



 CITY OF  
VANCOUVER

# Pop-up Plazas



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E 27th Ave & Fraser St

# BACKGROUND

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*In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in partnership with Business Improvement Associations, local businesses, and communities, the City of Vancouver created temporary pop-up plazas in 2020 to help businesses reopen and give residents more public space to enjoy in their communities while maintaining a safe distance from each other.*

*Throughout the year, City staff collected feedback, monitored the plazas, and worked with partner businesses and organizations to make sure spaces were properly maintained, inclusive, and comfortable.*

*The following is a summary of the public feedback we received, along with early observations of these spaces, and how this information will inform our next steps.*

# OVERVIEW

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*Overall, pop-up plazas are welcomed additions to communities for providing free outdoor spaces for residents to access. These spaces encourage residents to support local businesses, promote pedestrian foot traffic, reduce social isolation, and strengthen communities.*

*Out of the ten pop-up plazas that were installed in 2020, eight have been extended, one will become seasonal, and one will be removed.*

*We aim to continue to make improvements to the remaining plazas based on the feedback we received, focusing on upgrading the materials, and improving comfort for plaza users.*

*Going forward, we will engage further with groups that we missed last year to ensure that these spaces work for more people.*



# Overview: *Engagement & Monitoring* (in 2020)

## Notification letters

Sent to residents and businesses within 1-block radius at key project milestones

## On-site signage

Installed sandwich boards and decals at all plazas

## Pop-up Plazas survey (location-specific)

Received 767 responses

## Making Streets for People survey (public life recovery initiatives, not location-specific)

Received 3,322 responses

## Survey to local businesses

Received 34 responses

## Social media promotion

Through City of Vancouver & VIVA social media channels

## Media releases

Released 6 information bulletins

## Direct emails from public

Received 195 emails

## 311 cases

Received 25 inquiries

## On-site monitoring

At all 10 locations at different times of day and days of week, in 30 minute intervals

*What we saw:*

# MONITORING SUMMARY

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*Collected between July – October 2020*

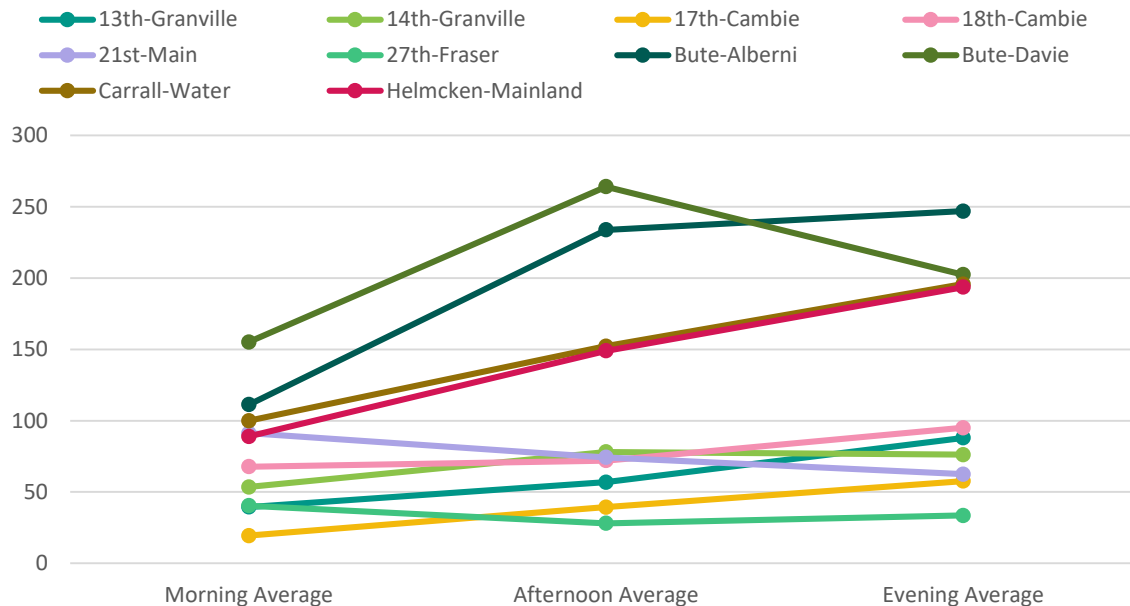
*City staff monitored the pop-up plazas to understand how the spaces were being used. Plazas were monitored in 30 minute increments on weekday and weekend mornings, afternoons and evenings.*

# Monitoring: *What we saw*

Average number of people observed during 30 minute monitoring shifts



Average Number of People Observed at Different Times of Day



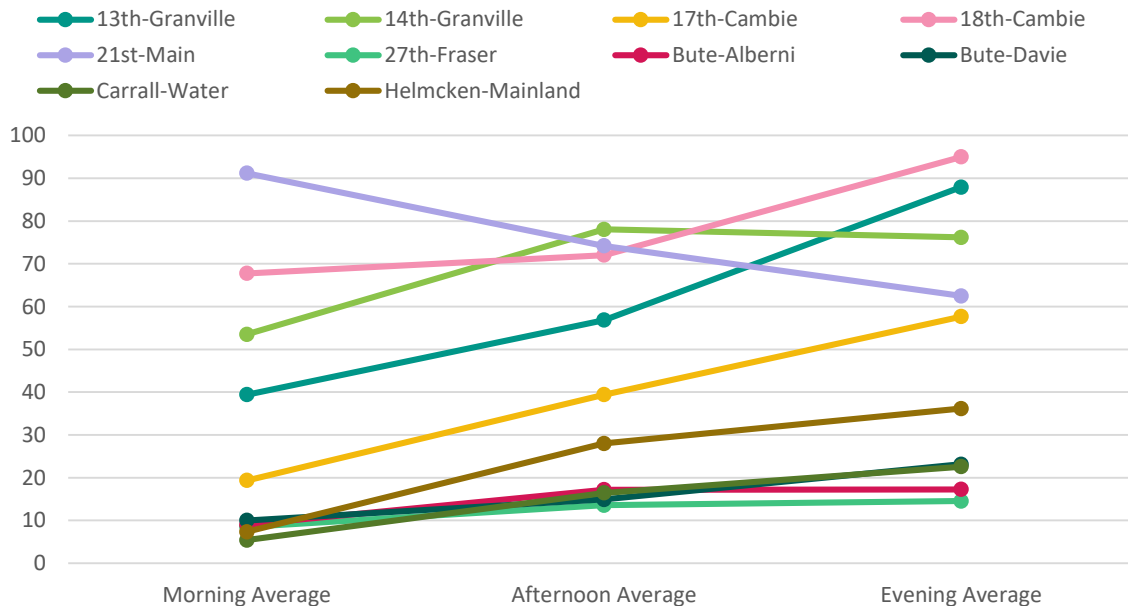


# Monitoring: *What we saw*

Average number of  
people lingering  
during 30 minute  
monitoring shifts

18

Average Number of People Observed Lingering at  
Different Times of Day



*What we heard:*

# GENERAL SURVEY SUMMARY

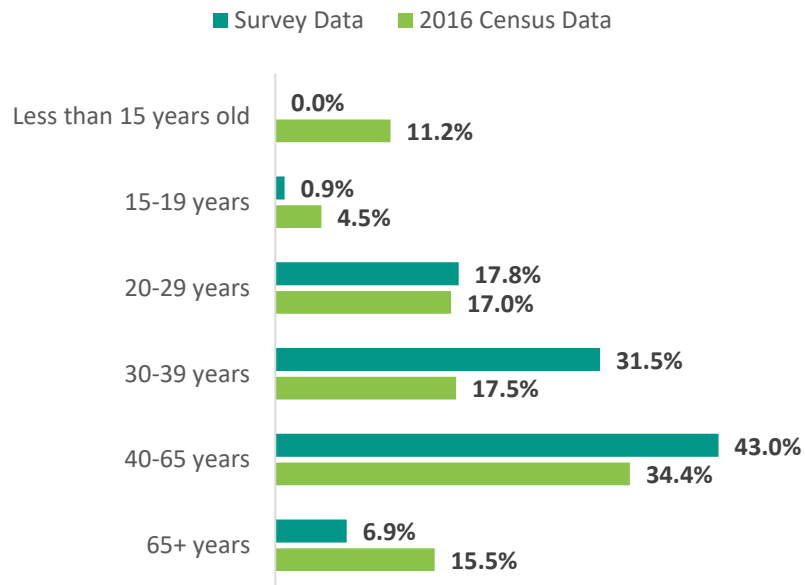
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*Open for feedback between July – October 2020*

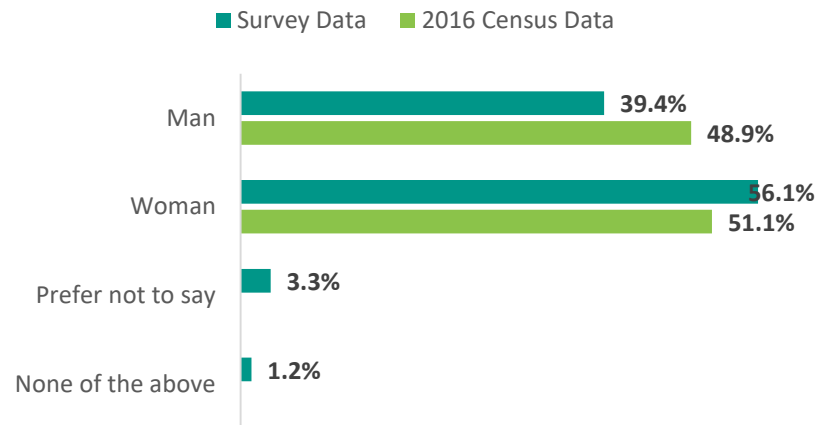
*We collected feedback from the public on pop-up plazas through an online survey. The feedback helped us improve these spaces over time, and determine the future of these following the pandemic.*

