

Swansea 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan
Public Engagement Report



Date: November 18, 2022

To: Swansea Open Space Committee

From: Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District

RE: Public Engagement Report, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Fall 2022

Committee Members,

Please find enclosed the outcomes, presented in graphics with supporting narratives of the public comment received to inform the 2023 Swansea Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

The goal of public engagement in preparing the OSRP was to understand resident usage and enjoyment of open space and recreation lands and facilities, and desired improvements for the future. To maximize participation, the Town of Swansea and SRPEDD facilitated two kinds of engagement opportunities: an online survey and an interactive mapping exercise offered at one public workshop, community events and in Town Hall.

The report is divided into two sections. In Section One, we present the results of the community OSRP survey. In Section Two, we present the input provided through the interactive mapping exercise.

The next step for the Committee will be to craft plan goals and action items that are reflective of local perspectives and points of view, which will be the topic of the February Open Space Committee meeting. SRPEDD will draft potential goals and actions based on the public feedback and the Committee's responses to this feedback in our upcoming meeting on November 16, 2022, for discussion and feedback in February.

We appreciate and welcome your review and comment.

Thank you,

The SRPEDD Team

SECTION ONE: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

A. Survey Development and Deployment Process

To ensure that public participation in Plan development was widespread and available beyond attendance at in-person meetings, the project team launched an online survey that respondents could take at their convenience.

Swansea's 2020 Open Space survey was combined with the Town's Comprehensive Plan Survey, as both plans are being updated simultaneously and public feedback collected will inform both plans. Page 6 of the survey contained the Open Space and Recreation Plan questions. It included 12 questions specific to Swansea's open space and recreational amenities (survey questions 37 – 48). Survey questions were meant to gauge the public's satisfaction with the current state of conservation, open space, and recreation lands, facilities, programs and policies within the town, as well as to help chart a course for future improvements.

The survey was posted on the SRPEDD website, and was available from June 28, 2022 through October 5, 2022. A mailer with a QR code to the online survey was included in the annual tax bill to all residents in July 2022. The survey link was also shared on social media pages for SRPEDD, the Town and local community groups. The exact number of survey responses is difficult to gauge precisely, as it was possible for participants to skip individual questions. A total of 815 respondents engaged with the survey, but a core group of about 500 or more respondents completed the survey fully, skipping few, if any, questions.

The summary that follows presents the results of the 12 OSRP-specific questions. Additionally, results from demographic and other relevant but not OSRP-specific questions in the survey are also included below to assist interpretation of the results.

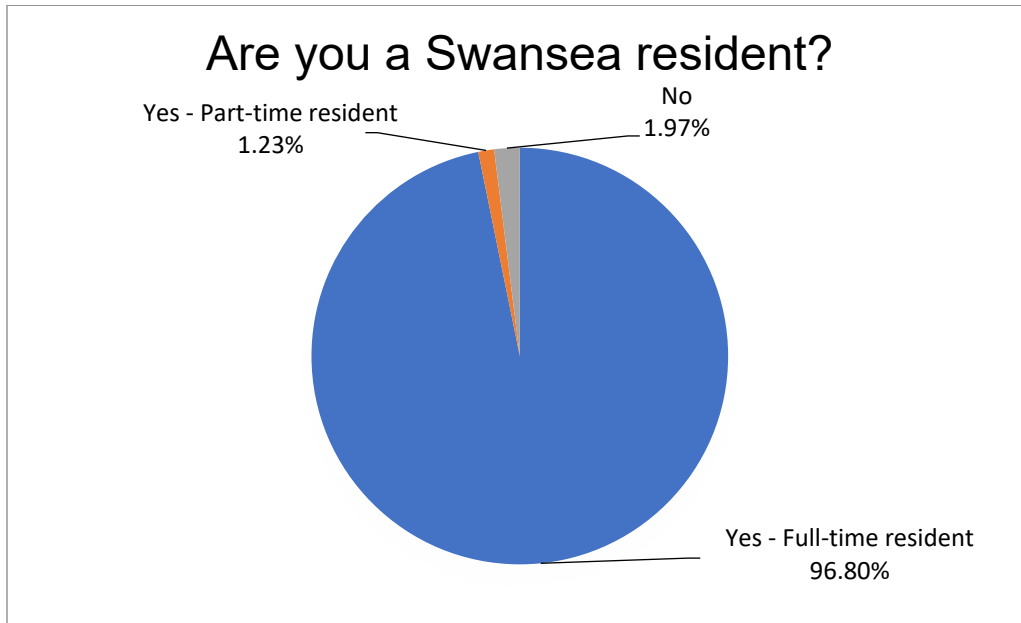
B. Summary of Survey Responses by Question

Question 1: Are you a Swansea resident?

Type: Multiple choice

Purpose: To understand who is taking the survey and if the views offered are representative of town residents.

Big Picture Results: The overwhelming majority of respondents (786, or 96.8%) are full-time residents of Swansea. 1.23% are part-time residents (10 respondents) and 1.97% are not town residents (16 responses). Three (3) respondents skipped this question.

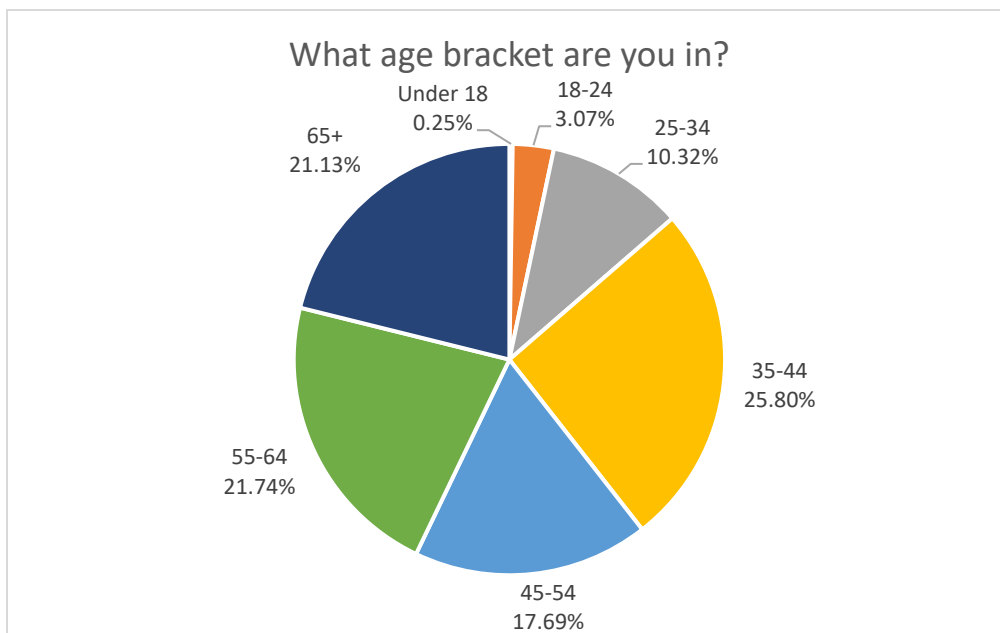


Question 4: What age bracket are you in?

Type: Multiple choice

Purpose: Understand the age distribution represented across survey respondents.

Big Picture Results: Survey respondents were distributed across all age categories, except very few were under the age of 24 (27 total respondents, or 3.3%). Each of the age categories 35 and older had similar representation, between 17% and 26% of the total.



Detailed Results: A total of 814 respondents answered this question (1 person skipped). The majority of respondents were 35 years and older. The largest represented age category was 35-44, with 210 individuals (25.8% of respondents). The 55-65 and 65+ age groups each represented 21.7% (177 individuals) and 21.1% (172 individuals) of respondents. The 45-54 range represented 17.7% of survey respondents (144 individuals) and 25-32 range represented 10.3% (84 individuals). Very few people were in the 18-24 range (3.1% or 25 individuals) and even fewer in the under 18 range (0.3% or 2 individuals).

Question 5: What is your race/ethnicity: (select all that apply)

Type: Multiple choice with “other” write in option

Purpose: Understand the cultural diversity represented across survey respondents.

Big Picture Results: The majority of survey respondents are white or Caucasian (711 responses, or 88.4%).

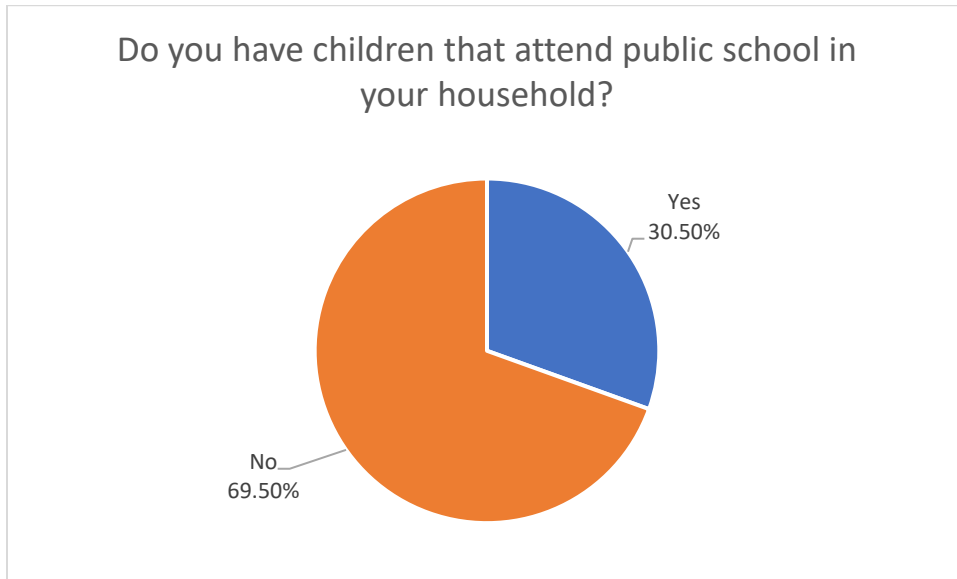
Detailed Results: A total of 804 respondents answered this question (11 people skipped). Sixty-seven (67) respondents opted not to answer (8.3%). Of those who did provide an answer, most are white (88.4%), 1.5% are Hispanic or Latinx, and fewer than 1% each are Asian or Pacific Islander (0.8%), Native American or Alaskan Native (0.6%), or Black or African American (0.5%). 0.9% are multiracial or biracial. 1.74% indicated their race as “other” and wrote in the following responses: American (6 responses), Euro-American (1 response), human (2 responses), Middle Eastern (1 response) and Portuguese (3 responses).

Question 6: Do you have children that attend public school in your household?

Type: Yes / No

Purpose: This question was included as part of the Comprehensive Survey to understand whether the views of those utilizing Swansea’s public schools are represented in the survey. For open space planning purposes, this question can also reveal if there were families with children taking the survey; however, additional families whose children do not attend public school may be missing from the results of this question.

Big Picture Results: Most survey respondents indicated they do not have children that attend public school (565 responses, or 69.5%. 30.5% of respondents do have children in public school (248 responses).

