



City of Evansville

Community Survey 2014

Results Analysis

University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh

May 3, 2014

About the Survey

A survey of citizens in Evansville was reviewed and analyzed by the Business Success Center of the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh in cooperation with the City of Evansville in the Spring of 2014. In addition to efforts by two of the UWO faculty, the students in the Masters of Public Administration - Policy Analysis course provided a statistical evaluation and analysis of the results of the survey. This report analyzes the results of this survey and provide insight into the perspectives of the Evansville citizens on a variety of issues.

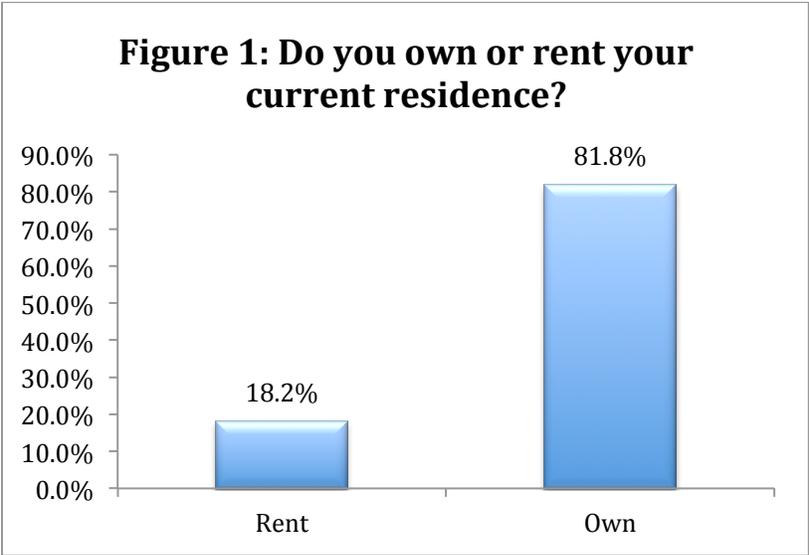
The 2014 Evansville Citizen Survey included nineteen primary questions and multiple sub-questions, along with questions requesting general demographic data as well as an opportunity for comments from the respondents. Seven hundred and twelve (712) surveys were returned and the resulting data has been entered into a statistical analysis program. Depending upon the nature of the question, individuals were asked to respond based on the four following possible rating options: 1.) top notch, good, fair, poor and do not know 2.) very strong aspect, strong aspect, weak aspect, very weak aspect and neutral/no opinion 3.) strongly support, support, oppose, strongly oppose and neither support nor oppose or 4.) strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and neither agree nor disagree.

The survey was sent to all 2084 properties from the residential parcels provided from a City database. The 712 responses constitute a 34.2 percent overall response rate, which is a good response rate compared to other similar citizen surveys. The relationship between sample size and precision of the survey instrument at a 95 percent confidence rate frequently used in surveys is shown below. The 712 responses create a margin of error of approximately 3.8 percent. A level of 5 percent is considered acceptable for most survey results. The confidence rate is 96.2 percent.

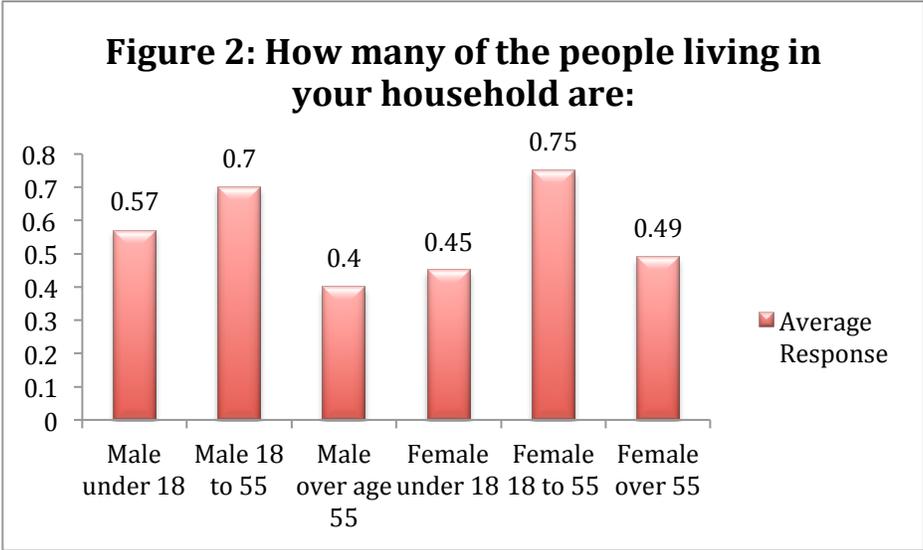
Sample Size	Margin of Error
100	10%
300	5.5%
400	5.0%
800	3.5%

