

Floating Home Association Survey Results - September 2024

Overview

With only 67 responses (13%), the participation rate is low. The breakdown is 67% from Eastlake, 20% from Portage Bay, 10% from Westlake, and 3% from Northlake. While we can still gather insights and identify potential trends or concerns, the low response rate may also reflect a weaker connection to the FHA among members. Note that we held the survey open several weeks with reminders online; QR code posters were displayed on the Eastlake docks.

For the ~10 people that were not members (or not sure if they were members), reasons for not joining/not knowing were lack of value, unaware of benefits, the association is "not good at renewing," and no contact/communication.

Overall, about 60% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the FHA, while 30% felt neutral and less than 10% were dissatisfied. Similarly, 63% believed the FHA represents the interests of floating homeowners, with 31% neutral and 6% dissatisfied. These results indicate that while the majority surveyed have a positive view of the FHA, there is still a significant portion of neutral respondents, suggesting an opportunity to engage and better connect with this group to strengthen overall support.

In an open-text question about the top shared issues or projects the FHA should focus on, the responses fell into the following categories:

1. Neighborhood and Legislative Relations: 48%
2. Environment: 13%
3. Community: 11%
4. Safety and Security: 11%
5. Communications: 8%
6. History and Preservation: 3%
7. Noise: 3%
8. Legal and Compliance: 3%

Nearly half of respondents highlighted Neighborhood and Legislative Relations as the most important focus. Within this group, 20% prioritized City Light issues, and 12% emphasized concerns with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Additionally, 20% of this group requested stronger overall connections with the city, seeing floating homes as an asset that should be better integrated into the city's promotion and priorities.

Environmental concerns were another key theme, with 63% of respondents who listed the environment focusing on lake quality, citing issues like water pollution and the spread of invasive plant species. (One person mentioned we should do water quality tests). It's no

surprise that lake health is a top priority, given that more people listed it as the best aspect of living in a floating home - more than anything else.

Within the Safety and Security category, a notable issue was the lack of harbor patrol enforcement on speeding boats (which may potentially be addressed through Neighborhood and Legislative Relations efforts.)

When we asked another way, prompting users with drop down choices, the priorities were:

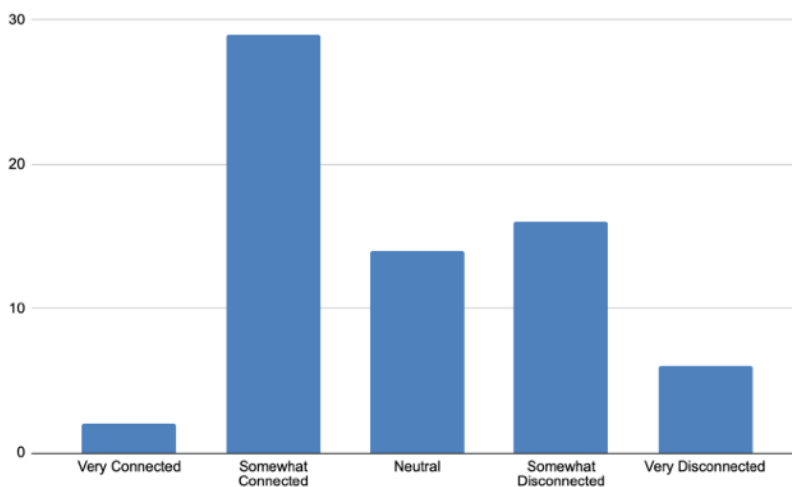
1. Advocacy and lobbying (Neighborhood and Legislative Relations) 29%
2. Environmental protection 20%
3. Member communication and transparency 15%
4. Safety 12%
5. Community events 12%
6. History and Preservation 12%

For comparison of the last survey in 2016, top three concerns: Harbor Patrol, City Lights electric, and building code issues. "Emergency preparations" were also seen as important - but this was not mentioned by anyone.

Details

A desire for community

How connected do you feel to the floating homes outside of your existing dock neighbors?

