

CHAPTER 4: Satisfaction with Services

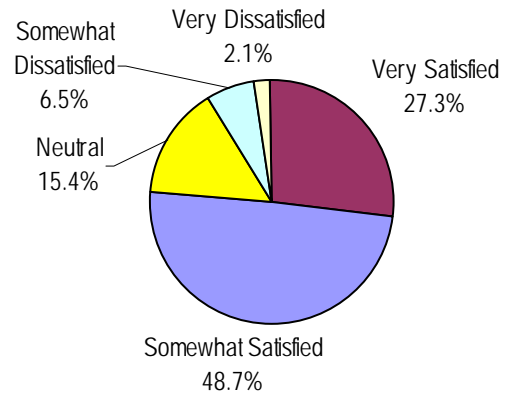
As part of an effort to better serve Spotsylvania County residents, the 2004 Citizen Survey included questions designed to measure citizens' satisfaction with government services. We asked respondents about their satisfaction with a variety of services the County provides, including public safety and 9-1-1 use, parks and recreation, public transportation, planning for growth and development, the Department of Social Services, litter and beautification efforts, library services, programs for the elderly, Public Access Channels, and water quality.³ In addition, citizens were asked about the County's efforts to keep citizens informed and provide opportunities for citizen input. Respondents were also asked how they felt about subsidies for public transportation.

Overall, Spotsylvania County citizens are very impressed with the general level of service provided by the County. Before asking about specific service items, survey respondents were asked how satisfied they are *in general* with the services the County provides. A total of 76 percent said they are satisfied with County services overall, with 27.3 percent saying they were very satisfied with the County's services, as Figure 4.1 indicates. Only 2.1 percent said they were very dissatisfied, 6.5 percent were somewhat dissatisfied, and 15.4 percent said they were neutral on this question.

Across voting districts, residents of Chancellor (84.3%) and Courtland (81.6%) were the most likely to be satisfied with the services provided by the County, whereas only 63.1 percent of those in Berkeley reported that they were somewhat or very satisfied. On average, 75 percent of those living in the other four voting districts, (Battlefield, Lee Hill, Livingston, and Salem) reported satisfaction with the level of service by the County.

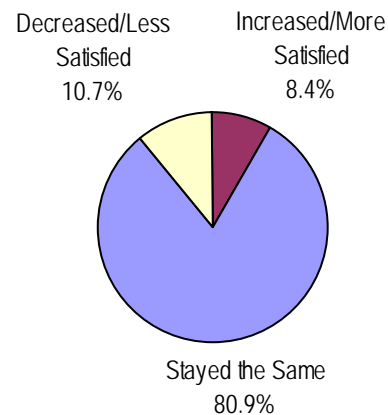
³ For purposes of this report, the percent very satisfied was combined with the percent somewhat satisfied, for an overall "satisfaction level." In the tables below, we also present the percent of respondents who are very satisfied, an indication of the intensity of satisfaction.

Figure 4.1: Overall Satisfaction with Services



Respondents were then asked to report whether their satisfaction with service provided by the County government had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past year. The majority of respondents say that their impression of County-provided services has not changed over the past year, with 80.9 percent reporting that their level of satisfaction remaining the same, whereas 8.4 percent thought the services had improved and 10.7 percent felt their satisfaction with the services provided by the County had declined. Figure 4.2 illustrates these findings.

Figure 4.2: Change in Satisfaction in the Past Year



Although there was no significant difference in current overall level of satisfaction of services across demographic subgroups, there were several interesting differences of opinion when respondents were asked if their impression of service had changed over the past twelve months. The longer

one has lived in Spotsylvania County, the more likely he or she was to express a change, either positive or negative, in their satisfaction level. Respondents who themselves had attended a Spotsylvania public school were also more likely to report a change in satisfaction, again either positive or negative, than were those who either have indirect or no experience with the public schools. Finally, those aged 18 to 25 and those of races other than Caucasian were significantly more likely than older and Caucasian residents, respectively, to feel that the services provided in the County had improved over the past twelve months.

