

City of Bremerton

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan



Draft One: 10/3/19





Mission Statement

Bremerton Parks and Recreation is committed to providing an array of Parks, Open Spaces, Trails and Recreational 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 and 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 8 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 PROS 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 & Conservation Office (RCO) to maintain Bremerton's eligibility for federal and state grants that will help realize these opportunities.

The 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 & 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 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 ship yard 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 1980's 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's 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 median home listings increasing by 19% from June 2017 (\$260k) to July 2019 (\$310K) according to Zillow. 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 & 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, population growth of the City 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 is comprised of 25- to 34-year-olds, representing 31.9% of the population. This is somewhat younger than the rest of Kitsap County, which is comprised of 19.8% of 25-34 year-olds but contains more 35- to 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 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. This data increases the need for public recreation services above that of higher income communities where residents have 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 comprise 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)



"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

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 due to the fact that there are medical and educational services available to meet their special needs. This emphasizes the need to provide recreational opportunities for many citizens with special needs.

Community Involvement

A variety of outreach methods were used in the 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 and 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 upon newly drafted chapters of the PROS Plan and Commissioner's comments were incorporated as each chapter was drafted. The 365 survey respondents along with all members of the public were invited to attend the Commissioner's 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 on _____, 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."

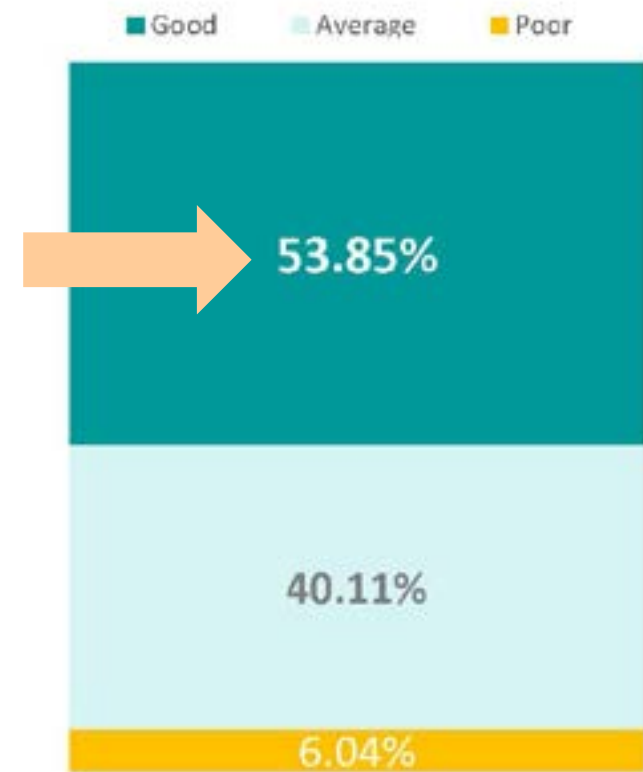
– Jane Jacobs,
The Death and Life of Great American Cities

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.

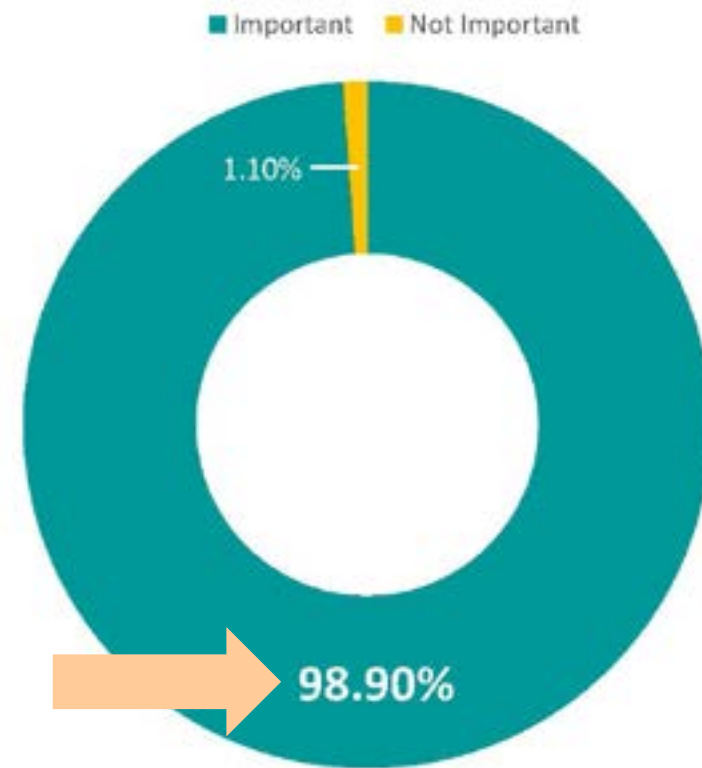
Key Findings: Importance of Parks to Quality of Life

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.

