

Recommendation Regarding the George Washington Bust in the City Plaza

NOVEMBER 2, 2020

Recommendation

In accordance with feedback received from Watsonville residents through a community survey and further input collected during a Town Hall meeting, staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission make a recommendation to the City Council:

- That the George Washington Bust remain in the City Plaza, and
- That a bilingual plaque that outlines a broad historical perspective about George Washington be added to the bust.

Brief History of the Bust

- June 1997 – Lloyd F. Alaga passed away
- May 1999 – Watsonville City Council accepted the gifts of \$100,000 for the bust (the remainder to be used to restore the fountain) and \$200,000 for library reference works
- Late 1999 – City released RFP calling for artists to create and install the a bust
- April 2000 – City entered into agreement with artist Michelle Armitage for \$70,000
- February 2001 – Unveiling ceremony



Recent Community Discussion - Overview

Date	Action
July, 2020	3 Petitions circulated both in favor of and against removing the Bust
August 3	PRC Study Session
September 1-30	Survey open to the Public
September 21	Update Report to the PRC
October 20, 6-8p	Town Hall Meeting
November 2, 6:30p	PRC Meeting and Recommendation
Early 2021	City Council Meeting and Final Action

Recent Community Discussion

July 2020

- 3 community initiated petitions
- 2 sit ins/demonstrations in front of the bust
- Many letters and emails sent to the Parks and Rec Commission, City Council and City Managers Office
- Petitions and correspondence clearly outlined two opposing arguments and positions on the placement of the Bust at the City Plaza
- High level of support for both sides

Recent Community Discussion

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting – August 3, 2020

- Study Session conducted to further understand community viewpoints
- An unprecedented community conversation
- Opportunity to determine what concerns needed to be addressed and what further information is needed

Unaddressed Concerns

- Concerns were expressed by individuals who advocated for removal and that it remain
- Concerns that:
 - Opinions expressed through petitions and other correspondence are from Non-Residents
 - Concerns that duplicate responses from individuals may be counted
 - Concerns that there was not enough time for community to learn about the discussion and weigh in on it

Community Survey

- Survey created to address these concerns
- Ability to better account for city residency
- Ability to better control for duplicate responses
- Ability to gather broader community input
 - Cast a wide net
 - From a neutral source
 - Serve as education tool on the topic
 - Month long survey
- Survey tool was created using language from petitions and other correspondence

Survey Details

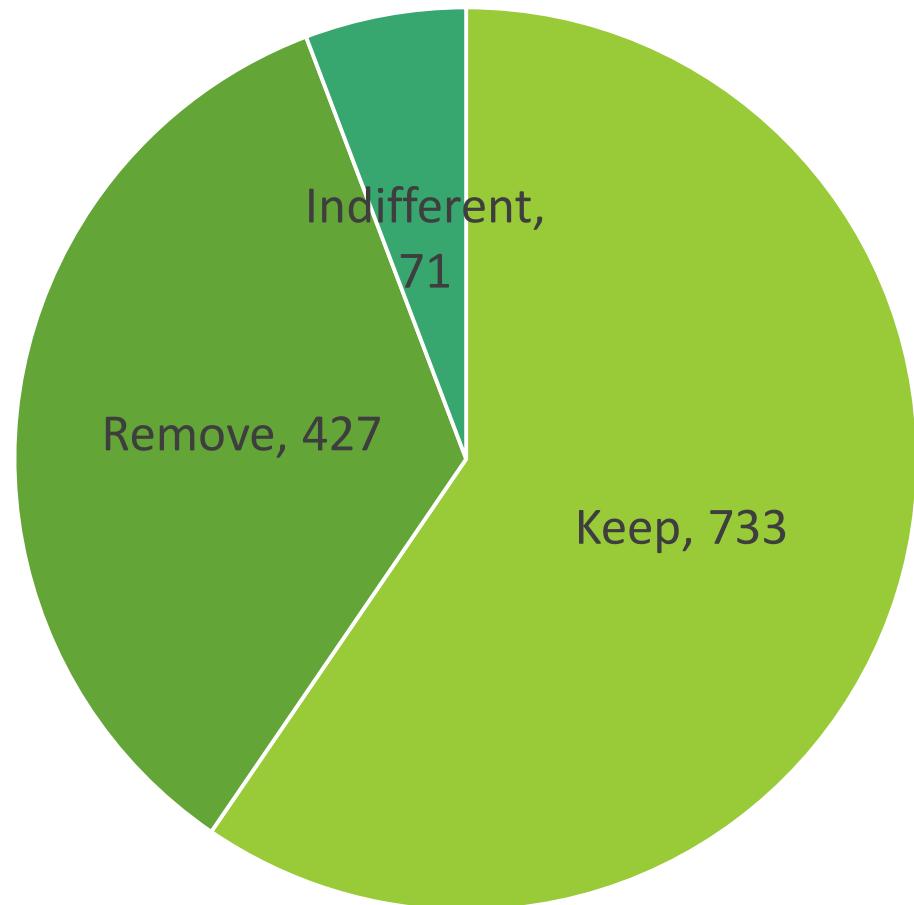
- **Collection Dates:** September 1 – 30, 2020
- **Survey Tool:** Survey Monkey
- **Languages:** English and Spanish
- **Number of Responses:** 1,231 (498 City residents)

