

2018 Forest Hills Residential Survey

I. Overview

In the Spring of 2018 the Public Policy Institute (PPI) at Western Carolina University (WCU) facilitated a survey concerning community issues for the Village of Forest Hills, NC. In total, 171 households were contacted either through email addresses provided by Forest Hills or by mailing addresses provided by the Jackson County Tax Office. We contacted those with listed email addresses first and invited them to take an on-line survey. This provided 31 responses which were recorded electronically. We then mailed out paper copies to residents for which we did not have email addresses or that did not respond to the email invitation. Forty-two respondents returned the completed paper survey. The on-line survey responses and paper versions, which had identical questions, were combined into one dataset, providing a total of 73 usable responses, a response rate of 43%.

Of the respondents, 75% were fulltime residents of Forest Hills, 23% were property owners but did not themselves reside in the Village, and 1% (one respondent) indicated he/she was a seasonal resident. The length of residency in the Village ranged from less than one year to 53 years, while the average time a respondent had lived in Forest Hills was 25 years. About one-fifth (19%) had lived in the Village for 10 years or less. The majority of respondents (53%) had two people living in their residence, about another third (31%) lived alone and 10% reported having children under 18 living in the home.

Questions focused largely on public services. Residents were asked what new services they would like to see available in Forest Hills, what changes they would like to see to existing services, and other concerns they may have about the village (see the Appendix for the full survey instrument). This report is provided to the elected village council and may be distributed to the public as needed.

This project and other Public Policy Endeavors are made possible through the support of Western Carolina University, the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs, the WCU Print Shop, contributions from private donors, and the hard work of our students, including graduate assistants from the Master in Public Affairs program.

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II. Survey Results

A. Services

The survey asked several questions about services that residents would like to see in Forest Hills and potential improvements to services currently offered. We asked respondents to select which services they would like to see from a list of seven options which were suggested from the town council. Respondents could select as many or as few choices as they wanted and they were also free to include other services not listed in an open-ended response. Table 1 displays the results of those services requested by respondents. Indicated in Table 1 are both the number of respondents that marked each choice as well as the percentage of respondents for each service in parentheses from all the respondents that answered this question. Overall, better access to high-speed internet service was the most often included choice from respondents, followed by recreational spaces (such as walking trails and picnic areas), and then water and sewer service. Fourteen respondents selected “Other” and 11 of these provided an open-ended response. These open-ended responses varied greatly with no clear trends.

Table 1: Additional Services

Service	Number (Percentage)
Cable	14 (20%)
Electric	5 (7%)
Emergency Services	14 (20%)
High-speed Internet	29 (41%)
Recreational Spaces	23 (32%)
Sidewalks	19 (27%)
Water/Sewer	22 (31%)
Other	10 (14%)

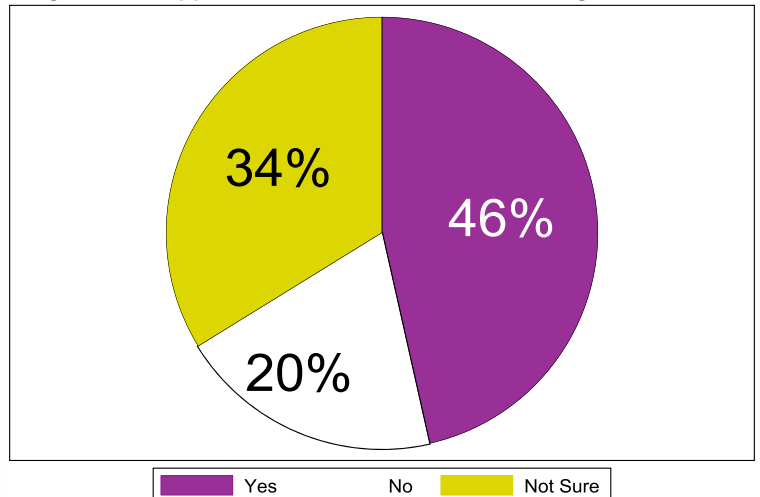


We also asked residents to select which one service they would most like to determine which service they felt was most important. Here, they could only select one answer choice from a list. When asked which one service they wanted, the top three choices most often given included recreational spaces (28%), high-speed internet (25%), and then water/sewer (22%).

