

Community Surveys in Albemarle County

Perspectives on Planning, Preservation,
and Natural Resources from 1994 to 2023



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Location of Survey Reports

Links to the surveys referenced in this report can be found at pecva.org/albemarle-surveys.¹

¹ Albemarle County Surveys are not available through a standard search engine query sans AC 44 input, 2002 and 2020. All surveys from 1994 to the present have been compiled by PEC staff. Links to electronic (digital) copies are available on PEC's website.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research report is to provide a detailed review of community surveys conducted in Albemarle County, Virginia, from 1994 to the present. Specific focus is on survey responses related to the environment, growth management, natural resources, preservation, and rural areas. In addition, the topics of mobility, parks and recreation, and connectivity are outlined and presented.

The surveys reviewed in this report have historically played a crucial role in shaping strategic plans and comprehensive plans in Albemarle County. The results of our findings identify a longstanding and consistently high commitment to growth management policy, preservation of natural resources, and protection of rural area character. Albemarle community members have consistently expressed favorable attitudes toward topics of the environment. Furthermore, respondents support these commitments through existing community services and programs by an overwhelming margin, even indicating a willingness for increased taxes to fund these priorities.

Throughout the current comprehensive plan update process, community members have maintained a focus on natural resource preservation and access, rural area character, and multimodal transportation. The results of our analysis further underscore the priority Albemarle County residents have overwhelmingly given to policies tied to the environment, preservation and smart growth for nearly 30 years. In this time, Albemarle County residents have given high value to policies pertaining to the environment and preservation, access to nature and recreation reinforcing the pivotal role these themes play in the community's ethos and direction.

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Background

As Kelly (2011) acknowledges, surveys are an important part of the community planning process. Surveys often capture viewpoints that are absent from public hearings or issue-focused stakeholder group meetings. While survey techniques vary widely, the author notes that the best way to get representative views is through a professionally managed, randomized controlled survey. A scientifically controlled survey, such as ones carried out by national polling firms or universities, differ significantly from an open survey. Professional surveys use a variety of sampling methods to ensure participants are representative of a larger group.

In the years 1994, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2020, The Center for Survey Research (CSR) at The University of Virginia (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service) performed surveys for Albemarle County. The CSR surveys allowed the Albemarle Board of Supervisors to customize survey questions to include topics such as attitudes toward growth management policy, a question which has not re-appeared in subsequent surveys with the exception of in AC44 questionnaires.

In the years 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 a more standardized approach was taken to Albemarle County surveys. These surveys were conducted by The National Research Council (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The stated purpose of the National Citizen Surveys was to collect responses that could be benchmarked nationally. These surveys capture more general, albeit important, attitudes.

In 2020, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors returned to CSR to provide a community survey. Using similar sample sizes and methods as before, the results of the most recent Albemarle Community Survey affirm the trend of consistent commitment toward topics of the environment. A unique aspect of this survey is the focus on attitudes toward growth, particularly on participant's view toward anticipated effects of future growth and development.

Methodology

The initial step for carrying out this research was to define the scope of the investigation and then to gather the required documents and surveys. A thirty-year timeframe was decided as the appropriate number of years to review, as 1994 was the first year attitudes on pertinent topics began to be collected. We retrieved the needed surveys through a search of our organization's online storage system, cooperation with The Center for Survey Research (CSR), and through searching Albemarle County Board of Supervisors agenda packets, within the County's online records management system.

Survey reports from 1994 to 2020, including AC44 input, were analyzed by the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC). A straightforward tabulation of text and results assisted in developing topical summaries and tables to describe and illustrate the time series. Findings are organized by category (e.g.) quality of life, preservation. Topical summaries expand upon

research findings and provide contextual understanding of the topic itself, supported by peer reviewed or professional publications.

QUALITY OF LIFE

As a general quality measure, respondents of community surveys are often asked to rate the overall quality of life in their community. Although quality of life is a subjective measure, inclusive of an array of community characteristics, open space and access to nature are found to be key predictors of neighborhood quality of life (Russell & Scott, 2019).

