



**THE NCS™**  
The National Citizen Survey™

# Cañon City, CO

Community Livability Report

2018



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Charter Members



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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Cañon City. 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 484 residents of the City of Cañon City. 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 Cañon City

A majority of residents (about 6 in 10) rated the quality of life in Cañon City as excellent or good. This was lower than ratings given 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. As in previous years, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Cañon City community in the coming two years. Ratings for most facets of community livability were similar to the benchmark except for Mobility, Built Environment and Economy, which were lower. 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.

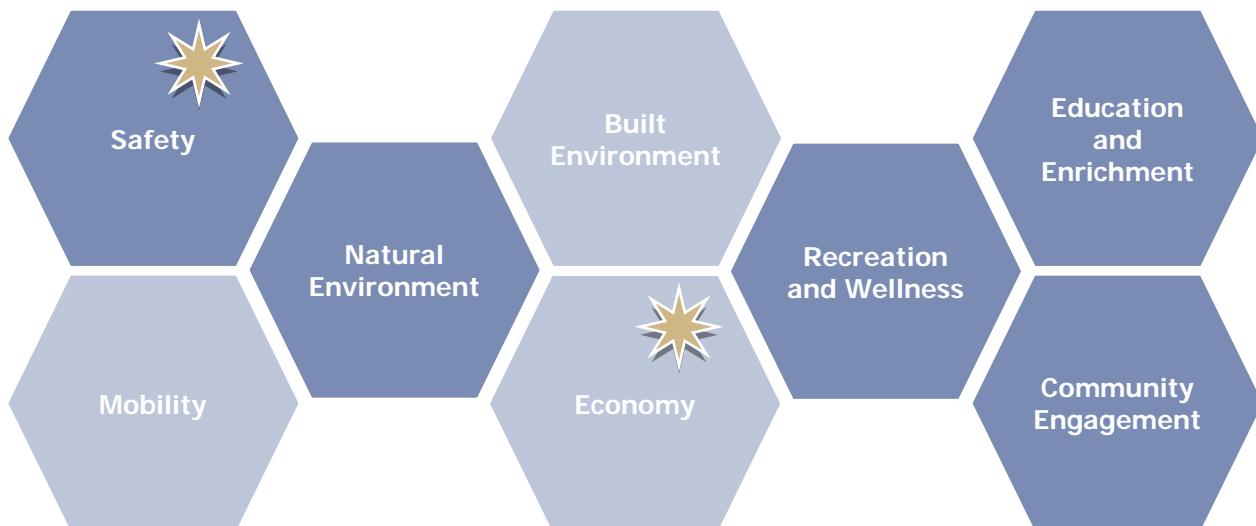
Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Cañon City's unique questions.



## 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?*

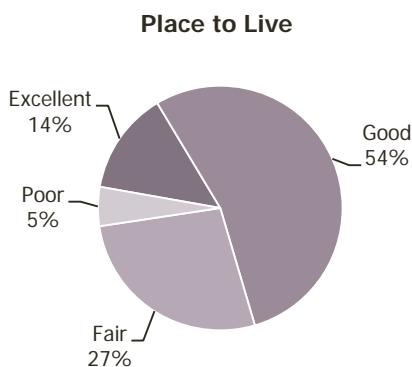
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Cañon City, 68% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Cañon City as a place to live were lower 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 Cañon City as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Cañon City and its overall appearance. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to their neighborhood as a place to live and Cañon City as a place to retire, ratings which were similar to the national benchmark. Roughly half of residents gave favorable marks to the City's overall image, appearance and Cañon City as a place to raise children and these ratings were lower than average.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Generally, most aspects of Community Characteristics received ratings lower than or similar to those observed in other communities across the nation. For example, in the facet of Safety, while more than 8 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in Cañon City's downtown/commercial area (both similar to the national benchmark), only 6 in 10 residents

positively rated the overall feeling of safety in the city and this rating was lower than average.

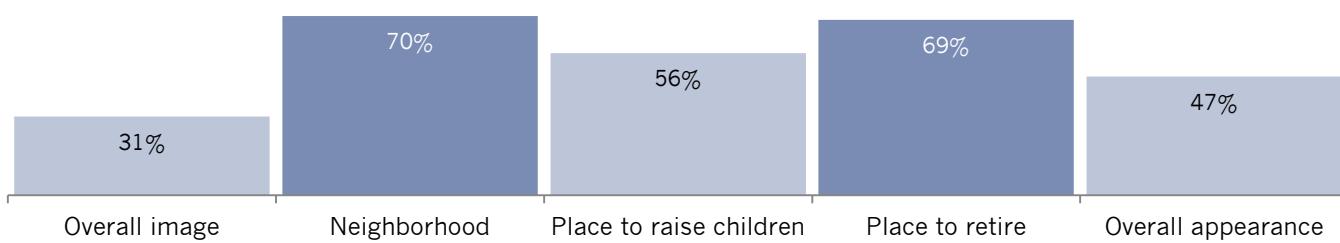
Compared to 2017, several ratings within Community Characteristics declined in 2018, particularly within the facets of Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment (for more information see the *Trends over Time* report under separate cover).



