



Future of the West End (Street Closure) Feedback / Surveys / Additional Information

At the April 19, 2022 Boulder City Council meeting, members of council reviewed city staff recommendations for a post-pandemic, district-wide outdoor dining program and provided unanimous direction supporting staff's recommendations. Future guidance regarding implementation of the program will be forthcoming.

Pearl Street's West End closure was also discussed with no permanent decisions finalized.

Downtown Business Feedback:

On April 26, 2022, Downtown Boulder Partnership (DBP) sent a request for feedback to the downtown business community - those located within the business improvement district (BID) and current DBP members (the two lists overlap but some DBP members are located outside of the BID).

An email went out to 1,113 individuals with a link to a Google Form. The email open rate was 50% and click through rate (CTR) 11% (both numbers well above email industry averages). On April 28, a reminder email was sent out specifically to 120 West End businesses*. Feedback was requested by 5 pm on Monday, May 2, 2022. On May 2, a final reminder email was sent to just over 525 email addresses who did not open the initial email.

**For the purposes of this report, West End businesses are defined as being located on Pearl Street - west of 11th Street, as well as 10th Street.*

Respondents were asked a few initial questions so that the raw data could be parsed in a variety of ways to analyze responses by location; business type and respondent role within the business (e.g. owners, employee, property manager, etc.)

At the close of business on May 2, 2022, there were 177 responses.

A generalization of the highest percentage of responses is categorized below:

Is your business a:

Office (Company): 28%

Retail (Shop): 24%

Restaurant: 21%

Other: 15%

Service / Personal Care: 12%

What is your position within the business (multiple options could be chosen):

Business Owner: 47%

Employee: 21%

Property Owner: 11%

General Manager: 19%

Resident: 9%

Where is your business located:

West End between 11th and 10th Streets: 26%

West End between 10th and 9th Streets: 16%

Pearl Street Mall: 14%

East End (east of 15th Street): 9%

South of Pearl Street: 8%

Other: 8%

Resident: 7%

North of Pearl Street: 5%

West End on 10th Street: 3%

West End between 9th and 8th Streets: 3%

In analyzing the raw data (including reviewing the 'other' comments), 53% of the respondents represented businesses that were in the West End district*. Of that number, 27% of the respondents identified as restaurants and 37% as retailers / service providers.

**Reminder, for the purposes of this report, West End businesses are defined as being located on Pearl Street - west of 11th Street, as well as 10th Street.*

Respondents were asked their preference as to the future of the West End.

The four main choices were: a permanent year-round closure to vehicular traffic; a complete re-opening to vehicular traffic (as it was pre-covid); a seasonal vehicular closure; a hybrid (mixed vehicle / dining use).

Of all the 177 respondents:

44% favor a permanent year round vehicular closure

31% favor a permanent reopening (back to pre-covid)

13% favor a seasonal closure

8% favor a mixed use / hybrid model

4% other response

Of all the West End businesses in particular - 93 respondents total:

37% favor a permanent year round vehicular closure

43% favor a permanent reopening (back to pre-covid)

10% favor a seasonal closure

8% favor a mixed use / hybrid model

2% other response

Of West End RESTAURANTS in particular:

0% favor a permanent year round closure

64% favor a permanent reopening

12% favor a seasonal closure

16% favor a mixed use / hybrid model

8% other response

Of West End Retailers/Service Providers in particular:

38% favor a permanent year round closure

38% favor a permanent reopening

12% favor a seasonal closure

9% favor a mixed use / hybrid model

3% Unsure

Next, respondents were asked their preferences of what to do with the West End closure temporarily while the long term solution is decided.

The question asked when the Emergency Order expires on August 31, 2022, would the respondent like to see the West End re-opened while talks about the future continue.

The choices were: Yes, open streets back up on September 1, 2022 while talks continue; No, leave the streets closed until a final decision is made either way; leave the street closure in place until the end of the fall season (October 31, 2022) or unsure.

Of all the 177 respondents:

44% - No, leave the streets closed until a final decision is made either way

33% Open the streets back up on Sept. 1 while talks continue

21% Leave the street closure in place until the end of the fall season (October 31, 2022)

2% - Other response

Of West End businesses in particular (businesses located west of 11th Street):

38% - No, leave the streets closed until a final decision is made either way

47% Open the streets back up on Sept. 1 while talks continue

13% Leave the street closure in place until the end of the fall season (October 31, 2022)

2% - Other response (comments were: Open the street immediately)

Of West End RESTAURANTS in particular (businesses located west of 11th Street):

72% Open the streets back up on Sept. 1 while talks continue

8% No, leave the streets closed until a final decision is made either way.