Survey Questions

- Respondents asked about their option on the placement of the bust
- Respondents asked how strongly they felt in their opinion of the bust remaining or being removed from the City Plaza
- Respondents asked about reasons for their feelings
- Respondents asked about actions they would support
- Respondents asked for name and address (email and phone changed to optional)

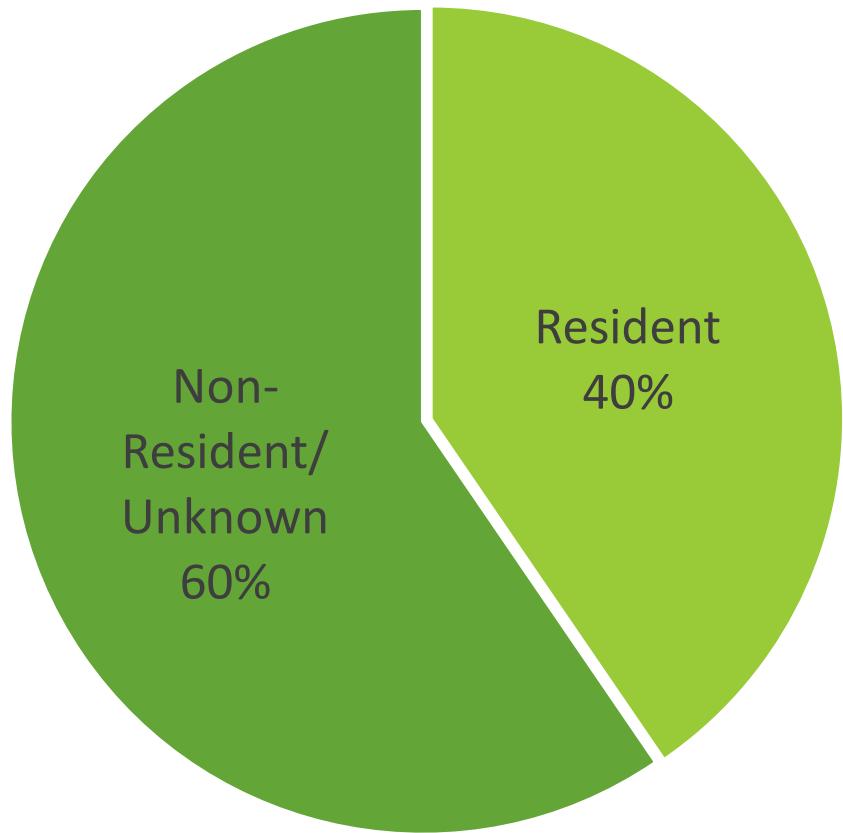
Summary and City Residency

Survey Summary (Question 1)



	Total	%
I think the bust should remain in the City Plaza.	733	60%
I think the bust should be removed from the City Plaza.	427	35%
I am indifferent.	71	6%
TOTALS	1231	100%

