

# SAFE STREETS INITIATIVE

## Evaluation Report

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT  
MARCH 2021



**PBOT**  
PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

## PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL

**Ted Wheeler**, Mayor  
**Jo Ann Hardesty**, Commissioner-in-Charge  
**Mingus Mapps**  
**Carmen Rubio**  
**Dan Ryan**

## CONTRIBUTING TEAMS

Many people contributed to the creation of the Safe Streets Initiative, under the leadership of **Director Chris Warner**.

Key PBOT teams contributing this report include:

**Policy, Planning & Projects** led by Art Pearce

**Active Transportation & Safety**  
led by Catherine Ciarlo

**Transportation Planning** led by Kristin Hull

**Equity & Inclusion Program** led by Irene Marion

**Communications & Public Involvement**  
led by John Brady

**Maintenance Operations** led by Tara Wasiak

**Right of Way Management & Permitting**  
led by Amber Clayton

**Parking Operations** led by Chris Armes

**City Traffic Engineer** Wendy Cawley

**Engineering Supervisor** Carl Snyder

## PROJECT TEAM

**Gena Gastaldi**  
Evaluation Project Lead

**Rani Boyle, Amber Clayton, Scott Cohen, Roger Geller, Michelle Marx**  
Program Leads

**Bridgette Coleman, Maggie Derk, Jocelyn Ginton, Shreya Jain, Francesca Jones, Colleen Mossor, Greg Raisman, Mike Serritella, Shane Valle**  
Program Support

**Stacy Brewster, Pierre Haou, Kailyn Lamb, Brady Lovell, Katie MacDougal, Vanessa Micale, Sarah Peterson, Dylan Rivera, Hannah Schafer**  
Communications, Website, Translation & Graphic Support

**Photos from the Portland Bureau of Transportation, unless noted otherwise.**

**To obtain a copy of this document or more information about this project, please visit:**

**[www.safestreetspdx.com](http://www.safestreetspdx.com)**

Portland Bureau of Transportation  
1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 1331  
Portland, OR 97204  
Phone: 503-823-6152

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# SAFE STREETS INITIATIVE

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## Evaluation Report

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*The Ankeny Street Plaza in Southeast Portland*

# The Safe Streets Initiative

supports the health, safety, and resiliency of our communities

In May 2020, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) released the Safe Streets Initiative, a report which outlined how the bureau was going to respond to the Covid-19 public health crisis. The report provided ways to respond and adapt to the challenges (and opportunities) of this unprecedented time.

Early on, it became clear that PBOT would prioritize physical distancing on our streets. Three strategies were identified in the Safe Streets Initiative report that became the pillars of the program: Safer Busy Streets, Healthy Businesses, and Slow Streets.

**Safer Busy Streets:** On busy streets with crowded sidewalks, PBOT made changes to provide more space and make it easier for people to stay physically distanced.

**Healthy Businesses:** PBOT supported our many business “main streets” by providing more space for pickups and deliveries, as well as plazas for outdoor dining and retail.

**Slow Streets:** PBOT turned sections of our low-traffic streets (known as “neighborhood greenways”) into “local access only.” This helped limit traffic to essential trips and deliveries. It also made these streets more accessible for everyone, providing more space to get outside while staying close to home.

PBOT identified the following actions for each of these pillars:



## Safer Busy Streets

- Expand pedestrian space to support physical distancing on sidewalks where space is limited. This includes along narrow sidewalks, areas with lots of pedestrians, and at intersections where people must wait to cross the street.
- Work with partner agencies to expand pedestrian space to support physical distancing on roadways, bridges, and freeway crossings not managed by PBOT.
- Expand pedestrian space at transit stops where space is limited.

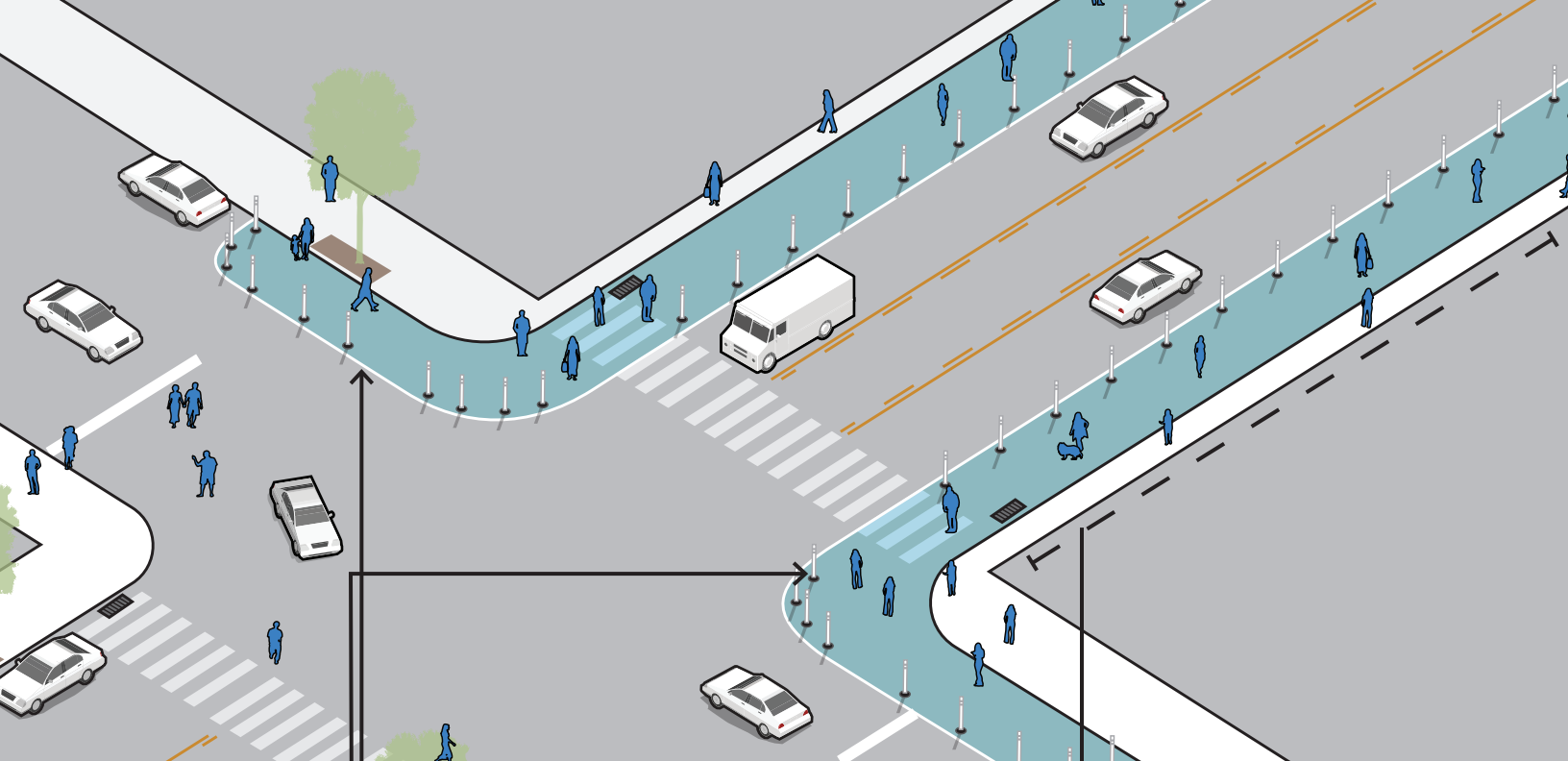
## Healthy Businesses

- Distribute a toolkit to help businesses and organizations use the right-of-way and adapt to changing guidelines on physical distancing.
- Implement loading zones for delivery and pickup, in partnership with businesses.
- Offer streamlined permitting for businesses and organizations to use the right-of-way in a way that adheres with physical distancing guidelines.
- Leverage communications and events such as Sunday Parkways to support “shop local” messaging.

## Slow Streets

- Deploy advisory “local access only” restrictions along the existing neighborhood greenway network.
- Develop criteria and an implementation plan for signage along the planned (but not yet implemented) neighborhood greenway network to expand access for people of color and lower-income communities.
- Develop messaging to encourage physical distancing and avoid crowding on neighborhood greenways.

This evaluation report focuses on the three pillars of the Safe Streets Initiative from March through November 2020.



Repurposed space for walking and lining up while maintaining a safe physical distance

Priority given to busy streets with narrow or incomplete sidewalks

## Safer Busy Streets

Providing space for physical distancing on busy streets with narrow or missing sidewalks

### OVERVIEW

The Safer Busy Streets program helps with areas where people, especially pedestrians, might find it harder to keep six feet apart. Locations include narrow sidewalks, crowded bus stops, or busy intersections where people are waiting to cross.

Using physical barriers, paint, and other markings, PBOT created more space in these narrow or crowded areas without closing streets to traffic.

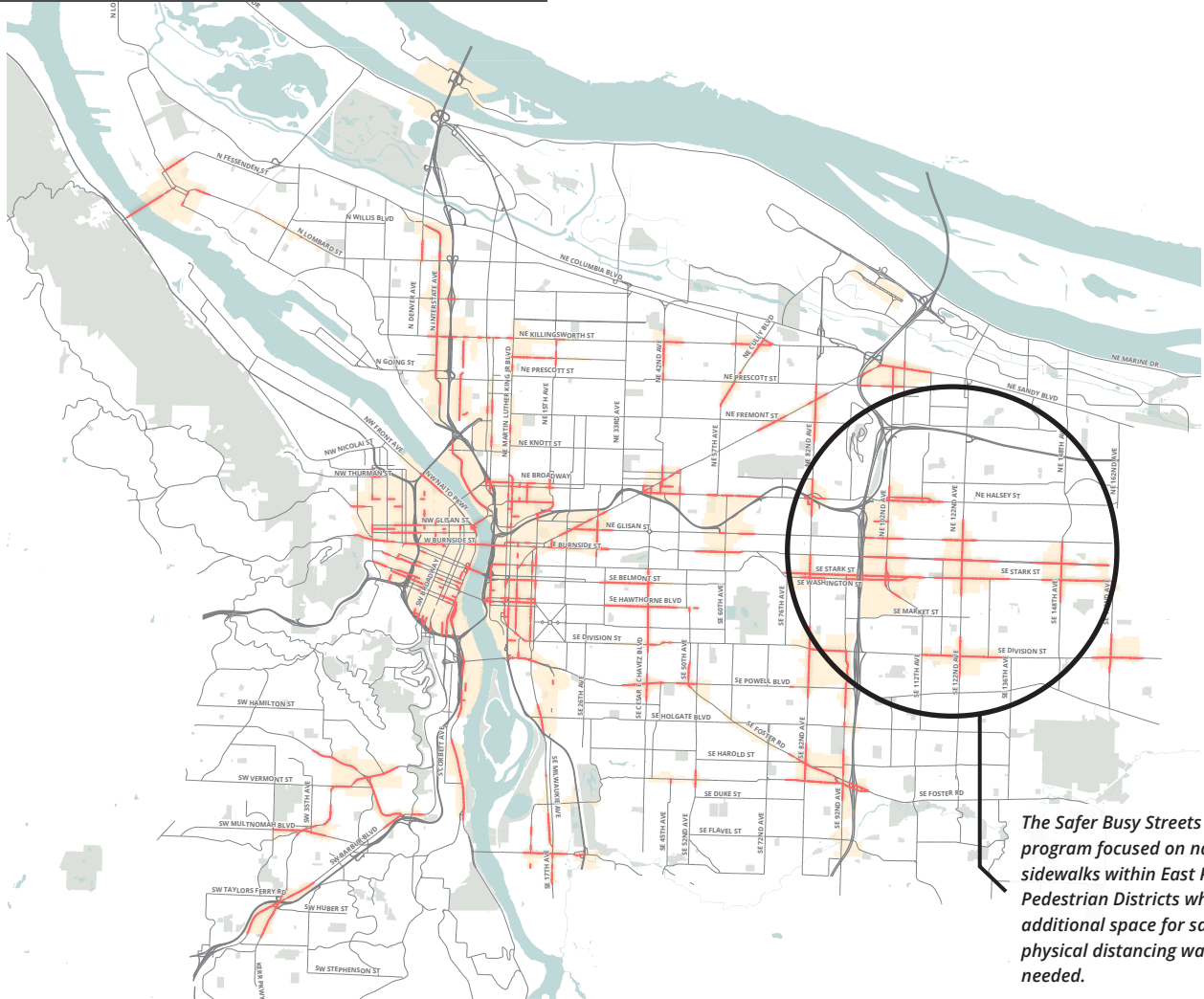
### Goals

Pedestrians feel comfortable and safe.

Balance needs for parking and curb access with safe space for pedestrians.

Prioritize installation in communities that are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

## BUSY STREETS IN PEDESTRIAN DISTRICTS



Guided by PedPDX, Portland's Citywide Pedestrian Plan and PBOT's Equity Matrix, PBOT focused on high-traffic pedestrian areas in East Portland for this first phase of Safer Busy Streets.

Pedestrian Districts are areas near neighborhood centers and transit stations as defined in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Pedestrian Districts in places like Gateway and Montavilla have heavy pedestrian traffic and include places that people walk to, including services and jobs, many of which may not provide teleworking as an option. These are also places that feature senior services, affordable housing, medical facilities, and transit.

**BUSY STREETS**  
In pedestrian districts with missing or constrained sidewalks

.....

