

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Bellevue is a city of neighborhoods. And while each neighborhood is unique, the city strives to ensure every neighborhood is safe, resilient, welcoming, adaptable, socially connected, and provides a high-quality environment. This overarching vision is outlined in the Neighborhoods Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”
 ~ Jane Jacobs

Neighborhood Plans bring the city’s broader Comprehensive Plan to life in a local way. They provide residents, businesses, city staff and other stakeholders guidance as each neighborhood grows and evolves.

The **Great Neighborhoods** program has been the process for developing these plans. Over the past year the Great Neighborhoods team collaborated with residents and stakeholders to develop plans that reflect the values, vision and priorities of community members. The Northeast Bellevue Neighborhood Plan lays a foundation that will help ensure a future as a livable, inspiring, vibrant, and equitable community.

OVERVIEW OF OUTREACH PROCESS

The Neighborhood Plan is built around a template that includes the following sections:

- A vision statement that outlines the communities core values and hopes for the future.
- A neighborhood profile that shares key data about the community.
- The context of the key opportunities and challenges facing the neighborhood.
- Specific goals and policies to guide future development.



The engagement process used the template as a guide. Each section was tackled sequentially through a phased approach.

- **Phase 1 (summer 2020)** – Build Awareness of the planning process and understand the community’s core values.

- **Phase 2 (fall 2020)** – Define the vision and develop the neighborhood profile.
- **Phase 3 (winter & spring 2021)** – Explore challenges and opportunities and develop the policies.

COVID-19 & ENGAGEMENT

The Great Neighborhoods program launched in June 2020. In-person gatherings were prohibited and most people, including city staff, were working from home. At the time it was unclear how long restrictions would be in place and protecting the health of the community was the top priority.

The Great Neighborhoods team had to adapt to a new engagement landscape. Plans to attend community events, table at local gathering spots, or go door-to-door were cancelled. In-person events were transitioned to online platforms. This meant that many traditional avenues for building project awareness by meeting people where they shop, work, and play were not available. The result was a smaller list of people who were informed about the planning process and signed up to receive updates and invitations to participate.

There was a learning curve as both staff and community members figured out how to use new tools and create welcoming and inclusive spaces in the virtual world. Flexibility and creativity were the watchwords, but the staff was committed to moving forward and the community proved willing to embrace new ways of participating.

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION

The Great Neighborhoods team worked to engage a broad range of community members that was representative of the community's diversity. Overall, we had:

- 320 people provide feedback online at www.engagingbellevue.com
- 92 people participate at one or more virtual events
- 386 households return our mailed survey
- 36% of participants at virtual events were people of color¹
- 39% of participants online were people of color

¹ More detailed demographic information is available at the end of this report.

It's important to note that participation was based on self-selection; people chose whether or not to engage in the planning process. Awareness of the project, relevance to the individual, sense of urgency about the decisions to be made, culturally appropriate engagement, and comfort with city processes are all factors that drive or depress participation.

The team addressed those factors in a variety of ways. Robust social media and digital advertising was used to build awareness. Four digital ad campaigns reached between 2,753 – 8,036 people, with between 127 – 319 clicking on the ads to learn more about the project. The city's Next Door account provided an opportunity to target residents in Northeast Bellevue; posts inviting people to participate online or attend virtual events were seen by 296 - 823 people.

Additionally, to ensure that residents were informed of the neighborhood planning process and had the opportunity to provide input the Great Neighborhoods team prepared two mailings to every household in Northeast Bellevue. In November 2020 a postcard was sent that invited residents to take the Values Survey and in March 2021 each household received a postage paid questionnaire asking people to weigh in on key issues related to housing and mobility.

Outreach to Diverse Communities

To support culturally relevant outreach the Great Neighborhoods program piloted the use of Cultural Outreach Assistants. Part-time staff with connections and experience working with key cultural communities in Northeast Bellevue supported outreach and engagement by conducting one-on-one meetings with community members, delivering presentations to community groups, posting online, evaluating contents, and connecting with key businesses. The four Cultural Outreach Assistants contributed to this process by:

- Conducting 76 meetings with individuals and organizational leaders
- Giving 7 presentations to community groups
- Reaching over 2500 people via social media

This type of intentional outreach was new and provided an important learning opportunity that will impact future outreach efforts. It is important to note that these efforts were also impacted by the community response to COVID-19. Organizations that serve various cultural groups were navigating their own shift to virtual engagement while also addressing the concerns raised by COVID-19. Community festivals were cancelled, and it was not possible to table in front of grocery stores or other businesses that serve diverse communities.

Youth Outreach

Neighborhood plans look 10, 15, 20 years into the future, so it's important that youth have a voice in shaping what that future might be like. To support youth engagement in the planning process the Great Neighborhoods team worked with an intern from Interlake High School who managed a team of students in the International Baccalaureate program. The students were charged with developing a plan for engaging their peers. This team of six students, led by the intern designed and led two engagement events.

- A virtual Data Walk that engaged 17 students in a discussion of what would make their neighborhood more livable.
- An outdoor pop-up event for students to review and comment on the draft goals and policies that engaged 24 students.

Through the process students learned how the city approaches long-term planning and had the opportunity to develop their civic engagement, public speaking, and facilitation skills.

OVERVIEW OF OUTREACH EVENTS

Values & Vision

The planning process began with an exploration of what core values should guide the future of the development. Starting with values as opposed to specific issues allows both the community and staff to understand the why behind the goals and policies and build a foundation based on shared understanding of what's important to the community. To understand what the community's core values the team conducted an online survey and hosted virtual community conversations.

23 people attended the Values Conversation event in July. The Values Survey was open from June through November. During that time 479 people looked at the survey and 146 completed it. The top five core neighborhood values identified through the survey include:

- Safety
- Environment
- Sustainability
- Sense of Community
- Diversity

"I am currently raising a young family in Bellevue and I chose these [values] because I think they are crucial for children's future. Diversity is so important, and I want my kids to have exposure to all different cultures and people. I'd like for them to have a sense of community and belonging in their neighborhood. I'd like for the neighborhood to be a place where they can play and interact with others (recreation) and the neighborhood must be sustainable if we want it to still be around for future generations."

~ Comment from Values Survey

This information helped inform the next step of the planning process which involved exploring residents' vision for the future. A core group of 14 residents met virtually to imagine a future where the core neighborhood values had been realized. Participants were invited to think about what would be the same and what would be different. At the end of the workshop participants had the chance to develop their own vision statement.

*In the future **transit** will play a vital role in NE Bellevue. By focusing on **access for all**, we can help people **get where they need to go** and bring a new **accessibility** to Northeast Bellevue.*

~ Resident Vision Statement

Input gathered through these efforts was used to craft Vision Statements that reflected the community's values and their aspirations for the future of Northeast Bellevue.

Data Walks

Before diving into the issues that needed to be addressed in the neighborhood plan, the Great Neighborhoods team wanted to make sure the community had a clearer sense of what was going on in the neighborhood. Working with city staff from multiple departments the team developed a Data Walk. During the event participants had the opportunity to look at information, ask questions and reflect on what the data said about the strengths and challenges facing the community. The Data Walk included information related to:

- Income
- Diversity
- Housing Costs
- Places to Gather
- Access to Shopping & Services
- Traffic Safety
- Commute Patterns
- Walkability
- Access to Transit
- Access to Parks
- Tree Canopy
- Carbon Emissions

<p>City may need to educate new homeowners about value of trees. Many individuals quickly take out trees instead of learning about view thinning and beneficial pruning.</p>	<p>While most of the houses were built in the 60s, which coincides with when NE Bellevue was annexed, I worry about the new constructions going up. McMansions change the look of the neighborhood and reduce tree canopy.</p>
<p>NE Bellevue doesn't really have a place within itself to gather, and a general lack of commercial areas where people could gather, I think that's a big reason why ppl feel a lack of community in this neighborhood, myself included</p>	<p>With limited public transportation, arterial roads that are clogged during rush hour, safe biking and walking options are a must, or our neighborhood will be cut off from the rest of Bellevue and neighboring cities.</p>

Sample of comments provided via Mentimeter during November 19, 2020 Data

17 people attended the Data Walk live virtual event and 138 people viewed the Data Walk materials online at www.engagingbellevue.com. Participants left the event with a broader perspective about their community and better prepared to engage in creative brainstorming around key issues.

Community Brainstorming Sessions

Through February and March of 2021, the Great Neighborhoods team hosted four Community Brainstorming Sessions. These virtual events brought residents together with subject matter experts from Transportation, Neighborhoods, Environmental Stewardship and Planning to discuss key issues and develop community-based ideas for addressing challenges.

