

**QUALITY OF LIFE IN SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE:  
UNDERSTANDING COASTAL AND INLAND RESIDENTS'  
PREFERENCES, ATTITUDES, AND OPINIONS**

**DEL-SG-06-04**

**PREPARED BY:**

**JAMES M. FALK  
AND  
PAUL C. GERNER**

**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
SEA GRANT MARINE ADVISORY SERVICE  
LEWES, DE**

**AUGUST, 2004**

This publication is the result of research supported by NOAA, National Office of Sea Grant, Department of Commerce under project #NA030AR4170011 to the University of Delaware Sea Grant College Program. Federal and state government entities are authorized to produce and distribute reprints for governmental purposes, notwithstanding any copyright notation that may appear hereon.

The University of Delaware Sea Grant Program is supported cooperatively by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce and the State of Delaware.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction and Methods

The University of Delaware Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service conducted a study of Sussex County residents during the fall 2002 and winter 2003. The overall purpose of the study was to assess residents' perceptions and opinions of development, growth, and land-use issues facing the county. Another goal was to begin identifying quality of life factors that affect residents' lifestyles in the county. The chief focus of this report is to discuss similarities and differences between residents living in the ever-growing coastal sections of the county and inland residents, mainly living west of Route 113, a major north/south corridor in Sussex County.

Data was collected using a mail survey of randomly selected Sussex County residents. One thousand, six hundred and eight residents were surveyed, with 688 surveys being returned with useful information. This represented an overall response rate of 46%.

### Socioeconomic Characteristics

Coastal residents were significantly older than inland residents. The average age of coastal residents was 62 years and 57 years for inland residents. Coastal residents were more likely to indicate they were retired (60%) as compared to inland residents (42%). Coastal residents also were more likely to be college graduates. Sixty percent of inland residents reported household incomes of less than \$50,000, compared to 44% of coastal residents. Nineteen percent of coastal residents reported incomes greater than \$100,000 versus 9% for inland residents.

### Residency in Sussex County

Eighty-six percent of respondents overall were permanent residents and 14% were part-time or seasonal residents. Inland residents (99%) were more likely to reside in the county on a permanent basis than coastal residents (82%). Overall, 58% of respondents indicated that they lived within town limits in the county and 42% lived in unincorporated areas throughout the county. Two-thirds (66%) of coastal residents had resided in the county for 20 years or less, compared with 38% of inland residents. The average residence time in the county was 19 years for coastal residents and 33 years for inland residents.

### Residents Born in Sussex County and Reasons for Relocating

Only 18% of all respondents indicated that they were born in Sussex County. Of particular interest, is the fact that almost one-half (45%) of inland residents were born in the county versus only 12% of coastal residents. When respondents were asked to indicate their reasons for relocating, coastal residents were more inclined to select: relaxed/quiet lifestyle; retirement; recreational opportunities; natural environment; and moved to a second home. Inland residents were more apt to select employment opportunities and family decisions as their reasons for relocating.

### Concerns About Growth and Development

Respondents reacted to a series of statements about growth and development in the county. Coastal residents felt stronger about the statements: Traffic congestion in the county is a concern that needs immediate

attention; I am in favor of limiting growth and development in Sussex County's coastal area; If it costs more to protect the environment in Sussex County, individuals should be willing to share the burden. Inland residents were more likely to support the statement: County and town officials are taking the necessary steps to minimize the negative impacts of development.

### **Support for County Services**

Residents were asked to indicate if they would support new or expanded services in the county and whether they would be willing to support the services through taxes or other fees. Overall, the top choice was improving roads and highways. Expanding open space in the county was supported by coastal residents, with inland residents expressing less support for this service. Inland residents had stronger feelings about establishing a county park and recreation program than did coastal residents. Although nearly all of the new or improved services proposed were supported by both groups, the percentage of residents willing to pay for the services was usually less than 25% of all the respondents.

### **Sussex County's Economic Future**

Respondents felt that tourism and farming were growth industries in Sussex County's future. Coastal residents (77%) were significantly more inclined to support tourism than inland residents (53%). Although not supported very highly by either group, building construction (32% versus 23%) and heavy manufacturing (8% versus 3%) had greater support from inland residents. Seventy-three percent of coastal residents rated economic prosperity in the county either "good or outstanding", compared to 62% of the inland residents.

### **Contact with Officials**

Only 16% of coastal residents felt county and local officials do an adequate job of informing citizens about land-use issues affecting their communities. Inland residents had similar views with 18% indicating they thought officials do an adequate job. Thirty-two percent of coastal residents reported that they had contacted an official about land-use issues, compared with 27% of inland residents. Fifty-three percent of coastal residents indicated that they had attended public hearings or meetings on land-use issues, compared to 40% of inland residents.

### **Information Sources**

County residents learn about land-use issues from many sources. Overall, respondents read local community newspapers (86%) to learn about issues. Although both groups indicated this was their primary source of information, coastal residents (89%) rated this source significantly higher than inland residents (81%). The next highest rated sources of information were from friends, family members or co-workers (51%) and local TV stations (50%). Inland residents (72%) were more likely to indicate local television stations were a source of information than coastal residents (45%).

### **Sussex County's Environment**

Nearly one-half (45%) of all respondents felt Sussex County's environment was deteriorating. Eighteen percent thought it was staying the same and only 13% felt it was improving. Almost one-quarter (24%) indicated they were unsure. In addition, one-half (50%) of all respondents felt government's efforts to protect and manage the county's natural resources were "good"; 39% rated their efforts "poor or fair"; and 7% rated government's efforts "outstanding".

## **Factors Contributing to Quality of Life**

When residents were asked to rate the overall “quality of life” in Sussex County, 94% of coastal residents rated it either “good or outstanding” and 89% of inland residents rated it “good or outstanding”. There are certain factors that contribute to an individual’s “quality of life” in the area that they live. Sussex County residents ranked personal safety, safeguarding the environment, uncongested roads, and reasonable living costs as high quality of life factors.

## **Conclusions**

County residents had a variety of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about “quality of life” as well as growth and development issues occurring in the county. Most residents seemed to be in agreement that growth is occurring too fast and that many problems such as extreme traffic congestion, loss of open space, and lack of land-use planning are concerns that are at the forefront. Even though there are many problems facing

county residents, they rate the “quality of life” very high. The fact that many current county residents are non-native (not born in Sussex County) may explain their perceptions of “quality of life” being high relative to where they used to live.

The data collected in this study can be examined in many ways other than those presented here (e.g. comparing coastal residents versus inland residents). For instance, native-born residents may differ in their opinions and attitudes about certain variables significantly more than non-natives. Additionally, residents who are retired and not raising families may also have different views than residents who are employed and still have children living at home. Additional information will be examined in the future to provide useful information for local and county decision makers as they attempt to address the major issues facing communities in Sussex County.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
INTRODUCTION AND METHODS .....	1
STUDY RESULTS .....	5
Socioeconomic Characteristics .....	5
Residency in Sussex County .....	7
Residents Born in Sussex County and Reasons for Relocating .....	8
Perceptions of Growth/Development and Support for County Services .....	9
Sussex County’s Economic Future .....	12
Contact with Officials and Information Sources for Learning about Issues .....	14
Sussex County’s Environment .....	16
Factors Contributing to Quality of Life .....	17
CONCLUSIONS .....	18
APPENDIX A: Mail Survey Instrument .....	20
APPENDIX B: Select Comments from Sussex County Residents .....	28

