

Town of Carrboro
2016 Biennial Citizen Survey
Executive Summary

The overall results for the Town of Carrboro's 2016 Biennial Citizen Survey were very positive. The respondents gave high marks for the level of service provided to them in Carrboro. A total of 405 residents were surveyed and the resulting margin of error was $\pm 5\%$. The telephone survey methodology included listed, unlisted, and wireless numbers in the sampling frame.

The Town Government staff received very high marks for the six service dimensions examined with no marks falling below B+. There were high grades for *courteous* (A-), *professionalism* (A-), *knowledgeable* (B+), *promptness of response* (B+), *helpful* (B+), and *overall quality of customer service* (B+). The Town's rating for *maintenance of streets and roads* was also good earning a grade of B-. The major concerns mentioned by the respondents were potholes and rough pavement throughout the town and issues with snow removal and excessive winter weather preparation.

The cleanliness and appearance of public areas earned very solid marks. The grades for *parks* (A-), *greenways* (B+), *streets* (B+), and *median/roadsides* (B) were very good. There were several comments given for public areas needing attention including the need for more sidewalks, flood control measures, and taking action on rundown buildings in town. As for streets, North and South Greensboro Street was mentioned several times as a problem area.

The Carrboro Police Department garnered very strong marks from the respondents. The lowest grade given was an A- for this department. The impressive grades for the service dimensions were *response time* (A), *courteous* (A-), *competence* (A-), *fairness* (A-), and *problem solving* (A-). The Carrboro Fire Department earned the highest marks for any department examined in the survey. The Department earned A+ grades for *problem solving*, *courteous*, *response time*, and *competence* while the grade for *fairness* was an A. The Parks & Recreation Department also earned excellent ratings. The department received a grade of A for *overall experience*, *ease of registration*, *cost or amount of fee*, *facility quality*, and *program quality*. The grade for *instructor quality* was an A-.

The respondents were positive in their rating of Carrboro as a place to live giving the town a mean score of 7.95 on the 9-point scale. This would equate to a grade of B+ with 96.3% of the responses on the "desirable" side of the scale and only 0.2% on the "undesirable" side. The respondents also perceived the quality of life in Carrboro as improving or getting better. While most of the respondents (71.1%) perceived the quality of life as unchanged, the percentage on the "better" side of the scale exceeded the "worse" percentage 25.4% versus 3.5%. When asked the most important issue facing Carrboro, the primary response was none/no issues (121 comments). For those naming issues, the most important one was growth. There were 44 comments concerning controlling growth/overcrowding along with 38 comments on controlling development/overdevelopment. Other key issues were affordable housing (39 comments), traffic (35 comments), rising cost of living (18 comments), and high taxes (14 comments).

The respondents felt very safe in Carrboro in all areas of the town. The means for safe in Carrboro overall (8.24), in their home neighborhood (8.35), and in public places (8.10) were all very high reflecting the high perception of safety.

Several barriers to citizen involvement in local government were examined. The most significant barrier was *too busy – don't have time* with a mean of 5.47 on a 9-point scale. Other less important barriers were *don't know about opportunities* (3.81) and *timing is inconvenient* (2.58).

The top five major information sources (in order) used by the respondents include word-of-mouth, street signage, Carrboro's website, Facebook, and television. Sources also utilized but somewhat less important were radio, Raleigh News & Observer, Parks & Recreation Brochure, Independent Weekly, The Daily Tar Heel, and Carrboro's email list service in that order.

The large majority of respondents who use Wi-Fi perceived no problems with its availability in Carrboro. The only areas mentioned frequently as having availability issues were Weaver Street (16 comments), coffee shop/Look Glass Cafe (13 comments), downtown area (7 comments), and Carr Mill Mall (3 comments).

Carrboro has generally been effective in its communication efforts with citizens. The respondents felt largely well informed about *government services, projects, issues, and programs that affect them*. The mean was 6.00 with 55.6% on the "informed" side of the scale versus only 20.4% on the "uninformed" side. There was a level of satisfaction with *Carrboro making information available to citizens concerning important services, projects, issues, and programs* with a mean of 6.45 with 60.7% on the "satisfied" side of the scale versus 7.7% on the "dissatisfied" side. Finally, the respondents were also pleased with the *opportunities Carrboro gives them to participate in the decision-making process*. The mean was 6.35 with 57.1% on the "satisfied" side of the scale versus 6.6% on the "dissatisfied" side. Keep in mind, there was a significant number of respondents who indicated they did not seek information and it was their fault for not being informed. This will serve to lower the means for these questions regardless of the town's efforts.

Solid Waste Services received very solid marks from the respondents. The grades were very good for *curbside garbage collection* (A), *curbside bulk item collection* (A-), *curbside yard waste collection* (B+), and *curbside loose leaf collection* (B+). There were 50.9% of the respondents who were not aware curbside recycling was provided by Orange County Waste Management and not Carrboro.

