

CROSS-NEIGHBORHOOD COMPARISON

Comparison with the Neighborhood Dialogue

In contrast to the Neighborhood Dialogue, where we asked a few participants from each of the 10 neighborhoods to come together and generate cross-neighborhood consensus about key priorities, the approach of the Healthy Neighborhoods Survey was to gather information from a cross-section of individuals from each of the 10 neighborhoods. We were interested in using the interviews to assess if the priorities expressed at the Neighborhood Dialogue were shared by the broader community and how priorities may or may not differ across neighborhoods.

The top priorities expressed at the Neighborhood Dialogue and through the community interviews are highlighted to the right. A detailed look at the community interview priorities by neighborhood is found in *Appendix D* of this report. For the most part, the issues and concerns voiced at the Neighborhood Dialogue were echoed throughout the community interviews. Some of the overlapping priorities included healthy neighborhood commercial districts, public safety, and an engaged citizenry. However, there were a number of concerns voiced much more strongly in the interviews than at the Neighborhood Dialogue such as housing affordability, racial and cultural diversity, and open space. Given the limitations of this project, we can not say for certain why these differences emerged. We suspect that one

Top Priorities from the Neighborhood Dialogue

- Neighborhood Commercial Districts
- Safety
- Transportation
- Neighborhood Activism/Participation
- Responsive City Government
- Pedestrian-Oriented
- Affordable Housing
- Environment
- Education

Top Priorities from the Community Interviews

- Affordable Housing
- Safety
- Thriving Commercial District
- Greenery, Parks and Open Space
- Racial/Cultural Diversity
- Active & Connected Citizens

reason could be the fact that one goal of the community interviews was to hear from a more diverse mix of community members – in terms of race, ethnicity, age, and areas of interest. Another explanation may be that issues such as diversity, alternative transportation, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods were expressed more strongly in certain neighborhoods. Therefore, some of these concerns may have been filtered out during the prioritization process used at the Neighborhood Dialogue, which brought together community members from different neighborhoods to develop more generic neighborhood priorities that touched all of the 10 neighborhoods, rather than the localized needs of one neighborhood.

Cumulative Analysis of Survey Findings

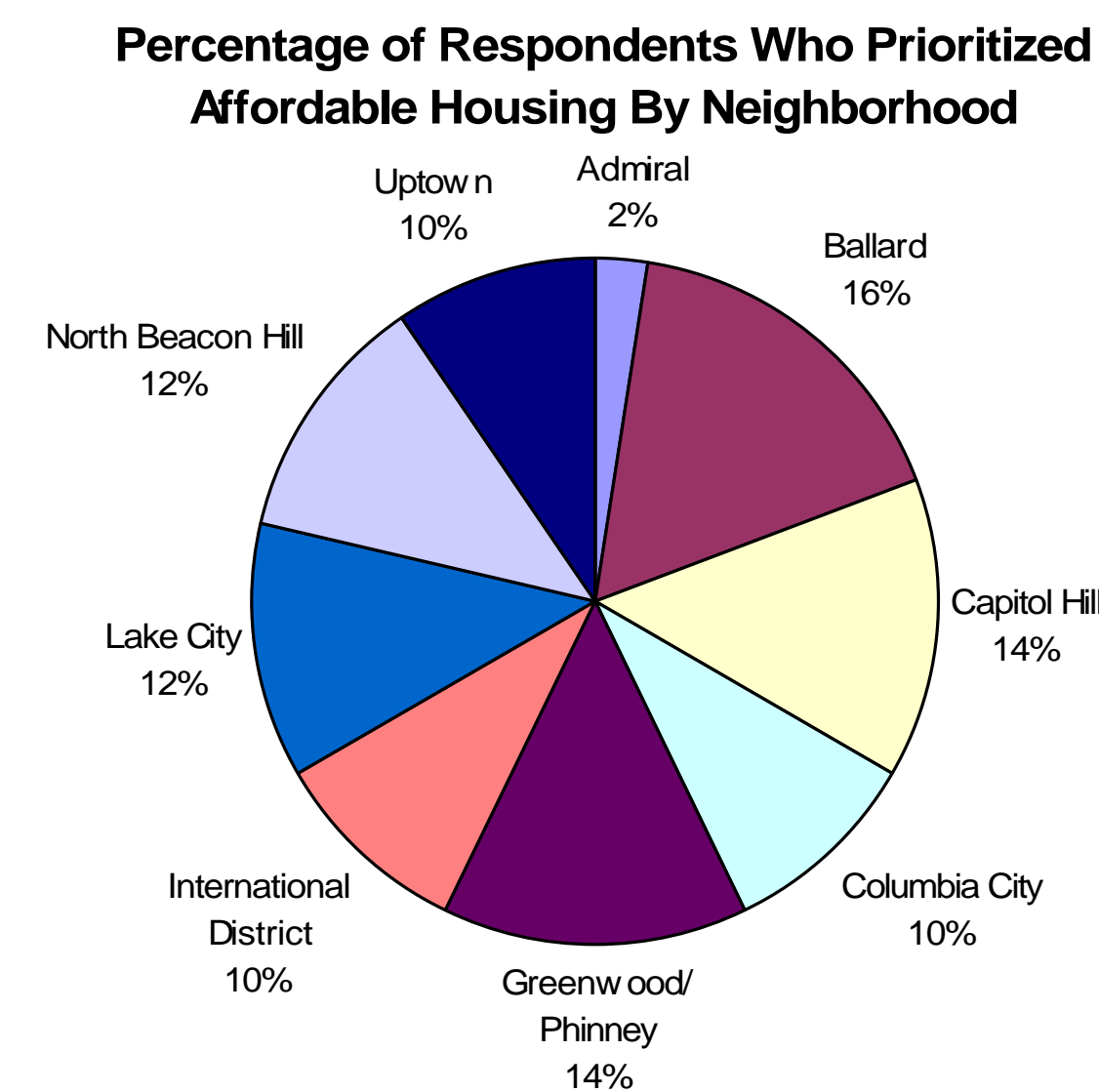
The following section highlights the six top neighborhood priorities that emerged from the 92 community interviews taken as a whole. Appendix D presents the full list of priorities expressed by neighborhood.

