



Exploring Summer Uses for 2nd Avenue in Downtown Fernie Engagement Summary

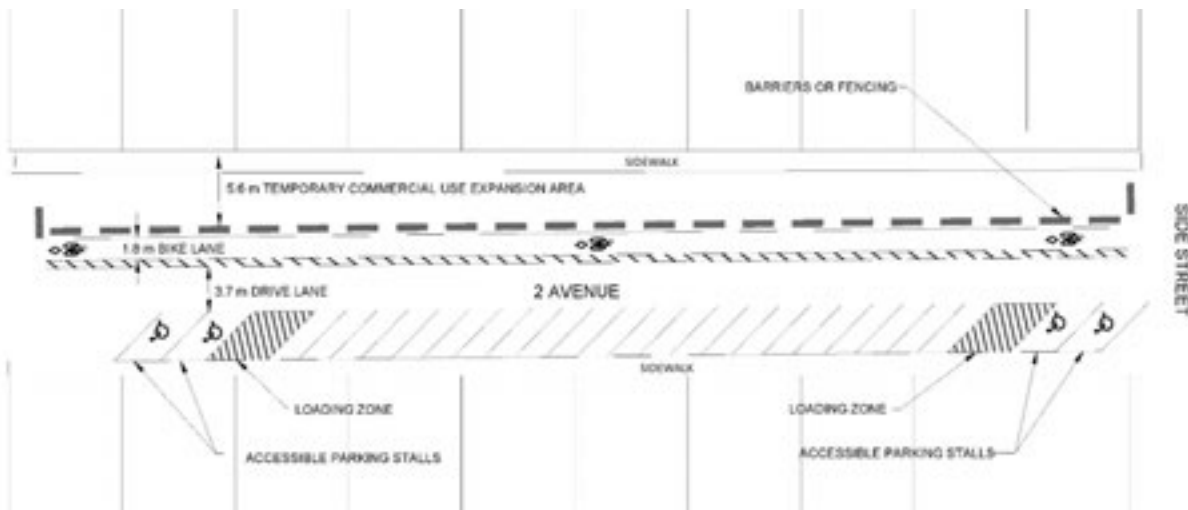
Project Introduction

Fernie City Council is exploring how temporary changes of use to 2nd Avenue could support business recovery this summer. Following a discussion of temporary or partial closures staff have developed a design for expanding business spaces into the street on 2nd Avenue between 4th and 7th Streets.

This is an approach being taken in other resort communities in Canada in an effort to support business recovery from COVID-19.

By expanding their business area outside, businesses can both accommodate higher numbers of patrons, while also supporting physical distancing recommendations for customers of their businesses, customers waiting in line, and pedestrians or cyclists traveling through the area.

Staff have developed a road-use design that allows for these options and to seek feedback from businesses and the public to help inform Council on their decision on how to move forward.



This design includes:

- Business Expansion or Public Use Area – one side of 2nd Avenue
- Vehicle Traffic – one-way travel on 2nd Avenue
- Pedestrians – can travel on the sidewalks
- Cyclists – can travel in the separated bicycle lane
- Parking – angled parking and loading zones on opposite side of 2nd Avenue from the Business Expansion or Public Use Area

Engagement Summary

A survey was delivered to businesses along 2nd Avenue between 4th and 7th Streets and an online survey was launched on Friday, June 19, 2020 to gather feedback from businesses and the public regarding how temporary changes of use to 2nd Avenue could support business recovery this summer. Paper copies of the survey were also available for pick-up/drop off at City Hall. The survey was open for feedback between June 19 and July 2, 2020.

What We Heard Overall – Key Themes

There was a robust response to the survey with 1,054 responses, 84% of which indicated they were residents and 16% indicated they were business owners in Fernie.

53% of respondents indicated that the business expansion areas would increase their comfort visiting these businesses this summer, while 20% said it would not and 26% said it would neither increase nor decrease their comfort.

47% of respondents said the proposed changes would improve their access to visit businesses on 2nd Avenue while 27% said it would worsen their accessibility and 25% said it would neither improve nor worsen. This was quite different from the business-only response where 83% of respondents indicated that the changes would worsen or have no impact on their customers' ability to access their businesses. Of businesses who identified their premise was located on 2nd Avenue, 49% felt the changes would worsen customers accessibility to their businesses and 36% felt it would have no impact.

