



Survey on Community Issues for the Kings Park Civic Association

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Executive Summary

This survey of Kings Park residents was conducted by the Kings Park Civic Association (KPCA), Fairfax County and George Mason University's Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) as part of the Kings Park Civic Association's Community Revitalization Project. The survey was designed to assess residents' opinions and preferences on issues facing the Kings Park neighborhood. A total of 272 completed surveys were received from the 1,160 households in the community. This survey found that most residents have lived in Kings Park for over 15 years. About 30% of households had children under age 18, while 42% had at least one resident over age 65. Residents were evenly split on their opinions about whether the quality of life in Kings Park is getting better, staying the same or getting worse. Residents generally agreed with such statements as "people generally help each other out, people volunteer for community activities, and KPCA helps make it a better neighborhood." KPCA generally had a strong favorability rating from residents.

What residents most appreciated about Kings Park is its geographical location for the commute to work and for local nearby amenities. To a lesser extent residents also appreciated the friendliness of neighbors, the beauty of the old growth trees, the frequent, fun community activities, the quality of local schools, the peacefulness of the community, and the large yards and well-built homes. In regards to what residents would like to see changed in Kings Park, the most common concern was general upkeep of homes: residents were upset about uncut lawns, trash in yards, homes in disrepair, and foreclosed homes. Other concerns dealt with parking issues and overcrowded homes. Due to the combination of homes in disrepair, parking issues and overcrowded homes some residents expressed interest in more code enforcement. Speed and traffic control was also mentioned as a concern by some residents. Other, less frequently cited concerns included a lack of friendliness by neighbors, limited functionality of local parks, and the size of remodeled homes. Also, some residents expressed interest in re-initiating homeowner's association bylaws to help enforce local codes. Finally, some residents suggested developing a system whereby neighbors could identify which neighbors need help with general upkeep, so that they could offer their assistance.

In sum, there were many strong points which the community can build on as it seeks to build a sense of commonness among Kings Park residents and generate vitality within the community. There were also several complex, yet serious, issues that must be resolved to allow residents to focus their energy on improving the quality of life of their community. Any questions regarding this report can be addressed to John Cook at KPCA or the Center for Social Science Research at 703-993-2993.

Introduction and Background

A survey of Kings Park residents was conducted by the Kings Park Civic Association (KPCA), Fairfax County and George Mason University's Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) as part of the Kings Park Civic Association's Community Revitalization Project. The survey was designed to assess residents' opinions and preferences on issues facing the Kings Park neighborhood. This report summarizes the findings of the survey and provides background information on the neighborhood.

The Fairfax County Community Revitalization Project started in 2007 to study and respond to key issues for older, established communities in the county. Its goal is to identify community problems in older communities (1950s and 1960s) that may lead to deterioration, destabilization and conflict, and then assist those communities in developing community-led efforts to respond to those problems. It does so by assessing neighborhood expectations, identifying common problems as expressed by community members, and countering those problems using diverse programs, training tools, and community activities. Kings Park was selected as one of the participating communities, in part due to support from County Supervisor Sharon Bulova and the interest of Kings Park residents in improving the quality of life in their neighborhood.

Kings Park was established in the 1950s and 1960s along Braddock Road, a major thoroughfare in Fairfax County. It is just one mile from the I-495 Capitol Beltway (built in 1955-1964) and three miles to the I-395 corridor into Washington DC. The convenience of this central location with easy access to main roads is an important aspect of this report's findings. Kings Park has a large number of older residents who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time. This microcosm exists within a larger metropolitan area that has seen considerable social, economic, and cultural change. Hence, there exist such problems as inter-generational differences (older retired neighbors versus new, younger neighbors); households with many vehicles which impact neighbors; cultural and language differences with the growing Asian and Hispanic populations; and upkeep of homes, including expansion of older homes. The challenges involved in responding to these current community problems and helping the Kings Park community build and maintain energy and vitality for the future are important to both local Kings Park residents and Fairfax County in general. As a pilot project the Community Revitalization Project will also provide valuable insight for designing community revitalization processes for other communities.

The local schools are also central to this report's findings, and are large, ethnically diverse and good schools academically. Kings Park Elementary School (KPES), for grades K-3, is located within Kings Park, and Kings Glen ES, for grades 4-6, is only half a mile from Kings Park. Most Kings Park public elementary students go to these two schools, which are unique in that they are able to specialize more for each age group (grades K-3 and 4-6), due to local population densities. Kings Park ES had 714 students in the 2007-8 school year, with an average of 173 students per grade level¹, while Kings Glen ES had 501 students that year, with an average of 167 per grade.² The average cost per pupil is \$10,463 for the Fairfax County School District. Lake Braddock Secondary School, located about 1 mile from Kings Park, is one of the largest in Virginia with 3,873 students.³

¹ Source: <http://www.city-data.com/school/kings-park-elementary-school-va.html>

² Source: <http://www.city-data.com/school/kings-glen-elementary-school-va.html>

³ Source: <http://www.city-data.com/school/lake-braddock-secondary-school-va.html>.

