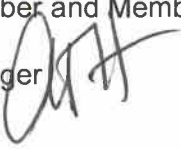


MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Alina T. Hudak, City Manager 

DATE: June 23, 2021

SUBJECT: **Discussion Regarding the Pedestrianization of Ocean Drive**

RECOMMENDATION

Based on several interdepartmental discussions and thorough reviews of the Ocean Drive options presented herein, discussions with representatives of the Ocean Drive Association, and taking into consideration the public safety and aesthetic concerns associated with the current configuration of Ocean Drive as a priority issue, the Administration is recommending the interim reconfiguration of Ocean Drive depicted in Option 3A until the pedestrianization of the future Ocean Drive project commences in approximately two years.

The Administration believes that Option 3A will mitigate the public safety and aesthetic concerns with the current configuration and improve accessibility for businesses, primarily hotels and restaurants fronting Ocean Drive. Additionally a predominantly pedestrianized character will be maintained for the corridor that aligns with the vision established in the City's adopted mobility plans and the preliminary concepts developed as part of the ongoing Art Deco Cultural District Visioning Study.

In addition, the Administration will continue to explore more efficient access management solutions to improve emergency vehicle access onto Ocean Drive in short order. These include the installation of automatic gate arms at three critical emergency vehicle access locations and remote-controlled hydraulic vehicle barriers on the 100 Blocks to replace the existing non-automated vehicle barriers.

Lastly, the Administration recommends that the City Commission revisit the Restaurant Recovery Outdoor Seating Pilot Program, approved via Resolution No. 2020-31276 on May 13, 2020 and in effect until September 30, 2021. Option 3A is premised on revoking the Pilot Program on Ocean Drive.

If the City Commission approves the Administration's recommendation, City staff will share Option 3A with the Ocean Drive stakeholders for further discussion and refinement, including capital and maintenance costs. Subsequently, pursuant to Resolution No. 2020-31313, the Administration will return to the City Commission for final approval of the recommended alternative prior to making any changes to the current pedestrianized configuration of Ocean Drive.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Ocean Drive was closed to vehicular traffic as part of the Restaurant Recovery Outdoor Seating Pilot Program during the COVID-19 pandemic as an economic recovery initiative. This allowed restaurants to expand onto the right-of-way for social distancing and outdoor dining.

The Restaurant Recovery Outdoor Seating Pilot Program was authorized by the City Commission on May 13, 2020 through Resolution No. 2020-31276. There are currently 130 businesses with this approval throughout the City, of which approximately 41 restaurants have been issued Outdoor Seating Expansion Permits to expand their operations along a portion of Ocean Drive through September 30, 2021.

The closure of Ocean Drive to vehicular traffic was approved by Miami-Dade County on May 15, 2020, and the actual pedestrianization of Ocean Drive between 5th Street and 15th Street began on May 16, 2020. In addition, Resolution No. 2020-31313 was passed on July 17, 2020, "requiring any potential new pilot mobility options on Ocean Drive, or other major streets in the City, be fully vetted by all stakeholders, including residents and discussion by the City Commission, prior to taking any action."

The City Attorney's Office has interpreted that the Governor's Executive Orders, issued on May 3, 2021, does not prevent the City from implementing discretionary programs or benefits to promote economic recovery (including the Restaurant Recovery Outdoor Seating Pilot Program). There are, however, several considerations related to the pilot program and the pedestrianization of Ocean Drive (none of which relate to the COVID-19 pandemic or implicate the Governor's Executive Orders), such as upcoming events, congestion, access to hotels and restaurants, and public safety issues. These considerations are discussed more fully below.

ANALYSIS

Vehicular Congestion and Public Safety

As part of this discussion, professional staff and I remain deeply concerned about an Ocean Drive environment that is difficult to manage due to traffic congestion in the surrounding area and resulting public safety issues. I have directed the Police and Code Compliance Departments to increase efforts to ensure the restaurant recovery program sidewalk café permits are following occupancy and other rules.

Furthermore, our Fire Department has expressed concerns with its ability to promptly respond to emergency calls when accessing Ocean Drive from the north due to the manual gate arm located in the 100 Block of 10 Street.

Adding to the congestion we are experiencing is the temporary reconfiguration of Washington Avenue, which consists of several sidewalk café expansions (i.e. parklets), a reduction of one vehicular travel lane in each direction to accommodate protected bicycle lanes, and relocation of bus and trolley services to Collins Avenue. The Washington Avenue pilot was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic in August 2020 to promote outdoor dining while social distancing, to serve as an economic recovery initiative for restaurants, and to provide a separated facility for cyclists.

