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Survey Finds Oak Parkers Very Satisfied with Community and Municipal Services

When it comes to sense of community and acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds, Oak Parkers rate their Village very high – higher, in fact, than did the residents of all towns polled nationally by the National Research Center (NRC), a leading research firm known for its comprehensive studies of citizen perceptions and views.

These key quality-of-life views expressed by Oak Park residents are among the many findings contained in the 100-plus-page report of a formal citizen telephone survey conducted by NRC for the Village. The survey found citizen satisfaction with the community, its amenities, safety and the performance of municipal staff very high, exceeding national norms in almost every area where comparisons were possible.

The large majority of respondents – about three quarters – also said they felt positively about the impact of economic development in Oak Park. A similar percentage of respondents expressed satisfaction with the overall direction the Village is taking and said they believe citizen involvement in government is welcomed, both of which placed Oak Park above the 90th percentile nationally.

“I was very pleased to find Oak Park residents have continued to have the high satisfaction levels shown in our last survey four years ago,” said Village Manager Carl Swenson, himself an Oak Park resident for the past nine years. “I believe it is important in for municipal officials to periodically look beyond their own experiences and those of their friends and neighbors to take an objective, formal measure of attitudes and perceptions.”

Surveys were completed by 800 randomly selected Oak Park residents contacted via telephone in July and August for results that have a 3.5 percent margin of error. Participants answered some 40 questions on items such as quality of community life, public safety, government services, Village employees, traffic, parking and diversity. The survey also sought to measure use of public information sources, determine where most residents get their information about issues and gauge satisfaction with economic development in the Village.

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Most of the questions were from the National Citizen Survey™ adopted by the International City Manager's Association as a national standard for comparing responses to other communities across regions and the nation. In addition, respondents were asked in which quadrant of the Village they live – east or west of East Avenue and north or south of Lake Street – to allow responses to be examined geographically as well.

“The information contained in the survey is wide ranging and very detailed, and can be viewed in many different ways, including demographically and geographically,” Swenson explained. “The survey cannot be easily summarized in a few statements. But the data should prove very useful for improving delivery of Village services and even for the future allocation of resources.”

Highlights of the survey, which will be posted in its entirety at www.oak-park.us, include the following:

- 94 percent of respondents rated the overall quality of life in Oak Park excellent or good. Similar numbers of respondents rated the overall quality of their neighborhoods just as high, while also saying good or excellent when asked about the Village as a place to raise children. All responses in this category put Oak Park above the 90th percentile of communities nationally. As a place to raise children, Oak Park was ranked second in the nation. Some 96 percent of the respondents also rated the overall appearance of the Village as good or excellent.
- 97 percent of the respondents rated ease of rail/subway travel as good or excellent, while 94 percent said the same about ease of walking in the Village, responses that were ranked the highest in national comparisons. Ease of bus travel ranked second highest in the national comparison. Oak Parkers' ratings of the community's shuttle bus and transit services put it in the 91st percentile of communities nationally.
- Oak Parkers' perception of their personal safety ranged from 94 percent saying they felt very or somewhat safe from fires to 85 percent responding likewise for violent crimes and 76 percent for property crimes. Responses to the question about fire safety ranked Oak Park tops among 73 communities where comparisons were possible.
- Parking was most frequently identified as a problem in Oak Park. Traffic in Oak Park was judged a moderate problem on average, while drugs, crime, homelessness, noise and disorderly youth were given average ratings between moderate and minor problems.

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- Nearly nine out of 10 respondents rated the overall quality of municipal services as good or better. Fire services ranked the highest, followed closely by emergency medical services and police services. Most Village services were rated significantly more positively than the national norm, with no service rating significantly below the national norm.
- Nearly three-quarters of the respondents said economic development had had a positive impact on the Village. A similar percentage of respondents said they were somewhat or very satisfied with efforts to promote economic development within the Village.
- Village public information efforts, including the monthly OPFYI newsletter, VOP-TV6 cable television station and official website all posted significant gains in usage compared to previous surveys.

For more information on the survey, call 708.358.5778 or email village@oak-park.us.

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