



**THE NBS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Business Survey<sup>TM</sup>

## Denton, TX

Business Climate Report

2015



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# About

The National Business Survey™ (The NBS) report is about the business climate of Denton and provides guidance about community characteristics and services that support local businesses.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NBS captures business owners' and managers' opinions across eight central facets of community livability (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Business Climate Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 327 business owners and managers of the City of Denton. Because no statistical weighting was performed, no traditional margin of error was calculated. However, because not all business owners or managers responded to the survey, NRC recommends using plus or minus five percentage points as the “range of uncertainty” around any given percent reported. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Highlights

## **Denton business owners and managers value the community as a place to live and do business and feel positively about the business climate.**

About 84% of survey respondents rated their quality of life in the City as excellent or good. Respondents' ratings of quality of life were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation. When considering Denton as a place to work, 83% of business owners and managers felt it was excellent or good while about three-quarters felt it was an excellent or good place to visit. At least 6 in 10 business owners rated Denton as a place to do business and as a place to retire as well as the overall image and appearance of the city favorably. About 68% of survey respondents would be very or somewhat likely to recommend operating a business in Denton, which was lower than other municipalities across the nation. Most business owners planned to keep their business in Denton for the next five years and felt positive about the impact of the economy on their revenues in the coming six months.

## **Economy is important to business owners and ratings related to Economy were generally positive.**

Business owners indicated that Economy is an important facet for Denton to focus on in the coming years. The rating for overall economic health was similar to the national comparison with about 7 in 10 business owners giving it a positive rating. Within Community Characteristics, about 8 in 10 survey respondents felt that the quality of business establishments in Denton and the vibrant downtown/commercial area were excellent or good and slightly fewer (63%) gave positive marks to shopping opportunities. Employment opportunities received a positive rating from 54% of survey respondents, which was lower than the national comparison. Within Governance, economic development was rated positively by 64% of business owners and was similar to the national comparison; however the remaining three aspects were rated positively by less than half of survey respondents (retaining existing businesses, attracting new businesses and supporting or creating new jobs).

## **Mobility represents an area of opportunity for Denton.**

Mobility was also a key focus area for the business community, and respondent felt some areas may need improvement. Within Community Characteristics, each of the nine aspects received a positive rating from less than a majority of survey respondents ranging from about one in five giving positive ratings to traffic flow and ease of public parking to about two in five giving positive ratings to ease of walking and paths and walking trails. Within Governance, ratings of Mobility ranged from 19% excellent or good for street repair to 78% excellent or good for traffic enforcement (a rating that was higher than the national comparison).

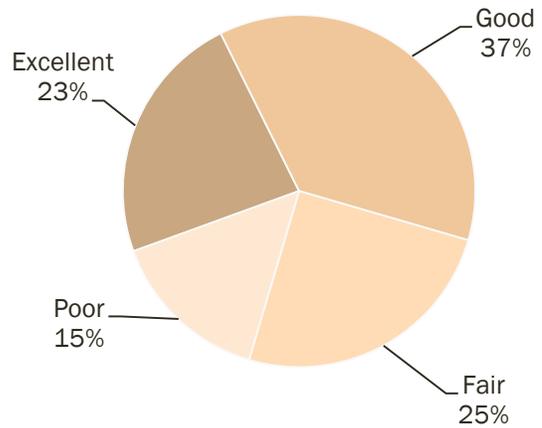
# Doing Business in Denton

Knowing where to focus resources to establish or preserve a thriving business climate requires information that targets features that are most important to the business community. Overall, about 6 in 10 business owners rated Denton as a place to do business as excellent or good. This rating was lower than ratings in comparison communities (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Business owners rated eight facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement) in two dimensions on the survey, first by their overall quality and then how important each was for the City to focus on in the next two years. The chart below summarizes these ratings by showing how each facet's quality compared to the benchmark; stars indicate the areas deemed most important for Denton's efforts in the future.

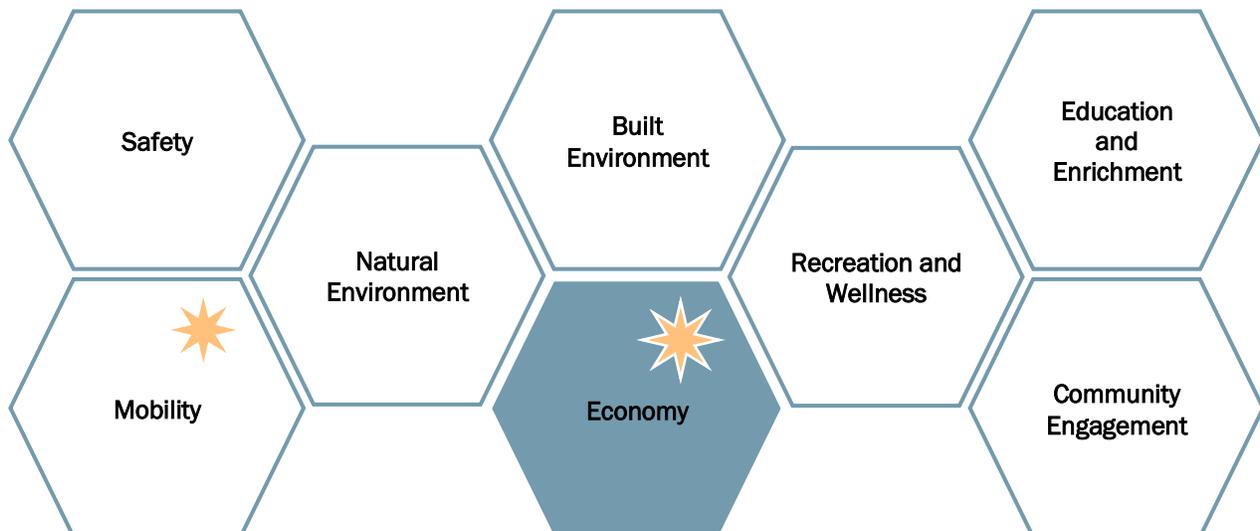
Business owners identified Mobility and Economy as priorities for the Denton community in the coming two years. Ratings for Economy were strong and similar to the national benchmark. Benchmarks for the remaining seven facets were not available. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where businesses 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.

