



Main Street Town Square

What We Heard Report: Main Street Town Square
Exit Survey
November 2023

Economic Development
City of Whitehorse



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Engagement results

The Main Street Town Square Exit Survey launched on September 14th and closed on October 1st, 2023, on Engage Whitehorse. The survey had 1,493 responses total, 1,236 from the general public and 257 from businesses (including 56 businesses adjacent to Main Street Town Square).

Overall satisfaction with the project is divided, with 54% of the public satisfied or very satisfied, while 53% of businesses are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Main Street Town Square, and 62% of businesses self-declared as adjacent to Main Street Town Square are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the project.

The main positive aspects of the project were feeling safe within the space, the cleanliness and the atmosphere or inviting nature of the pedestrian area for residents and businesses. The main negative impacts identified by businesses were less parking, traffic flow disruption and accessibility, while most residents mentioned loss of parking, and lack of programming.

Among surveyed businesses self-identifying as adjacent to Main Street Town Square, 19 declared a decrease in business revenue between June and August 2023 compared to 2022; 10 declared an increase, and 16 declared no change. 59% of responding businesses considered that other factors affected the Yukon economy during this summer, especially inflation.

When asked if the City should consider similar initiatives in the future, 72% of residents and 59% of businesses answered yes or maybe.

The main improvements requested by residents are activities/entertainment (60.5%), and community and business engagement (45%). Businesses' main suggested improvements are related to changing the location (46.7%) and activities/entertainment (40.6%).

The main topics appearing in the open questions are related to requesting more events (423 comments), more food vendors/food options (249 comments), and more and a greater variety of seating (240 comments).

The favoured locations for 2024 are:

- The same location as this year (57% of residents, 50% of businesses).
- The Riverfront off Front Street (49% of residents, 53% of responding businesses).
- Front Street, between Main and Steele Streets (40% of residents, 45% of responding businesses).

No operational analysis has yet been done for these locations.

Direct Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to the survey, Administration has collected direct feedback from 22 adjacent businesses and building owners, ten market and food vendors, six partnering organizations, four groups supporting seniors and people with disabilities and five City departments through email, call or in-person meetings.

Eight adjacent stores, most located in Horwoods Mall, directly reported losses during the summer, while four reported having increased sales over that period. All mobile food vendors who participated in the Town Square reported having benefitted from the operation, including two that launched their businesses on the Town Square. Market vendors mostly reported low sales due to low foot traffic.

The artwork has opened new opportunities for the commissioned non-governmental organization. The 14 concerts were attended by approximately 1,515 people.

Groups supporting seniors and people with disabilities noted that the temporary accessible parking stalls, like many of the City's permanent accessible parking spots, did not have accessible ramps to access the sidewalk without having to get onto the road and come onto the sidewalk through the intersection. They also mentioned that locating accessible parking spots on Second Avenue was unsafe, and that the only accessible entry to Horwoods Mall was located on Main Street.

A majority of stakeholders, including businesses located around Main Street, are supportive of the idea of a town square, but some want the City to rethink the location, and include them in future planning. Fifty business owners and NGO workers have shared their contact to be involved in the planning of such future initiatives.

Background

Main Street Town Square Project

The Main Street Town Square (MSTS) project was a seasonal pilot that consisted of turning Main Street into a pedestrian-only square between Second Avenue and Front Street from June 23rd until September 5th, 2023 (See Figure 1). The purpose of the project was to create a vibrant downtown hub for residents and visitors to gather, eat, shop, and enjoy live entertainment. The area was closed to motor vehicle traffic except for emergency, fire trucks, and service vehicles for the duration of the pilot to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The Town Square featured extended patios for adjacent businesses, mobile food vendors (food trucks), planters, picnic tables, and benches, as well as a stage for live entertainment. The streetscape (See Figure 2) was animated by artwork and pavement painting, and pop-up retail vendors were present. To ensure accessibility, four accessible ramps, additional seating and washrooms were provided in the area. Accessible parking spots were made available on Second Avenue and Front Street.

Figure 1. Study Area



Figure 2. Main Street Town Square Set Up



Guiding Documents

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The City's 2040 Official Community Plan (OCP) designates Main Street as "Downtown Core's primary pedestrian-oriented retail corridor" (p.82). It highlights a strong existing pedestrian environment on Main Street, and provides guidelines to animate the streetscape for example with art installations, seating, murals, and flexible front yard setbacks. Policy 15.8.11 states that "Programming efforts and design elements will be supported along Main Street to encourage year-round, full-day use of the right-of-way by enhancing overall pedestrian comforts and interest. This may include temporary use of sidewalks for retail sales or patios" (p. 83).

DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Downtown Plan (2018) echoes the OCP's policies to reinforce the downtown core as the heart of Whitehorse. It identifies a pedestrian street pilot project opportunity on Main Street, which is a blueprint for the Main Street Town Square pilot being proposed. The hypothetical Main Street Events Plan presented in the Downtown Plan (p. 27) shows a closed street for a special event with parking spaces used for extended patios, a dedicated outdoor entertainment area, market stalls, communal tables and chairs as well as a comfort station. The intent of the street closure and programming is to "attract more visitors Downtown for longer periods of time and reinforce the core area as the arts and cultural center for Whitehorse" (p. 28).

SIDEWALK CAFÉ AND POP-UP PATIO PROGRAM

The Sidewalk Café and Pop-up Patio Bylaw 2021-27 was adopted on May 25, 2021 to enable the creation of temporary outdoor seating for patrons of adjacent eating and drinking establishments. A Sidewalk Café is defined as a group of tables, chairs and other accessories situated and maintained on a public sidewalk or boulevard while a pop-up patio is a group of tables, chairs and other accessories situated and maintained on a roadway including designated parking stalls. It stipulates that sidewalk cafes and pop-up patios must be generally adjacent to business frontage, and cannot be within 6 meters of a stop sign or intersection unless appropriate traffic control measures are in place.

All sidewalk cafés and pop-up patios will comply with fire regulations to maintain access to fire department connections, fire hydrants and utility maintenance features at all times. Pop-up patios on the roadway must leave 6 meters between the outside edge of the patio to the inside limit of the traffic lane for vehicles, in this case, emergency vehicles. To maintain pedestrian accessibility, sidewalk cafés must ensure 1.6m of sidewalk remains free and clear for pedestrian use.

ROAD CLOSURE BYLAW

The Special Event Road Closure Bylaw 99-49 allows a temporary closure of a municipal highway for a period of time not exceeding seven (7) days, for special events such as ceremonies, festivities, and other observances including activities such as parades, celebrations and block parties. The proposed Main Street Town Square pilot has the duration of 80 days so does not fall under the regulations set out in the existing bylaw. Therefore, a new bylaw was approved by Council to enable a temporarily closure of Main Street. The Main Street Town Square project and road closure Bylaw was approved by Council on May 23, 2023.

Engagement Overview

Once the Main Street Town Square came to an end, public input was collected from residents and businesses via an online survey on Engage Whitehorse open between September 5 and October 1, 2023, receiving 1,493 responses.

The online survey was advertised on the City of Whitehorse website, and posted on the City of Whitehorse social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) through paid ads. A reminder of the survey closing was posted on Facebook and Instagram on the last day, October 1st. Interested citizens and businesses could follow the link provided to access the survey on engagewhitehorse.ca. Yukon News, CBC Whitehorse and the Whitehorse Star have also shared the survey link in articles in the week of September 10, 2023. The City's Economic Development Coordinator also promoted the survey during a CBC radio interview on September 15, 2023.

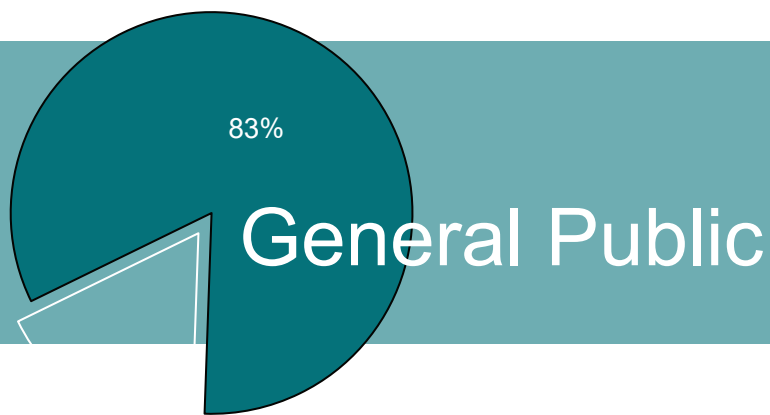
What We Heard

Figure 3. Main Street Town Square



Results Overview

The following is an overview of the input received from the exit survey. The complete survey can be found in Appendix A in a separate appendix document. The survey had 1,493 responses. Most questions allowed respondents to choose from multiple choice answers. Some questions allowed respondents to choose an “other” response and to specify their answer to the question. ‘Other’ responses to questions are listed in Appendix B in a separate appendix document. The first question: “Do you own or operate a business or non-governmental organization (NGO), and/or own commercial land in Whitehorse?” divided respondents into the general public and business respondents. Results from the general public will be presented first, followed by the results from businesses. Many questions were not mandatory, allowing respondents to answer to the questions they wanted, therefore not all questions have the same amount of respondents, and the percentages are based on the number of respondents per question, not on the total number of respondents to the survey.



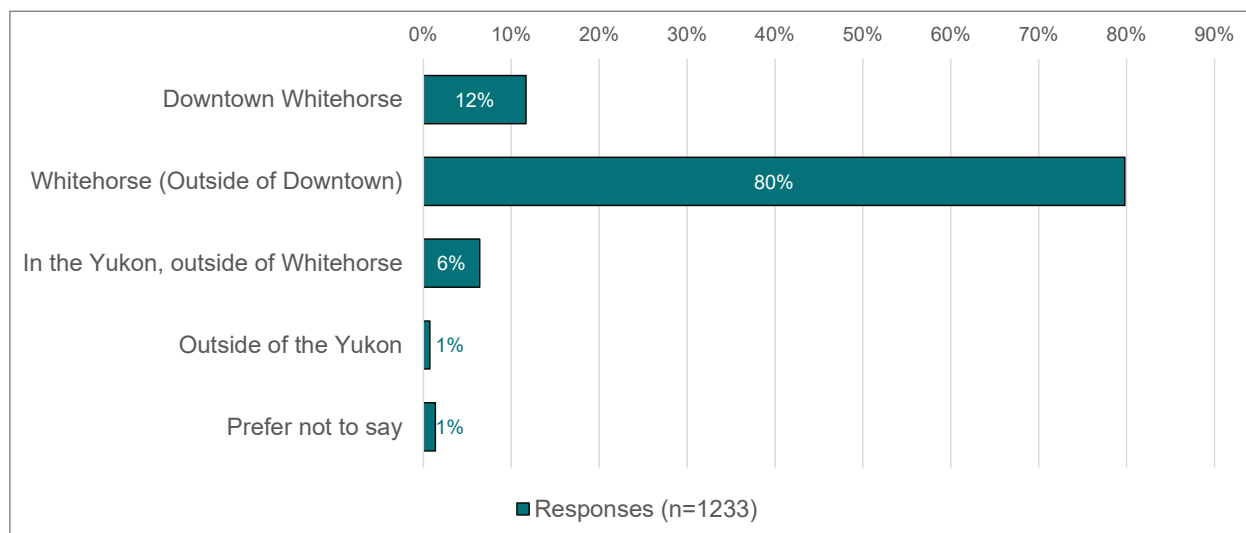
General Public

The following section presents the result of 1,236 survey participants who indicated not owning or operating a business in Whitehorse.

Participant Place of Residence

The general public survey participants were asked to indicate where they resided. The majority of survey participants (80%) indicated living in Whitehorse, outside of Downtown, while 12% declared living in Downtown Whitehorse and another 6% indicated living in the Yukon, but outside of Whitehorse. Nine participants were from outside of the Yukon and 17 preferred not to answer. Refer to Figure 4.

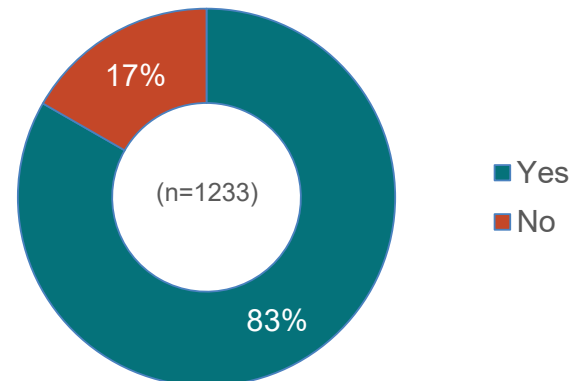
Figure 4. Where do you live?



Visiting Main Street Town Square

The survey participants were asked whether they visited the Main Street Town Square this summer (2023). The majority of participants (83%) indicated that they did, while 17% indicated not having attended. Refer to Figure 5.

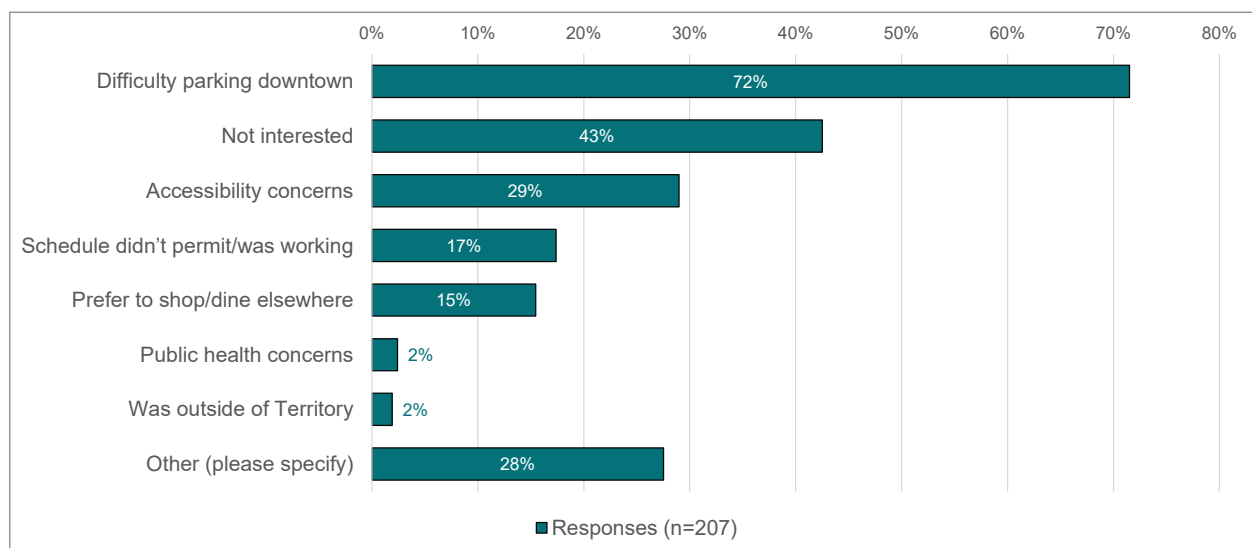
Figure 5. Did you visit the Main Street Town Square this summer?



REASONS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

The participants who indicated not visiting the town square this summer were asked to specify their reason for not visiting. Difficulty parking downtown emerged as the major reason with 72%, while 43% were not interested. 29% selected accessibility concerns. Refer to Figure 6.

Figure 6. Why didn't you visit?



In addition to selecting options from a list of choices, respondents were also given the option to select "other" and provide their individual responses to the question. The following section provides an overview of the main themes that surfaced within the "other" responses, with the percentages reflecting the frequency of specific sentiments mentioned in the 57 responses marked as "other".

Loss of Left Turn Signal and Parking Issues (42%):

Several comments mentioned difficulty turning left onto 2nd Avenue as the traffic light located on Main Street, coming from Front Street, was no longer accessible to turn southbound. The loss of valuable parking spaces was seen as damaging to businesses, tourism, and locals. Parking issues were a common concern, especially for seniors and people with mobility challenges, as they struggled to find nearby parking to access the banks. This made it inconvenient to access services and businesses in the area.

Lack of Appeal and Attractiveness (37%):

The overall aesthetic of the location was criticized. Many individuals noted that the area did not look appealing or inviting. They described it as concrete and unattractive, which deterred them from visiting. There were suggestions of adding activities that are more interactive like a garage sale day or a plant swap.

Negative Perception of the Initiative (25%):

Many people expressed their disagreement with the initiative as a whole. They felt it was a waste of taxpayer money and gave priority to specific businesses over others. Some considered it a misguided attempt to improve the area.

Inconvenience and Disruption (11%):

The closure of the section of Main Street was seen as an inconvenience and a disruption, especially for businesses. Some questioned the decision to close the road for the whole day just to operate during limited hours in the afternoon and evening.

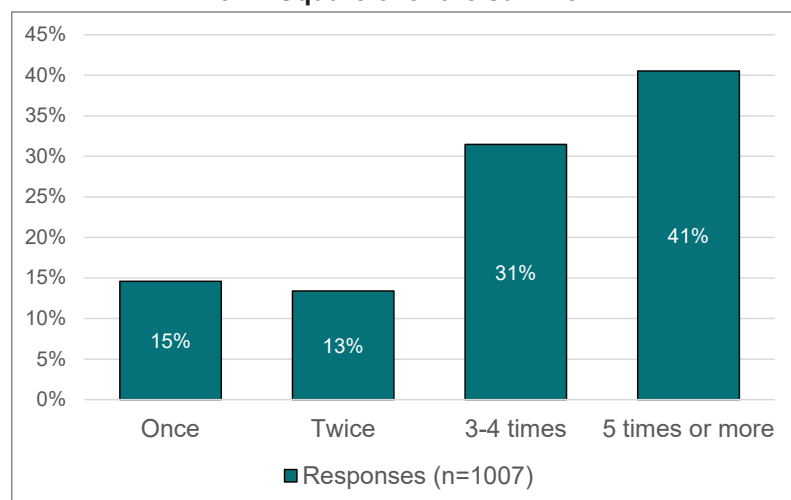
Location Discontent (11%):

Some individuals expressed discontent with the location and a few suggested that the initiative should have been located elsewhere, such as at the wharf or a more suitable location. There was a call to reconsider the chosen location.

AMOUNT OF VISITS

The participants who indicated visiting the Main Street Town Square this summer were asked to specify how many times they attended. Forty-one% attended the Town Square five times or more, 31% three to four times and 28% once or twice. Refer to Figure 7.

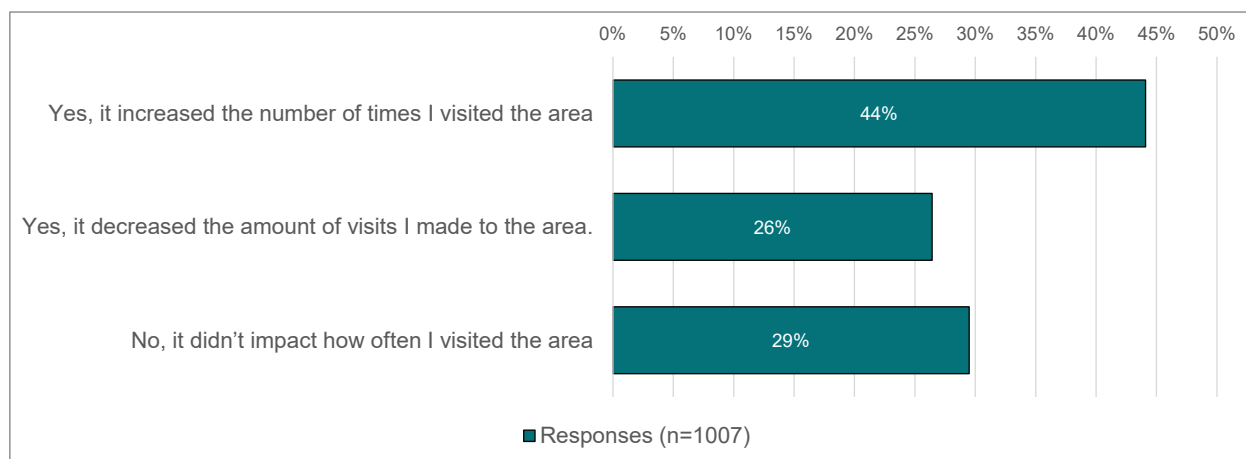
Figure 7. How many times did you attend the Main Street Town Square over the summer?



INFLUENCE IN NUMBER OF VISITS

The participants were asked whether they believed the transformation of this portion of Main Street into a pedestrian area affected the number of times they visited the area. While 44% indicated that it increased the number of times they visited, 26% indicated that it decreased their visits to this area. 29% believed it did not affect the amount of times they visited the area. Refer to Figure 8.

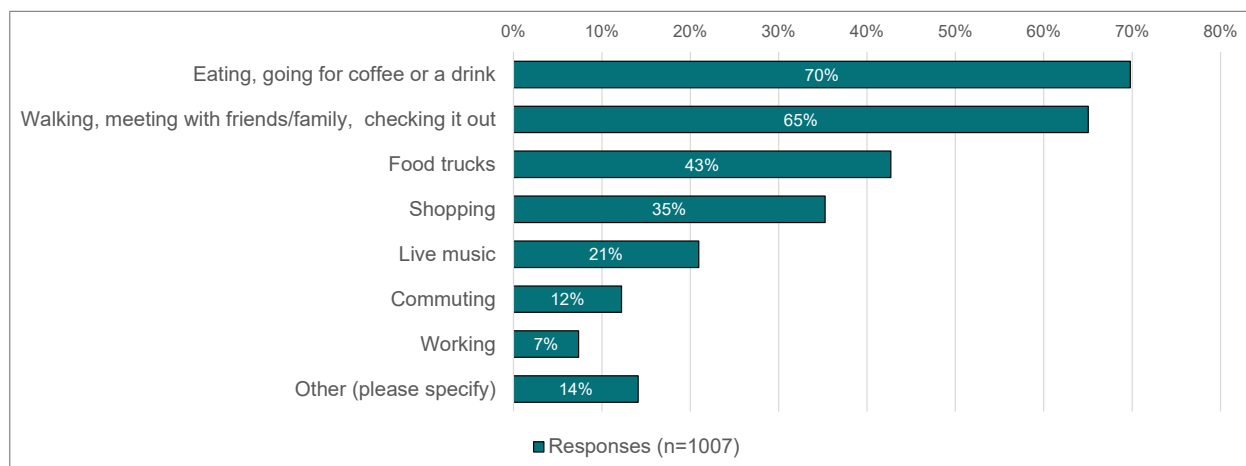
Figure 8. Has the transformation of this portion of Main Street into a pedestrian area affected the number of times you visited the area?



REASONS FOR VISIT

The survey participants were asked to specify the reason for their visit. Eating, going for coffee or a drink was the most selected reason with 70%, closely followed by walking, meeting with friends/family, checking it out. Food trucks and shopping was also an attractant to visit the town square. Refer to Figure 9.

Figure 9. Why did you visit?

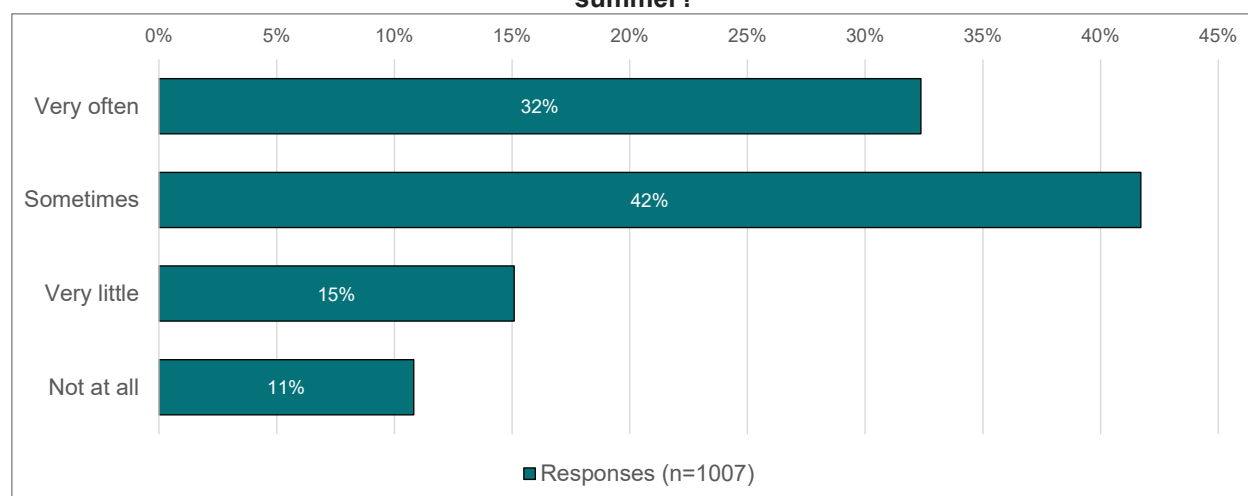


Other responses included banking, passing through the area, checking it out, dining, running errands, and occasionally observing or enjoying the atmosphere. Numerous comments highlighted the inconvenience of the space for reaching banks and other businesses. Some expressed curiosity and hoped for more activities or events in the area.

