

GRASS VALLEY MILL STREET PEDESTRIAN ZONE SURVEY

Executive Summary

The following report outlines the results of a survey deployed by the City of Grass Valley to solicit resident feedback about the Mill Street Pedestrian Zone. More than three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would like to keep the Pedestrian Zone- safety, community feel, family-friendliness, and tourism potential emerged as the leading reasons for support. Among Mill Street business stakeholders, more than two-thirds agreed that the Pedestrian Zone should remain. On the other hand, concerns about access, parking, and traffic were the primary reasons for opposition. Additionally, some conditioned their support for the Pedestrian Zone on the basis that more parking be made available.

Introduction and Methodology

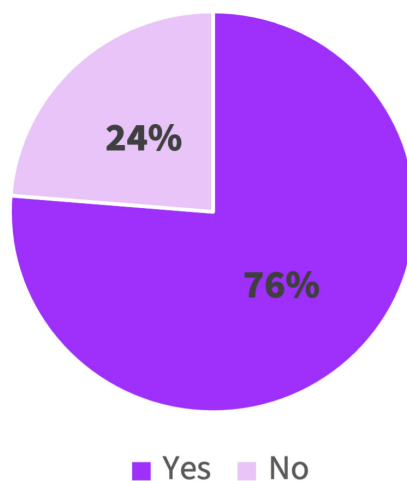
The following report analyzes the results of the survey deployed by the City of Grass Valley to solicit resident feedback about the Mill Street Pedestrian Zone. The survey received 1,392 responses to the close-ended question and 2 incomplete responses. Incomplete responses are not included in the analysis below.

In addition to responses to the closed-ended question, residents were given the opportunity to provide additional feedback through written responses. In total, 778 respondents (56% of all completed responses) gave written feedback. To carry out this analysis, a Zencity analyst categorized the free-text responses by common thematic areas both in support to and opposition of the Pedestrian Zone. Due to the multiple viewpoints that can be expressed in a single response, a free-text response could be categorized under multiple thematic areas.

Overview of Responses

As shown below, 76% (1,062 respondents) expressed support for keeping the Mill Street Pedestrian Zone, outweighing those in opposition (24%; 330 respondents) by more than threefold.

**Should Mill Street Remain
a Pedestrian Zone?**



Reasons for Support

Of the 1,062 respondents who indicated that they would like to see the Mill Street Pedestrian Zone remain as-is, more than half provided free-text responses to offer further reasoning for their support. Among these responses, the most common themes included:

Safety

48 responses

Many commented on how closing off the street has made it safer for residents, especially for young children.

“ This closure has been amazing for families to come downtown and shop, eat and just feel safe not having to worry about speeding car going down the street. ”

Community Feel

46 responses

Some feel that the Pedestrian Zone gives Grass Valley a welcoming space for community members to gather.

“ It is a wonderful community feeling. Encourages interaction between people and I believe people will hang around longer. ”

Family-Friendly

29 responses

Some applauded the Pedestrian Zone for being more family-friendly and a place for families to spend time together.

“ With the street shut down it makes it easier and more enjoyable for us to enjoy downtown as a family. ”

Tourism

26 responses

Residents expressed optimism that the re-designed space will increase the city's appeal for tourism opportunities.

“ It's beautiful, it's quiet, kids love it, great attraction for tourism. It give GV something special and makes our town stand out even more. ”

Reasons for Opposition

On the other hand, almost two-thirds of the 330 residents who voted “No” provided free-text responses to express their opposition. Among these responses, the three most common themes were:

Access

61 responses

The leading concern was difficulty of access for elderly and disabled residents who cannot walk long distances if nearby parking is not available.

“ Open back up to through traffic. The way it is now is not conducive to handicapped or mobility impaired individuals. ”



Parking

44 responses

Concerns about limited parking availability repeatedly appeared in the responses.

