



South End Community Survey

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I. Introduction:

In October of 2014 a short confidential and anonymous community survey was conducted and distributed using web-based mechanisms, namely e-mail, Facebook, and the OnlyinBridgeport.com blog. The survey consisted of eight questions, all of which targeted different quality of life issues. The survey was specifically tailored to quality of life issues in Bridgeport's South End Neighborhood. Participants were asked to rate key quality of life issues on a scale from 1 (not concerning) to 10 (extremely concerning). In order to analyze these data, scores for each quality of life area were averaged, and then ranked from highest to lowest.

A total of 82 participants responded, 34 of which were residents of Bridgeport's South End. For the convenience of the reader of this report, findings from this survey are divided into three major sections (1) South End Residents, (2) Non-South End Residents who live in Bridgeport, and (3) Non-Bridgeport residents. However, in this report, we mainly focus on the findings generated by South End Residents.

II. Responses by South End Residents

Figure 1: Responses from Bridgeport South End Residents

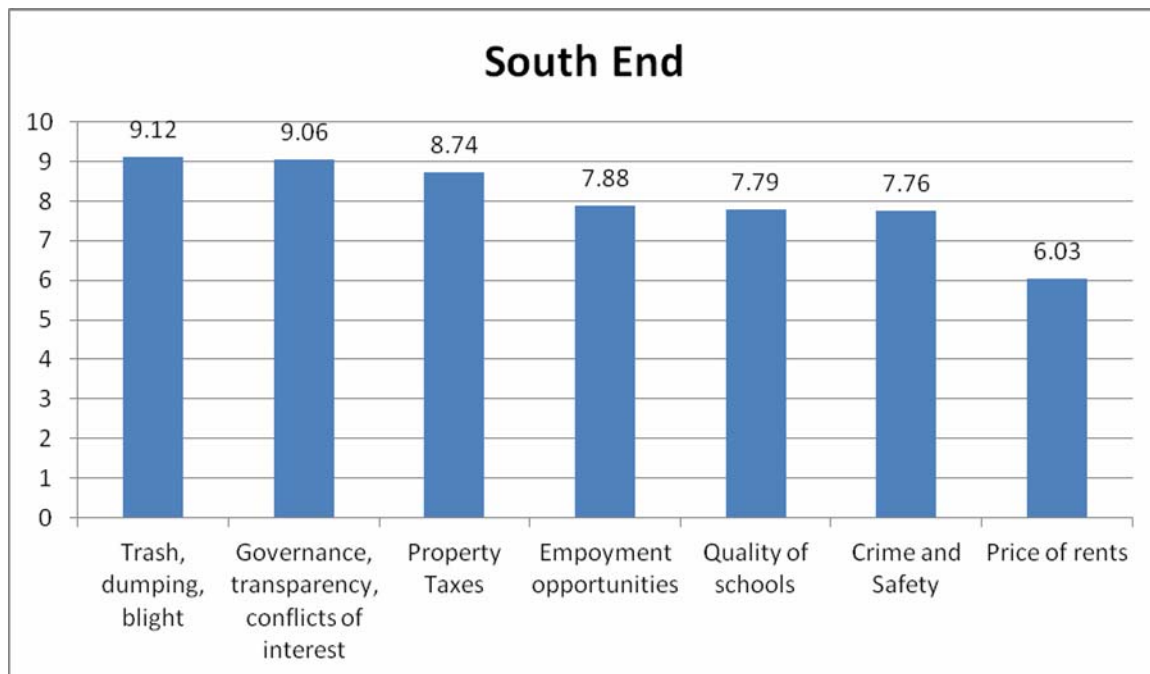


Figure 1 presents average scores across South End residents ($N = 34$) in descending order. The top three areas of concern among participants in this survey were issues concerning blight, governance, and taxes. All areas are discussed below in more detail.

1. **Trash, dumping, blight:** Blight remains a serious issue of concern among South End residents. This concern was further corroborated by qualitative responses that were generated within this survey. For example, participants stated *"I am concerned about blight and ill maintained roads"*, *"I love the South End but I want it to be improved"* and *"there is too much blight and potholes"*.

Issues of blight are of serious concern not only to residents, but also other local stakeholders such as the University of Bridgeport. As prospective students (and parents of students) visit the university, the aesthetics of the surrounding neighborhood can raise concerns and may play a role in whether the student decides to attend the university.

In addition, Bridgeport's South End is easily accessible from Route 8 and I-95. Given its accessibility, the appearance of this neighborhood should be prioritized as it is likely to serve as a 'first impression' to outside visitors due to its accessibility.

Lastly, the South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone was established in approximately 2008 to address issues of blight. According to Connecticut statutes Neighborhood Revitalization Zones are primarily established to address issues of blight. Despite this objective, and the establishment of the South End NRZ, blight remains a central issue among South End residents. Future work should consider an examination of the South End NRZ to better understand how current practices are at fidelity with the objective of addressing blight.

