

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results for the Town of Cary's 2020 Biennial Citizen Survey were exceptionally positive and reflect the best ratings the Town has earned for any survey period. A total of 400 residents were surveyed and the resulting margin of error was $\pm 4.89\%$. The telephone survey methodology included listed, unlisted, and wireless numbers in the sampling frame with 92.8% of the numbers contacted being wireless.

The **Town Government staff** received very high marks for the seven service dimensions measured with no grades falling below A-. The grades improved for courteous (A- to A) and promptness of response (B+ to A-) with the grades remaining unchanged (A-) for helpful, professionalism, knowledgeable, and quality of customer service. Fairness was assessed for the first time in this survey and earned an A-. The overall combined ratings earned this year represent the highest to date for the staff.

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The **cleanliness and appearance of public areas** continued to earn exceptionally strong ratings from the respondents with a degree of improvement. The grades increased from B+ to A- for bus shelters, streets, and median/roadsides while the grades for parks and greenways remained unchanged at the A level.

The Town's rating improved for how well they **maintain traffic signals** (B to B+) and streets (C+ to B-). The maintenance of sidewalks remained a very solid B. How well Cary maintains traffic signs and street pavement markings were measured for the first time this year with impressive grades of A- and B+, respectively. The grade of B- for streets represents the highest rating the Town has earned and this area has historically been one of the Town's lowest rated in previous surveys. The streets and roads mentioned most frequently as needing attention were Maynard Road and High House Road.

The **Cary Police Department** garnered excellent ratings this year which have improved across all service dimensions. The grades increased for fairness (A- to A), courteous (A- to A), competence (A- to A), response time (B+ to A), and problem solving (B+ to A-). These are the best combined marks the Police Department has earned by a substantial margin. The **Cary Fire Department** continued to earn the best overall ratings for any department examined in the survey. The department earned A+ grades for fairness, courteous, competence, response time, and problem solving. In addition, the **Parks & Recreation Department** received excellent ratings again this year also the highest the depart-

ment has earned. The grade improved for cost or fee (A- to A) with all the other grades remaining at the A level for facility quality, overall experience, program quality, instructor/coach quality, and ease of registration.

The respondents were positive in their rating of **Cary as a place to live** giving the Town a mean score of 8.30 (8.15 in 2018) on the 9-point scale. This would equate to a grade of A-. There were 98.7% of the responses on the "desirable" side of the scale and only 0.3% on the "undesirable" side. The respondents also perceived the **quality of life** in Cary as improving. While most of the respondents (52.3%) perceived the quality of life as unchanged, the percentage on the "better" side of the scale exceeded the "worse" side 39.8% versus 7.9% (30.2% versus 12.9% in 2018). The **overall quality of the services provided** by Cary earned a grade of B+ (B in 2018) and the overall value of the services provided for the taxes and fees paid earned at C+(B- in 2018). The respondents were also asked if they would **recommend Cary as a place to relocate**. There were 90.0% who would recommend Cary with 6.8% responding "maybe" and only 3.3% responding "no." These percentages were virtually unchanged from 2018.

When asked the **most important issue facing Cary**, the primary response was growth-related concerns with 132 comments. Other key issues were traffic (61 comments), affordable housing (23 comments), schools (21 comments), infrastructure (17 comments), and cutting down trees/greenpace (14 comments). In 2018, the key issues were growth-related concerns (147 comments), traffic (75 comments), schools (32 comments), streets/roads (19 comments), crime/safety (18 comments), and infrastructure (18 comments).

There was an increased **perception of feeling safe** in Cary overall this year. The mean was 8.35 with 99.0% answering on the "safe" side of the scale. This mean has increased from 8.22 in 2018 and represents the highest rating the Town has earned to date.

The top ten major **information sources** (in order) used by the respondents include word-of-mouth, Cary's website, BUD, television, Facebook, Nextdoor, Raleigh News & Observer, radio, Cary Citizen website, and Parks & Recreation Brochure. The top five information sources were unchanged from 2018. The biggest increases among other sources in the top ten were Nextdoor (9th to 6th) and radio (10th to 8th) while the biggest decreases were Cary Citizen website (6th to 9th) and Parks & Recreation Brochure (8th to 10th). Two new sources rated for the first time this year were WAZE (12th) and 311 (20th).

