

**THE NCS**<sup>TM</sup>  
The National Community Survey<sup>TM</sup>

# Milford, DE

Community Livability Report

2019



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# About

The National Community Survey™ (The NCS™) report is about the “livability” of Milford. The phrase “livable community” is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

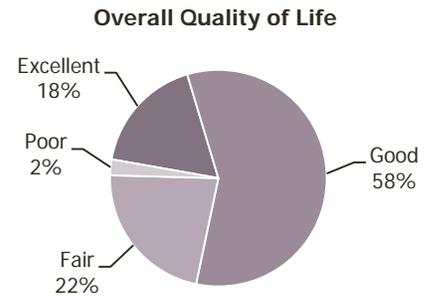
Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 457 residents of the City of Milford. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 5% for all respondents. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Milford

Most residents (76%) rated the quality of life in Milford as excellent or good. This rating was similar to the national benchmark (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).



Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.

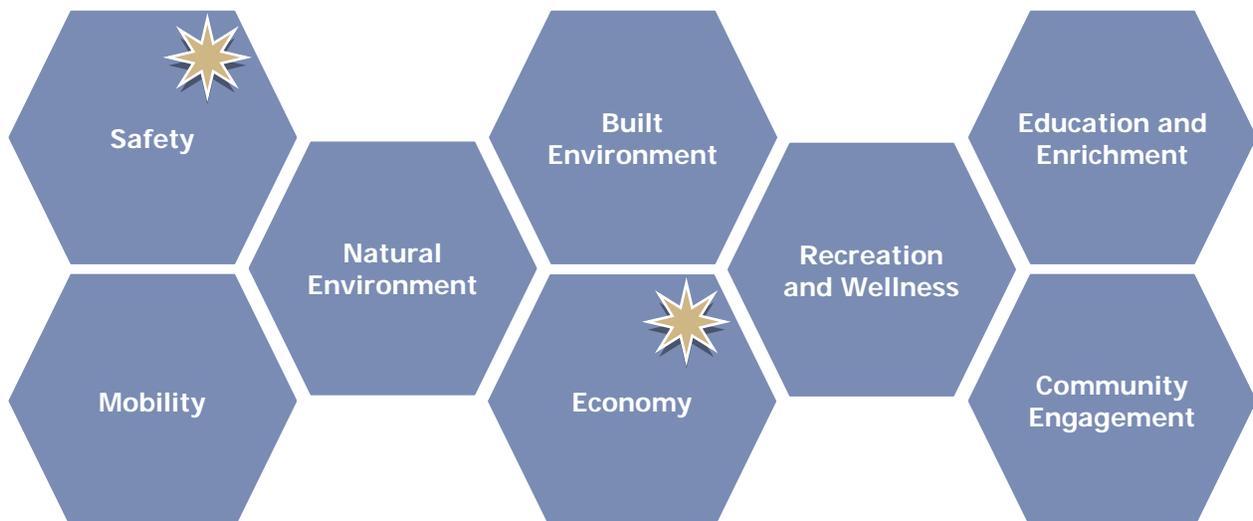
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. As in 2017, residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Milford community in the coming two years. Ratings for all eight facets of community livability were positive and similar to other communities across the nation. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Milford’s unique questions.

## Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark

- \* Most important



# Community Characteristics

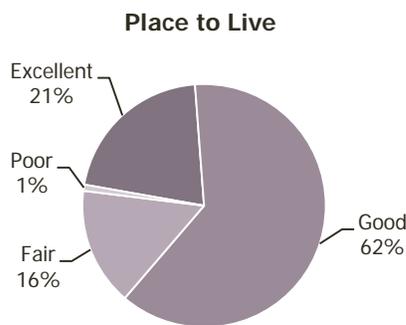
*What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?*

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Milford, 83% rated the city as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Milford as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the city as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality. About three-quarters of residents favorably rated their neighborhood as a place to live and Milford as a place to raise children and retire, while 6 in 10 residents gave high marks to the overall image or reputation of Milford and its overall appearance. These ratings were on par with national averages. Additionally, residents' scores for Milford as a place to retire increased in 2019 (see the *Trends over Time* report provided under separate cover for more details).