About the Residents of Evansville

The City of Evansville is a stable community as evidenced by the large percentage of residents who own their home. As can be seen in Figure 1, 81.8% of survey respondents report owning their current residence. This number is up slightly from 2004, when 73% of residents reported owning their own home. A similarly high percentage, 78.9%, report living in a single-family house. This percentage too is similar to 2004, when 75% of residents reported living in a single-family house. Only 8.0% and 6.6% of respondents live in an apartment or duplex, respectively.



Evansville residents are also diverse in their age and gender. Figure 2 lists the average number of people, by age group, living in individual households. The most represented group are males and females age 18 to 55, however Evansville does have sizable populations below the age of 18, and over the age of 55.

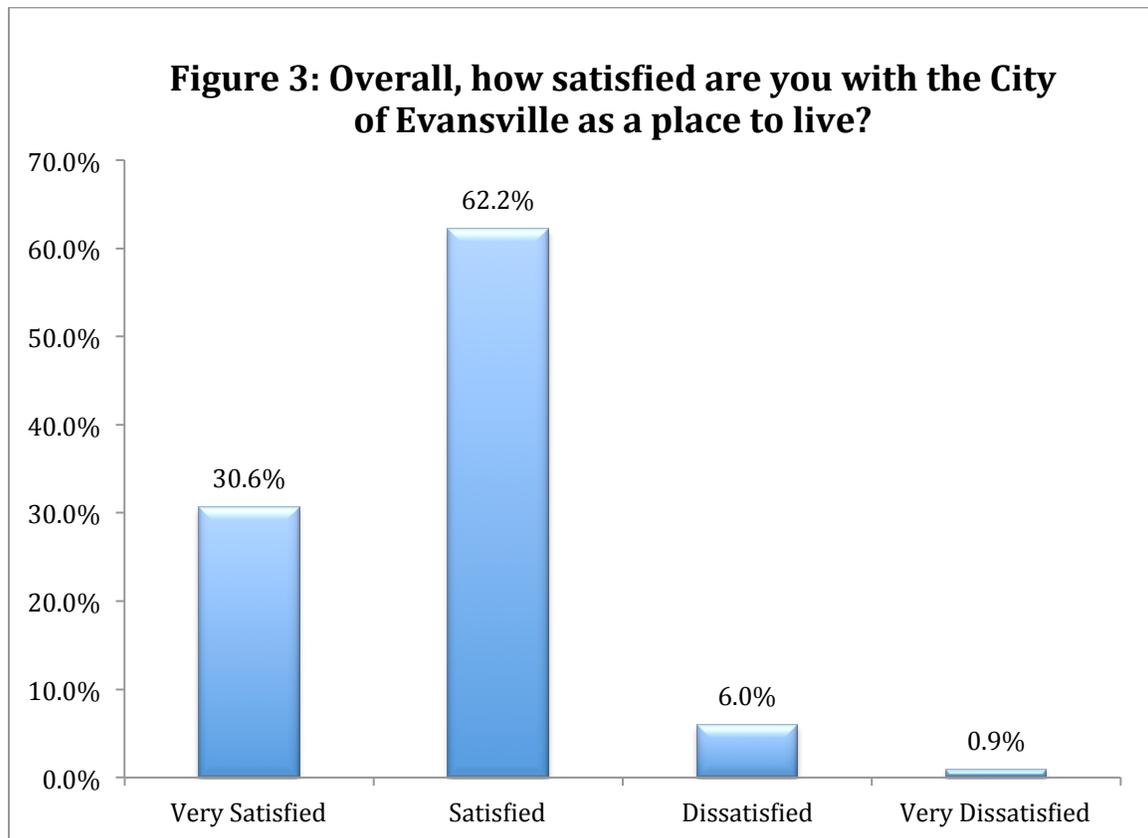


A majority of Evansville residents work outside of the City of Evansville. Two-thirds of respondents, 66.3%, indicate that at-least one member of their household works in Madison or elsewhere in Dane County. A smaller but still significant percentage, 28.5%, indicate at-least one household member works in the City of Evansville.

