

Busking in Victoria

Engagement Summary Report

May 2025



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Appendix A: Have Your Say Survey Results

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands
of the Songhees Nation and the Xwsepsum Nation.



Executive Summary

The City of Victoria is reviewing its Street Vendor Bylaw to improve the busking experience downtown. The review is part of the City's OUR DWTN revitalization program's vision for a refreshed and improved downtown experience. It also aligns with objectives outlined in Victoria's Music Strategy: to "increase music programming budget and the busker licensing program to expand music in publicly accessible places."

The City's Street Vendor Bylaw is currently administered through a simple licensing process that provides basic guidelines for buskers to follow. The fee is set low (\$25) to encourage registration and ensure accessibility. There were 444 licensed buskers in 2024 and 326 licensed in 2023, an increase of 36 per cent in the past year.

Bylaw and permit conditions have been gradually updated over several decades, with the latest amendment to the Street Vendor Bylaw occurring in 2012.

Although administration of busker registrations has worked reasonably well, concerns have been shared about the **quality, locations and timing of performances**, and there is a growing internal and external consensus that improvements could be made to elevate the overall program.

To date, the Busking in Victoria engagement project has consisted of a two-phase approach. Phase 1 took place from October 2023 to January 2024, which included the City conducting a comprehensive review of municipal busking best practices and engaging with a 12-member stakeholder working group. Members include seven licensed buskers, two downtown business owners and representatives of the Downtown Victoria Business Association, the Downtown Residents Association and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.

This engagement helped inform a plan to pilot two types of busking locations around downtown the summer of 2024 for public feedback. Juried buskers were scheduled to perform at eight "elevated" locations downtown and paid \$50 per scheduled performance to complement their tips. In addition, five designated busking locations were piloted along Government Street for spacing, at which any licensed busker could perform for tips.

Phase 2 focused on public engagement in the form of a public survey available on Have Your Say, the City's online engagement platform from June 25 to August 31, 2024.

The City heard from 239 people in the survey, which was made available in print upon request.

The survey measured the community's support for busking downtown, as well as specific types of busking locations, sound amplification at specific sites, strategies to enhance busking downtown and the types of busking and related amenities buskers and the public would like to see, such as covered spaces with comfortable seating, accessible parking and food trucks nearby to create a dynamic downtown experience.

In addition, the City received written correspondence from 11 members of the community, eight of whom were buskers. As their input was received unsolicited, it is summarized in this report.

Engagement feedback from both phases has informed draft recommendations to update the City's Street Vendor Bylaw, which will be presented to the Committee of the Whole for consideration in early 2025.

The update to the City's Street Vendor Bylaw will:

- Improve the quality of busking performances downtown
- Establish busking locations that support scheduled, high-quality performances
- Encourage talent development and provide opportunities for performers of varying proficiency levels

If approved, the bylaw update accompanied by a comprehensive communications plan, will roll out in early 2026.

This timeline will enable staff to continue to test additional busking approaches in summer 2025, such as emerging performer busking locations, amplified busking in designated locations and an online calendar for City staff to book key sites.

Phase 3 will consist of focused engagement with members of the stakeholder working group in summer 2025, with the Bylaw Council report presented to Council in fall 2025 for consideration.

Survey results demonstrate strong support for busking downtown:

- 88 per cent believe/strongly believe busking enhances the vibrancy and cultural appearance of our downtown
- 89 per cent support/strongly support busking in downtown Victoria.

Of the 239 survey respondents, the top three types of busking people want to see downtown are:

- Music at 91 per cent (e.g., singers and musicians)
- Visual arts at 79 per cent (e.g., painting, chalk art, sketching, etc.)
- Dance at 71 per cent (e.g., acrobatics, ribbon dancing, hula hooping, etc.)

Both the survey results and email correspondence identify strong support for the eight “elevated” busking locations, which featured scheduled/juried buskers.

Feedback is mixed for the five designated busking locations on Government Street, with some downtown residents and businesses voicing concerns about excessive noise and lack of enforcement for busking rules.

- 86 per cent support for busking along Government Street overall
- 80 per cent support having designated locations for busking on Government Street between Yates and Wharf Streets
- 77 per cent support a juried process to audition licensed buskers to perform at scheduled dates/times at specific “elevated” busking locations
- 51 per cent think that the City should allow busking to take place anywhere along Government Street
- 44 per cent think busking should take place anywhere downtown

Despite focused outreach with licensed buskers, only 20 of the 239 survey respondents (eight per cent) identify as licensed buskers. Of note, 33 per cent of survey respondents identify as downtown residents and six per cent as downtown business owner/operators.

The survey and email feedback both show great support for the return of the annual busking festival downtown, with one person suggesting that buskers help inform its development.

Feedback on amplified sound is varied, with those who feel amplification should be banned (and the ban enforced), used only for vocals and “soft” instruments and/or at specific “elevated” locations. Some comment that amplification needs to be defined, monitored and measured in decibels, whether it is electronically amplified or created by the natural sounds of an instrument (e.g., saxophone, drums, trumpet, etc.).

In the survey, 51 per cent of respondents support/strongly support sound amplification at specific “elevated” busking locations featuring auditioned/juried buskers, 14 per cent are neutral while 35 per cent don’t support/strongly don’t support.

