

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Decatur, GA

Community Livability Report
2018



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Decatur. 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 537 residents of the City of Decatur. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

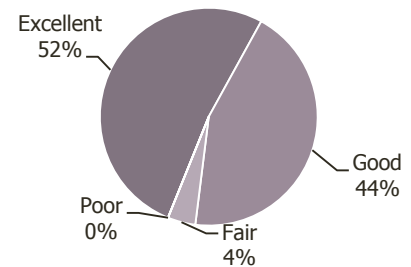


Quality of Life in Decatur

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Decatur as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the national benchmark (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.

Overall Quality of Life



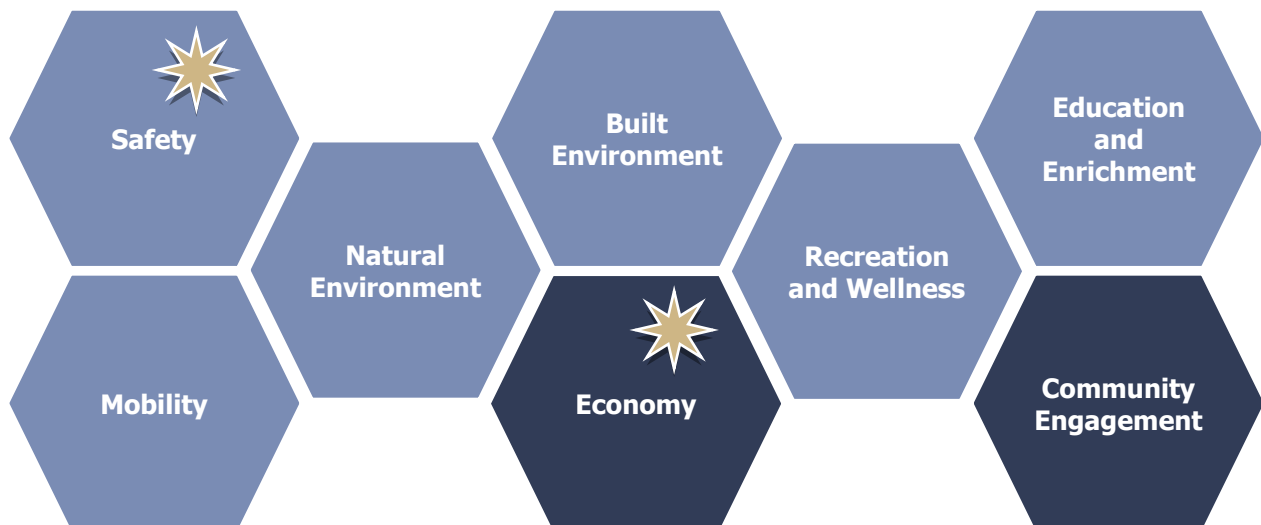
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Decatur community in the coming two years. Ratings for Economy were exceptionally strong and tended to be higher than the national benchmark, this also was true for ratings related to Community Engagement. 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 Decatur’s unique questions.

Legend

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

- * Most important



Community Characteristics

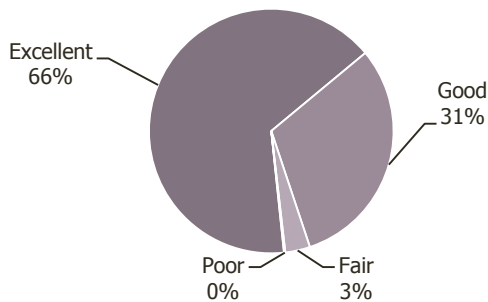
What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

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 Decatur, 97% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Decatur as a place to live was higher than 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 Decatur as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Decatur and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 respondents gave high marks to the overall image, neighborhoods, Decatur as a place to raise children and to the City's overall appearance. These ratings were all higher than ratings observed elsewhere. About 6 in 10 gave high marks to Decatur as a place to retire, and this rating was similar to the national average.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. At least three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to each aspect of Community Engagement, and all ratings were higher than the national benchmarks. All aspects of Safety, Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment were rated positively by a majority of Decatur residents and all aspects were at least similar to ratings recorded across the U.S.

