

Wilburton Vision Implementation

Community Engagement Report

Phase 1 & 1b: April – December 2022
February 2023



Introduction

In April of 2022, the Bellevue City Council directed staff to implement the vision for the west edge of the Wilburton neighborhood area, also known as the Wilburton study area (Exhibit 1). The vision was developed by a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) during 2018. Council directed staff to update the vision to reflect new citywide growth targets, and new housing, sustainability, equity, and multimodal transportation goals. At the same time, the city began proactively planning for growth and change over the next twenty years across the city as part of the city's Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. The Wilburton study area will play an important role in providing future housing, jobs, and amenities to support Bellevue's diverse and growing communities.

The Wilburton study area will become "Bellevue's next urban mixed-use community that enhances livability, promotes healthy living, supports economic vitality, and serves the needs of a diverse and growing population. As Bellevue's cultural and innovative hub, it serves as a regional and international destination that connects people and fosters community by leveraging its existing assets to define a distinctive sense of place and character."

-2018 Citizen Advisory Committee Letter to the Mayor

This process will incorporate input from a variety of sources over several phases. Sources of input will include environmental analyses, review of existing plans and polices, and input from boards and commissions and community stakeholders. Each will inform growth alternatives, policy development, and code updates for the Wilburton study area across several phases:

Phase 1: Onboarding and Re-Engagement (Spring & Summer 2022)

Re-engage stakeholders involved in the development of the 2018 Wilburton Commercial Area Study and Eastrail Framework Plan. Expand list of community members who wish to participate.

Phase 1b: Re-Affirm and Enhance Vision (Summer & Fall 2022)

Collect input to refine the 2018 Wilburton CAC vision. Develop and refine growth alternatives for environmental review.

Phase 2: Evaluate Action Alternatives and Proposed Subarea Plan Updates (2022-2023)

Collect input on proposed land use map and subarea plan amendments as part of the formal Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) process. Identify a preferred strategy for growth in the Wilburton study area.

Phase 3: Evaluate Proposed Zoning, Development Standards, and Design Guidelines (2023-2024)

Collect input on draft zoning, development standards, and design guidelines as part of the formal Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) process.

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Exhibit 1. Wilburton study area

What Have We Learned from Community So Far?

This report summarizes outreach activities and community input for the Wilburton Vision Implementation project between April of 2022 through December of 2022. The primary means of gathering input were an online questionnaire and interactive map posted on the City of Bellevue’s online engagement hub www.engagingbellevue.com.

Following are notable observations made about the 2018 CAC vision from the online questionnaire. Important opportunities for updating the implementing the vision are described in greater detail starting on Page 10 of this report.

General support for the 2018 CAC vision and recommendations

Many respondents felt each major element of the vision is important. As a result, numerous respondents used the questionnaire to build off of the 2018 CAC vision by sharing specific ideas of how and where CAC recommendations could be implemented. The vision leverages new investments coming to Wilburton over the next few years, such as the Wilburton light rail station, Eastrail, and Grand Connection. Many respondents were excited to see more housing, jobs, activated streetscapes, and open spaces centered around these new investments.

A vibrant retail environment is essential to achieving the vision

Retail and restaurants ranked very high in importance among future land uses in Wilburton. Retail was also identified as integral to future housing, transportation, and placemaking opportunities. While many respondents noted the importance of existing regional retail in the study area, they also cared about small businesses thriving here. Providing appropriately sized retail spaces, which are affordable, and located near housing and transit were all seen as important pieces for implementing the vision

Housing is essential, yet which types of housing are most appropriate varies

Housing ranked very high in importance among future land uses in Wilburton. However, respondents had mixed views on the concept of “diverse and affordable housing”. Several respondents wanted to maximize the amount of housing and diversity of housing types that could be built within the Wilburton study area, while others were concerned about the impacts of dense housing on aesthetics, traffic, affordability, and neighborhood character – both within and outside of the study area.

Focus of future engagement efforts

While a broad set of participants were engaged recently, the number of questionnaire respondents who were people of color, renters, and people who live in multifamily housing were not representative of city demographics. Focused outreach to these groups is important for future outreach phases.

Overview of Outreach Activities

Phase 1 of community engagement began in April of 2022 and continued through December of 2022. Engagement goals for this phase included informing the public about the 2018 Wilburton CAC vision; expanding the list of stakeholders interested in participating in the process; and gathering input to re-affirm and enhance the vision.

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update team organized several outreach events, including four in-person “Deep Dives” that allowed community to learn about and provide feedback on environment, connection, access, and housing. The Wilburton Vision Implementation team coordinated to incorporate feedback specific to the Wilburton study area.

Community Group Presentations

The Wilburton Vision Implementation team presented to several community groups and city-affiliated boards, including Bellevue Diversity Advantage Network (BDAN), Bellevue Network on Aging (BNOA), Bellevue Youth Link Board, and Bellevue Parks & Community Services Board. Individuals were invited to ask questions, contribute feedback to staff, and participate in an online questionnaire and interactive map on Engaging Bellevue.

Staff were also invited to meet with community members at neighborhood events, including the Annual Wilburton Community Association Picnic.

Property Owner Conversations

Bellevue staff was invited to meet with a property owners’ group that convenes approximately once a month to discuss mutual interests in development/redevelopment of property they have interests in located within the study area.

Business Walks

The Wilburton Vision Implementation team met with employees and business owners at Design Market Center (1044 116th Ave NE) and Brierwood Center (12001-12005 NE 12th St), two shopping centers within the Wilburton study area. The purpose of these business walks was to share information on the Wilburton Vision Implementation, and connect businesses with Cultural and Economic Development staff. Several business owners and property owners of these sites have contacted the team on the Wilburton vision.

Online Questionnaire & Interactive Map

An online questionnaire and interactive map were posted on the City of Bellevue’s online engagement hub www.engagingbellevue.com. These online tools informed the community of recommendations that came out of the 2018 CAC visioning process and provided an opportunity to collect input on enhancing the 2018 vision. The questionnaire and interactive map were open from July 12 – December 15, 2022.

Questionnaire and Interactive Map Summary

Questionnaire and Interactive Map Overview

The questionnaire was organized into six sections, each focusing on a major element of the Wilburton vision. Respondents assessed the importance of each element in achieving the vision and identified additional opportunities for the project team to consider.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were directed to an interactive map to locate opportunities and challenges for implementing the Wilburton study area vision. Most pins were placed in the core of the study area, specifically in the area around Wilburton Station, and the Eastrail – Grand Connection intersection area (*Exhibit 2*). Clusters of pins were also placed around Kaiser/Overlake Medical Centers, Lake Bellevue, 120th Ave NE and Spring District, Main St, and the Wilburton Trestle gateway.

The questionnaire received 100 different responses. Significantly fewer people participated in interactive map; there were 9 contributors, leaving a total of 68 pins.

Who Did We Hear From?

Some demographic highlights for the questionnaire include (city-wide demographics from the 2019 American Community Survey (5-year estimates):

- **27.4% of respondents were people of color** (about half of the city's population are people of color)
- **13.5% of respondents were renters** (about half of households rent in the city)
- **22.1% of respondents live in multifamily housing** (about half of units in the city are multifamily)
- **33% were born after 1980** and are Millennials or Gen Z (that is 42 or younger – a little over half the population is under 40)
- **36 responses noted a language other than English spoken at home** (about 44 percent of people speak a language other than English at home, about 7 percent of households do not have a member who speaks English well)

In terms of respondents' relationship with the Wilburton study area today:

- **66% of respondents visit** the Wilburton study area (for shopping, eating, services, etc.)
- **62% of respondents travel** though the Wilburton study area
- **24% of respondents live** in the Wilburton study area
- **19% of respondents work** in the Wilburton study area
- **20% of respondents own property** in the Wilburton study area
- **10% of respondents own or operate a business** in the Wilburton study area
- **4% of respondents develop or represent properties** in the Wilburton study area

The sections below summarize opportunities and reoccurring themes for each topic. More detailed results and demographic information of respondents to the questionnaire are located in *Appendix: Engaging Bellevue Responses* on Page 16 of this report.

