

Summary of 800 Robson Public and Key Stakeholder Engagement

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As directed by Council in April 2016, City staff designed and implemented a process to engage the public and key stakeholders on the 800 Robson plaza project. The intent of the consultation was to gain input from a wide cross section of plaza users (Vancouver residents, businesses, and visitors) and to also gain insight from the Province, tenants, and stakeholder groups.

Through this process, 800 Robson was reaffirmed as a key central gathering space in Vancouver. Its proximity to shopping, food, arts and culture along with downtown offices, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Law Courts, draws many people to the area. While the majority of people are passing through on foot, many stay to relax, eat, or meet up with others.

Certain themes from the findings included accessibility and sustainability, which will help guide future design modifications. Providing enhanced public realm amenities such as landscaping, lighting, seating, public art, public washrooms and additional litter containers also ranked high as desired elements for the area. Some form of weather protection was identified as a positive enhancement to the plaza. Also expressed

was the most appropriate way to support active transportation through and around the heavily pedestrian-oriented space.

An important project goal strengthened through this engagement process is that of enhancing the space in a way that ensures it is safe, inviting, and welcoming to all; supporting the development of the City's broader stewardship strategy.

800 Robson is a special space in the city. There is an exceptional opportunity to build on the positive aspects of the plaza in the creation of an integrated and connected space that can continue to serve as the central gathering space at the city's heart. Conversations and engagement on more detailed elements of the plaza design and stewardship plan will continue through 2017.



Open House Engagement Team on September 15, 2016

2. ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- To initiate a conversation about the role of a public square in the city
- To shape the guiding principles for the design of the 800 Robson plaza and the stewardship plan
- To consult on the look, feel and use of the future plaza

3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND OUTREACH

Open Houses

The City held two on-site engagement open houses on the 800 block of Robson to gather feedback from the general public on the use and design of the future plaza.

The first open house was held on Thursday, September 15th from 11am-6pm to capture weekday users, including the lunch time business crowd, as well as participants attending the international Pro Walk Pro Bike Pro Place conference.

The second on-site engagement event was held on Saturday, September 24th from 11am-3pm to capture input from plaza visitors who might typically visit the space on weekends.

There was strong attendance at both events by a variety of plaza users.



Open House participants, September 15, 2016



Plaza Ideas at Open House, September 15, 2016

Questionnaire

Visitors to both open houses were encouraged to fill out a printed questionnaire. An online version of the questionnaire was programmed on Talk Vancouver and an invitation to complete the questionnaire was sent to all Talk Vancouver members. Links to the questionnaire were also available on vancouver.ca/vivarobson, and advertised in on-site signage, the City's website, social media accounts and business cards handed out on-site. The online questionnaire launched on September 12 and closed on October 2, 2016.

Outreach

A variety of methods were used to notify the public about the project and opportunities to provide feedback. The following provides a synopsis of notification methods.

1. Online and Social Media

- City of Vancouver website: vancouver.ca/vivarobson
- Social media campaign to encourage feedback through Twitter and Instagram: vivarobson.hscampaigns.com; hashtag: #vivarobson
- Email invitation to members of the City's public engagement panel Talk Vancouver.

2. On-site Signage

- A temporary application of 150 large scale decals on the street that posed questions to the public about the possible look and feel of the future plaza
- Several informational posters were provided within the 800 block of Robson Street attached to light poles and on the hoarding of the Vancouver Art Gallery Annex stairs under construction at the time

3. Advertising

- The second on-site engagement event was advertised in local newspapers: 24, Metro, and Georgia Straight



#VIVAROBSON Social Media Image



#VIVAROBSON Temporary Vinyl Decals



Moveable Chairs and Tables with Temporary Engagement Decals on 800 Robson, September, 2016

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	Approx. No.
On-site participants (Thursday, Sept. 15 and Saturday, Sept. 24, 2016) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with City staff • Hardcopy feedback forms (see online engagement statistics) • Post-It Posters asking the public to provide for one word about 800 Robson ‘Now’ and in the ‘Future’. (77 completed) • Post-It Note comments placed on an aerial of the project area (72 responses) 	500 people
Feedback Forms completed (survey launched Sept. 12, closed Oct. 2)	2,198 (includes 200 questionnaires completed in person)
Twitter + Instagram postings + comments	530
Individual project-related emails (vivarobson@vancouver.ca)	32
Earned Media	Tracking media commentary, reader comments

4. SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

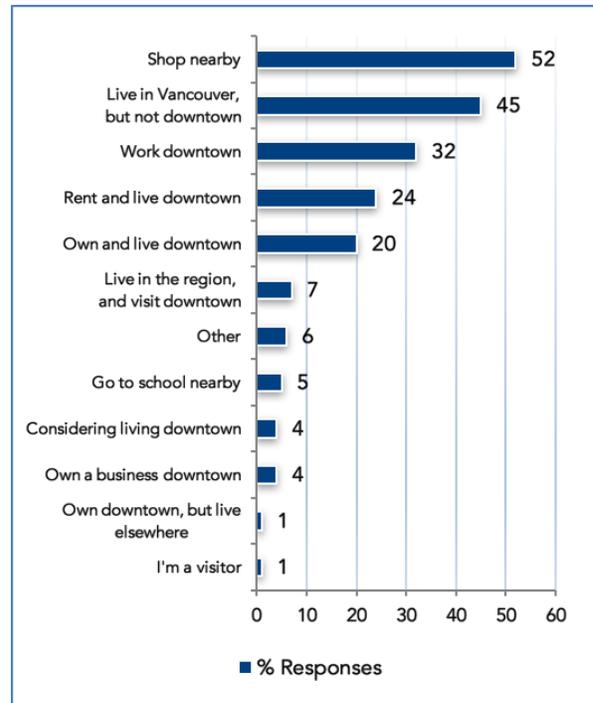
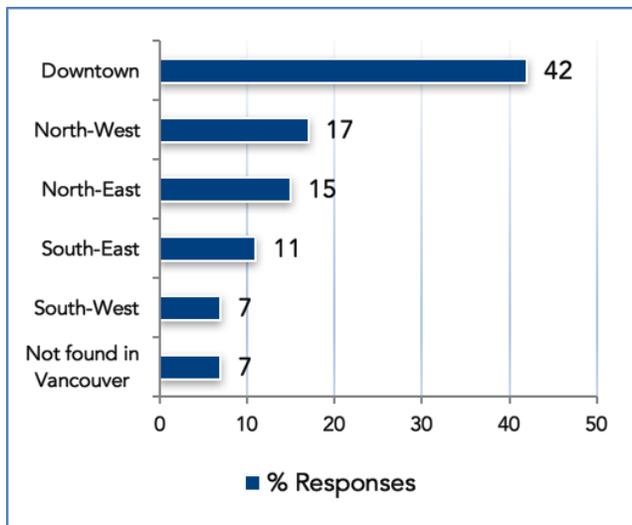
Overview and Demographic Snapshot

The City received a total of 2,198 completed responses to the questionnaire. The majority of responders heard about the project and survey through Talk Vancouver (61%). The complete questionnaire, found at the end of this report, asked a series of questions to better understand:

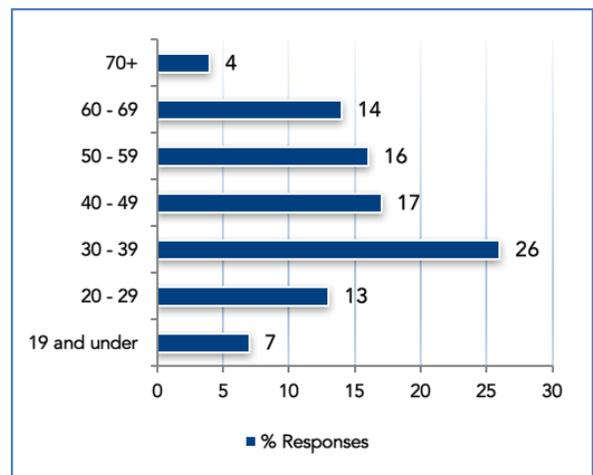
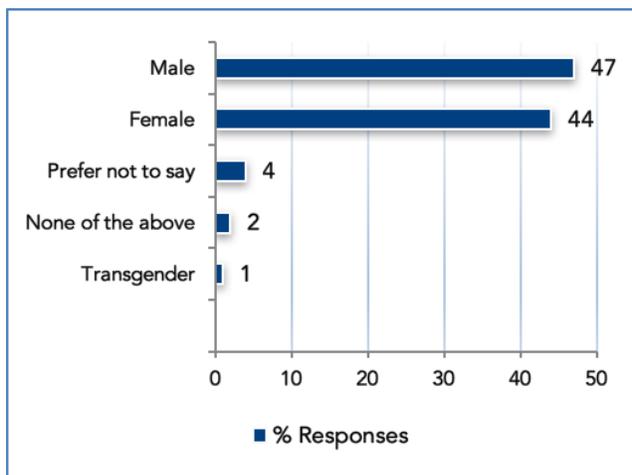
- What makes this area unique;
- How frequently participants visit 800 Robson;
- How people arrive and what features are important to allow people to move through the block;
- Potential design features and elements;
- How to make this area a rainy city plaza;
- Should the Viva Vancouver design competitions and installations continue in the future;
- How people envision using the space in the future;
- Frequency of programmed activities; and
- Suggestions for project objectives.

The following overview and tables provide a snapshot of demographic profile of respondents to the survey.

- There was an even split between those that live downtown (44%) versus those living outside the downtown core (45%);
- There was a relatively even split between respondents who identify as female (44%) and male (47%);
- The age group that responded the most were between the ages of 30-39 years of age (26%)



Connection to the area



Demographics

Unique Qualities of Robson

Q1: In your opinion, what makes 800 Robson Street unique within Vancouver?

