

"A GIFT TO THE COMMUNITY"

HEALTH, HEALING, AND
WELLBEING IN THE PEACE
GARDENS AND SCULPTURE PARK
2021



HEALTH, HEALING, AND WELLBEING

In 2020, we set out to learn about the impact of the Burton Street Peace Gardens and Sculpture Park on the health and wellbeing of visitors. We surveyed visitors with a voluntary online survey and a group of students with paper survey forms.

The survey included questions about visitors' perceptions of the impact of the gardens and sculpture park on health and wellbeing and healing from collective and individual trauma. We also asked visitors to share what they did at the Peace Gardens, how frequently they visited the gardens, where they live, and some additional information about them.

A total of 127 visitors completed the online survey and 17 students (in one visit) completed the paper survey between October 2020 and November 2021. This report summarizes the findings from the surveys. The end of this report contains more information about the respondents to the online survey.

Overall, the survey indicates that people who visited the Peace Gardens and took the time to complete the survey appreciated the influence of being in the garden and sculpture on their and others' health, healing, and wellbeing. For many, the experience was profound. The findings suggest great potential for healing and wellbeing through expansion or more spaces like the Peace Gardens. As one survey respondent stated, "This garden is a gift to our whole community, and has positively impacted my life and sense of place."

PERCEIVED IMPACT ON HEALTH & WELLBEING

"It was alleviating for my health. Being in nature usually does that for me. Being surrounded by gardens and sculptures all with educating messages was refreshing and well needed."

80% of online and student survey respondents commented on ways that being in the Peace Gardens and Sculpture Park **influenced their health and wellbeing**. Themes that emerged from 109 respondents' comments about how the gardens influenced their health and wellbeing, in order of frequency are listed in the sidebar on the right.

In addition, nearly a quarter of people (23.4%) responded that the garden and sculpture park **helped them to improve a specific health concern**.

Comments provided by respondents revealed that being at the gardens contributed to:

- anxiety reduction
- mental and emotional health improvements
- lower stress
- greater connections, and
- raising of spirit

We asked about any influence of the garden on visitors' **fruit and vegetable consumption**, and most people who commented said that their visit supported their desire to eat healthfully.

Themes that emerged from 109 respondents' comments about **how the gardens influenced their health and wellbeing**, in order of frequency (from highest to lowest frequency), included:

Expression of **emotional** states, such as happiness, love, etc.

References to **relaxing**, soothing, calming, peaceful, etc. experiences

Remembering and considering civil rights and **social justice** issues

Positive/improved impact on health/wellbeing

Connection to and with **community**

Inspiring, uplifting, hopeful, offered possibilities

Allowed for thinking and **reflection**

Opened eyes and/or mind (general)

Appreciation for **energy**, vibes, creativity

Appreciation for plants, **nature**, fresh air

Personal **motivation** to act or do something similar



HEALING IN THE GARDENS

97.6% of respondents thought that the garden and sculpture park helps people to **heal from collective or community trauma.**

- 61.8% responded that being at the garden and sculpture park helps people A LOT.

63% of respondents thought that the garden and sculpture park helped them to **heal from individual trauma in their life.**

- 11.8% responded that being at the garden and sculpture park helped them A LOT.

"At a basic level, it provides an opportunity for connection, with the natural world, and with the cycles of growth and decay. On a deeper level it provides an opportunity and space for reflection on past, present and future and each life form's place in the collective whole."

"There is residual trauma due to what's been done to Black Ashevilleians for decades, and this impacts more than Black Ashevilleians - it impacts all of us who care about our community. This is such a positive counterpoint to that. It feels like an ember that can grow into something positive and much bigger.."

"The garden is a place of acknowledging pain and suffering while also giving you the tools to self reflect and grow. I know coming here with my class felt like an awakening for me and has helped me learn how to listen and help others.."

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

What did students like most about the Peace Gardens?

