
2010 DirectionFinder[®] Survey

Executive Summary Report

Overview and Methodology

During February of 2010, ETC Institute administered a community survey for the City of Wilmington. The purpose of the survey was to assess resident satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and to help set priorities for the community.

The survey was mailed to a random sample of 2,400 households in the City of Wilmington. Approximately seven days after the surveys were mailed, residents who received the survey were contacted by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone. Of the households that received a survey, 432 completed the survey by phone and 376 returned it by mail for a total of 808 completed surveys (34% response rate). The results for the random sample of 808 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 3.5%. There were no statistically significant differences in the results of the survey based on the method of administration (phone vs. mail).

This summary report contains:

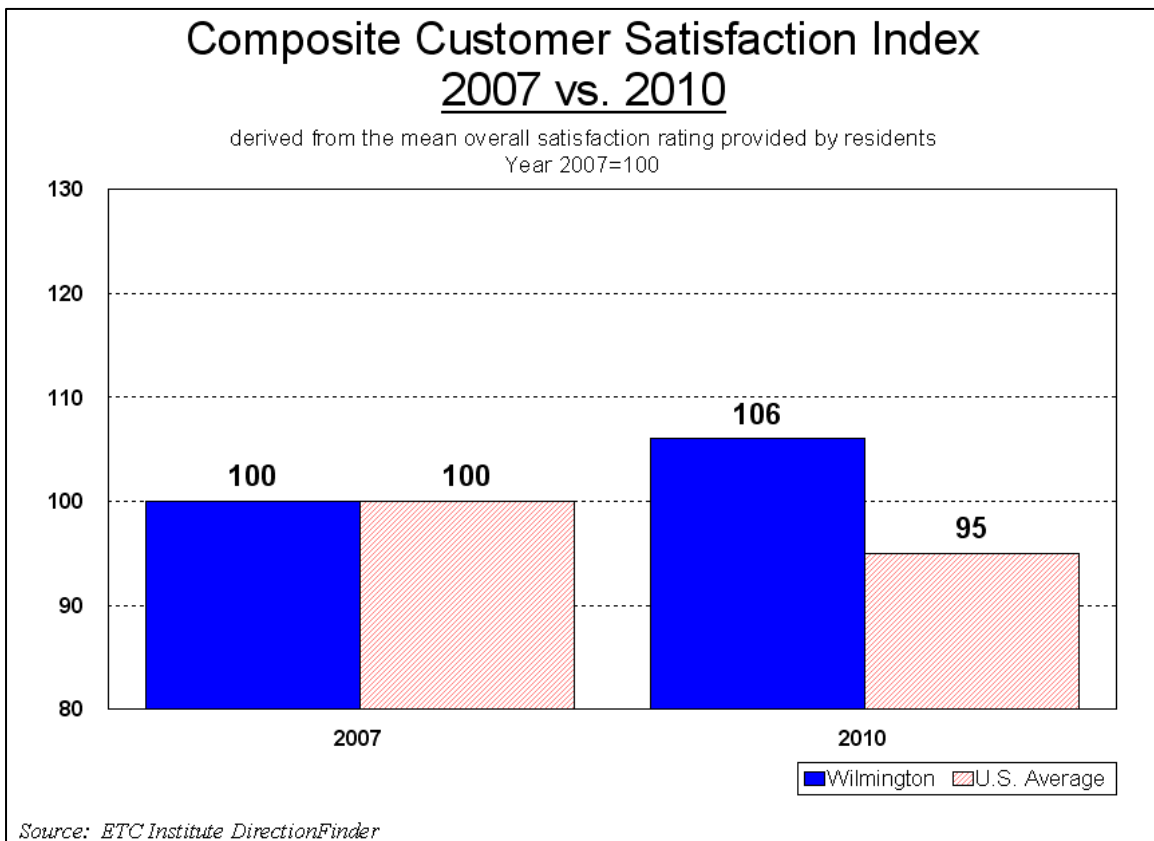
- a summary of the methodology for administering the survey and major findings
- charts showing the overall results for most questions on the survey
- GIS maps that show the results of selected questions on the survey
- importance-satisfaction analysis
- a copy of the survey instrument

