

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

**Suwanee, GA**  
Community Livability Report

2017



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# 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).

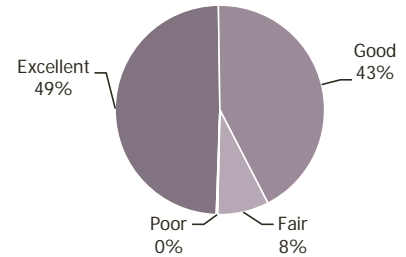
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 232 residents of the City of Suwanee. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 6% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Suwanee

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

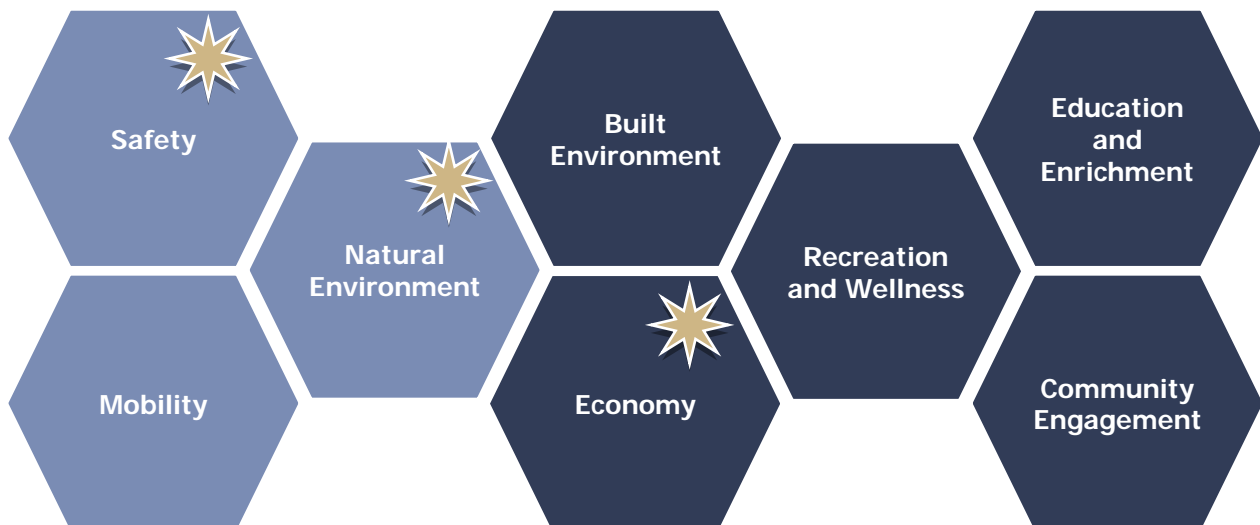
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety, Natural Environment and Economy as priorities for the Suwanee community in the coming two years. It is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



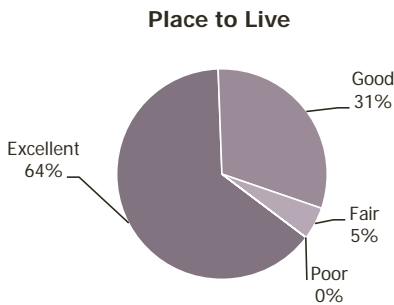
# Community Characteristics

*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, 95% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live, which was higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several other aspects of community quality. At least 9 in 10 respondents awarded high marks to Suwanee as a place to raise children, their neighborhoods as places to live and the overall image and overall appearance of the City, while about three-quarters of respondents positively rated Suwanee as a place to retire. Neighborhood ratings were on par with national averages and all remaining aspects of community quality 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. Almost all of these community features were rated positively by a majority of respondents and all were similar to or higher than the national benchmarks. Suwanee's Built Environment emerged as a truly stand-out community feature, as ratings for all aspects, including new development in Suwanee and housing options, were higher than those seen in comparison communities. Residents also praised opportunities to engage with the Suwanee community: almost all aspects of Community Engagement were higher than the benchmarks and received positive ratings from about four in five survey participants.



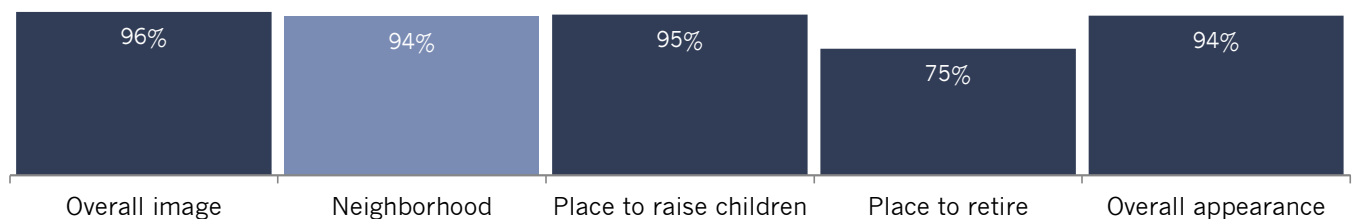
Residents rated every other facet as similar to or better than other communities across the country. Almost all residents felt safe in the community, and residents showed a similar appreciation for the Natural Environment. Within Mobility, survey respondents highlighted paths and walking trails as a strength in Suwanee, and other aspects of Mobility were similar to the national benchmarks.

