

# Boulder Downtown Streets as Public Space

Engagement Summary Report

# Introduction

The purpose of the **Downtown Streets as Public Space (DSaPS)** project is to develop recommendations for the temporary reimagining of one or more downtown streets for a Spring/Summer 2023 “pop-up” through technical analysis and community engagement. **We intend to:**

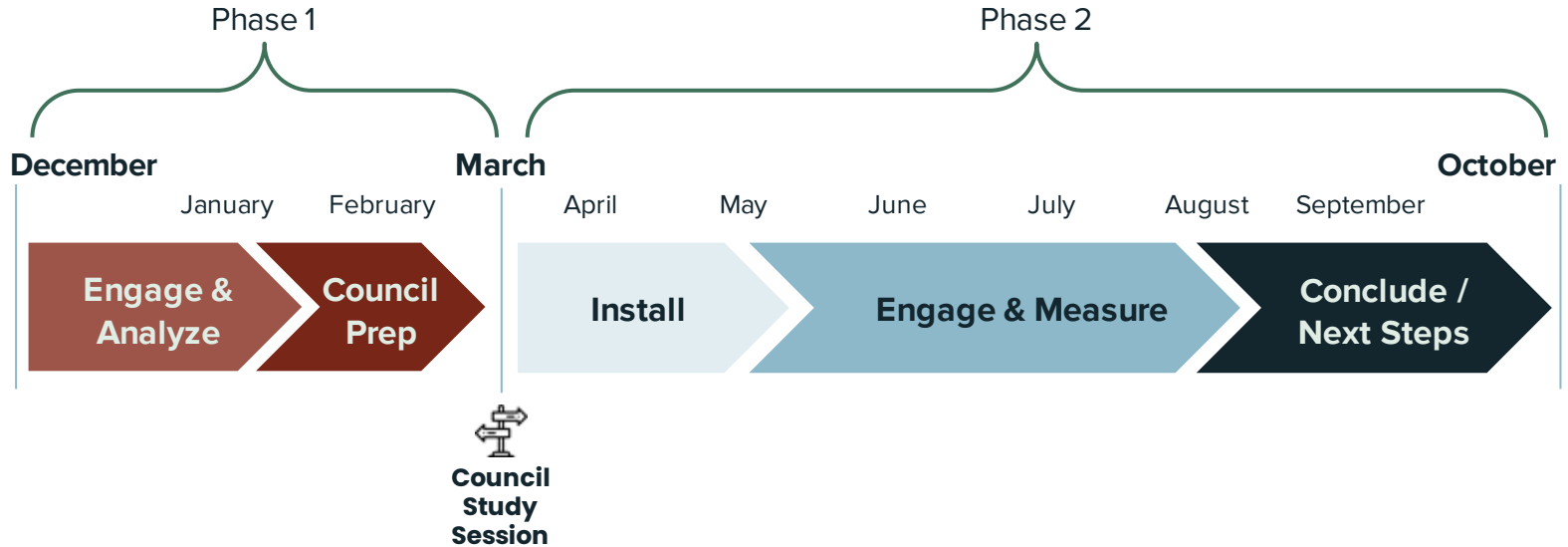
- Collectively reflect, learn from and build on a variety of experiences.
- Ensure that recommendations for Downtown Streets as Public Space reflect diverse community voices and the feasibility and technical analysis of the issues considered.
- Develop a series of feasible and exciting recommendations to implement in Spring/Summer 2023 that will test ideas for reimagining streets in one or more downtown locations.
- Utilize the project outcomes to inform upcoming planning efforts and future policy discussions about streets for public spaces in the city.

**Downtown Streets as Public Space**  
*Boulder is trying something new this spring.*



# Project Timeline

The DSaPS project kicked off in December 2022 with the intent to deliver recommendations to City Council in March 2023 for pop-ups that will occur in the Spring and Summer of 2023. The quick turnaround schedule to develop recommendations is to ensure that the community sees action this Summer, so that we can learn by doing and also meet the great community interest in reimagining downtown streets.



# Engagement Overview

Two goals of the DSaPS project are to build on a variety of experiences and build pop-up recommendations that reflect diverse community voices as well as public space potential and other technical considerations. To do that, we began by evaluating previous engagement data to identify gaps both in type of feedback and community members represented. Then, we built a series of engagement activities based on the city's Engagement Framework to address the gaps and to inform this summer's pop-ups .



# Engagement Timeline

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

Online  
Questionnaire

Jan 13 - 31 Online Questionnaire

In-  
Person  
Activities

Jan. 25 - North Boulder  
Rec. Center

Jan. 27 - East Boulder  
Comm. Center

Jan. 27 - Outside in  
Downtown Boulder

Stakeholder  
Meetings

Jan. 25 - Boulder  
Farmers Market

Feb. 1 - Business Support  
Recovery Alliance\*

Jan. 25 - Downtown  
Boulder Partnership

Feb. 10 - Community  
Connectors in Residence

Jan. 26 - West Pearl Business  
Owners Focus Group

Jan. 26 - Community  
Cycles

\*see page X for list of Alliance members

# Audiences

## *Who did we try to reach?*

Our goal in the engagement plan was to reach all types of audiences outlined here, however, we noticed some gaps that still remain after conducting the engagement. The gaps are summarized on pages 44 and 45 and will be addressed in the pop-up engagement.

### Individuals

- Historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- English and non-English speakers
- Immigrant and mixed-immigration status families
- Low-income residents
- Residents over 65 years old
- People living with disabilities
- Members of the LGBTQ community
- University community
- Residents
- Visitors and tourists
- Downtown employees

### Stakeholder groups

### Downtown businesses

### City Council

### City staff

# Approach to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

## Questionnaire & Activity Design and Translation

Carefully considered individual audience members' potential interpretation to question wording and sought to frame questions appropriately

Included responses that account for multiple experiences and provided an opportunity for write-in options in case an individual's experience was not listed in multiple/single choice responses

Translated all materials, including the questionnaire, to Spanish

## Outreach

Created a communications plan that accounts for specific outreach to underrepresented groups, including those that may not visit downtown, to promote participation in the questionnaire

Leveraged partnerships to spread the word through their networks


## Demographic Data

Gathered demographic data to assess if we reached the intended racial, gender, age, neighborhood diversity, and income

# Boulder Engagement Strategic Framework

The Boulder City Council adopted the Engagement Strategic Framework in 2017 that utilizes the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) engagement spectrum to design engagement plans. This project focuses on “Inform” and “Consult” level engagement:

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding a problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on public analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout a process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of a preferred solution.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and share feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are reflected in any alternatives and share feedback on how the public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and to incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.



# Summary: Online Questionnaire



# Questionnaire Approach & Design

## Simplicity

We wanted to hear from people who likely had not participated in engagement about downtown before, so the questionnaire was designed to be less than 10 questions and easy to fill out.



## Understand Travel

We believe travel type (bike, bus, walk, vehicle) and weather dependencies impact a successful pop-up, so we wanted to ask questions about how people get downtown and if weather makes a difference.



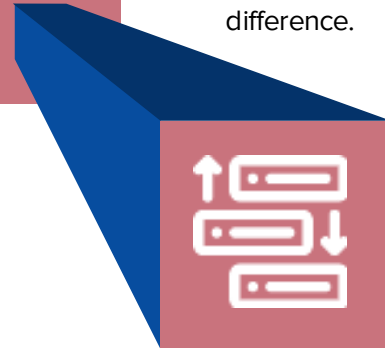
## Solicit Desired Experiences

This project is about bringing the community an experience, so we wanted to understand how people currently and might use downtown in the future.



## Prioritize

This is a project of tradeoffs. We wanted to know - if you had to pick - what pop-up aspects would you choose as most / least important?