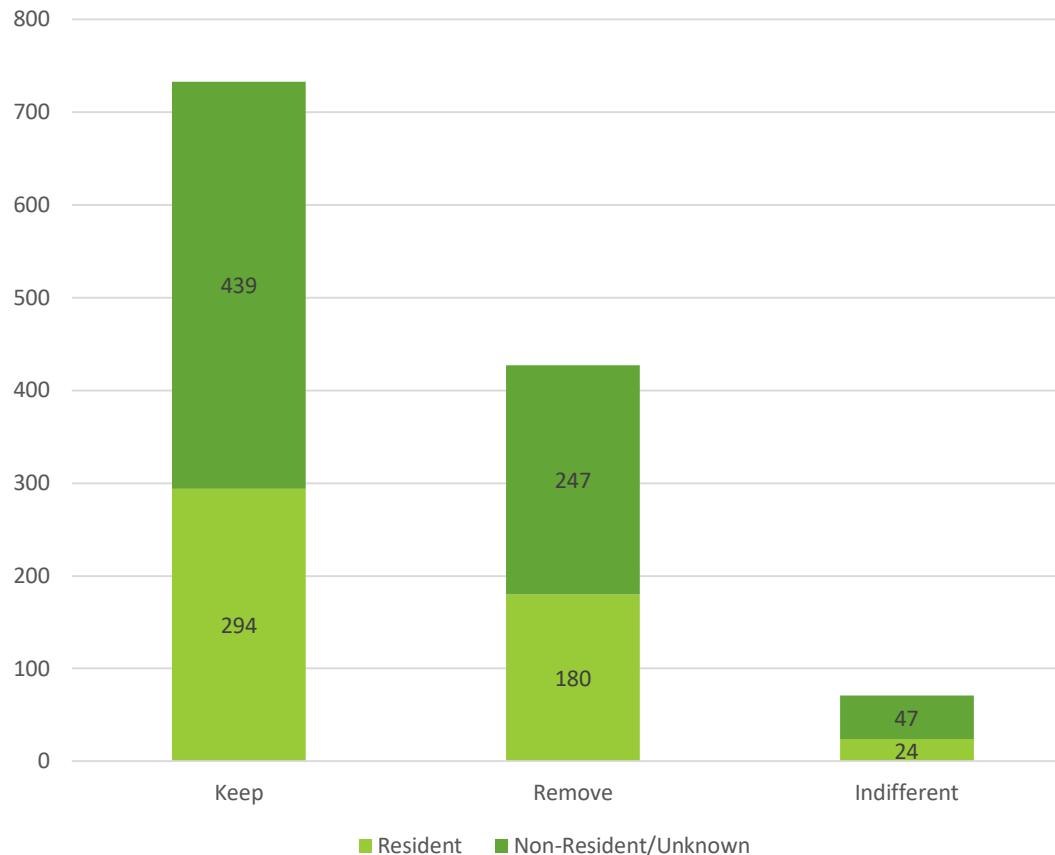
Residency of Respondents



	#	%
Residents	498	40%
Non-Residents	733	60%
TOTALS	1,231	100%

- **Residents** - Provided a verified address, within Watsonville City limits
- **Non-Resident/Unknown**
 - Provided an address outside of Watsonville
 - Provided an unverified address
 - Did not enter an address

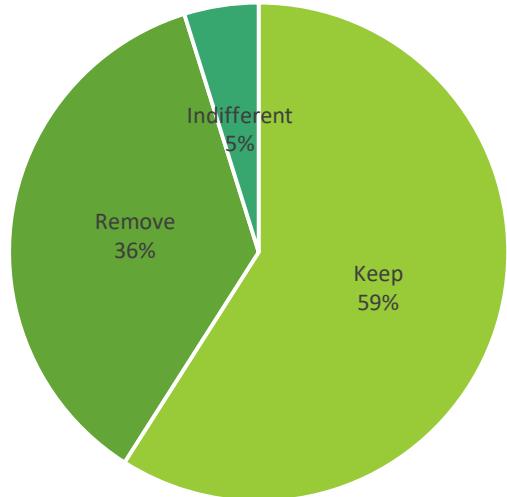
Survey Summary with Residency



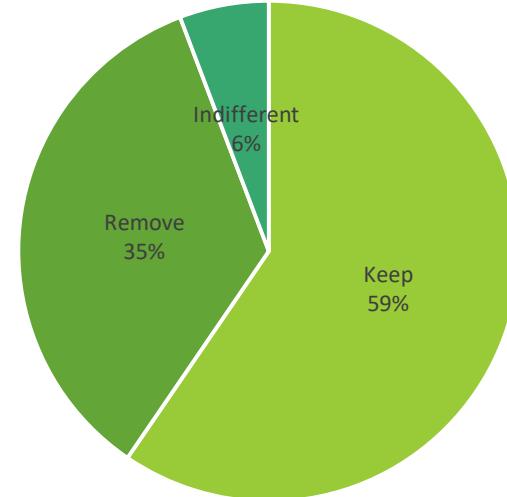
	KEEP		REMOVE		INDIFFERENT		TOTAL
Resident	294	59%	180	36%	24	5%	498
Non-Resident/Unknown	439	60%	247	34%	47	6%	732
Total	733	60%	427	35%	71	6%	1231

Survey Summary (Residents vs. All Respondents)

