

SOCIALIZE SAFELY IN THE STREETS

ONE-MONTH PILOT PROGRAM



Downtown Ventura Partners

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COLLECTIVE RECOVERY RETURNING TO A ROBUST DOWNTOWN

We know how much our Downtown means to everyone. As we shift gears to a long recovery mode, we know our collective future in Downtown Ventura is in a fragile state.

Consumer traffic will be slow to return until many residents are confident they can venture out with a degree of certainty they will not contract the virus.

How can we best pull together?

For Downtown Ventura Partners, a solid path forward is one where we focus on safety, have each other's backs, honor individual and collective needs of merchants, and embrace uncertainty with a growth mindset and courage.

The ground has shifted under us and will continue shifting. We may experience a "new normal" for quite some time.

PROPOSAL

We propose a Socialize Safely in the Streets pilot program for an initial 30 days to achieve the dual critical goals of creating an area for social distancing while generating business revenue. The program will support dining and retail businesses and provide mechanisms for pedestrians who need additional space beyond the traditional sidewalk.

Main Street would be closed to traffic between the Mission and Fir Street. Restaurants, retailers, and pedestrians would share the space.

"I love the idea and think it would be so great to see and experience." Whitney Riles, owner, Findings Market



PROBLEM

- *Pedestrians want systems in place to support safe distancing.*
- *Restaurant owners likely face dramatic reductions in occupancy and revenue potential. Texas reopened restaurants with 25% capacity.*
- *Retailers with limited financial wherewithal face great uncertainty.*

SOLUTION

- *Give pedestrians added space on both the sidewalks and street.*
- *Allow street dining, expanding a restaurant's footprint to create capacity for a profitable customer "churn."*
- *Allow limited sidewalk space for retailers to elevate shopper engagement.*

TIMELINE

The closure would start AFTER our county meets state-level criteria to trigger the full opening of restaurants/retail. Public Health Dir. Dr. Levin reviewed our proposal and voiced support for greater space and safety measures.

If the program suffers setbacks too difficult to overcome, the plug can be pulled. Our goal is safety first, not economics. Continuous monitoring will allow DVP and others to identify and address problems as they arise.

OVERSIGHT

DVP, along with City staff and other invested individuals, can monitor and provide feedback on the program to DVP and City officials.

ASSETS

There are 160 businesses visible from the sidewalk of Main Street between the Mission and Fir Street, ranging from retail to restaurants to services. The density of merchants provides incentive for residents and tourists to “stay and walk.”

DVP is well positioned to provide logistical support and amenities such as hand wash stations, signage, security and focused clean and safe services.

Our Downtown offers over 3,000 FREE parking spaces within half a block of Main Street. Losing 200 metered parking spots will not impact the ability to come downtown.

The single-owner nature of our stores and restaurants means they can be nimble and resourceful to respond to evolving conditions.

TRAFFIC PLAN

DVP is working with Total Barricade Services to provide a detailed traffic management plan that can be modified per City feedback.

We propose maintaining vehicle traffic on north/south streets and closing Main from the Mission to Fir. We are curious whether a roundabout could be designed near the Mission, to provide access to the church and Museum.

