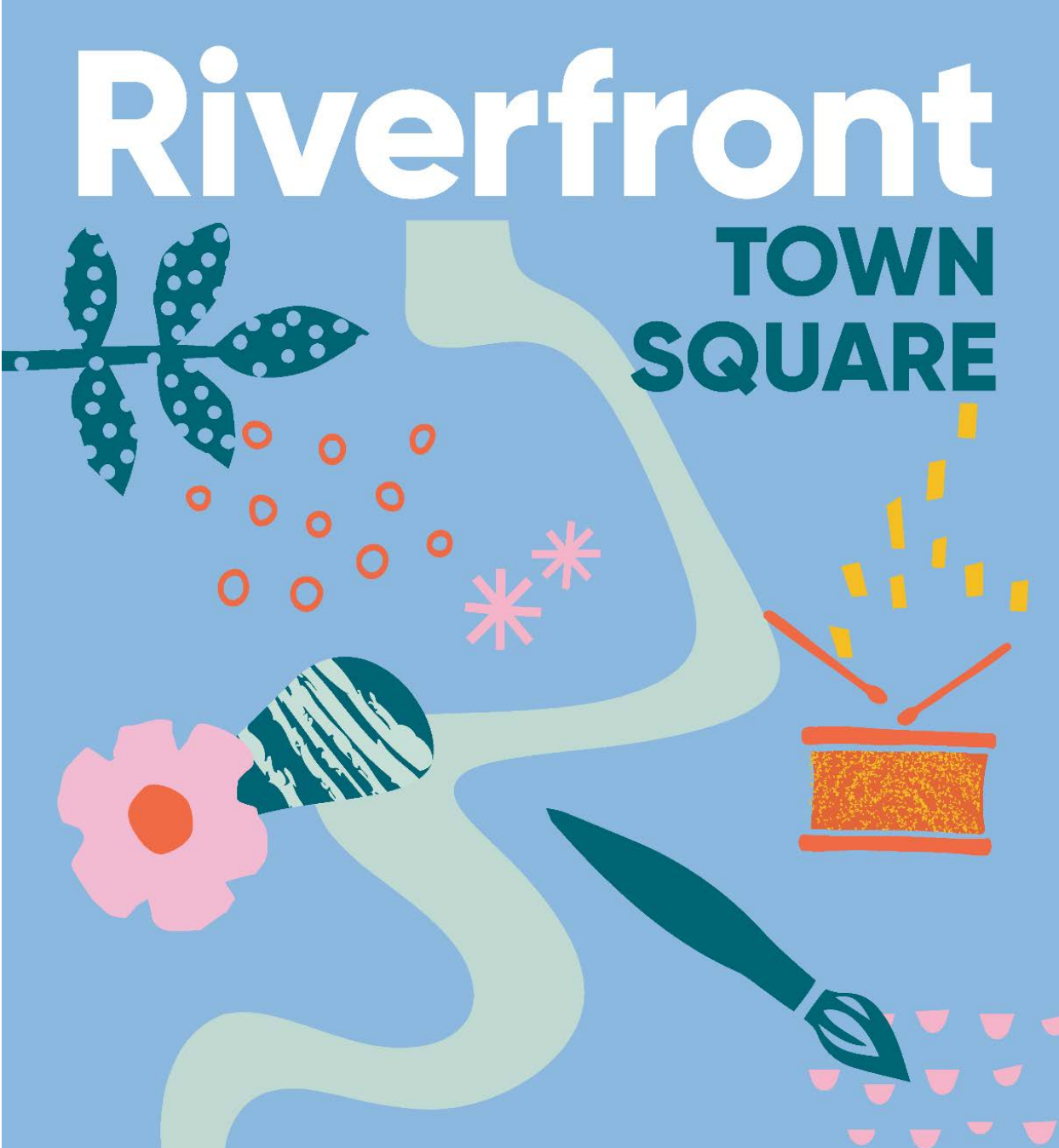


2024 Riverfront Town Square

Final Report



City of Whitehorse

Economic Development
November 2024



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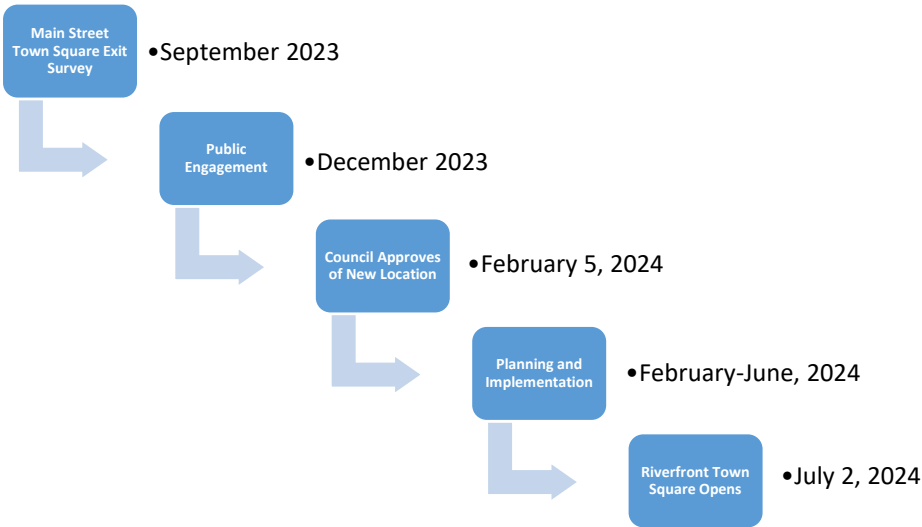
1. Background

The Town Square project aims to provide an opportunity to enhance the vibrancy of the Downtown through arts, culture, and small business activities which serve residents and attract more visitors to the area. The Official Community Plan, the City of Whitehorse Strategic Priorities 2022 – 2024 and the 2018 Downtown Plan reinforce the role of Downtown Core as the heart of the city.

In 2023, the Main Street Town Square (MSTS) pilot project took place from June through early September and featured restaurant patios, markets, mobile food vendors, public seating, live music, and street artwork. Upon completion of the project, Administration sought feedback from the general public, business community and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) through an exit survey and stakeholder workshops for a potential 2024 Town Square. The majority of respondents wished to see the City put on similar projects in the future, with support for the same or adjacent locations.

On February 5, 2024, Administration presented to Council a proposal and location analysis for converting a portion of Front St between Main Street and Steele Street, along with the riverfront and wharf, into a pedestrian town square, which was approved by Council. Administration then proceeded with the planning and design of the 2024 Town Square with continued efforts to engage and collaborate with stakeholders and programming of the location. Similar to its predecessor, the Riverfront Town Square was also a pilot project given its new location. As the riverfront is owned by the government of Yukon (YG), Administration negotiated a land use agreement with YG’s Realty and Capital Asset Planning team, part of Highways and Public Works.

The Riverfront Town Square was launched on July 1, 2024, and was in operation until September 1st.



2. Public Engagement

2.1. Main Street Town Square Exit Survey

In September 2023, the Main Street Town Square Exit Survey was launched 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). Between August and October 2023, Administration also collected directed 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. According to the feedback, there was general support for the project and a 2024 Town Square was taken into consideration.

Among respondents of the General Public, the most popular location was Main Street (57%, 470 respondents), followed by the Riverfront (49%, 405 respondents). Among respondents from the business community, the Riverfront was the most popular option (53%, 62 respondents), followed by Main Street between Second Avenue and Front Street (50%, 59 respondents).

2.2. Public Engagement Workshops

In December of 2023, Administration hosted public engagement workshops with the support of a local consultant. Businesses, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and the general public were invited to provide input and feedback on a potential 2024 Town Square location. Due to both the disruptive impact of MSTs on local businesses and to market vendors feeling unwelcomed in this location, the Riverfront area was identified as the preferred location. It was felt that the Riverfront location would minimize impacts on local businesses and further activate this area. These sessions guided Administration to generate a preliminary site plan and to propose programming.

2.3. Stakeholders Committee

From April 1 to August 29, six Stakeholders Committee Meetings were held either at the Heritage Room in City Hall or online via Teams. The Stakeholder Committee included a representative from Yukon government's Highways and Public Works, Real Estate Division, adjacent businesses, Town Square food and market vendors, programming partners (MusicYukon, Arts Underground, Northern Cultural Expressions Society, Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism, Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre), MacBride Museum, Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, Inclusion Yukon, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, and City of Whitehorse's Economic Development staff. Updates on the Town Square, as well as comments or concerns of each stakeholder, were discussed during these meetings to make adjustments and improvements to the project. Minutes from each meeting were shared with stakeholders.

2.4. Ongoing Engagement

Administration has continuously engaged with adjacent businesses directly (corresponding via emails, phone calls, and in-person) to address issues or concerns and share updates as the project developed. Additional meetings were held with adjacent businesses and potential market vendors in June, to review the layout of the project and reach consensus with all stakeholders.

3. Implementation

3.1. Timeline

Once Council approved the location on February 5, 2024, Administration moved forward with further developing the program and implementation plan of the Town Square. A layout and program were submitted to the RTS stakeholders committee for review in March, and approved in April.

Throughout May and June 2023, Administration worked with community partners to finalize the programming and operational details of the Town Square. In May, the final layout was sent to stakeholders, and generated concerns from the neighboring business community as it included temporary closures of Front St. between Main and Steele for market days. Administration reviewed the layout; the temporary road closures were ultimately removed from the Town Square and the market was set to take place on the grassy areas of the riverfront. Two engagement sessions with Horwoods Mall businesses and one with potential market vendors were hosted online to ensure general approval of the new layout.

At the beginning of June, Administration launched a call for market vendors and liaised with City departments to coordinate operations in preparation of the Town Square. Non-Profit Organizations were contracted to provide their expertise in programming concerts (MusicYukon), artist workshops (Arts Underground) and First Nation artwork on the wharf (Northern Cultural Expressions Society).

The Riverfront Town Square was launched on July 1, 2024. Throughout the pilot project, the Economic Development team oversaw daily and weekly programming of the Town Square, including vendor markets with food trucks, concerts, and artist workshops. Adjacent businesses and other stakeholders provided direct feedback to the Economic Development staff throughout the project and discussed issues, concerns, and updates at the monthly Stakeholders Committee Meetings.

The pilot project concluded on September 1st, 2024, and the riverfront and wharf returned to the management of Yukon Government.

3.2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Riverfront Town Square (RTS) project is the result of collaboration between multiple City departments, community groups, non-profit organizations and Yukon government.

Table 1. 2024 Riverfront Town Square Roles & Responsibilities.

City of Whitehorse	
Department/Organization	Role
Economic Development	Plan and coordinate all aspects of Riverfront Town Square.
Parks	Installation and maintenance of Town Square elements (benches, picnic tables, tents, ramps, stage, etc.) and provide staff for market attendant.
Engineering	Develop a traffic management plan for Riverfront Town Square (assessing accessibility needs, circulation) and install traffic signage.

Bylaw	Assist with special events road closures for food trucks parking on street parking and enforce according to parking signage changes
Communications	Promotion and advertisement of Town Square activities and line up (PSA, social media, liaise with media).
Recreation	Program activities and provide recreational games for the Town Square.
Property Management	Provide electrical assistance to provide power from electrical box at the riverfront and Old Firehall to food vendors.
Water & Waste Services	Provide and service garbage and compost bins.

Partners	
Yukon Government	Define and sign land-use agreement with City of Whitehorse.
Music Yukon	Curate and produce a lineup of concerts for Tuesday evenings (9 concerts)
Arts Underground	Curate a lineup of artist workshops for Saturday markets (18 artists over 9 markets)
Northern Cultural Expressions Society	Host a community art-making event in preparation of the launch of the project Produce <i>Part of the Water</i> , the First Nations artwork by artist Ken Anderson on the wharf for Riverfront Town Square.
Yukon Arts Centre	Provide in-kind support for concerts (lend a tent for the stage)
Opportunities Yukon	Responsible for litter clean-up and maintenance of the riverfront area.

4. Programming

4.1. Community Art-making Event

A community art-making event took place on July 1st, 2024 on the last day of Adäka Cultural Festival, acting as a prelude to the launch of the Riverfront Town Square. Youth and the public were invited to paint salmons from the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre to the wharf. By involving the community to participate in enhancing the First Nations presence along the riverfront, the public could learn about First Nations artists, the history of First Nations displacement along the Yukon River and the importance of the meaning behind the project. Northern Cultural Expressions Society was contracted to produce this event with artists they selected, and a collaboration with YFNCT allowed the City and YFNCT to coordinate their efforts and connect the Adäka Cultural Festival and the Riverfront Town Square.



Figure 1. Riverfront Town Square community art-making event. Produced by Northern Cultural Expressions Society (NCES) with the support of Ken Anderson.

4.2. First Nations Artwork at the Wharf

The First Nations artwork, painted on the cement pavement by the wooden wharf, was commissioned to the Northern Cultural Expressions Society (NCES). Ken Anderson was chosen as the lead artist to design an artwork that is inspired by themes such as the importance of the Yukon River for First Nations and the history of First Nations displacements along its shores. The project retells the story of First Nations settlement by the river and the role of the Yukon River in their daily lives. In combination with the Healing Totem and the Monument for Whitehorse Residential School Survivors that is already on site, this project enhances and reinforces the First Nations identity along the riverfront.

Ken Anderson's Artist Statement:

The mural is about the First Peoples of the Yukon and the river; wolf and raven in the centre (centre of our culture) salmon representing a traditional food source. Next out from the centre, the bear and eagle represent the other animals that frequent the river. Seal bowl represents the oral history and culture of the First People's flora. The part farthest from the river represent the plants and vegetation found along the river and also the beadwork of the mothers and grandmothers (matrilineal society). The piece doesn't have a particular top, bottom, or sides so as to represent the movement of the peoples from this area both to and from the water.



