



**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Citizen Survey<sup>TM</sup>

## Davidson, NC

Community Livability Report

2017



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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).

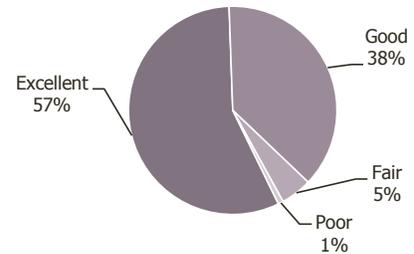
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 565 residents of the Town of Davidson. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Davidson

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Davidson as excellent or good. This rating was higher than ratings seen in other jurisdictions across the country (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.

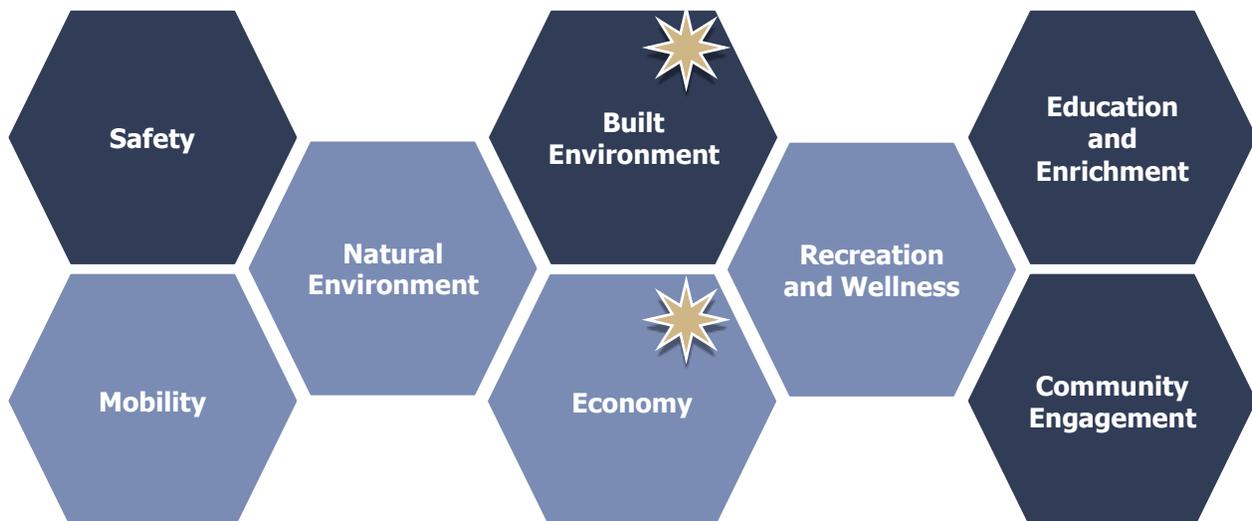
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. In question 13 of the survey, residents were asked to identify which of these facets were most important for the Davidson community to focus on in the coming years. Residents identified Built Environment and Economy as priorities for the Davidson community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Davidson residents gave strong ratings that were higher than the national benchmark to Built Environment as well as to Safety, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings for Mobility, Natural Environment, Economy and Recreation and Wellness were positive and 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 Davidson’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

- Most important



# Community Characteristics

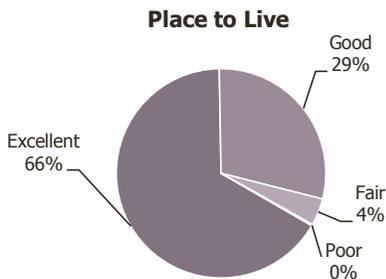
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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, 96% 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. A strong majority of residents rated each of these aspects of the community favorably and all aspects were higher than the national benchmark comparisons.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings within Community Characteristics varied across the different facets, but tended to be similar to or higher than the national benchmark comparisons. Almost all residents felt safe within the community and they showed a similar appreciation for aspects of the community's Natural Environment. Ratings within Mobility were mixed: elements related to motorized transportation (travel by car and public transit, parking and traffic flow) tended to be viewed less favorably than alternative modes (walking, biking and paths and walking trails). Additionally, ratings for seven Mobility characteristics declined from 2014 to 2017 (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under a separate cover for more detail). Residents' ratings of the Built Environment of Davidson were similar to ratings in other communities across the U.S., and respondents often viewed aspects of the Economy more favorably than their counterparts in other communities. However, when compared to results in 2014, ratings for Built Environment tended to decline while ratings for Economy remained stable. Most aspects of Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement received

positive assessments from about four in five survey respondents, resulting in many items being higher than the national benchmark comparisons.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



