Residents rated seven City public safety services; of these, none were rated above the benchmark comparison, three were rated similar to the benchmark comparison and four were rated below the benchmark comparison. Fire and emergency medical services received the highest ratings, while emergency preparedness and crime prevention received the lowest ratings.

FIGURE 30: RATINGS OF PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

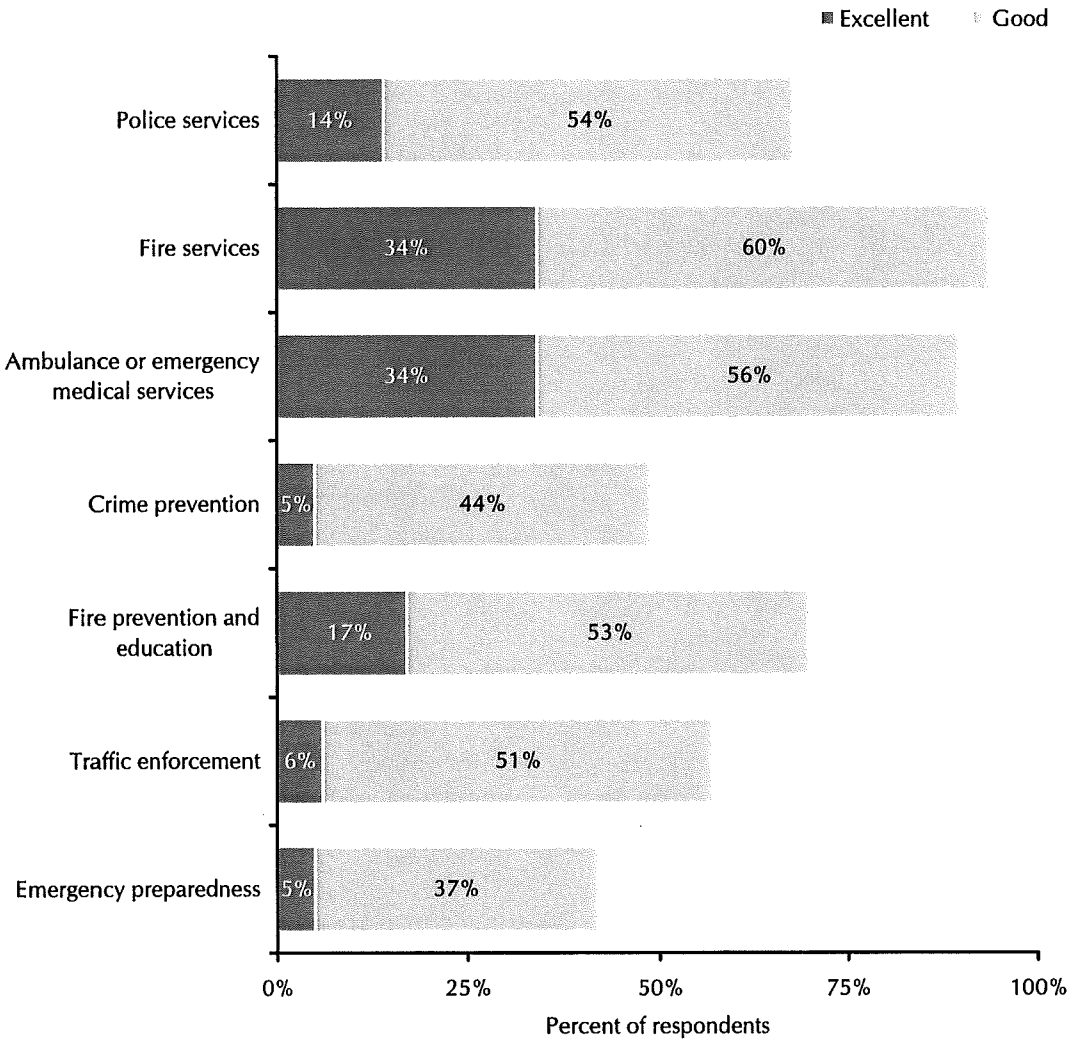


FIGURE 31: PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Police services	Below
Fire services	Similar
EMS/ambulance	Similar
Crime prevention	Below
Fire prevention and education	Similar
Traffic enforcement	Below
Emergency preparedness	Below

Environmental Sustainability

Residents value the aesthetic qualities of their hometowns and appreciate features such as overall cleanliness and landscaping. In addition, the appearance and smell or taste of the air and water do not go unnoticed. These days, increasing attention is paid to proper treatment of the environment. At the same time that they are attending to community appearance and cleanliness, cities, counties, states and the nation are going "Green". These strengthening environmental concerns extend to trash haul, recycling, sewer services, the delivery of power and water and preservation of open spaces. Treatment of the environment affects air and water quality and, generally, how habitable and inviting a place appears

Residents of the City of Asheville were asked to evaluate their local environment and the services provided to ensure its quality. The overall quality of the natural environment was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 68% of survey respondents, it received the highest rating, and it was below the benchmark.

Figure 32: Ratings of the Community's Natural Environment

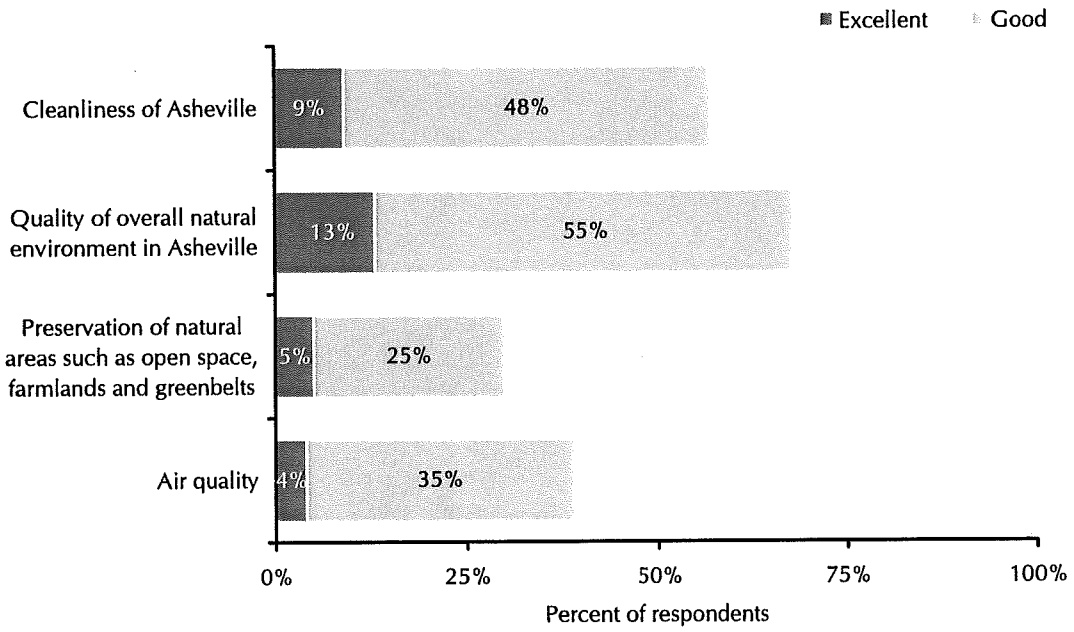


Figure 33: Community Environment Benchmarks

	Comparison to benchmark
Cleanliness of Asheville	Below
Quality of overall natural environment in Asheville	Below
Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts	Below
Air quality	Below

Of the five utility services rated by those completing the questionnaire, four were similar and one was below the benchmark comparison.

