

PIKE ST. PEDESTRIAN PILOTS

DATA + RECOMMENDATION REPORT



PILOT REPORT

On three Saturday nights in August, E Pike St was open to pedestrians-only between Broadway and 12th Avenue to pilot a nighttime pedestrian street concept.

The idea of periodically closing Pike-Pine to auto traffic had been circling for at least four years from both community stakeholders and City departments, with interests varying from placemaking, safety, business, and mobility. Given this growing interest, the city and community partners wanted to have a broader conversation about the idea and what it might look like.

The conversation looked at weekend nights, a Sunday daytime, and Thursday Art Walk. There was enough interest to recommend a summer pilot focused on a nighttime pedestrian street concept to address the overcrowded sidewalks on busy weekend nights. The other options weren't explored due to concerns about access during business hours and funding/organizational capacity.

There was also interest in including some fun programming in the street that celebrates the neighborhood identity, to see if this could also be a community building opportunity and try and change some of the behavior in the streets on weekend nights.

This report summarizes the planning behind the project, lessons learned from the summer pilot, and outlines potential next steps for the neighborhood and city staff.

The pedestrian street pilot is one part of a broad economic development strategy – the Capitol Hill 2020 Plan – to support a vibrant commercial district where daytime and nighttime businesses thrive. The full Capitol Hill 2020 Plan can be seen at www.capitolhill2020.org.

PARTNERS



PROJECT TIMELINE

2010-2014

Capitol Hill community and City Council discuss need and potential for pedestrian programs in the Pike/Pine area

March 2015

Grant awarded to Capitol Hill EcoDistrict to study street options

April 2015

Research and outreach begins to explore best practices and gather input from neighborhood residents, businesses, and visitors

June 2015

Capitol Hill 2020 Action Plan released

July 2015

Pilot schedule is released, based on research and community feedback
Baseline studies begin

August 2015

Pedestrian pilots are tested each Saturday night

September 2015

Data and program analysis begins
Post-evaluation interviews and public meetings

April 2016

Report released



PROJECT PURPOSE

Pike/Pine is a mixed-use urban neighborhood that contains a variety of housing types close to businesses of all kinds, tied together with robust transportation options. Because of this urban context, Pike/Pine is both a home to an increasing number of people and a bustling retail and recreation center that attracts many visitors from Seattle and beyond.

The neighborhood is undergoing intense transformation, including new residential and commercial development, major transportation infrastructure projects such as the light rail and street car, and increasing recognition as a restaurant and entertainment destination.

This growth has brought opportunities but also some challenges. Conversations in spring 2015 highlighted the following issues related to the sidewalks and streets in the commercial core, as well as potential opportunities to celebrate the cultural history of the neighborhood.

In response, three key goals emerged from the community discussion:

1. Increase pedestrian access and mobility,
2. Improve the tone, feel and attitude of crowds, while allowing a positive SPD presence, and
3. Open the street to positive community-led programming to promote an inclusive environment and celebrate the LGBTQ identity and artistic culture of the neighborhood.

SIDEWALK MOBILITY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- The average sidewalk in the Pike/Pine core is 10' wide. This space includes numerous streetscape elements such as tree pits, bike racks, café seating, newspaper stands, utility poles, and trash cans that effectively reduce the walkable sidewalk area.
- During peak hours of pedestrian traffic, the sidewalks overflow, forcing people to walk through tree pits or into vehicle travel and parking lanes.
- The large number of people crossing the street at key intersections results in long delays for vehicles.
- Because of sidewalk choke points and slow/non-moving vehicles, people make frequent mid-block crossings.

SAFETY

- For those with limited or assisted mobility, the sidewalk areas are difficult to navigate.
- The low-light environment and erratic pedestrian movement creates continual risk for collisions.
- The influx of people on weekend nights and constrained physical space contributes to aggressive behavior and a negative visitor/resident experience.
- Crowded sidewalks create access and visibility concerns for police patrolling.

MIXED-USE ECONOMIC VITALITY

- The sustained nightlife explosion in the neighborhood has created a vibrant, public scene, but has also generated mobility, safety, and civility concerns on weekend nights.
- Shared interest in maintaining a balance of daytime retail as the district also embraces a vibrant nightlife culture.

PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY

- Any lines generated by shops, venues, or food vendors can cause mobility concerns, even if managed.
- Any spontaneous artistic, cultural, or musical expression is crowded and further congests sidewalk areas.

