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Town of St. James Community Center Survey

Final Report



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Executive Summary

This report describes the results of a project that surveyed all property owners within the Town of St. James to determine whether they support having the Town build a community center in the near future. Every property owner received one questionnaire. Jointly owned properties (e.g., married couples) received an additional questionnaire to account for differences in opinion between joint property owners. The mailing included a cover letter, informational brochure, and a short questionnaire. The survey was mailed on April 17, 2008 and had a May 23, 2008 response deadline. A reminder post card was mailed one week after the initial mailing. Both mailings were sent using bulk mail postage to reduce costs. Various quality control/quality assurance procedures were used to ensure the accuracy of the data entry and to eliminate duplicate responses from property owners. The data were analyzed using SPSS 15.0 for Windows.

Out of 6,123 mailed questionnaires, 3,687 were returned for an overall response rate of 60.2 percent. The response rate for St. James mailing addresses was 86.9 percent. The response rate for non-St. James mailing addresses was 40.5 percent. The survey found that 50.7 percent of all respondents supported having the Town of St. James build a community center while 48.1 percent were opposed. Respondents with St. James mailing addresses supported the proposal by a margin of 50.6 to 48.6 percent. Respondents without a St. James mailing address supported the proposal by a margin of 50.7 percent to 47.4 percent. The results were then analyzed using cross tabulations between support for the community center and the demographic characteristics, residential status, and club membership status. The cross-tabulations provide general support for the community center across a variety of sub-groups within the sample. A similar analysis using only those with or without St. James mailing addresses produced comparable results. Notable variations among sub-groups include:

- Property owners under 45 and older than 75 tend to be opposed while those between 45 and 75 support the community center by small margins.
- Full-time residents and non-resident property owners tend to support the community center by a small margin while part-time residents are opposed by similar margins.
- Length of time as a resident appears related to support for the community center. Full-time residents who moved to St. James within the last year had the highest level of support. Residents between one and five years and those living there for between five and 10 years have progressively lower margins of support and then residents of more than 10 years tend to be against the community center.
- Individuals who plan to become full-time residents tend to support the community center, regardless of when they plan to move there. Conversely, those that never plan to move to St. James full-time tend to be against it.
- Club membership is related to support for the community center in two different ways. Property owners with golf or tennis club memberships tend to support the community center by small margins. Property owners with social club memberships or no club membership tend to be opposed by small margins.

While these differences help to understand the opinions of property owners, in almost every instance the sub-groups opposed to the community center are a relatively small proportion of the total responses. Thus, the vast majority of respondents within each category supported the community center, albeit by small margins. The one exception is the opposition by a small margin to the community center by those with social club memberships.

Introduction

This report describes the results of a project that surveyed all property owners within the Town of St. James during April and May of 2008 to determine whether they support having the Town build a community center in the near future. The community center has been the subject of considerable debate since the Town's incorporation in 1999. Discussion of a community center began when a group of residents signed a petition that was submitted to the St. James Property Owners Association (POA) in 1999. In 2004, the *St. James Comprehensive Plan* recommended that the Town investigate the desirability and feasibility of constructing a community center, town hall, and other recreational facilities. In Fall 2004, the Town Council appointed a special committee of residents to investigate the need for these facilities. In November 2005, the committee concluded that a facility was needed that could accommodate meetings, gatherings, and other social functions. The Facilities II Committee was subsequently created in early 2006 to continue investigating the issue. During their investigation, a consulting firm mailed a survey to all property owners that determined that 51% of respondents wanted a community center while 38% disagreed and 10% wanted more information.

When presenting the Committee's final report in January 2007, it became apparent that additional information regarding the financial impacts was needed. This led to a series of efforts by Town Officials over the last year. An architectural firm was hired to develop conceptual designs for a combined community center and town hall/POA facility. After considerable discussion, the Town Council decided to on the conceptual designs depicted on the cover of this report and further illustrated in Figure 1. The conceptual designs have separate buildings for a community center and a town hall/POA complex. The Town Council's decision on building the Town Hall/POA complex will be addressed separately from its decision concerning the proposed community center.

The proposed community center would be designed to provide affordable event, meeting, banquet, gathering, and activity space for residents and property owners in St. James. Preliminary concept drawings call for a 12,865 square foot facility that includes:

- Large event room that seat 375 dining and 500 auditorium style
- Small event rooms
- Arts and crafts room
- Office space
- Restrooms
- Kitchen facility designed for catering
- Parking for 240 vehicles.

Figure 1: Floor Plan of the Proposed Community Center and Adjoining Town Hall Complex



It will be located on an undeveloped parcel of land west of the Sales center on State Highway 211, across from the main entrance to St. James. It will be owned and operated by the Town, not the developer, property owners association (POA), nor any of the clubs. Accordingly, building the community center should have limited impacts on club dues or POA fees.

Construction would begin no earlier than 2010. The preparation of the conceptual designs allowed for estimates of the cost for site preparation, construction, and furnishing, which is currently estimated to be \$3,563,988, of which \$2.05 million will be financed using a 30-year mortgage. Estimated operating costs and debt service when completed is \$264,480 per year. After evaluating revenues and projected expenses over the next five years, the Town Council concluded in its February 2008 *Development Plan* that it can build and operate the proposed Community Center without raising the current property tax rate of 5 cents per \$100 of valuation (see http://www.stjamespoa.org/Town/CC_Dev_Plan.pdf).

The principal investigator's involvement with the issue began during the Summer of 2007 when he was contacted by Town Officials about the possibility of conducting a survey to gauge public opinion regarding the proposed community center once the conceptual designs and *Development Plan* were complete. Over the following months, the investigator had several meetings with Town officials to discuss the options pertaining to the survey's format and administration. The investigator also attended several Town Council meetings where

issues related to the community center and the concept plans were discussed. Discussions with Town officials culminated in the submission of a grant proposal to conduct a survey of all St. James property owners that was subsequently approved by the Town Council at its meeting on January 8, 2008. Additional guidance pertaining to the survey was communicated in a letter to the principal investigator on February 7, 2008 and subsequent meetings and email communications by Town Council members. The following sections describe the research design and survey results.

Research Design

When formulating the research design, various options were considered and explored during discussions with Town officials. These included the relative strengths and weaknesses of different sampling targets such as registered voters, property owners, or residents and different sampling strategies (e.g., random samples or population surveys). The relative merits of different survey methodologies such as telephone surveys, web surveys, in-person interviews or surveys, and mailed surveys were also discussed. In the end, it was determined that the research design would utilize a mailed self-administered questionnaire to survey all property owners. The following sections describe each component of the research design in greater detail and the rational form making these methodological choices.

Sampling Design

During early meetings with Town officials, the principal investigator discussed the merits of various survey methodologies and sampling designs. Since the costs of constructing and operating a community center would be paid out of the Town's budget, which is funded in part by property taxes, it was decided that it was best to sample property owners rather than registered voters or residents. Since there was no comprehensive list of email addresses or phone numbers for all property owners, but there is a mailing list for all property owners maintained by the St. James Property Owners Association (POA). Accordingly, a mailed survey was determined to be most practical mechanism for obtaining data on the opinions of all property owners. A mailed survey had the added advantage of allowing informational materials describing the proposed community center to be included with the mailing. Since the survey was relatively simple in design and consisted of a limited number of questions with an uncomplicated skip pattern, there was no major obstacle to its self-administration.

Two basic approaches to sampling were considered. The first involved conducting a random sample of residents sufficient in size to satisfy a desired significance (confidence) level and margin of error (confidence interval). Alternatively, the Town had the option of surveying the entire population of known property owners. Random sampling is a statistically valid means of gauging public opinion that is somewhat cheaper to administer due to the reduction in mailing costs and data entry. However, if the survey results were close, it raised the possibility that the final margin would end up inside of the margin of error, thus limiting the

survey's ability to help Town officials determine whether to build the proposed community center. In addition, residents often have trouble understanding the complexities of random sampling, which in turn might cause some to question the validity of the findings.