During each session participants revisited key data and considered current citywide goals. Then they broke up into small groups for rapid brainstorming where the goal was to generate as many ideas as possible. After a short debrief, the small groups reconvened to further discuss their ideas. Staff facilitators used that time to learn more about which ideas were most exciting and why residents supported them.

33 Individuals participated in at least one Community Brainstorming Event and 53 individuals visited the online Community Brainstorming Tool at Engaging Bellevue.

IDEAS	WHY	HOW/WHERE
Repurpose the old Bellevue Youth Theatre site Add a dog park Since we don't have restaurants – bring the restaurants to us with food trucks moving to a different neighborhood every day Turn BTC site into a public park so it can be used by residents Link open spaces and parks Close a block or two Schedule block events With get togethers request ethnic identity objects and questings Schedule community events and opportunities Create community walks / treasure hunts Playgrounds and dog parks are great gathering places – add benches so people can sit and chat Allow small businesses (coffee carts, food carts) to operate at larger parks	It is sitting there unused and we have no formal community center; it is wasted space; not optimal Ivanhoe playfield would be a good place; dog parks and playgrounds are magnets for people to gather; two great ways for people to mingle; we have quite a few We don't have anything, let's get creative; it is a great way to bring different cultures together; people like to gather over food or drinks or both (note: some do not agree; there are lots of ethnic restaurants nearby; concern with traffic uses and parking on the streets; need to serve a necessary purpose; temporary and in different places – it comes to us and available for people in the neighborhood via walking and biking. At locations that make sense It is not currently being used as a park; there is a question as to what it should be used for; there are a lot of people around that location including Liv and Hyde Square; since it isn't owned by the City it can't be modified by the city to enhance it to address people's needs better; We don't have as much open space for open space as commercial space in the city as a whole; it would be nice to maintain as much open space and trees as possible; Neighborhood walk events – would help us learn about our neighborhoods - Sharing stories helps people remember each other and creates a link between people; waving and smiling leads to talking which grows that relationship, which is important Concern about losing shopping area at Crossroads; where does the farmers market go, small businesses surrounding the mall; food court;	Collaboration with BTC – office during work; neighborhood park after hours Lake to Lake trail – defined streets – make it more of a matrix up to Keeny Park and up to Ardmore. Gateways to link all the open spaces. ★ ★ Make block parties more formal Use ribbons for walks Scheduling neighborhood walks – e.g. tree ambassadors – learning about your neighborhood; events better at bringing people together

Example of virtual whiteboard from March 17, 2020 Community Brainstorm

Input gathered through the Brainstorming Events helped inform the Goals and Policies sections of the Neighborhood Plan by shining a spotlight on issues that were of special concern to the community and that needed to be addressed in policy.

Policy Open House, DADU/Backyard Cottage Conversation, Placemaking & Survey

Before completing the Draft Neighborhood Plan, residents had several opportunities to review the goals and policies and provide feedback. Three virtual events were held in April 2021, each one with a slightly different focus and agenda.

- **Policy Open House** – during this drop in event, participants were able to rotate between breakout rooms focused on various policy areas for open-ended discussion. Each breakout room was facilitated by a staff expert who could answer questions and take notes on feedback. Participants were able to spend as much time as they wanted in each breakout room.
- **DADU/Backyard Cottage Conversation** – the city’s Comprehensive Plan and Affordable Housing Strategy provide direction to address the issues of detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs), also referred to as backyard cottages, through the neighborhood planning process. Discussion of DADUs and ADUs came up in every event and tool related to affordability, but a separate event was scheduled to ensure this important issue was given additional attention. During this discussion, participants learned more about the role DADUs could play in providing housing options, what current city regulation allows for, and what other cities who allow DADUs are finding. Then participants were invited to engage in open ended discussion with staff to ask questions, share concerns, and provide feedback. Several attendees appreciated the additional information provided in the presentation and felt like they had a better understanding of the issue.
- **Placemaking Discussion** – connectivity and access to shopping, cafes, and other amenities were some of the biggest challenges shared by residents. Northeast Bellevue is surrounded by arterials that see heavy commute traffic and many parts of the neighborhood area are far from any commercial area. This discussion helped further understand how policies could address these challenges.

34 people came to at least one of the above virtual policy-focused events

- **Policy Survey** – an online survey was also provided on EngagingBellevue so residents who were unable to attend events could still weigh in and give feedback on the full draft Goals and Policies section of the plan. 473 individuals visited the survey and 111 of them completed it, providing their input on both specific policies and how they fit together as whole.

- **88%** of respondents support all or most of the Mobility and Access goals and policies.
- **85%** of respondents support all or most of the Environment goals and policies.
- **75%** of respondents support all or most of the Sense of Community goals and policies.
- **67%** of respondents support all or most of the Sense of Place goals and policies.
- **63%** of respondents support all or most of the Housing Affordability goals and policies.

The range of support expressed for the Housing Affordability goals and policies matches what was heard throughout the process. There were participants who expressed a strong desire to see more housing options like duplexes, triplexes and backyard cottages allowed in the neighborhood and there were others who wanted to see the single-family character of the neighborhood preserved.

"Neighborhood Identity" is not being preserved by existing single-family zoning. The houses in NE Bellevue are so expensive that most existing residents could not buy their own homes today--this means renters are being priced out and every home sale results in gentrification. Also, a significant number of homes are being torn down and redeveloped due to the high land values.

We need a better mix of housing types such as small-scale duplexes, triplexes, and small lot single-family homes that both fit architecturally with existing single-family homes and are financially accessible to the existing residents of the neighborhood.

~ Comment from Policy Survey

We enjoy living in a community of single-family homes. The integrity of these existing neighborhoods (that actually have small lots!) need to be preserved. The Overlake corridor is already very densely developed with pockets of apartments, condos, retail, single homes.

~ Comment from Questionnaire

MAJOR THEMES & KEY ISSUES

Over the course of the planning process clear themes emerged and key issues were raised multiple times. Changes that are happening regionally are felt at the neighborhood level and, in their comments and in discussions at events, residents grappled with how to respond. In many instances, participants want to see a citywide response to issues that are impacting their neighborhoods.

Affordability of Housing is, by far, the biggest concern of community members. Affordability is directly related to several of the key neighborhood values – Diversity, Sustainability and Sense of Community. Rising property taxes are a challenge for seniors who want to stay in their home. Lack of affordable housing choices limits diversity in the neighborhood and makes it harder for people to access jobs without having to endure long commutes that increase the city’s carbon footprint.

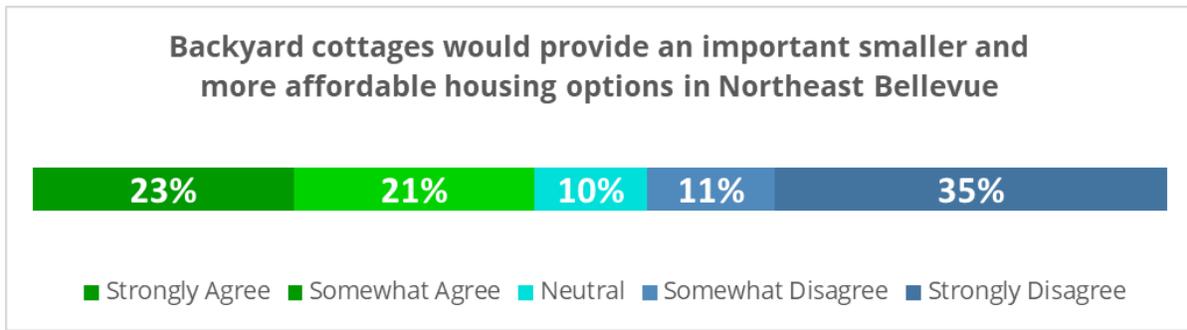
I think promoting Economic Diversity is good. We moved to Bellevue in 2005 and it has only gotten more and more expensive-- specifically housing. I don't know how someone starting out could live here. I know that a lot of the folks that work at my local Trader Joe's live outside the city as do folks who work at some of the restaurants. It is great to have a city where people come to work; but it would be good if the workers could also live closer to their jobs

~ Comment from Values Survey

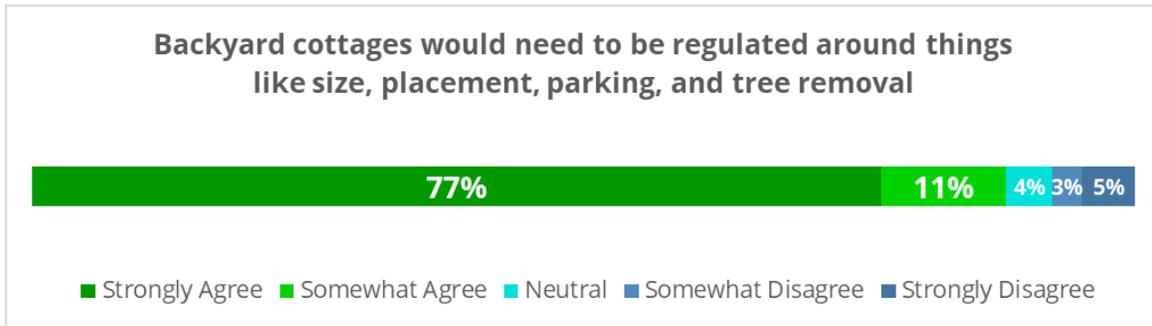
Participants also noted that Northeast Bellevue borders the BelRed and Overlake neighborhoods, which are rapidly transforming into high density neighborhoods; participants want to better understand how those neighborhoods are contributing to the city’s affordable housing goals.

