



2020 Capitol Hill Business Survey Results

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Capitol Hill Business Alliance (CHBA), a program of the GSBA, conducted an independent survey of small businesses in the neighborhood from June 16th to June 26th, 2020.

Questions covered basic demographic information, COVID-19, CHOP, and related damage. The business name field was required to ensure all respondents were located in this business district, and 78 respondents took the survey. Many questions allowed for open-ended answers, so we coded the most common themes and included anonymous quotes for additional context and to let the businesses speak for themselves.

Findings covered a few key areas:

Pandemic - Financial concerns, public safety, and pandemic protection. Requests for grants and rent assistance. Ideas for increasing capacity and improving access for both customers and employees, particularly around street closure, parking, and curbside pickup.

CHOP - Impact on neighborhood, business reopening timelines, and effectiveness of response from various entities (City, SPD, GSBA/CHBA). Business owners reported that a majority (67%) of personal interactions with both protesters and city officials were considered positive or neutral. Emphasis on necessity for a quick, peaceful resolution.

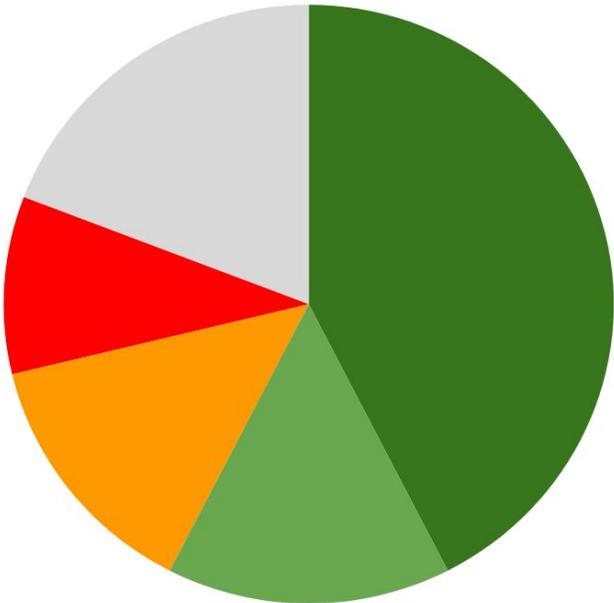
Damage - Preventative measures (boarded windows) taken for both pandemic and protest related closures, as well as assessment of damage sustained during protest. The 24 out of 46 businesses that reported damages (52%) reported more than one example of damage. None of the damage was resolved by SPU.

Other - Additional comments and perspectives on the response to CHOP from the SPD, City, and CHBA/GSBA; includes a spectrum of support for protesters and the movement at large. Overarching sense of urgency for all community stakeholders to engage in immediate, actionable support to the business community in the wake of both the protests and the pandemic.

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

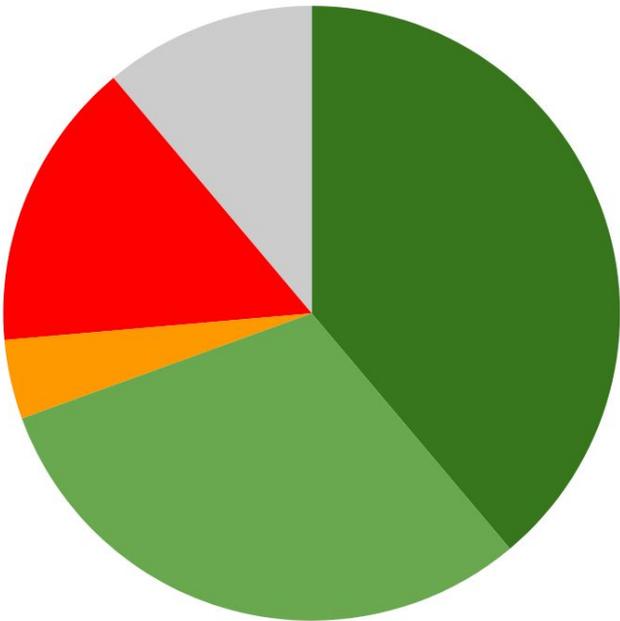
Business Size (# of Employees)

- 1-5 employees
- 11-25 employees
- 26-50 employees
- 51+ employees
- 6-10 employees



