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The City of Gainesville, Florida

Summary Report 2008



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SURVEY BACKGROUND

About The National Citizen Survey™

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

Understanding the Results

Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 1,200 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 67 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 264 residents, for a response rate of 23%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey of 264 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 6 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in the City of Gainesville. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix B in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix C of the Report of Results.)

Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

Putting Evaluations onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 1 representing the best rating and 4 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 4 points based on all respondents.

PROFILE OF GAINESVILLE

As assessed by the survey, about 27% of Gainesville residents have lived in the community for more than 20 years and 48% are over age 34. Another 12% are over age 64. Sixty-seven percent are currently employed; 56% rent; 44% own and 38% live in detached single family homes. Over 87% of Gainesville residents have at least some college and 38% have annual household incomes above \$50,000. Five percent of Gainesville residents reported that they are Spanish, Hispanic or Latino and 72% said they are White or Caucasian.

COMMUNITY LIFE

The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in Gainesville. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of Gainesville. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of Gainesville.

Quality of Life

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in Gainesville, 17% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 2% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” Gainesville as a place to raise children received an average rating of 62 on a 100-point scale.

Ratings of Community Characteristics

The highest rated characteristics of Gainesville were educational opportunities, opportunities to attend cultural activities, and air quality. When asked about potential problems in Gainesville, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were traffic congestion, homelessness, and taxes. The rate of population growth in Gainesville was viewed as “too fast” by 45% of respondents, while 6% thought it was “too slow.”

Perceptions of Safety

When evaluating safety in the community, 57% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in Gainesville. In their neighborhood after dark, 68% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 13% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 58% had reported it to police.

Community Participation

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of Gainesville during the past year was assessed on the survey. Among those completing the questionnaire, 55% reported volunteering in the past year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of Gainesville were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey™. They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from the City of Gainesville. Those who had any contact with a City of Gainesville employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

Public Trust

When asked to evaluate whether they were pleased with the overall direction taken by the City of Gainesville, residents gave an average rating of 53 on a 100-point scale.

Service Provided by Gainesville

The overall quality of services provided by the City of Gainesville was rated as 58 on a 100-point scale.

The City of Gainesville Employees

Impressions of the City of Gainesville employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a City of Gainesville employee in the past year (48%) rated their overall impression as 66 on a 100-point scale.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Three additional questions were asked by the City of Gainesville as listed below. The results for these questions are also available in the Report of Results.

Policy Question #1					
Please rate how important each of the following is to you:					Total
	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	
Purchase of land for conservation	24%	31%	34%	11%	100%
More recreational facilities (ball fields, swimming pools, etc.)	11%	28%	42%	19%	100%
Public safety enhancements	20%	44%	26%	10%	100%
New road construction	16%	26%	41%	17%	100%
Road reconstruction	22%	39%	31%	8%	100%
Traffic reduction measures	31%	38%	23%	8%	100%
Economic development	24%	44%	25%	7%	100%
Improving mass transit	20%	34%	34%	12%	100%
Investment in computer and technological infrastructure	13%	34%	38%	15%	100%

Note: "don't know" responses have been removed.

Question 16b: Policy Question 2					
Due to current economic conditions, the City will need to increase revenues or reduce services. Please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose the following types of revenue increases to fund improvements:					Total
	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	
Increased sales tax	10%	29%	21%	41%	100%
Increased impact fees on new home construction	27%	30%	17%	26%	100%
Increased property tax	8%	17%	25%	50%	100%

Policy Question 3

If the City were to have to reduce services, in which City services are you willing to make changes? Please check all that apply:	Percent of Respondents
Increase the response time to citizens' complaints on code enforcement	42%
Reduce art and cultural programs	38%
Eliminate the purchase of land for conservation	35%
Reduce traffic mitigation measures	26%
Reduce recreation programs and opportunities	24%
Reduce the level of street and roadway maintenance	22%
Eliminate fire safety education programs	22%
Eliminate social service programs	21%
Eliminate economic development activities	20%
Eliminate neighborhood improvement programs	16%
Reduce park maintenance	15%
Eliminate crime prevention programs	9%
Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one category.	