VISITING DOWNTOWN

The survey participants were asked to indicate how often they visited elsewhere downtown after visiting the MSTS area during the summer. While the majority indicated sometimes visiting elsewhere after their visit to the Town Square, another 32% indicated that they do so very often. Refer to Figure 10.

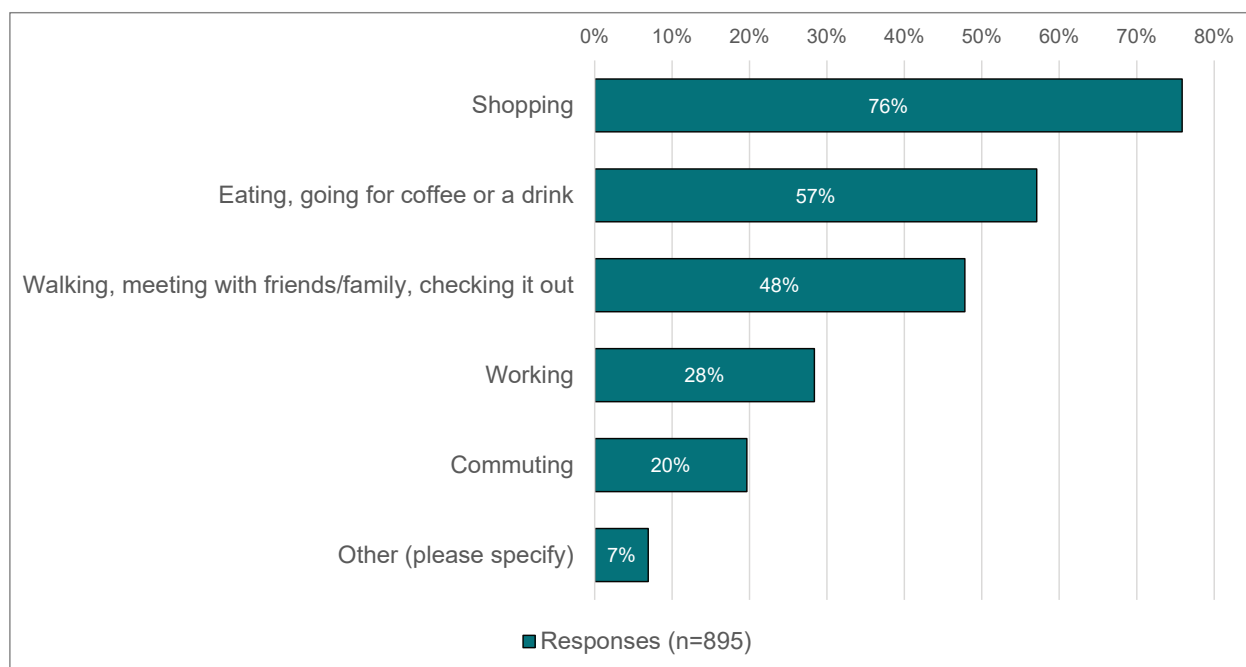
Figure 10. How often did you visit elsewhere downtown after visiting the MSTS area during the summer?



REASON FOR DOWNTOWN VISIT

The survey revealed that the primary motivation for visiting downtown was shopping, as indicated by most participants. Approximately 57% of respondents chose dining, grabbing coffee, or enjoying a drink as their main purpose for visiting. Following closely, 48% of participants mentioned walking and socializing with friends or family as their reason for being downtown. Among the 62 “other” responses, the majority cited activities such as banking, running errands, or attending appointments. Refer to Figure 11.

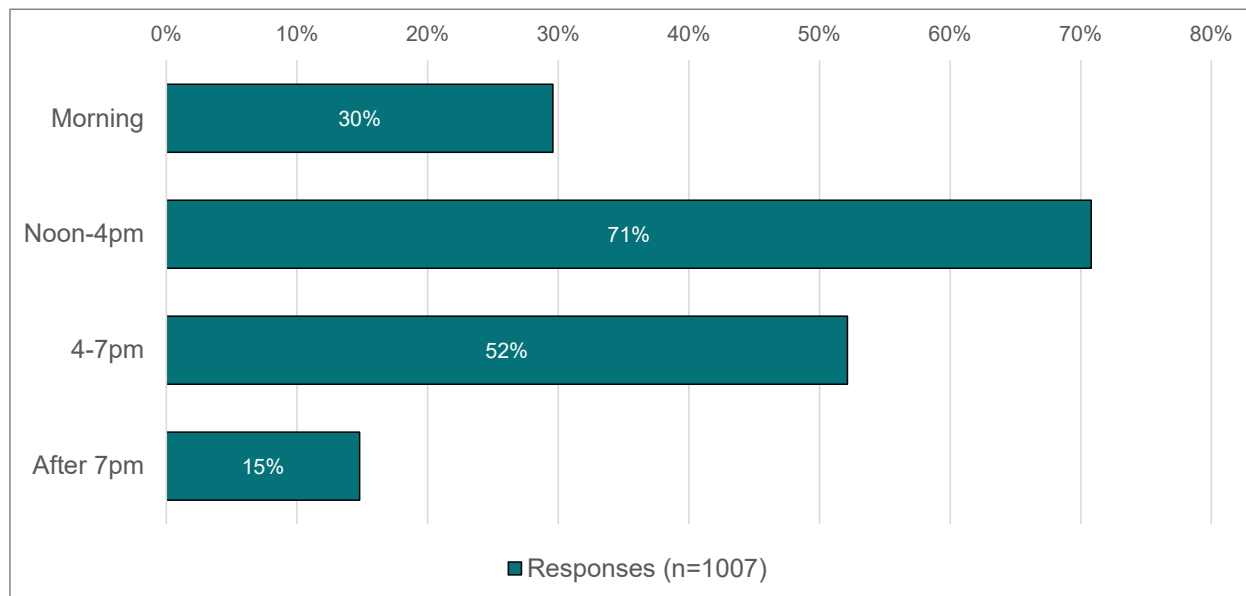
Figure 11. When visiting elsewhere downtown, what was the purpose of your visit(s)?



TIME OF VISIT

The respondents were asked to indicate at what time of day they visited the Town Square. They could select all that applied. With 71%, the majority visited the town square between noon and 4pm, 52% between 4pm and 7pm. The town square was less frequented during the morning (30%) and after 7pm (15%). Refer to Figure 12.

Figure 12. When did you visit?

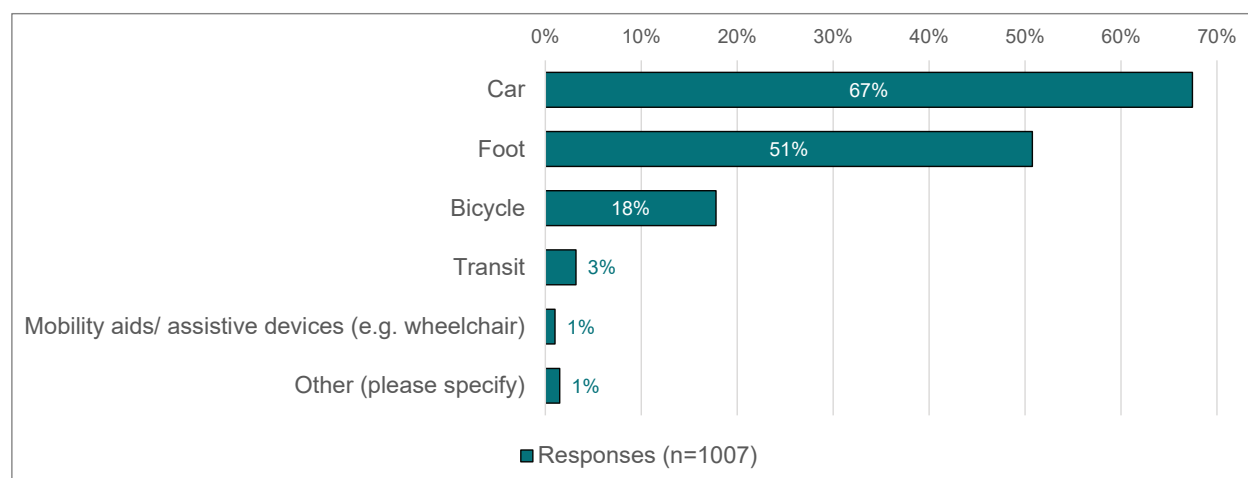


MODE OF TRANSPORT

The participants were asked with which mode of transport they traveled to the MSTs. Again, they could choose all options that applied to them and also had the option to specify another response. While by car was the majority response (67%), 51% indicated arriving by foot and 18% by bicycle. Refer to Figure 13.

Other comments included a variety of transportation methods to reach the town square. Some carpooled with friends, while others walked due to limited parking availability or used modes like skateboards or motorcycles. Limited bus services in certain areas constrained options for some individuals. Concerns about safety were prevalent, with individuals expressing reluctance to bike due to the absence of safe infrastructure and fears of accidents.

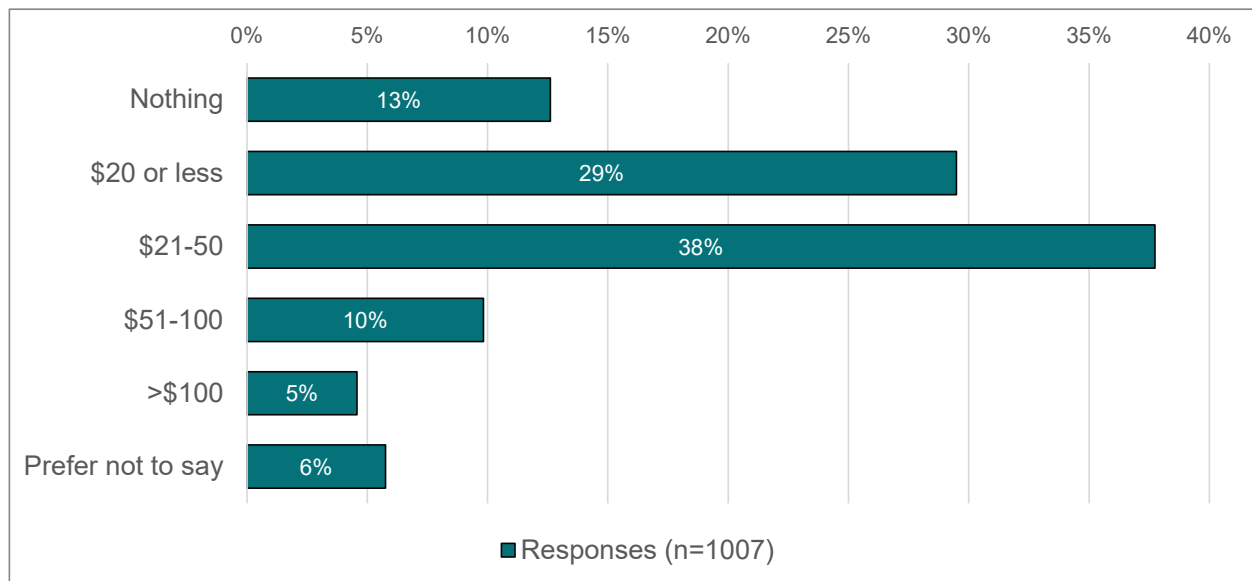
Figure 13. How did you travel to the MSTs?



AVERAGE MONEY SPENT

Participants in the survey were requested to provide insights into their typical spending habits during their visits to the area. The data revealed that a significant proportion, constituting the majority, reported spending up to \$50 on average during their visits. Notably, 13% of respondents indicated that they spent nothing during their visits. In contrast, a smaller but noteworthy 5% of participants reported spending more than \$100 during their visits. Refer to Figure 14.

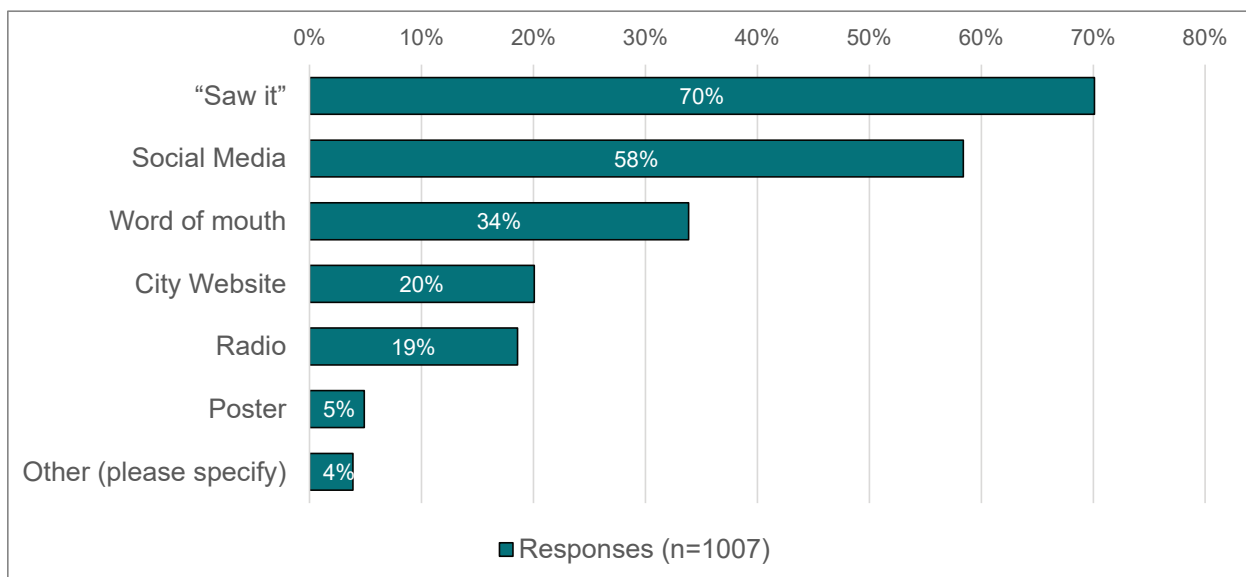
Figure 14. How much did you spend on average on your visits to the area?



PROMOTION OF THE PROJECT

The participants were asked how they heard about the MSTs. The majority of participants indicated seeing the Town Square, followed by advertisements through Social Media and Word of mouth. Refer to Figure 15. Other Responses mostly outlined printed News or learning about it through workplaces.

Figure 15. How did you hear about the MSTs?

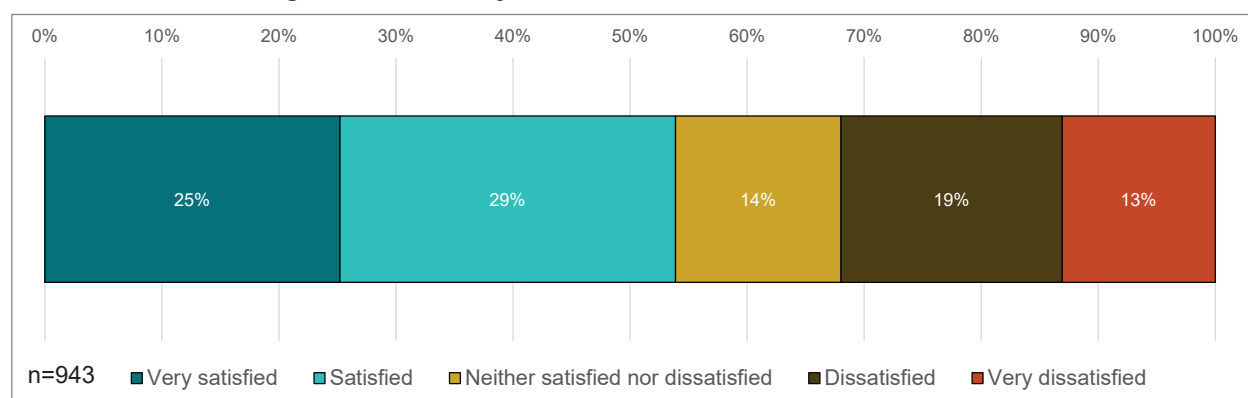


Evaluating Main Street Town Square

OVERALL SATISFACTION

The survey results provide insight into the satisfaction levels of the public survey participants with the MSTS. It is notable that a combined 54% of respondents expressed positive sentiments, with 25% indicating they were “very satisfied” and an additional 29% reporting that they were “satisfied” with the Main Street Town Square. In contrast, 18% of participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the MSTS, and 13% were particularly discontent, as they reported being “very dissatisfied.” Refer to Figure 16.

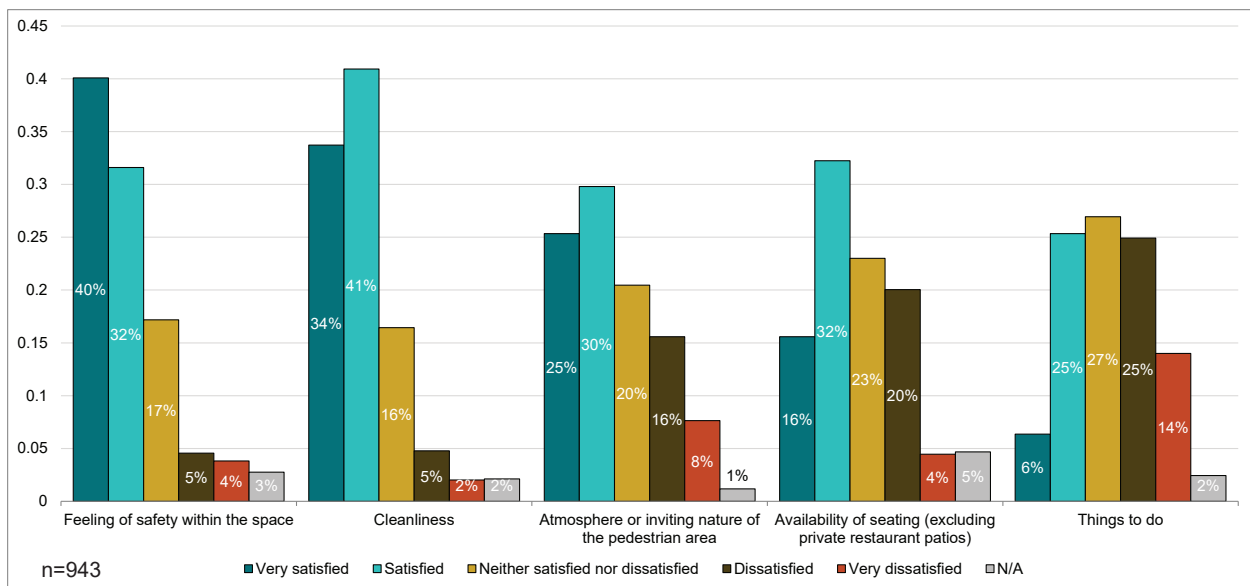
Figure 16. What is your overall satisfaction with the MSTS?



ASPECTS OF THE MAIN STREET TOWN SQUARE

Survey participants were given the opportunity to express their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the Main Street Town Square (MSTS). The results indicated that several characteristics of the MSTS were positively received by the public. Notably, respondents expressed a high level of appreciation for the sense of safety within the space, the overall cleanliness, and the inviting atmosphere of the pedestrian area. However, it is worth highlighting that the category labeled “Things to do” within the MSTS received the highest number of dissatisfied votes. Refer to Figure 17.

Figure 17. Please rate your satisfaction level with the following aspects of the MSTs.

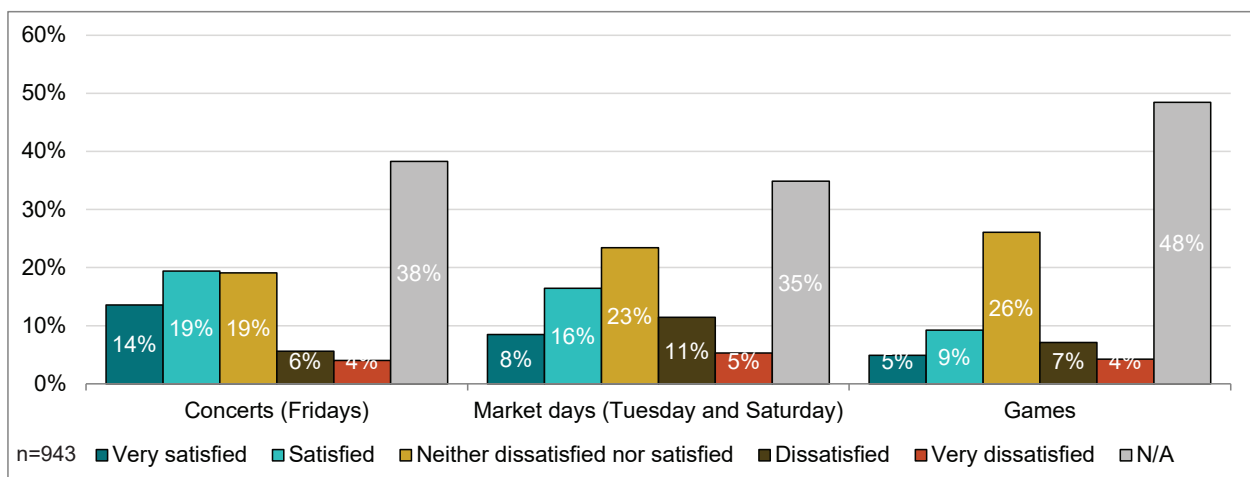


ACTIVITIES IN THE MAIN STREET TOWN SQUARE

Survey participants were also asked to assess their satisfaction levels regarding the activities offered in the MSTs, which included Market days on Tuesdays and Saturdays, Concerts on Fridays, and various games available throughout the square.

Notably, Concerts garnered the highest satisfaction rate, with 33% of respondents expressing either satisfaction or very high satisfaction. Conversely, Market days received the highest dissatisfaction rate, as 16% of participants indicated they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. It is worth mentioning that a significant number of participants chose the "not applicable" option for evaluating these activities. Refer to Figure 18.

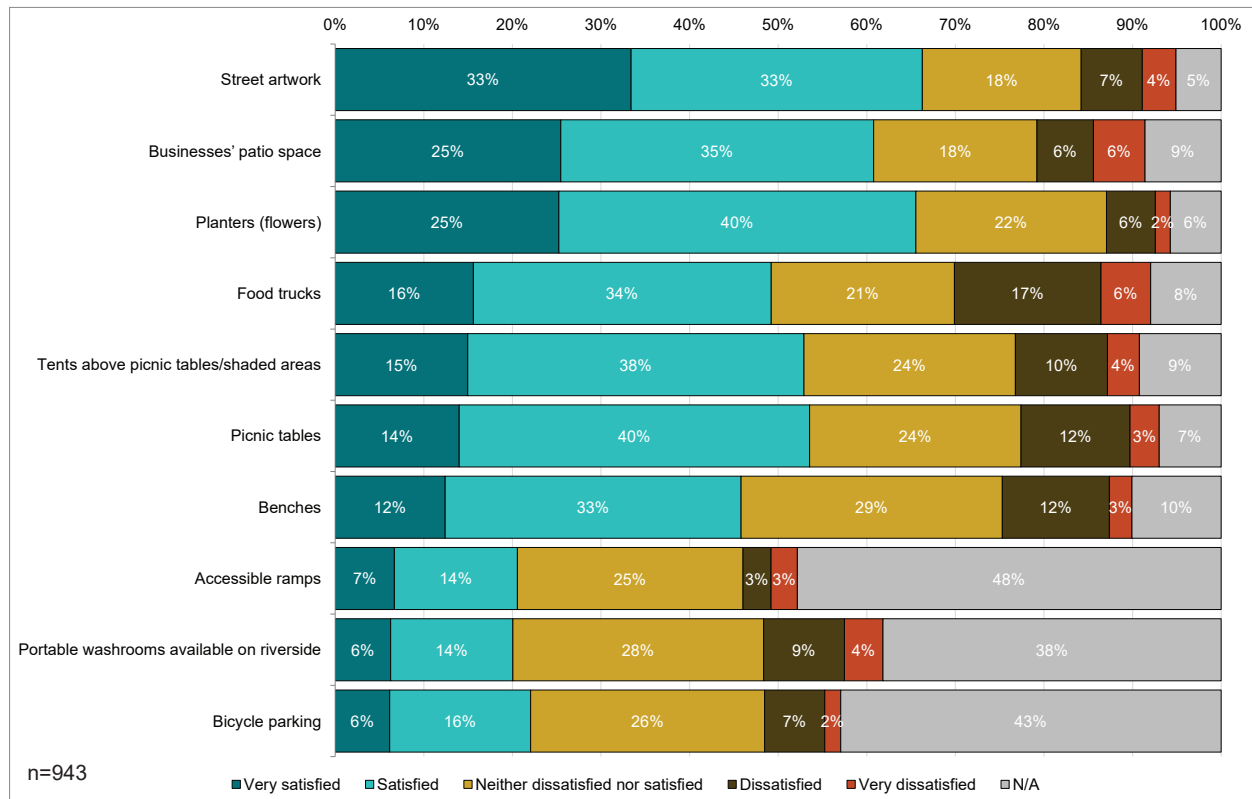
Figure 18. How satisfied were you with these activities in the MSTs?