As for downtown, there were 95.6% of the respondents who had visited downtown in the past year. The three major reasons they visited downtown were for restaurants (130 comments), Weaver Street Market (85 comments), and shopping (76 comments). Other slightly less prominent reasons included everything (58 comments), events/festivals (48 comments), Farmer's Market (29 comments), atmosphere (27 comments), bars (26 comments), grocery store (26 comments), and music/Music Festival (23 comments). Those who had not visited downtown indicated the major reason was too busy (4 comments). The respondents indicated the most effective amenity/activity to bring them downtown would be cafes/restaurants, festivals, outdoor performances, Summer Streets/Closed Street, Farmer's Market, shopping opportunities, and concerts in that order. When asked about any other suggestions to bring people downtown, the respondents included more family/children oriented things, better parking, more affordable pricing, make it pedestrian friendly, and adding ethnic restaurants. Although the most frequent comment was nothing else is needed downtown.

The Carrboro focus areas earned generally solid ratings; however, there were some areas of concern. The focus areas will be discussed in order of ranking. The highest level of satisfaction was for the overall job the town has done on *Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources*. The mean was 7.56 with 89.4% of the respondents on the "satisfied" side of the scale and this equates to a grade of B. The respondents felt Carrboro was successful with the *Town being effective in keeping Carrboro the*

best place to live, work, and raise a family. The mean was 7.32 with 83.7% on the “effective” side of the scale. The job the Town is doing on *environmental protection* also earned good marks garnering a mean of 7.29 with 85.2% on the “satisfied” side of the scale equating to a solid grade of B-. The next three focus areas earned somewhat lower ratings falling below the B grade range. Firstly, there was a level of satisfaction with the job the Town is doing on *transportation*. The mean was 6.98 with 78.4% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. However, this would equate to a grade of C+ and represents one of the few ratings earned by the town below the B- level. Secondly, the job the Town is doing on *planning & development* was also an area of concern with a grade of C-. The mean was 6.61 with 71.2% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. Finally, Carrboro also earned a C- for the job the Town is doing on *parking within the town*. The mean was 6.60 with 69.6% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. This is the second lowest overall grade earned by the town in the survey.

The respondents rated several new programs/services they would likely be willing to pay for in Carrboro. The highest rated or most likely to pay for would be affordable housing. Other programs/services rated higher (in order) include festivals/Open Streets, environmental sustainability, fire services, police services, recreation programs, and sidewalks/greenways.

The Town earned somewhat lower grades for the job they are doing with senior citizens and citizens with disabilities. The mean for the job the Town is doing with seniors was 6.63 with 60.8% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. The mean for the job the Town is doing for citizens with disabilities was 6.75 with 61.1% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. The grade for both of these would be a C representing two of the lower marks the town earned. Finally, there was much more concern for the ratings for the job the town is doing for providing affordable housing. The mean was only 5.28 with 34.9% on the “satisfied” side of the scale versus 25.4% on the “dissatisfied” side. The grade in this instance would be an F.

The final questions in the survey examined transportation sources used by the respondents going to work and around town. The primary source for going to work were vehicles (62.4%), public transportation (15.6%), bicycles (11.4%), and walking (7.4%). There was limited use of car pools (3.2%). The primary sources around town were vehicles (52.7%), walking (27.7%), bicycles (11.8%), and public transportation (6.9%) with limited use of car pools (0.9%). The major change was in the significant increase in walking around town.

In conclusion, there are 27 graded core Carrboro service dimensions structured in the grading format (very poor to excellent scaling). The overall mean for all service dimensions was 8.24. This mean translates to an impressive grade of A- for the town. Overall, the Town of Carrboro receives an excellent report card with 19 grades in the A range and 8 grades in the B range with no grades in the C range for the core service dimensions. The lowest grade earned was the B- for the *maintenance of streets and roads*.

However, there were some areas of concern for the town. On the positive side, the ratings for the town are so strong overall that C range grades (average) would be considered areas of concern. First, the ratings for the job the town is doing for *transportation, planning & development, and parking within the town* were somewhat lower than other service ratings Carrboro has earned from the respondents. These ratings if converted to grades would be the C range. Second, the job the town is doing for senior citizens and citizens with disabilities were also somewhat low equating to grades in the C range. Third, the lowest rating the town earned was for the job the town is doing for providing affordable housing and this would equate to an F. Fourth, Wi-Fi available appears to have issues in the downtown area, especially around Weaver Street. Finally, the open-ended questions revealed a

few other suggestions made by the respondents. There were issues with potholes/rough pavement around town and some difficulties with snow removal/winter weather preparation. Flood control and stormwater drainage problems were also concerns. The respondents suggested adding sidewalks and bike lanes in town along with better connectivity and safety for those bike lanes. In addition, improving safety for pedestrian crossings was suggested as well. Bus service could be improved with longer hours, weekend service, and a schedule app for cell phones. There were several suggestions to take action on rundown buildings in the area and adding more parking in town. Finally, two streets needing the most improvements were Greensboro Street and Estes Drive with upgrading needed for safety, traffic, sidewalks, and bike lanes.