

St. Helens OR – Branding & Wayfinding Master Plan



Finding St. Helens

Design Concepts Outreach Summary

April 2017

Overview

The City of St. Helens conducted public outreach to gather feedback from the community on preferred design concepts in order to create a Branding & Wayfinding Master Plan. The goal of the Branding & Wayfinding Master Plan is to enhance the visitor experience through strategically placed and branded signage. Installation of unified wayfinding signage, informational kiosks, and enhanced gateways will enliven the business districts of St. Helens, increase foot traffic to businesses, and offer a more enjoyable visitor experience.

The team provided members of the public with two opportunities to participate:

- **Open House Meeting:** April 4, 2017 from 6-8pm at Meriwether Place, 1070 Columbia Blvd., St. Helens, OR. 97051
- **Online Survey:** April 5-12, 2017

About 45 people attended the open house meeting, and 237 provided comments through the online survey. This report summarizes outreach activities and public comments.

Notification

The City of St. Helens invited members of the public to participate in the open house meeting and online survey through the following forms of notification:

- City newsletter announcement
- Announcement on project website
- Announcement on City web pages
- Facebook posts on City Facebook
- Press release
- Email blast to Open House participants
- Email blast to Wayfinding Advisory Committee Members

The Chronicle Online wrote an article about the project and open house meeting:
http://www.thechronicleonline.com/out_about/st-helens-branding-wayfinding-open-house/article_bad18714-0e81-11e7-bb72-8f2bbdec2f98.html

Executive Summary of Comments

Overall

Among open house and survey participants, many wanted to see a combination of River and Stone concepts, to create a sense of honoring St. Helens' past (Stone concept) and moving into the future (River concept). Some suggested using more of the River design to sign waterway destinations, while using elements from the Stone concept for other signs. Participants preferred the following font and writing elements to make it easier to read signage: dark backgrounds with light lettering, no all-Caps writing, and no vertical letters.

Stone Concept

Participants liked the color palette and easy to read fonts, and described this concept as elegant, noble, and graceful. Many liked the combined use of stone and timber. Some liked the gateway, but others said they would prefer an arched gateway that looked more "finished." Some felt that the overall design was too bulky and imposing.

Timber Concept

Participants liked the use of natural wood and the theme honoring the paper mill and St. Helen's past. Many were concerned that wood would not weather well or stand up to vandalism, and that the design was too rustic and focused on the past—rather than the future. Some also thought the broken/stacked wood design could distract drivers. Some participants felt that there should be more focus on the future of St. Helens rather than getting design inspiration from a past industry.

River Concept

Participants liked the theme, and stated that the waterfront is the heart and future of St. Helens. Many said they like the bright, airy colors and airy gateway design. A few felt the design was too contemporary and the color palette too muted. There was concern that the materials would not withstand the weather, and many expressed a dislike for the design of the archway, suggesting that there be a merging of the "Stone" and "River" concepts.

Open House Meeting Summary

1. Format

Members of the public were welcomed and provided with comment forms and project information. Staff made a presentation about the three draft design concepts, and explained that public input would help the team refine these into one preferred design concept.

Participants were then directed to visit four “stations” to learn more and provide their input. Three stations included display boards that showed images of the three design concepts (Stone, Timber and River concepts). A fourth station showed a map of St. Helens and asked participants to indicate the bike, pedestrian, and vehicle routes that they think should be highest priority to receive wayfinding signage.

2. Attendance

About 45 members of the public attended the event.

3. Method of Soliciting Input

Participants were invited to share their comments via:

- Sticky wall exercise: At each of the three design concepts stations, participants wrote what they like and what they would change about each concept.
- Priority route maps: Participants used maps to indicate priority routes to receive wayfinding signage
- Comment cards for other comments
- Flip charts for general comments

4. “Stone” Concept Comments

What do you like about this concept?

- Stone reflects contemporary St. Helens
- Colors complement well. Stone classic - meets contemporary
- Amazing Gateway! Wood highlights & blue color palette are the BEST!
- On road bike markings are GREAT! Highly visible & convey motion.
- Way to combine flowing and flexible river design with noble and enduring stone elements? (New motion of future + deep earth history)
- Good color/ Gateway Bridge looks like erector set
- Like dark blue with white letters
- Love the font! Also, so easy to read.

- Stone: clear, inviting fonts and colors.
- Stone concept: Love the archway/gateway. Like the font, like palette colors, like basalt, like the mile marker, like the light post style mile marker.
- Lampposts are quaint/ whimsical, but don't overwhelm. Arches tie in everything without standing out.
- Stone: bold yet graceful archway at base of signs
- Mix of wood & stone good- better than all wood.
- Stone: The arch motif harmonizes with the cityscape
- "I only like this one"
- In 2007 a Highway Entrance Sign was designed by a body associated with the city and a preferred design was selected but not built. Follow up?
- I like the stone & timber. It represents our natural area. Basalt & timber :)
- Font Good, Upper & lower case good. Add QR code
- The Gateway Arch would be easy to decorate for Christmas & Halloweentown
- Colors & foundations incorporate elements of "wood" and "river."
- Love the use of stone & timber (except top of arch)- historic connection. Like the colors & style of signage
- Metal + Stone more shape
- Stone is very elegant and noble. Sense of gravitas & lightened by color (not too serious) palette.

