



THE NCSTM
The National Community SurveyTM

Mountlake Terrace, WA

Community Livability Report

DRAFT
2019



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Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Mountlake Terrace..... 2

Community Characteristics 3

Governance 5

Participation 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions 10



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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 Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Mountlake Terrace. 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.

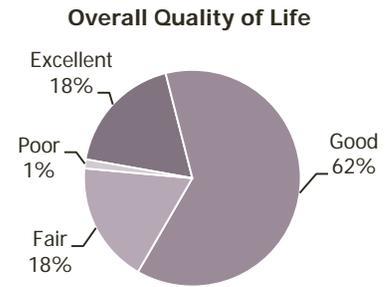
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 366 residents of the City of Mountlake Terrace. 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 Mountlake Terrace

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Mountlake Terrace as excellent or good. This rating was similar to the national benchmark comparison (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.

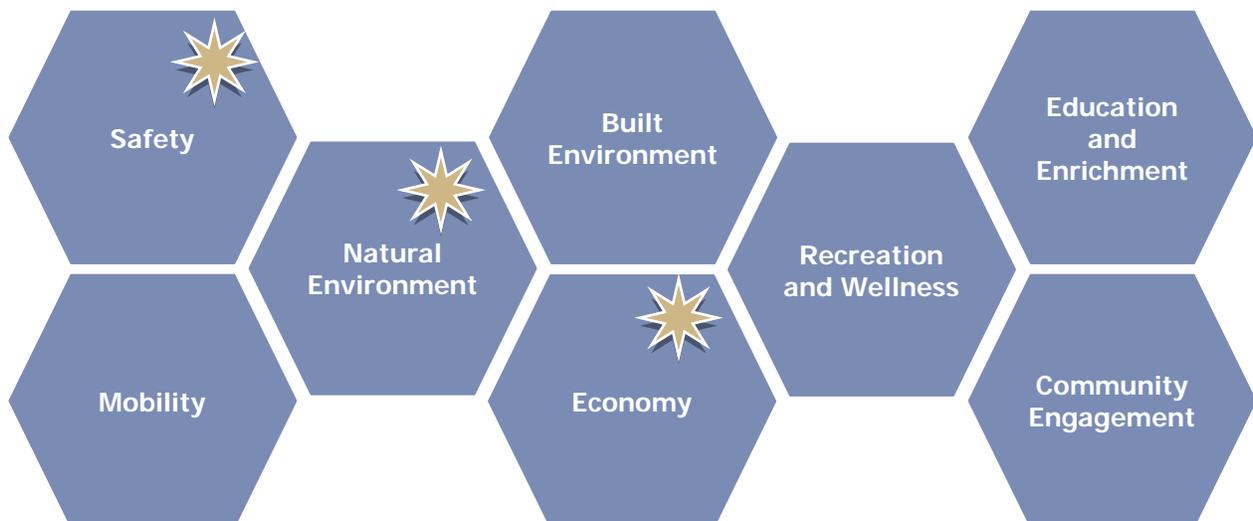
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Natural Environment, and Economy as priorities for the Mountlake Terrace community in the coming two years. Residents' ratings for all facets were similar to other 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 Mountlake Terrace's unique questions.

Legend

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

- Most important



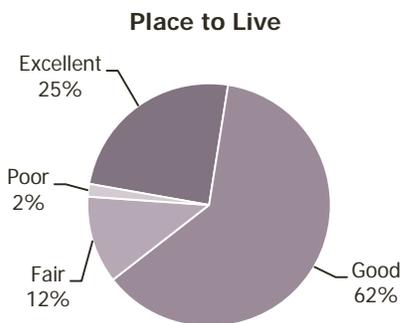
Community Characteristics

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 Mountlake Terrace, 87% of residents rated the city as an excellent or good place to live, which was similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Mountlake Terrace as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Mountlake Terrace and its overall appearance. About 8 in 10 residents positively rated their neighborhood and at least 7 in 10 considered Mountlake Terrace a good place to raise children; both of these ratings were similar to other places in the country. More than half of respondents assessed the overall image or reputation of the community (which was rated lower than national averages), city as a place to retire, and the overall appearance of Mountlake favorably, on par with the national benchmark.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, ratings for Community Characteristics tended to be similar to communities across the nation. Residents were pleased with a number of aspects within Mobility, as ratings for the ease of travel by public transportation, ease of travel by car, and traffic flow outpaced other communities nationwide.

