

HHHS Healthy Community Check-up ON-LINE SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

(5-08-08)

Who Participated in the Survey?

The Healthy Community Check-up Survey was available online at the HHHS website for over three weeks during March/April of 2008. Participation was open, with 327 people starting the survey, 320 responding to at least the first set of questions, and 305 completing all the survey questions.

Compared to the outreach sessions conducted for the Healthy Community Check-up, the online survey reached proportionately more younger people (under age 45), more females, more parents with children in the home, and fewer retired people.

A comparison of the characteristics of the online survey respondents to Bainbridge Island population data from the 2000 Census is provided below.

Characteristics	Online Survey	2000 Census
AGE		
• 44 and under	20.7%	36.3%
• 45 – 64 years	61.2%	45.1%
• 65 and older	18.1%	17.4%
GENDER		
• Male	27.4%	48.6%
• Female	72.6%	51.4%
Children in Household?		
• Yes	40.4%	36.8%
• No	59.6%	63.2%
How Long on Bainbridge?		
• Less than 3 years	10.7%	n/a
• 3 – 10 years	23.7%	
• 11 – 20 Years	27.6%	
• More than 20 years	36%	
• Not living on B.I.	1.9%	
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
• Employed	61.4%	64.2%
- On Island (Home or Business)	(41.6%)	
- Off Island	(19.8%)	
• Not Employed	38.6%	35.8%
- Retired	(26.3%)	
- Other	(12.3%)	

HOUSEHOLD INCOME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below \$50,000 • \$50-150,000 • Above \$150,000 	18.2% 53.6% 28.2%	28.1% 51% 21%
RACE/ETHNICITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anglo/White • African-American • Asian-Pacific Islander • Hispanic • Mixed Race • Other 	94.4% .3% .7% .3% 2.0% 2.3%	93.7% .3% 2.5% 2.2% 2.7% .8%

Allowing for the aging of the population and inflation, it appears that the online survey participants are fairly representative of the general population – except for the under-representation of men, employees who commute off the Island, Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander people.

Response to the “Healthy Community Vision”

Survey respondents were shown the following statement from the Bainbridge Island Comprehensive Plan, Human Services Element:

Bainbridge Island will function as a caring community that strives to maintain the wellbeing of all its members, a community where all members feel connected to the community and where each individual has opportunities to contribute to the community.

Respondents were asked to rate **the extent to which “our community on Bainbridge Island currently fits the Healthy Community Vision”** – on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = does not fit at all, and 5 = totally fits.) The overall mean score for this question was **3.2** – with the majority of participants rating our current fit at a “3” (40.9%) or a “4” (37.2%). Ratings across different demographic groups were fairly consistent, with the following exceptions: People with household incomes above \$150,000, parents of school-age children and people in the 20 – 44 year age group were somewhat more likely to give higher ratings of “4” or above, while people with incomes below \$50,000 and on Bainbridge less than 3 years were more apt rate at “3” or below.

Respondents were then asked to rate **“how important is to you to live in a community that fits this Healthy Community Vision?”** (Where 1 = not at all important and 5 = extremely important.) Scores for this question were high – with a mean of **4.3** -- showing a strong resonance for these values among all demographic groups. Overall the large majority of respondents gave this

question a score of “5” (50.3%) or “4” (35.0%) While mean scores were high and relatively consistent across all groups, people with household incomes below \$50,000 and people who have lived on the island more than 20 years were most likely to say it was “extremely important” to them to live in a community that fits this vision.

