

# Policy Analysis of Open Streets Initiatives in Long Beach

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## Introduction & Background

The Open Streets Program in the City of Long Beach provides businesses and restaurants with temporary areas which allow for physical-distancing so businesses can continue making a living. This initiative is also geared towards residential neighborhoods and the socio-economic benefits of non-vehicle transportation. This project examines the extent to which the Open Streets program can provide insight on alternative transportation and viable economic strategies for sustainability in Long Beach. The analysis found little support for Open Streets as an initiative to combat Climate Change, however, the program had economic incentives and benefits, that would increase the viability of a similar sustainability measure in the future.

### Business - Restaurants

This initiative includes temporarily transforming public areas, such as sidewalks, on-street parking, parking lots, plazas, and promenades. Local businesses and restaurants continue to struggle due to the Covid-19 pandemic because they are unable to provide services to the public which they rely on for continuing business. Most businesses were conducted indoors, however, the City of Long Beach designated areas for business during the pandemic providing a secure way of allowing them to sustain themselves during this unfortunate time. This program allows local businesses to thrive because it would permit them to continue in-person dining.

### Neighborhoods:

This Open Streets Initiative within the residential areas encourages biking, walking, skating, and the use of other non-vehicle modes of transportation within roadways.

The Long Beach City's transportation has long been a priority for the city; this coastal area consists of bold ideas for its future which includes investments in both local and regional transportation systems. As stated in their Long Beach Mobility Plan: Long Beach works to "encourage the use of the most efficient and convenient mode of travel while integrating land use planning with multimodal mobility networks, providing people with options to choose various forms of convenient transportation, plans, maintenance, and operational mobility systems, consistent with the principles of complete streets, active living, and sustainable community design." (City of LB, 2021)

This initiative works to make the city ecologically sustainable and by the ability to provide alternatives to vehicle enabled transportation. If this initiative becomes permanent, we may well be on our way to assisting the defense in climate change. Social equity may also be initiated within this program by allowing low income neighbors be able to request an open streets development by filling out a form on the GO Active LB website. This allows residents to ensure their communities receive the benefits from the city as well as other areas in Long Beach,

The City of Long Beach supports sustainability and the importance of health and small businesses, despite a troubling year (Go Active LB, 2021). The Open Streets Program looks to improve the wellbeing and lives of residents throughout the populated city.

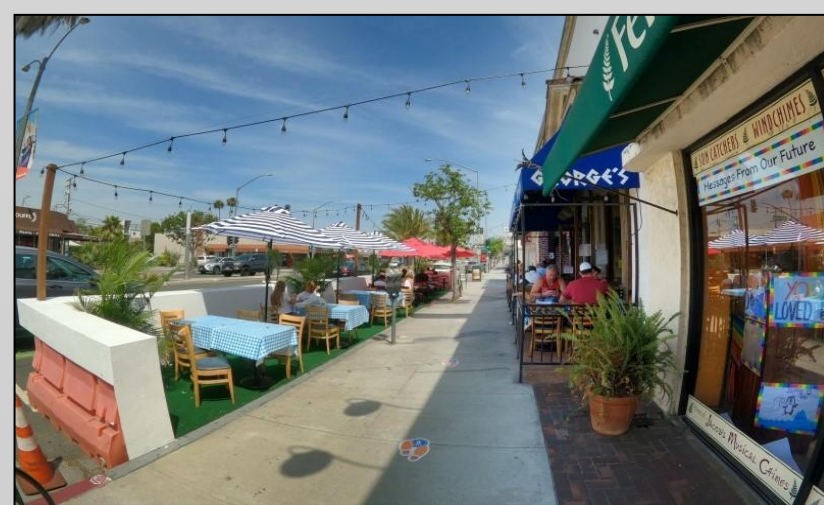


Figure 1. An example of the Open Streets Initiative in action in the City of Long Beach. Photo Credit: <http://www.longbeach.gov/goactive/lb/programs/temporary-open-streets/>

## Methods

This qualitative content analysis of Long Beach Open Streets Program, evaluates the positions of individuals and organizations for and against the open streets initiative by the Long Beach City Government.

The data used for this analysis was collected from 12 Newspaper articles, written by Newspapers in Long Beach, such as the Long Beach Post, Long Beach Press-Telegram, and Long Beach Grunion Gazette.

The news articles cover the Open Streets Initiative since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, thus, the article dates range from February and March 2020 to recently released articles in 2021.