FIGURE 34: RATINGS OF UTILITY SERVICES

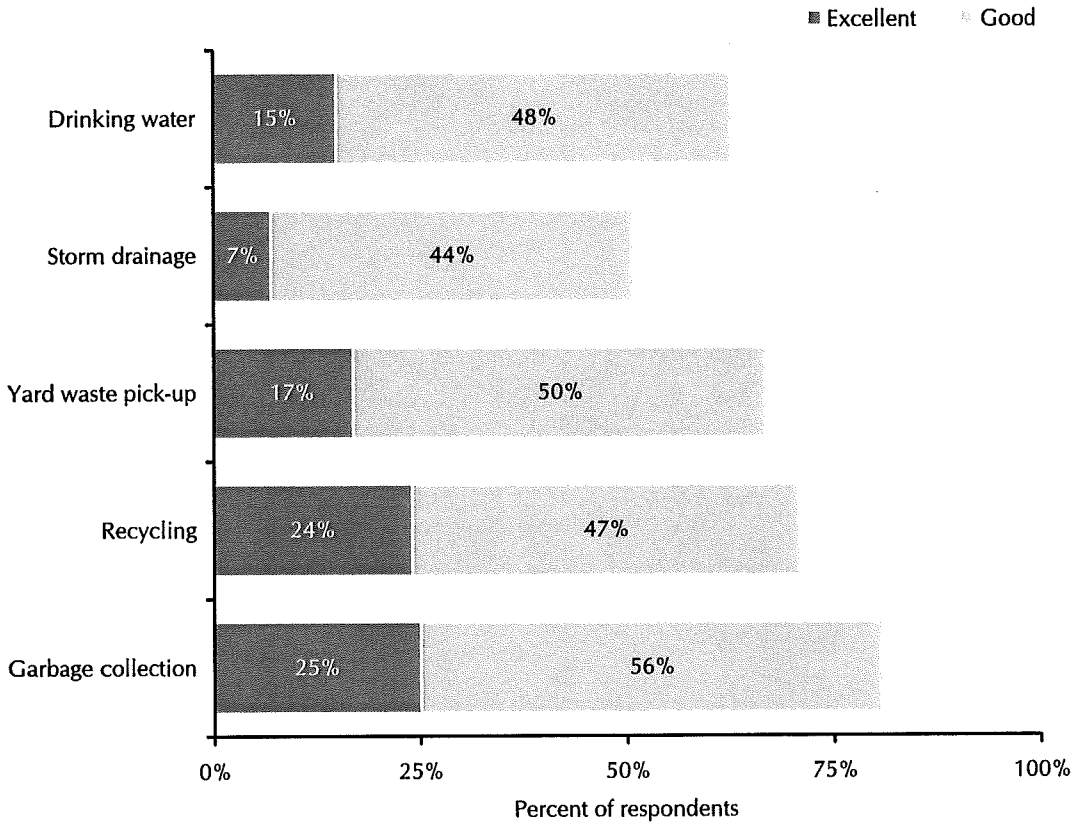


FIGURE 35: UTILITY SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Drinking water	Similar
Storm drainage	Similar
Yard waste pick-up	Below
Recycling	Similar
Garbage collection	Similar

RECREATION AND WELLNESS

Parks and Recreation

Quality parks and recreation opportunities help to define a community as more than the grind of its business, traffic and hard work. Leisure activities vastly can improve the quality of life of residents, serving both to entertain and mobilize good health. The survey contained questions seeking residents' perspectives about opportunities and services related the community's parks and recreation services.

Recreation opportunities in the City of Asheville were rated positively as were services related to parks and recreation.

FIGURE 36: RATINGS OF COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

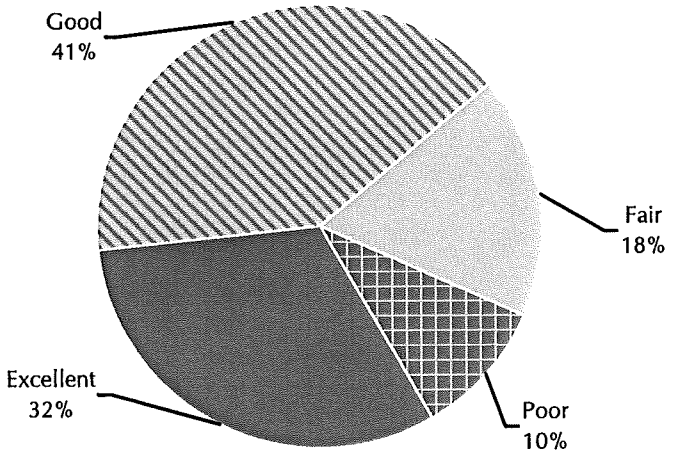


FIGURE 37: COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Recreation opportunities	Above

FIGURE 38: PARTICIPATION IN PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

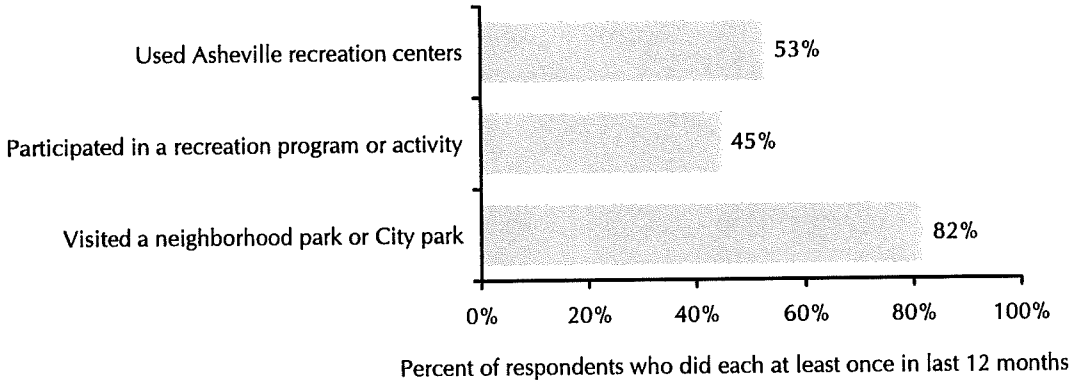


FIGURE 39: RATINGS OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

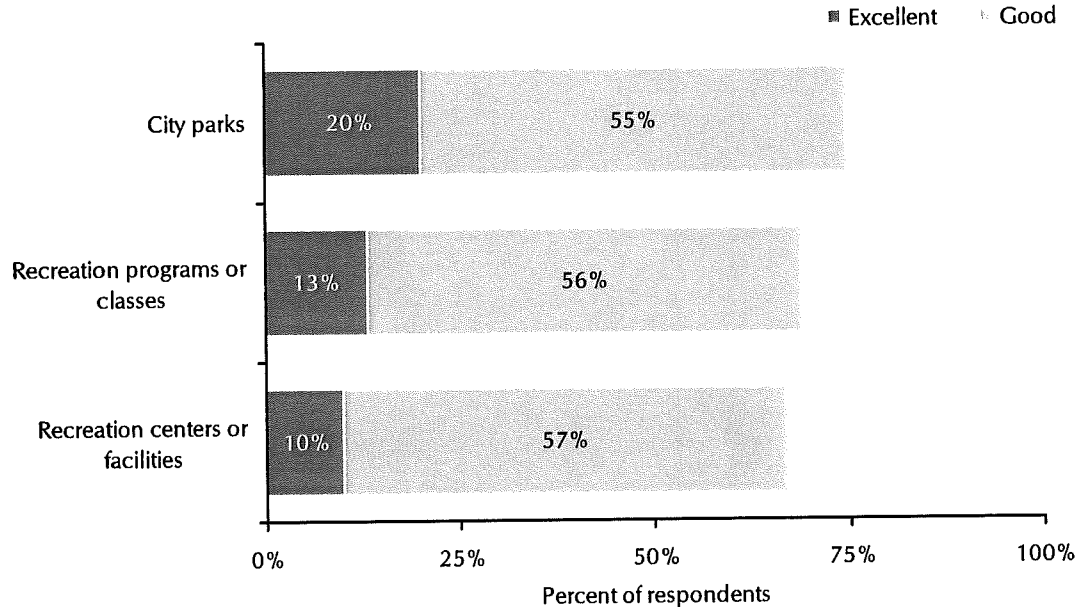


FIGURE 40: PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
City parks	Below
Recreation programs or classes	Similar
Recreation centers or facilities	Below

Culture, Arts and Education

A full service community does not address only the life and safety of its residents. Like an individual who drudges to the office and returns home, a community that pays attention only to the life sustaining basics becomes insular, dreary and uninspiring to business and individuals. In the case of communities without thriving culture, arts and education opportunities, the magnet that attracts those who might consider relocating there is vastly weakened. Cultural, artistic, social and educational services elevate the opportunities for personal growth among residents. In the survey, residents were asked about the quality of opportunities to participate in cultural and educational activities.