# Questionnaire Results

*The full questionnaire response report from BeHeard Boulder is attached as an Appendix to this report. Key results and insights are below and on the following pages.*

**7** Multiple Choice Questions

**1** Pin-on-the-map Exercise

**19** Days available online in English & Spanish

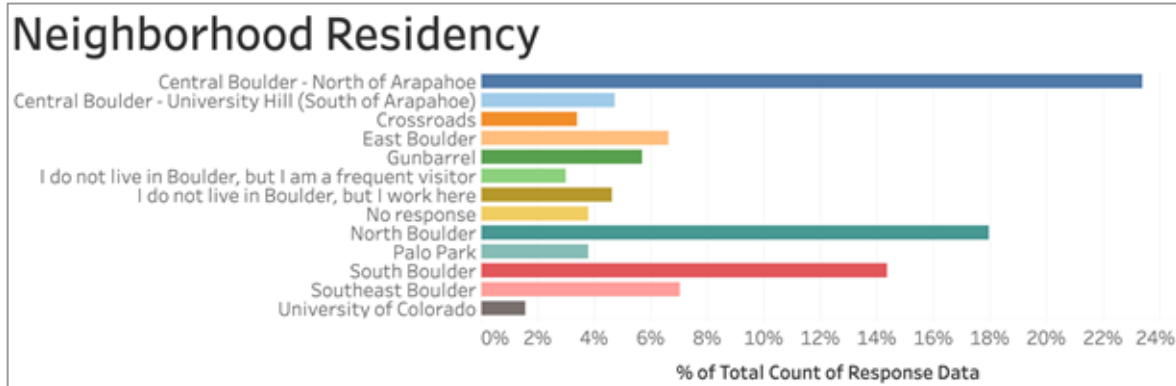
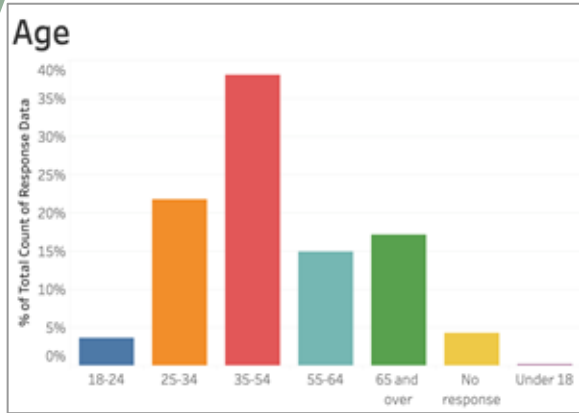
**+3,600** Website Visits

**1,799** Questionnaire Respondents

**133** Online Map Pins

# Questionnaire Results: *Demographics Overview*

The graphs below represent the demographic characteristics of the 1,799 questionnaire respondents, including those that chose not to respond to some or all demographic questions.

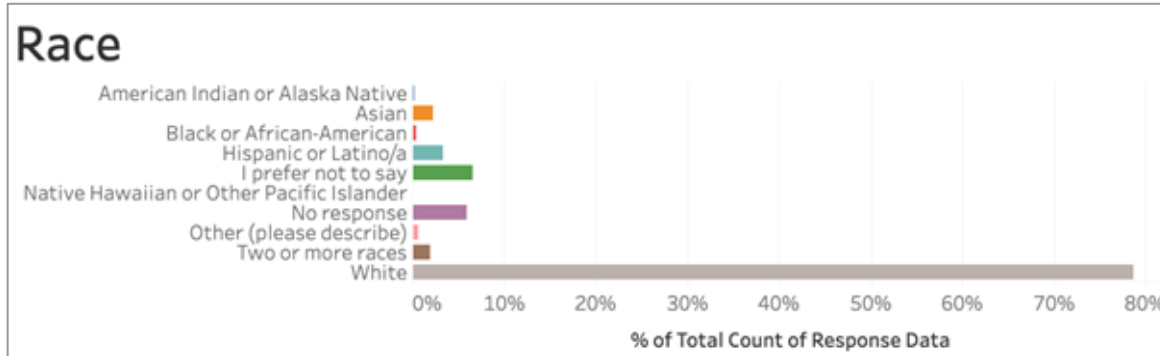
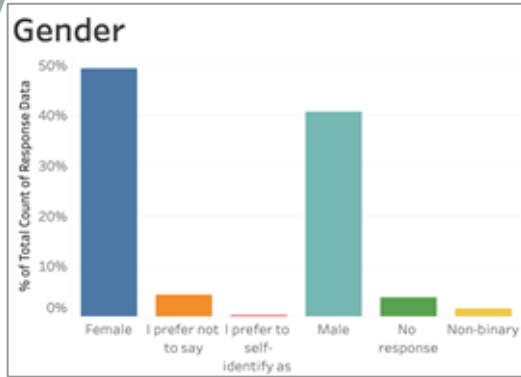


## What does this tell us?

- 38% of respondents are between ages 25-54
- 65% of respondents are homeowners
- 60% of respondents live in Central, South and North Boulder

# Questionnaire Results: *Demographics Overview*

The graphs below represent the demographic characteristics of the 1,799 questionnaire respondents, including those that chose not to respond to some or all demographic questions.



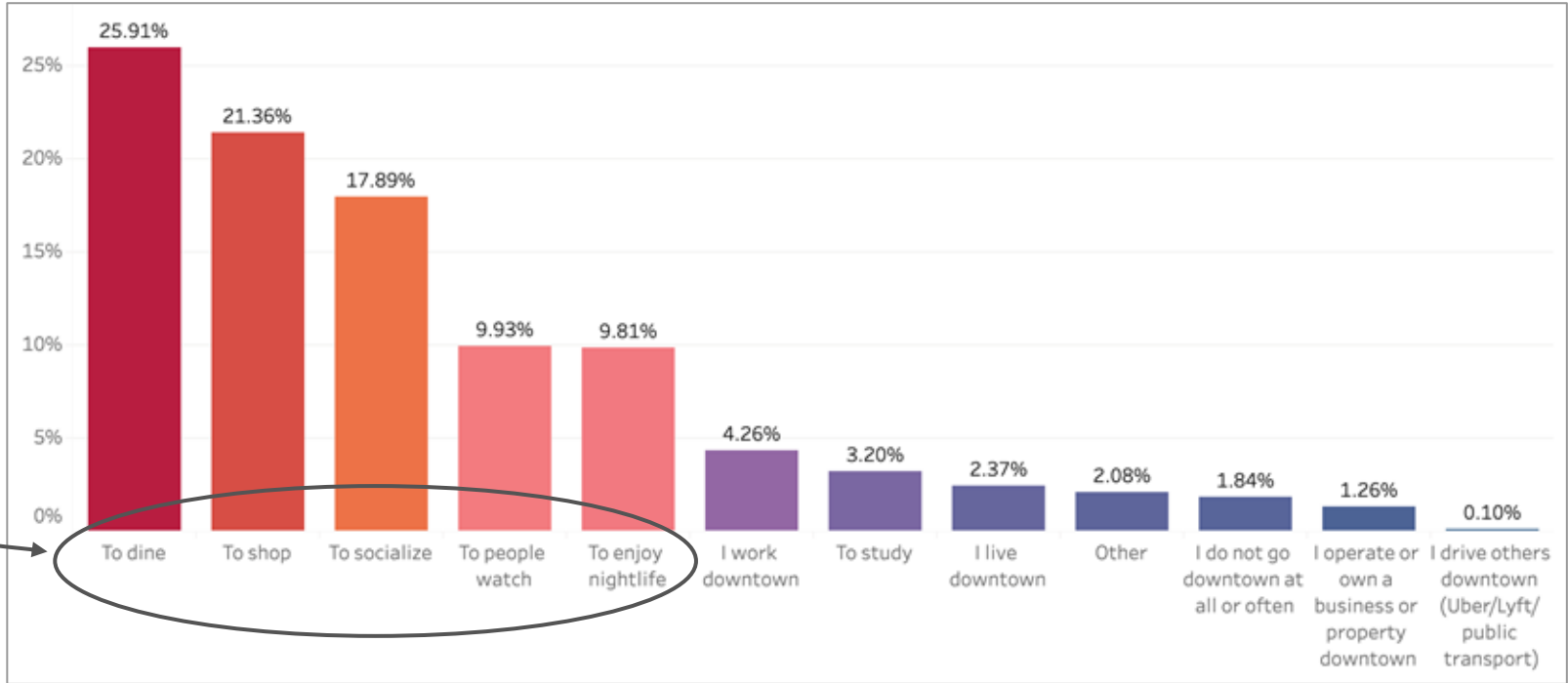
## What does this tell us?