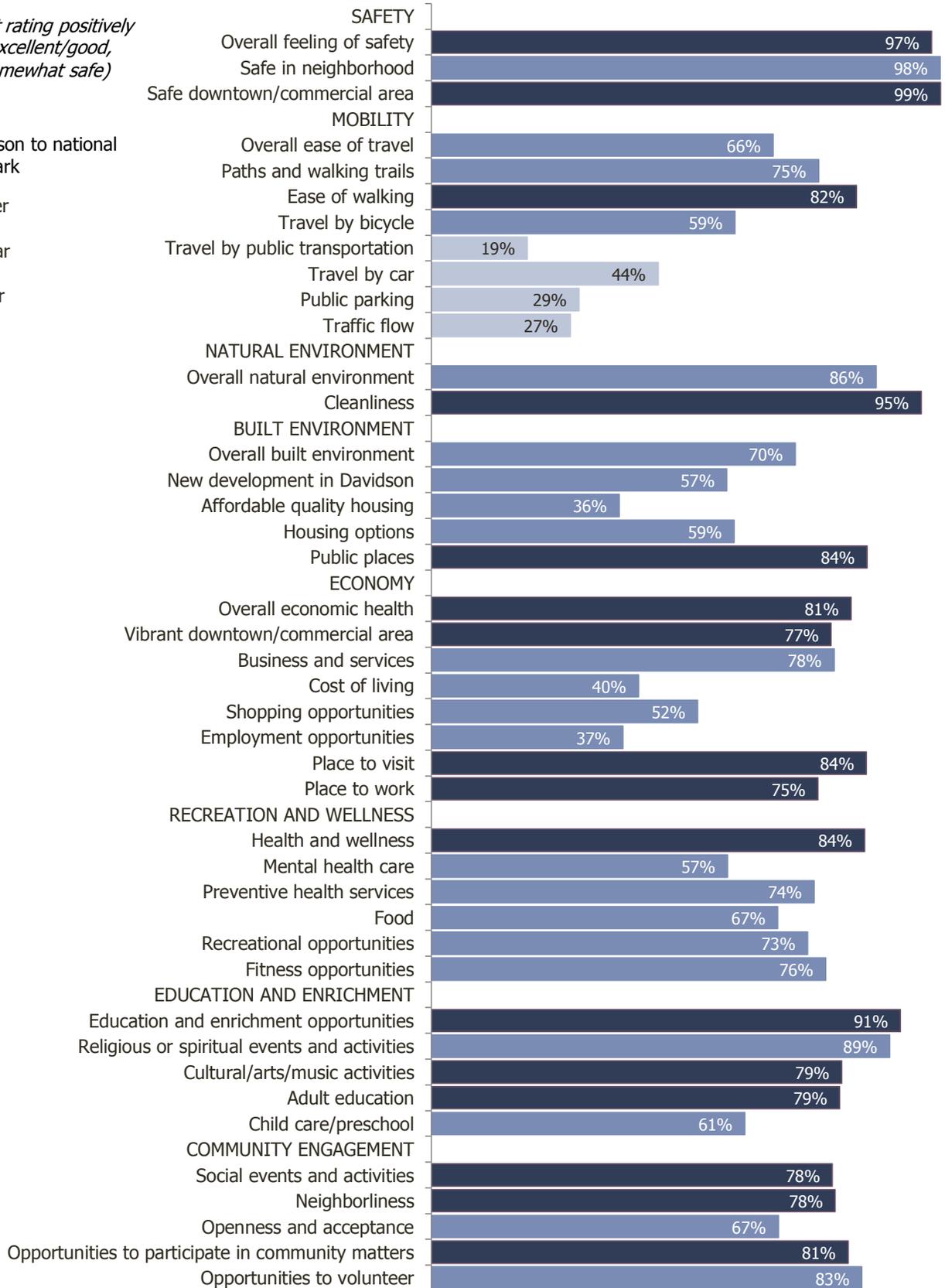
# The National Citizen Survey™

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 Davidson meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