City Residents Only



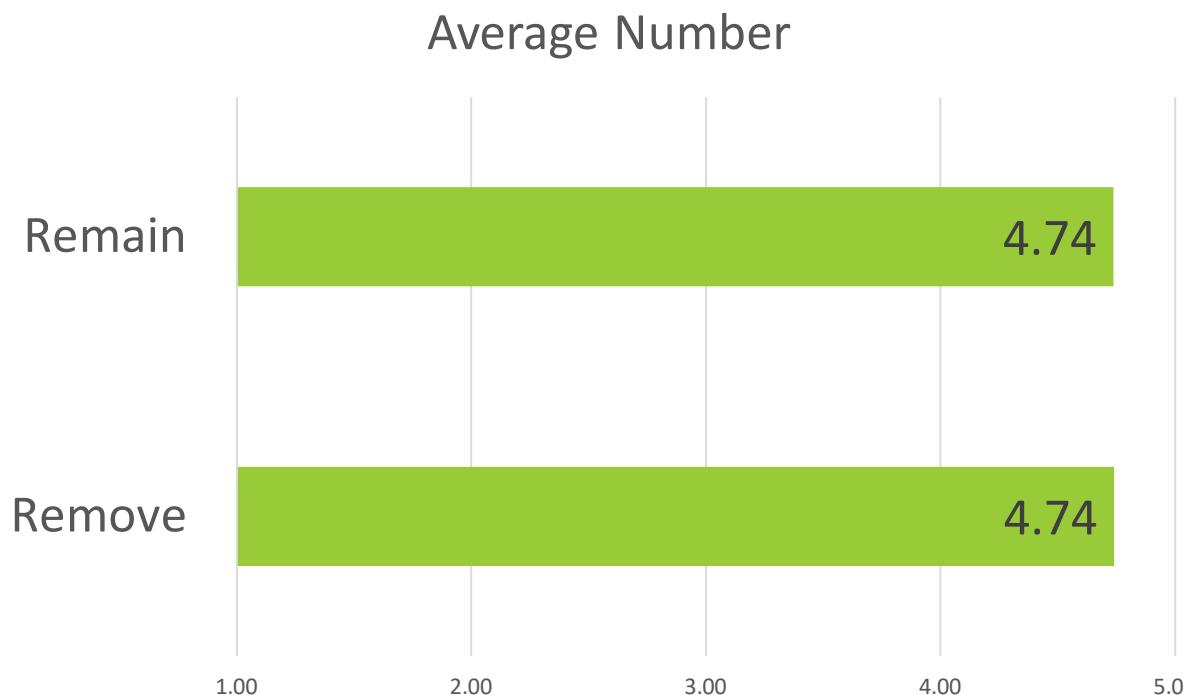
All Respondents



	Residents	%	All	%
Keep	294	59%	733	59%
Remove	180	36%	427	35%
Indifferent	24	5%	71	6%
TOTALS	498	100%	1231	100%

Follow Up Questions – How strongly do you feel?

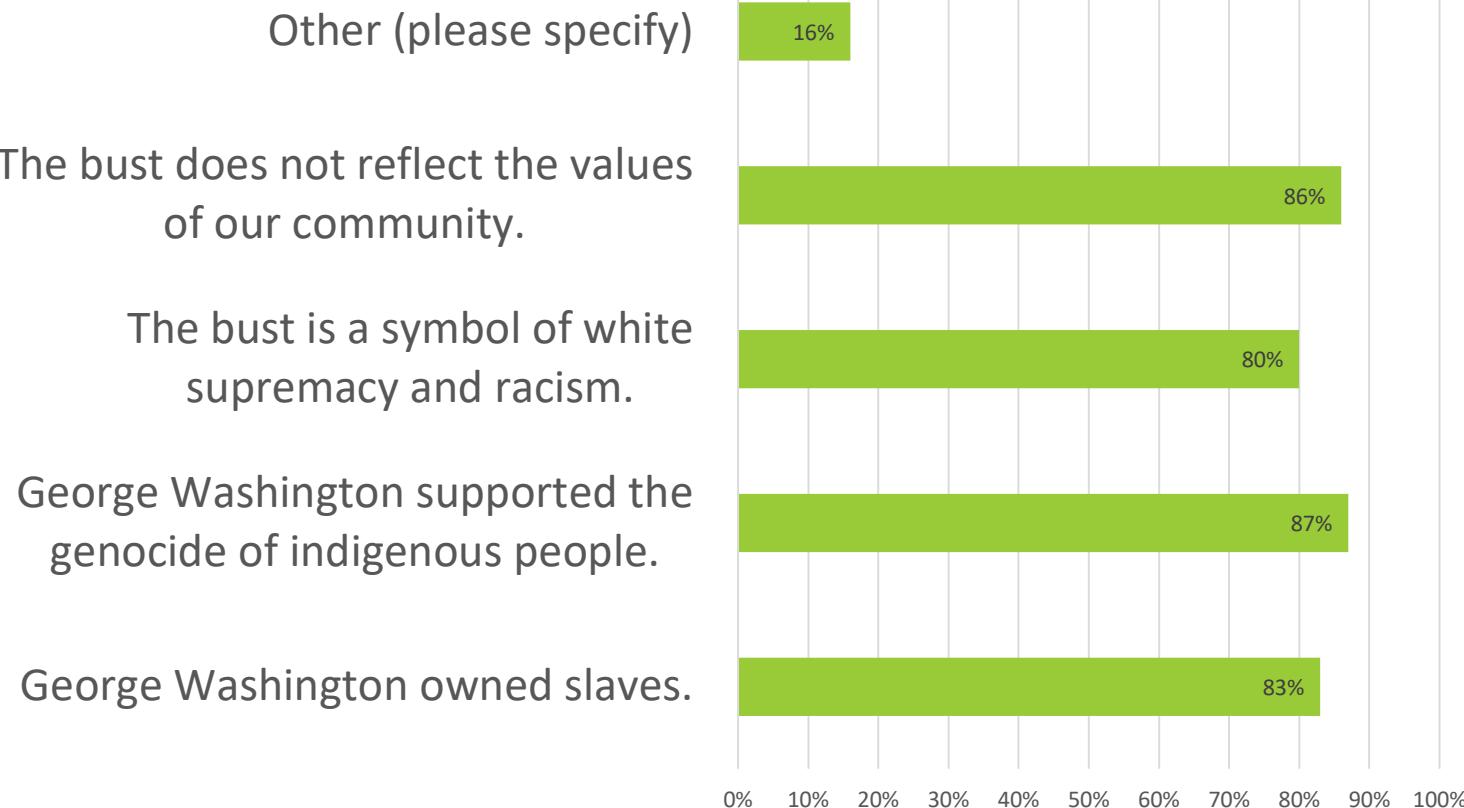
On a scale of 1-5, how strongly do you feel that the bust should be removed from/remain in the City Plaza (1 being the least strong and 5 being the strongest)?