The Administration has collected traffic data and conducted observations since the inception of the pilot to determine its effectiveness and impact on the surrounding streets. While the study found that over 900 bicyclists use the separated bicycle lanes on a daily basis, the study also found that the pilot has increased friction along Washington Avenue due to the elimination of a lane in each direction coupled with the high amount of freight loading/unloading activity and parking maneuvers. The relocation of bus and trolley service to Collins Avenue has also increased congestion and friction along Collins Avenue. At the April 28, 2021 Neighborhood and Quality of Life Committee (NQLC) meeting, the Committee discussed the current lane closures on Washington Avenue and recommended that the Administration return to the July NQLC

meeting to discuss the recommended concepts in the Art Deco Cultural District Master Plan Study. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that the Administration explore the feasibility of a shared bus/bike lane on Washington Avenue to restore transit service and improve traffic flow on Collins Avenue. The Administration is engaged in discussions with Miami-Dade Transit to determine the feasibility of this and other options with the goal of restoring transit service on Washington Avenue in short order.

The Future of Ocean Drive

With respect to the future of Ocean Drive, the City's Transportation Master Plan and Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan (adopted in April 2016 via Resolution No. 2016-29371 and Resolution No. 2016-29373, respectively) recommend a "living" street, all at one grade, that allows vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to share space through traffic calming and low speeds. In addition, both a shared street concept and pedestrianization are currently being considered as part of the Art Deco Cultural District preliminary concept plan by Zyscovich Architects, with the final plan expected in December 2021.

The study limits of the Zyscovich plan include Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, Washington Avenue, as well as the side streets, from 5 Street to 16 Street ("Art Deco Cultural District"). The consultant team is currently evaluating all available traffic data, pedestrian and bicycle volumes, and mobility needs, challenges, and opportunities in the Art Deco Cultural District. The team is working closely with the Mayor's Art Deco Cultural District Panel, Ocean Drive Association, Washington Avenue Business Improvement District, area stakeholders, and the City team to identify a preferred street configuration for Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, Washington Avenue and the side streets within the Art Deco Cultural District. Zyscovich has developed preliminary concepts which have been shared with the Art Deco Cultural District Panel and the Administration for review and input. The preliminary concepts from the visioning study will be presented to the City Commission at the June 23, 2021 City Commission meeting for discussion. The Administration anticipates commencing construction of the future G.O.B. Ocean Drive project in 2023.

Potential Interim Configurations

Given the public safety and aesthetic concerns, among others, with the current temporary configuration of Ocean Drive, the Administration has developed various alternative cross section options for consideration by the City Commission and Ocean Drive stakeholders (Attachment A). Options 1–3A described below retain a pedestrianized configuration for Ocean Drive. As an alternative to a fully pedestrianized Ocean Drive, Options 4 and 5 described below include introducing a vehicular traffic lane on Ocean Drive. The first cross section labeled "Ocean Drive Pre-COVID" is included for reference purposes only and is not being considered as a viable option given concerns from the Miami Beach Police Department with the unlawful uses of the on-street parking, particularly on the east side of Ocean Drive, as well as the Administration's concerns with creating a vehicular centric street that does not align with the City's adopted modal hierarchy of pedestrians first and the City's vision for Ocean Drive. Furthermore, although Ocean Drive businesses have preferred sidewalk café areas on the west sidewalk of Ocean Drive, for operational purposes, the Administration has developed an option that would still allow for seating in the right-of-way. With no vehicular conflicts, the operation of the cafés will still be seamless. Additionally, this will allow for unencumbered access to all the buildings along Ocean Drive, as well as a safer pedestrian connection.

Option 1

The current pedestrianized configuration of Ocean Drive is depicted in Option 1. The existing cross section consists of a 14.5' wide west sidewalk accommodating a 6' pedestrian path and a 8.5' sidewalk café area, a 19' wide sidewalk café expansion area, a 19' wide shared space for

pedestrians and bicyclists, and a 10.5' wide east sidewalk. As mentioned above, the Administration has public safety concerns with the current configuration in terms of creating an environment that is difficult to manage, particularly during high impact periods. In addition, there are concerns regarding the aesthetics of the existing sidewalk café expansion areas and the proliferation of umbrellas and other street furniture that detract from the historic building facades and Art Deco character of Ocean Drive.

Option 2

The cross section depicted in Option 2 is similar to Option 1 except that it incorporates a Freebee service within the existing 19' wide shared space on Ocean Drive. The Freebee service is intended to address a critical concern from various businesses fronting Ocean Drive by improving customer access to/from valet stands on the 100 Blocks, hotels, and restaurants. The Freebee service can also be used as a mobility option for the public, further activating the shared space on Ocean Drive and serving as a park-n-ride option by serving parking garages in proximity to Ocean Drive.