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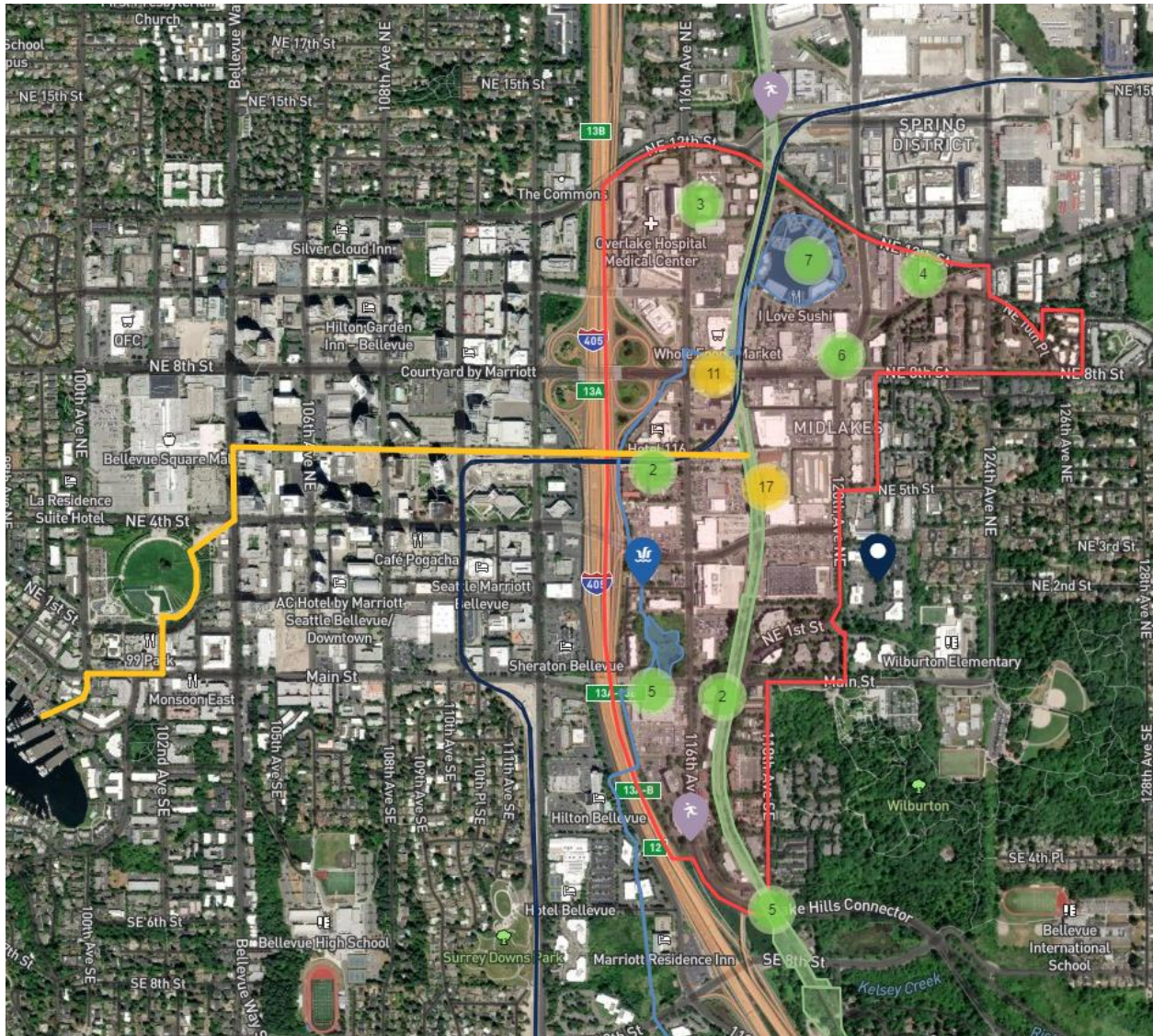


Exhibit 2. Engaging Bellevue Interactive Map – distribution of pin locations. Grand Connection shown in yellow, East Link shown in dark blue, and EastRail shown in green.

Introduction

The first section consisted of open-ended questions about changes within the Wilburton study area and Likert scale questions gauging the importance of different elements and land uses within the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

The first question asked “What has been the most significant change in Bellevue over the last 5 years that would impact the vision for the Wilburton study area?”. Reoccurring themes included:

- The arrival of Eastrail and East Link light rail stations over the next few years
- Increase in traffic congestion
- Continued lack of safety as walking and biking increases
- Increased demand for housing, particularly affordable housing
- Significant amount of development and growth in Downtown and BelRed
- Increase in the number of jobs, particularly tech jobs
- Increased demand for retail, compounded by loss of small businesses
- Increased crime

“Development planning and implementation around the light rail stations of East Main, Downtown, Spring District, and BelRed has accelerated, and it's clear we're going to need greater density sooner than previously expected.”

- Engaging Bellevue respondent

The second question asked “What aspects of the Wilburton study area today are important to preserve as Wilburton transforms into a future “urban mixed-use community?” Reoccurring themes included:






- Preserving access and natural feel of existing trails, greenspaces, and wetlands
- Preserving both smaller, locally owned businesses and larger grocery stores
- Preserving access to medical facilities
- Preserving existing affordable housing opportunities
- Preserving ease of travel through Wilburton (vehicle, transit, non-motorized, etc.)
- Preserving transition toward adjacent residential neighborhoods
- Preserving community-oriented and human-scale character

“The Botanical gardens are unique to the area and with the addition of the trail system it's important to have easy access to both for business and livability. Make it easy to connect with the downtown core.”

