

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

**Suwanee, GA**  
Community Livability Report

2014



**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

# Contents

- About..... 1
- Quality of Life in Suwanee..... 2
- Community Characteristics ..... 3
- Governance ..... 5
- Participation ..... 7
- Special Topics..... 9
- Conclusions ..... 12

# About

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

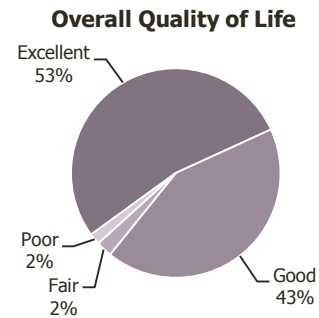
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central 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 244 residents of the City of Suwanee. 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 Suwanee

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Suwanee as excellent or good. Residents rated overall quality of life 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.

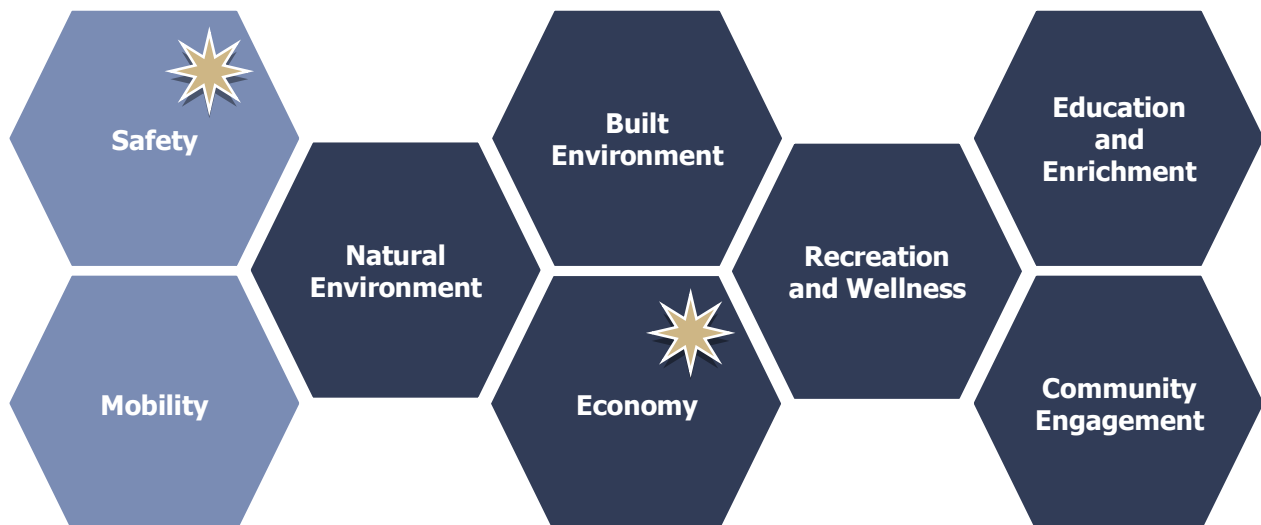
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Suwanee community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Suwanee residents gave strong ratings to most of the facets of community including Economy, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement. Ratings for Mobility and Safety 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 Suwanee’s unique questions.

## Legend

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

★ Most important



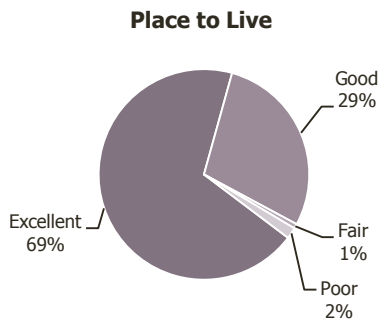
# Community Characteristics

*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 Suwanee, 98% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Suwanee as a place to live were 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 Suwanee as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Suwanee and its overall appearance. About 9 in 10 respondents or more gave positive ratings to their neighborhood as a place to live, Suwanee as a place to raise children as well as to Suwanee's overall appearance and overall image. The ratings for Suwanee as a place to raise children and Suwanee's overall appearance and overall image were higher than the national benchmark along with the rating of Suwanee as a place to retire (78% excellent or good).

