

REPORT

City of Bellingham Service Priorities and Customer Satisfaction Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Bellingham conducted a survey of 600 randomly selected Bellingham residents. The purpose of the survey was to help identify people's satisfaction level and priorities for city services. The survey replicated some items from surveys of registered Bellingham voters in 2004 and 2006, as well as adapting items from Portland, Oregon's neighborhood survey.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND IMPORTANT PROBLEMS

People gave continued high ratings to the quality of life in Bellingham with 90% saying it was *excellent* or *good*. In addition, 60% of respondents said they think Bellingham is "generally going in the right direction."

When asked to name the most important problem facing Bellingham, the most frequent responses had to do with growth. This included comments about sprawl, overdevelopment and planning. Traffic issues were also mentioned (10%) as were watershed issues (6%).

CITY PERFORMANCE RATINGS

More than half of respondents gave the city *excellent* or *good* ratings on:

- Protecting the environment
- Protecting the livability of neighborhoods
- Meeting community needs

Planning for growth was the least well rated item, with 22% of respondents saying the city is doing a *poor* job. However, this is down from 30% giving the city a *poor* rating in 2006.

PRIORITY AND SUCCESS OF CITY EFFORTS

As in prior years, respondents placed fire protection, emergency medical services and crime prevention at the top of the priority list out of 13 topics presented. In addition, involving the public and guiding development were top tier priorities.

Respondents were also asked to rate the same 13 items in terms of how well the city was doing in providing the service. The highest priority items -- providing fire protection, preventing crime and providing emergency medical services -- were rated as *good* or

excellent by more than 70% of respondents. In addition, maintaining parks and trails, providing library services, opportunities for education in culture and the arts and recreational programs were given high marks. Lowest marks were given to communicating with citizens and involving the public in decision making.

Analysis showed that the high priority items that were rated poorly by respondents were:

- Involving the public in making decisions that affect the community
- Guiding development to protect the environment and promote healthy neighborhoods

BUDGET AND TAXES

Respondents were asked to consider whether people who live outside the city should pay extra for services that are supported by city taxes. Over half (59%) said they think people who live outside the city should continue to get the services without paying extra fees.

Fifty five percent (55%) of respondents favored increasing taxes to maintain services in the event of a budget shortfall. Among the 37% who said they favored cutting services to maintain taxes, the services they mentioned most often were related to culture and arts, parks and recreation and city administration or salaries.

ATTRIBUTES

When asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement “Bellingham is growing too fast and is losing its character,” 34% *strongly agreed* and another 28% *somewhat agreed* (62% total). This is down substantially from 2006 where 71% of respondents agreed with the statement. Other responses were:

- A good place to do business (28% strongly agreed, 37% somewhat agreed).
- City makes sure people have access to information on issues the city is deciding (15% strongly agreed, 43% somewhat agreed).
- City listens to neighborhood concerns (14% strongly agreed, 47% somewhat agreed).
- City does a good job involving people in decisions that impact them (11% strongly agreed, 46% somewhat agreed).

BTV10 AND COB.ORG

Most respondents (70%) had heard of BTV10 (unchanged from 2006). Approximately half (49%) watch BTV10 once a month or more often, down from 57% in 2006. Among

those who ever watch BTV10, 40% did so in order to watch a city council meeting *always* or *sometimes* (42% in 2006).

Just over half of respondents (54%) had heard of the city's website (unchanged from 2006). Among those who had heard of it, 43% visited the website *once a month* or more often (down from 48% in 2006). One quarter of those who had heard of the website *never* visited.

ENVIRONMENT

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of four potential actions that the city could take that relate to the environment. All were given similarly high ratings, suggesting that environmental issues in general are considered important by a large majority of residents (69% or more). Below is the portion who said the issue was *very* or *extremely important*.

- Preventing further development in the Lake Whatcom watershed to protect our drinking water (80%)
- Promoting the use of renewable energy such as green and solar power (71%)
- Reducing automobile trips by improving transit, bicycle and pedestrian choices (71%)
- Creating a plan to reduce dependence on oil and respond to an oil supply crisis (69%).

SAFETY

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their sense of safety in different parts of their neighborhood or town and at different times of day. Time of day was the strongest indicator of feeling safe, with 91% of respondents feeling *extremely* or *very* safe in their neighborhoods during the day and 72% feeling as safe downtown.

People felt least safe downtown at night, with just 25% saying they felt *extremely* or *very* safe. Nighttime also affected residents' perceptions of safety in neighborhood parks.

Portland, Oregon had similar ratings for most items, though Bellingham residents gave higher marks to feeling safe downtown during the day and at night in their neighborhoods.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Respondents were asked if they were prepared to sustain themselves and their family for 72 hours after a major disaster. Sixty five percent (65%) said they were, with another 19% saying they were *somewhat* prepared.

NEIGHBORHOOD RATINGS

Respondents rated their neighborhoods on a variety of characteristics. Highest ratings went to walking distance to a bus stop (59% said it was *very good* or *excellent*) followed by access to shopping or other services (49%) and the physical condition of the housing (48%). Lowest ratings went to the availability of on-street parking (29%) and housing affordability (21%).

Relative to the city of Portland, these ratings were quite similar, though Portland gave higher scores to walking distance to a bus stop and on-street parking.

NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

Residents rated characteristics of their streets in terms of cleanliness (64% gave *excellent* or *very good* ratings), pedestrian safety (35%) and safety of traffic speed (35%). The lowest ratings went to the safety of bicyclists (28%).

These are similar to Portland's ratings on similar items, though Bellingham residents gave higher marks to the cleanliness of streets than did Portland's residents.

CONCLUSION

Bellingham residents are mostly pleased with the quality of life and conditions of their area. Concerns about growth, planning and traffic and infrastructure are predominant issues, along with the environment and the economy. There is some concern that the city has not supported planning for growth adequately, and not involved or informed residents in important decisions.

The city received high marks in key priority areas of fire, emergency medical services and crime prevention. It needs to focus energy and resources on guiding development and involving the public – areas that were rated as high priorities but for which the city received relatively low marks. Residents gave strong ratings to important amenities (arts and culture, library and parks) but did not give these very high priority.

Most residents showed some willingness to pay more to maintain services, though among the substantial minority who would not, cutting arts and culture as well as park funding was the focus.

Environmental issues are important to a large majority of residents, especially when it comes to protecting Lake Whatcom as a drinking water source. The city can take action on environmental issues and trust that they are representing citizen's interests.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Bellingham contracted with Applied Research Northwest (ARN) to conduct a survey of Bellingham residents. This survey was conducted as a part of regular efforts aimed at gathering public feedback from the community. The purpose of the survey was to help identify people's satisfaction level and priorities for city services.

The survey consisted of 74 items, including 2 open ended questions. Some items were repeated from prior years' surveys, while others were added to meet current interests of the city. In addition, some items from Portland Oregon's neighborhoods survey were adapted for use in this survey.

The telephone survey resulted in 600 completed surveys which provides for an error margin of plus or minus 4%. Unlike prior surveys which included only registered voters, the 2008 survey was open for all residents of the city.

A complete description of the methods used in the research is included in a set of appendices under separate cover. It includes the frequency report, which includes the actual telephone script used and the distribution of respondent answers, can be found in Appendix B. The verbatim responses given to the open-ended questions can be found in Appendix C. Comparisons to prior years' survey findings are in Appendix D.

This report uses the convention of *italicizing* any verbatim response option from the survey in an effort to fully convey the voice of the residents' survey responses.

FINDINGS

This section of the report summarizes the responses for each survey item using text and graphics. Further analysis looked at particular segments within the population to see if there were any significant differences between subgroups. Segments were defined by the following attributes:

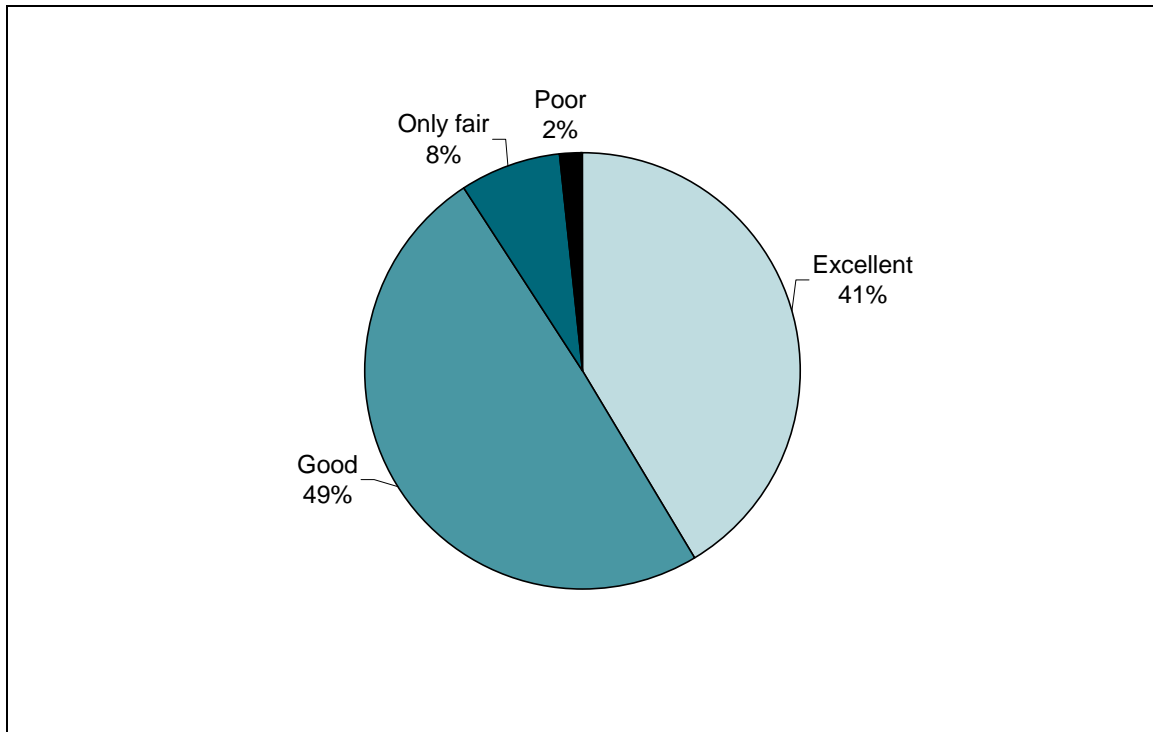
- Households with children under the age of 18 (for the ease of reporting these will be called “Parents”)
- Length of time living in Bellingham (for ease of reporting, those who have lived in Bellingham for 3 years or less will be called “Newcomers”)
- Age
- Renters vs Owners
- Income (Less than 75K per year vs 75K+)

Findings of the subgroup analysis are reported where relevant.