- 49% of respondents are female
- 21% of respondents are non-white
- 52% of respondents have household income higher than \$100k

# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

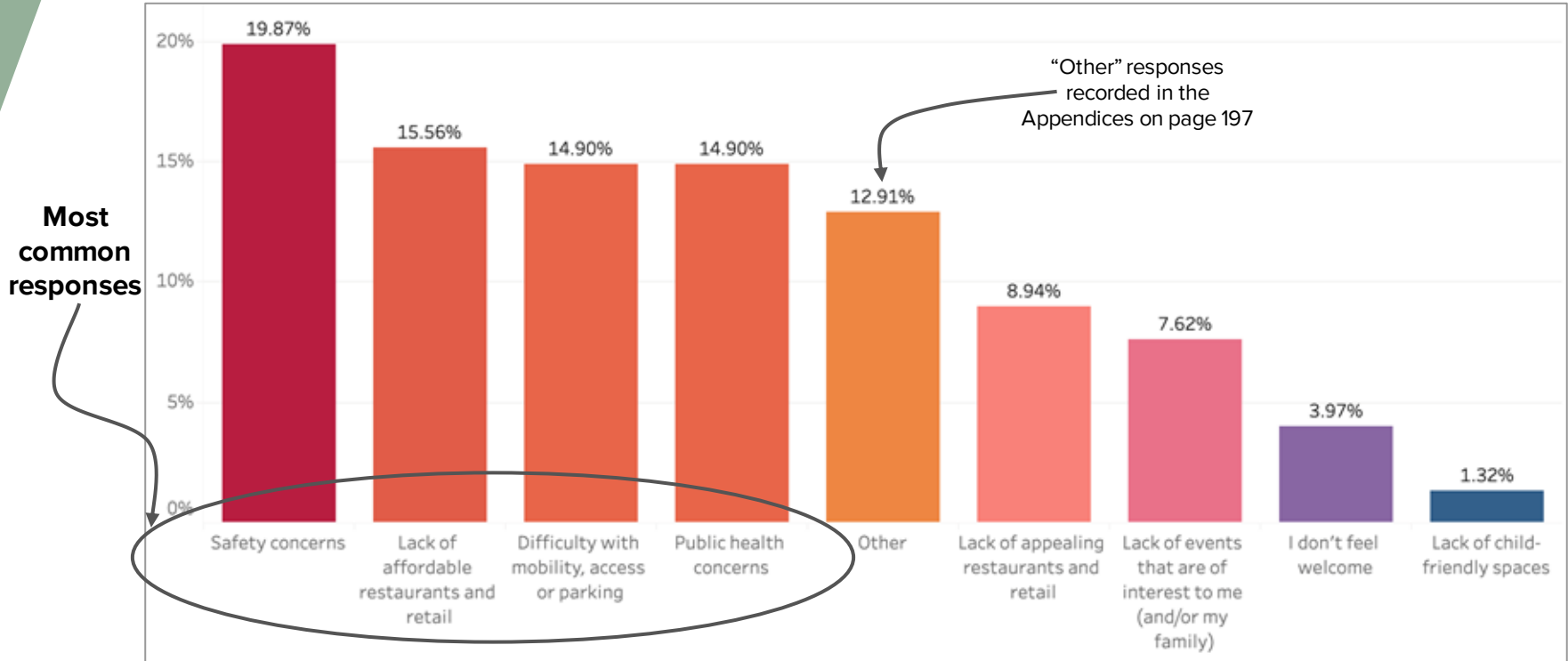
“Why do you typically go downtown? (Check all that apply)”

Most common responses



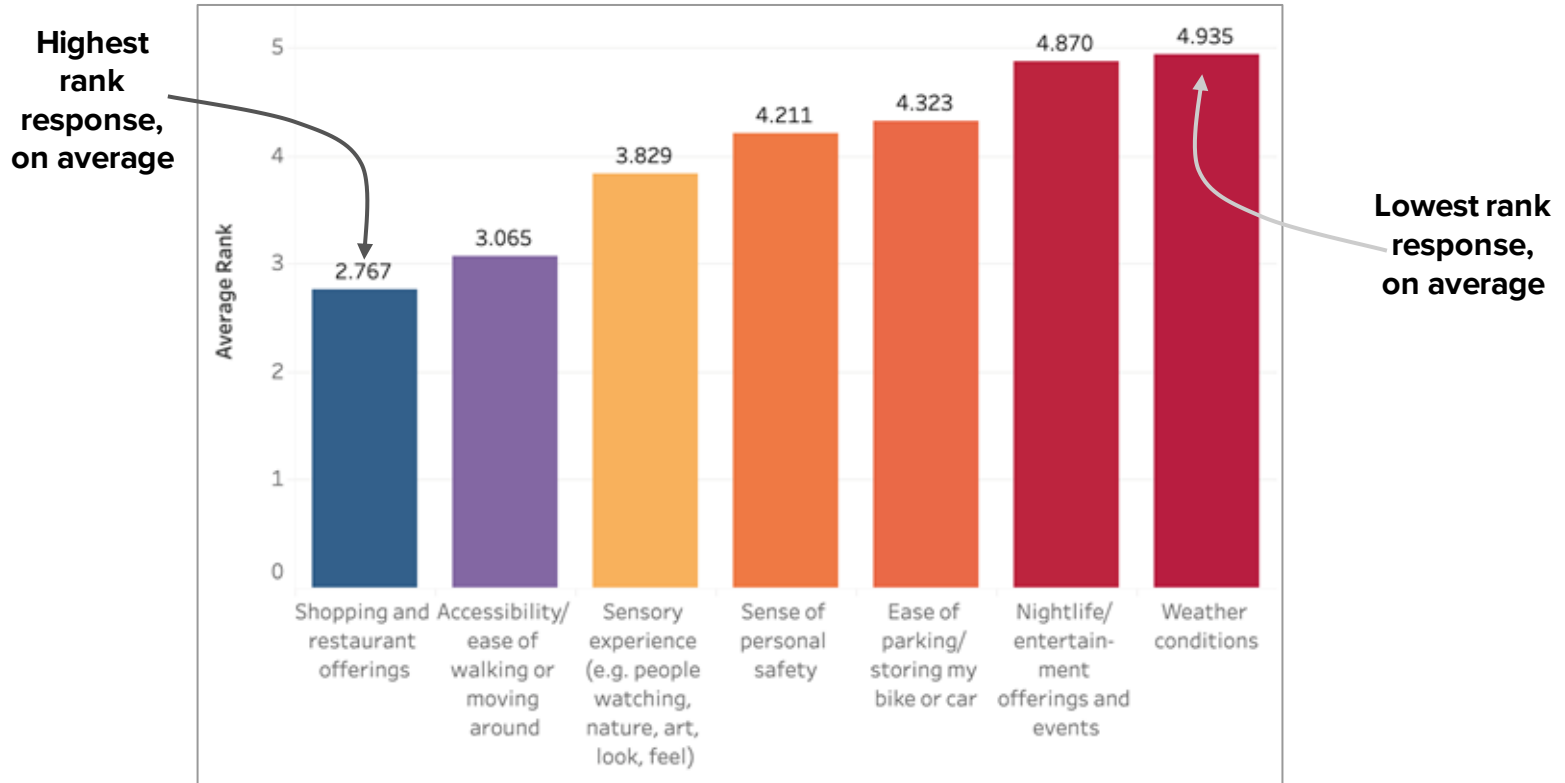
# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

“If you selected ‘I do not go downtown at all or often’ on the previous question, please check all of the reasons that you do not visit downtown”



# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

“Which factors influence your choice to spend leisure time downtown? Please rank each factor from most (1) to least (7) important.”