Survey and email feedback note that current busking rules are not being followed and Bylaw Services staff needs to monitor and enforce current and any future busking rules.

While the majority of downtown residents and business owner/operators support busking, some express concern regarding some buskers lacking talent, staying longer than the two-hour limit, performing too loudly, repeating songs or being verbally and physically aggressive to passers-by. In addition, the 10 p.m. cut-off for busking is not being respected or enforced in downtown residential areas and some buskers block business entrances or take up too much space on the sidewalk.

Creating a feedback mechanism and opportunities for collaboration between buskers, downtown residents and businesses is suggested to improve the busking experience.

A comprehensive analysis of public feedback is located under the What We Heard section of the engagement summary.

Engagement at a Glance

Phase 1: October 2023 to January 2024

Phase 2: June 25 to August 31, 2024



239

**People completed
a survey**

415

**Buskers invited to audition
to perform at elevated
busking locations**



134

**Elevated busking
opportunities
offered to
buskers from July
to September**

12

**Stakeholders
participated
in working group**



67

**Buskers
auditioned
over 3 days**

11

**People provided
written feedback**



Project Overview

The City of Victoria is reviewing its Street Vendor Bylaw to improve the busking experience downtown. The review is part of the City's OUR DWTN revitalization program's vision for a refreshed and improved downtown experience and aligns with objectives outlined in Victoria's Music Strategy: to "increase music programming budget and the busker licensing program to expand music in publicly accessible places."

The Pilot

In summer 2024, the City piloted new busking locations downtown and invited feedback through an online survey. Public input gathered through an online survey (June 25-August 31, 2024), email correspondence and engagement with the project's stakeholder working group has informed recommendations for the City's Street Vendor Bylaw. The level of engagement was to consult.

Four hundred and fifteen licensed buskers were invited to audition over three days for an opportunity to be scheduled to perform at eight "elevated" locations downtown, enabling them to be paid \$50 per scheduled performance to complement their tips. Sixty-seven buskers participated in the audition process. (Note: Of the 444 licensed buskers, staff were unable to reach 29 to invite them to audition.)

The eight "elevated" busking locations included the Upper Causeway near the Visitor Centre, Ship Point, two spots in Bastion Square (the plaza area near Wharf Street and the southwest corner of Langley and Bastion Streets), Johnson Street plaza, the northwest corner of Broad and Fort Streets and the northeast corners of both Broad and Yates Streets and Douglas and Broughton Streets.

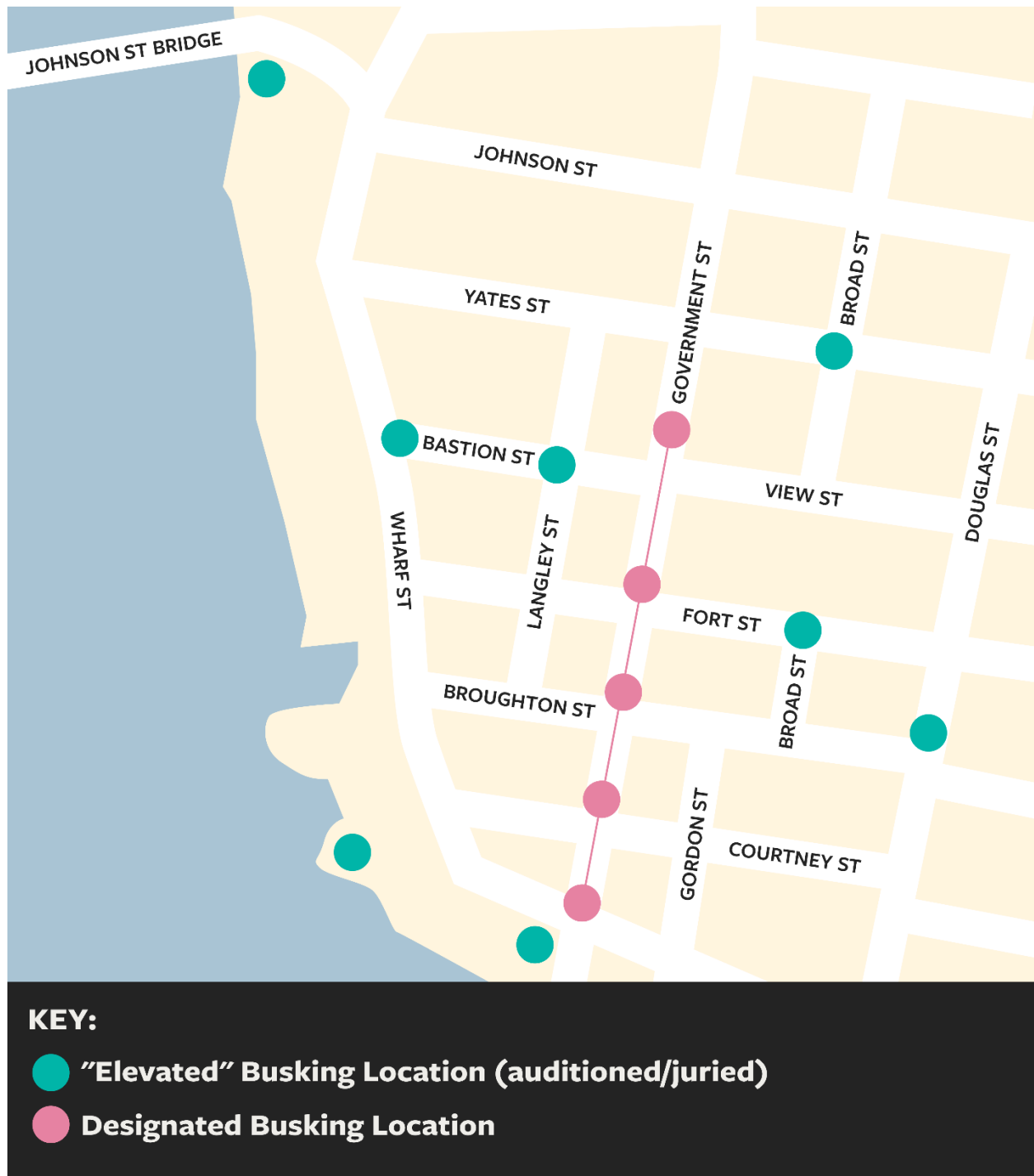
Five designated locations along Government Street were piloted for spacing. Any licensed busker could perform at these locations for tips. The pilot ended on September 19, 2024.

