



NEW WESTMINSTER

What We Heard: Anvil Centre 10-year Review Public Engagement Summary Report

April 2024



Participants place dots on a map during a drop-in engagement session at Anvil Centre in February 2024.



A variety of engagement activities were completed February-April 2024 to gather community input about Anvil Centre, the City-owned cultural and conference facility located in downtown New Westminister. Pictured here is a drop-in session. Other engagement activities included workshops, interviews, intercept surveys, and online engagement such as discussion forums and a survey.

We recognize and respect that New Westminister is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

Anvil Centre 10-year Review

Public Engagement Summary Report

April 17, 2024

Introduction

Anvil Centre is a vibrant cultural venue and conference centre located in downtown New Westminster. The multi-use, City-owned facility is designed to accommodate a wide variety of events, conferences, community programs, workshops, exhibitions, performances, and cultural experiences. Anvil Centre is home to the New Media Gallery, New Westminster Museum and Archives, the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame, Anvil Theatre, and more.

Having opened in 2014, Anvil Centre is reaching its first decade of operations. As we approach this milestone, the City of New Westminster invited Anvil Centre users, non-users, businesses, and the community at large to reflect on what's working well and whether any adjustments should be considered moving forward.

The engagement questions and activities were developed based on direction from City Council, and in collaboration with Anvil Centre staff. Community engagement was active from February 1-March 7, 2024, with a drop-in engagement session for Anvil Centre staff following in mid-March, and a workshop with the City's Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee taking place in early April. More than 300 people participated across all opportunities to share input.

Engagement activities included public, interest group, and committee workshops, public and staff drop-in sessions, intercept surveys in busy pedestrian areas near Anvil Centre, interviews with New Westminster-based conference clients, and a range of digital engagement tools on [Be Heard New West](#) – including discussion forums, an Ideas brainstorming board, and a short survey.

The purpose of this summary report is to share with City Council, engagement participants, and the New Westminster community:

1. [What engagement activities were completed](#)
2. A summary of what we heard
 - a. [Key themes across engagement activities](#)

- b. [Intercept Surveys](#)
 - c. [Online Survey](#)
 - d. [Interviews with Conference Clients](#) (also, see [Appendix A](#))
3. [Demographic information about participants & representation analysis](#)
4. [Next steps](#)

1. Engagement Process

The Anvil Centre 10-year Review Engagement began on February 1, 2024 with the launch of our [Be Heard New West project page](#), online survey, online discussion forum, and online ideas board. The main engagement period ran from February 1 through March 7, 2024, with additional engagement with staff and a City committee taking place in March and early April. Online and in-person engagement activities included:

- **Be Heard New West Project Webpage**
 - Launched February 1, 2024
 - 1,175 unique visitors as of March 4, 2024
- **Online Survey**
 - Open February 1 through March 4, 2024
 - 159 responses
- **Online Discussion Forum**
 - Three different discussion topics between February 1 and March 4, 2024
 - Total of 52 contributions made by 23 participants ([click here to review all contributions](#))
- **Online Ideas Board**
 - Open February 1 through March 4, 2024
 - 72 contributions made by 19 participants ([click here to review all contributions](#))
- **Community Workshops**
 - Two workshops offered: February 13 (virtual) and February 22 (in-person)
 - Total of 12 participants

- **Interest Group Workshop**
 - February 27, 2024 (virtual)
 - 11 participants
- **Public Drop-in Engagement Sessions**
 - Two sessions offered: February 19 (Family Day) and February 29
 - Total of 56 participants
- **Interviews with Conference Clients**
 - Conducted in February and March 2024
 - 8 participants
- **Intercept surveys with members of the public in busy pedestrian areas in downtown New Westminster**
 - Three different days and locations during the week of March 4, 2024
 - Total of 58 participants
- **Anvil Centre Staff Drop-In Session**
 - March 14, 2024
 - 13 participants (including staff who provided written input)
- **Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee**
 - April 11, 2024
 - 9 participants (including input provided by email)

New Westminster residents and Anvil Centre clients and collaborators were invited to participate in the various engagement activities through the following methods:

- Email notice to various City email databases:
 - Be Heard New West subscribers
 - Citypage Online newsletter subscribers
 - Invest New West business newsletter subscribers
- Email outreach to local businesses, Anvil Centre clients, collaborators, artists and other interest groups
- Social media posts on the City's main channels, as well as various Anvil Centre accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X)
- Flyers distributed at Anvil Centre and during engagement events
- Paid advertisement in the New Westminster Record e-newsletter



City of New Westminster
February 5 · 🌐

After a remarkable decade of Anvil Centre, we're gearing up for the next chapter! Your ideas are the key to our success. Join us in-person, or online to contribute to the legacy of this facility. Sign up for a workshop, stop by a drop-in, or share your suggestions on the online ideas board and let us know how we can make Anvil Centre even more welcoming and community-focused. Visit beheardnewwest.ca/anvil-centre for all the ways you can participate!



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Left: First of three separate Facebook posts inviting community members to share their input.

Below: Flyer distributed at Anvil Centre and beyond.

Important Note: this summary of engagement input does not reflect a representative sample of the New Westminster community. The input captured here reflects the views of those who self-selected to participate, and may not be representative of the views of other community members and interested groups. Please see section four – About Participants, starting on Page 25 – for some demographic information (where available) and representation analysis.

2. What We Heard

Key Themes across Engagement Activities

The following section summarizes the key themes raised in response to four main questions. These questions were asked to engagement participants across multiple engagement activities, and all input has been compiled and analyzed to identify these key themes. In some cases, one person's response may have included multiple themes. Themes with five or more mentions are listed below. The number of mentions each key theme received, by unique participants, is noted by the number in brackets.

Note: Similar themes were also identified in the comments provided from intercept survey and online survey participants. However, because the questions asked in these surveys were different, they have been reported separately.

Question 1: Anvil Centre's tag line is "Where Culture, Community and Commerce Meet". How have your experiences at Anvil Centre lined up with these three areas?

Engagement Activities Summarized: Public and Interest Group Workshops; Drop-in Engagement Sessions; Be Heard Discussion Forum Week 1; Staff Engagement; Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee Workshop

Question 1 Key Themes:

- **Conventions and conferences feel like the priority** (21 mentions)
Participants shared that "the design of the building prioritizes corporate uses", noting that Anvil Centre is "where commerce happens, and culture is upstairs." Multiple participants shared stories of organizing community events and being treated secondary to the building's corporate clients. "There is room for community when there is not commerce happening."
- **There is a disconnect between the community and Anvil Centre** (19)
Several participants expressed they felt "people in the community aren't necessarily the target visitor." Others questioned "how is Anvil building relationships" when it "does not participate in community events or street festivals" or "reach out to the community"?

- The community does not feel welcomed** (18)

Many participants shared personal experiences interacting with Anvil Centre, noting “the sense of welcome depends on your appearance” and “security guards contribute to lack of welcome-ness.” Others commented that often “there is no one in the lobby” and how that contributes to the feeling that the building is “empty and unwelcoming to the public.” One participant remarked, “I know I can go there but I don’t feel welcomed to.”
- The pricing of and access to rental space signifies the building is not for certain groups** (18)

Participants said “the very high cost of conference rooms limits accessibility for local businesses and organizations.” Others shared “our strata meetings were priced out” and that “we want to use the space but can’t afford to.” This challenge was also raised in the staff engagement session, where it was noted: “We do get lots of inquiries for community groups and non-profits. We do what we can, but our rate structure, we can’t discount to the level they’re used to like a community centre.”
- All three areas (Culture, Community and Commerce) take place** (10)

Some participants “consider it to be a hub for all of these areas,” sharing “I feel the tag line matches my experiences.” Staff also noted “in my (work) day I will see all three of those things happening,” while also acknowledging “it would be more accurate to say where Culture Community and Commerce pass each other in a hallway. People are coming for a specific reason; there is rarely people who are here to do all those things at the same time.” A few participants noted all three areas take place, but don’t necessarily overlap or “meet.”
- Commerce can exist with Community and Culture** (7)

In contrast, some participants felt “commerce and art are not antithetical,” and that “corporations need art.” Another noted, “commerce attracts artists.”
- A prioritization needs to be made** (6)

A handful of participants felt “Anvil has an identity problem.” Some felt Anvil should “make a decision to serve community first.” Others supported this, saying “I think the Anvil Centre needs to prioritize enhancing its accessibility and engagement with the community.”
- Commerce is an outlier** (6)

Some participants observed they are “not understanding the commerce side – it wasn’t apparent.” Others felt commerce was the wrong word choice, feeling like “what they were really talking about is economic development... So they termed it as ‘commerce’ instead when they meant ‘economic drivers.’”