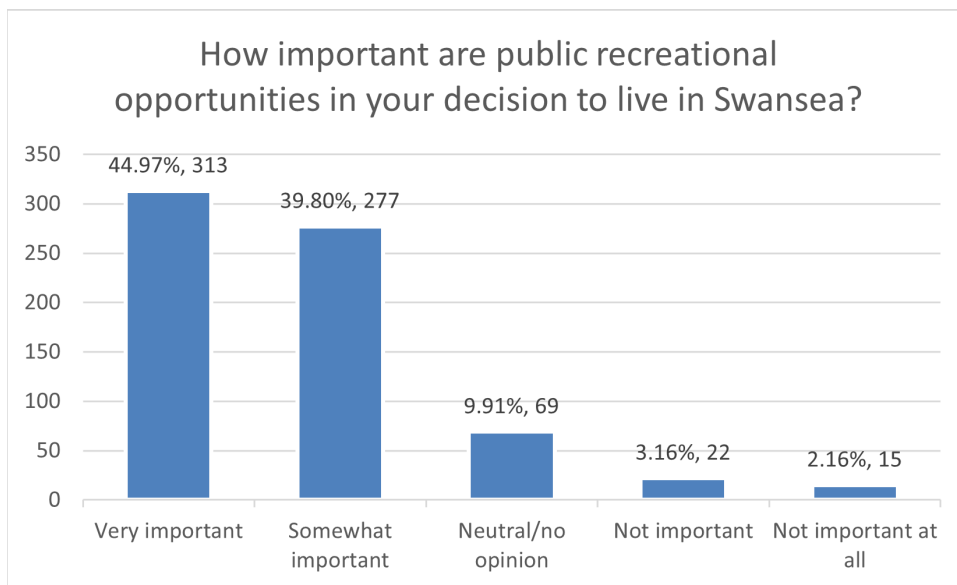


Question14: For residents, how important are each of the following in your decision to live in Swansea?

Type: Multiple choice

Purpose: To see which factors are important to residents and their decision to live in Swansea.

Big Picture Results: For the purposes of this open space-related feedback summary, these results look specifically at the results for one particular factor (“public recreational opportunities”) of the 13 included in the question. The majority of respondents indicated that recreational opportunities are important. Nearly 45% of respondents said it is “very important” in their decision to live in Swansea and nearly 40% said it is “somewhat important.”

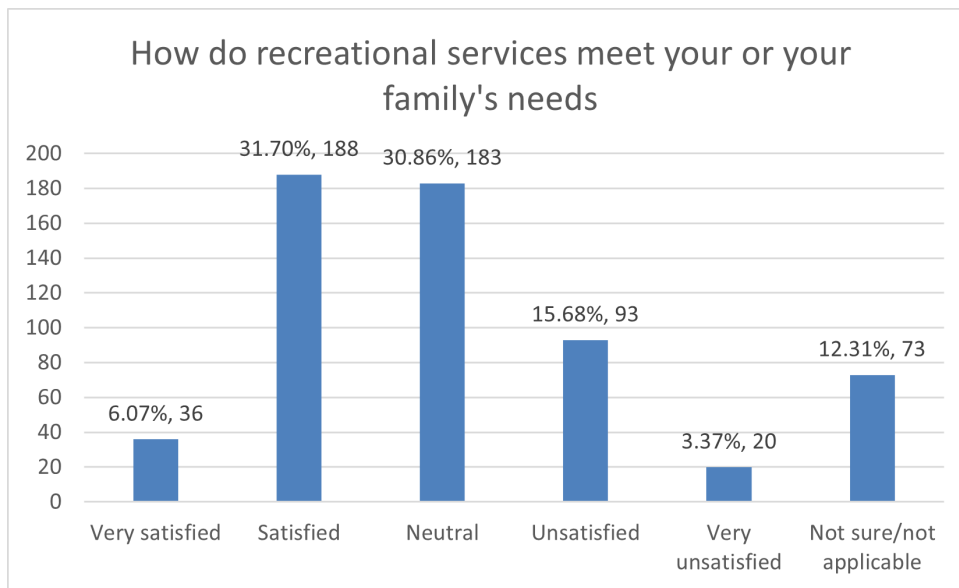


Question 28: Please rate how the following public services meet your or your family's needs.

Type: multiple choice

Purpose: Understand how well different public services are meeting the needs of community members.

Big Picture Results: For the purposes of this open space-related feedback summary, the results for “recreational services” (just one of the 11 types of town services that respondents were asked to rate) are shown. Most respondents indicated they are “satisfied” with (31.7%) or “neutral” (30.9%) towards recreational services in Swansea. 15.7% are “unsatisfied.” 12.3% were unsure and did not rate their satisfaction with recreational services.



Question 37: What do you think of Swansea’s current recreational amenities for the following types of activities?

Type: multiple choice ratings

Purpose: To understand the community’s satisfaction with the availability of various different types of recreational amenities offered in town.

Big Picture Results: Few respondents indicated that there were “more than enough” of any category of amenity. Most responses were in the “enough” or “not enough” choices across the categories. And for some categories, “unsure/not applicable” was the most popular choice (i.e. disc golf, agritourism and x-country skiing/snowshoeing trails). “Not enough” was perhaps the most popular response, with over 50% of respondents selecting that choice for the following 10 amenities: outdoor event venues, swimming facilities, local neighborhood parks, hiking and walking trails, community gardens, bike paths, picnic areas, dog parks, ice skating rinks and conservation areas.

Detailed Results: 550 respondents answered this question (265 skipped). None of the amenities listed received “more than enough” as the most popular vote; however, the amenities for which the most

people selected “more than enough” were: golf courses (72 or 13.3% of respondents), ATV/off-road motorized vehicle trails (61, 11.3%) and baseball/softball fields (52, 9.6%). The categories for which “enough” was the most popular choice included: baseball/softball fields (369, 68.3%), golf courses (309, 57.2%), boat ramps (263, 48.9%), public beaches/waterfront access (257, 47.4%), playgrounds (256, 47.1%), tracks (250, 46.5%), tennis/pickleball courts (250, 46.0%), basketball courts (249, 46.0%) and soccer/football/lacrosse/multi-purpose fields (216, 40.2%). The categories for which “not enough” was the most popular choice included: outdoor event venues (336, 63.0%), swimming facilities (320, 59.2%), local neighborhood parks (318, 58.6%), hiking and walking trails (317, 58.2%), community gardens (310, 57.4%), bike paths (311, 57.3%), picnic areas (287, 53.0%), dog parks (285, 52.6%), ice skating rinks (282, 52.5%), conservation areas (280, 52.0%), and recreation centers (259, 48.3%). The categories for which “not sure/not applicable” was the most popular choice included: disc golf (346, 64.7%), agritourism (317, 59.3%), x-country skiing/snowshoeing trails (315, 58.6%), skate parks (286, 53.1%), ATV/off-road motorized vehicle trails (258, 47.6%), fishing/hunting/trapping areas (235, 43.9%).

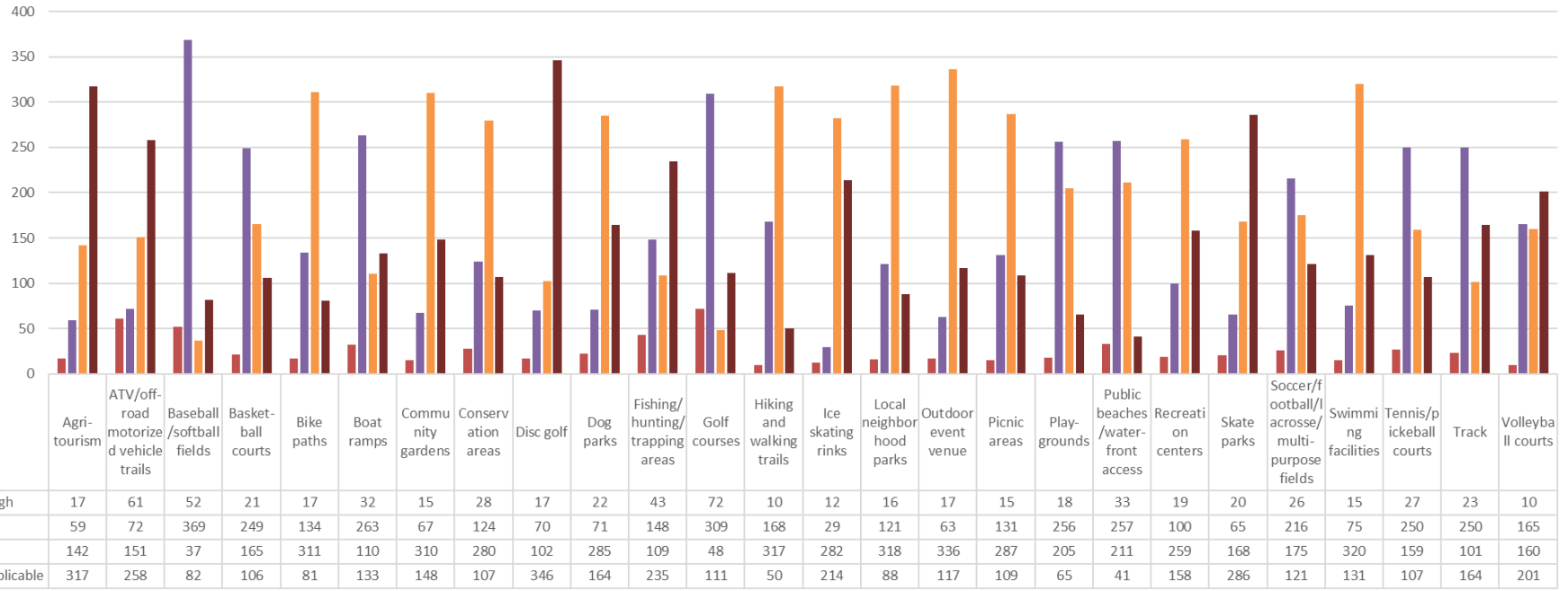
Twenty-three (23) respondents selected the “other” option to write in additional amenities or other comments. Some of the additional amenity ideas included: waterfront dining options, fitness classes, community meeting spaces, publicly accessible sports fields, and more wintertime activities. Two comments were pointing out specific maintenance needs and the many of the remaining comments were elaborating on views already expressed regarding the different amenity categories.

Top-ranking amenities (by percentage of votes within that category) for each satisfaction rating:

More Than Enough	Enough	Not Enough	Not Sure
Golf courses (13.3%)	Baseball/softball fields (68.3%)	Outdoor event venues (63.0%)	Disc golf (64.7%)
ATV/off-road vehicle trails (11.3%)	Golf courses (57.2%)	Swimming facilities (59.2%)	Agritourism (59.3%)
Baseball / softball fields (9.6%)	Boat ramps (48.9%)	Local neighborhood parks (58.6%)	X-country skiing/ snowshoeing trails (58.6%)
	Public beaches/ waterfront access (47.4%)	Hiking and walking trails (58.2%)	Skate parks (53.1%)
	Playgrounds (47.1%)	Community gardens (57.4%)	ATV/off-road vehicle trails (47.6%)
	Tracks (46.5%)	Bike paths (57.3%)	Fishing / hunting / trapping areas (43.9%)
	Tennis/pickleball courts (46.0%)	Picnic areas (53.0%)	
	Basketball courts (46.0%)	Dog parks (52.6%)	
		Ice skating rinks (52.5%),	
		Conservation areas (52.0%)	

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What do you think of Swansea's current recreational amenities for the following types of activities?

