



Commerce City, CO

Community Livability Report

DRAFT
2018



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The National Citizen Survey™
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Commerce City. 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 836 residents of Commerce City. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% 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 Commerce City

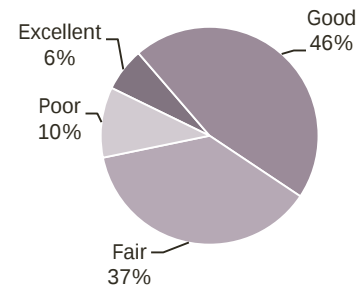
Most residents rated the quality of life in Commerce City as fair or better, which was similar to levels seen in 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover for additional details). This rating was lower than the national and Colorado peer benchmarks (see Appendix B of the *Technical 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.

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. As in 2017, survey respondents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Commerce City community in the coming two years. Ratings for these facets, as well as Built Environment, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were lower than national averages, while evaluations for the remaining facets were on par with national and Colorado comparison communities. 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 Commerce City's unique questions.

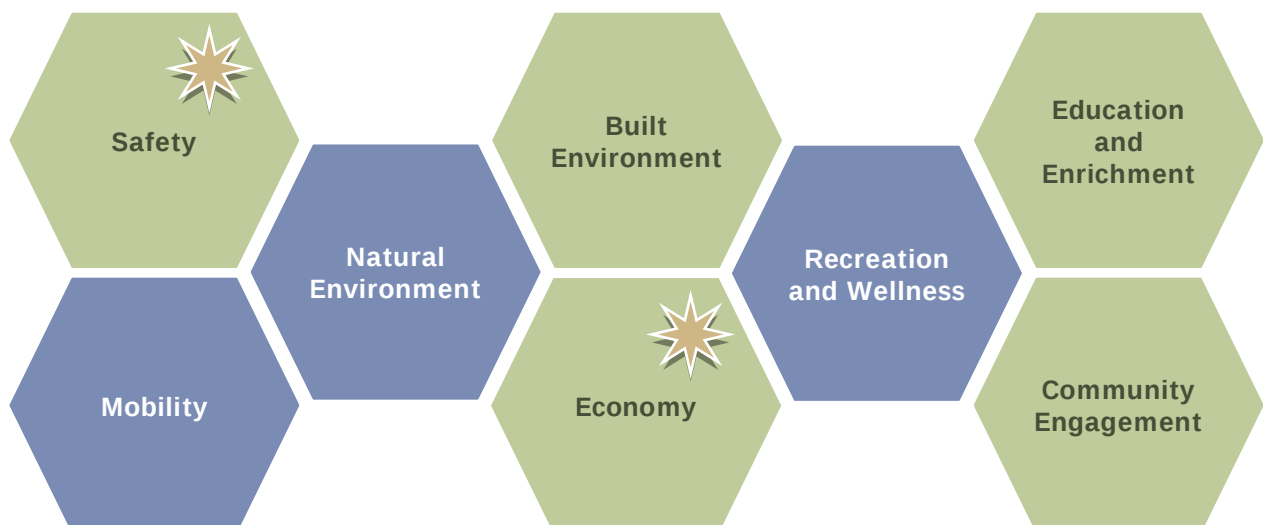
Overall Quality of Life



Legend

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

- Most important



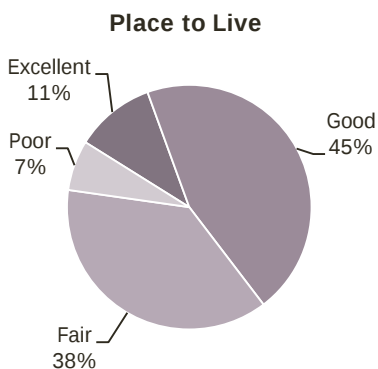
Community Characteristics

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. More than half of respondents rated the city as an excellent or good place to live and this rating was much lower than benchmark comparisons, but similar to 2017 ratings.