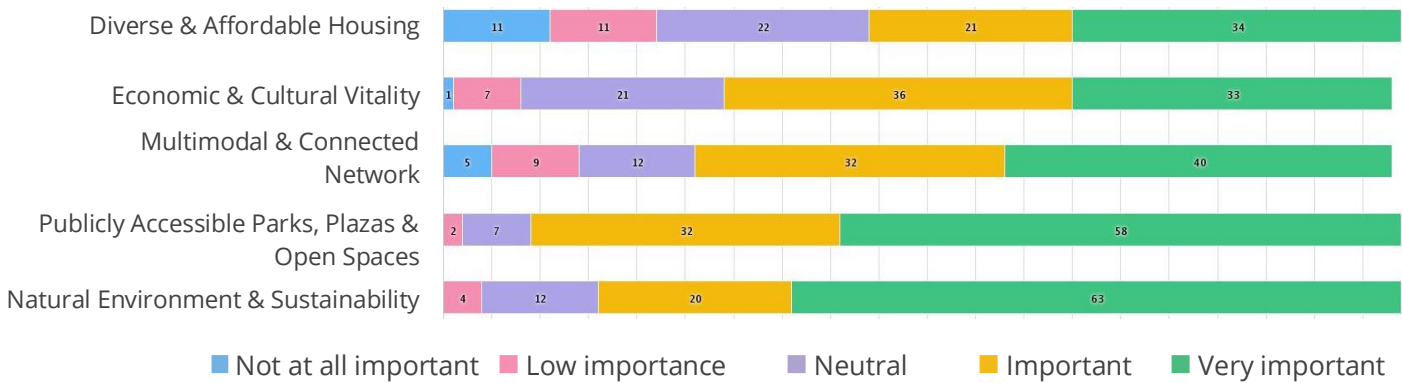
-Engaging Bellevue respondent

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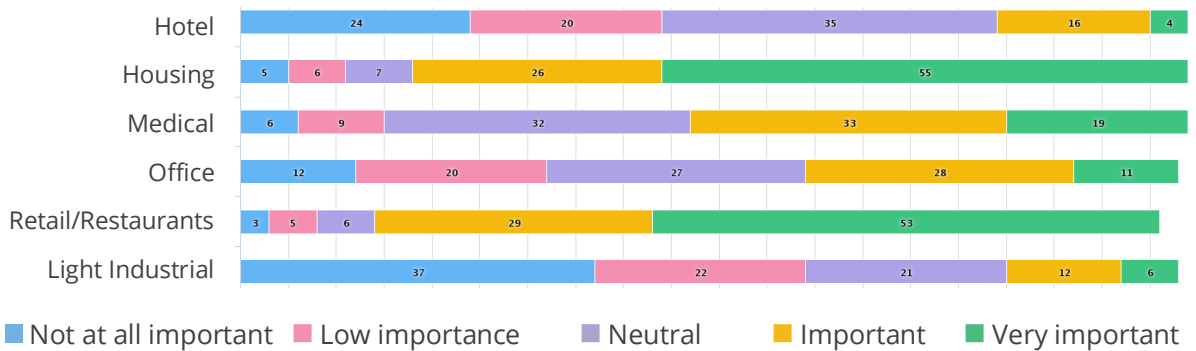
The questionnaire introduced five major elements of the vision, and asked respondents to assess the importance of each element in achieving the Wilburton vision:

-  Diverse & affordable housing
-  Publicly accessible parks, plazas & open spaces
-  Economic & cultural vitality
-  Natural environment & sustainability
-  Multimodal & connected network

Most respondents rated every element as “important” or “very important” in achieving the vision. Publicly accessible parks, plazas & open spaces on average ranked the highest in importance, followed by natural environment & sustainability. Diverse & affordable housing had a mixed response. More respondents rated diverse & affordable housing as “not at all important” or “low importance” compared to other elements.



The questionnaire also introduced six different types of land uses described in the vision. Responses were more varied in level of importance for respondents. **By far, retail/restaurants on average were ranked the highest in importance, followed closely by housing.** Respondents were neutral on medical and office, while hotel and light industrial (e.g. small-scale manufacturing and production) ranked least in importance.





Diverse & Affordable Housing

This section of the questionnaire provided an overview of existing housing conditions in the Wilburton study area, and the future vision for diverse and affordable housing. This section was accompanied by Likert scale questions gauging the importance of different housing opportunities in the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

On average, the top three most important housing opportunities were:

1. Workforce housing affordable to middle-income households
2. Mix of rental and ownership opportunities
3. Housing for different types of families (e.g. multi-generation, single parent households, households with no children)

A variety of residential building types were shared, ranging in intensity and mixed use. Most respondents found residential incorporating small footprint ground floor retail and office were appropriate for the study area, and the fewest respondents found residential towers as appropriate for the study area.

An open-ended question allowed respondents to identify other opportunities to contribute toward diverse and affordable housing. A companion interactive map allowed respondents to also locate housing opportunities on a study area map. Other opportunities included:

- Housing that supports transit and walkability, and minimizes the need for a car or parking
- Preserving smaller-scale housing opportunities
- Providing diversity of unit types, unit sizes, and unit affordability levels
- Ability to start small businesses from home (i.e. live-work units)
- Mixed use zoning allowing for a mix of both residential and commercial opportunities, and housing to be located above retail

"There must be a diversity of housing types, but also affordable houses for ownership, not just for rent. Ownership is important for families or individuals to build equity through home ownership and will bring in more people to the area."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

"I think that a combination of living, retail and office space can create the ecosystem for creating self-sustaining jobs that don't require cars."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent



Cultural & Economic Vitality

This section of the questionnaire provided an overview of existing businesses and services in the Wilburton study area, and the future vision for cultural and economic vitality. This section was accompanied by a Likert scale question gauging the importance of different cultural and economic opportunities in the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

On average, the top three most important cultural economic opportunities were:

1. Residential, retail, and office buildings within walking distance of transit
2. Creating new spaces suitable for small businesses
3. Neighborhood amenities serving Bellevue's diverse communities

An open-ended question allowed respondents to identify other opportunities to contribute toward cultural and economic vitality. A companion interactive map allowed respondents to also locate economic development opportunities on a study area map. Other opportunities included:

- Affordable commercial space, especially for smaller businesses
- Arts, performance, and other multicultural spaces
- Reduction of commercial parking lot sizes
- Ensuring a diverse population lives and works in Wilburton to support different economic opportunities
- Retail oriented toward Eastrail

"Make sure that small businesses can operate in new developments with affordable rent. We shouldn't just cater to the bigger businesses that can afford to rent here. Encouraging unique businesses along the Eastrail is a must."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

"Love the change to bring density to Wilburton with a 24 hour live/work/play environment."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent



Multimodal & Connected Network

This section of the questionnaire provided an overview of existing transportation conditions in the Wilburton study area, and the future vision for a multimodal and connected network. This section was accompanied by a Likert scale question gauging the importance of transportation opportunities in the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

On average, the top three most important transportation opportunities were:

1. Expanding pedestrian and bicycle trails through Wilburton
2. Improving transit connections between Downtown and Wilburton
3. Creating small block sizes that encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment

An open-ended question allowed respondents to identify other opportunities to contribute toward a multimodal and connected network. A companion interactive map allowed respondents to also locate transportation opportunities on a study area map. Other opportunities included:

- Enhancing crossings and pedestrian signals at intersections
- Reducing speeding (i.e. speed enforcement, designing roads to limit speeding)
- Increasing comfort, safety, width of sidewalks next to roadway
- Improved bicycle facilities (including safer bike lanes, bike parking, etc.)
- Implementation of Grand Connection lid across I-405

"To support local business, we need to promote local pedestrian/transit traffic and make the area feel safe. Wilburton should not be a freeway stop on the way to Downtown."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

"Currently, crossing Bellevue east-west on bike requires either going to a highway trail (I-90, 520) or riding on a dangerous arterial (Bel-Red, NE 8th). We need a more connected grid for pedestrians/bikes!"

-Engaging Bellevue respondent



Publicly Accessible Parks, Plazas & Open Spaces

This section of the questionnaire provided an overview of existing open spaces in the Wilburton study area, and the future vision for publicly accessible parks, plazas, and open spaces. This section was accompanied by a Likert scale question gauging the importance of open space opportunities in the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

On average, the top three most important open space opportunities were:

1. Parks and plazas along the Eastrail multi-use corridor
2. Streetscapes with urban amenities, such as seating, plantings, lighting, and art
3. Creating different public spaces as part of the Grand Connection initiative within Wilburton

An open-ended question allowed respondents to identify other opportunities to contribute toward publicly accessible parks, plazas, and open spaces. A companion interactive map allowed respondents to locate parks and open space opportunities on a study area map. Other opportunities included:

- Providing access to Lake Bellevue
- Ensuring that parks are easily accessible and proximate to housing
- Providing different experiences along Eastrail, including trail-facing commercial properties, greenery, and bike and running trails
- Providing different types of recreational facilities and gathering opportunities at parks

"We have 3 amazing parks in Wilburton, it would be fantastic to add urban spaces to our amazing woodlands! I commend the Spring District - build off of that and make Wilburton truly a neighborhood in a park with lots of diversity in plazas and gathering."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

"I like the idea of more smaller parks rather than one huge fancy park. I think the priority should be accessibility for everyone, and proximity is a huge factor in that."