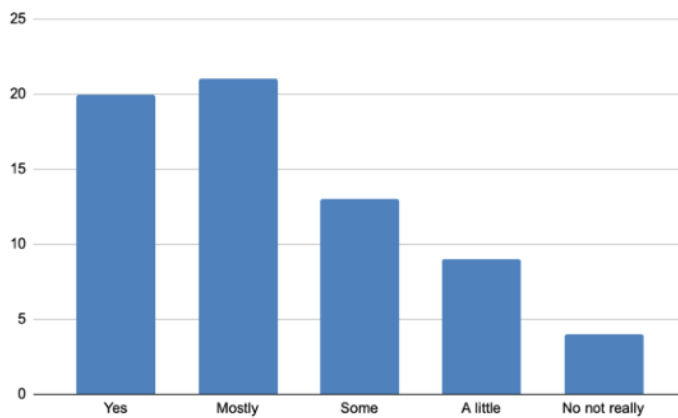


Many people feel a strong connection to their dock neighbors (the "Y" axis of the community), but there's a sense of disconnection when it comes to neighbors beyond their

own dock (the “X” axis). The FHA has a unique opportunity to bridge this gap by organizing shared events and addressing common concerns across docks. However, one person pointed out that the Floating Home Tour tends to focus more on the relationship with the city than fostering community connections. So, while a successful tour is important, it won’t be enough on its own – we’ll need to take additional steps to bring people together this coming year.

Our Communication and Our Benefits

Do you believe you know and understand the function and activities of the Floating Home Association?



While most respondents are aware of much of what the FHA does, many are still in the dark. Considering that only 13% of families responded to the survey, the number of people who are unaware of our activities is likely much higher.

The new printed newsletter will help address this gap, but it should feature practical, easy-to-use content that members can refer to often, like a “list of vendors who work on floating homes, from window washers to barrel adjusters.” These pull-out items could also become a potential revenue stream through advertising.

In addition, the newsletter should consistently direct readers back to the FHA website, serving as a promotional tool for the site’s resources. To maximize impact, we should consider updating the website, ensuring it’s clean, user-friendly, and a valuable extension of our communications.

Increasing Membership

These are the specific brainstorm of responses for getting people to join or stay members of the FHA.

- More active FHA

- More advocacy for floating homes.
- Active support for floating home owners
- Awareness, stop fighting seaplanes, advise on power issue vs blanket fight it. Encourage better maintenance on docks.
- Benefits and info listed.
- Better communication
- \$24/year Renter membership tier.
- A fun t-shirt
- Frankly I am only a member as our Dock enrolls all owners. In eight years I am not aware of anything that the FHA has done to better my enjoyment or quality of lake living.
- I would like to see activities that gave me a chance to meet people from other docks.
- Know the benefits of membership/incentives for membership.
- Ongoing support of key issues.
- Persistent reminders to renew.
- Sharing best practices and resources to improve floating home HOA management; sharing resources for maintenance of individual floating homes
- Some direct contact.
- Become closer to our community.

Freeform Responses of what the FHA should be focused on - the specifics

Listed as number one priority:

1. Keeping Fairview as it is - multi modal, pedestrian friendly, no further development, no sidewalks
2. A list of vendors who work on floating homes from window washers to barrel adjusters
3. Better standing with SDCl
4. Cleanliness of the lake and how to live on it
5. Communication with residents
6. City of Seattle regulations (includes City Light)
7. maintain / improve relationships with City, County, and State
8. DNR Lease
9. Connection and support of floating home community
10. Lake water quality
11. Advocacy and lobbying, and communicating
12. Communication with the City or the County or the State regarding issues that. effect the general conditions of living on a houseboat, ie, sewer issues, electricity, use of the lake,
13. Building community
14. The massive variety of invasive plants on the shoreline of the various floating home docks.
15. City of Seattle and/or various utilities imposing added costs
16. Advocacy with governing agencies.
17. Lake water quality