Figure 2. Riverfront Town Square First Nations Artwork. Part of the Water by Ken Anderson (lead artist) and Northern Cultural Expressions Society (NCES).

Considering its location beside the Yukon River, the design was created using durable and environmentally friendly paints.

4.3. Market

4.3.1. Market Overview

A retail, food, and arts and crafts market was programed at the Riverfront Town Square, to provide an opportunity for small businesses to sell their products to residents and visitors in the downtown core, without restriction to local products (such as the Fireweed market).

Through engagement with potential vendors, Tuesdays and Saturdays were determined to be the preferred dates, with afternoons and evenings being the ideal times of day. A schedule of two weekly markets was created:

Tuesdays, 4 pm - 8 pm

Saturdays, 10 am - 2 pm

Concerts were programed during Tuesday markets, and Arts workshops were programed during Saturday workshops to increase the attractiveness of each market.

Vendors could sign up for the market days of their choice and a layout of the allocated vending sites was sent out weekly.



Figure 3. Riverfront Town Square market. City of Whitehorse.

The City did not charge vendors any fees to have a spot at the Riverfront Town Square market, as this was a pilot project, and the main goals were to generate interest in the market from the small businesses community and attract as many of them as possible.

All vendors who were selling goods or services were required to have a valid City of Whitehorse (or inter-municipal) Business License, minimum \$3,000,000 General Commercial Liability Insurance, and approval from health inspection if they are selling food. Some vendors only wanted to participate in a few market days, so these requirements appeared to be deterrent for them. Administration provided clear information to vendors in the market's guidelines, investigated in event insurance companies and provided examples of daily insurances to help them navigate the registration process and minimize bureaucratic work.

A total of 35 vendors signed up, 4 of which dropped out before attending any market. The array of vendors who participated range from retail, food, and arts and crafts to community services and governmental organizations. Of the mix, 2 were push carts, 3 were food trucks/trailers and the remaining were tent and table vendors.

The three food trucks usually located on the cement plaza beside the Roundhouse (Azhong Noodles, Smashed YXY and Streets of Kerala) were moved temporarily onto the parking stalls on Front Street for the duration of the Town Square to accommodate a stage and food court.

Food trucks/trailer vendors who registered to the market were set up between the White Pass Building and the Old Firehall. All tent and table and push cart vendors were set up on the grassy areas of the riverfront, inviting the public to meander through the landscaped pathways. A market attendant was present at every market day to provide information on site and help vendors with set up and tear down.



Figure 4. Riverfront Town Square layout and power information. City of Whitehorse.

Table 2. List of Vendors Registered



Vendor	Description
Gold Essence	Body butters, body scrubs, face scrubs, lotion bars, bath salts, bath bombs, soaps, shower steamers, body lotions, candles, wax melts
Whitehorse Woof Natural Dog Treats & Accessories	Homemade dog/cat treats & accessories.
Hooked on Ewe	Local business specializing in dye sublimation and laser engraving services, focusing on mugs and apparel to bags, tumblers, necklaces, keychains, and more!

The Garden Witch	Selling locally grown flower arrangements and floral art.
The Northern Crochet Co.	Crochet items, stickers, drink ware, baseball hats, gifts, and more!
Imperfect Woodcarving	Hand-crafted wooden bowls, carved burls, utensils and wooden art.
Raices Design	Collection of artistic jewelry made of healing stones, metals, macrame and beautiful wooden cover's notebooks.
Volke' Arts	First Nations knives, tools, jewelry, hand-carved sculptures.
Tagish Rocks	Crystals, mystery gifts, necklace pendants, etc.
The Yukon Box	The Yukon Box features monthly themed gift boxes featuring a variety of Yukon artists.
Isolated Garments	Curated vintage & streetwear clothing.
Yukon Organics	Trailmixes, dried fruit and nuts.
Chef Sandra	Jams and spreads, infused oils, European specialties, risottos, soup mixes. Made locally in the Yukon.
First People's Coffee	Cold brew coffee and whole bags of First People's coffee beans.
KITA Japanese Kitchen + Bar	Claw machine with stuffed toys, Japanese snacks and soft drinks.
Yukon Bunsik	Korean food (Bibimbap, Gimbap, Kimchi, Yuja ade - Korean honey citron drink).
BBQ King Restaurant	Lemon tea, bubble tea, dimsum and more! Bubble egg waffles will be freshly made on site.
Food Ninja	Bento boxes featuring different combinations of Japanese street food.
Half Moon Ice Cream	Small batch, flavor-forward locally-made ice cream. All prepackaged into single servings intended for immediate consumption.
Wassup Dogg	Hot dogs, chips, and soft drinks.
Chip Inn Fish & Chips Inc.	Fish and chips, burgers, wraps, donair and poutine.
Klonbite	Corn dogs, hard-shell tacos, churros, and more.
Daat Indian Cuisine	Butter chicken, curry chicken, samosas, dal, vegetables, and more.
Azhong Noodles	Hand-pulled noodles, steam buns, and more.
Smashed YXY	Gourmet burgers and a variety of sides.
Streets of Kerala	South Indian food.
Lotteries Yukon	Promotional items to give away in celebration of their 50 th anniversary.
City of Whitehorse Firesmart pogram	Promote the Free Firesmart Home Assessment program
Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon	Information booth about Ukrainian culture and how we help with the current situation in the country. Sale of memberships, Ukrainian handicrafts, etc.
Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce	Information booth about the Chamber, Whitehorse events, and Town Square programming.
Solstice Haiku	Community group that writes, reads and shares poems.
Safe At Home Society	The Safe at Home Society works to end and prevent homelessness in the Yukon, bringing together service agencies, government partners,

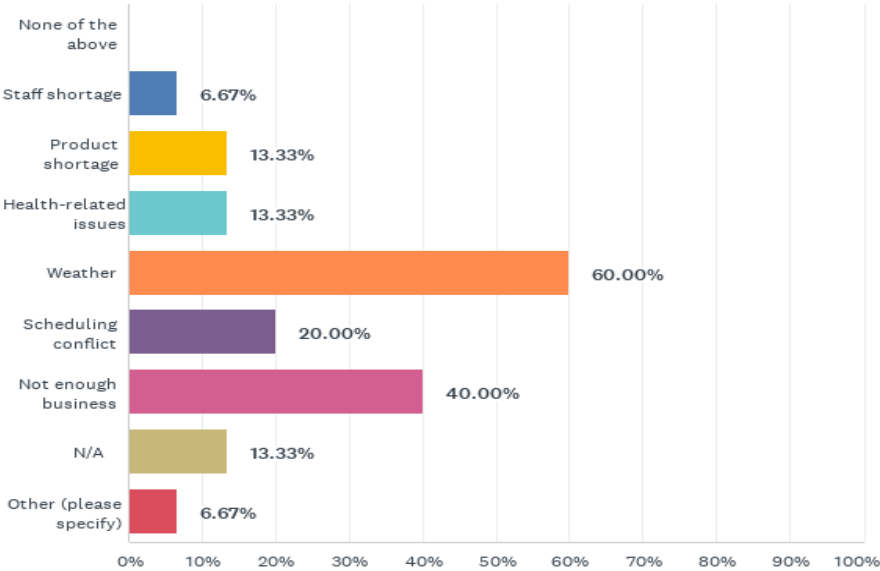
	landlords, community members and people with lived experience of homelessness to connect people with housing and supports.
Elder Active	Selling cash raffle tickets at \$10 a ticket for a grand prize of 10,000! All proceeds will go towards funding elder active programs such as hiking, snowshoeing, art classes and more.
Youth of Today Society	YOTS is a youth-serving non-profit located in downtown Whitehorse. We will promote the 2025 Yukon Youth Summit, engage with the community, gather input on youth assistance programs and services in the territory, and promote our event.
Yukon Fish & Game Association	Selling our 2024 raffle tickets and a few other items - hat, buckles , memberships. We will also have some TIPPS swag to hand out.

4.3.2. Market Feedback and Analysis

Markets were held from July 2 until August 31, 2024. Customer foot traffic for the markets fluctuated with the weather, with a low of 64 attendees to a high of 648 attendees per market. In overview, Tuesday markets garnered fewer visitors, averaging about 200 visitors while Saturday markets averaged about 400 people in attendance. Adjacent events held at the KDCC or parades such as Whitehorse Pride, did not attract more people to the markets.

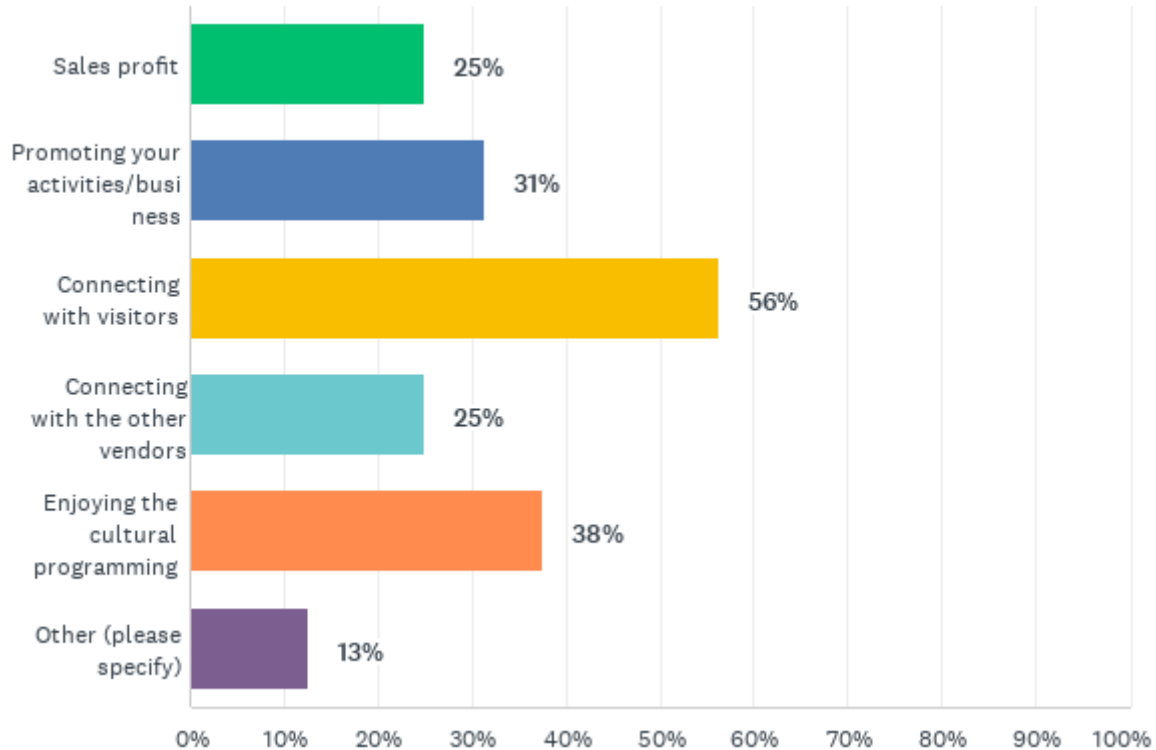
A total of 31 vendors attended at least one market, with 23 businesses, 6 non-profits/community groups and 2 governmental organizations. An average of 13 vendors were scheduled to attend on Tuesdays and 17 on Saturdays. In reality, an average of 7 vendors attended Tuesday markets, and 11 attended Saturdays. Poor weather and lack of business were often the reason for cancellation (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 - If you cancelled, what were your reasons for cancelling? (Select all that apply) [n = 15]



Due to these cancellations, the market didn't reach the size required to draw the public as much as expected, especially on rainy days. Still, most vendors are eager to participate in the Town Square markets again as sales profit and promotion of their business made the Town Square markets worthwhile and rewarding.

Figure 6 - What was the most rewarding? (Select all that apply) [n = 16]



General feedback from vendors included:

- There was a perceived lack of advertisement and residents/visitors were not aware of the markets; there is potential to collaborate with other stakeholders for improvement in marketing
- Prospective vendors with no existing business license or insurance struggled to overcome these regulatory barriers both administratively and financially. The liability insurance requirement was higher than usual as requested by Yukon Government (\$5 million liability insurance instead of the usual \$3 million liability insurance) so some businesses had to amend their policy.
- A more permanent and visible location for vendors, such as a "Commons" space similar to Carcross Commons would make setting up easier for vendors.
- There should be one longer market as opposed to two shorter markets. Programming such as live musical performances and artist workshops should overlap with the market and happen simultaneously to increase the draw for the public.
- The weather was a significant determinant of customer traffic/sales

4.3.3. Food Trucks

Three riverfront sites used in the Mobile Food Vendor Program were temporarily occupied by the Riverfront Town Square stage and food court, so the three food trucks were moved onto the parking stalls in front of the cement plaza. Azhong Noodles, Smashed YXY and Streets of Kerala remained there for the whole duration of the Town Square initiative. The secondary site identified for other mobile food vendors during market times was between the White Pass Building and Old Firehall. The Old Firehall had the electric capacity to accommodate 2 food vendors and an electrical panel was temporarily installed and removed to provide the needed 4-prong plugs for food trucks.

Market days were split evenly amongst the 3 mobile food vendors who had signed up for the market. Similar to market vendors, food trucks were asked to operate for the entire duration of the markets. However, the location did not work well for all of them and they opted out of the event after a few trials. Customer traffic from Main Street would pool towards the Roundhouse as the main activity converged in the grassy areas. Programmed concerts and artist workshops took place beside the Roundhouse and by the wharf, and the amenities (picnic tables, tents, benches, portable washrooms) were disconnected to these vendors' location. While the three vendors opted out of this year's Town Square, they are still interested in participating in future iterations given that there is a location change.

The City provided benches, picnic tables and tents, as well as additional garbage, compost and recycling bins on the riverfront for the public. However, vendors were responsible for disposing of their garbage for their operations.