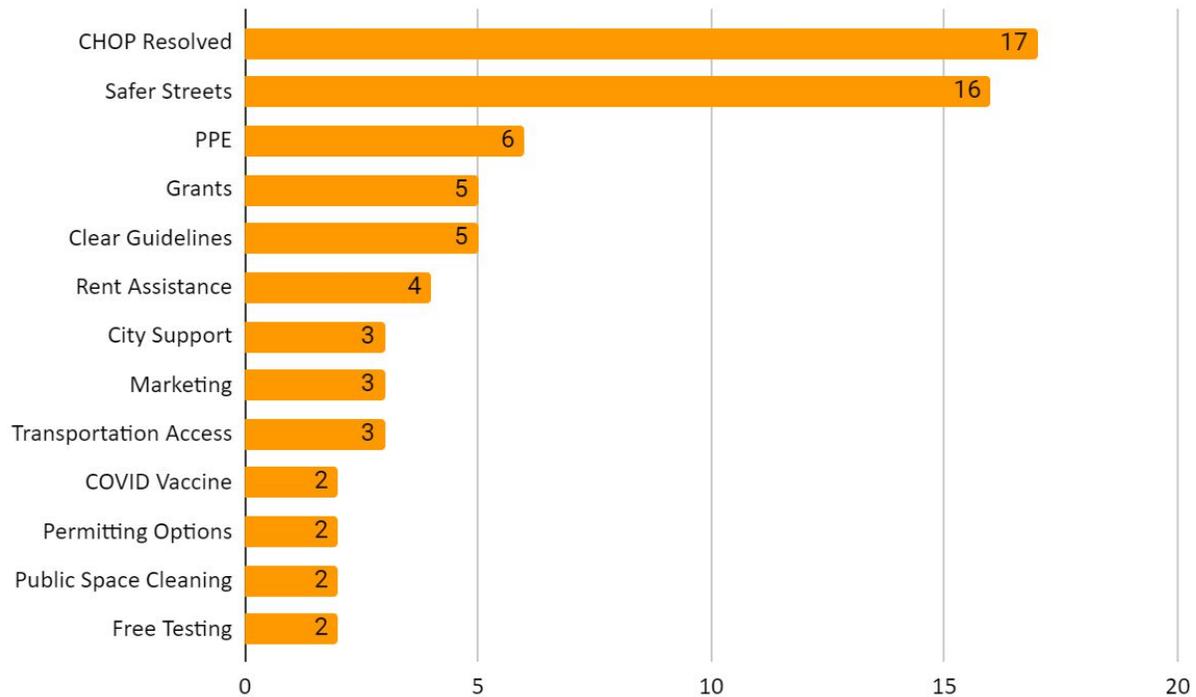
Are you open for business?

- Never closed
- Opened in Phase 1.5
- Opened in Phase 1
- Planning to open in Phase 2
- No plans to reopen yet



COVID-19 QUESTIONS

What support do you need (from the City or otherwise) to safely and successfully reopen?



Financial Concerns

- “Rent deferment, organized cleaning, and sanitation support for spaces.”
- “A grant would be nice to offset road work and lack of foot traffic.”
- “I would love to have financial support for all of the COVID mitigation steps we're taking like plexiglass going up and social distancing directional signage.”
- “We need support from the city to continue to create financial offsets for small businesses and in turn for the Landlords as well so they can continue to help us "buy" more time to get through this and see if we can emerge on the other side.”

