

**CITY OF ALLENTOWN**  
**CITIZEN SATISFACTION SURVEY**

**INDEX**

Section 1 – Key Findings

Section 2 - Purpose

Section 3 – Methodology

Section 4 - Demographics

Section 5 - Summary Report

5.1 Public Safety

5.2 Fire Department

5.3 Code Enforcement

5.4 Parks and Recreation

5.5 Health and Emergency Medical Services

5.6 Recycling and Trash Services

5.7 Sewer and Water Service

5.8 Ratings of Specific City Services

5.9 Ratings of City Sponsored Events

5.10 Views on Construction of an Arena

5.11 Views on MLK City Holiday

5.12 Sources of Information about the Community

5.13 Rating the Performance of City Government

5.14 Rating of Overall Quality and Value of City Services

5.15 Rating of the Overall Quality of Life in Allentown

5.16 Key Issues for The City to Work on

Section 6 - Conclusion

Section 7. Frequency Questionnaire

Section 8. Transcript of Select Open Ended Comments

## **SECTION ONE: KEY FINDINGS**

- City residents express high levels of concern for public safety, especially individuals living in downtown neighborhoods
- Most citizens rate Allentown Police Department (APD) service positively, but a moderately size minority of residents maintain negative views of APD service and personnel.
- Fire services rated very highly by city residents.
- While generally satisfied with housing appearance in their neighborhood, many city residents would like to see stronger code enforcement efforts
- City residents are very satisfied with the quality of city parks.
- Allentonians indicate strong confidence in the city's emergency medical services
- A substantial percentage of city residents provided negative ratings of trash service, with late collection and lack of thoroughness identified as problems.
- Allentown residents displayed confidence in the city's water and sewer services
- The survey findings demonstrate fairly widespread dissatisfaction with street conditions and maintenance
- City residents indicate positive views on the major city sponsored events
- While there is a greater percentage of city residents that support the construction of a sports and entertainment than oppose it, a large percentage of citizens remain undecided on this issue
- Public opinion on the creation of a city holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is strongly divided

- The primary source of information about the Allentown community is through local newspapers, while city sponsored information sources such as newsletters and Allentown's web site draw relatively low levels of use and recognition.
- Public sentiment on the performance of both the city council and mayor is quite divided, with negative ratings slightly outpacing positive ratings
- A majority of Allentown residents are satisfied with the value of services that they receive for their tax dollar
- While a majority of citizens rated the city as a good place to live, responses varied substantially from the varied areas of the city.
- Fear of crime and lack of shopping options and attractions are identified as the key reasons for not visiting Allentown's downtown
- The public provided fairly low ratings of the quality of public education in the Allentown Public Schools
- Crime is overwhelmingly identified as the most important facing the city as a whole, but is noted as less important of a problem in many sections of Allentown
- About one quarter of city residents reported that they are either certain or likely to move out of the city in the next five years, with younger individuals the most likely to leave.

## **SECTION TWO: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research project was to gather information on the views and opinions of Allentown citizens in regard to their satisfaction with the services, programs and facilities provided by the city, and the major issues facing Allentown at this time. The first iteration of this project was designed to develop a set of measures that can be tracked over time in order to provide useful analysis of shifts in the quality of service provision by the city. Similarly the survey instrument designed for this project can be used in subsequent years to track shifts in public opinion in terms of the performance of government officials, departments and agencies. There was an attempt to initiate a similar research endeavor in the early 1980s that resulted in two substantial citizen surveys, but the process was not continued past 1984.

## **SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The project was initiated by the City of Allentown's Urban Observatory in the Fall of 2000. Under the direction of Councilwoman Pam Varkony, the Urban Observatory board agreed to undertake this project with City Clerk Michael Hanlon gathering similar studies conducted in American cities. This information was presented to the board and was used to construct the first draft of the survey questionnaire. After development of the draft questionnaire Hanlon and Dr. Chris Borick of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion refined the instrument into a final version.

To make valid inferences about the views of city residents it was necessary to develop a methodologically sound sample from the Allentown population. To accomplish this goal a sample was drawn from the per capita tax rolls of the City of Allentown. This data base was selected because it comprises a broad base of city residents that approximates the city's adult population. The size of the sample was determined by combining the desired number of completed surveys with the projected response rate. In order to produce a margin of error of under +/- 5 with subgroups large enough to draw meaningful inferences it was necessary to achieve approximately 600 completed surveys. We anticipated a response rate of approximately 20%, thus it was necessary to draw responses from a sample of approximately 3,000 citizens. Thus 2939 names were randomly selected from the per capita tax rolls for inclusion in the study.

Each individual selected in the sample was sent a pre-notification letter by Allentown Mayor William Heydt informing them of the intent of the project and requesting their assistance. Individuals selected for inclusion then received a survey questionnaire and directions during March and April of 2001. While all surveys were sent in an English version, directions were sent in both Spanish and English. A Spanish version of the survey was available for any individual that called a city number listed in the directions.

By the end of May 2001, over 1000 surveys had been returned to the city. The final number of 1,012 surveys marked a response rate of 34%, far surpassing the estimated number of returns. This sample size produces a margin of error of +/- 3 at a 95% level of confidence.

Each of the returned surveys was given to the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion for data coding, entry, and analysis. The survey questionnaire was comprised of 89 questions of which 25 were open-ended. Each response to an open-ended question had to be numerically coded to allow for empirical analysis. Because of the greater than expected volume of completed surveys this coding process required an extended period of time during the summer of 2001. Upon completion of coding and entry, the final data set was analyzed by Chris Borick in September of 2001, with release of the final report on October 3, 2001.

