

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Davidson, NC
Community Livability Report

2019



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Davidson. The phrase “livable community” is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 525 residents of the Town of Davidson. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

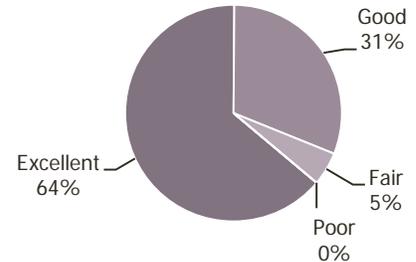


Quality of Life in Davidson

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Davidson as excellent or good. This rating was higher than levels seen in comparison communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.

Overall Quality of Life



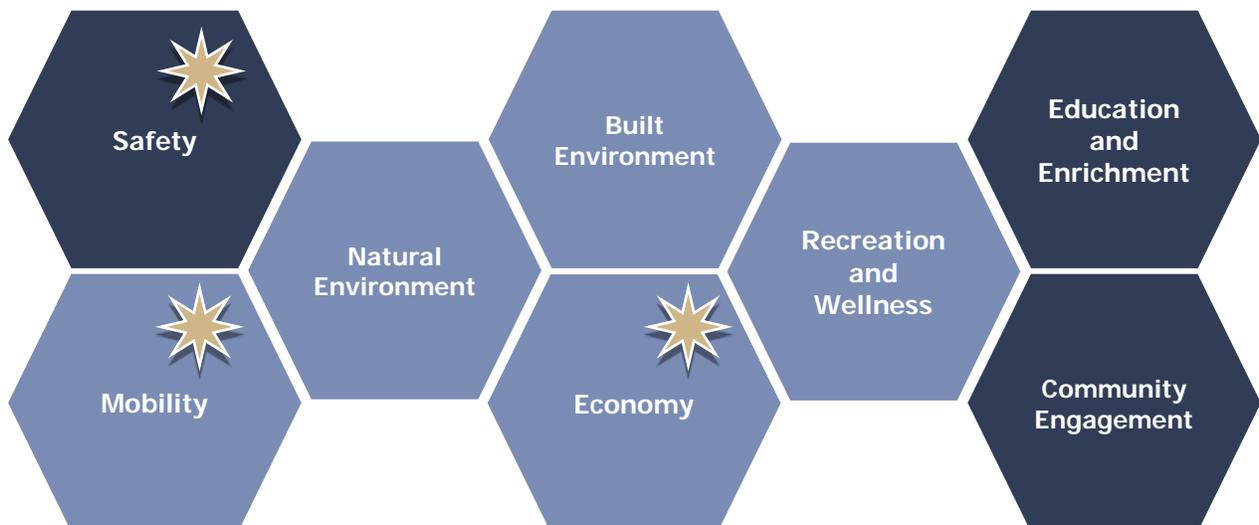
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Economy, and Mobility as priorities for the Davidson community in the coming two years. Assessments for items within the facets of Safety were higher than the national benchmark while those within Economy and Mobility were similar. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Davidson’s unique questions.

Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark

- Most important



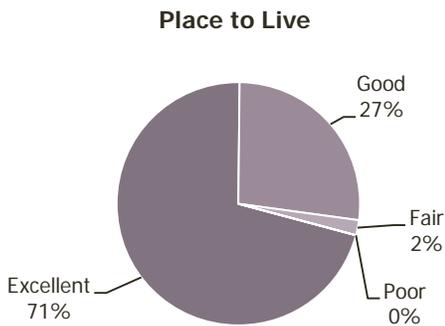
Community Characteristics

What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Davidson, 98% rated the Town as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Davidson as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Town as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Davidson as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Davidson and its overall appearance. All of these aspects were rated highly and at levels that were above the national averages.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Aspects of Safety were scored positively by at least 97% of respondents and all were similar to or higher than national benchmarks. The facets of Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement also received strong ratings, with residents awarding scores higher than national benchmarks to all but one item.



Resident opinions about Mobility-related aspects of the community were mixed. For example, paths and walking trails, and ease of walking were rated excellent or good by over 8 in 10 respondents (higher than the national averages), while less than half of respondents gave positive marks to public parking, traffic flow and travel (each rated lower than the nation). Additionally, evaluations of travel by bicycle, ease of walking, travel by public transportation, and paths and walking trails improved from 2017 to 2019 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover for more detail).

Items within the facet of Economy tended to receive ratings that were higher than the national benchmarks, with about 8 in 10 respondents giving excellent or good scores to the overall economic health, Davidson's vibrant downtown and commercial areas, the quality of business and services establishments, Davidson as a place to visit and as a place to work. Assessments of the cost of living, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities were on par with the national averages.

