



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

www.washoecounty.us

CM/ACM	<u>x</u>
Finance	<u>n/a</u>
DA	<u>x</u>
Risk Mgt	<u>n/a</u>
HR	<u>n/a</u>
Other	<u> </u>

STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: March 28, 2017

DATE: Monday, March 20, 2017

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Mark Mathers, Budget Manager
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THROUGH: Christine Vuletich, Assistant County Manager
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SUBJECT: Accept presentation on the 2016 Washoe County Citizen Survey. [No impact]. (All Commission Districts)

SUMMARY

During the FY17 budget process, the Board of County Commissioners directed staff to contract for a statistically valid citizen survey of Washoe County residents. Washoe County contracted with the National Research Center, which works with ICMA, to conduct this survey. The results of this survey are now available to share.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Stewardship of our Community

PREVIOUS ACTION

April 26, 2016 – The Board of County Commissioners (BCC) directed staff to contract for a statistically valid citizen survey of Washoe County residents. The purpose of the study was to query residents about their perceptions of County services, the relative importance of strategic planning areas and major functional areas of the County.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to direction from the BCC during the FY17 budget process, staff from the Manager's Office reviewed citizen surveys conducted for other governmental agencies and the companies that prepared those surveys in order to engage a firm to conduct a statistically valid citizen survey of Washoe County residents. The Manager's Office selected the National Research Center (NRC), which had conducted a survey for Washoe County in 2006. The firm has over 20 years' experience conducting survey research for local governments and has a long-term partnership with the International City Managers Association (ICMA).

In order to have the timeliest information available for the FY18 budget and strategic planning processes and because of the presidential and local elections that dominated

news during the summer and fall, the survey was conducted from December 1, 2016 through January 12, 2017. A total of 1,500 households were randomly selected for a mail-in survey with the option for residents to complete the survey online. A stratified sampling methodology was used based on the number of households in incorporated and unincorporated areas. A response rate of 20% was achieved, which is fairly typical for other citizen surveys conducted by NRC. This results in a margin of error of +/- 6%.

The survey itself included standardized questions, which allows NRC to compare responses to the prior survey conducted for Washoe County in 2006 and to benchmark the County to peer groups. The County selected a peer group of medium-sized county governments in the US to benchmark itself to. These standardized questions covered residents' perceptions of County services, quality of life and aspects of participation with the County.

The survey also included five customized questions, written by County staff with NRC's assistance, which covered the County's strategic planning areas and other issues unique to Washoe County. The attached Community Livability Report provides responses to these standardized and customized questions. Also attached is a short presentation covering the major results of the survey, which County staff will present.

FISCAL IMPACT

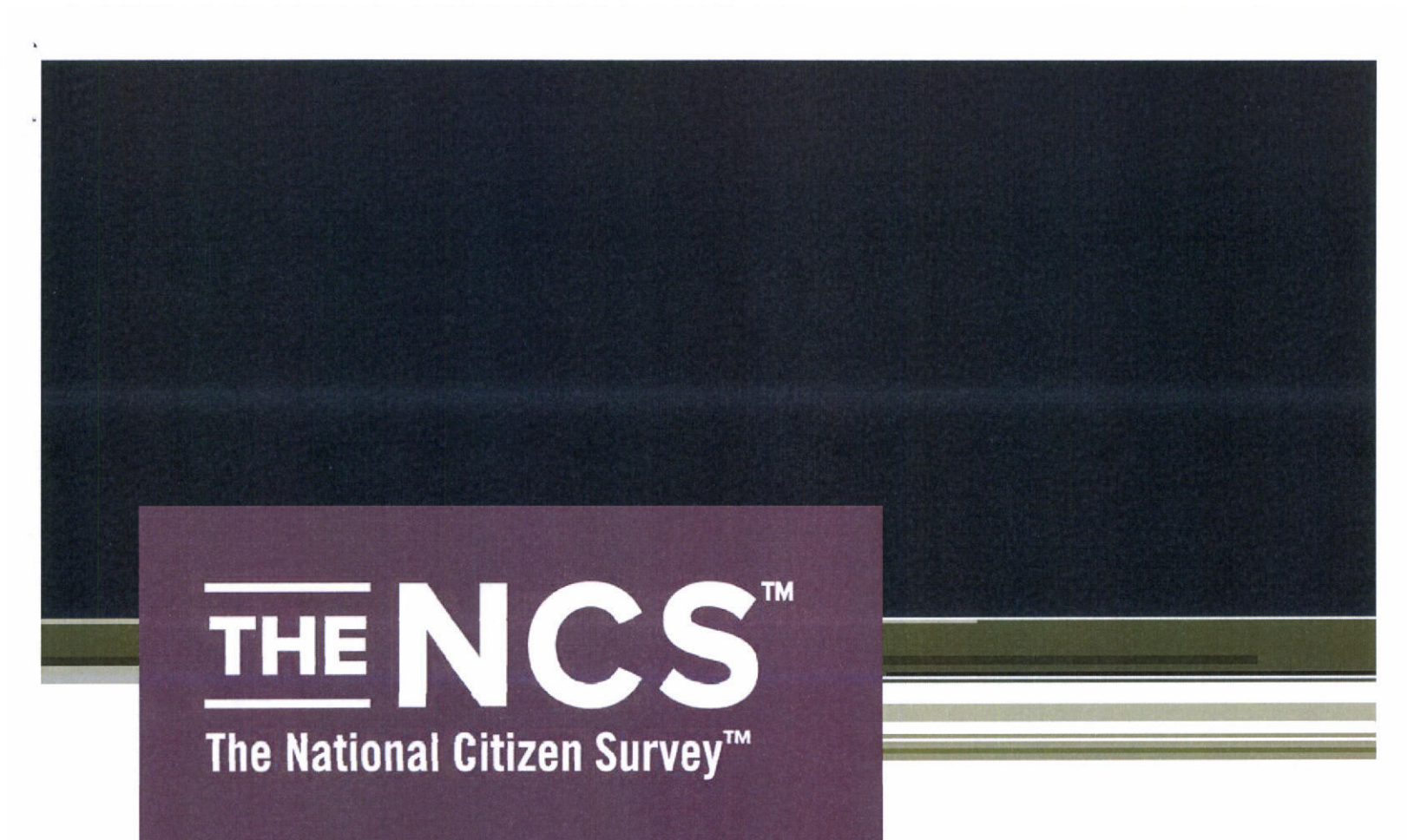
There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners accept the presentation on the 2016 Washoe County Citizen Survey

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendations, a possible motion would be: "Move to accept the presentation on the 2016 Washoe County Citizen Survey."



THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Washoe County, NV

Community Livability Report

2016



NRC
National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300
Boulder, Colorado 80301
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

ICMA

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

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The National Citizen Survey™
© 2001-2017 National Research Center, Inc.

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 Washoe County. 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).

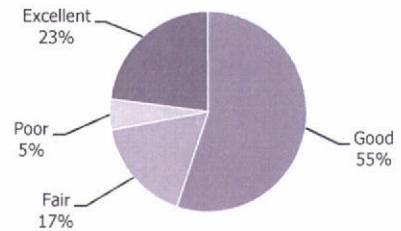
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 282 residents of Washoe County. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Washoe County

Nearly 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Washoe County as excellent or good. This is similar to the ratings given in communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Overall Quality of Life



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.