Of the open-ended comments – there was quite a lot of interest expressed in the proposed changes to 2nd Avenue, some of the benefits identified included:

- Increased safety for pedestrians
- Increased ability to socially distance while visiting businesses, or walking past line ups
- Supporting businesses
- Creating a more vibrant atmosphere downtown
- A desire to see the street closed to traffic entirely
- Interest in doing a trial this summer and following up with feedback again once done for lessons learned

Concerns expressed included:

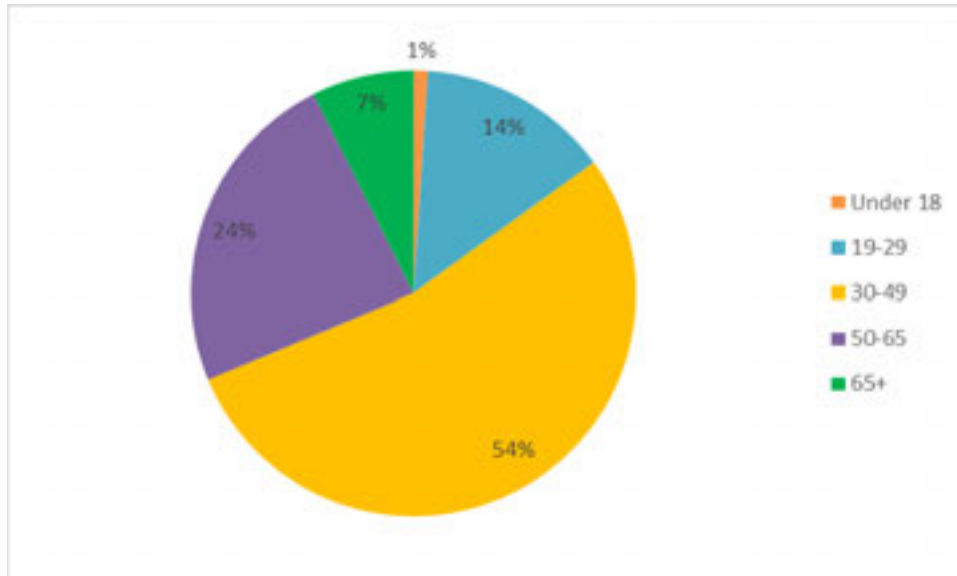
- Accessible parking for people with mobility challenges should be maintained
- The need for more parking downtown
- Confusion or congestion created by the changes
- Concern that the proposed changes would result in higher numbers of people gathering which should be avoided during the pandemic
- Too many bicycles riding on the sidewalk or don't follow the rules of the road

Survey Summary

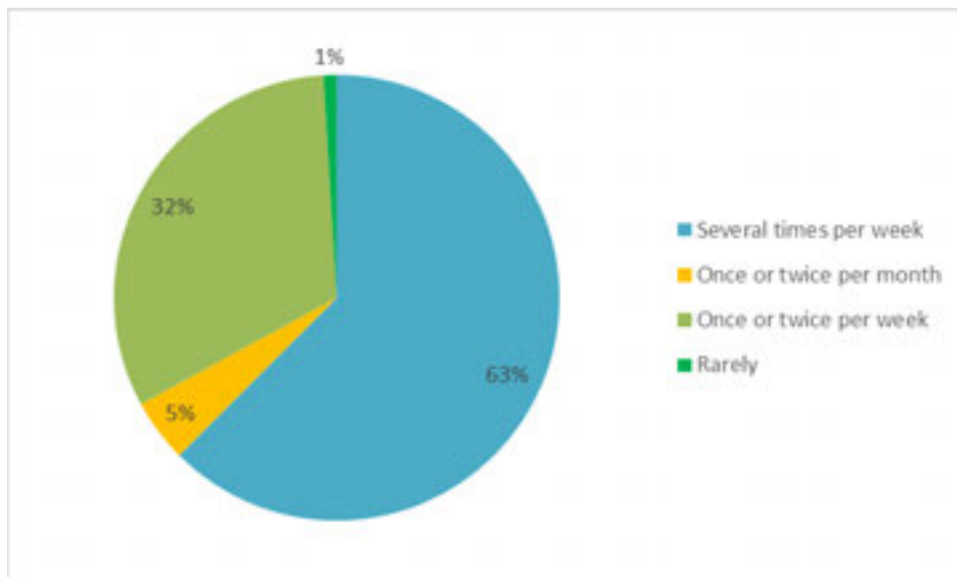
Demographic questions

These questions help us better understand responses to the survey and are optional.

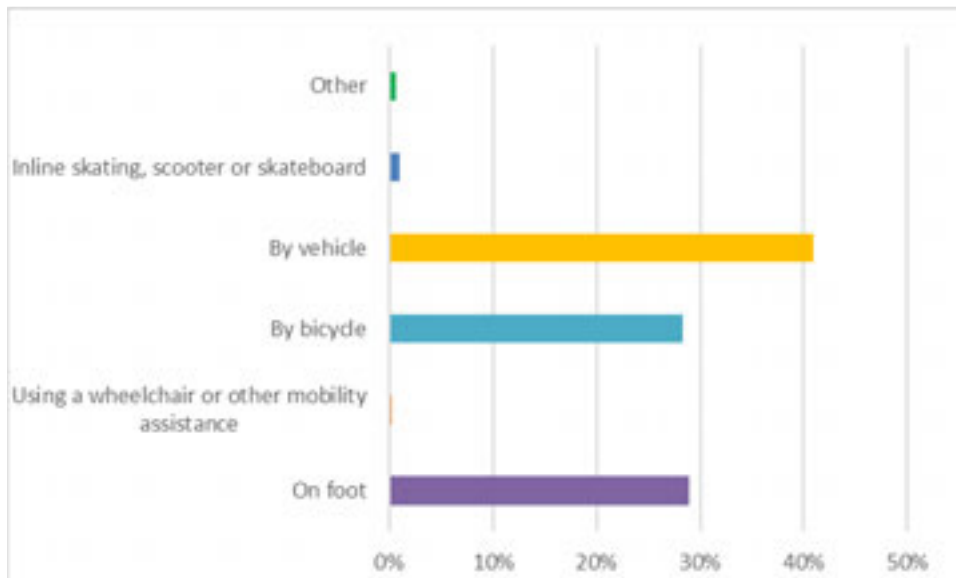
i) Please share your age.