Place to do business



## Legend

- Higher than benchmark
- Similar to benchmark
- Lower than benchmark
- Benchmark not available
- ★ Most important



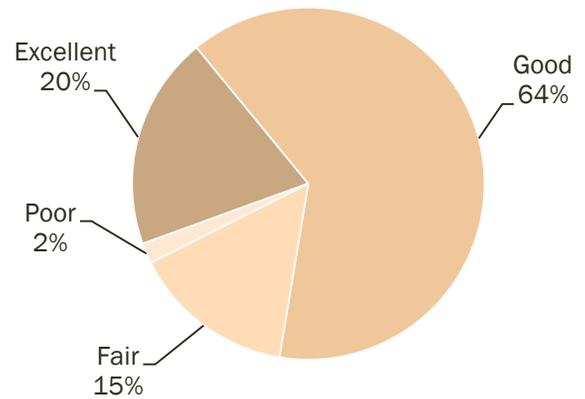
# Community Characteristics

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How the business community views the overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Denton, 84% felt the City had an excellent or good quality of life. Respondents' ratings of quality of life were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, business owners and managers rated several aspects of community quality including Denton as a place to work, to retire and to visit, the overall image or reputation of Denton and its overall appearance. Overall, a majority of respondents rated each of these aspects favorably, with Denton as a place to work being the most positively rated aspect. A high proportion of respondents also felt that Denton was a good place to visit. When national comparisons were available, these ratings tended to be lower.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 25 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. When benchmark comparisons were available, these ratings tended to be lower than ratings given in communities across the nation. However, exceptions to this include three aspects that were rated similar to the national comparison including ratings of feelings of safety in commercial areas during the day, ratings for overall economic health and for opportunities to participate in community matters. Within Safety, nearly all business owners and managers identified that they feel safe in commercial areas during the day while about 9 in 10 gave positive ratings to their overall feeling of safety. About three-quarters felt safe in commercial areas after dark. Within Mobility, each of the nine aspects received a positive rating from less than half of survey respondents including traffic flow, ease of public parking, ease of walking and availability of paths and walking trails. Ratings within the facet of Natural Environment were strong with at least 6 in 10 giving positive ratings to each of the three aspects within this facet. About half to three-quarters of respondents rated aspects of Economy as excellent or good (e.g., employment opportunities, vibrant downtown/commercial area).