In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Commerce City as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Commerce City and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, which was similar to other municipalities. Less than half of residents gave favorable marks to the overall appearance of the city, the city as a place to raise children and the city as a place to retire (a rating that did increase from 2017 to 2018). The overall image of Commerce City was scored as excellent or good by 16% of survey participants; a rating lower than those given in other communities.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, ratings across and within the different facets tended to be similar to or lower than the national comparisons. Areas where Commerce City had stronger comparisons to national averages included ease of travel by car, public parking, traffic flow and public transportation. The community also was rated comparably for affordable quality housing and housing options. Residents' reviews for neighborliness and the openness and accepting nature of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds were also similar to the benchmarks.

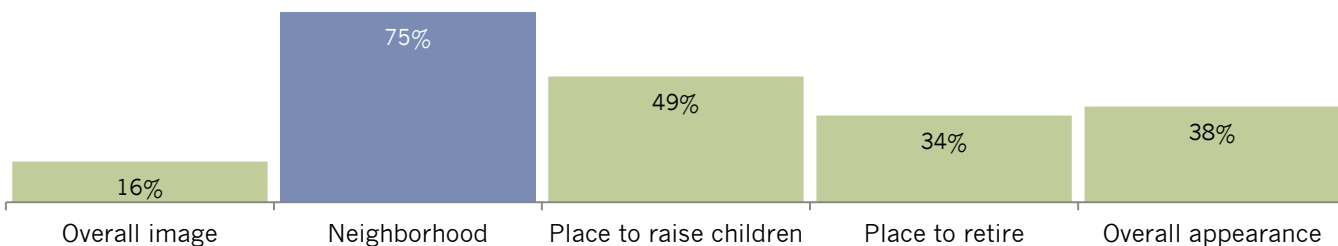


Aspects related to Safety, Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment received ratings lower than the national benchmarks. However, in 2018 there were several ratings within these areas that increased since 2017, including the overall feeling of safety, overall health and wellness, fitness and recreational opportunities and opportunities to attend religious or spiritual activities.

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

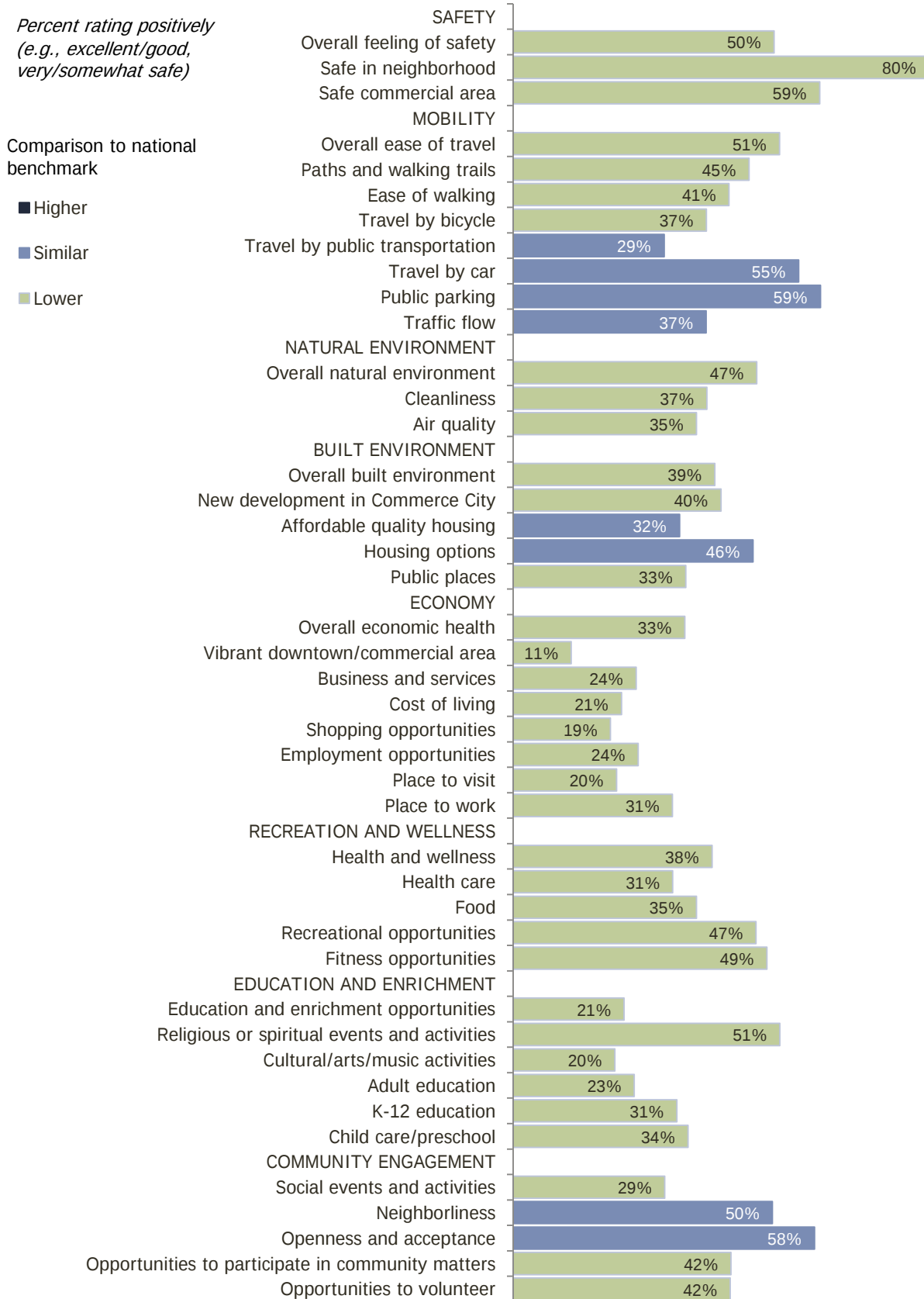
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



