

City of College Park Resident Survey 2008

SURVEY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Resident Satisfaction Survey was administered as a mail-in survey in December 2007 and January 2008. Every household in College Park received a survey form, which is shown in Appendix A. There were 633 responses mailed in. This is a slight rise from the 2006 survey, when 613 responses were returned.

The following is an analysis of the results of the quantitative questions in the survey. The results are briefly reported in the following section and are compared with results from the resident surveys from 2006, 2004 and 2002 where possible. Please note that the socio-demographic questions were asked last in the survey but are presented first in the report. Detailed results for each question in the survey (in the survey question order) are shown in Appendices B, C and D. Results of the 2006, 2004 & 2002 surveys are in Appendix E.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Questions

The distribution of respondents within College Park was very uneven, with a very large percentage (26%) living in the Hollywood neighborhood. Calvert Hills (13%), Daniels Park (12%) and College Park Woods (12%) were also very highly represented. This distribution is very similar to that of the 2006 and 2004 surveys: in those surveys as well, Hollywood led followed by Daniels Park and Berwyn respectively. The increase of responses from Hollywood might indicate growth in that area, although it might also just indicate more involved residents, or even confusion on the part of residents regarding where they live. It should be noted that this question also had many missing responses (53) limiting the assessment of the origin of responders.

The sex distribution of the respondents (42% male, 58% female) is consistent with previous surveys: 46% male, 54% female in 2006, 44% male, 56% female in 2004.

Respondents overwhelmingly are long-term College Park residents, with 39% having lived in College Park for more than 30 years. Again, this is very similar – although a slight increase – to results of the 2006 and 2004 surveys (36% of respondents having lived in College Park 30 or more years.) The 2006 and 2004 results both had fewer long-term respondents than 2002 (38% respondents residents of College Park for 30+ years) but 2008 had even more long-term resident respondents than 2002. Furthermore, fewer new residents of College Park (5 years or less) responded than in previous years (20% in 2008 compared to 27% in 2006 and 24% in 2004). Respondents also tend to be older, with only 23% below the age of forty-five. This was also the case in the previous surveys. Both of these trends show that respondents do not reflect the University population, as students are greatly underrepresented.

This is reflected in the commute question in the survey: over 40% either didn't answer, responded "not applicable" or "less than 1 mile". This probably means that a large percentage of respondents are retired. It should be noted that the "not applicable" response (for retirees and others who don't work outside the home) was not an answer option but rather was written in, so the 13% of "not applicable" responses is almost definitely an undercount. Unlike in previous surveys, this one did not include a question about place of employment, but it's likely that responses would have reflected the older results of few University employees.

Respondents using the Metro generally walked (31%) or drove (26%) to the Metro station. When drop-off by car is added to the driving response, this was by far the largest response, at 35%. Almost no respondents used the PG "The Bus" (0.5%) or used a taxi or vanpool (0.3%). A sizable portion of respondents (24%) reported not using Metro at all. This was a notable increase from 2006, when only 19% of respondents reported not using Metro.

A new feature of the 2008 survey is that it was printed and distributed both in English and Spanish. Twelve surveys, representing just under 2% of total respondents, were returned completed in Spanish.

Section 1: City Services

Perceptions of parking enforcement in commercial areas remained the same since 2004: 59% gave a good or excellent rating as opposed to 60% in 2006. There had previously been an improvement in 2006 from the earlier surveys: 54% in 2004 and 2002. Perceptions of parking enforcement in neighborhoods improved significantly from earlier surveys: 61% good or excellent compared to 53% in 2006, 53% in 2004 and 55% in 2002.

Perceptions of plantings were positive and similar to 2006 and 2004: 68% good or excellent in 2008, compared to 70% in 2006 and 68% in 2004. Perceptions of sidewalk condition stayed mostly constant, with a slight decline from 2006, with 11% finding them poor compared to 10% in 2006 and 15% in 2004. The question regarding the number of sidewalks was removed from the survey this year, and should perhaps be reinstated in the future: numerous respondents wrote in that they found the number of sidewalks insufficient next to their numeric response.

