



# BEACH STREETS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

By 8 80 Cities



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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to share our objective thoughts and observations about the Beach Streets Downtown program based on our program audit and related interviews conducted on March 18-22, 2016. The Situation Assessment will identify key areas of success and areas for improvement that will become the focus of the Visioning & Strategic Planning Workshop. This workshop will be facilitated by 8 80 Cities, and will be followed up with the Sustainability Strategy Report.

# SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

## Areas for Celebration

- Attendance
- Vibe
- Overall business participation
- Logistics
- Community Partnerships

## Areas for Improvement

- Clarity of goals and values
- Streamline Communication
- Brand Development & Conservation
- Strengthen Evaluation

## I. CLARIFY GOALS & VALUES

It's important to clarify the purpose, goals, and values of Beach Streets in order to develop a strong and sustainable program. Clarity around these topics will make decision-making related to programming, business engagement, route planning, sponsorship and marketing, easier and more streamlined. It will also help ensure the unique character of Beach Streets is protected and stewarded for years to come as the program develops. Without clear goals, it is easy for Open Streets programs to slowly become unrecognizable from other street fairs and celebrations.



### A. Commercial vs. Free Activities

From our observations, there were inconsistencies regarding payment for participation in activities along the Beach Streets route--some activities were provided for free and others were charging for their services.

Inconsistencies included free activities taking place in activity hubs while the same activity was being offered for a fee in another activity hub. i.e. face painting for a fee in Hub #8 and face painting for free in Hub#7. Of the 89 activities surveyed along the Beach Streets route, 27 were conducting sales, 62 had no sales. The main items being sold were food and merchandise, while some were selling services.

Having clear guidelines related to sales will help develop robust guidelines for activity providers and businesses, and will help communication and marketing efforts with participants.

### Workshop Questions:

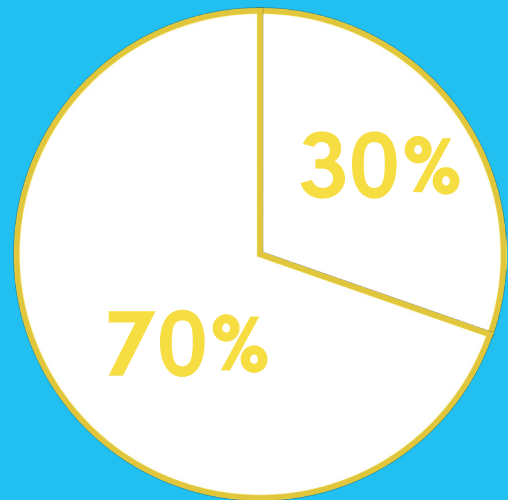
**Should activities provided at Beach Streets be free to everyone?**

**If so, are there exceptions to this rule?**

**If on-street sales or fees for participation are allowed, how can you ensure that the program remains accessible?**



**Mr. Fun, an activity programmer in Hub 8 selling face-painting services.**



**Percent of sales vs. non-sales activity at Beach Streets Downtown**

## **B. Family vs. Adult**

During our interviews, stakeholders identified a key difference between Beach Streets Downtown and Beach Streets Uptown. While Beach Streets Uptown was described as being family-friendly and family-oriented, Beach Streets Downtown was described as being more adult-oriented as a result of the activities provided, more narrow and crowded streets, and parents being cautious about letting their children getting too far ahead. Only about 6% of activities were clearly child-focused.

### **Workshop Questions:**

**Do we want Beach Streets to be recognized as a family friendly program?**

**Are there route and programming considerations that we can make to encourage family participation?**

## **C. Moving vs. Staying**

The slogan of Beach Streets is “Walk, Bike, Shop”. This phrase captures the concept of moving through the city in new ways while exploring what neighborhoods have to offer. From our observations there was a strong amount of movement throughout the route. Many people were riding bikes, skateboards, scooters, or walking, pushing strollers, and more, while in other areas (such as the hubs), more staying activity was observed.