12% Leave the street closure in place until the end of the fall season (October 31, 2022)

8% Other response (comments were: Open immediately)

Of West End RETAILERS in particular (businesses located west of 11th Street):

44% Open the streets back up on Sept. 1 while talks continue

38% - No, leave the streets closed until a final decision is made either way.

15% Leave the street closure in place until the end of the fall season (October 31, 2022)

3% Comments were open the street immediately

Open Ended Comments (60 total):

1. Keep the block closed but regulate the restaurants..They are taking up too much space and some of the enclosures are ugly!
2. I believe strongly that the permanent closure of the street will be beneficial to my business and will allow the restaurants to invest in more permanent esthetically pleasing structures. I know there is a lot of resistant to this but @ ShoeFly we are definitely for a permanent closure on the west end
3. Reopen Pearl to auto traffic as soon as possible please
4. Pearl street is a fantastic pedestrian destination and there is a lot more we can do throughout the closed street - add pop-up booths, creating sitting/outdoor office space, etc - all to make it more of a destination than just a throughway.
5. The street closure has been the best! Parking has not been a problem even with fewer spots and as business comes back. Taking clients to outdoor restaurants assures everyone's comfort and helps us stay in business and the restaurants stay in business!
6. The loss of parking overweighs the benefit of outdoor dining for us as a retail business on West Pearl.
7. We need changes to increase foot traffic on the East End too! Maybe add topic to future meeting?
8. I love this new closed area of Pearl. I'd like to see it fully pedestrian some day.
9. Parking is and has always been key to business survival. Open the streets!

10. Because of comments I've read by other restaurant owners in that area I feel it should be opened up as it used to be. I support and value their opinions.
11. My personal opinion is having the street closed and creating a large outdoor gathering area has been vital to the downtown community. As a member of the business community, I have really enjoyed seeing the outdoor seating and hope it continues permanently.
12. The number 1 factor (we conducted our own survey) that dictates the business level of the west end is parking. The lack of parking and struggle to get to the area has reduced traffic and therefore business.
13. We think possible events on that block could be really fun and good for business on Pearl. Events such as: live music, beer gardens, even promotional tents or local art walks, etc.
14. Thank you for asking for input from a broad group, including downtown residents. All of my friends who live downtown strongly support a permanent vehicular closure of West Pearl. Our thinking is as follows: The pedestrian traffic on these blocks is strong. The outdoor dining and sense of community potential has been great. We never could park in the lost spaces anyway -- they were always taken (in some cases by staff in the stores who needed that parking and fed the meters accordingly). So, the idea that stores wish there were spaces out front from which people could pop in was never our experience anyway. We want to see safety, access, and equity addressed, but believe that there are creative solutions available for these objectives that still enable/support our ability to have more pedestrian space in town. Again, thanks for asking and good luck! We appreciate that this isn't as easy a decision.
15. While my business is on the east end and we do not necessarily benefit from the street closure on the west end, it seems to me that it brings people to that area, boosts business (I think?) and is enjoyed by locals so why not continue?
16. I'd like to see that street turn into an extension of the bricks. If it's never going to be better than picnic tables in parking spots, I'd say end it and make boulder actually look nice again. It's beginning to look like a ghetto with all of the poorly funded temporary patios, especially with all of the construction going on. 10th street looks terrible, with the exception of Jungle. If a restaurant can't make their outdoor patio look somewhat appealing, they probably shouldn't have one. Some of these places are hurting Boulders curbside appeal more than they are helping it
17. Please open west Pearl. Businesses aren't being run efficiently. There is horrible access for those that are handicapped. Safety service (ie. police, ambulance, fire trucks) access is non-existent. Get things back to normal.
18. The Pearl Street Mall is arguably one of the most successful pedestrian malls in the country. Those responsible for its design knew the secret ingredient back in the 70s was keeping it to four walkable blocks. There are so many other downtown districts that look to the Pearl Street Mall in awe. The West End district has a completely different aura - which also contributes to the success of the West End over the last several decades. The uniqueness of each area of downtown creates an extremely successful district. Don't try to fix what's not broken without careful input and consideration of those who know best (not sure that is city council reps).

