Appendix C: Public Input

1. Stakeholder Meetings
2. Focus Group Sessions
3. Public Interest Survey

Appendix C: Public Input

An important aspect of determining this need and demand for a Bellevue Aquatic Center is through public input regarding the project. With the help of the City of Bellevue staff and members of the SPLASH committee, a number of different public input mechanisms were utilized to gather information regarding community concerns and desires for such a project.

Stakeholder Meetings – A number of stakeholder meetings were held in person and over the phone during November and December of 2007. Some of these meetings were conducted by Bellevue staff and others by Ballard*King and Associates.

Focus Groups – 9 sessions with various interest groups in the area were conducted on October 29 and 30 of 2007.

Survey – a 400 response statistically valid survey of Bellevue residents was conducted in November of 2007.

The following pages present the findings from these different public input sources.

1. Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder meetings were held with the following groups:

Bellevue Community College
Bellevue School District
King County Parks and Recreation
Bellevue Chamber of Commerce
Bellevue Downtown Association
Neighboring Communities

Each of these groups was asked to provide specific input regarding a new aquatic center planning efforts and the possible role of their organization.

The following is a general summary of the findings from each stakeholder meeting:

Bellevue Community College (BCC) – This meeting was conducted with Jean Floten, President and CEO, by phone on December 17, 2007. She indicated that there is a need for an aquatic center on the Eastside and there seems to be a great deal of interest in the project.

Bellevue Community College does not have currently any space identified on their campus master plan to locate an aquatic center , and there appears to be a limited number of locations in for a center of this magnitude. The college may be able to provide a limited level of capital funding ($1-$2 million at most) through a matching state fund but the project would have to apply for this grant and will ultimately have to compete with other identified needs in the state.

If the center were built in relative close proximity to the college campus, then the BCC would probably use the facility for physical education, community education, and to support some medical programs through hydro therapy. Other uses might include water rescue and kayaking classes.

Ultimately there might be a possibility of using students to help with staffing of the center through a work study program.

Bellevue School District – A meeting was held with Jack McLeod, Facility Manager with the Bellevue School District on Friday December 7th. In this session, he reiterated the District's overall support for a new aquatics center, especially one that supports competitive swimming, diving, and water polo. However, the Bellevue School District does not have any current property that is either large enough for an aquatic center or that they would be willing to sell or provide for the project.

Currently, the Bellevue School District would also not be able to contribute any capital funding to build the facility, but would be interested in utilizing the center for district aquatic programs and would be willing to pay market rates for pool time.

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks – This meeting was conducted by phone on December 4th with Margaret Anthony, King County Parks Operations Manager. She noted that the Parks Division had been short on funding for years and as a result King County has been "giving away" their facilities (including aquatic centers). They will not be building any new pools in the County in the future, but do plan to continue to hold on to and schedule events at the King County Aquatic Center.

Margaret indicated that King County would most likely not be a capital partner in a new Eastside aquatic center as the County's existing capital budgets continue to shrink. However, this would ultimately be a decision for the county's elected officials.

The King County Aquatic Center was mandated to cover 50% of operating costs, but the facility has been unable to meet this requirement. While event revenue has increased steadily, it still is not producing enough to meet its goals. Contributing to this situation, are the increasing costs for staffing and utilities.

The county has a strong concern that the market is not large enough for two aquatic centers that focus on regional and national events.

Bellevue Chamber of Commerce – This meeting was held on January 8, 2008 with Shannon Boldizsar, Government Affairs Director; Wayne Ottum, Economic Development & COO, and Bob MacMillan from MacMillan Associates Consulting. These individuals indicated that the aquatic center project was of interest to the Chamber and that there was probably a need for a facility of this nature. They were intrigued by the idea that such a facility could have an economic impact on Bellevue itself.

However, the Chamber feels there are a number of other priorities that need attention, such as transportation and the redevelopment of the Bel Red Corridor. There are a number of other large projects that are trying to generate private dollars to fund their facilities, one of which is the proposed performing arts center. They feel that these types of priorities may make it tough to raise dollars for a new aquatic center.

The Chamber of Commerce will need to have more information regarding the particulars of the project before taking a position on it. There is concern that funding for the project would require a tax increase.

Bellevue Downtown Association – A phone conversation was held with the BDA President, Leslie Lloyd on December 3, 2007. She indicated that there is a need for a new aquatics center in Bellevue, but there are a lot of other needs in the community that will also need funding. She stated that Downtown Bellevue is in need of at least $185 million in funding for a variety of projects, and the City has not been able to keep up with the demand. She thinks that the aquatics center project is a great idea, but does not believe that it should compete with other funding needs in the community.

Ms. Lloyd is not sure what type of facility should be built. Having a recreation focus will help, but a competitive pool (if it were to be built downtown) would potentially bring a larger economic impact to the downtown. She is not sure of the downtown business community's overall support for the project, as there are many organizations in the area that are trying to raise capital for their projects. This includes a children's museum and a performing arts center.

It is not anticipated that the Bellevue Downtown Association will have much involvement in the project, other than helping to get information out to the public and business community.

Neighboring Communities **-** Phone conversations were held with the following organizations:

City of Sammamish – A discussion with Ms. Jessi Richardson, Director of Parks and Recreation, indicated that negotiations are still on going with the City and YMCA over a possible joint recreation center that would include aquatics. Funding by the City of Sammamish would require the passage of a bond issue in November 2008. Sammamish is also preparing to enter into an agreement with the City of Issaquah to complete a feasibility study for a possible aquatic center that would help both communities. This study would also look at the future of the Julius Boehm pool as well.

Ms. Richardson indicated that there is a strong need for a competitive aquatic center on the Eastside, as most of the existing aquatic facilities are old and in need of being replaced. While the needs of competitive swimming must be acknowledged, there are many other aquatic needs that will have to be served by a new aquatic center.

The City of Sammamish is willing to explore a possible partnership with Bellevue on a regional aquatic center, as an option to meet some of the aquatic needs of the Sammamish community. Site would be a primary driver on the level of interest. A site in close proximity to Sammamish (Marymoor Park or a site along I-90) would be required. It is possible that they might be willing to explore some level of capital and operations partnership for an aquatic center that is close to Sammamish.

**Update (Sept, 2008):* The City of Sammamish has not proceeded with further studies or partnership agreements, and no funds were identified for aquatics in the referenced November bond issue. While they continue to support the need for aquatics improvements and expanded programs, they have no plans at this time.

Issaquah School District – In a phone conversation with Steve Crawford of the Issaquah School District, it was noted that the district does not currently have a swimming pool, and they do not plan to build any pools in the future. He noted that there is a general lack of pool time on the Eastside, and that many of the existing pools were older and in need of being replaced or renovated. Mr. Crawford also indicated that there have been on going efforts to try and develop a new pool in the Issaquah/Sammamish area. The cities of Issaquah and Sammamish are preparing to do a joint study on a possible center, and the YMCA is also still pursuing a possible new facility with a pool.

The school district does not have any school sites in Bellevue that are large enough to support a regional aquatic center, and any possible utilization of a new Bellevue Aquatic Center would depend on not only what happens with local efforts to build a new pool, but also where the new aquatic center would be built in Bellevue. A site along the I-90 corridor would make it easier for school district swim teams to utilize a new aquatic center.

Lake Washington School District – A phone conversation was held with Forrest Miller, Director of Support Services, regarding aquatic facilities and needs in the Lake Washington School District. The school district has four high schools that either utilize Juanita High School's pool or the Hartman Pool. The LWSD is currently assessing the status of the Juanita pool, and it is possible that at some point in the future, they may not continue to operate this pool.

Lake Washington might be interested in purchasing pool time at a new aquatic center in Bellevue, but location would be critical. The new pool would have to be located on the north side of Bellevue to be convenient to their high schools.

Other – In addition to meeting with the communities and school districts noted above, staff of the City of Bellevue's Parks & Community Services Department held a meeting with a significant number of other Eastside communities to discuss the need for a regionally based aquatic center in Bellevue. The following communities were present at this meeting, held on November 16, 2007.

City of Redmond – The City of Redmond indicated that there is a major need for additional aquatic facilities on the Eastside, as most of the existing facilities need to be replaced. They are willing to explore a potential partnership for a regional aquatic center. The location of the facility is the primary driver on the level of interest. A site in close proximity to Redmond (Marymoor Park or a site along SR 520) would be required. Any site(s) further south of WA 520, would limit their involvement.

City of Kirkland - The City of Kirkland completed a recent recreational study which included an aquatics component. They have no current plans for additional aquatics facilities, but are supportive of a regional facility to meet some of the needs of their residents.

City of Seattle - The City of Seattle would be supportive of a center to assist to alleviate some of the regional needs for aquatics. However, their concerns stemmed from the distance to Bellevue and the amount of time required to travel to and from Bellevue and Seattle.

City of Mercer Island - The City of Mercer Island is willing to explore potential partnerships with Bellevue for an aquatics center. Mercer Island noted that their pool space is limited, and that the Northwest Center's Mary Wayte Pool is growing older and will require updating and potential replacement in the future. They were very engaged with the idea of a new facility in Bellevue, as the travel distance to and from Bellevue is easily managed by their residents.

City of Issaquah - The City of Issaquah acknowledged the need for an aquatics complex and has been working with the City of Sammamish on a possible feasibility study for an aquatics center to meet the needs of both communities. While Issaquah is supportive of the Bellevue study and potential center, they were unable to make any further commitments at this time. However, they would be willing to address potential future partnerships, if it would not conflict with their existing facilities.

*Update September 2008: the City of Issaquah started the formal public outreach process for their own aquatic feasibility study. Similar to the COB study, Issaquah's feasibility study is being conducted to assist Issaquah in determining whether to proceed with plans to construct and/or renovate an aquatic facility, and if so, under what circumstances; and to comparatively evaluate location, size, program elements, facility configuration, capital and operating costs, funding mechanisms, and market potential.

2. Focus Group Sessions

On October 29th and 30th 2007, a series of focus group sessions were held with different segments of the aquatic community. Focus groups included:

Age group swim team coaches
Water polo, diving and synchronized swim teams
High school swim and diving coaches
Local neighborhood association swimming pool representatives
Tri-athlete community representatives
Medical/therapy groups
USA Swimming representatives
Bellevue Family YMCA representatives
Northwest Center representative

Each of these groups was asked a series of questions regarding a potential new aquatic center. These included what issues were of concern regarding indoor aquatics, and what specific amenities should be included in an indoor facility.

Focus Group Sessions Overall Summary

The following are common overall comments from the focus group sessions.

- There was consensus that the Eastside area is a strong region for competitive swimming and there is a need for more pool time. However, there was some concern expressed regarding the depth of need and demand to justify a large new aquatic center.

- A new aquatic center should be a multipurpose facility that meets a broad range of aquatic needs and should contain some other non-aquatic amenities.

- The competitive swim market is relatively large and water polo is acceptable, but the diving and synchronized swimming markets are much smaller.

- All the organizations and teams were willing to pay market rates for the use of an aquatic center. However, groups and teams that are outside of the immediate Bellevue market will only use the center on a more occasional basis.

- Some of the existing pools and swim clubs in the area could be adversely affected by the presence of a new aquatic center.

- There are potential partners for the project that could provide some modest levels of capital funding, but they will require operational control of the facility.

- The market for a new aquatic center should focus, first and foremost, on the Eastside needs, followed by larger Seattle area events and activities. Large national events should remain the market for the King County Aquatic Center.

- The center should be located in an easily accessible site, preferably on the I-90 corridor.

Focus Group Findings

Age Group Swim Teams – this meeting was held with coaches of local age group swim teams. In attendance:

Laura Halter, Issaquah Swim Team
Tom Hutchison, Issaquah Swim Team
John Walker, King Aquatic Club

Key findings from this meeting includes:

- King Aquatic Club – this Club covers an area from Tacoma to Mercer Island and has approximately 350 swimmers. They swim twelve months a year at the King County Aquatic Center, Mary Wayte pool, as well as a number of other pools on the south side of the Seattle metro area. They practice seven days a week (both morning and evening). The rates for pool rentals vary from $40-$45 or more - they pay up to $260,000 a year for pool time. The King Aquatic Club also has a management arrangement with some of the pools that they use.
- Issaquah Swim Club –this club has approximately 260 swimmers that utilize three pools, including Boehm and Hazen High School. The club swims 11 months a year and has both morning and afternoon practices. They pay a little under $10 per lane/per hour for pool time, and their yearly total for pool rental is up to $120,000 a year.
- There is a very strong competitive swimming community in the Eastside area that is being constrained by the lack of pool time and pool "quality." Both teams have grown substantially in the last few years and now have waiting lists.
- There are a number of other swim teams in the area, including Chinook, Best, Wave, and a team at the Pro Club. Most teams have about 100 swimmers, however, the PRO Club's swim team has 240 members with a waiting list of 75 (Nov 2008)
- According to these swim team representatives, a new aquatic center in Bellevue should have the following:
    - 50-meter pool
    - Seating for 800 – 1,000
    - Ample deck space for swimmers
    - Adequate parking
- While the aquatic center should be designed to accommodate a majority of the swim meets, the focus should be more on meeting the specific needs of the Eastside area - training time is a more pressing issue than having a space for meets, but meets will be important. Local and regional meets in the Seattle area should be the emphasis, leaving the larger national meets to the King County Aquatic Center.
- Local teams in the area would rent pool time in a new facility, but may not entirely leave their home pools for training. Swim teams would be willing to pay rates to use a new pool at a level that is comparable to other local facilities. A rate as high as $15 to $20 per lane hour was mentioned as being at the high end.
- It is their belief that a new 50-meter pool would grow the market more than moving users from existing pools.
- The location of a new competitive pool would be critical. Swimmers are willing to drive a considerable distance for meets and long course training (but not so far for short course

training), but the center should be in a central location along the I-90 corridor. They would prefer to see the facility privately managed rather than municipally run.

Triathlete Community – there was one representative of the triathlete community present at this meeting.

In attendance:

Jill Fry- Triathlete and coach

Key findings:

- There are a much larger number of triathletes in the Seattle area than in most other metropolitan areas of the United States, and there has been a strong growth in the number of triathlons in the Seattle area.
- Triathletes are reluctant to join a masters swim program as they often feel intimidated.
- Triathletes are interested in having an aquatic center where they could train on a regular basis. Many triathletes do use the Bellevue Aquatic Center, but there are no day time training times available.
- The Pro Club also has a significant triathlete training program, and there is training time available at Juanita High School, Bellevue YMCA, and the Bellevue Club.
- There needs to be several lap lanes available for training for an hour to hour and half time slot. To serve the midday market, there also needs to be drop-in child care services. Other non-aquatic services that would be of advantage would include a cycling/spinning studio, a group fitness area, and a weight/cardio equipment area.
- A location that has easy access to the major interstates (I-90 and I-405) is essential.
- Triathletes are willing to pay user fees for lap space.
- There is a greater need for competitive pool space than the existing pools in the area can provide.

Water Polo, Diving, and Synchronized Swim Teams – representatives of water polo, diving, and synchronized swimming were present at this meeting.

In attendance:

Patti Sutherland, Pacific Northwest Diving
Bruce Glidden, United Water Polo
Craig Penner, Seattle Synchronized Swimming

Key findings:

Diving

- Ms. Sutherland indicated that there were not nearly enough facilities to support competitive diving in the Seattle area. Pacific NW Diving currently has 60 divers, but they are hindered by the lack of pool time which does not allow them to grow. They believe that there is market for up to 250 divers. There used to be 8 diving clubs in Seattle and now there is only one. The only true diving facility is at the King County Aquatic Center. They dive 4 days a week for 2.5 hours and often share the dive tank with synchronized swimming.