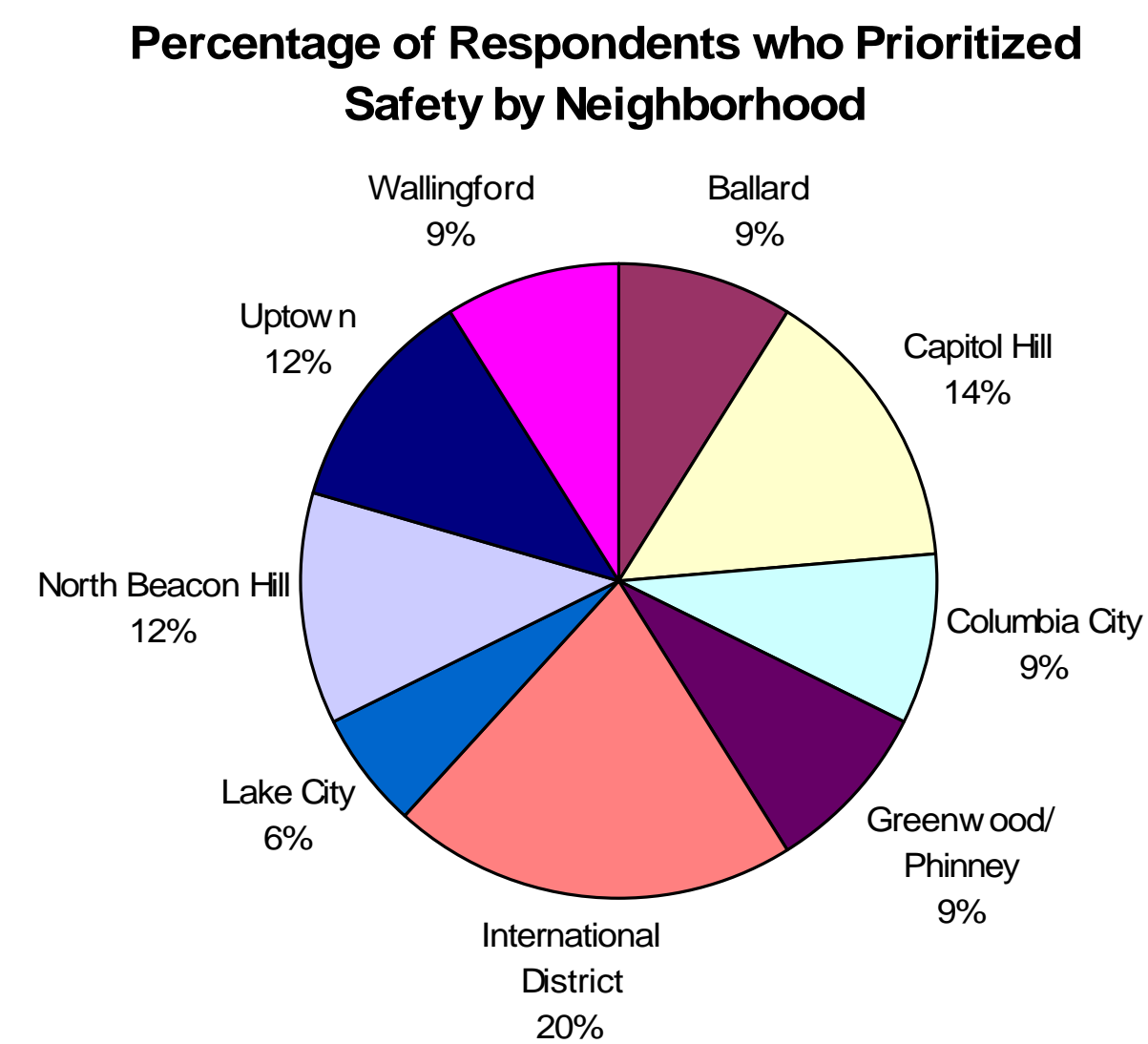
Priority 1: Affordable Housing Viewed as Top Concern

Affordable housing was the top priority selected by interviewees in all 10 neighborhoods surveyed. Overall, respondents felt that housing prices in their communities – and in Seattle as a whole – had rapidly increased over the past few years. As a result, interviewees noted that the character and composition of neighborhoods were becoming more gentrified as racial, cultural, and economic diversity declined. Many

respondents highlighted the fact that rising housing prices forced people to live further and further from the city center, which makes it difficult for people to live close to where they work. Many Ballard residents, for example, noted that most industrial workers who used to live in the neighborhood can no longer afford Ballard housing prices. Therefore, those who cannot afford to buy a house in these urban communities usually have a longer commute to work and are less likely to be actively engaged in both their work and residential communities. While most respondents were less informed about rental prices, few viewed rent to be totally unaffordable. Respondents could generally name a few housing options for people in various stages of life (i.e. elderly or assisted living, options for young families, etc.), but did not know if these housing options adequately met the needs of the neighborhood. Interviewees frequently placed the responsibility of providing and maintaining affordable housing on the state and federal government.