These numbers have changed substantially since 2004, when 55% of respondents indicated at-least one household member worked in Madison or elsewhere in Dane County. This change reflects a strong and growing economic connection between Evansville and Madison. It also demonstrates the importance of transportation access, an issue that 66.6% of residents view as a weak or very weak aspect of what attracts people to Evansville.

Overall Satisfaction and Engagement

The 2004 Evansville community survey found that residents were highly satisfied with the City of Evansville as a place to live. As can be seen in Figure 3, residents continue to be highly satisfied with Evansville. A series of cross-tabulations (not included) showed no significant relation between time of residency, home ownership, or engagement and satisfaction. Residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with their City regardless of other measured factors.



Specifically, residents are most highly satisfied with (percentages reflect the share of respondents rating the service top-notch or good):

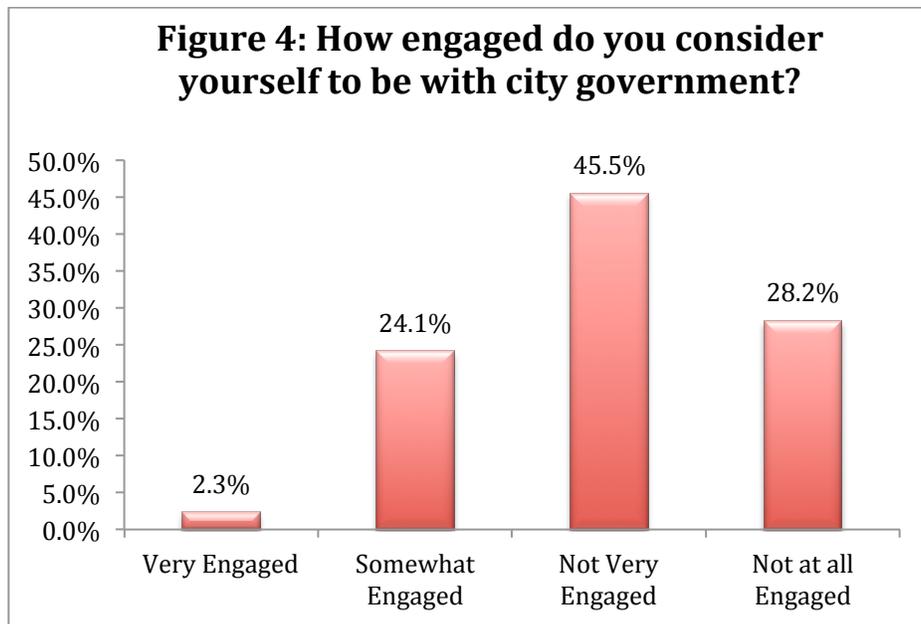
- Garbage and recycling: 88.4%
- Parks and recreation: 82.2%
- Library: 80.8%
- Fire: 80.1%
- Police: 77.8%
- EMS: 74.3%

There are several areas, however, where substantial percentages of the population rate satisfaction with services fair, or poor (percentages reflect the share of respondents rating the service fair or poor):

- Downtown revitalization: 59.8%
- Pothole patching: 59.5%
- Street maintenance: 49.8%
- Sidewalk access/conditions: 44.5%
- Drinking water: 37.7%

Many of these comparably lower ratings may be related to the timing of the survey; perceptions of streets and sidewalks are likely influenced by the difficult 2013-2014 winter. Notably, when asked if they would spend more tax money to improve individual services, a majority of respondents supported increased taxes in every case.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the level of engagement in City government indicated by respondents is low. However, a substantial minority (26.4%) do indicate they are very or somewhat engaged in city government.



When asked why they are not engaged, respondents point to insufficient means of electronic engagement (29.1%), a lack of interest (26.0%), a belief that no one will listen to their concerns (19.5%) or a confidence in government without their involvement (18.1%).