-Engaging Bellevue respondent



Natural Environment & Sustainability

This section of the questionnaire provided an overview of natural features in the Wilburton study area, and the future vision for natural environment and sustainability. This section was accompanied by a Likert scale question gauging the importance of open space opportunities in the CAC vision (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important).

On average, the top three most important environmental opportunities were:

1. Preserving, restoring, and enhancing natural habitats
2. Adding climate-appropriate vegetation
3. Increasing urban tree canopy

An open-ended question allowed respondents to identify other opportunities a to contribute toward natural environment and sustainability. A companion interactive map allowed respondents to also locate natural environment opportunities on a study area map. Other opportunities included:

- Providing access to Lake Bellevue and improving natural conditions around it
- Converting existing asphalt into more naturalized/green state
- Protecting existing mature trees
- Providing planted buffers between vehicular traffic and sidewalks
- Environmental stewardship and education opportunities

“Climate change must be a part of every decision-making process in the city. Green space and tree cover is needed to combat the ‘urban heat island’ effect. Plants and tree species must be appropriate for our future warmer (and drier?) climate.”

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

“For a daylighted Sturtevant Creek to be healthy, the lake at its head needs serious clean-up to restore it to a state conducive to salmon and other life.”

-Engaging Bellevue respondent

Next Steps

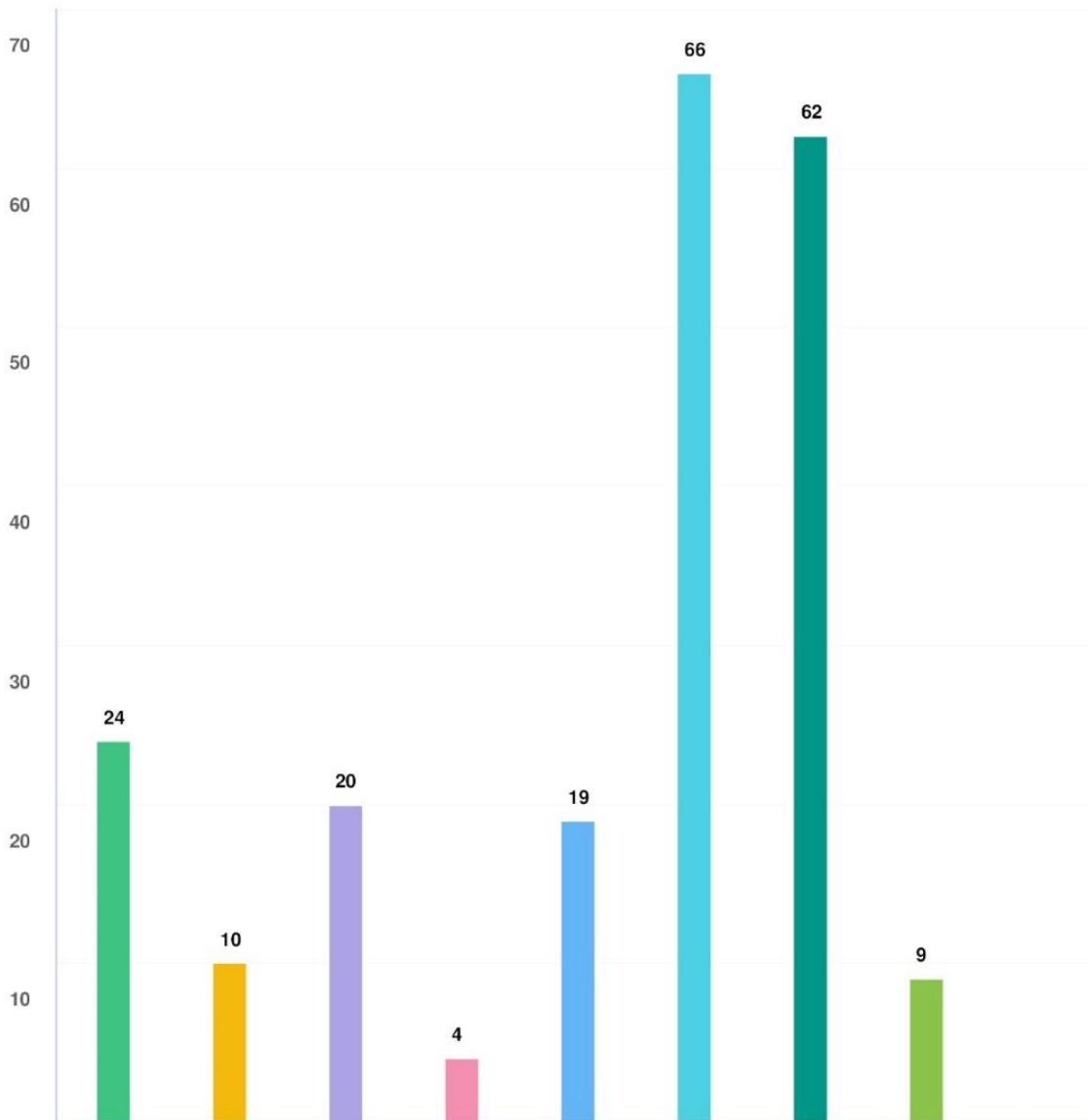
City staff are in the process of drafting proposed policy amendments to the Wilburton/N.E. 8th Street and BelRed Subarea Plans informed by input gathered during Phase 1 that both affirms policy concepts from the CAC vision and identifies new policy concepts to consider. Further refinement of policies and the development of the preferred land use alternative will occur with environmental review, public comment and input from Boards and Commissions all received during Phase 2 of engagement.

Input gathered during Phase 1 will also be used to shape the next phase of engagement by identifying key policy areas. Based on respondent demographics in the questionnaire, staff will be focusing outreach to the following groups: 1) minority-owned businesses within the study area; 2) current residents living within the study area; and 3) youth.

Appendix: Engaging Bellevue Responses

The following pages provide more detailed results and demographic information of respondents to the Wilburton Vision Implementation Engaging Bellevue questionnaire.

What is your relationship to the Wilburton study area? Check all that apply.