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

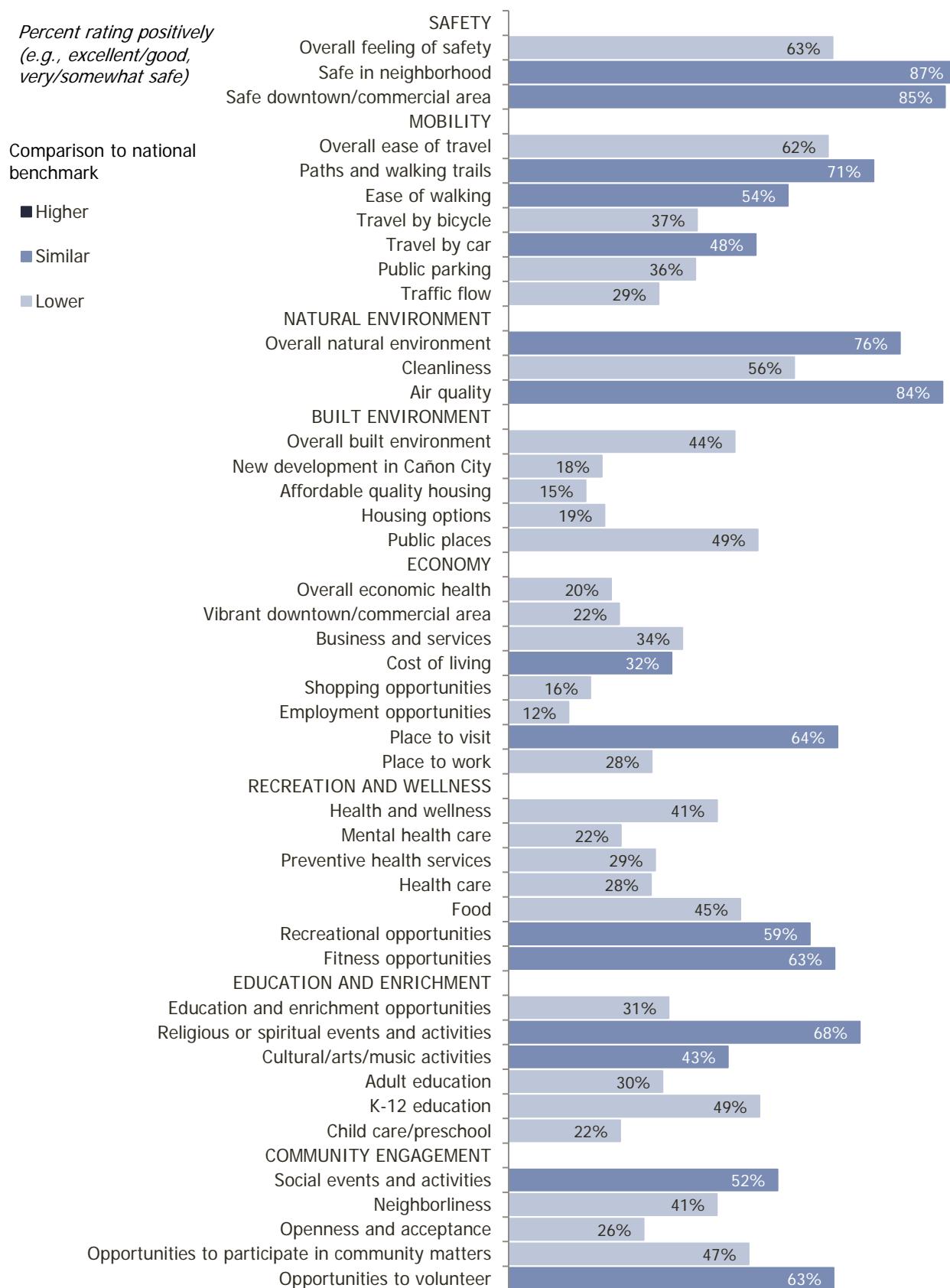
Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher   ■ Similar   ■ Lower



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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics



# Governance

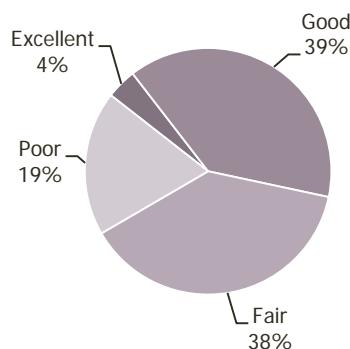
*How well does the government of Cañon City meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Cañon City as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 4 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the overall quality of City services; this rating was lower than the national benchmark and decreased since 2017. About 3 in 10 residents were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government and this rating was on par with other communities nationwide.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Cañon City's leadership and governance. These aspects of government performance received positive ratings from roughly 2 in 10 residents and were rated lower than the national benchmark, and most ratings decreased from 2017 to 2018. About half of residents gave positive marks to the customer service provided by the City and this rating was also lower than average.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Cañon City. Ratings for City services tended to be similar to or lower than the national benchmarks. A majority of residents gave positive marks to fire, ambulance/EMS, fire prevention, garbage collection, drinking water, sewer services, utility billing, City parks and public libraries; these ratings were all similar to those given in other communities. However, ratings within the facet of Mobility, including for traffic enforcement, street repair, sidewalk maintenance and traffic signal timing, were less positive and lower than average.

## Overall Quality of City Services

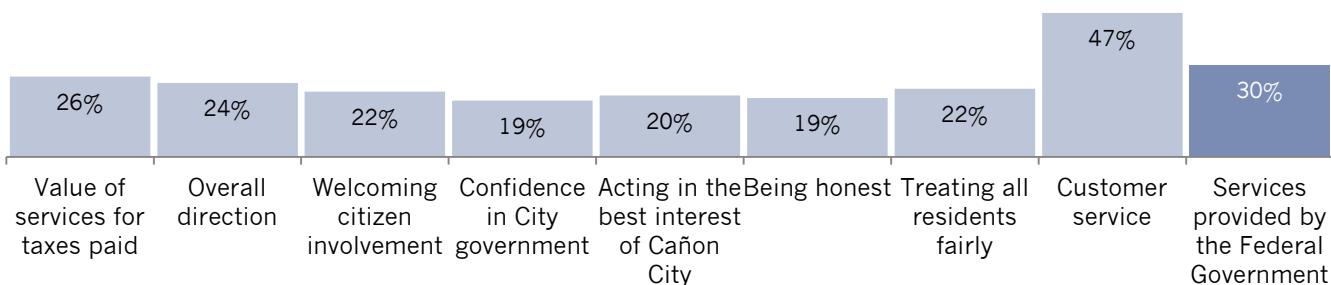


Compared to 2017, ratings decreased in 2018 for several aspects of Natural Environment, Built Environment and Community Engagement, among others.

