

City of Bremerton

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan



Draft Two: 11/15/19





Mission Statement

Bremerton Parks and Recreation is committed to enriching the lives of Bremerton citizens by providing an array of parks, open spaces, trails, recreation and enrichment opportunities that are responsive to citizen needs and build community through celebration and inclusion.

Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

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Bremerton is located on the beautiful Kitsap Peninsula, with 22 miles of saltwater shoreline and sterling views of the Olympic and Cascade mountain ranges. The city's 23 square miles contain rolling hills sloping down to the shores of Puget Sound. While the city has fairly dense residential development, there is a remarkable amount of greenery, highlighted by the city's 178 acres of forested parkland and the 8,400-acre watershed property.



The Bremerton Parks & Recreation Department manages a total of 40 park and non-park (e.g., plazas, greenways, special use facilities) sites totaling 324 acres. Within this system there are 28 parks totaling 292 acres. In the last 10 years the city has significantly renovated eight of its parks, and each of these facilities has experienced a renaissance of usage.

The purpose of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan is to identify service needs within Bremerton's park and recreation system and to establish policies to meet those needs. This plan replaces the 2014 Plan, adopted by the City Council on March 19, 2014.

This document provides a road map to develop a quality system of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreation facilities that is community-driven and balanced. The plan will be submitted to the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), to maintain Bremerton's eligibility for federal and state grants that will help realize these opportunities.

The PROS Plan is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Identifies purpose, community context, community outreach, and key findings

Chapter 2 – Inventory: Defines park and recreation categories and provides inventory with site-specific needs and recommendations

Chapter 3 – Goals & Objectives: Defines goals, objectives, and recommendations derived from analysis and community feedback

Chapter 4 – Needs Analysis: Defines level of service standard and analyzes parks and recreation facility needs

Chapter 5 – Action Plan: Prioritizes park facility upgrades and identifies various methods for funding

Chapter 6 – Appendices: Supplemental information

Economics and Demographics



Centrally located and well-connected to the region and to downtown Seattle by two ferries (60- and 28-minute), Bremerton is the largest city on the Kitsap Peninsula and has a well-established urban character and distinctive neighborhoods. The Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS) has provided Bremerton's primary economic base for over a century. Along with the many benefits of PSNS comes the tax exemption on the Federal holdings that affect the city's ability to pay for public services including parks, recreation, and open space. Diversification of the industrial base is key to the city's success going forward. The growth of the Puget Sound Industrial Center and potential annexation of unincorporated areas with a comparatively higher property and sales tax base will also contribute to allowing Bremerton's park system to attain its future vision.



Bremerton's most pronounced growth period took place during World War II, when the PSNS workforce reached 30,000 people. The city's population attained an all-time high of 72,500 but dropped sharply to less than 28,500 by 1950, leaving a legacy of underutilized, quickly-built housing. In recent years these older, small units, originally designed as temporary shipyard and naval housing, started to give way to master-planned residential development, such as the East Park

and Bay Vista projects.

The construction of the submarine base at Bangor in the 1980s helped spur an exodus of commercial and retail business from downtown Bremerton north to the Silverdale area. The city has been working to re-establish its downtown retail core and has made significant progress since the year 2000, with an influx of restaurants, apartment and condominium developments, and hotels and tourism-related facilities. Plans for additional apartment and condominium developments will continue to increase the downtown population, helping support new retail business.

The addition of the 28-minute fast ferry in 2017 also made Bremerton more attractive to homebuyers that work in Seattle, contributing to a 19% increase in median home listing prices (according to Zillow) from \$260 thousand in June 2017 to \$310 thousand in July 2019. This increase has impacted housing costs for Bremerton citizens who now spend a greater percentage of their income to continue to afford to buy or rent housing as prices climb.

Population and Employment

Since 1970, the city's population has remained essentially stable, with the exception of a 60% increase in Kitsap County's population from 1980 to 2000. In 2000, Bremerton's population was 37,259, with a modest increase to 37,729 in 2010, and up to an estimated 41,235 in 2018. According to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the city's population is anticipated to grow to 53,407 residents by the year 2036. More than half of the new population is expected to reside in the city's urban centers, including the downtown core. Jobs are likewise expected to grow by 18,782, primarily due to the addition of jobs in the Puget Sound Industrial Center.

Age Groups

The 2010 census identified that Bremerton's largest age range group comprises 25–34-year-olds, representing 31.9% of the population. This is somewhat younger than the rest of Kitsap County, which comprises 19.8% of 25–34-year-olds but has more 35–64-year-olds (41.7%) than Bremerton (33.7%). According to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), Bremerton's median age is 32.8, compared to 39.1 in Kitsap County.