Question options

- I live in the Wilburton study area
- I own or operate a business in the Wilburton study area
- I own property in the Wilburton study area
- I develop or represent properties in the Wilburton study area
- I work in the Wilburton study area
- I visit the Wilburton study area (for shopping, eating, services, etc.)
- I travel through the Wilburton study area
- Prefer to specify
- Prefer not to answer

Optional question (100 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question



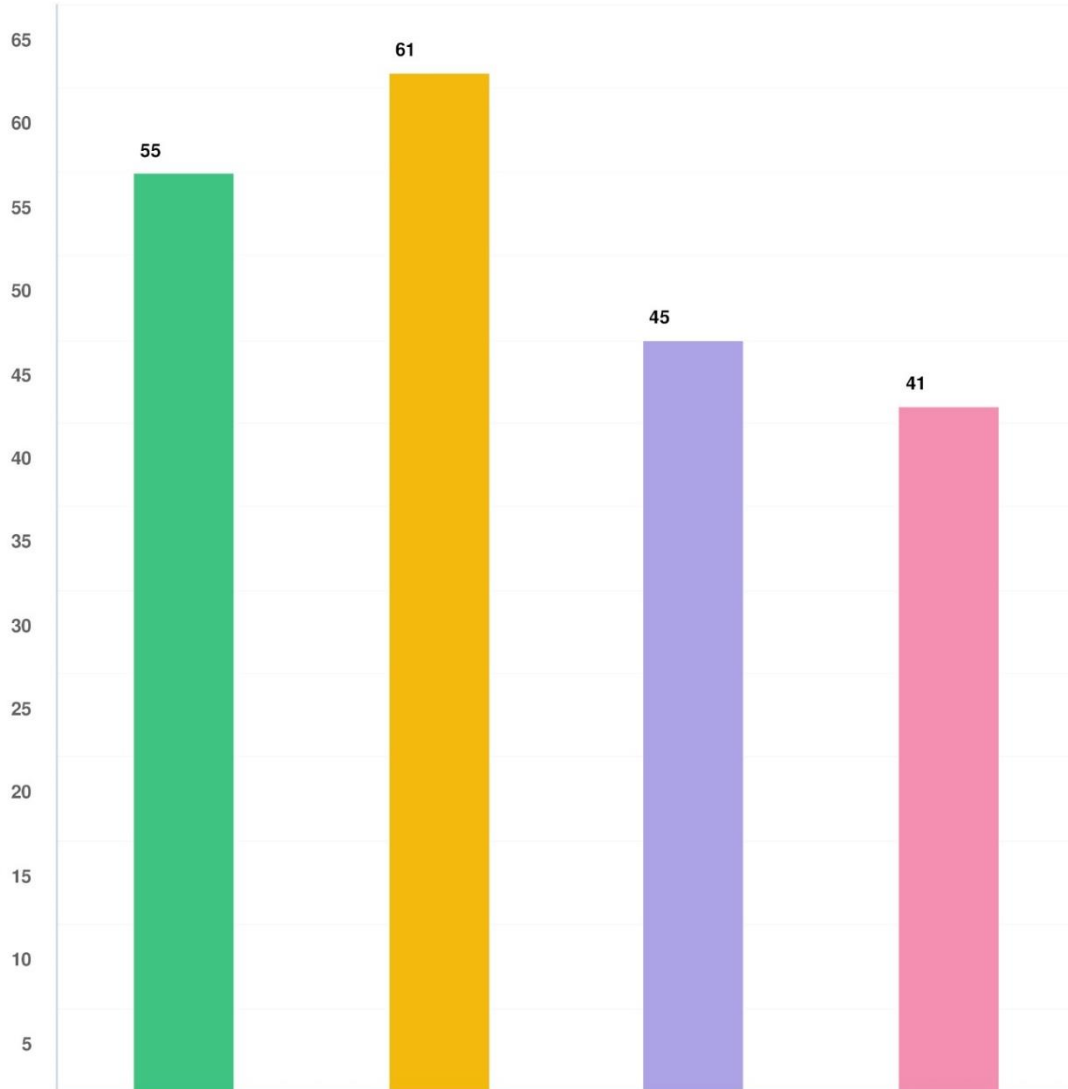
Diverse & Affordable Housing

What opportunities are important to consider when implementing the vision?



Optional question (85 response(s), 15 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

What types of residential buildings are appropriate for the Wilburton study area? Check all that apply.



Question options

- Residential towers and/or residential integrated into mixed-use towers
- Residential integrated into medium-scale commercial and office development
- Residential integrated with small footprint ground floor retail and office
- Attached residential types (i.e. townhomes, condos) walkable to amenities and open spaces

*Optional question (78 response(s), 22 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question*

Cultural & Economic Vitality

What opportunities are important to consider when implementing the vision?



Optional question (77 response(s), 23 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Multimodal & Connected Network

What opportunities are important to consider when implementing the vision?

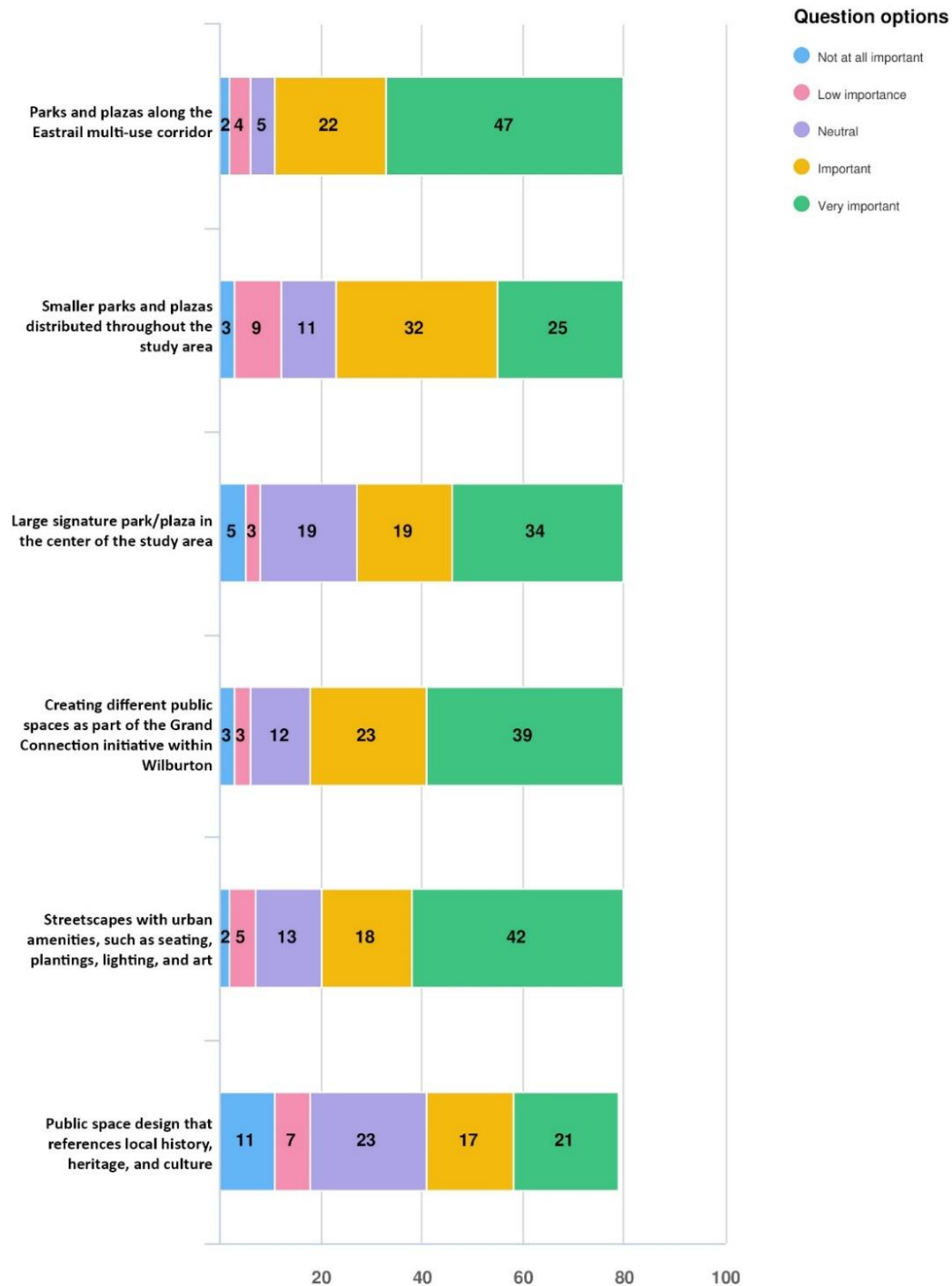


Optional question (83 response(s), 17 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question



Publicly Accessible Parks, Plazas & Open Spaces

What opportunities are important to consider when implementing the vision?



