



8 80 Cities
364-401 Richmond St W
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Canada M5V 3A8

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@880Cities

April 27, 2026

Re: Church Street Pedestrianization

Dear Members of the Toronto & East York Community Council,

On behalf of 8 80 Cities, I am pleased to provide this letter in support of the proposed Church Street Pedestrianization Pilot. Church Street is the heart of the Church-Wellesley Village — a neighbourhood with deep roots in Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ history and a community that has long shaped the cultural life of our city. This summer, a stretch of Church Street is planned to transform into a pedestrian-friendly space where residents, families, and visitors can gather, connect, and celebrate together.

The proposed Church Street Pedestrianization Pilot has the following goals:

- Designate Church Street (Wellesley Street East to Alexander Street) as a seasonal pedestrian zone this summer
- Develop and implement a local access model with the help of relevant City divisions for business deliveries, waste collection, and emergency services, following the successful frameworks used in Montreal and Calgary
- Establish a new pedestrianization policy using Church Street as a model and pilot project

The proposed pilot is strongly aligned with the goals and values of 8 80 Cities where we are committed to addressing the significant need for pedestrianization initiatives in the City of Toronto. Our organization is centered around the simple but powerful idea that if you build a city that's great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then you can create better cities for all. Over the last 20 years we have worked in collaboration with diverse communities across Canada and around the world through equitable approaches that actively engage children and older adults in the planning of their communities. We agree that by temporarily closing Church Street to through traffic, the project will create safer conditions for pedestrians and people of all ages and abilities, supporting local businesses and economic recovery along the street, opening up public space for families, children, and community events, and honouring the Village's place in Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ history.

This pilot is also a meaningful step toward a more walkable, active downtown. Through several years of research and collaboration on open streets and pedestrianization programs across North and South America, our organization continues to find that walkable streets invite longer stays, higher foot traffic, improved health outcomes, increased economic activity, and social cohesion. Toronto's data affirms the same findings. While other Canadian cities, such as Montreal, have embraced people-first infrastructure, Toronto lacks a formal, permanent policy



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for street pedestrianization. A pedestrianized Church Street would not only advance broader city building objectives around local economic development, sustainability and improved population health, it would also provide an important precedent for the city, demonstrating leadership in prioritizing human connection and investment in local businesses in high-density, mixed-use neighborhoods, while setting the foundation for future projects.

The proposed program takes an innovative approach for Toronto: seizing two landmark moments in a community's history for a celebration of people and place to inform the creation of a pedestrianization policy for seasonal and permanent major road closures. With the 50th anniversary of The 519, a cornerstone community centre for the Village, and the long-awaited Cultural District designation coming to City Council in June 2026, it is the right moment to invest in this street and the people who call it home. In addition to programming and associated celebrations, this project will also take steps to identify coordinated service pathways for running pedestrianization events, helping to reduce navigation barriers, establish knowledge-sharing mechanisms, enhance capacity for public space activations, and build community resilience. All of this is necessary for long-term sustainability of pedestrianization projects.

We are confident in the Office of Councillor Chris Moise and the Church Wellesley BIA's ability to deliver on the commitments outlined in the project and look forward to supporting this important work as both local champions of inclusive city building and as a multidisciplinary team of professionals with experience delivering transformative placemaking projects and programs around the world.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amanda O'Rourke'.

Amanda O'Rourke
Executive Director, 8 80 Cities
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