AMENITIES OF THE MAIN STREET TOWN SQUARE

Survey participants were tasked with evaluating their satisfaction levels with the amenities available at the Main Street Town Square. A majority of participants expressed satisfaction with specific elements within the MSTS, including the street artwork, businesses' patio areas, shaded picnic tables, and the planters. On the other hand, there was a prevalent sense of dissatisfaction among participants regarding certain amenities. Notably, the food trucks were the primary source of discontent. Refer to Figure 19.

Figure 19. How satisfied were you with these amenities in the MSTS?

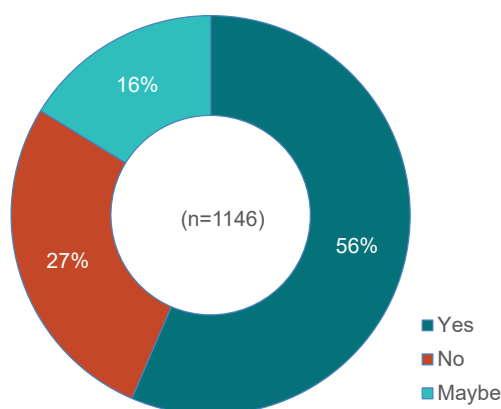


Future Planning

SIMILAR FUTURE INITIATIVES

Survey participants were inquired about whether the City should contemplate similar initiatives in the future. A majority of respondents, 56%, expressed their support for the city's consideration of future initiatives resembling the MSTs. Conversely, 27% of participants indicated their opposition to the idea of pursuing similar initiatives in the future. Refer to Figure 20.

Figure 20. Should the City consider similar initiatives in the future?



FUTURE TOWN SQUARE LOCATIONS

Survey participants who expressed interest in the City considering similar initiatives or were uncertain were subsequently questioned about their preferred location for a future town square. They were presented with a map showing conceptual boundaries for each answer choice, along with the opportunity to offer additional input through the "other" category. 57% voted for it being in the same location as this year, on Main Street between Front and Second. The River Side off Front Street was also a favored location followed by Front Street, between Main and Steele. Refer to Figure 21.

Many respondents in the "other" responses expressed preferences for specific locations such as Front Street, Steele Street, or Main Street for a potential town square, emphasizing accessibility and minimal disruption to traffic and businesses. Some suggested alternatives like Rotary Park or Shipyards Park. Concerns included the impact on parking availability, traffic flow, and avoiding access point blockage. Business owners' input was seen as crucial, with some proposing location rotation for broader benefits.

Furthermore, several participants stressed the importance of ensuring accessibility for all, especially seniors and individuals with disabilities, to nearby businesses and events. Pedestrian safety and the availability of active transportation infrastructure were also highlighted as critical factors to consider in the planning process.

Figure 21. What do you think would be the best location for a future town square?

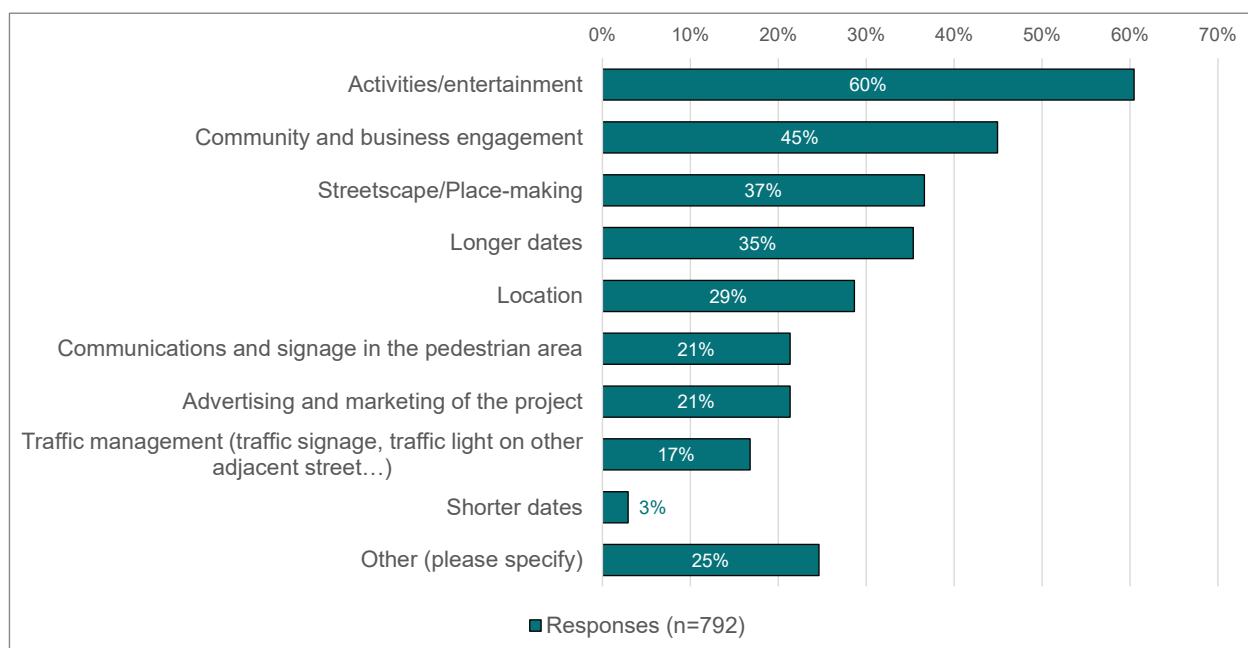


IMPROVEMENTS

Survey respondents were prompted to specify areas they believed could be enhanced in the event of a future town square project. While they had predefined options to select from, they were also given the opportunity to offer their own comments. A predominant concern among participants was the improvement of activities and entertainment, with another key focus being on enhancing community and business engagement. Refer to Figure 19.

Other comments expressed the need for improvements. They highlighted concerns related to traffic flow and access to businesses, suggesting that changes should not unduly affect certain establishments. Suggestions for enhancing the town square included more seating, diverse food truck options, shade structures, and a broader range of activities and entertainment. Some comments emphasized the importance of engaging local businesses, ensuring accessibility, and creating an inviting atmosphere.

Figure 22. What do you think could be improved if a town square were to happen again?

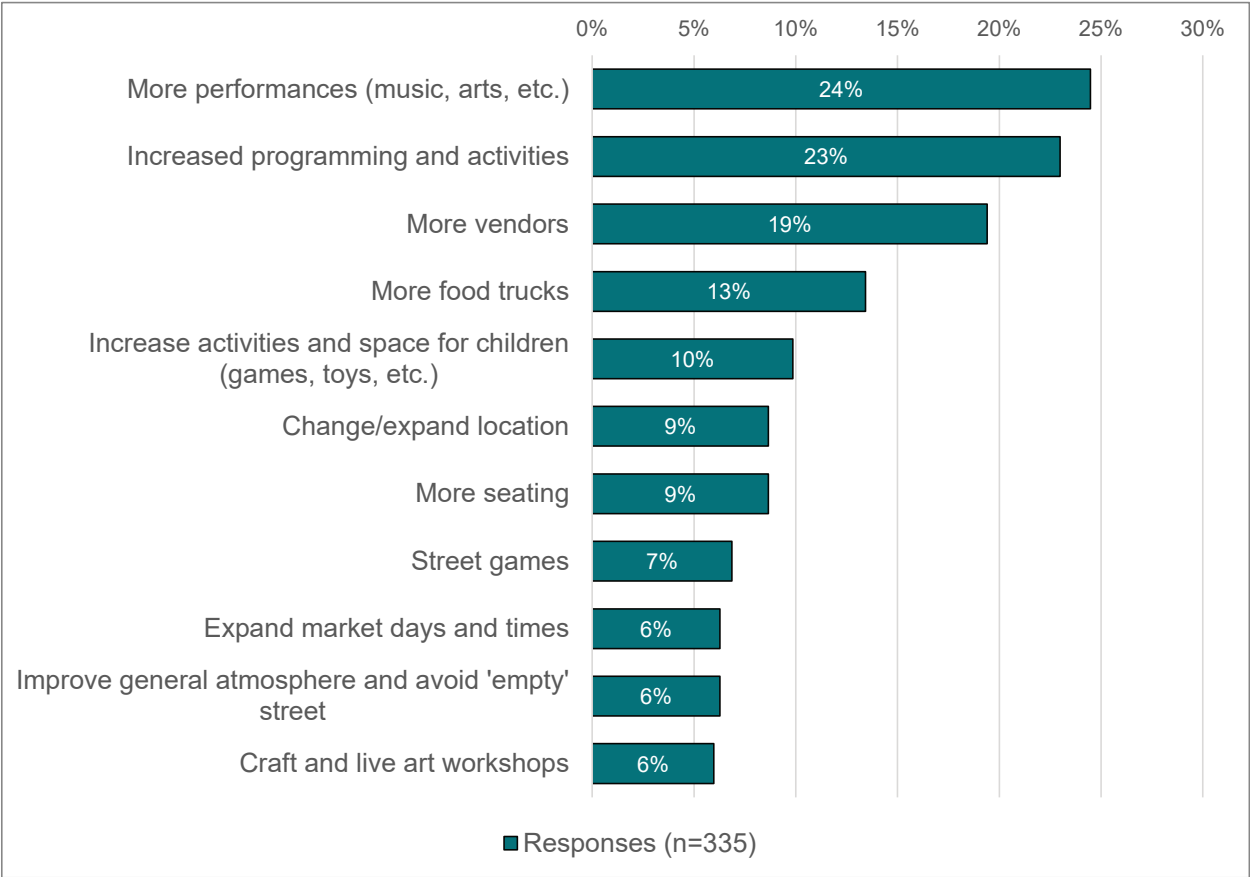


SUGGESTED FUTURE ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMMING

The survey participants were asked to give their input on any activities or programming they would like to see included or expanded on in any similar future initiative. This was an optional open response question and respondents consistently expressed a strong desire for increased entertainment and activities in the town square. They wanted more music, live concerts, street performers, and buskers to create a lively atmosphere. This desire extended to daytime and evening events, with suggestions for evening markets, expanded vendor variety, food trucks, and more children's activities.

Respondents proposed relocating the event to different areas and expanding the pedestrian closure. They also stressed the need for ample seating and versatile activities for all ages. Additionally, there was a call for more artistic and cultural activities, including collaborations with local artisans and First Nations communities. The overarching goal was to enhance the square's vibrancy and offer a diverse range of entertainment options. Some respondents even considered extending or relocating the town square to the Waterfront Wharf. Refer to Figure 23.

Figure 23. Suggested future activities or programming



SUGGESTED FUTURE AMENITIES

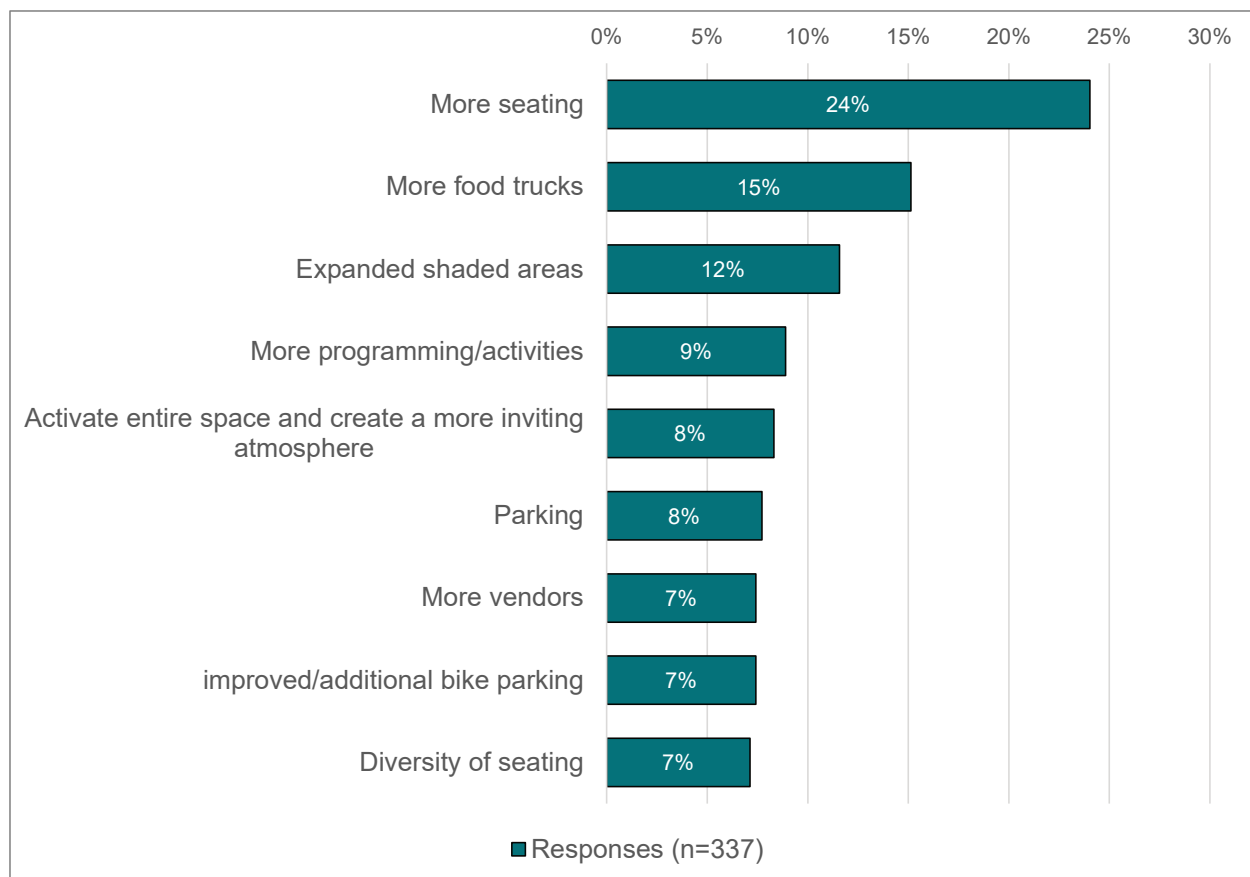
The survey participants were also inquired about any amenities they would like to see included or expanded in any similar future initiatives. The comments from respondents revealed a strong desire to enhance the town square, emphasizing the need for increased seating options, such as picnic tables, benches, and shaded areas. There was a clear consensus on expanding seating capacity to create a more inviting space for gatherings and dining. Respondents also stressed the importance of diverse seating choices, visual enhancements like street lights and artwork, and more music to enliven the atmosphere.

Food options in the square were a significant concern, with many expressing a desire for more food trucks offering a wider variety of choices. They called for food trucks to be more accessible on the street, accompanied by additional shaded seating and covered picnic areas.

Parking issues were prevalent in the comments, due to the street closure. Many expressed frustration over the limited parking options, especially for individuals with disabilities.

Lastly, the community's desire for a wider variety of vendors and activities in the area was evident. Respondents emphasized the need for more diverse businesses, services, and entertainment options to create a bustling and attractive destination for both locals and tourists. Refer to Figure 24.

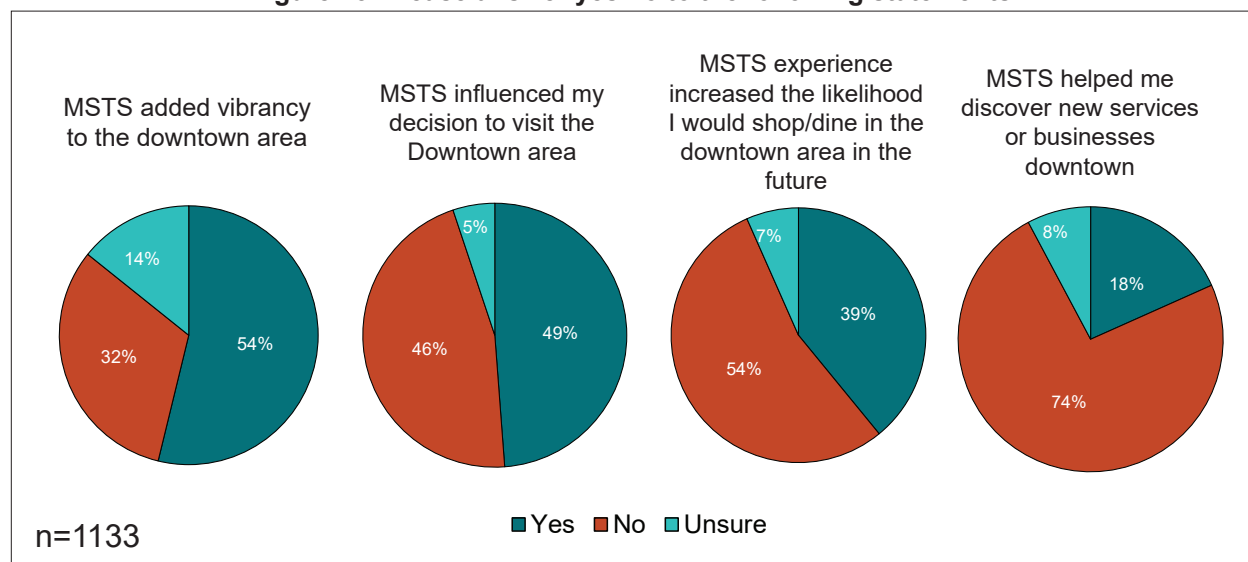
Figure 24. Are there any amenities you would like to see included or expanded in any similar future initiatives?



IMPACT OF THE MSTS ON THE DOWNTOWN AREA

Respondents were presented with statements assessing the impact of the Main Street Town Square (MSTS) on the Downtown Area and were asked to choose "yes," "no," or "unsure" as their response. A majority of respondents (54%) affirmed that the MSTs added vibrancy to the downtown area, while 49% stated that it influenced their decision to visit the Downtown area. Conversely, the MSTs was generally not seen as a means to discover new services or businesses downtown, with 74% expressing this sentiment. Furthermore, the town square experience did not appear to enhance the likelihood of future shopping or dining for 54% of the respondents. Refer to Figure 25.

Figure 25. Please answer yes/no to the following statements.



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The survey for the general public was concluded with an optional open-ended question, inviting respondents to provide any additional comments or information they considered important for consideration.

Participants expressed concerns about the town squares effects on parking, accessibility, and business operations. Many respondents highlighted the reduction in parking spaces, particularly how it negatively impacted access to essential services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Uneven impacts on local businesses and parking difficulties discouraged people from visiting the area, leading to dissatisfaction.

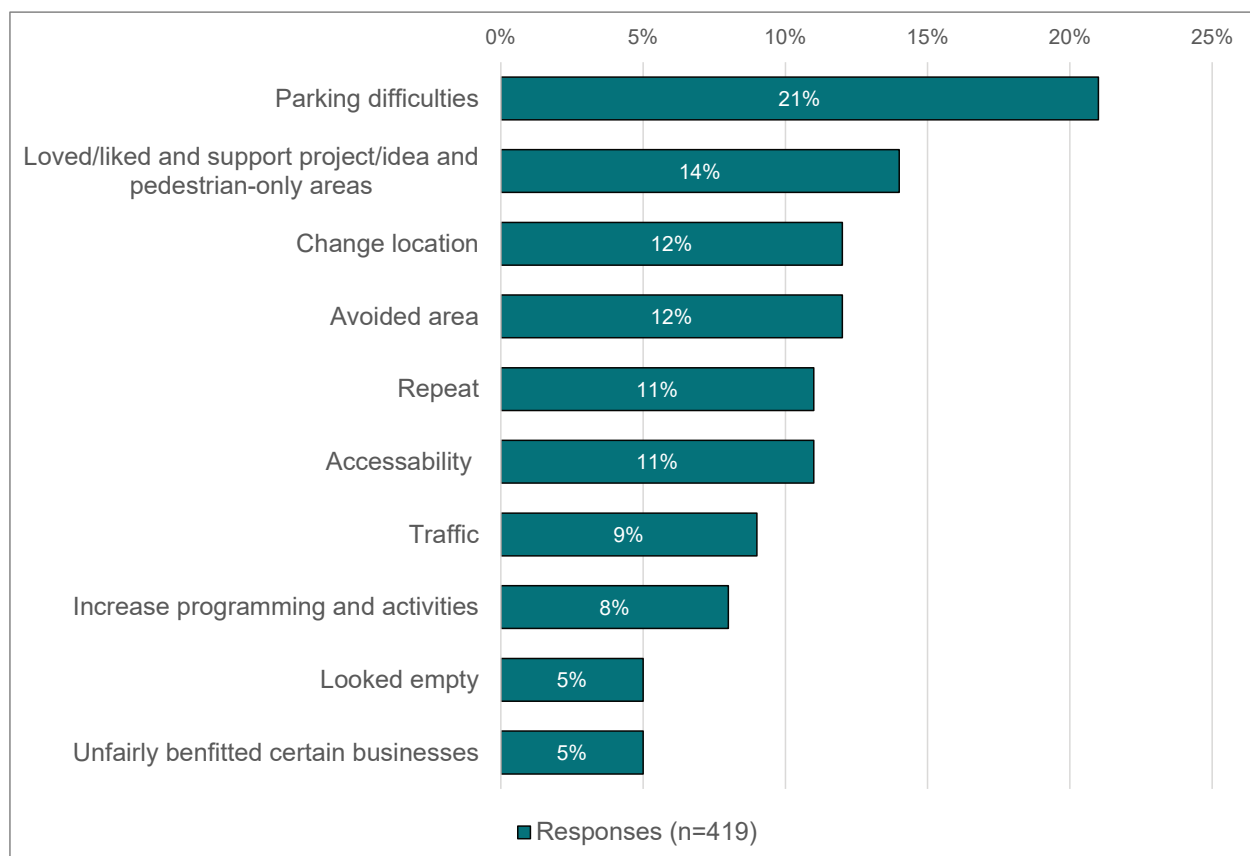
Conversely, the Walkable Cities initiative received positive feedback, with enthusiasm for its pedestrian-friendly spaces. It was seen as a significant advancement in city planning, providing a sense of safety and community. Many supported its expansion and continuation.

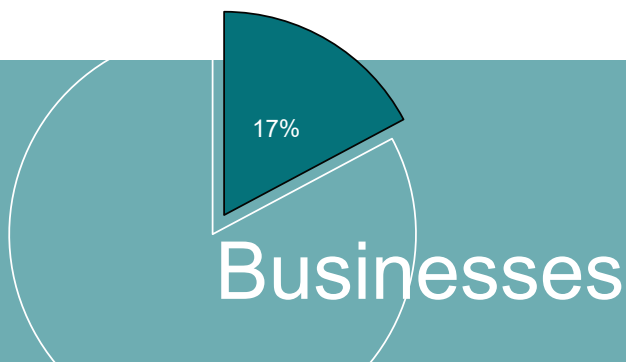
Concerns about the town squares location and convenience were raised, with suggestions for more suitable locations. Parking problems led many to choose other areas, negatively affecting businesses. Accessibility issues were recurring, hindering access to essential services for those with mobility issues and seniors. There were concerns about certain businesses benefiting unfairly from the initiative, but some expressed support for the Main Street Town Square, acknowledging its potential benefits for community interaction.

Respondents emphasized the necessity for additional programming and activities in the Main Street Town Square, as many felt that the square often appeared underutilized. Suggestions to make it more vibrant included more live music, cultural events, markets, food vendors, and activities for all age groups.