# Engagement: *Who We Heard From*

## Age



## Gender

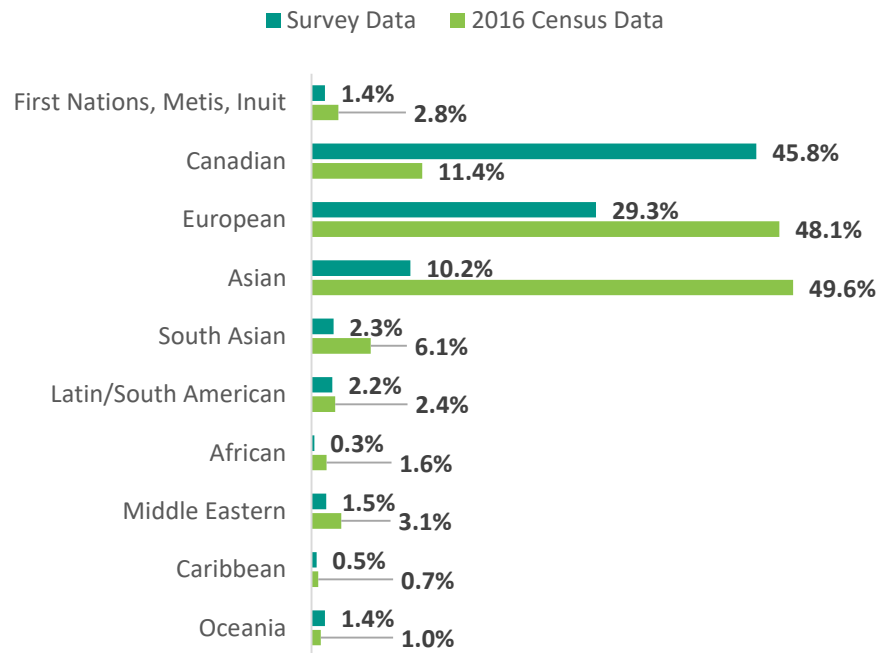


*Note: The 2016 Census allowed respondents to only identify as either male or female.*

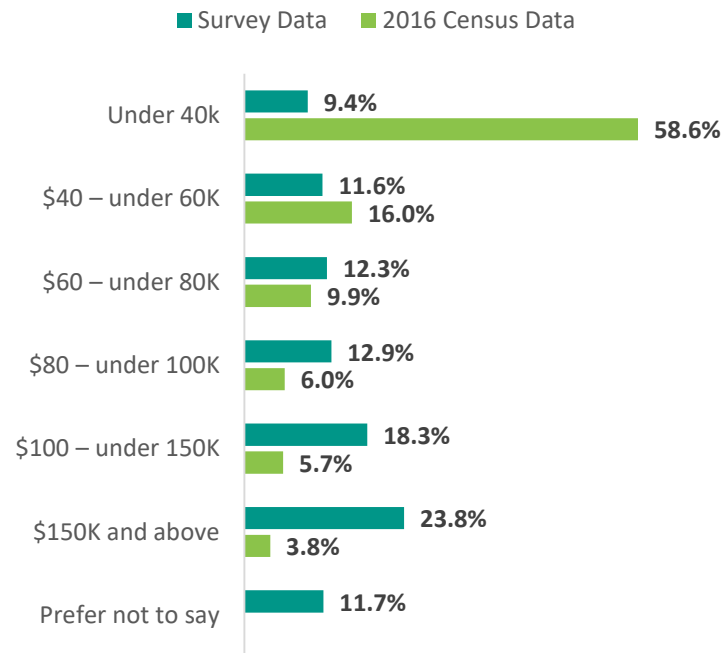


# Engagement: *Who We Heard From*

## Ethnic origin of ancestors



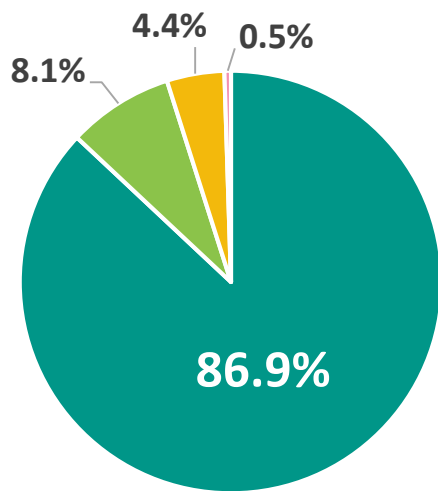
## Total household income



# Engagement: *What We Heard*

## Overall support for plazas becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



*767 total responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

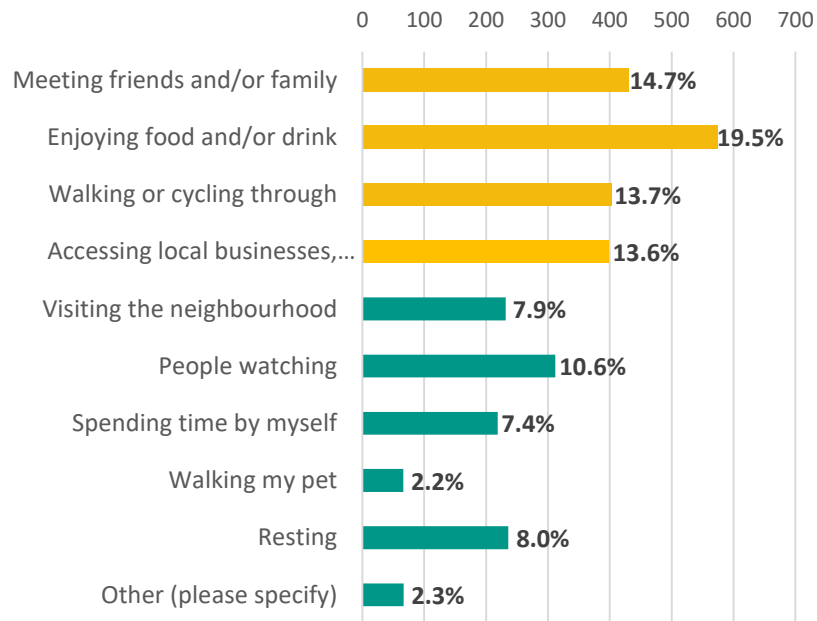
- Appreciation for having safe space to be outside
- Acts as a backyard for many who don't have access
- Adds vibrancy and strengthens communities
- Need for more free outdoor spaces like these
- Fills a gap in the city's public space network
- Enables residents to support local businesses
- Improves mental health / reduces social isolation
- Provides traffic calming

## Reasons for not supporting:

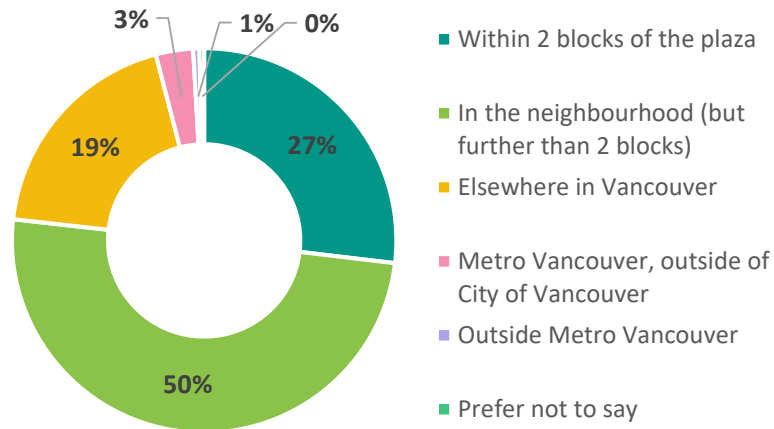
- Impacts to vehicle traffic
- Loss of vehicle parking
- Proximity to vehicle traffic (noise, fumes)
- Would support seasonal plaza

# Engagement: *What We Heard*

## How are you using the plaza?



## Do you live near the plaza?

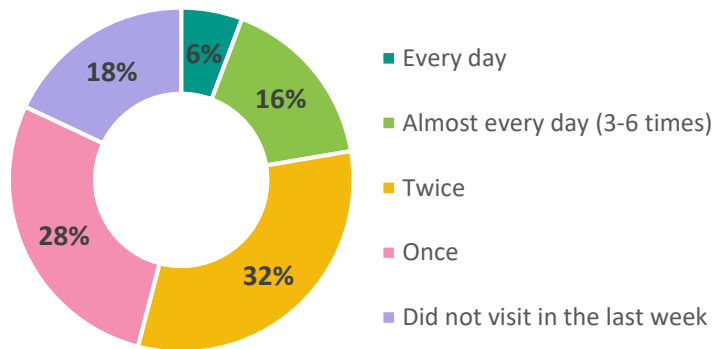


*77% live in the neighbourhood*



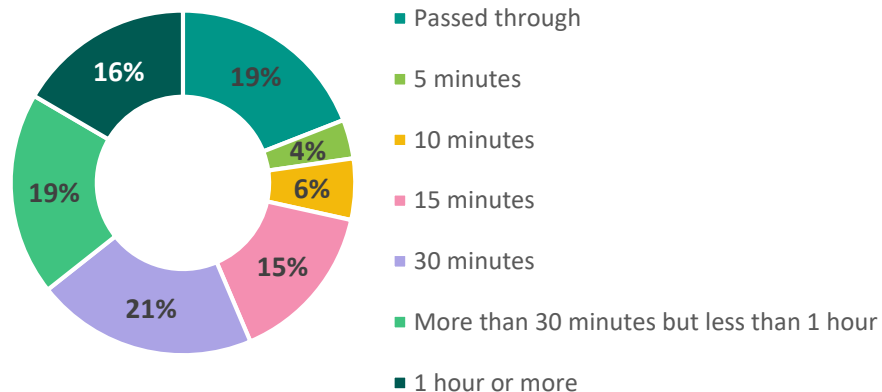
# Engagement: *What We Heard*

In the last week, how often did you visit the plaza?