Moving to the more specific items, it is interesting to note that for each of the service areas, the majority of citizens feel very or somewhat satisfied with the County’s performance of services, with two exceptions: growth and development planning, and public transportation. The satisfaction rate ranged from a low of 32.6 percent for rate of growth in Spotsylvania to a high of 95.3 percent for assistance that respondents received from the person who took their 9-1-1 call.

Public Safety

Emergency services provided by the County received some of the highest marks in terms of satisfaction. Residents in the County are exceedingly satisfied with the County’s fire protection (89.6%), emergency medical services (84.3%), and protection provided by Sheriff’s Department (83.0%). Table 4.1 details these findings.

Table 4.1: Satisfaction with Public Safety Items

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Job the County is doing in fire fighting in your area	89.6	61.1
Job the County is doing in providing emergency medical services in your area of the County	84.3	52.6
Overall performance of the Sheriff’s Department	83.0	48.0

There were some interesting differences by demographic subgroup for each of the emergency service items. Length of residence was significant for all three, but in different ways. Those who have

lived in Spotsylvania County less than a year were significantly less satisfied with fire protection, with two-thirds of these respondents reporting satisfaction compared to an average of 90 percent of those who have lived in the area at least one year. Satisfaction with emergency medical services was significantly higher among those who have lived in the County 11 to 20 years and satisfaction with the Sheriff’s Department was lowest among those who have lived in Spotsylvania less than one year or all of their life.

Those with children in the home and respondents aged 26 to 37 reported less satisfaction with the fire protection than those with no children in the home and those in other age groups, respectively. Residents living in something other than a single-family home, especially apartment dwellers, reported lower satisfaction ratings for the County’s emergency medical services. The Sheriff’s Department received higher marks from the most senior age group (age 65 and older) and those who have completed some graduate degree work.

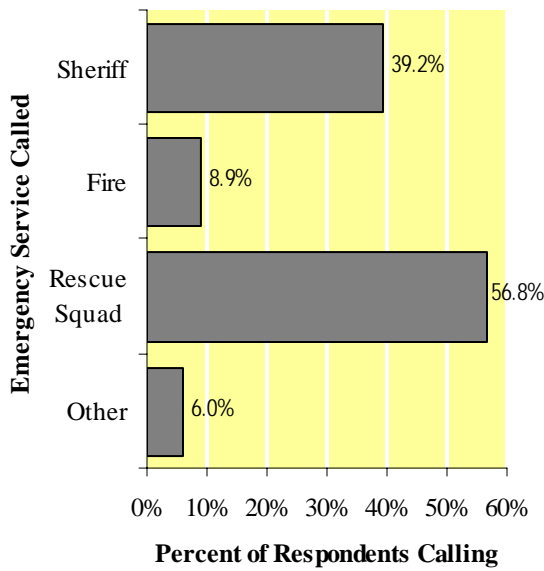
9-1-1 Emergency Use and Satisfaction

To better understand the use of and satisfaction with County emergency services, including 9-1-1 dispatch, the 2004 Spotsylvania Citizen Survey included a series of questions concerning use of 9-1-1 to contact emergency services and satisfaction with the service response resulting from the call.

Twenty-two percent of the respondents in our sample reported having called 9-1-1 in the past 12 months. Those that had called 9-1-1 in the past 12 months were then asked to report which department it was that they had called. Slightly more than half (56.8%) of the 9-1-1 calls were for emergency medical services (rescue squad or ambulance), approximately a third (39.2%) called for assistance from the Sheriff’s Department, and 8.9 percent of calls were for the Fire Department (see Figure 4.3).⁴ Calls to 9-1-1 in the past 12 months were most frequently made by females, those who are not currently married (divorced, widowed or have never married), African-Americans, and those with lower income levels.

⁴ Percentages add to more than 100 percent because some respondents called 9-1-1 multiple times and some callers requested more than one service.

Figure 4.3: 9-1-1 Emergency Service Requests



The vast majority (95.3%) of those who called 9-1-1 in the past 12 months said that they were satisfied with the assistance they received from the person who took the call, with 81.8 percent indicating that they were very satisfied (Table 4.2).