What would you change?

- Dark background with light writing stands out better in fog/ grey mist... we have a lot of that! Change all white signs
- NEED high contrast signage
- Trailhead sign: Kite. Difficult to read on vertical. How to handle wind? Rotate? Fixed? Wind issues
- Don't like Dalton Lake Trail letters sideways. Don't like [drawing depicting sideways words on vertically oriented sign]. Better [drawing depicting letters stacked vertically on vertically oriented sign].
- Gateway arch: Lose horizontal line. Either to the arch or columns- tall/ large trucks/ boats - no way to easily raise/ lower
- Stone: Not all caps. Vertical signs- hard to read.
- Vertical letters are unpleasant and difficult for in-motion reading
- Doesn't inspire me to visit Saint Helens. Don't like the style of the metal poles. Arch doesn't invite. Looks like an old left over building.
- Slightly brighter blue (tie in the river theme blue)
- I like the arch but not this arch. Supports OK/good. Too unfinished looking.

- Change wood to STEEL
- No vertical writing, please
- No "bridge" concept on big arch- adds nothing.
- Gravity > no stone atop piers. Look at historical photo for gateway.
- Text vertical no good
- Bike route should be larger and clearer.

5. "Timber" Concept Comments

What do you like about this concept?

- Like white letters on dark background. Easy to read when misty.
- Love the gateway has name on top to pass under.
- "Timber" theme honors the paper mill.
- Use of wood, but use NW wood (no pine, no bamboo).
- Like natural wood material.
- Could you use repurposed wood from around St. Helens?
- Could gray bottom be material other than concrete?
- Just the gateway.
- Reminiscent of the old gateway in St. Helens.
- Gray stone base is awesome. Use basalt? Dark stone?

What would you change?

- Timber, least like.
- Beautiful graphics, but feels too much like Canby – western themed. Paper mills are gone, focus on future, not past.
- Consider wood chips too, not just stacked wood.
- Space between wood is distracting while driving.
- Looks like incomplete lathe and plaster construction project.
- Brown on-road bike marking are distracting. Seem to indicate something wrong on road – be wary.
- Wood may not do well in rainy weather (not vandalism-proof).
- Gateway looks like prison entry.
- I agree that it is too "rustic and focused on the past."
- Wood will weather and turn gray. Use alternative material or assume it will turn gray. (Trex?)
- Wood is pretty, but lends to an older and run down look – a stigma our town is moving away from.
- Stacked look is clever, but leads to a broken feel that St. Helens doesn't need anymore.

- Colors are too bland. Too muted; too much in the same color palette.
- Vehicular directional – the name of the city is overwhelmed and isn't easily seen.
- Timber is St. Helens' past.
- Live edge should be organic/natural looking (different widths) not modern and all the same.
- Wrapped map complicates finding points.
- Looks like unfinished lathe and plaster construction. Bland color palette. Hard to read signs – no contrast.
- Vehicular direction and highway identity signs – don't like negative space below (use of poles looks cheap).
- Trailhead text is hard to read, consider white text on dark brown background. Would like to see upper and lowercase font on all, consistently.

6. "River" Concept Comments

What do you like about this concept?

- Water and sky, flow and flexibility are the future of St. Helens.
- I dislike all CAPS. Gateway- shape good, uplifting but flimsy.
- The River concept feels edgy and futuristic
- Way to combine noble and enduring stone design with flowing flexible elements of river concept? (Old history + new motion)
- Not all capital (letters on signs)/ add QR code
- Gateway good design, good colors
- Love the blue/ yellow!
- Would like (the) sign pole (to be) metal- so that no fliers/posters can be nailed on pole.
- Difficult to recognize bike (symbol) from top (of sign) view (we think the comment was saying the sign was too high).
- Add "Restaurants/ Shopping >" to signage. Keep few words (simple)
- White block print on dark background most legible. Gateway sign makes best statement. Keep it simple. A moving car does not give driver time to read more than a couple words.
- Good san-serif font. Water theme (is great)! Water front is future of Saint Helens. Love strings.
- REALLY like the on road bike markings. (Regarding signs, the) airy strings & shape (are) nicely open.
- River concepts, Near River, River Concept (River concept should be used near the river only)

What would you change?

