

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 10, 2021

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Tiffany MacLaren, Community Economic and Cultural Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Downtown Almonte Renewal Project Business Survey Results**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the following data for information during discussions surrounding the downtown renewal construction project.

BACKGROUND:

Mississippi Mills Municipal Council has considered the Downtown Renewal Project and received information on the estimated costs and plans that are considered 90% complete. The projected budget is \$7,824,391. The next step will be for Council to choose the timeframe so staff can begin the tender process and choose a firm.

Construction work will be completed in phases and is expected to take 18 to 24 months. The schedule being considered is for the work to start May 2022 continuing until late Fall 2023. The infrastructure under the road is well past its expected life and due for replacement.

Council discussed the timing of the project at a Committee of the Whole meeting in June 2021. Stemming from the discussion, staff was asked to survey the downtown business community for their feedback. This survey served as both a communication tool and a method to solicit feedback from businesses who will be impacted by the project.

DISCUSSION:

Construction will have a significant impact on downtown business specifically street and business access for customers or clients. This impact may affect the businesses' ability to generate revenue. Open communication between the Municipality and business owners will be key to minimizing negative impacts and managing construction.

Downtown Almonte is home to 82+ businesses (Mill Street, Little Bridge St. High St. and adjacent portions of Bridge St.) These includes 12 restaurants, 40 retail businesses and 26 service and professional businesses.

Business	Type
8008 Lingerie (Heritage Court)	Retail – Fashion
Acanthus (Heritage Court)	Retail – Plants
Alliance Coin	Retail – Misc.
Almonte Antiques	Retail – Antiques
Almonte Ice Cream Shop	Restaurant – Take out
Almonte Post Office	Professional – Post Office
Baker Bobs	Restaurant – Take out
Barley Mow	Restaurant
Bay and Balm	Retail – Misc. & Gift
Big Vintage	Retail – Antique
Blue Bird (Heritage Court)	Retail – Cannabis
Blush and Black	Service – Esthetician
Brae St. Almonte Optometrist	Medical - Optometrist
Brae St. Drummond Moving	Construction – house movers
Brenda's New to You	Retail – Antiques
Carriageway Studios	Art Studio Space and Retail
Cashmere and Rose	Retail – Gifts and Flowers
Cheerfully Made	Retail – Gifts and Fashion
Chew That (Heritage Mall)	Retail – Pet Supplies
Coady's Car Care	Service – Garage
Colby McGeachy	Service - Accounting
Cortelli's	Restaurant
Crush Marketplace (Heritage Court)	Retail – Fashion
Dentist Office (Bridge St. High St Parking)	Medical - Dentist
Diana Jackson (Old Post Office)	Art Gallery
DNA Nails (Heritage Mall)	Service – Nail Salon
Doggy Day Care (Heritage Mall)	Service – Dog Daycare
Don's Meat Market	Retail – Food
Doree's Habit	Retail – Fashion
Dragon Fly Boutique	Retail – Fashion
Edward Jones	Professional - Accounting
Evelyn Wheeler	Professional – Law Office
EXP Realty	Professional – Real Estate Office
Exquisite (Thoburn Mill)	Professional – Marketing Firm
Former Hydro Office – new owners	Restaurant (future)
Fran's - Building	Retail – Antiques
Frangipani	Retail – Fashion
Freedom 55	Professional – Financial Services
General Fine Craft	Retail – Art Gallery
Gilligalou (Heritage Court)	Retail - Birding

