

The Morning Call
Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion

Allentown Citizen Survey

KEY FINDINGS REPORT

April 22, 2005

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1. Allentown residents generally have a favorable view of the city as a place to live, yet there is a substantial majority of residents giving the city a negative review in terms of quality of life.
2. When asked to compare Allentown to two years ago, more residents indicated that the city was a worse place to live than those who found the city has gotten better over that time frame. The percent saying the city is now a worse place to live is also higher than the level found in last year's survey.
3. City residents gave outgoing Allentown Mayor Roy Afflerbach's job performance strongly negative ratings, with about half of Allentonians indicating that the Mayor has performed poorly in his position
4. While slightly better than ratings of the mayor, Allentown residents give City Council mediocre job performance ratings.
5. A majority of city residents feel safe in their neighborhoods, yet substantial minorities in areas such as the center of the city expressed concern regarding their safety.
6. The service of the Allentown Police Department is generally viewed positively by city residents.
7. City residents are evenly split on whether the city should actively pursue the construction of a new minor league baseball stadium in Allentown.
8. While generally dissatisfied with the quality of the Allentown Public School system, residents expressed concerns about the adequacy of funding for the city schools, with about half supporting increases in property taxes if the money went to improving Allentown schools.
9. In an examination of the race for the office of Mayor Allentown, former Mayor William Heydt and the three Democratic challengers appear to be in a tight contest, with all potential match-ups within the survey's margin of error.

METHODOLOGY: The following key findings report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of residents of City of Allentown residents between April 1 and April 17, 2005. Individual households throughout Allentown were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, with 444 surveys completed. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, college educated, parents) is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded upward at the .5 mark, thus many totals in the results will not equal 100%. Because of an undersampling of Hispanic and Latino citizens, the data was weighted to more closely mirror the actual racial breakdown among city residents. The survey questionnaire was designed by Christopher Borick, Ph.D. of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in consultation with staff members of the *Morning Call*. Analysis and report writing were completed by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion under the direction of Dr. Borick.

OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN ALLENTOWN

Overall, residents of the city of Allentown rate life in the city fairly positively, with about 2 out of 3 residents rating life here as either excellent (7%) or good (61%). While generally positive, a substantial percentage 28% of city residents indicated negative views of living in Allentown, with 8% rating the city as a poor place to live. These findings are statistically unchanged from last year.

Table One

Ratings of Quality of Life in the City of Allentown

Quality of Life Rating	2004	2005
Excellent	5%	7%
Good	60%	61%
Not So Good	23%	20%
Poor	9%	8%
Not Sure	2%	3%

While residents are generally positive about the quality of life in the city, there is noticeable variation across the various sections of Allentown. For example, while only 21% of residents in the West Side rated quality of life negatively (17% “not so good”, 4% “poor”), their counterparts in Central City and South Allentown were more negative about local quality of life. More specifically, 30% of residents in Central or South Allentown rated quality of life in the city as either “poor” or “not so good”.

In contrast to their generally positive appraisal of quality of life in Allentown, they were more pessimistic about the direction of the city over the past two years. More specifically, 53% of

citizens surveyed indicated that life in the city was worse than two years before, in comparison to 30% who said life was better. The percent of city residents who find quality of life in Allentown to be worsening is also 9% greater than a year ago.

Table Two
“Compared to Two Years ago
What is the Direction of Quality of Life in Allentown”

Direction of The City	2004	2005
Much Better	5%	3%
Somewhat Better	26%	27%
Somewhat Worse	29%	39%
Much Worse	15%	14%
Staying the Same	18%	11%
Not Sure	8%	6%

Once again, the respondent’s area of residency had a significant impact on their views regarding the direction of the city, but in an opposite direction from perspectives on overall quality of life. As can be seen in Table Three, residents of the city’s East and West sides were the most likely to indicate that life in Allentown is getting worse than two years ago.

Table Three
“ Citizens Ratings of the Direction of Quality of Life in Allentown
by Area of Residency

Area of The City	Getting Better	Getting Worse	Staying the Same	Not Sure
West Side	32% (21%)	49% (43%)	16% (31%)	3% (6%)
Central City	29% (33%)	53% (44%)	10% (11%)	8% (12%)
East Side	29% (43%)	59% (44%)	6% (7%)	6% (5%)
South Side	29%(33%)	59% (49%)	7% (15%)	6% (5%)

* 2004 Responses in Parentheses

PERCEPTIONS OF MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Allentown residents gave very negative ratings to the performances of Mayor Roy Afflerbach and mediocre ratings to the work of city council. As can be seen in Tables Four and Five, a majority of city residents rated the performance of the city’s executive and legislative institutions in the fair and poor categories.