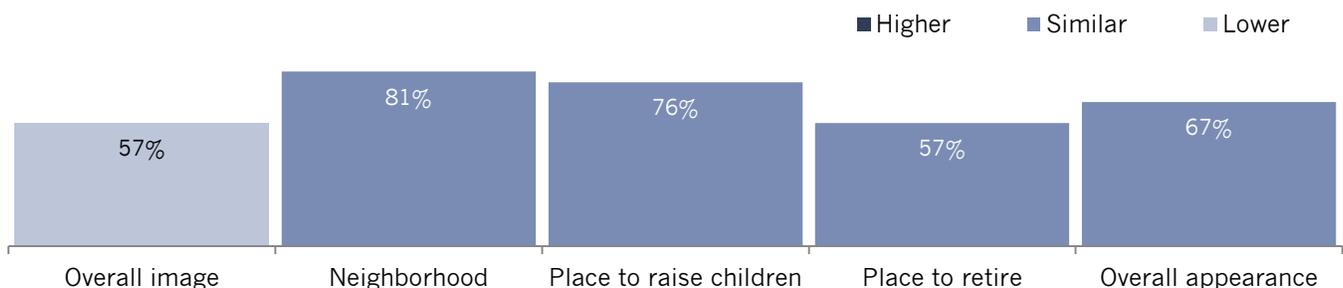


Respondents also felt positively about a number of aspects of Safety and Natural Environment; three-quarters or more awarded positive scores to the overall feeling of safety in Mountlake Terrace, overall natural environment, cleanliness, and air quality, and indicated they felt safe both in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial area. All of these evaluations were similar to other municipalities nationally. Within Built Environment, Economy, and Community Engagement, many measures were assessed by residents to be on par with the benchmarks, with the exception of public places where people want to spend time, the vibrant downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, the city as a place to visit and as a

place to work, and opportunities to volunteer; these items fell below the national averages. Further, reviews for the availability of affordable quality housing and the cost of living in Mountlake Terrace decreased since the last survey iteration. On a positive note, respondents' ratings for new development in Mountlake Terrace, overall economic health, vibrant downtown/commercial area, the overall quality of business and service establishments, and the city as a place to work rose from 2017 to 2019.

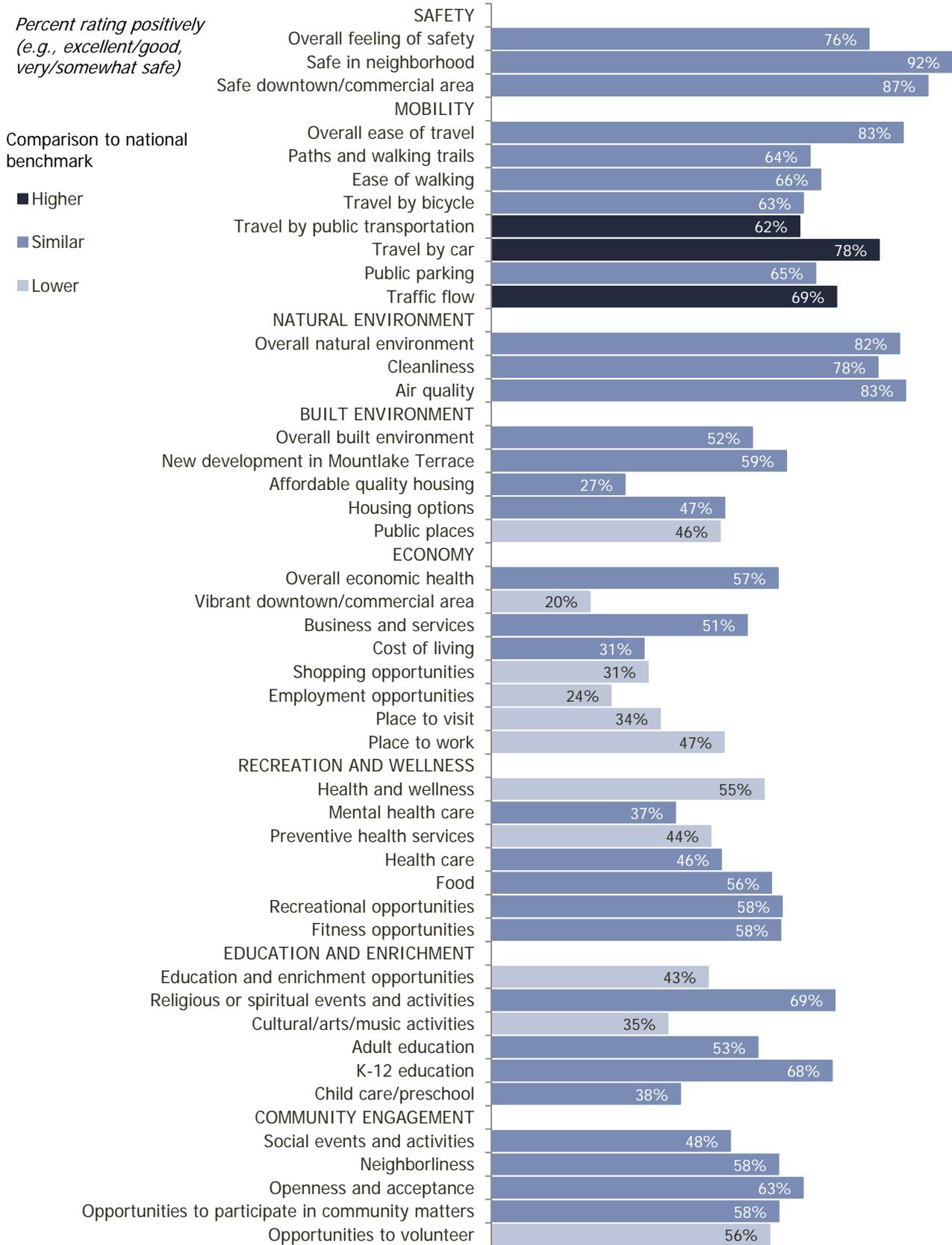
Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark



The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



Governance

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

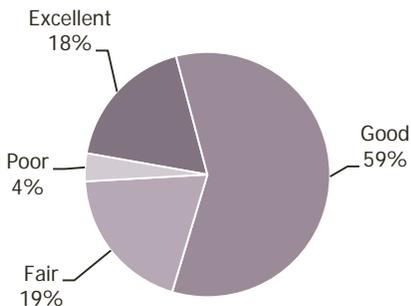
The overall quality of the services provided by Mountlake Terrace as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Around three-quarters of survey respondents awarded high marks to the overall quality of services provided by Mountlake Terrace, which was similar to the national benchmark and previous administrations of the survey.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Mountlake Terrace’s leadership and governance. About 7 in 10 community members provided excellent or good scores to the City government being honest and treating all residents, as well as the customer service provided by City employees and at least half gave positive ratings to the remaining aspects of government performance. Further, all measures of leadership were evaluated more positively in 2019 and were on par with the national averages, with the exception of the government treating all residents fairly, which surpassed levels seen elsewhere in the country.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Mountlake Terrace. Many ratings for services provided by the City were similar to those seen elsewhere in the country. Survey participants especially appreciated Safety and Natural Environment-related services, with at least 8 in 10 provided excellent or good scores to police, fire, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and drinking water. While most of these services were comparable to national comparisons, evaluations for yard waste pick-up and drinking water outperformed the benchmarks. Residents also provided top marks to bus or transit services (74% excellent or good) and this ratings was also higher than national averages. Conversely, respondents’ were more critical of emergency preparedness services in 2019 and this service was rated lower than other municipalities.

Other changes over time were noted in 2019. More community members gave excellent or good ratings to economic development, adult educational opportunities; land use, planning, and zoning; and cable television, while downward trends were found for snow removal services in 2019 compared to 2017.

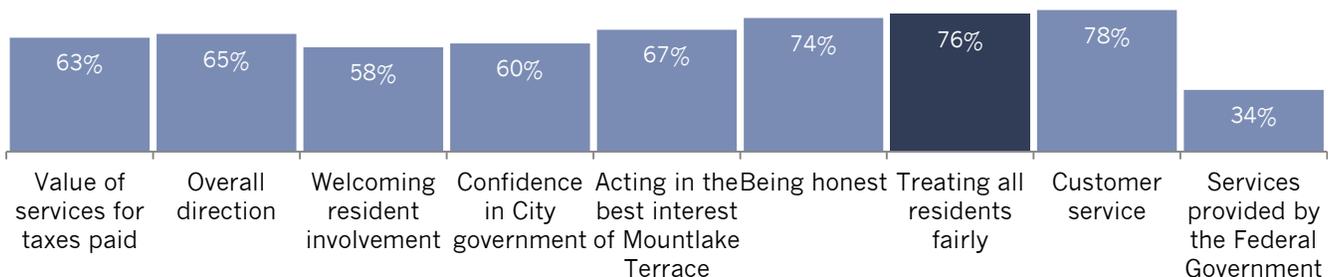
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