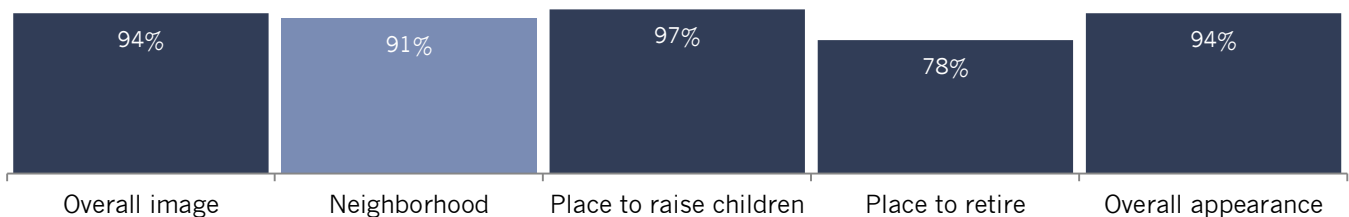
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Almost all residents rated the overall feeling of safety in Suwanee positively with ratings higher than the national benchmark. Similarly, almost all residents rated their feelings of safety in their neighborhood and in downtown/commercial areas positively. Within the facet of Mobility, residents were most pleased with Suwanee's paths and walking trails, with about 85% of residents giving them positive ratings that were higher than the national benchmark. Residents were the least pleased with traffic flow but ratings were similar to those found in other communities across the nation. At least 9 in 10 residents rated all aspects of Natural Environment positively with ratings higher than the national benchmark. Ratings for Built Environment were generally favorable with positive ratings ranging from 71% for affordable quality housing to 88% for public places; each of the five aspects were higher than the national benchmark. Within Economy, residents rated seven of the eight aspects higher than the national benchmark with 89% of respondents rating Suwanee's overall economic health as excellent or good. Residents rated aspects of Suwanee's Recreation and Wellness characteristics and opportunities positively with more than 80% of respondents rating health and wellness opportunities, recreational opportunities and fitness opportunities higher than the national benchmark. Ratings within Education and Enrichment varied with almost all residents positively rating K-12 education while about 6 in 10 residents rated adult education opportunities similar to the national benchmark. Within the facet of Community Engagement, at least 8 in 10 residents rated all five aspects higher than the national benchmark.



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



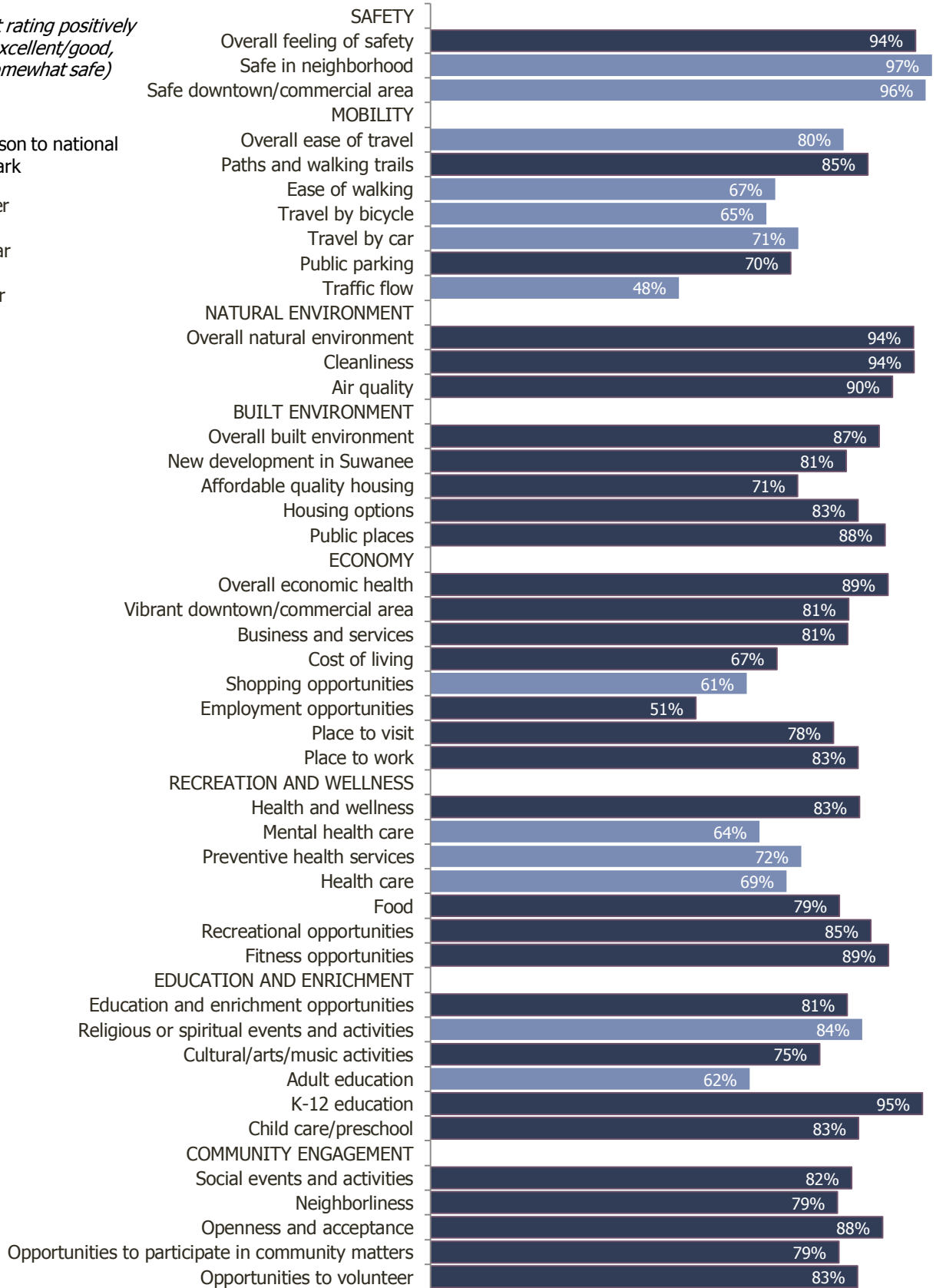
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