Table Four
Ratings of The Performance of Allentown Mayor
Roy Afflerbach

Mayor's Performance	2005	2004	2003	2001 (Heytd)
Excellent	2%	4%	6%	5%
Good	11%	23%	37%	31%
Fair	21%	29%	26%	34%
Poor	49%	29%	19%	16%
Not Sure	16%	16%	12%	15%

Table Five
Ratings of The Performance of Allentown City Council

Council Performance	2005	2004	2003	2001
Excellent	2%	2%	2%	2%
Good	26%	28%	36%	30%
Fair	36%	34%	30%	33%
Poor	18%	13%	12%	7%
Not Sure	18%	23%	20%	28%

For the performance of Mayor Roy Afflerbach, city residents tended to be extremely negative, with almost half (49%) rating his work poor. These numbers also mark a significant decline in satisfaction from last year's survey, with 20% more city resident's rating the mayor's performance as poor (29% to 49%). Not surprisingly, city Republicans rated the Democratic mayor most negatively (64% rated him poor). However, over half of Democrats (51%) rated Afflerbach's performance as poor, demonstrating the first-term mayor's loss of his party support. Residents who are affiliated with a minor political party or who are unaffiliated with any party were least likely to rate Afflerbach's performance as poor (37%). Finally, residents in the city's west end were most critical of Afflerbach's performance, with 56% of residents west of 20th Street rating the mayor's work as poor.

SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BASEBALL STADIUM

Over the past year and a half there has been considerable discussion regarding the construction of a new minor league baseball stadium in Allentown. While there have been numerous options discussed, Allentown citizens are evenly divided on whether the city should pursue this endeavor. More specifically, 44% of individuals surveyed indicated that they either strongly or somewhat agree that the city should pursue construction of a new minor league baseball stadium, with 45% disagreeing with this option. A full breakdown of responses follows in Table Six below.

Table Six
Citizen Agreement that The City Should Pursue Construction of a New Minor League Baseball Stadium

Level of Agreement	2004	2005
Strongly Agree	28%	23%
Somewhat Agree	21%	21%
Somewhat Disagree	11%	13%
Strongly Disagree	31%	32%
Not Sure	9%	10%

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE SERVICE AND CRIME

One of the most important issues facing the City of Allentown is the problem of crime and perceptions of safety. In this survey we examine the issue of public safety by gauging citizen satisfaction with police services and concern over neighborhood safety. First, Allentown residents give generally positive ratings to the service of city police department. As is noted in Table Seven, slightly just under two out of three Allentonians rated the service of the APD as either excellent or good, with only about one in three rating police service as either fair or poor. While generally positive, citizen perceptions of the APD are slightly more negative than a year ago.

Table Seven
Ratings of The Service of the Allentown Police Department

APD Performance	2001	2003	2004	2005
Excellent	14%	17%	14%	14%
Good	54%	53%	53%	48%
Fair	19%	20%	21%	26%
Poor	4%	4%	5%	6%
Not Sure	9%	6%	7%	6%

While city residents are generally positive towards police service, there is significant variation among residents of different races. Most notably white resident were most likely to rate city services positively, with 68% indicating the police service is either excellent or good. In comparison, only 44% of African Americans, and 39% of Hispanic/Latino residents identified police services as excellent or good.

As for perceptions of neighborhood safety, almost 7 out of 10 (68%) of city residents reported that crime is either not too big of a problem or not a problem at all in their area of the city. Conversely, just under one out of three residents reported crime being either somewhat or a big problem in their neighborhood. A full breakdown of responses follows in Table Eight.

Table Eight

Extent of Crime Problem in Your Neighborhood

Extent of Problem	2004	2005
Big Problem	9%	7%
Somewhat of a problem	23%	24%
Not too big of a problem	42%	39%
Not a problem at all	26%	29%
Not Sure	>1%	1%

Looking closer at the findings we see that the respondents area of residency plays a big role in determining their perceptions of neighborhood safety. For example, while only 24% of West Allentown residents reported that crime is either somewhat of a problem or a big problem in their neighborhood, 48% of their counterparts in Central Allentown maintained the same position. A breakdown regarding concern with neighborhood safety follows in Table Nine.