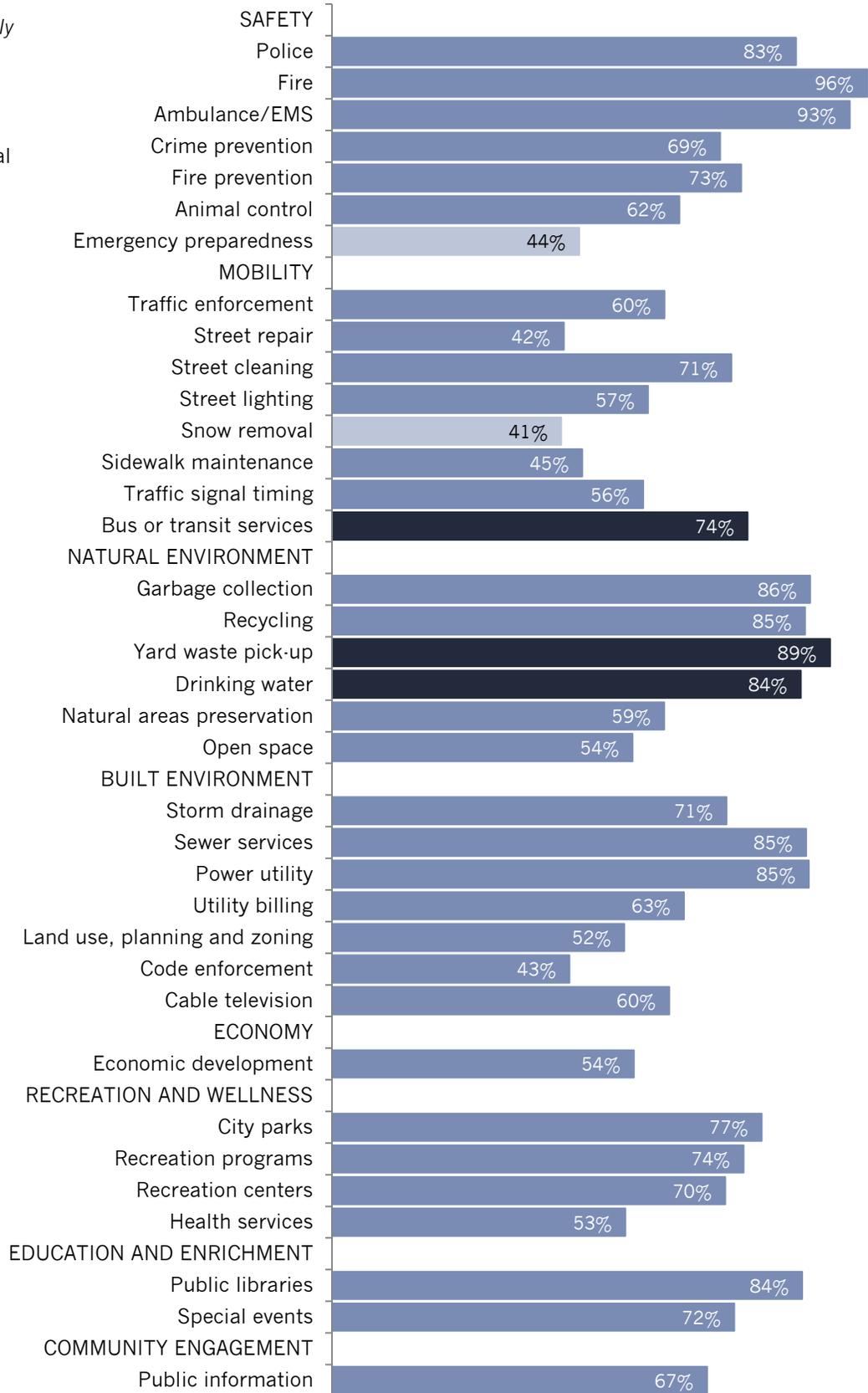
The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