Respondents who indicated they had called 9-1-1 in the past 12 months were also asked to evaluate the response time for help to arrive as well as satisfaction with the assistance provided on the scene. Again, the majority reported satisfaction with both the response time (81.9% satisfied, 71.7% very satisfied) and the assistance received at the scene (87.0% satisfied, 79.5% very satisfied), as is indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Satisfaction with 9-1-1 Assistance

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Assistance you received from the person who took your call	95.3	81.8
Assistance provided on the scene	87.0	79.5
Response time it took for help to arrive on the scene	81.9	71.7

Interestingly, 100 percent of those aged 18 to 25 and over 90 percent of the oldest respondents (age 65 and older) said they were satisfied with the time it took for help to arrive, but only 70.4 per-

cent of those aged 38 to 49 indicated satisfaction with the response time. Individuals with children were less likely to report satisfaction with the assistance they received on the scene, whereas over 90 percent of those without children in their household said they were satisfied with the service received.

Growth and Development

Growth and development issues are areas of concern for many Spotsylvania residents. Less than a third (32.5%) of residents are satisfied with the rate of growth Spotsylvania County is experiencing. A slightly higher percentage of citizens (36.8%) feel that the County is doing a satisfactory job in planning how land will be used and developed in the County. At the same time, almost half (48.7%) of those interviewed said they felt satisfied with the efforts by the County in attracting new jobs and businesses to the area. Table 4.3 details these findings.

Table 4.3: Satisfaction with Growth and Development Items

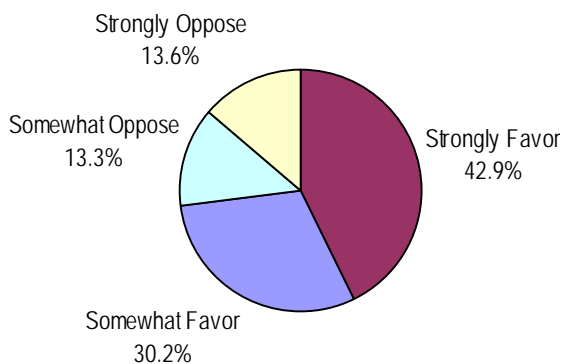
Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Job the County is doing in attracting new jobs and businesses to the County	48.7	11.2
Job the County is doing in planning how land will be used and developed in the County	36.8	5.7
Rate of growth in Spotsylvania County	32.5	8.1

Satisfaction with County planning for growth and development is highest among the newest residents (those who have lived in the County less than one year) with 57.7 percent saying they are satisfied, whereas only a minority (approximately a third) of those who have lived in the County for any length of time over one year report satisfaction with the growth rate. Approximately two-thirds of those with less than a high school education find the rate of growth satisfactory, whereas only about a third of those with at least a high school degree or better report satisfaction with the growth rate. Caucasians and those in the middle age groups (38 to 64) were also more likely to indicate dissatisfaction with the growth rate compared to African-

Americans and those in the younger and oldest age groups.

Respondents were told that County policy attempts to concentrate growth in designated development areas of the County while restricting development in rural areas. They were then asked if they favor or oppose this policy. As is illustrated in Figure 4.4, 42.9 percent of respondents strongly favor this policy and another 30.2 percent somewhat favor it, for a total of 73.1 percent who support the policy.

Figure 4.4: Favor Concentrating Growth in Development Areas



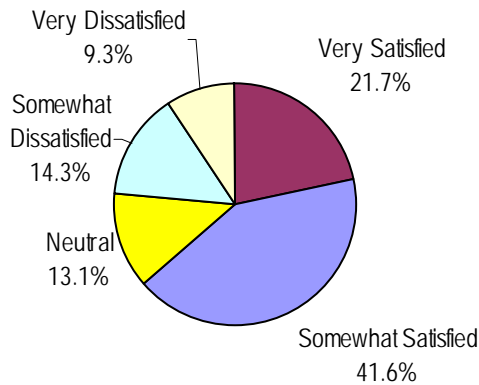
In general, the newer someone was to Spotsylvania County, the more he or she favored the policy to concentrate growth in development areas. Those who were newest to Spotsylvania (having lived there for less than a year) favored the policy the most (82.4%) and those who have lived in Spotsylvania their whole lives favored the policy the least (59.1%). There was also a significant difference in how much respondents favored this policy based on race, such that African-Americans and those of “other races” opposed the policy more than did Caucasians and Asians. Surprisingly, there was no difference in opinion on this policy based on voting district, indicating that both those in the rural and the more developed areas favor this policy somewhat equally.