**PEDESTRIAN DISTRICTS**

**PARKS / OPEN SPACES**





## Expanded walkways

PBOT installed expanded walkways along SE Stark and Washington streets in the Gateway and Montavilla areas:

- **SE Stark Street** (north side), from **84th to 94th** avenues and **99th to 102nd** avenues
- **SE Stark Street** (both sides of the street), from **102nd to 105th** avenues and **108th to 122nd** avenues
- **SE Washington Street** (north side), from **103rd to 106th** avenues



## Expanded bus platforms

Temporary bus platforms were installed at five bus stops along TriMet's frequent service line 15, all of which have narrow sidewalks. These larger platforms make it easier for pedestrians and people waiting to board the bus keep physically distant. These bus platforms were installed at:

- **SE Washington Street** and **80th** Avenue
- **SE Stark Street** at **82nd, 90th, 92nd,** and **105th** Avenues

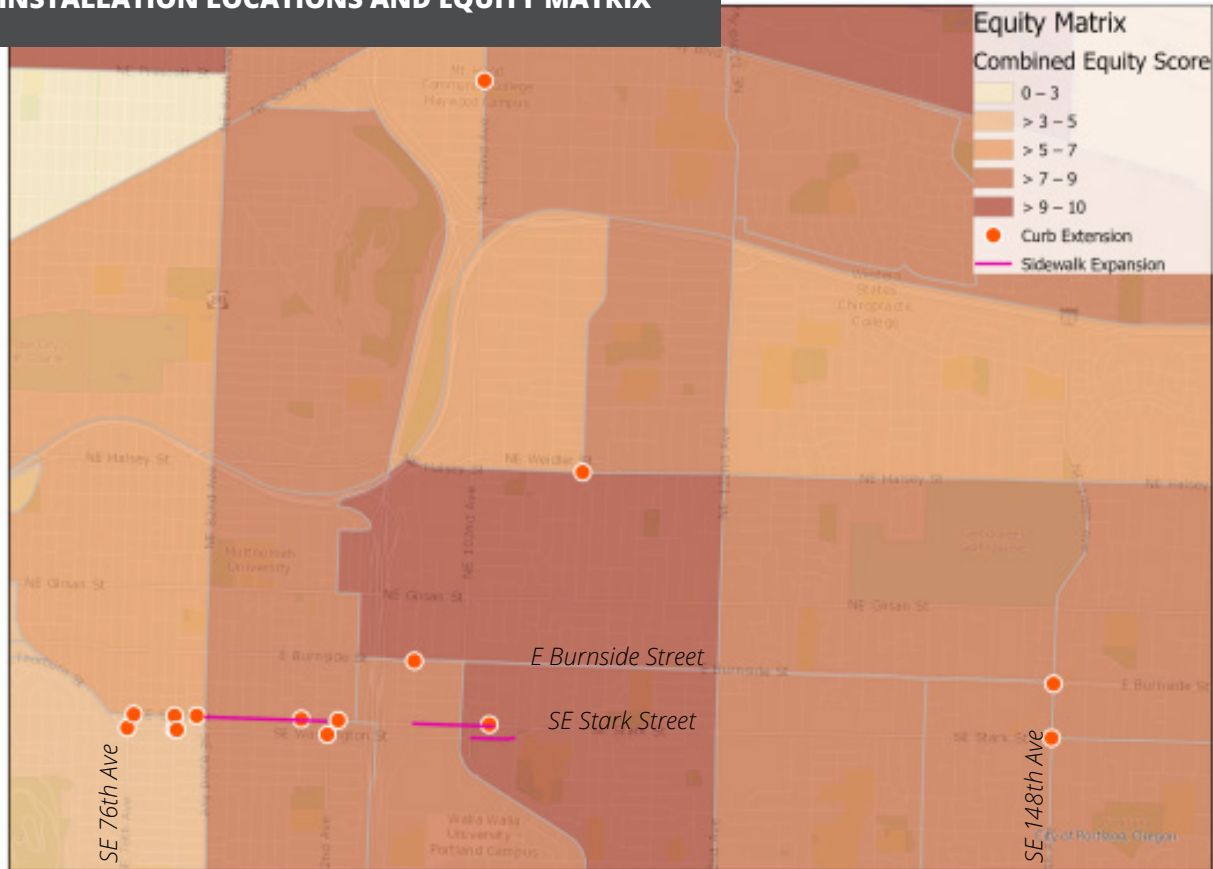


## Expanded corners

Expanded corners make it easier to physically distance while waiting to cross the street at 10 busy intersections. Using paint and other markings, PBOT installed expanded corners at 10 busy intersections in East Portland:

- **E Burnside Street** at **99th** and **148th** avenues
- **NE Halsey Street** and **111th** Avenue
- **NE Prescott Street** and **102nd** Avenue
- **SE Stark Street** at **76th, 80th,** and **148th** avenues
- **SE Washington Street** at **76th, 80th,** and **92nd** avenues

## INSTALLATION LOCATIONS AND EQUITY MATRIX



*All of the Safer Busy Streets installations were in areas that scored higher on PBOT's Equity Matrix.*

## EVALUATION WORK

The main tool for evaluating the Safer Busy Streets program was a public survey. The survey went live in September 2020 and was advertised using sidewalk decals placed near installations. The survey was also advertised on PBOT social media. The survey was open for approximately six weeks and received 137 responses and 38 additional comments. Other tools used in the evaluation were online mapping analysis and pedestrian counts conducted before and after installation.

Twelve percent of survey respondents identified as members of BIPOC communities, 66% did not, and 22% preferred not to say.

## What is PBOT's Equity Matrix?

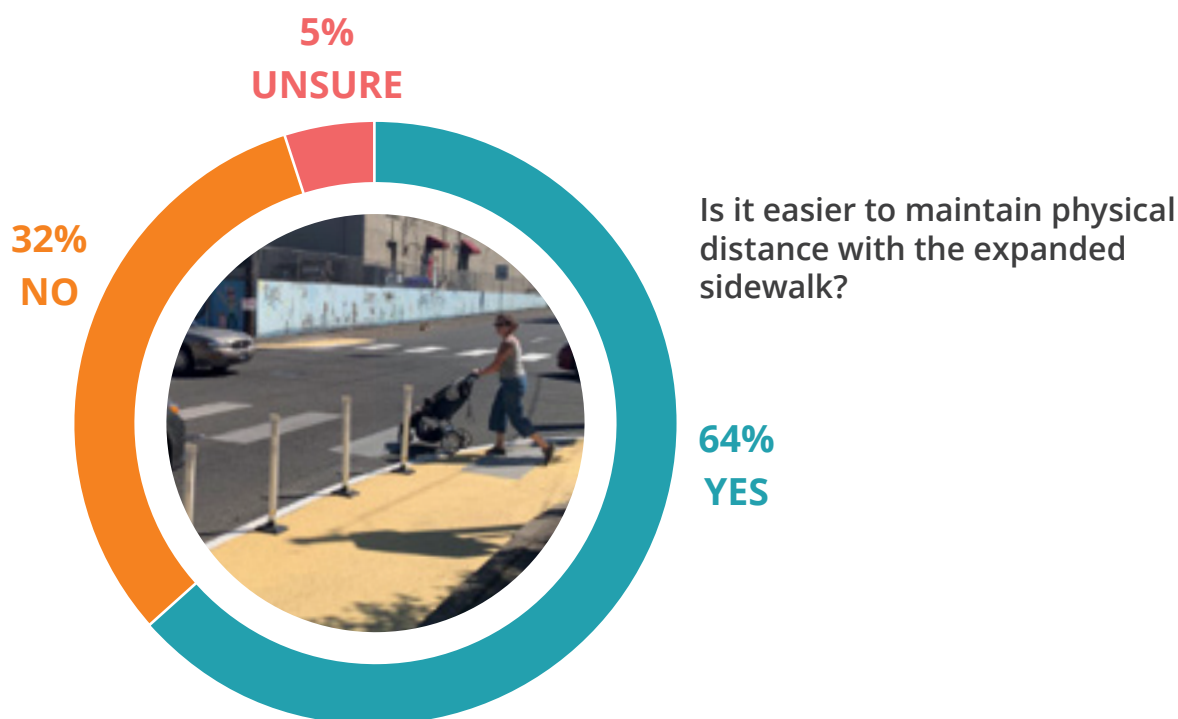
Using three demographic variables — race, income, and limited English proficiency (LEP) — PBOT designed a simplified Equity Matrix that focuses on break points above and below the citywide averages for these variables. This means that more points are assigned to a census block that has a higher than citywide average concentration of people of color and/or people with LEP, and or people below the average for total household income. This is a strategy that has a lot of intersectionality with people with disabilities and is a strategy that keeps race centered.

## FINDINGS

### Corners

The majority of Safer Busy Streets survey respondents (64%) felt it was easier to maintain physical distance with the expanded corner, while 32% said it was not. Five percent of respondents were unsure.

When asked if they felt safe from harassment or violence with the expanded corner, only 20% of survey respondents answered yes, while 40% answered no. Six percent answered sometimes and 35% were unsure.



### Asking about harassment and violence

One of PBOT's key responsibilities is to keep Portland's streets safe, a responsibility we have often narrowly interpreted as an obligation to address traffic violence. However, there are many other types of insecurity Portlanders face that impact how and whether they get around. This is especially true for Portlanders who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color who experience more harassment and hate crimes against them, key factors in how safe they feel traveling.

This survey was one of the first times PBOT has asked the public about harassment and violence on city streets. This is a question we will continue to explore to improve our understanding of personal safety and security in the right-of-way.

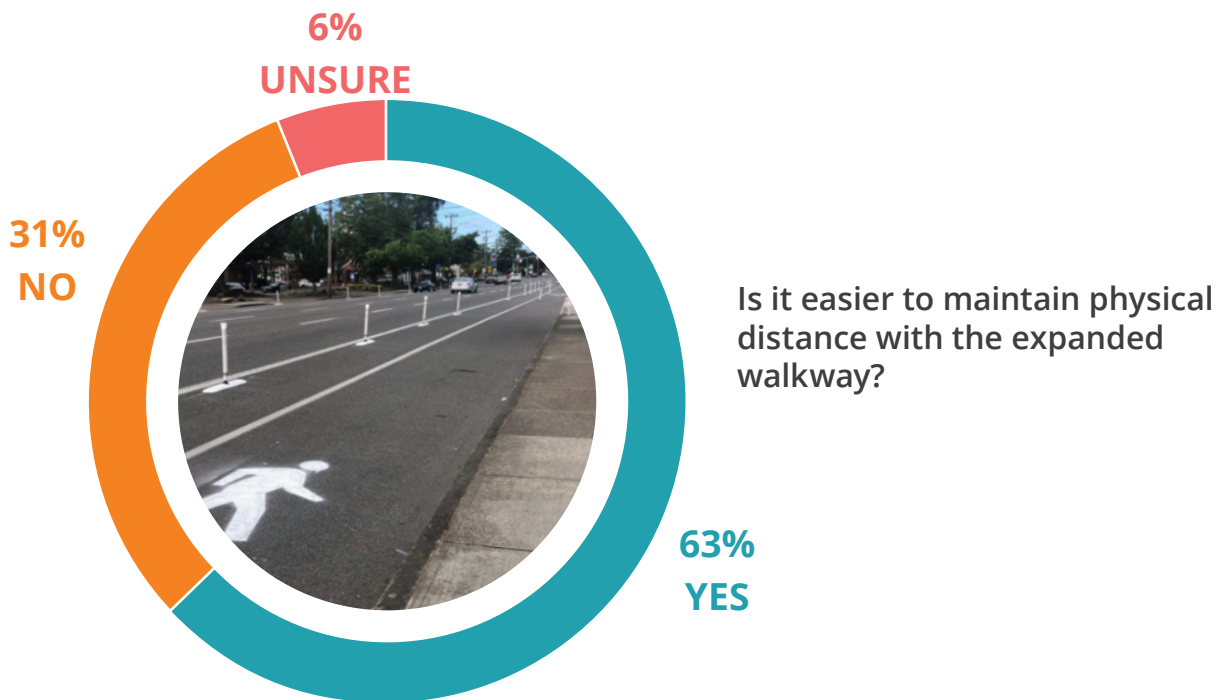


## Expanded walkways

PBOT installed expanded walkways along SE Stark and Washington streets in the Gateway area, as well as along SE Stark Street in Montavilla. Due to community feedback early in the project, the Montavilla walkway was removed.

For the Gateway expanded walkway, 63% of survey respondents felt that it was easier to maintain physical distance with the expanded walkway, while 31% responded that it was not. Six percent of respondents were unsure.

When asked if they felt safe from harassment or violence with the expanded walkway, 31% of survey respondents answered yes, while 44% answered no. Nineteen percent answered sometimes and 7% were unsure.

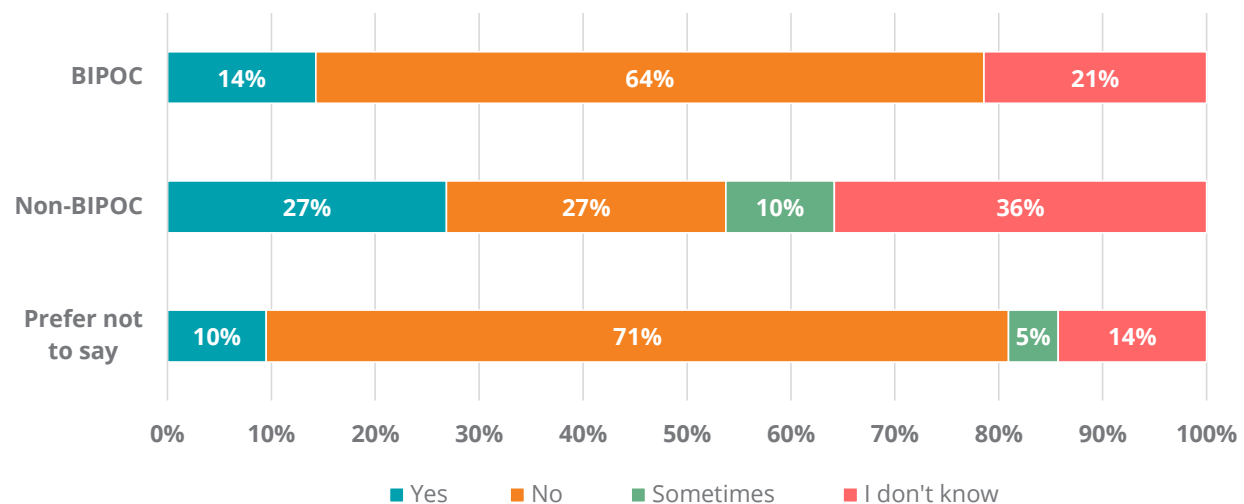


*"I loooooove the expanded sidewalks and greenways in East Portland!!! My partner, dog, and I are thrilled to see these improvements in our neighborhood. We feel so much safer on walks and bike rides. It's honestly been a huge improvement to our quality of life. We often feel like this part of the city is neglected and it's great to see Portland invest in us. Please don't stop!" - Survey respondent*

## A CLOSER LOOK AT QUESTIONS ABOUT HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

When asked about safety from harassment or violence, 64% of respondents who identify as members of BIPOC communities reported not feeling safe, compared with only 27% of respondents who are not members of BIPOC communities. Of respondents who preferred not to answer whether they were members of BIPOC communities or not, most (71%) said they do not feel safe.

Question: Do you feel safe from harassment or violence with these expanded corners and sidewalks?



*"I've seen a lot of people get hit right here by cars. I think it's a good idea. It keeps people from getting hit. It makes people go around instead of going up on the curb."*

*- Interview at E Burnside Street at 148th Avenue*



*Two people walking use the expanded corner along E Burnside Street in East Portland*



## PEDESTRIAN COUNTS

PBOT conducted pedestrian counts at four locations before and after the expanded walkway installations. Pedestrian traffic increased in only one of these locations, although poor weather may have been a factor.

