

Community Appearance Survey 1995-96

RALEIGH APPEARANCE COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION

The Raleigh Appearance Commission with the support of the Raleigh City Council sponsored its second community appearance survey in 1995. The first survey, conducted in 1982, resulted in a renewed City Street Tree and Entranceway Planting Program, new landscape standards for private property, billboard/sign regulations and a litter prevention program.

The 1995 survey was distributed to citizens within the city limits of Raleigh as an insert in the News and Observer in the Fall of 1995. Of the 50,000 questionnaires distributed, 2,173 were returned. The response rate for the questionnaire was 4.3%, similar to the 4.5% response to the 1982 survey.

The questionnaire results reflect a self-selected rather than a scientifically-selected sample. The 1995 survey provides the Commission and the City Council with information about how existing programs and regulations are working as well as new initiatives that are needed.

The surveys were analyzed and evaluated by the entire Appearance Commission, with each commissioner tabulating approximately 150 surveys. This process gave the commission a personal sense of the citizens' concerns and an overall feel for what the survey communicated.

The surveys were then given to Joann McDaniel with the NCSU Dept. of Social Sciences who performed an independent evaluation with partner Jim McDaniel at no cost to the commission or the city. Their results corroborated the commission's evaluation.

The results of the NCSU analysis are based upon the 1,888 questionnaires which were actually processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The other 285 questionnaires were not available to the consultants at the time of data processing.

The Commission feels that the volunteer effort evaluating the survey results is to be commended and that special thanks should be extended by the City to the McDaniels for their help.



FIGURE A. Years Lived in Raleigh

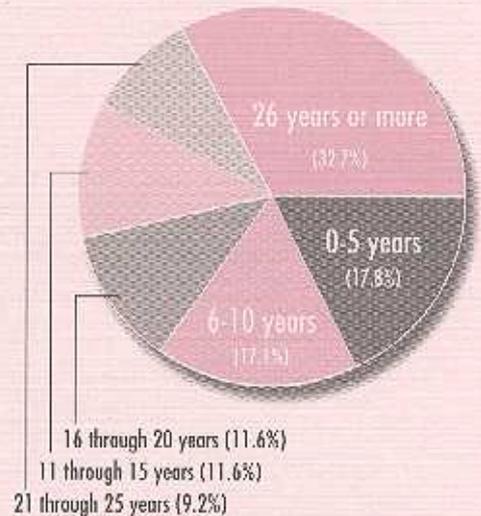


FIGURE B. Is Raleigh an Attractive City?

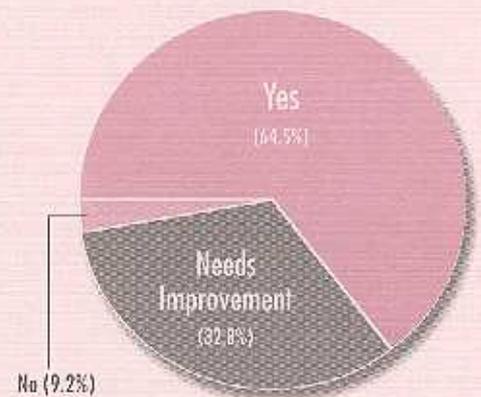
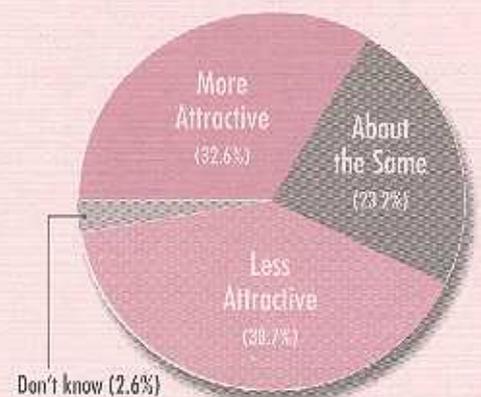


FIGURE C. Raleigh Is Becoming...



