

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Richmond Heights, MO
Community Livability Report

2015



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

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The National Citizen Survey™
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The NCS™ is presented by NRC in collaboration with ICMA.

NRC is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Richmond Heights. 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).

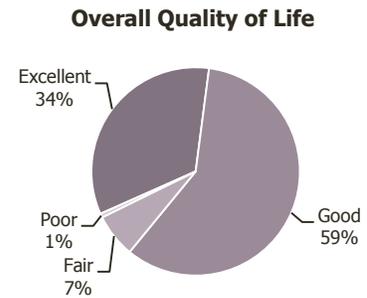
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 411 residents of the City of Richmond Heights. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in Richmond Heights

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Richmond Heights as excellent or good. This rating was similar to those seen in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.



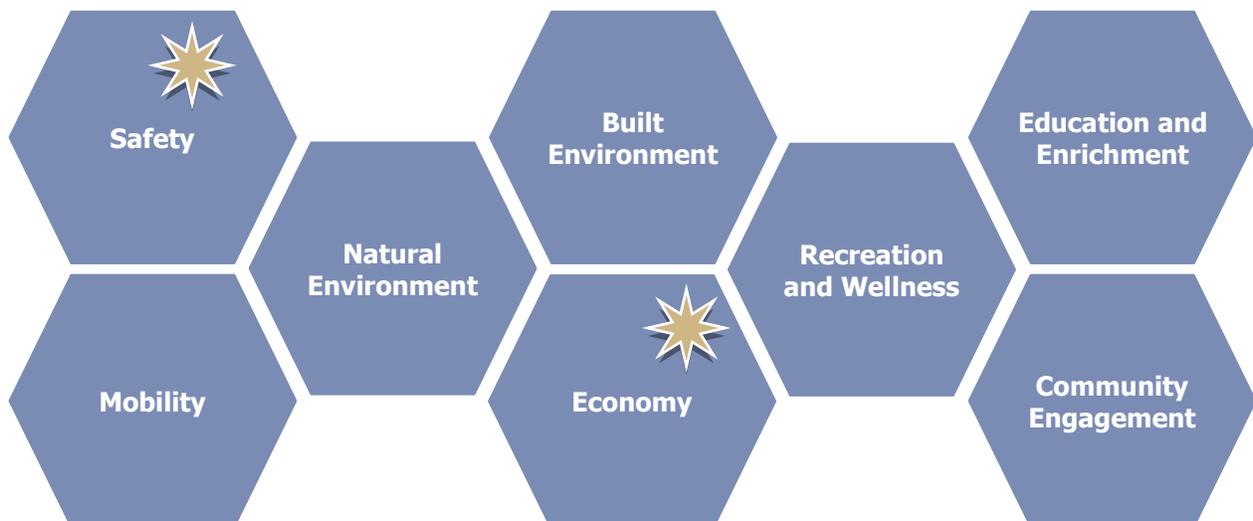
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Richmond Heights community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Richmond Heights residents gave favorable ratings to both of these facets of community. Ratings for all other aspects of community livability were also 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 Richmond Heights' 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 Richmond Heights, 96% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Richmond Heights 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 Richmond Heights as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Richmond Heights and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 respondents favorably rated their neighborhood as a place to live and Richmond Heights as a place to raise children, while around 8 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the overall image and overall appearance of Richmond Heights. About three-quarters of respondents gave positive ratings to Richmond Heights as a place to retire; all of these aspects received ratings similar to the benchmark comparison.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, ratings for aspects of Community Characteristics were strong across each of the eight facets. Ratings for aspects of Built Environment were particularly favorable; at least 3 in 5 residents gave positive ratings to all aspects, and ratings for the availability of affordable quality housing and the variety of housing options were higher than ratings given in other communities. Ratings within the facet of Economy were also strong: about 8 in 10 residents positively rated the overall economic health of Richmond Heights, quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities and Richmond Heights as a place to work, and at least 6 in 10 gave favorable ratings to Richmond Heights' vibrant downtown/commercial area, cost of living, and Richmond Heights as a place to visit. Additionally, vibrant downtown/commercial area, cost of living, shopping opportunities and Richmond Heights as a place to work all received ratings higher than those given in other communities. Generally, almost all other aspects within the six remaining facets of Community

