

PHASE ONE ENGAGEMENT MEMO

Bus Garage Qualicum Beach

heart of the community 

December 2023

TOWN OF
QUALICUM BEACH



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INTRODUCTION

The Qualicum Beach Bus Garage project presents an opportunity to create a community vision for the Bus Garage Lands. Located in the heart of Town, the project will help shape the character, amenities, and experience of this area for years to come.

The conceptual design for the Bus Garage Property will encompass parking and public space and will determine the amenities and activities on the site. This design will also consider the site's interaction with its surroundings, including transportation, pedestrian connections, and nearby businesses.

This Engagement Summary Memo offers an overview of the engagement activities, and stakeholder and community input received to date. The feedback gathered during the engagement process will shape the conceptual design of the Bus Garage Property. Public input will also guide the study on transportation in the area, including analyzing parking and traffic operations for the site and adjacent Uptown area.

Phase One Engagement involved a Town staff and stakeholder meeting, a Pop-Up event, a youth engagement event, and a survey to gather valuable input from the community.



Bus Garage site photos.

OUTREACH

The engagement events were promoted by Town of Qualicum Beach in the following ways:

Town of Qualicum Beach Website: A project page was created for the Bus Garage and Mobility Study process at qualicumbeach.com/busrevive. This page features an overview of the process and provides important links to project materials.

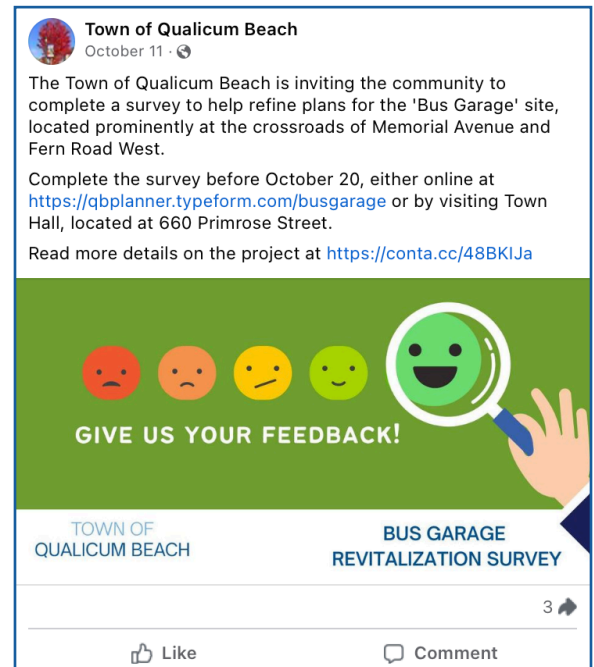
Social Media Posts: Posts were completed on the Town of Qualicum Beach’s Facebook page with a link to the online survey.

Constant Contact (Email Notice): Emails were sent out to those on the Town’s email list. One media release was emailed advertising the project mid-September. Another media release was emailed out at the end of September, advertising the survey.

Town Tidings (Newsletter): A notification about the project was posted in the Town’s newsletter in early August. The newsletter was published in Parksville Qualicum Beach Newspaper.

Noteworthy (Bulletin Mail-Out): Bulletins were distributed to more than 5,500 address with utility bills at the end of October.

Town Hall: Project information and hard copy surveys were made available at Town Hall.



Town of Qualicum Beach Facebook posts.

STAKEHOLDER MEETING 1

Engagement Overview

The Bus Garage site is located directly to the south of Qualicum Beach’s Uptown commercial area. The site is within walking distance to many businesses and amenities and is currently used as a public parking lot - the future design and programming of this site will affect the operations of nearby businesses, landowners, and organizations. Engagement with these stakeholders is essential to realizing the site’s potential as a vital community hub, and this process was initiated by the Town of Qualicum Beach prior to community engagement.

