



James City County Comprehensive Plan Survey 2019

Report of Results
July 2019

by:

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CSR Project
19.04

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Acknowledgments

The Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia would like to thank all those associated with the 2019 James City County Comprehensive Plan Survey, particularly James City County leaders, under whose auspices this project was developed and funded.

At James City County, Tammy Rosario, Principal Planner, and Alex Baruch, Senior Planner, were primary contact persons. They worked with CSR to precisely define the survey parameters and finalize the questionnaire, working tirelessly to gain feedback and approval from James City County colleagues as well as from the County Board of Supervisors. Their thoughtful attention to detail resulted in a precise and well-developed questionnaire.

At the Center for Survey Research, Thomas M. Guterbock, Ph.D., Director, served as principal investigator for this project. He had overall responsibility for scientific oversight of the project, for the sample design and weighting of the data. Kathryn F. Wood, Ph.D., directed the project and was the primary point of contact between CSR and James City County. She worked with Ms. Rosario and Mr. Baruch to finalize the questionnaire and was the primary author of the report. Kara Fitzgibbon, Ph.D., Senior Project Coordinator at CSR, had primary responsibility for data analysis, assisted by research analysts Laura Baird, Megan Miller, Andrea Negrete, Sarah Warfield, Carole Yang, and Shayne Zaslow. Mitchell Morehart, Senior Project Manager at CSR, worked with the county to ensure correct geographic sample representation and was responsible for analyzing the gap between importance of and satisfaction with services. Matt Starnowski, survey operations manager at CSR, assisted by Sean Johnson, survey operations lab manager, supervised the mailings, the online version, and validation of data entry. Ila Crawford, fiscal technician for CSR, tracked the incoming questionnaires. For the CSR CATI laboratory, supervisors Dorothea Lewis, Beverley Kerr and their staff prepared the mailings and entered the data from completed questionnaires.

The success of any survey project ultimately depends on the respondents who bring it to fruition. The Center for Survey Research and the government of James City County are very grateful to the more than 1,000 respondents who completed the questionnaire. The high number of respondents ensures the quality of the data and that decision-makers in James City County can confidently rely upon the results provided in this report.

The Center for Survey Research is responsible for any errors or omissions in this report. Questions may be directed to the Center for Survey Research, P.O. Box 400767, Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4767. CSR may also be reached by telephone at 434-243-5232, by electronic mail at surveys@virginia.edu, or via the World Wide Web at: <https://csr.coopercenter.org>.

I. Introduction

Background

In January 2019, the James City County Board of Supervisors contracted with the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia to design, conduct and analyze a survey of James City County residents. The goal of the survey was to determine opinion on a number of issues as the County began the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan.

Summary of methods

Personnel from James City County and from the Center for Survey Research worked together at length to develop the survey questionnaire, which included some questions similar to the last James City County Comprehensive Plan survey, which was done as a telephone survey in the spring of 2014 by the Center for Survey Research at Virginia Tech.

At the recommendation of the Center for Survey Research, the County agreed that the survey would be accomplished primarily by mailing paper questionnaires to a randomly selected sample of residents. Non-respondents to the first mailing of the questionnaire were sent a second questionnaire, which also included a web address for an online version of the questionnaire, hosted by CSR on the Qualtrics platform. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Virginia reviewed and approved the entire protocol for the project (IRB-SBS #2364).

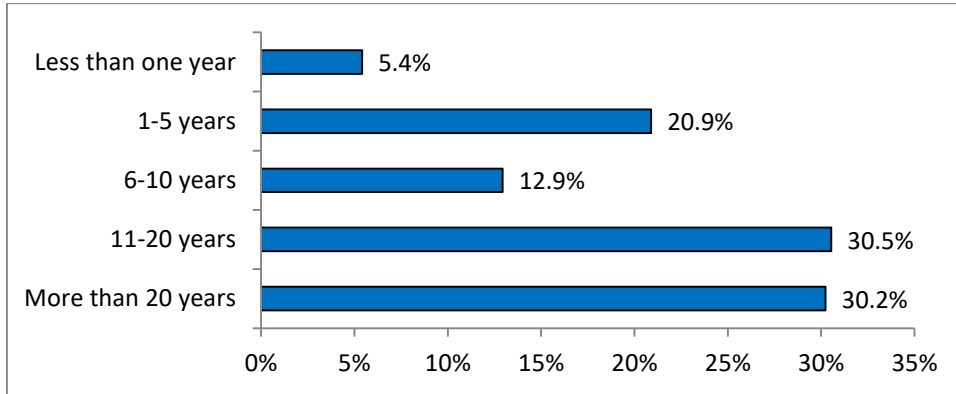
Sample size was set at 3,000. The initial mailing of the questionnaire occurred on April 12, followed by a thank-you and reminder postcard, which was followed on May 7 by the second mailing of the questionnaire.

Following receipt of the mailed-back paper questionnaires from the respondents, CSR staff entered the responses into a data base, and then merged that data with the responses received via Qualtrics. Considering the weighted data, there were 1060 completions. The response rate was 35.3 percent, providing an overall margin of error of +/- 3.6 percent.

Residential geography

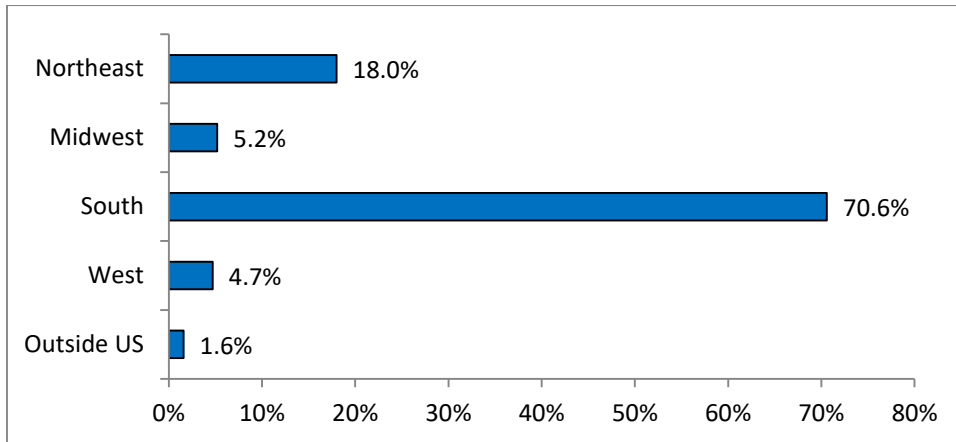
The respondents to the survey were all residents of James City County, by design. Thirty percent of them had lived in James City County more than 20 years, and an additional 31 percent had lived in the county 11-20 years. Five percent could be considered newcomers, having lived in the County less than one year. Figure I-1 illustrates the data for this question.

Figure I-1: Length of Residence in James City County



Five percent of our respondents reported that they had lived in James City County all their life (see Appendix B for complete frequencies). In a follow-up question, those who had lived elsewhere previously (which included most respondents) were asked where they had lived previously. Approximately 1.6 percent had lived outside of the United States. Of those who reported living in the United States, 53 percent had lived in Virginia, while 47 percent reported living elsewhere. Detailed information can be found in Appendix B: Frequencies. In terms of region, 18 percent reported they had lived in the Northeast, 5 percent in the Midwest, about 5 percent in the West, and as might be expected, 70.6 percent in the South (which includes Virginia). Figure I-2 illustrates these findings.

