



THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Mission Statement: As stewards of the Town of Amherstburg, we strive to improve the quality of life of all residents through the delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable services.

Table with 2 columns: Author's Name, Report Date, Author's Phone, Date to Council, Author's E-mail, Resolution #.

To: Mayor and Members of Town Council
Subject: Report Back on Open Air and Business Survey

1. RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

- 1. The report on the Open Air including the Business Survey and Open House BE RECEIVED for information.

2. BACKGROUND:

At the March 25, 2024 Council meeting the following resolution was made:

Resolution: 20240325-018

Moved By Councillor Allaire

Seconded By Councillor Courtney

That at the end of Open-Air events in September administration, businesses, and council if they so wish TO PARTICIPATE in a meeting together to discuss the footprint, frequency, benefits, and improvements for open air for all businesses within and outside the footprint up to 500m.

Table with 3 columns: Name, Yes/ Concur, No/Not Concur. Rows include Councillor Allaire, Councillor Courtney, Councillor Crain, Deputy Mayor Gibb.

Councillor McArthur		X
Councillor Pouget	X	
Mayor Prue	X	

The Deputy Mayor put the Motion.

Motion Carried.

This report is to provide an update on Open Air as well as the results of the business survey in advance of budget deliberations.

3. DISCUSSION:

Business Survey - 2024

The direction from Council was to survey all businesses within the Open Air footprint as well as those within 500m of the footprint. In order to determine those within 500m of the footprint the clock tower in the courtyard at the foot of Dalhousie and Richmond was used. There are 118 businesses identified as being within the defined area, Appendix A provides a listing of those businesses. Given the unique nature of this survey and open house the Economic Development Coordinator hand delivered the survey and invitation to the Open House to each business.

The Open House was held on September 11, 2024 from 3pm to 6pm at Flow Café and Bikes at 274 Dalhousie. This location was selected based on proximity to the businesses invited to the Open House in an effort to provide the most opportunity for attendance by reducing the need for them to travel to the Libro Centre.

There were 19 businesses which attended the Open House to discuss Open Air. They were provided the opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns with staff and those members of Council in attendance. Business owners were directed by staff to share their comments through the survey to ensure their feedback could be reported out correctly.

In total 49 business survey responses were received, 29 from businesses inside the footprint and 20 from outside, which equates to approximately 42% of the total businesses submitting a survey response. The results of the survey are attached to this report as Appendix B– Open Air Business Survey Results 2024. The results of this survey are consistent with the challenges in obtaining a format for Open Air which all businesses could support.

Of note: The attached survey results currently shows a minor discrepancy. More specifically the beginning of the report indicates 50 survey entries submitted however the metrics for each question indicates 49 responses. Efforts to resolve with matter through collaboration with Talk the Burg is in process and if corrected before November 22nd an addendum will be provided.

Open Air Survey – 2023

As per Council direction in August 2023 an Open Air survey was completed after the 2023 season.

Resolution # 20230814-026
Moved By Councillor Allaire
Seconded By Councillor Pouget

That the Town of Amherstburg **TO POST** a survey on Talk the Burg which includes questions regarding frequency, duration, activities and a comments section for 30 days to solicit comments on Open Air and the CAO to approve.

The Mayor put the Motion.

Motion Carried.

The survey was made available to the public from September 14, 2023 to October 15, 2023. There were 549 survey responses received and a report on the findings was brought to Council on November 13, 2023.

The following summary of the results of the survey was included in the November 13, 2023 report:

Talk the Burg Residents Survey (549 respondents).

- 89.3% attended Open Air Weekends
- 77.8% liked the 2023 Open Air Weekends Footprint
- 83.2% would like to see Open Air Weekends return
- 74.8% would like Open Air Weekends to return every weekend

The following resolution was made on November 13, 2023

Moved By Councillor Allaire
Seconded By Councillor Crain

That the Open-Air Weekends 2023 Survey Report from the Manager of Tourism and Culture dated October 19, 2023 **BE RECEIVED for information.**

The Mayor put the Motion.

Motion Carried.

Resolution # 20231113-008
Moved By Councillor Allaire
Seconded By Councillor Pouget

That the Open-Air footprint, activities and ideas **BE SENT** to the Accessibility Committee for an accessibility review before budget.

The Mayor put the Motion.

