

News Releases

Chapel Hill reports high satisfaction with services Change and managing future on residents' minds

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How's life in Chapel Hill? Ninety percent of the respondents in a recent survey of residents say they are very satisfied/satisfied. About 94 percent said that the quality of safety and security played an important role when deciding to live in Chapel Hill.

The Community Survey to measure residents' perceptions of Town services and issues was conducted in November and December of 2011. The Town engaged ETC Institute to conduct the statistically valid Community Survey that was mailed to 2,000 randomly selected Chapel Hill households. A telephone survey was conducted as a follow-up to the mailed survey. There were 607 residents who completed the survey (a 31 percent response rate).



Meeting the Town Council's goal to survey the community on a biennial basis, the Town conducted its first comprehensive and scientifically conducted survey in 2009. That year, residents reported in high numbers their overall satisfaction (82 percent) with Town services and provided feedback on other topics. In 2011, the overall satisfaction rating increased to 84 percent. Benchmarking data compared Chapel Hill to similar cities in the Southeast and the United States, areas that scored 58 percent and 57 percent respectively in the "quality of city services provided."

"Comparing 2011 to 2009 survey results, satisfaction ratings for the Town increased in nearly every service area category," said Town Manager Roger Stancil. "These numbers reflect the wise decisions of the Town Council, as well as our excellent team of employees."

A sampling of interesting findings, comparing results from the last two surveys (2009 and 2011):

- Acceptance of diverse populations - increased from 68 to 74 percent
- Overall quality of police protection - increased from 83 to 84 percent
- How safe residents feel during the day: 99 percent (rated 4 or 5 on a 5-pt scale)
- Satisfaction with maintenance downtown (public works) - increased 52 to 62 percent
- More than half (65 percent) were satisfied with the quality of the Town's website, Chapel Hill eNews updates and with access to information on local news and events. There was a significant increase in nearly every area of communications.
- Satisfaction with walking and biking trails - increased from 57 to 67 percent
- Parks and Recreation services that should receive the most emphasis from the Town: Number of walking and biking trails was 1st choice (40 percent)
- Most important events offered by the Town - Fourth of July (34 percent), Locally Grown (33 percent) and Festifall (32 percent)
- 71 percent of residents felt a redeveloped downtown was essential (39 percent) or important (32 percent) as a part of the Town's economic development strategy. Comparing the positives (71 percent) to the negatives (15 percent), the ratio is nearly 5 to 1.
- Satisfaction with public art - increased from 57 percent to 65 percent

Highest rates of dissatisfaction concerned availability of affordable housing and jobs. When residents report on issues that they characterize as having a low level of satisfaction and a high level of importance, these issues become priorities. The priorities identified in 2011 were as follows (and ways we are addressing these issues):

- Overall flow of traffic and congestion (This issue is being addressed in part by a \$5 million Traffic Signal Project slated for completion in August 2012.)
- How well the Town is prepared for the future (Chapel Hill 2020 is a yearlong process to create a new Comprehensive Plan to help guide our future.)
- Value you receive from your town tax dollars (We are engaged in a Priority Budgeting process to better prioritize services the community values.)
- How well the Town is managing change (Chapel Hill 2020)

The Chapel Hill 2020 project was launched in September 2011, only a few months before the Community Survey was conducted. The Chapel Hill 2020 process has included numerous methods to engage residents. These have included direct conversations, surveys, feedback forms and the blog at www.2020buzz.org. Results for the Community Survey seem to validate that the Chapel Hill 2020 group discussions are a sampling of the larger community's concerns and priorities for the future.

To review the complete results of the 2011 Community Survey, please find the extensive report online at www.townofchapelhill.org/survey. An online survey was offered to those who were interested in reviewing the questions and participating, although it was not tabulated with the main survey. The results of the online survey are being tabulated and will be posted online as soon as possible.

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