



Friends of Bayou St. John

2023/24 Community Feedback Survey



Introduction

The Friends of Bayou St. John presents this community mapping survey report, a comprehensive overview compiled from 205 responses from residents in and around Bayou St. John collected in Fall/Winter 2023. This report serves as a conduit for the voices of our community, articulating their desires and aspirations for the future of Bayou St. John. Its purpose is twofold: to disseminate key findings and insights garnered from the survey, and to ensure that our organization's initiatives align closely with the expressed needs and wishes of the community. By providing a platform for residents to voice their opinions, this report underscores our commitment to ongoing community engagement and collaborative decision-making, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and responsive approach to programming and development in Bayou St. John.

Who We Are

Bayou St. John connects many communities in New Orleans and traces a path through the city's history. The Friends of Bayou St. John connects people to this unique natural and cultural resource.

The Friends of Bayou St. John is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes stewardship, cultural appreciation, responsible recreation and initiatives that support a clean, healthy and beautiful Bayou St. John that is accessible to all.

What We Do

The Mid-City Bayou Boogaloo music festival is the organization's signature program. Originally created in 2006 to help revitalize a neighborhood and support musicians, artists and community businesses in the wake of Hurricane Katrina — Boogaloo has grown into a yearly celebration of local culture and community and demonstration of how Bayou St. John can bring New Orleans together.

But we are more than just Bayou Boogaloo. In our efforts to promote the stewardship and preservation of Bayou St. John, we run monthly invasive species and litter cleanups crucial to keeping the Bayou clean and healthy. Moreover, we work toward material improvements and upkeep of the Bayou through programs like trash can installation, tree plantings and tree upkeep, accessible signage installation, and more.

We are also committed to promoting environmental education for children and adults, partnering with other local organizations to uplift and promote safe recreational use of the Bayou, promoting local artists and creators and fostering a sense of community and collaboration in the Mid-City/ Bayou St. John neighborhood.

This Report

This report is composed of results from a community mapping survey conducted in and around Bayou St. John in the fall/winter of 2023. Survey questions were originally piloted in a smaller survey during our May 2023 Give Nola Day event. The survey was then retooled

and shared with community members and neighborhood organizations across Bayou St. John to get further feedback and input from our community. The final version of the survey was then shared both online and via a physical mailer with a qr code to access the survey (over 90 responses came in after the launch of the physical mailers). An incentive of being entered in a drawing for two sets of VIP Weekend Passes to the 2024 Bayou Boogaloo was offered to respondents. **205 people responded, and this report consists of their answers. Please note, we do not have the space within this report to list each individual response as there were hundreds of write in responses; however, we have done our best to provide an overview of the responses gathered and represent the views of the respondents fairly.** Names and identifying information of respondents remain anonymous. Please see the appendix for links to copies of the survey questionnaire and the one page report from the pilot survey. If you have any questions or concerns about this report please contact Zoe Sullivan at zoe@bayoustjohn.org.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to all those who participated in this survey and to the neighborhood associations and Mid-City groups who participated in feedback that was key to the creation of this survey and disseminated the survey to their members. Special thanks also to our sister organization Waterway Eco Team for their support with the creation of this report.

Follow Us

To keep up to date with our organization, volunteer for our cleanups, donate to support our efforts and/ or become a member, please scan the QR Code below! Follow us on Facebook and on Instagram at @friendsofbayoustjohn, and check out our website at www.bayoustjohn.org.

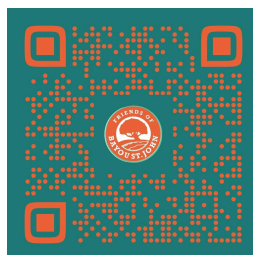


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Demographics

Of our 205 participants, responders were split across age groups somewhat evenly, with the largest percentage being between 35-44 years old (24.5%), followed by 65+ years old (21.6%), 55-64 years old (20.6%), and 45-54 years old (17.2%) with the smallest number of respondents coming from ages 18-24 years old.