Motion Carried

Open Air Event

The program initially launched mid-summer and operated through to November 1 2020, with hours from Friday at 2 pm to Monday at 8 am. In 2022, Open Air achieved its longest stretch, running for 19 consecutive weekends. Over time, operational efficiencies have been identified and implemented, leading to adjustments in program hours. Initially set at 66 hours, the road closure hours have been refined to 53 hours in 2023 & 2024, now running from Friday at 3 pm to Sunday at 8 pm over a span of 14 consecutive weeks.

This option was selected by Council on March 13, 2023, along with delegated authority to the Chief Administrative Officer to approve exemptions and permits required for noise and road closures.

During the 2024 season Open Air themed programming aligned with various festivals occurring on four (4) of those weekends.

1. Ribfest
 - a. Regular programming costs were reduced as the Ribfest provided for additional entertainment and programming.
2. Horticulture (every other year)
 - a. Tourism Students gathered ballots for the Garden Tour participants.
 - b. A hands-on planting experience was coordinated.
 - c. Jack's Organics was engaged and handed out free tomato plants
3. Art Crawl
 - a. Regular programming costs were reduced as the Art Crawl provided for additional entertainment and programming
4. Cars Gone Crazy
 - a. The streets are reopened on that Sunday to provide for this event and no additional entertainment or programming is done.

These events are funded and organized by local businesses, residents and non-profit groups. Since they are held in the downtown core Administration has developed, and continues to improve, on themed programming for Open Air complementing these events to provide a cohesive and enhanced experience for those attending.

Local businesses, residents, and non-profit groups fund and organize these events. Since they are held in the downtown core, Administration has developed and continues to improve themed programming for Open Air, complementing these events to provide a cohesive and enhanced experience for those attending.

New in 2024

Non-Profit Engagement:

During the 2024 season, Administration actively connected with local non-profit organizations to offer them valuable opportunities to raise awareness and foster community engagement. Examples include weekend pickleball events led by Amherstburg's Pickleball Association, bringing residents together for enjoyable activities and showcasing local initiatives. The Amherstburg Pickleball Association reported 60 members enjoyed the engagement Downtown, where they taught 48 people to play pickleball.

Night Markets:

During the 2024 Open Air season, Night Markets were held every Friday evening, featuring a total of 37 predominantly non-brick-and-mortar businesses. Vendor participation each week varied between 11 and 17 vendors. Initial findings indicated strong vendor engagement and perceived benefits early in the season, though these benefits lessened toward the end. Despite this trend, there is potential for a successful Friday Night Market in the future. Planned adjustments include reducing space availability for each Friday, curating a diverse selection of vendors to avoid duplicate offerings, and

coordinating vendor participation for three themed weekends: Latin Fest, Carousel of Nations, and Agricultural Weekend.

Brick and Mortar:

In 2024, we introduced Business Markets on Saturdays and Sundays, offering a valuable opportunity for Amherstburg's brick-and-mortar businesses and local non-profits to set up a booth in our Open Air footprint at no cost. Despite our strong marketing efforts, participation from local businesses was lower than anticipated, while interest from out-of-town businesses was notably high. The Business Market had the following outcomes:

- 6 not-for-profits attended 15 business markets
- 4 brick-and-mortar businesses attended 6 business markets, and 2 of these businesses were no-shows.

To better prioritize the local businesses that actively support our community and contribute to our commercial tax base, we're refining our approach for 2025. Amherstburg brick-and-mortar businesses will continue to enjoy complimentary booth space in the Open Air footprint on Saturdays and Sundays. For out-of-town businesses interested in joining, we will consider their participation with a vendor fee. This adjustment lets us showcase Amherstburg businesses first and foremost while welcoming outside vendors to enhance the market experience for all.

Local Entertainers:

This year, we elevated our local programming by holding an open audition, tapping into a rich, diverse pool of local talent across all ages and music genres. This initiative welcomed new artists, with performers ranging from 10 to 70 years old, creating a vibrant mix of seasoned entertainers and first-time performers eager to showcase their skills. The open audition not only highlighted the depth of talent in our community and provided us with a unique talent resource that allowed us to enrich our summer schedule. The tourism team is excited to continue this successful approach in 2025, bringing even more local talent into the spotlight and creating memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike.