Household Size

The 2017 ACS estimated there were 16,516 households in Bremerton averaging 2.2 persons per household. This is less than the county average (2.5) and also lower than the assumed number of 2.5 persons per household set by the Washington State Office of Financial Management. Residential uses are located on somewhat less land than the national average, creating a higher residential density with a slightly lower average of persons per household.

Median Income and Poverty Level

According to the 2017 ACS Bremerton's median income was \$48,757, considerably lower than Kitsap County (\$73,026) and Washington State (\$70,979). Bremerton's poverty level was 18.1% compared with 12.2% of residents statewide and 12.3% nationally. These findings demonstrate the need for public recreation services above that of higher income communities where residents have more disposable income to pursue private recreation options.

Ethnic Diversity

Bremerton is home to a more diverse population than regional and statewide averages. In the 2010 census, the non-white population increased by more than 50% since 1990 to represent over one-quarter (26%) of the overall community. Bremerton's ethnic mix is greater than that of Kitsap County and Washington State (17.4% and 22.7%, respectively). Residents of African American, Asian, and Latino heritage make up the majority of the non-white population. Also, slightly more than 12% of the population speaks a language other than English at home.



"City parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work."

– Sherer, Paul (*The Benefits of Parks*)



Persons with Disabilities

The 2010 census reported 20.1% of the population (6,872 persons) as having a disability that interferes with life activities. This is higher than state and national averages (both 12%). Among residents 65 and older, the percentage rises to 48.9%, or 1,819 persons, also higher than percentages found in the general elderly population.



In 2018 it was estimated that Bremerton School District and local non-profit Holly Ridge Center serve more than 1,700 children ages 1–21 with special needs. This high number is owed to the fact that Bremerton is one of five communities the Navy has classified as an Exceptional Family Member (EFM) Program. This program provides placement of military families with children with special needs in Bremerton and surrounding areas that provide medical and educational services to meet their special needs. This emphasizes the need to provide recreational opportunities for many citizens with special needs.

"We have an aging population that needs accommodations such as level surfaces and an updated Senior Center. We also have lots of temporary resident families with the Navy who need free or inexpensive opportunities to be involved in their community. And we have people who would like to see property values increase by being located near a well-maintained greenspace or park. It's a lot to accommodate and maintain, but it is a foundation of every desirable community and should be a priority for our City too."

– Park Survey Comment, 2013

Community Involvement

A variety of outreach methods were used for updating this PROS Plan. To kick off the update a community survey was developed to gain public input that would help guide ongoing and future decisions regarding the management, maintenance, improvements, and future investments in Bremerton parks, open space, recreation facilities, trails, programs, and events. The survey was advertised multiple times over a 3-month period through the city's website, email "blasts" to the city's local government interest list, Facebook posts to 2,064 followers, and laminated flyers placed in parks at kiosks and strategic locations along popular walking paths. The 365 responses represent a high level of engagement. Answers to 29 multiple-choice questions were supplemented by 662 written comments. A typical survey respondent spent 11–12 minutes on the survey, with a grand total of about 70 hours of community effort.

Open public meetings hosted by the Bremerton Parks & Recreation Commission represent the backbone of the PROS Plan public outreach process. A public meeting was held each month to review and comment on newly drafted chapters of the PROS Plan, and commissioners' comments were incorporated as each chapter was drafted. The 365 survey respondents along with all members of the public were invited to attend the commissioners' meeting held in May



to review the survey results and the Inventory section (Chapter 2) of the PROS Plan which includes management issues and improvement recommendations for each park and recreation facility. Following the meeting this information was posted on the City's website along with an online comment form to receive public comment.

In October 2019, a complete PROS Plan draft was posted on the city's web page, with hard copies available at the Sheridan Park Community Center. The availability of the draft PROS Plan was advertised using the same methods described for the survey. During a four week comment period, citizens were invited to comment on the draft PROS Plan by filling out a comment form online, sending an email, or by voicing their opinion at an October 22nd public meeting hosted by the Parks and Recreation Commission. A second

draft incorporating salient review comments will be released and made available for public comment prior to endorsement by the Parks & Recreation Commission and City Council adoption process.

The SEPA environmental review process will also allow the public and relevant local and state agencies time to review and comment on the draft plan. Additionally, public testimony will be taken prior to adoption by the Bremerton City Council.