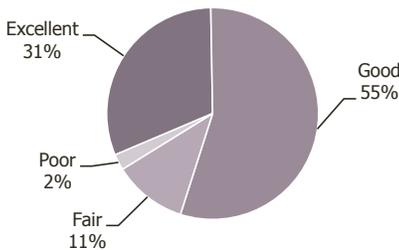
The overall quality of the services provided by Davidson as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. More than 8 in 10 respondents (86%) positively rated the overall quality of services provided by the Town of Davidson; in comparison, about 4 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Ratings for both of these measures were similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Davidson’s leadership and governance. Strengths of the Town included its customer service and welcoming citizen involvement; both received marks higher than the national benchmarks. Between a half and two-thirds of residents rated all other aspects of the Town’s leadership and governance positively. Despite these strong ratings, several aspects of Davidson’s leadership and governance declined from 2014 to 2017.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Davidson. Residents’ ratings of Davidson’s services and amenities tended to be similar to those seen in other jurisdictions across the country; however, there were a few noteworthy exceptions. Safety-related services received excellent or good ratings from at least 6 in 10 participants, and most services received ratings higher than those reported in comparison communities. Within Built Environment, storm drainage and code enforcement emerged as stand-out services; special events within Education and Enrichment also received exceptionally high ratings. Other top-rated services in Davidson included garbage collection, recycling, Town parks and recreation programs; at least 8 in 10 residents positively rated these services and amenities, and these ratings were similar to the national comparisons.

Ratings increased from 2014 to 2017 for fire services, snow removal and storm drainage, and decreased for seven services, including emergency preparedness; land use, planning and zoning; and Davidson open space.

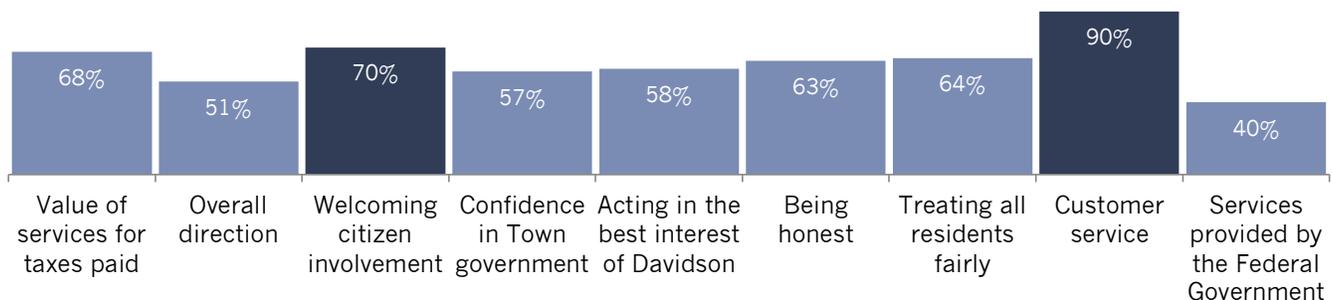
**Overall Quality of Town Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