While these installations may not increase pedestrian traffic, they may increase pedestrian comfort.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Public feedback varied by type of installation (corner versus walkway) and location (Gateway versus Montavilla), with the expanded corners receiving the most positive response.
- The Safer Busy Streets installations need to look and act more permanent in order to be effective. For example, the wave delineators used in Montavilla were not effective, as they could be easily moved around, while the bolted-down delineators in Gateway stayed in place.
- Based on pedestrian counts in the area, Safer Busy Streets did not increase pedestrian traffic. However, the comments we received through the public survey indicated the streets and crossings felt more comfortable for pedestrians and people biking.
- Based on survey results, PBOT has a lot to consider about harassment and feelings of safety on busy streets.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

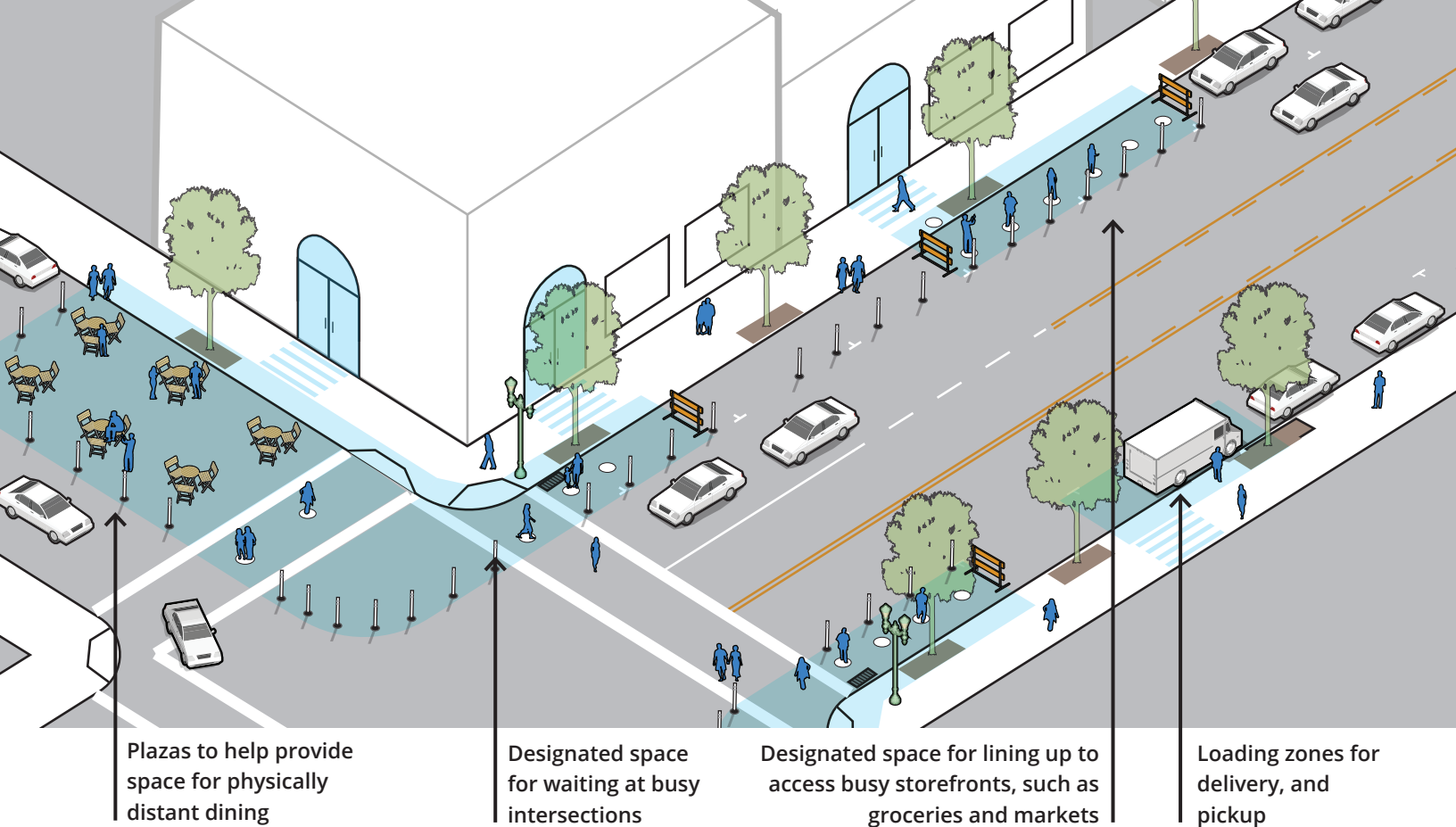
Based on the findings, PBOT staff have the following recommendations:

- Use tactile tools (such as bolted-down delineators and paint ) more regularly in the Pedestrian Network Completion program. PBOT can look to other cities who have been using these tools with success as case studies.
- Set aside maintenance funding and establish a maintenance schedule for annual repainting through our Pedestrian Quick Build program.
- Have PBOT engineers develop guidelines on painted tactile interventions to facilitate more of these installations.



*A person walking and pushing a stroller uses the expanded corner in the Montavilla neighborhood of Southeast Portland*





## Healthy Businesses

Helping local businesses adapt to physical distancing guidelines

### OVERVIEW

Healthy Businesses is a permit program which helps businesses use public space to conduct business safely, whether on the sidewalk, or using parking spaces, travel lanes, or the street. Permits were free and available to restaurants, bars, and retail businesses.

This evaluation focuses on the first phase of Healthy Businesses permits which expired on November 1, 2020. The subsequent winter Healthy Businesses program is not evaluated in this report.

The majority of Healthy Businesses permits were issued to food and beverage establishments. Permits were also issued to retail stores, fitness studios, as well as other businesses and nonprofits.

### Goals

Businesses can quickly and easily access the program.

Balance the various needs of the right-of-way (parking, access, through movement) with business use.

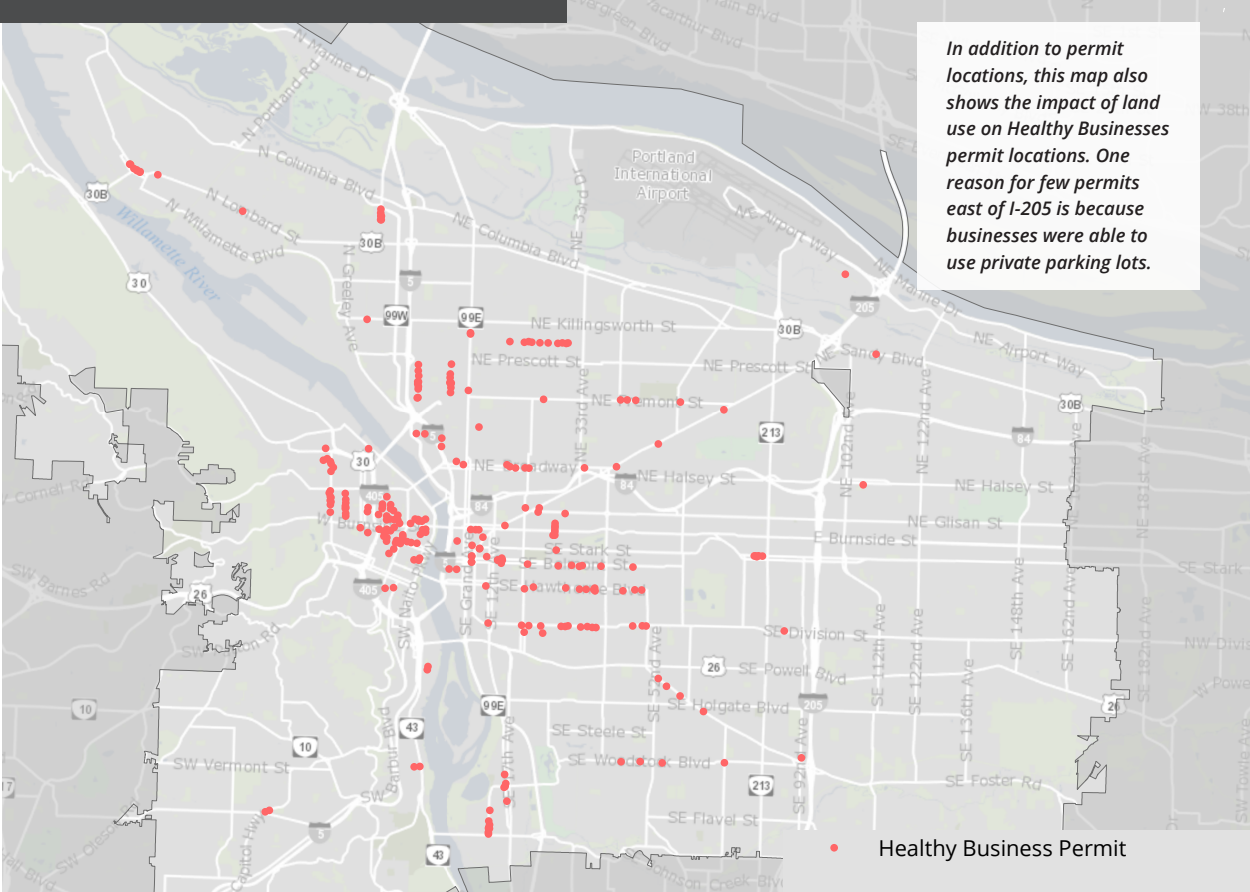
Support business resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Center the needs of BIPOC communities.

Garner public support for outdoor dining and the Healthy Businesses program.



HEALTHY BUSINESSES PERMITS



PERMIT TYPES



Sidewalk



Parking



Street/Lane



Alley

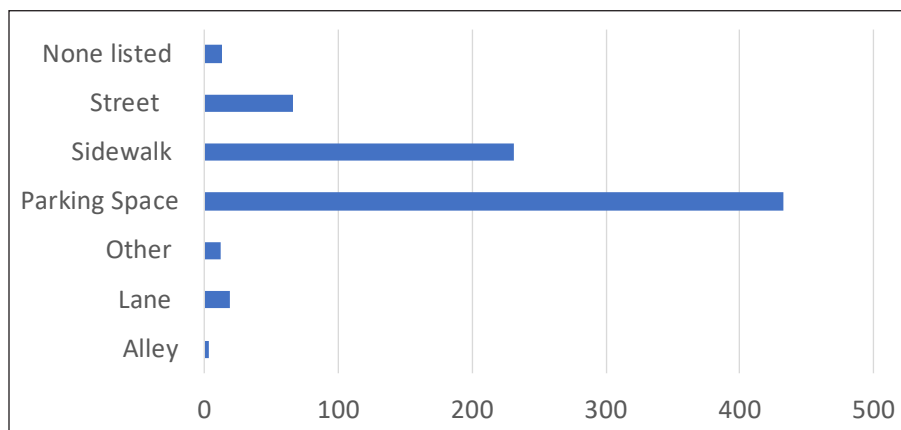
Sidewalk Photo: BikePortland

Additionally, 94 priority 5-minute pickup/drop-off zones were issued as part of the Healthy Businesses program to support businesses with a to-go model.



A 5-minute drop-off/pick-up spot at Salty's Pet Supply

### Number of Healthy Businesses permits issued by type

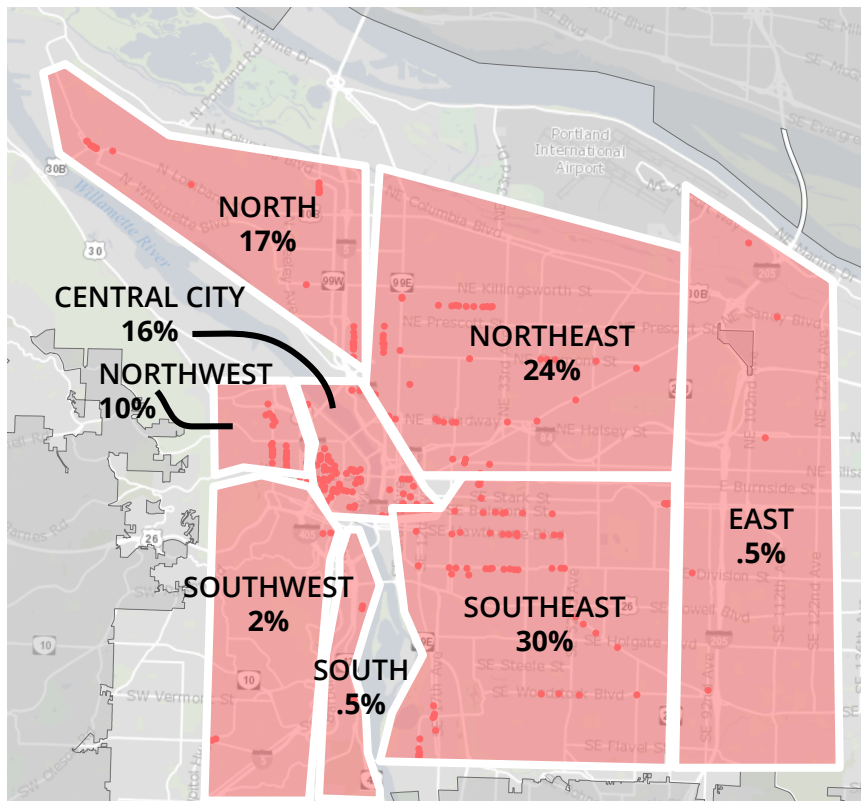


## EVALUATION WORK

Like the other programs in the Safe Streets Initiative, the main tool for evaluating the Healthy Businesses program was through a public survey. The public survey went live in September 2020 and was advertised using sidewalk decals placed throughout the city near businesses with the permit. The survey was also advertised on PBOT's social media accounts. The survey was open for approximately six weeks and received over 3,100 responses and 368 additional comments.

Of the responses, a majority were from Southeast and Northeast Portland.

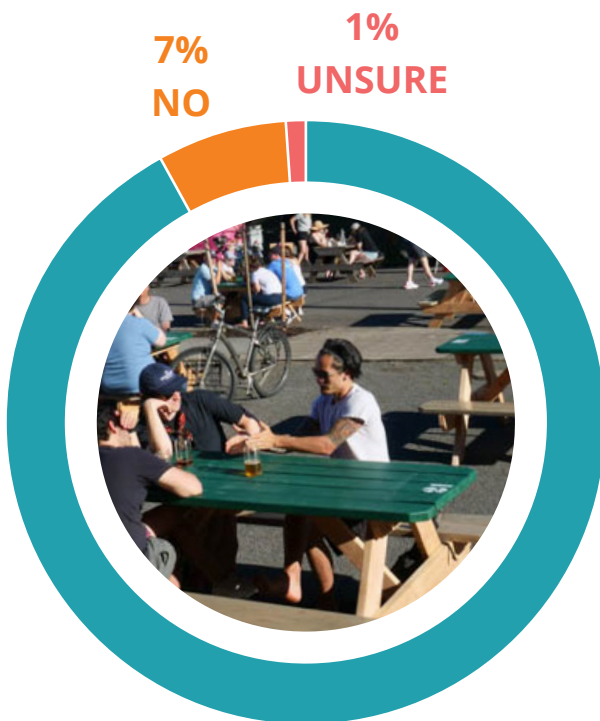
### Survey responses by geography



## FINDINGS

Ninety-two percent of all survey respondents reported visiting a Portland establishment that was doing business this summer in the public right-of-way, such as on the sidewalk or in the street.

