

Market Square Public Kick-Off
Fort Frances, ON
February 16th, 2016

Executive Summary

A public participation kick-off event was held February 16th at the Memorial Sports Centre in Fort Frances, Ontario. The purpose of the event was to enhance awareness of the project as well as to gather public opinion on its potential components. A general invitation to participate was distributed in various ways in order to reach the maximum number of people. This included direct email, newspaper ads, radio ads, notifications on the Town of Fort Frances web-site and other social media outlets. In all, roughly 60 people signed in at the welcome table. Of the total number of attendees, an exceptionally high proportion of them actively participated.

The event was held as a come-and-go format which allowed participants to peruse information boards at their leisure. Some boards engaged the participants to share information and opinions both by adding stickers to their preferred options and through conversation with SMM staff. The event allowed SMM to better understand how people engage with the space with respect to where they live, work and play. Furthermore, of a wide range of possible programs and amenities, SMM was able to understand how participants prioritized their preferences.

In retrospect, SMM observed that the greatest number of the participants lived in the Town of Fort Frances in no particular pattern. A significant majority of participants worked or volunteered within 2 blocks of the Market Square site. In addition, the recreation preferences of participants were dominated by three main locations, The Point Park, the Sorting Gap Marina/Riverwalk and the Memorial Sports Centre.

In the Programs category, SMM observed the top priorities being Special Events (20%), followed by Live Concerts and Performances (17%), and finally Tourism and Community Promotion (16%).

In the Amenities category, SMM observed the top priorities being some form of public washrooms (20%), followed by a shade/rain canopy (16%), and finally elements that reflect the local landscape (14%).

Lastly, participants were provided with an opportunity to share any additional comments they may have had in an unstructured way. SMM observed the top priorities being related to tourism opportunities (33%), historical aspects of the Town and Area (17%) and finally opportunities for markets and vendors (15%).

Overall, the public response was very positive with the vast majority of participants feeling satisfied with the engagement process and presentation of the event.