Resident Survey Engagement

Monica Croskey Chaparro
Assistant Budget Director, Strategy & Performance
Office of Performance and Innovation
Budget & Management Services Department
Complementing the Survey

• **Every method** of scientific inquiry is subject to limitations and choosing among research methods inherently involves trade-offs\(^1\).
  
  • Unlike focus groups or interviews, one of the trade-offs with survey research is data that are produced are likely to lack details or depth on the topic being investigated\(^2\).
  
  • However, unlike focus groups or interviews, representative sample surveys document that a perception is widespread enough to be observable in the general population, and allow researchers to explore whether certain perceptions vary by people’s attributes\(^2\).
  
• The inevitability of research limitations has led many methodologists to advocate the use of multiple methods and to insist that substantive conclusions can be most confidently derived by triangulating across measures and methods\(^1\)...
Triangulating Methods

ETC Survey

- Random sampling
- Representative sample
- Statistically significant
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Focus Groups & Interviews
Tabling
What we asked

Mixture of general questions that gave residents an opportunity to share a broad perspective of opinions as well as neighborhood-focused questions that gave residents an opportunity to reflect on the quality of life where they lived.

1. What do you think about how the City involves people in your community in local decision making?
2. What kinds of local issues do you think are most important for the City to keep you informed about?
3. What do you think about how quickly and effectively the City responds when there are problems with City services?
4. How do you feel about Durham’s appearance and the role the City plays in maintaining it? What about your neighborhood?
5. How do you feel about how the City protects the streams and lakes in your community?
6. What do you think about the opportunities for play in your neighborhood?
7. If there’s one thing you think the City of Durham could do to make the quality of life in your neighborhood better, what would that be?
Engagement Methods

We spoke with over 100 people in the course of our engagement.

7 INTERVIEWS
6 in English
1 in Spanish

5 FOCUS GROUPS
1 McDougald Terrace & Pearsontown residents
1 Braggtown residents
1 NCCU students
1 Latinx LGBTQ Initiative (Spanish)
1 Mother’s group at El Centro Hispano (Spanish)

3 TABLING EVENTS
1 Durham County Department of Social Services
1 Durham Bus Station
1 PAC 4 meeting
Engagement Demographics

GENDER
- Male: 62%
- Female: 38%

RACE/ETHNICITY
- Black: 15%
- White: 65%
- Latino: 18%
- Other (American Indian and Asian): 2%

AGE
- Under 18: 29%
- 18-29: 21%
- 30-45: 45%
- 46-65: 2%
- Over 65: 3%

WARDS
- Ward 1: 37%
- Ward 2: 15%
- Ward 3: 48%
What we asked...

- Local decision-making
- City’s responsiveness
- Opportunities for play
- Being informed
- City + neighborhood appearance
- Lakes + stream protection
- 1 thing to improve QOL

What people shared...

- Opportunities for Play + Safety
- Police
- Communication + Participation
- Gun Violence
- Transportation + Transit
- Growth + Affordable Housing + Displacement
- Relationship & Trust Building
Many residents echoed the sentiment that when a recreation center does exist, it is a real source of community building.

“One of the biggest pluses is we have the Walltown rec center. It has an awesome open field area, playground, everything you could ask for. It’s an excellent intersection for the community. Durham tends to be socially segregated. But there, you see all kinds of people playing basketball together… the only divider is English and non-English speakers. It fulfills the purpose of bringing people together.”
Opportunities for Play: Affordability + Accessibility

Even with the sliding scale of costs, some residents cannot afford to enroll their children in Parks and Rec programming. Additionally, some residents spoke about not having access to rec centers, either because of closings or transportation challenges. Some residents remember a time when mobile recreation opportunities came to them and hope that this could happen again.

“We’re fortunate to have Holton Career and Resource Center; now that all the programs are free it gives people an opportunity to participate in the program without worrying about cost.”

“They want these kids to have a Play More pass when you have parents struggling to pay for rent and food each month. $10 to $15 a month is a lot because they need to pay for gas. Yeah, it’s a sliding scale but your version of sliding scale is not my version of sliding scale.”

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Residents often spoke about the lack of access to safe recreation opportunities and how this is directly connected to people's perception of safety and the lack thereof in their neighborhoods.

“They say an idle mind is a devil's workshop. When they have nothing to do they think of something they shouldn't be into. A rec center would probably save them because they would be in the rec center doing something positive. I know I would want my kids in the rec center rather than walking the streets. If they make the rec like how it was, they wouldn't have to worry about the drive-bys. They would be in rec center.”

“Make Durham safer. My children are not allowed to play outside because I worry for their safety. There are too many robberies.”

“There are no community programs for children. Due to the changing population in Durham the City went into Recreation Centers and closed them somewhere in the 2005-2009 timeframe. There are kids who don't have a safe place to do homework or use computers.”
Reducing crime, particularly gun violence, was a top priority for many residents we engaged.