Question 2: How would you describe the identity of Anvil Centre, both in terms of physical presence and the experience it offers?

Engagement Activities Summarized: Public and Interest Group Workshops; Drop-in Engagement Sessions; Be Heard Discussion Forum Week 2; Staff Engagement; Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee Workshop

Question 2 Key Themes:

- **Clean, Quiet, Sterile** (25 mentions)
Participants used a variety of adjectives and comparisons to describe the identity of Anvil Centre. Some said it felt “like I am in an airport or hotel” or “like a mausoleum.” Another said: “Words that come to mind are blank, cavernous and vacant – a wall of anonymous glass.” Others shared their experiences, with one participant noting, “every time I’m in there I feel like I have to be really quiet and tiptoe around.”
- **Not inviting** (22)
Participants commented that “a feeling of belonging does not exist” at Anvil Centre. Some identified the physical appearance of the building to be a barrier: “I have often commented that the glass and cement is not inviting” and that “the space is not welcoming to families. It is intimidating, it looks like (an) office building with absolutely no warmth.” Others commented on some of the more social aspects of the building that contribute to this feeling, sharing it is “financially inaccessible” or that they feel they are “not cultured enough to go in the New Media Gallery.” Another participant shared, “[Anvil Centre] hasn’t been a safe space for many.”
- **Fantastic space** (18)
Many participants expressed their love of Anvil Centre, describing it as “a bright light on Columbia in appearance,” and “so valuable.” Another said, “Anvil is showing clean and fancy is also New West.” Other participants

praised what takes place in the building, with examples including the “New Media Gallery is a gift,” and “the staff are very receptive,” specifically noting the many “warm relationships” they have in the building.

- **Full of potential** (14)

Participants felt that “there is so much opportunity” for Anvil Centre. They shared that there is “definitely great stuff going at Anvil, but tons more potential.” One participant remarked “only those with inside knowledge know to climb the imposing stairwell to find its hidden treasures.”

- **A convention centre** (10)

Participants shared that Anvil’s identity was more of a convention centre, observing that “people don’t know it is an art or community space.” Some engagement participants themselves “didn’t realize this is a public space” or that it’s a City-owned facility.

- **Confusing** (8)

A few participants felt Anvil’s identity was confusing, that it is “not a community centre, not an office tower; quieter than a library but somewhere in between.” Others felt that Anvil is “trying to be everything to everyone” and having a “bit of an identity crisis.”

- **Centrally located** (6)

Some participants appreciated the location of Anvil Centre in Downtown New West, and proximity to Skytrain, as a marker of its identity.

Question 3: What aspects or features of Anvil Centre help it feel welcoming and community focused?

Do you have any specific suggestions for making Anvil Centre a more inviting space for the community? What suggestions would you have to help Anvil feel more welcoming, and a more inviting space?

Engagement Activities Summarized: Public and Interest Group Workshops; Drop-in Engagement Sessions; Be Heard Ideas Board; Staff Engagement; Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee Workshop

Question 3 Key Themes:

Aspects that help Anvil Centre to feel welcoming and community focused:

- The staff: at the front desk, in the Museum and Archives, at the New Media Gallery, the workshop and program instructors (15 mentions)
- The location (14)
- Fantastic programs (LAB, theatre, art, classes, and lessons) (12)
- The New Media Gallery (12)
- The facility itself (12)

Suggestions to help make Anvil Centre feel more welcoming and community focused:

- **Offer more programming options** (49 mentions)
Many participants suggested they would use Anvil Centre more if there was a greater variety or an increase to the number of programs currently offered in the building. A number of participants specifically requested more drop-in workshops at the New Media Gallery, and a refresh to the theatre program. Other ideas included: summer camps, seniors' programming, STEM-related programs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and more free/no-cost options to bring people in.
- **Activate the ground floor** (47 participants)
A large number of participants had ideas and suggestions to activate the ground floor to make it "make it more warm, comfortable, inviting, active." Ideas included:
 - A library / library services (18)
 - Animating the space with colour and artwork (17)
 - Convert the security desk to a reception or welcome booth (10)
 - Add lounge space with better seating options (8)
 - Display public art (7)
 - Host pop-up markets or gift-shops (7)
 - Move the Community Art Gallery to the ground floor (6)
 - Add plants or greenery (6)
- **Make using the space more financially accessible** (22)
Participants noted that the "price is too high for community groups," recalling that they were faced with a "gnarly bill" and that "staffing costs are a killer." As suggestions to reduce the financial cost, participants suggested to "offer

free meeting space for residents”, or “reserve 50% of space for community at a discounted rate.” Other ideas included to “give (out) grants” and “offer a community pass program” at a discounted rate.

- **Reduce the amount of red tape and bureaucracy** (20)
Participants shared their experiences trying to navigate accessing the building. “I’ve tried to access the building but have been turned away from areas due to filming or other events.” Others shared they “tried to book [a space] but was tangled in red tape,” while someone else recalled they “needed to talk to five people” to make a booking. Participants suggested “not partnering with non-profits is an issue,” and having “no head of programming” makes things difficult.
- **Put displays in the windows** (14)
Participants suggested to “hang things” in the windows so that when “people walk by they see art.” Ideas included to “put an artifact on display” or to “showcase public art” as a “way to activate the windows so people are drawn into downtown.”
- **Improvements to the neighbourhood** (11)
At the staff engagement session in particular, participants commented on the challenges they have been facing in the building as a direct result of what is happening on the streets in downtown. Staff noted they file “five to six incident reports a week, but we can’t keep up with what is happening in the community. If we want this to be a community facility, we need to address what is happening in the community.” Concerns about drug use and/or paraphernalia in the washrooms at Anvil were also raised by participants in the conference client interviews and the Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee workshop.
- **Remove the in-house catering requirement** (8)
Participants identified the requirement to only serve food provided by the exclusive catering contractor at Anvil to be a significant barrier. Some called it “costly” and that it “does not meet their cultural needs.” One commented that they “received a grant from the City (to support their event), but could not afford any food with the money.”
- **It needs to be messier and noisier** (8)

Participants noted that artists are not generally clean and quiet. To reflect the diversity of uses in the building, “make it less quiet and austere.” One suggestion was to play music and “open the doors so the sound flows onto the street.”

- **I feel welcome and comfortable** (7)

Some participants specifically commented they do feel welcome at Anvil Centre. “I feel very welcome. I feel warm; I feel at home here.” Another described Anvil Centre as “a place you’d want to come back to” and that “I didn’t find it unwelcoming. [I] never came in and felt unwelcome.”

- **Other ways to activate the space**

Participants offered a number of other ideas and suggestions to make Anvil Centre more welcoming and community focused:

- A café or other food outlet (10)
- Study or work space (6)
- Reducing or removing the cost of parking (4)
- Tourism or welcome center (3)

Question 4: What other platforms or methods would be most effective in sharing information about Anvil Centre with the wider community and beyond?

Engagement Activities Summarized: Public and Interest Group Workshops; Be Heard Discussion Forum Week 3; Staff Engagement; Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee Workshop

Question 3 Key Themes:

- **Take a collaborative approach to marketing** (21)

Participants identified there is “potential to do more to get info out there” and suggested “coordinating with promotions of what’s happening at Massey... to reach more people.” Others commented the “BIA/tourism department/City need a coordinated marketing program for downtown,” and that there is potential to “leverage the expertise and networks of non-profits.” Relatedly, a few other participants suggested using regional channels such as DailyHive and Vancouver is Awesome to share information about Anvil Centre’s offerings.