When asked how they would describe themselves, 90.1% of respondents identified as white, 3% identified as Black or African American, and 1.5% identified as Asian with the remaining respondents self identifying as Creole, French Creole Latine, Mixed, Hispanic, and Bi-Racial. 8.4% of the respondents identified themselves as being of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

43.7% of respondents identified as female, 48.2% of respondents identified as male, and 1% identified as non-binary. The remaining 7% declined to answer.

When asked if respondents have children under the age of 18, 20.6% of respondents answered that they had children.

Bayou Experience

91.7% of respondents reported that they live directly on or near Bayou St. John with the majority reporting that they live in the following areas: Bayou St. John, City Park, Faubourg St. John, Parkview, Mid-City, Fairgrounds and Lakeview.

When asked what they mainly used the Bayou for, the overwhelming majority of respondents named enjoying nature, recreation, and socializing as their top three choices. Sports, walking, dog-walking, biking, and fishing were also mentioned multiple times as key uses of the Bayou.

Most respondents reported being on the Bayou every day (39%) or at least once a week (36.1%), and all remaining respondents reported being on the bayou at least once a month or once every few months.

When respondents were asked to self identify what they think is most important about Bayou St. John the following answers or variations of these answers were the most reported:

- 1) **Nature and Greenspace:** Respondents overwhelmingly mentioned the natural beauty and serenity of Bayou St. John as a wild and undeveloped green space. They value it as a unique urban sanctuary, distinct for its non-commercial character, offering opportunities to enjoy natural flora and fauna. This underscores the communities strong desire to maintain Bayou St. John as an untouched natural haven amidst urban development.
- 2) **Upkeep and Preservation:** Respondents express a clear desire to preserve Bayou St. John as it is, and to maintain its waterways and greenspaces. Respondents stated this means ensuring its waters remain clean and free of litter. They seek solutions to maintain a litter and garbage-free environment, emphasizing the importance of proper recycling and trash disposal. Additionally, there's a strong commitment to keeping waterways clear of invasive species and safeguarding the natural flora and fauna, including the preservation of oak trees and upkeep of the grounds.
- 3) **Recreation and Socializing:** Respondents highlighted the importance of Bayou St. John as a space for recreation and socializing. Many expressed a desire for improved bike paths and expanded options. Many also mentioned utilizing the bayou for water-based activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Additionally, there's a strong interest in utilizing the bayou as a community gathering space. Finally, many mentioned utilizing the bayou for activities like picnics, yoga, meditation, nature watching and leisurely walks with dogs.
- 4) **Cultural Center and Activities:** Numerous respondents emphasized the historical and cultural significance of Bayou St. John as a hub for cultural activities, art, festivals, and commemorating its historical importance. They expressed a desire to utilize the space for events that celebrate the area's rich heritage and serve as a platform for artistic expression and community engagement. This acknowledgment

underscores the community's commitment to preserving Bayou St. John's legacy and fostering a vibrant cultural scene for generations to come.

- 5) **Accessibility and Safety:** Respondents emphasized the need for Bayou St. John to remain safe and accessible for all, as one of the city's few remaining natural green spaces. Safety for families and residents was a key concern, as was traffic safety – highlighting the community's commitment to preserving the Bayou as a welcoming environment for enjoying nature. Accessibility for those with disabilities and/or hearing and vision impairments was also mentioned.

Programming

Overall

When asked what types of programming respondents would most like to see from our organization, the following responses were most popular, with participants allowed to choose multiple options:

- 1) 81% selected Environmental Educational Programming (interactive signs, videos, talks from specialist/ experts on Bayou St. John, reports, community meetings)
- 2) 64.9% selected Beautifying Programs (planting projects, new signs, art installations, etc.)
- 3) 50.2% selected Community Focused Programs (art pop ups, yoga, sports, community celebrations)
- 4) 43.9% selected Historical Education Programming/ Outreach (learning more about the history and culture of Bayou St. John)
- 5) 35.1% selected Environmental Educational Programming (interactive signs, videos, talks from specialist/ experts on Bayou St. John, reports, community meetings)
- 6) 32.7% selected Volunteer Opportunities
- 7) 25.9% selected Information Hub (resource for information about services, rules and regulations surrounding the Bayou)
- 8) 21.5% selected Family Friendly and Kid Focused Programming

