

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

**Cartersville, GA**  
Community Livability Report

2017



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

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



*Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

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

# Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Cartersville ..... 2

Community Characteristics ..... 3

Governance ..... 5

Participation ..... 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions ..... 11



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 Cartersville. 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 329 residents of the City of Cartersville. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% 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 Cartersville

About 8 in 10 residents rated the quality of life in Cartersville as excellent or good. This rating was similar to national comparisons (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.

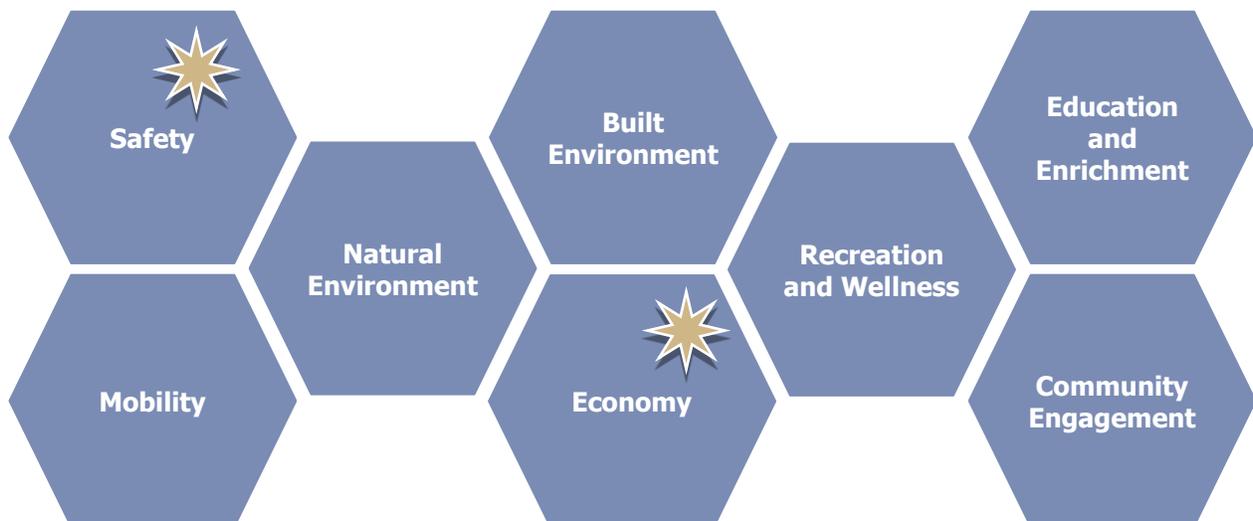
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2015, residents identified Economy and Safety as priorities for the Cartersville community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets 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 Cartersville’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

★ Most important



# Community Characteristics

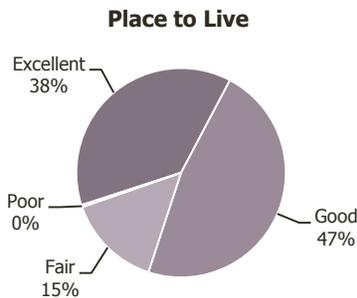
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

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 Cartersville, 85% of residents rated the City as an excellent or good place to live and no one said it was poor. Respondents' ratings of Cartersville as a place to live were 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 Cartersville as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Cartersville and its overall appearance. Overall, at least 7 in 10 residents felt favorably about each of these aspects of the community, providing ratings similar to those of other communities across the U.S.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, most ratings for aspects of Community Characteristics were positively scored by at least half of respondents and tended to be similar to the national benchmark.

Evaluations of Safety tended to be similar to comparison communities with about 9 in 10 residents indicating they felt safe in their neighborhood and in the downtown/commercial area; however, close to 7 in 10 awarded excellent or good marks for overall feeling of safety, which declined since 2015 (see *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover). Within Mobility, ratings were more mixed as less than half gave favorable scores to ease of travel by bicycle, ease of travel by public transportation, ease of public parking and traffic flow; these ratings were either similar or lower than those seen elsewhere. Additionally, many aspects of Mobility decreased over time.