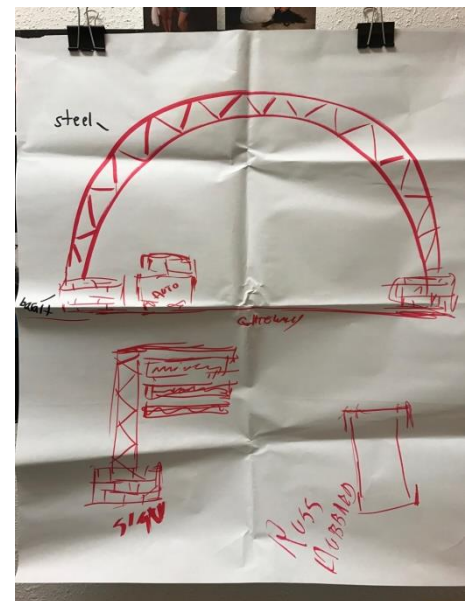
- I like this the LEAST. Unsubstantial looking signs. HATE the arch. Boring color palette.
- # 3 ugly
- More contrast. Boring shape.
- The dragonwing shape of signs doesn't look mast-like- unfortunately, it stands out too much and makes signs hard to read- too contemporary (yes, dragon should = boat, but I see dragons)
- Does material hold up to strong winds? (they thought material was fabric)
- Generally like this "concept" but not "Gateway" sheet 3.
- Map kiosk too small of map for size of kiosk sign. Also, will be a kite in the high winds. Trailhead sign wind difficulty. Mile marker looks easy to hit if on bicycle.(they thought material was fabric)
- Font a bit too compressed for quick reading - make posts uniform in width on bottom & top

7. Comment Card Comments (4 submitted)

- All designs look good! I think you should start the project with a clear "branding" concept, the selected one. From that concept, you then design different designs that reflect the concept. Today, you have three different branding concepts with three different designs. People get too focused on the actual details of the designs rather than the bigger point, which is the branding concept.
- Avoid light bulbs. They fade very quickly and are not eye-catching. Absolutely no gray, this is Oregon, if it rains nine months out the year. Why would you make signs that are the same color as the sky? The arch in the street 1-3 looks unfinished. Why don't you put St. Helens in the arch, rather than a separate sign?
- QR codes are great, but what happens when QR is passé? Maybe a spot or square that can be changed out. Also, who would be responsible for maintaining the QR links? Etc. Thanks.
- I found the open and engaging nature of this open house truly inspiring. Thank you to the City of St. Helens! As for the design concepts, I was deeply moved by the "stone" concept and uplifted with hope by the "river" concept. Many future designs combine the best of both! Deep, grounded history of our city and the flexible flow into our future of the river's wind and water.

8. Flip Chart Comments

- Incorporate wayfinding from river towards St. Helens (later stage).
- Are QR codes possible on the kiosk? Lead to website or PDF of map.
- Include river concept near riverfront district (and other concepts in other areas).
- Uniformity of signs, but combination of elements (stone and river) to hint at river from Hwy 30.
- Stone basalt (enduring history) and flexible shape of river sign = wayfinding combination that speaks to old and new/future.
- Legibility/visibility of signs is important.
- What about signage for people traveling by boat?
- QR code on signs – to give people access to more information via their smart phones.
- Important to get information about beauty, nature and recreation outside of St. Helens. Infomercial on Youtube?
- Signs need to be vandalism and rain-proof.
- Put the gateway so that you can see it from Hwy 30 (to attract regional visitors).
- Put sign to denote Eisenschmidt pool.
- Too rustic, too focused on the past.
- Consider color-coded destinations (ex: signs for trails are green; blue for water destinations, etc.).
- Signs: Say "St. Helens" instead of "City of St. Helens."
- Need standardized use of information, biking and walking symbols. Some signs have them and others don't. Why?
- Gateway should be an arch, not horizontal.
- Could you use nautical theme for nautical destinations, and "stone" concept for the rest? Some variation depending on district/destination.
- Interest in interpretive signage.
- Use locally sourced materials and fabrication to build signs (not store-bought, ready-made).



One person suggested this steel arch Gateway design with basalt bases.

Online Survey Meeting Summary

Format

To begin, participants were given an overview of the project background and purpose. They were then shown examples of the three design concepts with a brief explanation of the history and theme that inspired each option. Participants were asked to choose which concept they liked the most as well as questions regarding the stylistic details.

Participation

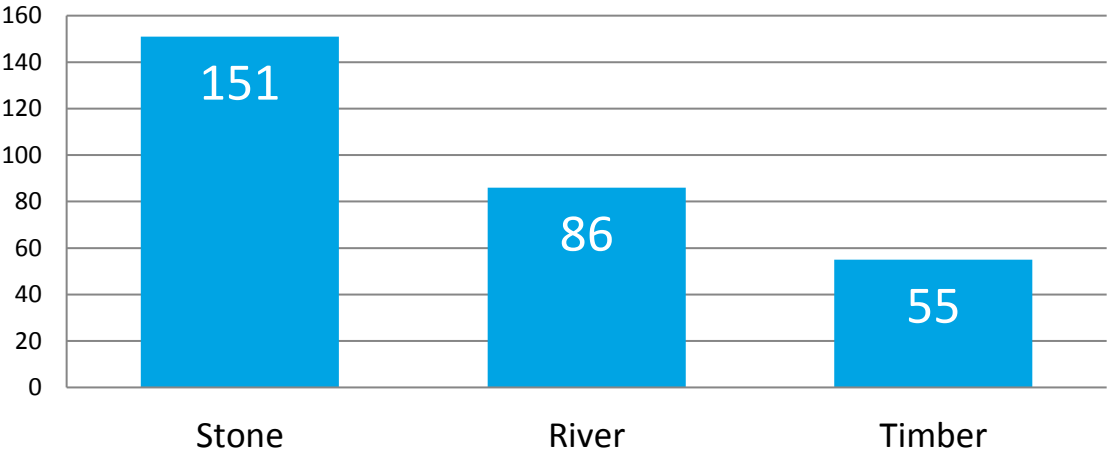
A total of 237 people participated in the online survey.