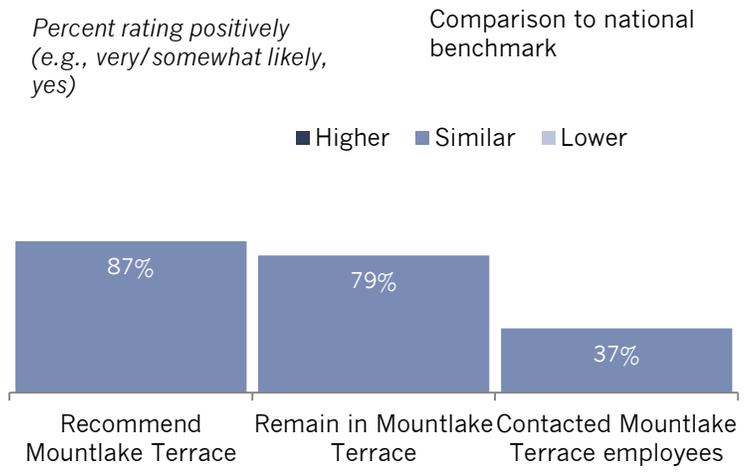
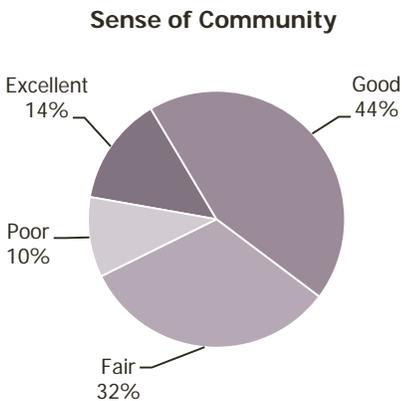


Participation

Are the residents of Mountlake Terrace 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. More than half of residents rated the sense of community in Mountlake Terrace as excellent or good, an assessment that was similar to those across the nation. About 8 in 10 respondents indicated they would recommend living in Mountlake Terrace to someone who might ask and reported they were somewhat or very likely to remain in the city for the next five years; both of these levels were similar to national comparisons.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates reported by Mountlake Terrace residents were similar to the national averages and most remained stable since 2017. Community members were especially engaged in alternative modes of transportation, with about half indicating they had used public transportation instead of driving and carpoled instead of driving alone, which exceeded rates reported nationwide. Nearly all residents reported they recycled at home, a level that was higher than the national average, and at least three-quarters reported they had conserved water or made their home more energy efficient. Mountlake Terrace survey participants also indicated they stocked supplies in the event of an emergency at rates that were higher than comparison communities. Residents were less likely to have used Mountlake Terrace recreation centers, participated in religious or spiritual activities, volunteered, participated in a club, and watched a local public meeting compared to residents across the U.S. Mountlake Terrace respondents also indicated they read or watched local news less in 2019 than they did in 2017.