18. Safety
19. Inclusiveness of houseboats/barges and other liveaboards in activities, campaigns, etc. (I live on a houseboat, not a floating (sic) home)
20. New dock electrification regulations
21. Protecting floating home living from unreasonable interference and expense.
22. Protecting the community from city or other regulation. I'm not sure if there is anything pending, but we need a watchdog.
23. Developing a sense of community
24. Pollution on the lake
25. DNR Lease renewals and requirements for docks
26. Educating floating home/houseboat residents as to their responsibility of residing on the lake. That encompasses rules of the lake as regards to water activities, environmental concerns, and respect for neighbors.
27. Noise on the water, esp large commercial charter boats with bands
28. Fairview Ave
29. electrical connections
30. building community
31. Seattle City Light requiring new hookups.
32. Threats from the City or County
33. Insurance
34. Lack of DNR leases.
35. Inconsistency in tax rates applied to docks with land houses (significantly lower for all floating homes) and docks with all homes floating (significantly higher)
36. Updates on articles of interest regarding issues related to houseboats, moorage, ownership, upkeep, legal issues, etc.
37. City Light requirement to have lines under water and box on land
38. City support to improve safety of Fairview for walkers, scooters, bikers and 2 way car traffic. One option is to make is one way and regular pavement maintenance. Some holes swallow a tire!
39. any governmental position (eg SCL, DNR) that potentially could be a financial disaster currently or in the future. Is the FHA looking beyond to identify potential issues that could have an adverse effect on us
40. Collective work on policy issues such as DNR lease negotiations, SCL meter requirements and sprinkler system requirements for houseboats etc.
41. City Light and cost of relocating electric meters.
42. Safety and security
43. Maintaining the number of houseboat moorages.
44. Electricity
45. Getting rid of the seaplanes from Lake Union, a safety and community support issue.
46. SCL
47. property assessments
48. Fairview Avenue

Listed as number two priority:

1. Monitoring health and vitality of Lake Union
2. Keeping the areas around us clean. Water and land. Our common areas are pathetic in general. Cities responsibilities but we can do better as members of community on picking up litter, weeding, etc.....
3. Health of Lake Union
4. Getting to know each other
5. Kenmore Air volume
6. develop and share resources and support to help HOA's maintain and upgrade piers and other infrastructure
7. City Light
8. Awareness and communication of current and upcoming construction projects that may impact Lake Union.
9. Road/construction impacts on Fairview
10. Annual full membership events, as well as smaller come-if-you-can social events (monthly sunrise paddle, Gasworks Brewing FHA happy hour meetup, SeaFab/Saint Bread morning coffee, etc.
11. Answered in above question
12. Protecting the lake from pollution
13. Parking!
14. I don't know if anything can be done, homeowners' insurance costs for floating homes
15. Lake law enforcement...low presence for safety, boat speed, etc. See 3rd priority.
16. community/safety
17. Environment
18. Protecting lake health
19. Networking and assisting floating home owners and docks to find qualified service providers (divers, dock repairs, insurance, etc.)
20. The floating home tour is not really for residents, we should have events that allow us to get to know people on other docks open only to floating home residents. Also water based activities.
21. Environmental issues
22. Seattle city Light and power lines
23. Keeping the character of houseboats versus the modern box on water that now is the norm
24. Proper care and maintenance of existing and future properties as well as lobbying the city to maintain a safe walking path around the lake.
25. Noise on the water, esp large commercial charter boats with bands
26. DNR Leases
27. refinement of city regulations to encourage older floating homes to not be forced out by dock owners
28. safety, security and privacy
29. Influence how the Lake is being developed as business conditions in the area change

30. Houseboat Codes differences from Land Codes (i.e. electrical, fire, etc.)
31. City's Shoreline restrictions on replacing/fixing existing docks
32. DNR leases
33. Parking taken away by every new building site which requires a sidewalk to nowhere!
34. Getting more members signed up. In numbers there (sic) is strength.
35. Plans for a Fairview Ave E "green street" and how that might affect houseboats and parking.
36. City and state regulation (sic)
37. Quality of water on which we float.
38. Requirements for fixing floats
39. Reducing insurance costs
40. Taxes
41. DNR lease rates

Listed as number three priority:

1. Re-greening, reforesting Eastlake
2. Community
3. Advocating for floating homes in general
4. Reduction of SPD Harbor Patrol
5. Involvement in surrounding shoreside communities to build collaborations
6. Parking enforcement
7. History and preservation. Collect and document the history. And an accessible Wiki and resources so one doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. Challenges/solutions documented, as well as the history and stories behind the homes.
8. Having more interaction with the members of our community
9. Creating a safer neighborhood
10. Lake noise levels are getting out of control.
11. floating homes being regarded as an asset to the city of Seattle and not a troublemaker
12. Community
13. Noise abatement
14. Promoting and facilitating best practices for operating condominium and cooperative docks.
15. Provide a resource for crazy HOA boards and bylaws. There are professional HOA managers that could help HOAs improve their operations without spending crazy money on lawyers. Classes? Seminars? Speakers? Dispute resolution??
16. State and City regulations
17. float plane dangers and pollution
18. Keeping the history of houseboats and keeping our community together
19. Educating the public as to the historical significance of the floating home community.
20. Speeding boats (going high speed, not the ones where it's hard to tell if they are OR are not speeding)
21. Parking