Juried Process for Piloting "Elevated" Busking Locations

In spring 2024, 415 licensed buskers were invited to sign up for a five-minute audition in a juried selection process on June 14 and 17, for the opportunity to perform at piloted "elevated" busking locations with paid/scheduled performances. An additional juried process took place on July 19. Licensed buskers received an invitation by email or phone in early July to participate.

Busking Showcase at Ship Point

On Canada Day, a busking showcase was featured at Ship Point from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. along with an information booth for buskers and the public to learn more about the busking pilot and the online survey.



Engagement Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the Busking in Victoria engagement was to obtain stakeholder and public feedback to help inform recommendations to improve the City's Street Vendor Bylaw and busking program.

Objectives

- To communicate the opportunity for the community to provide feedback on piloted busking locations in the summer through an online survey
- To provide a feedback process that was meaningful and accessible to participants

Engagement Process

To date, the Busking in Victoria project has involved a two-phase approach to engagement.

Phase 1 – Stakeholder Working Group

Phase 1 took place from October 2023 to January 2024, which included the City OUR DWTN team conducting a comprehensive review of municipal busking best practices and engaging with a 12-member stakeholder working group that included seven licensed buskers, two downtown business owners and a representative from the Downtown Victoria Business Association, the Downtown Residents Association and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.

- Seven licensed buskers (Dave Harris, Jon Velarde, Blake Andison, Iminah Amal-Hill, Jaime Nolan, Harbour Nolan and Peter Sandmark)
- Two Government Street business owners (Spencer Buck of Irish Times/Bard n' Banker and Jessica Walker of Munro's Books)
- Jeff Bray, Executive Director, Downtown Victoria Business Association
- James Davis, Downtown Residents Association representative
- Stella Garcia, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority

The stakeholder working group developed several recommendations, some of which could be piloted over summer 2024 for public feedback. The recommendations are as follows:

- Improve the quality of busking performances in key locations
- Consider jurying buskers to perform at “elevated” busking locations and second or third tier locations
- Establish sites that support scheduled, high-quality performances
- Amplification in specific areas or no amplification
- Considerations: locations, infrastructure, booking and reserving sites by juried buskers
- Encourage the development of talent and provide opportunities for performers of varying levels of proficiency
- Considerations: Non-juried buskers, support for development, grandfathering
- Currently the City has a Music Roster to have juried musicians perform around the city. Need to consider including buskers/street entertainment in the City’s Call for Musicians for juried busking locations in key areas.
- Ensure that the right administrative tools are in place for positive outcomes and minimal impacts for everyone.
- Considerations: Licensing fees, passive or active coordination, guidelines, hours, duration, enforcement, staffing to ensure program is running smoothly and guidelines are followed.

Phase 2 – Busking Pilot for Public Feedback

The stakeholder working group helped inform a plan to pilot two types of busking locations around downtown the summer of 2024 for public feedback.

Auditions of licensed buskers were held over three days. Juried buskers were scheduled to perform at eight “elevated” locations downtown and were paid \$50 per scheduled performance to complement their tips.

Five designated busking locations were piloted along Government Street for spacing, at which any licensed busker could perform for tips.

Phase 2 focused on obtaining public input through an online survey that was available on Have Your Say, the City’s online engagement platform, from June 25 to August 31, 2024. The City heard from 239 people in the online survey, which was also available in print upon request.

The survey measured:

- the community's support for busking downtown
- specific types of busking locations
- sound amplification at specific sites
- strategies to enhance busking downtown
- the types of busking and related amenities buskers and the public would like to see, such as covered spaces with comfortable seating, accessible parking and food trucks nearby to create a dynamic downtown experience

In addition to the survey, the City received unsolicited written correspondence from 11 members of the community, seven of whom were buskers. What we heard from the email correspondence is summarized in this report.

Below is a timeline that identifies the status of the Busking in Victoria engagement project.



Promotion

The following strategy was used to promote the pilot and public feedback opportunity.

- **Branding** – All pilot materials were creatively branded to drive participation in the public engagement. The name of the pilot project was **Busking in Victoria** and featured the OUR DWTN colours and wordmark.