Option 3

The cross section depicted in Option 3 is premised on revoking the Restaurant Recovery Outdoor Seating Pilot Program on Ocean Drive. As compared to the existing configuration, this cross section will accomplish the following:

- Increases the total width of shared space for pedestrians and bicyclists from 29.5' currently to 45', including a 20' wide unobstructed path for emergency vehicle access
- Allows Freebees to operate along a 20' wide shared path to activate the area and provide a mobility/accessibility solution for hotel and restaurant patrons and potential park-n-rides
- Relocates the existing sidewalk café areas on the west sidewalk further east to free-up the entire west sidewalk for use by pedestrians
- Enhances the view and preserves the historic character of the Art Deco building facades
- Eliminates the sidewalk café expansion areas and increases the sidewalk café widths from 8.5' (pre-COVID) to 11' wide. The elimination of the sidewalk café expansion areas will allow the City to more effectively enforce rules and manage compliance
- Proposes planters next to the outdoor café seating areas for greening and screening
- Improves public safety through increased activations of the usable street space

Modified Option 3A

After further discussion, including with representatives of the Ocean Drive Association and the Miami Beach Police and Fire departments, the Administration has made the following refinements to Option 3:

- An 11' wide sidewalk café area is situated between the unencumbered west sidewalk and the 20' wide shared path for pedestrians, bicyclists, and Freebee; this area will be protected by planters on the east side of the seating area.
- Planters on the east side of Ocean Drive are oriented east-west in a staggered manner and arranged in clusters adjacent to the east sidewalk with openings provided between the planter clusters. This will allow for seamless and unencumbered access to the sidewalk on the east side of Ocean Drive and Lummus Park, while also providing a mechanism to control the congregation of large crowds.
- Planters will also be placed in front of establishments that do not have a sidewalk café permit to deter congregating.

Option 4

Option 4 introduces one vehicular travel lane and a buffered bicycle lane (both in the southbound direction only). This option consists of keeping the 14.5' wide west sidewalk as-is, a 15' wide

sidewalk café expansion area, a 6' painted buffer separating the 10' wide vehicular travel lane in the southbound direction and the sidewalk café expansion areas, and a 7' wide buffered bicycle lane in the southbound direction.

Reintroducing vehicular traffic on Ocean Drive will enable valet operations to occur directly in front of the commercial establishments as well as passenger and freight loading zones on the curb in the areas between the sidewalk café expansion areas and in close proximity to the businesses being served. However, introducing a lane of vehicular traffic is expected to create friction and conflicts between (jaywalking) pedestrians and vehicles and will require restriping Ocean Drive from 5 Street to 15 Street to safely and legally segregate vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and sidewalk café patrons. Given the vehicular travel lane would operate in the southbound direction only, intersection striping and signalization modifications would be required at 5 Street and 15 Street to accommodate the modified traffic flow. Furthermore, Miami-Dade County approval of the traffic flow modification may be required.

Option 5

Option 5 is similar to Option 4 except that it accommodates 7' wide bi-directional buffered bike lanes by utilizing the 6' striped buffer in Option 4 and reducing the sidewalk café expansion zones by 1' (i.e. 14' wide). The same concerns with introducing vehicular traffic described in Option 4 above apply to Option 5. However, this option would allow bicyclists to legally travel in both directions on Ocean Drive, thus, it is a better alternative than Option 4 from a bicycle safety perspective.

Potential Freebee Service

As described in Options 2, 3, and 3A above, the Administration is exploring mobility options to improve access to businesses, particularly hotels and restaurants, on Ocean Drive and improve the customer experience. One of the options being explored is to provide Freebee service to/from designated valet stands on the 100 Blocks and hotels and restaurants on Ocean Drive. In addition, one or two Freebee vehicles could also be dedicated for use by the general public as a mobility option along Ocean Drive and as a park-n-ride option serving parking garages in proximity to Ocean Drive. The Administration is having discussions with Freebee and the Ocean Drive stakeholders to refine the service parameters and explore cost-sharing opportunities for this potential mobility service. It is the Administration's expectation that the cost of the Freebee service would be funded by Ocean Drive businesses and not the City.

100 Blocks – Emergency Vehicle Access and Valet Operations

Retaining a pedestrianized Ocean Drive as depicted in Options 1-3A will necessitate more efficient access for emergency vehicles. Currently, emergency vehicles access Ocean Drive via gate arm systems at the 100 Block of 10 Street and at Ocean Drive and 5 Street; however, the existing system is not automated and requires that a person manually lift the gate arm to allow emergency vehicle access. Furthermore, Ocean Drive is closed at 14 Street with barricades that do not allow vehicles, including emergency vehicles, to continue traveling southbound on Ocean Drive from that point.

The Administration is exploring various access management solutions to improve emergency vehicle access at three critical locations (Ocean Drive and 5 Street, the 100 Block of 10 Street, and at Ocean Drive and 14 Street) while prohibiting general vehicular access to protect pedestrians. Options include installing automatic gate arm systems at the three locations listed above. As an alternative, these critical access points can also be equipped with remote-controlled hydraulic vehicle barriers in lieu of automatic gate arms. The Administration is researching costs associated with these more efficient access management solutions.

Currently, valet stands are located on the 100 Blocks of 9 Street, 11 Street, and 14 Street to serve hotels and restaurants on Ocean Drive. Under Options 1-3A (pedestrianized Ocean Drive), the three existing valet stands would remain and a potential Freebee service could provide a mobility option for hotel and restaurant patrons, improving accessibility and the customer experience.