“Do something with this crime. I was at the bus stop and somebody started shooting. That’s scary! It’s a lot of stupid stuff because my cousin got killed. We got to stop this.”

“I don’t really have a problem with the City but all the shooting going on. They shoot at Police in broad daylight.”

“We need to reduce the amount of shootings and focus on safety.”

“North Durham--all my people are dying. The police needs to get on their guard.”
Residents frequently mentioned wanting a greater police presence and better response times for their neighborhoods.

“Seems like y’all unorganized. When people get shot, it takes too long to respond.”

“The police barely come and when they do show up, they circle the block. They might wait for a minute and then they leave.”

“We need more security. We need more police here or a police station, there’s one on Broadway that we don’t need.”

“My neighborhood is very dangerous. There is not enough policing and a lot of drinking and loitering. The City should monitor that better.”
Many residents voiced the desire for Police Officers who have meaningful and sustained relationships with community members. Residents who have community policing in their neighborhoods indicated that this model works.

“Back in the day, the police would come to neighborhoods and talk to the people, they were engagement officers. They'd talk to the kids. I'm not blaming the PD, but they just do a drive by and leave. You have to know the people.”

“Do you think the community wants more police? They want more security. What can we do to make people feel more secure? It could be more police but there needs to be more conversation with the community and the police, develop more of a relationship. It’s not that Latinos are the problem, but that we want to be safer. There need to be appropriate programs with communication. This is a conversation we’re all having.”

“Our engagement officers for McDougald Terrace are A1. Our officers know who belong there and who don't. They know our names. They hosted our bingo nights. We begged the City to come cut down the trees and the police came out in plain clothes and cut down those trees themselves, just so we could see past the brush.”
Residents often mentioned the desire for more pedestrian infrastructure, traffic calming strategies/devices, and bus service options.

“I think the city can do a better job with transportation. I live in the homeless shelter and have to take the bus everywhere like doctor’s visits and over here (Durham Health and Human Service) because I have a free bus pass, but only for those locations. I have to walk everywhere else, like to get groceries and stuff like that.”

“It’s sometimes difficult to use the light at Lavender and Roxboro to get across to the relative safety of the surface streets at Northgate Park. Figuring out a way to do traffic calming on Roxboro would improve the quality of life in this neighborhood significantly.”

“Y’all can add some sidewalks. The bus stops at 7PM and that’s not cool because sometimes I get off later and then me and my kids have to walk and some stretches of the walk doesn’t have any sidewalks.”

“Get a bus coming to our neighborhood because there are so many seniors and we don’t all drive but we don’t want to bother other people. In Boston, a bus came all the time and went everywhere.”

"Some neighborhoods are deeply transit dependent and high rates of pedestrian utilization and high rates of pedestrian accidents. It is not even about a beauty thing and more about a safety thing."
One of the most frequently voiced frustrations by residents was dissatisfaction with the quality of roads. For some residents, they noted that the persistent lack of response and/or the perception of inaction has led them to give up on reporting issues because they believe it will make no difference.

“The City can do a better job maintaining the roads. Leaving my neighborhood and heading into the city, the roads are the worst compared to the rest of downtown. I personally filed a complaint six months ago & nothing has happened.”

“Our roads and the poor conditions that they are in. there are so many potholes in the city of Durham, it is unreal. And you don’t see any action being done about it. Because we don’t see any response, there are some things we as residents aren’t even calling to report anymore because nothing happens.”

“I live in East Durham in one of the oldest neighborhoods and we have a lot of pot holes and cracked asphalt. People feel like they are off-roading.”
Spanish-speaking residents were consistent and clear in their desire for more information being available in Spanish that is easy to access, and available in various media, formats, and locations.

“What worries me is that in our [Latinx] community, a lot of people don’t use computers, maybe paper would be better. Most people don’t use computers, they are on the phone, or on Facebook.”

“It is very difficult to get support regarding City services in Spanish. I called 911 and there was no one available in Spanish. It was difficult.”

“I go to Holton and it’s free but the information is more in English. There isn’t information for me. If there was information at Compare or La Superior, this would be helpful.”
Residents often cited the City’s website as being insufficient and not user-friendly. Feedback suggests that residents would welcome a wide range of options for communicating information, including more traditional strategies such as print newsletters and text messages.

“I don’t have information unless I seek it. I guess if I went looking on the website, maybe I could find information, but I’d have to know what information I was looking for.”

“It is difficult to find up-to-date and useful information about City services on the website, even for those who are computer-literate.”

“I want to be contacted personally by email or text message.”

“If the website is going to be the gateway, then that is something to address. That website is almost impossible to navigate.”

“One Call - what reason do we have other than calling for the water bill? We should be able to call for resources.”

“I’m all about sustainability but even getting mailed things that say what’s going on and the next events that are happening might be more helpful.”
Residents’ feedback indicates a desire for direct, convenient, and personal ways to participate in local government matters.

“For example, the meeting about the bus route and bus schedule changes, it wasn’t on all buses but it wasn’t posted at the station.”