BELLINGHAM QUALITY OF LIFE

Respondents were first asked general questions about the quality of life in Bellingham. When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Bellingham, 90% said *good* or *excellent*. Only 2% described the quality of life as *poor*.

Figure 1. Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in Bellingham? (n=599)



These findings differ slightly from prior years, with more respondents choosing *good* than *excellent*. Readers should recall that the population surveyed for 2008 included all Bellingham residents, not just those who were registered to vote (as in the 2004 and 2006 surveys).

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2008</u>
Excellent	49	48	41
Good	43	46	49
Only fair	7	5	8
Poor	1	1	2
(Don't know)	--	0	--
	(n=513)	(n=510)	(n=599)

Analysis found that some groups of respondents were especially likely to call the quality of life in Bellingham *excellent*:

- Homeowners (46%)
- Respondents aged 55 and over (45%)
- Respondents with an income of 75K+ per year (52%)

When asked “Do you feel Bellingham is generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten seriously off on the wrong track,” over half (60%) of respondents said that they think that Bellingham is generally going in the right direction while 32% said Bellingham is on the wrong track. The remainder (8%) said they didn’t know. This year’s findings are somewhat improved over prior years with more respondents offering a *right direction* assessment than in 2004 (57%) or 2006 (55%).

Analysis found two groups of respondents statistically more likely to think Bellingham is going in the right direction:

- Newcomers/Residents of 3 years or less (67%)
- Respondents aged 18 to 34 (66%)

When asked to name the most important problem facing Bellingham, the most frequent responses had to do with growth. This included comments about sprawl and too much development (14%), general comments about growth (8%) and also planning for growth (5%). Traffic was also a prevalent response (10%) as well as watershed issues (6%).

Table 2. What do you think is the most important problem facing Bellingham today that city leaders can do something about?		
	N	%
Improper Growth: Growing to large/Preventing Sprawl/Overpopulated/Too much development/improper in-fill	86	16
Traffic	60	11
Growth (General)	50	9
Police: Crime/Safety	39	7
Drinking Water/Watershed	38	7
Politics: Decision Making/Better City Officials	32	6
Creating/keeping/finding jobs	31	6
Other (see Appendix C for details)	30	5
Planning for growth/sprawl	27	5
Attract business/industry	25	5
Help Environment	25	5
Waterfront Development	24	4
Homelessness	22	4
Transportation	22	4
Improvement on Roads/Sidewalks	19	3
Affordable Housing	17	3
Energy Crises/Gas Prices	16	3
Zoning/Permits/Building Rights	16	3
Economy/Economic Development/Rising Prices	15	3
Taxes (General)	14	3
Education/ Youth Services	13	2
Housing	12	2
Poverty	10	2
Property Taxes	8	1
Parking	8	1
Involve Citizens	7	1
Healthcare/ Mental Healthcare	7	1
Planning (General)	6	1
Need More Development	3	1
Chuckanut Ridge	3	1
Need More Growth	2	0

n=585

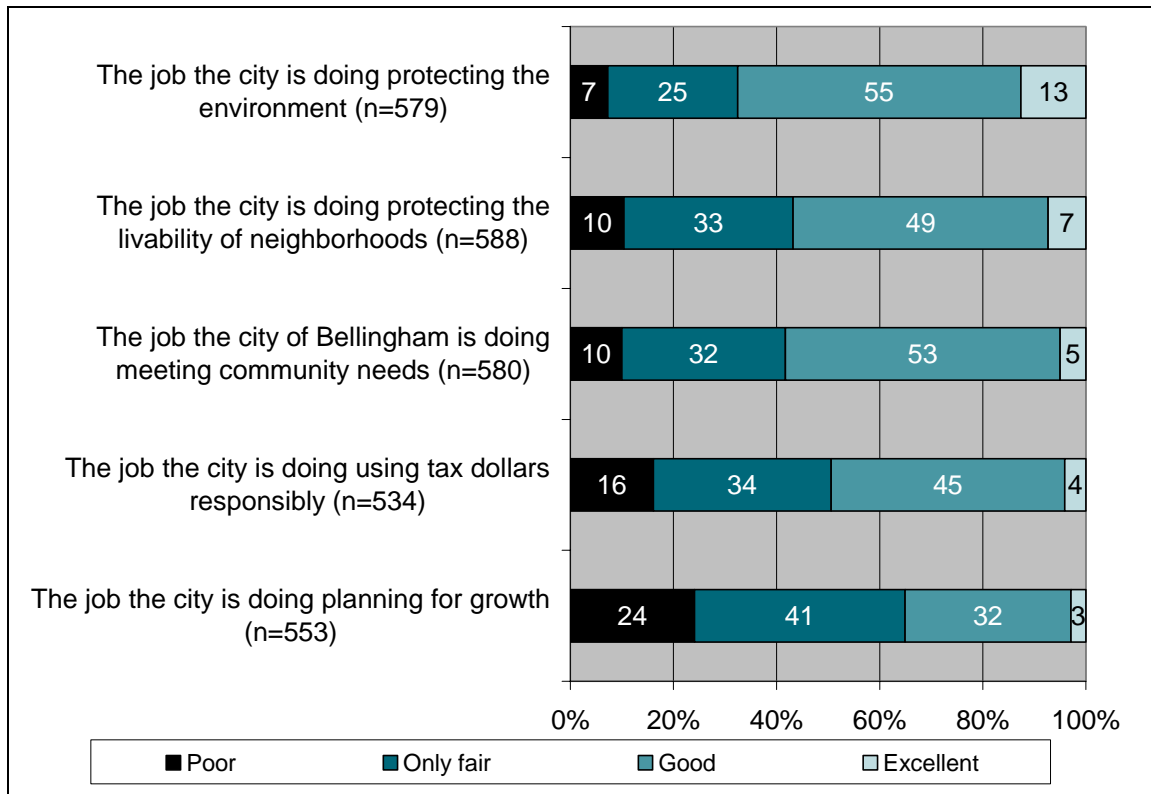
Some respondents mentioned more than one reason; numbers will total more than 100%

CITY PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Respondents were asked to rate the job the city is doing in several different areas. Figure 2 shows that the highest ratings went to what the city is doing to protect the environment, with 68% describing it as *good* or *excellent*.

Favorable ratings were given by over half of respondents for the job the city is doing protecting the livability of neighborhoods (56%) and meeting community needs (58%). Both of these were rated higher by newcomers to Bellingham (those who have lived in Bellingham for less than 4 years) and also by respondents with a household income of 75K or higher. Parents were more likely to give mediocre ratings for performance around protecting livability of neighborhoods (42% said *only fair* compared to 30% of non-parents).

Figure 2. Satisfaction with the City of Bellingham in five performance areas



Respondents showed some dissatisfaction with how the city is using tax dollars, with less than half (49%) giving *good* or *excellent* ratings. Newcomers to Bellingham were significantly more likely to give favorable ratings (66% vs 49% of those who have lived in Bellingham for more than 3 years). Similarly, respondents earning more than 75K per year were more satisfied, with 57% giving favorable ratings (compared to 46% of those earning less than 75K per year).

Respondents were least satisfied with the job the city is doing planning for growth with nearly one-quarter (24%) describing it as *poor*. This was a fairly universal sentiment, although males gave a particularly high proportion of *poor* ratings (29% vs 21% of females).

Three of these items were asked in prior years' surveys as well. The tables below show that people more often gave *excellent* ratings to "meeting community needs" in 2004 and 2006, though the overall distribution is not substantially changed. "Protecting the livability of neighborhoods" showed 7% higher *good* and *excellent* ratings in 2008. "Planning for growth" showed some improvement with 22% rating it as *poor* in 2008 compared to 30% in 2006. Readers should note that *don't know* responses are included in the tables while they are not in the graph above.

