

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: April 29, 2024

FROM: Strategy, Policy and Communications Department

DATE: April 16, 2024

SUBJECT: 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey

LOCATION: Town-wide

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey report from the Strategy, Policy and Communications department be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The town conducts a community satisfaction survey (formerly called the citizen survey) every two years to evaluate resident satisfaction with town programs and services, to get input on strategic priorities for decision-making and budgeting, and to inform value for tax dollars.
- The last community satisfaction survey was conducted in 2022.
- Overall, Oakville residents continue to give the town high marks when it comes to satisfaction with livability, government, town programs and services, and value for tax dollars.
 - 80% agree that Oakville is a better place to live than most areas in the GTA
 - 79% overall satisfaction with the government of the Town of Oakville
 - 89% are satisfied with town services
 - 92% say that town employees are respectful in their interactions with them
- The top three rated services were parks and green spaces, harbours and waterfront areas and recreation fields and facilities.

- Areas identified for improvement are availability of online services, municipal enforcement, arts, heritage and culture offerings and venues, public transit, availability of parking and recreation programs.
- Housing affordability remains the top issue identified by residents followed by urban sprawl/rapid development, and land use planning.
- This report provides a summary of the 2024 community satisfaction survey results, which will also be available on the town's website, and shared through social media, the town's e-newsletter and digital screens at town facilities. The full data set will be available through the town's open data catalogue.
- Ward-specific results will be shared through Council's information package following the April 29, 2024 council meeting.

BACKGROUND:

The town-wide community satisfaction survey (formerly called the citizen survey) process began in 2001. Surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2007 before the town decided to move to a biennial survey. In 2021, Forum Research Inc. was retained to conduct the town's 2022 survey and they also conducted the most recent survey for 2024. Forum Research Inc. is a well-known leader in market research and has extensive experience conducting satisfaction surveys for municipalities.

The survey provides the town with quantitative data to help Council and staff understand residents' service priorities as well as track the town's progress in implementing Council's strategic plan. The survey also helps to support the town's budget process and decision-making by providing valuable input from residents on:

- Livability
- Satisfaction with town services and attributes
- Priorities and planning
- Taxation, and
- Information and service usage.

Overall, results indicate that satisfaction with key town programs and services remains very strong. Results show that Oakville residents continue to believe they receive good value for their tax dollars and this helps contribute to the high overall satisfaction rating for the government of the Town of Oakville. Lorne Bozinoff, President and CEO and Win Stec, Senior Research Director from Forum Research Inc. will present the results to Council on April 29, 2024.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:**Methodology**

The community satisfaction survey process includes two distinct elements: a comprehensive 20-minute telephone survey of 805 randomly-selected residents (60% cell and 40% land line) conducted between February 13 to March 8, 2024, to gather quantitative data, and an online survey for qualitative research available from February 15 to March 8, 2024, to provide residents with opportunities to provide their input into the community satisfaction survey process. Key findings from the phone survey are outlined in this report. A summary of the phone survey and online survey is available as Appendix A.

Phone survey results were statistically weighted by age to ensure that the sample reflects the target population according to 2021 Census data, rendering an overall margin of error of $\pm 3.45\%$. Results have been weighted by age only, as the sample closely matched other demographic variables.

Key Findings

The large majority of residents (80%) agree that Oakville is a better place to live than most areas in the GTA. Residents are also more likely to say they would recommend the town as a place to live. Overall satisfaction with the government of the Town of Oakville is at 79%, remaining stable over the last four surveys. Residents express high satisfaction with the quality of town services (89%) and with the respectfulness of employees during their most recent interaction with them (92%). Most residents (80%) said that they receive good value for their tax dollars for the programs and services provided by the town.

A statistical “gap” analysis was done to gauge the difference between how satisfied residents are with each town service and the impact of the service to residents’ overall service satisfaction (i.e., perceived importance). Findings highlight two primary areas of improvement: municipal enforcement and availability of online services. Satisfaction with online services decreased by three percentage points. Municipal enforcement services was added to this year’s survey, so there is no data available to compare to previous years.

Four other services identified by residents that may need attention in the long-term are:

- Arts, heritage and culture offerings and venues (78%)
- Public transit (56%)
- Availability of parking (69%)
- Recreation programs (78%)

Livability

Oakville residents' overall perceptions of livability increased in 2024. A clear majority of residents (80%) believe livability is better in Oakville than in most other areas of the GTA.