- **Have Your Say** – All information materials linked to the City’s Have Your Say online engagement platform at engage.victoria.ca inviting people to take the survey.

Busking in Victoria



The City of Victoria is reviewing its Street Entertainment Bylaw to improve the busking experience downtown. The review is part of the City's OUR DWTN revitalization program's vision for a refreshed and improved downtown experience.

- **City Website** – The OUR DWTN web page on the City’s website featured a link to the Have Your Say project page, inviting people to learn more and have their say. The public engagement was also featured in the website’s Latest News section on the homepage and the events calendar.

- **Handbill** – A colourful printed card with information about the project and the call to action (take the survey) was available at the Downtown Victoria Business Association office, Business Hub, City Hall and Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre. City staff also delivered the handbill to downtown businesses to generate awareness and drive survey responses.



- **Poster** – A branded 11”x17” poster was displayed in City buildings downtown to help promote the online survey.

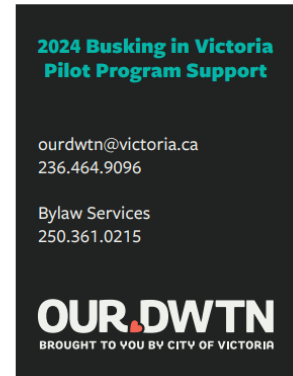
- **Fact Sheet** – A double-sided fact sheet was developed to distribute to buskers at the juried auditions and for use at the Canada Day busking showcase to help inform buskers and the public about the pilot and online survey.

- **Pavement Decals** – To promote and create awareness of the Busking in Victoria pilot and survey, temporary pavement decals were placed at the piloted busking locations downtown. The colourful decals were circular and featured the branding, text and a QR code that directed people to the online survey.



- **Lanyards** – Branded, double-sided lanyard inserts were created to identify the juried buskers when performing.

- **Pay Station Panels** – To help promote the survey, 25 branded pay station panels with the Have Your Say QR code were available from June 25 to August 31, 2024 along Government and Douglas Streets.



- **Display Panel** – A branded display panel with a QR code directed people to take the online survey. The display panel was set up at City Hall and the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre, along with the promotional handbills.
- **Media Release** – To help launch this engagement project and generate awareness of the piloted busking locations and online survey, a media release was distributed to the City's media list.
- **Social media campaign** – A creative social media campaign was created to promote participation in the survey using the City's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn channels. The campaign included organic and paid Meta boosts.
- **City Hall Slide** – A promotional slide was created to invite people to take the Busking in Victoria survey, as part of the slideshow that runs in the City Hall foyer.



- **Closing the loop emails** – OUR DWTN staff developed closing the loop emails to communicate updates to the stakeholder working group throughout Phase 2 of engagement.

- **Stakeholder emails** – A stakeholder email invited the following organizations to help promote the Busking in Victoria online survey to their members and networks: Victoria Downtown Residents Association, the Downtown Victoria Business Association, The Chamber, the Victoria Harbour Authority and Destination Greater Victoria.
- **Digital Newsletters** – The Busking in Victoria public engagement was promoted in the City’s Connect, Business Hub and Create Victoria e-newsletters. An update on the project was shared in the November 2024 Have You Heard newsletter, noting that the engagement summary will be presented to Council in early 2025.
- **Busking Showcase** – On Canada Day, a busking showcase was featured at Ship Point from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. along with an information booth for buskers and the public to learn more about the busking pilot and the online survey.

What We Heard

Phase 1 – Stakeholder Working Group

The stakeholder working group identified broad areas for change:

- **Licensing fees** (no fee or change in fee)
- **Application and Guidelines:** Provide better administrative tools to ensure the program runs smoothly, with clear expectations and clear guidelines around non-compliance of the rules.
- **Juried or non-juried:** Could use City’s Music Roster process and expand to include Busker Roster with a peer jury.
- **Amplification:** Currently no amplification allowed; could change to allow some amplification during certain hours and/or locations.
- **Hours:** How long they can busk in one location as well as when they begin/end (e.g., 8 a.m.-10 p.m.)
- **Locations:** Where buskers can set up (e.g., how close to business doorways, how close to the next busker, as well as introducing elevated busking locations with some infrastructure (e.g., a small stage, electrical access, signage and placemaking elements, chairs, coloured paint/mural on the ground with performance times)
- **Allowing bookable and reservable spaces** or free for all
- **Allowing buskers to sell merchandise** (e.g., CDs, etc.) or not
- **Enforcement:** What rules/consequences should be in place for non-compliance (e.g., fines, removal of busking licence, etc.)?
- **Types of busking:** What would people like to see (e.g., more circus-type acts, chalk artists, etc.)? What would bring you downtown to experience the street entertainment?

Phase 2 – Online Survey

Of the 239 people who participated in the Busking in Victoria online survey:

- 88% believe/strongly believe busking enhances the vibrancy and cultural appear of our downtown
- 89% support/strongly support busking in downtown Victoria
- Of the types of busking that people would like to experience downtown:
 - 91% - Music (e.g., singers and musicians)
 - 79% - Visuals Arts (e.g., painting, chalk art, sketching, etc.)
 - 71% - Dance (e.g., acrobatics, ribbon dancing, hula hooping, etc.)
 - 65% - Street Theatre (e.g., comedy, miming, clowning, storytelling, etc.)
 - 62% - Magic Tricks or Slight-of-Hand
 - 33% - Poetry
 - 9% - “Other” which is identified as juggling/fire juggling, any performance art, balloon animals, Indigenous culture and history, science/nature content
- The following table identifies the levels of support for the eight “elevated” busking locations that were piloted featuring auditioned, licensed buskers.

