



DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH ALLIANCE

Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Long Beach City Council
411 W. Ocean Boulevard, 11th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

SUBJECT: Support for Open Streets; May 19 City Council Agenda, Item No. 11

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of the Long Beach City Council:

On behalf of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA), I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your recent efforts to transition the City forward into Stage II of the Governor's [Resilience Roadmap](#) to safely reopen certain businesses.

Representing nearly 5,000 Downtown stakeholders consisting of businesses and commercial and residential property owners, the DLBA serves as a community leader and strategic partner dedicated to facilitating best practices and acting as a clearinghouse of information for our central business district.

The DLBA is in receipt of the May 15 letter submitted to you by the [Restart Long Beach Advisory Task Force](#) and supports its recommendations for businesses to utilize open spaces throughout the city.

As our community continues to navigate the phases of reopening while balancing the need to comply with health requirements, we urge city leaders to consider leveraging public space in its economic recovery plans. A variety of public space types could be considered for dining and retail use, including controlled street closures, underutilized parking lots, public parklets, esplanades, and promenades.

Now is the time to seize the unique opportunity to safely and creatively re-imagine public space for the benefit of both residents and commerce. Successful public space should be safe, accessible and comfortable, and should have a good image, be conducive to an array of activities, and ultimately support socialization.

With these characteristics in mind, the possibilities are endless as to what type of public space could be successful, whether it is a street, waterfront playground, marketplace or park. There are countless examples across the Long Beach community of what the City and its partners have accomplished with public space activation, from block parties to street events, demonstrating that safe opportunities are endless.

Emphasizing that public health and safety is and will always remain our number one priority, the DLBA concurs with the Restart Long Beach Advisory Task Force recommendations in its correspondence to you, including the following:

“Outdoor activity represents a safer environment from COVID-19 transmission. If proper social distancing and other protocols are required, the public can enjoy dining and other activities (small concerts, movie presentations, plays, etc.) with lower risks than indoor venues. We urge the City to consider allowing these activities as soon as possible within legal and practical constraints, with the following issues to be resolved:

- **Leveraging Public Spaces.** Outdoor dining would include curbside tables, parklets, street closures, use of public areas, and relaxed restrictions on private property.
- **Streamlining City Permitting.** A very efficient permit process, days not months, (or if possible, no permit process for areas such as the Promenade) that would achieve an approval/disapproval in a practical timeframe. Two weeks or less should be the goal.
- **Coordinating with State Agencies.** The City needs to have discussion with the Alcohol Beverage Control Board (ABC) to allow beverages to be served outside without cumbersome and costly restrictions. This will improve the economics of limited dining.
- **Special Innovation Zones.** The City should consider locations citywide for outdoor activities, downtown, Belmont Shore, Naples, Bixby Knolls, marinas, Retro Row, the Zaferia District, North Long Beach, and other areas should be considered.
- **Reusing Existing Spaces.** Consider the partial closure of commercial or public parking lots to restaurant expansion for outdoor dining.
- **Preapproving Applications.** The City should take applications for outdoor activities in advance of State or County permission to engage in these activities so approvals can be timely.
- **Reducing Costs and Fees.** All fees should be waived for any required permits for the transition period so that all geographic and demographic groups throughout the city can participate in an equitable way.
- **Creating Small Business Loan Funds.** Given that these new business models will create additional one-time costs for small businesses, the City should provide low-cost loans to help with the purchase of equipment, materials, supplies, and working capital that will be required to for small businesses to implement these pilot projects needed to move into Stage III.
- **Public-Private-Partnerships.** Stage III activities that leverage the public right of way and outdoor spaces will require close working relationships between the City, small business owners, and private non-profits like the business improvement districts and chambers of commerce to design and deliver these solutions.”

Just last Friday, local architectural and design firm, Studio One Eleven, and the DLBA collaborated on a working experiment to repurpose four on-street parking spaces along the 400 block of Pine Avenue into a temporary parklet alongside a curbside delivery and pick-up zone. The team’s intent was to implement best practices by creating a safe, purposeful, and aesthetically pleasing environment while exercising proper physical distancing protocols. The low-cost project created useful public space consisting of tables, chairs, wayfinding signage and softscape features adjacent to an existing private parklet. The DLBA is willing to continue to partner with the City of Long

Beach to help facilitate and deliver such projects that benefit the health and economic wellbeing of our community.

All these suggestions represent possibilities and opportunities of what can happen when creativity meets function. Coupled with exercising the political will necessary to create strong and sensible public policy, these concepts should remain at the forefront as we reimagine our future and begin to use the public space more wisely and creatively.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or comments regarding this letter or DLBA's position on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kraig Kojian', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kraig Kojian
President & CEO

cc: DLBA Board of Directors
Tom Modica, City Manager, City of Long Beach
Craig Beck, Director, Public Works, City of Long Beach
Mayor Bob Foster, Chair, Restart Long Beach Advisory Task Force