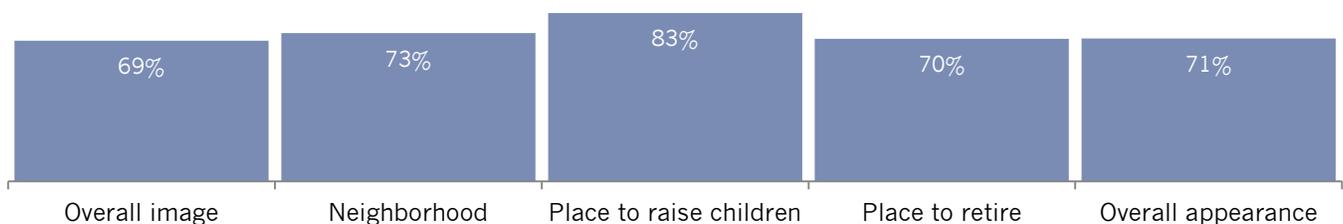


Strengths were seen within the facets of Built Environment and Economy with about two-thirds of respondents awarding excellent or good evaluations to new development and the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area. These ratings were higher than benchmark communities.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



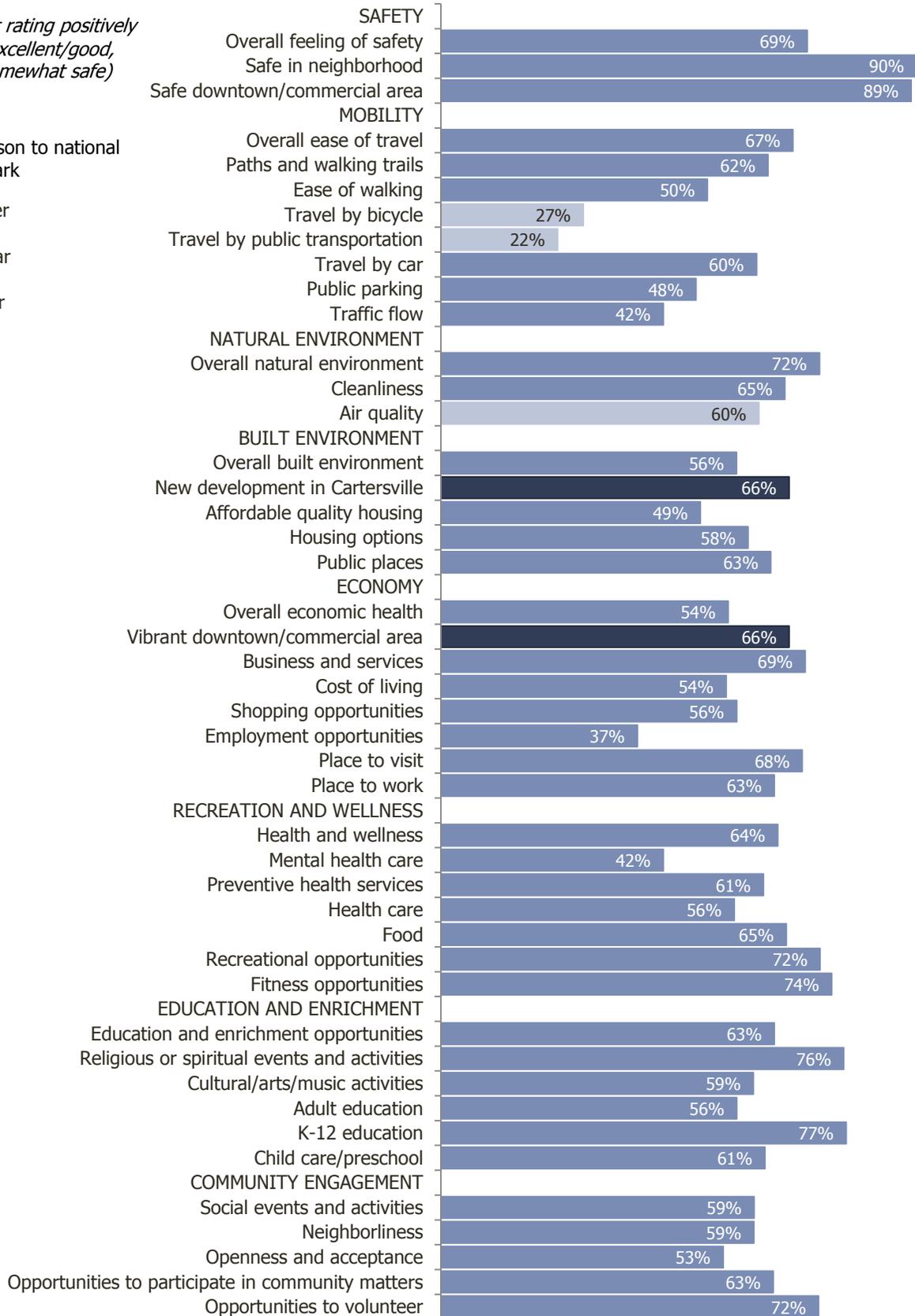
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