"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

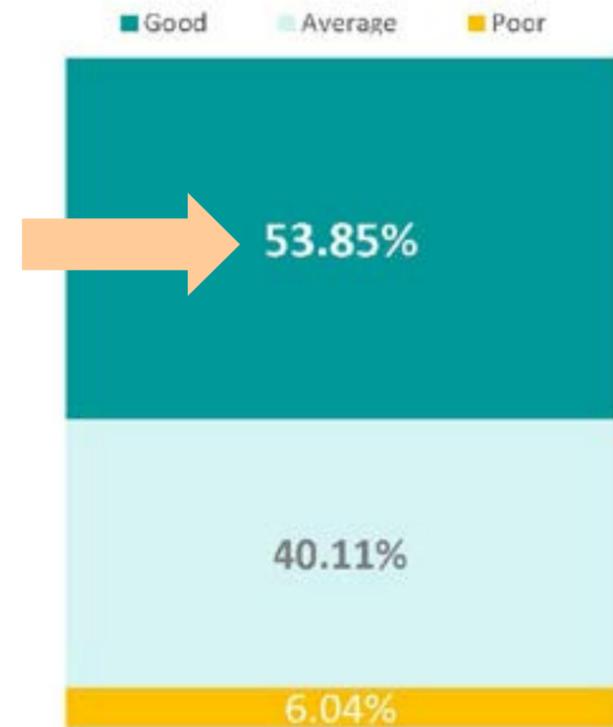
– Jane Jacobs,
The Death and Life of Great American Cities

The next 12 pages illustrate key findings of the survey which was conducted from the beginning of January to the end of March 2019 and received 365 responses. The entire survey results are included in Appendix C.

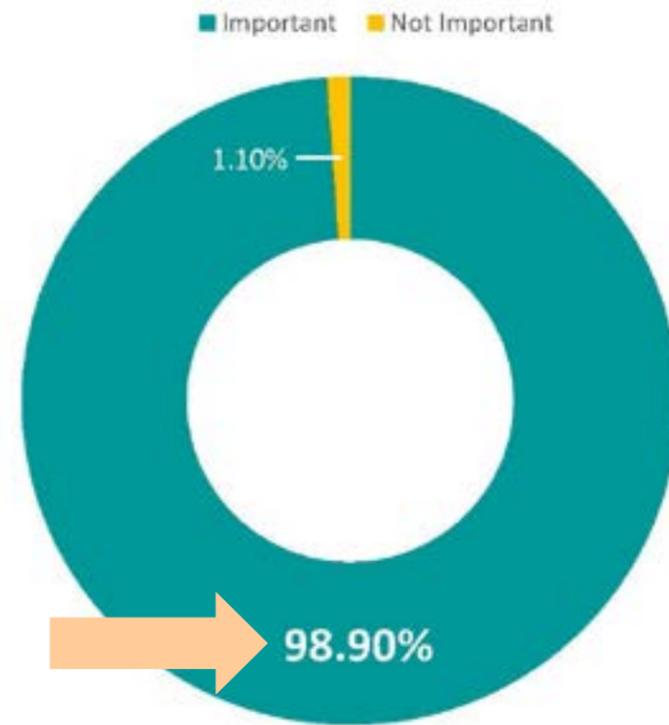
Key Findings: Importance of Parks to Quality of Life

Over half of the respondents rated Bremerton's overall quality of life positively, and almost all felt Bremerton's parks and recreation system is important to their quality of life.

1. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Bremerton?



2. How important do you think Bremerton's Parks and Recreation system is to the quality of life in Bremerton?



Main Reasons for Visting Parks

Residents visit Bremerton parks and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons, with general enjoyment of outdoors/relaxation, free/no cost, waterfront access, and fitness/running/walking leading the way.

3. What are the main reasons you or your family visit Bremerton Parks & Recreation facilities? (multi-response)

Reason	Percentage	Responses
Enjoyment of outdoors/relaxation	84.38%	308
Free/no cost	68.49%	250
Waterfront access	61.10%	223
Fitness/running/walking	60.00%	219
Hiking/forested areas	53.70%	196
Playgrounds/kids	53.42%	195
Socializing/friends & family/picnics	50.96%	186
Close by	46.85%	171
Dog walking/off-leash area	38.36%	140
Sports/athletics	24.11%	88
Classes/programs	8.49%	31
Other (See Appendix for comments)	6.58%	24

Suggestions to Increase Visitation

More/better walking/running/hiking trails, external factors (better weather, more free time, etc.), and reduction in homelessness were listed highest as what would make residents visit city parks more often.