*60% visited once or twice*

On your last visit, how long did you stay in the plaza?



*56% stayed 30 minutes or longer*

# LOCATION SUMMARIES

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*Ten pop-up plazas were installed around the city in 2020. The following are summaries of each location, along with observations and what we heard through the survey.*





# W18th Ave and Cambie St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 23, 2020

## Background:

2019 engagement - strong community support for public space on the west side of 18<sup>th</sup> Ave

## Steward Partner:

*Cambie Village Business Association* (provided and manages the furniture, occasionally programs the plaza)

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Low density
- Good tree canopy
- Connected to slow street
- Existing mural on JJ Bean

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Moveable furniture

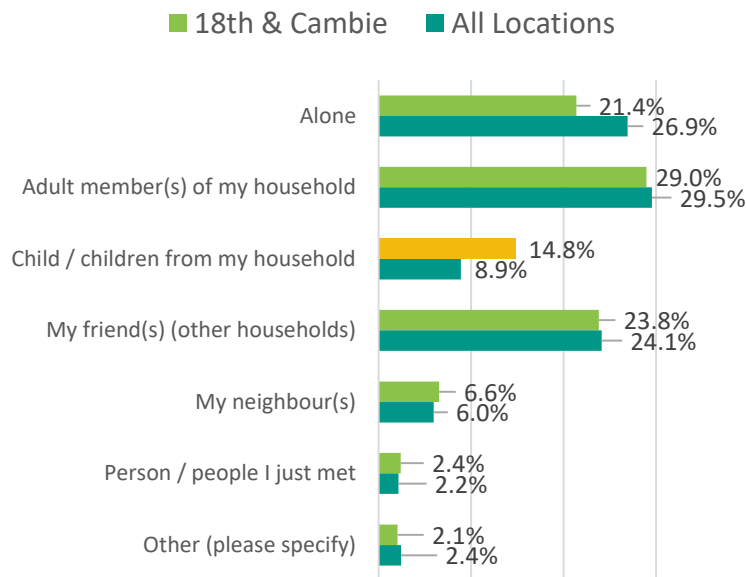
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended



# W18th Ave and Cambie St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Who have you visited with?



*Many people visiting this location with children*

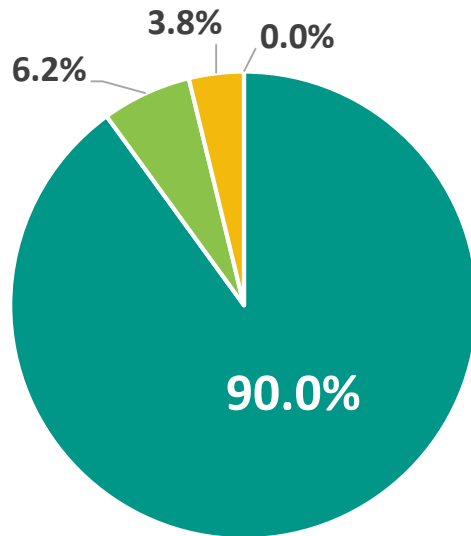
*“The ... plazas have added so much to our neighborhood. It has been wonderful to see how well they have been used by **diverse demographics** — the music was an added bonus and the range and quality of groups booked was really great. I would be very sad to see the [plazas] go.”*

*“It had a great **feeling of community** and felt like it was for anyone. My wife is 8 months pregnant and it is nice to have clearly **public seating options**.”*

# W 18th Ave and Cambie St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



*130 responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

- Provides more outdoor space to safely socialize with others (provides seating – not a park)
- Adds vibrancy, creates a sense of community, encourages neighbourhood interactions
- Lends itself well to supporting surrounding businesses
- Provides traffic calming, promotes foot traffic, makes cycling safer
- Others (improves mental health, inclusive, free, promotes civic pride)

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Would support seasonally / temporarily
- Reduces parking and Impacts traffic by pushing traffic to side streets and creating more turns to get around





# W 14<sup>th</sup> Ave and Granville St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 23, 2020

## Improvements made:

- 6 planters added
- 2 picnic tables added
- 3 umbrellas added

## Steward Partner:

*Meinhardt* (provided and manages the furniture) & *South Granville Business Improvement Association* (occasionally programs the plaza)

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Low density
- No tree canopy
- Connected to slow street
- Existing mural on Meinhardt
- Adjacent sidewalk patio

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Umbrellas & planters
- Fixed & moveable furniture

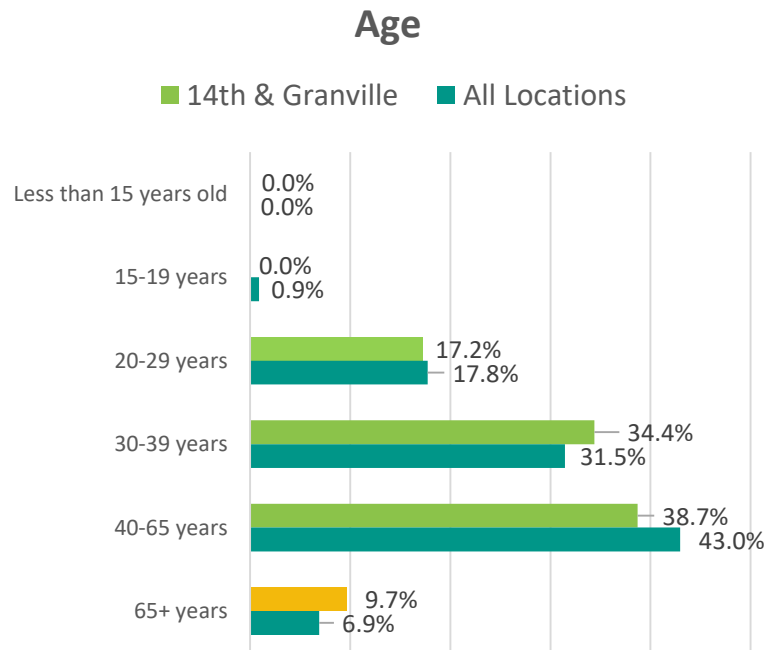
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended





# W 14<sup>th</sup> Ave and Granville St: *What we heard (survey)*



*Higher response from seniors than on average*

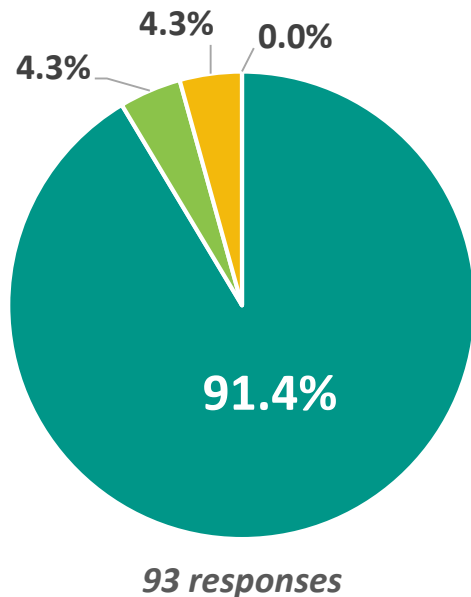
*“I’ve also seen many **neighbours with limited mobility** who may have difficulty accessing the parks in the neighbourhood **enjoy the space...** During a difficult time they have contributed so much to the **vitality of the city.**”*

*“Every time I walk by it’s being used by people from **all walks of life and all ages.** I understand that there will be some push back from some drivers, however, the **streets should be for everyone.** Dedicating one half block for pedestrians every 10 or so blocks seems fair to me.”*

# W 14th Ave and Granville St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



## Reasons for supporting:

- Provides outdoor space with seating
- Fosters community and creates a community amenity & stickiness in the neighbourhood that was previously lacking (area isn't just a destination for shopping anymore)
- Low impact to traffic & provides traffic calming
- Encourages people to spend time outdoors

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Only during March-October
- Next to main artery (loud, breathing in fumes from vehicles)
- Creates bottlenecks and impedes commercial delivery trucks & cyclists







# E 21<sup>st</sup> Ave and Main St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

Week of Aug 17, 2020

## Improvements made:

- 3 Astroturf panels added
- 5 picnic tables added
- 5 umbrellas added
- 5 planters added
- 1 trash can added