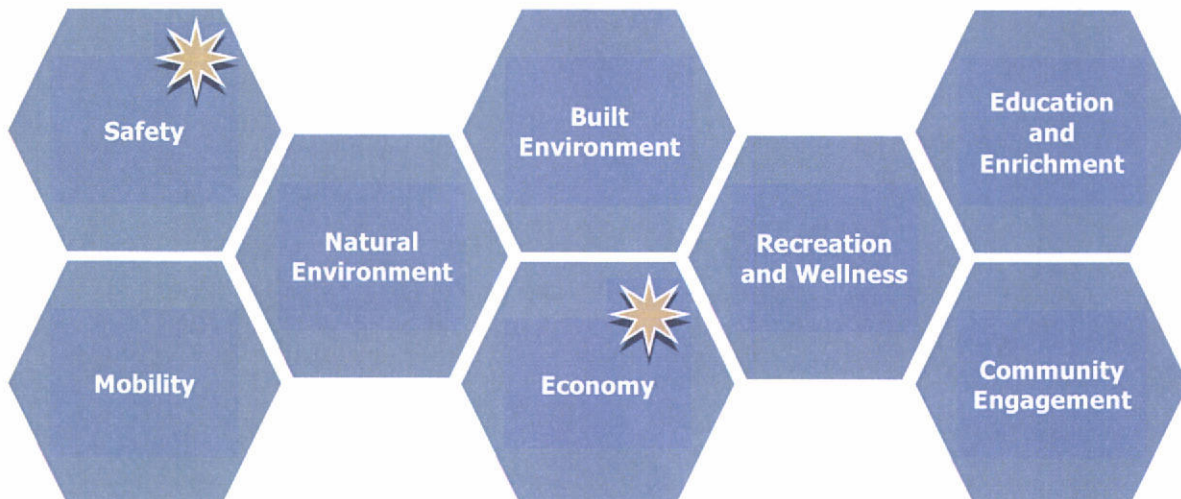
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Washoe County community in the coming two years. Washoe County residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community as well as to the remaining six facets: Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. 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 Washoe County’s unique questions.

Legend

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

★ Most important



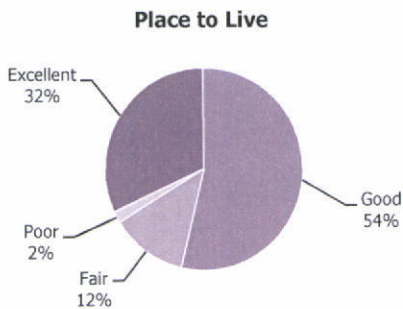
Community Characteristics

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 Washoe County, 86% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Washoe County as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the County as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Washoe County as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Washoe County and its overall appearance. Around four in five residents positively rated their neighborhood as a place to live and slightly fewer provided favorable ratings for Washoe County as a place to retire (both of which were similar to the national benchmark). Roughly two-thirds of residents rated Washoe County as a place to raise children as excellent or good and about half of respondents gave positive ratings for Washoe County's overall image and overall appearance.

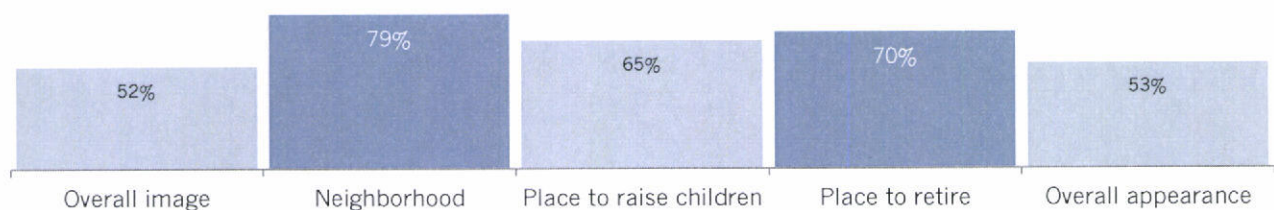
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. These ratings varied widely across all facets. Within the facet of Safety, around 9 in 10 residents positively rated their feeling of safety in their neighborhood, which was similar to the national benchmark. However, about three-quarters gave favorable ratings to their feeling of safety in Washoe County's commercial areas and fewer positively rated the overall feeling of safety in the County, both of which were lower in Washoe County than elsewhere. Around 7 in 10 awarded excellent or good ratings to the overall ease of travel in the County, while about half or fewer residents provided positive marks to the remaining aspects of Mobility. Additionally, fewer residents in Washoe County gave positive ratings to the ease of walking in the County than did residents in other comparison communities. Natural Environment received strong ratings for the quality of the overall natural environment and air quality, but less favorable ratings for cleanliness, which was rated as excellent or good by around half of residents. The quality of the overall built environment, new development in the County, housing options and public places where people spend their time received positive ratings that were similar to the benchmark, while ratings for the availability of affordable quality housing tended to lag behind other communities across the nation. Education and Enrichment tended to receive the most positive ratings of all the facets, with a majority appreciating the overall education and enrichment opportunities in the county and 8 in 10 awarding high marks for opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities, which was higher than the benchmark.



Comparing 2016's results to 2006, many measures trended upwards and no areas declined between survey iterations (see the *Trends Over Time Report* under separate cover for additional details).

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

Comparison to national benchmark
 ■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