2. **Governance:** Governance was rated as a central issue of concern. Although the specific concerns regarding governance cannot be determined from this survey, issues of trust and confidence in governing structures are typically central to this perception. In addition, the concern of governance was also rated highly by non-South End Bridgeport residents (see Figure 3).

Issues of governance and public trust are critical to revitalization efforts. It is possible that even well planned projects may experience public resistance if issues of public trust are not satisfactorily addressed. Echoing this theme of governance, one participant, a non-South End resident, stated “The South End NRZ should be replaced with sincere and honest people”. Regardless of the factual basis of these perceptions, it is necessary to note that perceptions are real in their consequences, and that public mistrust can challenge revitalization efforts.

Greater effort should be made in order to elicit meaningful community input from a wide-range of community stakeholders, families, and households.

3. **Property Taxes:** Property taxes were rated highly as well. In some instances taxes were discussed from a consumerist perspective in which money is paid but there is minimal return. For example, one participant stated “*We pay a lot of taxes but have horrible roads*”. Bridgeport’s tax rate ranks high nationwide and underlies many other quality of life issues (e.g., rent burden).

4. **Employment Opportunities:** Employment opportunities ranked 6th. Bridgeport is an economically distressed municipality and the development of viable employment opportunities is likely to favorably impact other quality of life issues. Despite being in Fairfield County, which ranks as one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, Bridgeport experiences high levels of poverty. For example one participant, a South End resident, stated, “*I have been unemployed for 7-months, and my salary was \$9.50...*”. Thus, given the high cost of living in Fairfield County, economic opportunities are particularly critical to the well-being of Bridgeport’s most fragile households and families, many of whom live in the South End.

5. **Quality of schools:** Quality of schools were also rated highly, albeit lower than other areas of concern. One parent of a Roosevelt School student stated the following “*My daughter attended Roosevelt from PreK-6 grade. Roosevelt is ranked as one of the worst performing schools in Connecticut, it ranks in the bottom 5%*”.

Thus, serious concerns were raised regarding the quality of local schools. In many ways the quality of local schools underlies other areas of concern addressed in this survey (e.g., employment opportunities).

In addition, it is important to note that Roosevelt school is in close proximity of the University of Bridgeport. It is possible that a university-community partnership could be developed between the University to Bridgeport and Roosevelt School. Such a partnership would need to be sustained overtime as opposed to partnerships that are more episodic (e.g., community clean-ups). Although short-term and episodic activities (e.g., community clear-ups) are important, only sustained partnerships over time can yield benefits (e.g., academic outcomes, positive youth development). Some of the activities that U.B. students can provide include mentoring, exposure to extra-curricular activities (e.g., musical talents), and tutoring. Such activities would be mutually beneficial, and would ideally be developed in a manner that is evidence-based and supported by funding.

6. **Crime and Safety:** Interestingly, crime and safety were rated lower than other areas, but was nevertheless, rated as an area of high concern. One South End resident stated *“we need the neighborhood to be clean of crime and drugs”*

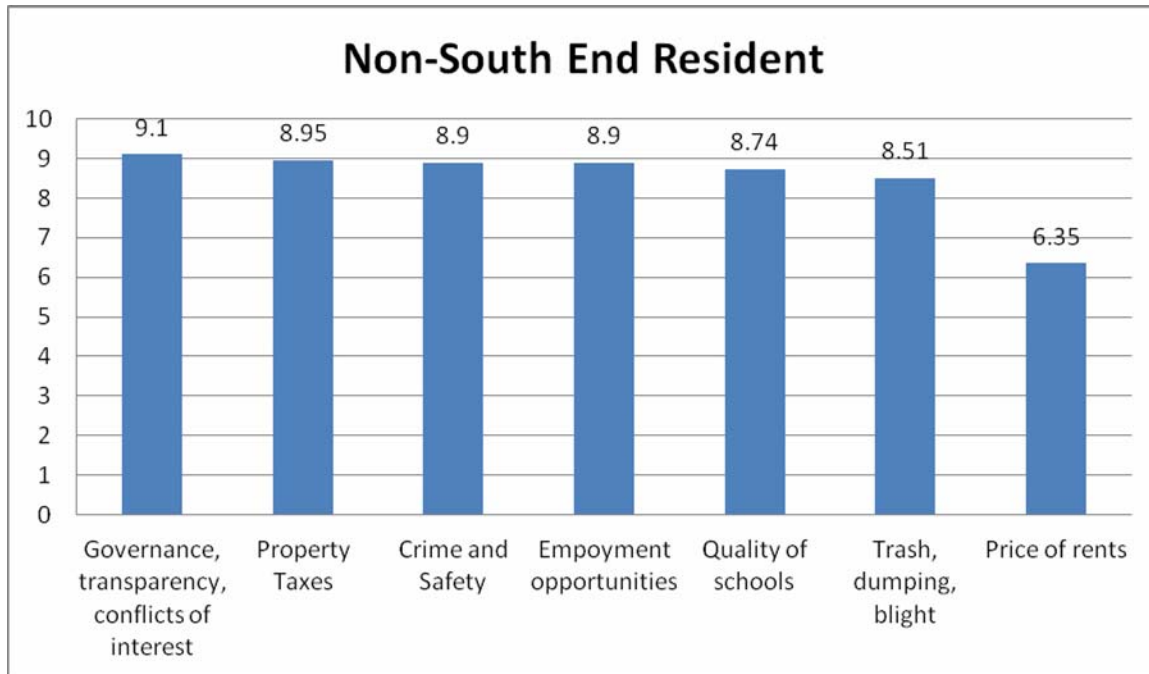
The issue of crime and safety is not only of concern to the neighborhood, but also visitors to the South End such as employees in the neighborhood, students, and potential students.