Building Design Standards

The majority (63.3%) of Spotsylvania residents are satisfied with the visual appearance of new developments in the County, as Figure 4.5 indicates. Younger residents, African-Americans, and renters are more likely to approve of the appearance of new development than are older residents,

Caucasians, and homeowners, respectively. It is also interesting to note that the longer one has lived in Spotsylvania, the more likely he or she is to be satisfied with the look of new developments.

Figure 4.5: Satisfaction with the Visual Appearance of New Development



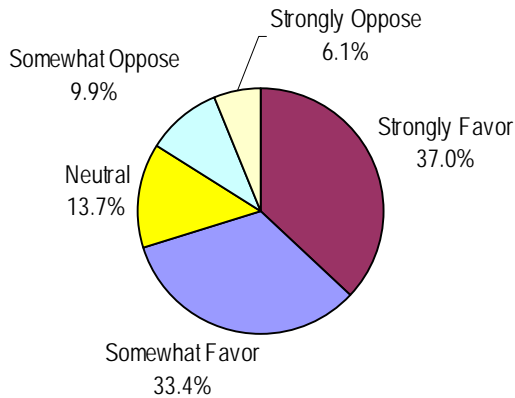
There were significant differences in level of satisfaction with the visual appearance of new developments across voting districts. Whereas over 70 percent of residents in Livingston and Courtland are pleased with the look of new developments, only 53.7 percent of those in the Berkeley district said they were satisfied. In Battlefield and Chancellor, approximately 57 percent of residents said they were satisfied with the visual appearance of the new development and more than 66 percent of those in Lee Hill and Salem reported satisfaction.

When asked if the County should institute design standards for commercial buildings, 70.4 percent said they would be in favor of such legislation, with more than a third (37.0%) indicating they strongly favored such standards (see Figure 4.6). Different demographic groups also expressed varying degrees of support for building standards. Newer residents are much more in favor of design standards than residents who have lived in the County several years to all of their life. Those with children aged 17 or younger in their household and those who stated their marital status as married or separated are more supportive of building standards. In addition, 10 of the 11 respondents to this question who have achieved a graduate degree said they favor design standards for commercial buildings.

Finally, various voting districts differ significantly in their support of design standards for new com-

mercial buildings. Whereas 72 to 77 percent of residents in Chancellor, Courtland, Lee Hill and Salem are in favor of design standards legislation, only 52.2 percent of those in the Livingston district said they were in favor of such rules. In Battlefield, 68.6 percent of residents said they were in favor of design standards as were 62.4 percent in Berkeley.

Figure 4.6: Favor Design Standards for Commercial Buildings



Preservation Efforts

The majority of Spotsylvania citizens feel that the County is doing a satisfactory job in its efforts to preserve historic places (63.1%) and its natural resources (61.9%), but less than half (42.0%) are satisfied with efforts to preserve the County’s farmland and forests. Table 4.4 details these findings.

Table 4.4: Satisfaction with Preservation Efforts

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
County’s efforts to preserve historic places	63.1	18.8
County’s efforts to preserve natural resources	61.9	12.9
County’s efforts to preserve farmland and forests	42.0	9.4

There were significant differences of opinion across voting districts with the County’s efforts to preserve historic places. Those in the Courtland (75%) and Livingston (72.5%) districts are the

most satisfied with the County’s historic preservation efforts, followed by 62 percent of those in Battlefield, Berkeley and Lee Hill. Chancellor and Salem residents had the lowest levels of satisfaction with 56.5 percent and 55.3 percent, respectively, reporting any satisfaction with the historic preservation efforts by the County.