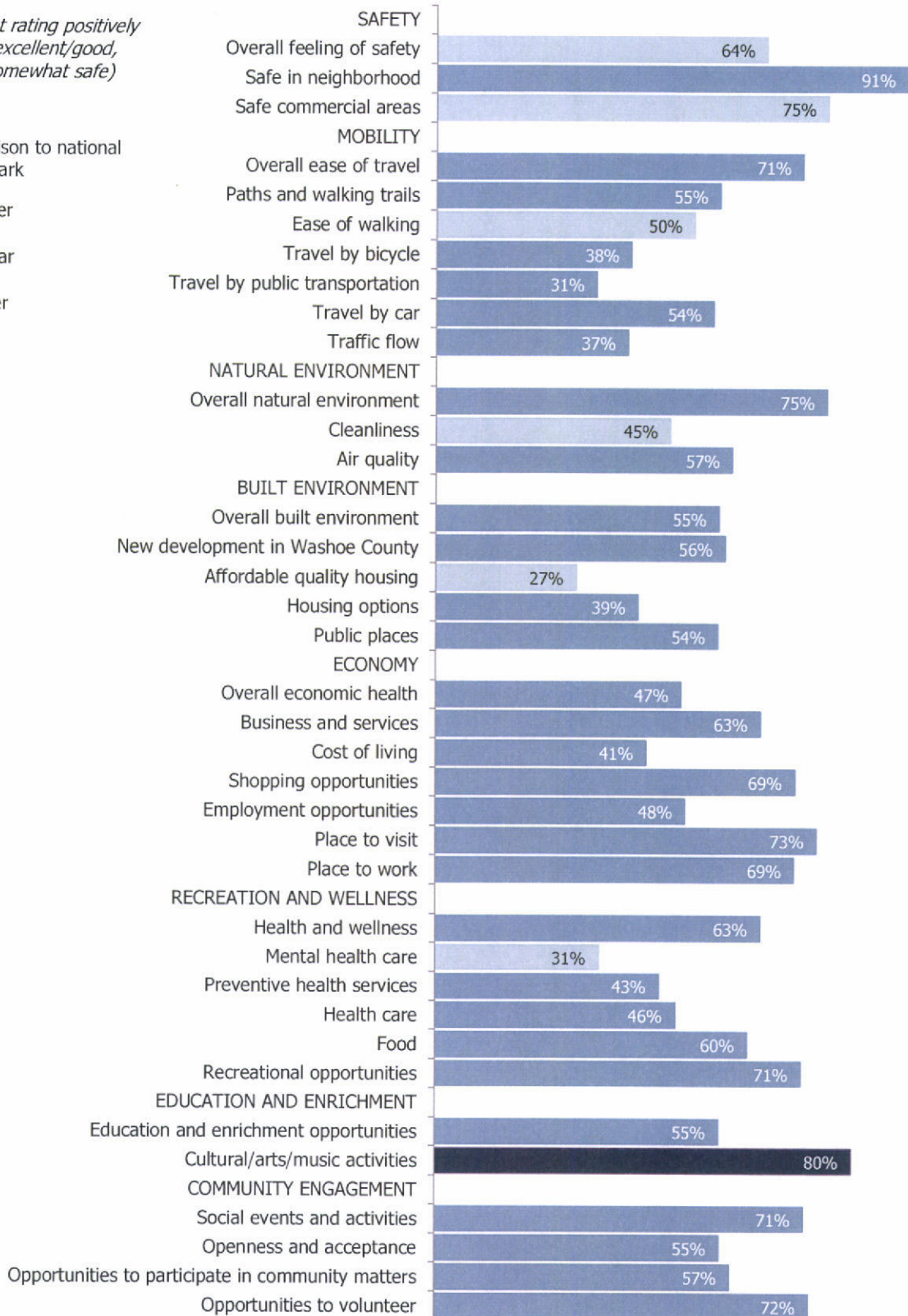
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



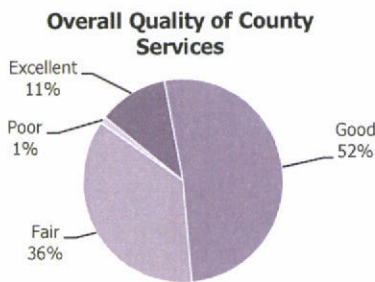
Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by Washoe County as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Around two-thirds of residents provided excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by Washoe County, which was similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Washoe County’s leadership and governance. These ratings were all similar to ratings seen in communities across the nation. Six in 10 respondents favorably rated the overall customer service provided by Washoe County employees while about half or fewer rated the remaining aspects of Washoe County’s governance as excellent or good.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Washoe County. In general, these ratings tended to be similar to the benchmark, though there were a few exceptions. Traffic enforcement and street repair ratings within Mobility generally lagged behind other communities in the nation. Additionally, code enforcement was rated positively by less than one-third of respondents and was lower than the benchmark. Washoe County services and amenities within Safety, Natural Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement tended to be rated positively by a majority of residents and were all similar to the national benchmark comparisons.

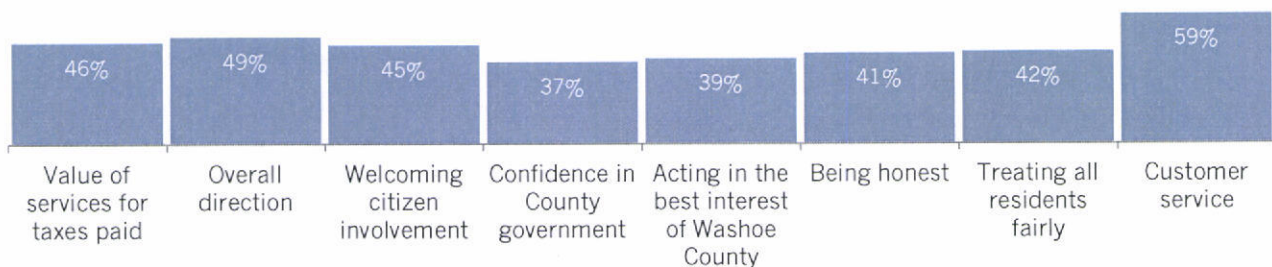


Trends for Washoe County services and amenities generally remained stable between 2006 and 2016, though there were some notable changes. Crime prevention, snow removal, storm drainage, utility billing and the overall direction the County is taking all improved in 2016 compared to 2006. Only two items declined during that time period: public libraries and the overall customer service by Washoe County employees.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



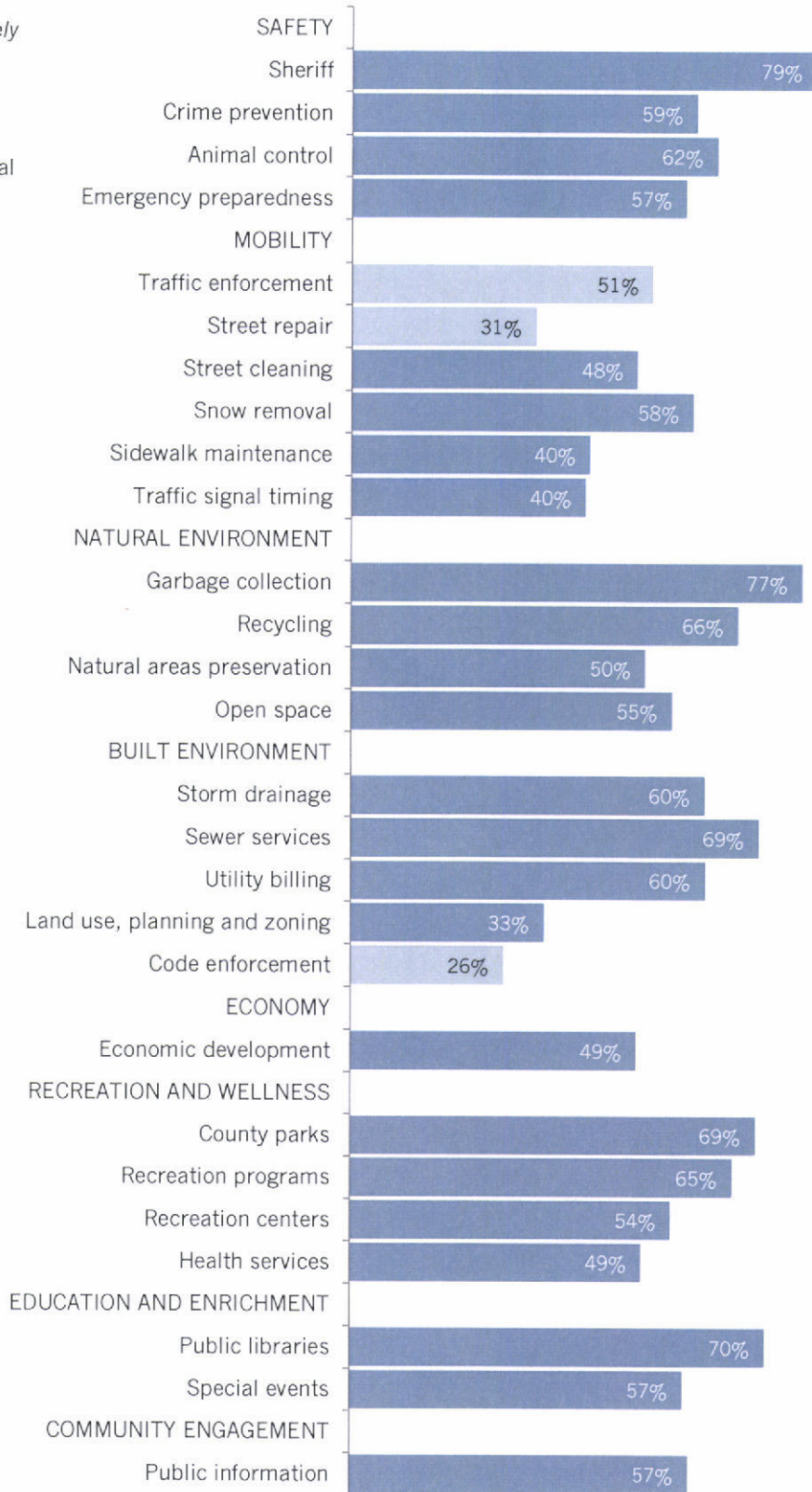
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Participation