- **Advertise more** (20 mentions)
 Participants felt that more advertising is required to increase awareness of Anvil Centre in the community. One participant questioned “I would love to see more and hear more about what is happening there. I have missed the promotion and invitation to the community – where does that happen?” Others noted, “I don’t think anything gets the marketing or advertising it deserves,” and that it “feels like advertising is an afterthought.”
- **Utilize the outside of the building more** (19)
 Participants shared that the building could “have better signage outside.” At the Family Day drop-in event one participant commented, “[you] wouldn’t know from the street things are happening in here today.” Some ideas for ways to use the outside of the building better included: “a billboard outside that says coming soon”, “posters in the windows”, and “sandwich boards saying ‘come in.’”
- **Have a single source for information and presence online** (16)
 Participants requested to “just have a central place where people can go for information,” and currently “people don’t know where to go to find information.” Others questioned “why are some programs in the Parks and Rec brochure and some in the Anvil Centre one?” Some noted “there is also confusion with the Massey Theatre.” Others found navigating separate websites to purchase event tickets to be confusing, commenting “consumers want to go to a single place to find what’s going on and buy their tickets.”
- **Hire a communications and marketing staff person** (7)
 In order to realize many of the suggestions made, participants suggested hiring a dedicated staff person for marketing and communications at Anvil. Staff commented, “right now it is done off (the) side of our desks, by all of us with a bunch of different voices.” Others acknowledged, “there’s lots we can do but don’t have capacity or resources to do it.” A community participant observed it is “quite unusual to have so much cultural programming and have no marketing person.”

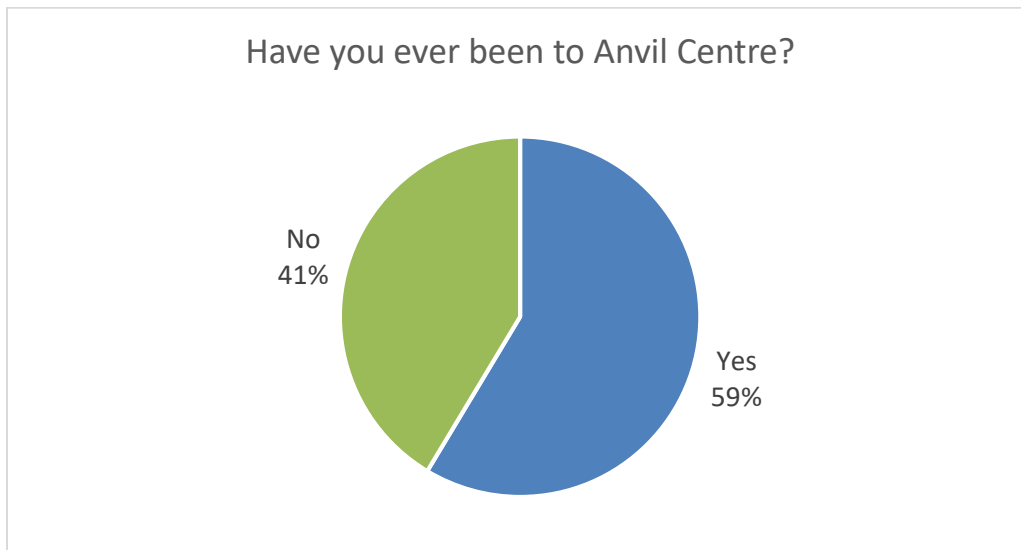
Intercept Surveys

During the week of March 4, 2024, Anvil Centre and Public Engagement staff took to the streets around Anvil Centre to survey New Westminster residents about their familiarity and experiences at Anvil Centre. Staff spoke to residents along the boardwalk at the Quay, outside Columbia Street Skytrain Station, and in the immediate vicinity of Anvil Centre, along Eighth and Columbia streets. Staff spoke to many people during the shifts; however, only 58 of them qualified as residents and were able to complete the survey.

The following is a summary of their responses:

Q1. Have you ever been to Anvil Centre?

Response	Percent	Count
Yes	59%	34
No	41%	24



Q1A. Tell me about a recent experience at Anvil Centre. What did you like? Anything you would change? (Asked to those who answered 'yes' to Q1)

Participants shared they have attended Anvil Centre for:

- COVID-19 vaccinations (9)
- Theatre performances (8)
- The New Media Gallery and/or Museum (8)
- For conferences, meetings, or trade-shows (7)
- For classes and programs (5)

The majority of respondents shared their experience was positive, noting that it was a “good experience” or that the “staff were very friendly”. Others commented that the “facility is very nice” and that that it is a “beautiful building.”

In terms of ideas or recommendations that would improve their experience, respondents suggested offering “more variety” of classes and “more kid-friendly events.” Others commented they would like to see “more signage and information” about what is happening in the building, while a few others commented that there could be better options for concession and the wine that is being served.

Q2A. Anvil’s Tag line is “Where Culture, Community, and Commerce meet.” How have your experiences at Anvil Centre lined up with these three areas?
(Asked to those who answered ‘yes’ to Q1)

The majority of respondents (7) felt the tag line “lined up” with their experience at in the building. Others (5) commented that they had “no thoughts” on the tag line. For those who felt that the tag line did not align, they shared that Anvil Centre felt like a place for Culture and Community, not Commerce (5), or that Anvil is a place “only for culture” (5) or “only for community” (2).

Q1B. What is keeping you from visiting Anvil Centre? (Asked to those who answered ‘no’ to Q1)

Participants shared they do not attended Anvil Centre because:

- They don’t have enough information about what is happening in the building (10)
- They are not interested (7)
- They are too busy (4)

Q2B. Is there anything that could change to encourage you to visit Anvil Centre more often? (Asked to those who answered ‘no’ to Q1)

Respondents had two main suggestions on what could change to encourage them to visit:

- Increase advertising and promotion (7)
- Offer more types of programming (5)
 - Such as “family-friendly events”, “free yoga drop-ins”, and “low-commitment art drop-ins”.

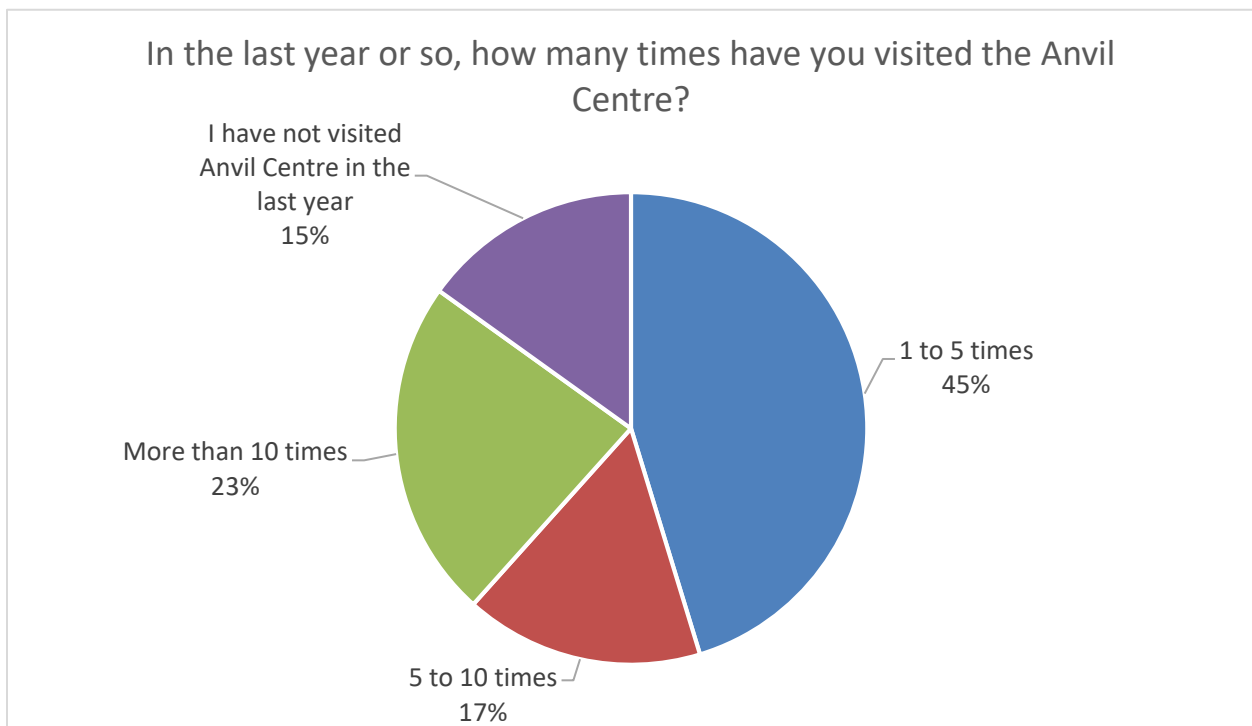
Online Survey

This quick, 3-question survey was designed as an entry point to get participants thinking about their experiences interacting with the building. The survey asked respondents to share their experience visiting Anvil Centre, or the reasons why they might not be visiting.

