

# The Greenest Belt: Understanding the Motivations and Barriers to Environmental Volunteering in Urban Green Spaces

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Friends of Harrison Ridge

## Background

- Urban green spaces are under threat as the demand for commercial and residential space increases due to population growth.
- Greenbelts are strips of natural land protected from urban development by law that provide easy public access to environmental spaces.
- These spaces are often entirely volunteer managed and maintained with little governmental assistance.
- Volunteer turnout must be increased to ensure the oversight and protection of these spaces.

## Research Question:

What are some important factors (both positive and negative) for long term participation of forest stewards and volunteers?

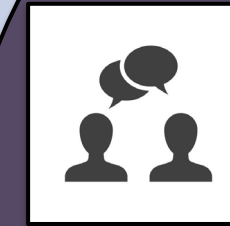
## Internship/Methods:



Figure 1: A photo taken at the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt during the removal of blackberries, a common invasive species found throughout Washington.

- Interned with the Friends of Harrison Ridge at the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt.
- Worked on a planting plan for a portion of the greenbelt as well assisted with maintenance and upkeep.
- Issued a survey to first time and recurring volunteers to understand their motivations and barriers for volunteering.
- Conducted a literature review on existing research on environmental volunteering.

## Results: Important Factors



### Sense of Community

"I value the camaraderie that the other volunteers provide by working alongside them." - Forest Steward

- Volunteers place a heavy emphasis on being in a comfortable environment surrounded by peers. (see Fig. 2)



### Environmental Impact

"[Volunteering helps] restore my relationship with the Earth" -Forest Steward

- The sense that the work being done is meaningful is consistently the largest motivator for participation. (see Fig, 2)



### Transportation

- Transportation and lack of awareness were the highest reported barriers to volunteering (see Fig. 3). Recurring volunteers almost all live within the immediate neighborhood.

### What motivates you to volunteer?

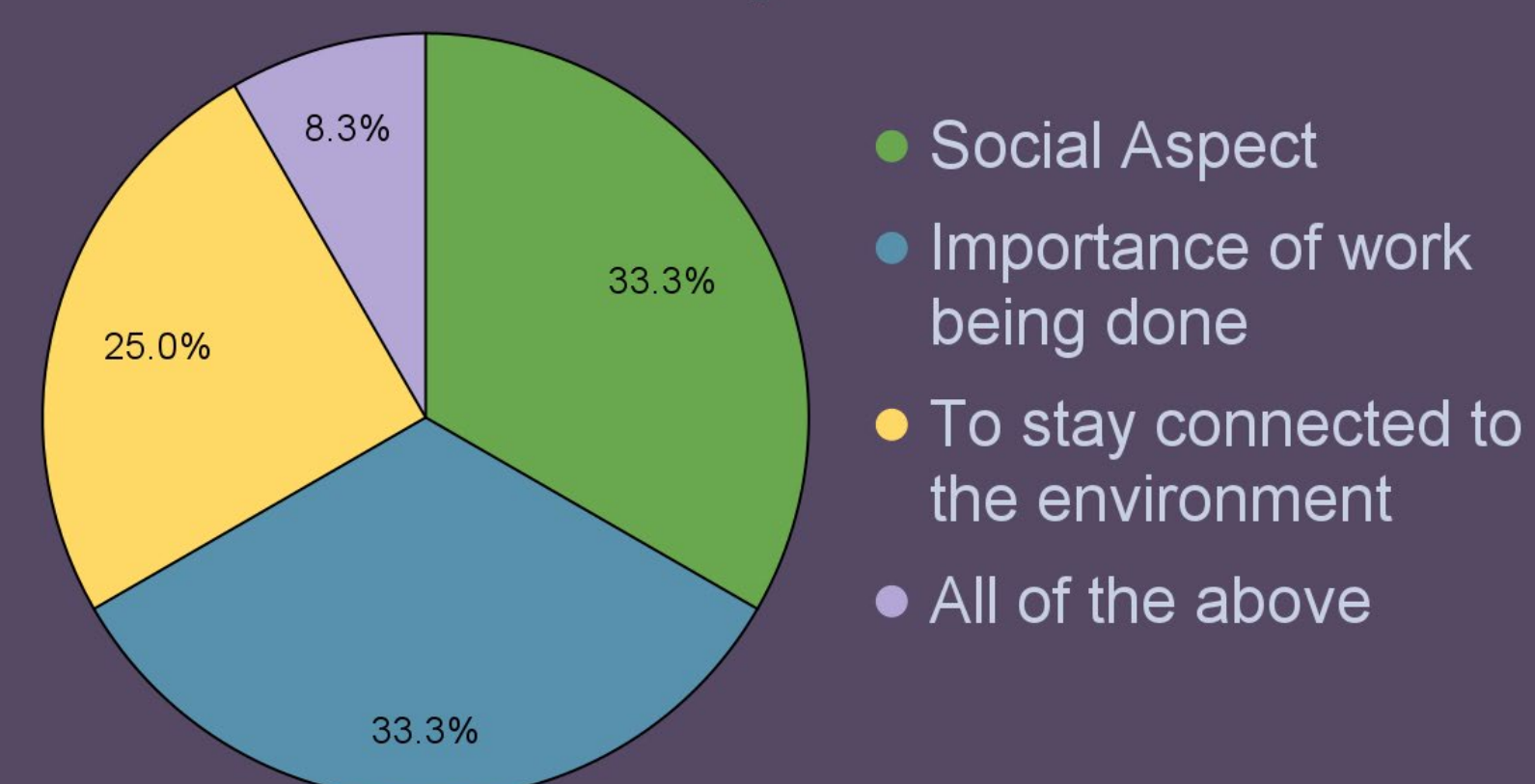


Figure 2: Survey responses from recurring volunteers at the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt on what motivates them to participate with a total of 9 respondents.

