



# CITY OF LYNCHBURG, VA 2008

## Report of Open-ended Questions

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## **SURVEY BACKGROUND**

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™**

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality survey methods and comparable results across The National Citizen Survey™ jurisdictions. Participating households are selected at random and the household member who responds is selected without bias. Multiple mailings give each household more than one chance to participate with self-addressed and postage paid envelopes. Results are statistically weighted to reflect the proper demographic composition of the entire community.

The National Citizen Survey™ customized for this jurisdiction was developed in close cooperation with local jurisdiction staff. The City of Lynchburg staff selected items from a menu of questions about services and community problems; they defined the jurisdiction boundaries NRC used for sampling; and they provided the appropriate letterhead and signatures for mailings. City of Lynchburg staff also determined local interest in a variety of add-on options to The National Citizen Survey™ Basic Service.

## UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

### ABOUT CLOSED-ENDED AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Questions can either be asked in a closed-ended or open-ended manner. A closed-ended question is one where a set of response options is listed on the survey. Those taking the survey respond to each option listed. Open-ended questions have no answer choices from which respondents select their response. Instead, respondents must “create” their own answers and state them in their own words. The verbatim responses are categorized by topic area using codes. An "other" category is used for responses falling outside the coded categories. In general, a code is assigned when at least 5-10% of responses will fit the code.

Advantages of an open-ended question include:

- Responses are not prompted, allowing respondents to provide answers that are not anticipated or well known.
- This type of question tends to capture response options that come to mind most quickly.
- The final result can be richer, since verbatim responses are included in an appendix, giving you and others a chance to “hear” the voice of respondents in their own words.
- There is a smaller risk of missing important dimensions.

### VERBATIMS

Respondents were asked to record their opinions about Lynchburg in the following question:

- What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Lynchburg in the next two years?

The verbatim responses were categorized by topic area and those topics are reported in the following table with the percent of responses given in each category. Those verbatim responses are grouped by the first topic listed in each comment whenever a respondent mentioned more than a single topic.

Results from the open-ended question are best understood by reviewing the table of frequencies that summarize responses as well as the actual verbatim responses themselves.

Question #18d: What do you think is the single biggest issue facing Lynchburg in the next two years?	
	Percent of Respondents
Jobs/economy issues	26%
Growth issues	13%
Crime/gangs/drugs/safety issues	12%
Cost of living/gas/food/housing	12%
Traffic/public transit/infrastructure	9%
Taxes/city spending	6%
City council issues/citizen input	5%
Race relations/diversity issues	3%
Other	9%
Don't know/nothing	5%
Total	100%

## VERBATIM RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The following pages contain the respondents' verbatim responses as written on the survey and have not been edited for spelling or grammar. Responses have been organized by coded topic areas.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING LYNCHBURG IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS?

#### Jobs/economic issues

- No jobs, tax's going up by the tax's on car's, also by the job's rate's.
- The economy-gas-groceries etc
- The economy-job loss
- Economical issues
- Allowing Liberty University to buy or use too much property and in turn not bringing enough jobs that pay \$13.00 or more an hour. We're losing our 25-35 yrs olds to North Carolina. What will we have as a tax base in this city? You can't depend on retirees to pay enough taxes to keep Lynchburg alive.
- Sustaining economic growth and health of the city. Minimize urban sprawl maintain high quality of schools
- Growth of jobs paying \$10/hr or more.
- The economy
- Economy is poor everywhere
- Jobs
- One concern = the economy and available affordable services for elderly and "soon to be (if not already) baby boomers.
- Median family income-
- \$\$\$\$!! Downtown
- Maintaining a solid economy.
- Job loss and gas prices-
- Jobs-not enough jobs out there, that pay anything. It is hard to make it on min. Wage.
- Employment opportunities-
- Economy
- Effect of economy employment situation on low-income and health-impaired citizens-
- Staying strong while much of the U.S. is floundering. We have some strong resources, such as Liberty U., bringing jobs here-don't throw roadblocks in their paths.
- Economic development!!
- Economic issues directly or indirectly related to gas prices.
- Job market. Particularly manufacturing jobs.
- Lack of jobs, economy, revitalization of downtown Lynchburg, gangs, drugs, crime.
- Unemployment ??
- Better jobs & the gas prices, & housing needs to be lower for the senior citizen.
- Jobs & wages gas price going up water at peoples homes
- Economic growth
- Jobs taxes high utility bills low wages.
- Economy, job loses, revenue
- Improvement of job opportunities, attracting more and larger "white collar" businesses