Commenters offered a variety of solutions including freezing property taxes for seniors on fixed incomes, requiring developers to include affordable units in new buildings, and more investment in transit-oriented development.

Backyard Cottages/DADUs were discussed as a one possible approach to adding more housing that would be affordable to people making between 80%-100% of area median income. Suggestions to look at the possibility of DADUs came up throughout the process both online and at virtual events. contributing to affordable housing. The questionnaire, which was sent to every household in Northeast Bellevue, gives the clearest picture on community sentiment and shows that residents are evenly divided.



Support for backyard cottages is dependent on regulation. Respondents expressed concern about loss of trees and impacts to parking and traffic that might come if backyard cottages were permitted. There was also a strong desire for regulation around owner occupancy and strict limits on short term rentals.



It’s important to note that commenters brought up other housing types in addition to backyard cottages. There was interest in revisiting regulations around attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and in allowing duplexes or triplexes.

Tear-Downs and “Mega-Homes” were another concern that was frequently raised by community members. Many people expressed concern about the removal of mature trees that comes with building out to the lot line. Others see larger homes as another sign that their neighborhood is becoming less affordable and would rather see duplexes or triplexes. And still others see the character of their neighborhood changing as smaller homes that were built in the mid-twentieth century are replaced.

Currently, the city is allowing people to remove their homes, tearing them down and allowing the removal of mature tree growth then building right up to the maximum area of the property leaving nothing that allows for esthetics, just a building and a few saplings to meet code. Newly build homes should conform to the neighborhood structures. Not monstrosities that are eye sores.

~ Comment from Policy Survey

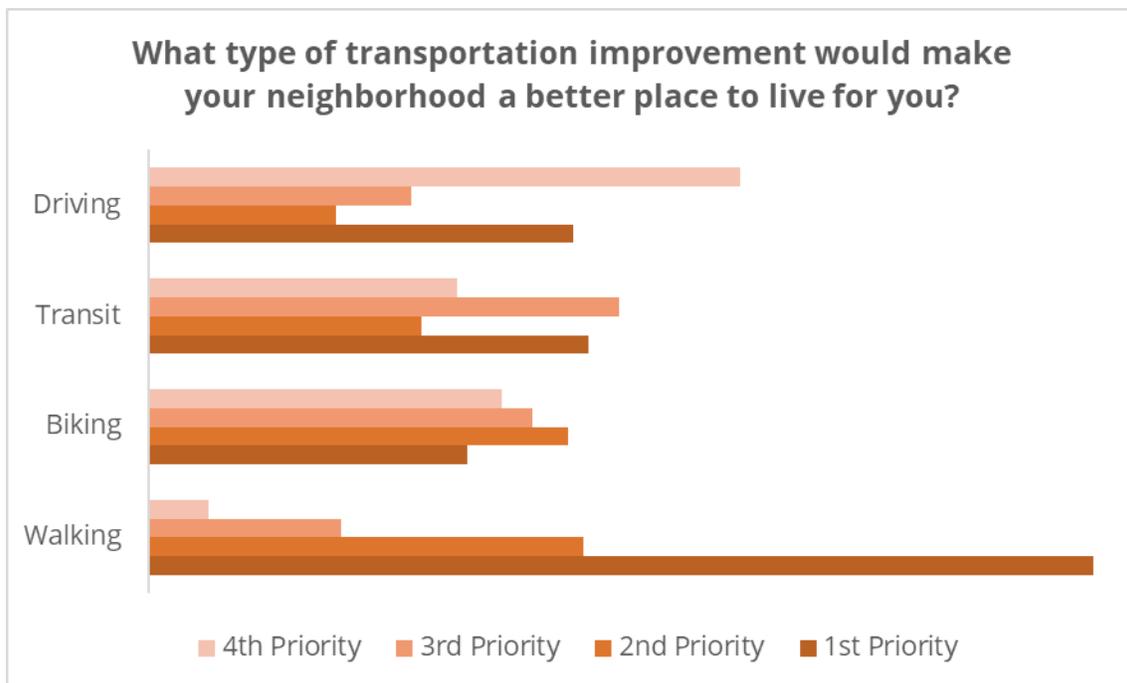
Mobility and Access were frequent topics of discussion. Residents’ concerns around mobility and access touch on several neighborhood values as well. Sidewalks and safe crosswalks contribute to feelings of safety and are important for seniors who want to age-in-place. Bike lanes, sidewalks, and safe crosswalks would give residents more alternatives to driving which can help the community be more sustainable. Finally, a neighborhood that encourages walking and makes it easy for people to get to services contributes to a sense of community when neighbors can run into one another when they are out and about or schedule a meet up at a local café.

With limited public transportation, arterial roads that are clogged during rush hour, safe biking and walking options are a must, or our neighborhood will be cut off from the rest of Bellevue and neighboring cities.

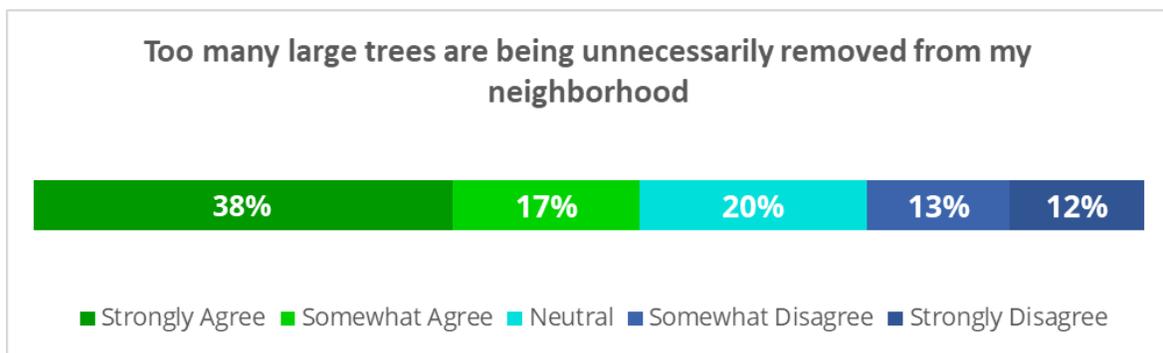
~ Comment from Data Walk

Many participants noted that Northeast Bellevue is heavily impacted by commuters who use the major arterials that border the neighborhood to get to Microsoft and other job centers. Traffic can make it difficult to get in and out of the neighborhood during peak commute hours. Residents of Northeast Bellevue are eager to have alternatives to driving many participants expressed a desire to have more connection to biking infrastructure that is being built elsewhere in Bellevue and Redmond and safer bike routes in general.

While there is a desire to see improvements around all modes of transportation, the questionnaire showed a strong preference for focusing on sidewalks and walkability.



Trees and the Environment are another important concern. Residents in Northeast Bellevue have a deep appreciation for trees and the natural environment. Mature trees and parks add to the unique neighborhood character. Trees are also an important environmental asset providing habitat, clean air, and shade in an urban setting. Many people are deeply concerned about the loss of mature trees and want to see the city take urgent action, particularly in how other neighborhood concerns such as redevelopment impact the Neighborhood’s tree canopy. However, it is important to note that some sub-neighborhoods prioritize their view of the lake or mountains or otherwise feel that the current pace of tree removal is acceptable. Responses to the questionnaire show this spread of opinion as well.



In the Community Brainstorming Session and in comments residents offered many ideas for preserving and enhancing Northeast Bellevue’s tree canopy including more tree care education, support for tree maintenance, and updates to the city’s tree code.

The parks, trails and other green space are well loved by residents and are seen as the neighborhood’s biggest asset. Improving access and recreation opportunities and acquiring land for additional parks would all be seen as worthwhile investments by the community.