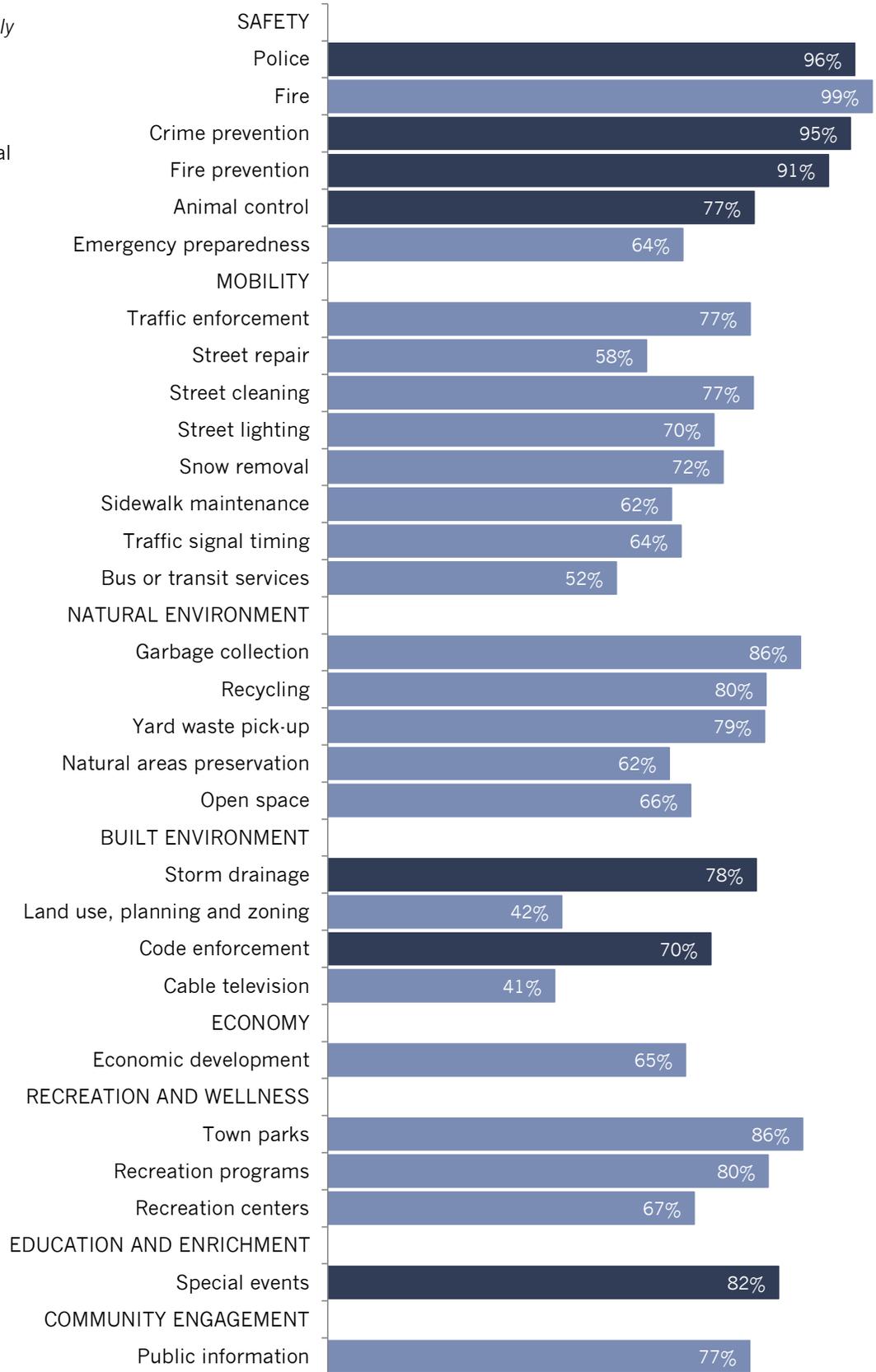
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



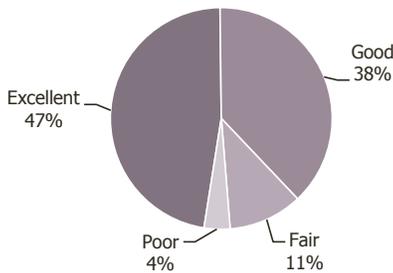
# Participation

*Are the residents of 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. More than 8 in 10 respondents awarded excellent or good ratings to the overall sense of community in Davidson, which was higher than ratings seen in other jurisdictions across the nation. About 9 in 10 residents would recommend living in Davidson to someone who asked and slightly fewer (85%) planned to remain in Davidson for the coming five years; both of these rates were similar to the national benchmark comparisons.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Residents' reported levels of Participation varied across the different facets, and were generally similar to or higher than the national comparisons. Overall, Davidson is a highly engaged community. While the proportions of residents participating in each activity within Community Engagement varied greatly, the relative levels of participation tended to be higher than those reported in other communities nationwide. Within Safety, about 9 in 10 residents did not report a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey, which was higher than rates seen in other communities. Levels of Participation within Mobility varied widely; while about 7 in 10 residents revealed they had walked or biked instead of driving (a rate that was higher than the benchmark), only around 1 in 10 had used public transportation instead of driving (which was lower than the benchmark). Within Built Environment few residents had observed a code violation and most were not experiencing housing cost stress. Almost all respondents had purchased goods or services in Davidson, and the proportion of Davidson residents who were optimistic that the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the coming six months was higher than the national benchmark.