Place to Live

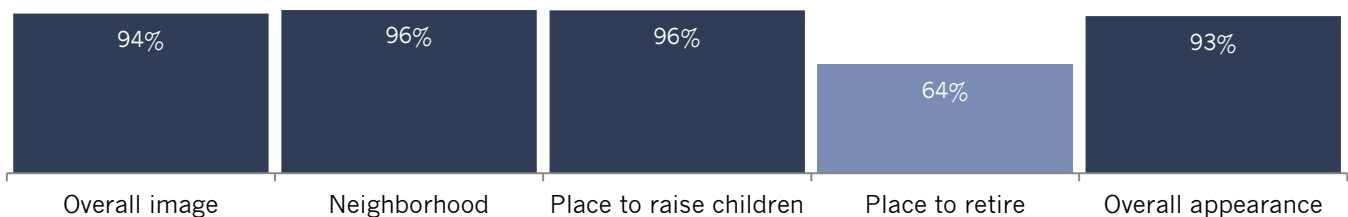


Resident opinions about Mobility in Decatur tended to be mixed. Ratings for ease of walking and travel by public transportation were higher than the benchmarks while ratings for travel by car and public parking were lower than the benchmarks. The same was true for Built Environment; while ratings for public places where people want to spend time were higher than the national benchmark, ratings for affordable quality housing were lower than ratings observed elsewhere. Economy ratings tended to be strong and higher than national averages.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



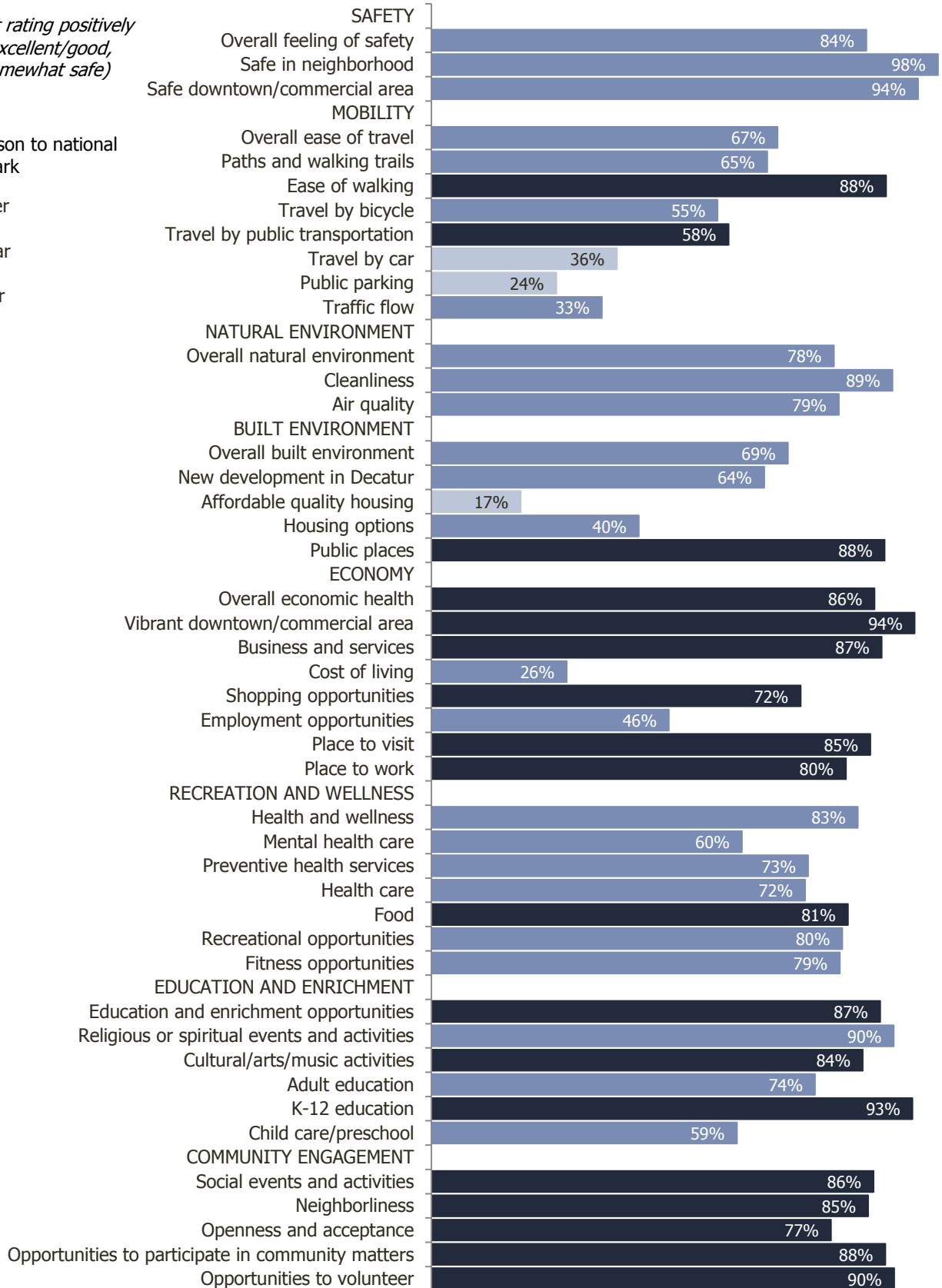
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