Respondents were also able to write in their own ideas for programming. Planning sessions with local community and neighborhood organizations, boating and rowing events, bike paths, parking enforcement, water testing, programming related to recognizing the indigenous history of the Bayou, programming related to centering the Bayou as a resource for all to enjoy and uplifting diverse voices and community partner organizations, water-safety education for children, trash reduction and more trash pick ups, yoga, invasive species clean up and education, bank naturalization, community gardens, appropriate tree planting and shade creation, and installation of things like benches, signage and trash cans were all mentioned 1-3 times.

On the opposite end of the spectrum at least 4 respondents reported wanting no installations of things like signage, trash cans, benches etc. on the Bayou and at least 15 respondents reported wanting no programming at all. Multiple respondents emphasized the need to prevent the commercialization of the Bayou.

For Children and Youths

When asked what programming respondents would like to see our organization offer for Children and Youths, the following responses were most popular, with respondents able to select multiple options:

- 1) 71.2% selected Environmental Education
- 2) 50.6% selected Arts and Music
- 3) 50.6% selected Exercise and Sports
- 4) 50% selected Historical and Cultural Education
- 5) 23.5% selected Yoga

Respondents also wrote in responses mentioning things like partnerships with the Audubon Zoo, birding, and programs that involve senior citizens. 10 respondents wrote in that they wanted no programming for children.

For the Future

When asked what issues do respondents see as the most important programming focuses for the future of the Bayou St. John Community, the following responses were most popular, with respondents able to select multiple options:

- 1) 77.2% selected Health/ Environmental Stewardship and Preservation
- 2) 53.5% selected Beautification
- 3) 43.1% selected Safety
- 4) 32.2% selected Inclusivity
- 5) 26.2% selected Arts and Culture
- 6) 14.4% selected Education

Respondents also mentioned safety, traffic safety, law enforcement, preservation of the Bayou, preventing the commercialization of the Bayou, more bike lanes and options, restricting vehicle traffic, and good neighbor behavior/ respect for residents.

When asked about potential physical improvements respondents would like to see on the Bayou, the following responses were the most popular, with respondents allowed to select multiple options:

- 1) 53.8% selected Benches
- 2) 53.8% selected Bike Path and Walking Path Improvements
- 3) 21.1% selected Educational Signage

Multiple residents wrote in responses that requested more trees and native plants, no-parking signs, shade creation, and recycling/ trash receptacles. Multiple respondents reported wanting no physical improvements.

Safety

When asked what we could do to make Bayou St. John safer, the following responses were the most reported:

- 1) Installation of appropriate lighting that does not harm flora/ fauna
- 2) Improved signage

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- 3) Improved cross walks/ street crossings
 - 4) Bulkhead restoration
 - 5) Speed Bumps/ Traffic Regulation
 - 6) Improved walking paths/ bike paths
 - 7) More police patrols
 - 8) Enforcement of parking and traffic ordinances

Health

When asked what we could do to make Bayou St. John healthier, the following responses were the most reported:

- 1) Cleaner Water: water testing, removal of trash and invasive species, water cleaning plants, creation of wetlands and bank naturalization to promote cleaner water
- 2) Maintaining trees, growth, grass, and grounds
- 3) More Trash Pick Up, Litter Prevention, Recycling, Litter rules enforcement, More Trash Cans
- 4) Enforcement of parking restrictions on the Levee tops/ Banks/ Grass of the Bayou
- 5) Open the gates/ flow to Lake Pontchartrain
- 6) More Trees and Native Plants
- 7) Enforcement of Dog Leash Laws

Beauty

When asked what we could do to make Bayou St. John more beautiful, the following responses were the most reported:

- 1) Planting of More Trees and Native Plants
- 2) More Trash Cans and Litter Clean ups
- 3) Bulkhead Restoration
- 4) Cleanup of Graffiti
- 5) Artwork/ Art Installations/ Murals
- 6) Keeping Grass Mowed
- 7) Washing/ Cleaning of Bridges
- 8) Dedicated walking/ bike paths

Multiple respondents also reported that they want nothing done to beautify the Bayou.

