

Draft Comprehensive Plan Outreach Summary

City of Lynden
Washington

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City of Lynden

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Outreach Summary

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Executive Summary

In the Summer and Fall of 2024, several engagement efforts gathered input from specific groups in the Lynden community to inform the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Climate Element. These included a penny poll at the City of Lynden’s Raspberry Festival, an online and printed community survey, as well as focus groups and listening sessions with commercial interests, the Community Center, and agricultural interests.

Raspberry Festival

On July 20, 2024, the consultant team attended the Northwest Raspberry Festival in Lynden to gather community input on the City’s Comprehensive Plan Update and Climate Element. Eight jars were placed on the table, each labeled with a key issue and description of how it may affect the Lynden community. Attendees were first asked if they live, work, or play in Lynden, and if so, they were given eight pennies to distribute into the jars as they wished, guided by what issues they care most about and want to see the City prioritize. Full results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. NW Raspberry Festival Penny Poll Results

Issue	# of Pennies	Ranking
Agriculture Economy	63	1
Local Jobs	57	2
Resource Lands	51	3
Housing Supply	50	4
Energy Security	39	5
Flooding	36	6
Transportation	24	7
Climate Change	23	8

The penny poll results are informed by the 43 respondents who distributed their pennies into the jars. The issue that received the most pennies was ‘Agriculture Economy’, followed by ‘Local Jobs’ and then ‘Resource Lands’.

Climate Focus Groups

Commercial Interests Focus Group

In the Commercial Interests focus group on September 10, 2024, participants shared their experiences and concerns regarding natural hazards and broader issues affecting the community, such as power supply reliability, local economic stability, and the protection of vulnerable populations. The discussion centered around challenges such as flooding, extreme heat, and other environmental impacts, as well as the potential strategies for addressing these issues. Participants also offered feedback on sample climate resilience policies for the City of Lynden's Comprehensive Plan update, providing input on how these measures might support both businesses and the broader Lynden community.

Key takeaways from the Commercial Interests focus group include:

- Attendees have experienced flooding, heat waves, and changing weather patterns. The community addressed these challenges with collaboration through businesses, churches, and individuals. Flooding and water availability are also major concerns.
- Several attendees expressed that the City cannot do much about flooding and that more government policies are unnecessary. The community strongly values collaboration and self-reliance.
- Attendees voiced that maintaining a sense of community as the city grows will be important.
- There was also interest in international cooperation and infrastructure improvements to better manage flooding around Fishtrap Creek.

Recommended Menu of Measures goals and policies that may be of interest to this group include:

- Preserving land for long-term agricultural use, recreation, open spaces, and other uses consistent with rural character.
- Prioritizing infill development through zoning and permitting process.
- Increasing or removing density limits within urban growth areas.
- Fostering higher-intensity land uses in mixed-use urban villages and transit corridors.
- Increasing tree canopy cover to boost carbon sequestration, reduce heat islands, and improve air quality, prioritizing trees in overburdened communities, without compromising infill potential.
- Improving internet connectivity to support those who work remotely.
- Reducing congestion or improving commercial corridors so that commuters can reach their place of work more efficiently.

Community Center Listening Session

On September 12, 2024, City staff gave a presentation to approximately 25 Community/Senior Center members about the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update and led a discussion about climate planning and resiliency efforts that will be included in the update.

Key takeaways from the Community Center listening session include:

- Attendees expressed concern about the impact of population growth and increased development on transportation, roads, and Lynden's sense of community.
- Attendees voiced concerns about future floods and new construction in or near floodplains.

- Attendees discussed the importance of preparedness for future water shortages, the potential challenges of not having well water back-ups, and the vulnerability of being dependent on the Nooksack River for water supply.
- Attendees identified utility resilience to hazard events and natural disasters as a priority, especially for water and sewer services.
- Attendees emphasized the importance of preserving local forests for quality of life and opposed forest removal for further development.
- Attendees expressed support for incorporating privately funded EV charging stations and establishing community hubs to provide resources during natural disasters and emergencies.

Recommended Menu of Measures goals and policies that may be of interest to this group include:

- Increasing multimodal capacity in coordination with the location of higher-density housing and commercial centers.
- Establishing land use patterns that increase the resilience of the built environment, ecosystems, and communities to natural hazards.
- Protecting and preserving water quality and quantity from drought, extreme heat, and other worsening hazards.
- Increasing tree canopy cover to boost carbon sequestration, reduce heat islands, and improve air quality, prioritizing trees in overburdened communities, without compromising infill potential.
- Expanding electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Installing distributed renewable energy generation and battery infrastructure at public facilities to store renewable electricity generated on-site and provide emergency power that ensures continuity of operations.

Agricultural Interests Listening Sessions

The consultant team engaged agricultural interests by holding in-person listening sessions at the Bertrand Watershed Improvement District (WID) on October 14, 2024, and the North Lynden Watershed Improvement District (WID) on October 15, 2024. The agricultural interests listening sessions focused on gathering input from community members regarding natural hazards, agricultural concerns, and climate resilience as part of the City of Lynden's Comprehensive Plan update. Participants shared their levels of concern about various hazards such as flooding, drought, and extreme heat, discussed the impacts of these events, and described the challenges faced by local farmers. The sessions also included a listening portion on potential actions the City could take to support agriculture, manage stormwater, and build long-term resilience. The Bertrand WID was particularly interested in stormwater management and flooding. Farmers in North Lynden receive stormwater runoff from Canada but experience less flooding than farmers in Bertrand. While the two WIDs had distinct interests, these interests have been combined in this summary.

Key takeaways from the Agricultural Interests listening sessions include:

- Attendees expressed significant concerns about both flooding and water shortages, with changing precipitation patterns leading to flood events on the Nooksack River, more runoff during heavy rain events, and drier summers.
- Attendees highlighted that as the city grows and land is developed, stormwater runoff is reaching farmland faster, resulting in prolonged flooding of fields. It was suggested that farmers be involved in discussions when new development with potential impacts to agriculture is under consideration.

- Attendees voiced concerns that farming is becoming less economically viable due to a combination of water rights issues, labor shortages, market pressures, and increasing regulations. They identified a need to reduce the regulatory burden on agriculture to help businesses stay viable amid mounting challenges.
- Attendees recommended that the City consider creating commercial transportation corridors through the city for farm equipment to reduce congestion.
- Attendees shared that affordable housing and parking for farm workers could support the agricultural workforce.
- Attendees highlighted that periodic flooding in the Fishtrap Creek area, particularly due to stormwater from British Columbia, is a high priority for the North Lynden WID. Flooding from the City of Lynden is a challenge for the Bertrand WID.
- Attendees discussed the important role the City can play in advocating for necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements to address these challenges with the county and state.
- Attendees expressed a strong interest in fostering a community culture that celebrates agriculture and educates residents about the importance of Lynden's agricultural sector.

Recommended Menu of Measures goals and policies that may be of interest to this group include:

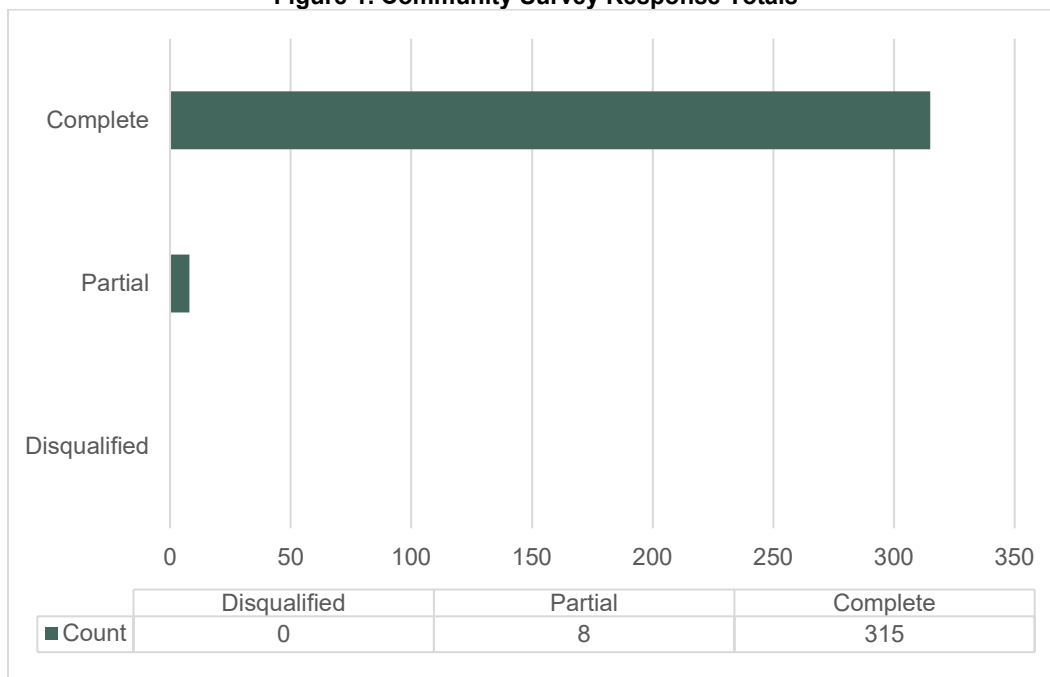
- Ensuring that the local agricultural economy — including food and materials producers, distributors, and sellers — is resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other worsening natural hazards.
- Preserving land for long-term agricultural use, recreation, open spaces, and other uses consistent with rural character.
- Requiring the design and construction of commercial and residential buildings and their surrounding sites to reduce and treat stormwater runoff and pollution.
- Developing green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff and pollution.
- Protecting the health and well-being of outdoor workers exposed to extreme heat and other hazards.
- Protecting and preserving water quality and quantity from drought, extreme heat, and other worsening hazards.

Community Survey

To gather public feedback on the City of Lynden’s community vision for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update, a survey was created using the Alchemer platform and was available to the public for 30 days in July and August 2024. Paper copies of the survey were also available and incorporated into the survey results. The online survey was intended to gain community input on their vision for Lynden’s future and their vision for the various elements within the comprehensive plan with an emphasis on factors that could affect revisions to the city’s comprehensive plan.

With a total of three hundred and twenty-three (323) respondents, approximately ninety-eight percent (98%) completely answered all the questions provided, with the remaining two percent (2%) partially completing the survey. Partial responses answered all of the questions before the optional demographics section and were not officially submitted.

Figure 1. Community Survey Response Totals



Survey Key Takeaways

This section explores the key trends, topics, and issues that emerged from the survey data.

About the Survey Respondents

Survey respondents identify as residents, property owners, business owners, workers, people who come for recreation, and occasional visitors. The vast majority of survey respondents answered that they are residents of Lynden. These people account for 85% of the respondents. More than 40 percent (47%) stated that they own property in the city. Eleven percent (11%) own or operate a business in the City of Lynden with 10% being people who commute to Lynden for work but do not live there. Other respondents primarily come to Lynden to shop, and these are 7%. There were 9% of the respondents who chose the option other. These include 10 people who work in Lynden, 3 people who are retired, 3 who attend church there, and 2 who both live and work in the city. Additionally, 2 respondents shop in

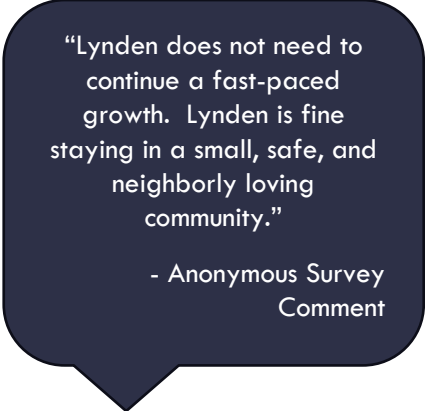
Lynden, 2 visit family, and 2 are volunteers, while some respondents have been part of the community for decades, such as one who has lived in the same home for 44 years. There is one who lives outside the city's limits. The demographics from the City of Lynden comprehensive plan survey show a population skewed towards older age groups, with 35% aged 65 or older and only 8% under 35¹.

The gender distribution is nearly even, with 49% identifying as female and 46% as male, while a small percentage selected other or preferred not to disclose. Almost all respondents (99%) report English as their primary language at home. Only a few households primarily speak Spanish.

The income data indicates a broad range of household earnings, with a noticeable cluster in the lower and middle-income brackets. Most households (33%) fall below \$90,000 annually, 29% earn between \$90,000 to \$150,000 annually, with only a small portion (22%) earning over \$150,000.²

Community Character Preservation Amidst Growth

A substantial number of respondents expressed a desire to maintain Lynden's small-town atmosphere, which they associate with Christian values, local events, and agricultural roots. Many are concerned about overdevelopment and high-density housing, fearing it could erode the city's character. A huge portion of the respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree (73%) that the predominant objective of the city's vision is that Lynden retains its community spirit, small-town atmosphere, and agricultural roots. Respondents went ahead to indicate that characteristics like wide streets, single-family homes, downtown character, population proximity to green spaces, and many others are reasons why Lynden has a small-town atmosphere.



"Lynden does not need to continue a fast-paced growth. Lynden is fine staying in a small, safe, and neighborly loving community."

- Anonymous Survey
Comment

When respondents were asked about the future initiatives that excite them most, the popular response was defining and promoting a small-town atmosphere. This overwhelming sentiment indicates a clear and widespread desire among community members to maintain the city's small-town character. One of the concerns from residents concerning growth was that it might lead to a change in Lynden's small-town character. The survey results serve as a compelling indication of public opinion, highlighting the importance of preserving the city's small-town identity as a priority for residents. Essentially, the responses suggest a strong community consensus in favor of continued efforts to protect and enhance the city's small-town character. Some of the suggestions from respondents on how to preserve the city's character include limiting multi-family housing, promoting larger lots, and protecting farmland from sprawl.

¹ The median age in Lynden is approximately 35.7 (ACS 2022 5-year estimates, Table DP05)

² The median household income in Lynden is approximately \$86,175 (ACS 2022 5-year estimates, Table S1901)

Adequate and Affordable Housing

Affordable housing emerged as a significant concern, with many residents acknowledging difficulties in finding suitable homes due to high costs and limited availability. Respondents suggested diverse housing options, including smaller homes for first-time buyers and senior condos, but also emphasized preserving single-family homes on larger lots to retain the city's rural feel.