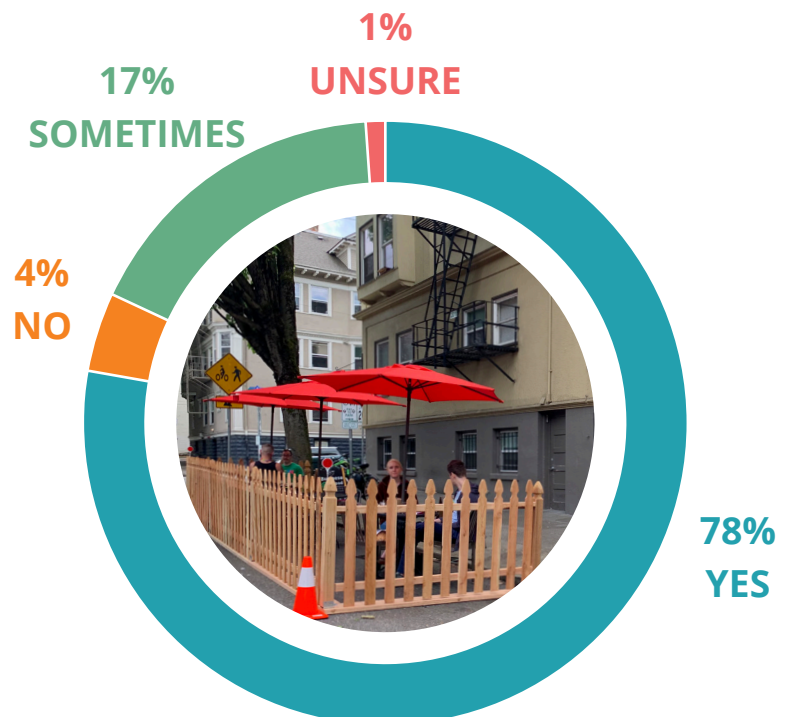
When asked if they felt safe visiting businesses outdoors, given the concerns about Covid-19, 78% of survey respondents answered that they felt safe, while 4% did not feel safe. Seventeen percent answered that they sometimes felt safe and 1% were unsure.



Did you visit a Portland establishment doing business this summer in the sidewalk or street?

92%  
YES

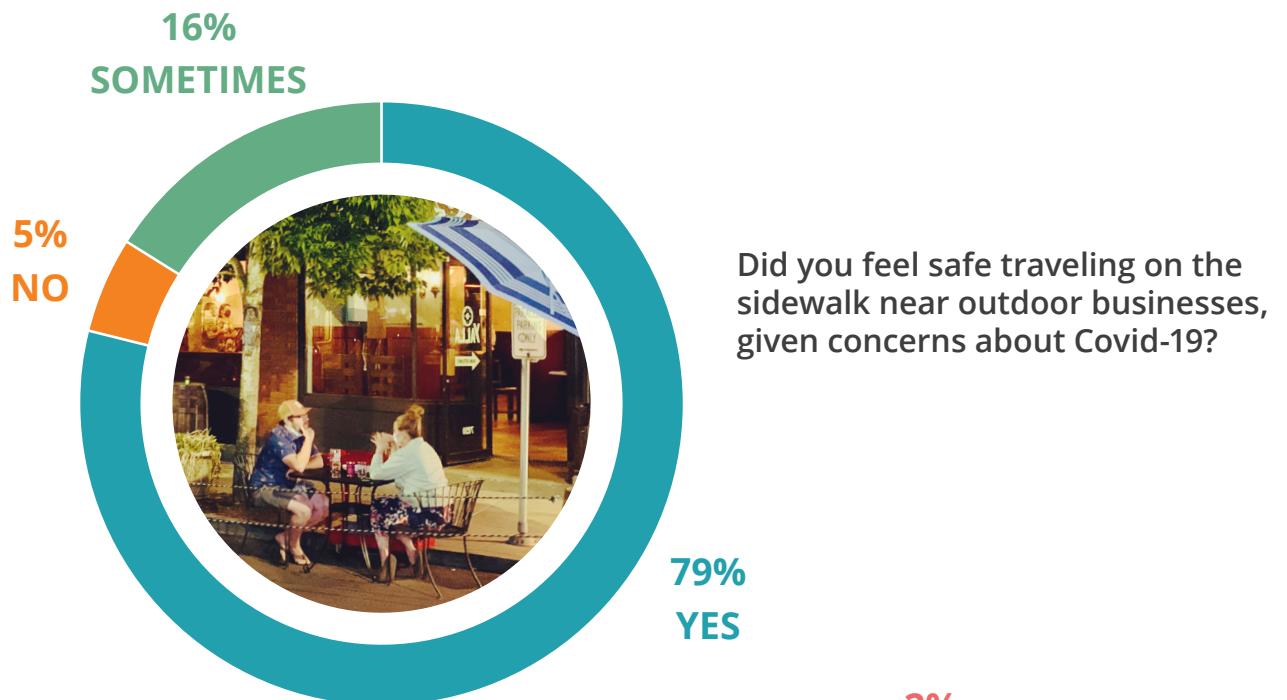
Did you feel safe visiting businesses outdoors, given concerns about Covid-19?



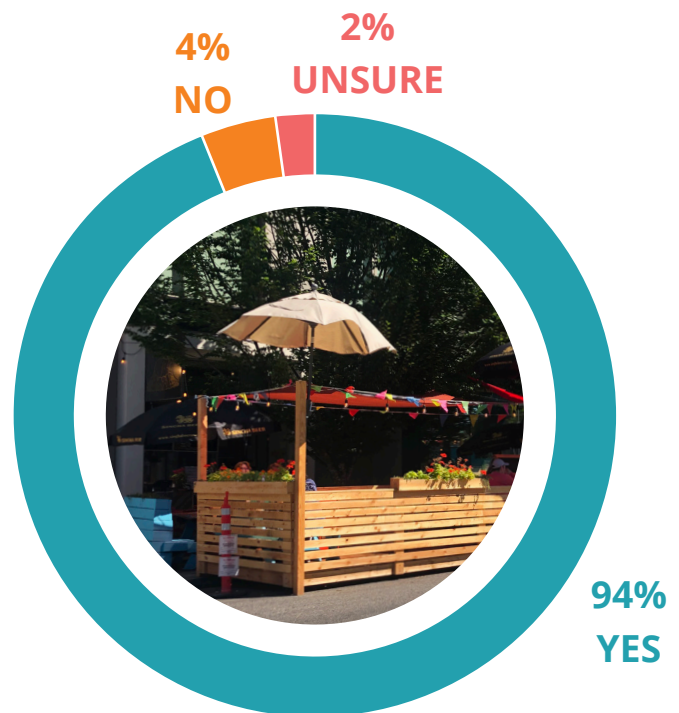


When asked if they felt safe traveling on the sidewalk near outdoor businesses, given concerns about Covid-19, the majority (79%) of survey respondents reported feeling safe, while 16% sometimes felt safe. Only 5% answered that they did not feel safe traveling on the sidewalk near outdoor businesses.

As Covid-19 continues to impact businesses, 94% of survey respondents answered that street space should remain open for business use, while only 4% felt it should not.



As Covid-19 continues to impact businesses, should street space remain open for business use?



## Comments

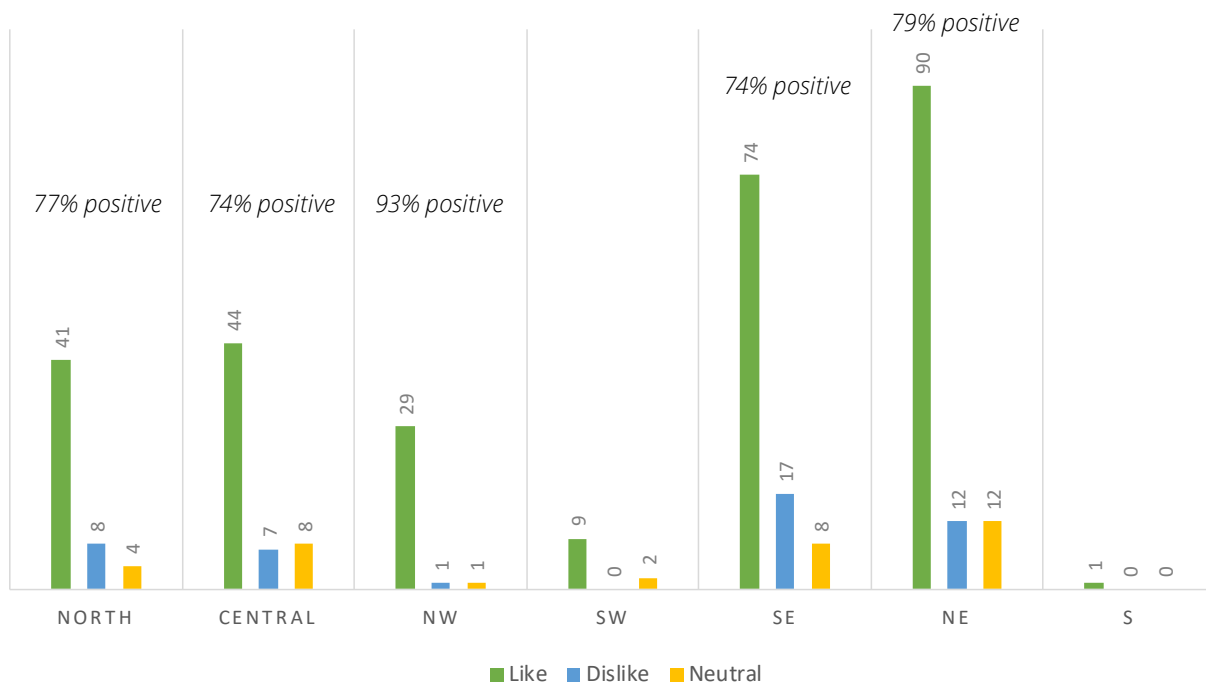
In addition to survey questions, respondents had the option to leave additional comments. PBOT received 368 comments, which were overwhelmingly positive. The comments were categorized into three buckets:

- 78% of the comments were **supportive** of the program, saying they liked it, would like to see the program expand, or would like the program to become permanent.
- 12% of the comments were **not supportive**, saying they disliked either the program itself or the installations, which they would like removed.
- 10% of the comments were categorized as **neutral**, as they didn't specify whether they liked or disliked the program and/or weren't relevant to the program.



*"I love these!  
It's really great  
to have all the  
people out in the  
street - I am able  
to feel part of an  
active city and  
also feel safe!  
Please keep/  
expand these!!"*  
-Survey  
respondent

## Healthy Businesses survey comments by geography



Citywide, more than 70% of comments were positive. 74% of comments received in Southeast Portland were positive, while 79% of comments received in Northeast were positive. Seventy-seven percent of comments in North Portland were positive, 74% of comments from the Central City (downtown) were positive and 93% of comments in Northwest Portland were positive. Only one comment was received from South Portland and no comments received in East Portland.

The comments provided a way to capture more detail on the types of concerns the public had about the Healthy Businesses program. The top concerns in the comments were:

- Sidewalk congestion or the blocking of sidewalks
- Traffic safety concerns
- Parking limitations

There were also concerns about ADA compliance or access in general for people with disabilities. Twenty one of the 368 comments received were ADA related. Twelve comments expressed dislike with the program, five comments were positive about the program and four comments were neutral about the program.



#### Comments from survey respondents

*"Outdoor dining permits should be permanent, even post-Covid. It has given the city a lovely European feel and greater sense of community. Right now, supporting our local businesses should be a priority- they are the heart of Portland and what drives tourism and many local economies. We cannot let them fail."*

*"It's seems to be a great system, I'd love to see it permanently implemented."*

*"I'm supportive of these businesses that basically built seating in parking spaces out front. I'm worried about this being a long-term addition to my neighborhood. It makes sense during COVID-19, I'm not sure how much sense it will make in two years when this is over."*

*"We love it! We live in NW and my mother is in an electric wheelchair. It makes it so easy to go out to dinner with her as she can just "drive" up to a table. It is wonderful and we hope it continues after this crisis. Thank you, Portland!"*

*"The outdoor dining and sidewalk business changes improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods where it's been implemented. I'd love to see some of the temporary measures—such as parklets, slow streets, and pedestrian-only blocks adjacent to commercial areas—become permanent."*

*"If you gotta re-open businesses, I like this approach. I support expanding this permanently and severely restricting parking to encourage public transit and alternative transit. Parking spaces are a blight on cities. More carless areas please."*

*"Outdoor businesses made a huge impact on improving my mental health. Seeing people sitting outside and eating helped reduce my anxiety. It was safely distanced and colorfully decorated (like Proud Mary on Alberta)."*

## INTERVIEWS WITH PERMIT HOLDERS

To understand how the Healthy Businesses program was serving businesses who used the permit, PBOT interviewed 30 business owners. The following pages provide a snapshot of those interviews:



### **Gino's** **SE 13th Avenue and Spokane Street**

*"Doubled capacity and went from 11 tables to 20 tables... Super beneficial for having more staff and definitely created more revenue. 42 seats added in plaza."*

*"Immediate neighbors and businesses really appreciate it. People thought it felt European. It was very fun. It was restaurant therapy. Gave people a place to come, relax, and forget about the outside world. Overall a nice place to be."*

### **Bagdad** **SE 37th Avenue and Hawthorne Boulevard**

*"Great for visibility, which is huge for the business. Were able to get back to 90% of last summer sales in the restaurant."*

*"It's been pretty phenomenal. We would be in tough spot without it."*





## T.C. O'LEARY'S



### T.C. O'Leary's

#### NE 29th Avenue and Alberta Street

*"Added 9 tables with 36 seats. 4 returning staff, 2 new staff and will hire additional 2-3 jobs if plaza continues. Significant increase in sales. Not just sales itself, but identity in the neighborhood as safe and healthy option has grown. Older neighbors have been coming as new customers."*

*"People liked the aesthetics of both the parking lane and alley installs... Once parking space seating went in, people started to come back because they realized we were open."*

### Güero

#### NE 28th Avenue and Davis Street

*"The (Healthy Businesses) program gets 5 stars. City of Portland has been amazing about this... PBOT's flexibility has enabled comfortable ability to manage for COVID safety."*

## GÜERO



## STORMBREAKER



### Stormbreaker Brewing

#### N. Beech Street and N. Lombard Street Locations

*"Beech location added 14 tables and 60 seats. And St Johns added about same. Both locations brought back entire staff, plus 20 new employees. More jobs during COVID than before."*

*"The Healthy Businesses program gets 10 out of 5 stars. We would be in deep trouble without it and couldn't be more grateful."*



*People enjoying the Ankeny Street Plaza at night*

## ANKENY STREET PLAZA

### **Gorges and other businesses**

#### **SE Ankeny Street between 27th and 28th avenues**

*"Multiple businesses added 25 tables total (in plaza). Gorges had 4 employees before and 16 employees now."*

*"Plaza saved the two restaurant businesses. We would have closed without plaza and now have enough capital to survive through next summer. It's been a godsend. Up 135% in sales compared to last summer."*

*"Customers say we're making their lives better. Customers feel extremely safe. Well over 6 foot distancing. A lot of neighbors are saying this is what the neighborhood needs and it makes them excited to live here. Neighbors are discovering restaurants."*

*"It's a communal family environment, kids running around on rainbow, bicycle riders taking photos. When businesses closed, common to see 25 neighbors sitting and enjoying the space together. Felt like a new community park."*



# CLINTON STREET PLAZA

## Broder and other businesses

### SE Clinton Street between 25th and 26th avenues

*"All businesses (combined between 7 businesses) have hired 45-50 jobs total... Significant increase in sales. Without plaza, sales were \$0. Now at about 70% of where they were on a normal day pre-COVID. Without this plaza, several of the businesses would not be open."*

*"Everyone has loved it. Gotten lots of reviews stating that people appreciate plaza. Adds a lot to neighborhood. Being able to have safe outdoor space with variety of restaurants is exciting for people. "*

*A person rides their bicycle through the Clinton Street Plaza*



# DREAM STREET PLAZA

## NE Sumner Street

The initial roll-out of the Healthy Businesses program was widely popular throughout the central city and historic main streets in Portland. However, while there were applications for Healthy Businesses permits in North or Northeast Portland on streets like N Mississippi Avenue and NE Alberta Street, applications were lacking from businesses along NE Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.

