

# MEMORANDUM

Date: March 26, 2024  
 To: Planning Commission  
 From: Erika Smith-Erickson, Land Use and Housing Planner, and Brad Medrud,  
 Planning Manager



## 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update – Community Survey Results

In November 2023, the City of Tumwater launched its first online community survey as part of community engagement for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update. The intent of the survey was to inform the community about the update, gauge interest in specific topics and elements, identify preferences for notification and events, and evaluate how to improve public engagement. Over 22,000 postcards were mailed, and notices were posted on City’s webpage and social media platforms.

The survey was a nonscientific survey that reflected the opinions of those who chose to respond to the survey. The survey closed February 14, 2024, and 975 responses were received.

This memorandum summarizes what staff learned, the demographics of those who participated in the survey, what the priorities are for those who responded, the best methods of public notification for those who responded, and where staff need to improve the City’s community outreach to be more inclusive and reach all groups in the community.

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## **Background**

On a ten-year cycle, the City is required to conduct a 20-year Growth Management Act periodic update of its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations. Responding to changes since the City completed its last major periodic update of the Plan in 2016; the updated Plan and development regulations will reflect the community's vision and the state's requirements for the Plan and the City's development regulations.

The updated Comprehensive Plan will address diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the Plan and incorporate climate mitigation, adaptation, and sustainability goals and actions in all the individual Elements.

The ten goals for the City's 2025 periodic update community engagement from the final Community Engagement Plan from July 2023 are to:

1. Provide information to enhance community understanding of issues.
2. Seek early and continuous involvement from people who care about the Comprehensive Plan and the community.
3. Offer opportunities for the community to provide feedback to staff and appointed and elected officials.
4. Develop an accessible, equitable, and engaging Plan.
5. Make community-driven planning the priority for the Plan.
6. Highlight projects implemented since the last Comprehensive Plan periodic update.
7. Use a flexible, phased approach.
8. Integrate and consolidate goals from all Elements of this Plan.
9. Develop a Plan that is in an easy to read and understandable format.
10. Rely on multiple communications strategies, tactics, and platforms to share information.

The Community Engagement Plan identifies ways that staff will engage with the community and stakeholders. The plan identifies surveys as one medium to assess community priorities. Staff reviewed the Community Survey from the 2016 update to determine which questions would be appropriate to ask again in 2024.

## **Intent**

After holding internal meetings with the Communications Department, staff decided the focus of the first survey would be to inform the community that the update was underway and share information on how to participate in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. Staff wanted to let the community know the update is happening, find out what communication methods work best for the respondents, determine what days and times work best for public meetings for the respondents, and which topics and elements those who responded were most interested in learning more about.

By collecting demographic information such as ethnicity, income, types of residence, and age from those who responded, staff were able to identify gaps in the City's initial community outreach to address in future outreach to address gaps in inclusion and equity.

## Responses

The survey was available online on the City's project website<sup>1</sup> from the beginning of November 2023 to February 14, 2024. There were 975 participants. The survey was shared on the City's social media and notice of the survey was mailed to all City residents by postcard on December 4, 2023.

The survey was a nonscientific survey that reflected the opinions of those who chose to respond to the survey, so conclusions drawn from the results should take that into account.

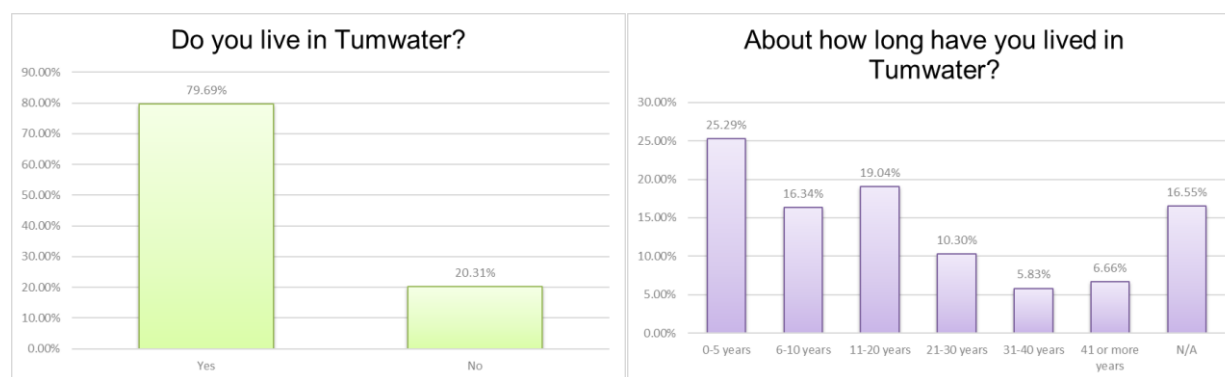
There were thirty-five questions in the survey. Attachment B is the presentation of the survey results. Attachment C is a summary of all the survey questions and written responses.

## Demographics

The first eight and last four questions of the survey focused on demographic questions related to respondents' employment, residency, type of housing, income, gender, race/ethnicity, age, household type, and education.

Attachment D is the Tumwater 2023 Statistical Profile from November 2023 prepared by the Thurston Regional Planning Council. A comparison of the demographic responses from the survey with the 2023 Statistical Profile shows the difference between the profile of the survey respondents and the population of the community.

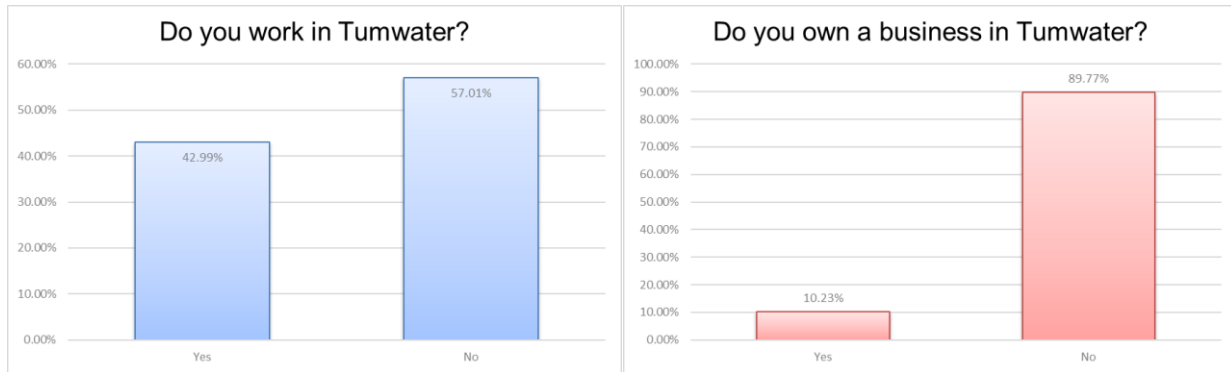
### Living in Tumwater – Survey Responses



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/departments/community-development-department/tumwater-comprehensive-plan/2025-comprehensive-plan-update>.