Table 1. Albemarle County Residents Reporting on Overall Quality of Life 1994-2020

	On a 1-10 Scale ²					Percent Reporting “excellent” or “good”				
Survey Year	1994	2002	2004	2006	2008	2011	2013	2015	2017	2020
	7.92	8.10	7.96	8.04	8.01	90%	92%	94%	89%	90%

Source: Figure II-2: Mean Quality of Life Rating by Survey Year, Citizen Satisfaction Survey 2008; Figure 3: Rating of Overall Community Quality by Year, The National Citizen Survey Albemarle County 2013 and 2017; Albemarle Community Survey 2020.

Historically the quality of life for residents in Albemarle County is consistently rated “good or excellent.” In the most recent community survey conducted in 2020, respondents were asked to give open-ended feedback to elaborate on why they thought the quality of life in Albemarle County would improve, get worse, or stay the same. Among those who expected quality of life to worsen, one of the most common responses revolved around concerns about growth and development, and prospects of infrastructure investments not keeping pace with growth (Center for Survey Research, 2020).

The National Citizen Surveys from 2011-2017 allowed the National Research Center to use a comparative database of resident’s opinions collected from similar questions for over 500 communities. This allowed results in those years to be benchmarked nationally. In the years 2011 and 2013 Albemarle’s overall quality of life was notably “much higher” than the national

² From 1994 to 2008 surveys conducted by The Center for Survey Research at The University of Virginia asked each respondent, “Please imagine a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the worst possible community in which to live, and 10 represents the best possible community. Where on that scale would you rate Albemarle County as a place to live?” For those years nearly three quarters rated the County’s quality of life an eight or better. The mean of the total responses was used from 1994 to 2008 (2002 Citizen Survey, p.14).

benchmark (NRC, 2017). For reference, a recent community survey of the Hampton Roads region (Old Dominion University, 2022) revealed that about 69 percent of area residents felt the overall quality of life was either good (58.8 percent) or excellent (10.5 percent).

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Growth management attempts to minimize adverse interactions between land uses while maximizing positive ones, improve equitable distribution of the benefits of growth, minimize fiscal burdens, and enhance quality of life (Nelson & Porter, 2005). Growth management within the framework of urban containment is most simply expressed as a line on a map separating urban and rural uses, aiming to curb sprawl. The line can take many forms such as an urban growth boundary, urban service limit/ boundary, or priority growth areas.

In the United States, growth management practices emerged in response to concerns over the adverse social, economic, and ecological impacts associated with twentieth-century development patterns characterized by sprawling low density auto-dependent environments.

The first Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan and growth management policy was introduced in 1971. The stated purpose of the initial growth management was to reduce sprawl by encouraging development within designated development areas, protect natural resources, and provide public services and utilities more efficiently (Albemarle County, 2022). As shown in Table 2 support for this policy has remained stable and the policy relatively unchanged.

Table 2. Albemarle County Residents Opinions on Development Areas

Survey Question:	Percent favorable (Favor Somewhat or Strongly)						
	1994	2002	2004	2006	2008	2011-2017	AC 44
Asked whether they wanted growth to be concentrated in what the County has designated to be development areas, while restricting growth in rural areas	90%of County households believed that the current growth management policy was a good approach p57.	78.7%	69.9%	72.6%	75.3%		75% (37% - say the current growth management policy <i>somewhat</i> captures my vision)

Source: *The 2002-2008 opinions come from page 37 of the 2008 Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Opinions on development areas were not collected from 2011-2020. AC44 source from Q1 “How well does the current Growth Management Policy (below) capture your vision for the future of Albemarle County.”*

Development Area Opinions Since 1994

In 1994, respondents were presented with this summary of the current growth management policy:

The County’s Comprehensive Plan currently includes a growth management policy. Under this policy, the County is attempting to concentrate growth into “growth areas,” in order to make services more efficient and limit the sprawl of development. The County is attempting to limit growth in rural areas, in order to protect farmland, natural resources, water quality and open space.

