
EVALUATION OF THE

BURKE-GILMAN TRAIL'S

EFFECT ON

PROPERTY VALUES AND CRIME

Executive Summary



SEATTLE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

OFFICE FOR PLANNING

MAY 1987

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine what effect, if any, the Burke Gilman Trail has had on property values and crime rates of property owners near and adjacent to the trail. The need for the study became apparent when property owners in a different area of the city expressed concern over the development of a new trail project on the basis that it might reduce their property values, increase crime, and generally reduce the quality of life. These concerns are similar to concerns raised by property owners who bought their homes prior to the construction of the Burke-Gilman Trail.

TRAIL PROFILE

The Burke Gilman Trail is a 12.1 mile (9.85 miles are in Seattle) multi-purpose trail that follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way. Most of the trail passes through residential neighborhoods. In Seattle, there are 152 single-family homes and 607 condominiums immediately adjacent to the trail, and 320 single-family homes within one block of the trail. The trail also passes through an industrial area, several neighborhood commercial areas, the University of Washington, and links six different parks. The trail was constructed in 1978 and has about three quarters of a million users per year.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected via telephone by interviewing residents near and adjacent to the trail, real estate agents who buy and sell homes near the trail, and police officers who patrol neighborhoods adjacent to the trail. Residents were asked questions regarding: their decision to buy their home; what effect they thought the trail would have on selling their home; what problems, if any, they have had with break-ins and vandalism by trail users; and how the trail has affected their overall quality of life. Real estate agents were asked similar questions on how the trail affects the selling price of homes along the trail. In addition, police officers were asked questions regarding trail users breaking into and vandalizing homes. A bi-weekly survey of newspaper real estate advertisements and real estate magazines was also conducted to determine whether homes were being advertised as being near or on the Burke-Gilman Trail.

An attempt was made to compare the selling prices and assessed values of homes along the trail with homes in comparable neighborhoods. However, due to the many variables that determine the value of a home, it was impossible to isolate the trail as a determinant of increased or decreased home value using this method.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Property near but not immediately adjacent to the Burke-Gilman Trail is significantly easier to sell and, according to real estate agents, sells for an

average of six percent more as a result of its proximity to the trail. Property immediately adjacent to the trail, however, is only slightly easier to sell, and sells for zero to 1/2 of one percent more. Residents who bought their homes after the trail was opened are most likely to view the trail as a positive factor that increases the value of their home. Longtime residents who bought their homes prior to the opening of the trail are generally less likely to view the trail as an economic asset. Real estate advertisements that promote properties as being on or near the trail tend to be from the companies that regularly sell homes near the trail. In other words, people who have recently been involved in the real estate market near the trail are more likely to have experienced the economic assets of the trail.

Homes immediately adjacent to the trail did not experience an increase in burglaries and vandalism as a result of the trail. In the eight years the trail has been open, there has been an average of two incidences of vandalism or break-ins per year where a trail user was thought to be involved. This is well below the neighborhood average, which would expect about five incidents per year, given the number of homes along the trail. Police officers interviewed stated that there was not a greater incidence of burglaries and vandalism of homes along the trail. They attributed that fact to the absence of motor vehicles. The police officers said that there would be no significant trail problems as long as parking lots were away from the trail and bollards prevented motor vehicle use.

Not a single resident surveyed felt the trail should be closed. Less than three percent said there were any problems associated with the trail that were serious enough to cause them to consider moving. Almost two-thirds of the residents felt the trail increased the quality of life in the neighborhood. Two of the residents surveyed indicated that they had been leaders in the group opposing the trail, and that they now believe the trail is the best thing that has happened to the neighborhood.