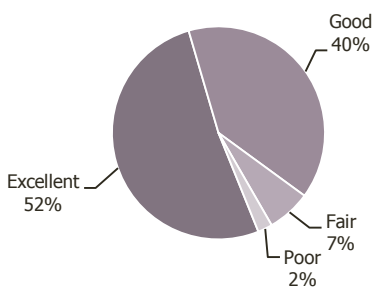
*How well does the government of Suwanee meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Suwanee as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. Residents' ratings for Suwanee's quality of services were higher than the national benchmark with 92% of respondents rating them as excellent or good.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Suwanee's leadership and governance. Almost all residents (91%) reported being satisfied with the overall direction that Suwanee was taking which was a rating higher than the national benchmark. More than 80% of respondents gave positive ratings for the City welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of Suwanee, being honest, treating all residents fairly and their confidence in City government; these ratings were higher than ratings found in communities across the nation. About two-thirds of residents gave positive ratings to Gwinnett County services and about 4 in 10 gave positive ratings to the State and Federal Government services; each of these ratings were similar to the national comparison.

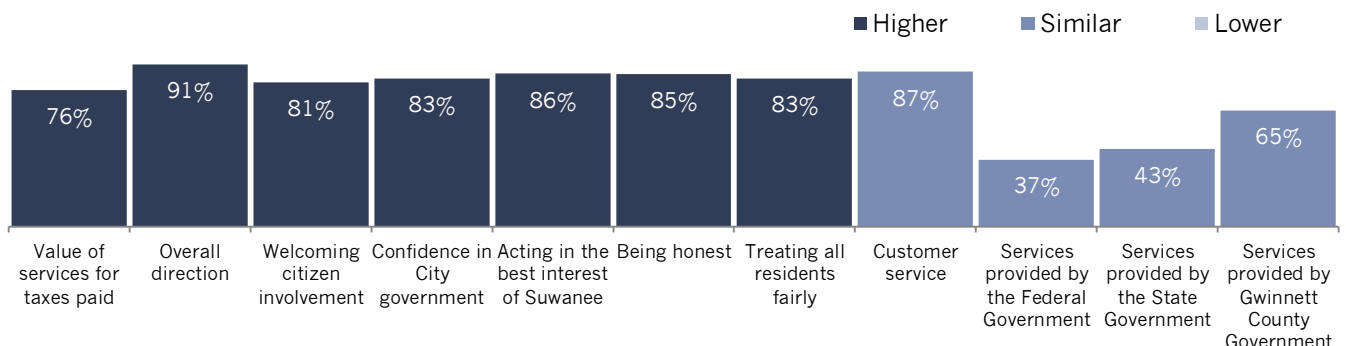
Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Suwanee. At least 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of Safety in Suwanee. Respondents rated Suwanee's crime prevention efforts higher than the national benchmark and ratings for the remaining aspects were similar to the national benchmark. Within Mobility, at least 7 in 10 residents rated street repair, street cleaning, street lighting and sidewalk maintenance positively and higher than the national benchmark. All other aspects of Mobility were rated similarly to ratings found in communities across the nation with the exception of bus or transit services, which 39% of residents rated lower than the national benchmark. Ratings within Natural Environment were favorable with at least 8 in 10 residents rating each of the six services positively. Drinking water, natural areas preservation and Suwanee's open space received ratings that were higher than the national benchmark. Residents rated two of the five aspects of Built Environment (land use planning and zoning and code enforcement) higher than the national benchmark. Residents were pleased with the economic development in Suwanee with 83% of respondents rated this aspect of Economy higher than the national benchmark. Almost all (96%) residents rated City parks as excellent or good which was higher than the national benchmark. Residents were also pleased with Suwanee's recreation centers, recreation programs and health services with at least 7 in 10 giving a positive rating. Within Education and Enrichment, 9 in 10 respondents positively rated the City's public libraries and special events. More than 80% of residents rated Suwanee's public information services higher than the national benchmark.