## Work and Employment – Survey Responses



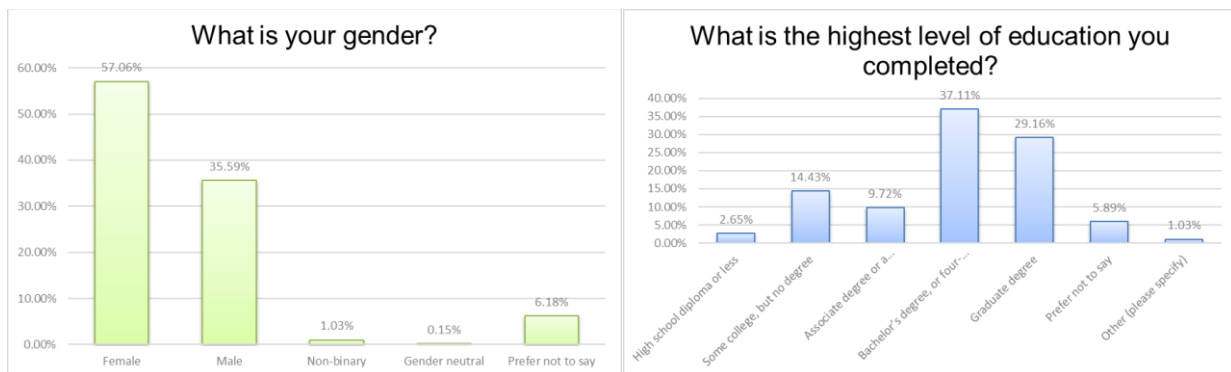
## Employment – 2023 Statistical Profile

### Jobs (2017 Estimate)

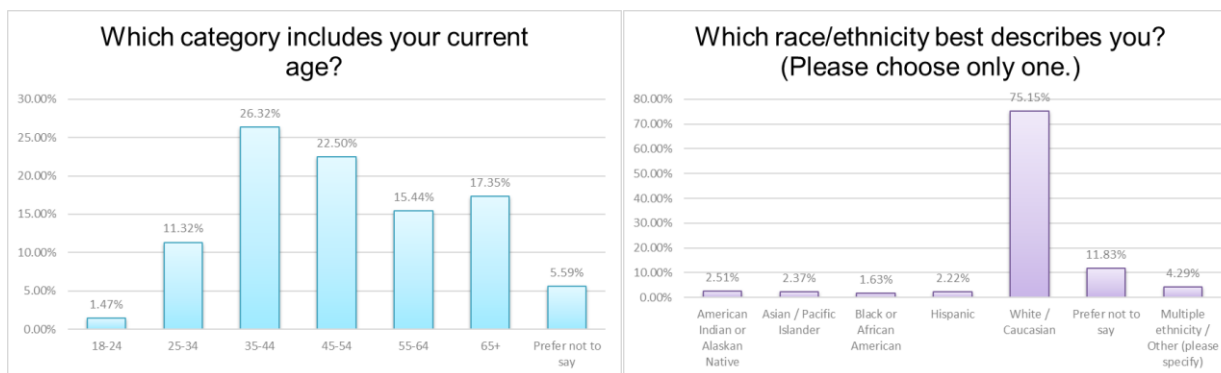
Resource, Construction, Utilities	1,890
Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade	2,970
Retail, Accommodation, Food	3,660
Transportation, Warehousing	680
Services	5,630
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	1,250
Government	10,960
<b>Total Jobs**</b>	<b>27,030</b>

**\*\*Numbers may not add due to rounding.**

## Gender and Education – Survey Responses

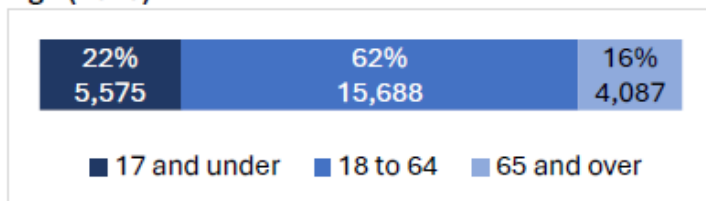


## Age, Race, and Ethnicity – Survey Responses



## Age, Race, and Ethnicity – 2023 Statistical Profile

### Age (2020)



Median Age: 37.8

### Race & Ethnicity (2020)

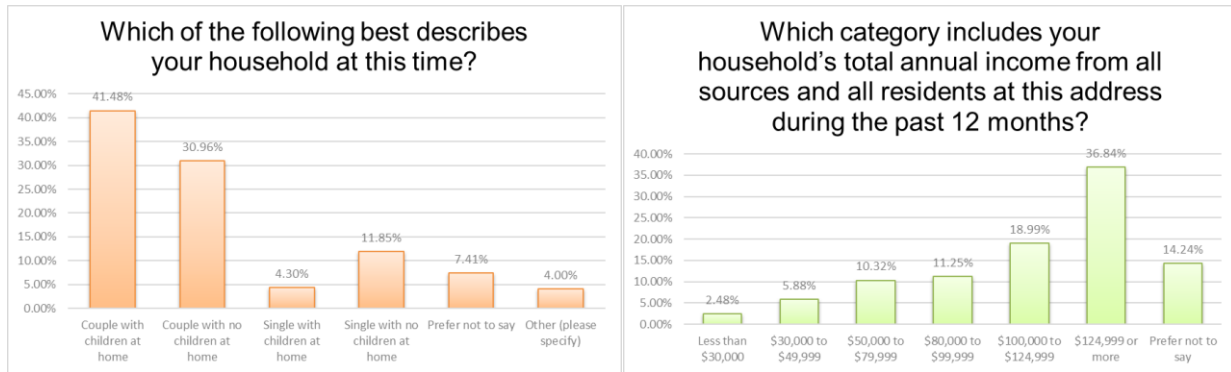
#### Race

White	76%
Black & African American	3%
American Indian & Alaska Native	1%
Asian	5%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	1%
Other Race	2%
Two or More Races	12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Ethnicity

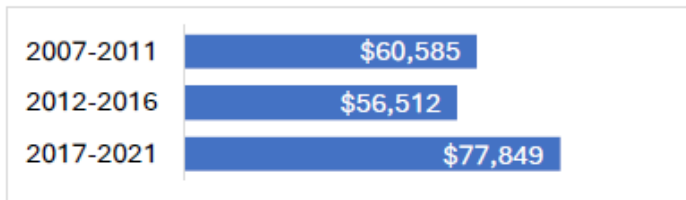
Hispanic or Latino	9%
Not Hispanic or Latino	91%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Type of Household and Income – Survey Responses