ii) How often do you frequent businesses in downtown Fernie?



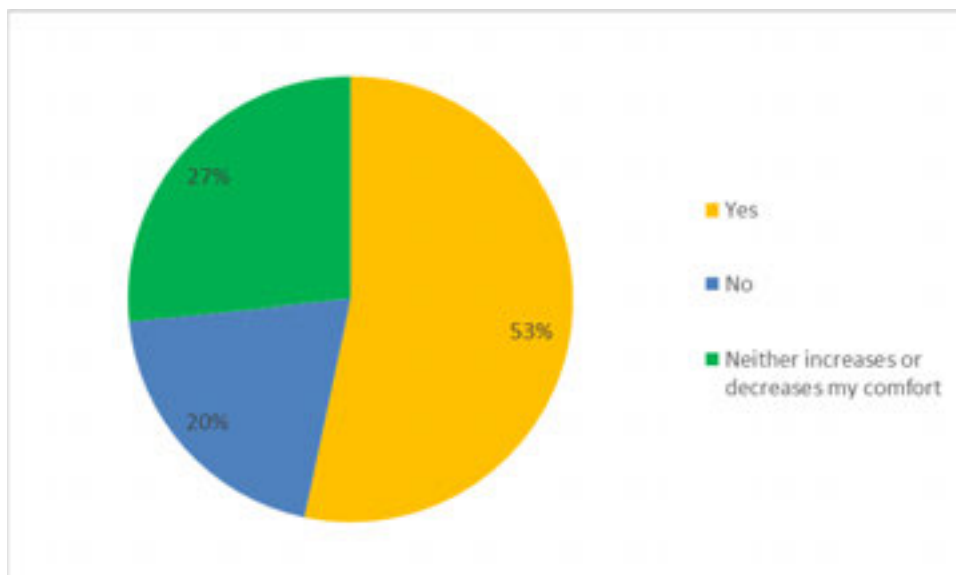
iii) How do you travel to downtown (select all that apply)?



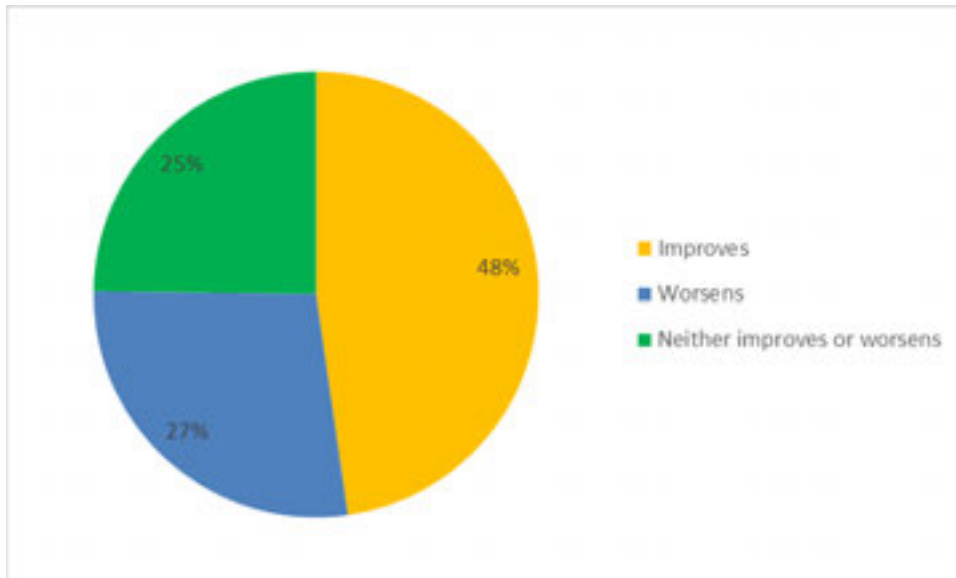
Other: A combination of the above, run, motorcycle, shuttle, with a stroller, live close, wheelchair care giver

As a resident or visitor to downtown Fernie, please respond to the questions below.

