

Brief Analysis of the National Citizen Survey for the City of Charlottesville

The National Citizen Survey was mailed to 1,200 Charlottesville households in November 2012 and 315 completed surveys were returned. The survey asked for resident perceptions about community quality, community design, public safety, environmental sustainability, recreation and wellness, community inclusiveness, civic engagement and public trust, as well as resident participation in activities and services. Results were presented as percentages and averages of responses. The averages of responses were benchmarked against averages of approximately 500 other localities.

An examination of both the averages and the benchmarks shows many strengths for the City of Charlottesville and identifies several areas of concern. A detailed analysis of responses by rating and benchmark is included in Appendix 1 and in the full reports from the National City Survey. Areas identified as strengths by rating and comparison survey benchmarks included:

- General: quality of life; perceptions of neighborhoods and the City as a whole; overall appearance of the City; and likelihood to recommend Charlottesville as a place to live.
- Economic Sustainability: overall quality of businesses; economic development; Charlottesville as a place to work; and availability of affordable quality food.
- A Center for Lifelong Learning: opportunities to attend cultural activities; educational opportunities; and public library services
- C'ville Arts and Culture: opportunities to attend cultural activities; public library services; and opportunities to participate in social events and activities.
- A Green City: cleanliness of the City; quality of natural environment; air quality; garbage collection; recycling; and preservation of open spaces and greenways,
- America's Healthiest City
Public safety: feeling safe in one's neighborhood (day and night); feeling safe downtown (day only); lack of environmental hazards; police; fire; ambulance; fire prevention; perception of police and fire departments; and animal control.
Health and wellness: availability of health care; and health services
- Connected Community: ease of walking; availability of paths and trails; ease of bus travel; and ridership on local buses.
- A Community of Mutual Respect: sense of community; openness and acceptance toward people of diverse backgrounds; good place to raise a child; good place to retire; and good senior services; and volunteerism.
- Smart, Citizen-focused Government: overall image and reputation of Charlottesville; the direction the City is taking; the City's welcoming of citizen involvement; services provided by the City; city employees' knowledge, responsiveness, courtesy, and overall service; and participation in public meetings.
- Reduce poverty by increasing sustainable employment among less skilled and educated residents: Charlottesville as a place to work; economic development; educational opportunities
- Provide a comprehensive support system for children: educational opportunities; value of services for taxes paid for public schools.

- Build an interconnected network of multi-modal transportation including bikeways, trails and transit system: See Connected Community above.

The areas of concern identified in the survey tend to cluster in housing, transportation, public safety, community health, and employment.

- A Center for Lifelong Learning: The **availability of quality affordable childcare** was rated at the low end of “fair” and “below” benchmark. The **use of public libraries** and their services was “much below” benchmark. The job the school division is doing in **educating all students** was rated as “fair” and not benchmarked.
- America’s Healthiest City: 39% of respondents report feeling somewhat or very **unsafe in Charlottesville’s downtown after dark** which is “much below” benchmark. 17% of respondents reported being a **victim of crime** which is “more” than benchmark. **Traffic enforcement** was “below” benchmark. The **use of Charlottesville recreation centers** was “below” benchmark. **Services to low income residents** were rated as “fair” and the rating was similar to benchmark.
- A Connected Community: The **availability of public parking** was the only indicator rated as “poor” and “much below” benchmark. The **ease of car travel** and **traffic flow** on major streets were rated as “fair” and “much below” benchmark. The **ease of bicycle travel** and **traffic signal timing** were rated “fair” and “below” benchmark.
- Affordable Housing for All: The **availability of affordable, quality housing** was rated at the bottom of the “fair” range and “much below” benchmark. The **variety of housing options** was “below” benchmark. Fifty percent of respondents reported experiencing **housing stress** (defined as paying 30% or more of their income for housing) which is “much more” than benchmark.
- Reduce poverty by increasing sustainable employment among less skilled and educated residents: The availability of **employment opportunities** was rated as “fair” but also “much above” benchmark. **Job growth** seen as too slow by 70% of respondents.