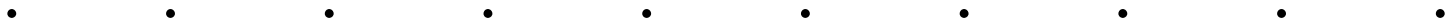




2 Harrison Hall
Miami University
Oxford, OH 45056

Village of Seven Mile, OH



*Community Satisfaction
Survey – Summer 2001*

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September 2001

This report presents the findings of 110 responses to the Village of Seven Mile Community Survey. These data represent a snapshot of the views concerning a variety of issues in Seven Mile. Village officials may find the data useful on two levels. First, general views about the delivery and quality of the services provided to residents may be valuable in long range planning efforts. Second, residents' views and ratings of specific conditions provide baseline data for continued benchmarking and ongoing evaluation. We are pleased to have worked with Village officials and residents. Council Members Vivian Gorsuch and Melissa Mick provided valuable input into the development and administration of the project.

The following individuals comprised the project team:

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Craig McClure, Jessica Service, and Sydney Smith provided assistance with the development and production of this survey.

Village of Seven Mile:

Mayor Mickel Day
Council Members: Kathy Faine, Vivian Gorsuch, Gary Meece, Melissa Mick, Joseph Zehler, and Vance Zimmerman
Residents: Estelle Brockman, Anne Jantzen

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University engages in applied research, technical assistance services, training and education, and data base development in the areas of public management and capacity building, local government economic development and planning, and public program evaluation and policy research. The Center's full-time professional staff hold advanced degrees in public administration, policy/program evaluation, and community planning. The Center's activities are funded by external grants and contracts from a number of funding sources including Ohio's Rural University Program and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Respectfully,

Philip A. Russo, Jr.
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Professor, Political Science, Miami University

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Village of Seven Mile – Community Satisfaction Survey

Summer 2001

Executive Summary

This section summarizes the results of the Village of Seven Mile Community Satisfaction Survey conducted in July 2001 by the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University. The total response rate to the survey was 35.9%¹.

Households Mailed	308
Households Responding	110
Response Rate	35.9%

- Five out of ten (52.3%) respondents have lived in the Village for more than 20 years.
- A total of 64.2% of the respondents indicated the Village had “stayed about the same” over the past five years.
- A significant majority (72.5%) indicated that they were “happy here and will probably stay for the next five years.”
- Police protection (58.7%), fire protection (91.5%), emergency medical services (90.8%), and water service (68.3%) all had satisfaction rates above 50.0%.
- Street and road maintenance had the highest dissatisfaction rate (39.8%).
- Nearly five out ten respondents (49.1%) indicated the Village should not consider creating a paid full-time police department in the next three to five years.
- A total of 56.4% of all respondents were “satisfied with the overall appearance of the village.”

¹ The response rate is based on the total number of households (308) less returned or vacant addresses (2) for a total of 306 households.

- Miscellaneous junk (54 comments) and maintenance of vacant buildings (43 comments) were the most commonly cited public nuisances in the Village.
- Nearly all of the respondents (92.6%) indicated their awareness of the recent improvements at Triangle Park. Only 67.0% were aware of the new Seven Mile Community Park (formerly known as Wieche Field).
- Just over half of the respondents (52.4%) thought the Village should “pursue moderate growth” over the next five years.
- While 89.1% of the respondents were aware of the State Route 63 project, only 24.5% had attended a public hearing regarding the project.
- Respondents indicated having an understanding of village affairs, but were less likely to feel they had any say in what village government does.

Introduction

The staff at the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University conducted a mail survey for the Village of Seven Mile in July 2001. Village officials were interested in assessing resident’s attitudes towards a variety of services provided by the Village. They were also interested in identifying preferences and interests of residents that could be used in longer-term planning efforts for the Village.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information from households within the Village of Seven Mile. The objectives of the survey were to better understand current satisfaction levels with Village services and to identify areas or issues that may require the attention of Village officials in the future. Through an objective analysis of survey responses, Village officials can evaluate these findings and establish priorities and strategies to better address the needs of the community.

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Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was drafted by the staff at the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs in consultation with Village of Seven Mile officials and residents. The final survey instrument was approved by the Village Council at their July 2, 2001 meeting. The survey used a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions to obtain responses from participants.

The first set of questions asked about life in the Village of Seven Mile. These questions asked respondents to indicate how long they have lived in the Village, their overall satisfaction with life in the Village, and to identify both positive and negative aspects of life in the Village.

The second set of questions asked respondents to assess their satisfaction with a variety of public services provided to Village residents. These services included: police and fire protection, emergency medical services, street and road maintenance, public parks, water service, and zoning enforcement. Additional questions asked respondents to indicate whether the public services provided by the Village had become better, stayed about the same, or become worse over the past three years.

A third set of questions sought opinions on the parks and recreation facilities available to residents in Seven Mile. Respondents were asked if they were aware of the new community park in Seven Mile, and what additional recreational facilities they would like to see in the Village.

A fourth set of questions assessed opinions towards economic growth and development in the Village. Respondents had the opportunity to indicate their preferences towards a number of different types of growth including: expanding Village boundaries, increased industry, increased retail stores, increased service providers, more single family homes, or more multi-family homes.

A fifth set of questions asked respondents to indicate their attitudes toward and perceptions of village government.

A final set of questions collected base line demographic data such as home ownership, number of persons in household, gender, and marital status.

A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A. A codebook containing all survey questions and the multiple choice responses can be found in Appendix B.

