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MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY

June 24, 2015

***UPDATED July 17, 2015**

Dear Council President and Members of the Municipal Council:

The following report has been prepared for your consideration in order to provide supporting evidence and research for the creation of a Pedestrian Mall on the portion of Newark Avenue between Grove Street and Erie Street.

The portion of Newark Avenue between Erie Street and Grove Street is suitable for the creation of a Pedestrian Mall.

- This portion of Newark Avenue is not a part of any state highway and is not a major vehicle traffic artery or through street to other areas of the city or region.
- This portion of Newark Avenue is not a bus route or cargo and/or other type of delivery route.
- This portion of Newark Avenue is not a preferred route of travel for emergency vehicles, except for those vehicles that must directly access this portion of the street.
- The proposed Pedestrian Mall plan preserves all current service and maintenance operations, with no disruptions to waste removal operations or inhibition of emergency vehicle access.
- The City of Jersey City may undertake development and maintenance of a Pedestrian Mall as a local improvement pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40:56-69 et seq.
- The proposed Pedestrian Mall plan underwent a section 31 review pursuant to NJSA 40:55D-31 during the regularly scheduled Jersey City Planning Board meeting on June 23, 2015 in the Council Chambers in City Hall.
- Pedestrian Malls utilizing a shared space format (allowing vehicles and pedestrians to share the space) have been successfully implemented in a variety of cities and neighborhoods throughout the country and throughout the world.

A Pedestrian Mall in this area will support the local economy and enhance patronage of local businesses.

- 30 businesses currently operate with storefronts directly adjacent to the Pedestrian Mall, including 9 bars and restaurants and also 6 businesses with outdoor seating. At least two more storefronts/businesses are currently under construction. Dozens of additional businesses operate within a few blocks of the proposed Pedestrian Mall boundaries. All of these businesses stand to benefit from additional foot traffic that a Pedestrian Mall will bring.
- Foot traffic and window shopping is limited due to the unwelcoming and uninviting streetscape along this portion of Newark Avenue, with narrow sidewalks, two lanes of fast moving traffic, and 16 parking spaces within an already crowded commercial corridor.
- Double parking and other illegal stopping and standing is common along this stretch of Newark Avenue, creating further hazards for pedestrians and also vehicle traffic in the area.
- The businesses directly adjacent to this portion of Newark Avenue as well as the Historic Downtown Special Improvement District (HDSID) are in support of a Pedestrian Mall, noting it will serve to not only increase foot traffic to local businesses but will also drive activity and visitors throughout the local area. Requests were made by local businesses to specifically include limited vehicle access for emergencies, deliveries, and for patrons that require local drop-offs and pickups.

A Pedestrian Mall will build a safer, more pedestrian friendly area and will foster more frequent cultural and social exchanges in the community.

- This portion of Newark Avenue and the area immediately surrounding it was formally a congested traffic hub that is still utilized by thousands of daily commuters traveling on foot and bike to bus and PATH train stops.
- Despite current use as a pedestrian thoroughfare, this portion of Newark Avenue does not currently provide adequate pedestrian safety or promote positive interactions between pedestrians.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will enhance the movement, safety, convenience, and enjoyment of pedestrians by decreasing the volume of vehicles, reducing air pollution, and increasing socialization and other interactions between local residents and visitors.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will remain in compliance with all applicable ADA regulations and will continue to ensure equal access to all patrons and visitors.
- The local and nearby communities are supportive of a Pedestrian Mall so long as the City includes the following items in the plan:
 - Restrictions on activities, noise, and public disturbances
 - Increased police presence and/or other enhanced safety measures
 - Limited vehicle access for emergencies, deliveries, and for residents that require local drop-offs and pickups
 - Sufficient project management and oversight

A Pedestrian Mall will be a unique neighborhood asset found nowhere else in Jersey City that will serve as a destination for residents and visitors and will become a highlight attraction for Jersey City.

- This is the first location in Jersey City where a Pedestrian Mall will be implemented.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will become a tourist attraction but also source of pride for residents.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will expand cultural and social opportunities with the addition of a distinctive open public space that allows for gatherings, events, and expanded socializing.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will serve as a model for additional Pedestrian Malls throughout Jersey City.
- A Pedestrian Mall on this portion of Newark Avenue will allow for implementation of a variety of new artistic elements as well as additional green infrastructure in a public open space.

Data and information has been gathered from a variety of sources including a pilot program last summer.

- A pilot Pedestrian Mall program was implemented on a temporary basis last summer beginning Tuesday August 18, 2014 and ending October 31, 2014.
- The pilot program was approved by ordinance (ordinance 14.043, approved 9-0 by the Jersey City Municipal Council on July 16, 2014) in the same fashion as the proposed plan seeks to be approved.
- Thousands of patrons utilized this space during the pilot program but more importantly the City was able to test the model and better understand the impact on businesses and the community as a whole.
- Two public meetings were held after the end of the pilot program to solicit feedback from the community and businesses:
 - A meeting targeting businesses was held on Tuesday March 3, 2015 in the Jersey City Council Caucus Room.
 - A meeting targeting the community was held on Monday March 9, 2015 at 7:30PM at Grace Church Van Vorst at a regularly schedule Harsimus Cove Association meeting.
- Several follow up group discussions occurred at regularly scheduled HDSID and Harsimus Cove Association meetings, including several conversations between city officials and HDSID and Harsimus Cove Association leadership.
- Additional feedback was volunteered and also solicited directly from individual business owners, local residents, and other Pedestrian Mall patrons during and after the pilot.

- Relevant city officials and other stakeholders were also consulted throughout the process, including representatives from the following groups and offices:
 - Councilwoman Candice Osborne
 - Mayor's Office
 - Fire Department
 - East District Police Department
 - Department of Public Safety
 - Jersey City Medical Center EMS
 - Department of Administration
 - Cultural Affairs
 - Division of Commerce
 - Division of Planning
 - Division of Traffic and Engineering
 - Jersey City Incinerator Authority (HCIA)
 - Department of Public Works
 - Jersey City Corporation Counsel
 - Department of Health and Human Services
 - NJ Transit
 - Sam Schwartz Transportation Planning and Engineering (solicited design proposal)

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Platt
Jersey City Mayor's Office