Survey Results

1. Which themes do you like as a guiding principle for sign design?

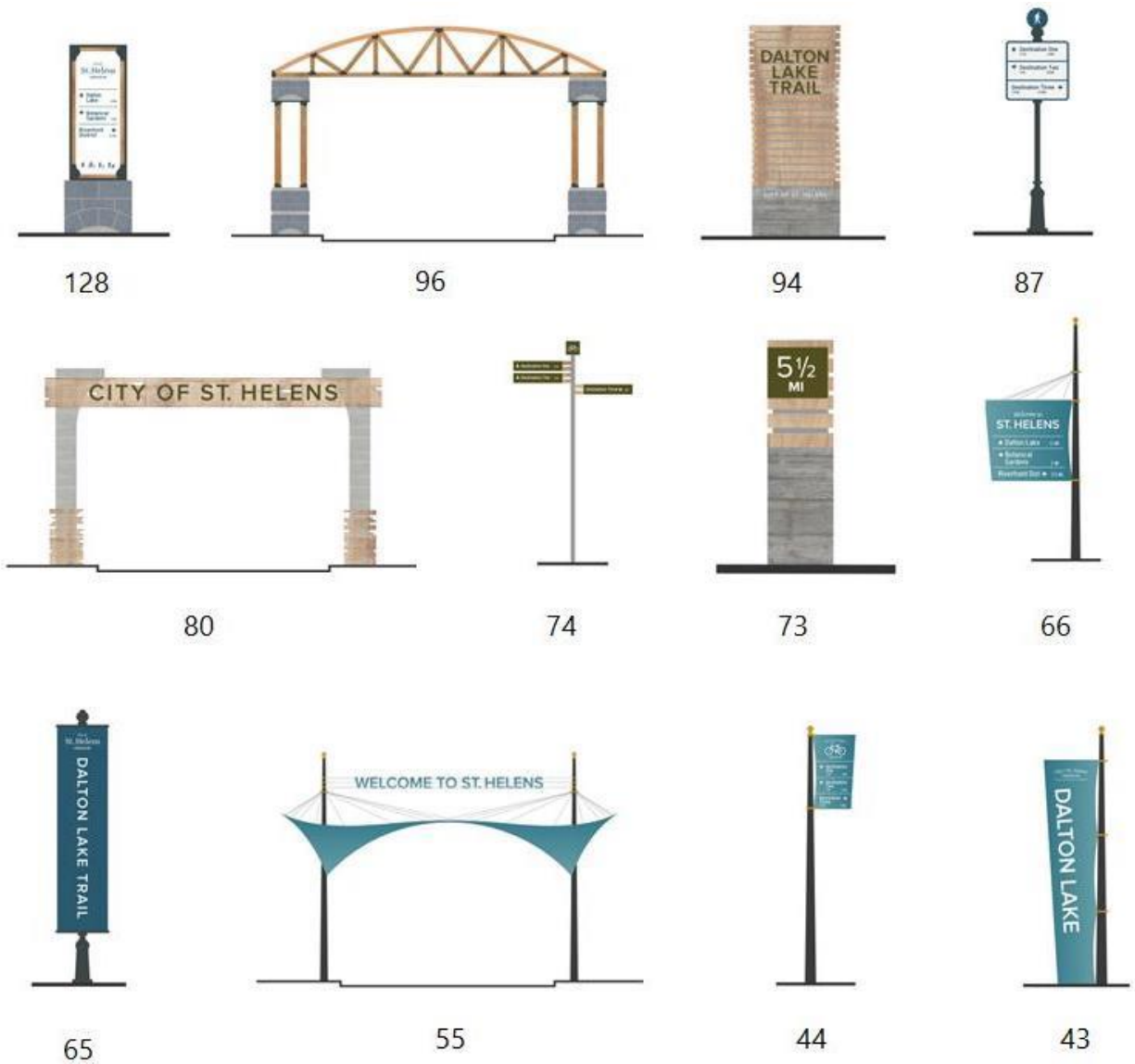
Participants most liked the "Stone" theme – inspired by the distinctive architectural style of St. Helens historic civic buildings

Participants were able to select more than one theme. 229 people answered this question.