Gord Pike	Landlord – multiple units
Headquarters' Salon	Service – Hair Salon
Heritage Salon (Heritage Mall)	Service – Hair Salon
Holly Agnew	Professional – Law Office
HP Auto	Service – Auto Garage
JB Arts	Art Classes and Art Supplies Retail
Judy Joannou	Retail – Fashion
Kentfield Kids	Retail – Children's Fashion
Lark	Service – Hair Salon
Laundry Centre	Service – Laundry and Dry Cleaners
LG Lee and Son's	Retail – Hardware and Gifts
Lift Aps (Old Post Office)	High Tech - Sales
Mill Street Books	Retail – Books
Mill Street Crepe Company (Heritage Court)	Restaurant
My Upholstery Shop	Services – Upholstery
Nine Lives Antiques	Retail – Antiques
North Market	Retail & Restaurant (Take out)
Oat Couture	Restaurant
ORPC/MRPC (Heritage Mall)	Service – Hydro Office
Pack Rat's Bazar	Retail – Antique Store
Pat Ashby (Old Post Office)	Landlord – multiple units
Peche Poivre	Retail – Food
Pizzeria Unlimited	Restaurant
Poochie Girl Dog Grooming (Heritage Mall)	Service – Dog Grooming
Postinos (Old Post Office)	Restaurant
Royal Lepage	Professional – Real Estate
Silver Poodle	Service – Dog Grooming
Sivarulrasa Gallery	Retail – Art Gallery
Superior Restaurant	Restaurant
Swarbick Law (Thoburn Mill)	Professional – Law Office
Tea and Cake	Restaurant
Textile Traditions	Retail – Fabric
That's the Spirit	Retail – Misc. & Gifts
The Hub & Rebound	Retail – Not for Profit
Threadworks	Retail – Gifts and Fashion
Tin Barn Market	Retail - Misc. & Gift
Vamos Outdoors (Heritage Court)	Retail – Fashion
Victoria Mill - Darrell Thomas Textiles	Retail – fabric and fashion
Victoria Mill – Joes Italian Kitchen	Restaurant
Wax Wing Tattoo	Service – Tattoo
Wee Bee Growing	Retail and Social Enterprise, classes
Youngs Tackle Supply (Heritage Court)	Retail - Fishing

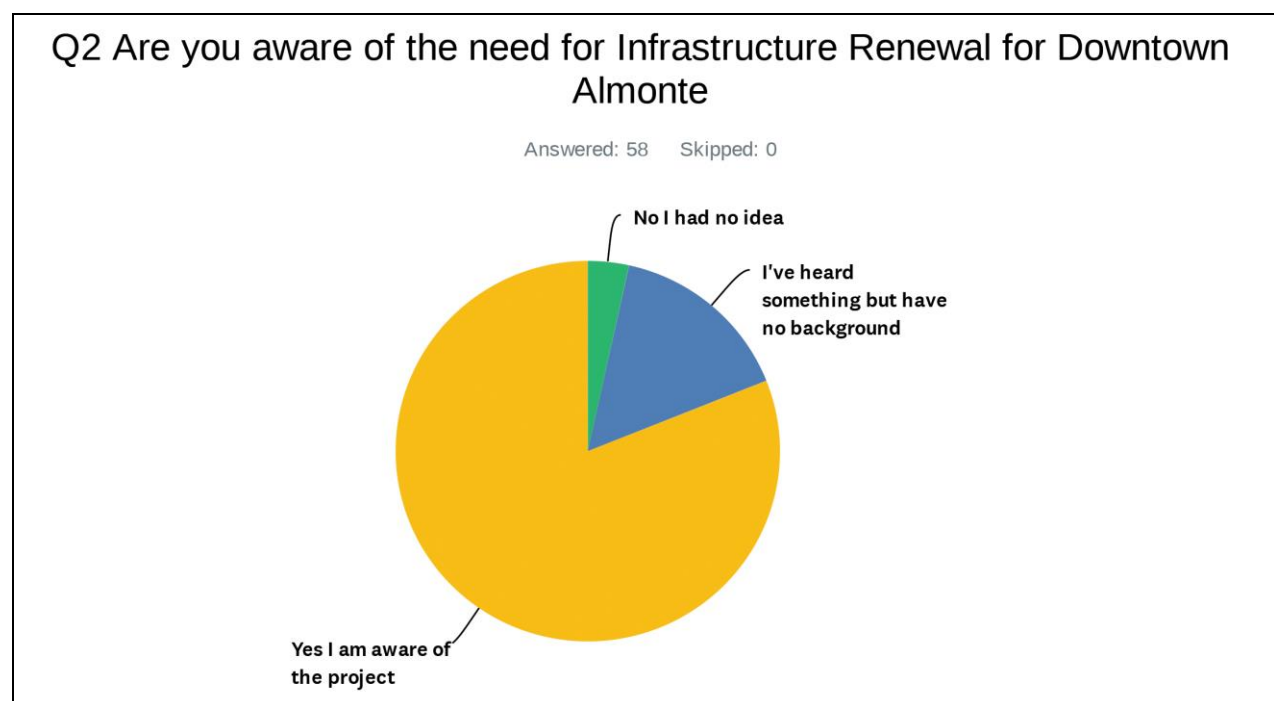
Staff created and circulated a survey containing 12 questions. Survey questions are attached. Business owners were also provided the attached presentation about the project.

The data retained in the survey will be useful before and during the project.

The survey was circulated online through merchant downtown Facebook group, via email and through in person visits with handouts the week of July 23rd.