Opportunities to attend cultural activities was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 80% of respondents. Educational opportunities were rated as "excellent" or "good" by 70% of respondents. Compared to the benchmark data, educational opportunities were above the average of comparison jurisdictions, as was cultural activity opportunities.

FIGURE 41: RATINGS OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

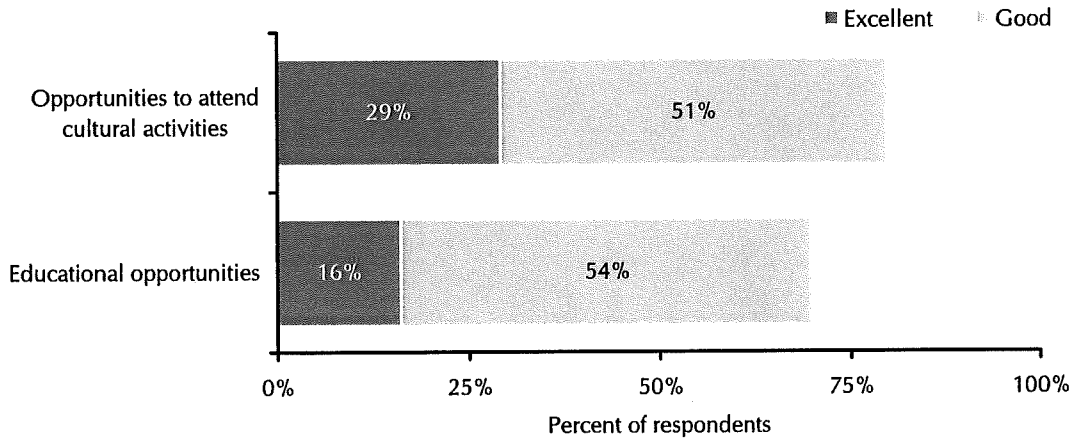


FIGURE 42: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	Above
Educational opportunities	Above

FIGURE 43: PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

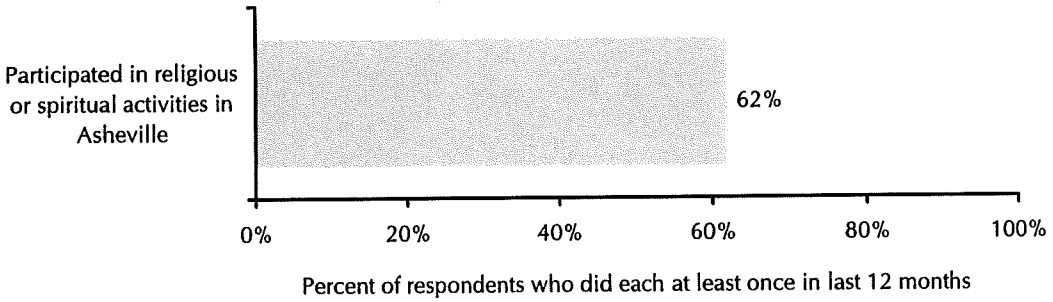


FIGURE 44: PERCEPTION OF CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

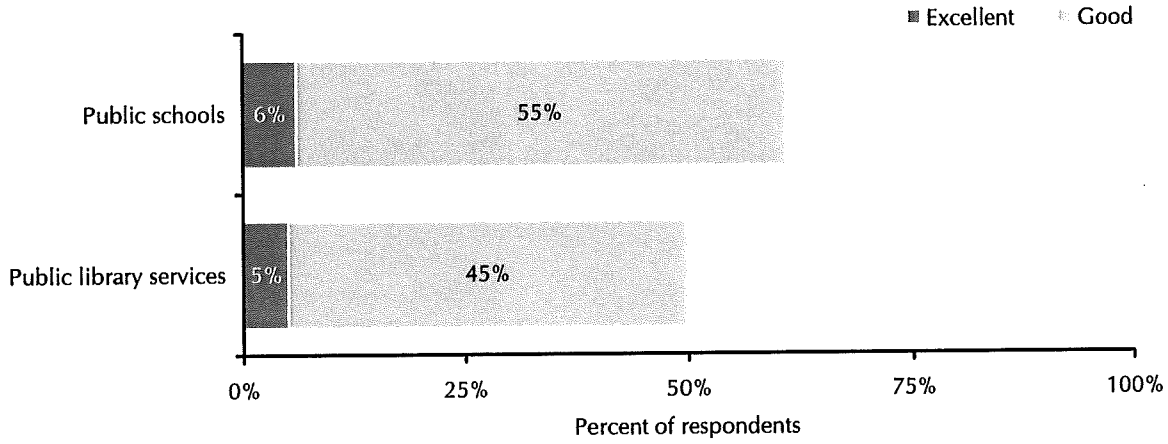


FIGURE 45: CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Public schools	Below
Public library services	Below

Community Inclusiveness

Diverse communities that include among their residents a mix of races, ages, wealth, ideas and beliefs have the raw material for the most vibrant and creative society. However, the presence of these features alone does not ensure a high quality or desirable space. Surveyed residents were asked about the success of the mix: the sense of community, the openness of residents to people of diverse backgrounds and the attractiveness of the City of Asheville as a place to raise children or to retire. They were also questioned about the quality of services delivered to various population subgroups, including older adults, youth and residents with few resources. A community that succeeds in creating an inclusive environment for a variety of residents is a community that offers more to many.

A high percentage of residents rated the City of Asheville as an "excellent" or "good" place to raise kids and a high percentage rated it as an excellent or good place to retire. Most residents felt the local sense of community was excellent or good. Most survey respondents felt the City of Asheville was open and accepting towards people of diverse backgrounds. Sense of community was rated the lowest by residents but was higher than the benchmark.

FIGURE 46: RATINGS OF COMMUNITY QUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

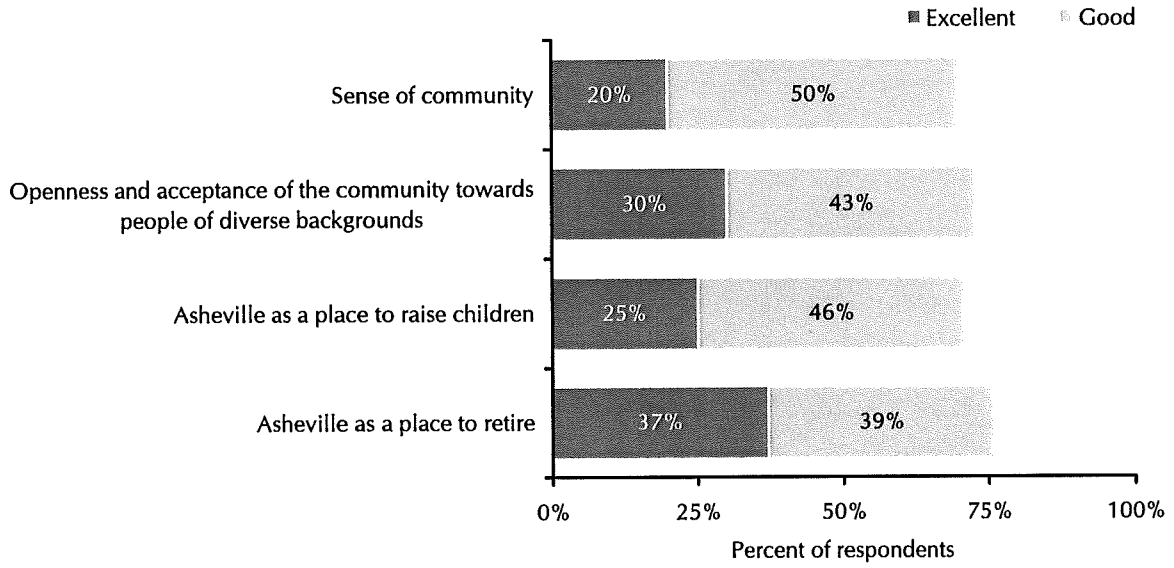


FIGURE 47: COMMUNITY QUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Sense of community	Above
Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds	Above
Asheville as a place to raise children	Similar
Asheville as a place to retire	Above