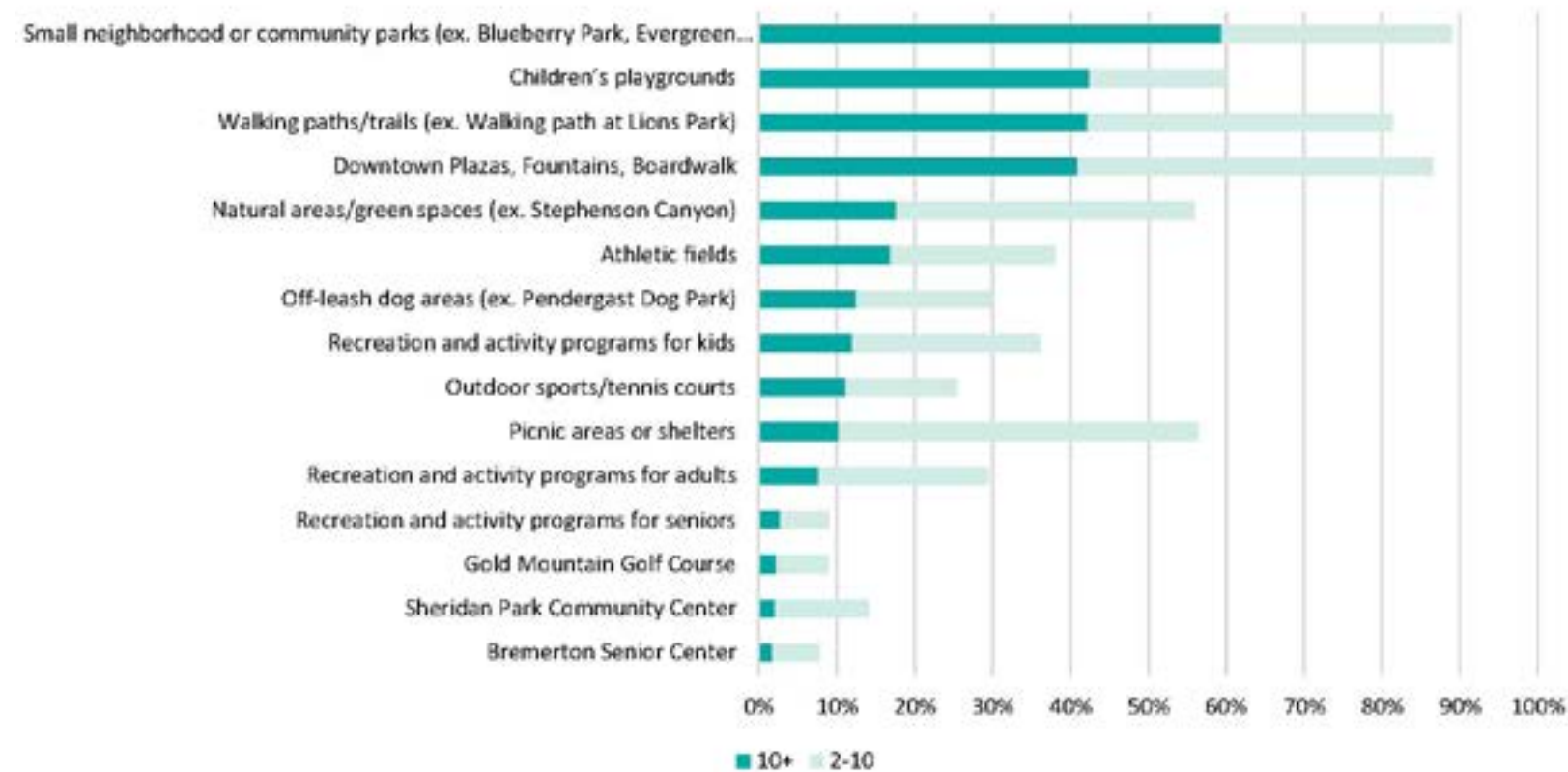
4. What, if anything, would make you visit more often? (multi-response)

| 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 |
| 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 plus visits a year and the light green 2-10 visits per year. Neighborhood and community parks (ex. Blueberry Park, Evergreen Rotary Park), children’s playgrounds, walking paths/trails (ex. pathway at Lions Park), and downtown plazas/fountains/boardwalk are visited the most frequently.