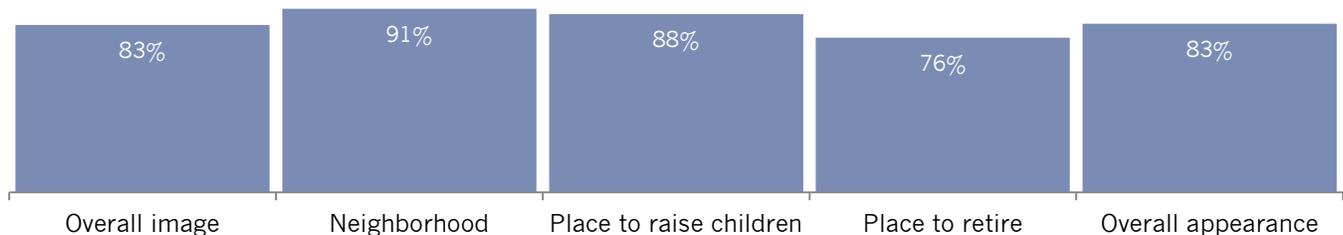
Characteristics received ratings that were positive and similar to the benchmark. The only aspect rated lower than the benchmark was the availability of paths and walking trails, which was rated positively by 47% of respondents; however, this rating has increased since 2012. Several ratings for Community Characteristics increased from 2012 to 2015, including traffic flow, overall natural environment, K-12 education and Richmond Heights as a place to raise children (for more information on trends see the *Trends Over Time* report provided under separate cover).



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



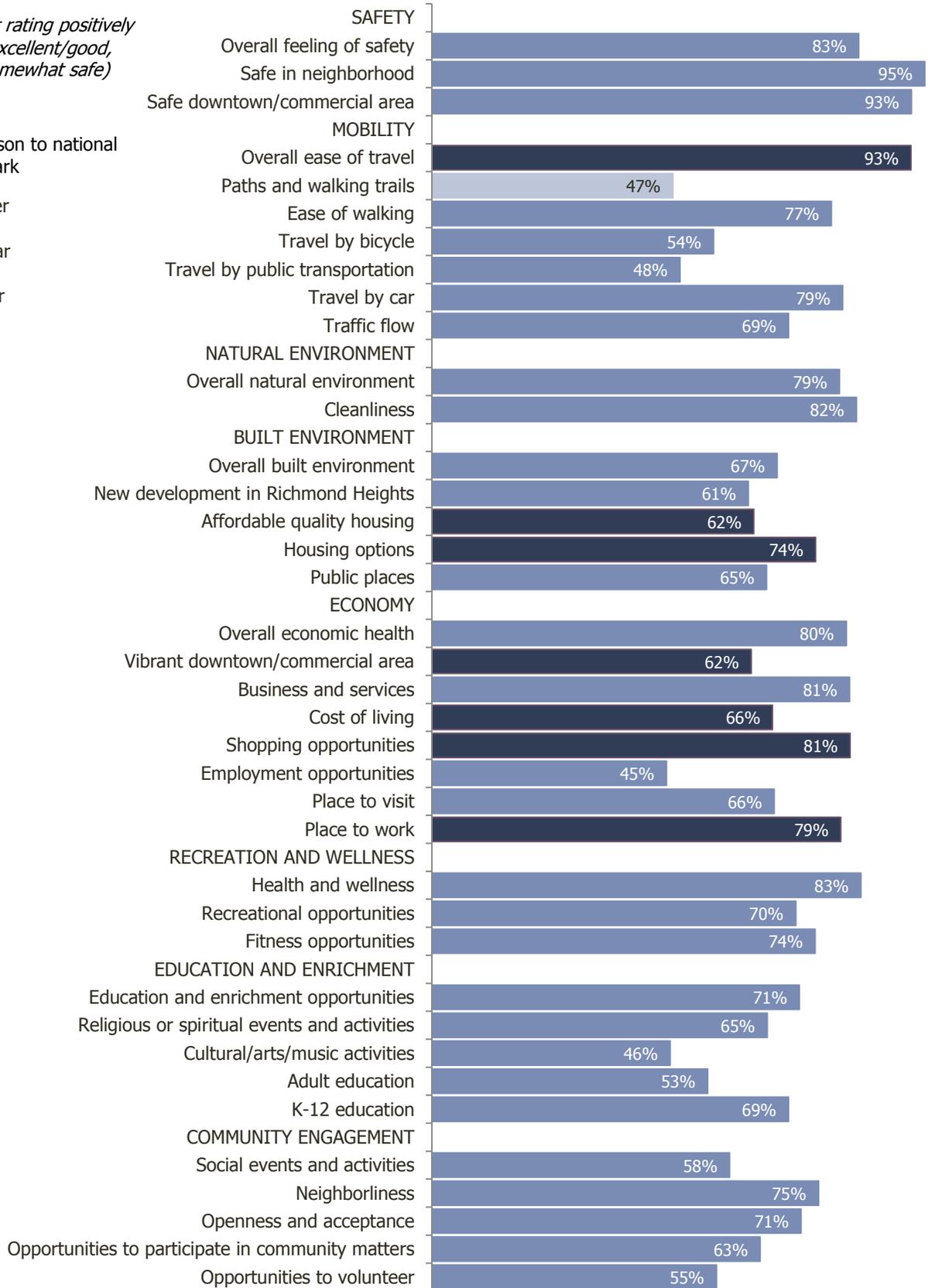
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



