



Comox Year-Round School Street

PHASE 1 - PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MARCH TO APRIL 2023

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OVERVIEW

Executive Summary



The City of Vancouver was exploring the idea of transforming the 1600-block of Comox Street into a year-round School Street. This idea came after a successful two-year School Street Pilot program at Lord Roberts Elementary School.

For the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, volunteers closed the road to vehicles twice a day from September to June. But a significant reliance on volunteers is likely not a sustainable approach in the long term.

A year-round School Street would be a space where people can walk, bike, and roll and play all year long. The goal is to create a space that the residents and school community can enjoy. In spring 2023, the City asked area residents and the school community for feedback on a year-round School Street proposal. We heard from over 749 people through emails, surveys, and pop-up sessions during phase one of engagement. People provided comments on accessibility, parking, sanitation, safety, and support for safe active travel options.

The information collected has helped us explore different design options. In the fall of 2023, we plan to provide a project update to the residents and the school community.

We want to thank everyone who has shown interest in the year-round School Street initiative.

For future updates, please visit vancouver.ca/comox-school-street

OVERVIEW

Background

The City of Vancouver and the Vancouver School Board started a School Streets pilot program in the spring of 2021. A School Street is a block near a school where vehicles are not allowed during drop-off and pick-up times, except for emergency services. School Streets encourage families to walk, bike or roll to school. Other streets next to the school remain open to vehicles for drop-off purposes as needed.

The School Streets program aims to help improve safety around schools and encourage more families to walk, bike and roll. The program also supports the City's Climate Emergency Action Plan goal of having two-thirds of daily trips be taken by active transportation and transit by 2030.

School Streets were first introduced at three elementary schools, including Lord Roberts Elementary School.

With the help of volunteers, Lord Roberts Elementary has been able to continue the School Street program on 1600-Comox Street for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 school years. The program depends on volunteers to place barriers at the intersections to set up the School Street twice a day on each school day. Vehicles cannot enter or leave the block except for emergency services.



OVERVIEW

Background

Year-Round School Street Proposal

Volunteers have helped make this program a success. But a significant reliance on volunteers is likely not a sustainable approach in the long term.

The City has been exploring the idea of creating a year-round School Street between Bidwell and Cardero streets. A year-round School Street is imagined as a car-free space at all times of the day throughout the year. People walking, biking, and rolling would be able to access the area. Parking and vehicle access would not be available except for emergency services.

A year-round School Street aims to create a safe and welcoming car-free public space for the school and community to enjoy.

In the spring of 2023, we asked neighbouring residents and the school community for feedback on this proposal.

Public engagement began the week of March 20, 2023, and closed on April 20, 2023. A notification letter was mailed to all residents within a two-block radius.

We heard from over 749 people through emails, surveys, and pop-up sessions. This report provides an overview of the feedback we collected.

Engagement Snapshot

Staff collected feedback about the year-round proposal in a number of ways:

**584**

Surveys completed

**105**

Participants at Pop-Up Information Booths

**60**

Responses collected through School Active Travel email inbox

WHO WE HEARD FROM

Public Survey

We received 584 survey responses between March 27 and April 20, 2023. The online survey asked people how they might use the year-round School Street if it were implemented and what amenities they would like to see in the space.

Who we heard from:

283

Parents, guardians, students or staff of Lord Roberts Elementary School, Lord Roberts Annex, and King George Secondary Schools



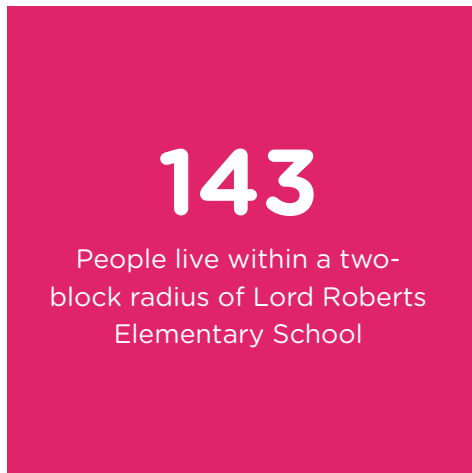
43

People live outside the two-block radius



143

People live within a two-block radius of Lord Roberts Elementary School



91

People indicated they live on the 1600-block of Comox Street



24

People did not identify any connection to the School Street



WHO WE HEARD FROM

Demographic Overview

**35%**

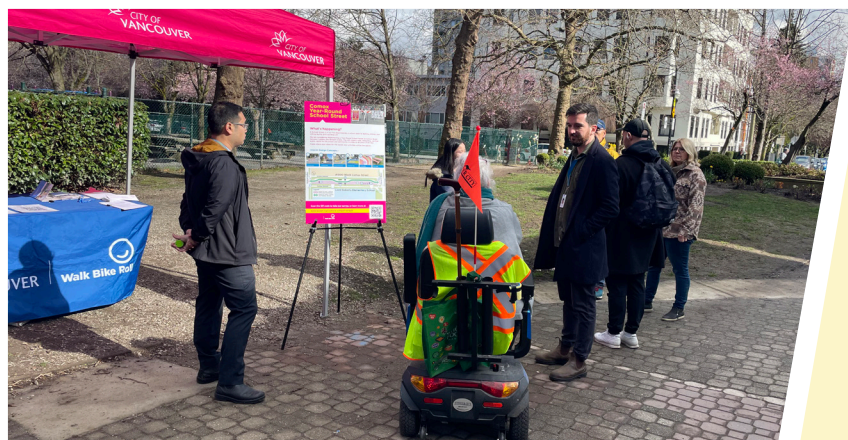
of people we heard from were
35 - 44 YEARS OLD

23%

of people we heard from were
45 - 54 YEARS OLD

46%

Of people identified their ethnic
origin as **EUROPEAN**.
This was more than any other
category.