Table Nine

**“ Citizens Ratings of the Problem of Crime in Their Neighborhood
by Area of Residency**

Area of The City	Big Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not Too Big of a Problem	Not a Problem at All
West Side	4%	20%	40%	37%
Central City	14%	34%	35%	15%
East Side	10%	18%	46%	25%
South Side	7%	21%	39%	31%

RATINGS OF ALLENTOWN SCHOOLS

Along with crime, public education has been a focus of much local attention in recent years. More specifically, the quality of the public school system in Allentown has been brought under scrutiny both from the state government and the media. Therefore this study sought to examine the current state of public attitudes regarding Allentown's school system. From Table Ten below one can see fairly low levels of public support for the quality of public education in the city. Most specifically, one out of four Allentonians rated the public schools as poor.

Table Ten

Ratings of The Quality of the Allentown School System

Performance Rating	2001	2004	2005
Excellent	4%	3%	5%
Good	21%	26%	25%
Fair	32%	28%	30%
Poor	25%	26%	27%
Not Sure	18%	17%	14%

While not very favorable in their perceptions of school quality in the city, Allentown residents were more split on the proposition of paying more property taxes if the money was directed to improving educational quality in the city. The survey results indicate that 48% of city residents would support an increase of property taxes if it only went to increasing educational quality in the district. Conversely, 49% of Allentown residents expressed disagreement with the possibility of increased property taxes earmarked for educational improvement. A full listing of responses on this question follow in Table Eleven.

Table Eleven

Level of Agreement for Increasing Property Taxes if the Money Went Only to Improving Allentown Schools

Level of Agreement	2004	2005
Strongly Agree	27%	20%
Somewhat Agree	26%	28%
Somewhat Disagree	13%	16%
Strongly Disagree	28%	33%
Not Sure	5%	3%

As might be expected, Allentown residents with children under the age of 18 are more supportive than resident's without school age children. For example, while 56% of city residents without children 18 years old or younger opposed increasing property taxes to improve school quality, only 31% of Allentonians with children in this age category indicated opposition to that fiscal

possibility. In addition, individuals who own homes in the city were more hesitant to support this proposal, with 42% supporting the tax increase compared to 60% of individuals who do not own their home. Finally, individuals who vote most regularly in city elections were the least likely to support increased property taxes to aid public schools, with 44% of regular voters supporting this measure, compared to 54% of individuals who rarely or never vote in city elections.

THE LIKLIHOOD OF STAYING IN ALLENTOWN

A challenge facing many areas in Pennsylvania, and particularly the state’s urban centers, has been the ability of areas to maintain their young individuals and college educated citizens within their borders. Thus this study sought to measure citizen intent on staying in Allentown over the next five years. The findings indicate that just under 1 in 3 Allentown residents expect to leave Allentown within the next five years. A breakdown of all responses follows in Table Thirteen.

Table Twelve
Likelihood of Remaining in Allentown for the Next Five Years

Likelihood of Staying	2001	2004	2005
Certain to Stay	24%	31%	32%
Likely to Stay	34%	32%	33%
Likely to Move	18%	23%	17%
Certain to Move	10%	12%	13%
Not Sure	14%	3%	2%

Looking closer at the characteristics of city residents who are likely or certain to leave Allentown in the next five years some disturbing trends emerge. Most notably, 44% of individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 expressed that they are likely or certain to leave the city in the next half decade. While high mobility is most expected in this age group, it poses a challenge for the city to keep many of Allentown’s younger generations within the city.

Allentown Mayor’s Race

With incumbent Mayor Roy Afflerbach choosing not to run for reelection, Allentown will elect a new mayor this November. While there are many possibilities for match-ups in the general election race, this survey examined potential contests between former Mayor William Heydt, a challenger for the Republican nomination, and the three Democratic candidates competing for their party’s nomination. The results of this survey show Heydt in tight races against either Louis Belliteri, Siobhan Bennett, or Ed Pawlowski, with the former mayor leading each competitor. However, the races are all within the survey’s margin of error, with significant portions of the city’s voters undecided about their preference six months before election day.

**Table Thirteen
Belliterri vs Heydt**

Candidate	Percent
William Heydt	36%
Louis Belliterri	26%
Other	1%
Neither	5%
Not Sure	29%
Refused	3%

**Table Fourteen
Bennett vs Heydt**

Candidate	Percent
William Heydt	33%
Siobhan Bennett	29%
Other	2%
Neither	6%
Not Sure	27%
Refused	3%

**Table Fifteen
Pawloski vs Heydt**

Candidate	Percent
William Heydt	33%
Ed Pawloski	30%
Other	<1%
Neither	3%
Not Sure	31%
Refused	3%