Development Stage for 2025

During the 2025 season Administration is looking at providing for three (3) additional festival weekends within the 14 weeks, more specifically:

1. Latin Fest

In 2024, the August 23rd weekend was Latin-themed to gauge interest. The weekend proved successful, and the tourism team is exploring programming to enhance resident/visitor engagement.

2. Carousel of Nations

In 2024, the tourism team began conversations with the Multi-Cultural Centre about the feasibility of becoming a satellite hosting site for the Carousel of Nations. Administration is reviewing this potential themed programming as one of the Open Air weekends.

3. Agricultural Weekend

A founded opportunity to engage our agricultural community in a place where our residents/visitors can learn more about the various types of agriculture in Amherstburg including wineries, craft beverages, farm markets, greenhouses, farm animals and crops.

To maintain the effectiveness of Open Air’s branding and maximize grant funding moving forward it is suggested that Open Air continue to be the 14 weeks, including 7 festival weekends and 7 weekends focused on Open Air-only programming. Sustained promotion of Open Air as a unique attraction is essential to fulfilling the terms of the grants awarded to the Town, as outlined in the Revenue Generation section of this report. Notably, in 2023/24, we have seen a propensity for grantors to support events with longevity that embody the core principles of placemaking, which Open Air consistently delivers.

Attendance

During the 2024 season Administration revisited the attendance counting process. Each weekend attendance was counted at the following times:

Friday	7:00pm-8:00pm
Saturday	12pm-1pm
	4pm-5pm
	7pm-8pm
Sunday	12:00pm-1:00pm
	4:00pm-5:00pm

Staff was stationed at the following locations: Murray St and Ramsey; Richmond and Ramsey and; Dalhousie and Richmond counting people as they entered the Open Air footprint. This process was put in place to reduce double counting of people as it only counted those coming into the area from one of the three (3) locations. The hours selected were based on when businesses were already open, and therefore the majority of staff likely already on site. This reduced the probability of counting staff going to work. While efforts were taken to minimize double counting or counting staff, Administration recognizes there is still at some level of double counting or staff counting, however that probability is deemed as minimal by putting these new control measures in place.

These counts were used to determine an average daily count for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. When determining the average count Administration recognized early morning and later evening are lower in attendance and therefore we did not apply the daily average to the full number of hours each day. More specifically the table below shows the Open Air hours and how many hours were actually used for the daily average so as to avoid overstating activity during what is known to be slower times:

Day	Hours Open	Hours Used for Average	Average Hourly Attendance	Average Count over 14 weeks
Friday	3pm to 11pm – 8hrs	2	668	18,714
Saturday	8am to 11pm – 15hrs	8	529	59,293
Sunday	8am to 8pm – 12hrs	5	374	26,212
	Total Count for 14 weeks			104,219

Had the full number of hours each day been used rather than the reduced number of hours noted above, the resulting total count for the 14 weeks would have been 248,941. The total count of 104,219 for the 14 weeks, based on the process changes and conservative approach to the number of hours which are most active during Open Air is deemed by Administration as a more reasonable and reliable number.

In 2024 staff also conducted attendance surveys to provide for additional key insights into visitor demographics, engagement, and event appeal. These insights provide for greater insight and planning for future programming. Below is a summary of the key insights received through these surveys:

Attendance Awareness: Most attendees learned about Open Air through social media, followed by word-of-mouth and radio, underscoring the importance of digital and community-based marketing.

Visitor Origins: While 46.5% of attendees were Amherstburg locals, 15.5% came from Windsor, 9.1% from LaSalle, 5% from Essex, 4.4% from Kingsville, and smaller percentages from Leamington, Lakeshore, Tecumseh combined came to 4.9%. Those that travelled from Ontario (outside of Windsor-Essex) were 8.3%, other parts of Canada were 0.7%, the United States were 4.4%, and internationally were 1.1%.

Frequency of Attendance: The event enjoys strong local engagement, with 26.8% attending weekly and 22% monthly.

Group Sizes: Attendees primarily came in small groups, with 57.1% arriving in groups of 2-3, highlighting Open Air's appeal for family and friend gatherings.

Main Attractions: Dining and entertainment topped the list of reasons for attending, followed by the opportunity to spend quality time with family or friends.

Overnight Stays: Only 10.1% of out-of-town visitors stayed overnight, indicating that most opted for day visits.

Overall, Open Air is a community-centered event that draws a mix of local and regional visitors, primarily for food, entertainment, and social experiences.

