



Enhanced Sidewalks 2021

Visitor Survey Results





Survey Overview

The purpose of this survey was to gather feedback from the public on the OSBA's efforts to enhance the sidewalk expansions this summer. Additionally, this survey sought to understand specifically how visitors used the sidewalk expansions. The survey consisted of 7 questions, including multiple choice, ratings, and open-ended questions. An alternate set of questions was created for less frequent visitors to see what would incentivize them to visit the area more. The feedback collected from these surveys will be used to advocate for future permanent infrastructure developments on Whyte Avenue.

Methodology

Similar to last year, we opted to have visitors fill out an online survey. Postcards were printed with QR codes and were taped onto the furniture and barriers of the expanded sidewalk. The survey was sent out the week before the Fringe Festival began to take advantage of the increased foot traffic in the area. After a couple of weeks, the survey was released through social media channels for completion to supplement additional responses.

AT A GLANCE

85

RESPONDENTS



42%

WEEKLY VISITORS



58%

VISIT SLIGHTLY
OR
SIGNIFICANTLY
MORE WITH
SIDEWALK
EXPANSIONS



56%

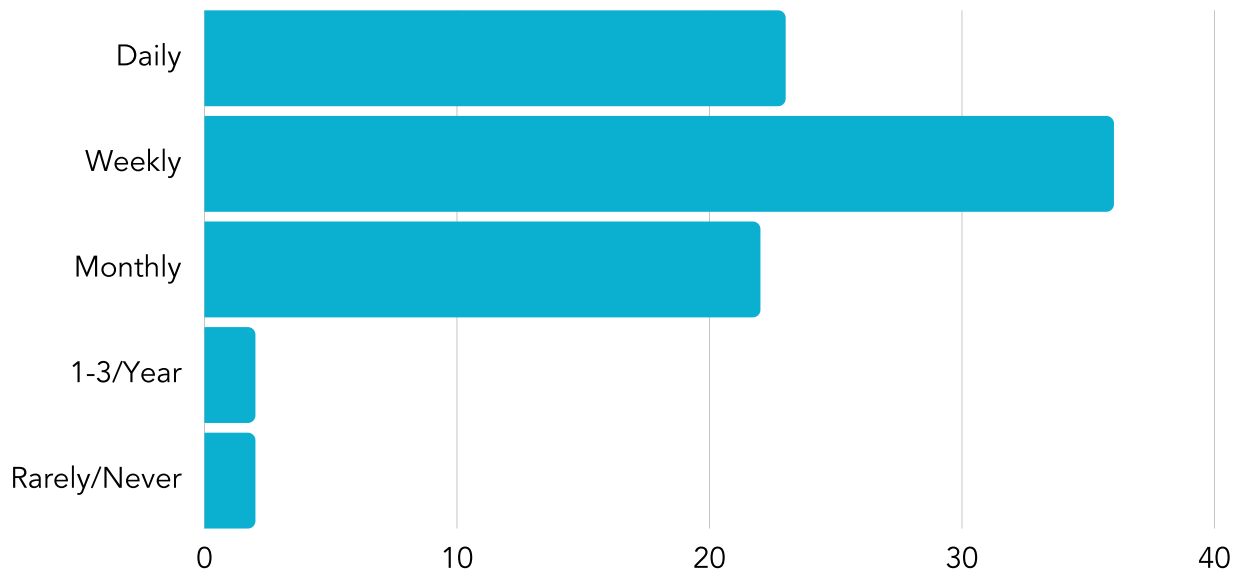
HIGHLY
PRIORITIZE
SPACE FOR
WALKING

Frequency & Reason For Visit

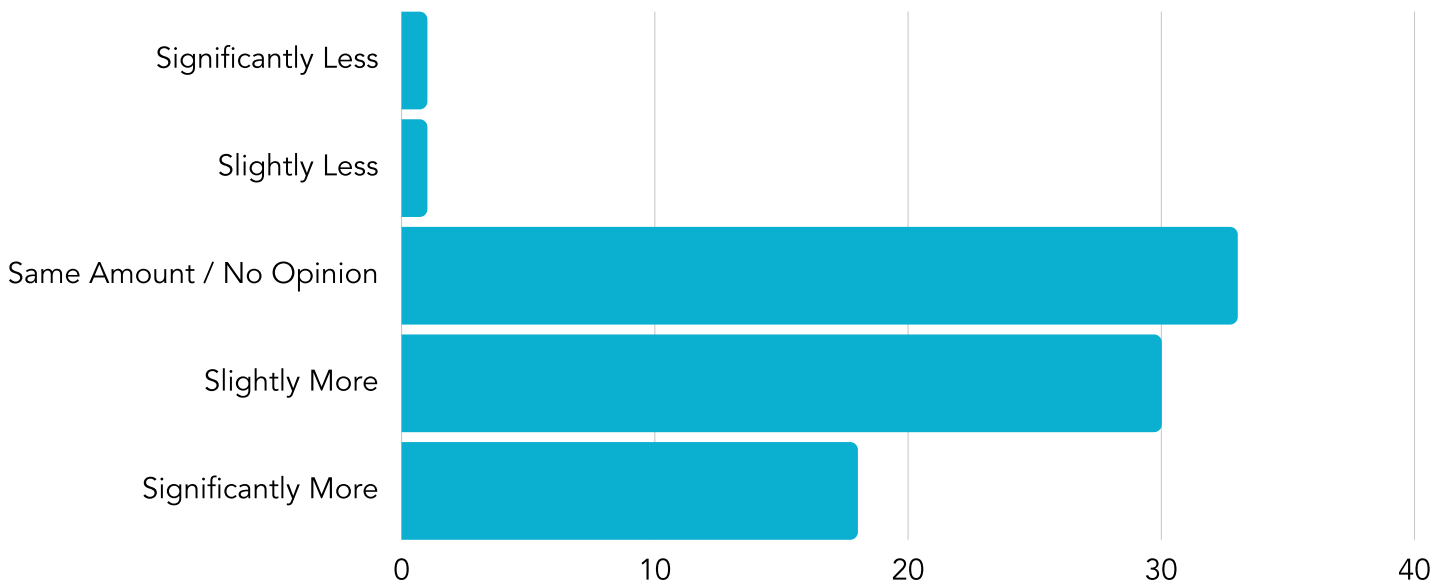
Highlights:

- Similar to last year, the majority of respondents are weekly visitors
- 95% (vs 83% LY) of respondents visit the area monthly or more
- 56% (vs. 42% LY) indicated they visited the area slightly or significantly more compared to before the sidewalk expansion
- 2% (vs. 20% LY) indicated they visited the area less to significantly less compared to before the sidewalk expansions

How frequently do you visit Whyte Ave and Old Strathcona?



How often do you visit now compared to before the sidewalk expansion?



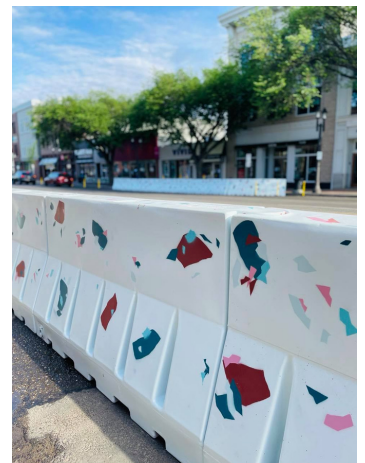
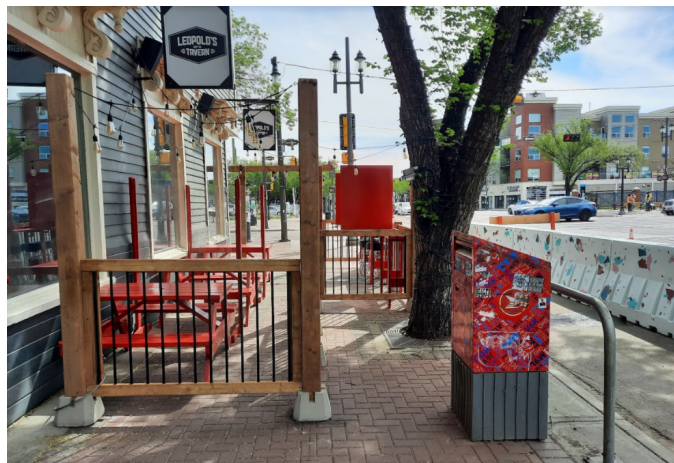
Frequency & Reason For Visit