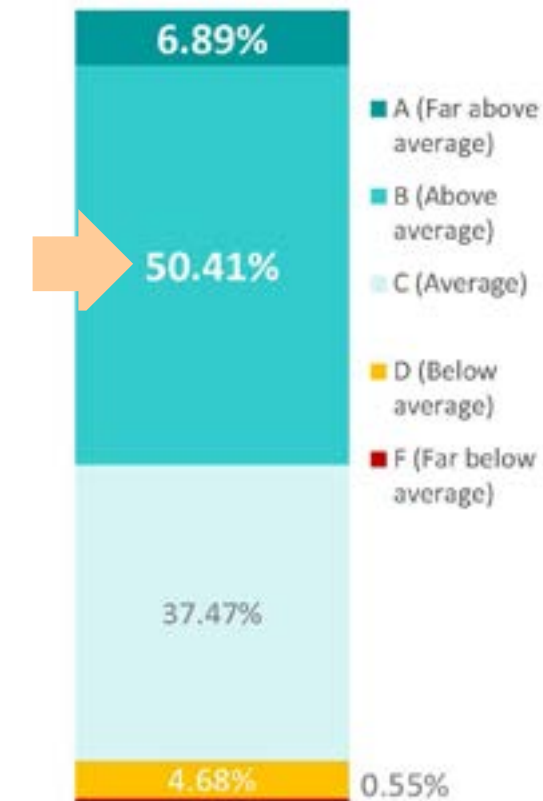
5. For each of the following types of parks and recreation facilities, please indicate how often you or your family visit that type of park or facility.



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

Over half of the respondents gave the P&R system an overall grade of either an A (far above average) or B (above average) and 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?



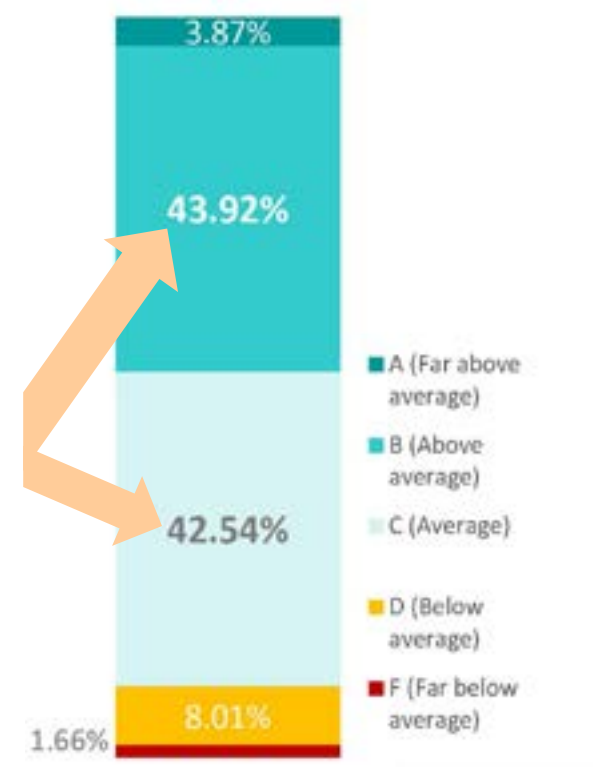
7. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for Bremerton’s Parks and Recreation system overall? (multi-response)

| 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 with the highest reason given (from over 200 people) 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?



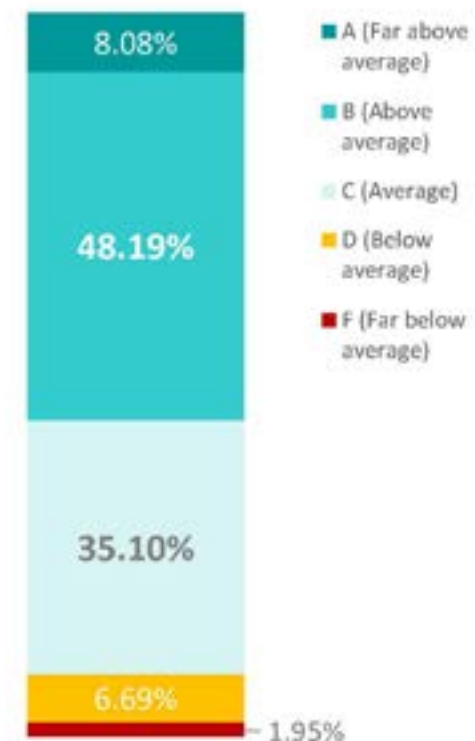
9. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the safety of Bremerton's Parks and Recreation facilities? (multi-response)

| 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 either being “parks are near me” or conversely “need more parks or facilities”. The respondents that graded this question below and far below average came predominately from 3 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?