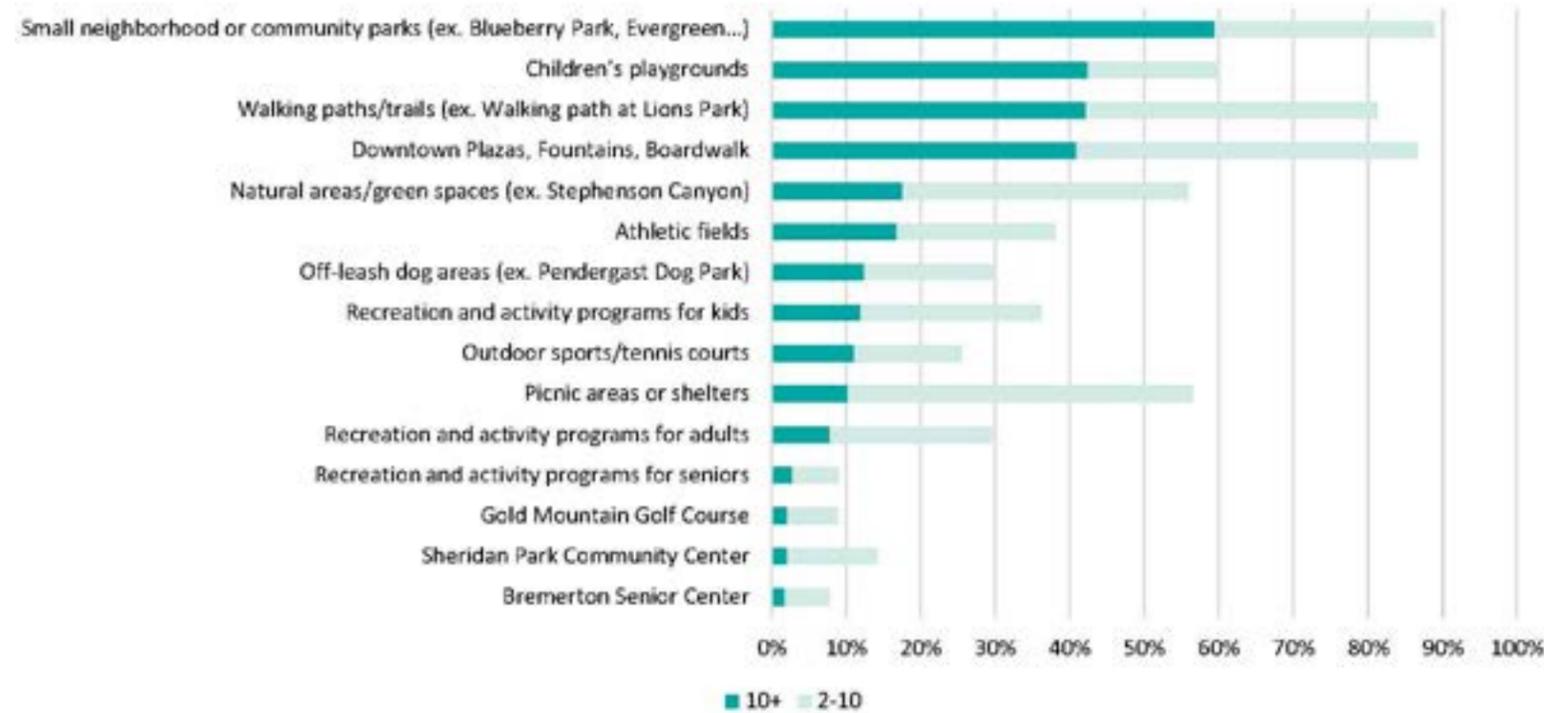
4. What, if anything, would make you visit more often? (multi-response)

Suggestion	Percentage	Responses
More/better walking/running/hiking trails	42.70%	155
External factors (better weather, more free time, etc.)	36.36%	132
Reduction in homelessness	34.99%	127
More parks	29.48%	107
Cleaner/better maintenance	27.00%	98
More activities/programs/events/classes	26.45%	96
I already visit often	24.79%	90
More dog parks	24.52%	89
Improved safety	23.42%	85
Other (See Appendix for comments)	20.66%	75
More/better parking	17.36%	63
Leash law enforcement	17.08%	62
Proximity/easier access	13.77%	50
More/better sports fields/courts	11.57%	42

Parks Usage

This chart shows parks usage with the dark teal denoting 10 or more visits a year and the light green 2-10 visits a year. Neighborhood and community parks (e.g., Blueberry Park, Evergreen Rotary Park), children’s playgrounds, walking paths/trails (e.g., pathway at Lions Park), and downtown plazas/fountains/boardwalk are visited the most frequently.

5. For each of the following types of parks and recreation facilities, please indicate how often you or your family visit that type of park or facility.



Grade and Reasons for Grade of Bremerton Parks & Recreation System Overall

Over half of the respondents gave the Bremerton Parks & Recreation system an overall grade of either an A (far above average) or B (above average). The top reasons were “enjoy parks/parks are good; good location/accessible; well-maintained; good system overall”; the top negative reason being that “more parks are needed” and “need more facilities for dogs”.