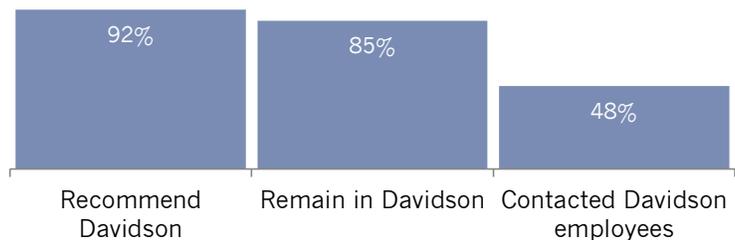
**Sense of Community**



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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



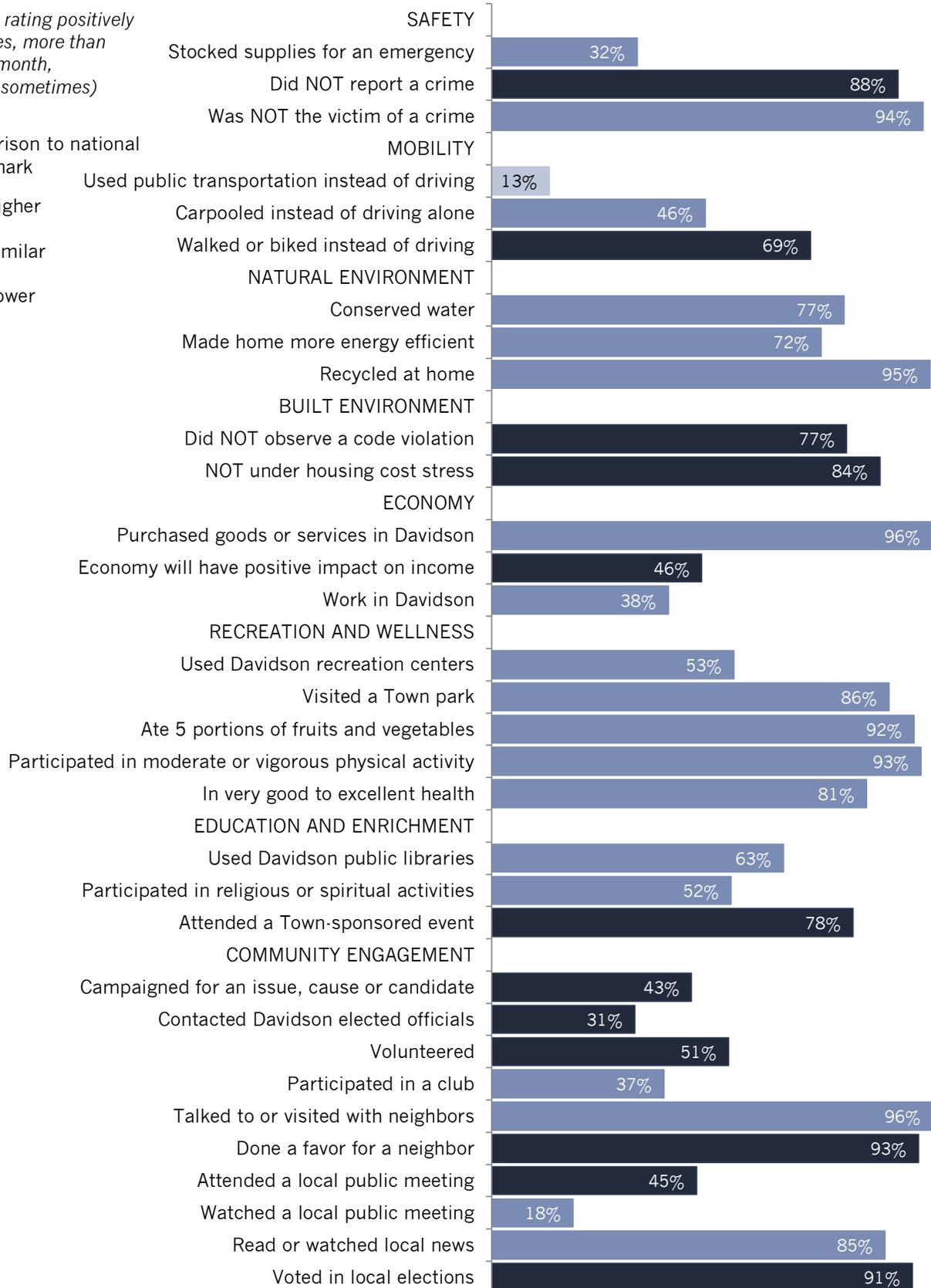
## The National Citizen Survey™

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

The Town of Davidson included four questions of special interest on The NCS. These questions explored aspects of affordable housing, facility and program improvements and transportation.

The first special interest question asked residents about their support for various measures that would increase the supply of affordable housing in Davidson. Around 6 in 10 residents indicated support for requiring a fee from developers that the Town would use to provide affordable housing, and a similar proportion would support allocating funds from the Town budget without a tax increase. Residents were evenly split on a proposed property tax increase that would support affordable housing: about half indicated that they would somewhat or strongly support this increase in property taxes, and about half would oppose this tax (with about one-third in strong opposition to this option). A majority of respondents (58%) were somewhat or strongly opposed to the Town providing incentives to developers.