Students mentioned:

- art, murals, pictures of empowered African Americans
- area focused on gun violence
- "trikes and kids toys made into art"
- Library
- "Story behind it"
- greenhouse, plants

When asked about what might have had a lasting impact on students, they mentioned:

- thinking differently because of the garden
- learning about the history of the garden
- being unsettled, seeing and hearing how people were treated
- seeing the information about gun violence and shootings and wanting to advocate
- thinking about the impacts of gentrification and desegregation
- feeling better about themselves



"The whole garden was amazing. something I'll never forget."

"The whole garden was amazing. and the woman who sang before the tour made me very happy and I'm thinking of possibly coming back with my family."

"All of the stuff about school shootings ...I care strongly about that stuff an it made me want to advocate for gun restrictions more. like I used to.."

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PEACE GARDENS

When asked about the suggestions that visitors had for the Peace Gardens, many provided words of encouragement and support. Also, some visitors made suggestions, to:

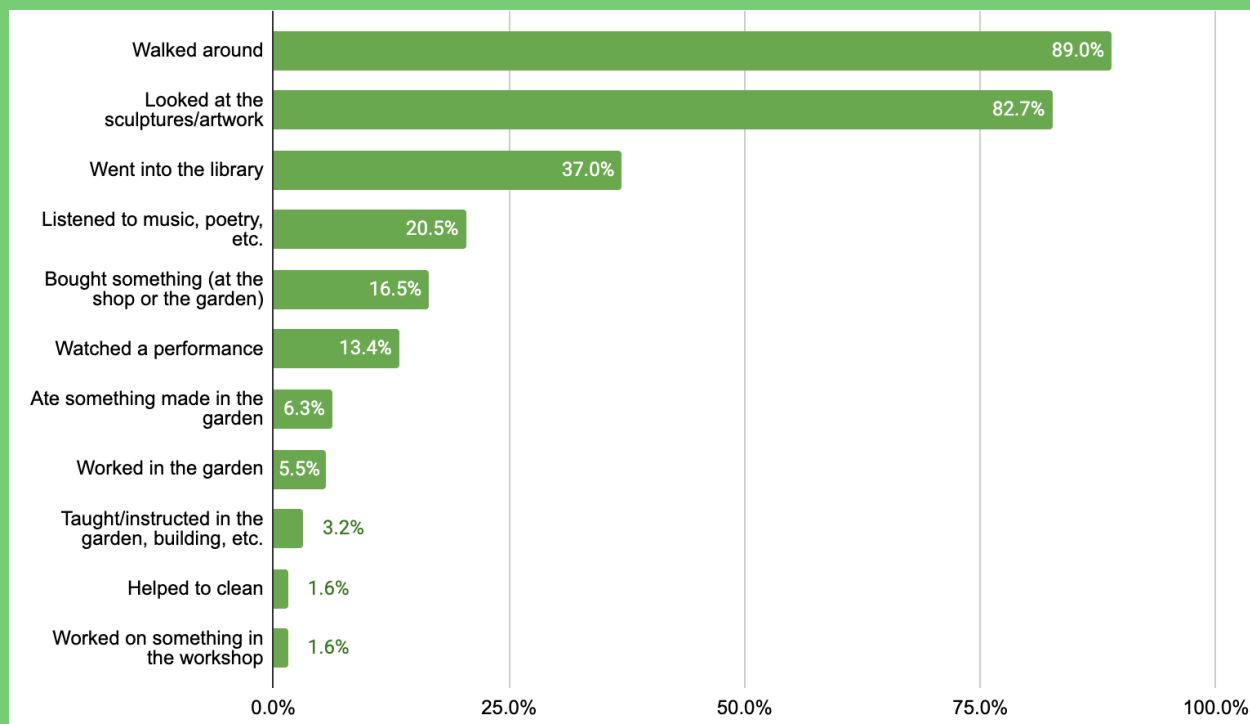
- An opportunity for visitors to create art
- A place to sit and eat
- More activities and interactivity
- Opening a conversation to grieve the gentrification
- Artists' statements about the artwork
- A wall or place where people can write down their experiences
- More performances, live shows, music
- Bug spray/bit of a mosquito problem
- Interpretive garden tours