If there was a change in frequency or reason for visiting to we asked respondents to explain why. These are some of the most commonly used words among 44 responses to this question:

pedestrian space sidewalk patios Traffic sidewalk expansions
think twice pedestrian feel safer Easier
feel of the Ave street space Whyte car area
pedestrian friendly place comfortable being on the sidewalk

Comments:

- "It was less noisy, more patios to visit, more fun."
- "Traffic is a little slower but I think it's worth it."
- "The changes were an improvement and definitely improved the 'look' of Whyte. However, I think I preferred what was done in 2020. The road was a lot quieter and more comfortable to spend time on with less lanes for vehicles."
- "The feel of the Ave changed a lot. More welcoming. Felt safer and more like a place to hang out instead of a place to drive through."
- "They're in the way. Bus stops are moved or closed. Traffic is backed up. Taxis have a hard time picking up [fares]."



Experience

We asked the public which elements of their experience were most impacted by the sidewalk expansion project.

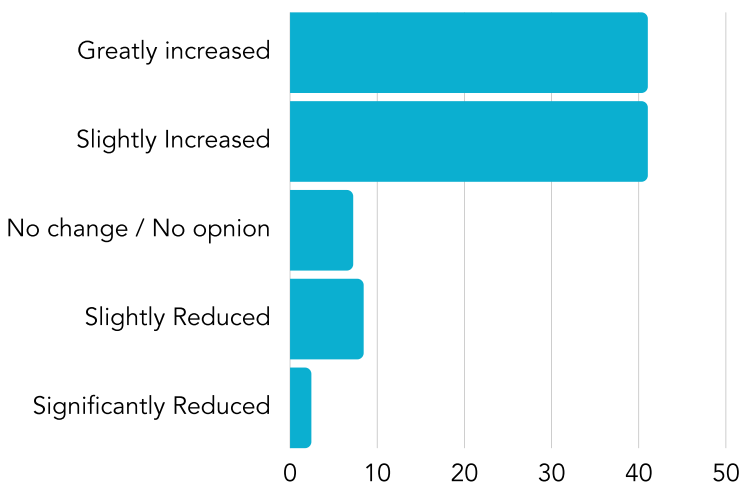


Highlights:

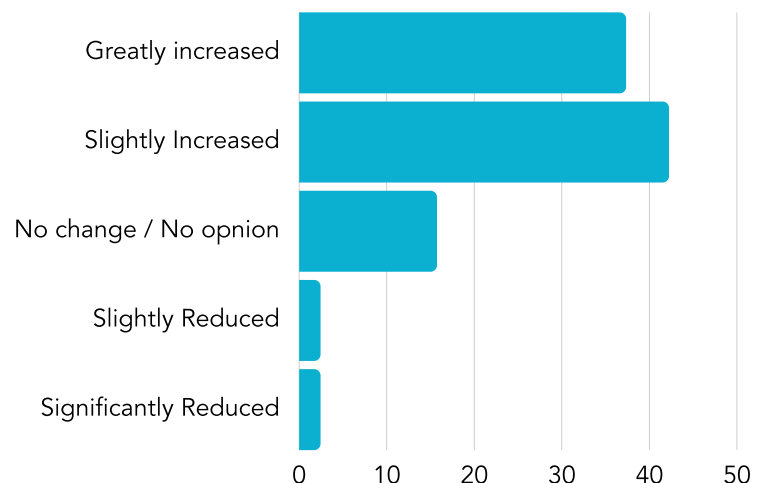
- 41% indicated accessibility/walkability significantly increased, followed by feeling of safety (37.3%) and ability to socialize (37.3%)
- However, accessibility/walkability also had the the most people feeling it was significantly reduced or reduced (10.8%) indicating this area still needs improvement in design and implementation

How have the expanded sidewalks affected the following:

Accessibility / Walkability

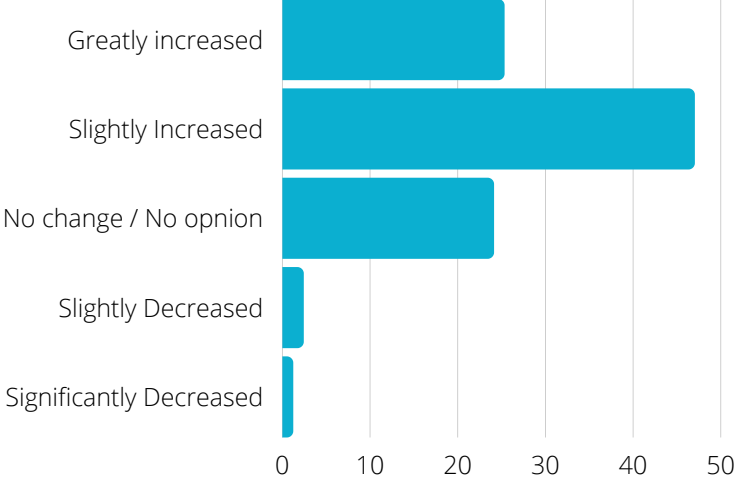


Feeling of Safety

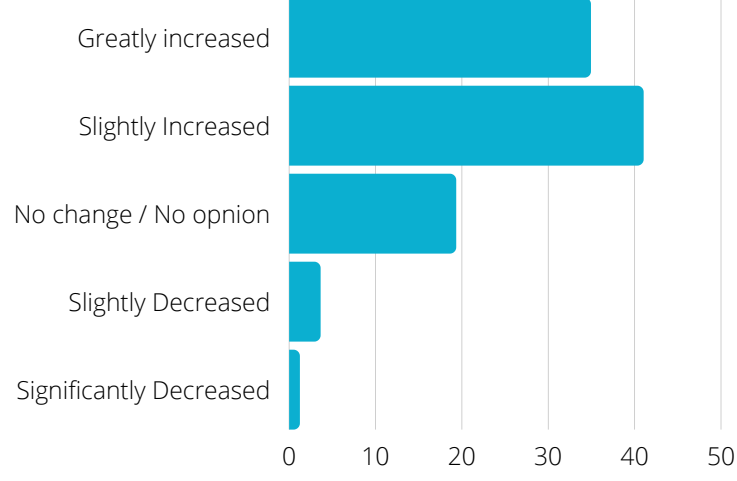


Experience

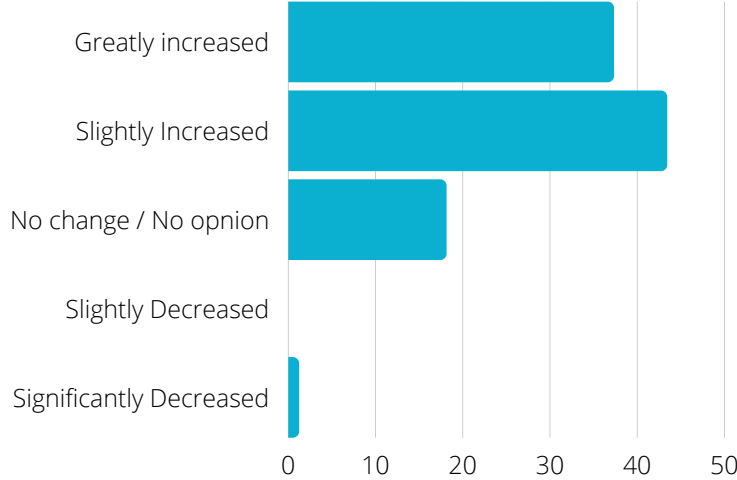
Time spent on the Avenue



Incentive to visit the area



Ability to socialize



Experience

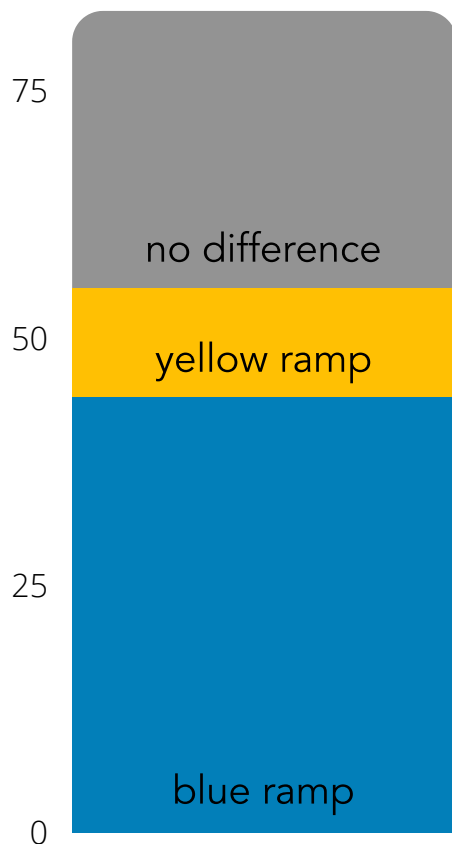
There were two different ramps used to fulfill this year's project. Which one did you find to be more accessible and usable?



