



NEWPORT CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS

June 2008

Conducted by:



Eastern Carolina Council

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June 20, 2008

In December 2007 the Eastern Carolina Council first began discussing the idea of a Citizen Survey with the Town of Newport and on February 26, 2008 the agreement was signed. ECC staff worked with the Town Council and Town Manager to draft the questions. The responses from the surveys would be entered into Survey Money, an online statistical analysis program, by ECC staff.

It was decided that ECC would mail the surveys directly to the residents of the Town. Mayor Garner drafted a cover letter on the Town of Newport's stationery. ECC made copies of the survey and the cover letter. The Town provided an envelope with their logo. This envelope was used to mail the survey. The Town also provided the mailing labels which were obtained from the water department. ECC provided a self-addressed envelope in which the residents could return the survey to ECC after affixing a stamp. The residents could take the completed survey and drop it off at Town Hall, if they so desired. The residents also had the option of completing the survey directly online. The web address was provided on the survey. The citizens were asked to respond by May 23, 2008.

ECC staff mailed 1,362 surveys from New Bern on May 2nd and May 5th. A total of 354 surveys were completed and entered into the Survey Monkey. Of those 29 were returned to the Town Hall and later conveyed to ECC for data entry. Ten were entered directly online. The total mailed to ECC was 315. This is a return of 26%. Of the 354 who completed the survey, only 23 did not live within the town limits of Newport (6.5% of the respondents). Of the 354 respondents, 160 (45.2%) took the time to add a comment and 79 (22.3%) requested to be added to an email group to receive updates on the town via email.

This document is a summary of the responses and a synopsis of the written comments. A complete copy of the survey results and citizen comments is being provided along with this summary. The hard copies of the completed surveys are being provided to the town as well.

Summary of Responses

- 99.4% live more than six months a year in Newport
- 92.3% own their place of residence
- 57.7% have lived 11 or more years in Newport
- 60.8% still work
- 29.1% (largest group) have incomes of between \$50,000 and \$74,999
- 92.2% would rate Newport as an excellent or good place to live
- 83.5% would rate Newport as an excellent or good place to retiree
- 87.5% would rate the quality of life in Newport excellent or good
- The biggest issues facing Newport were:
 - #1—Growth
 - #2—Water

- #3—Parks & recreation needs
 - Maintenance of the Streets ran a close 3rd
- The top three characteristics respondents liked most about living in Newport were:
 - #1—Small town feel
 - #2—Location
 - #3—Safety in the community
- The three biggest things that the Town of Newport could do to improve the quality of life in Newport were:
 - #1—Minimize tax increases
 - #2—Control/manage growth
 - #3—More parks and recreational facilities
- Recreation—to what degree do you believe the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 56.8% said that the lack of indoor facilities was a moderate or major problem
 - 50.4% said that the lack of variety of recreational facilities was a moderate or major problem
 - 48.9% said that the availability of recreational facilities was a moderate or major problem
 - 48.1% said that the lack of a Senior Center was a moderate or major problem
- Roads—to what degree do you believe that the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 43.9% said that the UPKEEP of the streets in town was a moderate or major problem
 - 43.5% said that the traffic VOLUME on Hwy. 70 was a moderate or major problem
 - 38.9% said that the traffic SPEED on Hwy. 70 was a moderate or major problem
- Safety—to what degree do you believe that the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 59.4% said that drugs were a moderate or major problem
 - 29.7% said that theft was a moderate or major problem
 - 28% said that animal control was a moderate or major problem
- Environment—to what degree do you believe that the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 44% said that stormwater runoff was a moderate or major problem
 - 38.5% said that water quality of the Newport River was a moderate or major problem
 - 29.2% said that litter was a moderate or major problem
- Water/Wastewater—to what degree do you believe that the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 27% said that the quality of the tap water (taste, smell) was a moderate or major problem
 - 26.8% said that the stormwater system was a moderate or major problem
 - 12.2% said that water pressure was a moderate or major problem