All three food vendors located in front of the museum as part of the City's Mobile Food Vendors Program reported benefitting from good foot traffic in the area, and would likely participate in future editions. Residents asked that more vendors be set up in future Town Squares to offer more food options. The City's Water & Waste Department also recommended improvements in ensuring food trucks manage their waste.



Figure 7. Mobile Food Vendors on the riverfront location during Riverfront Town Square. City of Whitehorse

4.4. Concerts

The Riverfront Town Square offered concerts every Tuesday from 5 to 7 p.m. in July and August, and during lunchtimes from 12 to 2 p.m. on August 26 and 28 for Street Eats. A total of 22 local artists or bands performed over 11 concerts.

Yukon Arts Centre provided in-kind support with a 20' x 20' tent to shelter artists from the elements while MusicYukon produced and programmed the concerts. Our collaborators are all open to renewing their participation in future initiatives. Musicians' feedback reflected on their content with location and attendance. MusicYukon recommended earlier timelines to better schedule and promote the event in their work plan.



Figure 8. Attendees enjoying the Riverfront Town Square music series presented by Music Yukon. The City of Whitehorse.

Table 3. Lineup of Musicians/Bands

Date	Musician/Band
Tuesday, July 2	5pm – Sean from the Yukon 6pm – Kim Beggs Trio
Tuesday, July 9	5pm – Keitha Clark and Graeme Poile 6pm – Blues Cargo
Tuesday, July 16	5pm – Ellorie McKnight 6pm – Elijah Bekk ft. Selena Savage

Tuesday, July 23	5pm – Hendrika 6pm – Caleb Tomlinson
Tuesday, July 30	5pm – Stockstill & Rose 6pm – Bria Rose N’ Thorns
Tuesday, August 6	5pm – Claire Ness 6pm – Anne Turner Trio
Tuesday, August 13	5pm – Selena Savage (duo) 6pm – Fawn Fritzen & David Restivo
Tuesday, August 20	5pm – Remy Rodden 6pm – Deb Bergman
Tuesday, August 26	5pm – Sarah Hamilton Duo 6pm – Brigitte Jardin
Tuesday, August 27	5pm – Joey O’Neil 6pm – Gordie Tentrees
Tuesday, August 28	5pm – South of Town 6pm – Ryan McNally

4.5. Artist Workshops



Figure 9. Attendees of the artist workshops as presented by Arts Underground. City of Whitehorse.

Every Saturday from 10am to 2pm in July and August, two free artist workshops were offered near the wharf, each under a tent. Attendees were welcome to participate in a drop-in format while a few sessions required online registration. Arts Underground was contracted to curate the lineup of artists and each artist programmed and led their workshops.

Certain workshops garnered greater public interest, especially painting or hands-on demos. On the other hand, listen-in demonstrations or sessions that required online registration had few people in

attendance. Like our collaborators with music programming, Arts Underground is looking forward to participating in future iterations of the Town Square.

Overall feedback from artists was highly positive. Suggestions include integrating the workshops into the natural flow of the market. There should also be an initial site visit walk-through with staff from Arts Underground so they can better inform the attending artists of power outlets, parking and layout.

Table 4. Lineup of Artist Workshops

Date	Musician/Band
Saturday, July 6	Elissa Cuillo – Pressed Flower Art Nicole Bauberger – Silkscreen Printing
Saturday, July 13	Tara Fallat – Air Dry Clay for Kids Sheelah Tolton – Try the Pottery Wheel
Saturday, July 20	Helen O’Connor – Pulp Painting with Natural Pigments Alaena Warner – Needle Painting and Embroidery Basics
Saturday, July 27	Kathy Piwowar – Mixed Media Methods Josh Lesage – Wood Carving Demo
Saturday, August 3	Natasha Henderson – Painting with Atmosphere Janna Swales – Plastic Injection with Your Plastic Waste
Saturday, August 10	Joyce Majiski – Making a Braided Rug with Socks Heather Atkinson – Paint the Northern Lights
Saturday, August 17	Stephanie Luneta-Stevens – Stained Glass Art Marlene Collins – Hand-building Clay with Coils and Slabs
Saturday, August 24	Meghann Atina – Bee Creative Summer Acrylic Painting Patrick Royle – Clay Tile Carving and Colouring
Saturday, August 31	Karen Nicloux – 2 Needle Beading Lara Melnick – Bead Making Using Polymer Clay

4.6. Public Amenities

Twelve picnic tables, including three accessible ones, benches and planters were set up on the riverfront, following the layout designed by a consultant and an Intern. A total of four 20’x20’ tents provided shelter and shade for Town Square visitors during the summer. Three portable washrooms, including one accessible one, were placed in a visible and central location, between the stage and grassy



areas. Northern Vacuum Services serviced them three times a week. Garbage and compost stations were placed by the food court and the White Pass Building, which were serviced twice weekly.

Figure 10. General public seating during a Friday concert. The City of Whitehorse.

4.7. Communications – Visual identity

A visual identity was developed for the Riverfront Town Square, to give more personality to the area and provide a more festive feel. Funders and partners logos were added to the banners and prints where relevant.

- The Town Square’s identity on site was highlighted through:
 - Banners of different colours were set up on light poles between Front Street (Horwoods’ side), the wharf, the Roundhouse and the White Pass building
 - Wrap of metal garbage bins on the wharf with information on the Town Square’s arts workshops and on the First Nation artwork painted by Ken Anderson and NCES

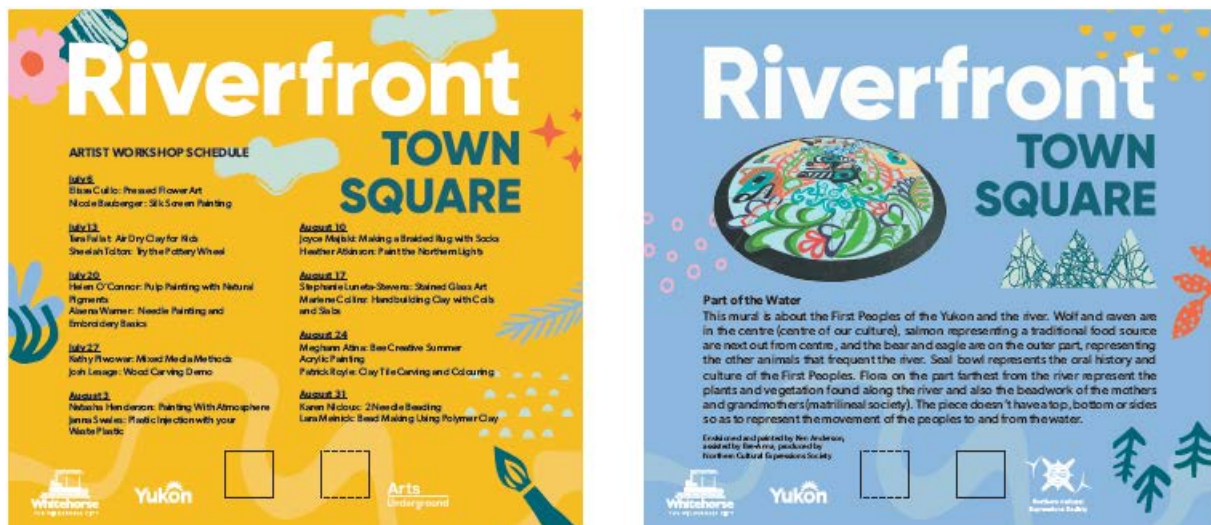


Figure 11 – design of garbage bin wraps set up on the wharf

- Large banner “Welcome to Riverfront Town Square on Marquee tents and on one side of the porta potties
- Contact list banner printed and installed on side of porta potty
- The promotion of the town square, market and cultural events was done through:
 - A webpage was developed specifically for the project on the City’s website, <https://www.whitehorse.ca/visiting-whitehorse/2024-riverfront-town-square/> which included funders and partners logos at the bottom of the page

2024 Riverfront Town Square



The Riverfront Town Square is pedestrian-oriented and located in the heart of downtown Whitehorse. Starting on July 1 to September 1, 2024, every Tuesday and Saturday, the riverfront and wharf will transform into a vibrant hub for people to eat, drink, socialize and shop. This area will be programmed for a market, concerts and artist workshops to activate the waterfront and draw people towards the Downtown core.

Figure 12 Header of the Riverfront Town Square webpage

- Posters were distributed around town twice, once in early July, and another time in August For the Town Square + market days
- Rack cards were distributed at the airport, the visitors centre, and hotels
- North of Ordinary screens (airport and selection of restaurants, hotels and stores) included the Town Square ad in July and August
- Radio ads (CBC, CKRW, CHON-FM) ran during the entire summer



Figure 13 design of Riverfront Town Square rack card and poster



- o Social media of the City and partners social media every week for concerts (MusicYukon), the market, and the arts workshops (Arts Underground)



Figure 14 examples of RTS social media designs

- o Large signs were installed by the campground and at the bottom of 2 Mile Hill
- o Quarter page ads were inserted in the What's Up Yukon every 2 weeks in July and August



Figure 15 Design of ad published in What's Up Yukon

- Poster carriers were set up at the Town Square with information on coming artists for the concerts and arts workshops:



Artist Workshops
Saturday July 6 (10am - 2pm)



Pressed Flower Art with The Garden Witch
 Ages 5+

Using pressed flowers from The Garden Witch's garden, participants will make a keepsake jar to take home.

Silk Screening with Nicole Bauberger
 Ages 8+

Nicole will demonstrate her one-of-a-kind silk-screening technique. Participants will then use Nicole's screens to silkscreen on paper and an upcycled T-shirt from her stash.



Live Music
Tuesday July 2 (5pm - 7pm)



Sean from the Yukon
Kim Beggs Trio

For more information: www.whitehorse.ca/riverfront
business@whitehorse.ca



Figure 16 examples of posters installed in poster carriers on the riverfront

5. What We Heard from Exit Survey

The Riverfront Town Square Exit Survey launched on September 18th and closed on October 10th, 2024. The survey had 130 responses in total, 105 from the general public, 7 from businesses/NPOs and 18 from market vendors.

5.1. General Public & Business/NPO

5.1.1. Satisfaction, Positives, and Negatives

Overall, residents who visited the Town Square expressed satisfaction with the 2024 Town Square (see Figure 17) Residents highly rated the cleanliness, and the feeling of safety within the space. The amenities available and the atmosphere also scored reasonably well among respondents.

Residents felt less satisfied with the community and business engagement, and the operating days and hours of the Town Square.

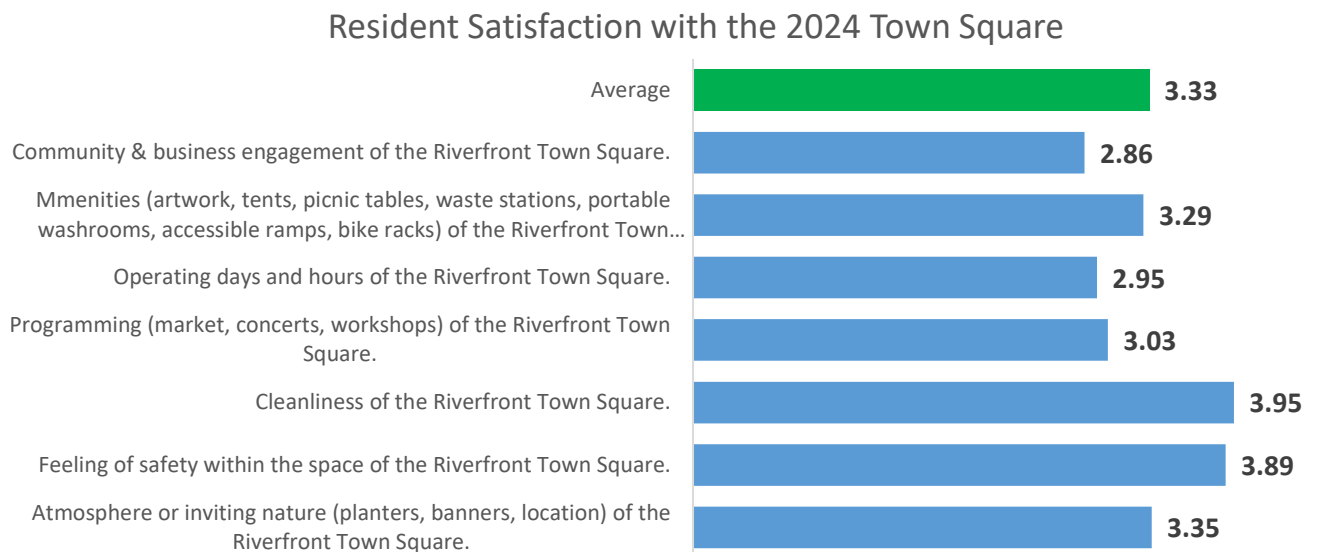


Figure 17- Please rate the following categories on a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being poor and 5 excellent. (n = 80)

5.1.2. Resident Visit Summary

The majority of residents visiting the Town Square visited the Riverfront Town Square either 3 to 4 times (38.5%) or 5 times or more (16.9%) [See Figure 18]. The large majority of visits were either 30 minutes or less (43.4%) or between 30 minutes to an hour (37.36%) [See Figure 19].