Question 1:

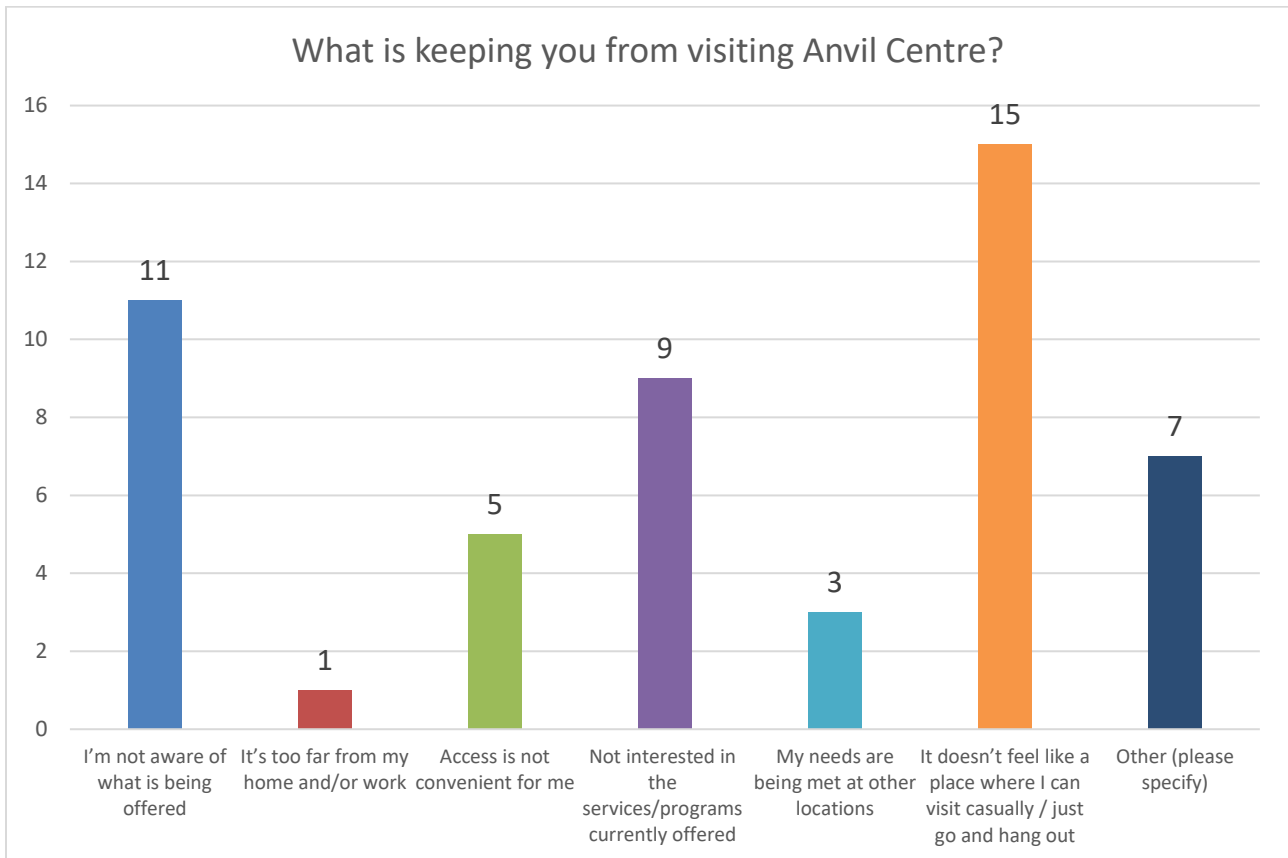
In the last year or so, how many times have you visited the Anvil Centre (including Anvil Theatre, New Westminster Museum, New Media Gallery, the Community Art Gallery, registered classes and workshops, events, meetings, conferences, etc.)?

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 159		
1 to 5 times	45%	72
5 to 10 times	17%	26
More than 10 times	23%	37
I have not visited Anvil Centre in the last year	12%	24



Question 1A: (If you have not visited Anvil Centre in the last year): What is keeping you from visiting Anvil Centre? Select all that apply:

Choice	Count
Total Responses: 24	
I'm not aware of what is being offered	11
It's too far from my home and/or work	1
Access is not convenient for me	5
Not interested in the services/programs currently offered	9
My needs are being met at other locations	3
It doesn't feel like a place where I can visit casually / just go and hang out	15
Other (please specify)	7

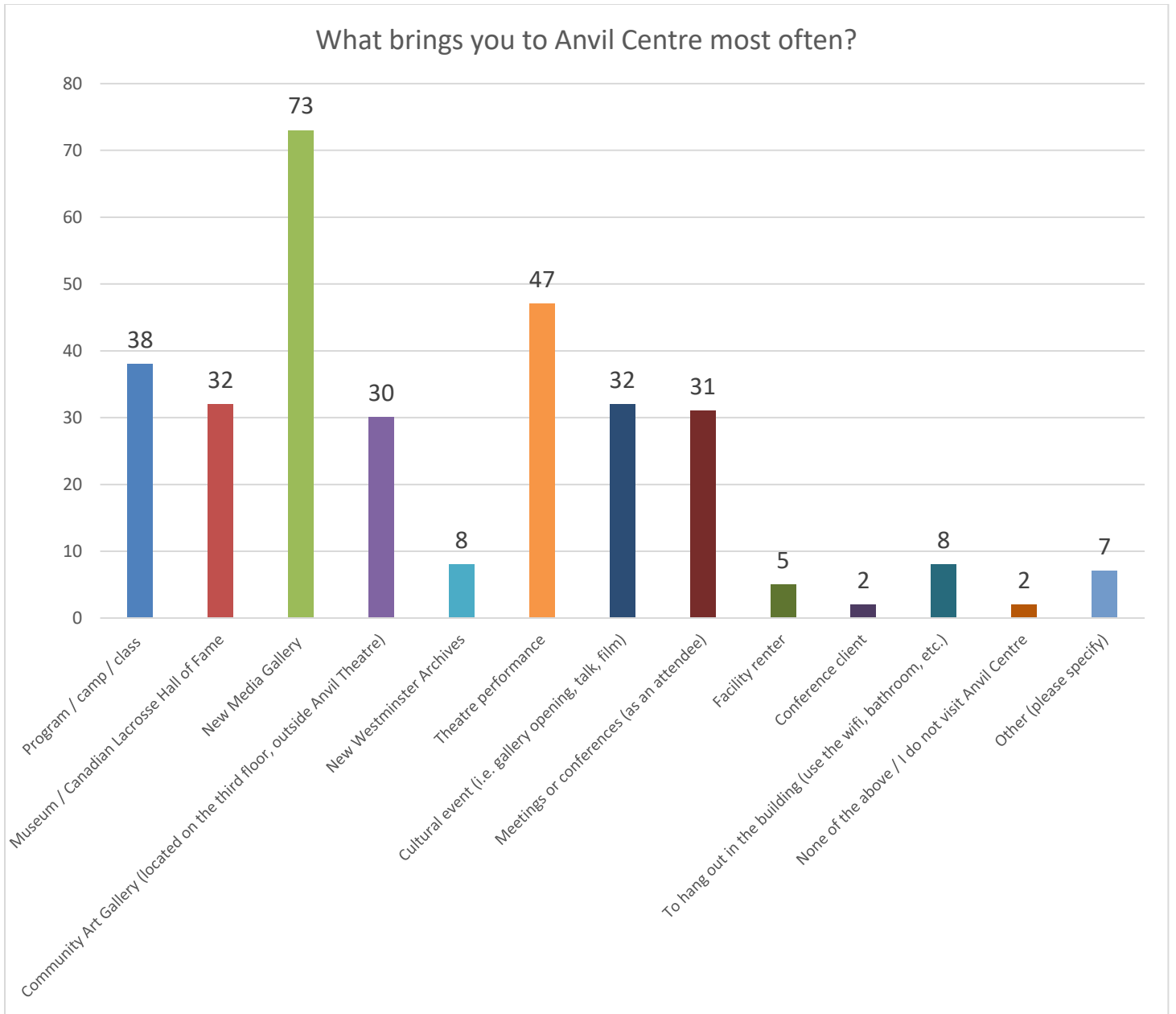


Seven respondents selected “Other (please specify)”. Below are the responses they provided:

- “There is no Marque board or signage to market what events are going on.”
- “Safety in New Westminster Downtown”
- “Parking is a problem. I have difficulty walking so cannot use transit system.”
- “Parking downtown New West is always an issue.”
- “Impractical location - I have no routine reason to go into the area.”
- “I am usually with my dog. We have been looking for more dog-friendly indoor spaces to hang”
- “Does not look engaging or interesting from the sidewalk.”

Question 2: (For participants who have been to Anvil Centre at least once in the last year) What brings you to Anvil Centre most often? Select up to three most common reasons for visiting.

Choice	Count
Total Responses: 134	
Program / camp / class	38
Museum / Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame	32
New Media Gallery	73
Community Art Gallery (located on the third floor, outside Anvil Theatre)	30
New Westminster Archives	8
Theatre performance	47
Cultural event (i.e. gallery opening, talk, film)	32
Meetings or conferences (as an attendee)	31
Facility renter	5
Conference client	2
To hang out in the building (use the wifi, bathroom, etc.)	8
None of the above / I do not visit Anvil Centre	2
Other (please specify)	7



Seven respondents selected “Other (please specify)”. Below are the responses they provided:

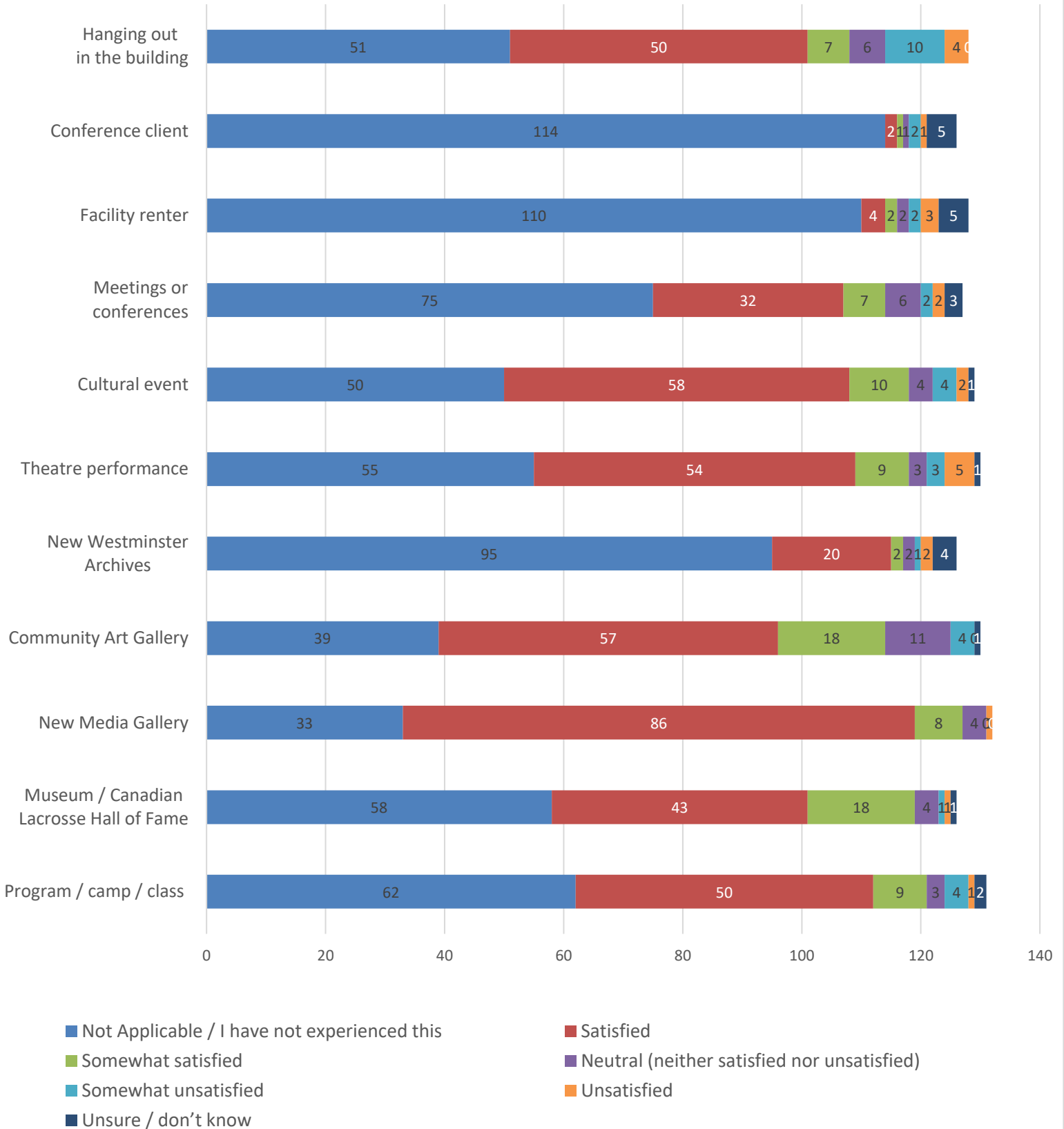
- “Volunteer”
- "Tourism centre - get maps and washrooms"
- “Immunization, Lego Exhibition”
- “Healthcare events (my COVID shots)”
- “Have also visited for a show at the gallery, theatre, main floor events, blood donations, vaccination, and occasional bathroom or sit-down respite”

- “Craft fair”
- “Book return”

Question 3: Thinking about your experiences at Anvil Centre over the last year or so, please share how satisfied you have been with the programs/services you have used.

	Not Applicable / I have not experienced this	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral (neither satisfied nor unsatisfied)	Somewhat unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Unsure / don't know
Program / camp / class	62	50	9	3	4	1	2
Museum / Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame	58	43	18	4	1	1	1
New Media Gallery	33	86	8	4	0	1	0
Community Art Gallery	39	57	18	11	4	0	1
New Westminster Archives	95	20	2	2	1	2	4
Theatre performance	55	54	9	3	3	5	1
Cultural event	50	58	10	4	4	2	1
Meetings or conferences	75	32	7	6	2	2	3
Facility renter	110	4	2	2	2	3	5
Conference client	114	2	1	1	2	1	5
Hanging out in the building	51	50	7	6	10	4	0

Level of Satisfaction with Programs and Services



Question 4: OPTIONAL: Is there anything that could improve your experience at Anvil Centre?

This question received 92 responses from survey participants. Responses were gathered and analyzed for key themes. In some cases, a single response may have generated up to three themes. Themes with four or more mentions are listed below.

Note: *Because the survey question was framed differently than the four main questions asked across other engagement activities, the themes here have not been included in the Key Themes across Engagement Activities section above. However, it should be noted that many of the themes below are similar to the Key Themes above.*

- Comments expressing appreciation and praise towards Anvil Centre, its staff, the programs and exhibits (28)
- Activate the ground floor to make the space feel more welcoming (28)
- Offer more classes and workshops; Parks & Rec, Arts, Technology (17)
- Host more, and a greater variety, of events and programs (13)
- Increase awareness of what is happening in the building through more marketing and promotion (12)
- Reduce barriers and cost for community groups wishing to book space (11)
- Open a library or book pick up (9)
- Improve the physical accessibility of the Anvil Theatre (including installing handrails, widening the bridge for wheelchairs, and changing the seats to be more comfortable) (8)

Interviews with Conference Clients

As part of the engagement process, staff identified 10 New Westminster-based conference clients to participate in an interview about their experiences hosting events or renting space at Anvil Centre. The interviews were conducted by an external contractor to support staff capacity to deliver the breadth of engagement activities. Eight clients completed interviews. Questions asked in the interview were similar to the questions asked in the broad-scale public engagement, and similar themes were shared.