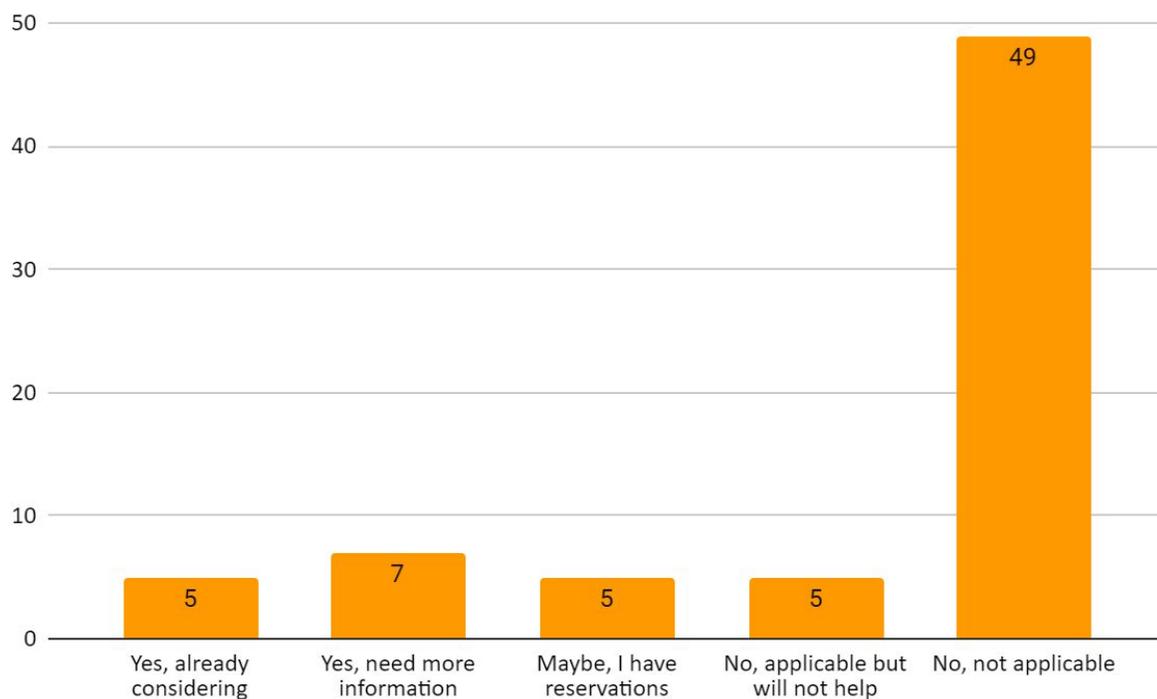
Public Safety

- “Reassurance that it's safe to take boards off our windows! That's the main thing I am nervous about given the CHOP demonstrations (that we very much support, but also have had windows broken from the protests at the beginning of the movement).”
- “People should feel safe in Capitol Hill. Currently that is not the case. Also, people have privatized the entirety of Cal Anderson Park, so now it's no longer a place where the community can traditionally gather this summer, and no longer the important community resource for all of the renters nearby who will need safe open space this summer as we continue to shelter in place to stop the spread of the coronavirus.”

Pandemic Protection

- “To have an independent audit of our space and make suggestions for how we can improve safety and sanitation measures.”
- “Personal Protective Equipment (masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies)”
- “Clear guidelines & marketing to the community.”
- “Support on portable handwashing.”
- “Ideally, the city would provide free bi-weekly testing for every restaurant employee. These people have the most contact of any industry with people with masks off.”
- “We need to procure more cleaning supplies, put up signage, and rearrange desks to open safely. Employees are concerned about public transportation (rightfully so), or the option of expensive parking near the office.”

Would you take advantage of an expedited Sidewalk Cafe permit from SDOT to expand retail or restaurant capacity?



What options for expanding capacity and safely increasing access would be meaningful to you?



Street Usage

- “Expedited permitting for sidewalk or in-store revamps for solutions to offer take out, pick up windows, separating areas; expanded sidewalks or patio seating parameters would be helpful too.”
- “We are a retail business, but for what it’s worth I would LOVE to see entire streets closed to vehicles and converted to sidewalk cafes for the summer. There are several blocks on Capitol Hill where this would make a lot of sense!”
- “Parklet/streeter style seating would be helpful. With wide streets, there could be more done to capture space from wide lanes--also has the added benefit of traffic calming.”
- “I would love to be able to close the block behind our building on Friday and Saturday evenings until 9pm. We have so few tables inside we could move tables outside and keep social distance and serve more people.”
- “If we were allowed to hold outdoor fitness under a "Sidewalk Cafe permit" in a small group of 5 that would help immensely.”