#### **SECTION FOUR: DEMOGRAPHICS**

Survey respondents came from the various geographic sections of the City of Allentown. To help organize and simplify the analysis the city was broken down into seven discrete geographic regions. These seven sections are comprised of the 19 political wards that make up Allentown. The following table provides a break down of the geographic distribution of respondents:

**TABLE ONE**

***GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS***

SECTION	WARDS IN THE SECTION	% of RESPONDENTS
West End	17, 18	14%
South Side	12,16,19	27%
Mid City	11,13	19%
North Side	8,10	16%
Center City	2,3,4,5,7,9	7%
Wards	1,6	4%
East Side	14,15	13%

The sample of city residents can also be examined in terms of various other demographic factors such as age, marital status, educational attainment, racial background, income and length of residency. The survey respondents indicated a variety of responses regarding marital status, with 17% reporting they are single, 58% responding that they are married, 12% divorced, 2% separated and 10% widowed. Almost three out of four Allentown citizens reported that they currently own their home, while just over 1 out of 3 respondents currently working within the city. The distribution of respondents in terms of educational attainment follows in Table two.

**TABLE TWO**

***EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT DISTRIBUTION OF  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS***

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	% of RESPONDENTS
Some High School Education	11%
High School Graduate	38%
Attended Some College	25%
College Graduate	26%
No Response	1%

Survey respondents were asked to report their annual household income within a series of categories that were presented to them in the survey. While approximately 10% of returned surveys did not have a reported income listed, over 880 respondents listed a household income within the 5 categories offered. The distribution of income responses follows in Table Two.

**TABLE THREE**

***INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF  
SURVEY RESPONDENTS***

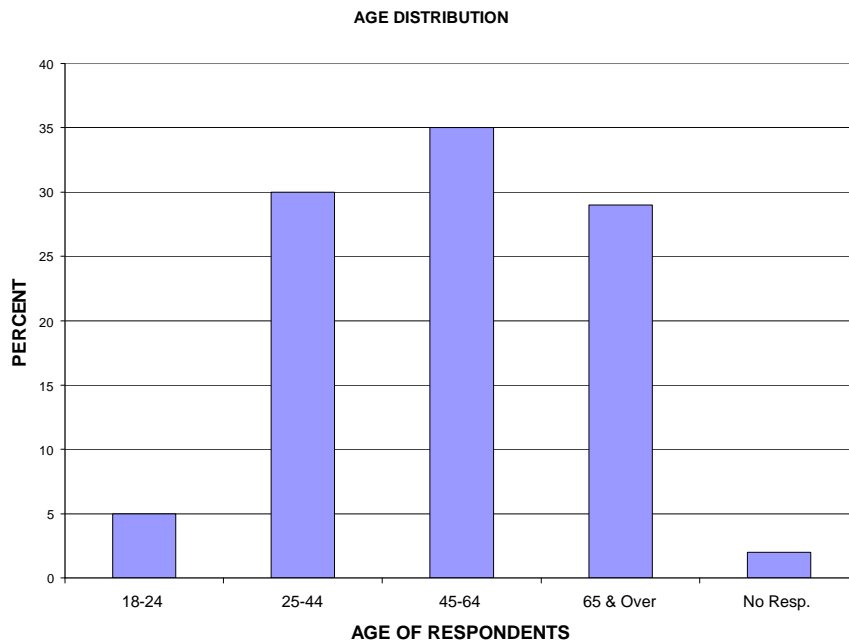
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	% of RESPONDENTS
\$1 - \$19,999	19%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	30%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	25%
\$60,000 and Over	25%
No Income	2%

Approximately 95% of individuals that returned surveys provided a response to a question regarding their racial or ethnic background. Slightly over 7 out of 10 survey respondents identified themselves as caucasian, with the remaining respondents reporting that they were either African American (10%), Hispanic (7%), or from another racial group (5%). Similarly, 99% of survey respondents provided information on their current

age. The compilation of this data on age is provided in the distribution presented in Figure One that follows:

**FIGURE ONE**

***AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY REpondENTS***



Based on data from the United States Census Bureau (1990) we find that the sample gathered is slightly skewed in terms of the youngest and oldest age categories used in the analysis. More specifically, the sample has a lower percentage of 18-24 year olds than the actual population, and more individuals over the age of 65. While it would be possible to weight these numbers to match actual population percentages, the unavailability of 2000 Census data makes this process problematic. Thus real values are employed in the analysis rather than weighted measures



## **SECTION 5.1: PUBLIC SAFETY**

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their perceptions of public safety in the City of Allentown. Individuals rated such factors as neighborhood safety, quality of police service and confidence in the 911 system. In terms of overall perceptions of neighborhood safety in Allentown, a majority of city residents indicated only moderate feelings of security. While roughly one out of three individuals surveyed indicated that they felt extremely or very safe in their own neighborhood, over half of the respondents indicated that they feel only somewhat safe in the area in which they live. In addition, a small but significant number of individual reported that they never feel safe in the neighborhood in which they live.

The survey results indicate striking differences between citizen feelings of safety and the neighborhood that the live in. For example, a resident of the west end is over three times as likely to feel extremely or very safe in their neighborhood as is a resident of Allentown’s center city neighborhood, and over four times as likely to feel safe in comparison to residents of the north side. A full breakdown of citizen views on safety in relation to area of resident is displayed in Table 4A

**TABLE FOUR A**  
***THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
VIEWS ON SAFETY AND AREA  
OF RESIDENCY IN ALLENTOWN  
(n=998)***

SECTION	Extremely Safe	Very Safe	Somewhat Safe	Never Safe
West End	11%	59%	30%	0%
South Side	7%	32%	58%	2%
Mid-City	3%	34%	57%	4%
North Side	2%	13%	64%	16%
Center City	2%	21%	59%	17%
Wards	6%	14%	49%	23%
East Side	5%	29%	60%	5%

Survey respondents also expressed views on the quality of services provided by the Allentown Police Department (APD). Over 2 out of 3 Allentonians rated the APD's service as excellent (14% ) or good (54% ), with only 4 % expressing the view that police services in the city are poor. These findings closely match citizen views on the attitudes of city police officers, with approximately 2 out of 3 individuals rating APD officers attitudes towards the community as either good or excellent. Conversely, approximately 1 in 4 survey respondents provided more negative ratings of officer attitudes, with 22% rating attitudes as fair and 5% indicating police personnel have poor attitudes.