Figure 4: Support for Affordable Housing Measures

*To what extent would you support or oppose the following measures to increase the supply of affordable (not subsidized) housing in Davidson:*

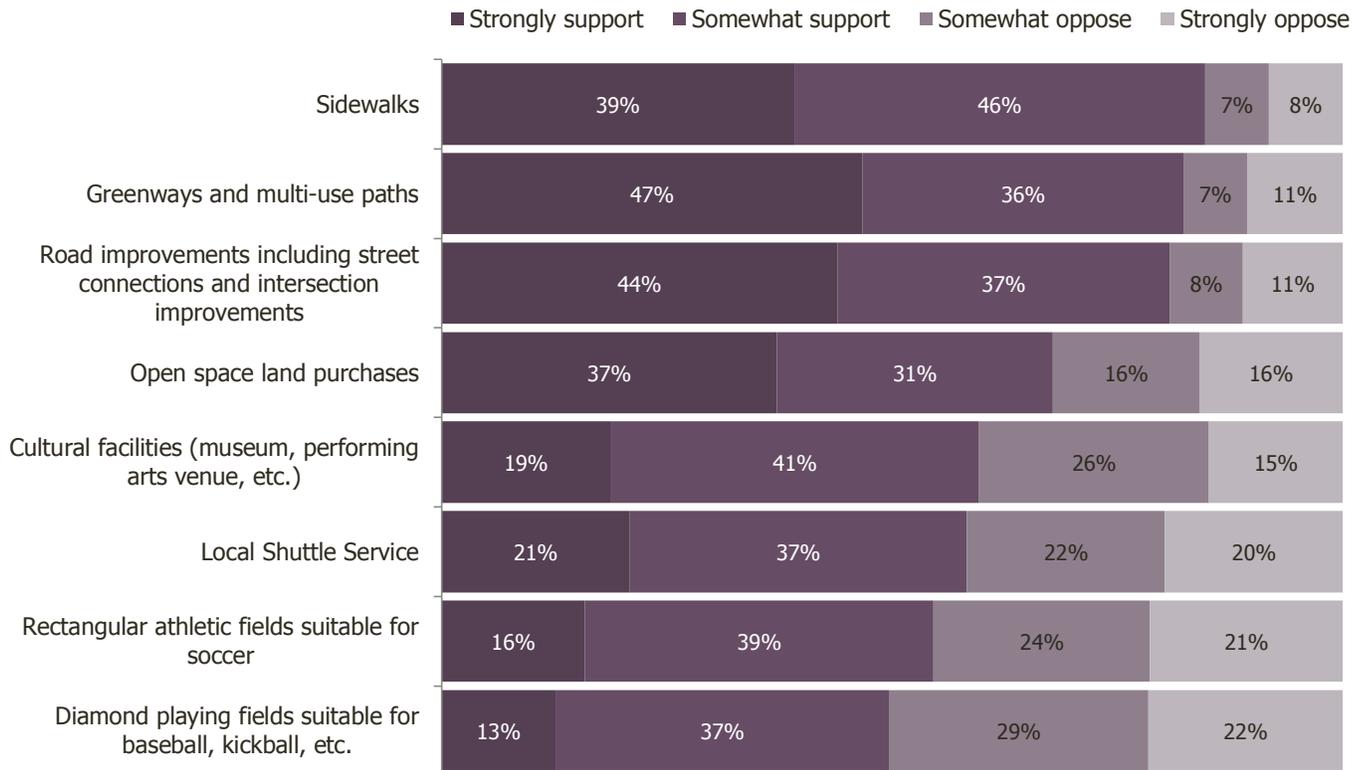


## The National Citizen Survey™

The second special interest question asked residents to what extent they would support or oppose using a property tax increase to finance improvements to various Town facilities, programs and infrastructure. Overall, residents tended to favor options that would increase mobility in the form of sidewalks, paths and road improvements. Only about half of respondents indicated support for a tax increase to support rectangular athletic fields suitable for soccer and diamond playing fields suitable for baseball and kickball.