Parking

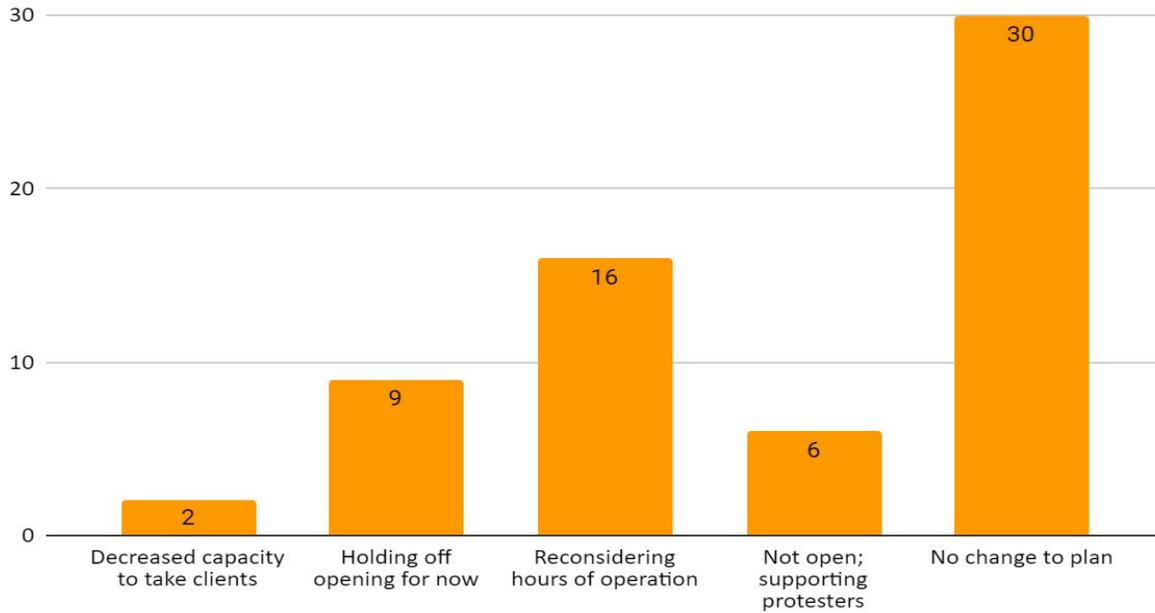
- “Continued free street parking so employees don't have to take public transportation.”
- “Paid parking again. With the free parking, all spots are being used constantly.”
- “30-minute parking spots for shopping appointments.”
- “Taking away parking does not help us at all. Clients need short term parking of up to two hours.”
- “Stop sacrificing traffic lanes and parking to sparsely used bike lanes and bus stops that prevent buses from exiting traffic while exchanging passengers at each stop.”

Pickup

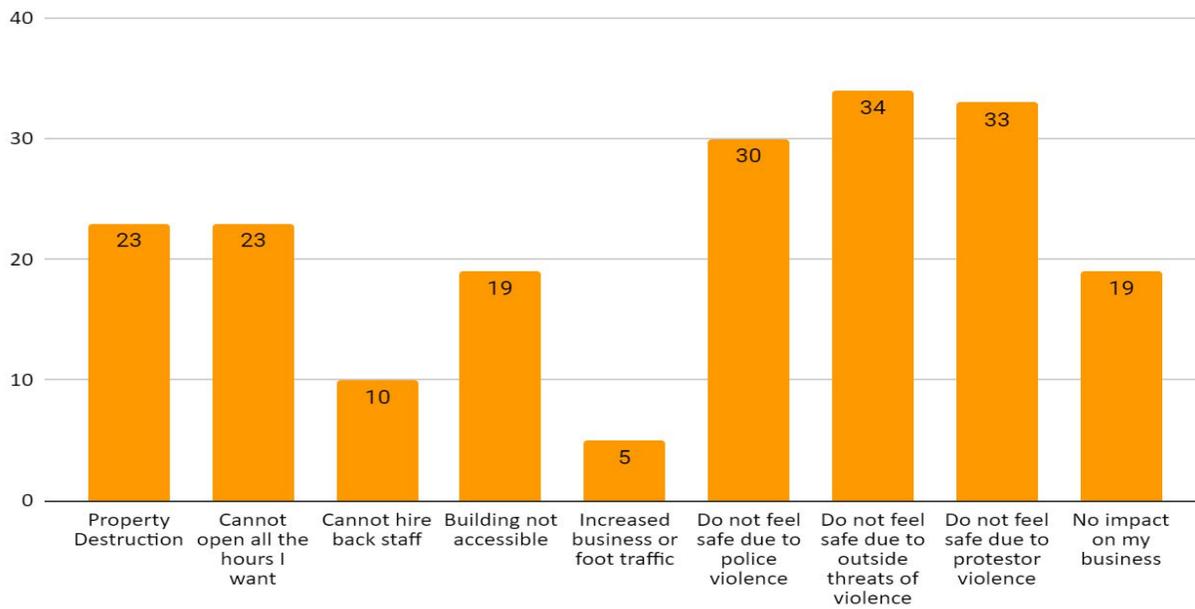
- “Secure contactless product pickup facilities -- like a postage box or public Amazon locker system where we could put products for customers and they could retrieve them securely with no contact!”
- “It would really help if the curbside pick up zones were monitored. A lot of people [are] using them to park and take up space for hours. Traffic enforcement says they cannot ticket them so they just continue to take up our valuable parking spaces.”