Respondents were then asked if they thought the above policy was a good approach to use in relation to growth. In 1994, 90 percent of County households believed that the current growth management policy was a good approach. In 1994, only nine percent of County residents did not support the current policy shown above (1994 Albemarle County Planning Needs Survey, pages 50-52).

From 2002 to 2008, support for growth management remained consistent and highly supportive. In 2008, to evaluate the general population’s opinion about growth management policies, residents of Albemarle County were asked:

“While the County can’t stop growth, it can take measures to manage it. County policy attempts to concentrate growth in areas designated for growth and increased services. Do you favor or oppose efforts to direct growth into these areas of the County while restricting development in the rural areas?”

The policy was worded in two different ways in 2006 in order to determine whether the label given to the designated areas would affect citizen support. Since no appreciable difference was found, the present wording of the question above was adopted. (2008 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, page 37).

The 2022 AC44 process marked a return to asking participants about development areas. Participants were asked:

“Where do you think the County should direct new residential and business growth over the next 20 years?”

Responses to the question above were as follows:

- 352 Respondents: “In the Current Development Areas”
- 224 Respondents: “In Rural Area locations with existing businesses and/or community centers (e.g. rural villages or crossroads communities)”
- 84 Respondents: “In locations currently in Rural Area, by expanding current Development Areas”
- 57 Respondents: “Other (please specify)”

As shown in Table 2, please note that 75% of respondents reported support for the current growth management policy during the Plan for Growth - Current Policy and Priorities Survey. This is far more consistent with the historic responses on growth management since 1994, demonstrating remarkable consistency for nearly 30 years.

Overall Albemarle County residents are consistently concerned with growth issues. Though they are less satisfied with efforts to manage growth in general, there has nevertheless been broad and sustained support for this specific policy of directing growth to designated development areas.

LAND PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

Albemarle County has the most protected land of any Virginia county (NBC29, 2023). The success of Albemarle land conservation has been observed by professional practitioners and researchers. McMahon (2010) writing of Bundoran Farm acknowledged “with 90 percent of the farm’s acreage put under a proven system of easements and deed restrictions designed to ensure the beauty, character, and vitality of the land in perpetuity” the site can flourish.

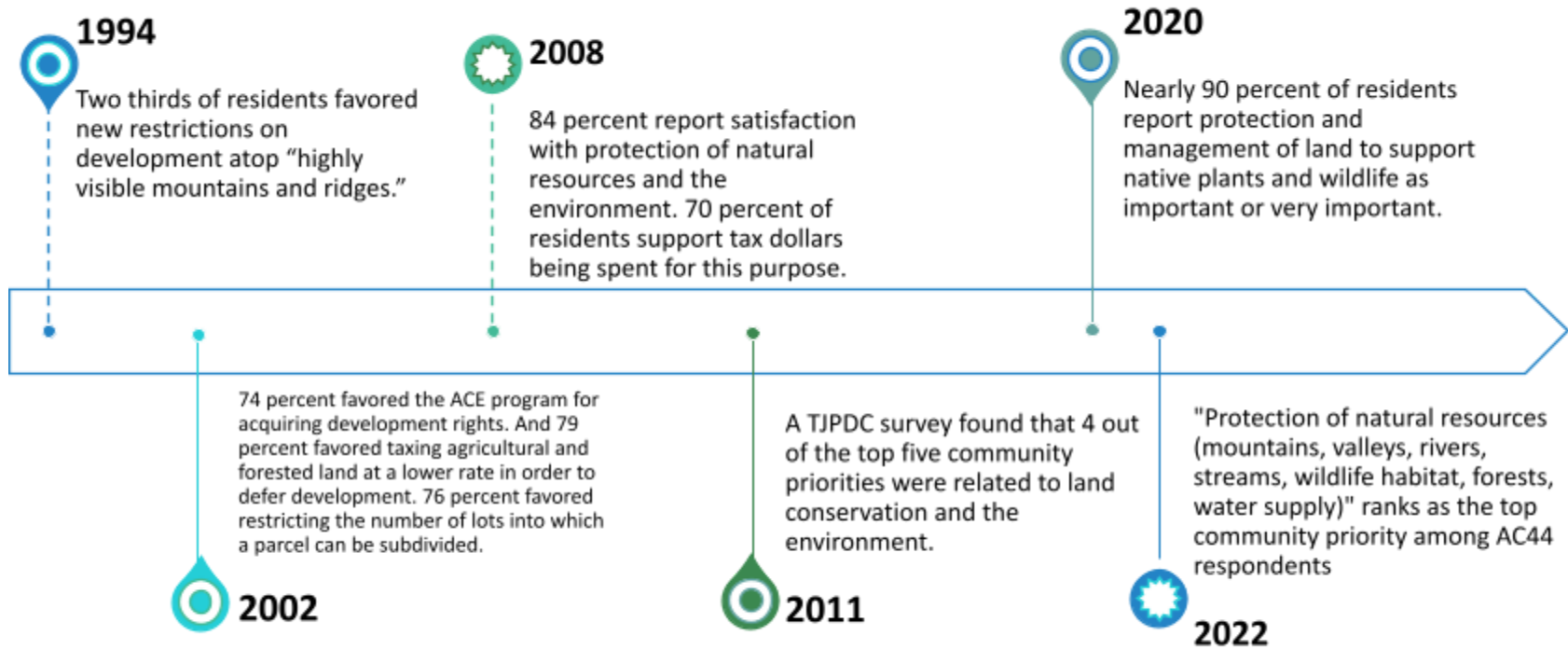
The success of land conservation efforts in Albemarle appears to contribute positively toward residents’ overall satisfaction with the environment and prevailing support for these programs.