A third question asked respondents to rate “**how much do you feel like a connected and contributing member of the Bainbridge Island community?**” (For this question, 1 = not at all and 5 = completely.) There was considerably more variation in the responses to this question. More than half (about 52%) of the total participants rated their personal connection to community at a level of “4” or above. But nearly 20% of all respondents reported their sense of community connection at “2” or below – resulting in an overall mean score of 3.5. Greater percentages of respondents reported a low rating (“2” or below) among the following groups: 1) people with family incomes below \$50,000 (29.4%); and 2) people who have lived on Bainbridge Island for less than 3 years (27.2%). Large percentages of the “newcomers” (nearly 73%) and lower-income respondents (about 50%) reported their sense of community connection at “3” or below – resulting in lower mean scores among these groups (3.0 and 3.2 respectively) on this question. Non-parents were somewhat more likely than parents to report feeling less sense of community connection and contribution.

The table below summarizes mean ratings on these three questions across a range of demographic groups, as well as participants in the outreach sessions conducted prior to the online survey.

GROUP	Number of Responses	<i>How well do we currently fit the vision?</i>	<i>How important is the vision to you?</i>	<i>How connected do you feel?</i>
Total Online Survey Respondents	320	3.2	4.3	3.5
• More than 20 years on B.I.	111	3.3	4.5	3.7
• Less than 3 years on Bainbridge	32	3.0	4.3	3.0
• Children in the household	124	3.2	4.3	3.6
• Income above \$150,000	78	3.4	4.3	3.6
• Income below \$50,000	51	3.0	4.5	3.2
• Age 65 & over	55	3.2	4.3	3.5
• Age 20 – 44	63	3.2	4.3	3.5
Total Outreach Session Participants	171	3.5	NA	3.6

What Contributes to a Healthy Community?

Respondents were asked to give their input on what factors contribute most to a healthy community both by rating the importance of eight individual factors and by their comments to an open-ended question about what else is important to them in maintaining a healthy Bainbridge Island community. The table below summarizes the numerical ratings and ranking of the eight identified factors. (Ratings were on a scale of 1-7, with 1 = not important and 7 = extremely important.)

Rank Order	Factor/Potential Contributor	% Rating “Extremely Important”	Mean Score
1	<i>Quality of schools/education</i>	63.6%	6.4
2	<i>Health and human services to address a variety of needs</i>	45.5%	6.0
3	<i>Transportation – around the Island mobility and access</i>	41.9%	5.9
4	<i>Affordable housing – a range of housing options</i>	46.9%	5.7
5	<i>Knowing your neighbors – good relationships at a neighborhood level</i>	37.4%	5.9
6	<i>Diverse population (e.g. a mix of ages, income levels, race, cultural backgrounds)</i>	38.9%	5.7
7	<i>Recreational opportunities – activities for all age groups</i>	33.7%	5.8
8	<i>Community gatherings and events (for example, July 4th Celebration, Rotary Auction, etc.)</i>	26.8%	5.4

Among these factors, responses were most polarized for “Affordable Housing” and “Diverse Population”. Both garnered relatively high levels of respondents rating them “extremely important” but also had somewhat higher (though still small) percentages of responses at “3” or below – which tended to slightly lower their mean scores.

Over half of the open-ended responses included comments related to one or more of the eight factors listed above. Examples of these comments and summaries of major themes are provided below by factor (listed in order of frequency of mention.)

Mobility/Transportation

The most frequently voiced comments in this category emphasized the importance of alternative forms of transportation in building a connected, sustainable community. Many people called for more and better bike paths, walking trails and bus service or other alternatives to personal cars to connect neighborhoods to downtown and allow people of all ages to move about the Island more freely and with greater safety. While the focus was largely on mobility around Bainbridge, there were a number of comments about the need for better, more economical transit to and from off-Island locations – including improved ferry service.

- *Decrease the need for private transportation and increase safe exercise opportunities by putting in better, marked bike pathways and invest in well-planned and connected pedestrian pathways. (Look to Whistler, BC for the remarkable job they have done with this.)*
- *More walking and biking opportunities promote a healthy life-style and social interaction. Freedom from the fear of being hit by a car on our shoulder-less roads.*
- *Public transportation needs to be greatly improved. Busses should run downtown and to the ferry, continuously, including during early evenings and on weekends.*

Health and Human Services

Comments related to human services were scattered throughout the open-ended responses. Most frequently mentioned was the need for youth and family-support services, including: affordable quality childcare, family and youth counseling, drug and alcohol abuse prevention and treatment, youth programs and better supervision and support for teen-agers whose parents work off-Island. Services to support an aging population, as well access to emergency medical care and affordable dental care were also mentioned.

