

Grays Harbor County

WASHINGTON



EST 1854

Youth Third Space Facilities Assessment

PREPARED FOR GRAYS HARBOR
COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

BY

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MARCH 2024

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Executive Summary

Understanding the Need

Recent County assessments have highlighted the need to understand the landscape of youth third spaces in Grays Harbor. In their 2022 Community Health Assessment, Grays Harbor identified the lack of recreational and safe spaces for young people as a key gap. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Gap Analysis (2022), Early Childhood Supports Services Gap Analysis (2023), and the 2021 Health Youth Survey (conducted every other year by the Office of Public Instruction) notes gaps in after school, mental health and prosocial supports within Grays Harbor, in comparison to Washington state averages. A growing body of research points to the devastating impacts of loneliness on mental health with an emphasis on youth mental health outcomes.

Grays Harbor has a mix of urban and rural population centers that are geographically separated in a configuration that creates transportation and access issues. This is particularly impactful when considering the location and density of resources for youth to access. Youth need spaces and opportunities to connect with one another in safe environments that are close to the places where they live and attend school. Grays Harbor's geography creates additional challenges to meeting this need.

As such, multiple coalitions have developed over time to address the needs of the specific regions within the County. Each of these coalitions is working to develop capacity and supports for youth in their local communities. These are a critical resource, and yet there is not currently a coordinating body for all youth space efforts within the County. This may lead to a duplication of efforts and limits the potential for the collective impact that could be achieved with greater coordination. Additionally, Grays Harbor lacks a place where youth and their families can learn about the activities and third spaces that are offered, including days, times, costs, and specific activities. This contributes to inequitable access and limits use of these resources, as knowledge of their availability is based on word of mouth or being connected to the specific organization that is offering the activity. Youth also shared that there is a lack of spaces to simply, safely "hang out" without structured activities.

Lastly, a theme that emerged was a history of spaces and activities that have emerged, developed a popular following and then disappeared from the area. This has created some skepticism among community members as to whether it is possible to develop a true and lasting third space.

Recommendations

HMA recommends that Grays Harbor work to create a neutral convening body that can track, coordinate, and communicate the efforts of the incredible coalitions that are already in place in the Harbor. This will enhance the impact of these coalitions and support youth in the community to learn about the offerings currently available to them. Not all youth will have the ability to travel to participate in an activity in a distant part of the County. However, by sharing the approaches and offerings across the County, there may be opportunities to scale approaches that are working well to other neighborhoods. No single facility can meet the needs of all youth and young adults in Grays Harbor. However, a group of approaches can serve to build on the strengths and current resources available to create a coordinated approach to youth third spaces in Grays Harbor.

The recommended approaches described in this report include:

- ❑ **A Single Space is Not the Answer for Grays Harbor**
- ❑ **Invest in Coordination and Collaboration**
 - Identify and support a backbone/anchor organization for youth third space coordination. This organization will bring together regional efforts, spot gaps, curate new resources and lead efforts to apply for funding to sustain a coordinated effort. Ideally, the backbone organization would be a neutral convener of stakeholders.
 - This backbone entity can also serve as a convener of a “Coalition of the Coalitions” to pull together efforts and information from smaller region-specific groups.
 - A key early focus area for this entity should include a County-wide youth summit, which could be modeled after Summit Pacific Medical Center’s September 2023 Summit.
 - Coordination efforts should include community and business partners that are providing services that youth frequent (e.g., skating rink, video game store, church groups, libraries, etc.) in conversation about a community-wide approach to youth third spaces.
- ❑ **Increase Community Education and Raise Up Existing Efforts**
 - It will be valuable to invest in educational efforts to increase community knowledge about the value youth third spaces play in promoting youth, family, and community well-being. These efforts can also raise up and promote existing third spaces, so community members know where they are and how to benefit.
- ❑ **Create a Hub or Centralized Communication Place**
 - In expanding the third space infrastructure, consider creating a hub or centralized communication space (virtual with a social media presence to engage youth) where community members can learn about existing third spaces and efforts in progress to expand access and programming.
 - This can serve to create awareness for youth and their families, while also reducing duplication of efforts and increasing engagement across the county.
- ❑ **Expand and Deepen Engagement with Emerging/Young Adults**
 - To address noted gaps in input from young adults for this assessment, and in acknowledgement of the diverse needs of this age group, it will be valuable to continue to invest in outreach to emerging adults 18-24 years old and gather input about their needs related to third spaces.
- ❑ **Expand Access to Existing Resources Through Scholarships/ Reduced Cost**
 - Given the cost barriers identified in this analysis, it may be beneficial for Grays Harbor to leverage models such as “Silver Sneakers,” which gives low or no cost access to activities such as the YMCA or other places to youth who meet certain criteria. This increases the use of already existing facilities and eliminates the cost barriers that youth have identified.

Focus Areas Identified

In general, while the study identified multiple activities and offerings across the community, it is notable that Grays Harbor has a small number of existing third spaces. The YMCA offers one strong model for third spaces in the region, as do the efforts of other community partners. Increasing access to Grays Harbor youth will require a community effort that is focused on offering a wide variety of opportunities, spaces and offerings to meet the needs of the age group from 13- 24 years of age. The geographical configuration of the County creates the need for some third spaces to be based on collaborative

agreements with existing resources such as the public libraries, schools, churches, and existing sites. However, there is also a need for additional spaces for youth to gather. Based on the geological mapping and the population growth analysis, the following areas represent the highest potential for additional capacity building in Grays Harbor:

- The neighborhood known as The Hill and Northern Aberdeen
 - Increased supports for youth aged 15-19 and 20-24
- Montesano
- Rural Elma
- Central Park
- Moclips and Ocean City
 - Specific need for increased resources for young adults 20- 24
- Elma and Aberdeen
 - Increased supports needed for disconnected youth and young adults
- Rural Elma and Taholah
 - Need for increased Summer and afterschool supports

Introduction

Grays Harbor Public Health engaged with Health Management Associates to assess the current state of youth third spaces in Grays Harbor County, including mapping existing programs, gathering input from youth and other key stakeholders around gaps and needs in this area, and developing recommendations for expanding access to youth third spaces. This analysis builds upon a series of assessments conducted by Grays Harbor Public Health including the Community Health Assessment, Community Health Implementation Plan, an Early Childhood Supports Gap analysis, and a Behavioral Health Gap analysis. Through the process of engaging community stakeholders, Grays Harbor Public Health noted that in addition to gaps in the behavioral health and birth to 5 years of age safety nets, the assessments highlight a common theme: a lack of safe spaces for youth and their families to engage in prosocial, recreational activities. This analysis serves as a foundation for Grays Harbor to respond to these identified gaps and in acknowledgement of the growing body of research that suggests the availability of spaces and activities for youth to develop a sense of belonging is a key component for supporting mental health and wellness^{1,2}. Additional research shows the impact of isolation on youth mental health issues, particularly anxiety and depression.³

A third space is a shared place for a community to gather. The name “third space” distinguishes it from home (a first space) or school/work (a second space). A youth third space is a place for teens and young adults to come together, for both informal time to socialize and to access formal activities and support. It is intended to promote a sense of belonging and is a place youth want to return to again and again. The assessment described below seeks to capture both the current availability of spaces and activities for youth in Grays Harbor, while also evaluating the extent to which these spaces are meeting the needs of youth. Particular attention was paid to whether there are spaces available that cultivate a sense of belonging for youth who participate.