Services to more vulnerable populations (e.g., seniors, youth or low-income residents) ranged from 32% to 49% with ratings of "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 48: RATINGS OF QUALITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED FOR POPULATION SUBGROUPS

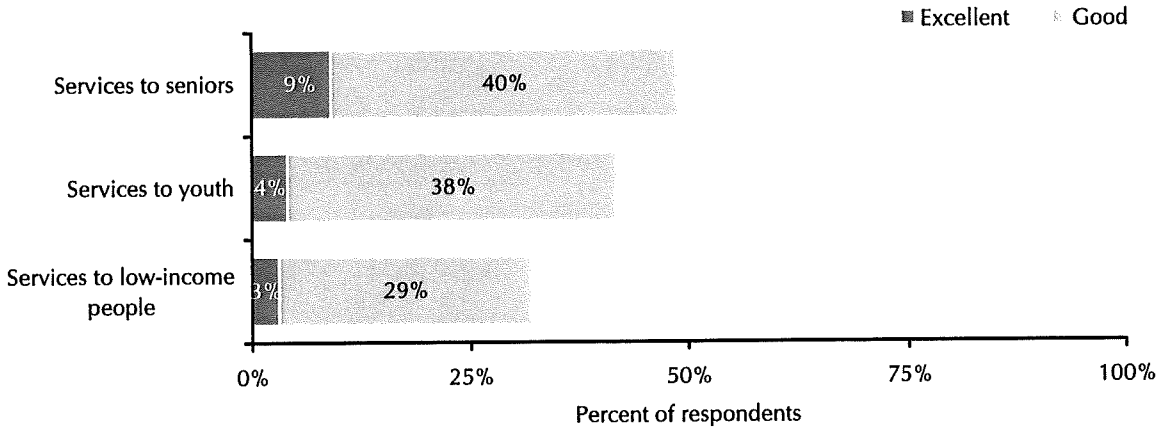


FIGURE 49: SERVICES PROVIDED FOR POPULATION SUBGROUPS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Services to seniors	Below
Services to youth	Below
Services to low income residents	Below

Civic Engagement

Government leaders, elected or hired, cannot run a jurisdiction alone and a jurisdiction cannot run effectively if residents remain strangers with little to connect them. Staff and elected officials require the assistance of local residents whether that assistance comes in tacit approval or eager help; and commonality of purpose among the electorate facilitates policies and programs that appeal to most and causes discord among few. Furthermore, when neighbors help neighbors, the cost to the community to provide services to residents in need declines. When residents are civically engaged, they have taken the opportunity to participate in making the community more livable for all. The extent to which local government provides opportunities to become informed and engaged and the extent to which residents take those opportunities is an indicator of the connection between government and populace. By understanding your residents' level of connection to, knowledge of and participation in local government, the City can find better opportunities to communicate and educate citizens about its mission, services, accomplishments and plans. This survey information is essential for public communication and for helping local government staff to conceive strategies for reaching reluctant voters whose confidence in government may need boosting prior to important referenda.

Civic Activity

Respondents were asked about the perceived community volunteering opportunities and their participation as citizens of the City of Asheville. Survey participants rated the volunteer opportunities in the City of Asheville favorably. Opportunities to attend or participate in community matters were rated less favorably.

FIGURE 50: RATINGS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

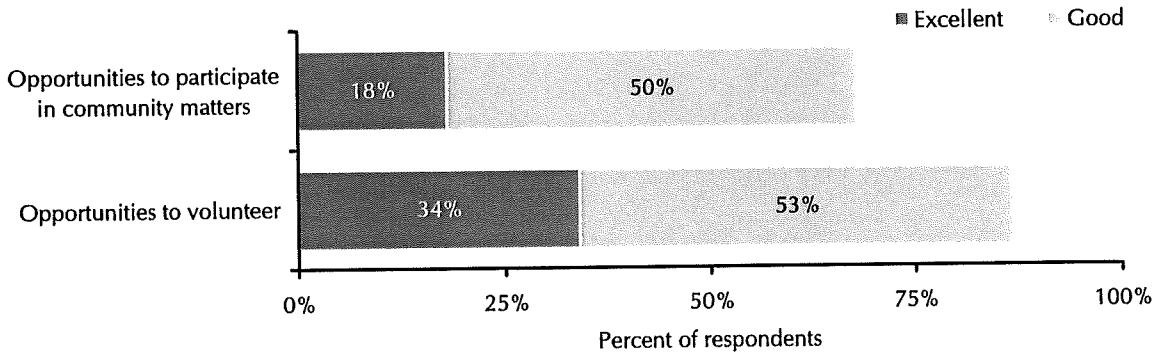
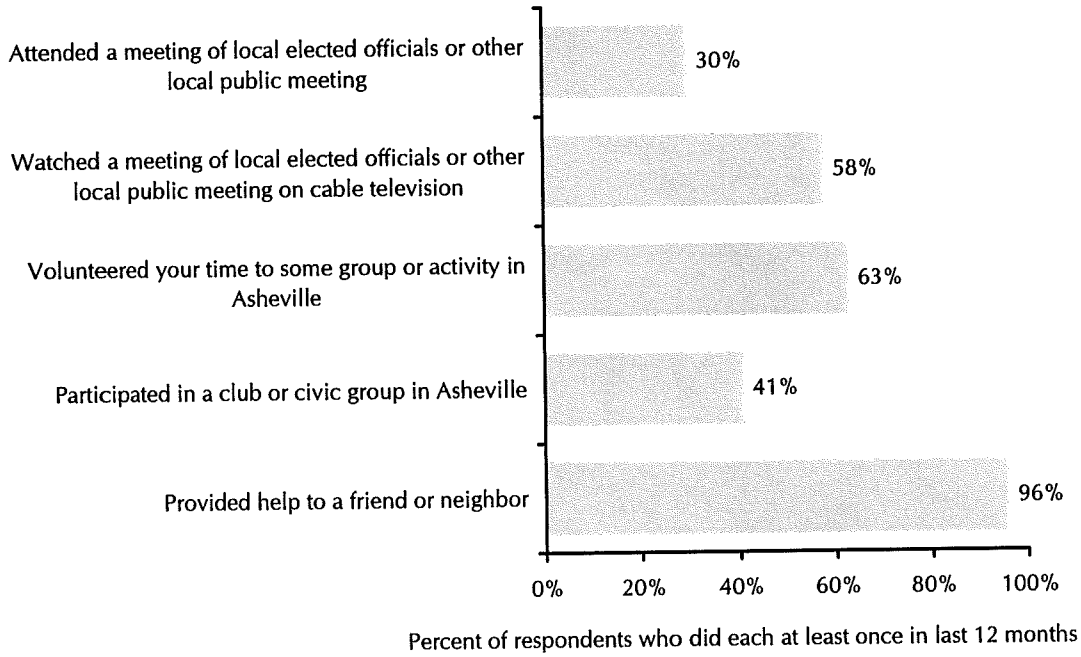


FIGURE 51: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to participate in community matters	Above
Opportunities to volunteer	Above

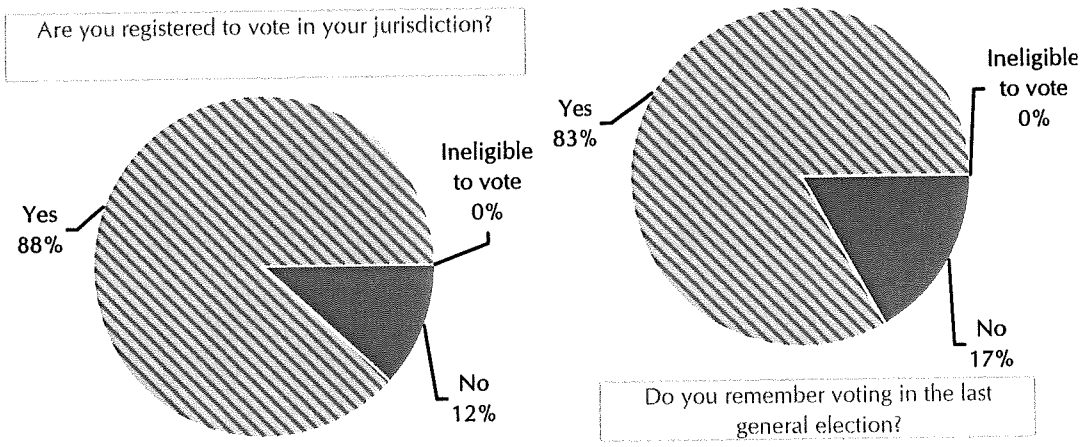
Most of the participants in this survey had not attended a public meeting in the 12 months prior, but the vast majority had helped a friend.

