



CITY OF PORTLAND

Jon P. Jennings, City Manager

To: Housing & Economics Development Committee
From: Jon P. Jennings, City Manager
Date: February 16, 2021
RE: Survey results related to the outdoor dining program

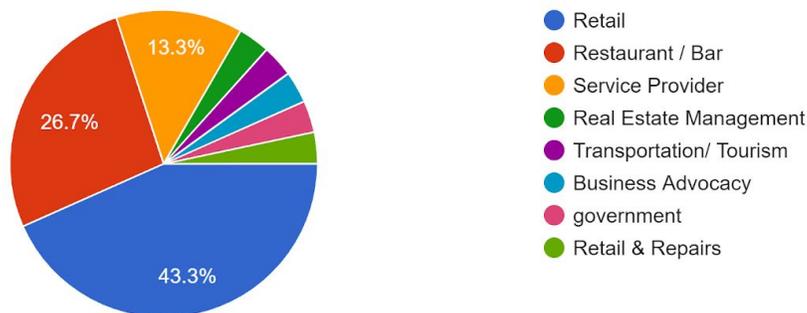
To assist small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has implemented an outdoor dining/retail program that allows businesses to continue to serve customers as safely as possible. Staff recommend an extension of the Emergency Proclamation allowing, among other things, businesses to continue to operate outdoors in order to ensure safe and continued operations during a challenging time.

In response to HED Committee feedback, staff recently distributed a survey geared toward small businesses throughout Portland (January 2021). It was distributed to permitted businesses for which the City has an active email address; in addition, it was shared with partners (Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce, Portland Downtown, and Portland Buy Local) to share with their members.

Thirty (30) recipients completed the survey. Of those 30 respondents, only 10 were currently participating in the program (meaning they were permitted to conduct business outdoors during the winter). Survey results and staff analysis are below:

What is the primary nature of your business?

30 responses



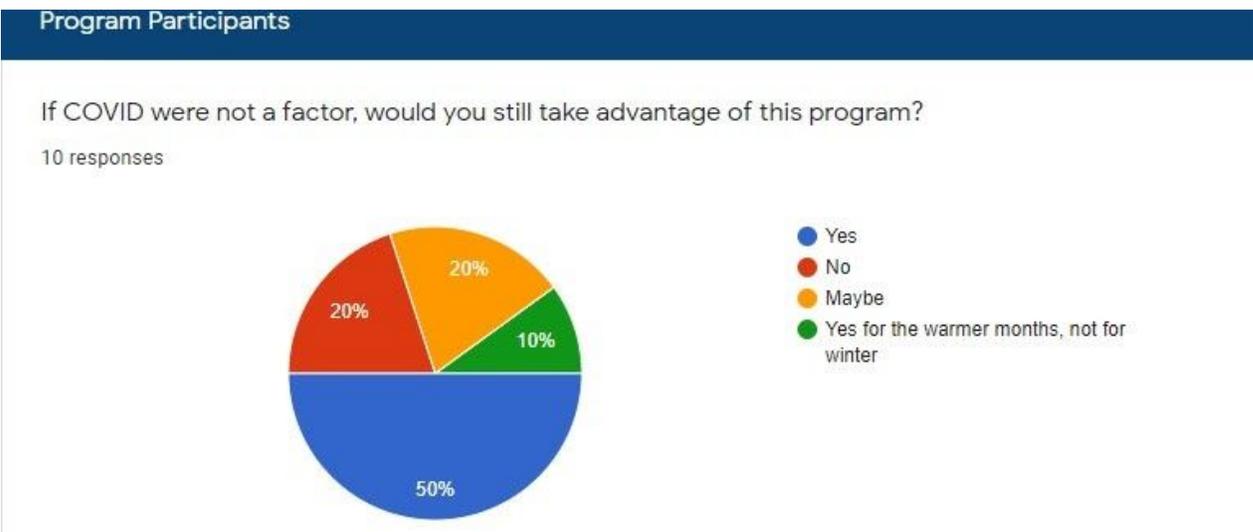
Which of the following has your business received a permit to do since June 2020?:

30 responses



The pie slices in the above represent the following: Conducted business on a temporarily closed street (dark blue); Conducted business on a permitted parklet (bright red); Conducted business in a different public space (e.g. a park) (yellow); Conducted business outdoors on private property during the winter (green); None of the above (purple); Both permitted parklet and outdoors private property during the winter (light blue); A couple of tables and four chairs on the sidewalk (pink); I did not get a permit but operated on Exchange Street when closed to traffic (lime); Sidewalk permit in front of our store (dark red).