Items within the facet of Economy tended to receive ratings that were higher than the national benchmarks, with about 8 in 10 respondents giving excellent or good scores to the overall economic health, Davidson's vibrant downtown and commercial areas, the quality of business and services establishments, Davidson as a place to visit and as a place to work. Assessments of the cost of living, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities were on par with the national averages.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



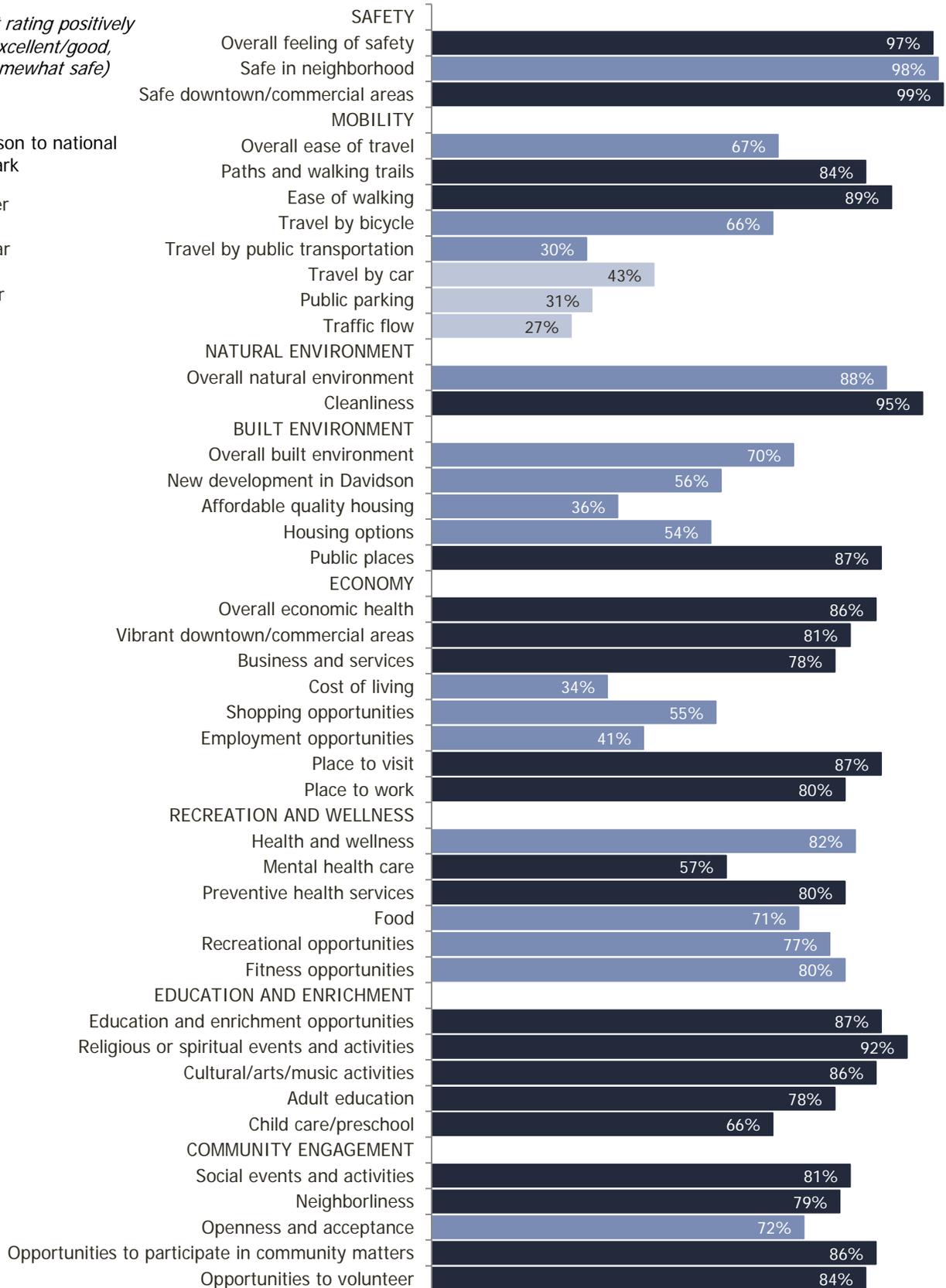
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

Percent rating positively
(e.g., excellent/good,
very/somewhat safe)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