- General—to what degree do you believe that the following are problems in Newport (ranked):
 - 55.9% said that the management of growth and development was a moderate or major problem
 - 30.3% said that the cost to live in the town was a moderate or major problem
 - 18.9% said that the adequacy of the town ordinances was a moderate or major problem
- As far as participation, in the last twelve months (ranked):
 - 89.9% have never sent an email to the town or one of the town council members
 - 89.3% have never received an email from the town or one of the town council members.
 - 67.9% have never attended a town council meeting
 - 67.7% have never attended a public meeting about town matters
 - 59% have never visited the town's website
 - 54.8% have never contact a member of the town council
 - 41.1% have contacted a town employee once or twice
 - 36.7% have visited town hall 3 to 12 times
- Impressions of the Town of Newport for those who had contact with staff in last 12 months (ranked):
 - 90% had a good or excellent impression of courtesy
 - 87.6% had a good or excellent overall impression
 - 83.4% had a good or excellent impression of their knowledge
 - 82.9% had a good or excellent impression of their responsiveness
- Ratings for overall performance of town government included:
 - 78.9% thought that general administration and management was good or excellent
 - 72.2% thought that the Town Council was good or excellent.
- Respondents strongly agreed, agreed, or were neutral on the following points (ranked):
 - 82.1%--believe town government welcomes citizen involvement
 - 81.5%--are pleased with the direction of services
 - 80.6%--are pleased with overall direction town is taking
 - 77.8%--believe that Newport is run for the benefit of all people
 - 76.5%--believe that Newport officials care about what I think
 - 76%--are pleased with direction town is taking regarding environment
 - 75.1%--would recommend Newport as an example of how to provide local government services
 - 72.5%--are pleased that Newport is becoming a retirement community
 - 70.8%--believe that the media accurately reports on the town
 - 65%--are pleased with direction of parks & recreation
 - 63.8—believe that their tax dollars are spent wisely.

- When asked how informed the respondent was regarding town issues and operations, they said (ranked):
 - 43.5%--were moderately informed
 - 30.1%--were slightly informed
 - 17.7%--were not well informed
 - 8.7%--were very informed.
- When asked where they got most of their information on the town, they responded (ranked):
 - 43%--The Newport Voice
 - 24.7%--The Carteret News Times
 - 15.2%--word of mouth
- On the topic of future growth, the following wanted to see some or great increase in (ranked):
 - 70.7%--commercial
 - 65.1%--Single family residences
 - 50.4%--industrial
 - 36%--Multi-family residences
- The following rated these very important or essential (ranked):
 - 76.6%--maintain tax rate
 - 61.3%--walking trails
 - 60.5%--more sidewalks
 - 57.4%--bike trails/paths
 - 49.9%--additional recreational facilities
 - 46.9%--medical facilities
 - 44.2%--senior activity center
 - 43.8%--additional shopping opportunities
 - 42.8%--nature observing areas
 - 40.5%--additional restaurants
 - 34.5%--increase town governmental services

Summary of written comments

The written comments mostly covered more than one concern. This section categorizes the bulk of the comments. You are referred to the actual comments for more information.

A number of respondents wrote to thank the Town Council for the survey:

“I like the idea that the town council has put in place for citizens to communicate with them and give their opinions. This tells me that they do care and are in office for the people and betterment of the town.”

“These questions were very relevant. I hope the answers will be useful.”

“I am grateful for the survey.”

“Make the most of this as possible.”

“Thanks for the survey.”

“Good way to find out about the needs of residents.”

Teens & recreational opportunities

“Teenagers in our community are being lost! We need to make room for them to hang out and do the things they enjoy—things that make them feel welcome in the community...”

“Our youth intensely dislikes Newport for the simple fact that there is nothing for them to do here except get into trouble...”

“The young people of Newport can’t wait to grow up and leave the area because there is nothing here for them...”

“We need more recreational facilities...Need more options for teenagers—a recreation building.”

“Try to get more things for the kids to do that are affordable for low income families.”

“I want to stress the importance of more recreation facilities.”