**6%**

of people identified as having a
DISABILITY
(this includes using a walker or a
wheelchair)

45%

of respondents identified as
WOMEN

**33%**

of respondents identified as
MEN

For a full breakdown of demographic results, please refer to Appendix A



What We Heard

To engage with West End residents and the school community, our team used an online survey and collected feedback through email and community pop-up booths.

The survey asked nine questions in total. We invited people to rank a list of six amenities they might want to see in the space. We also gave examples of nine activities that could be done in the area and asked how likely people would be to use the space for each. Comments collected can be viewed on page 12.

WHAT WE HEARD

Amenities

Over half of the respondents said they “strongly” or “somewhat” support the following ideas:



62%
Community Garden



62%
Community
Book Exchange



60%
Public Seating

59%
Bike Parking



55%
Play Elements



41%
Ping-pong Table

WHAT WE HEARD

Space Use



About half of the respondents said they would be “very likely” or “likely” to use the School Street for the following:


54%

Hanging out and spending time there


54%

Connecting with friends


49%

Playing


47%

Using it as a safe space to practice biking, skateboarding, rollerblading and scootering

Less than half of the respondents indicated they would use the School Street for:


46%

Social activities


45%

Visiting family


43%

Outdoor learning


38%

Eating lunch/dinner


35%

Gardening



WHAT WE HEARD

Inbox & Pop-up Booths

60**Email Responses**

From March 20 to April 20, 2023, we received and responded to approximately 60 emails sent to Mayor and Council, City staff and the School Active Travel team.

Each email contained more than one theme listed on pages 12 - 14 in the survey section.

About half of the emails supported the proposal highlighting that a year-round School Street could provide a great space for the school and community to enjoy.

The other 50% had voiced why the year-round School Street initiative would not work in the community. Key themes' included concerns over parking loss, noise, accessibility and the misuse of the space during evening hours.

City staff also heard similar feedback from people who visited our pop-up booths on March 30 and April 1, 2023.



WHAT WE HEARD

Survey Comments & Concerns

Questions four and five of the survey asked residents and the school community if they had any concerns about the implementation of the year-round School Street or comments for us to consider.

**584**

Survey Responses

**410**

People shared their ideas, comments and concerns

**174**

Respondents did not complete the comments or concerns section

The most common themes included the following mentions:

Mentions

125

Concerns over parking loss

"The West End is chronically short of parking. Removing access to parking on Comox will only make matters worse in the surrounding area."

A year-round School Street would be a space to enjoy and use for active travel

"I strongly believe that implementing the Year-Round School Street space on Comox will be a powerful step forward for public safety, public health, community engagement, walkability and overall well-being in our neighbourhood. I've been very impressed by the previous results of the School Streets Program and am eager to see this program made permanent for the sake of our children and families. Thank you for this transformative vision."

115

A year-round School Street would be a space to enjoy and use for active travel

"It's a great idea! We need more spaces that are safe for cycling and rolling, and more outdoor community space."

103

Concern about how the space will be used and managed (such as littering)

"Setting up a public space up next to the main Roberts School sadly and unfortunately right now would only invite more drug-related activities."

WHAT WE HEARD

Survey Comments & Concerns

Mentions

90

The concern is that there will be more vehicle traffic & congestion

"The school streets program on Comox Street has effectively funneled the traffic to Bidwell, creating a traffic jam of frustrated and sometimes aggressive drivers."

78

Concern for personal safety

"Safety of the residents at night and the noise from loitering people. Great to have the street blocked in the day, but you are not taking into consideration the hours when the children are not in school and what that means for the residents."

64

Dissatisfaction with the City's engagement process

"The majority of West End residents don't want this. Why are you pushing this through with no consultation?"

"Totally unfair to current residents and not well consulted at all."

53

Questions around why more space is required for the school

"The students at Robert's already have a play area. They already have a garden. Why can't the students walk on sidewalks to get home? They need an entire street?"

49

Concerns with increased noise in the area from people lingering in the area

"As a retired couple, we are home all the time. We have to put up with the loud kids all day and would like to have some peace and quiet at night. The last thing we want is to have more people making noise on the streets at all times of the night."

WHAT WE HEARD

Survey Comments & Concerns

Mentions

48

Potential loading and delivery problems

"Taking away access for delivery drivers is a bad idea. There is already limited parking in the area and this is just going to make it worse."

34

Not having access to residential buildings on Comox St.

"Accessibility to homes for those with mobility aids, requiring the use of handy dart or taxis, etc. My building has no back door for residents, guests or trades to gain access - we all need a space to park and access the front door."

29

Concerns around road safety in the area

"People who do not live further away from school and do not drive do not understand how important it is for road access to drop off our kids. Have you seen the chaos every morning and afternoon for cars trying to get by into one single road? I do because I drive every school day, and I've seen drivers almost getting into physical fights because of frustrations."

OVERVIEW

Conclusion

The City of Vancouver is grateful to everyone who participated in the spring 2023 engagement process. We value the time, energy, and feedback you shared with us.