FIGURE 52: PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



City of Asheville residents showed the largest amount of civic engagement in the area of electoral participation. About 88% reported they were registered to vote; 83% indicated they had voted in the last general election.

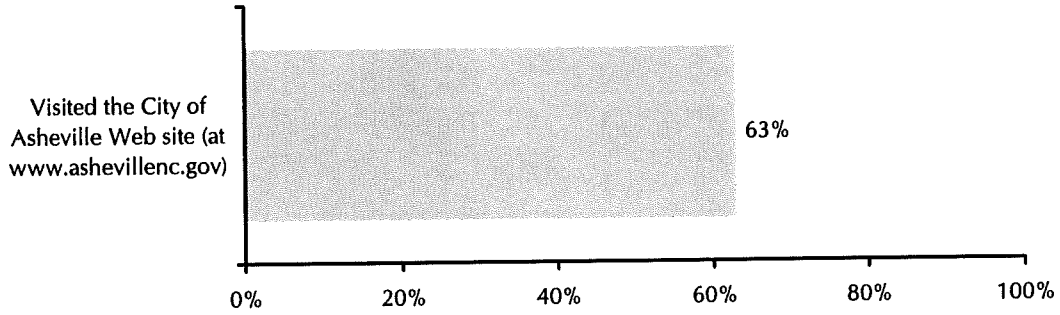
FIGURE 53: REPORTED VOTING BEHAVIOR



Information and Awareness

Those completing the survey were asked about their use and perceptions of various information sources and local government media services. When asked whether they had visited the City of Asheville Web site in the previous 12 months, 63% reported they had done so at least once.

FIGURE 54: USE OF INFORMATION SOURCES



Social Engagement

Opportunities to participate in social events and activities were rated as "excellent" or "good" by 78% of respondents, while even more rated opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities as "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 55: RATINGS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

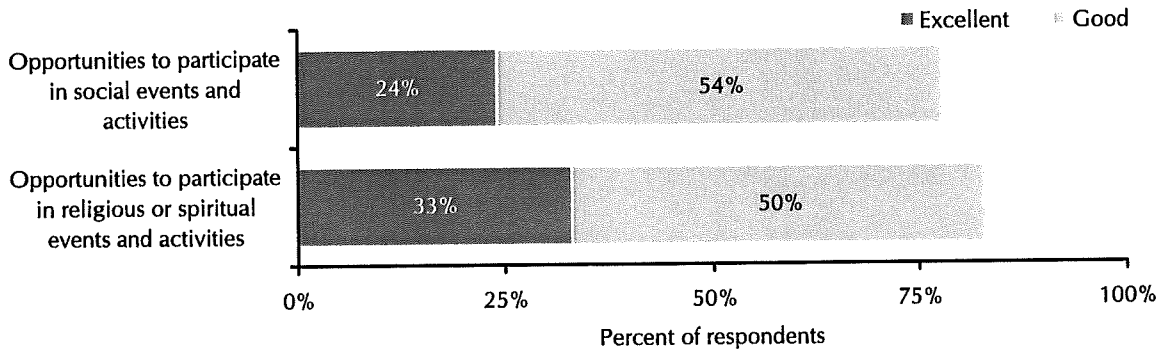
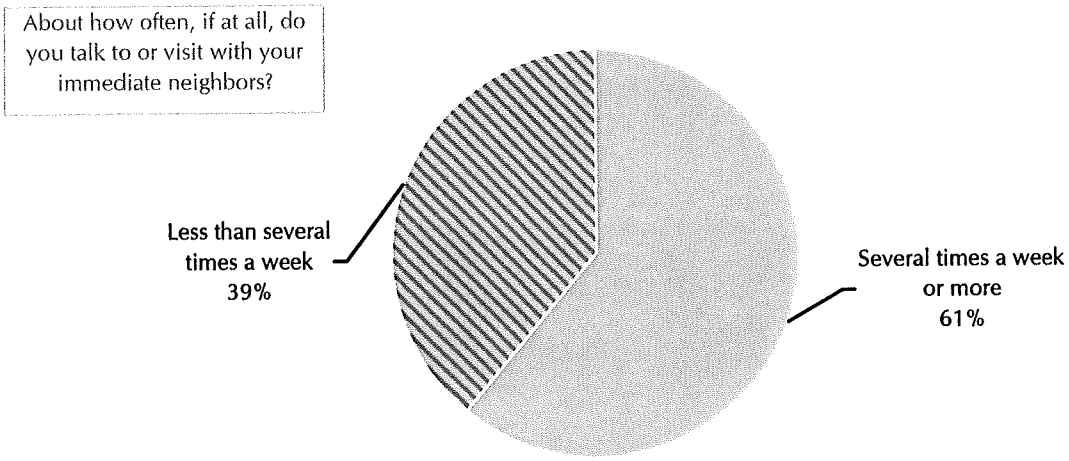


FIGURE 56: SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	Above
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events	Above

Residents in Asheville reported a strong amount of neighborliness. More than 61% indicated talking or visiting with their neighbors several times a week or more frequently.

FIGURE 57: CONTACT WITH IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS



Public Trust

Residents are more likely to cooperate with the proposals and policies advanced by their community leaders when trust in local government officials runs high. Trust can be measured in residents' opinions about the overall direction the City of Asheville is taking, their perspectives about the service value their taxes purchase and the openness of government to citizen participation. In addition, resident opinion about services provided by the City of Asheville could be compared to their opinion about services provided by the state and federal governments. If residents find nothing to admire in the services delivered by any level of government, their opinions about the City of Asheville may be colored by their dislike of what all levels of government provide.

Less than half of respondents felt that the value of services for taxes paid was "excellent" or "good." When asked to rate the job the City of Asheville does at listening to citizens, 47% rated it as "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 58: PUBLIC TRUST RATINGS