In conversations with partners at the Soul District Business Association (SDBA), PBOT realized that deeper partnership and investment was needed to ensure that the Black-owned and Black-serving businesses along this corridor would also benefit from this program.

The result of this work was the Dream Street Plaza, a tent-filled plaza featuring micro enterprises owned by members of BIPOC communities from around the neighborhood.

The plaza, which opened October 2020, also featured a street mural painted by Cole Reed of greenHAUS Gallery and an outdoor beer garden with picnic tables and trees outside of Old Town Brewing.

The opening weekend featured over a dozen vendors selling items such as art, clothing, skin-care products, kombucha, and homemade food. There was even a vendor with a full crab boil.

Programming at the space continued for the next five weekends with smaller events featuring new and returning vendors. Over 25 different vendors participated over the course of the five-week period.

While the plaza was initially planned to be winterized and open through the holiday season, the sudden rise in Covid-19 cases in Multnomah County changed that plan. While all further programming is on hold until the freeze is lifted, there is continued interest with community partners in reopening the space for vending and other community-led programming.





*Dream Street Plaza was a chance for community members and advocates to reconnect at a safe, outdoor pop-up marketplace.*



*PBOT partnered with Cole Reed, owner of greenHAUS gallery, to program the plaza with vendors and public art.*



*The opening of the plaza featured over a dozen vendors selling locally made clothes, art, and delicious food.*

## ASSESSMENT OF PARKING

PBOT wants to understand the impacts of the Healthy Businesses permit program on on-street parking. An assessment found very few locations where occupancy was greater than 60%. The financial impact of the program was also negligible (only six instances where there was \$500 in lost revenue).

However, as the economy reopens and there is greater demand for public parking, this will likely change. Parking occupancies at the locations we assessed have increased from 3% to 18% since May 2020, showing an increase in demand. Parking revenue numbers have also been increasing since early summer, another indication of increased parking demand.

### Long-Term Impacts

PBOT closed 628 metered parking spaces for the Healthy Businesses program last summer. While the economy recovers, and parking occupancy remains low, this likely won't be a cause for concern. If we continue these permits or make the program permanent *and* parking demand increases, it could impact both parking supply and revenue.

This assessment only considered parking at metered locations. Many other areas of the city, such as business districts along SE Division Street, N Mississippi Avenue, and NE Vancouver and Williams avenues, also have high parking occupancy in the same areas where businesses have requested Healthy Businesses permits.

PBOT is exploring meter districts or other parking management tools in those areas. As we explore, we'll be considering the impact of extending Healthy Businesses permits.

## CARES ACT FUNDING FOR WINTER HEALTHY BUSINESSES

### Overview

PBOT heard a lot from Winter Healthy Businesses permit holders about the costs of moving their operations outdoors. For some, these expenses threatened their ability to stay open. PBOT secured \$500,000 in federal CARES Act funding to support struggling small businesses.

PBOT aimed to distribute funds and resources directly to businesses, with as little barriers for participation as possible, and to prioritize businesses owned by members of BIPOC communities who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.

### How the money was spent

- **Business Assistance Fund Cards (\$400,000):** PBOT awarded U.S. Bank prepaid cards to 257 Winter Healthy Businesses applicants. Most awards were \$1,500 with a maximum award of \$2,000.
- **Traffic Control Device Lending Library (\$50,000):** PBOT purchased 160 self-watering planters to be used as traffic control devices, along with signs that comply with federal traffic control standards. Planters also helped convey the message that these installations were open, not under construction, providing a more inviting space for pedestrians, people biking, and customers.
- **5- Minute Parking Signs (\$10,000):** PBOT produced 181 parking signs for priority, 5-minute pickup/drop-off zones and provided them FREE to businesses who requested them.
- **Plaza Kits (\$40,000):** PBOT distributed “plaza kits” to 20 area businesses identified through community partners. These plaza kits, valued at \$1,783 each, included materials for businesses to construct their own outdoor dining plazas, such as picnic tables, tents, lighting, signs, and fencing. PBOT made sure these materials were delivered free of charge, with additional tables purchased as needed.



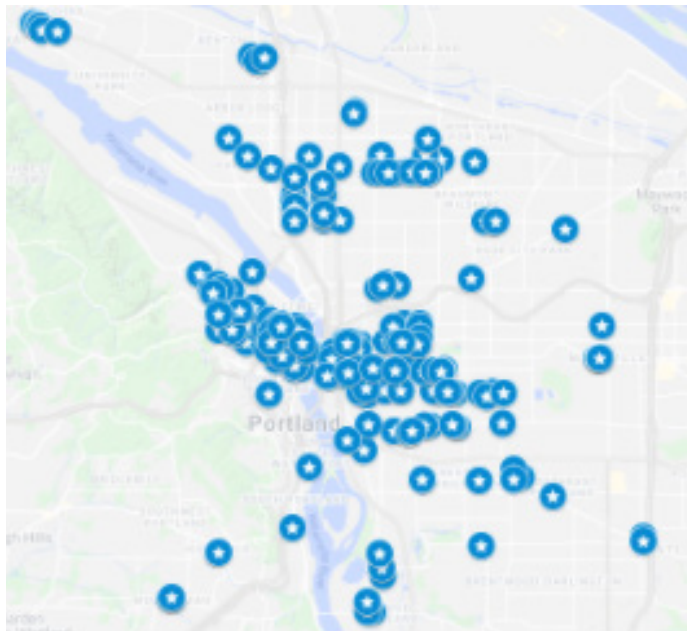
## Business assistance fund cards

PBOT distributed Business Assistance Fund cards to offset material costs for operating outdoors in the right-of-way, such as heaters, tents, tarps, and fencing. Eligible businesses applied online and those approved were mailed preloaded U.S. Bank cards in December 2020.

Of the businesses that received cards, 76 were owned or led by members of BIPOC communities, and/or were certified by the state's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID). COBID-certified firms meet criteria for being disadvantaged, minority-owned, women-owned, emerging small businesses, or service-disabled veterans' business enterprises (D/M/W/ESB/SDVBE).

PBOT prioritized support of BIPOC communities and these businesses, awarding up to 80% of the amount requested. PBOT also conducted additional phone outreach to eligible businesses owned by members of BIPOC communities, resulting in an uptick in applications.

## Locations of businesses who received funding cards



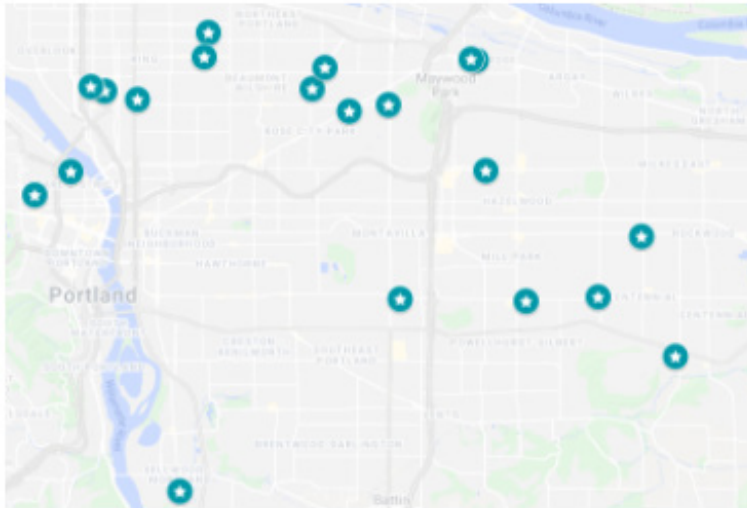
## Plaza kits

PBOT purchased and gave “plaza kits” to businesses facing barriers participating in the Winter Healthy Businesses permit. PBOT also distributed these kits to businesses who were operating on private property because right-of-way space was unavailable. All kits were distributed by February 2021.

Of the businesses that were given kits, 20 are owned by members of BIPOC communities. These businesses were pointed out to PBOT by eight different community-based partners. PBOT also provided one business six folding tables in order for them to hold a pop-up market featuring Black-owned businesses and microenterprises.

Plaza kits included two 8'x12' tents, tent weights, nearly 200 feet of lighting, 100 feet of extension cables, two 6-foot folding picnic tables, A-frame signs, cable covers, as well as clean/dirty signs for tables, reflective tape, zip ties, and duct tape.

## Locations of plaza kits distributed



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- PBOT was able to stand up a new permit program quickly to assist businesses, allowing applicants to request right-of-way space for commercial use before Multnomah County entered Phase 1. This was only accomplished by pausing many other permit programs, reassigning staff, and expediting program outreach and permit review.
- The permit program was accessible and beneficial to many businesses. Not only were permits free but the application was simplified, with considerable assistance from staff. Many business owners reported these permits saved their business and allowed them to retain staff. Most participating businesses were restaurants or bars, an industry experiencing significant unemployment.
- About 20% of permits were issued for businesses owned by members of BIPOC communities. PBOT worked hard to distribute information about the program, with staff making direct calls to over 100 businesses owned by members of BIPOC communities. PBOT also distributed free traffic control devices as a way to reduce barriers to the program.
- We saw wide support for the use of right-of-way space for outdoor commerce during the pandemic, especially given concerns about the survival of small businesses and high unemployment.
- We have some concerns about sidewalk accessibility and safety. Although Healthy Businesses permits, like Sidewalk Cafe permits, require clear pedestrian through zones, some installations still posed accessibility problems. However, given other safety concerns, there was no indication any installation contributed to vehicle crashes.
- There were trade-offs between different uses of the right-of-way. Parking demand has been lower during the pandemic. In the future, it may be more difficult to balance uses of curb zone including commercial use, short-term vehicle pickup spaces, and parking for vehicles, bikes, and other mobility devices such as e-scooters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate the lessons learned from the 2020 permit program into new materials guiding applicants through the process. This would make it easier on staff while not placing more burden on applicants. These materials would provide additional information about accessibility, safety, and other challenges, increasing compliance with permit conditions.
- Continue outreach to businesses owned by members of BIPOC communities. Where right-of-way space isn't the best fit for outdoor operations, work with other bureaus to provide assistance to businesses seeking to expand into private parking areas. Furthermore, reach out more to East Portland businesses to ensure they're aware of permit programs, and so we can provide technical assistance and supplies.
- Given that the Healthy Businesses permit was created in response to a public health and economic crisis, changes to the program must consider evolving conditions impacting businesses, such as:
  - Public health reports indicating outdoor space and low occupancy reduces the chance of Covid spread.
  - Vaccine rollout and the uncertainty about how vaccines will change business operations.
  - Shifting restrictions on businesses based on new information and trends, requiring businesses to close and change their business models repeatedly.
  - The rising costs of outdoor equipment, insurance, and unemployment insurance taxes.
  - Additional challenges, including civil unrest, break-ins, thefts of outdoor equipment, and vandalism.
  - The emergence of new and informal microenterprises amid a climate of business closures.
- Evaluate limits on staffing and funding while prioritizing programs the community needs. Public health guidance would likely allow us to bring back some of the permit programs we paused, such as community events and block parties. However, businesses operating in the right-of-way will still be feeling the economic impact of the pandemic.



- Given the likely demand for community and special events, PBOT will look at short-term installations which can accommodate the various things businesses need, including vehicle access. Long term installations on major streets were hard on businesses trying to adapt to evolving health guidance.
- Evaluate the impact of charging for these permits. This could offset staffing costs and other budget concerns. However, fees are likely to present a serious challenge to businesses continuing to struggle. Fees are also likely to impact underserved communities disproportionately. Any permit fees must be evaluated with an equity lens. Permit fees typically include meter revenue, which implies that the value of the permit is in the parking fees, not the larger economic value of activating public right-of-way. It also disadvantages areas that have meters in terms of cost to the applicants.
- Identify funding to support businesses in the form of direct support, equipment, and permit costs. In December 2020, over \$400,000 of CARES Act funding was distributed to businesses. An additional \$100,000 funded the purchase of supplies to support businesses operating outdoors. (See page 29 for more information). PBOT should continue to find ways to reduce the impact on permit holders, including reducing insurance costs.
- Evaluate the best balance of right-of-way uses as we emerge from the public health and economic crises. Many factors impact ongoing demand for curb space. This includes ongoing business needs, less commuting, changes to parking demand, as well as the operation of transportation network companies (such as Uber and Lyft) and “micro-mobility” services (such as e-scooters). PBOT must allocate right-of-way and run these programs with these trends in mind, informed by continued outreach.



*People enjoy a Healthy Businesses plaza on NE Alberta Street in Northeast Portland*



## Slow Streets

Keep low-traffic streets, known as neighborhood greenways, slow and safe with advisory messaging and barriers

### OVERVIEW

PBOT converted 118 miles of already low-traffic streets (most of which were already developed as neighborhood greenways) into “local access only” streets to restrict cut-through traffic. The city accomplished this with 212 installations of “Local Access Only” signage and traffic control devices.



*Slow Streets signage being installed*

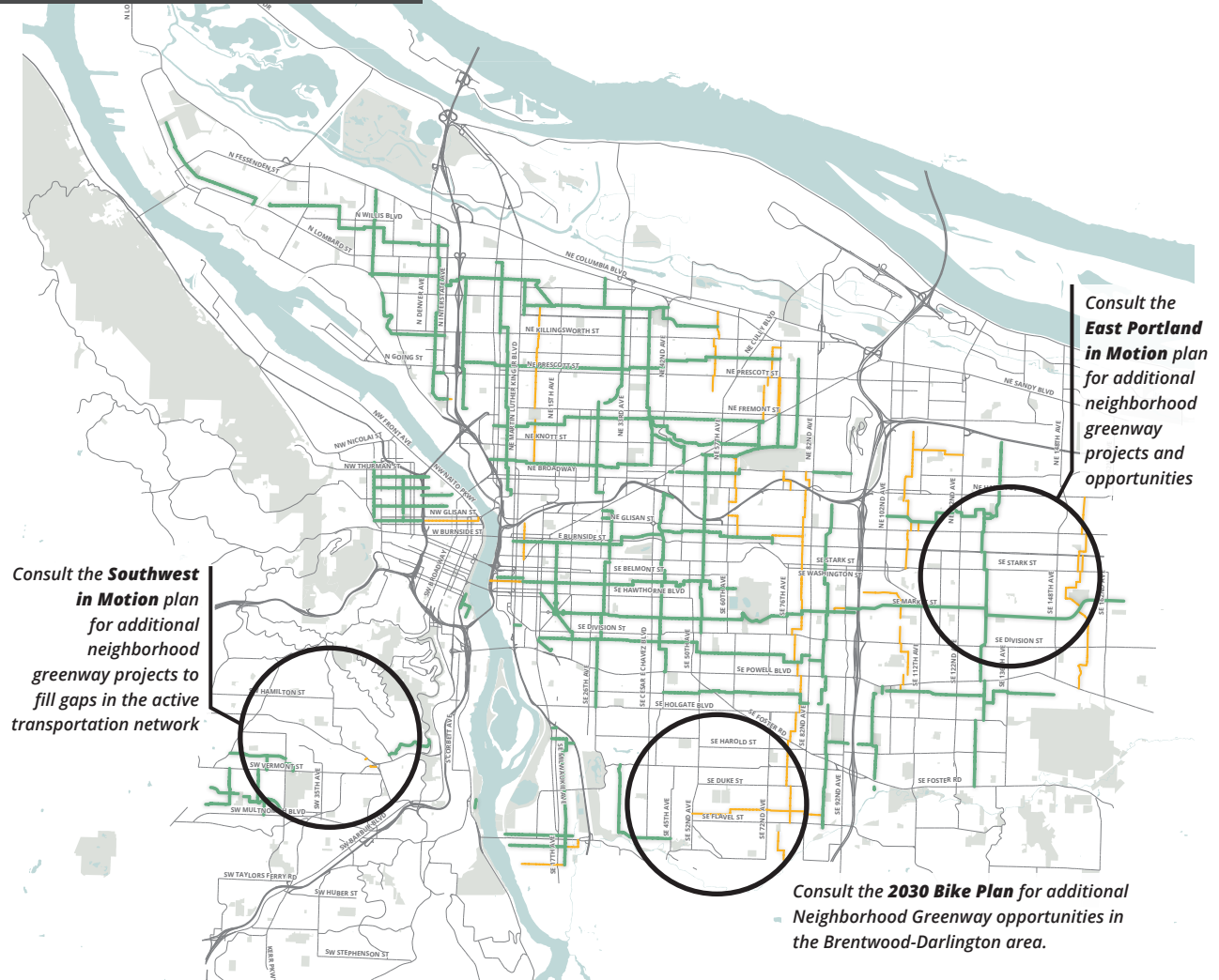
### Goals

Pedestrians and people biking feel comfortable and safe.

