

ALBEMARLE CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

October 2006

UVA CENTER FOR SURVEY RESEARCH CONDUCTS CITIZEN SURVEY

In June and July, 2006, the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at the University of Virginia conducted a telephone survey of 787 residents of Albemarle County, Virginia, on behalf of the County's Board of Supervisors and executive management.

The purposes of the survey were to determine residents' opinions about quality of life in Albemarle County, to evaluate the importance of a num-

ber of services the County provides, to determine their level of satisfaction with these services, and to measure citizen opinion about the way in which the County is managing growth.

The survey calling was conducted June 28 through July 30, 2006, and resulted in 787 completed interviews. CSR used Random Digit Dialing (RDD) to contact County residents.

Data analysis for this survey included breaking down the responses for all opinion items by demographic subgroups, in order to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between them.

Statistically significant differences are those that probably did not result merely from sampling variability, but instead reflect real differences within the County's adult population.

have translated into high satisfaction levels with our services and a generally positive attitude towards county government by our citizens.

I look forward to working with citizens and staff towards the best possible future for Albemarle County.

*Robert W. Tucker, Jr.
County Executive*

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Survey Highlights

- Quality of life scored 8.04 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best possible place to live and 1 the worst.
- Residents were most satisfied with emergency rescue, fire protection, residential safety and library services.
- 90.6% of all respondents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with county services.
- 85% of residents surveyed said they were satisfied with the value of service they receive for their tax dollar.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

The Citizen Survey is critical to the County's customer service and strategic planning efforts. Results of past surveys helped identify priority goals for our current strategic plan.

The most recent survey focuses on priority issues for county residents, citizen satisfaction with our progress towards those

goals, as well as helping us identify and respond to areas where we can improve our services to the public.

We will continue surveying on a regular basis to measure our progress in responding to important citizen issues.

I appreciate the efforts of our employees that

QUALITY OF LIFE IN ALBEMARLE COUNTY

Overall, Albemarle residents very much like Albemarle County as a place to live. Respondents were asked to rate the quality of life in the County on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best possible place to live, and 1 being the worst.

The mean rating was 8.04, not a statistically significant difference from surveys in 1994, 2002 and 2004, showing that a high level of satisfaction has remained fairly constant over the past twelve years.

Seventy-four percent rated the County's quality of life an "8" or better (compared to 71% in 2004) Nineteen percent rated the County a "10" (compared to 16% in 2004).

Those residents who have lived in the County two years or less were asked where they had relocated from, with the following results:

Charlottesville	10.8%
Fluvanna	4.7%
Louisa	4.2%
Nelson	1.9%
Greene	0.5%
NoVa, DC, Maryland	10.0%
Other Virginia	12.5%
Elsewhere	55.6%

Top ranked reasons for moving to Albemarle included:

- *Take a job here* **41%**
- *Overall quality of life* **16%**
- *Had family here* **12%**
- *Beauty of landscape* **8%**
- *College/university* **6%**
- *Cost of housing* **5%**
- *Retirement* **3%**
- *Convenient commute* **3%**
- *Culture, arts, things to do* **3%**
- *Quality of schools* **3%**

IMPORTANCE OF COUNTY SERVICES

To measure how important various services are to county residents, respondents were asked to rate 33 local government services on a scale of "very important", "somewhat important", or "not that important".

Of the listed service items, providing quality education for school children had the highest mean rating.

Residents found promotion of tourism, support of cultural and entertainment opportunities, and preserving historic buildings and places, to be least important.

In comparing these results to the 2002 survey when a similar question was asked, education and safety issues received the highest rankings in both cases.

There were some significant increases in the importance of some services between 2002 and 2006. For example, police protection was ranked as very important by 78% of

Citizens were most interested in providing quality education to school age children, providing emergency rescue and fire service, and protecting water resources.

respondents in 2002 and increased to 91.5% in 2006.

Providing parks and recreation space was rated as very important by 46% of respondents in 2002 and increased to 68% in 2006.

The following chart lists the top ten service items ranked by importance. It is important to note that the difference in percentage among these items is so small that it is almost indistinguishable.

▲ Quality Education
▲ Emergency Rescue Services
▲ Fire Protection
▲ Water Resource Protection
▲ Police Protection
▲ Effective Customer Service
▲ Fair Property Tax Assessment
▲ Quality of Life
▲ Citizen Input
▲ Business Area Safety

SATISFACTION WITH COUNTY SERVICES

To report results on satisfaction with County services, CSR combined the percent “very satisfied” with the percent “somewhat satisfied.”

For the most general question, overall satisfaction with County programs and services, 90.6 percent of our respondents said they were satisfied. This finding is not significantly different than the 2002 or 2004 rating, and continues to reflect the significant improvement from the 1994 results when only 84.3 percent said they felt satisfied.

Similarly to 2004, residents were most satisfied with public safety items, with emergency services (96.8%), fire protection (95.4%), and safety at or near residence (94.7%) ranked in the top five services based on satisfaction.