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

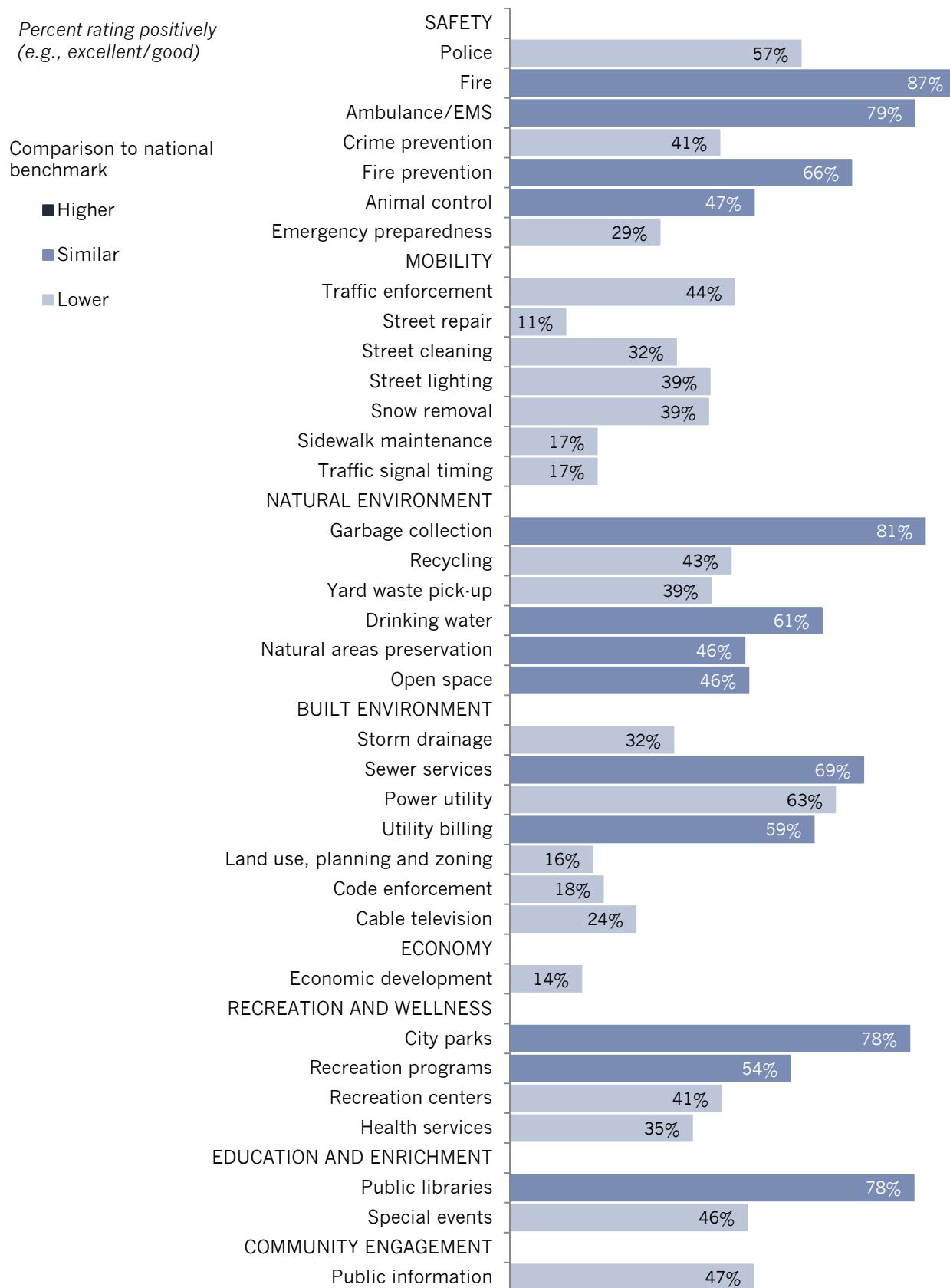
*Comparison to national benchmark*

■ Higher      ■ Similar      ■ Lower



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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance



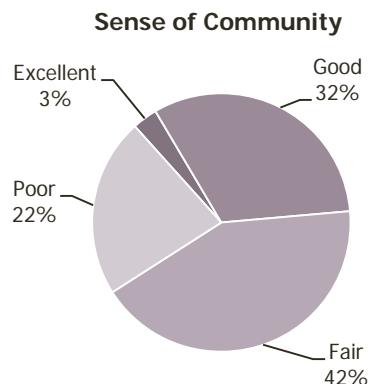
# Participation

*Are the residents of Cañon City 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 one-third of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the sense of community in Cañon City and 7 in 10 would recommend living in the city to someone who asked; these ratings were lower than the national benchmark. About 8 in 10 residents planned to remain in the city for the next five years and this was similar to ratings given in other communities across the country.

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 tended to vary widely across the different facets, making the comparisons to the benchmarks and to Cañon City's ratings over time, useful for understanding the results. Most levels of Participation in the city tended to be similar to the national benchmarks, but the proportion of residents who had attended a City-sponsored event or volunteered was higher than average. Additionally, residents who lived in Cañon City were less likely than others to recycle at home and also more likely to have observed a code violation.

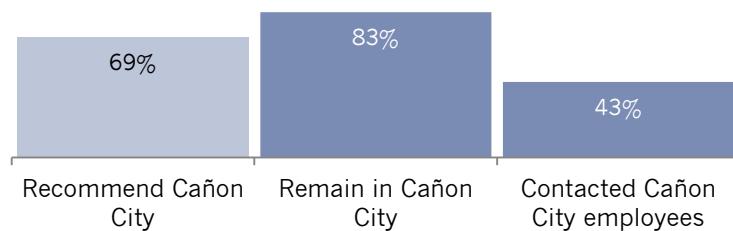
Most levels of Participation remained stable from 2017 to 2018. However, residents in 2018 were less likely than in 2017 to have read or watched local news, but more likely to have volunteered.