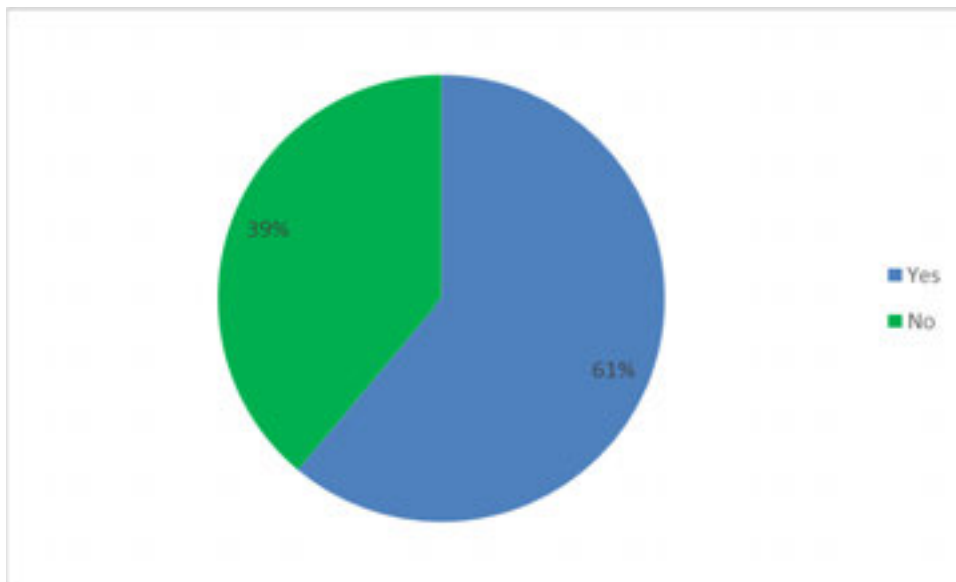
1. If businesses on 2nd Avenue between 4th and 7th Streets could expand their spaces into the street this summer, would that increase your comfort visiting these businesses?



2. Do you feel the changes being considered improve or worsen your accessibility to visit businesses on 2nd Avenue?



3. With these potential changes, would it be of interest to you to accommodate two-way bicycle traffic on 2nd Avenue?



4. In your opinion what are the benefits and impacts with allowing one-way vehicle traffic, business expansion areas on one-side of 2nd avenue, and angle parking on the other side of second avenue?

Business owner key themes:

- Accessibility parking for people with mobility challenges are maintained
- Improved atmosphere for people walking and increases foot traffic for businesses

- Increases ability to social distance during COVID-19 pandemic
- 2nd Avenue should be closed completely to vehicle traffic
- Reflects the need to balance social distancing, with maintaining parking, accessibility and supporting businesses
- Increased safety for pedestrians with decreased vehicle traffic, and encouraging active lifestyles; however, also concern about people needing to cross the street to access businesses on the side without parking
- Concern about reduction of parking spaces for employees, seniors, parents of young children and those who may have mobility issues
- No benefit or only benefits businesses that are located on the one side of 2nd avenue
- Concern about increased traffic congestion

Business owner on 2nd Ave key themes:

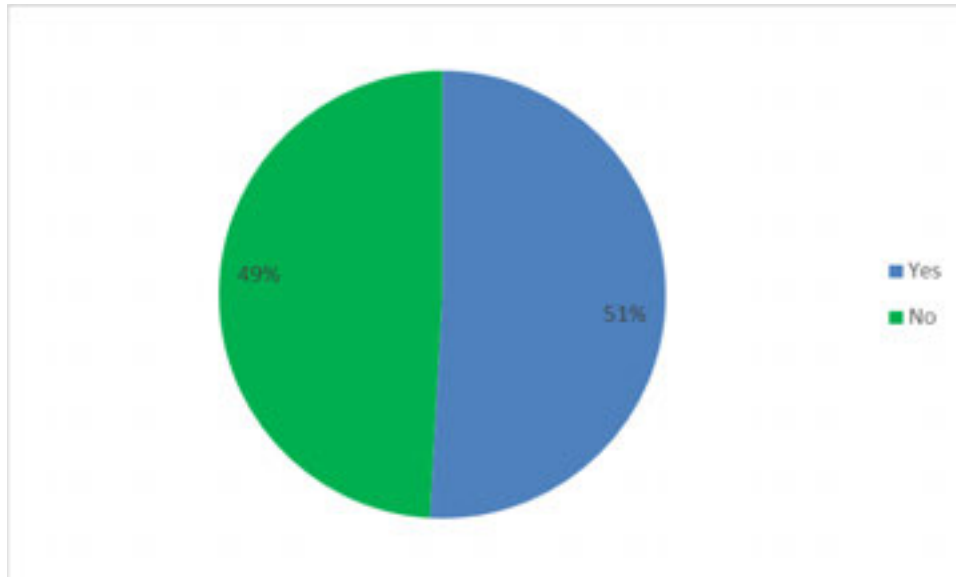
- Maintains accessibility for people of all mobilities
- Reflects the need to balance social distancing, with maintaining parking, accessibility and supporting businesses
- Creates a pedestrian friendly atmosphere
- Supports businesses during COVID-19 and economic downturn; however, benefits businesses on one side of the street more than the other
- 2nd Avenue should be closed to all vehicle traffic or all parking to allow for both sides to expand
- Increased safety to pedestrians and cyclists through reduced vehicle traffic and separation
- No benefit