SITE CONTEXT

STUDY AREA

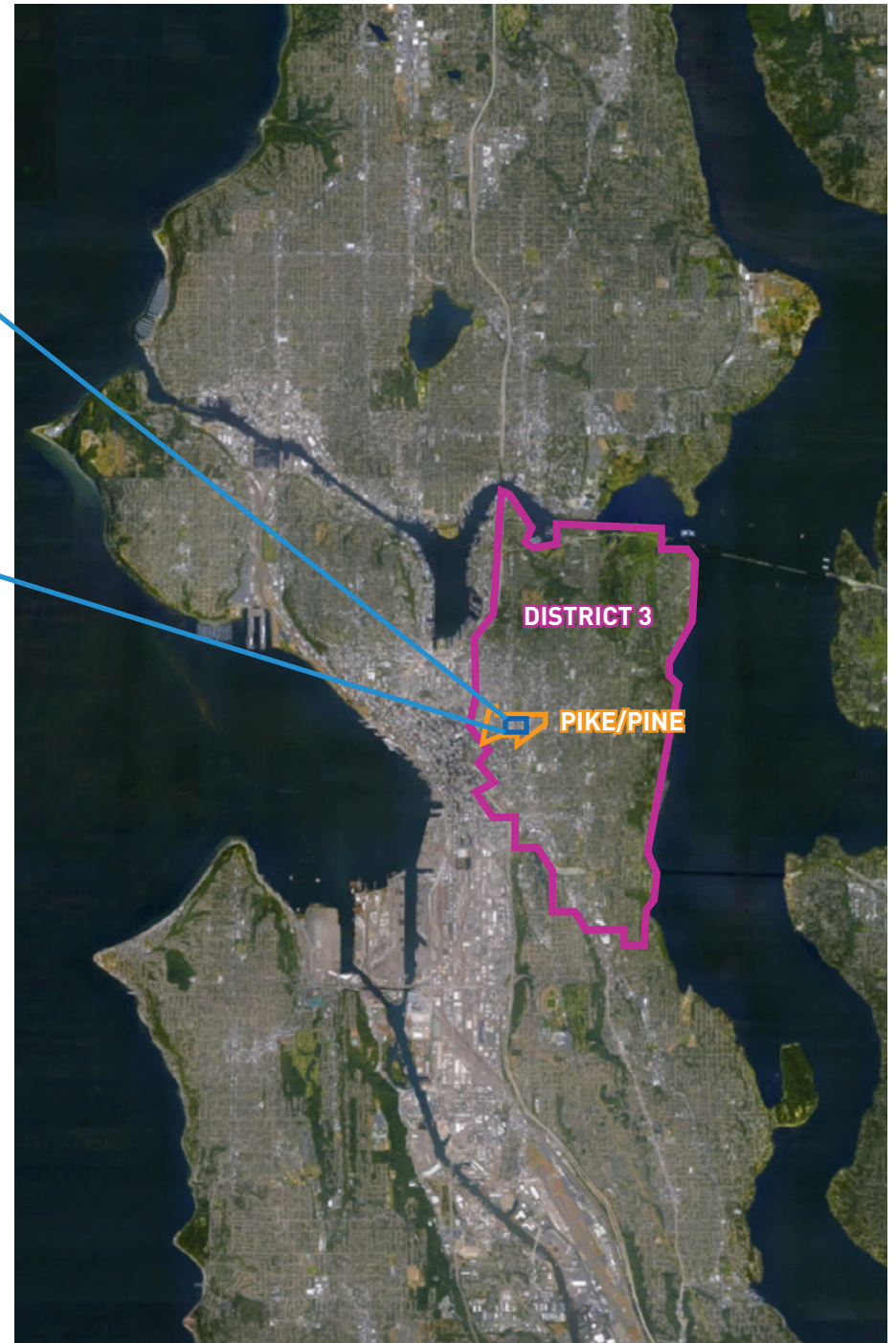


NEIGHBORHOOD DETAILS

Pike/Pine is a dense center of residential and commercial activity and will only become more busy in the coming years. Currently, 32,144 people live in Capitol Hill and 83,275 people live in Council District 3, of which Pike/Pine is a part.

This number will grow as Pike/Pine is already at 587% of its 2005-2024 housing unit target (this includes units built and in permitting).

65+ businesses are located in the six-block area we focused on. With new buildings coming in that have ground-level storefronts, this number will also be expanding.



PILOT DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH

Pike/Pine is fortunate to have an organized and engaged community of residents, business owners, and visitors. The first step in project development was to gather feedback from the community about their interest in a pedestrian street concept, including preferences about time, date, and configuration.

During the spring and early summer of 2015, Capitol Hill EcoDistrict, with support from SDOT and OED, held seven open public meetings and 23 one-on-one meetings with active neighborhood stakeholders. Since the neighborhood is home to such a variety of people and activities, these meetings sought out the perspectives of residents, business owners, property owners, workers, and the general public.

Four major topics were presented and discussed:

1. Best practices from other contemporary cities
2. Footprint options for which streets could be closed
3. Time/date options for potential closures
4. Activation options for the created pedestrian space



CREDIT: CAPITOL HILL HOUSING

BEST PRACTICES

Most cities of Seattle's size have one or more nightlife or entertainment destinations, whether they are designated or develop naturally. Some peer cities have explored pedestrian streets as a method of safely managing crowds while also promoting commercial activity and public space activation. For this pilot, we found the context/experiences of Portland OR, Austin TX, and Vancouver BC to be valuable when considering how to develop a pilot for Pike/Pine.

After conducting research and having conversations with these cities, elements were identified to share with the community that could be compatible with Seattle's unique context.

Examples include integrating community policing and foot patrols, providing a calmer positive energy for nightlife crowds, and bringing programming into the street.



CREDIT: ERIK URSIN

PORTLAND, OR - Oldtown

Since 2013, Portland has been closing multiple blocks in their Oldtown neighborhood on Fridays and Saturdays from 10PM-3AM.

During closure nights, reported offenses went down 30% in the immediate area. Activation is primarily provided by adjacent businesses with outdoor dining.

Portland is looking into artistic street barricades and providing public restrooms to improve the visibility and attractiveness of the program.



CREDIT: CASEY YEE

VANCOUVER, BC - Granville St

Started in 2008, Granville Mall is closed on Friday and Saturday nights from 9PM-4AM.

Vancouver Police Department has reported a 20% reduction in offenses in the immediate area and a 13% reduction in the surrounding area.

When last polled, 93% of surveyed public supported continuing the closure program.

Daytime programming of the space is managed by the City's VIVA Vancouver public space activation program.



CREDIT: JOHN ROGERS

AUSTIN, TX - 6th St

6th St in Austin has long been a place for people to freely walk during evening hours on the weekend.

By restricting vehicle access on the street, Austin has been able to better provide on-foot community policing.

Opening the space has also allowed for experimental and festive uses of the street.

A major goal is to provide a calmer positive energy for the nightlife crowds.

CONFIGURATION AND DATE OPTIONS

Footprint Options

While Pike St was of primary concern during the outreach process, it is a link in a larger street network. Conversations around which streets to potentially open to pedestrians centered on their function in the transportation network and their potential impact on the neighborhood.

Pine St, Union St, Broadway, and 12th Ave were quickly ruled out due to their arterial status and function as transit corridors. This left Pike St and the intersecting streets of 10th Ave and 11th Ave. While 10th and 11th are less intensely used, they share many of the same concerns as Pike St for sidewalk crowding, vehicle/ pedestrian interaction, and noise and civility.

The options presented to the community were:

- Pike St between Broadway and 12th Ave
- 10th Ave between Pine St and Union St
- 11th Ave between Pine St and Union St

Time/Date Options

The character of Pike/Pine changes depending on the time and day of the week. With these dynamics in mind, three options were advanced for consideration that separately targeted the nightlife, daytime retail, and artistic identities of the neighborhood:

- Weekend nights
- Sunday days
- Second Thursday evening Art Walk



STREETSCAPE ACTIVATION

The pedestrian street pilot provided an opportunity for positive street activation through community-led programming. This aligns with other community-based efforts to highlight the LGBTQ identity and artistic culture that has long contributed to a vibrant and inclusive neighborhood.

Community stakeholders were enthusiastic about this idea and contributed ideas for different kinds of activities.

For use of the open street space, we looked into a wide range of activities, including:

- Musicians
- Games and sports
- Dancing lessons
- Yoga sessions
- Cultural performances
- Food and drink vending
- Interactive art displays



PEDESTRIAN STREET PLAN

As one might expect in a neighborhood with so many overlapping uses and identities, we heard a diversity of opinions about where, when, and how to test pedestrian street concepts.