Overall, respondents felt positively about street cleaning and all forms of trash pickup, but had much more mixed feelings about lighting. Perceptions of street cleaning improved slightly, at 65% good or excellent, compared to 63% in 2006 and 2004. Similarly, snow removal slightly improved (78% excellent or good compared to 76% in 2006 and 73% in 2004). However, both of these still fell short of their rating in 2002 (73% and 84% respectively). Ratings of street lighting were mixed this year: ratings of good and excellent improved from 2006 (66% compared to 64%) but ratings of poor

also increased (11% compared to 95). The ratings for lighting overall were still weaker than in 2004 and 2002.

Results for all types of trash pickup (regular trash, bulky and special trash, grass/leaf pickup and recycling) all stayed relatively constant from previous surveys, with very slight improvement (generally less than 1%).

Views on cleanliness in commercial areas were not very positive, nor were perceptions of property maintenance and of noise in commercial areas. The ratings of excellent and good together remained mostly constant, but with generally more ratings of "excellent". Ratings of "poor" also slightly declined. However, question 1C1a "Cleanliness and property maintenance in commercial areas" cannot be formally compared to previous years, as it is a collapsing of what used to be two questions. Distribution of survey results for the neighborhood categories regarding cleanliness, property maintenance and noise was very similar, with a slight increase in the response "excellent" but the same number choosing good or excellent overall.

Animal control services rating was slightly higher in 2008 (53% good or excellent) compared to 2006 (51% good or excellent.) This question was new in the 2006 survey.

Respondents were overwhelmingly unfamiliar with city senior programs (74% missing, not applicable or not aware of the service). The small portion of respondents who did have an opinion gave moderately good ratings: mostly good or fair. Results were similar - with a very slight decline - to those of 2006, 2004 and 2002.

The question regarding City youth and family services as well as events like the Egg Hunt (question 3), is new to the 2008 survey and therefore cannot be compared to previous years. Overall, most people were either unaware of these services and events (54%) but people aware of the services were positive about them (33% good or excellent, 10% fair or poor.)

Respondents mostly felt positive about public information efforts (61% good or excellent.) There was a noticeable improvement over the previous years' results in that respect (49% in 2006).

Ratings of the City Planning and Community Development programs were more negative (36% fair or poor). However, the ratings showed improvement from 2006, with 7% excellent in 2008 compared to only 4% in 2006.

Respondents felt very positively about City parks, playgrounds and athletic fields (70% excellent or good) and also positively rated City's responsiveness and timeliness to inquiries and complaints (55% excellent or good.) Ratings for City parks and City responsiveness improved from 2006 and 2006, particularly for responsiveness, which not only garnered more "excellent" ratings but also fewer "poor" ratings.

Overall, respondents felt positively about the quality of College Park services, with close to 73% of respondents giving a good or excellent rating. There was a slight improvement over 2006 and 2004, with both more “good” and “excellent” ratings and fewer “poor” ratings.

There was improvement in responses regarding the value of City services for tax dollars spent: 56% gave a positive rating compared to 52% in 2006 and just 29% in 2004. However, it should be noted that the wording of the question changed between the 2004 and 2006 survey, limiting the value of comparisons over time. In addition, ratings of poor rose very slightly in 2008.

Section 2: City Programs and Events

Respondents mostly found the usefulness of the “municipal scene” info in the Gazette to be “good” with improvement from previous years (48% compared to 41% in 2006 and 40% in 2004). Respondents who used the College Park website were mostly positive about the usefulness of the information posted there but very few people use it (about 55% of respondents reported never visiting it or did not respond to the question.) However, this is a slight improvement over 2006, when 60% of respondents never used the website. Only 22% of respondents were aware that rental properties are listed on the City’s website, but this is a significant improvement over 2006, when only 16% were aware of this. Most respondents did not watch College Park Channel 71 (71%) which is an increase from 2006 (66%). Rates of people watching once or twice a month or more also declined slightly.