It has a middle school for grades 7-8 and high school for grades 9-12. Lake Braddock was ranked the 95th best high school academically in the U.S. in the 2008 Newsweek ranking, with rankings between 100 and 131 over the past three years.⁴ Fully 54% of its students have a passing grade in an Advanced Placement class. Due to its large size, it is able to offer a large number of clubs (about 60), sports (about 20), and student government groups for students to join.⁵

Kings Park Civic Association's website provides information on the variety of attractions and public services in the area. Local groups include the Boy and Girl Scouts, Kings Park Band, several churches, and Parent-Teacher Associations for local schools.⁶ Also nearby are a library, Post Office and recreation center (Audrey Moore RecCenter) plus two nearby strip malls with supermarkets, pharmacies, restaurants, banks, dry cleaning and other services. Kings Park currently has one pool, Parliament Pool, and Kings Park Park, which offers tennis, basketball, picnic and playground areas. Kings Park used to have a second pool, the Royal Pool, which was closed in the last few years. The community is also adjacent to another large Fairfax County-run park, Lake Accotink, which offers hiking, biking, boating, fishing, picnic areas, and playgrounds.

Kings Park residents and the civic association work to preserve the environment and maintain a well-kept community. The neighborhood has a large number of old growth hardwood trees and a newly formed Environmental Awareness Committee, and organizes many beautification projects.⁷ KPCA has worked to limit zoning violations, such as where the grass has grown above Fairfax County regulations of 12 inches. Community members are encouraged to look out for each other and to help each other out when they need help.

Kings Park Civic Association

Kings Park Civic Association is the primary local governance group for Kings Park. It is made up of elected community members who address community issues and challenges, together with the Fairfax County government. The neighborhood consists of single family homes that are required to comply with Fairfax County zoning, health, and safety statutes. There are no homeowner's association regulations. Of the approximately 1,160 households in Kings Park, 500 are members in KPCA.⁸ KPCA's goal is to create a safe, attractive environment and to increase community involvement among its members. Some of the programs used to gain this involvement include a neighborhood watch, youth program, bimonthly gazette, block captains (to welcome new residents and monitor zoning violations), and maintenance of common areas. The KPCA holds monthly meetings where residents can raise concerns or suggestions. Events such as youth community service, block parties, and parades are all hosted by KPCA in an effort to get members more involved.

KPCA acts as an intermediary between community members and the Fairfax County government, as with the current revitalization project.⁹ One of the current issues the KPCA is addressing is the use of the community roads as a bypass for congestion, which has led to the community inserting speed humps, low speed limits, four way stops, and traffic circles in an attempt to curb cut-through

⁴ Source: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/39380>

⁵ Source: http://www.fcps.edu/LakeBraddockSS/activities/act_hs_clubs.htm

⁶ Source: <http://www.kings-park.org/index.html>.

⁷ <http://www.kings-park.org>; KPCA July August 2008 Gazette

⁸ Communication with John Cook, President KPCA, October 24, 2008.

⁹ <http://www.kings-park.org>

drivers.¹⁰ The KPCA also works to ensure foreclosed houses comply with zoning requirements (especially concerning grass length), and limit boarding violations, especially multiple occupancy violations, and parking violations. Residents are encouraged to report violations to Fairfax County agencies.

KPCA Revitalization Project

KPCA is currently taking steps to revitalize the Kings Park neighborhood, attempting to create a safe attractive environment in which members feel like they are part of a community. Part of this work includes collaboration with the Fairfax County Park Authority to renovate Kings Park Park. The KPCA wants to revitalize the park while at the same time making sure families, walkers, and picnickers feel welcome. Possible plans include playground relocation (possibly to the site of the now closed Royal Pool), installing picnic gazebos, and creating areas for athletes such as micro soccer fields and a tennis wall.¹¹ Many of the activities planned and hosted by the various committees, such as the Fourth of July Parade, the Christmas Party, and the youth clean up project are all part of the revitalization project designed to increase community involvement of members who live in the neighborhood. Other parts of the project include outreach to seniors and minorities. The new Environmental Awareness committee seeks to promote positive interaction of community members with their environment. The emphasis on reporting zoning violations (such as boarding and grass height) is another attempt of the revitalization project to keep Kings Park attractive.