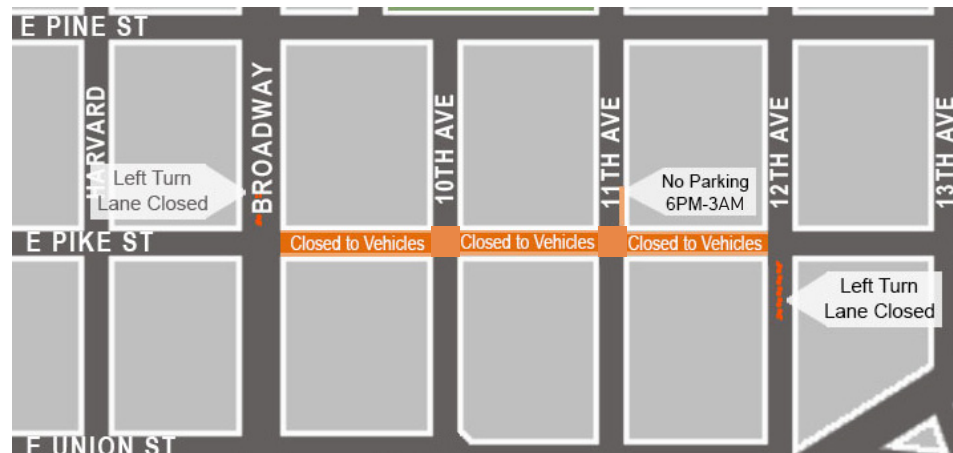
There was interest from many stakeholders to try a nighttime pedestrian street concept to address overcrowded sidewalks and mobility issues while also using the streets to positively build community.

Through the many conversations, one option rose to the forefront: closure of Pike St on Saturday nights.

Settling on this option was a balancing act of public opinion, impact to businesses, city resources, and capacity for activation. With those factors in mind the final plan piloted a few different approaches on four Saturday nights in August 2015. They are summarized below.

August 8 + 15

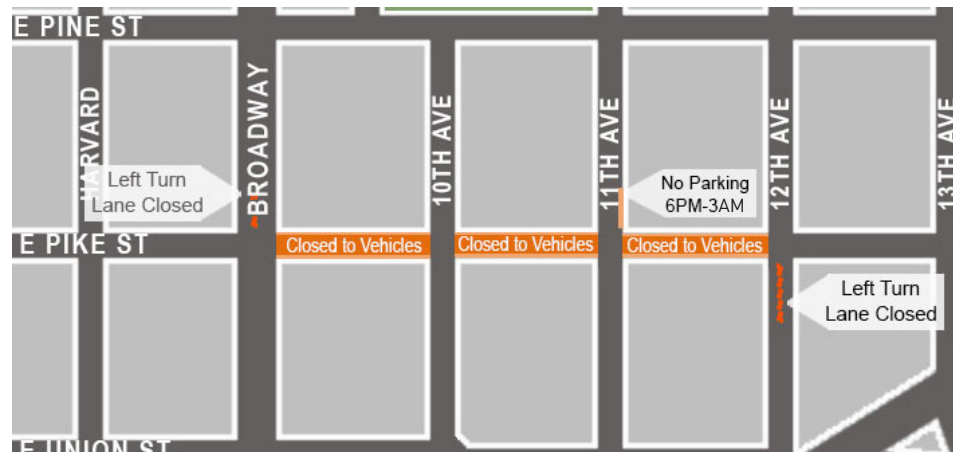
- o Cross-streets closed
- o No programming



August 22 + 29*

- o Cross-streets open
- o Programmed activities and performances

* The 29th was canceled due to rain

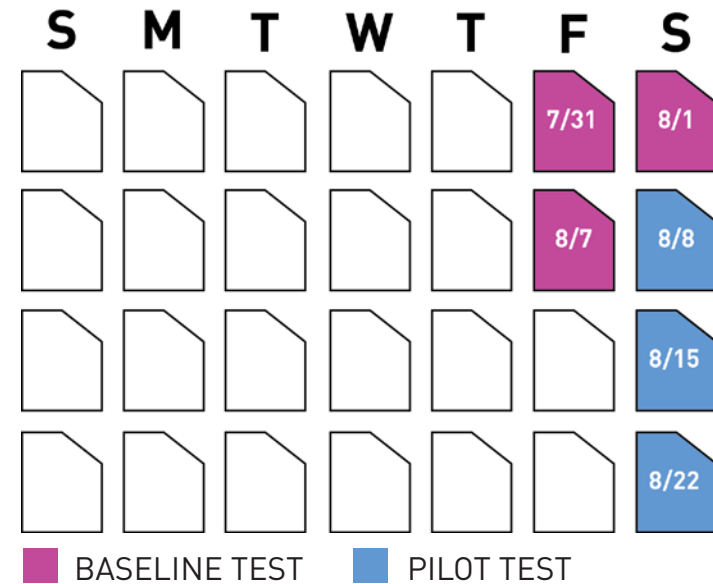


RESEARCH METHODS

City staff in collaboration with Capitol Hill EcoDistrict and community volunteers, developed a data collection plan to help evaluate the performance of the pedestrian street experiences. Observations were collected on six weekend nights, with three baseline nights immediately prior to the three pilot nights during July and August 2015.

Data collection for performance evaluation drew on the Gehl Public Space Public Life methodology previously used in a Seattle downtown pedestrian study in 2009. Data was gathered by a combination of community volunteers and city staff. This methodology is people-centered and looked at three main categories:

JULY/AUGUST 2015



IN-PERSON SURVEYS

In-person surveys were also used to learn more about the personal details and choices of the people who visited during the study nights.

Each night, volunteers randomly surveyed people on the street with a quick, 10-question form that asked about who they are, why they chose to visit, and how they got there.

PEDESTRIAN COUNTS

Six cameras were mounted within the study area focused on the walkable areas of the street.

These counting stations were placed at key locations into and out of the pedestrian zone allowing a quantitative observation of total pedestrian crossings.

Pedestrians passing these stations were counted by City staff in two 10-minute segments per hour, creating an average estimated hourly count.

STATIONARY MAPS

While volumes of people circulating in the neighborhood are important, observations of how the street space was used provided another level of detail capturing stationary activity.

Using a series of maps, volunteers marked where people were either standing in place, sitting, or lying down. Data was collected nearly every hour for most block faces.