Instead, Town officials decided on the more costly option of surveying the entire known population of property owners. The value of this approach is that it eliminates the sampling error associated with relying on random samples of the population. Thus, in that regard they are more accurate. However, random samples of a population and surveying the entire population still have the potential for a response bias that results in a sample that is unrepresentative of the population or certain characteristics of the population. Generally speaking, the higher the response rate for the total sample or important sub-groups within the sample, the greater the likelihood that you will have results that are representative of the population. Normally, response bias is examined by comparing the results of a random sample or a survey of the population to the known characteristics of the population to determine where the final results are representative of the population or the sub-groups of interest. However, in St. James there is no data on the characteristics of the population of property owners. Given the absence of these data, it is difficult to determine whether any response bias exists.

The mailing address list was furnished to the principal investigator by Town officials and reflected the POA's mailing list as of February 1, 2008. Before the principal investigator received the list, duplicate listings for property owners were eliminated. This was done to ensure that builders and other property owners with multiple lots would not have a disproportionate impact on the survey results. The address list was then analyzed using computer software by the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) Mail Center to determine the validity of the mailing addresses. This analysis identified 3,239 valid U.S. addresses and 7 foreign addresses. It identified only 16 bad addresses that were considered to be undeliverable by the U.S. Postal Service. One of those was corrected during the administration of the survey when the property owner contacted the principal investigator.

Every property owner on the list received one questionnaire. If more than one property owner was listed on the address list (e.g., husband and wife, two or more individuals, family, etc.) they received a maximum of two questionnaires. The use of an additional questionnaire ensured that any differences in opinion among spouses or other forms of joint property ownership would be reflected in the results. Of the 3,239 property owners, only 449 (13.9%) property owners received a single copy while 2,790 (86.1%) received two questionnaires. During the survey's administration, 20 property owners contacted the principal investigator to obtain an additional questionnaire because the address list incorrectly listed the property in a single owner's name. This equates to about 4.5% of the addresses that originally received one questionnaire. Other address problems identified during the administration of the survey are discussed in the section on response rates below.

Survey Instrument

The survey mailing consisted of four components: (1) a cover letter; (2) informational brochure; (3) one or two copies of the questionnaire; and, (4) a business reply envelope to return the completed questionnaires. These materials were mailed to the respondent in a white catalog envelope emblazoned with UNCW's insignia and address labels generated by the UNCW Mail Center's software.

The cover letter, informational brochure, and questionnaire were drafted by the principal investigator but reviewed and approved by Town officials prior to their printing and distribution. Given the controversial nature of the survey and the desire to keep these materials confidential until their approval by the Town Council, no pre-test of the survey materials was conducted.

The first piece of information the respondent received was a cover letter providing information to the survey's participants. This letter described the objective of the survey, provided directions for completing the survey, and contained informed consent to those choosing to participate in the study. The cover letter is contained in Appendix A.

The second component of the mailing was a 4-page informational brochure drafted by the principal investigator. It is contained in Appendix B. The informational brochure provided property owners with information needed to make an informed decision about whether or not to support the proposed community center. The information contained in the pamphlet came from several sources:

- Discussions with Town Officials and residents over the course of the project;
- Town council meeting discussions of the proposed community center;
- Information contained in the Town's *Development Plan* approved in February 2008 (see http://www.stjamespoa.org/Town/CC_Dev_Plan.pdf);
- Information provided to residents at a presentation on January 29, 2008.

The informational brochure begins by describing the proposed community center and its facilities. It then describes the history of the controversy dating back to 1999 in order to provide newer property owners with some understanding of the issue. The informational brochure then discusses the proposed need for a community center, plans for its operation, and the financial impacts as described in the *Development Plan*. It ends with answers to frequently asked questions about the community center.

The third piece of the mailing was one or two questionnaires depending on the number of property owners listed on the address list. The questionnaire was designed to be short with 10 questions that fit on one double-sided sheet of paper [See Appendix C]. The first question was a simple yes or no question that determined whether the respondent thought the Town Council should begin building a community center in the near future (the earliest construction could likely begin is 2010). The questionnaire also included demographic

questions about gender, age, number of adults, and number of children in the household. The questionnaire also contained a question to determine the respondent's residential status. If they were not permanent residents, the questionnaire asked whether they anticipated becoming a full-time resident. If they planned to become a full-time resident, the questionnaire then asked them to identify when they planned to change their residential status. If they were permanent residents, it asked them how long they have resided in St. James. The survey ended with a question about the respondent's club memberships. While providing useful information to the Town Council for planning purposes, these additional questions also allowed the investigators to determine whether responses to the first question pertaining to community center support varied in terms demographic characteristics, residential status, or club memberships.

The final piece of the mailing was a business reply envelope addressed to the principal investigator. This allowed the respondent to enclose the questionnaire and return it to the investigator without having to provide postage. Self-addressed, postage paid return envelopes are generally used with self-administered questionnaires to increase response rates.

A draft of these materials was reviewed by two members of the St. James Town Council. Where necessary, changes and clarifications were made to the cover letter, informational brochure, and questionnaire. A draft of the corrected final proofs was then approved by the two council members and brought before the entire St. James Town Council for their approval at a meeting on Thursday April 17, 2008. Prior to this meeting, the cover letter, informational brochure, and questionnaire were reviewed and approved by UNCW's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure they protected the rights of human subjects involved in the study.

In addition, at the direction of the Town Council an electronic version of the materials was prepared in the event that a respondent was out of town during the survey period or was otherwise unable to respond by mail. In these instances, the questionnaire was completed using an interactive form prepared in Microsoft Word. It was then returned by the respondent as an email attachment. This method of survey response was limited to several circumstances where there was no feasible way to complete the regular questionnaire by mail.

Survey Administration

The self-administered questionnaire was designed to be confidential and did not collect any self-identifying information. The identity of the respondents remains known only to the investigators. No data that would permit the identification of individual respondents will be shared with Town officials. However, confidential does not mean anonymous. In order to track the survey mailing and ensure that there were no duplicative responses, each questionnaire was coded with a sticker in the lower right corner on the second page. The coding system also allowed the investigator to know geographically where the respondent was located. Replacement mailings were hand coded with a particular type of ink so that

original and duplicate mailings could be identified. Any attempt to forge a duplicate mailing would also be detected due to the difference in hand writing.

Original Mailing and Reminder Post Cards

The survey entered the mail stream via UNCW's mail center on Thursday April 17, 2008. A reminder post card was mailed to all respondents on Thursday April 24, 2008 with a phone number and email address to contact the investigator if the original mailing was not received. Respondents were then given until May 23, 2008 to return their questionnaires. While a longer timeframe and a second (even a third) mailing of the original survey to non-respondents is often used in social science research, the postage and printing costs of the additional mailings and the desire for speedy results due to the controversy surrounding the issue resulted in eliminating the additional mailings and picking the earliest practical date for a response deadline. While this would impact the response rates, Town officials were confident that the controversy surrounding the survey, word of mouth in the community, and coverage of the mailing in the newspaper and various newsletters would ensure that the vast majority of property owners knew about the mailing and would contact either the Town or the principal investigator if they failed to receive the original mailing.

The mailing consisted of 3,239 catalog envelopes. They were mailed using a bulk rate nonprofit postage rate. Bulk rate mailings tend to move much slower in the mail stream and can take 10 days to two weeks to be delivered to some addresses. Mailings to bad addresses are not returned to the sender as they are with first class postage. Since the Town Council was assured that the property owner association mailing list was accurate, the lack of return to sender mail was not considered to be a major issue. It was also determined that the cost savings associated with using a bulk rate mailing offset the delay in delivery times. The reminder post cards went in the mail 1 week later using a similar bulk rate mailing that saved the Town additional money. The seven property owners with foreign addresses were mailed a survey packet using appropriate postage to their overseas designations. However, no reminder post cards were sent.