Optional question (80 response(s), 20 skipped)

Question type: Likert Question

Natural Environment & Sustainability

What opportunities are important to consider when implementing the vision?

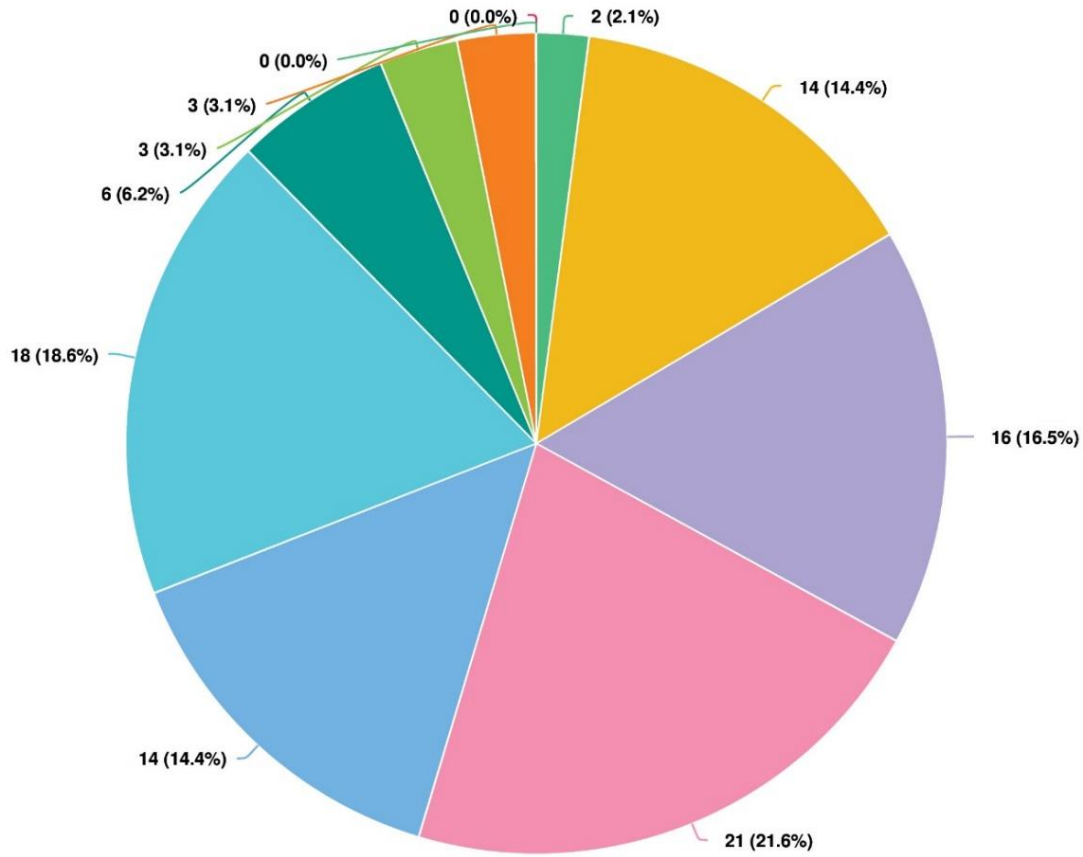


Optional question (81 response(s), 19 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question



Respondent Demographics – Age

What decade were you born in?



Question options

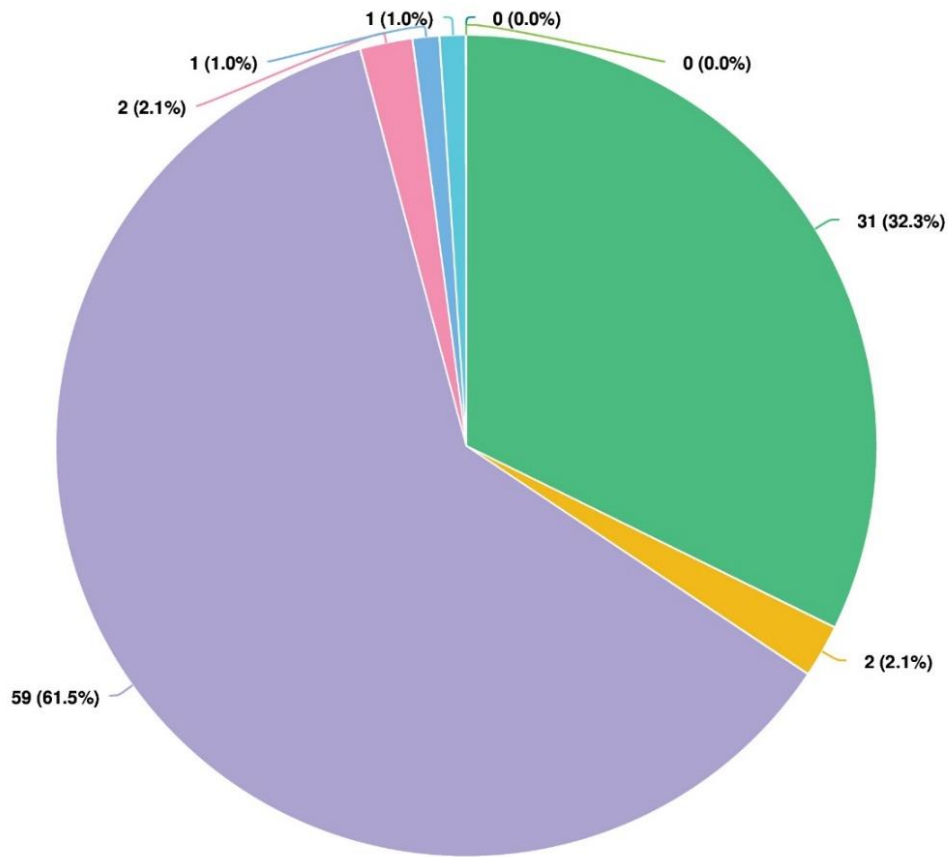
- 1920s
- 1930s
- 1940s
- 1950s
- 1960s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000s
- 2010s
- Prefer not to answer

Optional question (97 response(s), 3 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question



Respondent Demographics – Gender Identity

What is your gender identity?