Kings Park Demographics

Detailed, recent demographic information for the Kings Park community is difficult to obtain. However, some data are provided from the 2000 U.S. Census¹² and other data from Kings Park Elementary School (KPES) enrollment. While the 2000 U.S. Census data is somewhat dated, it is the best data available on Kings Park demographics, and may help to understand future neighborhood changes (see Figure 1).¹³ Blocks 1 and 2 of the Fairfax County census tract 4304 provide pertinent data for Kings Park, but also include Danbury Forest, which has 326 townhomes.¹⁴ Note that about 85 of the 1,160 Kings Park homes are not in Census Tract 4304. King Park is made up of all single family homes.

As can be seen on Table 1 below, U.S. Census data are helpful for understanding the context of the Kings Park revitalization survey. Key demographic points include:

- Of the 1,411 households in the two census blocks, Kings Park has about 1,085 households and Danbury Forest 326. About 16% are one person households, and married families make up 70% of the 1,411 households.
- All households with six or more inhabitants are classified as family units, and 21% of family units had five or more inhabitants. About 83% had 1 to 4 residents, and 17% had 5 or more.
- 2000 census data on tenancy shows 89% of homes were owner-occupied and 11% were rental units. There were only 11 vacant homes.

¹⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/25/AR2008072503528.html>

¹¹ Kings Park JulyAugust Gazette

¹² Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

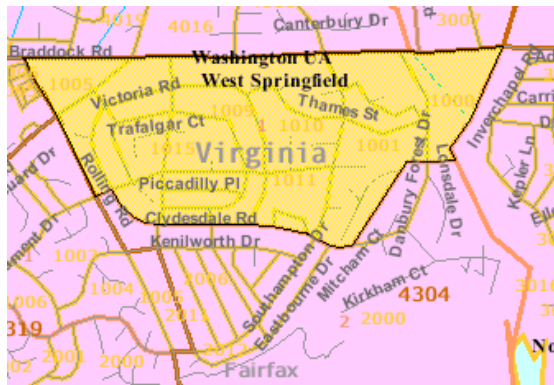
¹³ These changes may have occurred due to the spike in homes sales in the early part of the decade, recent foreclosures, and recent purchases by minority families, especially Asian and Hispanic.

¹⁴ Source: http://www.danburyforest.org/editor_upload/File/Handbook.pdf. Note: one long block of homes between Rolling Road, Kings Park Drive, Southampton and Kenilworth are not included in Tract 304 – see Figure 1, Block 2.

- Census data on race and ethnicity show a predominantly (76%) white population, while 14% of residents are Asian, 8% Hispanic and 4% African American. This can be compared with KPES enrollment data, which shows 46% white, 21% Hispanic, 20% Asian, 6% black, and 8% other ethnicities (see Figure 2).¹⁵
- According to KPES data, in just the last three years, from 2005-6 to the 2007-8 school year, the white population has declined from 51.4% to 46.1%, the Asian group increased from 16.5% to 19.6% and Hispanics from 19.4% to 21%, while Blacks increased 1%.
- Regarding ages, census data identifies 15% of residents as under age 18, and 6% over age 65. Fully 43% of households had children under 18, while 21% had elderly over 65.
- Regarding need levels for the 2007-8 school year, 129 (21%) out of 671 KPES children qualified for free or reduced fare lunches.¹⁶

Figure 1. Blocks 1 and 2, Fairfax County Census Tract 4304

Tract 4304, Block 1



Tract 4304, Block 2

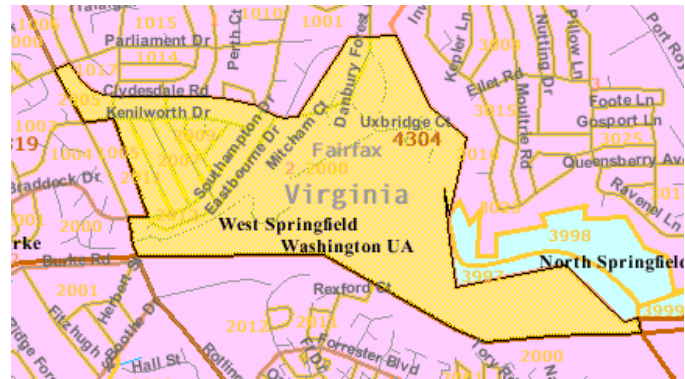
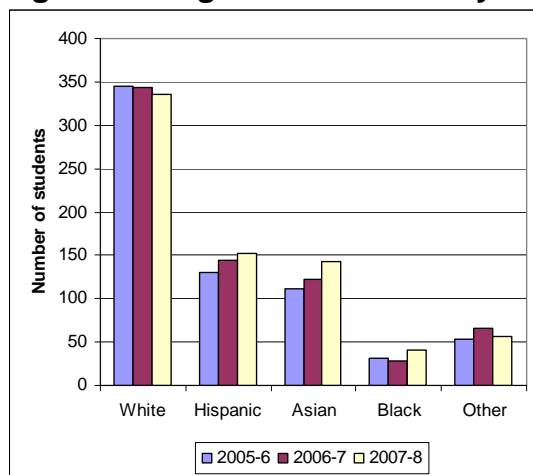