While the overall citizen view of APD officer's attitudes is generally favorable, there are noticeable differences in the various section of the city. For example, citizens in the west end are almost twice as likely (81% to 44%) to rate officer attitudes as excellent or good as are their counterparts in the center city area of Allentown.

As with many other sections of the survey, respondents were provide an opportunity to express comments on the police department in an open-ended fashion. Table One below provides a breakdown of the most common responses of residents regarding police services and the percentage of respondents that provided comments in those categories. As can be seen in the table, the most common comment offered about polices service and attitudes was that officers on the force were helpful and courteous. In addition, respondents offered positive comments about the performance of officers under difficult circumstances and regarding the response time of officers. Conversely, a significant number of city residents noted problems with the performance and attitudes of APD officers. Most notably, 6% of responding individuals indicated that the response time of police is too slow and that officers demonstrate poor attitudes (13%) towards the public.

**TABLE FOUR B**

***COMMENTS ON ALLENTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
ATTITUDES AND SERVICES  
(n = 477)***

COMMENTS ON POLICE SERVICE AND ATTITUDES	% RESPONDING
APD does not have enough officers	11%
Response time is too slow	6%
APD officers are helpful and courteous	29%
More pay is needed for APD officers	1%
Officers demonstrate racist behavior	2%
Officers perform well under difficult conditions	6%
Officers respond quickly to calls	6%
Officers demonstrate poor attitudes	13%
Not enough contact to comment on APD	7%
Other Comments	18%

Finally, citizens were asked the single most important thing that the city should be doing to increase safety in their neighborhood. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents expressed the view that the most beneficial thing that can be done to increase safety would be an increase in the number of patrols and visibility of officers in the city. Other recommendations such as targeting drug dealers (5%) and youth and gang violations (5%) were provided by city residents along with 6% of respondents that would most like to see parking violations addressed more strictly.

**SECTION 5.2 :FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICES**

The results of the survey provide evidence of strong citizen satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the Allentown Fire Department (AFD). Over 7 out of 10 Allentown residents indicated that they were very confident that the fire department would respond to an emergency in a professional and timely manner, with less than 1% of citizens expressing little or no confidence in these services. These findings are positively correlated with general ratings of the AFD's service, with a majority of survey respondents indicating that the fire department provides excellent service to the community. Conversely, less than three percent rated fire protection as either fair or poor, thus providing further evidence of public satisfaction with this area of public safety

In terms of open-ended comments about the fire department, the most common response was that service in the city was of an extremely high quality. Only 2% of respondents offering comments on the AFD indicated a measure of dissatisfaction with the quality of fire protection services provided. Table Five provides a breakdown of open ended comments on fire service.

**TABLE FIVE**  
***COMMENTS ON ALLENTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT***  
***ATTITUDES AND SERVICES***  
*(n=332)*

COMMENTS ON AFD SERVICE	% RESPONDING
Fire protection is excellent	48%
AFD responds quickly to calls	11%
AFD needs more personnel	3%
Dissatisfied with AFD services	2%
Not enough contact to rate AFD	27%
Other comments	8%

**SECTION 5.3: CODE ENFORCEMENT**

City residents were asked to express their views on the quality of code enforcement within Allentown. While expressing general satisfaction with the quality of appearance of housing in their neighborhoods, Allentonians were strongly split in their ratings of the code enforcement efforts of the city government. Nearly 8 out of 10 survey respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the overall appearance of their neighborhood housing, with 36% very satisfied and 40% somewhat satisfied. Conversely, only 22% expressed dissatisfaction with housing appearance in their neighborhood. These findings are closely related to survey responses in terms of concerns about run-down buildings in city neighborhoods. Over half of the responses given indicated that run-down houses or abandoned buildings are not at all a problem in their neighborhood, with an additional 22% indicating these types of structures are only a small problem. Table Six Below provides a full breakdown of survey responses to this question:

**TABLE SIX**

***CITIZEN CONCERN WITH THE PROBLEM OF RUN-DOWN HOUSES and  
ABANDONED BUILDINGS IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD  
(n=1000)***

RESPONSE	% RESPONDING
Big Problem	8%
Somewhat of a Problem	15%
Small Problem	22%
Not at All	51%
Not Sure	4%

While generally satisfied with the quality of housing in their neighborhood, Allentown residents were more split in their satisfaction with the city's code enforcement efforts. More specifically, while 41% rated Allentown's code enforcement as either excellent or good, a similar proportion (38%) indicated services in this area are only fair or poor. The apparent disconnect between citizen satisfaction with housing conditions in their neighborhood and views of code enforcement efforts may be caused by a variation in citizen views about the overall quality of city housing and the housing in their particular section of the city.