Improve neighborhood livability on slow streets.

Center the needs of BIPOC communities.

## NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAYS



Our neighborhood greenway network is a collection of low-traffic streets made safer so they can be used as the preferred routes for people walking, biking, and rolling. The existing neighborhood greenway network is well established, and recent neighborhood planning has confirmed future routes.

The focus of Slow Streets was to protect these neighborhood streets from higher traffic volumes and to set expectations for future investments. Other factors PBOT looked at: presence (or lack of) sidewalks, proximity to parks and natural areas, and ability to serve multifamily housing.

**EXISTING  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
GREENWAYS**

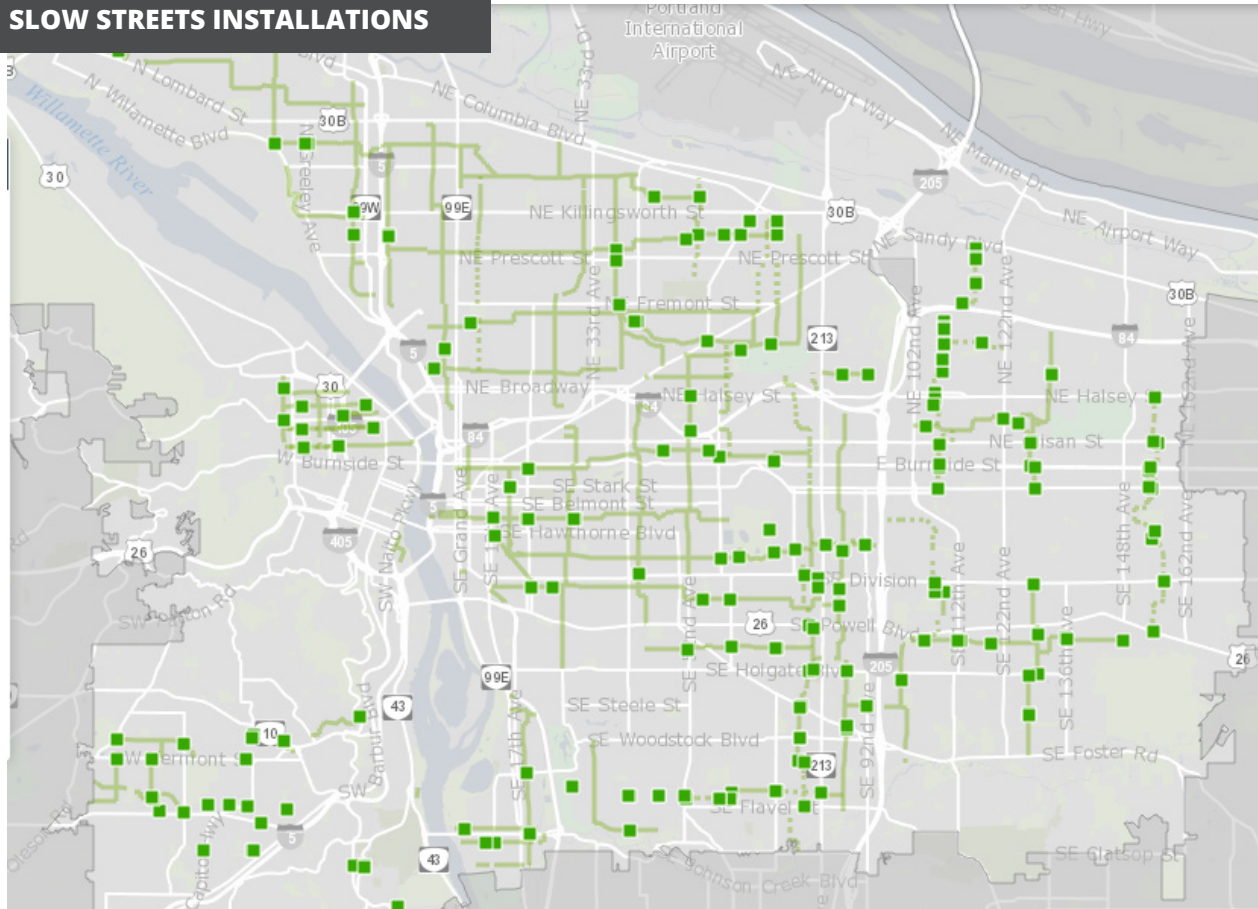
**PLANNED / FUNDED  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
GREENWAYS**



**PARKS /  
OPEN SPACES**



## SLOW STREETS INSTALLATIONS



The green lines show our neighborhood greenway network, while the green dots are where advisory signage was installed.

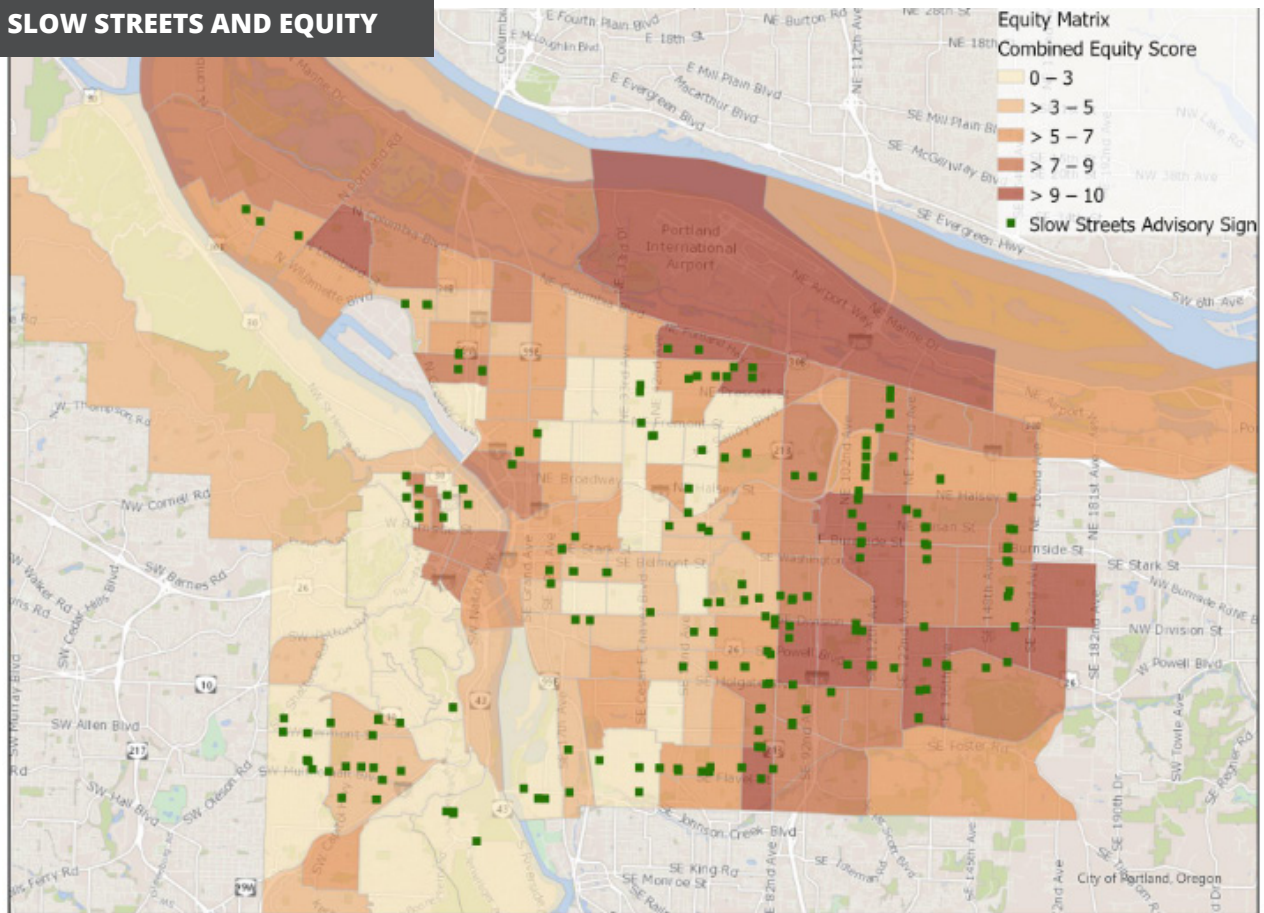
The map above shows where PBOT placed signs. The “local access only” restrictions allow people to travel safely and give space to others. All essential vehicle trips are allowed. People who live, work, and need access to homes and businesses are allowed to drive on the street.

The Slow Streets advisory signs were printed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese, with over 400 signs provided in languages other than English.



Slow Streets signage in English, Spanish, Chinese (Simplified), Russian, and Vietnamese

## SLOW STREETS AND EQUITY



Over half of the Slow Streets installations were in areas that scored higher on PBOT's Equity Matrix.

PBOT installed 57% of the advisory signage in areas that scored a seven or higher on PBOT's Equity Matrix.



A Slow Streets installation at SE Holgate Boulevard and 128th Ave (Photo: East PDX News)



A Slow Streets signage being installed in the Lents neighborhood (Photo: East PDX News)



## EVALUATION

The main tool for evaluating the Slow Streets program was a public survey that went live in September 2020 and was advertised using lawn signs placed along neighborhood greenways. The survey was also advertised on PBOT social media. It was open for about six weeks and received 985 responses and 250 additional comments. Feedback was also gathered through the 823-SAFE line.

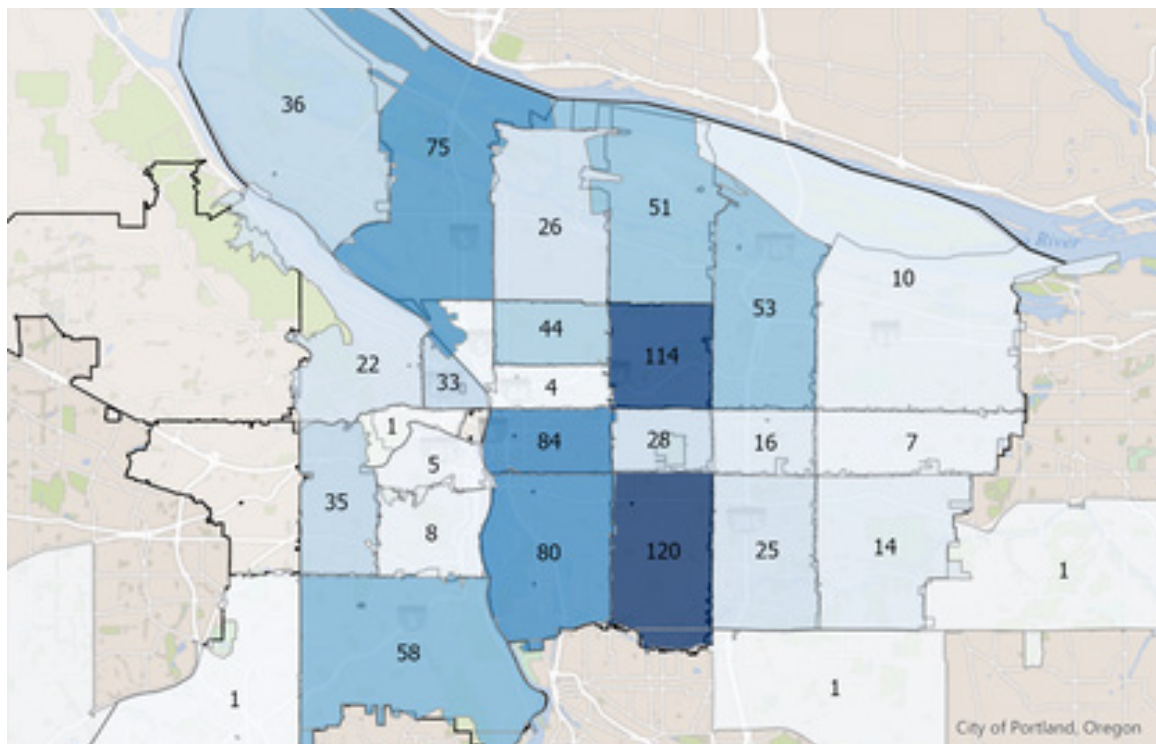
Other tools used in the evaluation were online mapping analysis, before and after bike and vehicular counts, and before and after vehicular speeds.

Survey responses were received from all over Portland, with the most responses coming from Southeast and Northeast Portland ZIP codes. Ten percent of survey respondents identified as members of BIPOC communities, 78% did not, and 12% preferred not to say.