- *Provide opportunities for lower-income families – including affordable activities for teenagers.*
- *Drug use by teens is not being fully addressed, as well as mental health of teenagers.*
- *There needs to be a health clinic for the high school.*
- *Children are our future. I would like to see more emphasis on services for children of all ages, but particularly high school students so we make sure that each year we produce a healthy group of high school graduates who will be contributing members of society.*

- *We need better access to health care – emergency night & weekend care. The recent increase in Island health-care is encouraging.*
- *Please look more at the needs of low and fixed income. Dental costs are atrocious. Families get stuck helping when they often cannot afford it. How about asking dental providers to lower their charges by 1/3 to ½ for low-income clients?*
- *We need more support to connect people across generations and allow residents to age in place.*
- *This is a wonderful place for mobile, outgoing individuals, but it would help to have some kind of contact network set up to keep in touch with those who are elderly, ill, handicapped, alone, etc. Sometimes just a phone call makes the day for a shut-in. I know the IFC does a lot of that, but we could use a lot more volunteers for this.*
- *Networking and collaboration between organizations with similar purposes is very important. I would like to see even more such collaboration.*

Affordable Housing Options for a Diverse Population

Comments to the open-ended questions showed that the perceived need for affordable housing was linked with the desire to provide appropriate housing options for a variety of different groups and to encourage a diverse population mix on Bainbridge Island. Many comments related to specific segments of the population.

- *We need to ensure affordable housing for people who work in our community and to encourage cultural diversity.*
- *The 20 – 35 age demographic is largely absent for the island. More affordable housing is what would most attract this group. Without these 20-35 year-olds, Bainbridge has become a land of children, middle-management professionals and retirees. That is not only unhealthy, it's unreal.*
- *I grew up on Bainbridge Island and have come back as a married adult because of the people, close-knit community, safety, beauty and tranquility of this very special island. I have a master's degree and competitive public sector job. But I cannot afford to purchase housing.*
- *It is important to maintain affordable living for senior citizens. This may mean access to day care if needed, as well as support for private home care or small boarding house style assisted living units.*
- *I can't emphasize too strongly the degree to which I think economic diversity – with adequate housing to encourage and sustain it – is essential to the continued wellbeing of the Island. It is so far reaching in its impact that I would need 5 pages to articulate my position.*

However, not everyone was in favor of providing City support for affordable housing. There were just a few negative comments, such as the following:

- *As to affordable housing – go where you can afford the housing. Do not expect others to pay for you to live like people who actually work and save for what they have.*

Activities, Events and Gathering Places for all Ages

A number of respondents focused their comments on activities, events and gathering places as the best ways to bring people together on the Island and promote interconnection and a stronger sense of community. One set of comments focused on activities and facilities for teens. Other groups called out were young adults, singles and seniors. Several people offered ideas and opinions about traditional Island events.

- *We need to focus more attention on teens and give them meaningful things to do. They need to have places they can gather and not feel unwelcome*
- *We need a larger senior center. Or maybe an all-age community center in Winslow.*
- *I value churches and similar organizations that bring people together for communal activities. We need more events offering entertainment, edification, provocation – and gathering places of all sorts.*
- *There needs to be more entertainment options for the 25-35 year old group and people without kids. These two groups find the Island dull and tend to feel disconnected.*
- *We need more chances for community connections to happen – beyond Rotary Auction and July Fourth. There used to be much more “tradition” here – and when that disappears so does pride and FUN. There used to be a “strawberry Festival” with a princess chosen from local competition. And the VERY random Scotch Broom Parade each May. Maybe we should try to revive these or drum up some new “traditions”.*

Education, Arts and Culture

A number of respondents made the connection between “quality education” and arts, cultural opportunities and historical preservation as major contributors to a healthy, inter-connected community.