## Steward Partner:

Coco et Olive, Little  
Mountain Neighbourhood  
House, local property owners  
and residents

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Low density
- Good tree canopy
- Adjacent sidewalk patios
- Existing fixed furniture (parklet & tree bench)

## Design elements:

- Low concrete barriers
- Umbrellas & planters
- Fixed furniture

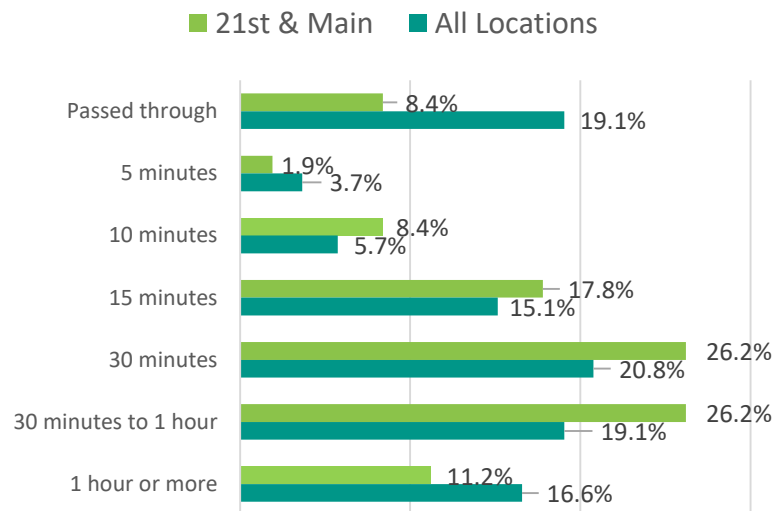
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended



# E 21st Ave and Main St: *What we heard (survey)*

On your last visit, how long did you stay in the plaza?



*Many people lingered for less than 1 hour*

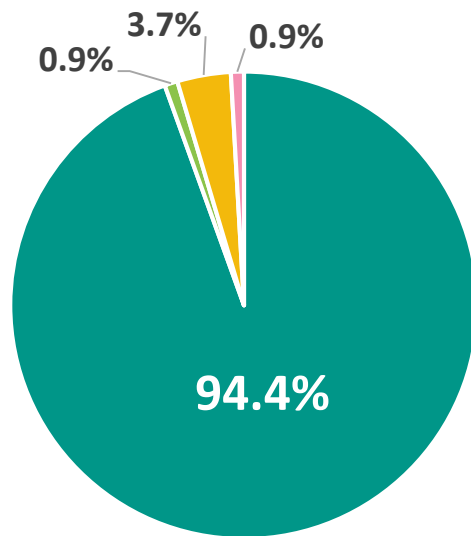
*“I think we need more public, open spaces that aren’t parks. I love sitting along Main Street and **feeling the vibrancy of the community**. I feel part of the action even if I’m just observing. It makes me **feel more connected to my neighbourhood and my community**.”*

*“The positives that have come out of the pandemic have by far outweighed the negatives. I believe these pop-ups are encouraging people to **enjoy their community, respect their neighbours and neighborhoods, support local business, be healthier by spending time outdoors**.”*

# W 21<sup>st</sup> Ave and Main St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



*High level of community support  
107 responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

- Encourages access to local businesses
- Improves livability and vibrancy in the neighbourhood and increases community pride
- Provides free public outdoor space with seating
- Brings people and the community together safely
- Adds public space that aren't parks
- Low impact to traffic at this location
- Puts people's wellbeing before cars

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Increases traffic congestion
- Creates safety issues from diverted vehicles







# E 27<sup>th</sup> Ave and Fraser St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 12, 2020

## Improvements made:

- Bike corral added
- 5 picnic tables added
- 5 umbrellas added
- Bistro furniture removed

## Steward Partner:

*Say Mercy!*  
(manages plaza furniture)

## Site characteristics:

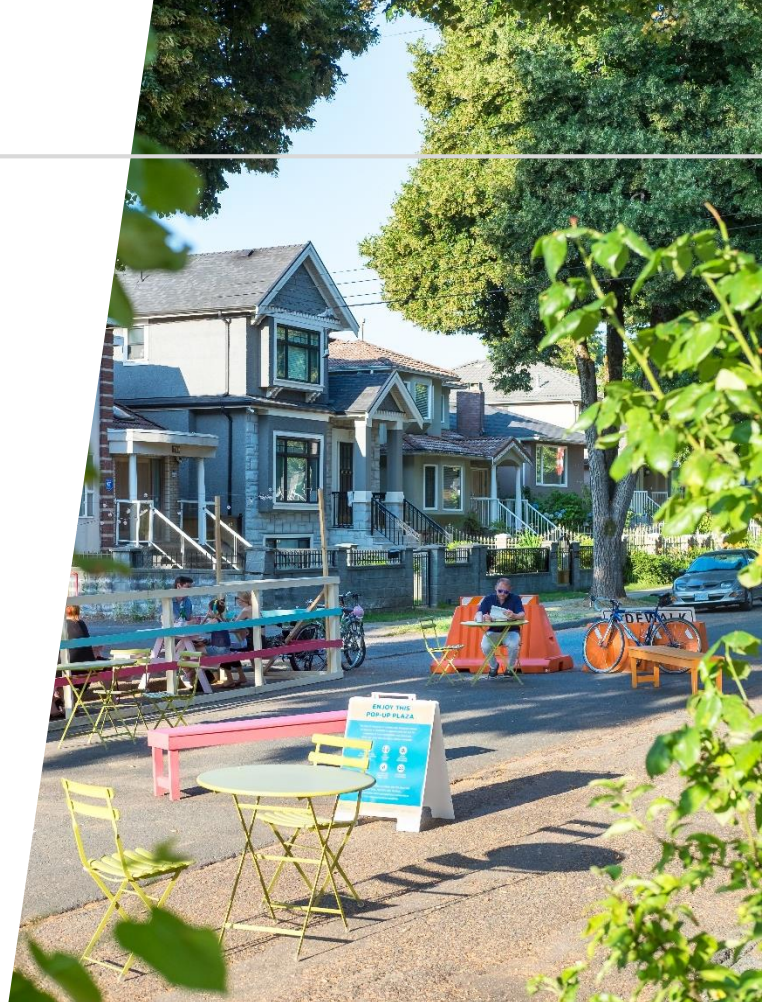
- Side street plaza
- Low density area
- Good tree canopy
- Connected to slow street
- Curbside patio in plaza

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Umbrellas & planters
- Fixed & moveable furniture
- Bike rack corral

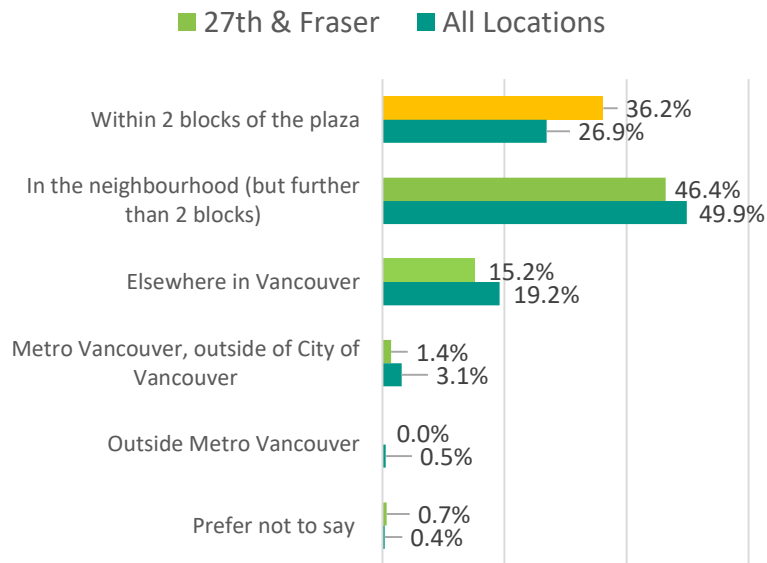
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended



## E 27<sup>th</sup> Ave and Fraser St: *What we heard (survey)*

### Do you live near the plaza?



*Many respondents live within 2 blocks*

*"I LOVE this in our neighbourhood. In addition to helping out Say Mercy! with more seating, it's a great addition to our area. I've read a book, met friends, had a coffee and enjoy it a lot this summer. With no patio/yard, **it's become like our backyard.**"*

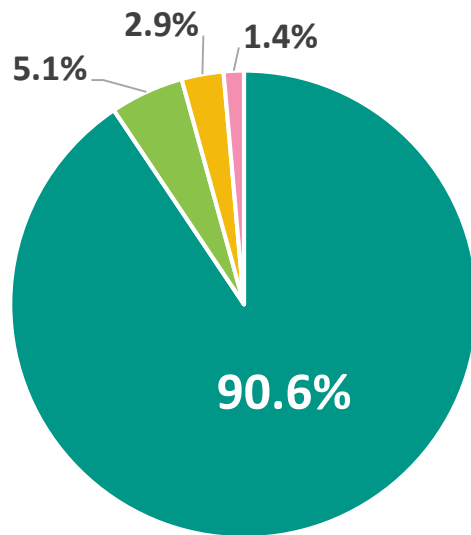
*"I live in the neighbourhood and there is a real **lack of public space.** Just the cemetery."*