Given the current pedestrianization of Ocean Drive, the existing mobile vehicle barriers located just east of the Ocean Court alleyway create underutilized areas (dead zones) on the east ends of the 100 Blocks between the alleyway and Ocean Drive. These areas (east end of 10 Street in particular) have recently served as locations where large crowds congregate and propagate bad behavior. To mitigate this significant public safety concern, the Administration is exploring ways of activating these underutilized areas in a way that deters congregating. Attachment B depicts a plan view of a typical block on Ocean Drive including the east ends of two 100 Blocks, the one on the left with valet operation and one on the right without valet. The 100 Block on the right depicts a series of planters strategically placed to reduce the effective width of the street and deter crowd formation. Moreover, planters will have low foliage coverage for CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) considerations. It is important to note that planters can be used in conjunction with vehicle barriers for enhanced aesthetics and pedestrian safety and configured to accommodate a 20' wide path for emergency vehicle access at the street-ends.

County Approval

The temporary closure of Ocean Drive to vehicular traffic was approved by Miami-Dade County in May 2020 for the purpose of sidewalk café expansions and outdoor social distancing. On June 14, 2021, the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works advised the City's Transportation and Mobility Department that County approval of the temporary projects implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic expires on June 30, 2021. In order to obtain approval for the continuation of these projects beyond June 30, 2021, the City was advised that it would need to apply for a Miami-Dade County Block Party Permit. The Administration will submit the required documentation to the County for continuation of the Ocean Drive pedestrianization.

CONCLUSION

The City has had numerous internal discussions over the past couple months regarding the current temporary configuration and future vision for Ocean Drive. Concerns with the current configuration include public safety, emergency vehicle access, code compliance, mobility challenges, freight deliveries, access to businesses, particularly hotels and restaurants on Ocean Drive, and aesthetics. To address some of these concerns, City staff has developed various alternative cross sections considered to be workable interim configurations until the future Ocean Drive reconstruction project commences (expected to occur in 2023).

In consideration of the above concerns, primarily public safety, the Administration is recommending Option 3A, which includes the following benefits:

- Ocean Drive is maintained as a pedestrian street.
- The overall space for pedestrians and bicyclists is increased.
- The sidewalk café areas are relocated in a manner that unclutters the west sidewalk.
- The revised sidewalk café footprint more effectively allows the City to enforce rules and manage compliance.
- A Freebee service will operate along the shared space as a mobility and accessibility option

- Planters are proposed on the east side of Ocean Drive adjacent to the east sidewalk and along the 100 Blocks to enhance the aesthetics and visitor experience and deter the congregation of large crowds congregating.
- Emergency vehicle access will be enhanced through the installation of automatic gate arms and remote-controlled hydraulic vehicle barrier systems.

In summary the recommended improvements in Option 3A are intended to more effectively activate Ocean Drive, improve corridor aesthetics, and enhance public safety for all visitors.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

Based on the 2019 Resident Survey, 17% of residents use walking as their primary mode of transportation for trips within Miami Beach; 30% of residents use walking as their secondary mode of transportation for trips within Miami Beach; 73% of residents are concerned or dissatisfied with pedestrian safety (vehicle yielding to pedestrians) when crossing the street at an intersection. Based on the same survey, while 64% of residents feel somewhat safe when riding their bicycle in the City, 37% of residents feel unsafe. 47% of residents responded that at least one person in their household regularly rides a bike. 33% of residents consider bicycling the most viable alternative to using cars for trips within Miami Beach.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The cost of implementing the recommended option (Option 3A) consists of purchasing and installing approximately 600 planters, automatic arm gates at the three critical emergency vehicle access locations, and hydraulic vehicle barriers on the 100 Blocks to replace the existing non-automated vehicle barriers. The Administration is currently researching prices with various vendors in the supply chain to determine the approximate total cost of Option 3A, including maintenance cost. If approved by the City Commission, the above recommended improvements are anticipated to be funded by General Fund and Resort Tax reserves.

Applicable Area

South Beach

Is this a Resident Right to Know item?