CONCLUSION – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

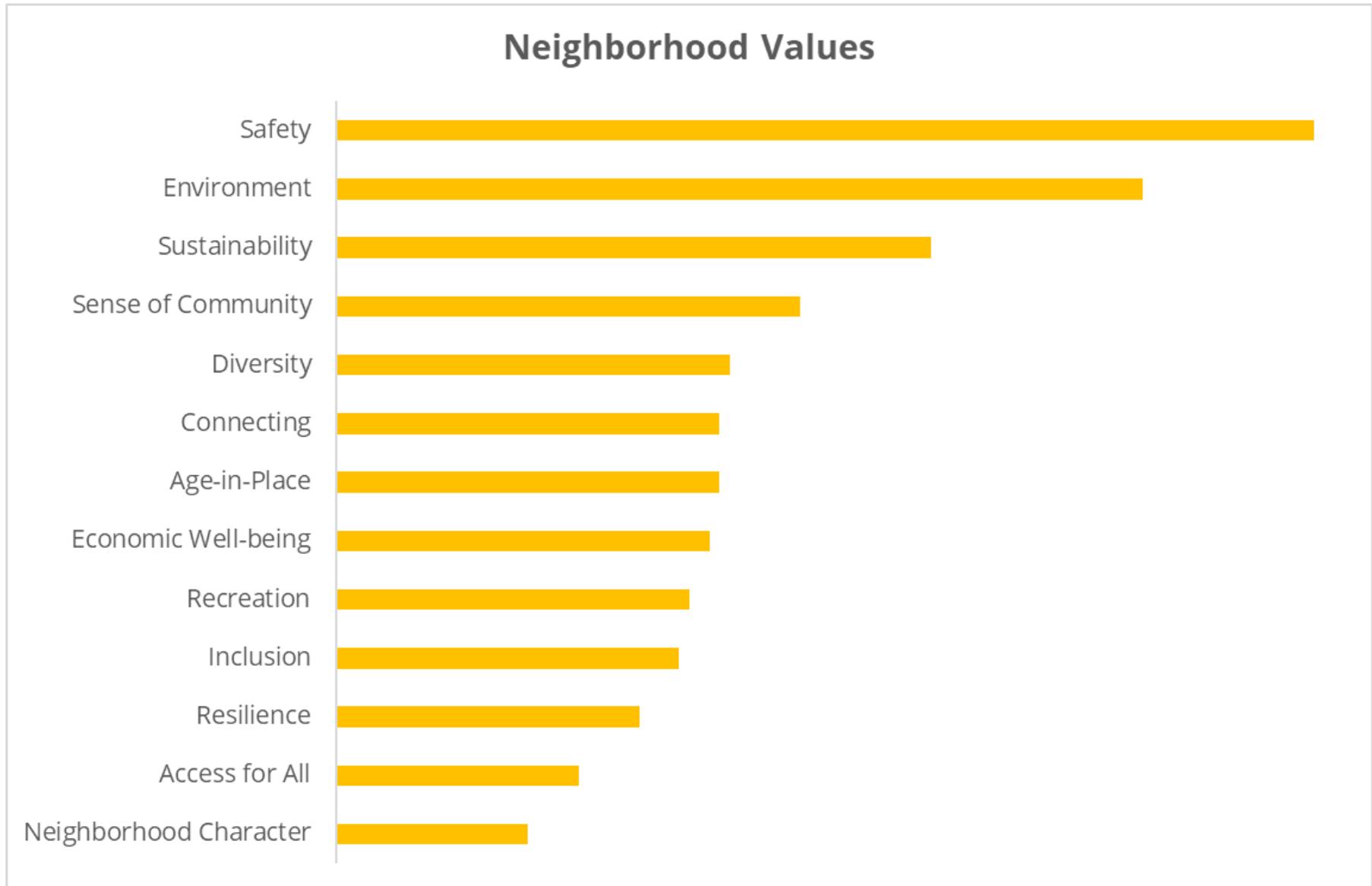
Bellevue has a long tradition of engaging residents and stakeholders in planning for the future. The city's Comprehensive Plan outlines clear goals and policies related to engagement that include encouraging broad participation that is user-friendly, informative, and that provides multiple methods and opportunities for engagement. The Comprehensive Plan also calls on staff to provide culturally relevant engagement and equitable access for people with disabilities or language barriers. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan encourages the use of innovative methods and technologies that can reach people who might not normally participate.

This planning process has sought to implement these goals and policies in a variety of ways, from bringing on Cultural Outreach Assistants to incorporating new platforms that make virtual engagement more participatory and accessible. That said, there are still opportunities for learning and growth. Reaching renters and other residents in multi-family buildings remains challenging; engaging historically underserved populations takes an ongoing commitment to relationship building; and there are social media platforms and communication methods that need further exploration.

The lessons learned through this process will inform future efforts as the city continues to work with residents to make Bellevue “the place you want to be.”