The challenge is to balance these “movement” activities with activities that encourage “staying” in business areas and in programmed activity hubs. From our observations and key stakeholder interviews, there were differences of opinion regarding the most successful and least successful areas of the route—some people felt the busiest areas were the most successful, while others felt the areas that facilitated ease of movement were the most successful.

For the purposes of route planning, programming activation, and communication, it’s important to have a strong internal understanding of what success means to Beach Streets. For example, everyone wants their program to be “busy” but depending on route design, there will be quieter areas than others. Sometimes this can result in calls to shorten the route in order to achieve a greater density of people.

### **Workshop questions:**

**How important is it for Beach Streets to look “busy”?**

**How important is it to encourage active transportation?**

**Could the programming in activity hubs or “staying” areas be more diverse to encourage more movement between activity hubs?**

## D. Getting the Type of Participation You Want

One of the best reasons to have clearly defined goals and values is so that you can begin to shape your route and complimentary activities in a way that helps to achieve these goals.

Beach Streets Downtown proved that there was significant interest and enthusiasm from programing partners in participating in the program. Close to 100 partners provided an array of different activities to Beach Streets participants, from live music, interactive learning opportunities, food samples, games, and much more.

However, from our experience with Open Streets programs, a better balance can be struck between the types of activities offered and the goals of Beach Streets (or the yet-

to-be clearly defined goals of Beach Streets). For example, only 7% of Beach Streets activities were clearly focused on physical activity participation, while 18% were predominantly sales. To achieve a better balance, the city will have to determine if it is comfortable taking a more prescriptive approach to activation.

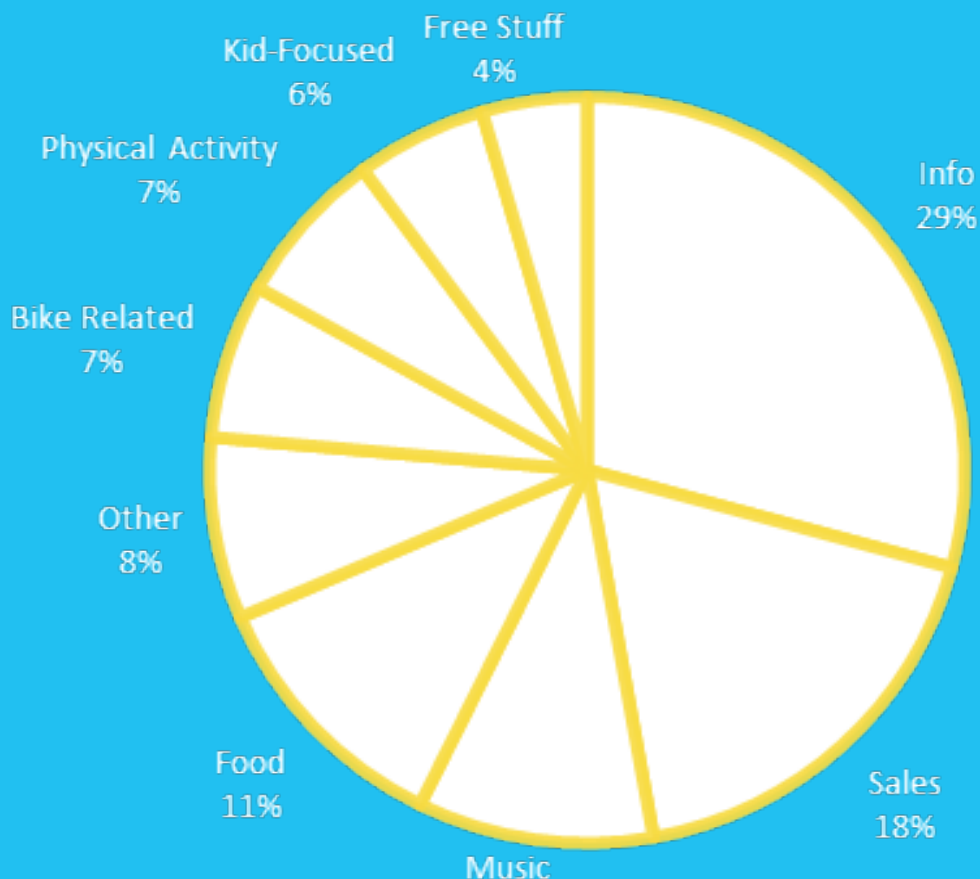
### Workshop Questions:

**Have you achieved a mix of activities that you are happy with?**

**What types of activities would you like to see more or less of?**

**How do we balance what partners want to provide with our goals as a program? Can we create a mindful programming recruitment strategy?**

## Types of Programmed Activities Provided at Beach Streets





### E. Passive vs. Interactive

Similar to the previous topic of “Getting the type of Participation you Want”, we feel that a better balance could be struck between passive and interactive activities offered at Beach Streets. This would contribute more liveness in the hubs to set the programmers up for more success in terms of participation.

From our audit, we found that more than 50% of the activities offered were considered “passive”, which we defined to mean that they required little interaction from participants. This included activities such as distributing information, handing out giveaways, and selling food or merchandise. We defined “interactive” as activities that required some interaction from the participant, such as participating in a game or physical activity, sharing thoughts or information, or listening to music.

The Bixby Park hub is an example of a hub that had a very high percentage of passive activities—almost 70%. A number of the activity partners we spoke with at Bixby also said they had less participation than they had expected. Communicating with the potential programmers about the types of activities that are effective at Beach Streets would serve a benefit to the programmers as well as to the public.

### Workshop Questions:

**Do you need passive activities? If so, what is the balance of interactive vs. passive?**

**Are there successful activity providers that we can learn from?**

**What sort of parameters and support can you provide for activity partners?**

**Can this support be provided consistently across all hubs?**

**42% Interactive**



**VS**

**58% Passive**



# II. STREAMLINE COMMUNICATION & MANAGEMENT

## A. Improving Communication with Businesses

From our conversations with business area representatives, it's clear there was some confusion regarding how a business area should be animated during Beach Streets and how the City expected business to participate. There were a number of businesses that didn't take advantage of the increased foot traffic on the streets despite BIAs being given grants for programming within their jurisdiction and the theme of Beach Streets being "Walk, Bike, Shop".

In some cases these funds were used to pay for entertainment—such as stages, musicians, etc.—while few funds seem to have been used for business engagement or coordination of local business-led activation. Some of this activation was a duplication of efforts in other business districts, such as music and stages. It also seemed there was some confusion about who was responsible for outreach to businesses as well as who was the point of contact for local business owners and community partners.

Planning and communication between City staff and business area representatives could be streamlined if there was clear direction for how business areas, specifically those that are formally organized, should be animated during Beach Streets. This

could be done in the form of a Beach Streets business area workshop and an application process specific to the business areas as a condition of receiving funds from the City.

### Workshop Questions:

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**If part of the Beach Streets brand is "walk, bike, SHOP" what sort of participation should be encouraged for businesses?**

**Where should business districts' staff and volunteers focus their energy?**

**How can we ensure that local businesses are benefiting fairly from the Beach Streets grants?**

**How can individual businesses be supported to succeed during Beach Streets?**

Q: "Were there any guidelines or parameters that they gave you, in terms of what could happen and what couldn't happen within your programmed area?"

Excerpt from stakeholder interviews conducted by 880 Cities

A: I think that evolved a little bit... I think... if anything... I think it was a process of learning what we can and what we can't do.

# III. BUILDING A STRONG BRAND

## A. Polished vs Grassroots

Beach Streets is a very well-branded program. The logo is recognizable and the banners, structures, and stages all look professional. In addition, all the programming at activity hubs are very polished and professional with stages, sound booths, and many activity providers using branded tents and handing out glossy brochures. These efforts were also accompanied by unique Beach Streets branding in organized business areas along the route.