58 (70%) of businesses filled in the survey. Responses were analyzed. Response summaries and individual responses were attached for Council information. Names and addresses have been redacted for privacy. Staff have verified surveys were only submitted by businesses located in the downtown Almonte area.

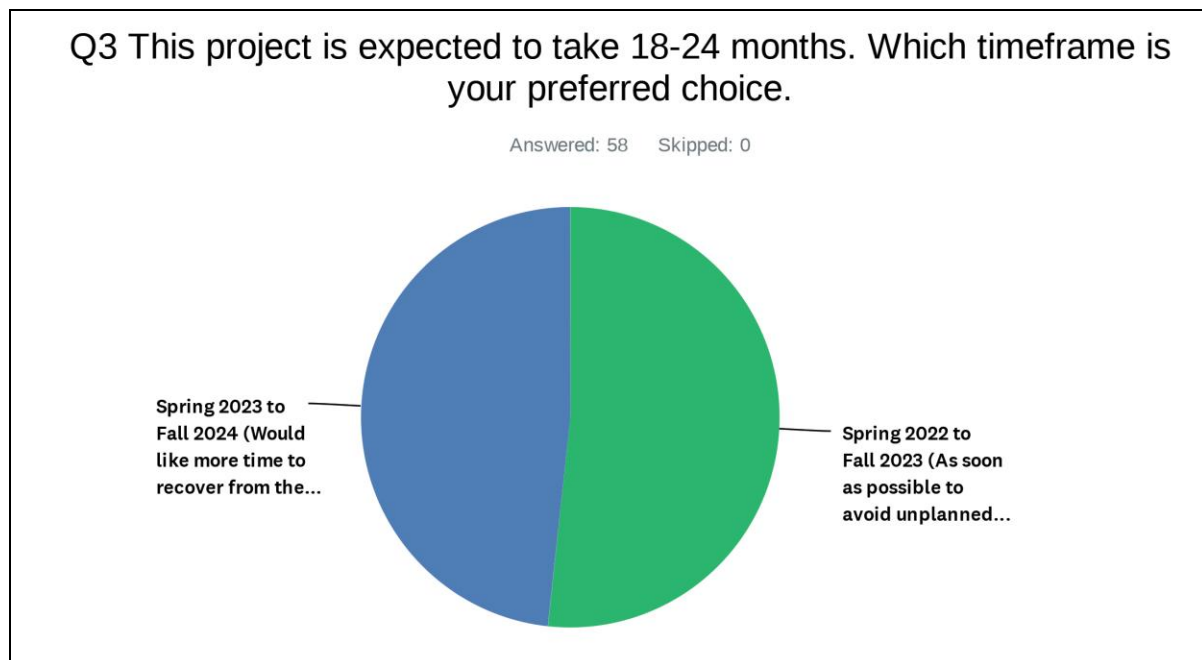
When asked if they were aware of the need for infrastructure renewal in downtown Almonte 47 (81%) people answered they were aware of the project.



Respondents were asked to specify their choice of two possible timeframes for the project.

- a) Spring 2022 to Fall 2023 (As soon as possible to avoid unplanned emergencies and get the project over with)
- b) Spring 2023 to Fall 2024 (Would like more time to recover from the Covid-19 disruptions)

Opinions on this question were divided with 30 (52%) preferring 2022-2023. 28 (48%) preferred waiting an additional year.

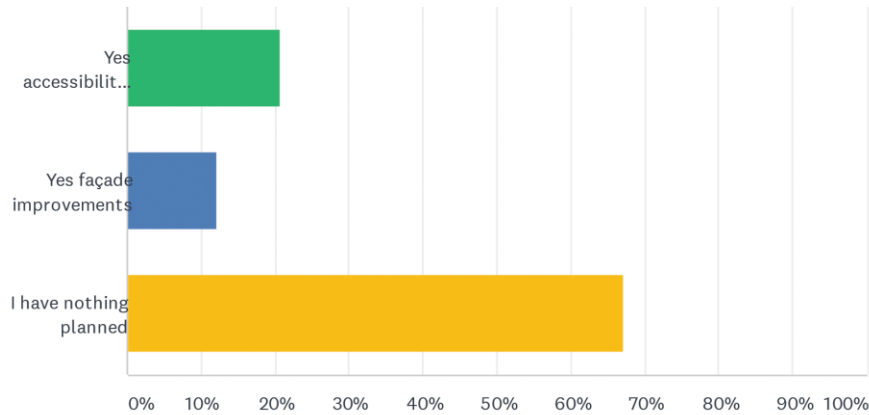


The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires businesses to be accessible. A heritage downtown presents certain challenges. The downtown renewal work will address some of these accessibility challenges. However, there will be some businesses who will still have a step into their location and may require modifications. Since the downtown will be getting a facelift with new concrete and sidewalks some property owners may consider facade improvements for their buildings as well. Coordinating construction work may save business and property owners time, money, and frustration.