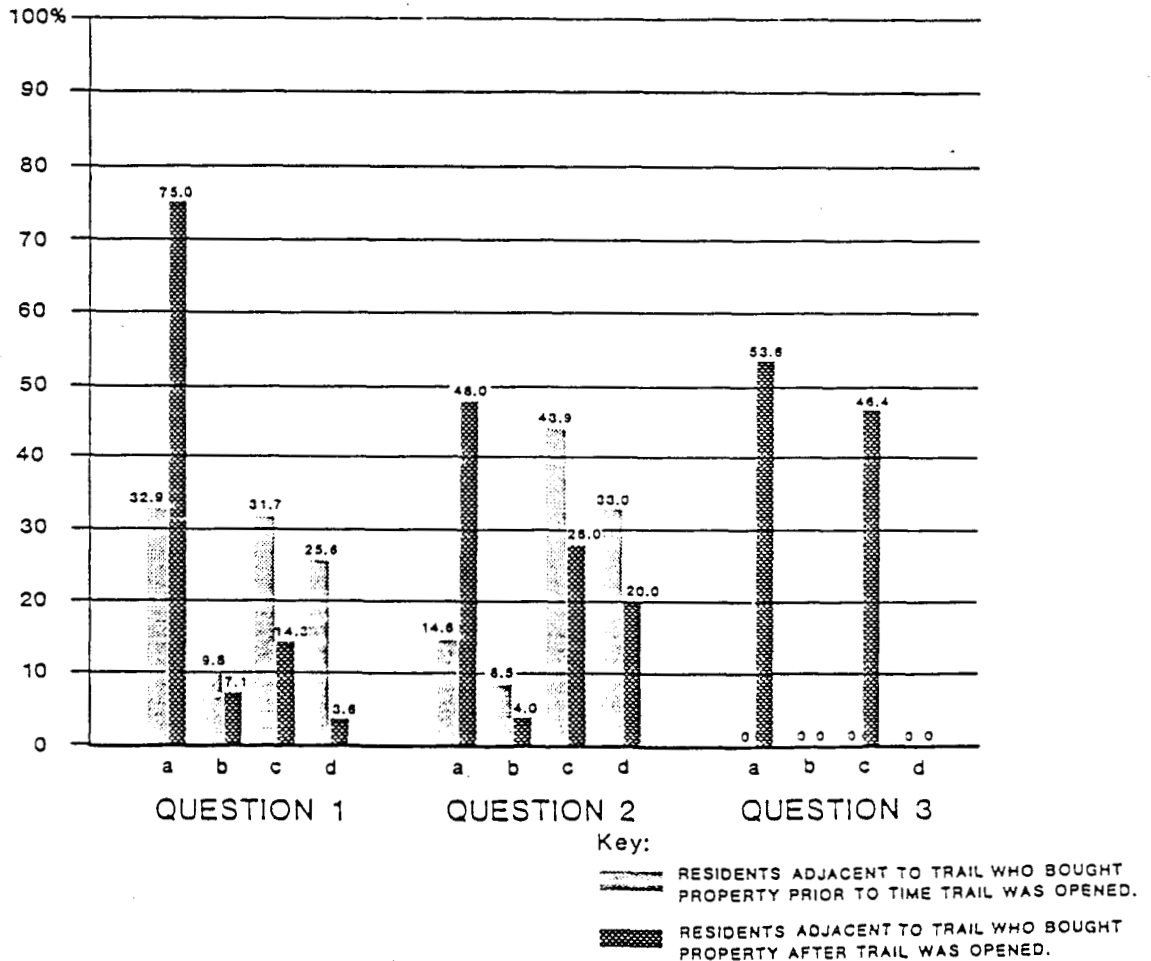
One point of concern regarding the trail must be mentioned. Although not included in the survey, thirteen percent of those surveyed brought up the problem of user conflicts (i.e., speeding bicyclists) on the trail. To some extent it is a problem of success. The trail has twice as many users as had been originally forecasted. Solving this problem may require trail design changes, educating users, and enforcing trail regulations.

SURVEY OF RESIDENTS WHO OWN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES ADJACENT TO TRAIL

1. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the home easier to sell
 - b. make the home more difficult to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the home
 - d. do not know

2. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the home sell for more
 - b. make the home sell for less
 - c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
 - d. do not know

3. When you bought your home, did the Burke-Gilman Trail
 - a. positively influence your decision to buy your home
 - b. cause some misgivings about buying your home
 - c. have no effect on your decision to buy your home
 - d. owned home prior to construction of trail