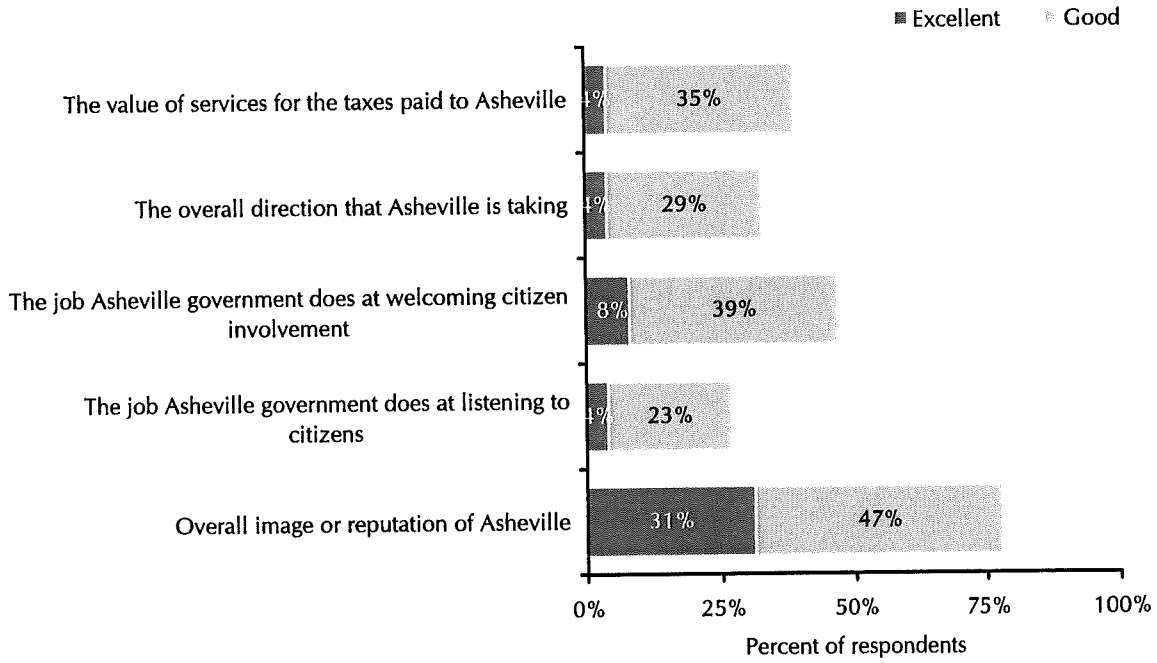


FIGURE 59: PUBLIC TRUST BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Value of services for the taxes paid to Asheville	Below
The overall direction that Asheville is taking	Below
Job Asheville government does at welcoming citizen involvement	Below
Job Asheville government does at listening to citizens	Below
Overall image or reputation of Asheville	Above

On average, residents of the City of Asheville gave the highest evaluations to their own local government and the lowest average rating to the federal government. The overall quality of services delivered by the City of Asheville was rated as "excellent" or "good" by 64% of survey participants. The City of Asheville's rating was below the benchmark when compared to other communities in the nation.

FIGURE 60: RATINGS OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS

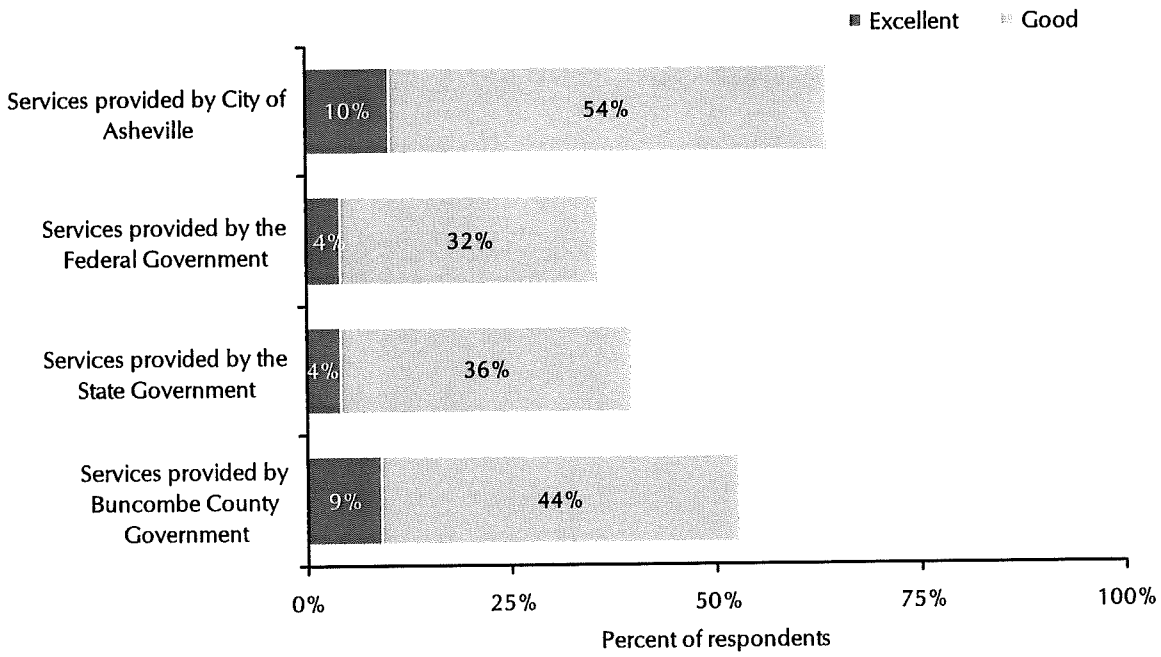


FIGURE 61: SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Services provided by the City of Asheville	Below
Services provided by the Federal Government	Below
Services provided by the State Government	Below
Buncombe County government general	Similar

City of Asheville Employees

The employees of the City of Asheville who interact with the public create the first impression that most residents have of the City of Asheville. Front line staff who provide information, assist with bill paying, collect trash, create service schedules, fight fires and crime and even give traffic tickets are the collective face of the City of Asheville. As such, it is important to know about residents' experience talking with that "face." When employees appear to be knowledgeable, responsive and courteous, residents are more likely to feel that any needs or problems may be solved through positive and productive interactions with the City of Asheville staff.

Those completing the survey were asked if they had been in contact with a City employee either in-person or over the phone in the last 12 months; the 60% who reported that they had been in contact were then asked to indicate overall how satisfied they were with the employee in their most recent contact. City employees were rated highly; 75% of respondents rated their overall impression as "excellent" or "good."

FIGURE 62: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAD CONTACT WITH CITY EMPLOYEES IN PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

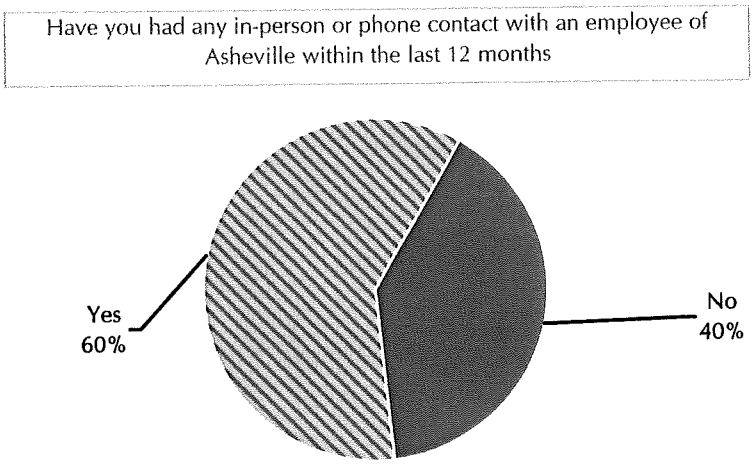


FIGURE 63: RATINGS OF CITY EMPLOYEES (AMONG THOSE WHO HAD CONTACT)

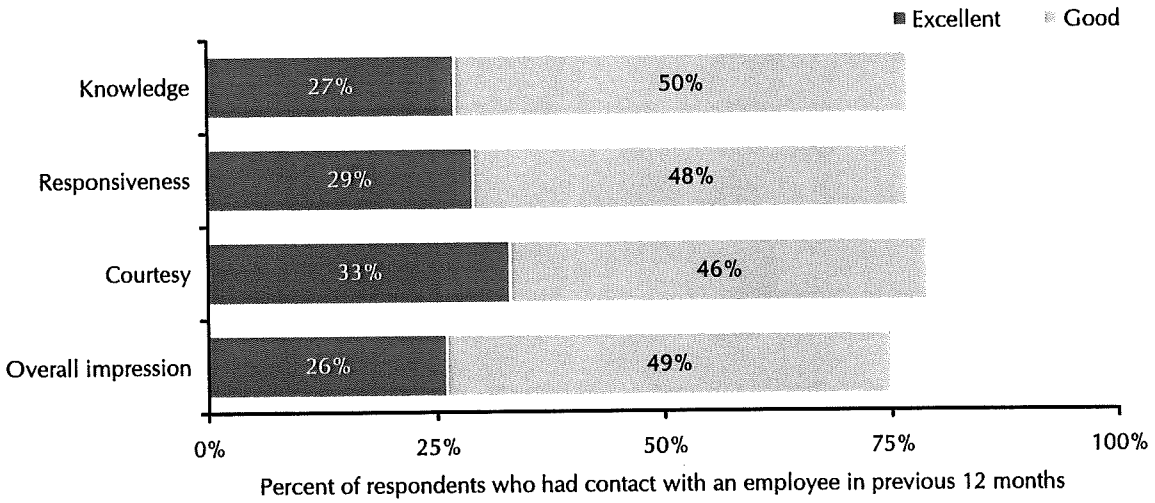


FIGURE 64: RATINGS OF CITY EMPLOYEES (AMONG THOSE WHO HAD CONTACT) BENCHMARKS

	Comparison to benchmark
Knowledge	Similar
Responsiveness	Similar
Courtesy	Similar
Overall impression	Similar

From Data to Action

Resident Priorities

Knowing where to focus limited resources to improve residents' opinions of local government requires information that targets the services that are most important to residents. However, when residents are asked what services are most important, they rarely stray beyond core services – those directed to save lives and improve safety.

