

OKINSIGHT
COMMUNITY SURVEY

BENCHMARKING SUMMARY 2026



OKInsight Community Survey 2026 Benchmarking Summary

Introduction

To provide context for Oak Island’s 2026 Community Survey results, benchmark communities were selected to reflect a range of municipal conditions and performance levels. These comparisons help identify where Oak Island is performing strongly relative to peers and where opportunities for improvement may exist.

The following communities were selected:

City of Wilmington: Included as a regional comparison, as a nearby urban center with a larger population and more complex service environment, Wilmington provides useful context for how resident perceptions may differ in a more urban setting.

Town of Garner: Selected as a consistently strong performing peer community. Garner consistently demonstrates strong performance across a wide range of services and quality of life metrics, making it a useful benchmark for best practices.

Town of Fuquay-Varina: Included as a rapid growth comparison. Fuquay-Varina is experiencing significant population and development growth, similar to trends affecting Oak Island, and provides insight into how growth impacts resident perceptions.



How to Interpret This Summary

This benchmarking summary includes only survey questions where a clear and meaningful comparison could be made across communities. Questions that were not asked consistently or did not have directly comparable metrics were excluded to ensure accuracy and defensibility of the analysis. While wording and survey structures vary slightly between communities, comparisons are based on similar question intent and reported as percent positive (e.g., “Excellent” + “Good” or “Satisfied” + “Very Satisfied”).

Quality of Life

This set of questions reflects overall quality of life and community appeal. Oak Island performs exceptionally well across these measures, with particularly strong ratings as a place to live and retire. Compared to peer communities, Oak Island consistently ranks at or near the top, reinforcing its position as a highly desirable coastal community. Ratings are lower for “place to work,” which aligns with the Town’s primarily residential and tourism-based economy rather than a major employment center.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Overall Quality of Life	97%	70%	84%	90%
___ as a place to live	97%	69%	86%	89%
___ as a place to retire	94%	62%	76%	70%
___ as a place to raise children	70%	51%	78%	87%
___ as a place to work	47%	39%	62%	49%
Overall value that you receive for you tax dollars and fees	69%	30%	54%	55%

Town Services & Customer Experience

This group of questions reflects residents' experience interacting with Town services and staff. Oak Island performs very strongly across all measures, with consistently high ratings for overall service quality, customer service, communication, and ease of access. Compared to peer communities, Oak Island significantly outperforms in most categories, indicating that residents find the Town responsive, accessible, and easy to work with.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Overall quality of services	90%	46%	74%	80%
Quality of customer service	90%	58%	75%	81%
Effectiveness of communication with the public	90%	27%	69%	N/A
Ease of contacting employees	83%	70%	N/A	78%
Ease of making a service request	84%	N/A	N/A	80%
Ease of locating information on the Town's website	87%	42%	N/A	75%

Public Safety

Public safety is a clear strength for Oak Island. The Town receives exceptionally high ratings across all measures, including police and fire services as well as overall feelings of safety in both residential and commercial areas. Oak Island meets or exceeds peer communities in every category, reinforcing a strong perception of safety and effective emergency services.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Quality of police services	96%	54%	88%	89%
Quality of fire services	98%	85%	88%	94%
Feeling of safety in your neighborhood	97%	92%	92%	96%
Feeling of safety in commercial areas	98%	64%	94%	88%

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation are another key strength for Oak Island. The Town receives very high ratings for both the availability and quality of recreational programs, as well as the overall quality of Town parks. Compared to peer communities, Oak Island consistently performs at or above the top of the range, indicating that residents place high value on these amenities and view them positively.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Availability of recreational programs	90%	N/A	66%	82%
Quality of recreation programs	91%	N/A	78%	82%
Quality of Town parks	93%	73%	85%	81%

Growth, Development & Community Character

This group of questions highlights areas where residents have more mixed perceptions, particularly related to growth and development. Ratings for ordinance enforcement, permitting, growth management, and development quality are notably lower than other service areas and, in some cases, fall below peer communities. These results suggest that while growth and development pressures are being felt, there may be opportunities to improve clarity, consistency, and overall experience in how growth is managed.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Enforcement of Town ordinances	31%	29%	45%	57%
Permitting review	41%	N/A	N/A	48%
Town efforts to attract, retain, and support businesses	53%	27%	54%	N/A
Growth management	33%	12%	40%	27%
Development quality	41%	N/A	57%	61%

Infrastructure & Utilities

Infrastructure and environmental services show mixed results for Oak Island. Core utilities, such as water and sewer services, receive strong ratings and are comparable to peer communities. Stormwater management also performs relatively well. However, ratings for street maintenance and sidewalk conditions are more moderate, indicating opportunities for improvement in transportation-related infrastructure. Overall, this section reflects solid performance in essential services, with more variability in areas tied to mobility and upkeep.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Overall quality of water and sewer services	86%	N/A	82%	85%
Overall management of public stormwater runoff/drainage/flood control	70%	38%	63%	66%
The Town's overall effort to protect natural resources and the environment	74%	N/A	78%	N/A
Overall maintenance of Town streets	58%	39%	62%	70%
Overall condition of sidewalks	52%	51%	55%	39%

Transportation & Mobility

Transportation and mobility represent one of the most consistent areas of concern across the survey. Ratings for traffic flow, travel time predictability, and parking are relatively low, and measures related to walking and biking also show limited satisfaction. While these challenges are not unique to Oak Island and are reflected in peer communities, the results indicate that residents experience constraints in getting around the Town, particularly outside of driving. Overall, this section highlights a need to improve mobility, connectivity, and access as the Town continues to grow.



Question	Oak Island	Wilmington	Garner	Fuquay-Varina
Overall traffic flow in the Town	33%	18%	49%	18%
The ability to predict travel time to places in the Town	38%	N/A	63%	74%
Availability of sidewalks	35%	51%	N/A	49%
Availability of bicycle lanes	28%	53%	N/A	34%
Availability of parking	46%	30%	57%	36%
Ease of walking places	40%	51%	54%	49%
Ease of biking places	36%	40%	45%	34%

Benchmark Survey Sources

The following community surveys were used for benchmarking comparison:

Town of Oak Island, NC

OKInsight Community Survey 2026 Findings Report

City of Wilmington, NC

2025 Community Survey Findings Report (ETC Institute)

Town of Garner, NC

2026 National Community Survey (Polco / National Research Center)

Town of Fuquay-Varina, NC

2024 Community Survey Results (ETC Institute)