Of the total 2,198 completed questionnaires, approximately 1,770 people responded to this open-ended question regarding the unique qualities of 800 Robson. These are the qualities which one might most readily use to differentiate the plaza on 800 Robson amongst the array of other public spaces in Vancouver. The most popular comment about the space is that it is a central location or heart in the city that is both a hub and an oasis. People described 800 Robson as a place to gather, including for demonstrations, to watch or meet people, to relax, and to enjoy the sun.

The pedestrian focus and large numbers of pedestrians is seen as very positive. However, in relation to unique attributes related to access, people are still concerned with the new No. 5 bus route and traffic impacts due to the road closure.

Vibrancy, arts and culture, iconic architecture and landscaping, and the skating rink were identified as attributes unique amongst all other public spaces in the city, in addition to 800 Robson’s close connection to major shopping areas and neighbourhoods.

Some unique qualities we heard:

“So many people pass through this area and a plaza is essential to create a meeting place where people will want to be.”

“It’s in the heart of the city, but at the same time it’s like no other place in the city.”

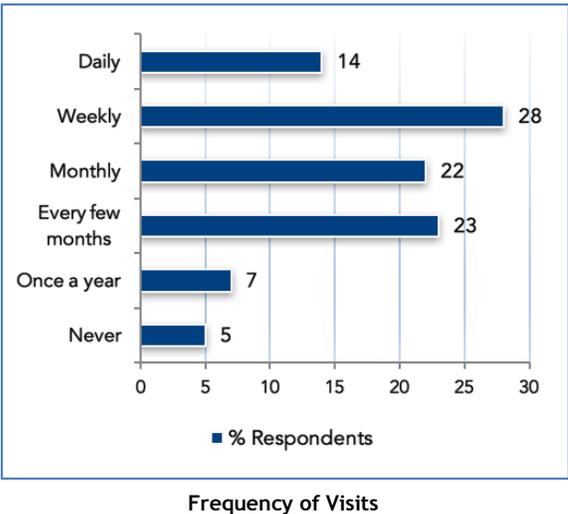
“It’s like an urban community center, with places for learning, social meetup, and exercise on the [skating] rink.”

Details on the types of activities and programming people wish to see more of in the future can be found in response to Q7 on page 8 of this report.

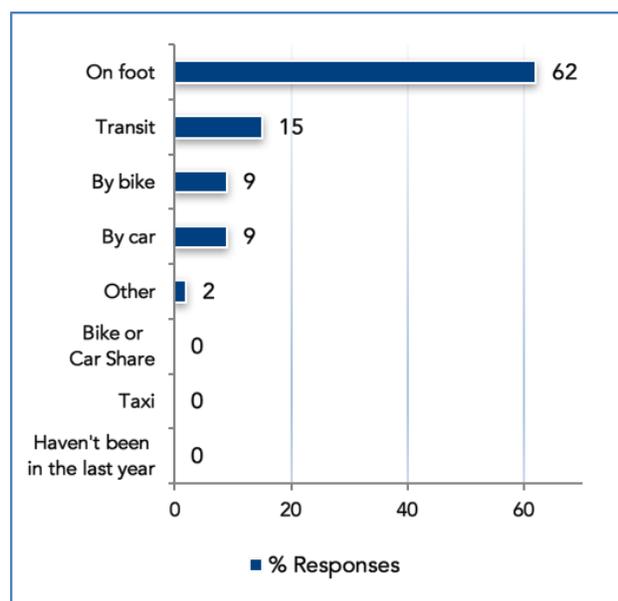
Visitation

Q2: In the last year, how frequently did you visit 800 Robson Street?

The majority of people who responded visit this section of Robson Street at least once a month or more (64%). When asked the open-ended question - Why do you visit this section of Robson Street? - respondents most commonly indicated they are passing through (43%) or work or live nearby (21%). The remainder of people (66%) are there enjoy the space and its amenities; to access services, to eat, for events, to relax, to shop, for activities, to meet others, for demonstrations, or to be in the sunshine.



Modes of Visitation



Primary mode of transportation to 800 Robson

Q3a: The City's Transportation 2040 Plan identifies 800 Robson Street as a potential pedestrian priority space. We understand that many people pass through this block on their way to other destinations. Monitoring has shown that during the summer season approximately 2,500 pedestrians travel through this space an hour. What's your primary mode of transportation when you visit 800 Robson Street?

All questionnaire respondents answered this question. As the table to the left indicates, the primary mode of transportation respondents used to travel to/from 800 Robson is on foot.

Q3b: As we design this public plaza, what features are important to you to allow movement through the block?

1,815 respondents answered this open-ended question. Common responses indicated a desire to level the plaza and remove the curbs, and keep the plaza flexible, accessible and clutter-free allowing movement in all directions. A number of people commented on the heavy pedestrian flows through the area.

53% of responses identified this space as a key pedestrian area. Suggestions to assist with movement through the space included: street furniture, lighting, durable materials, and art.

Some ideas we heard:

"Take out curbs for total accessibility."

"While I primarily walk there, I also cycle to and through the area. I think the plaza needs to be permeable to slow, courteous cycling."

"Wide walkway with good lighting and some interesting features, art, fountains."