O V E R V I E W O F T H E R E S U L T S

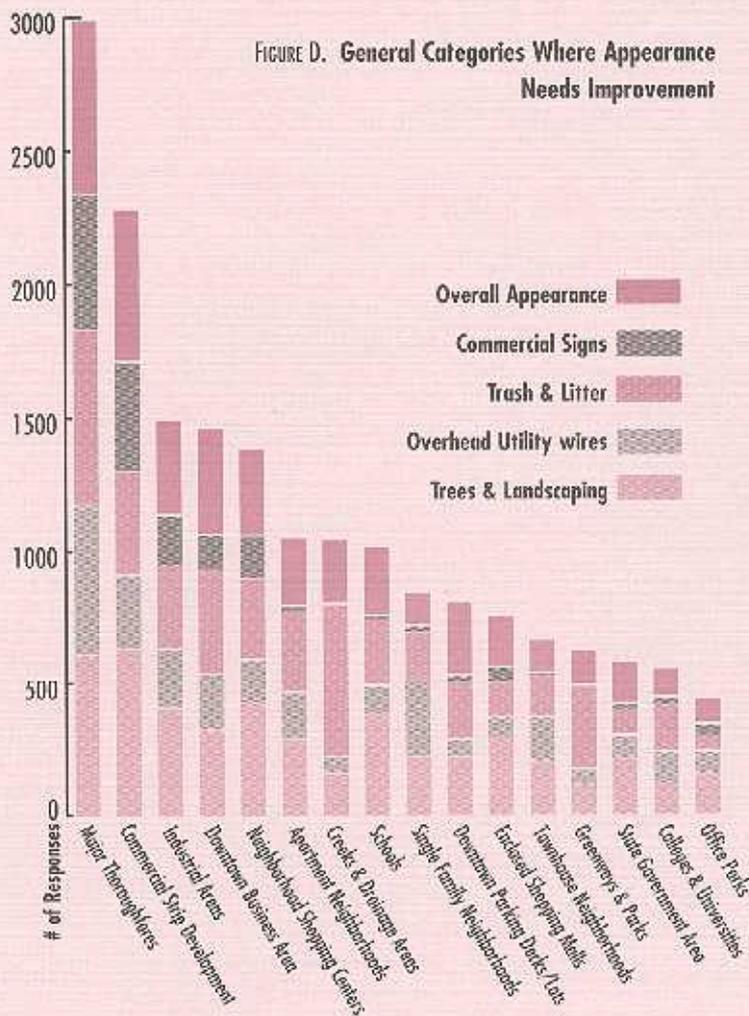
Results show that survey respondents find Raleigh attractive, but many view it as becoming less attractive. Major thoroughfares, specifically Capital Boulevard, are cited as in need of improvement. “Trash and litter” is seen as a problem both generally and on specific streets.

Many survey respondents identified their favorite places in Raleigh, with city owned lakes and parks cited most often. Respondents also identified places that detract; Capital Boulevard is overwhelmingly cited by survey respondents as a place that detracts. Downtown Raleigh was cited in both favorite and least liked categories.

The appearance programs that received the most support from survey respondents are protecting existing trees during construction and protecting Raleigh’s natural resources. Those receiving the least support are improving the appearance of overhead utility wires and paving streets currently unpaved.

Survey respondents indicated that they are willing to improve the appearance of where they live by maintaining their lawns, picking up trash, and landscaping. They indicated that they would participate in a Neighborhood Cleanup Day and neighborhood tree planting efforts.

Again, results represent a self-selected group of respondents, and offer insight into the views of those who responded to the survey.



Capital Blvd. was marked most often by survey respondents as a street that needs appearance improvements.

Question One: How long have you lived in Raleigh?

Some 33% of the survey respondents have lived in Raleigh 26 years or more. Newcomers, those who have lived here 5 years or less, comprised the next highest response category at 18%.

Analysis of the data indicates that there is little difference of opinion concerning the appearance of Raleigh in terms of how long survey respondents have lived in Raleigh. (See Figure A.)

Question Two: Do you consider Raleigh an attractive city?

Almost 65% of those who responded to Question Two indicated that they consider Raleigh to be an attractive city; 2.7% said they did not; 32.8% said that it needs improvement. (See Figure B.)

Question Three: Do you feel Raleigh is becoming...?