Resident key themes:

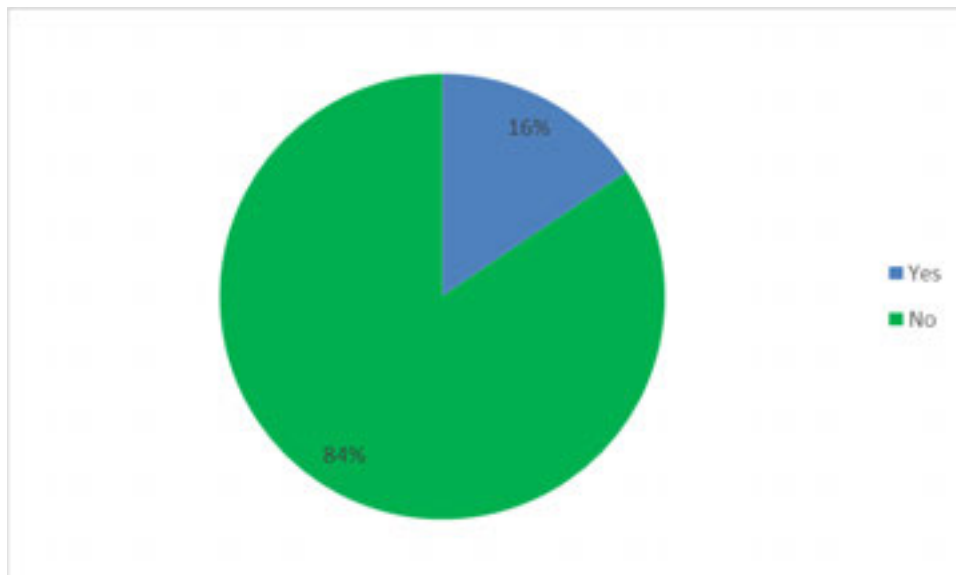
- Increases pedestrian and cyclist access to the area and creates a friendly atmosphere
- Maintains accessibility for people of all mobilities; however, also concern about reducing accessibility to the area for people with mobility challenges and seniors by creating further walking requirements
- Supporting businesses by increasing foot traffic for nearby businesses and allowing for safe physical distancing during COVID-19 and economic downturn; however, benefits businesses on one side of the street more than the other
- Increased safety for pedestrians with decreased vehicle traffic, and encouraging active lifestyles; however, also concern about people needing to cross the street or jaywalking to access businesses on the side without parking
- 2nd Avenue should be closed to all vehicle traffic
- Cyclist infrastructure will allow for increased safety for pedestrian and cyclists through separation; however, concern about an increased potential for collisions between pedestrians and cyclists
- It is worth a trial, although may cause some confusion when it starts
- Maintains and/or increases parking options; however, concern about parking being reduced, angle parking being difficult to maneuver and reducing visibility, creating an additional barrier for those with mobility challenges and seniors, and creating difficulties for deliveries for businesses
- Concern about traffic congestion and parking impacts on adjacent streets

- Increases seating area through patios
- Concern about discouraging residents and visitors from going to the area due to confusion and difficulty of access
- No benefits

5. Do you believe there is value in allowing businesses on 2nd Avenue to expand their operations into the street beyond summer and into the winter season?