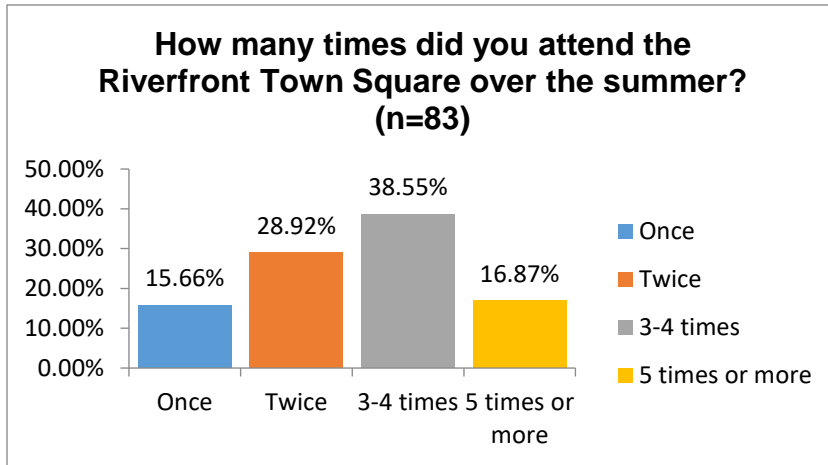


Figure 18 - How many times did you attend the Riverfront Town Square over the summer (n=83)

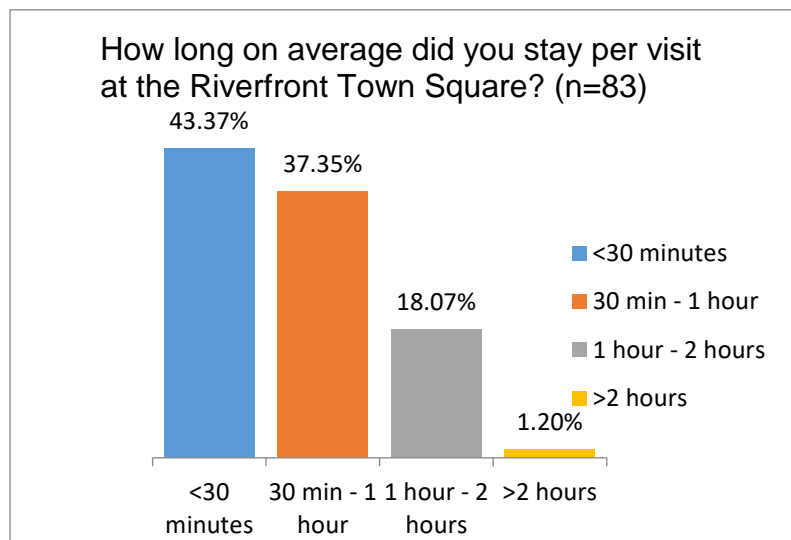


Figure 19 - How long on average did you stay per visit at the Riverfront Town Square? (n=83)

There was a wide disbursement of times and days of the week that residents visited the Town Square. Of note, Saturdays after 3pm (8.4%) and Tuesdays after 7pm (4.8%) were not popular times to visit the Town Square (See Figure 20).

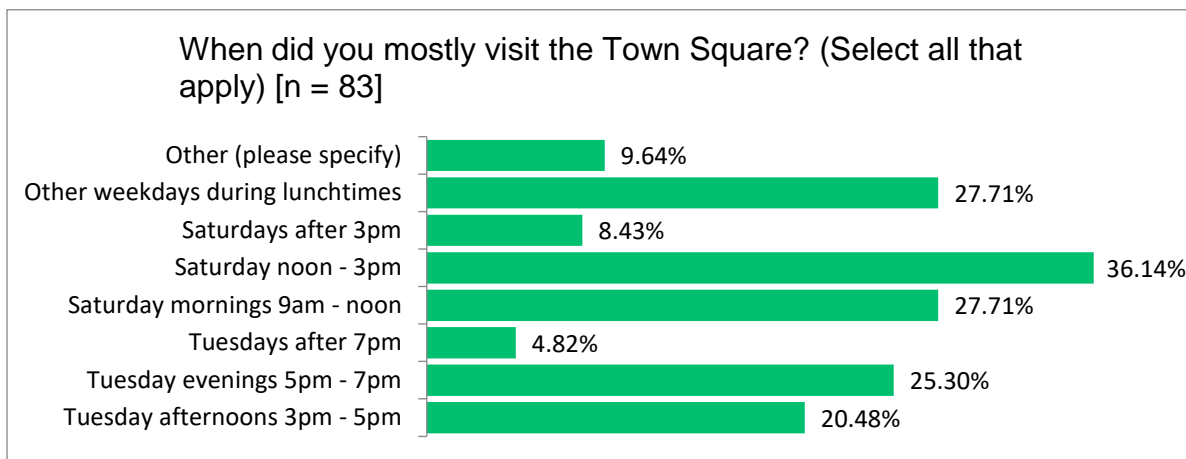


Figure 20 - When did you mostly visit the Town Square? (Select all that apply) [n = 83]

The top reasons for visiting were for the food trucks (55.4%), passing through the area by foot or bicycle and checking it out (49.4%) [See Figure 21]. Meeting friends/family (34.9%), shopping at the market (27.7%) and live music (26.5%) were also common reasons for visiting.

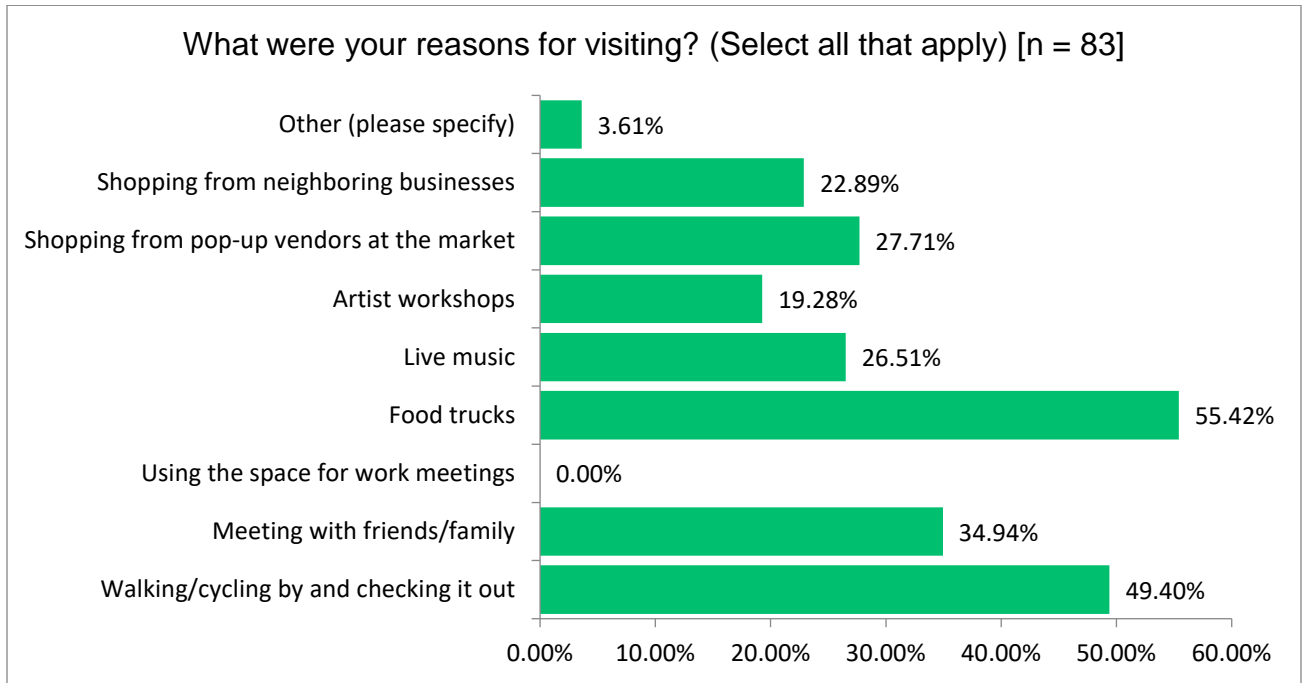


Figure 21 - What were your reasons for visiting? (Select all that apply) [n = 83]

5.1.3. Resident Spending

The majority of residents either spent between \$20 to \$50 (34.9%) and less than \$20 (32.5%) [See Figure 22].

For this spending, residents primarily spent money on food from food trucks (67.5%) and products from market vendors (32.5%) [See Figure 23].

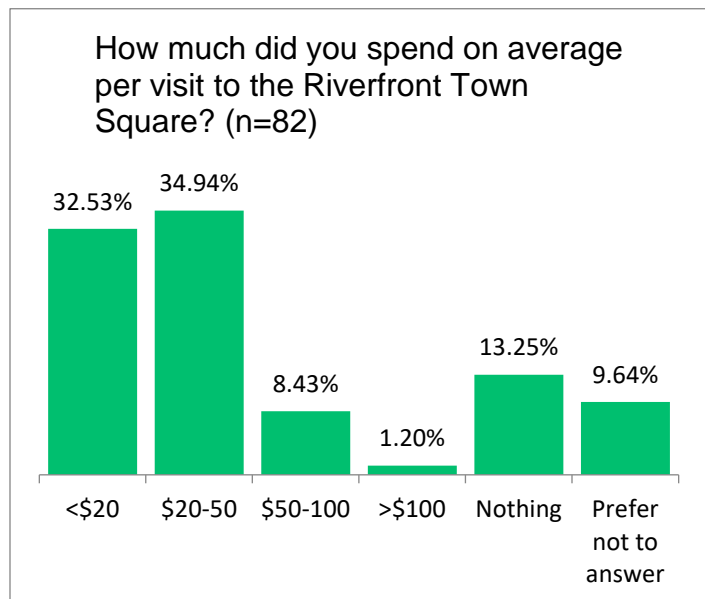


Figure 22 - How much did you spend on average per visit to the Riverfront Town Square? (n=82)

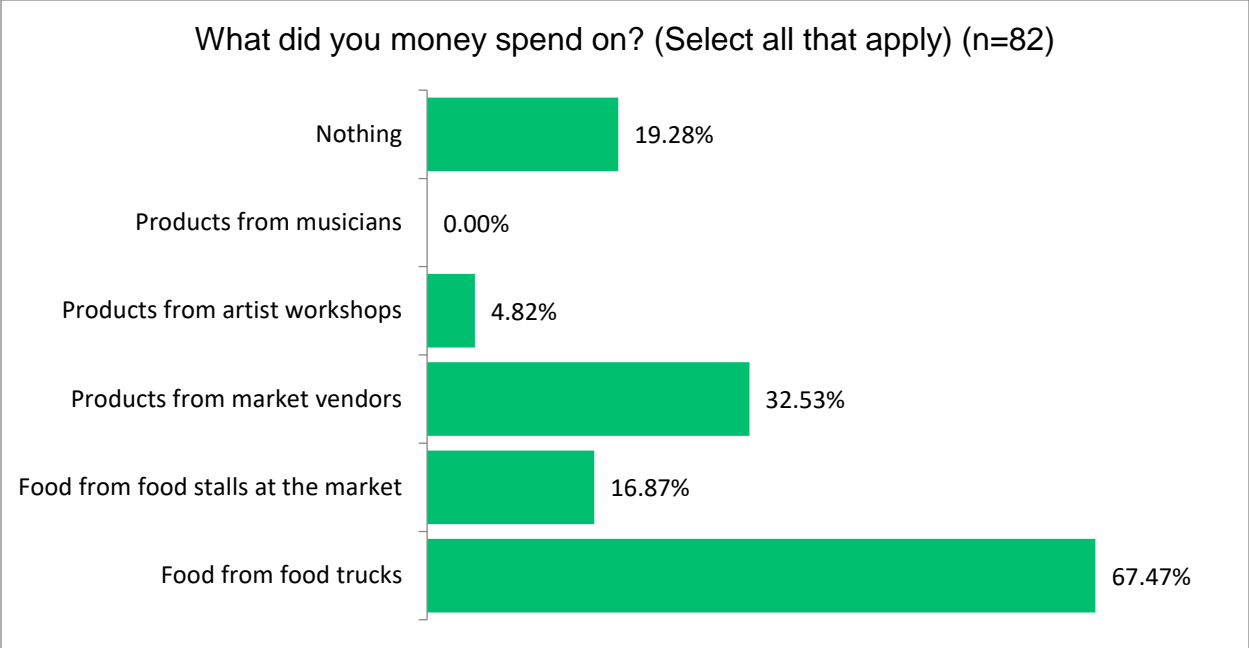


Figure 23 - What did you money spend on? (Select all that apply) (n=82)

5.1.4. Downtown Benefit and Support for Future Town Squares

The majority of residents felt that the Riverfront Town Square either did benefit Downtown Whitehorse overall (42%) or may have (35%) [See Figure 24]. Roughly a quarter (22%) of residents felt that the project did not benefit Downtown Whitehorse.

The majority of residents (66.7%) felt that the City should consider organizing Town Square in the future (see Figure 25), with the top favored location for future iterations being the same location along the Riverfront (see Figure 26).