22. Historic multi-use of Fairview Avenue E as a shared street for pedestrians and vehicles
23. Legal advocacy - keep us informed of all the crazy things the city is trying to do
24. Seattle City Light
25. Keeping us informed of the day to day developments and solutions from other docks
26. Getting more enforcement/protection as lake union gets busier.
27. Response time for harbor patrol. Lack of patrol boats
28. City allowing floating homes to continue
29. City electric upgrades and assuring floating home owners do not pay for the infrastructure
30. The Lake is aging out and new owners are absentee and/or 2nd homeowners. We need a strategy to appeal to this new group in many cases much younger than previous owners.,
31. Lake use and safety. Seaplanes.
32. Parking
33. Cleanliness of lake, water quality test?
34. Float planes
35. Vandalism
36. New construction

Other Concerns:

1. I'm surprised there is no manual for how to live in a FH, also the names of other FHs
2. Maintenance and architectural resources.
3. Lake cleanliness, particularly with the impact of that many people living over the water surface.
4. General cooperation with other lake users.
5. HOA/bylaw resources for each condo/co-op association to improve skills/processes
6. Community events would also be a priority
7. Establishing a safe, clear and clean walking path. Walking the perimeter of Lake Union should be enjoyable to all residents and tourists alike.
8. DNR lease
9. Advocacy for floating home owners and preservation of existing floating homes and communities
10. Rights of houseboat owners and responsibilities of dock owners.
11. Keeping the neighborhood safe from crime and homeless encampments which brings safety issues
12. Invigorate these new owners to take on the stewardship of preserving a part of Seattle's history. ip
13. Increase links or contact with Eastlake Community Council. They share some of the same concerns.

What's the Best Thing(s) about living in a Seattle Floating Home

1. Community

2. Everything
3. Community, proximity to nature & City
4. The independence
5. Such a unique way of life.
6. A wonderful lake
7. Being on the water, the views
8. Water access, close community, quirky properties
9. Uniqueness, the water, city living, our dock's community
10. Being close to the water; swimming in summer; watching winter ducks when it's too cold to swim!
11. View, water access, community
12. The water! I feel connected to my neighbors, nature, and urban elements.
13. Coming home to a relaxing environment (sic)
14. It floats! Also the water fowl and other water creatures.
15. Community and peaceful lifestyle
16. Calm and stillness quiet swells and motion.
17. View, community, safety (on the dock at least)
18. The experience and neighbors
19. Everything.
20. unique way of living
21. My neighbors
22. Mix of privacy/community; constantly changing views; feeling that I'm a small part of a historical continuum.
23. The light
24. Living on the water, views, access to use the water (swim, boat, etc.)
25. View and proximity to the water
26. The water and the animals
27. Being close to the water.
28. The water and the neighbors
29. Watching nature through your window.
30. On water living
31. Everything! (Except the rain, but that's not just with FH's 🙄)
32. Quirkiness, charm, and community
33. being close to water and environment
34. Being on the water
35. Being on the water; having a sense of neighborhood with other floating home residents; enjoying natural environment while also being close to city amenities
36. On the water lifestyle,
37. peaceful setting and close knit neighborhoods
38. the location and community
39. Being on the water
40. Enthusiastic community
41. Peace, quiet and safety

42. Community
43. We are the last threads of a village inside a modern, rich , young community. So far we've been able to keep a 50's mentality in tact, to a degree but this is slipping away. Not that it can be replicated but a new vision for the future that appeals to new ownersre
44. views, direct access to water
45. The unique lake location, our dock neighbors
46. Tranquility, quiet, proximity to the water
47. Interaction with the water, cooperative community
48. close to nature and downtown
49. It used to be connuting (sic) to the universuty (sic) by boat. Now it is the rowers and the quiet.
50. Lake access
51. A unique and wonderful lifestyle
52. Simplicity and community
53. Access to the water
54. water access
55. Our wildllife neighbors, water access

What's the most challenging thing about living on a floating home?