Looking Forward

In 2004 49.0% of Evansville residents indicated a support for moderate growth. That level of support has grown over the last decade to 58.0%. Overall, there is strong support for steady growth focused on specific types of housing:

- Clear majorities support future upscale (59.6%) and affordable (87.8%) single-family homes in Evansville.
- Very strong majorities support future assisted (85.2%) and independent (85.3%) living facilities for seniors and residents with disabilities.
- About half of respondents, 49.5%, support encouraging new business by nurturing entrepreneurship.

A substantial percentage of respondents support a full service City (37.0%) or a diverse community (42.2%), while a strong majority (73.4%) thinks it is important for the City to be highly walkable.

Residents were also surveyed on their opinions on specific policy ideas. As can be seen in Figure 5, more respondents oppose than support investment in a park and ride to serve commuters to Janesville and Madison. This lack of support is in spite of the large number of residents commuting to these areas. However, support is up from 2004 (20.0% supported and 49.0% opposed the idea), and a large portion of respondents voiced no opinion on the issue.

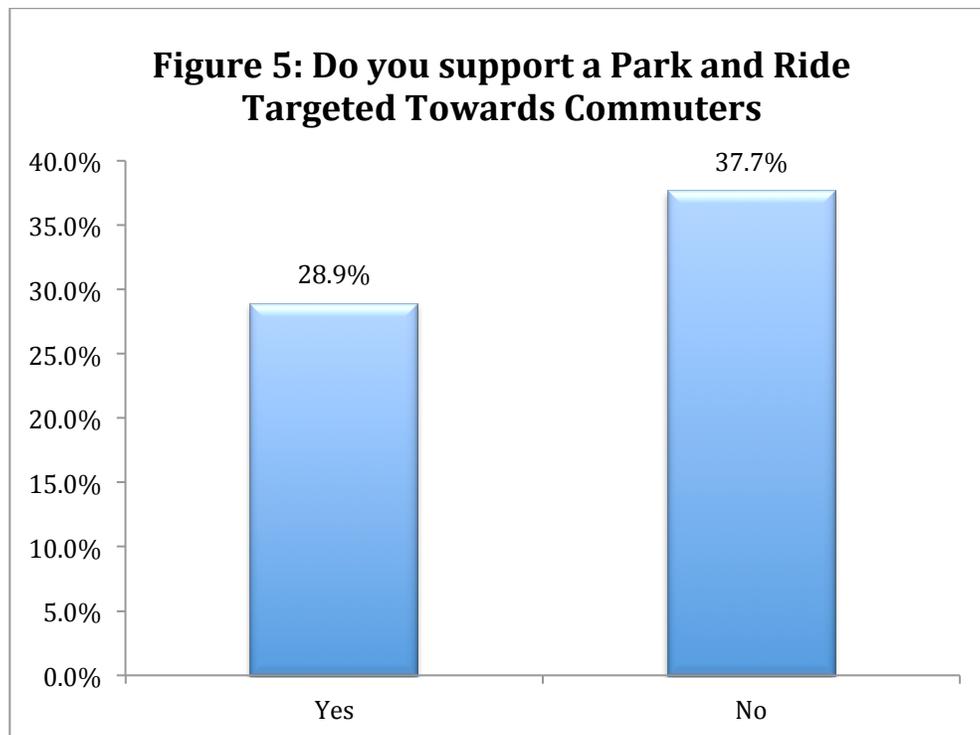
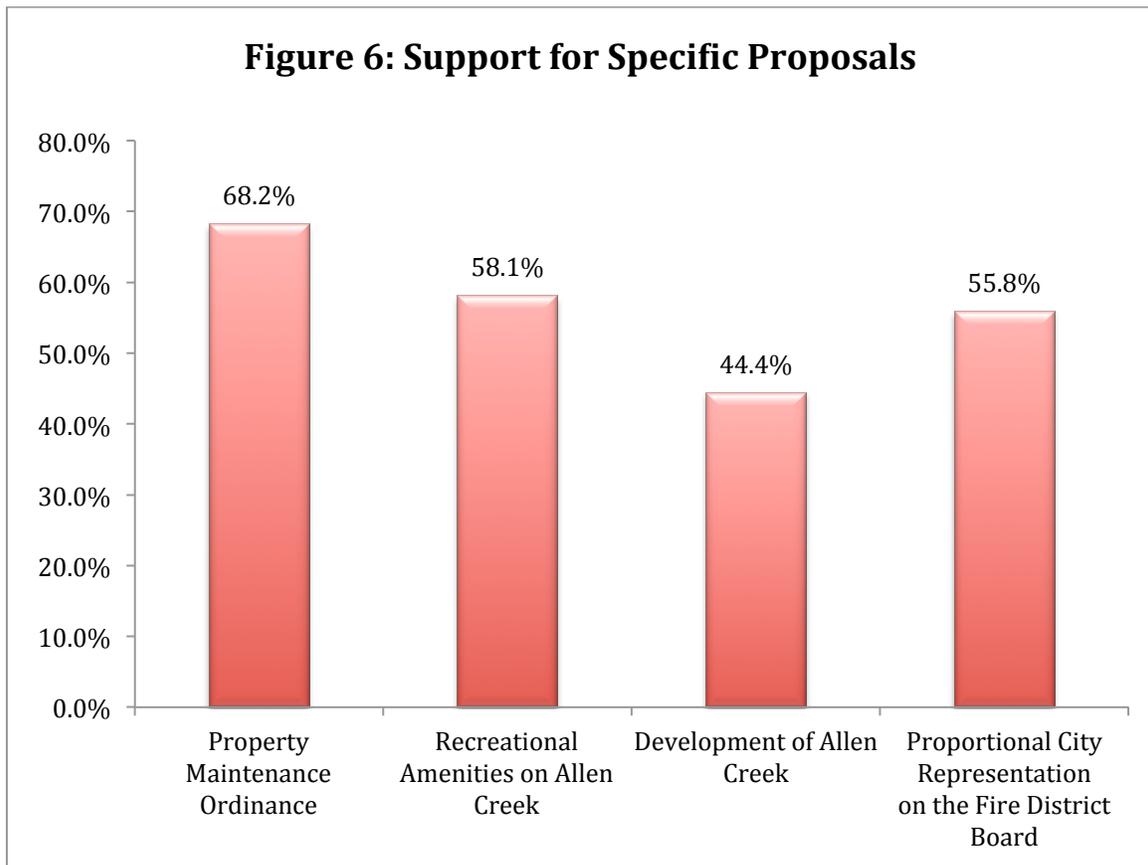