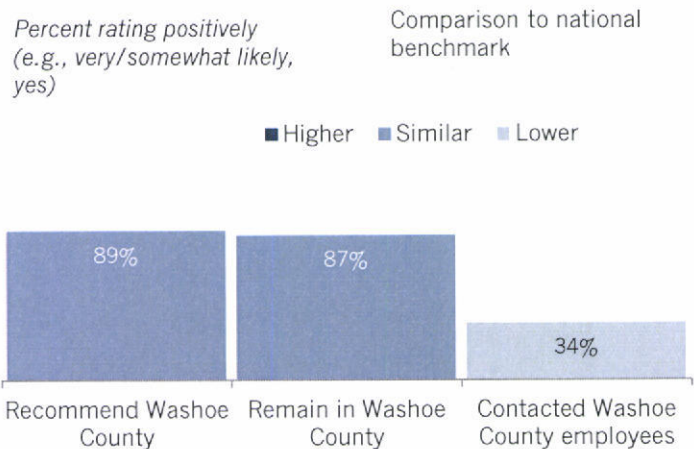
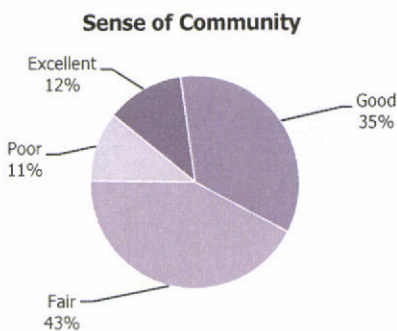
Are the residents of Washoe County connected to the community and each other?

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. Ratings for the sense of community in Washoe County were rated fair or higher by most residents. Nearly 9 in 10 residents reported that they were likely to recommend living in Washoe County and planned to remain in the County for the next five years. These levels were similar to what was seen in other communities and was stable between 2006 and 2016.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Washoe County residents reported mixed levels of engagement compared to comparison communities. Within the facet of Safety, fewer Washoe County respondents than elsewhere said they had reported a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. More Washoe County participants reported that they had observed a code violation compared to residents in other communities across the country. Washoe County residents were more likely to think that the economy would have a positive impact on their income and were more likely to work within the County boundaries compared to their nationwide counterparts; however, were less likely to report they attended a County-sponsored event than their peers.

In 2016, more County residents reported they were recycling at home and voting in local elections, and an increased number of respondents felt optimistic about the economy having a positive impact on their income.

Furthermore, fewer residents reported that they were victims of crime in 2016 than in 2006. However, fewer Washoe County residents reported using the recreation centers or public libraries, attending or watching a local public meeting or volunteering in 2016 compared to 2006.



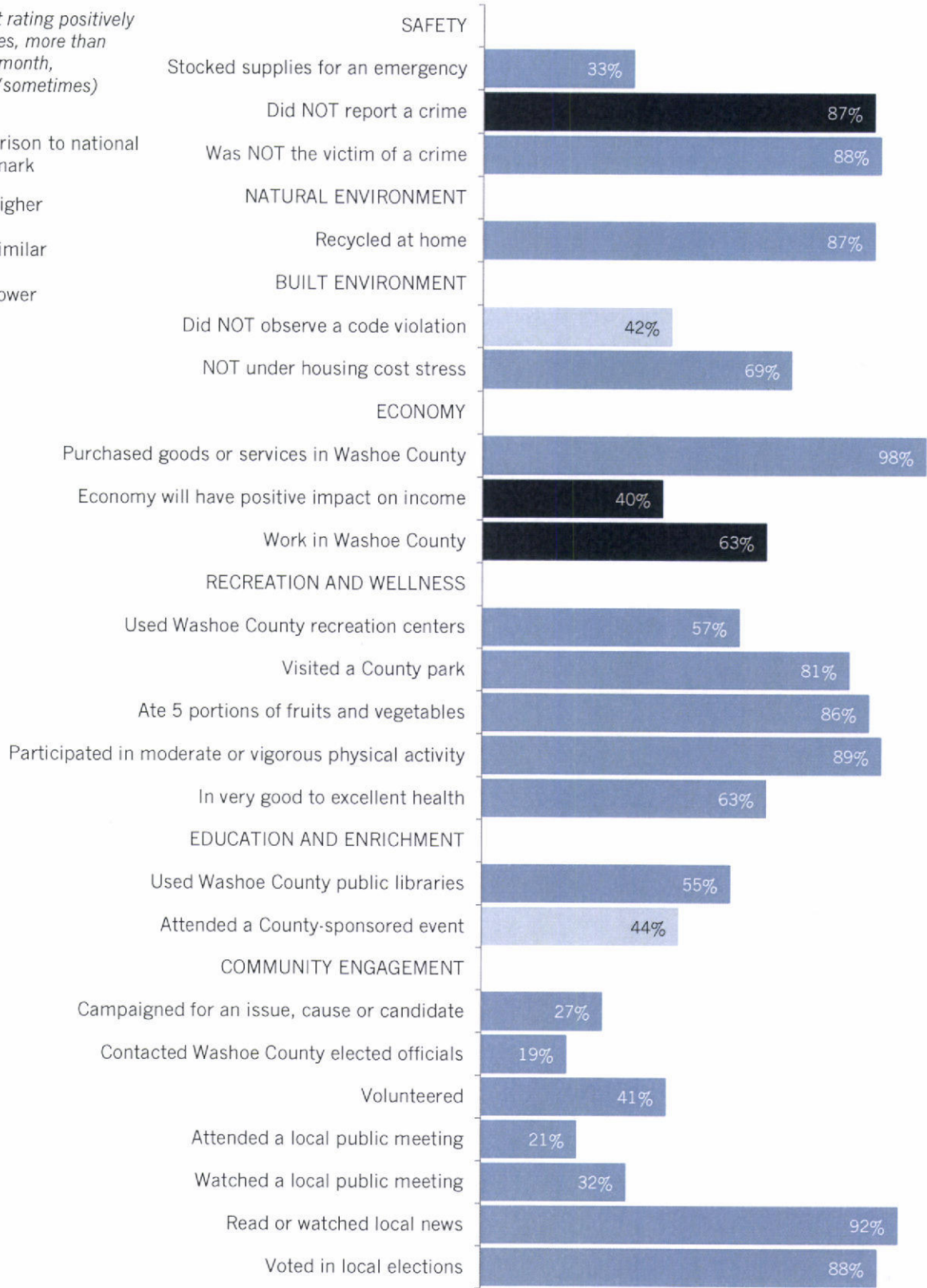
The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