**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark



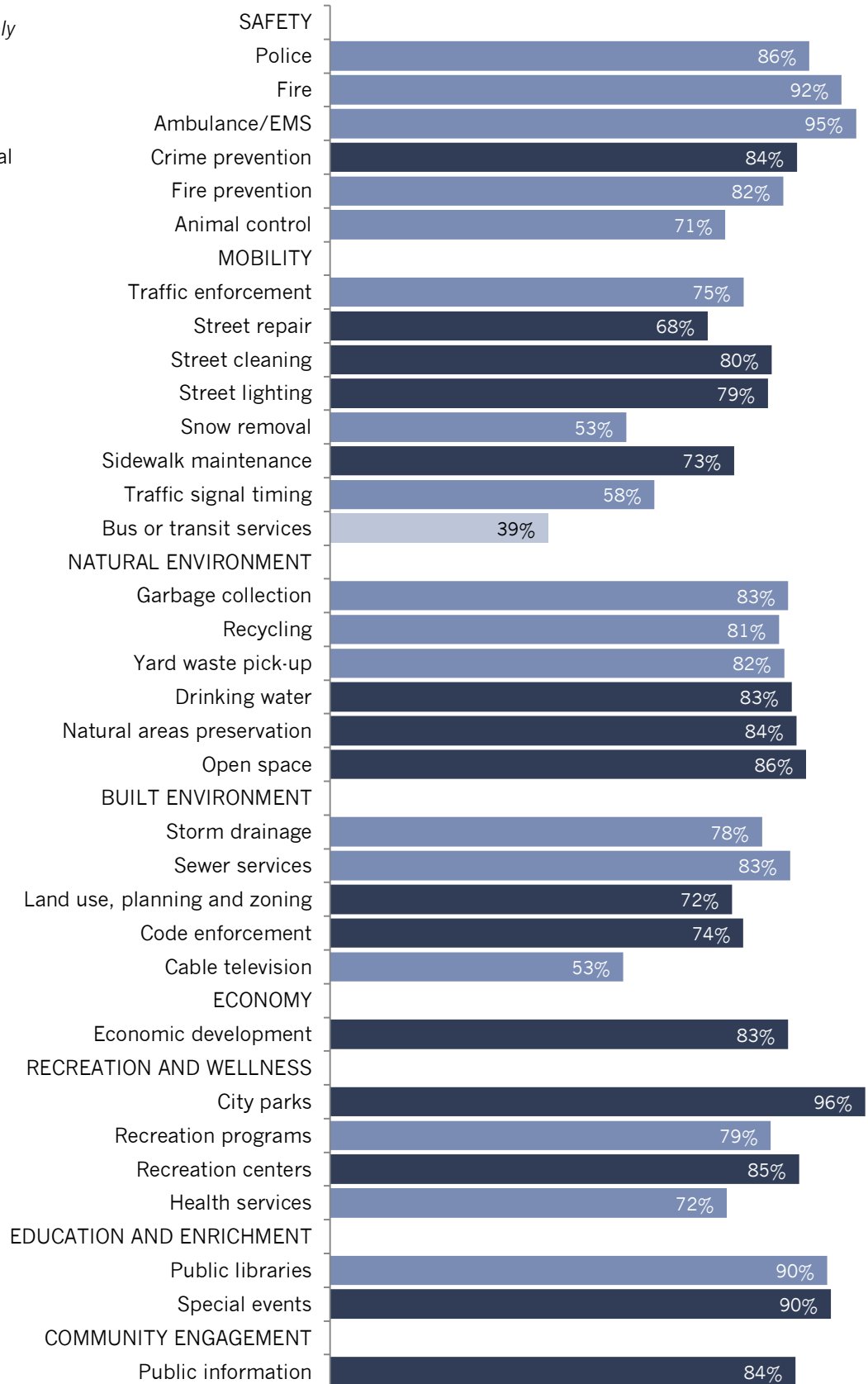
## The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





# Participation

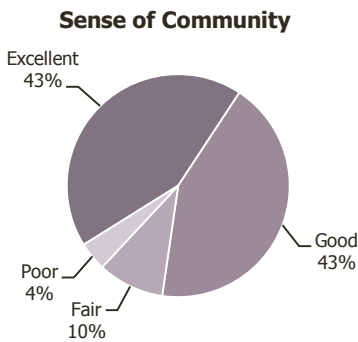
*Are the residents of Suwanee connected to the community and each other?*

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 86% of residents gave positive ratings to the sense of community in Suwanee. This rating was higher than ratings found in communities across the nation.