While looking professional and polished can be a positive quality of a program it can also increase costs. Consistent and quality branding throughout the route can be effective for people who “stumble upon” Beach Streets but, from our conversations and observations, it seemed that the majority of individuals who attended Beach Streets knew that it was happening and came deliberately to participate.

### Workshop Questions:

Was there duplication on the route of branding collateral?

Did you strike the right balance in terms of value for money?

How “unique” does each Beach Streets date need to be?

## B. Brand Development and Conservation

The City of Long Beach has undertaken a branding process for Beach Streets. A logo, website and overall brand identity have been established to a significant degree, however, there were some inconsistencies in terms of the articulation of the brand through communication collateral during the Beach Streets program.

Two notable examples of this were the flyers designed and distributed by the Retro Row business area, and the Downtown Business area. Both of these flyers looked professional and contributed to the promotion efforts of the business area, however they both put their own twist on the colours and overall feel of the brand.

The City needs to determine if it is comfortable with this type of re-branding and how it would like to manage the brand itself.

### Workshop Questions:

Are we comfortable with our partners altering the brand?

Does this bring a unique, grass-roots quality to the program or does it dilute the brand?

Is there a way we can encourage partners to make Beach Streets “their own” while conserving the brand?

# IV. EVALUATION

From our observations and stakeholder interviews, we believe that the evaluation of Beach Streets can be improved. Evaluation is a critical component of any Open Streets program, however it takes a significant amount of volunteer resources and time to develop a robust evaluation strategy.

Many Open Streets programs, such as CicLAvia, Open Streets Toronto, New Brunswick Ciclovía, and others partner with a local academic institution. Partnering with a local academic institution can be an effective way to reduce the burden on program organizers while also strengthening the evaluation process.

Evaluation is critical because it helps organizers measure their own success, it provides follow-up information for sponsors and partners, and it's often key to making the case for future expansion of the program. In addition, a growing international effort is being made to develop a global body of research that uses a results-based approach to measuring social and health impacts of Open Streets programs on city residents.


## Workshop Questions:

**Who will use the evaluation results?**

**What information would be useful to them?**

**What information would help you strengthen the case for expanding the Beach Streets program?**

**Who can you partner with to ensure evaluation is conducted efficiently and effectively?**



"It was phenomenal... being on the streets and there were no cars there and just riding further and there's this going on and there's a gospel choir. And then somebody waves me over and is like 'Hey it looks like your tire is flat'. And there's this guy just pumping up my tire and he's like 'Alright, off you go!' I was just riding off and it was such a feeling of community.

It was absolutely amazing."

- Beach Streets participant

# V. CREATING A SUSTAINABLE BUDGET

Managing and controlling the costs of Beach Streets will be critical to the growth of the program. By working through the questions in the preceding sections of this summary we believe we can make key decisions related to budget management and costs. More specifically, we feel that by implementing a clear programming policy for activity hubs and businesses costs for Beach Streets can be reduced.

## Workshop Questions:

**Now that we have defined our values, goals, communication structure, and evaluation goals, what are the Beach Streets budgetary priorities?**

**How do these priorities relate to programming, marketing, evaluation, and overall program management?**



# BEACH STREETS VISIONING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

Based on the Workshop Questions in this Assessment Summary,  
the Workshop will be facilitated in the following format:

- 15 MIN      Introductions
- 20 MIN      Presentation of Assessment from 8 80 Cities
- 75 MIN      Clarify Goals and Values: Questions  
& Discussion
- Break**
- 20 MIN      Streamline Communication and Management
- 20 MIN      Building a Strong Brand
- 20 MIN      Evaluation
- 20 MIN      Creating a Sustainable Budget & Wrap Up

**Workshop will be followed by a final  
report by 8 80 Cities that includes plans  
and resources for Beach Streets  
Sustainability.**