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Response Rates among Sussex County Census Tract Groups.....	4
Table 2. Demographic Profile of Sussex County Residents .....	6
Table 3. Percent of Residents Living Full-time in Sussex County .....	7
Table 4. Percent of Residents Living Within Town Limits .....	7
Table 5. Residents’ Distance from Coastal Waters.....	8
Table 6. Time Spent in County as a Full or Part-time Resident .....	8
Table 7. Percent of Residents Born in Sussex County.....	9
Table 8. Reasons Residents Relocated to Sussex County.....	9
Table 9. Residents’ Perceptions on Growth and Development Issues in Sussex County .....	10
Table 10. Residents’ Support for New or Expanded Services/Programs in Sussex County .....	11
Table 11. Residents’ Support of Growth Industries Compatible with Sussex County’s Future .....	12
Table 12. Residents’ Opinions on Agricultural Issues in Sussex County.....	13
Table 13. Residents’ Opinions on Tourism Issues in Sussex County.....	13
Table 14. Residents’ Perceptions of Economic Prosperity in Sussex County .....	14
Table 15. Percent of Residents who Have Contacted Officials and Attended Public Meetings.....	15
Table 16. Residents’ Sources of Information for Learning about Sussex County Land-use Issues .....	15
Table 17. Residents’ Perceptions of Quality of Life in Sussex County.....	17

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Sussex County Delaware Census Tracts.....	1
Figure 2. Primary Coastal Tracts in Sussex County Delaware .....	2
Figure 3. Secondary Coastal Tracts in Sussex County Delaware .....	2
Figure 4. Mid-County Tracts in Sussex County Delaware .....	3
Figure 5. Western Tracts in Sussex County Delaware.....	3
Figure 6. Health of Sussex County Environment.....	16
Figure 7. Government’s Efforts to Protect and Manage the County’s Natural Resources .....	16



# **QUALITY OF LIFE IN SUSSEX COUNTY DELAWARE: UNDERSTANDING COASTAL AND INLAND RESIDENTS' PREFERENCES, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION AND METHODS**

The University of Delaware Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service conducted a study of Sussex County residents during the fall 2002 and winter 2003. The overall purpose of the study was to assess residents' perceptions and opinions of development, growth and land-use issues facing the county. Another goal was to begin identifying quality of life factors that affect residents' lifestyles in the county. The chief focus of this report is to discuss similarities and differences in opinions between residents living in the ever-growing coastal sections of the county and inland residents, mainly living west of Route 113, a major north/south corridor in Sussex County.

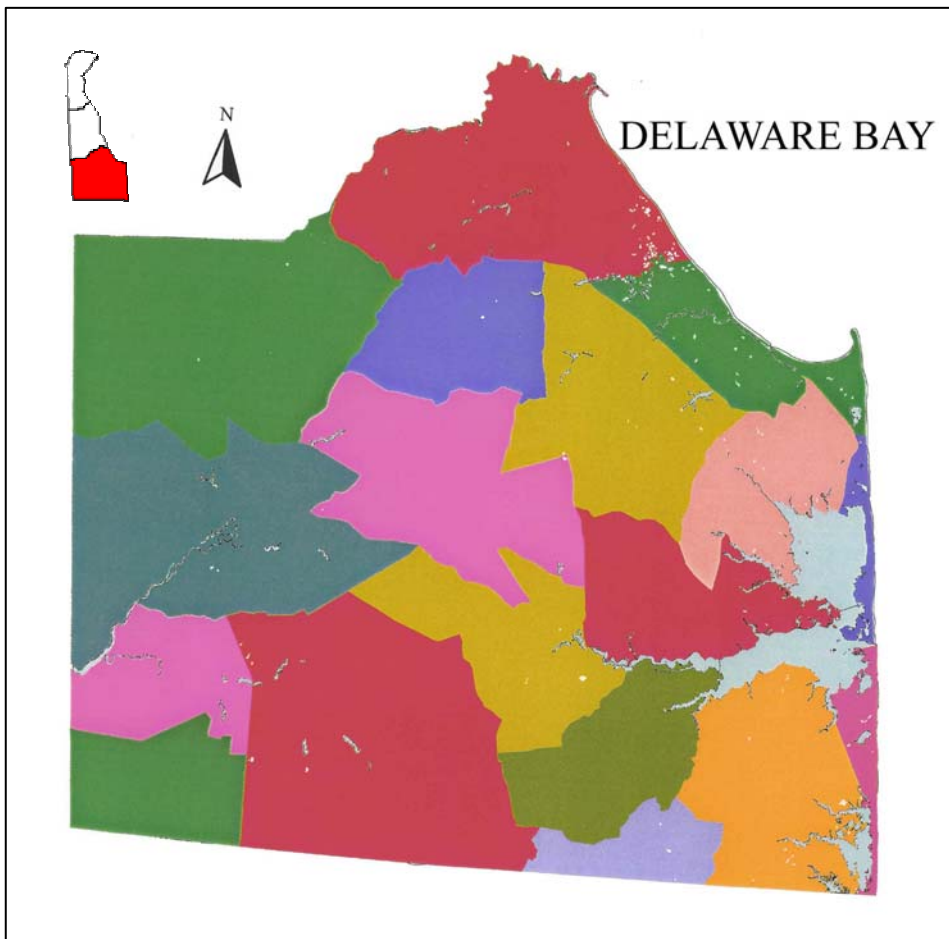


Figure 1. Sussex County Delaware Census Tracts

Data was collected using a mail survey of randomly selected Sussex County residents. Approximately 1,600 residents were surveyed by mail. For sampling purposes, the county was divided into four separate areas comprised of U.S. Census tracts (see Figure 1). The resident populations of these four areas were determined using 2000 census data and appropriate sample sizes were selected from each area. The four census tract groups were defined and samples were selected. The group name and sample sizes included: Primary Coastal (n=600); Secondary Coastal (n=607); Mid-County (n=198); and Western (n=200).

The Primary Coastal tracts (Figure 2) included those census tracts along the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay coasts (three tracts were included in the 2000 census). These areas include the beach resort towns of Lewes, Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach, Bethany Beach and Fenwick Island and the barrier island areas in between, much of it consisting of state park land. The tracts make up only 5% of the county's land area, but over 12,000 residents reside in this area. According to the 2000 census, the population in these primary coastal tracts grew at a rate of 59% between 1990 and 2000.

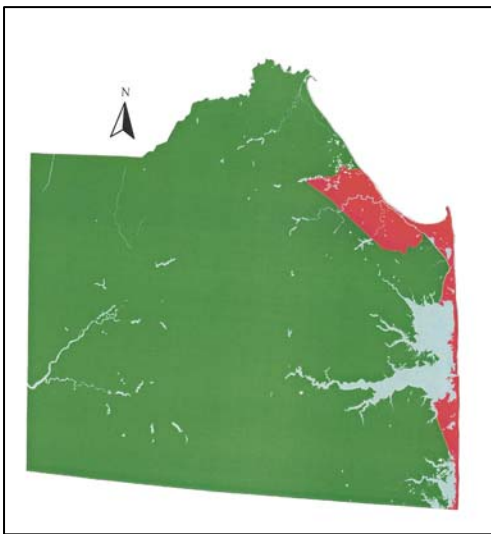


Figure 2. Primary Coastal Tracts in Sussex County Delaware

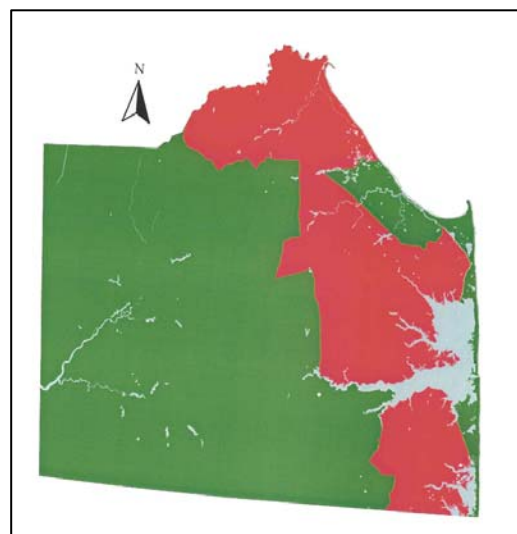


Figure 3. Secondary Coastal Tracts in Sussex County Delaware

The Secondary Coastal tracts (Figure 3) included the areas just west of the Primary Coastal tracts, yet these areas exhibit many of the same characteristics as the primary coastal tracts including waterfront along the inland bays, second home ownership, and population growth trends higher than the county average (five census tracts were included in the 2000 census). These tracts make up about 30% of the county's land area, and almost 63,000 residents reside in this area. According to the 2000 census, the population in these secondary coastal tracts grew at a rate of 54% between 1990 and 2000.