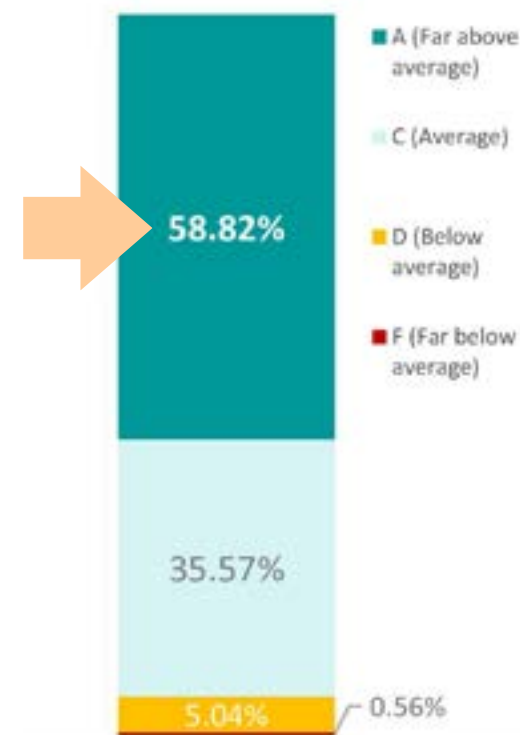
12. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for meeting the needs of your neighborhood? (multi-response)

| 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 with the following top three top reasons: parks are clean; parks are well-maintained; garbage is regularly collected. Conversely the top three negative reasons given for where maintenance and cleanliness was an issue 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?



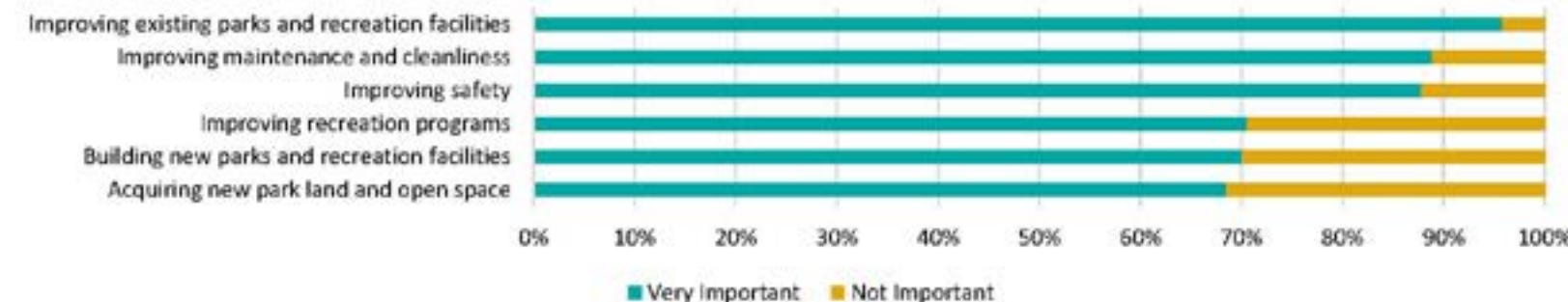
14. What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the maintenance and cleanliness of parks and recreation facilities? (multi-response)

| | Percentage | 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. 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 improving existing parks and recreation facilities and between 87-88% said it was very important to improve maintenance/cleanliness and safety.

