



Car-Free Pedestrian Zone Pilot Project

Report Presented by Cara McKillop

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Introduction

The following is a summary of the results of the independent survey recently circulated to DGBA members. The purpose of this additional survey is to collect further feedback and information from businesses within the DGBA who were affected, or within proximity, to the Dining District/Car Free Pedestrian Zone in 2020. The following report depicts the results gathered from the survey alone. Further comparisons are being made and will be released before Monday's meeting for City Council's reference.

Objective

This report aims to provide additional relevant insight to be used when planning for Guelph's Car-Free Pedestrian Zone/'Dining District' status during the summer months of 2021 and onward. This information will help clarify the general consensus between business owners to reinstate a similar district and address the concerns of polarity on this topic.

Further analysis will focus primarily on businesses who claimed their operations were directly negatively hindered by the district and how. While it is appreciated that not all businesses liked the district, the focus of this report is on the businesses who sustained loss. This selected analysis aims to identify common problems that were faced so that an action plan can be made to mitigate these businesses' problems as the Car-Free Pedestrian Zone pilot program further develops.

This survey was initiated by Cara McKillop and was created and dispersed at request by Brianne McCrossan. Please direct technical survey questions to Brianne, and all additional inquiries to Cara, either at contact@plantguelph.com or by calling 226-500-6347.

Areas of Focus

The coming report will address the following concerns mentioned by City Council, if/where applicable:

1. Parking
2. Thruway Traffic
3. Public Transit
4. Mediation/Businesses Not In Support
5. COVID Compliance/Enforcement
6. Information Items Report Q1 2022/Insufficient Data Collection

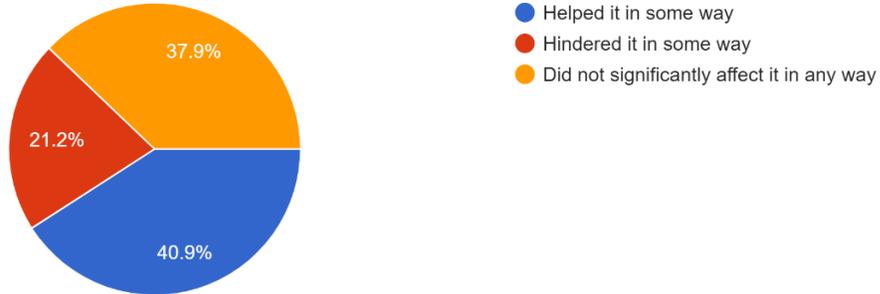
Summary of Respondents

A total of 66 businesses participated in this survey. Each business was permitted to submit one response only. The survey was open for submission from March 9, 2021 and ending on March 22, 2021. The form was circulated via email, as well as posted on the DGBA's Facebook group.

Survey Summary

Do you feel that the Downtown Dining District helped or hindered your business last year?

66 responses



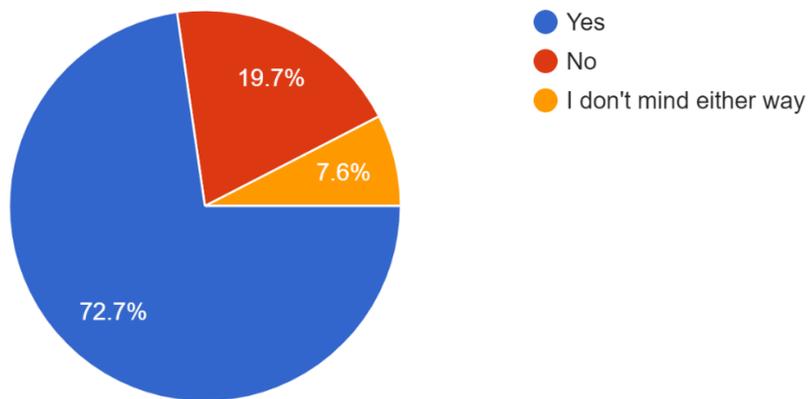
Helped:27

Hindered:14

Did not significantly affect: 25

Do you want to see the Dining District return to downtown this year?