Minor Problems During the Mailing

There were several minor problems with the original mailing; however, none of them appears to have impacted the response rate. When UNCW's mail center picked up the original mailing, one tray of 175 addresses (331 questionnaires) for residents in St. James was mistakenly left in the locked storage room. This amounted to 5.4% of the total property owners and 12.9% of the property owners with St. James mailing addresses. This mistake was discovered on Friday April 25, 2008 when the reminder post cards were delivered within St James. By Saturday morning the tray of envelopes was discovered and the UNCW Mail Center put them in the mail Monday April 28, 2008 using first class postage so they were delivered the following day. While the affected property owners received their survey packets a little more than a week after most respondents with a St. James mailing address, they still received it before many of the property owners with addresses in other states. Most of these property owners began receiving their surveys later that week or early the following

week. Thus, there was no reason to suspect that this problem had any impact on the response rates or survey results.

The second problem was that in some isolated areas of the country, particularly VA, PA, NJ, and NY, the reminder post cards were delivered as first class mail and ended up preceding the arrival survey packets. This led to some confusion and numerous inquiries about lost or missing surveys. This confusion was addressed using a voice mail recording on the phone number included on the post card and by a mass email sent to all property owners with a mailing address outside of St. James that had email addresses in the POA mailing database. Both messages informed property owners about the potential problem and asked them to contact the investigator if they failed to receive their survey packet by May 5, 2008. This resolved the vast majority of the confusion and those with undelivered surveys were mailed replacements the week of May 5 using first class mail. During the course of the survey's administration the Town also distributed an email reminding property owners about the survey and provided instructions on how to receive replacement survey materials.

There were also numerous inquiries about undelivered, misplaced, or lost surveys over the course of the survey's administration. Every email and phone call was returned by the research team and every attempt was made to get every property owner a survey packet with the correct number of questionnaires. All replacement mailings were sent using first class mail.

Replacement mailings were sent to 126 households (244 questionnaires), however, duplicates ended up being sent to 16 of these households (31 questionnaires) and these were either returned or destroyed by the respondents. They were sent due to a variety of reasons such as:

- I never received it
- I thought it was a UNCW fund raising letter
- I misplaced it
- I threw it out by mistake
- I changed my mind and now want to now respond to the survey.

Twenty individuals contacted the investigator to request an additional copy of the questionnaire because they were sent one questionnaire when they were actually entitled to two. This was often due to such things as:

- Property was listed as an LLC or trust for estate planning purposes
- Marriage after the original purchase and POA list was never changed to reflect the additional owners
- POA list reflected a husband or wife but not both family members.

Each of these property owners was sent an additional questionnaire along with the other survey materials. There was also 1 case where the property owner erroneously received an extra questionnaire when their spouse had died and informed the research team of the mistake.

There were other problems with the POA mailing list. Four households (8 questionnaires) contacted the principal investigator who were not in the POA database and were sent survey materials. One individual with a bad address flagged by UNCW's Mail Center contacted the principal investigator and was mailed a survey packet. Seventeen households (34 questionnaires) reported moving and were no longer at the address furnished by the POA. Many of these were out of state residents who had moved to St. James on a permanent basis. Others had moved from a rental condominium or house within St. James to their newly constructed house. There were 10 households (20 questionnaires) where their address frequently experiences problems or they were temporarily at another address. Most of these households had non-St. James mailing addresses. In both cases, their materials were mailed to addresses other than those found in the POA list. Four households (7 questionnaires) had issues that prevented them from receiving or mailing a completed questionnaire and completed the electronic version of the form. In total, replacement survey materials were mailed to 181 households (5.57% of the total) for a total of 333 replacement questionnaires (5.44% of the total).

Finally, while the original mailings and reminder post cards were all sent using bulk rate postage and there shouldn't have been any return to sender mail, the principal investigators did receive 5 returned survey packets and 23 reminder post cards with undeliverable addresses. All but two of these were from mailing addresses outside of St. James. The investigators also received one request to be removed from the POA mailing address because she moved from St. James a while ago and continues to receive mail and email.

It is unclear how accurate the St. James mailing address list is. However, there is reason to suspect that the address list for property owners is much more accurate for property owners with St. James mailing addresses. Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the request for replacement surveys came from property owners with non-St. James mailing addresses. All but two of the "return to sender" surveys and post cards were from mailing addresses outside of St. James. Moreover, virtually all of the property owners (27 of 31 households) who contacted the investigator due to address problems had non-St. James mailing addresses.

Data Entry and Analysis Procedures

Data from the questionnaires was coded and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Responses were coded using a numeric format to assist with data analysis (e.g., no = 0, yes = 1, did not answer = 99). Each questionnaire had 16 distinct pieces of data that were recorded in the spreadsheet, which amounts to 58,992 pieces of data. Answers to open-ended responses were recorded separately in a word processing file and are reported in Appendix D. Since the Town Council was interested in having a quick turn around from the deadline for submitting the questionnaire until the final tabulation of the results, we initiated the data entry process while questionnaires were being returned. Data entry was completed on June 6, 2008.

Quality Control/Quality Assurance Procedures

Several procedures were used to improve the accuracy of data entry. First, the data was entered by one person who had prior experience with entering data into spreadsheets from survey questionnaires. Second, to verify the accuracy of the questionnaire codes used to identify duplicate questionnaires and be sure they were not counted. Questionnaire codes were entered in two different formats. Third, the question pertaining to the support for the community center was the next piece of information entered to improve the accuracy of data entry. Fourth, at the conclusion of entering the data from each questionnaire, the data enterer double-checked the accuracy with which the community center preference and other data were recorded before moving on to entering data from the next questionnaire.

Fifth, at the conclusion of the data entry process, the investigators examined the data entered to identify any data that was outside of the parameters of the coding system. Fifteen coding errors were identified, most of which failed to record a missing value as 99. The other mistakes involved entering a number outside of the range of acceptable responses. This amounts to an error rate of 0.025 percent. No errors were identified in the question concerning the support for the community center. All invalid data was recoded as missing.

Finally, to further check the precision of our data entry procedures, 250 total questionnaires were randomly selected to analyze and determine the possible error rate. The objective was to review the data recorded for each questionnaire to determine the accuracy of the data entered. Of the 4,000 pieces of data entered, only 4 potential mistakes were identified for an error rate of 0.1 percent (one out of 1,000). None of the mistakes were located in the question regarding support for the community center. An error rate of 0.1 percent would produce an estimated 59 data entry mistakes in the entire data set. These errors are assumed to occur randomly and would be spread out within the data set in a manner that would have virtually no impact on the final results. Moreover, even if all of the errors were in the question regarding support for the community center, it would not be enough to change the overall results.

In accordance with the Town Council's direction, all duplicate responses from households were also eliminated before compiling the results described in the following section. Only one household submitted a duplicate set of responses. While the household requested a replacement survey packet, it is unclear if they or someone else completed the original questionnaires. There were also 13 questionnaires where the respondent destroyed the coding label attached to the questionnaire. Since it was impossible to determine if they completed the questionnaire mailed to them or attempted to submit a duplicate questionnaire (e.g., obtained someone else's questionnaire, erroneously requesting a replacement, etc.), the data from these questionnaires was also eliminated from our analysis. In total, 17 questionnaires were coded as potential duplicate responses and were not tabulated in the results. However, they were included in our calculated response rates.

Table 1: Response Rates for St. James Community Center Survey

	Mailed		Returned	
	N	%	N	%
All Property Owners	6,123	100.0	3,687	60.2
St. James Address	2,566	41.9	2,230	86.9
Non-St. James Address	3,557	58.1	1,440	40.5

The final data were then analyzed using SPSS 15.0 for Windows, statistical software that is commonly used in social science research. The following sections report the frequencies and percentages for the survey questions. Cross tabulations for different responses are also reported.