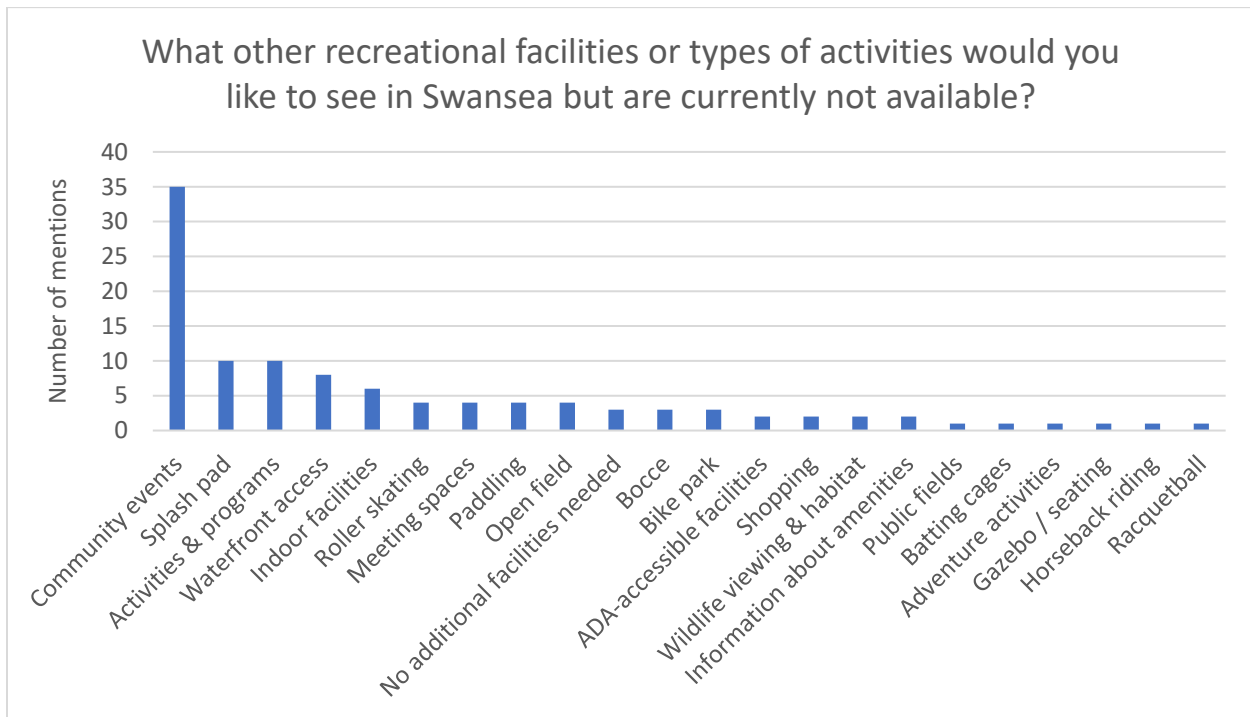


Question 38: What other recreational facilities or types of activities would you like to see in Swansea but are currently not available?

Type: open-ended

Purpose: Solicit additional recreational facility and/or activity needs not listed in question #37.

Big Picture Results: Additional amenities not addressed in questions #37 that respondents would like to have available in Swansea include (in order of most mentioned): more community events, such as outdoor concerts, movie nights and festivals; a splash pad; regular recreational programming, such as fitness classes, craft classes, bus trips, and other group activities for diff age groups (especially youth); more public waterfront access, including for passive viewing as well as dining and events; and indoor recreational facilities that offer year-round activities.



Detailed Results: A total of 169 respondents provided an open-ended response for this question (646 skipped). Many of the responses included more than 1 suggestion, so the total “number of mentions” will add up to more than the 169 total responses. The most responses (35 total) were related to different types of special community events, particularly outdoor concerts, movie nights and/or a drive-in movie theater, farmers markets and other types of community festivals and events. Ten (10) responses requested a splash pad. Ten (10) responses were related to more regular types of recreational programming and activities for different age groups, such as fitness and craft classes, and especially youth group activities. Eight (8) responses wanted to see better public access to the waterfront for a number of different activities, including for simple sightseeing/viewsapes as well as more active uses like fishing, kayak launches, events, and waterfront dining. Six (6) responses were related to offering indoor recreational spaces, such as a multi-purpose recreational facility as well as more specific indoor

amenities such as a swimming pool, track, basketball courts, arcade and ice and/or roller skating rink. Roller skating received 4 specific mentions. Ice skating was already addressed in question 37, but not roller skating, and many are interested in seeing both types of skating rinks (i.e. an outdoor rink for roller skating in the summer and ice skating in the winter). Four (4) responses requested more paddling opportunities, including canoe and kayak rentals as well as launch sites. Four (4) responses requested community meeting spaces, including indoor meeting rooms as well as outdoor pavilions, that could be used both for community group meetings and rentals for private events. Four (4) responses requested more open field/grassy spaces that could be used for passive recreational uses like picnicking and kite-flying. The following types of activities/amenities received 3 or fewer mentions: bocce courts, bike park, ADA-accessible facilities, shopping, wildlife viewing and/or interaction areas, general sports fields open to general public use, batting cages, adventure activities (i.e. ropes course, rock climbing wall), horseback riding and racquetball.

Three (3) individuals stated that no additional amenities were needed, two of which expressed the importance of keeping town costs low. Two (2) individuals stated there is a need for better access to information about the existing amenities in town. Seventeen (17) of the comments received recommended maintenance or improvement needs to existing facilities – these are not included in the summary above. Some of the facilities where people suggested such improvements included Memorial Park, junior high soccer field, tennis courts at Memorial Park and Hoyle School, the town beach, Village Park, the Y, and general sports fields.

111 responses mentioned activities and/or amenities that were already addressed in question #37. These mentions were removed from the above summary. These included 17 mentions about a swimming pool; 16 mentions about walking, hiking and/or biking trails; 16 mentions about ice skating and/or roller skating; 14 mentions about a dog park; 8 mentions each about a skate park and pickleball; 6 mentions about off-road vehicle use (i.e. ATVs); 5 mentions about a community rec center; 4 mentions each about playgrounds and soccer; 3 mentions each about basketball and fishing; 2 mentions about volleyball; and 1 mention each about hunting, neighborhood parks, community garden, disc golf and farms/agritourism.

Illustrative survey response quotes include:

“Outdoor activities like rock wall climbing, ropes courses, geocaching.”

“More programming through the community center: fitness classes, bus trips, craft classes, fundraisers, health/wellness education (see Bristol RI Parks and Rec for ideas)”

“A vibrant downtown area with community park for celebrations and events.”

“I really enjoyed the holiday stroll and would look forward to more annual events like that”

“East/west bike trail running through south Swansea that connects to the RI East Bay bike trail and through Somerset and FR/Westport”

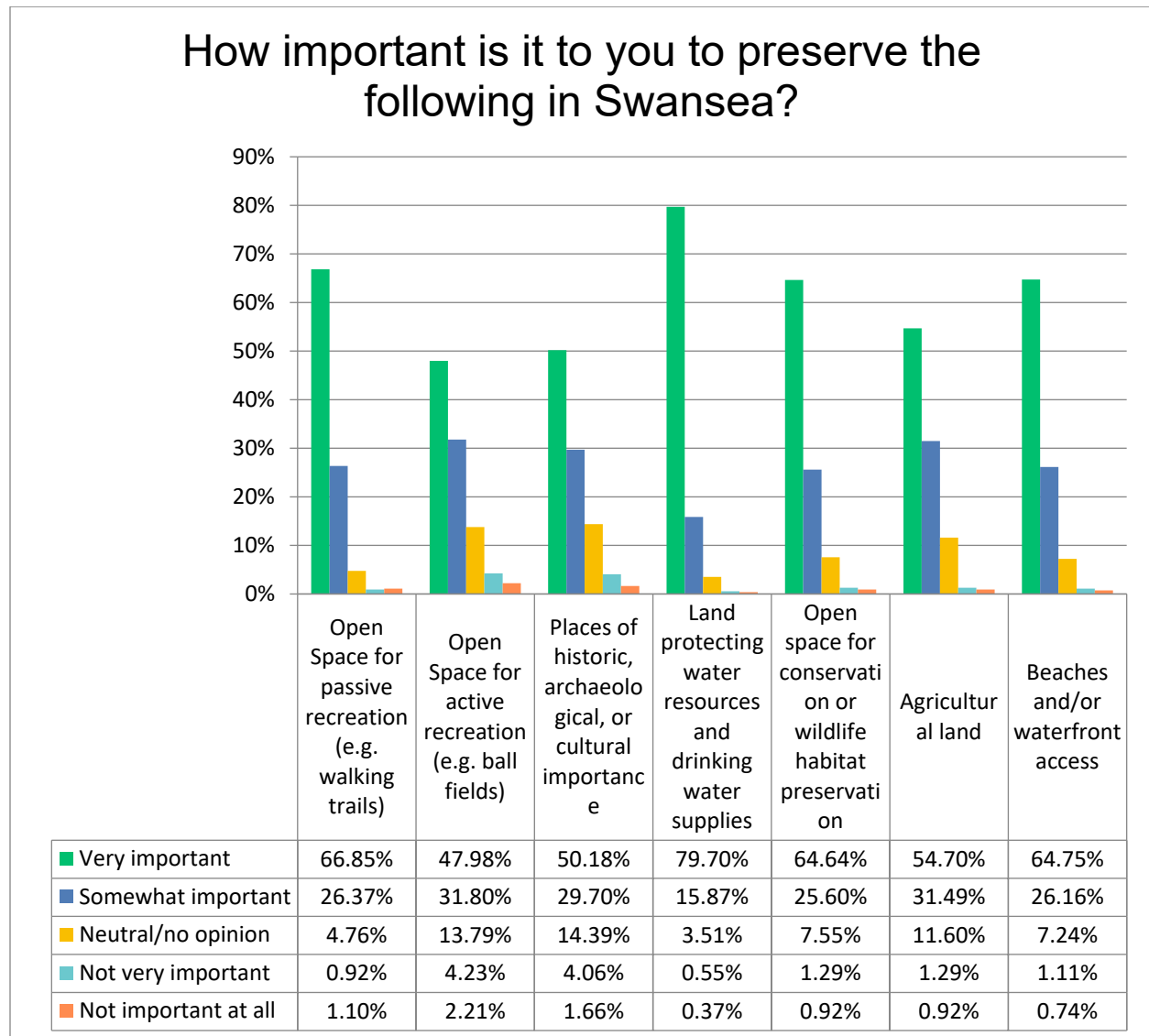
“Events at the beach like: Outdoor concerts, outdoor farmers market, fireworks/bon fire, food trucks, beer garden.”

Question 39: How important is it to you to preserve the following in Swansea?

Type: Multiple Choice

Purpose: Identify which preservation efforts should be prioritized.

Big Picture Results: The areas respondents feel are most important to preserve include land protecting water resources and drinking water supplies, open space for passive recreation, beaches and/or waterfront access, and open space for conservation or wildlife habitat preservation.



Detailed Results: A total of 547 respondents answered this multiple-choice question (268 skipped). The majority of respondents agree that each of the categories of open space are either “very important” or “somewhat important” to preserve. The categories for which the greatest proportion of respondents selected “very important” were: land protected water resources and drinking water supplies (64.6%), open space for passive recreation (e.g. walking trails) (66.9%); beaches and/or waterfront access