66 responses



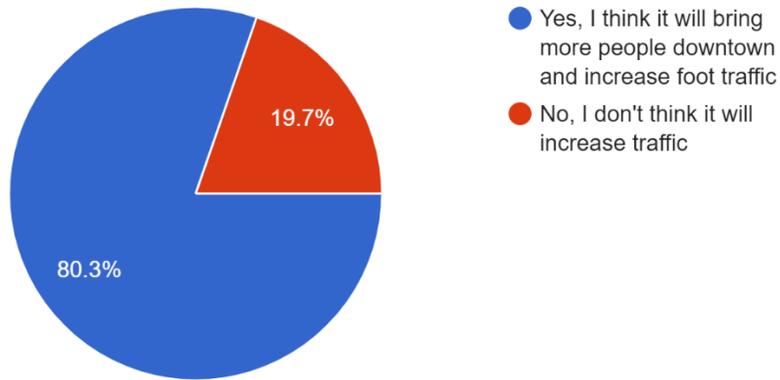
Yes: 48

No: 13

I don't mind either way:6

Do you feel that the Dining District/extended patios taking place again this year having gain...oot traffic downtown in general?

66 responses

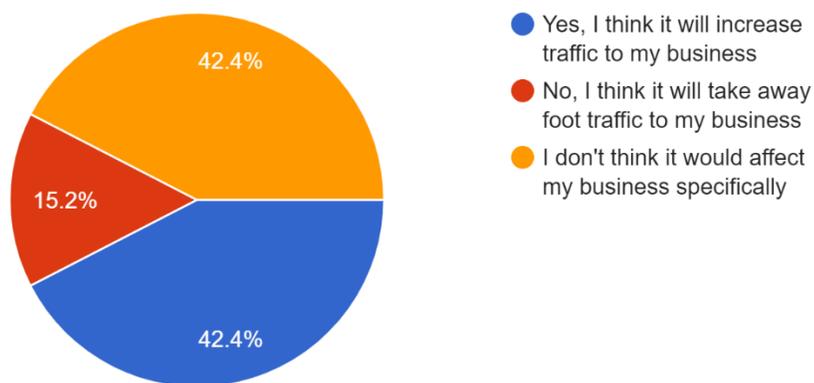


Yes, I think it will bring more people downtown and increase foot traffic: 53

No, I Don't think it will increase traffic: 13

Do you feel that the Dining District/extended patios taking place again will increase traffic to your business specifically?

66 responses



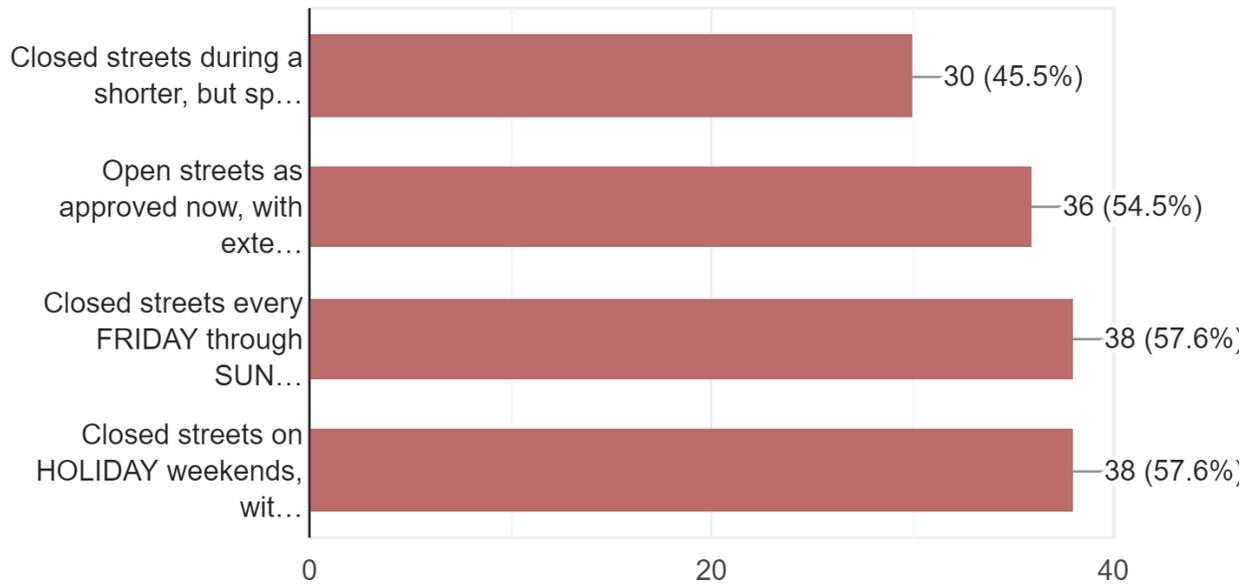
Yes, I think it will increasetraffic to my business: 28

No, I think it will take awayfoot traffic to my business: 10

I don't think it would affectmy business specifically: 28

City Council has turned down the option to close the streets completely for the area, but allow..., to be re-evaluated next year.**

66 responses



Closed streets during a shorter, but specific period (for example 4-8 weeks), with extended patios during the rest of May to October:30

Open streets as approved now, with extended patios:36

Closed streets every FRIDAY through SUNDAY with extended patios during the week:38

Closed streets on HOLIDAY weekends, with extended patios during the week:38

Survey Comments

Identity of all businesses are protected.