Almost all residents (97%) reported that they would recommend Suwanee as a place to live which was a rating higher than the benchmark comparison. Slightly fewer (91%) positively rated the likelihood of remaining in Suwanee which was similar to the national comparison. Only one-third of respondents reported that they had contacted a Suwanee employee in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The survey included over 25 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Within the facet of Safety, about 84% of residents indicated they had not reported a crime and 91% had not been the victim of a crime; ratings which were similar to the national benchmark. About 1 in 10 residents were likely to use public transportation instead of driving which was a lower rating when compared to residents across the nation. However, residents' ratings for carpooling instead of driving alone and walking or biking instead of driving were similar to the national benchmark. Within Natural Environment, more than three-fourths of respondents reported conserving water, making their home more energy efficient and recycling at home which was similar to the national benchmark. Ratings within Built Environment were generally favorable with 67% of residents reporting that they did not observe a code violation (which was higher than the national benchmark). Ratings varied within Economy, with almost all residents purchasing goods or services in Suwanee, half feeling that the economy will have a positive impact on their income (a rating higher than the benchmark comparison), and only 29% of residents working in Suwanee (a rating that was lower than in other communities).

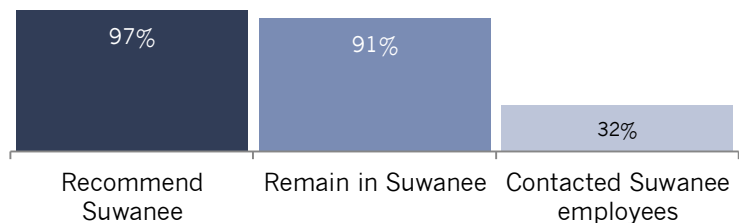
Within the facet of Recreation and Wellness, 78% of respondents reported using Suwanee's recreation centers and 96% said they had visited a City park, both of which were higher rates of use than the national benchmark. More than 80% of residents said they had attended a City-sponsored event while only 37% reported participating in religious or spiritual activities. Within Community Engagement, residents rated most aspects similarly to the national benchmark. The only aspect rated lower than the national benchmark was volunteering, with 27% of residents reporting that they had done so.



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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