"I see home ownership as an important value in a small community like Lynden. I'd like more affordable single family detached as well as single family attached opportunities to keep the next generation invested in the community."

- Anonymous Survey Comment

There is a need for a variety of housing options in Lynden to meet the needs of current residents, workers, and those who come for recreation. A significant portion (around 59%) of respondents indicated that it is difficult to find suitable housing in Lynden and this applies to both residents and people who are considering relocation. Some of the difficulties in finding suitable housing include the lack of affordable housing, financial constraints, limited availability of homes on sale, housing type limitations, and others. A few respondents also indicated some reasons such as high interest rates, high rent, and high property taxes. There is also a clear interest in a variety of other housing options, including single-family on large and small lots, townhouses, apartments, Condominiums, Senior housing, ADUs, duplexes, and rentals.

Transportation and Safety

While most residents feel generally safe walking and biking in Lynden, many highlighted the need for improved infrastructure to support these activities. The survey reveals a strong community interest in promoting active transportation options in Lynden. This is evident from numerous responses mentioning the desire for:

- Better and expanded bike lanes/infrastructure
- Improved sidewalks
- Implementing traffic-calming measures to ensure routes
- Improved road connectivity
- Wider road shoulders
- Safe and accessible biking and walking paths throughout the community especially for children commuting to school.

Participants were also asked to identify locations in the city limits to improve congested or dangerous intersections.

Intersections along Grover Road, particularly Grover & 1st and downtown intersections were identified as the most frequently followed by Guide and Kook, then Bradley and Vinup. A full list of the intersections is in the detailed summary.

"I consider biking/walkability (sidewalks & especially dedicated trails), a variety of parks & green spaces, and recreational/shopping opportunities in Lynden as its best qualities. I would like to see the city focus on expanding trails and dedicated bike lanes as well as parks and green spaces."

- Anonymous Survey Comment

Environmental Concerns and Climate Resilience

“Planting LOTS of trees would be beautiful and cool things off by putting moisture into the air through transpiration.” - Anonymous Survey Comment

The main theme from the survey data is the community's mixed levels of experience and concern regarding climate-related events and their impacts on Lynden. While many residents have encountered events like wildfires, floods, and extreme heat, there is a significant variation in how worried they are about climate change's potential effects. Flooding stands out as a top concern and priority for resilience efforts, indicating that while respondents are aware that climate risks are present, the urgency and the specific actions needed to address these risks differ across the community. Although the views of respondents on climate change

were mixed, with some respondents downplaying its significance, there was a notable interest in conservation efforts within parks and green spaces. Respondents suggested planting more trees, enhancing flood and drought management, and protecting agricultural water rights to support local resilience to improve climate and resilience.

Economic Development

Economic growth elicited mixed feelings. While respondents valued local businesses and job opportunities, some pointed out challenges such as limited retail options and high costs that impact affordability. Others voiced concerns over rapid growth and the strain it could place on infrastructure and public services.

Social and Cultural Dynamics

The survey reflected some tension regarding diversity and inclusivity, with a few respondents advocating for a welcoming approach, while others expressed concern about cultural shifts. The desire to maintain a cohesive community amid demographic changes was a recurring theme, with calls for fostering understanding and unity.

Open Response Topics

To conclude, respondents were asked to share any other thing they would like to share. Several responses were given. Out of these comments, there were recurring themes which have been detailed below.

Community Growth and Development

Many residents expressed concerns about rapid growth impacting Lynden's small-town feel, with several comments opposing high-density housing and apartment complexes. Others emphasized the need to balance growth with adequate infrastructure, such as schools, roads, and public services, to maintain the community's quality of life.

Parks and Recreation

Respondents highlighted the importance of expanding and maintaining parks, trails, and recreational spaces. Suggestions included planting more shade trees, adding new trails, improving existing park facilities, and even repurposing unused spaces like the railroad for recreational use. There were also calls for reopening and maintaining the Homestead Golf Course as a community asset.

Environmental Concerns

There was strong support for environmental conservation efforts, including planting trees to reduce temperatures and improve air quality. Some respondents voiced concerns about pollution, particularly from loud vehicles and illegal fireworks, and suggested the city take measures to improve air and water quality.

Affordable Housing

While some advocated for more affordable housing options, others worried that making housing too affordable could alter Lynden's demographics and small-town feel. Several respondents mentioned the high cost of living and a few proposed building more single-family homes instead of multi-family units.

Transportation and Safety

There were numerous comments about the need for traffic enforcement, especially regarding speeding on major streets. Respondents also suggested improving bike and pedestrian safety by adding speed bumps, widening streets, and extending trails. Additionally, some mentioned the importance of better connectivity and public transportation options.

Education and Schools

Comments indicated a need for better school facilities and support for educational infrastructure, as many residents believe that the city's growth necessitates stronger investment in schools. There were also calls for community programs to engage youth, such as bringing back the Boys and Girls Club.

City Administration and Communication

Respondents suggested that the city improve transparency and communication with residents, particularly around budgeting and public projects. Some advocated for a more proactive approach in securing grants to reduce costs and fund city programs, while others recommended more community involvement through city hall meetings.

Politically Motivated Comments

The Lynden Comprehensive Plan Survey included a range of comments from residents, some of which were notably divisive, politically charged, or expressed frustration about local issues. A portion of respondents voiced strong opposition to the perceived influx of liberal ideologies, climate change policies, and multifamily housing, which they believe threaten Lynden's small-town character. Comments also highlighted concerns about increasing diversity, affordable housing, and government regulation, with some explicitly advocating for the exclusion of certain groups or ideas from the community. Additionally, there were criticisms directed at state mandates and calls to limit growth to preserve the city's traditional values and identity. Several respondents expressed politically motivated views, including:

- Concerns about the influence of “woke” policies and climate change initiatives.
- Opposition to perceived “liberal” values, with some advocating for the separation of church and state.
- Criticisms regarding gender identity and climate change, which some felt should not be prioritized in city planning.

- Comments about maintaining conservative values and limiting the influence of outside political ideas, particularly from regions like Seattle or California.

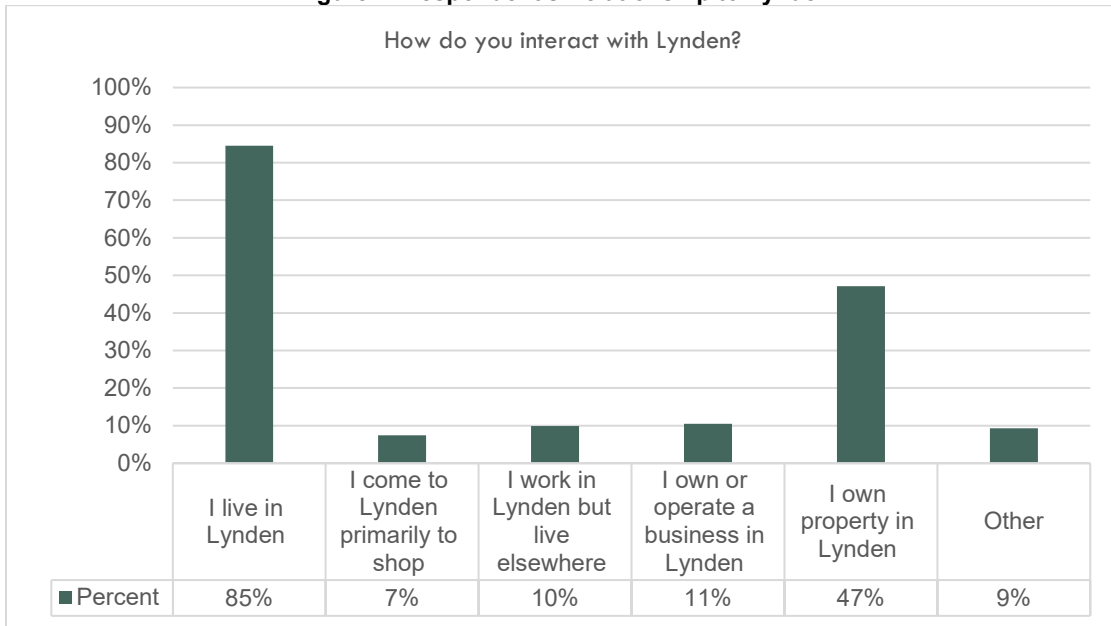
Detailed Summary

This section presents a detailed analysis of the data collected from the community survey. Response rates and more specifics about comments are included.

Survey Participants

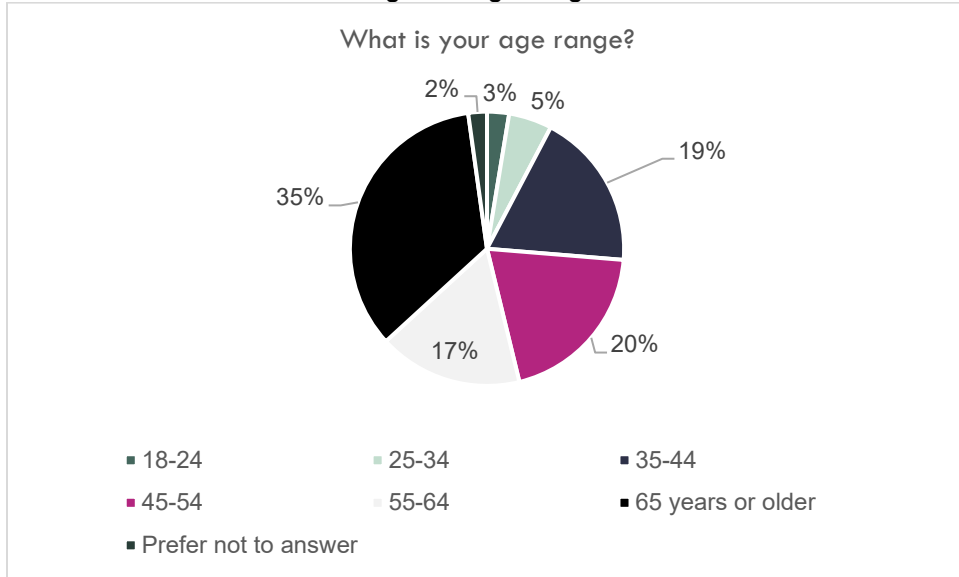
Demographic questions were asked of participants including their relationship to Lynden, age, income, and gender.

Figure 2. Respondent's Relationship to Lynden



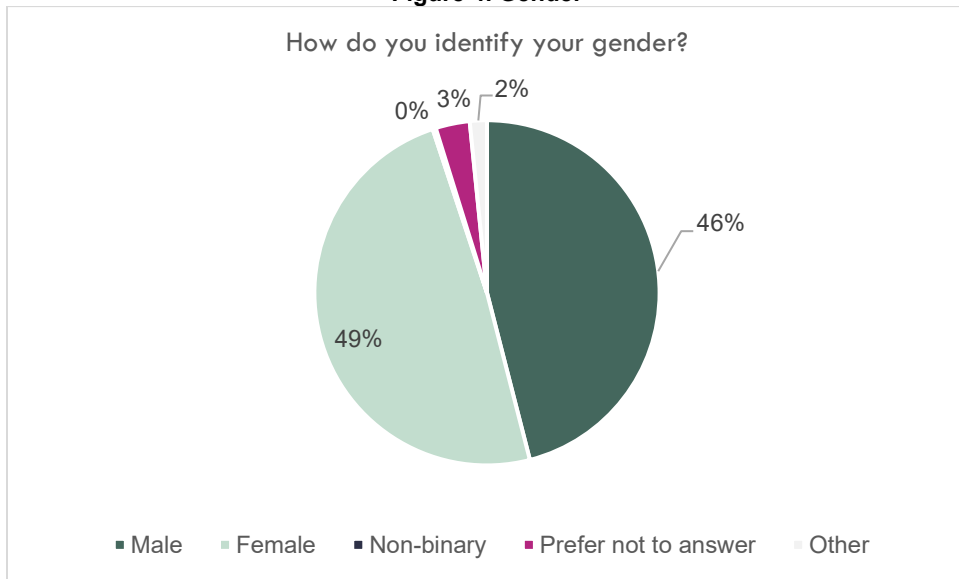
Survey respondents were asked how they interact with Lynden and to select all that apply. The vast majority of survey respondents answered that they are residents of Lynden. These people account for 85% of the responses. More than 40 percent (47%) stated that they own property in the city. Eleven percent (11%) stated they own or operate a business in the City of Lynden with 10% being people who commute to Lynden for work but do not live there. Other respondents primarily come to Lynden to shop, and these are 7%. Other responses made up 9% which include 10 people who also work in Lynden, 3 people who are retired, 3 who attend church there, and 2 who both live and work in the city. Additionally, 2 respondents shop in Lynden, 2 visit family, and 2 are volunteers, while some respondents have been part of the community for decades, such as one who has lived in the same home for 44 years.

Figure 3. Age Ranges



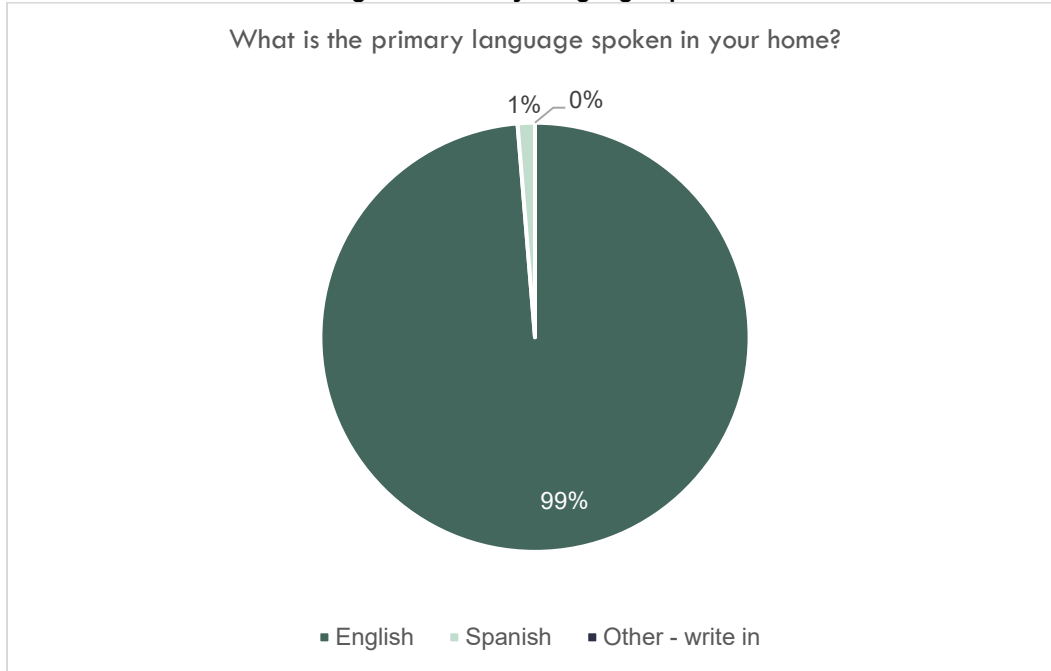
The demographics of the survey takers were mostly older age groups, with 35% aged 65 or older and only 8% under 35. This is likely due to the paper survey copies provided to the senior center.