The significance of land preservation was highlighted in the 1994 Albemarle County Planning Needs Survey, wherein participants were asked to prioritize a list of 25 goals. Notably, the

goals "preserving natural resources and open space" and "preserving farmland and forested land" were ranked fourth and fifth in importance (Center for Survey Research, 1994). The survey results played a fundamental role in shaping the county's strategic plan and comprehensive plan. Over time, the emphasis on land preservation has continued to be strongly supported among Albemarle residents, as depicted in Figure 1.

In 2015, the "overall natural environment" emerged as the most positively evaluated aspect of Albemarle's community characteristics with 92 percent satisfaction. Satisfaction with the natural environment consistently emerges as one of the most positive community features according to Albemarle's residents, as shown in Table 3.

Figure 1. A Commitment to Land Conservation in Albemarle County Timeline of Survey Attitudes From 1994-2022



Source: Center for Survey Research (1994-2020); 1994 p. xiv; 2002 page 10, 2008 Table III-10: Natural and Historic Resources p25, 2020 Figure 8. Importance of tax allocation across various topic areas p19. TJPDC (2011) Community Priorities Questionnaire Findings. 2022 AC44 Plan for Growth Current Policy and Priorities Questionnaire p 36.

Ratings of Natural Environment and Preservation 2011-2017

Table 3 combines the environmental questions asked during the 2011-2017 survey period. The last two rows of the table show the importance respondents gave to the respective community characteristic, whereas the first three rows indicate net satisfaction with the community characteristic. The quality of the overall natural environment is highly rated while preservation and open space are less so. However, as shown in Table 3, the last two rows indicate significant support to enhance these community characteristics. A potential conclusion of these results is that while the Albemarle public is supportive of natural landscapes and preservation, they would like to have more enhancement and access to these areas, particularly open space. Survey results by comp plan area from 2015 and 2017 are presented in Table 4, and further support the shared community interest in land preservation.

Table 3. Ratings of Albemarle’s Natural Environment by Year (Excellent or Good), last two rows by importance (Essential, Very Important, Somewhat Important -net).

Community Characteristic	2011	2013	2015	2017
Quality of overall natural environment in Albemarle County	88%	89%	92%	91%
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmland and greenbelts	61%	66%	70%	62%
Rating of Open Space	76%	75%	70%	66%
Protecting the rural character of the county ³		96%	77%	79% ⁴
Protecting natural resources and the environment		98%		79%

Source: Figure 43: Ratings of The Community’s Natural Environment by Year (NRC, 2013) Albemarle Citizen Survey, p 27; (NRC, 2017) Albemarle Citizen Survey.