2. Which sign shapes do you like?

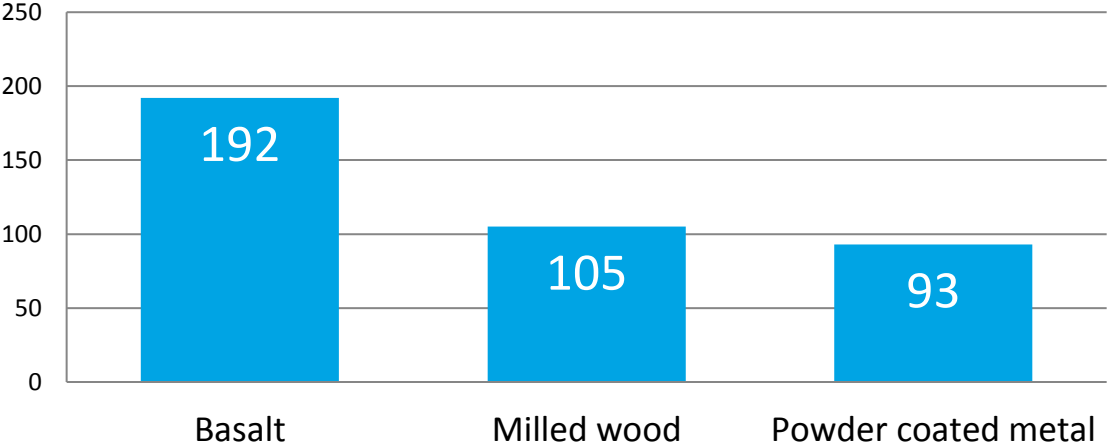
Participants were shown various sign shapes and were asked to select the ones they liked. There was no limit to the number they could choose, and shape was not directly connected to the design concept (stone, river, timber), though the shapes were illustrated in the different themes. Below are the options and the number of people who said they liked that sign shape. 229 people answered this question.



3. What type of building material do you like?

Participants most liked the use of basalt as a building material.

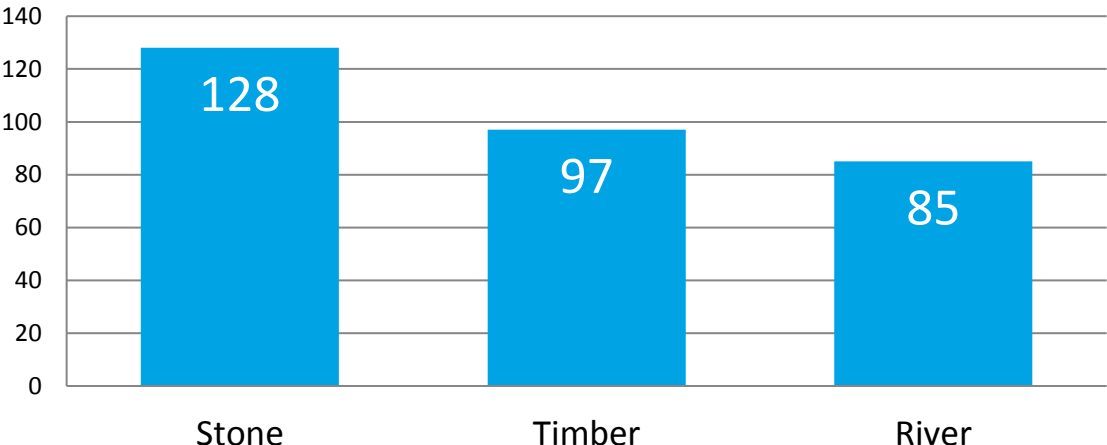
Participants were able to select more than one option. 232 people answered this question.



4. Which color palettes do you like?

Participants most liked the color palette associated with the Stone concept, although many also liked the Timber and River color palettes.

Participants were able to select more than one option. 220 people answered this question.



5. Which sign lettering do you prefer?

The vast majority of people (83) preferred white lettering on colored background. Only 17% preferred colored lettering on white background.

A total of 223 people responded to this question.

6. "Stone" Concept

Participants were asked to provide input on what they liked about this option, and what they would change.

- When asked what they liked about the "Stone" concept, these were the most common responses (136 people responded to this question):
 - The lettering and color stand out and are easier to read.
 - It is aesthetically pleasing and stylistically timeless.
 - It is distinctive and representative of the community's history and culture.
- When asked what they would change about the "Stone" concept, these were the most common responses (89 people responded to this question):
 - The design is too bulky and imposing.
 - The archway design was not popular.
 - It was suggested that the "Stone" concept incorporate elements of the "River" concept.

7. "Timber" Concept

Participants were asked to provide input on what they liked about this option, and what they would change.

- When asked what they liked about the "Timber" concept, these were the most common responses (136 people responded to this question):
 - The wood and natural materials are attractive.
 - The simplicity of the style, specifically the directional signs, is easy to read and is appealing.
 - The design is unique, both rustic and modern.
- When asked what they would change about the "Timber" concept, these were the most common responses (102 people responded to this question):
 - The materials would be hard to maintain.
 - The design seems unfinished and many thought it looked either too modern or too western.

- Not cohesive with the style of the rest of the town.

8. "River" Concept

Participants were asked to provide input on what they liked about this option, and what they would change.

- When asked what they liked about the "River" concept, these were the most common responses (139 people responded to this question):
 - It is representative of the ports and nautical aspects of town.
 - The colors are attractive.
 - The signage is unique and fun.
- When asked what they would change about the "River" concept, these were the most common responses (104 people responded to this question):
 - There was concern about the durability of the materials.
 - The signs seem difficult to read.
 - The design is too kitschy and modern.