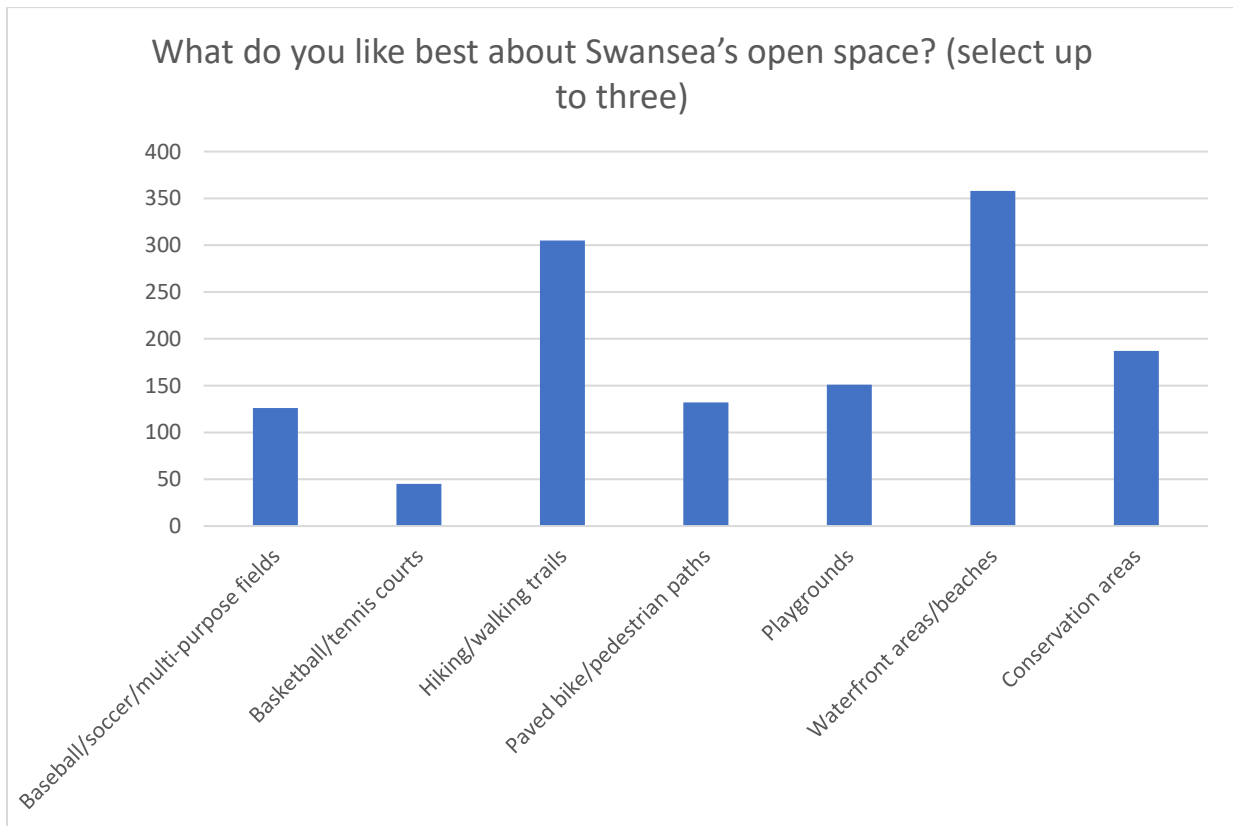
(64.8%); and open space for conservation or wildlife habitat preservation (64.6%). Open space for active recreation (e.g. ball fields) was perhaps the least important preservation priority; it received the lowest proportion of “very important” votes (48.0%) as well as the greatest proportion of both “not important at all” (2.21%) and “not very important” (4.23%) votes.

Question 40: What do you like best about Swansea’s open space? (select up to three)

Type: Multiple Choice

Purpose: Identify Swansea residents’ opinions on which open space features in town are the best.

Big Picture Results: The open space features Swansea residents identified as the best included the waterfront areas/beaches, hiking/walking trails, and conservation areas.



Detailed Results: 513 respondents answered this question (302 skipped). Of the responses, the open space areas respondents liked best included the waterfront areas/beaches (receiving 358 total votes), hiking/walking trails (305), and the conservation areas (187). The remaining areas included the playgrounds (151 total votes), paved bike/pedestrian paths (132), baseball/soccer/multi-purpose fields (126), and the basketball/tennis courts (45). Note the total votes will add up to greater than the total number of responses for this question since respondents were able to select multiple choices (and were encouraged to select up to three).

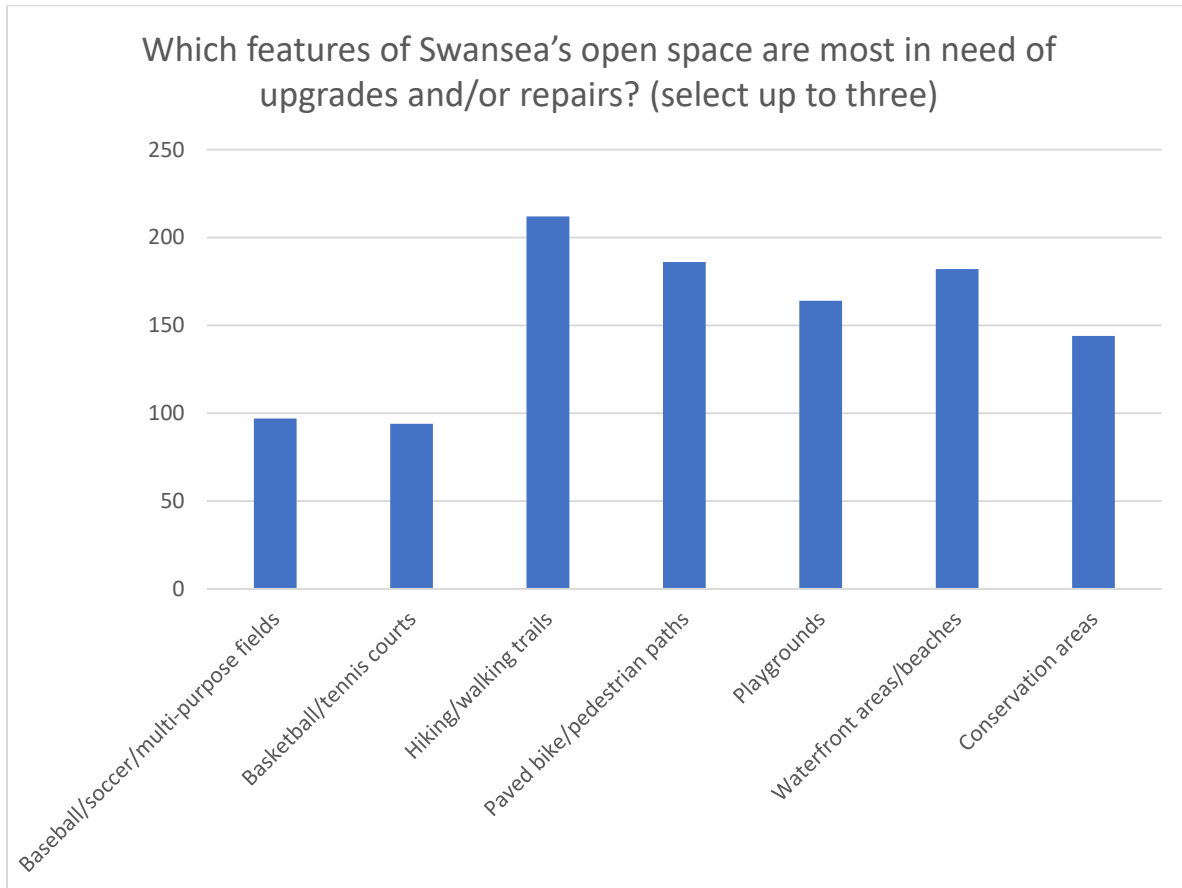
Question 41: Which features of Swansea’s open space are most in need of upgrades and/or

repairs? (select up to three)

Type: Multiple Choice

Purpose: Identify the open space areas most in need of upgrades and/or repairs.

Big Picture Results: The open space areas that need to be upgraded and/or repaired the most include the hiking/walking trails, paved bike/pedestrian paths, and waterfront areas/beaches. Sports fields and courts are least in need of upgrades and/or repairs.



Detailed Results: A total of 478 respondents answered this multiple-choice question (337 skipped). Of those responses, the open spaces identified needing the most upgrades and/or repairs are the hiking/walking trails (212 total votes), paved bike/pedestrian paths (186), and waterfront areas/beaches (182). However, despite these being the highest ranked, playgrounds (164 votes) and conservation areas (144 votes) weren't far behind. The areas that received the fewest votes include baseball/soccer/multi-purpose fields (94), and basketball/tennis courts (94).

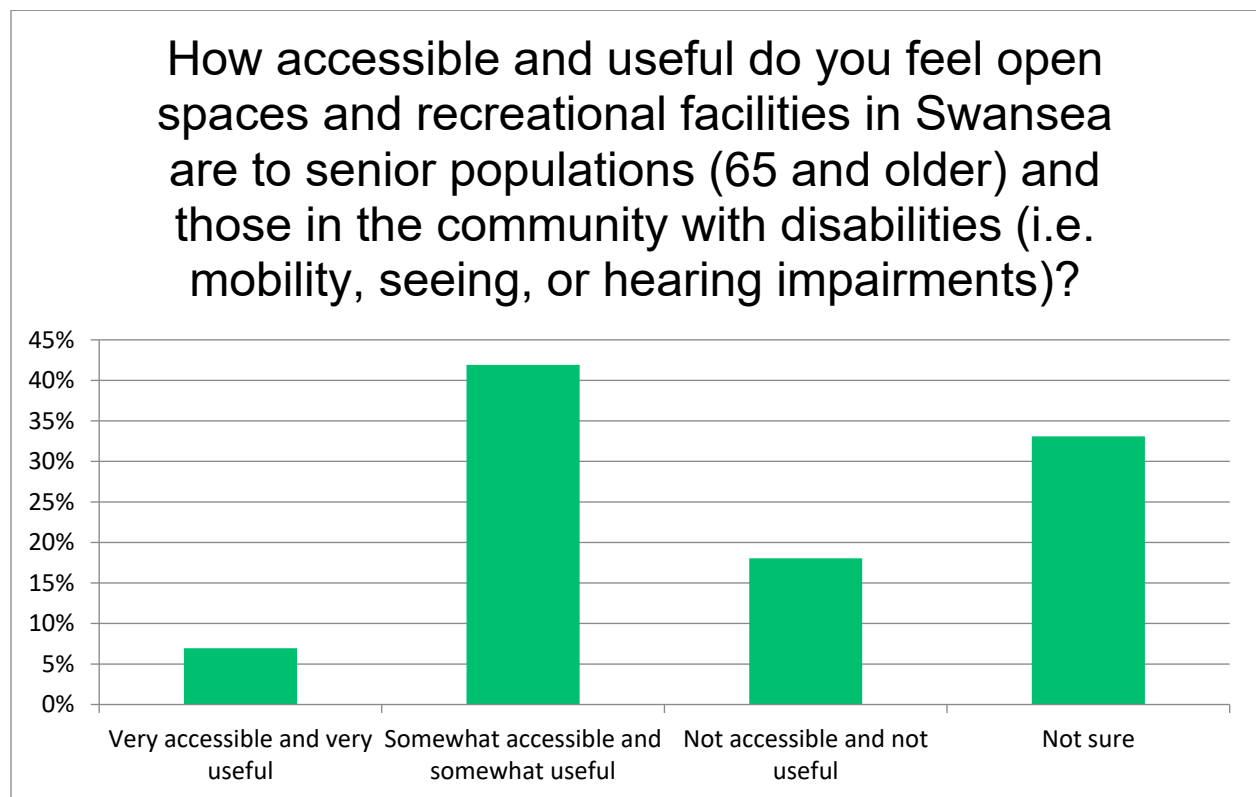
It is interesting to note the similarities in which open spaces respondents like best and which respondents feel are most in need of upgrades and/or repairs. Waterfront areas/beaches and hiking/walking trails scored highly for both questions 40 and 41, suggesting they may be higher priorities for repairs, considering both their popularity and indicated need.

Question 42: How accessible and useful do you feel open spaces and recreational facilities in Swansea are to senior populations (65 and older) and those in the community with disabilities (i.e. mobility, seeing, or hearing impairments)?

Type: Multiple Choice

Purpose: Identify how accessible and useful Swansea open spaces and recreational facilities are to seniors and those with disabilities.

Big Picture Results: Overall, Swansea residents felt that open spaces and recreational facilities are only somewhat accessible and useful to seniors and those with disabilities.