Governance

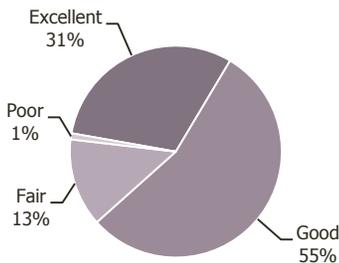
How well does the government of Richmond Heights meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Richmond Heights 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 residents rated the overall quality of services provided by Richmond Heights as excellent or good while about 4 in 10 positively rated the services provided by the Federal Government; both of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities across the nation.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Richmond Heights' leadership and governance. Between 70% and 80% of residents gave favorable ratings to the overall direction of Richmond Heights, welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in City government, government acting in the best interest of the community, being honest and treating all residents fairly, and all of these aspects received ratings higher than the benchmark. The value of services for taxes paid (69% excellent or good) and the overall customer service provided by Richmond Heights employees (81%) were rated similarly to other communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Richmond Heights. Generally speaking, all aspects of Governance received positive ratings from at least a majority of respondents and were rated similar to or higher than the national benchmark; no aspects received ratings lower than the benchmark. Within the facet of Safety, both fire services and ambulance/EMS services received notably high ratings (96% excellent or good) and 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to police services. Within Natural Environment, about 9 in 10 residents positively rated garbage collection, recycling and yard waste pick-up, and the latter two received ratings higher than those given in other communities. About 8 in 10 residents were pleased with all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, and recreation centers received ratings higher than the benchmark. Economic development within the facet of Economy was also strong and rated higher than communities elsewhere, with positive ratings given by about two-thirds of respondents. This rating increased since 2012.

Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



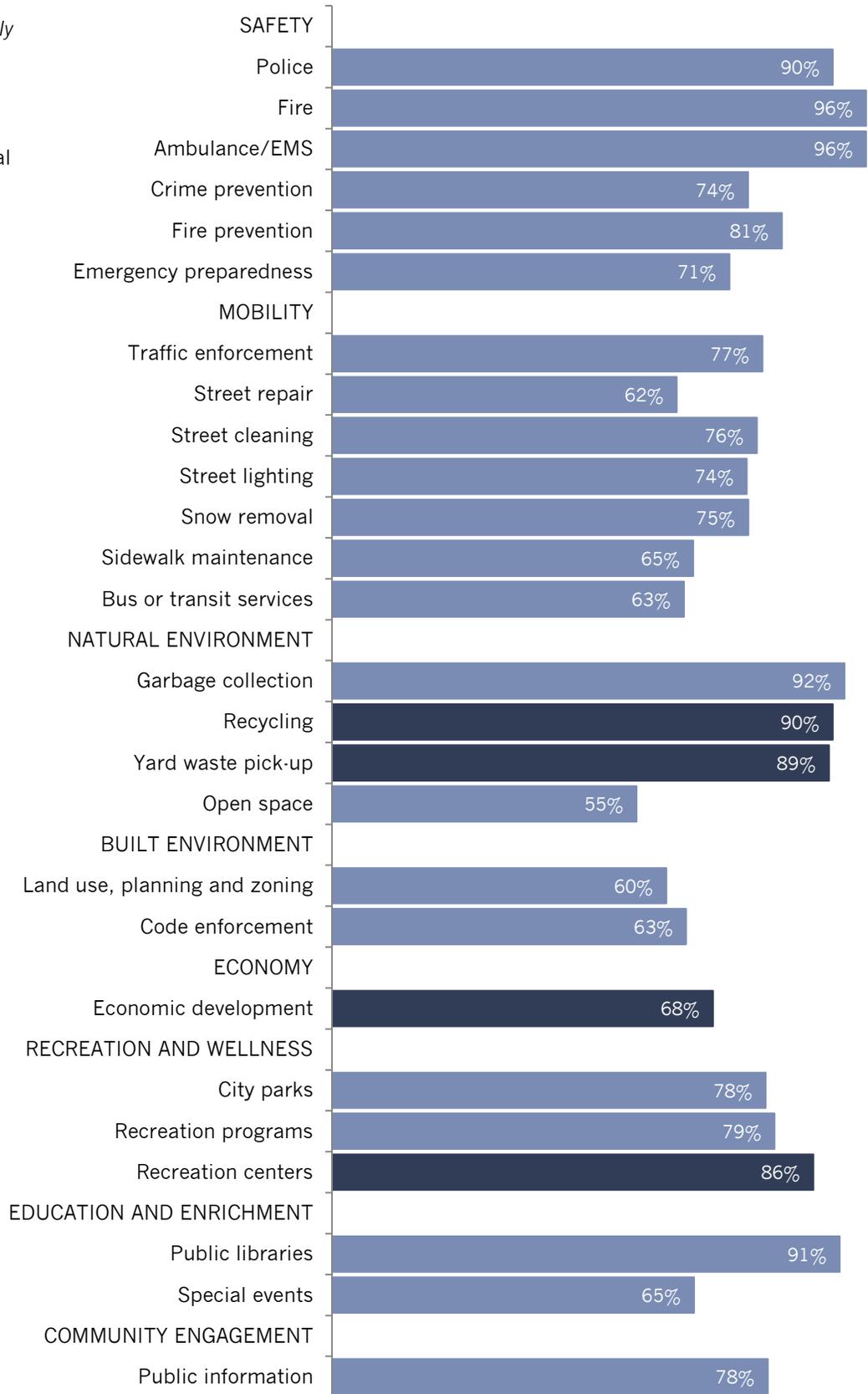
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



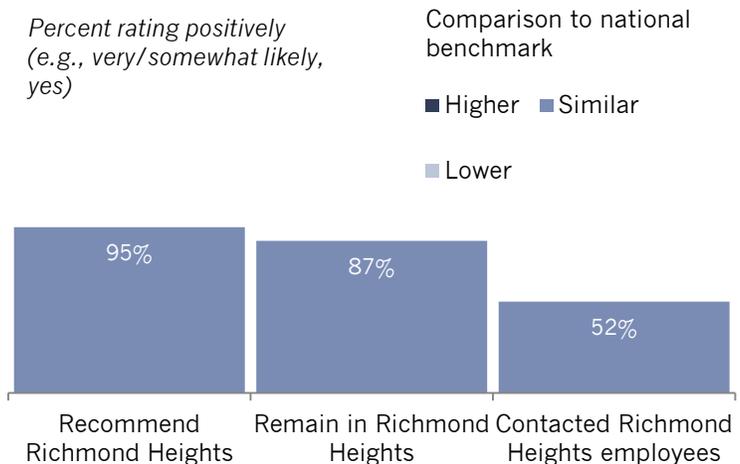
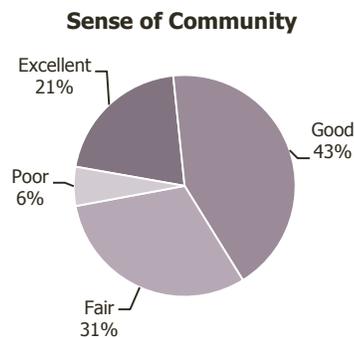
Participation