Importance of Design Improvements

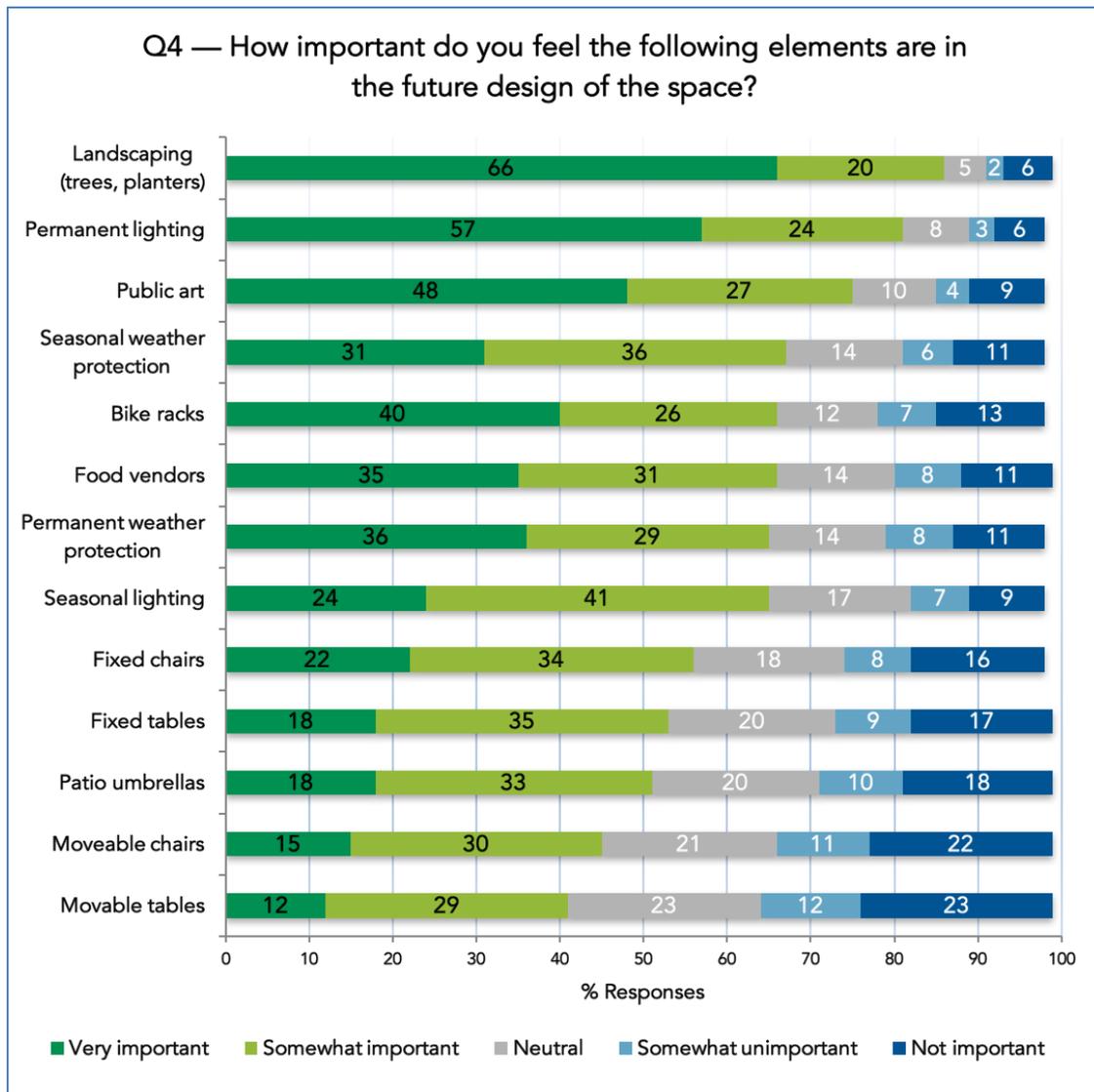
Q4a: How important do you feel the following elements are in the future design of this space?

The closed portion of Q4 focused on understanding people's preferences for design elements and features in the space. The intent of this question was to assist the design team in determining the right balance of features and open space. While no element was seen as

unimportant, out of 2,198 responses, at least two thirds or more of respondents thought these top five elements were very important or somewhat important:

1. Landscape, trees and planting (86%);
2. Permanent lighting (81%);
3. Public art (75%);
4. Seasonal weather protection (67%); and
5. Bike racks (66%) and food vendors (66%).

Lastly, there was a preference for fixed seating and tables (56%; 53%) over moveable ones (45%; 41%).



Level of Support for Access and Amenity Improvements (% per option)

This question also provided an opportunity to provide additional open-ended feedback by asking the following:

Q4b: Are there any other elements in the future design of this space that you think are important?

Integration, that is, including other elements of the plaza into the greater Robson Square precinct to develop a consistent experience across ownership boundaries, was a common theme that surfaced (from the 1,330 responses to this question). Ideas included: a covered stage area, Wi-Fi, garbage cans that accommodate recycling and compost, and access to water, food, and toilet facilities.