Figure 2. Kings Park Elementary School student demographics



Source: Fairfax County Public Schools, http://commweb.fcps.edu/schoolprofile/profile.cfm?profile_id=407

¹⁵ Source: http://commweb.fcps.edu/schoolprofile/profile.cfm?profile_id=407 Data on ethnicity trends of KPES is one of the most current sources of ethnic data for the Kings Park community, but has limitations since some children attend KPES from neighborhoods outside of Kings Park. Roughly about one-third of the children in KPES live in Kings Park. For the KPES boundary map see: <http://www.fcps.edu/images/boundarymaps/kingsparkes.pdf>.

¹⁶ Source: http://commweb.fcps.edu/schoolprofile/profile.cfm?profile_id=407

Table 1. U.S. Census 2000 data for Kings Park neighborhood

Type	Total from Block 1	Percent of total, this block	Total from Block 2	Percent of total, this block	Total, both blocks	Percent of total, both blocks
Total population	2,152		2,091		4,243	
Race & Ethnicity						
White	1,691	79%	1,544	74%	3,235	76%
Asian	305	14%	296	14%	601	14%
Black/African American	63	3%	97	5%	160	4%
Other race	45	2%	89	4%	134	3%
Two or more races	46	2%	42	2%	88	2%
Hispanic/Latino	156	7%	171	8%	327	8%
Age demographics						
Under age 18	317	15%	314	15%	631	15%
Over age 65	152	7%	85	4%	237	6%
Households *						
1 person household	84	12%	136	19%	220	16%
2 or more people	608	88%	583	81%	1,191	84%
Married couple families	522	75%	461	64%	983	70%
Other family	59	9%	79	11%	138	10%
Male headed, no wife	17	2%	23	3%	40	3%
Female head, no husband	42	6%	56	8%	98	7%
With people under age 18	290	42%	323	45%	613	43%
With people over age 65	191	28%	112	16%	303	21%
With people over age 75	69	10%	36	5%	105	7%
Household size *						
<i>Family households total</i>	581		540		1,121	
2 person household	211	36%	186	34%	397	28%
3 person household	121	21%	112	21%	233	17%
4 person household	122	21%	137	25%	259	18%
5 person household	85	15%	73	14%	158	11%
6 person household	24	4%	19	4%	43	3%
7 or more person household	18	3%	13	2%	31	2%
<i>Nonfamily households total</i>	111	19%	179	33%	290	21%
1 person household	84	14%	136	25%	220	16%
2 person household	16	3%	23	4%	39	3%
3 person household	5	1%	12	2%	17	1%
4 or 5 person household	6	1%	8	1%	14	1%
Population in families						
Average family size	3.41		3.33		n/a	
Housing units						
Owner occupied	642	92%	619	85%	1,261	89%
Renter occupied	50	7%	100	14%	150	11%
Vacant	5	1%	6	1%	11	1%

source: <http://factfinder.census.gov>¹⁷

¹⁷ * The percentages of total households is based on total households, n=1,411.

Kings Park Survey Data and Findings

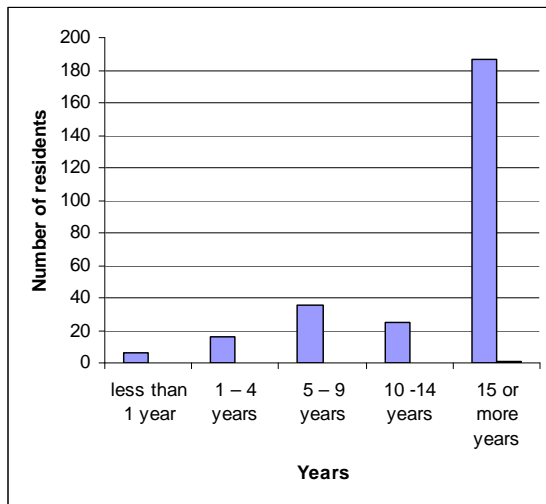
Survey Methodology

The survey, implemented by GMU’s Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) in mid-2008, was mailed to all 1,160 households in Kings Park.¹⁸ CSSR received and processed 272 responses, or about 25%, from Kings Park residents. The survey focused on issues facing the community. The questions included were: what residents liked most about Kings Park; what they would like changed; whether KPCA helps to make the neighborhood better; how much people help each other and volunteer in the community; whether other languages are spoken at home; and the ages of the household members of respondents. This report summarizes the findings of the survey. It does so by reviewing statistics and informative verbal responses for each question asked.¹⁹

General Demographics of Survey Respondents

Respondents were asked how long they have lived in Kings Park and the ages of each person living in the house. As seen in the Table 1, Kings Park is indeed a well-established neighborhood, with almost 70% of the respondents having lived in the neighborhood for more than 15 years (see Figure 3). This is noteworthy given the often transient nature of living in the Washington DC area due to political changes, military rotations and other social and economic changes in recent years. Further, only about 8% of the respondents have lived in Kings Park for less than five years. This data raises many issues about the welcoming nature and openness of Kings Park, from the “old-timers” who may see new neighbors as potentially leading to unwanted neighborhood change, on the one hand, or as creating opportunities for diversity and growth, on the other.