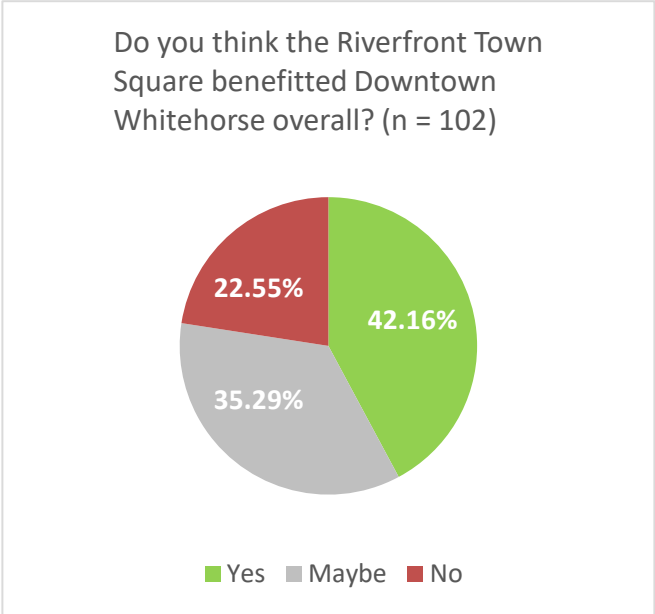


Figure 24- Do you think the Riverfront Town Square benefitted Downtown Whitehorse overall? (n = 102)

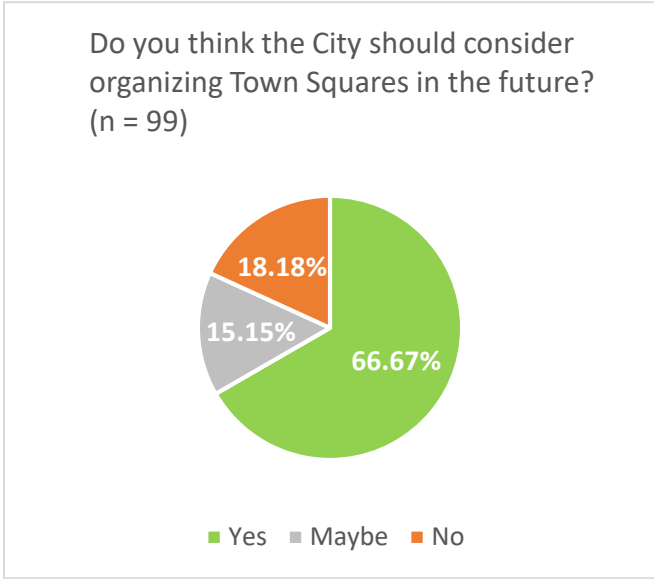


Figure 25 - Do you think the City should consider organizing Town Squares in the future? (n = 99)

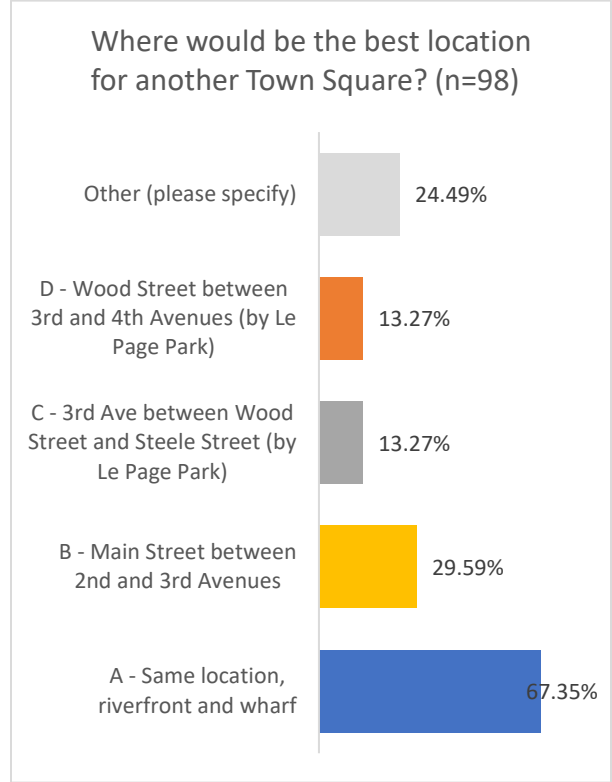


Figure 26 - Where would be the best location for another Town Square? (n=98)

5.2. Market Vendors & Food Vendors

5.2.1. Vendor Satisfaction with 2024 Riverfront Town Square

18 market and food vendors replied to the survey, of which, the majority (12) were a small business with no storefront (see Figure 27). 2 small businesses with storefronts and 2 food truck/trailers responded. 1 community group responded to the survey.

Market vendors were generally satisfied with the 2024 Town Square, on average rating various aspects of the Town Square a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 (see Figure 28). Cleanliness, programming, amenities, and atmosphere all scored 4 or above, indicating satisfaction with these aspects. Days of operation and community and business engagement scored 3.5 or lower, indicating less satisfaction with these aspects and room for improvement.

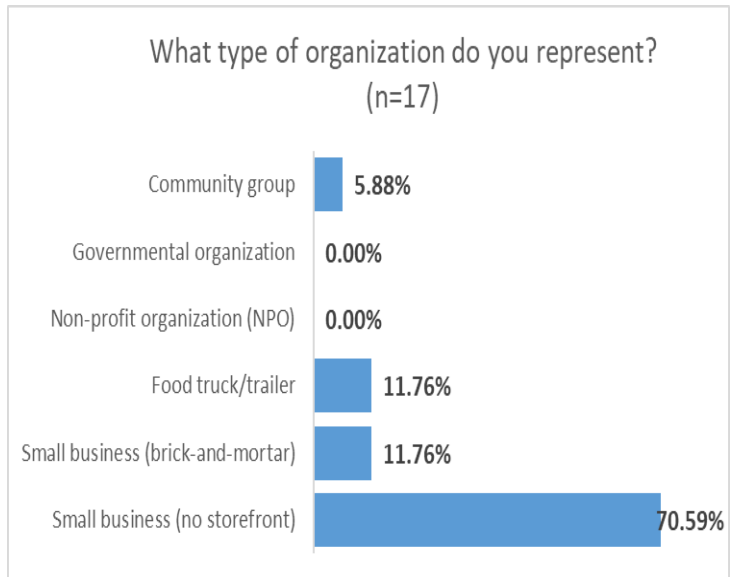


Figure 27 - What type of organization do you represent? (n=17)

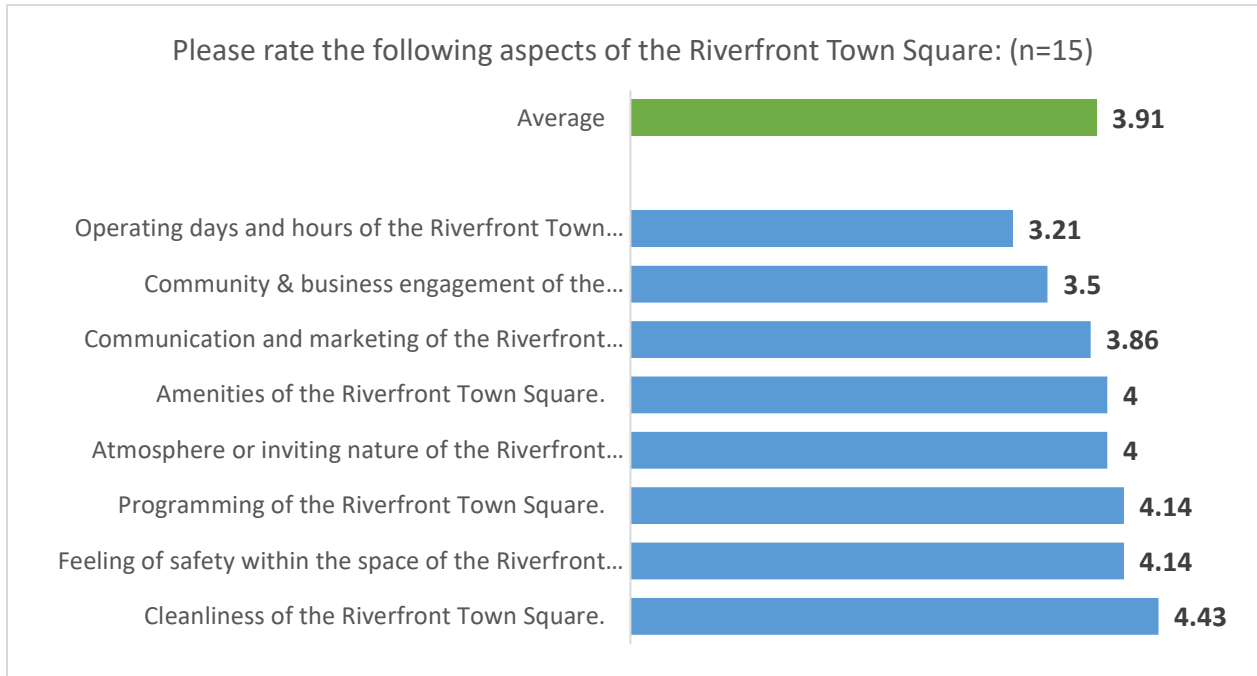


Figure 28 - Please rate the following aspects of the Riverfront Town Square: (n=15)

In line with the ratings, the majority of vendors (56.25%) expressed that they had an overall fairly positive experience at the market, with a quarter having a neutral experience, and a minority (12.5%) having a fairly negative experience (see Figure 29)

Most vendors found connecting with visitors to be rewarding (56.25%), some finding the cultural programming (37.5%) and promoting their activities/business (31.25%) rewarding (see Figure 30).

Vendors found weather (50%) to be challenging, as well as setting up (43.75%) [see Figure 31]. 'Other' responses (50%) also mentioned weather and set up challenges, in addition to sales, promotion, and lack of visitors.

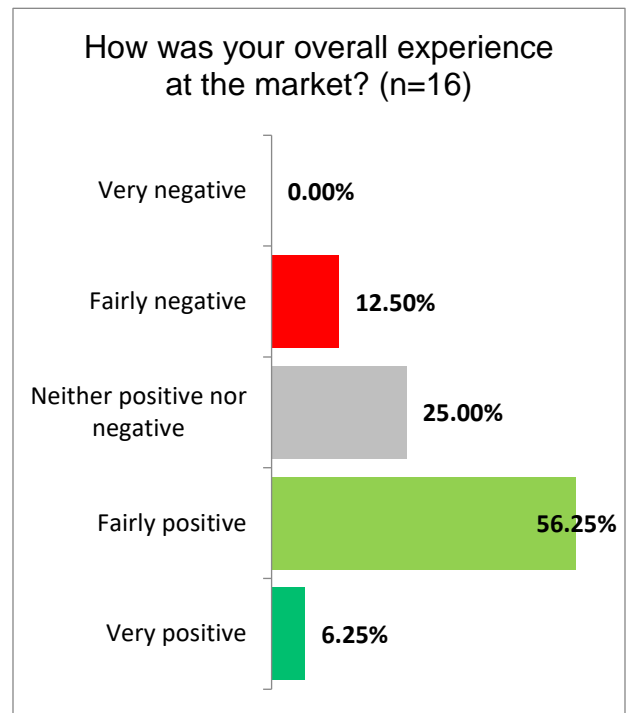


Figure 29 - How was your overall experience at the market? (n=16)



Figure 30 – What was the most rewarding? (n=16)

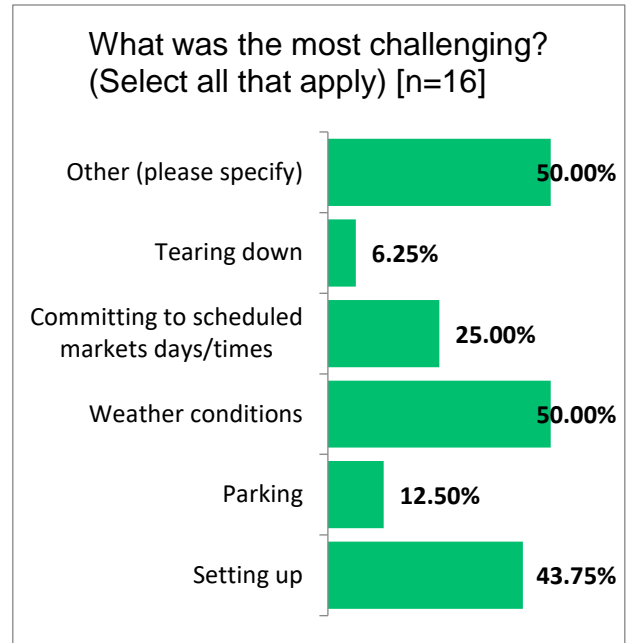


Figure 31 – What was the most challenging? (n=16)

5.2.2. Market Promotion

Most vendors were either somewhat satisfied (46.67%) or satisfied (26.67%) with the marketing of the Town Square (see Figure 32).

Common suggestions for improvements to better promote Town Square markets included working more closely with the Visitors Centre (53.33%) and tour bus companies (53.33%), having earlier timelines (46.67%) and additional signage/billboards (40.00%) [see Figure 33].

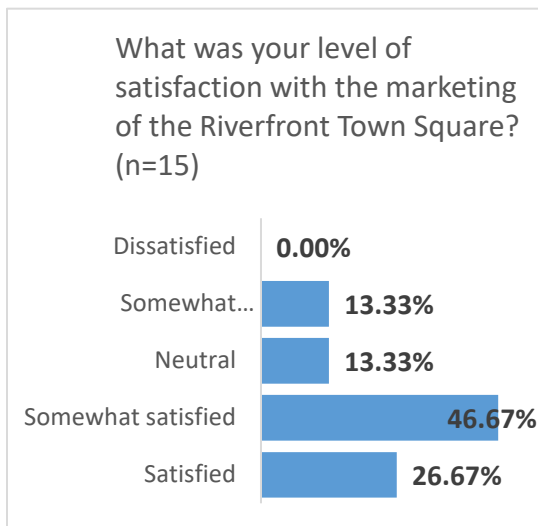


Figure 32 - What was your level of satisfaction with the marketing of the Riverfront Town Square? (n=15)

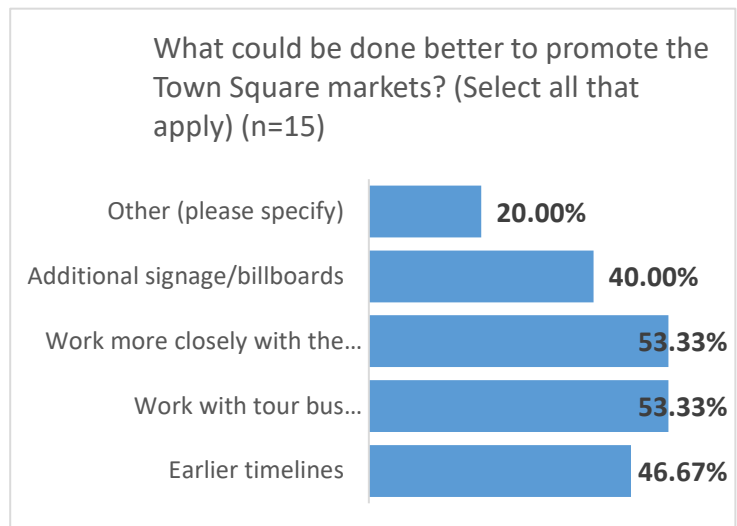


Figure 33 - What could be done better to promote the Town Square markets? (Select all that apply) (n=15)

5.2.3. Organization and Programming

The majority of vendors found the overall organization of the market to be fairly good (66.67%) or very good 13.33%, with some neutral on the programming (20.00%) [see Figure 34].