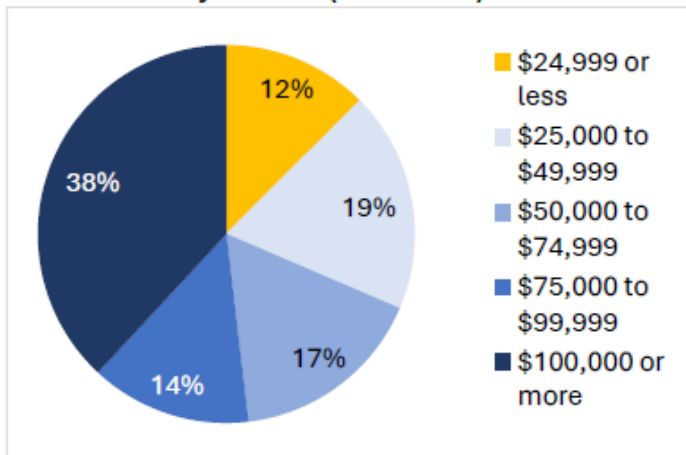


## Household Income – 2023 Statistical Profile

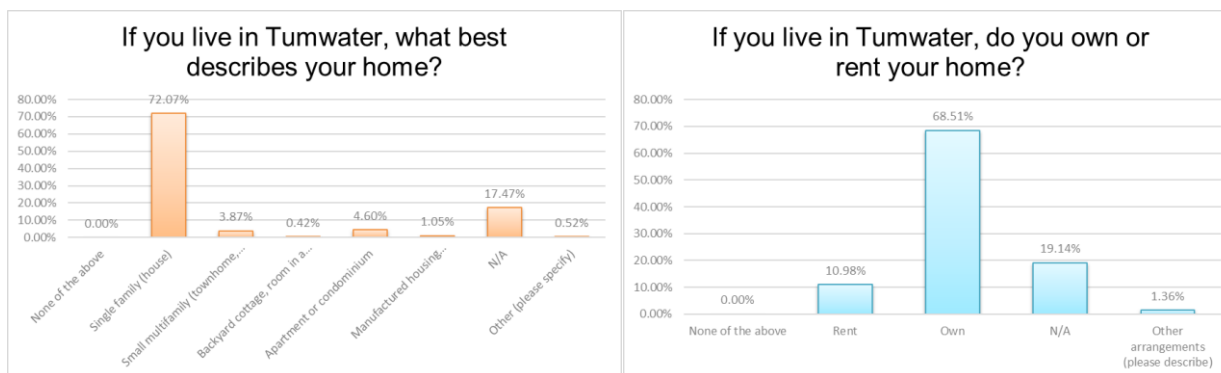
### Median Household Income\*



### Households by Income (2017-2021)\*



## Type of Residence – Survey Responses



## Households and Existing Housing Units – 2023 Statistical Profile

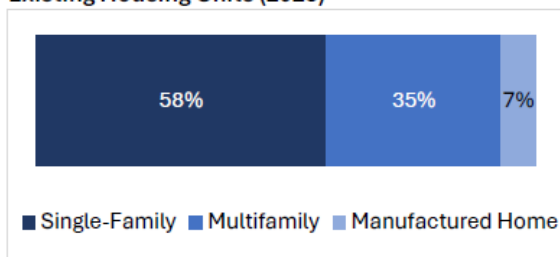
### Households (2020)

Total Households: 11,488

Average Household Size: 2.39

**Median Home Sale Price (2022): \$505,000**

### Existing Housing Units (2023)



The demographic responses in the survey showed that a majority of the respondents were white, home-owning, female between the ages of 35-54 couples with children at home with an annual income of \$124,999 or more.

While the survey was not representative of the community overall, it did allow staff to determine which groups that staff will need to expand their future community outreach efforts to include.

## Communication Preferences

Four questions in the survey asked about the communication preferences of the respondents. Staff were able to gather information about the days and times for the survey respondents that worked best for public meetings, obtaining contact information, and the best way to be notified. The table below summarizes the responses received.



Preferred Day & Time for Meetings / Open Houses	Preferred Platform for Meetings
1. Wednesday PM 2. Tuesday PM 3. Thursday PM	1. Hybrid 2. In person 3. Online

Preferred Method of Communication	Preferred Way to be Notified
1. Email to City staff. 2. Attend a virtual meeting. 3. Attend a meeting at City Hall.	1. Email 2. City Website 3. Social media

Email Addresses Obtained	Phone Numbers Obtained
299	209

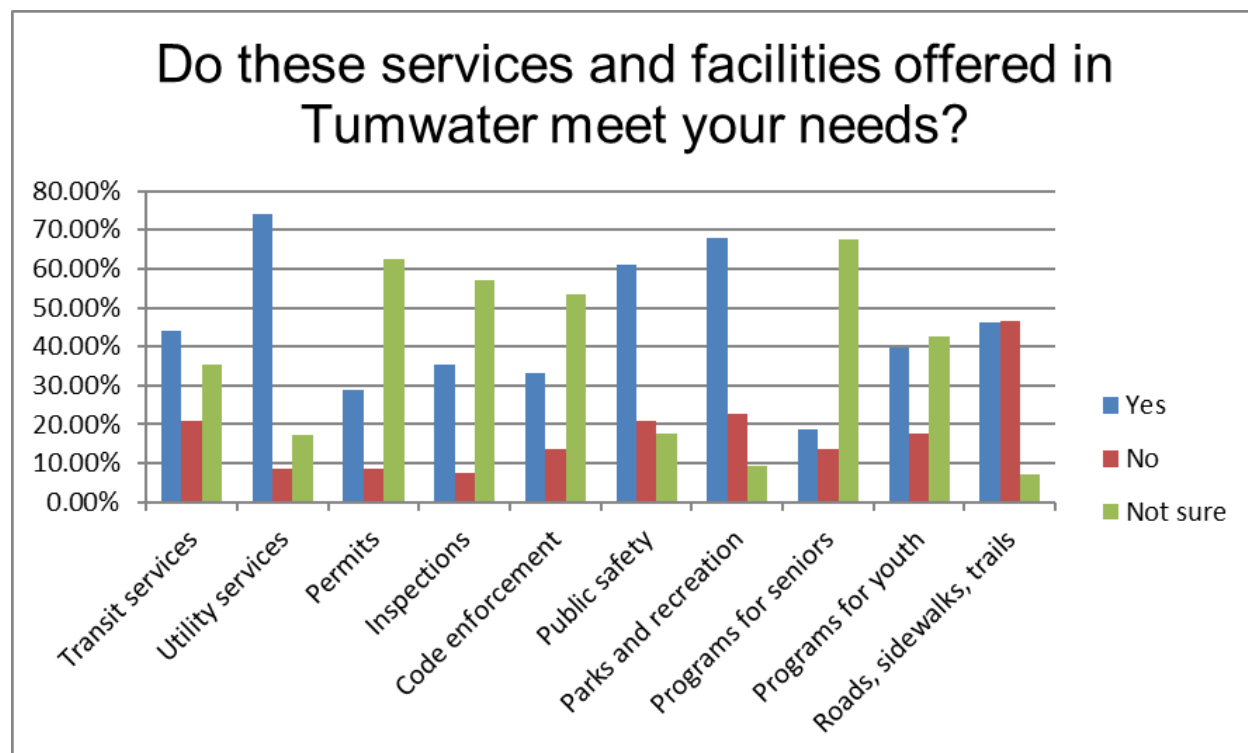
E-news Subscription Lists Followed
1. 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update 2. Parks & Recreation 3. Construction notices