“We need more opportunities for our youth, especially the teenage group.”

Need more types of recreational facilities. “Nothing for kids to do but hang out, drink & do drugs.”

“The town needs entertainment for teenagers. There is nothing for them to do and no place to just hang out.”

“You need more parks/recreation...”

Need “...recreation service for the young and old.”

“Need a place for seniors to exercise.”

“Have seen an increase in crime. I think this is in direct relation to population growth and a loss of recreation for kids.”

“...need...something for the teens to do—a well-supervised recreation center.”

“We are in great need of a Recreation Center for all active youth and seniors.”

“I have a concern about lack of things for the kids and others to do.”

“...not enough concern for teenage citizens...as important as a senior center is... a youth center is vital.”

“We need to support our growing population of young people by providing activities and facilities that encourage active community involvement and wise choices instead of street wandering.”

“Community recreational facilities are needed...help keep kids off the street and out of trouble with drugs.”

“There was talk about a bigger park area being developed. I am interested in knowing how that is going. It could include a bike and walking trail, tennis court and an old fashioned band stand. It could be a gem for Newport.”

“It would be nice to have more for the children to do instead of getting into drugs or trouble.”

“I have lived in Newport for 36 years and there is nothing for the young folks to do. No updated park or any recreation centers—only basketball.”

“Need someplace for teenagers to go skateboarding, teen dances, gaming area—like a teen hut.”

“I think there is too much money spent on the police department...money would be better spent...on parks for kids to play.”

“I also find it disgraceful that a large military community does not celebrate July 4th.”

“I really like the community park and was disappointed that the town was not able to buy the land across the street, but definitely think the town made the right financial decision.”

“Our family loves and uses the library. This is a great asset to the community.”

Enforcement of codes and ordinances were of concern to some:

“Enforce no parking on the streets.”

“...does not enforce the town ordinance of nuisance and neglected houses.”

“The ordinances are adequately enforced considering the lack of manpower to enforce them.”

“We have enjoyed living in Newport these past seven years but are concerned that the town does not enforce ordinance requiring residents to maintain and keep clean their yards and property in general.”

“Enforce ordinances concerning lots, houses, and streets especially those items that make the town and area look unattractive to visitors and residents.”

“There are noise ordinances in place that are not enforced.”

“Why do we keep making laws when we can’t enforce the ones we have?”

Animal Control

“Animal control is a big problem.”

“...too many dogs and cats running around...”

“Animal control is lacking... need to keep animals inside or on a leash..”

“Enforce leash law.”

“...pet control is a major issue in the community...”

“...dog and cat problem in Newport is out of control.”

“Leash law needs to be enforced—too many dogs running loose.”

“Please enforce dog and cat laws; we have dogs and cats running all over White Sands.”

“Animals are running loose. We need a leash law for animals...Something needs to be done.”

Noise

“Noise control is a major issue in the community...noise ordinances in place that are not enforced.”

“Noisy dogs.”

“...barking dogs...”

“Helicopters fly over town much too often and much too low.”

“Loud boom boxes in area.” (Woodlands)

“The town is very noisy with a high volume of truck and emergency vehicles along Hwy. 70, jet noise, helicopters destroying the quality of life.”

“Noise from cars/radios.”

Need “...noise ordinance...”

“Catch those crazy nuts who blast their big speakers full blast in the housing areas.”

“Living in the South Park subdivision we had problems with noise from fire department sirens (no calls made for them to respond) and air raid sounds.”

“I do think there are too many cars in town vibrating with loud music.”

“...need fewer loud cars.”

Sidewalks

“...the streets could have...sidewalks for people...”

“We really need more sidewalks...our family loves to walk but I hate walking in the grass or people’s yards and/or the street!”

“Sidewalks would be great for walking, less chance of being run over.”

“...more sidewalks would be nice.”

“Many citizens like to walk...no sidewalks for this activity.”

“More sidewalks...”

“Sidewalks would be nice, but I don’t see much space for them.”

“I am distressed to see people walking along the side of the road in areas where sidewalks have been put in.”