PROTEST & CHOP QUESTIONS

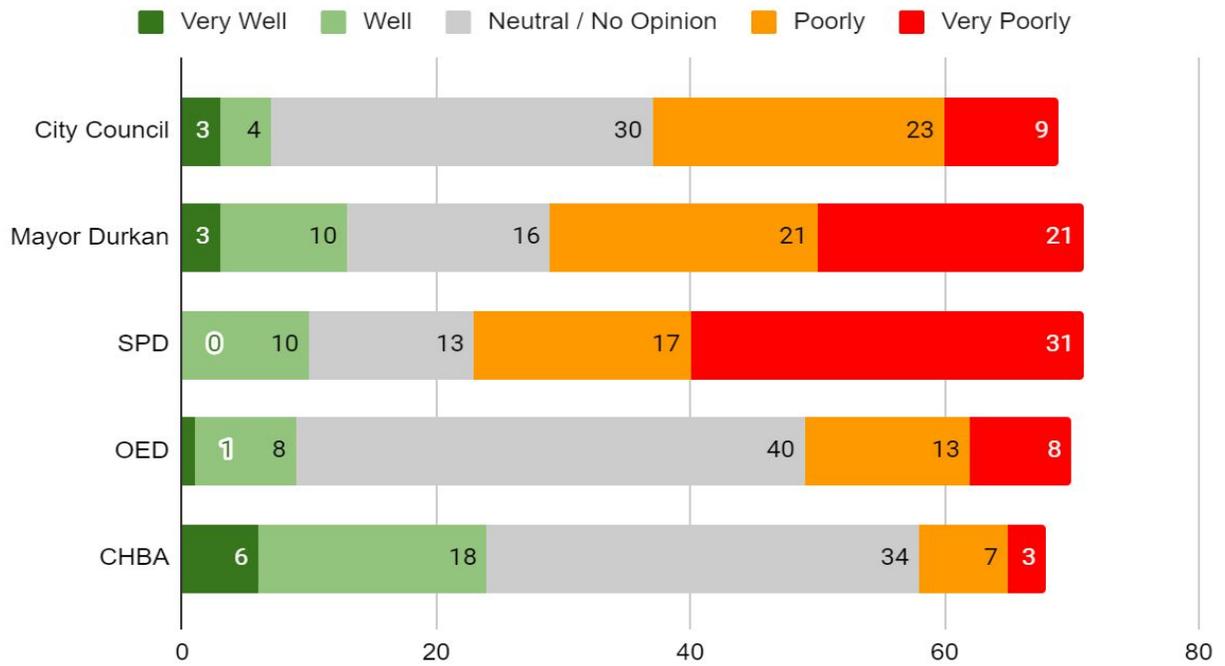
How has the situation with the protests changed your mind about reopening?



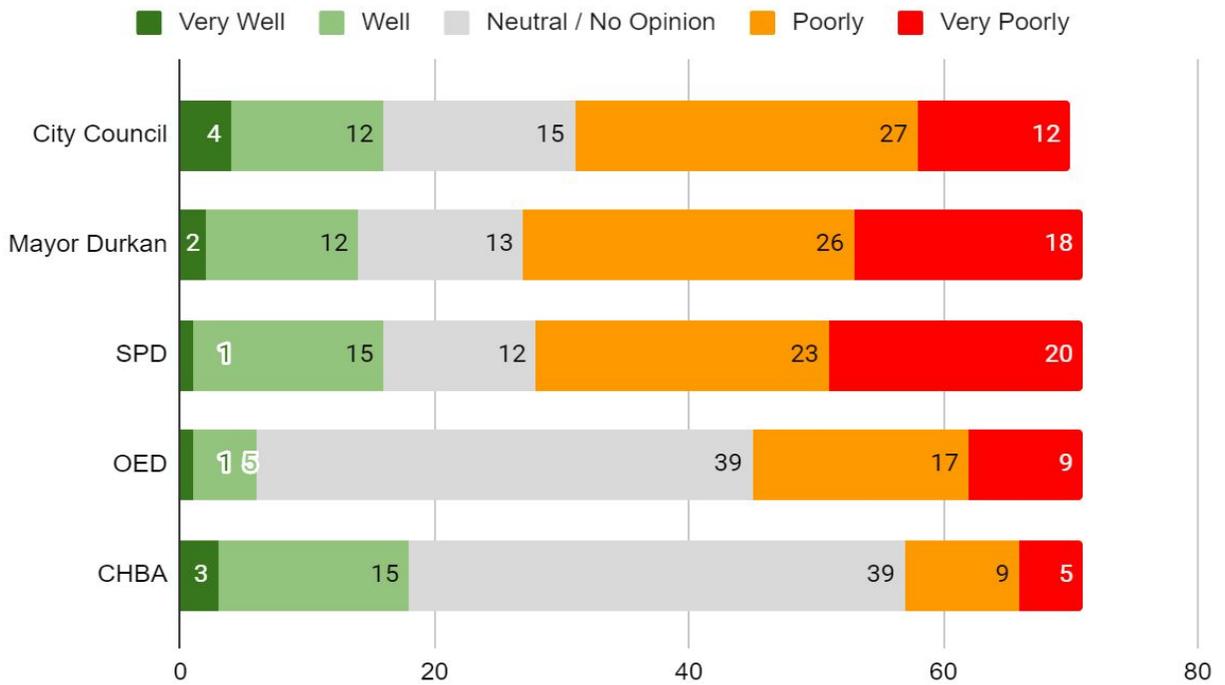
How have the current demonstrations in Capitol Hill affected your business?