Elements of a Rainy City Plaza

Q5: What can we do to make this a great rainy weather plaza?

The intent with this question was to come up with ideas for the space during the rainy fall and winter months. Weather protection was identified in nearly one quarter of the 1,600 responses to this question. While a third of those who commented on weather protection saw it as a positive addition, approximately 235 people (15%), responded with words to the effect of “leave it be, it rains in Vancouver and that’s fine.” This indicates some people felt weather protection was not necessary.

Some ideas we heard:

“This is life in our city. Places to duck into to get out of the rain.”

“Add landscape features that offer some protection.”

“Canopy in one part for the artisans but rain is a local feature.”

Uses and Programming

Questions Q6, Q7, and Q8 were all closed questions that focused on determining the type and level of uses and programming for the space.

Q6: For the last five summers, 800 Robson has been the site of Robson Redux, the annual design competition to transform the space. Installations have included Pop Rocks, Porch Parade, Picnurbia, Corduroy Road and Urban Reef. Do you want to see this or a similar competition continue to be a part of the future programming of the permanent plaza?

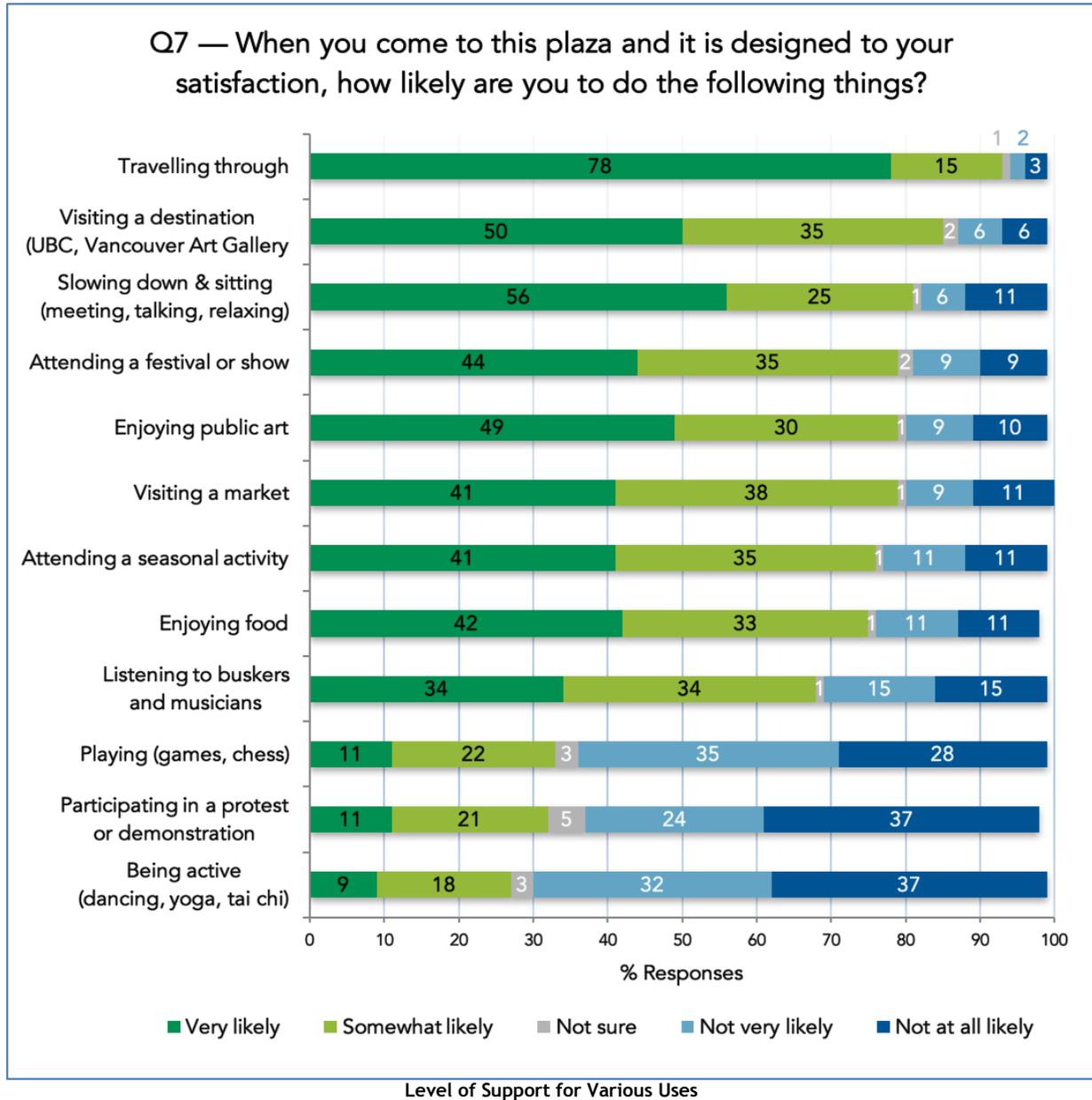
Of the 2,198 responses to this question, 41% voted yes, they do want to see Robson Redux or a similar competition continue; 31% voted maybe and 27% voted no.