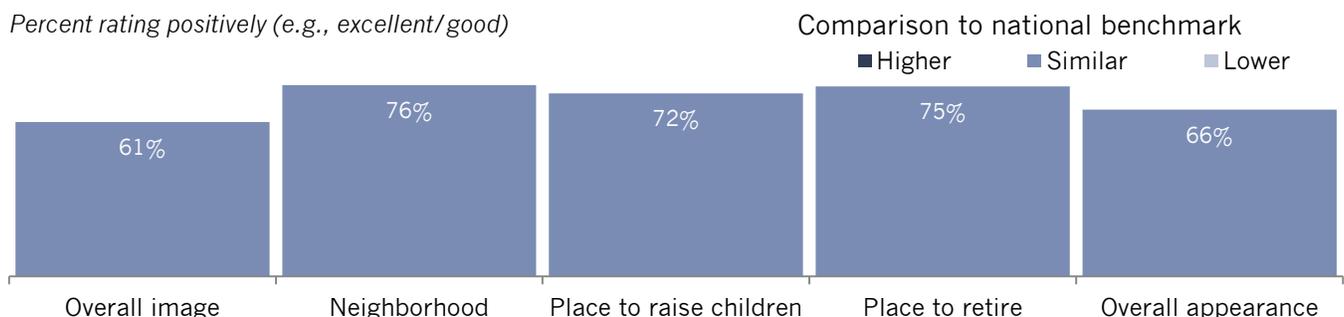
Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Overall, at least half of respondents reviewed most aspects of Community Characteristics positively and ratings tended to be similar to other benchmark communities.

As a highlight within Community Characteristics, assessments of traffic flow on major streets were strong and higher than the national average, with two-thirds of residents giving high marks. Ratings for several aspects of Economy improved from 2017 to 2019, including employment opportunities (34% excellent or good), cost of living (54%) and Milford as a place to work (55%). Other increases over time were observed in evaluations of new development in Milford, K-12 education and neighborliness of residents; about 6 in 10 residents or more gave positive scores to each of these.



Residents' ratings for overall feeling of safety in Milford, recreational opportunities, overall opportunities for education and enrichment, and adult educational opportunities were lower than those observed in other communities. Compared to 2017, survey participants' marks for ease of walking, availability of paths and walking trails, overall natural environment and availability of affordable quality food declined in 2019.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)



