



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 8, 2008

**To:** James City County Board of Supervisors  
Planning Commission  
Community Participation Team

**From:** William C. Porter, Jr., Development Manager

**Subject:** Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

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In advance of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, the Board of Supervisors directed that two citizen surveys be conducted in addition to public meetings. The purpose of the surveys were to add a quantitative instrument to complement the qualitative feedback received in early public input components of the update process. Staff contracted with Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research (VT) and the National Research Center (NRC) to accomplish this task. The NRC survey, a standardized mail survey developed by the International City Management Association (ICMA), compared James City County to other municipalities nationally who have participated in the survey. The VT survey, a customized phone survey, used the same questions as the 2001 VT survey for the 2003 Comprehensive Plan update in order to measure changes in public opinion.

One the most noticeable results of the surveys were the excellent quality of life enjoyed by James City County (JCC) residents. In fact, responses of JCC's overall image and reputation rank above national benchmarks:

- 91 percent of respondents rated JCC as a good or excellent place to live;
- 85 percent of respondents rated the quality of life in JCC is good or excellent; and
- 85 percent of respondents would recommend JCC as a place to live.

Residents have also indicated that the County does well delivering services. Over 77 percent of respondents rated overall services provided by JCC as good or excellent. Respondents of the survey gave particularly high marks on:

- Public Safety, Fire, and EMS services;
- Cleanliness of the County;
- Quality of recreation facilities;
- Cultural and educational opportunities;
- Schools and library services; and
- Knowledge, courtesy and responsiveness of JCC employees.

The survey also pointed out areas where the County is viewed as weak either by decreased ratings since 2001 or in comparison to national averages. In particular, the study indicated that residents feel the County is lagging on economic development and housing opportunities, although the public feels there are an abundance of shopping centers. Furthermore, residents have a less than favorable opinion on:

- Ease of walking in the County;
- Amount of open space;
- Availability of transit;
- Amount of affordable housing;
- Land use, planning and zoning;
- Yard waste pickup;
- Garbage collection;
- Affordable child care; and
- Services for low-income residents.

Citizen opinions have strengthened on a variety of questions since 2001, meaning more people are becoming concerned on certain issues. These include the availability of water resources, speed of growth (residential and commercial) and preservation of farmland. The strengthening opinions on these issues indicate a call for action on growth management, establishing ways to offset the public costs of development, and finding an adequate water supply.

Finally, though residents feel that the County does a good job delivering services, the statistics suggest that residents continue to urge fiscal responsibility. Support for raising taxes has decreased since 2001.

The surveys are one of many tools the County will use during the Comprehensive Plan update to analyze public opinion and determine Comprehensive Plan policy. The themes of the survey are consistent with the comments heard at Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors meetings, and in other James City County reports. In light of this, the County has already begun working on strategies to address some of these concerns and will continue to do so through the Comprehensive Plan update process.

Attached are the results of the two surveys. The NRC deliverable is a full analysis of the data while VT's report is an executive summary. Staff has prepared additional material so readers can easily compare the results of the 2007 survey to the 2001 survey. These two surveys represent the first significant piece of public input for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

There will be a press conference on February 12, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. in Building F of the JCC Government Center. At this time, representatives from NRC and VT will be presenting their findings, discussing how results can be used, and answering questions.

WCP/nb  
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cc: Press