7. **Price of Rents:** Interestingly, the price of rent was rated lowest. However, this issue was still rated as a high concern (6.03). Bridgeport’s South End is still an area in which rents are relatively lower than other neighborhoods in the city and neighboring towns. Nevertheless, this should be interpreted with some caution as Bridgeport’s South End also has many households that are low-income and live in poverty and may be highly concerned about rents. Although it cannot be fully determined from this survey, it is possible that that some respondents to the survey rated rents as a high concern whereas another sub-population may have rated this concern lower leading to an average score that is at the middle of the 10-point scale. Nevertheless, overall, the price of rents was rated as less of a concern relative to other quality of life issues.

III. Responses by Non-South End Residents who live in Bridgeport

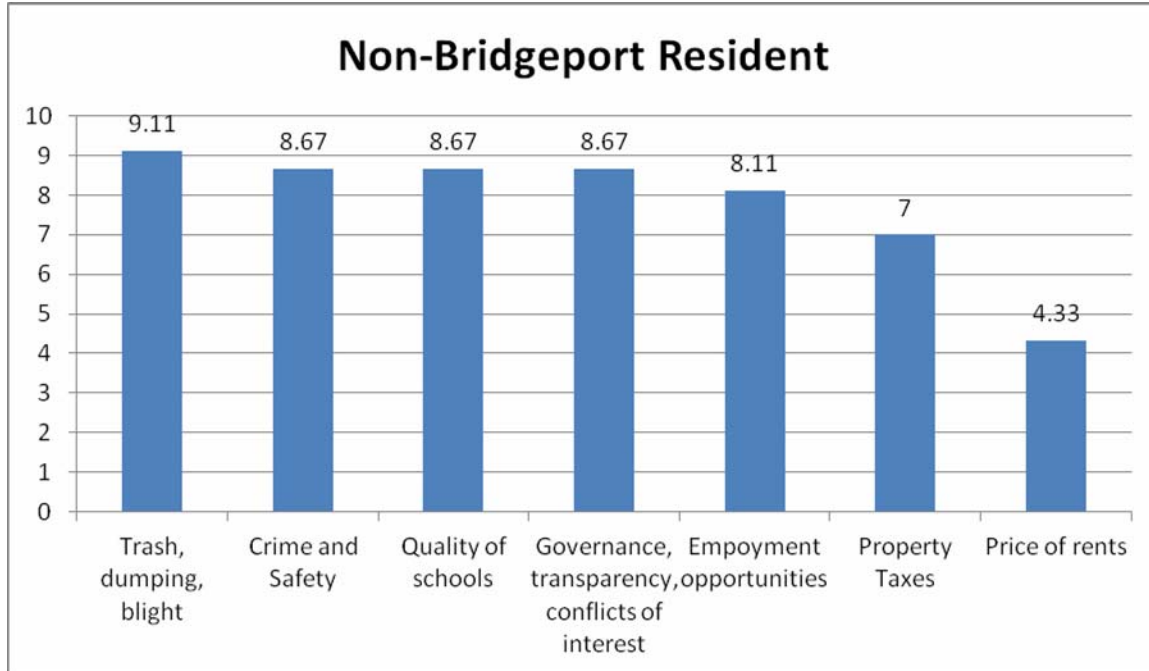
Figure 2 is based on responses from non-South End residents. All of Bridgeport’s major neighborhood were represented (i.e., East Side, East End, West End, Black Rock, North End, and the Hollow).

Figure 2: Scores generated by non-South End residents



IV. Responses by Non-Bridgeport Residents

Figure 3: Scores generated by non-Bridgeport residents



V. Limitations:

Findings in this brief and preliminary report should be interpreted with some caution. First, a larger sample size is necessary. Second, data were collected using an online survey and it is possible that individuals without internet or community access may not be well represented.

Despite these limitations, community-level surveys that are focused on specific Bridgeport neighborhoods remain rare, and this report marks a first-step in beginning to gather a wide-range of perspectives from residents within specific Bridgeport neighborhoods.