³ In 2013 this was a custom question using a Likert scale from essential, to very important, somewhat important, and not at all important. Ninety-six percent of responses from that year reported protecting the rural character of the county as important (40% essential, 34% very important, 20% somewhat important, 6% not at all important). The same applies for the row below. From NRC 2013 Survey, p.53.

⁴ Percent of overall reporting “preservation of the rural area” as either essential or very important (NRC Albemarle County 2017 Survey: Comparisons by Demographic Subgroups, p 19).

Table 4. Satisfaction Ratings of Albemarle’s Natural Environment by Comp Plan Area, 2015 and 2017 Only.

Survey Year	2015				2017			
	Urban Ring	Rural Areas	Other developed areas	Overall	Urban Ring	Rural Areas	Other developed areas	Overall
Overall appearance of Albemarle County	85%	88%	89%	87%	87%	86%	90%	88%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	74%	94%	96%	87%	90%	90%	89%	90%
Quality of overall natural environment in Albemarle County	88%	80%	77%	82%	92%	85%	95%	91%
Preservation of the rural area	78%	76%	76%	77%	76%	79%	82%	79%
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	62%	73%	74%	70%	56%	60%	70%	62%

Source: Table 31 of NRC (2015) Albemarle County Citizen Survey: Comparisons by Geographic Subgroups and Table 34 of NRC (2017) Albemarle County Citizen Survey: Comparisons by Geographic Subgroups: “How important, if at all, are the following services for Albemarle County to provide? (Percent rating as “essential” or “very important”).

RURAL AREA

Over the years, Albemarle County residents have demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting the rural character of the county. In 2011, a survey conducted by the TJPDC showed that for residents of Albemarle County and the city of Charlottesville, the most important community priority was "Limiting rural area development," indicating a clear preference for safeguarding the rural landscape (TJPDC, 2011). In 2007 Charlottesville Tomorrow conducted a survey to assess voter's views on the rural countryside and community infrastructure. The focus on specific aspects of Albemarle's rural countryside offers a detailed view of the overwhelming favorability of the county's countryside and support for local government to play a role in safeguarding the rural area through specific policies, as shown in Table 5.

Albemarle residents have historically supported allowing "localized rural services such as country stores, post offices, etc., in traditional rural communities." Nearly 96 percent of residents strongly or somewhat supported this item in 2002 (page 30).

Table 5. 2007 Statements about Albemarle's Rural Countryside by Percent Agreement (Strongly and Somewhat)

Statement about Albemarle's rural countryside	
I enjoy seeing the countryside when I drive my car	98.8%
I value our farms for horses, cattle, and crops	95.7%
I value our rural countryside as a source of clean drinking water	94.3%
I enjoy hiking, walking, hunting, birding, or biking in the countryside	92.6%
Government has a role to play establishing fair policies that set the physical and economic conditions for development in the rural countryside	85.4%
In order to permanently protect rural land from development I'd be willing to pay a bit more in real estate property taxes	57.5%

Source: Charlottesville Tomorrow (2007) Voters' views on the rural countryside, community infrastructure, and satisfaction with local government leadership on these issues.

These sentiments were further supported when "Preservation of the rural area" was ranked as the most important service provided by the county, with approximately 8 in 10 respondents stating it was very important or essential in the 2017 National Citizen Survey (p.13 Community Livability Report). In the 2013 National Citizen Survey for Albemarle County 94 percent of participants felt that "protecting the rural character of the county" was important - (40 percent) essential, (34 percent) very important, or (20 percent) somewhat important (Question 22a, 2013 Report of Results page 61).

How The Community Has Ranked Priority Areas: Comparing 1994 to 2022

In 1994 the CSR asked respondents to rate thirteen of the following twenty-five goals at random (from very important, to somewhat important, and not too important). This allowed researchers to establish a rank from most important to least important. The results were used to develop strategic plan goals that have been illustrated in Table 5. The satisfaction with meeting those goals is illustrated in Table 6.