Figure 4. Gender



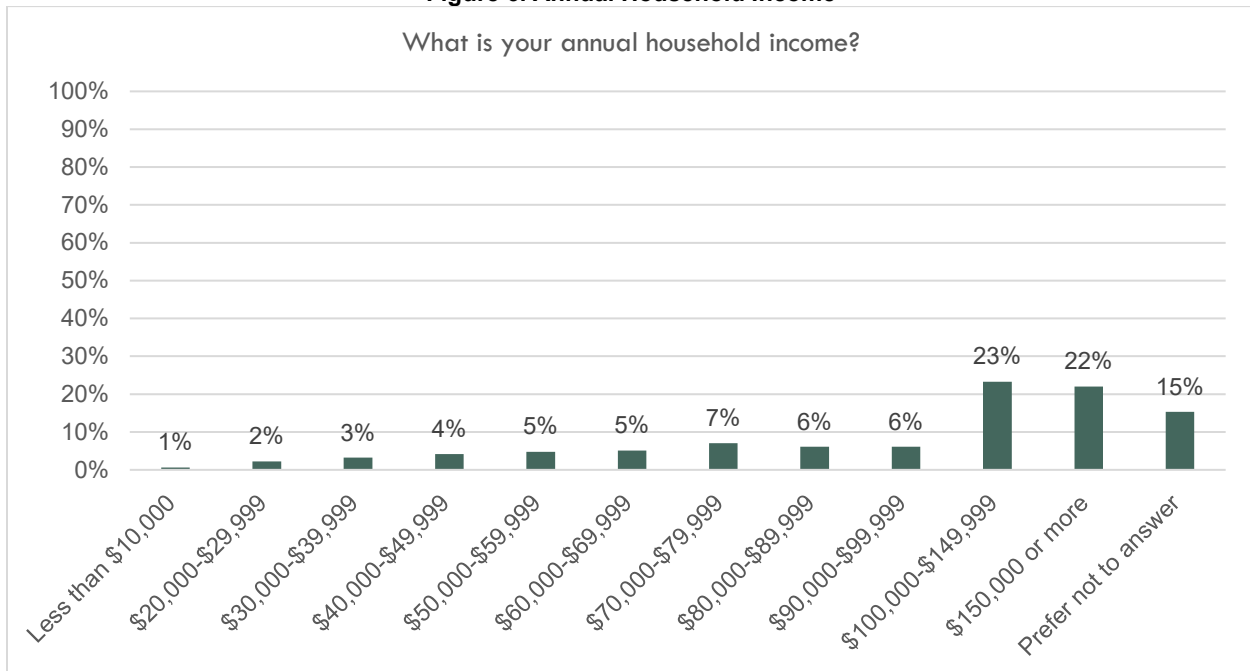
The gender distribution was nearly even, with 49% identifying as female and 46% as male, while a small percentage selected other or preferred not to disclose.

Figure 5. Primary Language Spoken



Almost all respondents (99%) report English as their primary language at home. A Spanish version of the survey was provided and advertised.

Figure 6. Annual Household Income

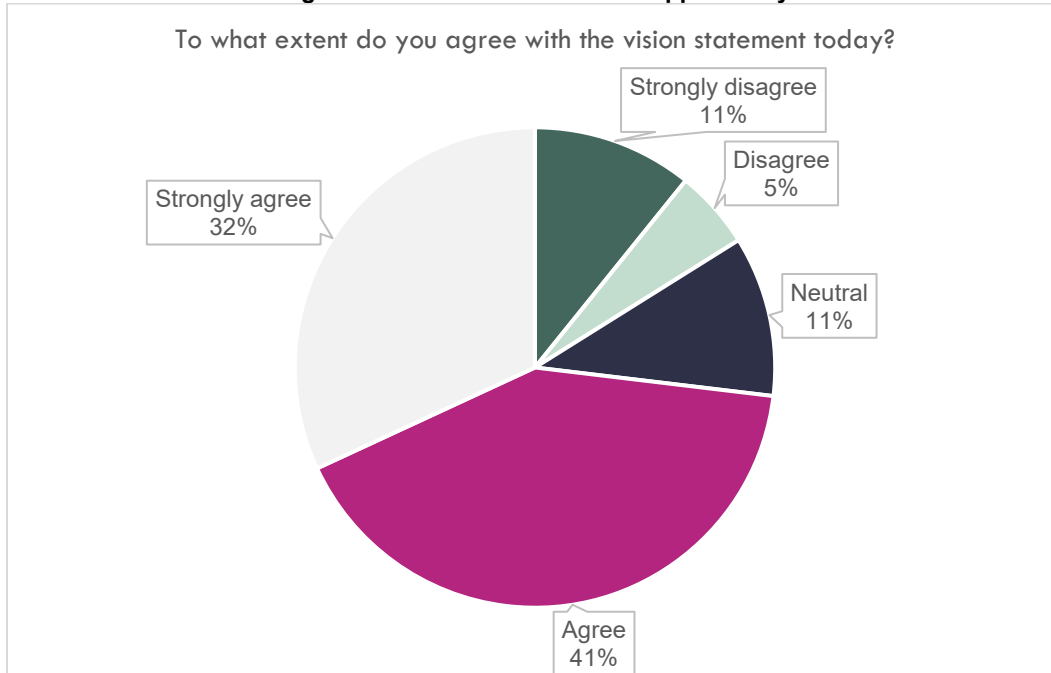


The income responses indicate a broad range of household earnings by respondents, with a noticeable cluster in the lower and middle-income brackets. Most households (33%) indicated they fall below \$90,000 annually, 29% earn between \$90,000 to \$150,000 annually, with only a small portion (22%) earning over \$150,000.

Vision & Character

The vision and character portion of the survey asked participants about their vision for Lynden including questions about today's relevance to the 2016 vision statement, enhancing economic and agricultural connections, and future hopes for 2045.

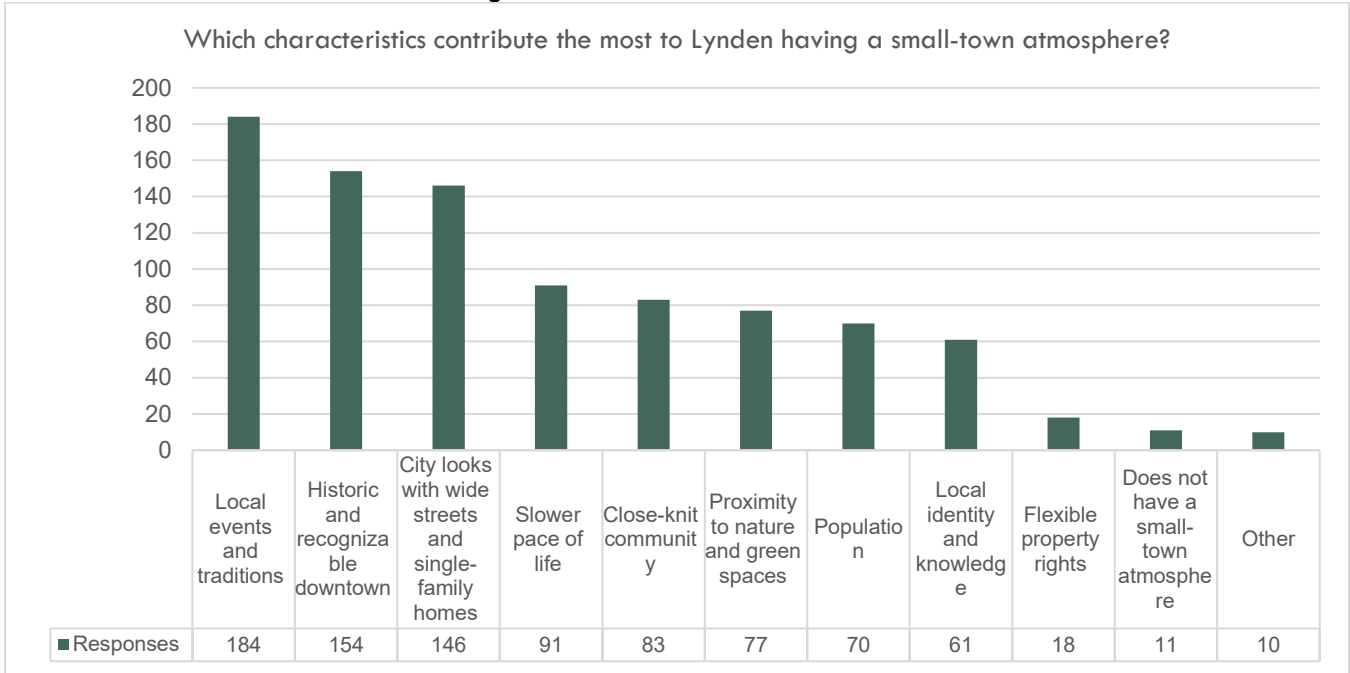
Figure 7. 2016 Vision Statement Applicability



In the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the city's vision statement was: "The predominant objective of this vision is that Lynden retains its community spirit, small-town atmosphere, and agricultural roots." Respondents were asked: "To what extent do you agree with the vision statement today?"

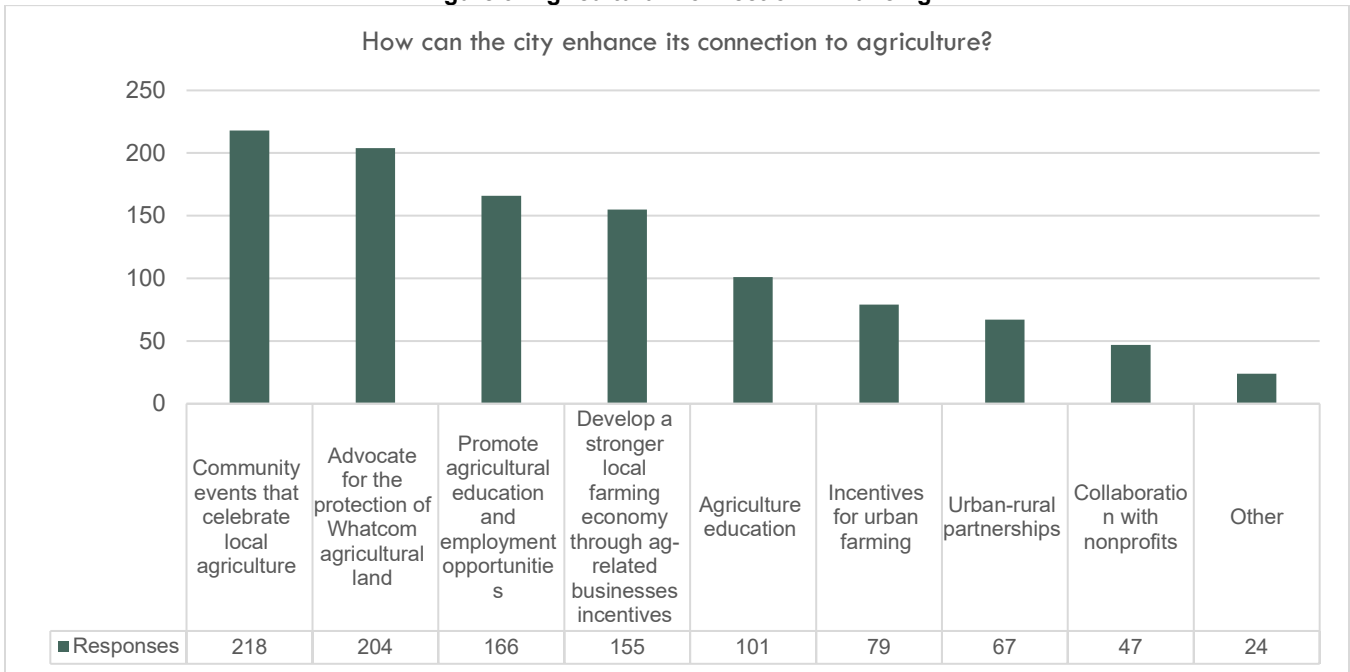
The primary objective for the city of Lynden remains to preserve its small-town character amid growth. With 73% of respondents strongly agreeing and agreeing to this statement it is evident that this is a shared sentiment. The strong support indicates the vision statement is still relevant to Lynden today.