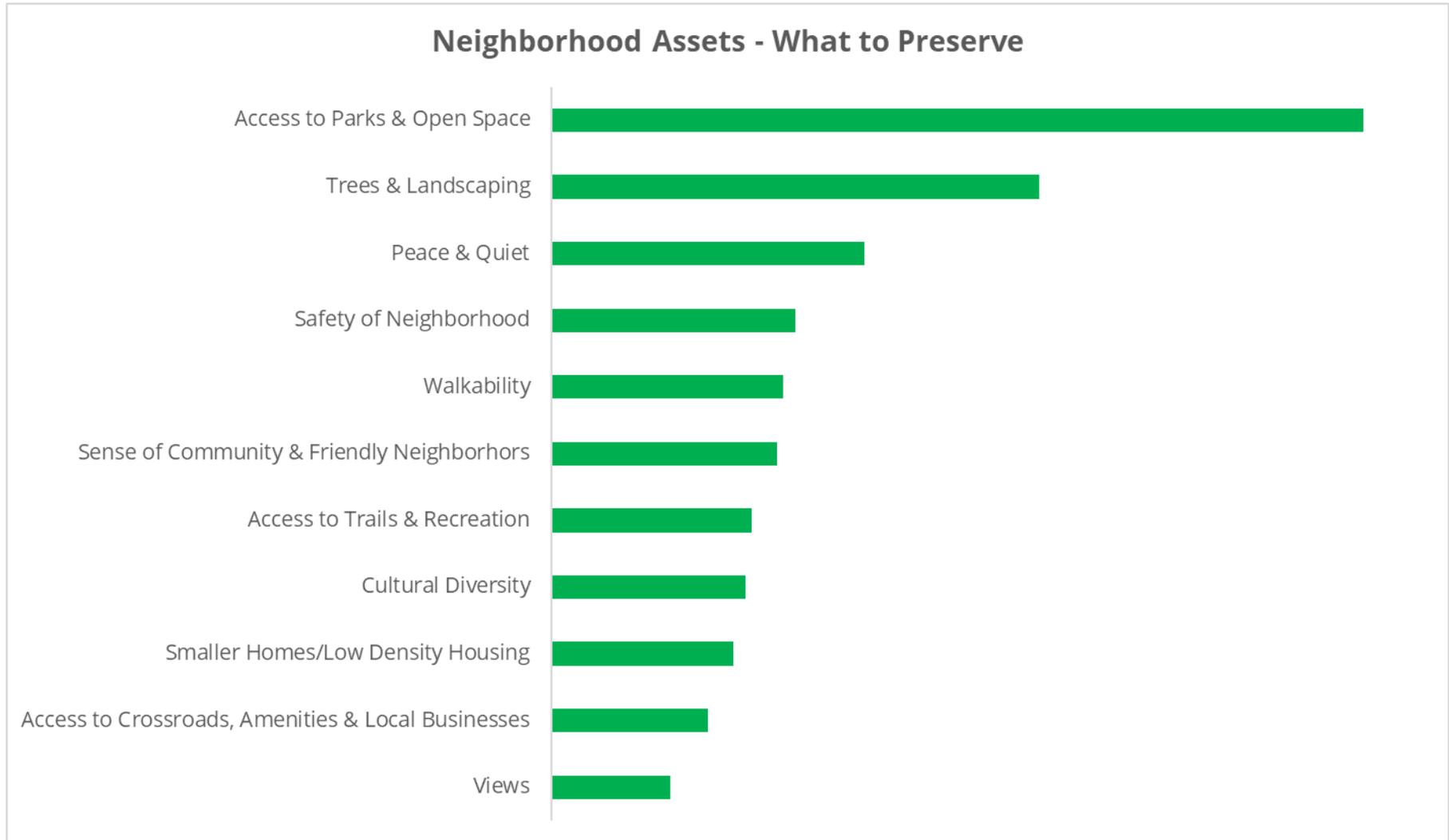
Values Survey

146 Respondents – each respondent allowed to choose up to four values



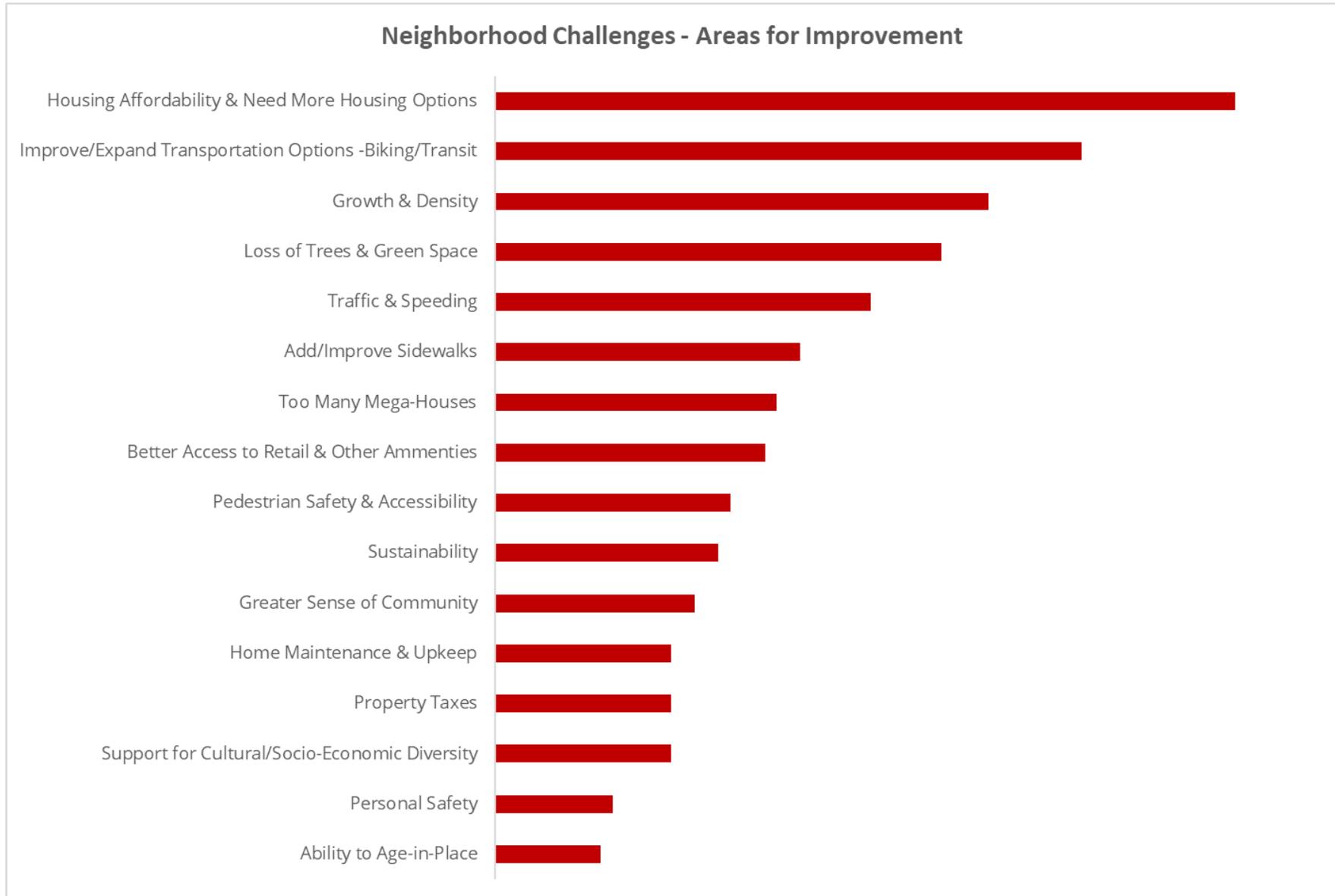
Comment Analysis – Neighborhood Assets

Review of open-ended comments from the Values Survey, Questionnaire, Policy Survey, and Virtual Events



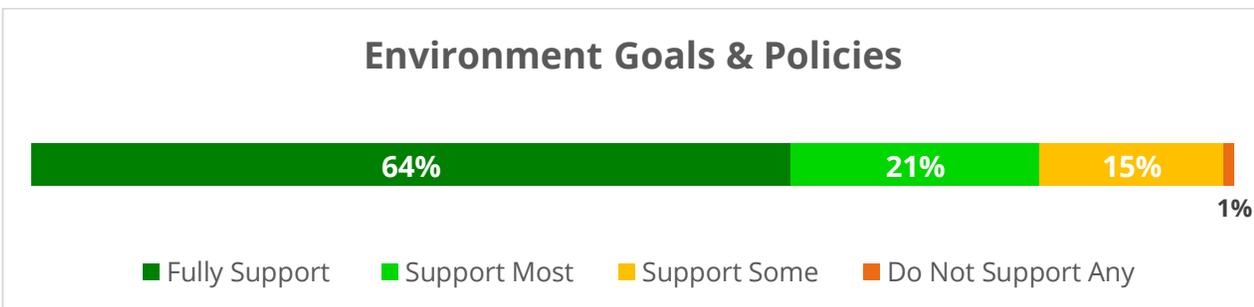
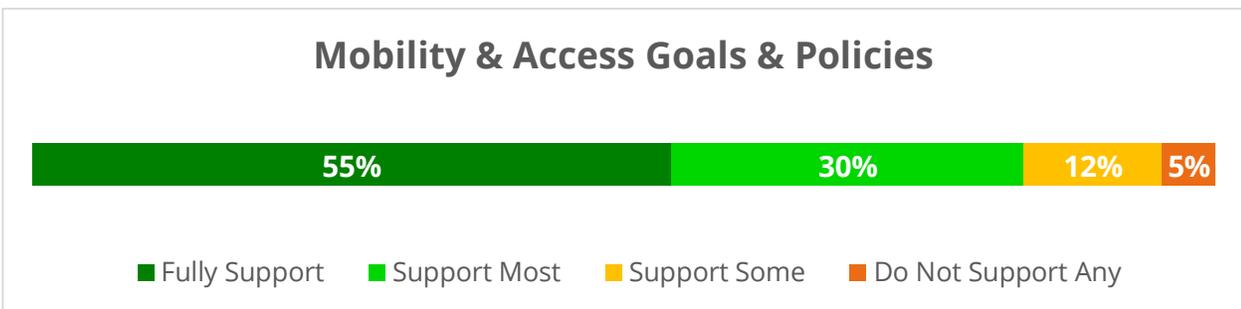
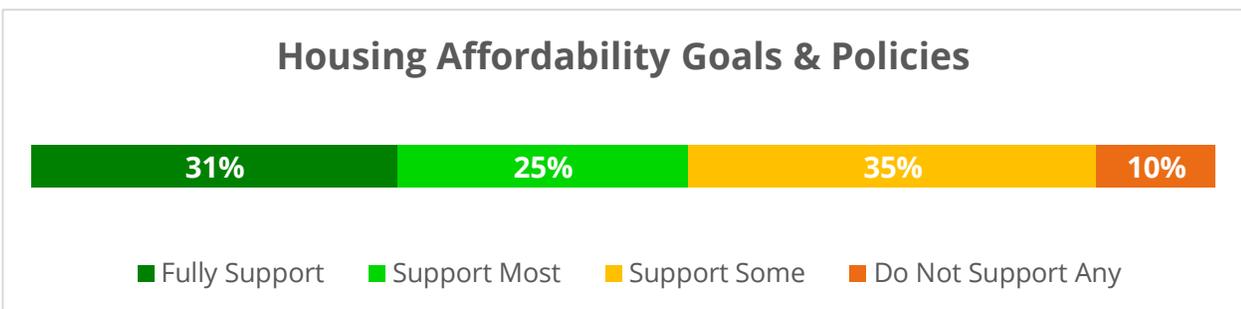
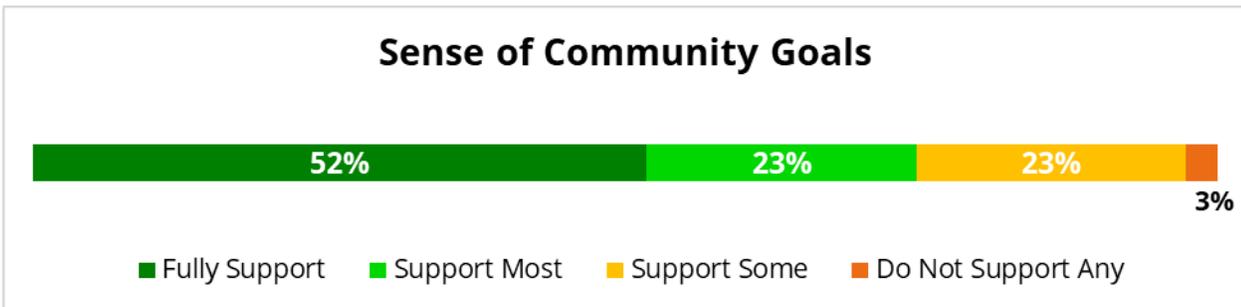
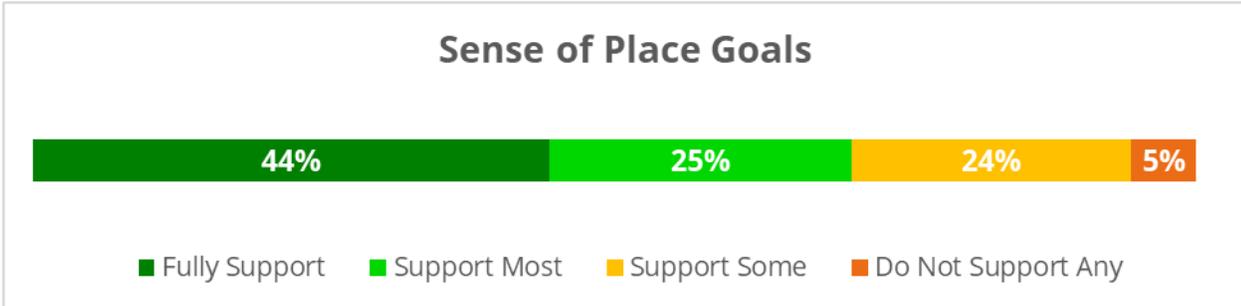
Comment Analysis – Major Themes