“It is a waste of our money for sidewalks. People still walk on the roads. The sidewalks start and end and go nowhere.”

Mopeds/scooters

“You need to get the mopeds and scooters off the road.”

“I don’t like the small scooters—dangerous on the highways for everyone...Something has to be done about this problem.”

“Scooters going down highway or street—riding in the lane in the middle...”

Police/Fire/EMS/Public Safety

“The number of sex offenders in our community is TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE...”

“There are between 27 and 62 sex offenders living in the Newport area....depending on which website you go to.”

Concerned about “...people trespassing... traffic too fast in areas of the duck crossing...”

“Need more police officers...police do not patrol often in Woodlands subdivision: auto break-ins, speed limits exceeded and people barely stop at stop signs.”

“...seems to be a lot of action in back of the Red & White. You need to put a flood light to inhibit possible drug trafficking.”

Concerned about “...control of speeding of the police & fire departments. Why do we need a car for each police officer to park in their yard? ... Slow that fire chief down...”

“Newport’s EMS is the best.”

“The fire and police...have done a wonderful job...”

“Don’t feel the fire department employees or volunteers should wash their personal vehicles using the ‘town’ water at the fire hall.”

“The drug factor in Newport is getting really bad.”

“What justifies so many police in Newport?”

“I have noticed an increase in vandalism and kids skateboarding, smoking and disturbing the peace on the streets especially behind Grater’s house next to the gas station on Chatham Street...”

“Since we live in the ETJ area, there is no control of speeders in our development.”

“The police department is doing a great job in getting a handle on the crime that is making its way into our town.”

“The police department doesn’t serve us properly.”

“Police do not seem helpful if you have a theft—no follow up—no concern over trying to find the thief.”

“...I am impressed with the efforts of law enforcement attempts to curb dealings and drug dealers.”

“This town needs a drug detective or police officers...need to make sure they need patrol cars (new) for the officers to do their jobs.”

“Police department should spend less time hassling teenagers and more time enforcing speeding and leash laws.”

Need “More law enforcement on side streets to slow down speeders, control teenage activity as certain locations and times.”

Need “Police follow-up finger printing—doing more than just taking information on theft and robberies.”

“Feel... law enforcement...goes far above...”

“The police department is doing an excellent job even though they are understaffed and underpaid.”

“Waste of money on cops and cars.”

“We need more cops!...We don't need 5 cops, but we have 10.”

“I appreciate the police protection, but not the harassment.”

“Newport is a wonderful little town, but the drug problem is very bad.”

“I am pleased to see the drug arrests being made, but the level of drug activity in this town is very concerning...We want nothing to do with a community of drug use and drug sales.”

“I think there is too much money spent on the police department. We do not need a police department of this size in this small town...”

“Newport Police Department has lost credibility with their petty behavior.”

“Why do the police have to patrol Hwy. 70 bypass?”

“Police need to be in the office more. I have stopped by on numerous occasions and no one was there.”

“I seldom have contact with police but my few interactions have been pleasant.”

“Lack of gun/rifle control.”

Drainage/stormwater

“...poor drainage...”

“The flooding problem on Beaver Dam Trail needs to be fixed.”

“Provide an additional means for stormwater runoff. Insufficient drainage on Park Avenue. The Town of Newport had ditched and run drain tile in this area, but it still doesn’t drain properly.”

“I contacted the Town of Newport 3 or 4 times in 2005 and 2006 about cleaning my ditches out... said it would be taken care of, but nothing was done.”

(Washington Avenue) “Every time there is a heavy rain we are blocked at both ends.”

“Need to improve the flow of water in the large ditch behind the houses on E. Forest Dr. The town seems to be only concerned with the ditch that leads to the large ditch. Water backs up from the large ditches to the smaller ones during heavy rain.”

“Inform homeowners along drainage ditches of their responsibilities...”

“Get the county to clean the canal—all the ditches run to the canal. Storm season is coming up.”

“Please take a good look at the storm drain system.”