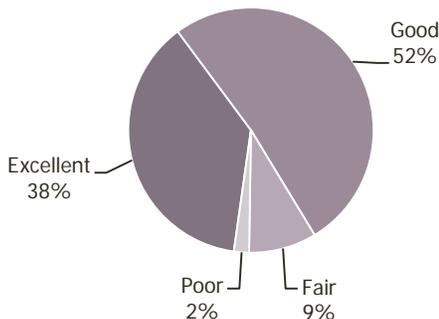
How well does the government of Davidson meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Davidson as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 9 in 10 residents awarded high ratings to the quality of services provided by Davidson. This proportion was higher than that seen in comparison communities across the nation. For comparison, 4 in 10 residents gave high marks to the quality of services provided the Federal Government, a rating which was similar to the national average.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Davidson's leadership and governance. Most aspects of Davidson's leadership and governance were rated positively by about 7 in 10 residents, including the value of services for taxes paid and treating all residents fairly. Ratings tended to be higher than the national benchmarks and many had improved from 2017 to 2019. About two-thirds of residents stated the overall direction of Davidson was excellent or good, a similar rating to the national average and an increase from 2017. The customer service provided by Town employees was also rated more positively than in other communities, with nearly 9 in 10 residents identifying it as excellent or good.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Davidson. Within the facet of Safety, police, fire, crime prevention, fire prevention and animal control were scored positively by at least 8 in 10 respondents and were rated higher than those seen in comparison communities across the nation. About three-quarters of respondents gave favorable reviews to emergency preparedness, an improvement from 2017 and on par with the national average.

Overall Quality of Town Services

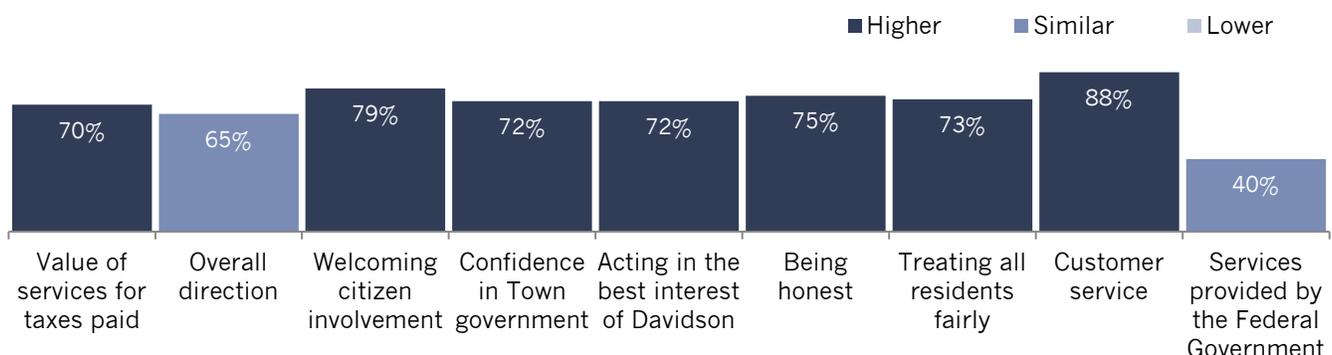


A majority of respondents gave positive evaluations to aspects Recreation and Wellness, all of which were similar to national benchmark levels. Additionally, more respondents in 2019 than in 2017 gave excellent or good ratings to Town recreation centers. Special events also received ratings in 2019 that were higher than those given in 2017 and were higher than the national average.

Ratings of traffic enforcement, code enforcement and public information also excelled compared to the nation, with at least three-quarters of residents rating each as excellent or good.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark



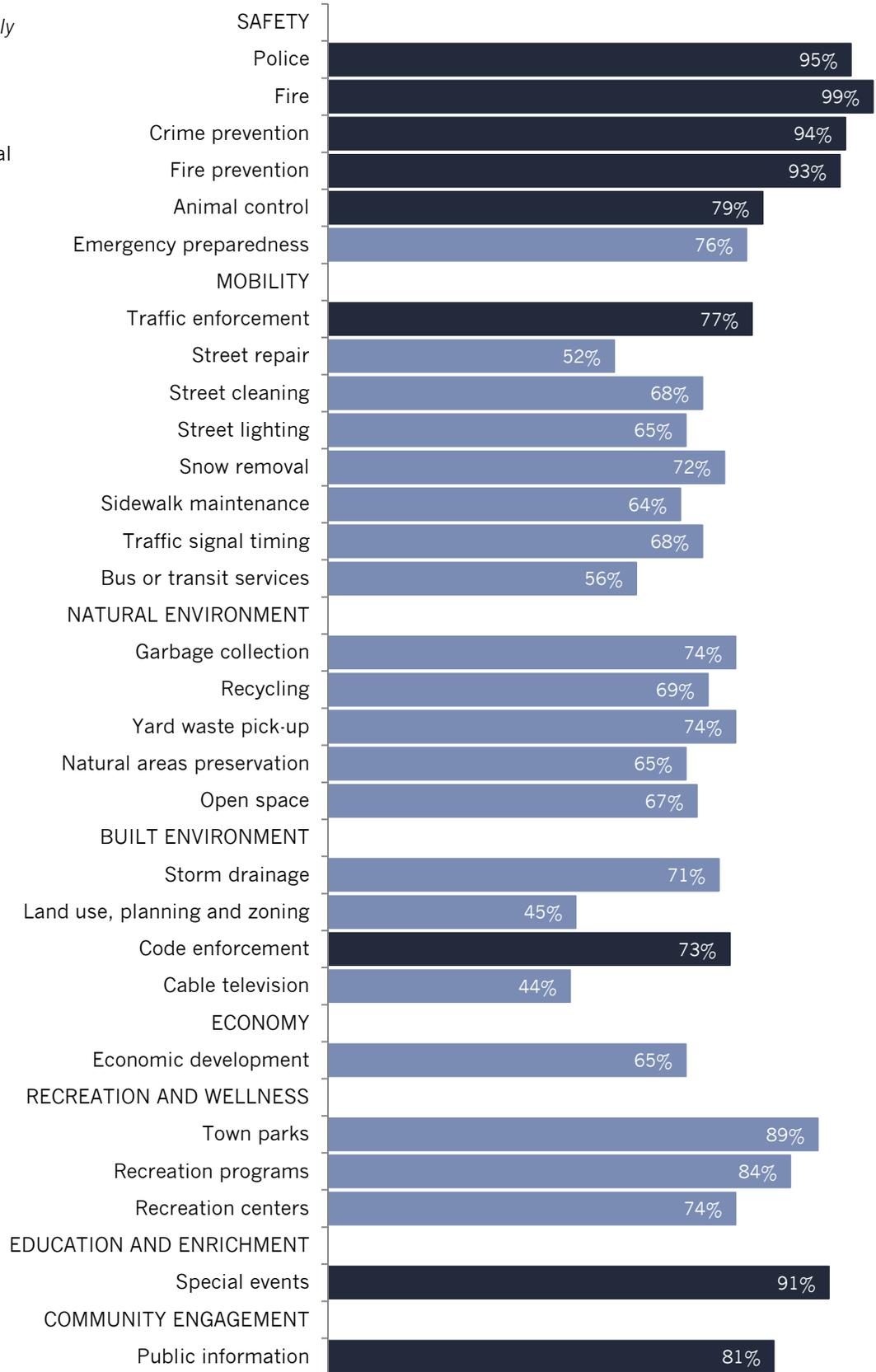
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent rating positively
(e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

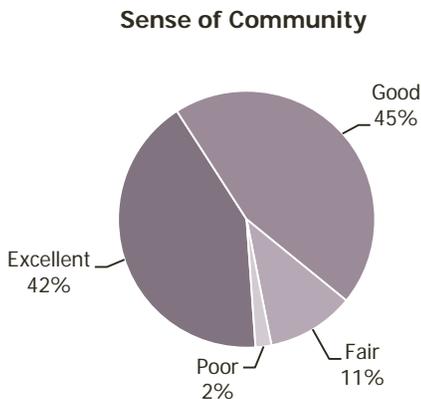


Participation

Are the residents of Davidson connected to the community and each other?

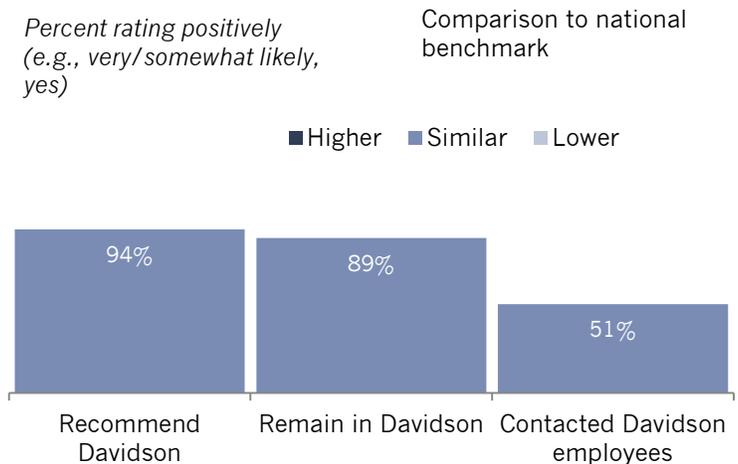
An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About 9 in 10 residents awarded a positive score to the sense of community in Davidson, a level that was higher than the national average. Approximately 9 in 10 survey respondents indicated they would recommend living in Davidson to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. About half of residents reported they had contacted Town employees. These ratings were similar to those reported across the nation.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Residents' rates of participation tended to vary, but generally were on par with rates seen in communities across the nation. A higher than average rate of participation was seen for several items within the facets of Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement: attended a Town-sponsored event; campaigned for an issue, cause, or candidate; done a favor for a neighbor; attended a local public meeting; and voted in local elections. Davidson residents also were more likely than residents in other communities nationwide to stock supplies for an emergency (89% had done so in the previous 12 months), a rate that was higher in 2019 than in 2017.