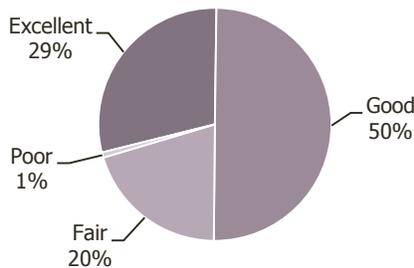
*How well does the government of Cartersville meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Cartersville as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 8 in 10 survey respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall services provided by the City resulting in ratings similar to comparison communities.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Cartersville’s leadership and governance. The City excelled in the areas of overall direction that the government is taking, acting in the best interest of Cartersville and being honest; these aspects received ratings higher than those seen elsewhere across the country. About 6 in 10 residents gave favorable scores to the remaining aspects of government performance resulting in evaluations on par with other communities across the country.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Cartersville. Broadly, a majority of residents rated these services and amenities as excellent or good and similar to communities across the nation. The highest rated services included fire, ambulance/EMS, fire prevention, garbage collection, yard waste pick-up, power utility, City parks and public libraries, with at least three-quarters awarding high marks to each.

**Overall Quality of City Services**

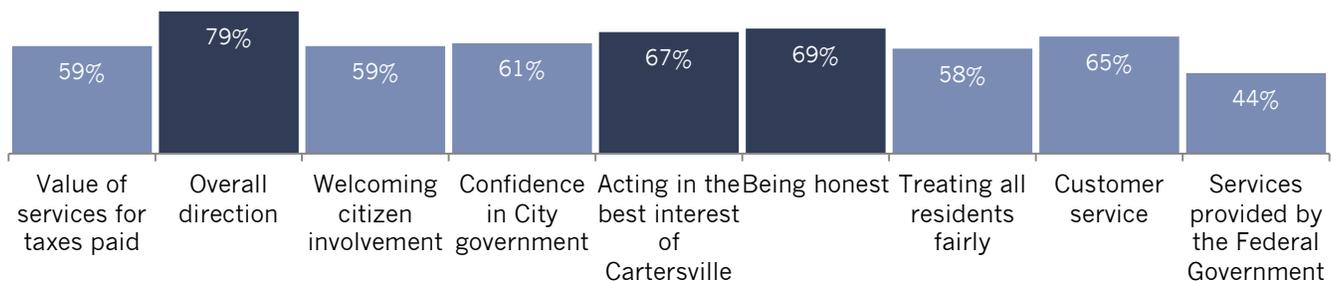


All Safety-related services were favorably evaluated by about 6 in 10 or more; however, ratings for crime prevention, emergency preparedness and animal control decreased from 2015 to 2017. Other declines were seen within Mobility, including traffic enforcement, street repair, street cleaning and traffic signal timing.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