The analysis was conducted over the course of a six-month period between September of 2023 and February 2024. This assessment included stakeholder engagement through key informant interviews, input gathering at multiple youth-related coalition meetings, and youth survey conducted in collaboration with key partners. The assessment incorporated geo-mapping and accompanying data analysis. Analysis was conducted of demographic data sets and key performance indicators available through both publicly available and subscription-based sources.

The sections below include a summary of the background and methodology, themes from key stakeholders, a summary of geo-mapping findings, and recommendations for future state.

¹ [Making cities mental health friendly for adolescents and young adults | Nature](#)

² [Designing and scaling up integrated youth mental health care - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

³ [Social isolation and its impact on child and adolescent development: a systematic review - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Background and Methodology

Overview

HMA used the following methods to learn about the services, gaps, and perceptions of access to youth third spaces in Grays Harbor County. HMA, in collaboration with Grays Harbor Public Health:

- Gathered input from 5 youth-related coalitions in Grays Harbor
- Conducted 7 key informant interviews with youth providers and other key stakeholders
- Gathered input from 76 Grays Harbor youth

Additionally, the HMA team reviewed regional and county assessments related to behavioral health, youth well-being, and school outcomes.

Lastly, the HMA team examined the Grays Harbor youth data from a geo-mapping lens that combined data gathered from publicly available and subscription-based census tract demographic data, data related to the social determinants of health (SDOH), and local input on available youth activities and supports.

HMA examined the network of youth third spaces both quantitatively and qualitatively. There was strong provider and broad stakeholder engagement in data collection and a general congruence amongst the feedback obtained through key informant interviews, coalition meetings, and from youth. This gives us a high degree of confidence in the gaps and strengths identified in the report. That said, despite significant outreach efforts, there was a lack of input gathered from young adults (18-24 years). This gap is described further in the report, along with recommendations for future engagement.

Provider and Other Key Stakeholder Engagement

A diverse set of qualitative data was collected from providers and other key youth stakeholders through interviews and input gathering at youth-related coalition meetings. Interviews and coalition discussions were semi-structured and guided by a set of questions developed to understand the current status of youth third spaces in Grays Harbor County, youth needs, and opportunities for change. Detailed interview notes were taken in each interview and forum and subsequently reviewed for themes, which are summarized in the results section below.

Organization/Coalition	Type of Engagement
Grays Harbor RISE Coalition	Coalition Meeting
Elevate East County	Coalition Meeting
My TOWN Coalition	Coalition Meeting
SMPC Youth Collaborative	Coalition Meeting
Harbor Strong Coalition	Coalition Meeting
YMCA of Grays Harbor	Key Informant Interview

Summit Pacific Medical Center	Key Informant Interview
Timberland Regional Library	Key Informant Interview
Grays Harbor/Great Rivers FYSPRT	Key Informant Interview
ESD 113	Key Informant Interview
Quinault Indian Nation Tribal Wellness Court	Key Informant Interview
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southwest Washington	Key Informant Interview

Youth Engagement

To gather youth input, Grays Harbor Public Health partnered with key youth stakeholders who have existing relationships with youth across the county. A multi-pronged tool to gather youth input was provided to these partners, where they could engage youth by either 1) facilitating a discussion with a group of youth served by their school/program using the discussion guide provided, or 2) distributing an electronic survey link to the youth served by their school/program.

Secondary Analysis and Data Dashboard

In order to identify the areas in Grays Harbor with the most need, an analysis was conducted of the population, broken down by age category and location. Regions, by census tract, were categorized as having a low, medium, or high concentration of residents by age group. The age groupings included: 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, and 10-24. The maps show where the population is forecasted to grow over the next 5 years based on the growth and migration patterns. The two variables noted on the geoaccess map are the size of the population now and the forecasted growth, or lack of growth for the region. In the table at the bottom of the map page, readers will find Grays Harbor County benchmarked with its neighbors, Cowlitz County, and the Great Rivers ASO Group (excluding Grays Harbor County). This analysis gives Grays Harbor County leaders visibility into areas where resources are located and zones that may benefit from additional resources to expand access to third space environments for youth.

Healthy Youth Survey

The WA State Healthy Youth Survey from 2021 (**Table 1**) below shows several areas where Grays Harbor is underperforming relative to the State averages. In the risk category, the domain of “low neighborhood attachment” reflects higher risk for all grades that were asked this question in Grays Harbor compared to the WA State survey results. Additionally, the lack of protective factors is noted in the domain titled, “Opportunities for prosocial involvement.” Overall, the question shows that Grays Harbor is underperforming the state in this measure for all 3 three grades. Further examination into the questions that comprise this domain shows a mixed response on the availability of opportunities. Specifically, the question about the availability of sports teams shows strong responses for all three grade levels, while the availability of Scouts and service clubs underperformed for all three grade levels. The question about the availability of activity clubs, which included the listed examples of, “Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, or other activity clubs,” showed that 8th grade students matched the State average rating, 10th grade students felt there were more opportunities than their statewide counterparts, and 12th grade students reported

fewer opportunities than the statewide average. Overall, data from the Healthy Youth Survey points to the need for Grays Harbor to develop additional capacity and resources for youth to connect with prosocial activities in the neighborhoods where they live.

Table 1. Key Performance Indicators for Youth in Grays Harbor

Domain	Indicator	Grays Harbor	WA State	GH is doing better than WA State ✓ = True ⊗ = Not True
Youth risk factors (Lower is better)	Low Neighborhood attachment	Grade 8: 36%	Grade 8: 32%	⊗
		Grade 10: 54%	Grade 10: 40%	⊗
		Grade 12: 61%	Grade 12: 54%	⊗
Community Domain protective factors (higher is better)	Opportunities for prosocial involvement	Grade 8: 58%	Grade 8: 59%	⊗
		Grade 10: 54%	Grade 10: 60%	⊗
		Grade 12: 66%	Grade 12: 62%	✓
Questions included in the Community Domain protective factors section	Which activities are available in your neighborhood or community?			
	Sports teams and recreation (yes)	Grade 8: 82%	Grade 8: 76%	✓
		Grade 10: 81%	Grade 10: 77%	✓
		Grade 12: 84%	Grade 12: 78%	✓
	Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H, or other service clubs (yes)	Grade 8: 46%	Grade 8: 52%	⊗
		Grade 10: 52%	Grade 10: 57%	⊗
		Grade 12: 55%	Grade 12: 61%	⊗
	Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, or other activity clubs (yes)	Grade 8: 65%	Grade 8: 65%	Same
		Grade 10: 68%	Grade 10: 66%	✓
		Grade 12: 66%	Grade 12: 69%	⊗