While there is support for all eight locations, four locations ranked highly: Bastion Square plaza near Wharf Street; Ship Point; the Upper Causeway near the Visitor Centre; and Bastion Square at the southwest corner of Broad and Fort Streets.

“Elevated” Busking Location Support	Percentage
Bastion Square (plaza near Wharf Street)	94%
Ship Point	92%
Upper Causeway near Visitor Centre	90%
Bastion Square (southwest corner of Broad and Fort Streets)	86%
Johnson Street Plaza	79%

“Elevated” Busking Location Support	Percentage
Northwest corner of Broad and Fort Streets	75%
Northeast corner of Broad and Yates Streets	70%
Northeast corner of Douglas and Broughton Streets	67%

(Note: Percentages are rounded up.)

- Amplification at “elevated” busking locations:
 - 51% support/strongly support amplification at specific “elevated” busking locations featuring juried buskers
 - 14% are neutral
 - 35% don’t support/strongly don’t support amplification at these eight piloted sites
- 86% support/strongly support busking along Government Street
- 80% support/strongly support having “designated” busking locations on Government Street between Yates and Wharf Streets
- There is strong support for all five designated locations piloted along Government Street between Yates and Wharf Streets:
 - 91% support the northwest corner of Government and Wharf Streets
 - 91% support the Government and View Street intersection (next to the Trounce Alley entrance)
 - 90% support the northwest corner of Government and Broughton Streets
 - 88% support the northwest corner of Government and Fort Streets
 - 86% support the northeast corner of Government and Courtney Streets
- 51% think that the City should allow busking to take place anywhere along Government Street, while 30% do not and 19% are unsure

- Only 44% think busking should take place anywhere downtown, with 37% no and 20% unsure

The table below identifies levels of support for strategies that could help improve the busking experience downtown.

- The top four strategies are:
 1. The return of the annual busking festival
 2. Having designated locations for licensed, pre-qualified buskers
 3. A calendar of performances online and onsite
 4. The ability to tip buskers electronically
- Three strategies tie for fifth place:
 - Designated locations for emerging/novice buskers
 - Comfortable/accessible seating nearby
 - Having public washrooms nearby

According to the ranking below, 48% support amplification at designated locations/times by licensed, pre-qualified (auditioned/juried) buskers as a way to help improve the busking experience downtown. (Note: In a similar survey question, specifically about the level of support for amplification, the result was 51% in support. Both results demonstrate support is split.)

Ranking	Strategies that Could Support Busking	Percentage
1	Annual busking festival	71%
2	Designated locations and times for licensed, pre-qualified (auditioned/juried) buskers	64%
3	Calendar of performances available online and onsite	59%
4	Ability to tip buskers electronically	57%
5	Designated locations and times for emerging/novice buskers	54%
5	Comfortable/accessible seating nearby	54%
5	Public washroom nearby	54%
6	Shade/rain cover for buskers and spectators	52%

Ranking	Strategies that Could Support Busking	Percentage
7	Consequences for buskers who do not follow the program rules	51%
8	Bylaw officers ensure buskers follow program rules	50%
9	Food trucks nearby	49%
10	Designated locations and times for sound-amplified performances by licensed, pre-qualified (auditioned/juried) buskers	48%
11	Opportunities for buskers and community to collaborate and share ideas and challenges	45%
12	Accessible locations (e.g., near parking, cycling corridor, walking path, etc.	44%
13	Professional development and/or mentorship opportunities for buskers	38%

(Note: Percentages are rounded up)

Of 239 survey respondents, when asked how often do you visit downtown:

- 39% - several times a week
- 27% - I reside downtown
- 19% - daily
- 11% - once a month
- 4% - rarely
- 1% - never

Of 239 survey respondents, the following identified as:

- 33% - Downtown resident
- 8% - Busker/aspiring busker
- 6% - Downtown business owner/operator

Busker Section of Survey

There was relatively low participation from buskers in the survey, despite focused outreach with this stakeholder group. Of the 239 survey respondents, 20 (8%) identify as buskers.

- Of the 20 respondents who identified as buskers:
 - 16 – a licensed busker
 - 3 – considering being a busker downtown
 - 1 – an unlicensed busker
- When asked how long have you been busking in Victoria?
 - 10 – under five years
 - 4 – more than 10 years
 - 3 – 5-10 years
 - 3 – haven't started yet but interested
- When asked have you experienced any challenges obtaining a Street Entertainment licence in Victoria?
 - 15 – no
 - 2 – yes
 - 3 – haven't applied yet
- When asked to rate their experience as a busker in Victoria, the majority responded favourably:
 - 11 – good
 - 3 – very good
 - 4 – neutral
 - 1 – fair
 - 1 – not good

Busker Survey Feedback

Pilot:

- Some of the “elevated” spots in the pilot seemed very difficult without any amplification (Yates and Broad; anything on Douglas from Pandora to Fort, and Johnson Street Bridge)
- If buskers are to be scheduled at designated locations and times, make sure not to have same genre (e.g., jazz musicians) performing nearby at the same time
- Support auditioning buskers
- Support scheduling of locations
- Need to monitor when scheduled/juried buskers don’t perform (when there are no people around) – to revisit the scheduled timing of performances for an area
- Clustering buskers along Government Street will make it difficult for buskers to make a living wage

Opportunities:

- Support for an annual busker festival again – but consult with actual buskers on how to make it good again
- Most people are considerate of buskers
- Create sheltered or covered areas to increase busking time throughout the year
- Can the City and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority work together re: busking in the Inner Harbour?
- Bylaw update could address dealing with “loud, proud and annoying performers”
- Enforce time limit of 1-2 hours at designated locations
- Jurying is a good idea if decision making is transparent

Challenges:

- Currently busking is at severe ebb; needs City support
- Difficult for licensed buskers to get a spot when unlicensed buskers are out
- People don’t always tip buskers; “stingy”
- Some buskers overstay their spot and are aggressive
- Lack of bylaw enforcement in the past year

- Too much loud canned music on Government Street from local businesses competing with buskers
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority's requirement for buskers to carry liability insurance on the Inner Harbour is a huge financial challenge for buskers

Amplification: There is split among buskers for and against amplification.

- Don't amplify as it makes it impossible for other buskers to perform nearby
- Buskers with amplification are not being regulated
- Don't ban amplification outright for all types of busking
- Inability to use amplification is severely limiting for talented vocalists who do not want to harm their voices trying to project over traffic, wind, etc.
- Amplification needs to be considered based on the type of performance (e.g., vocalists or violinists versus a three-piece band with natural amplification due to their instruments). Needs to be based on decibel readings.
- Amplification at the Visitor Centre on Wharf Street impacts buskers performing on the Inner Harbour below
- Only place to allow amplification should be at Ship Point and Lower Bastion Square
- Controlled/regulated amplification would be beneficial to buskers and listeners

Downtown Business Owner/Operator Section of Survey

15 of 239 (6%) of survey respondents identify as being a business owner/operator downtown.

- When asked to rate your overall experience with buskers in downtown Victoria:
 - 5 – good/very good
 - 7 – neutral
 - 1 – fair
 - 2 – not good
- When asked if current busking downtown attracts or detracts from their business:
 - 2 – attracts
 - 9 – no significant impact
 - 4 – detracts

Downtown Business Owner/Operator Feedback

Pilot:

- The piloted location in Bastion Square near Langley Street is disruptive to businesses in adjacent older office buildings with little insulation to the outdoor sound levels; busking in addition to Bastion Square Market's music would be too much
- Support juried licensed buskers
- Buskers should not be juried but instead sign a code of conduct as is done in Europe; everyone should have equal opportunity to perform
- Fort Street and Bastion Square piloted locations may suffer from areas that already have too much going on

Opportunities:

- Support for an annual busking festival
- Keep it simple: let people busk anywhere, charge a fee; have them move every 45 minutes
- Hire professional musicians and limit the performance time
- Locations should not block businesses or make pedestrians step around buskers
- Limit sound amplification
- Need a system to judge and approve artists before they are allowed to perform on City streets

Challenges:

- Some buskers are way too loud and have limited musical experience
- Some buskers block entrances to tax-paying businesses
- Some downtown buildings are not well-insulated and one can hear everything happening outside
- Almost all buskers near Yates and Government are unlicensed; Bylaw is not enforcing busking rules (e.g., not completing songs/little talent, extremely loud, aggressive yelling at or touching passers-by)
- Bylaw needs to be available to enforce busking rules
- Buskers must move if a business asks them to
- Businesses shouldn't be forced to listen to "novice noise"

Amplification:

- Keep the rules about no amplification
- Don't allow percussive instruments that have natural amplification
- Don't want amplified busker next to my business

Downtown Resident Section of the Survey

78 of 239 (33%) of survey respondents identify as being downtown residents.

- Those who identified as downtown residents were asked to rate their overall experience with buskers in downtown Victoria.
 - 44 – good/very good
 - 10 – neutral
 - 24 – fair/not good
- When asked does busking enhance or detract from your downtown living experience?
 - 51 – enhances
 - 22 – detracts
 - 5 – no significant impact

Downtown Residents Feedback

Pilot:

- Consider locations away from downtown residences, hotels and businesses such as: Douglas, Wharf waterfront, the Causeway, Gordon Street towards Beacon Hill Park, Store Street, City Hall area, 700 block of Johnson, Fort, View and back of Empress Hotel on Douglas and on Broughton Street
- Select designated locations next to plazas where people can gather safely, without impeding other pedestrians or blocking businesses
- Establish designated busking zones that are strategically located to minimize disruption to residential areas. Also establish well-marked no-busking zones. Enforce regulations with regular patrols.
- Implement licensing or audition process based on quality and variety of performances
- Support designated busking locations; give professional buskers the priority spots
- Don't jury buskers; keep it simple

Opportunities:

- Please bring back annual busking festival; engage advice from a seasoned festival director
- Make licences visible during a busker's performance
- Unless electronic payment is available, busking will not work for the performers