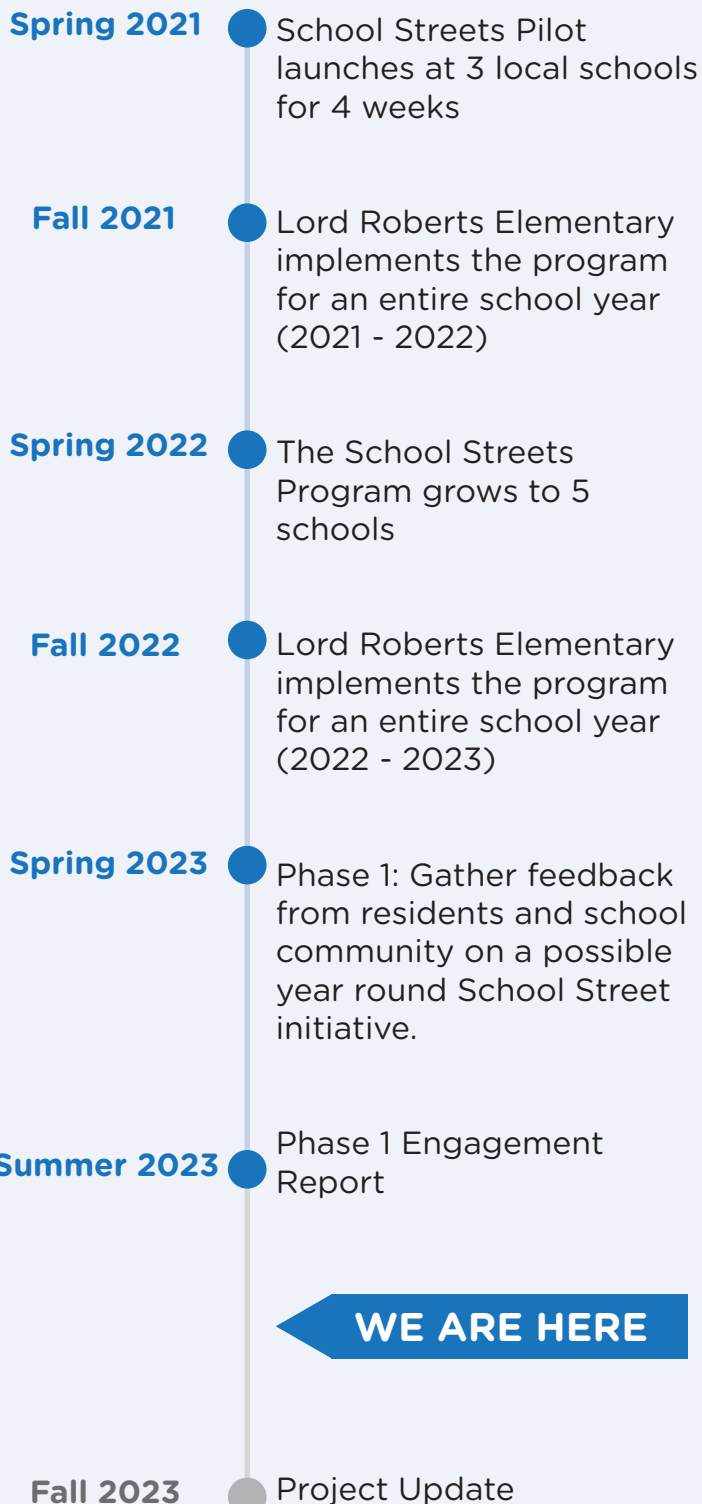
We heard feedback and questions about accessibility, parking, sanitation, and support for safe active travel options for the school community.

Your input has helped us explore additional potential concepts. A project update will be provided to residents and the school community in the fall of 2023.

Once again, we thank you for your valuable contributions.

For project updates, visit vancouver.ca/comox-school-street

Project Timeline



Appendix A

Comox Year Round School Street,
Phase 1 Public Engagement Results

Overview

The City of Vancouver and Vancouver School Board have been running a School Street at Lord Roberts Elementary since 2021 where a car-free block was created on Comox Street between Bidwell Street and Cardero Street during school pick-up and drop-off times.

During the first two years of the School Streets Program, the school community reported an increased sense of safety. Families also reported walking, biking and rolling more often to get to and from school. Building off the success of the pilot and the feedback collected over the last two years, the City is exploring the idea of creating a year-round School Street between Bidwell and Cardero streets.

A Year-Round School Street is a car-free public space at all times of the day throughout the year. The public space would remain accessible to those walking, biking and rolling, but vehicle access and parking would not be available (except for emergency services). This would create a safe, welcoming public space for the school and community to enjoy.

In the spring of 2023, we asked neighbouring residents and the school community for feedback on this proposal.

We received 584 survey responses between March 27 and April 20, 2023. The online survey asked people how they might use the year-round school street if it were implemented and what amenities they would like to see in the space.

This survey summary provides an overview of the feedback we collected.

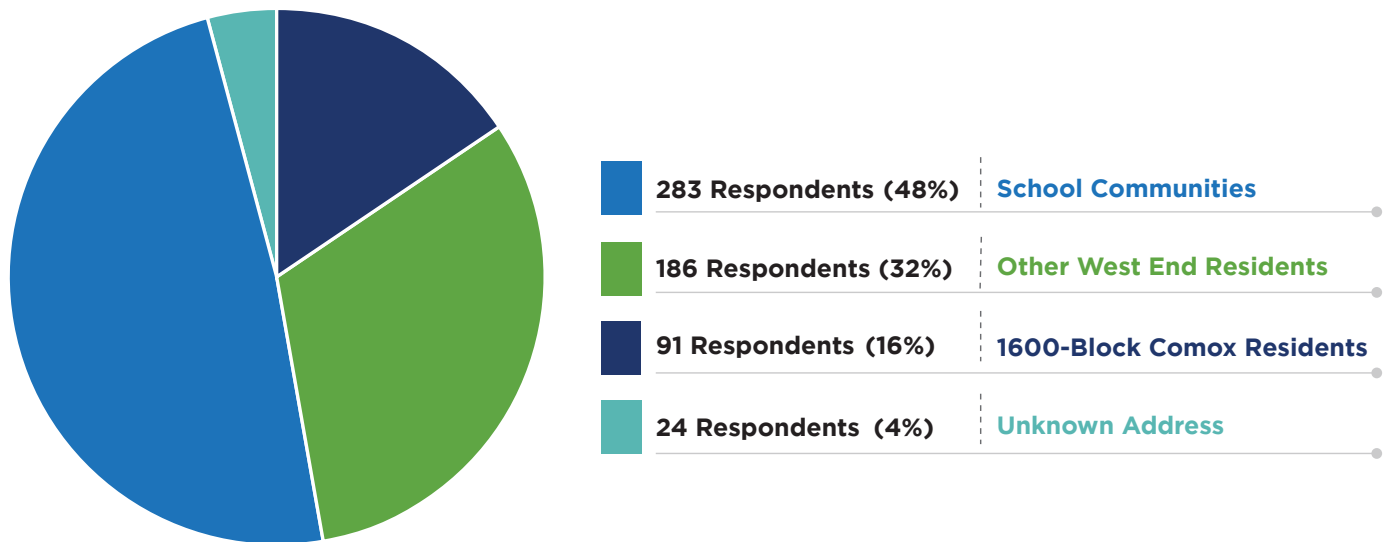
Your Connection to Comox Year-Round School Street

Q1. What is your connection to the Comox Year-Round School Street Project? Select all that apply.