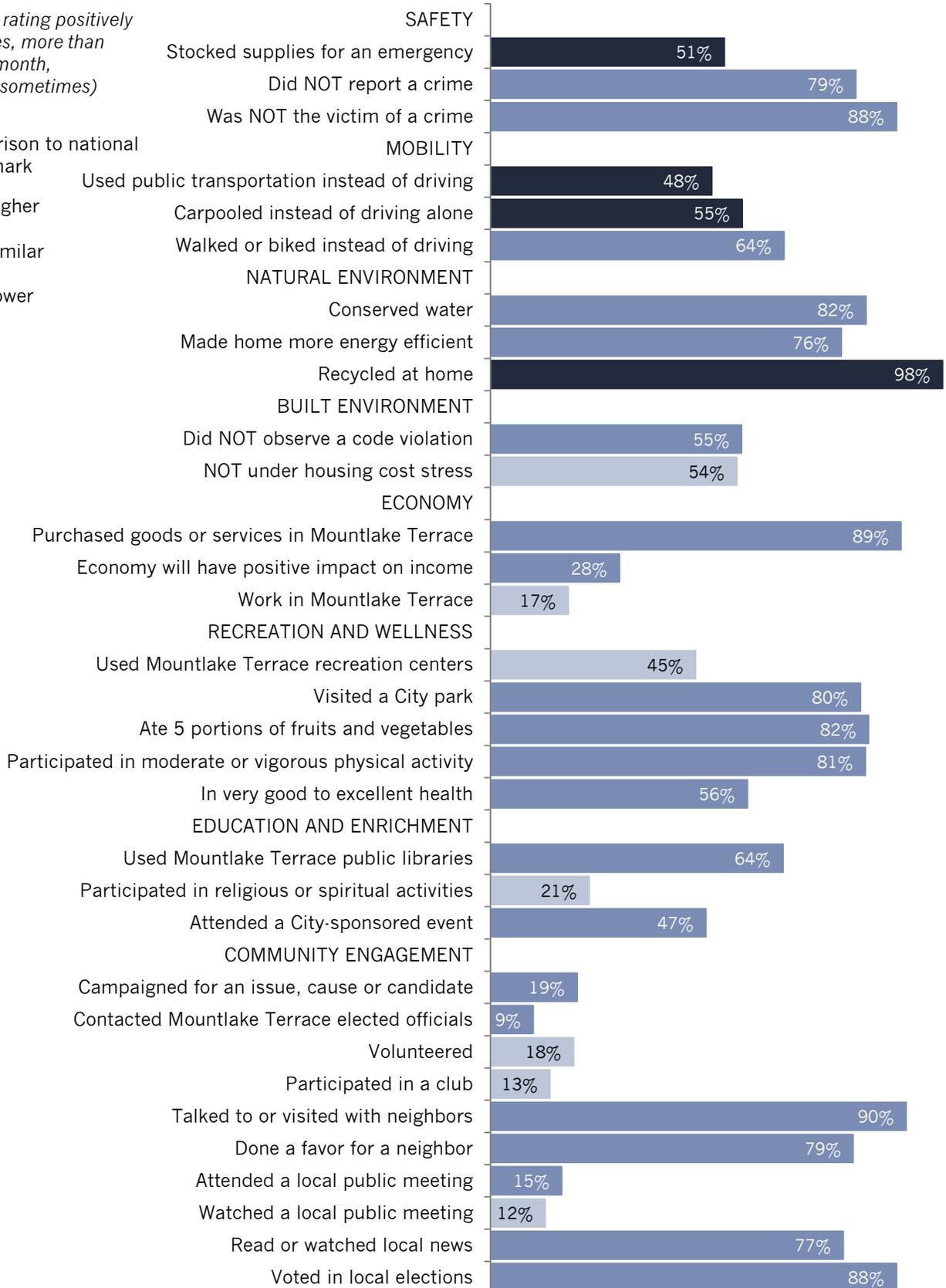
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

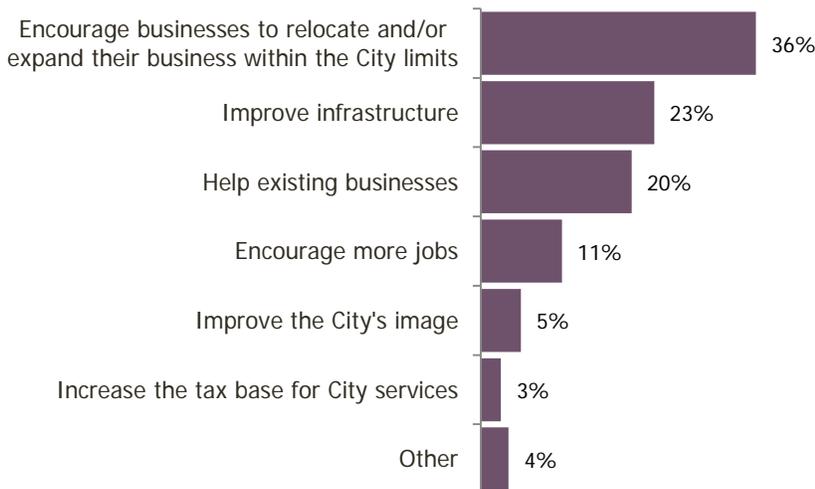


Special Topics

The City of Mountlake Terrace included two questions of special interest on The NCS, both related to economic development. The first question asked residents to indicate what they felt the City's number one priority should be for economic development. About one-third of community members felt encouraging businesses to relocate and/or expand their business within the City limits should be the highest priority, while about 2 in 10 felt helping existing businesses and improving infrastructure should be the highest priority. Around 1 in 10 or fewer residents indicated that encouraging more jobs, improving the City's image, and increasing the tax base for City services and were their top preferences for economic development strategies.