In market research, identifying the most important characteristics of a transaction or product is called Key Driver Analysis. The key drivers that are identified from that analysis do not come from asking customers to self-report which service or product characteristic most influenced their decision to buy or return, but rather from statistical analyses of the predictors of their behavior. When customers are asked to name the most important characteristics of a good or service, responses often are expected or misleading – just as they can be in the context of a citizen survey. For example, air travelers often claim that safety is the primary consideration in their choice of an airline, yet key driver analysis reveals that frequent flier perks or in-flight entertainment predicts their buying decisions.

In local government core services – like fire protection – invariably land at the top of the list created when residents are asked about the most important local government services. And core services are important. But by using Key Driver Analysis, our approach digs deeper to identify the less obvious, but more influential services that are most related to residents' ratings of overall quality of local government services. Because services focused directly on life and safety remain essential to quality government, it is suggested that core services should remain the focus of continuous monitoring and improvement where necessary – but monitoring core services or asking residents to identify important services is not enough.

A Key Driver Analysis (KDA) was conducted for the City of Asheville by examining the relationships between ratings of each service and ratings of the City of Asheville's overall services. Those key driver services that correlated most highly with residents' perceptions about overall City service quality have been identified. By targeting improvements in key services, the City of Asheville can focus on the services that have the greatest likelihood of influencing residents' opinions about overall service quality.

Services found to be most strongly correlated with ratings of overall service quality from the Asheville Key Driver Analysis were:

- Land use, planning and zoning
- City parks
- Street cleaning
- Public schools

City of Asheville Action Chart™

The 2008 City of Asheville Action Chart™ on the following page combines three dimensions of performance:

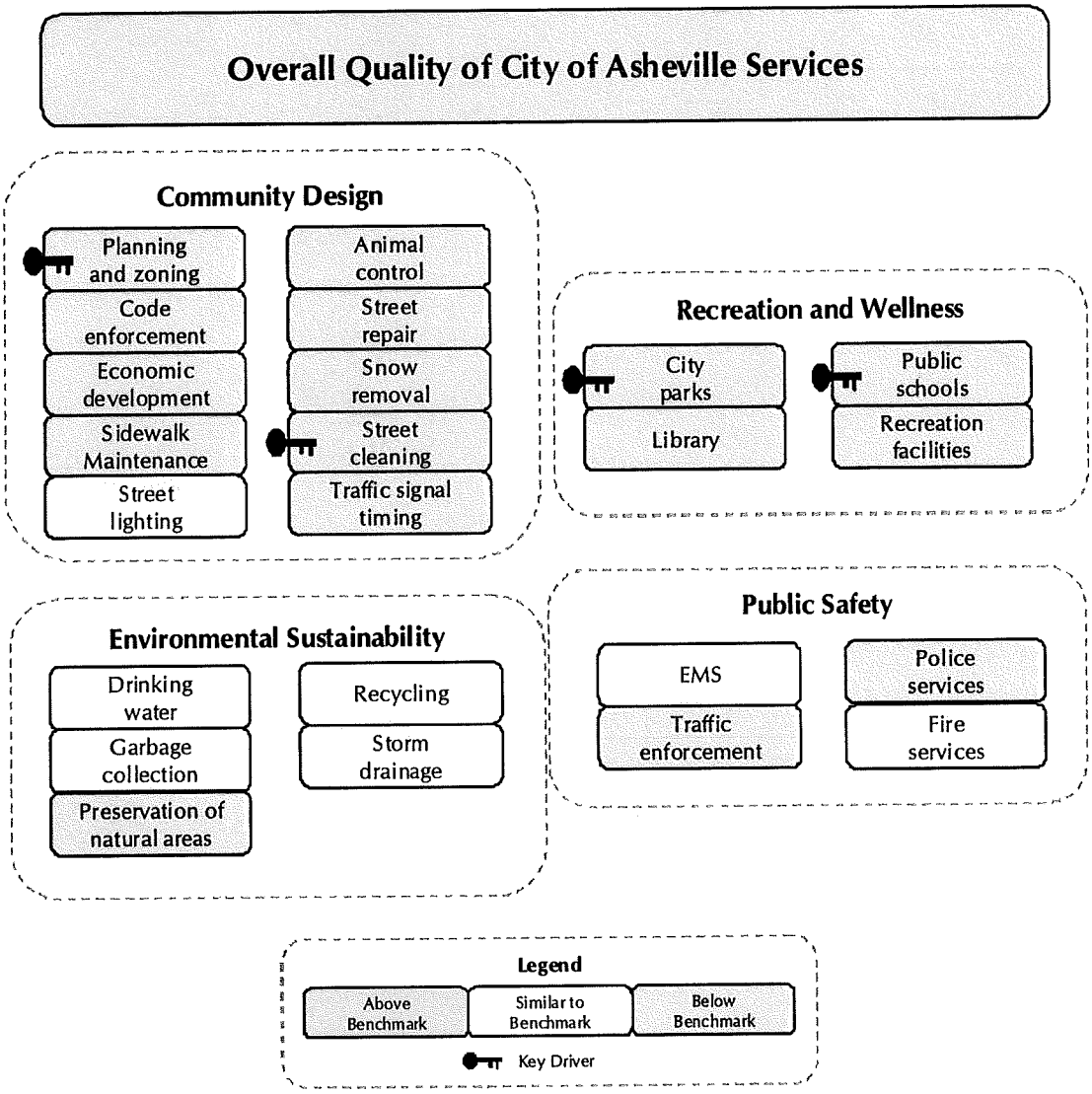
- Comparison to resident evaluations from other communities. When a comparison is available, the background color of each service box indicates whether the service is above the benchmark (green), similar to the benchmark (yellow) or below the benchmark (red).
- Identification of key services. A black key icon next to a service box indicates that service is key (either core or key driver)

Twenty-three services were included in the KDA for the City of Asheville. Of these, 16 was below the benchmark and seven were similar to the benchmark. The four key drivers are shown.

Considering all performance data included in the Action Chart, a jurisdiction typically will want to consider improvements to any key driver services that are not at least similar to the benchmark. In Asheville, all four key drivers were below the benchmark. More detail about interpreting results can be found in the next section.

Services with a high percent of respondents answering "don't know" were excluded from the analysis and were considered services that would be less influential. See Appendix A: Complete Survey Frequencies, Frequencies Including "Don't Know" Responses for the percent "don't know" for each service.

FIGURE 65: CITY OF ASHEVILLE ACTION CHART



Using Your Action Chart™

The key drivers derived for the City of Asheville provide a list of those services that are uniquely related to overall service quality here. Those key drivers are marked by key symbols in the action chart. Because key driver results are based on a relatively small number of responses, the relationships or correlations that define the key drivers are subject to more variability than is seen when key drivers are derived from a large national dataset of resident responses. To benefit the City of Asheville, NRC lists the key drivers derived from tens of thousands of resident responses from across the county. This list is updated every three years so that you can compare your key drivers to the key drivers from the entire NRC data set. Where your locally derived key drivers overlap national key drivers, it makes sense to focus even more strongly on your keys. Similarly, when your local key drivers overlap your core services, there is stronger argument to make for attending to your key drivers that overlap with core services. In the following table, we have listed your key drivers, core services and the national key drivers below and we have indicated the City of Asheville key drivers that overlap core services or the nationally derived keys.