Those with less than a high school education, household income levels below \$50,000, African-Americans⁵ and those aged 65 or older were more likely to feel the County is doing a satisfactory job in its efforts to preserve its natural resources.

Across demographic subgroups, several significant differences of opinion were identified in regard to satisfaction with the County’s efforts to preserve farmland and forests. Satisfaction was highest among those who have lived in the County only two years or less and those who are life-long residents. There was also a strong association between level of satisfaction and commute time such that 60 percent of those with the shortest commute (15 minutes or less) reported satisfaction with the County’s efforts compared to only 27.9 percent of those who travel more than an hour to work. Sixty percent of those with less than a high school education feel that the County is doing a good job protecting farmland and forests, but as education level increased, level of satisfaction declined dramatically with only 10 percent of those with graduate degrees expressing any satisfaction with the County’s efforts. African-Americans were also more likely to report satisfaction than Caucasians on this item.

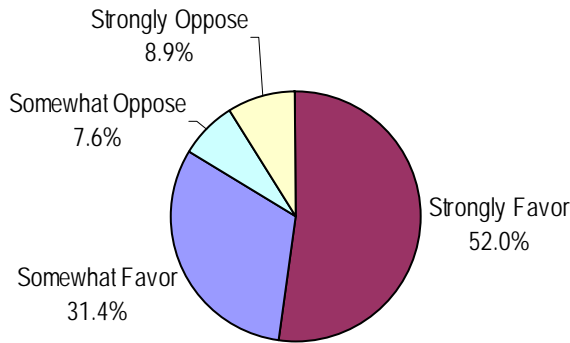
Conservation Easements

The County is considering establishing a “Purchase of Development Rights” program designed to help preserve Spotsylvania County’s agricultural, natural, historic and scenic resources by purchasing conservation easements. When respondents in our sample were asked if they would be in favor of such a program, the overwhelming response was positive. Over half (52.0%) said they strongly favor such a preservation program and an additional 31.4 percent said they are somewhat in favor of this idea. About 9 percent (8.9%) strongly

⁵ For a full discussion of differences in concern for environmental quality between races, please refer to: “Is there a ‘race’ effect on concern for environmental quality?” by Paul Mohai & Bunyan Bryant, 1998. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 62, pp. 475-505.

oppose and 7.6 percent somewhat oppose this idea. Figure 4.7 illustrates the findings concerning conservation easements. Support for this type of conservation program does not vary across demographic groups.

Figure 4.7: Use of Public Funds to Purchase Conservation Easements



Information and Opportunities for Citizen Input

Information and opportunities for citizen input is potentially an area of concern for the County. Only slightly more than half of the respondents (54.1%) reported satisfaction with the opportunities for citizen input into issues that come up for discussion in the County. When asked more specifically about level of satisfaction with opportunities for citizen input on the planning process for the County, 52.2 percent reported being satisfied, with only 13.8 percent very satisfied. Further, only about half (50.8%) of Spotsylvania County residents indicated that they are satisfied with the County’s efforts to keep citizens informed about County government programs and services, with 14.8 percent saying they are very satisfied. See Table 4.5.

Females and those aged 65 or older were significantly more positive about the government’s efforts to keep them informed. Satisfaction with opportunities for citizen input was higher the longer an individual has lived in the County and among those with household incomes of \$35,000 to \$50,000.

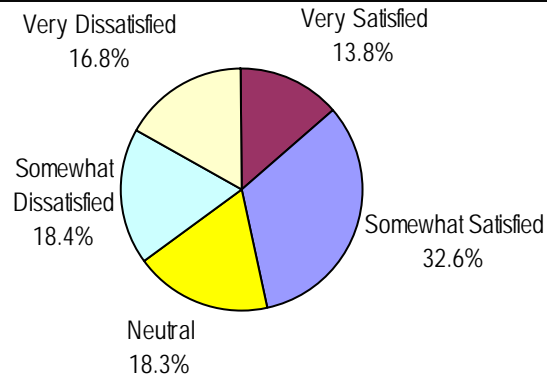
Table 4.5: Satisfaction with Information and Opportunities for Citizen Input