- Economic development
- Economy
- Job's
- Economic development
- Jobs are decreasing fuel prices are becoming burden economic is increasingly crowding out necessities
- Money
- Money! It's always money...
- Jobs
- Jobs availability
- 1-bad economy 2-gas prices/food prices 3-car stereo base stricter punishment/laws 4-rudness of African Americans!
- Economy
- Non-technical job availability. There are few entry-level positions that aren't specialized skilled labor, or that don't require specialized degrees or 3-10 years experience. Can't keep young people here w/out jobs they can hope to gain.
- Not enough housing or jobs
- Economy
- Good paying jobs to offset increased cost of living and help keep young people in the city.
- Employment-
- Economy (getting jobs for high school and college graduates to remain in the area
- Need more professional type jobs to be available. Retail wages and entry level positions hurt the community
- Economy, jobs
- 1-the bad economy. 2-gas & food prices 3-car stereo's that are obnoxious 4-rudeness of African Americans
- Creating & keeping jobs
- Depression-everything going up and salary cannot match it.
- Economy
- Unemployment
- Economy gas prices, increased utility bills
- Providing job opportunities for high school grads-suggestion: take a semester of last high school year & teach pupils how to survive-e.g. write checks-buy cars-rent limits-responsibility to self & neighbor.
- (economy)
- Economy-specifically because of the slow housing market and the number of people it affects
- Economy
- Revitalizing commercial areas-plaza, downtown, mall.
- Jobs-technology development-economy
- Economy
- I am very young in the city. But as far as I know employment is the major concern [source of income]
- Economic development in areas that are more residential in nature. I'm referring to Wal-Mart opening a store on Old Forest Rd which will completely change the beauty and the nature of that community for the worse. This is a disaster that big stores think of nothing more than making money.
- Young men getting out of jail, or prison, can't find a job, want to work, job turning them down because of a felony charge.
- Boosting the Lynchburg economy

- Making Lynchburg a business-friendly environment
- Jobs housing traffic congestion (overflow)
- Limited income of its citizens

### Growth issues

- Building up to fast and homes builded are not made so working class people can afford them. There are just so many rich people, the rest are poor.
- With the new planning for the downtown/5th St./Rivermont areas, I don't feel like there is recognition of the fact that the areas are low income/drug/high crime and the people currently there are not compatible with the designs currently being offered.
- Over-building business & residential housing with closed businesses that are useable etc. Causing more traffic problems in a lot of areas.
- Over development in "02" area - traffic congestion on Timberlake and Wards Rd
- Growth (taxes and traffic)
- Overcrowdedness. They build on every inch of land! Im sick of seeing so many buildings!
- To much building and not using buildings that are sitting empty buying up farmland to build shopping centers that will eventually sit empty not listening to the people!
- Rapid growth!
- To much growth & not enough attention to traffic flow weekly trash pick up should not require \$1.00 tax tax base is enough to ?? ?? Of pick up
- Keeping up with population growth which causes more traffic, need for more jobs, housing, school space, etc.
- Controlling growth of large chains + other large organizations within the city who have no respect for the environment or the city and it's people.
- Over construction of large apartment and or condominiums. Too many now that are not fully occupied.
- Overdevelopment in residential & commercial sectors
- Downtown development
- Controlling development to avoid too much housing and causing a decline in home values.
- Downtown revitalization. I live downtown and have no place to park. The city wants to encourage people to live downtown, and yet I pay city taxes and they can't even give me a place to park at my home.
- Maintaining a healthy pace of development and planning well for the increasing population.
- Too many businesses' being built up and over crowding major streets. Traffic issues.
- Too much building of new developments-makes a drain on services and roads. Taxes should level out with all the new residents but they keep going up
- 1-Restoration of degenerating sections of the city 2-Responding to rapid growth in the area.
- Growth & economy
- Over development
- Balance of development between downtown/mid-town/Wards Road areas. We have to continue focusing on over 'heart'-downtown/mid-town.
- We need a curb on developers-there are far too many empty strip malls and poorly built apt. Complexes for a city this size-we also need more green space-
- Putting all high density housing in postal code 24502 as four out of seven city council members consistently vote to do so.
- There are too many empty retail buildings in the city and too much building of new strip malls. Pittman Plaza is an example.
- Planning for growth
- Keeping Lynchburg's charm while growing.