Themes Shared by Providers and Other Key Stakeholders

Previous Efforts and Challenges

Stakeholders described concerns about the fatigue and hopelessness that they observe in their community regarding the topic of increasing opportunities for increasing youth recreation support. They attribute this reaction, in part, to previous unsuccessful efforts to provide resources or address unmet needs. Community stakeholders highlighted the importance of creating meaningful solutions that will last. These community members emphasized that it is critical for the community to come together to implement innovative solutions for youth, while acknowledging the challenges involved with creating momentum around this collaborative effort. For example, stakeholders noted:

- *"{The} challenge is dealing with apathy and cynicism- people in these communities have been promised a lot that hasn't come through."*
- *"There is a sense of a lot of talk and not enough action- hopelessness around change."*
- *"We have some broken promises that are generational."*

This theme was particularly emphasized for groups furthest from opportunity, many of whom also have experiences of historical and community trauma. As one stakeholder noted:

- *"For our communities there has been so much trauma, so that it seems like the logical place to start is- how can we build community capacity to unwrap all of that trauma and figure out what to do with it? The starting point is giving our families a different frame of reference, because they have lived in this from day one."*

Need for Coordination and Collaboration

Stakeholders expressed a resounding need for coordination and collaboration in expanding access to youth third spaces across the county. They described pockets of progress, while also expressing concern about duplicated efforts and a lack of awareness of what is happening in other parts of the County. Stakeholders wondered about the potential value of a backbone or anchor institution that could support collaboration around youth third spaces and leverage and streamline existing efforts. Related to this theme, stakeholders noted:

- *"There is a {tendency} to pull away and self-segregate in these communities. Different geographical pockets {are} not collaborating with one another."*
- *"There are a lot of things going on in the community in terms of new efforts in this area AND everyone is maxed out in terms of capacity, etc. Intentional partnership models needed {to address this}."*
- *"{There is} not a central hub who is saying this is what is happening in different regions- sometimes there is a lack of communication and coordination"*
- *"{This effort} needs an anchor institution. This community struggles with standing up programs and then losing them."*

Geography and Transportation

In interviews and coalition meetings, stakeholders emphasized the ways in which transportation and geography are key considerations in expanding access to youth third spaces in the county. They noted the

time it takes to travel from much of the county to population centers such as Aberdeen and Hoquiam. They also expressed that transportation resources are needed to help youth access third spaces independently.

Need for Alternative, Low Cost, and Flexible Spaces

When providing input about existing resources in the community, stakeholders noted that there is a lack of diversity in the offerings for youth (e.g., *“It’s sports or there are not a lot of other things going on.”*) Stakeholders emphasized several key unmet needs with respect to youth spaces:

- Low or no cost options
- Spaces where youth can hang out/find their own space with a cluster of friends, with no or limited programming
- Spaces where youth who need another adult in their lives can find acceptance (e.g., LGBTQIA youth who are not finding acceptance at home)
- Activities that build social/emotional competency and address mental health but don’t *“feel like therapy”*
- Spaces that promote cultural identity and belonging

Unique Needs of Young Adults

One focus that in conversations with stakeholders was the unique needs of emerging adults in the 18–24-year-old range. As one stakeholder noted, *“If you are not going to a bar and want to be social, where do you go?”* Stakeholders emphasized the need to consider what spaces for this group look like, separate from spaces for youth under 18. Additionally, the difficulty in gathering input from this age group was both noted by stakeholders and felt in the outreach efforts for this assessment. Stakeholders hypothesized that this may be in part because of the diversity of paths at this age (e.g.. some individuals are pursuing post-secondary education, some individuals are parenting, some are entering the workforce, and others may be disconnected from both work and school).

Themes Shared by Youth

As noted above, youth input was gathered through youth partners by providing them with a discussion guide they could use to facilitate conversations with youth and a survey link they could distribute to youth in their programs. Two partners facilitated discussions with youth and the remainder distributed the survey link. The results from the survey are described below, with input from the youth discussions woven throughout.

Demographics:

A total of 50 youth completed the youth survey (the survey was also completed by a 45-year-old, whose results were not analyzed). Additionally, two adults led discussions with the same questions, which included 26 participants ranging from 12-15 years old.

Together, input was gathered from a total of 76 Grays Harbor youth (across the survey and discussion methods).

Survey responses were provided by individuals ranging from 12 to 21 years old. Notably, largest number of responses was from 12-year-olds, as illustrated in **Figure 1** below. More than half (56%) of respondents reported living in the 98520 zip code, which encompasses areas such as Aberdeen, Central Park, Ocosta, Junction City, Wishkah, Bay City, Laidlow, and Markham. Additional details regarding reported zip codes can be found in **Figure 2** below.