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

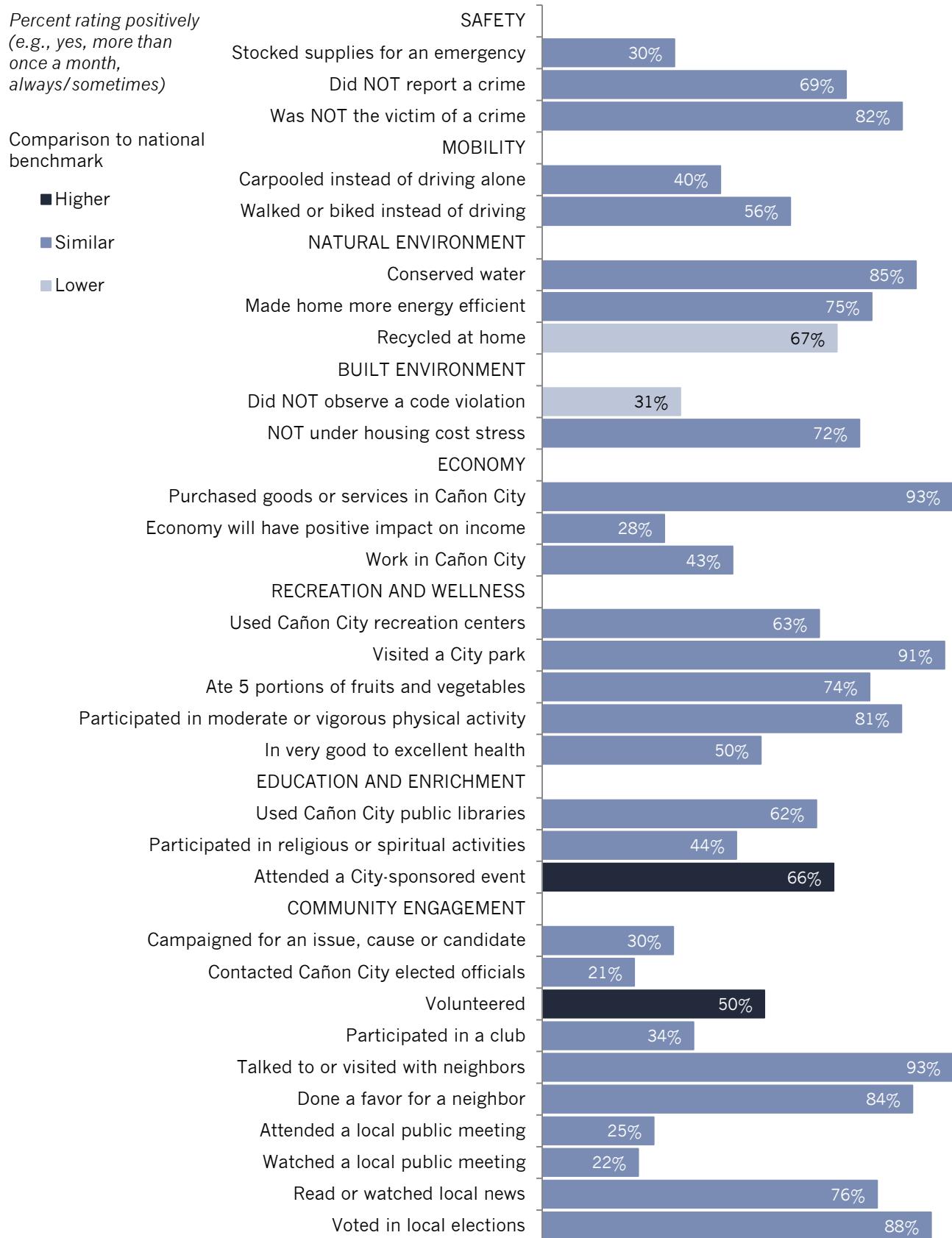
Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation



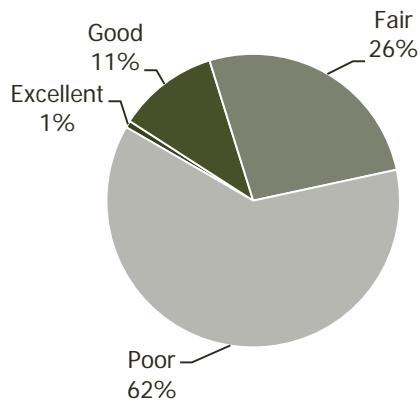
# Special Topics

Cañon City included a number of special interest questions on The NCS as well as several line additions to standard questions. Topic areas included the creation of a stormwater organization, potential tax increases, the cultivation and sale of recreational marijuana and various development projects, among others.

About 1 in 10 residents rated the overall condition of streets in Cañon City as excellent or good; one-quarter thought they were fair and about 6 in 10 rated them as poor.

Figure 4: Condition of City Streets

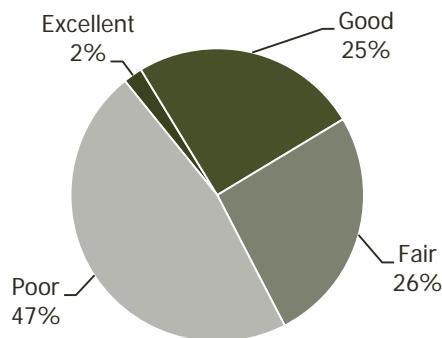
*Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Cañon City as a whole: overall condition of City streets*



Thinking about the quality of building services in the City, roughly one-quarter of residents who had an opinion rated these as excellent or good, one-quarter rated them as fair and half thought they were poor. It is noteworthy that about one-third of respondents indicated “don’t know” to this question.

Figure 5: Building Services

*Please rate the quality of each of the following services in Cañon City: building services (building permits, inspections, plan review, etc.)*

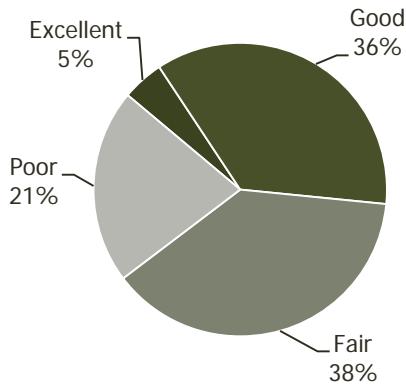


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About 4 in 10 residents rated the services provided by Fremont County as excellent or good, another 4 in 10 thought they were fair and 2 in 10 rated them as poor. This rating was similar to residents' ratings of the services provided by the City government and higher than ratings for Federal Government services.