No

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

Strategic Connection

Mobility – Improve the walking and biking experience

Legislative Tracking

Transportation and Mobility

Sponsor

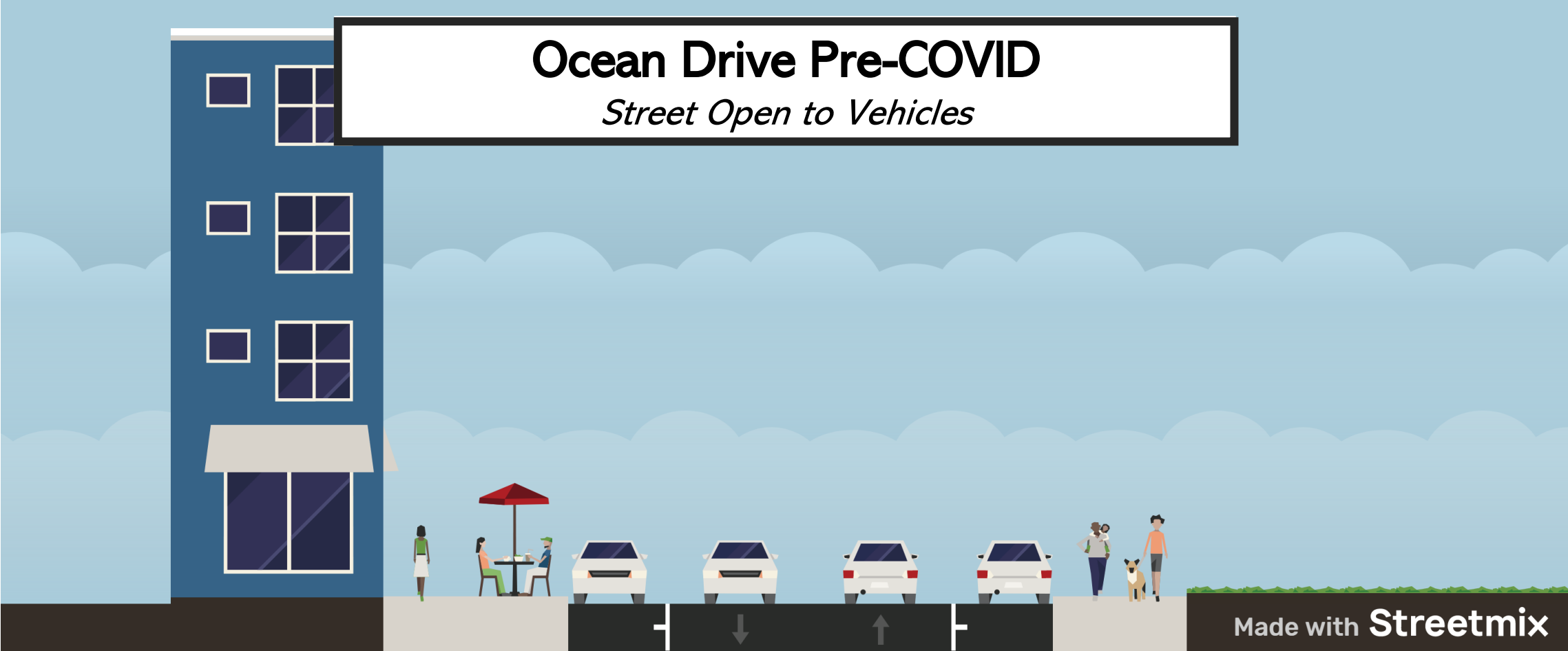
N/A

Attachment

- A: Ocean Drive Cross Sections
- B: 100 Block Plan View

Ocean Drive Pre-COVID

Street Open to Vehicles



6' Ped Path
8.5' Sdwk Café
(includes Curb)

8'
Parking/
Valet
(includes gutter)

11'
Travel
Lane

11'
Travel
Lane

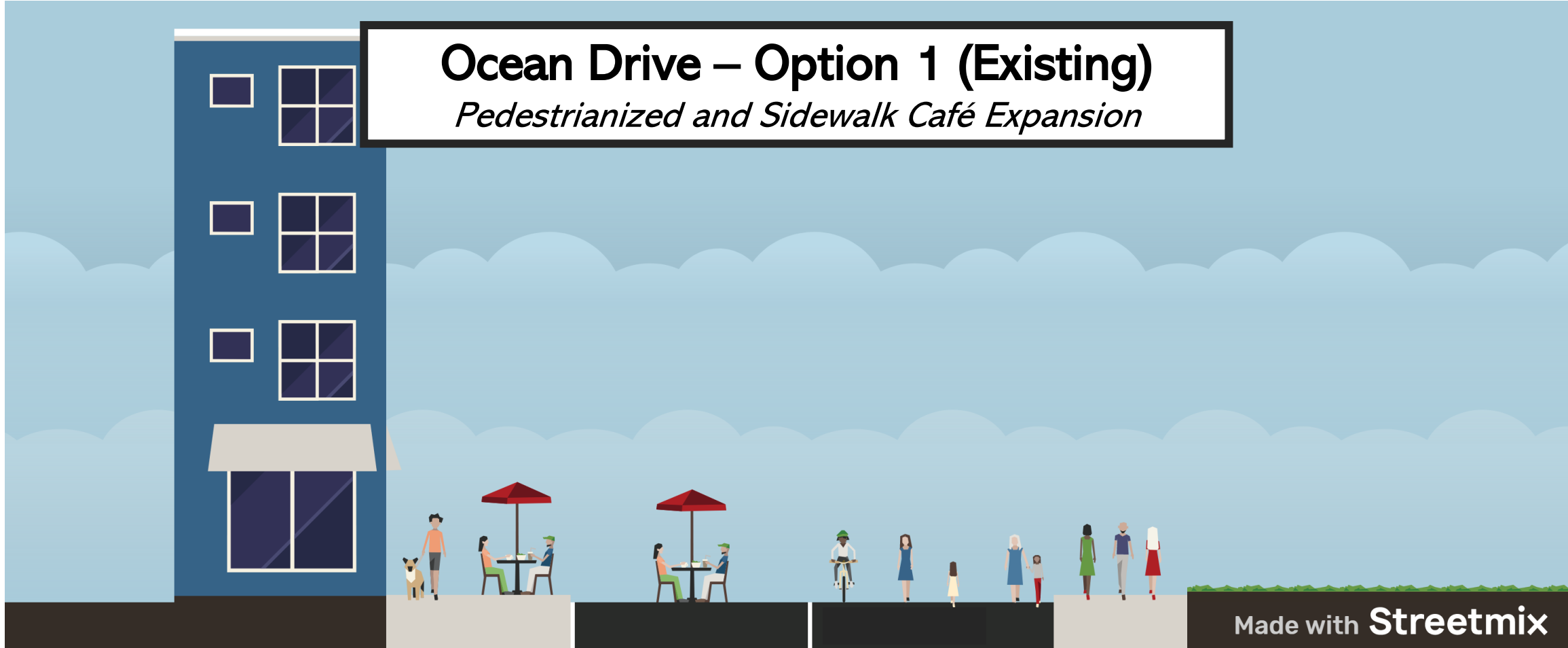
8'
Parking
(includes gutter)