Figure 8. Small-Town Characteristics



The characteristics that sponsor this small-town feel the most were identified as local events and traditions (184 responses), the historic and recognizable downtown (154), and the city’s look with wide streets and single-family homes (146). About a dozen responses indicated Lynden does not have a small-town atmosphere. Other responses

Figure 9. Agricultural Connection Enhancing

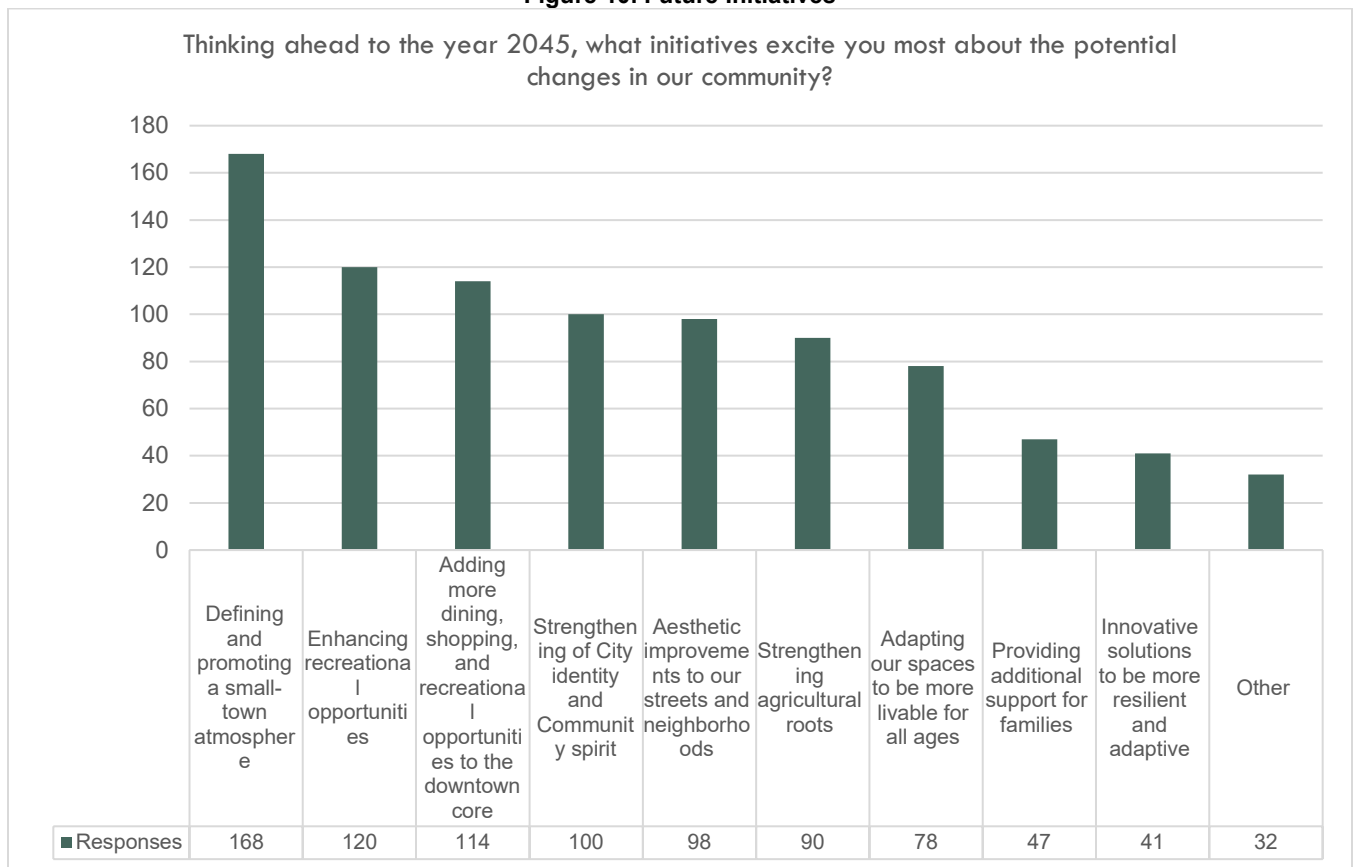


A majority of respondents (218) believe that promoting community events that celebrate local agriculture can help enhance the city’s connections to agriculture. Other notable responses include advocating the protection of Whatcom agricultural land, and agriculture education among others. There

were additional responses that highlighted a strong emphasis on supporting and preserving agriculture, local food systems, and water availability in Lynden.

Many respondents value maintaining farmland, limiting housing developments that could encroach on agricultural spaces, and promoting local farm-to-table partnerships. There is also a clear desire to expand community engagement through farmers' markets and farm tours while preserving water rights for agriculture and providing tax incentives for urban farming. Additionally, there is concern about unchecked growth, with several advocating for building up rather than expanding outwards to protect farmland and prevent sprawling developments. Overall, these comments reflect a community that prioritizes sustainable agriculture, responsible development, and a strong local food economy.

Figure 10. Future Initiatives



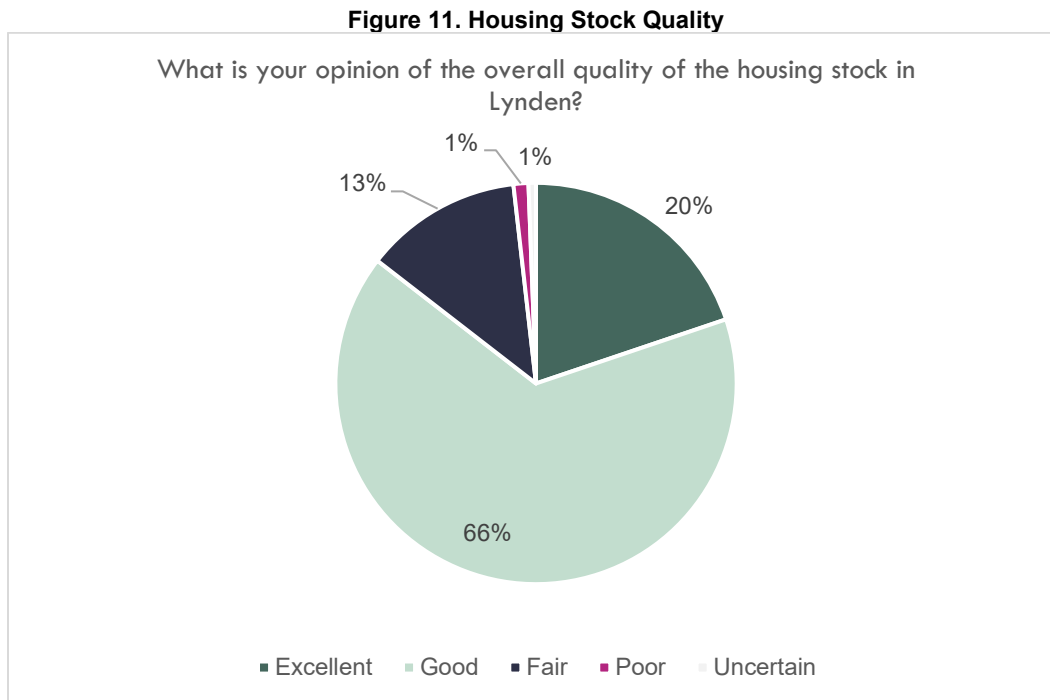
Respondents expressed excitement about future initiatives that could shape Lynden, with the top priority being the preservation and promotion of the town’s small-town atmosphere. Closely following was a desire to enhance recreational opportunities, highlighting a community interest in maintaining green spaces, expanding trails, and improving amenities like parks and shaded streets. There were additional responses that reflected a mix of priorities. While many residents emphasized the importance of limiting high-density and multi-family housing to prevent overdevelopment and protect infrastructure, others stressed the need for affordable housing, inclusivity, and sustainable growth.

The community values both traditional elements, such as Christian values and a close-knit feel, and progressive aspects like diversity and welcoming new residents. Among the additional responses, there were some economic suggestions including developing a business-focused airport, expanding retail

options, and encouraging downtown businesses to open on Sundays to boost tourism. Overall, the responses reveal a community intent on balancing the preservation of its heritage with thoughtful development that supports both its identity and evolving needs. The figure below captures the other initiatives that respondents are excited about.

Housing

Participants were asked to identify housing-related needs, issues, and opportunities. Questions covered topics like barriers to accessing housing and types of housing in Lynden.



The majority of respondents (66%) expressed that the overall housing stock in Lynden is of good quality, 20% agreed that it is of excellent quality, 13% maintained that it is of fair quality and 1% believed that it is poor.

Figure 12. Finding Suitable Housing Agreement Level

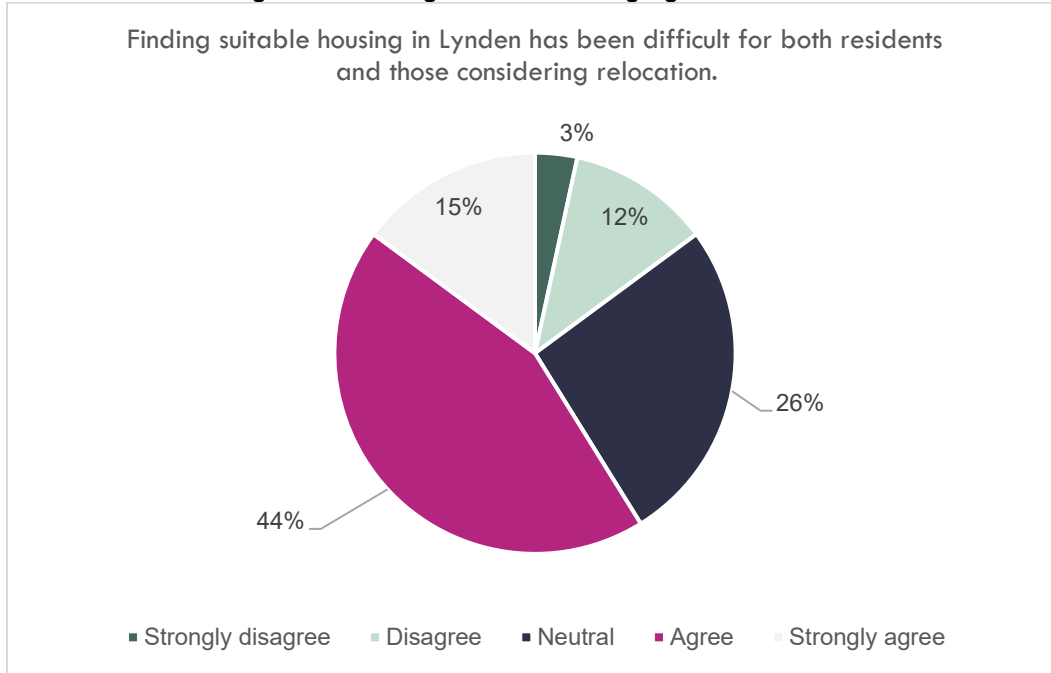
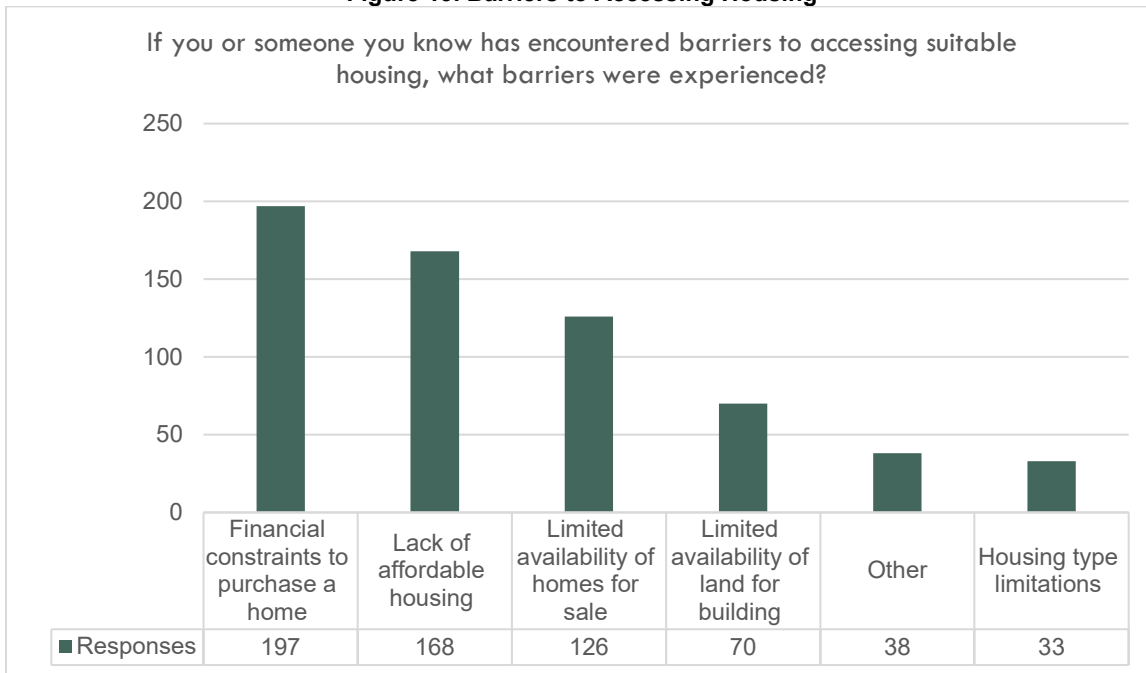


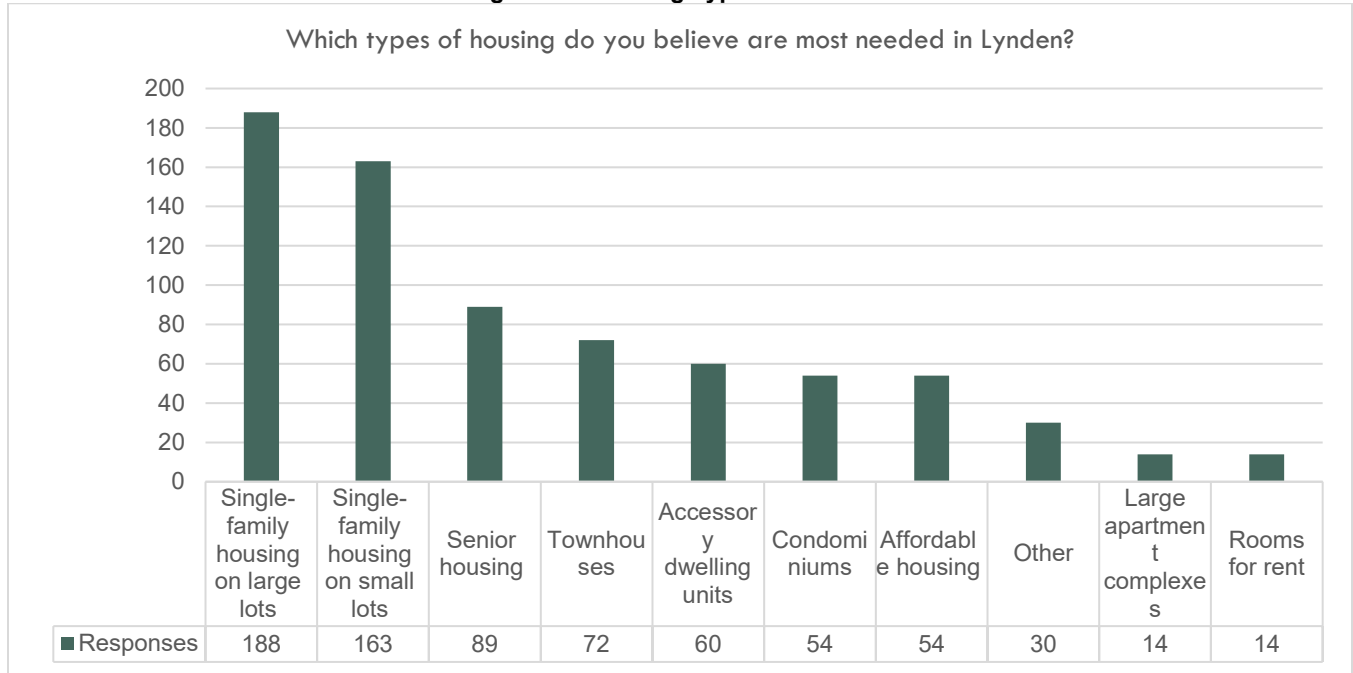
Figure 13. Barriers to Accessing Housing



The top identified barriers to accessing suitable housing in Lynden include financial constraints (197) and a lack of affordable housing (168). Respondents also cited limited availability of homes for sale (126), land for building (70), and housing type limitations (33).