- Growth
- Development too quickly
- 1-contuning downtown “excitement”, while connecting it through 5th St and “mid town” towards Wards Rd. 2-close second is managing tax money.
- Being able to support the growth of the local colleges.
- Making Lynchburg a stronger presence than Jerry Falwells enterprises. Encouraging more downtown development
- Renovating/filling empty or abandoned buildings in the downtown/midtown area
- Addressing the development of and needs of midtown Lynchburg—it's deteriorating is shameful. (example: why is there a Walgreen’s in Boonsboro and Forest and Ward's road-but none in midtown? Where cheaper prices and 24 hr. Service is desporately needed.).
- 1-overcrowding 2-jobs 3-crime 4-parking police not enforcing there own laws like speeding on themselves without reason.
- Too many big, expensive stores pushing out smaller ones. Why was question d15 allowed to be a leading question?
- Unplanned development-no regard for congestion/traffic flows in areas-and council wasting tax payers money in funding downtown projects and ignoring programs that help needy/low income.
- We keep building and building and houses/retail spaces are sitting empty. Too much effort being put into revitalizing downtown. Businessess should look at empty buildings before being allowed to take more land and build new buildings. Too many townhouses!

### **Crime/gangs/drugs/safety issues**

- Crime-police-cost of living
- Crime-gangs-thuss police not patrolling neighborhoods instead sitting on Wards Rd trying to catch speeders i.e. instant revenue
- I feel that gangs, drugs and violent crimes will take over our city. If we are not more agressive in taking our city back. We need to give the children something to do, not just a select group. Make recreation free or affordable for the poor.
- Gang violence and drug trafficking
- The growth of more gangs or additional gang members in existing gangs. We need a gang task force and stricter laws on persons involved in gang activity.
- Would like to see police officers & firefighter get better pay raises to help retention in these departments
- Increase in crime
- Crime from gangs
- Increasing gang activity-crime
- Gangs, Miller Park, the Plaza
- Crime rate in (especially) downtown Lynchburg, drugs
- Juvenile crime due to unemployment. I feel these situations rate on the same scale.
- Increased crime, low paying jobs
- Not enough police officers to support the economic development/growth within the city.
- Crime
- Crime thank you for this survey, I will be attending gov. meetings, reading “City Source” and watching Channel 15 thanks to you.
- -Inner city stagnation/property upkeep/empty city shopping centers (tear down & start over) - lack of city support to increase the police force; being proactive prevents crime and adds to citizen confidence



- Crimes & drugs
- Drug dealers, street gangs
- Getting the drugs and drunks out of the parks Miller Park is full of them.
- Gangs
- Two years isn't very long, but in that short time I expect the gang presence to increase dramatically & crime to spike, especially with the declining economy
- Crime/job growth. Stop writing tickets just for \$. Deal with the real crime issues stop police from being rude-write the ticket-do not berate or degrade.
- Crime associated with growth
- Keeping kid's of gang's, more oppourtunities convincing them that there are more way's to eat than bye turning to crime, stop the increase of police harasment.
- Gang related crime drug problems
- Higher crime rate
- Cleaning up downtown & making it an enjoyable/safe place for families
- Gang violence (needs to be strongly addressed)

### **Cost of living/gas/food/housing**

- The high cost of gas & groceries. The sale & use of drugs in neighborhoods.
- The cost of living will sky rocket from rents to home cost food to services. All the student and folks retiring to this area are looking foe a cheaper place to live-not know that they bring with them a much higher cost of living for long time residents.
- Affordable lower middle income rentals. The price being asked for rentals is outrageous.
- Houses & apartments are too expensive for retired persons like my husband and myself.
- Price of gas
- More affordable housing for the average citizen
- High gas price
- Fuel & gas prices, food prices. I think the problem with the economy will cause and rise in the crime rate.
- High price food and the price of gas and energy
- Inflation/increased cost of living.
- Gasoline is keep going up unfotunately.
- Fuel allocations, unemployments, loss of income from secured properties of "LU", and other Christian organizations, the "should be improvements" in industrial employments, the attractions of stores to vacant buildings, slowing down the drivers in traffic
- Gas prices, care for the elderly, I was just told that Medicaid will only pay for 1 eight hr. Staff-not 16 hrs like I'm use to-I'm a wheel-chair client & need 24 hr. Care. Can you help?
- The economy being able to cope with high prices on food and gas which causes other needed items to take a back seat, because you can't afford them.
- Housing prices. Remain stable
- Finding away to make the cost of living acceptable with the rising cost of gas, groceries, etc
- Gas prices continuing to increase = big issue!
- Gas prices
- High gas
- Gas prices. Enough said.
- Rising energy costs!
- Increasing gas + food prices while payment of employees does not increase enough to even cover the cost of living
- All household bills to high and everything going up.

