

Wallingford
Plan of Conservation and Development
2015 Update



Community Survey #1
Executive Summary and Full Results

Executive Summary

The first community survey for Wallingford’s POCD update was extremely successful in attracting responses from a large and diverse segment of the Town, with 1,811 respondents to English and Spanish language versions of the survey.

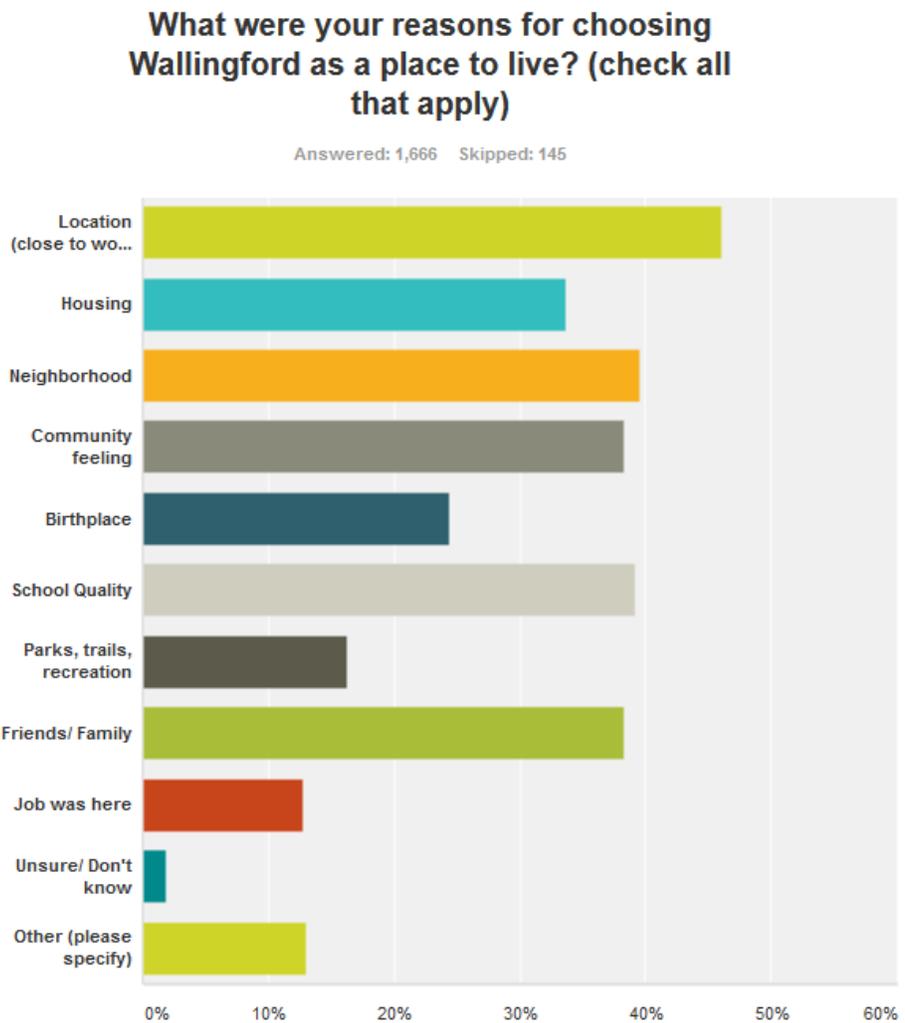
Who took the survey?

The median respondent was between 45 and 54 years of age, slightly older than the Census-estimated median age of 43 years. While the majority of respondents were between 35 and 64, the large number of respondents ensured that over 250 respondents under 35 and over 150 respondents 65 or older were included in the results. Over three quarters of respondents have lived in Wallingford for at least a decade, and a quarter are lifelong residents.

Most (81%) respondents live in single-family homes, which are the most common housing type in Wallingford. Younger residents (those between 18 and 34) were more likely than other age groups to live in apartments or townhomes. Close to half of respondents live in the East Side of Wallingford, followed by approximately a sixth of respondents each from the Town Center, Yalesville, and the West Side. 83% of respondents are employed and/or in school, and the most common types of employment were in the management, business, office administration, and professional services sectors.

Why Wallingford?

Proximity to employment was the leading reason why respondents chose to live in Wallingford, in addition to its neighborhoods, schools, community feeling, and to be near friends and family; among newer residents (5 years or less in Wallingford), similar reasons for living here applied, with many also mentioning affordable tax and utility rates.



Community Involvement

Wallingford residents are involved in a wide variety of organizations and events. According to the survey, athletic organizations and religious groups attract the greatest level of participation and giving in the community. Many respondents also volunteer in the schools or work to support local youth groups.

Most respondents follow local news, with the Record-Journal as the most common news source. In addition, large numbers of respondents reported relying on online sources for local news, including Facebook groups and the Wallingford Patch. When asked about how connected they feel to their community, the bulk of respondents said they felt “somewhat or occasionally” connected and engaged, while about a quarter each felt either very connected or very disconnected. Interestingly, while many younger adult residents of Wallingford have lived here their whole lives, younger respondents as a whole tended to report lower levels of connection to the community. Over 400 suggestions (see below) were made for improving community engagement in Wallingford; many suggested making more information about town events, meetings, and decisions easily available, such as through the Town website and social media. Many also suggested holding more events and gatherings in the community, including in Yalesville and other neighborhoods.