Rates of participation within Mobility were mixed. About 1 in 10 residents used public transportation instead of driving (lower than the national average) but more than 7 in 10 residents reported having walked or biked instead of driving (higher than the nation). About 4 in 10 residents carooled instead of driving alone, a rate similar to the benchmark.

Aspects of Recreation and wellness were given excellent or good ratings by at least 60% of respondents and all were on par with peer communities. Use of Davidson recreation centers has been on the rise since 2012, while use of or participation in the other aspects have remained stable.



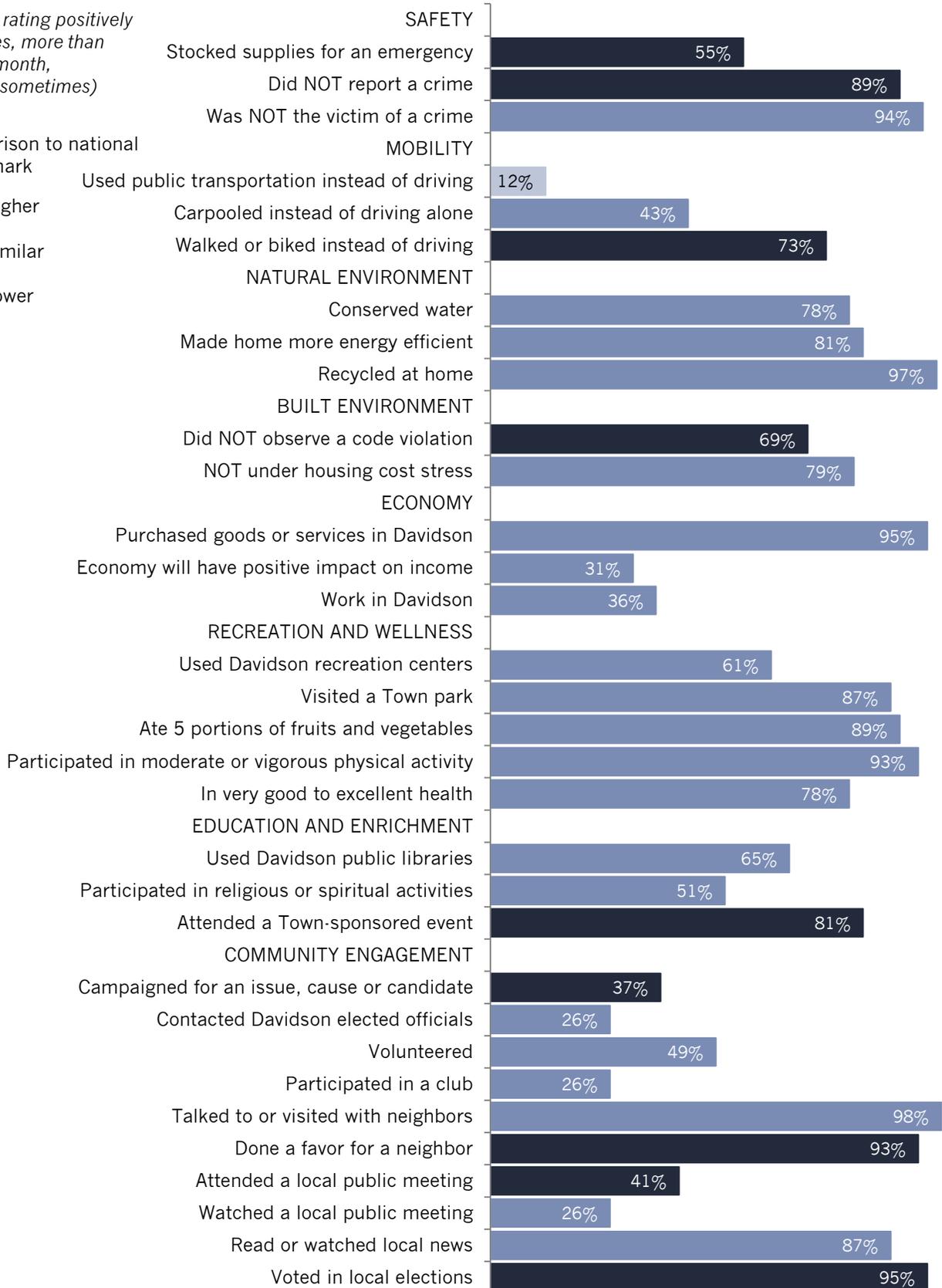
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively
(e.g., yes, more than
once a month,
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