Governance

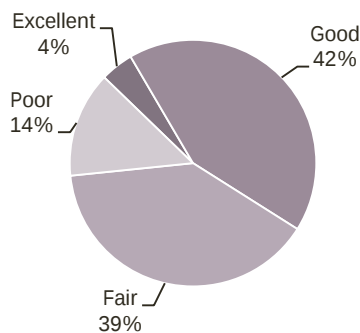
How well does the government of Commerce City meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Commerce City as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than 4 in 10 residents gave favorable assessments to the overall quality of Commerce City services. In comparison, 3 in 10 residents were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government, a rating which decreased in 2018.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Commerce City's leadership and governance. About 6 in 10 residents were pleased with the customer service provided by City employees and about one-third of respondents or fewer gave excellent or good reviews to the remaining aspects of government performance. Scores for the City welcoming citizen involvement and acting in the best interest of the community as well as residents' confidence in their government decreased in 2018. All ratings for local efforts in government were lower than national averages.

Respondents evaluated over 25 individual services and amenities available in Commerce City. More than half of the services were rated on par with the national benchmarks. These ratings were clustered in the areas of Mobility, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Safety. The highest-rated services included police, garbage collection, recycling, City parks, recreation programs and recreation centers (a rating that increased since 2017), with two-thirds of residents awarding excellent or good ratings to each service. Additionally, ratings for street lighting and snow removal improved since 2017. Respondents' evaluations for measures within Economy, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement lagged behind national and peer averages. Additionally, reviews for economic development and health services decreased in 2018.

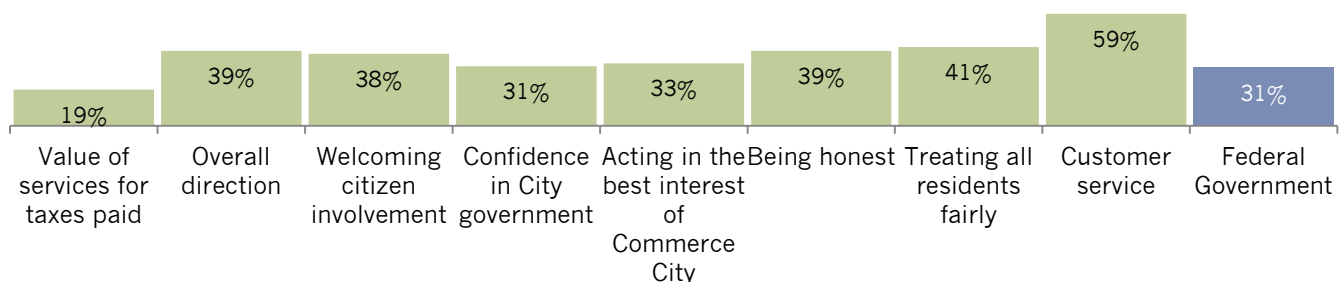
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