10.5'
Sdwk
(includes curb)

Made with **Streetmix**

Ocean Drive – Option 1 (Existing)

Pedestrianized and Sidewalk Café Expansion



6' Ped Path
8.5' Sdwc Café
(includes Curb)

19'
Sidewalk Café Expansion

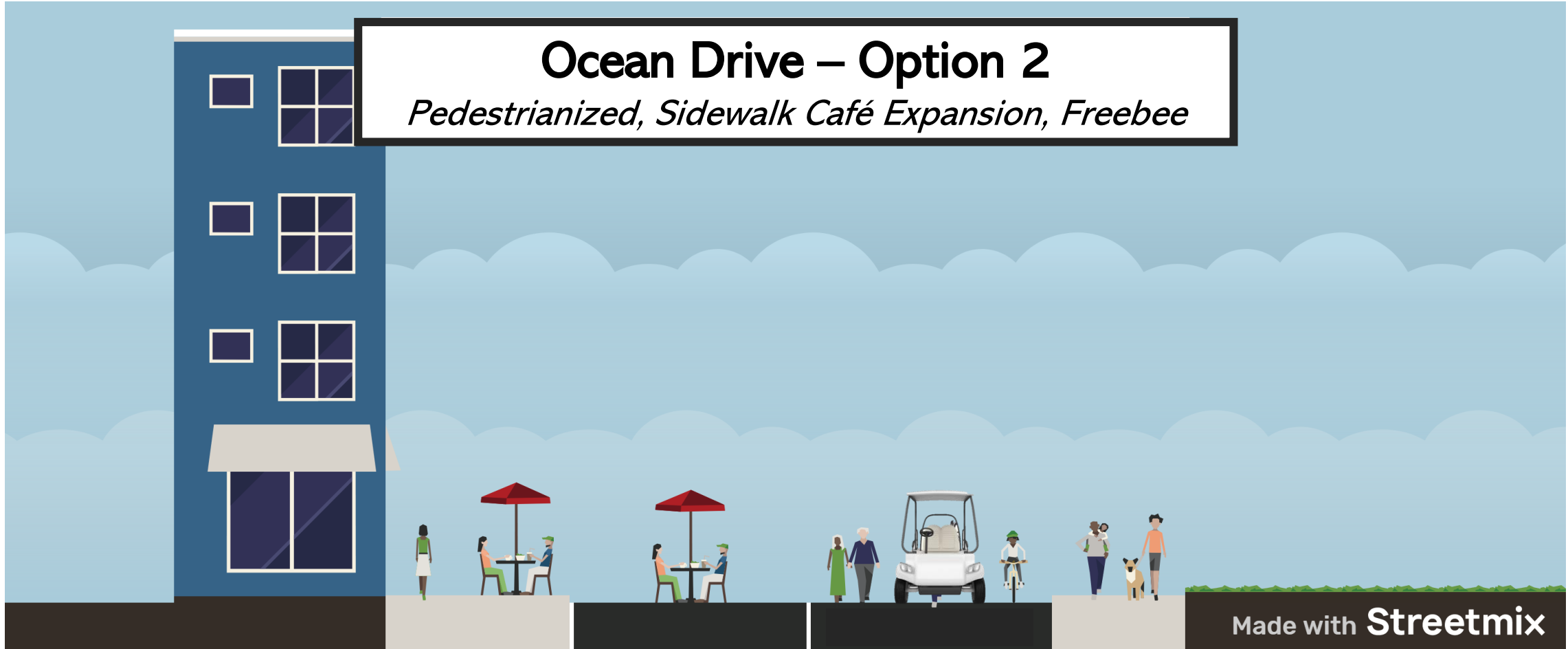
19'
Shared-Space
(Pedestrians and Bikes)