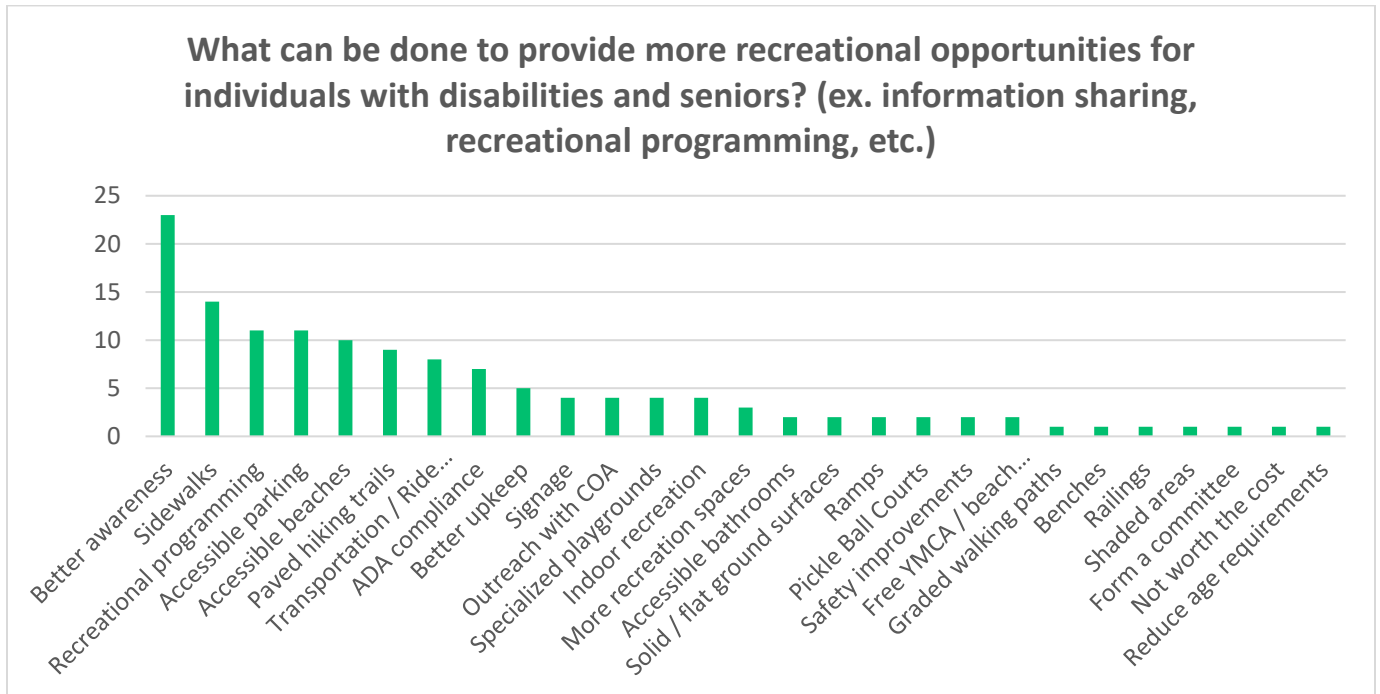
Detailed Results: A total of 532 respondents answered this question (283 skipped). Of those who responded, the majority felt that open spaces and recreation facilities in Swansea are only somewhat accessible and useful to seniors and those with disabilities (223 responses, 42%). The next largest category was respondents who were unsure how accessible or useful these areas are (176 responses, 33%), followed by respondents who felt these areas were not accessible or useful (96 responses, 18%). The remaining respondents felt the open space and recreation facilities in Swansea are very accessible and useful (37 respondents, 7%).

Question 43: What can be done to provide more recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities and seniors? (ex. information sharing, recreational programming, etc.)

Type: Open-ended

Purpose: Solicit suggestions for improving recreational opportunities in Swansea for individuals with disabilities and seniors.

Big Picture Results: The most frequent suggestions included better awareness around recreational opportunities, sidewalks, recreational programming, and more accessible parking.



Detailed Results: 123 respondents answered this question (692 skipped). Accounting for comments with multiple concerns and removing non-response answers, there were 136 comments addressed in this question. The majority of responses suggested there needs to be better awareness around recreational opportunities available to elderly and disabled individuals in Swansea (23 responses), followed by a need for more sidewalks (14 responses), and a need for specific recreational programming, as well as more accessible parking (11 responses each). The remaining responses included: accessible beaches (10 responses), paved hiking trails (9 responses), a transportation / ride program (8 responses), basic ADA compliance (7 responses), better upkeep of these recreational spaces (5 responses), improved signage (4 responses), partnering with the Council on Aging (4 responses), specialized playgrounds (4 responses), indoor recreational opportunities (4 responses), more recreational spaces to choose from (3 responses), accessible bathrooms (2 responses), solid / flat ground surfaces instead of things like wood chips (2 responses), ramps (2 responses), pickle ball courts (2 responses), safety improvements (2 responses), free memberships to the beach or YMCA (2 responses), graded walking paths (1 response), more benches (1 response), railings along walkways (1 response), shaded areas (1 response), and forming a committee of these people to help identify areas of improvement more accurately (1 response).

Additional comments received included a suggestion to reduce the age requirement for senior eligibility (1 response), and a comment stating that the cost of implementation of these strategies are not worth it for the few it would benefit (1 response).

Illustrative survey response quotes include:

“Development of safe areas for them to go and improved communication about where they are.”

“Recreational programming and providing rides to these recreational areas. A boardwalk in the sand at town beach so that people in wheel chairs and those that use walkers can get on the beach.”

Questions 44: Are there any particular parcels/areas in Swansea that you would like to protect from development and keep as open space? Please provide as detailed information as you can, including general names, addresses, and/or tax plot information.

Type: Open ended

Purpose: Identify specific locations or areas in town that the public wishes to see protected.

Big Picture Results: Respondents want to preserve farmland, woodland, and waterways/water access. The most specific suggestions for new conservation areas were associated with particular areas to target for farmland preservation concentrated mainly around Locust Street (see list below), followed by specific locations for preserving woodlands, with a major concentration on eastern Swansea (list also below). Respondents also prioritize preserving areas that expand water access and protect the Cole River and Mount Hope Bay. Other specific sites frequently mentioned include expanding Village Park, public access on Pleasure Island, and the use of the former Girl Scout Property on Dillon Lane. See the map below for a spatial accounting of these responses.

Detailed Results: 120 respondents answered this optional open-ended question (695 skipped), though when non-responses and “don’t know” write-ins are accounted for, there were 98 true open-ended responses provided for this question. Eleven respondents expressed the desire to preserve as much land as possible in town. Seven respondents were on the opposite end of the spectrum, believing the town to be too developed, precluding further preservation. One respondent wanted to focus on maintaining existing preserves before preserving more land. More specifically, many of the responses listed multiple locations or types of land as preservation priorities. The paragraphs below summarize specific land preservation suggestions by category of land. These areas and sites are pictured in the map below.

Farmland - The most popular type of land that respondents want to conserve is farmland. Thirty-three (33) respondents, or about 1/3 of those who provided an answer to this question, mentioned farmland in their response. Some indicated a generalized interest in preserving any farmland possible in Swansea (14 respondents). Three specific farmland blocks in town were mentioned:

1. Preserve Farms in the Locust Street – Hortonville Street agricultural corridor, from Reed Street in the west to Delmage Road in the southeast (4 mentions). This is the area of Baker Farm (Swansea Ice Cream Barn), which is already preserved through an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). Three people mentioned Baker Farm specifically.

2. Preserve Farms in the vicinity of the intersection of Marvel and Bark Street, east to Whetstone Hill Road at the Somerset Line (2 mentions).
3. Preserve Farms on the Route 103 Corridor, including Stoney Creek Farm (2 mentions).

Forests – Forests and wooded areas were the second most popular land type that respondents want to preserve. In very close second, 32 respondents, or about 1/3 of those who provided an answer to this question, mentioned forests or wooded areas in their response. Some indicated a generalized interest in preserving any wooded areas possible in Swansea (5 respondents), but more respondents identified three specific parts of town as having woodlands that need priority protection.

1. Wooded areas around Sharps Lot Road and Marvel Road. Most of the specific responses (12 mentions) focused on preserving wooded areas in the eastern edge of town, in a band running west to east from Marvel Road to the Somerset town line. Specific responses pinpointed areas both to the north and south of Marvel Road. North of Marvel Road the responses called out areas around Dillon Lane and Hilton Lane. South of Marvel Road, the responses called out areas between Sharps Lot Road, Bark Street, and to the Somerset Town line.
2. Eight (8) mentions focused on preserving wooded areas in the center of town in the vicinity of Hortonville and Wood Street, referencing areas around the High School, Swansea Mall, and Del Mac Orchard.
3. Two (2) respondents each mentioned preserving wooded areas in the southwest of town around Wilbur Avenue from Pearse Road to the Warren town line, and in the area between Hollister and Barneyville Road in the northwest of town.

Waterbodies and Coastal Areas - Land surrounding waterbodies and the Mount Hope Bay shoreline was the next most popular category (18 total mentions). Most of these comments (12 mentions) specified the need to protect the shoreline waterfront, including Town Beach, and highlighted the fact that the town needs to maintain, expand, and enforce public access to the waterfront. Protecting the Coles River Corridor was cited three times, as was the need to preserve the town's wetland areas. Two respondents specifically mentioned parcel 064.0-0017-0000.0 (the lot behind Mr. Peepers Ice Cream) as a site with water access potential to Lee River. One respondent suggested the development of a small park with water access, kayak launch site, and easy access to affordable housing, while another pointed out that it could be incorporated into a continuous park with the abandoned dye factory ruins.

Other Individual Sites - Some people mentioned specific parcels or features for consideration. Sites mentioned by more than one person included the desire to add to Village Park (7 mentions), public access on Pleasure Island (5 mentions), use of the former Girl Scout Camp at the end of Dillon Lane (3 mentions), and water access south of the Coles River Bridge on I-195 (parcels 054.0-0015-0000.0, 058.0-0001-0000.0, and 058.0-0002-0000.0; 2 mentions).

Sites with 1 mention were: land south of Coles River Bridge, Milford Dam margins, Lot 7 on Pearse Road, Swansea Dam, Comptons Corner, open area on 5th Street, Swans Nest, Touisset Country Club, Chapter 61 Lands, add to Veterans Memorial Park, Swansea Country Club, Wampanoag Golf Course, Dr. Haile Property, the grist mill near Hortonville and Cummings, parcels 001.0_0002_0000.0 and 001.0_0003_0000.0 to connect to the bike lane on Long Lane in Warren, parcels 041.0-0026-0000.0 and 044.0-0066-0039.0 to open a trail from Winward, Winslow Way to access Touisset and Seaview Ave. to

waterfront access taking pedestrians off of Barton where sidewalks are lacking, parcel 047.0-0031-0000.0 (if it ever became available) to open a bike/pedestrian bridge to the town beach and Ocean Grove, and parcels 052.0-0304-0000.0 and 052.0-0127-0000.0 for open space and a fishing pier.

Illustrative survey response quotes include:

Areas along the waterways - I was a little disappointed that the driving range was redeveloped so close to the river but I hope that the new owners will be responsible. We should protect the coastal buffers to minimize sea level rise impact and erosion and maximize water quality.