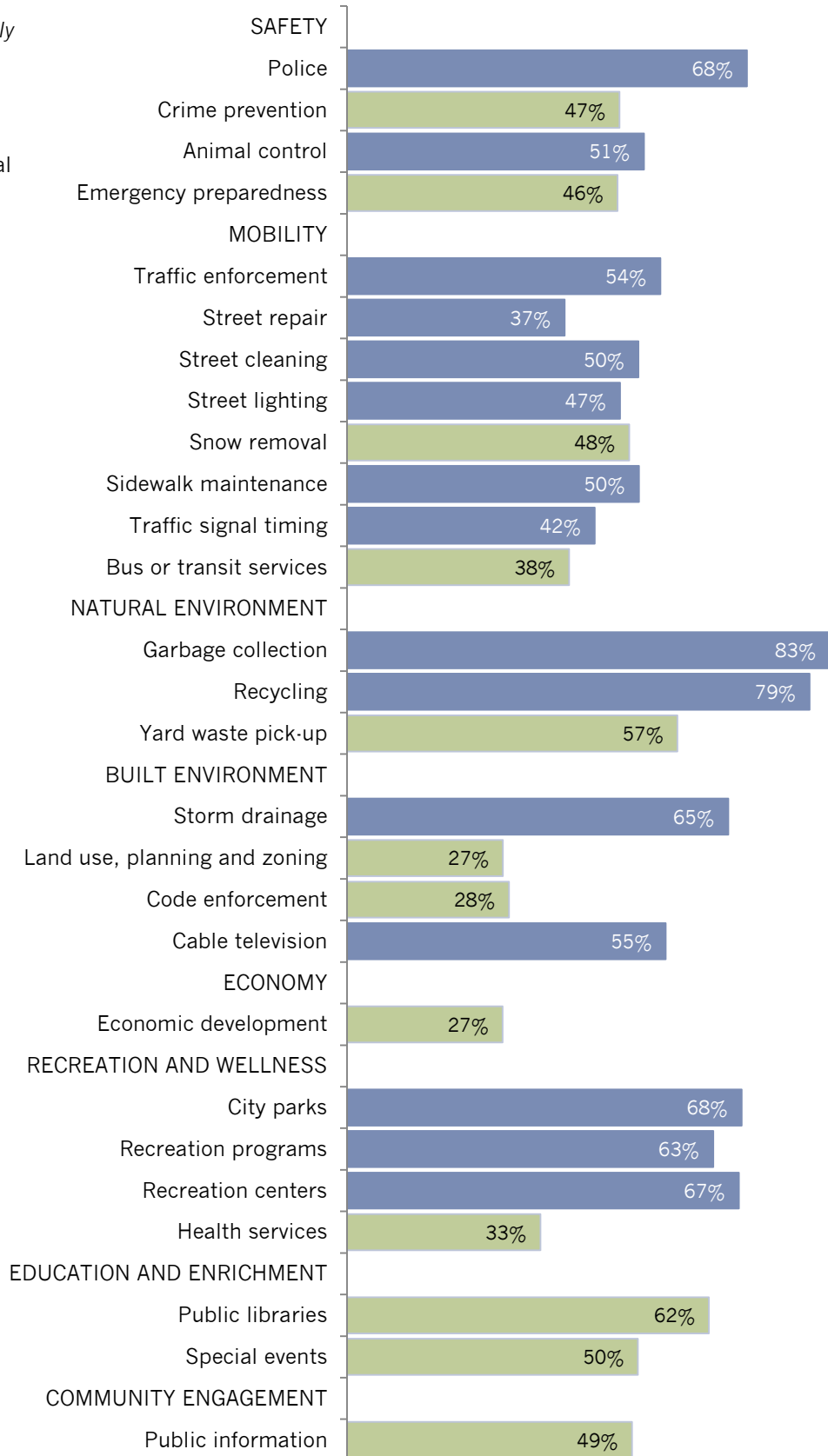
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