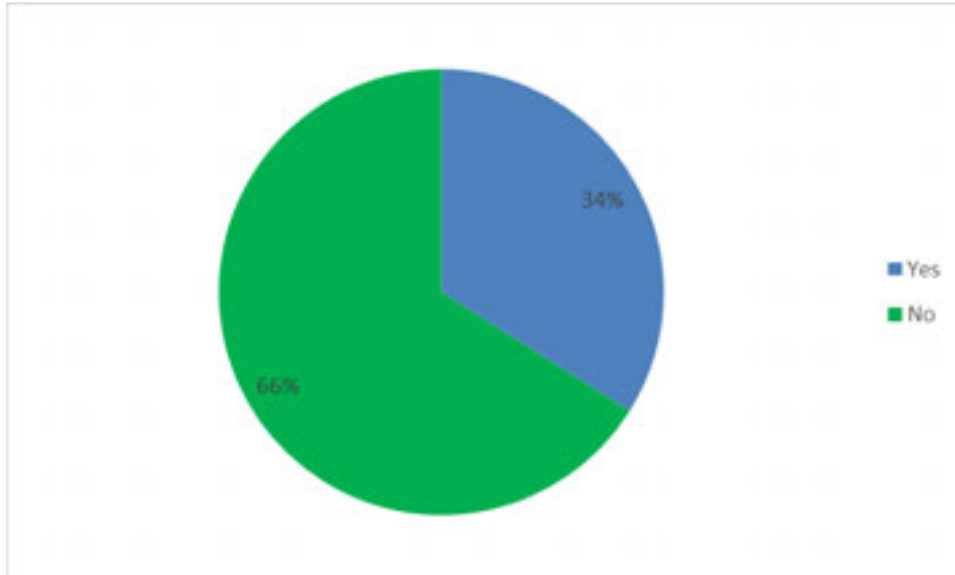


6. Do you own a business in Fernie?



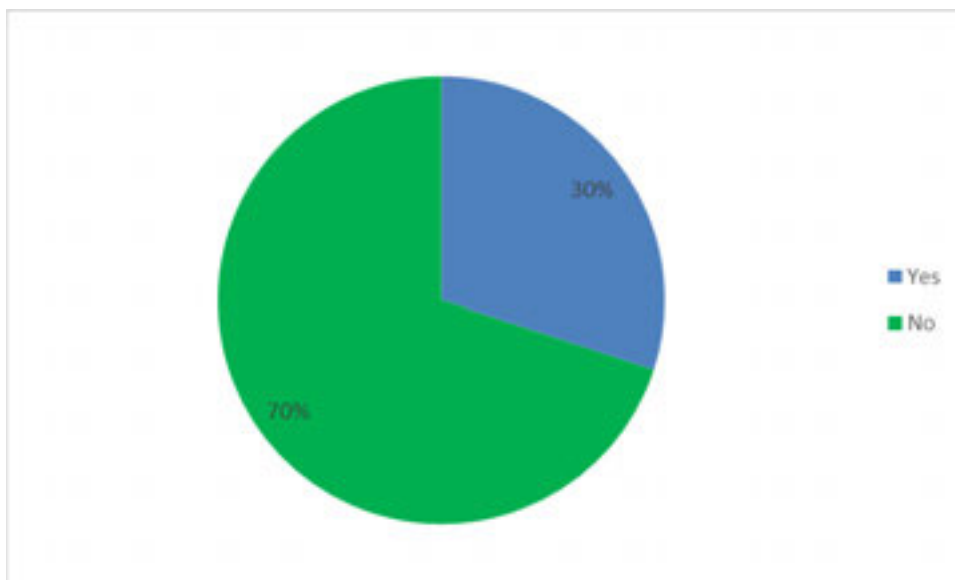
If you are a Business Owner in Fernie, please respond to the following questions