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Opportunities for citizen input into issues that come up for discussion in the County	54.1	14.6
Opportunities for citizen input on the planning process in the County	52.2	13.8
Job the County is doing in keeping citizens informed about County government programs and services	50.8	14.8

Public Transportation

Transportation issues are considered to be a concern among Spotsylvania County citizens. Currently fewer than half (46.4%) of Spotsylvania residents are satisfied with available public transportation, as Figure 4.8 indicates. By subgroup, those less likely to be satisfied with the current public transportation system include homeowners, those who have lived in Spotsylvania more than a few years, wealthier residents, and those with higher levels of education.

Figure 4.8: Satisfaction with Public Transportation



Despite dissatisfaction with the current public transportation system, residents are in favor of expanding local bus service, with almost three-fourths (73.9%) of those interviewed indicating they would support such an initiative. This result is interesting in light of the low priority given to providing public transportation in the questions about importance of strategic planning goals (see

Chapter 4). Females, renters, those not currently employed, widows, and those never married, as well as those aged 65 and older, are significantly more likely to be in favor of additional bus service in the area. Table 4.6 details support for public transportation.

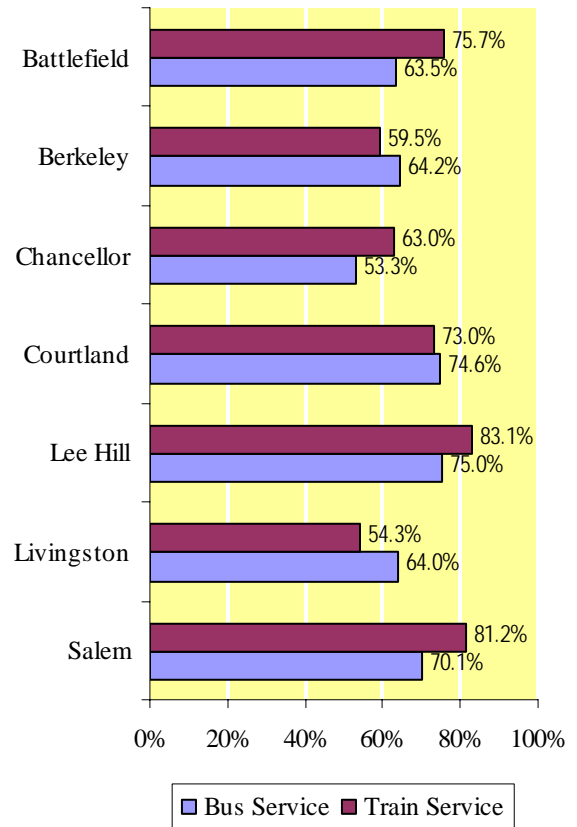
Table 4.6: Support for Public Transportation

Item	% Favoring (Strongly & Somewhat)	% Strongly Favoring Only
Expanding local bus service	73.9	38.6
Subsidizing commuter train/rail service	70.4	40.9
Subsidizing commuter bus service	66.1	30.5

Slightly less popular is the proposition to subsidize bus or commuter train service with tax dollars. Approximately 66 percent (66.1%) of those interviewed said they would support subsidizing commuter bus service and 70.4 percent indicated they would support such a subsidy for local commuter train service. Females, African-Americans, and those who reported their marital status as either separated or never married are significantly more likely to be in favor of subsidizing commuter bus service. Those who have live in the County only two years or less, the better educated (four year degree or some grad work), those with higher income levels, and African-Americans indicated more favorable attitudes toward subsidizing commuter train service.

Residents of the various voting districts feel differently when asked if they would favor subsidizing commuter bus or train service. Approximately three-fourths of residents in the Courtland and Lee Hill districts favor subsidies for commuter bus subsidies whereas those in the Chancellor district were the least likely to favor such use of tax dollars (53.3%). In addition, over eighty percent of those in the Lee Hill and Salem districts say they would be in favor of subsidizing commuter train service whereas only 54.3 percent of those in the Livingston district favor such subsidies. Figure 4.9 provides a full overview of voting district views on public transportation subsidies.

