

April 16, 2026

Toronto and East York Community Council
City Hall, Council Chambers
100 Queen Street West
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Pedestrianizing Church Street Pilot

In partnership with the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area (BIA), my office is seeking to pedestrianize Church Street between Wellesley Street East and Alexander Street from June 19 to August 21, 2026, leaving all east-west corridors open to vehicular traffic.

Pedestrianization significantly enhances urban quality of life by improving road safety, increasing accessibility, and driving sustained commercial activity. Church Street offers unique strategic advantages that make it an ideal location for such an initiative. First, it boasts a proven track record as a high-volume corridor for world-class festivals like Pride Festival and Halloween on Church. Furthermore, this stretch provides a rare opportunity for pedestrianization due to the absence of dedicated bus or streetcar routes, ensuring minimal disruption to the TTC's broader network.

Church Street is also anchored by a dense cluster of hospitality and retail venues. With increased foot traffic, the pedestrian zone will serve as a primary social and economic driver for Toronto Centre. In addition, the proposal facilitates critical residential integration by reclaiming the street for people, providing a safer, more walkable environment for the high-density local population and improving access to vital civic assets such as the neighbourhood school and The 519.

To ensure the comprehensive success of this project, my office has been working in close, ongoing collaboration with a broad range of City divisions. This inter-divisional effort includes Transportation Services, the FIFA Secretariat, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto EMS, and the Toronto Police Service to manage logistics and public safety. We are also aligning our efforts with Social Development - specifically through the Downtown East Action Plan and SafeTO frameworks - as well as Economic Development and Culture and Toronto Public Health. Through these partnerships, we are implementing a proactive, street-level community safety strategy that utilizes a trauma-informed lens to address the unique socio-economic complexities of the downtown core. This includes a targeted approach to

enhancing public realm well-being and social order through the Downtown East Action Plan's Here to Help Program, ensuring that our outreach and response mechanisms are integrated directly into the site's operational footprint to support both housed and unhoused residents effectively.

Furthermore, this coordinated approach ensures that the pedestrianization timeline does not significantly conflict with the 2026 FIFA World Cup schedule, as actual overlaps are limited to only one match date on July 2. While June 19 marks the publicized commencement, FIFA operations already coincide with established annual events like the Village Fest and Pride Festival. My office has also collaborated with Solid Waste Management Services to develop a specialized operational plan for local businesses and street receptacles. Unlike high-intensity programmed events, this initiative is designed for passive use, and we anticipate significantly lower waste volumes. Recognizing the impact of road closures on mobility, we have also prioritized accessibility by including dedicated pick-up and drop-off zones for WheelTrans and installing additional ramps at regular intervals. My office also maintains an active dialogue with people living with disabilities to ensure the design remains inclusive for all residents.

Toronto should look to the proven success of Montreal's Rue Sainte-Catherine as a primary model for urban vitality and economic growth. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Montreal's seasonal pedestrianization program, which has successfully transformed their Village into a world-class destination. While our neighbours have benefited from two decades of increased foot traffic and retail resilience, Toronto remains twenty years behind in adopting similar large-scale seasonal infrastructure.

This pilot project should inform the creation of a formal Streets Pedestrianization Policy and Guidelines. By establishing a standardized framework, the City can move away from ad-hoc planning and toward a proactive strategy for reclaiming street space for public use. It is important to note that while the [City previously initiated the development of such guidelines](#), the process faced successive delays, resulting in the outstanding operational strategy and final report originally slated for December 2025. This project provides the necessary momentum to finalize those long-awaited standards.

Ultimately, this proposal builds on the success of Church Street and honours community milestones - such as the 50th anniversary of The 519 and the upcoming Cultural District designation - while better serving the residents and businesses of the Village.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Transportation Services to approve a Street Event, despite any section of Chapter 743 to the contrary, to facilitate Church Street Pedestrianization Plan / Village Fest requiring the closure of Church Street to vehicular traffic, between Wellesley Street East and Alexander Street, but not including east-west intersections, from June 19, 2026 to August 21, 2026, inclusive, with such conditions deemed appropriate in the opinion of the General Manager, Transportation Services and the City Solicitor.
2. City Council request the General Manager, Transportation Services, in consultation with the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to evaluate outcomes of the temporary closure of Church Street, including levels of community participation and engagement, improvements in road safety, and overall social and economic benefits, alongside risks and public safety impacts, to help inform the creation of a pedestrianization policy and identification of resource requirements for seasonal and permanent arterial roadway closures.
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to waive the application and permit fees charged in relation to any application by the Church-Wellesley Business Improvement Area for a Street Event requiring the closure of portions of Church Street, between Wellesley Street and Alexander Street, not including east-west intersections, for the period June 19 to August 21, 2026 (Fee Ref. 61.06, 61.07, Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, Appendix C –Schedule 2, Transportation Services).

Sincerely,



Chris Moise

City Councillor

Ward 13 - Toronto Centre

CM/fp