Survey Methodology

A survey questionnaire was mailed to all households in the Village of Seven Mile.

The household mailing list was provided by the Village Water Department. A total of 308 surveys were mailed to all households in July 2001. Each survey packet included a survey instrument and a return-addressed postage-paid envelope.

The survey requested that one member of the household who is 18 years of age or older and a resident of the Village complete the survey. A reminder card was mailed to all households two weeks after the survey instrument had been mailed.

A total of 110 usable responses were returned, for a response rate of 35.9%.

The standard margin of sampling error in this survey is plus or minus 7.5 percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases. This means that if a survey is conducted 100 times, in 95 cases the results will not vary by more than 7.5 percentage points from the results if all Village residents responded.

All surveys are subject to sources of error, such as bias in the wording of questions, timing, issue salience, etc. The instrument design, format, and timing were chosen to increase the response rate and to minimize bias. There is little reason to suspect that the data collection procedures introduced any significant bias; the

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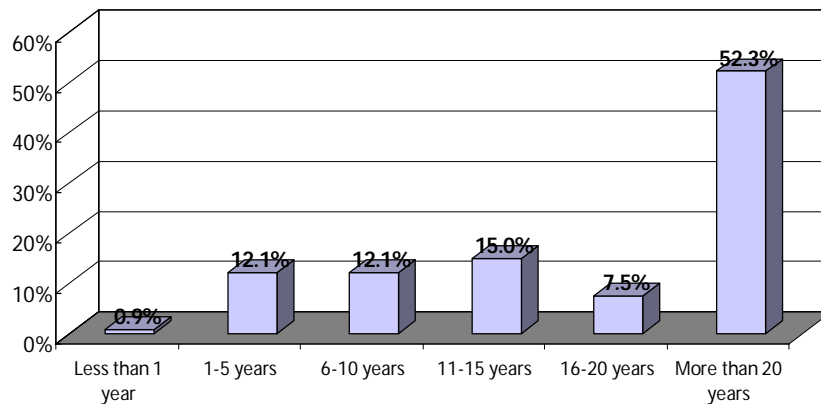
findings reported herein can be taken confidently as an accurate reflection of respondent opinion at the time.²

The majority of surveys returned were completed in full. However, some respondents chose not to answer parts or specific questions in the survey. Incomplete surveys were included in the database, thus some questions may have more responses than others. Due to rounding, some of the reported percentages may not equal 100%.

Survey Results and Analysis

VILLAGE LIFE: Respondents were first asked how long they had lived in the Village of Seven Mile. An overwhelming majority of respondents (86.9%) were long-term residents having lived in the Village for five years or more. Over half (52.3%) reported living in Seven Mile for more than 20 years. These results are not surprising as longer-term residents have more experiences to draw from, often feel more connected with the community, and may be more willing to share their thoughts and opinions when asked.

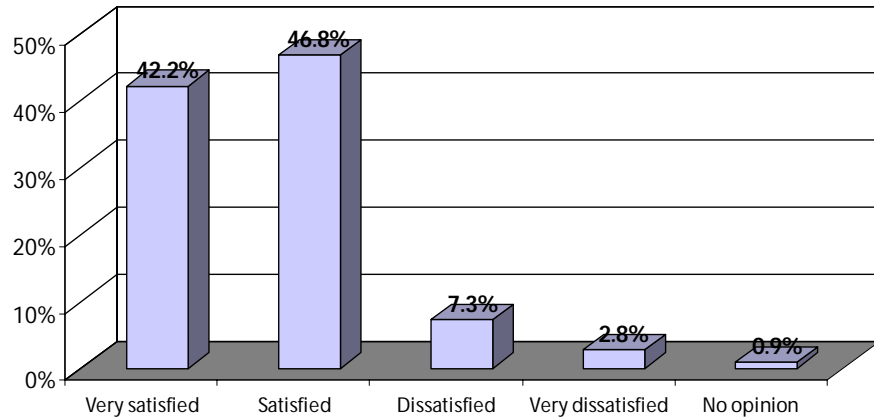
How long have you lived in the Village of Seven Mile? (N=107)



² The findings reported can be taken confidently as an accurate reflection of respondents' opinions at the (footnote continued)

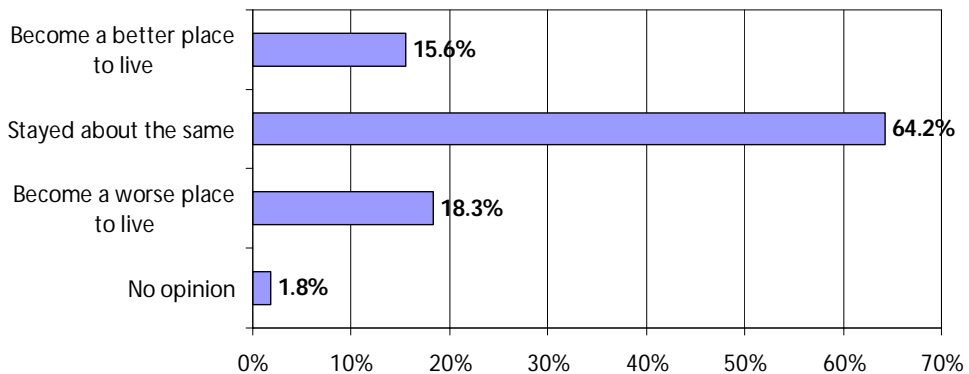
Respondents were asked to identify their satisfaction with living in the Village of Seven Mile. Nearly nine out of ten respondents indicated that they were either very satisfied (42.2%) or satisfied (46.8%) living in Seven Mile.