The Town has engaged the following stakeholder groups as part of this process:

- The Old School House Arts Centre
- Naked Naturals
- Town of Qualicum Beach Staff
- The Old School House

The first Town Staff and Stakeholder Meeting was held virtually on August 29th, 2023. Information was shared and feedback was recorded using Miro, a virtual collaboration platform. The Miro board will be available for viewing and comment for the duration of the project.

PWL provided an overview of their opportunity and constraints analysis. This analysis including review of transportation, parking, and circulation; nearby landmarks, services and amenities; existing character and materials; and work completed to date by the Town and other partners. Participants were invited to provide feedback either verbally or using the “sticky note” function of Miro. Verbal feedback was recorded by PWL via sticky notes on the Miro board.

Folks said...

"Can we locate parking elsewhere in the area - eg. where field is. Plan for the future with less cars!"

"What will happen to Qualicum Commons?"

"What are the opportunities for shared parking?"

"Park space north of Qualicum Commons is used as spill-out space for the Commons."

"Long-term parking is an issue - employees and business owners use it. There is an enforcement issue."

"We just lost a parking lot that was frequently used by downtown workers - near east village. Good location on the periphery."

"Many visitors are visiting the entire downtown."

Selected Town staff and stakeholder quotes.

STAKEHOLDER MEETING 1

Summary of Findings

Following the introductory remarks the participants were asked to respond to a series of questions:

- What do you think would make a successful design/outcome for the Bus Garage site? How would you define success for this project?
- What do we need to know about Qualicum Beach and/or the Bus Garage site to make this project a success?
- Are there programs, amenities, or spaces that the community is currently lacking that would be suitable for this site?
- What do you think this site should be like in 5 years? 10 years? 20 years?

The feedback received throughout the Town Staff and Stakeholder Meeting has been grouped into three categories: parking and mobility; programming; and consideration for future generations.

Parking and Mobility

- Explore options to replace parking spaces elsewhere in the Uptown area to maximize use of the site as public open space.
- Balance current parking demand with the likelihood of decreased reliance on private cars in the future.
- Explore a variety of vehicular circulation and parking options.
- Enhance pedestrian and cyclist mobility and connection to the Bus Garage Site. Provide bicycle facilities such as bike racks and bike repair stations.
- Determine how the existing parking lot is currently being used.

Future Programming Ideas

- The Bus Garage site should be a community hub that is welcoming to all.
- Ensure the site program and design is coordinated with Naked Naturals operations.
- Incorporate green space, play opportunities, public art, connection to TOSH, coffee shop/ café, public washroom, flexible plaza space, and opportunities for markets and food trucks.

Future Generations

- There is resistance to programming all of 'leftover' space in the Town, as open space is not something we will be able to get back.
- Consider the next generation and what their needs and desires for the site will be. The plan for the Bus Garage site will not be implemented right away, but over many years to come. It is important that many voices weigh in.



Feedback received on virtual whiteboard 'Miro'.

ENGAGEMENT POP-UP

Engagement Overview

The Pop-Up was the first public event for the Qualicum Beach Bus Garage project. The Pop-Up event took place on September 23rd, at the Qualicum Beach Farmers' Market.

The Pop-Up imitated a vintage kitchen, providing a fun and compelling engagement opportunity in a bustling community space. Kitchens are the heart of the home, and the Bus Garage site is heart of Qualicum Beach: a welcoming place that encourages people to linger, socialize, and relax.

The goals for the Pop-Up were to introduce the project to the community; promote the public survey; and encourage the public to become involved with the process.

Participants who visited the Pop-Up were invited to respond to a single 'big question': What do you love about Qualicum Beach? Responses were posted on the vintage fridge using sticky notes. Many participants also shared what they would like to see happen at the Bus Garage site during one-on-one discussions with PWL or Town staff. This feedback was recorded via sticky notes.

Thirty-two hard-copy surveys were filled out at the Pop-Up, and approximately fifty surveys were taken home by members of the public. Some attendees scanned the project QR code linking them directly to the project website.



**make
yourself
at
home**

Public advertising for Pop-up Engagement event.