Overall quality of life



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

Comparison to benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

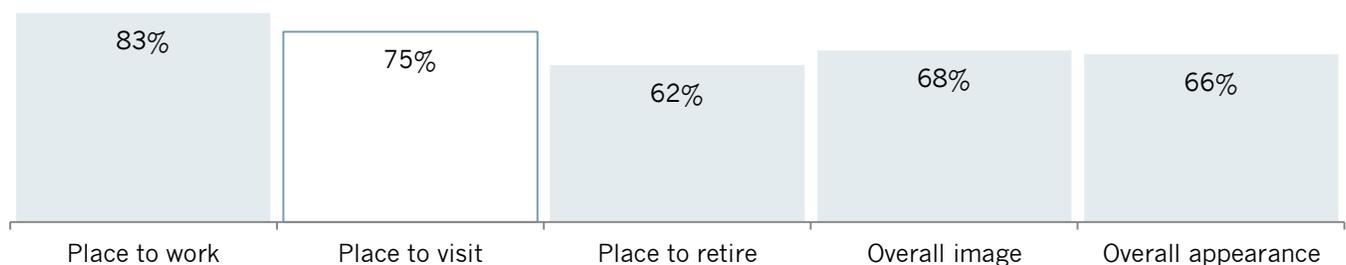
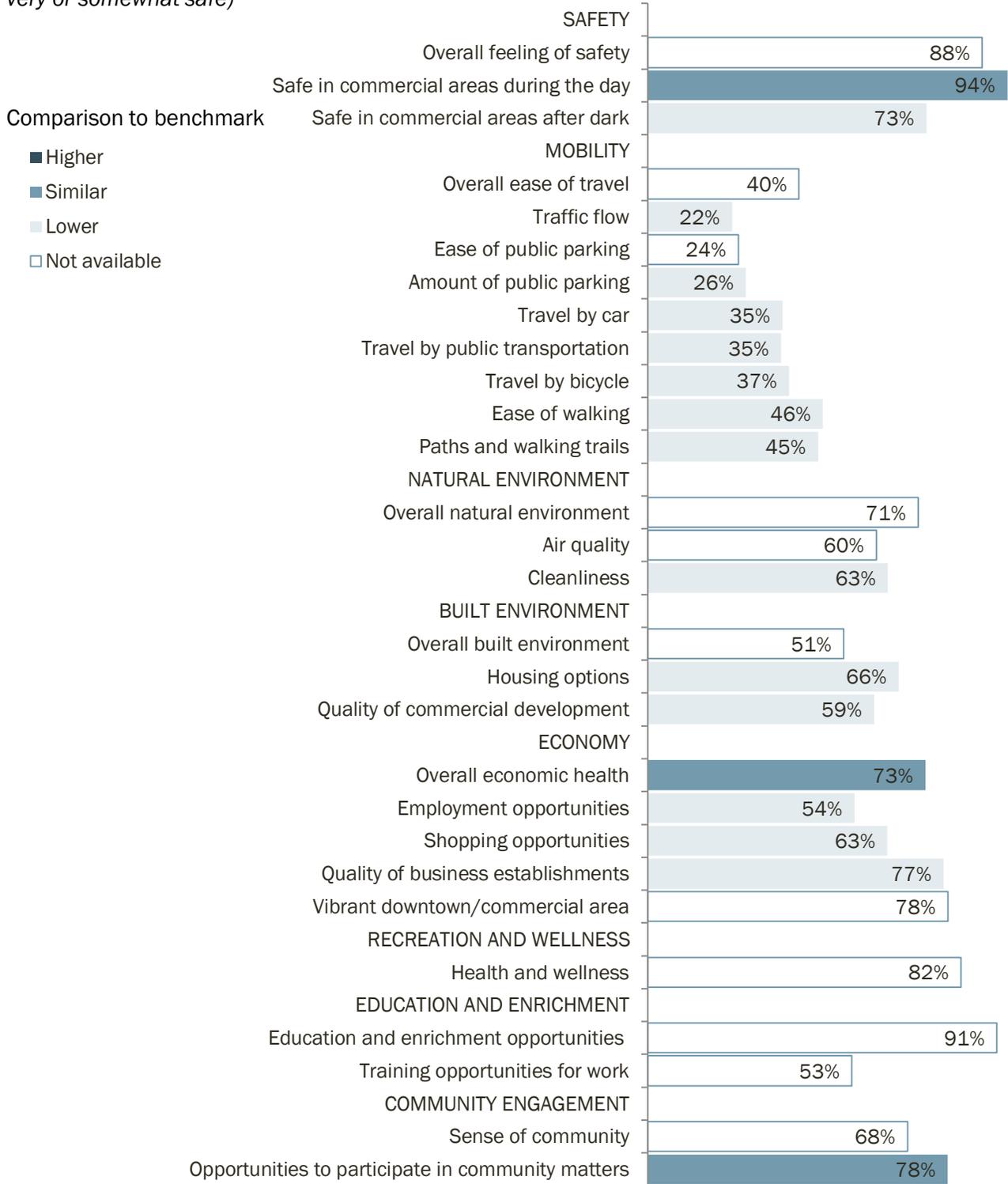


Figure 1: Aspects of the Community

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat safe)

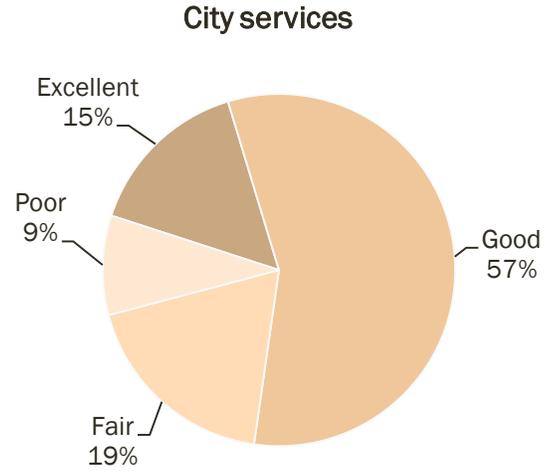


# Governance

The overall quality of the services provided by Denton as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how the business community rates the quality of life and the City as a place to do business. About three-quarters of business owners or managers gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Denton which was a rating similar to the national comparison. In comparison, only 51% gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by State Government and fewer (36%) gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Denton's leadership and governance. When comparisons to the national benchmark were available, ratings in Denton tended to be lower. About 7 in 10 business owners and managers gave high marks to the customer service provided by Denton employees. About half of survey respondents gave high marks to the overall direction of Denton, acting in the best interest of Denton and being honest.

Respondents evaluated over 20 individual services and amenities available in Denton. When benchmark comparisons were available, these ratings tended to be similar to or lower than the ratings given in other communities across the nation. Within Safety, ratings were strong with three of the four related aspects receiving positive ratings from at least 84% of respondents; each of which was also similar to the national comparison (a benchmark was not available for emergency preparedness). Ratings of Mobility ranged from 19% excellent or good for street repair to 78% excellent or good for traffic enforcement (a rating that was higher than the national comparison). Ratings within the facet of Natural Environment were strong with about 8 in 10 giving positive ratings to both garbage collection and recycling while the rating for recycling was similar to the national comparison (a benchmark was not available for garbage collection). Economic development was the highest rated aspect within the facet of Economy with 64% giving a positive rating.