Are the residents of Richmond Heights 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. In Richmond Heights, 63% of survey respondents described the sense of community as excellent or good. Almost all residents would recommend living in Richmond Heights to others, nearly 9 in 10 planned to remain in Richmond Heights for the next five years, and more than half had contacted Richmond Heights employees in the 12 months prior to the survey. All of these ratings were similar to those given in other communities 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. Rates of Participation were mixed across the different facets. Within the facet of Safety, about 9 in 10 residents had not been the victim of a crime and about 8 in 10 had not reported a crime, but only about one-quarter had stocked supplies for an emergency. In Mobility, about three-quarters of survey participants had walked or biked instead of driving, which was a rate higher than seen in other communities. At least a majority of residents participated in all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, but fewer Richmond Heights residents had visited a City park than residents elsewhere. Rates of participation varied most widely in the facet of Community Engagement: while more than 4 in 5 residents had talked to or visited with their neighbors, done a favor for a neighbor, read or watched local news or voted in local elections, about 1 in 5 or fewer residents had campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate, contacted Richmond Heights elected officials, volunteered,

participated in a club or watched a local public meeting. The proportion of respondents who had volunteered or participated in a club in the 12 months prior to the survey was lower than the national benchmark. The proportions of residents who had used the Richmond Heights recreation center or the public library decreased from 2012 to 2015.



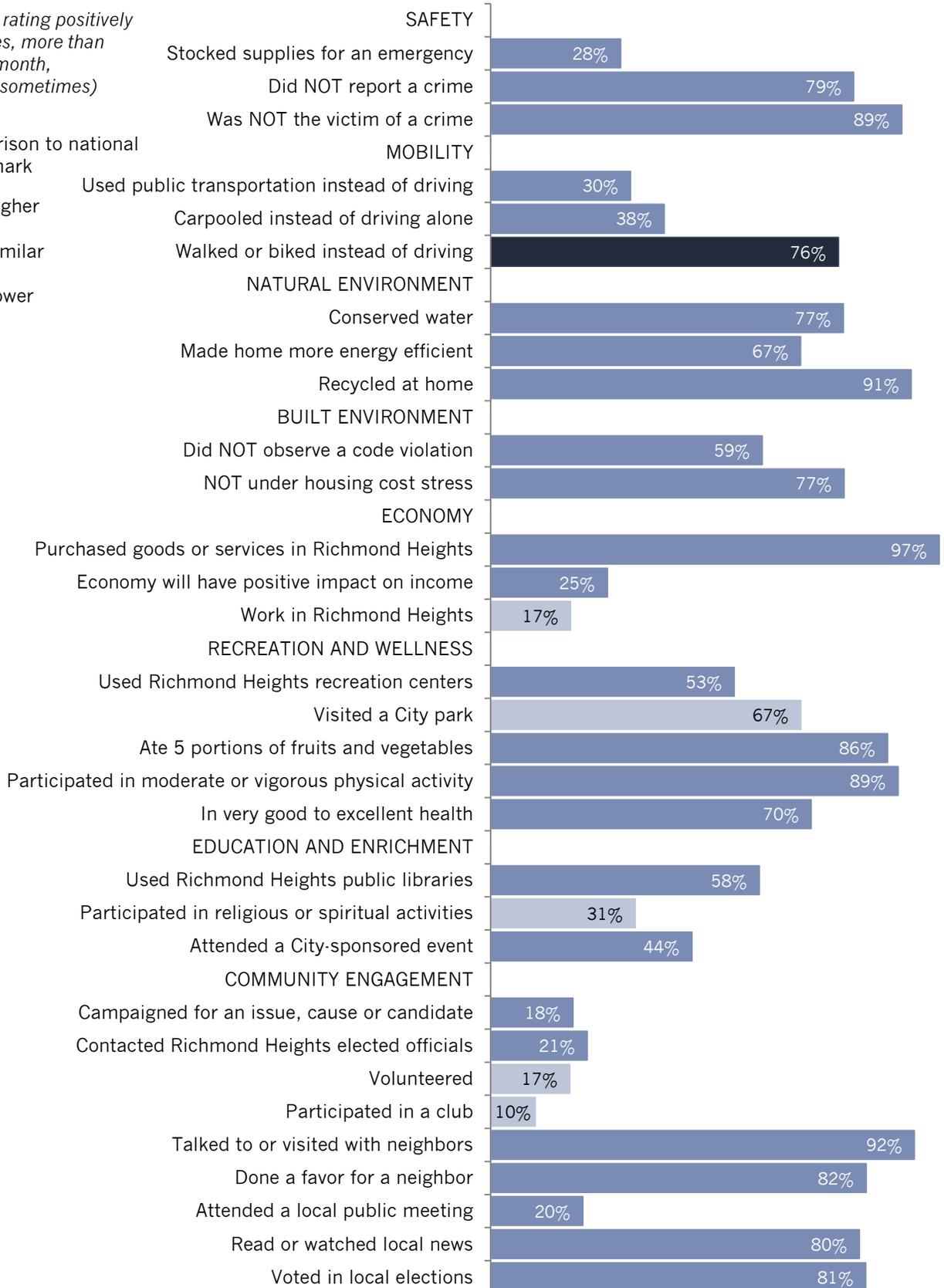
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