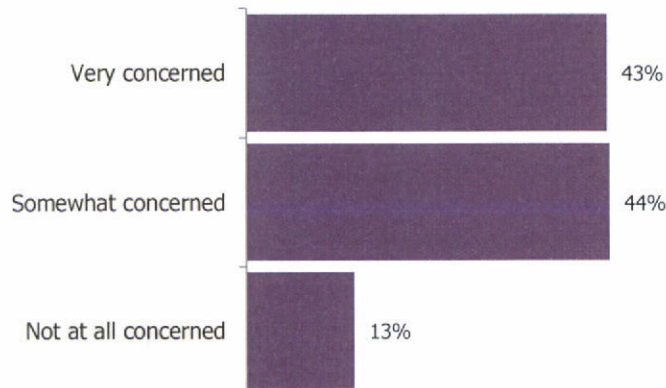
- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Special Topics

Washoe County included five questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents how concerned they were, if at all, that new development would have an impact on County services. Only around 1 in 10 residents reported they were not concerned at all, while almost 9 in 10 residents stated some level of concern for the impact development might have on County services.

Figure 4: Impact of New Development on County Services
How concerned are you, if at all, that new development will impact County services?

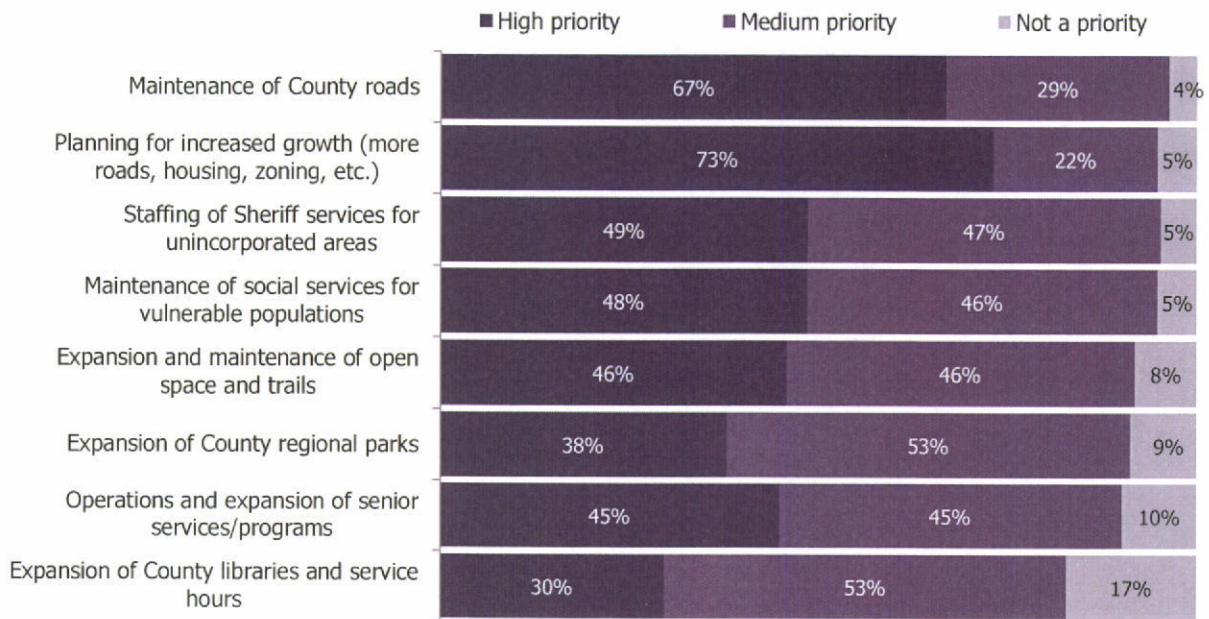


The National Citizen Survey™

The next custom question sought to understand how important certain issues and programs were for the County to focus on in the coming five years. Around 8 in 10 residents rated each of the issues or programs as at least a medium priority for the County to address. The top-most priority evaluated by respondents was the maintenance of County roads (96% medium or high priority), followed by planning for increased growth (95%), staffing of Sheriff services for unincorporated areas (95%) and maintenance of social services for vulnerable populations (95%).

Figure 5: Washoe County Priorities for Next 5 Years

Please indicate how important, if at all, each of the following issues and programs will be for Washoe County to address over the next five years:

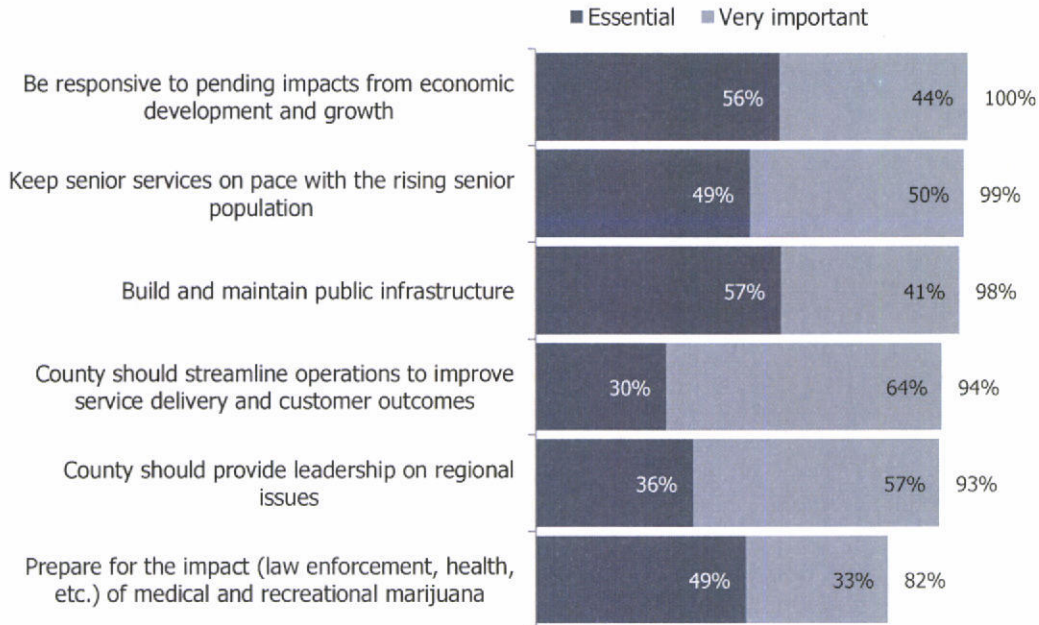


The National Citizen Survey™

Another special interest question asked residents to rate the importance of the various strategic planning areas to the overall quality of life in the County. Nearly all residents reported that responsiveness to pending impacts from economic growth, keeping senior services on pace with the rising senior population and building and maintaining infrastructure were at least very important to the overall quality of life in Washoe County.