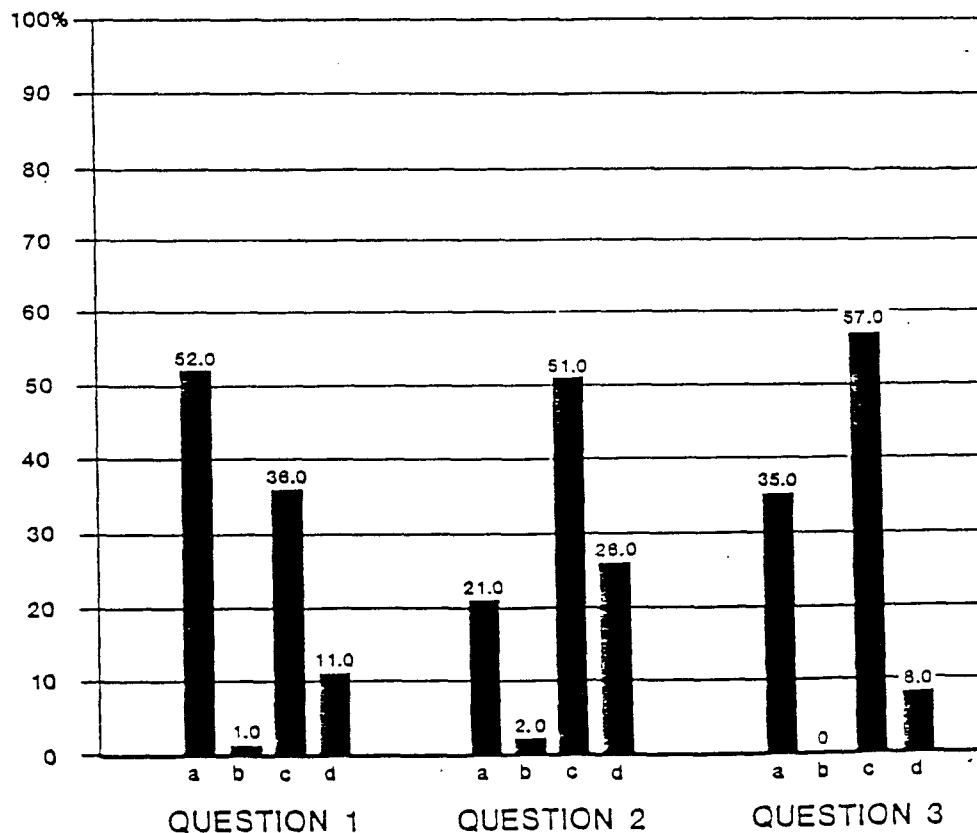


SURVEY OF CONDOMINIUMS ADJACENT TO TRAIL

1. If you were to sell your condominium today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the condo easier to sell
 - b. make the condo more difficult to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the condo
 - d. do not know

2. If you were to sell your condominium today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the condo sell for more
 - b. make the condo sell for less
 - c. have no effect on the selling price of the condo
 - d. do not know

3. When you bought your condominium, did the Burke-Gilman Trail
 - a. positively influence your decision to buy your condo
 - b. cause some misgivings about buying your condo
 - c. have no effect on your decision to buy your condo
 - d. owned condo prior to construction of trail