VISITING THE GARDENS

- Most survey respondents learned about and visited the Peace Gardens through a Hood Huggers tour or through someone they knew, such as DeWayne or Safi, a friend, or teacher/professor. 29.1% responded that they visited because they were curious.
- 56.4% of respondents had been to the Peace Gardens one time and 7.1% visit once a month or more often
- 81.9% visited the Peace Gardens with someone else
- 89% of respondents walked around and 82.7% looked at the sculptures/artwork (see chart below). 13.4% of respondents listed "other" activities such as visiting the plant sale, eating in the gardens, listening to music, and meditating.
- 82.0% responded that from their visit they took a memory with them, 37.7% took information, 15.6% took plants, and 8.4% took fruits/vegetables. Several also volunteered that they took photos.

RESPONDENT ACTIVITIES IN THE GARDENS AND SCULPTURE PARK

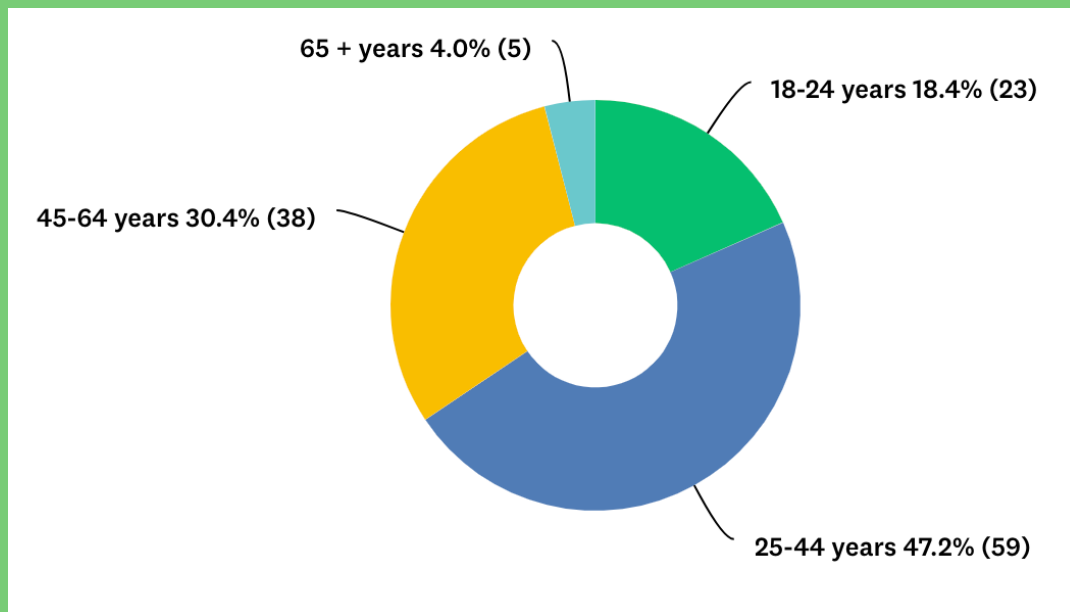


SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Among the 127 online survey respondents:

- 49.6% live in Asheville City, mostly from West Asheville, including Burton Street Community, and North Asheville, followed by East and South Asheville
- 71.8% identified as white, followed by 17.1% who identified as Black or African American, Latinx (7.7%), Asian (3.4%), Native American (1.7%), Middle Eastern (1.7%), and Other (human being, British - 1.7%).
- 47.2% were between 25-44 years (see chart below)

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT AGE CATEGORIES



The online survey was promoted via posters at the Peace Gardens and on social media. UNC Asheville faculty member Ameena Batada and student Siddhi Patel analyzed the data and prepared this report. For more information, please contact Ameena at abatada@unca.edu.