Survey Results

The survey was mailed to 3,239 households. With the addition of seven foreign addresses and the five addresses added during the survey, 3,251 households were mailed a total of 6,123 questionnaires. The investigators received 3,687 questionnaires by the May 23, 2008 deadline for a total response rate of 60.2 percent [See Table 1]. A total of 1,937 households responded for a total household response rate of 59.6 percent. Both response rates are good by social science research standards.

It was also possible to compare the response rates between residents and non-residents as reported in Table 1. We identified the response rates from property owners with a St. James mailing address and compared their response rates to those without a St. James mailing address. A total of 2,230 questionnaires were returned out of a possible 2,566 sent to property owners with a St. James mailing address for a response rate of 86.9 percent. A total of 1,440 questionnaires were returned from property owners without a St. James mailing address out the 3,557 sent for a response rate of about 40.5 percent [Table 1].

The response rate was considerably higher for property owners with a St. James mailing address. This was expected. The proposed community center is controversial and has received much attention in recent years. The survey was undoubtedly a topic of conversation among neighbors and members at the social, golf and tennis clubs. It has been covered in the local media and has been on the agenda of numerous Town Council meetings. Thus, there was reason to believe that residents with St. James mailing addresses might have stronger feelings about the proposed project, which in turn would make them more likely to respond to the survey. The survey data provide some support for this proposition because residents

with non-St. James mailing addresses were much more likely to have returned a completed questionnaire with the question pertaining to community center support left blank. Since those without an opinion would be much less likely to complete the questionnaire, it makes sense that the response rate for property owners without a St. James mailing address would be lower.

There was also a practical reason why the response rate is higher. The use of bulk mail meant that property owners with a St. James mailing address would have more time to respond to the survey because they received it quicker than did property owners with mailing addresses in other parts of the country. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that their response rates would be somewhat higher. Similarly, there is every reason to believe that the questionnaires submitted after the May 23rd deadline may come primarily from property owners with non-St. James mailing addresses.

Finally, as noted earlier, the address information for property owners with a St. James mailing address appears to be more accurate than those without a local address. These address problems would further depress the response rate since property owners located in other parts of the country may be unaware that a survey is taking place.

While 40.5 percent is still a good response rate and is sufficient for statistical analysis, the large difference in response rates for property owners with (86.9 percent) and without (40.5 percent) a St. James mailing address is of some concern. At a minimum, it means that the aggregate results are weighted in favor of the opinions of those with a St. James mailing address. Thus, if residents with a St. James mailing address had vastly different opinions or characteristics than those with a St. James mailing address then it would be important to weight the samples and correct for these differences. While the questionnaire did not collect a lot of data on the characteristics of property owners, the results presented in the following sections are remarkably similar between the two sub-groups and the aggregate sample so no weighting was used. Instead, the results of the entire sample and the two sub-samples are reported for comparison purposes.

The other concern raised by the difference in response rates is whether there was a response bias that depressed the response rate for the non-St. James sub-group of property owners. If there was, the results might not be representative of the larger population. Unfortunately, the absence of data on the entire population of property owners or these sub-groups makes it nearly impossible to determine whether any response bias existed. Nothing in the data suggests that there is a response bias. Nor is there any reason to believe that the property-owners without a St. James mailing address differ in some way that made some more likely to respond than others. Instead, we believe that the lower response rates are probably due to the absence of strong opinions about the proposal, the shorter timeframe for response, the decreased likelihood they knew about the survey, and the increased likelihood that they never received the survey due to address problems.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are contained in Table 2. Unless otherwise noted, the discussion that follows reports the results from the full sample.

There were slightly more males (50.4 percent) than females (49.6 percent) that responded. The average number of adults in each household was two. The average age of the respondents was 56 – 65, with 50.3 percent of the respondents located within this category. Another 31.5 percent of the respondents reported being either 66 – 75 (28.6 percent) or over 75 (2.9 percent). Alternatively, only 17.3 percent of the respondents reported that they were 55 or younger. The St. James mailing address sample was slightly older while those respondents without a St. James mailing address were slightly younger overall. The number of children under the age of 18 ranged from zero to four. However, only 202 respondents reported having children (about 100 of 1,937 households). Thus, the average number of children in a household was essentially zero.

Respondents were also asked about their residential status. They were given the option of choosing the following options:

- I am a permanent resident in the Town of St. James
- I live in St. James part-time while maintaining a full-time residence somewhere else
- I own property in St. James but do not live there at all during the year
- Other _____

Of the 3,612 respondents who answered the question, 2,158 (59.7 percent) indicated that they were a full-time resident of St. James, while 397 (11 percent) reported living there part-time, and 984 (27.2 percent) owned property but did not live there at all during the year. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of permanent residents had a St. James mailing address while the vast majority of part-time residents and people who owned property but did not live in St. James at all during the year had non-St. James mailing addresses.

Respondents who identified themselves as full-time residents were then asked how long they have been a full-time resident of St. James. Of the 2,149 individuals who answered this question:

- 149 (6.9 percent) were residents less than one year
- 981 (45.6 percent) lived in St. James between one and five years
- 746 (34.7 percent) lived in St. James between five and 10 years
- 269 (12.5 percent) lived in St. James between 10 and 15 years
- 4 (0.2 percent) lived in St. James for more than 15 years

Respondents were also asked about their membership in the social, tennis, and golf clubs at St. James. Of the 2,556 respondents who answered this question:

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of All Property Owners

	Total		St. James Address		Non-St. James Address	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	3,620	100.0	2,200	100.0	1,420	100.0
Male	1,826	50.4	1,089	49.5	737	51.9
Female	1,794	49.6	1,111	50.5	683	48.1
Age	3,603	100.0	2,194	100.0	1,409	100.0
18 – 25	2	0.1	0	0	2	0.1
26 – 35	6	0.2	2	0.1	4	0.3
36 – 45	71	2.0	12	0.5	59	4.1
46 – 55	554	15.4	119	5.4	435	30.2
56 – 65	1,812	50.3	1,097	50.0	715	49.7
66 – 75	1,051	29.2	872	39.7	179	12.4
Over 75	107	3.0	92	4.2	15	1.0
Residential Status	3,612	100.0	2,201	100.0	1,411	100.0
Permanent Resident	2,158	59.7	2,120	96.3	38	2.7
Part time resident	397	11.0	72	3.3	325	23.0
Own property but do not live there	984	27.2	1	0.0	983	69.7
Other	73	2.0	8	0.4	65	4.6
Time as a Full-Time Resident	2,149	100.0	2,106	100.0	43	100.0
Less than 1 year	149	6.9	125	5.9	24	55.8
Between 1 and 5 years	981	45.6	969	46.0	12	27.9
Between 5 and 10 years	746	34.7	743	35.3	3	7.0
Between 10 and 15 years	269	12.5	265	12.6	4	9.3
Over 15 years	4	0.2	4	0.2	0	0.0
Will they Become Full-Time Residents?	1,422	100.0	80	100.0	1,342	100.0
Yes	1,141	80.2	53	66.3	1,088	81.1
No	281	19.8	27	33.8	254	18.9
When Will They Become Full-Time Residents?	1,210	100.0	65	100.0	1,145	100.0
In the next year	166	13.7	7	10.8	159	13.9
Between 1 & 5 years	684	56.5	42	64.6	642	56.1
Over 5 years	300	24.8	3	4.6	297	25.9
Never plan to reside full time	60	5.0	13	20.0	47	4.1
Current Club Memberships	2,556	100.0	2,129	100.0	427	100.0
Social	1,088	42.6	825	38.8	263	61.2
Tennis	318	12.4	294	13.8	24	5.6
Golf	1,493	58.4	1,349	63.4	144	33.7
No club membership	163	6.4	110	5.2	53	12.4

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Full-Time, Part-Time, and Non-Residents Property Owners in St. James