- High quality education in the public schools
- Bringing more jobs to our area
- Improving the quality of housing
- Making housing more affordable for people of lower income
- Preserving natural resources and open space
- Promoting economic growth in the area
- Providing more parks and recreation facilities
- Making the area's neighborhoods and streets safer
- Expanding cultural and entertainment opportunities
- Making the cost of living more reasonable
- Increasing the racial and cultural diversity of neighborhoods
- Extending and improving water and sewer service
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Providing better public transportation buses, JAUNT, etc; not private autos
- Controlling the rate of growth of our area
- Expanding social services offered by our local governments
- Improving medical and health services in the area
- Keeping taxes at or below their current level
- Creating a better sense of community between the University, Charlottesville, and Albemarle County
- Keeping future growth of the University focused within the U.Va Grounds
- Preserving historic buildings and places
- Preserving farmland and forested land
- Promoting tourism in our area
- Protecting water quality in reservoirs, streams, and wells
- Preserving the freedom of property owners to use their land as they want

The community goals outlined above first appeared in CSR's 1994 Survey and have consistently appeared in subsequent surveys. In addition to ranking services by importance, residents have

also been asked whether they would support higher taxes for these services. While the phrasing of priorities may differ each year, the fundamental areas listed above have largely remained unchanged over the survey years and have significantly influenced the development of the county's strategic plans and comprehensive plans.

Table 5. Goals for the Strategic Plan Ranked by Importance (percent "Very Important")

<i>Goal:</i>	2002	2004	2006	2008
Protect natural resources and environment			81.1	70.3
To manage growth in the County			77.4	68.4
To protect water resources	85.2		92.2	88.8
To protect and preserve County's rural character			75.9	62.9
Preserving natural resources and open space	65.1			
Preserving farmland and forested land	63.8			

Source: Center for Survey Research (2002) Table 3.1 Goals for the Strategic Plan Ranked By Mean Importance page 16; (2006) Table 3-2: Percent "Very Important" for Service Items in 1994, 2002, 2006 p. 17; (2008) Table III: Service Items Ranked by Importance p.12

<u>1994 Planning Goals Ranked by Importance</u>	
1. Quality Education	6. Reduce Traffic
2. Water Quality	7. Control Taxes
3. Public Safety	8. Control Inflation
4. Natural Resources	9. Affordable Housing
5. Farms & Forests	10. Historic Preservation

Source: Figure III.1 Top Ten Planning Goals for Albemarle County Households (1994, Albemarle County Planning Needs Survey, p.19)

The AC44 Plan for Growth - Current Policy and Priorities survey further reinforced the community's dedication to the goals first identified in 1994. Respondents were asked to prioritize updates to the County's Growth Management Policy, and "Protection of natural resources (mountains, valleys, rivers, streams, wildlife habitat, forests, water supply)" emerged

as the highest-ranking priority among respondents with an overwhelming majority of responses (62). Additionally, "infrastructure & utilities planning (public water and sewer, roads and sidewalks, broadband, etc.)" was recognized as the second most important area, indicating a continued emphasis on sustainable development.

Table 6. shows resident satisfaction with the government's effort to achieve its strategic planning efforts, including protection of the County's rural character for years 2004, 2006, and 2008.

Table 6. Percent Satisfied with Goals in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008.

	Percent Satisfaction (Very and Somewhat) - net satisfaction			
	2002	2004	2006	2008
<u>Overall Satisfaction Government Efforts:</u>				
To protect natural resources and environment	80.5	74.0	78.3	84.0
To manage growth in the County	64.3	56.4	55.6	60.8
To protect water resources		71.4	79.4	75.7
To protect and preserve County's rural character		67.6	65.7	77.1
To preserve open space	79.0	63.7		

Source: Center for Survey Research (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008); (2002) Table 4.7 and 4.8 Ranked List of Satisfaction Items page 23-24; (2004) Table 4-8 Ranked Listed of Satisfaction Items page 27; Figure 4-6 Satisfaction with Efforts to Protect Water Resources, page 25; (2008) Table 3-5 Ranked List of Satisfaction with Goals page 19.

PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES – WATER

Water quality and the protection of water sources is perhaps the most consistently elevated community priority for the past thirty years.

The 1994 Albemarle County Planning Needs Survey first identified “protecting water quality in reservoirs, streams, and wells” as the second most important future planning goal for the

County to pursue, from a list of 25 options. The planning goals were adopted as part of the 1998 strategic plan. In 2002 the same water quality item received nearly 99 percent of respondents rating it as either “very important” or “somewhat important.”

As shown in Table 5, protection of water resources were reintroduced as topics for ranking strategic plan goals and remained high priorities for 2006 and 2008.

During the current comprehensive plan update process when asked “How important are the following resources in our community?” respondents had identified:

1. “Drinking water and water supply” as the most important resource (508 important)
2. “Healthy Streams” as the second most important resource (494 important)

From Tell Us About Your Needs & Priorities for the Future: (January 28, 2022 to March 19, 2023)

PARKS AND RECREATION

“While respondents appreciated the existing parks and green space available in Albemarle, which they consider an asset of living in the area, they encouraged the expansion of more parks, walking paths and bike trails, and other recreation opportunities.” From open feedback on Albemarle County’s allocation of tax dollars (CSR, 2020; page 30).

Albemarle County residents have consistently ranked parks and recreational facilities highly as important government services, as demonstrated in Table 7. And from 2002-2020 they have expressed consistent satisfaction with County parks and recreation, as shown in Table 8 and 9. In 2020 Albemarle County residents rated “County Parks” as the fourth highest item out

of 20 services for its overall quality with 81 percent finding the service either “excellent” or “good.” Overall public support for Albemarle parks and recreation is further reinforced by a desire to expand upon the services currently offered.

The 2018 Albemarle County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessments details specific priorities. For example, participants identified “Develop walking/hiking/biking/equestrian trails” and “Acquire new parkland in underserved areas” as the two actions most important for the county of Albemarle to develop. Similarly walking and biking trails were found to be the most used and valued recreational item provided to Albemarle County residents, emphasizing a well-documented trend of community favorability toward access to nature and more broadly an appreciation of the County’s natural assets.

Table 7. Albemarle County Residents on “Providing parks and recreational space” by percent importance 1994-2008

Survey Year	1994	2002	2006	2008	2020 ⁵
Very important	30.5	46.0	68.6	67.3	34.4
Important or somewhat important	49.5	45.2	24.8	22.4	57.8
Net Importance	80	91.2	93.4	89.7	98.6

Source: Center for Survey Research (1994, 2002, 2006, 2008); (1994) Table III.1 Importance of Long-term Community Planning Goals p. 18; (2002) Table 3.1 Goals for the Strategic Plan Ranked by Mean Importance Rating p. 16; (2006) Table 3-13 Other Service Items p. 25; (2008) Table III-10: Natural and Historic Resources p. 25. (2020) Figure 8. Importance of tax allocation across various topic areas.

Table 8. Satisfaction Ratings of Parks and Recreational Space in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2020.

Survey Year	2002	2004	2006	2008	2020
Provide parks and recreational space	91.9	88.4	90.4	89.7	81

Source: Center for Survey Research, 2008). Table III-6: Percent Satisfied for Service Items in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008. CSR (2020) Figure 5 Quality Rating of Albemarle County service p.16.

⁵ In the 2020 Albemarle Community Survey, "important" and "slightly important" were introduced as response options for "tax allocation across various topic areas." Notably, 38.1% of respondents selected "important," while 19.7% chose "somewhat important," and 6.4% opted for "slightly important." These "important" and "somewhat important" are combined into the third-row total, while "slightly important" was grouped with the other three response options in the fourth-row total.