Figure 6: Services Provided by Fremont County

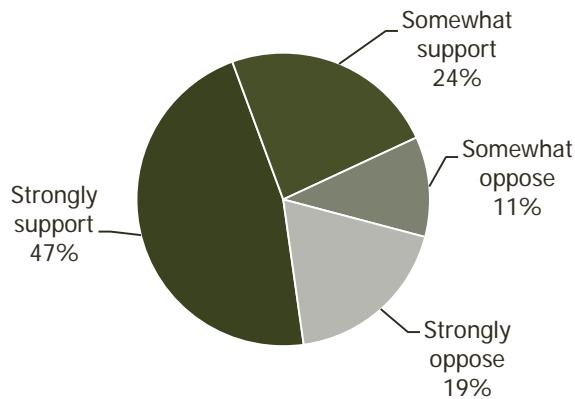
*Overall, how would you rate the quality of the services provided by Fremont County?*



When asked about their level of support for additional deer hunting archery licenses being issued by the Department of Wildlife, about 7 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported this measure while 3 in 10 opposed it.

Figure 7: Additional Deer Hunting Archery Licenses

*Deer hunting by archery is currently legal in Cañon City. To what extent would you support or oppose the Division of Wildlife designating Cañon City and adjacent areas for additional deer hunting archery licenses only by hunters that will meet Division of Wildlife hunter competency and safety guidelines, starting in 2019?*

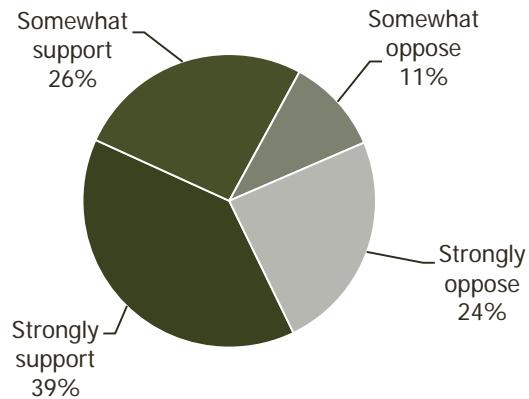


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About two-thirds of residents supported a half-cent sales tax increase to fund a new recreation/aquatic community center, while 1 in 10 somewhat opposed a tax increase and one-quarter strongly opposed it.

Figure 8: Sales Tax Increase for Recreation/Aquatic Community Center

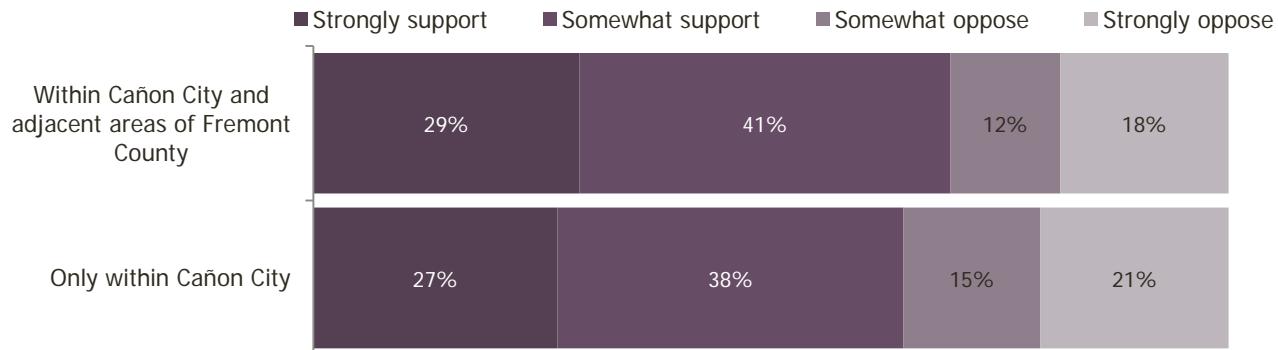
*To what extent would you support or oppose using a half-cent sales tax increase to help finance the construction of a new recreation/aquatic community center, with additional funding coming from public and private partners?*



Overall, a majority of respondents supported the City creating a stormwater organization to fund and operate stormwater flooding prevention and control. Residents were slightly more supportive of creating a stormwater organization within Cañon City and adjacent areas of Fremont County (70% strongly or somewhat support) than they were of creating such an organization only within Cañon City (about 65%).

Figure 9: Creation of Stormwater Organization

*To what extent you would support or oppose creating a stormwater organization to fund and operate stormwater flooding prevention and control:*



Thinking about methods of funding the stormwater organization described in the previous question, about half of residents most preferred a sales tax increase, 3 in 10 preferred a property tax increase and 2 in 10 preferred an impervious surface fee for property owners.

Figure 10: Preferred Method of Funding Stormwater Organization

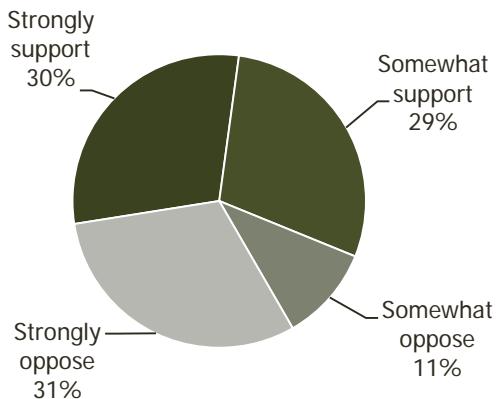
*If a stormwater organization were to be created, what would be your MOST preferred method of funding the entity? (Please select only one response.)*



About 6 in 10 residents voiced support for a City lodging tax increase for visitors and guests staying at city hotel, motel and lodging accommodations, while about 4 in 10 opposed such a tax increase. It is noteworthy that the proportions of residents who strongly supported or strongly opposed the tax increase were about the same (3 in 10).