Figure 5: Support for a Property Tax Increases for Facility and Program Improvements

*To what extent would you support or oppose using a property tax increase to finance improvements to the following facilities and programs:*

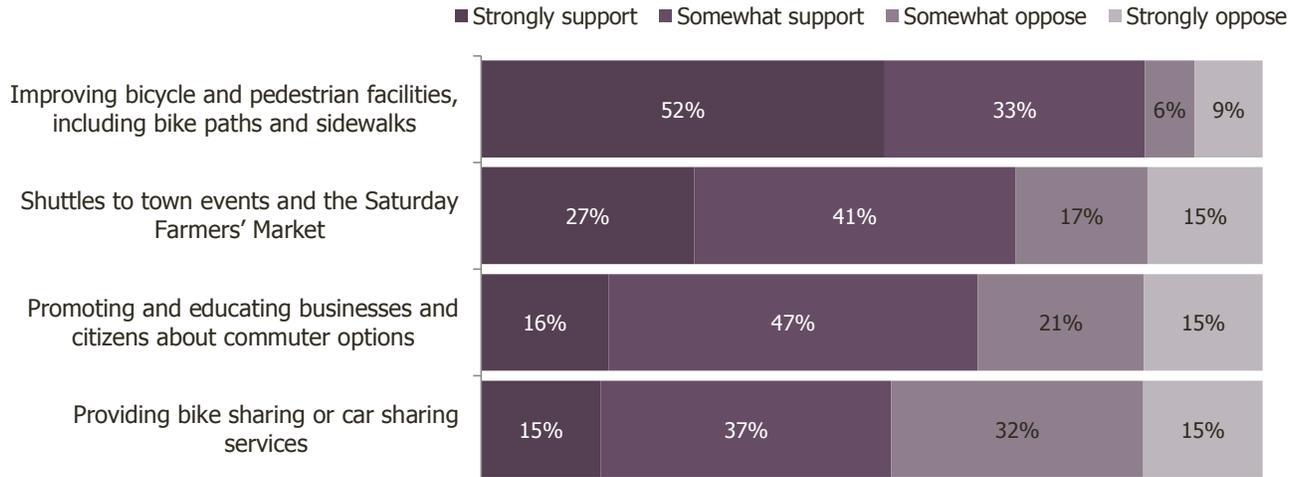


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Residents next indicated their level of support for Town funds being allocated for different transportation initiatives. A vast majority of respondents (85%) indicated that they would strongly or somewhat support funds being used for improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities. About two-thirds of participants would support shuttles to town events and the Saturday Farmers' Market, and about 6 in 10 supported promoting and educating businesses and citizens about commuter options. Using funds to provide bike sharing or car sharing services was supported by about half of residents.

Figure 6: Support for Transportation Initiatives

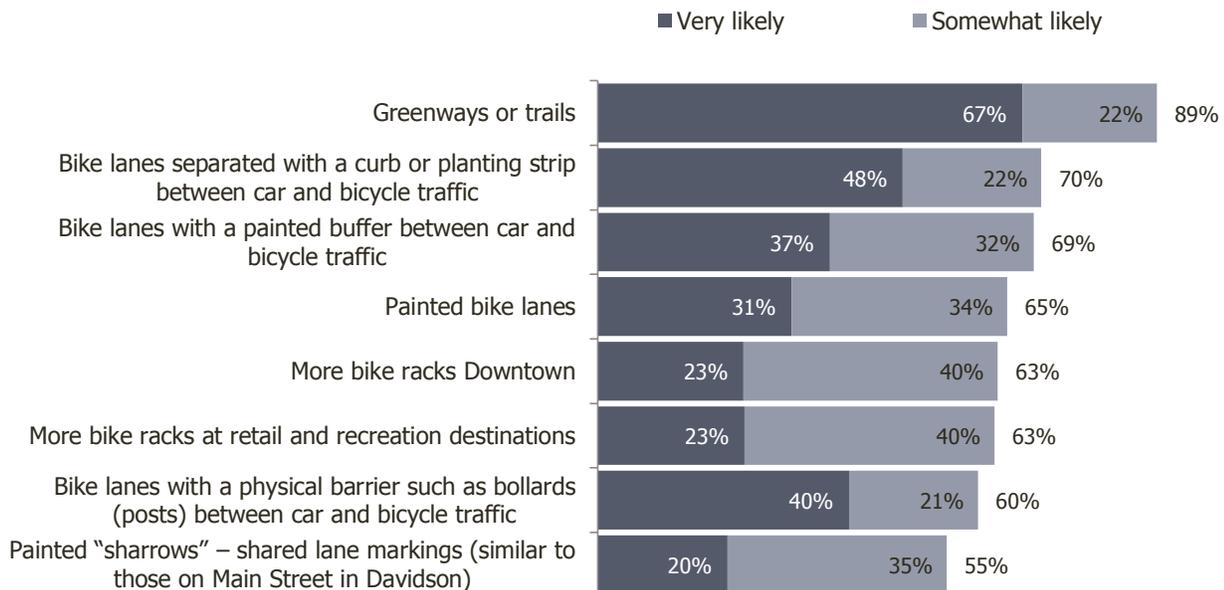
*To what extent would you support or oppose Town funds being used for the following transportation initiatives:*