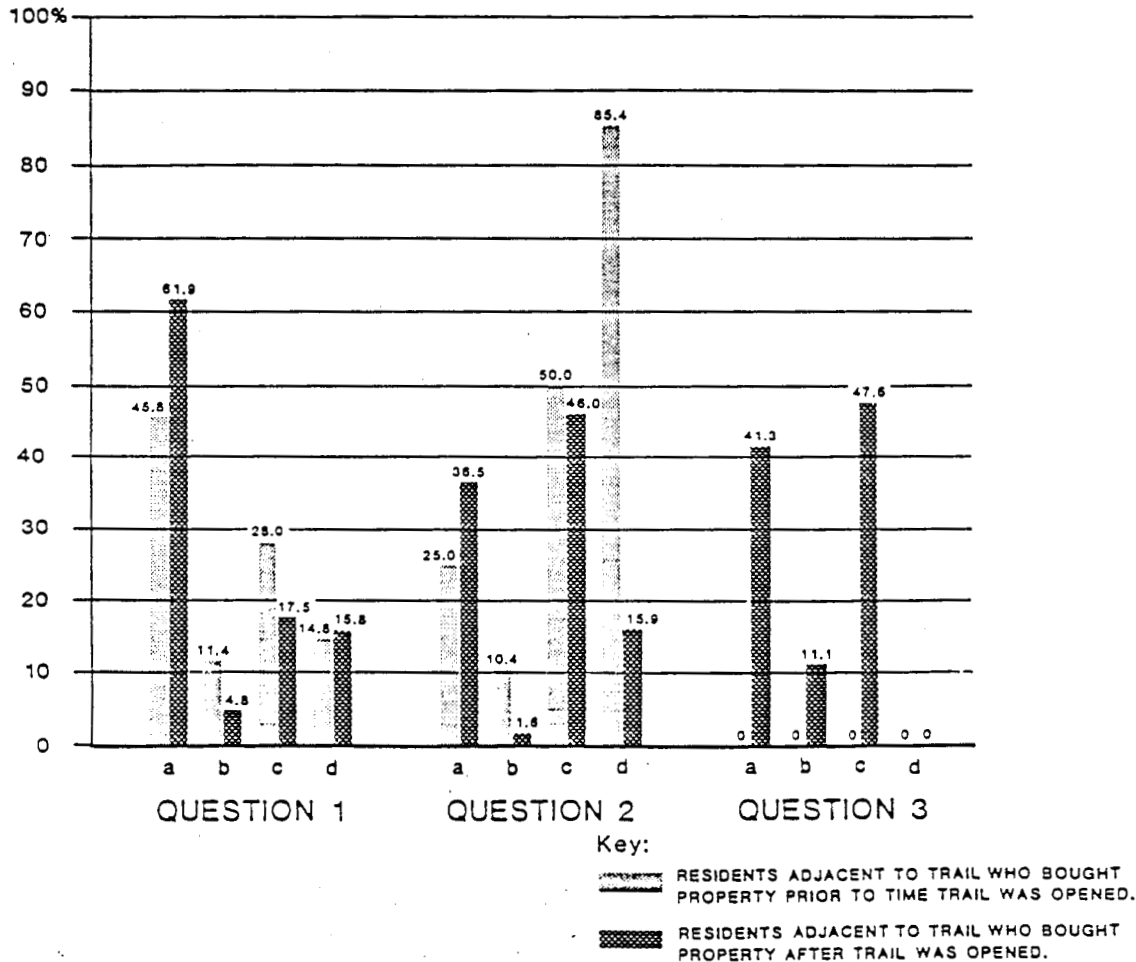


SURVEY OF RESIDENTS WHO OWN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES WITHIN ONE BLOCK OF TRAIL

1. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the home easier to sell
 - b. make the home more difficult to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the home
 - d. do not know

2. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
 - a. make the home sell for more
 - b. make the home sell for less
 - c. have no effect on the selling price of the home
 - d. do not know

3. When you bought your home, did the Burke-Gilman Trail
 - a. positively influence your decision to buy your home
 - b. cause some misgivings about buying your home
 - c. have no effect on your decision to buy your home
 - d. owned home prior to construction of trail



SURVEY OF REAL ESTATE AGENTS

1. If a home is immediately adjacent to the Burke-Gilman Trail, the trail will
 - a. make the home easier to sell
 - b. make the home more difficult to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the home

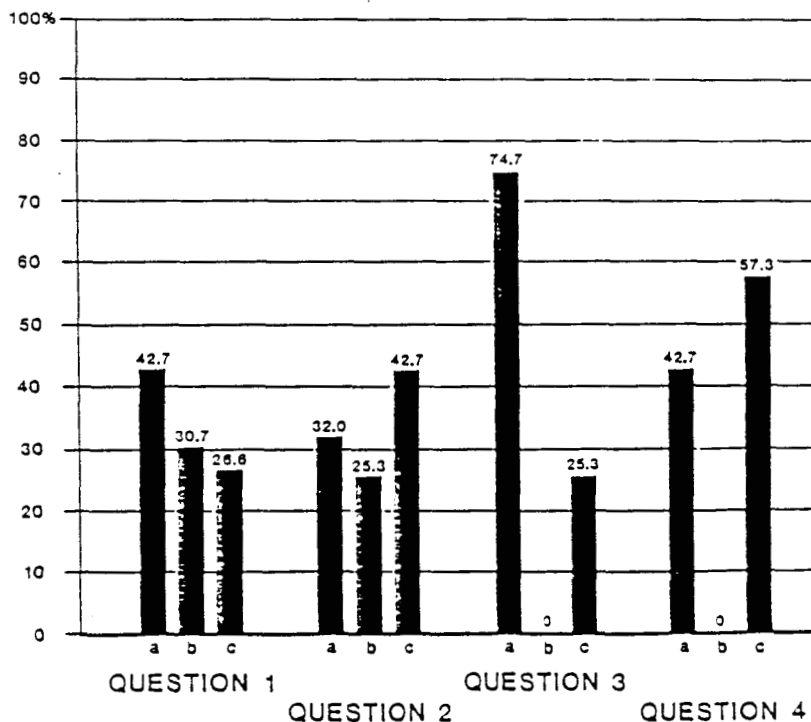
2. If a home is immediately adjacent to the Burke-Gilman Trail, the trail will
 - a. make the home sell for more
 - b. make the home sell for less
 - c. have no effect on the selling price of the home