The 38 “other” comments indicated no barriers (12 responses). Respondents expressed frustration over high housing costs, limited rental options, and the impact of rapid development on Lynden’s character. Other recurring themes include concerns about property taxes, inadequate green space, discrimination, and a lack of support for first-time homebuyers.

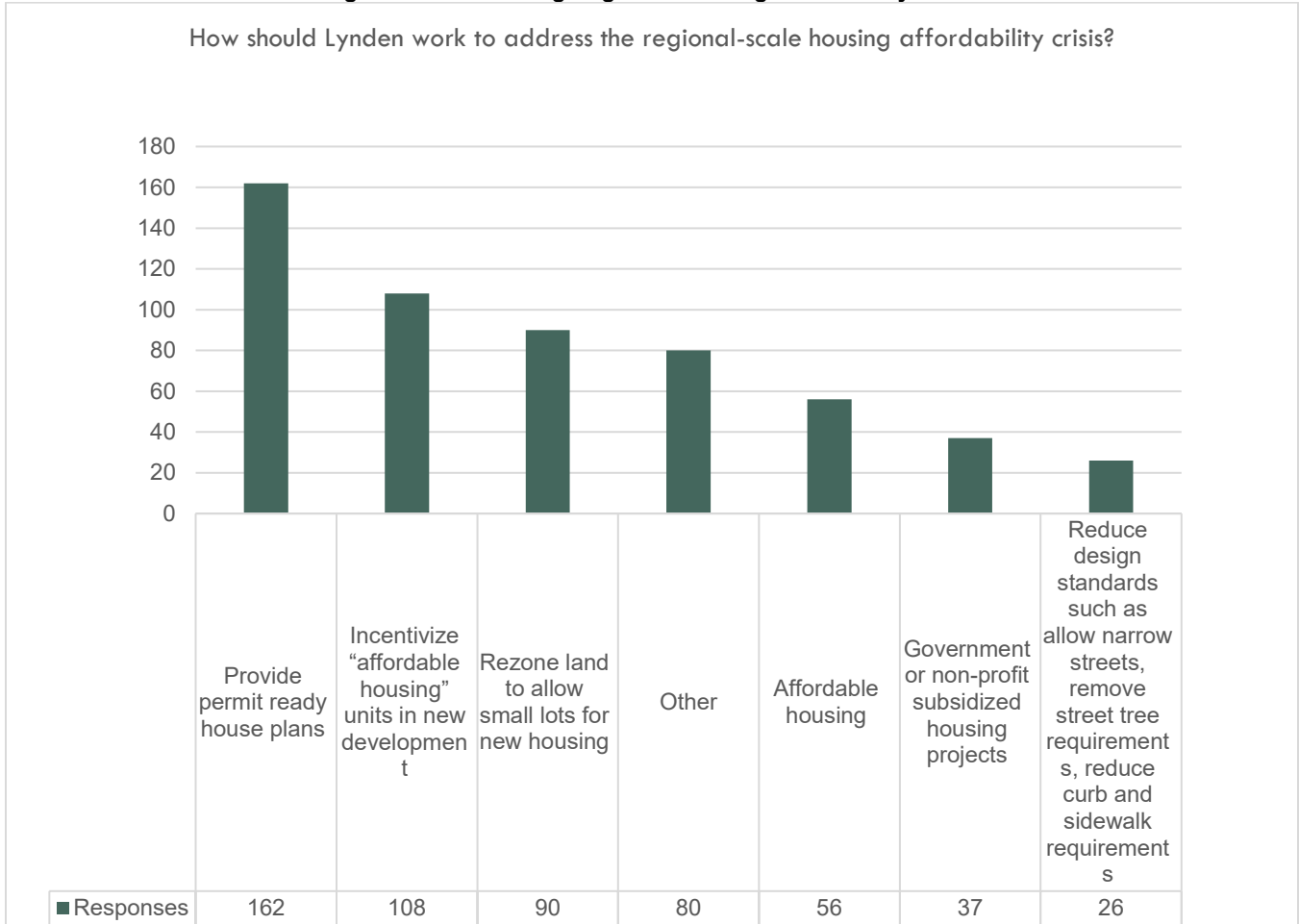
Figure 14. Housing Types Preference



Single-family housing on large lots (188) and small lots (163) are the most desired types. Other popular options include senior housing (89), townhouses (72), and accessory dwelling units (60). Affordable subsidized housing and condominiums each received 54 responses, while other types like boarding houses and large apartment complexes had minimal support.

The 30 “other” comments primarily express concerns about rapid growth and the potential negative impacts on Lynden's character and infrastructure. Many respondents advocate for a balance between different housing types, including single-family homes, duplexes, and affordable rental options. There's a strong desire to maintain Lynden's rural charm and prevent overdevelopment. Additionally, some comments highlight the need for accessible housing options for seniors and young families.

Figure 15. Addressing Regional Housing Affordability Crisis



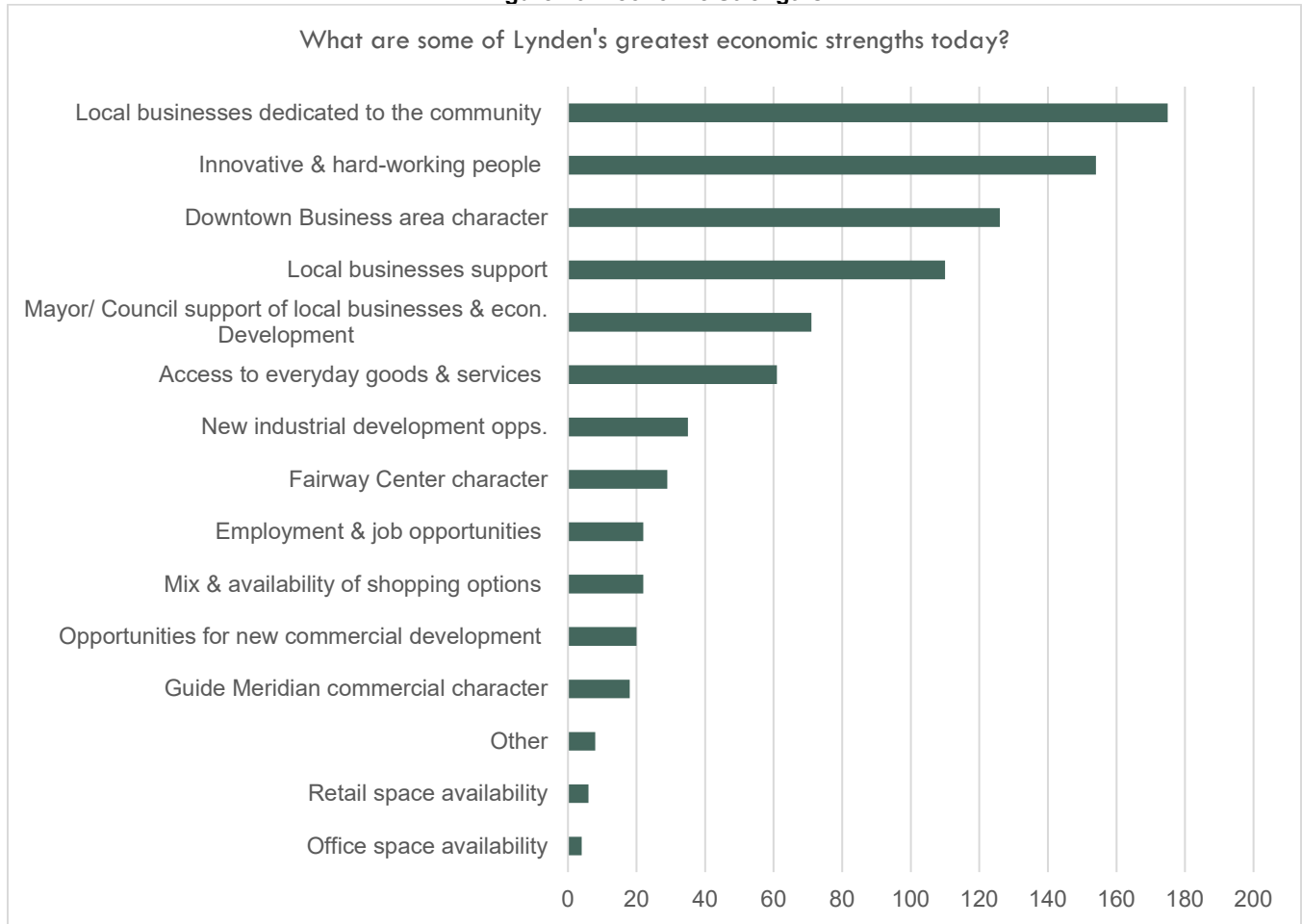
The preferred approaches to address housing affordability include providing permit-ready house plans (162) and incentivizing affordable units in new developments (108). Rezoning land for smaller lots was also favored (90), along with government or nonprofit-subsidized housing (37).

The 80 other comments reflect a wide range of opinions on housing affordability and development in Lynden. "None of the above" received 14 responses and stop growing received 6. Some respondents advocate for deregulation, reduced fees, and streamlined permitting processes to encourage development and lower housing costs. Others express concerns about overdevelopment, environmental impact, and the loss of rural character. There's also a strong sentiment against government intervention and a preference for market-driven solutions. Some respondents believe that the city should focus on attracting higher-paying jobs to improve affordability, while others suggest that the city should limit growth and maintain its current character.

Economy

Participants were asked about economic growth strengths and challenges for Lynden.

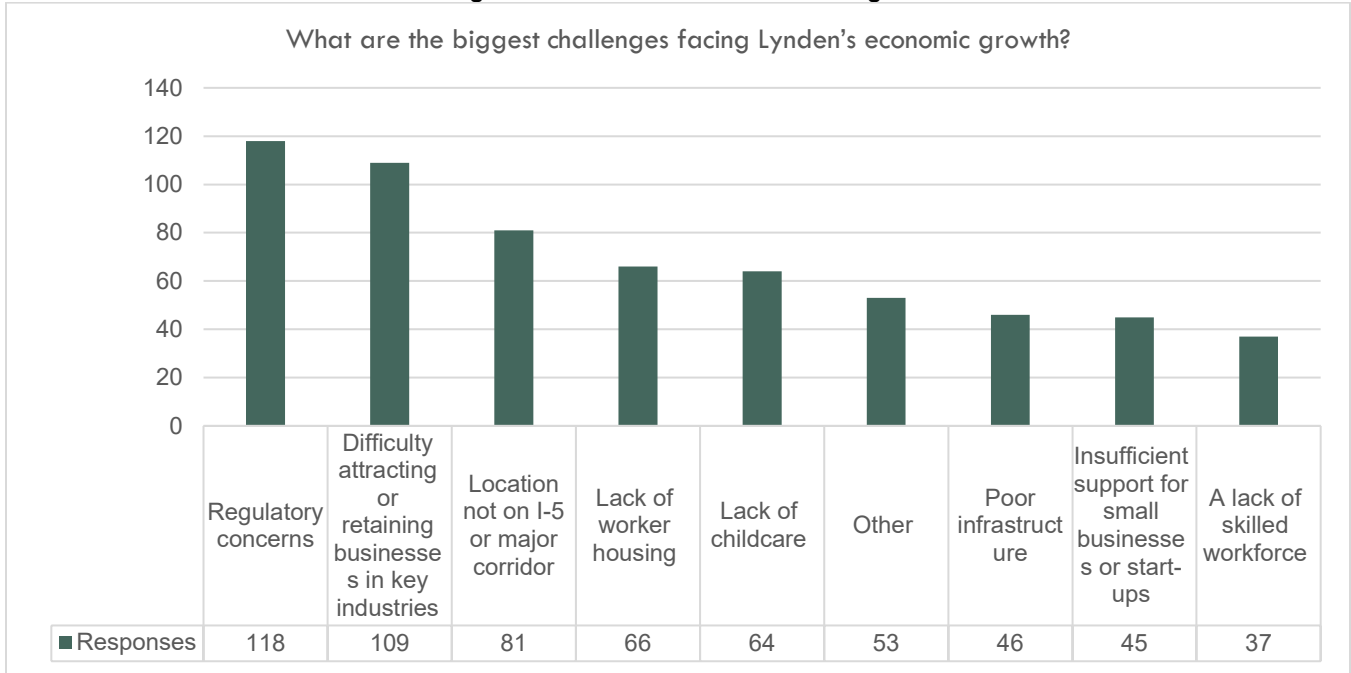
Figure 16. Economic Strengths



Respondents were asked to choose some of the greatest economic strengths that are present in Lynden. Respondents highlighted local businesses, an innovative workforce, and the character of downtown as key economic strengths. Additional suggestions included preserving clean, well-maintained properties, being close to the Canadian border, and maintaining small-town charm by discouraging overdevelopment.