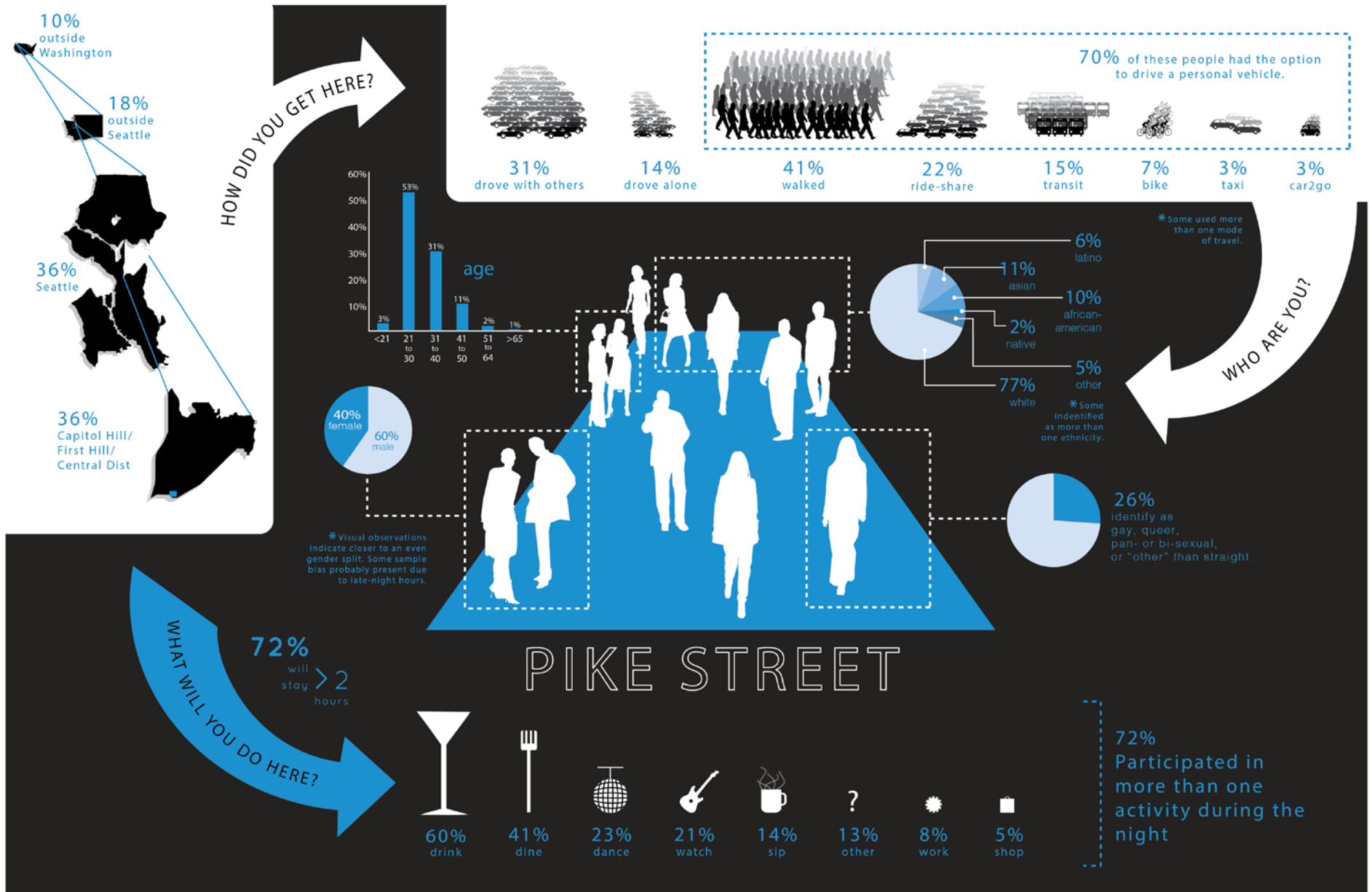
The intent of these maps is to better understand where people are congregating and where sidewalk congestion problems occur.

RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY

After long hours of data gathering and compilation, we now have a robust database of the Pike/Pine nightlife environment. The results of the data are shown in further graphical detail on the following pages.



IN-PERSON SURVEY RESULTS



PEDESTRIAN COUNT RESULTS

PEDESTRIAN COUNTS

252 hours of video were recorded and counted. Major findings include:

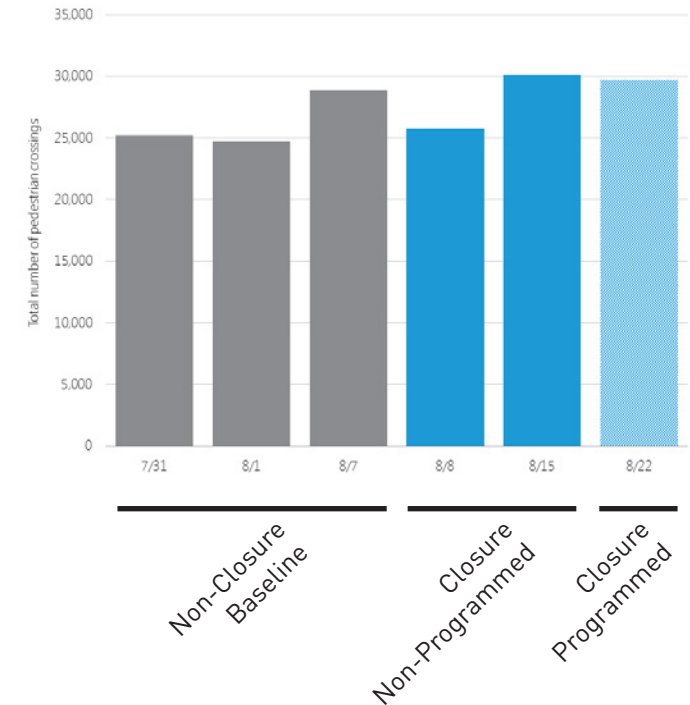
- Numbers are high (more than enough to fill a stadium each night) but are consistent between baseline and closure nights (only 9% increase)
- Peak pedestrian activity occurs between 11pm-1am
- Hourly counts are comparable to downtown peak hours except downtown sidewalks range from 10 to 20 feet wide where Pike/Pine sidewalks are 10 feet or less with tree pit, light pole, and utility obstructions.