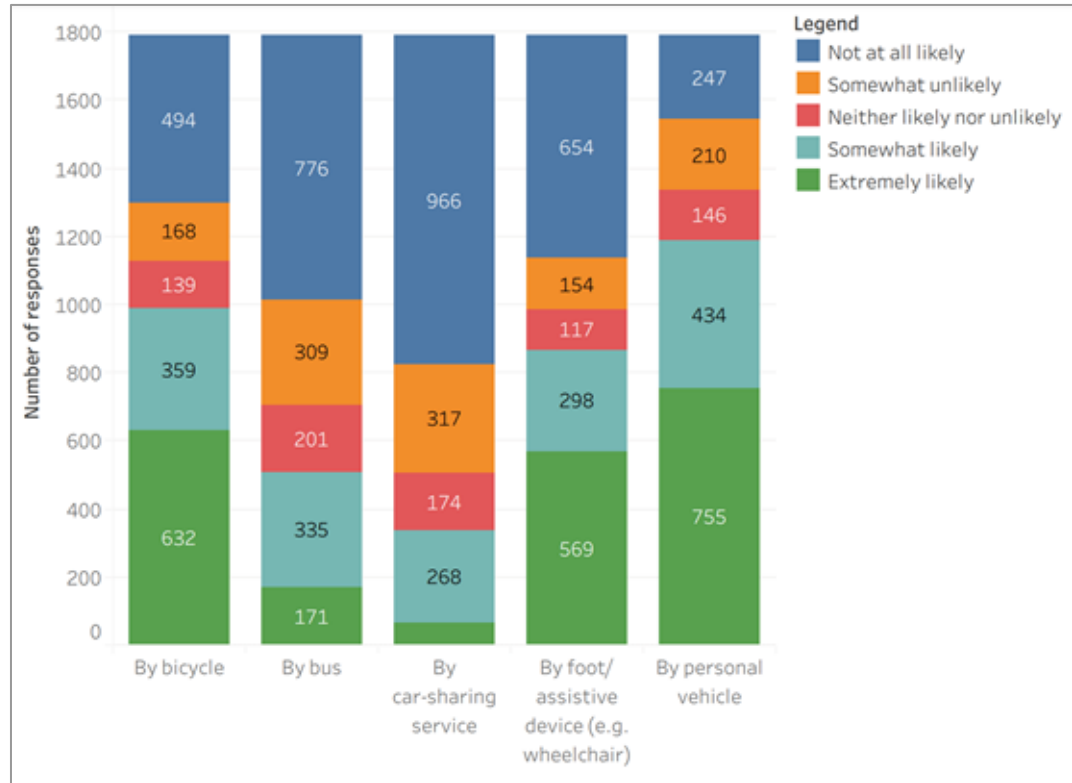


# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

During **good weather**, how likely are you to use the following mode(s) of transportation to get downtown?

## What does this tell us?

- Many respondents are likely to bike, walk, and/or drive a personal vehicle downtown in good weather
- Few respondents are likely to take a car sharing service or bus downtown in good weather

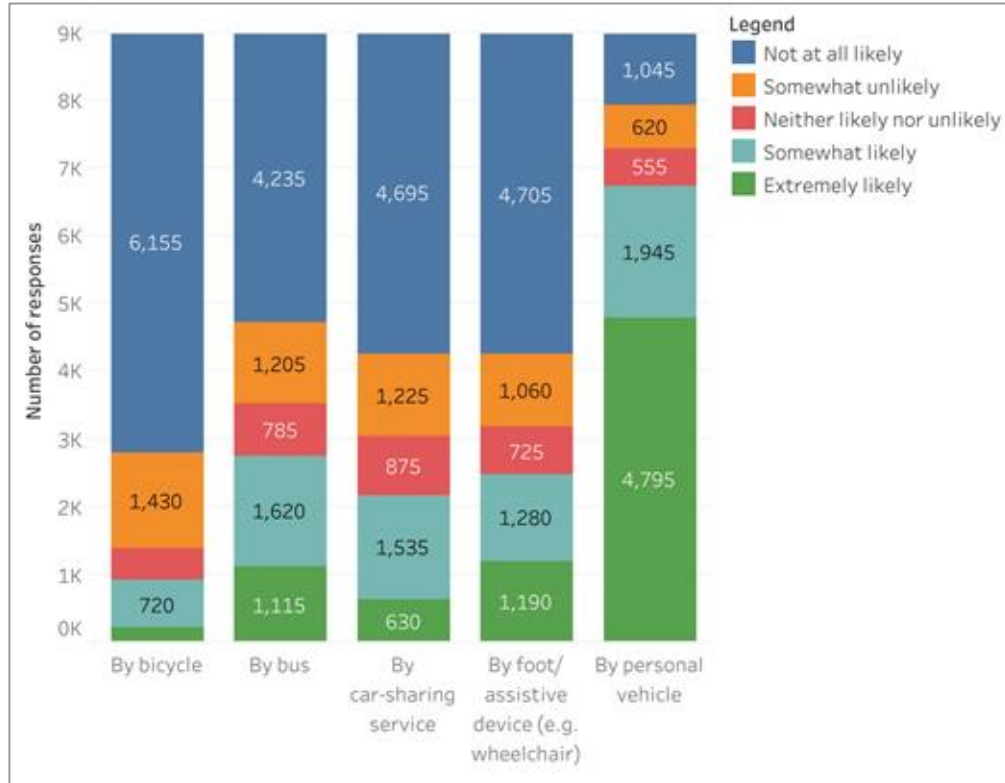


# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

“During **inclement weather weather** (extreme cold, snow, heavy rain, high winds), how likely are you to use the following mode(s) of transportation to get downtown?”