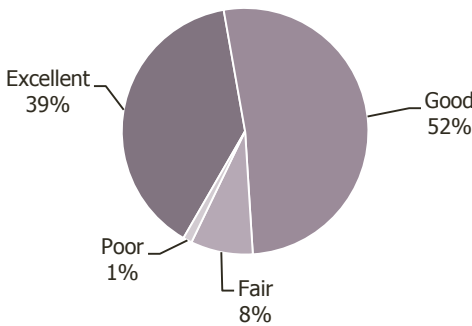
How well does the government of Decatur meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Decatur as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 91% gave excellent or good marks to the overall quality of services provided by the City, while about 28% gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the Federal Government. Ratings for the overall quality of City services were higher than the national benchmark while ratings of the Federal Government were similar to the benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Decatur’s leadership and governance. Decatur residents demonstrated a strong level of public trust; almost all aspects were rated higher than the national averages and received high marks from at least 7 in 10 respondents. The overall direction of Decatur was the only aspect that wasn’t rated higher than the benchmark; however this rating was still quite favorable and increased from 2016 to 2018 (see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Decatur. Broadly, ratings of services and amenities tended to be rated positively by a majority of respondents and all were similar to or higher than the national benchmarks. Within Safety; almost all residents gave excellent or good ratings to both police and fire services and these ratings were higher than those observed in comparison communities. Ratings for emergency preparedness also were higher than average.

Overall Quality of City Services

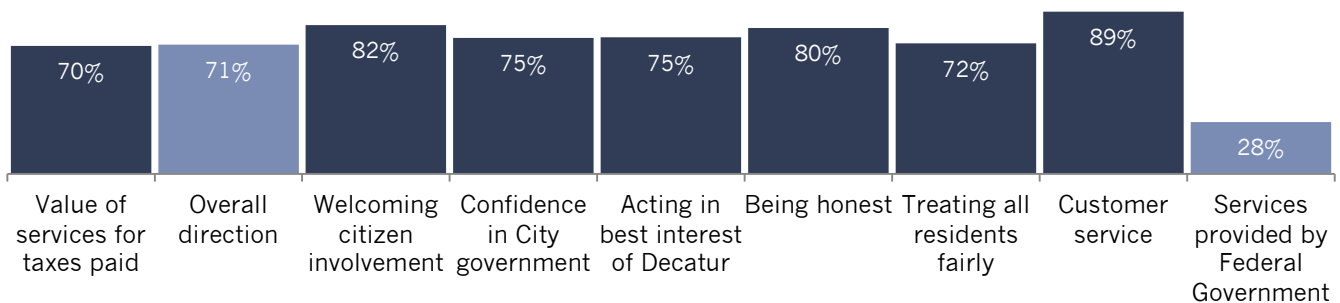


All aspects of Mobility received ratings similar to the benchmarks; with the exception of bus or transit services which received ratings higher than the national benchmark. Compared to 2016, ratings decreased for street repair in 2018 but increased for street cleaning and street lighting. At least 4 in 5 residents gave excellent or good ratings to all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. These ratings tended to be higher than ratings in other communities across the U.S.