19. Really?! Get this opened up, listen to the business owners who put their investment into West Pearl Street because of accessibility, parking, walk by traffic. Why listen to people who don't have skin in the game. Did anybody do any surveys in the dead of winter when West Pearl was a ghost town due to inaccessibility. Get our locals back down town. Ask Richard Foy, who designed this and advised on so many other projects. He knows that extending it will lead to failure. Thanks
20. The street closure made sense when there was no indoor dining. We are now completely back to normal with no government mandates except that our customers still won't come downtown. We are not just losing a little profitability, we are really hurting and trying to figure out how not to close our doors. To be going through this while the city continues to cause strife for our customers and drive them away is very painful. The time for intervention is over, please reopen.
21. The city has not responded to business outside of restaurants the parklets only serve restaurants and make access more difficult don't turn Pearl into a food court
22. Deferring to the opinion of on-street retailers and restaurants, but parking and flow of traffic are definitely compromised. Alleyways are terrible. Guests coming to our offices for 30min appointments spend 20min parking. There are vacancies everywhere - why is this? The foot traffic is not working.
23. It is time to put it back to normal and move on. Way overdue. Thank you
24. The feel of the west end right now so positive. All of my tour guests love the outdoor dining look and feel of the area and they want to spend time there.
25. Doesn't your sales tax analysis show that restaurants on the West End of Pearl Street have NOT recovered from the pandemic closures? Closing Pearl Street has hurt my ability to make a living wage because patrons' access to my place of work is restricted. Open up the streets of Boulder so I can go back to making a living wage.
26. Thank you for all the thought and time that has gone into this planning. Side note: the photos included in this email and survey show the "prettiest" parts of the street closure. I wonder if you could also show the danger that is currently 10th St.
27. As a Boulder resident, finding outdoor seating is often a requirement of groups of diners I have been associated with and has occasionally brought us downtown since more outdoor seating has been available rather than opting for other locations.
28. Closure helped restaurants during pandemic restrictions. No longer necessary. We have lost business due to inability for parking in front of our office. We leased our space because there is parking in front of our office. Jeffrey Smith for Envision Boulder
29. Consider opening up side streets proximate to the West End to handi-cap parking (Particularly 10th st by Tonic, Zoe Ma Ma, etc.) to have 1/2 the street for dining, other half for parking.
30. If the West End is permanently closed to cars, I would like to see the bricks, flowers, benches and public art (sculptures, etc.) also extended. I would like it to feel integrated with the other blocks of the Mall.
31. Closing to street traffic and effectively extending the mall over the last 2 years has naturally enticed pedestrians to continue walking West of 11th, where they might have (and in the past have) otherwise turned around. Pedestrian foot traffic is higher on West Pearl when the area is closed to autos - and no doubt better for West End retailers.

32. As a small restaurant, we really liked having the added outdoor space during the summer months. The outdoor space has not proven to be of much benefit during the winter months. From my point of view, having some vehicular traffic (with parking options, of course), while having an outdoor seating option that is not an outrageous expense for smaller businesses would incorporate the best of both worlds. Ultimately, it's difficult to determine what's best for the future; therefore, I feel like a year at least should be given to observe the West End in its original state to get an idea of what would be best going forward.
33. I have lived in Boulder since 1995. I own two restaurants off the bricks in Boulder. I own Oak and Corrida. I would personally like to see the walking mall extended and be a feature of our downtown. I think this will bring more visitors and create a better experience than the traffic we had before. I think Boulder should take the opportunity Covid has provided to upgrade our downtown mall. Bryan Dayton
34. This block and the temporary dining and crap is an eyesore, and it's really difficult to get in and out of our office space. Open it up!
35. Thank you for the hard work on the topic!
36. We would love a permanent closure. The decreased vehicle noise and the improved walkability of the West End have massively enhanced our team's quality of work life since the closure.
37. We selected this area of Pearl West because it was open to traffic and allowed for some parking flexibility for our customers. If we had wanted to be in a pedestrian only block, we would have selected a space on the Mall.
38. The entire vibe of Pearl Street west of 11th is much more alive and active with the street being used by people and not cars. Downtown Boulder feels more like a small European city. It's pedestrian, people and dog friendly on the West End without traffic.
39. Street parking/the loading zones being removed has been tough on us, as we transfer everything from our warehouse and the alleys are always blocked with huge trucks. Furthermore, the tents are hideous and a strange exception for the restaurant industry when retailers aren't getting any special treatment. We were just as impacted by the pandemic.
40. I have mixed feelings about leaving the streets closed. On one hand it is nice for the businesses to have the outdoor space (personally I will only eat outdoors), but on the other hand we are in desperate need of parking during the busy months. If we were to shut down again because of COVID I would prefer to have the outdoor space made available, but if we are not, then let's open the streets up.
41. The pandemic is not what it was 2 years ago. We pay a lot more rent to be on the bricks/pedestrian part of the mall. Why should they pay less rent but get the same benefits at no cost?! At the bare minimum they should cover the parking revenue lost from those parking spaces. But also it looks cluttered and junky. Sandbags/barricades/non-permanent furniture all distracts from our beautiful mall. I foster for Farfel's farm and it's so hard to pick up and drop off the fosters and it shouldn't be that way. Five years is an insane length of time for a "pilot" program.
42. Good luck, this is a tough one to deal with. Either way, we really appreciate all of your work!