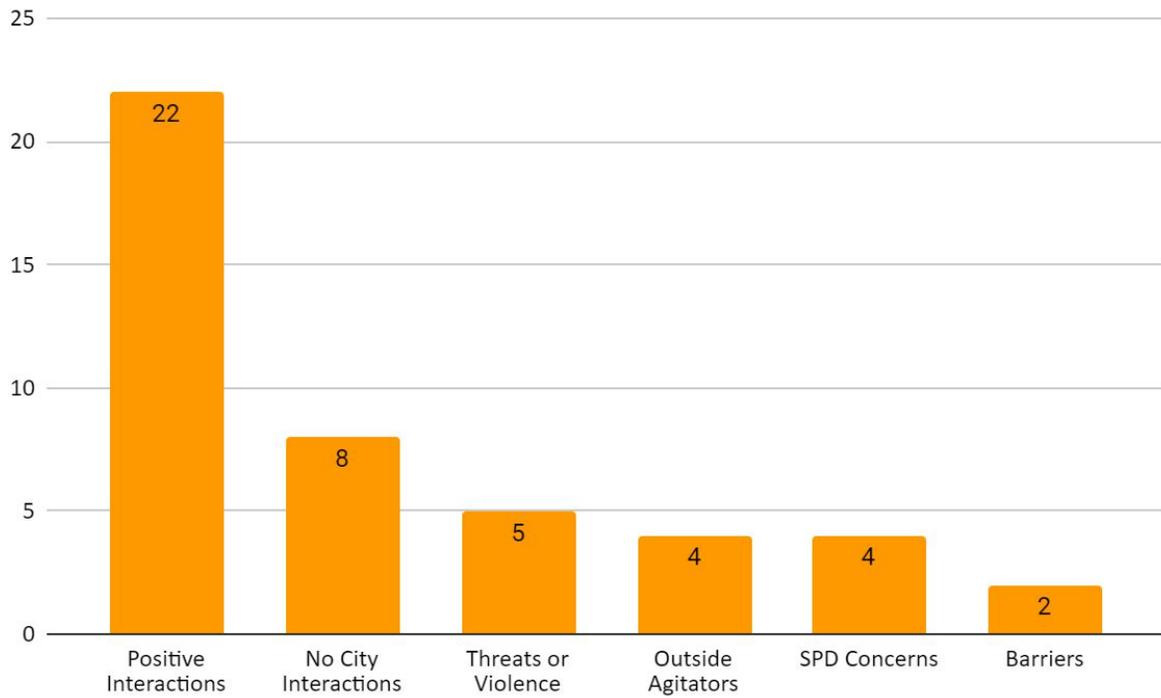
How do you feel the initial protests were handled by the following agencies?



How do you feel CHAZ/CHOP has been handled by the following agencies?