## Looking at the City Now

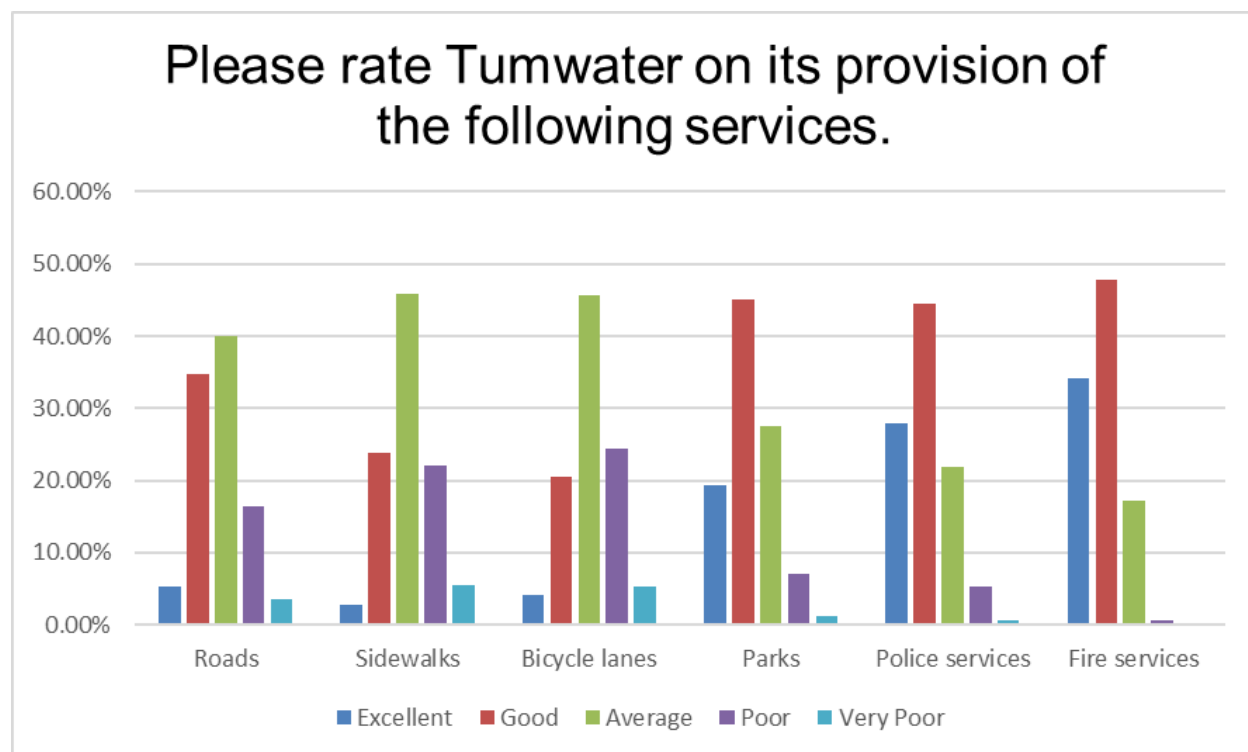
Five questions in the survey asked about current City services, “quality of life,” critical issues the City is facing, and what are the City’s greatest assets.

The responses are summarized below. The questions provided multiple choice options and the ability to add comments. Though the data received is not representative of the community, there were obvious specific topics and concerns based on the comments. The tables below are summaries of the written comments received on each question. The comments do not necessarily correlate to the questions being asked in some cases, but it was a way for the survey respondents to voice general concerns and opinions. Attachment C shows the survey questions and written responses.