The Mid-County tracts (Figure 4) essentially comprised the central corridor of the county, generally including the towns along Route 113 from Milford in the north to Selbyville in the south. There were five census tracts included within this group. The tracts make up about one-quarter (24%) of the county's land area, and over 29,000 residents reside in this area. According to the 2000 census, the population in these mid-county tracts grew at a rate of 29% between 1990 and 2000.

The Western tracts (Figure 5) were the largest of the four areas and included the north-south corridor along Route 13 and the extensive surrounding rural areas. There were five census tracts within this group. The major towns of Greenwood, Bridgeville, Seaford, Laurel and Delmar are included in these tracts. The tracts make up 41% of the county's land area, and more than 52,000 residents reside in this area. According to the 2000 census, the population in these primary coastal tracts grew at a rate of 25% between 1990 and 2000.

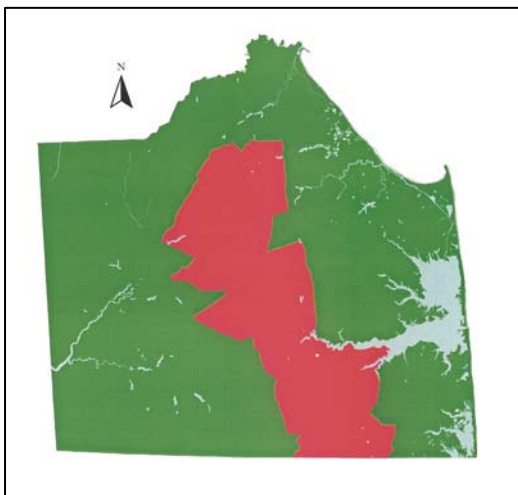


Figure 4. Mid-County Tracts in Sussex County Delaware

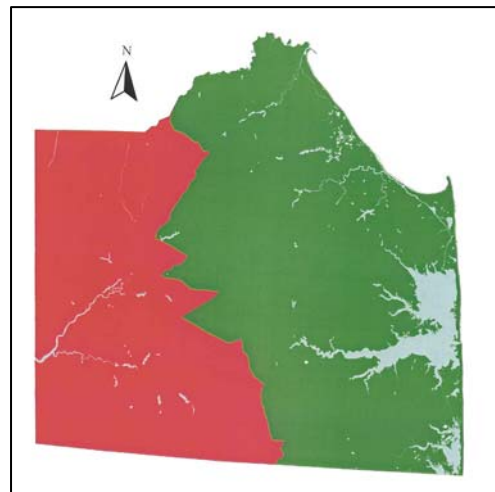


Figure 5. Western Tracts in Sussex County Delaware

The first wave of 1,608 surveys was mailed in September 2002; a follow-up postcard reminder and second complete mailing were mailed at various intervals later in October to those who did not respond to the initial mailing. One hundred and eight of the mailings were returned as undeliverable by the U.S. Postal Service (e.g. insufficient/improper address, resident moved and left no forwarding address, etc). Six hundred and eighty-eight surveys were returned with useful information, representing an overall response rate of 46% after non-deliverables were excluded. Thirty-five percent of the inland residents (Mid-County and Western) responded to the survey (135 of 381) after undeliverables were excluded, and 49% of the coastal residents (Primary Coastal and Secondary Coastal) responded (543 of 1,119) after undeliverables were omitted. For a complete review of responses by census tract group see Table 1.

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PRIMARY COASTAL</b>	<b>SECONDARY COASTAL</b>	<b>MID-COUNTY</b>	<b>WESTERN</b>
Surveys Mailed	1,608	600	607	198	203
Surveys Undeliverable	108	52	36	15	5
Effective Sample	1,500	548	571	183	198
Completed Returns	688	278	265	63	72
Percent Response	46%	51%	46%	34%	36%

To analyze and compare the results between coastal and inland residents, as this report does, the data from the four census tract groups were combined into two distinct segments. The Primary Coastal and Secondary Coastal census tract respondents were combined and designated as **coastal residents** and the Mid-County and Western tract respondents were combined and designated as **inland residents**. This classification provided the best geographical approximation of respondents living in coastal versus non-coastal areas.

## **STUDY RESULTS**

The results presented in this report are shown in two distinct ways. First, the overall responses are depicted in the various tables and figures to provide the reader with a sense of how all Sussex County respondents felt about certain questions. Secondly, the responses are presented by the residents' geographic location in the county – coastal or inland. Statistical tests were performed comparing the responses between the two resident segments and significant differences are noted between coastal and inland residents.

### **SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Coastal residents were significantly older than inland residents. For instance, 35% of inland residents were younger than 40 years of age, compared to 18% of coastal residents. In addition, one-third (33%) of the coastal residents reported being 60 years of age and older versus 27% of inland residents. The average age of the two groups was 62 years – coastal residents and 57 years – inland residents.

Coastal residents also were more inclined to be college graduates than inland residents. Fifty-five percent of coastal residents reported having college degrees (29% even had post-graduate degrees). Slightly more than one-third (34%) of inland residents reported having college degrees.

Coastal residents were more likely to indicate they were retired (60%) compared to inland residents (42%). Sixty percent of inland residents reported household incomes of less than \$50,000 compared to 44% of coastal residents. Nineteen percent of coastal residents reported incomes of greater than \$100,000 versus 9% of inland residents (Table 2).

<b>Table 2. Demographic Profile of Sussex County Residents (Values are Percent)</b>			
	<b>ALL</b>	<b>COASTAL</b>	<b>INLAND</b>
<b>Age<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>(n=663)</b>	<b>(n=525)</b>	<b>(n=129)</b>
Less than 20	3	2	5
20 – 29	5	5	9
30 – 39	13	1	21
40 – 49	21	21	22
50 – 59	27	29	18
60 – 69	24	26	18
70 – 79	7	6	9
80 and Greater	1	1	--
<b>Sex</b>	<b>(n=636)</b>	<b>(n=502)</b>	<b>(n=126)</b>
Percent Male	61	61	65
<b>Education<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>(n=674)</b>	<b>(n=532)</b>	<b>(n=134)</b>
Grade School	1	1	2
Some H. S.	4	3	8
H. S. Graduate	21	18	31
Some College	24	23	25
College Graduate	25	26	17
Post Graduate	26	29	17
<b>Employment<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>(n=677)</b>	<b>(n=538)</b>	<b>(n=131)</b>
Percent Retired	57	60	42
<b>Income<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(n=605)</b>	<b>(n=475)</b>	<b>(n=121)</b>
< \$30,000	19	17	28
\$30,000 - \$49,999	28	27	32
\$50,000 - \$99,999	36	38	31
> \$100,000	17	19	9

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

## RESIDENCY IN SUSSEX COUNTY

Eighty-six percent of respondents, overall, were permanent residents and 14% were part-time or seasonal residents. Inland residents (99%) were more likely to be permanent residents than coastal residents (82%). Part-time or seasonal residents reported residing in the following states on a permanent basis: MD — 28%; PA — 26%; DE (other than Sussex County) — 18%; FL — 9%; VA — 6%; DC — 6%; and other states — 7% (Table 3).