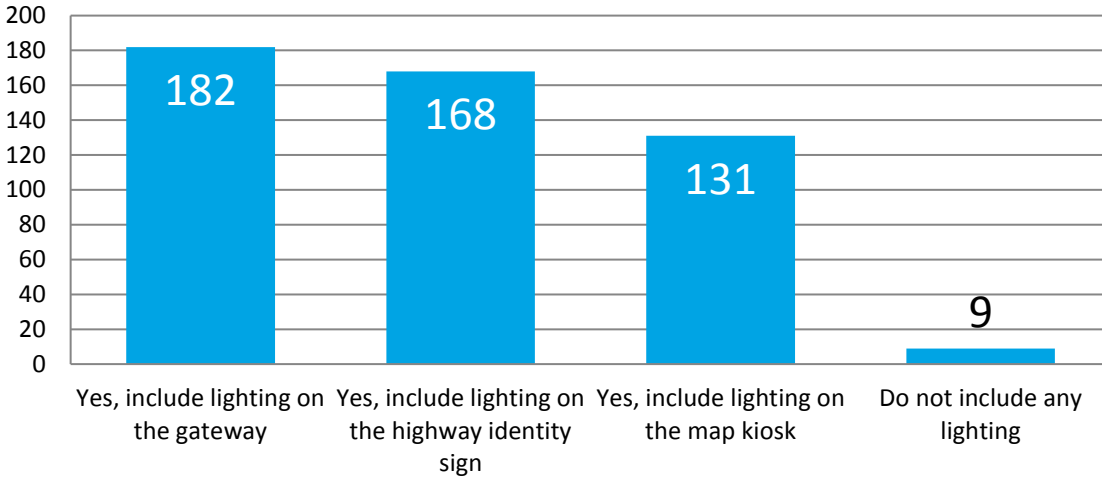
9. Which title do you prefer for the signs?

The vast majority of respondents (96%) preferred the title "City of St. Helens Oregon." Only 4% preferred "City of St. Helens." A total of 205 people responded to this question.

10. Do you think we should include lighting on the Gateway, Highway Identity sign, and Map Kiosk?

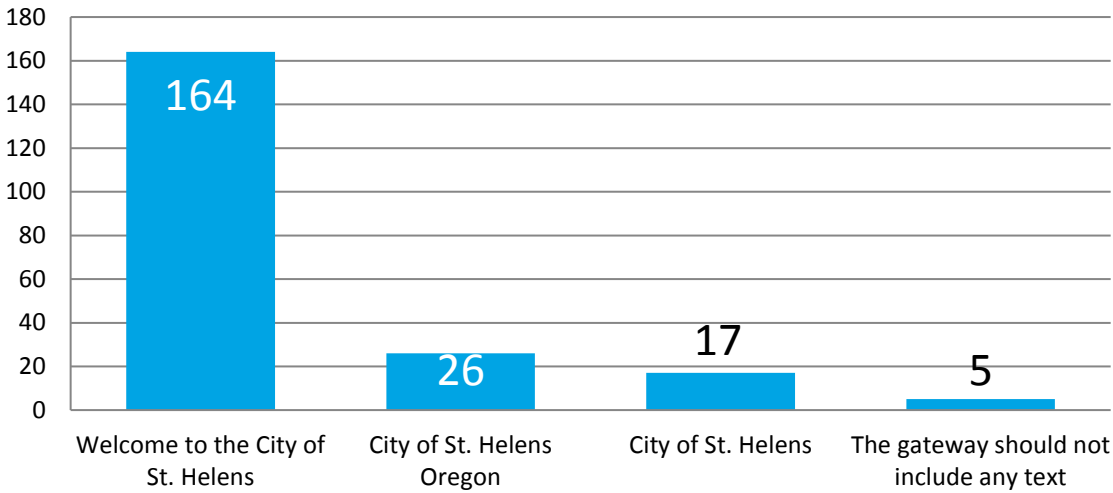
Participants were generally in favor of including lighting on most of the sign options, particularly the gateway and highway identity sign.

Participants were able to select more than one option. 210 people responded to this question.