Views on the initiative's impact on traffic varied, with some perceiving improved flow and safety, while others cited concerns about congestion, reduced parking, and increased pollution due to road closures. Suggestions were made to reconsider future initiative locations to minimize traffic disruptions, reflecting differing opinions on its impact. Refer to Figure 26 to observe how often these themes were mentioned in the comments.

Figure 26. Additional Comments Frequency by Themes





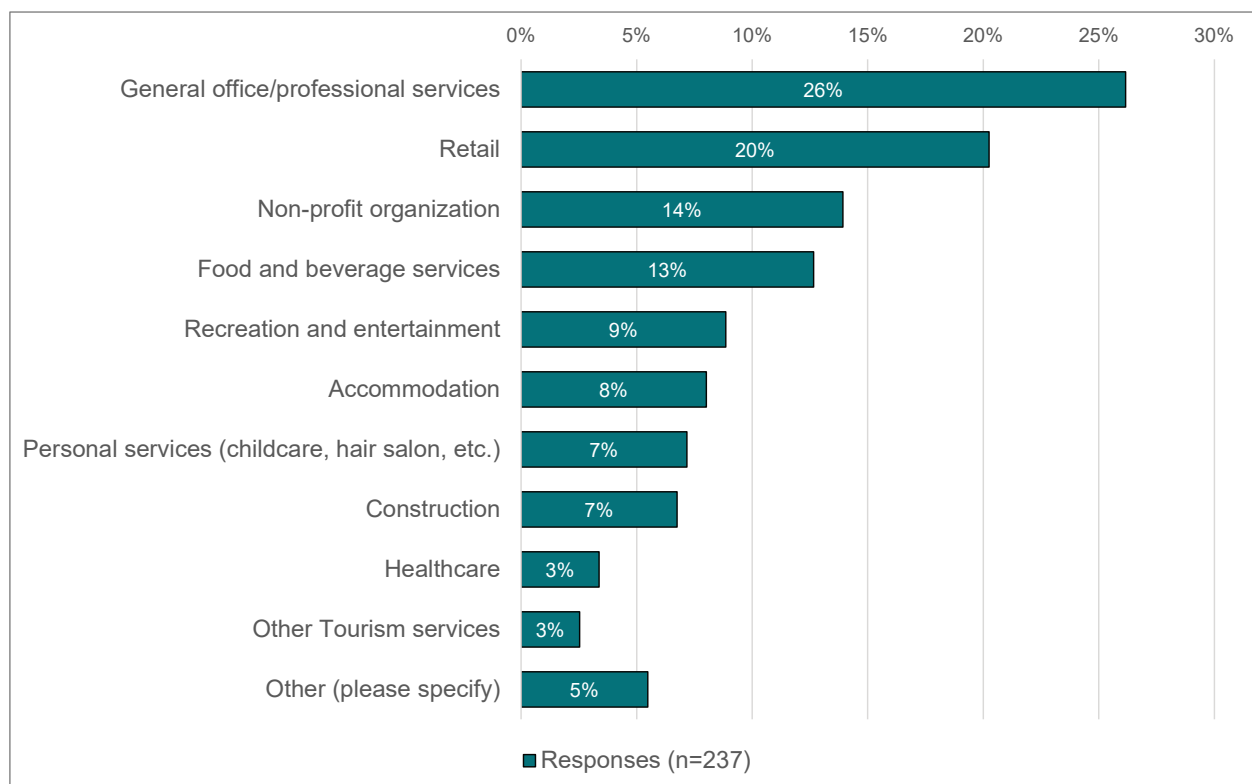
Businesses

The first survey question categorized the participants into two distinct groups: Business respondents and the general public. These two groups received survey questions tailored to their focus to ensure a comprehensive analysis of their specific perspectives regarding the pilot project. This section of the What We Heard Report focuses on presenting the responses of 257 participants who identified themselves as either business owners or operators, had affiliations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and/or possessed commercial property in Whitehorse. For the sake of clarity and brevity, this group will be referred to as “Businesses” throughout the survey analysis.

TYPE OF BUSINESS

The Business participants were asked to indicate what type of businesses they had. They could choose from a list of options, or select “other” and specify their response.

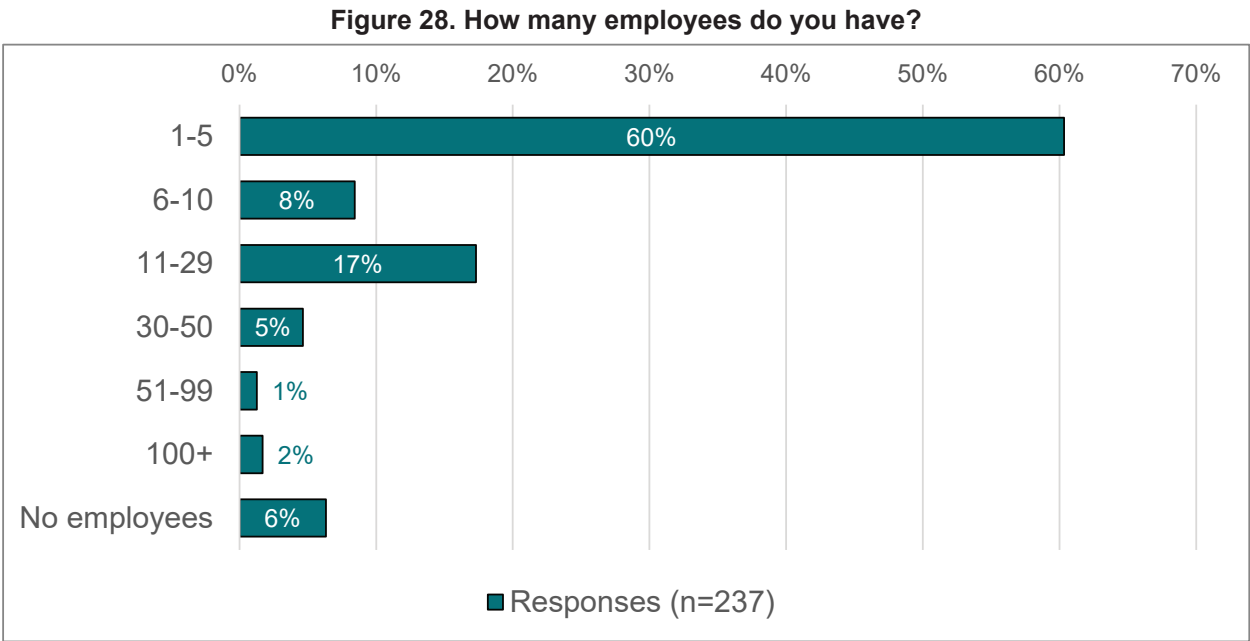
Figure 27. What type of business(es) do you have?



The majority, accounting for 26%, represents general office and professional services. Retail followed closely at 20%, while non-profit organizations comprised 14% of the business participants. Food and beverage services and recreation and entertainment sectors made up 13% and 9%, respectively. Accommodation services represented 8%, while other tourism services constituted 3%. Refer to Figure 27.

Amount of employees

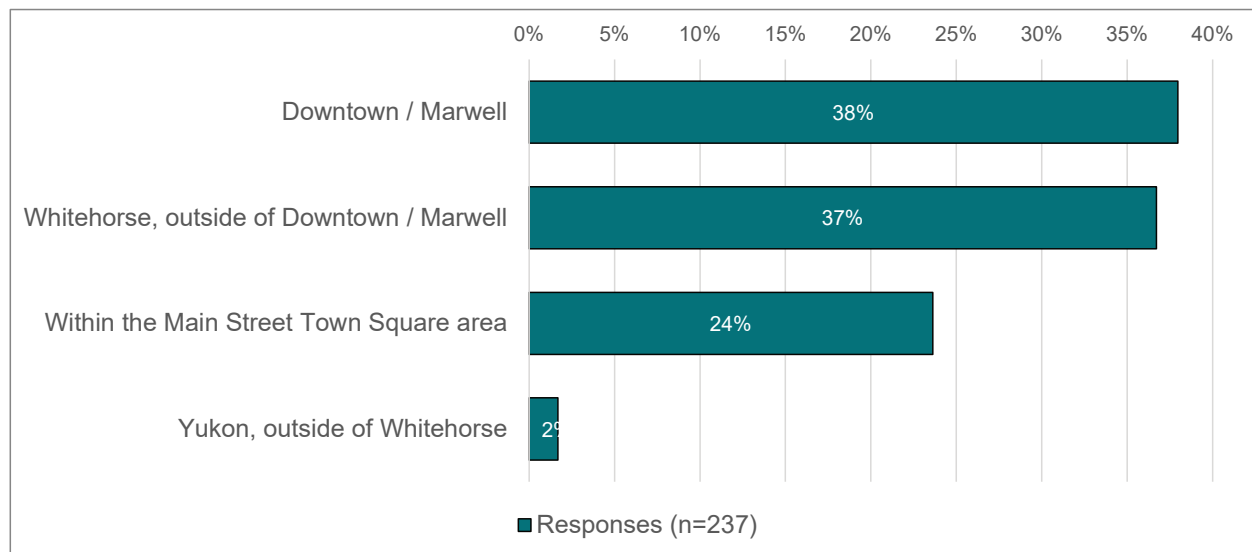
Business participants were asked to provide information about the size of their respective organizations in terms of the number of employees. The majority of respondents, comprising 60%, indicated that their organization had between 1 to 5 employees. Additionally, 8% reported employing a workforce of 6 to 10 individuals. A substantial segment of participants, accounting for 17%, represented organizations with 11 to 29 employees, while 5% had 30 to 50 employees. In contrast, 1% of respondents were associated with organizations having 51 to 99 employees, and 2% indicated having more than 100 employees. Lastly, 6% of participants reported that their organizations had no employees. Refer to Figure 28.



Location

Following this, the respondents were prompted to specify the location of their business. 38% mentioned that their business was situated in downtown or the Marwell area, while 37% had their businesses within Whitehorse but outside of the downtown or Marwell areas. 20% of the participants indicated that their business was located within the Main Street Town Square area and therefore answered a more extensive survey. Their individual responses are highlighted in another section of this report. A small 2% of respondents reported operating businesses in the broader Yukon region, beyond the confines of Whitehorse. Refer to Figure 29.

Figure 29. Where is your business located?

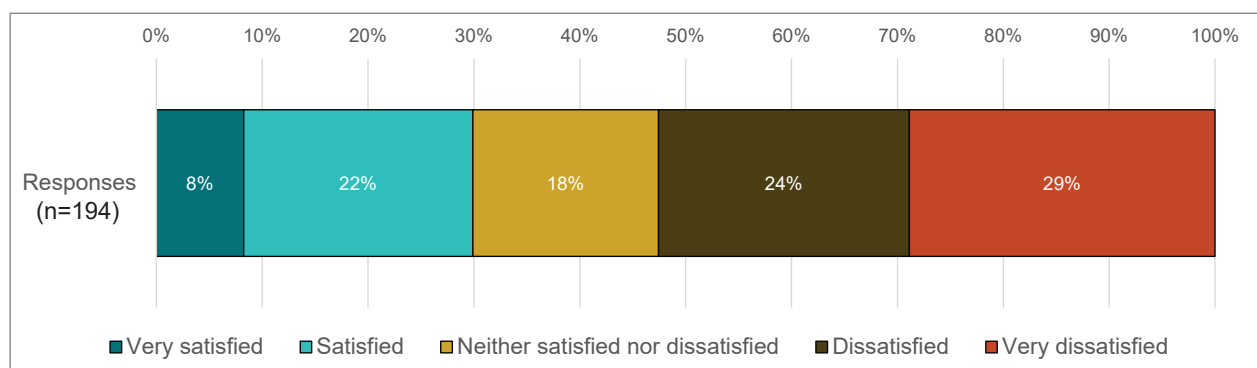


Evaluation

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Participants were asked to express their overall satisfaction with this year's Town Square. 16 individuals expressed that they were very satisfied with this year's Town Square. Additionally, 42 respondents reported being satisfied with their experience. While 34 participants indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 46 individuals conveyed their dissatisfaction with this year's Town Square with an additional 56 respondents reporting being very dissatisfied. Refer to Figure 30.

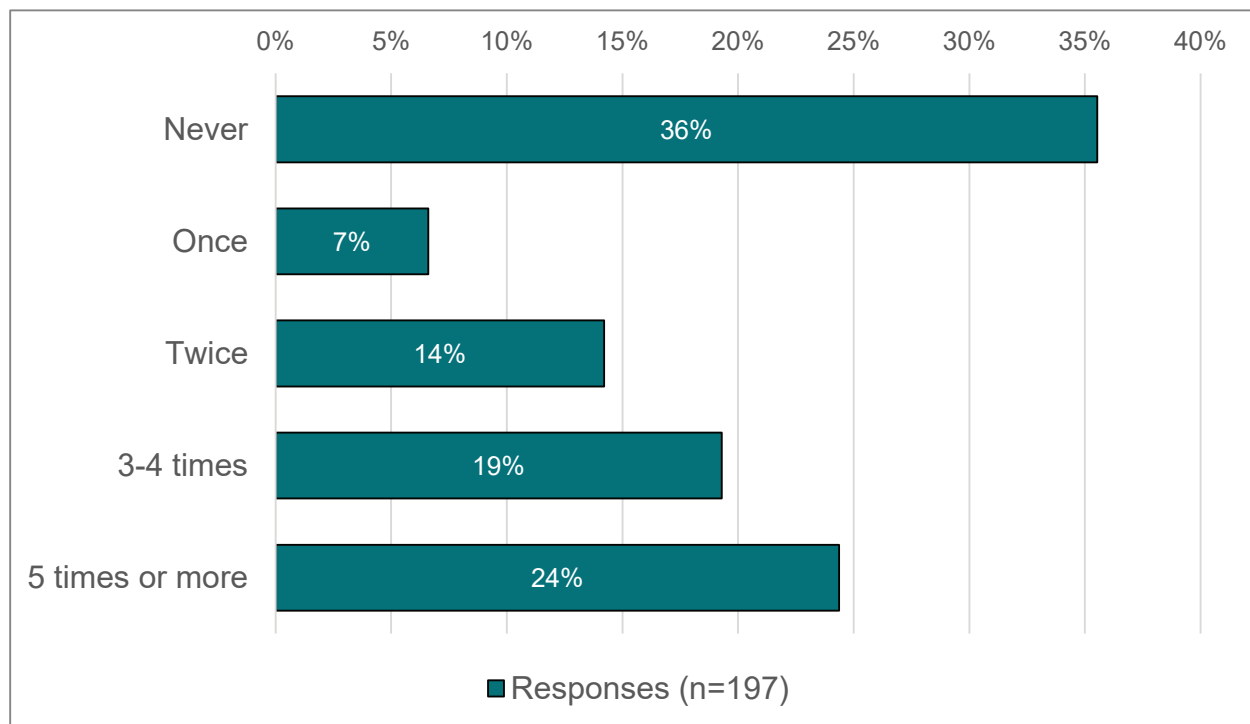
Figure 30. What is your overall satisfaction with this years' Main Street Town Square?



ATTENDANCE

Participants were asked to provide information about their frequency of visits to the Main Street Town Square area for business purposes during the summer. While 43% of respondents attended the area three or more times, 36% reported that they had 'never' visited the Main Street Town Square. Refer to Figure 31.

Figure 31. How many times have you attended the Main Street Town Square area for business purpose this summer?



FEATURES

Respondents were asked to assess various features of the Main Street Town Square, using a rating scale that ranged from Very Good to Very Poor. The survey data reveals varying levels of satisfaction across different features of the Main Street Town Square.

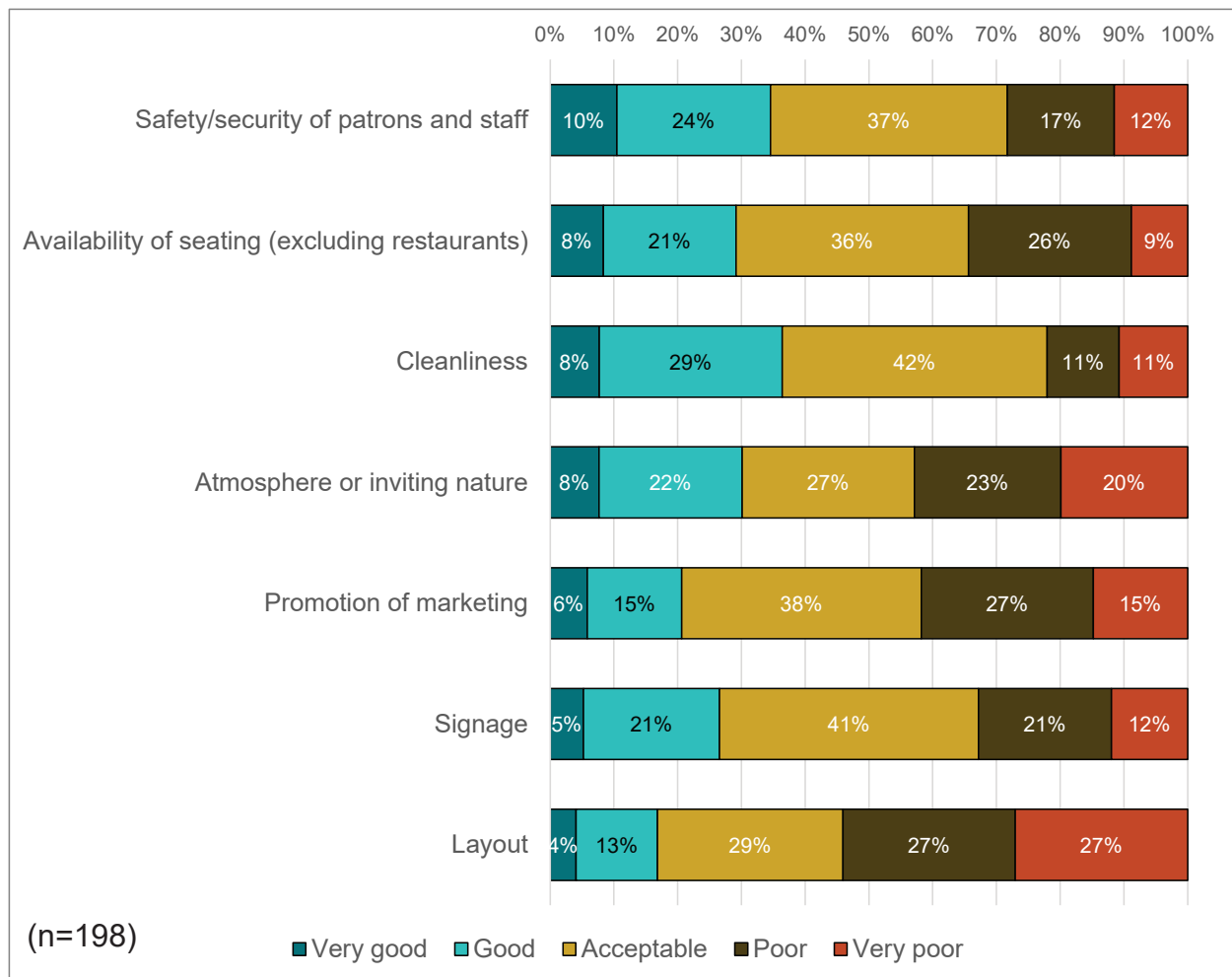
The majority of respondents found the Atmosphere or Inviting Nature to be acceptable to good. In contrast, Safety/Security of Patrons and Staff and Availability of Seating received mixed reviews. A substantial respondent group considered the Promotion and Marketing acceptable. Cleanliness was generally rated as acceptable to good. Signage received a broad range of responses, with a significant portion considering it acceptable. Finally, the Layout showed mixed feedback with a substantial portion rating it as very poor to poor. Refer to Figure 32.

IMPACTS

Positive Impacts

The respondents were asked to indicate what possible positive impacts the MSTs had on their businesses. 32% mentioned that MSTs provided them with an outdoor meeting space. Another 30% of respondents reported that the MSTs offered a lunch space for both their staff and customers while 25% found that it expanded the lunch options available to their staff and customers. 28% appreciated the entertainment aspect of the MSTs and one-fifth of the respondents highlighted the positive impact of the MSTs in creating a safe and pleasant environment. Some respondents mentioned that the MSTs enhanced

Figure 32. If relevant, please rate the following features of Main Street Town Square.

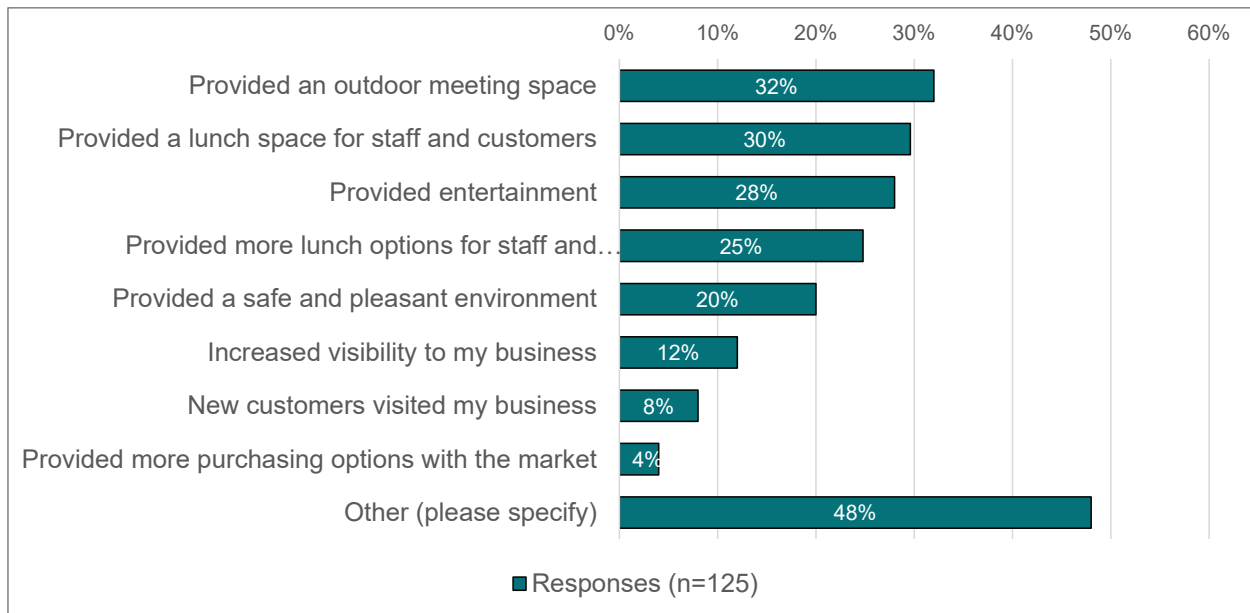


the visibility of their businesses and a smaller percentage of respondents reported that it attracted new customers to their businesses. Refer to Figure 33.

A significant percentage of respondents provided specific, individual responses that fell outside the predefined answer choices. The overwhelming majority with 92% of the 60 respondents in the other comments expressed strong dissatisfaction and believed that the changes had a negative impact on their businesses. They cited issues such as reduced foot traffic, lost parking spaces, increased attempted theft, and a lack of positive outcomes from the changes. Many felt that the initiative was ill conceived and a waste of time, resulting in no benefits for their businesses.

A smaller percentage of respondents in the other comments (14%) reported positive or neutral impacts from the changes. Some mentioned that the initiative encouraged pedestrian use and created a pleasant atmosphere in the area. Others noted that they did not rely on walk-in traffic, so the changes had no direct impact on their businesses.

