



Parks and Recreation Department
City of Bellingham

MEMORANDUM

To: Parks & Recreation Advisory Board
From: Nicole Oliver, Director
Subject: Parks & Recreation, Civic Athletic Complex Public Engagement
Date: December 6, 2024

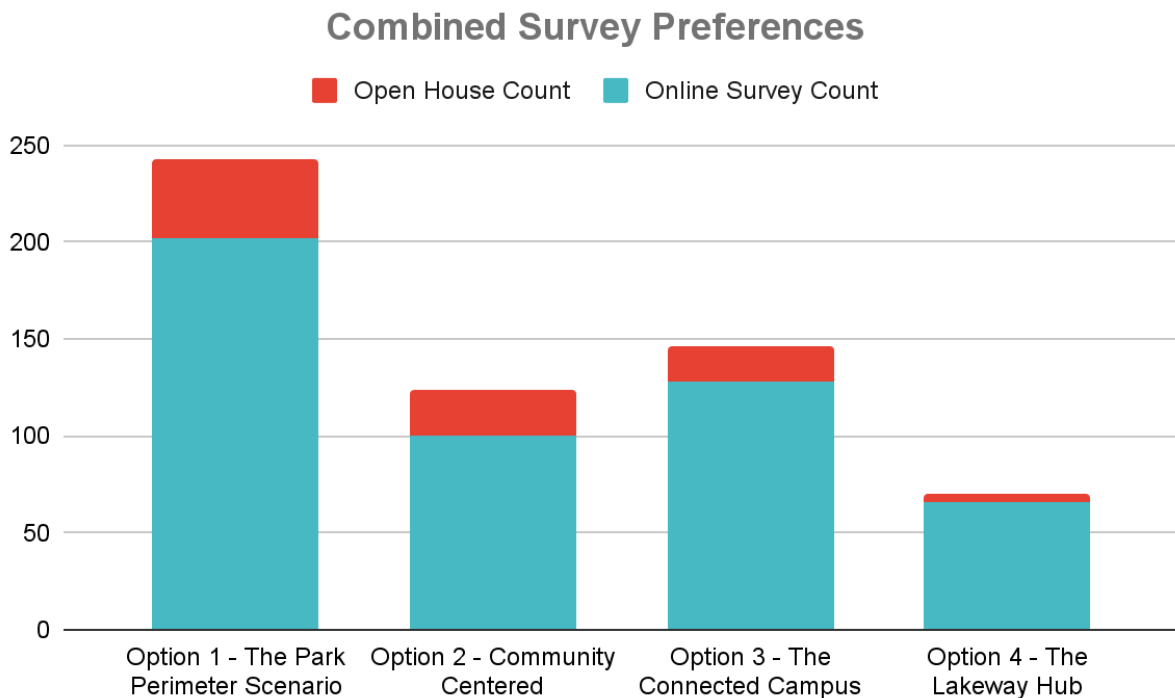
Attached is a summary of the public engagement survey on the Civic Complex Master Plan update. City and Bellingham School District staff are working together to focus and refine Option 1 and will be evaluating and incorporating the feedback we received into a preferred alternative to be released to the public in January. This engagement was well received, and many stakeholder groups emphasized their support for the process and our efforts to be inclusive and transparent as we built consensus around the best approach for the future of this critical recreational area.

Survey Results Summary

Civic Athletic Complex

The following graph shows data from both an in-person open house and online survey, indicating community preferences for a set of different visions for the Bellingham Civic Athletic Complex.