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

Comparison to benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

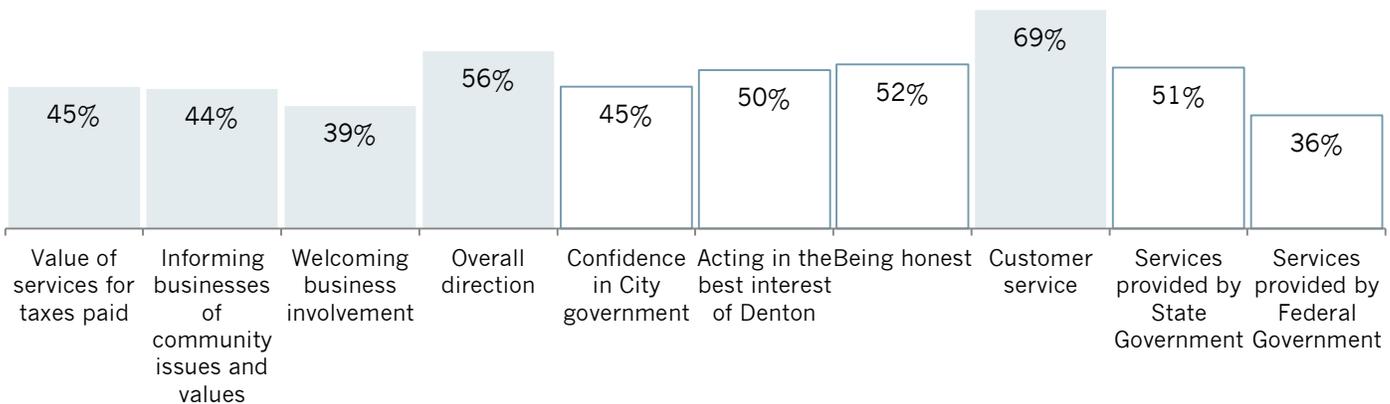
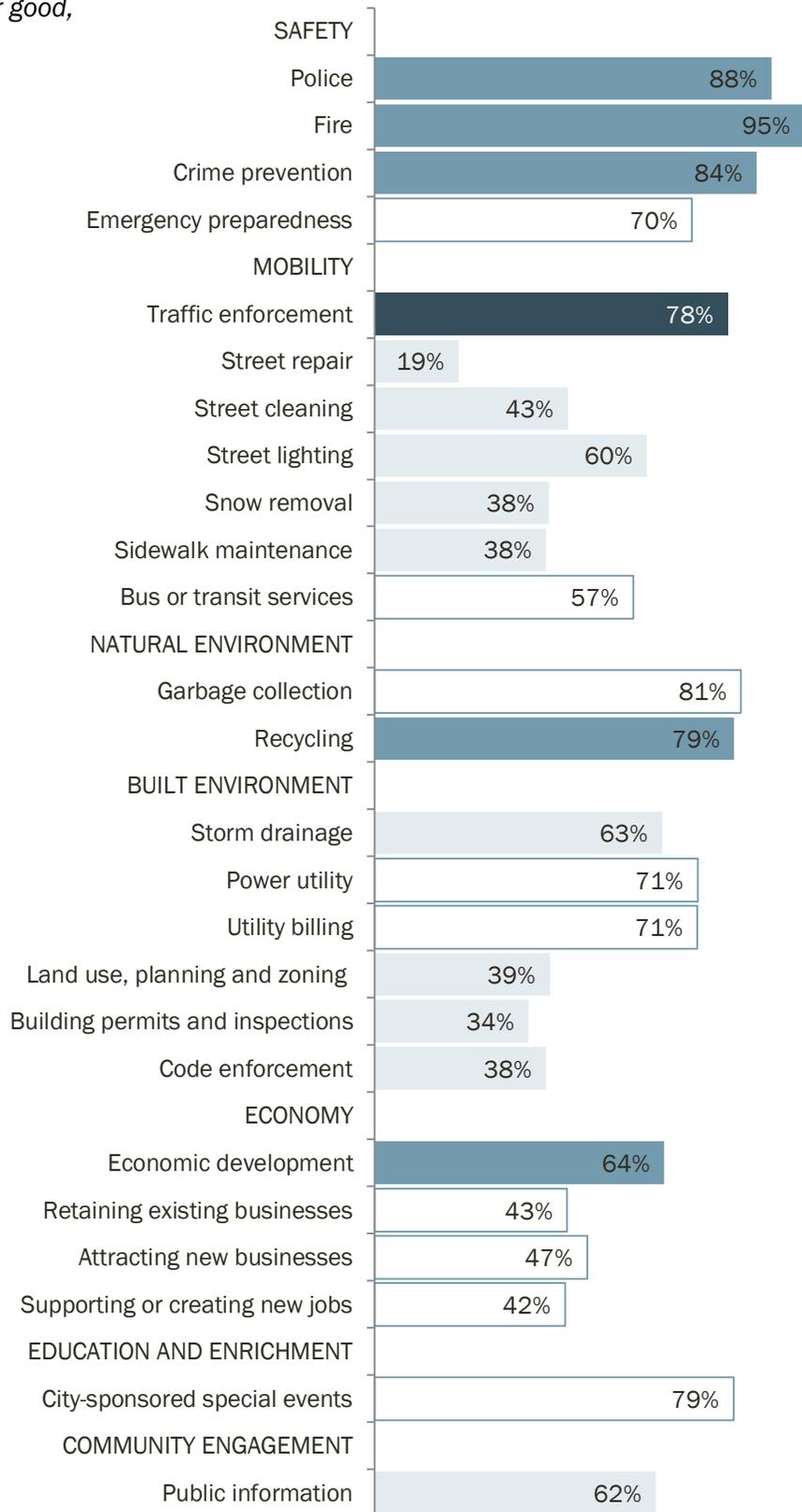


