

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2008 survey of Chesapeake residents was performed by Continental Research, a local full-service marketing research firm. Telephone interviews were conducted with 308 randomly-selected households from October 9th through November 6th. A scripted questionnaire was used to measure attitudes toward City services, programs, and characteristics.

Most Important Problem or Greatest Need Facing Chesapeake

The survey began by asking residents to name the single most important problem or greatest need facing the City of Chesapeake today. A wide variety answers were offered, ranging from property taxes being too high to a desire for more code enforcement. The top areas of concern were (see pgs. 13-14 for a complete list):

Table 1

MOST Important Problem or Greatest Need Facing Chesapeake Today:	Percent Who Mentioned
Property taxes are too high	13.3%
Issues with roads (maintenance/condition/need more/build faster)	13.0%
Traffic congestion/delays	12.0%
Too much growth/Need better planning for growth	8.1%
School crowding/Need to build more schools	6.5%
Bridges are old and need better maintenance	5.5%
Other school issues (safety/class sizes/need more funding)	4.2%
Other concerns (detailed in this report)	32.1%
Everything is fine	5.2%

Overall Rating of City Services

Each respondent was asked if, overall, he or she is Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, or Very Dissatisfied with the services provided by the City. By combining the Very Satisfied and Satisfied responses, we find that 88.3% of Chesapeake residents are satisfied with City services (see pg. 15).

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Importance Ratings

Next, residents were asked to rate the importance of 15 City services using a 1 to 5 numeric scale, where 1 means Not Important and 5 means Extremely Important (see pgs. 16-20). This metric was used by the City because it feeds into the Gap Analysis (see pgs. 7-8 and pgs. 32-36). The 15 City services are shown below in descending order based on the service that has the highest average importance rating.

Table 2

Importance of:	Avg. Rating*
Fire services	4.84
Police services	4.80
Maintaining City bridges	4.75
Maintaining City roads	4.66
Citizens having an opportunity to share their ideas/opinions before the City makes important decisions	4.56
Improving the traffic flow on City roadways	4.56
The quality of the drinking water	4.54
Trash collection	4.53
The public school system in Chesapeake	4.48
Human service programs for needy or disabled residents, the elderly, & people with substance abuse problems	4.21
Keeping residents informed about City services & activities	4.11
The rain water drainage from City streets	4.01
The Chesapeake public library system	3.99
The City's recycling services	3.91
The City's parks, recreation areas, & community centers	3.89

*Out of a possible 5.00, where 1 = Not Important and 5 = Extremely Important

Looking at the "Importance" table above, the ratings ranged from 3.89 to 4.84 on a five-point scale. Certain City services typically rise toward the top of the "Importance" chart. Those providing essential services (i.e., fire and police services) tend to be viewed as more important than items that may be seen as discretionary.

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Satisfaction Ratings for City Services

Respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with the same 15 City services on a scale where 1 means Not Satisfied and 5 means Extremely Satisfied (see pgs. 24-28). The average satisfaction ratings are displayed below in descending order.

Table 3

Satisfaction with:	Avg. Rating*
Fire services	4.52
Police services	4.21
The Chesapeake public library system	4.13
The trash collection	4.09
The public school system in Chesapeake	3.81
The City's parks, recreation areas, & community centers	3.61
The City's recycling services	3.51
The human service programs for needy or disabled residents, the elderly, & people with substance abuse problems	3.34
The rain water drainage from City streets	3.29
The quality of the drinking water	3.27
Citizens having the opportunity to share their ideas or opinions before the City makes important decisions	3.25
How the City keeps residents informed about City services & activities	3.22
Maintenance of City roads	2.75
Maintenance of City bridges	2.70
The traffic flow on City roadways	2.69

*Out of a possible 5.00, where 1 = Not Satisfied and 5 = Extremely Satisfied

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Gap Analysis

A special analysis was then performed to calculate the difference between the City's performance and citizens' expectations on the 15 City services. This difference is referred to as the "Gap." The customary calculation for a Gap Analysis involves subtracting the percentage of people who said a particular item was Extremely Important (those who rated the importance as a "5") from the percent who were Extremely Satisfied (those who gave a satisfaction rating of "5").

A positive "Gap" indicates that the City is exceeding citizens' expectations, a negative "Gap" occurs when performance does not meet expectations, and a result close to zero suggests equilibrium between expectations and performance. Naturally, very large negative "Gaps" indicate a need for further study and analysis.

