



**interoffice**  
**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Mayor Allen Joines and Members of City Council  
**From:** Martha Wheelock, Assistant City Manager  
**Date:** February 26, 2009  
**Subject:** 2008 Citizen Satisfaction Survey

The third City of Winston-Salem Citizen Satisfaction Survey was conducted this past fall. Between October 10 and November 9, 2008, BLK Research and Consulting randomly called a sample population of 600 residents of the City. This statistically sound sample size with a reasonable margin of error of  $\pm 4\%$  is similar to the number of citizens called the past two years. The telephone survey sample was generated from both unlisted and listed landline telephone numbers; cell phone numbers were not included. The full report is available for your review and will be posted on the City's website.

Overall, the citizen satisfaction grade of B+ has been maintained for the third consecutive year, although the mean has increased every year as illustrated below. The mean is the average of all scores for the respective year. The survey included questions related to citizen satisfaction in the following areas: fire, police, water, sewer, sanitation, solid waste disposal facilities, utility billing services, parking decks, streets, WSTA, inspections, neighborhood services, recreation and parks, public assembly facilities, and fairgrounds. Other areas surveyed included satisfaction with contact with city staff, perceptions about their safety in the city, and awareness and use of citizen communication mechanisms. A summary of the current and prior years' grades is attached and will be used in the development of the Citizen Satisfaction Report Card.



## Citizen Satisfaction Survey Ratings

Focus Area	October 2006	September 2007	September 2008	Comments
<b>Public Safety</b>				
Fire	A-	A	A-	Consistently high performer.
Police	B	B+	B+	Quick response time is of utmost importance to the citizens.
Overall Safety		A	A+	Citizens feel safe throughout the City.
<b>Environmental Health</b>				
Water and Sewer	B+	B	B	Water flow/pressure, water quality, and city responsiveness questions included for the first time in 2008.
Sanitation	B+	A-	A-	More persons used curbside pickup this year than in previous years.
Solid Waste Disposal Facilities			A-	New focus area in 2008.
Utility Billing Services	B+	B+	B+	Included questions about bill payment website for 1 <sup>st</sup> time in 2008.
Stormwater			B	New focus area for 2008.
<b>Transportation</b>				
Parking Decks	B-	B-	B	Citizens using the decks more than 6 times annually have increased.
Streets	B	B-	B-	Streets nationally have lower survey grades because traffic and parking can be contentious issues.
WSTA	B	B	B+	Price, cleanliness, and overall satisfaction improved.
<b>Community &amp; Economic Development</b>				
Inspections	B+	B-	B+	Service rendered to businesses improved.
Neighborhood Services	--	B-	B-	Responsiveness to complaints is the key issue for citizens.
<b>Leisure Services</b>				
Recreation & Parks	B+	B+	B+	The number of limited users and various locations for special services makes broad-based conclusions challenging.
Public Assembly Facilities	B	B+	A-	Improved cleanliness rating is noted
Fairgrounds		B+	B+	Included traffic and parking questions for the 1 <sup>st</sup> time in 2008.
<b>Other</b>				
City Staff Services Contact	B	B	B+	New focus area in 2008.
Communication Mechanisms			B	Includes CityLink for the first time in 2008 with good ratings.
Overall Citizen Satisfaction	B+	B+	B+	No significant change noted.

Survey results were distributed to the department heads responsible for the nineteen focus areas. The department heads reviewed the data and committed to serve the citizens in a manner to address their responses on the survey. Open-ended questions on the survey were used to help identify areas of concern for the citizens. The department heads monitor satisfaction, among other areas of service, by means of their performance measures, which are kept current.

## **SURVEY ANALYSIS**

Telephone surveys are generally preferred because there is a greater response to telephone surveys than mail surveys. For example, multiple attempts are made for each randomly selected number, which provides an appropriate number of guaranteed participants to make statistically significant assumptions. Landlines also allow the city to accurately identify census tract (physical address) of the participant that may influence citizen responses. However, as more people move to cell phones as their primary source of communication, the sample population may become less representative of the city's population. People most likely to have a cell phone are often younger and may be less affluent (i.e., homeowner) and may not be captured in the survey sample. Additionally, telephone surveys are limited by the amount of time a citizen is willing to participate.

The current survey instrument has been refined each year, but still reflects satisfaction with core municipal services rather than interests identified by the citizen. Usefulness of responses for service areas in which there is limited participation (recreational activities, for example) is limited by fewer data points to evaluate. Finally, the existing survey was developed based on the city's population rather than by ward, which although it would require a larger sample overall, would provide better information on trends that may be different in different areas of the city.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although the information provided in this cycle of citizen survey has provided a base level of detail and trends for our citizen's satisfaction with the city's core service areas and staff responsiveness, industry best practice suggests that citizen engagement at the front end of the review process is valuable to developing a survey instrument that identifies their needs and concerns. Staff recommends developing a plan of enhanced citizen engagement as a part of a comprehensive environmental scan. As City Council considers the development of long-range strategic plans and considers a proposed bond referendum, a series of citizen meetings and community involvement designed to solicit that information can be integrated into a framework for obtaining data and future planning. Staff will incorporate citizen survey considerations as it brings forward a plan and timeline for this process.

Other recommendations include:

- 1) Although the response rate is lower, a mail survey may be used while the citizen participation process is refined. A random sampling would insure equitable distribution throughout the community as well as capture citizens with no landline phone who may not be represented at the time. The cost of doing a mailing would be less than a phone survey. By doing a random selection (preferably by ward), the number of users for some of the service areas might have greater respondents and be more equitably distributed within wards. The ability

to allow for more questions and more open-ended responses should also be utilized to obtain more detailed feedback.

- 2) In the future, mail surveys could be alternated with a phone survey. Developing an online survey and implementing use of citizen satisfaction cards for distribution in and by departments would also provide for a more ongoing review and monitoring of citizen satisfaction levels, and allow staff to be aware more proactively to areas of concerns on a regular basis.