Question options

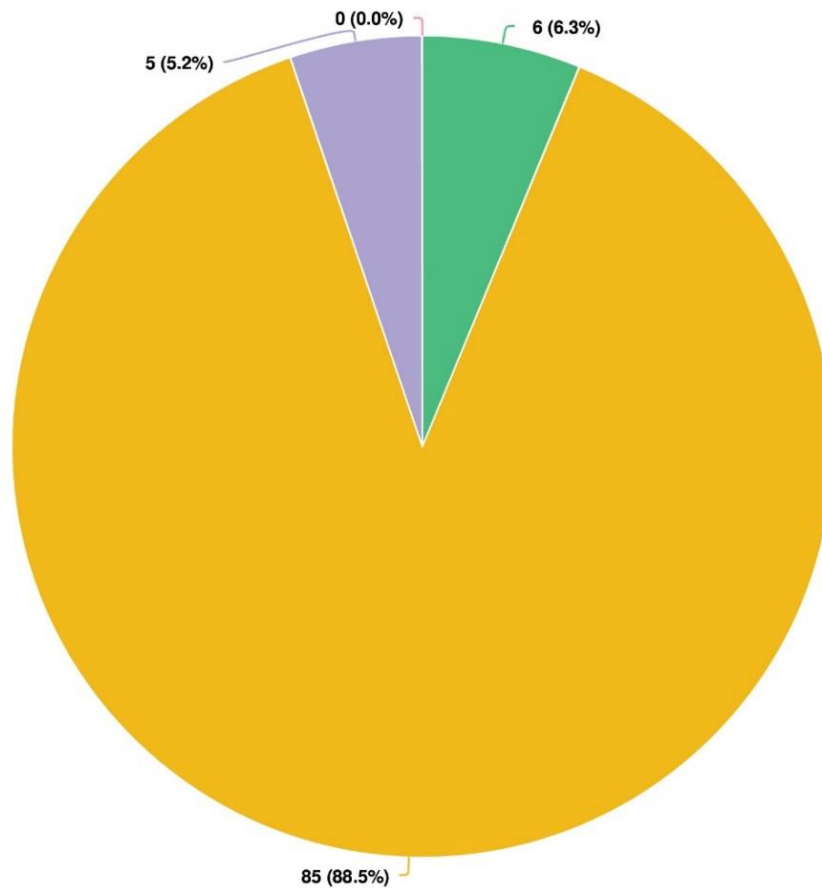
- Queer
- Intersex
- Prefer to specify
- Prefer not to answer
- Trans
- Male
- Gender Neutral
- Female

Optional question (96 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question



Respondent Demographics - Ability

Do you have a disability?



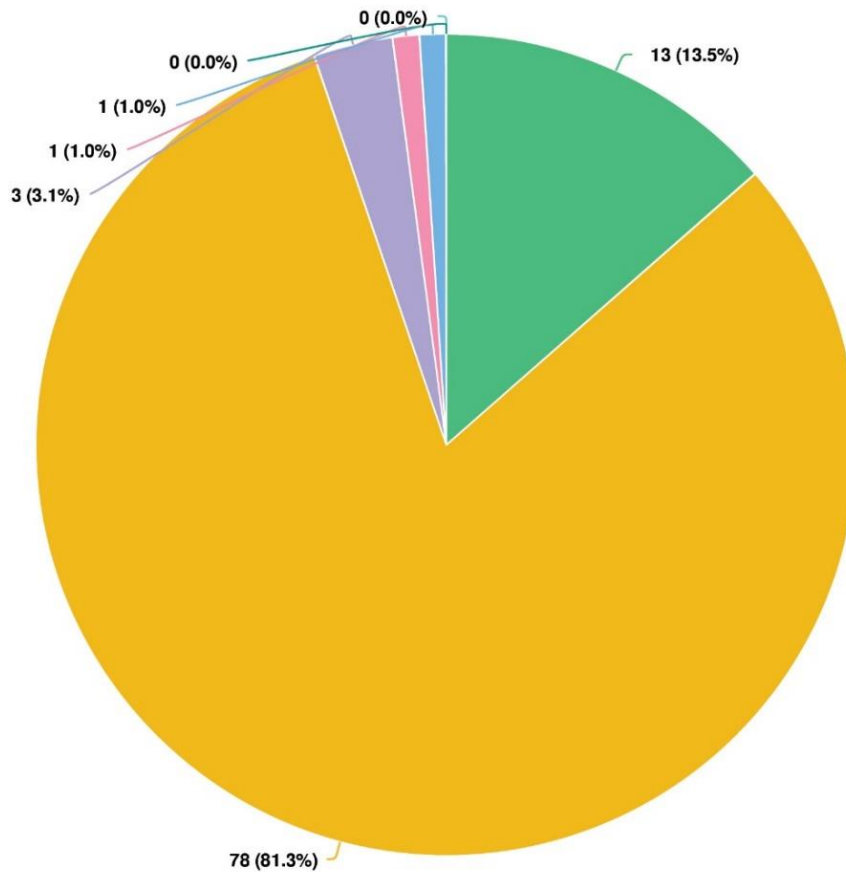
Question options

● Prefer to specify ● Prefer not to answer ● No ● Yes

Optional question (96 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question

Respondent Demographics – Housing Tenure (Rent or Own)

Do you rent or own your current residence?



Question options

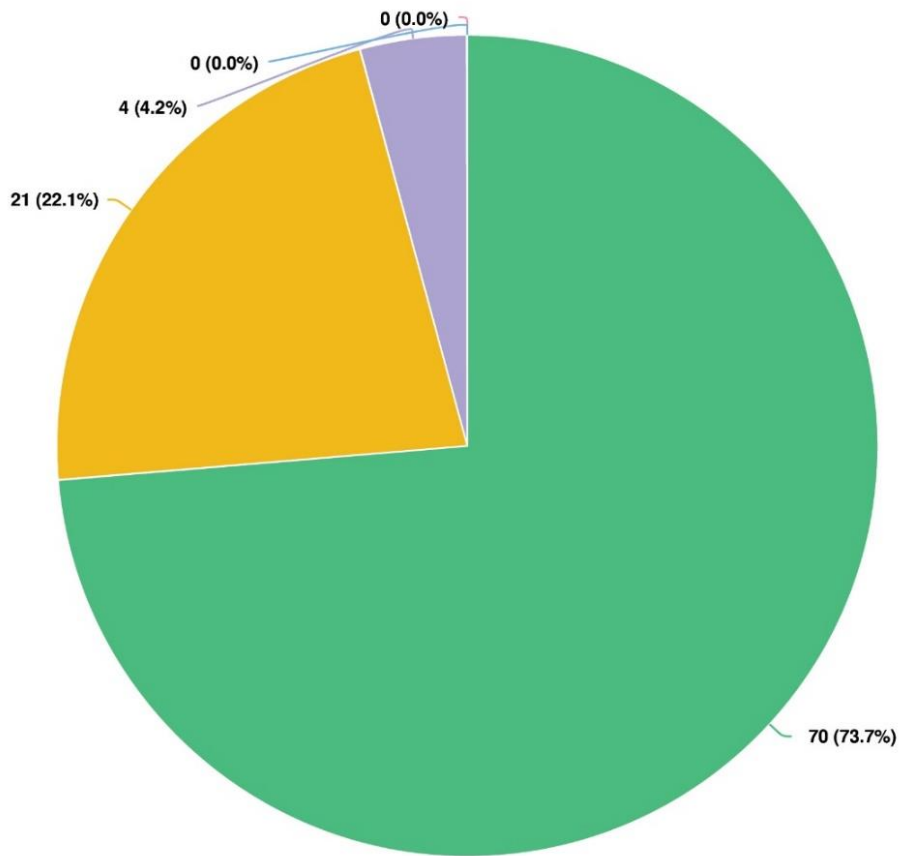
- Prefer to specify
- Currently without housing
- Prefer not to answer
- Living with friends
- Living with parents/grandparents/guardian
- Own
- Rent

Optional question (96 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question



Respondent Demographics – Housing Type

What kind of home do you live in?