Reasons for Removal or that it Remain

Reasons for Removal

Which of the following are reasons that you feel the bust should be removed (check all that apply)?



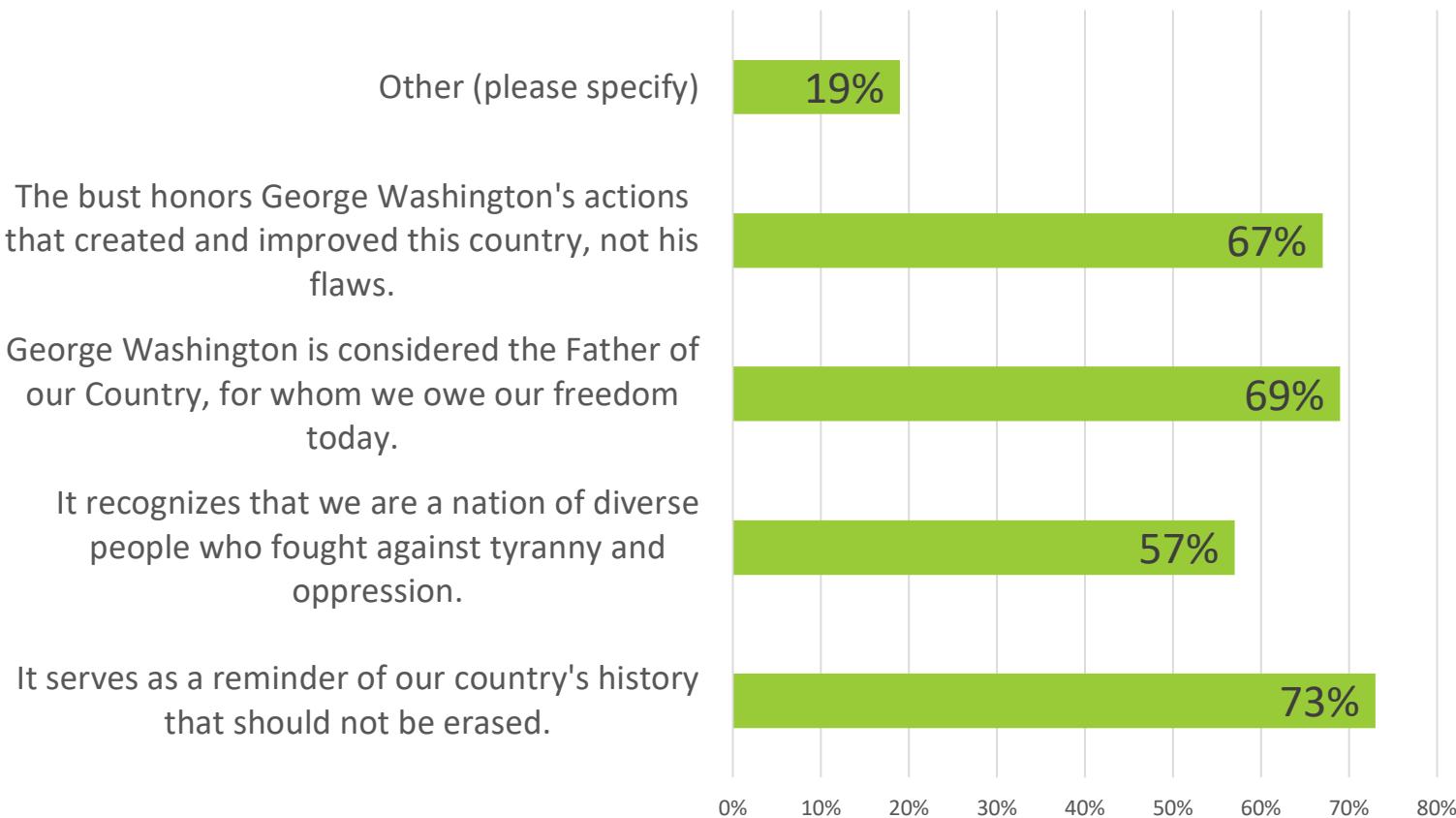
Reasons for Removal

Other:

- Bust ignores other parts of history/tells an incomplete story
- George Washington is irrelevant to local history
- Need a symbol that better represents our community
- George Washington represents oppression, racism, slavery
- It is ugly

Reasons to Remain

Which of the following are reasons that you feel the bust should remain (check all that apply)?