When asked to identify the most important thing that the city can do to improve housing quality survey respondents offered a variety of suggestions. The most common recommendation of city residents was for the city to enforce appearance codes in a stronger manner (20%), with improved efforts in keeping building clean and graffiti free (12%) following as a close second. The following table provided an overview of all responses to this question:

**TABLE SEVEN**

***THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THE CITY CAN DO  
TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF HOUSING  
IN ALLENTOWN (n=524)***

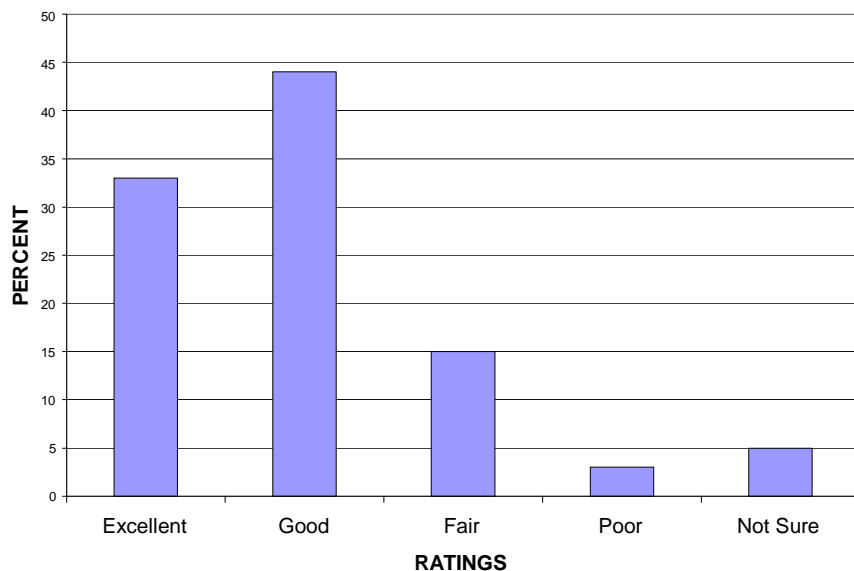
Citizen Recommendation	% Responding
Stronger Enforcement of Appearance Codes	20%
Crack Down on Loitering and Safety Problems	4%
Keep Streets and Buildings Clean and Graffiti Free	12%
Enforce Health and Occupancy Codes More Diligently	3%
Punish Absentee Landlords	5%
Deal With Vacant Buildings	5%
Focus Attention on Rental Properties	6%
Other	45%

**SECTION 5.4: PARKS AND RECREATION**

Survey Respondents were asked to provide comments on the quality of Allentown’s Park system. The survey results provide evidence of widespread citizen satisfaction with the city’s parks, with over 3 out of 4 respondents rating the parks as either excellent (31%) or good (46%). Conversely, only 15% of those surveyed rated city parks as fair, with % finding park facilities to be poor. A breakdown of responses to this question follows in Figure Two.

**FIGURE TWO**

***Citizen Ratings of Allentown’s  
Park System  
(n=1007)***



Survey respondents indicated that their most common use of the city park system was for running and walking (35%), with sports and swimming activities (13%), picnics and gatherings (7%), and concerts and musical performances (5%) also prominently mentioned. While the city’s parks are generally well regarded by city residents, survey respondents did offer a variety of opinions regarding priorities in the area of recreational programming. Most notably, just under one third of respondents would like to see improved programming and hours of availability within the cities recreation efforts. A complete breakdown of the views offered on recreational programming is contained in the following Table.

**TABLE EIGHT**

***CITIZEN VIEWS ON THE CITY’S  
RECREATION PRIORITIES  
(n=614)***

RECOMMENDED PRIORITY	% of RESPONDENTS
Improve the quality of city playgrounds and parks	22%
Provide greater supervision of recreational facilities	2%
Improved programming and hours needed	31%
More summer camps and summer programming needed	8%
Improve the safety of city parks	8%
No change necessary, satisfied with current conditions	6%
Other	23%

**SECTION 5.5: HEALTH AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

While about half of survey respondents did not have enough contact or were unsure about the quality of Allentown’s Health Bureau Service, a majority of those providing ratings had positive views. More specifically, of the 564 respondents that rated services, 80% found services in this area to be either good or excellent.

Similarly, ratings of the city’s emergency medical services were quite positive. Over half (56%) of survey respondents indicated that they are very confident in the city’s emergency medical service, with an additional 33% stating that they are somewhat confident in these services. Conversely, only 2% of city residents expressed little or no confidence in the quality of emergency medical service.

## **SECTION 5.6: RECYCLING AND TRASH SERVICES**

One area of substantial concern among the citizen's of Allentown is the quality of trash and recycling collection services. While a slight majority of survey respondents gave positive ratings of this city service (14% excellent and 41% good), over 4 out of ten respondents provided less positive opinion. More specifically, 26% of survey respondents found trash and recycling services to be only fair, with an additional 17% rating these city services as poor. This substantial level of dissatisfaction can be further examined in open ended comments provided by city residents.

Of the 612 individuals who provided comments on this service, about one quarter indicated that garbage collection is not provided in a thorough manner. Additionally, about one in five survey respondents indicated that they encountered missed or late garbage collection as part of their service. An overview of comments on this issue is provided in the following table.

