



City of Alexandria

City Council Chambers at
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Resource Center
4850 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22311

Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2018

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the 2018 Alexandria Resident Survey Results.

ISSUE: Results of the 2018 Alexandria Resident Survey.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive the results of the 2018 Alexandria Resident Survey.

BACKGROUND: The City conducted a resident survey in January and February 2018, to collect data on residents' satisfaction with City services. The City has conducted similar resident surveys in 2017, 2016, and infrequently prior to that. The survey, developed in conjunction with the National Research Center (NRC) and the International City and County Managers' Association (ICMA), included standardized questions to allow comparison to national benchmarks and questions specific to Alexandria needs. Results will be used to inform decisions, track progress on the City's Strategic Plan, and provide data for performance reports.

The survey was distributed by mail to a random, representative sample of 3,000 Alexandria households; of that sample, 695 returned surveys, equaling a 24% response rate. This is considered a favorable response rate. Recipients received three reminders and the survey was available in Spanish. A random sample sought to ensure that the survey was completed by a diverse representative group of residents across Alexandria. To that end, if under or over reporting occurred, survey responses were weighted to reflect the City's demographics based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey should be considered statistically representative of the Alexandria population at large with citywide questions having a 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of +/- 4%.

DISCUSSION: Alexandria continues to be a place where residents want to live. Most residents (94%) would recommend living in Alexandria to others, and 92% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live.

Alexandria was ranked higher compared to similar jurisdictions as a place to visit, it's overall image and reputation, as well as it's openness and acceptance towards people of diverse backgrounds. While similar to comparator jurisdictions, neighborliness (66%), sense of community (66%), and as a place to retire (53%) were all areas where there is opportunity for improvement.

As part of the survey, residents are asked what they perceive to be barriers to living in Alexandria. The largest perceived barriers that residents reported were age (13%), race (10%), and color (9%). The lowest perceived barriers were religion (3%), gender identity (4%), and sexual orientation (5%).

Overall, residents feel safe in their community, with 96% feeling safe in both their neighborhood and in the downtown/commercial area (i.e. Old Town). Public safety services also were rated highly. Most notably, was fire services, with 96% of residents indicating satisfaction. Additionally, compared to similar jurisdictions, Alexandria ranked higher in residents not observing code violations (73%) and the availability of affordable mental health care (65%). An area for improvement was emergency preparedness and services (64%), residents having the flu shots (59%), residents with three days of emergency supplies (49%), and residents who have discussed an emergency plan with their household (39%).

At the request of the Police Department, the survey included questions about contact with police officers and on community policing, the results were all positive. About 31% of all residents indicated having contact with the police in the last 12 months. Of those who had recent contact with a police officer, 84% rated that experience as good or excellent. For community policing, over 84% of residents rated the Police Department's collaboration, responsiveness, and relationships with the community positively. In surveys of this type, this 84% positive rating is considered a very high percentage score.

Environment and transportation realized generally positive results with some areas for improvement. The highest ranked items were resident who recycle at home (86%), satisfaction with garage collection (83%), and satisfaction with street signs (83%). Satisfaction with snow removal (71%) saw a statistically significant increase from 2017 (56%; statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ level). This has been an area of improvement since the first survey in 2016. Resident satisfaction below 50% in this area included street repairs (42%), traffic flow on major streets (40%), and ease of public parking (39%). Of note, these ratings are similar to comparator jurisdictions. Cable television also scored low with only a 37% satisfaction rate.

Additionally, multi-modal transportation was rated above our comparators. Specifically, bus or transit services (79%), ease of walking (79%), travel by bike (68%), and travel by public transportation (64%).

The City's economy and affordability had mixed results, with the economy receiving some of the highest rankings in the survey, and affordability receiving some of the lowest. The highest rated items were residents purchasing products in Alexandria (98%) and dining opportunities (87%). Many aspects of Alexandria were ranked higher than comparison communities including, shopping opportunities (82%) and the vibrancy of our downtown (80%). Additionally, an area of improvement has been resident's perception that the economy will have an overall positive impact on their income in the next six months at 40%. This is a statistically significant increase from 2017 (31%; statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ level). While the economy is strong, there are several opportunities for improvement with regards to employment and affordability. Residents working in Alexandria (30%), the availability of affordable housing satisfaction (24%), and cost of living satisfaction (23%) were all ranked lower than comparator jurisdictions.

For arts, education, and recreation historic character reflected in the built environment, exhibits, and events (91%), public library services (88%), and city parks (87%) were rated high for resident satisfaction, in line with

comparator communities. Questions with satisfaction below 50% included the availability of affordable quality child care or pre-school (45%), residents using online public library services in the last year (39%), and residents participating in a recreation program or class in the last year (28%).

For City Government and civic engagement resident satisfaction with voter registration (90%), the elections and voting process (88%), and opportunities to volunteer (83%) were all rated high. While similar to comparator jurisdictions, less than 20% of residents contacted their elected officials, watched (online or on television) a local public meeting, or attended a local public meeting.

The City also included question's regarding resident contact with City employees other than law enforcement. About 42% of residents indicated having contact with a City employee in the past 12 months. Of those who had recent contact with a City employee, 85% had a positive overall impression of the employee. Additionally, 88% indicated that the employee was knowledgeable, 87% indicated they were courteous, and 84% indicated the employee was courteous.

The results of this Resident Survey will be posted on the City's website along with more detailed technical appendices.

This is the third annual resident survey. Except for the areas noted, responses were largely similar to last year; which was also the case for the 2016 and 2017 surveys. For this reason, unless Council directs otherwise, City staff are planning to change the frequency of the resident survey from an annual to a bi-annual basis.

FISCAL IMPACT: The survey has been completed and there is no further direct cost. Additional cost associated with any actions taken as a result of survey data are not immediately evident.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Community Livability Report
2. Technical Appendices
3. PowerPoint Presentation

STAFF:

Laura Triggs, Deputy City Manager
Greg Useem, Chief Performance Officer
Benjamin Walworth, Performance Analyst Apprentice