<b>Table 3. Percent of Residents Living Full-time in Sussex County*</b>			
	<b>ALL (n=680)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=537)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=135)</b>
Permanent residents (% YES)	86	82	99

\*Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

Overall, 58% of respondents indicated that they lived in a city or within town limits in the county; 42% lived in unincorporated areas throughout the county. Although no significant differences were noted, more inland residents (65%) than coastal residents (57%) resided within town limits, but more than one-half of each sub-group indicated that they did reside within established communities (Table 4).

<b>Table 4. Percent of Residents Living Within Town Limits</b>			
	<b>ALL (n=670)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=528)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=134)</b>
Live within town limits (% YES)	58	57	65

As expected, coastal residents were more likely to indicate they lived near coastal waters than inland residents, even though some inland residents could reside near bays, tidal rivers or creeks. One-half of the coastal residents (51%) lived either directly on the water, or within one mile of tidal waters, compared with 11% of inland residents. Another one-third (34%) of the coastal residents lived between one and five miles from coastal waters. The majority of inland residents lived more than 15 miles from coastal waters (Table 5).

<b>Distance</b>	<b>ALL (n=681)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=539)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=134)</b>
Live directly on waterfront	13	15	5
Less than 1 mile	30	36	6
1 - 5 miles	29	34	8
6 - 15 miles	14	12	22
16 - 25 miles	6	2	25
More than 25 miles	7	<1	31
Unsure of distance	1	<1	3

\*Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

Coastal residents are relative newcomers in the county compared to inland residents. Two-thirds (66%) of coastal residents had resided in the county for 20 years or less, compared with 38% of inland residents. More inland residents (42%) had resided in the county for more than 40 years, compared to coastal residents (8%). The average number of years' residence time in the county for coastal residents was 19 years, and 33 years for inland residents (Table 6).

<b>Years</b>	<b>ALL (n=676)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=535)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=133)</b>
1 - 10	40	44	24
11 - 20	21	22	14
21 - 30	13	13	16
31 - 50	16	13	27
51 - 70	8	5	15
Greater than 70	3	3	7

\*Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

#### **RESIDENTS BORN IN SUSSEX COUNTY AND REASONS FOR RELOCATING**

Only 18% of all respondents indicated that they were born in Sussex County. The other 82% were born in other states or in the other two Delaware counties. Of particular interest, is the fact that almost one-half (45%) of inland residents were born in the county versus only 12% of coastal residents (Table 7).



	<b>ALL (n=680)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=540)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=132)</b>
Born in Sussex County (% YES)	18	12	45

\*Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

When residents who were not born in the county were asked to indicate their reasons for relocating, some interesting differences were observed between coastal and inland residents. Coastal residents were inclined to select the following reasons more often than inland residents: relaxed/quiet lifestyle (60% versus 40%); retirement (54% versus 28%); recreational opportunities; (48% versus 25%); natural environment (41% versus 23%); and moved to a second home (17% versus 2%). Inland residents selected employment opportunities (34% versus 14%) and family decisions (34% versus 13%) to a greater extent than coastal residents (Table 8).

<b>Reason</b>	<b>ALL (n=524)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=450)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=65)</b>
Relaxed/Quiet Lifestyle <sup>1</sup>	57	60	40
Retirement <sup>1</sup>	50	54	28
Reasonable Cost of Living	47	49	37
Recreational Opportunities <sup>1</sup>	44	48	25
Natural Environment <sup>1</sup>	38	41	23
More Rural/Less Developed	35	36	25
Moved to Second-Home <sup>1</sup>	15	17	2
Employment Opportunities <sup>1</sup>	17	14	34
Family Decision to Re-locate <sup>1</sup>	16	13	34

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF GROWTH/DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR COUNTY SERVICES**

Residents reacted to a series of statements about growth and development in the county. They were instructed to rate each statement on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Overall, statements about controlling traffic congestion and limiting growth in the county's coastal area received the highest ratings from residents. Coastal residents felt stronger

about the statements: traffic congestion needs immediate attention (4.6 rating; 93% agree/ strongly agree versus 4.3 rating; 83% agree/strongly agree); limit growth and development in the coastal area (4.5 rating; 89% agree/strongly agree versus 4.1 rating; 77% agree/strongly agree); and county residents should be willing to share the costs of protecting the environment (3.5 rating; 62% agree/strongly agree versus 3.2 rating; 49% agree/strongly agree). Inland residents were more likely to support the statement: officials are taking proper steps to minimize the negative impacts of development (2.7 rating; 24% agree/strongly agree versus 2.2 rating; 15% agree/strongly agree) (Table 9).

Statement	ALL (n=676)		COASTAL (n=536)		INLAND (n=132)	
	Mean Rating Value+	% A. & S. A.*	Mean Rating Value+	% A. & S. A.*	Mean Rating Value+	% A. & S. A.*
Traffic congestion in the county is a concern that needs immediate attention. <sup>1</sup>	4.5	91	4.6	93	4.3	83
I am in favor of limiting growth and development in Sussex County's coastal area. <sup>1</sup>	4.4	87	4.5	89	4.1	77
"Smart Growth" in the county can be achieved by requiring new development to be located near communities that have the necessary infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.).	3.7	75	3.9	74	3.9	75
If it costs more to protect the environment in Sussex County, individuals should be willing to share the burden. <sup>2</sup>	3.5	59	3.5	62	3.2	49
Towns should annex adjacent unincorporated areas to help manage growth and improve local decision-making.	3.3	46	3.4	46	3.3	47
Developing land in the county's coastal area stimulates the local economy.	3.0	42	3.0	42	3.1	43
County and town officials are taking the necessary steps to minimize the negative impacts of development. <sup>1</sup>	2.3	16	2.2	15	2.7	24

+Ratings based on 5-point scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Represents percent of respondents who Agree and Strongly Agree.

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

To gauge whether county residents supported new or expanded services in the county to address some critical concerns, a series of services were presented and survey respondents were asked to indicate if they would like to see the service created or expanded. They were again instructed to use a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly Oppose and 5 = Strongly Favor. They were also instructed to indicate whether they would be willing to support the service financially, through taxes or other fees. Overall, the top choice was improving roads and highways in the county. Eighty-one percent of all respondents favored or strongly favored this improvement (4.2 rating). Only 33% of

the residents, overall, indicated a willingness to help pay for road improvements, with coastal residents (35%) more likely to indicate a willingness to pay than inland residents (24%). Expanding open space in the county was the next highest rated service supported by coastal residents (4.0 rating; 71% favor/strongly favor), with inland residents (3.6 rating; 57% favor/strongly favor) expressing less support than their coastal neighbors. Inland residents (4.1 rating; 70% favor/strongly favor) had stronger feelings about establishing a county park and recreation program than did coastal residents (3.7 rating; 56% favor/strongly favor). Although nearly all of the services were supported by a majority of both groups, the percentage of residents willing to pay for the services was usually less than 25% (Table 10).