Figure 11: City Lodging Tax Increase

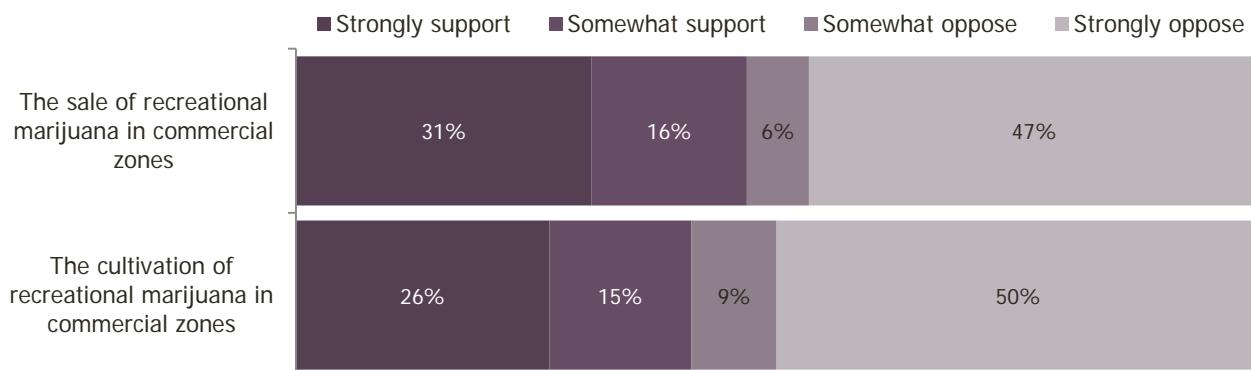
*To what extent you would support or oppose a City lodging tax increase from 2% to 5% for visitors and guests staying at city hotel, motel and lodging accommodations, to be used exclusively for promoting and marketing tourism and special events in the Cañon City and Royal Gorge Region? This 5% tax in the city would replace the existing 2% lodging tax.*



When asked to indicate their support for or opposition to the sale and cultivation of marijuana in commercial zones other than in the downtown area, slightly less than half supported the sale of recreation marijuana while slightly more than half opposed it (with 47% of these respondents indicating strong opposition). Similarly, about 4 in 10 residents supported marijuana cultivation while 6 in 10 opposed this (half voiced strong opposition).

Figure 12: Adoption of Recreational Marijuana in Commercial Zones

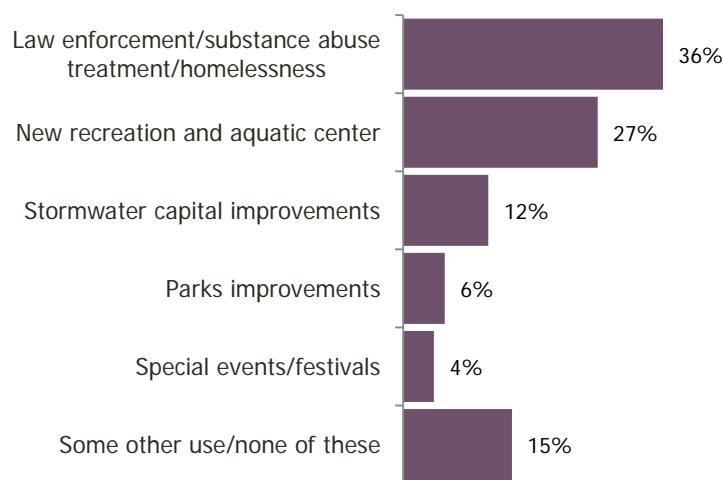
*To what extent you would support or oppose the adoption of zoning and special review conditions to permit each of the following in the City, but not in the downtown:*



Residents were most likely to indicate that they would like to see marijuana sales tax revenue used to fund either law enforcement, substance abuse treatment or homelessness measures (36%) or a new recreation and aquatic center (27%). About 1 in 10 would most prefer for marijuana tax revenue to fund stormwater capital improvements, and fewer wanted to see the revenue used for park improvements or special events/festivals. More than 1 in 10 respondents wanted to see marijuana tax revenue used for some other purpose.

Figure 13: Most Preferred Use of Marijuana Sales Tax Revenue

*If the City were to permit the cultivation and sale of recreational marijuana in the City, what would be your **MOST** preferred use of marijuana sales tax revenue? (Please select only one response.)*

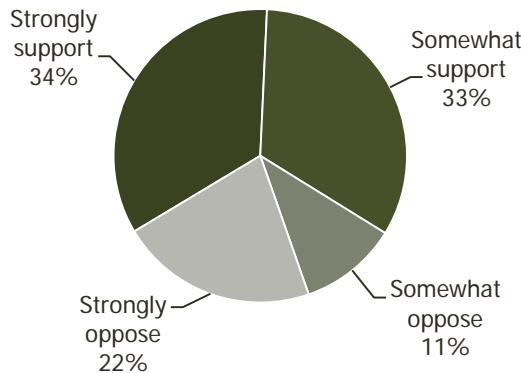


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About two-thirds of residents strongly or somewhat supported the City acquiring available riverfront property for various enhancements, while about one-third opposed this.

Figure 14: Acquiring Arkansas River Property

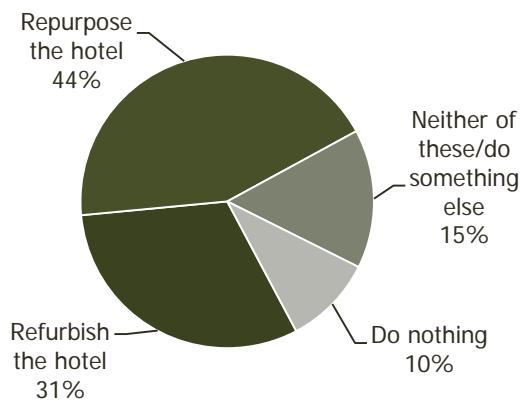
*To what extent would you support or oppose the City acquiring available for sale property adjacent to the Arkansas River to enhance river access, parking, recreation, retail, restaurants and residences?*



Thinking about potential future renovations to the downtown St. Cloud Hotel, residents were most likely to support repurposing the hotel (44%), and somewhat fewer preferred to refurbish the hotel (31%). About 1 in 10 indicated that they wanted another outcome besides repurposing or refurbishing the hotel or wanted the City to take no action.