Figure 4: Economic Development Priorities

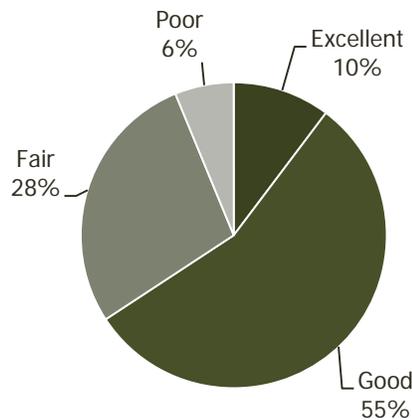
Economic Development involves creating and/or retaining jobs, services and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base. What one of the following should be the City's number one highest Economic Development priority?



The second economic development question asked residents to assess the job the City has done at being proactive about economic development. About two-thirds of respondents felt the City was doing an excellent or good job; less than 1 in 10 gave the City a poor rating in this area.

Figure 5: Job City Does at Being Proactive about Economic Development

Please rate the job the City has done at being proactive about Economic Development.



Conclusions

Natural Environment is a priority that residents want to protect.

Residents indicated that the Natural Environment is a resource they would like to protect, with about 8 in 10 indicating this should be a focus area for the City in the next two years. Around three-quarters or more of community members assigned positive ratings to the overall natural environment, cleanliness (a rating that increased since 2017), and air quality of Mountlake Terrace. Additionally, residents gave strong ratings to city services that relate to the natural environment: about 8 in 10 residents gave positive evaluations to garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick up, and drinking water. Assessments of yard waste pick-up and drinking water exceeded national averages. Respondents were engaged in behaviors that will protect the environment, such as conserving water, making their homes more energy efficient, and recycling at home, with at least 7 in 10 indicating they had participated. Further, Mountlake Terrace residents recycled at higher levels than those seen nationwide.

Motorized travel in Mountlake Terrace is a highlight.

Residents were pleased with characteristics related to Mobility, with 8 in 10 assigning positive evaluations to the overall ease of travel and at least two-thirds of offering positive ratings to all of the remaining characteristics, such as the availability of paths and walking trails, ease of walking, and public parking. Around 6 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good scores to the ease of travel by public transportation and traffic flow and three-quarters praised the ease of travel by car; all of these aspects were rated higher than the national averages. Bus or transit were also appreciated by residents, with 7 in 10 awarding top marks, which was rated higher than the national comparison. Mountlake Terrace community members also reported high levels of utilizing alternative transportation, with around half of respondents indicating they had used public transportation instead of driving and carpooled and these rates surpassed those reported elsewhere. In 2019, snow removal services lagged behind national averages and fewer residents felt positively about the ease of walking compared to 2017; therefore, these areas may need further attention in the future.

Economy ratings are improving, reflecting successes and challenges.

Residents continue to identify Economy as a priority for the City. Over half of residents rated the overall economic health of the community positively, which surpassed all previous survey iterations. This pattern was also true of economic development services and when asked to assess the job the City has done at being proactive about economic development, over half of respondents rated the City's job as excellent or good. Other improvements since 2017 included residents' sentiment regarding the vibrant downtown/commercial area, the city place to work, and the overall quality of business and service establishments. Conversely, assessments for several aspects were lower than national averages and could benefit from improvement, including the vibrant downtown/commercial area, shopping opportunities, employment opportunities, Mountlake Terrace as a place to visit, and as a place to work. Residents also gave lower scores to cost of living and the availability of affordable quality housing in 2019 than in 2017 and more respondents reported being under housing cost stress than their counterparts nationwide. Looking at possible avenues for improving the economic development of the City, about one-third of residents felt encouraging businesses to relocate and/or expand their business within the City limits should be the number one priority for Mountlake Terrace, while about 2 in 10 indicated that helping existing businesses and improving infrastructure should be the highest priority.

Government performance ratings are on the rise.

In 2019, around 6 in 10 residents expressed appreciation for the overall direction the City of Mountlake Terrace is taking, the value of services for taxes paid, the City welcoming resident involvement, confidence in leadership, and the City acting in the best interest of the community. Moreover, about three-quarters of respondents valued the government's ability to be honest and treat all residents fairly, and gave top marks to the customer services provided by City employees. Residents' reviews for all measures of Mountlake Terrace's government performance improved from 2017 to 2019 and ratings for the government treating all residents fairly exceeded national averages.