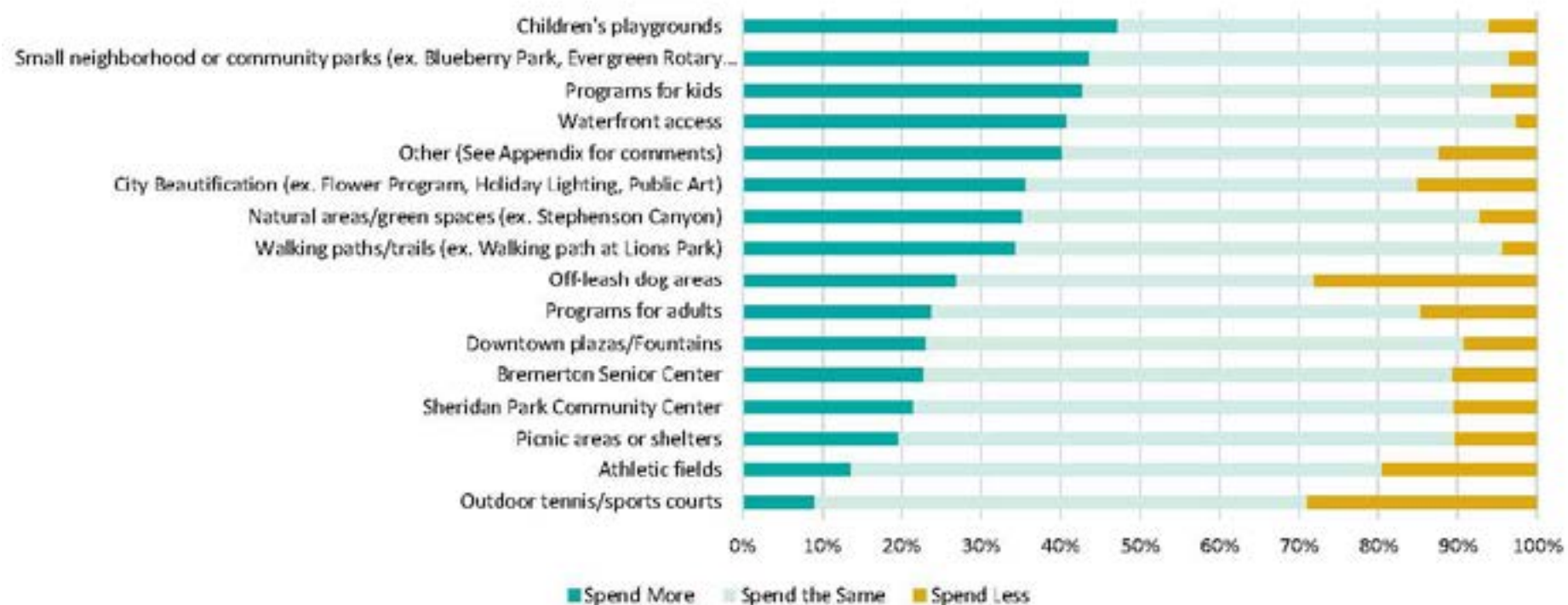
16. Bremerton Parks and Recreation must prioritize limited funding to address system needs over the next 6 to 10 years. For each of the following, please indicate how important you feel it is to fund that project or issue.



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 was 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 or not in which 53% answered “yes” and 47% answered “no”.

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.