In another question, we asked respondents which Forest Hills services (if any) they would like to see changed. This was an open-ended question where residents were free to include anything they wanted. In total, 30 respondents included an answer to this question. While these did vary, we categorized them into some broad categories. Five respondents’ comments concerned law enforcement (such as speeding or noise ordinances). Another five indicated that they did not want the Village to do anything else and/or wanted to keep the Village small. Other responses to this question included the need for better clearing of the roads (three respondents), more pedestrian areas (three respondents), and another three respondents were not aware of what services were provided by the town.

Lastly, we asked residents if they would support additional public funding for additional services. Here, 33 respondents (47%) indicated that they would support more public funding, 14 respondents (20%) said they would not, and 24 respondents (34%) said that they were not sure, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Support for Additional Public Funding for Services



B. Concerns and Other Comments

Next we asked residents about their concerns regarding Forest Hills. We presented a checklist of seven issues, again based in part on suggestions from the elected council members. Respondents could check as many of these issues as they wanted and an open-ended response was available for a respondent to add a concern that was not on our list. Table 2 displays the overall results for this questions. As shown in Table 2, the most often concern raised by respondents was speeding as 25 of the 61 respondents that answered this question indicated that speeding was a problem. Other frequent responses included noise (20 respondents (33%)), litter (19 respondents (31%)), loose dogs (15 respondents (25%)), and road conditions (15 respondents (25%)). Of those that said they had a concern that was not on our list, ten provided more detail in an open-ended response. These ten responses varied greatly without a clear trend, although the most common issues out of these ten answers was that three did mention concerns over potential development in and near Forest Hills.

Issue	Number (Percentage)
Loose Dogs	15 (25%)
Noise	20 (33%)
Litter	19 (31%)
Road Conditions	15 (25%)
Speeding	25 (41%)
Suspicious Individuals	9 (15%)
Other Ordinance Violations	5 (8%)
Other Concerns	10 (16%)

Table 3: Other Comments

Issue	Number (Percentage)
Development Concerns	5 (18%)
Road Improvement	3 (11%)
Water/Sewer	2 (7%)
Housing Upkeep	3 (11%)
More Residential Participation	6 (21%)
Other	9 (32%)

For those respondents that indicated noise was a concern, we gave them the opportunity to provide more detail in an open-ended response about noise.

Twenty respondents provided more information on noise, with most (13 or 68%) indicated that “partying” or other noise from college students was the issue, four (21%) stated that vehicles were the cause of the noise, and two (11%) said that barking dogs were the source of their noise concerns.

We asked a last open-ended question to allow respondents to share any other comments, information or suggestions that they may have and 28 respondents offered some additional comment. Again, the responses varied greatly, but we were able to put these comments into five general issue areas, with the rest placed in the “other” category. The results are displayed in Table 3. Most interesting may be the fact that six of the 28 respondents that provided a reply to this question indicated that they would like to see more means of participation for residents. These responses included such things as more open meetings, resident newsletters, a suggestion for an electronic sign at the entrance, and a dedicated place for social gatherings and meetings.

III. Conclusions

In sum, the PPI was pleased with the response rate and the range of information provided by property owners in Forest Hills. Respondents’ concerns were varied, but there appears to be strong interest in better high-speed internet, recreational spaces, and water/sewer options. Speeding, noise, and litter appear to be the most common concerns of residents, with some voicing concern over development and growth. While we hope these survey results are helpful for long-term planning, we encourage town leaders to continue to seek public input as the town moves forward in meeting the need of its residents.