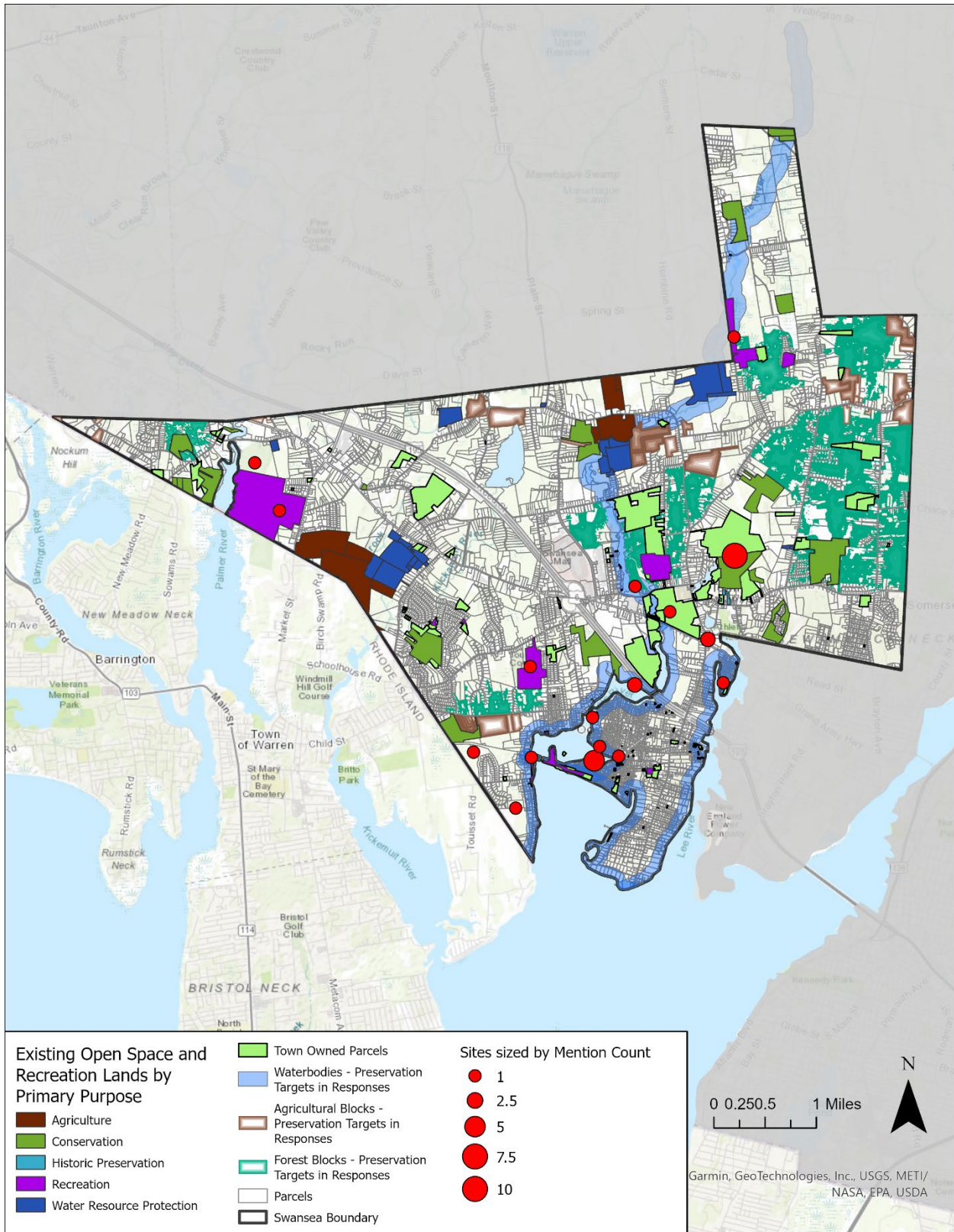
Any waterfront access allowing people access to the water.

No, the town has almost been completely developed why stop those who wish to do the same with theirs. This horse left the barn a long time ago why punish the late comers to the party.

All of them. Stop building

Any existing farmlands forests and/or wetlands that have not yet been sold or developed.

Swansea 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan
Public Engagement Report

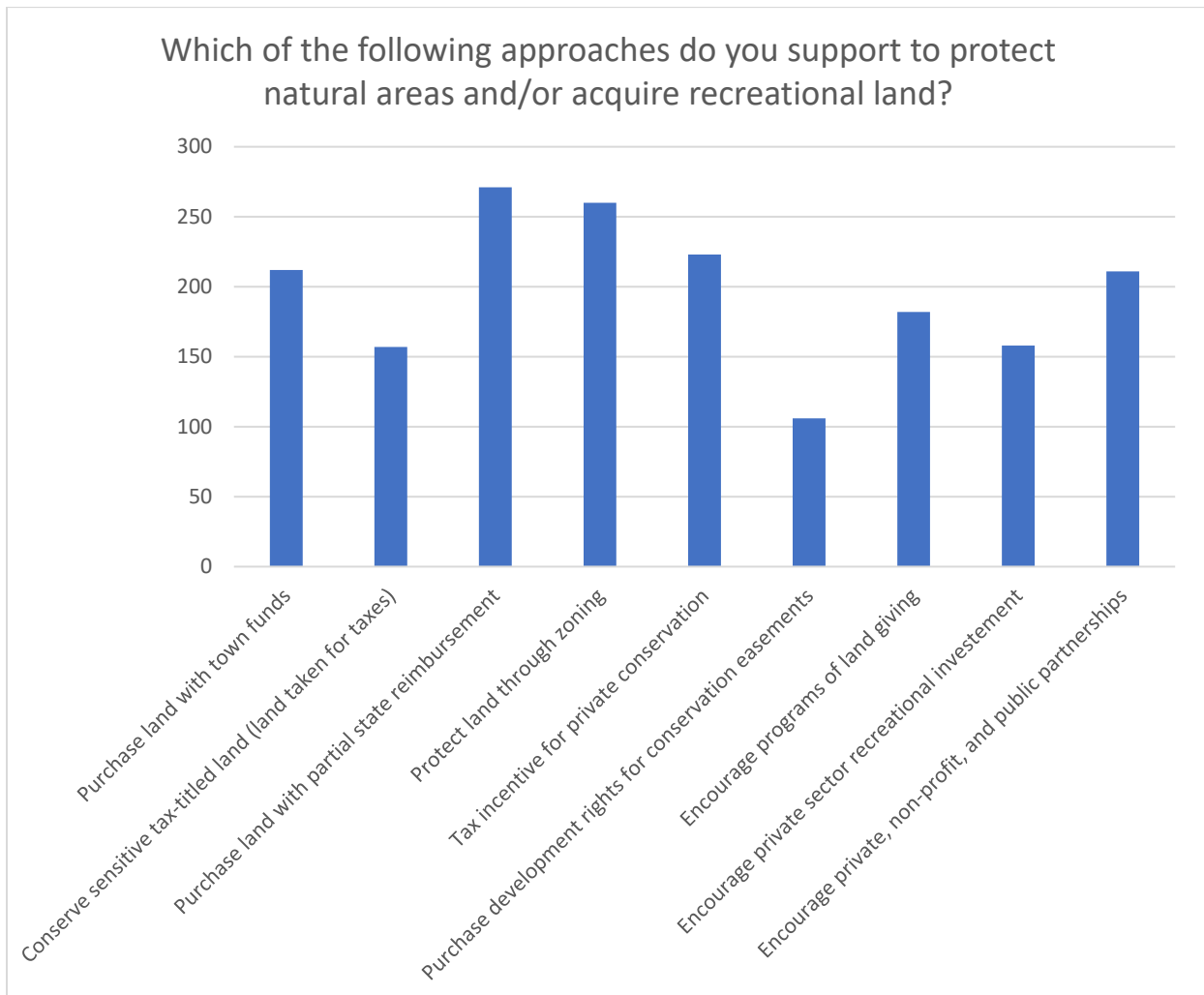


Question 45: Which of the following approaches do you support to protect natural areas and/or acquire recreational land?

Type: multiple choice (select as many as apply)

Purpose: Understand which approaches to open space protection and/or land acquisition the community is in support of.

Big Picture Results: The majority of respondents (greater than 50%) support the following types of strategies for land protection and/or acquisition: the purchase of land with partial state reimbursement (i.e. use of CPA funds) and protect land through zoning. The strategies with the least support include: conservation of sensitive tax-titled land (meaning land taken for taxes; selected by 32.5% of respondents) and the purchase of development rights for conservation easements (22.0%).



Detailed Results: The listed strategies which more than half of those who responded to this question indicated they would support include the purchase of land with partial state reimbursement (i.e. use of CPA funds; selected by 56.1% of respondents) and protection of land through zoning (53.8%). The

following strategies had moderate support: provide tax incentive for private conservation (selected by 46.2% of respondents); purchase land with town funds (43.9%); encourage private, non-profit, and public partnerships (43.7%); and encourage programs of land giving (37.7%). The following strategies were least supported: encourage private sector recreational investment (selected by 32.7% of respondents); conserve sensitive tax-titled (taken for taxes) land (32.5%); and purchase development rights for conservation easements (22.0%).

Twelve (12) respondents chose the optional write-in option. Of these, 3 indicated they were unsure. Two (2) provided general thoughts expanding on their choices selected. Two (2) responses noted that some combination of all of the listed strategies would work, since there is no single solution, and an additional comment expressed the similar sentiment, “whatever works.” Additional potential strategies that were selected included: requiring larger residential lot requirements; accessing grant programs such as through the national Land and Water Conservation Fund in particular; and through town control of land.

Question 46: What is your familiarity with the town-owned open spaces listed below?

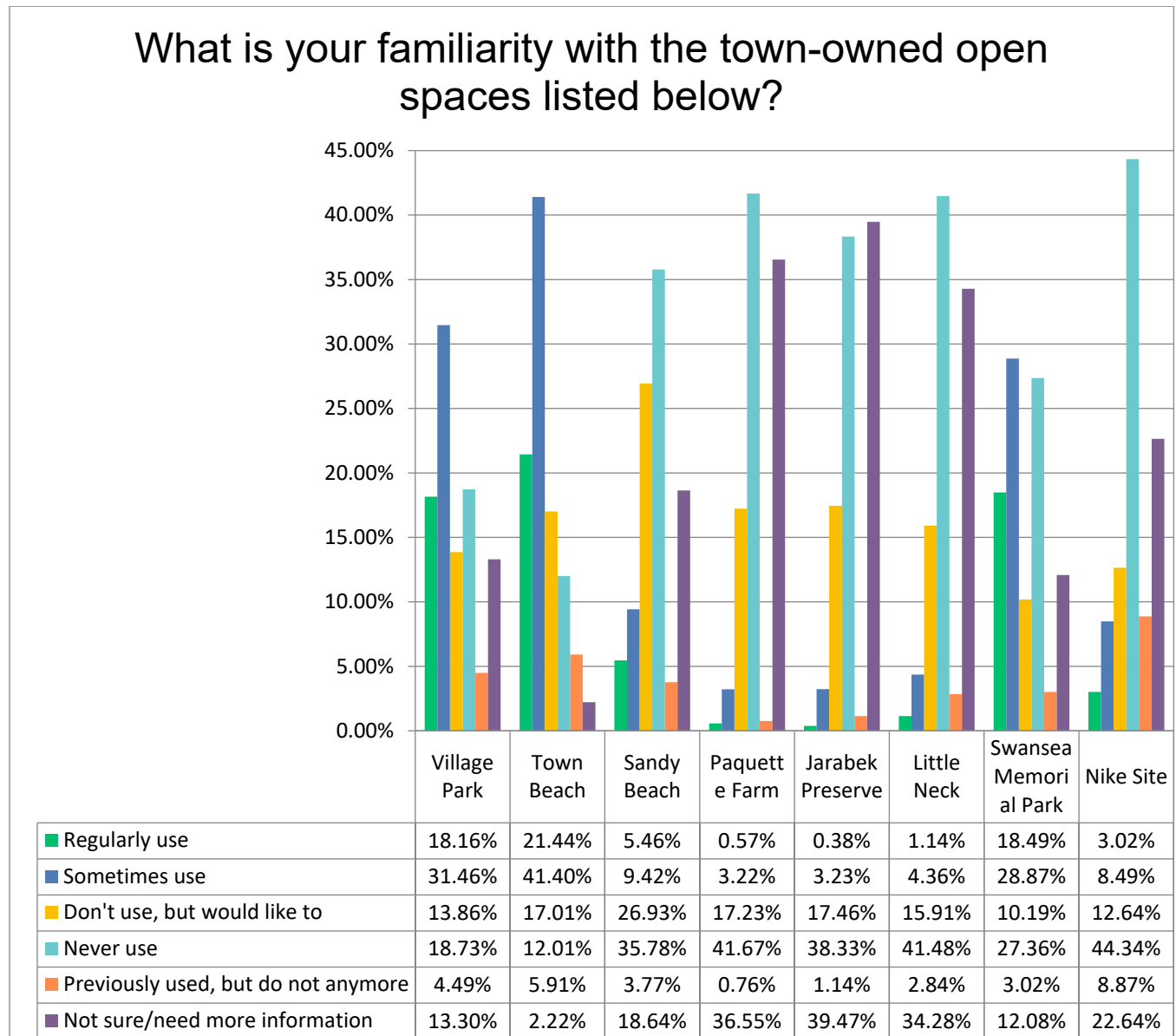
Type: Multiple choice

Purpose: To understand which open spaces the community is and isn’t utilizing.