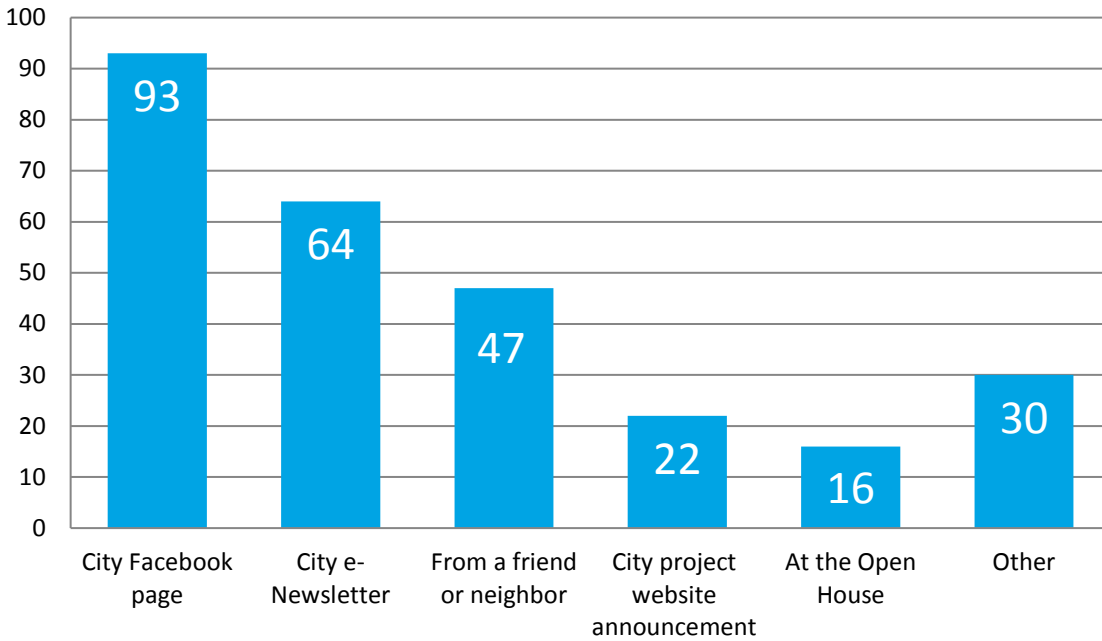
11. What text, if any, should the Gateway include?

The vast majority of participants preferred that the Gateway say: “Welcome to the City of St. Helens.” A total of 212 people responded to this question.



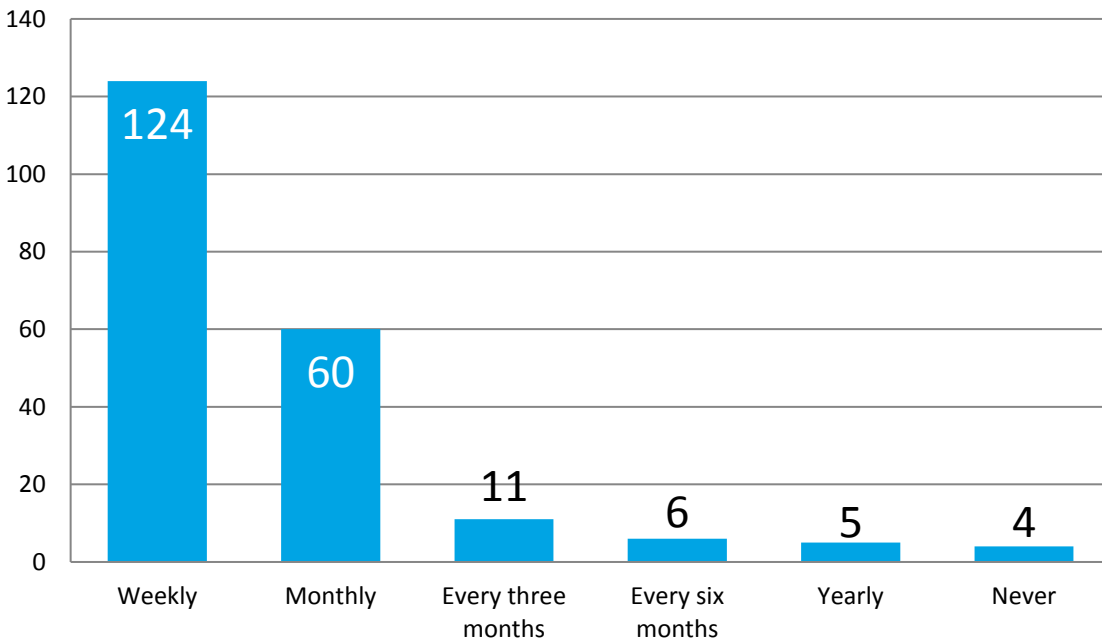
12. How did hear about this event?

Most people heard about the event through the City Facebook page and through the City e-newsletter. Participants were able to select more than one option. A total of 203 people answered this question.



13. How often do you visit the Houlton Business District or the Riverfront District (formally known as Olde Towne)?

Most people said that they visit the Districts at least weekly. A total of 210 people responded to this question.