FIGURE 66: KEY DRIVERS COMPARED

Service	City of Asheville Key Drivers	National Key Drivers	Core Services
City parks	✓		
Code enforcement			✓
Economic development		✓	
EMS			✓
Fire			✓
Garbage collection			✓
Land use planning and zoning	✓	✓	
Police services		✓	✓
Public information services		✓	
Public schools	✓	✓	
Sewer			✓
Storm drainage			✓
Street cleaning	✓		
Street repair			✓
Water			✓

POLICY QUESTIONS

"Don't know" responses have been removed from the following questions, when applicable.

Question 18a: Policy Question 1					
Please rate how important, if at all, you think each of the following investments is for the City of Asheville:	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total
Improving roads	25%	43%	28%	4%	100%
Recreation centers and youth programs	25%	43%	27%	4%	100%
Public safety including police, fire and emergency preparedness	48%	40%	12%	1%	100%
Environmental protection and renewable energy	55%	29%	11%	5%	100%
Sidewalks and greenways	42%	36%	19%	2%	100%

Question 18b: Policy Question 2					
To what degree would you support or oppose each of the following capital improvements funded with a property tax increase?	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Total
Affordable housing development	43%	33%	10%	13%	100%
Construction of new sidewalks and greenways	45%	35%	10%	9%	100%
Public transportation	44%	37%	10%	8%	100%
Renovation of existing recreation facilities (i.e., Community Centers)	24%	45%	17%	14%	100%
Roadway improvements	35%	42%	15%	8%	100%

Question 18c: Policy Question 3					
Asheville is creating a new Downtown Master Plan. When you're thinking about Downtown Asheville's identity and its character in the future, how important, if at all, is each of the following dimensions?	Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Total
A place to work	47%	33%	15%	5%	100%
A place to shop	32%	34%	26%	8%	100%
A place for entertainment and community events	42%	36%	17%	5%	100%
A place where social services are available	34%	33%	24%	9%	100%
A place to worship	24%	24%	29%	23%	100%
A place with a variety of good transportation options	45%	36%	15%	4%	100%

Appendix A: Complete Survey Frequencies

Frequencies Excluding "Don't Know" Responses

Question 1: Quality of Life					
Please rate each of the following aspects of quality of life in Asheville:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Asheville as a place to live	43%	43%	12%	3%	100%
Your neighborhood as a place to live	35%	45%	15%	5%	100%
Asheville as a place to raise children	25%	46%	23%	6%	100%
Asheville as a place to work	9%	26%	40%	25%	100%
Asheville as a place to retire	37%	39%	17%	8%	100%
The overall quality of life in Asheville	25%	55%	15%	4%	100%

Question 2: Community Characteristics					
Please rate each of the following characteristics as they relate to Asheville as a whole:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Sense of community	20%	50%	23%	7%	100%
Openness and acceptance of the community towards people of diverse backgrounds	30%	43%	20%	6%	100%
Overall appearance of Asheville	13%	55%	27%	5%	100%
Cleanliness of Asheville	9%	48%	33%	10%	100%
Overall quality of new development in Asheville	6%	34%	42%	18%	100%
Variety of housing options	4%	24%	40%	32%	100%
Overall quality of business and service establishments in Asheville	12%	55%	28%	5%	100%
Shopping opportunities	19%	55%	21%	5%	100%
Opportunities to attend cultural activities	29%	51%	13%	7%	100%
Recreational opportunities	32%	41%	18%	10%	100%
Employment opportunities	2%	13%	44%	41%	100%
Educational opportunities	16%	54%	25%	5%	100%
Opportunities to participate in social events and activities	24%	54%	18%	5%	100%
Opportunities to participate in religious or spiritual events and activities	33%	50%	15%	2%	100%
Opportunities to volunteer	34%	53%	12%	1%	100%
Opportunities to participate in community matters	18%	50%	26%	6%	100%
Ease of car travel in Asheville	10%	44%	32%	15%	100%
Ease of bus travel in Asheville	5%	31%	32%	31%	100%
Ease of bicycle travel in Asheville	1%	22%	36%	41%	100%
Ease of walking in Asheville	6%	35%	37%	22%	100%
Availability of paths and walking trails	5%	29%	42%	24%	100%
Traffic flow on major streets	2%	25%	47%	26%	100%
Amount of public parking	2%	17%	40%	42%	100%
Availability of affordable quality housing	2%	10%	32%	56%	100%
Air quality	4%	35%	41%	19%	100%
Quality of overall natural environment in Asheville	13%	55%	27%	6%	100%
Overall image or reputation of Asheville	31%	47%	14%	8%	100%

Question 3: Growth						
Please rate the speed of growth in the following categories in Asheville over the past 2 years:	Much too slow	Somewhat too slow	Right amount	Somewhat too fast	Much too fast	Total
Population growth	1%	1%	29%	47%	23%	100%
Retail growth (stores, restaurants, etc.)	2%	9%	46%	28%	14%	100%
Jobs growth	40%	51%	7%	2%	0%	100%

Question 4: Code Enforcement	
To what degree, if at all, are run down buildings, weed lots or junk vehicles a problem in Asheville?	Percent of respondents
Not a problem	10%
Minor problem	36%
Moderate problem	41%
Major problem	13%
Total	100%

Question 5: Community Safety						
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel from the following in Asheville:	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Total
Violent crime (e.g., rape, assault, robbery)	21%	42%	14%	19%	5%	100%
Property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft)	13%	41%	15%	24%	7%	100%
Environmental hazards, including toxic waste	21%	40%	16%	18%	5%	100%

Question 6: Personal Safety						
Please rate how safe or unsafe you feel:	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Neither safe nor unsafe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Total
In your neighborhood during the day	67%	27%	3%	2%	2%	100%
In your neighborhood after dark	32%	41%	7%	14%	5%	100%
In Asheville's downtown area during the day	49%	32%	7%	10%	2%	100%
In Asheville's downtown area after dark	12%	32%	15%	26%	16%	100%

Question 7: Crime Victim	
During the past twelve months, were you or anyone in your household the victim of any crime?	Percent of respondents
No	78%
Yes	22%
Total	100%

Question 8: Crime Reporting	
If yes, was this crime (these crimes) reported to the police?	Percent of respondents
No	23%
Yes	77%
Total	100%

Question 9: Resident Behaviors						
In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or other household members participated in the following activities in Asheville?	Never	Once or twice	3 to 12 times	13 to 26 times	More than 26 times	Total
Used Asheville recreation centers	47%	22%	19%	5%	7%	100%
Participated in a recreation program or activity	55%	23%	15%	2%	5%	100%
Visited a neighborhood park or City park	18%	24%	28%	14%	16%	100%
Ridden a local bus within Asheville	72%	11%	8%	5%	6%	100%
Attended a meeting of local elected officials or other local public meeting	70%	17%	12%	1%	1%	100%
Watched a meeting of local elected officials or other local public meeting on cable television	42%	26%	19%	10%	3%	100%
Visited the City of Asheville Web site (at www.ashevillenc.gov)	37%	23%	27%	9%	4%	100%
Recycled used paper, cans or bottles from your home	16%	7%	10%	14%	53%	100%
Volunteered your time to some group or activity in Asheville	37%	24%	20%	10%	10%	100%
Participated in religious or spiritual activities in Asheville	38%	15%	13%	9%	25%	100%
Participated in a club or civic group in Asheville	59%	15%	12%	5%	8%	100%
Provided help to a friend or neighbor	4%	14%	38%	19%	25%	100%

Question 10: Neighborliness	
About how often, if at all, do you talk to or visit with your immediate neighbors (people who live in the 10 or 20 households that are closest to you)?	Percent of respondents
Just about everyday	31%
Several times a week	29%
Several times a month	23%
Once a month	5%
Several times a year	5%
Once a year or less	4%
Never	3%
Total	100%