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News Release

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Durham Satisfaction Survey Shows Residents Pleased with Employee Service During COVID-19 Pandemic

DURHAM, N.C. – In a year like no other, City of Durham employees rose to the occasion to continue to serve the Bull City, and residents took notice giving high marks for customer service during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The results from the [2020 Resident Satisfaction Survey](#) show significant improvements in the areas of general customer service satisfaction, making Durham 33 percentage points above the average for large cities in customer service from City employees. Areas with the most improvement included ease in contacting City government, which was 6.2 percentage points higher at 71.9% compared to last year's 65.7%. Effectiveness of communication with the public also saw a 6 percentage point increase to 58.7% compared to last year's 53%. Finally, other customer service areas that also had improvements in satisfaction included accuracy of information given, resolution of issues/concerns, ease of locating information on the City website, and quality of customer service received from City employees.

According to Interim City Manager Wanda Page, this annual survey continues to provide an ongoing opportunity to touch base with city residents in a statistically sound way to find out what they think of the community and the services provided by their city government. "The year 2020 was a tough year, not only for our community, but our nation. So much changed in how we live our lives, go to work, teach our children, and more," Page said. "I saw firsthand how our employees stepped up and continued to serve this community during a time when public servants were needed the most. To see that our residents made note of these efforts is wonderful, and does so much for employee morale as many continue to put themselves on the front lines in service to our city."

Another theme that emerged from the survey indicated that, compared to other large cities with populations of 150,000 to 400,000, Durham is also setting the standard for overall quality of City-provided services ranking 21 percentage points above the average. In addition, 83% of residents felt that Durham was a good-to-excellent place to live, and 82% of residents felt that Durham was a good-to-excellent place to work. Based on the survey, residents ranked their preferences for overall community-wide priorities for improvement over the next two years as being the quality of public schools, maintenance of city streets, and the quality of police protection.

City-provided services with the highest levels of satisfaction, which combines very satisfied and satisfied responses, include:

- solid waste collection services at 85%
- curbside recycling services at 82%
- courtesy of City employees at 80%
- fire and life safety programming at 77%
- response time for fire services at 76%
- appropriateness of City employees' response at 74%
- sewer services at 73%
- how easy City government was to contact at 72%
- condition of public art at 63%
- condition of trails and greenways at 63%

Various City services, some directly impacted by COVID-19, saw declines in satisfaction including yard waste collection services, maintenance of streets, pedestrian facilities, and the quality of downtown parking facilities.

In policing, as the City participates in a [study](#) to ensure that responses by law enforcement and other first responders align with the needs of the community, survey respondents identified the quality of police protection as an area for improvement over the next two years. According to Page, while this is an area the City is working on, she is encouraged that 89% of respondents say they still feel safe walking in their neighborhood during the day, and 59% at night.

New for this year, the survey asked residents to indicate how satisfied they were with how their government has responded to the pandemic; to rank areas where they wanted funds to be spent to address the pandemic; and questions regarding their mask usage.

- 69% were satisfied with how the City has responded to COVID-19
- Top five choices to allocate spending were:
 - housing and rental assistance at 65%
 - preventing the spread of COVID-19 at 58%
 - food at 55%
 - helping small businesses at 52%
 - ensuring access to medical health services at 51%
- 93% report wearing a mask when at public indoor gatherings; 87% wear a mask at their workplace; and 77% wear a mask at public outdoor gatherings.

According to Page, the overall results provide a picture of, not only resident satisfaction, but also how the City administration should view community-wide priorities, since this data is used by the City Council and City administration to help direct priorities from making day-to-day decisions to overall long-term planning and funding allocations.

The ETC Institute, which conducted the resident satisfaction survey in December 2020, used a randomly selected sample of 637 households whose demographics reflect the population inside the city limits. The survey has a 95% level of confidence with a margin of error of +/- 3.8%.

The 2020 City results, shared for the first time earlier today with the Durham City Council during their virtual annual budget retreat, is the eleventh City of Durham resident satisfaction survey distributed over the past 15 years, and the sixth combined survey with Durham County Government. The full results of the City's portion of the survey are now available on the City's [website](#). The results of the County's portion of the survey can be found on their [website](#).

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