Figure 1: Youth Survey Respondents by Age

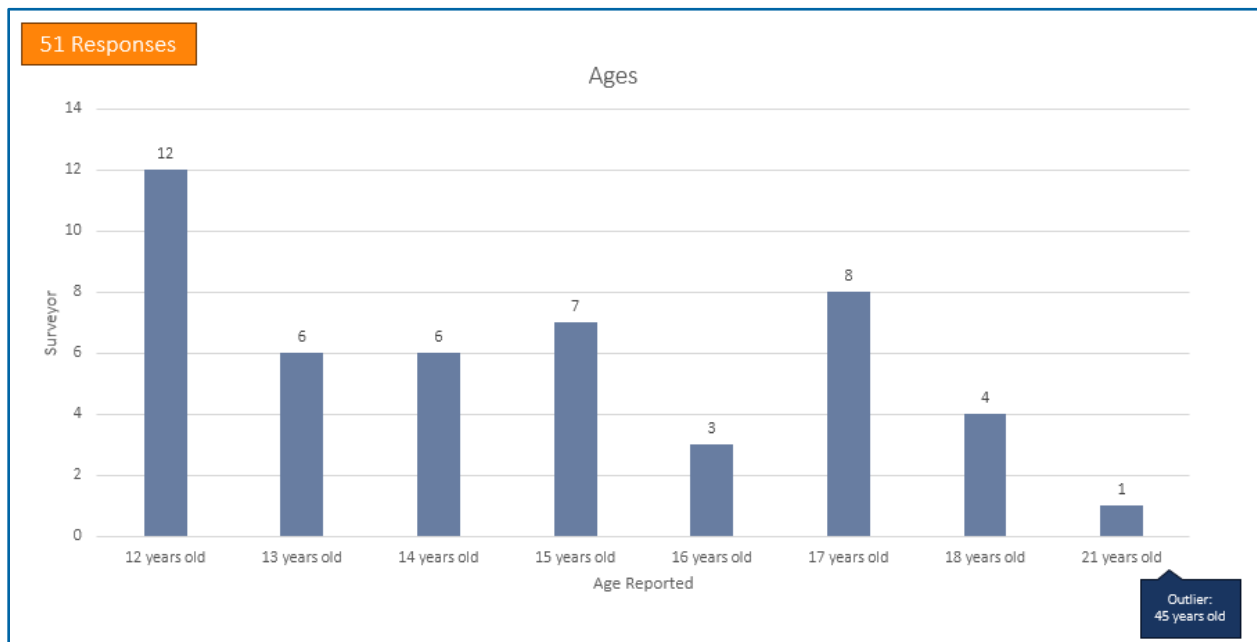
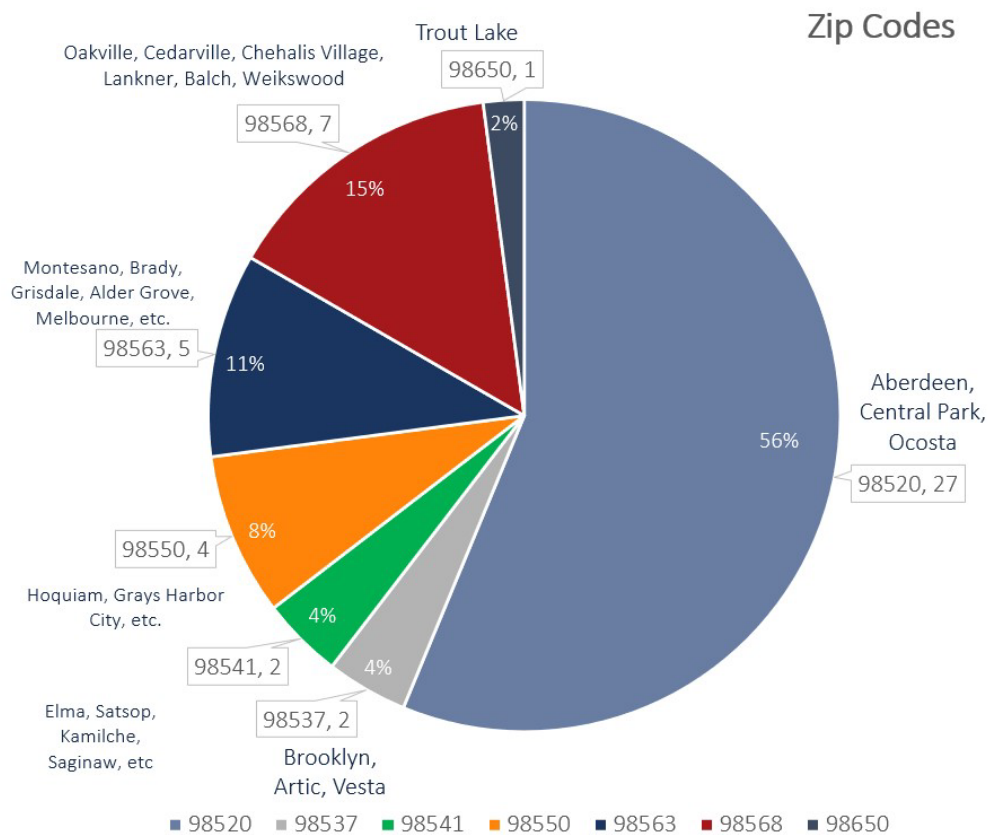


Figure 2: Youth Survey Respondents by Zip code

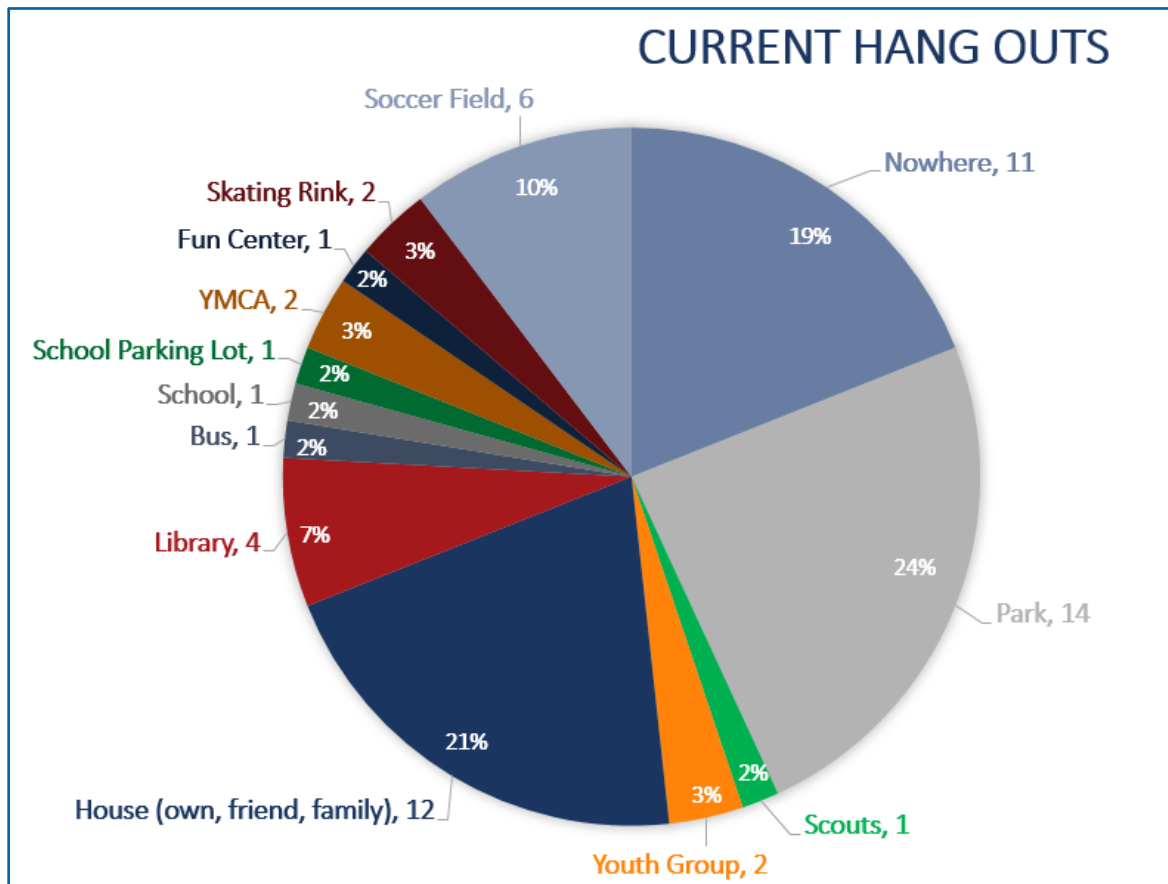


Survey Input on Existing Third Spaces and Needs

Available Spaces

In response to the question “*Is there a place that you and your friends can hang out outside of school and home? If yes, where/what kind of place?*”, the data suggests a mix of preferred spaces, with a notable portion of youth facing challenges in identifying a comfortable space. **Nearly one fifth (19%) of youth reported that they have nowhere to hangout outside of school and home (Figure 3).** Of those who identified places they hang out, 16% mentioned parks and 12% indicated their friends’ houses. Some participants expressed discomfort with planning social gatherings (e.g., “*I don't hang out with my friends out of school, planning a hang out for me is awkward and stressful.*”)