**TABLE NINE**

***COMMENTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE CITY'S  
TRASH AND RECYCLING SERVICE  
(n=612)***

COMMENTS	% RESPONDING
Garbage collection is not thorough	25%
Recycling services are not thorough	7%
Garbage collection is missed or late	21%
Generally satisfied with services	18%
Generally dissatisfied with services	8%
Damaged or misplaced trash cans and bins	9%
Other	13%

## **SECTION 5.7: SEWER AND WATER SERVICE**

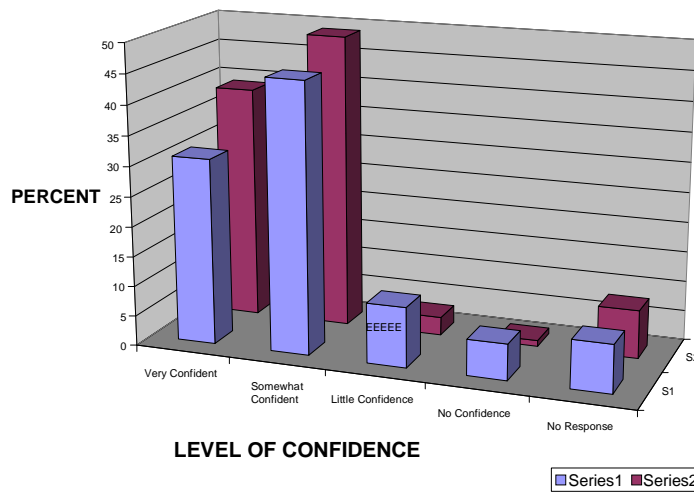
Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in the delivery of drinking water and the provision of sewer services to the city. The survey results indicate substantial confidence in the city's ability to provide these essential services. While confidence in the city's sewer service is slightly higher than confidence in the provision



of quality drinking water, Figure Three provides a visual portrayal of generally high levels of citizen confidence.

**FIGURE THREE**

***CONFIDENCE IN THE CITY'S  
DRINKING WATER AND SEWER SERVICE***



SERIES ONE = Drinking Water  
SERIES TWO = Sewer Service

**SECTION 5.8: RATINGS OF SPECIFIC CITY SERVICES**

To help develop benchmark data on citizen attitudes towards specific city services the survey included a section where individuals were asked to rate varied services on a scale from one to four, with one being excellent and four being poor. Overall, 15 individuals services were presented in the areas of recreation, public works and public safety. The breakdown of responses is presented in Table, along with mean scores for each category.

In terms of recreation, a majority of survey respondents rated each service positively (either excellent or good). Most notably, almost 9 out of 10 respondents found the summer concert series to be either excellent (43%) or good (44%). Similarly,

approximately 3 out of 4 individuals provided positive ratings of the city’s adult and youth recreation leagues.

Allentown’s recreation facilities received more mixed reviews from responding citizens. A majority of city residents (54%) rated the swimming pools as either fair or poor, compared to 46% rating these facilities as excellent or good. While rated slightly more positively than pools, the city’s playgrounds received fair or poor ratings by over 4 out of 10 respondents. The city’s trail system fared considerably better, with three out of four respondents rating the walking and bicycle trails as either excellent or good.

Ratings of the city’s street conditions and road maintenance proved to be quite low, with a substantial majority of Allentonians providing low ratings of street conditions, cleaning and maintenance. More specifically, about three out of four survey respondents rated street conditions as poor (29%) or fair (45%), while only 26% found the street conditions to be excellent (2%) or good (24%). Street maintenance received similarly low ratings with over 6 out of 10 individuals providing low scores for these services.

**TABLE TEN**

***RATINGS OF CITY SERVICES***

SERVICE	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	# of Responses	Mean
Summer Concert Series	43%	44%	10%	3%	605	1.7
Adult Recreational Leagues	22%	50%	24%	4%	364	2.1
Youth Recreation Leagues	22%	51%	22%	5%	485	2.1
City’ Swimming Pools	10%	36%	36%	18%	628	2.6
Playgrounds	10%	46%	36%	8%	669	2.4
Walking and Jogging Trails	27%	49%	19%	4%	729	2.0
Bicycling Trails	17%	48%	25%	10%	583	2.3
Street Conditions	2%	24%	45%	29%	957	3.0
Storm Drainage Conditions	5%	45%	40%	11%	900	2.6
Street Maintenance	5%	34%	40%	22%	947	2.8
Street Cleaning	8%	44%	32%	16%	959	2.5
Street Lighting	12%	47%	32%	10%	962	2.4
Traffic Signals	14%	64%	18%	5%	953	2.1
Neighborhood Parking	11%	34%	25%	30%	911	2.7
Police Visibility	7%	29%	40%	24%	930	2.8

## **SECTION 5.9: RATINGS OF CITY SPONSORED EVENTS**

Five major city sponsored events were presented to survey respondents for their ratings. All five received strongly positive ratings, with most city residents pleased with the quality of events. The most highly rated city event was the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks display, which was rated positively by 9 out of ten respondents with 47% finding the display to be excellent and 44% finding it good. Mayfair and Sportsfest also rated well, with about 8 out of ten respondent rating these events as either excellent or good. While receiving positive ratings from about 7 out of 10 survey respondents, Lights in the Parkway and Wine and Dine were rated as fair or poor by a more substantial percentage of individuals. More specifically, 31% of respondents found lights in the Parkway to be either fair (16%) or poor (15%), with Wine and Dine receiving 23% fair ratings and 5% poor marks.

## **SECTION 5.10: VIEWS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX**

The possibility of the construction of a new sports and entertainment complex at the Former Hess's site in Allentown's downtown was presented to citizens for their views of the proposal. The survey findings show mixed public support for the development plan, with 43% of respondents indicating that they support this project and 28% indicating they do not support the plan. Importantly, about 3 out of 10 residents remain undecided on the proposal, thus preventing a majority view on the project.

While public support for the sports and recreation venue remains mixed, survey respondents provided their views on potential activities if a complex was built in the future. The most commonly suggested activities include ice sports such as hockey and ice skating (21%) and concerts (23%), with basketball, wrestling and other sports receiving smaller levels of consideration.

### **SECTION 5.11: VIEWS ON A CITY HOLIDAY FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY**

Survey respondents provided mixed levels of support for the creation of a city holiday that would give city employees Martin Luther King Day off. Just under half (48%) of city residents indicate that they oppose this proposal, with 29% very opposed and 19% very opposed. Conversely, 41% of individuals in Allentown support the creation of a city holiday to honor Dr. King, with 19% strongly supporting the proposal and 22% somewhat supporting the plan. Importantly, 12% of city residents remain undecided on the creation of this holiday at this time.