## What does this tell us?

- Most respondents are likely to drive a personal vehicle downtown in inclement weather
- Few respondents are likely to take other travel modes downtown in inclement weather

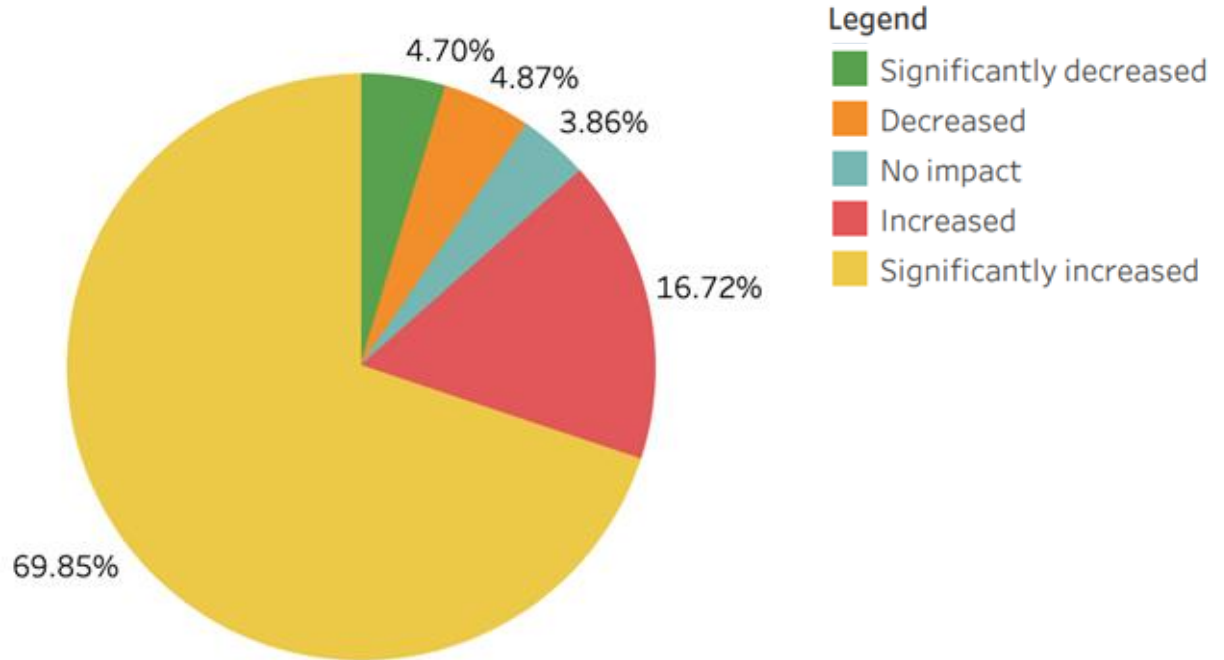


# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

During the pandemic, from spring of 2020 until fall of 2022, the west Pearl Street area from 9th Street to 11th Street was closed to vehicles to make room for expanded outdoor dining, pedestrian spaces, gathering and events. In your view, how do you think this temporary change in the use of streets impacted the overall appeal of the west Pearl area?

## What does this tell us?

- ~86% of respondents said the temporary change significantly increased or increased the overall appeal of the West Pearl Area
- ~9% of respondents said the temporary change significantly decreased or decreased their



# Questionnaire Results: *Analysis*

“Different people may have different priorities for downtown streets. In which order do you think the city should prioritize community interests for downtown streets as public space?” (1 is highest priority; 8 is lowest)

**Highest priority**

**Lowest priority**

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight
Provide additional enjoyable public spaces for gathering and outdoor dining/entertainment/leisure	1,054	239	118	94	79	65	55	88
Use curbs for non-vehicular purposes (e.g. landscaping, bicycle/scooter parking, curb and sidewalk extensions, outdoor dining)	125	564	308	185	180	160	161	109
Maximize access for all people regardless of ability and mode	182	262	368	300	282	167	136	95
Maximize economic vitality potential for underutilized/underinvested areas	46	161	263	361	349	292	206	114
Preserve quiet enjoyment/quality of life/character of surrounding neighborhoods	97	187	279	281	284	303	228	133
Minimize traffic congestion	78	179	229	246	241	304	337	178
Enhance critical connections between downtown and nearby destinations such as University Hill	32	120	142	231	249	315	390	313
Preserve curbside vehicle access to businesses (e.g. on-street parking/passenger pick-up/drop-off/deliveries/loading)	178	80	85	94	128	186	279	762



# Questionnaire Results Analysis

*The project team requested cross-tabulation analysis of several “key questions” to further our understanding of the questionnaire responses. The results and insights from the cross-tabulation exercises are on the following pages.*

# Questionnaire Results Analysis

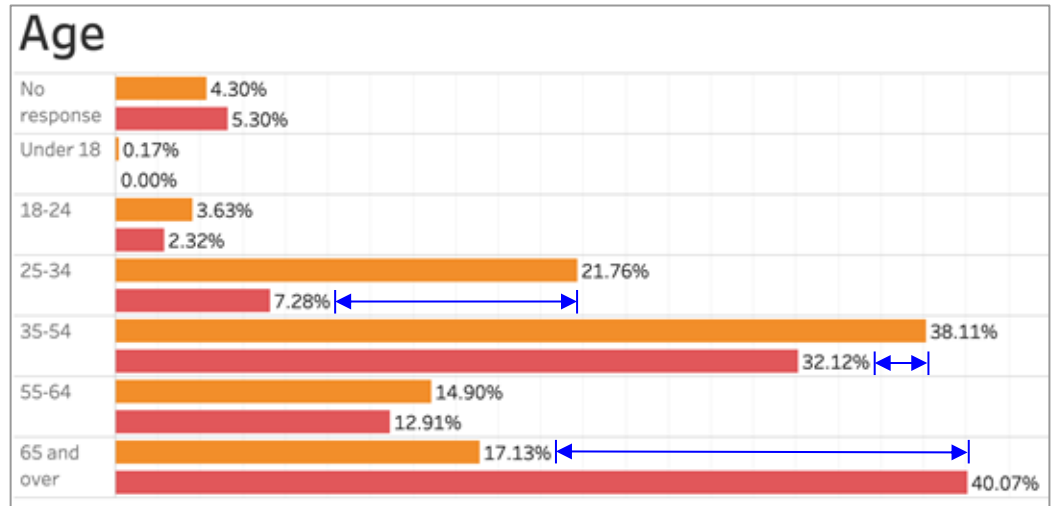
Do respondents that said they ‘do not visit downtown or often’ vary by demographics?

## What does this tell us?

Respondents ages 65 and over were almost twice as likely to say they don’t visit downtown at all or often as compared to their overall representation in the respondent pool.

Conversely, respondents ages 25-34 and 35-54 are less likely, as compared to their respondent pool, to say they do not visit downtown at all or often.

The remaining demographics are skewed too heavily by “no response” rates to determine if this response varies by other demographics.



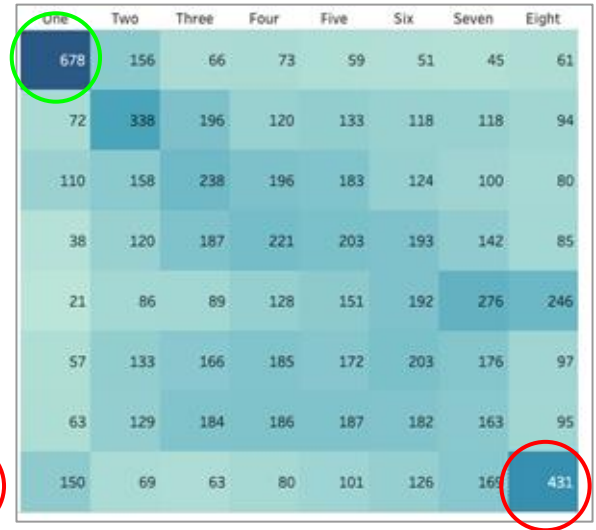
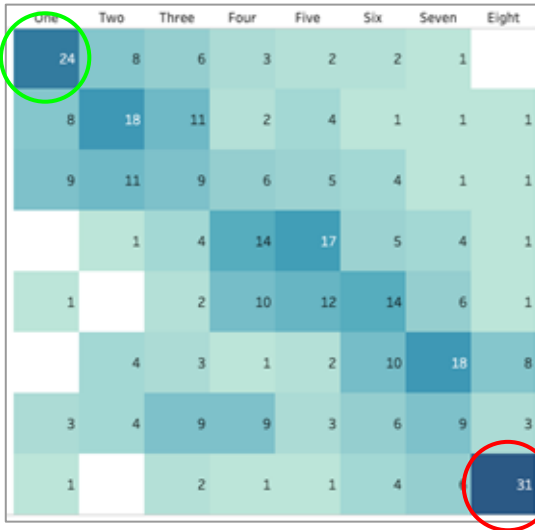
# Questionnaire Results Analysis

Do the priorities of respondents vary for those with extremely different travel preferences?  
The darker the color, the higher number of respondents prioritized the associated rating and choice.