Big Picture Results: The most commonly recognized and used open spaces in town are Village Park and the Town Beach. Respondents are least familiar with the following sites: Jarabek Preserve, Paquette Farm, and Little Neck.

Detailed Results: Village Park and the Town Beach are the most used sites among respondents with 18.2% and 21.4%, respectively, reporting they regularly use the site and 31.5% and 41.4%, respectively, reporting they sometimes use the site. Swansea Memorial Park is also frequently used, with 18.5% reporting they regularly use it and 28.9% reporting they sometimes use it. Many people selected that they don’t use, but would like to use several sites, particularly Sandy Beach (26.9%). Further investigation may be able to ascertain what is preventing people from using certain sites more.

The following sites received the largest proportions of “never use” responses: Nike Site (44.3%), Paquette Farm (41.7%), Little Neck (41.5%), Jarabek Preserve (38.3%) and Sandy Beach (35.8%). Jarabek Preserve, Paquette Farm and Little Neck also received the largest proportions of “not sure/need more information” responses (39.5%, 36.6% and 34.3%, respectively). Perhaps better advertisement of these sites and their amenities could increase their use.

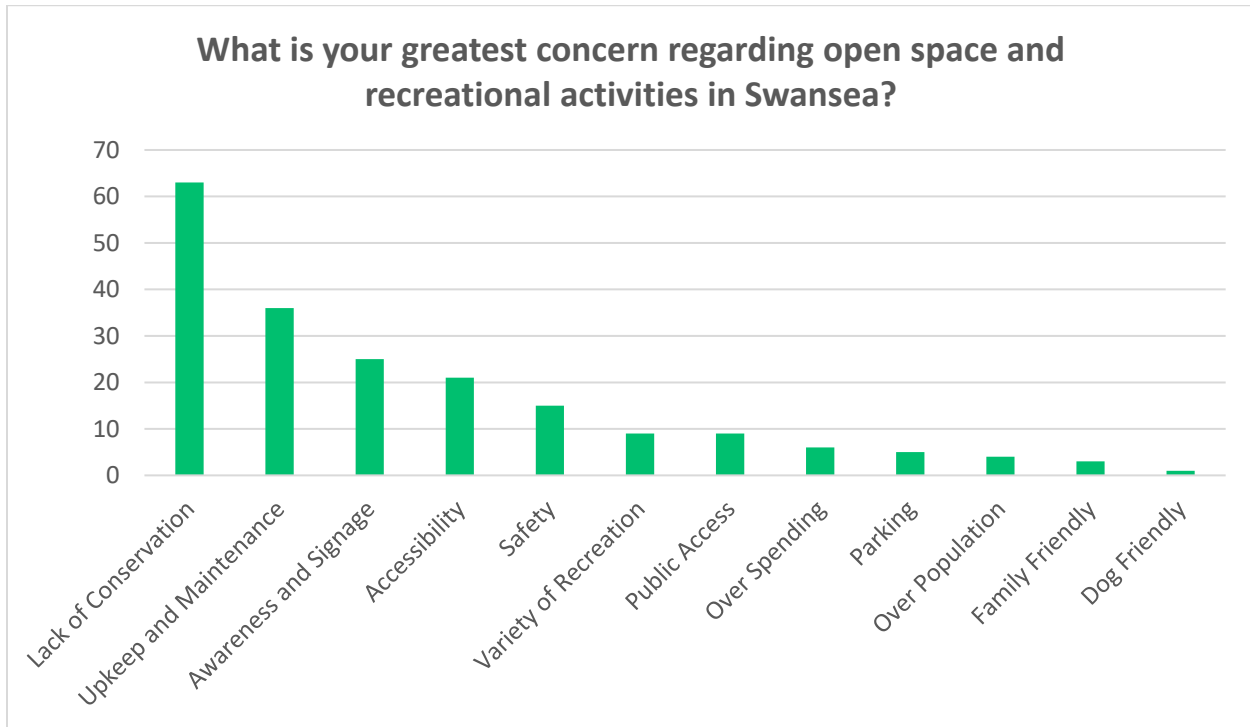


Question 47: What is your greatest concern regarding open space and recreational activities in Swansea?

Type: Open-ended

Purpose: Identify specific areas of concern regarding open space and recreational activities.

Big Picture Results: The biggest areas for concern when it comes to open space and recreational activities in Swansea are a lack of conservation, upkeep and maintenance of these spaces, and lack of awareness and signage.



Detailed Results: 179 respondents answered this optional question (636 skipped). When considering comments with multiple concerns and removing non-response comments, there were 197 concerns addressed in this question.

The largest concern among respondents was the lack of conservation / over development (63 responses), specifically in terms of Swansea becoming overdeveloped with commercial business. Following was upkeep and maintenance needs for open spaces (36 responses) to prevent these areas from becoming degraded or dilapidated, as well as general awareness and signage about these places (25). Other concerns included: a lack of accessibility in these spaces (21 responses), a lack of safety (15 responses), a need for more variety in recreational opportunities (9 responses), insufficient access to these spaces as a whole (9 responses) due to privatization, permits being required, or abutters preventing access, over spending / increases in taxes to acquire these spaces (6 responses), limited parking availability at these locations (5 responses), over population of people living in Swansea (4 responses), lack of family-friendly activities (3 responses), and lack of dog-friendly activities (1 response).

Illustrative survey response quotes include:

“Not enough. Not aware of most. Town website has virtually no info about these offerings.”

“That Swansea will lose opportunities to maintain open space because the land is sold to developers.”

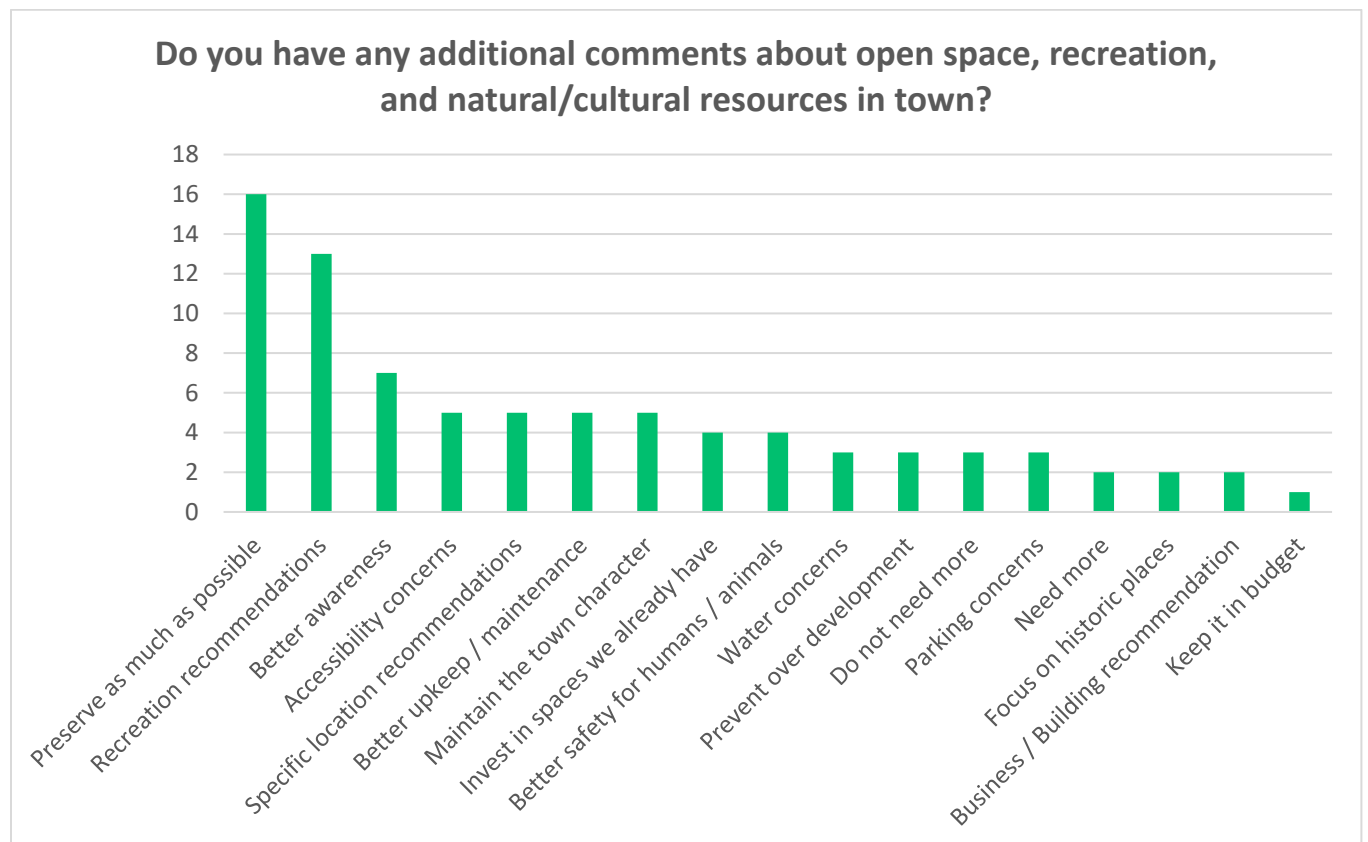
Question 48: Do you have any additional comments about open space, recreation, and natural/cultural resources in town?

Type: Open-ended

Purpose: Identify other comments about open space, recreation, and natural/cultural resources.

Big Picture Results: The majority of responses expressed a desire to preserve as much space in Swansea as possible, followed by specific recreational recommendations, and a desire for better awareness of the opportunities in Swansea.

Detailed Results: 99 respondents answered this question (716 skipped). Accounting for comments with multiple concerns and removing non-response answers, there were 83 comments addressed in this question. The comment received the most was to preserve as much open space in Swansea as possible (16 responses), followed by specific recreational recommendations, such as more bike paths, boat launches, and playgrounds (13 responses), and a desire for better awareness about the open spaces in Swansea (7 responses). Other comments included: accessibility concerns (5 responses); specific location recommendations, such as improvements to Village Park (5 responses); better upkeep and maintenance of these spaces (5 responses); prioritizing maintaining the character of the town (5 responses); investing in spaces Swansea already has over acquiring new ones (4 responses); a desire for better safety, such as improved lighting (4 responses); concerns over water quality (3 responses); worries about over development (3 responses); comments about not needing more open space (3 responses); parking concerns (3 responses); a general need for more opens spaces (2 responses); a desire to specifically focus on historic locations in town (2 responses); suggestions for specific building recommendations (2 responses); and a comment to keep these projects in budget (1 response).



Illustrative survey response quotes include:

“We need to protect the open spaces we currently have and acquire more.”

“All are important to the identity of the town.”

SECTION TWO: INTERACTIVE MAPPING EXERCISE

A. Logistics and Overview

An interactive in-person mapping activity was prepared to solicit feedback on existing open spaces and recreational facilities as well as additional needs. A map of Swansea displaying existing open space and recreational parcels, color-coded by level of protection (limited, none, in perpetuity, term limited, or unknown) was provided on a 30” by 43” poster board. Individuals were provided 8 different types of stickers, which represented the following comment categories: new recreation amenity need, maintenance/beautification need, recreational programming need, pathway need – bicycle, pathway need – pedestrian, ADA access need, open space/resource conservation need, and cultural/historic resource need. Participants were instructed to place these stickers in locations on the map where that type of need or suggestion was desired, and then to write a unique number on that sticker and the corresponding explanation or comment with the same number next to the map. Participants were also invited to share general comments that did not have a specific location associated with them by either writing that comment with no number associated with it, or placing their sticker on a location on the map outside of the town boundary.