From 2014 to 2017, ratings within Community Characteristics were generally stable, though decreases were observed for the cost of living and Suwanee as a place to work (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under a separate cover for more detail).

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

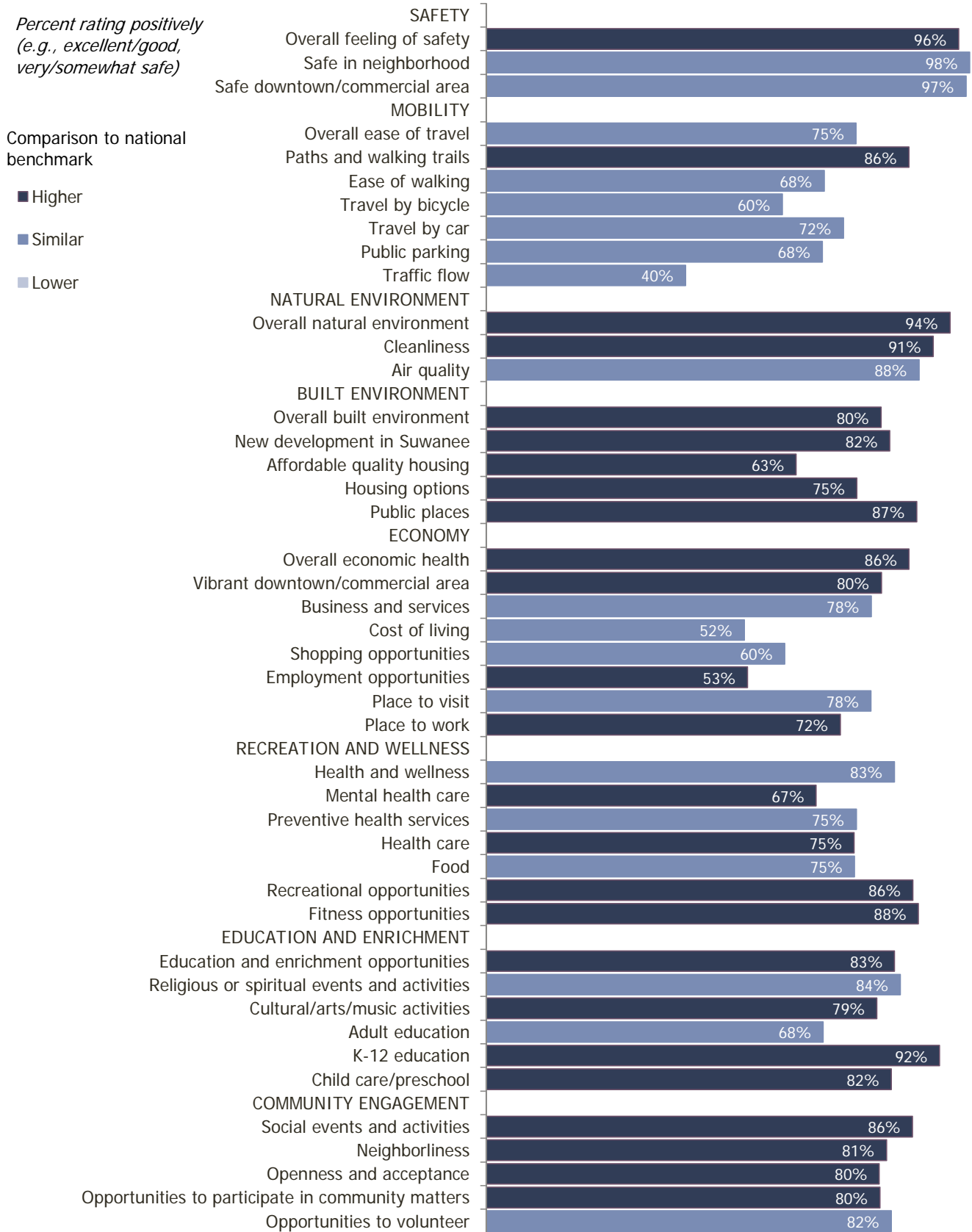
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



# 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. About 9 in 10 respondents awarded high marks to the overall quality of City services, which was higher than ratings seen elsewhere; in comparison, only about half of residents favorably rated services provided by the Federal Government, which was similar to the benchmark.

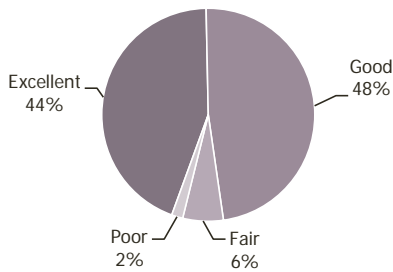
Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Suwanee’s leadership and governance. All local aspects, including the overall direction the City is taking and confidence in the City government, were rated as excellent or good by between 7 in 10 and 8 in 10 respondents. Customer service was viewed positively by 86% percent of Suwanee residents. All aspects were higher than the national benchmark comparisons.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Suwanee. All Suwanee services and amenities received positive ratings from at least 6 in 10 respondents and were similar to or higher than other communities nationwide. Suwanee residents awarded particularly strong ratings to services and amenities in the facets of Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement, with above-average ratings for all aspects within these facets.