COUNTING STATIONS

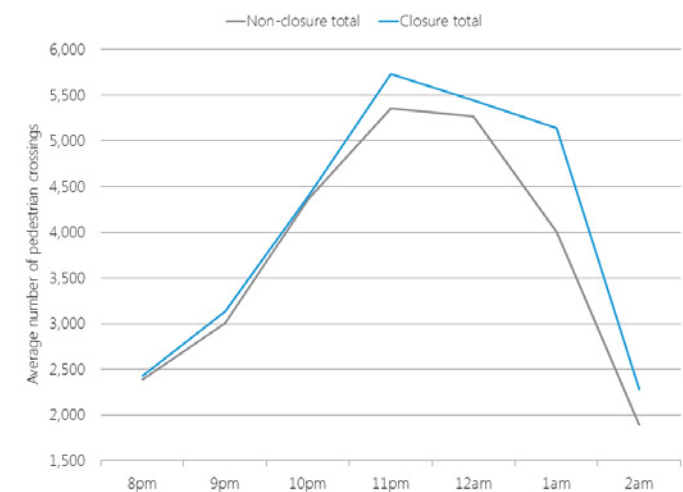


○ Camera location ■ Count line

TOTAL CROSSINGS COUNTED PER NIGHT



TOTAL CROSSINGS COUNTED PER HOUR



STATIONARY MAP RESULTS

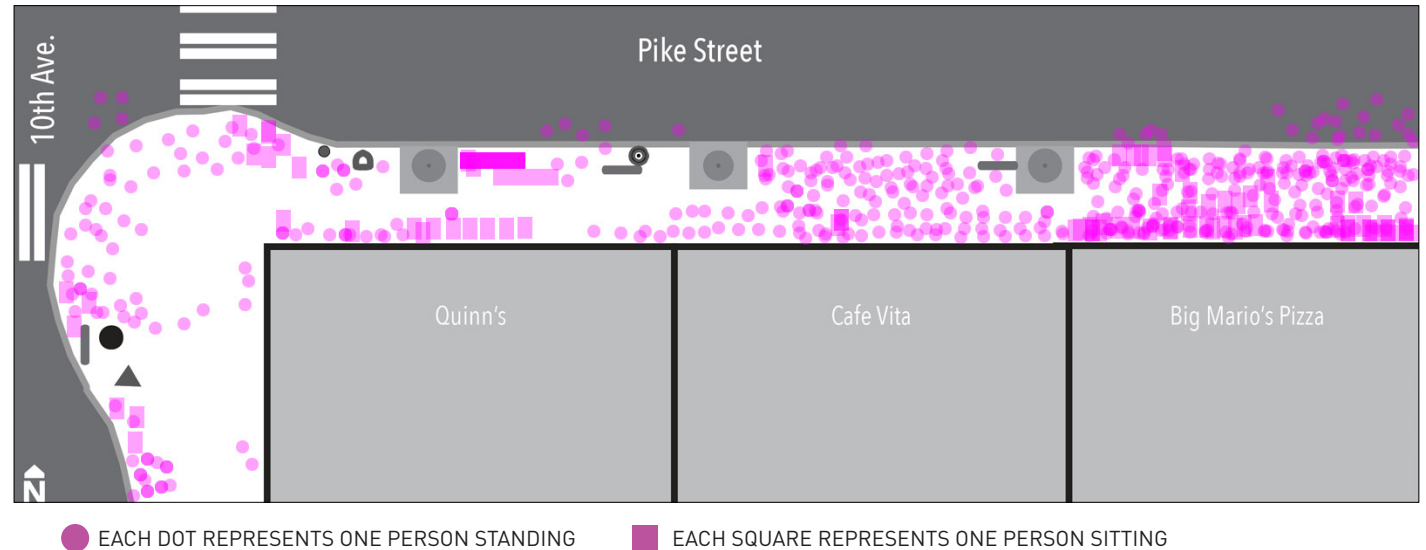
STATIONARY MAPS

210 maps were completed.
Three representative block maps are provided here.

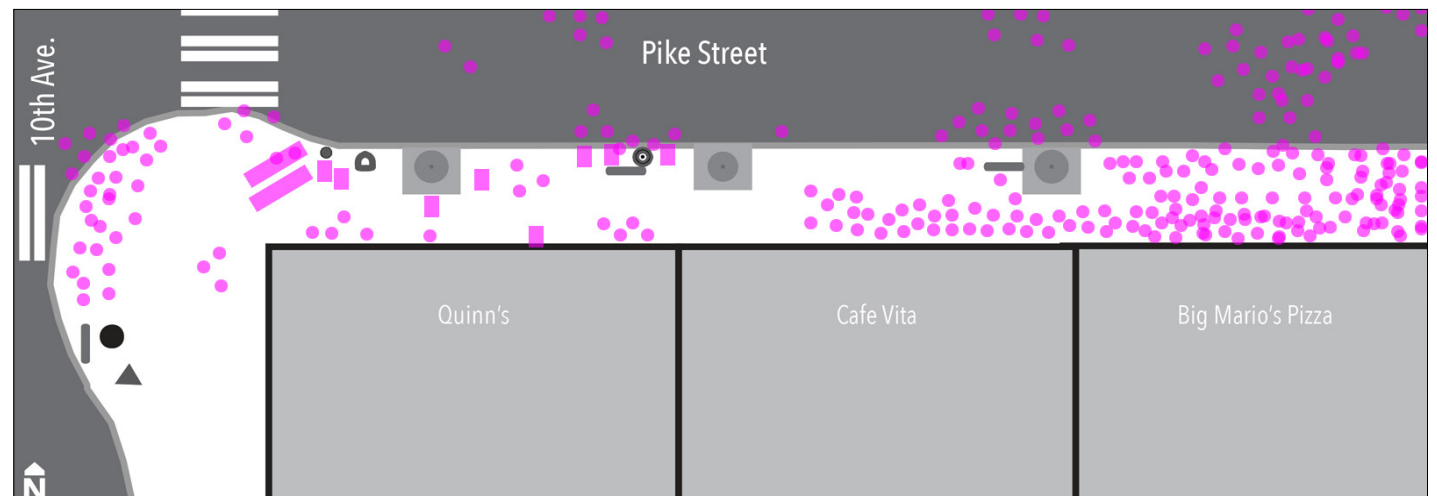
Major findings include:

- Pedestrian mobility chokepoints were observed on every studied block
- These congestion points were found primarily at entry lines, food vending, and street corner locations
- Gathering tends to increase in volume and duration as the night goes on
- People were observed standing and walking through travel and parking lanes during baseline nights
- The number and size of the sidewalk chokepoints were smaller during the closure nights across all blocks