Figure 15: Renovation of St. Cloud Hotel

*Should the City seek public or private partners to renovate the downtown St. Cloud Hotel, or repurpose the hotel as a mixed-use restaurant, residential and commercial building?*

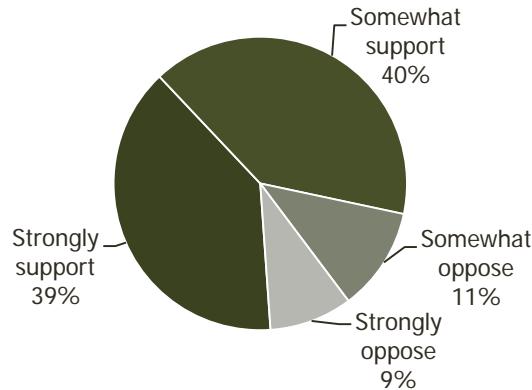


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About 8 in 10 residents strongly or somewhat supported the City exploring development of additional playgrounds and multi-lighted sport fields in Cañon City; only 2 in 10 opposed it.

Figure 16: Development of Playgrounds and Multi-Sport Fields

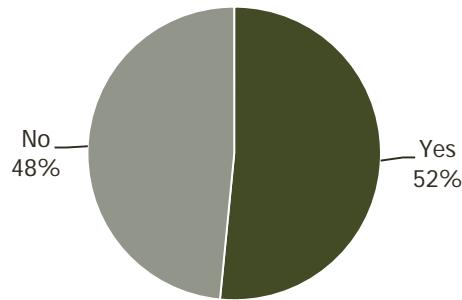
*To what extent would you support or oppose the City exploring development of additional playgrounds and lighted multi-sport fields in the City?*



When asked whether the Mayor should be permitted to vote on all City Council matters rather than only in the case of a tie, residents were evenly split: half thought the Mayor should be able to vote and half thought they should not.

Figure 17: Mayor's Right to Vote

*Currently, the Mayor is only permitted to vote in the case of a tie. Should the City Charter be amended to permit the Mayor the right to vote on all City Council matters?*

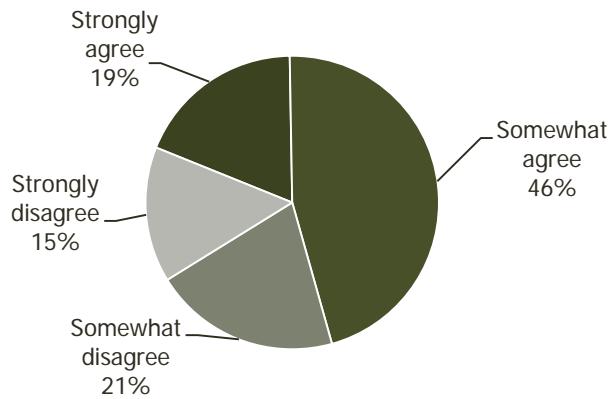


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About two-thirds of residents agreed that City Hall is a place where they could have their questions answered, while one-third disagreed.

Figure 18: Opinion of City Hall

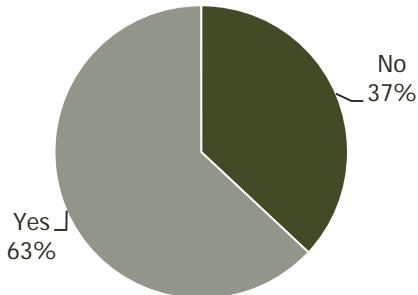
*To what extent do you agree or disagree that City Hall is a place where you can have your questions answered?*



When asked whether they had had any contact with Cañon City employees in the 12 months prior to the survey, about 6 in 10 residents had contact and 4 in 10 had not.

Figure 19: Contact with City Employee(s)

*Have you had any in-person, phone or email contact with an employee of Cañon City within the last 12 months (including police, receptionists, planners or any others)?*

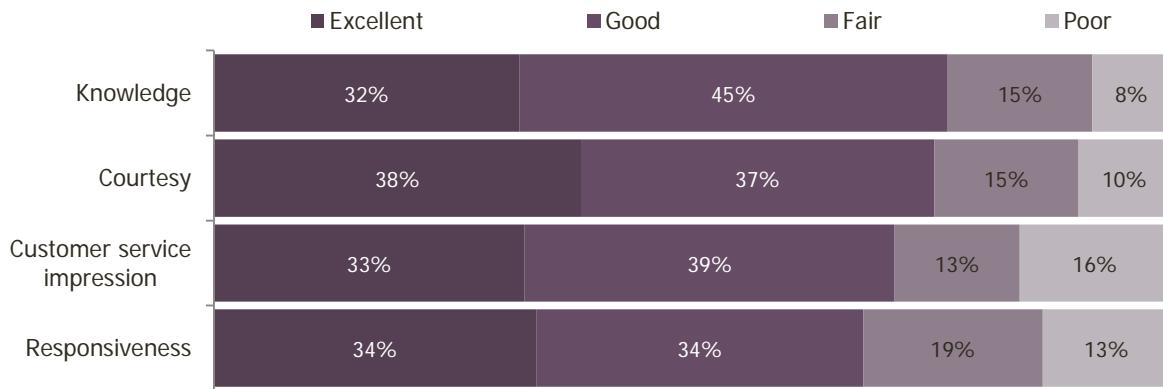


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Thinking about different aspects of their impression of their most recent contact with a City employee, roughly 7 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to each listed aspect while about 1 in 10 rated their most recent contact as poor.

Figure 20: Impression of City Employee(s)

*What was your impression of the employee(s) of Cañon City in your most recent contact? (Rate each characteristic below.)*

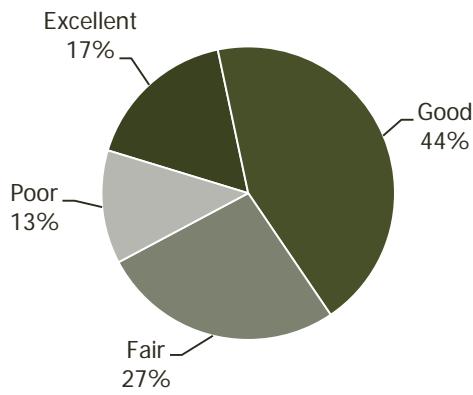


This question was only asked of residents who reporting having had contact with a City employee in the 12 months prior to the survey.