Figure 4.9: Support for Public Transportation Subsidies by Voting District



Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

Approximately two-thirds (62.4%) of Spotsylvania County residents have visited a County park or recreation facility in the past twelve months and a high proportion (83.9%) said that they are satisfied with County parks and recreation facilities and programs (see Table 4.8). Residents more likely to have visited a County park or recreation facility in the past twelve months include: those who have lived in the County for one to two years, apartment dwellers, parents with children under age 18 in their home, students, males, married individuals, and those in the higher education and income categories. Satisfaction with County parks and recreation facilities and programs is significantly lower among homeowners, those with incomes of \$50,000 or more, and respondents in the middle age categories (38 to 64), compared to renters, the less affluent and the younger and oldest residents, respectively.

Table 4.7: Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
County Parks and Recreation facilities and programs	83.9	43.8

Department of Social Services

Less than 30 percent (28.9%) of Spotsylvania residents are familiar with the County’s Department of Social Services. The likelihood of someone being familiar with the Department of Social Services varied significantly among different subgroups. Not surprisingly, the longer one has lived in the County, the more likely he or she is to be familiar with this department. Individuals with children under 18 in their homes and those with experience with the Spotsylvania school system, either directly or by proxy, are also more likely to be sufficiently familiar with the Department to rate it. In addition, approximately 45 percent of our respondents who are not currently married (divorced, separated or widowed) said they were familiar with the Department, compared to only a quarter of married and over a third of those who have never been married. Half of those in the lowest income category (\$35,000 or less) said they knew enough about the Department to rate it, whereas less than 25 percent of those with incomes of \$50,000 or more said they were familiar with it.

As Table 4.8 indicates, of those who felt able to rate Spotsylvania’s Department of Social Services, 61.7 percent said they were somewhat or very satisfied. There were no statistically significant differences across demographic subgroups on this rating.

Table 4.8: Satisfaction with Department of Social Services

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Department of Social Services	61.7	26.8

Other County Services

Library Services

Spotsylvania County residents are highly pleased with the library services available, with 69.3 percent of those interviewed reporting they are very

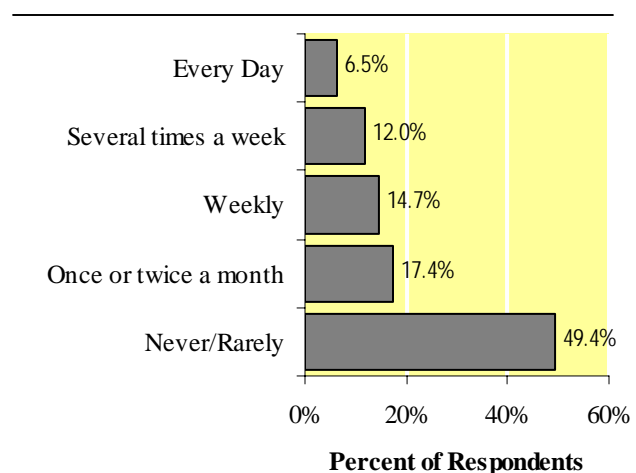
satisfied and an additional 22 percent indicating they are somewhat satisfied, for a total satisfaction rating of over 91 percent (91.3%).

It is also notable that level of satisfaction varied significantly across several demographic subgroups. In particular, the longer one has lived in the County, the more likely he or she was to have a positive impression of the library services available, with only 77.1 percent of those who have lived less than a year in the area reporting satisfaction with the library services compared to over 90 percent of those who have lived in Spotsylvania for three or more years. Those who have some experience with the Spotsylvania County school system (either having attended school in the County or having someone in the household who is or has) were also more likely to report satisfaction with the library services compared to those who have not had any experience with Spotsylvania schools. Furthermore, Caucasians and older respondents were more likely to indicate some level of satisfaction compared to other racial categories and the younger age groups.