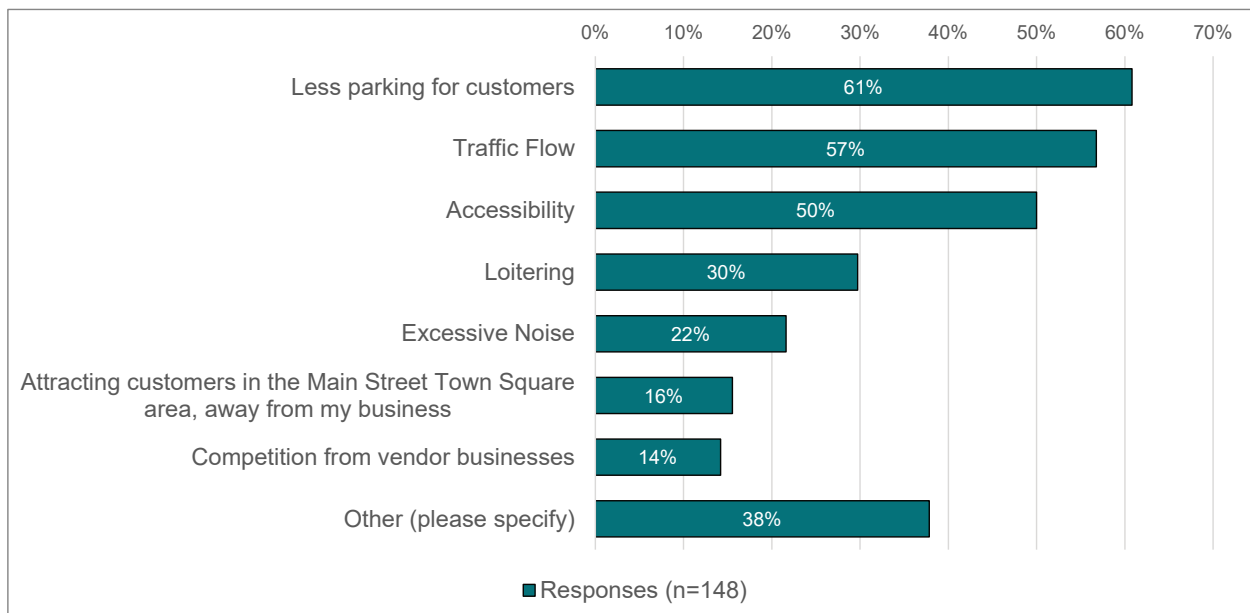
Figure 33. What positive impacts did MSTs have on your business?



Negative impacts

The survey participants were asked to share potential negative effects that the MSTs had on their businesses. The majority (61%) of the respondents reported reduced parking availability for their customers. Traffic disruptions were mentioned by 57% of businesses, while 50% encountered accessibility challenges. Loitering was observed by 30% of participants, and 22% expressed concerns about excessive noise. Furthermore, 16% of businesses indicated that the MSTs drew customers away from their establishments, with 14% facing competition from vendor businesses. Refer to Figure 34.

Figure 34. What negative impacts did MSTs have on your business?



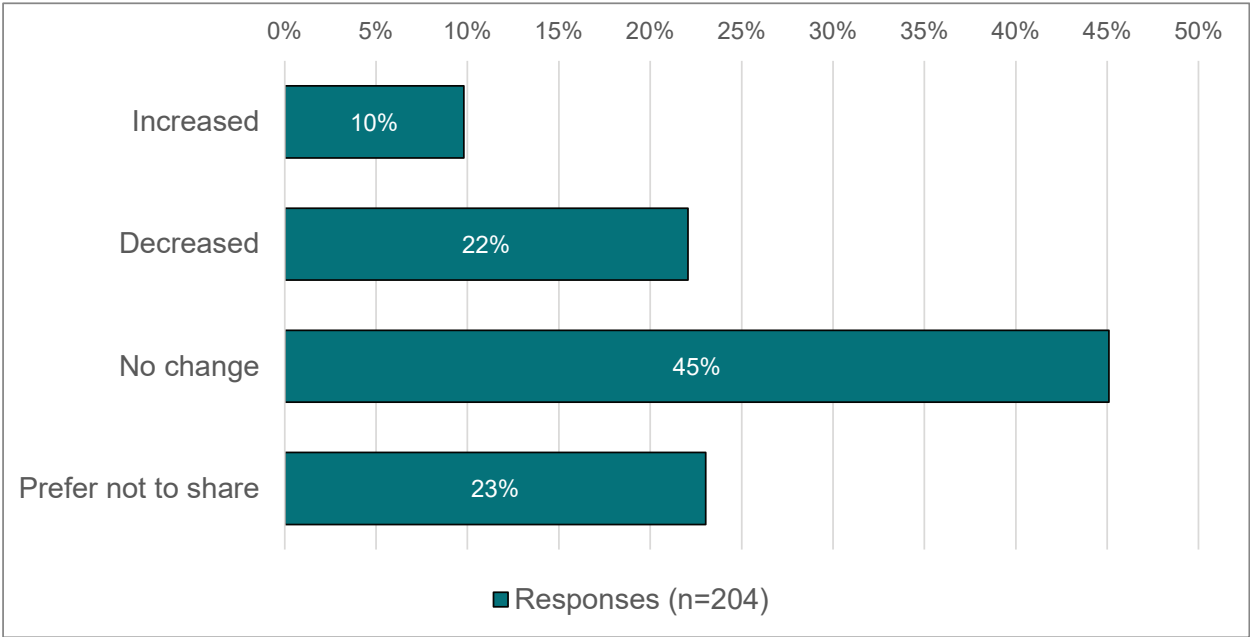
Feedback from respondents in the comments section (38%) provided a diverse range of experiences and challenges related to the initiative. 25 businesses conveyed that they experienced no negative impact. However, several respondents elaborated on issues related to accessibility, such as parking difficulties and client complaints regarding mobility problems. Some businesses mentioned a loss of revenue and decreased foot traffic due to parking issues.

Others highlighted negative aspects of the event, including noise and an uptick in theft, emphasizing the need for improved security and atmosphere. Furthermore, there were calls for more program offerings and amenities. The feedback also raised concerns about the unequal distribution of benefits, increased demands on staff due to late approval, and the necessity of achieving consensus before commencing the initiative.

Changes in Revenue

The participants were asked to evaluate how their business revenue evolved in comparison to the same period (between June and August) of the previous year. Among the respondents, 10% reported an increase in their business revenue, while 22% noted a decline. The majority (comprising 45%) stated that their revenue remained unchanged when compared to the previous year. 23% chose not to disclose their revenue information. Refer to Figure 35.

Figure 35. Overall, how did your business revenue evolve compared to the same period last year?



Percentage of Change

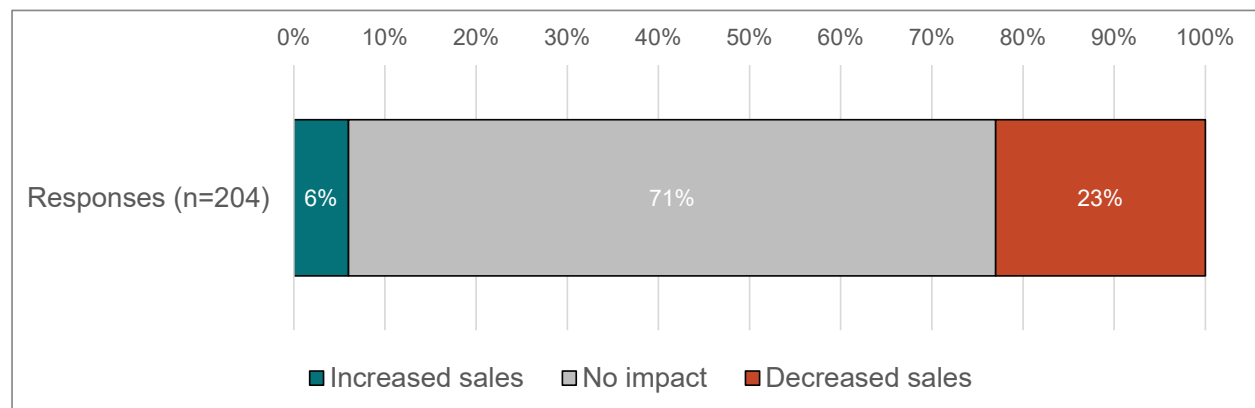
Thirty-nine respondents proceeded to answer a subsequent question, revealing the percentage of change in their revenue. Among them, two businesses reported a substantial increase in revenue, exceeding a 50% gain. On the other hand, four businesses disclosed

a significant decline in revenue, with several indicating a decrease ranging from 10% to 49%. Seven businesses conveyed that their revenue remained constant when compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

Impacts on summer sales

The participants were asked about their perception of the MSTS affecting their summer sales. The majority (71%) expressed that they did not believe it had an impact on their sales. 23% mentioned a decrease in sales, while 6% believed that it had a positive influence, leading to increased sales during the summer. Refer to Figure 36.

Figure 36. Do you think the Main Street Town Square has been a factor influencing your sales over the summer?



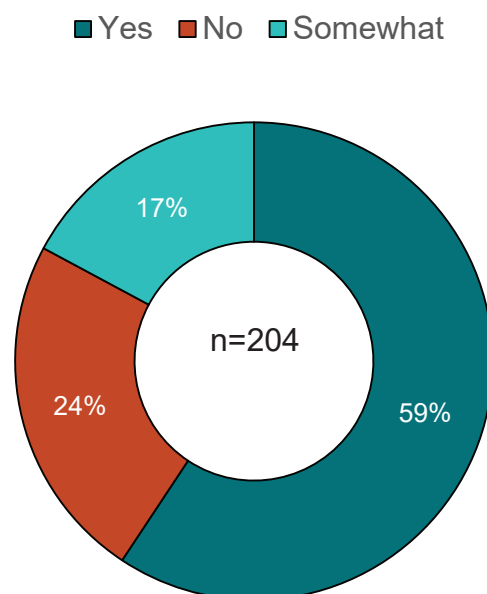
Additional Factors

Subsequently, the participants were inquired about their opinions regarding additional factors that might have influenced the Yukon economy during the summer. The responses revealed varying viewpoints among the respondents. The majority (59%) believed that there were other factors at play, while 24% of the participants did not share this perspective. Furthermore, 17% of the respondents expressed a nuanced viewpoint. Refer to Figure 37.

Respondents who indicated that they believed other factors played a role during this summer were asked to specify these additional factors.

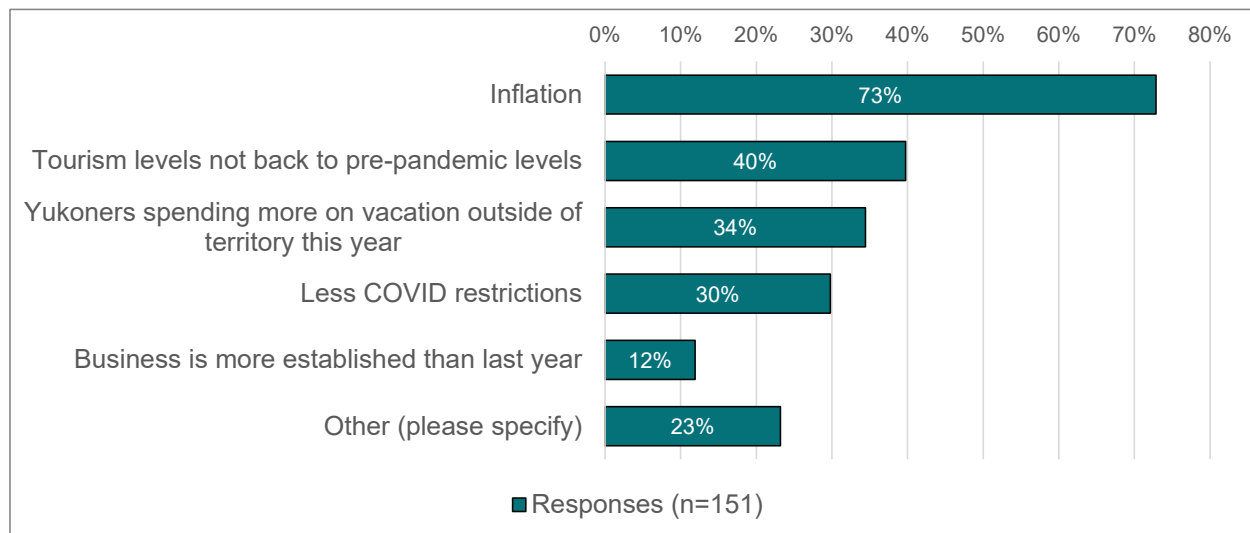
The majority (73%) pointed to inflation as a significant factor. 40% identified the tourism

Figure 37. In your view, are there other factors that affected the Yukon economy during this summer?



levels as not having fully returned to pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, 34% mentioned that Yukon residents appeared to be spending more on vacations outside of the territory this year. 30% of respondents selected “less COVID restrictions” as a factor they identified, suggesting that the relaxation of pandemic-related measures played a role. A smaller group (12%) highlighted the business as more established compared to the previous year as a contributing factor. Refer to Figure 38. Furthermore, other responses included factors such as favorable weather conditions, elevated interest rates, labor shortages, and rising living costs.

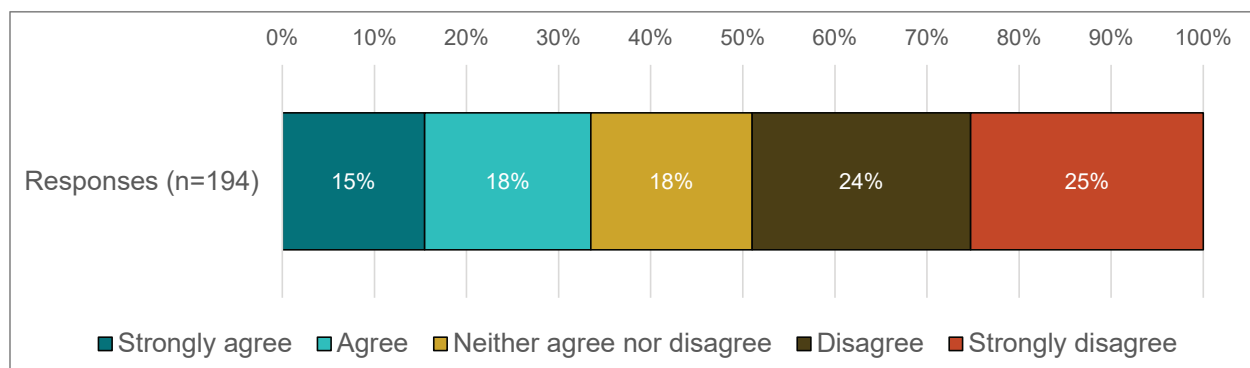
Figure 38. What other factors have you identified?



Impact of the MSTs on the Downtown Area

When business respondents were surveyed about whether the Main Street Town Square had a positive impact on Downtown Whitehorse as a whole, the results showed a mixed response. A third of the business respondents believed that the initiative benefited Downtown Whitehorse, while the majority (49%) did not believe it had a positive impact. Refer to Figure 39.

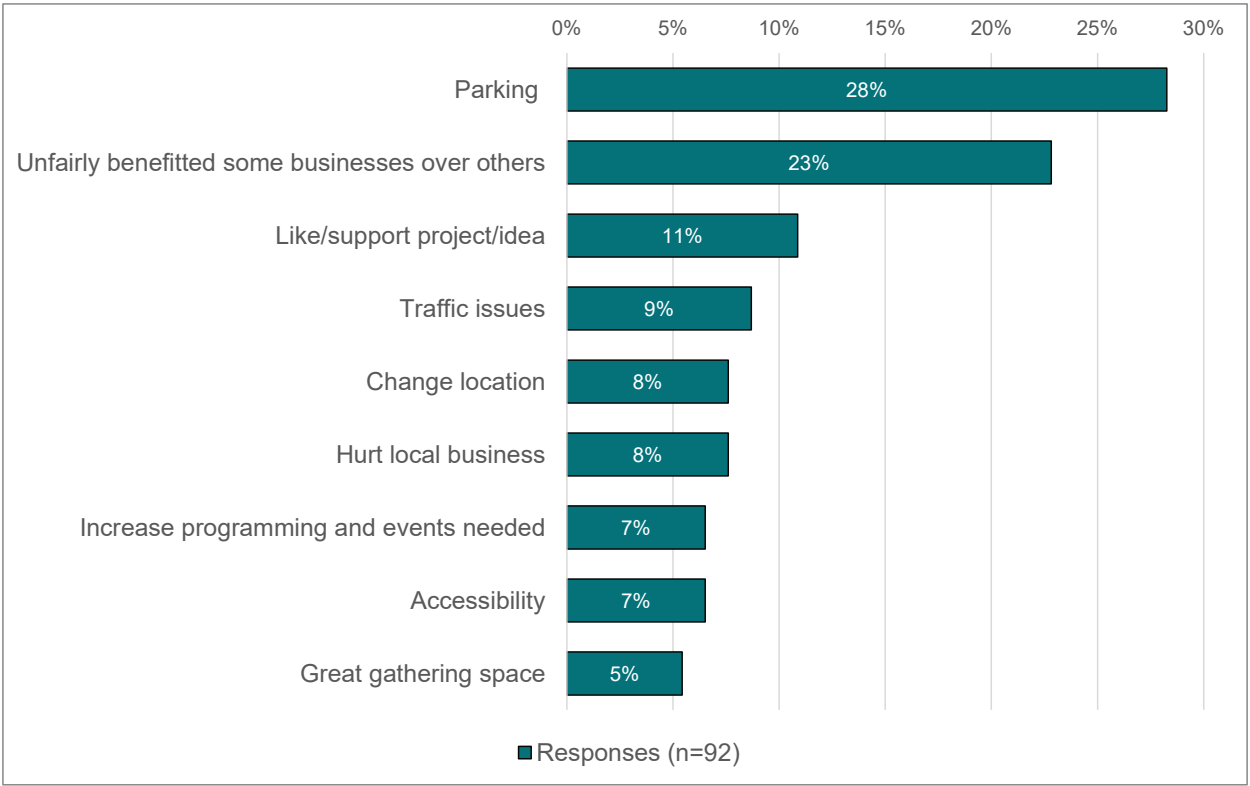
Figure 39. Do you think the MSTs benefitted Downtown Whitehorse as a whole?



Subsequent to the initial question, survey participants were invited to provide further insights by elaborating on their responses. 35% of the participants opted to share their thoughts.

Key themes and concerns revolved around the initiative’s impact on local businesses, with many expressing worry over the removal of parking spaces and disruptions in traffic flow that negatively impacted small businesses, leading to lower sales and increased stress levels. The choice of Main Street as the location received criticism for its negative impact on accessibility, especially for people with disabilities and seniors who needed access to banks and businesses. Concerns were raised about a lack of diverse programming and events, with calls for a more inviting atmosphere. Accessibility issues, particularly for seniors and those with mobility concerns, were a major point of contention. Despite these concerns, some expressed support for the initiative, seeing it as a potential pedestrian-friendly gathering space beneficial for both locals and tourists. Suggestions for improvement included better planning, leadership, and community engagement. Positive aspects included the town square’s role as a community space that encouraged support for local businesses and provided opportunities for outdoor enjoyment and live entertainment. Refer to Figure 40.

Figure 40. Please elaborate on whether the project benefitted Downtown Whitehorse as a whole (Categorized Responses)

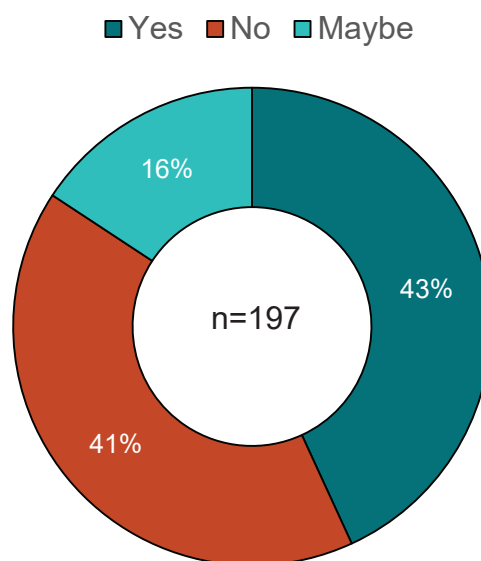


Future Planning

SIMILAR FUTURE INITIATIVES

Survey participants were inquired about whether they would like to see a Pedestrian Town Square implemented again in Whitehorse in future years. The majority is open to see a future similar initiative, with 43% yes and 16% maybe, totaling 59%, while a significant 43% do not want to see it again. Refer to Figure 41.

Figure 41. Would you like to see a Pedestrian Town Square implemented again in Whitehorse in future years?



FUTURE TOWN SQUARE LOCATIONS

Survey participants who expressed interest in the City considering similar initiatives or were uncertain were then questioned about their preferred location for a future town square. A map showed conceptual boundaries for each answer choice, along with the opportunity to offer additional input through the “other” category.

The riverside area along Front Street received the highest favorability at 53%, with 50% of business respondents showing support for keeping it in the same location as the previous year, on Main Street between Front and Second. Additionally, 45% of respondents expressed preference for Front Street, between Main and Steele. Refer to Figure 42.

The central theme in the comments was the importance of ensuring that the town square is both central and accessible, with concerns raised about potential noise disruptions, the need for parking, and proximity to businesses. Some suggested specific streets or areas like Front Street, Steele Street, and Lambert Street, while others proposed closing off certain sections to vehicular traffic. The size of the square and its connection to the waterfront were also discussed. Overall, there was a desire for a town square that benefits both the public and the local business community while addressing various logistical challenges.

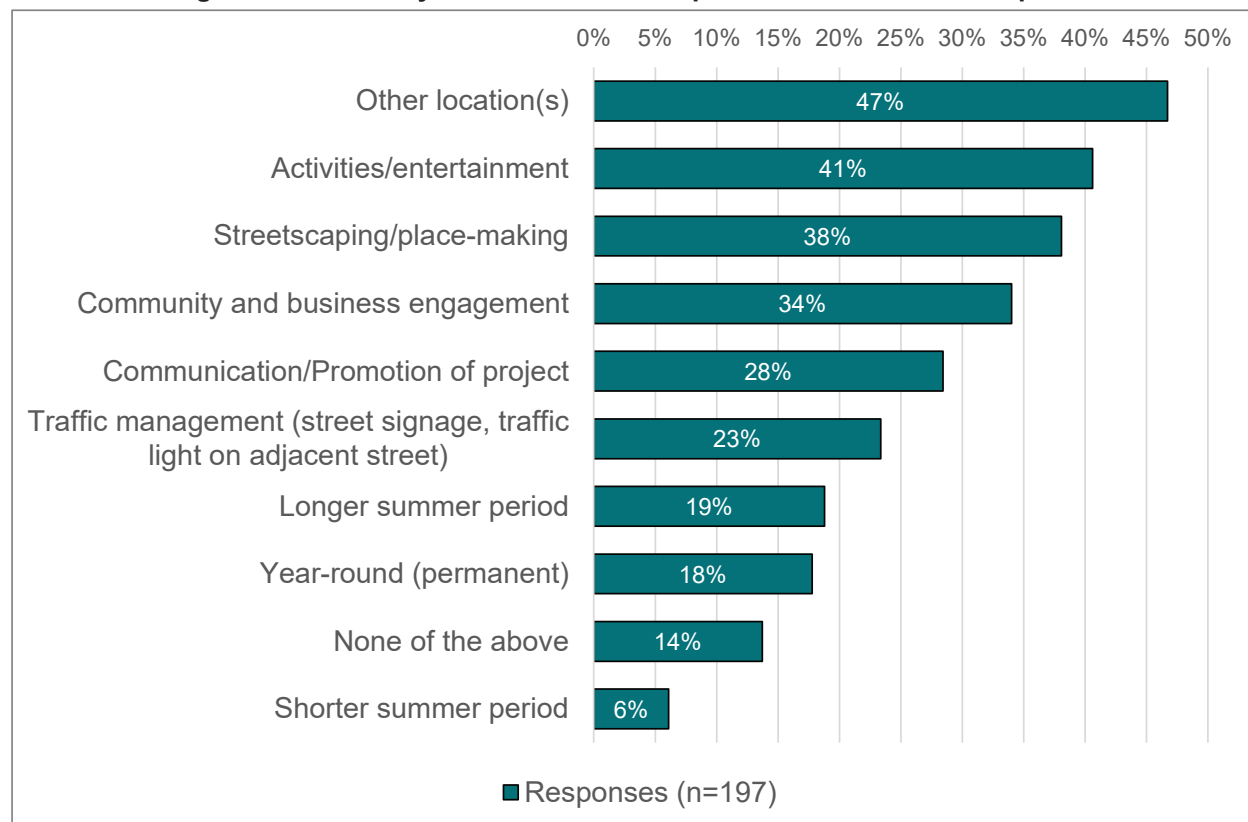
Figure 42. What do you think would be the best location(s) for a future town square?



IMPROVEMENTS

Participants were asked to identify areas they felt could be improved in the context of a future town square project. The most prevalent response was a desire to change the location, with 47% of respondents supporting this idea. 41% expressed interest in improving activities and entertainment, while 38% recognized potential for enhancement in streetscaping and place making. Additionally, 34% wished for an improvement in community and business engagement. Refer to Figure 43.

Figure 43. What do you think could be improved in a future town square?