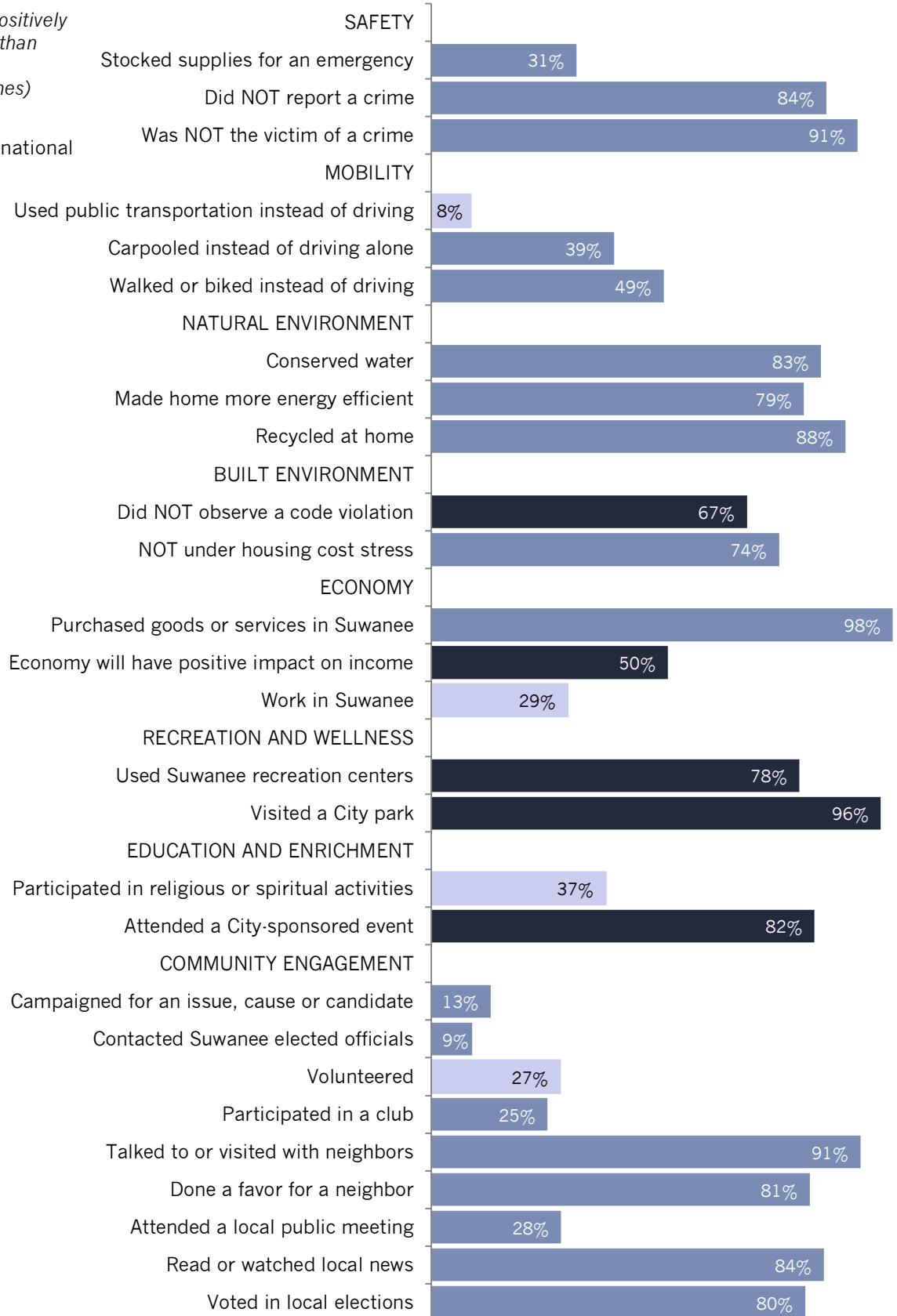
# The National Citizen Survey™

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

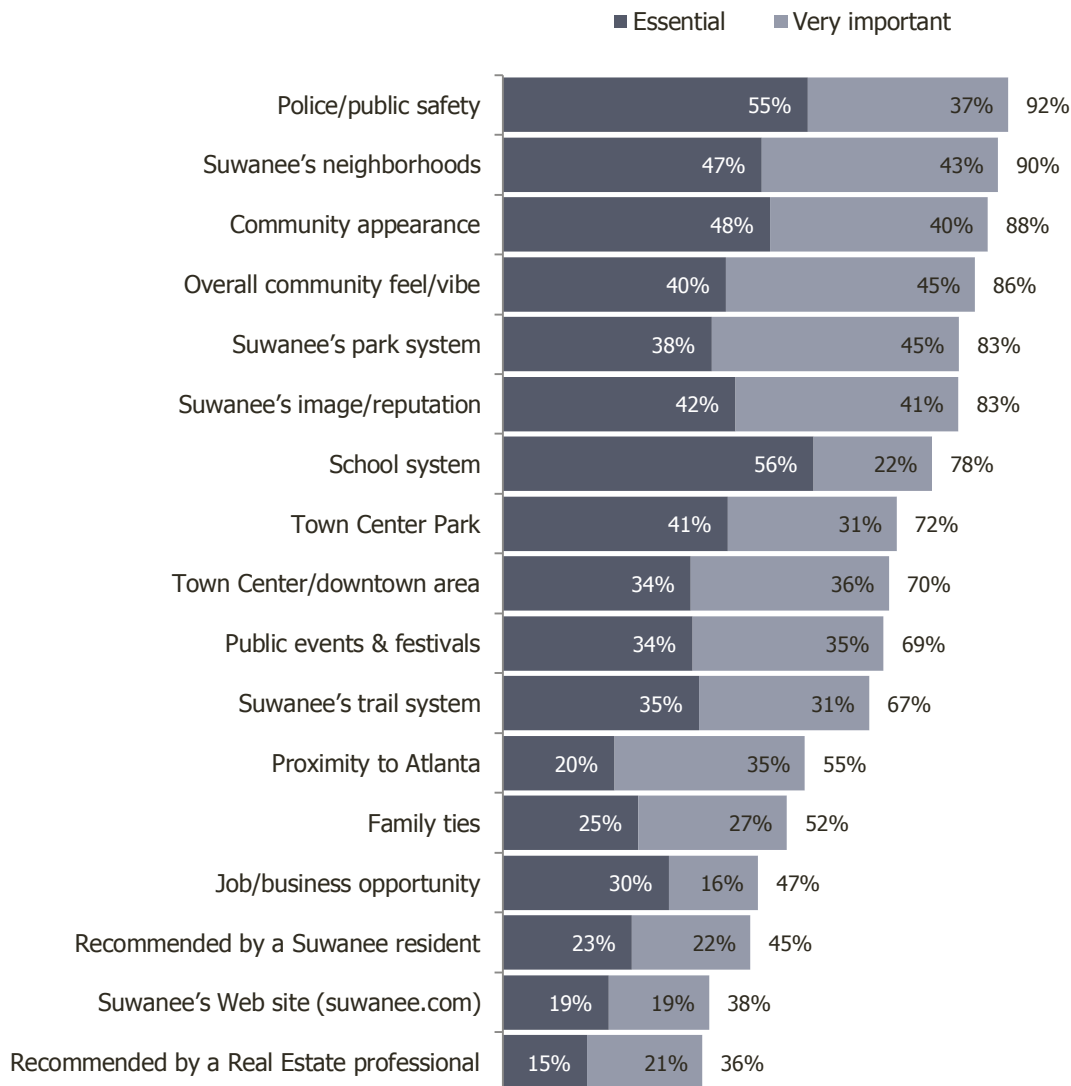


# Special Topics

The City of Suwanee included three questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents who moved to Suwanee after January 1, 2009 to rate how important certain factors were in their decision to select Suwanee as a place to live. A majority of residents rated the City’s police and public safety and its neighborhoods as essential or very important. More than 80% of respondents reported that Suwanee’s community appearance, overall community feel/vibe, park system and its image/reputation were important in their decision to move to the City.