Question Three asked respondents about the direction they feel Raleigh is headed in terms of appearance. They were asked if Raleigh "is becoming more attractive, less attractive, about the same or don't know?" Results indicate that 38.7% feel Raleigh is becoming less attractive, 32.6% more attractive, 23.2% about the same, and 2.6% didn't know. (See Figure C.)

"I think you'll see some concentrated effort by the City Council for some initiatives that will give us, both in form and substance, a better-looking city. This is certainly a bit of a wake-up call."

- Kieran Shanahan, Raleigh City Council
Raleigh News & Observer, July 12, 1996



Protection of existing trees during construction was the most favored community appearance program.



Question Four: Where does appearance need improvement?

Using a matrix approach Question Four allowed respondents to first mark "General Categories" in need of improvement (Figure D.) and second, "Specific Streets" (Figure E.). These areas were identified with reference to:

- trees and landscaping
- overhead utility wires
- trash and litter
- commercial signs
- overall appearance.

The chart shows a typical pattern for General Categories with "trash and litter" cited as the biggest problem and major thoroughfares cited as what needed improvement the most.

Question Five: Do you have a favorite place in the City?

Some 1,255 survey respondents (66.5%) indicated in response to this open-ended question that they have a favorite place in Raleigh. Of those who indicated that they have a favorite place, Shelley Lake was identified by 145 respondents; 24 other places were identified by 10 or more respondents. The "Top Ten" are identified below.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1) Shelly Lake | 6) Downtown |
| 2) Pullen Park | 7) Lake Lynn |
| 3) Lake Johnson | 8) Raleigh Rose Garden |
| 4) Parks | 9) Cameron Village |
| 5) City Market | 10) Five Points Area |

Note: A complete listing of the favorite places can be obtained from the data on file.

Question Six: Do you know a place that detracts?

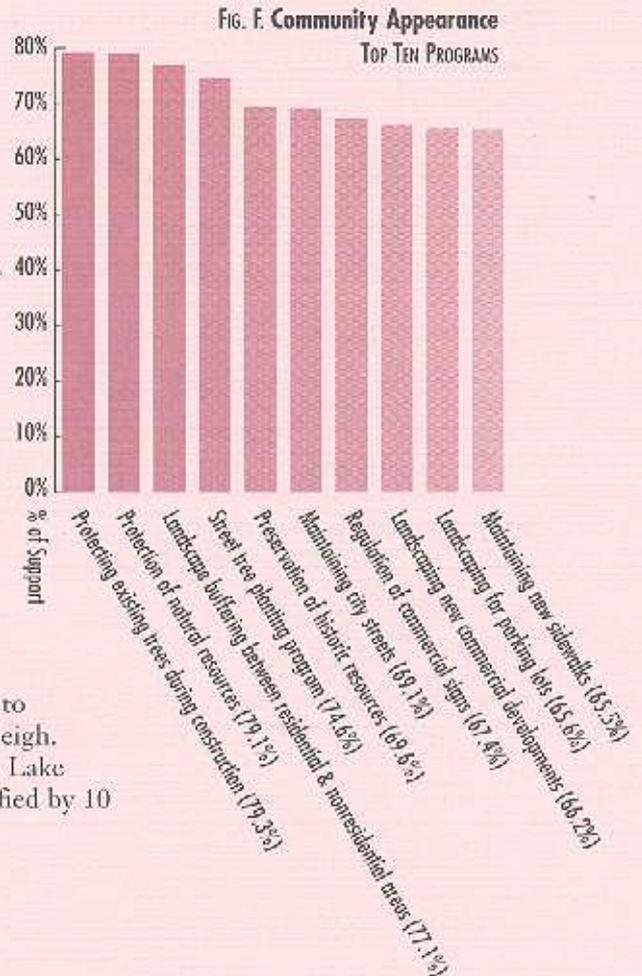
Survey respondents were asked if they "know a place that detracts from the good appearance of our City?" Those who answered this question totaled 1,324 (70.1%). By far, Capital Boulevard was singled out as a place that detracts; 343 people or 25.9% of those who identified a place that detracts wrote Capital Boulevard as their response to the open-ended question. (The Commission interprets this as primarily applying to the section north of the beltline not yet renovated.) Twenty-four other places were identified by 10 or more respondents. The "Top Ten" places that detract are listed below.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Capital Boulevard | 6) Western Boulevard |
| 2) Downtown Raleigh | 7) Crabtree Valley |
| 3) South Saunders Street | 8) Glenwood Avenue |
| 4) Hillsborough Street | 9) U.S. 1 North |
| 5) Strip Shopping Centers | 10) Moore Square |

Note: A complete listing of the detracting places can be obtained from the data on file.