The following questions were directed to current program participants (an audience of 10 small businesses):



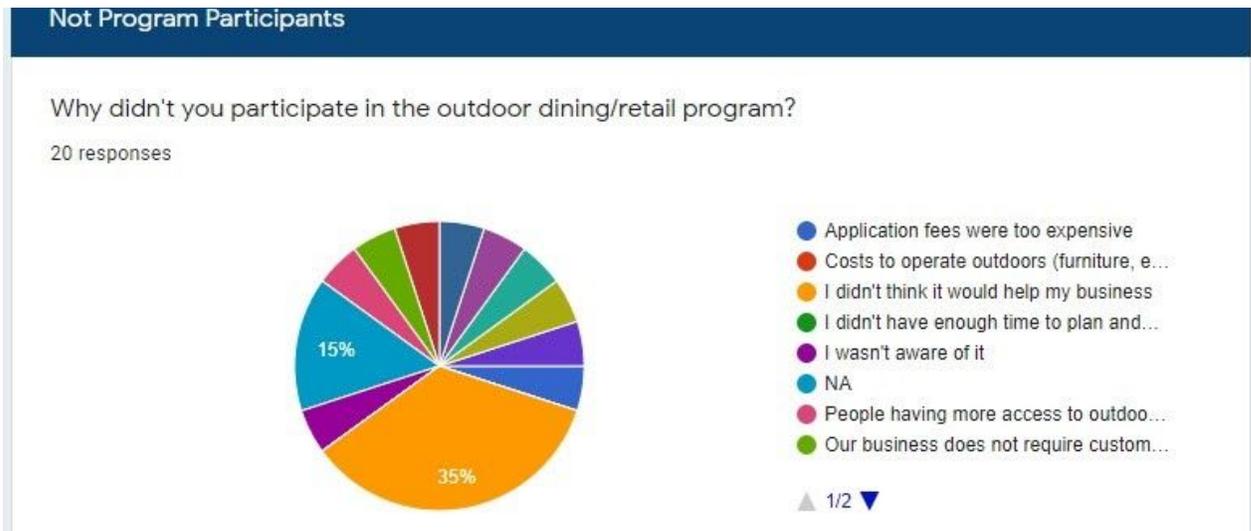
If this program were to continue, how could we improve it?

10 responses



Responses to the above include Reduce fees (dark blue); give businesses more advance notice (dark red); activate public spaces with art and culture (green); It worked well as it was (light blue); Close Boothby Square to traffic (pink); More flexibility with respect to the outdoor dining space on public space boundaries, which were difficult to comply with and make attractive (lime); Directional signage (dark red); The street closure program should not continue (dark blue).

The following questions were directly to businesses that were not participating in the program:



- People having more access to outdoor space in the summer of 2021 will help us attract more visitors to the region.
 - n/a
 - too much work for us to bring out products and the chance of breakage.
 - not applicable
 - We have plenty of opudoor space
 - we did not need outdoor space
- ▲ 2/2 ▼

Staff Analysis

The results of this survey proved what similar surveys conducted in 2020 showed: there is far from a consensus among small business owners about the best way to support their operations during COVID-19. We believe this speaks to the unique challenges and circumstances each small business owner faces, depending on their business history, location, nature, and owner expectations.

As such, we believe that our current plan for spring/summer 2021, which would reintroduce street closures to Wharf and Dana streets. In addition, we will consider the same changes to Middle Street traffic flow. These changes, in addition to allowing outdoor business activities similar to last year's summer program, is the most efficient way to accommodate the varied needs and interests of Portland's small business community.