Business information will only be provided to an appointed third party Mediator, who does not own a business within the DGBA, and only for the purposes of strengthening the pilot program by addressing and mitigating concerns and providing assistance through the crisis.

45.5% of survey respondents provided additional comments.

Survey Question:

Our findings will be submitted to City Council and shared with the DGBA and membership on March 25th, 2021. If you have any additional comments or feedback, please provide it here.

1. More foot traffic is good for everyone
2. Last year we had many customers complain about how long it took them to come pick up their food due to road closures. There were times when customers wouldn't pick up food due to parking issues. Because the main focus was on the dining district, small business restaurants on the other side of the streets were ignored. Hence we had a huge loss in sales. I certainly do like the idea of trafficless downtown and dining district, i think it should inclusive of other restaurants, not just the main three bars.
3. Roads belong to public and please leave them open and running to be used by public. Please don't try to help very few against so many business.
4. Anyway we can increase overall traffic to downtown we all win!
5. We feel this is excellent for downtown Guelph and the businesses in the area.
6. Streets must stay open for traffic flow. The pandemic has made many businesses suffer, not just a few. Any decision made about the downtown dining district should benefit all downtown businesses and the needs of general public. Let a few businesses gain on the cost of many other surrounding businesses and the needs of general public, just like last year, is totally unfair and selfish. The bottom line is all businesses and all citizens should be treated equally and fairly.
7. 1 YEAR PATIO PROGRAM - RE-EVALUATE NEXT YEAR
8. Thanks for asking for input. We are all in this together!
9. We believe increased volume anywhere downtown Guelph is vital to it's survival through these times.
10. My clients loved the dining district and so did we. It made us all feel more safe downtown, and it felt like a safe way to see our bubble and support our local businesses.
11. There's many other business than Dining. Extended patio (Free) on sidewalk is good enough for them. Other business has no benefit at all. Street close cause more festive feeling yet, we are in pandemic. Street close cause more night time problem that people cannot see.
12. I am not in the restaurant and bar industry but I fully support the dining district. The downtown businesses are a community, and we all need to survive to thrive. If anything, money should be spent on educating the public on their parking options downtown. Most of my customers have no idea that the Market Square parkade exists! Signage for parking options year round especially while the dining district is operating, would be very helpful and beneficial. Please consider!!
13. There is no option in the above question to get rid of this completely and not have extended patios. I'm not sure why that is not an option. How are you supposed to answer that if you are opposed to the idea. Anyway in my honest opinion I believe this should only be a weekend thing. Just leave the streets as they are now. I believe that is the best solution to satisfying both the 4 bars at the street corner that benefit only and it helps the other businesses keep foot traffic throughout the week.
14. More picnic tables around downtown area for customers who get take out food can sit and eat if not purchasing from a restaurant that is offering a patio