Figure 2: Aspects of the Governance

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat beneficial)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

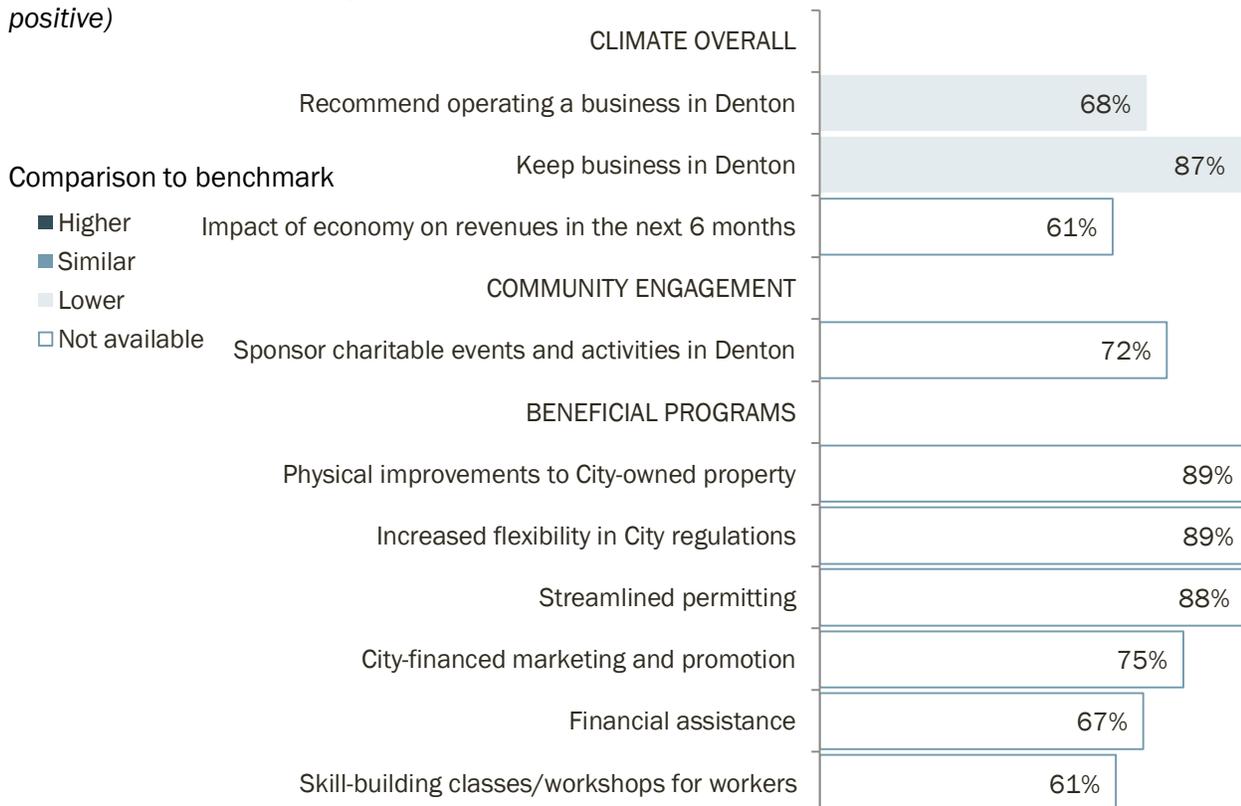


# Business Climate

City businesses weighed in on the business climate of Denton. Of those surveyed, 68% would be very or somewhat likely to recommend operating a business in Denton, which was lower than other municipalities across the nation. Significantly more were likely to keep their business in Denton for the next five years and 61% felt positive about the impact of the economy on their revenues in the coming six months.

When asked about potential programs and services to benefit businesses in Denton, about 9 in 10 identified physical improvements to City-owned property, increased flexibility in City regulations and streamlined permitting as the most beneficial. About three-quarters of respondents would find City-financed marketing and promotion beneficial, but fewer saw the benefits of skill-building classes/workshops for workers.

Percent positive (e.g., very or somewhat likely, very or somewhat beneficial, very or somewhat positive)



# Workforce

Business owners and managers evaluated several aspects of Denton’s workforce, including whether they planned to hire in the near future, the types of positions needed as well as the quality of the applicants they have encountered in past. Owners and managers also indicated the extent to which they used various hiring resources available in the community.