The analysis evaluates quotes from individuals and organizations in local newspaper articles, to assess the support and concerns regarding the reallocation of street space from cars.

The analysis of direct quotes and positions from newspaper articles allows for an overall evaluation on the progress and concerns regarding the initiative, with regards to business and residential consumers in Long Beach.

## Results

Community Members	Decision	Quotes	Citation
City Government: Al Austin, Robert Garcia, and Rex Richardson	There were quotes from two city councilmembers, and the mayor shared opinions on how great the open street initiatives have been. They want to encourage the community to utilize public streets as well as improve economic opportunities for businesses.	"I am happy to see the Open Streets Program expand and allow for businesses to utilize public space to open and serve our community." -Al Austin "The City also hopes that less traffic in these areas will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in these areas." -Mayor Garcia. "Different neighborhoods have different needs, it's not a one size fits all, but we need everyone to want it and participate to ensure social distancing protocols are met." - Craig Beck(Gazettes) "Instead of closing down arterial streets, Long Beach shut down neighborhood streets because this program is not a one size fits all and we must be flexible." -Craig Beck (ABC 7)	Long Beach Press-Telegram Signal Tribune Newspaper Gazettes Newspaper ABC 7
Residents	Two Long Beach residents said they thought the open street parklets were dangerous because of the potential for drunk driving. Ten other residents expressed they felt these initiatives were good for business and the wellbeing of the community.	"We are losing, in some cases, a lane of traffic in Belmont Shore. These parklets extending out into the street are making driving very hazardous." -Ann Cantrell, (LB Press-Telegram)	Long Beach Press-Telegram
Business Owners and Staff	At least ten business owners and staff have welcomed open streets since the beginning of the pandemic and have followed CDC guidelines and created their own policies to prevent overcrowding.	"The parklets are keeping restaurants open, and having businesses stay open is valuable." -Tim McOsker.	Long Beach Press-Telegram



Figure 3. Open Streets initiative on Pine Avenue in Long Beach, Ca. Photo Credit: Shelby Miller

Figure 2. Open Streets Initiative on Pine Avenue in Long Beach, Ca. Credit: Shelby Miller



The Open Streets Initiative in Long Beach, aims to create economic and environmental benefits for both businesses and residents alike. In the figure below, both Open Streets Programs are evaluated in three major categories, Economics, Community, and Public Access.(Figure 4) As illustrated with the green concepts, there is far more support than opposition to the initiatives proposed by the city. Our analysis concluded that the initiative was inducing more benefits, than it was creating negative impacts for businesses and residents alike. This policy is also geared towards encouraging spatial justice and equity for all socioeconomic statuses. (Engelberg et. al, 2014) Research also shows that Open Streets programs provide social benefits to communities, which help influence social, environmental, and economic decisions.(Hipp et.al, 2015) Although most of the support is geared towards economic benefits, businesses and residents value the environmental benefits and community engagement that are associated with programs like Open Streets in Long Beach.

