

Public Policy Institute

Western Carolina University

2018 Waynesville Strategic Planning Survey Report

The Public Policy Institute (PPI) of Western Carolina University was contacted by the town of Waynesville, NC, to review survey data provided by the town. This survey was administered online by the town and open to the public at large. While the PPI was not involved in the data collect, we are happy to provide this summary of the 368 responses to the survey.

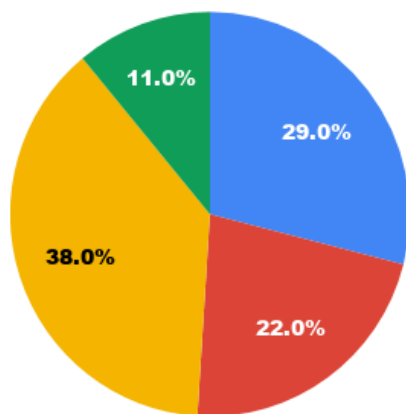
I. SURVEY METHODS & SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Working with Jackie Turner of Stewart, a planning, design, and engineering firm with offices in Raleigh, Durham, and Charlotte, Waynesville opened an online survey to the public as part of its strategic planning process. Respondents completed several questions including demographic questions, such as their age, income, and length of residence, and substantive questions about their opinions on the needs in the town, future development, and other planning issues.

Of the 368 respondents to the survey, the plurality of respondents (40%) were above 60 years-old, 28% were between 30 and 44, and 25% of respondents were between 45 and 59. A smaller group, about 6%, were under 30 years-old. The three largest respondent-groups based on income included 67 respondents (18.4%) that reported earning between \$100,000 and \$149,999, another 18% (66 respondents) reported earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and the third largest group (54 residents or 14%) reported earning between \$25,000 and \$49,999.

Length of Residency for Year-round Respondents

● 1-5 years ● 6-10 years ● 11-20 years ● 21+ years



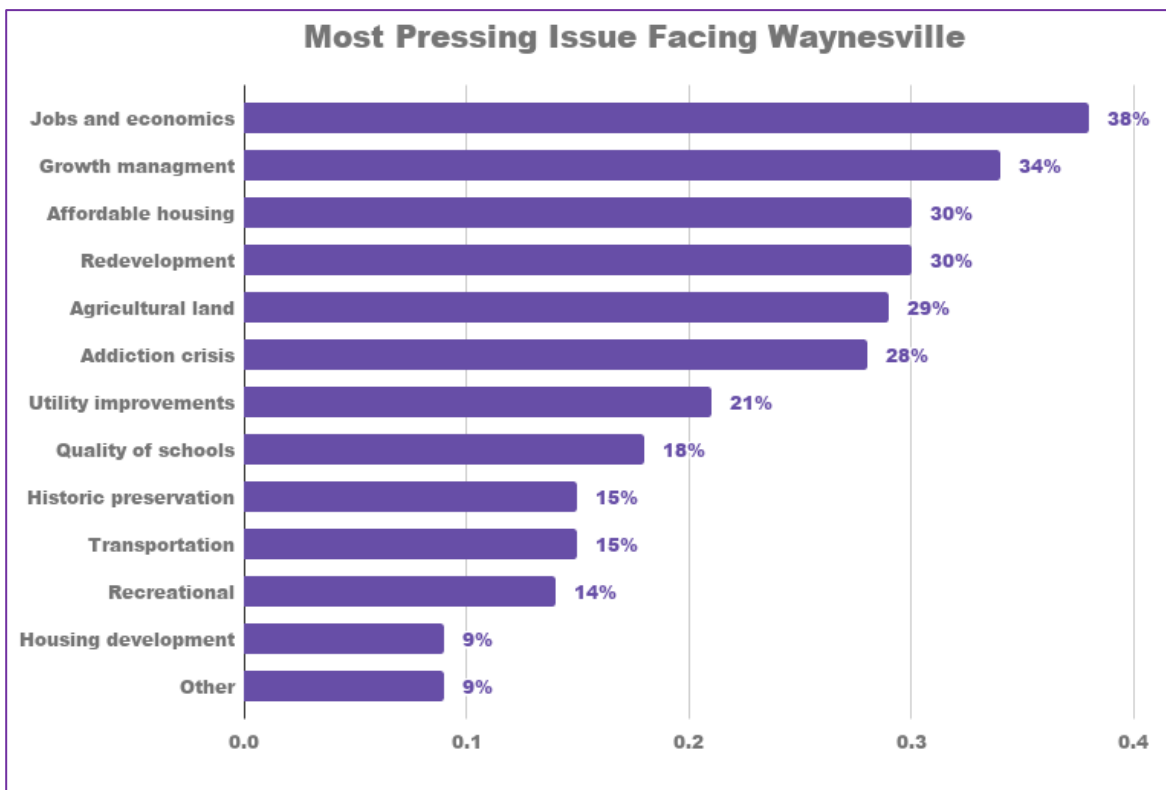
As to residency, the vast majority of respondents (over 91% or 292 respondents) reported living in Waynesville for more than six months a year. Twenty-six respondents reported living in town for less than six months a year. For those living in the area for more than six month a year, the largest number (38%) had lived in the area between 11 and 20 years, another 29% for less than five years, 22% between 6 and 10 years, and 11% for 21 years or more, as displayed in the figure to the left.