All responses for Question 7 related to priorities (see page 20 for more detail)

Respondents that said they were “extremely likely” or “somewhat likely” to **bike, bus or walk downtown during inclement weather**

Respondents that said they were “extremely likely” or “somewhat likely” to **drive a personal vehicle downtown during good weather**



## What does this tell us?

There are subtle differences in priorities, though overall, both travel preference profiles’ highest priority (green circle) is to “provide additional enjoyable public spaces...” and lowest priority (red circle) is to “provide curbside vehicle access to businesses...”

○ Highest priority  
○ Lowest priority



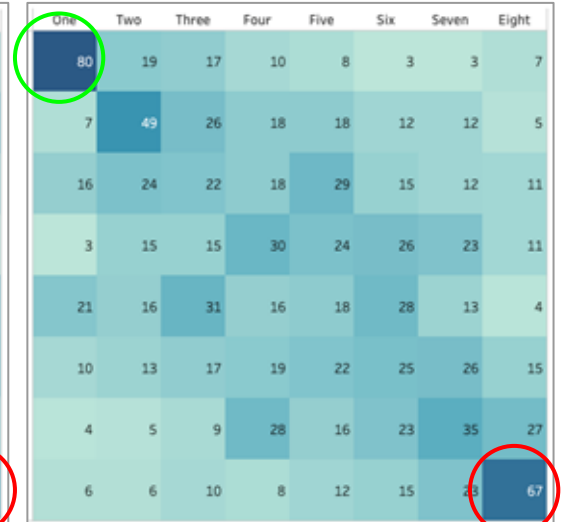
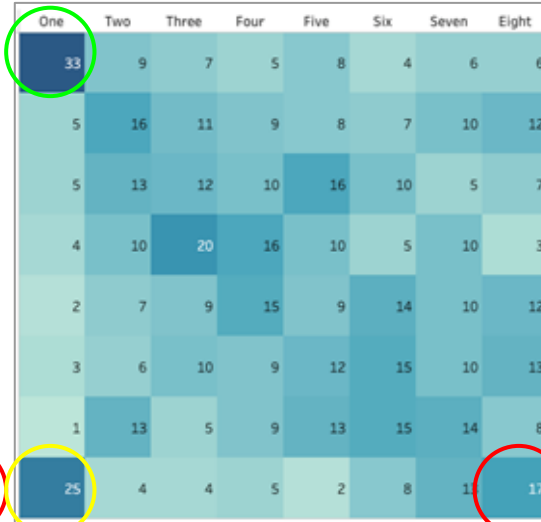
# Questionnaire Results Analysis

Do the priorities of respondents vary for those that live or own/operate a business downtown?  
The darker the color, the higher number of respondents prioritized the associated rating and choice.

**All responses** for Question 7 related to priorities (see page 20 for more detail)

Respondents that said they are a **downtown business owner / operator**

Respondents that said they are a **downtown residents**



## What does this tell us?

There is one significant anomaly: downtown business owner/operators' second highest #1 priority is to preserve curbside vehicle access. Though overall, both travel preference profiles' highest priority is to "provide additional enjoyable public spaces..." and lowest priority is to "provide curbside vehicle access to businesses..."

- Highest priority
- Lowest priority
- Anomaly

# Questionnaire Results: *Map Activity*

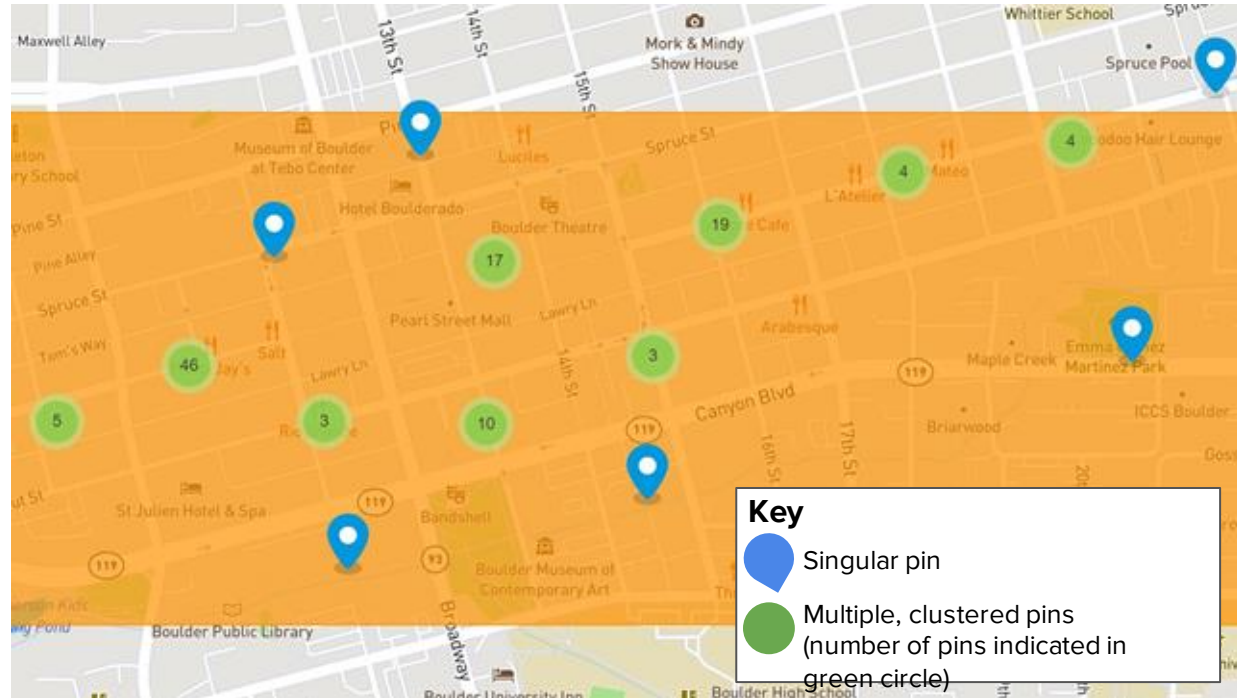
“Place up to 3 pins on the map to indicate street segments that you consider appropriate or desirable for reimagining streets as more pedestrian- friendly places.”