Table 3. Meeting community needs: 2004-2008.			
	2004	2006	2008
Excellent	13	7	5
Good	44	43	52
Only fair	30	34	31
Poor	9	10	10
(Don't know)	3	6	3
	(n=513)	(n=510)	(n=595)

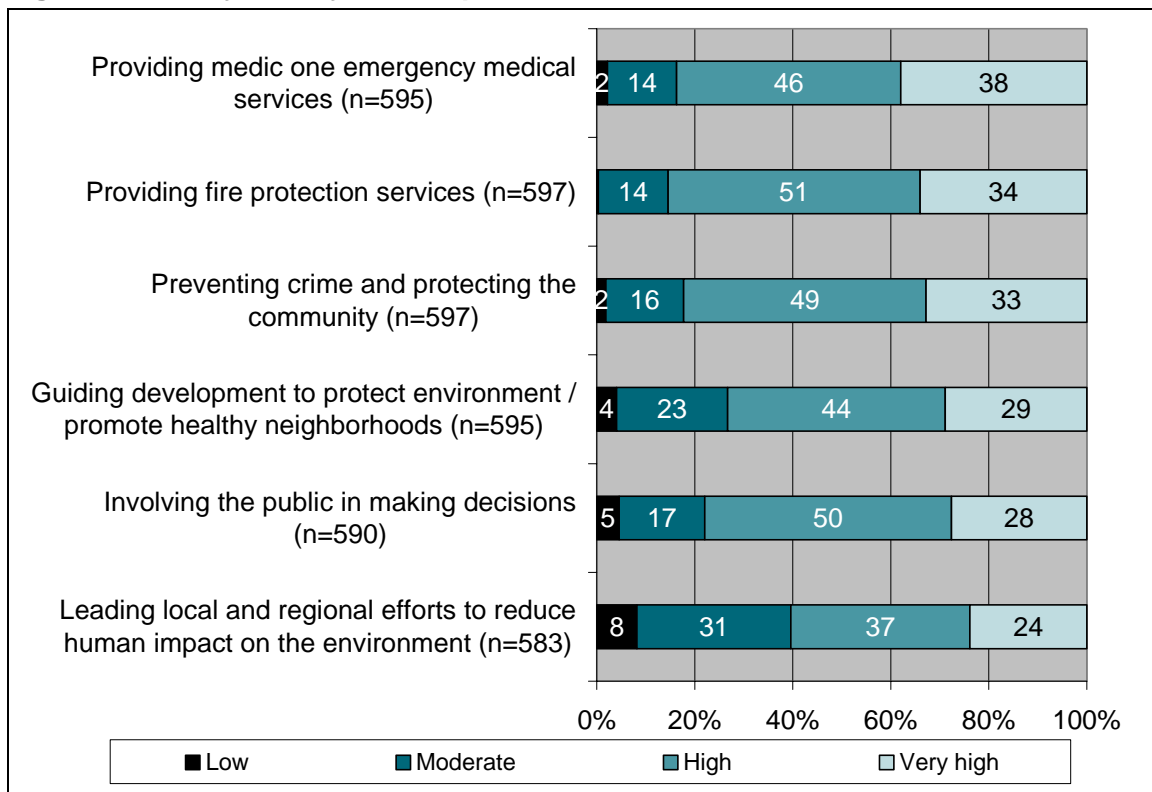
Table 4. Protecting the livability of neighborhoods 2004-2008.			
	2004	2006	2008
Excellent	--	7	7
Good	--	42	49
Only fair	--	31	32
Poor	--	15	10
(Don't know)	--	5	2
	--	(n=510)	(n=599)

Table 5. Planning for growth: 2004-2008.			
	2004	2006	2008
Excellent	--	4	3
Good	--	26	30
Only fair	--	36	38
Poor	--	30	22
(Don't know)	--	4	7

PRIORITY AND SUCCESS OF CITY EFFORTS

Respondents were asked to consider 13 different efforts that the City of Bellingham could spend tax dollars on. Each effort was rated in terms of their priority level with a scale of *low*, *moderate*, *high*, or *very high*. The frequencies were sorted by *very high* priority and split into two sections. Figure 3 shows the six efforts with the highest proportion of *very high* priority ratings. The top three efforts were rated as *very high* priorities by more than one-third of the respondents: providing medic one services (38%), providing fire protection services (34%) and preventing crime and protecting the community (33%). When looking at the combined *high* and *very high* priorities, these three remain the top ranked, with one more effort rated with similar priority level: involving the public in making decisions (78% consider it a *high* or *very high* priority).

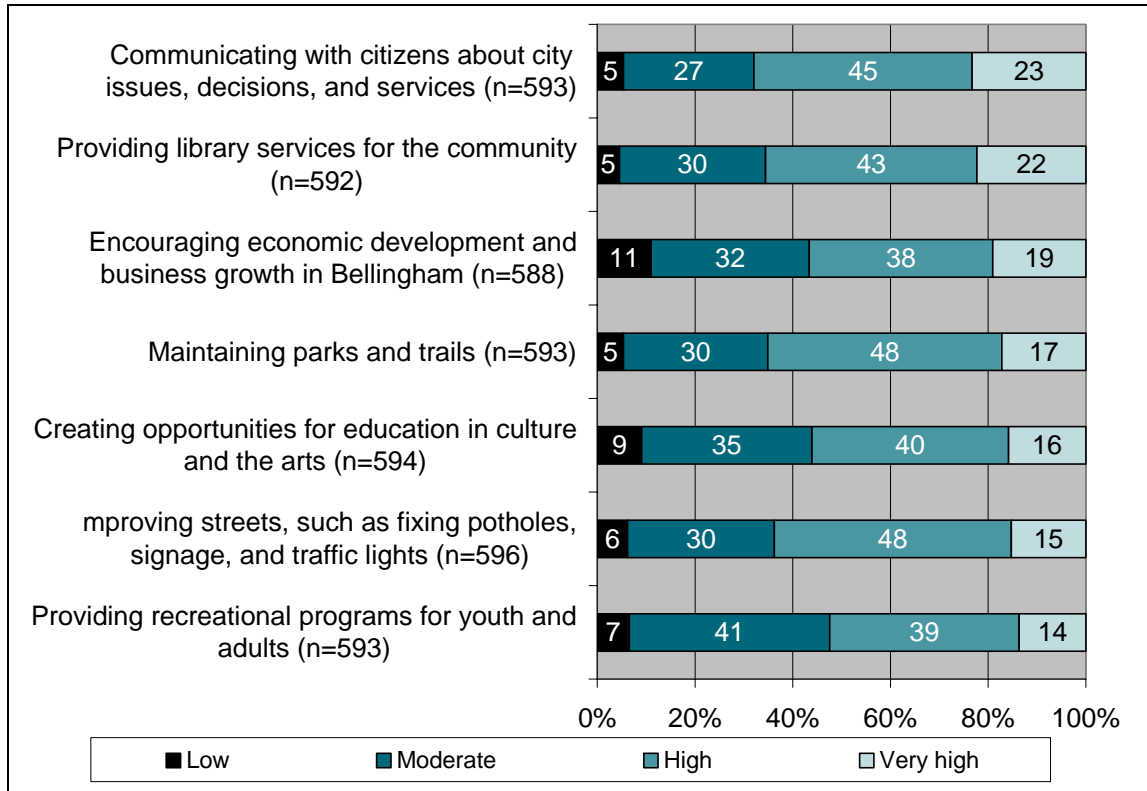
Figure 3. Priority for city efforts, part 1



Compared to prior years' surveys, all of these items were given a smaller proportion of *very high* ratings in 2008 and more *high* ratings on every item. "Leading local and regional efforts to reduce human impact on the environment" was a new item this year. For detailed tables, please see Appendix D.

The second half of the ranked priorities are shown in Figure 4. The efforts with the lowest level of *very high* priority ratings were improving streets (14%) and providing recreational programs (15%). Encouraging economic development had the highest proportion of *low* priority ratings (11%).

Figure 4. Priority for city efforts, part 2

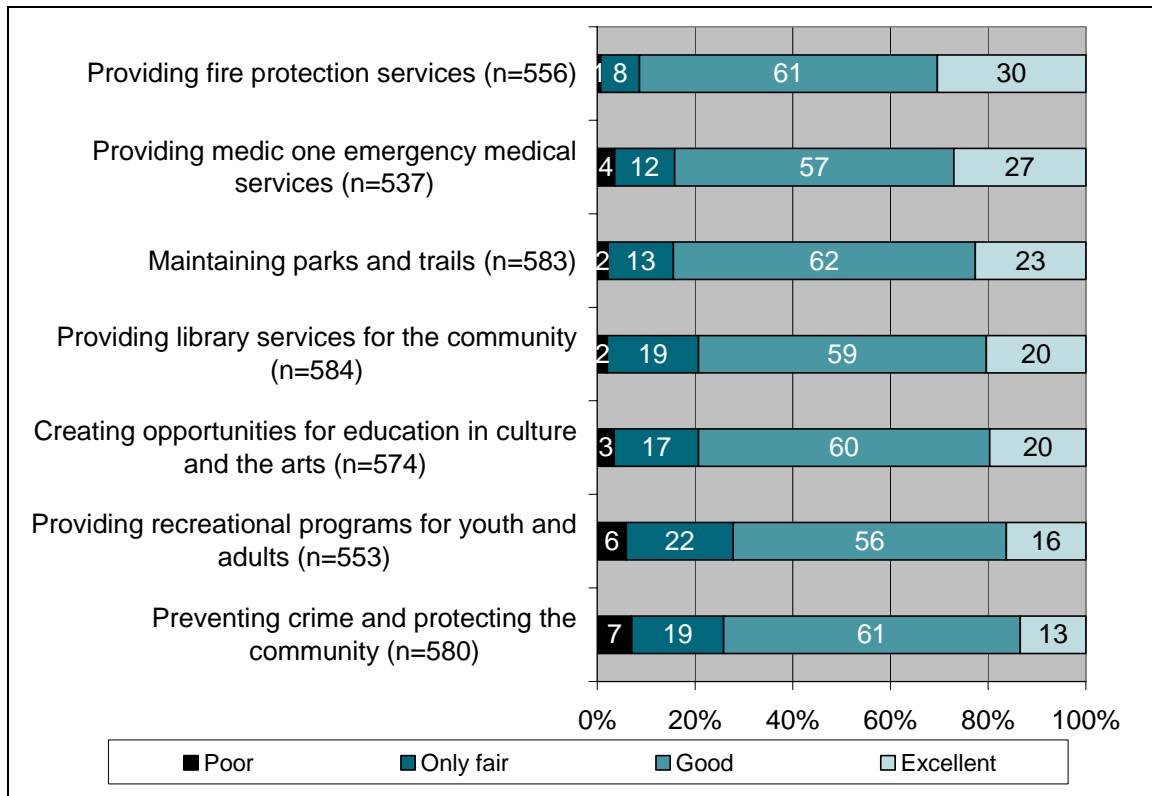


Analysis looked to see where particular subgroups differed in how they prioritized city efforts. Here are some of the key findings:

- Parents rated providing fire protection services slightly lower than non-parents (79% called it a high or very high priority compared to 88% of non-parents). Parents ranked preventing crime as a higher priority than fire protection.
- Women and men differed in their ratings on six of the items. In all cases women rated issues as a higher priority.
- Newcomers to Bellingham also stood out with ratings of higher priority on four of the items.