Figure 3: Current Hang Outs



When asked if there are activities that youth would like to participate in, or places they would like to hang out but aren't able to use, youth expressed a variety of interests, highlighting a desire for accessible and affordable options for socializing, physical activities, and club participation. Common desires included the establishment of a gaming club, improved accessibility to YMCA facilities, and the availability of a gym or dry space for teenagers. Specific preferences ranged from playing basketball at Thorbeckes (a wellness center based in Centralia/Chehalis/South Bend area) to engaging in small volleyball clubs or woodshop activities. Noteworthy concerns included cost barriers, transportation limitations hindering gym participation, and the challenge of accessing certain locations. Approximately 19.4% of respondents expressed disinterest with "no" or "N/A" responses to this question. **Responses to this question underscore the importance of addressing accessibility and affordability issues to meet the varied recreational needs of the youth surveyed.**

Barriers to Access

When asked about barriers to participating in desired activities or hanging out with friends, youth shared diverse perspectives. Overall, 29% of participants reported facing obstacles. Among them, 15% cited financial constraints, endorsing that activities were "too expensive." Additionally, 13% identified transportation challenges, endorsing that they "don't have a way to get there/too far away." Another 12% indicated that spaces available "don't offer activities I am interested in." A smaller percentage, 5%, mentioned other responsibilities such as jobs or family responsibilities as impediments. Cultural and linguistic barriers was noted by 4% and a few participants (3%) provided unique reasons under "Other,"

including a lack of planning skills, not being old enough, personal choice, and a desire for non-judgmental inclusion.

Characteristics of a Third Space

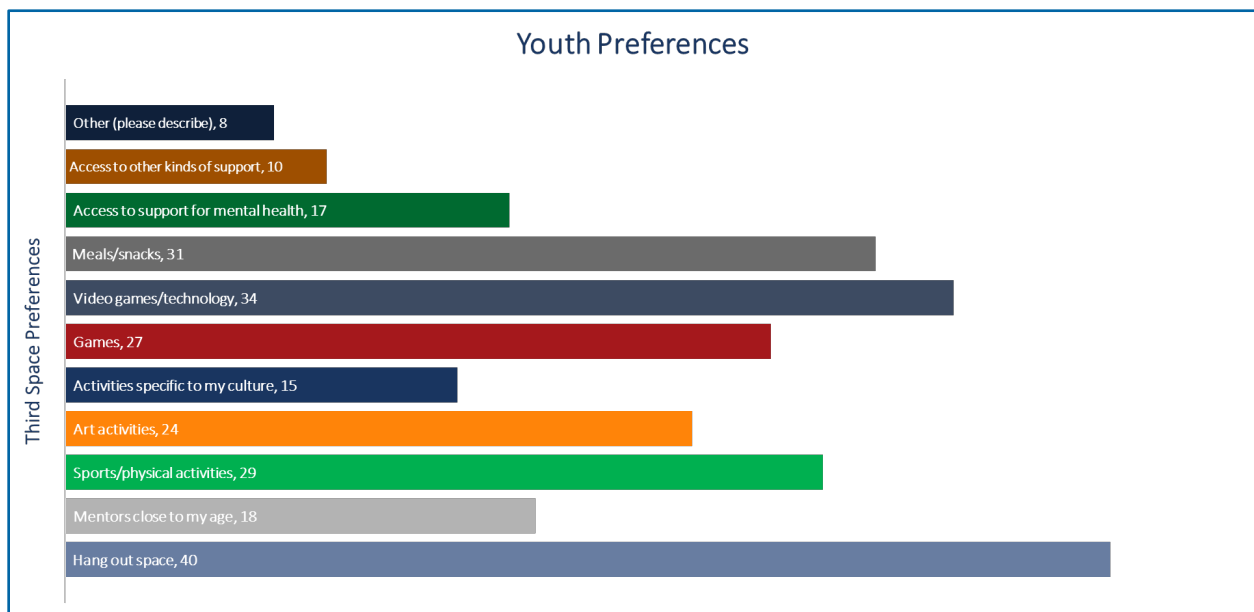
Youth were asked the following question, to gather input on what would help to build a sense of belonging at a third space:

A third space is generally a place that people feel comfortable going to all the time. It is a place where people can connect and hang out. If it were up to you, what would you want to see in a third space that would keep you coming back to again and again?

The results to this question suggested a multifaceted set of preferences, with participants expressing a desire for diverse recreational activities, affordability, inclusivity, and a sense of community in an ideal third space. Common themes in response to this question included activities such as a pool table, games, and a gym tailored for youth. Additionally, youth emphasized the importance of an inclusive and social environment. Affordable amenities like cheap snacks and drinks were noted and individuals underscored the significance of a sense of community. Some respondents highlighted a desire for autonomy and not being treated like a child.

When provided a list of amenities to consider as part of a third space, the highest-ranking preference, selected by 81% of respondents, was a “hangout space,” indicating a strong desire for a comfortable social environment. “Video games/technology” closely followed, chosen by 69% of respondents. “Meals/snacks” and “Sports/physical activities” also garnered significant interest, endorsed by 63% and 59% of respondents respectively. “Games” (55%) and “Arts activities” (49%) were also notable preferences. Approximately one third of youth (37%) expressed interest in mentorship by mentors close to their age and nearly the same volume (34%) endorsed an interest in access to support for mental health as part of a third space. Additionally, specific cultural elements were valued, with 31% desiring “activities specific to my culture.” (Figure 4)