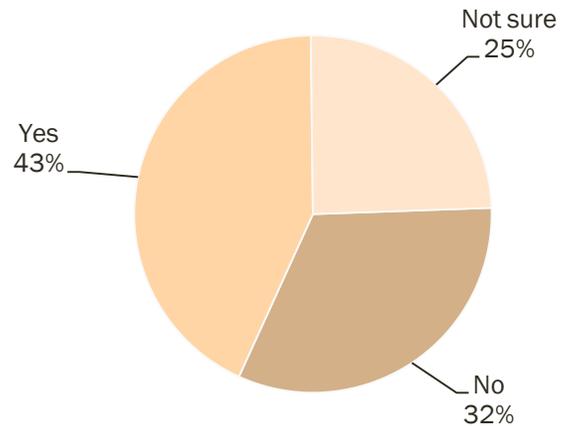
About 43% of survey respondents planned to hire within the next 6 to 12 months; about one-quarter were unsure if they would be hiring.

Those who indicated they were planning to hire or were unsure if they were planning to hire in the next 6 to 12 months were also asked what kind of jobs they might be adding. A majority indicated they would be adding technically skilled jobs while about 4 in 10 indicated they would be adding administratively skilled jobs. Business owners and managers were least likely to hire for unskilled administrative or labor positions.

When asked about their impression of job applicants in their most recent hiring experience, survey respondents gave the most positive ratings to applicant prior experience with 41% giving an excellent or good rating. When indicating their overall impression of applicants, 34% gave an excellent or good rating.

Survey respondents were also asked about their reliance on resources to seek talent for their business. About 4 in 10 indicated relying on job websites or their own business’ website to a great or moderate extent while about 3 in 10 relied on colleges/universities and social networks. About 13% relied on headhunters/recruiters and career fairs.

Planning to hire in the next 6 to 12 months



Types of positions needed

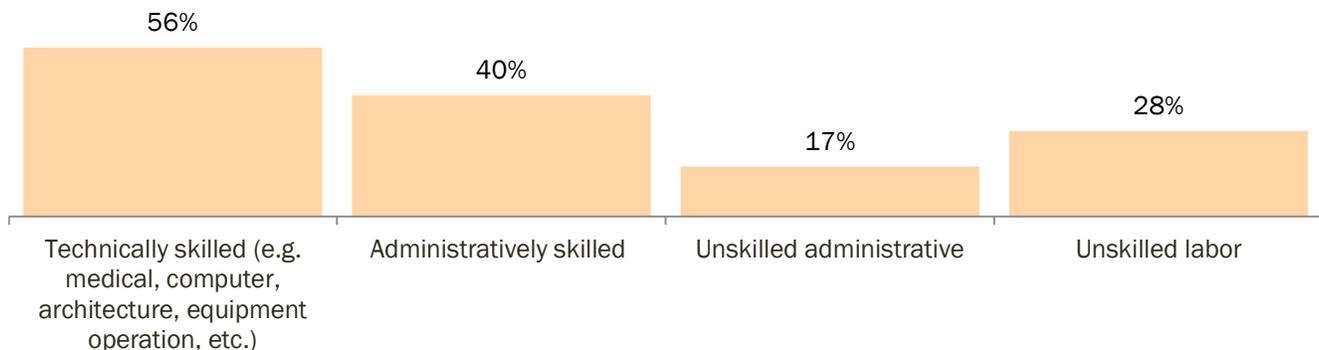
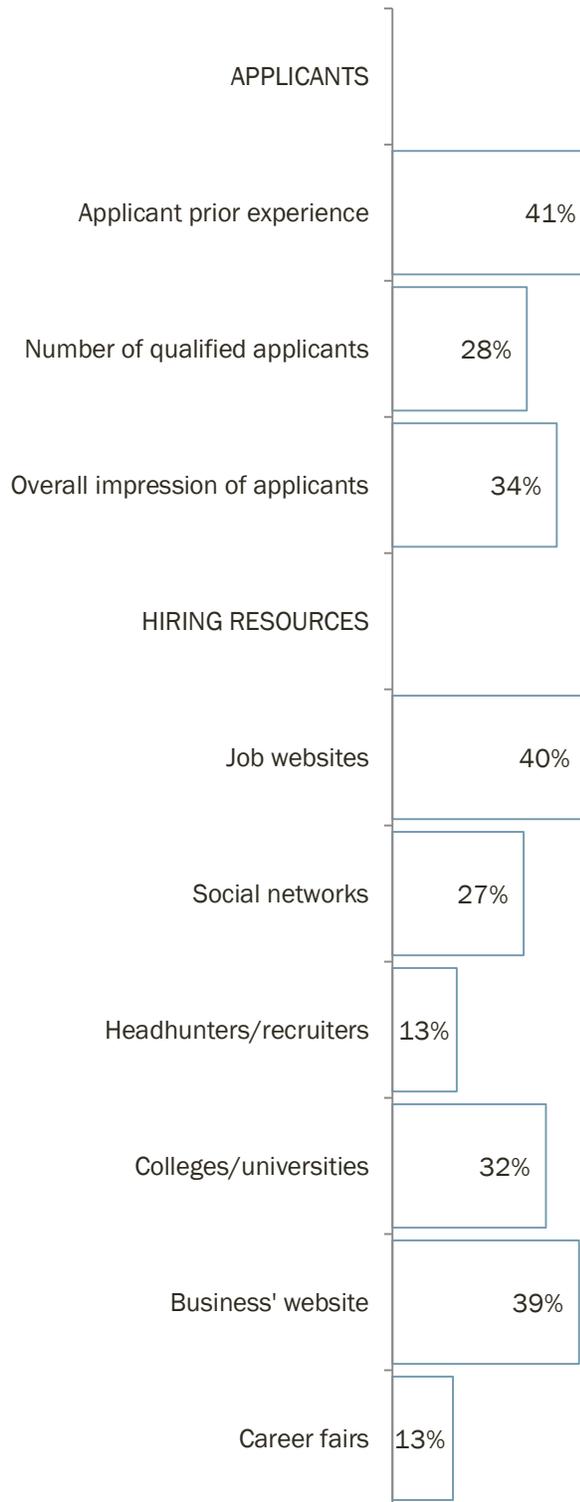