6. How would you grade the Bremerton Parks and Recreation system overall?



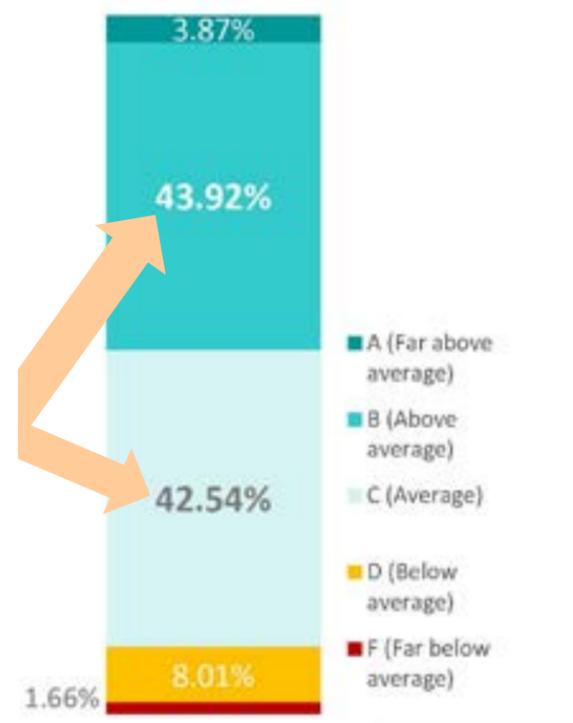
7. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for Bremerton’s Parks and Recreation system overall? (multi-response)

Reason	Percentage	Responses
Positives		
Enjoy the parks/parks are good	65.10%	235
Good location/close proximity/accessible	49.86%	180
Parks are well-maintained/clean	49.58%	179
Good system overall	34.35%	124
There are a lot of parks/facilities	32.69%	118
Parks feel safe	26.32%	95
Programs are good/variety of activities	7.48%	27
Negatives		
More parks needed	24.93%	90
Need more facilities for dogs	22.99%	83
Bathrooms need attention	22.44%	81
Safety concerns	21.05%	76
More park renovations needed	18.56%	67
Not enough variety of programs/activities	14.40%	52
Dog policies not enforced	13.57%	49
Lack of resources/staff/security personnel/no enforcement of rules	13.30%	48
Lack of maintenance/cleanliness	11.63%	42
Other (See Appendix for comments)	10.80%	39

Grade and Reasons for Grade of Safety

Respondents gave a B (above average) or C (average) grade for safety. The most common reason (from over 200 people) for the grade was that it “depends on the park/some feel safe and some do not.”

8. How would you grade the safety of Bremerton Parks and Recreation facilities?



9. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the safety of Bremerton's Parks and Recreation facilities? (multi-response)

Reason	Percentage	Responses
Neutral		
Depends on the park/some feel safe and some do not	55.83%	201
Positives		
I feel safe	41.39%	149
Parks are clean/well-maintained	35.28%	127
Open line of sight	33.06%	119
Negatives		
Illegal activities (discarded needles, tagging/graffiti, alcohol, etc.)	35.56%	128
Cleanliness/maintenance issues (litter, bathrooms)	23.06%	83
Absence of police/park staff	19.72%	71
Encampments	19.17%	69
Dogs off leash	16.39%	59
Other people (intimidating/aggressive)	15.56%	56
I don't feel safe	4.72%	17
Other (See Appendix for comments)	6.11%	22

Grade and Reasons for Grade of Meeting Neighborhood Needs

Respondents gave a B grade for how well the parks system meets the needs of their neighborhood with the highest rated positive and negative reason being, respectively, “parks are near me” or “need more parks or facilities”. The respondents that graded this question below and far below average came predominately from three zip codes: 98311 (East Bremerton [north of Manette]); 98383 (Silverdale); and 98312 (West Bremerton [Kitsap Lake area]).

11. How well do local Bremerton Parks and Recreation facilities meet the needs of your neighborhood?



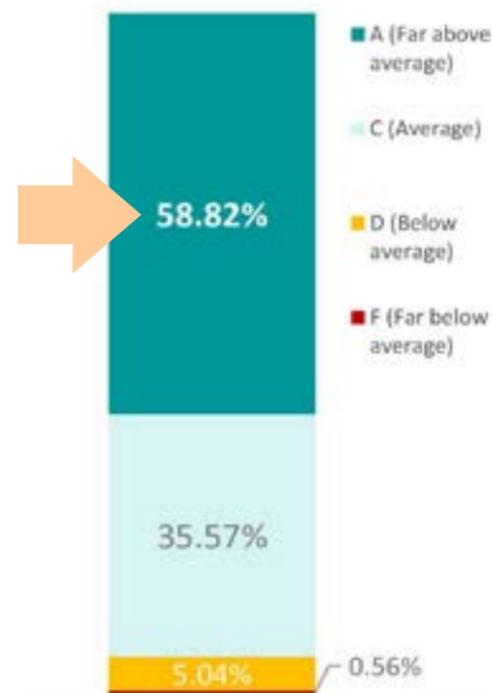
12. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for meeting the needs of your neighborhood? (multi-response)