15. The patio extensions should be fair to all businesses not just for the 5-6 at the intersection that would get many more seats than anyone else. And the roads being closed make it harder to reach other non food business and takes away more parking and easier accessible routes to other shops etc. Extended patios on the curb and a few parking spaces is the most fair of options for all businesses to expand if they choose to or not.
16. I am skeptical that attracting people downtown in the short term will be good for our Covid emergency. I think a grand reopening will be awesome once we are past the problem. Currently, we are not past the problem. Our efforts to reopen downtown with the Open Streets this summer is quite possibly too early. I understand that businesses are suffering (ours has been shut down for a year now, with rent to pay as usual), but there is a bigger picture issue at stake at the moment, and people just aren't getting it.
17. The dining district was a hindrance to our business only because not only were we excluded from it (and all of the free seating/patio barricades/promotion that came along with it) but we did not receive our extended patio until Labour Day Weekend. Up to that point we were allowed 10 seats and spent the entire summer turning customers away as we watched the business we built being decimated by favouritism and poor planning. I support the dining district and I support the businesses within it. It was a callous decision by the city to not only exclude the surrounding businesses, but offer no additional support to them during the toughest period our industry has ever faced. My business is surrounded by empty storefronts as a result of this decision and if the city has any interest in saving and rejuvenating the downtown then the time is now for an inclusive approach and new ideas.
18. Who is paying for patios? Responsibility of individual restaurants. Is there city funding? If so, where are the funds coming from? City of Guelph employees will be employed for set up/take down \$. Property taxes of DT are already high.
19. If you are going to keep extending the patio season then it is imperative that the City provide free parking as so much parking is taken up for patio's thus our Customers can find parking especially the elderly Customers.
20. Extended patios are good for downtown Guelph. Closing streets to traffic is bad for downtown Guelph. We want a fair playing field equally distributed to all food and beverage establishments. This was not the case at all during last year's pilot project. Ideally, increased patio space would bring more people downtown and would help bring foot and vehicular traffic to all downtown retail and food and beverage establishments. I contend that extended sidewalk patio space with less red tape and a more festive atmosphere could accomplish what the road closures last year intended to do during the pilot project. We can have our cake and eat it too.
Downtown Guelph is going to change dramatically over the next 5 years because of the redevelopment of Baker Street and associated infrastructure improvements. I want to be clear that I am not opposed to creative ideas regarding outdoor dining and entertainment.
The ----, as a downtown business which includes retail, entertainment and food and beverage components, I ask for fairness for all players in the downtown business ecosystem. This fairness includes public transportation being able to run efficiently and not having impediments for people who may want to commute to the downtown.
I live just south of The University of Guelph and talk to my neighbours about their perceptions of downtown. Last year, many of them expressed dissatisfaction with so many of the roads being blocked off to traffic. We want a holistic city. A city where residents feel comfortable going from area to area with as few impediments as possible to facilitate ease of movement.
If you have any other questions, you are welcome to contact me.
21. Live music should be added. Single, duet or trio of musicians which is suited to meals and drinks. This should be set up geographically so more than one patio is hearing and seeing the entertainment... this was a missed opportunity last summer. A roving minstrel, some unique fun thing? Let's tap into the arts community Live music, summer days, patios and people in the streets of downtown simply livens the place up. I know there are logistics but this is kind of a no brainer.

22. Closing the streets completely is not a good idea. Reduced lanes to provide for larger patios makes sense. We would regret the loss of parking spots for the restaurateurs but would support the idea. Clearly, we are not a car free downtown as most of our clients do not live in the core. We need to minimize the perception that getting to downtown is a challenge.
23. We would love to see this happen again moving forward this year and in the future. We saw an increase of community support and foot traffic to our business. There were plenty of people using public transit and also the parking garage downtown with ample parking. Overall it beneficial to us and surrounding businesses.
24. Weekends closed streets would be a perfect compromise, as the businesses all thrive on the weekends.
25. Our Business benefited from the Dining District , the guest enjoyed the whole downtown experience from getting some food to browsing the stores.
26. It's not just about the business it is also about giving the people of Guelph a place to go not just for something to do but for there state of mind as well. These restaurants and bars are accustomed to hundreds of guests a night. a couple socially distant tables out side would not even come close to paying the monthly hydro or city taxes that are all still paid wether they are open or not. Hardly fair that so many people are still getting paid by the people that are not even getting a pay check, and they are holding their heads under water to boot. A lot of people,, like elected officials, utility companies , city taxes are still getting paid by businesses not getting a pay check which we find shameful #savedowntownguelph
Downtown Guelph is being destroyed open your eyes and look around. Just admit it. its half the battle!
27. There are so many cities looking for ways to reduce traffic and increase walking/biking access to businesses, as a means of adapting to a more environmentally friendly future. This is an easy step in that direction, and puts Guelph on the map which increases attractiveness for both businesses and residents.
28. Any option must factor in the very limited street parking available and not eliminate any parking spots. Many people do not opt for parking in the parking garage due to its inconvenience and some people's physical limitations may not allow them be able to walk the distance to their destination from a parking lot.
29. We did notice a difference in traffic to the store trending negatively. There was a road closed sign at Macdonell and Woolwich which may have led drivers to think the Parkade was closed. Our delivery drivers were very upset about the roads being closed as it is not easy to reroute to the entrance off Macdonell if you are unfamiliar with the area. We believe the dining district is good for businesses in the area overall, but the roads being closed is a huge negative for us
30. The extended patio at the Woolly was great for us and helpful it did not close our street down but operated within their parking lot. I think to be fair to all businesses downtown, the roads should be open and accessible Mon-Fri. But A weekend closure would provide a nice festival type atmosphere. Buskers would be fun.