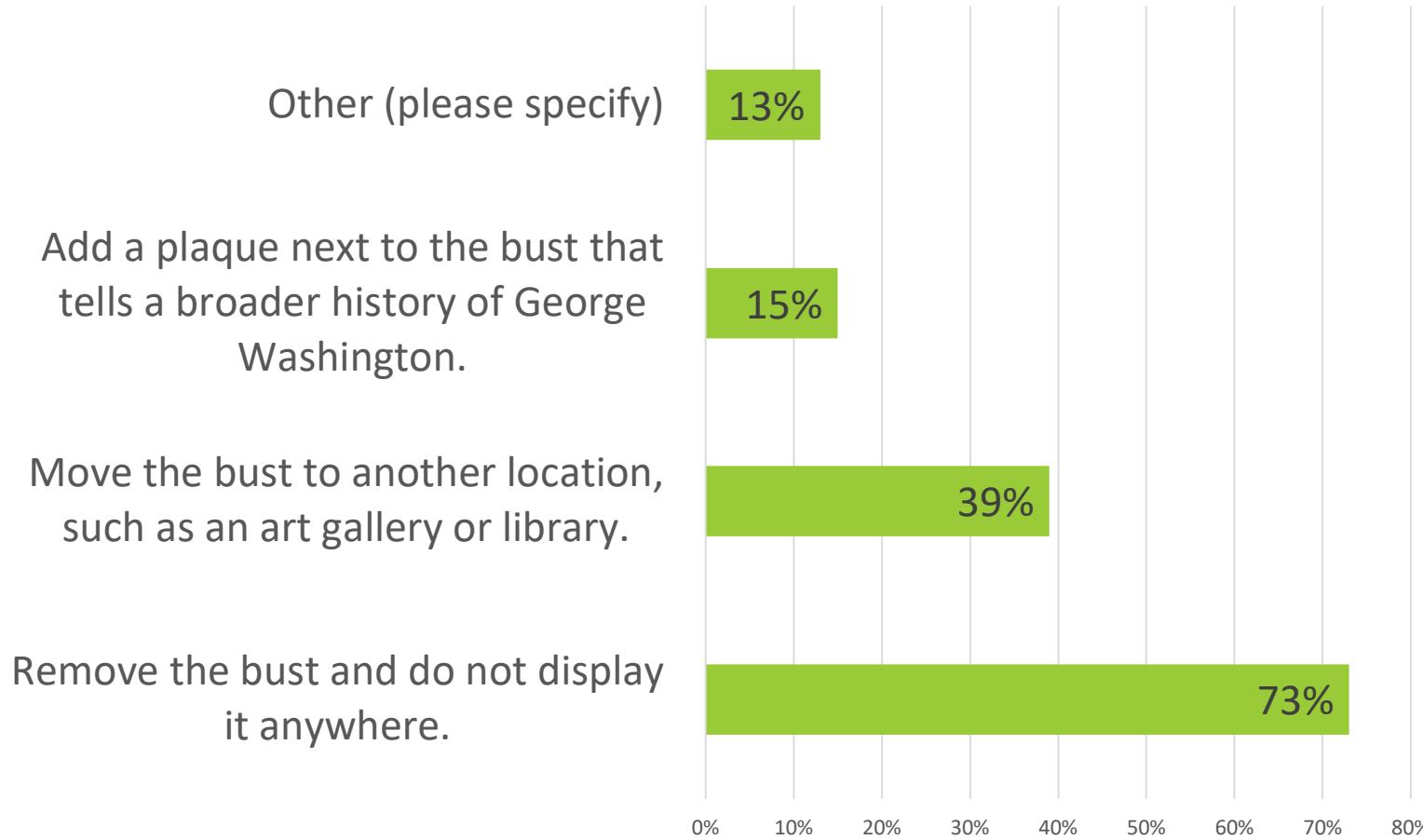
Reasons to Remain

Other:

- All people are flawed
- Can't apply today's values to the past
- It was a donation that the City Council accepted
- George Washington freed his slaves
- We would not have the freedoms we have today if not for George Washington
- We should learn from history, not erase it
- Slavery was practiced throughout history, including in European, African and Aztec cultures