	Full-Time Residents		Part-Time Residents		Non-Resident Property Owners	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	2,153	100.0	397	100.0	984	100.0
Male	1,066	49.5	205	51.6	511	51.9
Female	1,087	50.5	192	48.4	473	48.1
Age	2,148	100.0	396	100.0	981	100.0
18 – 25	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2
26 – 35	2	0.1	0	0.0	3	0.3
36 – 45	12	0.6	3	0.8	52	5.3
46 – 55	115	5.4	85	21.5	337	34.4
56 – 65	1,081	50.3	195	49.2	494	50.4
66 – 75	850	39.6	99	25.0	88	8.9
Over 75	88	4.1	14	3.5	5	0.5
Current Club Memberships	2,158	100.0	397	100.0	984	100.0
Social	819	38.0	105	26.4	137	13.9
Tennis	288	13.3	21	5.3	5	0.5
Golf	1,342	62.2	77	19.4	63	6.4
No club membership	114	5.3	9	2.3	38	3.9

- 1,088 (42.6 percent) had a social club membership
- 318 (12.4 percent) had a tennis club membership
- 1,493 (58.4 percent) had a golf club membership
- 163 (6.4 percent) reported that they had no club membership

The respondents who indicated that they were not full-time residents were asked if they planned to become full-time residents of St. James. Of the 1,422 respondents who answered the question, 1,141 (80.2 percent) stated that they planned to become full-time residents and 281 (19.8 percent) said they did not. Respondents were then asked when they planned to become full-time residents of St. James. Of the 1,210 respondents who answered the question:

- 166 (13.7 percent) planned to move to St. James full-time within the next year
- 684 (56.5 percent) planned to move to St. James full-time within one to five years
- 300 (24.8 percent) planned to move to St. James full-time over five years
- 60 (5 percent) never planned to move to St. James full-time

Table 3 reports the demographic characteristics of the respondents who reported that they were full-time residents, part-time residents, or non-resident property owners. These results

are quite similar to the overall results. While there are slightly more female respondents who are full-time residents, there are slightly more males who are part-time or non-resident property owners. The full-time residents are slightly older and non-resident property owner are slightly younger than their part-time resident counterparts. Club membership rates are highest among full-time residents and lowest among non-resident property owners.

Support for Building a Community Center

The objective of this study was to determine the level of public support for having the Town of St. James build a community center in the near future. As noted in Table 4, a total of 3,670 respondents answered the question with 1,859 (50.7 percent) stating that “yes”, they thought the Town Council should build a community center in the near future. A total of 1,765 respondents (48.1 percent) stated that “no”, they did not support a community center. Thus, the proposed community center was favored by a majority of property owners with a difference of 2.6 percent or 94 responses. The remaining 46 (1.3 percent) did not answer the question but completed the rest of the questionnaire. Of these individuals without an opinion, 28 or 60.9 percent were property owners without a St. James mailing address.

There was similar support by among respondents with and without St. James mailing addresses. Among those respondents with a St. James mailing address (2,230 respondents), 1,129 or 50.6 percent supported a community center, while 1,083 or 48.6 percent did not support the community center. The 1,440 property owners with a non-St. James mailing address exhibited a similar level of support with 730 or 50.7 percent supporting the community center while 682 or 47.4 percent were against it.

The inclusion of demographic questions within the questionnaire allowed us to analyze the level of support among different subgroups of respondents. These results are presented in Table 4. In terms of gender, there is support for building the community center among males and females. Male and female property owners supported building a community center by 51 percent and 51.3 percent, respectively. In terms of age, there appears to be a slight variation in the level of support [Table 4]. Younger respondents 45 and under (79 or 2.2 percent of the responses) were against the community center by a margin of 53.2 percent to 46.8 percent. However, respondents aged 46 – 75 (3,417 or 94.8 percent of the responses), supported the community center by a margin of 51.7 percent to 47.6 percent. Among those respondents over the age of 75 (107 or 3 percent of the responses), were against the community center by a margin of 57.9 percent to 42.1 percent [Table 4]. In terms of respondents with children under the age of 18, 110 or 54.5 percent supported the community center while 92 or 45.5 percent were against it.

We then examined whether the residential status of the respondent influenced their level of support for the community center. Permanent residents (2,158 respondents) supported the community center by a margin of 51.3 percent to 48.1 percent. However, part-time resident property owners (397 respondents) were against the proposed community center by a margin of 52.6 percent to 46.3 percent. Non-resident property owners (984 respondents) supported the community center by a margin of 53.2 percent to 45.9 percent [See Table 4].

Table 4: Support For Building a Community Center

	Yes		No		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Respondents (N = 3,670)	1,859	50.7	1,765	48.1	46	1.3
St. James Address (N = 2,230)	1129	50.6	1083	48.6	18	0.8
Non-St. James Address (N = 1,440)	730	50.7	682	47.4	28	1.9
Residential Status (N = 3,612)						
Permanent Resident	1108	51.3	1039	48.1	11	0.5
Part time resident	184	46.3	209	52.6	4	1.0
Own property but do not live there	523	53.2	452	45.9	9	0.9
Other	38	52.1	33	45.2	2	2.7
Gender (N = 3,620)						
Male	932	51.0	883	48.4	11	0.6
Female	920	51.3	859	47.9	15	0.8
Age (N= 3,303)						
18 – 25	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
26 – 35	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	0.0
36 – 45	34	47.9	37	52.1	0	0.0
46 – 55	286	51.6	268	48.4	0	0.0
56 – 65	939	51.8	856	47.2	17	0.9
66– 75	542	51.6	501	47.7	8	0.8
Over 75	45	42.1	62	57.9	0	0.0
Households w/ children (N = 202)	110	54.5	92	45.5	0	0.0
Current Club Memberships (N = 2,556)						
Social Members	529	48.6	550	50.6	9	0.8
Tennis Club Members	182	57.2	136	42.8	0	0.0
Golf Club Members	789	52.8	696	46.6	8	0.5
No club membership	62	38.0	101	62.0	0	0.0
Time as a Full-Time Resident (N = 2,149)						
Less than 1 year	85	57.0	63	42.3	1	0.7
Between 1 and 5 years	524	53.4	453	46.2	4	0.4
Between 5 and 10 years	378	50.7	365	48.9	3	0.4
Between 10 and 15 years	110	40.9	158	58.7	1	0.4
Over 15 years	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0

We then examined the length of time as a full-time resident of St. James influenced support for the proposed community center. As noted in Table 4, property owners who moved to St. James within the past year as full-time residents supported the community center by one of the largest margins, 57 percent to 42.3 percent. Property owners who have lived full-time in St. James between one and five years and those who have lived there between five and 10 years supported the community center by a margin of 53.4 to 46.2 percent and 50.7 to 48.9 percent, respectively. However, property owners who have lived in St. James between 10 and 15 years are against the community center by margins of 58.7 to 40.9 percent. Property owners who have lived in St. James for more than 15 years are split evenly.

Membership in a social, tennis, or golf clubs in St. James was then examined to determine if it affected the level of support for the community center [Table 4]. Respondents who had social club memberships (1,088 respondents) were opposed to the community center by a margin of 50.6 to 48.6 percent. Property owners who had no club membership (163 respondents) were also opposed to the community center by a margin of 62 to 38 percent. However, property owners with a tennis club membership (318 respondents) supported the community center by a margin of 57.2 to 42.8 percent while golf club members (1,493) supported the community center by a margin of 52.8 to 46.6 percent. Thus, club membership is related to level of support for the community center.

The cross-tabulations were then repeated for just the respondents with and without a St. James mailing address to see if there were any differences in the distribution of support for the community center between the sub-samples and total results. These results are presented in Tables 5 and 6 and are similar in terms of the level of support for the community center and the patterns of responses.