Out of the 584 survey responses we received:

- 283 people identified themselves as parents, guardians, students or staff of Lord Roberts Elementary School, Lord Roberts Annex, and King George Secondary Schools
- 183 people indicated they live in the West End
 - 143 people live within a two-block radius of Lord Roberts Elementary School
 - 43 people live outside the two-block radius
- 91 people indicated they live on the 1600-block of Comox Street
- 24 people did not identify any connection to the School Street

Survey Respondents

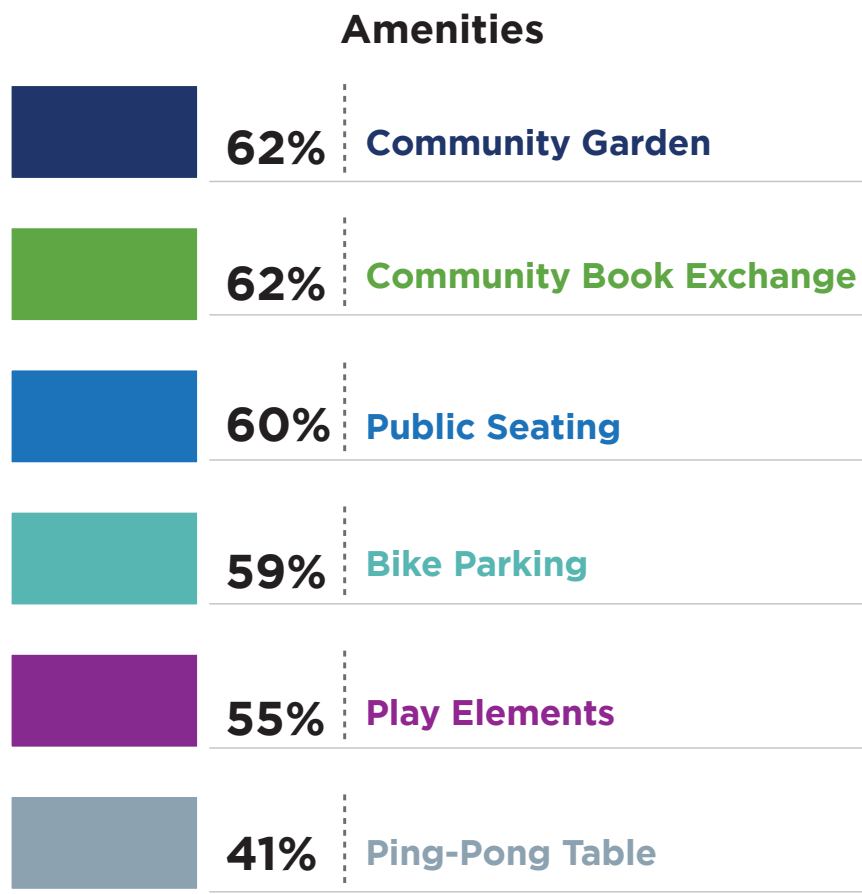


Q2. Please tell us your level of support for each of the following amenities that are being considered.

We invited people to rank a list of six amenities they might want to see in the space. Here is what we heard.

Over half of the respondents said they “strongly” or “somewhat” support the following ideas:

- Having a community garden space (62%)
- A community book exchange (62%)
- Public seating (60%)
- Bike parking (59%) and,
- Having play elements (55%) onsite
- A ping-pong table was the least supported amenity at 41%



*See page 6 for a complete break down of amenity results

Q3. We want the Comox Year-Round School Street to be cared for and enjoyed by neighbours, the school and the wider community. To help us design the space, please tell us how likely you are to use the Comox Year-Round School Street for different purposes.

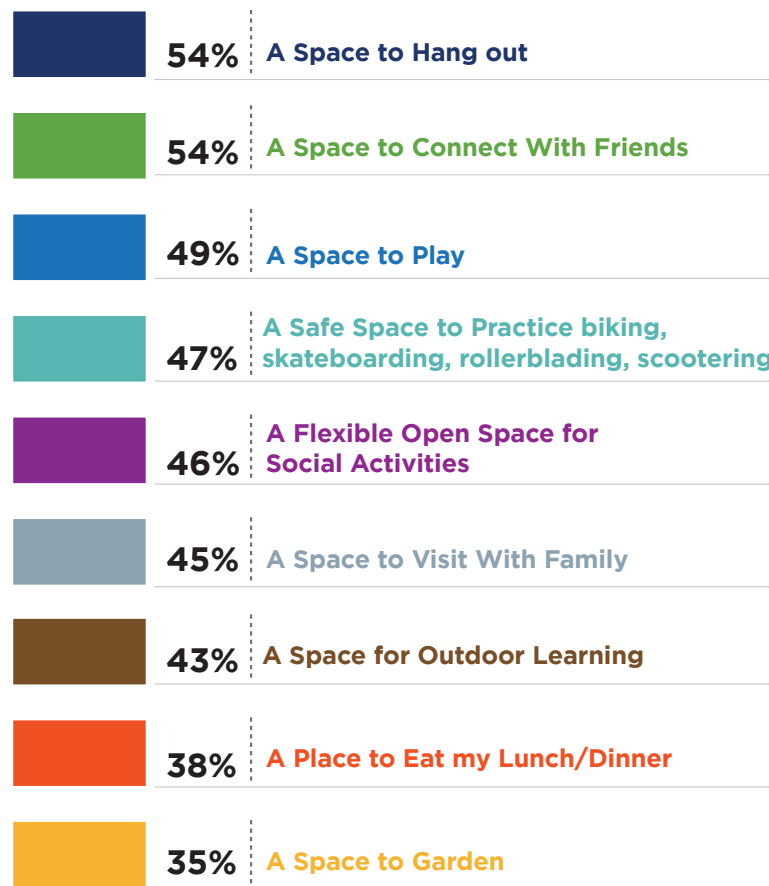
About half of the respondents said they would be “very likely” or “likely” to use the School Street for the following:

- Hanging out and spending time there (54%)
- Connecting with friends (54%)
- Playing (49%)
- Use it as a safe place to practice biking, skateboarding, rollerblading, and scooting (47%)

Less than half of the respondents indicated they would use the School Street for:

- Social activities (46%)
- Visiting family (45%)
- Outdoor learning (43%)
- Eating lunch/dinner (38%)
- Gardening (35%)

Space Use



*See page 6 for a complete break down of space use results

Total Breakdown of Amenities

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Supportive	Neither Supportive nor Unsupportive	Somewhat Unsupportive	Strongly Unsupportive
Community Garden	49%	13%	7%	3%	29%
Community Book Exchange	45%	17%	12%	3%	24%
Public Seating	48%	12%	6%	3%	31%
Bike Parking	45%	14%	10%	3%	28%
Play Elements & Games on Pavement	45%	10%	6%	4%	34%
Ping Pong Table	28%	13%	16%	6%	37%

Total Breakdown of Space Use

I would use the Year-Round School Street as:	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Don't Know
A space to hang out	36%	18%	6%	39%	1%
A space to connect with friends	34%	20%	7%	37%	1%
A space to play	37%	12%	7%	42%	1%
A safe space to bike, skateboard, rollerblade & scooter	36%	11%	8%	42%	3%
A flexible open space for social activities	29%	17%	10%	41%	3%
A space to visit family	27%	18%	11%	42%	2%
A space for outdoor learning	26%	17%	12%	42%	4%
A place to eat my lunch/dinner	21%	17%	17%	43%	1%
A space to garden	20%	15%	18%	43%	4%

Q4 & Q5: Do you have any concerns about the implementation of the Year-Round School Street? Do you have any comments for us to consider?

Out of the 584 survey responses, 410 people shared their comments and concerns, addressing one or more themes in their answers. One hundred seventy-four (174) respondents did not complete the comments or concerns section of the survey.












The most common themes included:

- Concerns over parking loss (125 mentions)
- A year-round School Street would be a space to enjoy and use for active travel (115 mentions)
- Concern about how the space will be used and managed (such as littering) (103 mentions)
- The concern is that there will be more vehicle traffic & congestion (90 mentions)
- Concern for personal safety (78 mentions)
- Dissatisfaction with the City's engagement process (64 mentions)
- Questions around why more space is required for the school (53 mentions)
- Concerns with increased noise in the area from people lingering in the area (49 mentions)
- Potential loading and delivery problems (48 mentions)
- Not having access to residential buildings on Comox St. (34 mentions)
- Concerns around road safety in the area (29 mentions)

[*Continue to page 8](#)

Questions 4 & 5 continued

Summary of Themes/Mentions

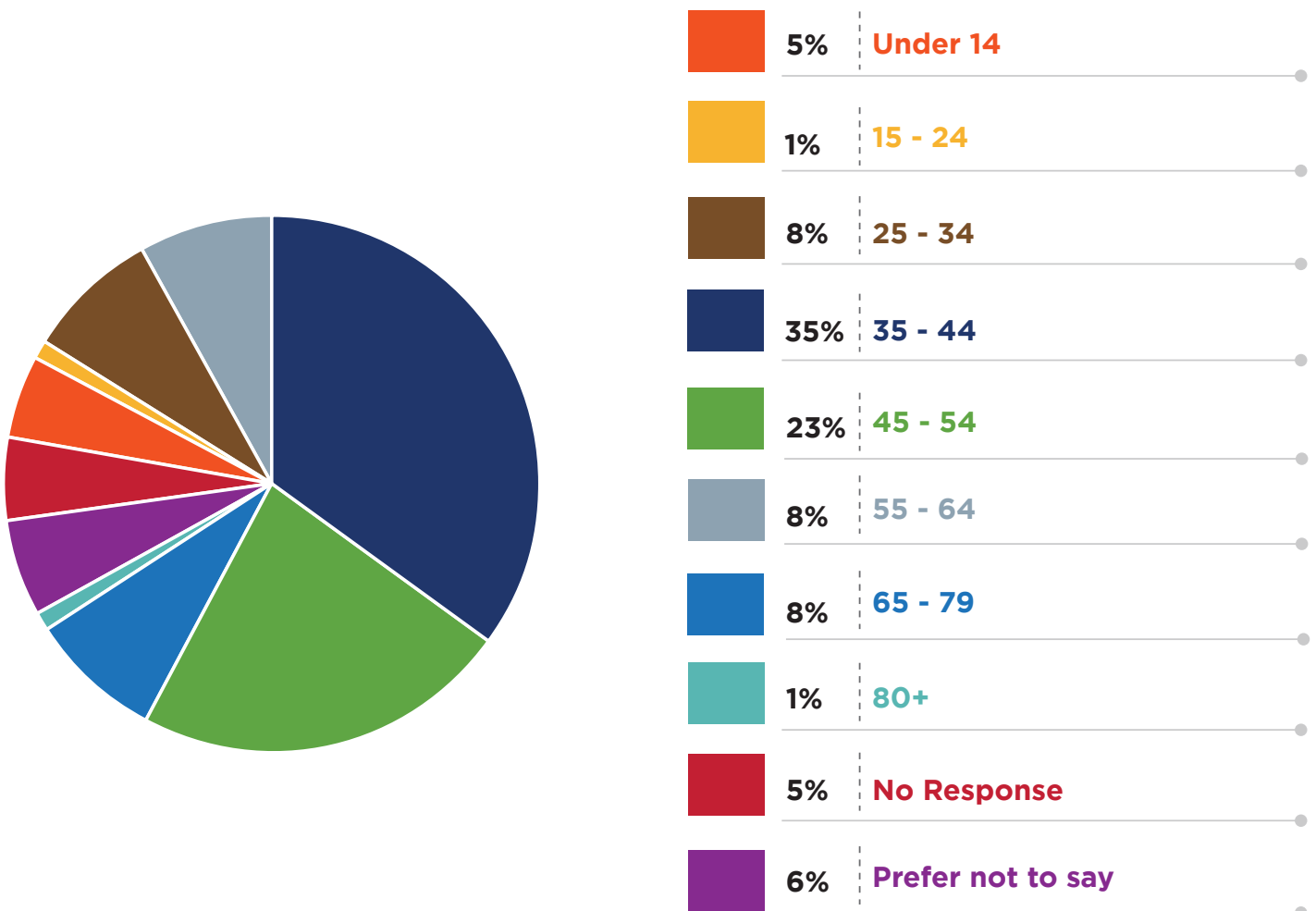
Mentions	Themes	Total Percentage
 125	Concerns over parking loss	21%
 115	A space to enjoy & use for active travel	20%
 103	How space is used & managed	18%
 90	Concern about vehicle traffic & congestion	16%
 78	Concern for personal safety	14%
 64	Dissatisfaction with City's engagement process	11%
 53	Questions around why more space is required for the school	9%
 49	Concerns with increased noise	8%
 48	Potential loading & delivery problems	8%
 34	Not having access to residential buildings on Comox St.	6%
 29	Concerns around road safety	5%