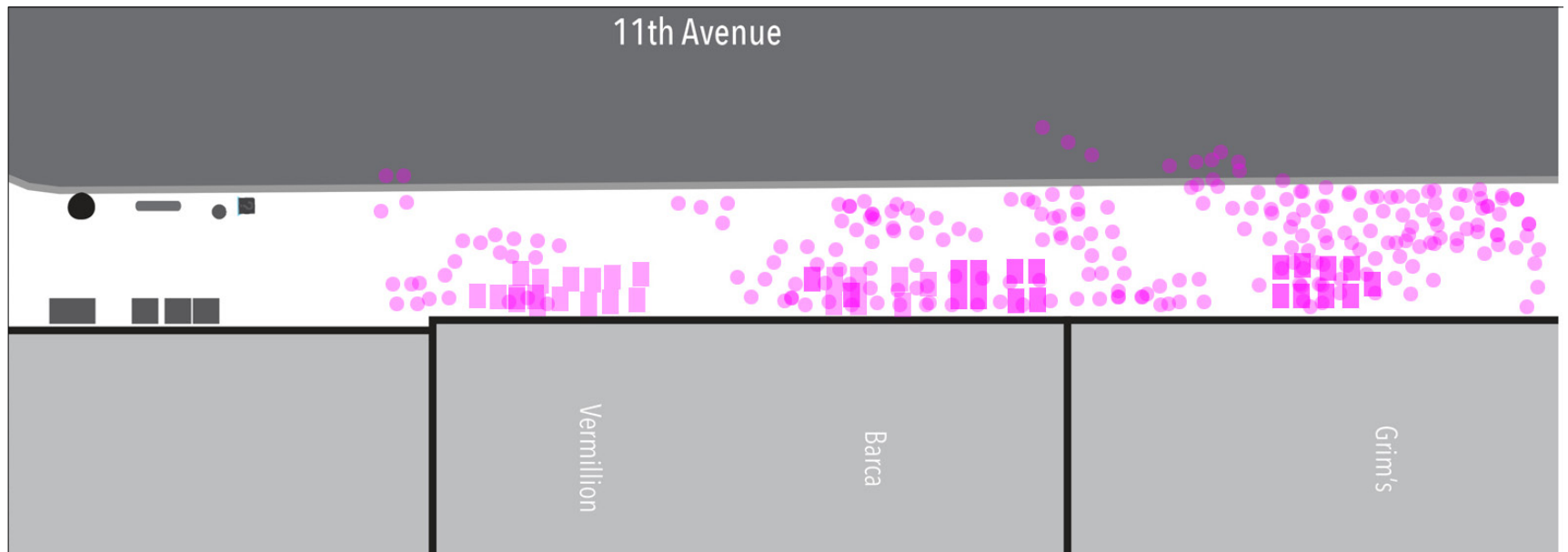
BASELINE OBSERVATION - 7/31 - 8PM to 2AM



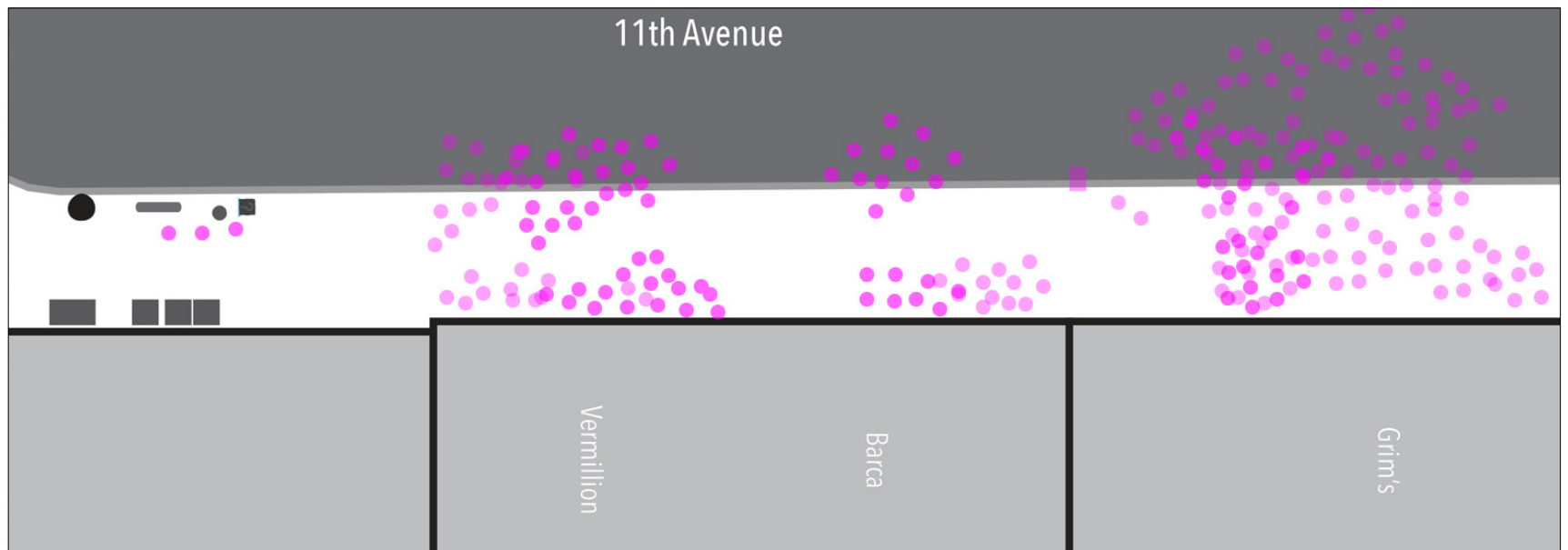
PILOT TEST OBSERVATION - 8/22 - 8PM to 2AM