Table 4 on the following page will present the results of the Gap Analysis. The "Gaps" are arranged in the order of importance as perceived by the citizens (i.e., Fire Services were thought to be the most important service). The number to the right is the actual "Gap" in performance associated with that service.

To demonstrate the "Gap" calculation, we can examine Fire Services. Here, 87.0% said it was Extremely Important (rated it as a 5), and 59.7% said they were Extremely Satisfied (rated it as a 5) with it (see pg. 33). By subtracting 87.0% (importance) from 59.7% (satisfaction), we find a "Gap" of -27.3. As you might imagine, "Gaps" can range from 0 to 100 (percentage points) and can be either positive or negative.

Because these are sequenced by importance, a large negative "Gap" in performance that occurs near the top of the Gap Analysis chart may be worthy of more attention than a similar negative "Gap" found lower in the table. When using the "5" scores (on a five-point scale), small "Gaps" (ranging from -25 to +25) are relatively common. Most communities tend to focus on the items that generate larger deviations. Of particular interest are the three largest negative "Gaps," those relating to: a) bridge maintenance b) road maintenance, and c) traffic flow.

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Gap Analysis (cont'd)

Table 4

City Service: (In order of importance based on % who said importance = "5")	"Gap" (Satis. - Imp.)
Fire services	-27.3
Police services	-39.9
Maintenance of City bridges	-75.9
The public school system in Chesapeake	-45.5
The quality of the drinking water	-57.1
Maintenance of City roads	-69.2
(Improving) traffic flow on City roadways	-66.3
Citizens having the opportunity to share their ideas or opinions before the City makes important decisions	-52.3
Trash collection	-18.5
Human service programs for needy or disabled residents, the elderly, & people with substance abuse problems	-39.9
Keeping residents informed about City services & activities	-29.2
The rain water drainage from City streets	-25.0
The City's recycling services	-10.1
The City's parks, recreation areas, & community centers	-15.2
The Chesapeake public library system	+ 6.8

Later in this report, the "Gaps" are presented in greater detail (see pgs. 32-34). Since a five-point, numeric scale was used, an alternate method of calculating the "Gaps" can also be used. In the alternate analysis, both the "5" and the "4" scores can be included in the calculation (as opposed to using only the "5" ratings) (see pgs. 35-36).

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The Budget

Next, Chesapeake residents were asked to name one thing they think the City should spend LESS on when preparing the next budget. While over half of the people surveyed (57.1%) were not able to recommend a specific cut, the remaining 42.9% mentioned a wide variety of ways the City could save money. The top nine responses are displayed in Table 5. A complete list of suggestions can be found on pgs. 38-39.

Table 5

What the City should spend LESS on: (Top 9 Responses)	Percent Who Mentioned
I don't know specifically what to cut to really help out	57.1%
High level administrators' salaries	3.6%
Cut back on spending for parks	3.6%
Cut back on welfare programs & payments	3.2%
Eliminate subsidies for developers	2.3%
Elected officials' compensation	1.9%
Entertainment & meal expenses for out-of-town travel & meetings	1.9%
Eliminate recycling	1.9%
Eliminate cars for City employees/off-duty use of cars by police	1.9%

When asked to name one thing the City should spend MORE on, almost everyone was able to come up with a suggestion. Spending more to improve the schools and spending more on road maintenance were mentioned most often (see pg. 40). Table 6 shows the 9 most popular answers.

Table 6

What the City should spend MORE on: (Top 9 Responses)	Percent Who Mentioned
Improve school quality/Add more technology/More teachers	17.5%
Road maintenance	16.9%
Maintaining both roads & bridges	6.2%
Build more schools	5.8%
Pay teachers more	5.5%
Widening roads	5.5%
Roads (in general)	5.5%
More police presence	3.9%
More help for the elderly & disabled	3.6%

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The Budget (cont'd)

To be more specific, residents were then asked if the City's next budget should allocate more, the same, or less money for certain City services. And, for those residents who thought the City should spend more money in an area, a follow-up question was later asked to see if they would still say "more" if that cost increased their property taxes (see pgs. 41-43). The results are summarized in the chart below.

Clearly, public safety is important to Chesapeake residents, with 45.1% saying the City should spend more even if the cost increased their property taxes. While residents were more divided over spending increases for traffic flow, City roads, bridge maintenance, and programs and activities for teenagers, a substantial percentage still would be willing to help pay for these increases. Areas where residents are more likely to think the City is spending the "right amount" include: the public library system, rain water drainage, and parks and recreation.