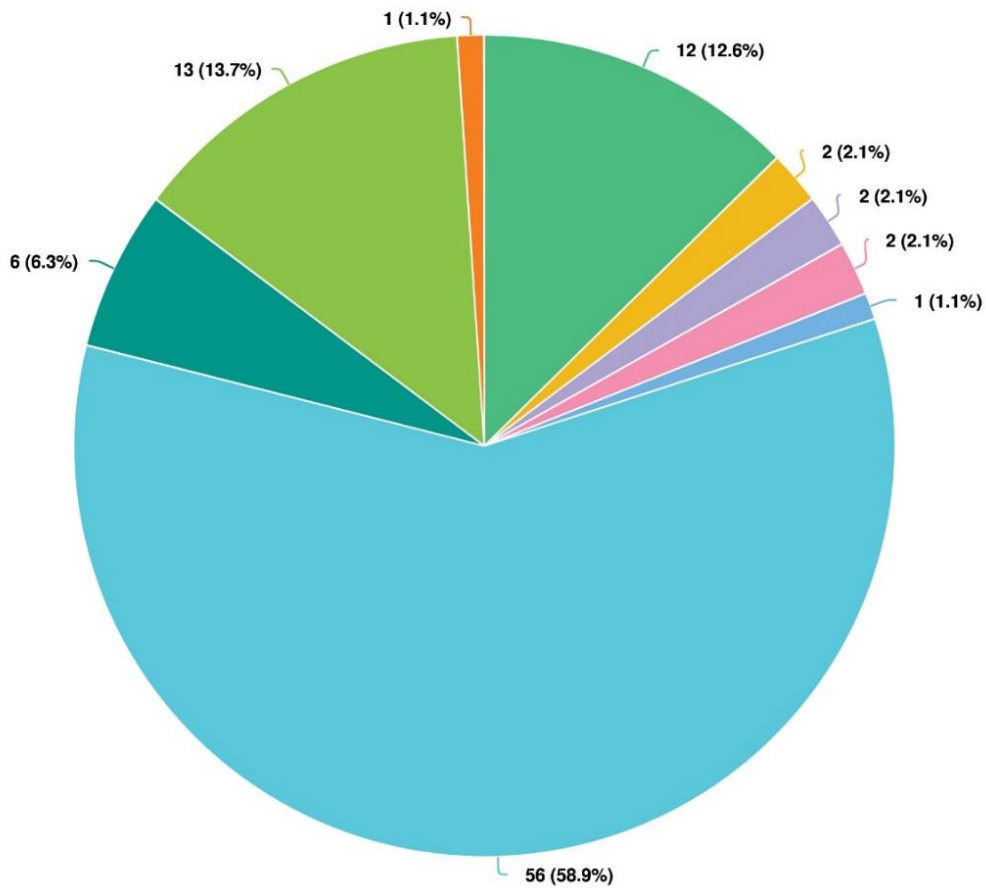
Question options

- Prefer to specify
- Currently Without Housing
- Prefer not to answer
- Apartment, Condominium, or Townhome
- Single-Family Home

Optional question (95 response(s), 5 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question

Respondent Demographics – Race and Ethnicity

What is your race or ethnicity?



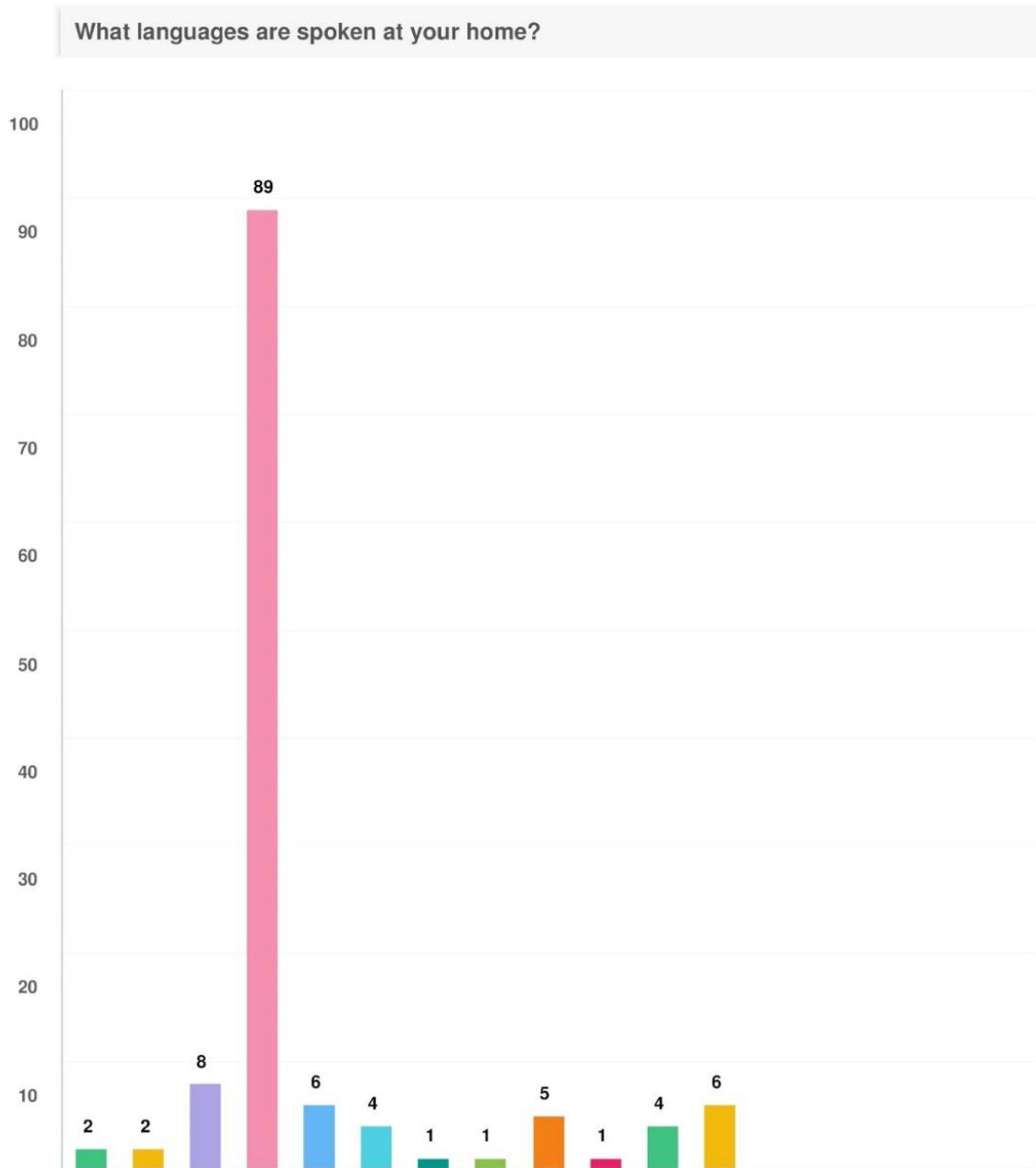
Question options

- Prefer to specify
- Prefer not to answer
- Two or More Races
- White
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Hispanic, latino/a, or Spanish Origin
- Black or African American
- Asian

Optional question (95 response(s), 5 skipped)
Question type: Dropdown Question



Respondent Demographics – Language Spoken at Home



Question options

- Vietnamese
 ● Telugu
 ● Tamil
 ● Korean
 ● Japanese
 ● Not listed (please specify)
- Prefer not to answer
 ● Urdu
 ● Spanish
 ● Russian
 ● Hindi
 ● German
 ● French
 ● English
- Chinese - Mandarin
 ● Chinese - Cantonese
 ● American Sign Language

Optional question (96 response(s), 4 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