Housing and Demographics

The majority of respondents found that the demographic summary the survey provided (based on Census data) accurately reflected their perception of the community, although some reported seeing more younger families moving into the Town than recent statistical trends indicate; this might indicate either a recent shift in trends or simply reflect which groups are more visible in the community. The survey also asked whether the town should focus on gearing policy towards young families, older adults, or no particular age group. The largest group of respondents (40%) favored policies that would attract more young people and families, with especially strong support for this approach among newer residents, while an additional 36% advocated a balanced approach that did not emphasize any particular demographic. However, when asked about affordable housing policy, many approaches that might provide more affordable options to younger households were supported at low levels (especially among younger residents), while enabling ‘in-law’ suites in single-family units received the highest level of support.

Economic Development

Respondents suggested that clothing stores, smaller specialty stores, a farmer’s market, and sit-down restaurants were priorities for new businesses in Town; popular specific desires include higher-end/healthy grocers (e.g. Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, co-ops), discount retailers (e.g. Christmas Tree Shops), and coffee shops.

The survey also asked what strategies could help continue to attract a skilled workforce to Wallingford. Maintaining high-quality services and marketing the community regionally were strategies advocated by the majority (67% or more) of respondents; however, many expressed concerns that the Town’s services and the school system needed improvement to continue to attract new residents.

Recreation, Town Facilities, and Natural Resources

A majority of Wallingford’s residents consider its natural resources an asset that they appreciate, although few consider them a central reason for why they chose to live here. While many respondents mentioned enjoying local trails and parks, some areas of concern included a need for better trails and open space maintenance, as well as the loss of Community Lake. Use of Town open space was strongly associated with age, as older respondents are steadily more likely to use local open space.

Doolittle Park is the most frequently used park among respondents, followed by Lakeside Park, Pragemann Park, and Vietnam Memorial Field. Conversely, fewer than 10% of respondents reported having ever visited Bennett Field, Grand & Washington Street Park, or Richard Sheahan Park. Three-quarters of respondents rated the Town’s recreational facilities as “above average” or “average,” with many noting maintenance problems with the Town’s ballfields. Common suggestions (see below) for new recreational facilities included a splash pad for children, a skate park for teens, expanding trails at Community Lake or the Linear Trail, and completing the dog park.



Most schools in Wallingford were rated as “Excellent” or “Good” by a majority of respondents familiar with them. The middle schools and high schools received somewhat less positive reviews than elementary schools. Specific issues included concerns over poor quality of fields and grounds at the high

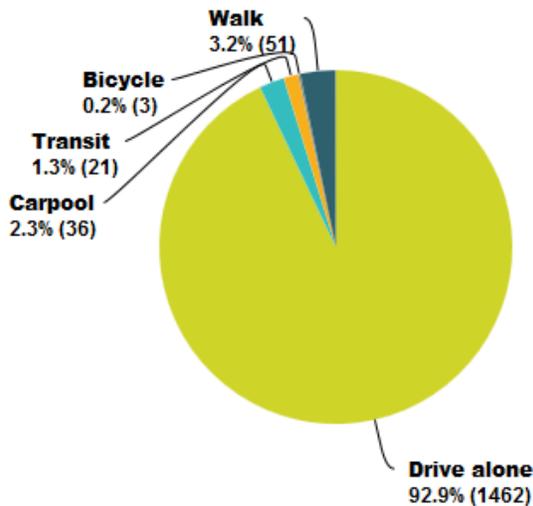
schools, poor maintenance of bathrooms and locker rooms, and the lack of air conditioning and poor heating and energy efficiency in many buildings.

Transportation

A large majority of respondents (92%) commute to work by driving alone, with small shares carpooling, using public transportation, or walking to work. Bicycling to work was almost non-existent among

How do you most often commute to work?

Answered: 1,573 Skipped: 238



respondents. However, a significant latent demand for transportation alternatives exist, with a full third of respondents preferring to use a different means of transportation if available, especially public transportation (at 14%). Younger residents (under age 35) were more likely to use public transportation for their commute, and when considering their ideal journey to work picked bicycling or carpooling at higher rates than other demographics. Conversely, older respondents were less likely to actually use public transportation, but more likely to list it as an ideal way to commute and to support transit accessibility as a strategy to attract

skilled workers to the community.

Close to half of respondents report commutes of less than 15 minutes, and only 19% report a commute over half an hour. In addition to traditional commutes, about a fifth of respondents reported telecommuting at least once a week.

When asked about neighborhood concerns, transportation-related issues were among the most commonly mentioned, with “Quality and maintenance of roads” (28%) and “Traffic or noise” (19%) the first and second most frequently cited issues. Non-existent or poorly maintained sidewalks and speeding were also cited as concerns by many respondents.