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



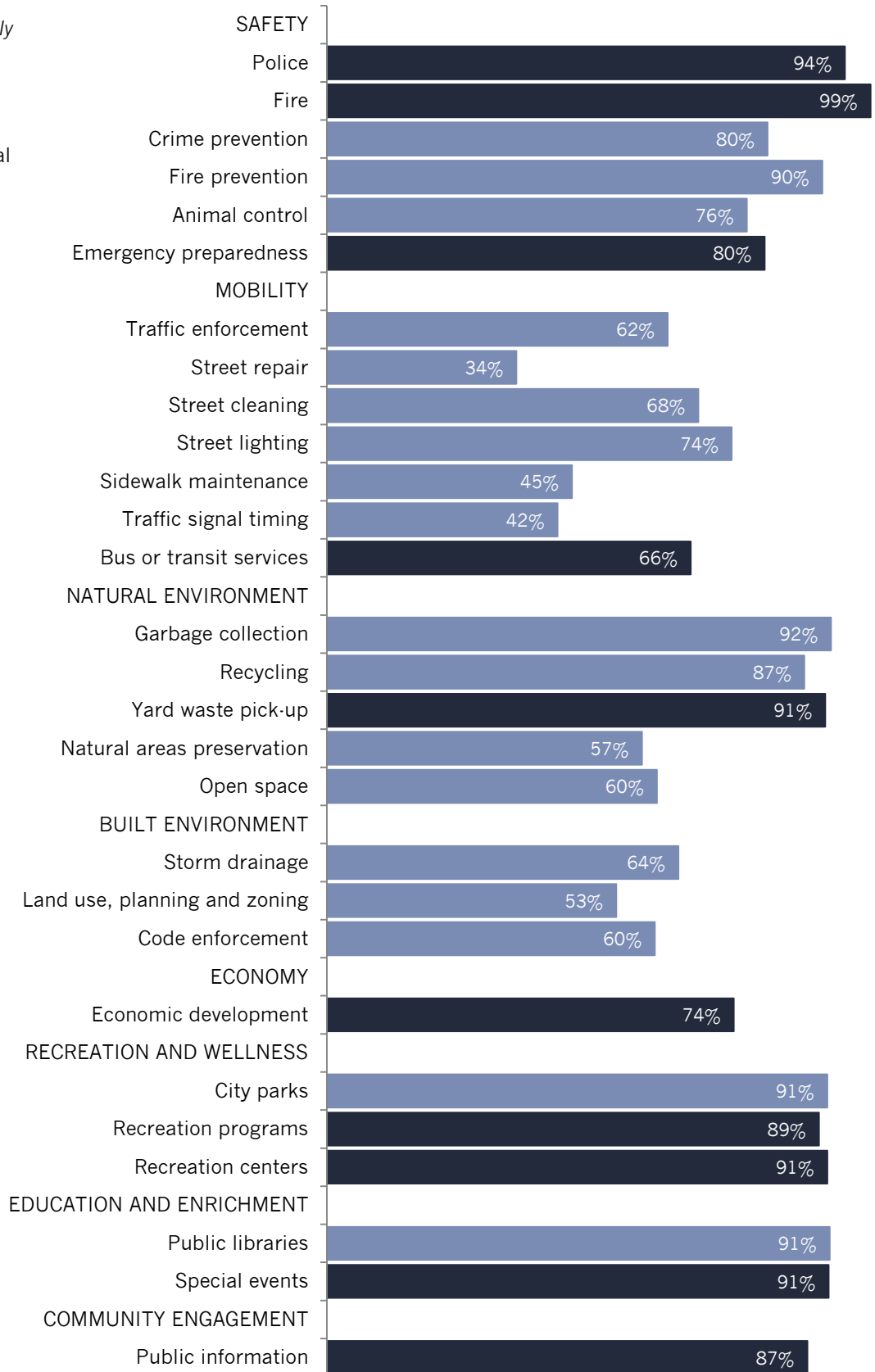
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



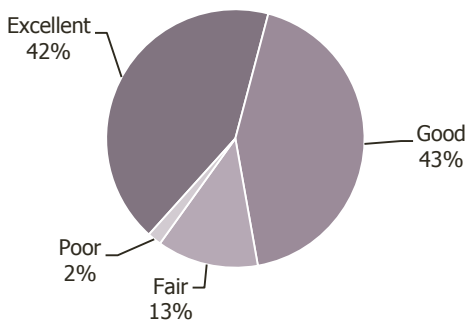
Participation

Are the residents of Decatur connected to the community and each other?