- For high school diving, all four schools in Bellevue practice at the same time at the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center on a single board. There are between 20-25 kids total.
- Competitive divers need a facility with multiple boards, at least two 1-meter boards and one 3-meter board. A dive tower with 3, 5, and 10-meter platforms would be great for national meets, but is not essential for a local diving program. A tower could also allow recreational slides to be operated from this location as well. There also needs to be space for dryland training in areas of the center.
- There is concern that the market for diving is shrinking, as there are not enough facilities to drive increased use. The cost for renting pool space is also going up, which further limits the market.
- They would be willing to rent a diving area 5-6 days a week from 4-9pm. They currently pay $54.00 an hour for pool space.

Water Polo

- Mr. Glidden reported that they have 70-80 kids that train year round, approximately 30 hours a week at Edgebrook in the summer and at the King County Aquatic Center during the other seasons. The club pays $60 an hour at Edgebrook and $310 an hour and up at KCAC. They host 3-4 competitions a year.
- There are two other water polo clubs in the Seattle area, both of which are smaller organizations.
- In the area north of Pierce County, water polo is only a club sport for high schools, but in the area of Pierce County and south, water polo is a varsity sport. There are 3 high school teams in Bellevue and another in Mercer Island. Boys compete in the fall and girls in the winter/spring seasons.
- Water polo needs an area that is 25-yards by 30-yards (an 8-lane 25-yard pool) with a depth of at least 9 ft.
- United Water Polo could commit to 30 hrs a week of pool time in a new facility (some of the time would be used strictly for conditioning), if they could get a firm commitment on pool availability.

Synchronized Swimming

- Seattle Synchronized Swimming is a 25 year old club that once had 75-80 members, but now only has about 50. The team members come from all over the Seattle area, and currently swims at St. Edwards pool and hosts some events (3 to 4 a year) at Juanita High School.
- They currently pay $46 to $62 an hour for pool time and use 19 hours a week for 10 months a year. Times of use are 5-8pm on Monday and Wednesday, 5-7:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as 5-7pm on Friday, 8am-12pm on Saturday and 3-7pm on Sundays.
- The club would like to have more pool time and believes that the number of members would grow as a result.
- There is only the one synchronized swimming club in Seattle, but there are four other clubs in the surrounding area.
- Local big events include a national meet that is held every 6 years and smaller such event every 3 years. Large national meets are held at the King County Aquatic Center.

- Ideally a pool that is 20-meters by 30-meters with a 3 meter depth is needed, but at minimum, they need an area the size of a 6-lane x 25-yard pool and 2.5-meters of depth. Having an elevated spectator seating area is also desired.
- Each of the three groups noted that a central location with easy freeway access would be an important criteria for site selection.

Bellevue Family YMCA – two representatives of the Bellevue Family YMCA were in attendance at this focus group.

In attendance:

Terry Pollard, Group Executive
Keri Stout, Associate Executive Director

Key findings:

- For the Bellevue Family YMCA aquatics represents a major portion of their program offerings. However, this is difficult with a small 4-lane 25-yard pool. Swimming lessons is the largest aquatic program. They try to achieve a balance between programming and drop-in use of their pool. They have time set aside for lap swimming, youth swim team use, as well as for a master's team.
- Due to the small size of their pool, the YMCA is forced to rent other pools in the area, including Samena and the King County Aquatic Center. Most of the rental time is for their competitive swim teams.
- The YMCA has determined that there is simply not enough pool time available in the Eastside area due to the general lack of indoor pools.
- The YMCA plans to build new facilities on the Eastside in the next several years.
    - Coal Creek/Newcastle – The YMCA has broken ground for the construction of a new 49,000-square-foot fully-accessible building which will contain an aquatic program featuring two pools for lap swimming, aquatic classes and youth and older adult programs.
    - Sammamish – there are no current plans for a facility at this time; however, they hope to have a new Y in the next few years. It would definitely include some type of an indoor pool.
    - Bellevue Family YMCA – there is a desire for some type of expansion at their current site, and they would like to expand the aquatics program, as well as other aspects of the center.
- The YMCA had the following opinion on the preliminary SPLASH plan for a new aquatic center:
    - The facility has a very strong competitive swimming orientation, but not as much for other aquatics interests.
    - There is some concern that the market may not be large enough to support a center of this size and magnitude. Some of the uses may have to come at the expense of other existing aquatic facilities.
    - It should be realized that most people will not drive far (more than 10 to 15 minutes) to use an aquatic center.
    - The project will need to look for partnerships with other organizations, such as the YMCA, to succeed.

- The YMCA is interested in a possible partnership on the project. The YMCA would have a capital interest in the project, but it would be until 2010 or later before a fundraising campaign could begin. Even then, an aquatic center would have to compete with other YMCA projects for funding.
- Any capital commitment by the YMCA will require that they have operational responsibility as well. If the project has this level of financial and operational involvement, then it should be a YMCA rather than some other hybrid facility.
- A site would have to be found that is some distance away from their current Bel Red Road site, so they do not compete with themselves. A site in the Bel Red corridor area would have a dramatic negative impact on their existing YMCA.

Medical/Therapy Groups – four representatives of local medical therapy groups attended this focus group.

In attendance:

Harriett Ott, Community Integration Services
Susan Collins, Harborview Medical Center
Cindy Brennan, Olympic Physical Therapy
Sallie Cowgill, Olympic Physical Therapy

Key findings:

- Community Integration Services provides aquatic therapy programs at the Bellevue Aquatic Center, in addition to four other pools in the area. They are currently serving approximately 150 individuals in their programs.
- The Bellevue Aquatic Center has the only "true therapy pool" anywhere in the Eastside area. However, there is not enough pool time available (especially in the evenings and weekends) for the therapy needs of the area. The Bellevue pool is currently utilized from 9am till 4pm Monday through Friday. The fee is $18 per hour for a single patient and $48 for a full class. There is a real concern that these rates result in a program that is not affordable for people who need it most.
- Harborview Medical Center is a Seattle trauma center, that provides water therapy for its patients at the Fircrest State Mental Hospital pool. They rent the pool once a week for an hour and pay $60. Harborview would like to utilize evening and weekend times (limited to a couple of hours a week) at the Bellevue Aquatic Center, but these times are not available. They serve approximately 200-400 patients a year.
- Olympic Physical Therapy has 9 clinics in the Puget Sound area, including 5 in the Eastside. None of their clinics have therapy pools. They would be interested in referring patients to the aquatic center, but are not sure that they would actually do physical therapy on site. If they did, Olympic Physical Therapy would be interested in a rental arrangement for pool time.
- Olympic Physical Therapy has a strong interest in being a contract provider of fitness classes and personal training (both aquatic and dryland) for the center.
- There is a belief by some that the current Bellevue Aquatic Center is not being used to its full potential and should be marketed better.
- While a new therapy pool would be great in Bellevue, there is actually a higher need for this type of pool in Seattle itself.

- A new therapy pool should have:
    - Wide steps for access and exercise use
    - A 10ft long bench in the pool for exercise
    - A pool area that is larger than the current Bellevue pool and needs to handle up to 20 patients and therapists
    - Disinfection should be by other means than chlorine
    - The area will need to have some privacy
    - Lifts and a ramp are both necessary
    - The water temperature should be 92-95 degrees
    - Hot tub that is 95 degrees
    - There is a need for deeper water (4-8 feet) as well as shallower depth of 2-3 feet. A current channel could also be utilized by patients
    - Office space for use by therapists.
    - The general locker rooms should be open and easily accessible
    - There will need to be a number of assisted change rooms that have a toilet, shower, sink, and large, wide, adjustable height changing bench.

- A community aquatic center would need to include: opportunities to teach children how to swim, programs to serve the needs of senior population, and have more warm water than cold water.

- The aquatic center needs to be in a location that is easily accessible from the entire Eastside. A location off of I-90 is preferred. Therapy patients are willing to come from a long distance for a good pool. There will need to be more handicapped parking spaces than what is currently available at the Bellevue Aquatic Center. The site should also be on a main bus line.
- The availability of pool time and cost will determine the level of use of the pool for therapy.
- There are many hospitals in the Seattle area that utilize water therapy, but only the VA hospital has its own pool.

Local Neighborhood Association Swimming Pools –representatives of local swim clubs (Midlakes Swim League) and neighborhood swimming pools attended this focus group.

In attendance:

Deanndra McKaig, Norwood Community Swim Club
Tonya Swick & Patty Grossbard, Samena Swim & Recreation Club
Laura Halter, Edgebrook Swim & Tennis Club

Key findings:

- The Midlakes Swim League is made up of 26 smaller (primarily outdoor) swimming pools in the Eastside area.
- The Norwood Community Swim Club is located in Bellevue, and has an outdoor 4-lane lap pool that it is too shallow for any swim team uses. They have approximately 100-140 families and their season runs from mid May to mid September. Most members come from the immediate area, and the yearly fee is $400. Norwood is not overly concerned about a negative impact from a potential new Bellevue Aquatic Center, but is not as supportive of the recreational pool aspects of the project.

- Samena Swim & Recreation Club is also located in Bellevue and it has both indoor and outdoor pools (indoor is a 6 lane 25 yard pool and outdoor is a 6 lane pool). They serve as a community swimming pool, have a large lesson program, and cosponsor the BEST Swim Team. Many other swim teams train at this facility as well. Membership is 1,600 units or approximately 6,000 individuals. Rental fees for swim team use are $50 an hour for 4 lanes. Samena also has other dry side amenities and programs. They do have some concern as a not for profit organization regarding the potential impact of a new aquatic center, especially any outdoor or recreational elements.
- The Edgebrook Swim & Tennis Club has an outdoor 6 lane pool that is bubbled during the off season for use by swim teams. Their fees are $500 a year. They are not concerned about potential competition from a potential new Bellevue Aquatic Center.
- There is definitely a need for more competitive water but, they are not sure about recreational water.

USA Swimming – two representatives of USA Swimming attended this session.

In attendance:

Ron Van Pool, Past President, USA Swimming
Andy Hathaway, Pacific Northwest Swimming Chairman

Key findings:

- The representatives of USA Swimming are aware of the need for more competitive swimming pools in the Eastside. There is also a concern over the likelihood that the Titlow 50 meter pool in Tacoma will be lost in the near future. Most of the swimmers in the Seattle area come from the Eastside.
- The University of Washington would like to build a new indoor 50-meter pool, but the focus for the future is on a new football stadium and not much else. It will be difficult to find a site for the pool until the stadium issue and the other transportation issues are decided. There is the possibility that the City of Seattle might be willing to complete a feasibility study for a new 50 meter pool as part of a partnership with the University.
- It will be critical that a new aquatic center in Bellevue have a multi-use approach. It should not be just a competitive venue, but should also have recreational and therapy uses. A new facility should also focus on a learn to swim program, the development of lifelong aquatic activities, and the promotion of the quality of life that a pool will bring.
- Funding for this project will require a broader base of interest and use, than just competitive swimming. The facility should also contain other non-aquatic elements as well to be successful.
- A new aquatic center will need to have a different orientation from the King County Aquatic Center. The Bellevue facility should not pursue and try to host national level events, as these are more appropriate for the KCAC.
- Ideally USA Swimming would like to see a regional plan for meeting the needs of competitive swimming in the greater Seattle area.
- Partnerships with other organizations and entities should be strongly pursued.
- There are a very large number of private swim clubs in the area and most have waiting lists. Most of the swim teams in the area are also at capacity and have waiting lists.

Northwest Center – A representative of Northwest Center attended this session.

In attendance:

Ty Taylor, Vice President

Key findings:

- A new aquatic center should contain more than just swimming pools. It should be a multi-use facility with a variety of components. The leisure pool will drive use and revenues in the center, and the competitive aspects of the project should probably be toned down.
- Most of the pools that Northwest Center operates now (Mary Wayte, Northshore, St. Edwards, and Redmond) still have pool time available, just not at prime use times of late afternoon or early evening. There is a concern that there may not be enough demand to support a 50 meter pool. Northshore (Bothell) only hosts 3 meets a year and has plenty of capacity. Mary Wayte (Mercer Island) has less time available during prime time, but its day time hours are very slow. They rent their pools for $100 an hour. For each one of their pools, they receive a $100,000 payment in public funding from the local jurisdictions that they are located in.
- Most people are not willing to drive very far (less than 15 minutes) to use a pool.
- There is definitely an aging pool inventory on the Eastside. The bond repayment schedule will be completed for all the Forward Thrust pools by 2010-2011. Northwest Center estimates that their pools have approximately 10 years of functional life left. After this time, these pools will need to be replaced.
- Northwest Center would like to be a part of the project team and possibly could contribute up to $5 million, but they would have to be operators of the facility.
- The aquatic center will need to be located at a central site within the City.

High School Swimming and Diving Coaches – representatives of high school swim teams that may also coach local swim clubs attended this focus group.

In attendance:

Eric Bartleson, Newport High School, Newport Swim & Tennis Club
Cory Hilderbrand, Bellevue High School, Bellevue Club
Nick Johnson, Sammamish High School
Kris Daughters, Liberty High School, Overlake Country Club Pool
Laura Halter, Issaquah High School
Jeffrey Lowell, Mercer Island High School

Key findings:

- The high school swim season is –
    - Boys – mid November to the end of February
    - Girls – Last of August to mid November
- Most high schools pay between $50 and $75 an hour for pool time and usually $500 to $600 a week. The cost for pool time is high.
- All divers in the Bellevue high schools train together at the Bellevue Aquatic Center.
- Newport High School trains in the outdoor pool at Newport Hills Swim & Tennis Center. There are 80 girls and 8 divers and 49 boys and 2 divers.

- Bellevue High School trains at the Woodridge and Mercerwood outdoor pools and at the Bellevue Aquatic Center. There are 58 girls and 2 divers and 40 boys and 1 diver.
- Sammamish High School trains at the Bellevue Aquatic Center and the team has 30 girls and 10 boys.
- Interlake High School trains at Samena or Newport Hills and the team has 24 girls and 20 boys.
- All Bellevue high schools must leave the City for their meets, which most are held at Juanita High School or at Mary Wayte on Mercer Island.
- Liberty High School in Issaquah trains at Hazen High School and a limited amount of time at Boehm. Their meets are held at Boehm. They would not use a new Bellevue Aquatic Center, unless they were swimming against a Bellevue high school team due to the distance from their school. Still there is not enough pool time in the area.
- Mercer Island High School has 77 girls and 55 boys on their team. They use Mary Wayte pool for training and meets, and have some use of the Mercer Island Country Club pool as well. They would have limited use of a new aquatic center; they might host a meet or use the new pool for league championships.
- There is a strong demand for a competitive pool for both training and meets. Pool time becomes most acute during the girls season. Diving is not that strong on the Eastside.
- There is a strong demand for swimming lessons, and the city should focus on making sure all youth have the opportunity to learn how to swim.
- The aquatic facility should serve a variety of aquatic needs.
- There is some concern that public pools in the area have the perception of not being well run.
- Some of the existing pools in the area that are currently renting to swim teams may be hurt financially if a new competitive aquatic center was built in Bellevue. This would be true for Newport Hills Swim and Tennis Club, but would not affect other facilities as much.
- Newport Hills Swim & Tennis Club has two pools, one of which has a bubble in the winter. They are nearing capacity as a club.
- The Bellevue Club has an extensive aquatic center, but it is at capacity and does not have any time available for outside rentals. It would not be affected at all by a new aquatic center. They have their own 300 member swim team and rent pool time for long course training in Seattle.
- The Overlake Country Club has no concern over the impact of a potential new pool in Bellevue. They are an outdoor, neighborhood based club.
- Many of the outdoor swim clubs have aging facilities and some are struggling financially.
- Specific facility needs include:
    - 50-meter by 25-yard pool
    - Recreational water – this is very important
    - Opportunities to do multiple aquatic activities at the same time and location
    - A swim team coaches' office
    - A place for dryland training (either on deck or in another area of the center)

- There is a concern over scheduling and that the needs of the local high school swim teams in Bellevue will be squeezed out by other users.
- A site that is on the I-90 corridor is important. It should be close to restaurants, have adequate parking, and easy freeway access.