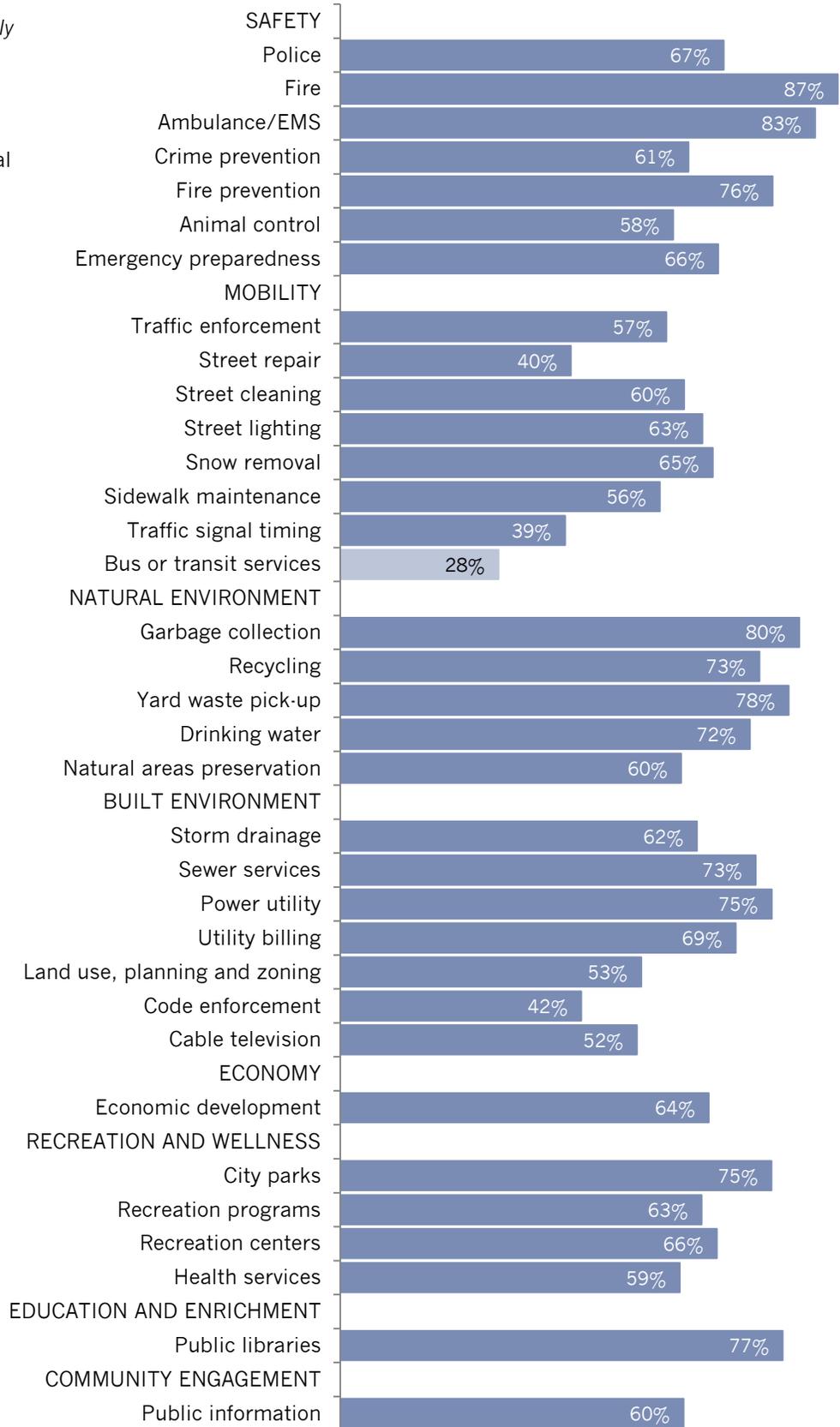
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Participation

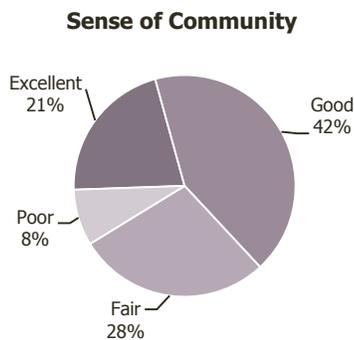
## *Are the residents of Cartersville connected to the community and each other?*

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. Similar to other communities in the U.S., about two-thirds of respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Cartersville.