Inclusivity

When asked what we could do to make Bayou St. John more inclusive, the following responses were the most reported:

- 1) Visual and Audio Impaired Accessible Signage
- 2) Adding more sidewalks that are ADA Compliant
- 3) Adding bike paths
- 4) Community Events and Collaboration Between Community Groups and Organizations
- 5) Community Engagement and Outreach
- 6) More Free Programs and Events

Multiple respondents also reported that nothing needs to be done to promote inclusivity, as the Bayou already exists as an inclusive natural resource accessible to all.

Community Engagement

When asked what types of community engagement programming respondents would like to see from our organization, the following responses were most popular, with respondents able to select multiple options:

- 1) 61.2% want representatives from our organization to attend Neighborhood Association Meetings Regularly
- 2) 51.8% want more Social Media Engagement
- 3) 31.2% want more Tabling Events
- 4) 11.2% want our organization to host Virtual Office Hours

Respondents also wrote in wanting more email communication, newsletters, and regular reporting of the organization's activities.

Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways identified as the main/ most important themes from the responses.

- 1) The community values Bayou St. John's unique role as a natural untamed green space amidst urban development, emphasizing the preservation of its beauty and serenity. Promoting ecological conservation and protecting the Bayou from over-commercialization are essential to meeting the community's desire to maintain its wild, natural character.
- 2) Preservation, maintenance and ecological conservation of Bayou St. John are of paramount importance to the community. Ensuring the continuation of regular invasive species cleanups and litter cleanups is crucial. Moreover, there's a strong interest in promoting programs that support these goals, including but not limited to: increased recycling/trash pickup, planting of native plants and trees as appropriate, maintenance of green spaces/greenways, environmental education, and water quality testing and maintenance.
- 3) Recognizing and promoting the history and culture of Bayou St. John is vital to the community. There's a call for increased education and programming focused on the recognition and preservation of the cultural heritage of Bayou St. John. This reflects the community's commitment to honoring the rich history and traditions that define Bayou St. John's identity.
- 4) Recreation is a crucial aspect of Bayou St. John's use, with the community expressing a desire for it to serve as a communal greenspace accessible to all. Maintaining and improving bike and walking paths, promoting safe water recreation, and providing opportunities for arts, cultural, sports, family and wellness recreation are priorities for the community. These desires reflect the community's vision of Bayou St. John as a versatile and inclusive space for various recreational activities.

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- 5) Safety and accessibility are also important concerns for the community regarding Bayou St. John. Improving traffic and bike safety, along with promoting measures such as enforcement of parking and traffic restrictions, appropriate lighting installations, and ADA-compliant sidewalks and signage for the visually and hearing impaired, are crucial to address these concerns. These initiatives underscore the community's commitment to ensuring that Bayou St. John is a safe and welcoming space for all residents and visitors.
 - 6) There's a strong call for increased collaboration among various groups and organizations throughout Mid-City to better represent the diverse community and ensure that the voices and wishes of all residents and visitors are heard. This includes enhancing community engagement, visibility, outreach, reporting, clear communication and strategic cooperation across organizations. Such efforts reflect the community's desire for inclusive and cohesive initiatives that address the needs and aspirations of everyone within the Bayou St. John area.

We believe these key findings will enhance our understanding of community needs and inform our programming decisions. They're intended to serve as a resource for all, fostering inclusive initiatives that reflect the diverse voices and aspirations of Bayou St. John. It's important to note that these findings are not plans, but rather information to better inform future planning efforts.

Appendix

Copy of Survey

Please access a copy of the original survey questions at this link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uvfQQ79PbJWU8bPzxeH-saU56T7u_3Ji/view?usp=sharing

Copy of Pilot Survey Report

Please access a copy of the pilot survey report at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NEP6rpomIPmxwjefmV6iffSkg0bffzoS/view?usp=sharing>