Figure I-2: Prior Region of Residence

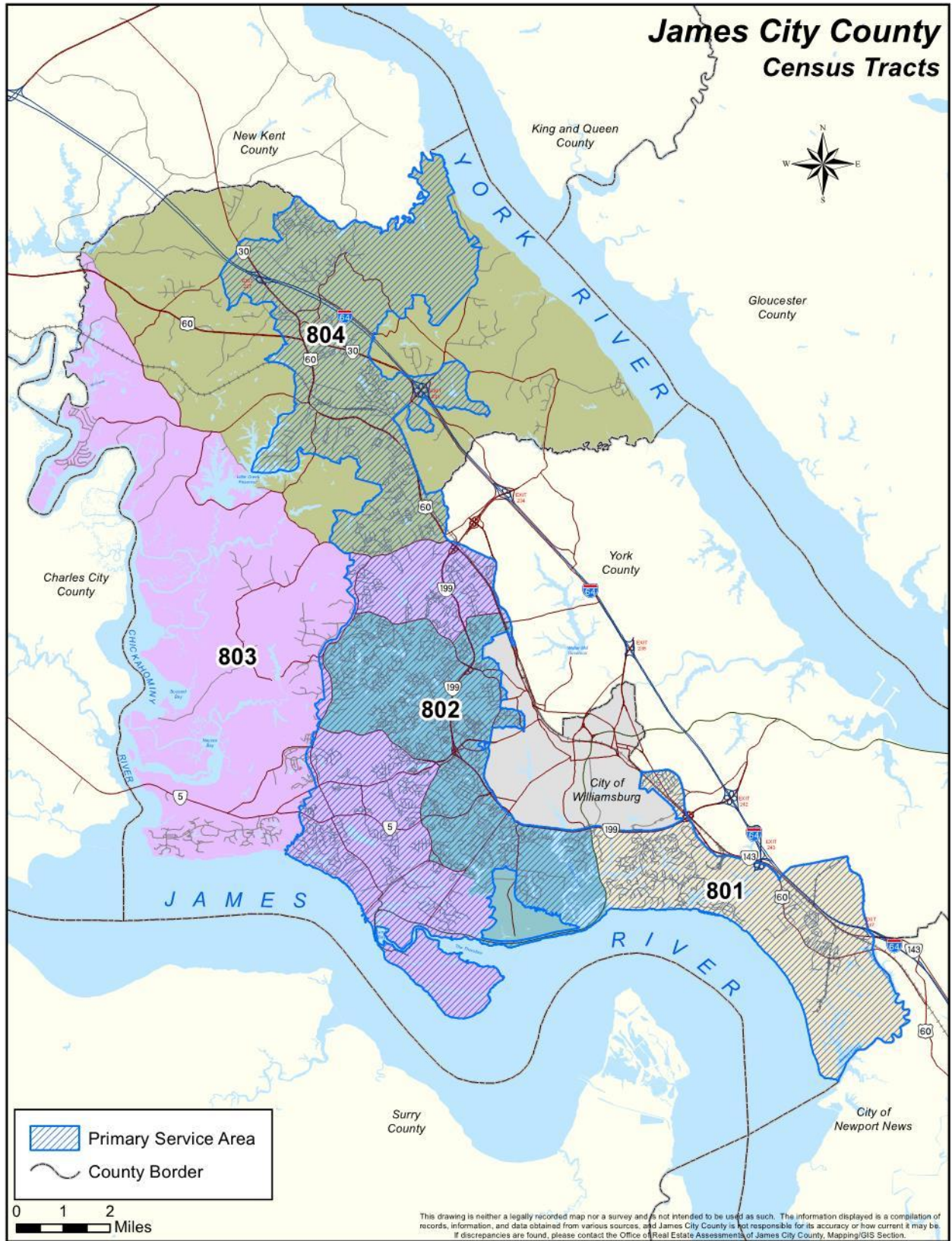


James City County Primary Service Area

James City County has a defined Primary Service Area (PSA), which is its principal tool for managing growth. The PSA defines the area planned for public utilities and services and intended for residential, commercial, and industrial development over the next 20 years. Areas outside the PSA are largely intended for rural uses (e.g. agricultural and forestry activities). James City County was interested in comparing opinions from citizens in developed areas (inside PSA) versus rural areas (outside PSA) of the County. The map below, Figure I-3, illustrates the boundaries of the County's PSA, as it is now defined. Approximately 87 percent of County residents reside within the PSA.

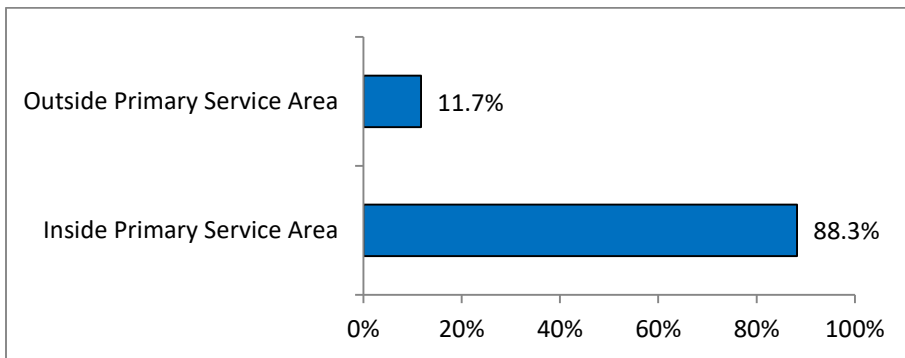
The U.S. Bureau of the Census divides James City County into a number of census tracts for purposes of enumerating and describing the County's population and housing units. For analysis purposes, the tracts are aggregated into tract groups according to the first three digits of the tract number. This yields four geographic areas as seen in Figure I-3. Cross-tabulations showing survey results by tract group are included in Appendix C.

Figure I-3: Primary Service Area Map



As Figure I-4 illustrates, 88 percent of survey respondents lived at addresses within the Primary Service Area, comparable to the actual distribution in the County.

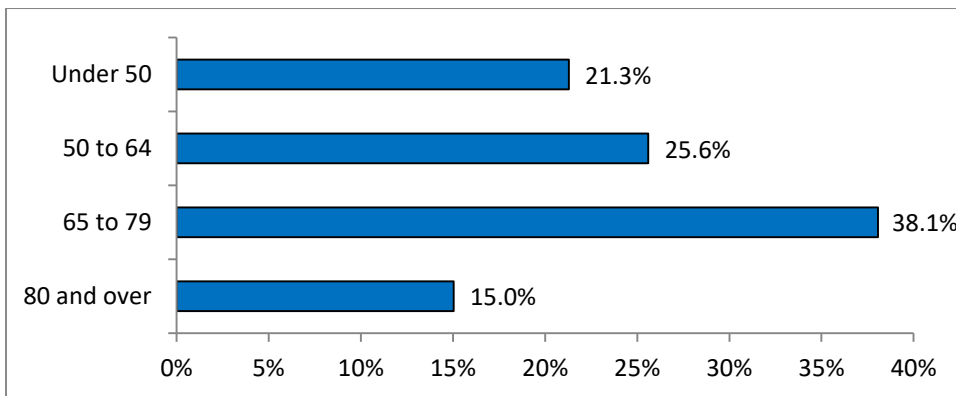
Figure I-4: Primary Service Area Address Distribution



Demographic profile of respondents

The graphs below illustrate the breakdown of respondents on other demographic variables, including age, race/ethnicity, employment status, owning or renting of home, spending 30% or more of income on housing-related expenses, annual household income, gender, and education. A full breakdown of demographic variables is included in Appendix B: Frequencies. We summarize them here, and where they are available, we report comparable 2013-2017 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS), provided by the United States Census Bureau.

Figure I-5: Age Category



The respondents to our survey were an older group, with only 21 percent under fifty years of age, as Figure I-5 shows. The ACS estimates that slightly less than 44 percent of James City County adult residents are under 50 years of age.

Figure I-6 shows that only slightly more than 2 percent of our respondents were of Hispanic origin, compared with the ACS estimate of 4.5 percent.

Figure I-6: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin

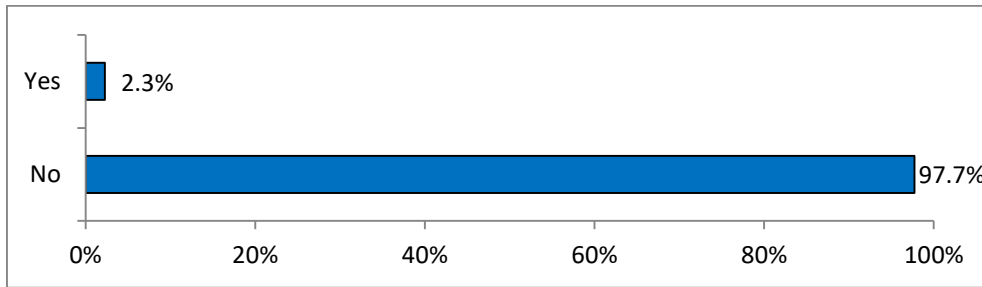
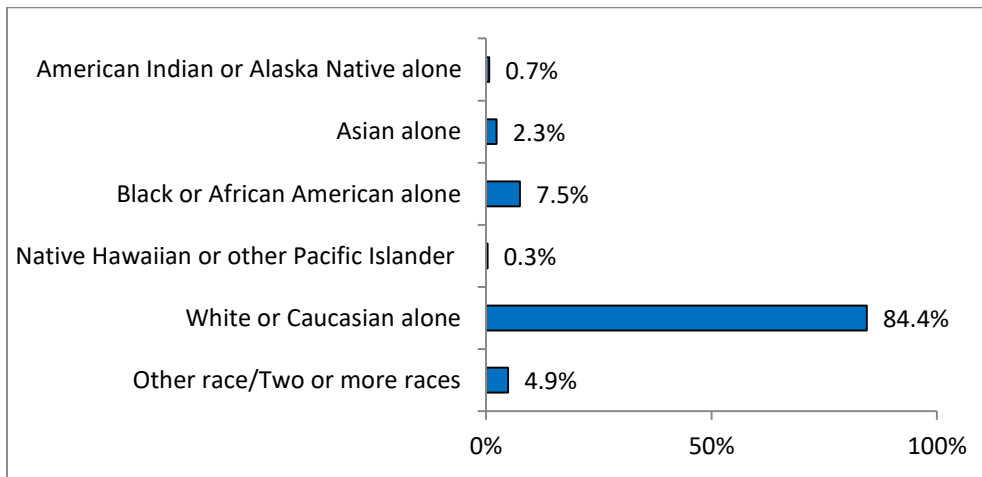


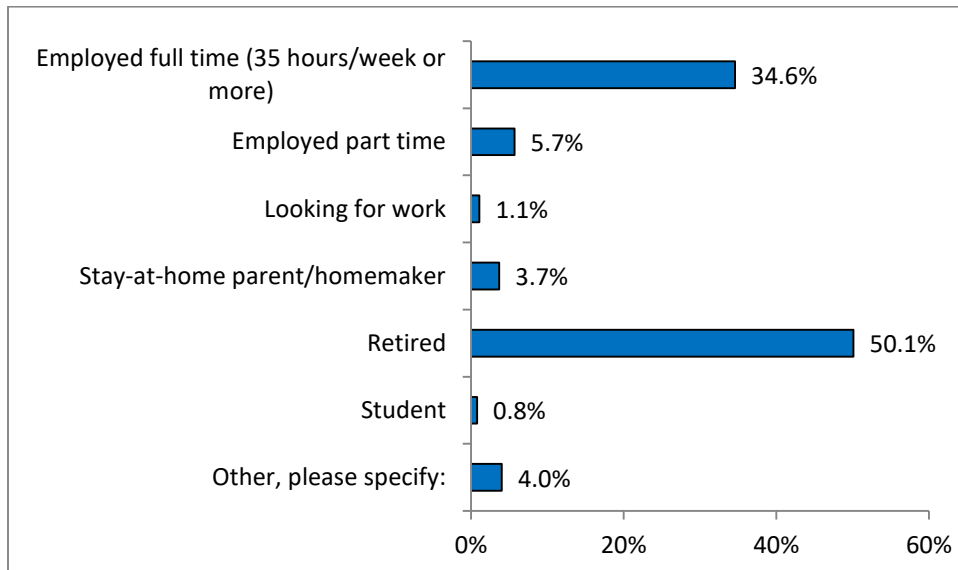
Figure I-7 shows that the vast majority of our respondents were White (84 percent), while 8 percent were Black or African American, and 2 percent were Asian. The comparable ACS figures are 82.2 percent White, 12.6 percent Black or African-American, 2.6 percent Asian, with 2.7 percent falling into other categories.