Interpretation of “Don’t Know” Responses. The percentage of persons who provide “don’t know” responses is important because it often reflects the level of utilization of city services. For graphing purposes, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded to facilitate valid comparisons with data from previous years. The percentage of “don’t know” responses for each question is provided in the Tabular Data Section of this report. When the “don’t know” responses have been excluded, the text of this report will indicate that the responses have been excluded with the phrase “*who had an opinion.*”

Trends

Composite Satisfaction Index. The Composite Satisfaction Index for the City of Wilmington increased significantly from 100 in 2007 to 106 in 2010. The Composite Satisfaction Index is derived from the mean rating given for all major categories of city services that are assessed on the survey. The index is calculated by dividing the mean rating for the current year by the mean rating for the base-year (year 2007) and then multiplying the result by 100.

The chart below shows how the Composite Satisfaction Index for the City of Wilmington and for the U.S. average have changed since 2007. While the results for Wilmington improved, the U.S. average declined by 5 points.



The results of the City of Wilmington improved in 50 of the 82 areas that were assessed in both 2007 and 2010. Some of the notable improvements included: the management of traffic flow on City streets (+11%), the enforcement of City codes and ordinances (+9%), the management of stormwater runoff (+5) and the quality of parks and recreation programs/facilities (+5%). The ratings decreased in 23 areas, but only 6 of the decreases were statistically significant. The most significant decreases included the availability of jobs (-12%) and drinking water services (-11%). The ratings were unchanged in 9 areas.

Findings

- **Overall Satisfaction with City Services.** The highest levels of satisfaction with City services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were the quality of fire services (87%), the quality of trash, yard, recycling and yard waste collection services (74%), the quality of City parks and recreation programs and facilities (70%) and the quality of police services (67%). Residents were generally less satisfied with the management of traffic flow on City streets (30%), the maintenance of City streets and sidewalks (33%) and the management of stormwater runoff by the City (33%).
- **General Perceptions of the City.** There were significant increases in the percentage of residents who were satisfied with how well the City is planning growth (+9%) and with the appearance of the City (+5%). There was a significant decrease in satisfaction with the availability of job opportunities in the City (-12%).
- **Quality of Life in the City.** Sixty-five percent (65%) of residents, *who had an opinion*, were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the quality of life in the City, 25% were neutral and 10% were “dissatisfied.” This was a significant increase from the 2007 survey results (+7%).
- **Public Safety.** Residents were generally satisfied with the quality of public safety services provided by the City. The public safety services with the highest levels of satisfaction, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: local fire protection services (83%), how quickly fire personnel respond to emergencies (83%), and fire prevention and education programs (64%). Residents were least satisfied with the frequency that police patrol officers patrol their neighborhood (38%).
 - **Perceptions of Safety.** Based upon the combined percentage of residents who felt “very safe” or “safe,” those residents *who had an opinion* felt most safe in their neighborhood during the day (85%), in downtown Wilmington during the day (84%) and in their neighborhood at night (62%). More than half (55%) of residents felt most “unsafe” in Downtown Wilmington at night. The only safety issue that showed a significant change from 2007 was the feeling of safety in City parks (+4%).
 - **Trends in Satisfaction with Public Safety Services.** The public safety services that showed significant increases from the 2007 survey were the City’s efforts to prevent crime (+5%), how quickly police responded to emergencies (+4%) and the enforcement of traffic laws (+4%). There were no significant decreases in satisfaction for any of the public safety services assessed on the survey.

