Bedminster Community Spaces

###### Community Feedback Summer 2021

# Background

Community development is part of Windmill Hill City Farm’s mission. One focus of this aspect of its work is to explore provision of more community spaces in its local area. There are two main areas of interest: Bedminster Green (a large new development); and East St (the local high street, in need of regeneration).

In 2019 we started to have conversations to raise interest in ideas about what community spaces might be popular in Bedminster. Starting with the proposed new developments we wrote up what we found in a [Charter for Bedminster Green](https://www.windmillhillcityfarm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Charter-for-Bedminster-Green-Feb-2020.pdf).

Through the summer of 2020 we’ve had more conversations and refined our thinking. We went onto East Street for two days to talk to local residents, we had a website that illustrated some ideas and invited comment, we hosted an exhibition of ideas in the foyer at the city farm, and we also ran some focus groups, particularly with students and young people.

# Physical surveys

The backdrop for the physical surveys (on East St and at the city farm) were 4 printed boards that illustrated the context and location of potential spaces, along with ideas for a small-to-medium sized space (200 m2) and a large space (1000 m2). Around 50 conversations were recorded on East St and a similar number of surveys logged through the exhibition.

The most popular ideas for a small-to-medium space were for it to provide an informal, multi-use meeting place with features such as a climbing wall or workshop. People would like to use it as a learning or skill-sharing space.

For a large space, the opportunity for an indoor market was popular, with a sense that it should be adaptable, foster a sense of community, and add value to the community by imparting new skills or new experiences. Like the smaller space, a workshop or repair café, dance studio, climbing wall, and music performance space were all favoured.

There were some general topics that appeared in a significant number of the surveys. An opposition to gentrification (ensuring existing users still felt at home), a focus on inclusivity, and fostering a sense of community came through strongly. Spaces for creativity (music, art, theatre, dance) are needed as are places that facilitate skill sharing and learning (languages, repairs, cooking, vocational courses). Affordability was a key concern with multi-use adaptable space being seen as important.

## Demographics

The spread of age and circumstances of those surveyed on East St.

# Online surveys

The format of the online feedback was more restricted than the free conversations possible through the face-to-face interactions. 64 people responded online through the web-based form, with the general thrust of responses in line with what we heard on the street.

The most popular ideas for a small-to-medium space were as a flexible, multi-use space with a café and potential for events and performances. Workshop space in a place for learning or training was popular, alongside coworking or hotdesking, a shared community space and a place to hang out with friends.

For a large space the notion of a food hall and performance space were common with repair shops (bikes or café-style) and a library of things also being envisioned. The multi-purpose element (including exercise or creative space) also came through.

The people surveyed mostly felt the proposed space would be good if it added something new or different to Bedminster, was of a manageable size and was aimed at young people, perhaps providing training. There was a strong desire for an inclusive and accessible place for socialising without alcohol being the main focus, especially in the evening.

When asked what they would really like to see in Bedminster, the most common answers were for more food, cafés, and restaurants; greater inclusivity, a vibrant environment, community space, more greenery, versatile, creative and affordable space for meeting.

General emerging themes online included fostering a sense of community, a focus on small local businesses and a general focus on young people

## Demographics

# Focus Groups

We ran a small focus group with students of the University of Bristol. The attendees were mainly heading into their 2nd year, which meant they’d had an unusual first year university experience due to the pandemic.

There was clear interest in a learning space that would offer elements not easy to achieve in a student bedsit environment (eg printing facilities), though a group working environment was not particularly sought. Affordability featured high on their agenda, both for a social and learning space, and there was some question around the relationship of a learning space to university library facilities.

Tie-in to student societies was a popular vein: music or dance studios and an interest in fitness. Socially they favoured late-night venues, with fast-food options (burgers, fries and kebabs were the top choice). Alcohol clearly still plays a key role in a student night out.

We also partnered with BS3 Community to engage with some of their client groups. [Awaiting feedback].