Demographics

Q6: How old are you?

Most people we heard from were between 35-44 years old (35%) and 45-54 years old (23%).

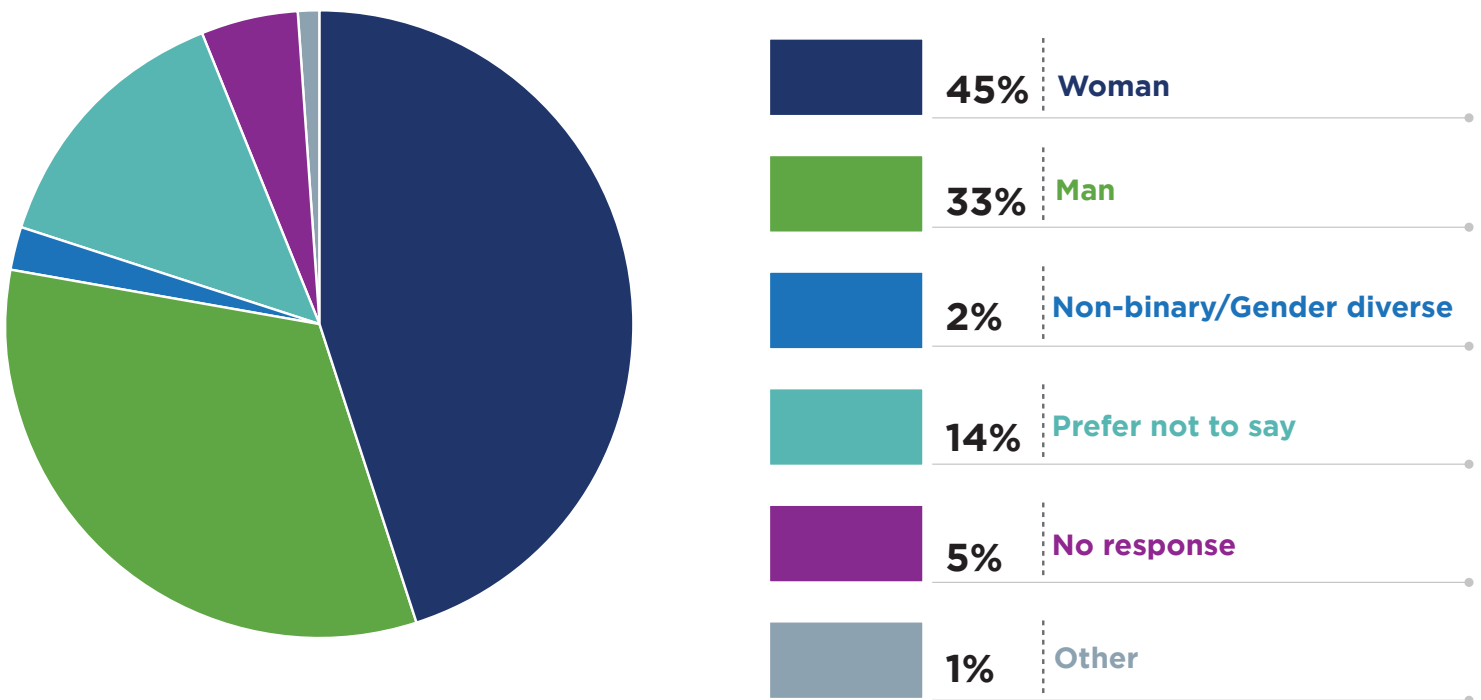
Age Distribution of Survey Respondents



Q7: How would you best describe your gender identity?

Forty-five per cent (45%) of the respondents identified as women, and 33% identified as men.