Figure 3. Length of time living in Kings Park



Based on the survey responses, an average of 2.65 people resides in each home, ranging from one person per household to eight people per household. Just under one-third of households (30%) had children under age 18. About 42% of households had at least one resident age 65 or older. About 13% of the Kings Park households speak a language other than English at home. These data from

¹⁸ A total of 44 surveys were returned by the U.S. Post Service due to incorrect addresses.

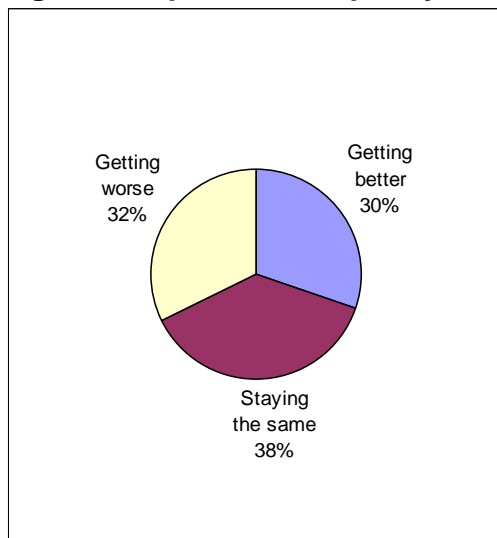
¹⁹ Regarding representativeness of these findings, given the sample size and response rate, there is a 95% confidence level, within 5.15 percentage points.

survey respondents differ somewhat from the 2000 U.S. Census data cited earlier, possibly due to the aging population, both under age 18 and over 65.

Quality of Life and Volunteerism in Kings Park, and Opinions on KPCA

The first question asked “Thinking about the Kings Park neighborhood only, do you think the quality of life is getting better, staying the same or getting worse.” Of the 251 responses to this question, about 38% of respondents said the quality of life is staying the same, 32% said getting worse, and 30% said getting better (see Figure 4). Written comments range from positive and supportive on the quality of life to neutral and negative. On the positive side, respondents mentioned efforts made by KPCA to improve the sense of community, block captain efforts to network among neighbors, more community activities, home improvements being done by homeowners, and increased ethnic diversity. Many negative comments focused on poorly kept yards and homes, foreclosures, and parking problems. Other negative comments included homes having multiple families living in them, thefts, noisy neighbors, not knowing the neighbors, and lack of involvement by some community members.

Figure 4. Opinions on quality of life in Kings Park



Opinions regarding quality of life were correlated with whether they thought residents helped each other: those who thought quality of life was getting better were more likely to say that residents help each other.²⁰ Surprisingly, of those who thought the quality of life is getting worse, many still thought people help each other (56% circled *definitely* or *somewhat agree* with the latter statement). Comments related to quality of life in Kings Park and whether KPCA helps make it a better neighborhood were also positively correlated: those resident who thought that the quality of life was getting better were also more likely to say that KPCA helps make it a better neighborhood.²¹

Question four of the survey asked residents “How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about Kings Park neighborhood?” The three statements include: “people in Kings Park help each other out; people in Kings Park volunteer for community activities; and the Kings Park

²⁰ This relationship was statistically significant (p=.001)

²¹ This relationship was statistically significant (p=.000)

Civic Association helps make this a better neighborhood.” For each statement, respondents were asked if they definitely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, definitely disagree, or don’t know. See Table 2 for responses.

Table 2. Responses to helping, volunteering and KPCA

Statement	Definitely agree		Somewhat agree		Somewhat disagree		Definitely disagree		Total responses
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
People in Kings Park help each other out	77	31%	142	58%	16	7%	11	5%	246
People in Kings Park volunteer for community activities	46	21%	144	65%	24	11%	8	4%	222
Kings Park Civic Association helps make this a better neighborhood	165	66%	70	28%	8	3%	5	2%	248

On the issue of whether Kings Park residents help each other out, the vast majority agree with this statement: only about 12% disagree. Thus, there is a widely held perception among most residents that they offer and/or receive assistance from their neighbors. As to whether Kings Park residents volunteer for community activities, again the majority (86%) state that they think residents volunteer for community activities, with about 15% disagreeing.