The majority (73.33%) of vendors stated the cultural programming, both the concerts and workshops, were beneficial to the market (see Figure 35).

Most vendors found that Saturday between noon and 3pm was the busiest time for them (see Figure 36).

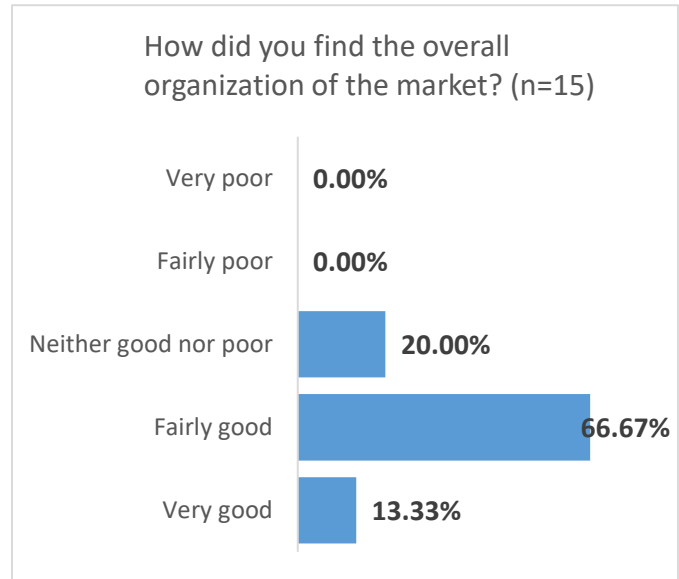


Figure 34 - How did you find the overall organization of the market? (n=15)

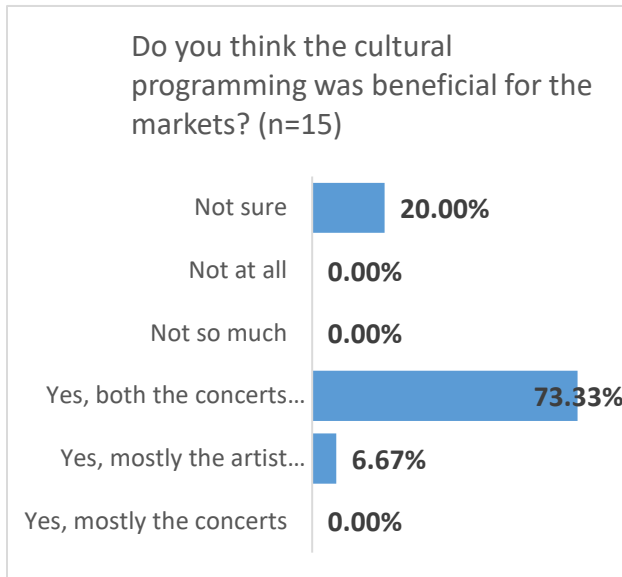


Figure 35 - Do you think the cultural programming was beneficial for the markets? (n=15)

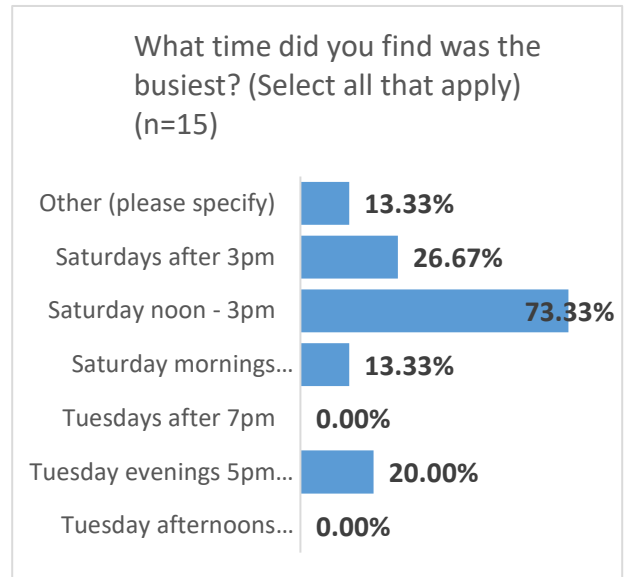


Figure 36 - What time did you find was the busiest? (Select all that apply) (n=15)

5.2.4. Benefits & Support for Future Editions

The majority (73.33%) of vendors felt that the Riverfront Town Square benefitted Downtown Whitehorse overall (see Figure 37). 80% of vendors also think that the City should consider organizing Town Square in the future (see Figure 38).

60% of 2024 Town Square vendors indicated they would participate in future Town Squares, and 40% said maybe (see Figure 39).

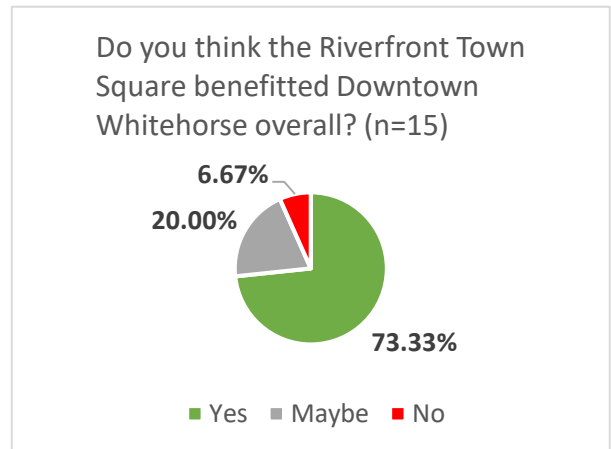


Figure 37 - Do you think the Riverfront Town Square benefitted Downtown Whitehorse overall? (n=15)

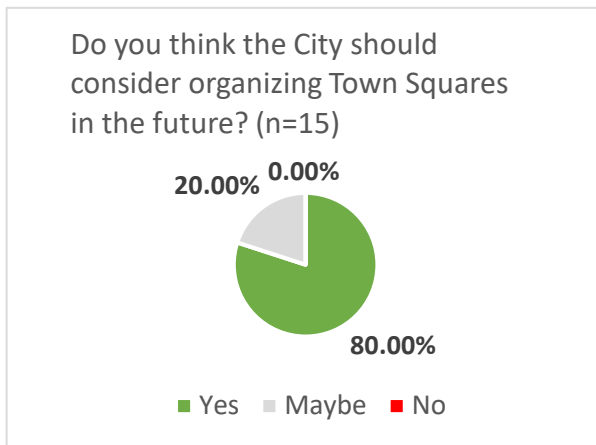


Figure 38 - Would you participate in future Town Squares if they were to happen? (n=15)

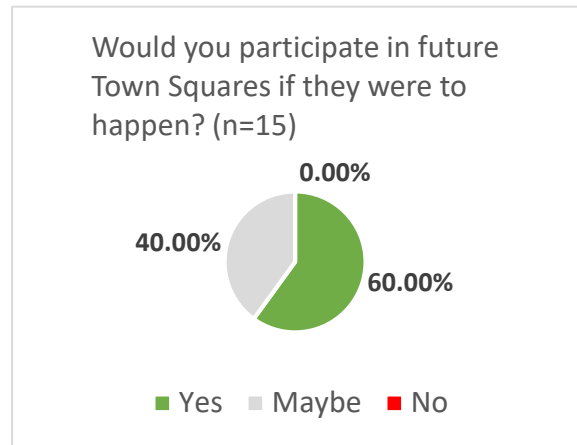


Figure 39 - Do you think the City should consider organizing Town Squares in the future? (n=15)

50% of market vendors indicated that participation in the market increased their revenues by 20% to 50% (see Figure 40). Roughly 29% stated their revenue did increase, but not by much, and approximately 21% said their revenue did not increase.

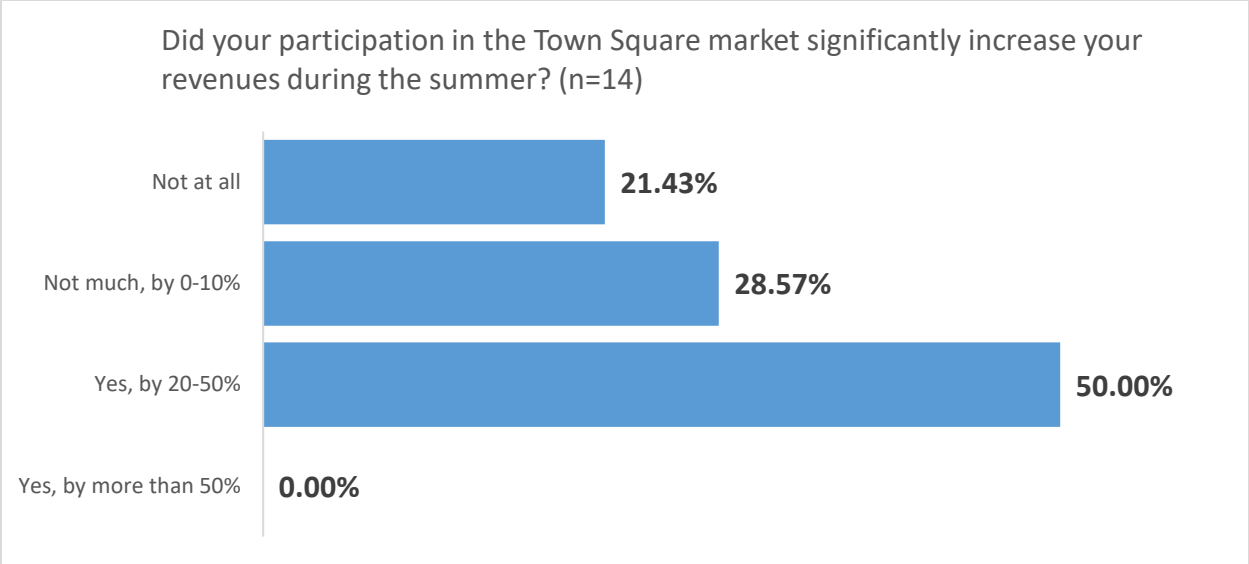


Figure 40 - Did your participation in the Town Square market significantly increase your revenues during the summer? (n=14)

5.2.5. Location Options for Future Iterations

The most popular choice (60%) of future Town Square locations among vendors is the same location on the riverfront and wharf area (see Figure 41). One third of vendors also indicated support for a Town Square on Main Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenue.

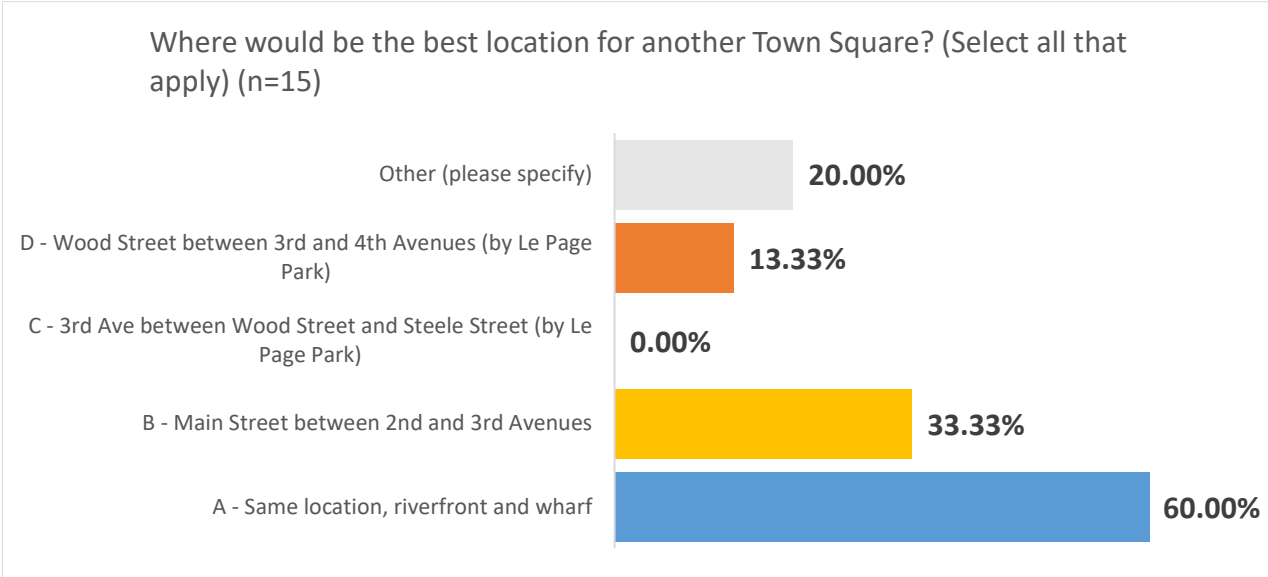


Figure 41 - Where would be the best location for another Town Square? (Select all that apply) (n=15)

Who do you think is best suitable to organize the market in the future?
(n=15)

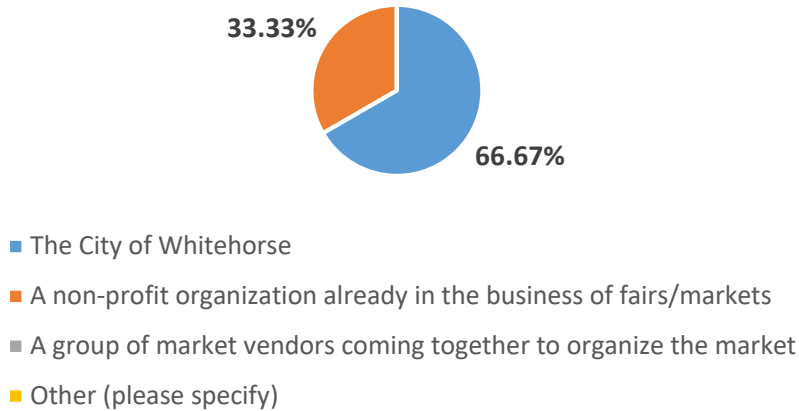


Figure 42 - Who do you think is best suitable to organize the market in the future? (n=15)

The majority (66.67%) of vendors believe the City of Whitehorse is the most suitable to organizer for a future Town Square market (see Figure 42), with some indicating a non-profit organization already in the business of fairs/markets would be most suitable.