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. About 4 in 5 respondents gave high marks to the overall sense of community in Decatur, and this rating was higher than ratings in comparison communities. About 9 in 10 residents were likely to recommend living in Decatur and planned to remain in Decatur for the next five years. The proportion of residents that would recommend living in Decatur was higher than in comparison communities.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Decatur residents' reported levels of Participation were generally similar to those reported in comparison communities; however, there were a few noteworthy exceptions. Survey participants reported higher levels of Participation within all aspects of Mobility (used public transportation, carpooled, walked or biked instead of driving). Further, more Decatur residents reported that they had stocked supplies for an emergency, attended a City-sponsored event, campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate and attended a local public meeting than residents in other jurisdictions across the nation. Fewer Decatur residents reported that they had participated in religious or spiritual events or activities.

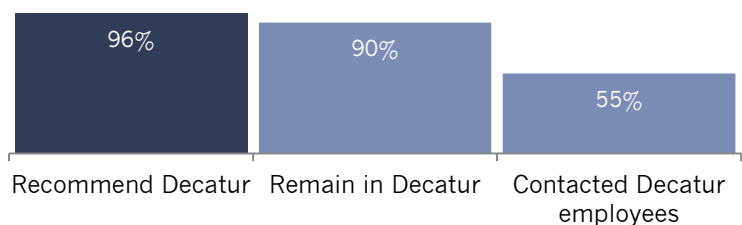
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



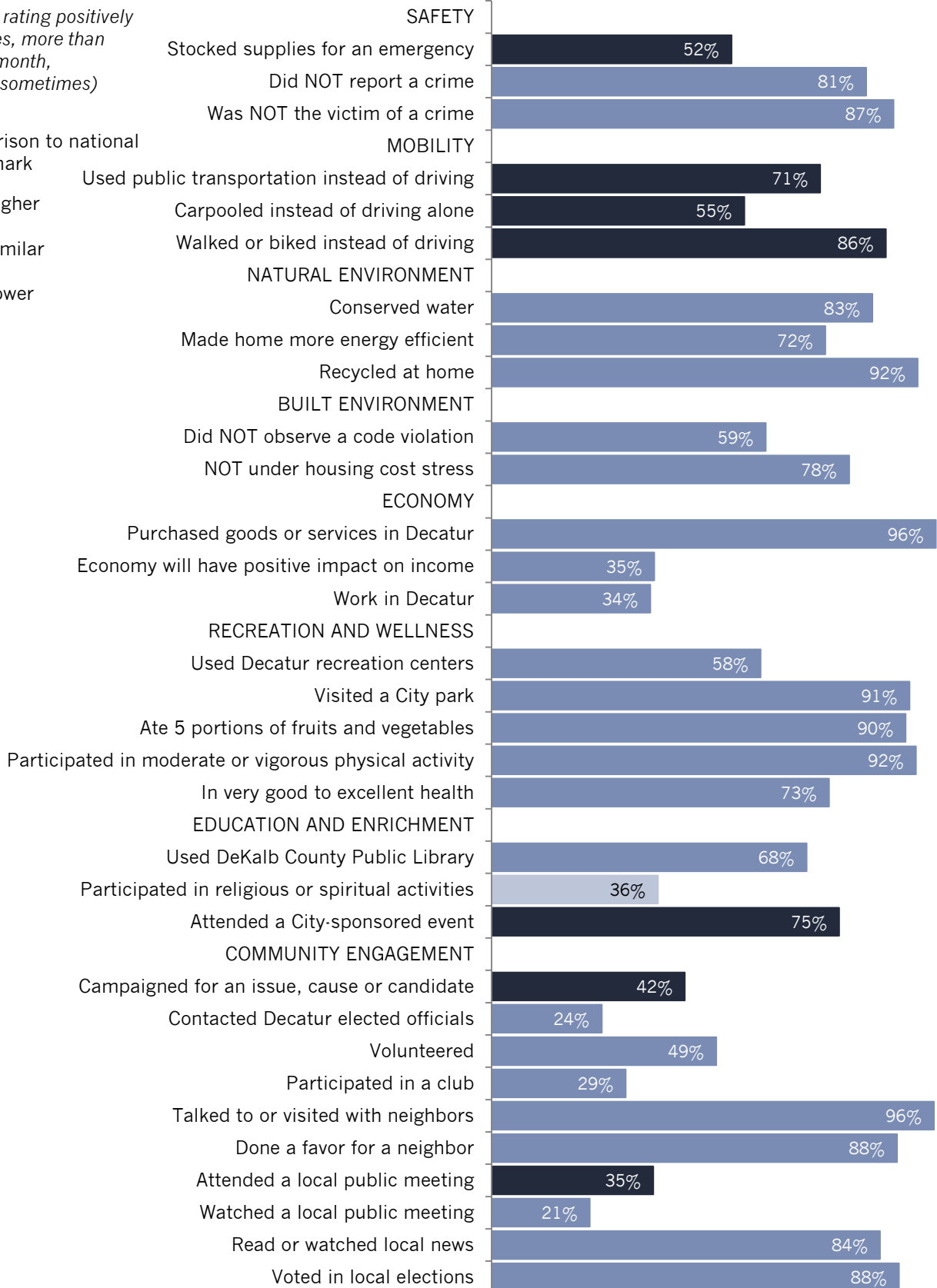
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