# W 27th Ave and Fraser St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



*138 responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

- Creates public space to gather outdoors in a safe and socially distanced way
- Enlivens neighbourhood
- Increases sense of community, social connections and mental health
- Encourages people to support businesses in the area
- Reduces vehicle traffic and makes streets more pedestrian-friendly

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Impacts vehicle traffic by limiting access to Fraser St and diverts traffic to alleyways



# W17th Ave and Cambie St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 23, 2020

## Improvements made:

- 3 picnic tables added
- 3 umbrellas added
- Portable toilet added (Alcohol Consumption Pilot)

## Steward Partner:

*Cambie Village Business Association* (provided and manages the furniture, occasionally programs the plaza)

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Low density
- Partial tree canopy
- No active business frontages – primarily residential

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Fixed and moveable furniture
- Umbrellas
- Portable toilet

## Plaza status:

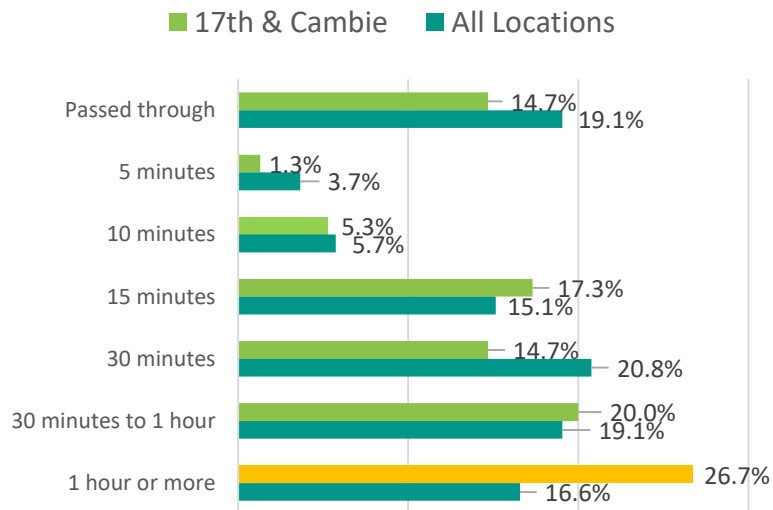
Temporary (removed for winter 2020, re-installation in spring 2021)





# W17th Ave and Cambie St: *What we heard (survey)*

On your last visit, how long did you stay in the plaza?



*Many people stayed for 1 hour or more*

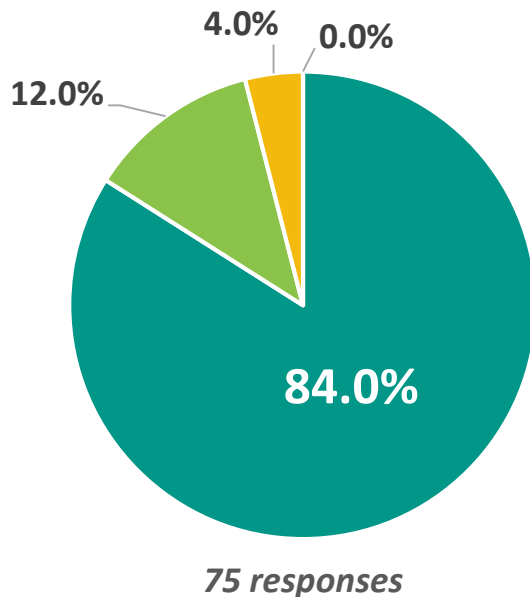
*“...it is a perfect excuse to get outdoors and spend time with family/ friends. Especially your **older parents who can’t sit in the park** for long but want to spend time together ... The plazas have been great as tools to **boost everyone’s mental health** this summer and leading into the fall/winter.”*

*“Cambie is a very loud street, one of the loudest in town at rush hour. This is a **welcome respite and makes the village come to life.**”*

# W 17th Ave and Cambie St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



## Reasons for supporting:

- Provides a safe place for people to sit, linger and enjoy takeout from local businesses
- Provides a welcome respite from the busy street and makes the village come to life
- Accessible space that can be enjoyed by all regardless of socio-economic status or ability
- Excellent for mental health

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Limits vehicular access to 400 block West 17<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Loss of vehicle parking and access to side streets for people visiting businesses
- Vehicle traffic rerouting







# W 13<sup>th</sup> Ave and Granville St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 23, 2020

## Improvements made:

- 3 picnic tables added
- 2 planters added
- 3 umbrellas added

## Steward Partner:

*South Granville Business  
Improvement Association*  
(manages furniture)

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Low density
- Good tree canopy
- Existing mural
- Existing green streets garden
- Adjacent sidewalk patio

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Umbrellas & planters
- Fixed & moveable furniture
- Temporary patio

## Plaza status:

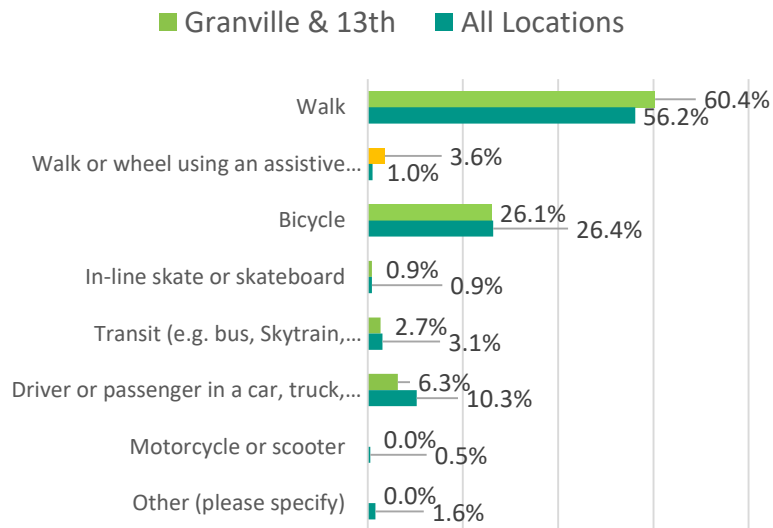
Plaza extended





# W 13<sup>th</sup> Ave and Granville St: *What we heard (survey)*

## How did you get to the plaza?



*Higher response rate from people using assistive devices than on average*

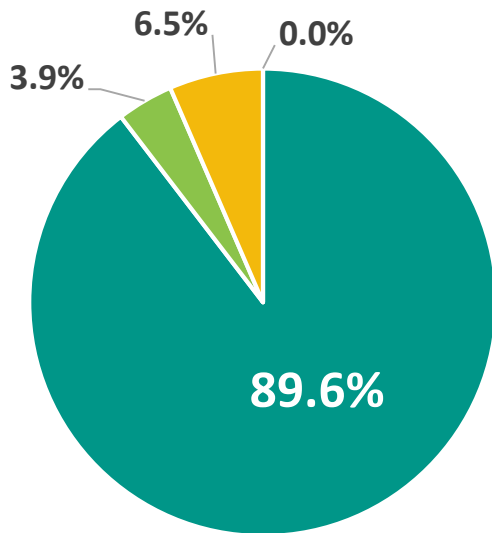
*“I think the area needs more public space to bring it to life. I live in the area and would **gladly work around the traffic implications** to give the community a space gather, rest, collaborate, meet, and engage. This area desperately needs these city plazas, and it’s good for the surrounding businesses!”*

*“I saw a **new mom with her baby** meeting with a friend. **How nice for them to have the option to be outdoors**, and for her to have stress free adult interaction in the post partum stage ... Please keep these spaces permanent and maintained!!!”*

# W 13th Ave and Granville St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



*77 responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

- Promotes social connections and getting people outside
- Provides a much needed community gathering space
- Creates a vibrant sense of community
- Benefits of plaza are worth the impacts to vehicle traffic
- Provides a place to sit and rest
- Supports local businesses

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Unsure about usage in winter months
- Creates too many obstacles for people driving
- Too close to vehicle traffic





# Bute St & Alberni St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 12, 2020

## Improvements made:

- Planters added
- Mural added
- Fabric art added

## Steward Partner:

*Downtown Vancouver  
Business Improvement  
Association* (provided  
planters, coordinated art,  
manages furniture)

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- High density
- Partial tree canopy
- Bute St bikeway

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Planters
- Fixed & moveable furniture
- Ground mural and art  
installation in trees

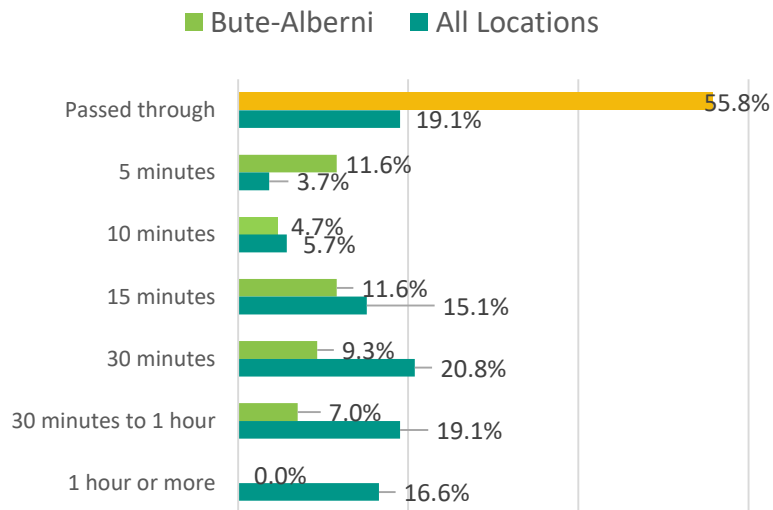
## Plaza status:

Plaza to be removed with Water  
Main infrastructure upgrades



# Bute St & Alberni St: *What we heard (survey)*

On your last visit, how long did you stay in the plaza?