- Create a community feedback mechanism for residents/public to provide feedback on busking activities, enabling City to respond quickly to concerns
- Education campaign for buskers (e.g., information on designated areas, noise levels and performance times)
- Incentivize compliance with priority spots for buskers who follow the rules
- Talented buskers bring vibrancy, energy and livability to downtown
- Busking adds to the tourist experience; a tradition that gives Victoria its character
- Busking makes downtown culturally richer; music helps unite people; great for young families to enjoy
- Love seeing and hearing art downtown
- Juried buskers are a good idea; buskers need to be vetted as they are representing Victoria
- Keep acts small and diverse
- Include some spaces/areas for novice buskers to perform
- Consider the steps near the Steamship Grill as a designated location
- Spread out busker locations – not just along Government Street
- Be respectful of downtown residents
- After 10 p.m., police officers should enforce the busking rules

Challenges:

- Busking detracts from living downtown due to noise disruption from constant busking; disrupts work concentration; varying quality and content do not mirror my tastes; distraction and stress; bylaw is not enforced (e.g., playing longer than permitted, performing past 10 p.m. and often with amplification)
- Bylaw officers and Police need to enforce rules
- Recently a “busker” was spewing hate about women; need better busking rules and enforcement
- Half of current buskers don’t know how to play their instruments
- Busking and music played by restaurants and bars needs to be monitored and managed to not compete with buskers nearby
- Distracting to have to involuntarily listen from home to somebody who can’t play an instrument or sing
- 10 p.m. needs to be the cut-off time for all busking
- Some buskers are aggressive – they are really panhandling

Amplification:

- Amplified music should not be allowed in locations where residents, hotels or businesses are nearby. Buskers are making me want to move out of downtown. I have to keep my windows shut to avoid the constant noise.
- Due to traffic closures on Government Street, buskers set up and perform for hours on end. They tell us that amplification attracts more people. No one seems to care about downtown residents.
- Three-piece band with amplification should not be allowed outside of residential buildings
- Limit amplification use
- No to amplification downtown
- Don't allow amplification for emerging artists/buskers
- Amplification depends on location, timing and level of performer
- Too much busking noise at Government and Wharf Streets and amplification makes it unbearable
- No to amplification, especially instruments such as drums, saxophones and trumpets that project naturally
- Restrict amplification to a few areas such as Ship Point and the Inner Harbour

Any additional suggestions or concerns from all survey participants:

- Bring back the annual busking festival
- Support busking to add more vibrancy to our downtown
- Support juried approach
- Limit busking for one hour and no song repeats
- Schedule and locate complimentary buskers
- Instead of banning amplification, state decibel levels, duration, repetitiveness, time of day and a detailed complaint-driven process
- Visitor Centre busking location is already too crowded and noisy for amplification
- Consider busking opportunities in neighbourhood villages and on Fort to Cook Streets from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
- Consider busking outside of downtown such as along Dallas Road and Bamfield Park; Vic West side along the Selkirk Trestle in the shelter area; Songhees Walkway near Ocean Point Hotel
- Support busking year-round; create grants for buskers to make it more accessible

- Allow soft amplified music for vocals and piano keyboard; allow use of small battery-operated amplifiers in the downtown core (adds vibrancy and richer sound)
- Amplified spaces with guidelines can increase enjoyment of performance by larger crowds
- Would be good to see Indigenous buskers
- Ensure comedy or theatre acts are tasteful
- Create a mechanism to remove problematic buskers (e.g., aggressive)
- There should be more than five non-auditioned (designated) busking locations
- Consider Centennial Square and Market Square for scheduled busking performances, as well as the lawn of the Parliament building
- Opportunity to tip electronically would be great; many don't carry cash
- City should be hands-off busking; downtown is meant to be loud
- Best busking locations right now are the entrance to Bastion Square off Government Street and Government Street between Fort and Broughton
- Encourage talented young musicians to busk
- Don't micro-manage buskers; regulating buskers is hurting low-income people
- Be considerate of downtown residents
- Need litter containers next to busking locations

Survey Demographics: Victoria Neighbourhood

Of the 236 survey respondents who identified their place of residence:

- 20% reside in James Bay
- 17% reside Downtown
- 15% reside in another municipality
- 10% reside in Victoria West

Victoria Neighbourhood	Percentage of Survey Participants
Burnside	1%
Downtown	17%
Fairfield	7%

Victoria Neighbourhood	Percentage of Survey Participants
Fernwood	8%
Gonzales	2%
Hillside Quadra	5%
James Bay	20%
Jubilee	4%
North Park	3%
Oaklands	1%
Rockland	2%
Victoria West	10%
Prefer not to answer	5%
*Live in another municipality	15%
TOTAL:	100%

(Note: Percentages have been rounded up.)

*Of those who identify that they reside in another municipality:

- 13 – Saanich
- 6 – Langford
- 5 – Esquimalt
- 2 – North Saanich
- 2 – View Royal
- 2 – Lower Mainland
- 1 – Colwood
- 1 – Oak Bay
- 1 – Central Saanich
- 1 – Shirley

Age Demographics

Of the 237 respondents who answered the age demographic question:

- 12% are ages 55-59 and 65-69
- 11% are ages 30-34
- 10% are ages 60-64

Age Range	Percentage of Survey Participants
0-14	1%
15-19	1%
20-24	3%
25-29	6%
30-34	11%
35-39	6%
40-44	9%
45-49	7%
50-54	6%
55-59	12%
60-64	10%
65-69	12%
70-74	6%
75-79	3%
80-84	3%
85+	0%
Prefer not to answer	4%
TOTAL:	100%

(Note: Percentages have been rounded up.)