94 individuals took the opportunity to offer additional comments and insights concerning potential improvements. While some respondents appreciated the idea, there was a notable concern about the project's location, as many felt that closing Main Street disrupted parking, access to essential services like banks, and negatively affected some businesses. Alternative locations were suggested, such as Front Street, the waterfront, or Shipyards Park, to mitigate these issues. The comments also highlighted the need for improved organization, communication with businesses, and better overall planning. Some respondents emphasized the importance of accessibility, while others expressed safety concerns due to loitering and harassment.

Additionally, ideas for enhancing the town squares aesthetics and layout were put forward. They included enhancing the visual appeal and overall atmosphere through better design, more attractive kiosks and vendors, pleasing aesthetics, lighting, and landscaping. They

recommended creating a park-like environment to encourage visitation and participation, with suggestions such as planters, food trucks, music and fire pits to make the area more inviting.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

The business participants were asked whether they would like to participate in the planning phase of a future town square. The results showed that a majority of them, 48%, declined the opportunity. 26% expressed interest, and 26% remained uncertain. Refer to Figure 44.

The next question inquired about their interest in participating in a town square in the coming years. 41% expressed no interest and 35% showed interest in participating. The remaining 24% remained uncertain. Refer to Figure 45.

Figure 44. Would you like to participate in the planning phase of a future town square?

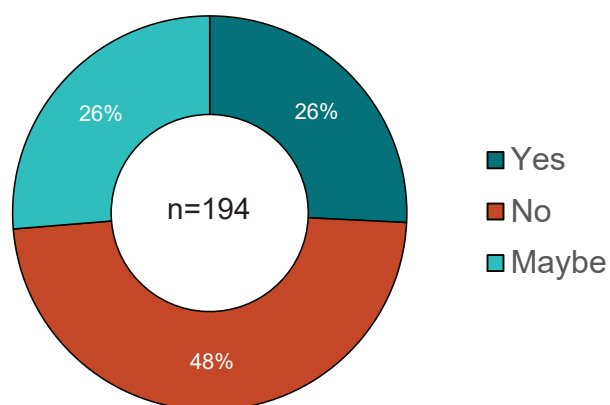
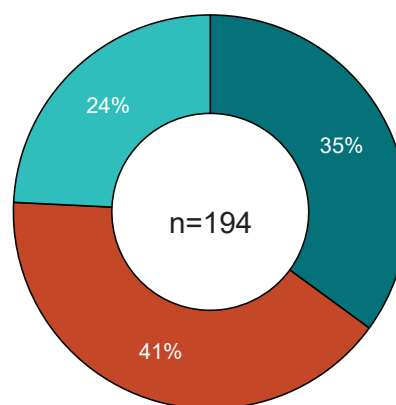


Figure 45. Would you participate in a town square in the coming years?



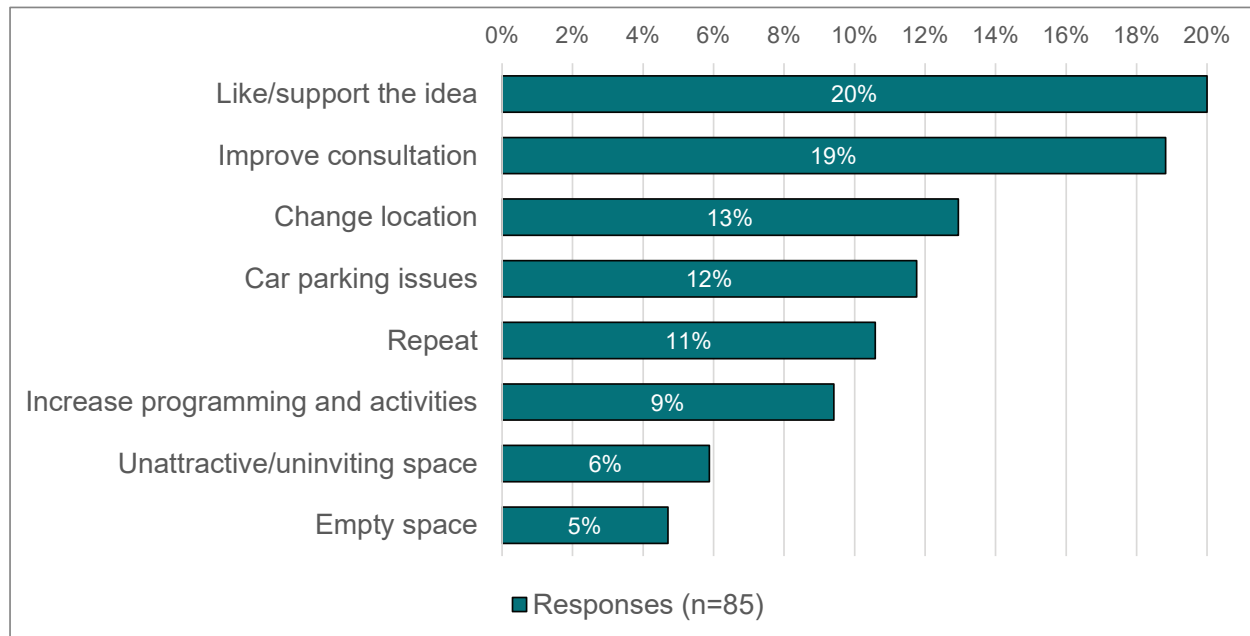
Additional Comments

The survey for the business respondents concluded with an optional open-ended question, inviting respondents to provide any additional comments or information they considered important for consideration. Refer to Figure 46.

The comments expressed a mixed response to the town square initiative. Some individuals strongly supported the concept, viewing it as a much-needed addition that had the potential to inject vibrancy into the community and should be repeated. Still, there was a consensus that the first year of execution had issues, with some finding the space empty at times and hoping for improvements. Others were frustrated with what they perceived as the city prioritizing tourists' interests over those of local businesses, citing financial difficulties and inadequate consultation.

Concerns about the chosen location, specifically the closure of Main Street, were widespread, with respondents emphasizing the importance of preserving access to downtown businesses and minimizing parking and traffic disruptions. Alternative locations, such as the waterfront or Shipyards Park, were suggested. Dissatisfaction with the parking situation in the downtown area was evident. Some request more programming, longer hours, and better advertising. Others found the area unattractive and underutilized.

Figure 46. Themes of Additional Comments





Adjacent Businesses

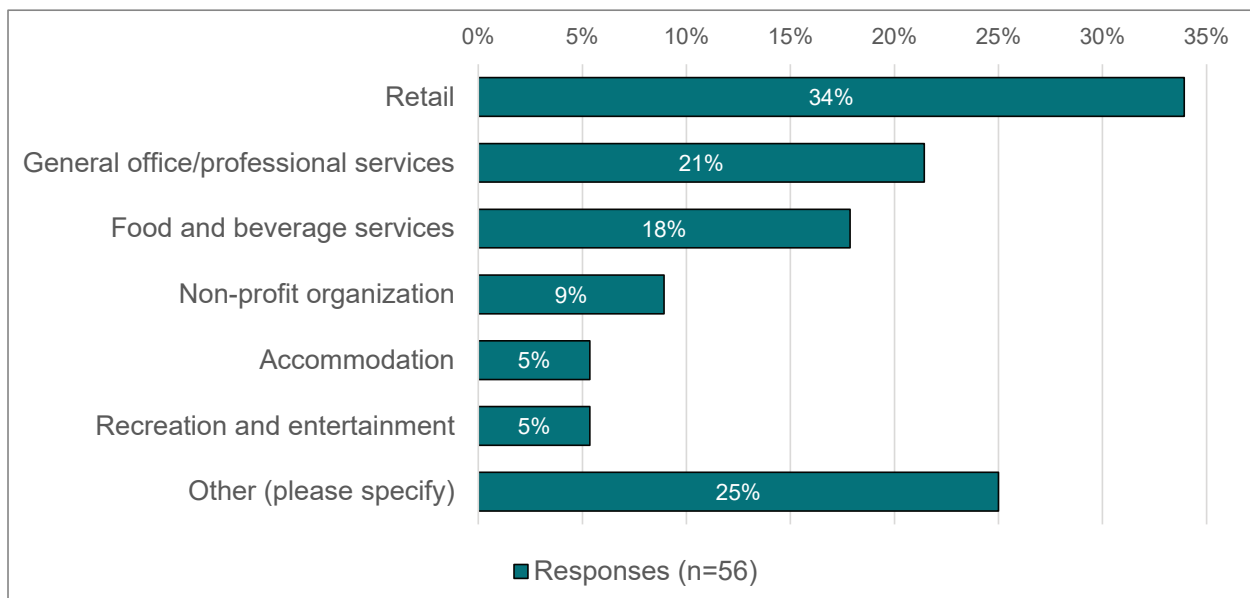
Adjacent Businesses

The following section of the focuses on highlighting the perspectives and feedback from the business community that specified being located within the Main Street Town Square (MSTS) area. Their unique proximity to the MSTS and its associated urban developments warranted a dedicated section in the survey analysis. In addition to a separate chapter, this group also received more extensive survey section. This approach was taken to thoroughly explore their location specific impacts, experiences, and perspectives regarding the MSTS and gather a comprehensive and detailed understanding of their interactions with the urban environment.

TYPE OF BUSINESS

The Business participants were asked to indicate what type of businesses they had. They could choose from a list of options, or select 'other' and specify their response. The majority of respondents (34%) indicated owning or operating a Retail business. 21% indicated having a General office/ professional services, followed by 18% owning or operating Food and beverage services. Refer to Figure 47.

Figure 47. What type of business(es) do you have?

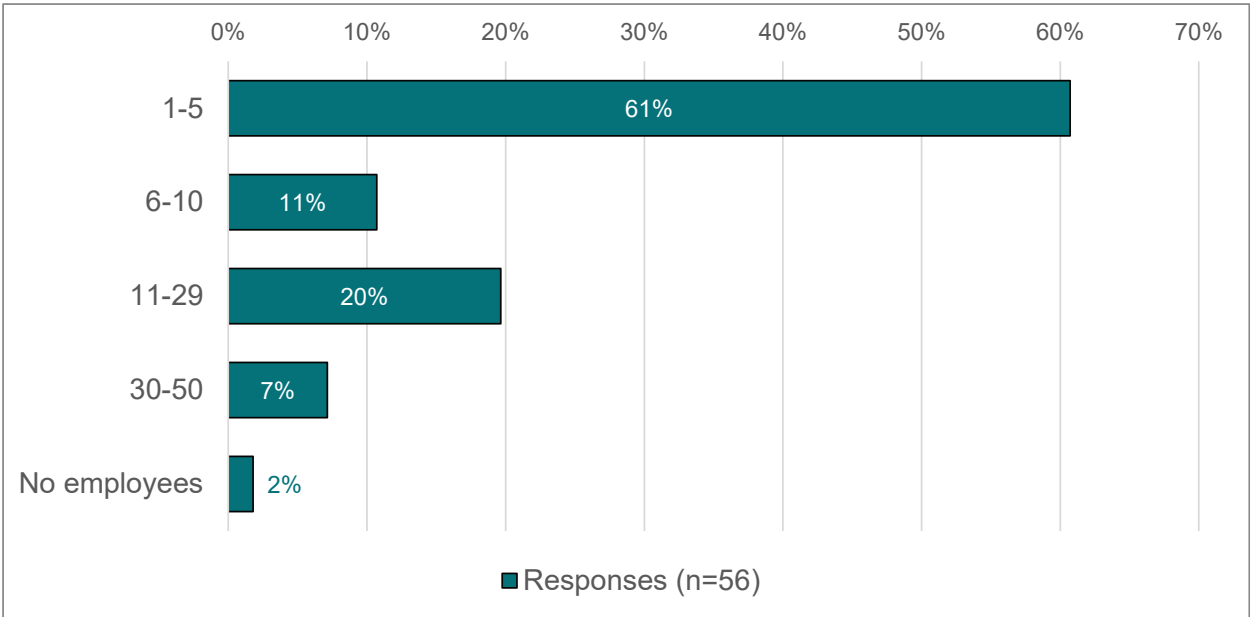


The specified responses showed a diverse mix of businesses spanning multiple sectors, including professional services firms, businesses operating within the film industry, personal services like hair salons, barbering, and wellness clinics, as well as pilates studios and those offering medical services and equipment. Additionally, mobile food vendors, crafts and market vendors and a landlord were represented.

AMOUNT OF EMPLOYEES

61% of the adjacent business respondents indicated having one to 5 employees, 11% indicated having 6 to 10, while 20% have 11 to 29 employees. 7%, equaling four businesses have 30 to 50 employees, while one business indicated not having any employees. Refer to Figure 48.

Figure 48. How many employees do you have?



Relationship to Main Street Town Square

ACTION UNDERTAKEN RELATED TO THE MSTs

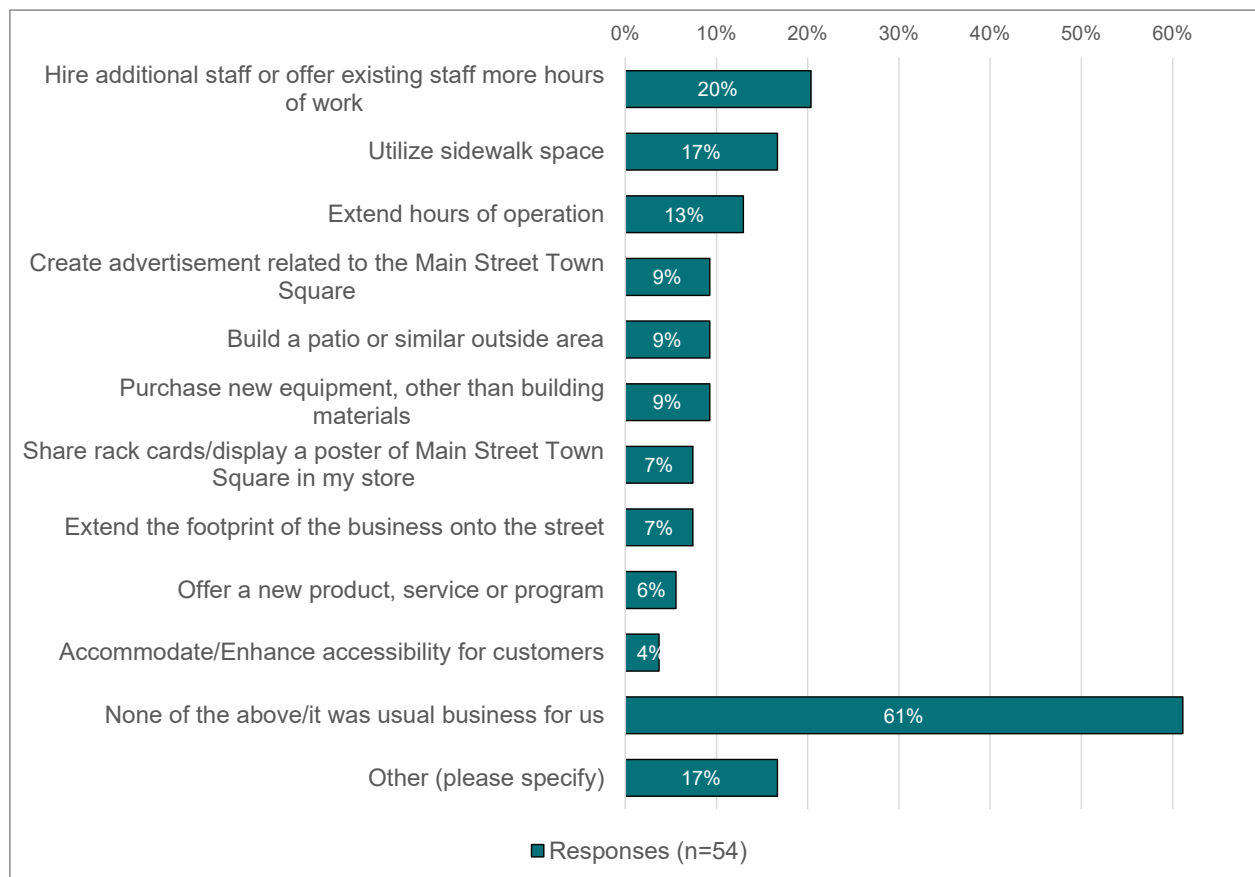
The Main Street Town Square adjacent businesses were asked which actions they had undertaken related to the MSTs. While predefined choices were available for selection, respondents were also provided with the option to provide individual comments under the ‘other’ response category.

The majority, 33 businesses, didn’t undertake any actions related to the MSTs, it was usual business for them. 20% hired additional staff or offered existing staff more hours

to work. 17% utilized the sidewalk space, 13% extended their hours of operation while 9% either created advertisement related to the MSTS, built a patio or similar outside area and/or purchased new equipment, other than building materials. Refer to Figure 49.

Other feedback emphasized the need of implementing special arrangements for the pilot project. This involved effectively communicating to clients that parking might be more challenging to find, and also extending greater flexibility in their cancellation and lateness policy to account for parking-related issues.

Figure 49. Which actions have you undertaken related to the Main Street Town Square?



Customer Travel

The following segment of questions focused on Customer Travel Impacts due to the Main Street Town Square, specifically regarding foot traffic. To initiate this section, respondents were asked whether their respective businesses receive any foot traffic. Refer to Figure 50. Only those 41 businesses who confirmed the presence of foot traffic were subsequently presented with the following questions, which explored the effects and consequences of this foot traffic to their businesses.

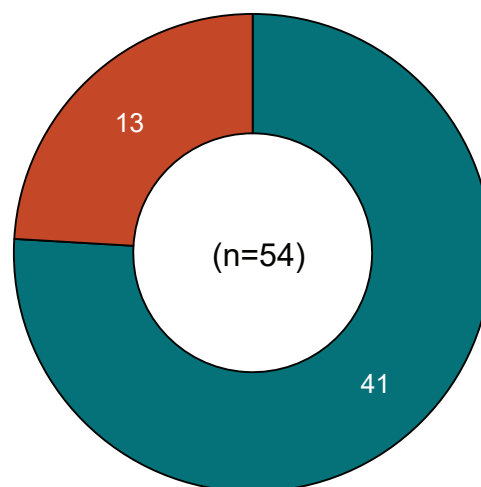


Figure 50. Do you own/operate a business that receives foot traffic?

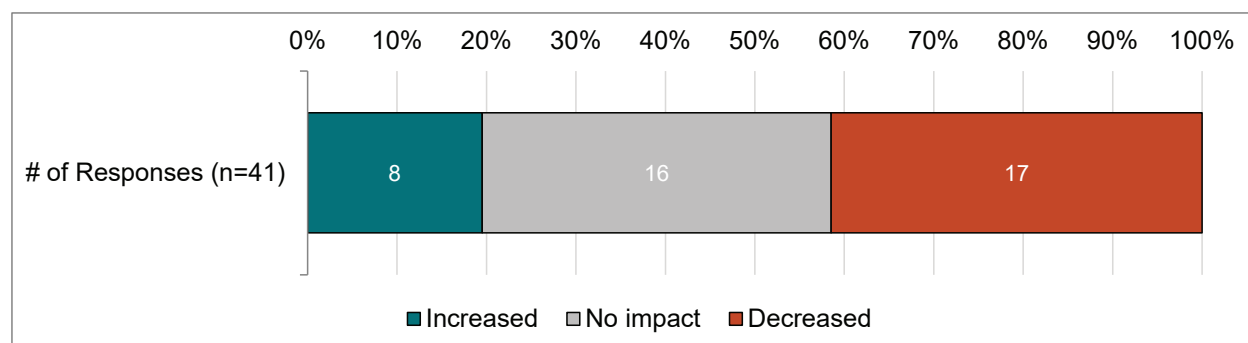
■ Yes ■ No

IMPACTS

Impact on Foot Traffic

17 businesses reported a perceived decrease in foot traffic, 16 stated that they observed no noticeable impact, and 8 believed that it had increased. Refer to Figure 51.

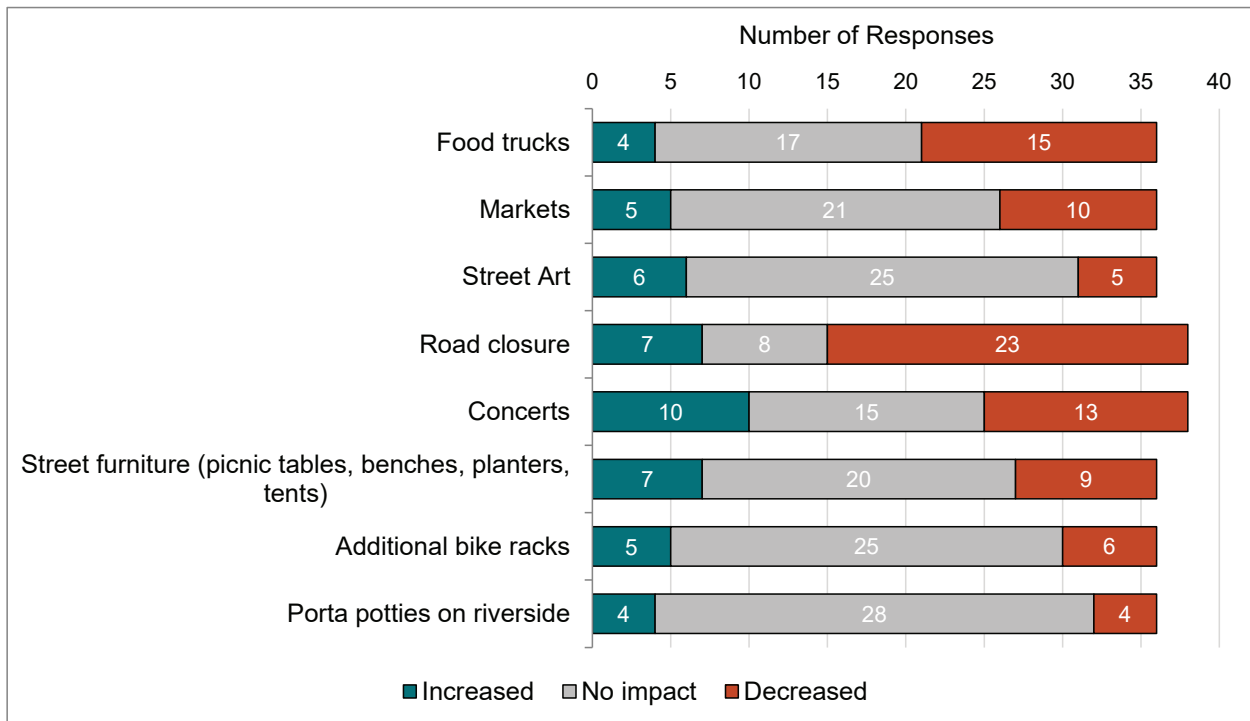
Figure 51. In your view, how did having the MSTS this summer affect your foot traffic?



Impacting Elements

The respondents were asked to evaluate how elements of the Main Street Town Square influenced their foot traffic. Concerts (10) and street furniture (7) were perceived as positive impacts to foot traffic, while decreased road closures (23) and food trucks (15) were perceived as impacting the foot traffic negatively. However, most responding businesses indicated no impact across several elements, such as porta-potties (portable washroom) on the riverside (28 no impact), street art (25 no impact), and additional bike racks (25 no impact). Refer to Figure 52. Some respondents also noted that while Town Square attracted more foot traffic to the waterfront, it had minimal impact on foot traffic within Horwoods Mall, except for restroom visitors.

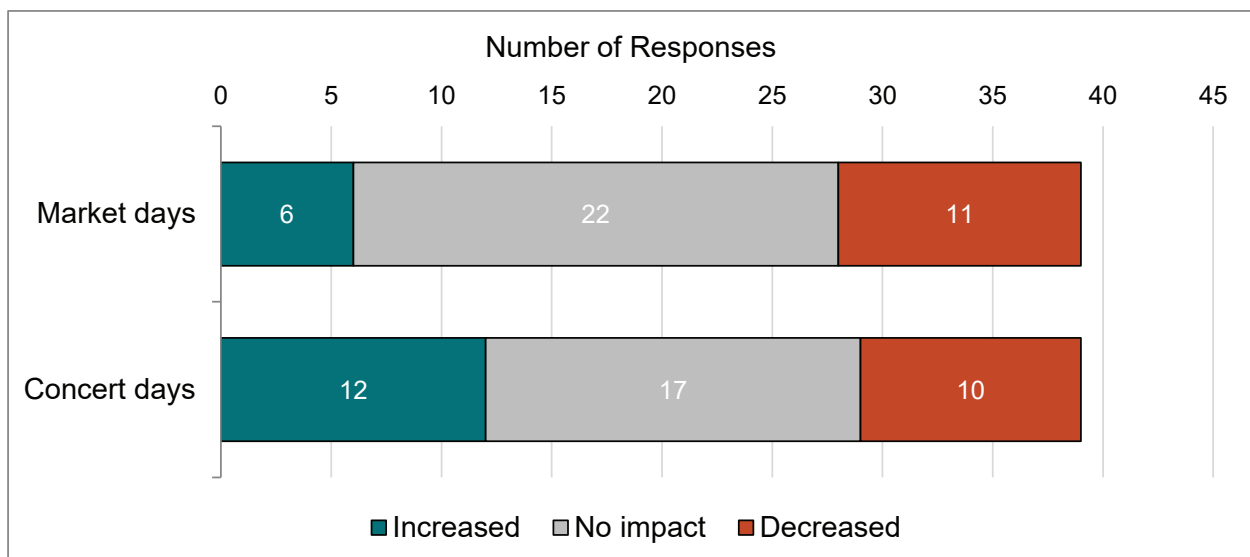
Figure 52. Which elements of MSTs impacted your foot traffic?