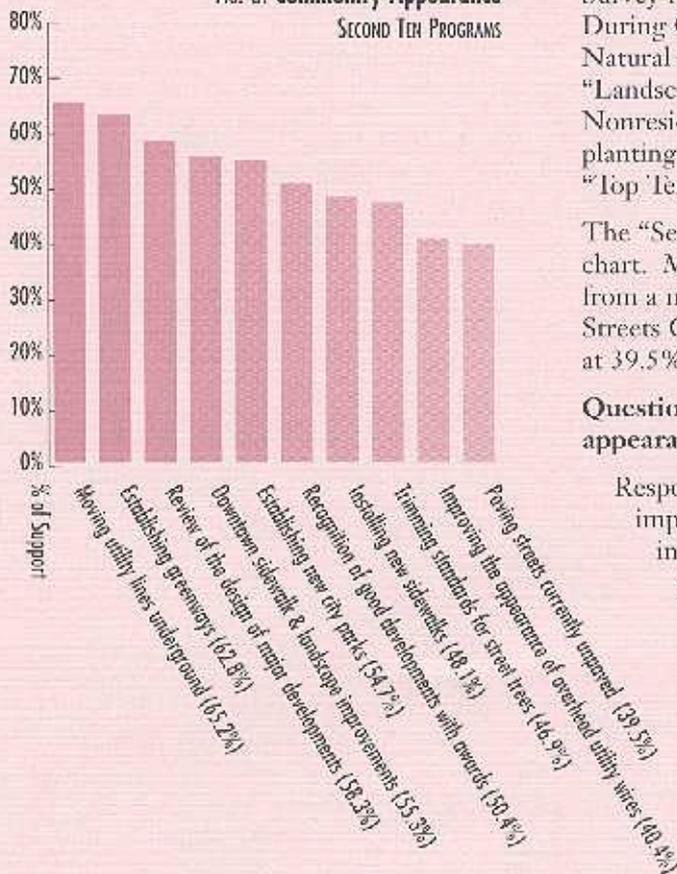
Question Seven: Which community appearance programs do you support?

Survey respondents were asked about their support for Community Appearance Programs with a matrix question. Twenty programs were identified on the questionnaire.



RESULTS

**FIG. G. Community Appearance
SECOND TEN PROGRAMS**



Survey respondents cited “Protecting Existing Trees During Construction” and “Protection of Raleigh’s Natural Resources” as the top two programs. “Landscape Buffering between Residential and Nonresidential Areas” was third, and city street tree planting was fourth. The following chart presents the “Top Ten Programs.” (see Figure F.)

The “Second Ten Programs” are presented in the next chart. Many of those programs still receive support from a majority of the survey respondents. “Paving Streets Currently Unpaved” received the least support at 39.5%. (See Figure G.)

Question Eight: What can you do to improve the appearance of where you live?

Respondents were asked about how they can improve the appearance of where they live. Many indicated they already were doing the identified tasks of painting, landscaping, picking up trash, repairing, maintaining their lawns, and planting trees. Those who responded cited maintaining their lawns most often. Picking up trash and landscaping were cited next in order.

Question Nine: Would you participate in a neighborhood cleanup day?

Some 1,667 respondents answered Question Nine. Of those who indi-

cated whether they would participate in a Neighborhood Cleanup Day, 84.6% said “Yes” (See Figure H.)

Question Ten: Would you participate in a neighborhood tree planting effort?

Survey respondents to Question Ten totaled 1,605. Of these, 73.8% said they would participate in a neighborhood tree planting effort. (See Figure I.)