Q7: In the future, when you come to this plaza and it is designed entirely to your satisfaction, how likely are you to do the following things?

Respondents were asked to indicate how likely they were to engage in the activities listed.

Given the high volume of foot traffic currently in the 800 block of Robson, travelling through 800 Robson received the highest likelihood rating of 93%. Other activities respondents thought they were likely to engage in were: visiting a destination and slowing down, sitting, meeting and talking, and relaxing (81%), as well as attending a festival or show, enjoying public art

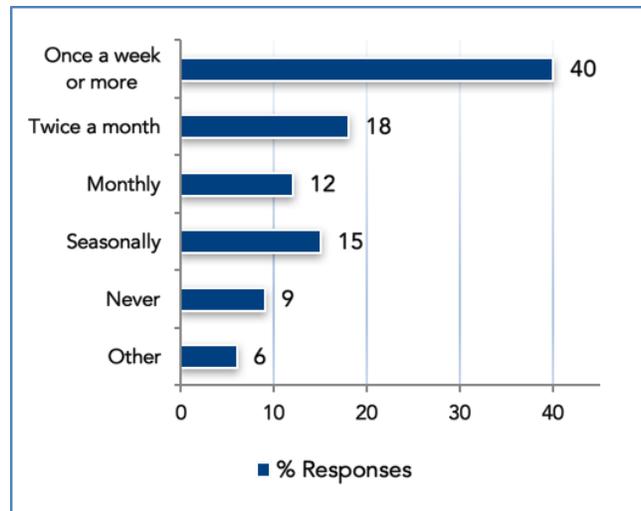
and visiting a market (79%). Attending seasonal events (75%) and food (75%) also figured prominently.



Q8: In the future, how often should programmed activities happen in this space?

The intent with this last programming question was to help determine the amount and frequency of programming for the space.

A high percentage of people (40%) indicated their preference for programmed activities to take place once a week or more.



Desired Frequency of Programming (shown as a percentage)

Potential Goals and Principles

Q9: Are there any principles, goals or ideas that should be incorporated into the future design?

The following categories and key words are example themes emerging from the responses which support the guiding principles. Approximately 1,440 people responded to this question.

- Sustainability
- Transportation and Accessibility
- Uses and Features
- Welcoming and Clean
- Democratic and Social Space
- Open Space
- Art/Culture
- Holistic

Some ideas we heard:

“This is Vancouver’s premier public space and it should be given bold new life to welcome all Vancouverites to enjoy at all times of the year.”

“It should encompass greenery... and serve as an oasis in the city to teach people about Vancouver’s sustainable goals.”

“It should be a gathering space for all, that respect all who use the space and designed to facilitate as many uses as possible.”

5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

As summarized earlier, from mid-September until December 5th, the City held 24 meetings with 20 stakeholder groups with the intent of identifying concerns and opportunities to help guide future conceptual work.

Groups engaged included a variety of on-site stakeholders, those with a vested interest in the area, and City advisory committees.

These groups included:

On-Site Stakeholders (Owners and Tenants)

- Province of British Columbia
- Vancouver Art Gallery
- University of British Columbia
- Law Courts (including the Sheriff's Office)
- 800 Robson Street Vendors

Stakeholders with a Vested Interest

- TransLink
- Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association
- Robson Street Business Association
- Arthur Erickson Foundation
- West End Seniors Planning Table
- Vancouver Public Space Network
- HUB
- Vancouver Heritage Commission
- Select Film and Event Organizers

City of Vancouver Advisory Committees

- Active Transportation Policy Council
- Public Art Advisory Committee
- Seniors' Advisory Committee
- Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee
- Urban Design Panel
- City Asset Naming Committee

Forthcoming conversations with these and additional stakeholders will focus on detailed design.

Key Themes

Consistent with the findings from the public engagement process, the following key themes emerged from discussions with stakeholder groups:

Design

- Addressing the egress from the Law Courts underground parkade onto Hornby Street including sightlines with the bike lanes, vehicular exiting and emergency vehicle access to the space
- Removing the curbs and leveling the street to create a continuous surface across Robson Street and creating and preserving the plaza as a pedestrian-oriented space
- Respecting the existing architectural and landscape design intent
- Thoughtful selection of materials to help unify and create a sense of coherence across the distinct spaces of the North Plaza, Robson Square and the Law Court complex
- Introducing transitional design cues in the 700 and 900 blocks of Robson and maintaining visual access along Robson Street

Movement

- Improving traffic circulation and safety for all road users around the Robson Square precinct
- Maintaining and improving on site pedestrian circulation by minimizing obstructions and ensuring north-south movement remains open
- Addressing transit connections