ENGAGEMENT POP-UP

Summary of Findings

The feedback gathered provided a snapshot of public perception and use of the site. A unified message emerged regarding what residents cherish about their town: Qualicum Beach has a safe, homey and small town feel, with strong ties to the community and its natural surroundings. In contrast, the feedback received with regards to suggested future programming on the Bus Garage site reflected a diverse set of needs and desires.

What do you love about Qualicum Beach?

- Small town feel – knowing our neighbours
- Value locally owned businesses
- Quaint and homey character
- Access to nature
- Clean and safe
- Buildings fit the character of the town – small scale
- Walkability

What would you like to see at the Bus Garage Site?

- Plaza – town square, community gathering place
- Ensure the site has multiple uses
- Community Cinema
- Year-round use – covered areas with heaters
- Parking – maintain/manage parking on site in a creative and functional way
- Incorporate a restaurant or café
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist circulation and connectivity to site
- Public art and connection to TOSH
- Improved vegetation – street trees, flower beds, increase tree canopy and bird habitat
- Affordable housing for diverse population



Pop-up Engagement event.

PUBLIC SURVEY

Engagement Overview

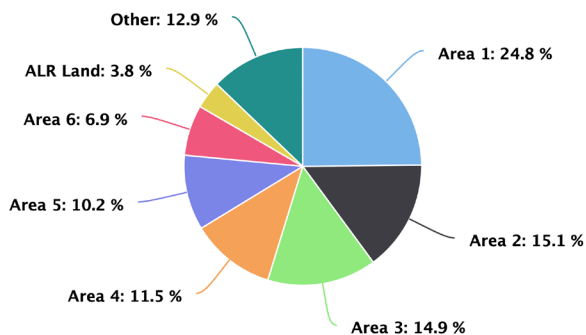
A survey was open to the public from September 22nd to October 20th, 2023 and was another engagement technique used to gather feedback from the community. A total of 451 responses were received.

The goals of the survey were to gain insight into current uses of the site; invite input on mobility and transportation concerns in relation to the site; and gather feedback on high-level programming and amenity options.

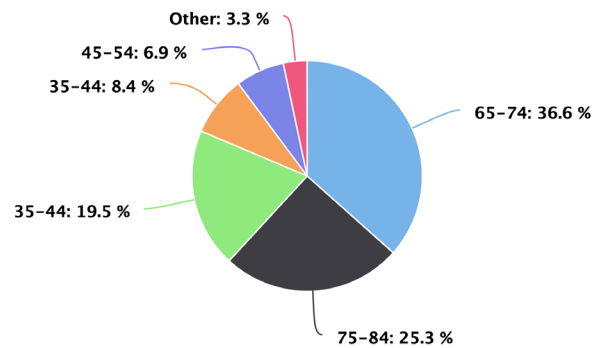
Principle Survey Questions and Summary of Findings

Geographic Distribution of Respondents

- Area 1: Uptown or within a very short walk
- Area 2: Oceanside of railway and Parksville side of Memorial
- Area 3: Eaglecrest
- Area 4: Oceanside of railway and Courtenay side of Memorial
- Area 5: Mountain side of railway and Courtenay side of Memorial
- Area 6: Chartwell



Age Distribution of Respondents



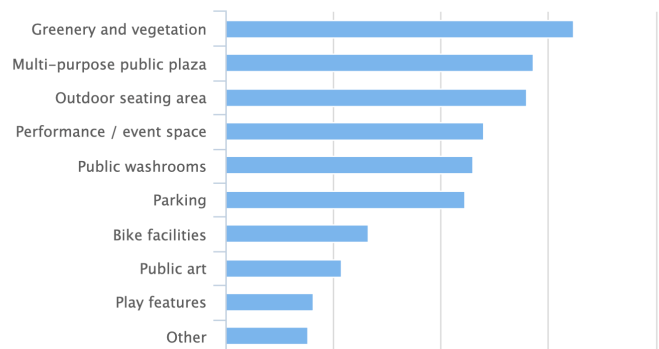
How do you currently use the Bus Garage Site?