BASELINE OBSERVATION - 7/31 - 8PM to 2AM



PILOT TEST OBSERVATION - 8/22 - 8PM to 2AM



BASELINE OBSERVATION - 7/31 - 8PM to 2AM

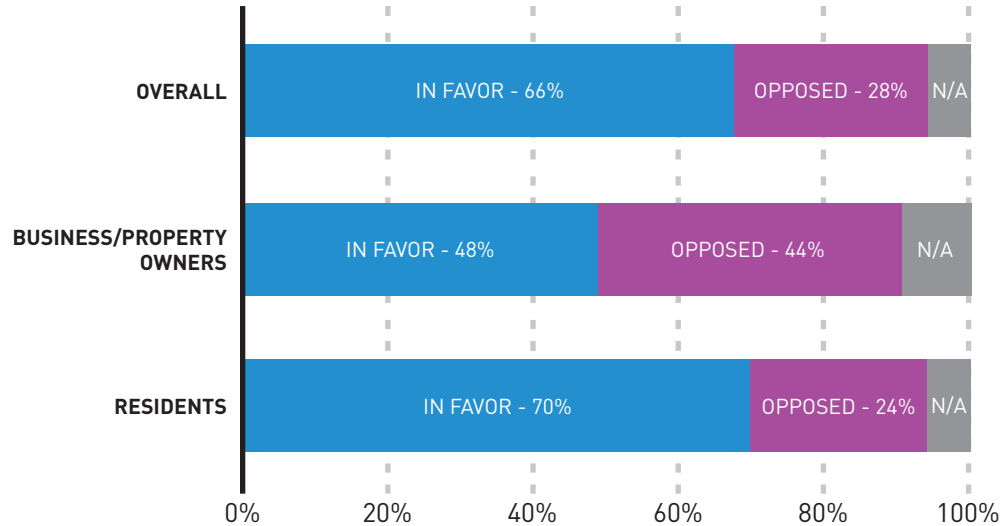


PILOT TEST OBSERVATION - 8/22 - 8PM to 2AM

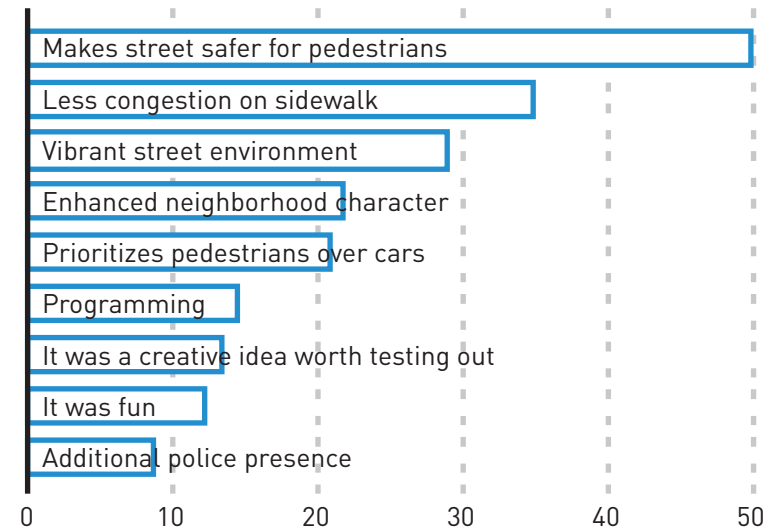


POST-PILOT SURVEY BREAKDOWN

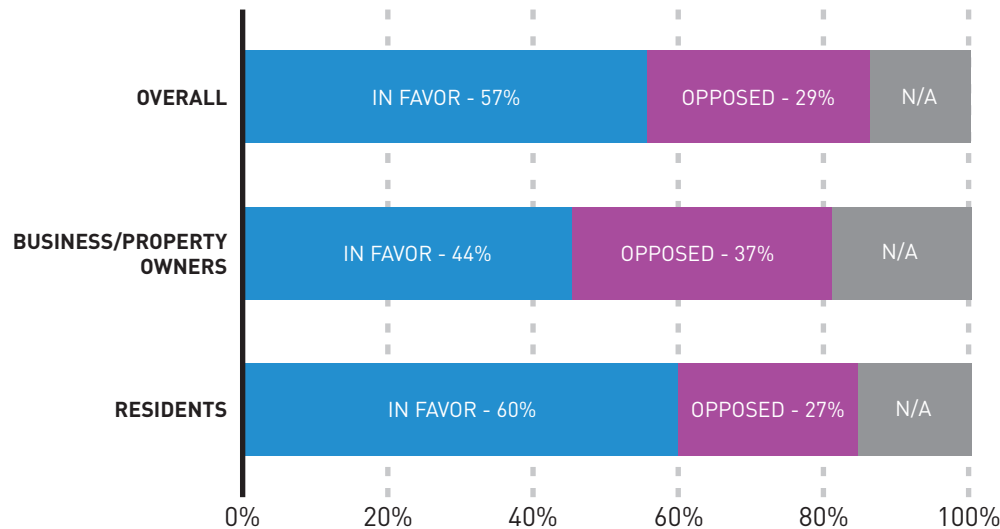
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PEDESTRIAN STREETS ON WEEKEND NIGHTS?



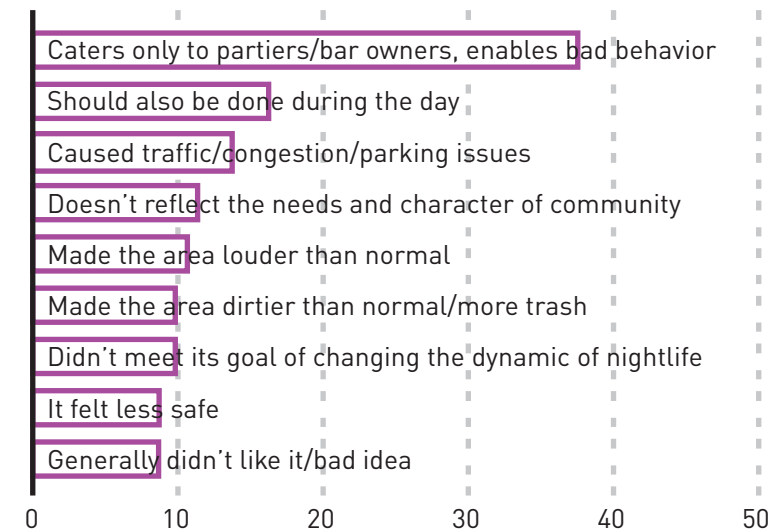
WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PEDESTRIAN PILOT? (COUNT OF MOST COMMON RESPONSES)



WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PEDESTRIAN STREETS AT OTHER TIMES?



WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE PEDESTRIAN PILOT? (COUNT OF MOST COMMON RESPONSES)



POST-PILOT OUTREACH

In addition to quantitative and qualitative analysis of data collected, the City performed outreach following the pilot dates to learn more about how people felt about the street closures and their interest in future pilot phases.

In two public feedback meetings, nine one-on-one interviews, and 272 survey responses, we heard a number of key issues to be addressed if future pedestrian street tests are conducted, including:

| WHAT WE HEARD | POTENTIAL ACTIONS | INVOLVED GROUPS |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| The programming was positively received – especially the drag show, bringing out community members who do not typically come out on Sat. nights. | Work with community groups to identify and coordinate public activities and performances | OED, SDOT, Community |
| Noted improvement in the vibe of the street with less aggression and a more relaxed feel | Continue to work with businesses and visitors to promote a neighborhood feel that is welcoming and festive while also safe and respectful | OED, SDOT, Community |
| It was difficult to discern that the closure was for pedestrian activation and additional circulation | Design street barricades to look more festive and inviting | SDOT, Community |
| Desire to use program outreach and advertising to reaffirm positive identity of the neighborhood | Continue to work with all neighborhood stakeholders to craft a message, identity, and marketing approach that is appropriate and balanced to encourage economic vitality for all businesses and residents | OED, SDOT, SPD, Community |
| The SPD presence was very strong and created a negative tone (cars w/lights, large groupings of officers, large barricades) | Continue on-foot patrols, but scale back the presence of vehicles and siren lights | SPD |
| The parking A-frames added additional clutter to the sidewalk area | Adjust parking signage and pay stations to inform drivers of the parking restrictions instead of using no-parking A-frame signs | SDOT |
| Access to private parking garages and lots was not clear | Work with property owners to create an improved access/management plan | SDOT, Community |
| Some interviewees reported sales down, some reported sales up, some did not see a discernible change | Work with businesses to utilize the street space during closures and look into business promotion efforts during non-closure times | OED, SDOT, Community |
| Need to maintain business visibility and access | Involve businesses in creating a presence directly in a pedestrian street, and appropriately marketing as an opportunity for businesses | OED, SDOT, Community |
| Some felt opening 10th and 11th increased congestion and conflict with vehicles at crossings, a few liked the access | Look into traffic flows, delivery needs, and access concerns to settle on a preferred closure layout | SDOT, SPD, Community |

POST-PILOT SURVEY SAMPLE QUOTES

Hundreds of comments were collected via survey and conversations. These samples are representative of what we heard:

SUPPORT FOR THE PILOT

"I'm loving that our city is experimenting with ways to activate neighborhoods and use our streets, sidewalks, and parking in new ways."