<b>Improve Roads/Highways</b>			
	<b>ALL (n=666)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=527)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=131)</b>
Favor Improvement (Rating Value)	4.2	4.2	4.2
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor"	81	81	84
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees <sup>2</sup>	33	35	24
<b>Expand Open Space Program</b>			
	<b>(n=657)</b>	<b>(n= 522)</b>	<b>(n=127)</b>
Favor Expansion (Rating Value)	3.9	4.0	3.6
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor" <sup>1</sup>	69	71	57
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees <sup>2</sup>	23	25	15
<b>Establish County Parks/Recreation Program</b>			
	<b>(n=657)</b>	<b>(n=520)</b>	<b>(n=129)</b>
Favor Establishment (Rating Value)	3.8	3.7	4.1
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor" <sup>1</sup>	59	56	70
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees	24	24	24
<b>Establish Alternate Transportation Systems (bike/pedestrian paths)</b>			
	<b>(n=665)</b>	<b>(n=527)</b>	<b>(n=130)</b>
Favor Establishment (Rating Value)	3.7	3.8	3.5
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor" <sup>1</sup>	59	62	48
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees <sup>2</sup>	23	25	15
<b>Expand Central Sewers Throughout County</b>			
	<b>(n=649)</b>	<b>(n=515)</b>	<b>(n=126)</b>
Favor Expansion (Rating Value)	3.6	3.6	3.5
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor"	53	53	51
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees	24	25	20
<b>Improve Public Transportation (bus system)</b>			
	<b>(n=661)</b>	<b>(n=521)</b>	<b>(n=132)</b>
Favor Improvement (Rating Value)	3.6	3.6	3.6
% "Favor" and "Strongly Favor"	53	53	55
% Willing to Pay Higher Taxes/Fees	15	16	10

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

## SUSSEX COUNTY’S ECONOMIC FUTURE

When residents were asked to indicate which growth industries they perceived as being compatible with Sussex County’s future, tourism and farming (both crop and poultry) were the only ones supported by more than 50% of both groups. Coastal residents (77%) were significantly more inclined to support tourism than inland residents (53%). Although not supported very highly by either group, building construction (32% versus 23%) and heavy manufacturing (8% versus 3%) had greater support from inland residents (Table 11).

<b>Industry</b>	<b>ALL (n=654)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=513)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=133)</b>
Tourism <sup>1</sup>	72	77	53
Crop Farming	69	68	73
Poultry Farming	51	50	53
Light Manufacturing	49	48	52
High Tech Firms	36	37	30
Building Construction <sup>2</sup>	25	23	32
Heavy Manufacturing <sup>2</sup>	4	3	8

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

Both segments of residents responded similarly to a series of statements related to the agriculture industry in the county. Overall, on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree, the residents acknowledged that agriculture contributes a great deal to the economy of the county (4.1 rating; 83% agree/strongly agree). Fifty-nine percent felt that government should pay farmers to keep land in agricultural uses to prevent new development (3.7 rating) and slightly more than one-half (53%) agreed or strongly agreed that agriculture provides diverse employment opportunities for residents (Table 12).

Agriculture Statements	ALL (n=662)		COASTAL (n=531)		INLAND (n=131)	
	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*
Agriculture contributes a great deal economically to the residents of Sussex County.	4.1	83	4.1	82	4.2	86
Government should pay farmers to keep land in agricultural uses to prevent new development from occurring.	3.6	59	3.6	60	3.4	52
Agriculture in the county provides diverse employment opportunities for local residents.	3.4	53	3.4	55	3.2	43
Agriculture negatively affects the environment around Sussex County's bays and streams.	3.2	45	3.2	47	3.2	43

+Ratings based on 5-point scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Represents percent of respondents who Agree and Strongly Agree.

When residents were presented with a series of statements about tourism and asked to rate each statement on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree, both groups agreed that tourism was responsible for too fast a rate of development in the county (3.8 rating; 69% agree/strongly agree). There were notable differences for two of the statements, tourism is a bright spot in the county's economic future and the tourism industry provides many worthwhile employment opportunities for residents. Coastal residents were more inclined to rate these statements higher than inland residents (Table 13).

Tourism Statements	All (n=664)		Coastal (n=531)		Inland (n=133)	
	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*	Mean Rating Value <sup>+</sup>	% A. & S.A.*
Tourism is responsible for too fast a rate of development in Sussex County.	3.8	69	3.9	70	3.7	61
Tourism is one of the "bright spots" in the county's economic future. <sup>1</sup>	3.7	68	3.8	70	3.5	59
The tourism industry provides many worthwhile employment opportunities for county residents. <sup>1</sup>	3.6	66	3.7	68	3.4	55
Tourism in the county has caused taxes to go up for local residents because of extra police, roads and other services.	3.4	49	3.4	50	3.5	48

+Ratings based on 5-point scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Represents percent of respondents who Agree and Strongly Agree.

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

When asked to rate the overall economic prosperity in Sussex County, coastal residents had a higher rating than inland residents. Seventy-three percent of coastal residents rated the county’s economic prosperity either “good or outstanding” compared to 62% of the inland residents. Also, a significantly higher percentage of inland residents (31%) rated the economic prosperity “poor or fair” compared to the coastal residents (20%) (Table 14).

<b>Table 14. Residents’ Perceptions of Economic Prosperity in Sussex County*</b>			
	<b>ALL (n=672)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=532)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=132)</b>
Poor	4	2	11
Fair	18	18	20
Good	63	63	59
Outstanding	9	10	3
No Opinion	7	8	7

\*Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

#### **CONTACT WITH OFFICIALS AND INFORMATION SOURCES FOR LEARNING ABOUT ISSUES**

When residents were asked whether they felt county and local officials do an adequate job of informing citizens about land-use issues affecting their communities, 16% of coastal residents replied “Yes” and 56% replied “No”, with 29% indicating they were “Unsure”. Inland residents had similar views, with 18% replying “Yes”, 50% replying “No” and 32% indicating they were “Unsure”.

When residents were asked if they had ever contacted any government officials about land-use issues affecting the county or their local communities, 32% of coastal residents reported that they had contacted an official, compared to 27% of inland residents. When they were further asked to indicate whether they had ever attended a public meeting or public hearing about land-use issues affecting the county or their local communities, 53% of coastal residents indicated that they had attending such meetings, compared with 40% of inland residents (Table 15).

	<b>ALL (n=678)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=538)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=132)</b>
Contacted public officials (% YES)	31	32	27
Attended public meetings (% YES) <sup>1</sup>	51	53	40

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

Residents use many different sources of information to become familiar with issues related to land use in the county. Overall, respondents read local community newspapers (86%), such as the Cape Gazette, The Wave, or Seaford Leader, to learn about important issues affecting the county. Although both groups indicated that newspapers were their primary source of information, coastal residents (89%) rated this source significantly higher than inland residents (81%). The next highest rated sources of information were by word of mouth from friends, family members or co-workers (51%) and local TV stations (50%). Inland residents (72%) were more likely to indicate local television stations were a source of information than coastal residents (45%) (Table16).

<b>Information Source</b>	<b>ALL (n=680)</b>	<b>COASTAL (n=539)</b>	<b>INLAND (n=133)</b>
Local Community Newspapers <sup>2</sup>	86	89	81
Friends/Family/Co-workers	51	51	50
Local TV Stations <sup>1</sup>	50	45	72
Statewide Newspapers	35	33	41
Local Radio Stations	28	27	29
Environmental Organizations	17	18	14
Government Officials	8	7	11
Internet Web Sites	4	4	5
University Scientists	4	4	4
Other	5	6	2

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

## SUSSEX COUNTY'S ENVIRONMENT

When asked to rate the health of Sussex County's environment compared to five years ago, nearly one-half (45%) of all the respondents felt it was deteriorating. Eighteen percent thought it was staying the same and only 13% felt it was improving. Almost one-quarter (24%) indicated they were unsure. There were no significant differences between the two segments of residents (Figure 6).