Public Access TV for County and School Information

Spotsylvania County uses public access television to provide its citizens with information about the County (Channel 16) and schools (Channel 17), but only half of residents report ever viewing the channels. Of those who said they do use the channels for information, most view only once a week or a few times a month. Figure 4.10 illustrates these findings.

Figure 4.10: Use of TV for County and School Information



Litter Control and Beautification Efforts

Spotsylvania County has programs designed to reduce the amount of trash and beautify public spaces. When residents were asked if they were satisfied with the efforts made by the city to control litter and provide beautification efforts, over sixty percent (61.4%) indicated satisfaction. In particular, renters (78.9%) and African-Americans (82.5%) were much more likely to report satisfaction with this County service compared to homeowners (58.3%) and Caucasians (59%).

Programs for the Elderly

Of those in our sample who felt able to rate the job the County is doing in providing programs to help the its elderly population, less than half (47.5%) gave the County a satisfactory rating for this service,⁶ indicating that this may be an area of possible concern for the County. Among racial categories, African-Americans stand out as being significantly more likely to give County-supported programs for the elderly a satisfactory rating compared to Caucasians and those of other races or ethnic groups.

Please refer to Table 4.9 for details on these four items.

Table 4.9: Satisfaction with Other County Services

Item	% Satisfied (Very & Somewhat)	% Very Satisfied Only
Library services provided to County residents	91.3	69.3
Information about public schools and County government on the Public Access Channels	90.9	44.1
County's programs for litter control and beautification	61.4	19.2
Programs to help the County's elderly population	47.5	12.4

Water Quality in Spotsylvania

Of the residents in our sample, approximately 70 percent (69.2%) are Spotsylvania water customers.

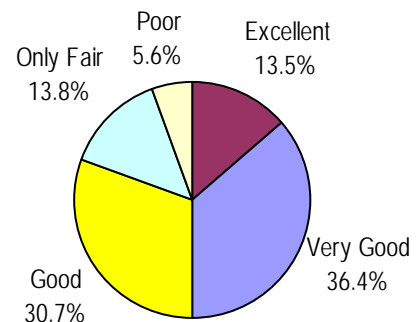
⁶ Notably, 46.1 percent of the sample said they were unable to rate County provided programs for the elderly.

The likelihood of being a Spotsylvania water customer increases with level of education and income but decreases with age. Those with children in the home, especially young children (aged 4 or less) and those who live in something other than a single-family home are also more likely to be Spotsylvania water customers. Interestingly, those who have lived in the County for 20 or more years are significantly less likely to report being a County water customer than those who have lived in the area a shorter length of time.

Living in a particular voting district also increases the likelihood of being a Spotsylvania water customer. The vast majority of respondents in the Lee Hill (96.7%), Salem (91%), Battlefield (87.3%) and Courtland (82.1%) districts reported that they receive water service from the County, whereas only 23 percent of those in the Berkeley district and 22.4 percent in the Livingston district are County water customers. Approximately two-thirds of residents in the Chancellor voting district report being a Spotsylvania water customer.

Those respondents who reported being Spotsylvania water customers were further asked to rate the quality of their water. Approximately half said that their water quality was very good or excellent (49.9%), with close to an additional third (30.7%) rating it as good. Slightly less than 14 percent (13.8%) rated the water quality as only fair, whereas 5.6 percent said that it was poor. Figure 4.11 illustrates these findings. Of particular interest to the County may be the finding that, despite significant differences between districts in who receives County water services, there were no significant differences in water quality ratings based on this demographic variable.

Figure 4.11: Rating of Spotsylvania Water Quality



Summary

Overall, satisfaction with County-provided services is quite high, with 76 percent of respondents reporting general satisfaction with the services that they receive. Satisfaction for most specific services were also quite high, with the highest ratings being for public safety services, library services, and information about public schools and County

government on the Public Access Channels. Despite the high ratings for most satisfaction items, there are some areas of concern, most notably in the area of growth and development, and public transportation. Other items of possible concern are satisfaction with the job the County is doing in providing programs to help the County's elderly population and satisfaction with information and opportunities for citizen input.