*Many people passed through*

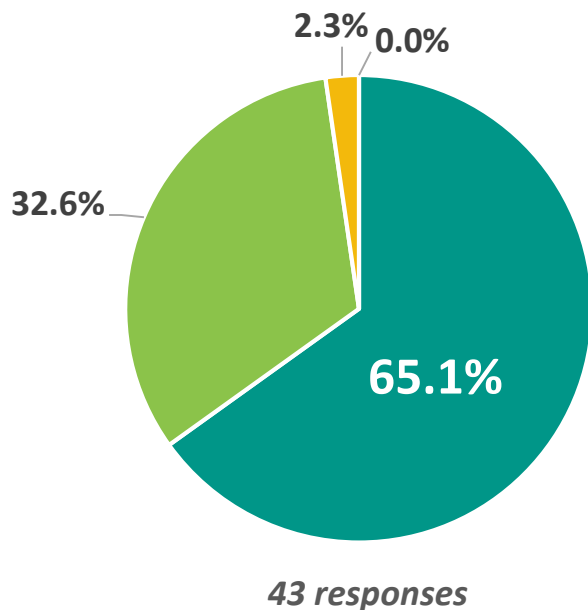
*"I like it as I often have to catch [the] bus to go to my part time job [...] where I help a family with cleaning. I am a **senior** and semi-retired but [have] been with my clients for over 40 years so they are near 80 and yes **parking near where they need to go is important but [being able to] sit down is just as important.**"*

*"It's fine the way it is... however I am always worried about my **older seniors and handicapped peoples** who **need parking close by so they can have lunch with a friend too.**"*

# Bute St & Alberni St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



## Reasons for supporting:

- Makes area more car-free and pedestrian-friendly
- Need for more public spaces
- Improves volume of foot traffic to businesses
- Impacts to traffic are manageable

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Impedes traffic circulation (disruptive not having Bute St open as Thurlow is one-way and causes vehicles to have to travel for blocks to get around it)
- Restricts parking for local businesses
- Redundant with Bute-Robson Plaza and other public spaces in the area
- Not well-used





# Bute St & Davie St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

Mid-April

## Improvements made:

- Benches added

## Steward Partner:

West End Business  
Improvement Association

## Site characteristics:

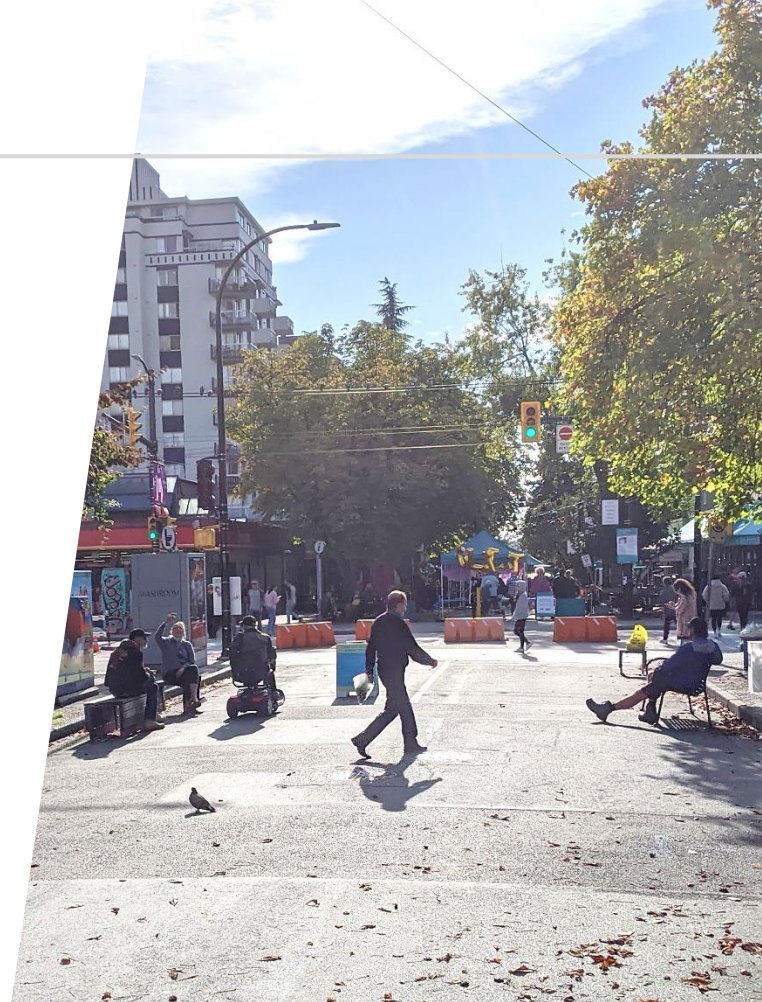
- Side street plaza
- Medium density
- Partial tree canopy
- Bute St bikeway

## Design elements:

- Water-filled barriers
- Fixed furniture
- Existing Mobi station and automated portable toilet

## Plaza status:

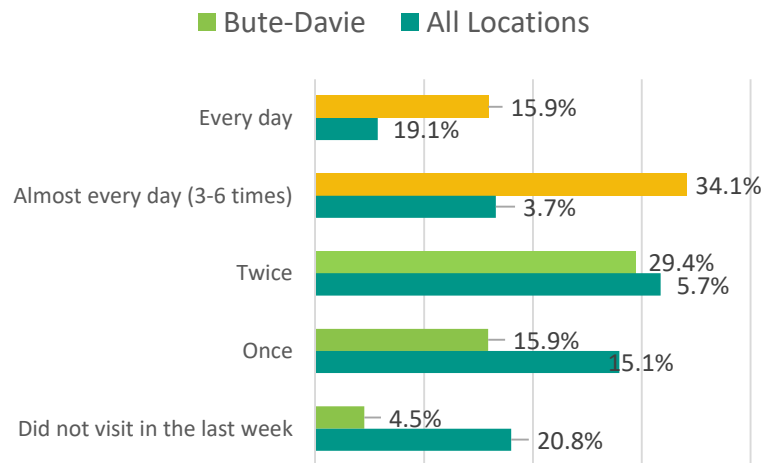
Plaza extended





# Bute St & Davie St: *What we heard (survey)*

In the last week, how often did you visit the plaza?



*Many respondents visited this location every day or almost every day*

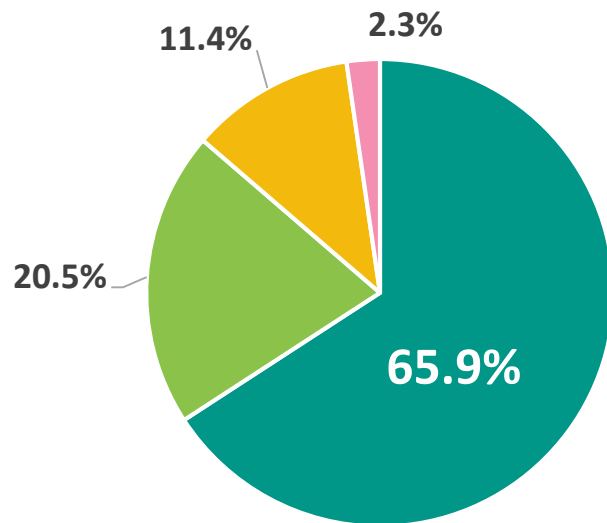
*“It really adds to the **neighborhood feeling**. Instead of doing my shopping and heading home, I now grab a coffee and sit for a bit. It's **great seeing my neighbours!** As density is increased and our living spaces continue to shrink, these types of spaces are even more **important for our mental health and sense of community.**”*

*“Think about how these **road closures affect traffic patterns** in the neighbourhood. The West End has a **severely restricted road network**. Closing a particular block of a street to traffic could mean a 20 min detour during rush hour.”*