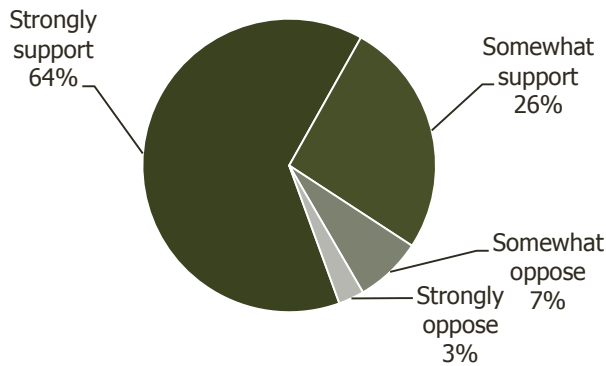


Special Topics

The City of Decatur included seven questions of special interest on The NCS. Residents were asked about their level of support for the continued use of Decatur’s Clean Streets Policy, as well as a variety of questions related to affordable housing in Decatur. About 6 in 10 respondents strongly supported the continuation of Decatur’s Complete Streets policy, and only about 1 in 10 strongly or somewhat opposed it.

Figure 4: Complete Streets Policy

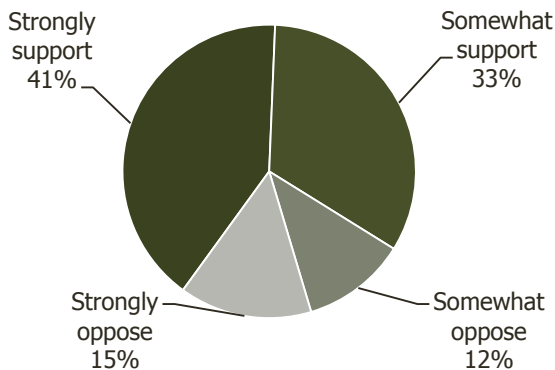
The City of Decatur now has a "Complete Streets" policy that requires most streets to have bicycle and pedestrian safety features. These involve the use of lower speed limits, narrower vehicle lanes, fewer "right-on-red" opportunities, more mid-block crosswalks and similar techniques. To what extent do you support or oppose continued use of this policy?



Survey respondents were then asked to indicate their level of support or opposition for allowing the construction of two or more single-family cottages on existing residential lots as an alternative to one larger single-family home. About three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would somewhat or strongly support this; while about one-quarter indicated they would somewhat or strongly oppose this policy.