Table 9. Satisfaction Ratings of Recreational Opportunities 2011-2017 by percent “Excellent” or “Good”

Survey Year	2011	2013	2015	2017
County Parks	92	86	84	87
Recreation Centers or Facilities	77	73	79	76
Visited a County Park	83	84	80	83

Source: Figure 53: Ratings of Parks and Recreation Services By Year (NRC, 2013), Table 31: Governance – Recreation and Wellness (NRC, 2015).

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

Albemarle residents consistently show support for enhancing active transportation and connectivity options and have indicated a willingness to increase taxes to fund these initiatives. From 1994-2022 survey support for the items related to the topic have gradually evolved into leading

“Residents would like the County to increase and improve bike lanes, put in more walking and biking trails, increase street lighting, and either provide curbside recycling pickup or increase the number of recycling centers throughout the county.” (CSR, 2020) from Executive Summary.

community priorities. Beginning in 1994, homeowners and renters were first asked if it was worthwhile to invest in sidewalks and walkways; 54.5 percent of homeowners and 67.6 percent of renters supported the investment (Planning Needs Survey 1994, p. 87). Compared to the 2020 Albemarle County Community Survey where 79% of respondents considered allocating tax revenue for "improvements to roads, bike/pedestrian paths, and public transit" as either "important" or "very important" – emerging as the leading category of tax allocation by rated importance.

While residents of Albemarle are consistently interested in making active transportation safer, more viable, and connected, they are considerably less satisfied with government’s effort to achieve this outcome, as demonstrated in Table 10 and 11. From 2002 to 2008 residents were

notably less satisfied with government's efforts to “ensure safety for walkers and bicyclists” than they were for governments “efforts to make it easy to get around by car.”

The commitment to enhanced mobility options goes beyond financial support. The community places a significant emphasis on walkability and bicycle infrastructure, with a focus on safety and reducing single occupant vehicle trips.

Table 10. Satisfaction with Mobility by percent 2002-2008

Survey Year	2002	2004	2006	2008
Ensure safety for walkers and bicyclists	68.4	55.3	68.0	71.8
Make it easy to get around by car	82.5	69.4	71.0	77.7

Source: Center for Survey Research (2008). Table III-6: Percent Satisfied for Service Items in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008.

Table 11. Ratings of Transportation Modes in Albemarle County 2011-2017 (Percent Positive)

Survey Year	2011	2013	2015	2017
Travel by car	56	50	55	57
Travel by bicycle	33	36	27	27
Ease of walking	40	44	45	35
Paths and walking trails	52	57	60	60

Source: Figure 6: Ratings of Transportation in Community by Year of NRC (2013) Albemarle County Citizen Survey; NRC (2015) and (2017) Dashboard Summary of Findings National Citizen Survey.

Access and Barriers

According to the 2020 Albemarle County Community Survey, nearly 85 percent of Albemarle residents found accessing greenway trails convenient (46 percent very convenient and 38.7 percent somewhat convenient). Whereas only 45.4 percent found accessing biking lanes to be convenient (14.5 percent very convenient and 30.9 percent somewhat convenient). The assets for which the largest share of respondents encountered barriers included sidewalks (28%) and bike lanes (23%). Specifically, of those who used bike lanes 65 percent encountered barriers of those who used public transportation 53

percent. The results indicate that a substantial number of County residents would like to use alternative modes of transport if barriers could be reduced and access even further provided.

CONCLUSION

The historical significance of these surveys in shaping Albemarle County's strategic plans and comprehensive plans is evident, as they have consistently highlighted a robust commitment to preservation of natural resources, access to nature, multimodal travel, and protection of rural area character. The continued favorability and satisfaction expressed towards these categories as government services and guiding principles for the county to consider, underscore the enduring importance accorded to environmental policies and smart growth principles by Albemarle County residents. Furthermore, the alignment of survey findings with the ongoing comprehensive plan update underscores the continued relevance of these priorities. Over the span of nearly three decades, Albemarle County residents have demonstrated the value given to policies pertaining to the environment and preservation, access to nature and recreation reinforcing the pivotal role these themes play in the community's ethos and direction.

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