10.5'
Sdwc
(includes curb)

Made with **Streetmix**

Ocean Drive – Option 2

Pedestrianized, Sidewalk Café Expansion, Freebee



6' Ped Path
8.5' Sdwk Café
(includes Curb)

19'
Sidewalk Café Expansion

19'
Shared-Space
(Pedestrian, Bike, Freebee)

10.5'
Sdwk
(includes curb)

Made with **Streetmix**

Ocean Drive – Option 3

*Pedestrianized, Sidewalk Café New Location,
Freebee, Planters*



14.5' Sdkw

20'
Shared-Space
(Pedestrian, Bike, Freebee)

11'
Sidewalk
Café
New Location

7'
Planter Buffer

10.5'
Sdkw
(includes curb)

Made with **Streetmix**

Ocean Drive – Option 3A

Pedestrianized, Sidewalk Café, Freebee, Planters



14.5' Sdwk

11'
Sidewalk
Café and Planter

20'
Shared-Space
(Pedestrian, Bike, Freebee)

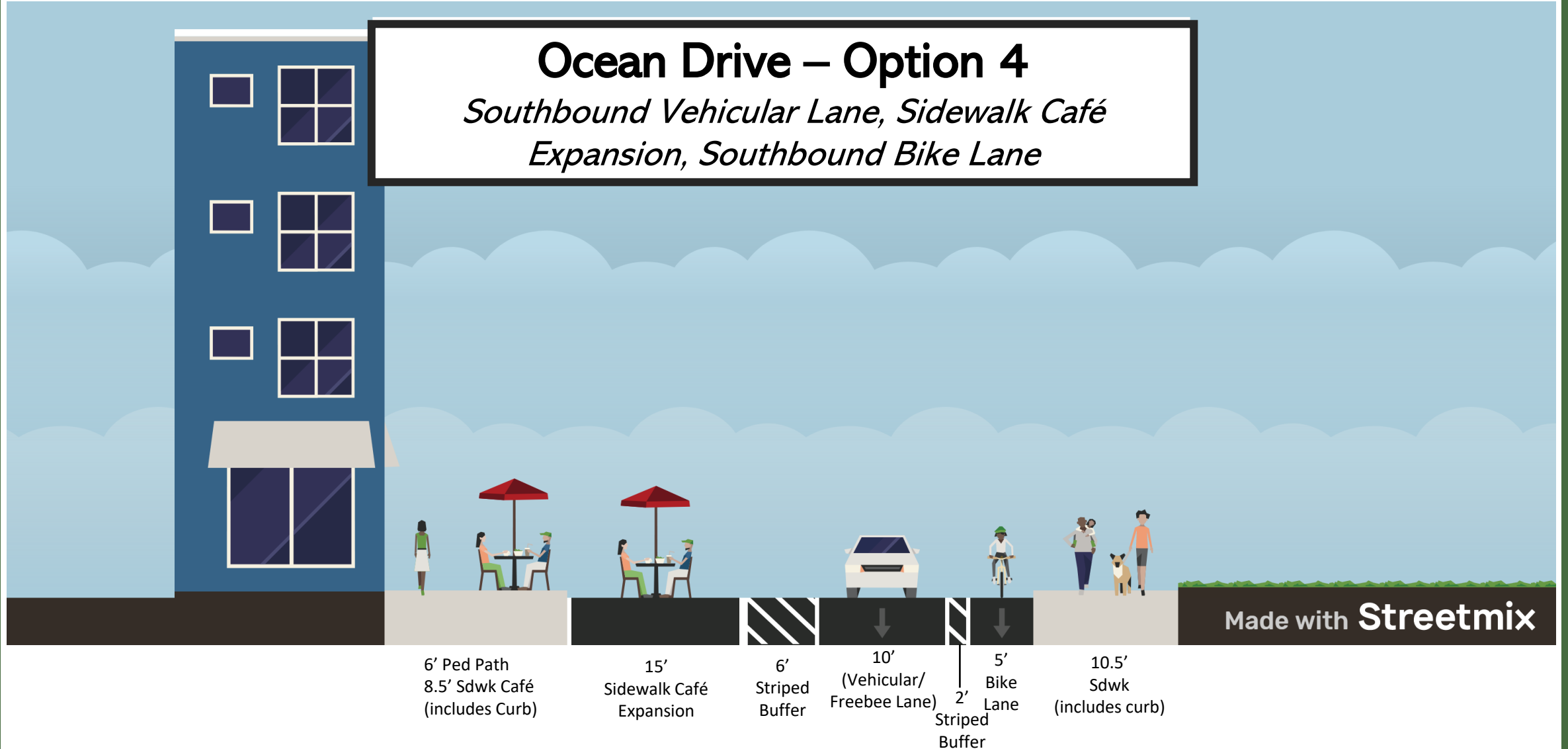
7'
Planters

10.5'
Sdwk
(includes curb)