Reason	Percentage	Responses
Positives		
Parks are near me/easy to access	66.76%	233
Parks get good use/are popular	52.44%	183
Quality playgrounds	39.54%	138
Ample open green space	38.11%	133
Well-maintained	35.53%	124
Enjoy the diversity of options	28.94%	101
Quality sports courts/fields	16.05%	56
Recreational programming	4.58%	16
Negatives		
Need more parks or facilities	20.92%	73
Vagrant issues	18.62%	65
Drug use/paraphernalia	17.19%	60
Safety issues	13.18%	46
Not clean/maintained	9.46%	33
Parks are not near me/difficult to access	6.59%	23
Parks are crowded/noisy	4.87%	17
Other (See Appendix for comments)	12.32%	43

Grade and Reasons for Grade of Maintenance and Cleanliness of Facilities

Most respondents gave an A grade for maintenance and cleanliness, citing the following three top reasons: parks are clean; parks are well-maintained; garbage is regularly collected. Conversely the top three negative reasons given for a poor grade for maintenance and cleanliness included: restroom issues (outdated or not clean); dog waste; and drug paraphernalia.

13. How would you grade the maintenance and cleanliness of Bremerton Parks and Recreation facilities?



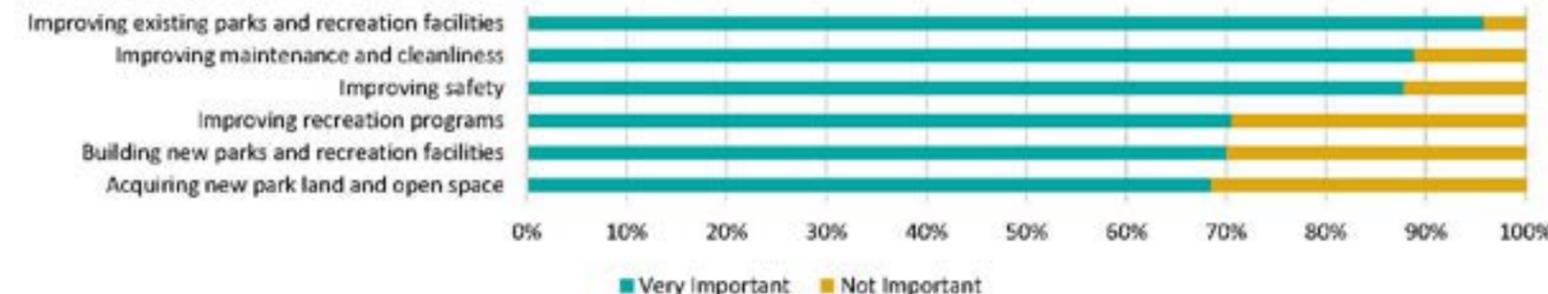
14. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the maintenance and cleanliness of parks and recreation facilities? (multi-response)

		Responses
Positives		
The parks are clean	52.17%	180
The parks are well maintained	51.01%	176
Garbage is regularly collected/picked up	46.09%	159
Good, hard-working staff	39.42%	136
Trails are well maintained	26.67%	92
Bathrooms are clean	22.61%	78
Negatives		
Restroom Issues (ex. outdated or not clean)	23.77%	82
Dog waste	20.87%	72
Drug paraphernalia	19.13%	66
Worn down facilities/need to be updated	17.39%	60
Garbage cans full/not enough	17.39%	60
Encampments	14.20%	49
Tagging/graffiti	12.46%	43
General cleanliness is poor	6.96%	24
Other (See Appendix for comments)	8.12%	28

General Priorities

This question asked respondents how important they felt it was to fund a particular project or issue. The percentage of those who answered “very important” is shown in teal and “not important” in orange. Over 95% of respondents felt it was very important to fund improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities, and 88% and 87%, respectively, said it was very important to improve maintenance/cleanliness and safety.