Regarding where they first look for City Information, residents reported favoring the Gazette (67%) followed by word of mouth (28%) calling the City (28%), and visiting the City website (25%). The Diamondback and Civic Groups were not as widely used (10% each.) Although the relative importance of each source of information remained mostly the same since 2006, the importance of the Gazette seems to have strongly increased, from 48% in 2006.

Section 3: Quality of Life

NOTE: Changes in wording from the surveys before 2006 make timeline comparisons only possible for the 2008 and 2006 surveys.

Respondents felt that pedestrian safety was not very good in the City, with many finding it “not safe” (27%). This is consistent with the 2006 survey, when 28% responded the same way. However, respondents felt much more positively about safety as drivers in College Park, with 80% finding it “safe” or “very safe”. Again, this is consistent and shows a very slight improvement from 2006, when responses were 79% for the same.

Ratings of personal safety varied widely depending on the area. The most positive rating was given for “in your neighborhood” where 77% felt “safe” or “very safe”, a decline from 80% in 2006. This was followed by “retail areas of the city” (74% “safe” or

“very safe”) and “at local parks and playgrounds” (67% “safe” or “very safe”). These results are almost identical to those in 2006. The question of safety on the University of Maryland Campus was not included in the 2008 survey. Safety around the College Park and Greenbelt Metro stations had much lower ratings, which is consistent with 2006 results (46% “safe” or “very safe” for the College Park Metro station, 39% for the Greenbelt Metro station). Again, this is almost identical to results in 2006, when the ratings were of 47% and 39% respectively. It should be noted for all these safety ratings that a large number of respondents wrote in the margins that they felt safe during the day but not at night, prompting perhaps biased results.

Neighborhood ratings for physical condition of housing, nearness to parks and open spaces, walking distance to a bus stop, access to shopping and other services, and access to employment were all positive overall, with a large majority of respondents giving wither excellent or good ratings. However, availability of sidewalks and hiking trails, availability of bike trails and bike lanes and access to quality schools for children all received much more mixed ratings, with a significant amount of the respondents giving a poor rating (16%, 12% and 17% respectively.) The scores for all neighborhood ratings were very similar to those of 2006, with very small shifts within particular categories but no overall pattern of improvement or worsening.

For ratings of College Park as a whole, vibrancy of downtown, cost of living, shopping opportunities, dining opportunities, recreation opportunities and cultural opportunities all received mediocre ratings, often with as many as half of respondents giving a fair or poor rating. This very closely reflects the results from the 2006 survey. The transportation network received a much more favorable rating, with 61% giving it a positive rating. This was also nearly identical to 2006, when 63% of respondents gave the same rating.

Ratings of “your neighborhood, overall” were positive but declined slightly from 2006, with 15% giving a rating of “excellent” (compared to 17% in 2006) and 55% giving a rating of “good” (compared to 56% in 2006). These results were still better than those in 2004, where scores were of 12% and 56% respectively. Ratings for “College Park, overall” were similarly positive, with 12% “excellent” and 53% “good”, which is similar to 2006 results and slightly better than 2004 results (13% excellent, 52% good in 2006; 8% excellent, 53% good in 2004.)

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents of the survey were not very representative of the College Park population: they skewed much older, were long-term residents of College Park, most were not affiliated with the University, and most were clustered in certain neighborhoods. However, this is not much different than the respondents of the 2006, 2004, and 2002 surveys, indicating that comparisons over time are appropriate.

Perceptions of Public Works were generally positive except for sidewalk quantity and maintenance. Respondents also felt more positively about code enforcement in their neighborhood than in College Park commercial areas. City services and events were generally positively rated, although many respondents were not aware of some services and did not attend City events.

Safety ratings were mixed in most areas and negative around both metro stations. However, neighborhood ratings were generally positive, as were College Park ratings. Overall, residents felt positively about College Park.

The 2008 survey showed slight improvement in some areas and slight decline in others, but no changes were major, denoting much continuity in residents' opinions of the City and its services and events.