A comparison of Tables 4, 5, and 6 reveals only 4 instances where there is a change in the pattern of preferences described above. Part-time residents with a St. James mailing address tend to support the community center while those with non-St. James mailing addresses and the entire sample do not [Tables 4, 5, and 6]. Property owners age 46 – 55 with a St. James mailing address are slightly opposed to the community center while those with non-St. James mailing addresses and the entire sample are not [Tables 4, 5, and 6]. Conversely, as noted in Table 6, property owners aged 36 – 45 with a non-St. James mailing address are slightly in favor of the community center while their younger counterparts with a St. James mailing addresses are opposed. Property owners with a St. James mailing address who have a social club membership are slightly in favor of the community center while those with non-St. James mailing addresses are even more opposed and the entire sample is slightly opposed [Tables 4, 5, and 6]. With the exception of the question on social club memberships, the other three differences involve only a small number of respondents and are of limited significance.

Finally, Table 7 reports the opinions of all property owners who planned to become future full-time residents of St. James. Property owners who planned to become full-time residents (1,422 respondents) supported building a community center in the near future by a margin of 54 to 45.2 percent. Property owners who did not plan to move to St. James on a full-time

Table 5: Support For Building a Community Center Among Property Owners with a St. James Mailing Address

	Yes		No		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Respondents (N = 3,670)	1,859	50.7	1,765	48.1	46	1.3
St. James Address (N = 2,230)	1129	50.6	1083	48.6	18	0.8
Non-St. James Address (N = 1,440)	730	50.7	682	47.4	28	1.9
Residential Status (N = 2,201)						
Permanent Resident	1,081	51.0	1,028	48.5	11	0.5
Part time resident	40	55.6	32	44.4	0	0.0
Own property but do not live there	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	5	62.5	3	37.5	0	0.0
Gender (N = 2,200)						
Male	555	51.0	528	48.5	6	0.6
Female	570	51.3	536	48.2	5	0.5
Age (N= 2,194)						
18 – 25	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
26 – 35	1	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
36 – 45	3	25.0	9	75.0	0	0.0
46 – 55	56	47.1	63	52.9	0	0.0
56 – 65	568	51.8	524	47.8	5	0.5
66– 75	452	51.8	414	47.5	6	0.7
Over 75	43	46.7	49	53.3	0	0.0
Current Club Memberships (N = 2,230)						
Social Members	413	50.1	410	49.7	2	0.2
Tennis Club Members	170	57.8	124	42.2	0	0.0
Golf Club Members	715	53.0	627	46.5	7	0.5
No club membership	39	35.5	71	64.5	0	0.0
Time as a Full-Time Resident (N = 2,106)						
Less than 1 year	65	52.0	59	47.2	1	0.8
Between 1 and 5 years	523	54.0	442	45.6	4	0.4
Between 5 and 10 years	376	50.6	364	49.0	3	0.4
Between 10 and 15 years	106	40.0	158	59.6	1	0.4
Over 15 years	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0

Table 6: Support For Building a Community Center Among Property Owners without a St. James Mailing Address

	Yes		No		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All Respondents (N = 3,670)	1,859	50.7	1,765	48.1	46	1.3
St. James Address (N = 2,230)	1129	50.6	1083	48.6	18	0.8
Non-St. James Address (N = 1,440)	730	50.7	682	47.4	28	1.9
Residential Status (N = 1,411)						
Permanent Resident	27	71.1	11	28.9	0	0.0
Part time resident	144	44.3	177	54.5	4	1.2
Own property but do not live there	522	53.1	452	46.0	9	0.9
Other	33	50.8	30	46.2	2	3.1
Gender (N = 1,420)						
Male	377	51.2	355	48.2	5	0.7
Female	350	51.2	323	47.3	10	1.5
Age (N= 1,409)						
18 – 25	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
26 – 35	1	25.0	3	75.0	0	0.0
36 – 45	31	52.5	28	47.5	0	0.0
46 – 55	230	52.9	205	47.1	0	0.0
56 – 65	371	51.9	332	46.4	12	1.7
66– 75	90	50.3	87	48.6	2	1.1
Over 75	2	13.3	13	86.7	0	0.0
Current Club Memberships (N = 1,440)						
Social Members	116	44.1	140	53.2	7	2.7
Tennis Club Members	12	50.0	12	50.0	0	0.0
Golf Club Members	74	51.4	69	47.9	1	0.7
No club membership	23	43.4	30	56.6	0	0.0
Time as a Full-Time Resident (N = 43)						
Less than 1 year	20	83.3	4	16.7	0	0.0
Between 1 and 5 years	1	8.3	11	91.7	0	0.0
Between 5 and 10 years	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0.0
Between 10 and 15 years	4	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
Over 15 years	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Table 7: Future Resident Preferences for Building a Community Center

	Yes		No		No Response	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Will they Become Full-Time Residents (N = 1,422)						
Yes	616	54.0	516	45.2	9	0.8
No	116	41.3	160	56.9	5	1.8
When Will They Become Full-Time Residents (N = 1,210)						
In the next year	86	51.8	74	44.6	6	3.6
Between 1 & 5 years	371	54.2	311	45.5	2	0.3
Over 5 years	166	55.3	134	44.7	0	0.0
Never plan to reside full time	24	40.0	34	56.7	2	3.3

basis (281 respondents) were opposed to building a community center by a margin of 56.9 to 41.3 percent. The 1,210 respondents who planned to move to St. James on a full-time basis also supported building a community center:

- 51.8 percent of the property owners planning to move within the next year
- 54.2 percent of the property owners planning to move between one and five years
- 55.3 percent planning to move after five years

However, 53.5 percent of those who reported that they never planned to move to St. James as full-time residents were opposed to building a community center.

Summary & Conclusions

The results suggest that a majority of property owners who responded to the survey support building the proposed community center in the near future. These results hold for both property owners with a St. James mailing address and those without. This suggests that there is general support for the community center, albeit by a small margin.

There are some notable differences in the opinion of the different sub-groups identified in the cross-tabulations presented in Tables 4 - 7:

- Property owners under age 45 and older than 75 tend to be against the community center while those between 45 and 75 support the community center by a small margin. However, the vast majority of the respondents are between 45 and 75.

- Full-time residents and property owners who do not live in St. James support the community center by small margins while part-time residents tend to be against the proposal by a similar margin. However, the combination of full-time residents and property owners who do not live in St. James is much larger than the number of respondents who identified themselves as part-time residents.
- Length of time as a resident appears related to the level of support for the community center. Full-time residents who moved to St. James within the last year have the highest level of support, which declines over time such that residents who have been residents of St. James for more than 10 years tend to then be against the community center. However, the vast majority of full-time residents have lived in St. James for less than 10 years.
- Property owners who plan to move and become full-time residents tend to support the community center, regardless of when they plan to move there. Conversely, those who never plan to move to St. James full-time tend to be opposed by similar margins. However, the property owners who plan to move to St. James vastly outnumber those who never plan to live there full time.
- Club membership appears related to community center support. Property owners with golf or tennis club memberships tend to support the community center by small margins. Property owners with social club memberships or no club membership tend to be opposed to the community center by small margins.

While these differences help to understand the opinions of property owners, in almost every instance the sub-groups opposed to the community center are a relatively small proportion of the total responses. Thus, the vast majority of respondents within each category supported the community center, albeit by small margins. The one exception is the opposition by a small margin to the community center by those with social club memberships.

Appendix A:
Cover Letter -
Information for Participants



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Department of Public and International Affairs

St. James Community Center Survey Information for Participants

Dear Property Owner in the Town of St. James:

The Town of St. James is considering building a Community Center. It will be located on a parcel of land west of the sales center on NC 211 across from the main entrance, which was recently acquired by the Town. Additional information about the proposed Community Center is contained in the enclosed pamphlet. In order to help make their decision, the Town Council has contracted with researchers at the University of North Carolina Wilmington to survey all property owners to determine whether they support building a Community Center. Our goal is to survey all of the property owners in the Town of St. James in order to provide the Town Council with an accurate assessment of public opinion concerning this proposal. The results of the survey will be presented to the Town Council at a public meeting.