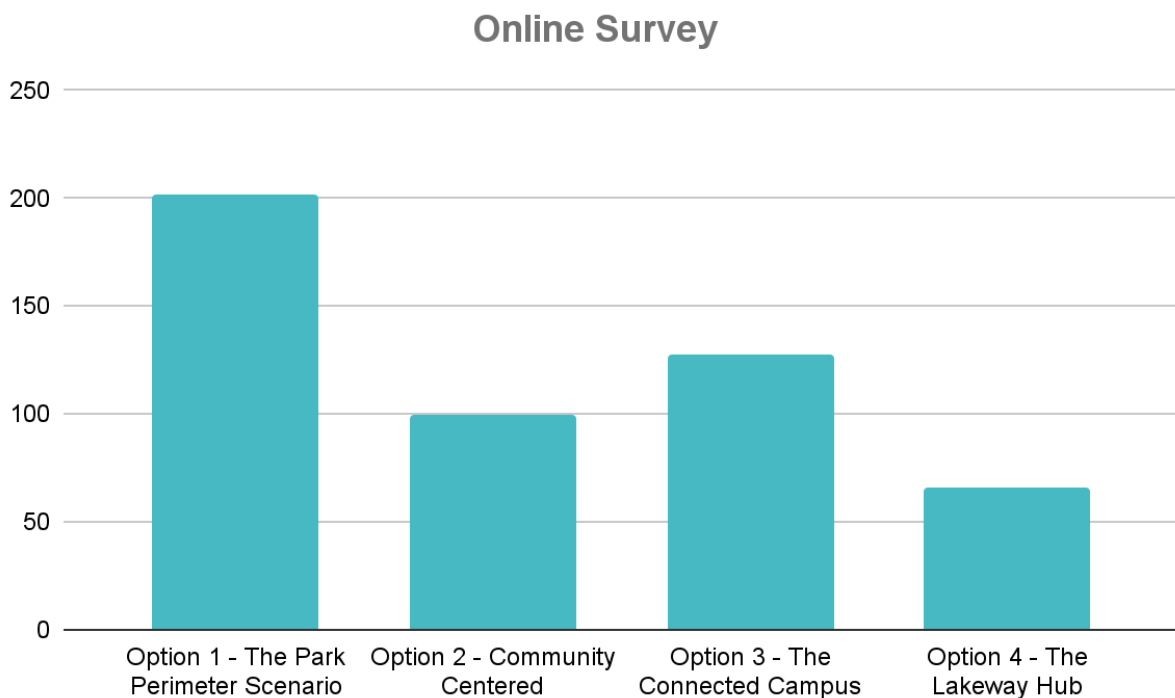
We shared four scenarios for high intensity development at Civic Athletic Complex. In your opinion, which option presents the vision that aligns best with what you hope to see for Civic?



Civic Athletic Complex Online Survey Counts

1. Preferred Vision

We shared four scenarios for high intensity development at Civic Athletic Complex. In your opinion, which option presents the vision that aligns best with what you hope to see for Civic?



Option 1 - The Park Perimeter

- 202 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - Focuses on open spaces and preserves wetlands, which aligns with environmental priorities.
 - Maintains traffic flow without significant disruption.
 - Provides space for future expansion while preserving the character of the Civic complex.

- Examples of Feedback:
 - "Doesn't interrupt the flow of traffic or add unnecessary congestion."
 - "Option 1 feels more expansive and less crowded compared to others."

Option 2 - Community Centered

- 100 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - Emphasizes community spaces and gathering areas.
 - Features a balanced integration of recreational and social amenities.
- Examples of Feedback:
 - "I like the community-oriented approach and the central focus on connectivity."
 - "Option 2 seems to bring people together, which is important for a civic complex."

Option 3 - The Connected Campus

- 128 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - Promotes connectivity across the site with trails and bike paths.
 - Centralized facilities reduce traffic congestion and enhance walkability.
- Examples of Feedback:
 - "I like the idea of connected paths and trails for better pedestrian access."
 - "Option 3 fosters an integrated campus feel, which could be beneficial for the community."

Option 4 - The Lakeway Hub

- 66 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - Focuses on developing the area along Lakeway Drive.
 - Provides opportunities for high-density activities and economic development.
- Examples of Feedback:

- "The Lakeway Hub could support economic growth and create a vibrant urban area."
- "It's a good option for maximizing use of the space, though traffic is a concern."

2. Reasons for Favorite Option

- Preservation of Natural Spaces: Mentioned by 89 respondents.
 - Example: "Highlights wetlands and maintains green areas."
- Community-Oriented Design: Mentioned by 105 respondents.
 - Example: "Central gathering spaces bring people together."
- Traffic Flow and Accessibility: Mentioned by 96 respondents.
 - Example: "Improves pedestrian and cyclist safety."
- Aquatics and Recreational Facilities: Mentioned by 165 respondents.
 - Example: "Expand pool and sports facilities to meet demand."