“The whole bus [schedule/routes] has changed. Why are they not riding on the bus and asking people who take them?”

“Use volunteers more to spread the word. Ask us to help. [Up North] I use to get paid like $9 an hour for some of the volunteer work I would do. The City would go through temp agencies. And we would ride buses all day and help the City spread news and stuff to people.”

“For most working class people whose opinions would hold more weight on the topics the City is engaging about, the meeting times are very inconvenient for working class people, people with small children, or both.”

“NCCU students had the opportunity to meet with City Council. We complained about Fayetteville Street. We learned about how streets are graded. The street has been improved so I believe City Council listens.”
Residents indicated the City is moving in the right direction for improving resident participation. Those who are plugged in spoke to appreciating formal efforts that are underway. Those who were not actively engaged in efforts expressed an appreciation for City staff being out in the community and meeting them where they were to get their feedback.

“I like that you’re here. We always complain that we don’t get a say and look – you’re here. We have no excuse for not stopping by your table.”

“I like this. I like what y’all doing...being out here asking us how we feel.”

“I think there are some good efforts the City is making to try to involve low wealth residents. Engage Durham is a great example. Consistent engagement is what needs to be done better. Even when there isn’t anything specific.”

“My personal experience, I volunteered with PB. That sets me apart as someone more directly involved than some other folks. My thoughts have been well solicited— not necessarily well represented.”

“I think PB is a good process. I hope you all gather enough information to make it even better. It is another way to give people a voice in their neighborhood. Although not all the ideas people provide make it to final round, it was a really good way to give people a voice about their perceptions on what the issues are in their neighborhood. It’s a good starting point.”
Several residents spoke positively about the City’s growth, changing downtown scene, and overall changing image.

“I’m excited about us becoming metropolitan, a country little city that most people don’t know about.”

“I’m loving downtown. They are building up new properties. I heard where it’s gonna be kind of metro and more fast-paced. I love how everything looks downtown.”

“I’ve been here since ’95. The appearance has increased immensely. I’m proud to call it home. I’m glad to come downtown.”
Growth: Affordable Housing + Displacement

“Over the last 5 years, Durham has started to build up beautifully. I see a lot of positive changes and growth opportunities coming out of Durham. What saddens me though is the amount of homelessness and displacement in that. I’d like to see the balance restored so everyone has a decent place to live.”

“Walltown grew out of displacement, and after all their investment, and now that it’s good, they’re going to get kicked out again. The multigenerational experience here is wonderful. I love that the people who are in their 60’s now, who might’ve gotten their homes from their parents... But between rampant gentrification, and a lot of their homes got reassessed at very high tax rates. And predatory real estate has come for them. They don’t know what it takes to make it stop. They’re getting multiple phone calls a week, people show up at their door.”

While residents expressed excitement about changes, there were clear and consistent concerns about how change and growth impacts residents’ ability to remain in their neighborhoods. Residents often cited the desire for Durham to remain accessible for people of all socio-economic backgrounds.

“Y’all need to find a middle ground on housing that’s being built. Build houses for the people who are here. It’s like they build houses for the wealthy who aren’t yet here, and they build the houses to attract them but build houses for people who are already here. What’s the point of working, if you can’t someday have your own? It’s discouraging.”
Some feedback highlights the need for the City to continue building trust and relationships with residents across varied demographic groups.

“Traffic calming, the flashing lights and speed bumps, how are those planned? Who decides where those go. It doesn’t seem equitable. Those are in affluent areas. I want my kids to be just as safe playing in our neighborhood.”

“My next door neighbor is elderly, and drinks literally Gatorade and beer. To hear my neighbor, and maybe this is ‘old Durham’ talking, he felt the water was unsafe. Despite the fact that so much has been said about the drinking water in Durham he still feels that it’s unsafe.”

“They don’t have publications that are open to us. I don’t understand why they put us down and see us as less. If the City had publications and advertisements about their programs in our language in Latino markets that would help.”

“Y’all taken over downtown but only for a certain group of people.”
Resident feedback indicates:

- Residents are concerned about safety, specifically gun violence.
- Recreation centers & opportunities for play are viewed as neighborhood assets that can help address crime; however, crime and perception of lack of safety may be preventing some from participating – as well as other barriers such as cost and transportation.
- Many residents noted a desire for more police presence, better police response times, and stronger relationships with Police.
- When it comes to participation & communication, residents expressed appreciation of and desire for the City to communicate in their language and meet them where they are – whether that be out in the community at existing events, text messages sent to their phones, information mailed to their homes, or publications placed where they shop.
- Residents expressed the desire for better roads, more sidewalks, and more bus service.
- Most residents expressed that they are excited about how Durham is changing and growing but are concerned about how that growth impacts housing affordability.
- Some feedback speaks to (a) some residents’ belief that certain groups receive better or worse City service delivery and (b) the need for the City to continue building relationships and trust.
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