As to residents’ perceptions of whether KPCA helps make it a better neighborhood, fully 66% of residents definitely agree with that statement, and another 28% agree somewhat. Only 5% disagree. Simply put, there is a broad perception among residents that KPCA helps improve the neighborhood. Some people suggested other roles for KPCA including: reinstating a Homeowner’s Association-type government with covenants to control unkempt houses and large remodeling projects; facilitating other community development projects like park and pool renovations; and reducing costs of cutting down and trimming back large growth trees. Finally, a number of comments simply expressed pleasure with and support for the activities of KPCA, such as the potluck and parade, or displeasure at KPCA management and controls.

What People Like Most about Living in Kings Park

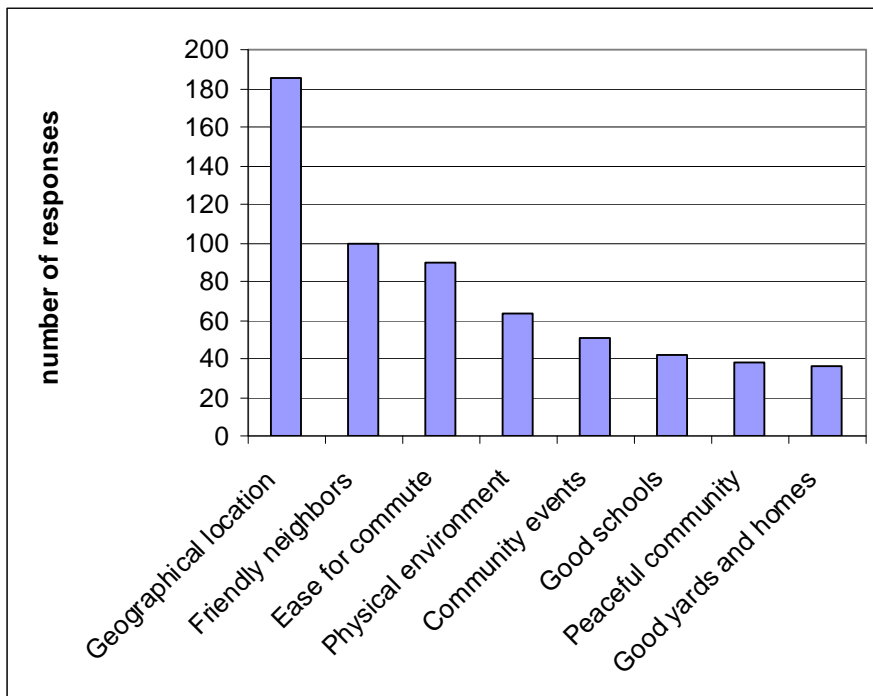
The survey asked Kings Park community members “What three things do you like the most about living in Kings Park.” There were over 738 responses to this question. We grouped the responses by similarity of issues and frequency (see Figure 5). Below are the findings of the key issues:

- **Geographical location:** The most common aspect that community members liked about Kings Park is the geographical location of Kings Park for their everyday lives. These responses (n=185) are best evidenced by such comments as “convenient,” “location,” being near schools, stores, and Lake Accotink Park, or just being close to everything.
- **Ease for commute:** Separate from, but related to, the first comment is the convenient location for the commute to work and Washington DC, via the Beltway, public transport, and buses. A total of 90 people mentioned this issue. While the first set focused on local places, this set of responses addressed locations slightly further away geographically.
- **Friendly neighbors:** The second most common response (n = 100), was related to neighbors. Respondents stated that they like Kings Park because the neighbors are good and

people are friendly, quiet, respectful, and responsible. They also said that there are many children for their children to play with.

- **Peaceful community:** Again, similar to, yet slightly different from, the previous issue, was another set of comments (n=38) regarding Kings Park as a community that is peaceful, quiet and calm. While the previous set of comments addressed the people, this set focused more on the community setting. People who have lived in Kings Park for 15 years or more were even more likely to comment that Kings Park is calm and peaceful.
- **Physical environment:** The fourth most common reason given (n=63) was the physical environment, including mature trees and green spaces. Interestingly, people who have lived in Kings Park longer were more likely to state that trees and green space are what they like most about Kings Park.²²
- **Community events:** Events and activities were mentioned next (n = 51). These include parades and parties, as well as the overall sense of community that exists in Kings Park.
- **Good schools:** The quality of schools in the area, including both elementary and high schools were mentioned next (n = 42 people). These responses did not consider the closeness of the schools, instead focusing more on their quality (closeness was included under the first bulleted item above).
- **Large yards and good homes:** Respondents mentioned their appreciation of the large, well-maintained yards and the quality of home construction in Kings Park (n= 36). Many people stated that the yards were much larger than many others in the area and, while the homes are somewhat older, they were well-built and have weathered the years very well.