# Bute St & Davie St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



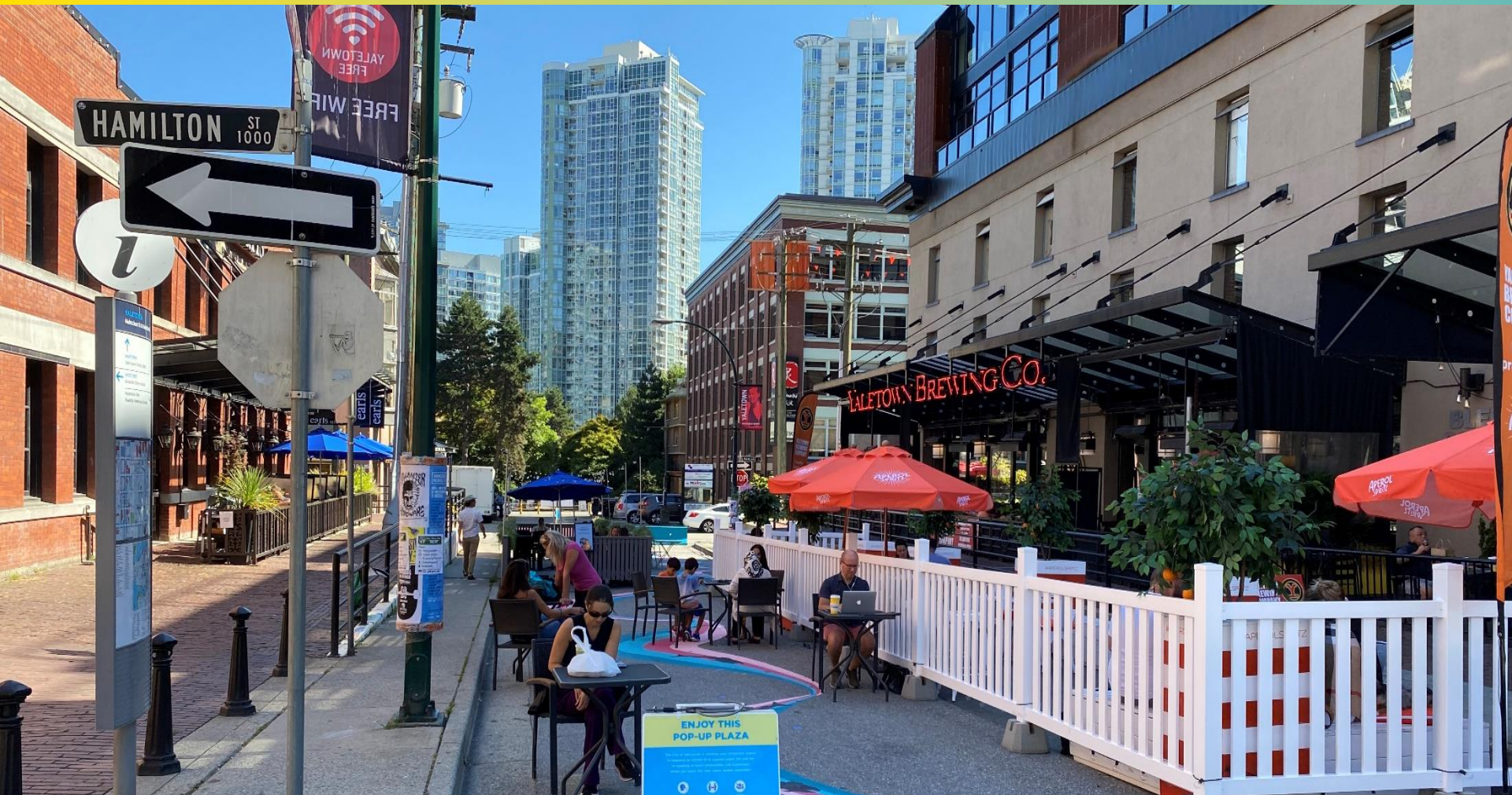
*44 responses*

## Reasons for supporting:

- Need for more free outdoor public spaces
- Pedestrianizes street and provides traffic calming
- Provides space to linger
- Creates a sense of community
- Supports local businesses

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Needs better stewardship and maintenance (smoke, pigeons, cleanliness)
- Impacts traffic by creating too many one-way streets in West End
- Redundant with Jim Deva Plaza and other public spaces nearby





# Helmcken St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

June 8, 2020

## Improvements made:

- Mural added
- Bistro furniture added

## Steward Partner:

*Yaletown Business  
Improvement Association*  
(manages furniture)

## Site characteristics:

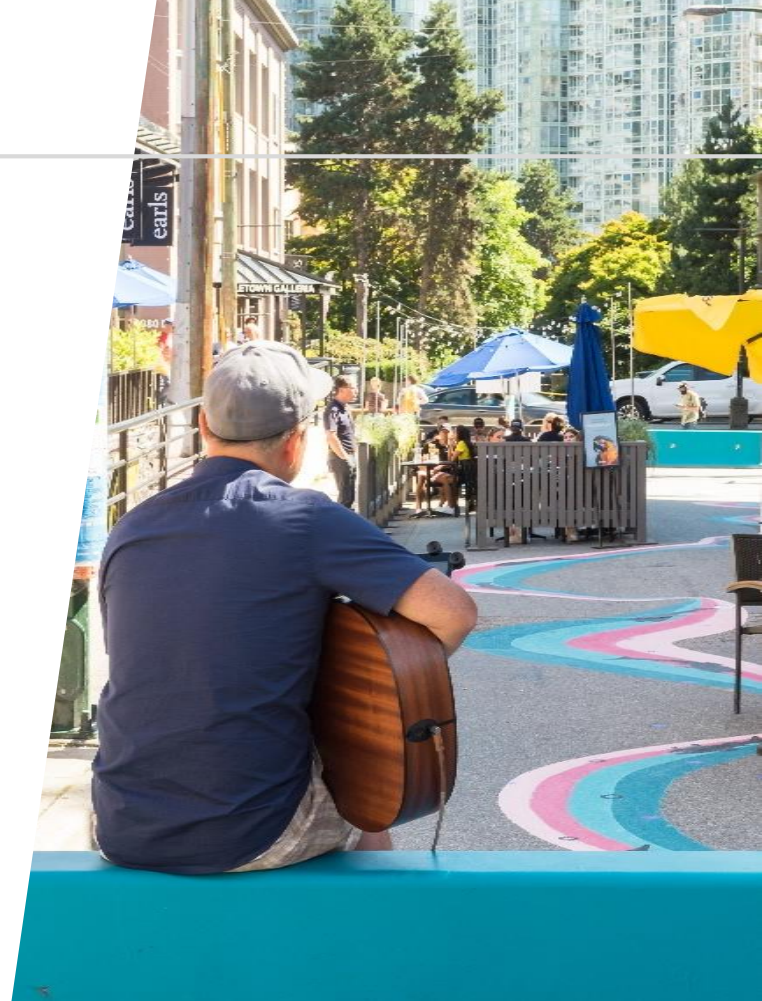
- Side street plaza
- High density
- No tree canopy
- Helmcken St bikeway

## Design elements:

- Low concrete barriers
- Moveable furniture
- Murals on ground, barriers and stairs
- Curbside patios in plaza

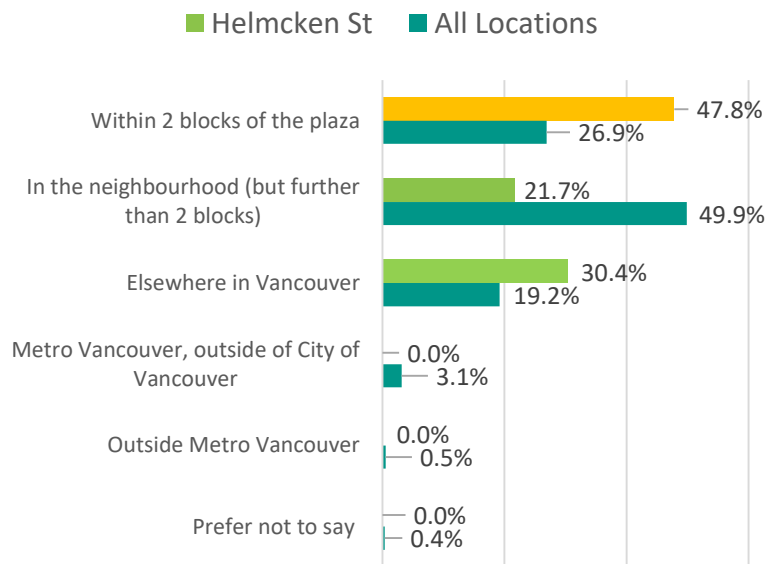
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended



# Helmcken St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Do you live near the plaza?



*Many respondents live within 2 blocks*

*“More plazas leads to **healthier social environments**, and since Vancouver doesn't have a proper town square, these plazas fulfill that purpose.”*

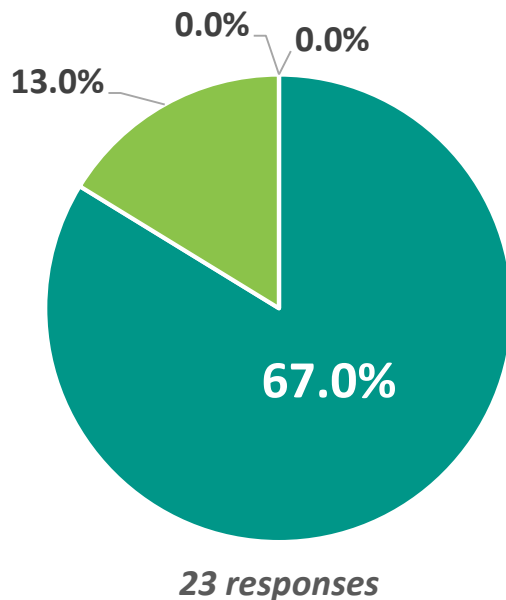
*“I am all in favour of **helping out restaurants** expand their outside business, **but not to the degree that they take up the entire pop-up plaza. Maintain the public space**, put furniture out so it is available for the public.”*

*“Change the design so the plaza is **intuitively public**.”*

# Helmcken St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



## Reasons for supporting:

- Need more outdoor spaces to bring community together
- Creates healthier social environments
- Encourages pedestrian lifestyle
- Great for community and businesses

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Won't be used in cold and rainy season
- Perceived loss of access to businesses