### **SECTION 5.12: SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMUNITY**

The survey examined the key sources of information that citizens use to gain information about the Allentown community, including levels of use of existing city information tools. In terms of finding information about the community, citizens overwhelmingly (68%) identified newspapers as their primary source. Other methods of gathering information about Allentown such as television (11%), radio (8%), and word of mouth (8%) were identified far fewer times. In addition a slight majority (53%) of survey respondents indicated that they receive adequate information about city government from the local media, while about one in four (28%) indicated that local media did not provide adequate information about Allentown government.

As for information sources provided by the city, a vast majority of city residents have not used or are unaware of such resources. For example only 13% of survey respondents indicated that they were aware that the city publishes a newsletter with community information. Similarly, only 11% of city residents reported that they have visited the city's web site at this time. Of the remaining 89% who have not visited the site, two thirds had computer access and one third did not.

About one quarter (n=245) of survey respondents expressed views on what information should be found on the city's web site ([allentownpa.org](http://allentownpa.org)). The most commonly requested content was for information on who to contact for city services (24%) and a listing of activities (27%). Additionally, about 40% of survey respondents indicated that they would take advantage of securing permits or other forms if they were available over the Internet

**SECTION 5.13: RATING THE PERFORMANCE OF CITY GOVERNMENT**

This research project included questions regarding citizen satisfaction with the various institutions of Allentown City government. Survey respondents were asked to rate and comment on the performance of the city council and mayor. In terms of the performance of city council there was considerable division in terms of public opinion. Most notably, while 32% of survey respondents rated city council performance as either excellent (2%) or good (30%), 40% rated council performance as either fair (33%) or poor (7%). An additional 28% of city residents were unsure about the performance of council. As for open-ended comments about Allentown Council, the most common criticism was that it lacked unity and cooperation (21%).

In terms of ratings of the mayor’s performance, there was also considerable disagreement between Allentown residents. More specifically, while 36% of respondents rated the mayor’s performance as excellent or good, 50% found the mayor’s work to be either fair (34%) or poor (16%). Only 15% of survey respondents did not rate the mayor’s performance. A listing of open-ended comments regarding the mayor can be found in the following table.

**TABLE ELEVEN**  
***COMMENTS ON THE MAYOR’S***  
***PERFORMANCE***  
*(n=485)*

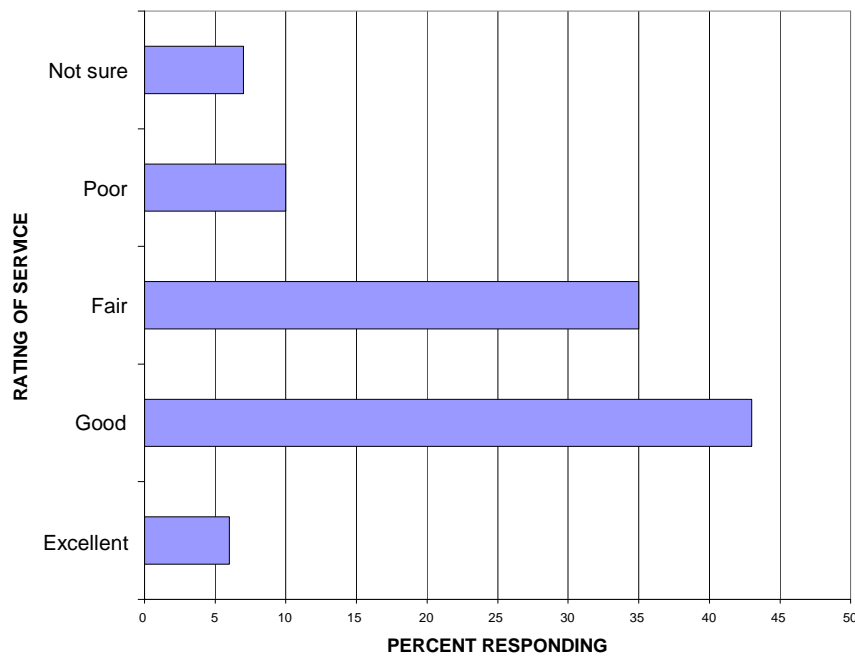
<i>COMMENTS</i>	<i>% of RESPONDENTS</i>
Too arrogant and non-approachable	12%
Should focus more on crime	4%
Needs to respond to issues quicker	1%
Should focus more on downtown development	6%
Positive views on performance and leadership	24%
Should focus more on cleanliness of the city	1%
Generally negative views	17%
Out of touch with the people	7%
Should work better with council	4%
Other	23%

### 5.14: RATING OF THE OVERALL QUALITY AND VALUE OF CITY SERVICES

The survey sought to measure citizen satisfaction with the overall quality of services provided by the City of Allentown and the value that they receive for their tax dollars. In terms of the quality of service offered by the city, most respondents provided ratings of either good (43%) or fair (35%), with few individuals rating services as excellent (6%) or poor (10%). A breakdown of ratings follows in Figure 4:

**FIGURE FOUR**

**RATING OF THE OVERALL QUALITY OF CITY SERVICE**  
(n=998)



The findings also show that a slight majority (56%) of Allentown residents indicated that they were satisfied with the overall value that they receive for the tax dollars that they pay. Conversely, only about 1 out of 3 residents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the value of their tax dollars, with 23% somewhat dissatisfied and 10% very dissatisfied.