*Lawn sign advertising the Slow Streets public survey*

### Number of survey responses by ZIP code

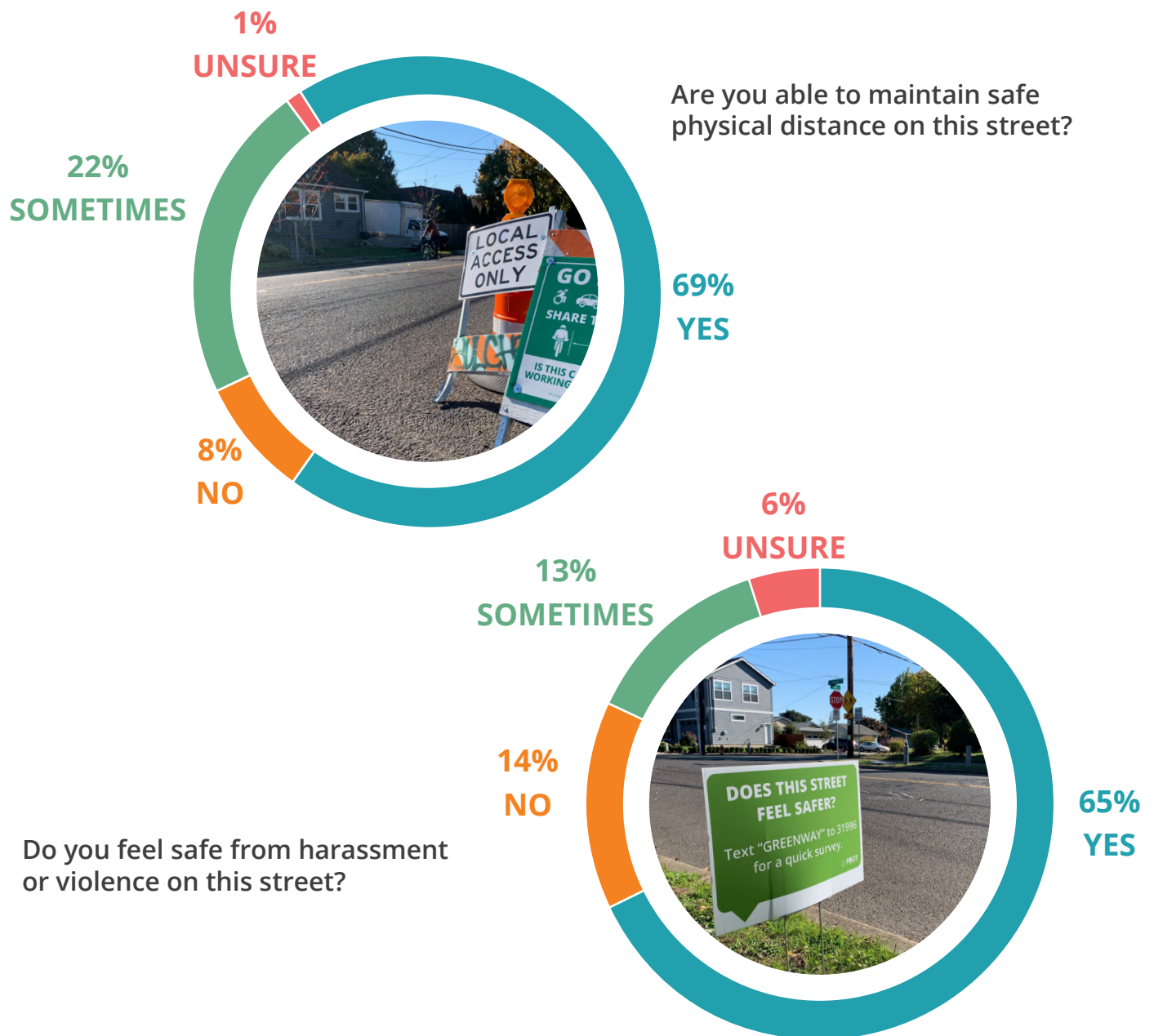




## FINDINGS

Overall, the majority of survey respondents (69%) felt they were able to maintain safe physical distancing on Slow Streets. Only 8% of respondents did not feel that they could maintain safe physical distancing and 22% answered that they could keep a safe distance some of the time.

When asked about feeling safe from harassment or violence on Slow Streets, 65% of survey respondents answered they did feel safe from harassment or violence, while 14% answered that they did not feel safe and 13% answered sometimes.



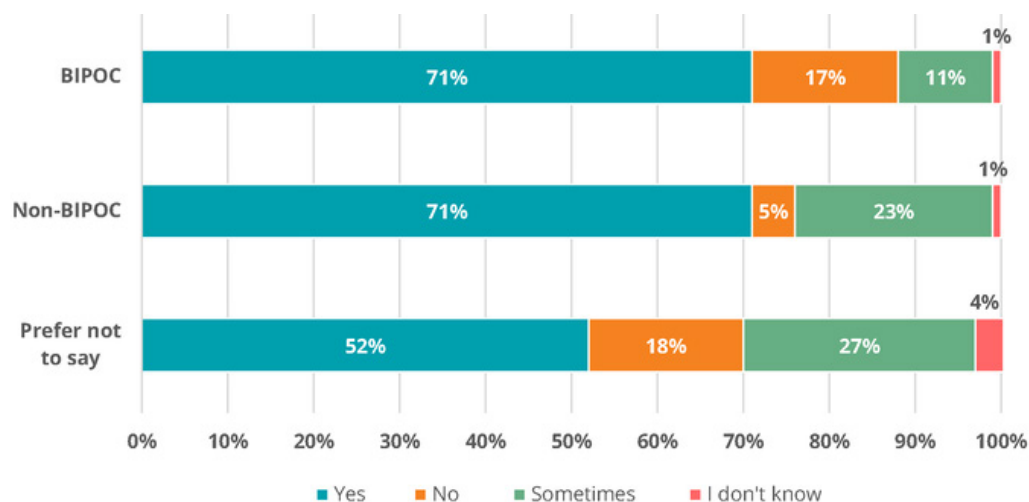
## Responses by race

Only about 10% of respondents identified as members of BIPOC communities and 12% preferred not to say. Whether members of BIPOC communities or not, respondents answered similarly on questions about safe physical distancing. Those respondents who preferred not to identify their race reported feeling the least safe on this question.

Those identifying as members of BIPOC communities were less likely to feel safe from harassment or violence, with 60% reporting feeling safe, compared to 74% of those not identifying as members of BIPOC communities. As with the previous question, respondents who preferred not to identify their race felt the least safe on this question.

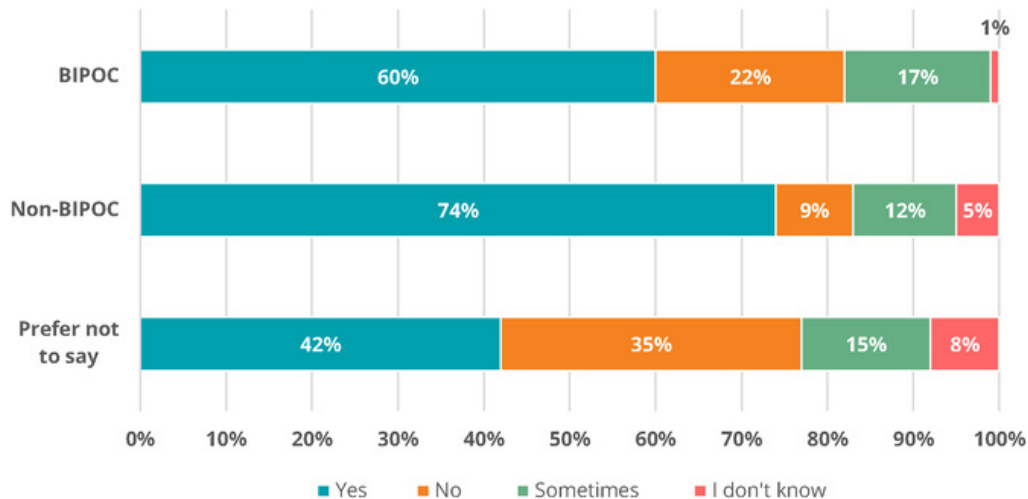
### Slow Streets

Survey Question: Are you able to maintain safe physical distance on this street?



### Slow Streets

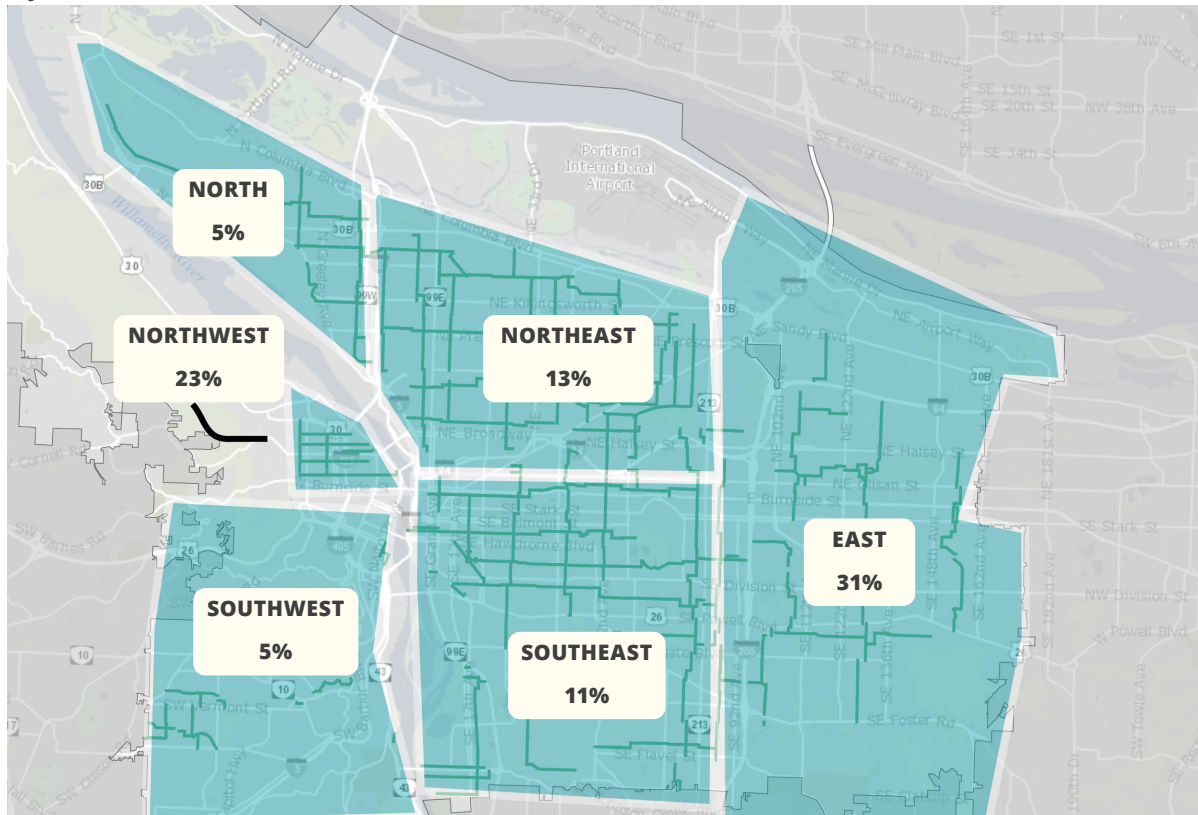
Survey Question: Do you feel safe from harassment or violence with this street?



## Responses by geography

Responses on safety from harassment or violence differed by geography. Thirty-one percent of respondents in East Portland and 23% in Northwest Portland answered they do not feel safe from violence or harassment on Slow Streets. This is compared to only 5% of respondents in both North and Southwest Portland who answered “no” to this question. Thirteen percent of respondents in Northeast and 11% in Southeast Portland responded that they did not feel safe from harassment or violence.

Slow Streets survey responses of “no” by geography to question:  
Do you feel safe from harassment or violence with this street?



*"Make them permanent please!  
And close them off more to traffic  
by implementing more traffic  
calming or actual physical barriers  
where practical and appropriate."  
-Survey respondent*



## A sense of community

PBOT was interested in knowing if the Slow Streets installations had any impact on the public's sense of community. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents answered that they felt a stronger sense of community along Slow Streets, compared to 28% who said they didn't and 7% who were unsure.

Do you feel a stronger sense of community along these Slow Streets?

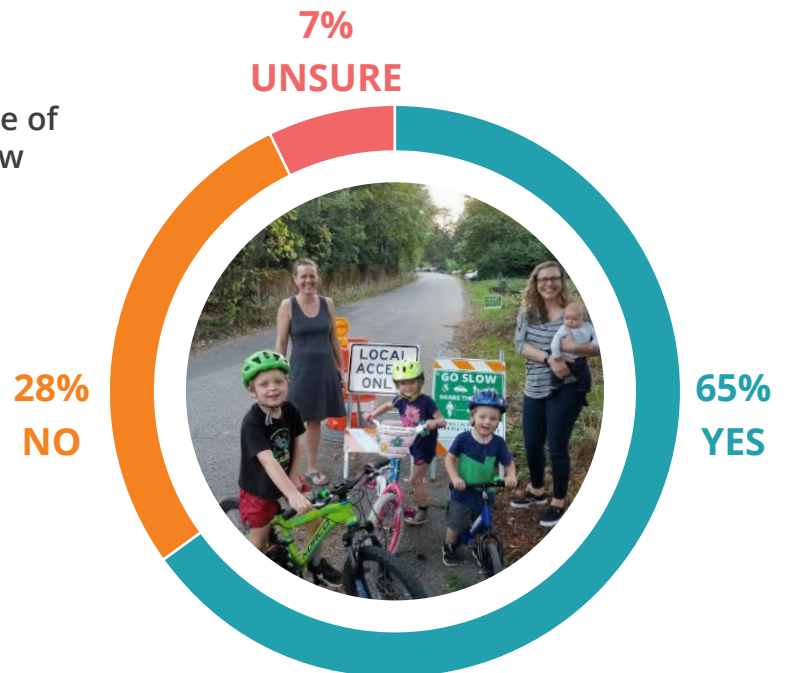
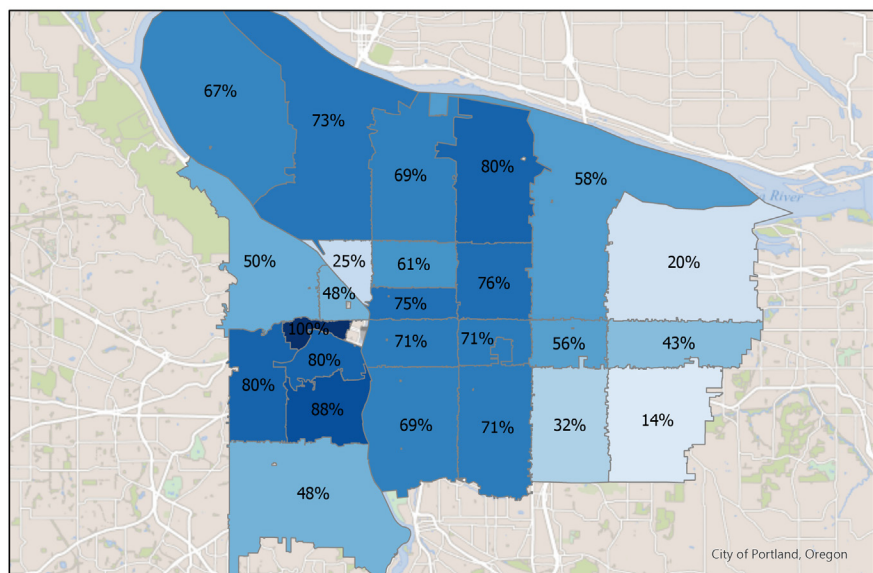


Photo: Hillsdale News

Responses to the question "Do you feel a stronger sense of community along these Slow Streets" were consistent across races, but varied greatly by geography. Those in inner Southeast and Northeast Portland neighborhoods, as well as those in North and Southwest Portland felt there was a stronger sense of community along the Slow Streets. It was less so in East Portland and the inner most area of North Portland.