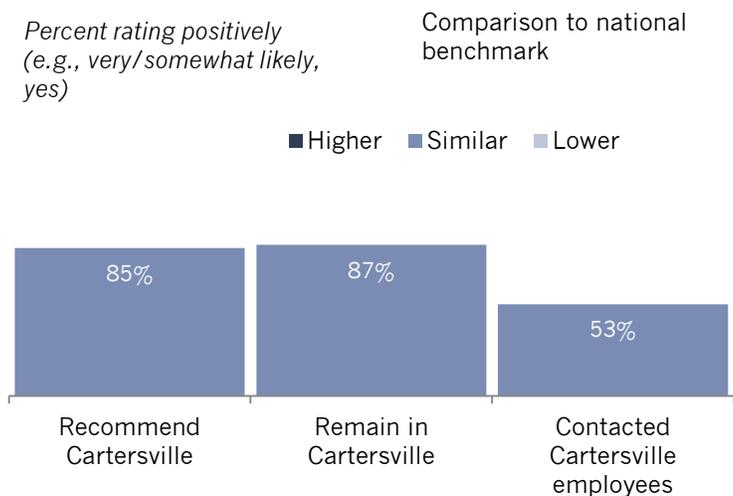
At least 8 in 10 survey respondents indicated they would recommend living in Cartersville to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years and about half of residents reported they had contacted Cartersville employees. These ratings were similar to those reported across the nation.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Participation rates within Cartersville varied widely and tended to be on par with Cartersville's national peers. At least 8 in 10 participants indicated they had conserved water, made their homes more energy efficient, purchased goods or services in the community and visited a City park. . Those regularly engaging in moderate or vigorous physical activity increased in 2017. As for Community Engagement, most residents reported high levels of neighborliness and attention to local news. While few residents exhibited interest in local public meetings, more residents watched a local public meetings (online or on television) in 2017 than in 2015.

Cartersville residents exhibited higher than national average participation rates in the area of Economy, specifically in their optimism about the impact the economy on their income in the next six months and the proportion of residents who reported working in Cartersville, which increased in 2017 when compared to 2015.



Compared to municipalities across the country, fewer Cartersville residents reported they had used public transportation instead of driving and recycled at home.