How satisfied are you with living in the Village of Seven Mile? (N=109)



As one measure of changing conditions over time, respondents were asked whether they thought the Village has “become a better place to live, stayed about the same, or become a worse place to live” over the past five years. Nearly two thirds (64.2%) of the respondents think the Village has stayed about the same over the past five years.

In the past five years, do you think the Village of Seven Mile has "become a better place to live, stayed about the same, or become a worse place to live?" (N=109)



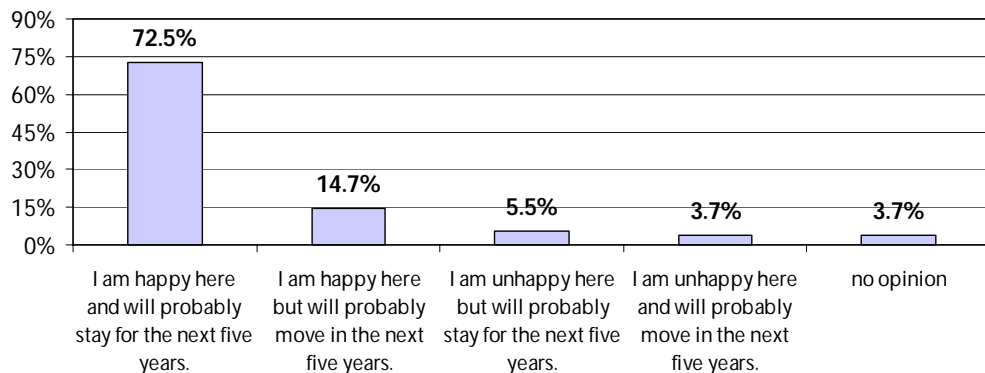
time they completed the survey. However, these opinions may and do change over time. Therefore, they reflect a snapshot of respondents' views only at the time of the survey.

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Respondents were then asked to identify three positive and three negative aspects to living in the Village. Elements of the community were the most frequently identified positive aspects to living in the Village. For example, “country living/rural setting,” “friendly community,” “small town atmosphere,” and “you know your neighbors” were all listed as positive aspects. Safety was the second most frequently identified positive aspect to living in Seven Mile. The safety aspect included: a “feeling of being safe,” “good fire department,” and “low crime rate.” The most frequently cited negative aspects to living in the Village included: various public services issues (e.g., “lack of sewers,” “side walk conditions,” etc.), public nuisances (e.g., “junk cars,” “noise,” “building maintenance,” etc.), and traffic conditions. A complete list of all the positive and negative aspects can be found in the Frequency Tables in Appendix C.

The final question in this section asked respondents to best describe how they felt about living in Seven Mile and their prospect for staying for the next five years. By a wide margin, respondents were both happy living in the Village and intended to stay for the next five years.

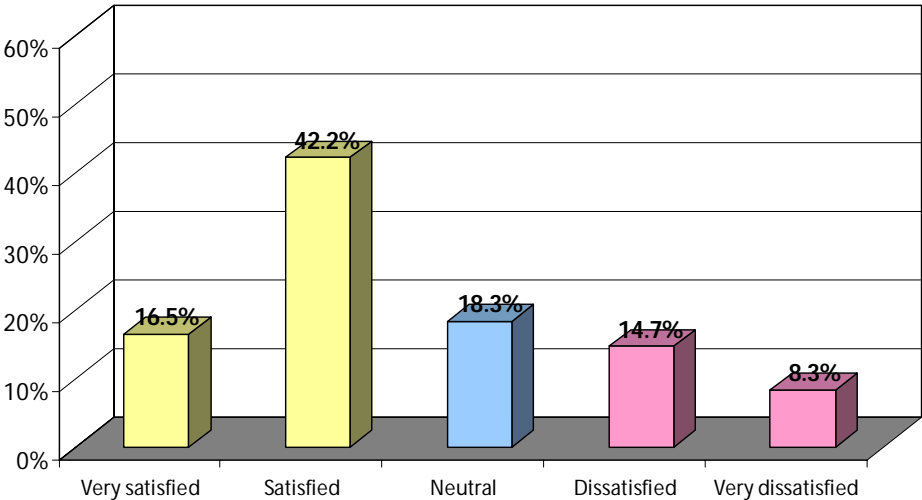
Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about living in the Village of Seven Mile? (N=109)



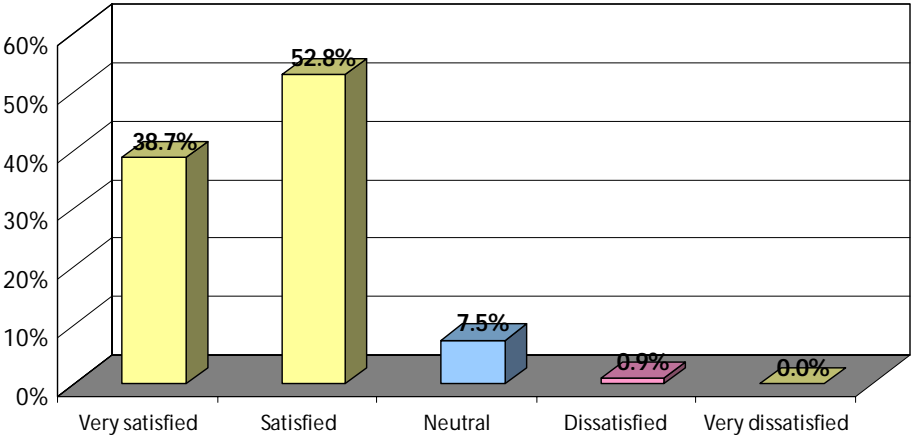
PUBLIC WORKS AND SERVICES: The next section of the survey assessed respondent satisfaction with a variety of public services provided to residents by