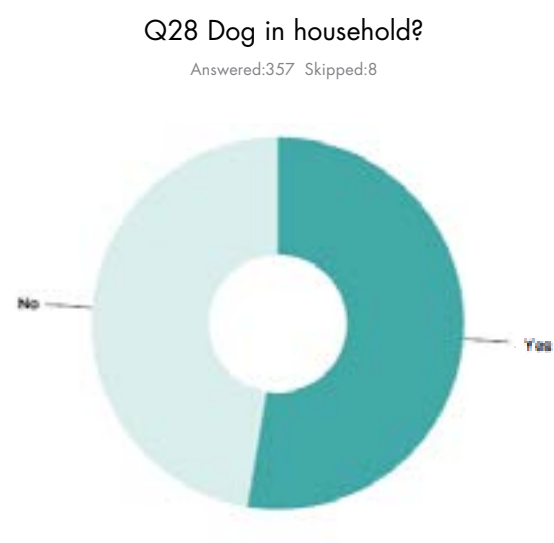
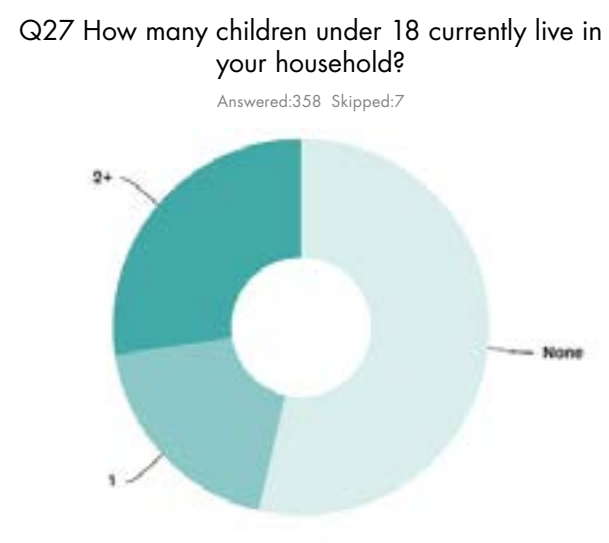
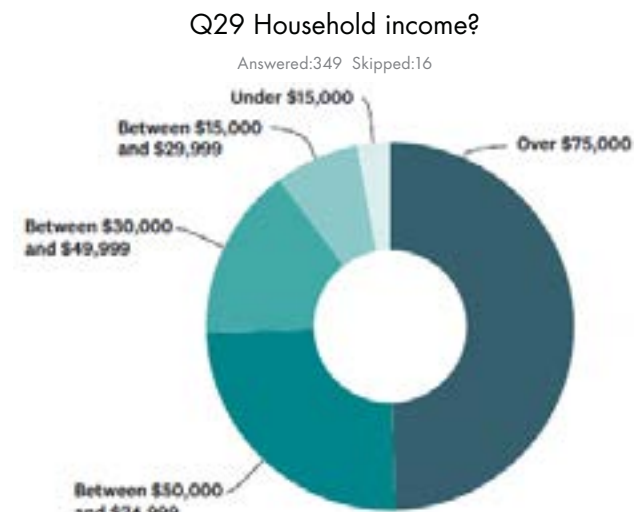
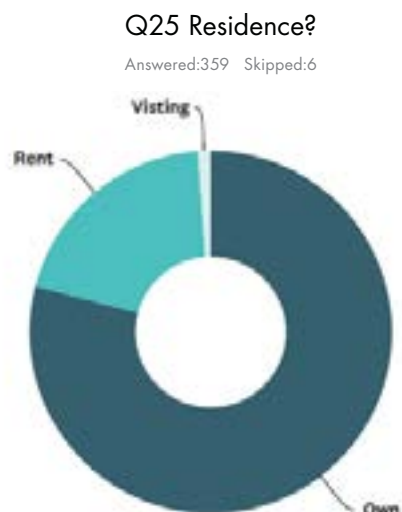
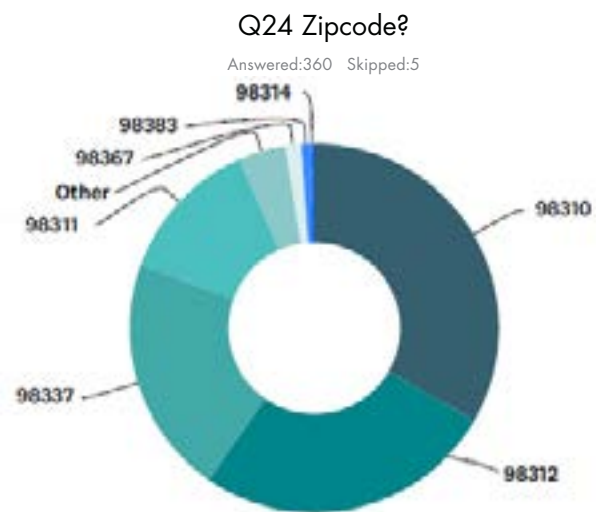
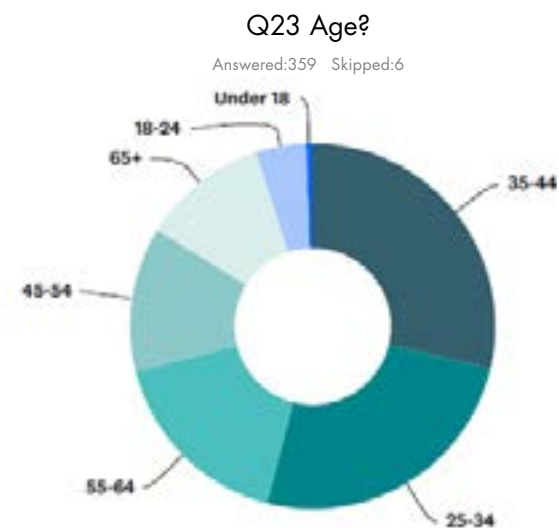
Desire for More Park and Recreational Facilities

Over 50% of respondents expressed a desire for more multi-use trails for walking, hiking, biking 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 | 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 most mentioned topics expressed among the 662 written survey comments, with the biggest words being the topics that were brought up the most. Some of the most mentioned items 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 for preserving 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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