3. Public Interest Survey

Overview of the Methodology

The City of Bellevue conducted an Aquatic Center Feasibility Survey during November of 2007 to help assess the future direction of aquatic facilities and services in the City. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Bellevue. The survey was administered by phone.

Leisure Vision worked with City of Bellevue officials, as well as members of the Ballard*King and Associates project team in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

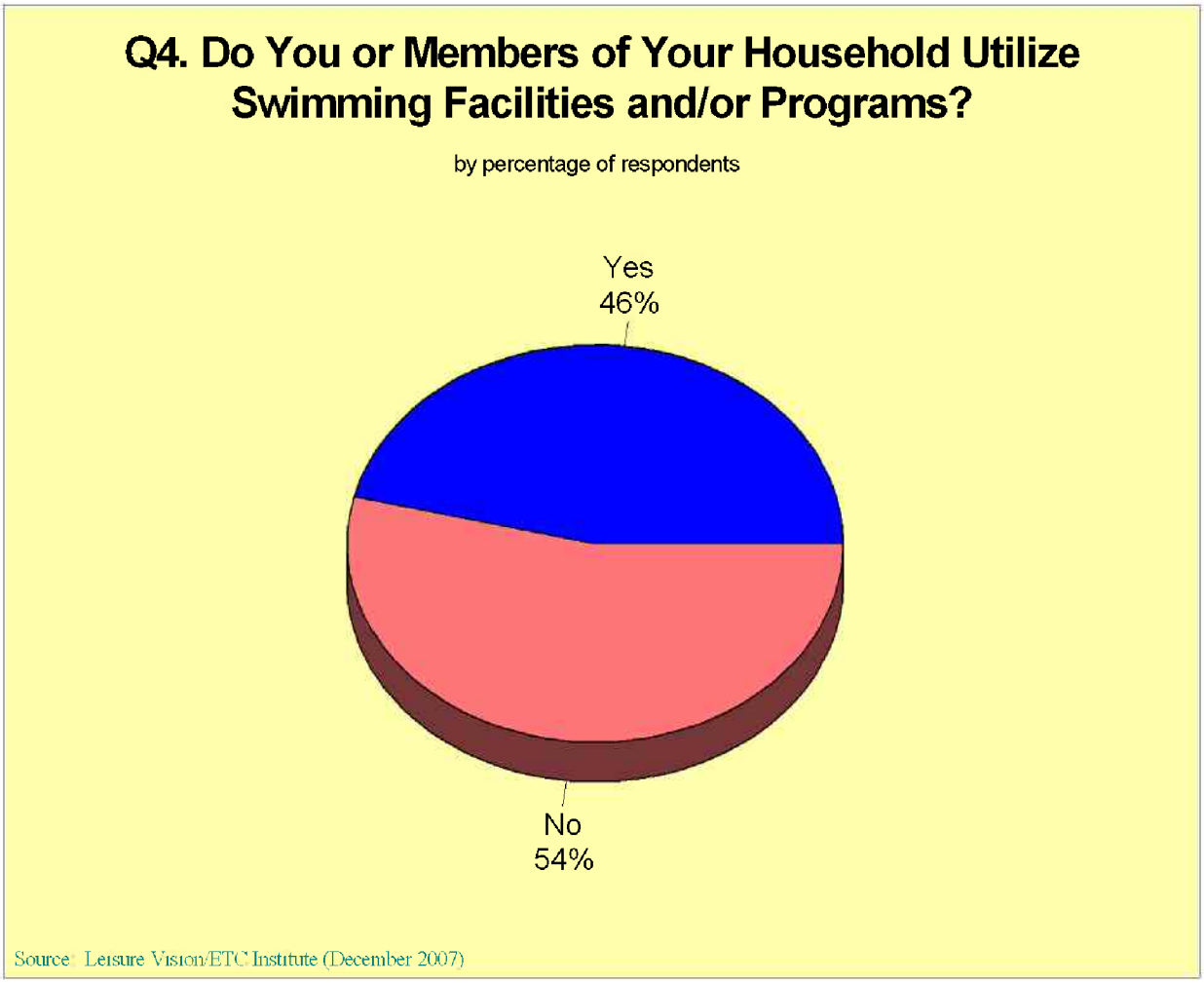
The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 406 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 406 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-4.9%.

The following pages provide the question-by-question survey responses from the 406 completed surveys, followed by a cross-tabulation of the survey data, a demographic analysis of the respondents, and a summary of the results.

Use of Swimming Facilities and/or Programs

Respondents were asked if any members of their household use swimming facilities and/or programs. The following summarizes key findings:

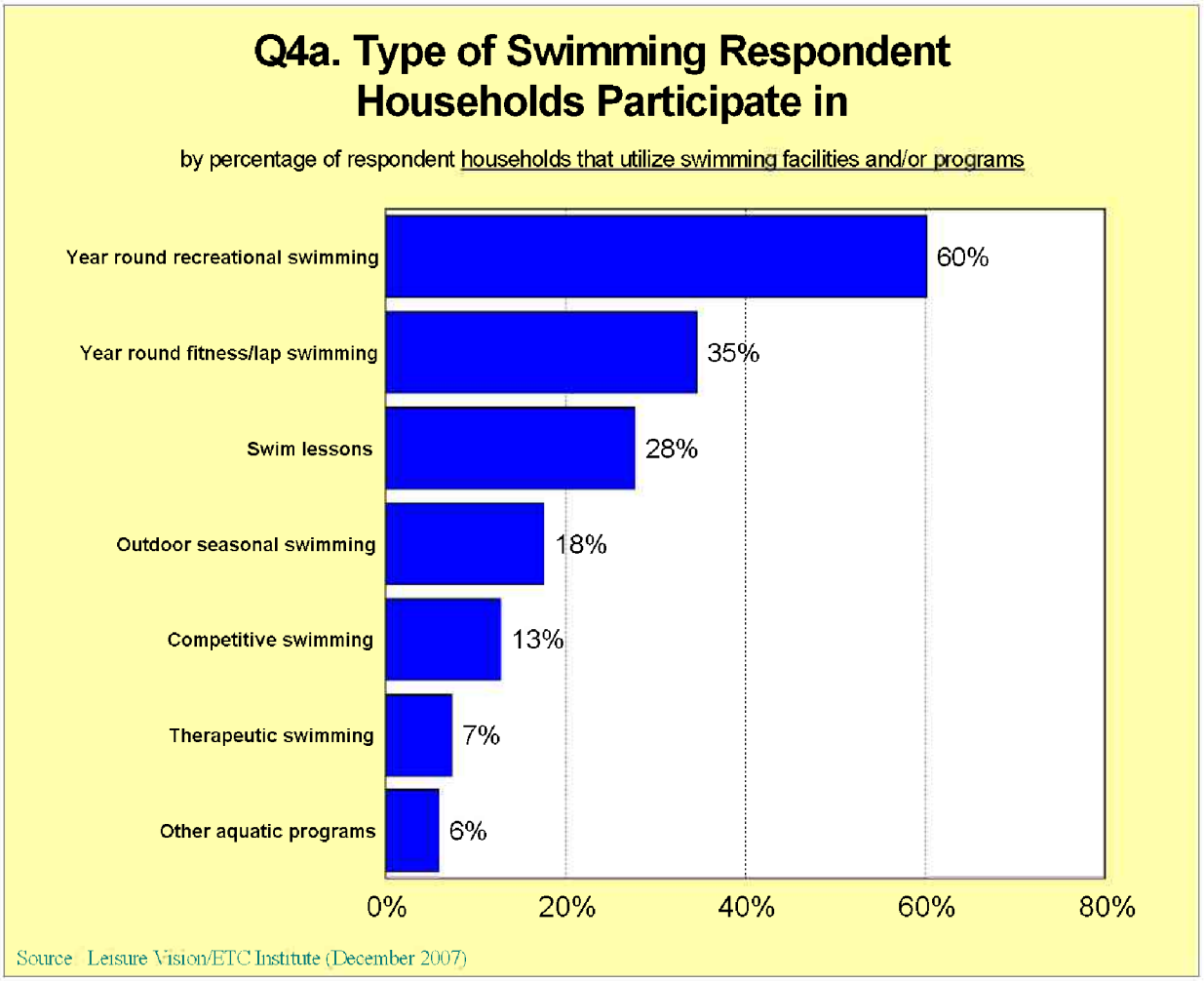
- **Forty-six percent (46%) of respondent households use swimming facilities and/or programs.**



Types of Swimming Participated in

From a list of six types of swimming, respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs were asked to indicate all of the types of swimming they participate in. The following summarizes key findings:

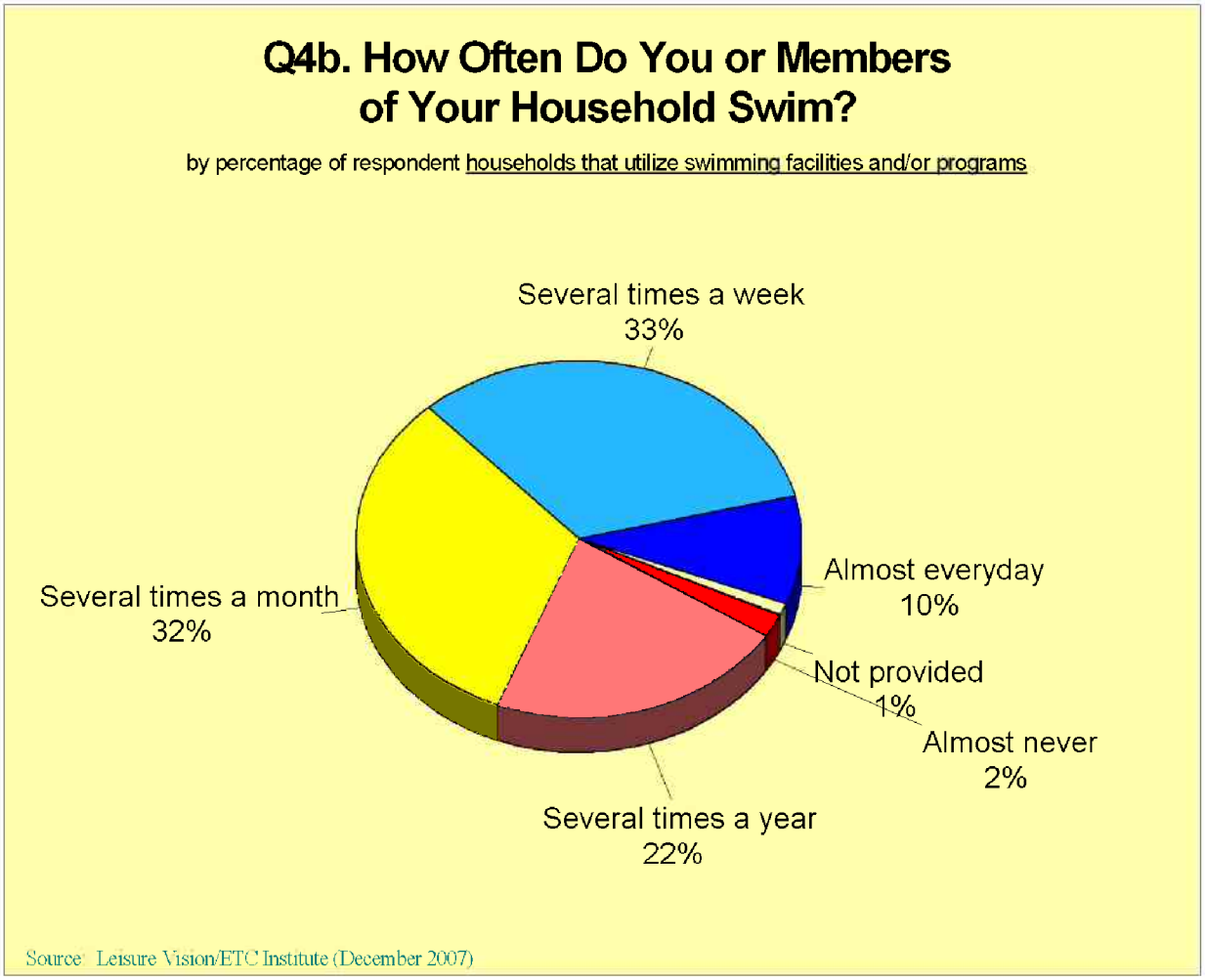
- **Of the 46% of respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs, 60% participate in year round recreational swimming.** The other most frequently mentioned types of swimming that respondent households have participated in include year round fitness/lap swimming (35%) and swim lessons (28%).



How Frequently Respondent Households Swim

Respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs were asked how often they swim. The following summarizes key findings:

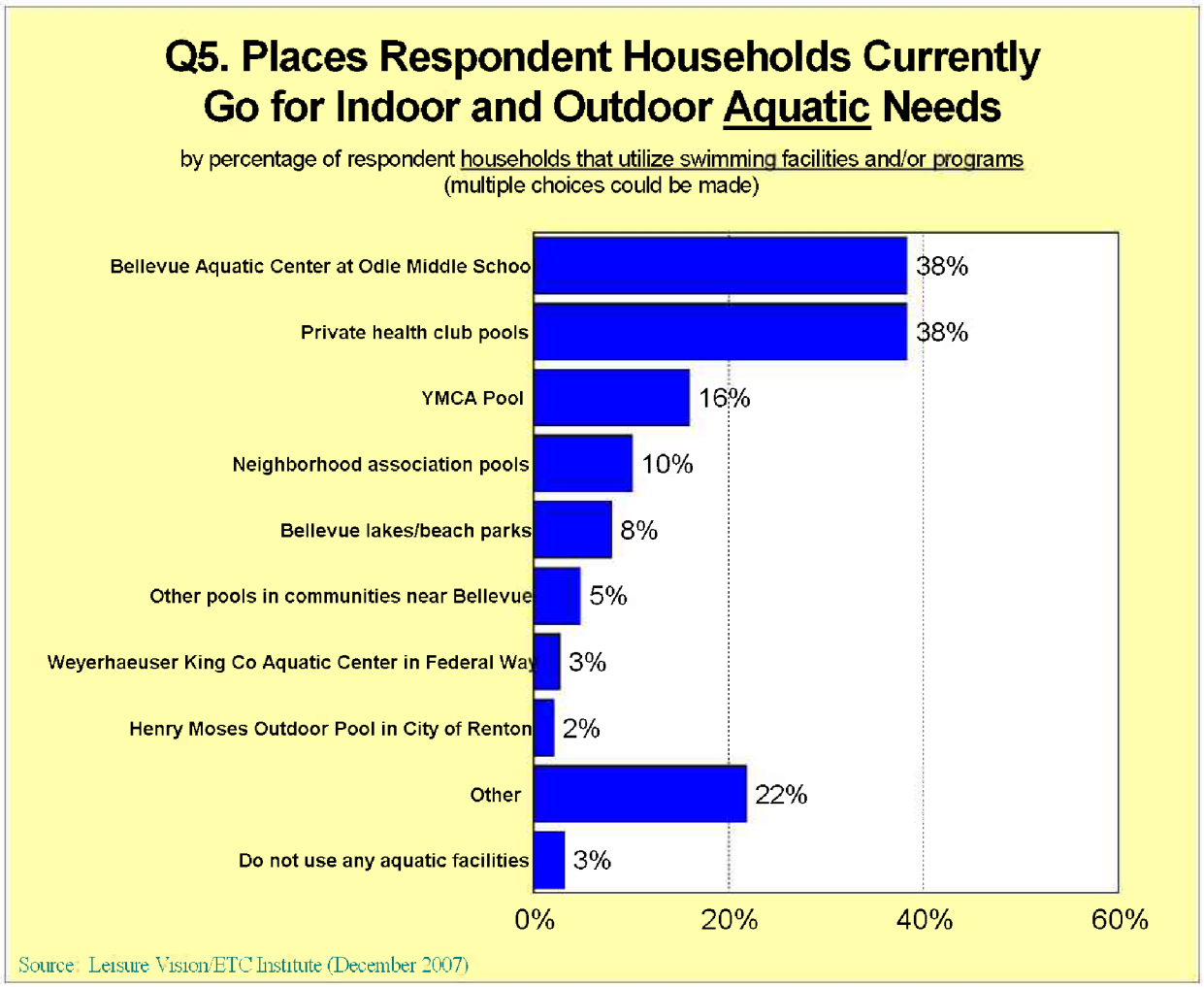
- **Of the 46% of respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs, 75% swim at least several times a month.** In addition, 43% of respondent households swim at least several times a week.