Library services were the fourth most highly rated service at 95%.

The satisfaction rating for the quality of education in the County schools was 88 percent, with a level of 92% for those with children in public schools.

Residents were least satisfied with efforts to make it easy to use public transportation (55.2%), managing growth (55.6%), and recycling services (56.6%).

Whereas there were no significant decreases in satisfaction since 2004, there were significant increases in satisfaction on several different items:

- preserving historic buildings and places
- providing needed public facilities, protecting water resources

- providing needed infrastructure, ensuring safety for walkers and bicyclists
- assuring economic growth and job opportunities
- making it easy to use public transportation.

Satisfaction was highest for . .

▲ <i>Emergency Rescue</i>	96.8%
▲ <i>Fire Protection</i>	95.4%
▲ <i>Residential Safety</i>	94.7%
▲ <i>Library Services</i>	93.8%
▲ <i>Historic Preservation</i>	93.5%
▲ <i>Tourism Promotion</i>	92.7
▲ <i>Public Facilities</i>	92.5
▲ <i>Cutural/Entertainment</i>	91.7
▲ <i>Police Protection</i>	91.4
▲ <i>Parks/Recreation</i>	90.4

CONTACT WITH THE COUNTY

On the whole, citizens of Albemarle display a positive attitude toward their government.

Residents who contacted the County within the past 12 months were asked how satisfied they were overall with their experience. Most residents, 78.1%, reported being very or somewhat satisfied.

During the past 12 months, 41% of respondents have contacted the County government for some type of information or service.

The departments contacted most frequently by citizens were Police, Finance and Community Development.

78% of residents surveyed said they were satisfied with County efforts to keep them informed about programs and services

County citizens reported that they are satisfied with the job the County is doing in keeping them informed about programs and services, a significant increase from 74.9% in 2004 to 78% in 2006.

Approximately half of the respondents were asked how they prefer to get County information. They ranked possible information sources

in the following order of preference:

- Mail
- Newspaper
- Television or radio
- Website
- Email

Approximately 78% of all respondents have access to the Internet, and of that number, 60% have used the County website at least once in the past year. Over one-third of those respondents who are aware of AMail, the County's enews service, have signed up to receive bulletins.

Our Mission . . .

Providing the highest level of public service to our citizens

Our Values . . .

Integrity Innovation
Stewardship Learning

The complete results of the survey will be posted on the website: www.albemarle.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All those connected with this project are grateful to the Albemarle County residents who gave their time and candid responses in answer to many questions about their opinions on a variety of issues. This project received enthusiastic support from Robert W. Tucker, Jr., Albemarle County Executive, and from his two assistant County Executives, Roxanne White and Tom Foley.

Ms. Lori Allshouse, Strategic Planning Coordinator, oversaw the project with assistance from an active and involved citizen survey project team that included Lee Catlin, Community Relations Office; Pat Mullaney, Parks and Recreation; Mark Graham, Community Development; David Benish, Community Development; Hugh Gravitt, Finance Department; and Jason Nauman, Fire Rescue.

In addition, the members of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors gave their support and advice to this project. Thanks also to the Albemarle County Community Development Department for supplying maps and other geographic information.

MANAGING GROWTH

Citizens of Albemarle County continue to favor major growth management policies of the County, but remain concerned about the impacts of continued growth and development.

The County's policy of concentrating growth in areas designated for development while restricting development in rural areas continues to enjoy solid support, with approximately 72.6% of residents saying they are in favor of that approach.

While this is a decline in support from the 2002 survey, where almost 80 % of respondents said they favored concentrated growth, it is an increase from the 2004 survey where the percentage in favor of development areas was 69.9%.

Survey respondents were asked: "As you may be aware, Albemarle County's population grew by just over 1,400 people last year or about 2% a year for the last 20 years. In

your opinion, what rate of growth would be in the best interest of the future of Albemarle County? Continuing to grow at the same rate; growing at a faster rate; or growing more slowly?"

Nearly two-thirds of County residents (63.6%) indicated that

Citizens' primary concern regarding growth is traffic and/or overall congestion, with the next most frequently cited concern being growth's impacts on the environment.

slower growth was in the County's best interest. Just over 30 % preferred the County to grow at the same rate, while very few residents (3.4%) supported faster growth.

Residents who supported slower growth were evenly divided be-

tween those who believed the County ought to grow a lot more slowly or just a little more slowly.

Respondents were given an opportunity to express their primary concern regarding growth. The most frequently expressed concern was traffic and/or overall congestion, noted by a third of respondents. The next most frequently cited concern, from approximately a quarter of respondents, was about growth's impacts on the environment.

VALUE FOR TAX DOLLAR

Respondents were also asked to rate the County efforts in giving them the value for their tax dollars. The vast majority (84.9%) reported satisfaction, a rating that is significantly higher than the 80.4 % reported in 2004 but similar to the 85.1% reported in 2002.