- **Parks and Recreation.** The parks and recreation services with the highest levels of satisfaction, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: the maintenance and appearance of City parks (74%), the number of City parks (61%), the quality of outdoor athletic fields (54%) and the City golf course (53%). Residents were least satisfied with biking trails in the City (33%).
 - **Parks and Recreation Trends.** The park and recreation services that showed significant increases from 2007 were satisfaction with the number of City parks (+4%), with City swimming pools (+4%) and with biking trails (+4%). There was a significant decrease in the percentage of residents who were satisfied with the City golf course (-4%).

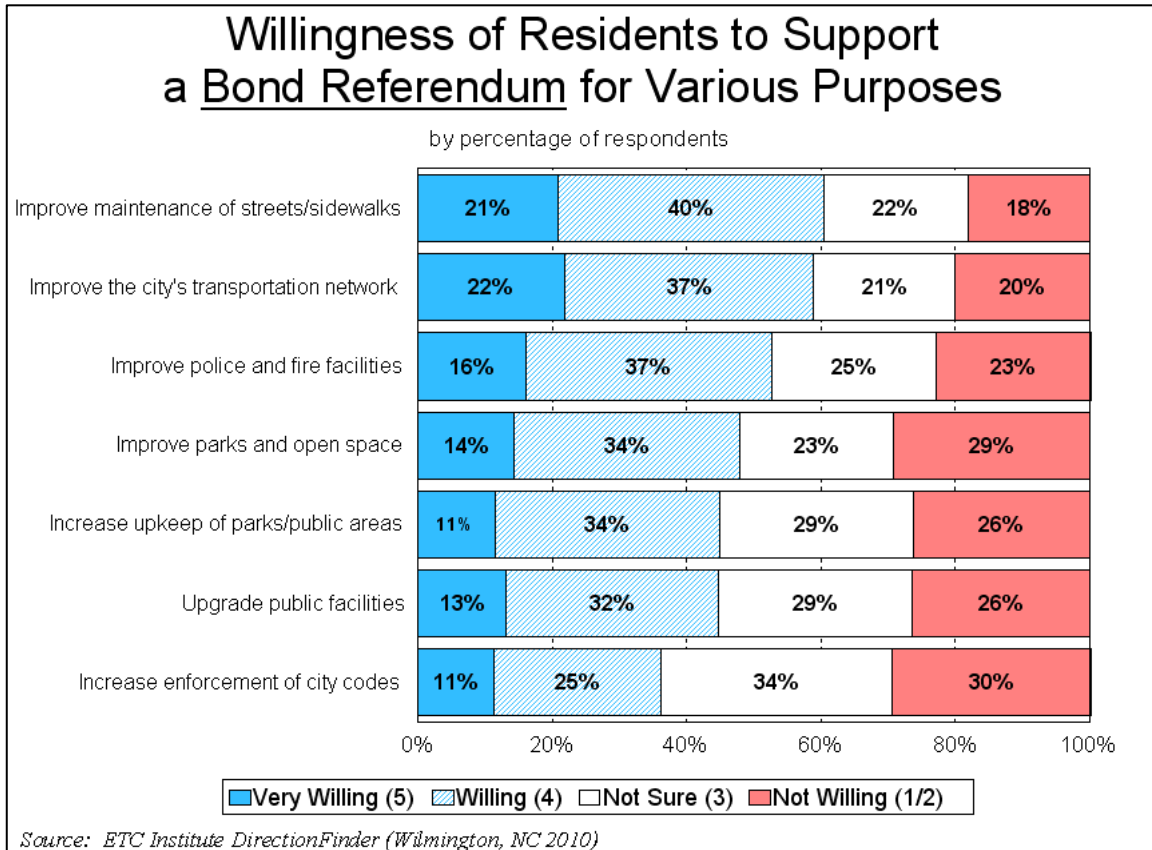
- **City Communication.** The City communication services with the highest levels of satisfaction, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: the quality of the City’s cable television channel (52%), the usefulness of information on the City’s web site (48%), and City efforts to keep residents informed (47%). When asked where residents received information about the City, the top three sources were: (1) the local television news, (2) the local newspaper and (3) the local radio.
 - **City Communication Trends.** The communication services that showed a significant increase in satisfaction from 2007 were the level of public involvement in local decision making (+5%) and the quality of the City’s cable television channel (+4%). There were no significant decreases in any of the communication services accessed on the survey.