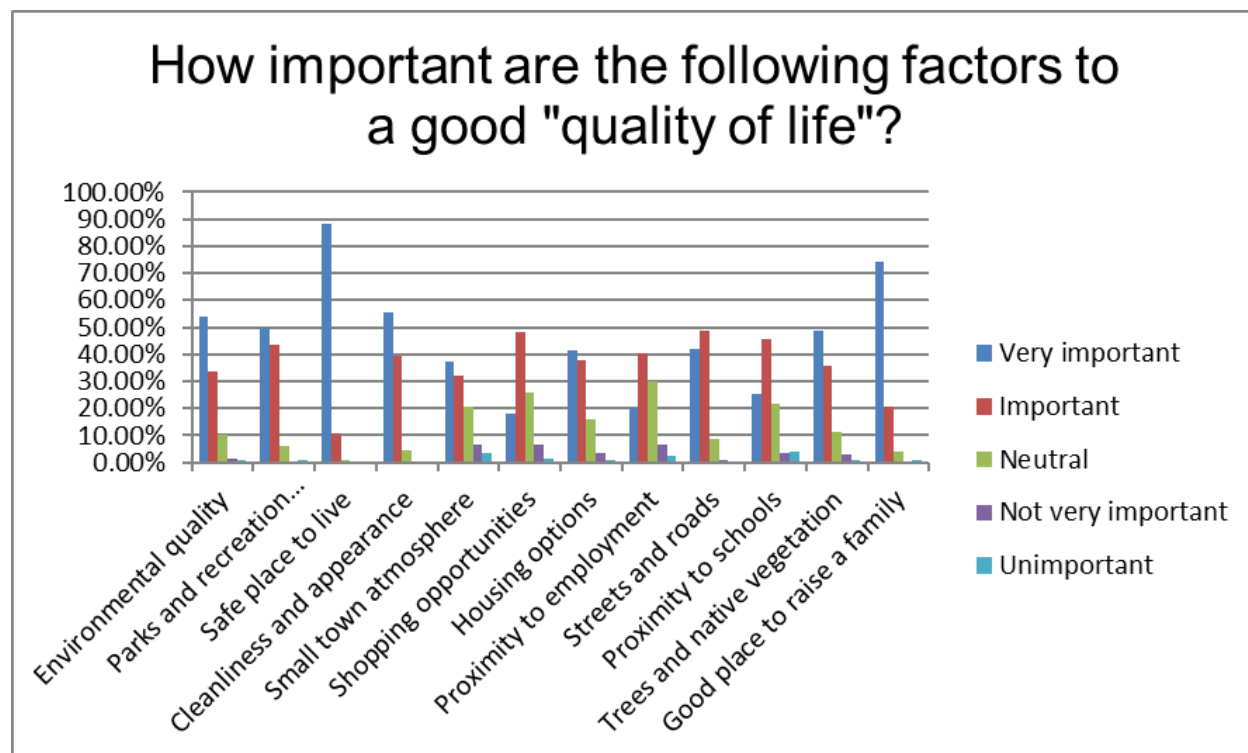
## Question #9



## Question #11



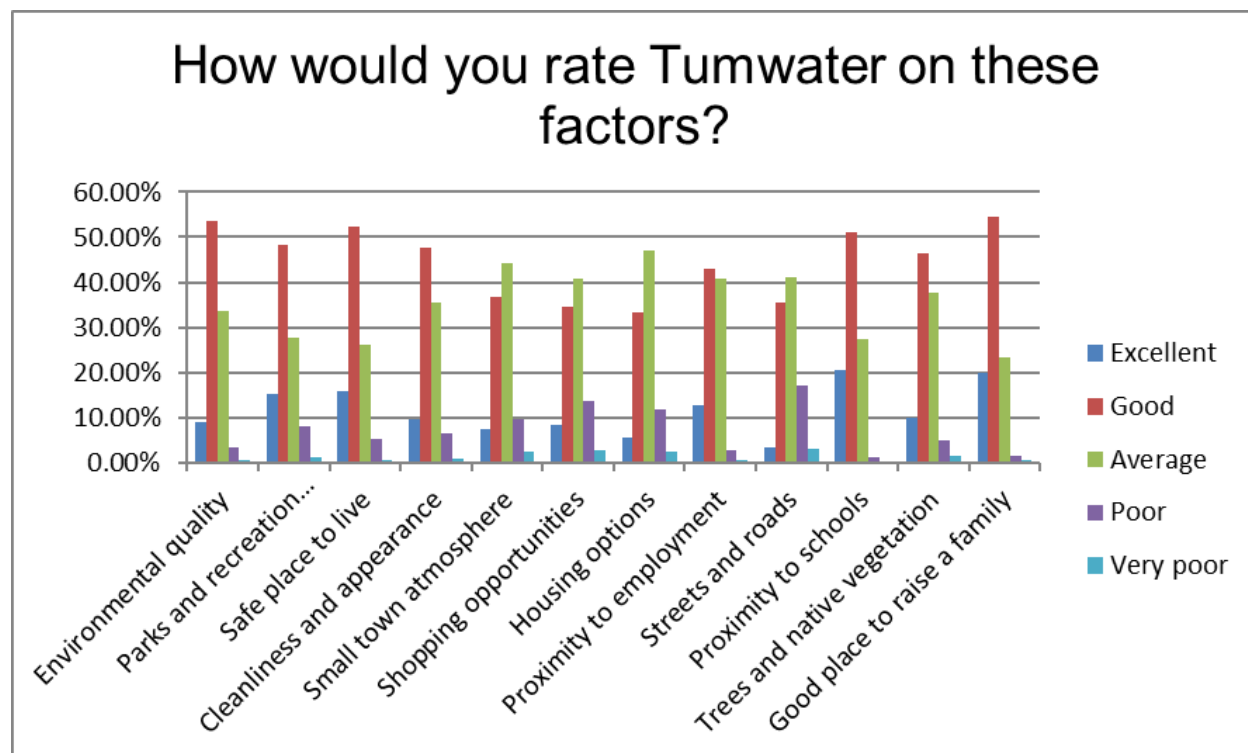
## Question #12



There were 118 written survey responses to Question #12, and they are found on pages 10 – 18 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

Sample of responses to "How important are the following factors to a good "quality of life"?"
More green space in development is needed. Incorporate more landscape in development and retain trees.
More parks, dog parks, and city centers or places to gather are needed for the community.
More sidewalks, lighting, and bike lanes for alternative transportation and safety- connector trails/routes. Widening the bridge near Pioneer Park for pedestrians.
Redevelop the Brewery property and create a walkable downtown or City center.
There is a need for more local dining/shopping experiences, no more chain restaurants.
More public transportation and walkable communities.
Concern with crime and safety related to transients/homeless populations.

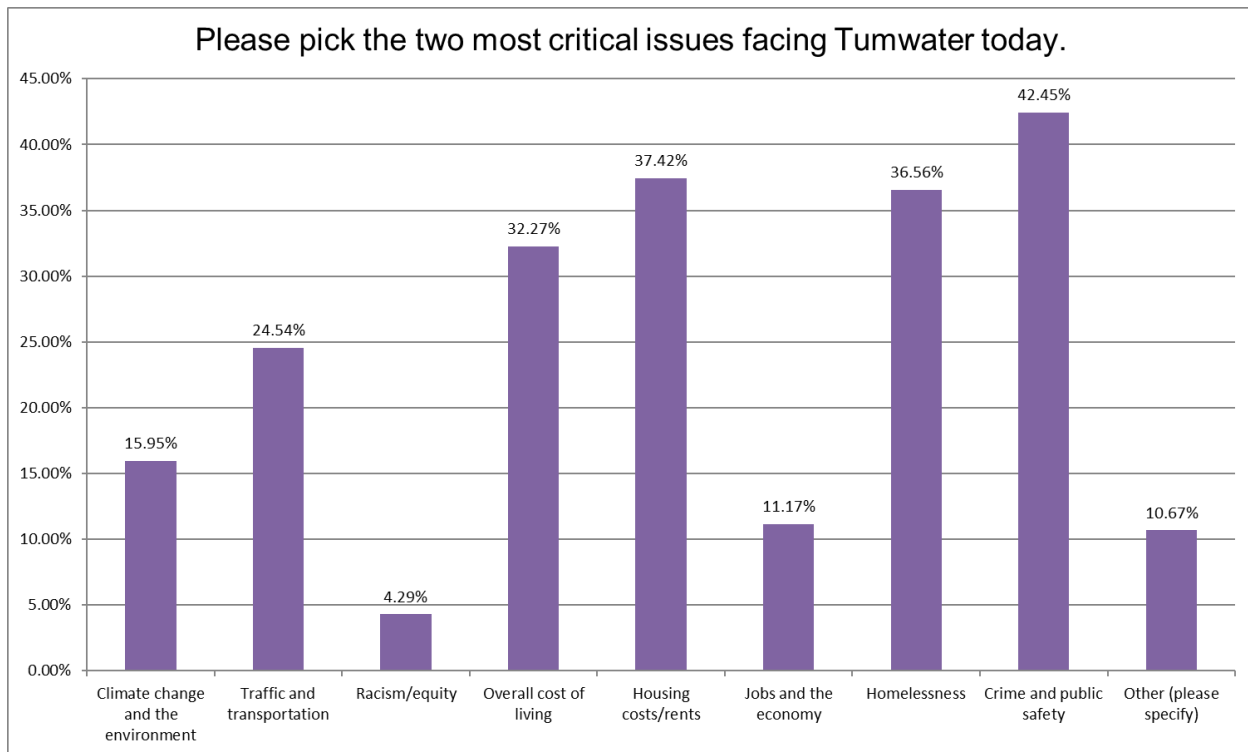
## Question #13



There were 103 written survey responses to Question #13, and they are found on pages 18 – 27 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

Sample of responses to “How would you rate Tumwater on these factors?”
There needs to be a City-wide design, or architectural theme.
Redevelop the Brewery property.
Create a town center.
More parks, trees, and community spaces.
More sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails are needed.

## Question #17



There were 87 written survey responses to Question #17, and they are found on pages 45 – 49 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

### Sample of responses to “Please pick the two most critical issues facing Tumwater today.”

Lack of downtown area/ City Center and gathering places.

Lack of infrastructure for new development and growth- including alternative modes of transportation and sidewalks.

The brewery and abandoned buildings.

Preservation and creation of green spaces and parks.

Politics, need for more public services (fire and police) taxes, and homeless people living in parks.