- Gas prices & home prices
- Gas prices and bus prices going up.
- The effects of rising gas prices on economy
- Cost of living for middle and especially low income families and job availability for all.
- Famine, and the lack of healthcare and jobs
- The cost of energy going up. The cost to the city is like home owners we have to know where to spent the money.

### **Traffic/public transit/infrastructure**

- Transportation & air pollution
- Better rail & air service with continued growth
- Traffic control w/all new shopping centers (Wal-Mart & 221 Mall?) And new housing areas.
- Traffic too many cars
- Money for street and schools and ROTC programs in the city.
- Lynchburg needs more sidewalks, so families can walk together and use walk as a means of transportation
- Managing expansion issues-Wards Rd area & traffic
- Public transportation in the shadow of gas prices it is not handled very well and needs new management from someone who lives in a larger city to make ?? Prepared for the needs of the population.
- Transportation
- Roads. Schools.
- Not enough room, traffic on Fort Ave, 221, Wards.
- Retail expansion with little consideration to traffic problems incurred by this expansion-could use access roads to shopping centers.
- Mandated sewer system
- Traffic issues & road architecture ie Wards Road & 221 & activities geared toward young adults
- Lack of mass transit system-bus routes are not comprehensive enough. I live near HHS, and want to go to graves mill-I have to take a bus to main station @ plaza then take another bus to graves mill, total tome > 60 mins. Walking would be a more timely option. Mass transit needs more mutiple stops across lines.
- Traffic taxes senior care
- The roads! They are the biggest problems & why id dislike the city. The roads are hindering city growth dramatically. The lack of onramps/exit ramps are causing many accident problems. I tell many people a day how mizezable the road systems. When visitors come to town, they always ask about the roads. I tell them toddles made them, not engenieers.
- Parking in the downtown area!
- Traffic.
- Traffic.
- Traffic owner not keeping there properly up
- Traffic & roads - unchecked over growth along Wards Rd/LU. Lu doesn't do their fair share wet infrastructure
- Have a nice street and living. And more sign put end the right place. All over Lynchburg and light. Please look over the city and see where we need light and stop sign
- I would like to see the city cleanliness done by the way we vote-wards. This way brush and bulk items would be picked up sooner. Animals too, especially skunks. Street light outages would be replaced sooner also. If limbs were cut from electrical lines, power outages would not

occur. When street lights are out in my neighborhood, I'm the one who report it. I don't think the citizens know that they have to do it. Please!!!

- Better street transportation (buses). In order to get to further away jobs without being late and able to get home at late ours. Have buses run both sides of the street instead of one!
- Ramps leading into the expressways that could cause serious accidents because many will not pay attention. This is very serious.

## Taxes/city spending

- Taxes, then crime
- Taxes = ability to hold-down taxes to individuals as city government grows-better job of prioritizing of resources id needed.
- Loss of residents to county for lower taxes
- Generate funds to operate city and needed services without significantly increasing taxes on citizens. Better budget controls and increased productivity with existing staff.
- Budget-overstaffing, not combining management positions in most departments, mainly fire, police & school systems
- Continuing to provide quality service without increased taxes.
- Taxes-that's why people move to the county.
- Lowing real estate taxes especially senior citizens on fixed income.
- Keeping real estate taxes at a reasonable rate for house owners. High taxes will discourage house ownership in Lynchburg.
- High taxes
- Rising cost of utility bills & real estate taxes.
- Control spending to keep from having tax increases
- Too high taxes for services offered too slow growth too much money pumped into down town!
- Continuing to deliver the high quality services and value for our tax dollar
- Lynchburg keeps raising real estate taxes with no help for people in fixed incomes & the services like garbage are till costing & now they want to add more. They should think of the older citizens instead of wasting money on the downtown projects!!
- Taxes & jobs. Many people are moving outside of Lynchburg because of high property taxes & assessments. We need more businesses coming in that pay enough for people to live without having to work 2-3 jobs just to make ends meet.
- Being able to sustain services without raising taxes.
- Losing taxable real estate and vacant land to non-taxable uses and providing social services for new residents moving into the city from adjacent areas as well as demands to upgrade road network.
- Real estate taxes too high reduce govt. Give aways, eliminate social programs that dont require working
- Tax assessments are too high for area. Deer population in city is ridiculous. Please attempt to rid the city of them.
- Keeping budget balanced & avoid excessive debt
- Rising cost of taxes, and increased cost of living.