The “other” comments primarily express concerns about overdevelopment and the potential negative impact on Lynden's small-town character. There are also concerns about the cost of living, particularly in downtown areas. Additionally, some comments reflect a desire to maintain a specific community culture and limit outside influences.

Figure 17. Economic Growth Challenges



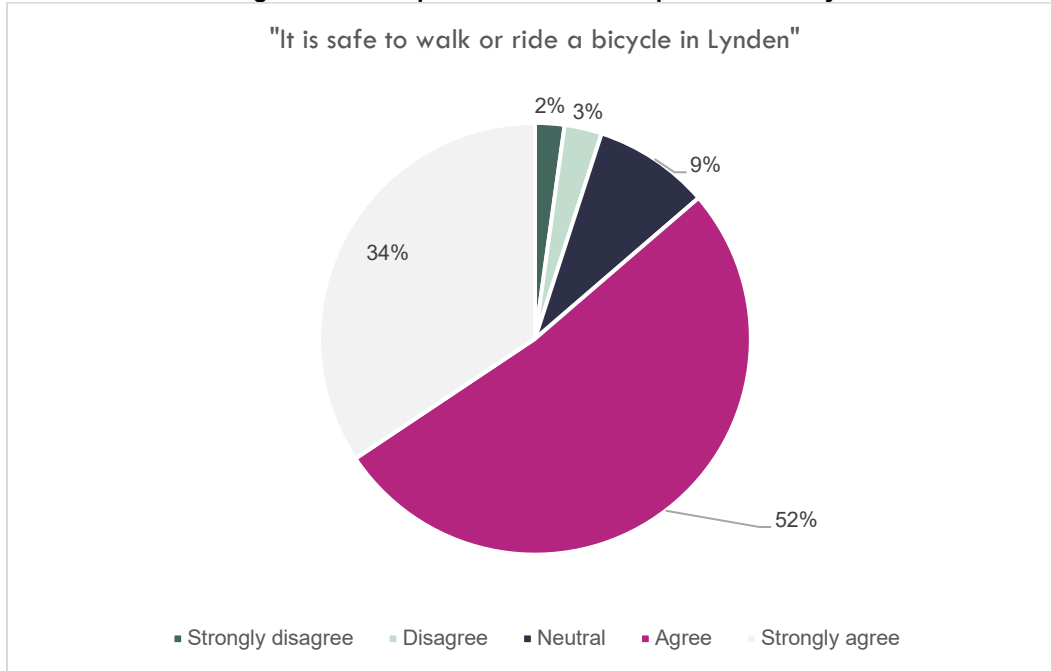
Respondents identified the biggest challenges that confront the economic growth of Lynden. Top challenges include regulatory concerns (118), difficulty attracting or retaining key businesses (109), and Lynden’s location away from major transportation corridors (81). Limited childcare options (64) and poor infrastructure (46) were also noted.

Other concerns (53) included high taxes, lack of public transit, and the need for diverse economic opportunities to attract young residents. Respondents also mentioned the need for better planning to avoid unchecked growth and to preserve the city’s small-town identity.

Transportation

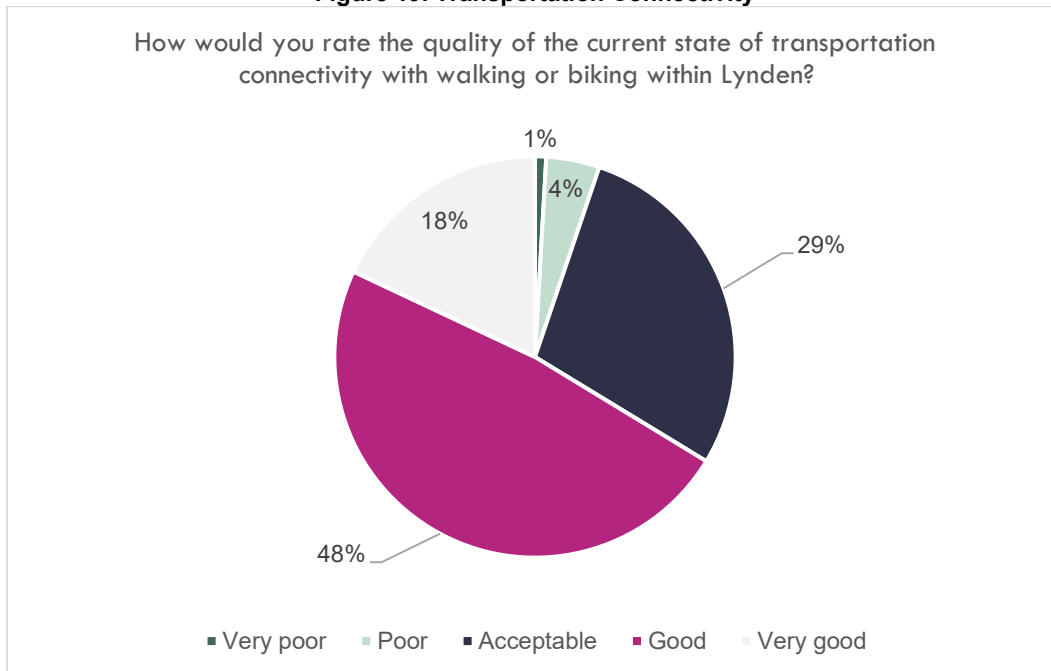
This survey section focused on transportation such as safety, transportation modes, and identifying problematic road intersections.

Figure 18. Perception of Active Transportation Safety



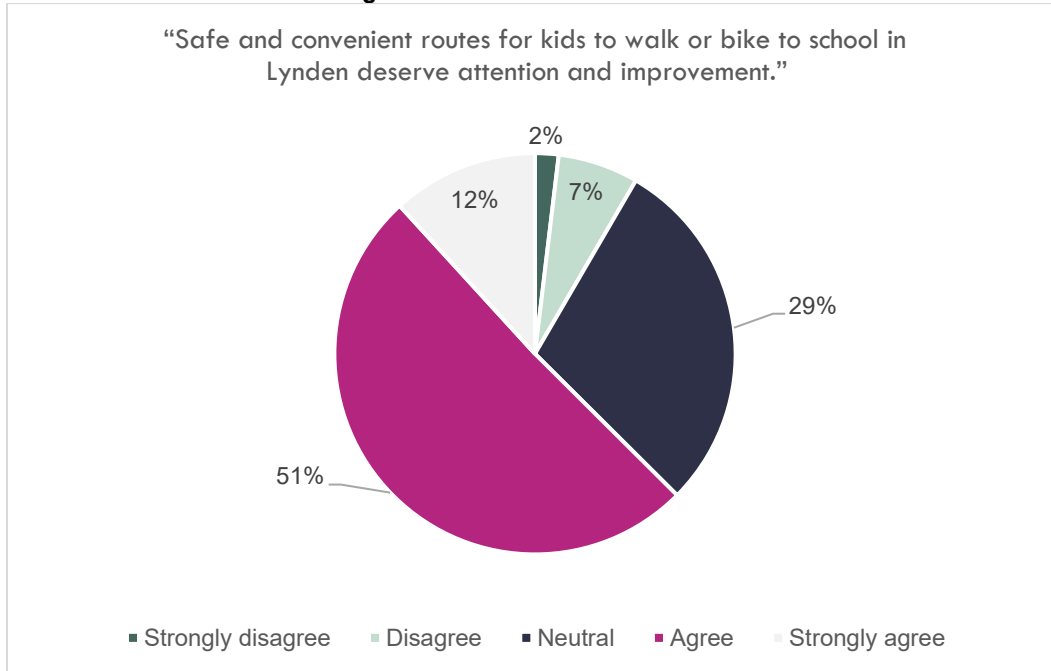
Most respondents feel positive about walking and biking safety, with 52% agreeing and 34% strongly agreeing that it is safe to walk or ride a bicycle in Lynden, totaling 279 favorable responses. A small percentage disagreed, with 3% disagreeing and 2% strongly disagreeing.

Figure 19. Transportation Connectivity



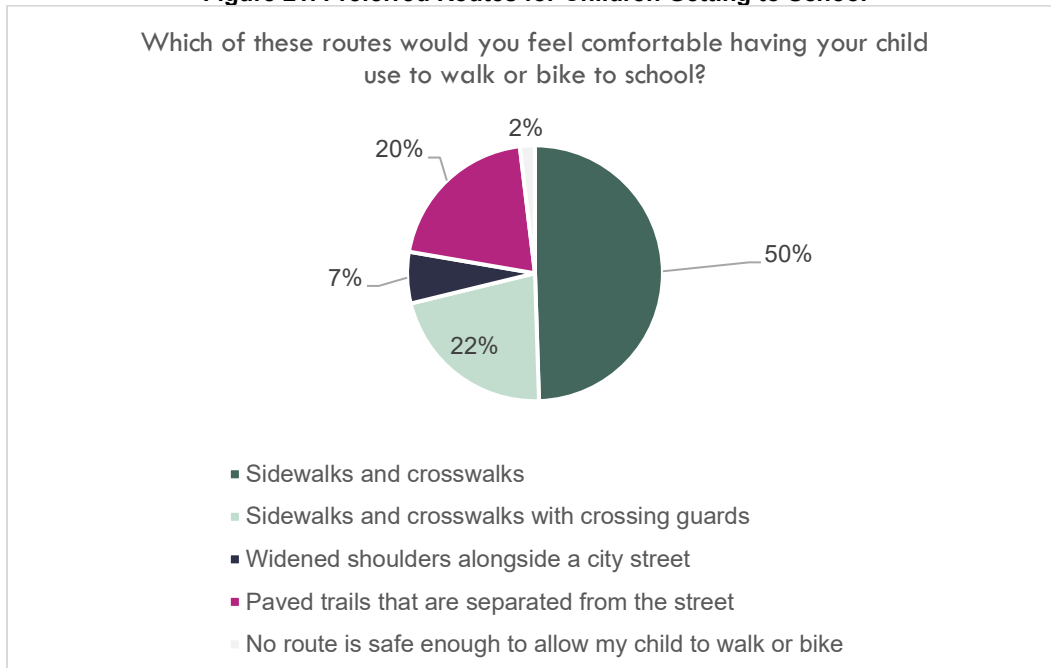
The majority of respondents rated transportation connectivity for walking and biking as good (48%) or very good (18%), totaling 214 favorable responses. Meanwhile, 29% rated it as acceptable, and only a small minority found it poor (4%) or very poor (1%).

Figure 20. Safe Routes to Schools



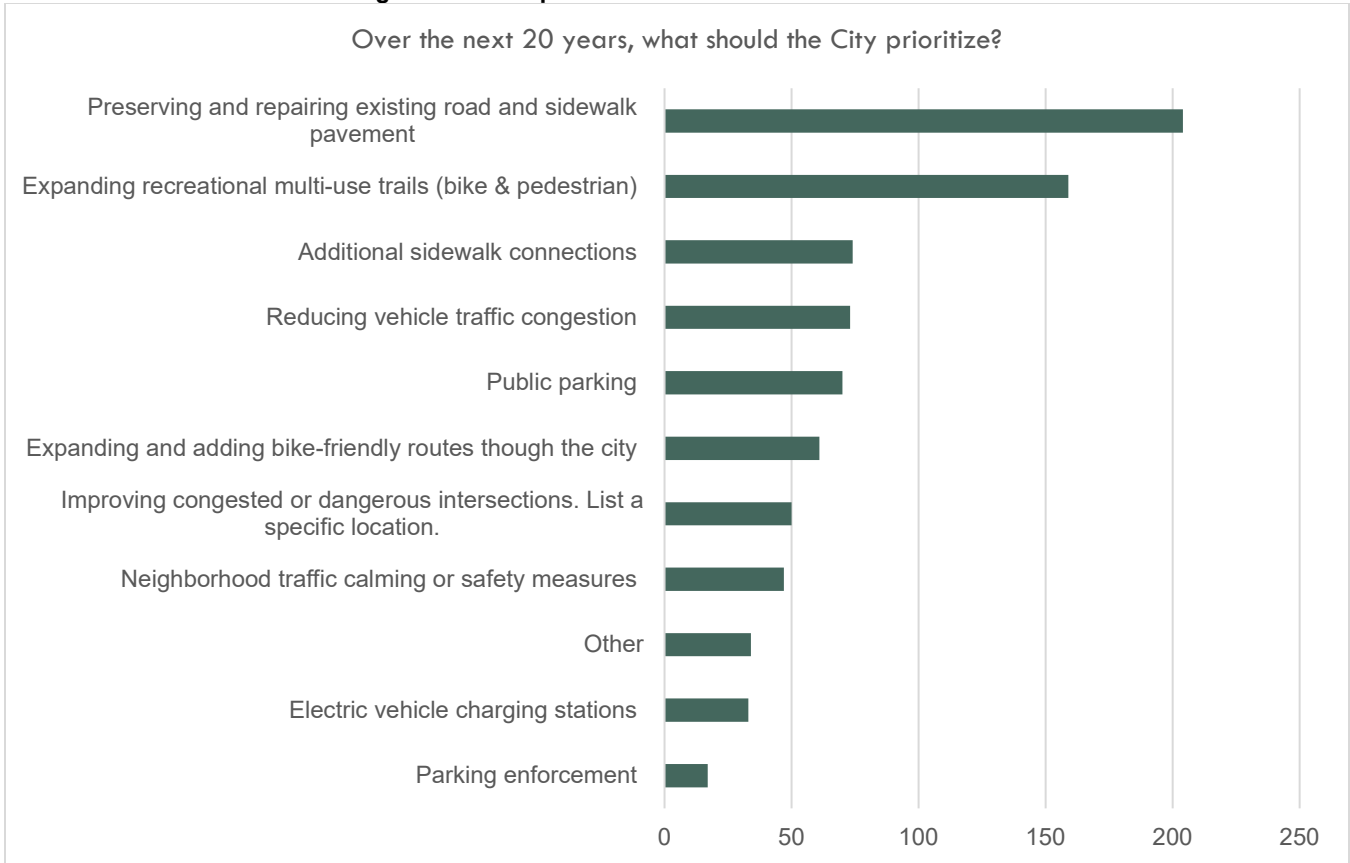
Respondents largely agree that safe and convenient routes for kids to walk or bike to school require attention, with 51% agreeing and 12% strongly agreeing. Around 29% were neutral on the issue, while only 7% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. This suggests a need for improvement in safe routes to schools for children.