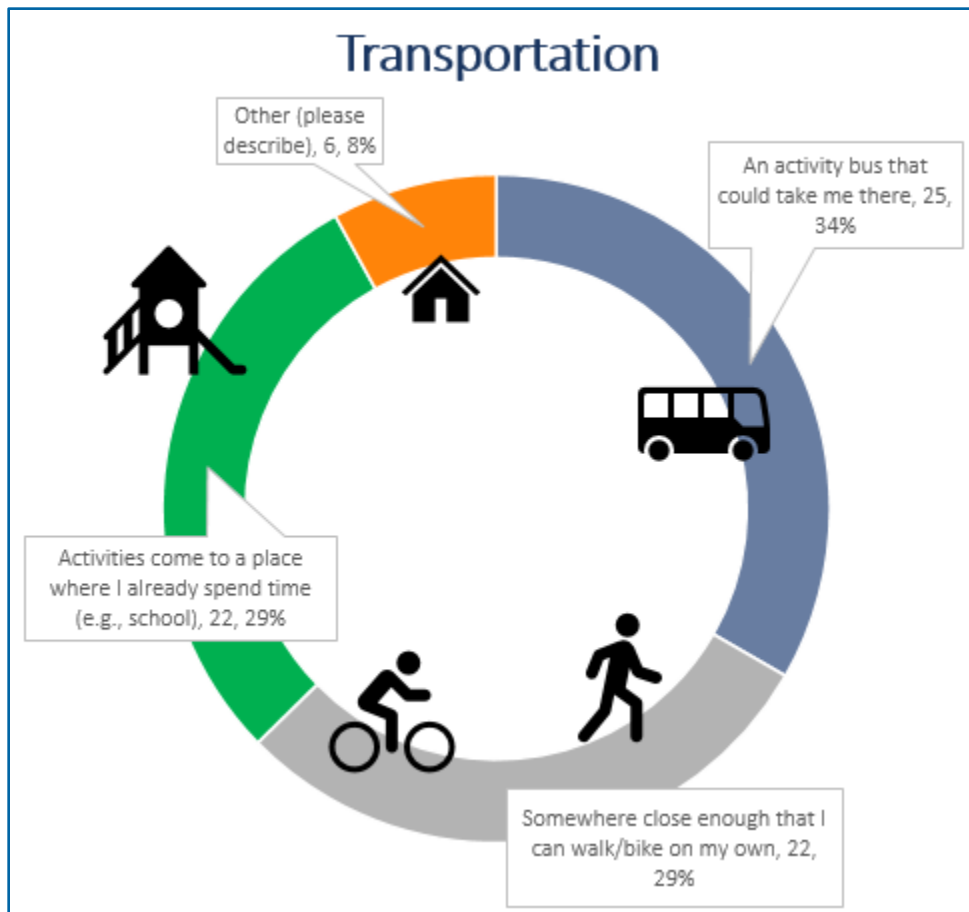
Figure 4: Youth Preferences



Transportation to a Third Space

When asked about their preferences for transportation to third spaces, youth provided diverse responses, illustrated in **Figure 5** below. Preferences were split nearly evenly between the options provided, suggesting a split in transportation preferences, with some favoring structured options like activity buses, while others prefer more flexible choices like walking or relying on family. Notably, nearly a third of respondents endorsed a preference for activities that come to a place where they already spend time.

Figure 5: Transportation Preferences



The creativity of the youth shone through the survey responses, with youth proposing unique ideas like a skating rink in Hoquiam, floral arrangement workshops, and the establishment of a music club. In their own words, participants humorously or emphatically expressed preferences, with one stating, "*I just wanna stay home,*" while others envisioned a space, "*where one can feel comfortable and safe without regard to race or religion.*" Overall, the responses underline the need for diverse, inclusive, and accessible third spaces catering to a wide range of youth interests and preferences in Grays Harbor.

Secondary Analysis and Data Dashboard

Key Findings for Population Density

The Broadway area of Aberdeen, often referred to as the Hill, has the highest concentration of youth aged 15- 19 years. This area shows a high level of projected growth within the next five years. Many of the current resources for youth are located in Aberdeen, however the northernmost sector of Aberdeen has few to no youth third space resources.

Key Findings for Population Growth Rate

The downtown region of Elma represents the highest projected growth area in the County for the population of 20- 24-year-olds. This region has some resources to serve the population and also represents a place that Grays Harbor may want to expand support to in the coming years. The Montesano, rural Elma, and Central Park regions are forecasted to increase in population density over the next 5 years. These areas represent opportunities to consider building capacity for youth third spaces.

It is significant to note that the 20–24-year-old age group shows current and projected decline in growth rate across the County. The Moclips/ Ocean City and areas South of Westport, the Grayland and Tokeland areas have small concentrations of young adults aged 20-24. However, this age group is projected to remain steady over the next 5 years. There are no identified resources to support this population in these areas at this time. This suggests a need for additional resources to support the age group.

Key Findings for Disconnected Youth

Disconnected youth are defined as youth who are not in school and who do not report current employment. Although numbers are low, disconnected youth are traditionally considered to be at higher risk for criminal justice involvement and behavioral health needs. It will be important to incorporate strategies for engaging disconnected youth in these regions. Elma and Aberdeen each have census regions that have a higher percentage of disconnected youth compared to other geographic benchmarks (7% vs 0%, respectively). The recent Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program strategy development grant is one resource that could be leveraged to address the needs of this high-risk population in Grays Harbor.

Key Findings for Child Dependency Ratio

A high child dependency ratio (CDR) means that the region’s families are experiencing more economic stress. These regions would benefit from more Summer and afterschool programming. Rural Elma and Taholah have higher CDRs. This means that there is a higher level of dependency on the working-age population compared to other geographic areas. These areas, although rural, are expected to grow over the next five years.

Key Findings for Proximity to Providers

The bulk of the available resources are in Aberdeen. However, the population is more diffused throughout the County. This leaves many Grays Harbor youth without access to third space resources in the community.

Recommendations for Future State

A Single Space is Not the Answer for Grays Harbor

The population of Grays Harbor is too geographically diffuse for single site to meet the needs of the community. Additionally, there are pockets of youth third space work in several areas. There is a clear need to augment these resources, focusing particularly on access in communities where youth live and attend school.

Invest in Coordination and Collaboration

The following recommendations are offered to address needs identified with respect to coordination and collaboration amongst existing third space efforts in Grays Harbor:

- Identify and support a backbone/anchor organization for youth third space coordination. This organization will bring together regional efforts, spot gaps, curate new resources and lead efforts to apply for funding to sustain a coordinated effort. Ideally, the backbone organization would be a neutral convener of stakeholders.
- This backbone entity can also serve as a convener of a “Coalition of the Coalitions” to pull together efforts and information from smaller region-specific groups.
- A key early focus area for this entity should include a County-wide youth summit, which could be modeled after Summit Pacific Medical Center’s September 2023 Summit.
- Coordination efforts should include community and business partners that are providing services that youth frequent (e.g., skating rink, video game store, church groups, libraries, etc.) in the conversation about a community-wide approach to youth third spaces.

Increase Community Education and Raise Up Existing Efforts

It will be valuable to invest in educational efforts to increase community knowledge about the value youth third spaces offer in promoting youth, family, and community well-being. These efforts can also raise up and promote existing third spaces, so community members know where they are and how to benefit.

Create a Hub or Centralized Communication Place

In expanding the third space infrastructure, consider creating a hub or centralized communication space (virtual with a social media presence to engage youth) where community members can learn about existing third spaces and efforts in progress to expand access and programming. This can serve to create awareness for youth and their families, while also reducing duplication of efforts and increasing engagement across the county.

Expand and Deepen Engagement with Emerging/Young Adults

To address noted gaps in input from young adults for this assessment, and in acknowledgement of the diverse needs of this age group, it will be valuable to continue to invest in outreach to emerging adults 18-24 years old and gather input about their needs related to third spaces.

Expand Access to Existing Resources Through Scholarships/ Reduced Cost

Given the cost barriers identified in this analysis, it may be beneficial for Grays Harbor to leverage models such as “Silver Sneakers,” which gives low or no cost access to activities such as the YMCA or other places

to youth who meet certain criteria. This increases the use of already existing facilities and eliminates the cost barriers that youth have identified.