Figure 5: Housing Types

Encouraging a diversity of housing types throughout the City of Decatur’s 4.4 square miles has been a goal over the past several years. One option would be to allow the construction of two or more small, single-family cottages on an existing residential lot in a traditional single-family neighborhood as an alternative to one larger single-family home. To what extent do you support or oppose this concept?



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Decatur residents were then asked about their vision of affordable housing in Decatur in regard to housing structure type, number of bedrooms and number of bathrooms. When it came to structure type, residents were pretty evenly divided among the three options given. About one-third felt apartments or condos, townhomes or single-family homes best fit their vision for affordable housing in Decatur. When asked about the number of bedrooms needed in affordable dwellings; about half felt that three bedrooms were needed, and about 40% felt that two bedrooms were needed. About 4 in 5 respondents felt that affordable dwellings needed two bathrooms.

Figure 6: Affordable Housing Structure Types

The availability of affordable quality housing is a topic frequently mentioned as an issue for the Decatur community. Which of the following structure type best fits your vision of affordable housing in Decatur (select only one):

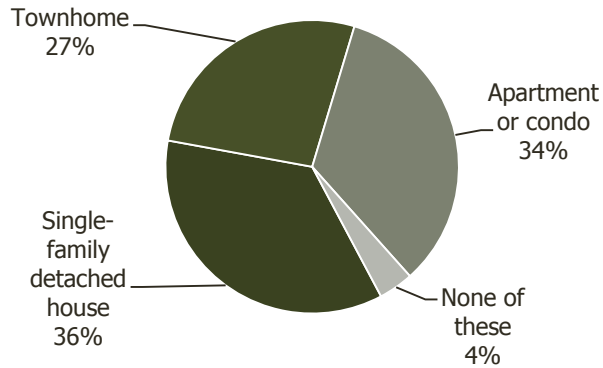


Figure 7: Number of Bedrooms Needed in Affordable Dwellings

About how many bedrooms are needed in affordable dwellings in Decatur (select only one)?

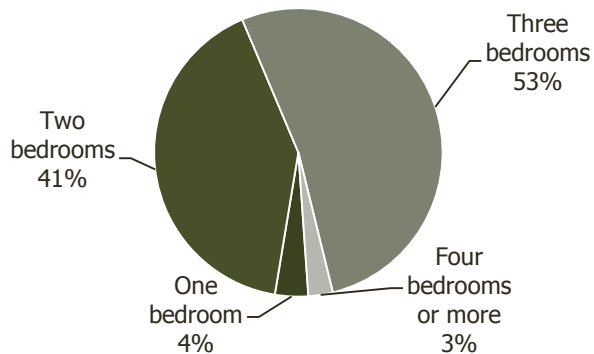
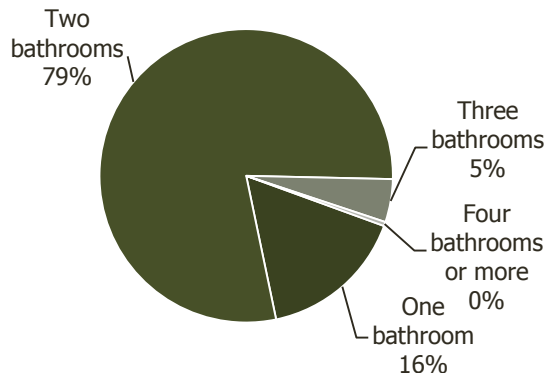


Figure 8: Number of Bathrooms Needed in Affordable Dwellings

About how many bathrooms are needed in affordable dwellings in Decatur (select only one)?



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The final questions on the survey related to residents opinions on the monthly housing costs that should be considered “affordable”. About 4 in 10 thought that monthly rent should not cost less than \$1,000 a month for an affordable dwelling, and an additional 5 in 10 thought rent should be about \$1,001 to \$1,650 per month. When asked about the price to purchase and affordable dwelling; about 4 in 10 thought the price should be less than \$250,000 and another 4 in 10 thought the price should be about \$250,001 to \$450,000.

Figure 9: Cost to Rent and Affordable Dwelling in Decatur

About how much should resident(s) pay in monthly rent for an affordable dwelling in Decatur (select only one)?