Use, Function and Management

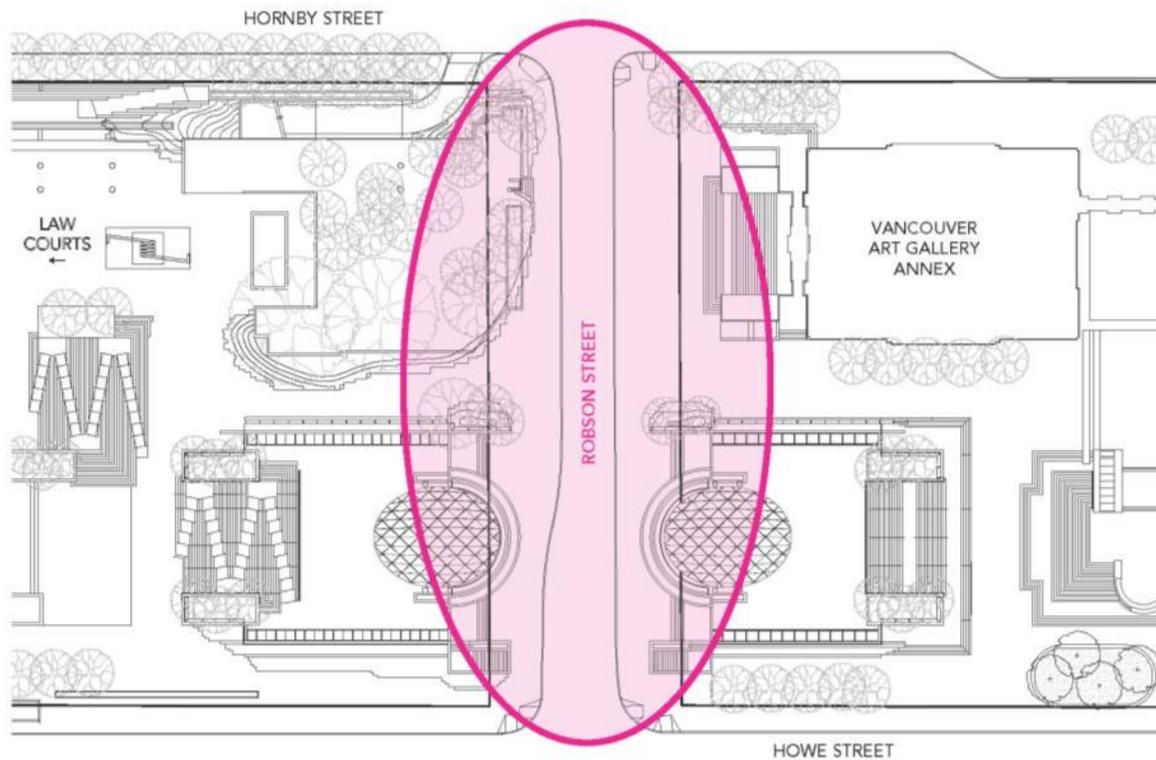
- Improving overall function and use of the site
- Maintaining and establishing respect for existing tenants on site
- Developing a comprehensive plaza stewardship strategy, including interesting, creative, proactive programming of the space, year-round
- Providing key amenities, such as seating, lighting, washrooms and electrical connections, making the space flexible for many uses
- Improving vertical connections, visibility of lower level uses and connections with anchor tenants
- Exploring feasibility of a multi-use kiosk, and other vending opportunities that do not compromise existing architectural intent
- Ensuring the space is safe, accessible, welcoming and inclusive and remains a democratically vital space

6. NEXT STEPS

Taking the above into consideration, the next steps in the design process will be:

- Engage key area stakeholders to begin planning for the plaza stewardship strategy
- Engage stakeholders throughout the detailed design process

SCHEDULE 1 - FEEDBACK FORM



#VIVAROBSON QUESTIONNAIRE

800 ROBSON STREET



800 Robson Street, between the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Law Courts, is set to transform into a permanent city-serving public plaza that will reflect the diversity of Vancouver and its users! Over the last five years, the City has been engaging with the public on the use of this space through past VIVA installations and various public consultation processes. This September, staff hope to build on their learnings and understanding of:

- How residents, businesses and users would like to use the space;
- What the space should look like;
- What kind of programming, if any, you would like to see in the space; and
- What movement through and around the plaza should be considered.

In the following months, we will be seeking your feedback to help transform this street into a plaza. Feedback you submit will help inform the look, feel and use of the permanent plaza. The results of what we hear will be available in the fall, along with details outlining next steps. We will be seeking your input and feedback in subsequent stages of work. Stay tuned for more information.

#VIVAROBSON

1 The 800 block of Robson Street (between Hornby and Howe) and the Vancouver Art Gallery's North Plaza, has long been the centre for Vancouverites to socialize, and display civil democracy and creative expression. In your opinion, what makes 800 Robson Street unique within Vancouver?

2 In the last year, how frequently did you visit 800 Robson Street?

- DAILY
 WEEKLY
 MONTHLY
 EVERY FEW MONTHS
 ONCE LAST YEAR
 NEVER

Why do you visit this section of Robson Street?