When asked if they were considering accessibility or other modifications to their storefront over the next 2 to 3 years 21% are considering accessibility improvements and 12% are considering façade improvements.

Q4 Are you considering accessibility or other modifications to your storefront over the next 2 to 3 years?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 0

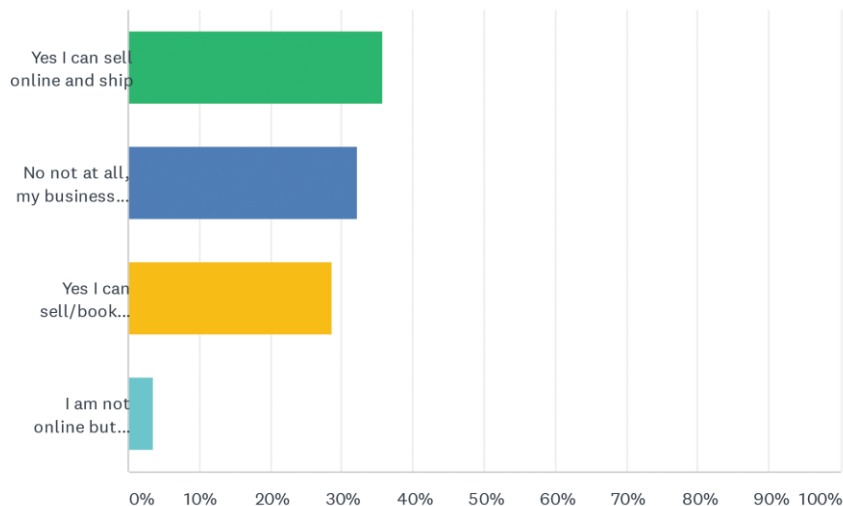


Survey results indicate Almonte downtown businesses require foot traffic. Maintaining access to storefronts as much as possible will be critical throughout the project.

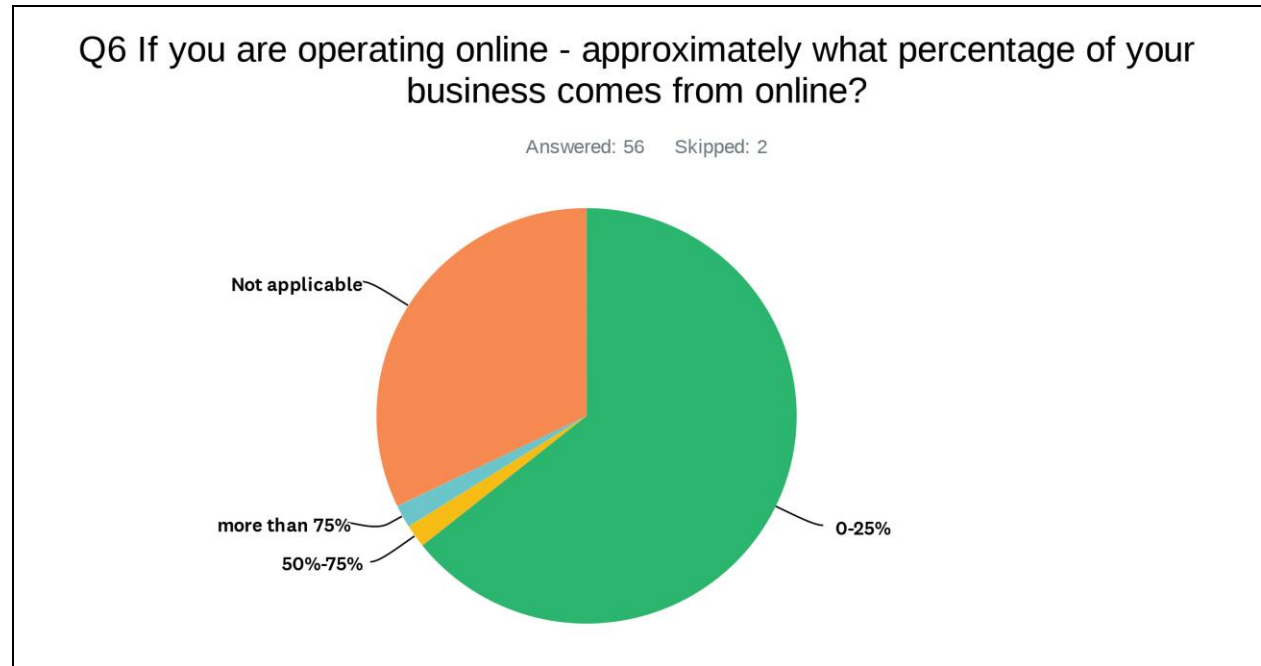
When asked only 36% of downtown Almonte business can sell online and ship. 29% have an online presence but require clients to come into their businesses. The remaining 35% do not do business online at all.