“I requested the ditching crew to clean out the drainage ditches on Easy Street—in some places there was only a 3 to 4 inch opening in the culvert. My response was that the town cleaned 18 inches of my drainage ditch. Well done!”

“Stormwater is a major problem. The town should take a hard look at the natural drains that take the water to the tributaries and keep them clean and cleared.”

“Why wetlands for stormwater in White Sands—no upkeep, people feeding wildlife—no signs.”

Community appearance

“A lot of the neighborhoods look like trash.”

“... many citizens don’t care about the junk vehicles on their property or vacant houses with overgrown yards...”

“I don’t think that the Town Council is doing enough to increase the overall aesthetics of the town. There needs to be a beautification committee...The area of Howard and Hwy. 70 is always filthy as well as the Food Lion parking lot and Chatham Street. Hibbs Road is atrocious”

“Has anyone noticed the weeds and stones at the railroad and Hwy. 70? It is an eyesore.”

“The basketball courts have been trashed/littered at times.”

“...don’t throw beer cans, potted plants, milk jugs into the ditches.”

“May of the homes look like junk yards and give impression of low-class, low-income area...People should not be allowed to have disabled vehicles or any vehicle parked in their yards or have tires/trash, clothes, or junk piled on their property.”

“Review by city of property that needs cleaning: autos and trash around.”

“...many areas need to be cleaned up.”

“Need litter clean-up on side of streets, especially cigarette butts.”

“I am very pleased with the cleanliness of Newport driving on Hwy. 70...suggest we add more landscaping.”

“Simmons Transfer Company is an eyesore and a danger for children—needs to be torn down and all the broken tractors disposed of as well.”

“Please clean up the entrance to White Sands subdivision...clean out the ponds...replace the fountains or make the pond a grassy area.”

“I think we need to address the look of our downtown area. The overall appearance of the town from the Baptist Church to the old Hwy. 70 bridge over the river is bleak.”

“Why are junk yards and filthy trailers allowed to be placed on a public street with no screening or buffering.”

“The move to get new businesses to landscape was great! Thank you.”

“I love the Post Office building and the landscaping.”

“We want to be proud of our community, but it is very poorly cleaned up and seems to be a lack of pride in our town’s appearance in most neighborhoods.”

Recycling and garbage services

“The garbage men are very sloppy at picking up garbage and will not go out of their way to pick up garbage that THEY spill out of the cans. They also hog the left lane of the highway...”

“The recycling program should be on the website and should mirror Morehead City’s incentive program for recyclers.”

“I live in John’s Way and they are not very good about picking up recyclable on the days when they go around. I have no problem with trash collections.”

“Should encourage more households to recycle.”

“At times I feel we received better trash pick up when the town did it rather than Waste Industries.”

“We have not had any problems except for the recycling program. It is not adequate for our household.”

“I find it very discouraging to see so few houses put out recycling bins on collection day and think the town should push residents to recycle.”

Water/ sewer

“Shift more of the cost of water and sewer additions to the builders and developers of subdivisions.”

“The sewer system is a mess.”

“We need more fluoride in our water.”

“We can no longer act as though we do not have problems regarding water/sewer.”

“Cost of water/sewer too high.”

“How can the city complain about now losing money to repair/replace sewer problems, yet continue to allow subdivisions to be built? How can you justify digging and installing sewer access for developments yet on the other hand whine about pumping capacity?”

“I don’t mind paying for the water I use, but paying for the sewer if I water my flowers or garden is ridiculous.”

“Developers of new houses should pay for the burden new buildings place on town infrastructure not the current tax payer many of whom are on fixed incomes.”

Technology/ email/ website/ communication

“The recycling program should be on the website...”

“Your website could be updated more efficiently.”

“The website should be maintained by someone who has the time to manage it and the minutes from the meeting should be available online. The website says they are, but the link does not work.”

“Improve website; show all minutes of meetings within 24 hours. Show all meeting dates/times. Publish agenda.”

“There should be a posting somehow showing when the meetings will be held at town hall.”