1. Parking
2. People paying for needed upgrades and having adequate insurance on their docks
3. Close proximity to each other, no storage/garage
4. I have learned things about living in a FH that I wish I were told when I first moved in
5. Issues can bit a bit vexxing to solve.
6. parking
7. Upkeep - freezing pipes, dry rot
8. Tight quarters, new construction, rising costs
9. Carrying everything up and down the stairs
10. Upkeep expense
11. Considerably more upkeep and maintenance than traditional homes, and additional obstacles to getting things done.
12. Not sinking
13. Protecting property from the elements
14. Managing space, parking, lots of construction around me.
15. As a disabled person getting on and off the dock.
16. maintenance and securing reasonable priced services
17. Weather
18. Lately the noise levels on the lake.
19. Not everyone on the dock "pulls their own weight" - makes more work fall on fewer people
20. Maintenance
21. The noise

22. Getting everyone on our dock to engage and take on equal responsibilities.
23. Irrational and illogical neighbors on my dock and neighboring dock.
24. Lack of parking
25. nearness of neighbors.
26. Bad neighbors that should not be in a coop community
27. Living in very close quarters when some neighbors disregard bylaws and don't give consideration to their neighbors.
28. Maintenance
29. Division of labor for community facilities and repair (think docks, sewage systems etc)
30. Expense
31. speeding boats
32. Changing demographics
33. For our dock, not having long-term leases for each floating home
34. Maintenance
35. Dock rules vs reality.
36. Maintenance
37. lake union traffic/noise/pollution
38. Pipes freezing and dock getting slippery
39. managing the one difficult neighbor (everyone has one) who abuses the shoreline rules
40. Contentions with dock owner - what rights of houseboat owners vs rights of dock owner
41. Parking
42. Fixing everything!
43. privacy, safety issues created by speeding boaters
44. A long walk on the dock in wintery weather
45. Parking, lack of space
46. Maintaining infrastructure, building cooperative community
47. disagreeable neighbors
48. Heating it.
49. Maintenance, proximity to neighbors
50. The noise and safety concerns of the seaplanes.
51. Logistics
52. High costs
53. structural problems due to constant movement
54. Bad neighbors, parking

BETA-ideation

Direct ChatGPT Analysis of the Freeform Survey Results with Actionable Ideas

Top Priorities Identified:

1. Lake Union Environment

Members are concerned about preserving protecting Lake Union from

pollution.

Actionable Ideas: Launch a 'Clean Lake Union Initiative': Organize regular lake clean-up days with the community and coordinate with environmental groups to improve water quality. Publicize these efforts in the community newsletter and social media. **Invasive Plant Control Program:** Partner with environmental specialists to identify and manage invasive plant species on the lake's shoreline. Create an educational guide to inform residents on how to spot and report these plants. **Testing:** Coordinate with local university for regular water analysis and testing.

2. **Regulatory Challenges and Relationships with City, County, and State**

The FHA's relationship with agencies like the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), Seattle City Light (SCL), and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a critical concern for members.

Actionable Ideas: Create an 'Advocacy and Regulatory Affairs Committee': This committee could focus solely on building better relationships with city and state agencies. They could meet quarterly with representatives from SCL, SDCI, and the DNR to proactively discuss upcoming regulations and find ways to work together. **Host Quarterly 'Regulatory Q&A' Webinars:** Invite officials from these agencies to speak to FHA members and address concerns about electric hookups, lease renewals, or construction regulations. This would increase transparency and allow members to engage directly. **'Advocacy Watchdog' Initiative:** Set up a monitoring system to keep tabs on upcoming regulations that could impact floating homes. This could include a monthly newsletter section dedicated to updating members on key policy issues and potential threats.

3. **Community Building and Communication**

Strengthening the sense of community and improving communication with residents are top priorities. Many members want more social events and better ways to communicate FHA activities and updates.

