



RESIDENTS' SURVEY: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

The VCU Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory (SERL) conducted a Residents' Survey as part of the update of the Henrico County Comprehensive Plan. The SERL prepared a summary and analysis of the survey responses in July 2022.

This memorandum, prepared by Clarion Associates and independent from SERL's analysis, provides a summary of the themes found in the open-ended responses from the survey. All responses can be found in Appendix D of the SERL Report located on the HenricoNext website:

<https://www.henriconext.us/resources-1>

HOW WERE KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED?

Upon reading the responses for each question, a word, phrase, or idea was noted if it was mentioned more than 3 times. Notes were then organized into 8 to 12 themes, and responses containing those specific words, phrases, or ideas were themed accordingly.

THEMES FROM OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following section summarizes key themes and takeaways for the open-ended comment responses to the Residents' Survey questions 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 22, and 33.

Q4: What do you value most about Henrico County? Please describe in your own words.

Takeaways:

- Most common response was proximity to Richmond and the convenience and proximity of amenities.
- There was a relatively positive response to the county government, how the county is managed, and the county services provided.
- The county's rural and small-town character are highly valued as well its history and culture.
- The quality of schools and education in the county is also one of the most highly valued aspects of the county.

Themes:

- **Governance & Management**
 - Governance/management/leadership
 - Utilities/sewer/waste removal
 - Public services/public works
- **Education**
 - Schools/library
- **Location & Proximity to Amenities**
 - Location/Richmond
 - Convenience/proximity
 - Amenities/shops/retail
- **Recreation & Parks**
 - Recreation/parks/green space
- **Infrastructure & Development**
 - Infrastructure/development
 - Growth/planning/maintenance

- **Transportation**
 - Traffic/roads/highway/sidewalk
- **Safety**
 - Safety/police/emergency services
- **History & Community Character**
 - History/character
 - Small-town/rural
- **Quality of Life & People**
 - Demographics/diversity
 - Peaceful/quiet/clean
 - Events/activities for community/families/friendly
 - People/community/neighborhood
- **Economic Development**
 - Taxes/fiscal management/real estate/affordable
 - Economic growth/opportunities/business
- **Environment**
 - Nature/conservation/landscape
- **Housing**
 - Affordability/quality

Q6: Why did you give that rating in Question 5? (How would you rate the overall quality of life today in Henrico County?)

Takeaways:

- Concern about growth and high-density development.
- The government is well run with good services.
- There is need for more bike and pedestrian infrastructure to increase walkability, and the existing infrastructure should be better maintained.

Contradictory responses:

- Schools are either great quality or need improvement.
- Not affordable to some, low cost of living for others.
- Quality of life is very different between the east and west sides of the county.
- Some more developed areas are happy with their access to amenities, while others have a lack of access to amenities, services, recreation, etc.

Themes:

- **Education**
- **Environment**
- **Transportation & Mobility**
- **Health & Safety**
- **Infrastructure & Development**
- **Community Character**
- **Amenities**
- **Governance & Management**
- **Equity**
- **Economy & Affordability**

Q8: Why did you give that rating in Question 7? (Over the past ten years has the quality of life in Henrico County gotten worse or gotten better?)

Takeaways:

- Almost half of the responses say that there is no change or that they have not lived in the county long enough to see one.
- Growth of population and development has led to overburdening of infrastructure.
- Growth disparity has increased between east and west ends of the county.
- Social and political shifts are increasing polarity.

Themes:

- **Safety** - increase in crime
- **Traffic/Congestion** - increased traffic and congestion
- **Growth** - too much sprawl; well managed; inadequate services and infrastructure
- **Development** - overdevelopment leads to overcrowding; development brings new amenities
- **Politics/Governance** - change in political climate; unhappy with leadership
- **Education** - school system has grown and improved; decreased quality; overcrowding
- **Amenities/Services** - new businesses, parks, and facilities; improved county programs and services
- **Housing** - more housing; still unaffordable
- **Bike/Ped/Transit** - bike and pedestrian infrastructure needs improvement; some increase in public transit

- **Infrastructure** - public infrastructure is not keeping up with growth; need better road maintenance
- **People/Equity** - shifts in social values; lack of equity throughout the county

Q9: What do you think is Henrico County's biggest challenge today? Please describe in your own words.

Takeaways:

- Managing growth while considering infrastructure and natural resources
- Supporting alternative transportation and reducing car dependency
- Access to quality education
- The economic, social, and physical disparities between eastern and western Henrico

Themes:

- **Education** - inequity; capacity; quality and controversial curriculum
- **Transportation & Traffic** - growth increasing traffic; bike and ped infrastructure, road maintenance
- **Economic Development** - business support; socioeconomic disparity; urbanization
- **Housing** - affordability; missing middle; density
- **Safety** - increasing crime; law enforcement
- **Governance & Administration** - taxation; leadership; planning, engagement

- **Growth & Development** – sprawl; infrastructure capacity; managing growth
- **Equity** – increasing diversity; access to services and opportunities; preserving history and culture
- **Quality of Life** – health; affordable; maintaining quality of life

20. Accessible (16)
21. Equality (15)
22. Healthy (15)
23. Jobs (15)
24. Roads (15)
25. Sustainable (14)

Q10: When you think about your ideal vision of Henrico County in 25 years, what words come to mind?

Top 25 words:

1. Safe (126)
2. Clean (70)
3. Safety (56)
4. Green (49)
5. Diverse (45)
6. Education (38)
7. Community (37)
8. Schools (34)
9. Affordable (31)
10. Growth (30)
11. Parks (29)
12. Inclusive (25)
13. Prosperous (24)
14. Diversity (23)
15. Opportunity (23)
16. Peaceful (20)
17. Progressive (19)
18. Educated (17)
19. Friendly (17)



Q22: "Other (Write in)" responses: When you travel around Henrico County, what are your top three transportation concerns?

Themes:

- Speed & Safety
- Road Conditions & Maintenance
- Traffic Lights & Signage
- Public & Alternative Transportation

Q33: "Other (Write in)" responses: How do you find out about County information?

Themes:

- TV
- Newspaper & Magazine
- Signage & Posters
- Radio
- Mail & Email
- Community Organizations
- Word of Mouth