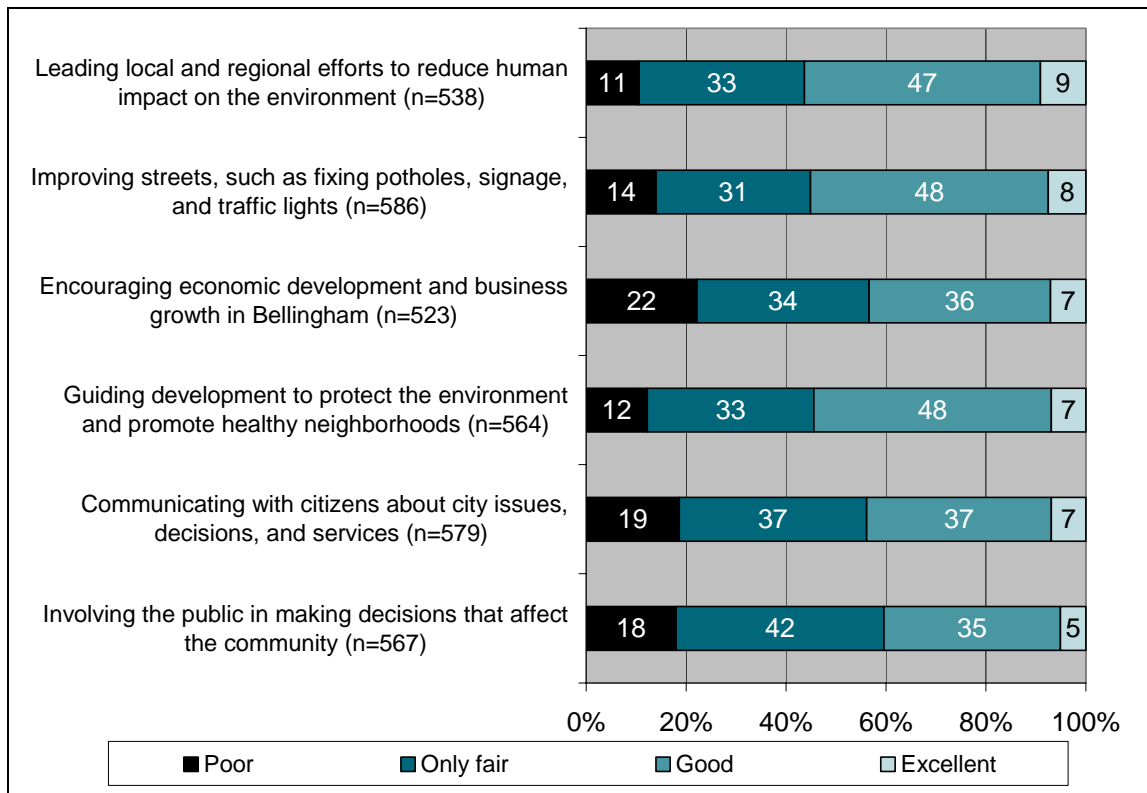
Respondents were then asked to rate the same 13 efforts in terms of how well the City of Bellingham is doing in providing services. Again, the efforts were ranked and split into two graphics. Figure 5 shows the first half, where the bulk of respondents (approximately 60%) said the job the city is doing is *good*. The top ranked service was fire protection services where 91% called it *good* or *excellent*. A slightly smaller proportion gave such high ratings to medic one services (84%) and maintaining parks and trails (85%). With few exceptions, the top ranked services had very few *poor* ratings.

Figure 5. Success in city efforts, part 1



The lower ranked services had more distributed ratings, with a larger proportion of *poor* ratings. The services receiving the lowest proportion of favorable ratings were communicating with citizens about city issues (44%) and involving the public (40%). The highest proportion of *poor* ratings was garnered by the job the city has done on encouraging economic development (22%).

Figure 6. Success in city efforts, part 2



Analysis looked to see where particular subgroups differed in how they rated the success of city efforts. Here are some of the key findings:

- Respondents over 65 were more likely than younger respondents to give *excellent* ratings regarding fire services (35%) and Medic One services (40%)
- Respondents under age 35 were more likely to give *excellent* ratings for the job the city is doing encouraging economic development (14%)
- This same group (18-34) was significantly less satisfied with opportunities for education in the arts with 31% giving *fair* or *poor* ratings
- Respondents with an income under 75K were more likely to give unfavorable ratings of *fair* or *poor* regarding maintaining parks and trails (20%) and also providing recreational programs (35%)
- Renters were more likely to give *poor* ratings for preventing crime and protecting the community (13%)

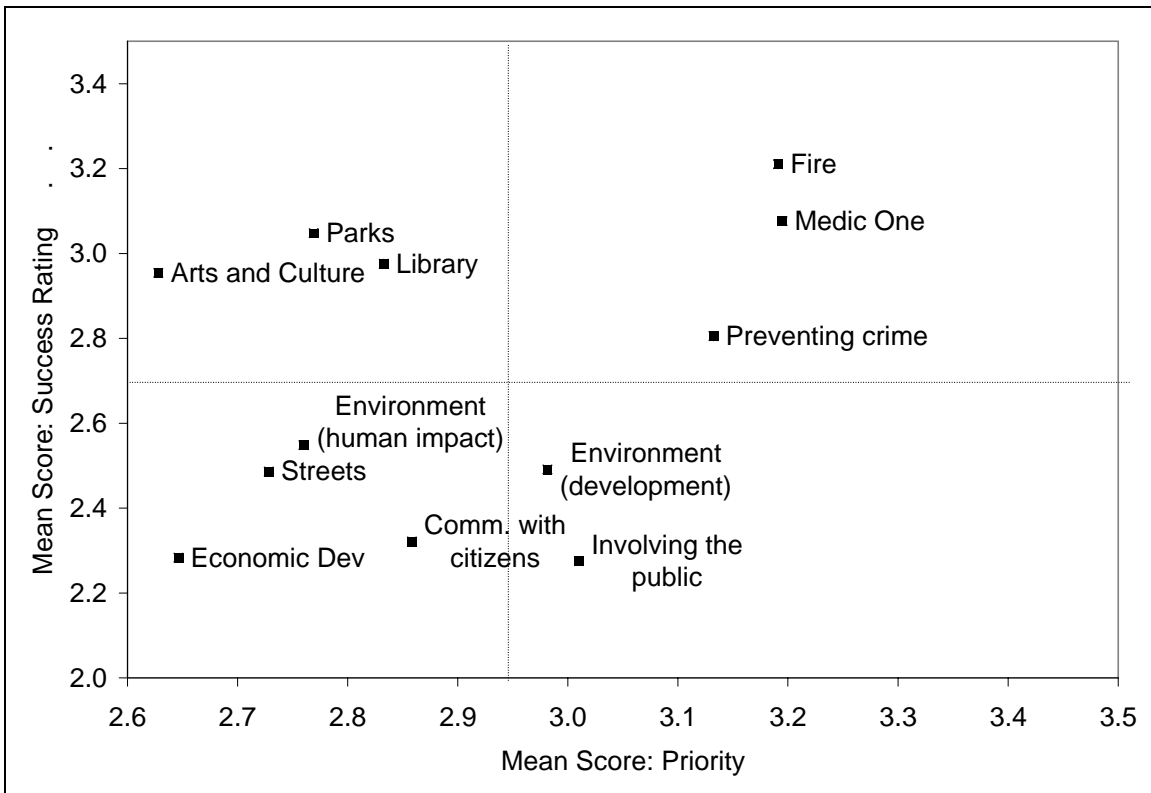
Further analysis looked to see how the priority ratings stacked up against the success ratings. In other words, “Do the residents think the city is doing well in the areas that they think are most important?” Figure 7 illustrates where each of the city efforts fall on a continuum of priority ratings, showing that the average city effort priority rating was a 2.9. The average success rating across these services was a 2.7. There were three efforts that received above average ratings in both priority and success:

- Providing fire protection services
- Providing medic one emergency medical services
- Preventing crime and protecting the community

There were two efforts that received above average priority ratings, but below average success ratings:

- Involving the public in making decisions that affect the community
- Guiding development to protect the environment and promote healthy neighborhoods