- *In addition to our public school system, we should include support for continuing education and opportunities to participate in cultural activities, such as writing, acting, art and musical groups.*
- *Theatre, dance and musical arts should be more widely integrated in our public schools.*
- *I like the fact that our community strongly supports arts and humanities. I would like to see more collaboration within the arts community.*
- *Understanding our history and having a thriving arts community (are important.)*
- *The library is most important.*
- *Building community in the schools is the most important and direct way to change things for the better on the Island. And I don't think that means a winning sports team.*

What additional factors make a difference?

In the open-ended questions, respondents contributed a range of different ideas about what else is important in maintaining a healthy Bainbridge Island Community. Among these, the most frequently mentioned factors were: 1) *sustainable development/preservation*; 2) *effective city government*; 3) *tolerance, civility & inclusivity*; and 4) *community outreach and communication*. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

Sustainable Development/Preservation

Many respondents spoke to the need for careful management of growth and development to ensure preservation of the Island's natural resources and built environment, as well as maintaining the vitality of our community life. Comments about pursuing "greener" and more ecologically sound practices and preserving open space, forests, shoreline and natural beauty were especially prevalent.

- *I would like to see preservation of open spaces, farms, gardens and all things contributing towards a healthy and balanced ecosystem.*
- *Buying food and other products locally is important. Maybe we could expand the farmers market.*
- *Let's protect our beautiful natural environment – parks, open space, beaches and public access to the water.*

A number of people spoke of the need to limit growth and control development in ways that would preserve the "character" of Bainbridge Island, which was sometimes often described as "small town" or "rural".

- *In an effort to improve the community and to "have the best", I fear we are homogenizing not only the population but also the character of the Island. Our neighborhood mix of cabins with rudimentary plumbing, million dollar plus homes, single wide trailers and 60's style ramblers in becoming a rare phenomenon. The*

charm and funk that drew many here is rapidly giving way to the aspirations and vision of those can pretty much have whatever they want.

- *It's not a good idea to keep chipping away at the small town feel we have had in the past decades.*
- *Maintain the charm of a small town center. That is what we are (not a large city), and that is what it would be a shame to lose.*

Effective City Government

Many of the open-ended comments addressed the importance of an effective and responsive city government in setting the tone and maintaining the conditions needed for a healthy, sustainable community. A large portion of these comments focused on *functional* communication and decision-making – within City government and between the government and citizens. Other government-related themes addressed the need for fairness and the importance of focusing on priorities

- *Our governing bodies should be visionary, open, organized and empowering.*
- *(We need) a City government that listen to the voice of the people and respects its individual citizens. One that applies law equally and creates policy that benefits the whole community. Not one that cracks down on individual homeowners or business people while allowing large developers and other privileged constituencies to skirt the law, often to the detriment of public safety and environment. Not one that mortgages our future to help line the pockets of a few individuals.*
- *Focus city resources on priorities: keeping water supplies safe; caring for the environment; caring for the underserved.*

Tolerance, Civility & Inclusivity

Other comments focused less on government and more on the way we view and communicate with each other within and outside the Island community. A number of respondents were concerned with what they viewed as increasing *selfishness* and materialism – including a trend toward litigation as a way to solve neighborhood disputes. There were pleas for greater tolerance and compassion.

- *We need more and better civil discourse – with tolerance for differing opinions.*
- *This island is at a critical time of choosing its future. Will we choose to listen carefully to all the stakeholders and give everyone the chance to be heard, to share their stories, their dreams and their concerns?*
- *A healthy community requires the acceptance of all people. I feel that there is a larger divide between the haves and the have-nots since I came to the island 17*

years ago. It is very important to broaden the acceptance and tolerance of all – regardless of economic status, ethnicity, religious or non-religious affiliation.