Q5 Are you currently able to you operate any part of your business virtually?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 2



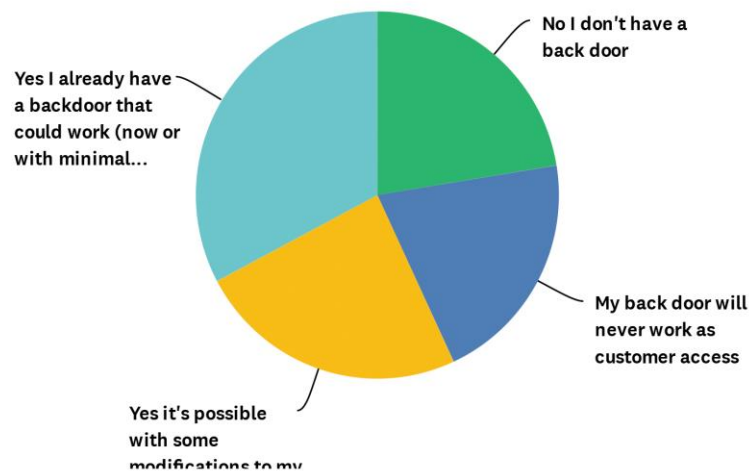
It is also important to note the majority of those with online sales tell us it represents 0-25% of their business.



In some cases, a back door may be able to be utilized to maintain business when construction is immediately outside a front entrance. However, in just under half of the survey responses the business has no back door or their backdoor can never be used for public access. The survey also gathered information about parking access for business staff.

Q8 Do you have a backdoor that could be used/modified for public access for a limited time?

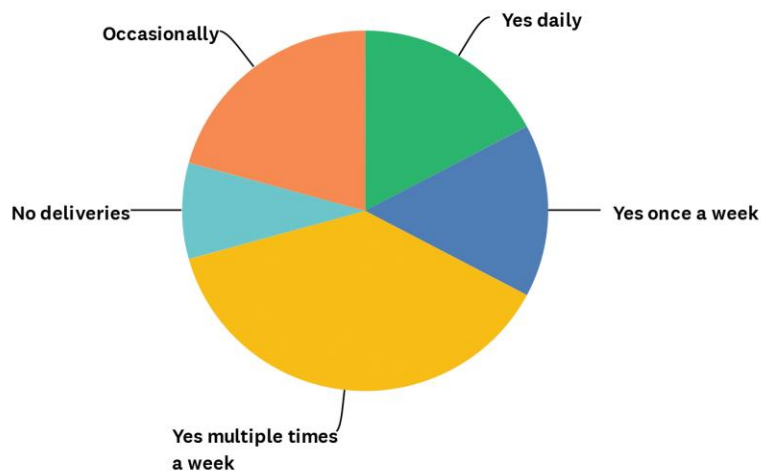
Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Throughout the construction period plans will need to be made to accommodate business deliveries. 91% of survey respondents indicated they receive deliveries directly to their business. 32 of those businesses receive deliveries multiple times a week or even daily.

Q10 Do you receive deliveries to your business front or back door?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Responses to *Question 11: Is there anything else you would like Council to know?* Was optional but received 41 responses that have been attached with names and addresses redacted for privacy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is for council's information when considering timing for the downtown Almonte infrastructure renewal project. The report itself has no financial implications.

SUMMARY:

70% of current downtown businesses responded to the survey. Question summaries and individual responses are attached for Council's consideration.

Respectfully submitted by,



Tiffany MacLaren
Community Economic
& Cultural Coordinator

Reviewed by:



Ken Kelly,
CAO

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Survey Questions Downtown Renewal July 2021.PDF
2. Downtown Renewal All Question Summaries - Identifying Information Redacted.PDF
3. Public Presentation Downtown Core.PDF