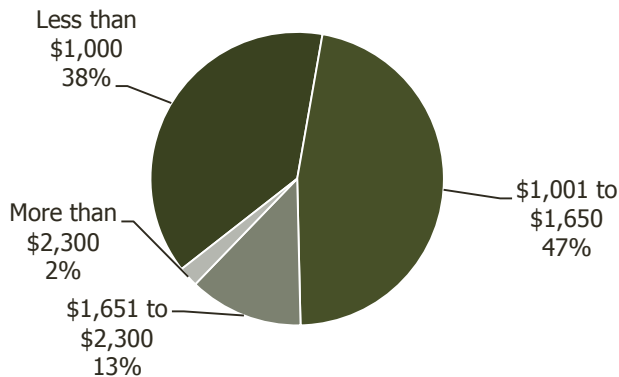
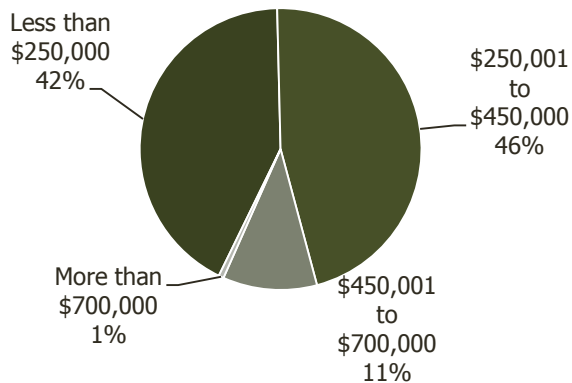


Figure 10: Cost to Purchase an Affordable Dwelling in Decatur

About how much should resident(s) pay to purchase an affordable dwelling in Decatur (select only one)?



Conclusions

Decatur continues to be a highly desirable and safe place to live.

Almost all survey respondents rated the overall quality life in of Decatur and the city as a place to live as excellent or good; these ratings remained stable over time and were higher than the benchmarks. Residents remain loyal to the community, with 9 in 10 being likely to recommend Decatur as a place to live and planning to remain in Decatur for the next five years. Further, about 9 in 10 gave high marks to the overall image of Decatur, their neighborhoods, Decatur as a place to raise children and to its overall appearance. Each of these ratings was higher than the national benchmark and remained stable from 2016 to 2018.

Residents identified Safety as one of the most important focus areas for the community and the survey results showed that the City is meeting resident expectations. Nearly all Decatur residents felt safe in their neighborhoods and 4 in 5 had a positive overall feeling of safety in the city. Safety-related services also received high marks from a majority of respondents. Ratings for Safety services such as police, fire, crime prevention, fire prevention and animal control have all increased since the baseline survey in 2006.

Like other highly desirable cities, the issue of scarcity impacts Decatur. The only community issues scoring lower than the national benchmarks in 2018 related to car travel, parking and affordable housing. These are the key challenges confronting community livability in Decatur.

Trust in City Government is high, and City services are well-regarded.

At least 7 in 10 Decatur residents gave high marks to each aspect of Decatur's leadership and governance and almost all ratings were higher than the benchmarks. Ratings for the overall direction of the City and the job the City does at being honest increased in 2018, rebounding from decreases observed in 2016. Not only were most ratings higher than the benchmarks, but some of the ratings were among the highest ever recorded in NRC's benchmarking database. Decatur ranked #1 out of 322 jurisdictions nationwide for the job the government does at welcoming citizen engagement.

Almost all residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services and individual services were also rated highly by most residents. Most aspects of Governance remained stable from 2016 to 2018; however many have increased since 2006.

Decatur residents continue to be highly engaged in the community.

About 4 in 5 survey respondents rated the sense of community in Decatur as excellent or good, which was a higher rating than seen elsewhere. Many other aspects of Community Engagement received ratings higher than the national benchmark, including social events and activities, neighborliness, openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds, opportunities to participate in community matters and opportunities to volunteer. Further, more Decatur residents campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate or attended a local public meeting at higher rates than residents of other communities. Ratings for Community Engagement tended to remain stable from 2016 to 2018; however more residents reported that they had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate in 2018.