## Question #16

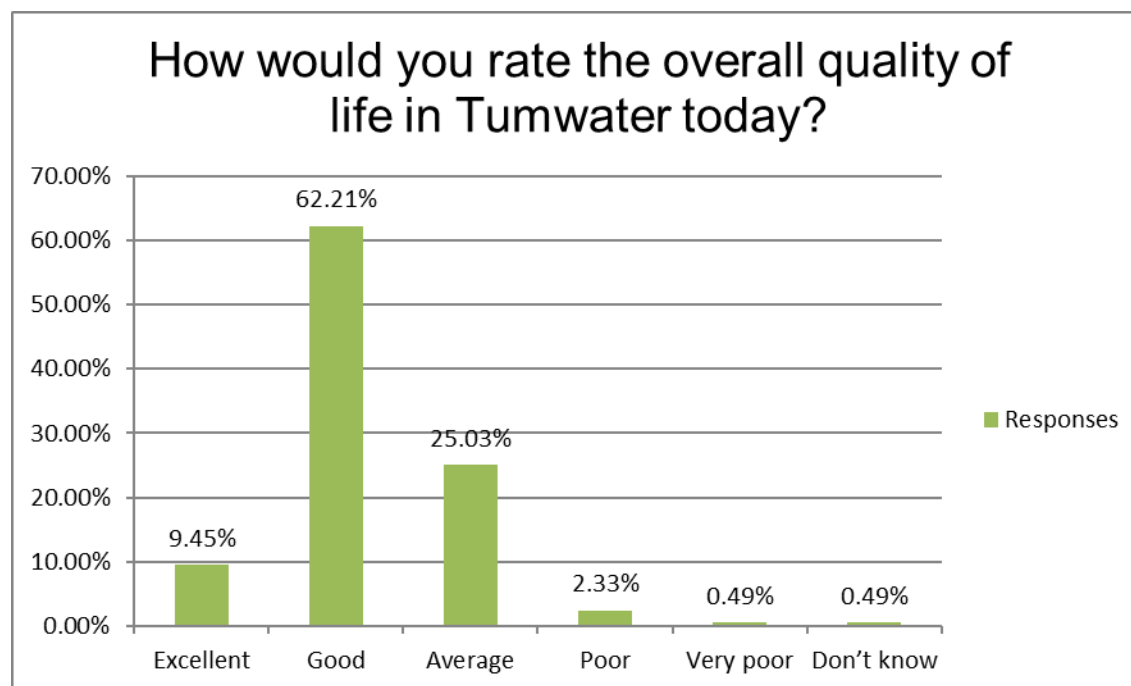
There were 557 written survey responses to Question #16 “What do you consider to be Tumwater’s greatest asset?” and they are found on pages 28 – 45 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

Sample of responses to “What do you consider to be Tumwater’s greatest asset?”
The parks, landscape, trees, proximity to recreation, and community events.
Small town feel & central location.
Schools and Community.
Police, Fire, Government & crime prevention.
Not many homeless encampments.
Historical background.

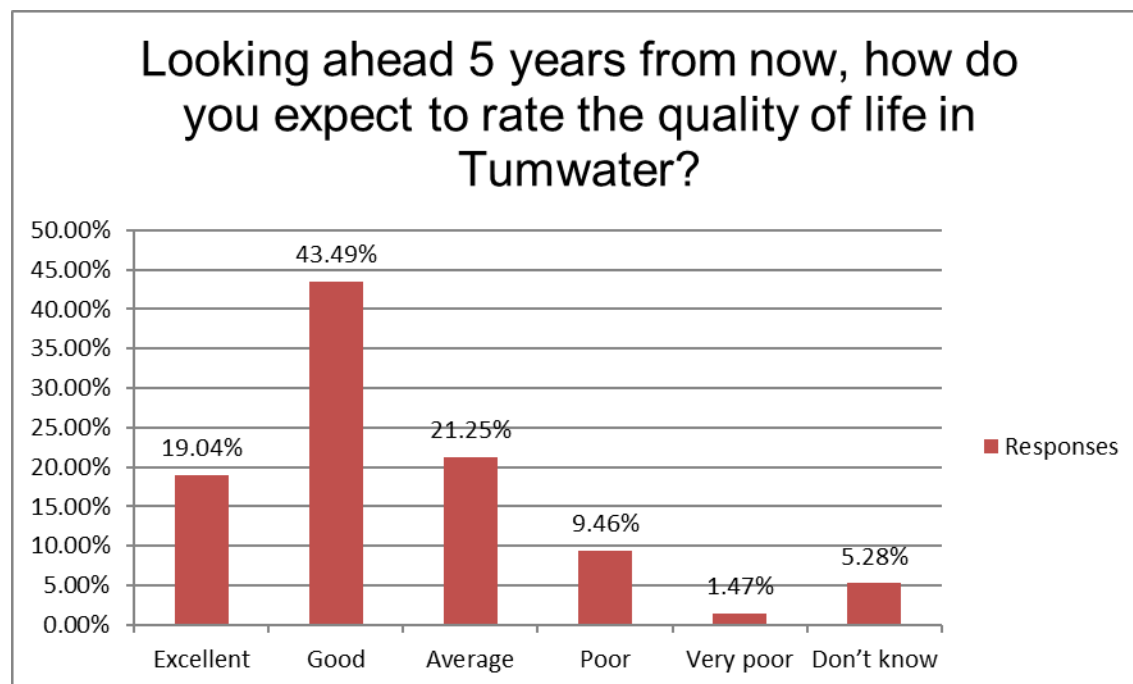
## Looking Ahead

The survey also included questions about quality of life now and in five years, housing, growth strategies, topics of greatest interest for the periodic update, top three priorities, and other comments and ideas that City leadership should hear about.

## Question #14



## Question #15



## Question #25

There were 534 written survey responses to Question #25, “What would be your top three priorities for Tumwater?” and they are found on pages 104 – 146 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

Sample of responses to “What would be your top three priorities for Tumwater?”
<p><u>Police &amp; Fire / Crime / Public City Services:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce homelessness.</li> <li>• Prioritize public safety and reduce crime &amp; drugs.</li> <li>• Hire more police and firefighters.</li> <li>• Create more programs for homeless.</li> <li>• Create more programs for special needs or families in need.</li> <li>• Maintain a clean city.</li> <li>• Improve schools.</li> </ul>