Figure 7. Priority and Success Quadrants

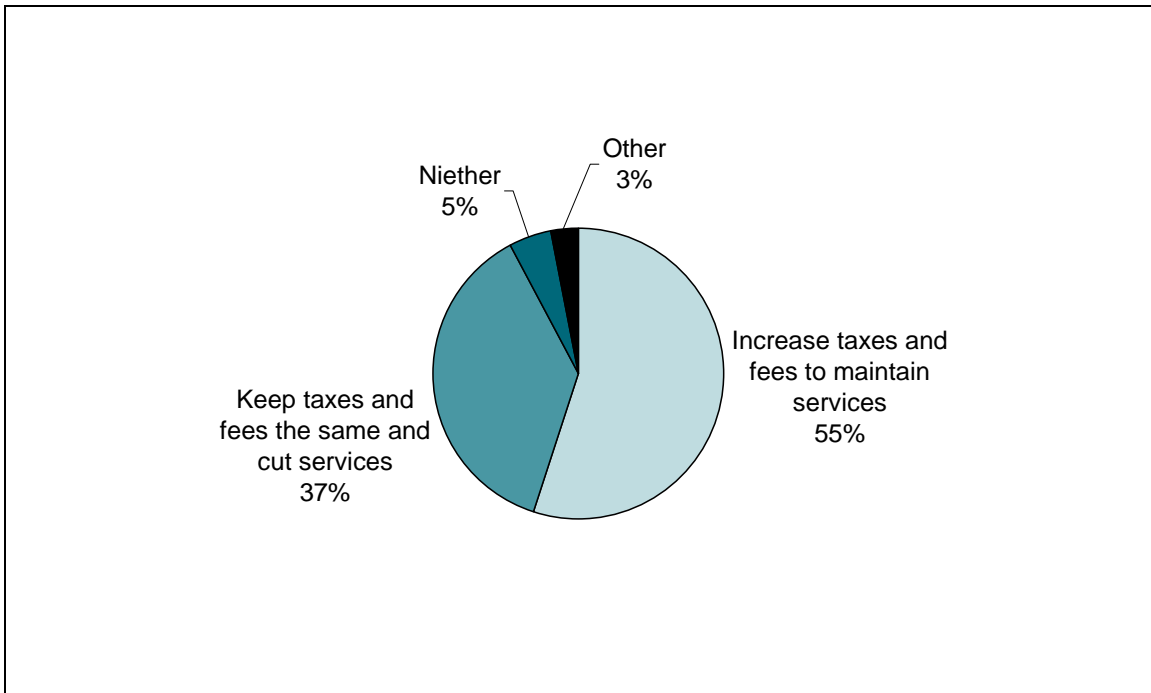


BUDGET AND TAXES

Respondents were asked to consider whether people who live outside the city should pay extra for services that are supported by city taxes. Over half (59%) said they think that the people who live outside the city should continue to get these services without paying extra fees.

When asked to choose between increasing taxes to maintain services or keeping taxes the same but cutting services, just over half (55%) chose increasing taxes. Just over one-third (37%) preferred cutting services to keep taxes the same. The remainder would not select between the available choices and said *neither* or something else.

Figure 8. Which would you choose for the City of Bellingham? (n=564)



Analysis found that renters were significantly more likely to prefer increasing taxes to maintain services (65% vs 51% of owners). Respondents under the age of 35 were also more likely to prefer the option of increasing taxes (62% compared to 54% of those 35+). Those over 35 were more likely to say *neither* or *other*. This is very similar to the 2004 findings, where 56% of respondents preferred maintaining services with tax increases. In 2006, fewer people were certain of a response to the question.

Table 6. Increase taxes or cut services: 2004-2008			
	2004	2006	2008
Increase taxes, maintain services	56	44	52
Keep taxes same, cut services	33	42	35
(Other)	4	5	3
(Neither)	3	4	5
(Don't Know)	3	4	3
(Refused)	1	1	2
	(n=513)	(n=510)	(n=598)

Respondents were asked to suggest which services the city should cut if they were to cut services. The most frequently mentioned suggestions were

- Cultural/Arts
- Parks and recreation
- Administration/city salaries

Other top mentions were the library, roads, and law enforcement.

One common theme was distinguishing between necessities and luxuries, typically referring to arts and parks/recreation.

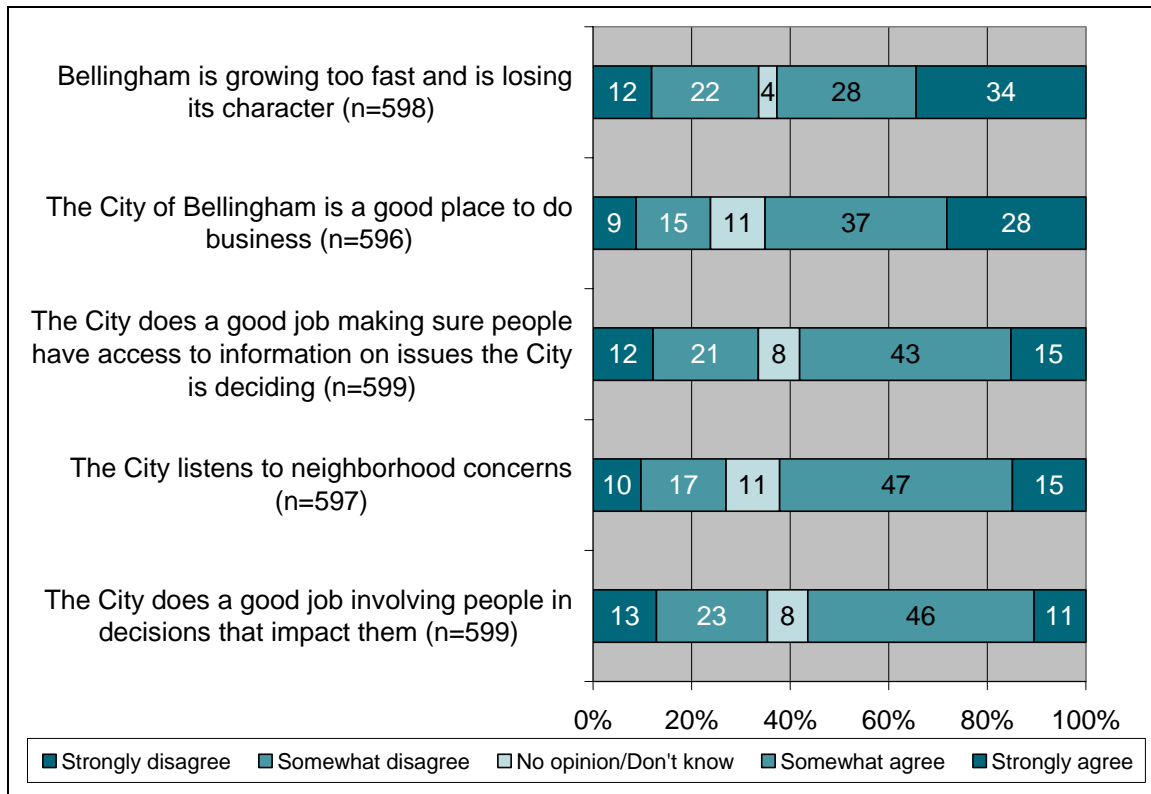
"The arts and the trails. As much as I enjoy them, they are "I wants" not "I needs." We should keep the needs, cut the wants."

ATTRIBUTES

Respondents were presented with a series of statements about Bellingham and asked to rate their agreement. The highest proportion of *strongly agree* ratings went to “Bellingham is growing too fast and is losing its character” (34%). Residents who have lived in Bellingham longer than 3 years were more likely to *strongly agree* with this statement (37% compared to 18% of newcomers). Two other groups were particularly likely to take this position: women (39%) and residents with income under 75K (40%). This is substantially changed from 2006 in which just 26% of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement compared to 34% this year (see Appendix D for detailed tables).

When *somewhat* and *strongly agree* are combined, solid support was voiced for “The City of Bellingham is a good place to do business” (65%). Respondents under 35 were more likely to feel this way (80% compared to 63% of older respondents). Parents were also more likely to agree (73%). A portion of men *disagreed strongly* (13% vs 6% of women). This question was not asked in prior years.

Figure 9. Attributes of Bellingham



The two lowest ranked statements both concern community involvement. “Listening to neighborhood concerns” was largely unchanged from 2006. Ratings for “involving

people in decisions” cannot be compared to 2006 due to changes in the question wording.

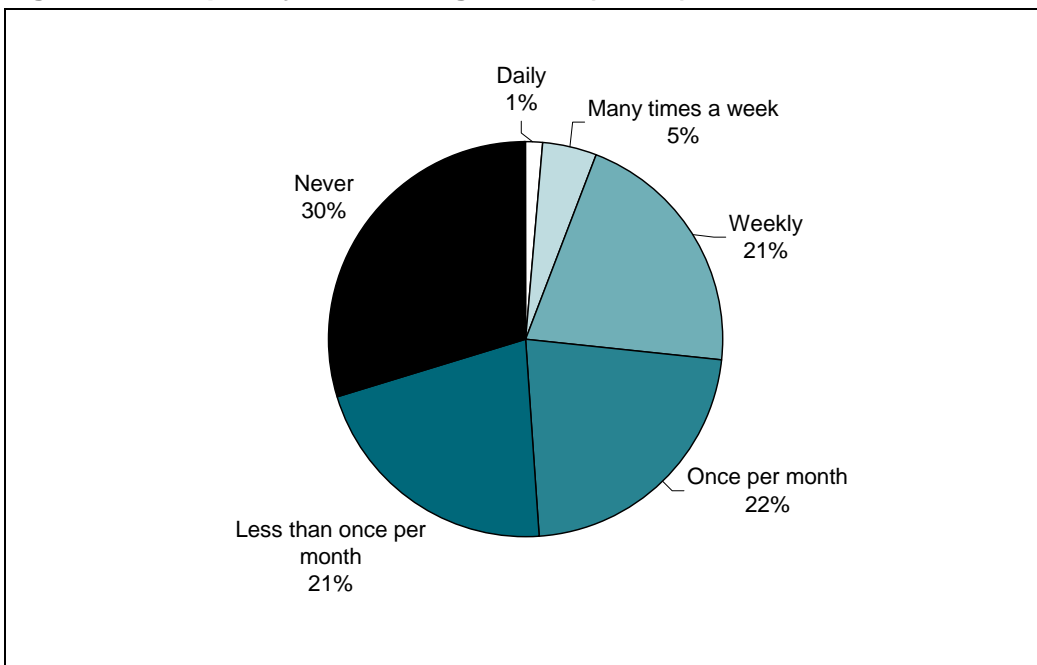
Older respondents (55 and older) were especially likely to *strongly disagree* that the city listens to neighborhood concerns (13% compared to 6% under 55). This same group was also less likely to *somewhat* or *strongly agree* that the City does a good job involving people in decisions that impact them (52% vs 62% of younger respondents). Similarly, parents were more likely than non-parents to *agree* with this item (65% compared to 53% of non-parents).