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

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



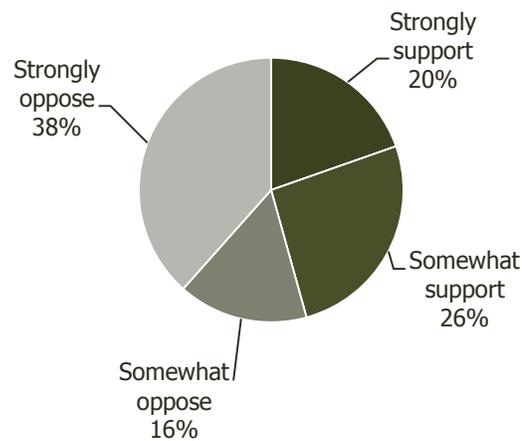
Special Topics

The City of Richmond Heights included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents whether they supported or opposed discontinuing leaf-vacuuming service provided by the City. More than half of survey respondents opposed discontinuing the service, and nearly 4 in 10 residents strongly opposed discontinuing it.

Figure 4: Support for Discontinuing Leaf-Vacuuming Service

Currently, the City offers both free (2 days annually) leaf-vacuuming service and free unlimited (year-round) yard waste pickup service to residents. To reduce expenses, the City is considering eliminating leaf-vacuuming service. Yard waste pick-up service would not be affected.

Do you support or oppose the City discontinuing leaf-vacuuming service?