For a full report on the Interviews with Conference Clients, please see Appendix A.

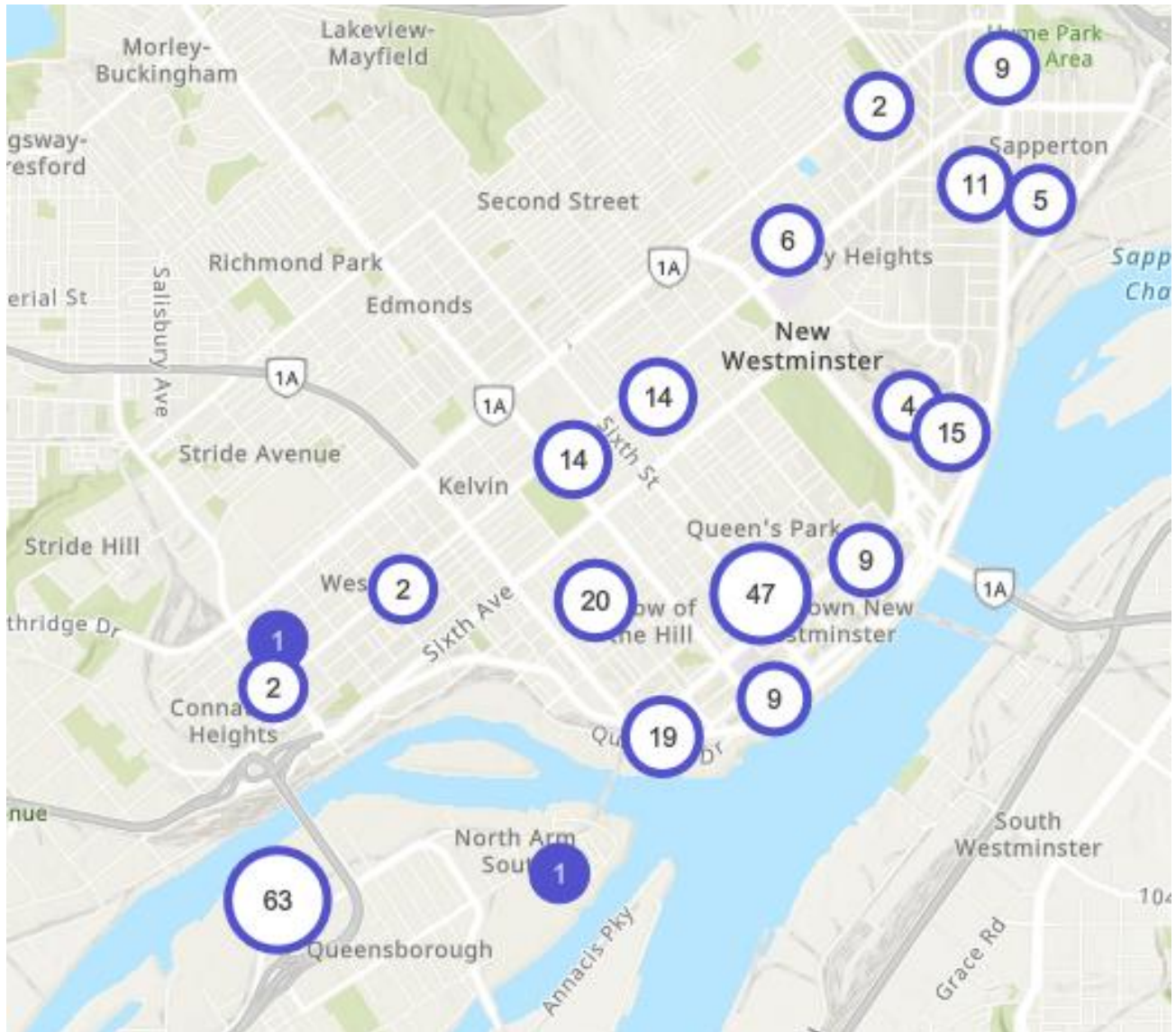
3. About Participants

Given the broad range of user groups engaged and the variety of engagement activities conducted, it's important to recognize that the same demographic data is not available for all participants. Be Heard New West users provide demographic information when they register on the site, including postal code, year of birth, connections to New Westminster, and other optional details such as Indigenous identity, if they have a disability, if they were born outside of Canada, and other lived experiences. This same information was not collected from participants of the in-person engagement activities.

We can report on and consider the demographic profile of community members who shared input online through the survey, discussion forum and ideas board; however, we cannot compare the characteristics of the full 300 participants with the Census profile of New Westminster. Therefore, the demographic analysis below should be considered incomplete.

Neighbourhood Spread of Online Engagement Participants

A total of 282 contributions were made by Be Heard users through the online engagement activities (survey, ideas board, and discussion forums). A single user can make multiple contributions. Out of those 282, 253 were from users in the following areas and neighbourhoods across New Westminster. The remaining 29 online contributions were made by users located in other cities across the Lower Mainland.



Map of New Westminster, showing the number of Be Heard contributions from different neighbourhoods / areas of the city.

Demographic Analysis of Online Engagement Participants

Demographic analysis has been completed for 159 unique participants who shared input online on Be Heard New West. The characteristics of this group of users were compared to the most recent demographic profile of New Westminster residents from the 2021 Census.

Again, this same demographic information was not collected from participants at in-person engagement activities, so the demographic profile of all participants in this engagement process is not clear.

As we see in most City of New Westminster engagements, among online participants, residential property owners were highly over-represented (70% of online participants; 55% of residents according to Census), and tenants were highly under-represented (18% of participants; 45% of residents according to Census). An additional 1% of participants identified as being under-housed or unhoused members of the New West community.

For age ranges of online participants, there were only two online responses from residents age 19 or younger, so this age group was highly under-represented. Ages 20-34 were also highly under-represented compared with 2021 Census data. Conversely, the 35-49 year old, 50-64 year old, and the 65+ age group were over-represented.

In terms of other demographic information provided by online participants, we can compare with Census data on Indigenous, immigrant, new immigrant (arrived within past five years) and visible minority proportions of the New Westminster community. Based on this comparison, immigrants, visible minorities and newcomers were all highly under-represented amongst Be Heard participants. Indigenous people and parents of children under 18 were similar to 2021 Census representation.

Analysis of all Participants at Drop-in Events

At the in-person drop-in events, attendees were invited to share their demographic information through a sticky-dot board. This was an optional activity, and participants were not required to answer these questions; therefore, this should

not be considered a complete data set. Of note, a larger number of respondents at the drop-ins were 19 & under (compared to online).