Vendors strongly prefer one larger market in future Town Square (73.33%) [see Figure 43] and the majority (80.00%) believe that Saturday Afternoon would be the best day and time (see Figure 44).

Would you prefer to attend two shorter markets or one longer market every week? (n=15)

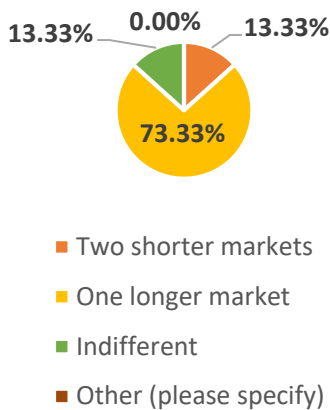


Figure 43 - Would you prefer to attend two shorter markets or one longer market every week? (n=15)

What would be the best time for the market? (n=15)

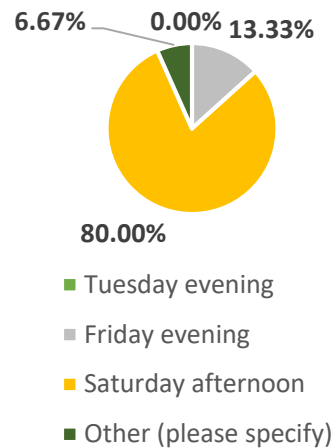


Figure 44 - Would you prefer to attend two shorter markets or one longer market every week? (n=15)

5.3. Businesses and Non-Profit Organizations

5.3.1. Organizations Represented and Location

Only 7 businesses and non-profit organizations responded to the survey, of which 5 were businesses and 2 non-profit organizations, which is a too small sample to be representative of this group.

5.3.2. Impacts

Common positive impacts of the Riverfront Town Square for businesses/NPOs included entertainment/activities, outdoor lunch options, meeting space, a more vibrant downtown core, and increased draw for tourists (see Figure 45).

Common negative impacts cited by respondents include a loss of parking spaces (57.14%), reduced foot traffic, accessibility issues, and traffic issues (see Figure 46).

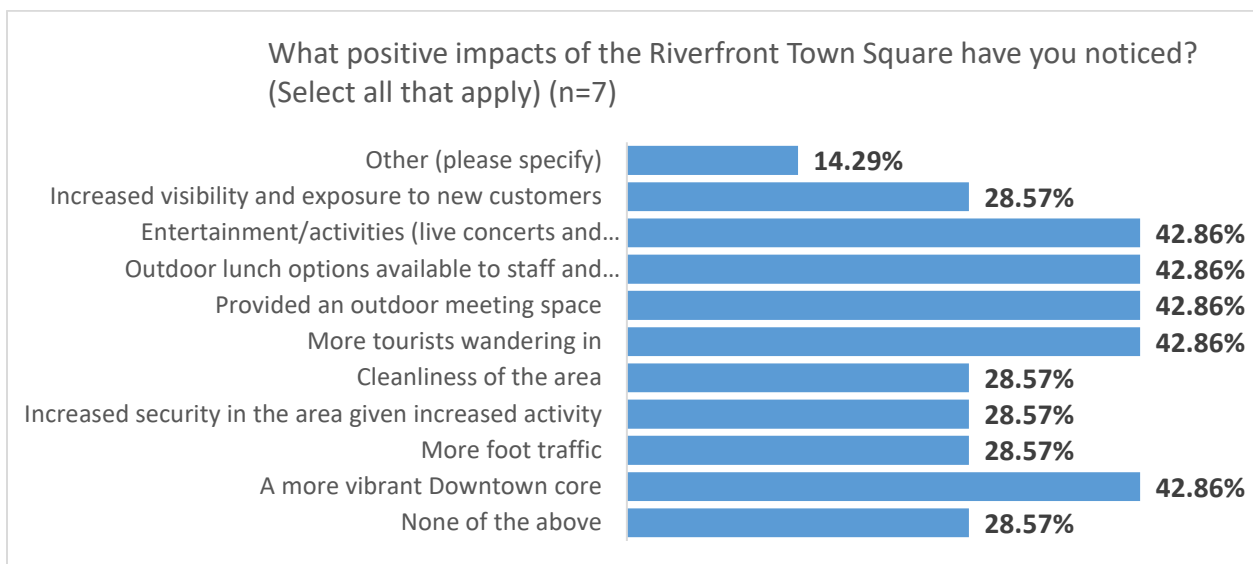


Figure 45 - What positive impacts of the Riverfront Town Square have you noticed? (Select all that apply) (n=7)

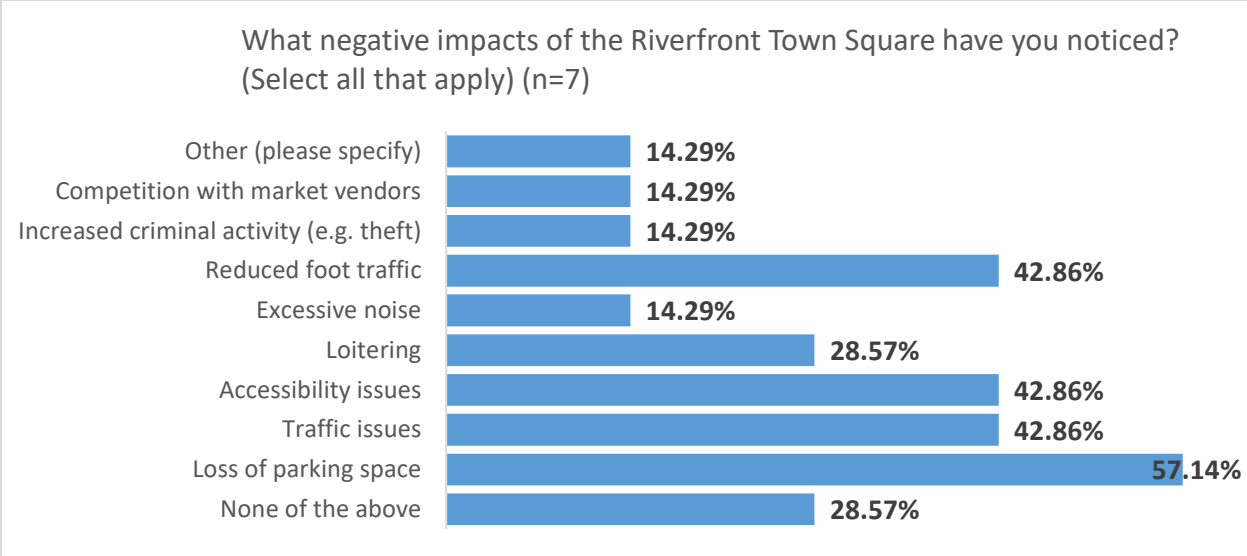


Figure 46 - What negative impacts of the Riverfront Town Square have you noticed? (Select all that apply) (n=7)

3 respondents (60%) indicated that the Town Square decreased their sales, and 2 said it did not have an impact on their sales (see Figure 47).

Of those indicating an impact to their sales, 2 said sales decreased by 0-10%, and 1 said they decreased by 20-50% (see Figure 48).

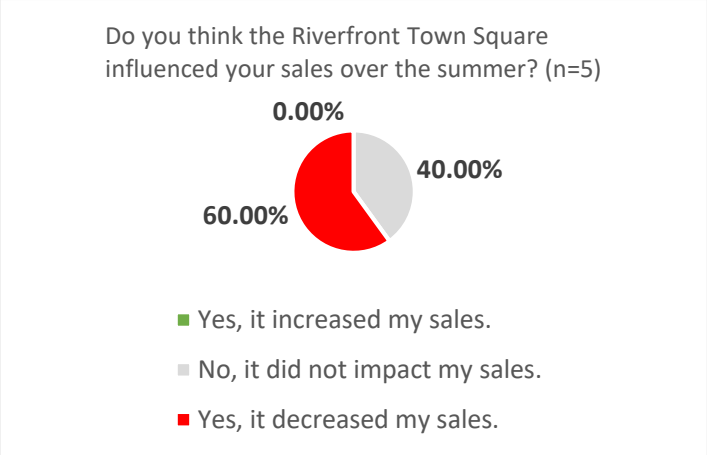


Figure 47 - Do you think the Riverfront Town Square influenced your sales over the summer? (n=5)

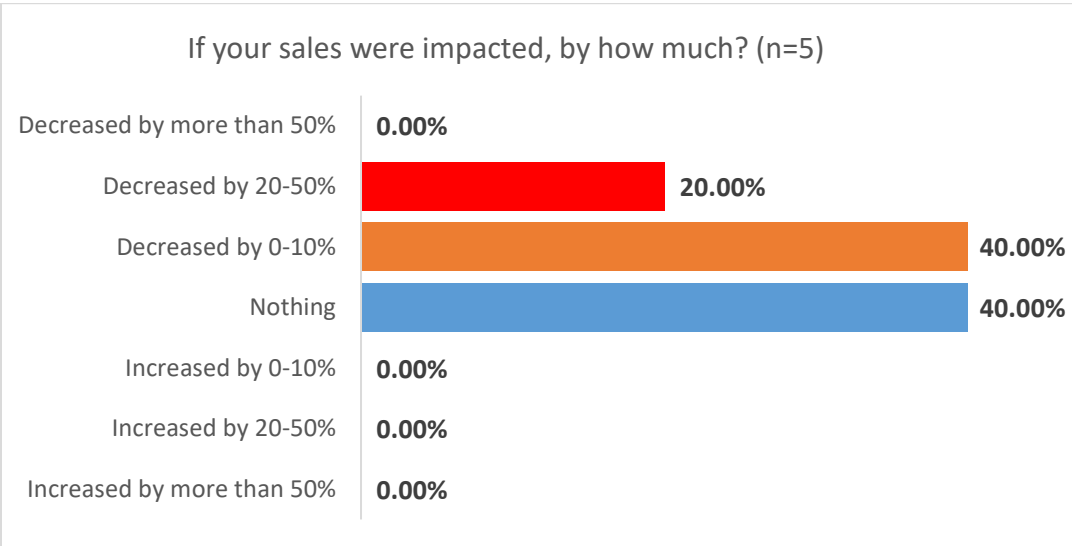


Figure 48 - If your sales were impacted, by how much? (n=5)

5.3.3. Satisfaction, Benefit, and Future Town Squares

On average, respondents rated the Riverfront Town Square a 3.5 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent (see Figure 49). Operating days and hours, programming, and cleanliness scored on the lower side, while communication and marketing and atmosphere scored higher.

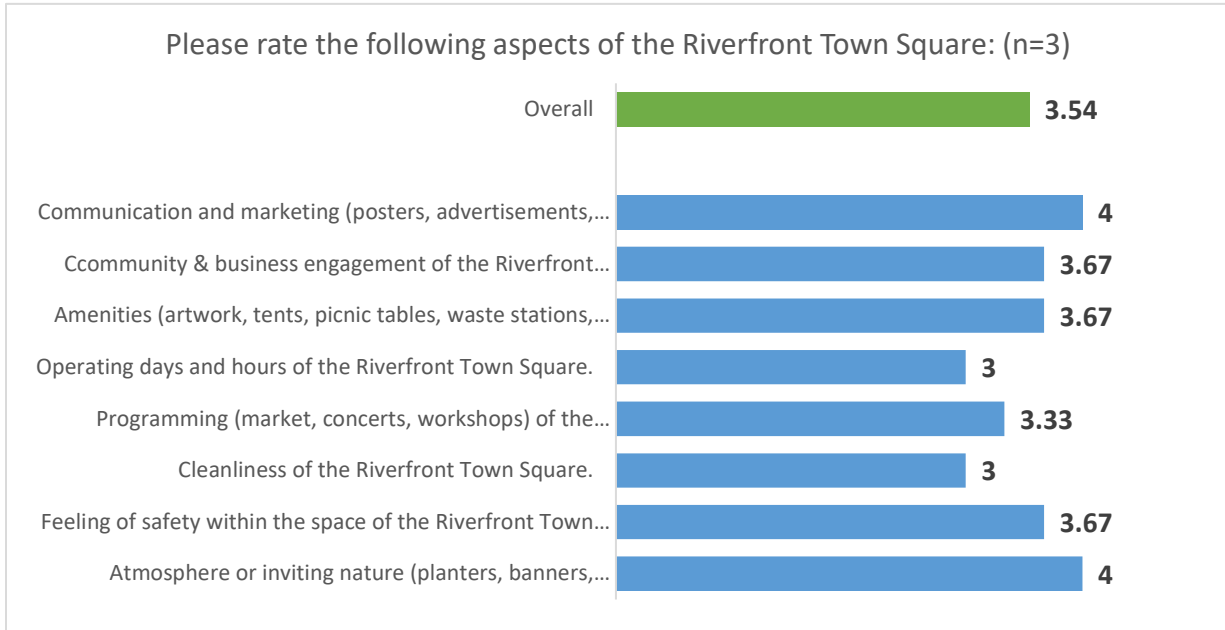


Figure 49 - Please rate the following aspects of the Riverfront Town Square: (n=3)

Respondents were split on whether or not the Riverfront Town Square benefitted Downtown Whitehorse overall, with roughly 3 saying yes (43%), and 3 saying no (see Figure 50).