Open Air Financials

Financial Investments from Businesses in Footprint

Administration gathered information in 2023 regarding investments made by businesses in the Open Air footprint which include, but is not limited to, the following:

\$40,000

Investment in additional programming for Open Air including but not limited to:
WSO performance, live entertainment, bagpipers and family activities;

\$72,000

Investment in additional events in 2024 to be held over an Open Air weekend funded by businesses in the downtown: Art Crawl, Ribfest & Pride Weekend

\$38,000

Investment in outdoor spaces and entertainment provided in businesses expanded footprint, examples outdoor story time, musicians, artists etc.

Other investments not specific to Open Air and benefits all our festivals as well as downtown public spaces:

\$198,000

Public space investments including but not limited to murals, art work, on air promotion of the Town.

\$25,000

Sponsorship of other Town events.

In total approximately \$385,800 in investments to date from the businesses within the Open Air footprint contribute to community festivals and year round enhancements in the downtown and Kings Navy Yard Park area.

Town Financials for Open Air

Base Budget

At the 2024 budget deliberations Administration presented information as it relates to the Community Events general expense line only, to support the base budget increase being requested.

2023 Community Event Expenditures	
Total 2023 Expenditures	\$ 297,000
Less: Expenditure funded by Grants and Sponsorships	(119,000)
Total Base Budget Community Event	\$ 178,000
Allocation of \$178,000 by Community Event	
Open Air	\$ 30,156
Car Shoe	\$ 5,000
River Lights	\$ 57,652
Truth and Reconciliation	\$ 8,141
Uncommon	\$ 28,026
Canada Day	\$ 12,158
True Fest	\$ 12,099
Santa Parade	\$ 16,000
New Events and General Costs	\$ 8,162
Total	\$ 177,394

The Tourism 2024 approved operating budget includes the following general expenses:

2024 Tourism General Expense Budget

Uniforms	1,000
Office Supplies	3,000
Advertising	35,000
Contracted Services	-
Community Events	180,000
Mobile Devices	3,200
Memberships	1,000
Training and Conferences	6,000
Travel and Mileage	1,000
Promotions	10,000
Bank Charges - Special Events	500
	240,700

Of note the Community Events budget of \$180,000 includes a one-time amount of \$20,000 for 2024, meaning the annual base budget for this line item is \$160,000.

Open Air 2024 Financials – as of October 31, 2024

During the 2024 season Administration put in place additional changes to further define the actual expenditures which relate to specific community events. As a result, for 2024 the following expenditure types are also being tracked at the event level: Advertising; Student and Contract Labour and; Promotions. All other expenditures, full time salaries, uniforms, office supplies, mobile devices, memberships, training and conferences, travel and mileage and bank charges are not able to be tracked at that level as they are general in nature and not unique to a specific event.

In a focused effort to enhance operational efficiency and support work-life balance, adjustments were made to the scheduling practices for full-time staff during the 14-week Open Air event. Previously, staff often worked overtime on weekends and evenings to ensure adequate coverage. The revised approach introduced flex shifts, allowing each staff member to maintain a standard five-day workweek, with shifts arranged to cover both weekends and weekdays.

This shift in scheduling reduced the accumulation of banked time, minimizing the need for payouts of unused hours, and significantly lowered the demand for extended shifts and workweeks.

As of the writing of this report the 2024 actual costs for Open Air which can be reported are as follows:

2024 Open Air costs - As of October 31, 2024	
Student and Contract Labour *	\$ 42,650
Overtime Public Works *	\$ 6,345
Advertising	\$ 6,316
Printed Material and Promotions	\$ 651
Community Events	\$ 23,710
Total	\$ 79,673

*Included in the Student and Contract Labour is approximately \$14,900 for a contracted Tourism Co-ordinator. This cost is funded 100% by the My Main Street grant. Overtime for Public Works, which is required to close and open the streets, is included in the PW operating budget however included in this table as it is that direct cost for Open Air can be determined.

These numbers are not final and will be subject to change until year end is closed and all invoicing and payments have been processed.

Administration has also put in place further processes to track actual events costs which are funded by base budget (taxpayer) vs those costs funded by sponsorships and or grants. As this process was not put in place until May and submission claims for awarded grants is still in process the table below is reflective of all Open Air costs to date, however as can be seen in the Revenue section of this report a significant amount of the expenses for Open Air will be off set by sponsorship, grants and new revenue.