BTV10

Most respondents (70%) have heard of Bellingham’s city television channel known as BTV-10 (unchanged from 2006). Residents who have lived in Bellingham for more than 3 years, respondents with an income of 75K or more and respondents 35 and older were significantly more likely than their counterparts to have heard of it.

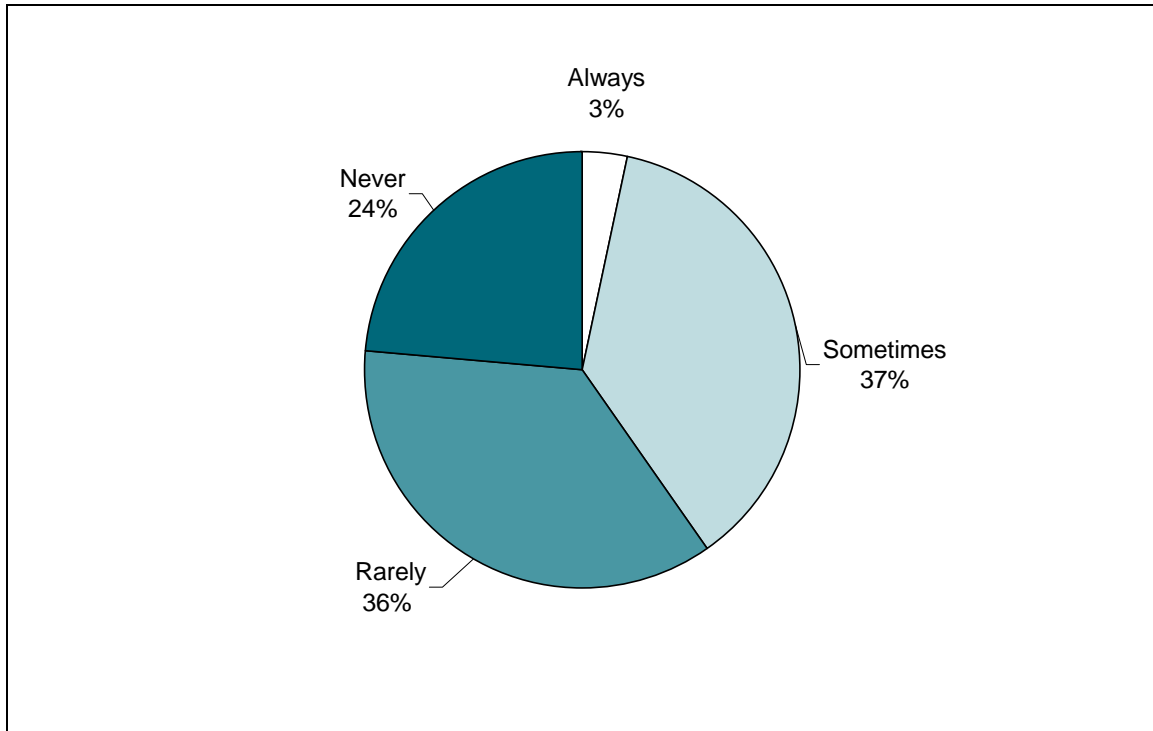
Among those who have heard of it, approximately half (49%) watch it once a month or more (see Figure 10), down from 57% in 2006. This is one instance where the switch from registered voter respondents to residents in general might have accounted for at least some of the change, though registered and unregistered respondents were equally aware of the station and had similar viewing patterns.

Figure 10. Frequency of watching BTV10. (n=419)



Among those who ever watch BTV-10, 40% were tuning in to watch a City Council meeting *sometimes* or *always* (42% in 2006). Women were especially likely to *sometimes* or *always* use the channel to watch a City Council meeting (47% vs 32% of men).

Figure 11. How often were you tuning in to watch a City Council meeting? (n=295)

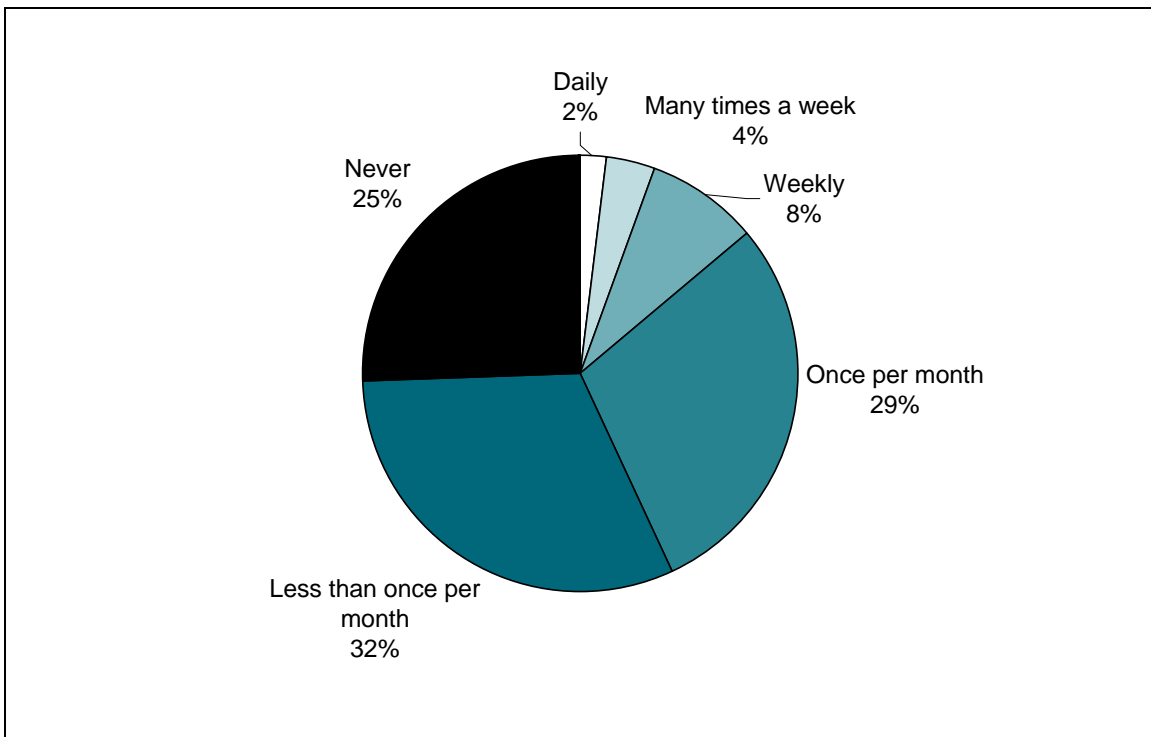


CITY WEBSITE

Just over half of respondents (54%) have heard of the City’s website cob.org (unchanged from 2006, though significantly better known among registered voters than unregistered respondents in 2008). Among those who have heard of it, 43% visit cob.org about *once a month* or more (down from 48% in the 2006 survey). One-quarter (25%) of those who have heard of the website have *never* visited.

Age was strongly associated with usage; respondents over 65 were the least likely age group to have ever visited the site (56% vs 79% of those under age 65).

Figure 12. Frequency of visiting cob.org. (n=326)

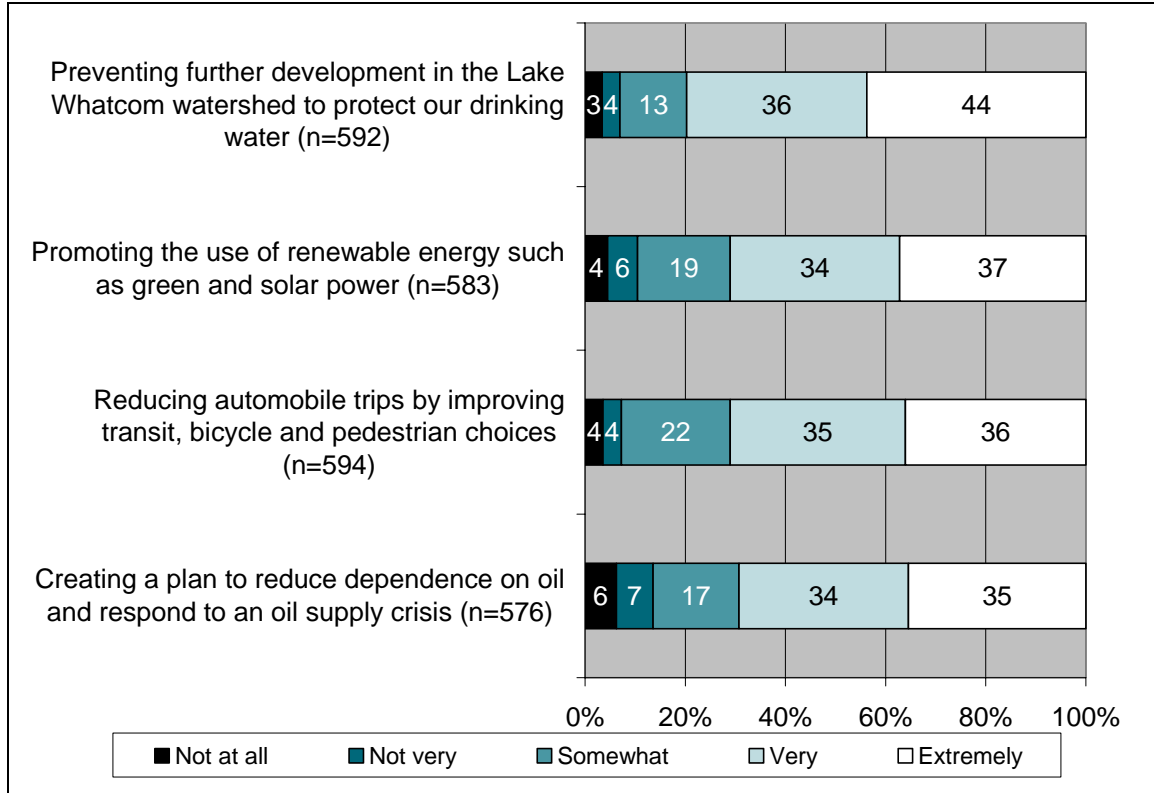


ENVIRONMENT

Respondents were presented with four actions that the City of Bellingham is taking to protect the environment. They were instructed to rate how important each action is to them. The four actions yielded very similar distributions (see Figure 13). The action receiving the highest proportion of favorable ratings was “preventing further development in Lake Whatcom watershed to protect our drinking water” with 80% calling this *very* or *extremely important*. Analysis found this distribution of ratings to be consistent among the various segments of residents.