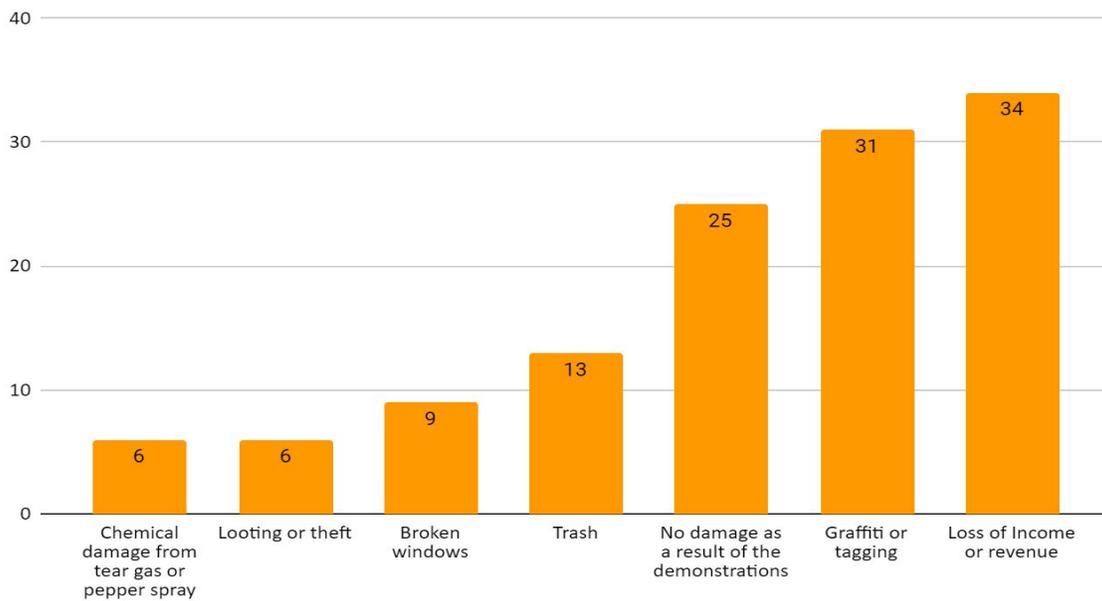


Have you had interactions with CHAZ/CHOP protestors, City officials, or outside agitators?