Based on 2024 revenue to date, revenue, sponsorship and grant funding specific Open Air is noted in the table below. Of note, in addition to the \$23,935 in funding from My Main Street directly attributable to Open Air, there is an additional \$32,477 in expenditures funded by the grant for Open Air which are for investments which can be leveraged for other events and use. Examples of these include but are not limited to the Tourism Carts; outdoor furniture; decent costumes and lighting for Kings Navy Yard Park.

2024 Open Air Revenue- As of October 31, 2024	
Night Markets	\$ 9,700
Whimsical Signs	\$ 1,550
Experience Ontario Grant 2024/2025	\$ 20,000
My Main Street	\$ 23,935
Libro Credit Union Sponsorship	\$ 2,000
Total	\$ 57,185

In considering the total costs to date of \$79,673 less the grant and sponsorship funding of \$57,185, the estimated tax payer cost for Open Air in 2024 was \$22,488. The table below outlines the average cost per day for Open Air funded from taxpayers is \$643 and the cost per attendee \$.22.

# of Days	Taxpayer Cost	Average Cost per Day	Event Attendance	Average Cost Per Attendee
35	\$ 22,488	\$ 643	104,219	\$ 0.22

Economic Impact

Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM):

The Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model is a tool which has been developed by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming. This tool generates a report which details an event's broader fiscal and employment impacts across multiple sectors. This tool is also used for various grants awarded to festivals or events in order to gauge impact to the economy as key indicators for grant investment value. By example

Experience Ontario 2024/2025 grant of \$20,000 awarded for Open Air will require this report and is therefore included as Appendix C.

The 2024 Amherstburg Open Air Weekends delivered a notable economic impact throughout Ontario. 104,219 attendees participated in the event, with approximately 19,540 visitors who travelled to Amherstburg from outside the Windsor-Essex region, including areas across Ontario, other Canadian provinces, the United States, and overseas. These visitors contributed an estimated \$4,286,911 in spending, underscoring the event’s capacity to draw tourism dollars and support economic activity beyond the local area.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

There is no risk in receiving this report.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Financial information has been provided in Discussion section of this report. There are no financial matter directly attributable to this report.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

Jennifer Ibrahim
Eric Chamberlain

7. CORPORATE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:


Vision: Preserving our past while forging our future.

<i>Amherstburg Community Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026</i>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 1 Deliver Trusted & Accountable Local Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve trust between council and staff, and residents, by strengthening governance and internal accountability structures. ✓ Deliver transparent and efficient financial management. ✓ Increase effective communication and engagement with residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop our staff team, resources, and workplace culture. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to deliver strong core municipal services. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure Amherstburg is an inclusive accessible and welcoming community committed to reconciliation. 	<p style="text-align: center;">PILLAR 3 Encourage Local Economic Prosperity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage development of commercial and industrial lands. ✓ Continue to promote local tourism industry, especially overnight accommodation. ✓ Continue to facilitate downtown development for residents and visitors. ✓ Continue to leverage partnership opportunities with other provincial, federal, and local governments, agencies, and organizations.

<p align="center">PILLAR 2</p> <p align="center">Invest in Community Amenities and Infrastructure</p>	<p align="center">PILLAR 4</p> <p align="center">Shape Growth Aligned with Local Identity</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain safe, reliable and accessible municipal infrastructure and facilities. ✓ Increase access to recreation opportunities for all ages. <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize and execute plans for town-owned lands (e.g. Duffy’s site, Belle Vue) <input type="checkbox"/> Create public access to water and waterfront <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritize opportunities to reduce environmental impacts of Town operations and increase Town resilience to climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define and communicate a vision for the Town’s future and identity. <input type="checkbox"/> Promote and plan for green and “climate change ready” development. <input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement policies that promote greater access to diverse housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Protect the Town’s historic sites and heritage. <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve the Town’s greenspaces, agricultural lands, and natural environment.

8. CONCLUSION:

That Council receive this report for information.



Melissa Osborne
Deputy CAO/Director of Development Services

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Report Back on Open Air and Business Survey .docx
Attachments:	- Appendix A - Businesses within 500 metres of Open Air.pdf - APPENDIX B - 2024 Open Air Business Survey Redacted.pdf - APPENDIX C - Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model - Open Air 2024 (002).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 15, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Prince



Valerie Critchley



Kevin Fox