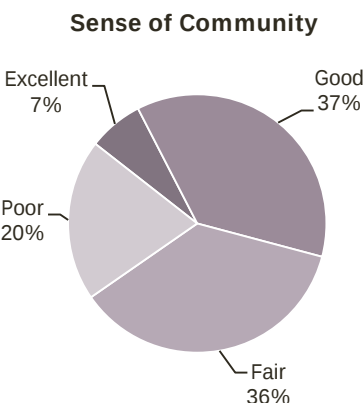
Participation

Are the residents of Commerce City 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 4 in 10 residents assessed the sense of community in Commerce City as excellent or good, while 6 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked. About 7 in 10 survey respondents planned to remain in Commerce City for the next five years, which increased in 2018. These ratings were lower than those given in other communities nationwide.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, but most rates of resident engagement were on par with those reported in peer communities. Survey participants were less likely to have walked or biked instead of driving or worked within the community, and reported higher levels of code violations and housing cost stress compared to residents living in other municipalities. Commerce City residents also participated within their community at lower levels, including participation in clubs, religious or spiritual activities, City-sponsored events and volunteerism. On a positive note, respondents indicated they were using recreation centers and campaigning for issues, causes and candidates at higher rates than those seen in 2017.

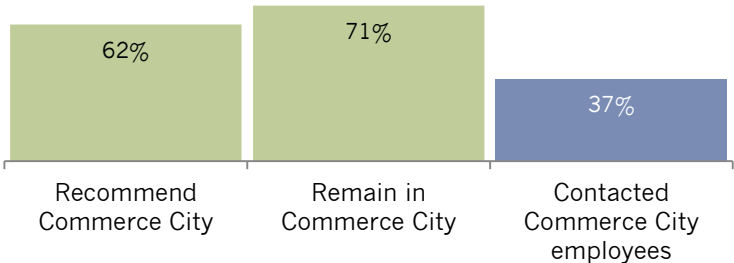
Other notable changes in 2018 included decreases in the number of residents who made their homes more energy efficient or were optimistic about the impact of the local economy on their income in the next six months. Additionally, more residents reported they had observed a code violation in 2018 compared to 2017.



Percent rating positively
(e.g., very/somewhat likely,
yes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



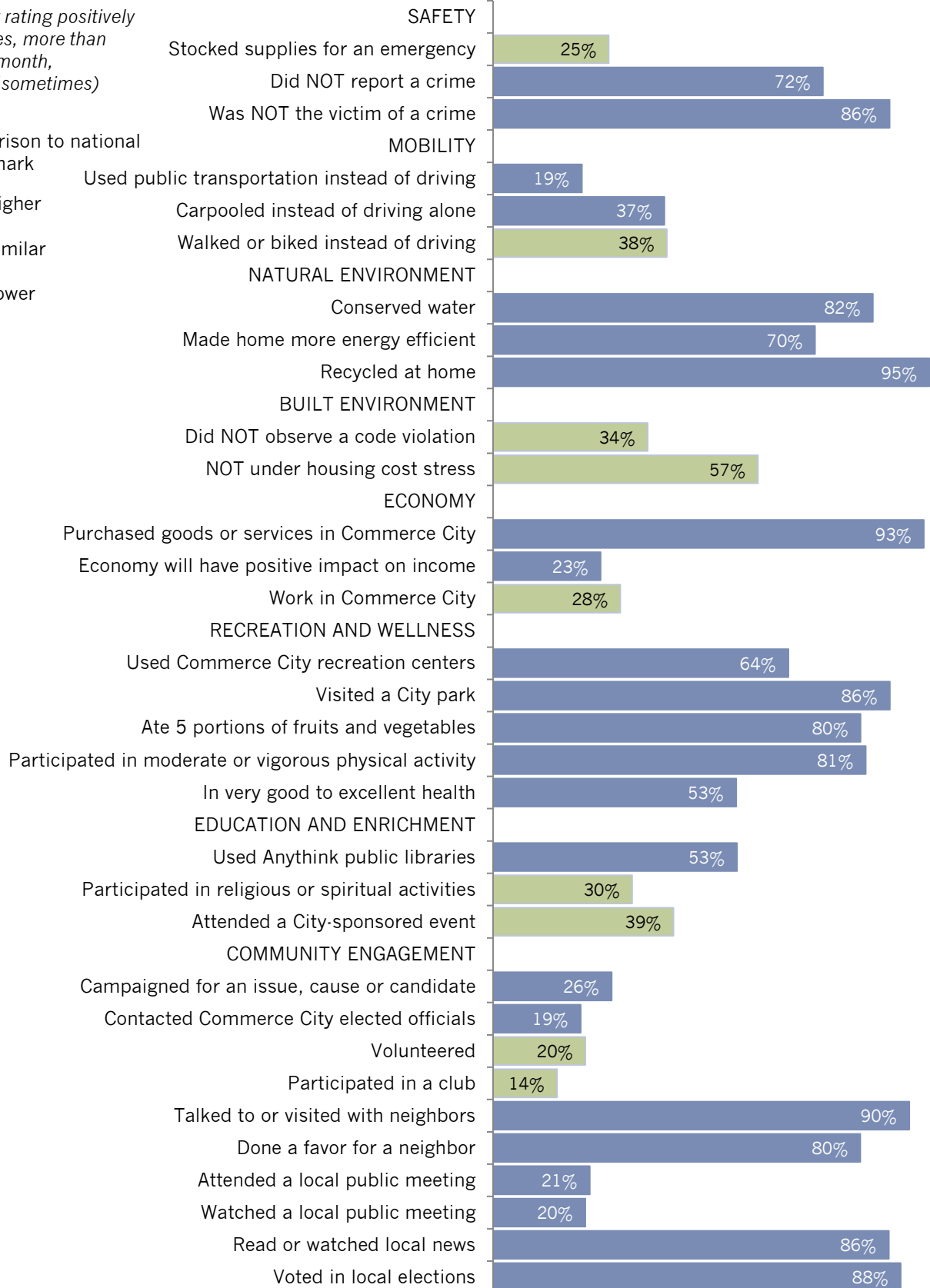
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