Figure I-7: Race



As Figure I-8 below shows, about 35 percent of our respondents were employed full-time, while 50 percent were retired, reflecting the age distribution of respondents. The ACS does not report comparable figures on employment.

Figure I-8: Employment Status



About three-quarters of our respondents reported that they were buying or owned their homes, while 24 percent were renters. This is comparable to the 74 percent home ownership rate reported by the ACS. Figure I-9 below illustrates this comparison.

Figure I-9: Do you rent or own your home?

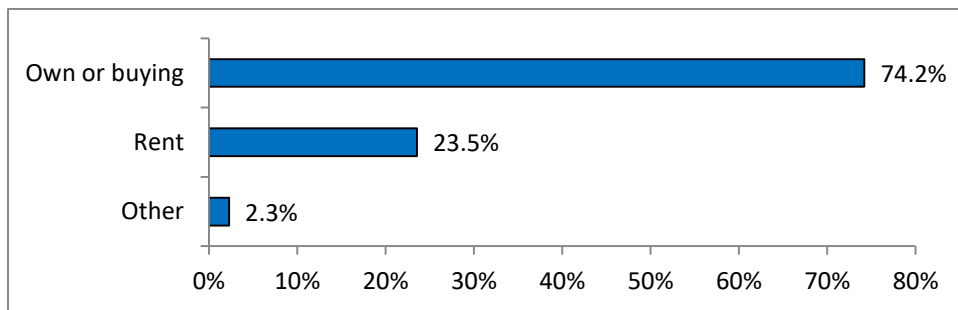


Figure I-10 below shows that a sizable number of respondents, 44 percent, report that they spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs. The latest ACS figures suggest that 29 percent of James City County residents spend 30 percent or more on housing costs.

Figure I-10: Do you spend 30% or more of your income each month on housing costs?

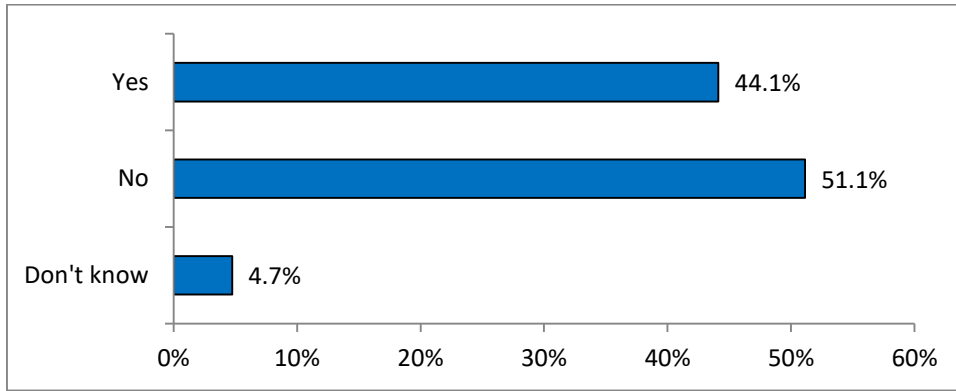
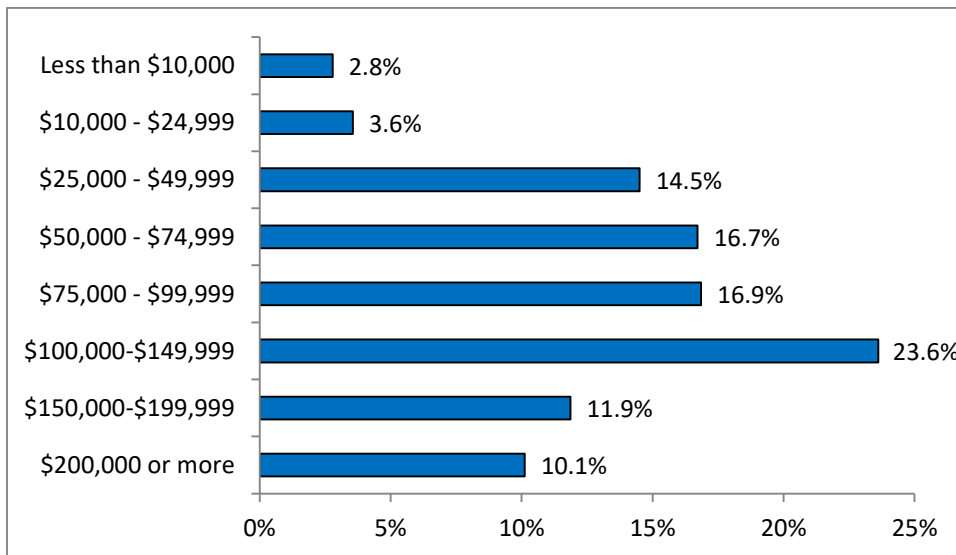


Figure I-11 below shows that the respondents to our survey represented the full range of income categories, with about one-quarter of them falling into the \$100,000 to \$149,000 range. More than half fell below that number, and about 22 percent were above. The ACS survey estimates that 21 percent of JCC households fall into the \$100,000 to \$149,000 range, with 3 percent earning less than \$10,000, about 10 percent in the \$10,000 to \$24,999 range, and about 47 percent between \$25,000 and \$100,000. The ACS estimates that 19 percent of households in JCC are in the brackets above \$150,000.

Figure I-11: Annual Pretax Household Income



Based on weighted data, the breakdown of our respondents according to gender was slightly higher for females, as is true in the population, at 52 percent, while males were 48 percent of respondents. Figure I-12 illustrates this breakdown.

Figure I-12: Gender

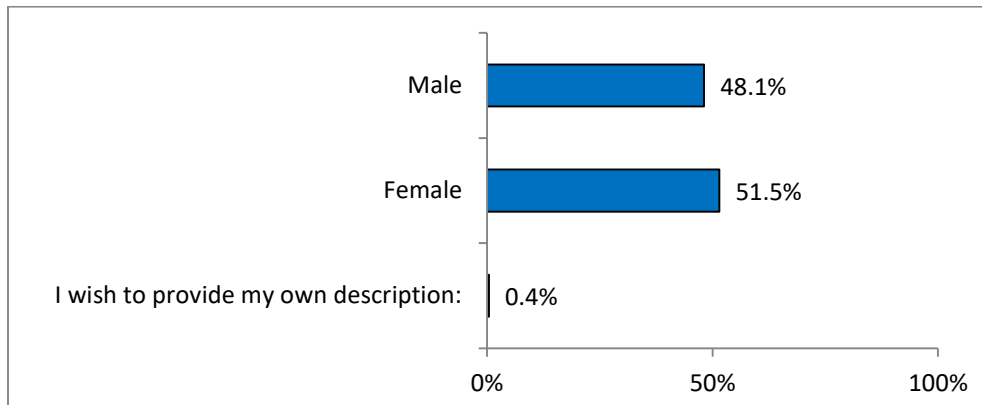
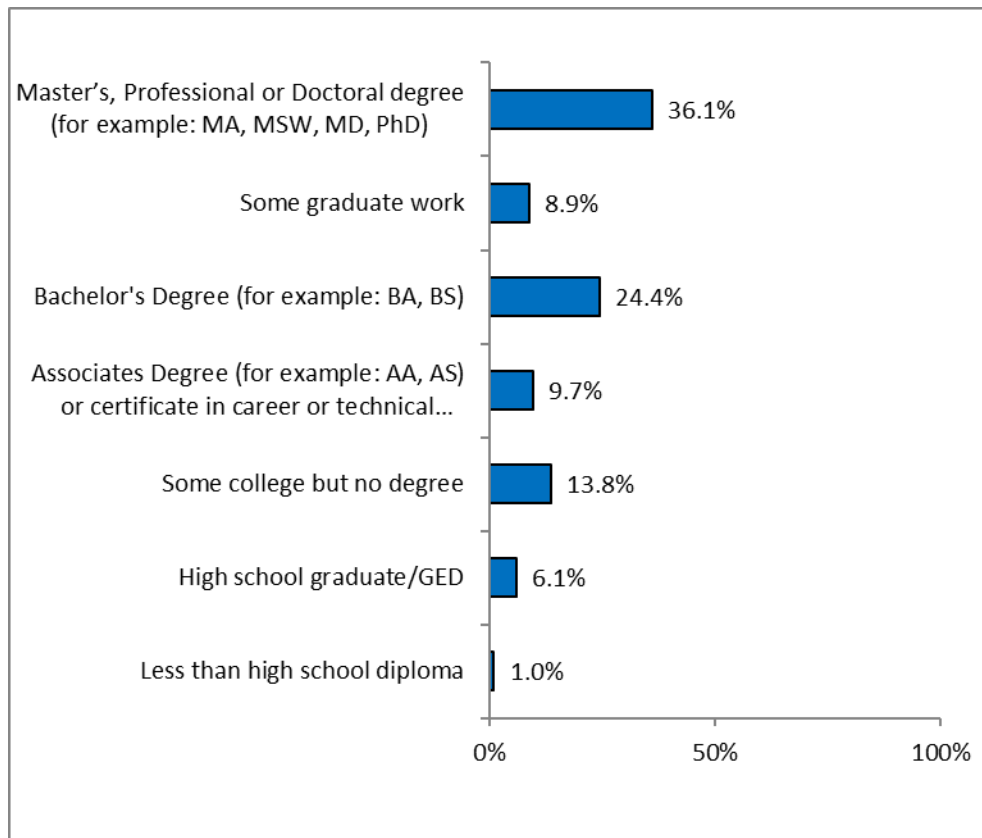


Figure I-13 below shows that the respondents to our survey were a highly educated group. More than a third of them (36.1 percent) reported having an advanced degree, while an additional 24.4 percent had a bachelor’s degree. More than 92 percent of respondents had at least some college education. Reporting on the population over age 25, the ACS suggests that 75 percent of JCC residents have at least some college, with 22 percent having a graduate degree.