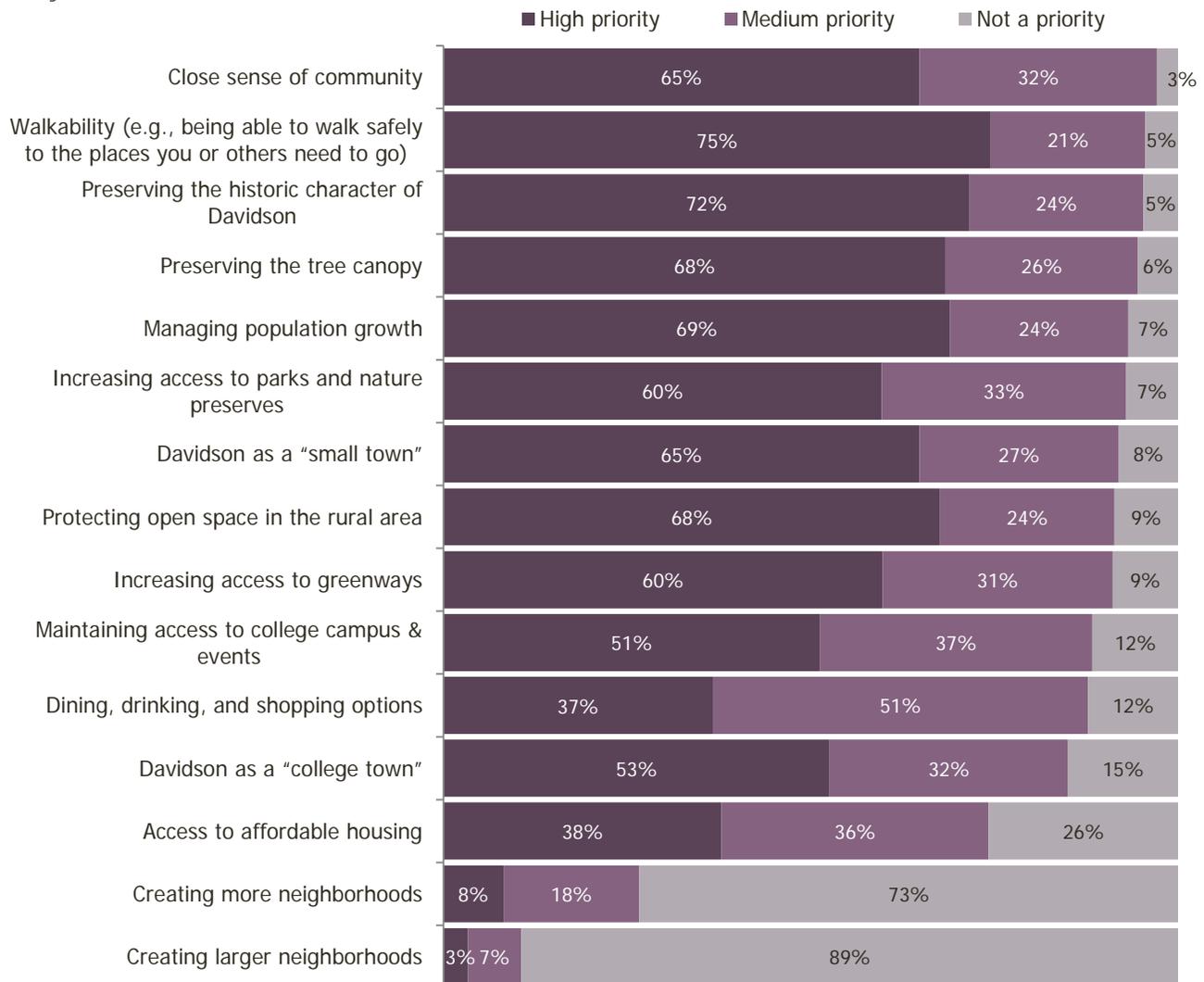
Special Topics

The Town of Davidson included four questions of special interest on The NCS. Topics included setting priorities for the Town of Davidson for the next five years, levels of support for a property tax increase, levels of support for affordable housing projects and how residents would prefer to fund affordable housing measures.

When asked how much of a priority several aspects of quality of life should be for the Town of Davidson in the next five years, most aspects were rated as a high or medium priority by at least 85% of residents. Nearly all respondents (97%) felt that a close sense of community should be a high or medium priority for the Town. Walkability and preserving the historic character of Davidson was a high priority for about three-quarters of respondents and a medium priority for roughly one-quarter of respondents. Access to affordable housing was a priority for about three-quarters of residents. Residents were less likely to feel that creating more neighborhoods or creating larger neighborhoods was a priority (26% and 10%, respectively).

