

RESULTS SUMMARY

2008 ANDOVER CITIZENS SURVEY

Community Life Summary

Andover is rated as an excellent place to live and raise children, with 97% and 96% of respondents rating the town as excellent or good in these two categories respectively. Overall quality of life received a 90% excellent/good rating. The areas of weakness appear to be shopping and dining (40% rate this as fair), and place to retire (54% rate this as fair or poor). In addition, a quarter of respondents indicated they were unsure about quality of Andover as a place to retire.

Andover receives high marks for safety and appearance, with 96% of respondents rating it as excellent or good in terms of feeling safe, and 90% rating its overall appearance as excellent or good. Public transportation and range of housing options received the lowest overall ratings. Violent crime is not perceived as a problem in Andover, with 76% of respondents strongly disagreeing and 19% somewhat disagreeing it's an issue of concern. On the other hand, property crime and vandalism (though not graffiti) are seen as more relevant problems in the community. Overall, most of the potential problems that respondents were asked about did not seem to be major issues of concern. The one exception to this generalization appears to be automobile speeding, where half of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that this is a problem issue.

Andover's public schools are seen as one of the most attractive features of the community, with three quarters of the respondents rating it as essential or very important in their decision to move to and/or stay in Andover. Town services, location, and property values were also rated as extremely important in attracting respondents to Andover and keeping them here.

There is a strong consensus that Andover's stock of single family housing is appropriate for the community, with 85% rating it as just about right. Opinion on the amount of multi-family and rental housing is more divided, with approximately 20% of residents feeling there is too much of these types of housing, and another 20% feeling there is not

enough. Only 1% of residents feel there is too much open space/farmland, while a substantial number (40%) feel there is not enough of this type of property in Andover's current mix.

Local Government Summary

Andover is a town where levels of voting and community engagement are high. In terms of civic and community participation, voting rates are much higher than rates of attendance at Town Meeting. Almost 90% of respondents said they had voted at least once in the past twelve months, while only 40% claimed to have attended the Annual Town Meeting. In a separate question, 43% of respondents reported attending Town Meeting at least once in the past three years. In addition, large numbers of residents attend town events (76%), donate money to local groups (78%), and shop in the downtown district (95%) at least once a year.

Most of the Town's services were ranked positively, with nearly all being rated at excellent or good by at least 70% of survey respondents. Superior services (with excellent/good scores in the 90+ range) were: schools, police, fire, EMS, trash collection, recycling, library services, parks, and handicapped access. Services that received less positive ratings were: street repair/maintenance, sidewalk maintenance, public parking availability, and public transportation, which were ranked as fair or poor by 45-50% of citizens.

Contact with town officials was rated very positive, with 85% of survey respondents ranking their experience as excellent or good across all criteria.

The Andover Townsman and word of mouth are the primary sources of local news and information for residents, with over 80% of residents reporting they use these sources at least occasionally to keep up on local town news. Electronic media, including newspaper websites, the town website, other websites or blogs, local access television, and email networks, were less frequently used by respondents as a source of local news.