Figure I-13: Highest level of education completed



We gathered these demographic data to ensure that the respondents represented the full range of diversity among James City County residents and to allow determination of differences in opinion among demographic groups.

The figures described above and the analysis and summary to follow reflect statistical weighting of the data, which is required to ensure that the survey results accurately reflect the County population. Weighting is an adjustment that allows some cases to count more than others in the tabulation of results. Cases from groups that are under-represented in the sample are given greater weight, while cases from over-represented groups are given lesser weight, so that the final sample will more accurately represent the population of interest. In this case, data were weighted on three variables: census tract grouping, gender, and combined race and homeownership. Complete details can be found in Appendix G: Survey Methodology.

Overview of report

The chapters that follow summarize the findings from the 2019 James City County Comprehensive Plan Survey. Chapter II examines residents' opinion about County services, Chapter III looks at Development and Land Use, Chapter IV concerns issues pertaining to Growth in the County, Chapter V reviews opinion about communication and information from the County, and Chapter VI provides an overall assessment of the County in the respondents' own words and a summary of the key findings from the survey. The appendices attached include Appendix A: Questionnaire; Appendix B: Frequencies; Appendix C: Cross-tabulations; Appendix D: T-test Mean Comparisons; Appendix E: Open-ended Responses; Appendix F: 2014 Comparisons; and Appendix G: Survey Methodology.

II. Opinion about County Services

An important part of the questionnaire dealt with residents' opinion about the large variety of services they receive from James City County: parks and recreation libraries, roads, housing, and many other services. The first part of the questionnaire asked about importance of County services and then asked about their satisfaction with them.

Importance of services

The first list of services was a grid asking respondents to rate the level of importance of each item, from very important to not at all important. Table II-1 provides the dichotomized frequency of respondents saying a service was very important or somewhat important, compared to those saying it was somewhat unimportant or not important at all. Reference to this table shows that all services were rated important by more than half of the survey respondents. Those with the highest level of importance were roads and highways (97.5 percent), parks and recreation services (93.9 percent) public schools, (93.6 percent), parks, (93.5 percent) and library services (93.4 percent). Lower levels of importance were assigned to development of a field house (52.2 percent important/somewhat important) public access to waterways for swimming and boating (76.1 percent), availability of bike lanes and sidewalks (77.5 percent), and housing opportunities for citizens generally (78.1 percent). It is very important to note that even the service rated lowest, development of field house, was rated important by more than half of respondents, and all the other services mentioned above as lower in importance were still rated important by three-quarters of respondents.

Table II-1: Importance of County Services

	Percent Very important/Somewhat important	Percent Somewhat unimportant/Not important at all
James City County's parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services, overall.	93.9%	6.1%
James City County's parks.	93.5%	6.5%
The recreation centers.	85.7%	14.3%
The recreation programs.	82.9%	17.1%
The Williamsburg Regional Library services provided at the Williamsburg and James City County public libraries.	93.4%	6.6%
Williamsburg-James City County's public schools.	93.6%	6.4%
Roads and highways in James City County.	97.5%	2.5%
Availability of bike lanes and sidewalks.	77.5%	22.5%
Housing opportunities for citizens, generally.	78.1%	21.9%
Housing opportunities that are affordable to our workforce.	82.9%	17.1%
Efforts to protect and improve the natural environment including water quality, air quality, and environmentally sensitive areas.	95.2%	4.8%
Public access to waterways for swimming and boating.	76.1%	23.9%
Efforts to protect and preserve the County's rural character.	85.2%	14.8%
Visual appearance of buildings within new developments in the County.	84.4%	15.6%
Efforts to attract jobs and new businesses.	88.1%	11.9%
Limiting irrigation with public water to conserve the County's water supply.	80.2%	19.8%
Development of a field house or multi-use indoor sports facility for community recreation and competitive sporting events.	52.2%	47.8%

Satisfaction with services

Table II-2 below presents the same list of services with the dichotomized frequencies of response on the satisfaction scale, from very satisfied to very unsatisfied. It is very clear from this table that respondents to the survey are satisfied with the services, on the whole, with the highest ratings going to the parks (94.9 percent satisfied), parks and recreation services (94.6 percent satisfied), recreation centers (92.7 percent satisfied), and regional library services (93.9 percent satisfied). Three services fall into lower levels of satisfaction: housing opportunities affordable to the workforce (50.3 percent), efforts to attract jobs and new businesses (68.3 percent), and efforts to protect and preserve the county's rural character (69.5 percent). Satisfaction with James City County public schools was quite high, at 82.7 percent. When considering the responses of households with and without children in the public schools, 51.2 percent of those with children in public schools said they were very satisfied, compared to 27.7 percent of those without children in the public schools.

Table II-2: Satisfaction with County Services

	Percent Very satisfied/Somewhat satisfied	Percent Somewhat unsatisfied/Very unsatisfied
James City County's parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services, overall.	94.6%	5.4%
James City County's parks.	94.9%	5.1%
The recreation centers.	92.7%	7.3%
The recreation programs.	89.2%	10.8%
The Williamsburg Regional Library services provided at the Williamsburg and James City County public libraries.	93.9%	6.1%
Williamsburg-James City County's public schools.	82.7%	17.3%
Roads and highways in James City County.	73.2%	26.8%
Availability of bike lanes and sidewalks.	71.4%	28.6%
Housing opportunities for citizens, generally.	72.8%	27.2%
Housing opportunities that are affordable to our workforce.	50.3%	49.7%
Efforts to protect and improve the natural environment including water quality, air quality, and environmentally sensitive areas.	80.0%	20.0%
Public access to waterways for swimming and boating.	82.8%	17.2%
Efforts to protect and preserve the County's rural character.	69.5%	30.5%
Visual appearance of buildings within new developments in the County.	82.1%	17.9%
Efforts to attract jobs and new businesses.	68.3%	31.7%
Limiting irrigation with public water to conserve the County's water supply.	73.9%	26.1%
Development of a field house or multi-use indoor sports facility for community recreation and competitive sporting events.	75.1%	24.9%

Comparison of importance and satisfaction

An interesting and potentially important way for policy makers to consider all this information is to compare the importance rating of a service with the level of satisfaction reported for it. In the ideal world, those services deemed the most important in a community would also receive the highest satisfaction ratings. Lower satisfaction ratings, while not ever desirable, are less significant when the services being rated are considered less important. Table II-3 below presents a comparison of the two tables above. Both importance and satisfaction are reported for each service, as the dichotomized summary measure of the combined responses (“very important/satisfied” plus “somewhat important/satisfied”).

Table II-3 below also presents a third column: the difference between importance and satisfaction percentages. The services are ranked from those with a high, positive difference (where importance is higher than satisfaction) to those with lower differences and negative differences (where satisfaction is higher than importance). For instance, the first item on the list pertains to housing opportunities affordable to the workforce. That service was ranked important by 82.9 percent of respondents, but only 50.3 percent were satisfied with the service, resulting in a difference or “gap” of 32.6 percent. When considering the gap between importance and satisfaction, the higher the difference, the more discrepancy there is between the two measures. We suggest that those services with a higher discrepancy might be priorities for County effort. Those services in the middle of the table have smaller discrepancies, suggesting that the County is doing very well, with satisfaction levels approaching importance levels. Finally, where there is a negative gap, the citizens are saying they are satisfied with efforts but the service is less important than others.

Table II-3: Comparison of Service Importance and Satisfaction

	% Important	% Satisfied	Difference
Housing opportunities that are affordable to our workforce.	82.9%	50.3%	32.6%
Roads and highways in James City County.	97.5%	73.2%	24.3%
Efforts to attract jobs and new businesses.	88.1%	68.3%	19.8%
Efforts to protect and preserve the County's rural character.	85.2%	69.5%	15.7%
Efforts to protect and improve the natural environment including water quality, air quality, and environmentally sensitive areas.	95.2%	80.0%	15.2%
Williamsburg-James City County's public schools.	93.6%	82.7%	10.9%
Limiting irrigation with public water to conserve the County's water supply.	80.2%	73.9%	6.3%
Availability of bike lanes and sidewalks.	77.5%	71.4%	6.1%
Housing opportunities for citizens, generally.	78.1%	72.8%	5.3%
Visual appearance of buildings within new developments in the County.	84.4%	82.1%	2.3%
The Williamsburg Regional Library services provided at the Williamsburg and James City County public libraries.	93.4%	93.9%	-0.5%
James City County's parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services, overall.	93.9%	94.6%	-0.7%
James City County's parks.	93.5%	94.9%	-1.4%
The recreation programs.	82.9%	89.2%	-6.3%
Public access to waterways for swimming and boating.	76.1%	82.8%	-6.7%
The recreation centers.	85.7%	92.7%	-7.0%
Development of a field house or multi-use indoor sports facility for community recreation and competitive sporting events.	52.2%	75.1%	-22.9%

Figure II-1 illustrates this analysis in another way. Services are divided into three groups on both importance and satisfaction based on the percentage of respondents who said the service was either very important or somewhat important, and the percentage of respondents who said they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. The groups are as shown in the matrix below: above 90 percent, 80 percent to 89 percent, and 50 to 79 percent. Each service falls into a box on the matrix, based on its two scores. The importance rating is broken down by columns; the satisfaction rating by rows. Parks and recreation services, for instance, in the top left box, was believed to be important by more than 90 percent of respondents, and more than 90 percent of respondents were satisfied with them. Similarly, more than 90 percent of the respondents said the public schools were important, while satisfaction with public schools was between 80 and 89 percent.