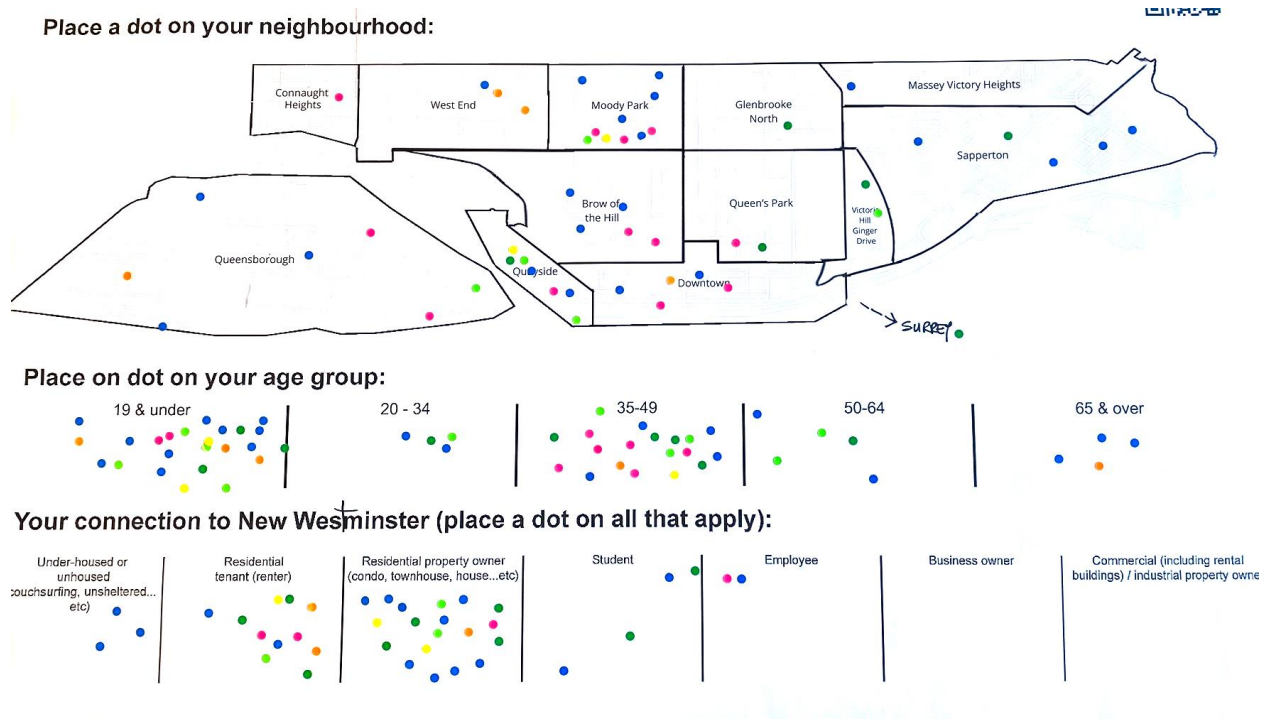


Photo of drop-in engagement board showing the number of participants from different neighbourhoods / areas of the city, age rangers and connections to New Westminster.

4. Next Steps

This engagement summary report will be provided to Council at its May 6, 2024 regular meeting, and shared on the [Anvil Centre 10-year Review project webpage](#). The detailed notes from workshops, drop-in sessions and intercept surveys, as well as the written comments from the survey will also be posted to the Be Heard page.

Following the reporting of What We Heard to Council, engagement participants and the community, staff from Anvil Centre and other City departments will collaborate to develop a set of draft recommendations based on the engagement input. The draft recommendations will then come forward to Council in a workshop setting for discussion, refinement and adoption.

Implementation of the recommendations will begin after they are finalized and approved by City Council. Visit the project page on Be Heard for further updates as this process continues.

Appendix A

Anvil Centre

10-year Review

Conference Clients Interviews Summary Report

March 2024



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Introduction

The Anvil Centre ('the Centre') is located in Downtown New Westminster. It is a 10-year-old, four-floor building that is owned and operated by the City of New Westminster as a cultural and conference centre.

As the public facility nears 10 years of operations, the City launched a public engagement process to review what is working well at Anvil Centre and whether any adjustments or new opportunities should be considered.

Purpose and context

As part of the Anvil Centre 10-year Review engagement process, the City requisitioned a set of one-on-one interviews with New Westminster-based conference clients.

This report outlines the interview process and a summary of the input shared by the conference client interviewees.

The interviews sought client experiences to understand:

- Where the Centre is performing well
- Where are the Centre's areas of opportunity
- Where the Centre can capitalize on marketing and sharing its purpose

Interview methodology

Ten clients were identified by City staff, with their information provided to the contractor. All 10 were based in the City of New Westminster. The groups represented not-for-profit, health, transportation, local business, and education sectors. Some represented more than one category. Representatives for each client provided answers on the client's behalf. Interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes, and were conducted via phone or Microsoft Teams.

The questions—which were provided in advance to client respondents—were as follows:

- 1. As a client who has booked and organized meetings and conferences at Anvil Centre, please share a little bit about your experiences.*

- a. *What has worked well?*
- b. *What could be improved?*

2. *Have you had other experiences at Anvil Centre, besides organizing conferences, either as part of your professional role or personally? If so, please share a bit about your non-conference experiences.*

3. *Anvil Centre is a community facility that offers a wide range of cultural programming and spaces such as the Museum, New Media Gallery, Theatre, etc. in addition to the conference facilities. Thinking about this variety of offerings, does anything else come to mind that could be added to enhance what's already on offer at Anvil Centre?*

4. *We have heard feedback that awareness of Anvil Centre and its diversity of programs, services, and spaces could be expanded. Do you have any suggestions for how best to share information about Anvil's offerings to the local community and beyond?*

5. *Do you have any other thoughts or suggestions to share, as the City of New Westminster reflects on the last 10 years of Anvil Centre operations and looks towards the future of this public facility?*

These questions were provided to the contractor by the City of New Westminster.

Of the 10 clients, eight completed the feedback process. Two did not respond to multiple requests for an interview by deadline. Participating organizations included (in no particular order):

- Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation
- Vancouver Retro Gaming Convention
- BC Craft Brewers
- TransLink
- Last Door Recovery Society
- Tourism New Westminster
- Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine
- Key West Ford

In both the report and notes, the clients are anonymized. The contractor has used a key assigning numbers to each client; only the contractor has access to this key.

While the aforementioned questions were addressed with each client, the third-party contractor asked follow-up questions as necessary: for instance, the contractor may

have asked the respondent to elaborate on a point they made related to the minutiae of food services or invoicing.

During the interview, the contractor took detailed notes. Once the notes were transcribed, they were returned to the client respondent for review. The client was told throughout the process they could add other comments, and that corrections and/or clarifications were welcome. Once the client respondent approved the notes, they became a part of the contractor's compiled report.

One client bypassed the note reviewing process as they felt they had provided Anvil Centre stakeholders with similar feedback in separate, unrelated engagement.

Summary of interview input

Highlights: what's going well

Anvil Centre Staff

Most interviewees were enthusiastic about the staff, with almost every participant naming and remembering specific people who work at the Centre. Participants made note of the staff's professionalism, attentiveness, creativity, flexibility, kindness, and helpful nature. Some highlights:

- Multiple respondents mentioned the building would be “nothing without the staff,” particularly at the front desk, as they are front and center when it comes to fostering a warm and welcoming feel in the space
- An event organizer had an unusually large water bottle, and was in need of a refill. The staff member instead took it to another spot where it could easily be filled. The event organizer said they were impressed at how the staff member went up multiple floors just to fill up their water bottle, calling it a perfect example of going above and beyond
- Another client mentioned an instance where a major courier failed to pick up gowns from a ceremony they held at the Anvil. Staff not only sent them a kind reminder about the courier's failure to carry out the pick-up; the client noted the Centre was exceptionally accommodating and did not charge them any kind of storage-related fee for the company's missed pick-up
- One client who was working on a booking with a centre in another Canadian city remarked they missed working with the staff at the Anvil, saying that the

service provided at the New West centre is akin to a “small-town feel”

Convenience of Anvil Centre Location and Parking

Multiple interviewees noted the ability to walk from New West Station or Columbia Station to the Anvil Centre is exceptionally attractive. SkyTrain and buses frequent the area, making it easy to get to. A number of them were also pleased with the parking options immediately below the Centre.

Creativity

Some clients mentioned being able to be creative with a layout, adding that anytime they asked for feedback from Centre staff about how to make a space work best for their purposes, staff were quick to offer suggestions, or to let them try layouts people might not see in a more traditional conference-style setting.

Two clients celebrated the creativity and potential offered by spaces like the New Media Gallery. One of the clients said they love taking their family there, and while they may not always understand the concepts on display, it is something they are able to enjoy together.

Highlights: areas of opportunity

Food and catering

Take-aways

- Food and catering logistics can be challenging
- Delays to the expedition of food, particularly during large-scale events
- A desire for more flexibility around the provision of food, including:
 - When it is served
 - Being able to bring in food from outside the Centre

Three clients who have hosted large events at the Centre—each with upwards of 250 people in attendance—cited moderate to significant delays to food service.