One map was displayed on a table hosted by SRPEDD at the Swansea Harvest Festival on September 10, 2022. SRPEDD staff were present at the table for the duration of this event and engaged attendees in discussion about open space and recreational needs and invited comments. A second identical map was displayed at a public workshop in the Case High School Library on Wednesday September 28, 2022, from 6:30-8:30 PM, which covered the following topics for public input: open space and recreation; transportation; and public facilities and services in Swansea. A third identical map was also made publicly available in the Town Hall with posted instructions to invite additional comments, beginning October 11, 2022. This map is still posted in Town Hall at the time of the drafting of this summary; therefore, the input received on that map is not included in this summary.

B. Public Input Results

Big Picture Results: The most popular needs expressed in both map activities were the need for new kayak launches (3 mentions, proposing 3 different location) and the creation of one or more dog parks (3 mentions at 2 potential locations). Bicycle and pedestrian pathway needs were also mentioned several times. Two (2) comments suggested bike path connections to the East Bay Pike Path nearby in Rhode Island, and 3 suggested a bike path along Rt 103. Three (3) comments wanted to see additional walking paths at open spaces in town and connecting various open spaces with each other. Two (2) comments requested more clarity with clear signage of public and private waterfront access areas.

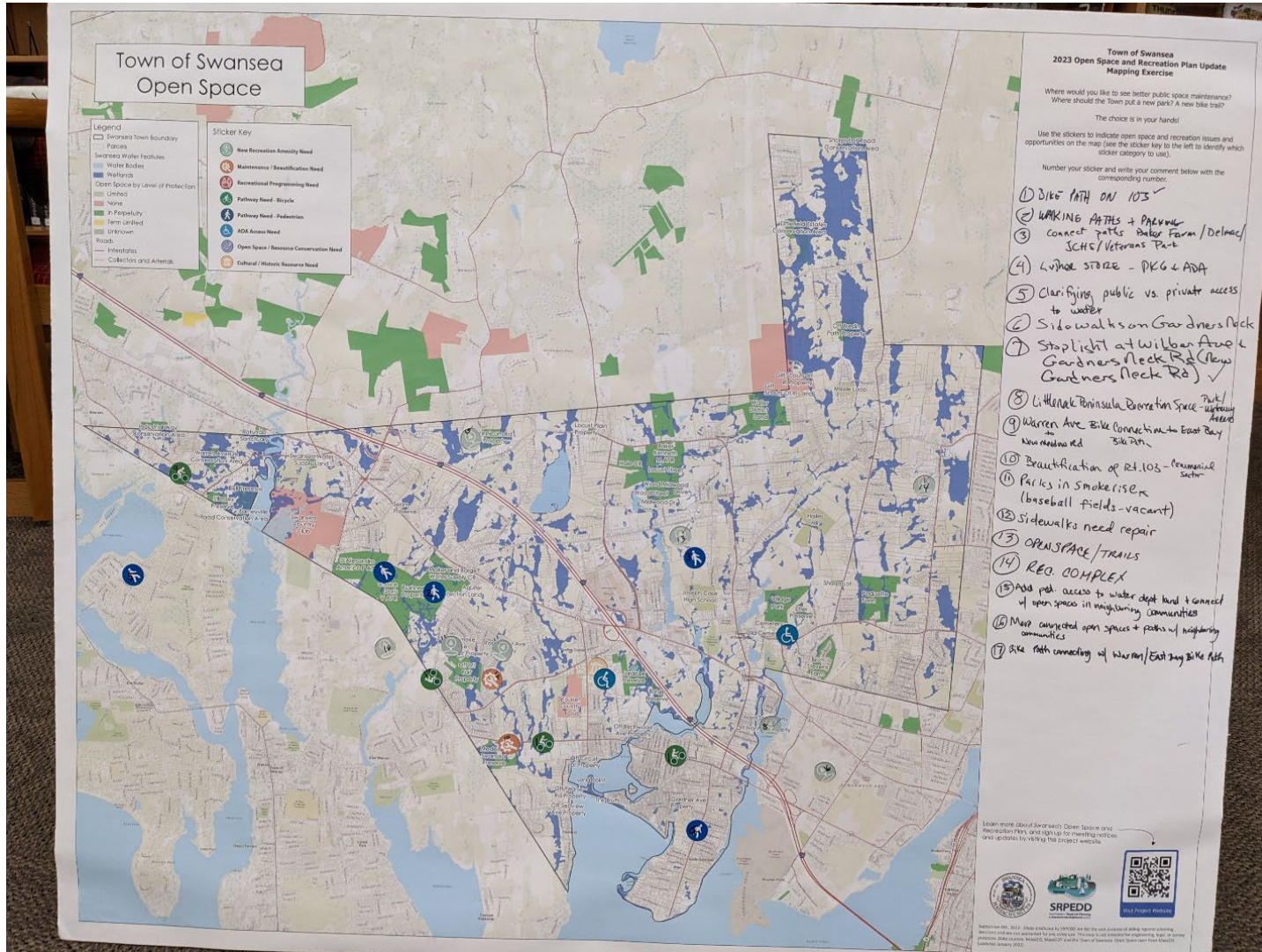
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Detailed Results: The map used at the Swansea Harvest Festival received 20 comments:



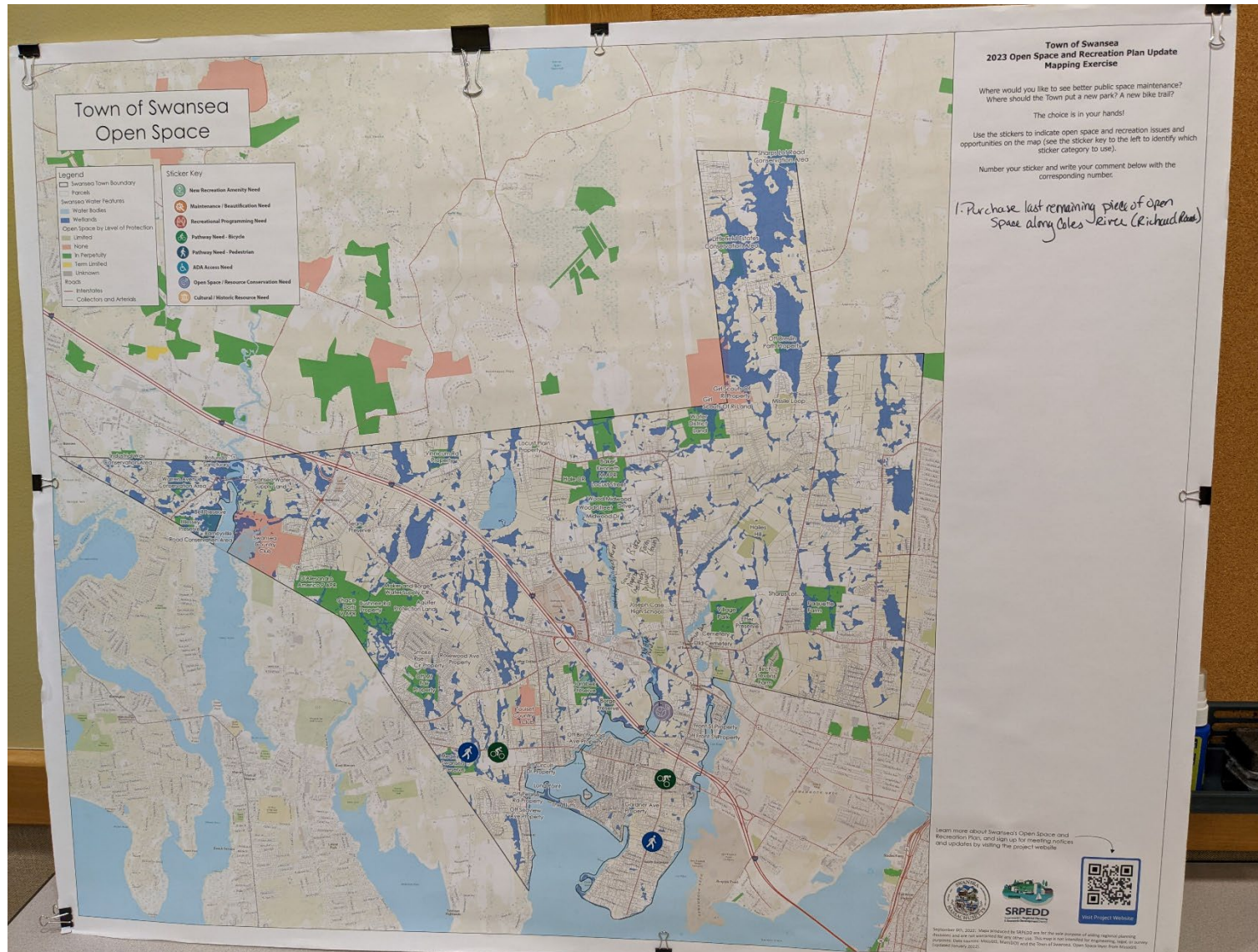
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The map used at the public workshop received 17 comments:



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The map posted at Town Hall received 3 stickers with 1 accompanying written comment:



The following is a breakdown of all comments received on all 3 maps, by sticker category:

ADA Access Needs

Comment	# of Mentions
Provide parking and ADA access at Luther Store	1

Cultural/Historical Resource Needs

Comment	# of Mentions
Swansea Small Pox Cemetery (Kingsley Cemetery): maintain historic site, beautification, formalize access	2
Preserve Margaret’s Rock (on Shawmut Metal Property on Rt 6)	1
More historic preservation town wide	1
Preserve Dinosaur Rock across from Country Gardens Nursing Home	1

Maintenance/Beautification Needs

Comment	# of Mentions
Provide restrooms at tennis courts and little league fields	2
Letting out water from the dam on Milford Pond, especially during drought, seems to be harming the pond (it is getting shallower and filling in)	1
Beautification of the Town’s commercial sector on Rt 103	1
Sidewalks need repair between Old Warren Rd and Bushee Rd	1

New Recreation Amenity

Comment	# of Mentions
New kayak launches: Lewin Brook behind Joseph Case Jr High, Lees River at Veterans Memorial Park, Cole River new right of way south of Rt. 103/Wilbur Ave	3
Dog parks: Gardner Elementary, Veterans Memorial Park, near animal shelter (Stevens Rd and Bark St)	3
Create Park with waterway access to Lee River on Littleneck Peninsula	2
Need parks in Smokerise neighborhood (baseball fields are vacant)	1
Open space and trails south of Wood St. (east of Milford Pond)	2

New rec complex on Bark St	2
More connected open spaces and paths with neighboring communities	1

Open Space/Resource Conservation Needs

Comment	# of Mentions
Preserve/support farms and farmers	1
Protect open space from ongoing development around southwest corner of Town (south of Rt. 103/Madeiras Swansea Preserve)	1
Preserve remaining open land along Sharps Lot Rd. and Hornbine Rd	1
Possibility for wildlife preservation between Village Park and Hailes Hill (Lewin Brook)	1
Purchase last remaining piece of open space along Coles River (Richard Road)	1

Pathway Needs – Bicycle

Comment	# of Mentions
Provide bike path connections to East Bay Bike Path (Warren Ave)	2
Provide enclosed biking areas/paths for safety (streets not safe)	1
Provide bike path along Rt 103	2

Pathway Needs – Pedestrian

Comment	# of Mentions
Need speed bump at intersection of forked road near Town Beach playground (people drive too fast by playground)	1
Clarify and clearly label public vs. private water access areas	2
Provide walking paths and parking at Bushnee Property and area	1
Connect paths between Baker Farm, Delmac, Joseph Case High School, and Veterans Park	1
Provide sidewalks on Gardner’s Neck Rd	1
Install stoplight at Wilbur Ave/Rt 103 and Gardners Neck Rd	2
Add pedestrian access to Water District Land and connect with open spaces in neighboring communities	1

Recreational Programming Need

Comment	# of Mentions
Are any waters stocked for fishing? (Provide information and/or stocking)	1
Village Park: provide written guide with trail landmarks to hand out; can trails be redone for bike use as well	1
Who maintains girls softball league?	1