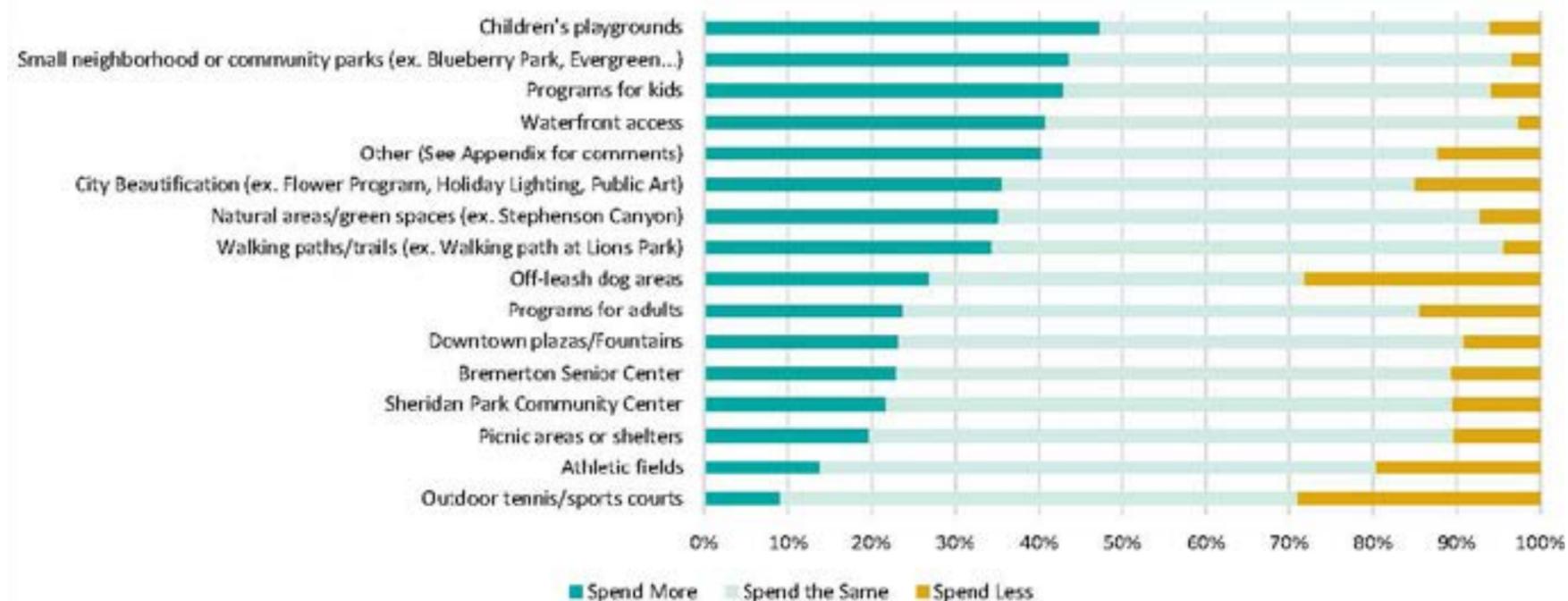
16. Bremerton Parks and Recreation must prioritize limited funding to address system needs over the next 6 to 10 years. For each of the following, please indicate how important you feel it is to fund that project or issue.



General Funding Priorities

This question asked respondents how much (more, less, or same) should be spent on a particular project or issue. In most cases, when the “spend more” response increased (teal), the “spend less” response proportionately decreased (orange), and vice versa. One exception concerned the issue of off-leash dog areas, which was split more evenly between the three (spend more, less, or same) responses. This was consistent with results from Question 28, which asked whether respondents had a dog (53%) or not (47%).

17. For each of the following types of parks and recreation facilities/programs, please indicate whether you think Bremerton Parks and Recreation should spend more, spend the same, or spend less on that type of park facility/program.