Figure II-1: Priority Matrix

		Summary Importance Rating		
		Above 90 percent	80 percent to 89 percent	50 percent to 79 percent
Summary Satisfaction Rating	Above 90 percent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parks and recreation services</i> • <i>Parks</i> • <i>Williamsburg Regional Library services</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recreation centers</i> 	
	80 percent to 89 percent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Williamsburg-James City County's public schools</i> • <i>Efforts to protect and improve the natural environment</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recreation programs</i> • <i>Appearance of buildings within new developments in the County</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public access to waterways for swimming and boating</i>
	50 percent to 79 percent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Roads and highways in James City County</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Affordable housing opportunities</i> • <i>Efforts to attract jobs and new businesses</i> • <i>Efforts to protect and preserve the County's rural character</i> • <i>Limiting irrigation with public water</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Availability of bike lanes and sidewalks</i> • <i>Housing opportunities for citizens generally</i> • <i>Development of a field house or multi-use indoor sports facility</i>

Comparison of importance and satisfaction by PSA/Non-PSA

In order to compare the findings on service importance and satisfaction by subgroups of respondents, for each service, we computed the mean level of importance and satisfaction separately. We assigned numeric values to the responses such that 1=not at all important or very dissatisfied, 2=somewhat unimportant or somewhat dissatisfied, 3=somewhat important or somewhat satisfied, and 4=very important or very satisfied. Therefore, higher mean scores reflect services assessed as more important, or those with which respondents were more satisfied. By comparing the mean scores on each item, we can determine whether there are differences according to whether the respondent lives within or outside of the Primary Service Area. For the complete means comparison tables, see Appendix D. Statistical significance of the difference was determined by using a t-test; those differences are noted below.

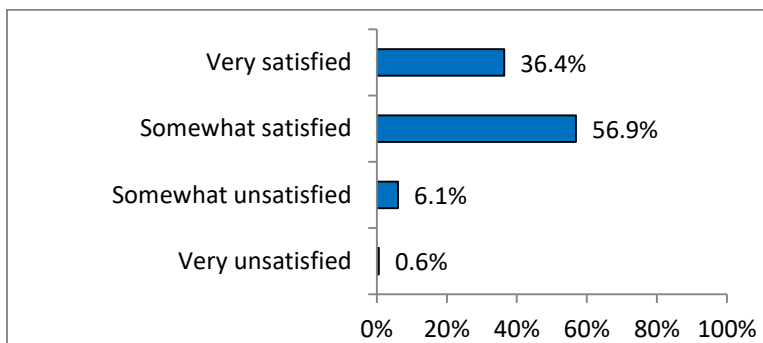
Considering importance, there were four services that received statistically different mean ratings between residents living within the Primary Service Area and those living outside of it. Specifically, residents living within the PSA rated the following four services with a statistically higher level of importance than residents living outside the PSA rated them: (1) parks; (2) recreation centers; (3) availability of bike lanes and sidewalks; and (4) parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services overall.

In terms of satisfaction with services, there were six services where there were distinct differences in means between those inside and outside the PSA. Those inside the PSA were more likely than those outside it to be satisfied with (1) the parks and recreation facilities overall, (2) the parks, (3) the efforts to protect the natural environment, (4) the efforts to protect and preserve the rural character, (5) the efforts to attract jobs and new businesses, and (6) limiting irrigation.

Overall satisfaction and value

After considering the variety of services in detail, respondents to the survey were asked two summary questions. First, they were asked how satisfied they were *overall* with the services provided by James City County. It is clear from Figure II-2 below that most residents of the County are satisfied with the services. More than a third of them (36 percent) say they are very satisfied, and less than 7 percent of respondents were either somewhat or very unsatisfied.

Figure II-2: Overall Satisfaction with Services Provided by the County

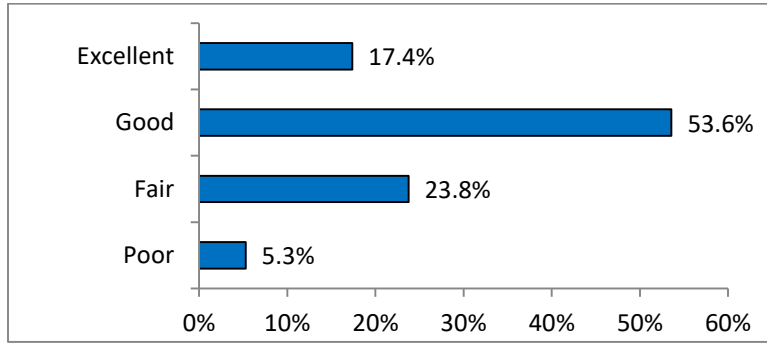


Comparing the responses based on the PSA, those outside the PSA were significantly less likely to report being satisfied than were those inside, though both percentages are high. While 88 percent of those outside the PSA said they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied, 94 percent of those within the PSA said so. Gender also had a significant impact on this question, with women slightly more likely

than men to report satisfaction (95 percent for women vs. 92 percent for men), with the “Other” (those who wished to provide their own description of their gender) category least likely to report satisfaction, at 75 percent.

Asked how they would rate the value of services in relation to taxes paid, 17.4 percent said the value was excellent, and more than half (53.6 percent) said the value was good. Nearly a quarter (23.8 percent) rated the value as fair, and 5.3 percent rated it poor. Figure II-3 below illustrates these findings.

Figure II-3: The Value of County Services in Relation to Taxes Paid

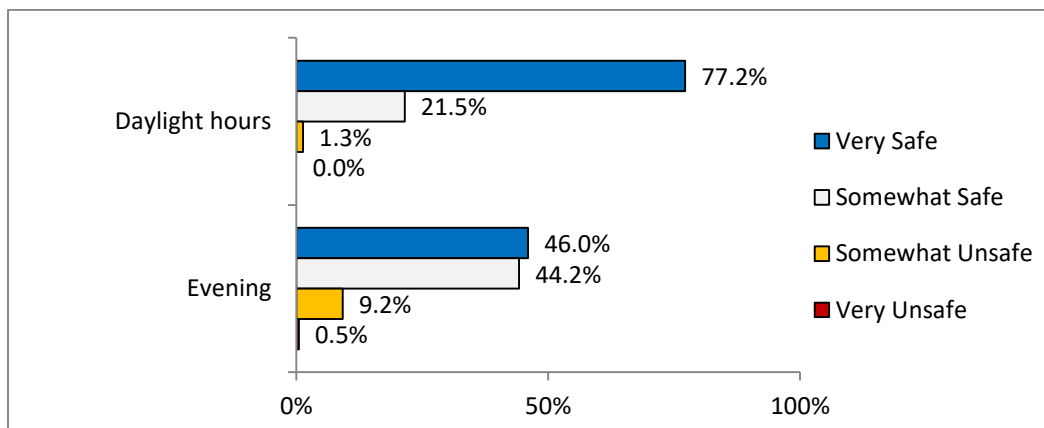


Similar to the question on satisfaction with services, those respondents living outside the PSA were more likely to rate the value of the services for taxes paid lower than were those within the PSA. The complete cross-tabulation tables may be found in Appendix C.

Safety

Another set of questions asked about feelings of safety. As we might expect, there was a difference between feelings of safety in daylight hours and during the evening, which Figure II-4 below illustrates. While 77 percent of respondents felt very safe during daylight hours, that number dropped to 46 percent in the evening, as Figure II-4 illustrates. While a number of respondents (9 percent) reported feeling somewhat unsafe in the evening, that percent dropped to only 1 percent in the daylight, and in both day and night, the percentage of respondents reporting feeling very unsafe was negligible. Comparing the feelings of respondents from within the PSA to those outside it, those outside were somewhat less likely to say they felt very safe in the daytime than were those in the PSA (71.4 percent vs. 78 percent), but there were no significant differences in the evening hours.

Figure II-4: Feelings of Safety in Daylight and Evening Hours

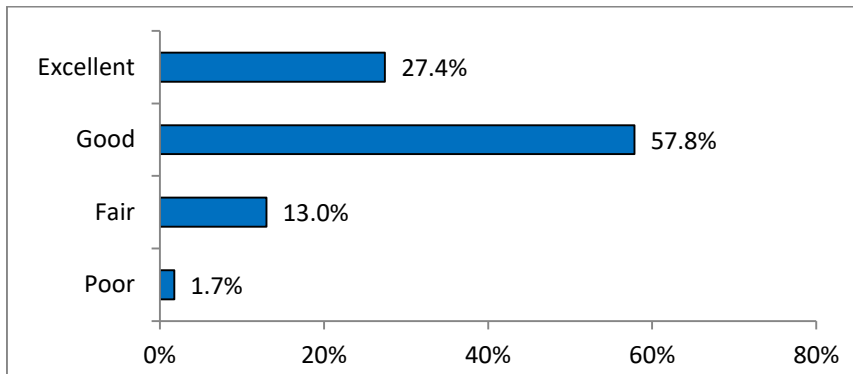


Respondent opinion about safety changed since 2014. In 2014, 85.3 percent of respondents said they felt very safe, while in 2019, 77.2 percent said they felt very safe during daylight hours. At night the change is more dramatic. In 2014, 66.5 percent said they felt very safe at night, while in 2019, that figure dropped to 46 percent. The full comparison can be found in Appendix F: 2014 Comparison.

Public school buildings

Asked about public school buildings and facilities, more than half of our respondents (57.8 percent) rated them good, and an additional 27.4 percent rated them excellent. Thirteen percent rated the buildings and facilities fair, and 1.7 percent said they are poor. There were no statistically significant differences between those residing inside and outside the PSA boundaries. There were significant differences, however, between those respondents with children in public schools and those without. While school buildings and facilities were rated good or excellent by most residents, with or without children in school, 36.7 percent of those with children in public school rated the facilities as excellent, compared to 22 percent of those without children in the public schools.