“Re-establish the town newsletter.”

“Publish the town regulations.”

“It would be nice if you would accept water/sewer payments (and others) by Web Pay and/or credit card.”

“I would like to be able to pay my water/sewer bill online and on town website.”

“Should accept credit cards for city water and waste water bills.”

“The City of Cary has a pamphlet that outlines their services to the tax payers. You may want to request one—the services are well thought out.”

Roads/traffic

“Very concerned with the speeding up & down S. Lakeview Drive...”

“The present system of cross-overs (on Hwy. 70) and stoplights is dangerous. Safety of our citizens is a great concern.”

“The intersection at the Red & White/old 70/Howard Blvd. is a disaster. I have almost gotten into an accident there on several occasions.”

“New turning lanes on Hwy. 70 are sometimes inconvenient...they are a dramatic step forward in public safety. Well done!”

“I wish you could lower the traffic speed from Main Street to the Red & White to 25 mph like most of the other streets in town. It is a very busy block and it is hard to cross the street.”

(Howard Blvd.) “I think it needs some serious work done.”

“I hate that no one was notified of the Hwy. 70 change making us waste time and gas to get out of our street and making it impossible to turn left on Hwy. 70.”

“...there are some streets that need repair...”

Need “slower speed limit on Chatham Street from train tracks to elementary school”

(Howard Blvd.—South Park area) “There is a two-block section of the road that needs repairs.”

“...traffic flow on Hwy. 70 and old Hwy. 70” are a concern to me.

“Need dividers at the end of Hwy. 70.”

“Concerned about dividers on Hwy. 70. Feel it has a negative impact on businesses.”

“...I have to back track coming out of my subdivision to get to where I need to go. Don’t understand why the town didn’t have a say.” (Hwy 70)

“Live in Baywood. Don’t like the fact...having to drive 2 miles out of our way just to cross the road. I know the intersections are dangerous, but the local citizens are the ones paying the price not the tourist traveling Hwy. 70.”

“Town Council should oppose raising speed on Hwy. 70 to 70 mph. The present system of crossovers and stoplights is dangerous.”

“My main concern for Newport is access from residential areas to Hwy. 70. There are few traffic lights and most have no left turn signals. The answer by NCDOT to put median areas at intersections to prevent turning left on Hwy. 70 is crazy. Also, speed limit of 55 mph on Hwy.70 is too high considering that most drivers go 60-65 mph making it dangerous for Newport citizens to turn onto Hwy. 70.”

“I think a walk bridge whether over or under Hwy. 70 is essential.”

“...Hwy 70—the Hibbs Road and Roberts Road stoplights are a minute too fast. I personally timed those lights and ten seconds is not enough time for crossing traffic.”

“We need to work on Howard Blvd. Everyone is complaining about how rough it is.”

“School traffic at the Red & White is not managed right.”

Growth

“Growth plan should NOT include encouragement of low income housing...”

“I would like to see growth limited to those that the city services can handle. No more multi-family units. Small town flavor is Newport’s biggest asset. I like telling my family I live in Mayberry.”

“Overall the town has excellent size and growth for single families.

“Need moderate housing \$200,000 and under, patio homes, duplexes, planned communities along Hwy. 70 corridor...”

“Newport should be a town for all ages.”

“Tactfully controlling growth of the town and town services...” is a concern to me.

“Too much growth too fast will definitely decrease the quality of life in this lovely town. Please let’s proceed slowly and very carefully.”

“Establish a 50-year no growth period to maintain the 3000/3500 population...”

“Over the past 27 years Newport has grown some and it has improved our lives.”

“Newport needs to maintain that ‘small town’ feel.”

“Newport is a great town and we are proud that we have lived here for 16 years. The main problem is that there is no apparent plan for growth and development.”

“I would not want Newport to become a big town. I think our goal should be to have it be a healthy, pleasant small town.”

“I don’t see Newport as a retirement community, but as a small working class community.”

“Control of growth is essential.”

“The town needs to...pay close attention to the Newport that is developing.”