Other Metrics of Note:

- Of 234 respondents, 20% operate a business in Victoria
- Of 232 respondents, 61% own and 34% rent their home
- Of 97 respondents, 30% identify as an immigrant
- Of 236 respondents, 50% have a two-person household, followed by 23% one-person households; 13% three-person households; 6% four-person households; and 4% five-person or more households

Phase 2 – Email Correspondence

As the City did not officially invite email feedback on the Busking in Victoria pilot, the emails submitted were done so without the understanding they could be shared in a public report. For this reason, the email feedback is summarized below but does not appear as an appendix.

Aligned with what we heard in the survey, the email correspondence provides feedback on the piloted busking locations, the concern for amplification and busking on Government Street by some downtown residents, and questions why busking rules are not being enforced.

Please see the table below for a breakdown of the emailed feedback.

Email Feedback Theme	Details	Busker or Resident
“Elevated” Locations	Acoustics were great under the Johnson Street Bridge. A few people came out of the condos to listen. The term “elevated” sounds like the busking location is on a platform, so could be confusing to some people.	Busker
“Elevated spots”	Worry about the Tourist Information location being elevated as it’s currently one of the most used spots by all buskers.	Busker

Email Feedback Theme	Details	Busker or Resident
Elevation and amplification	I thought that an elevated location meant that amplification would be allowed. That's why I came for the audition. Otherwise, I damage my voice when singing outdoors as the bars and cars are loud.	Busker
Government Street	Belleville and Government Street works well for bagpipers.	Busker
Time of Day	Very slow on a Tuesday morning in the heat.	Busker
Tour Guide	A tour guide came by at 11:45 a.m. and indicated I should stop performing while they did their speech. It wasn't respectful.	Busker
Facebook Group	There is a busking Facebook group that the City may want to consider joining: https://www.facebook.com/groups/victoriabuskers	Busker
Amplification	There needs to be a more level playing field, which means eliminating amplified acts from the top causeway and turning the stage volume down on the City-operated stage at Ship Point.	Busker
Amplification	Amplification needs to be revisited. It doesn't make sense to have some buskers using amplification while others can't. Without enforcement, it becomes a double standard.	Busker
Panhandlers	One of the better busking spots is being used by panhandlers. This discourages busking as it impacts the ambience and street culture.	Busker
Venue Patio Music	Some local restaurant/pubs blast canned music out onto Government Street for their patio customers. Buskers can't compete with that.	Busker

Email Feedback Theme	Details	Busker or Resident
Pilot	Thank you for this pilot. I hope it helps improve busking downtown.	Busker
Fort & Broad Busking Location	<p>It's a nice location with natural amplification, however there is a lot of traffic noise and shade but many pedestrians, so made good tips</p> <p>4-6 p.m. has minimal foot traffic and there's not much to attract people to the area as it's not a destination. It could be one though if there was an ice cream cart to encourage people to pause and listen. Good venue but needs to be managed.</p>	Busker
Tourist Info Busking Location	<p>Making this an elevated location takes away the opportunity for new buskers and youth with their parents who try out busking there.</p> <p>Making this site only available to juried/scheduled buskers reduces the number of new potential buskers who feel safe to try it out there.</p> <p>Amplification should not be allowed at this location as the sound spreads across the entire Inner Harbour, making it impossible for anyone to busk on the Causeway.</p>	Busker
High Cost of Insurance	The high cost of insurance is why there are no more buskers on the Causeway.	Busker
Jurying/Auditions	As most buskers work weekdays at part or full-time jobs, please consider holding your jurying after 5 p.m. on a weekday or on a weekend.	Busker
Need for shade	It's important that busking locations have shade during hot days of summer.	Busker

Email Feedback Theme	Details	Busker or Resident
Competing noise from downtown festivals	It's challenging to busk outdoors when competing with music from outdoor music festivals and local cabarets. I think the only successful buskers are the ones that have been allowed to "amp". Consider placing a decibel law in place.	Busker
Government Street busking locations	<p>At least two of the five designated busking locations are outside my place of residence. Please consider a no-busking zone near residential buildings downtown.</p> <p>I fear the pro-busking voice of people visiting and strolling downtown will overshadow the voices of people who live downtown.</p> <p>Please mail letters to downtown residents that will be impacted by a pilot such as this to increase awareness and participation in a feedback survey.</p>	Resident
Illegal amplification	<p>A music group set up at Government Street north of Broughton, played amplified music for nearly four hours, exceeding the two-hour rule. 200 spectators were cheering them on, which added to the excessive noise.</p> <p>Government Street is not a concert venue and downtown residents need to be respected. My neighbours and I are very concerned about the proposed busking zones on Government Street being piloted. There are more appropriate areas in Victoria that target visiting tourists.</p>	Resident

Email Feedback Theme	Details	Busker or Resident
Non-abiding Buskers	<p>Buskers are not complying with the rules, even though they are contacted directly and made aware of the bylaws. Please install busking signs with times and rules, especially around the Customs House on Government Street.</p> <p>Why aren't bylaws being enforced as compliance isn't working?</p>	Resident

APPENDIX A.

Have Your Say Survey Results