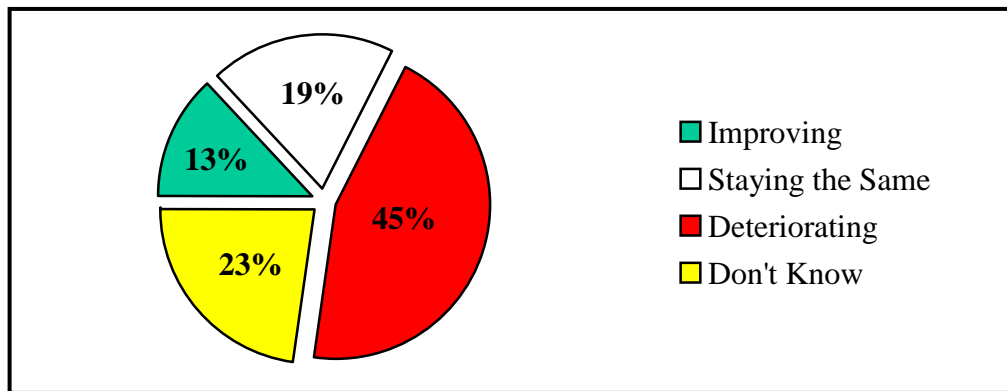


Figure 6. Health of Sussex County Environment

When asked to rate government's efforts to protect and manage the county's natural resources, there were no significant differences between coastal and inland residents. One-half of all respondents (50%) replied government's efforts were good, 39% rated their efforts either poor (11%) or fair (28%), and 7% rated government's efforts outstanding. Four percent had no opinion (Figure 7).

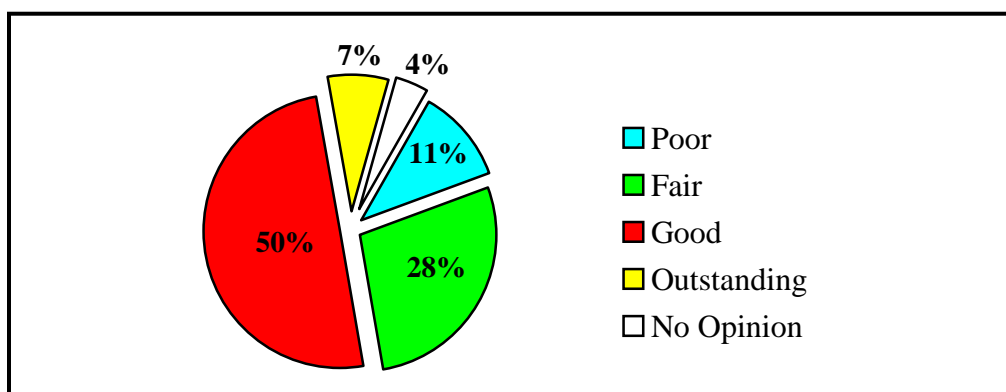


Figure 7. Government's Efforts to Protect and Manage the County's Natural Resources



## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY OF LIFE

As a final gauge to determine how residents felt about living in the area they were asked to rate the overall “quality of life” in the county. Ninety-four percent of coastal residents rated it either good (63%) or outstanding (31%) and 89% of inland residents rated it good (67%) or outstanding (22%). More inland residents (11%) rated the quality of life fair or poor than did coastal residents (5%).

There are certain factors that contribute to an individual’s “quality of life” in the area where they live. A series of quality of life statements were provided to survey recipients and they were asked to rate them on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Not at all Important and 5 = Extremely Important. Factors related to personal safety, safeguarding the environment, having uncongested roads, and reasonable living costs were all ranked high. Table 17 reveals the respondents’ ratings for all the factors that were presented.

	<b>ALL (n=669)</b>		<b>COASTAL (n=531)</b>		<b>INLAND (n=131)</b>	
	Mean Rating Value+	V.I. & E.I.*	Mean Rating Value+	V.I. & E.I.*	Mean Rating Value+	V.I. & E.I.*
Safe Neighborhoods	4.6	93	4.6	95	4.6	92
Protected Open Space/Natural Areas <sup>2</sup>	4.2	80	4.3	82	4.0	73
Uncongested Roads	4.2	77	4.2	80	4.0	70
Low Property Taxes	4.1	75	4.1	75	4.1	73
Reasonable Cost of Living	4.1	78	4.1	77	4.2	81
Affordable Housing	4.0	74	4.0	72	4.1	83
Live Close to Stores/Other Services	3.6	53	3.6	54	3.5	48
High Quality Schools <sup>1</sup>	3.1	49	2.9	43	3.9	72
Presence of Alternate Transportation <sup>2</sup>	3.0	36	3.1	39	2.8	25
Employment Opportunities <sup>1</sup>	2.8	36	2.5	29	3.7	65

+Ratings based on 5-point scale: 1=Not at all Important; 5=Extremely Important.

\*Represents percent of respondents who responded Very Important and Extremely Important.

<sup>1</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .01.

<sup>2</sup>Significant differences observed between coastal and inland residents at .05.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sussex County is a wonderful place to live, work and play. These study results revealed that 82% of all the respondents indicated they were not born in the county. No doubt, many of them have vacationed or visited the county at some point and decided to make it their permanent or seasonal residence. When asked their motivations for relocating to the county, most respondents presented a multitude of reasons (as opposed to simply selecting one). At the top of the list was that they enjoyed the relaxed/quiet lifestyle the county offers (57% of all respondents), next was those who decided to retire to the area (50%), and thirdly was the reasonable cost of living in the county (47%).

County residents had a variety of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about “quality of life” as well as growth and development issues occurring in the county. Most respondents seem to be in agreement that growth is occurring too fast and that many problems such as extreme traffic congestion, loss of open space, and lack of land use planning are concerns that are at the forefront. Even though there are many problems facing county residents, they rate the “quality of life” very high. The most important factors that contribute to high “quality of life” are: safe communities; open space and natural areas; uncongested roads; and reasonable cost of living. The fact that many current county residents are non-native (not born in Sussex County) may explain their perceptions of “quality of life” being high relative to where they used to live. For instance, those who used to live in major metropolitan areas may be able to better tolerate the traffic and development because it is still less than that which they had previously experienced.

Another important fact that was gleaned from the study findings was that a majority of respondents did not feel that county or local officials did an adequate job of informing them of land use issues affecting their communities. Even though one-half of the respondents indicated they had attended public meetings or public hearings on land-use issues, there still appears to be a lack of information sharing on important land-use issues. Since local community newspapers (86%) were the primary sources of information that residents use to learn about issues, it seems reasonable that this source should be the best vehicle for county and local officials to keep citizens abreast of important issues.

The data collected in this study can be examined in many different ways to gain more insight into the various population segments that make up the county resident base. For instance, native-born residents may differ in their opinions and attitudes about certain variables significantly more than non-natives. Additionally, residents who are retired and are not raising families may also have different views than residents who are employed and still have children living at home. This information may be useful to local and county decision makers as they attempt to address the major issues facing communities in this ever-growing county.

Responses from these other population segments will be explored and major findings will be presented on the University of Delaware Sea Grant Web site in the future. See [www.ocean.udel.edu/SeaGrant](http://www.ocean.udel.edu/SeaGrant).

**APPENDIX A**  
**MAIL SURVEY INSTRUMENT**



**This questionnaire is designed to obtain your opinions about important issues facing Sussex County. Please answer the questions and return the survey in the postage-paid envelope provided.**

1. Is your home in Sussex County your permanent residence or a part-time/seasonal residence?  
(Check only one)
  - Permanent residence
  - Part-time/seasonal residence

Where is your permanent residence?  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. How many years have you resided in the county either as a permanent resident or as a part-time/seasonal resident? \_\_\_\_\_ Years
  
3. Do you  Own or  Rent your residence in Sussex County?
  
4. Were you born in Sussex County?  Yes  No → If Yes, skip to Question 6.
  
5. If you were not born in Sussex County which of the following were important reasons for you to re-locate to the county? (Check all that apply)
  - Business/employment opportunities     Retirement     Family decision to relocate
  - Reasonable cost of living     Relaxed/quiet lifestyle     Moved to second home
  - Recreational opportunities     Natural environment     More rural/Less developed
  - Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Is your Sussex County residence within the municipal limits of a town or city?  Yes  No
  
7. How close do you estimate your Sussex County residence is to coastal waters (e.g. ocean, bays, tidal creeks, etc.)?
  - Live directly on waterfront     Less than 1 mile     1-5 miles     6-15 miles     16-25 miles
  - More than 25 miles     Unsure of distance
  