Review of open-ended comments from the Values Survey, Questionnaire, Policy Survey, and Virtual Events



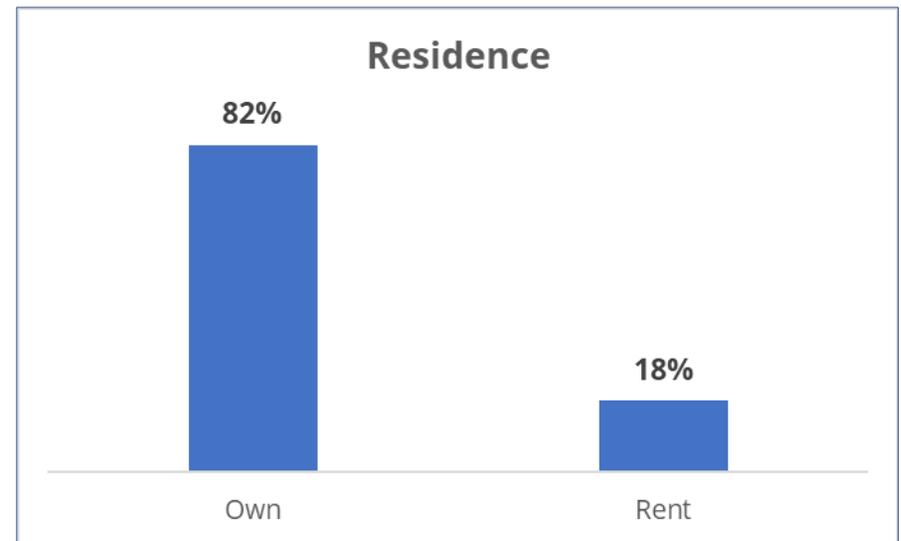
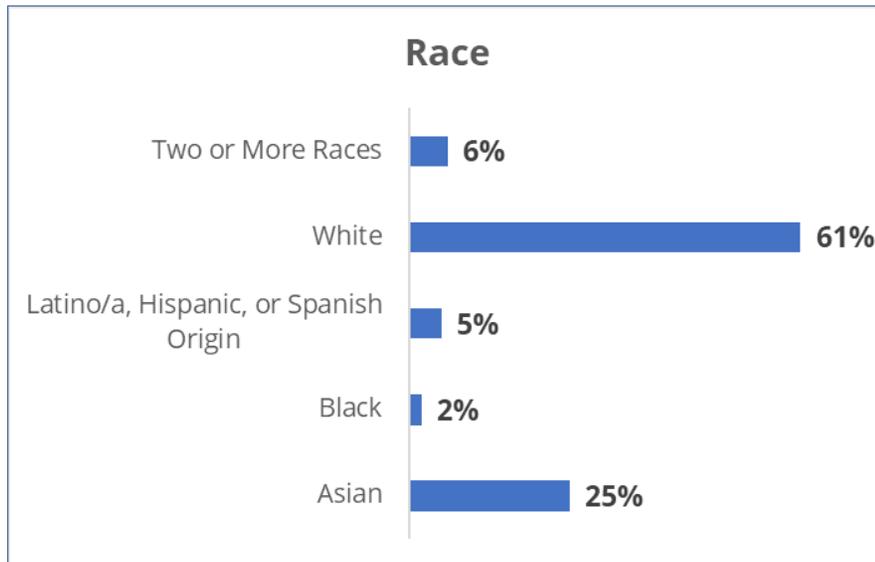
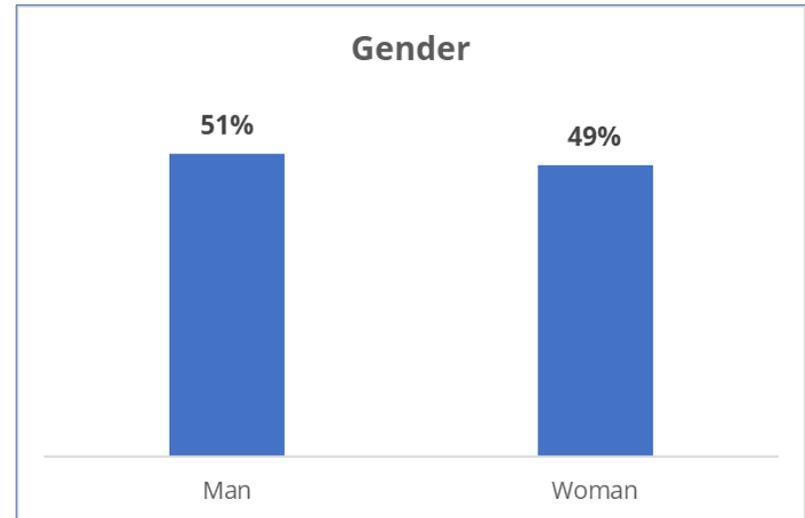
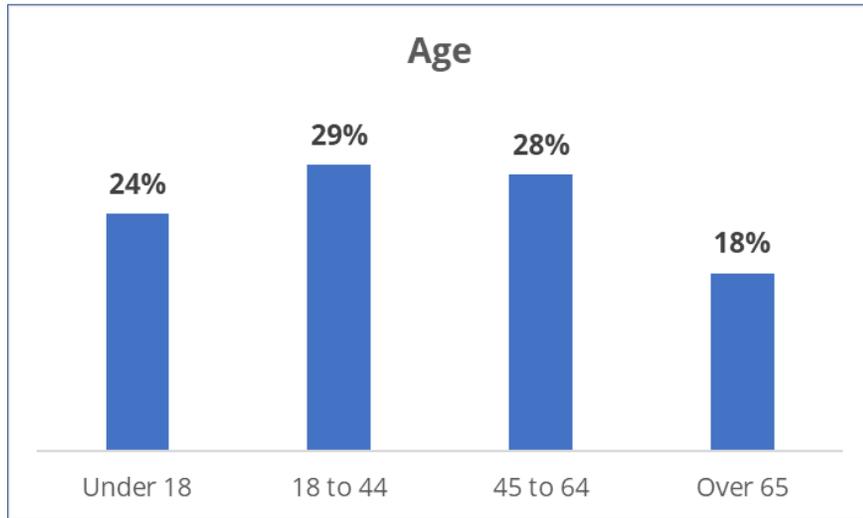
Policy Survey Charts

111 Responses



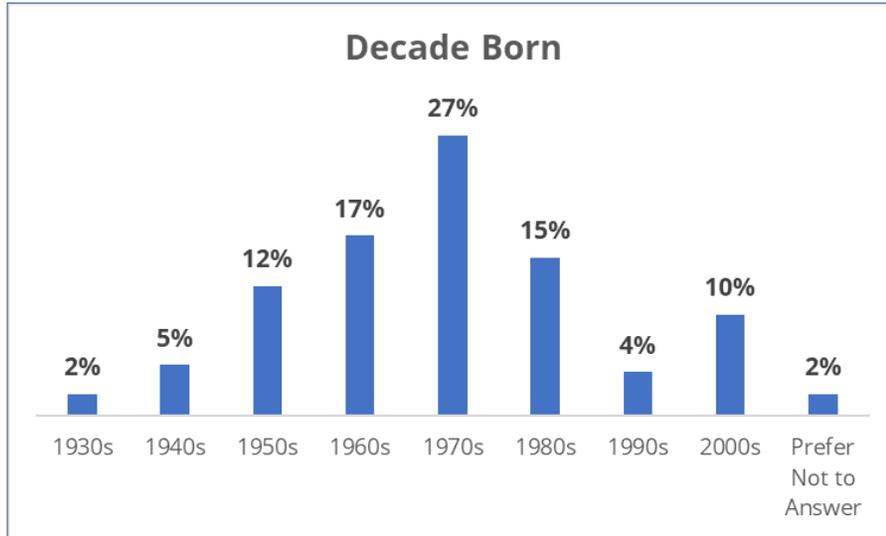
Northeast Bellevue Neighborhood Demographics