Figure 5. What residents like most about Kings Park



²² This relationship was statistically significant (p=.067)

What People Would Like to Change in Kings Park

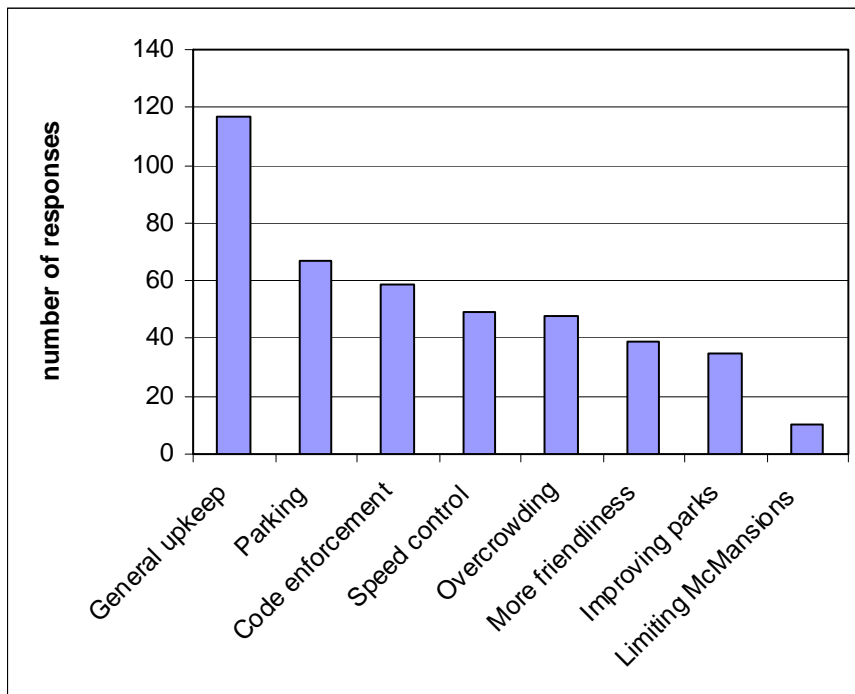
The third survey question explored issues that Kings Park residents see as problems or challenges. Respondents were asked “What three things would you like to see changed in Kings Park?” There were over 611 responses. Similar responses were grouped together to create the list below (see Figure 6).

- **General upkeep:** The general upkeep of homes, including cutting the lawn, removing trash, painting or repairing broken down houses, removing clutter and unsightly objects from front yards, carports used for storage, and similar maintenance and upkeep issues was mentioned most often (n = 117). While many people had mentioned in the previous question that the general maintenance of most homes was good, many responses to this *change* question noted that a small number of homes need significant work and are often in a regular state of disrepair. Uncut lawns and foreclosed homes were mentioned as particular problems. Suggestions included having twice a year cleanup days, especially to coordinate leaf pickup. These comments were often accompanied by comments about code enforcement, which will be addressed more below.
- **Parking:** Parking was the second most common set of issues (n=67). These comments mentioned an excess of cars in front of or associated with some houses (as many as 6 to 8), derelict cars that hadn’t been moved in a long time, and vehicles parked on lawns. Also commented on were commercial and recreational vehicles parked on public streets, blocking views or curtailing the home owner’s use of that space. A number of these comments also mentioned code enforcement.
- **Code enforcement:** Many comments directly addressed concerns about code enforcement (n=59), whether by KPCA, Fairfax County agencies, or the police. Residents mentioned enforcement related to parking, multiple families living in one house, traffic laws, and in a few cases, upkeep of homes. Several of these comments suggested having a homeowner’s association that would have more power to enforce codes and regulations. Generally most of the comments regarding upkeep of homes comments noted in the first group bullet did not mention code enforcement.
- **Speed control:** Speed control and traffic issues were the fourth most common responses (n=49). About half of the comments were concerned with cut through by drivers who live outside of Kings Park and half were concerned with speed control, especially on main streets. On the other hand, some respondents noted very specifically that they would like Kings Park to remove all speed bumps. Hence, there is not consensus on whether speed bumps should be used to control traffic speeds. Related to this issue were a large number of comments regarding code enforcement, as well as a smaller set of concerns about removing roundabouts, adding or removing four-way stops at key intersections, and changing flows on Eastbourne Drive.
- **Overcrowding in homes:** Following this were comments about having too many families in one house (n= 48). Comments included statements such as “too many families in one house,” “we don’t want boarding houses,” and “no overcrowded rental units.” Many of these comments were related to concerns about parking and code enforcement as well.