100

Comments:

- "The blue ramps are much more secure than the yellow ones."
- "The yellow ramps aren't great, and I don't know if any planners have tried to go up and down one in a wheelchair. The blue ramps are seemingly better, but unless they're butted up against the sidewalk, getting a wheelchair onto or off of them might be harder."
- "Maintenance of the sidewalk ramps could be improved, if we build it we should plan and allocate resources to sustain it."
- "Yellow ramps were too broken to even walk on."

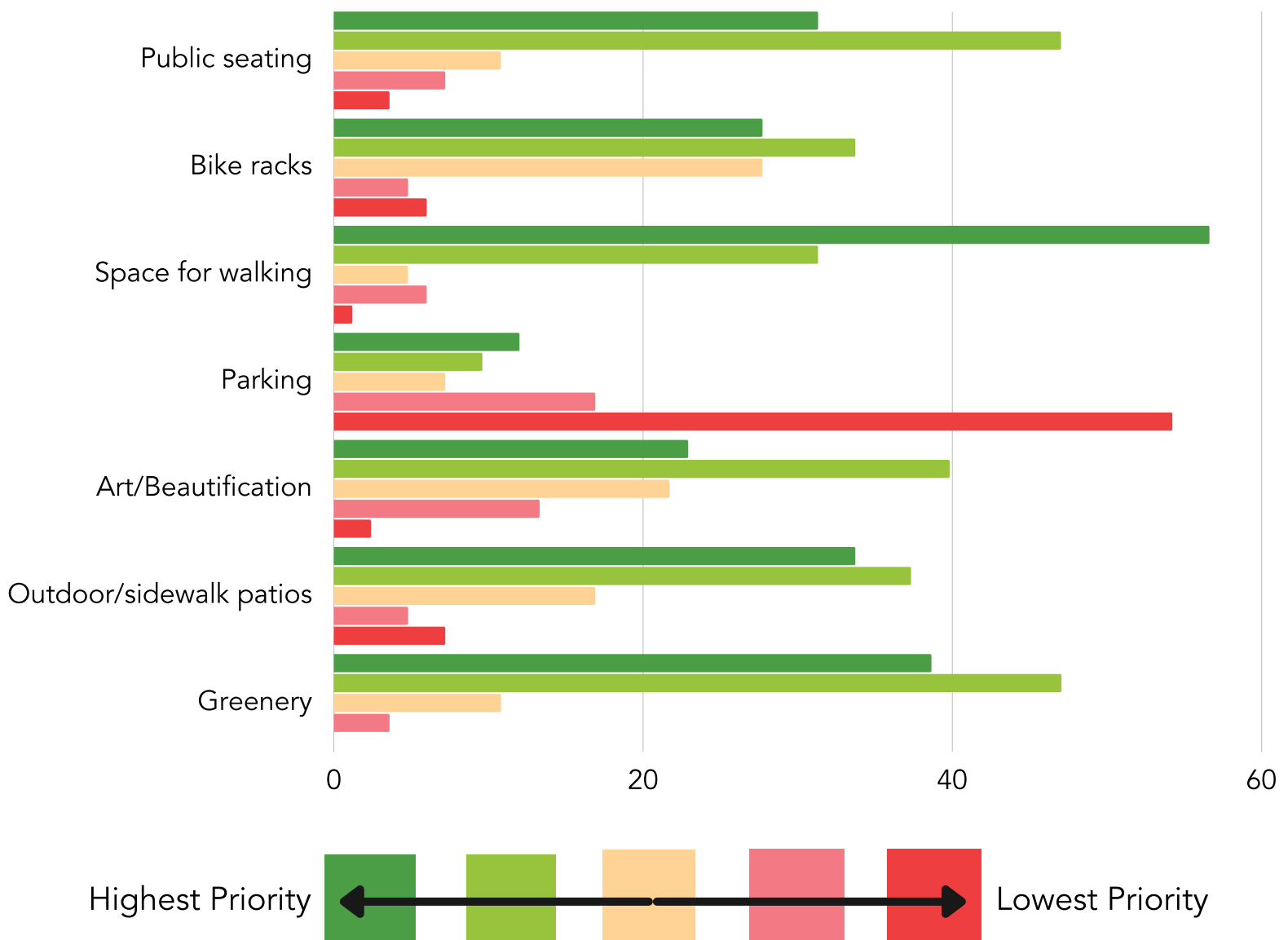


Placemaking Infrastructure

Highlights:

- 56% of respondents ranked space for walking as their highest priority
- Greenery, bike racks, and outdoor patios followed as some of the highest ranked options
- 54% of respondents ranked parking as the lowest priority

Rate the following in order of preference for what you would like to see implemented more as permanent infrastructure on Whyte Ave:



Infrequent Visitors

For the small number of visitors that stated they visited the area "rarely/never" we asked what would incentivize them to visit the area more frequently. This section was intentionally left open-ended to invite their unique opinions that perhaps the OSBA has not yet considered:

What would incentivize you to visit our area more?

"More walkability less cars."

"More trees."

"Cleaner streets and quieter cars."

General Feedback

The survey closed with an open-ended question to provide general feedback regarding the enhanced sidewalks and permanent infrastructure. This was done to invite additional perspectives and thoughts that may not have been reflected in the rest of the survey.

Some commonly used words among 37 responses:



General Feedback

"If there were no cars allowed down Whyte I would not mind at all, though some consideration would need to be made for emergency vehicles. Permanent sidewalk widening is required."



"I think Whyte Ave should be closed from 106 street to gateway. Traffic can be diverged [to] other routes and have full walking accessibility like Stephen Ave in Calgary."



"We quite enjoyed the expanded sidewalks, and they increased our frequency of visits, especially with our canines in tow. Keep doing more to get people out of their vehicles!"



"I love getting rid of parking and reallocating space on Whyte, but the impacts of all the pedestrian improvements need to be mitigated by dedicated bus lanes (at least peak hour). To be honest, since the bike route is on 83 Ave and cycling is the most efficient way around the area, I no longer go to Whyte much, I'd really like to see the expanded space include bikes so I have a reason to check out Whyte again."



"Too much construction, expanded sidewalks are great but just close the street to vehicles."



"This project should be expanded to 109 st. All the business deserve more transit."

General Feedback

"I would like to see the sidewalks permanently expanded. I think the program should run year-round. It's not like people don't walk down here during Fall, Winter, and Spring. It may help lure more retail back into the area as Whyte Ave has become so heavy with pubs and restaurants that it would be great to have more retail shops coming back to increase foot traffic and support shops. We should be more than just a long outdoor food court."



"I do not like the benches that have me sitting with my back to traffic, with only the plastic barricade separating me from cars, I would not use them. They need to be on the sidewalk edge facing the cars."



"The fact that most restaurants on Whyte have opted to eat up on street parking in order to provide more patio/walking space tells the whole story. Whyte does best when it's pedestrian friendly. The only downside of Whyte are the cars. Dealing w/ the noise & waiting at lights to cross all ruin the main reason people go to Whyte. The best thing you could do for Whyte is either extend the back alley redevelopment in some fashion, or take out on-street parking. Lately I often don't bother walking down Whyte when I'm visiting a business there, instead I walk down 83rd, because with the bike lane installed it's often much quieter and more pleasant to walk down. Walk up Whyte one direction on a weekend, then back the opposite way down 83rd to see the difference, and it's night and day. I don't know how businesses there can survive in a district that lives and dies on walkability, when walking on Whyte can be such a noisy and stressful experience."

Conclusion

Generally, survey respondents are supportive of the concept of expanding sidewalk space on Whyte Avenue and introducing projects & initiatives that grow walkability and accessibility within the district. Opinions on the tactics used to achieve these goals may vary, but there is a consistent desire to prioritize space for people, greenery and active transportation over vehicle accommodations like parking - something that will need to be balanced against business priorities in the future. While OSBA's sidewalk enhancement project was temporary in nature we hoped to show what the future of Whyte Avenue could look like. Results from this survey indicate there is a strong public interest in seeing the avenue transform in more permanent ways in the coming years.