All property owners (i.e., husband and wife and/or other individuals listed as owners of a particular parcel) are being surveyed. The enclosed packet of materials should include a questionnaire for each listed property owner that is age 18 or older based on a list furnished to the researchers in early February. Each property owner should complete their own questionnaire even if they agree for their opinion to count. If your packet does not include an appropriate number of questionnaires, please contact Dr. Mark T. Imperial (contact information below) to receive an additional questionnaire. The participation of each property owner is voluntary and all replies will be confidential. Only the University researchers working on this project will be able to see your responses. We will only report aggregate survey results to the Town and your name and address information will not be disclosed. Your consent to voluntarily participate in this study is recognized when you complete and return the questionnaire.

To help you complete the questionnaire, an informational brochure is enclosed that summarizes the reasons for building the proposed St James Community Center, its facilities and operation, and the financial impacts on the Town of St. James and its residents. The brochure also answers other frequently asked questions about the proposed project and includes conceptual drawings. Please read the brochure before completing the questionnaire.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it using the postage-paid envelope. If you do not wish to participate in the study, please return the uncompleted questionnaires. If you have received additional questionnaires in error, please return them uncompleted as well. The last day that questionnaires will be accepted is May 23, 2008.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your opinions are important and will help determine whether the Town Council builds the St. James Community Center. If you have any questions about the questionnaire or informational brochure, please feel free to contact me at 910-962-7928 or by email at imperialm@uncw.edu.

Sincerely,

Mark T. Imperial, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Director
Master of Public Administration Program

Enclosures: questionnaire(s), return envelope (no postage necessary if mailed within the U.S.)

* You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions if they make you feel uncomfortable. If you have questions about your rights in this study, you may contact Dr. Candace Gauthier, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, 910.962.3000 or by email at gauthierc@uncw.edu.

Appendix B:
Informational Brochure Included in the Mailing



Description of the Proposed Town of St. James Community Center

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

The Town of St. James is considering a proposal to build and operate a Community Center. The Community Center will provide affordable event, meeting, banquet, gathering, and activity space for residents and property owners in St. James. Preliminary concept drawings call for a 12,865 square foot facility that includes:

- Large event room that seat 375 dining and 500 auditorium style
- Small event rooms
- Arts and crafts room
- Office space
- Restrooms
- Kitchen facility designed for catering
- Parking for 240 vehicles.

It will be located on an undeveloped parcel of land west of the Sales Center on State Highway 211 across from the main entrance to St. James. The Community Center will be owned and operated by the Town, not the developer, property owners association (POA), nor any of the clubs. Accordingly, building the Community Center should have limited impacts on club dues or POA fees.

Construction would begin no earlier than 2010. The estimated cost for site preparation, construction, and furnishing is \$3,563,988, of which \$2.05 million will be financed using a 30-year mortgage. Estimated operating costs and debt service when completed is \$264,480 per year. After evaluating revenues and projected expenses over the next five years, the Town Council concluded in its February 2008 *Development Plan* that it can build and operate the proposed Community Center without raising the current property tax rate of 5 cents per \$100 of valuation (see http://www.stjamespoa.org/Town/CC_Dev_Plan.pdf).

HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER

The need for a community center has been the subject of considerable discussion and debate since the Town of St. James' incorporation in 1999. Discussion of a possible community center started when a group of residents signed a petition that was submitted to the POA in 1999. In 2004, the *St. James Comprehensive Plan* formally recommended that the Town investigate the desirability and feasibility of constructing a community center, town hall, and other recreational facilities. In Fall 2004, the Town Council appointed a special committee of residents to investigate the need for these facilities. In November 2005, the committee concluded that a facility was needed that could accommodate meetings, gatherings, and other social functions. The Facilities II Committee was subsequently created in early 2006 to continue investigating the issue. During their investigation, a consulting firm mailed a survey to all property owners that determined that 51% of respondents wanted a community center while 38% disagreed and 10% wanted more information.

When presenting the Committee's final report in January 2007, it became apparent that additional information regarding the financial impacts was needed. This led to a series of efforts by Town Officials over the last year. An architectural firm was hired to develop conceptual designs for a possible community center and town hall/POA facility. After considerable discussion, the Town Council decided on the conceptual designs in Figures 1 and 2 that have separate buildings for a Community Center and a Town Hall/POA complex. The Town Council's decision on building the Town Hall/POA complex will be addressed separately from its decision to build the Community Center.

The preliminary design was then used to produce detailed cost estimates for the construction of the Community Center, which was then incorporated into the *Development Plan* approved by the Town Council in February 2008. Given the controversial nature of the

Figure 1: External View of the Community Center and Town Hall



proposed Community Center, the Town Council also entered into a contract with Mark Imperial, Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina Wilmington to survey all property owners to determine whether they support building a Community Center.

WHY BUILD A COMMUNITY CENTER?

There are several interrelated reasons why some believe a community center is needed. St James population is now almost 2,700 with just over 1,600 single-family houses, 200 condominiums, and 40 townhouses. Since about 4,000 lots have been sold to date, the future population could easily grow to more than 6,800. Space for meetings and social gatherings is already at a premium and there are limited options within St James to accommodate these growing needs. For example, a needs assessment conducted in 2005 identified numerous clubs and organizations that may use the Community Center’s large or small rooms. The club houses are also too small to accommodate a number of the community’s large events such as:

- Member-Guest Dinner
- Artisan’s Show
- Service Club’s Flea Market
- Activities Committee Events
- Fire Department/Auxiliary social events
- Large Town or POA meetings

Accordingly, those who support building the Community Center believe it will provide a valuable community amenity that adds to the quality of life for residents while improving the value of their property.

COMMUNITY CENTER’S OPERATION

Final decisions about the operation and management of the Community Center will be made by a Board of Directors comprised of volunteer residents appointed by the Town Council. The Board will:

- Identify capital and operating needs
- Establish operating policies
- Monitor usage rates
- Determine usage fees
- Prepare a budget for input into the Town’s budget

It is envisioned that one full- or two part-time individuals will be hired on a contractual basis to

operate the facility. Where possible, volunteers will be recruited to help supplement paid staff.

Some believe that since tax dollars will be used to build and operate the Community Center, there should be no fees for using the facility. Others believe the facility should charge fees designed to cover its operational costs. The Town Council believes it is premature to set a detailed fee structure. The Board of Directors will establish the final fee schedule. A possible fee schedule is contained in Table 1. The fees would be set at a level that encourages use by St. James property owners while still encouraging use by non-residents. All revenue generated from the proposed community center will be placed in a separate fund, with the long term goal of generating enough revenue to cover its costs.

Table 1: Possible Fee Structure

# of Participants	Residents	Non-Residents
less than 25	TBA*	\$100/hr
More than 25 (St. James Organization)	\$25-\$50/hr	n/a
More than 25 (Other St. James Organizations)	\$50-\$100/hr	n/a
More than 25 (non-resident groups)	n/a	\$250/hr
UNCW, Brunswick Community College	n/a	TBA*

*Needs to be decided by Board of Directors



Figure 2: Floor Plan of the Community Center and an Adjoining Town Hall Complex

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The proposed Community Center is not designed to be a business enterprise. While its operation will generate revenue, it is impossible to predict with any certainty how much revenue will be generated. Accordingly, the Town Council believes that any decision regarding the proposed project should be made after residents consider the financial impacts on the Town assuming it generates no revenue.

The Town’s *Development Plan*, which was approved in February 2008, contains a detailed analysis of the estimated capital expenses and operational costs. Their

Table 2: Estimated Capital Expenses

Site Preparation & Construction	\$3,050,119
Professional fees*	\$216,149
Administrative Costs*	\$45,923
Contingency fund*	\$161,797
Furnishings & Equipment*	\$90,000

*Costs included in the Town’s draft five-year financial plan (http://www.stjamespoa.org/Town/5_Year_Financials.pdf)

estimates include a 7.5% escalation to account for the fact that construction would not begin for at least 18 months. The costs were further increased by an additional 5% to cover any other unanticipated cost increases. The overall cost of the proposed project is \$3,563,988 [Table 2].