Respondents from several neighborhoods, namely Capitol Hill and Columbia City, highlighted non-profit agencies that provide financial assistance to qualified applicants looking to buy their first home. According to respondents, Lake City, Greenwood, and the Chinatown-International District were viewed as neighborhoods with more affordable housing than most Seattle communities. Above all, interviewees stressed the value of mixed-use communities. They saw the opportunities to live and work in the same community as important factors in their quality of life.





Priority 2: Safety Continues to Challenge Communities

Interviewees in all 10 neighborhoods valued safety as one of the most important community priorities. They connected safety to other priorities such as parks and open space, thriving commercial districts, and an altogether clean and welcoming neighborhood. For the most part, respondents in the northern neighborhoods felt that their communities were relatively safe, while southern neighborhoods believed issues surrounding safety were improving but remained a concern. Respondents mentioned several factors as contributors to the overall safety of the neighborhood including residents knowing their neighbors, the formation of block watch groups, and the establishment of taskforces. They viewed these community activities as deterrents to crime. Many respondents suggested their neighborhood could use better lighting at night and more police on foot or bike. Overall, there was a general feeling that more police patrolling the streets would be a huge asset to communities and would help ameliorate the crime and engender a greater sense of safety.

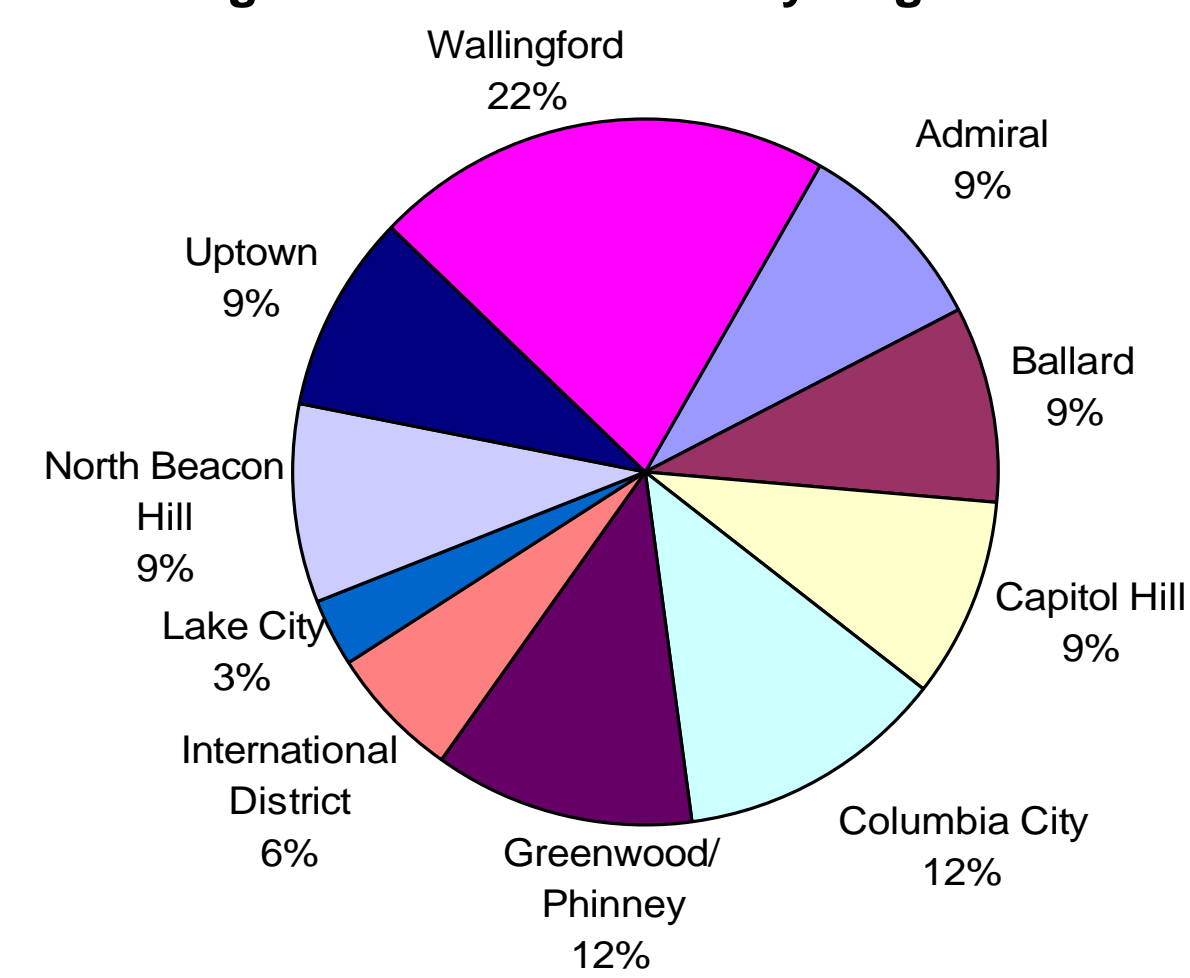
Several neighborhoods talked about safety as both a perception and reality. In Capitol Hill, Columbia City, and the Chinatown-International District, shedding the image of “an unsafe neighborhood” continues to be an obstacle. While many respondents viewed the “unsafe” perception to be based on earlier times or stereotypes, they admitted that real safety issues do exist in many communities. They saw many of the safety problems resulting from large transient populations, drug

activity, prostitution and petty crimes. North Beacon Hill and the Chinatown-International District both lay in close proximity to the Jungle, an open space which lies to the north of Interstate 5, and has frequently been home to many transients and drug dealers. Capitol Hill's commercial core on Broadway continues to battle drug dealing on the streets and in neighboring parks. Columbia City's revitalized business district is a huge improvement from the old commercial core, but the perception of an unsafe neighborhood lingers.