3 respondent's said that the same location (Riverfront and Wharf), 3rd Avenue between Wood Street and Steele Street would be the best location for another Town Square (see Figure 51). Other responses noted that Rotary Park would be a good option.

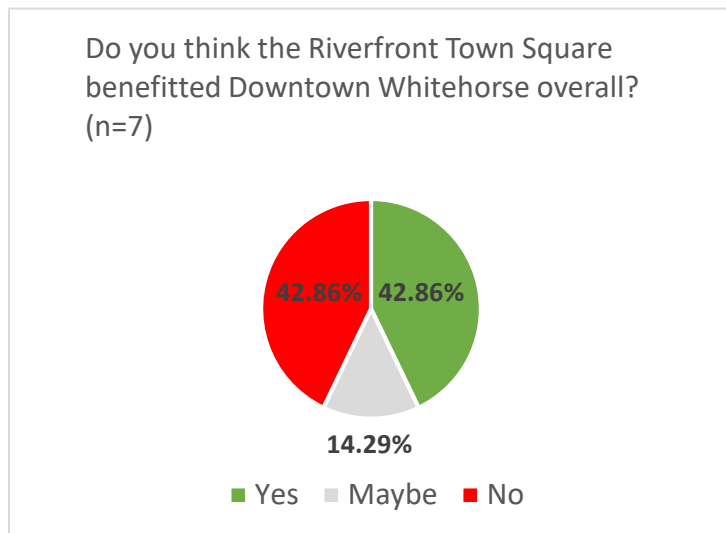


Figure 50 - Do you think the Riverfront Town Square benefitted Downtown Whitehorse overall? (n=7)

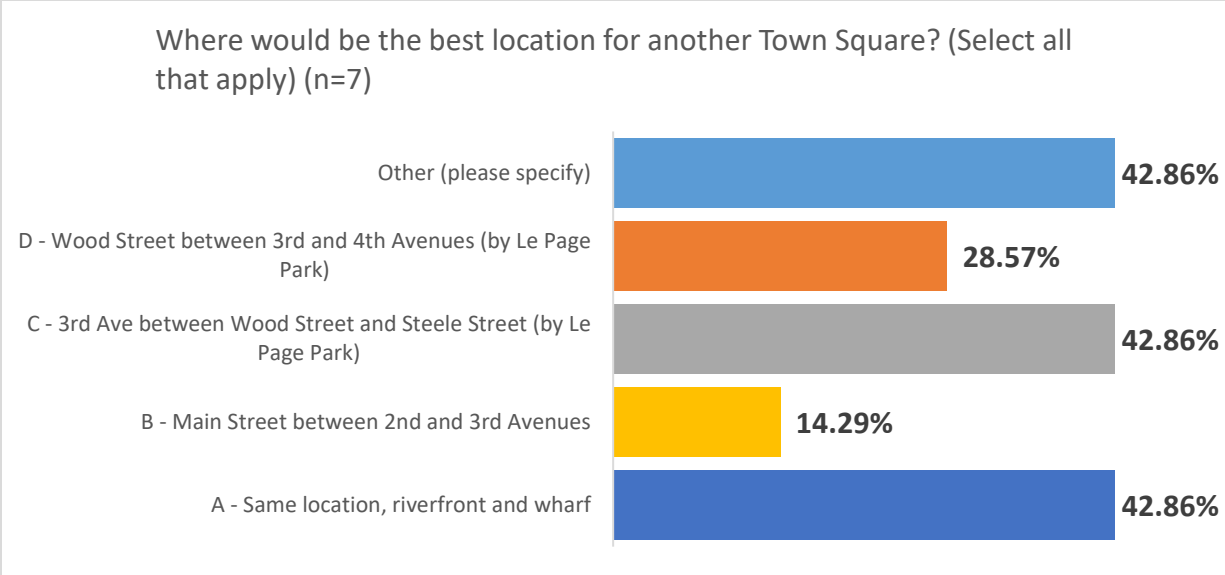


Figure 51 - Where would be the best location for another Town Square? (Select all that apply) (n=7)

5.3.4. Summary of answers to open questions

Several recurring themes were identified in the responses to the open questions of the survey. They related to the location, accessibility, and effectiveness of the Riverfront Town Square, along with specific suggestions and concerns raised by respondents.

The riverfront was praised by 39 respondents who consider it is the best location for its scenic beauty and accessibility, with some mentioning it being less disruptive to traffic and parking. Respondents appreciated the proximity to the river and walking paths. However, 10 respondents felt it was "too out of the way" and lacked the foot traffic needed to create a vibrant atmosphere, and concerns about wind were mentioned.

20 respondents believed that Main Street was a better location, especially because it attracted high visibility and foot traffic in 2023, and was already a central hub for local businesses. They felt it created a more vibrant, interactive experience; it felt more special and accessible to a wider range of people.

10 respondents suggested that the schedule of activities should be reviewed, including more programming around lunchtime perhaps. A few suggested that a bigger variety of vendors, music, and activities would make the event more engaging, and that the event should start earlier in the summer to build momentum. 5 respondents mentioned that the event was not well advertised or people didn't know about it. There were suggestions for more visible marketing or signage.

8 respondents shared concerns about lack of parking downtown, and 5 reiterated that the City shouldn't close a street again. 4 considered it wasn't a good use of municipal tax dollars.

5.4. Stakeholders Committee

At the final Stakeholder Committee meeting, stakeholders were asked to each provide feedback according to the party they represent.

Market vendors attending the last stakeholders committee meeting was positive about their experience selling at the market, and considered it had been well organized at a pleasant location. One market vendor expressed dissatisfaction with the resolution of the sprinkler incident, as she hoped she'd be compensated for her losses by YG or the City's insurance instead of having to go through her own liability insurance.

Business owners located close to the Riverfront Town Square much preferred this year's Town Square location. One appreciated the organic feel of the new location, and praised MusicYukon for the quality and level of music programmed in the area. She and another adjacent business owner did note that parking had still been an issue over the summer and could be improved. Overall, her perception is that the Riverfront Town Square didn't affect Horwoods' businesses sales as they felt Main Street Town Square did the previous year, but it didn't improve them neither. Two other businesses from Horwoods confirmed their sales had been strong this summer, which one thinks further highlights the detrimental impact that the 2023 street closure had on their business. According to them, this summer's success shows that street closures do not serve their businesses. All emphasize that they are opposed to future street closures to support any visions of Town Square.

Our programming partners, MusicYukon and Arts Underground, both expressed the satisfaction of their musicians and artists about the location of the venue and programming of the project. However, earlier timelines would benefit all parties to ensure sufficient time for programming, preparing marketing ahead of the event and hiring staff. They also recommend having a cancellation policy in case of poor weather, as attendance was very low on rainy days. MusicYukon also recommends increasing the artist fees per concert, as current budget includes a majority of solo and duo performers, which are limited in Whitehorse. An increase to the artistic budget would allow for further diverse programming and larger shows, which would likely draw more attention and larger audiences.

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, which attended every Tuesday market, consider the riverfront a location with great potential for the Town Square, and see how it can grow. They do note that the location for the market is good for small vendors, but more difficult for larger businesses. They witnessed that the weather impacted highly attendance, and numbers could be very low on some days, so a cancellation policy could prevent vendors and artists from setting up for very few visitors. They appreciated that City staff had consistent communication with vendors and that Music was a big draw.

Several recommendations were made with regard to marketing the initiative by stakeholders, such as approaching tour bus companies with more anticipation so that they could include a visit to the market in their schedule. Town Square concerts and arts workshops could have their own identity in addition to marketing the market. Tourism Industry Association of Yukon's representative also suggested advertising in campgrounds & RV Parks, working with cruising companies (tour packages are built 18 months before), and work with destination marketing organizations from Alaska (Haines, Juneau, Skagway) and with conferences with international delegates to promote the Town Square.

For Inclusion Yukon, it was challenging to find a time to go with clients during the times when there were vendors/presentations at the Town Square. Evenings and weekends didn't work well for them as they usually go for a stroll in the late morning, lunchtime or afternoon whereas concerts and the market took place later this year.

The MacBride Museum, on their side, do not support the Town Square being located on the riverfront. It created parking challenges, and they couldn't run the trolley on Saturdays as they considered it would be unsafe to run it during market time. As they want to run the trolley on Saturdays in 2025, they'd rather see the Town Square relocate to another location.

The government of Yukon's Highways and Public Works representative appreciated the respectful collaboration they had with the City through the land use agreement allowing the Town Square to take place on a property they manage. They are open to such partnership in the future, given that the City and MacBride Museum find a way to cohabitate securely in the space; they are open to find a solution that would work for everybody.

5.5. City Departments

Economic Development staff reached out to other City departments to request for feedback about their involvement of the Town Square. Staff directly involved with the project provided feedback and suggestions via email. There was a general consensus that earlier timelines would benefit the operational side of things, reducing the strain on their work schedule and **having be plan**. All departments see themselves involved and contributing in future planning of such initiatives.

6. Financial Report

6.1. Funding

Council’s 2024-2027 Capital Expenditure Program included the 2024 Town Square project with an expense of \$105,000 from Capital Reserve, subject to external funding. The Riverfront Town Square pilot project was funded by the City’s Capital Reserve (\$105,000), as well as generous support from Yukon Government’s Department of Tourism (\$15,000). Programming partner Northern Cultural Expressions Society had requested funding from Culture Quest for the First Nations artwork and art-making community event in partnership with the City and Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism, but the grant was not approved.

6.2. Budget

The project was implemented with a total budget of \$119,236. The two main expenses that were higher than originally planned were municipal staff involvement from various departments that were higher than originally estimated, and the rental of three marquee tents from a local provider instead of purchasing them from an outside company to ensure they would be monitored and taken care of the entire summer.

Equipment and communications items purchased for the 2023 and 2024 Town Squares can be reused for future initiatives: picnic tables, planters, benches, stage, electrical cable and connectors, accessible cable covers, and multiple banners used to adorn the tents and portable washrooms.

6.3. Amenities for Future Town Squares

Table 5. Amenities for Future Town Squares

Item	Size	Quantity	Department Holding	Location
Picnic Tables	6 ft x 60'	9	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Picnic Table - Accessible	8 ft x 60'	3	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Planter Bench – ‘L-Shaped’		4	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Rectangular Planter	4ft x 18”	6	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Square Planter	3ft x 3ft	3	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Stage	18ft x 18ft	1	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Bike Rack	4ft x 4ft	3	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Accessible Curb Ramp	6ft x 32”	3	Parks & Recreation	Parks Compound
Accessible Cable Cover	45.08 x 31.5 x 1.97”	10	Property Management	Compound behind Animal Shelter
Vevor Tent	10ft x 10ft	1	Economic Development	Sport Yukon
Light Post Banner	60” x 27” (extra 4” top and bottom for sleeves)	18	Economic Development	Sport Yukon
Tent Banner	20ft x 34”	4	Economic Development	Sport Yukon
Portable Washroom Banner	42” x 65”	2	Economic Development	Sport Yukon
Tear Drop Banner	7ft	3	Economic Development	Sport Yukon
Billboard Banner	4ft x 8ft	2	Economic Development	Sport Yukon

7. Recommendations & Next Steps

When asked if the City should consider similar initiatives in the future, 66.67% of the general public, 80% of market vendors and 28.57% of businesses answered yes.

The favoured locations for a future Town Square are:

1. Same location as 2024 (Waterfront and Wharf) (67.35% of residents, 60% of vendors, and 42.86% of businesses)
2. Main Street between 2nd and 3rd (29.54% of residents, 33.33% of vendors and 14.29% of businesses)
3. 3rd Avenue between Wood Street and Steele Street (13.27% of residents, 13.33% of vendors and 42.86% of businesses)

A majority of stakeholders are in favour of the same location as it provided a natural and pleasant location, and would ensure continuity to build on this year's experience. The MacBride Museum, though, isn't in favour of this location, as they want to run the trolley on Saturdays next year and don't want to run it during market time for safety concerns.

Given feedback from stakeholders and residents through the exit survey, emails and in-person interactions, Administration recommends keeping the riverfront and wharf as the best location for future Town Squares, given that an agreement can be reached with the MacBride museum and the government of Yukon's department of Highways and Public Works to run safely the trolley during weekends while the area is activated. Safety measures such as low wooden fences could be sought before the next edition starts. Efforts should also be put into seeking ways to make downtown businesses benefit from the initiative, in collaboration with partners such as the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. Finally, looking into creative ways to provide wind barriers in the area would dramatically improve visitors' experience on the many windy days the riverfront has year round.

On an operating level, it is suggested that the market guidelines be refined and a liability disclaimer be added for market vendors. Moreover, before the operation of the Town Square, a site visit with main collaborators such as MusicYukon and Arts Underground is recommended. Power supply should be known to all parties, including market vendors to ensure that their usage doesn't exceed capacity. There should also be an adjustment of market schedules, with the proposal of one longer Town Square market on weekends. Another form of activation during the week should be considered to fulfil the goal of Downtown revitalization.

Riverfront Town Square Final Report will be presented to the Council on December 2, 2024. Municipal staff has submitted an internal operating budget proposal for a 2025 Town Square that will be voted on by Council in early 2025. Favoured locations in the Exit Survey will be analyzed to propose to Council where the next Town Square should take place. This will include engagement with nearby businesses, mobile food and market vendors, and non-governmental organizations involved in the initiative.