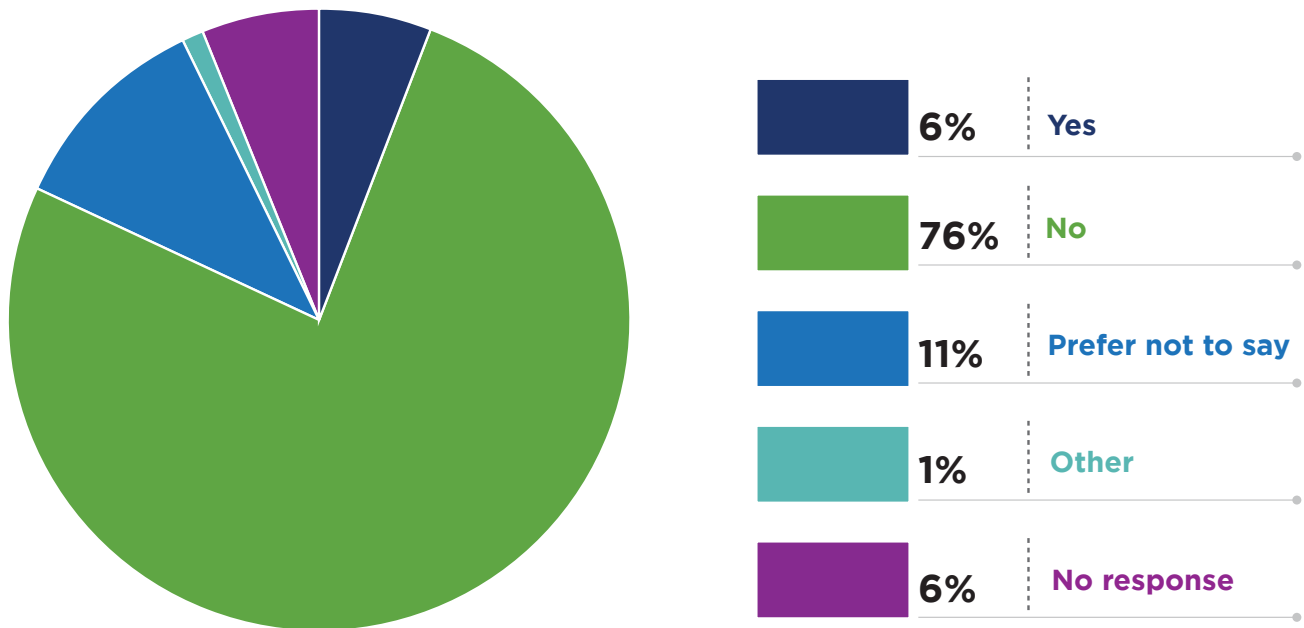
Gender Identity of Survey Respondents



Q8: Do you identify yourself as having a disability (this includes using a walker or a wheelchair)?

Six per cent (6%) of people identified as having a disability (this includes using a walker or a wheelchair).

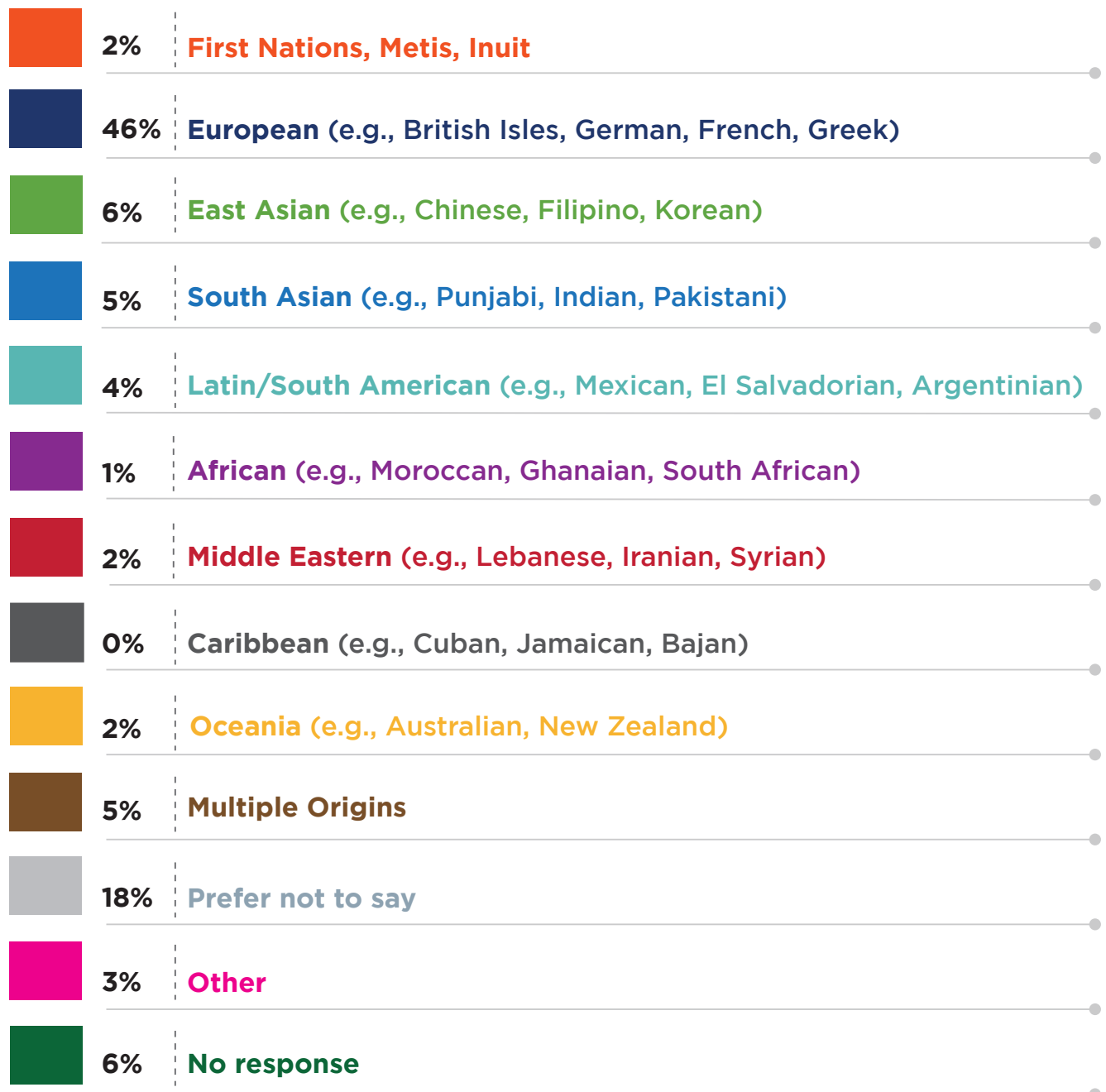
Persons with Disabilities



Q9: What do you consider your main ethnic origin(s) or that of your ancestors (parents, grandparents)?