Priority 3: Neighborhoods Struggle to Improve Local Commercial Districts

Maintaining a vibrant and thriving commercial district was a priority in all 10 neighborhoods surveyed. The needs, successes, and challenges of each neighborhood's commercial district varied depending on the neighborhood. In Greenwood/Phinney Ridge, for example, survey respondents generally felt that the area was restaurant and bar-heavy. Interviewees in North Beacon Hill explained that they lacked a cohesive commercial district to support residents but they were working hard to build one. At the same time, residents in Columbia City were just beginning to see the fruits of their newly energized business core. Wallingford survey respondents highlighted the fact that their business district continually struggles to find the right mix of businesses and to reduce high turnover rates. Capitol Hill, on the other hand, has four commercial districts varying in vibrancy.

Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Thriving Commercial Districts by Neighborhood



According to the survey data, the success and vibrancy of commercial districts were closely linked to the physical environment and walkability of the area. Most respondents felt that commercial districts with a welcoming environment (e.g. greenery, well-maintained side walks, clean shops and store fronts, and adequate street lighting) contributed to the number of pedestrians walking, shopping, or meeting in the area. Many respondents felt that their neighborhood lacked “destination points” and variety to attract more shoppers to the area.

Priority 4: Parks and Open Space Not Keeping Up with Population Growth

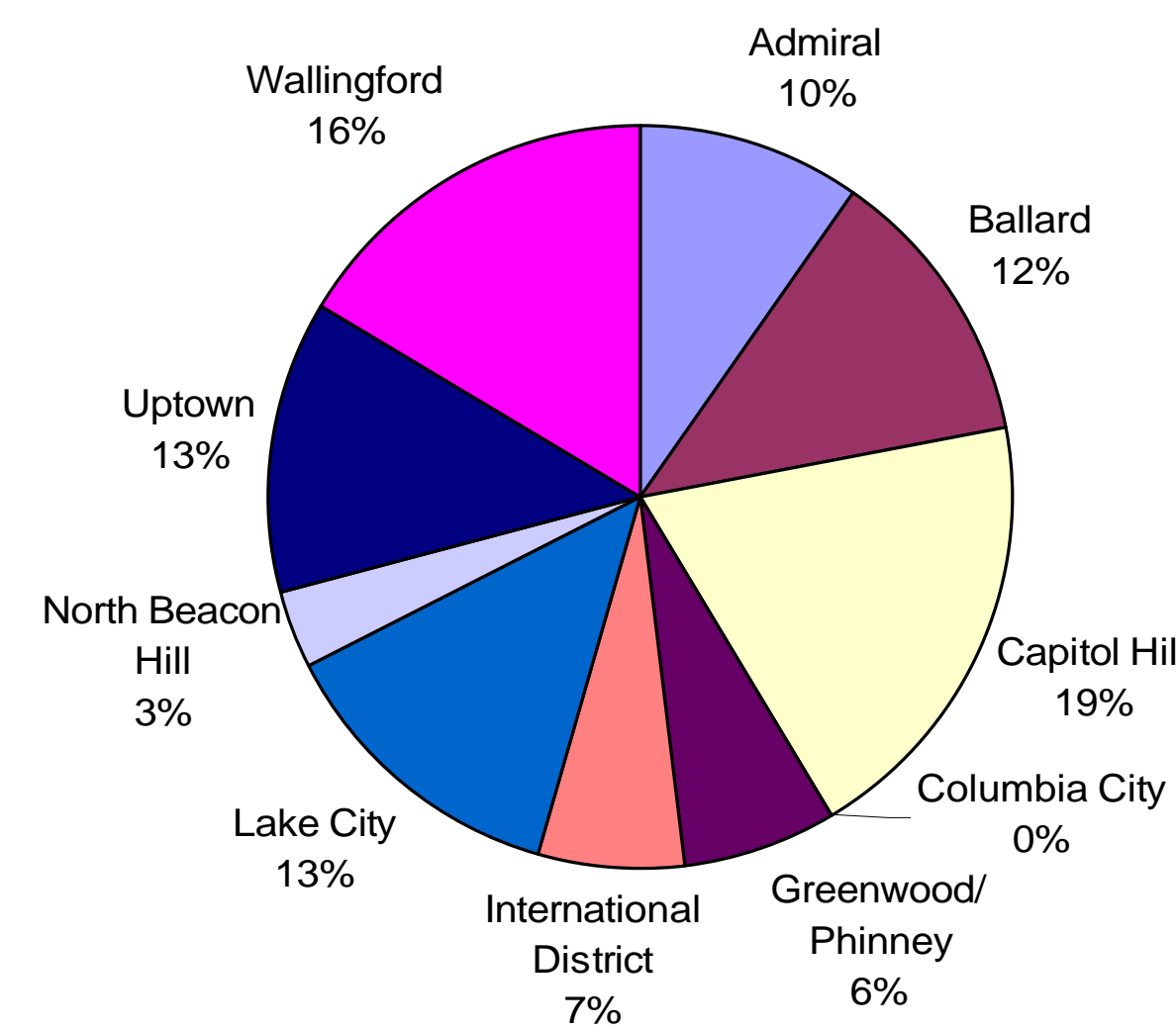
Greenery, parks and open space was the fourth most frequently selected priority of respondents from the 10 neighborhoods. Respondents tended to talk about parks as places to reflect, gather, play sports, and connect with nature. Of the 31 respondents who picked this theme, more than half were from northern neighborhoods while a smaller portion came from southern neighborhoods. In almost all of the neighborhoods surveyed, interviewees commented that the amount of parks and open space was not keeping up with the population. Respondents from Capitol Hill, one of the more dense neighborhoods surveyed, expressed concern that their neighborhood was particularly underserved by parks and open space, despite recent additions. In Lake City, interviewees expressed similar concerns –