Figure 4: Priorities for Next Five Years

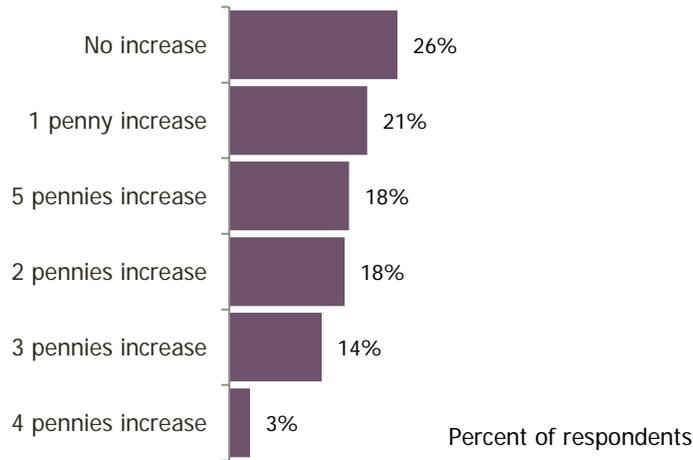
Town Government is currently updating its strategic plan and vision for the Town of Davidson. Please rate how much of a priority, if any, each of the following aspects is to quality of life in the Town of Davidson in the next five years:



Residents were asked to choose how much of an increase in property tax they would be willing to pay in order for the Town Government to fund new public facilities, including roundabouts, sidewalks and greenways. Overall, about three-quarters of respondents were willing to pay a 1 penny property tax increase and one-quarter wanted no increase (26%). When looking closer at the specific increase amounts, about 2 in 10 indicated that they would be willing to pay a 2 pennies (18%) or 5 pennies (18%) increase. Roughly 1 in 10 said they would pay a 3 pennies increase and only 3% were willing to pay a 4 pennies increase.

Figure 5: Willingness to Fund New Facilities

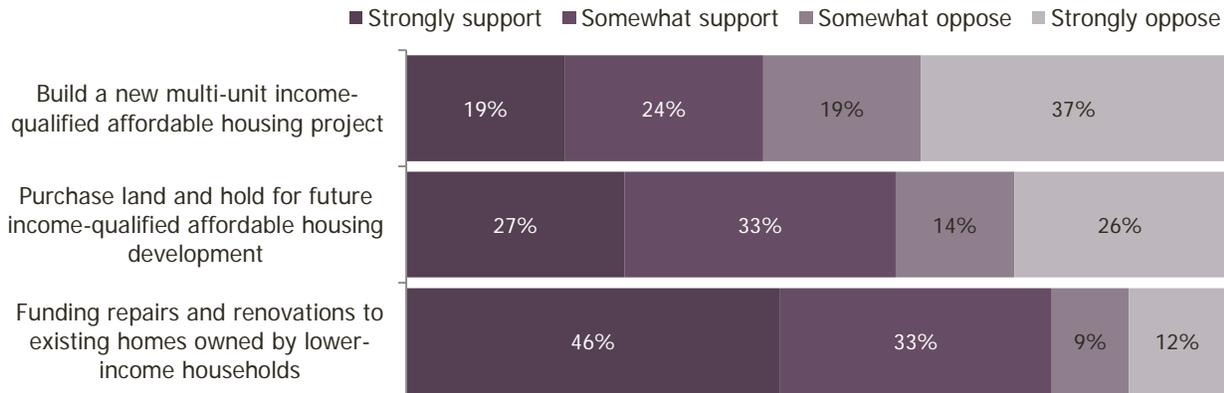
Town Government is considering constructing new public facilities, including the installation of roundabouts, sidewalks, and greenways. To fund these potential new facilities, the Town could use funds from the bonds (loans) approved by voters in 2017 (for mobility, parks and greenway projects), from the county's 2019 property revaluation, and from a potential new bond that could be paid for by a property tax increase. Davidson's current tax rate is \$0.35/\$100 of assessed property value, or about \$1,050 for a property valued at \$300,000. If property taxes were to increase, what is the maximum amount you would be willing to pay to fund these new facilities?



Residents were asked if they supported or opposed projects related to affordable housing. Nearly 8 in 10 residents stated they would strongly or somewhat support funding repair and renovations to existing homes that are owned by lower-income households. Six in 10 residents supported the purchase of land to be held for future income-qualified affordable housing development. Less than half of respondents supported the new multi-unit income-qualified affordable housing; in fact, about 4 in 10 strongly opposed this project.