Data calculated by City of Bellevue staff based on King County Assessor records (2020) and US Census Bureau American Community Survey (2018) tables

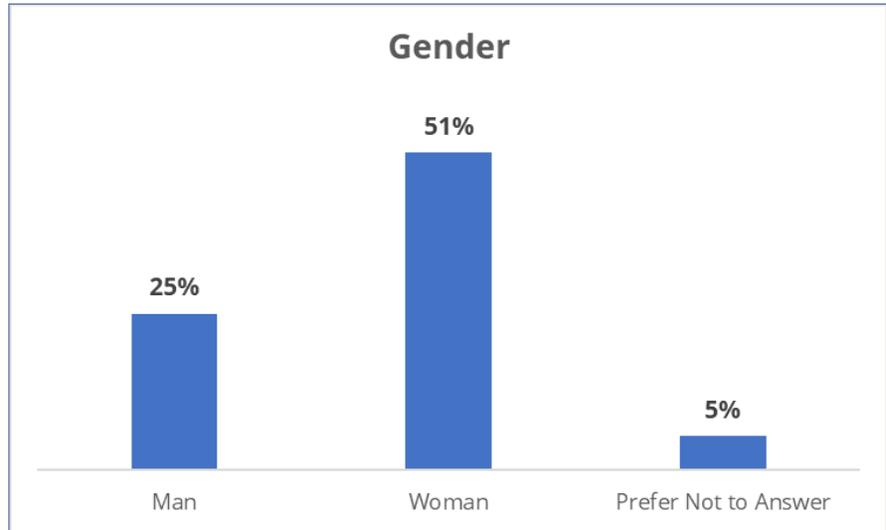


Values Survey – Demographics

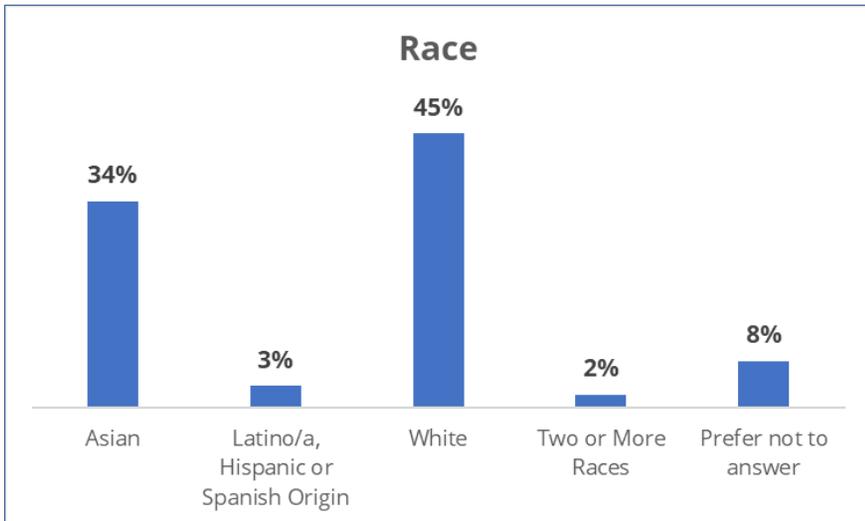
146 Respondents



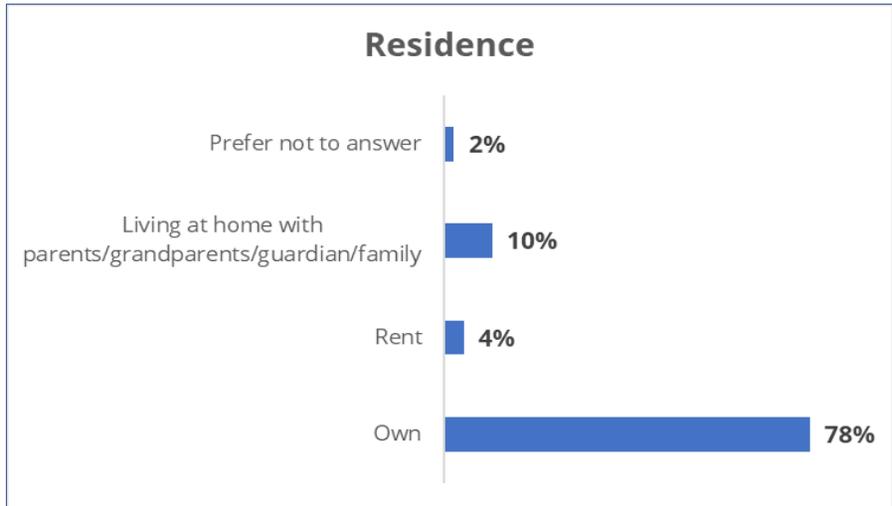
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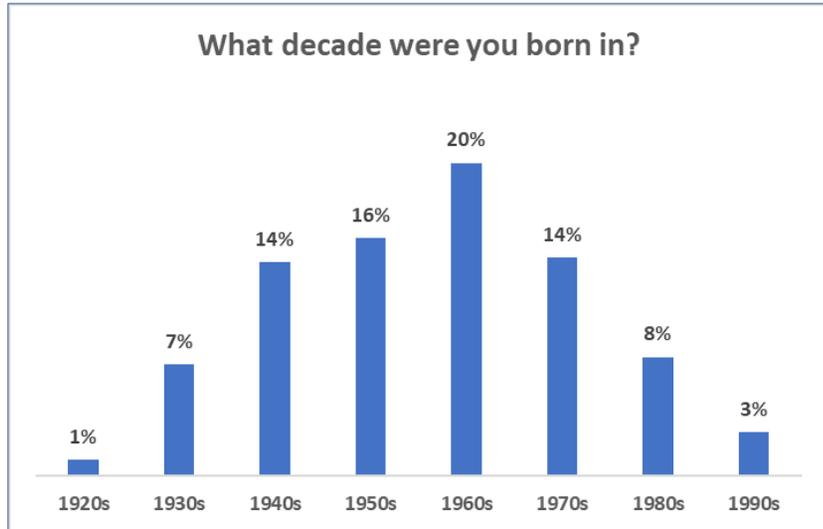
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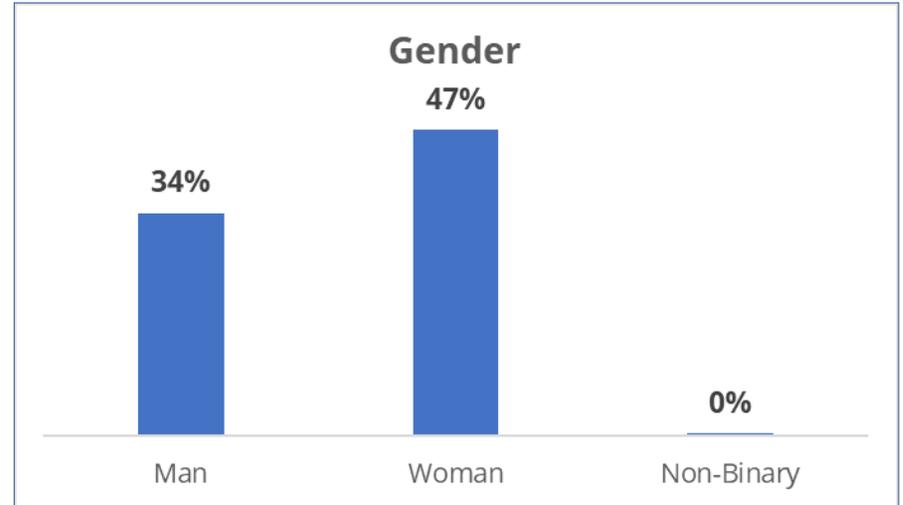
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Questionnaire Demographics