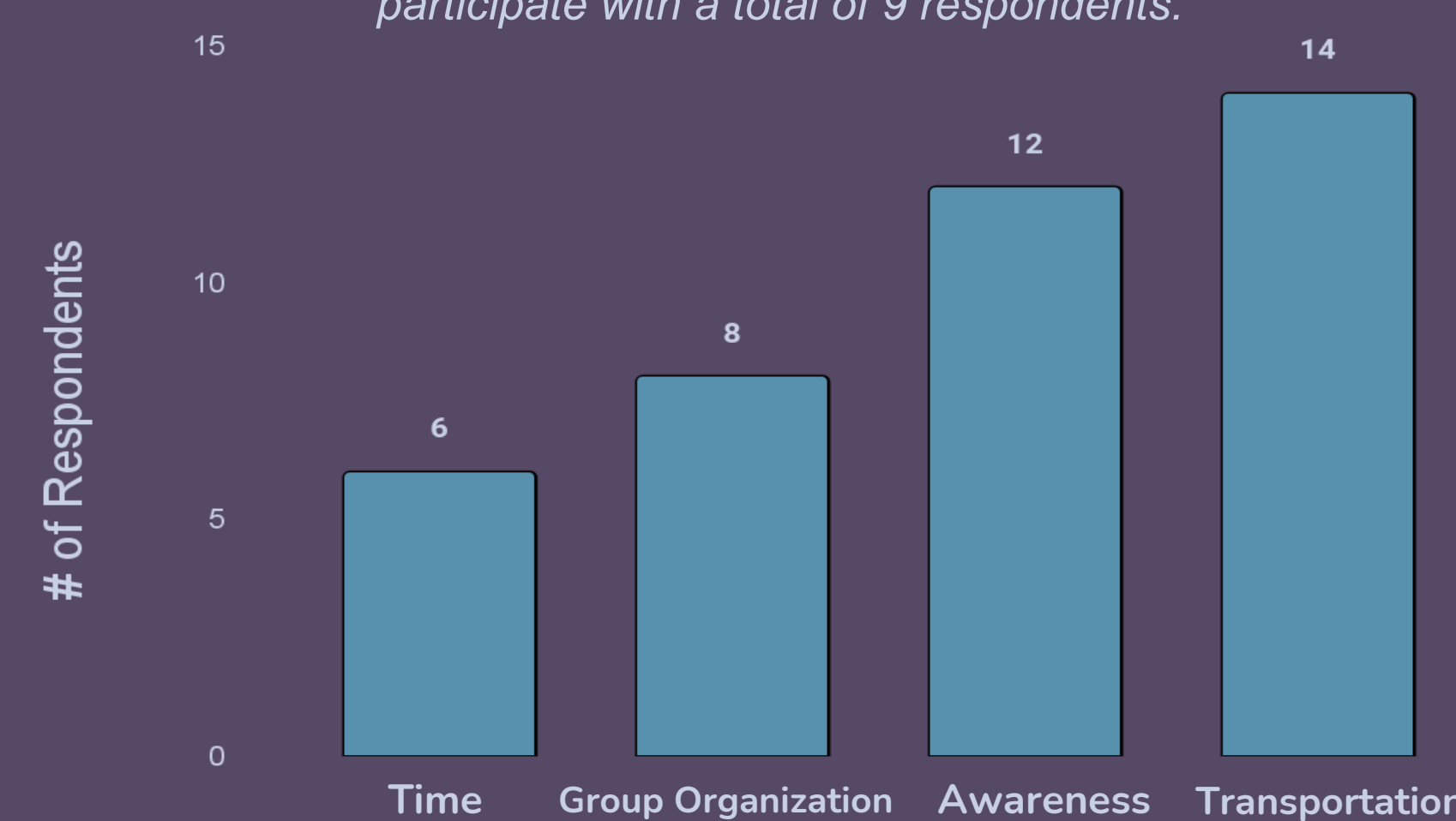


Figure 3: Survey responses from volunteers at the Harrison Ridge Greenbelt on what prevents them from volunteering more often with a total of 19 respondents.

## Recommendations:

- ☐ Advertise volunteer events as social events
- ☐ Explain the importance of work prior to participation
- ☐ Offer transportation or designated meet up spots to carpool

## Broader Implication

- Improved volunteer outreach by accounting for these factors when designing volunteer projects
- Increased forest stewardship
  - Help establish people with a connection to the environment while also educating them on environmental topics
- Increase public perception on urban green spaces
  - Puts pressure on governmental agencies for the preservation of these areas
- Research on the impact that socio-economic factors have on what volunteers find important in volunteer projects must be further explored to get a more holistic view on the topic.

## Special Acknowledgement:

I would like to thank my site supervisor, Linda Becker, as well as all the wonderful forest stewards who have helped me along the way. I would not have been able to complete this project without the support of all of you. In addition, I would like to thank my peers and supervisors for revising and assisting me with my work throughout the project.