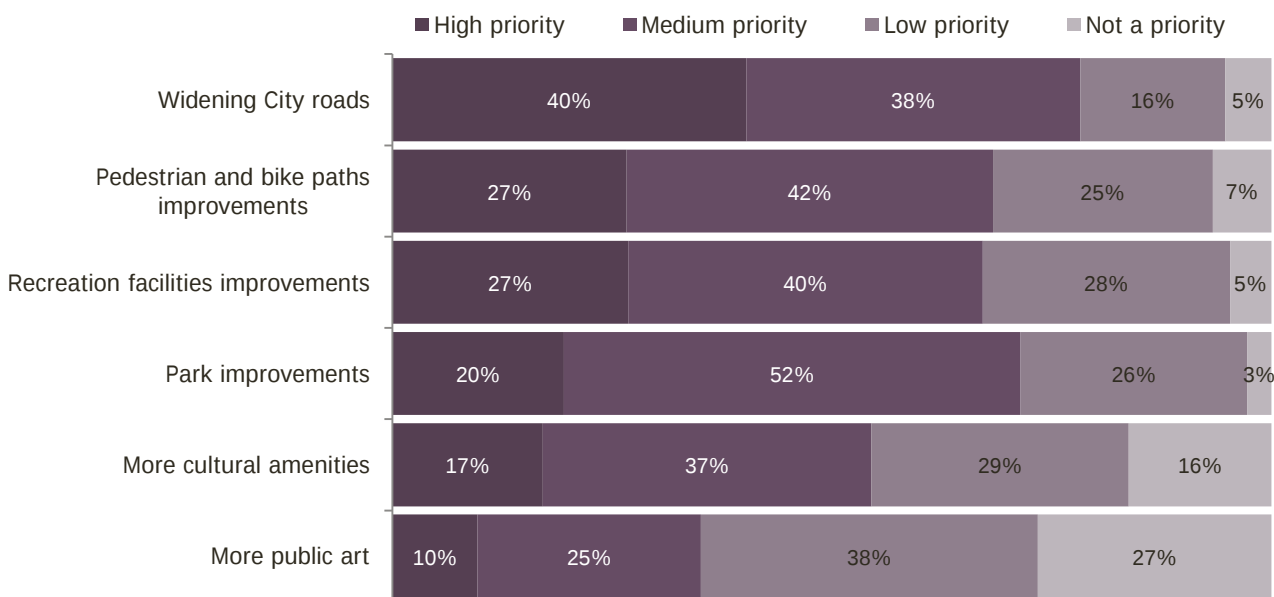


Special Topics

Commerce City leadership included four questions of special interest on The NCS. The City sought feedback on topic areas including City priorities, oil and gas operations, additional dining options and the City-wide ban on pit bulls.