How much more or less? (want %) (see page ___) Average = +0.47%

3. If a home is within two blocks of the Burke-Gilman Trail, but not immediately adjacent to the trail, the trail will
 - a. make the home easier to sell
 - b. make the home more difficult to sell
 - c. have no effect on selling the home

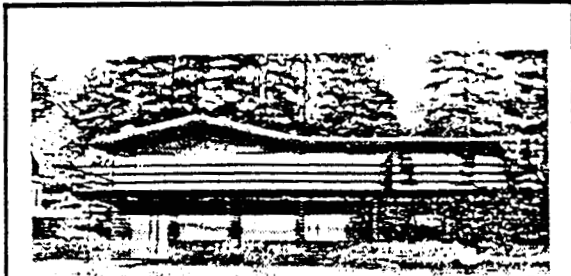
4. If a home is within two blocks of the Burke-Gilman Trail, but not immediately adjacent to the trail, the trail will
 - a. make the home sell for more
 - b. make the home sell for less
 - c. have no effect on the selling price of the home

How much more or less? (want %) (see page ___) Average = +6.2%



SAMPLE ADVERTISEMENTS
(See Appendix for Additional Ads.)

HOME ALONG TRAIL



CEDAR PARK **\$139,950**
Close in N Seattle location adjoining the Burke-Gilman Trail with full Lake Washington views. Ideal family or shared living w/4+ bdrms, 3 baths, 2 frpls, rec rm & full length entertainment deck. Call Jon Beahm, 527-5250.

Date: Mar. 28 - April 10
Source: FORUM

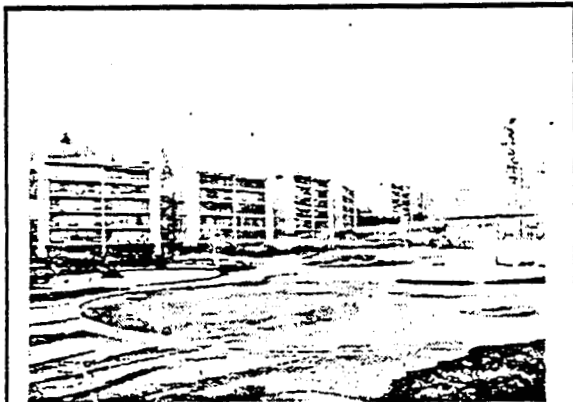
HOME NEAR TRAIL



VALHALLA **\$108,500**
View of Wayne Golf Course. Outstanding value. Lovely neighborhood. Family room off kitchen plus rec room. Community pool. Convenient to Burke-Gilman Trail. Sonia Bartel, 488-3503 or 527-1777.

Date: Mar. 28 - April 10
Source: FORUM

CONDOMINIUM ALONG TRAIL



FAIRWAY ESTATES **\$165,000**
Professionally decorated unit with view overlooking Lake Washington & Cascades. Wet bar & fireplace for elegant entertaining. Sauna, pool, rec room & Gilman trail at the door. Laureihurst Office, 525-6571.

Date: July 8 - July 18
Source: FORUM

APARTMENT NEAR TRAIL



EIGHT UNIT APARTMENT near UW, BURKE GILMAN TRAIL parking in rear. Updated and always rented, waiting list, prime rents & neighborhood. NEVER VACANT. \$239,950. 443-1046

Date: June 6 - June 19
Source: HOMES & LAND OF SEATTLE & SNOHOMISH COUNTY

SURVEY OF RESIDENTS WHO OWN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES ADJACENT TO TRAIL

Question #1: To the best of your knowledge

- a. Has a trail user ever broken into your home? Yes No
- b. (if yes) How often? (see page ____)
- c. What was stolen? What other damage occurred? (see page ____)

Results:

Out of a total of 110 residents surveyed, five of the residents said that, most probably, a trail user had broken into their home at one time during the 8 years the trail has been open. Two of the residents indicated that their home had been broken into twice. Hence, there has been a total of 7 break-ins during the 8 years the trail has been open. This is 4.5 percent of the residents surveyed.