"PLEASE MAKE THIS HAPPEN...A car-free zone would be a unique and extremely positive thing for the neighborhood, lessen crime and fights, and encourage a community feeling."

"The street closures made the area feel much more accessible and welcoming as a pedestrian. **I would love for this to happen more frequently.**"

"For the first time in a long time, **it felt like our neighborhood again.** Like this is where you moved, this is who we are, this is our space to 'be' ourselves. Using art to help shape the future and tone down the aggression and culture clash on the Hill is the best way to achieve a flourishing and peaceful neighborhood."

"Allowing people to spread out over the street, and not be packed together on the sidewalk **makes everything about the night better.**"

"It felt like the street was given back to us locals, when it's normally taken over by a parade of cars on busy nights."

"It was a much-needed respite from the typical scene down there. **Pike St. is such a perfect spot for a pedestrian zone.** It felt safer, more inviting, easier to move around and more connective to the space around it. Removing the cars made it feel like a neighborhood again."

"I felt safer and more connected to the community. I was able to reach my destination quicker and found myself visiting other businesses that I may not have otherwise gone into."

CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

"The space created **felt like a big dark void.** The police presence made it feel like a pen. And the side streets were abused as parking lots by limo vans, etc."

"It would be important to **make sure it doesn't just become a party zone** and instead caters to neighborhood identity."

"The pilot seems to be **enabling bad behavior** without contributing much. If the closures were [more] programmed, this might be better."

"Piping in entertainment didn't seem to work so well. Look to a European model where **businesses extend into the street** to meet patrons."

"I'd like there to be some **more outreach with artists, street performers, and food trucks** to turn it into more of an event that would appeal to people who aren't just there to get drunk."

"This isn't creating a safer environment. I deal with a lack of respect for Capitol Hill daily from out of towners who only come out to get drunk. For the life of me I can't figure out how closing down the streets is going to abate this type of visit."

"It's only applied late at night on weekends, catering only to drinking crowds. **It should be done during the day on weekends too, for local residents and shoppers.**"

"I don't want the Capitol Hill Block Party every weekend."

NEXT STEPS

Feedback/surveys and on-site evaluation show positive results in line with the keys goals defined during the community involvement process for the pedestrian streets pilot on Pike St.

Pilot Program Goals

1. Increase pedestrian access and mobility,
2. Improve the tone, feel and attitude of crowds, while allowing a positive SPD presence, and
3. Open the street to positive community-led programming to promote an inclusive environment and celebrate the LGBTQ identity and artistic culture of the neighborhood.

Pilot Program Results

- Post-pilot surveys and interviews indicated strong community interest in continuing pedestrian streets.
- Programming received nearly universal positive feedback.
- Majority of respondents said the streets felt safer, less congested, more comfortable, and easier to move around.
- On-site research documented huge pedestrian volumes using limited sidewalk space, and observed sidewalk choke points alleviated by the pilot.

Results from post-pilot analysis reveal many lessons learned, and additional work is warranted to examine how a pedestrian street can provide maximum engagement and benefit to all businesses, residents and visitors to Capitol Hill.

Further conversation is needed with leadership in Capitol Hill about what a pedestrian street concept can become in Pike/ Pine. If the program is further developed, we heard some specific ideas to more directly benefit businesses such as allowing outdoor seating/service for restaurants and cafes, bringing retail businesses into the street, and directly promoting businesses as part of the program.

QUICK WINS

Part of the Public Space Public Life methodology is to identify changes that can be made quickly to provide immediate benefit while future plans are being developed. For Pike St, the following changes could be made in a short timeframe at minimal cost.

BETTER LIGHTING

Many areas within the Pike St area are uncomfortably dark due to the placement of street lights and tree canopies. The city and businesses should work together to identify these dark locations and install pedestrian-scale lighting to better illuminate sidewalks and building facades.

LINE MANAGEMENT

One of the prominent causes of sidewalk congestion is crowding around food vendors and late-night food establishments. Ill-defined lines and a tendency for people to linger after purchasing food creates chokepoints that forces people to walk into the street. The city can work with vendors to provide cordon lines and seating areas during closure times.

RIDESHARE LOADING

With 22% of people saying that they use rideshare, the city should work with the local businesses to coordinate pick-up and drop-off areas and message this to visitors and residents.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering these positive signs, there are notable concerns among some business and property owners – evidenced by the split in survey results in support of further development of a Pike Pedestrian Street program, as well as issues heard during individual meetings (noted on page 18). These concerns will need to be accounted for in any future actions.

SDOT and OED recommend convening a diverse group of neighborhood stakeholders to interpret the results found in this report. Through a creative and collaborative process, the lessons learned and challenges experienced can be discussed and used to inform the best way to move forward.

It is important that the community meet together to carefully consider the findings and wealth of information garnered by the pilot.

In order to achieve that aim, an appropriate marketing and outreach effort must frame this opportunity to make sure people know about the program, ensure that everyone has the chance to engage and shape what happens in the streets, and that business and resident needs are met.

The City is committed to work with community partners to ensure a vibrant, mixed-use business district that maintains its cultural core. Many of these strategies are captured in the Capitol Hill 2020 Action Plan as well as some of the LGBTQ Task Force recommendations.

Some topics such a stakeholder group might consider include:

- Review the results of the 2015 pilot, including lessons learned.
- Determine if the goals articulated for the 2015 pilot fit with the larger goals of the neighborhood.
- Actively engage in a moderated dialogue regarding the boundaries, activation elements, and timeframes for the pilot.
- Discuss how business and neighborhood participation and benefits could be achieved, as well as how economic development strategies could be better incorporated.
- Consider how to market a pedestrian street in Pike/Pine, to message the opportunity for positive activation and to support local businesses.
- Determine the right evaluation criteria on which to base decisions about whether and how to sustain an ongoing pedestrian street program
- Participation from adjacent businesses and residents, the Capitol Hill Chamber, and other key stakeholders will inform decisions about additional pilot concepts to be considered.



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