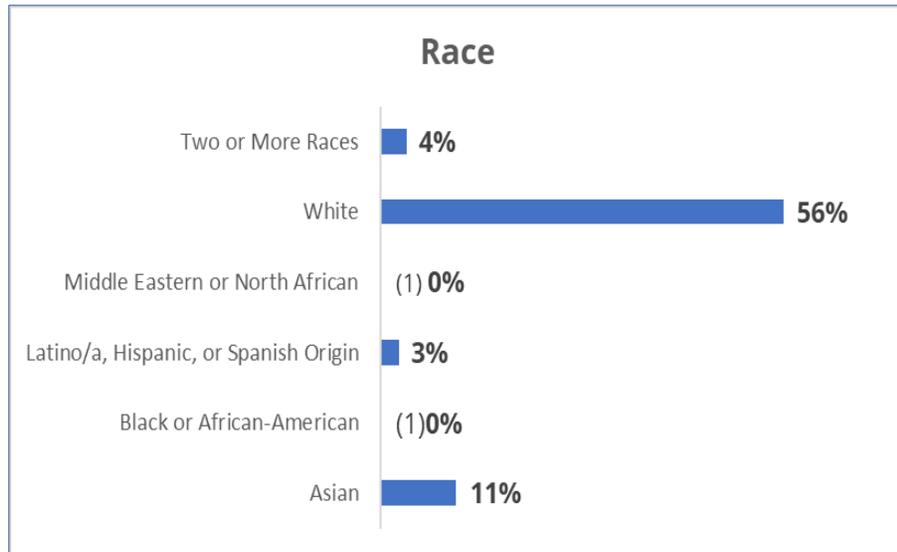
386 Respondents



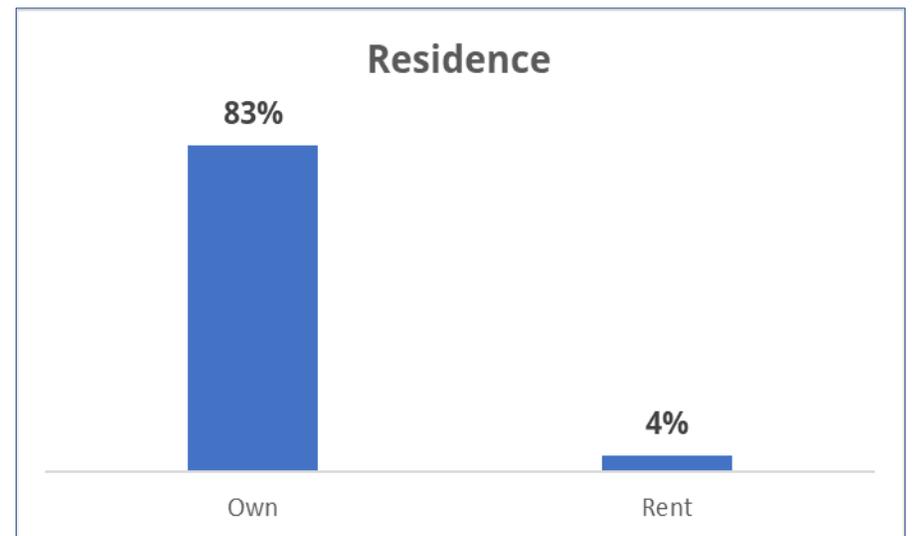
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74 Skipped



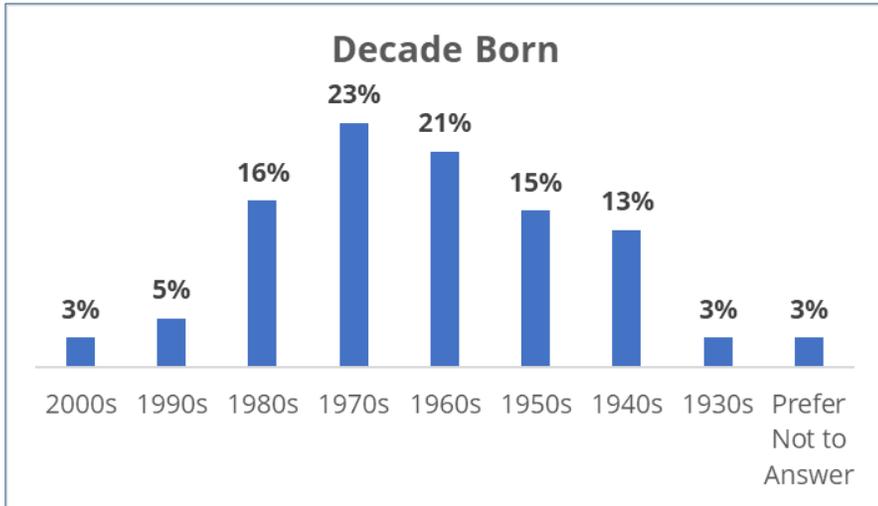
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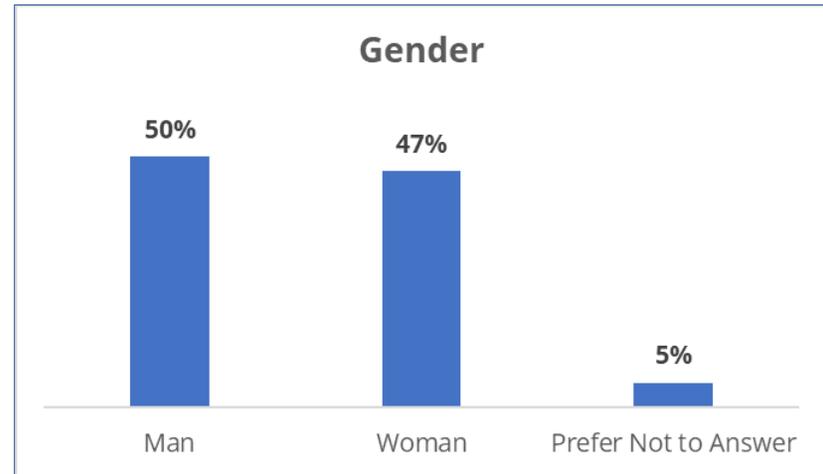
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Policy Survey Demographics

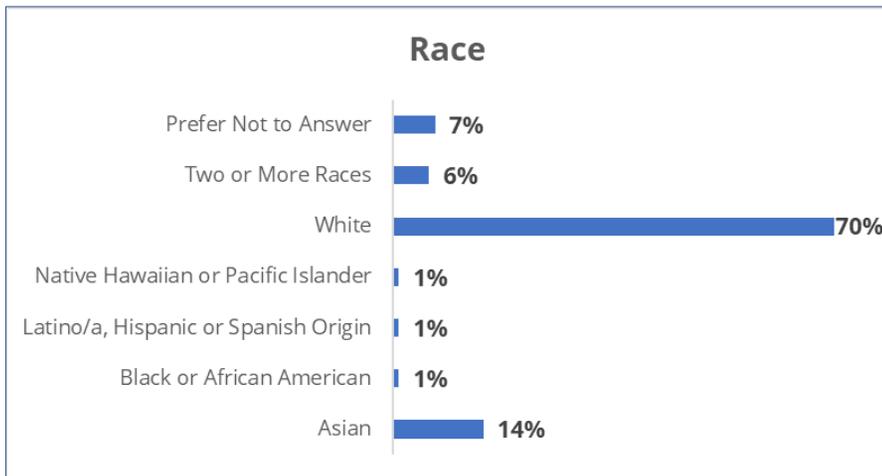
111 Responses



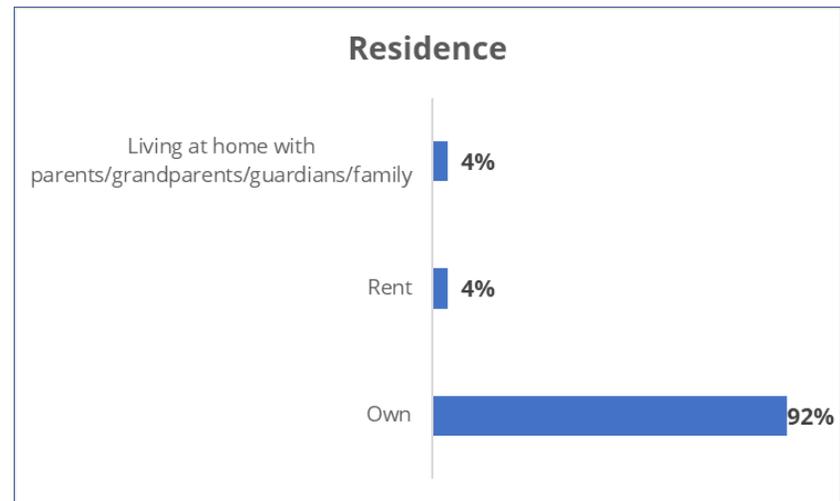
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Event Demographics

Data available for 48% of event attendees