II. SURVEY RESULTS

The survey asked many substantive questions including what is the most pressing issue facing Waynesville, where and what types of growth should be the focus of the Town, types of housing that should be promoted, and issues about services and infrastructure.

A. Pressing Issues

Respondents were asked to select what they believe to be the most pressing issue facing Waynesville. For this question, respondents had the option of selected three choices from a list of 11 potential issues or the respondents could write in an issue if it was not included in the predefined list. As displayed in the bar graph below, the issue most often selected by respondents was jobs and economic growth, which was selected by 38% of all respondents. Other often selected categories included growth management and controlling urban sprawl (34%), affordable and workforce housing (30%), redevelop distress commercial and residential properties (30%), protection of agricultural lands and open spaces (29%), and addressing the addiction crisis (28%).



Thirty-five respondents selected something other than the issues provided in the predefined list and wrote their own issue. These 35 answers varied greatly without a clear trend and some were rephrasing of an issue on predefined list, such as one respondent that wrote in “addressing the issues of addiction.” Overall the top six “pressing issues” may be of importance as over one-fourth of the respondents listed these in their choice of three.

B. Growth, Development, & Housing

Several questions for respondents targeted issues of economic development, town growth, and housing. Respondents were asked where residential development and growth should occur from a list of six predefined choices or the respondent could select “other” and write an open-ended response.

Respondents could select as many answers as they wanted. As the table to the right displays, most respondents felt that growth should occur away from sensitive environmental resources (66%), where infrastructure already exists (63%), and in parts of towns ready for redevelopment (60%). The open-ended responses to this question varied greatly for the 40 respondents that wrote something other than a predefined category and there was not a clear trend

Area for Growth	Number	Percentage of Respondents
Away from Sensitive Environmental Resources	244	66%
Where infrastructure (water & sewer) exists	213	63%
In Sections of Town Ready for Redevelopment	222	60%
Near Existing Shopping and Services	138	38%
Other	40	11%
Anywhere/Everywhere	33	9%
Near Major Intersections	32	9%

Two other questions asked about the preferred types of affordable or workforce housing that should be promoted and what types of residential neighborhoods a respondent favored. For both of these

questions respondents were provided with pictures representative of different types of housing and neighborhoods of various densities. For the workforce/affordable housing question, respondents selected one choice from five different pictures of varying housing types. These photos included representations of single-family housing, manufactured homes, less dense apartments, denser multi-floor apartments, and townhomes. Most respondents (247 or 68% of all respondents) selected small, single-family housing as the preferred type. The accompanying picture is displayed to the left.



Photo example provided in the survey of “Small Single-Family Housing”

Concerning residential neighborhood density, respondents were offered a selection of three photos of three different neighborhood types. The

respondents could select one of the photos as their most preferred type of neighborhood type for new residential development. A majority of respondents (198 residents or 54% of all respondents) selected the photo representing a medium density residential neighborhood. Almost one-third (118 respondents or 32%) selected the photo depicting a “very low density residential” neighborhood and the other 14% of respondents (49) selected a photo displaying a “traditional town grid,” which was more dense. The photo example of the top choice (“medium density residential”) is displayed below.