**Sample of responses to “What would be your top three priorities for Tumwater?”**

**Housing:**

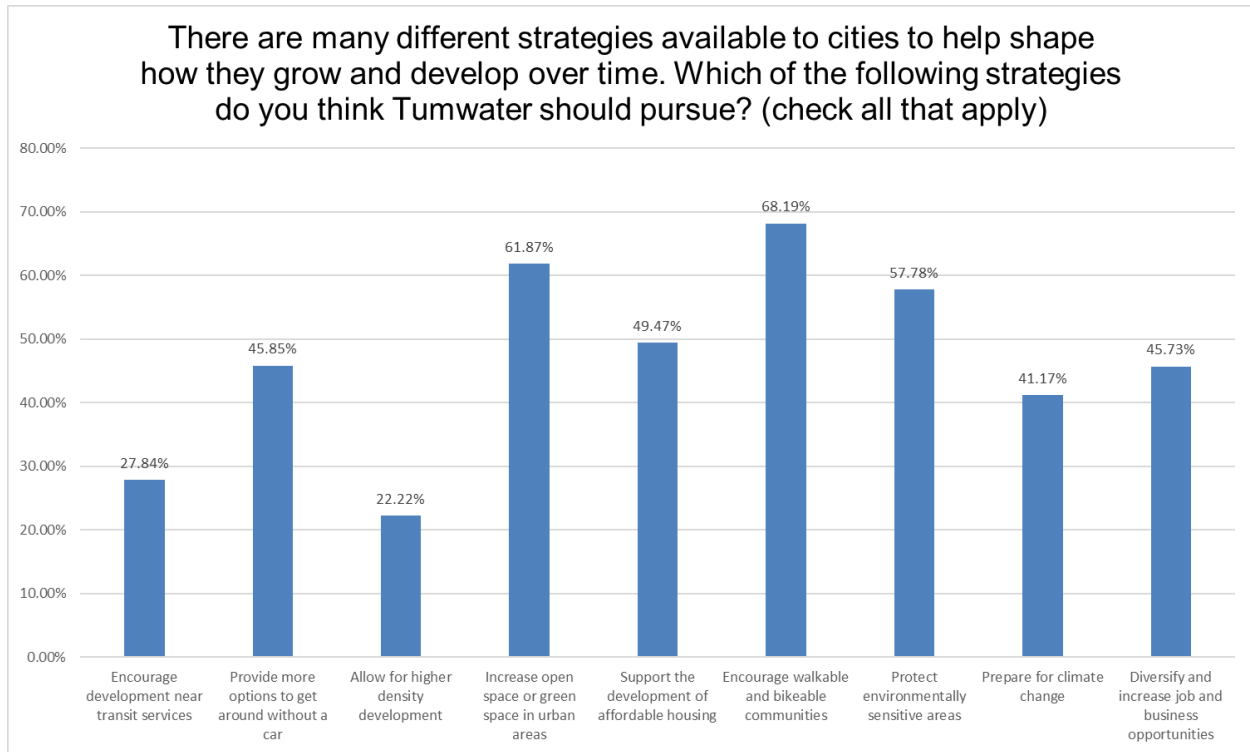
- Reduce sprawl.
- Keep small town feel.
- Have more affordable options for owning/renting.
- Create more middle housing.
- Improve building permit process.
- Create affordable senior housing.

**Economic Development:**

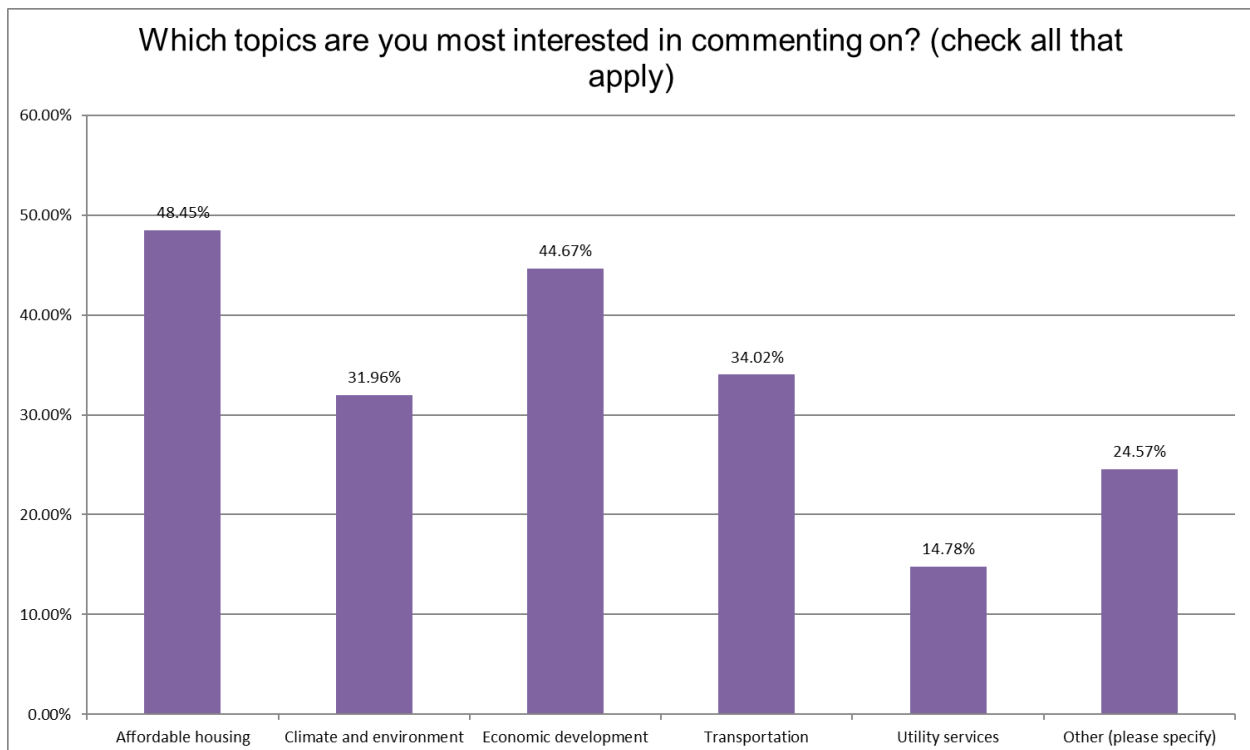
- More local shops/restaurants.
- Redevelop the brewery.
- Create a downtown.
- Create a more uniform building code/theme.
- Create more jobs.
- Bring in and attract more employers and industries.
- Diversify business.
- Create more community spaces for events/venues.



## Question #10



## Question #24



There were 143 written survey responses to Question #24, and they are found on pages 99 – 104 of Attachment C. The top three responses are below.

Top Three Topics for Update
1. Affordable housing.
2. Economic development.
3. Transportation.

## Question #26

### Comments or Ideas Survey Respondents Wanted City Leadership to Hear

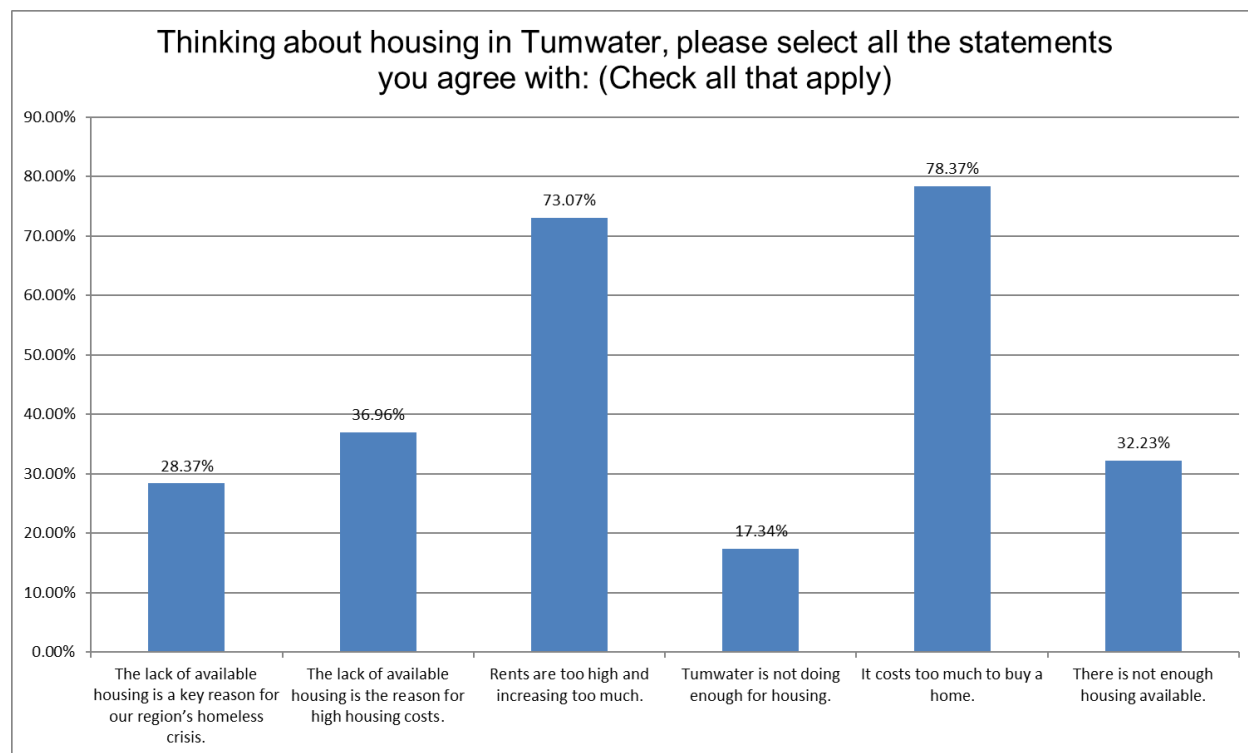
There were 227 written survey responses to Question #26 “Please provide any additional comments or ideas you would like the City leadership to hear?” and they are found on pages 146 – 158 of Attachment C. Because the responses were so varied, staff did not try to provide a summary in this memorandum.