- In terms of quality of life and changes over the last two years, 8% think the quality of life in Oakville has become better, 52% say it stayed the same and 37% say it has become worse.
- When residents were asked what qualities make Oakville livable and vibrant, the top three qualities identified were green spaces (16%), parks (16%) and safe/low crime/good police (14%).
- When asked about the most important issue facing the town, residents identified affordable housing (26%), urban sprawl/rapid development (14%), and land use planning (14%) as the top three issues. Compared to previous surveys, there has been a significant increase in affordable housing as an issue which is up 7 percentage points.
- The combination of affordable housing, urban sprawl/rapid development and land use planning as top issues is reflective of the opportunities and challenges anticipated by the town as it works toward achieving its population, employment, and housing targets.

Satisfaction with town services and attributes

- Residents express high satisfaction with town services at 89%. While it is four points lower than 2022, it is significantly higher than the benchmarked average (75%).
- The top three rated services were parks and green spaces (94%), harbours and waterfront areas (88%) and recreation fields and facilities (88%).
- Parking (69%) and public transit (56%) remained the lowest ranked, with both decreasing by two and five percentage points respectively.
 - A large portion of responses to the public transit service reported 26% "don't know or refused" to answer the question and likely represents non-transit users.
 - Overall, 11 of 13 town services scored at or over 70%, with seven of these scoring over 80%.
- A new question was asked as part of the survey to focus on a sense of belonging in the community, one of the key community indicators that is being tracked as per Council's [long-term strategy and action plan](#). 85% of residents responding as feeling a sense of belonging.

Priorities and planning

Residents were asked to identify their top priorities within specific areas.

- In the past 12 months, 9 in 10 residents (87%) regularly visited green spaces/parks/trails.
- There has also been an increase in regularly visiting community centres by 21 percentage points since 2022, as people resume activities post-pandemic.

- As it relates to growth and land use planning, protecting the character of existing neighbourhoods (30%) was mentioned by almost one third of residents, followed by diverse housing options (26%) and sustainable development standards (23%).
- Protecting and maintaining parks was the top priority area mentioned by almost one tenth of the residents (8%) in terms of the town's response to climate change, decreasing 12 percentage points since 2022.

Taxation

- Overall, 80% say they receive good value for their tax dollars for the programs and services provided by the town. Although Oakville is well above average when compared to benchmark municipalities with the mean being 67%, the rating has decreased from 2022 by five percentage points.
- When asked about their preference for an increase or decrease in taxes or user fees, there has been a slight decrease of 4 percentage points in the proportion of residents who preferred either maintaining service levels or adding services and facilities, even if it means an increase in taxes or user fees. Of those residents, 61% preferred an increase to user fees while 27% preferred an increase to property taxes.

Information and service usage

- Over 9 in 10 residents (92%) are satisfied with the respectfulness of town employees, 3 percentage points more than 2022.
- Resident scores for ease of finding information (82%) and finding the right person (78%) to deal with questions/problems fell slightly.
- When finding information about the town, the majority of residents (61%) say they use the town's website most often, almost double the rate reported in 2022.
- The rate of satisfaction with the town's website is still very strong at 87%.

To inform Oakville residents of the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey results, information will be posted to the town's website and communicated through the town's social media and e-newsletter. A summary highlighting key findings will be displayed on digital screens at the community centres. The full data set will also be added to the town's open data catalogue.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey involved two key components of public consultation. The first component was a random telephone survey of a representative sample of 805 residents from February 13 to March 8, 2024. The second component involved an online survey conducted from February 15

to March 8, 2024. The phone and online surveys were promoted through the town's website, social media, town's e-newsletter, email distribution lists, and digital screens at the community centres.

(B) FINANCIAL

The town's community satisfaction survey is conducted biennially. The cost of this survey is expected to be approximately \$64,200.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The town's community satisfaction survey assists departments in evaluating their programs and services and provides valuable input into achieving the town's vision and strategic priorities, budget allocation and business planning process.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses Council's strategic priorities: Growth Management, Community Belonging, Environmental Sustainability and Accountable Government.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

Residents were asked to identify their top priorities related to Climate Change. This helps the town understand and align with community priorities.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Community Satisfaction Survey Qualitative Report

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