Slow Streets survey responses of "yes" by ZIP code to question: Do you feel a stronger sense of community along these Slow Streets?

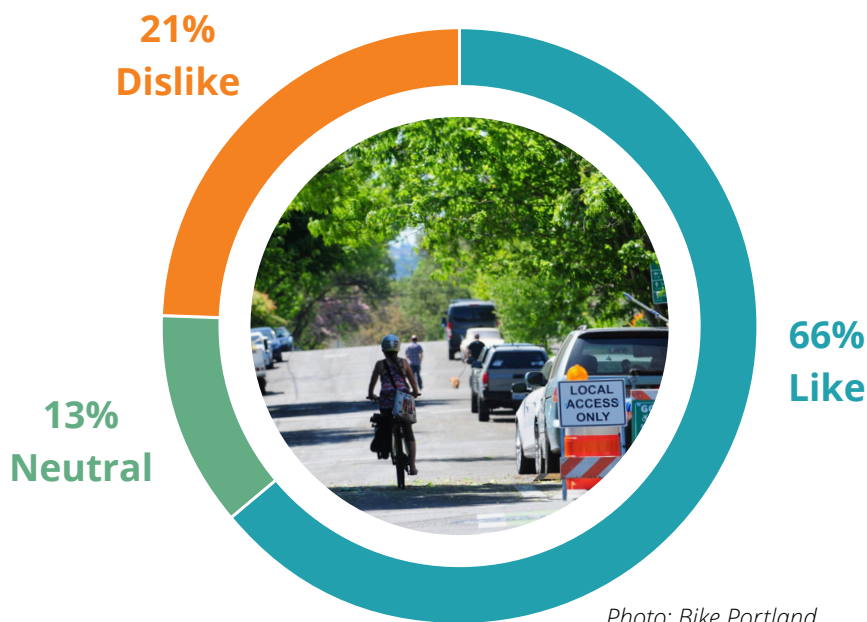


## Comments

The public survey had an option to leave a comment and we got 222 comments this way. Another 956 comments came in through PBOT's 823-SAFE phone and email line, as well as emails sent from the public directly to staff.

We categorized comments into three buckets:

- 66% of the comments were **supportive** of the program, saying they liked Slow Streets and would like to see the program expand or become permanent.
- 21% of the comments were **not supportive**, saying they disliked Slow Streets and/or wanted the signs and traffic barriers removed.
- 13% of the comments were **neutral**.

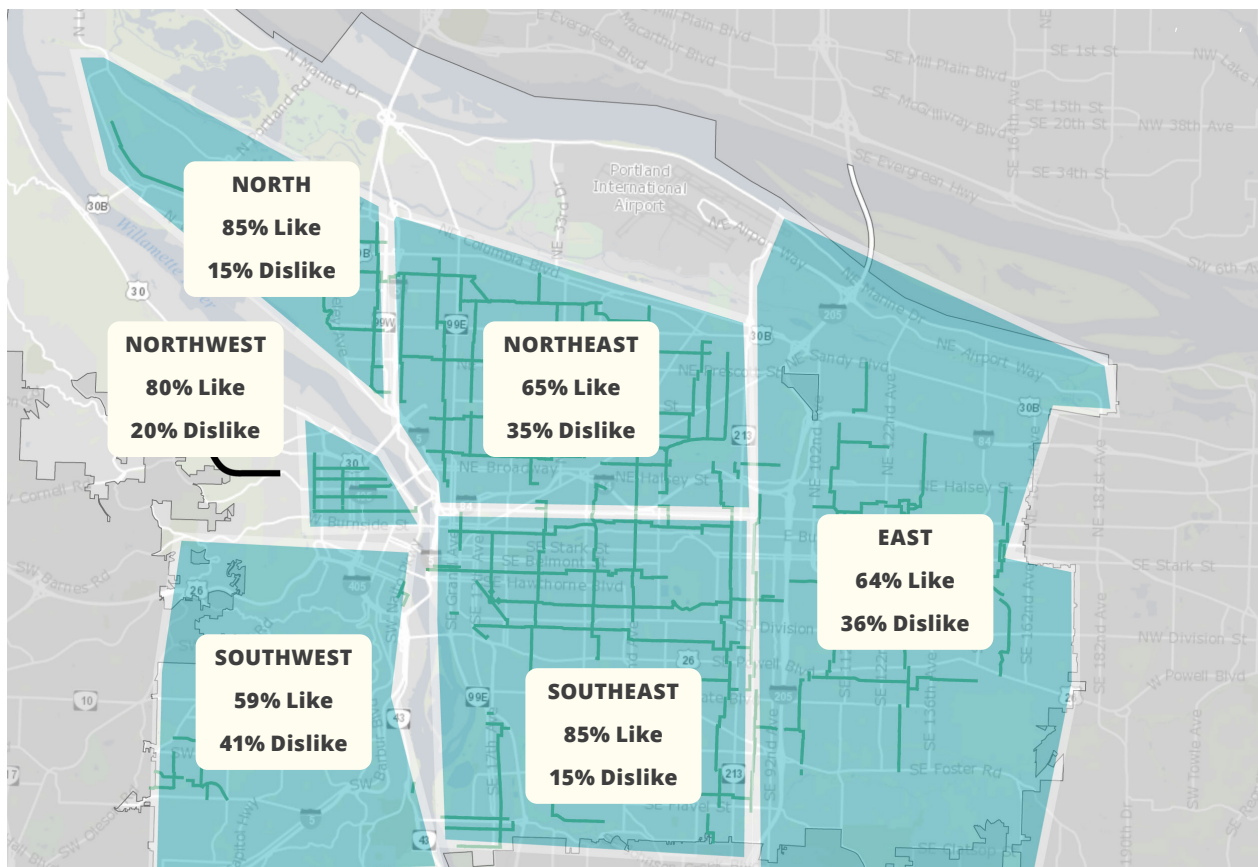


*"More slow streets please! I'd love permanent infrastructure- I always have to re-setup the barriers because they are moved or knocked down."*

*-Survey respondent*

We looked at the comments by location but were only able to do this for the survey itself and not comments that came in through 823-SAFE. North and Southeast Portland liked the program the most, with 85% of the comments received categorized as liking the program. The lowest percentage of supportive comments were received in Southwest Portland, with only 59% of comments received categorized as liking the program.

### Slow Streets survey comments by geography

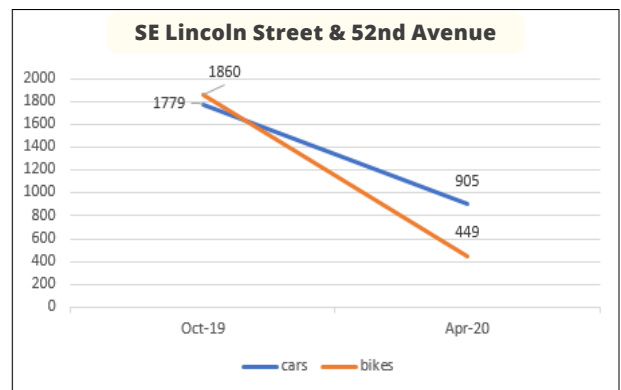
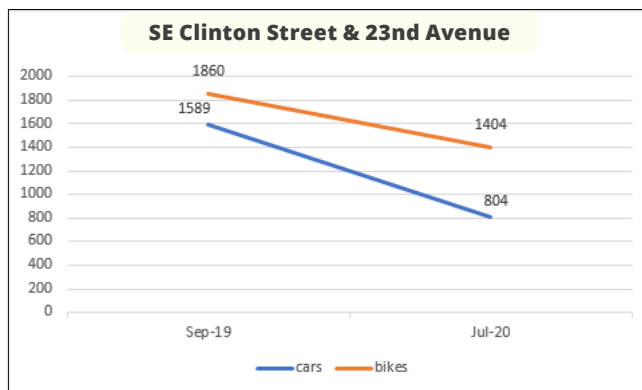


*I support the slow streets initiative! Thank you for making our neighborhoods safer and more focused on community! We live close to the one on Knapp and SE 60th. Would love to see more of these instituted in the Brentwood Darlington neighborhood!*  
-Survey respondent

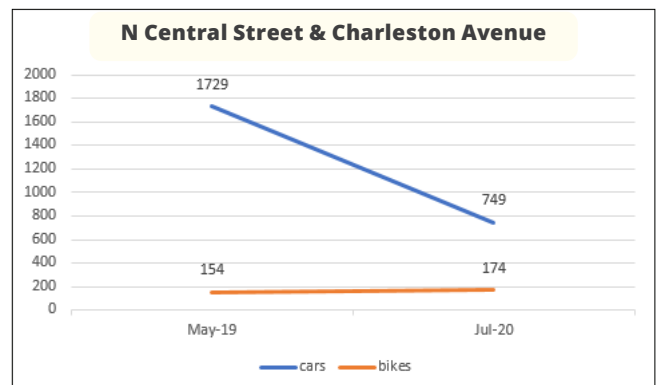
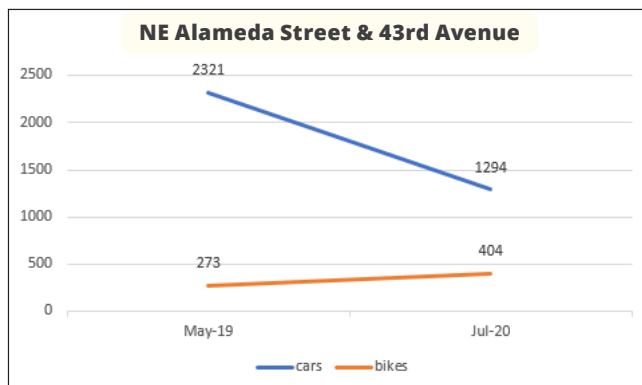
## Traffic counts

Overall, traffic volumes decreased citywide in the first several months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Routes to or near downtown, saw a 28-37% decrease in traffic. This includes W Burnside Road at NW Skyline Boulevard, NE Sandy Boulevard at 22nd Avenue, and SE Division Street at 33rd Avenue. Routes east of I-205, such as SE 122nd Avenue and outer Division Street saw 16% and 11% less traffic, respectively. Regional truck routes didn't see a big change. Traffic was 1% less on NW St Helens Road and 7% less on NE Marine Drive at 33rd Avenue.

Along neighborhood greenways in neighborhoods closer to downtown, bike traffic was down compared to the same time last year. On SE Clinton Street at 23rd Avenue, vehicle traffic was down 50% and bike traffic down 25%. On SE Lincoln Street at 52nd Avenue, vehicle traffic was down 49% and bike traffic down 76%.



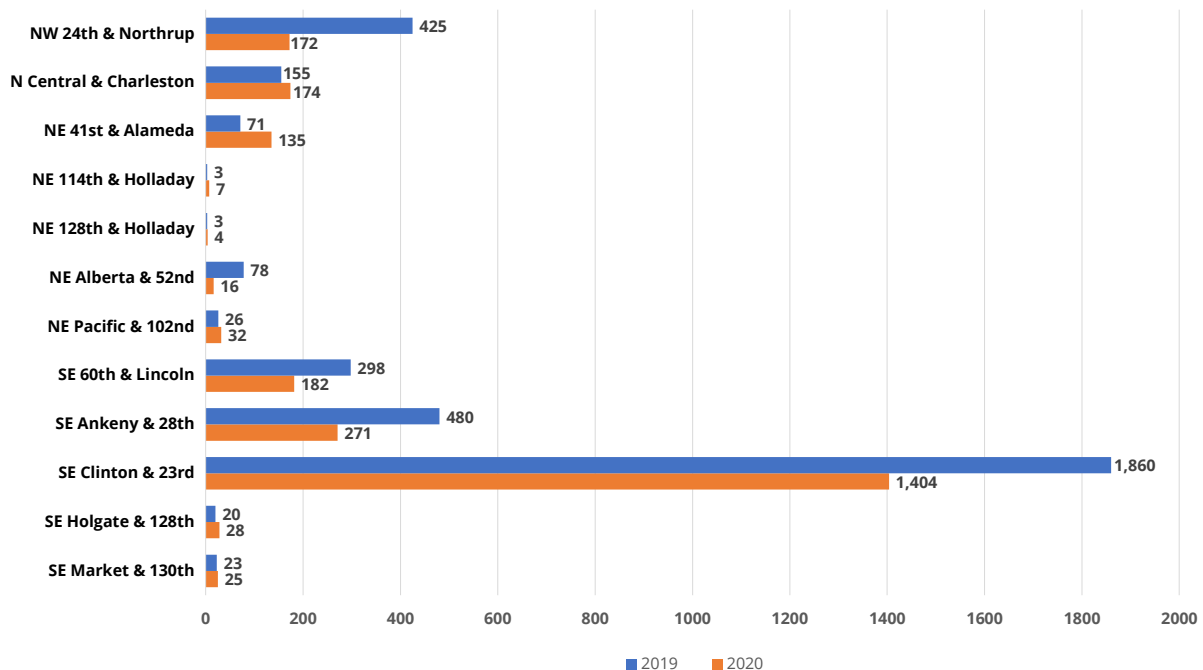
Where we conducted traffic counts on neighborhood greenways, we consistently saw less car traffic, as well as some locations where bike traffic increased. On NE Alameda at 43rd Ave, vehicle traffic was down 44%, while bike traffic was up 48%. Similarly, on N Central Street at Charleston Avenue, vehicle traffic was down 57%, while bike traffic was up 13%.





In the chart below, we see decreases in bike traffic on routes to or near downtown, and slight increases east of I-205 (although the total number of cyclists counted east of I-205 was very low).

Bike traffic counts 2019 (pre-Covid) & 2020 (during Slow Streets)



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Slow Streets was generally liked, with interest in expanding the program or making it more permanent.
- This survey was one of the first times PBOT has asked the public about harassment and violence on city streets. In this survey, for instance, residents in East Portland and Northwest Portland reported experiencing more harassment and violence in the right-of-way than other parts of the city. We will continue to explore ways to improve our understanding of personal safety and security in the right-of-way.
- Survey results show that the program led to a higher sense of community on Slow Streets, which was surprising and encouraging to staff.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep Slow Streets installations in place while physical distancing is a public health requirement.
- Fortify some Slow Streets locations, making them semi-permanent or permanent. This would slow vehicles entering a neighborhood greenway and require less maintenance. PBOT should also prioritize locations with higher traffic volumes and/or where BIPOC communities/organizations or public health organizations request them.
- Continue outreach and provide opportunities for public input.
- Once the Covid-19 public health crisis is over, use the same Slow Streets installations to raise awareness of neighborhood greenways. This is a great public engagement tool that reaches people where they live and travel.



Cyclists of all ages enjoy the Slow Streets  
Photo: BikePortland





*A group of people riding bikes enjoys the neighborhood greenway on SE Lincoln Street.*

# Safe Streets Initiative

## Next Steps

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, PBOT will continue to respond and adapt in order to make Portland streets work for all Portlanders. Currently, PBOT staff is working on what the three pillars of the Safe Streets Initiative will look like moving forward, both in the near term (summer 2021) and beyond.

PBOT will continue to evaluate and incorporate lessons learned through the Safe Streets Initiative to strengthen our transportation networks. PBOT will also continue our public engagement, particularly with members of BIPOC communities and public health organizations.

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