Figure 6: Strategic Planning

Please rate how important, if at all, each of the following strategic planning areas are to the overall quality of life in the County:



The National Citizen Survey™

The last two special interest questions asked residents to what extent they would support or oppose expanding facilities for the senior population and the construction of new recreational and cultural facilities at the cost of an annual increase of \$60 to vehicle registration fees for a vehicle valued at \$20,000. Residents showed slightly higher levels of strong support for expanding the senior program and slightly less, strong opposition to this expansion, compared to the support and opposition of the construction of recreational and cultural facilities.

Figure 7: Support for Expanding Senior Program
The County is considering expanding facilities for the growing senior population in Washoe County. These programs and facilities may include expanded meals for homebound seniors and new senior centers. Would you support an expansion of the senior program if paying for it required a \$60 annual increase to vehicle registration fees for a vehicle valued at \$20,000?

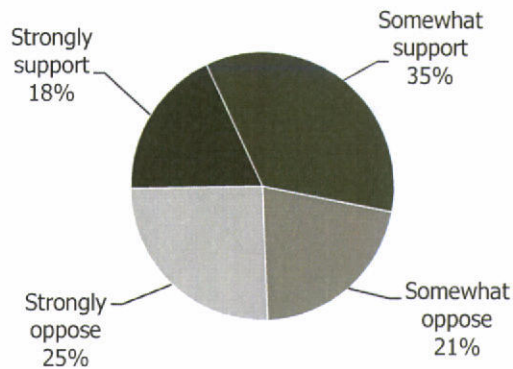
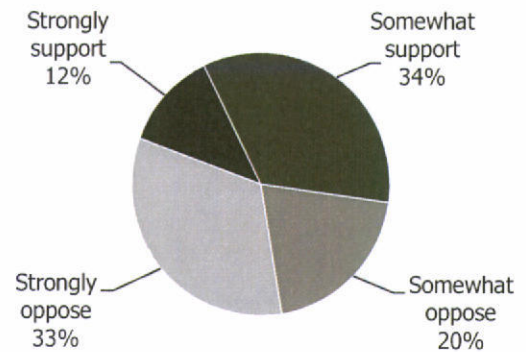


Figure 7: Support for New Recreational and Cultural Facilities
The County is also considering construction of new recreational and cultural facilities. These programs and facilities may include construction of a new North Valleys Library, expansion of South Valleys Sports Complex and expansion of Spanish Springs recreational facilities. Would you support construction of these facilities if paying for it required a \$60 annual increase to vehicle registration fees for a vehicle valued at \$20,000?



Conclusions

Washoe County residents continue to enjoy a good quality of life.

A vast majority of County residents reported that their overall quality of life was excellent or good. Nearly 9 in 10 residents rated the County as a place to live favorably. Additionally, around 8 in 10 viewed their neighborhood as a place to live positively and this rating increased between 2006 and 2016. Furthermore, resident loyalty was strong with most residents reporting that they were likely to recommend living in Washoe County and planned to remain there for the next five years.

Residents emphasize the importance of monitoring development.

Overall, the quality of new development in Washoe County received positive ratings from about half of residents, which was similar to what was seen in comparison communities. Washoe County asked several special interest questions involving development in the County. When asked about their level of concern about new development impacting County services, a vast majority of respondents indicated that they were at least somewhat concerned. Additionally, nearly all residents reported that planning for increased growth should be addressed as a top priority by the County in the next five years. Furthermore, all residents expressed that the County's responsiveness to pending impacts from economic development and growth was at least very important to quality of life in Washoe County.

Residents provide a great amount of insight as to the priorities for Washoe County.

Washoe County residents identified two areas of priority for the coming two years; Safety and Economy. Roughly two-thirds felt the overall feeling of Safety in Washoe County was excellent or good, three-quarters reported feeling safe in commercial areas and roughly 9 in 10 reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods. The overall economic health received positive ratings by slightly fewer residents as did the overall economic development in Washoe County.

When considering a slightly longer horizon of five years, roughly two-thirds of respondents or more rated planning for increased growth and maintenance of county roads as high priority. It is interesting to note, however, that staffing of Sheriff services for unincorporated areas and maintenance of social services were also considered high priority by around half of respondents. Only 5% of respondents did not consider each of these four issues or programs as at least a medium priority for the County to address in the next five years.

THE NCS™
The National Citizen Survey™

Washoe County, NV

Key Findings 2017

The NCS is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA

NRC
National Rural & County Association

ICMA
Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

The NCS & Washoe County

- Participant in The NCS since 2006
 - 2006, 2016
- Scientific sample of 1,442 households (58 households had no forwarding address)
 - 282 returned surveys; 20% response rate
 - ±6% margin of error