7. Is your business located on 2nd Avenue between 4th and 7th Streets?

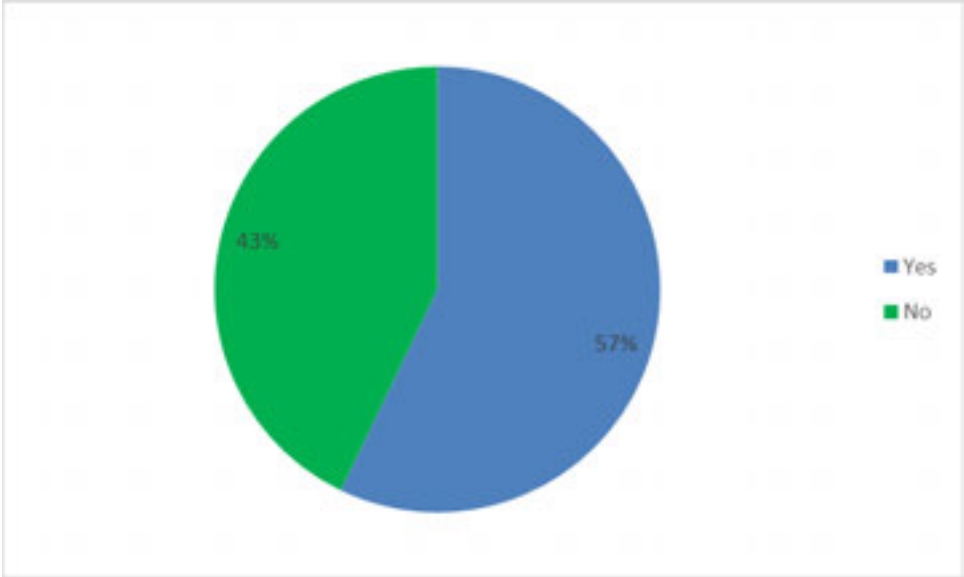


As the owner of a business on 2nd Avenue Businesses between 4 and 7 Streets

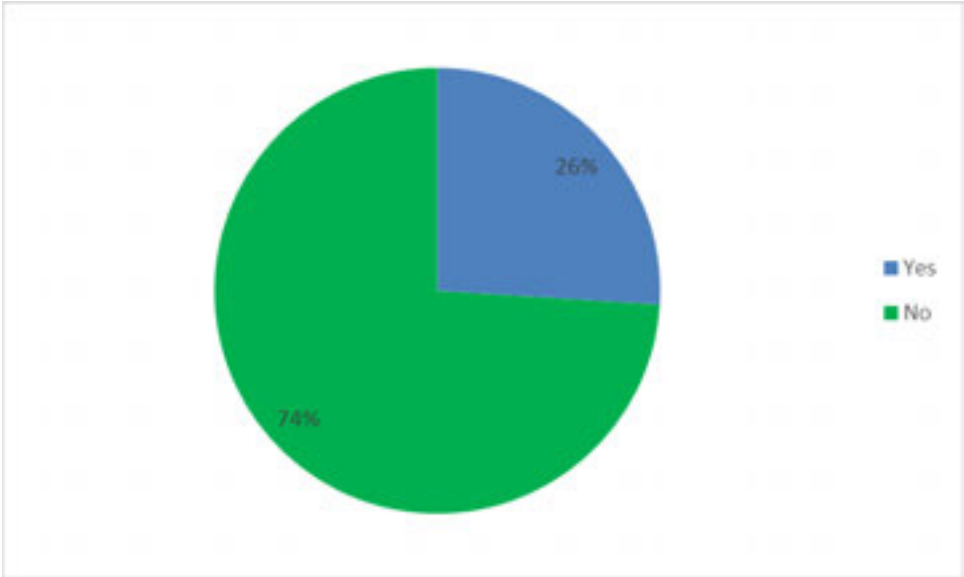
8. If you had the opportunity, would you use part of the street to expand your business for the summer?



9. Would a 3.8 meter (12 foot) expansion area in the street be wide enough to meet your business expansion needs?

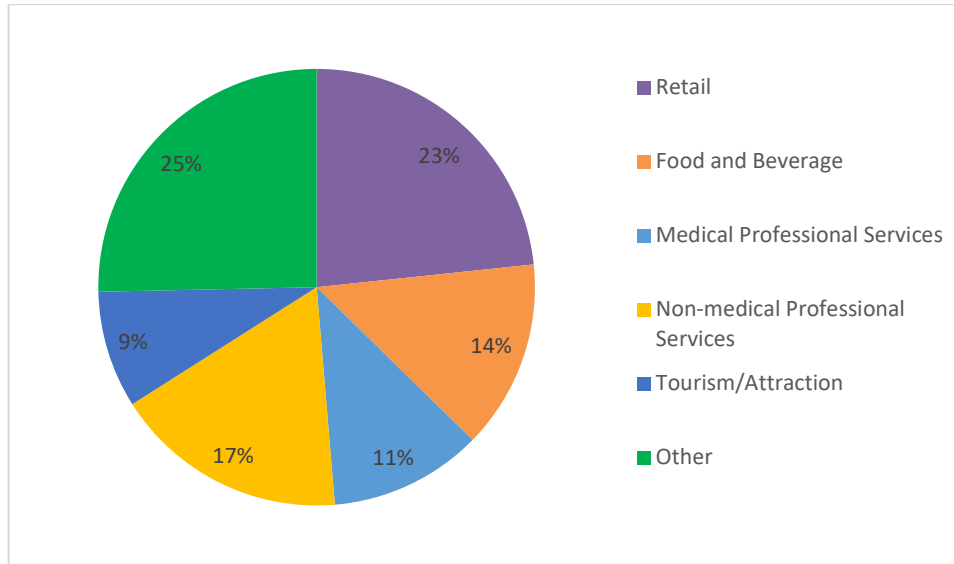


10. Do you believe there is value to you in allowing your business to expand operations into the street beyond summer and into the winter season?



As the owner of a business in Fernie

11. What industry are you in?



Other: Construction, professional services, daycare, pet care, fitness, hospitality, manufacturing, e-commerce, real estate, trades, transportation

12. What do you see as the potential impacts to your business operations with allowing one-way vehicle traffic, business expansion areas on one-side of 2nd Avenue, and angle parking on the other side of 2nd Avenue?