43. I would be open to seasonal as well, but I feel that may limit the options of creating permanent and more "aesthetically pleasing" outdoor dining. In all my years of living in Boulder, I have been able to park on the street between 9th and 11th a handful of times. It does not take away business by any means. In the Spring, Summer, and early Fall (so over half the year), the streets are bustling with people roaming the road and sidewalk. It's energetic and a great place to spend time! People also begin their shopping on this side of the mall more than they EVER did before the closure, specifically tourists. If we commit to something permanent, we can truly begin to modify the street to permanently work for everyone. I spent my whole life on pearl street and this road closure is an amazing continuation of the walking mall! Xo
44. I've lived in Boulder for 33 years. The Pearl St. Mall is a treasure. Why not continue to extend it westward as we have during the pandemic? It's pedestrian-friendly, business-friendly, and very Boulder!
45. Love the closed off street! Easy to navigate around it with a vehicle.
46. It boils down to whatever is better for business. That way people still have a reason to visit West End Pearl St. There has to be access to businesses and there has to be thriving business in order for people to want to spend their money in West End Pearl St. stores. Boulder needs to spend the money to make it convenient to make the best choice for the present and the future of pearl st as a whole.
47. I think it is very important that the city do whatever it can to help restaurants not only survive but thrive by providing outdoor seating as an option for diners as we continue to deal with the pandemic - and would help get through tough times as the pandemic turns into an endemic situation and there are shorter periods of breakout infections. If restaurants are able to maintain capacity by utilizing outdoor seating to compensate for more limited seating indoors - that will go a long way in helping them stay in business and not have empty/shuttered storefronts. A closed business has a ripple effect in all surrounding businesses.
48. Need to restore vehicular and transit access to West Pearl, including loading limited parking/ drop off and pick-up. Identify and evaluate alternative design and access solutions that balance outdoor dining and pedestrian access with functional vehicular and emergency response needs. Should utilize flexible modular design system currently recommended by staff.
49. I think the city, its residents, and visitors all benefit from an extension of the walking mall and the car closure on this part of town
50. Many businesses are negatively impacted by the closure.
51. I would like to receive a copy of the final results of the survey, please.
52. Really love have this part of the street a continuation of the pedestrian mall zone. Strongly feel the benefits of keeping this a pedestrian area for this increasingly lively and active block of pearl street out ways the small loss of parking spaces that result.
53. I think it would be beneficial to reopen it and refresh people's memories about that approach. A permanent decision can be made later.
54. There could be a bus only lane, but the rest should take over parking to make it sidewalk culture. It was always an inconvenient place to drive at best.

55. We just love the feel West End of Pearl Street when there is no traffic. The outdoor tables, lights and opportunities for pedestrians extend the festive spirit of the main part of the Pearl Street Mall. It reminds us of an outdoor pedestrian mall in Europe.
 56. We appreciate in advance your consideration.
 57. We chose this street as there is access to parking in front of our office/retail and we would like it to reopen. It is inconvenient for our patients and hurting the businesses around us. I would also like to address the time and cost that construction would take that would further damage our businesses. We have had other construction on our street and not only does it prevent access to our business, but it is never completed in a timely manner. See the current Xcel project.
 58. I believe that the businesses and property owners should be making this decision and they should be considered first because they are the ones that have made the investment to make but restaurants go through the Covid virus. The vote should go to the tenants and property owners only. I think a hybrid plan where does he have a compromise and satisfy all parties. I also don't believe the city should be spending all sorts of money on railings and decking and on and on. I believe that the businesses and property owners should be making this decision. To be considered first because they are the ones that have made the investment to make their shops and restaurants go through the Covid virus. I think a hybrid plan where achieve a compromise and satisfy all parties. I also don't believe the city should be spending big money on railings and decking and on and on. It should be a pretty simple and very close to how it is now, simple. I also don't believe it should go for five years I think we should do it for one year without a lot of infrastructure and see how it goes on a seasonal closure. Then the stakeholders could vote whether they wanna continue or not. Again it should be decided by popular vote of the restaurants weighted on square footage along with the owners of the buildings.
 59. We need parking and access this closure is bad for all businesses
 60. The closure is one of the best things that has happened to West Pearl. Brings back old BOULDER!
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