Residents said that services in the facets of Safety, Mobility and Natural Environment were strong, with all comparisons either higher than or similar to the national benchmarks. Stand-out services within these facets included police and crime prevention services, animal control, services related to street maintenance (e.g., street repair, snow removal, etc.), natural areas preservation, Suwanee open space and drinking water.

Ratings increased from 2014 to 2017 for snow removal, cable television and recreation programs and decreased for street lighting.

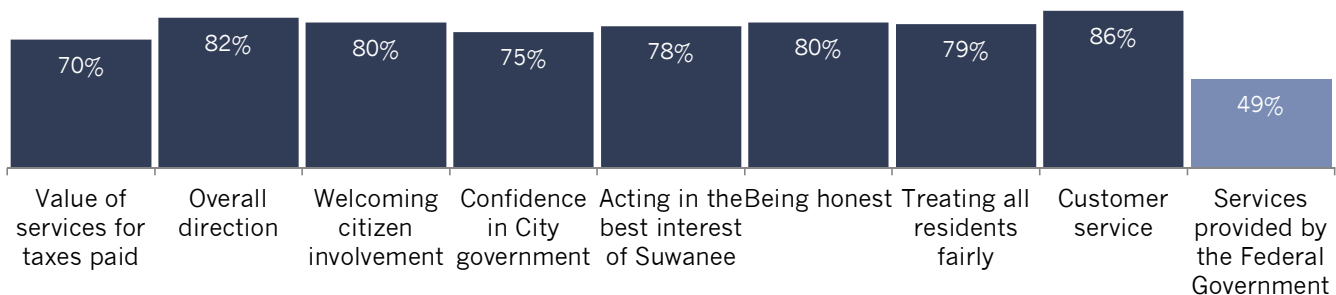
Overall Quality of City Services



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



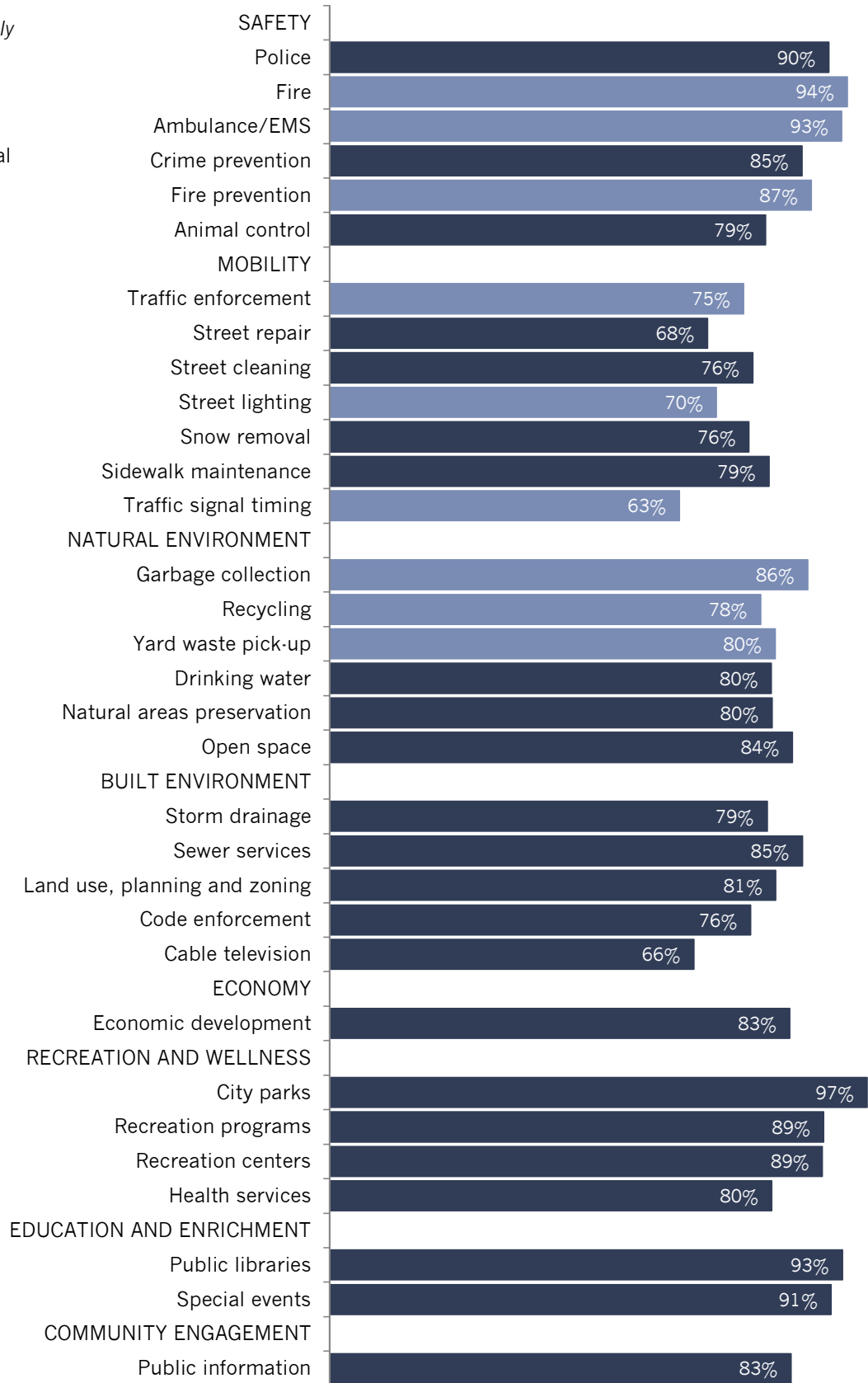
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower





# Participation

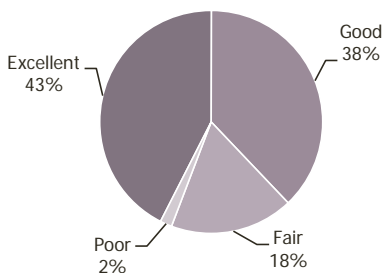
*Are the residents of Suwanee connected to the community and each other?*

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 four in five Suwanee residents felt the sense of community in the City was excellent or good, and almost all would recommend living in Suwanee to someone who asked. These ratings were higher than the benchmark. Additionally, about 9 in 10 respondents indicated that they planned to remain in the City for the next five years, which was similar to rates seen elsewhere. About 3 in 10 residents had contacted Suwanee in the 12 months prior to the survey, a rate lower than those typically seen in other communities.

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 varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparison helpful for understanding the results. Most participation rates were similar to the national benchmark. Residents participated at a higher rate in Suwanee than in other communities in use of parks and recreation centers, as well as attendance at community events (despite a decrease since 2014). Suwanee survey respondents also reflected a greater optimism about the economy than the rest of the country.

When compared to other communities across the country, Suwanee residents reported lower levels of walking or biking instead of driving, less participation in religious or spiritual activities, less volunteerism and lower rates of voting in local elections.

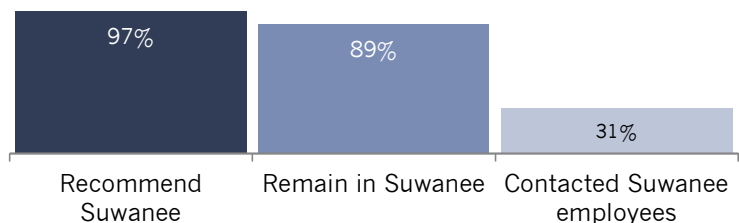
Sense of Community



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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