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Photo example provided in the survey of a “Medium density residential” neighborhood. Small Single-Family Housing” selected by most (54%) of survey respondents

C. Limiting Development & Protection of Open Spaces

Several questions also asked respondents about their opinions on protecting open spaces and limiting development. One question asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed that sensitive natural areas should be protected from development. A majority (63%) “strongly agreed” that natural areas should be protected, while another 24% “agreed” with this statement. Eight percent indicated they were “neutral” to protecting sensitive areas and about 4% either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that sensitive natural areas should be protected.

Respondents were also asked what types of areas should be protected, if any. Respondents could select up to three areas that the respondent felt should be preserved or conserved for open spaces by Waynesville. A large majority of respondents (83%) said that streams and areas important for water quality should be protected. The three other highest areas deemed in need of protection, as indicated by the table below, included areas important for habitat and biodiversity (41%), agricultural areas (39%), and scenic views 37%.

Type of Area to Protect	Number	Percentage of Respondents
Streams and Areas Important for Water Quality	306	83%
Lands Important for Habitat and Biodiversity	151	41%
Farms, Orchards, and Working Agricultural Lands	145	39%
Scenic Views	136	37%
Mature Forests	107	29%
Corridors for Future Greenways and Trails	100	27%
Steep Slopes	79	21%
Floodplain	61	17%

Respondents were also asked which one type of open space they most wanted to protect from development and were provide photo examples of each type of open space. There were seven predetermined types of areas that the respondents could choose from in their answer. The three most often selected open areas deemed worthy of protection included “streams/rivers” (33%),

“ridgeline” (27%), and “woodland” (19%). The example photos from the survey are included below:



Photo example provided in the survey of a “stream/river”



Photo example provided in the survey of “woodland”



Photo example provided in the survey of a “ridgeline”

D. Infrastructure Focus

Residents were also asked which three public services they thought should be of the highest priority. The respondents were provided a list of eight services or infrastructure items and were allowed to pick the three that they believed were of the highest priority. As the table below displays, almost

Services of the Highest Priority	Number	Percentage of Respondents
Parks, Greenways, Trails	179	49%
Public Safety (Police, Fire, EMS)	173	47%
Roads and Transportation	157	43%
County Schools (K-12)	154	42%
Open Space Preservation	142	39%
Water and Sewer	126	34%
Broadband Service	105	29%
Affordable/Subsidized Housing	66	18%

half (49%) of respondents included parks, greenways, and trails in their top three services or infrastructures of importance. Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that public safety services were important, 43%

included roads and transportation, and 42% included county schools.

E. Open-ended Responses

Lastly, two open-ended questions were included asking respondents what they valued most about Waynesville and another place to add any additional feedback to the Waynesville staff and elected officials. The PPI staff reviewed all of the comments in these two sections and categorized each response to look for general trends. Some of the responses covered more than one category, so the numbers presented in the tables below do include multiple responses and thus the percentages may add up to more than 100%.

In total 337 respondents left a comment on what they liked best about Waynesville. When asked this question, 49% of those that left a comment noted that they most appreciated the “small town feel” of Waynesville. For example, one respondent commented on “The small town environment and the beauty of the location” as what was most liked. Others commented that town is a good mix of small town with amenities, such as one respondent that wrote that Waynesville had “small town charm” with “a lot of conveniences of a larger city.” Other respondents (22%) noted the geographic location as ideal, such as one person that liked the “views around every bend.” Others (15%) also stressed the importance of the downtown area, as one person commented they liked Waynesville’s “vibrant downtown, shopping areas and it's a smart growth community.”

What Respondents Like Most about Waynesville	Number	Percentage of Respondents to This Question (337 Total)
Small Town Feel	165	49%
Geographical Location	73	22%
Downtown	50	15%
People	39	12%
Other	37	11%
Safety	16	5%
Quality of life	17	5%
Weather	13	4%

As to the final open-ended question concerning other feedback, 216 people took the time to add some comment. The statements were wide ranging but common issues mentioned in this area include the need to develop urban standards and limit urban sprawl (70 respondents), the need for more parks and public areas (24 respondents), and the need for improved roads (21 respondents). Again, these topics varied greatly and we encourage those interested to review the open-ended comments.