We heard from more people who identified their ethnic origin as European than any other category.

Ethnic Origins of Survey Respondents



Q4 & Q5: Do you have any concerns about the implementation of the Year-Round School Street? Do you have any comments for us to consider?

Themes	Examples of Public Feedback
Parking Loss (125 mentions)	<p><i>"The West End is chronically short of parking. Removing access to parking on Comox will only make matters worse in the surrounding area."</i></p> <p><i>"Removing 20 parking spaces will create more hardship for those of us who live nearby and rely on our cars."</i></p>
A year-round School Street would be a space to enjoy and use for active travel (115 mentions)	<p><i>"The Safety around school drop-off and pick-up is paramount. I feel so much more confident of my child's Safety since [the School Streets Pilot] has been implemented."</i></p> <p><i>"Losing the street would eliminate a meaningful and important space for outdoor activities for families, the school community and our surrounding neighbours who could use the space to interact and connect."</i></p> <p><i>"Great opportunity for children to have the safety of a space for fun activities and for the community to enjoy. Something that increases the opportunity for people to come together as a community and to share such a space is an important and worthwhile endeavor."</i></p> <p><i>"It's a great idea! We need more spaces that are safe for cycling and rolling, and more outdoor community space."</i></p> <p><i>"Parents and kids will have more space to enjoy and feel safe."</i></p> <p><i>"[A School Street is] a meaningful and important space for outdoor activities for families, the school community and our surrounding neighbours who could use the space to interact and connect."</i></p>

Themes	Examples of Public Feedback
How the space will be used and managed e.g., littering (103 mentions)	<p><i>"Amenities may draw certain individuals into the area who partake in loitering, substance use, and leave messes, and in this case, that would be immediately next to a children's playground."</i></p> <p><i>"It will become a garbage dump with so much crime. Just an awful idea. We can't drive around as it is!"</i></p> <p><i>"Was any consultation done of residents? Why would we want to make things less accessible for ourselves? Why would we want to set up a space on our front door that will likely be occupied by tents and struggling people after hours?"</i></p>
Traffic Circulation & Congestion (90 mentions)	<p><i>"The school streets program on Comox Street has effectively funneled the traffic to Bidwell, creating a traffic jam of frustrated and sometimes aggressive drivers."</i></p> <p><i>"There are already several access difficulties due to the one-way streets in the area."</i></p>
Personal safety (78 mentions) & Noise (48 mentions)	<p><i>"Safety of the residents at night and noise from loitering people at night!"</i></p> <p><i>"Concerned for my safety as I will be forced to use my back alley more."</i></p> <p><i>"This is not a good idea and could lead to an unsafe environment at night time."</i></p>
Dissatisfaction with the City's Engagement process (64 mentions)	<p><i>"Why weren't residents consulted?"</i></p> <p><i>"I never received a letter."</i></p> <p><i>"This isn't consultation; it looks like it's a done deal."</i></p>
Potential loading and delivery problems (48 mentions)	<p><i>"You will block the delivery of packages."</i></p> <p><i>"There will be delivery issues."</i></p>

Themes	Examples of Public Feedback
<p>Lack of need for this type of space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions around why more space is required for the school (53 mentions) 	<p><i>"We don't need a place to play when it's right beside a massive place to play."</i></p> <p><i>"This is unreasonable and will absolutely contribute to a less livable neighbourhood."</i></p> <p><i>"Please don't. Just don't. Just stop. The existing infrastructure is more than adequate for its intended purpose. Lord Roberts boasts a field, large play area and a picnic sitting area that can be utilized by the school community. Please leave the roads alone."</i></p>
<p>Not having access to residential buildings on Comox St. (34 mentions)</p>	<p><i>"Residents will lose parking, and those with disabilities will lose the ease of being picked up in vehicles where necessary."</i></p> <p><i>"Our building (1649 Comox) has no street level exit at the rear only very steep driveway to parkade. We have people using wheelchair and walkers that cannot manage driveway so could not get taxi or Handy-dart. Access to elevator from parkade is narrow so moving large items would not be possible. Also, many residents rely on deliveries. Residents in our building need vehicular street access to entrance."</i></p> <p><i>"I could not be more opposed. We have no back door to our building, so for anyone with any disability, they either would have to walk/wheel a fair distance to get to my building, or just not come at all. We have people living here with limited mobility. You are going to attract increased crime during the night and force single women to risk walking in the dark at night, rather than being able to be dropped at their home by Uber. You will block the delivery of packages. You will cause a significant increase in noise pollution for those who work from home."</i></p>
<p>Concerns around road safety in the area (29 mentions)</p>	<p><i>"The traffic on Pendrell Street is very congested. It is a two-way street with only space for one car to go through."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm opposed. It's a road and should be used a road. The school has plenty of space and a public area to the east of the school that could be used as year round street space. The school streets program has only pushed the car issues to Pendrell Street and Bidwell instead and made the traffic and safety even worse on those two streets surrounding the school."</i></p>

For More Information:

Email: SchoolStreets@vancouver.ca

Website: vancouver.ca/comox-school-street

City of Vancouver
Engineering Services
Community Transportation

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱ wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