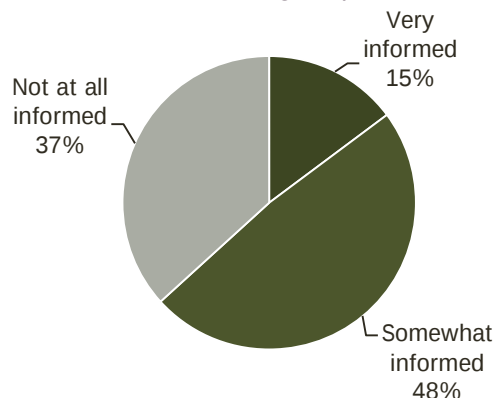
When asked about the priority of six focus areas in the city, the highest importance ratings were given to widening City roads; about 8 in10 residents felt that this was a high or medium priority for the City in the next three years. At least two-thirds of respondents prioritized improvements for pedestrian and bike paths, recreation facilities and parks. Community members placed less importance on adding more art to the community, with about one-third indicating this was a priority.

Figure 4: City Priorities
Please indicate how much of a priority, if at all, each of the following improvement projects would be for City leadership to focus on in the next three years:



To gauge resident knowledge of oil and gas operations in Commerce City, respondents were asked how informed they were on the issue. Only 15% of participants felt very informed and another half felt somewhat informed. At least one-third indicated they were not at all informed of these activities.

Figure 5: Resident Knowledge Regarding Oil and Gas Operations
Please rate how informed you are, if at all, about oil and gas operations occurring in Commerce City:

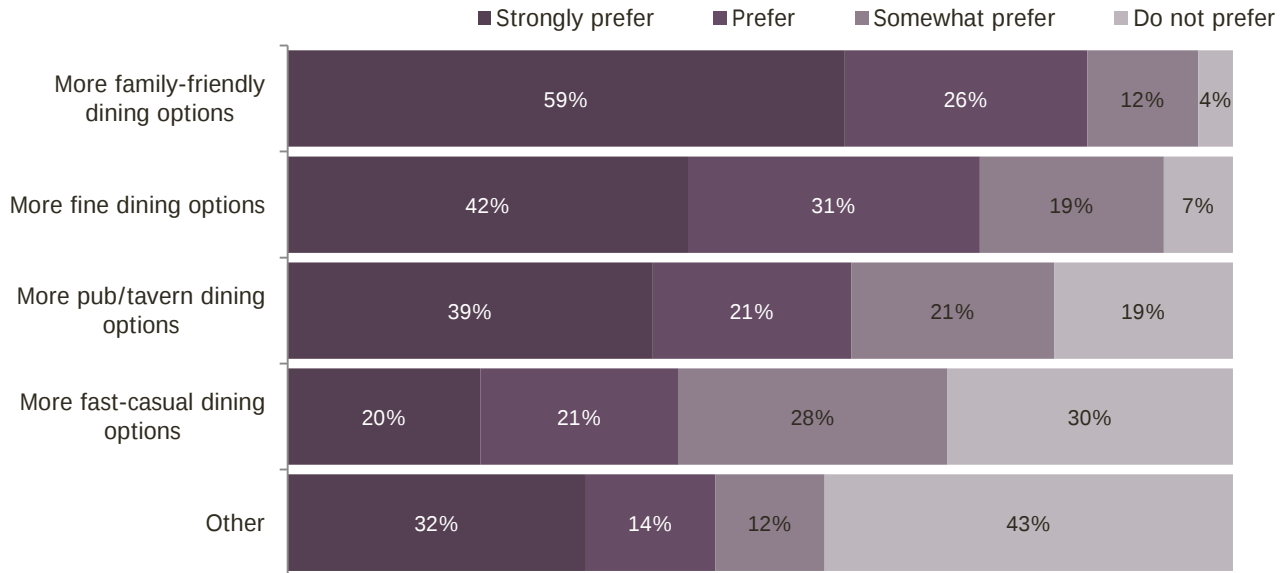


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Residents were also asked to provide their preferences for new types of dining options in the city. Community members reported the highest preference for additional family-friendly dining options (85% strongly prefer or prefer), followed by more fine dining (73%). About 6 in 10 survey respondents would prefer to have more pubs or taverns and 4 in 10 would like to see more fast-casual options.