Focus Areas Identified

In general, while the study identified multiple activities and offerings across the community, it is notable that Grays Harbor has a small number of existing third spaces. Increasing access to Grays Harbor youth will require a community effort that is focused on offering a wide variety of opportunities, spaces and offerings to meet the needs of the age group from 13- 24 years of age. The geographical configuration of the County creates the need for some third spaces to be based on collaborative agreements with existing resources such as the public libraries, schools, churches, and existing sites. However, there is a need for additional spaces for youth to gather. Based on the geological mapping and the population growth analysis, the following areas represent the highest potential for additional capacity building in Grays Harbor:

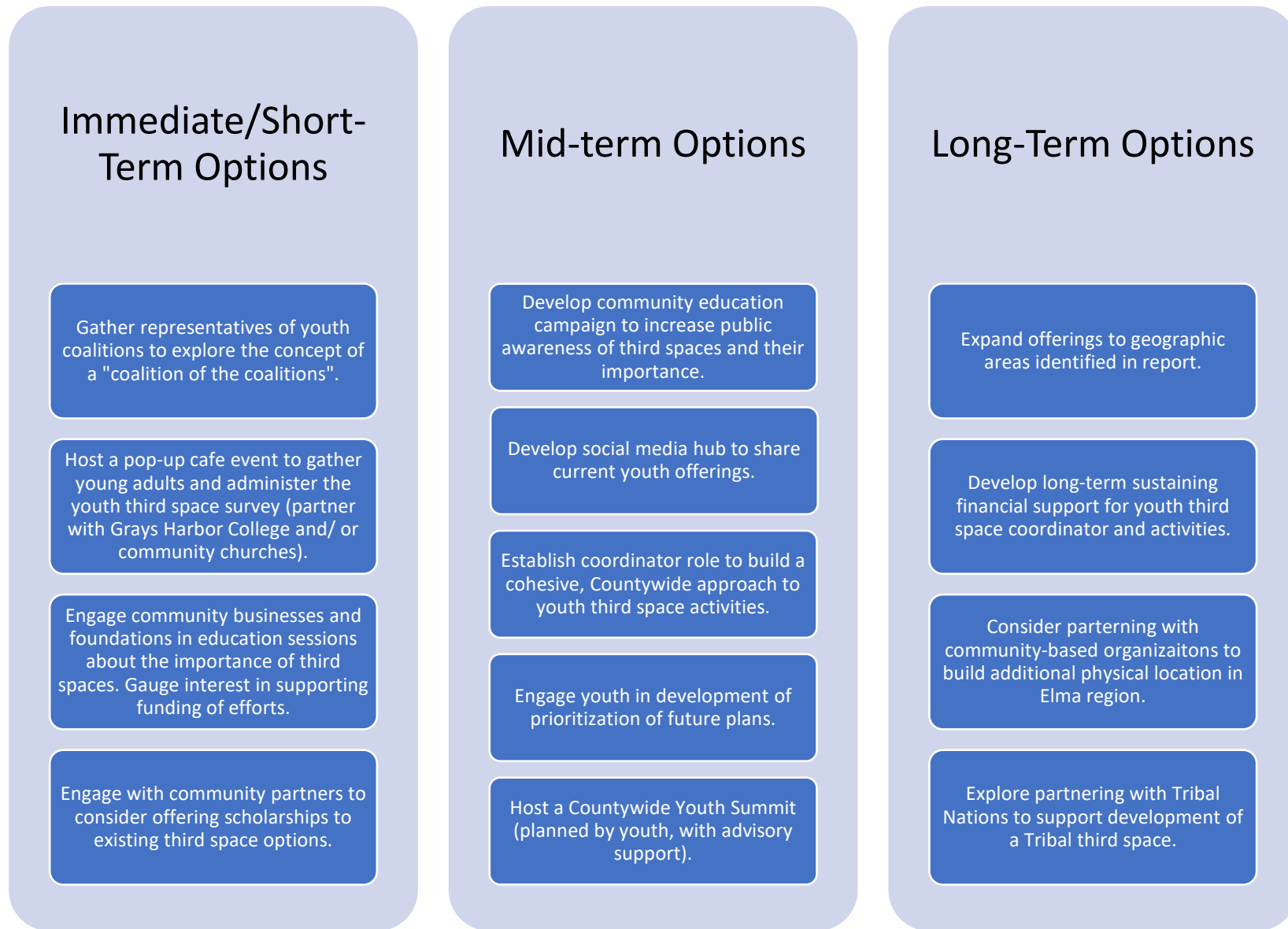
- The neighborhood known as the Hill and Northern Aberdeen
 - Increased supports for youth aged 15-19 and 20-24
- Montesano
- Rural Elma
- Central Park
- Moclips and Ocean City
 - Specific need for increased resources for young adults aged 20- 24
- Elma and Aberdeen
 - Increased supports needed for disconnected youth and young adults
- Rural Elma and Taholah
 - Need for increased Summer and after school supports

Models to Consider, Next Steps

Several communities across the country have invested in third spaces for youth. Here are some examples that Grays Harbor coalitions and residents might be interested in learning more about:

- Louisville, KY: Jesse E. Barnett Jr. Enrichment Center offers classes, basketball, workshops, etc. [Young people need a third place to get them engaged in difficult times \(courier-journal.com\)](https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2021/05/11/young-people-need-a-third-place-to-get-them-engaged-in-difficult-times/7441140002/)
- Malibu, CA: ThirdSpace a project of the Boys & Girls Club of Malibu offers classes for all ages, including parent and me music classes, a maker space for youth to learn about art, mentorship, and educational partnerships with local schools. This space has engaged local businesses as sponsors and sustaining supporters of the programming. [Third Space \(thirdspacemalibu.org\)](https://thirdspacemalibu.org/)
- Gloucestershire, United Kingdom: 3rd Space Youth Programme offer groups, camps, and Zoom meetings on a regular schedule for youth aged 16-25. They describe the center as a “place-based hub” [3rd Space Youth Project at the Mill - Creative Sustainability \(cscic.org\)](https://www.cscic.org/)

Figure 6. Proposed short-, mid-, and long-term activities.



Appendices

Appendix A: Dashboard Definitions

Population Density

Source: Esri, 2023

ID: N/A

Population density refers to the concentration of individuals within a specific geographic area.

Numerator

The numerator is the number of people in age grouping.

Denominator

Area measured in square miles.

Population Growth Rate

Source: Esri, 2023 and 2028

ID: N/A

The population growth rate is a percentage calculated using the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) formula. CAGR is an annualized measure that describes a variable's direction (positive or negative) and magnitude of change between two distinct points in time. An annualized rate means that the resultant value reflects a rate of change covering a twelve-month time period. This component of the calculation permits the analysis of multiple growth rates between values measured from differing points in time since the change is computed using a common time period of twelve months. The compound component of the expression simply means that the annualized growth rate is repeated, or compounded, each year. Moreover, the CAGR can colloquially be referred to as growth rate, annual rate, annualized growth rate, or compound growth rate.

Formula

$$\left(\frac{2028 \text{ Value}}{2023 \text{ Value}}\right)^{\frac{1}{5 \text{ Years}}-1} * 100$$

Disconnected Youth

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

ID: ACSDT5Y2022.B14005

Title: Sex by School Enrollment by Educational Attainment by Employment Status for the Population 16 to 19 Years

Disconnected Youth is the percentage of teens and young adults ages 16 to 19 who are neither working nor in school.