the Village. In general, respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with most of the public services provided to them. Police, fire, emergency medical services, and water service all had satisfaction levels above 50%. Satisfaction levels were lowest for zoning enforcement (29.7%), street and road maintenance (34.3%), and Seven Mile parks (43.0%). A significant number of “neutral” respondents influenced those services with satisfaction levels below 50%.

In general, how satisfied are you with police protection? (N=109)

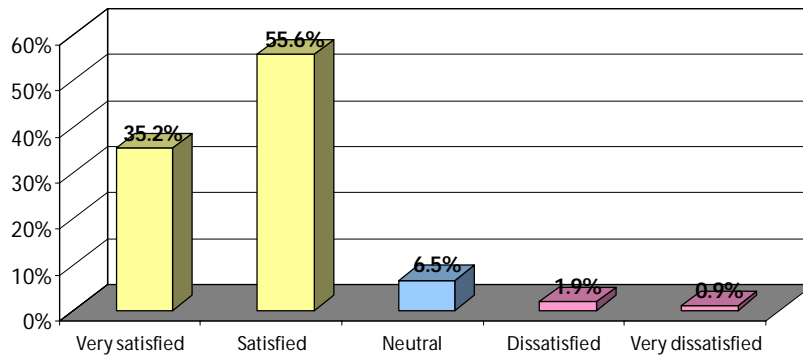


In general, how satisfied are you with fire protection? (N=106)

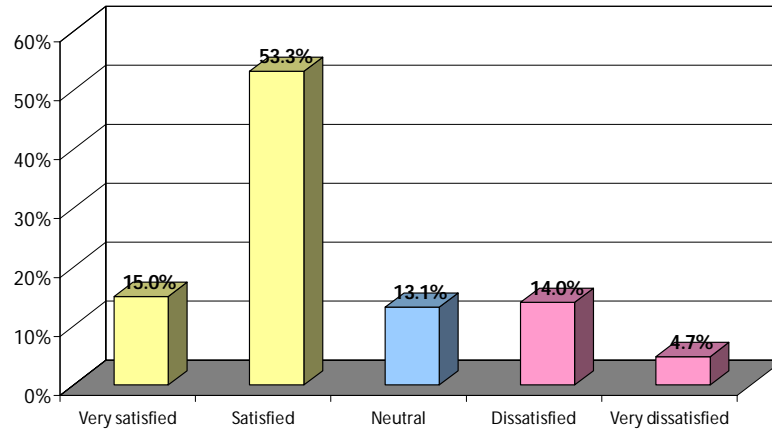




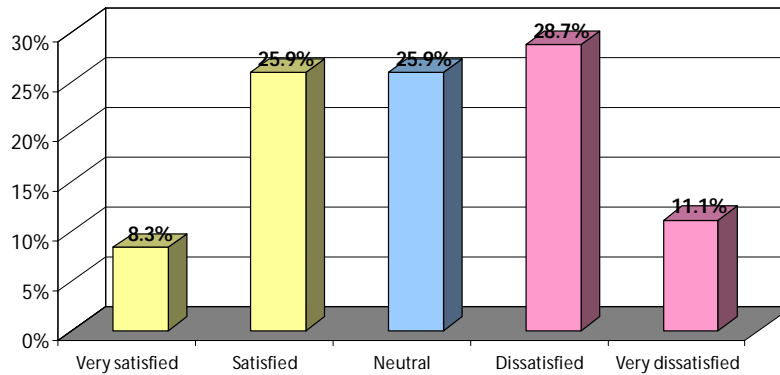
In general, how satisfied are you with emergency medical services? (N=108)



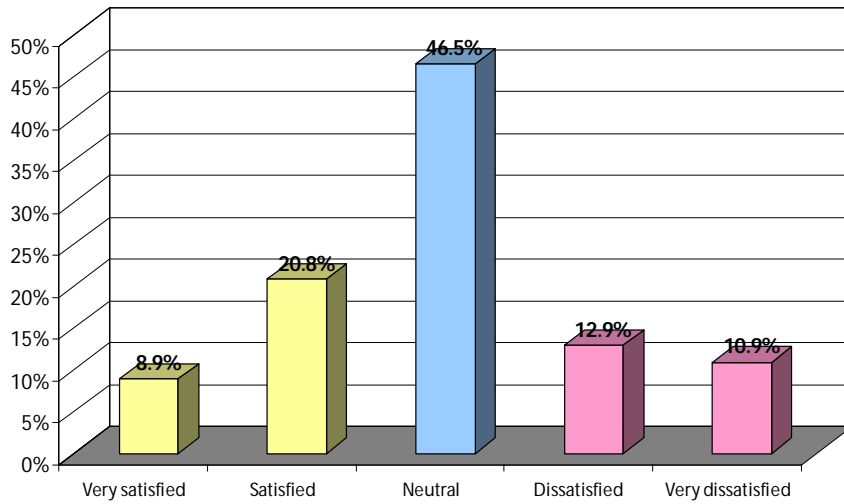
In general, how satisfied are you with water service? (N=107)