## What does this tell us?

Responses are scattered throughout the downtown area with a high concentration of pins on West Pearl

Additional, non-downtown pins included Pleasant View Sports Complex; Iris/30th; 29th St Mall; and 30th/Pearl

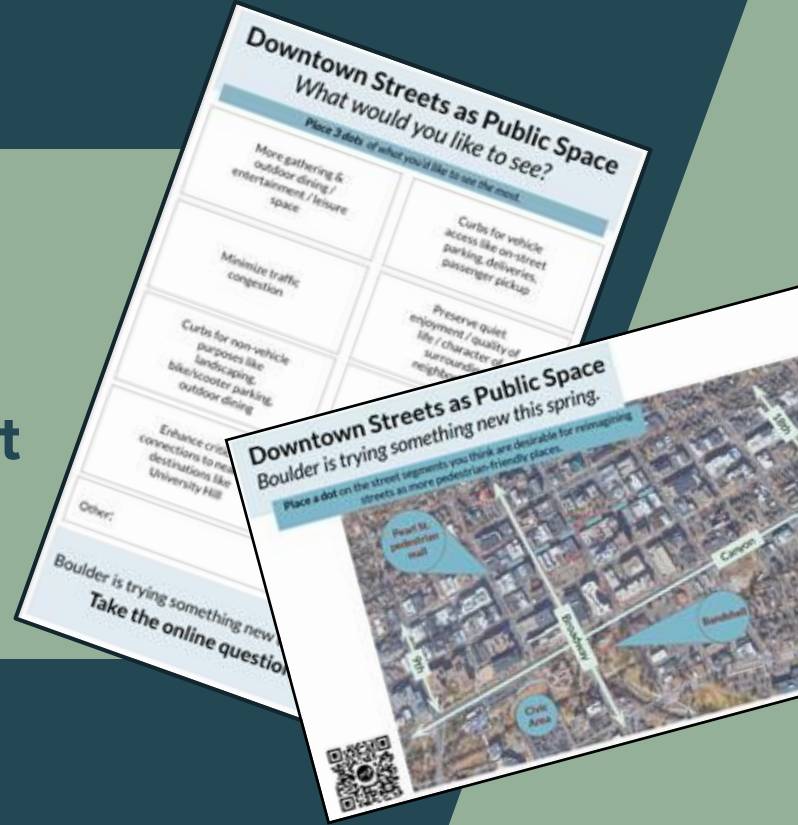
*See Action Plan page 51 and 52 for mapping of key comments from this exercise*



*Participants' comments that correlate to each pin is recorded in the Appendices on page 203. Not all participants left a comment.*



# Summary: In-Person Engagement



# In-Person Engagement Approach & Design

## Low Time Commitment

In-person engagement on a complex topic is, well, complex. Our activities were structured to take less than 2-minutes to encourage participants to give their input in a simple and informative way.



## Garner Placement Ideas

We thought community members could tell us where potential pop-up locations could be based on their own experience, and we wanted to capture those ideas in a visual way.



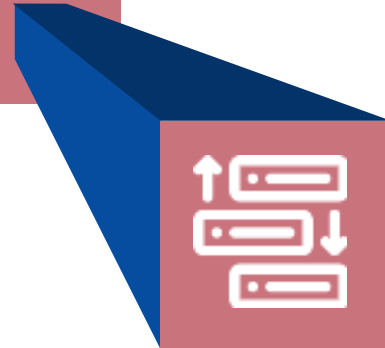
## Seek downtown & non-downtown engagement

Previous engagement solicited responses from many downtown users. We wanted to supplement in-person engagement with non-downtown locations to get even more feedback.



## Prioritize

This is a project of tradeoffs. We wanted to know - if you had to pick - what pop-up aspects would you choose as most / least important?



# In-Person Engagement Results

3 Locations

50-60 Participants

6 Hours of Engagement

## Downtown Streets as Public Space *Boulder is trying something new this spring.*

Place a dot on the street segments you think are desirable for reimagining streets as more pedestrian-friendly places.



## Downtown Streets as Public Space *What would you like to see?*

Place 3 dots of what you'd like to see the most.

More gathering & outdoor dining / entertainment / leisure space

Curbs for vehicle access like on-street parking, deliveries, passenger pickup

Minimize traffic congestion

Preserve quiet enjoyment / quality of life / character of surrounding neighborhoods

Curbs for non-vehicle purposes like landscaping, bike/scooter parking, outdoor dining

Maximize economic vitality potential for underutilized / underinvested areas

Enhance critical connections to nearby destinations like University Hill

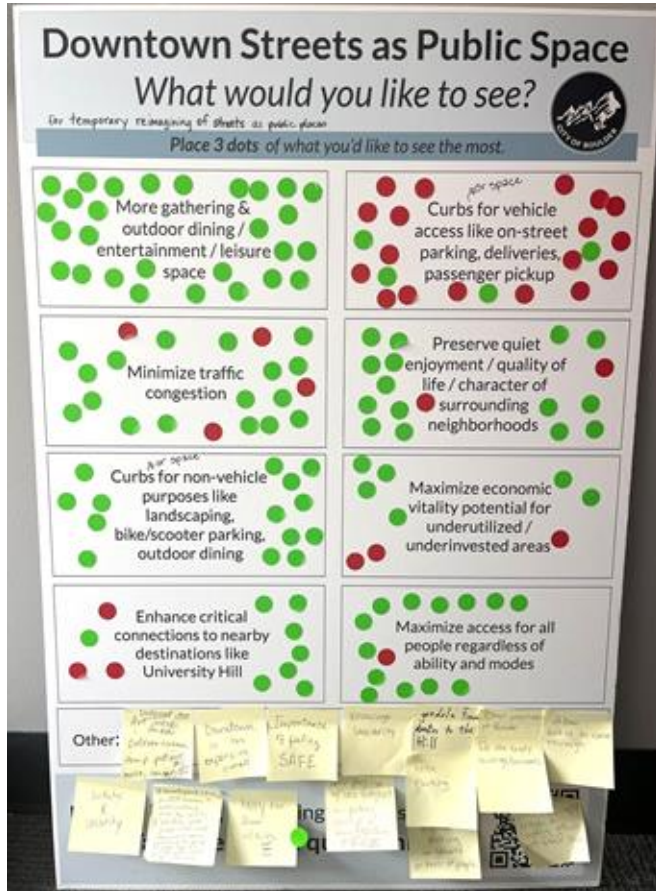
Maximize access for all people regardless of ability and modes

Other:

Boulder is trying something new this spring.  
Take the online questionnaire:



# In-Person Engagement Results



This type of engagement is used to solicit general feedback about community preferences, and it should not be used to assume sentiments represent the entire community. For that reason, we have not totaled the dot counts in order to rank what aspects that participants would like to see most and least.

With that being said, we can see that **participants prioritized:**

- More gathering & outdoor dining / entertainment / leisure space
- Curbs for non-vehicle purposes like landscaping, bike/outdoor parking, outdoor dining
- Preserve quiet enjoyment / quality of life / character of surrounding neighborhoods

While participants **tended to deprioritize:**

- Curbs for vehicle access like on-street parking, deliveries, passenger pickup

# In-Person Engagement Results



Similarly, this exercise is used to indicate a visual clustering of where participants think suitable pop-up locations could be.

We can see many clusters on both East and West Pearl, as well as throughout the Civic Area and on 13th Street.



# Summary: Stakeholder Meetings

# Boulder Farmers Market

## Key takeaways:

- They would love to see **more activation of the Civic Area Park** (adjacent to the market)
- A long term recommendation may be **access to permanent market space and increased access to public restrooms**, as there are none in the area
- There is a large waitlist for farmers to participate in the market, which implies demand could be accommodated on other days/times. They could see **expanding the market by number of vendors and/or size of the space**.
  - Would need **significant notice** to add another day of the farmers market or program space (such as a stand with revolving farmers)
  - There is a **bureaucratic burden to permitting** - generally needs to apply for 75 permits per year and therefore needs significant advance coordination, planning and cost



Photo credit: Boulder County Farmers Market - bcfm.org

# Downtown Boulder Partnership

## Key takeaways:

- The 2023 DBP **activations proposal for use of city ARPA funding is built to complement the DSaPS project** and respond to people's interest in West Pearl.
- **West Pearl is already “activated” in terms of foot traffic and business activity**; wouldn't recommend a full closure here, but DBP events are planned for the West Pearl area in 2023
- A primary, underutilized **area of downtown that could be well-suited is 13th**
- **Open to the idea of adding more events**, but it would require more resources as DBP capacity is already at its limit.
- Should **integrate DSaPS long term recommendations into the Civic Area Phase IB plan and upcoming Pearl St plan** (both funded with the latest CCS Tax renewal)
- **New shade structures and updated children's play areas** on East and West Pearl could pair with other additional urban design elements to increase public life in a passive way
- **CU's parents weekend and graduation are already heavily activated** with visitors enjoying shopping and dining downtown, so additional active programming / events are not needed to contribute to downtown vibrancy.