Figure 6 shows the level of support for four other specific proposals for the City of Evansville. A large majority of residents support a property maintenance ordinance to address issues such as peeling paint and excessive clutter, while a slight majority support City representation on the Fire District Board proportional to the City's financial support of the board.

Resident opinion on the development of the Allen Creek corridor is somewhat mixed. Less than half of respondents (44.4%) agree the corridor should be redeveloped to expand the central business district, but very few, 21.6%, disagree. A clear majority of 58.1% support developing recreational amenities, such as a walking trail, along the Allen creek corridor.

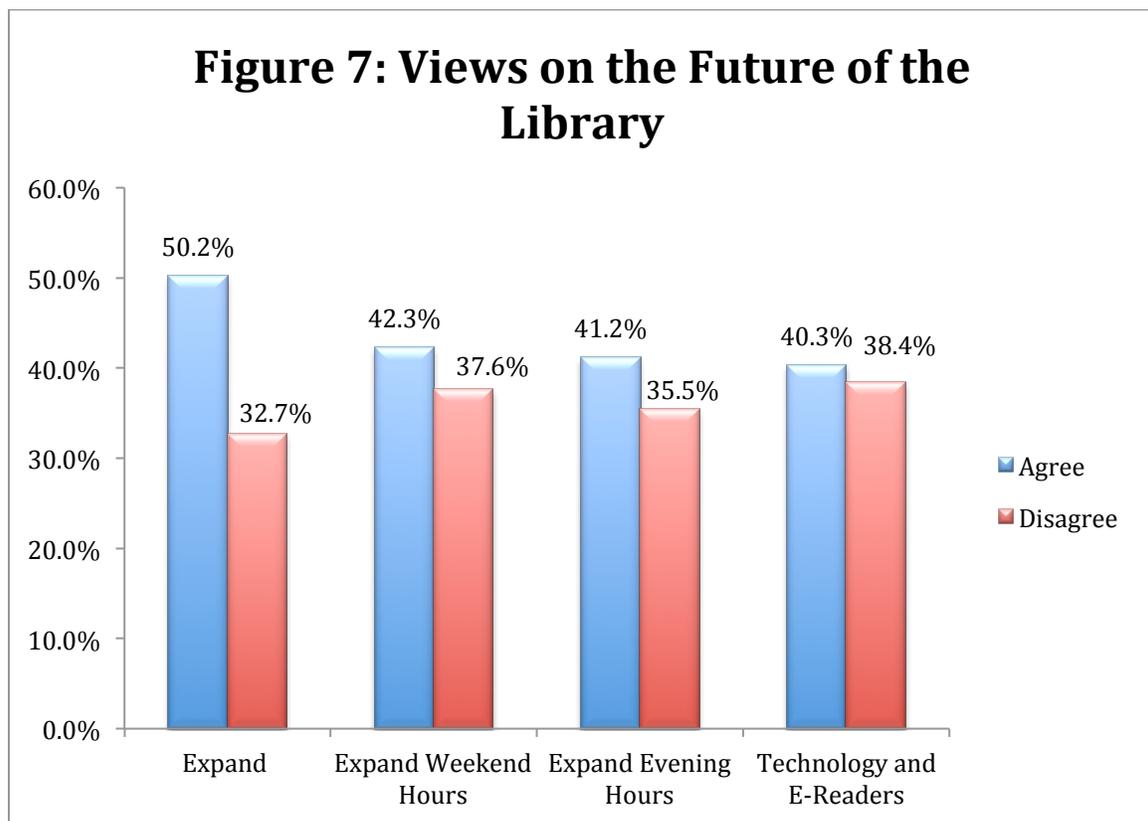


Notably, a significant portion of Evansville residents express no opinion on these proposals, suggesting opportunities to educate the public and perhaps grow public support exist.

Evansville residents have a very high opinion of their public library, 80.8% rate the service as good, or top notch. 84.1% of respondents believe the library is essential to the quality of life of Evansville.

The library is also well-visited; 82.3% of households report a member visiting the library at least once annually, and 35.3% report a household member visiting 12 or more times a year.

The responses in Figure 7 reveal more support than opposition exists to a variety of possible changes to the public library. About 50% of respondents support expanding the library in the next five years. Support for expanding weekend and evening hours is less significant, however more respondents agree with expanded hours than oppose. Support for the use of technology such as e-readers for patron checkout is statistically indistinguishable from opposition. A substantial share of respondents report no opinion on proposals reflecting the future of the library, suggesting increased support for the proposals is possible.



Conclusions

Evansville citizens, in general, have a very high opinion of the City. A majority give high rating to most City services, find the library essential to the quality of life of Evansville, and give Evansville Water & Light high marks. These opinions do not appear to be dependent on other factors; owners and renters, commuters and those that work in Evansville, and engaged and non-engaged citizens alike all share generally positive views of Evansville.

Respondents note that factors such as high-quality schools, low-crime rates, and the presence of a historic district make Evansville an attractive place to live. Those factors were also important to residents in 2004, and have not changed substantially over the past decade.

Citizens do, however, want a more full-service city. A significant portion of respondents would work in Evansville if they could, would like to see more diverse commercial options downtown, and express an appreciation for walkability and efficiency in energy use.

The results also show a small number of areas of concern. Just like in 2004, residents see the level of property taxes as a negative attribute. A portion of respondents also express concern with the quality of the drinking water in Evansville. Respondents also rate transportation access negatively. This concern is particularly relevant given the large and growing percentage of residents who commute from Evansville to Dane County for work. Finally, overall engagement with City government is somewhat low. Increased opportunities for virtual engagement with government could perhaps address this issue.

Overall, the 2014 community survey validates the direction taken by the City of Evansville over the past ten years. A diversity of residents think highly of the City, its services, and its attributes. Residents support continued residential growth, and commercial growth through the fostering of entrepreneurialism.