Figure II-5: Rating of Public School Buildings and Facilities



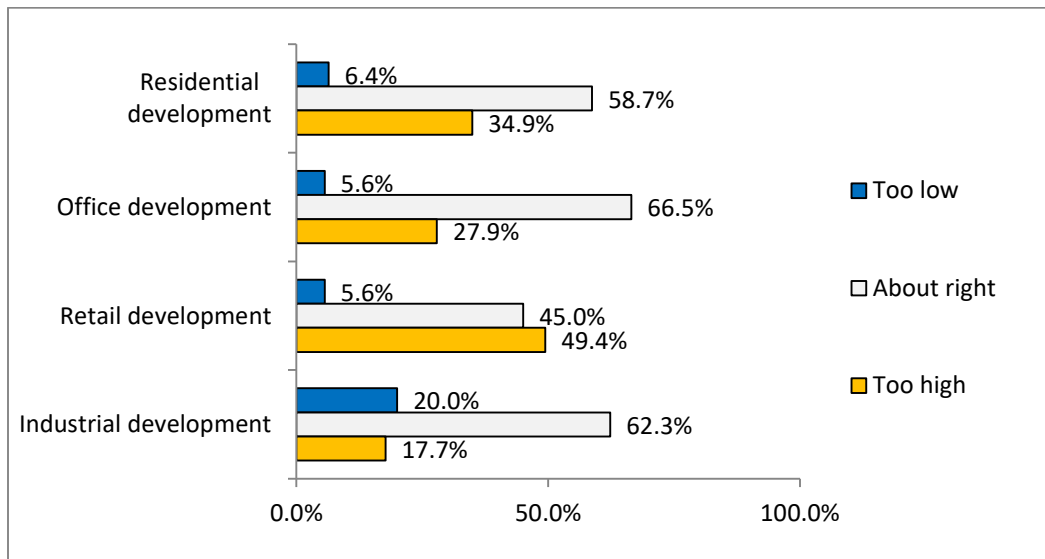
There were differences between 2014 and 2019 on this question. While in 2014 a total of 72.4 percent of respondents felt the school facilities were good or excellent, in 2019, that total increased to 85.3 percent.

III. Development and Land Use

Amount of development

As any local government moves forward with its planning, it is important to gauge residents’ opinion about the type of development occurring within the jurisdiction. We asked respondents to the survey whether they thought the level of residential development, office development, retail development and industrial development was too low, too high, or just about right. Figure III-1 below illustrates the findings on this question. There are clear differences in the responses, depending on type of development. While more than two-thirds of respondents said that the level of office development was about right, that percent dropped to 45 percent when retail development is considered. Nearly half of respondents reported that the level of retail development was too high. Comparatively, only about 18 percent of respondents felt that industrial development was too high, while 20 percent felt it was too low. If we judge satisfaction with the status quo by the percent saying the level of development is about right, the most satisfaction is with office development, and the least with retail development. There were no significant differences when the PSA boundaries were considered.

Figure III-1: Opinion on the Amount of Types of Development in James City County



There were differences in the findings compared with 2014, however. While in 2014, 41.6 percent of respondents said the level of residential development was too high, that percent dropped to 34.9 in 2019. Additionally, regarding industrial development, in 2014, 49 percent of respondents said the level was about right, while in 2019, well more than half (62.3 percent) said it was about right. The complete data can be found in Appendix F: 2014 comparison.

Opinion about development

Another set of questions asked about opinion on a number of statements pertaining to development issues. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement, on a scale ranging from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. Table III-1 below includes the full statement,

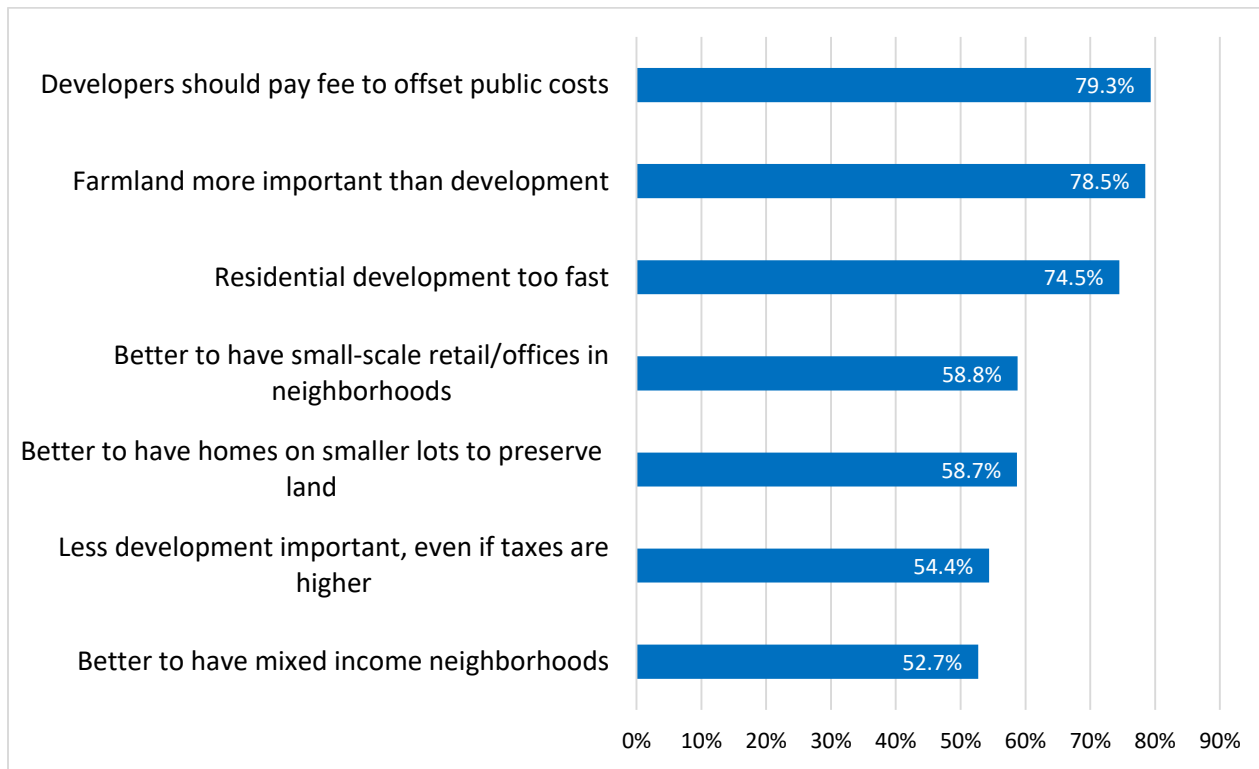
with the columns showing the percent of respondents who strongly or somewhat agreed and the percent who somewhat or strongly disagreed.

Table III-1: Opinion on Development Issues

	Percent strongly agree/somewhat agree	Percent somewhat disagree/strongly disagree
Developers who wish to build businesses or residences should always be required to pay a fee to the County to offset public costs even if it means increases in the price of their services and new housing.	79.3%	20.7%
It is more important to preserve farmland in the County than it is to have more development.	78.5%	21.5%
Residential development of the land in James City County is happening too quickly.	74.5%	25.5%
It is better to have neighborhoods in which there is a mix of housing options and small-scale retail and office development.	58.8%	41.2%
It is better to have more homes on smaller lots and set aside areas for open space in order to permanently preserve land and maintain the character of the community.	58.7%	41.3%
It is important to have less development in the County even if it means you may pay more in taxes.	54.4%	45.6%
It is better to have neighborhoods in which there is a mix of low-middle-, and high-income housing options.	52.7%	47.3%

Figure III-2 below illustrates these data in a summary way, with the statements ranked by percent of respondents who strongly agreed or somewhat agreed.

Figure III-2: Opinion on Development Issues: Percent Strongly Agreeing/Somewhat Agreeing



The strongest level of agreement, at 79 percent, pertained to the statement that developers should pay a fee to the County to offset public costs. About the same number (78.5 percent) think it is more important to preserve farmland than to have more development. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of residents agree that residential development in James City County is happening too quickly. But when asked whether it is important to have less development, even if it means paying more in taxes, the level of agreement drops to 54 percent (still more than half of respondents).

Asked about whether it is better to have more homes on smaller lots in order to preserve land, nearly 59 percent agreed, about the same percent who agreed that it was better to have small-scale retail and offices in neighborhoods. Slightly more than half, 53 percent, agreed that it is better to have neighborhoods with a mix of low, middle, and high-income housing options.

There were no significant differences of opinion on these statements when the PSA boundaries were considered.

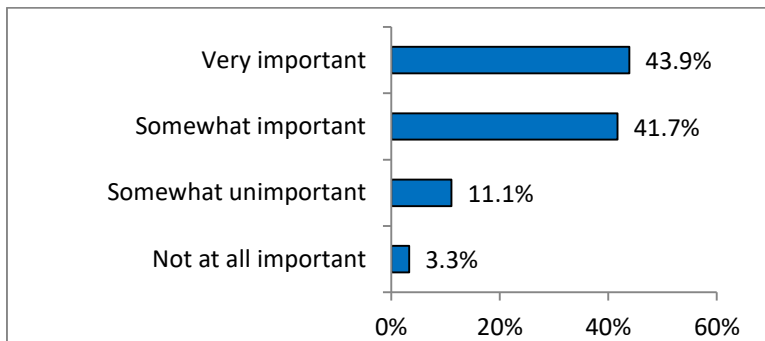
Comparing the results on this set of questions from 2014, there were differences. In 2014, 72.6 percent of respondents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that residential development of the land was happening too quickly. In 2019, that percent was 74.4, slightly higher. In 2014, the percent strongly agreeing that it is more important to preserve farmland in the county was 45.7 percent, compared to 37.9 percent in 2019. Considering the total level of agreement, however (those somewhat agreeing combined with those strongly agreeing), the percentages were almost the same: 77.6 percent in 2014, and 78.5 percent in 2019. On the question of development connected with taxation, in 2014, the percent agreeing

that it is important to have less development even if it means paying more in taxes, was 59.1 percent. That figure dropped to 54.4 percent in 2019. Opinion on whether it is better to have homes on smaller lots, with open space, opinion was quite split in both years. While in 2014, 29.7 percent strongly agreed and 25.9 percent somewhat agreed, in 2019, fewer (19 percent) strongly agreed, while more (39.7 percent) somewhat agreed. Comparing the agreement totals, in 2014, the total was 55.6 percent, while in 2019, it was 58.7 percent. There was some change between the years on opinion about whether it is better to have neighborhoods with a mix of low, middle, and high income housing options. In 2014, the total agreeing was 63 percent, while that percent dropped to 52.7 in 2019. Asked about consumer services mixed with housing, 74.9 percent agreed in 2014, and in 2019 that agreement level dropped to 58.8 percent. Finally, while in 2014, 70.3 percent of respondents agreed that developers should pay a fee to the county to offset costs, that figure increased to 79.3 percent in 2019.