Photo credit: Downtown Boulder Partnership Instagram  
- @downtownboulder

# West Pearl business owners' focus group

## Key takeaways:

- Business owners want vibrancy on West Pearl and believe that is returning. Some think there was **permanent consumer behavior change as a result of the closure.**
- Many concerns that the **online questionnaire is “biased toward change” and biased to create change on West Pearl.** Business owners expressed that they chose to site their investment on West Pearl rather than the Bricks purposefully for its design and vehicular access.
- There was general **consensus from restaurants that the temporary closure during COVID hurt their business financially.** Retail owners noticed less of a negative impact to their business, though they did comment that **a full street closure (24/7) is not favorable.**
- From their perspective, **business owners would rather see improvements that help drive people to the West End,** including some light capital upgrades and even some community-focused special events.
- The business owners **do not feel represented or heard** in the many conversations about West Pearl.



Photo credit: Downtown Boulder Partnership  
- boulderdowntown.com

# Community Connectors in Residence

## Key takeaways:

- Less concern about which street segments should be used for the pop-ups; received **more interest in the “what and how”**
- Comments about **feeling like a “stranger” in Boulder with Pearl Street changing so much over the decades**; Pearl used to be smaller with independent shops and entertainers (like jugglers) on the Mall; no sense of a place where you know everyone in a small community to connect
- Any human rights events or activities should be **an opportunity to educate and connect**, and any **cultural events should support local community members** and not be created solely for commodification, appropriation and profit by others
- Would like to see recommendations for kids/teen safety and **safe bike routes from places like Boulder Meadows to downtown**
- Recommendation to **celebrate CU student athletes who are coming to Boulder with Coach Prime** to Boulder from the south and other regions of the country

## Ideas for holiday celebrations:

- ¡Día de los Muertos! (November)
- Nepalese New Year (usually in April)
- Dashain (October)
- Juneteenth (June)

Holiday celebrations should be created with the community; sensitive to the type of celebration; and a learning opportunity.

Request for process on how to celebrate cultural holidays should be more clear and straightforward

# Community Cycles

## Key takeaways:

- Said that **they wouldn't be able to "sustain programming" during the pop-ups** because of the small to no financial return; level of investment of staff/money needed
- Thought **West Pearl was "more welcoming and less formal" than the bricks**, which is why they appreciate the closure despite Downtown already offering a pedestrian mall.
- Thought the project would be **focused more on long-term recommendations, which is where their perspective would likely be more impactful** (getting rid of the one way loop around downtown, bike infrastructure changes, etc).
- Want to see the recommendations translating to policies that could be **be applied in other areas of Boulder.**



Photo credit: Community Cycles  
- [communitycycles.org](http://communitycycles.org)

# Boulder Economic Vitality and Business Support Alliance

## Key takeaways:

- Focus on activation that drives foot traffic, but that **doesn't directly compete with businesses** in the area of activation
- Would love to see places that **capture the culture of Boulder: fun, innovative, diverse**
- Use the pop-ups as an **opportunity to highlight diverse businesses** in Boulder
- Prioritize **addressing public safety, affordable commercial, and co-creation** in this testing phase

## Ideas for pop-up activations:

- Performance and showcase artists, including Latino artists
- Food truck fest
- Art installations
- Informal, unstructured installations



*Photo credit: City of Boulder - bouldercolorado.gov*

## Alliance Members in Attendance:

- Boulder Chamber
- Boulder Latino Chamber
- Downtown Boulder Partnership
- Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Boulder Small Business Development Center

# Takeaways



# Learnings from Engagement

The goal of conducting engagement with the community is to learn from them and carefully consider and balance the different perspectives. In this process, we have learned how varied the perspectives are across the community, which will result in a highly customized approach for pop-ups in 2023. Our major learnings so far include:




## Desired Experiences

The community enjoys downtown for a variety of reasons, primarily to shop, dine, socialize, people watch and enjoy nightlife.

## What's Missing

Safety and public health concerns, general feelings of not being welcome, affordability (both for the business owner and consumer), and difficulty with mobility, access or parking could be barriers for folks using downtown.



## Frequent Comments on Homelessness

Frequent comments, both in the online questionnaire, at in-person engagement, and during stakeholder meetings, referenced the need for the city to address issues of homelessness through downtown in order to activate spaces.

*(Continued on next page)*

# Learnings from Engagement

## **Travel Preferences**

People use a variety of ways to get downtown, including primarily by bike, foot, or personal vehicle. Inclement weather shifts preferences heavily toward use of a personal vehicle.



## **Abundance of Activators**

There's no shortage of ideas and partners to activate downtown. Activators need permitting support, and sometimes financial support, from the city.



## **Equity & Inclusion**

There was a consistent emphasis through all engagement efforts that the city should use the pop-ups to increase inclusivity through the type of activations; participants; accessibility and affordability



## **West Pearl Learnings**

West Pearl businesses do not feel heard or represented as being directly impacted by changes to the streets where their businesses operate. More dialogue and a collaborative approach to pop-up planning could help build back trust with local government.



# Engagement Gaps

# Gaps in Engagement Feedback

We attempted to reach a variety of community members, particularly underrepresented groups, young people, people above the ages of 65, and community members that don't use downtown. We think there are still some gaps in representation from the feedback:

**Race:** Gap in all races other than White represented half or less than the 2020 Census data for Boulder (city)

	Online Questionnaire	2020 U.S. Census <a href="#">data</a>
White	78.62%	76.40%
Hispanic or Latino/a	3.35%	13.15%
Asian	2.23%	7.97%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.17%	0.45%
Black or African-American	0.45%	1.50%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.06%	0.14%
Two or more races	1.95%	5.49%
Other	0.61%	0.67%
No response or "I prefer not to say"	12.55%	N/A

**Age:** Gap in representation for ages 24 or younger

	Online Questionnaire	2021 Boulder <a href="#">statistics</a>
Under 24	3.79%	39.65%
25-34	21.76%	21.37%
35-54	38.11%	12.81%
55-64	14.90%	11.70%
65 and over	17.13%	14.47%
No response	4.30%	N/A

- It's possible that the online questionnaire respondents that skipped demographic question(s) or selected "I prefer not to say" may skew these results.
- This data also makes assumptions about Boulder residency, though approximately 6% of respondents do not live in the city limits.

# Gaps in Engagement Feedback

The project team will work on creative strategies to reach these demographic and audience groups during the Spring and Summer 2023 pop-up engagement.

**Income:** Gap in representation for low income participants earning less than \$50,000

	Online Questionnaire	2020 U.S. Census <a href="#">data</a>
\$25,000 or less	3.68%	21.50%
\$25,000-\$49,999	7.59%	13.80%
\$50,000-\$99,999	19.08%	21.60%
\$100,000-\$149,999	22.71%	15.00%
\$150,000 or more	30.30%	28.10%
No response or "I prefer not to say"	16.62%	N/A

Although we don't have a data source for all audiences to compare how we did, **other audiences that were potentially under or not represented** include:

- Non-English speakers
- Immigrant and mixed-immigration status families
- People living with disabilities
- Members of the LGBTQ community
- Downtown employees
- Downtown businesses
- Youth
- University students

- *It's possible that the online questionnaire respondents that skipped demographic question(s) or selected "I prefer not to say" may skew these results.*
- *This data also makes assumptions about Boulder residency, though approximately 6% of respondents do not live in the city limits.*