Numerator

The numerator is the number of people, ages 16-19, who are neither working nor in school.

Denominator

The denominator is the population ages 16-19.

Youth disconnection portrays a dynamic between individuals and the society they live in. Disconnected youth are at an increased risk of violence, smoking, alcohol consumption and marijuana use, and may have emotional deficits and less cognitive and academic skills than their peers who are working and/or in school.¹⁻⁵ Approximately 1 in 9 teenagers and young adults in the U.S. is currently referred to as disconnected; not in education, employment, or training.¹ Several studies have shown that disconnected youth have a disproportionate share of related health problems including chronic unemployment, poverty, mental health disorders, criminal behaviors, incarceration, poor health, and early mortality.⁶⁻⁹

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Child Dependency Ratio

Source: Esri, 2023

ID: N/A

The Child Dependency Ratio (CDR) is the population under 18 years of age divided by the working-age population aged 18 to 64. The ratio is then multiplied by 100.

Numerator

The numerator is the number of people, ages 0-17.

Denominator

The denominator is the number of people, ages 18-64.

For this measure, the population aged 18 to 64 is considered the working-age population. Higher ratios indicate a greater level of dependency on the working-age population. The U.S. Age Dependency Ratio (ADR) is 65.1 for 2023, or 65.1 dependents for every 100 individuals aged 18 to 64. Correspondingly, the U.S. CDR and Senior Dependency Ratio (SDR) are 35.7 and 29.4, respectively. This reveals that children represent a larger share of the dependent population than seniors at the national level. Age Dependency Ratios are a quick and valuable tool for understanding the age distribution and resulting dependencies within an area. These measures are also powerful comparative tools across geographies.

Secondary Analysis and Data Dashboard Parameters

Indicators were analyzed and visualized using Tableau Desktop 2023.24. Indicators were categorized as low, medium, and high by placing an approximately equal number of tracts in each group. Geographical area benchmarks were stratified by age group: 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, and 10-24. Geographical area benchmarks are presented as tables for the purposes of comparison and include high density-high growth tracts, low density-high growth tracts, Grays Harbor County, Cowlitz County, and the Great Rivers ASO Group (excluding Grays Harbor County).

Appendix B: Provider Interview/Focus Group Guide

1. We'd love to start by having you share one word or short phrase about what comes to mind when you think about services and support for youth in Grays Harbor County. In the chat or out loud, please share the words or phrases you would use to describe youth support in the county.
2. What are the barriers to youth accessing services? Focus for this question on the "front door" with respect to service access- what interferes with youth getting connected to and initiating the services they need?
3. What are the biggest gaps in services for youth? Where do youth currently spend their time outside of school?
4. A third space is a shared place for a community to gather. The name third space distinguishes it from home (a first space) or work (a second space). A youth third space is a place for teens and young adults to gather, for both informal time to socialize and to access formal activities and supports. It is intended to be a place that kids want to return to again and again and one that becomes part of their daily life.
 - a. What are key considerations for designing an effective youth third space in Grays Harbor? Think of factors like location, how the space is set up, and other design features.
 - b. What are the key services that need to be offered to make a youth third space in Grays Harbor effective?
 - c. Who are the key partners we need to be talking to?
5. What ideas do you have about engaged youth in the design process?
6. What promising new innovations do you see as "on the horizon" as it relates to this work? What are the challenges you see that a youth third space could help overcome?

Appendix C: Youth Interview/Survey Guide

Grays Harbor Youth Third Space: Youth Input Discussion Guide

Thank you for your help in gathering input from Grays Harbor youth about what is helpful in a Third Space! Below please find information about the process of gathering input from youth.

Grays Harbor Public Health has contracted with Health Management Associates, a research and consulting firm, to engage in planning around Youth Third Space Facility(ies) in the County. As part of this process, we are gathering input from youth around what is needed. The intention of this project is to build upon the programs and spaces that are already available to youth in Grays Harbor. This work seeks to identify ways to expand the number and type of options available to youth in our community. This may include potential partnerships and expansion of current programs.

What is a third space?

A third space is a shared place for a community to gather. The name third space distinguishes it from home (a first space) or school/work (a second space). A youth third space is a place for teens and young adults to gather, for both informal time to socialize and to access formal activities and supports. It is intended to promote a sense of belonging and is a place youth want to return to again and again.

How can I help gather youth input?

Attached, you will find a set of questions where we are hoping to gather youth input. You can gather input in several ways:

- 1) Ask a group of students the questions below and input their feedback [HERE \(survey for adults to capture youth input\)](#)
- 2) Provide students a link to this survey with the questions [HERE \(survey for youth to provide input directly\)](#)
- 3) Both 1 and 2! We believe that the conversations you have directly with youth will provide detailed feedback that can be complemented by the youth survey. Please feel free to distribute the survey link for students to share additional information after your discussion.

We recognize that you may only have time to pose 1-2 questions at a time- please feel free to spread out the questions in whatever way makes the most sense for the settings/schedule and then submit input when you are ready. **We are gathering input from November 27th - December 15th.**

On the next page you will find a list of the questions we are hoping you will ask youth.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions:

Jessica Molina, Grays Harbor Public Health
JMolina@Graysharbor.us

Megan Beers, Health Management Associates
mbeers@healthmanagement.com

Youth Third Space Discussion Questions

Demographics

When inputting youth feedback, please also be prepared to include the following demographic information:

How many students contributed to the responses you are sharing here?

What were the ages of the students contributing responses?

What zip code is your school/facility in?

Discussion Questions

- 1) Is there a place that you and your friends can hang out outside of school and home? If yes, where/what kind of place?
- 2) Are there activities that you would like to participate in/places you'd like to hang out with your friends that you aren't able to use? For example, a club that is too expensive to join or a gym that is too far away. What are those activities?

If there are activities that you would like to participate in/places you'd like to hang out with your friends that you aren't able to use, what gets in the way?

Below are some potential prompts for barriers for youth to consider:

- Too expensive
 - Don't have a way to get there/too far away
 - They don't offer activities I'm interested in
 - Other responsibilities get in the way (e.g., job, family responsibilities)
 - The spaces that are available aren't a good fit for my culture or language
- 3) A third space is generally a place that people feel comfortable going to all the time. It is a place where people can connect and hang out. If it were up to you, what would you want to see in a third space that would keep you coming back to again and again?

Below are potential prompts for third space characteristics for youth to consider:

- Hang out space
 - Mentors close to my age
 - Sports/physical activities
 - Arts activities
 - Activities specific to my culture
 - Games
 - Video games
 - Meals/snacks
 - Access to support for mental health
 - Access to other kinds of support
- 4) We are considering several options to help youth get to third spaces and would like to know which seems like a better fit for you. How would you prefer to travel to a third

space? For example, if there were an activity bus that could take you there would you ride it? Would you prefer that it be somewhere close enough that you can walk or bike there on your own? Would you prefer that the activities come to a place where you already spend time (e.g., school)?

- 5) What else do you think we should consider in planning youth third spaces?