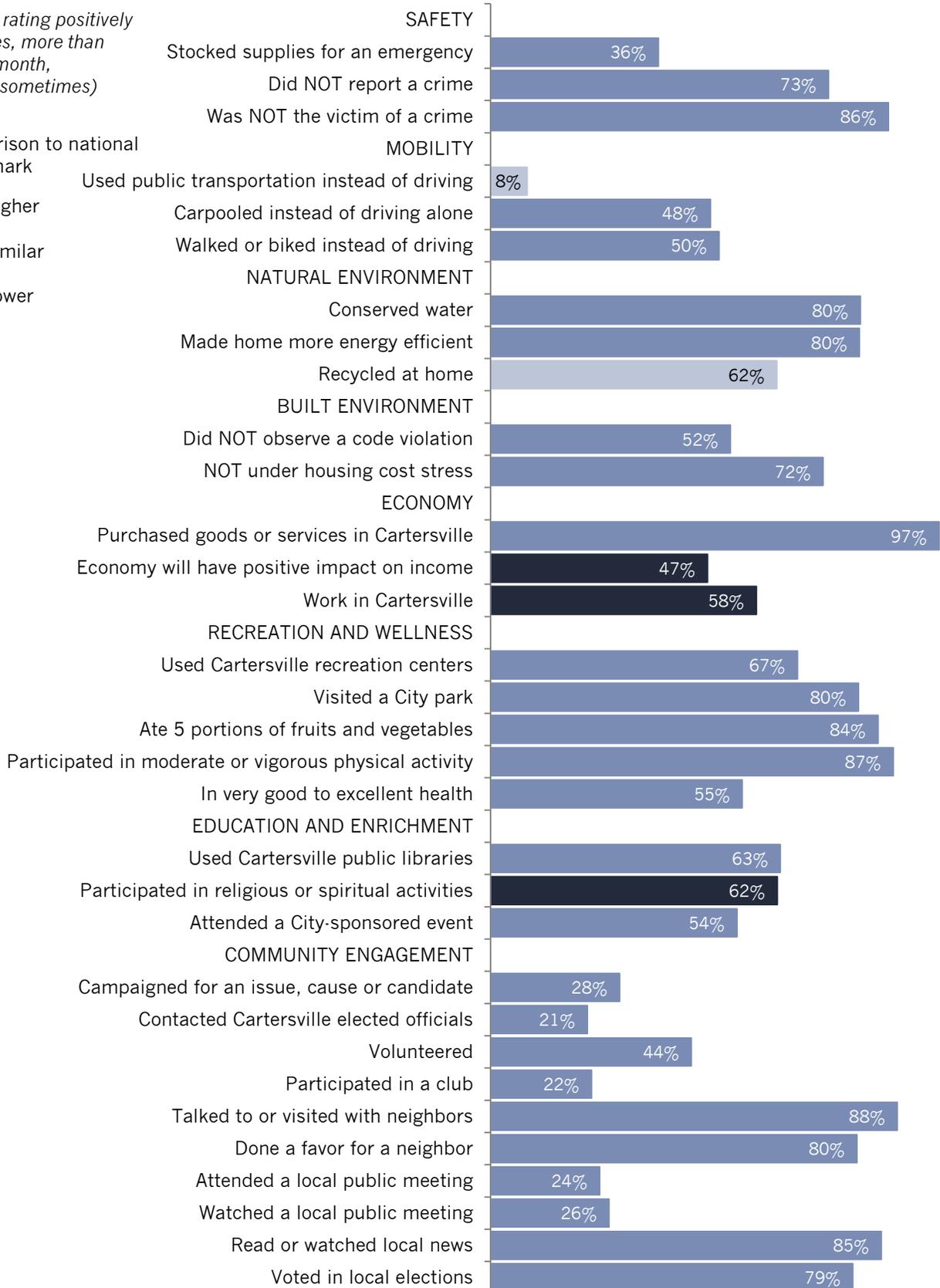
# The National Citizen Survey™

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



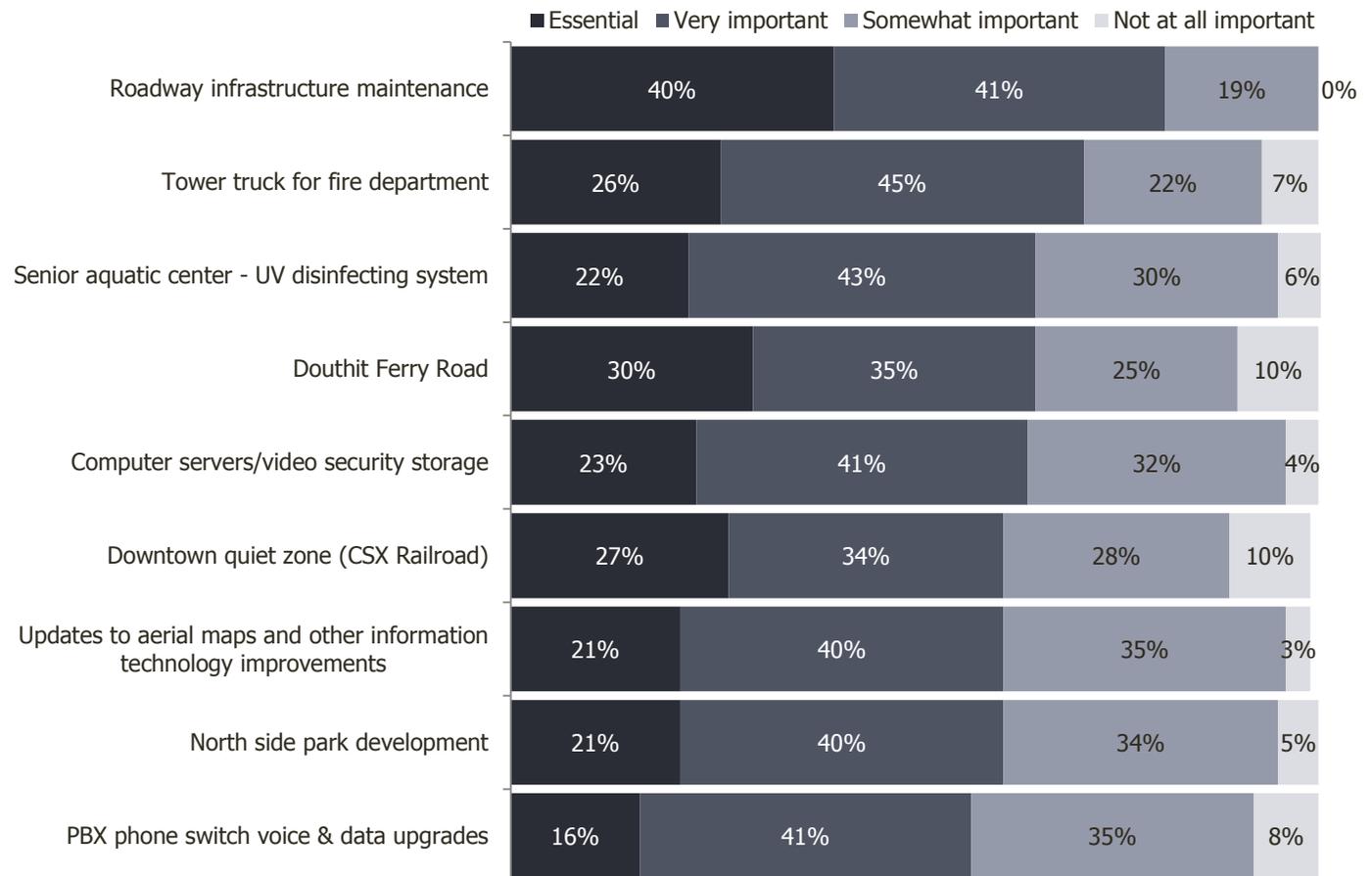
# Special Topics

The City of Cartersville included three questions of special interest on The NCS. City leaders sought feedback from residents regarding priorities for the next 10 years, development options for the former Civic Center and funding for road and bridge maintenance.

The first question asked residents to rate the importance of a variety of projects and issues for the City to address in the coming 10 years. Overall, a majority of residents rated each project as at least very important, with two projects edging out the others as the top priorities. Respondents to the survey identified roadway infrastructure maintenance as the top priority with about 80% identifying this project as essential or very important. A tower truck for the fire department emerged as the second priority for residents.

Figure 4: Priorities for Cartersville

*Please indicate how important, if at all, each of the following projects and issues will be for the City to address over the next ten years:*

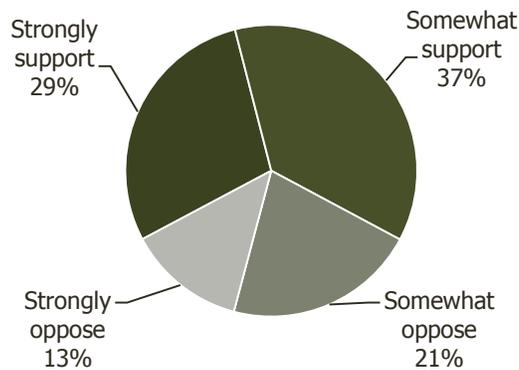


## The National Citizen Survey™

Respondents indicated their support or opposition for transforming the former Civic Center into residential use. About two-thirds of the survey respondents strongly or somewhat supported this project. Only about 1 in 10 strongly opposed transforming the Civic Center.