Places Used for Indoor and Outdoor Aquatic Needs

From a list of eight options, respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs were asked to indicate all of the places they use for indoor and outdoor aquatic needs. The following summarizes key findings:

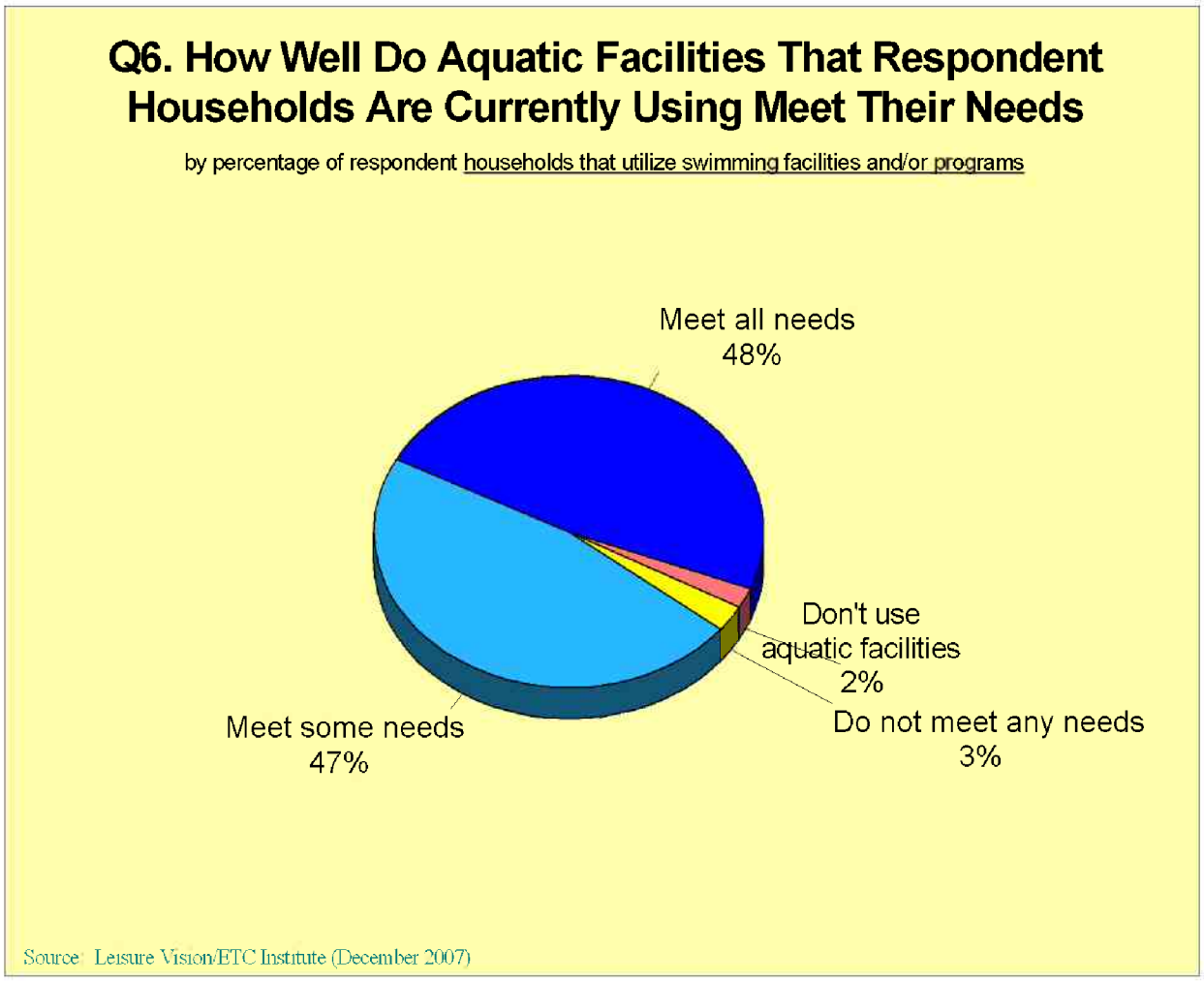
- **Of the 46% of respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs, 38% use the Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle Middle School and 38% also use private health club pools.**



How Well Aquatic Facilities Meet the Needs of Respondent Households

Respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs were asked to indicate how well the aquatic facilities they are currently using meet their needs. The following summarizes key findings:

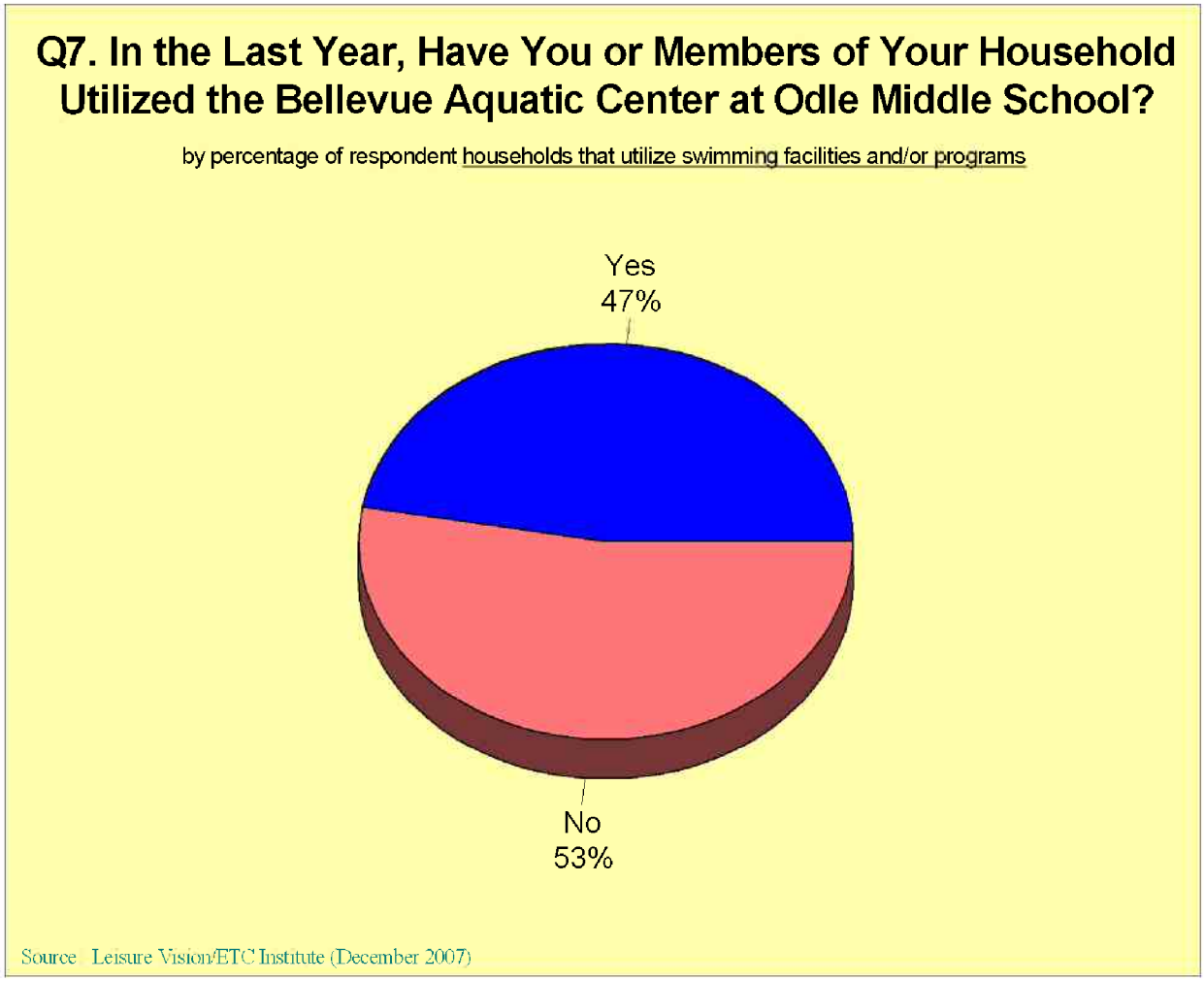
- **Of the 46% of respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs, 48% indicated that the aquatic facilities they're currently using meet all of their needs, and 47% indicated that the facilities meet some of their needs.**



Use of the Bellevue Aquatic Center in the Last Year

Respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs were asked if they have used the Bellevue Aquatic Center in the last year. The following summarizes key findings:

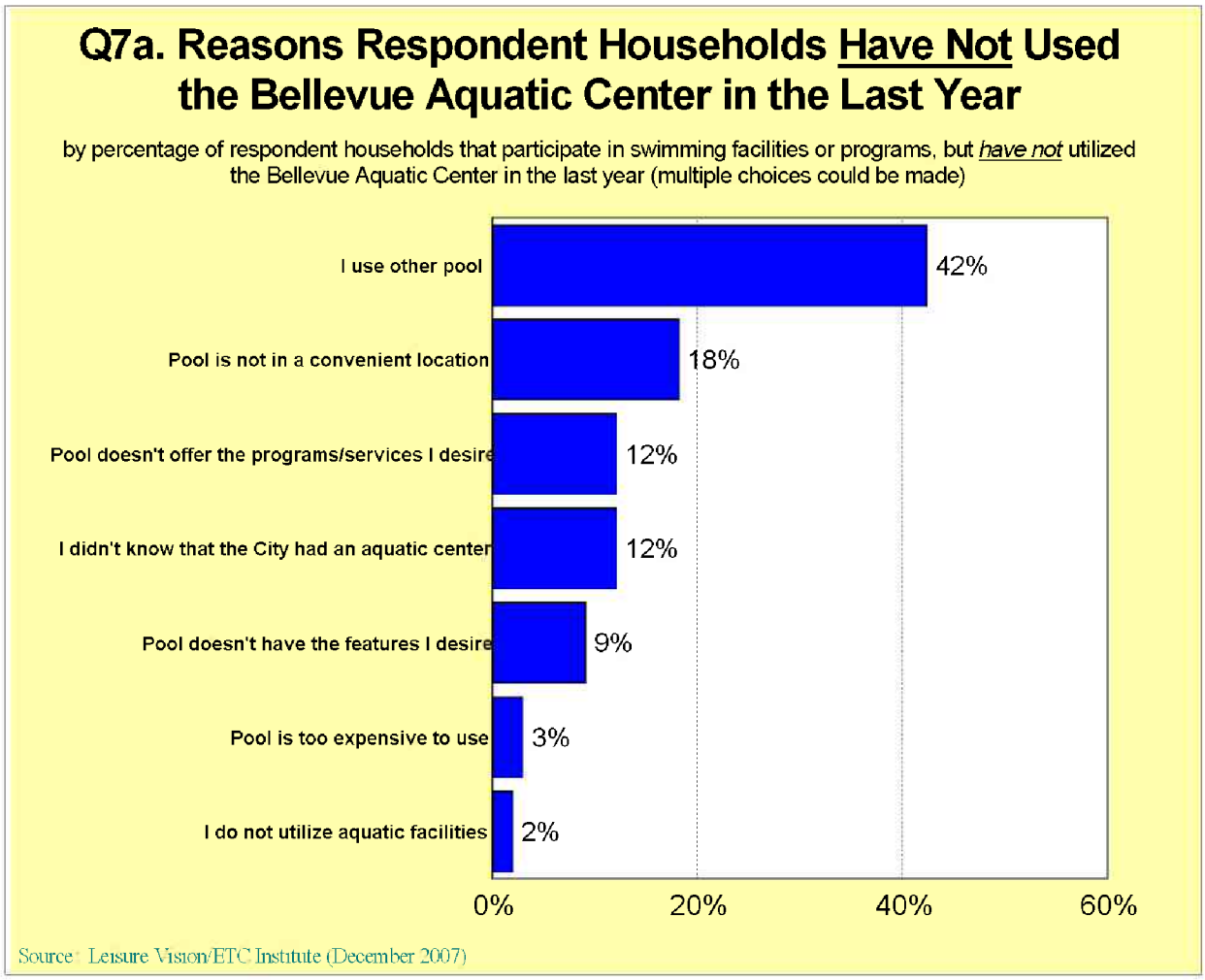
- **Of the 46% of respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs, 47% have used the Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle Middle School during the last year.**



Reasons for Not Using the Bellevue Aquatic Center in the Last Year

From a list of seven options, respondent households that use swimming facilities and/or programs but have not used the Bellevue Aquatic Center in the last year were asked to indicate all of the reasons they have not used the Center. The following summarizes key findings:

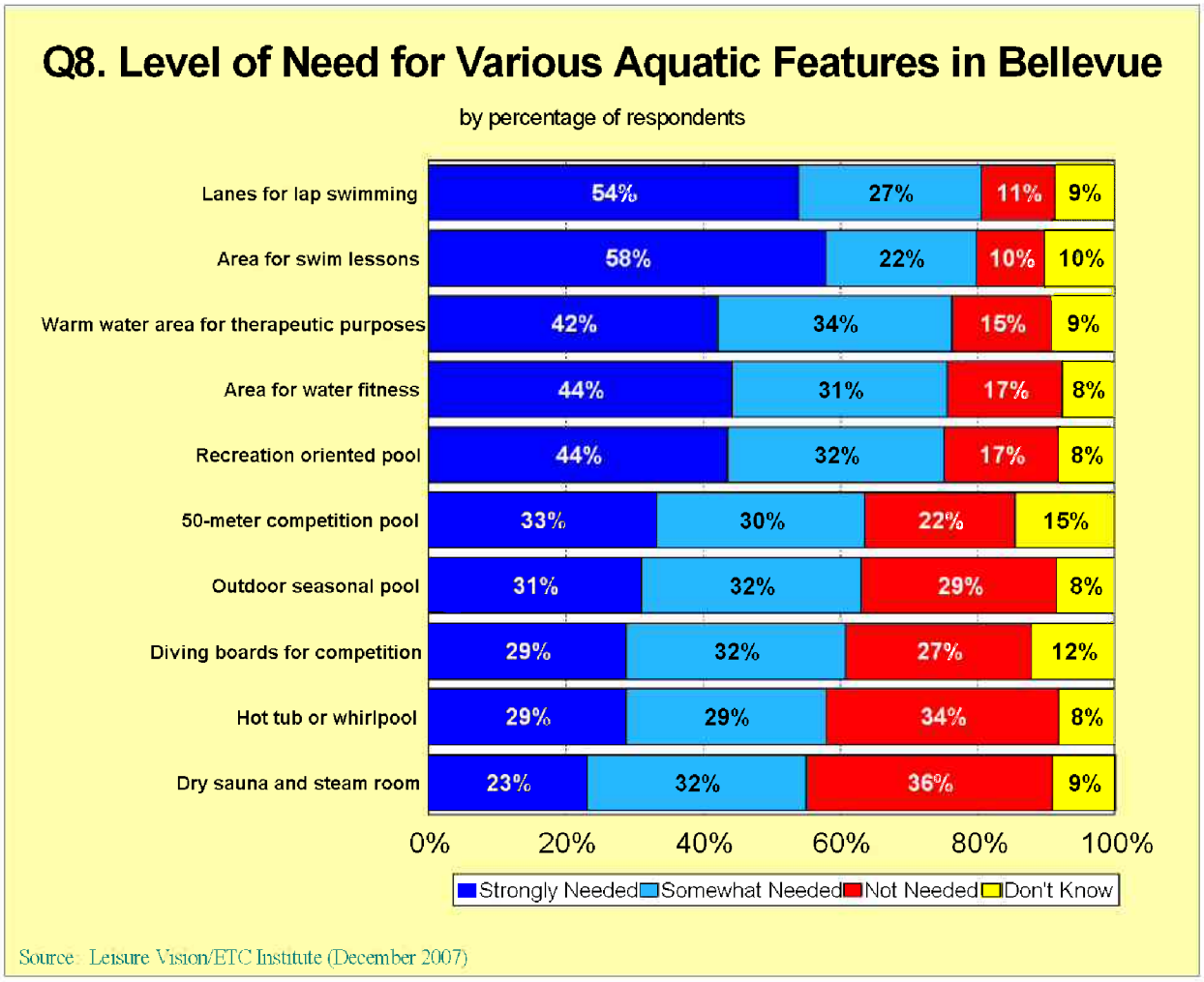
- **Of those that use swimming facilities and/or programs but have not used the Bellevue Aquatic Center in the last year, 42% indicated that they use other pools as the reason they haven't used the Bellevue Aquatic Center.**



Level of Need for Various Aquatic Features

From a list of 10 various aquatic features, respondents were asked to indicate if each feature is strongly needed, somewhat needed, or not needed in Bellevue. The following summarizes key findings:

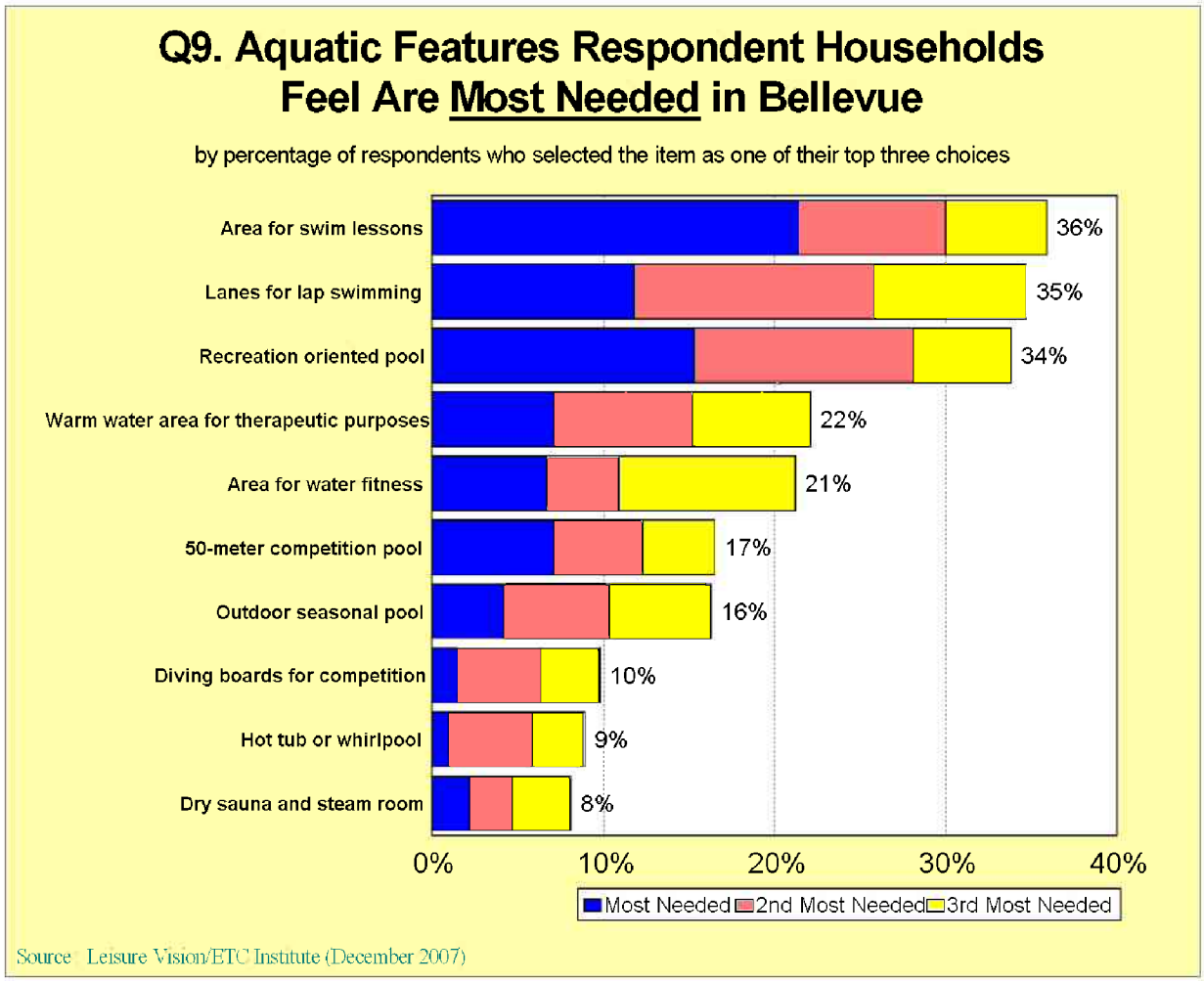
- **The aquatic features that the highest percentage of respondents feel are strongly needed in Bellevue are: area for swim lessons (58%), lanes for lap swimming (54%), area for water fitness (44%) and recreation oriented pool (44%).** It should also be noted that 8 of the 10 features had over 60% of respondents indicate they are either strongly needed or somewhat needed in Bellevue.



Aquatic Features Most Needed

From a list of 10 various aquatic features, respondents were asked to select the three they feel are most needed in Bellevue. The following summarizes key findings:

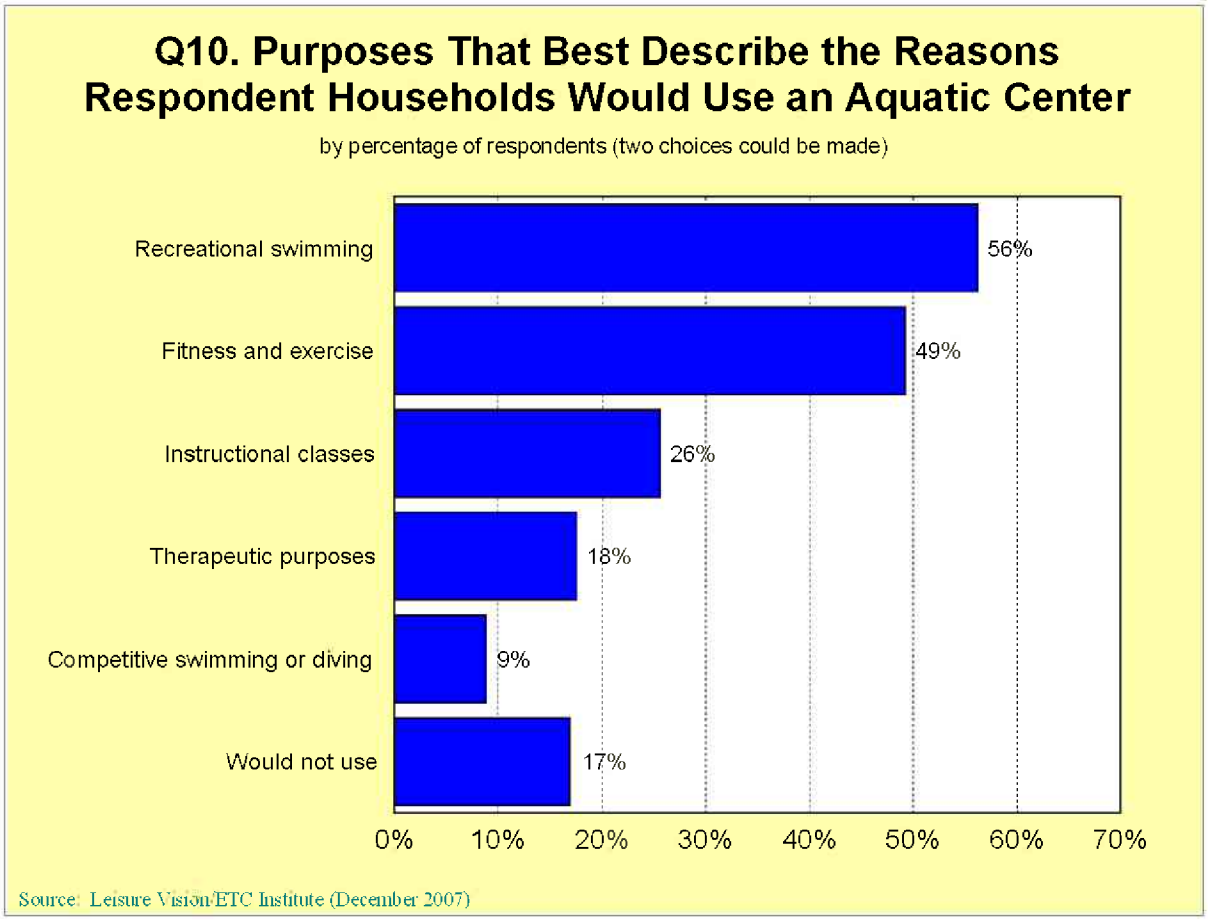
- **Based on the sum of their top three choices, the aquatic features that respondents feel are most needed in Bellevue are an area for swim lessons (36%), lanes for lap swimming (35%), and a recreation oriented pool (34%).** It should also be noted that an area for swim lessons had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the feature they feel is most needed in Bellevue.



Reasons Respondents Would Use an Aquatic Center

From a list of five options, respondents were asked to select the two reasons their household would use an aquatic center. The following summarizes key findings:

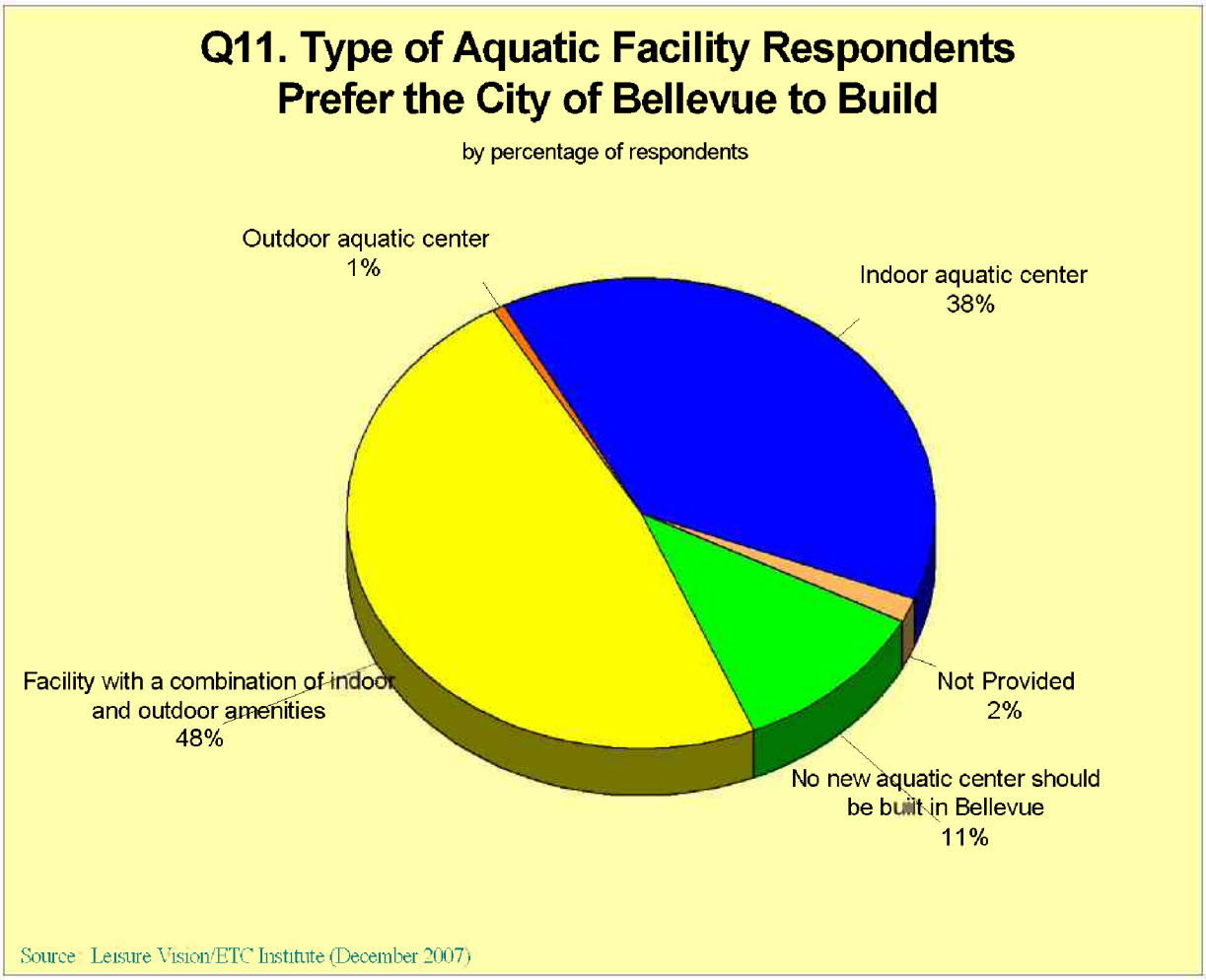
- **Based on the sum of their top two choices, the most frequently mentioned reasons that respondents would use an aquatic center are for recreational swimming (56%) and fitness and exercise (49%).**



Preferred Type of Aquatic Facility to Build

From a list of four options, respondents were asked to indicate the type of aquatic facility they most prefer the City of Bellevue to build. The following summarizes key findings:

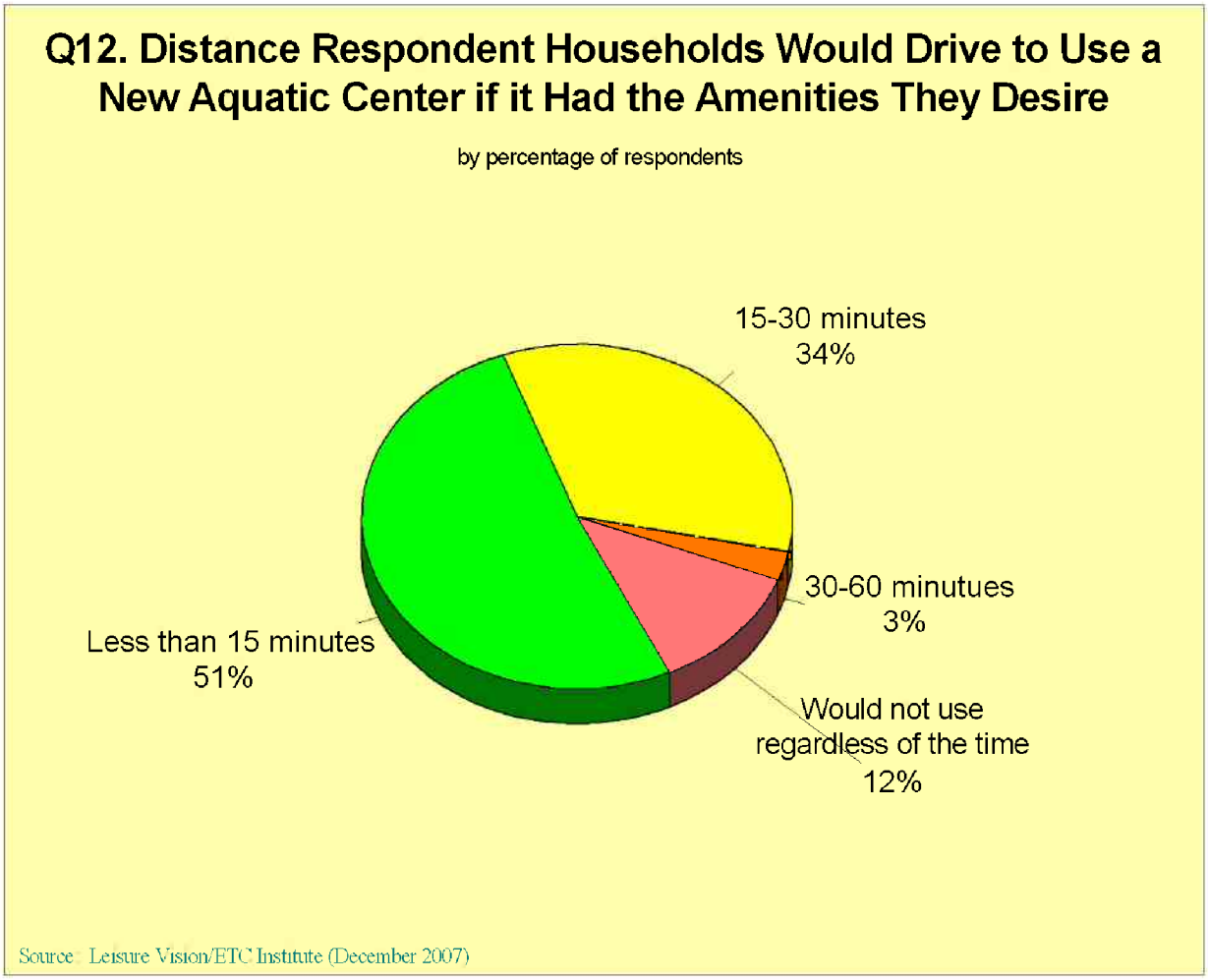
- **Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents prefer a facility with a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities.** In addition, 38% prefer an indoor aquatic center and 1% prefer an outdoor aquatic center. Only 11% of respondents indicated that no new aquatic center should be built in Bellevue.



Distance Willing to Drive to Use a New Aquatic Center

Respondents were asked how far in minutes they would drive to use a new aquatic center if it had the amenities they most desire. The following summarizes key findings:

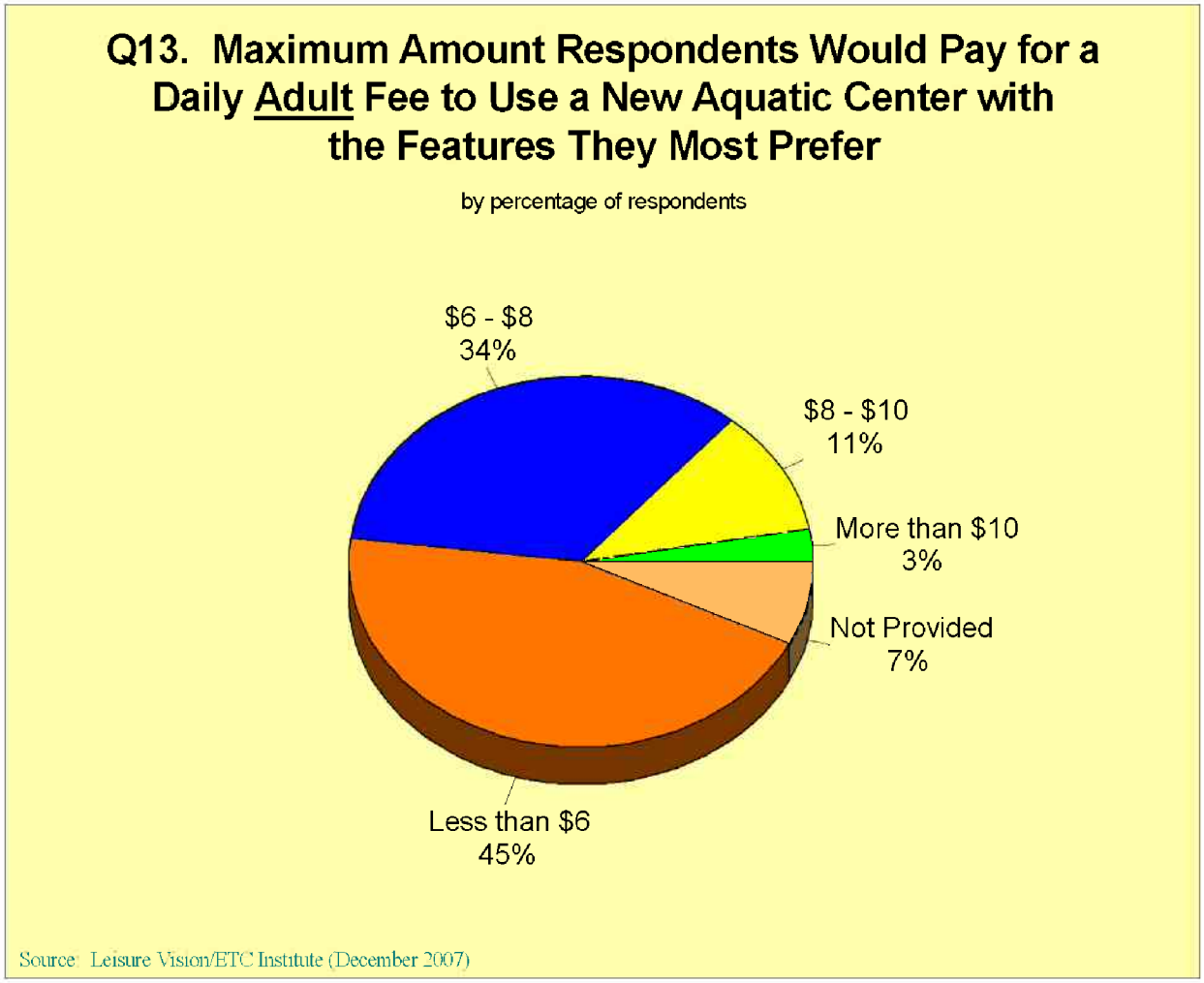
- **Thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents would drive 15 minutes or more to use a new aquatic center if it had the amenities they most desire.**



Paying with a Daily Adult Fee to Use a New Aquatic Center

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount they would pay for a daily adult fee to use a new aquatic center if it had the features they most prefer. The following summarizes key findings:

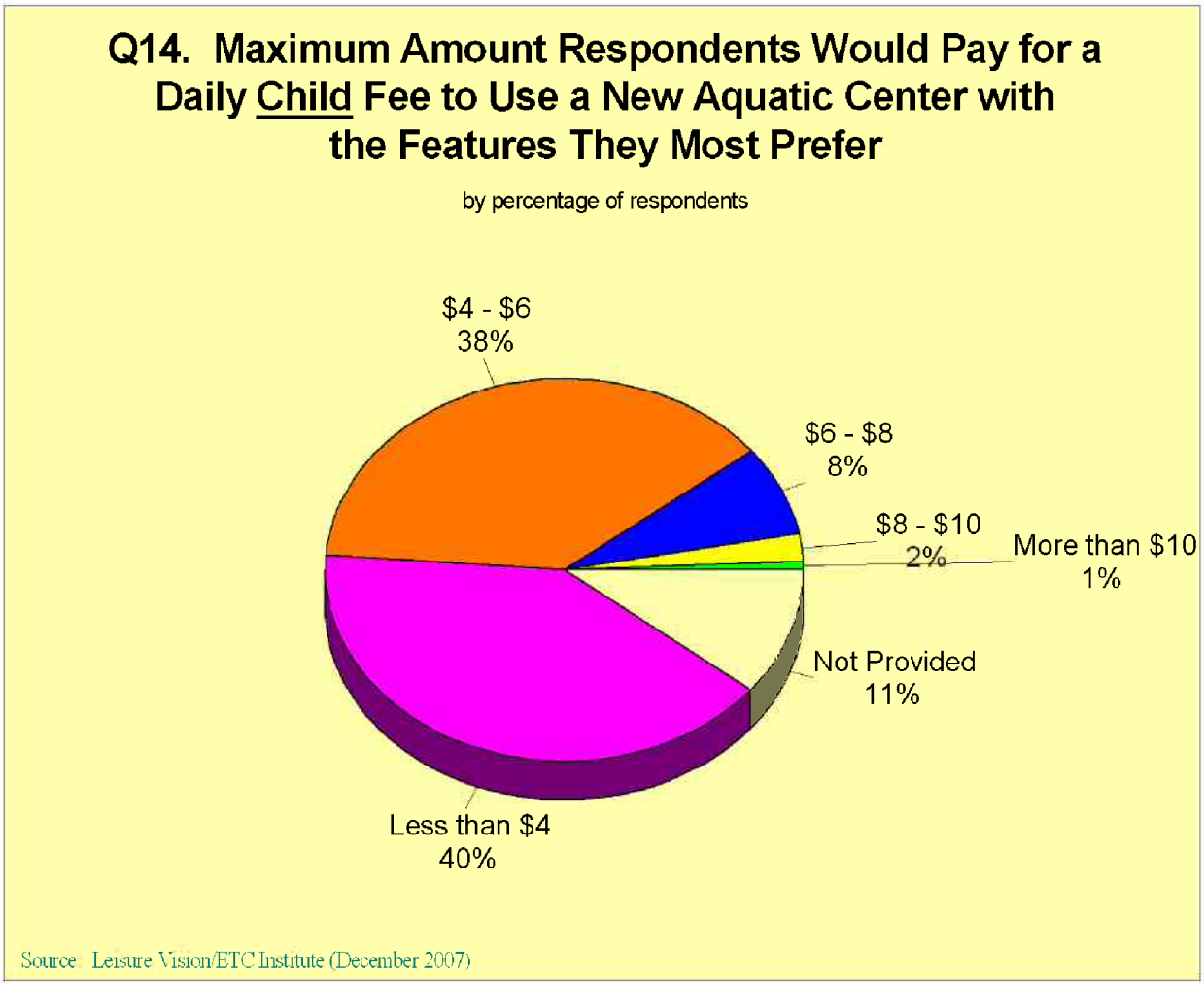
- **Forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents would pay $6 or more for a daily adult fee to use a new aquatic center if it had the features they most prefer.**



Paying with a Daily Child Fee to Use a New Aquatic Center

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount they would pay for a daily child fee to use a new aquatic center if it had the features they most prefer. The following summarizes key findings:

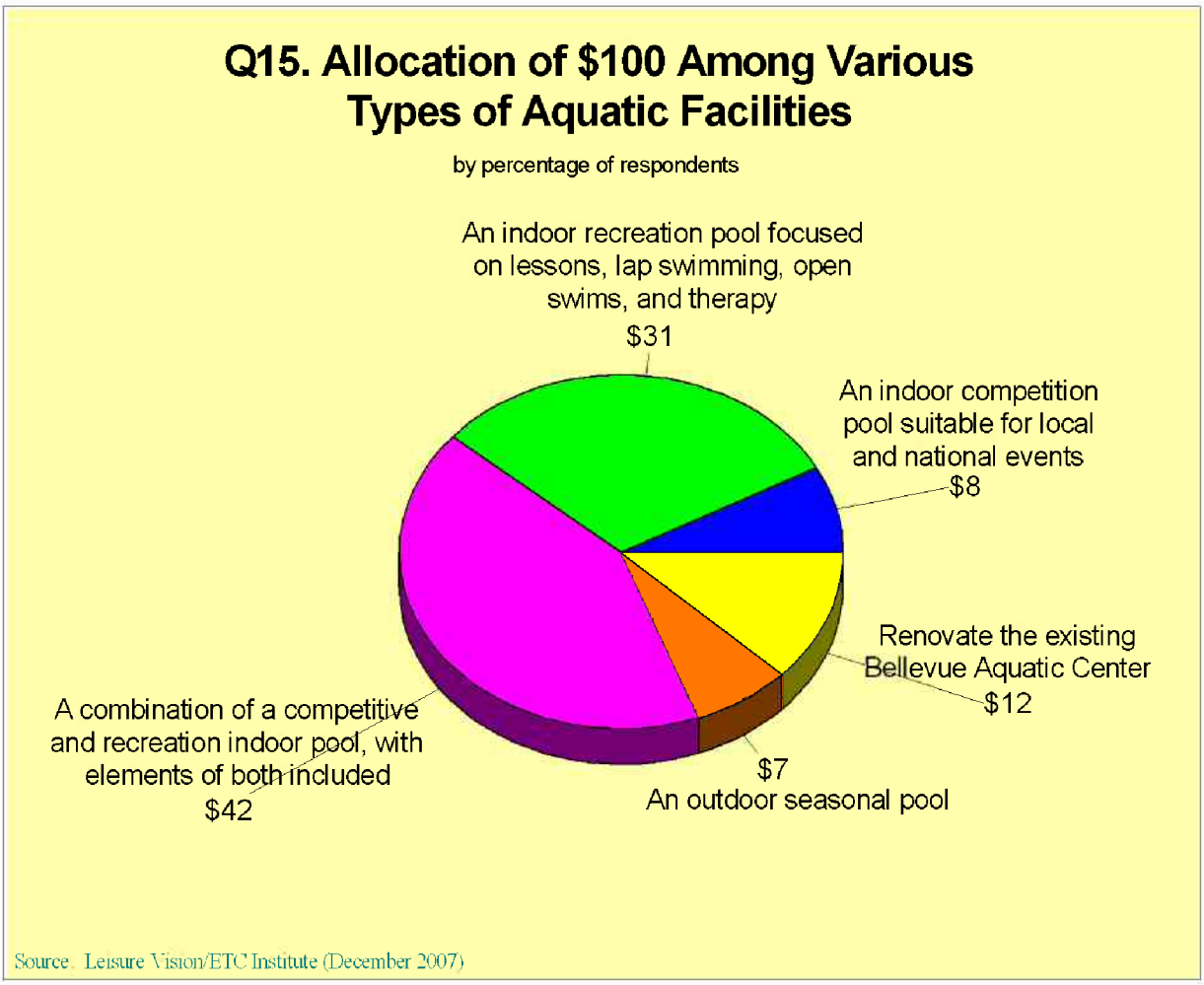
- **Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents would pay at least $4 for a daily child fee to use a new aquatic center if it had the features they most prefer.**



Prioritizing Various Types of Aquatic Facilities

Respondents were asked how they would distribute $100 among five types of aquatic facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