When asked about the quality to-date of the 2017 2A street improvement project, residents were generally pleased. About 6 in 10 rated the project's progress as excellent or good and one-quarter rated it as fair. Only 1 in 10 thought the quality of the project thus far was poor.

Figure 21: Quality of 2A Street Improvement Project

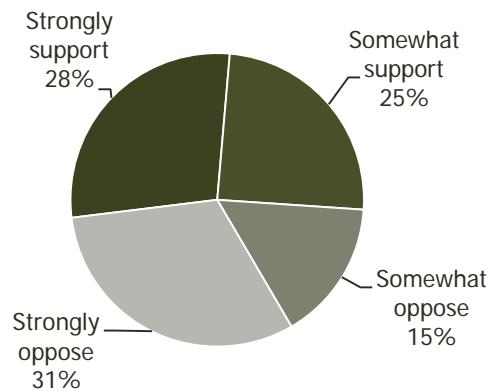
*Work was recently completed on the 2017 2A street improvement project, which included improvements to 1st Street/Mariposa Road, 10th Street, 16th Street, Greenwood Avenue, South Street, Yale Place (North/South), Fairview Avenue and Whipple Avenue. Now that the first year's work is complete, how would you rate the overall quality of the 2017 2A street improvement project?*



Thinking about their support for or opposition to eliminating frontage roads for US Highway 50, overall residents were evenly split between support and opposition. It is noteworthy that 3 in 10 residents strongly opposed eliminating the frontage roads and a similar proportion strongly supported it.

Figure 22: Elimination of US Highway 50 Frontage Roads

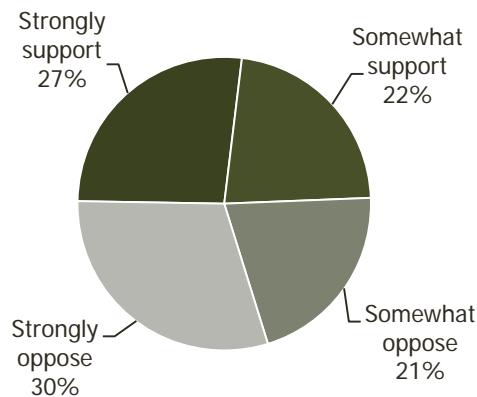
*To what extent would you support or oppose eliminating the frontage roads along US Highway 50 between 15th St. and Reynolds Avenue to improve access to local businesses, aesthetics, and traffic signal operations?*



Residents' opinions were similarly split on reducing the downtown speed limit from 25 to 15 miles per hour. About half supported the reduction and half opposed it, and about 3 in 10 residents strongly supported or strongly opposed reducing the speed limit.

Figure 23: Reduction of Downtown Speed Limit

*To what extent would you support or oppose reducing the downtown speed limit (on Main St. between 1st St. and 9th St.) from 25 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour?*



# Conclusions

## Cañon City residents support efforts to boost the Economy.

Cañon City residents indicated that Economy was an important area of focus for the City in the coming years. Ratings within this facet tended to be less positive and held steady from 2017 to 2018. While resident sentiment toward cost of living and Cañon City as a place to visit was similar to the benchmark comparisons, ratings for other Economy-related aspects, such as the overall economic health of the city, overall quality of business and service establishments, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities, were lower than those given elsewhere. Ratings for economic development were also below average and declined since 2017.

The City included a number of special topic questions on the survey related to economic development. When asked about a City lodging tax increase from 2% to 5% for visitors and guests that would be used for promoting and marketing tourism and special events, about 6 in 10 residents voiced support for the increase while about 4 in 10 opposed it. About two-thirds of residents strongly or somewhat supported the City acquiring available riverfront property to enhance river access, parking, recreation, retail, restaurants and residences, while about one-third opposed this. Additionally, thinking about potential future renovations to the downtown St. Cloud Hotel, residents were most likely to support repurposing the hotel (44%), and somewhat fewer preferred to refurbish the hotel (31%).

However, respondents were less likely to support the sale and cultivation of marijuana in commercial zones other than in the downtown area, with just under half supporting the sale of marijuana and slightly more than half opposing it. Residents were slightly less supportive of the cultivation of marijuana in commercial zones outside of downtown (41% support).

## Although residents feel safe, Safety is still a priority.

Safety was another important focus area for the City in the next two years and the Safety ratings were par with other communities nationwide. Most residents gave positive reviews to feelings of safety in their neighborhoods and in Cañon City's downtown/commercial area, and at least two-thirds were pleased with fire, ambulance/EMS and fire prevention services. A majority of residents had not reported a crime or been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. These ratings were all similar to those given in communities elsewhere. However, evaluations for the overall feeling of safety in the city and police and crime prevention services were lower than the national averages. When thinking about how the potential marijuana sales tax revenue could be used, the largest proportion of respondents felt that it should be used to fund either law enforcement, substance abuse treatment, or homelessness measures (36%).

Emergency preparedness ratings were lower than the benchmark comparisons and ratings decreased from 2017 to 2018. However, flood prevention and control was important to residents, even though storm drainage saw an uptick in positive responses from 2017 to 2018. A majority of respondents supported the City creating a stormwater organization to fund and operate stormwater flooding prevention and control, either within Cañon City and adjacent areas of Fremont County or only within Cañon City.

## Mobility remains a challenge for the City.

Less than half of residents gave positive ratings to many aspects of Mobility and most of these ratings were lower than those observed in other communities, including the overall ease of travel in the city, traffic flow on major streets, traffic enforcement, street repair and traffic signal timing, among others. Additionally, the rating for ease of public parking was lower than average and decreased from 2017 to 2018. However, residents were pleased with the City's progress related to some aspects of Mobility, with about 6 in 10 rating the quality thus far of the 2017 2A street improvement project as excellent or good.

Residents felt less positively about potential changes to transportation corridors downtown. Respondents were evenly split between support for and opposition to eliminating frontage roads for US Highway 50 (though it is worth noting that 3 in 10 residents strongly opposed eliminating the frontage roads and a similar proportion strongly supported it). Cañon City residents also were divided on reducing the downtown speed limit from 25 to 15 miles per hour; about half supported the reduction and half opposed it, and about 3 in 10 residents strongly supported or strongly opposed reducing the speed limit.