8. Listed below are some positive factors that add to people's Quality of Life where they live. Please rate the importance of each factor as they contribute to your Quality of Life in Sussex County by circling the response that comes closest to how you feel. (1 = Not at all Important; 2 = Slightly Important; 3 = Moderately Important; 4 = Very Important; 5 = Extremely Important)
 

Employment opportunities exist .....	1	2	3	4	5
High quality schools .....	1	2	3	4	5
Low property taxes .....	1	2	3	4	5
Reasonable cost of living (e.g. fair price for goods/services) .....	1	2	3	4	5
Live close to stores, restaurants and other services .....	1	2	3	4	5
Uncongested roads .....	1	2	3	4	5
Presence of alternate transportation (bikeways, foot paths) .....	1	2	3	4	5
Protected open spaces and natural areas .....	1	2	3	4	5
Neighborhoods are safe .....	1	2	3	4	5
Housing is affordable .....	1	2	3	4	5
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5

9. How would you rate the overall Quality of Life in Sussex County?

- Poor     Fair     Good     Outstanding     No Opinion

10. If you had the opportunity to live anywhere in Sussex County, where would you prefer to live?  
(Check only one)

- City/Large town                       Small town                       Suburban development  
 Rural development                       Home in the country                       Waterfront property

11. The following statements pertain to issues related to growth and development in Sussex County. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of these statements by circling the response that corresponds to your answer.					
<b>(SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE; D = DISAGREE; N = NEUTRAL/UNDECIDED; A = AGREE; SA = STRONGLY AGREE)</b>					
Traffic congestion in the county is a concern that needs immediate attention. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
Towns should annex adjacent unincorporated areas to help manage growth and improve local decision-making. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
I am in favor of limiting growth and development in Sussex County's coastal area. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
County and town officials are taking the necessary steps to minimize the negative impacts of development. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
Developing land in the county's coastal area stimulates the local economy. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
If it costs more to protect the environment in Sussex County, individuals should be willing to share the burden. ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
"Smart Growth" in the county can be achieved by requiring new development to be located near communities that have the necessary infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc.). ....	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

12. Do you feel that county and local officials do an adequate job of informing citizens of land-use issues affecting their communities?

- Yes     No     Don't Know/Not Sure

13. Have you ever contacted any government officials about land-use issues affecting the county or your local community?

- Yes     No

14. Have you ever attended a public meeting or public hearing about land-use issues affecting the county or your local community?

- Yes     No

15. Where do you regularly learn about land-use issues affecting the county or your local community?  
(Check all that apply)

- |                                                     |                                                |                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local community newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Local TV stations     | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet websites           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local radio stations       | <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide newspapers  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends/Family/Co-workers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government officials       | <input type="checkbox"/> University scientists | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____      |                                                |                                                      |

16. The following is a list of services and programs that could be established or improved in Sussex County. Please indicate if you would favor or oppose each item by circling the response that comes closest to how you feel. Also, please indicate if you would be willing to pay higher taxes or fees to support these items. (1 = Strongly Oppose; 2 = Oppose; 3 = Neutral/Undecided; 4 = Favor; 5 = Strongly Favor)

	Strongly Oppose					Strongly Favor		Willing to pay higher taxes or fees?
	1	2	3	4	5			
Expand central sewers throughout the county.....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Improve roads and highways.....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Improve public transportation (e.g. bus system).....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Establish county parks/recreation program.....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Expand open space program.....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Establish alternative transportation systems, such as bicycle and pedestrian paths.....	1	2	3	4	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	

17. What growth industries do you feel are most compatible with Sussex County's future?

(Check all that apply)

- |                                                |                                                |                                          |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crop farming          | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry farming       | <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy manufacturing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Light manufacturing   | <input type="checkbox"/> High-tech firms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |                                          |

18. Agriculture and tourism are the two largest industries in Sussex County. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the response that corresponds to your answer.

(SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE; D = DISAGREE; N = NEUTRAL/UNDECIDED; A = AGREE; SA = STRONGLY AGREE)

Agriculture contributes a great deal economically to the residents of Sussex County. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Agriculture negatively affects the environment around Sussex County's bays and streams. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Agriculture in the county provides diverse employment opportunities for local residents. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Government agencies should pay farmers to keep land in agricultural use to prevent new development from occurring. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Tourism is one of the "bright spots" in the county's economic future. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Tourism is responsible for too fast a rate of development in Sussex County. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
The tourism industry provides many worthwhile employment opportunities for county residents. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA
Tourism in the county has caused taxes to go up for local residents because of extra police, roads and other services. ....	SD	D	N	A	SA

19. Overall, how would you rate the economic prosperity in Sussex County (e.g. adequate jobs, low unemployment, fair tax structure, etc.)?

- Poor     Fair     Good     Outstanding     No Opinion

20. How would you rate government's efforts to protect and manage the county's natural resources (beaches, bays, parks, forests, streams, ponds, etc.)?  
 Poor     Fair     Good     Outstanding     No Opinion
21. How healthy do you think Sussex County's environment is compared to five years ago?  
 Improving     Staying the same     Deteriorating     Don't Know/Not Sure
22. In your opinion, can Sussex County sustain the growth it has seen in the past few decades and still maintain a Quality of Life that everyone can enjoy? (Check only one)  
 Yes, continue at same pace  
 Yes, but only with a coordinated approach to land-use planning  
 No, it will never return to the way it used to be  
 No, growth must stop now for quality of life to be restored

**The next few questions are about you and will help us to know more about county residents. We stress that all of your answers will be kept strictly confidential.**

23. Which category best describes your occupation?  
 Agriculture/Farming     Private business (tourism-related)     Academic/Teaching  
 Construction     Private business (not tourism-related)     Homemaker  
 Retired     Government (federal, state, local)     Non-profit organization  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

24. Are you, or is someone in your immediate household, employed in a job related to tourism? (e.g. hotel/motel, restaurants, retail, amusements, etc.)  
 Yes     No    If Yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

25. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

26. What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
 Grade School     Some High School     High School Graduate  
 Some College     College Graduate     Post Graduate Education

27. Are you:     Male     Female

28. Which best describes your total annual family income, before taxes?  
 Under \$20,000     \$20,000 – 29,999     \$30,000 – 39,999  
 \$40,000 – 49,999     \$50,000 – 74,999     \$75,000 – 99,999  
 \$100,000 – 149,999     \$150,000 or more

Please feel free to provide any additional comments you may have.

---



---



---



---



---



---



---

*Thank you for your cooperation.  
Please return the completed survey form in the stamped,  
self-addressed envelope provided.*



Ph: 302-645-4235  
Fax: 302-645-4213  
E-mail: jfalk@udel.edu

August, 2002

Dear Sussex County Resident:

We are conducting a study of issues related to Quality of Life in Sussex County. Your name was randomly selected from all residents living in the county. As the county is experiencing rapid rates of growth in population and housing, especially in the coastal area, little information is available concerning the public's views about how these changes affect them. The information you provide is especially important since it will be very useful in helping local and state officials better understand residents' needs and concerns.

The accuracy of the study depends on the number of questionnaires returned. It should only take between 10 and 15 minutes of your time to complete the survey. Once you have answered the questions, please place the questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope and return it as quickly as possible. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential, and your name or individual responses will never be reported in any way.

If you would like a copy of the summary report when the study is completed, please write your name and address on a separate sheet of paper and enclose it in the return envelope along with your questionnaire, or send it separately if you wish. Information from local residents, like you, is vital to ensure that your needs are being considered and that Sussex County continues to be an enjoyable place to live. We greatly appreciate your help and interest in this study.