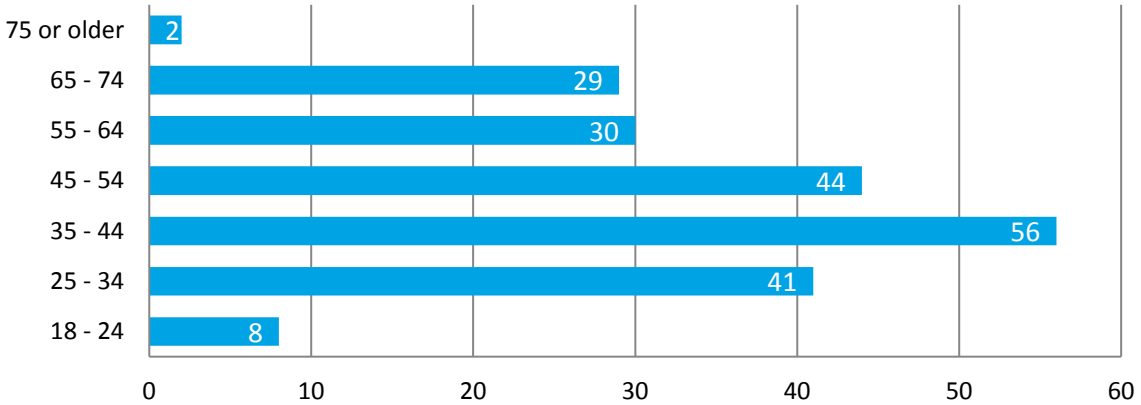


Demographics

Participants were asked to provide voluntary demographic information. The charts below show their responses.

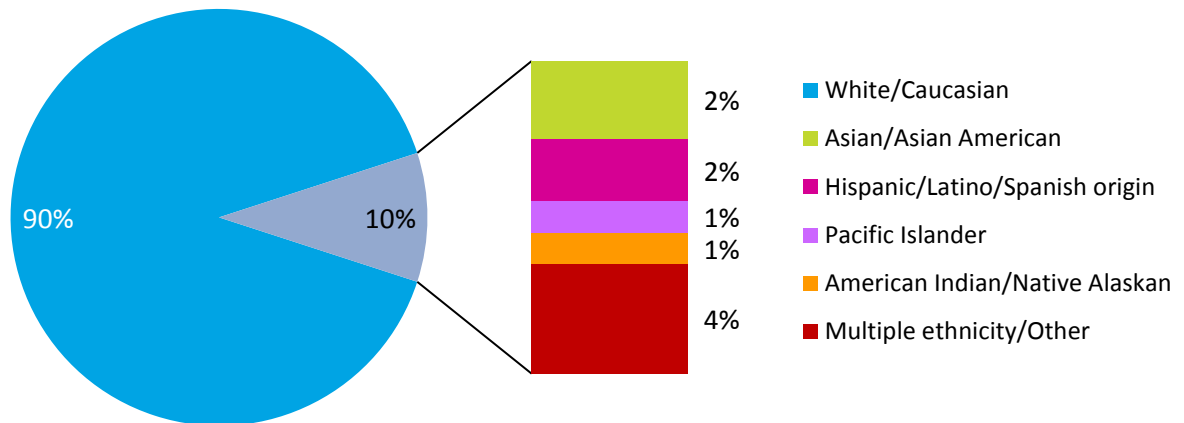
Age

A total of 210 people responded to this question.



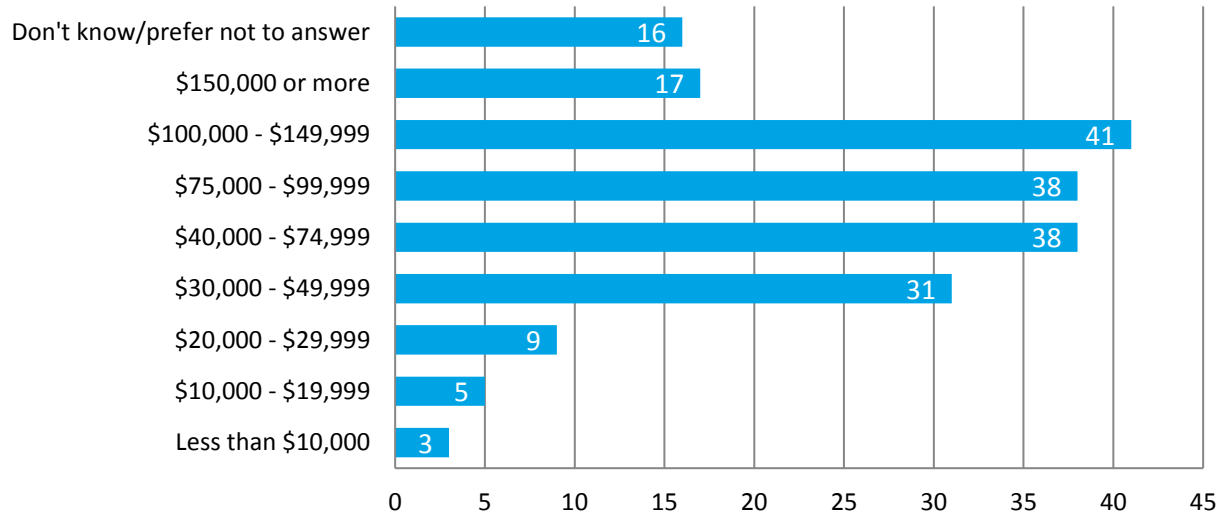
Race/Ethnicity

Participants were able to select more than one option. A total of 195 people answered this question.



Income

A total of 198 people answered this question.



Disability

Of the 185 people who responded to this question, 172 indicated that they do not have a disability or prefer not to answer. Of those that did indicate a disability, seven had ambulatory difficulty, four had hearing difficulty, four had cognitive difficulty, two had vision difficulty, and one had self-care difficulty.