Actionable Ideas: Create a 'Community Ambassador Program': Recruit volunteers from each dock to act as ambassadors who keep their neighbors informed about upcoming events and community issues. These ambassadors could help distribute newsletters, collect feedback, and encourage participation. **Host Monthly 'Community Connection' Events:** Organize informal social gatherings like coffee meetups, evening paddle sessions, or happy hours. These could be low-cost and foster a sense of belonging among residents. **Launch a 'Residents Directory':** Include a list of all floating home and houseboat owners (with their permission) and highlight ways to get

involved. It can also include a vendor directory for services such as window washing or dock maintenance.

4. **Safety and Security**

Safety on the lake and around the community is a prominent issue. Noise pollution from large boats and floatplanes is a concern, as is crime and vandalism.

Actionable Ideas: Set Up a 'Lake Watch Program': Similar to a neighborhood watch, this could focus on keeping an eye on boating speed, noise pollution, and any suspicious activity around the docks. Establish a system to report issues directly to local authorities or the Harbor Patrol. **'Silent Lake' Advocacy Campaign:** Partner with local boating companies and the city to reduce noise pollution from large charter boats and commercial operations. Create a public awareness campaign targeting boaters on the importance of keeping noise levels down. **Increase Collaboration with Seattle Harbor Patrol:** Work with local authorities to ensure a stronger presence of patrol boats on the lake. Encourage residents to report incidents of speeding boats or dangerous activity directly to the Harbor Patrol.

5. **Vendor Resources and Maintenance Support**

Members are seeking a resource list of trusted vendors who work on floating homes and help with maintenance issues.

Actionable Ideas: Create an FHA Vendor Directory: Build and maintain a vetted list of vendors who specialize in floating homes (e.g., window washers, electricians, barrel adjusters). This directory could be accessible via the FHA website and updated regularly with member feedback. **Organize 'Maintenance Workshops':** Host seasonal workshops where members can learn about dock and floating home maintenance. These workshops could feature experts on topics like electrical updates, float repairs, and lake-friendly cleaning practices. **'Vendor of the Month' Spotlight:** Each month, feature a trusted vendor in the FHA newsletter or on the website, giving them additional exposure while providing members with a dependable contact.

Secondary and Tertiary Concerns:

1. **Parking and Fairview Traffic**

Parking and road conditions along Fairview Avenue are a significant concern for many members, particularly as new developments impact parking availability.

Actionable Ideas: Fairview Traffic and Parking Study: Collaborate with local planners or a university to conduct a traffic and parking study, providing data

to back up requests for better road maintenance, parking availability, or one-way traffic solutions. **Launch a 'Park Smart' Campaign:** Encourage residents to use available parking spaces more efficiently and create guidelines for guests to help alleviate parking congestion during events or busy seasons.

2. **Lake Noise and Enforcement**

The growing volume of noise from charter boats and floatplanes is a notable concern.

Actionable Ideas: Noise Monitoring System: Consider investing in a noise monitoring system along the lake to document and report excessive noise levels. This data could be used in negotiations with local businesses or city officials.

3. **Floating Home Tour and Events**

While the floating home tour is popular, members want more opportunities for interaction with fellow residents rather than events catering to tourists.

Actionable Ideas: FHA 'Residents-Only' Events: Organize quarterly events exclusively for floating home residents, such as floating potlucks, paddleboard races, or historical tours of Lake Union. **'Community History Project':** Create a collaborative project where residents contribute stories, photos, and historical information about their homes and docks. This could be housed online as an evolving archive, preserving the community's unique history. **Host 'Floating Home Festival':** A summer event featuring water-based activities, music, and food to celebrate the community. Residents could showcase their homes, and local businesses could sponsor the event.

4. **Property Taxes, Insurance, and DNR Lease Costs**

Rising property taxes and insurance rates are ongoing concerns for members, along with DNR lease agreements.

Actionable Ideas: Hire a Tax and Insurance Consultant: Retain a professional who can provide insight into lowering property taxes and insurance premiums for floating home residents. Host a workshop or create a resource guide based on their findings. **Create a DNR Lease Negotiation Team:** Establish a dedicated team within the FHA to focus on DNR lease issues, specifically working to reduce rates and educate residents on how to navigate these complex leases. **Organize a 'Group Insurance Rate' Plan:** Work with insurance providers to establish group rates for floating home residents, reducing individual premiums by pooling resources.