One client cited an experience where an appetizer was served, with the following course being served with a delay of more than 30 minutes between the first and last

tables being served. Another noted the food service wasn't up to their expectations, which resulted in a financial credit to their invoice. The client added they have received credits for various events, which has resulted in them lowering their expectations related to food.

Both clients were worried about hosting large-scale dinners at the Centre in the future: one said they would likely request food served tapas-style (small dishes, snacks, or appetizers) as they are unsure whether hundreds of people can be served a plated dinner in a timely manner.

A client requesting coffee and pastries for the opening of their large-scale event (with more than 250 people attending) asked if the coffee and pastries could be fully available for guests approximately 10 minutes before the start time of the conference. The client respondent said their staff were told by those serving the food they could only be brought out at the start of the event.

A client who had also attended a memorial event noted some of the policies around bringing outside food into the Centre for an event did not feel clear, which created some instances of miscommunication that, in their opinion, could have been mitigated.

Financial and payment

Take-aways

- All charges should be disclosed as soon as possible
- Parking should be ensured for rentals with a large number of attendees
- Payment options feel atypical, relative to other spaces

One client mentioned being charged additional fees to use a television. This client felt equipment use should have already been included in the cost of their rental. Another regular client noted one of their fees had been waived in previous years, only for the fee to suddenly return. The client had to ask about the extra charges and was later told that because costs were going up, the waiving of this specific fee would no longer occur. While the client was eventually given a smaller discount, the client felt the interaction was not pleasant and wished the Centre had mentioned from the beginning that waiving this fee was no longer a possibility.

Another client wanted to see more parking available, particularly for guests who come from out of town for their event. This client wished the cost of parking would be included in their rental package, and that reserved parking spaces be made available to them to use for specific guests.

One client found the Centre's payment process odd: they were asked to pay in four installments, and were invoiced each time something in the booking was modified.

When this client asked why payment was carried out this way, they said they were told something to the effect of, "we can't wine and dine on the City's money." When the client was asked what they thought this response meant, the client said they weren't sure, but they did not feel a sense of trust from the Centre. Comparing experiences with other venues, this client said their group is usually invoiced just a handful of times in the process—typically one deposit, followed by a second payment to cover the balance owing.

Another client was once overcharged on their credit card and told by administrative staff they would have to wait for the City of New Westminster to give permission to disburse a refund. After what they described as a long wait, the money was eventually returned to them.

General logistics

Take-aways

- Too many different people/groups in charge; too much red tape
- Technology doesn't seem flexible if the event is not a meeting and/or conference; system doesn't feel modern
- More flexible options for dropping off/picking up if user has a vehicle

One client says it can be difficult to connect a cable for a hard line to the internet. To the best of the client's knowledge, there is no in-house employee who can assist with technological troubleshooting—someone needs to be called in. This client has held their event multiple times at the Centre and says they have since figured out a work-around in relation to this issue.

Most clients would prefer amenities at the Centre to be a one-stop-shop experience. Currently, food related requests must go through the contracted caterer, the Massey Theatre Society runs the Anvil Theatre, and parking is managed by the City of New Westminster. A number of clients noted that if they were to use a service at the Centre, they should be able to speak to someone at the Centre.

Another client with children under the age of 10 who has used the Centre for both professional and personal purposes says it would be great to be able to drop off their kids at an event without having to feed the parking meter. Currently, parking meters at

the Centre do not offer a short time frame for stopping in an underground parking stall. The client is aware of the loading zones outside the Centre, but does not want to risk stopping there for fear of being ticketed as they are usually alone when dropping off their children – there is no one else waiting in their vehicle for them.

Facility comfort

Take-aways

- Observations related to drug paraphernalia in the washrooms
- The building's temperature can get too warm in the summer

One client hoped there would be a way for the City to balance the needs of all Centre users. The client mentioned both observing – and being told about – drug paraphernalia in the Centre's washrooms. The client also mentioned sometimes finding the washrooms “trashed,” adding it was unfair for the Centre's staff to have to be responsible for cleaning these spaces.

Another client hoped to see the Centre look into shades for the building, particularly for its large glass sections. While the air conditioning usually works fine, this client feels it does not do enough to mitigate heat when the summer sun shines through the glass. This can be particularly troublesome when significant amounts of people are moving through the client's highly attended event.

What exactly is the Centre supposed to be?

Take-aways

- Messaging out of the Centre is mixed

Clients want the Centre to have a clear, concrete identity. One client referred to the centre as having an “identity crisis,” saying that they tend to use the building as a convention centre. Being a resident of the City however, they know the Centre is supposed to be a community space—but doesn't seem to tick that box. A second client felt like the Centre hadn't achieved either identity.

Other clients mentioned that while they are familiar with the Centre – because they live in New West and/or work in the City – they don't feel the building is inviting, and initially didn't feel like they could go inside. When asked why, they said the outside of the building felt too polished, and more in line with the look of a professional-looking

convention centre. That said, a number of respondents said once they'd been inside, it really was the people on the front lines who made the space warm and inviting.

Ideas & what these clients hope to see

Suggestions for events / programming:

Interviewees understood these suggestions were subject to resources—like staffing and finances. Some ideas:

- **More hands-on events.**
 - One client loved some of the tactile learning events like the Learning Lab, but wanted to see more events like this, particularly ones that could help youth pick up skills to be used in everyday life and/or in the workforce.
- **More family-focused and kid-focused events.**
 - One client suggested a kids' film fest: the Centre's space feels big enough for kids to be themselves (I.E., run around and play) while also watching a movie.
- **More community event involvement beyond the walls of the Centre.**
 - One client said they often walk by and see the Centre's main floor empty. They felt it would be nice to include the building as part of festivals and events. (I.E., a space people can come into during the New West Pride street festival.)
- **Create comprehensive Anvil Centre-only experiences that channel the “fear of missing out” or “FOMO.”**
 - One client said the Centre had great offerings in the form of spaces like the Museum & Archives and the New Media Gallery. As an observation, the client noted it is common for the general public to be left to tour these experiences on their own. To enhance that experience and make it more one-of-a-kind, the client thought it would be great to have guided museum and gallery tours, or experiences that allow the attendee to speak to someone about the exhibit in question. By creating a fulsome experience that would get visitors talking, the client felt this would create “FOMO,” also known as a “fear of missing out.”

Suggestions for marketing:

- **More of a presence on social media.**
 - Some of the interviewees said they only started recently following the Anvil Centre's social media pages in the last few months, while others said they couldn't remember when they had last seen a Facebook or Instagram post from the Anvil Centre.
- **More of a presence in community newsletters, community calendars, and local media.**
 - Some respondents wanted to see ads and/or more informational posts on local community news websites. They also wanted to see events cross-posted to other New West-based calendars and event lists. Three clients wanted to see the Centre make use of Facebook events pages.
- **Fixing the discrepancy between other City facility websites and the Anvil Centre's website.**
 - One client respondent noted a difference between the online presentation of the Moody Park and Queen's Park websites when compared to the Centre. The respondent felt Moody Park and Queen's Park's websites had more of a community feel, while the Anvil Centre's website read to the client like the website of a professional conference centre, not a community centre.
- **Taking things "old school" with flyers, pamphlets, or even a fridge magnet.**
 - One client explained they were moving away from the use of social media, adding they enjoyed seeing posters in the community, or receiving mail cards about programming at the local New West centres. Being able to access a simple prompt (i.e., a fridge magnet) might also help remind the client to check in with the Anvil Centre's offerings on a more regular basis.
- **Networking with other Metro Vancouver community centres.**
 - One client wanted to know if there were opportunities to drop off pamphlets and posters at other community centres or other Metro Vancouver tourist hot spots so that people had another way to access information about the Centre.

Suggestions for getting to know the Centre:

- **Offer tours.**
 - Offering a one-on-one tour or tours for groups of people who are interested in learning about the Anvil Centre.
- **Offer virtual tours.**
 - If someone isn't able to see the Centre in person, offering an online 3D tour might be a way to let them visit without them having to physically visit.
- **Cheat sheets for first-time Centre users.**

- In the case of the client who had attended a memorial event at the Centre, they would have loved to have a cheat sheet explaining what you can and can't do at the Centre—for instance, an explanation on the policies related to bringing outside food into the Anvil.