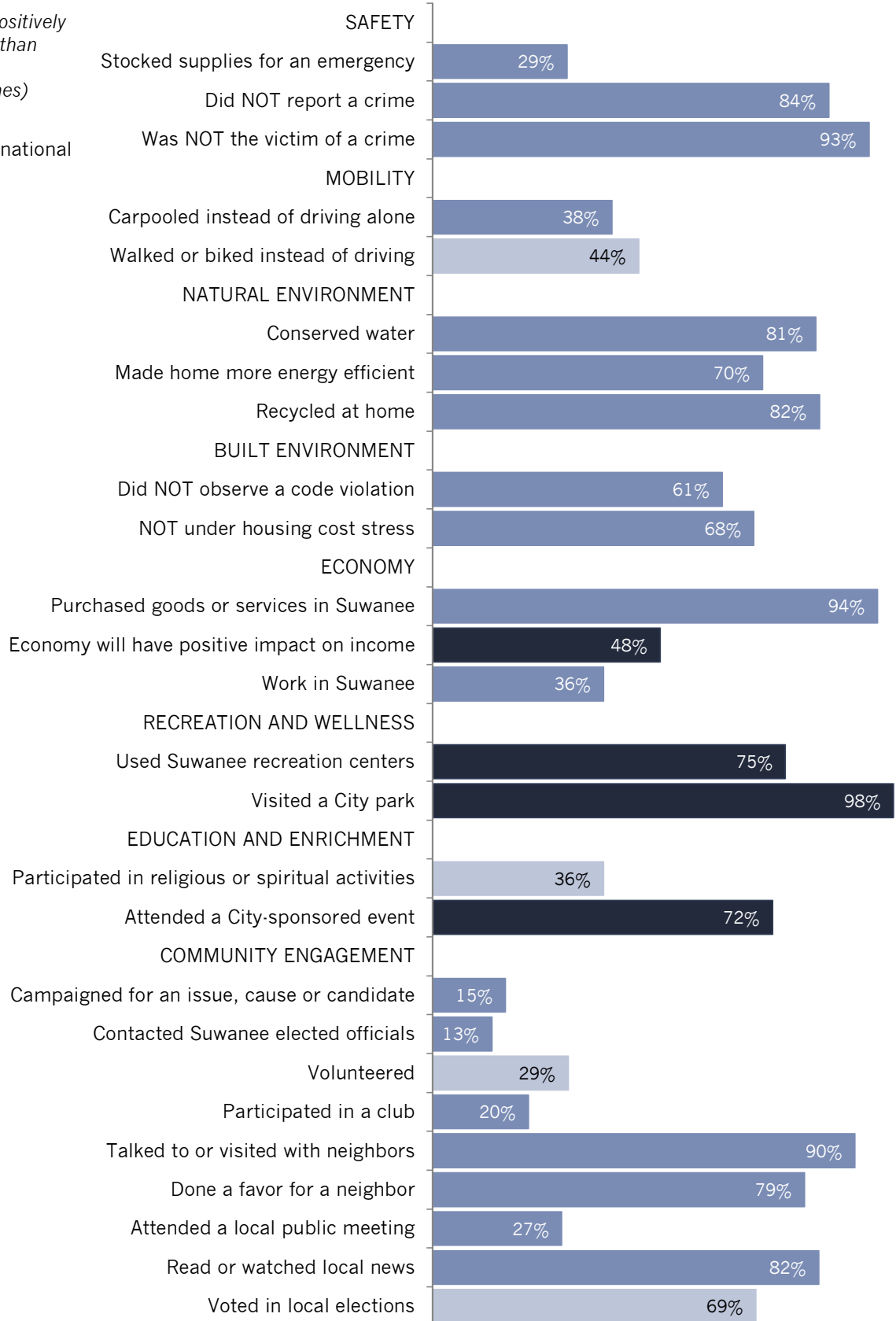
## The National Citizen Survey™

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



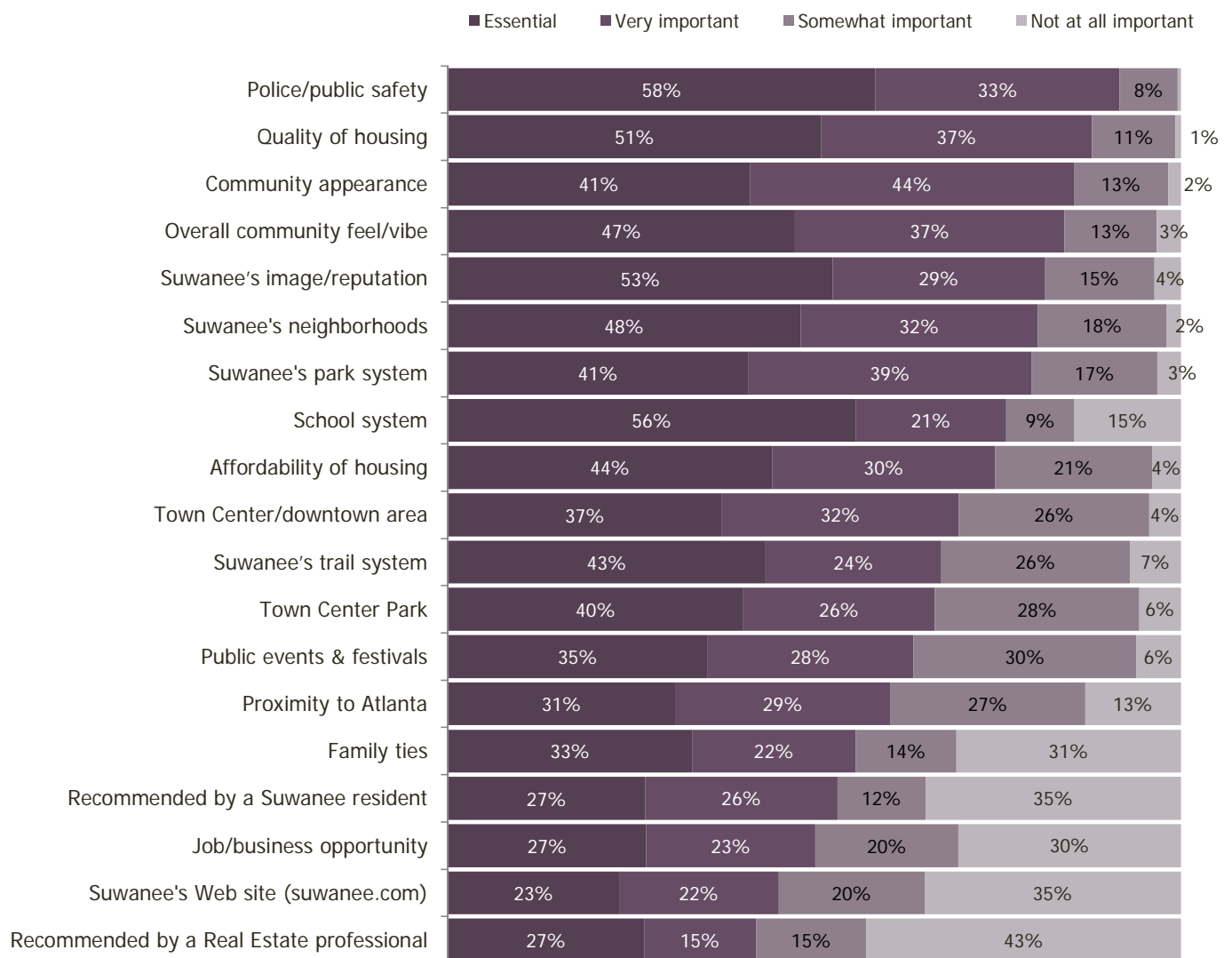
# Special Topics

The City of Suwanee included eight questions of special interest on The NCS. These questions explored several topics, including residents' reasons for moving to Suwanee, their use of sources to gain information about the City, public transportation and housing.