The lowest ranked action was “creating a plan to reduce dependence on oil...” with 13% calling it *not at all* or *not very important*. Older respondents (age 55 and older) were more likely to call this *not at all important* (9% compared to 3% of younger respondents). Income also appeared to factor into the ratings on this item; those with smaller income (less than 75K) were more likely to say this is *extremely important* (38% vs 27% of the 75K+ segment).

Figure 13. Environmental actions



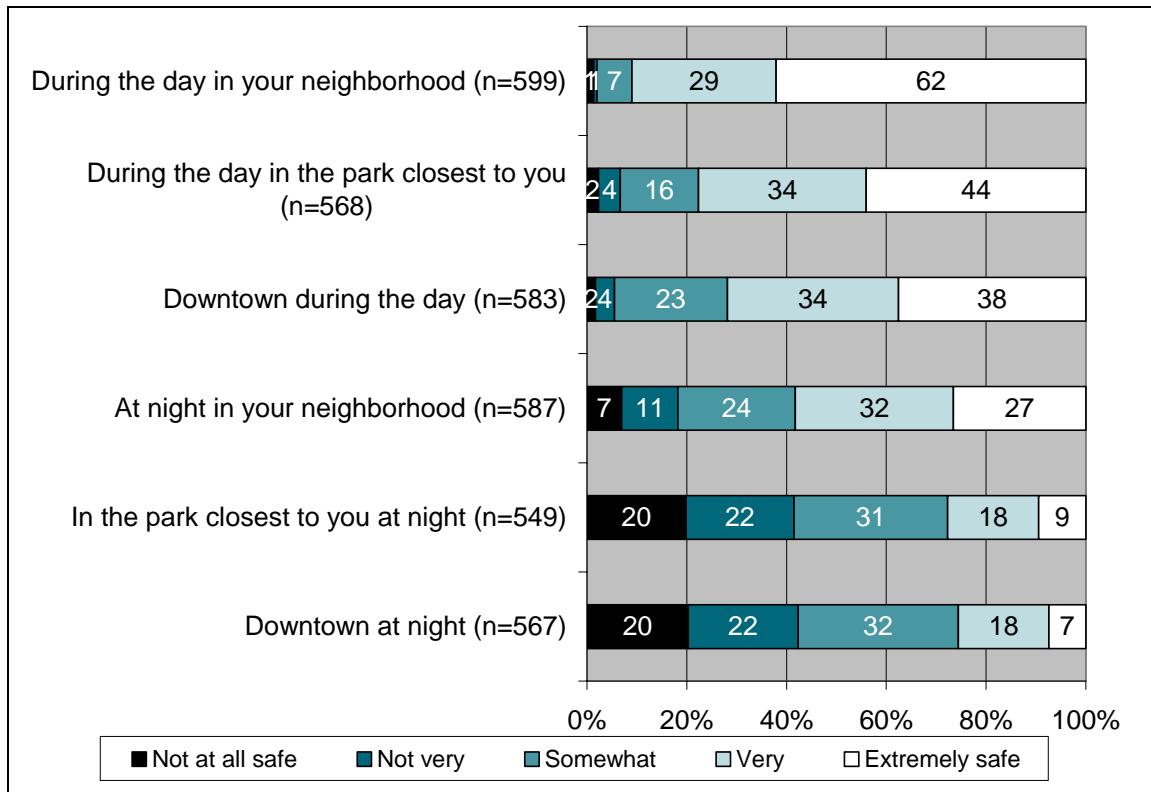
Other notable findings:

- Respondents with income over 75K were less likely to think that promoting the use of renewable energy is extremely important (41% compared to 27%).
- Reducing automobile trips was more important to younger respondents; those under 55 were more likely to call it extremely important (40% compared to 33% of 55+). Men were more likely to say this was not very or not at all important (10% compared to 5% of women)

SAFETY

Respondents were asked about how safe they feel in Bellingham, both in their own neighborhood, in parks nearby and downtown. The safest ratings went to daytime scenarios, with their own neighborhood rated highest (91% said *very* or *extremely safe*) followed by a nearby park (78%). Nighttime scenarios were rated less safe than corresponding daytime scenarios; 42% said they feel *not very* or *not at all safe* in the nearby park at night; an identical percentage felt this way about nighttime downtown.

Figure 14. Safety ratings



Further analysis found that there were clear patterns among two particular segments based on income and gender. Women felt significantly less safe than men in all scenarios except during the day in their own neighborhood (where ratings were similar). Respondents with an income of 75K or higher gave consistently higher ratings of safety in all scenarios.

Respondents aged 65 and over were less likely to say they felt *extremely safe* in their neighborhood during the day (58%) and at night (21%). They were also more likely to say they felt *not at all safe* in their neighborhood park at night (27%).

Parents did not differ from non-parent ratings except downtown during the day. In that scenario, 29% of parents said they feel *extremely safe*, compared to a larger proportion of 41% of non-parents.

Respondents who have lived in Bellingham for more than 3 years were more wary of downtown at night; they were significantly more likely to say they feel *not at all safe* (22% vs 10% of newcomers).

These items are partially comparable to items fielded by the city of Portland, Oregon.¹ Overall, Bellingham residents' responses are similar to or more positive than those given by Portland residents in terms of safety.

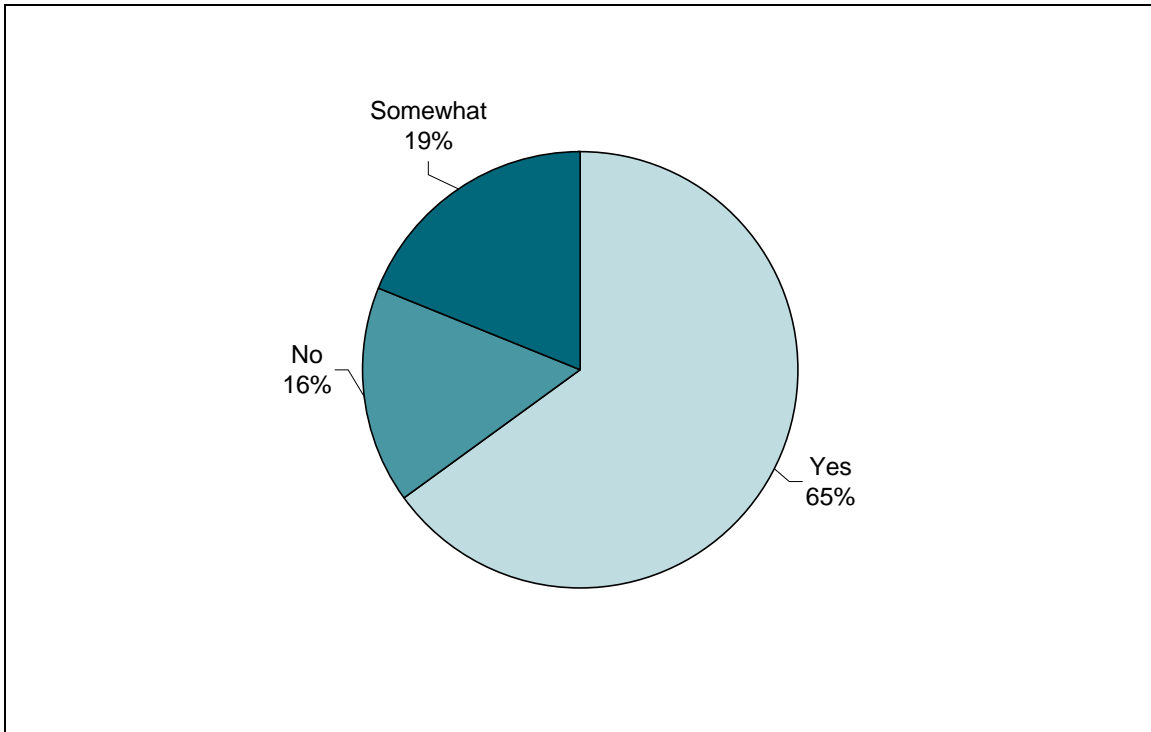
Table 7. How safe would you feel walking alone: Portland vs. Bellingham		
	Portland 2007	Bellingham 2008
	% Good or Very Good	% Extremely or Very Safe
During the day		
<i>In your neighborhood?</i>	89	91
<i>In the park closest to you?</i>	78	76
<i>Downtown?</i>	68	72
At night		
<i>In your neighborhood?</i>	51	58
<i>In the park closest to you?</i>	25	28
<i>Downtown?</i>	27	26

¹ Portland's survey relied on one response scale for all their items, which lead to some confusion in fielding the survey in Bellingham. Response scales were altered for the Bellingham survey to make them more appropriate for the questions.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Respondents were asked if they were prepared to sustain themselves (and family) for 72 hours after a major disaster. Two-thirds (65%) said they thought they were with another 19% saying they were *somewhat* prepared.