Budget Item:	<u>Spend MORE Even if Cost Increases My Prop. Taxes</u>	<u>Spend MORE But Not if the Cost Increases My Prop. Taxes</u>	<u>Spend the SAME Amount of Money</u>	<u>Spend LESS Money</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Traffic flow improvement	35.1%	31.5%	32.1%	1.3%	100%
City roads & road maintenance	32.1%	32.5%	34.1%	1.3%	100%
Bridge maintenance	39.3%	31.5%	29.2%	0.0%	100%
Rain water drainage issues	13.3%	10.7%	59.4%	16.6%	100%
Public safety	45.1%	21.1%	32.5%	1.3%	100%
Parks & recreation	14.9%	10.7%	55.8%	18.5%	100%
Pgms. & activities for teenagers	31.5%	21.8%	39.6%	7.1%	100%
Chesapeake public library system	10.4%	7.8%	72.7%	9.1%	100%
Economic development	14.9%	22.7%	48.1%	14.3%	100%

NOTE: The percentages in this table total horizontally to 100%.

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An Expanded Recycling Program

Earlier, respondents were asked to rate the importance of and their satisfaction with the City's recycling services (see pg. 33). The importance of recycling was rated a "5" (Extremely Important) by 38.3% of the respondents, and the percentage who rated their satisfaction with the recycling services a "5" (Extremely Satisfied) was 28.2%. This yields a "Gap" of -10.1 percentage points, suggesting that the City is generally meeting citizen expectations. (As an aside, the alternate calculation of the "Gap" is -16.0 if you combine the "4" and "5" responses - see pg. 35.)

The survey included a more detailed question about recycling (see pg. 44) where the following prelude was read:

"It has been suggested that Chesapeake expand the curbside recycling program so residents would have the larger 90-gallon wheeled container and they could recycle a wider variety of materials. Naturally, this would cost more."

Then, each respondent was asked:

"If an expanded recycling service with bi-weekly pickup cost each household \$7.75 per month, would you want the recycling program to be expanded, or not?"

Although 32.1% of the households surveyed said they would be willing to pay \$7.75 per month for the expanded service, two-thirds (67.9%) would not. Given the current economic conditions, many residents were hesitant to sign up for any "extras."

Demographics

A broad cross-section of residents, both new and longstanding, participated in this important study. All regions of the City were surveyed (see pg. 37 and pgs. 45-47):

Avg. (mean) number of years lived in Chesapeake	23.5 years
% residing in Chesapeake for fewer than five years	10.4%
% who have watched programs on Channel 48	44.2%
Avg. (mean) age	49.9 years old
% of respondents under age 50	51.3%
% who are Caucasian	66.2%
% who are African American	28.9%
% who are male	47.1%
% who are female	52.9%
Avg. (mean) yearly household income	\$68,626
Median yearly household income	\$65,535

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Conclusion

The 2008 City of Chesapeake Survey of Citizens was expanded to measure a variety of new items (for which no tracking data are available). The intent was to learn what is currently important to residents and solicit suggestions for the upcoming budget cycle, while continuing to monitor “customer satisfaction.” If this measurement system is used in future years, the addition of tracking data will make it even more useful.

A few tracking items are now available. A global “quality of life” measure has been used since 1999, employing a 4-point bipolar word scale. It produced favorable results consistent with prior years, as satisfaction with the overall quality of life in Chesapeake remains near 90%. Also, the percentage who have watched WCTV-48, the City’s cable TV channel (now available on-line through video on demand), is 44.2%, an increase of over 7% since 2007.

The questions about Importance and Satisfaction with respect to City services have been tracked only since 2007. As such, we see no linear change or areas of concern. It is clear that residents continue to enjoy a very high quality of life in Chesapeake, even during challenging economic times. They report high levels of satisfaction with most City services and characteristics, perhaps with a little less enthusiasm than we saw in 2007, but high nonetheless.

Of course, there were a few areas that rated lower than the others. While traffic flow, roads, and bridges remain near the bottom of the list, these are issues that cannot be solved quickly. Both issues related to growth and an aging infrastructure are tremendous challenges. Our research throughout the region suggests that traffic flow concerns will continue to be a problem for years to come.

More important than individual ratings is the “Gap” between residents’ priorities and the City’s performance. The “Gaps” ranged from +6.8 (where the Chesapeake library system continues to exceed expectations) to -75.9 (where expectations greatly exceed performance with respect to the maintenance of City bridges). By evaluating these “Gaps” and looking at residents’ “willingness to pay” for certain improvements, City leaders can better focus on issues that matter to the public.