Importance of proximity

Another question asked residents simply to state their opinion on how important it is to have places in the County where people can live, work, and play in close proximity. A plurality of respondents, 44 percent, said it is very important, and an additional 42 percent said it was somewhat important, a total of almost 86 percent seeming to favor this type of arrangement. Figure III-3 illustrates these findings.

Figure III-3: Importance on Proximity of Residence, Work, and Play



On this question, perhaps unsurprisingly, those respondents in the Primary Service Area were much more likely to say that proximity is important, and those outside it were more likely to say it is less important. For instance, while 46 percent of those inside the PSA said proximity is very important, only 30 percent of those outside the PSA said it was very important. That said, in both cases, a majority of respondents said it was at least somewhat important. A total of 74 percent of respondents outside the PSA said proximity is important, compared to 87 percent of those within.

There was a slight change on responses to this question from 2014. Respondents in 2014 were somewhat more likely to say they thought it was very important (48.7 percent) than in 2019 (43.9 percent). When the totals for very important and somewhat important are combined, however, the two years are identical, at 85.6 percent.

Open-end Question on Land Use

An open-ended question asked respondents, “Over the next twenty years, what are the most important land uses and activities that should occur in rural lands in James City County?”

As might be expected from a large-scale survey, the open-ended question on land use generated a large number of responses, which are included in full in Appendix E. Reading them over suggests that while there are a number of perspectives included, overall the residents noted that they want to keep the rural area rural, and to conserve the character of James City County. A number of respondents drew parallels with counties in the Northern Virginia area, expressing the desire to prevent growth and sprawl typical of those counties. Some comments focused on the need for affordable housing; others want to prevent more development of any kind.

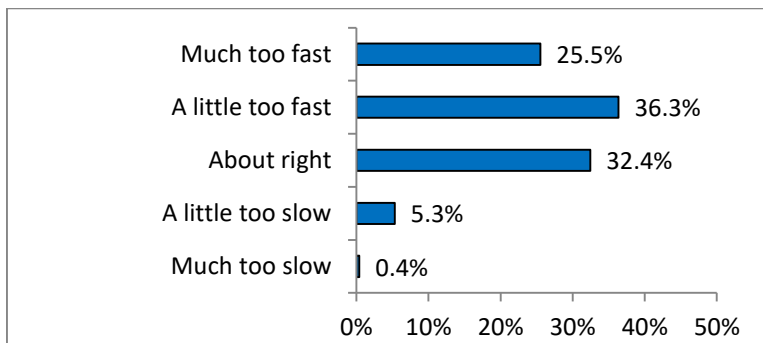
IV. Growth

Following the question on land use, the survey turned to questions about growth in the County.

Rate of growth

First, respondents were asked about their opinion about the rate of growth in James City County, assessing the growth rate on a scale ranging from “much too fast” to “much too slow.” Figure IV-1 shows that the majority of opinion leans toward the “too fast” side of the scale. More than a quarter of respondents said the rate was much too fast, and an additional third of the respondents said it was a little too fast. In sum, nearly 62 percent of respondents feel that the County is growing too fast. Close to a third, however (32.4 percent) said that the rate of growth is about right, and only small numbers (less than 6 percent total) said it was too slow. The PSA boundaries had no impact on opinion on this question.

Figure IV-1: Opinion about the Rate of Growth in James City County



Measures to manage growth

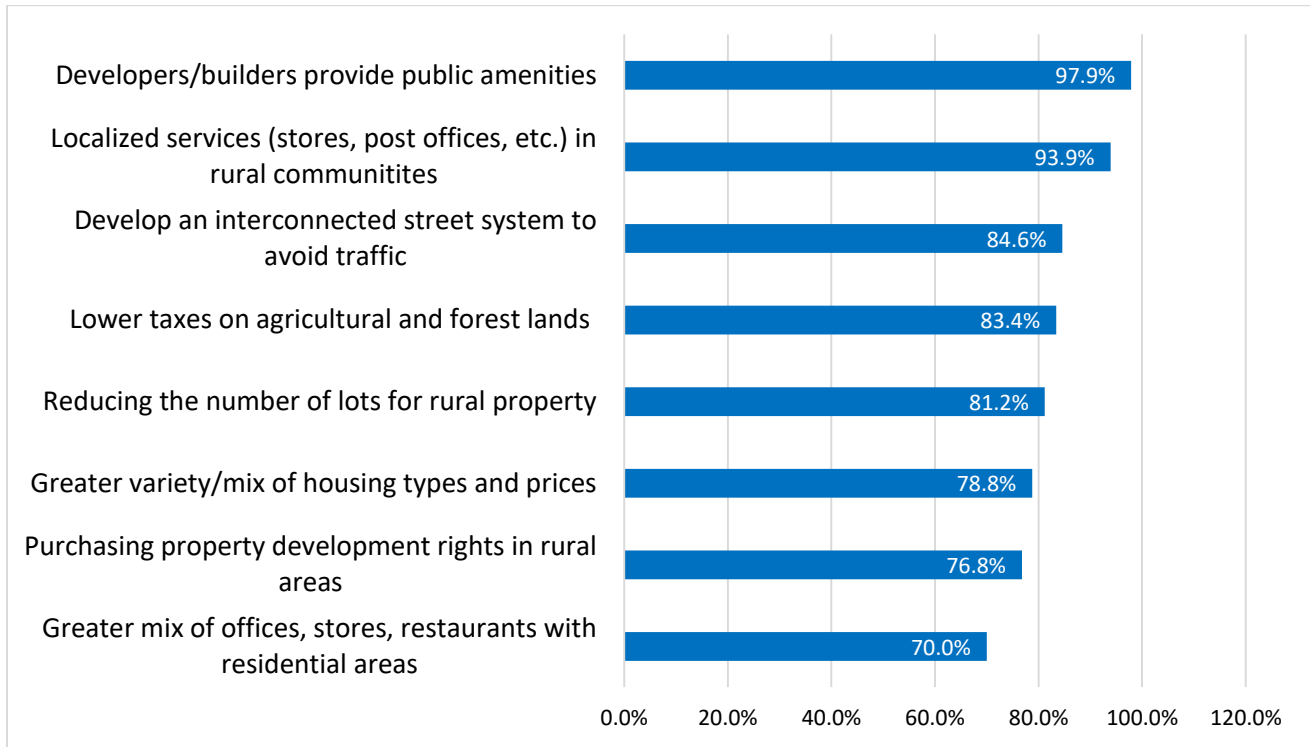
Another series of questions asked respondents to say whether they favor or oppose particular measures for controlling growth. Table IV-1 below provides the dichotomized frequencies for opinion about these measures, with responses divided into two groups: strongly favor or somewhat favor vs. somewhat oppose or strongly oppose.

The list is presented ranked by the percent favoring each measure. A total of 98 percent of respondents either strongly favored or somewhat favored having developers and builders provide public amenities in the County’s development area. Similarly, 94 percent of respondents either strongly favored or somewhat favored allowing localized rural services in traditionally rural communities. The most opposition (a total of 30 percent either somewhat opposing or strongly opposing) was to encouraging a greater mix of offices, stores, restaurants, etc. within residential areas in the development area. It is clear that these measures have relatively strong support among the respondents to the survey. Even though several of the rated measures make specific reference to rural areas and the development area, there were no significant differences in opinion according to PSA boundaries. The results are also illustrated in Figure IV-2.

Table IV-1: Opinion on Measures for Controlling Growth

	Percent Strongly favor/ Somewhat favor	Percent Somewhat oppose/ Strongly oppose
Having developers and builders provide public amenities such as sidewalks, bikeways, streetlights, parks and open spaces, and street trees in the County's development area	97.9%	2.1%
Allowing localized rural services (stores, post offices, etc.) in traditionally rural communities	93.9%	6.1%
The development of a more interconnected street system in the County's development area to provide more alternative routes for traffic	84.6%	15.4%
Taxing agricultural and forested land at a lower rate than market value in order to defer development of rural land	83.4%	16.6%
Reducing the number of lots a person can divide a large parcel of property into, for rural property	81.2%	18.8%
Encouraging a greater variety and mix of housing types and price levels in the County's development area	78.8%	21.2%
Purchasing property development rights in rural or sensitive areas, to keep the property from developing	76.8%	23.2%
Encouraging a greater mix of offices, stores, restaurants and other urban services with residential areas in the County's development area	70.0%	30.0%

Figure IV-2: Opinion on Measures for Controlling Growth: Percent Strongly Favoring or Somewhat Favoring



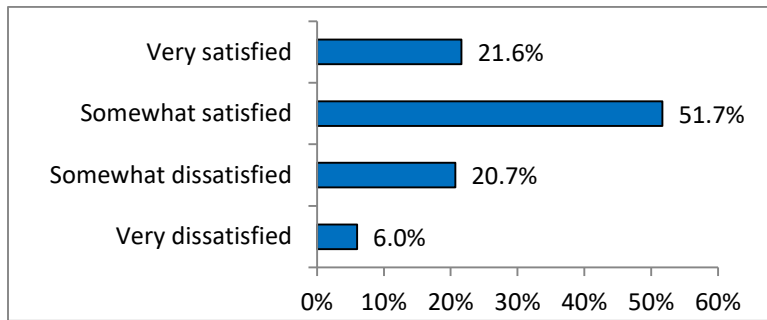
V. Communication and Information

A series of questions in the survey asked about communication and information.