Figure 21. Preferred Routes for Children Getting to School



Half of the respondents (50%) feel comfortable with their children using sidewalks and crosswalks, while 22% prefer sidewalks and crosswalks with crossing guards. Paved trails separated from streets were preferred by 20%, and 7% would be comfortable with widened shoulders alongside city streets. Only 2% indicated that no route is safe enough for their child.

Figure 22. Transportation Priorities for the Next 20 Years



Key priorities for transportation improvements over the next two decades include preserving and repairing existing roads and sidewalks, expanding recreational and multi-use trails, and adding more sidewalks. Other responses highlighted the need for enhanced parking solutions, enforcing speed limits, and improving safety at pedestrian crossings. Additionally, improving congested or dangerous intersections was frequently mentioned, with specific locations identified. Respondents identified several key intersections and corridors in Lynden as areas of concern for traffic congestion or safety improvements (Table 2).

Other comments (34) common themes included traffic management (speeding, parking, road infrastructure), public safety (police presence, pedestrian safety), environmental issues (green space, tree management), and community development (housing, parks, schools). Residents also expressed a desires for improved city services and reduced government intervention.

Table 2. Road Intersection Improvements

Locations	Count
Badger & Benson	1
Badger & Guide	1

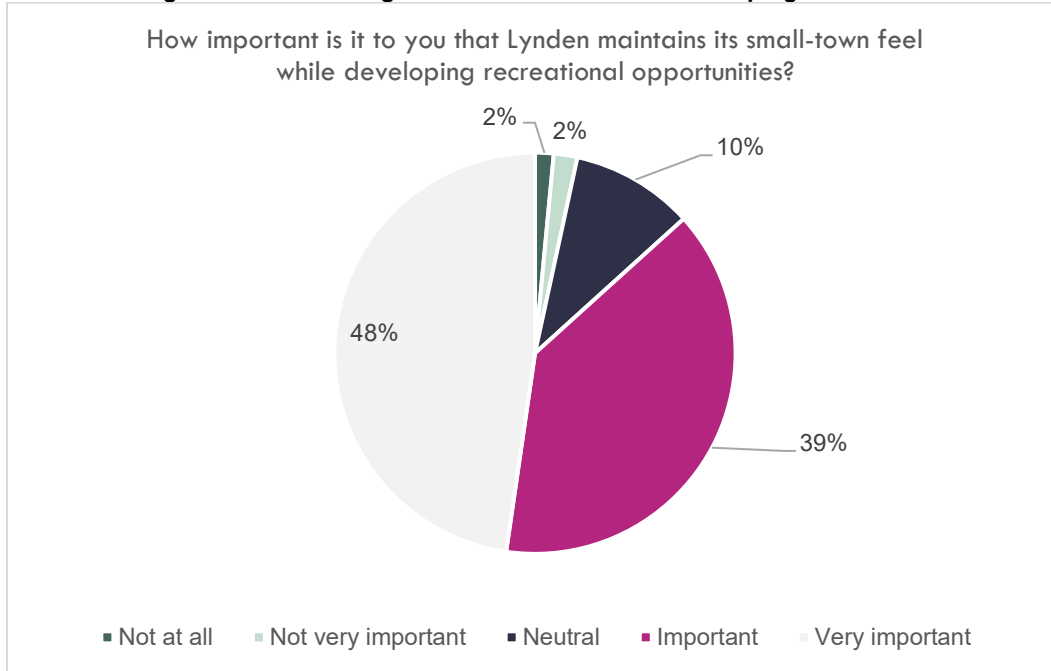
Badger & Vinup	3
Badger Road corridor	2
Bender & Drayton	1
Benson and Badger	1
Berthusen & Loomis Trail	1
Birch Bay-Lynden Rd & Berthusen	1
Birch Bay-Lynden Rd & Guide	1
Bradley & Vinup	6
Center lane at Middle School	1
Eastwood Way & Aaron Dr	1
First & Main	1
Front St - Little Red Wagon	1
Front St intersections downtown	3
Front Street	1
Grover & 17th	5
Grover & 1st	9
Grover & 5th	1
Grover & Bender	4
Grover & Dayton	1
Grover & Hampton	1
Grover & Nooksack Ave	1
Grover St intersections downtown	4
Guide & 17th	1
Guide & Bay Lyn	2
Guide & Kok	6
Guide meridian intersections	2
Line & Bradley	2

The most frequently mentioned locations include Grover & 1st (9 mentions) and Bradley & Vinup (6 mentions), as well as Grover & 17th (5 mentions) and Grover St intersections downtown (4 mentions). Additional problem spots include Badger & Vinup (3 mentions), Front St intersections downtown (3 mentions), and Guide & Kok (6 mentions). Other locations cited for potential improvements were the Badger Road corridor, Grover & Bender, Guide & Bay Lyn, Guide Meridian intersections, and Line & Bradley (2 mentions each). Single mentions were made for intersections like Badger & Benson, Badger & Guide, Bender & Drayton, Berthusen & Loomis Trail, Birch Bay-Lynden Rd & Berthusen, Birch Bay-Lynden Rd & Guide, Eastwood Way & Aaron Dr, First & Main, Front St - Little Red Wagon, Grover & 5th, Grover & Dayton, Grover & Hampton, Grover & Nooksack Ave, Guide & 17th, and the center lane at the Middle School.

Parks & Recreation

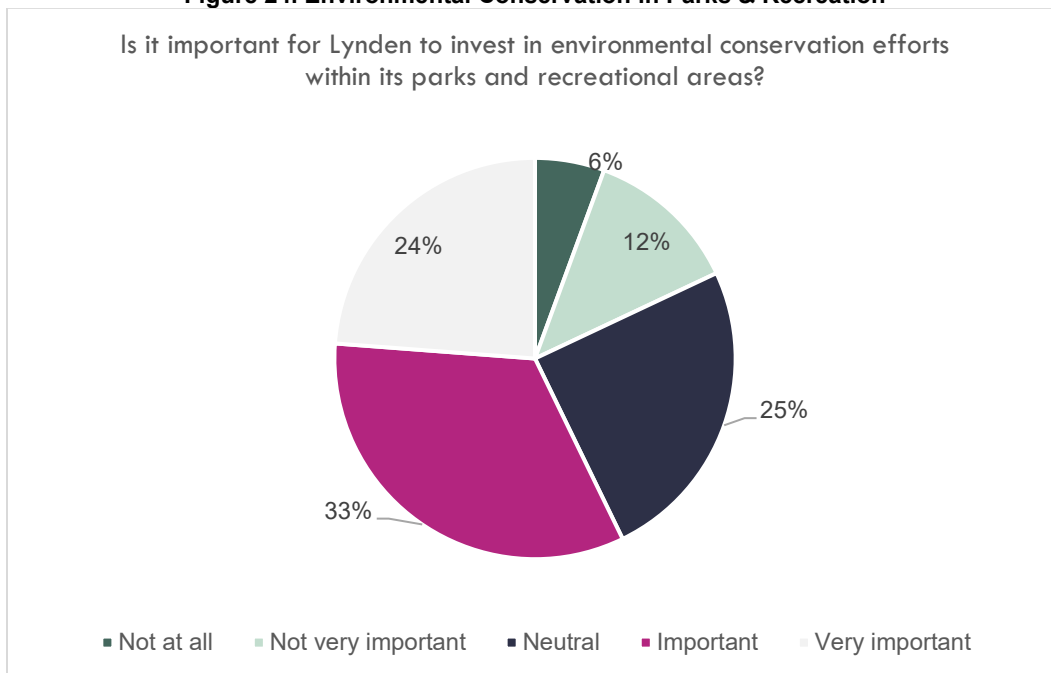
A few parks and recreation questions were asked to better understand recreation investments concerning conservation. A more comprehensive parks survey was distributed with the recent Master Parks Plan update so fewer questions were asked in this survey.

Figure 23. Maintaining Small-Town Feel While Developing Recreation



The majority of respondents feel that maintaining Lynden’s small-town character while developing recreational opportunities is essential, with 48% rating it as very important and 39% as important, totaling 280 respondents in favor. A smaller group remained neutral (10%), while only a combined 4% found it not very important or not important at all.

Figure 24. Environmental Conservation in Parks & Recreation



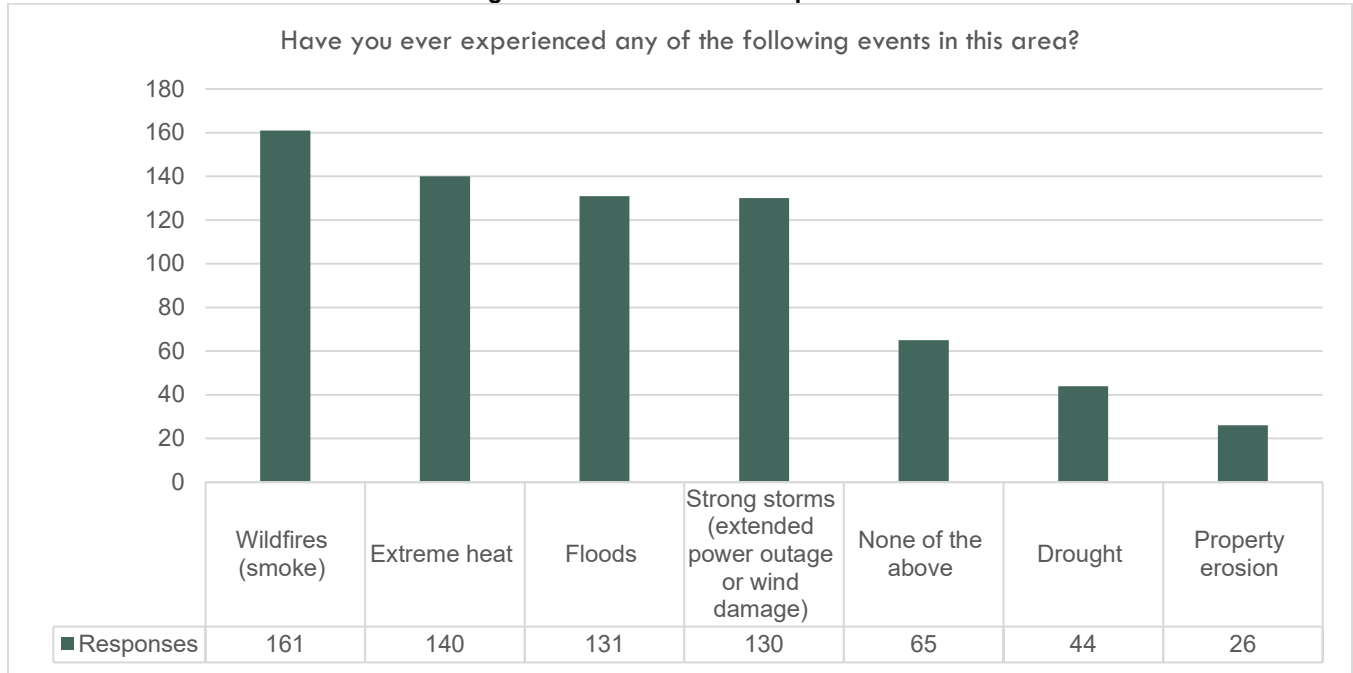
There is strong support for environmental conservation in Lynden’s parks and recreational areas, with 33% of respondents considering it important and 24% rating it as very important, for a total of 185

supportive responses. About 25% remained neutral on the issue, while a smaller percentage indicated it was not very important (12%) or not at all important (6%), showing that most respondents value conservation efforts in these spaces.

Environment & Climate

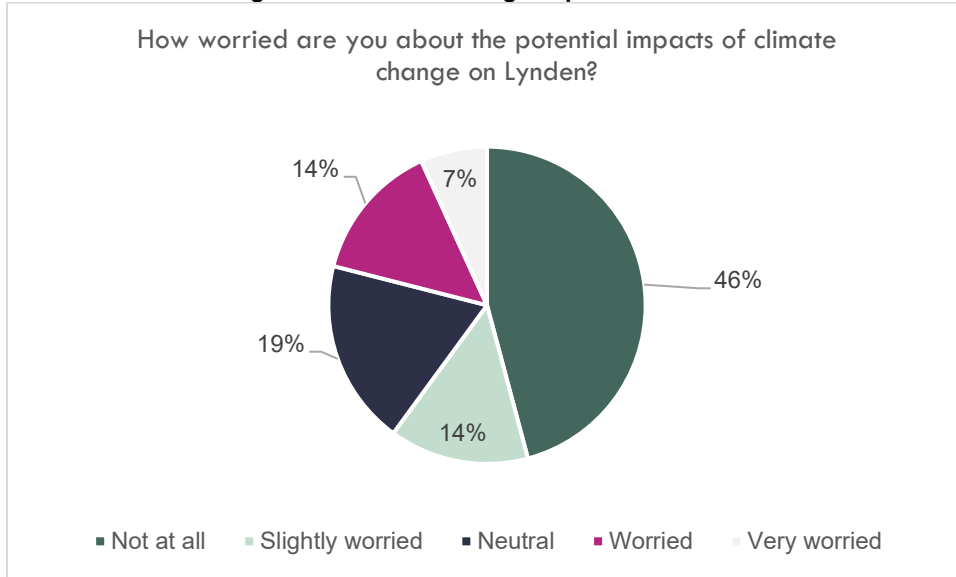
Climate and environmental questions were asked such as impacts, concerns, and priorities for addressing climate change.