Figure 4: Important Factors of Suwanee as a Place to Live

*If you have moved to Suwanee since January 1, 2009, please rate how important, if at all, each of the following items were in your decision to select Suwanee as a place to live.*

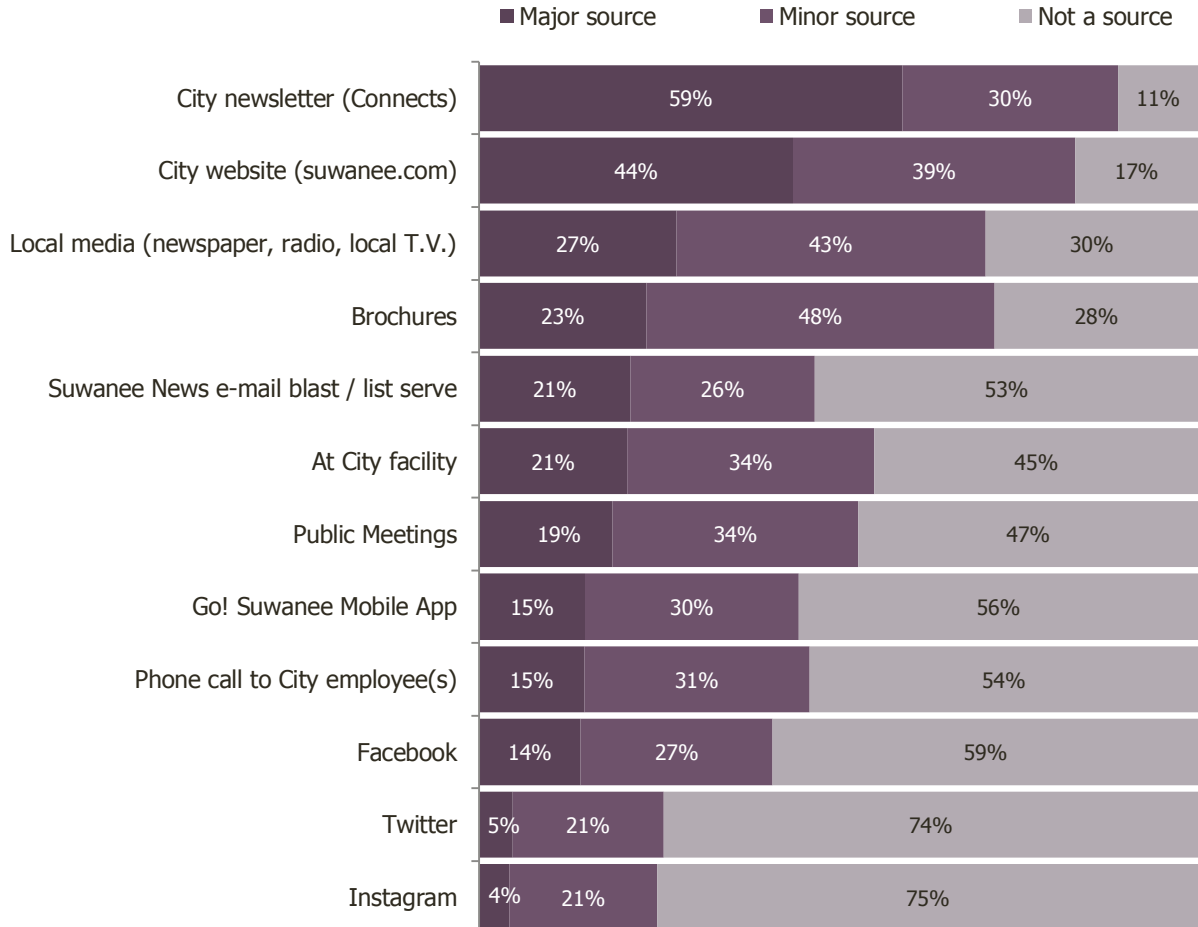


## The National Citizen Survey™

The second question asked residents to rate how much of a source of information 12 potential sources are for obtaining information about the City government, events and services. A majority of residents considered the City newsletter (Connects) to be a major or minor source of information. Around 83% of respondents identified the City's website (Suwanee.com) as a source of information. The local media and brochures were also favored by residents. Residents were least likely to use Twitter or Instagram to obtain information about the City.