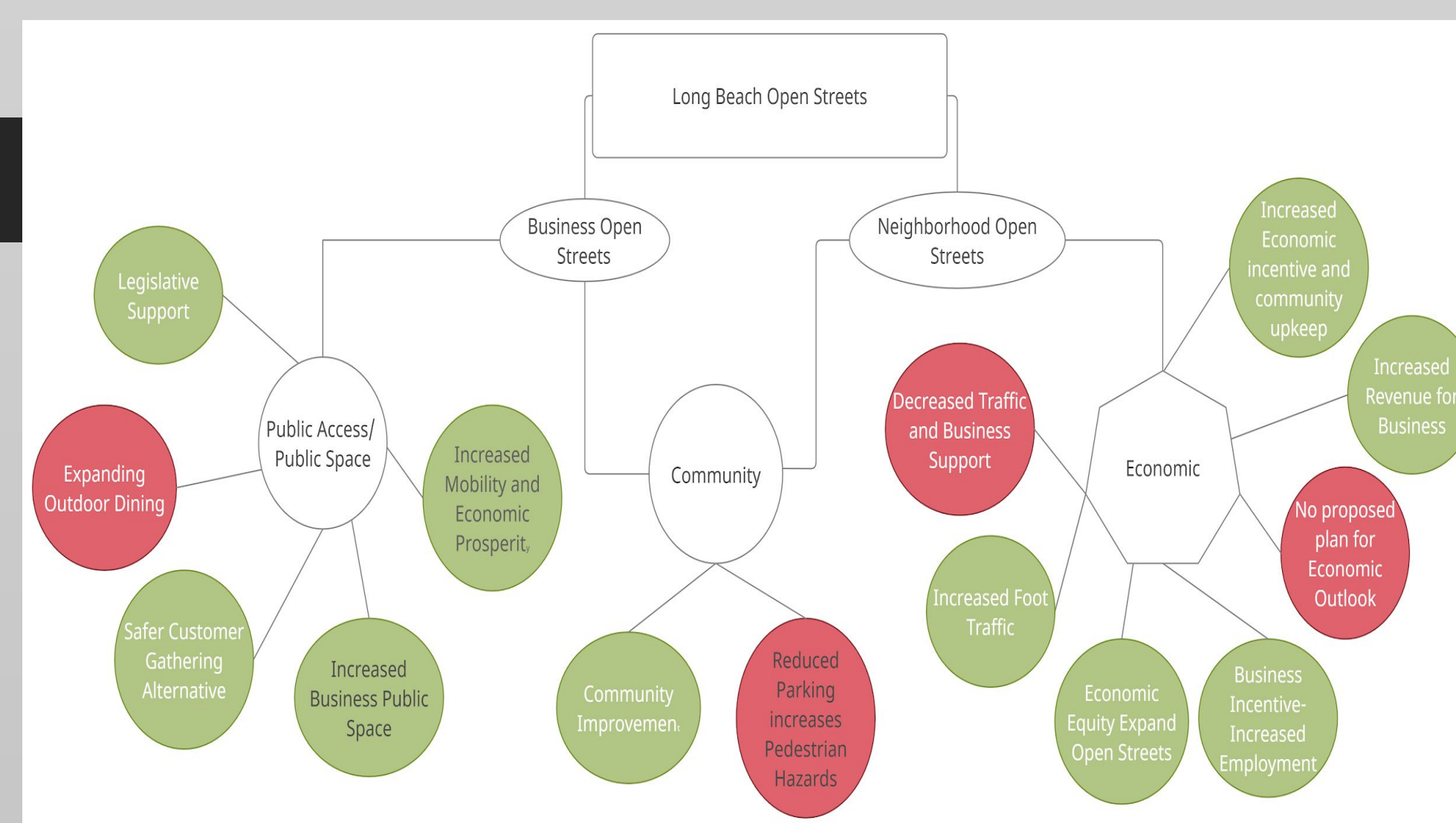


Figure 4. Visual summary of the overall Concepts analyzed in the 12 articles mentioned in the Methods section. The visual depicts the concepts related to the Business and Neighborhood Open Streets initiatives in Long Beach. The Visual illustrates concepts that are agreed and disagreed upon, with relation to Economic, Community, and Public motives. The visual displays Disagreed concepts in the color Red, while agreed concepts, are displayed in Green.

## Discussion

In the data collected, it demonstrates that the Open Street initiative has been positively received. The Open Street initiative in Long Beach helps promote other methods of transportation. Alternative methods of transportation that are promoted include walking, riding a bicycle, skateboarding, or using the scooters that the city provides. It is important to note that the Open Street initiative has worked very well for local business.

- With the Open Street initiative many of those who really benefit from them are business. Due to current health regulations many practices had to change.
- It is obvious that Open Streets provide healthier alternatives, but it is shown to have social benefits and economic benefits (Eyler 2015)

Even though it has been a great help to businesses, many residential areas that have incorporated the initiative have mixed emotions.

- With the initiative of slow streets in many residential neighborhoods it creates mixed emotions
- Many of the residents are not happy with the lack of parking space in some areas.
- The pro of having slow streets is that it provides a safe environment for children to play.

The figure below shows the distributional disproportionality of locations of available Open Street initiatives in Long Beach. The map illustrates high density locations in the Downtown area while in other parts of the city it is not very common.