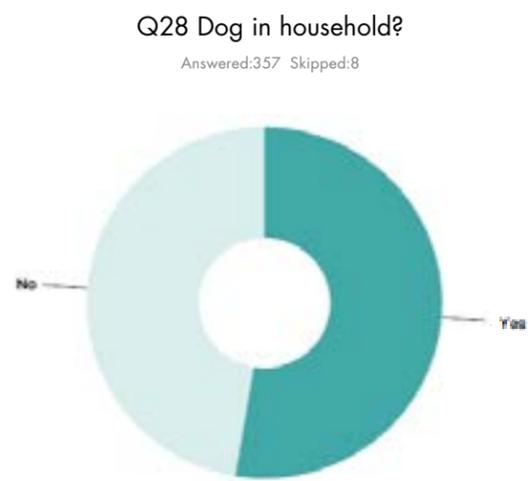
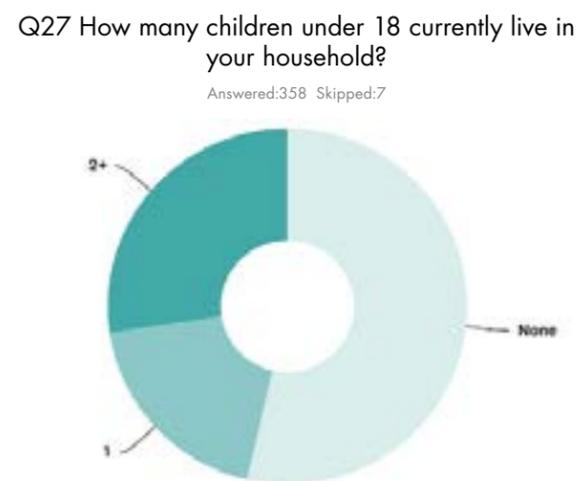
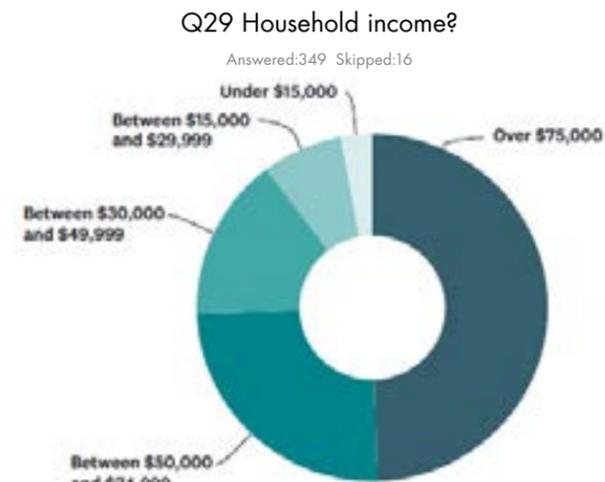
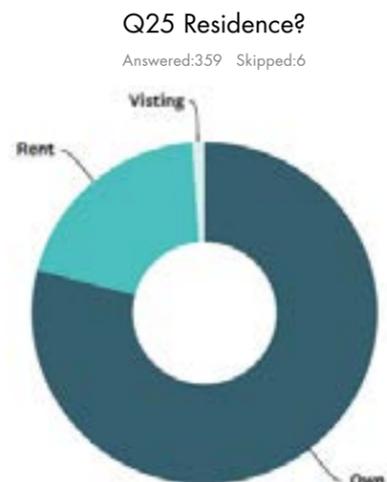
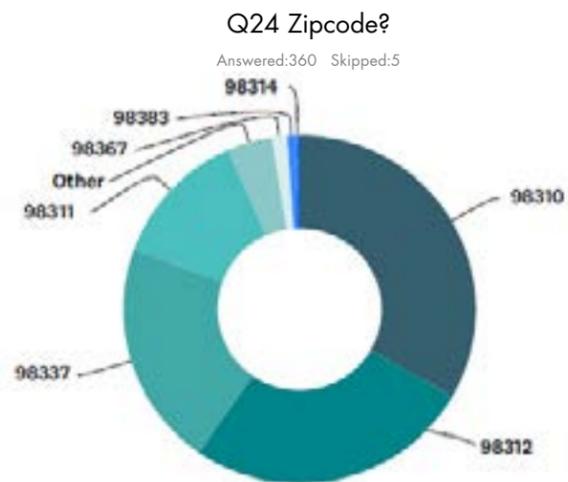
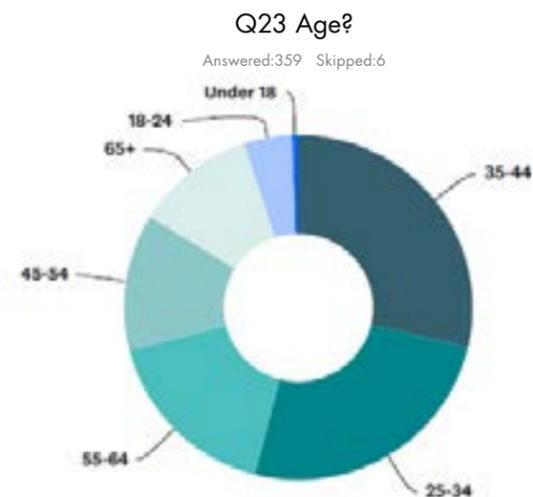
Desire for More Park and Recreational Facilities

Over 50% of respondents expressed a desire for more multi-use trails for walking/hiking/biking/etc., followed by splash/water play areas, waterfront access, green space/natural areas, and neighborhood parks.

18. Is there any type of park or recreational facility you would like to see more of in Bremerton? (multi-response)

Facility/Program	Percentage	Responses
Multi-use Trails (walking, hiking, running, biking, etc.)	51.14%	180
Splash/water play areas	44.89%	158
Waterfront access	39.77%	140
Green space/natural areas	36.93%	130
Neighborhood parks	35.23%	124
Dog parks/off-leash areas	27.84%	98
Playground areas	26.70%	94
Community activities/programs/events/classes	21.31%	75
Other (32 responses)	19.32%	68
Picnic areas/tables	16.76%	59
Bigger parks	14.77%	52
Skate parks	13.64%	48
Sports fields (softball, soccer, etc.)	8.52%	30
Sports courts (basketball, tennis, pickleball, etc.)	8.24%	29

Demographics of Survey Respondents



Themes from Individual Comments

The graphic below displays the topics mentioned most often among the 662 written survey comments, with the biggest words being the topics that were brought up the most. Some of the topics mentioned most often included: (1) transients, drug use, discarded needles, and encampments in forested areas make it more difficult to enjoy parks; (2) need enforcement of leash laws; (3) desire to preserve nature/wildlife habitat and adding more trees to provide beauty and shade, especially near playgrounds; (4) desire for connectivity (sidewalks/bike lanes) between parks and more walking paths in parks.



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