Figure 5: Support for Transforming Civic Center

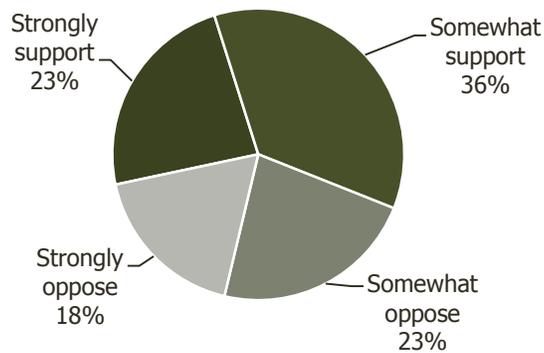
*Due to the addition of the Clarence Brown Conference Center, to what extent do you support or oppose transforming the former Civic Center on West Main Street for potential residential use?*



The City also asked residents if they supported or opposed a transportation sales tax to fund road and bridge maintenance and construction. About one-quarter of residents strongly supported the tax and another one-third somewhat supported increasing sales tax while 18% strongly opposed the measure.

Figure 6: Support for Transportation Sales Tax

*To what extent would you support or oppose a transportation special-purpose local-option sales tax (TSPLOST), specific to Cartersville/Bartow County and resulting in an additional local sales tax increase up to 1%, to fund road and bridge maintenance/construction?*



# Conclusions

## **Cartersville residents enjoy a positive quality of life.**

About 8 in 10 residents rated their quality of life and Cartersville as a place to live as excellent or good. Ratings for features that enhance quality of life, such as Cartersville as a place to raise children, as a place to retire and the overall image and overall appearance of the City were given high marks by about 7 in 10 or more residents. These positive ratings contributed to respondents' likelihood of recommending the community to someone who asked and were also reflected in residents' decision to remain in the community for the next five years. Additionally, a strong majority of Cartersville residents were pleased with the overall direction of the community, a rating that has been steadily increasing since the City's baseline survey of 2003.

## **Residents would like to see improvements in Mobility.**

Compared to 2015, many aspects of Mobility declined in 2017. Traffic flow; ease of travel by most modes (car, bicycle, public transportation, foot); street repair and cleaning; and traffic signal timing declined since the last survey administration. When asked about priorities for the Cartersville government for the next ten years, 8 in 10 residents identified roadway infrastructure maintenance as the most important project. Finally, nearly 6 in 10 survey respondents would support implementing a transportation sales tax to pay for road and bridge maintenance and construction.

## **Safety and Economy are priorities for the community.**

Residents identified Safety and Economy as two of the most important facets on which the City should focus for the coming two years. At least 6 in 10 respondents rated aspects of Safety positively and all measures were similar to communities across the nation. While nearly all residents safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown/commercial area, only about 7 in 10 awarded excellent or good scores to feelings about the overall safety of Cartersville, which declined between 2015 and 2017. At least three-quarters of participants evaluated fire, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention services favorably. On the other hand, satisfaction ratings for crime prevention, emergency preparedness and animal control services declined between survey administrations. About two-thirds or more placed high importance on the City acquiring a tower truck for the fire department and a police training building in the next ten years.

Evaluations for Economy in Cartersville tended to be similar to or higher than ratings given in comparison communities. However, residents were less satisfied with aspects of the cost of living and overall economic health of the community in 2017 than 2015. At least 6 in 10 residents provided positive assessments for the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area, business and service establishments, and Cartersville as a place to visit and as a place to work. Residents rated the vibrancy of the downtown/commercial area higher than others across the nation. Since the City's baseline survey in 2003, ratings for economic development services have fluctuated yet remain higher in 2017. Additionally, more Cartersville residents were optimistic the economy would have a positive impact on their income in the next six months than residents in comparison communities. Unlike most communities across the nation, a majority of survey respondents worked in Cartersville.