For 62% of the respondents, the main usage of the current site is for parking. The current usage of the parking lot is equally split between parking while shopping at Quality Foods Grocery Store and parking to access the Uptown Area.

The remainder of the respondents visit the site for the Old School House Arts Center (24%) and to use the adjacent open green space (11%).

What type of amenities would you like to see happen at the Bus Garage Site?

Most respondents in the 'other' category suggested a movie theatre, followed by a suggestion for a cafe/pub/restaurant.



PUBLIC SURVEY

What mode of transportation do you use to get to the Uptown commercial area and do you have transportation related concerns in the Uptown area?

When accessing the Uptown commercial area, just over half of respondents drive (54%) while the remainder walk or cycle. Public transit was identified as highly under-utilized (1%). Many respondents expressed concern over vehicular speed and traffic flow at intersections, and loss of parking.

Can you think of an example, from a place you've visited, that comes to mind when you envision the Bus Garage Site?

A majority of respondents envision a town plaza. Another theme was waterfront gathering areas such as Comox waterfront, Nanaimo waterfront, Maffeo Sutton Park, and Granville Island. A handful of respondents referenced local parks and markets such as Parksville Community Park/Stage and Coombs Market.

What local insight do we need to know about Qualicum Beach and/or the Bus Garage Site to make this project a success?

Respondents highlighted the potential of the site as a 'gateway' into the community due to its location at the entrance to Uptown and its mountain views. Several respondents noted that the walkability and quaintness of Qualicum Beach is highly valued. Lastly, a desire for green space with flowers and trees to provide shade was expressed. The responses have been grouped into the three emerging themes: Heart of the Community, Pedestrian Friendly, and Green Space.

Local Insight Themes



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Engagement Overview

Youth engagement was initiated as a distinct process to address the low participation of youth in most municipal planning processes. Town of Qualicum Beach visited Kwalikum Secondary School's leadership class on November 2, 2023 to lead a discussion with students around the question "What do you want to see happen at the Bus Garage site?" Students also completed hard copies of the public survey.

Summary of Findings

Feedback from the discussion and survey responses can be divided into two categories: suggestions for commercial amenities and businesses, and public space programming ideas. All feedback received from the students strongly suggested a need for more youth-friendly activities and "hang out places." Students also expressed an appreciation for the quaint, small-town feeling of Qualicum Beach.

Some students expressed a desire to see climate-friendly initiatives included in the Bus Garage site, and in Qualicum Beach at large. Suggestions included solar panels, bike lanes, bike facilities, tree planting, and water conservation measures.

A desire for multi-functional outdoor space that can accommodate a variety of uses, including live performances and local markets, was frequently mentioned. The desire to see more trees, garden plantings, and greenery was also common, as well as a request for sheltered and uncovered spaces to sit, eat, or hang out. Students expressed a desire for a public washroom on the site. Examples of precedents that students shared included the Galloping Goose rest stops and the Texada Island farmer's market, with the courtyard beside Bailey's being the most frequently mentioned precedent.

Commercial amenities suggested by students included businesses such as arcades, bowling alleys, and a movie theatre. These suggestions reflect the need for more youth-centered spaces and activities.

Some students also expressed a desire to retain parking on the site.

Public Space Programming Ideas

- Park with trees and plantings
- Spaces for live performances and events/ amphitheatre
- Community garden
- Local food trucks
- Market space
- Covered and uncovered spaces to sit, eat, socialize, or work
- Parking for vendors/loading for market space