The final special interest question asked respondents about their likelihood of using a bicycle if various cycling infrastructure were made more available in Davidson. About 9 in 10 respondents would be more likely to ride a bicycle if more greenways or trails were available, and about 7 in 10 would increase their bicycle usage if there were more bike lanes separated with a curb or planting strip and bike lanes with a painted buffer between car and bicycle traffic. Only about half of residents would be more likely to ride their bicycle if there were more painted "sharrows" in Davidson.

Figure 7: Cycling Structure Availability and Likelihood of Bicycle Usage

*How likely or unlikely would you be to ride your bicycle more often if the following cycling infrastructure were made available in Davidson?*



# Conclusions

## Davidson residents continue to enjoy an exceptional quality of life.

Almost all survey respondents rated the overall quality of life in Davidson and the Town as a place to live as excellent or good; these ratings were higher than ratings reported in comparison communities and were stable over time. Several features that enhance quality of life, including Davidson as a place to raise children and their neighborhood as a place to live, were rated positively by about 9 in 10 residents and were higher than ratings seen in other jurisdictions across the country. Around 9 in 10 survey participants would recommend living in Davidson to someone who asked and more than 8 in 10 planned to remain in the community for the coming five years. Additionally, Davidson is a highly engaged community, with at least four in five residents rating Davidson's sense of community as excellent or good and many residents participating in the community through campaigning, volunteering and attending public meetings and Town-sponsored events.

## Davidson's Built Environment is an important community feature, and a key area to monitor in the coming years.

Residents identified Built Environment as a priority for the Davidson community in the coming two years, and ratings for measures related to Built Environment were strong and similar to or higher than ratings seen elsewhere. About 7 in 10 respondents positively rated the overall built environment in Davidson, and residents highlighted public places where people like to spend time as an appreciated feature of the community. Fewer Davidson residents had observed a code violation in the previous 12 months than residents of other communities across the country. While most residents were not experiencing housing cost stress, they recognized the need for more affordable housing within the growing community: about 6 in 10 indicated that they would support requiring a fee from developers or allocating funds from the Town budget without a tax increase to provide affordable housing in the community. Despite overall positive marks, ratings decreased over time for the quality of new development in Davidson; the availability of affordable quality housing; variety of housing options; and land use, planning and zoning. The Town will need to monitor these areas as it plans for the community's future growth.

## Residents are finding it more difficult to get around Davidson and seek improvements.

Compared to 2014, many aspects of Mobility declined in 2017. Traffic flow on major streets, ease of travel by car, ease of travel by bicycle, ease of walking, the overall ease of travel, the availability of public parking and availability of paths and walking trails saw declines between survey administrations. Overall, residents gave favorable ratings to Mobility-related services, including street repair, street cleaning and traffic enforcement (all of these services were similar to the national comparisons). However, less than half of respondents positively rated ease of travel by public transportation, ease of travel by car, public parking and traffic flow on major streets; these ratings were lower than those seen in other communities. Residents voiced their preference for bicycle and pedestrian facilities improvements over car or bike sharing programs and indicated they would likely ride their bikes more if there were more greenways and trails or separate bike lanes. Additionally, when asked about their support for a tax increase to finance improvements to various Town facilities, programs and infrastructure, residents tended to favor options that would increase mobility in the form of sidewalks, paths and road improvements.

## The Economy is an important and positive feature of the community.

Respondents also indicated that the Economy should be a top priority for Davidson in the coming two years. Measures related to Economy generally received positive ratings that were similar to or higher than the national comparisons. About three-quarters of respondents or more positively rated the overall economic health of Davidson, the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, the Town as a place to visit and Davidson as a place to work; ratings for all of these measures were higher than those seen in comparison communities. Almost all respondents had purchased goods or services in Davidson and about 4 in 10 residents worked within the Town limits.