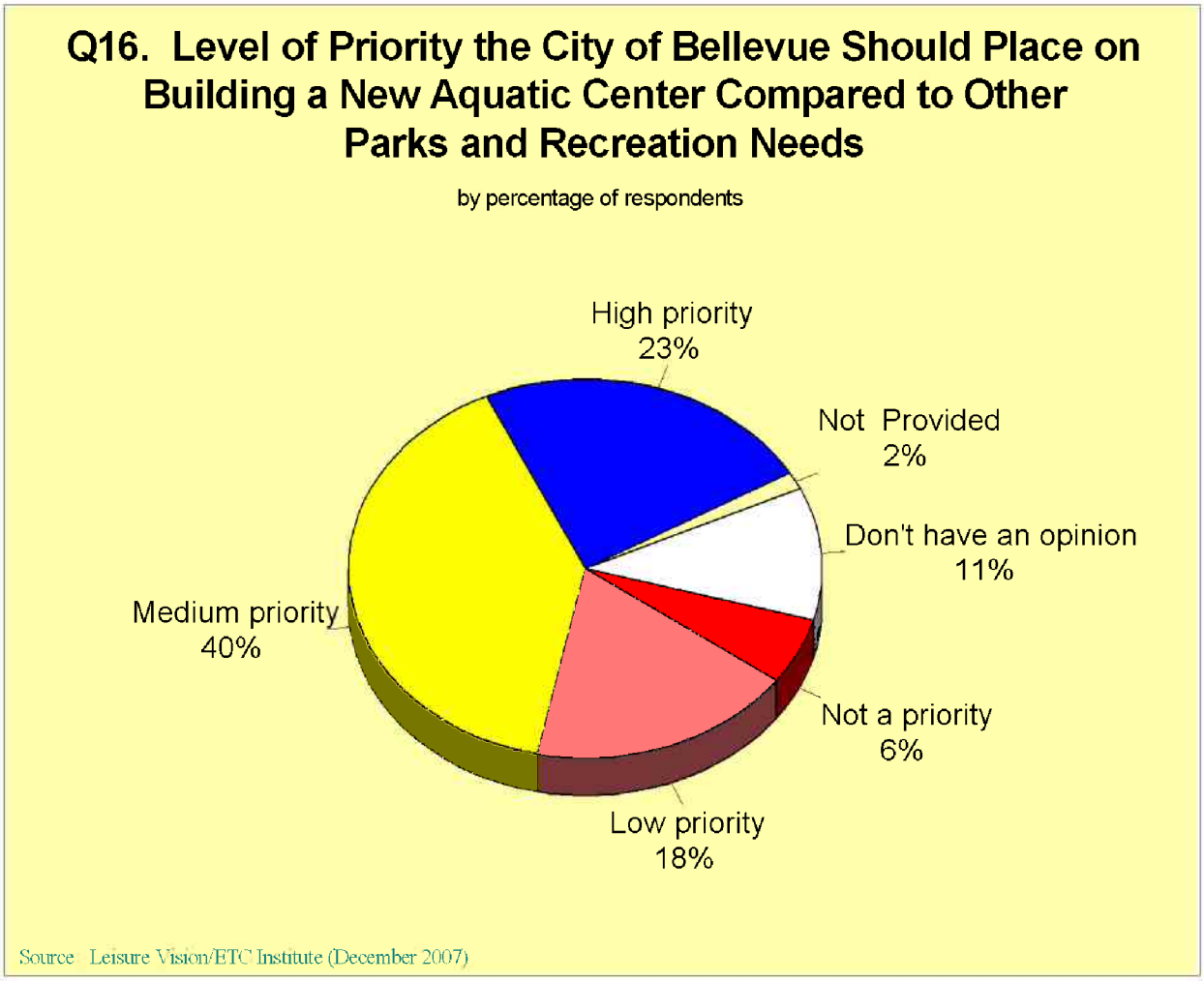
- **Respondents allocated $42 out of $100 to a combination of a competitive and recreation indoor pool, with elements of both included.** The remaining $58 were allocated as follows: an indoor recreation pool focused on lessons, lap swimming, open swims, and therapy ($31), renovate the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center ($12), an indoor competition pool suitable for local and national events ($8) and an outdoor seasonal pool ($7).



Level of Priority to Place on Building a New Aquatic Center

Respondents were asked how high of a priority the City of Bellevue should place on building a new aquatic center compared to other parks and recreation needs. The following summarizes key findings:

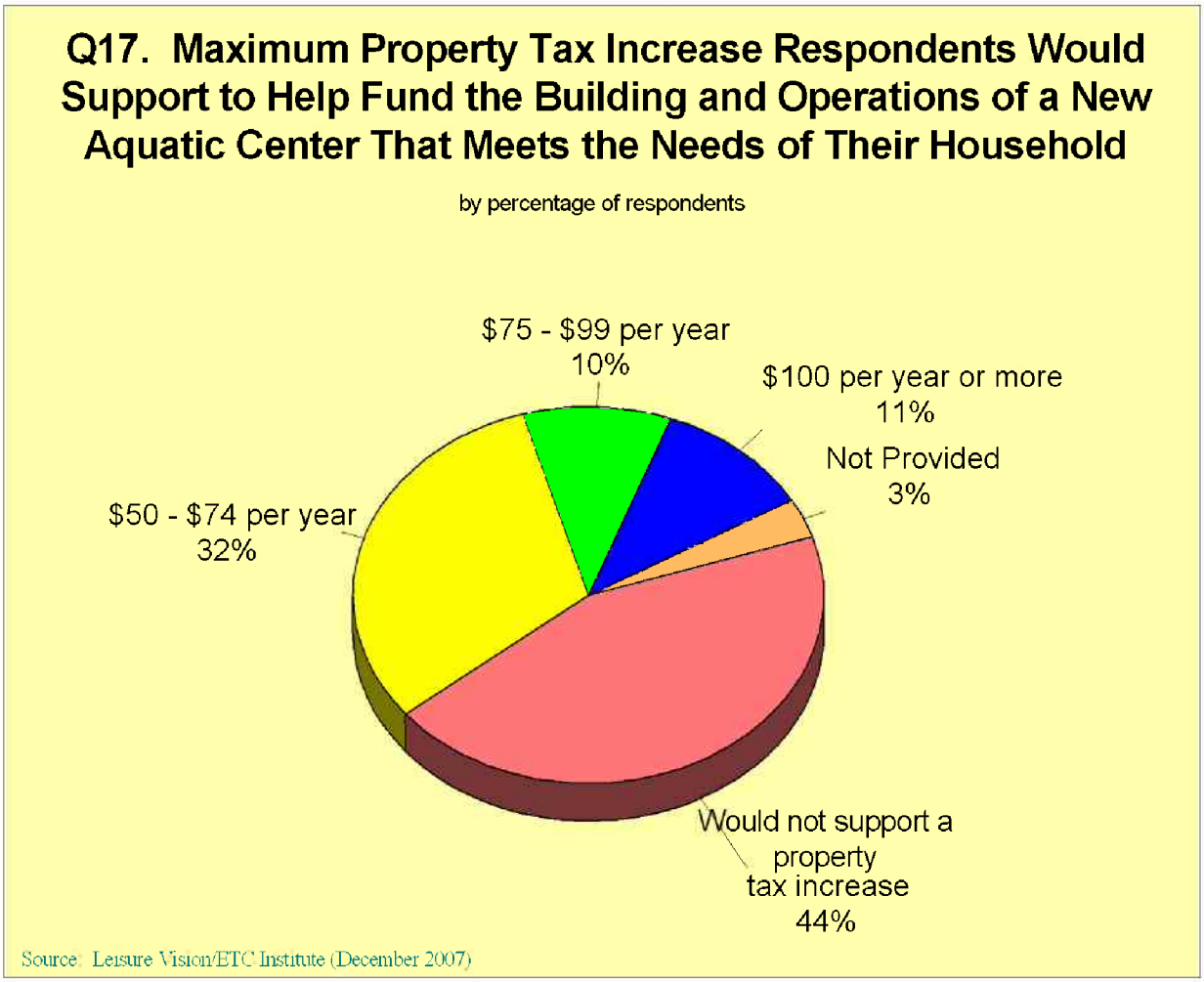
- **Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents feel the City should place either a medium (40%) or high priority (23%) on building a new aquatic center.** In addition, 18% of respondents feel it should be a low priority, and 6% feel it should not be a priority.



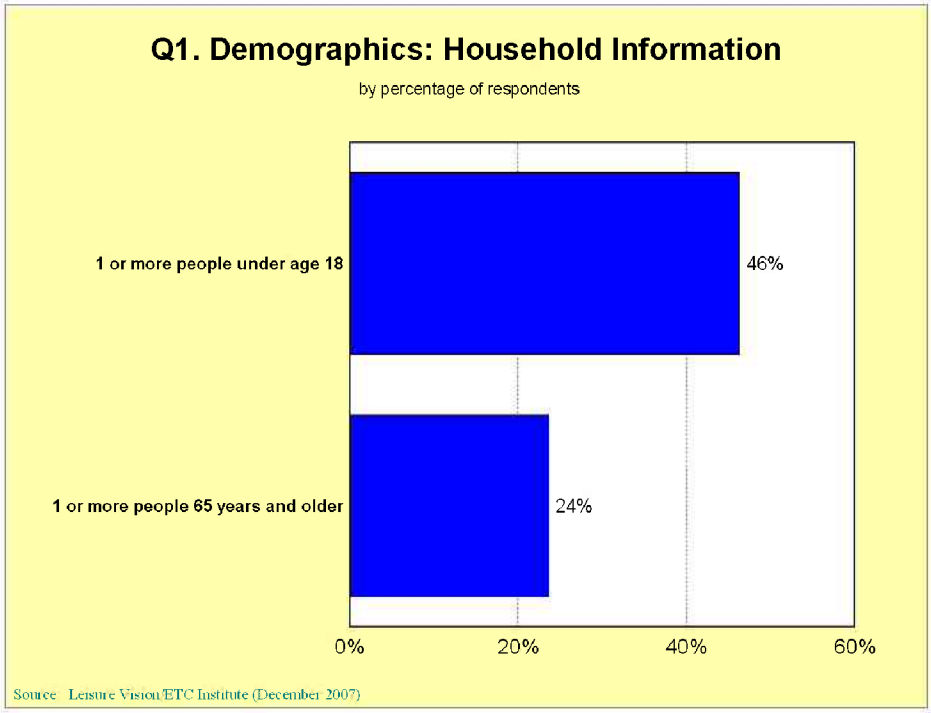
Property Tax Increase to Help Fund a New Aquatic Center

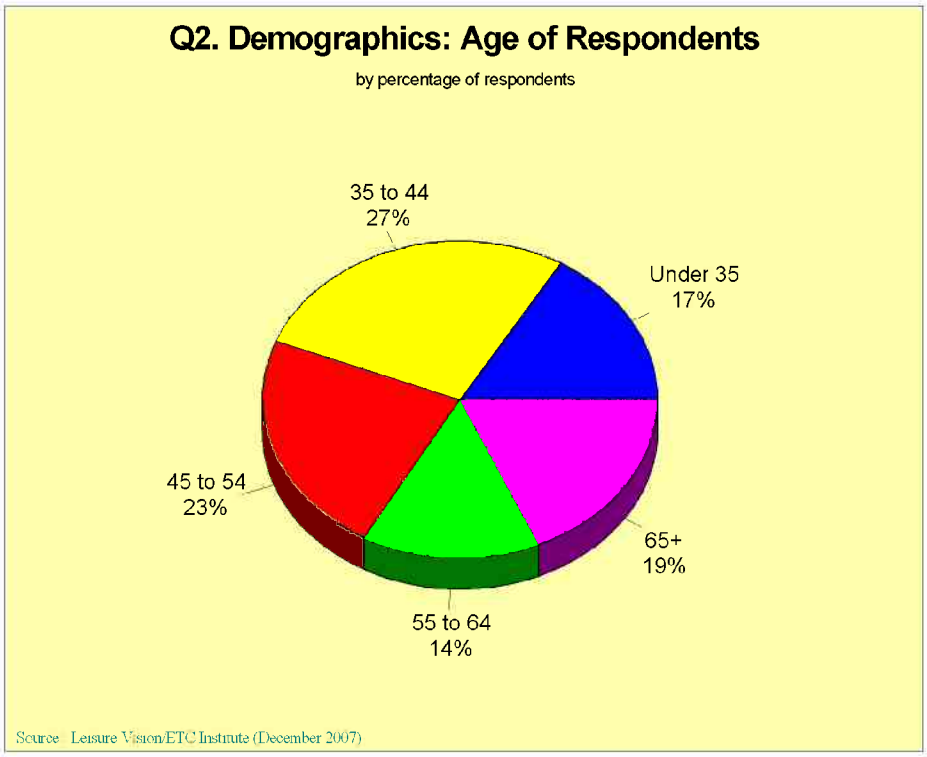
Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum property tax increase they would support to help fund a new aquatic center that meets the needs of their household. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents would support a property tax increase of $50 or more per year to help fund a new aquatic center that meets the needs of their household.**