Figure 6: Support for Affordable Housing Projects

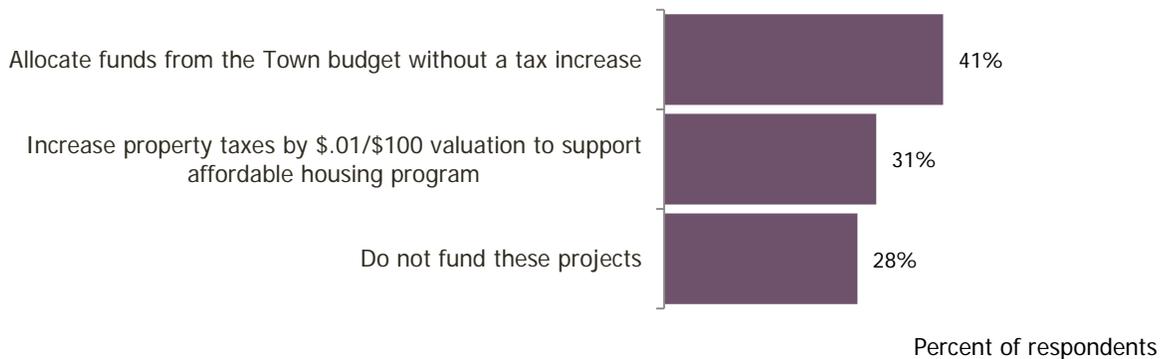
To what extent do you support or oppose the Town pursuing the following projects related to affordable housing in Davidson?



Residents also were asked which of several funding methods they would prefer to use for the various affordable housing measures. Four in 10 residents preferred allocating funds from the Town budget without increasing taxes. Three in 10 residents chose increasing property taxes by one cent for every \$100 in valuation, and a similar proportion felt these projects should not be funded.

Figure 7: Funding Affordable Housing

Please indicate your preference for funding the affordable housing measures:



Conclusions

Davidson remains a highly desirable and safe place to live.

All aspects of quality of life continued to be exceptionally positive and ratings were higher than those given in other communities across the country. Almost all residents (94% or more) rated the quality of life in Davidson, the overall image and appearance of the community, Davidson as a place to raise children and as a place to live, and their neighborhood as a place to live as excellent or good. Davidson as a place to retire was scored positively by 85% of residents. Most residents would recommend living in Davidson and plan to remain in Davidson for the next five years.

Residents prioritized Safety as a focus area for the Town in the next two years. Ratings of safety were strong, with more than 9 in 10 respondents giving excellent or good reviews to the overall feelings of safety in Davidson, police services, crime prevention, fire services and fire prevention. These positive evaluations were similar to 2017 and all were higher than the national averages. Nearly all residents reported feeling very or somewhat safe during the day in Davidson's downtown or commercial areas (a rating higher than the nation) and in their neighborhoods (similar to the benchmark).

Getting around Davidson is easier but there are still opportunities for improvements.

Mobility was identified as a key focus area for the community in the next two years. Several aspects of Mobility improved since the 2017 iteration of the survey, including travel by bicycle, ease of walking, travel by public transportation, and paths and walking trails. These items were rated similar to or higher than the national comparisons. Street cleaning was the only aspect of Mobility to decrease over the two-year period; however, ratings were still on par with other communities across the nation. The proportion of residents in 2019 who walked or biked instead of driving was consistent with 2017 and was higher than rates seen in other communities nationwide. While ratings of travel by car, public parking, and traffic flow have remained stable since 2017, they were lower than the national averages.

Not surprisingly, residents placed a high priority on walkability in Davidson. When asked to prioritize different aspects of quality of life that the Town should focus on in the next five years, 75% of respondents said that walkability is a high priority for the Town in the next five years and another 21% felt it was a medium priority. About three-quarters of respondents were willing to pay a 1 penny property tax increase for new roundabouts, sidewalks and greenways.

Residents' trust the Town government improved.

Ratings for many aspects of the Town government performance rebounded to levels seen in 2014, including the overall direction, confidence in the Town government, welcoming citizen involvement, being honest and treating all residents fairly, among others. Most of these ratings were higher than those in other communities across the nation. About 7 in 10 said the value of services for taxes paid was excellent or good, similar to 2017 but higher than the national average. The overall customer service provided by Town employees also was evaluated positively by 88% of respondents, a rating that was higher than the nation.

The sense of community in Davidson is strong and residents are engaged.

The sense of community in Davidson was high, with nearly 9 in 10 residents giving it an excellent or good rating (higher than the benchmark). This strong sense of community was mirrored in respondent opinions about priorities for the Town. Almost all respondents (97%) prioritized a close sense of community as the aspect of quality of life that the Town should focus on in the next five years. Most respondents appreciated opportunities to participate in community matters and volunteer, social events and activities, and felt the neighborliness of residents in Davidson was positive. Ratings of these aspects of the community were above average.

Davidson residents also participated in many community activities at higher rates compared to residents in other communities. More than 9 in 10 residents voted in a local election and had done a favor for a neighbor; these levels of participation were higher than the benchmark. About 4 in 10 residents had attended a local public meeting and campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, and 8 in 10 residents had attended a Town-sponsored event. Rates of participation for each of these activities were higher than in comparison communities.