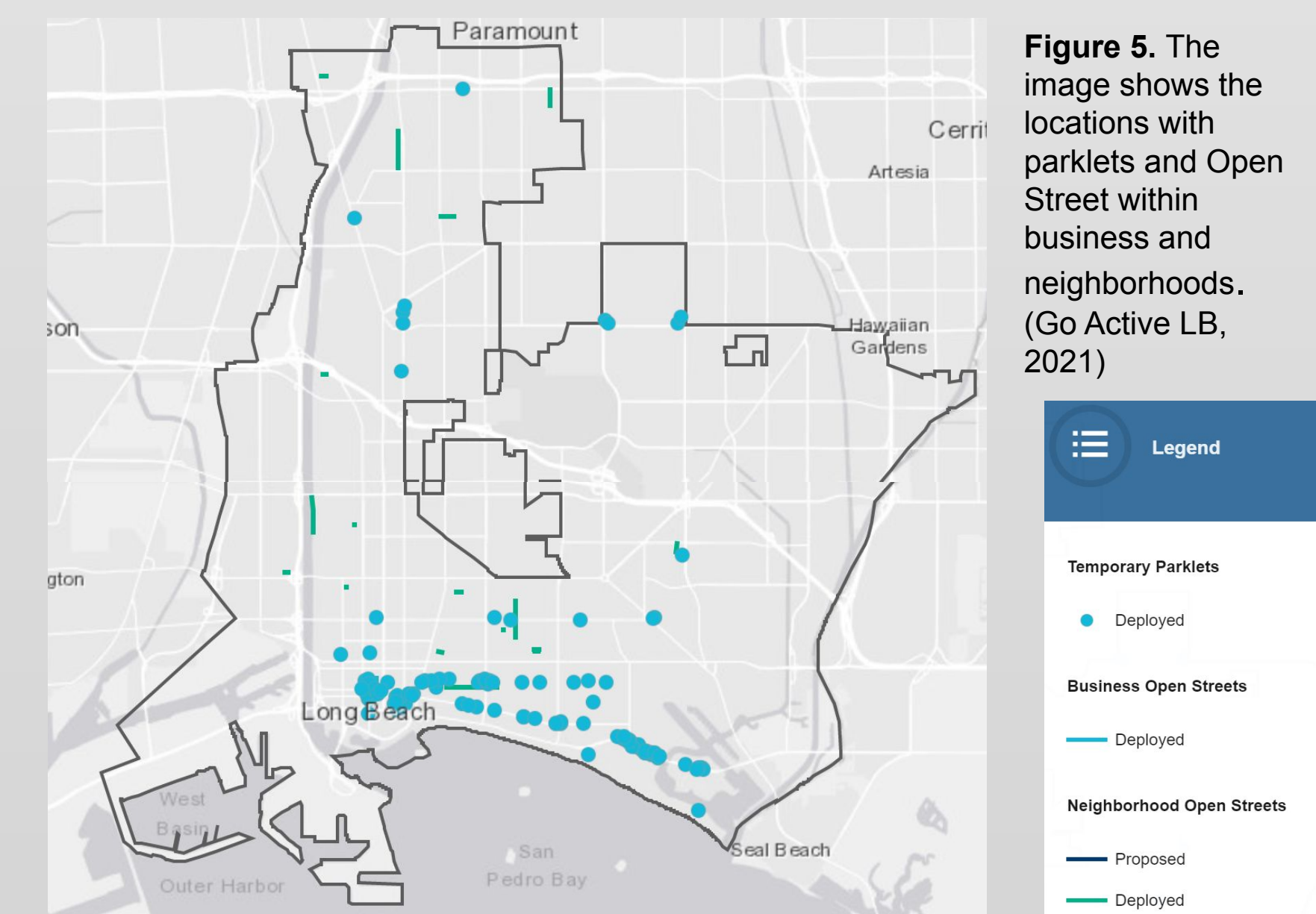


Figure 5. The image shows the locations with parklets and Open Street within business and neighborhoods. (Go Active LB, 2021)

## Conclusions/ Policy Recommendations

The Long Beach Open Streets initiative allows residents to take back public spaces and streets. At the beginning of the pandemic, many residents didn't approve of the open streets because of unavailable parking spaces and the fear of parklets being damaged while in use. However, over time this initiative was welcomed by businesses, residents, and city councilmembers. The original Open Streets' goal was to allow residents to practice proper physical distancing while walking, biking, and other physical activities in neighborhoods. Increased public space in Downtown Long Beach and various other neighborhoods contributed to a high walkability score on WalkScore. Long Beach was even ranked the most walkable city in Southern California (Addison, Long Beach Post). Therefore the Open Streets initiative has permitted Long Beach to be more sustainable and walk-friendly. Additionally, Open Streets have allowed businesses to remain open during Covid-19, as long as protocols were being met. With these goals being met, residents and businesses can continue to reap the environmental and economic benefits associated with Open Streets in Long Beach.

## For more information

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More information on this and related project can be obtained at : [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bXQtByukuRsEos4ph0mcMC\\_GXmHduJt3/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bXQtByukuRsEos4ph0mcMC_GXmHduJt3/view?usp=sharing)