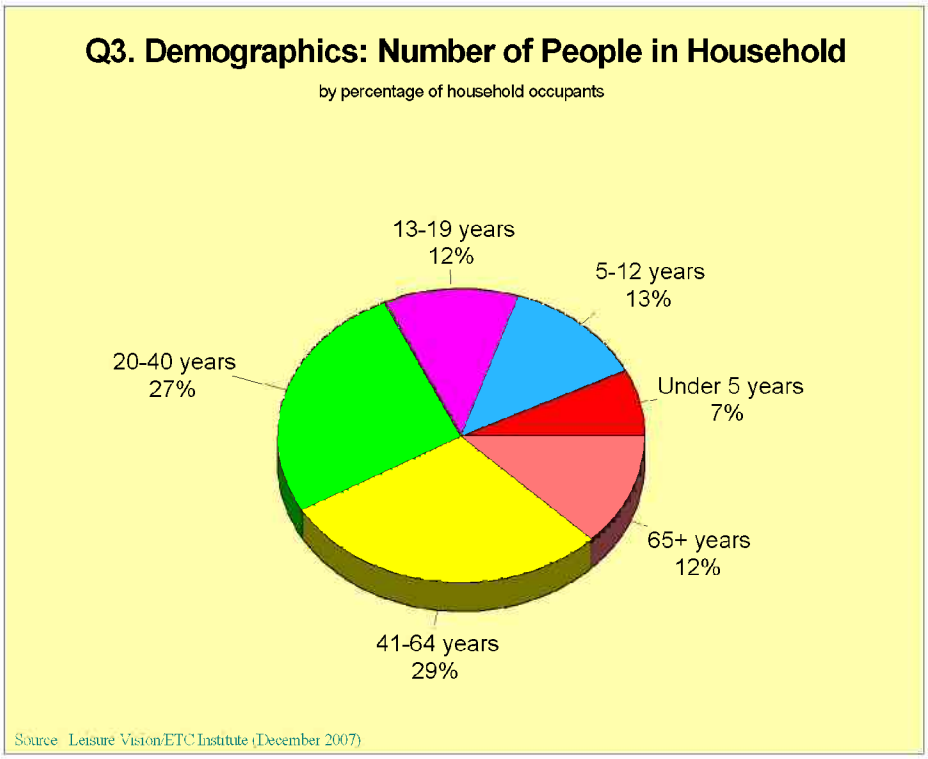


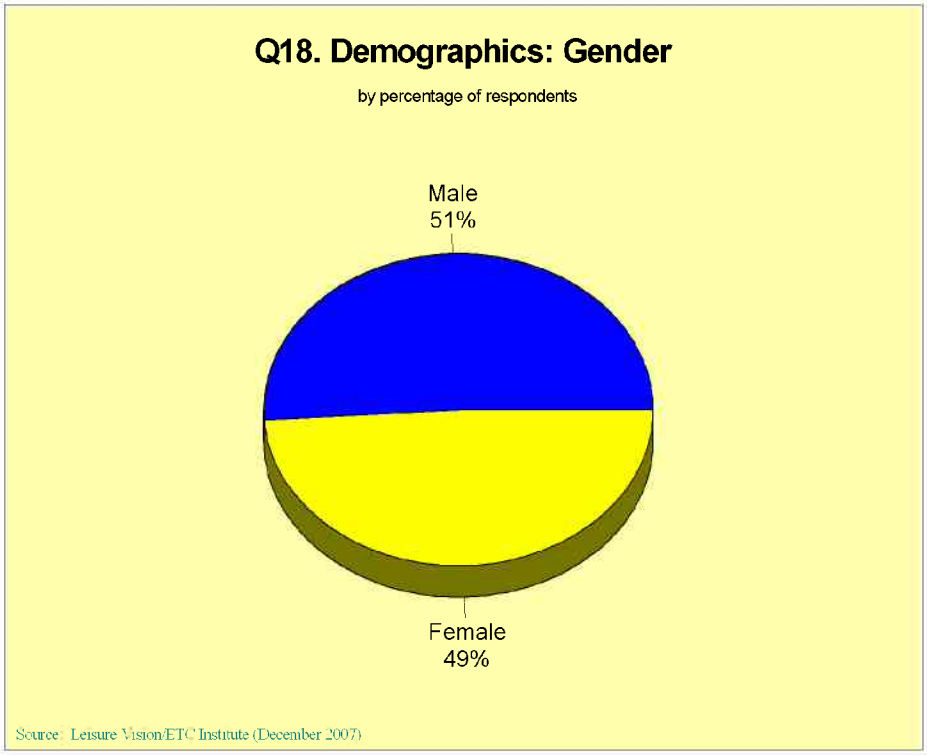
Demographics



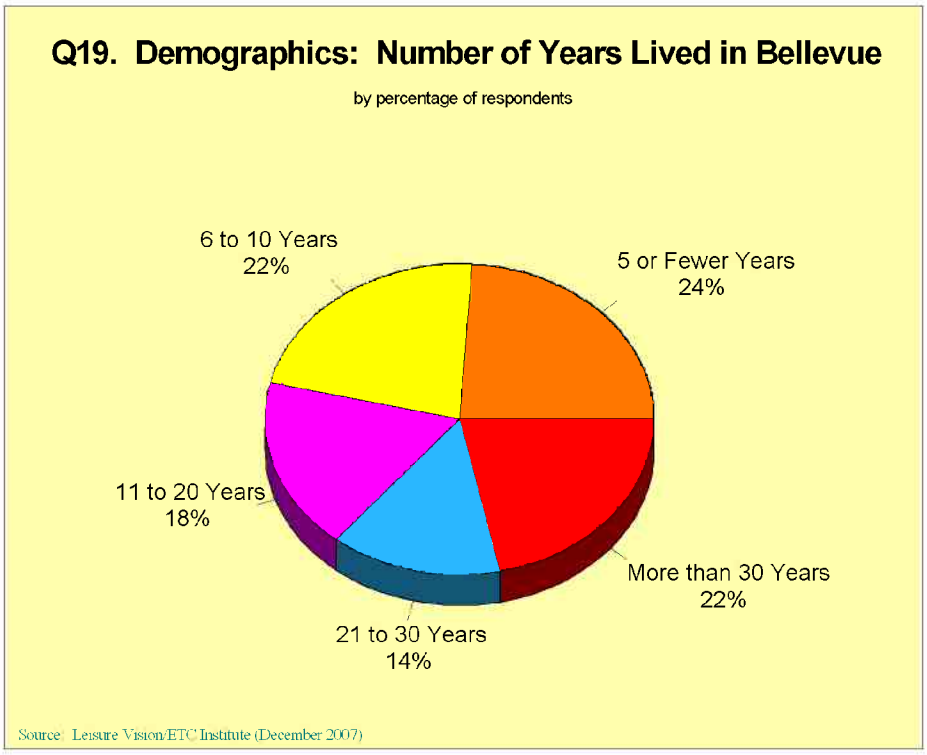


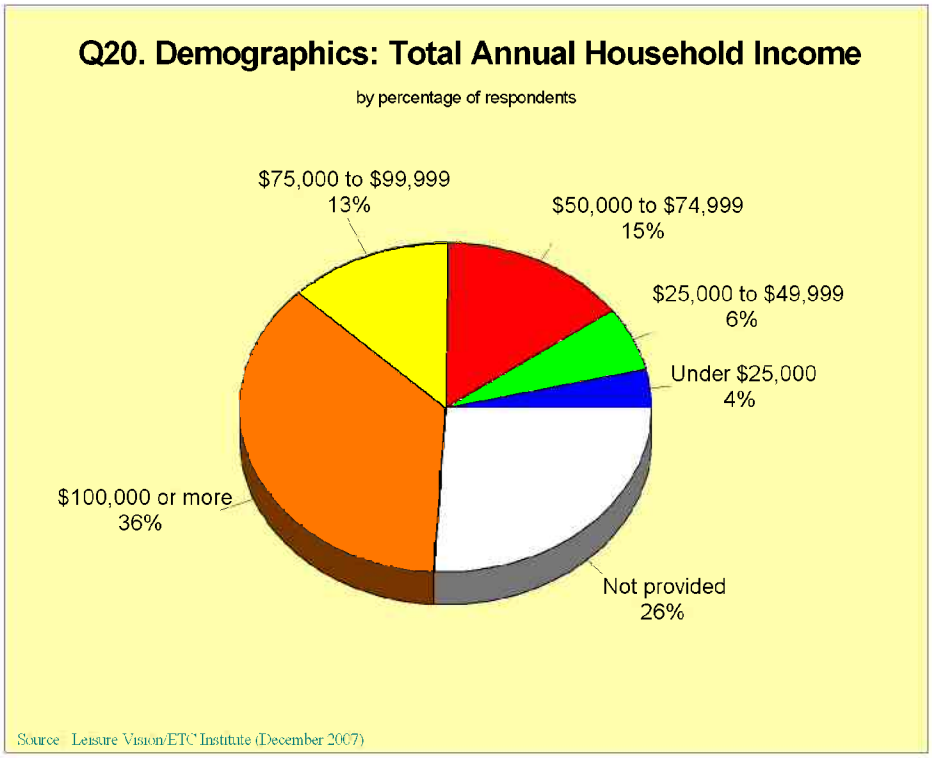
Demographics (Continued)



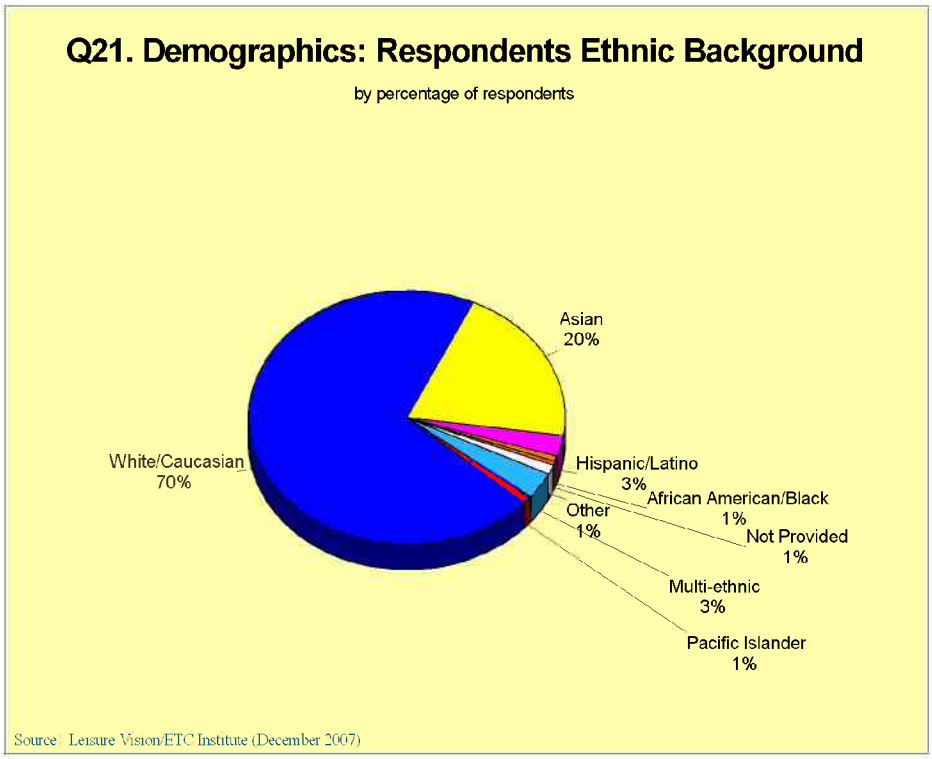


Demographics (Continued)





Demographics (Continued)



Cross Tabulation of Survey Data

Key cross tab analysis included the following:

Seniors

- Seniors are strong users of year round recreation swimming, year round fitness/lap swimming, and therapeutic swimming.
- Seniors feel that the current aquatic facilities meet all of their needs.
- Types of aquatic spaces that seniors feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Warm water area for therapeutic purposes
    - A recreation oriented pool

- Seniors believe that if there were a new aquatic facility built, it should include a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities.
- Seniors felt that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- Seniors would not support a tax increase to construct a new aquatic center.
- Seniors tend to be long-term residents of the Bellevue area.

Households with Children

- Households with children are strong users of year round, recreational swimming, swim lessons, and year round fitness/lap swimming.
- Households with children feel that the current aquatic facilities meet some to all of their needs.
- Types of aquatic spaces that households with children feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - A recreation oriented pool

- Households with children believe that if there were a new aquatic facility built, it should include a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities
- Households with children felt that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- 60% of households with children would support a tax increase, of some level, to construct a new aquatic center.
- Households with children tend to be more short-term residents of the Bellevue area.

Income less than $75,000

- Households with less than $75,000 annual income tend to be strong users of year round, recreation swimming, year round fitness/lap swimming, and swim lessons.
- Households with less than $75,000 annual income feel that the current aquatic facilities meet some to all of their needs.

- Types of aquatic spaces that households with less than $75,000 annual income feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - A recreation oriented pool

- Households with less than $75,000 annual income believe that if there were a new aquatic facility built, it should include a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities.
- Households with less than $75,000 annual income believe that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- Most households with less than $75,000 annual income would not support a property tax increase to construct a new aquatic center.
- Households with less than $75,000 annual income tend to be more long-term residents of the Bellevue area.

Income more than $75,000

- Households with more than $75,000 annual income tend to be strong users of year round, recreational swimming, year round fitness/lap swimming, and swim lessons.
- Households with more than $75,000 annual income feel that the current aquatic facilities meet some to all of their needs.
- Types of aquatic spaces that households with more than $75,000 annual income feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - A recreation oriented pool

- Households with more than $75,000 annual income believe that if there were a new aquatic facility built, it should include a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities.
- Households with more than $75,000 annual income believe that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- Most households with more than $75,000 annual income would support a property tax increase of some level to construct a new aquatic center.
- Households with more than $75,000 annual income tend to be more short-term residents of the Bellevue area.

Ethnicity (White)

- Caucasians tend to be strong users of year round recreational swimming, year round fitness/lap swimming and swim lessons.
- Caucasian users feel that the current aquatic facilities meet some to all of their needs.
- Types of aquatic spaces that Caucasian users feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - Area for water fitness

- Caucasian users believe that if there were a new aquatic facility built, it should include a combination of indoor and outdoor amenities.
- Caucasian users believe that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- Caucasian users would support a property tax increase of some level to construct a new aquatic center.
- Caucasian users' length of residency in the Bellevue area spans the entire spectrum.

Ethnicity (Minority)

- Minority users tend to be strong users of year round, recreational swimming, swim lessons, and year round fitness/lap swimming.

- Minority users feel that the current aquatic facilities meet some of their needs.
- Types of aquatic spaces that minority users feel are most needed in Bellevue are:
    - Area for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - Warm water area for therapeutic purposes

- Minority users believe that if there were a new aquatic center it should be an indoor aquatic center.
- Minority users believe that the construction of a new aquatic center had a medium priority compared with the rest of the community needs.
- Minority users would not support a property tax increase of some level to construct a new aquatic center.
- Minority users tend to be more short-term residents of the Bellevue area.

Demographics Information

Respondents were asked general questions regarding the composition of their households. The following summarizes key findings:

- Forty-six percent (46%) of households had 1 or more people under the age of 18, and twenty-four percent (24%) had 1 or more people 65 years of older.

- General Ages of Respondents:
    - Seventeen percent (17%) under 35 years
    - Twenty-seven percent (27%) from 35 to 44 years old
    - Twenty-three percent (23%) from 45 to 54 years old
    - Fourteen percent (14%) from 55 to 64 years old
    - Nineteen percent (19%) were 65 or older

- Number of people in Household:
    - Seven percent (7%) under 5 years old
    - Thirteen percent (13%) from 5 to 12 years old

  - Twelve percent (12%) from 13 to 19 years old
  - Twenty-seven percent (27%) from 20 to 40 years old
  - Twenty-nine percent (29%) from 41 to 64 years old
  - Twelve percent (12%) were 65 or older

- Gender of people in Household:
  - Forty-nine percent (49%) are female
  - Fifty-one percent (51%) are male

- Number of years lived in Bellevue:
  - Twenty Four percent (24%) lived 5 years or fewer
  - Twenty Two percent (22%) lived 6 to 10 years
  - Eighteen percent (18%) lived 11 to 20 years
  - Fourteen percent (14%) lived 21 to 30 years
  - Twenty Two percent (22%) lived 30 years of more

- Total Annual Household Income:
  - Four percent (4%) Under $25,000
  - Six percent (6%) from $25,000 to $49,000
  - Fifteen percent (15%) from $50,000 to $74,999
  - Thirteen percent (13%) from $75,000 to $99,999
  - Thirty-six percent (36%) at $100,000 or more
  - Twenty-six percent (26%) not provided

- Respondent Ethnic Background:
  - One percent (1%) Pacific Islander
  - One percent (1%) African American/Black
  - Three percent (3%) Hispanic/Latino
  - Three percent (3%) Multi-Ethnic
  - Twenty percent (20%) Asian
  - Seventy percent (70%) White/Caucasian
  - One percent (1%) Other
  - One percent (1%) Not Provided

Survey Summary

- The indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities currently being used by the highest percentage of respondents are:
    - Bellevue Aquatic Center at Odle Middle School
    - Private health club pools
    - Other
    - YMCA Pool

- The top 3 types of swimming that respondent households participate in are:
    - Year round recreation swimming
    - Year round fitness/lap swimming
    - Swim lessons

- The existing facilities are meeting some but not all needs of the respondents.
- Of the various activities that take place in an aquatic environment, the highest level of needs were in the areas of:
    - Areas for swim lessons
    - Lanes for lap swimming
    - Area for water fitness/Recreation oriented pool
    - Warm water area for therapeutic purposes

- There is an interest, if there is to be a new facility, to include both indoor and outdoor aquatic amenities.
- The majority of respondents are willing to drive to the aquatic center, if it had the amenities that were important to them.
- Users realize that they are going to have to pay to utilize the aquatic facilities. Most are willing to pay the following amount for daily admission:
    - Adult fee, less than $8.00 daily fee
    - Child fee, less than $6.00 daily fee

- A new aquatic center is a medium priority for the respondents.
- Close to half of the respondents would not support an increase in property tax to build a new aquatic facility.