Changes

Participants were asked whether they noticed a change in foot traffic on Market days and Concert days. During market days, which took place on Tuesdays and Saturdays, the majority of respondents perceived no significant change in foot traffic. In contrast, 11 businesses reported a decrease, while six believed there was an increase. On concert days, which occurred on Fridays, 17 reported no change in foot traffic, 10 indicated a decrease, and 12 noted an increase. Refer to Figure 53.

Figure 53. Did you notice a change in foot traffic on Market and Concert days?



ACTIONS TAKEN

Extended working hours

Respondents reporting an overall increase in foot traffic, were asked additional question regarding their response strategies. They were specifically asked whether they adjusted the working hours of their staff due to the increased foot traffic. Among these businesses, three chose to extend their staff's working hours, while the remaining five did not make such adjustments. Refer to Figure 54. Among the three businesses that extended their staff's working hours, one increased the hours by 2, another by 8 and the third added a substantial 80 additional hours.

Additional employees

They were further inquired about whether they hired additional personnel in response to the increased foot traffic at their establishments. Four businesses did, while the other four did not make such additions, as indicated in Figure 55. Those who did hire extra employees were asked to specify the number, which ranged from one to three additional staff members.

Figure 54. Did you extend the working hours of your staff as a result of the increased foot traffic?

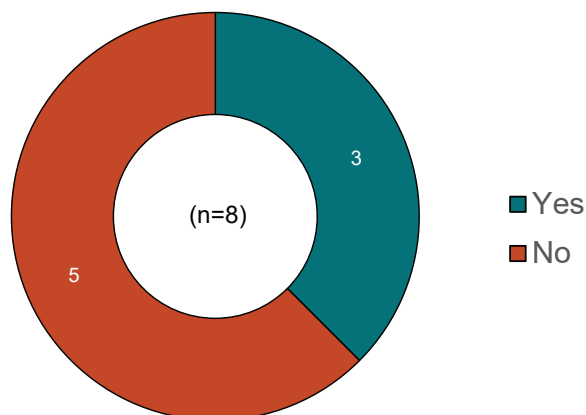
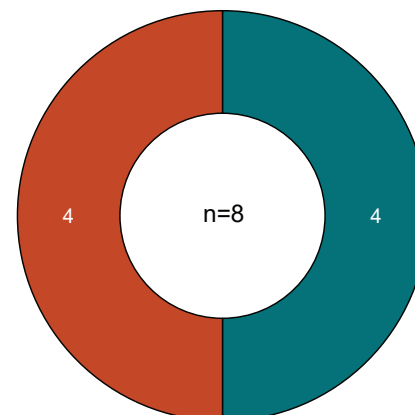


Figure 55. Did you add additional employees as a result of increased foot traffic?

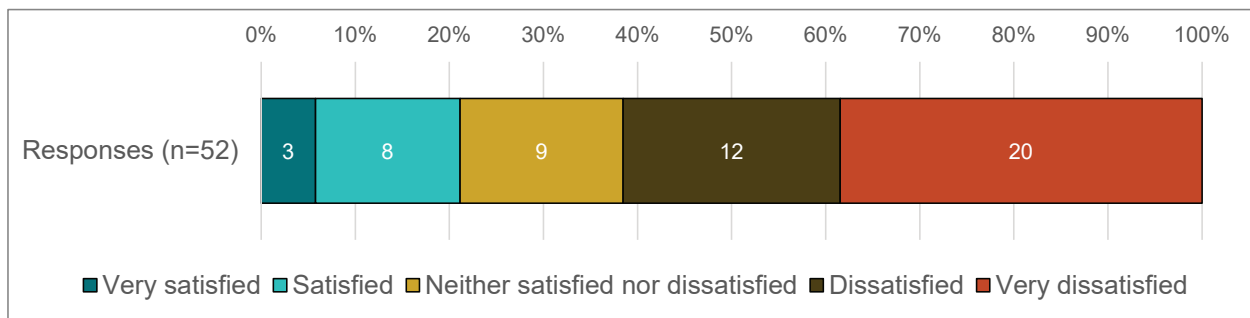


Evaluation

OVERALL SATISFACTION

All adjacent business participants were asked to express their overall satisfaction with this year's Town Square. While 11 respondents of the adjacent businesses indicated being satisfied or very satisfied with the Town Square, the majority (32 respondents) indicating being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with it. Refer to Figure 56.

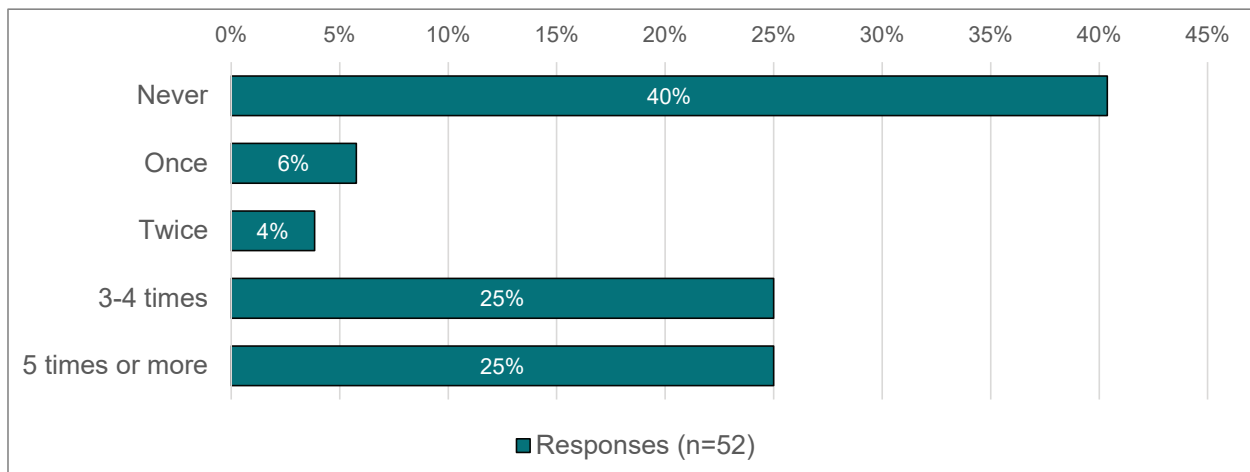
Figure 56. What is your overall satisfaction with this years' MSTS?



ATTENDANCE

Participants were asked to provide information about their frequency of visits to the MSTS area for business purposes during the summer. 40% of respondents indicated that they had never visited the Main Street Town Square area for business purposes. 6% mentioned that they had visited once, while 4% reported twice during the summer. 25% of the adjacent business participants indicated that they had attended 3-4 times for business purposes and another 25% mentioned that they had been to the Main Street Town Square area 5 times or more for business-related activities. Refer to Figure 57.

Figure 57. How many times have you attended the MSTS area for business purpose this summer?



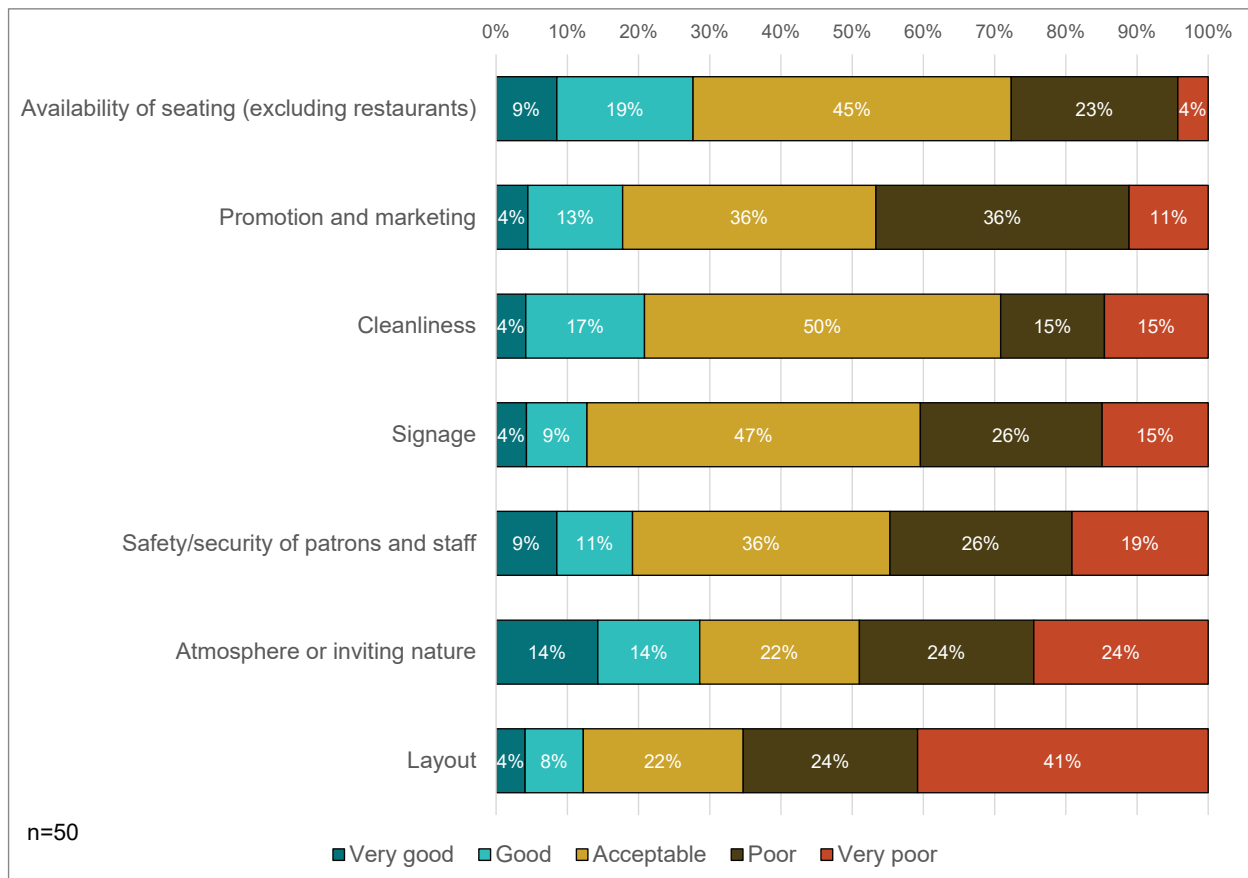
FEATURES

The following highlights the responses from the adjacent businesses asked to assess various features of the Main Street Town Square, using a rating scale that ranged from 'Very Good' to 'Very Poor'. The survey data reveals varying levels of satisfaction across different features of the Main Street Town Square. This question was not mandatory, and 50 businesses answered to it.

The aspects that were best rated (from acceptable to very satisfied) were the availability of seating, cleanliness and signage. The most dissatisfying aspects (dissatisfied or very

dissatisfied) were the layout, the atmosphere or inviting nature (50/50), and the promotion and marketing. Refer to Figure 58.

Figure 58. If relevant, please rate the following features of Main Street Town Square.

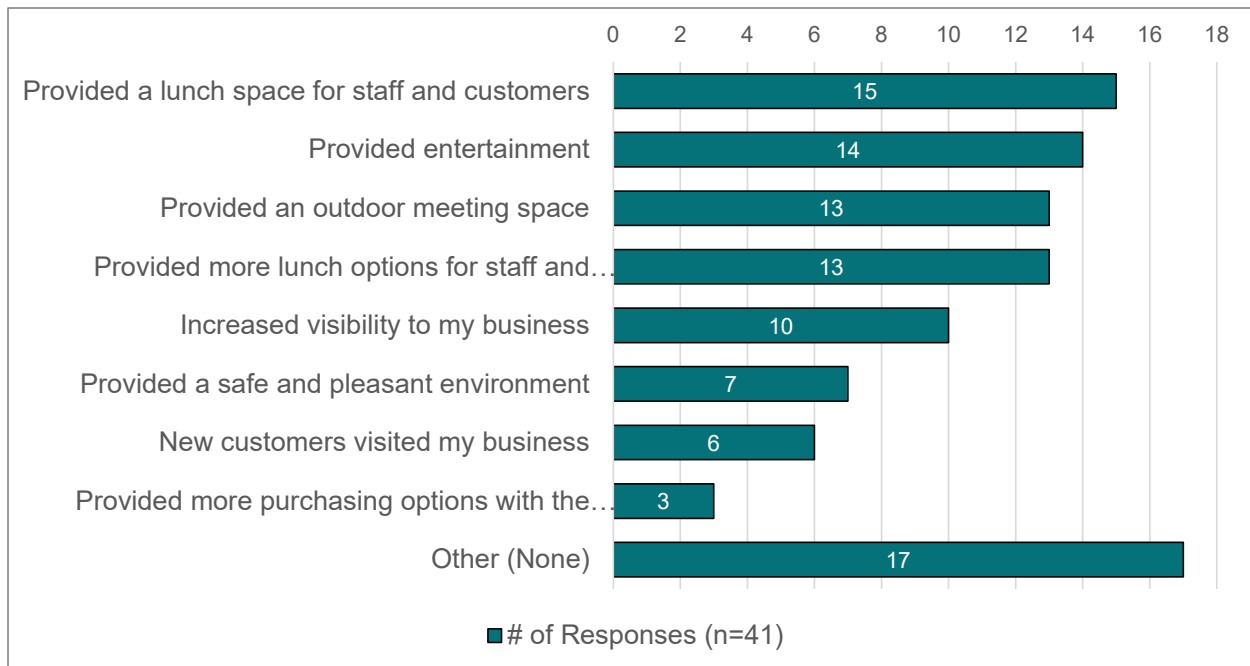


IMPACTS

Positive Impacts

The main benefits of Main Street Town Square identified were that it provided a lunch space for both staff and customers (15 respondents), was a source of entertainment (14 respondents), provided an outdoor meeting space and offered more lunch options (13 respondents each). MSTS increased visibility for 10 of the adjacent businesses and created a safe and pleasant environment according to seven of respondents. Moreover, six businesses attracted new customers due to MSTS. Refer to Figure 59. 17 of respondents identified not having any positive impacts in the “other” category.

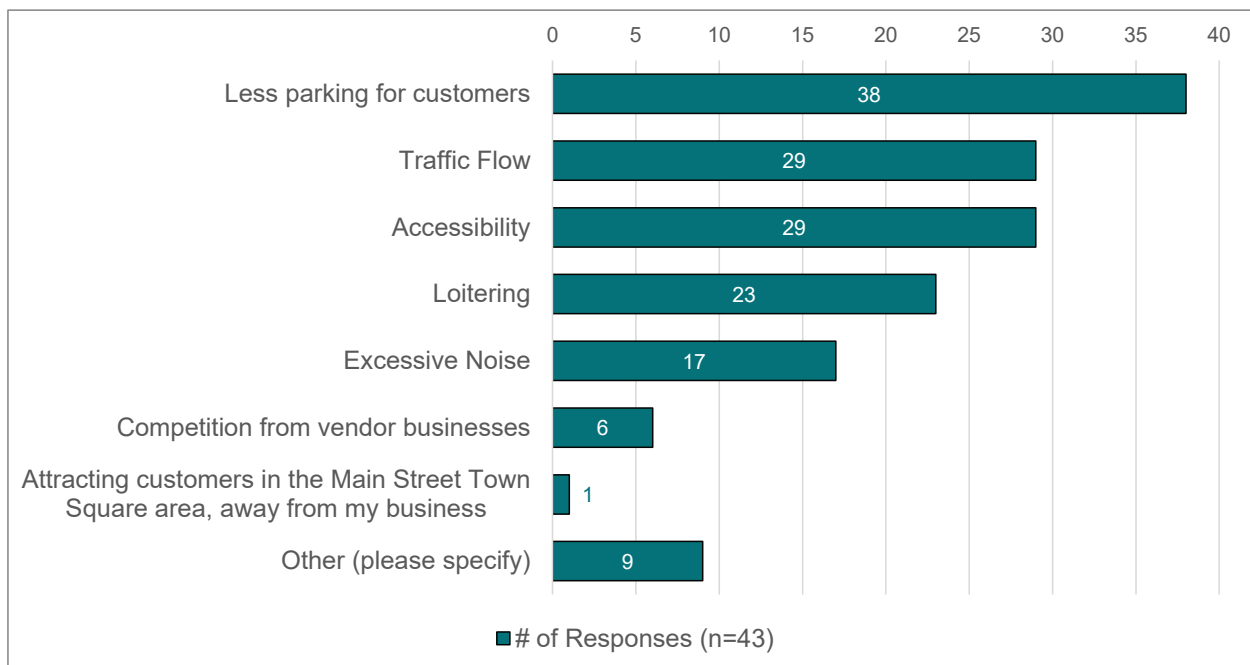
Figure 59. What positive impacts did MSTS have on your business?



Negative Impacts

The majority of the 43 respondents (38) reported that Main Street Town Square led to less parking for customers. Traffic flow and accessibility were issues for 29 of respondents. Loitering was a concern for 23 businesses, and 17 experienced problems related to excessive noise. Refer to Figure 60.

Figure 60. What negative impacts did MSTS have on your business?

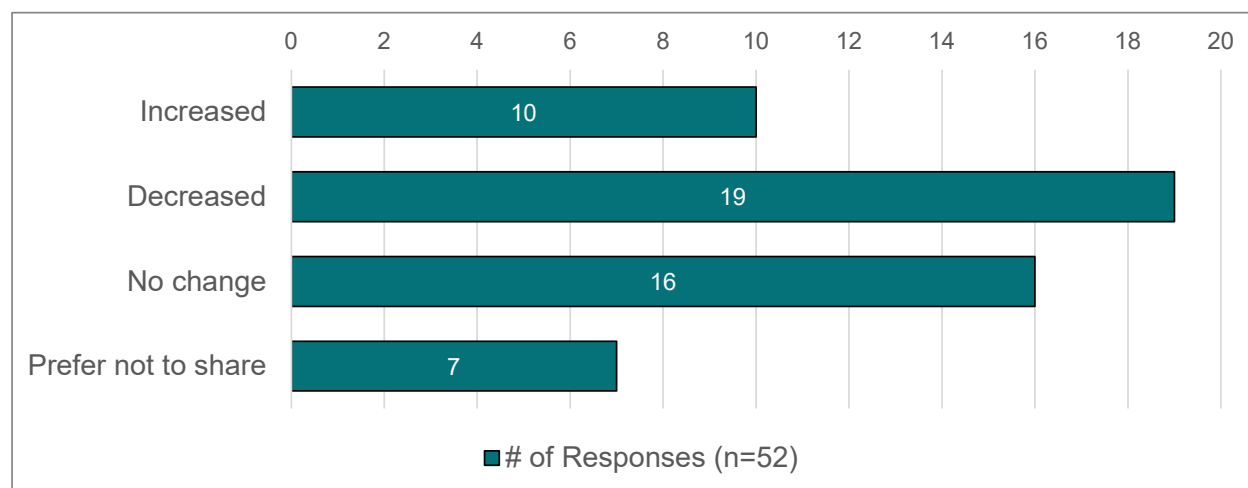


Nine respondents specified other challenges. These included disruptions to office hours, difficulties with loading zones, decreased customer traffic, issues with homeless individuals, and the inconvenience faced by seniors and those with mobility issues. Garbage overflow and its impact on customers were also mentioned.

Changes in Revenue

The adjacent businesses were asked to evaluate how their business revenue evolved in comparison to the same period (between June and August) of the previous year. Among the 52 respondents, 19% reported an increase in their business revenue, while 37% noted a decline. 31% stated that their revenue remained unchanged when compared to the previous year. 13% chose not to disclose their revenue information. Refer to Figure 61.

Figure 61. Overall, how did your business revenue evolve compared to the same period last year?



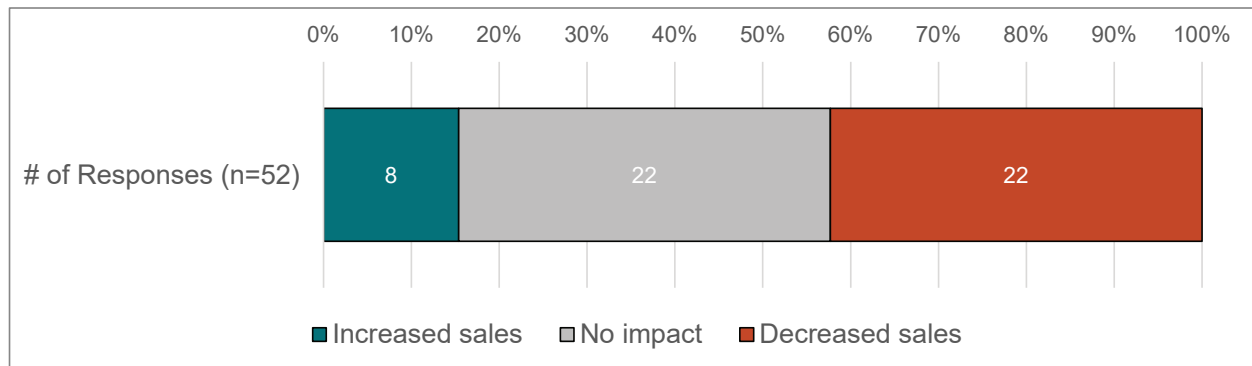
Percentage of Change

Twenty respondents offered insights into the change of their revenue. Reported revenue changes varied widely, with decreases between 10 and 50% and increases between 0.3 and 60%. While the project led to significant revenue gains, with reported increases of 60% for some businesses, other establishments experienced substantial revenue declines, exceeding 50%. The varying formats of responses to this question present a challenge in forming a coherent understanding of the outcomes for this question, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive analysis.

Impacts on Summer Sales

Participants were asked about their views on how MSTs influenced their summer sales. Among the respondents, 22 believed it had no impact on their sales, another 22 reported a decrease, while 8 businesses expressed a positive impact, indicating increased sales during the summer. Refer to Figure 62.

Figure 62. Do you think the MSTS has been a factor influencing your sales over the summer?



Additional Factors

Subsequently, the participants were asked if additional factors influenced the Yukon economy during the summer. 81% believed that there were indeed or somewhat additional factors at play, while 33% of the participants did not share this perspective. Refer to Figure 63.

Respondents who indicated that they believed additional factors to be at play during this summer were asked to specify these additional factors. The majority (67%) pointed to inflation as a significant factor that impacted the Yukon economy during the time frame of the Main Street Town Square initiative. 31% identified the tourism levels as not having

Figure 63. In your view, are there other factors that affected the Yukon economy during this summer?