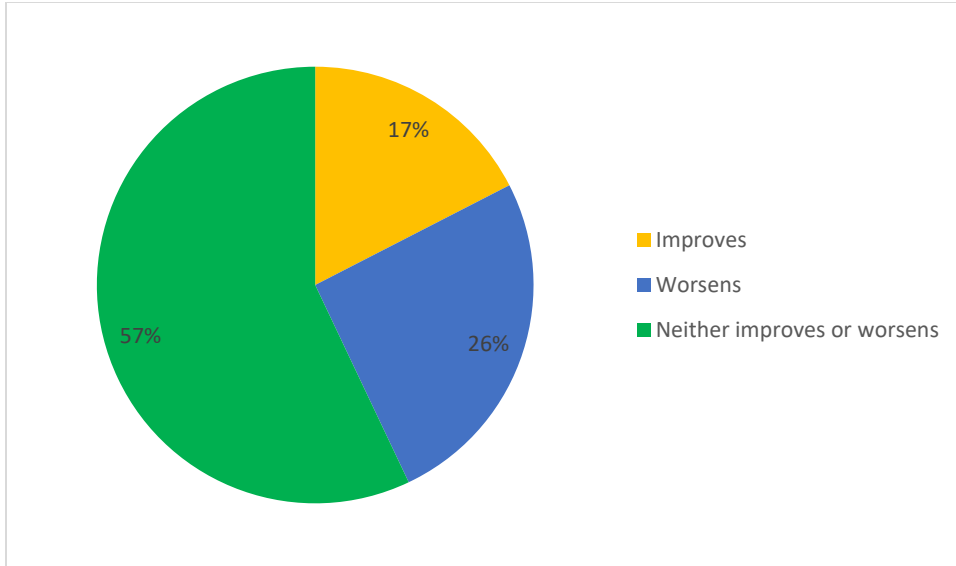
Business owner key themes:

- Concern about accessibility for those with mobility challenges
- No impact
- Concern about parking for deliveries and increasing traffic congestion
- Opportunity to create an interesting atmosphere appealing towards tourists

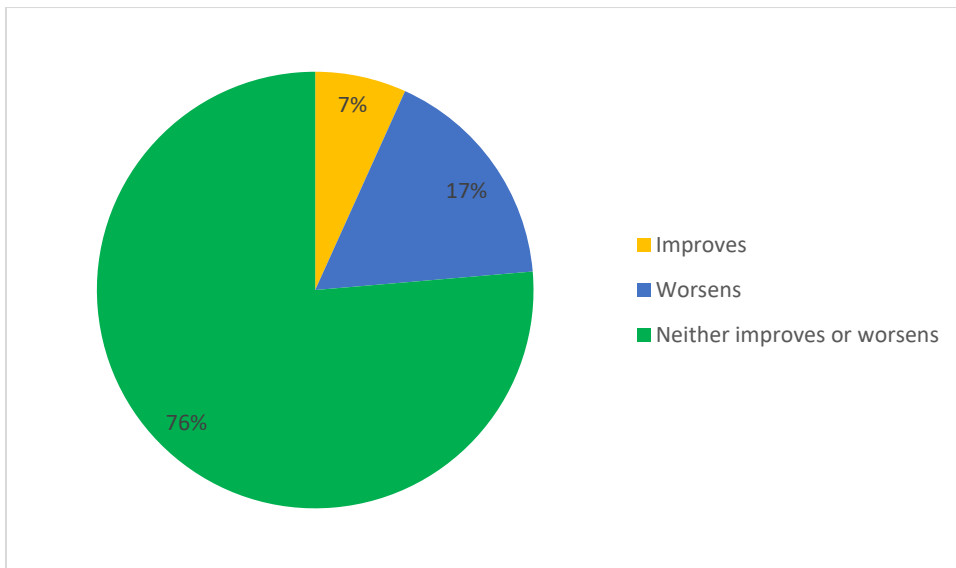
Business owner on 2nd Ave key themes:

- Concern about parking access for clients, employees and deliveries
- Potential to draw in tourists and increase foot traffic, increasing business; however, potential to discourage people from shopping due to difficult access and therefore reducing revenue
- Close 2nd Avenue to all vehicle access
- No benefit to the side not being expanded

13. Do you feel this potential change in use to 2nd Avenue improves or makes worse customers' accessibility to your business?



14. Do you feel this potential change to 2nd Avenue improves or makes worse your business' ability to receive deliveries?



15. Please share any additional comments you might have

Residents key themes:

- Like the idea and would like to see it tried this summer
- Recommendations to solicit follow-up feedback after a trial to see if any adjustments need to be made
- Would prefer if it was closed to all vehicle traffic

- Feel it will create a more vibrant downtown
- Concern about parking availability and employee parking downtown
- Concern about accessibility for those with limited mobility, suggestions included keeping parallel parking, adding disabled parking mid-block, allowing parking exception passes for seniors, expectant and new mothers, etc.
- Concern about creating confusion or congestion with changes to traffic flow
- Suggestions about what supporting changes may be needed on 1st and 3rd Avenue, e.g. changing to opposite direction one-way traffic, adding angled parking to these streets, re-directing bike traffic to these streets

Business owners key themes:

- Like the idea and would like to try it
- Feel it may be better to close to vehicle traffic entirely
- It will help to create a vibrant, family friendly atmosphere downtown
- Feel it needs to be done very soon
- Concern about parking availability downtown

Business owners on 2nd Ave key themes:

- Would like to see it done soon before the summer/tourism season is over
- Concern that expansion areas on only one side of the street is unfair
- Concern that it may compromise customer access to their business
- Concern that it may compromise curbside pick-up service