Possible Actions

Possible Actions - Respondents in Favor of Removal

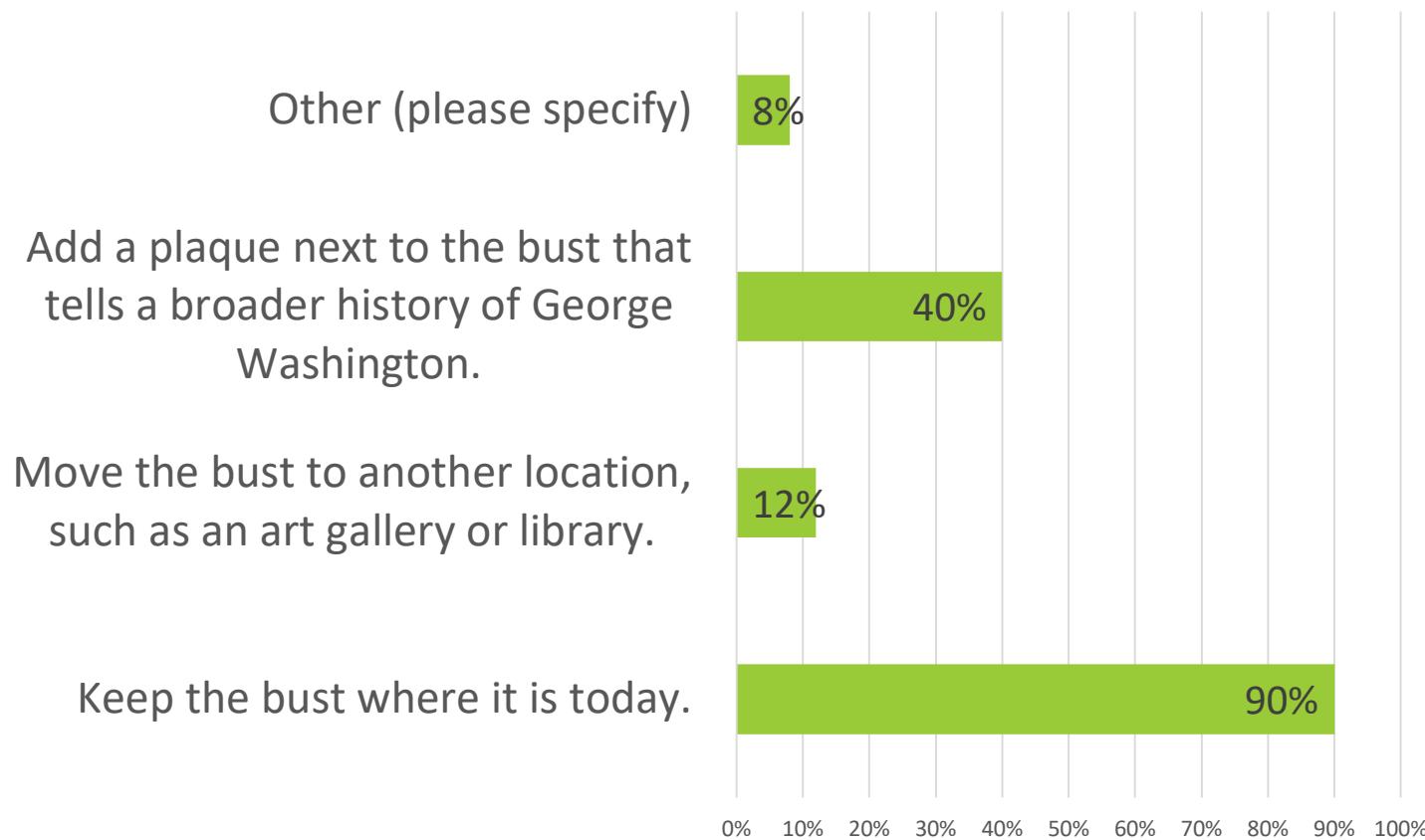


Possible Actions - Respondents in Favor of Removal

Other:

- Replace it with a statue of another historical figure
- Return it to the Alaga Family
- Relocate it **and** add a plaque that tells a broader history
- Add other statues of historical figures to the City Plaza