Satisfaction with communication

Figure IV-1 below shows that more than half of our respondents said they were somewhat satisfied with the level of communication they receive from the County government regarding services and other community issues. Slightly more than a fifth of survey respondents said they were very satisfied, while another fifth said they were somewhat dissatisfied. Only 6 percent said they were very dissatisfied.

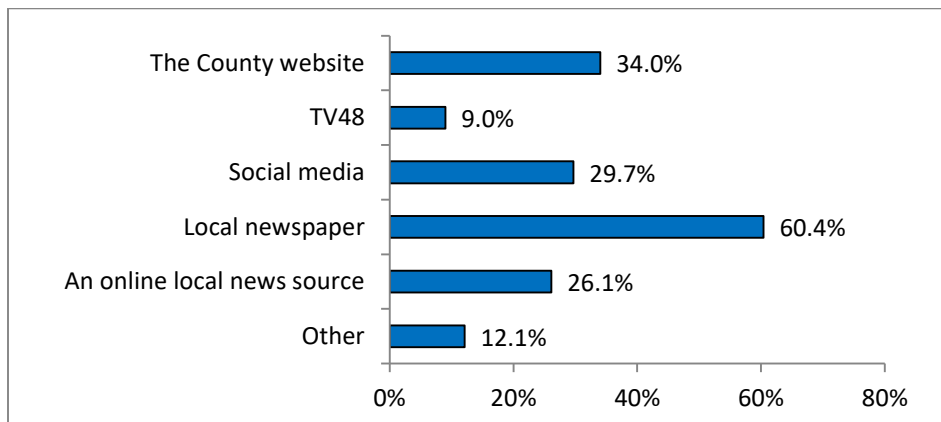
Figure V-1: Satisfaction with Communication from the County



Sources of Information

Asked about the source from which they receive County information, the majority (60 percent) said they depend upon the local newspaper, as Figure V-2 illustrates. Online sources play an important part, as is indicated by the fact that more than a third (34 percent) use the County website, 30 percent rely on social media, and 26 percent rely on an online local news source. These percentages sum to greater than 100 percent, because respondents could choose as many of these sources as they used. Twelve percent listed another source of information.

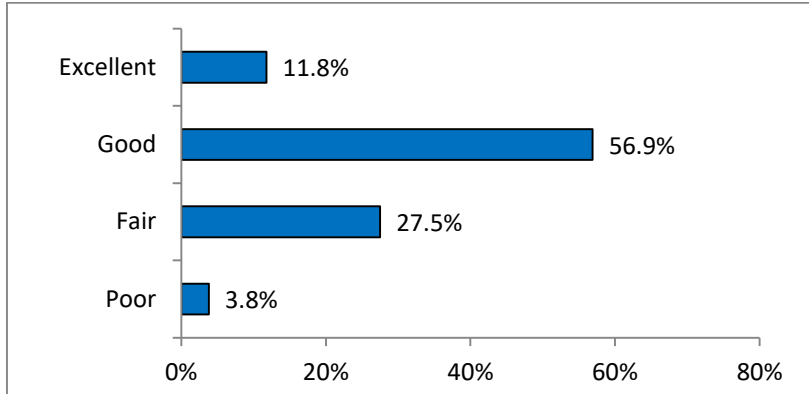
Figure V-2: Sources for County Information



Rating of website

Asked about the usability and quality of the County website, more than half (57 percent) find it good, while 12 percent find it excellent, and 27.5 percent rate it fair, as Figure V-3 below shows.

Figure V-3: Usability and Quality of County Website



VI. Conclusion

Overall opinion about James City County

The final section of the questionnaire asked respondents to share their own thoughts about James City County. The questionnaire provided a space for respondents to note first, what they liked best about living in the County and then what they would most like to see change in the future.

As might be expected these two questions generated a large response. The responses have not been formally categorized, but some themes do emerge from reading them. All the responses are attached in Appendix E: Open-ended Responses. These comments, considered in conjunction with the statistical analyses provided earlier in the report, provide a full view of resident opinion about direction for James City County.

What respondents like best

Reviewing the answers to the first question, it is clear that James City County has an unusual combination of characteristics that contribute to a life-style residents like very much. One phrase that came up often was “small town.” Many residents mentioned the small-town feel of the County, adding that the County is at the same time close to larger cities, so they in some sense have the best of both worlds.

Said one respondent: “The smaller town feel, wooded areas, sufficient shopping close-by in differing directions. Moderate taxation, generally affordable housing. Safe community with good police and fire resources.”

The rural nature of the county was mentioned by many respondents: its beauty, landscape, parks, and relative lack of development compared to other locations. Many statements about the rural character of James City County included a sense of wistfulness—it was better before all the current development—or a plea for caution and slowing down future development. Residents are afraid that the things they love about the County will disappear. One respondent said they liked the “rural quality, but that that is fast disappearing.” Said another, “Love the entire area. Sorry to see how much it’s grown.”

Respondents like the sense of community, the quiet, family-friendly feeling, that there is not too much traffic. They mentioned good government, low taxes, good public services, great schools, and the library. They like the historical aspect of living in James City County, and its proximity to Williamsburg. Another quote summarizes all of this well: “The historical aspects: history, tradition, colonial Williamsburg, The College of William and Mary. Educational opportunities. The people. The feeling that Williamsburg represents the best the USA has to offer. Esprit de corps. Musical events. Bruton Parish. Airport. Near the Rivers and Bay. Libraries. Railroad access. Athletic Events.”

What respondents want to change

On the whole the responses to the question of what the residents would like to see change present more variety than those responses reported above. Because they are so diverse and often include very specific requests for action, they are worth reading in total. The comments below represent some of the diversity of the response and should not be read as a summary.

That said, one theme does stand out: stop development and growth. Many comments pertained to there being too much residential development and too much retail development, when there are empty stores and malls. A number of respondents said essentially that they like how things are and don't want any change.

But it is clear that respondents differ on these issues. For instance, while some respondents oppose bringing in a big box store, other respondents said that was just what is needed. Some want all growth to stop, others said the County should bring in more jobs, small businesses, and light industry. Some residents favor more affordable housing options; some do not think that is important at all.

There were quite a few comments relating to roads: that some need to be widened, some need to be paved, that in general the roads do not support the amount of traffic in the area. But a number of responses asked for lower taxes. Some asked for cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions.

Summary of findings

The results of this survey as reported here in detail present some clear directions for James City County as it updates its Comprehensive Plan.

Opinion about County services

Regarding County services, considered overall, more than 93 percent of respondents were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. Asked about the value of service in relation to taxes paid, 71 percent rated it either good or excellent.

On the list of services the County provided, the respondents clearly believe that all of them are important. But some are more important than others. The top four in importance are roads and highways, the public schools, efforts to protect and improve the natural environment, and the Regional Library services. County residents are also very satisfied with most county services, though again the satisfaction level on some is higher than others: Highest levels of satisfaction are earned by the Regional Library services, the County's parks, the parks and recreation facilities, programs and overall services, and the Recreation centers. Lower levels of satisfaction are earned by housing opportunities affordable to the workforce, efforts to attract jobs and new businesses, efforts to protect and preserve the County's rural character, and the availability of bike lanes and sidewalks.

Concerning feelings of safety, 77 percent of respondents feel very safe in daylight hours, compared to 46 percent in the evening. Public school facilities are highly rated, with more than 85 percent rating them good or excellent.

Development and land use

Concerning residential, office, and industrial development, most respondents felt the amount of development was about right, but on retail development nearly 50 percent felt it was too high.

Asked about more detailed opinion on development issues, nearly three-quarters believe residential development is happening too quickly, and more than 78 percent agree that it is more important to preserve farmland than to have more development. Fewer agree that it is important to have less

development even if it means paying more taxes, but more than half either strongly or somewhat agree on that issue. Nearly 60 percent believe it is better to have more homes on smaller lots and set aside areas for open space, and more than 50 percent support having neighborhoods in which there is a mix of low, middle, and high income housing options. Slightly less than half agree that neighborhoods with a mix of housing and commercial development are preferable, and nearly 80 percent agree that developers should pay a fee to the County to offset costs.

On the importance of proximity of housing, work, and play places, nearly 86 percent said it was somewhat or very important.

Growth

On issues of growth, more than a quarter of respondents said that the rate of growth was much too fast. 36 percent said it was a little too fast, and 32 percent said it was about right.

On the whole respondents favor measures the county has considered or uses for managing growth. Almost all respondents favor having developers and builders provide public amenities, about 70 percent favor encouraging a mix of services and residential areas in the county's development area, 79 percent favor encouraging a greater variety of housing types, 84 percent favor a more interconnected street system, 81 percent favor reducing the number of lots allowed for dividing a large property, for rural property, 77 percent favoring purchasing property development rights, 83 percent favor taxing agricultural and forested land at a lower rate, and 94 percent favor allowing localized rural services like stores and post offices, in traditionally rural communities.

Communication and information

Nearly three quarters of respondents are very or somewhat satisfied with communication from the county. Most rely on the local newspaper, but many also rely on the county website, social media, and other online sources. The website is rated as good or excellent by 68.7 percent of respondents.

Conclusion

The Center for Survey Research presents these findings with the belief that the voices of the more than one thousand residents who completed the questionnaire are well represented here. The residents have expressed clear opinion about complex issues that face County leaders as they move into the future, providing relevant and useful information as the County updates its comprehensive plan.