Online option

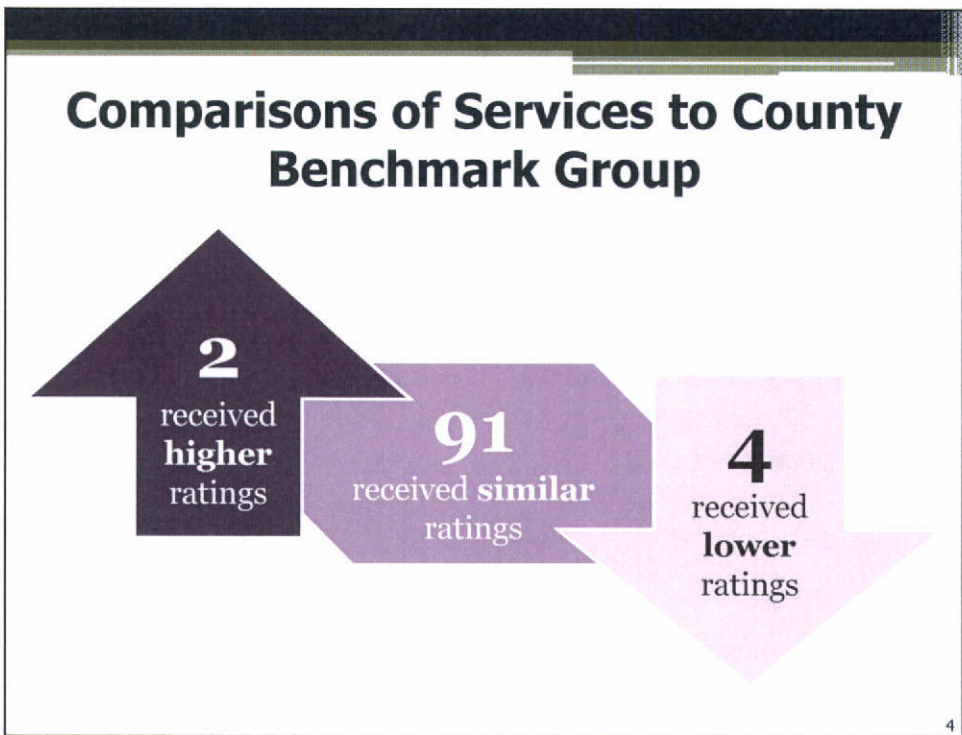
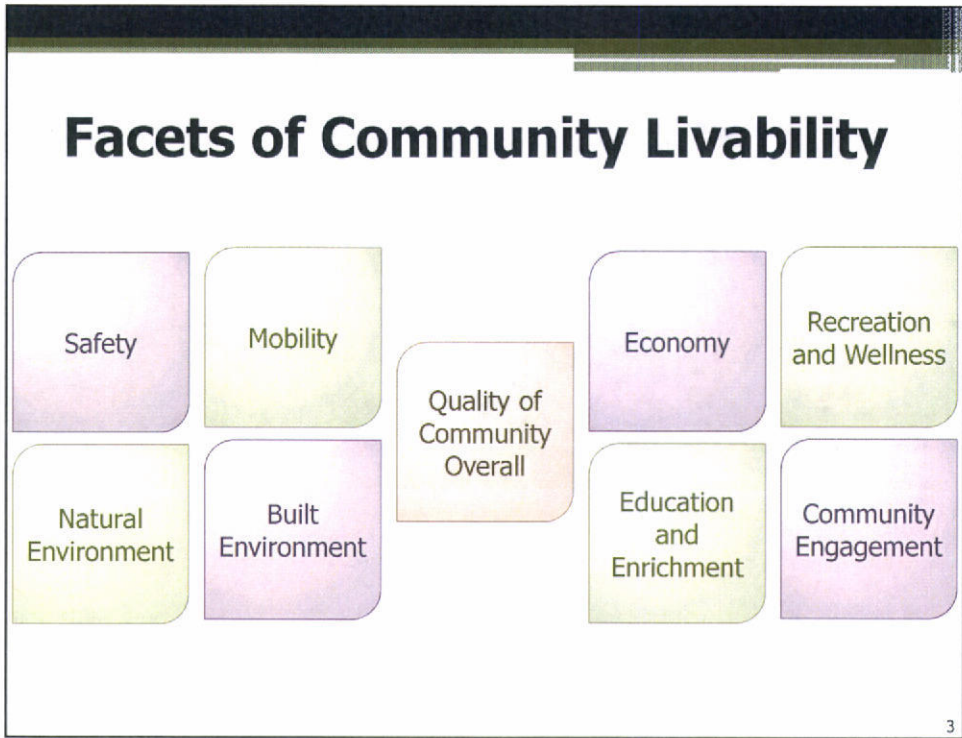
Spanish

Geographic comparisons

Demographic comparisons

Custom benchmarks

2



National County Benchmark Group

• Arapahoe County, CO	572,003	• Macomb County, MI	840,978
• Chesterfield County, VA	316,236	• New Hanover County, NC	202,667
• Clackamas County, OR	375,992	• Pasco County, FL	464,697
• Dakota County, MN	398,552	• Polk County, IA	430,640
• Douglas County, CO	285,465	• Prince William County, VA	402,002
• Durham County, NC	267,587	• Sarasota County, FL	379,448
• Escambia County, FL	297,619	• St. Louis County, MN	200,226
• Guilford County, NC	488,406	• Washington County, MN	238,136
• Horry County, SC	269,291		
• Jefferson Parish, LA	432,552		
• Lane County, OR	351,715		
• Larimer County, CO	299,630		

5

Key
Finding
#1

**Washoe County
residents continue
to enjoy a good
quality of life.**

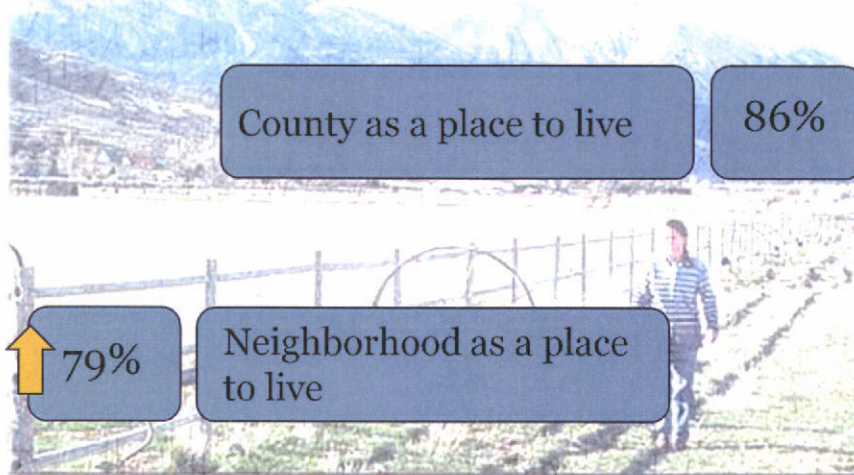
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Overall Quality of Life



7

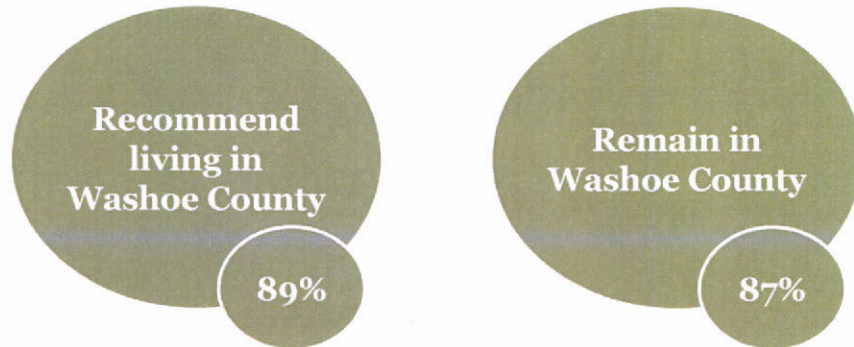
Aspects of Quality of Life



↑ Increase from 2006

8

Resident Loyalty

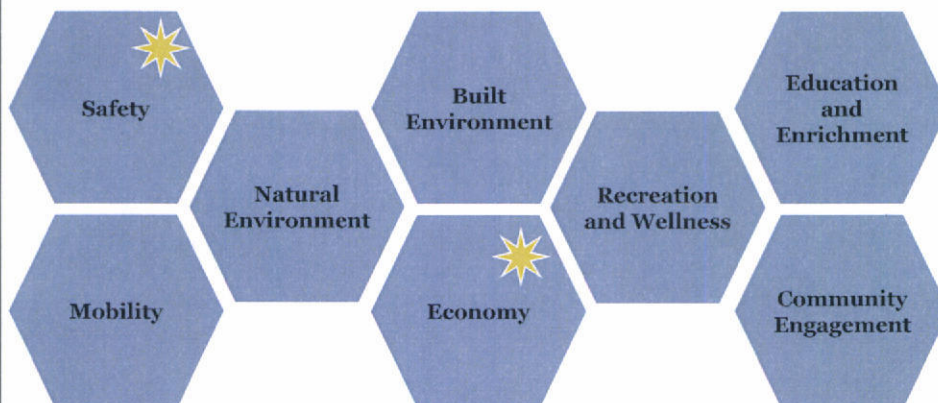


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Key Focus Areas

Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark
- ★ Most important



10

Key
Finding
#2

Residents emphasize the importance of monitoring development.

