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City of Solvang, California, “Danish Capital of America”, Closes Main Thoroughfare of Copenhagen Drive to Vehicular Traffic; Creates Pedestrian Space, Constructs Parklets

-- City of Solvang’s Latest Response to COVID-19-Driven Social Distancing Measures Supports Small Businesses, Food and Beverage Entities in Tourist Related Commercial District (TRC) --

Solvang, CA – Santa Barbara County tourist destination, Solvang, California (www.SolvangUSA.com), dubbed the “Danish Capital of America”, has authorized another COVID-19-driven move to support the California Central Coast community’s small businesses, with a temporary closure of one of the Santa Ynez Valley wine country town’s main thoroughfares, Copenhagen Drive.

The street, in the center of the City of Solvang’s (www.CityofSolvang.com) TRC, is lined with independently-owned boutiques, galleries, Danish bakeries, restaurants, and wine tasting rooms, many of which lack the required interior and/or exterior space to allow for COVID-19 social distancing measures and guidelines for retail or restaurant re-openings. In an effort to support the safe reopening of these businesses the City will temporarily close Copenhagen Drive to vehicular traffic from Alisal Road to the east, to Second Street to the west. Cross-streets in that stretch, such as First Street, will remain open to traffic for local access, and Solvang’s horse-drawn trolley tours will be re-routed to avoid the new pedestrian promenade. The temporary street closure, **effective as of Friday, June 5, 2020**, comes with support from Solvang’s new Marketing & Tourism Steering Committee, comprised of a wide array of Solvang business owners and local representatives.

The closed portions of Copenhagen Drive will sport a new look and concept, with deliberately-placed parklets along the closure to allow for additional outdoor seating and dining areas. Greenery will provide a more park-like feel and overhead, rows of string lights will demarcate the space’s vertical boundaries, and will provide illuminated ambiance in the evenings.

“We’re leaving the space in front of most retail open, so storefronts will now have the option of moving some of their merchandise outside to allow for open-air browsing and shopping. The string lights add a sense of intimacy and warmth, which accompanies the general feeling that fresh air provides a safer environment for locals and visitors to enjoy Solvang’s downtown district,” said Scott Shuemaker, President of IDK Events, Solvang’s current tourism marketing and events contractor.

The new parklets will include interspersed, pop-up bicycle parking with locks, as an added convenience for locals.

Solvang Mayor Ryan Toussaint added, “People visit Solvang for its Northern European-style architecture, its Danish appeal. We want everyone to enjoy Solvang, as they would Europe. While tourism is hindered due to the current events, we want to make it easy for locals to access this part of town to utilize the temporary installation.”

The Copenhagen Drive traffic closures are scheduled to remain in effect until at least July 4, 2020 pending any further changes in social distancing guidelines, and public response to this concept.

The City will also bring in Solvang Brand Ambassadors to assist visitors in and surrounding the new open space, to manage and maintain traffic flow, clean and sanitize public surfaces and high-touch areas, and help visitors to keep with COVID guidelines. The Brand Ambassadors will be able to answer questions about open businesses, and will provide yet another layer of safety as the public strolls in the new social-distancing setting.

In early April, the City of Solvang installed hand sanitizing stations throughout the town; additional stations have been added since that time.

“One of Solvang’s biggest drivers is food and drink, and with the new social distancing guidelines for our hospitality businesses, those with small, indoor spaces would not be able to safely re-open. The closure of Copenhagen will allow these businesses to expand onto sidewalks, and even into parking spots in the street, providing outdoor seating in compliance with the new regulations,” explained Xenia Bradford, Solvang City Manager.

Questions about the Copenhagen street closure may be directed to the City of Solvang at CityHall@CityofSolvang.com. Further information about these efforts will be posted to SolvangResources.com. The City of Solvang is on Facebook at facebook.com/CityofSolvang, and on Instagram at @CityofSolvang.

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