Commercial Amenity and Business Ideas

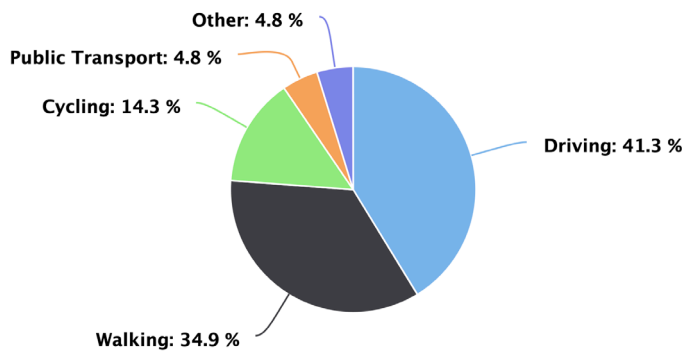
- Plant store
- Movie theatre or drive-in
- Dollar store
- Thrift store
- Book store
- Blockbuster Video
- Arcade
- Bowling alley
- Booster Juice
- Tim Horton's
- Starbucks
- Juice Bar

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Survey Responses

A total of thirty-three surveys were completed by students, which were analyzed separately from the general public survey results.

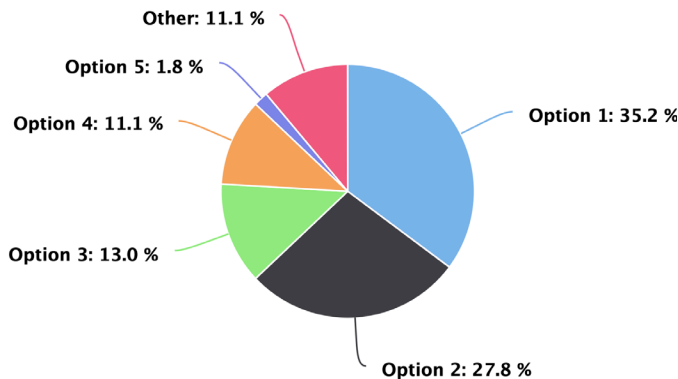
What mode of transportation do you use to get to the Uptown commercial area?



Responses in the 'Other' category included travel by skateboard.

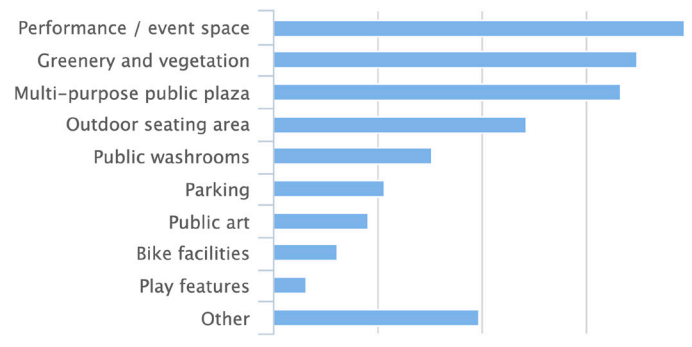
How do you currently use the Bus Garage Site?

- Option 1: Parking while shopping at Quality Foods
- Option 2: Parking while shopping/using services in the Uptown area
- Option 3: Visiting TOSH
- Option 4: Using the open green space adjacent to the site
- Option 5: Parking while working in the Uptown area
- Option 6: Other



Responses in the 'Other' category indicated that respondents do not use the Bus Garage site.

What type of amenities would you like to see at the Bus Garage Site?



Responses in the 'Other' category included ideas outlined in the 'Summary of Findings' section. Movie theatre and arcade were the two most frequently mentioned ideas.

MOVING FORWARD

Thank you for participating and contributing!

Building on the insights gathered from Phase One public engagement, our next steps involve crafting concept designs options for the site, aligned with the valuable feedback received. This phase will bring to life a vision for the Bus Garage site that reflects the community’s input. We will then seek public input on the proposed concepts, and refine the preferred concept based on community and stakeholder feedback.

What’s Next?

- Town Staff and Stakeholder Meeting - December 2023
- Online Questionnaire - December 2023 to January 2024
- Public Workshop - January 2024
- Virtual Public Presentation - Spring 2024



The Old School House Arts Centre.



We want to hear from you!

Visit the project website qualicumbeach.com/busrevive to share your feedback and to learn more about the next steps.