

The Town of St. Michaels recently completed a Citizen's Survey of items related to the current updating of the Town's Zoning Ordinance. While the survey responses and comments cover over 100 pages, below is an attempt to summarize the statistical answers. Complete summaries along with the individual citizen comments can be viewed at the Town offices or on the Town Website at www.stmichaelsmd.gov.

There were 20 questions, with most offering a choice of answers being:

- *Very Satisfied or Strongly Agree*
- *Satisfied or Agree*
- *Undecided*
- *Somewhat Dissatisfied or Disagree*
- *Very Dissatisfied or Strongly Disagree*

Some respondents skipped certain questions, and we rounded up or down as appropriate in developing the percentage response, so the following percentages may not always equal 100%,. The survey was mailed in January to approximately 750 addresses, or all property owners in Town, and business operators. The survey has also been available on the Town's website since January. Almost 250 full or partial responses were received either through the webpage, or by paper copies.

For ease of summarizing, we have combined *Very Satisfied and Somewhat Satisfied*, or *Strongly Agree and Agree* as one category; and combined *Somewhat Dissatisfied or Disagree*, and *Very Dissatisfied or Strongly Disagree* as another.

Demographics

1. 62% of the respondents were year-round residents of St. Michaels; and 23% were part-time residents. The remainder lived outside of the Town limits, but within Talbot County.
2. 76% owned one or more residences in the Town and 9% owned or operated businesses. 5% owned both a residence and business, and 6% checked none of the above
3. 79% lived in owner-occupied homes; while 5% were renters. The remainder did not live within the town limits.

4. Of the respondents, 11% were 26-45 years old; 38% were 46-64 years old; and 46% were 65 years of age or older. Only 2 people under 25 years of age participated.

General Zoning Issues

5. 52% of the respondents were satisfied with the Town's zoning requirements; while 25% were not satisfied. 23% were undecided, likely because they had little contact with the requirements of the ordinance or needed more information to make a choice. Virtually the same percentages felt the uses allowed in the residential districts were satisfactory or not.
6. Regarding commercial uses, 53% were satisfied with the uses allowed, and only 15% were dissatisfied, while 33% were undecided.

Accessory Dwelling Units

7. Several questions related to whether accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should be allowed. Such units would allow for the rental on a long-term basis for a room or rooms within a single-family home; in a converted garage; or perhaps on the second floor of a garage.

About 44% were in favor of allowing ADUs in residential districts; 33% were opposed and 23% were undecided.

8. If accessory dwelling units were allowed, 57% felt that the owner should live on the property; while 25% felt that was not necessary. 18% were undecided.
9. If ADUs were permitted, 40% thought that any residential unit should be allowed to have them; whereas 41% felt that not every residential property should be allowed to have an ADU. 19% were undecided.
10. Respondents were asked whether only immediate family members (related by blood, marriage, domestic partnership or legal custody) should be allowed to live in an ADU. 49% felt that they should not be restricted to immediate family members, whereas 32% thought they should be.

11. However, when the question specified a resident caregiver living in the ADU, an overwhelming majority, 82% thought that would be acceptable. Only 8% disagreed, and 9% undecided.
12. In terms of the number of people allowed to live in an ADU, 56% responded that it should be limited to 1-2 persons, while 13% would accept 3 or more. 31% answered that none should be allowed.
13. That ADUs should be allowed to be rented for long term use (more than 4 months a year) was acceptable to 61% of the respondents, whereas 24% disagreed. 15% were undecided.
14. 50% of the respondents believed that ADUs should not be available for short term rentals (less than 4 months) (e.g. AirBnB), whereas 36% would be agreeable to use them for short term rentals. 14% were undecided.

Miscellaneous Zoning Questions

15. Only 18% believed that homes in single family residential districts should be allowed to be converted into employee housing. 58% answered that this should not be allowed. 23% were undecided.
16. 65% of the respondents thought that the current number and size of signs around town were about right. Only 21% disagreed with that proposition. The remaining 14% were undecided.
17. Yet, 36% agreed that more signs in the public way directing visitors (wayfinding) would be acceptable along Talbot Street, whereas 44% were not in favor of adding such signage. 20% were undecided.
18. On the issue of whether adequate public parking exists, 42% felt that there was sufficient parking, but 47% did not agree that the public parking was satisfactory. 11% had no opinion.
19. The last question related to allowing for a minimal height increase for structures built in areas likely to be affected by sea level rise, 48% were agreeable to this concept, while 30% did not think this would be acceptable. 22% were undecided.

Summary

Many people took the time to write comments regarding their answers, and these comments are instructive, but they do not lend themselves easily to a statistical summary such as this. If anyone would like to see the comments, they are available for view at the Town office. The preparers of the survey realize that not all issues are easily answered with an “agree or disagree”, that often the devil is in the details. More context and information are often needed before making an informed decision for many of the questions. However, the survey did reveal important inclinations that are being considered by the planning commission in preparing the recommended changes to the zoning ordinance.