“ There’s already not enough parking downtown. Closing Mill [Street] will not be good for businesses or customers. ”

Worsening Traffic

33 responses

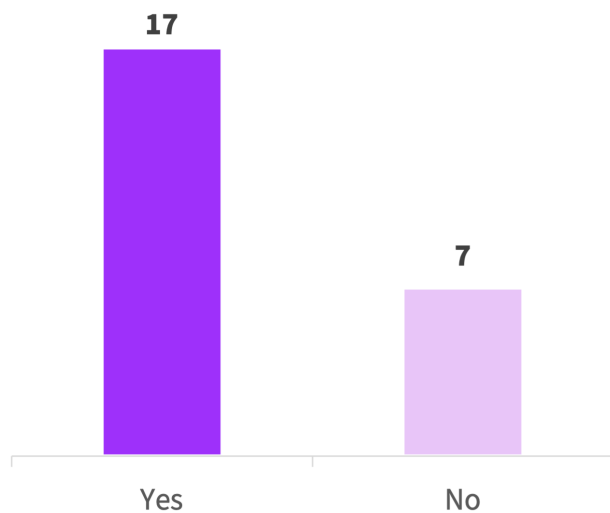
Additionally, some feel that the road closure has made traffic in the area more difficult to navigate.

“ [Mill Street’s] current incarnation is inhibiting businesses and having a severe impact on traffic. When things return to normal, the flow of traffic will become overly congested. ”

Mill Street Business Owners and Employees

Critical to the upcoming decision about Mill Street’s future will be the input of local business stakeholders. Among the responses, five residents indicated that the City should prioritize Mill Street business owners’ and employees’ input in deciding whether or not to keep the Pedestrian Zone.

In the survey data provided, 24 respondents were self-identified as Mill Street business owners and employees. Of these respondents, more than 70% (17 respondents) believe that the Pedestrian Zone should stay, while the remaining 7 believe that the street should return to its original form. Even when divided among employees and owners, a majority of both groups still expressed support. Among those in support:



“ We have a business on Mill [S]treet and have only seen more success for the businesses during the street closure. People are enjoying themselves more and it brought many new faces to town. This should have been done years ago! ”

“ I work on [Mill Street] and the businesses have been BOOMING since the street closure. Sure parking has gone down but there are solutions for that! [I]t’s a great place for tourists and locals and should remain closed permanently. ”

Notably, only three of the business stakeholders who voted in favor of keeping the Pedestrian Zone cited access and parking concerns. On the other hand, all seven of those in opposition raised such concerns:

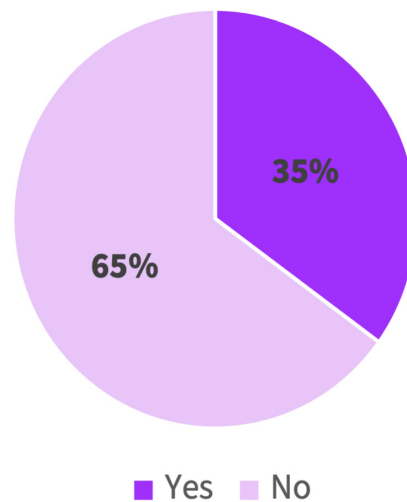
“ No visibility, restricted access for deliveries & seniors... Higher employee costs due to carry outs & DEAD hours. ”

Parking Availability

Although parking appeared as a recurrent theme in the free-text responses of those opposed to the Mill Street Pedestrian Zone, it also appeared in the feedback given by those who support it. As pictured in the graph to the right, more than a third (35%) of all free-text responses that mentioned parking concerns came from residents who still voted “Yes” to keeping the Pedestrian Zone.

“ Yes, only if the city figures out a way to add more parking somewhere else. Parking was already difficult beforehand, so if all that parking on Mill Street is gone, it’s going to be even worse. ”

Should Mill Street Remain a Pedestrian Zone?
(among respondents who raised concerns about parking availability)



This finding is indicative of two important considerations:

- Some of those who support keeping the Pedestrian Zone still have reservations about its effect on parking availability or condition their support on the provision of more parking spots.
- Concerns about parking availability are not automatically a disqualifier for resident support of the Pedestrian Zone.

Conclusion and Takeaways

- At 76%, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated that they would like the Pedestrian Zone to remain as is.
- Residents feel that the Pedestrian Zone has created a more safe, communal, and family-friendly space for locals and tourists alike to enjoy.
- In addition, residents want to make sure that those who might have difficulties accessing the businesses on Mill Street without nearby parking — such as the elderly and those with disabilities — have a way to do so easily.
- Though the 24 Mill Street business owners and employees made up only a small bloc of all respondents, those who did participate were highly supportive of keeping the Pedestrian Zone, with many pointing to increased business and an enhanced community feel.
- Addressing concerns about parking availability will be vital to gaining community support for a permanent Pedestrian Zone, even among those who voted “Yes” in the survey.