The first special interest questions asked residents who moved to Suwanee after January 1, 2012 to indicate how important certain factors were in their decision to select Suwanee as a place to live. Of the 232 surveys completed by Suwanee residents, 140 residents responded to this question. About 9 in 10 of the 140 respondents indicated that Suwanee's police/public safety and the City's quality of housing were essential or very important in their decision to select Suwanee as a place to live. Half of respondents said Suwanee's image/reputation and the school system were essential factors in their decision to reside in the City.

Figure 4: Reasons for Moving to Suwanee

*If you have moved to Suwanee since January 1, 2012, please rate how important, if at all, each of the following items were in your decision to select Suwanee as a place to live:*

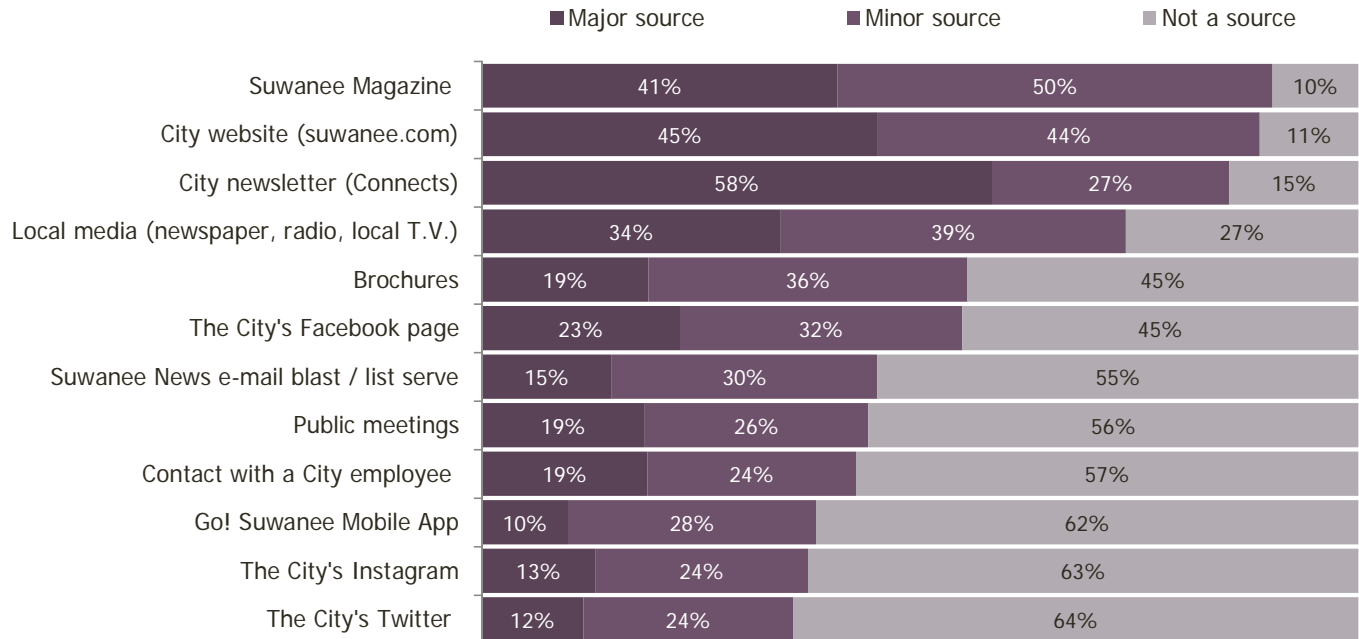


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The City of Suwanee inquired about the sources of information residents turn to gain information about the City government and its activities, events and services. About 9 in 10 respondents indicated that Suwanee Magazine and the City website were major or minor sources of City information. The City newsletter was turned to as a major source of City information by nearly three in five Suwanee residents. The City's Instagram and the City's Twitter were less likely to be used as sources of information.