# Carrall St: *Overview*

## Installation date:

July 2, 2020

## Improvements made:

- Bistro furniture added
- Picnic tables added
- Mural added
- Planters added
- Umbrellas added

## Steward Partner:

Gastown Business  
Improvement Association  
and local businesses

## Site characteristics:

- Side street plaza
- Medium density
- Good tree canopy
- Carrall St bikeway

## Design elements:

- Low concrete barriers
- Fixed & moveable furniture
- Umbrellas & planters
- Murals on concrete barriers
- Existing overhead lighting in trees

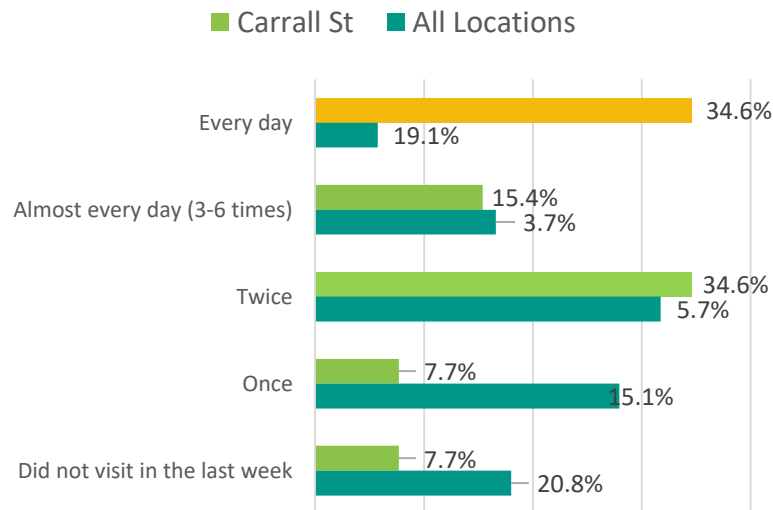
## Plaza status:

Plaza extended



# Carrall St: *What we heard (survey)*

In the last week, how often did you visit the plaza?



*Many people visited this location every day*

*“It’s a great, safe, public place for people to sit, interact, work and enjoy a break outdoors. Many people in apartments don’t have this luxury to be outside in a safe, restful place.”*

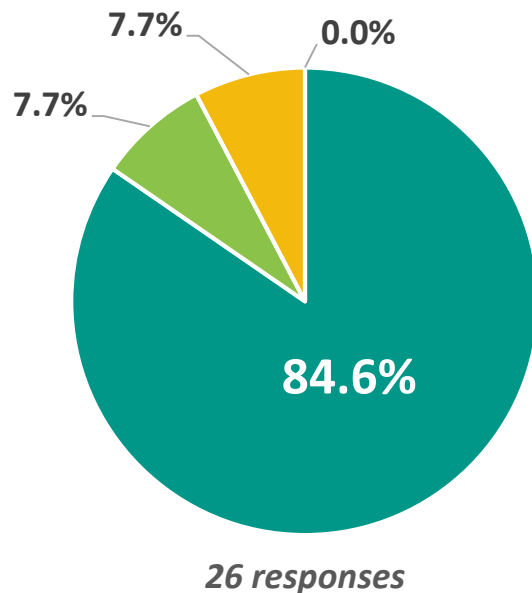
*“Water & Carrall streets should be low speed and low traffic areas to begin with. More space for pedestrians is definitely nicer and quieter.”*

*“I live in Gastown. This plaza has made the neighborhood feel more friendly and cohesive. It’s so lovely to have a car free zone!”*

# Carrall St: *What we heard (survey)*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

■ Yes ■ No ■ Somewhat ■ No opinion / don't know



## Reasons for supporting:

- Makes community feel more social, inviting and safe
- Creates more spaces for people instead of cars
- Provides space to relax outside
- Encourages people to support neighbourhood shops

## Reasons for not supporting:

- Cleanliness
- Not aesthetically pleasing
- Unsure about winter usage
- Impacts vehicle traffic by eliminating left turn on Carrall St and creating a bottleneck by forcing two lanes to merge into one

*What we heard:*

# BUSINESS SURVEY SUMMARY

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*Collected during October 2021*

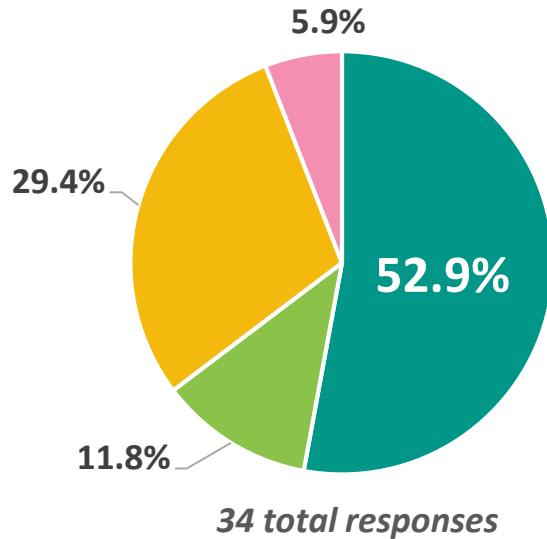
*We asked for feedback from people who own or run businesses  
or non-profits near the pop-up plazas.*



# Business Survey: *Summary*

## Support for plaza becoming permanent:

- Yes, very supportive
- Yes, somewhat supportive
- No, not supportive
- Unsure



*“These plazas are a **welcome addition** to the commercial area and I hope they stay. I love the plants, there was music one night. all in all, I think they are **important meetings areas for shoppers, dinners, and the local community.**”*

*“Adding more **places for families** to relax allows the **kids to be entertained** and mom or dad to shop around.”*

# NEXT STEPS

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*Based on what we've seen and heard so far, we've developed recommendations for using the feedback, and further engagement.*

# Next Steps: *Using the Feedback*

The suggestions received will help to inform improvements to these spaces to make them more comfortable and welcoming. Some improvements based on these suggestions are already underway.

## Common suggestions leading to improvements underway

- Transition to longer-term spaces (barricades)
- Add more greenery and colour
- Provide weather protection
- Provide more variety of seating and table options (to accommodate accessibility, different body types and group sizes)
- Improved stewardship (cleanliness, garbage, recycling, compost)
- Improve traffic control signage (for pedestrians, bikes and cars)
- More programming (performances, activities for kids, vending)
- More bike racks
- Access to toilets



# Next Steps: *Engagement*

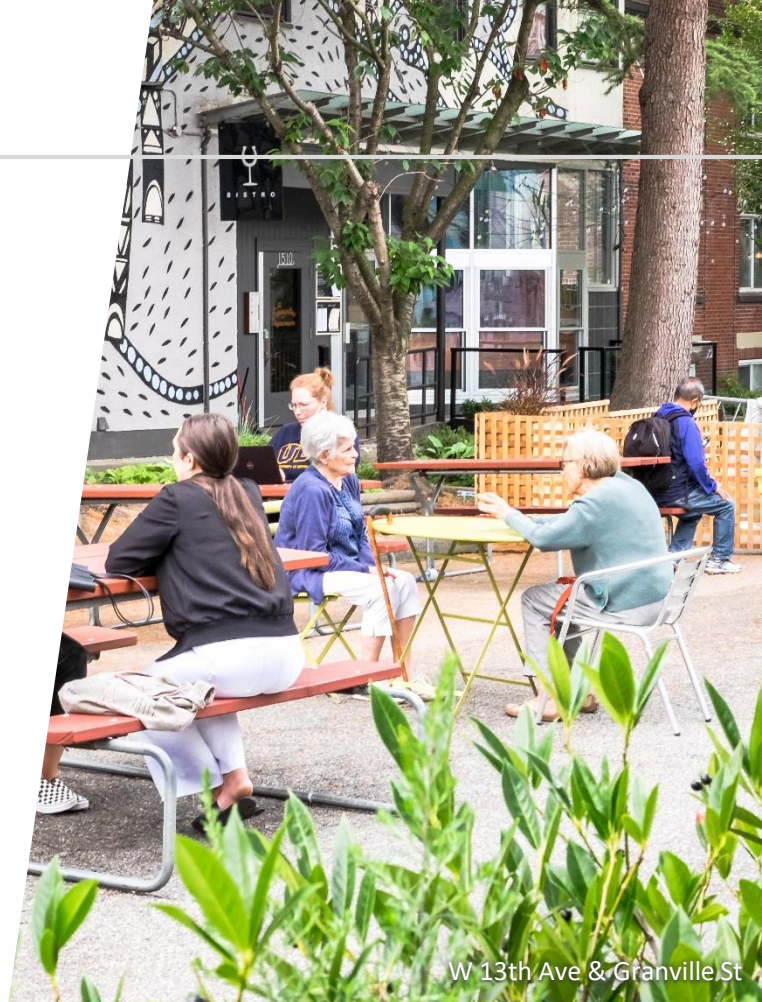
The gaps identified in our analysis will inform future engagement. To help address these gaps, we've developed some recommendations for next steps in engagement.

## Improve outreach to underrepresented groups

- Youth and seniors, racialized communities, lower income earners, and people with disabilities

## Explore forms of engagement that reach broader and more diverse groups

- Targeted engagement
- Build on *Designing for Difference* project (<https://thehappy.city.com/project/designing-for-difference/>)



W 13th Ave & Granville St





[shapeyourcity.ca/pop-up-plazas](https://shapeyourcity.ca/pop-up-plazas)