Figure 25. Climate Events Experience



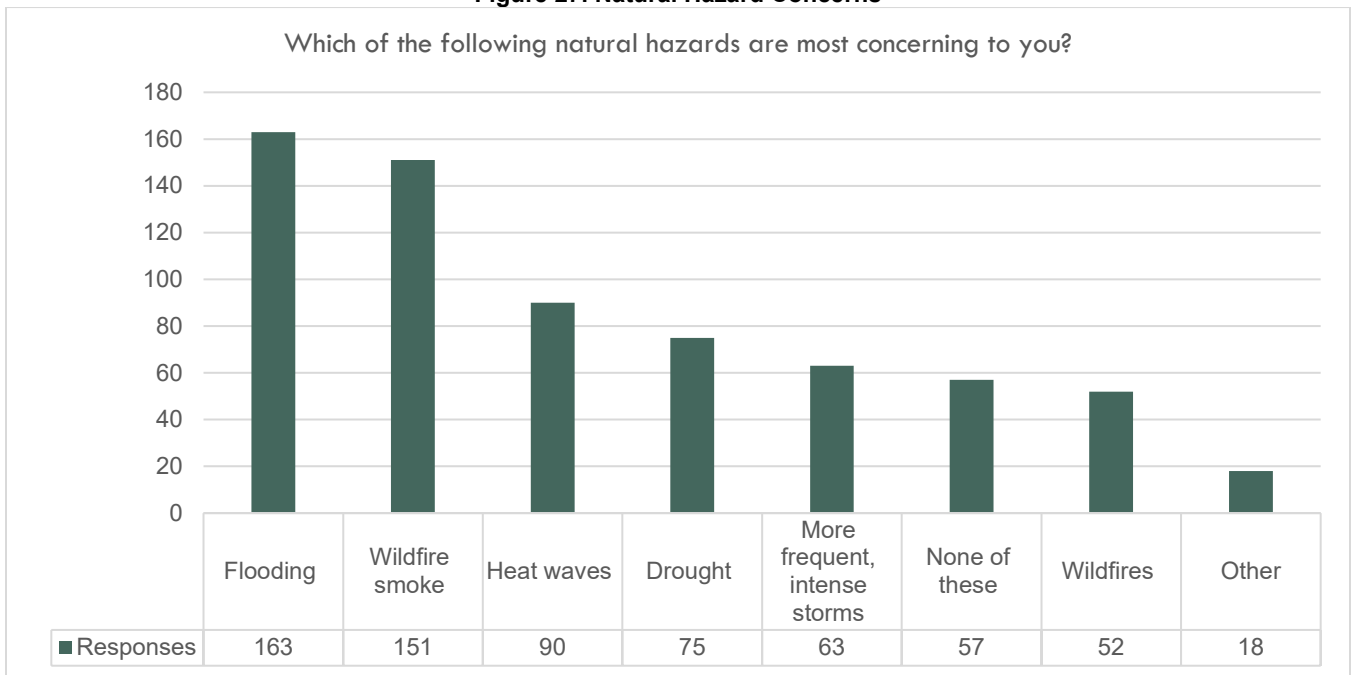
Many respondents have encountered climate-related events in the area, with the most common being wildfire smoke (161 responses), extreme heat (140 responses), floods (131 responses), and strong storms (130 responses). Fewer respondents reported experiencing drought (44 responses) and property erosion (26 responses). Meanwhile, 65 respondents indicated they had not experienced any of these events.

Figure 26. Climate Change Impacts Concerns



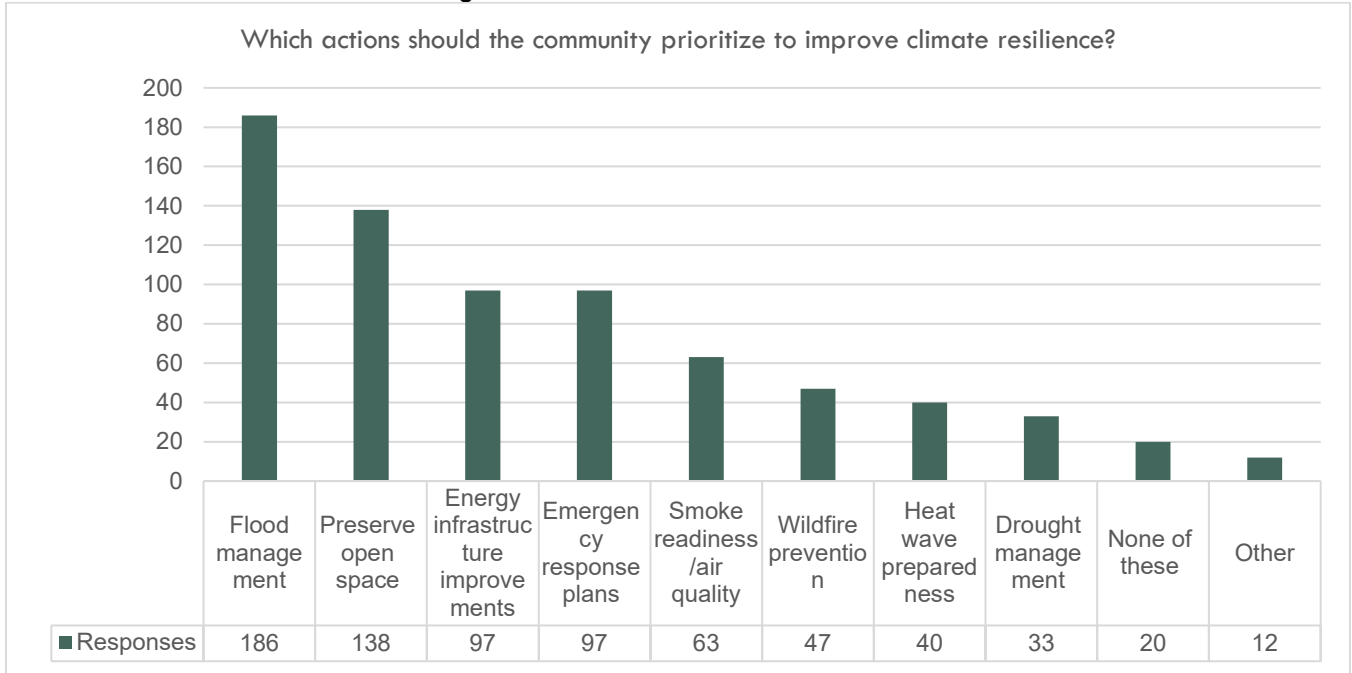
Opinions on climate change’s impacts vary, with 46% of respondents not worried at all. On the other hand, 14% are slightly worried, 19% are neutral, and 21% are either worried or very worried, showing a mixed range of concerns across the community.

Figure 27. Natural Hazard Concerns



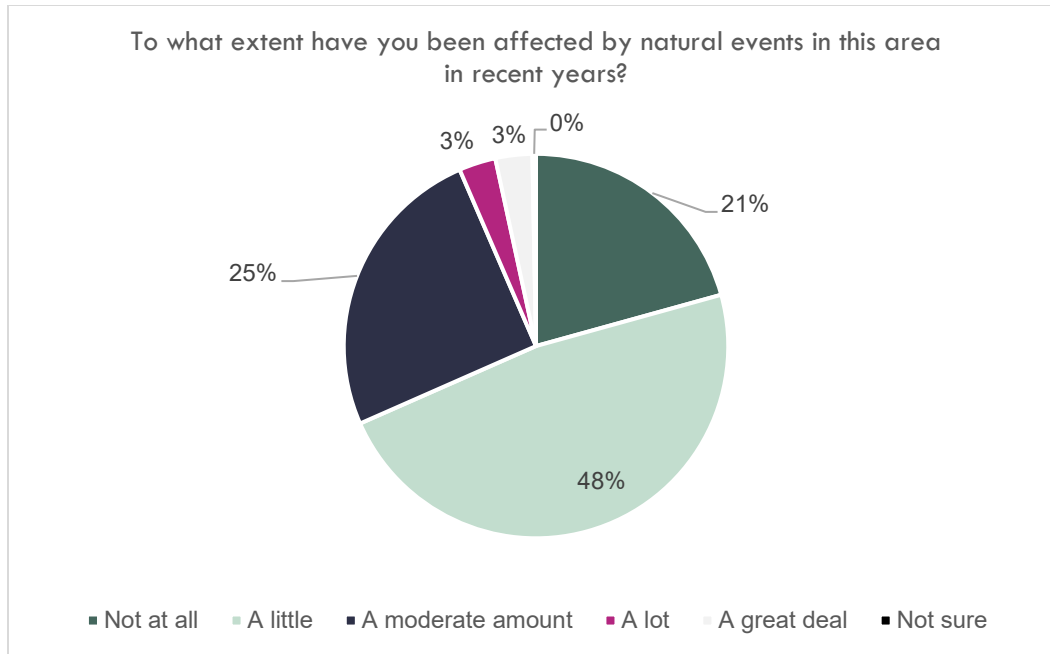
Flooding is the top concern, with 163 respondents citing it as a significant hazard, followed by wildfire smoke (151 responses), heat waves (90 responses), and drought (75 responses). Some respondents are also concerned about more intense storms (63 responses) and wildfires (52 responses). A few mentioned other hazards like earthquakes (6 responses) and volcanic eruptions (4 responses), while 57 respondents indicated that none of these hazards are concerning.

Figure 28. Priorities for Climate Resilience



Flood management is the leading priority for climate resilience, with 186 responses. Other priorities include preserving open space (138), and improvements in energy infrastructure and emergency response plans (97 each). Additional concerns include smoke readiness (63), wildfire prevention (47), and heatwave preparedness (40 responses). Only 20 responded to none of these with two additional “other” responses writing that there’s no need to address climate change. Unique suggestions, such as planting more trees and providing cooling shelters, also reflect varied approaches to resilience from written-in “other” responses.

Figure 29. Extent Affected by Natural Events



Nearly half of the respondents (48%) stated they have been affected "a little" by natural events, and 25% have experienced a moderate amount of impact. Only 6% reported a significant impact, while 21% indicated they have not been affected at all, showing that while many residents have been affected, the severity of the impact varies widely.

Open Response

In response to "Is there anything else you'd like to share with us, about any of the previous topics or others not covered?" we received 145 comments. They ranged in topics from community growth, school planning, and affordable housing. They are summarized more fully below:

City development and community issues were the most frequently discussed topics, with 34 mentions of city-related matters and 24 comments addressing community dynamics. Several comments touched on **city services and amenities**, such as maintaining parks, improving streetscapes, and supporting recreational facilities. The **addition of trails** and other shared spaces was frequently praised, with calls for further investment in amenities that enhance the community's livability and provide opportunities for outdoor activities.

The management of **city resources and infrastructure** also emerged as a key concern. Comments reflected a desire for efficient use of public funds, proper maintenance of existing infrastructure, and strategic planning to address future needs. This included calls for transparency and responsiveness from city leadership in addressing residents' concerns. The issue of **community identity and cohesion** was threaded throughout city-related feedback. Residents emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and maintaining Lynden's unique charm as it grows. These comments suggest a strong interest in ensuring that the city's evolution aligns with the values and expectations of its residents, balancing growth with preservation of the town's distinct character.

Housing-related issues ranked highly, with 20 comments specifically addressing housing challenges, including affordability and availability. The topic of affordable housing was particularly notable, with residents voicing concerns about the feasibility of achieving affordability while maintaining quality and livability. Comments reflected apprehension about rapid growth and its potential impact on housing availability and affordability for families and individuals alike.

Education and infrastructure also featured prominently, with 11 comments regarding **schools** and their integration into broader planning efforts. Residents called for investment in local schools to meet the needs of a growing population. Additionally, the community expressed interest in expanding recreational opportunities, particularly through the development of trails, which was highlighted in nine comments.

Concerns about **growth and transportation** were also evident, though to a lesser extent. Growth-related issues garnered 13 comments, focusing on managing expansion sustainably while preserving the town's character. Transportation was mentioned less frequently, with only one direct comment, suggesting it may be a less immediate priority for residents. Collectively, these insights underscore a community striving to balance growth, affordability, and quality of life in its future planning efforts.

Long-Form Version of Community Survey

A long-form version of the response survey was distributed to the Planning Commission and focus groups. The city received eight completed surveys back. These included more opportunities for open-response questions in addition to the multiple-choice questions in the community survey. These survey responses were tallied in the community survey totals with the additional open-response questions summarized below.

Small-Town Atmosphere Definitions

Most responses indicated a small-town atmosphere is defined by the people living there with caring, respectful, and welcoming attitudes. Other topics included an uplifting community with standards of cleanliness, preserved natural spaces, local business support, and a high quality of life for all ages.

Balancing Growth and Protecting Agriculture

Comments recognized the careful balance between urban growth and agricultural preservation. Strategies proposed include downsizing lot sizes, strategic zoning, and managed growth to accommodate development while protecting farmland. It's emphasized that economic analysis should guide decisions, considering the importance of agriculture for local identity and food security. Additionally, careful planning is needed to avoid urban sprawl and preserve the town's character.

Alternative One-Sentence Vision Statement

"To cultivate a charming and safe community in Lynden by supporting well-being and quality of life as we live and work together to retain our unique culture for generations to come."

"Lynden offers the welcoming, high-standards and natural beauty of a small community along with the business-friendly, tech-friendly, culture and resources of a large community.

"Lynden preserves and nurtures its small town and agricultural heritage while embracing growth opportunities that compliment the high quality of life enjoyed by residents."

Other comments about the vision statement without providing an alternative statement included keeping the current vision statement and recommending researching other cities' statements.

Future of Economic Development

The future of economic development in Lynden diversifies Lynden's economy and attracts high-skilled jobs. Comments suggest leveraging the town's location for cross-border commerce and investing in high-speed internet infrastructure. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of supporting agriculture and food processing as a sustainable economic pillar, while also accommodating small and medium-sized businesses.

Future of Parks

The comments emphasize the importance of creating a sustainable and livable community in Lynden. They highlight the need for diverse recreational facilities, including skate parks and indoor amenities. Additionally, they stress the importance of preserving natural beauty, expanding green spaces, and ensuring safe and accessible outdoor areas. The comments also propose strategic land use planning to balance development and conservation.

Other Comments

Other comments had sentiments about prioritizing long-term stability and planning over short-term gain as well as preserving existing community assets. The vision for Lynden should be a desirable place to live and work.

Hold onto high standards and build upon them. Avoid seizing on near-term economic gains that ultimately sacrifice the long-term stability and positive growth of the community. Leaders need to develop a list of key imperatives that will guide decision-making for all concerns. It is in the best interest of all parties to strive to be a community that is desired both to live and work in. People with low or fixed incomes deserve quality housing that requires low maintenance since ultimately low quality housing is expensive for the owner and community. Don't forget about the amazing asset located in the heart of the city the Lynden Municipal Airport. The airport will provide a vital staging point for air evacuation during a natural disaster and is a regional aviation hub.