multi-family housing rapidly increasing, but neighborhood services and amenities not keeping pace with the population density.

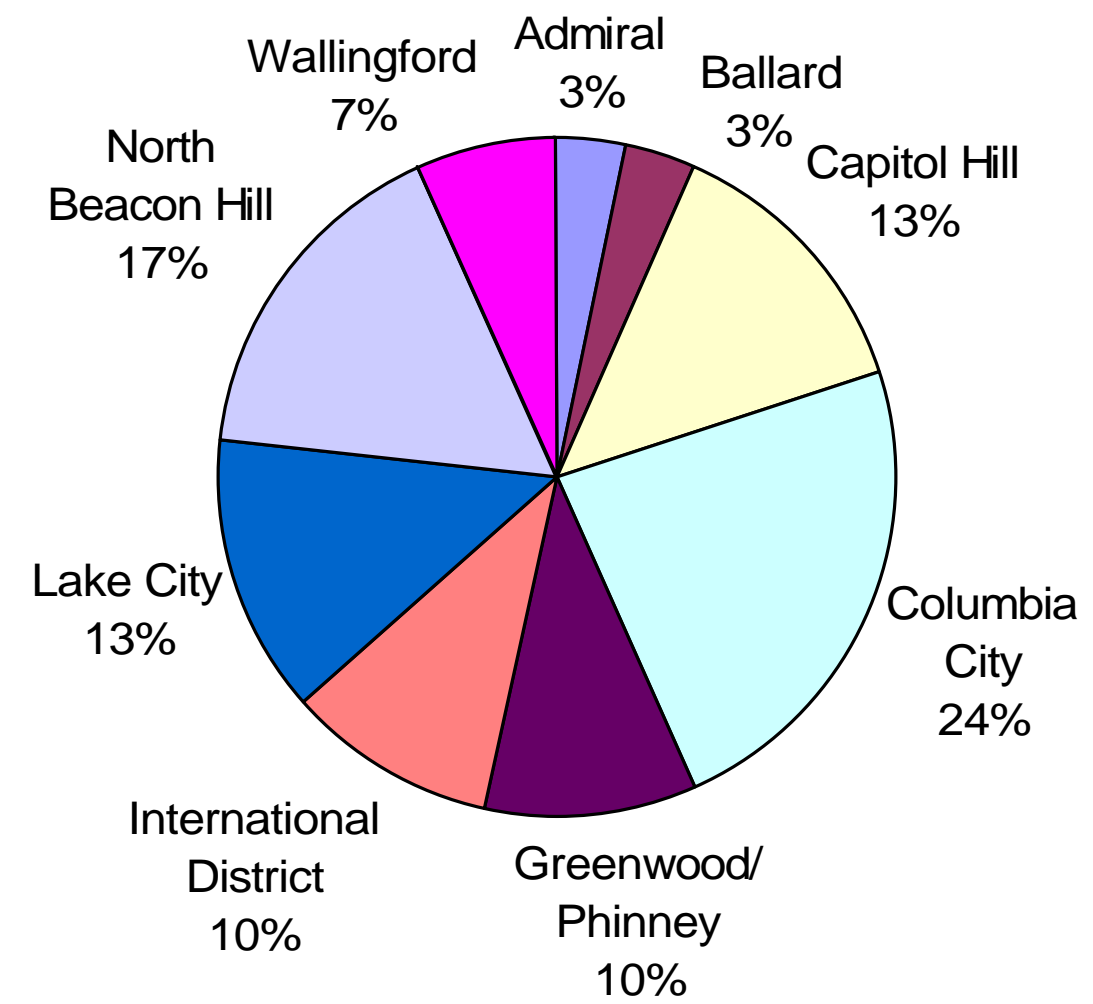
The majority of neighborhoods surveyed emphasized that parks and open space were frequently dominated by 'negative activity', such as transients, homeless populations, drug-activity, and prostitution. This sentiment was particularly apparent in Uptown, North Beacon Hill, Lake City, and parts of the Chinatown-International District. Residents of the Chinatown-International District, for example, felt uncomfortable and unsafe going to the Danny Woo Gardens. Likewise, North Beacon Hill's Jungle has been a constant community focus because of the drug activity, crime, and transients. The general sentiment among interviewees was that they could not enjoy the gardens, parks, and open space because of this negative activity.

Wallingford and Capitol Hill stood out as two neighborhoods where respondents viewed local parks-related projects to be successful. Wallingford residents generally agreed that they had "a lot of great" parks, including Gas Works Park, Wallingford Playfield, and Meridian Park. The neighborhood's success in providing and maintaining parks was due, in large part, to local activists and organized groups who worked regularly on this issue. Interviewees from Capitol Hill explained how a group of organized community members had spent 10 years advocating for the successful revitalization and remodeling of Cal Anderson Park, which had been dominated by heavy drug activity and crime.

Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Greenery, Parks & Open Space by Neighborhood



Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Racial and Cultural Diversity by Neighborhood



Priority 5: Racial and Cultural Diversity Important Across All Neighborhoods*

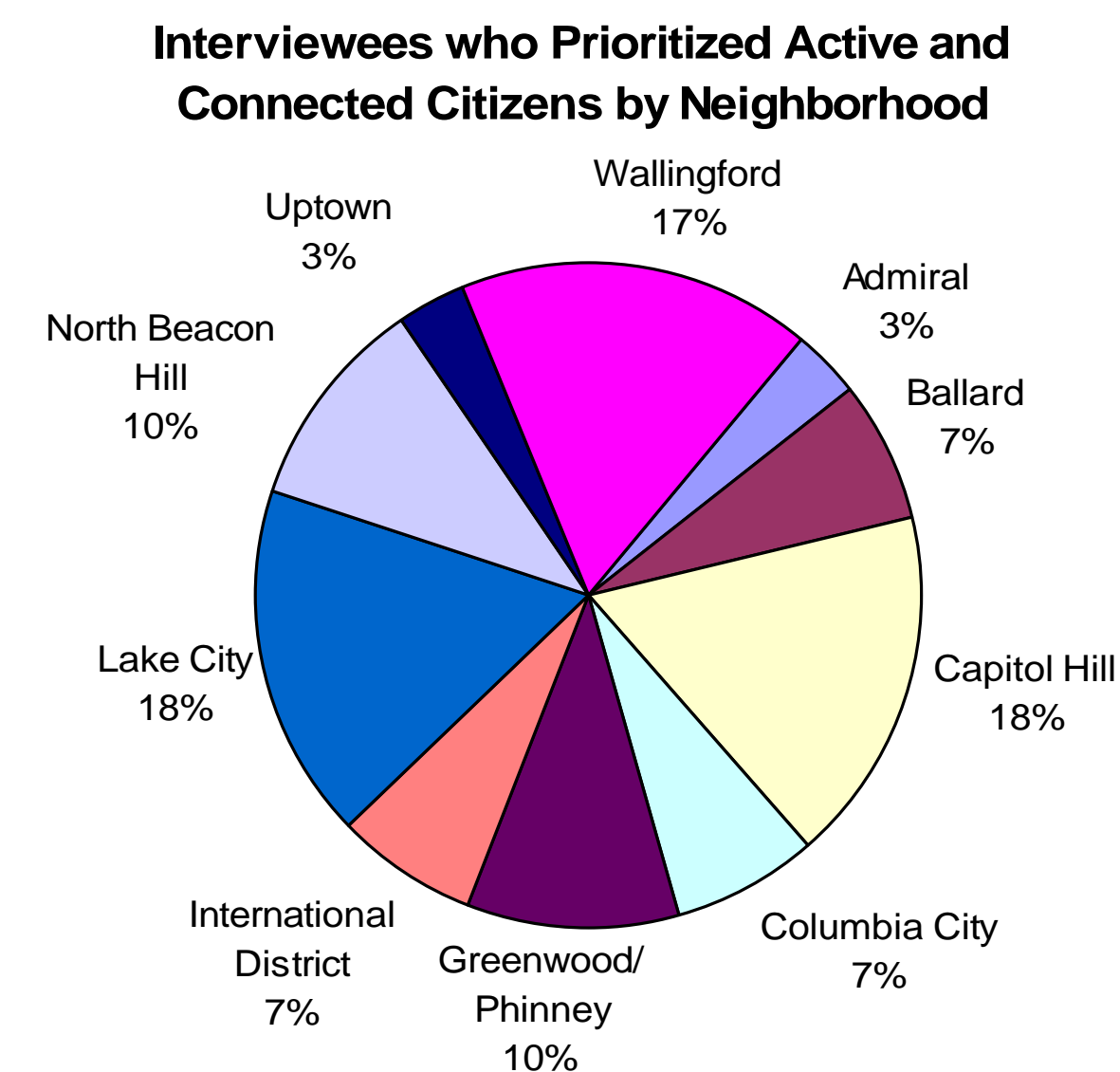
Although some participating neighborhoods placed more emphasis on racial and cultural diversity than did other neighborhoods, racial and cultural diversity as a neighborhood priority ranked fifth amongst all neighborhoods in Seattle. For example, in the neighborhoods of Columbia City, Capitol Hill, Lake City and North Beacon Hill, four or more of those interviewed selected racial and cultural diversity as a priority compared to Admiral, Ballard and Uptown where one or less of the interviewees selected this as a priority. Those interviewees that prioritized diversity felt that a diverse mix of people in terms of race, ethnicity, and income made for a more healthy and supportive community. Several stressed the value and learning that comes from connecting with others who are not necessarily of the same background or culture. Respondents from some of the more diverse neighborhoods such as Columbia City, North Beacon Hill, and the Chinatown-International District talked about diversity as integral to their longstanding neighborhood identity. Diversity also came up in the context of affordable housing. Most of the respondents expressed a fear that rising housing costs would inhibit their neighborhood’s ability to sustain a diverse mix of residents and businesses.

* A more detailed look at racial and cultural diversity follows in the *North-South Neighborhood Comparison* section.