## City Council issues/citizen input

- 1-Creating attractive social environment to retain young work force. 2-Eliminating the political bi-partison nonsense on city council.
- Polotics
- The city council
- City gov't. It is a disgrace. If they had to remit like a private business they would have all been fired long ago. I think they should be held accountable & not just keep asking for more & more & giving less & less.
- Better public service
- Citizen interest and participation
- No leadership or vision care taking management
- Negative attitude of city council. No compromise!
- Liberal council members!
- Leadership for the middle class of Lynchburg. Our city's leaders need to be more visible and community minded for reasons of support not votes.
- City counsel needs to listen. Do not spend our money downtown. Let private investment pay for downtown revitilezation.
- Factional local politics and school board's unwillingness to criticize a administration.
- Leadership
- A city council going back to the Pete White-Leighton Dodd attitude of raise taxes and more silly regulations as they present restrictions on safe burning practices.
- Poor council membership & city manager-make up very short sighted on issues.
- City council

## Race relations/diversity issues

- Diversity! We need more small businesses, more culture, more nightclubs, and more diversity!
- Integrating Hispanic newcomers as mainstream citizens.
- Immigration!
- Race
- Community building in the inner-city, with emphasis on early childhood development and parental education.
- Race relations
- Racism
- Race relations
- Race; youth; employment; housing food; gas

## Other

- There's nothing to do here-no shopping, no ethnic restaurants, no big cities nearby, very little cultural activities.
- The city is too closely identified with Liberty University, Thomas Road Baptist Church, and the legacy of Mr. Falwell. There are many citizens here who are not that socially or politically conservative. Don't let the LU "machine" take over the city. Also, the rapid grow of Charlottesville & Roanoke challenge this city to be ore open to fresh ideas & new people.
- The city needs more public swimming pools, especially for poor children in the summer.
- Youth, out lander's hispanish no English, so they claim, youth trimpuh crack gun's outter town'ners

- Efficient use of resources (ie energy) small # of law enforcement efficient use of revenue & revenue generation. It seems as though everyone wants a Cadillac city at a Yugo price.
- Lack of entertainment venues for the 20-somethings of Lynchburg. Everyone has to travel to Roanoke or Charlottesville for something to do.
- Lynchburg needs a civic center or large venue such as the acadamey to have concerts.
- Helping senior citizens to live comfortably-road conditions
- Not letting Thomas Road Baptist Church or Liberty University control this city!!!
- \*Schools! Lynchburg has a terrible school system. The uniform policy is one of the biggest reasons we will move! No uniforms in public schools unless the city wants to help pay for them! The schools get worse every year! The school board has too much power. I watch all the meetings!
- People moving out of city limits
- Public schools-facilities and teachers
- Keep thing going as they have been
- Help to keep agencies that serve the poor in areas that can be easily reached (transportation wise). And to build within the inner city (not moving stores and programs in areas already congested).
- Needs to revamp itself into more modern enviroment too many elderly people reaching retirement not enough replacement work force and no real incentive for the young to stay and play
- Fuel for city owned vehicles & heating fuel for schools.
- The prejudice of many citizens against Liberty University which is perhaps the biggest boon to the local economy
- Dilapidated houses and commercial structures!
- Maintaining excellent public schools...there are some people in Lynchburg (i.e. LU) who would like to undermine the schools
- Girls getting pregnant, welfare, people that need SSI can't get it cause of girls.
- Cost of education-renovating schools, busing
- Getting the homeless food & shelter year round!
- Place where children can go and learn, play that parents can not afford to take them too.
- Elder care-being able to take care of our older citizens and having affordable resources for their needs -over development-no more greenspace!!!

### **Don't know/nothing**

- Don't know
- It is hard for me to say as I work in a county that is 90 minutes away
- Don't know
- ?
- I don't know
- I am unsure
- Don't know
- I don't feel qualified to answer this since I have only been living here 3 1/2 months and I live at Valley View so this is out of my knowledge area.
- Very good city to live in. Excellent!
- Unsure!
- New to town, so do not know.