Figure 3: Aspects of the Workforce

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, great or moderate extent)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available



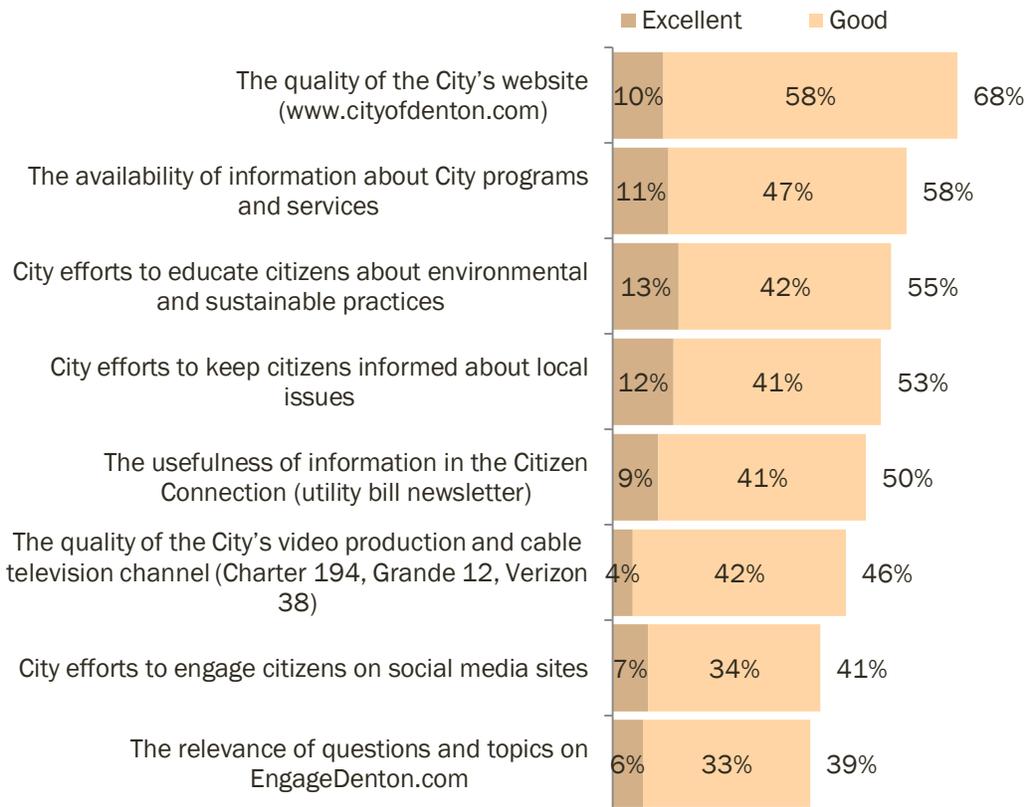
# Special Topics

The City of Denton included four questions of special interest on The NBS related to City communications.

When asked to rate the quality of eight aspects of Denton communications, about 7 in 10 gave excellent or good ratings to the quality of the City’s website, which was the highest rated aspect among the eight listed. About 6 in 10 gave high marks to the availability of information about City programs and services and slightly fewer gave high marks to City efforts to educate citizens about environmental and sustainable practices and City efforts to keep citizens informed about local issues.