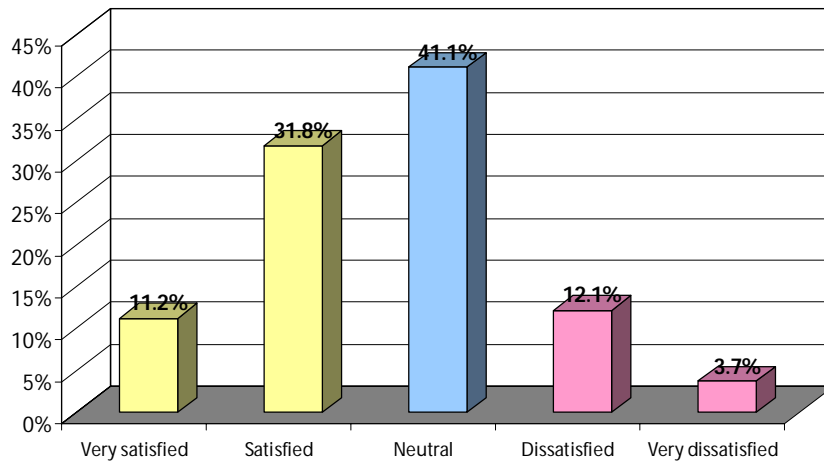
In general, how satisfied are you with street and road maintenance? (N=108)



In general, how satisfied are you with zoning enforcement? (N=101)



In general, how satisfied are you with Seven Mile parks? (N=107)

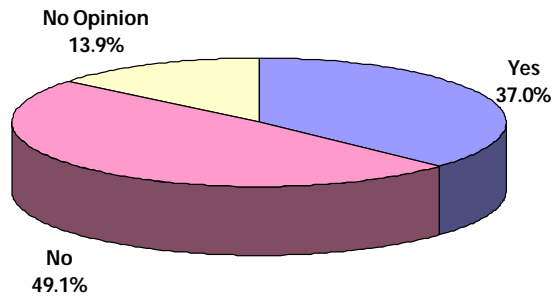


In addition to overall satisfaction with police protection, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they were satisfied with the volunteer police program currently used in the Village. Nearly six out of ten respondents (57.0%) indicated that they were satisfied with the volunteer program. Three out of ten (34.5%) were dissatisfied with the volunteer program while the remainder (8.4%) indicated no opinion on this question.

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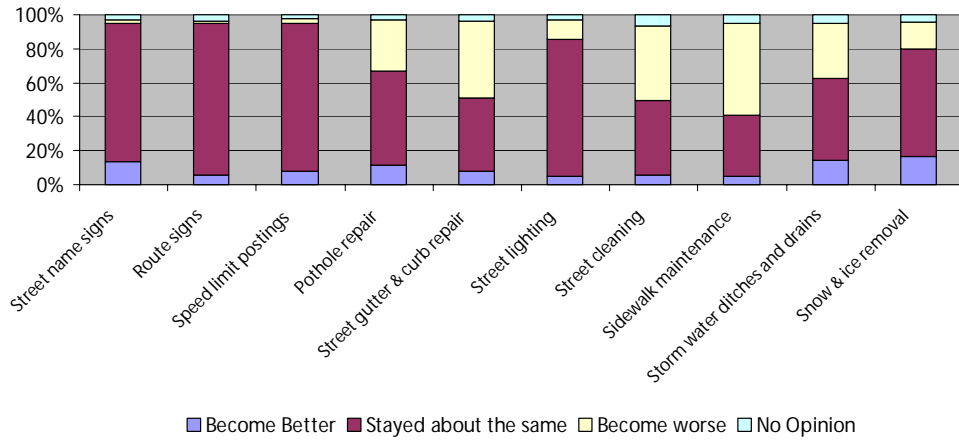
Assessing the potential needs for police protection in the future, respondents were asked if the Village should consider creating a full-time police department in the next three to five years. Just under half of the respondents (49.1%) do not think the Village should move in this direction.

Do you think the Village should consider creating a paid, full-time police department in the next three to five years? (N=108)



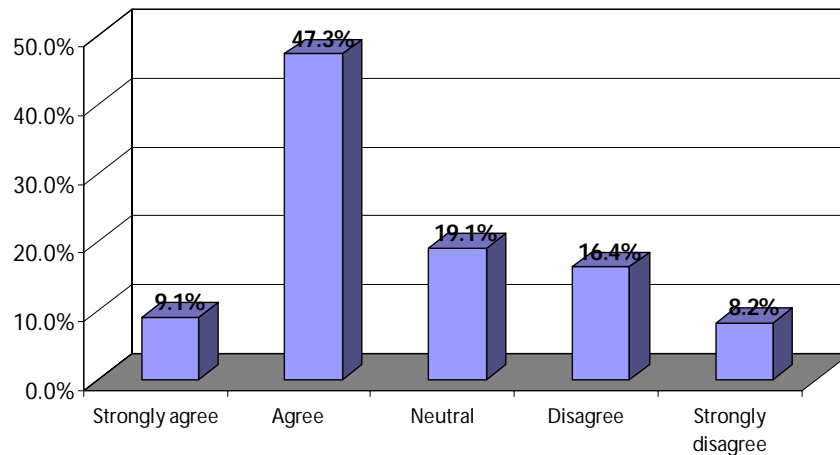
While respondents indicated being satisfied with most Village services, we also wanted to assess whether a number of specific conditions had changed in the Village over the past three years. Respondents were asked to rate whether conditions had “become better, stayed the same, or become worse.” Of the ten conditions listed, seven had majorities indicating that they had stayed the same. Three specific conditions, (street gutter and curb repair, street cleaning, and sidewalk maintenance), were identified as having become worse over the past three years.