A number of respondents spoke specifically to the need to reach beyond the boundaries of the Island and develop better communication and cooperation with the rest of Kitsap County.

- *We should value inclusion and diversity. Jokes about Bremerton are a symptom of our own narrowness.*
- *I think it is important to Bainbridge to feel as if we are a part of the entire Kitsap County Community and not just the Island.*

Community Outreach & Communication

A related theme among the open-ended comments was the need for more and better communication throughout the community, including: reaching out to newcomers; publicizing and coordinating volunteer opportunities and creating new and expanded venues for public debate.

- *We need diverse and robust sources for news and discussion of issues that matter to many people. Some people will be like-minded and others mavericks – that's okay.*
- *We should try to organize regular opportunities (quarterly?) to gather people together for an open conversation around things that matter to the whole community.*
- *Find ways to help connect those who are moving to the Island with the traditions and sense of community we seem to be losing.*
- *More groups that welcome newcomers. My newcomers group has provided me a wonderful connection with other newcomers – which I assume may have happened over and over on the Island, but I really don't know.*

Other Factors

Respondents mentioned a range of other factors that contribute to a healthy and connected community, including the following:

- Public Safety
- Affordable On-Island Shopping and Services
- Emergency Preparedness
- Employment Opportunities (On-Island)

Looking Toward the Future

On-line survey respondents were asked to look toward the future and rate “**how confident you feel about the overall health and wellbeing of our community on Bainbridge Island**” – using a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = not confident and 5 = very confident.) Over 44 % rated their confidence level at “3”. Another 31% gave a rating of “4”. The mean score across all respondents was **3.2**. The table below breaks out mean confidence scores by respondents from various groups.

GROUP	Number of Responses	<i>How confident do you feel about the future wellbeing of our community?</i>
Total Online Survey Respondents	309	3.2
• More than 20 years on B.I.	111	3.2
• Less than 3 years on B.I.	32	2.9
• Children in the household	124	3.2
• Income above \$150,000	78	3.4
• Income below \$50,000	51	2.9
• Age 65 & over	55	3.2
• Age 20 – 44	63	3.2
Total Outreach Session Participants	171	3.4

Respondents with household incomes above \$150,000 tended to express greater levels of confidence about the future health and wellbeing of the Bainbridge Island community. Two groups had lower mean scores, expressing less confidence: 1) Respondents with income below \$50,000; and 2) those living less than 3 years on Bainbridge Island. Overall the mean confidence score across all online survey participants (3.2) was somewhat lower than the mean score across the people who participated in the outreach sessions (3.4).

While parents had a mean score the same as the overall respondents in the online survey (3.2), responses among parents were more broadly distributed (with relatively more ratings of “2” or below as well as more “5”s – while other groups tended to be more heavily clustered in the “3” to “4” range.)

What are the Biggest Threats?

In addition to rating their level of confidence, survey respondents were asked the following open-ended question: **“What do you see as the biggest threat to the future health and wellbeing of our community?”** Their responses tended to cluster in the following categories:

1. **Rising Costs** – expensive housing and lifestyle driving people out of the community and reducing diversity. (65 responses)
2. **Uncontrolled Growth** – over-development, lack of adequate infrastructure & environmental degradation. (41 responses)
3. **Greed & Materialism** – Over-consumption & over-emphasis on material wealth and development versus human need and diversity. (34 responses)
4. **Government/Community Disconnect** – failure of government and community decision-making. (32 responses)
5. **Poor Attitudes** – Selfishness, lack of interest in community, intolerance of others and their needs. (29 responses)

Notable quotes across these categories are provided below.