Figure 5: Information Sources

*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:*

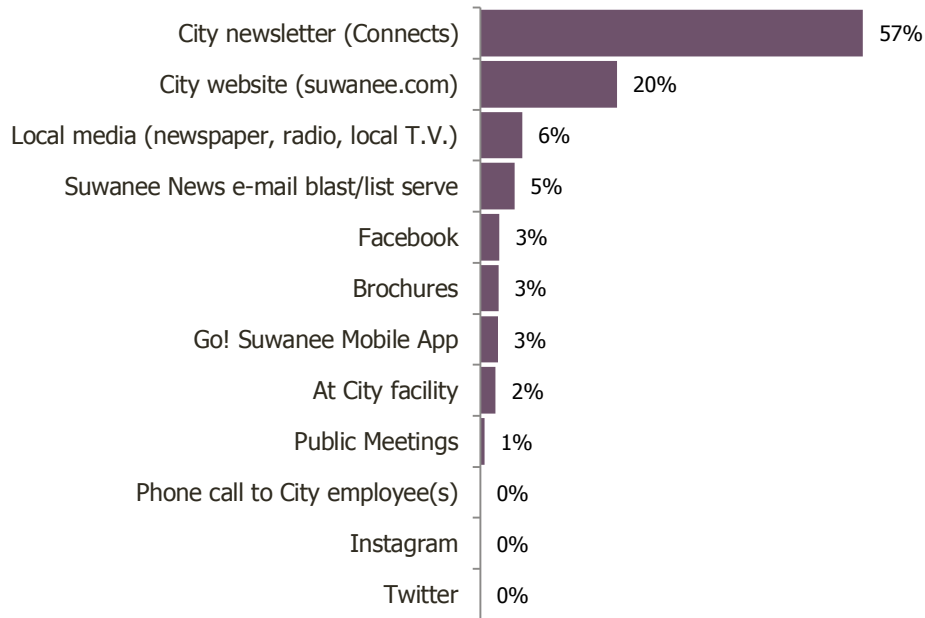


## The National Citizen Survey™

The third question asked residents to identify which of the 12 sources they preferred the most for obtaining information about the City's government, activities, events and services. A little more than half (57%) of respondents identified the City newsletter (Connects) as their most preferred source of information. The second most preferred source of information (20%) was the City website. None of the respondents reporting calling a City employee or using Instagram or Twitter to obtain information about the City.

Figure 6: Single Most Preferred Information Source

*Please check the source you consider to be your most preferred source for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services: (Please check only one.)*



# Conclusions

## **Residents of Suwanee continue to enjoy a high quality of life.**

Almost all residents rated the overall quality of life in Suwanee as excellent or good (96%) as well as the City as a place to live (98%). Compared to other communities, more residents gave positive ratings to Suwanee as a place to raise children and as a place to retire. More than 9 in 10 respondents rated the City's overall image and appearance positively with almost all reporting that they would recommend Suwanee as a place to live (97%). Additionally, a large majority of residents reported that they would remain in Suwanee (91%). Ratings for these aspects of community livability were similar to those from the 2012 iteration of the survey which suggests that residents continue to experience a high quality of life in Suwanee.

## **Economy was rated positively and is important to residents.**

Survey participants indicated that Economy is an important facet for Suwanee to focus on in the coming years. A majority of residents rated Suwanee's overall economic health as excellent or good with more than 80% of respondents identifying the City as an excellent or good place to work. Residents were most pleased with the downtown/commercial area, the business and services and the employment opportunities in Suwanee. However, only about 29% of residents reported working in Suwanee, which was lower than reported in other communities across the nation. Most respondents positively rated the economic development efforts being made by the City and half of respondents thought the economy will have a positive impact on their income; both ratings were higher than the benchmark comparison.

## **Residents use Recreation and Wellness amenities and services and think highly of their quality.**

The health and wellness opportunities in Suwanee were rated as excellent or good by a majority of residents, which was higher than ratings in other communities. Additionally, high ratings were noted in recreational opportunities and fitness opportunities. Almost all respondents reported visiting a City park and more than 70% said they used Suwanee recreation centers. Most residents were also pleased with the availability of affordable quality food. Compared to 2012, almost all Recreation and Wellness ratings remained stable, however, ratings for the quality of health services was lower in 2014.

## **Suwanee's Natural Environment is a valued community asset.**

Residents gave positive ratings to the overall natural environment in Suwanee, as well as its cleanliness and air quality. More than 80% of respondents rated Suwanee's drinking water, natural areas preservation and open space as excellent or good; ratings that were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation. A majority of new residents reported that the City's park system was an essential or very important aspect of their decision to select Suwanee as a place to live.