Over the past three years, have the following public works/street conditions listed below "become better, stayed about the same, or become worse?" (N=varies)



Although not a direct measure of Village services, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement that they were satisfied with the overall appearance of the Village. A majority indicated they strongly agreed (9.1%) or agreed (47.3%) with this statement. One quarter of the respondents disagreed (16.4%) or disagreed strongly (9.2%) with the statement.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I am satisfied with the overall appearance of the village." (N=110)

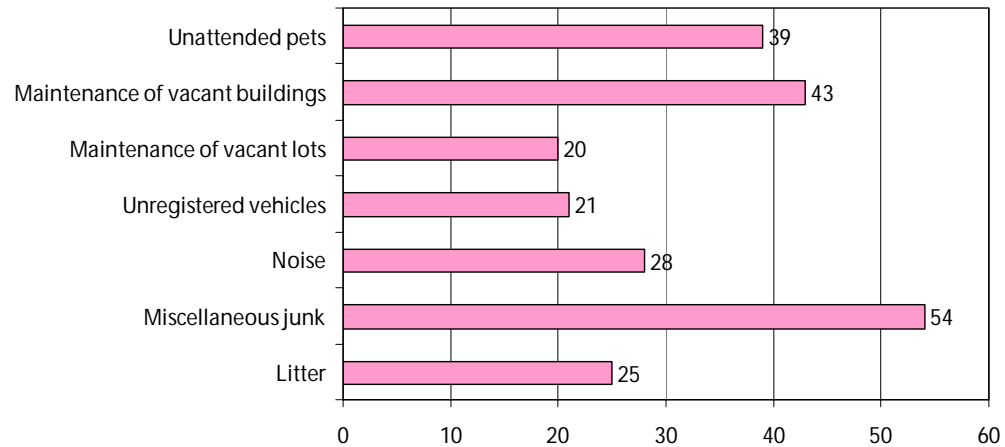


A variety of public nuisances may impact a local community. Respondents were provided with a list of common nuisances and asked to select those nuisances

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that they believed the Village has not adequately addressed. Respondents could select all that applied. Miscellaneous junk, maintenance of vacant buildings, and unattended pets were the most commonly identified nuisances.

Which of the following public nuisances, if any, do you believe the Village of Seven Mile has not adequately address? (N= total number of respondents)



When asked to list the three nuisances that need the most attention by the Village Council, maintenance of property, miscellaneous junk, unattended pets, and noise were the most commonly cited nuisances.

Thirty-one respondents provided additional comments regarding Village services. Many of the comments addressed nuisance issues such as “junk in yards,” “people should keep yards mowed,” or “need zoning updated.” Other comments were directed at specific Village services including:

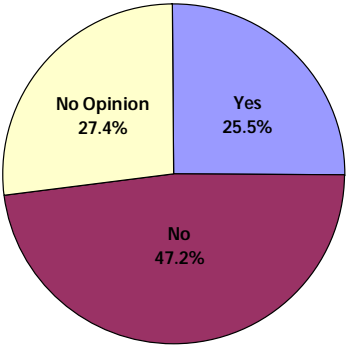
- “Do a good job in winter on snow and ice removal,”
- “Police and fire protection is very good. Streets and sidewalks need more work,”
- “We need a street cleaner,” and
- “Using too much salt on side streets.”

Another set of comments were directed at broader quality of life issues, for example:

- “There needs to be communication with the residents about what projects are priority and how everyone can do their part,”
- “Too much truck traffic, speeding in the Village,” and
- “Weight limits on Mill Street.”

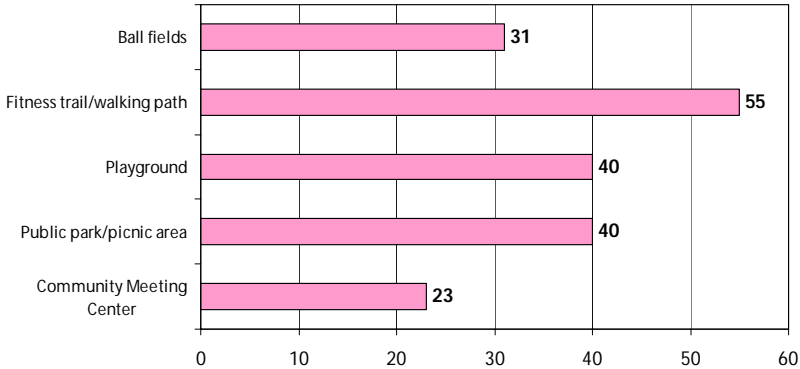
PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES: The Village recently purchased Wieche Field and is considering improvements to this new Seven Mile Community Park. In addition to acquiring a new park, improvements to Triangle Park were made in 2001. An overwhelming majority of respondents (92.6%) were aware of the Triangle Park improvements. To a lesser extent, 67.0% were aware of the new Seven Mile Community Park. Nearly half of the respondents (47.7%) indicated they were not interested in seeing more parks developed within the Village.