Priority 6: Active, Connected Citizens Necessary for Healthy Neighborhoods

Across all neighborhoods, an active and connected citizenry was seen as perquisite to a healthy and sustainable neighborhood. Capitol Hill, Lake City, and Wallingford were three of the neighborhoods where half of the respondents chose active and connected citizens as a priority. Many respondents touted the positive effects of an active citizenry in their community. For example, many community leaders interviewed in Capitol Hill explained that the restoration and renovation of Cal Anderson Park was due to a broad base of committed citizen volunteers.

Despite these successes, the interviewees who selected active and connected citizens as a priority felt there needed to be more community members engaged in neighborhood efforts. Many interviewees lamented the constant struggle of finding and recruiting new volunteers. Most interviewees also stated that the community generally comes together around an issue, but once the issue is resolved, the community dissipates until a new issue arises. When community leaders were asked about specific groups that should be more engaged, no single answer arose. Most respondents simply indicated that the community could benefit from more active engagement from all of its citizens.



Top North-South Priorities

(Selected by 25% or more of interviewees for each region, in order of importance)

North Neighborhoods (47 respondents)

- Affordable Housing (22)
- Alternative Transportation (19)
- Parks and Open Space (19)
- Commercial Districts (18)
- Pedestrian-Friendly (18)
- Active & Connected Citizens (16)
- Safe (15)

South Neighborhoods (45 respondents)

- Affordable Housing (20)
- Racially/Culturally Diverse (20)
- Safe (19)
- Commercial Districts (15)
- Active & Connected Citizens (13)
- Parks & Open Space (12)

North-South Neighborhood Comparison²¹

As our three interviewers compared what they were hearing from community members, they realized that there were some significant differences in certain issues between the north and south neighborhoods. As seen in the priority summary to the left, affordable housing was the top priority for both regions, with close to half of the respondents in each expressing this as a significant concern. However, moving down each list, there are some clear differences in how community members prioritized the neighborhood concerns. Differences across neighborhoods were also discussed in the earlier *Neighborhood Chapters* section of this report. The following discussion highlights several cases where the degree to which respondents from the north and south neighborhoods prioritized an issue differed by 25% or more (transportation, diversity, and pedestrian-friendly).²²

²¹ For the purpose of this report the northern neighborhoods are Ballard, Lake City, Greenwood/Phinney, Uptown and Wallingford. The southern neighborhoods are Admiral, Capitol Hill, Columbia City, International District and North Beacon Hill.

²² Themes such as City Responsiveness, Access to Food, and Cultural Places also showed a difference in degree of priority by region but are not included in this discussion because the total number of respondents that prioritized these issues for the region fell below the 25% threshold.

Pedestrian-Friendly Extremely Important in Northern Neighborhoods

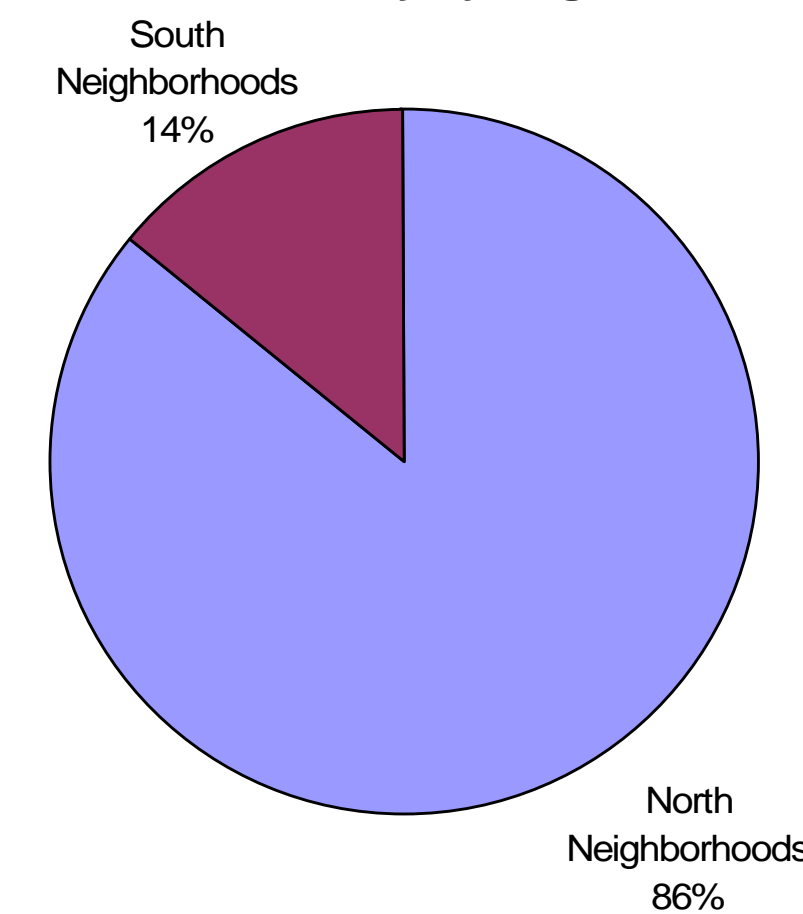
A pedestrian friendly neighborhood tied for third with thriving commercial districts as a major priority in the northern neighborhoods. In contrast, the southern neighborhoods only had three interviewees select this theme as a priority. Interviewees linked pedestrian-friendly to a number of neighborhood characteristics such as safety, the flow of automobile traffic, clean and welcoming environments, greenery, graffiti, and transients. These were all seen as factors that contribute or impede the pedestrian friendliness of a neighborhood.