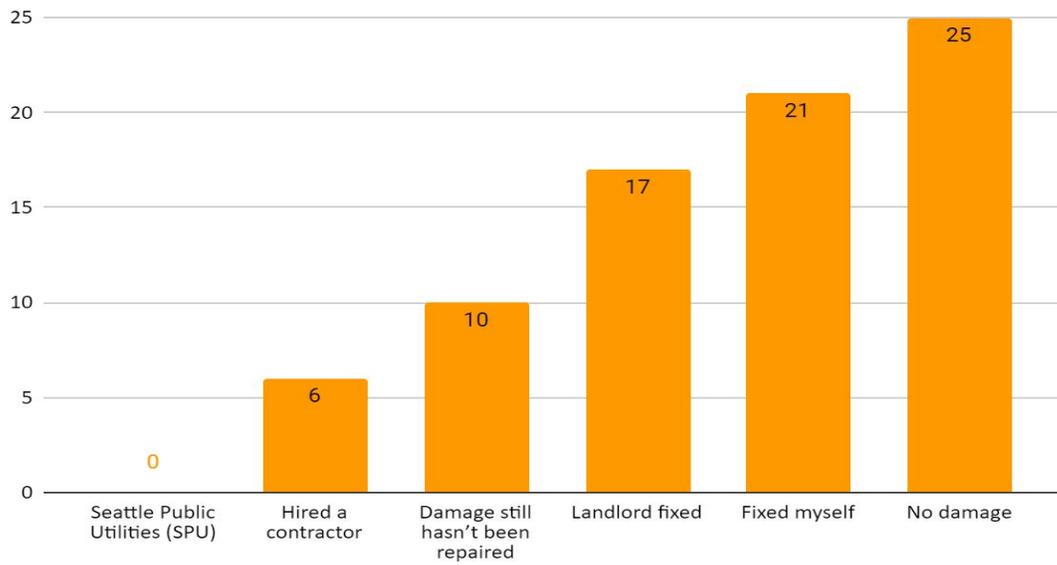


DAMAGE RELATED QUESTIONS

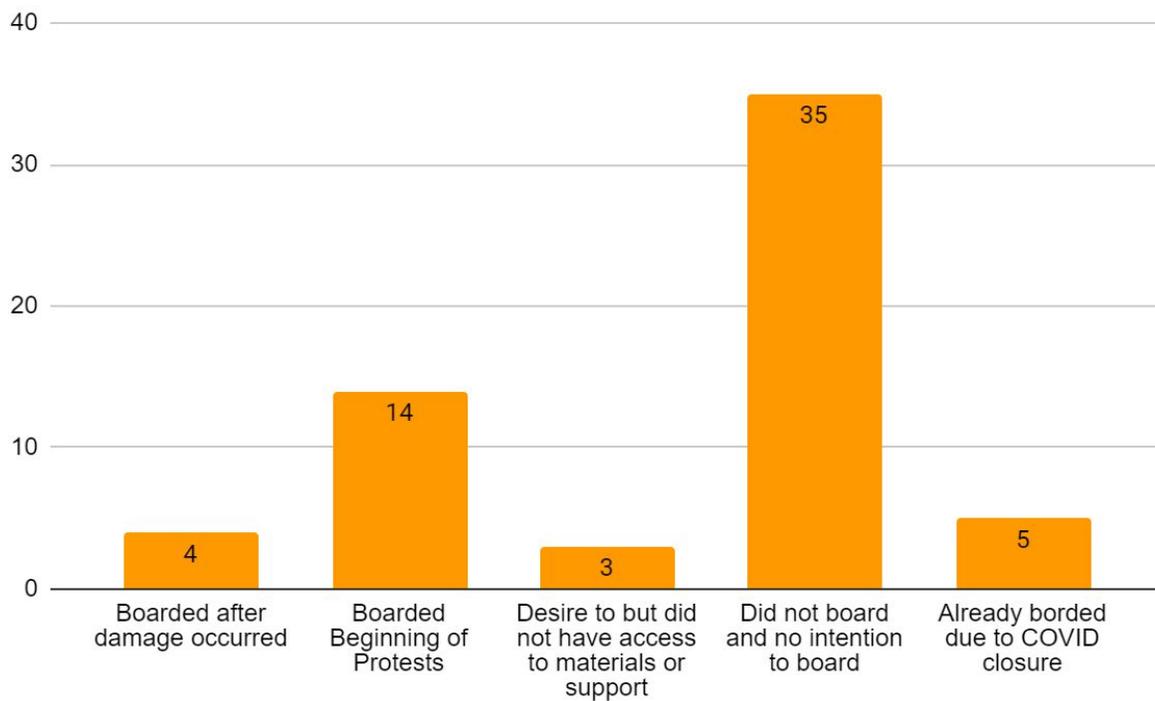
Has your business experienced any damage?



How have any repairs been completed?



Did you preemptively board unbroken windows?



FINAL THOUGHTS

Movement / Protesters

- “There needs to be a real solution, one that is equally radical to the CHOP. As a business community we need to be on the right side of history -- we need to reopen, but we need justice and we need to address the police misconduct during the protests. Otherwise, we'll be dealing with the same issues in three months, two months, two weeks. Time to roll up our sleeves and get behind a real solution.
- “These demonstrations are important and our neighborhood is known as a place where progressive voices have traditionally gathered to push for social change. This should continue.”
- “Just that it is an intense time and I hope that there is change happening. I think police brutality in general and specifically that aimed at black people and other people of color needs to stop.”
- “We support all these movements but this is financially devastating us after the Covid-19 shut down we are now suffering Huge income/revenue loss and now from Protest scares. People are not shopping in the area right now, they are shopping out of the area. We don't want to be unsupportive but we are losing hope for a quick comeback after the shutdown. We hope this can be turned around safely for our protesters and local business.”

City of Seattle

- “My business partner and I had very little outreach from anyone from the city during the police occupation of 12th Ave, only help from our landlord. I was continually disappointed by the communication with SPD--had to ask several officers many times every day to figure out how my customers could access our business, received different and contradictory answers, and was never updated on changes made to access. I had to lay off my one employee (after laying off all 9 other employees in March), and had just spent several thousand dollars to reopen in May (plexiglass, PPE, all new produce, menus, online ordering systems). I am very dismayed and don't know how to proceed; I'm just guessing about when it would be appropriate to open again.”
- “I wish the City of Seattle supported small business. Certainly do not feel we have an advocate on our side to help with grants or other plans for recovery.”

Seattle Police Department

- “I would love to see a restructuring of the police where we have better social services rather than the heavy hand of police. We do need some sort of police to maintain safety under real time of need but not a heavy handed force.”
- “I support patient negotiations toward consensus for long-lasting protections for Black folks, including the reallocation of police funds to less violent organizations.”

Get To Work

- “Please check in with local small businesses that are still open during this time and first and foremost ask how they are doing and really listen.”
- “Seriously; no more surveys. Please get to work before we all go under.”