Possible Actions - Respondents in Favor of Remaining

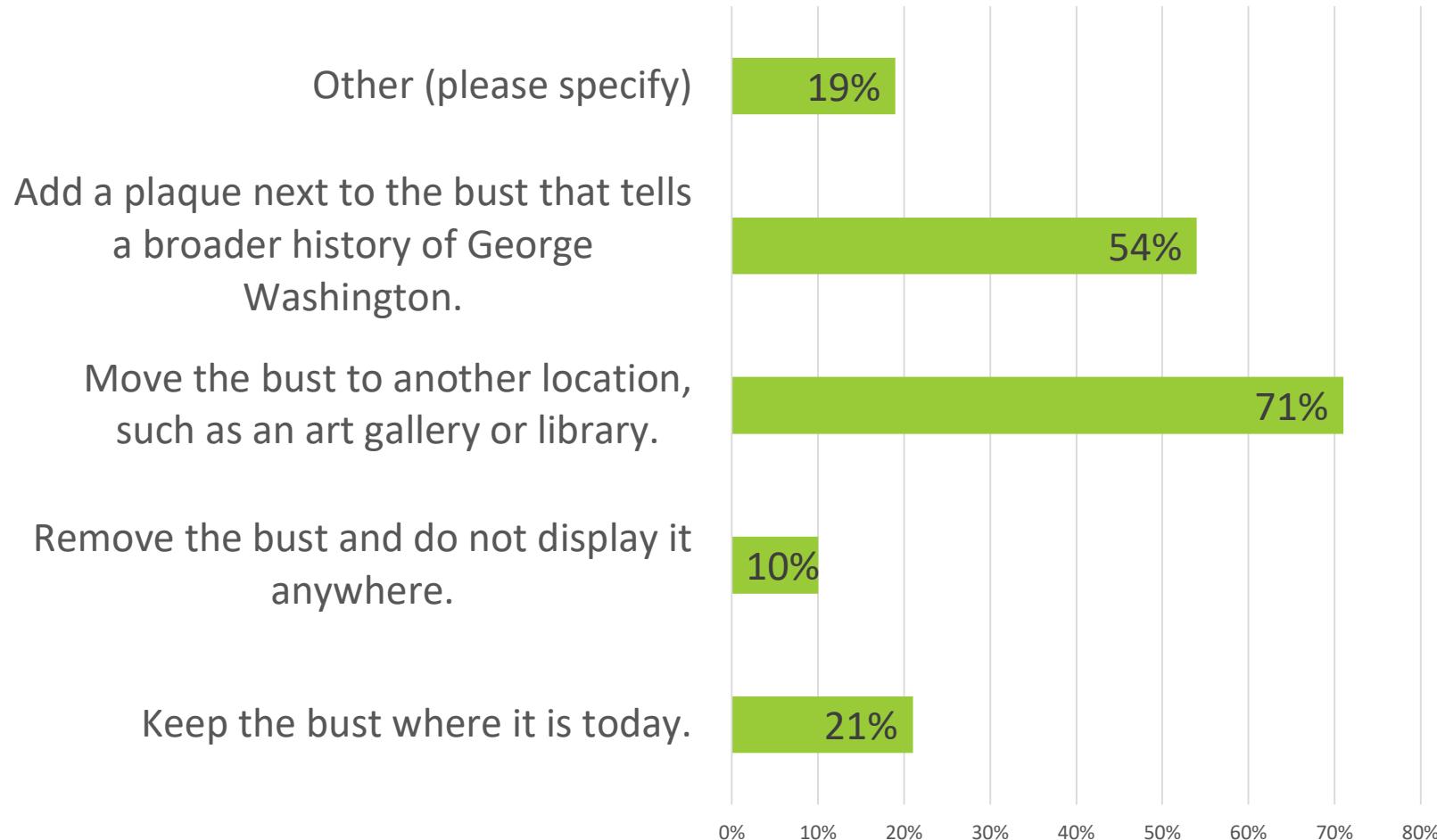


Possible Actions - Respondents in Favor of Remaining

Other:

- Add statues/art that honor other leaders, heritages
- If it is removed, give the money back to Alaga Family
- If it is removed, do not replace it

Possible Actions - Respondents who are Indifferent



Town Hall Meeting

- October 20, 2020
- **Attendance:** 94
- **Purpose:** To explore constructive ideas/options for the George Washington Bust to present to the PRC that align with the spirit of the feedback received by Watsonville residents.
- The intent of the meeting was to focus on the future, work together towards solutions and learn from each other.
- **Meeting Agenda:**
 - Review Results of the Community Survey
 - Work together to explore options

Meeting Discussion

- Options presented based on survey results:
 - Remain - Take no action and keep the bust where it is and do nothing else.
 - Remain with Plaque - Keep the bust where it is and add a plaque that tells a broader history of GW
 - Relocate - Move the bust to be displayed in another location (potentially City Hall, Library, PV Arts). Could also add a plaque.
 - Remove - Remove the bust and do not display in anywhere (could be returned to the Alaga Family or kept by the City for safekeeping).
- Individuals present during the meeting indicated support for each of these options, with more attendees supportive of the bust remaining with a plaque or relocating it.
- Some attendees suggested that more time and community outreach should be conducted prior to making a decision.
- General willingness to find a solution that brings community together

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Recommendation

In accordance with feedback received from Watsonville residents through a community survey and further input collected during a Town Hall meeting, staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission make a recommendation to the City Council:

- That the George Washington Bust remain in the City Plaza, and
- That a bilingual plaque that outlines a broad historical perspective about George Washington be added to the bust.

Alternatives

Parks and Recreation Commission could recommend another path forward regarding the placement of the bust. Based on survey results and community input, options include:

- Take no action and keep the bust where it is.
- Move the bust to be displayed in another location. Could also add a plaque.
- Remove the bust and do not display in anywhere.
- Do not take action at this time and determine what other information needs to be gathered before deciding on next steps.

Questions?