In a more specific reaction to the quality of services provided by the city, survey respondents were asked to report on their satisfaction with the city's reaction to a

complaint. Approximately one out of three survey respondents rated their satisfaction with the city's reaction to a complaint. Only 39% of those rating city complaint responses reported satisfactory replies, with 9% extremely satisfied and 30% very satisfied. Meanwhile, 61% of respondents reported unsatisfactory responses by the city, with 35% a little unsatisfied and 26% very unsatisfied.

#### **SECTION 5.15: RATING OF THE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN ALLENTOWN**

Apart from gaining citizen opinion regarding specific services, programs and facilities, this survey research project was designed to gather feedback from Allentown residents on the overall quality of life in the City. The results indicate that a majority of city residents find Allentown to be an excellent or good place to live, but a substantial minority of residents of the city have a more negative view of life here. For example, while 58% of survey respondents indicated that Allentown was either an excellent (5%) or good (53%) place to live, 37% rated the city as either a not so good (30%) or poor place (7%) to live.

As with many other issues, the responses of city residents in regard to overall quality of life significantly varied across the varied sections of Allentown. For example, while almost 8 out of 10 respondents from the west end of the city rated Allentown as an excellent or good place to live, only 44% of center city, 50% of east side and 48% of north side residents shared their view. A complete breakdown of quality of life rankings by city section in Table Eleven-B.

**TABLE ELEVEN B**  
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN**  
**VIEWS OF QUALITY OF LIFE AND AREA**  
**OF RESIDENCY IN ALLENTOWN**  
**(n=988)**

SECTION	Excellent Place to Live	Good place to Live	Not so Good Place to Live	Poor Palce to Live
West End	9%	70%	18%	1%
South Side	5%	50%	35%	6%
Mid-City	4%	62%	24%	5%
North Side	1%	47%	32%	14%
Center City	2%	42%	40%	12%
Wards	6%	46%	31%	9%
East Side	5%	45%	36%	8%

The factors behind these ratings are partially illuminated when survey respondents were asked to specify the one thing that you they liked most and the one thing they liked least about living in Allentown. As for the best aspects of life in the city three factors stand out. More specifically, the location of Allentown in proximity to other cities and activities (18%), the friendliness of neighbors and the community (17%), and the city’s parks (18%) were the only factors that drew double digit response levels from the public. A complete list of the factors that are most liked follows in Table Twelve.

**TABLE TWELVE**  
**THE MOST LIKE ASPECTS**  
**OF LIVING IN ALLENTOWN**  
**(n=715)**

ASPECT	% of RESPONDENTS
Parks	18%
Transportation	3%
Friendly Neighbors/Community	17%
Location Close to Other Cities and activities	18%
Shopping	6%
Entertainment Options	6%
Employment	3%
Cheap Cost of Living	2%
Other	28%



As for the things that Allentown residents like least about living in the city, crime was clearly the most noted factor. More specifically 29% of survey respondents listed crime as the least liked factor of life here. Two other things drew double digit responses, with 14% indicating the deterioration of the downtown and 11% listing taxes as the least liked parts of life in Allentown. The full list of least liked factors follows in Table Thirteen.

**TABLE THIRTEEN**  
***THE LEAST LIKED ASPECTS***  
***OF LIVING IN ALLENTOWN***  
*(n=758)*

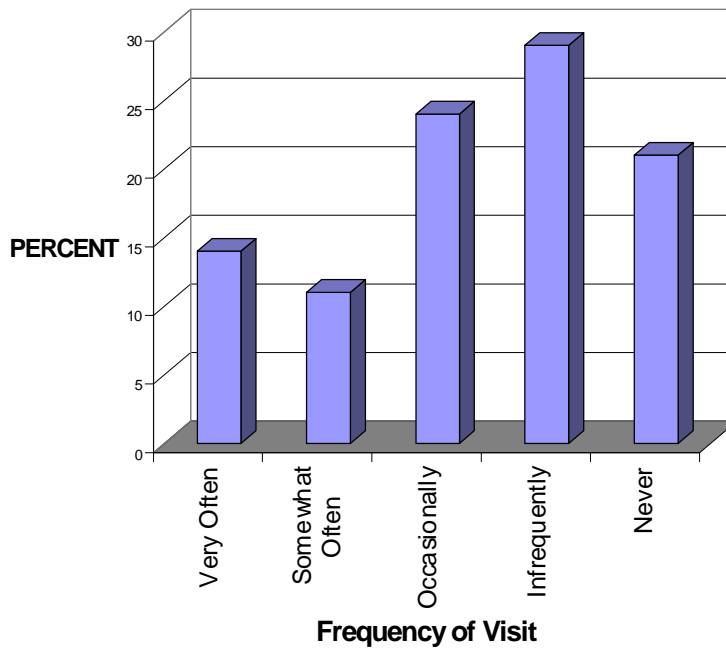
ASPECT	% of RESPONDENTS
Crime/Safety Concerns	29%
Drugs	2%
Taxes	11%
Rowdy Youth/Loud Music	3%
Parking/Traffic	7%
Deterioration of Downtown	14%
Trash	3%
Education System	4%
Other	28%

**SECTION 5.16: KEY ISSUES FOR THE CITY TO WORK ON**

The last section of the survey was designed to gather citizen views on key issues that the city is currently facing. One such issue is the future of Allentown’s downtown area. To gain an understanding of citizen views on this subject the survey first sought to ascertain the frequency of visits to the downtown-Hamilton Street area. The findings regarding downtown visits is found in Figure Five.

**FIGURE FIVE**

***FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO  
DOWNTOWN-HAMILTON STREET AREA  
(n=978)***



The results indicate that 50% of the city population reports that they never (21%) or infrequently (29%) visit the city's downtown. Conversely, one quarter of survey respondents report they often (14%) or somewhat often (11%) visit Allentown's downtown district. To understand the underlying reasons for this behavior the survey respondents were asked why they choose to visit or avoid downtown. The survey findings regarding the reasons why people visit downtown follows in Table Fourteen.