- *The cost of living is beyond the reach of many and that gulf is widening.*
- *More than ever the expense of living here is creating a wealthy community that imports working class people to do its work. I worry that perpetuating the exclusivity of BI degrades our sense of a vital community whose members include people of all socio-economic backgrounds.*
- *The housing market is squeezing out economic diversity and we are not taking concerted efforts to attract people from a mix of racial and ethnic groups.*
- *Increased population can lead to decreased intimacy or sense that we are all in this together.*
- *Uncontrolled growth and all of its unintended consequences are the biggest threats to the health and well being of our community. I came to Bainbridge 25 years ago because of its size and close sense of community. Steady growth of population and rising real estate prices threaten that sense of wellbeing that means so much to me.*
- *Overspending on the wrong things – while neglecting things of vital importance like social services and maintenance of the people in the community.*
- *Frivolous law suits that are motivated by greed and brought about by individuals who put their own interests above those of the community.*
- *I worry about a trend on the Island that everything has to be “top drawer” – which means City money is being spent on appearances instead of on people and preserving the desirable community connection and social diversity on the Island.*

- *Our inability to conduct a civil dialogue (is a threat to community.)*
- *The City has been unresponsive to multiple attempts by various groups to rewrite and institute a Housing Ordinance. Consequently optimum years of growth in revenues and development on the island have passed us up without any meaningful results on affordable housing. I am hopeful with the new council that things will shift on this. It has been very frustrating to have the city indicate that diversity and affordable work force housing are priorities of the growth plan and, at the same time, see how little they have committed to making it happen.*
- *Our inability to prioritize effectively. People seem to think that everything is “top” priority, from open space to cultural activities, from recreation to actual health and safety concerns. Since not everything can be funded, we might end up funding luxury items rather than health and human services.*
- *I think we are developing some serious entitlement issues and need to develop a sense of compassion for one another, for our children and for those less fortunate than ourselves*
- *Again, tolerance is what we need. You have an interesting mix of folks here – “old-timers” who came here to raise goats, strawberries and children to Range Rover-driving newbie’s from California who may see this as nothing more than a safe, white suburb you get to by boat – as well as everything in between. Still, the one thing everyone has in common is this place we all call “home”. Islanders can no longer assume we are all here for the same reasons. We need to create a vision going forward that respects and tolerates everyone’s perspective.*
- *An insular mentality. Community is not maintained by trying to insulate ourselves from outside forces and people but by our ability to deepen our community by integrating change.*
- *Polarizing of opinions – from right to left politically, upper to lower income, “new” versus “native” residents – all trying to win their interests or vision over others – without considering compromises.*

Other “threats” to community identified by respondents ran the gamut, from global warming to unsupervised teens to over-dependency on the Washington State Ferries. In the midst of all these comments, it is worth remembering that overall levels of confidence about the future of community on Bainbridge Island were relatively high. Perhaps the following comment may help to keep things in perspective:

- *I grew up here on the Island in the 40s and 50s. In my opinion, contrary to common belief, Bainbridge in the old days was not as healthy, by most measures, as the community is today. Yes, we face many problems as a community, but we also have many assets. This survey may show a high level of discontent or concern but that may reflect more than anything our unreasonably high standards and expectations.*

Parting Remarks

When respondents were offered an opportunity to share their final thoughts about a healthy Bainbridge Island community, most of what they said was positive. Here are some examples:

- *I am so grateful for all the work the land trust has done to preserve the precious places on the Island I am also grateful for the loving hard work done through HHHS. We truly live in paradise with the mountains, water and green surrounding us. Our island has grown fast, but I hope we can keep the spirit of generous volunteering and zest for a loving life.*
- *I think Bainbridge does better than most communities but I have high hopes for continual improvement. I am particularly impressed with HHHS.*
- *This is an amazing community and I know that efforts and ideas and energy about building and maintaining a healthy community will be thoughtful and creative. We look forward to that discussion and implementation.*
- *Keep doing survey like this to give frustrated citizens a chance to give input. Thanks for giving me this chance.*
- *It's excellent that you are asking the community for feedback. Way to go!*