In addition to Triangle Park and the new Seven Mile Community Park, would you like to see more parks developed within the Village? (N=107)



Respondents were asked to indicate what additional recreational facilities they would like to see in Seven Mile. Fitness trail/walking path was most frequently selected.

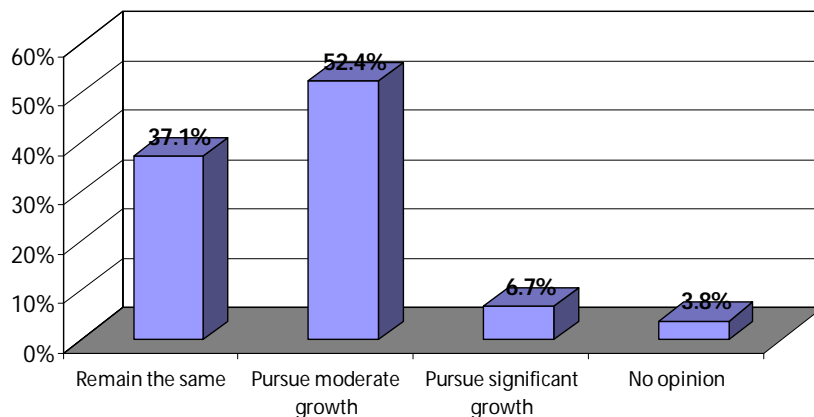
Which of the following recreation facilities would you like to see in Seven Mile? (N=varies)



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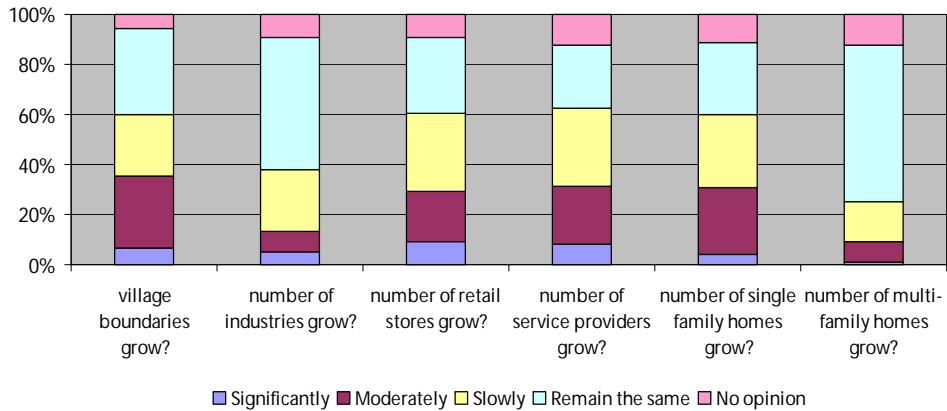
GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Another one of the objectives of the survey was to gather information to be used in long-term Village planning activities. An important component of any long-term community planning effort is to understand residents' attitudes towards growth and development. Respondents were asked to imagine the Village five years from now and assess the potential change. Just over half of the respondents (52.4%) thought the Village should pursue moderate growth over the next five years. Nearly four out of ten (37.1%) thought the Village should "remain the same." Less than one in ten (6.7%) thought the Village should "pursue significant growth."

When imaging Seven Mile five years from now, do you think the village should "remain the same," "pursue moderate growth," or "pursue significant growth?" (N=105)



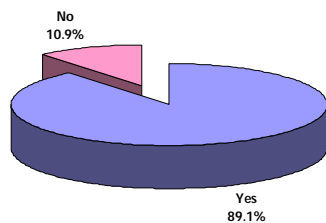
In an effort to understand growth and development preferences in Seven Mile, respondents were asked to indicate the type and rate of growth they believe the Village could pursue in the next five years. Areas of growth included expanding the Village boundaries, increasing the number of industries, retail stores, or services providers, or increasing the number of single family or multi-family housing units. Over half of all respondents preferred slow growth or for conditions to remain the same in all types of growth within the Village.

There are a number of specific categories of growth that Seven Mile could pursue in the next five years. With this in mind, should the... (N=varies)

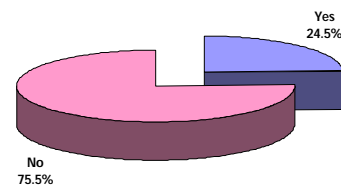


The State Route 63 Corridor Study refers to a collective undertaking by local and regional representatives, including the Butler County Engineer's Office, to study the possible establishment of an east-west transportation corridor across northern Butler County.³ Although the exact route and the impacts on Seven Mile remain uncertain at this time, respondents were asked if they were aware of this project. While nine out of ten respondents (89.1%) were aware of the project, only one out of four (24.5%) had attended any of the public hearings regarding the project.

Are you aware of the State Route 63 Corridor project? (N=110)



Have you attended any of the public hearings regarding the State Route 63 Corridor project? (N=110)



Respondents were asked to identify other traffic issues that the Village should address. Issues with U.S. Route 127 were mentioned in 18 of the 45 comments provided. Respondents were most concerned with the speed and the amount of

³ From the State Route 63 Corridor Study website at <http://www.bceo.org/sr63.html>.

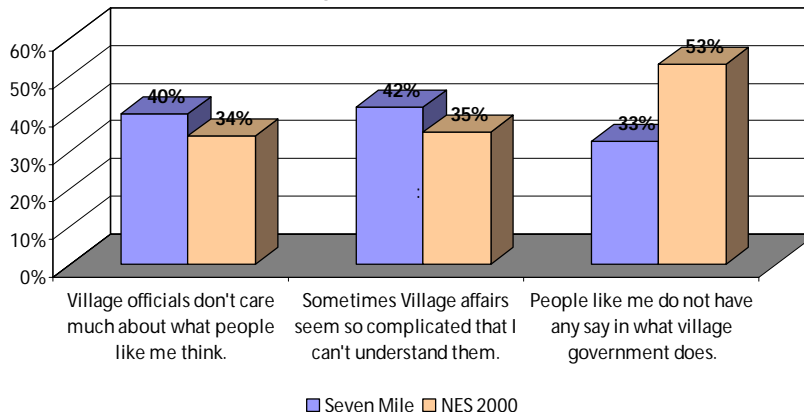
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traffic on U.S. 127. Parking, crosswalks, and State Route 63 were also raised as issues for the Village to address.

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT: The relationship between elected and appointed government officials and the residents of their community is an important one. This survey attempted to assess this relationship in a broad sense using a set of questions that have been used in other surveys in other communities. More specifically, these questions measure a respondent's belief in their capacity to both understand and influence politics in their community. Because these questions have been used in other surveys of other communities, we can compare Seven Mile responses with other survey results.⁴ We find respondents in Seven Mile more likely than the national average to disagree with the statements, "Sometimes village affairs seem so complicated that a resident like me cannot really understand what is going on" (42% versus 35%), and "I do not think that village officials care much about what people like me think" (40% versus 34%). These results are positive indicators that suggest Seven Mile respondents believe they can understand and influence politics in the Village. However, when asked their level of agreement with the following statement, "People like me do not have any say about what village government does," Seven Mile respondents are considerably less confident than the national sample (33% versus 53%).

⁴ The National Election Studies, Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan. The NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>). Ann Arbor, MI: 1995-98.

Village Government: Levels of Disagreement
(Higher levels are better)



We urge caution in the interpretation and use of these results. Many factors influence responses to questions of this nature and are reflected in the somewhat inconsistent results. However, the results may suggest that opportunities to increase citizen awareness and involvement exist in Seven Mile.

Civic organizations are another measure of community involvement and awareness. Hands On Seven Mile is a civic organization with the mission of: “The betterment of our Village through community participation.” Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88.1%) indicated they were aware of the Hands On Seven Mile organization. Only 3.0% of the respondents indicated they were members of this organization.

DEMOGRAPHICS: In order to assess the representativeness of the survey responses, data was collected in a number of general demographic categories.

- Five out of ten (52.3%) respondents have lived in the Village for more than 20 years,
- Nine out of ten (88.8%) respondents were homeowners,
- Six out of ten (60.6%) respondents were female,
- Seven out of ten (67.6%) were married,
- Nearly three out of ten were single (7.6% never married, 8.6% divorced) or a surviving spouse (15.2%),
- Three out of ten respondents (28.2%) had children under the age of 18 living in their household, and
- Three out of ten respondents (33.6%) were 66 years or older.

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Using the general demographic characteristics⁵ of Seven Mile, we can further analyze the respondent population. When compared with the overall demographic characteristics of the village, we find several groups to be somewhat over-represented in the survey results: women (60.6% versus 52.4% of the general population), homeowners (88.8% versus 78.7% of the general population), and respondents 66 years or older (33.6% versus 28.3% of the general population). Households with individuals under 18 years of age are somewhat under-represented (25.5% versus 38.6% of the general population). While these variations between the respondents and the overall population of the village do not invalidate the findings, all analyses should be mindful of the potential biases that these variances could produce.

Additional Comments

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were provided with space to write any additional comments. Thirty-one respondents provided a variety of comments regarding the village. A sample of the Additional Comments includes:

- “I am all for growth in Seven Mile, but I hope that it doesn’t destroy the village.”
- “I would like Seven Mile to remain a small country-like village. That is why we wanted to live here.”
- “Main intersection doesn’t look nice, it’s ‘junky.’”
- “Seven Mile has seen significant change in the past two years, change for the betterment of the community.”

⁵ Data source is the Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000. See Appendix D for Profiles of Seven Mile and Butler County.

- “The growth and well being of the village has been stunted by the lack of knowledge by most council members in the past several years. It appears all council members are now trying to turn this around.”
- “The way the police department operates is a very sad situation.”
- “There has been no tree trimming, little mowing, no sewer drains cleaned, no leaf or brush removal these last 2 years.”
- “There is a bulletin board at the firehouse. It has never changed much over the years. I would like a newsletter.”
- “There seems to be a lack of communication between council and the general public on many issues.”
- “We need a STRONG ordinance on miscellaneous junk and unregistered vehicles.”

All comments can be found in the Frequency Tables in Appendix C.

Conclusion

Overall, this snapshot of the opinions of residents of Seven Mile suggests residents are generally satisfied with life in the Village. Respondents indicated their satisfaction with most of the services provided by the Village and pointed out those services that may require additional attention. Respondents supported slow to moderate growth so long as the “small town” atmosphere can be maintained. They also indicated a strong desire for more strict enforcement of nuisance laws and zoning codes to improve the appearance of the Village.