CONCLUSION

Although not representative of all of the citizens of Raleigh, the Community Appearance Survey 1995 provides information about many of the important issues concerning Raleigh’s appearance as it moves into the next century. It identified survey respondents’ concern that, in their eyes, Raleigh is becoming less attractive. It highlights areas of concern such as major thoroughfares and Capital Boulevard. It reveals that “trash and litter” is seen as a problem across the board.

The Community Appearance Survey highlights which Community Appearance programs are supported the most and which are supported the least. It also reveals that survey respondents are willing to improve the appearance of where they live and are supportive of a Neighborhood Cleanup Day and tree planting efforts.

S U M M A R Y

The Tree Protection Ordinance recently passed by Council directly addresses the greatest citizen concern identified by our survey.

The Commission commends the strong leadership the Council demonstrated on this issue and feels that ongoing evaluation, enhancement, and enforcement of tree protection in the city would be in keeping with the public's concerns.

The survey indicates that the citizens are satisfied with our current sign regulations. The Commission recommends that the City, while working to make these regulations easier to use, retain the current requirements regarding total size, location, height, and quality of signs.

Trash and litter was a major concern expressed in the 1982 survey and is still seen as a primary appearance problem. This may require some allocation of city resources, but working with volunteer groups and neighborhoods to clean up trash and litter seems to be a popular idea with Raleigh residents. The Appearance Commission will explore ways to solve this problem and recommend solutions to Council possibly including a City-wide clean-up day, enhancing and extending the City's resources with volunteer efforts, and reentering the partnership with Wake County's volunteer Keep America Beautiful program.

Since the overwhelmingly favorite places listed were the City-owned lakes and waterways, and protection of natural resources was second only to tree protection in receiving the public's support, we should look at ways to maintain our natural areas. These would include utilizing a larger percentage of the parks bond monies for acquiring and protecting those outstanding natural features in the city still undeveloped — before the cost becomes prohibitive. The Appearance Commission will review City plans, regulations, and policies that could negatively impact our existing natural features and recommend to the council alternative low cost solutions that would protect these resources (including the use of technical solutions to mitigate run-off and water contamination such as buffer areas, appropriate vegetation and capillary pavement.)

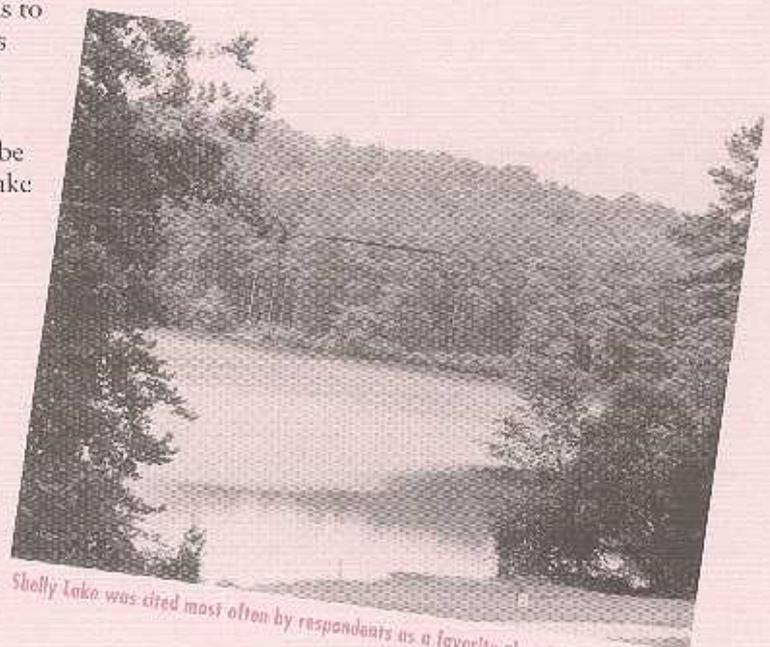
In conclusion, the Appearance Commission will be working harder than ever to help the Council make informed decisions for efficiently and effectively improving the appearance of our City. The Council should feel free to utilize our skills and expertise as needed to continue improving Raleigh as a place to live and work.

Respectfully submitted, June 1996.

FIGURE H. Potential Participation in Neighborhood Cleanup Day



FIGURE I. Potential Participation in Neighborhood Tree Planting



Sholly Lake was cited most often by respondents as a favorite place in Raleigh.