## Housing

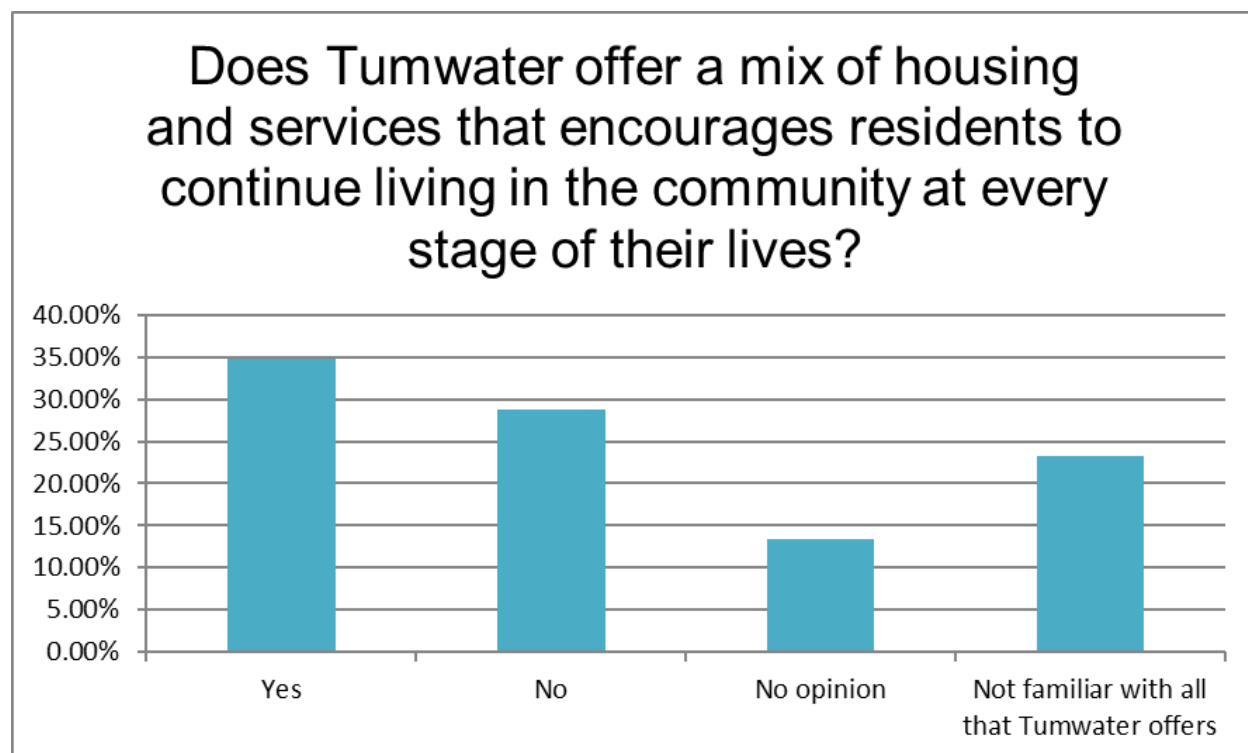
### Question #19

When asked about how serious you think the current housing situation is in Tumwater, on a scale of 0 to 10, where zero is “at all a problem” and ten is “a crisis”, the average survey respondents said 5.5.

## Question #20



## Question #18



There were 112 written survey responses to Question #18, and they are found on pages 49 – 54 of Attachment C. Staff tried to summarize the common themes from the survey respondents below.

Sample of responses to “Does Tumwater offer a mix of housing and services that encourages residents to continue living in the community at every stage of their lives?”
Not enough housing for seniors, retirement homes, fixed income, or assisted/independent living.
Need more middle housing and mixed development- with options to buy duplexes/condo/smaller houses.
Not enough affordable housing – rent or owning. Rentals are too high priced, and people cannot save to buy houses.
Smaller more affordable single-family residences or multifamily units that could be purchased.
Concerns homelessness and crime in public places/parks.

## Question #21

There were 485 written survey responses to Question #21 “What do you want the City to consider when working on housing issues?” and they are found on pages 76 – 97 of Attachment C.

Sample of responses to “What do you want the City to consider when working on housing issues?”
Concern with high density housing, schools being crowded, lack of infrastructure to support growth, and population growth.
Regulations that protect property taxes, short term rentals and private companies purchasing housing and using as rentals, controlling the rental market and prices, capping interest rates.
Anti-growth and development, keep single family residences or do not build more housing and apartments. Providing more housing will not solve homelessness.
Concern with overcrowding and traffic impacts.
Lower impact fees, streamline and create a faster permitting system, and stop raising property taxes to incentivize more affordable housing.
Provide facilities for behavioral health services and treatment centers.
Affordability for all income / age groups.

## **Summary and Next Steps**

Overall, the 2025 comprehensive plan update received far more responses than the previous update. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Survey posted through constant contact received 120 responses, this year's survey yielded 855 more responses.

The survey received far more responses than staff were expecting. Staff will make more efforts to reach out to renters, those making less than median income, the BIPOC community, eighteen to thirty-four years old and fifty-five and older, single with no children at home. Staff have started to reach out to non-profit groups, schools, realtors, renters, housing workgroups, and other potential groups to be a part of a stakeholder group for the Housing Element update, which will help give a better representation of the community when collecting input. Staff will use the day and times for future events, utilize email and preferred contact methods for future outreach.

After reviewing the responses, survey respondents appeared to have the following topics of interest: homelessness and safety, keeping the small town feel of Tumwater and reducing sprawl, preserving and creating green spaces in development, more recreational activities such as parks, redevelopment of the former Olympia Brewery and creating a downtown area, multimodal transportation, and more affordable housing options for different income segments and ages.

## **Staff Contacts**

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