Respondents from Uptown and Phinney/Greenwood indicated that more crosswalks and wider sidewalks would improve the pedestrian environment of their neighborhoods. Other elements that would enhance the pedestrian environment were additional trees and greenery and increased sidewalk maintenance. In Lake City, respondents generally viewed the neighborhood as a non-pedestrian friendly neighborhood, primarily due to a lack of sidewalks north of 85th Street, and a need for a more safe, clean and welcoming neighborhood.

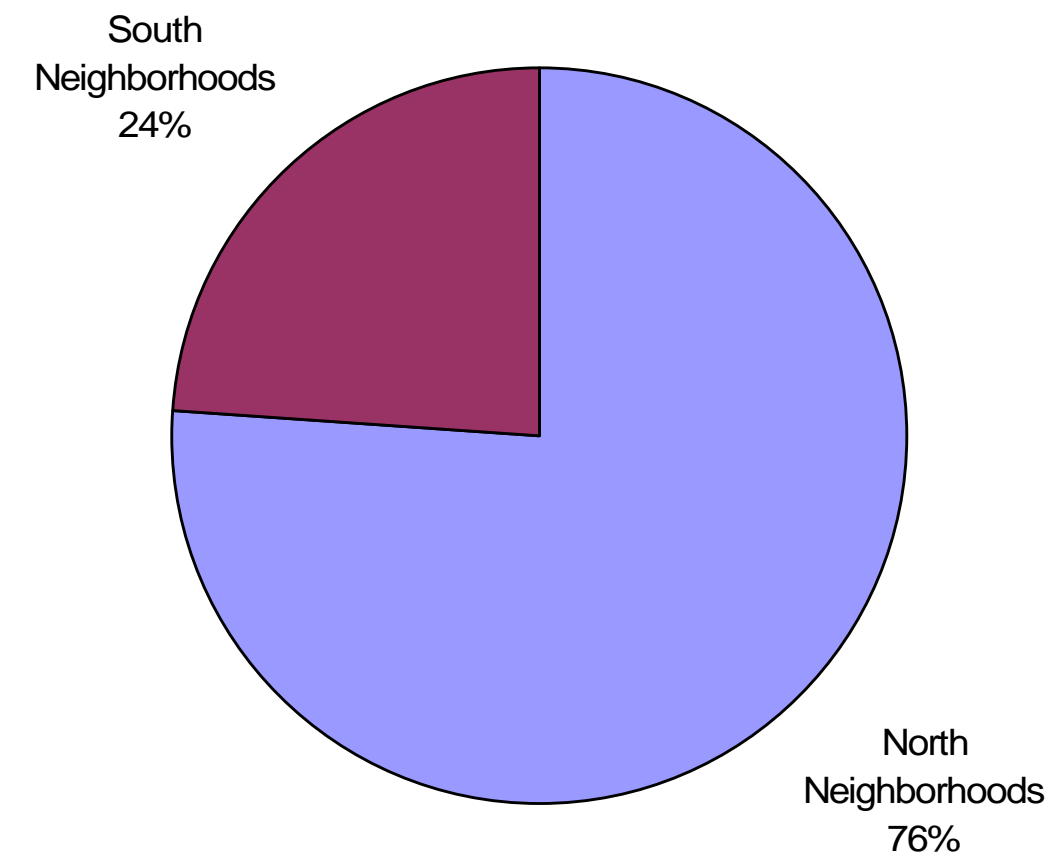
Alternative Transportation Higher Priority in Northern Neighborhoods

In the southern neighborhoods, only six of the respondents considered the support of alternative methods of transportation a priority,

Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Pedestrian-Friendly by Region



Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Alternative Transportation by Region



compared to 19 respondents who selected this theme in the northern neighborhoods. Most of the community leaders in the northern neighborhoods felt that they could benefit from some form of mass transit like Sound Transit, which will be servicing the southern neighborhoods soon. In addition, most of the northern respondents wanted their communities to be much more bike-friendly.

A major complaint regarding alternative transportation was the bus service; it does not seem to be sufficient to encourage people to stop using their cars. Most people stated that improvements, such as more frequent service and additional transfer points outside of downtown would reduce commute time and give people more of an incentive to ride the bus.

The Uptown community, in particular, felt that they needed better options for alternative transportation due to traffic stemming from large numbers of people visiting venues, such as the Seattle Center or Key Arena. For more details on Uptown see the previous *Neighborhood Chapters* section of this report.

Racial and Cultural Diversity Vital in the Southern Neighborhoods

Racial and cultural diversity tied with affordable housing in the south neighborhoods. When combined with another related theme (economic diversity), diversity ends up trumping affordable housing with nine more respondents prioritizing this issue in the south (see Appendix D).

Neighborhoods such as Columbia City, North Beacon Hill and the Chinatown-International District are home to many non-white residents. The respondents from these southern neighborhoods typically viewed diversity as an asset because they felt it brought culture, history, and richness to the community. They saw gentrification – stemming from a shortage of affordable housing – as a threat to this sense of community vibrancy.

The northern neighborhoods also emphasized diversity (racial, cultural, and economic) as a neighborhood asset. Yet, only 10 out of 47 respondents in the north neighborhoods prioritized racial and cultural diversity as an important issue. Again, if racial and cultural diversity were combined with economic diversity, diversity as a whole would still only rank fifth among northern respondents. Those respondents in northern neighborhoods that did prioritize racial and cultural diversity lamented that their neighborhood was not more diverse. However, in Lake City, racial and cultural diversity was seen as a community strength and a key priority. Many of the respondents there expressed pride in their diverse community and stressed the importance in sustaining it in the face of rising housing costs.

Percentage of Respondents who Prioritized Racial and Cultural Diversity by Region