There has been a marked improvement in the **effectiveness of Cary's communication efforts** with citizens as compared to 2018. There was a stronger level of satisfaction for Cary making information available to citizens about important services, projects, issues, and programs. This year's mean was 7.69 (7.49 in 2018)

with 91.2% on the “satisfied” side of the scale this year. This represents the highest mean the Town has earned. In addition, the respondents were satisfied with the opportunities Cary gives citizens to participate in the decision-making process. The mean rose this year from 6.98 to 7.53 with 87.8% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. This also represents the highest mean the Town has earned.

Solid Waste Services continued to receive very good marks this year with improvement for all the curbside collection services. The grades improved for garbage collection (A-to A), yard waste collection (B+to A-), recycling collection (B+to A-), and loose leaf collection (B to A-). This represents the highest overall combined ratings the department has earned.

The **Town Council focus areas** continued to earn good ratings this year with somewhat mixed results. The means improved for two of the focus areas while three other areas declined. The highest level of satisfaction was for the overall job the Town is doing on recreational facilities. The mean this year was 8.17 improving from 8.02 in 2018. There were 96.7% of the respondents on the “satisfied” side of the scale and the grade improved from a B+ to A- representing the highest rating the Town has earned for recreational facilities. The respondents were also satisfied with the Town Council being effective in keeping Cary the best place to live, work, and enjoy. The mean increased from 7.75 to 7.80 with 92.0% on the “effective” side of the scale with the grade improving from B to B+. However, there was a decline for the job the Town is doing on environmental protection. The mean fell from 7.64 to 7.39 with the grade falling from B to B- this year. Even with the decline, there were 86.1% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. There was also a decline in the level of satisfaction with the job the Town is doing on transportation. The mean decreased from 7.36 to 7.02 with the grade falling from B- to C+. There were 81.5% on the “satisfied” side of the scale. Finally, the job the Town is doing on planning & development showed a decline as well with the mean falling from 6.97 to 6.80 while the grade fell from C+ to C with 78.5% on the “satisfied” side of the scale.

In terms of **neighborhood characteristics**, the highest rated aspect was neighborhood safety which rated an A- unchanged from 2018. This was followed by neighborhood desirability improving to A- (B+in 2018). Neighborhood strength also improved to a B+ (B in 2018). Finally, neighborhood community connection improved as well earning a grade of B (B- in 2018).

The respondents were again asked about the job the Town is doing in providing housing choices to accommodate different preferences. The Town rated highest in providing for households with children with a grade of B- falling from B in 2018. The grades were unchanged for households without children (B-), members of the local workforce (C+), young professionals

(C+), and multigenerational households (C+). Ranking last was housing for seniors with a grade of C that has fallen from C+ in 2018.

There were 87.3% (89.0% in 2018) of the respondents who had visited **downtown Cary** in the past year. The three major reasons they visited downtown was for restaurants, library, and shops/shopping. Other prominent reasons included visiting the brewery/beer store, events, parks, and visiting/pleasure/fun, Art/Art Center, water fountain, quaint/historic feel/atmosphere and for business/work. Those who had not visited downtown indicated the major reasons given were no interest/don't like it, too distant from West Cary, and schedule/work/busy.

Lastly, the respondents were asked is it important to me to **give back to my community**. There was overwhelming support for this statement with a mean of 8.36 (8.43 in 2018) with 97.0% on the “agree” side of the scale.

**Overall, the Town of Cary
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and 3 grades in the B range.**

In conclusion, there were 13 grades that improved this year, 17 grades that remained unchanged, and no grades declined among the 30 common service dimensions (up from 27 in 2018 due to new questions). The common service dimensions include the core ratings for government staff, public areas, maintenance, police department, fire department, and parks & recreation. In terms of means, there were 18 means that increased, 9 means that decreased, and 3 remained unchanged. However, the mean decreases were generally small and did not result in any grade reductions. The final average for the 30 graded Cary service dimensions was 8.43 which corresponds with a grade of A and this is the first time the Town has achieved that grade level. For comparison, the mean in 2018 was 8.37 (A-), 2016 was 8.30 (A-), 2014 was 8.18 (A-), 2012 was 8.36 (A-), 2010 was 8.25(A-), in 2008 was 8.19(A-), and in 2006 was 7.92 (B+). Due to the addition of new questions, these means reflect comparisons to the common service dimensions from the previous survey period. Overall, the Town of Cary continues to receive an excellent report card from its citizens with 27 grades in the A range and 3 grades in the B range. It was very impressive that no grades fell below a B- this year among the common service dimensions.