Figure 4: Quality of City Communications

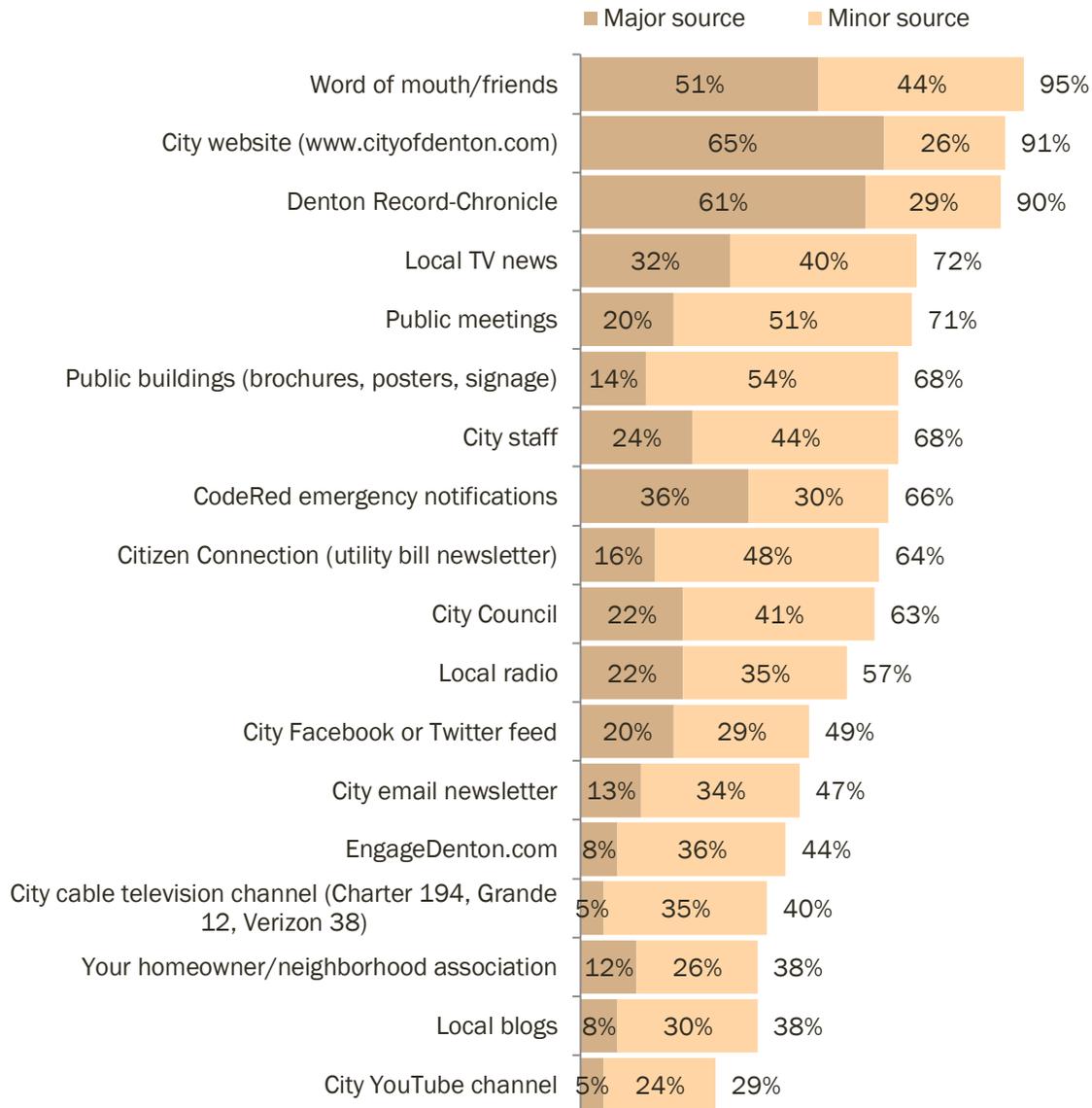
Please rate the following aspects of City of Denton communications:



When asked about sources of information, nearly all business owners and managers indicated that word of mouth/friends was a major or minor source of information about the City government and its activities, events and services. About 9 in 10 indicated that the City website and Denton Record-Chronicle were sources of information. About two-thirds of respondents relied on public buildings, City staff and CodeRed notifications for information about the City. The City YouTube channel, local blogs, homeowner/neighborhood associations and the City cable television channel were among the least used sources of information.

Figure 5: Sources of 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:

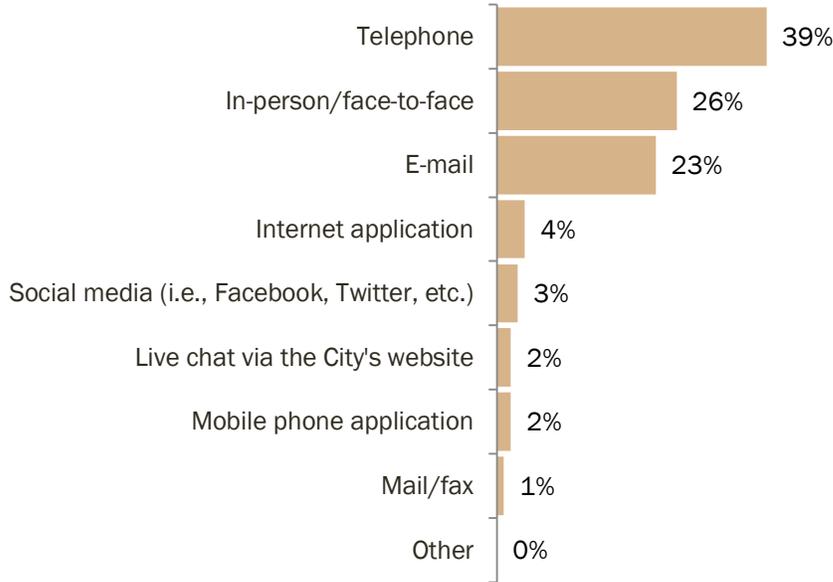


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About 4 in 10 survey respondents indicated the telephone as their preferred method of customer service interaction with the City of Denton employees. About one-quarter preferred in-person/face-to-face and e-mail while fewer than 5% preferred each of the other methods listed.

Figure 6: Customer Service Interaction Method

Please indicate which of the following is your preferred method of customer service interaction with the City of Denton Employees:



When asked about impressions of Denton employee customer service, nearly 8 in 10 gave excellent or good marks to the courtesy and helpfulness of City staff while about 7 in 10 gave high marks to the availability of City staff and the competence and knowledge of City staff. The lowest rated category of customer service performance was the length of time the survey respondent waited to submit a request; however a majority still gave positive ratings to this category.

Figure 7: Customer Service Impressions

Thinking about your most recent experience with the City of Denton, please rate your impression of the following categories of customer service performance:

