Recommendations

Receive presentation from Gould Evans and Downtown Lawrence, Inc. on Downtown Lawrence recommended temporary right-of-way configuration concept, allowing expanded business space along Massachusetts Street to aid with businesses reopening during COVID-19 event.

Executive Summary

Downtown Lawrence, Inc. (DLI) is recommending a plan for downtown Lawrence which would expand right-of-way usage by adjacent businesses in order to allow for some outdoor operation (retail and dining) and increased social distancing during COVID-19. Gould Evans, an architecture firm headquartered in downtown Lawrence, has worked pro-bono with DLI to develop a concept for Massachusetts Street. The plan was guided by concepts from DLI, including the need to retain two-way traffic on Massachusetts Street, the need to maintain some parking on Massachusetts Street for accessible parking and curbside carryout services, and the need that many businesses will have to temporarily expand into the public right-of-way area to enhance social distancing. Additionally, the plan has been vetted by City staff with a focus on public safety, public accessibility (ADA), creating a fair process for right-of-way space to be allocated, and appropriate responsibility for right-of-way to be assigned. Another important notion is to create an overall plan for Massachusetts Street, in lieu of an individualized and piecemeal approach to the shared right-of-way.

The attached materials explain the concept, which Gould Evans will present at the City Commission meeting. At a high level, the proposal includes the following:

- Maintains two-way traffic on Massachusetts Street with narrower traffic lanes
- Maintains existing ADA angled parking spaces
- Replaces angled parking with parallel parking, which would be limited to 15-minute curbside pickup parking
- Creates a new walkway zone and opportunity for expanded retail/dining opportunities within a portion of the angled parking area
- Expansion for the ability for businesses to utilize adjacent sidewalk space near the building and the new area created within the former parking area. Businesses could utilize this space via a license agreement with the City which could be administratively approved. Such an agreement would specify the area, require the business to be responsible for cleanup within the area, enable the City to have access to the area as needed for any emergency response or repairs, and other details.
- Placement of sanitation stations in the downtown area
- Enables ability for special event permit requests to still be considered on a temporary basis
• Adding temporary signage which directs customers to parking opportunities within the city-owned parking lots and parking garages in the downtown area.

The intention for the June 2 meeting is to help publicize the recommended concept and begin the process for additional downtown businesses/property owners to provide comments and ask questions. The City will assist DLI with gathering comments via the Lawrence Listens platform between the meeting on June 2 and the future date the City Commission would consider adoption of the proposal. There is a business need and urgency to consider adoption of the proposal which needs to be balanced with the opportunity for businesses to offer comments and ask questions on something that would affect downtown. Staff suggests that a formal vote on the concept be scheduled for the June 9, 2020 City Commission meeting to allow implementation to proceed in a timely fashion.

It should be noted that implementation of the plan will take some time after approval (painting, parking reconfiguration, signage, executing right-of-way agreements with businesses, etc). Staff is working on details regarding necessary materials, budget, and time frame necessary to implement the concept. There should be more information about this that can be reported at the June 2 meeting.

Strategic Plan Critical Success Factor

Safe, Healthy, and Welcoming Neighborhoods
Innovative Infrastructure and Asset Management
Collaborative Solutions
Economic Growth and Security

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact to the City is not known as of the writing of the memo. Implementation details are being assembled.

Action Requested

Receive the presentation on the recommended plan.

Attachments

DLI Letter on Recommended Revisioning and Recovery Plan to City
Gould Evans concept presentation
Communications - Updated 06/02/20
Downtown Lawrence plan - Added 06/02/20
Downtown Lawrence cost estimates - Added 06/02/20
May 28, 2020

Lawrence City Commission
City Hall
6 E. 6th Street
Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Downtown Lawrence, Inc. (DLI) Board of Directors, I am pleased to recommend the comprehensive Revisioning and Recovery plan that Gould Evans has developed alongside our board and our working group of Downtown business owners over the past six weeks. With the guidance of Gould Evans and our expert City staff, we have worked together diligently on a plan that will support our Downtown businesses and cultural institutions after the fundamental shift in business due to COVID-19.

Local businesses have been hard hit and are struggling as they adjust to new business models and methods of service. Our most basic needs in this crisis boil down to: businesses need people and people need space. The collaborative team has developed a plan that will allow businesses to expand onto the sidewalks and allow pedestrians more space to walk and maintain physical distance. Our plan also includes sanitization stations in each block (3 on each side of each block) as well as some parking lots and garages. We want Downtown visitors to feel comfortable and safe in our environment and this plan is meant to create that atmosphere.

The partners involved agree that our best chance for success includes a plan with expanded sidewalks and spaces for outdoor dining to allow social distancing. Our goal is to roll this plan out in a uniform and coordinated manner to serve Downtown as a whole. The plan allows for a cohesive, hyperlocal approach to respond to the business mix and streetscape on each block. It is flexible to respond to use and needs as they arise. This plan keeps two way traffic access open on Massachusetts Street and side/ancillary streets. It allows for short-term parking on Mass. to support continued curbside pickup options for businesses and equitably allocates the shared property so businesses can expand their storefronts.

Any plan for changing the Downtown streetscape requires maintaining emergency access and ADA/curbside pickup parking. As an organization we are also aware that health and safety needs have changed dramatically and we need to create a new experience to support a safe and accessible Downtown Lawrence. This plan takes these considerations into account and recognizes that different businesses' needs are unique, for example:

- Dining + drinking establishments: space to expand in person dining and access to curbside
- Retail: need more people Downtown and walking/waiting Downtown
- Professional services: need places to wait

In addition to the City and Gould Evans, DLI has established strong partnerships throughout the community to implement this plan including eXplore Lawrence, The Chamber, Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, and The Hamm Companies. All of us are excited to work on this opportunity to revision our Downtown and assist in its recovery.

Our desire is to implement a coordinated plan as expeditiously as possible. We must take advantage of every day possible to allow our businesses to maximize the potential of the new Downtown landscape. We urge you to adopt and fund this comprehensive plan to support Downtown Lawrence and its businesses.

Sincerely,

Sally Zogry, Executive Director
downtown lawrence, ks

ECONOMIC + PEDESTRIAN RESPONSE TO COVID-19
THE CHALLENGE

people need space

businesses need people
THE OPPORTUNITY

how can we use this knowledge to keep people healthy and create a viable—and vibrant—future for our downtown business community?
SOUTH PENN STREET PARTY

Vendor Outdoor Points of Sale

6' Round Tables spaced 10' apart each with 3 Chairs

Live Music Venues

Street Zoning for Distancing

Temporary Light Strings

STREET PARTY:

WESPORT ROAD

KANSAS CITY (WESTPORT), MO

BIRMINGHAM, AL

KENT, OH

DES MOINES, IA
OUR BUSINESSES

Our local businesses requested support from the city and DLI. It became clear — we need a comprehensive plan to provide:

- new opportunities
- a streamlined approach to implementation
- a Lawrence-specific response to our local context
embrace a culture of social distancing
support our businesses
quick to implement
minimal cost / use what the city has
allow curbside services to continue
accessible to all
a comprehensive plan

maintain fire-medical requirements
endorsed by the health department
collaborative with city engineers
in collaboration with the LPD
support artist and community involvement
viable for 18 months or longer
streamlined and consistent city approvals
OUR SIDEWALKS MUST DO MORE

“The requirement of ‘social or physical distancing’ combined with Covid-19’s ‘increased communicability in indoor settings, requires that we reallocate our streets and sidewalks for public use during this crisis and for the future.”

— Streets for Pandemic Response & Recovery (2020)
National Association of City Transportation Officials
OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

- pocket parks
- expanded sidewalks
- provided sanitation
- new signage
- special event closures / open streets
- corresponding city policy changes
OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

MASS ST. RECOMMENDATIONS
reconfigure to parallel parking
expand functional sidewalk width
provide business expansion opportunities

EXISTING PARALLEL PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS
allow parklets to repurpose parking stalls
maintain 5’ minimum clear path on existing sidewalk

utilize existing “utility zone” for additional outdoor seating or retail purposes (5’–11’ wide)

new zone created for use by businesses or pedestrians (4’–10’ wide)

mass st recommendation
reconfigure to parallel parking

maintain existing ada parking

parallel parking limited to 15-minute pickup

temporary platform infill for outdoor seating area

additional ramps
5' minimum clear path maintained on existing sidewalk

occupancy of new "occupiable zone" to be set by individual businesses

delineate new 4'-10' walking zone with temporary paint (opportunity to engage local artists and community)

define new edge of parallel parking with temporary means

MASS ST RECOMMENDATION
reconfigure to parallel parking
5' minimum clear path maintained on existing sidewalk

occupancy of new "occupiable zone" to be set by individual businesses

define new edge of parallel parking with temporary means
SPECIAL EVENT USE

during events of high attendance, ensure there will be enough space for people

gouldevans
COLLABORATIONS
just the beginning . . .
gouldevans

more to come!
POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE PLAN

gouldevans
Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in response to the downtown plan submitted by Downtown Lawrence, Inc. and Gould Evans.

Let me say first that I am fully in support of my fellow local business owners. Downtown Lawrence has been my home for 29 years, and I have seen countless businesses come and go. It is infinitely challenging to make a small business work, especially during a pandemic. My downtown colleagues have my full respect and support.

My primary concern with the plan that is being put forth is that it’s skewed in favor of restaurants, not necessarily retail. The proposed plan was featured in yesterday’s Journal World, and the headline said it all: “more room for dining.” Sally Zogry’s letter to the commission regarding this plan echoes that focus on restaurants: the third paragraph of the letter starts off with “…a plan with expanded sidewalks and spaces for outdoor dining to allow social distancing.” And it is true—expanding pedestrian and sidewalk spaces in front of restaurants will allow them to operate at higher capacity while maintaining safe distances. That’s great news for restaurants, and I think implementing the plan in limited areas (say, in front of restaurants) is a fantastic idea.

For retailers, I’m not really sure what the plan would accomplish other than further limiting available parking. As it is now, if we decide to allow customers inside our businesses, we have total control over the situation. We can require that customers wear masks to enter the store. We can require social distancing. We can limit the number of people in the store at any given time. The ability to do these things is essential to being able to assure the safety of everyone wishing to shop.

While I would love to think that most people will be wearing masks for the foreseeable future and will be considerate of the health of others, that’s not what I saw this past weekend in Downtown Lawrence. There were large numbers of people on the sidewalks, and I saw maybe one in twenty wearing a mask. Is there a proposal by Downtown Lawrence, Inc. that, if parking is limited and businesses are being encouraged to operate on the sidewalk, that mask-wearing will be required, or at the very least, suggested?
Another aspect is weather. There are only a few weeks out of the year that running a business outside is doable, and I’m afraid that time is already over until fall. No retailer wants to be outside in July and August. And, in my 29 years’ of experience with the sidewalk sale, customers tend to not want to shop outside in July and August if shopping inside is an option.

While I applaud the idea of keeping dedicated parking in front of each business for curbside pickup, there needs to be some sort of assurance that the spaces will be policed. Right now, we have two dedicated spaces in front of my store. There is a sign clearly designating the spaces for customers only. However, over the last two weeks I’ve had to go outside to ask people to move their cars, or call police dispatch to ticket cars that are parked there for other reasons, and I’ve gotten lots of pushback. I can only see that situation getting worse if the parking is further limited. Ms. Zogry says that Massachusetts Street parking only comprises 11% of downtown parking, and that this is an opportunity to “educate ourselves on where available parking is downtown.” However, there’s a reason that street parking is the first to get taken—it’s the most convenient, and people coming to downtown Lawrence will always try to park on the street first. Those spaces will be a hot commodity, I can guarantee that. The situation is stressful enough, so the city would have to have a viable plan to make sure the dedicated spaces are being used by the intended, and that business owners aren’t forced to stand outside being parking attendants.

Also, there are several empty retail spaces on our block—how would the city designate who gets those spaces?

While I know that restaurants have taken a big hit during this time, retail stores have been struggling for years. We have to go up against online retailers every single day. The number of empty retail spaces I just mentioned are a testament of how many have failed in that struggle. I think making a sweeping change in the landscape of downtown that focuses on the continued success of restaurants, but not necessarily retail, is a mistake.

Why not, instead, just allow restaurants to build out further onto the sidewalks, to allow for distancing, and give them two dedicated parallel spots for curbside pickup. Then the angled parking can stay wherever there is no designated buildout, with retailers being able to keep as much adjacent angled parking as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts.

Yours truly,

Jennifer McKnight
Covid-19 has certainly caused a lot of upheaval and change, but it needn’t keep causing it. I understand the need for “social distancing,” but am hard pressed to see how making an already poor parking situation even worse will greatly help the situation. Not all those who shop downtown are young and fit and able to walk easily. There are elderly and less-abled shoppers, as well, and by greatly limiting the parking without offering to get them closer to their destination is a poor idea.

I could get behind a purchase of the Journal World building at 6th and Mass for use as a parking garage and then doing away with on-street parking (except for a few handicap spaces) and offering jitney service up and down Mass all day long. You tell me there are ample spaces for parking downtown, but not all patrons are up for a hike after parking their car. And specifically I mean the hike from Vermont to Mass at 7th. That is a steep incline and not especially conducive to patronizing businesses in the 700 block of Mass. And the nearest parking garage is quite a distance away, as well. Even the garage near the library is quite a walk for a lot of people. Off street and no garage parking is slim in that area for both retail, restaurant and offices in that block.

In some ways we are fortunate that the large student population is not with us now. That could, indeed, cause some distance issues with so many people seeking the same venues (bars/restaurants). However, there is more to downtown Lawrence than just eating and drinking and those businesses’ wishes and needs should also be heeded and respected. As should the needs of their patrons. For curbside pick up it would be easy enough to simply designate one of the 15 minute spots in each pair of two meters as the pick up spot. Businesses could then, after receiving an “I’m here” call from their patron take the parcel out to the car. I’m not saying it’s perfect and I’m sure someone else can come up with a better solution. However, I certainly don’t think the proposed solution is any better and will deter a lot of people from going downtown. It will definitely inhibit the Topeka traffic we get from stopping and staying for awhile……they’ll either turn around and go home, or hop on the turnpike and head to Kansas City.

Carol Khoury
3232 Yellowstone Dr
May 29, 2020

Dear City Commissioners,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the Economic and Pedestrian Plan presented to you by Downtown Lawrence, Inc and Gould Evans.

As we move forward together into a new world, one of the things that will be critical to our economic recovery and healing our community will be restoring the health and vibrancy of our downtown. One of the most valuable and unique qualities Lawrence has as a city is that we share a common story that binds us together: the history of our downtown. Much of our civic culture is built around simply being out and about downtown. This humble activity is the foundation for a strong bond that binds us together as city. It is as strong as it is because it is built around an active, healthy main street whose vibrancy is more than a century old.

For generations, Mass Street is where we have gone to spend time together, to celebrate with our neighbors, and to support each other when something important has happened. Something important - a global pandemic - happened, and for the first time in the history of Lawrence, we could not come together. By posing a threat to all of the activities and pursuits that bind us as a city, COVID 19 has not just impacted our ability to connect with each other, it threatens the very thing that makes Lawrence, Lawrence: our commonality. All aspects of our recovery from this dark period is dependent on our ability to restore this. To do this in the face of our COVID 19 reality, we must be inventive, bold and poised to embrace new ways and opportunities to simply be together again. I believe this is the key to our future as a city. The plan presented to you does exactly this, in a way that honors our history and preserves our unique civic character. I would be more than excited to see it happen: it would restore my hope in post-COVID 19 Lawrence.

Thank you for your time and service to Lawrence,

Margaret Weisbrod Morris
CEO, Lawrence Arts Center
I would like to commend Downtown Lawrence, Inc. and Gould Evans for their proactive and creative plan for economic recovery downtown. I fully support their vision for a downtown that helps residents and visitors feel welcome, comfortable, and safe as we all navigate a return to a new normal.

In thinking about reopening, the Watkins Museum has drawn the same conclusions as DLI—there is no returning to the way things used to be. In order to bring people back, we need to provide experiences that incorporate safety precautions and new social norms in a comfortable and welcoming, not an obtrusive, way. The plan developed by Gould Evans is not a quick fix, but the foundation for a vibrant new downtown. It is likely that concerns about the safety of gathering in public will remain for quite some time. A vibrant downtown is central to the economic success and quality of life for our community. The stakes are too high to just hope for the best or make minor adjustments in the hopes of getting by. The changes proposed here are an investment in the long-term success of downtown.

The time to act is now. With the return of warm weather and the relaxing of restrictions, people are eager to get out. If downtown is ready to welcome people in ways that keep them safe and help them feel comfortable when they resume a public life, it will remain a viable attraction. People won’t feel a need to seek different alternatives. The proposal lays out a plan of action ready to move forward. Quick action will mean a faster economic recovery and prepare the way for a more prosperous summer and fall for downtown businesses and attractions.

I fully endorse the proposed reconfigurations of traffic, parking, and sidewalk use along Mass Street and believe it will have a positive impact on public perceptions and use of downtown. The Watkins Museum is also considering ways we can take activities and exhibits outside. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with DLI and the City of Lawrence to maintain downtown as a place where people want to be—truly the heart of our city.

Steve Nowak
Executive Director
Douglas County Historical Society/Watkins Museum of History

Please express the need for urgency to get the plan implemented – this is weather dependent, we need to make the most of the summer and to begin planning for the fall, we need to draw visitors to our community and
Correspondence?

From: Frank Janzen <fr.janzen@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 1, 2020 4:02 PM
To: Jennifer Ananda <jananda@lawrenceks.org>; Brad Finkeldei <bfinkeldei@lawrenceks.org>; Courtney Shipley <cshipley@lawrenceks.org>; Diane Stoddard <dstoddard@lawrenceks.org>; Lisa Larsen <llarsen@lawrenceks.org>; Stuart Boley <sboley@lawrenceks.org>; City Hall email <CityHallemail@lawrenceks.org>; Craig Owens <craigowens@lawrenceks.org>; Casey Toomay <ctoomay@lawrenceks.org>; Sally Zogry <director@downtownlawrence.com>
Subject: Parking lot dining in Aden, Yemen

When I was in Aden, Yemen, 2010-2011, I sometimes ate at these parking lot restaurants.
Frank Janzen.
Frank

--
1101 Vermont St, Apt 509
Lawrence, KS (Kansas) 66044
USA
My phone: 785-840-7566 -- mobile.
Physical implementation of Mass Street changes: (numbers are approximate)

This involves converting existing 346 angled spaces on Mass (including 10 angled ADA spaces) to 107 parallel parking spaces plus 10 existing angled ADA spaces

- Total cost estimate is approximately $100,000 (including materials, labor, equipment, demobilization and contingency) (see separate cost estimate sheet)
- Estimate is 2-3 weeks of install time, pending delivery

Physical implementation of changes on downtown numbered streets

- Unknown at this time. Staff is working on a possible framework for the side streets.

Sanitation stations

- Downtown Lawrence would provide the stations (33 of them each with 1 liter bottles of sanitizer) with the City to provide the bottles of sanitizer. Estimated initial cost to City of under $500 for the bottles of sanitizer plus need to refill sanitizer at cost of $40 per gallon until removal.

Business Agreements:

- Proposing template business agreements for use of right-of-way in front a business, processed administratively with no fee. Agreement would make business responsible for safety and assume liability for activities within the right-of-way. Agreements would be processed as expeditiously as possible.
- Businesses would be responsible for any installations within the right-of-way which would be temporary with the program duration.
- Staff is researching possible extension of existing sidewalk dining licenses to enable dining in the expanded area.
- If a neighboring business didn’t need the right-of-way space for activity, a larger space could be licensed with approval of the neighboring business owner, or property owner in the case of a vacant building.

Other issues:

- Smoking- City code limits smoking within 10 foot radius of any doorway, open window or air intake leading into a building
- Enforcement of 15 minute parking zones would be soft enforcement and parking enforcement staff would function in downtown ambassador role
- May need to make space for construction debris dumpsters in the event of remodeling activity
- Lawrence Listens survey has been posted gathering thoughts on the proposed plan
- Special Event permit applications for parades or other special events would be processed in the regular fashion
- Duration of the program- staff suggests the program would last no later than the end of the year, but could be sunset earlier after a review in the fall
- May need to be flexible with this plan in case unanticipated issues arise
Next steps: Item scheduled on City Commission meeting June 9 for action.
# Downtown Streetscape Change - Mass St. 6th to 11th (Estimated cost)

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<th>Materials</th>
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<td>Quantity (Ea.)</td>
<td>Unit Cost</td>
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<td>15 Minute Parking Signs</td>
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Total installation: $56,083.40
Contingency (25%): $14,020.85
Demobilization (50%): $28,041.70

$98,145.94