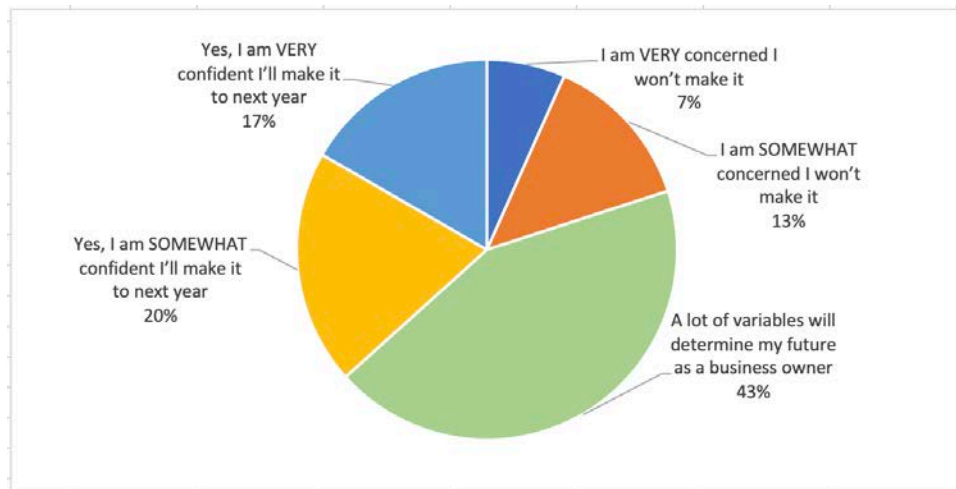


MERCHANT CHALLENGES

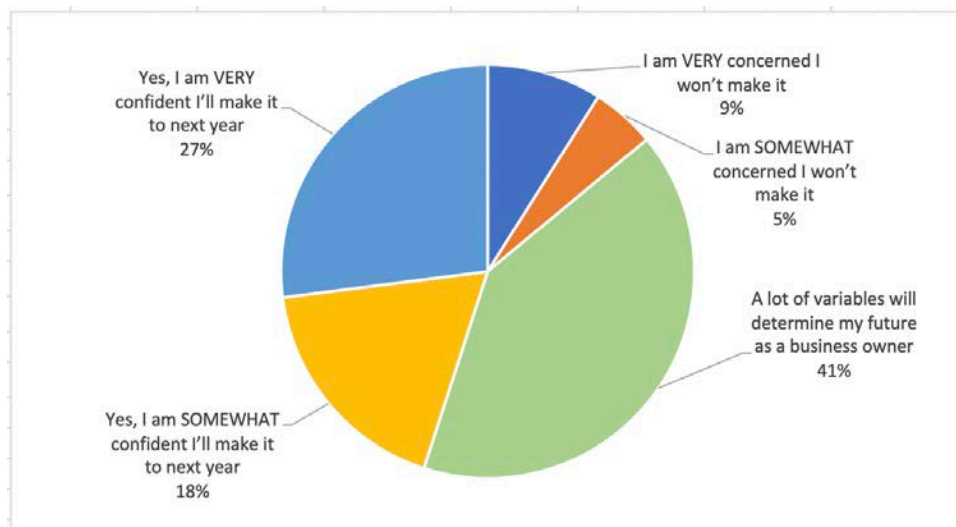
DVP has surveyed our Downtown merchants twice since the pandemic started and we keep our finger on the pulse with frequent conversations.

A May 5 survey has provided the following insights for retailers.

- 43% of retailers believe “a lot of variables will determine my future as a business owner.” 20% are concerned they don’t have the ability to weather potential shortfalls for the rest of 2020. The remaining 37% are somewhat or very confident they can weather shortfalls.



Restaurants responded with a bit more confidence.



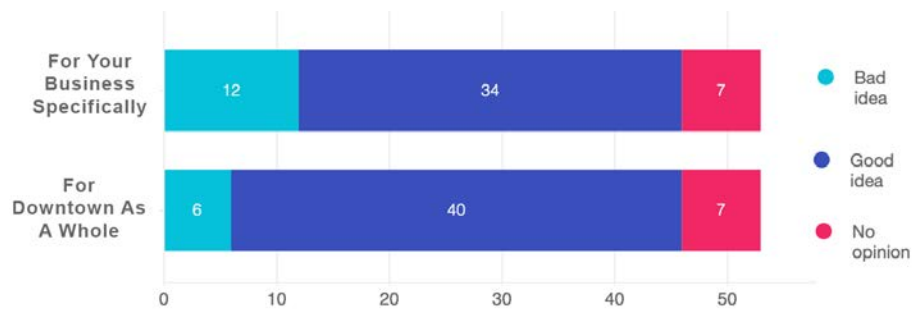
MERCHANT SUPPORT

The street closure concept enjoys wide support, both based on individual conversations and survey data.

When asked for an audacious idea, 16 out of 55 survey participants suggested closing Main Street to cars.

Later in the survey, we introduced the idea and specifically asked: “How would you view closure of Main Street as a means to help businesses survive potential hardship?”

A large majority of participants responded it was a good idea.*



LEGAL TEMPLATES

Accompanying this proposal are legal “hold harmless” and permit application documents used by another downtown association for merchants responding to the pandemic by implementing an outdoor dining program.

* The question included the following lead in description of the closure concept:

In Downtown Ventura, one reopening idea is to repurpose the space outdoors to create new capacity for customer interactions, dining, and pedestrian movement. We could close Main Street to cars for a few days, weeks, or months, creating an entirely new footprint for your downtown business.