3. Ideas to Include from Other Options

- Wetland Integration: Suggested by 46 respondents.
 - Example: "Include wetlands from Option 1 in all designs."
- Recreation Amenities: Suggested by 60 respondents.
 - Example: "Integrate trail systems from Option 3 into Option 2."
- Community Spaces: Suggested by 45 respondents.
 - Example: "Add community gathering areas to other designs."
- Traffic and Safety: Suggested by 30 respondents.
 - Example: "Incorporate traffic calming measures universally."

4. Additional Comments

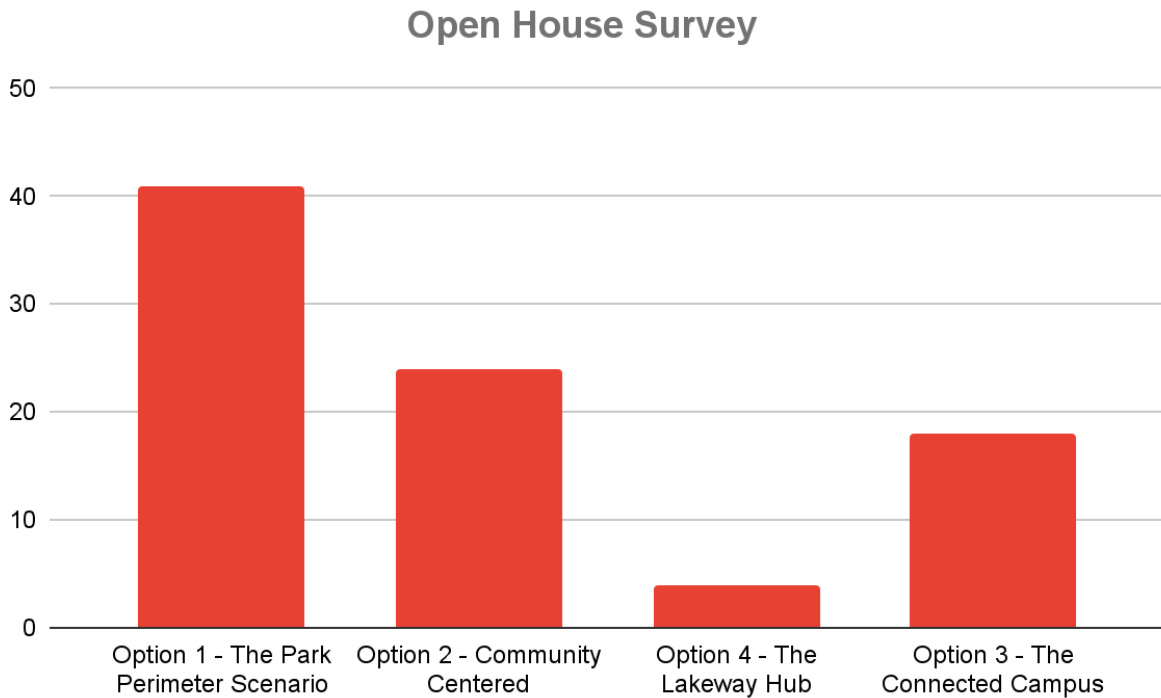
- Expanded Aquatics Facilities: Mentioned by 69 respondents.
 - Example: "Triple aquatic space and add features like warm water pools."
- Safety and Accessibility: Mentioned by 69 respondents.
 - Example: "Prioritize pedestrian and cyclist access for all ages."
- Preserving Natural Features: Mentioned by 26 respondents.
 - Example: "Save mature trees and restore habitats."
- Improved Indoor Spaces: Mentioned by 88 respondents.

- Example: "Include more indoor recreation spaces for year-round use."
- Traffic and Parking: Mentioned by 65 respondents.
 - Example: "Ensure adequate parking while promoting bike access."

Open House Survey ([link to survey data](#))

1. Preferred Vision

We shared four scenarios for high intensity development at Civic Athletic Complex. In your opinion, which option presents the vision that aligns best with what you hope to see for Civic?



Option 1 - The Park Perimeter

- 41 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - The option provides a relatively flat space to develop diverse sports fields.
 - It balances open areas with recreational amenities effectively.

- Respondents appreciated the open design allowing multifunctional use.
- Examples of Feedback:
 - "Option 1 has a relatively flat space to develop multiple fields."
 - "I like that this design keeps open and recreational areas accessible."
 - "It seems to allow for a mix of functionality and aesthetics."