**TABLE FOURTEEN**  
**REASONS FOR VISITING**  
**DOWNTOWN ALLENTOWN**  
*(n=276)*

REASON	% of RESPONDENTS
For a Walk	4%
Bank/Check Cashing	12%
Shopping	16%
Services (pharmacy, hairdresser)	12%
Government Services (library, post office)	23%
Dining/Bars	14%
Employment	17%
Church	1%

The preceding table illustrates a large variety of factors that draw city residents to downtown Allentown . Conversely, two factors appear to dominate the reasons why city residents avoid the downtown district. These two factors are fear of crime (38%) and lack of shopping and attractions (38%). A full listing of the factors that cause citizens to not make trips to the city’s downtown is found in Table 15.

**TABLE FIFTEEN**  
**REASONS FOR NOT VISITING**  
**DOWNTOWN ALLENTOWN**  
*(n=483)*

REASON	% of RESPONDENTS
Fear of Crime	38%
Malls are a Better Alternative	5%
Lack of Shopping and Attractions	38%
Parking	9%
Overall Condition/Dirty	9%

A second major issue facing the city is the quality of the Allentown school system. Survey respondents were asked to rate the quality of the schools system and to offer suggestions for improvement. As for ratings of the school system, a majority of respondents (57%) provided lower level ratings of school quality, with 25% of

respondents indicating the quality of schools in the city is poor and 32% rating school quality as fair. Less than half as many survey respondents rated the quality of Allentown’s school system as either excellent (4%) or good (21%). While individuals with students in the city’s school system were significantly more likely to rate the school system as excellent or good (33%) than individuals without children in city public schools (24%), most members of each group maintained less positive views. Additionally, survey respondents provided suggestions on improving education in the city’s public schools. The list of the most common suggestion follows in Table 16.

**TABLE SIXTEEN**  
***SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING  
 THE ALLENTOWN SCHOOL SYSTEM  
 (n=595)***

Suggestion	% of RESPONDENTS
Better Discipline and Safety	17%
New Leadership	4%
More Parental Involvement	9%
Greater Focus on English	6%
Crack Down on Truancy	1%
School Uniforms/Dress Codes	4%
Higher Teacher Salaries	2%
Need State Control	1%
More Funding Needed	2%
Better Teachers Needed	8%
More Teachers/ Smaller Class Sizes	4%
Reduce Overcrowding	1%
Other	42%

Apart from gaining insight into current issues such as downtown development and public schools the survey attempted to identify the issues which citizens feel are the most important facing both Allentown and their neighborhoods. At the city level, crime was the overwhelming issue identified as most important for the city to address, with 43% of respondents choosing this topic. Only two other issues drew double digit levels of response, with 12% identifying downtown development and 11% choosing drug issues. Interestingly, crime is mentioned far less often as the most important issue facing respondent's neighborhoods. More specifically, while 43% of respondents said crime is

the most important issue facing Allentown, only 21% said crime is the most important issue facing their own neighborhood. At the neighborhood level, issues such as garbage (9%), code enforcement (8%), speeding (6%) and youth rowdiness (6%) were noted much more often than at the city level. A full list of the most important issues facing respondent's neighborhoods is listed in Table Seventeen.

**TABLE SEVENTEEN**  
***THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE  
 FACING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD***  
*(n=596)*

ISSUE	% of RESPONDENTS
Parking	5%
Code Enforcement/Absentee Landlords	8%
Speeding	6%
Safety/Crime	21%
Vandalism	2%
Garbage/Street Cleaning	9%
Youth Rowdiness and Loitering	6%
Drugs	5%
Improved parks and recreation	1%
Street and Sidewalk Conditions	8%
Other	27%

Finally, the survey examined the future plans of Allentonians in terms of the likelihood of moving out of Allentown in the near future. The survey results provide evidence that over one quarter (28%) of current city residents are either likely (18%) or certain (10%) to leave the city in the next five years. Conversely, about 6 out of 10 residents indicated that they are either certain or likely to stay in Allentown. A closer examination of citizen moving plans uncovers a strong relationship between the age of survey respondents and their moving plans. Most notably, as the age of respondents gets younger the greater the likelihood of a move in the next five years. This relationship is shown in Table Eighteen.

**TABLE EIGHTEEN**  
***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
AGE AND MOVING PLANS***  
*(n=1003)*

MOVING PLANS	18-24	25-44	45-64	65 & OVER
Certain To Stay	6%	11%	40%	39%
Likely to Stay	27%	37%	35%	31%
Likely to Move	23%	23%	20%	11%
Certain to Move	27%	20%	6%	3%
Not Sure	17%	9%	14%	16%

For individuals certain or likely to move away from Allentown, a number of factors appear most important. Those factors are listed in Table Nineteen.

**TABLE NINETEEN**  
***REASONS FOR PLANNING  
TO MOVE FROM ALLENTOWN***  
*(n=309)*

REASONS	% of RESPONDENTS
Crime	17%
Taxes	11%
Overall Deterioration of the City and Neighborhoods	17%
Lack of Jobs	8%
Type of housing available	5%
School system	10%
Retirement	6%
Other	27%

## **SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS**

The data gathered in this project can be used to identify citizen views on the quality of services in the City of Allentown. Most importantly this first iteration of this project has created baseline measures which can be updated over time to help provide meaningful analysis of changes in citizen satisfaction with both the quality of city programs, services and facilities, but also general views on the quality of life in Allentown. Through this process public policy makers can direct their attention to areas of concern and react to the needs of the city's residents in a clearer manner.