APPENDIX: Question Wording

VILLAGE OF FOREST HILLS COMMUNITY SURVEY (please clearly mark your responses)



1. What new services would you like to see available in the Village of Forest Hills? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cable | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational spaces (walking trails, picnic area, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency services (police, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Water, including sewer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-speed internet | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

2. Of the possible services listed above, which **ONE** would you most like to see implemented? (check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cable | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreational spaces (walking trails, picnic area, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency services (police, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Water, including sewer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-speed internet | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

3. Would you support additional public funding to add any of the above services?

- Yes No Not Sure

4. Are any of the following a concern of yours in Forest Hills?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loose dogs | <input type="checkbox"/> Speeding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise (Specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Suspicious individuals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Litter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ordinance violations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other concerns _____ |

5. If any, what Village of Forest Hills services would you like to see changed? (Use the back if needed)

6. Please share any other comments, information, or suggestions you may have concerning the Village of Forest Hills (use the back of this page if needed):

7. Demographic Information:

Do you live in Forest Hills (check one)? Resident Property owner but reside elsewhere

How long have you lived/owned property in Forest Hills? _____

If a resident, how many people reside in your home? _____

If a resident, how many children under 18 live in the home? _____

Forest Hills 2018 Residential Survey: Open-Ended Responses¹

(Follow up to Question #1 “other”): As you selected "other" in the previous question, what other types of services would you like to see available from the Village of Forest Hills?
Better roads--road repair
Driveway snow removal--those who need this service could contract individually with person who provides this service on FH roads. Residents would pay the service provider directly for this service, but it could be done while this person is in the neighborhood.
More timely mowing of road shoulders.
Natural gas; restaurant
playground
Remaining a residential community, no commercialism
Road side parking.
Sidewalls built using a porous material such as the company Grasscrete offers
Transportation to Sylva to cut down on cars and associated pollution.
Utility lines buried.
Water is too expensive.

¹ All items have not been edited and are typed as they appeared in the survey response.

(Follow up to noise complaints in Question #4): As you answered noise was a concern in Forest Hills, could you please give us more information on what type of noise and/or what areas are a concern?
Continual barking.
Dogs barking during the night.
Gun fire, loud music
Highway 107
Late night parties.
loud cars
Off road four-wheel drive vehicles trespassing on property adjacent to me, behind Summit Apartments. Some are not street legal and without mufflers. Their sound shakes my house. It seems nothing will be done about it.
Parties crop up with apparently no concern for neighbors or at least a reasonable time to turn quiet.
Parties during university sessions. Loud music from cars. Barking dogs.
Party noises as well as loud engine noise
Partying, loud cars
Student parties but why not ask for more info about the other areas of concerns
Students
Students
Students partying.
The rental houses at the end of South Country Club are poorly managed and maintained. The students living there are rude and have nearly hit me on several occasions while I walked on the road. They have loud parties with no concern for neighbors. The apartments in the valley are the same.
These college students are loud anytime of the night. If reported, NOTHING HAPPENS. We need to be rid of college rentals. No rentals in Forest Hills at all! If we want this village to increase home value, lots of changes have to be made, but the most important change are rentals. The houses should be required to have a clean front yard...several houses, especially at the entrance.
Varies from year to year
Vehicles doing offroading activities (illegally and in private property) above the "Summit at Cullowhee Apartments". The property where this takes place is old land with 2 silos on Warp Rd off of N. Country club dr
WCU Student Parties

(Question #5): If any, what services that are currently offered by the Village of Forest Hills would you like to see changed and how?
Better roads--
Announcing meetings--website only
Can't say, I'm in the ETJ.
Continued snow removal as quickly as possible when weather permits.
Daily law enforcement presence at random times to deter speeding, loud noises, etc.
Enhanced clearance of right of ways, i.e. clearing of all ditches and culverts along right-of-ways on both village and state maintained roads.
Funds and taxes collected should benefit both the North and South sides equally. People on South Country Club Drive feel that most, if not all funds, have been spent to benefit the North side.
I have no idea what services are provided.
I think that the taxes are too high.
I would like to see recreational facilities-- pool, trails, playgrounds.
I would prefer village government to remain as minimal as is possible.
I'd like it if renting was restricted, and enforced, to one person or family to minimize student rentals.
Improved road repairs
Less money spent on lawyers.
Less money spent on village sign entrance.
Make more pedestrian friendly. Sidewalks need to be paved but separate lane for walking.
Nothing. Please keep our little village little! This is not Univ of GA!
Offer trash pick-up.
People to clean up around their houses and lots.
Police monitoring of speeding and littering should be increased
Rental policy make the rules and abide by them. Here again, apathy reigns.
Snow removal for residents. Residents would pay for contract service.
Speed limits are not consistent. Some are too low.