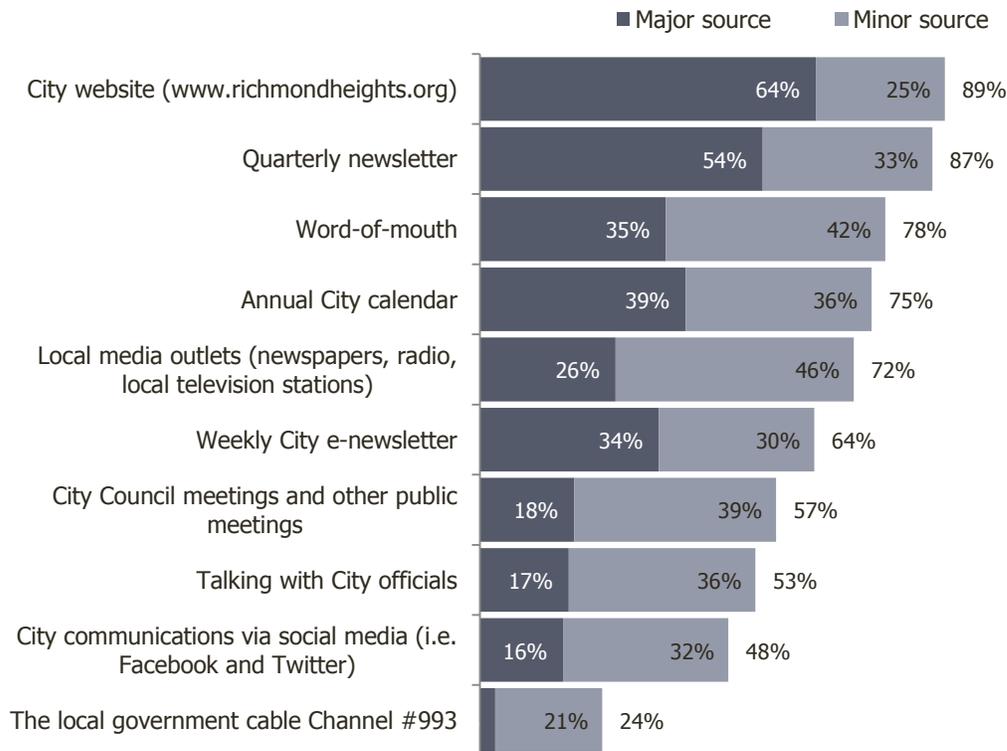


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The second special-interest question asked residents whether they found each of a number of potential information sources about the City to be a major source, minor source, or not a source. Nearly 9 in 10 residents found both the City website and the quarterly newsletter to be a major or minor source of information, and at least 7 in 10 rated word-of-mouth, the annual City calendar, and local media outlets as at least a minor source of information. Less than half of respondents found City communications via social media to be a major or minor source of information and less than one-quarter indicated that local cable channel #993 was a source.

Figure 5: Sources of City Information

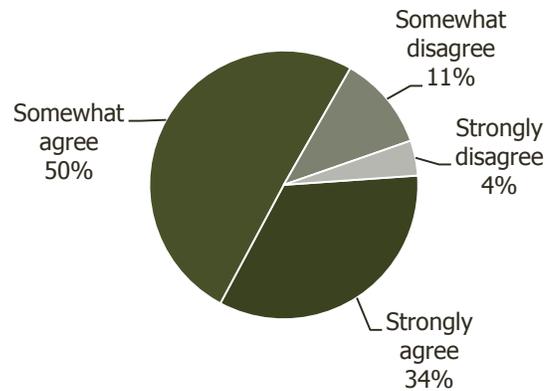
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



The final special-interest question on the survey asked residents to what extent they agreed or disagreed that more active neighbor to neighbor communication would occur with a stronger neighborhood block captain program. Half of residents somewhat agreed with this statement and an additional one-third strongly agreed. Only 15% of residents strongly or somewhat disagreed with this statement.

Figure 6: Neighborhood Block Captain Program

The City wishes to continue to be an attractive place to live for residents of all ages. To this end, the City is seeking ways to increase residents' sense of community by encouraging greater communication within our neighborhoods. Do you agree that more active neighbor to neighbor communication would occur with a stronger neighborhood block captain program?



Conclusions

Richmond Heights residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Almost all Richmond Heights residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of life in Richmond Heights, Richmond Heights as a place to live and their neighborhoods as a place to live, and at least 8 in 10 were pleased with the overall image and overall appearance of Richmond Heights and Richmond Heights as a place to raise children. Additionally, nearly all residents would recommend living in Richmond Heights to someone who asked and nearly 9 in 10 planned to remain in Richmond Heights for the next five years. Ratings for Richmond Heights as a place to raise children and the overall appearance of the City increased from 2012 to 2015.

Safety is a priority to residents.

Survey respondents indicated that Safety was an important area for the City to focus on in the coming two years, and ratings within this facet were generally positive and similar to those given in other communities. More than 8 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall feeling of safety in the City and nearly all residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhoods and in Richmond Heights' downtown/commercial area during the day. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to police, fire and ambulance/EMS services and at least three-quarters favorably rated crime prevention and fire prevention services. Safety ratings in 2015 were similar to those given in 2012.

Economy is also important to residents and ratings for it are strong.

Residents also indicated that Economy was an important focus area in the next two years, and many ratings within this facet were higher than those seen in other communities across the nation. Economy ratings that were particularly strong and higher than the benchmark included Richmond Heights' vibrant downtown/commercial area, cost of living, shopping opportunities, Richmond Heights as a place to work and economic development. Virtually all residents had purchased goods or services in Richmond Heights in the 12 months prior to the survey. Finally, the rating for economic development increased from 2012 to 2015.

Richmond Heights residents are pleased with their Built Environment.

At least a majority gave positive ratings to all aspects of Built Environment across the three pillars of community livability; two of these, the availability of affordable quality housing and the variety of housing options, received ratings higher than the national benchmark. Ratings for Built Environment in 2015 were similar to ratings given in 2012.