Figure 15. Are you prepared to sustain yourself and your family for 72 hours after a major disaster? (n=591)



Several segments identified themselves as unprepared. These groups were significantly less likely than their counterparts to say they are prepared in the event of a major disaster:

- Respondents with children in the household (56%)
- Respondents under age 55 (58%)
- Respondents with an income under 75K per year (60%)
- Women (57%)

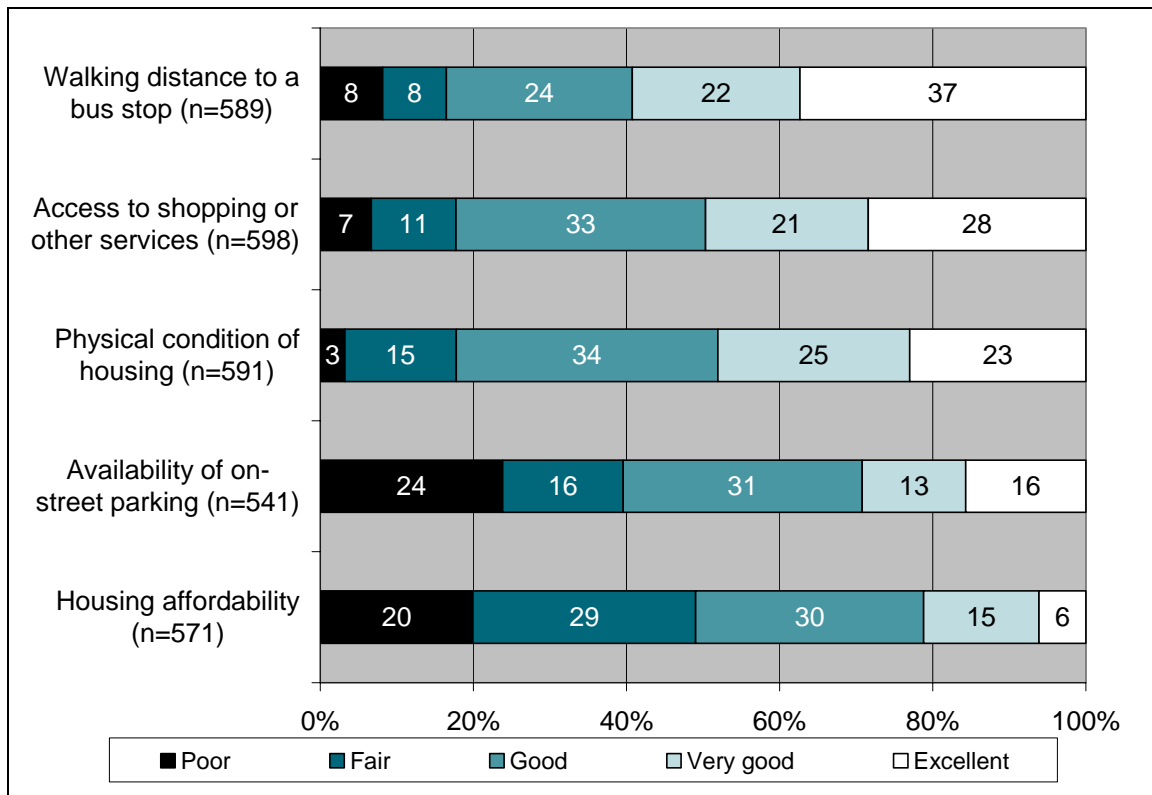
NEIGHBORHOOD RATINGS

Respondents were asked to rate their own neighborhood in a variety of categories. Respondents showed considerable satisfaction with the walking distance to the closest bus stop with 59% calling it *very good* or *excellent*.

Access to shopping or other services garnered nearly half (49%) *very good* or *excellent* ratings as did the physical condition of housing (48%). Both of these were areas where parents were less satisfied than non-parents. Just 15% of respondents with children in the house called the physical condition of housing *excellent* (compared to 26% of non-parents). This was also an area where income and age played a role. Respondents with household income of 75K or higher were more satisfied (32% *excellent* ratings) as were those aged 55 and over (28%).

The two areas with the least satisfaction involved parking and housing affordability. The highest proportion of *poor* ratings went to the availability of on-street parking (24%). This was fairly universal with no segments of residents presenting a statistically different range of opinions. Also ranked low was housing affordability with only 21% calling it *very good* or *excellent*. Two segments that were less likely to give *very good* or *excellent* ratings were parents (14%) and those aged 54 or under (15%).

Figure 16. Neighborhood ratings



With regard to neighborhood characteristics, “Walking distance to a bus stop” and “On-street parking” are the only items that appear to be more poorly rated by Bellingham residents compared to Portland residents.

	Portland 2007	Bellingham 2008
	% Good or Very Good	% Excellent, Very Good or Good/ % Excellent or Very Good
<i>Housing affordability</i>	40	51/21
<i>Physical condition of housing</i>	65	82/48
<i>Walking distance to bus stop</i>	87	84/59
<i>Access to shopping or other services</i>	76	82/50
<i>On-street parking</i>	62	55/29

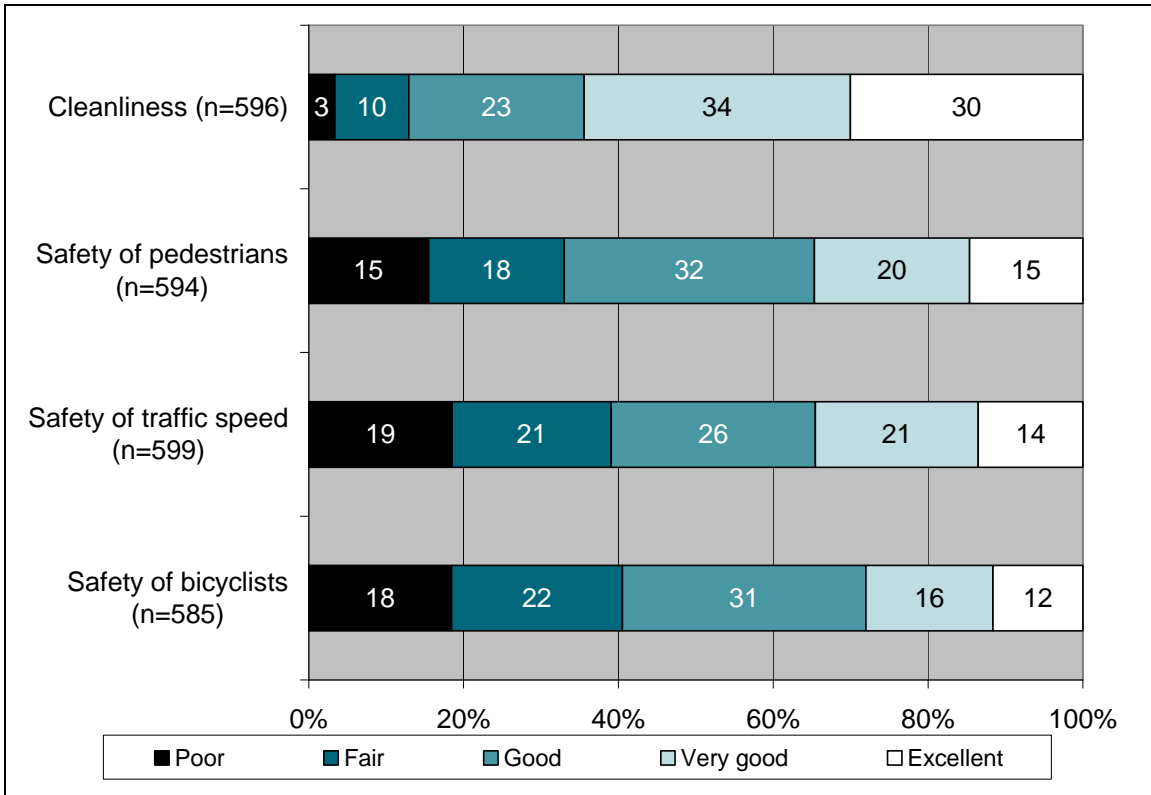
NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

Respondents were also asked to rate the streets in their neighborhood on four different attributes shown in Figure 17. Cleanliness ranked highest with 30% of respondents rating this as *excellent*. Analysis found that two groups were particularly satisfied with cleanliness and were more likely than their counterparts to call it *very good* or *excellent*: respondents aged 55 and older (69%) and respondents with an income over 75K (66%).

Safety of pedestrians and traffic speed yielded very similar distributions of responses with 35% calling them *very good* or *excellent*. A slightly larger proportion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the safety of traffic speed (40% called it *fair* or *poor*, compared to 33% for the safety of pedestrians). The distributions for both of these items were statistically similar among the various subgroups tested, indicating fairly universal opinions.

The poorest ratings went to the safety of bicyclists with only 28% calling it *very good* or *excellent*. Younger respondents showed that they were particularly underwhelmed with the safety of bicyclists (23% gave favorable ratings compared to 32% of those 55 and older).

Figure 17. Ratings of neighborhood streets, sorted by ratings of excellent



With regard to neighborhood streets, Bellingham residents gave higher scores to “cleanliness” than Portland residents.

Table 9. Neighborhood streets: Portland vs. Bellingham.		
	Portland 2007	Bellingham 2008
	% Good or Very Good	% Excellent, Very Good or Good/ % Excellent or Very Good
Cleanliness	61	87/64
Traffic speed	45	61/35
Safety of pedestrians	53	67/35
Safety of bicyclists	47	59/28

CONCLUSION

Bellingham residents are mostly pleased with the quality of life and conditions of their area. Concerns about growth, planning and traffic and infrastructure are predominant issues, along with the environment and the economy. There is some concern that the city has not supported planning for growth adequately, and not involved or informed residents in important decisions.

The city received high marks in key priority areas of fire protection, emergency medical services and crime prevention. The city needs to focus energy and resources on guiding development and involving the public – areas that were rated as high priorities but for which the city received relatively low marks. Residents gave strong ratings to important amenities (arts and culture, library and parks) but did not give these very high priority.

Most residents showed some willingness to pay more to maintain services, though among the substantial minority who would not, cutting arts and culture as well as park funding was the focus.

Environmental issues are important to a large majority of residents, especially when it comes to protecting Lake Whatcom as a drinking water source. The city can take action on environmental issues and trust that they are representing citizen's interests.