Sincerely,

James M. Falk  
Project Coordinator

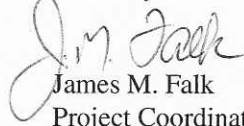
Dear Sussex County Resident:

About a week ago you should have received a questionnaire seeking your opinions about some important issues affecting Sussex County. At the time this postcard was mailed, we had not yet received your response. Your answers are very important and will be used to represent the opinions of many other residents with views similar to yours.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it in the postage-paid envelope we provided. If you have misplaced the questionnaire, or did not receive it, we will send you another one if we do not hear from you.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



James M. Falk  
Project Coordinator

**Note: If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please disregard this reminder. Thank you for your prompt response.**

Ph: 302-645-4235  
Fax: 302-645-4213  
E-mail: jfalk@udel.edu

September, 2002

Dear Sussex County Resident:

About three weeks ago, we sent you a questionnaire about your Quality of Life in Sussex County. If you have already replied, we thank you for your prompt response. If you have not yet completed the questionnaire, would you please take the time to do so now? It should only take 10 to 15 minutes.

As the county is experiencing rapid rates of growth in population and housing, especially in the coastal area, little information is available concerning the public's views about how these changes affect them. The information you provide is especially important since it will be very useful in helping local and state officials better understand residents' needs and concerns.

We are writing to you again because if our results are to be as reliable and useful as possible, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned. Remember, all responses will be summarized and handled in strict confidentiality.

A copy of the questionnaire and a reply envelope are enclosed in case you did not receive, or have misplaced, the original materials we sent you. Once the survey has been completed, just seal it in the postage-paid reply envelope and drop it in any mailbox.

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

James M. Falk  
Project Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SELECT COMMENTS FROM SUSSEX COUNTY RESIDENTS**

- We love living here at Bethany Beach but I do think the amount of new construction should be more controlled in order to protect our natural environment.
- Development on coastal areas should be limited as well as on the inland bays. Water quality should be improved and protected.
- Infrastructure must be planned before development, not after development takes place.
- Commercial development has severely congested Routes 1 and 13. Plans should be enacted to provide more limited access highways.
- We must use common sense in upgrading our roads. We don't need to blacktop the whole state. Add overpass at some cross roads, and require service road in front of businesses, etc. The state is 25 years behind in highway upgrades.
- I love Sussex County – let's keep her clean and beautiful.
- Developers and Government must work together to come up with sewage treatment plants capable of handling the developments' waste.
- Traffic is almost impossible now. If they keep building, where are we going to go? We can't enjoy our beaches now. There is no prospect of any new roads in any direction.
- Although I feel tourism is a necessary part of Sussex County, part of the charm of this area is that it is a rural environment. I would rather this area be more like the Outer Banks than Myrtle Beach. Yes, there would still be congestion, but pretty soon we won't be able to see the beauty of this area because of all the buildings.
- If we improve roads, more people will come. The tourism is important, but is destroying the environment. We must drastically slow down the influx of new residents but provide better education and jobs for current residents. The more part-time residents, the less need for better jobs for permanent residents. We must improve the quality of life for the people that are here, not for the people that aren't and not for more people to come!
- Better roads are needed (capacity wise). Sewer is needed throughout county if growth is to continue. More emergency, paramedics, firehouses, police, and parks are needed.
- I feel building should stop, especially on wetlands. We can't maintain that small family community that we love and cause others to want to visit, if others keep building and moving here. Most of the building are other's second homes. For those of us born and raised here, it is our only home.
- We need development away from the beach areas only. We do NOT want roads connecting Lewes and Rehoboth.
- A good transportation system could reduce cars on the road.

- Both the state and county should be more responsible to limit growth unless they can enforce rules for builders sharing cost of roads and expansion of schools.
- DelDOT needs to address traffic patterns particularly with regard to Highway 1. The Planning and Zoning Commission needs to be overhauled, with more attention to the impact of growth that threatens the natural environment and wildlife of the area. State/county should try to annex and set aside as much undeveloped area as possible.
- Overdevelopment is slowly choking Sussex County. If development isn't stopped or slowed, Sussex County will be like New Castle County with all the problems.
- Something must be done to control the overdevelopment in the eastern side of Sussex County. The infrastructure cannot take all of this development. Roads must be improved.
- Having moved to Sussex County Delaware from a heavily congested area – Long Island – I cannot stress enough the importance of good public transportation. In the few years I have been here, I have seen many beautiful tracts of land turned into housing developments with little or no regard to the environment or animals that lived there. Environment-friendly development would help a great deal. The Arbor Day Foundation has information on this type of development, which I think should be required.
- Year-round residents are not considered important in the current decision-making process. Coastal Sussex in particular is being systematically destroyed and endangering the public safety of permanent residents and those tourists so avidly sought. Our water resources are at risk. It is not being properly or seriously addressed.
- County government and departments of planning and zoning must put a lid on development, otherwise our quality of life will evaporate and tourists will not want to come here. Sometimes I don't want to be here, caught up in parking lot traffic.
- The saddest part of the changes here is the loss of a diverse population. Soon this will be an only upper income, insular area. I realize this cannot be prevented, but what a shame.
- Tourism is good but it must be controlled or else you will be developing to attract tourists, who in turn will grow more. We need to develop to attract good year-round residents; good jobs, good schools and ability to get around. Traffic conditions are bad because the roads are not designed to keep the flow going, traffic lights are ill-timed. Consideration should be given to alternatives to traffic lights (frontage roads, alternative traffic patterns). The park & ride concept to bring people into Rehoboth Beach was good! You need incentives to attract year-round residents and control seasonal growth.
- Sussex County must change with the times! The land here is too valuable to waste on open space. There is a severe housing shortage here that must be met. There is no future in farming by small farmers, they can make more money by selling their land.

- I moved to Sussex County after watching the increased growth in New Castle County for 30 years (crammed roadways). My health, which necessitates less stress, was another factor. I found the ocean a relaxing respite. The tranquility is amazing. I'm not against others enjoying the same. The county needs to be wise in regard to traffic and parking during the summer months.
- Stop building more developments and houses near the beach areas, the traffic is already unbearable. This year (2002) the traffic has been the worst ever. It is getting exceptionally worse each year.
- My wife and I have lived and worked in six different states, as well as Asia. Delaware is the best place we have ever lived. We feel that people who have lived their entire lives in Delaware and those that don't know anything about Delaware all suffer from the same under appreciation of the many advantages of living in Delaware.
- My main concern is Route 1. It takes forever to get anywhere with bumper-to-bumper traffic almost year round now!
- We find Delaware to be a great place for retirement but are very concerned about the health of our bays and tributaries because of the rapid development in our county.
- It is understandable that Sussex County is dependent on tourism in the summer, but I believe that over-development can do more harm than good for such a small area. We will become the same as our surrounding states with higher taxes and congestions because of expenses to keep up with overdeveloped land. This county needs to seek better employment opportunities (such as high tech firms) so better jobs could be offered to those seeking them. Keep as much open space as possible!
- Highway travel and parking to go to the beach are terrible. I have gone to the beach and have ridden around for up to an hour to find a parking spot; sometimes given up and gone home. Traveling on Highway One from Five Points (Lewes) to the Rehoboth exit is really bad. Getting to and from grocery stores, etc., used to take about 20 minutes; now it takes sometimes an hour or more.
- I have a deep concern for the amount of farmland that is being sold for development. This will have a significant impact on this region. Besides the loss of good fertile soil and the products it yields, there is the impact of the housing it brings. My immediate plans are to retire in Sussex County but if the "urban spread" brings higher taxes for schools and roadways and the congestions that go with it, I will reconsider when the time comes. This is a common feeling among the community where I currently reside.
- The development along Route 1 has more than quadrupled in the past 5-10 years. The traffic is horrific in the summer and busy in the winter. Development needs to be slowed considerably.