Figure 6: Resident Preference for New Restaurant Offerings

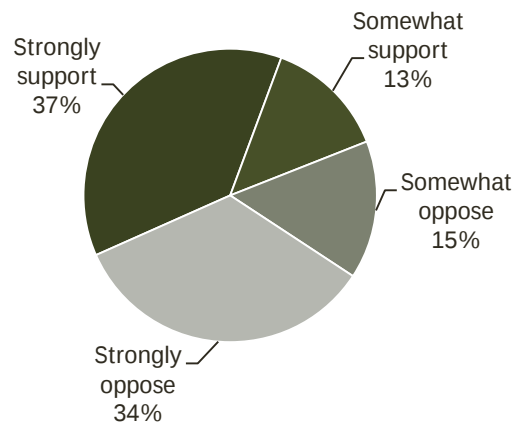
If Commerce City could attract new restaurants, which new offerings would you prefer?



Survey respondents were split on their support for the pit bull ban in Commerce City with about half in favor and half opposed. Further, the opinions of supporters and opponents were strong. Around one-third of survey participants strongly supported or strongly opposed keeping the current ban on pit bulls in Commerce City. Fewer residents were less adamant about their stance on the ban.

Figure 7: Support for Pit Bull Ban

With few exceptions, the City of Commerce City does not allow residents to own a pit bull. Do you support or oppose the City keeping the pit bull ban?



Conclusions

Residents are pleased with the ease of driving around the city.

There are plenty of places to park in Commerce City and residents were generally pleased with the ease of travel via car and public transit. Survey participants' marks for travel by car, public parking, traffic flow and public transportation in Commerce City were on par with the nation as well as many of the services associated with car travel (street cleaning, street repair, traffic signal timing, traffic and enforcement). City residents utilized carpooling and public transportation instead of driving at similar levels to their peers. Further, residents felt the City provided better snow removal services in 2018 than in 2017 and the score for street lighting also improved over the same time period.

While car travel was a strength of the community, ratings of and participation in alternate mode of travel, such as biking and walking, lagged behind the nation. Related, mobility-related community improvements received the highest importance ratings, as at least 7 in 10 survey participants considered road widening and pedestrian and bike path improvements to be a high or medium priority for City leadership in the next three years.

Economic health is a top priority for Commerce City residents.

As in 2017, survey respondents indicated that the Economy of Commerce City should be a top priority, with 9 in 10 reporting this area would be essential or very important to the quality of life in the community over the next two years. However, many ratings related to the local economy tended to be less than optimistic. One-third of residents or less gave positive marks to the overall economic health of Commerce City, vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, business or service establishments, shopping and employment opportunities in the city, economic development or to Commerce City as a place to visit or work. These ratings were lower than those given in other communities nationwide. However, three ratings that were on par with the nation provided a bit of a bright spot: levels of resident optimism regarding the impact that the local economy will have on their incomes and reviews for housing (the variety of options and availability of affordable choices). Residents also reported interest in a variety of new dining options in the city; at least 7 in 10 voiced a preference for additional family-friendly and fine dining options.

The sense of community in Commerce City could be bolstered.

Around half of residents were pleased with the neighborliness and the openness and accepting nature of the Commerce City community toward people of diverse backgrounds, which were on par with national levels. However, many aspects related to respondents' engagement within their community fell below national and peer benchmarks: fewer than half gave high marks to the opportunities to attend social events and activities, participate in community matters or volunteer. Participants also gave less positive evaluations to public information services, which could be contributing to below average volunteerism, participation in City-sponsored events and clubs and overall sentiment relating to government-resident relationships. Working to encourage greater public participation might improve residents feeling about their community and better understand their relationship to community livability.