Stricter ordinances regarding noise
The Village leadership should focus more on enforcing existing zoning and other ordinances. Maintaining the status of the Village for existing property owners and residents and NOT worry so much about bringing in more development (high density housing or otherwise multiple resident housing).
To ask the DOT to enforce parked cars along the roadway.
We really have no services other than road maintenance on non state maintained roads and police protection that I know of.
We receive few services. Is it possible that our village property tax go toward development of green spaces, picnic areas, sidewalks, trash pick up, options for internet and cable TV, etc.?
What specifically are the services?
White Pines removed and trees trimmed periodically. Sidewalks. Sewers.

(Question #6): Please share any other comments, information, or suggestions you may have concerning the Village.
SEE IF THE UNIVERSITY WOULD BUY THE OLD GOLF COURSE
Community building vs. lease/use of other places.
Concerned with what is going to happen in the valley. Quite a bit of tree removal and clearing has been taking place, but residents are not aware of any permits that have been granted for building. Many rumors are being thrown around by the developer and others, but it seems they have not gone through the appropriate channels for the development to take place. My biggest concern is that structures will be built without the proper permits, and building codes will be violated. I do not want to see houses or apartments being built below my house or anywhere close. It would be great if a green space could be developed. Is there a way the residents could purchase the land in order to protect their current investments.
Dislike Christian "fish" on village sign--offensive
Electronic sign to promote meetings/events at entrance--clock, temp.
Great neighborhood!
Having lived on both sides and still owning a lot-- I ride around often. It does not look as well-kept as it once was. Road also could use improving. The motel would look sharper if the pool were filled with nice furniture around.
I am concerned about more student housing coming to our neighborhood. Too much traffic and people.
I think the taxes are too high. Also ordinance violations seem inconsistent and personality driven.
I would like to have high speed internet. Also, new sewer.
I would like to see investigation into providing water and sewer by Tuckasegee Water & Sewer-- However, their impact fees could make it prohibitive for residential owners. With so many homes and possible businesses, a deal might be worked out. Also, prohibit parking in the ditch, lawns, shoulders of the road, etc. below Mr. Ron Yount's house. That would stop loud wrecker noises at early morning hours (2AM-4AM). Also, law enforcement officers check traffic around 4PM until 6PM. If they are checking on wild parties, they should begin about 1230AM. Parties do not usually begin then or later.
I would like to see open meetings with residents are invited to discuss issue that concern them or perhaps make suggestions (e.g. the proposed development by the clover leaf group.
Keep residents up to date perhaps via a newsletter of zoning changes and construction plans such as are being started in the valley on April 6 approximately.
Limit growth. Keep it small and quiet.
Our huge concern is the recently proposed development. We thought this was why we incorporated, to prevent further student housing/commercial development. Please do not allow this to happen! Our home will be greatly affected by noise, light, and traffic. Most people who live here don't even know about Vahala. We do not want to be forced to move!
Owners should maintain property or be fined. Too many overgrown areas and trees ready to fall.
Past time for South County Drive repaving by state road (DOT).
Pursue an agenda item that will promote "aging in place"

Thank you
The DOT needs to maintain the state maintained roads better...brush and tree removal and clearance. State maintained roads needs to be repaved.
The original plats identify access areas off roadways in village. Some active, others passive but take advantage of topography. Was used apparently for future services like sewers and runoff water. Some apparent, others less so but all should not be overlooked and seemingly forgotten.
The VFH needs to be careful with what develops in the valley. The current owner of that property is somewhat of a loose cannon and does not seem to understand the development process.
The Village needs more resident participation.
The village seems to be aging. Some of the homes/properties do not look like they are in full repair. I'd like to see efforts to being together the village as neighbors. I'm afraid when we moved from a Home Owners' Association to the Village Council, we have lost connectivity with each other. In fact, council members cannot even speak freely in fear of finding their statements (mis)quoted in the paper and/or in violation of meeting "laws." What happened to the day when we looked out for each other as neighbors and could speak freely?
Trash by house/units
VFH needs a gathering and social place for public meetings and events.
What does WCU have to do with Forest Hills?
Would really like water and sewer and underground utilities. That would make our neighborhood more desirable.