3 The City's *Transportation 2040 Plan* identifies 800 Robson Street as a potential pedestrian priority space. We understand that many people pass through this block on their way to other destinations. Monitoring has shown that during the summer season approximately 2,500 pedestrians travel through this space an hour. What's your primary mode of transportation when you visit 800 Robson Street?

- ON FOOT
 CAR
 TAXI
 BIKE
 BIKE SHARE
 I HAVEN'T BEEN THERE IN THE LAST YEAR
 TRANSIT
 CAR SHARE
 OTHER (PLEASE DESCRIBE): _____

As we design this public plaza, what features are important to you to allow movement through the block?

4 How important do you feel the following elements are in the future design of this space?

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	LESS IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL
Moveable chairs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Moveable tables	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Patio umbrellas	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fixed tables	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Fixed chairs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Permanent lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Seasonal or temporary lighting	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Permanent weather protection	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Seasonal weather protection	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Public art	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Food vendors	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Bike racks	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Landscaping (trees, planters)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Are there any other elements in the future design of this space that you think are important?

SHARE WITH US!

#VIVAROBSON

5 What can we do to make this a great rainy weather plaza?

6 For the last five summers, 800 Robson has been the site of *Robson Redux*, the annual design competition to transform the space. Installations have included *Pop Rocks*, *Porch Parade*, *Picnurbia*, *Corduroy Road* and *Urban Reef*. Do you want to see this or a similar competition continue to be a part of the future programming of the permanent plaza?

YES NO MAYBE

7 In the future, when you come to this plaza and it is designed entirely to your satisfaction, how likely are you to doing the following things?

	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY	DON'T KNOW/ NOT SURE
Slowing down and sitting <small>(i.e. meeting friends, talking to friends, relaxing, people watching)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Enjoying food	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Listening to buskers and musicians	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Enjoying public art	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Being active <small>(i.e. dancing, yoga, tai chi)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Participating in a protest or demonstration	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Attending a festival or a show <small>(i.e. the Jazz Fest, Façade Fest)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Attending a seasonal activity <small>(i.e. Christmas tree or menorah lighting)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Playing <small>(i.e. chess, kids games)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Visiting a market <small>(i.e. artisan market or farmers market)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Visiting a destination <small>(i.e. Vancouver Art Gallery, UBC)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Travelling through to another destination	<input type="checkbox"/>				

8 In the future, how often should programmed activities happen in this space?

DAILY TWICE A MONTH BY SEASON OTHER: _____
 WEEKLY MONTHLY NEVER

9 Are there any principles, goals or ideas that should be incorporated into the future design?

DEMOGRAPHICS

It's important to us that we hear from a diverse group of people and perspectives. The following questions help us determine how the feedback we receive represents the community.

10 What is your connection with this place? *(select all that apply)*

I...

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> RENT & LIVE IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> LIVE IN METRO VANCOUVER AND ARE VISITING DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OWN & LIVE IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> GO TO SCHOOL IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> I'M A VISITOR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OWN IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER BUT LIVE ELSEWHERE | <input type="checkbox"/> SHOP IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OWN A BUSINESS IN DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER | <input type="checkbox"/> LIVE IN VANCOUVER OUTSIDE THE DOWNTOWN CORE | |

11 Please provide your home postal code: _____

12 Which age category do you fall in?

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> UNDER 15 YEARS | <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 YRS | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-69 YRS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 YRS | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 YRS | <input type="checkbox"/> 70-79 YRS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-29 YRS | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59 YRS | <input type="checkbox"/> 80 YRS OR OVER |

13 Do you identify as...?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSGENDER | <input type="checkbox"/> NONE OF THE ABOVE, I IDENTIFY AS: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MALE | <input type="checkbox"/> PREFER NOT TO SAY | |

14 How did you hear about the #VIVAROBSON (800 Robson) consultation and questionnaire? *(select all that apply)*

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> STICKERS ON STREET AT 800 ROBSON | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE <i>(i.e. radio, television etc.)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> TWITTER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TALK VANCOUVER EMAIL INVITATION | <input type="checkbox"/> CITY OF VANCOUVER WEBSITE | <input type="checkbox"/> EMAIL/LISTSERV |
| <input type="checkbox"/> POSTER | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER WEBSITE <i>(please specify)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY/FRIENDS <i>(word of mouth)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NEWSPAPER ARTICLE | <input type="checkbox"/> INSTAGRAM | <input type="checkbox"/> DON'T REMEMBER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ONLINE ARTICLE <i>(i.e. Vancouver Hive, Vancouver is Awesome)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> FACEBOOK | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <i>(please specify):</i> _____ |

15 Do you want to be added to our #VIVAROBSON email list to stay up to date on consultation activities? If yes, please leave us your email address:

*Your personal information is collected under the authority of section 26(c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA). This information will be used for notification purposes of the above project. You may unsubscribe from the City's email list at any time by clicking the unsubscribe link that will appear at the bottom of each email. For questions about the City's collection of information on this form, please contact: Krisztina Kassay, City of Vancouver, 453 W 12th Ave, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4, vivarobson@vancouver.ca