The construction of the proposed Community Center will be funded using \$1 million from the Town’s capital reserves and a \$2.05 million 30-year mortgage at 3.79% interest (the current rate for this type of loan). This will result in an annual debt service of approximately \$114,480. When combined with estimated operating costs, the annual cost to the Town in terms of operation and debt service is \$264,480.

This raises the important question of whether a tax increase will be needed to cover the additional budgetary costs associated with building and operating the proposed Community Center. Table 3 summarizes the Town’s projected revenue and expenses over a five-year period. Town revenues during the current fiscal year are derived primarily from the local option sales taxes (approximately 50.4%) and property taxes

Table 3: Projected revenues and expenses for St. James

Fiscal Year	Revenue	Expenses	Surplus
2007-2008	\$1,456,357	\$1,106,357	\$350,000
2008-2009	\$1,847,888	\$1,512,888	\$335,000
2009-2010	\$2,027,551	\$1,577,551	\$450,000
2010-2011	\$2,232,583	\$1,696,583	\$536,000
2011-2012	\$2,439,856	\$1,987,856	\$452,000

(approximately 37.3%). Both revenue sources should continue to increase as development within St. James and Brunswick County increases.

The expense category includes the \$264,480 for the proposed Community Center as well as considers other potential future capital and operating expenses already at a premium and there are limited options within St. James to accommodate these growing needs. For example, a needs assessment conducted in 2005 identified in the draft five-year finance plan including:

- Fire department expansion and truck acquisition
- Construction of a Town Hall
- Assuming financial responsibility for street lighting
- Financing walking paths
- Potential contribution to the cost of a new water tower
- Stormwater expenses and projects
- An external road south of Polly Gully to the Oak Island Bridge Corridor for emergency use
- Additional town employees
- Addition of a new capital reserve fund for major facility maintenance.

As indicated in Table 3, the town still runs significant budget surpluses after these expenses.

The Town also projects that its reserve funds will be approximately \$2 million when the proposed Community Center is completed. Accordingly, the Town Council believes it can build and operate a Community Center without having to raise the current tax rate of 5 cents per \$100 of valuation.

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are potential risks of deciding to build the Community Center?

There are always risks associated with large capital projects. For example, construction or operating costs

might be significantly understated, future revenue estimates could be overstated, other unexpected capital expenses could emerge, the economy could experience a significant economic depression that changes financial assumptions, or the region could experience a catastrophic event. Since the project would not be completed for about 3 years, there should be time for Town officials to respond to unexpected contingencies.

Will the proposed Community Center have a financial impact on the clubs?

Since room rentals are not a significant source of club revenue, the community center should not impact their finances in any significant way.

Are there other public facilities nearby that can serve a similar function?

The closest facility is the Southport Community Center (6 miles) but it has a capacity of only around 200. Other facilities are at least 12 miles from St. James.

Can the existing club houses be expanded to serve a similar function?

They are owned by the developer and are either private facilities or their expansion is constrained by their foot print and the location of parking facilities.

Will the Community Center be managed by Troon?

No. It will be managed by the Town of St. James.

Has a combined Town Hall and Community Center been considered?

Yes. However, to allow for future expansion and maximize the use of both buildings, the Town Council selected a design concept based on two buildings. Combining the facilities in one building does not result in significant cost savings.

Will the Community Center be designed to serve as an evacuation center for hurricanes?

No. That would significantly increase its costs.

**More information about the
Proposed St. James Community Center can
be found at:**

<http://www.stjamespoa.org/>

Appendix C:
Self-Administered Questionnaire



St. James Community Center Survey



Directions: Your participation in this survey is voluntary and all replies are confidential. Your consent is recognized when you complete and return the survey. Your participation is important. All property owners in St. James have received this questionnaire. The results from the first question will help determine whether the Town Council builds the St. James Community Center. The remaining questions will be used to interpret the results and provide information requested by the Town Council.

Before answering the questionnaire, please take the time to read the enclosed informational brochure. It summarizes the reasons for the proposed St James Community Center, its facilities and operation, and the financial impacts on the Town of St. James and its residents. The brochure also answers other frequently asked questions about the proposed project and includes conceptual drawings that illustrate what the Community Center and a possible adjoining Town Hall Complex might look like.

1. Do you think the Town Council should begin building a Community Center in the near future?

Yes No

In order to help us analyze the survey data, please answer the following questions

2. I am a

Male Female

3. How many adults live in your household? _____

4. How many children under the age of 18 live in your household? _____

5. Which best describes your age?

18 – 25 56 – 65
 26 – 35 65 – 75
 36 – 45 Over 75
 46 – 55

6. How would you best describe your residential status in St. James? (*Mark the best answer*)

I am a permanent resident in the Town of St. James
 I live in St. James part-time while maintaining a full-time residence somewhere else
 I own property in St. James but do not live there at all during the year
 Other _____

*If you are a permanent resident,
then please skip to questions 9 and 10*

*If you are a part-time or non-resident,
then answer the following questions*

7. If you are not a full time resident, do you anticipate becoming a full-time resident?
- Yes No (skip to the end)
8. If you are not a full-time resident, when do you anticipate moving to St. James to become a full-time resident?
- In the next year
- Between 1 and 5 years
- Over 5 years
- I never plan to reside on a full-time basis

*If you are a part-time or
non-resident, then skip to the end*

*If you are a full-time resident, please
answer the final two questions*

9. How long have you been a permanent resident of St. James?
- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 10 and 15 years
- More than 15 years
10. What club memberships do you belong to?
- Social
- Tennis
- Golf
- I do not have any club membership

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
Your opinions will help determine whether the St James
Town Council builds the proposed community center

Please fold and return the questionnaire
in the enclosed business reply
envelope by May 23, 2008

If you have any questions about the questionnaire,
the information pamphlet, or the research project, please contact:

Dr. Mark T. Imperial, Associate Professor
Department of Public & International Affairs
University of North Carolina Wilmington
601 S. College Rd
Wilmington, NC 28403-5607
910-962-7928 or imperialm@uncw.edu

Appendix D:

Results of the Open Ended Question #6

- St. James residence 7 months, another residence 5 months (2)
- We live in Southport and work there (St. James) every day. Own 2 lots. (2)
- 6 months here and 6 months in Ohio (2)
- Part time between NC (3/4) and NJ (1/4)
- I own a condo but only visit several times a year (2)
- We will live full time at St. James starting 07/08
- Own lot only
- Moved to N. Myrtle Beach on 4-10-07. Have not lived there since then and do not expect to return. Condo has been for sale since 2-07.
- I own a home and plan to move there later this year
- Condo owner
- Townhouse owner
- Condo owner, limited visits (2)
- Currently building a permanent residence in St. James (2)
- Building new house
- St. James 6 months, other 6 months
- Permanent home under construction (2)
- I spend approximately 1-2 months out of the year at St. James.
- Own property in St. James and will live there in the near future (2)
- Own property and visit whenever possible for vacations, etc. (2)
- Currently building to become permanent residence in mid-2008 (2)
- Lived at St. James full-time until 1-1-06 (over 10 years) until divorced. Still own house and plan to return to reside there. (2)
- Own villa, visit several times a year (2)
- Own property and live nearby (2)
- Own property and spend 2-3 weeks per year. (2)
- Own property and visit regularly
- Lot owner – plan to build in near future (2)
- Own property will build 2010 (2)
- Currently building (2)
- Moving in 6/19/08 (2)
- Own property and stay in St. James periodically (2)
- Own property which we use a few weeks per year
- I own land and plan to build within the next year (2)
- Own property but full time resident elsewhere and visit every month or so on weekends. (2)

- Own lot (2)
- I am a permanent resident but work 20 days a month out of state (2)
- Own two lots (2)
- 3 months in winter
- Own property will build in future
- Currently building (2)
- Have property and condo and come down a few times a year (2)
- In the process of building (2)
- Moving in at the end of June (2)
- Currently building in St. James (2)
- Own land (2)
- Own vacant lot (2)
- Moving to St James in August (2)