Question #2: To the best of your knowledge

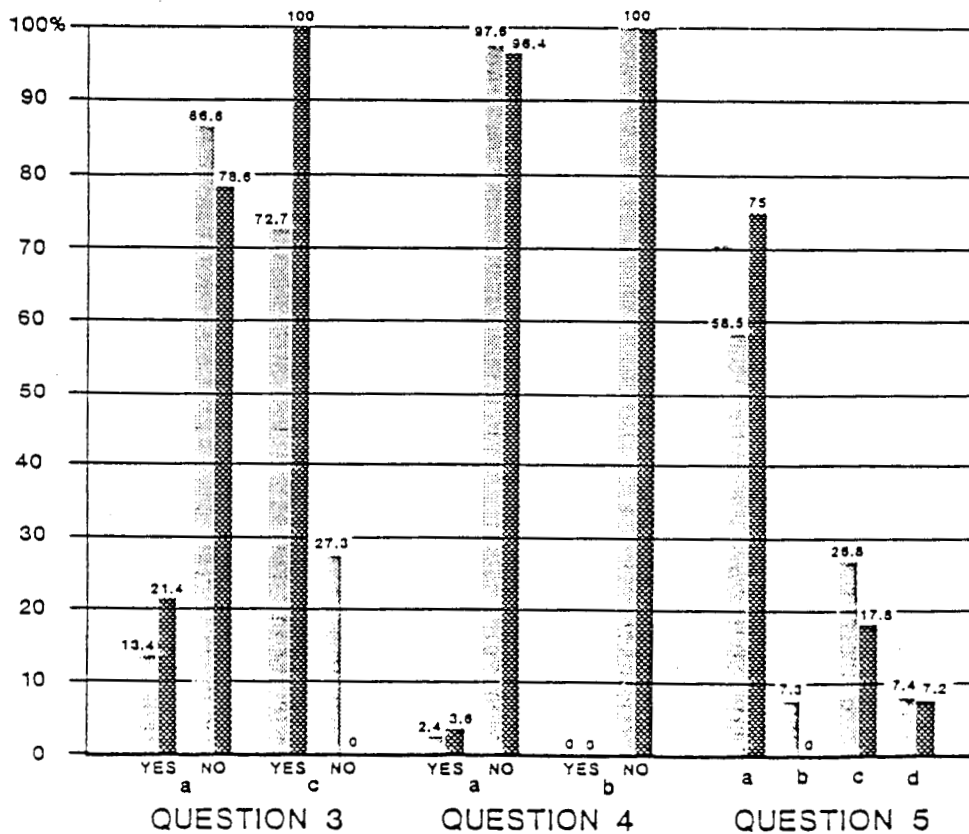
- a. Has a trail user ever vandalized your property? Yes No
- b. (if yes) How often? (see page ____)
- c. What damage occurred? (see page ____)

Results:

Out of a total of 110 residents surveyed, four of the residents said that, most probably, a trail user had vandalized their property at one time during the 8 years the trail has been open. One of the residents indicated that their property had been vandalized twice. Hence, there has been a total of 5 incidents of vandalism during the eight years the trail has been open. Only 3.5% of the residents indicated that their property had been vandalized.

SURVEY OF RESIDENTS WHO OWN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES ADJACENT TO TRAIL

3. Have you ever made any efforts to
- a. Keep trail users off your property? Yes No
- b. (if yes) How did you do it? (see page _____)
- c. Has it been successful? Yes No
4. Are there are problems caused by the trail that
- a. are serious enough to cause you to consider moving? Yes No
(if yes) What are the problems? (see page _____)
- b. are serious enough that you would like to see the trail closed? Yes No
5. In general, do you feel that the presence of the Burke-Gilman Trail has
- a. increased the quality of life in the neighborhood
- b. decreased the quality of life in the neighborhood
- c. had no effect on the quality of life in the neighborhood
- d. do not know



Key:

- RESIDENTS ADJACENT TO TRAIL WHO BOUGHT PROPERTY PRIOR TO TIME TRAIL WAS OPENED.
- RESIDENTS ADJACENT TO TRAIL WHO BOUGHT PROPERTY AFTER TRAIL WAS OPENED.