- **City Maintenance.** The maintenance services with the highest levels of satisfaction, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: the condition of street signs and traffic signals (65%), the mowing and tree trimming along City streets and other public areas (55%), and the cleanliness of City streets and public areas (48%). Residents were least satisfied with how quickly street repairs are made (27%) and with the cleanliness of storm drains (36%).
 - **City Maintenance Trends.** The maintenance services that showed significant increases in satisfaction from 2007 were the timing of traffic signals (+8%), the cleanliness of City streets and public areas (+5%), the maintenance of major City streets (+5%) and the condition of street signs and traffic signals (+4%). There was a significant decrease in satisfaction with the maintenance of residential streets (-4%)

- **Code Enforcement.** The highest levels of satisfaction with the enforcement of City codes and ordinances, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were the enforcement of sign regulations (44%), City efforts to remove inoperable or abandoned vehicles (41%), and the enforcement of the exterior maintenance of commercial property (40%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of the exterior maintenance of residential property (34%).

- **Code Enforcement Trends.** The only code and ordinance service that showed a significant change from 2007 was satisfaction with the enforcement of the exterior maintenance of commercial property (+4%).
- **Customer Service.** The highest levels of satisfaction with City customer service, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: how easy employees within that department were to contact (75%), with the way residents were treated (73%), and the accuracy of the information and assistance residents were given (71%).
 - **Customer Service Trends.** The only customer service item that showed a significant change from 2007 was satisfaction with the way customers were treated by City employees (-4%).
- **City Utility/Public Services.** The highest levels of satisfaction with City utility and public services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: residential trash collection services (85%), yard waste collection services (78%), and curbside recycling services (78%). Residents were least satisfied with wastewater services (56%).
 - **City Utility/Public Services Trends.** The utility/public service that showed a significant increase in satisfaction from 2007 was with wastewater service (+4%). There was a significant decrease in satisfaction with drinking water services (-11%)
- **Ratings of the City as a Place to Raise Children.** There was a significant increase from 2007 in the percentage of residents who perceived Wilmington as an “excellent” or “good” place to raise children (+6%).
- **Ease of Travel by Car.** There was a significant increase from 2007 in the percentage of residents who were satisfied with the ease of car travel in the City (+14%).
- **Availability of Affordable Housing.** There was a significant increase in the percentage of residents who were satisfied with the availability of affordable housing in the City (+10%).
- **Environmental Leadership.** More than three-fourths (77%) of the residents surveyed felt it was important for the City of Wilmington to be viewed as a leader in preserving and protecting the environment; 13% felt it was somewhat important, 5% felt it was not important and 5% did not have an opinion.
- **Capital Improvement Priorities.** Residents were asked to rate how important they felt it was for the City to invest in various capital improvement priorities. The priorities that residents felt were the most important to invest in, based upon the combined percentage of “extremely important” and “very important” responses were: transportation network improvements (75%) and police/fire facility improvements (64%).

- Willingness to Support a Bond Referendum to Improve City Services.** A majority of those surveyed indicated that they would be willing to support a bond referendum to improve the maintenance of city streets and sidewalks (61%), to improve the city’s transportation network (59%), and to improve public safety services (53%). Fewer than one-fourth of those surveyed expressed opposition to a bond issue for these items as shown in the chart below.



- Priorities for Improvement.** Based on the Importance-Satisfaction analysis that is provided in Section 3 of this report, the City of Wilmington’s top three priorities for improvement over the next two years should be police services, maintenance of city streets/sidewalks, and the management of traffic flow. Investments in these three areas will have the most positive impact on overall satisfaction with city services because residents place a high priority on these services and their current expectations for these services are not being met.