11

Development a Concern and Priority

87%
*Somewhat or very
concerned*

How concerned are you, if at all, that
new development will impact County
services?



Planning for increased growth
important for Washoe County to
address over the next five years:

95%
*High or medium
priority*

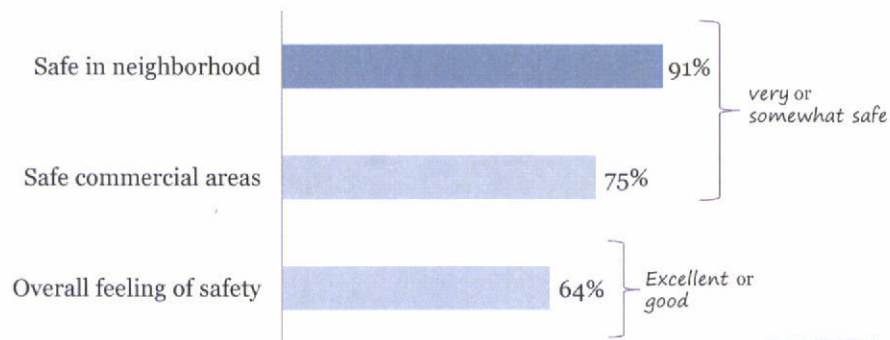
12

Key Finding #3

Residents provide insight as to the priorities for Washoe County.

13

Safety a priority



Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower




14

Economy a priority

40% 

Believe *economy* will have
positive impact on their
income.

 Higher than national benchmark



5 in 10

excellent or good

Overall economic health

Quality of economic
development

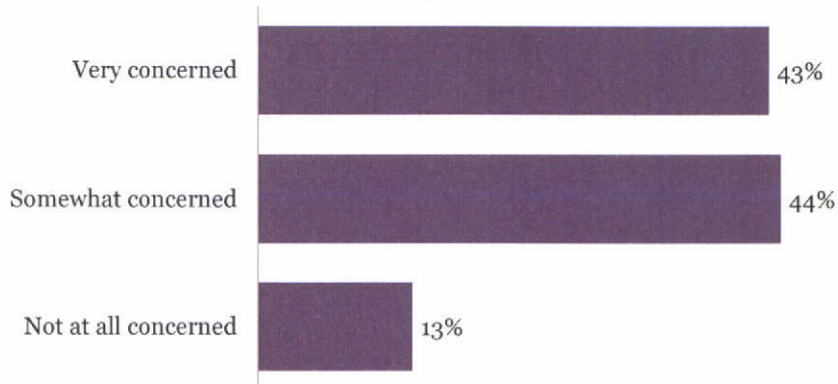
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Special Topics

16

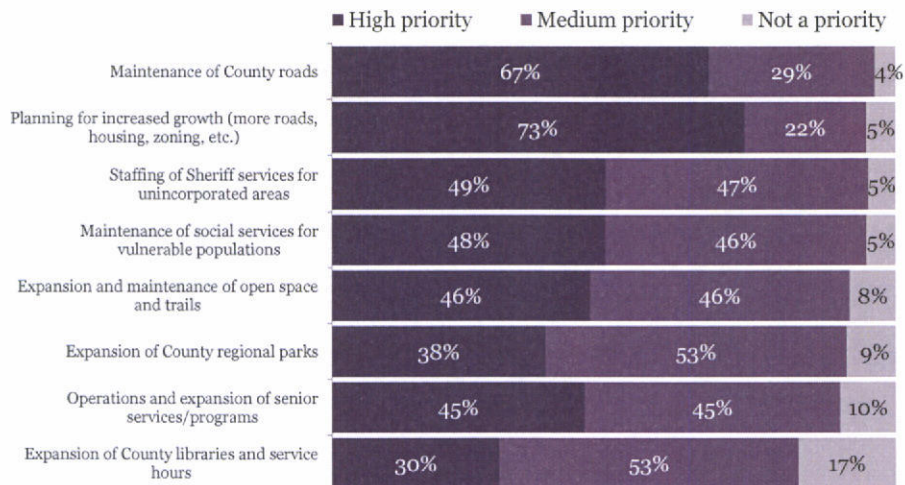
Impact of New Development on County Services

How concerned are you, if at all, that new development will impact County services?



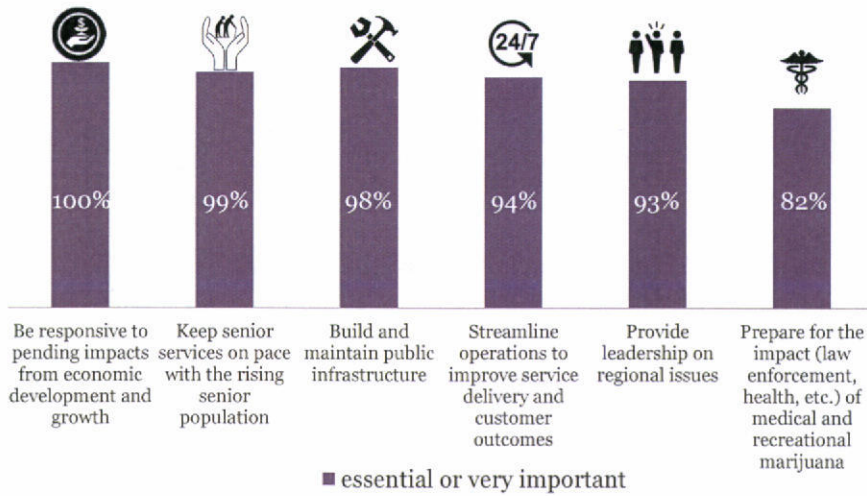
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Washoe County Priorities for Next 5 Years



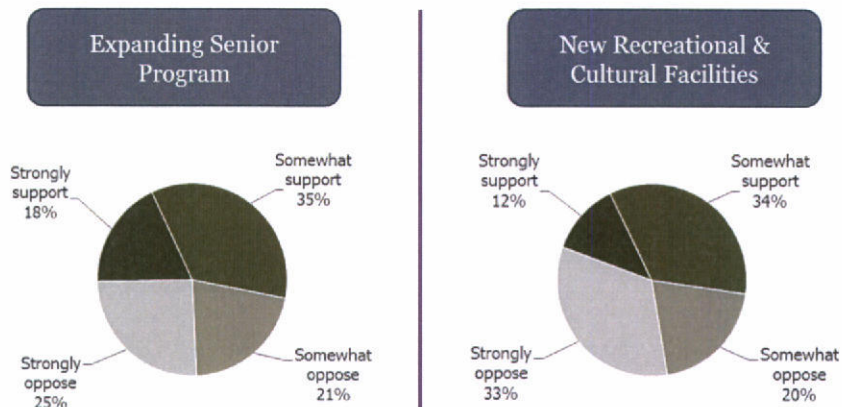
18

Strategic Planning



19

Support for Increased Vehicle Registration Fees



20

Conclusions

Washoe County
Residents *continue*
to enjoy a good
quality of life

Residents provide
insight as to the
priorities for
Washoe County

Residents emphasize
the *importance* of
monitoring
development