Made with **Streetmix**

Ocean Drive – Option 4

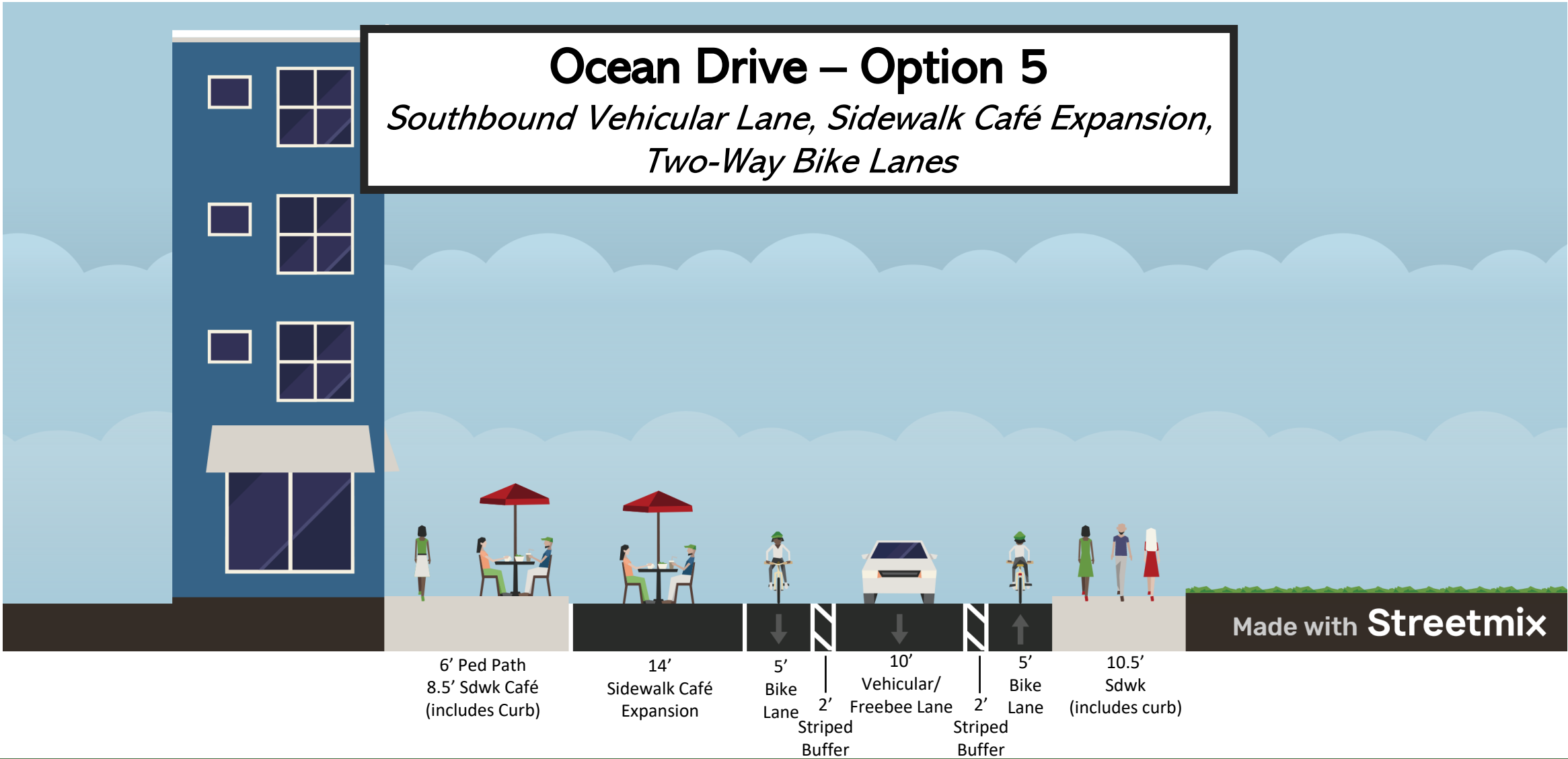
Southbound Vehicular Lane, Sidewalk Café Expansion, Southbound Bike Lane



Note: FLZ and PLZ would be located adjacent to the West Sidewalk in-between parklets. FLZ would be limited to small vehicles.

Ocean Drive – Option 5

*Southbound Vehicular Lane, Sidewalk Café Expansion,
Two-Way Bike Lanes*



Made with **Streetmix**

Note: FLZ and PLZ would be located adjacent to the West Sidewalk in-between parklets. FLZ would be limited to small vehicles.

REFLECTIVE CHAIN OR
HYDRAULIC BARRIER

TYPICAL VALET AREA
9TH, 11TH, 14TH STREET

OCEAN COURT

VALET
TURN-AROUND
ZONE

20'-0"

OCEAN DRIVE

LUMMUS PARK

14'-6"

11'-0"

20'-0"

7'-0"

10'-6"