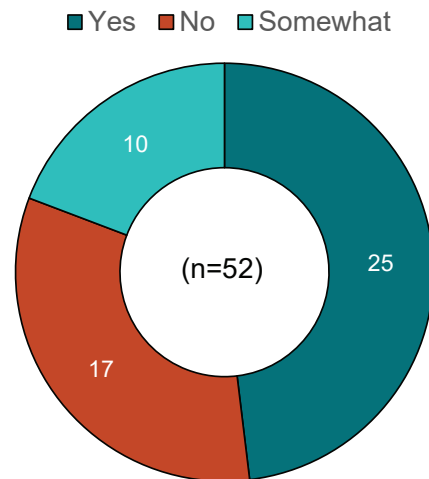
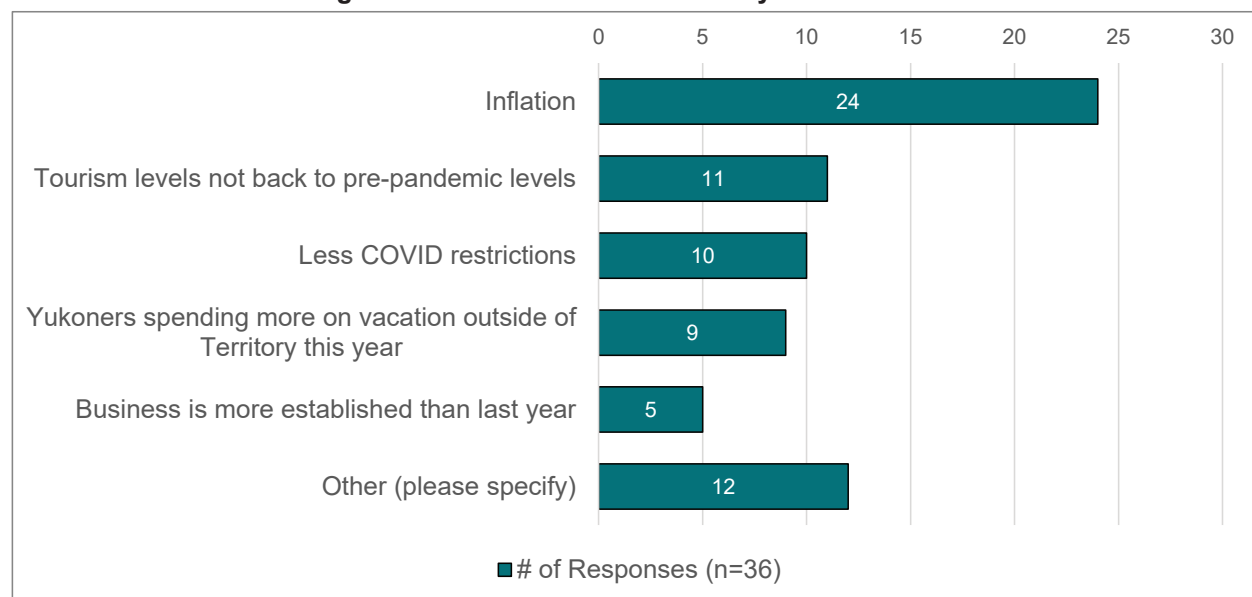


Figure 64. What other factors have you identified?

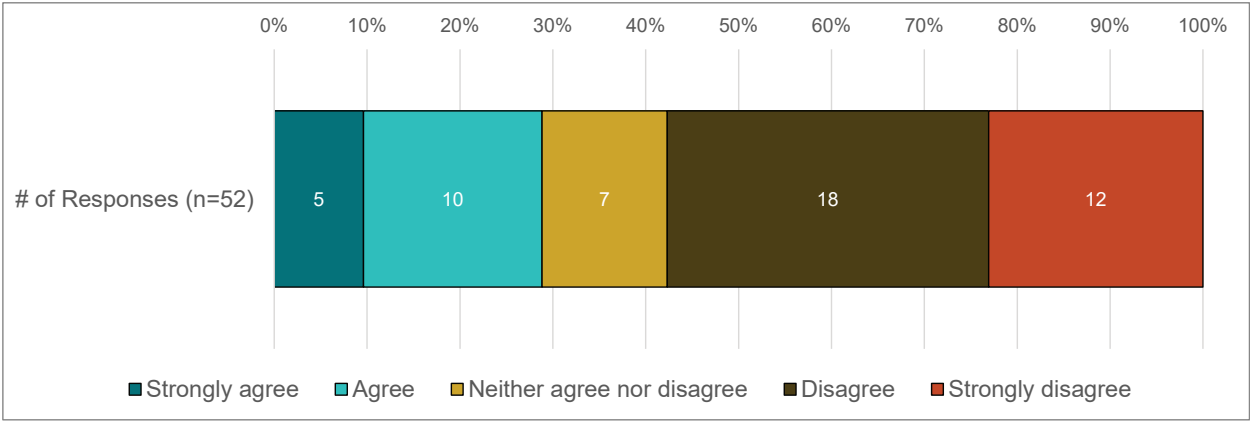


fully returned to pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, 25% mentioned that Yukon residents appeared to be spending more on vacations outside of the territory this year. Refer to Figure 64. Other responses criticized the survey’s simplicity of assessing business impact, emphasizing the complexity of various contributing factors. Increased crime, violence, and social challenges were noted. Wildfires were also mentioned as a factor affecting the local economy.

Impact of the MSTS on the Downtown Area

Adjacent businesses were asked whether the Main Street Town Square had a positive impact on Downtown Whitehorse as a whole. The results showed a mixed response. 15 adjacent businesses believed that the pilot project benefitted Downtown Whitehorse, while the majority (58%) did not think that it had a positive impact. Refer to Figure 65.

Figure 65. Do you think the MSTS benefitted Downtown Whitehorse as a whole?

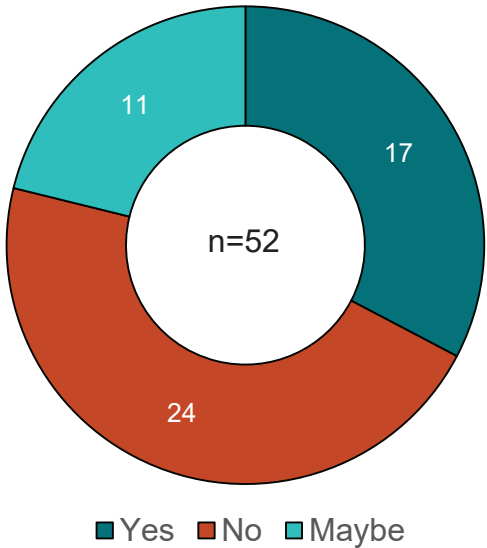


Future Planning

SIMILAR FUTURE INITIATIVES

Survey participants were inquired about whether they would like to see a Pedestrian Town Square implemented again in Whitehorse in future years. The majority of respondents (28) thought the City should maybe or certainly consider similar initiatives in the future, while 24 did not want to see similar initiatives again in the future. Refer to Figure 66.

Figure 66. Would you like to see a Pedestrian Town Square implemented again in Whitehorse in future years?



FUTURE TOWN SQUARE LOCATIONS

Survey participants who expressed interest in the City considering similar initiatives were subsequently questioned about their preferred location for a future town square. They were presented with a map showing conceptual boundaries for each answer choice, along with the opportunity to offer additional input through the “other” category.

The riverside area along Front Street received the highest favorability at 61%, with 43% of business respondents showing support for keeping it in the same location as the previous year, on Main Street between Front and Second. Additionally, 43% of respondents also expressed preference for Front Street, between Main and Steele. Refer to Figure 67.

Other comments expressed support for the concept of using landscaped areas around the wharf and totem pole for a town square, but raised concerns about the noise from loud concerts. Another suggested that the potential town squares sizes should be smaller, while another comment briefly suggested that the Shipyards Park would be a fitting location for the town square.

IMPROVEMENTS

In the survey, participants were asked to identify areas they felt could be improved in the context of a future town square project. The most prevalent response from the adjacent businesses was a desire to change the location, with 54% of respondents supporting this idea. Following closely, 44% expressed interest in improving the streetscaping and place making, while 40% recognized potential for enhancement in available activities and entertainment. Additionally, 35% wished for an improvement in community and business engagement and the promotion of the project. Refer to Figure 68.

25 adjacent businesses provided additional comments. Some expressed frustration over the projects effects on businesses, emphasizing its negative impact on accessible parking and business operations. There were calls to reconsider the location and better plan such initiatives in the future, with the waterfront and shipyards suggested as alternative venues. Several respondents highlighted the need for more engaging features in the town square, such as more planter boxes, food trucks, music, and lighting. The necessity for better communication, harm reduction outreach, and consideration for all types of businesses was also emphasized. Some respondents expressed support for a year-round town square but recommended a different location and more promotion efforts.

Figure 67. What do you think would be the best location(s) for a future town square?

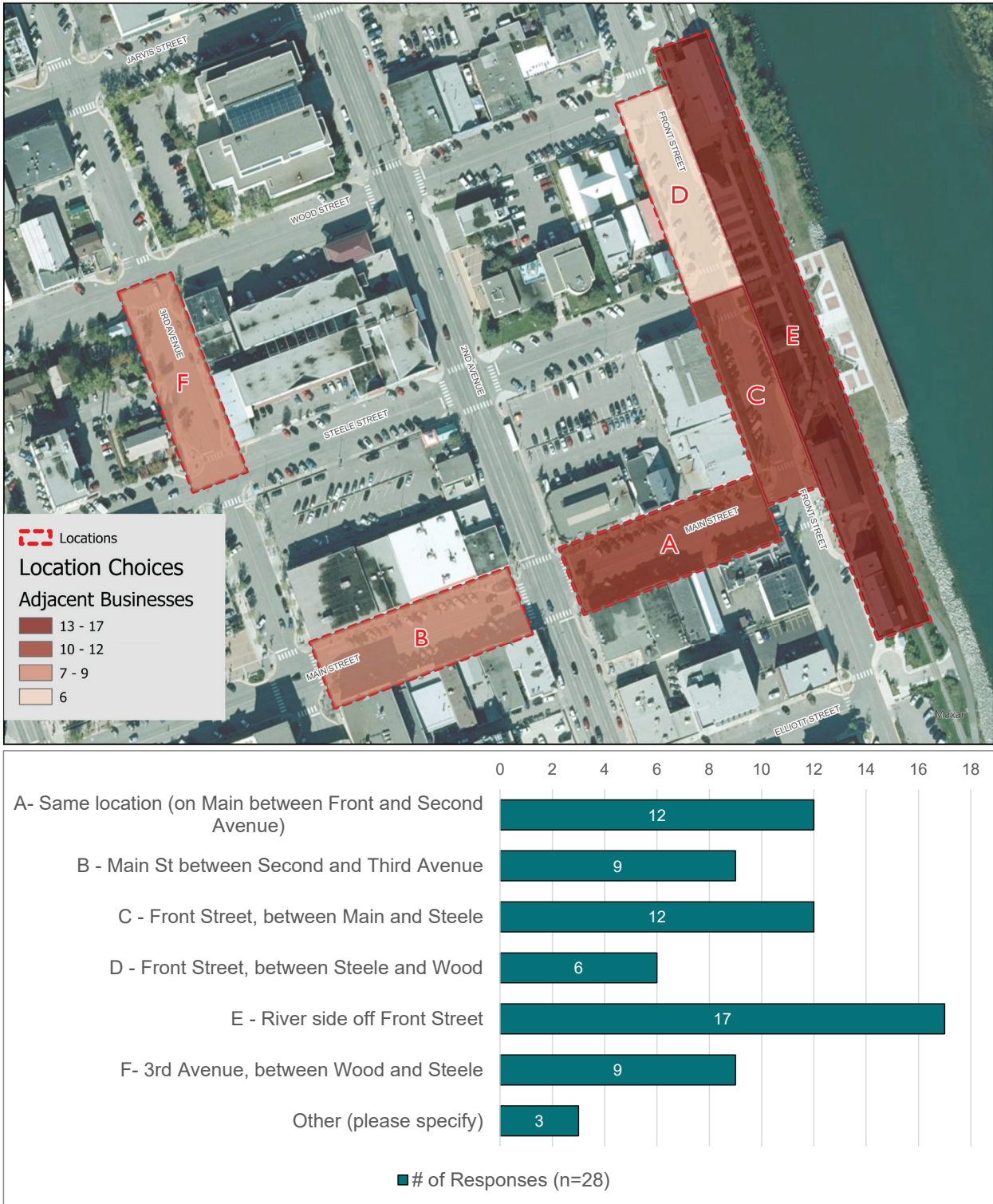
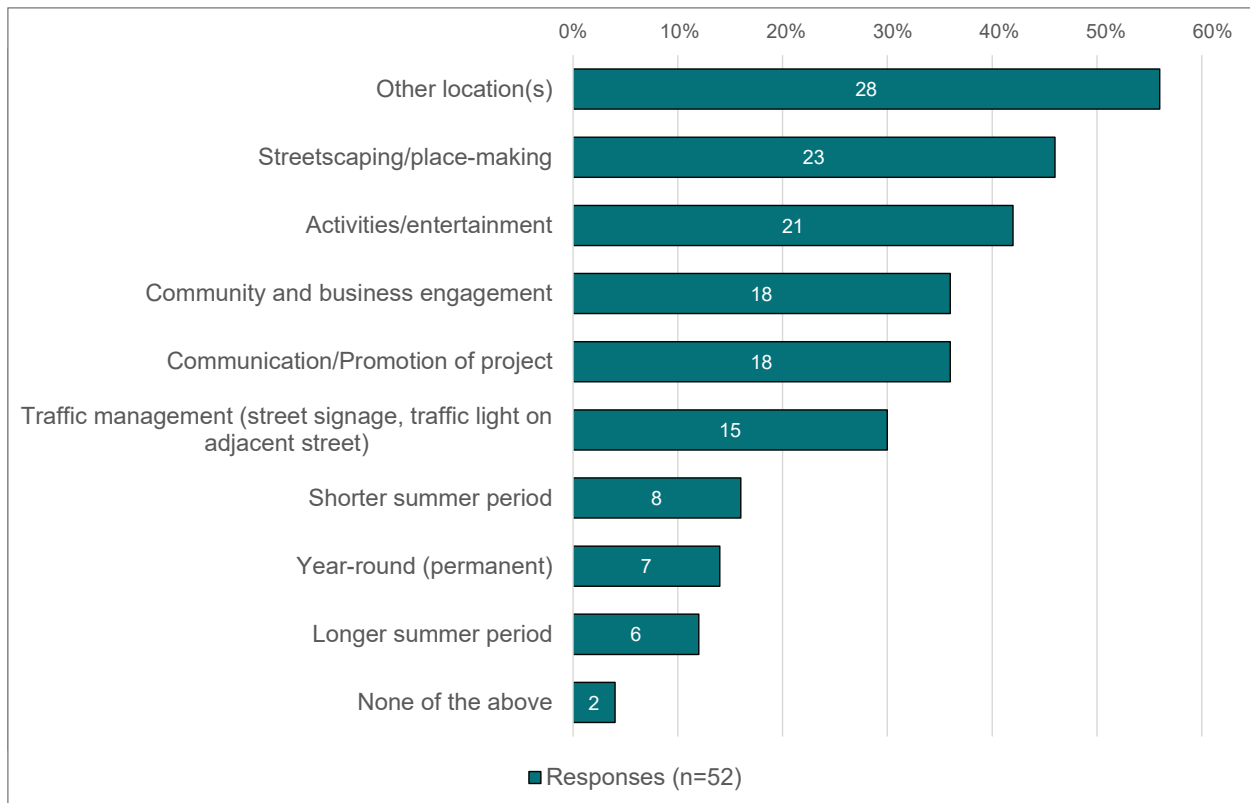


Figure 68. What do you think could be improved in a future town square?



FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

20 adjacent businesses showed interest in participating in the planning of future initiatives with an additional 14 open to consider the opportunity. Eighteen did not want to participate in the future. Refer to Figure 69. The adjacent businesses were then asked to indicate whether they would like to participate in a future town square. Thirty-one adjacent businesses showed interest in participating or maybe participating in a town square in the coming years, while 21 expressed no interest. Refer to Figure 70.

Figure 69. Would you like to participate in the planning phase of a future town square?

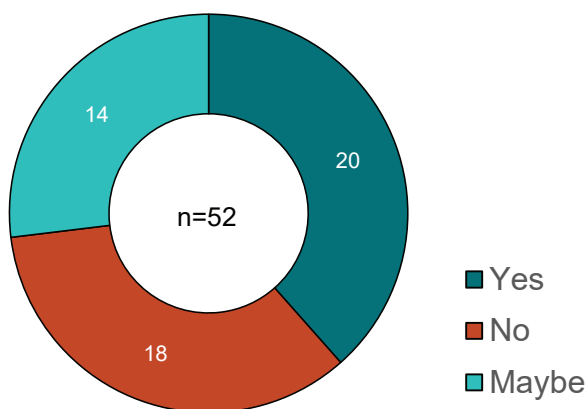
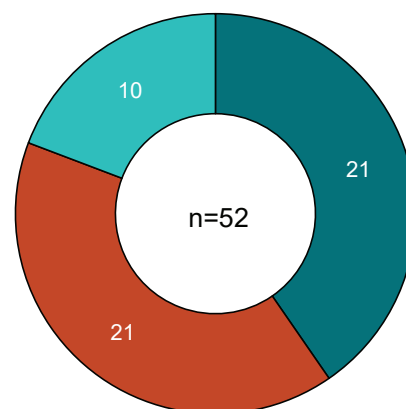


Figure 70. Would you participate in a town square in the coming years?



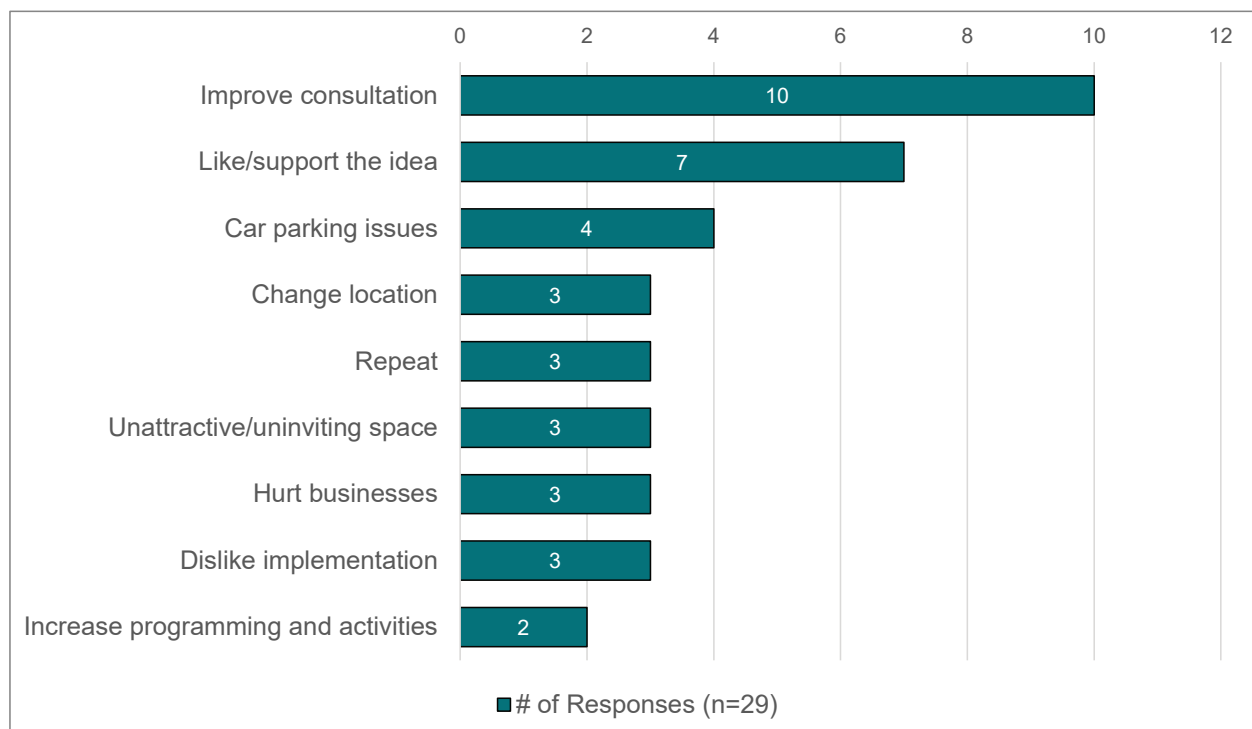
Additional Comments

The survey for the business respondents concluded with an optional open-ended question, inviting respondents to provide any additional comments or information they considered important for consideration.

In summary, the comments expressed a range of concerns and suggestions regarding the town square projects impact on local businesses. Many commenters felt that the initial consultations were inadequate, and expressed a predominant focus on parking issues and limited planning. The project was seen as negatively affecting nearby businesses during the crucial summer season and there were frustrations regarding the lack of responsiveness to business owners' concerns throughout the summer.

Suggestions included more lead-time for planning, exploring alternative event locations, improving communication and marketing, and involving nearby businesses in project decisions. There was also a call for a comprehensive assessment of the project's effects on businesses and the need for potential repairs or improvements. Refer to Figure 71 to observe how often the themes were mentioned.

Figure 71. Do you have any other feedback?



Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Whitehorse's Main Street Town Square has been a topic of both excitement and contention among the community. While it has attracted a majority of visitors from outside the downtown area, it has also faced a wave of discontent. The following text summarizes key takeaways from the community's feedback, highlighting areas of concern and providing insights into potential improvements for this public space initiative.

PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE: A VIBRANT COMMUNITY SPACE

The MSTS project emerged as a vibrant and welcoming community space, fostering a sense of togetherness. Local residents expressed a strong desire for active participation in shaping the future of the town square, with keen interest in providing input on amenities, activities, and overall improvements. The public enjoyed the variety of events and entertainment options hosted at the square, including concerts, street performances, and markets, which contributed to making it an appealing gathering space. However, concerns were raised about the lost parking, and increased traffic congestion, which led to challenges in navigating the area.

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE: CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

A certain amount of businesses declared a decrease in their sales this summer. A few mentioned that the MSTS gave an unfair advantage to the neighbouring businesses, but the majority of businesses considered there are larger economic factors at stake, such as inflation, and tourism numbers not back to the pre-pandemic levels yet.

However, challenges with parking, traffic flow, and accessibility were cited as contributing factors, disrupting established routines and affecting their bottom line. Operational hurdles, such as parking constraints and disruptions to loading zones, led to logistical issues. Loitering and excessive noise presented challenges to a conducive work environment. To address these challenges, businesses expressed a desire for better communication and planning, highlighting the need for comprehensive assessments of the project's effects. They also suggested alternatives for event locations and a longer lead-time for planning to minimize disruptions.

ADJACENT BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE: REVENUE IMPACT AND FUTURE PLANNING

Adjacent businesses, in particular, experienced significant impacts on their revenue, with several facing difficulties due to parking constraints and reduced customer accessibility. Loitering, excessive noise, especially during concerts, and logistical challenges disrupted the daily operations of adjacent businesses. Some respondents expressed the need for greater consideration and responsiveness to business owners' concerns during

the summer season. While adjacent businesses had varying opinions about the MSTs project's benefits to Downtown Whitehorse, there was a notable desire for better future planning, improved streetscaping, and increased community engagement.

ENGAGEMENT AND LOCATION

A significant portion of visitors to the Main Street Town Square came from outside of downtown, indicating the Town Square's success in attracting people from various parts of the city or even beyond, potentially contributing to the local economy. Although there was a noticeable level of discontent with the Town Square's location, it is interesting to note that when asked about their preferred location for a future Town Square, a substantial amount of respondents, including both the public and businesses, still chose the same location. This may suggest that while some may not have been satisfied with the current setup, they see potential in the existing location for future improvements.

PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS: A COMMON THREAD

Parking and accessibility emerged as a common concern among the respondents. Issues related to a decrease in parking availability, traffic flow, and general accessibility to businesses seemed to affect both public perception and business operations. This concern was particularly evident in the adjacent business survey, emphasizing the need for thoughtful solutions.

UNEVEN IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESSES

The impact of the Main Street Town Square on local businesses was diverse. While some businesses reported positive effects, such as increased foot traffic and visibility, others experienced declines in revenue and raised concerns about competition and parking issues. This disparity in impacts was evident in the adjacent business survey, emphasizing the need for more targeted support and engagement for affected businesses.

DESIRE FOR MORE ACTIVITIES

A shared concern across all groups was the perception that the Main Street Town Square often appeared underutilized. Respondents, especially the public, expressed a desire for increased programming and activities. This suggests that there is potential for the Town Square to play a more vibrant and dynamic role in the community, catering to a wider range of interests and demographics.

A BALANCE FOR THE FUTURE

In conclusion, the Main Street Town Square initiative resonated positively with the public, providing a vibrant and communal space for gatherings and entertainment. Nevertheless, concerns about noise and traffic persist. Some businesses, particularly those adjacent to the MSTs, struggled with decreased revenue and operational disruptions, highlighting the importance of balanced urban development projects.

The key takeaways underscore the significance of careful planning and consultation to maximize the benefits and mitigate the drawbacks of such initiatives. Addressing issues related to parking, traffic, and noise may prove critical in ensuring a harmonious coexistence of businesses and community spaces in the future. The Main Street Town Square project offers valuable lessons in the art of balancing community needs and business interests within urban development projects.