Figure 5: Sources of City Information

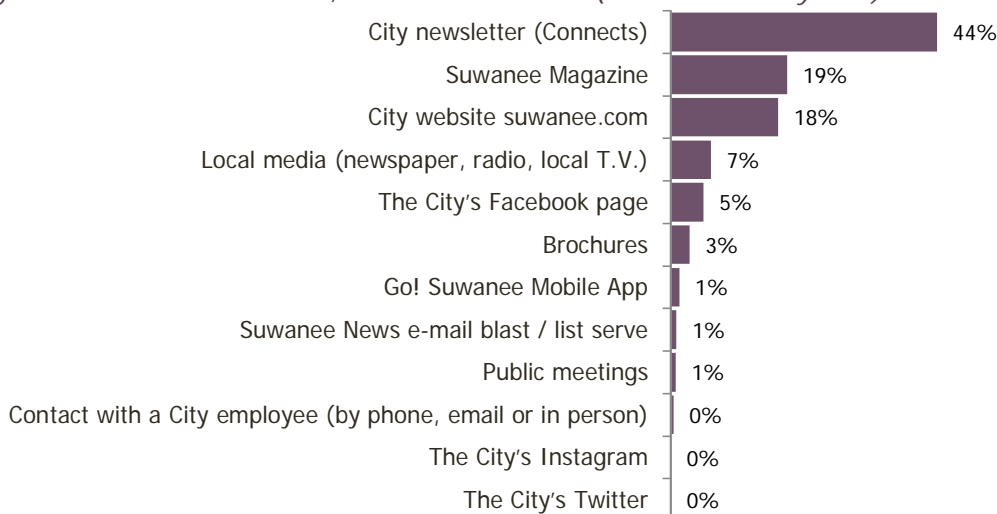
Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the City government and its activities, events and services:



Respondents next selected their most preferred source for obtaining City information. About two in five residents indicated the City newsletter (Connects) was their most preferred source of information. About one in five respondents preferred the Suwanee Magazine and the City website.

Figure 6: Most Preferred Source of City Information

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.)



Suwanee included two survey questions related to transportation: one about residents' average commute times and the second about the likelihood of using various modes of public transportation to travel to work.

About one in five survey respondents indicated they did not have a commute because they worked from home or were not currently working; those respondents were excluded from the results of these two questions. Of those residents who did commute to work, about one-quarter reported that their average travel time was 15 minutes or less. About one-third of respondents took 15 to 30 minutes to commute, and about 3 in 10 had a commute that lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. About 1 in 10 residents reported an average travel time to work that was 60 minutes or more.

Residents indicated how likely they would be to use various modes of public transportation if they were made available in Suwanee. Of those residents who reported commuting, a majority (57%) indicated they would be somewhat or very likely to use rail to commute to work if it were available; however, it is worth noting that the very likely and very unlikely percentages for this question were close to equal. About half of respondents said they would be very unlikely to ride a bus to work.

Figure 7: Average Commute Time  
*What is your average travel time to work?*

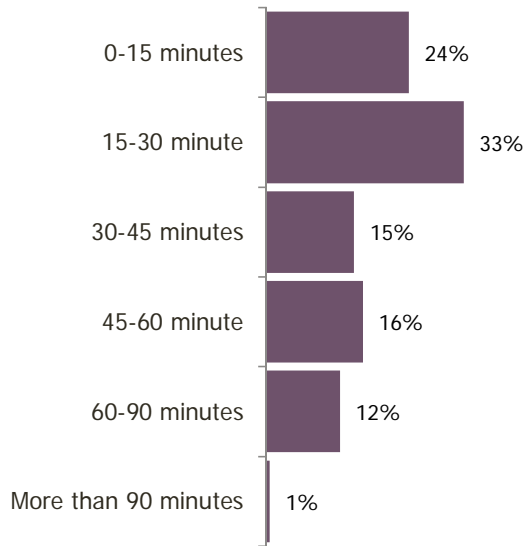
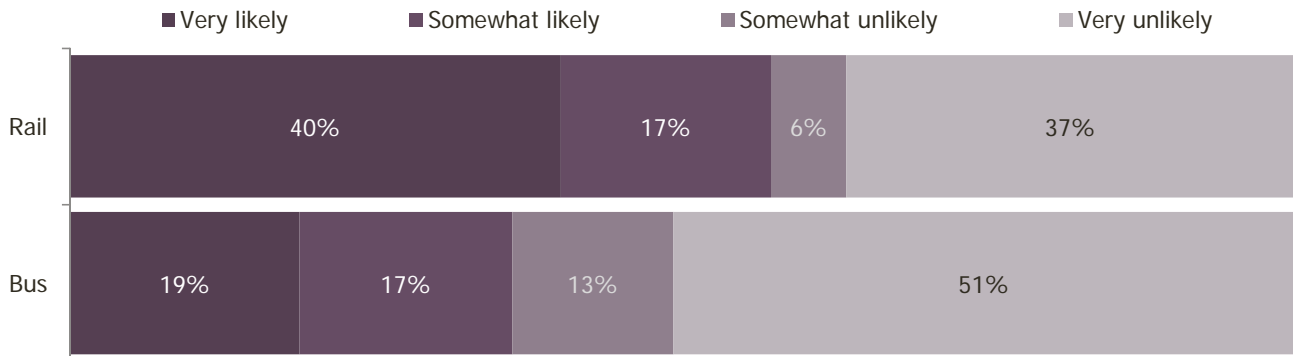
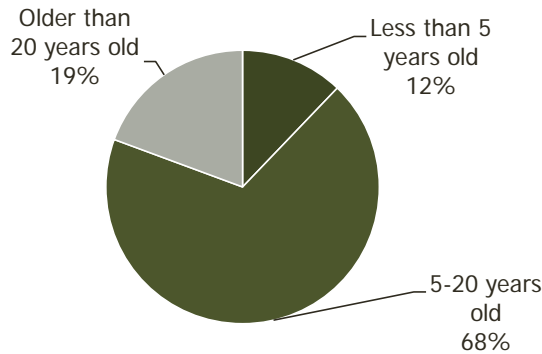


Figure 8: Likelihood of Using Bus and Rail for Commuting  
*If available, how likely or unlikely would you be to use the following modes of transportation to commute to and from work?*



The City was interested in learning more about residents' current housing characteristics and future preferences across a series of three questions. About one in five respondents were residing in a home that was more than 20 years old, and about two-thirds lived in a home between five and twenty years old. Only about 1 in 10 residents lived in a home that was less than five years old.