Option 2 - Community Centered

- 24 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - The design integrates community activities with accessible facilities.
 - Focuses on providing shared spaces that benefit the entire community.
 - Considerations for safety and functionality for local residents.
- Examples of Feedback:
 - "I like the community-centered option as it integrates shared spaces."
 - "I think the school should be further from Lake Washington for safety."
 - "This option feels more inclusive for families and local use."

Option 3 - The Connected Campus

- 18 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - This option offers good flow and connectivity around the campus.
 - Respondents appreciated the placement of parking areas away from the center and the efficient use of open spaces.
 - The design balances accessibility with well-distributed facilities.
- Examples of Feedback:
 - "A little bit of everything, good flow around the campus."
 - "Parking lot isn't in the center. Open surface areas feel inviting."
 - "This design creates a strong sense of connection across the site."

Option 4 - The Lakeway Hub

- 4 respondents chose this option.
- Reasons:
 - Retains existing infrastructure while consolidating facilities for efficiency.
 - Provides opportunities for expansion, including sportsplex and aquatics facilities.
- Examples of Feedback:

- "Keeps existing infrastructure, consolidated facilities."
- "Potential expansion to sportsplex, expanded aquatics, larger school spaces closer together, no school spaces on Fraser street where large crowds of homeless people have been gathering."
- "Focused development."

2. Reasons for Favorite Option

- Key reasons included:
 - Emphasis on community-oriented spaces.
 - Support for preserving wetlands and open green spaces.
 - Expansion of pool and aquatic facilities as a priority.
- Community Spaces and Accessibility:
 - "Option 2 creates a hub for the community and integrates spaces for people of all ages and activities. I want the complex to bring the community together."
 - "The focus on central gathering spaces in Option 3 resonates with my vision of a vibrant, accessible civic area."
- Preservation of Natural Features:
 - "Option 1 highlights the wetlands and natural beauty of the site. It's essential to preserve the character of the area while enhancing its use."
 - "I appreciate the balance in Option 4 between development and maintaining green spaces."
- Aquatic Facilities and Recreation:
 - "The expansion of the aquatic center in Option 1 is crucial for meeting community needs, especially for families and individuals with limited mobility."
 - "Pools and recreational activities in Options 3 and 4 should be emphasized for their versatility."
- Avoiding Overdevelopment:
 - a. "Option 1 maintains open spaces without overcrowding. The other options feel too dense and urbanized for the area."

3. Ideas to Include from Other Options

- Integration of Wetland Features:
 - "From Option 1, the wetlands park concept could be included in all designs to ensure environmental preservation and provide an educational opportunity."

- "The wetlands in Option 2 would enhance the ecological value of the area."
- Blending Recreational Amenities:
 - "I like the recreational amenities in Options 3 and 4, such as sports facilities and trails, which could be included in Option 1's framework."
 - "Integrating walking and biking trails from Option 3 into Option 2's design would create better connectivity."
- Community-Focused Design Elements:
 - "From Option 2, I appreciate the emphasis on community gathering spaces. This should be integrated into any final design."

4. Additional Comments

- Common themes in open-ended responses:
 - Requests for enhanced aquatics facilities and ensuring accessibility.
 - Preservation of mature trees and natural spaces.
 - Desire to merge the best features from various options for a more comprehensive plan.
- Emphasis on Accessibility:
 - "Ensure that all areas are accessible to people with disabilities, from trails to pools to parking."
 - "The designs should prioritize walkability and include safe pathways for pedestrians and cyclists."
- Preserving Mature Trees:
 - "Save as many old, established trees as possible. They are crucial for the area's aesthetics and ecology."
 - "Tree preservation should be a key goal, especially along the perimeter and in central areas."
- Aquatic Facilities:
 - "Aquatics are vital for families, seniors, and individuals with limited mobility. This should be prioritized in the final design."
 - "Expand pool areas and consider incorporating features like a splash pad or warm water pools for therapeutic use."
- Combining Best Features:

- "I'd love to see the best features from all plans combined, such as the wetlands from Option 1, the community spaces from Option 2, and the recreation focus from Option 3."
- "Avoid rigidly following one plan and instead synthesize the most impactful ideas across all scenarios."
- Traffic and Parking Concerns:
 - "Consider the impact of traffic on Lakeway Drive and ensure adequate parking. The area needs to remain accessible without causing congestion."
 - "Traffic calming measures should be included in the final design to ensure safety."