- **More friendliness:** Comments on changes in the friendliness and sense of community within Kings Park (n=39) included interest in increasing friendliness, sense of community, and pride in homeownership, along with having more community events and activities.
- **Improving parks:** Improving local parks and pools was mentioned (n=35). Most of these responses requested improving Kings Park Park, such as adding playground equipment, flowers, and a pavilion or community center. They also noted trimming or thinning out trees, and improving general maintenance. Other related comments addressed the use of the old Royal Pool site for playground equipment or a pavilion; and improving the Parliament Pool area and parking lot, and reducing pool fees (such as adding a day fee option).
- **Limiting size of remodeled homes:** A small group of people (n=10) commented that they would like to see limits on home remodeling and the development of McMansions in the neighborhood.

Given the broader issue of revitalization and the role of incoming ethnic groups as part of the broader economic, social and cultural change, one noteworthy finding was that there were only a small number of responses that specifically mentioned ethnic groups or immigration. The lack of such comments may point to minimal differences between ethnic groups in Kings Park.

Figure 6. What residents would like to see changed in Kings Park



Some other issues that were mentioned with less frequency included:

- Putting utility lines underground.
- Dog handling – complying with leash laws and cleaning up after pets.
- Fixing cracks in the sidewalks and having homeowners cut shrubs and trees back from the sidewalks so people can pass freely.
- Improving lighting.
- Trash pickup.

- More senior citizen activities, and at hours that accommodate working seniors.
- That the KPCA was doing a good job or that nothing further needed to be done.
- Criminal problems, such as squatters moving into abandoned foreclosed houses, drug dealing, and neighbors having loud parties.

One last, but significant, set of comments to the question of what people would like changed in Kings Park deals with neighbors helping neighbors. Several people said they would like to see ways that people can help each other. This included ways to identify which seniors need help with the upkeep of their houses, and ways to identify which neighbors (in general) need help to maintain their homes or yards. A number of people offered to help other neighbors. These comments provide a potential launching point for the revitalization project, helping to incorporate those that lack the knowledge, skills, and/or resources to maintain their homes and yards into the larger, more established community.

Summary of findings and conclusions

This survey, based on a 25% response rate of Kings Park residents, finds that a large proportion of residents have lived in Kings Park for a considerable period of time – over 15 years – with only a small percentage having moved into the area in the last five years. About 30% of households have children under age 18, while 42% have at least one resident over age 65. Residents are evenly split on their opinions about whether the quality of life in Kings Park is getting better, staying the same or getting worse.

What residents most appreciate about Kings Park is its geographical location for commutes to work and for local amenities that are nearby. To a lesser extent, and in order of frequency, many residents also appreciate the friendliness of neighbors, the beauty of the old growth trees, the frequent, fun community events and activities, the quality of local schools, the peacefulness of the community, and large yards and well-built homes.

In regards to what residents would like to see changed in Kings Park, the most common concern was general upkeep of homes: residents were upset about uncut lawns, trash in yards, homes in disrepair, and foreclosed homes. There may not be many homes that meet these criteria, but those that do generate considerable displeasure from neighbors. Another set of comments dealt with parking issues, which may be related to the problem of overcrowded homes. Residents concerned stated that some homes had as many as 6 to 8 cars which impacted sight lines and parking options. It should be noted that, based on 2000 Census data, all households with six or more inhabitants were family units, not rental units, so overcrowded houses with too many cars is more likely to be due to families with older children still living at home, than rental units with multiple inhabitants. The combination of homes in disrepair, parking issues and overcrowded homes led about 25% of residents to express interest in more code enforcement. Speed and traffic control was also mentioned as a concern by some residents, partly due to traffic that cuts through Kings Park to access Braddock Road and the Beltway. Less frequent concerns included more friendliness from neighbors, improving local parks, and limiting the size of remodeled homes.

Other issues also stand out. Residents generally agree with such statements as “people generally help each other out, people volunteer for community activities, and KPCA helps make it a better neighborhood.” KPCA generally has a strong favorability rating from residents. Also, due to code violations, some residents expressed interest in re-initiating some form of homeowner’s association

bylaws to help enforce local codes. Finally, some residents suggested developing a system whereby neighbors could identify which neighbors need help with upkeep of lawns, homes, and similar tasks; some residents seemed open to offering their assistance to those in need.

In conclusion, it seems that most Kings Park residents are very pleased with their community and can identify common aspects of the community which they appreciate. There is a strong sense that many residents value and take advantage of community activities and amenities. At the same time, a number of common issues seem to continue to be problems in the opinion of many residents. They have made efforts to resolve these issues, but the lack of resolution may be causing continued frustration. In sum, there are many strengths which the community and Kings Park Civic Association can build on as it seeks to build a sense of commonness among Kings Park residents and generate vitality within the community. There are also several complex yet serious (in terms of the number of residents who are concerned and the depth of their displeasure) issues that must be resolved to limit unproductive conflict and allow residents to focus on improving the quality of life of their community.