Figure 9: Age of Home  
*How old is your home?*



A strong majority of residents (84%) said they would currently prefer to own a home, and about three-quarters had a preference for a detached single family unit.

Figure 10: Renting or Owning Preferences  
*Would you currently prefer to rent or own your home?*

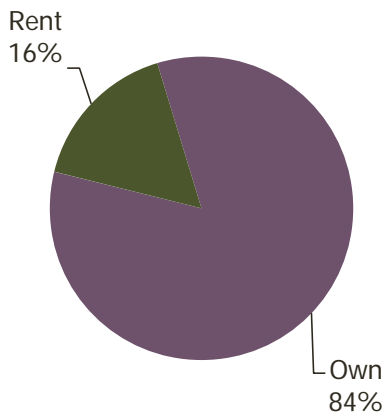
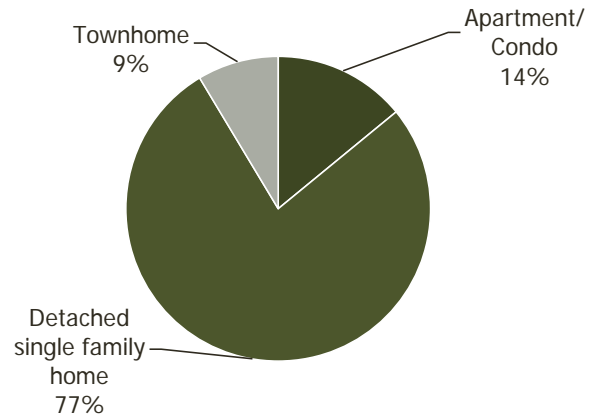


Figure 11: Housing Type Preferences  
*In which housing type would you prefer to live?*



Those who preferred living in an apartment or condo (14% of respondents) also preferred renting (at a rate of three to one). Renting preferences were equally low among respondents whose current preference was for a townhome or single family home (5% and 7%, respectively).

Table 1: Home Ownership and Housing Type Preferences Comparison

Rent/own preference	Housing type preference			Overall
	Apartment/Condo	Townhome	Detached single family home	
<b>Rent</b>	74%	5%	7%	17%
<b>Own</b>	26%	95%	93%	83%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%

# Conclusions

**Suwanee is designed well and its overall appearance and structures are appealing to new residents.**

Suwanee's Built Environment (which includes the overall design of the City, buildings, parks and transportation systems) emerged as a strong community asset and received exceptionally high ratings from residents. About three-quarters of respondents awarded high marks to key planning and infrastructure services, including storm drainage, sewer services and code enforcement. Residents also indicated a high degree of satisfaction with housing and development in Suwanee. A strong majority of residents positively rated new development in Suwanee, the availability of affordable housing and housing options; additionally, when asked about factors that influenced their decision to live in Suwanee, about 9 in 10 of those who identified a characteristic said that the quality of housing was an essential or very important reason why they chose Suwanee as a place to live. A vast majority of residents reported that they would prefer to own their home and about three-quarters indicated they would prefer to live in a single family home; this information will be important for Suwanee to consider as the City looks to plan for future development and growth.

**Residents continue to see Safety and Economy as top community priorities.**

This year, as in 2014, residents identified Safety and Economy as top priorities for the Suwanee community to focus on in the coming two years. Almost all residents reported feeling safe in Suwanee and residents gave exceptionally high marks to police services, crime prevention and animal control. Respondents flagged police/public safety as an important factor in choosing Suwanee as a place to live.

Residents generally evaluated Suwanee's Economy positively, and ratings for measures related to Economy tended to be higher than ratings reported in comparison communities. About four in five respondents awarded high marks to the overall economic health of Suwanee, the vibrancy of the City's downtown and economic development, all of which were higher than ratings seen elsewhere. Residents saw the cost of living and working in Suwanee less positively than in 2014, potentially reflecting the challenges of growth and development.

**City services consistently meet the needs and expectations of residents and government trust remains high.**

Suwanee residents reported a high degree of satisfaction with City services and amenities. At least 6 in 10 residents rated all Suwanee services and amenities positively, awarding a number of service areas ratings consistently higher than the national comparisons. Survey respondents strongly approved of the City's leadership and governance. All aspects of the City's leadership were given excellent or good ratings by about 7 in 10 respondents or more and were higher than ratings seen in other communities across the U.S. These strong government trust ratings were stable over time, indicating that the City continues to meet and exceed residents' expectations.