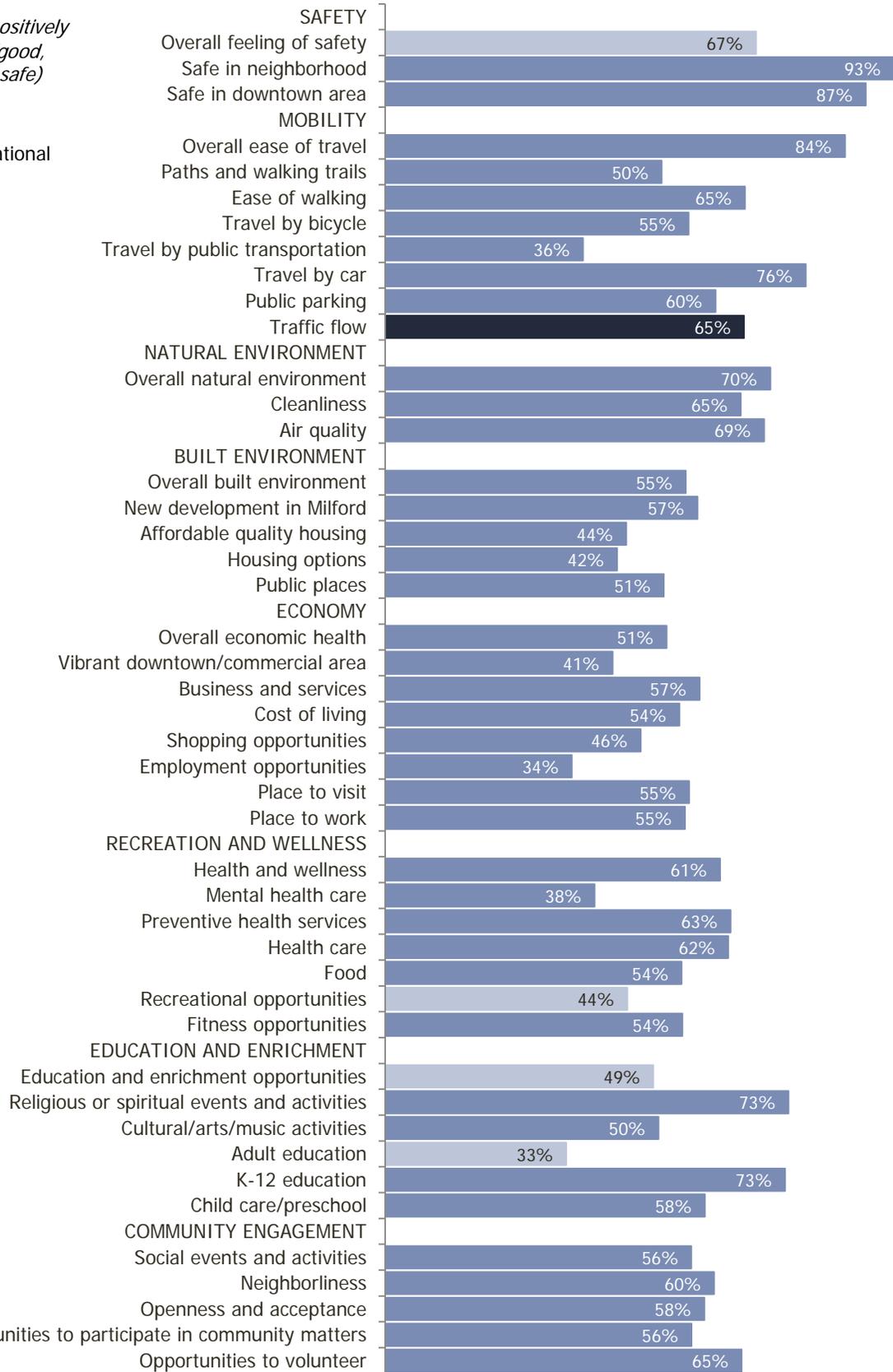
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

*Percent rating positively  
(e.g., excellent/good,  
very/somewhat safe)*

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



# Governance

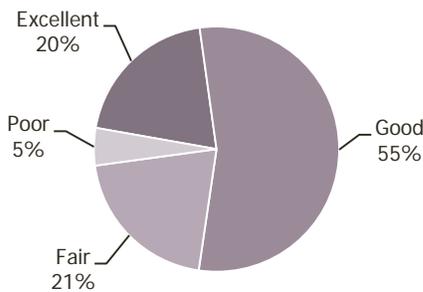
*How well does the government of Milford meet the needs and expectations of its residents?*

The overall quality of the services provided by Milford as well as the manner in which these services are provided is a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents gave favorable evaluations to the overall quality of services provided by the City, while 4 in 10 were pleased with the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these evaluations were similar to those observed elsewhere.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Milford’s leadership and governance. About three-quarters of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall customer service provided by the City. Roughly 6 in 10 residents gave positive reviews to all other aspects of government performance and these ratings were similar to those given in other communities. Respondents gave higher marks to the City acting in the best interest of Milford and treating all residents fairly in 2019 compared to 2017.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Milford. Broadly, at least half of respondents reviewed most government services positively and ratings tended to be similar to those observed in other benchmark communities. The highest-rated services included police, fire, ambulance/EMS, garbage collection, recycling, yard waste pick-up and public libraries, with at least 8 in 10 residents assigning positive scores and each being on par with averages nationwide. Reviews for yard waste pick-up and land use, planning and zoning improved from 2017 to 2019.

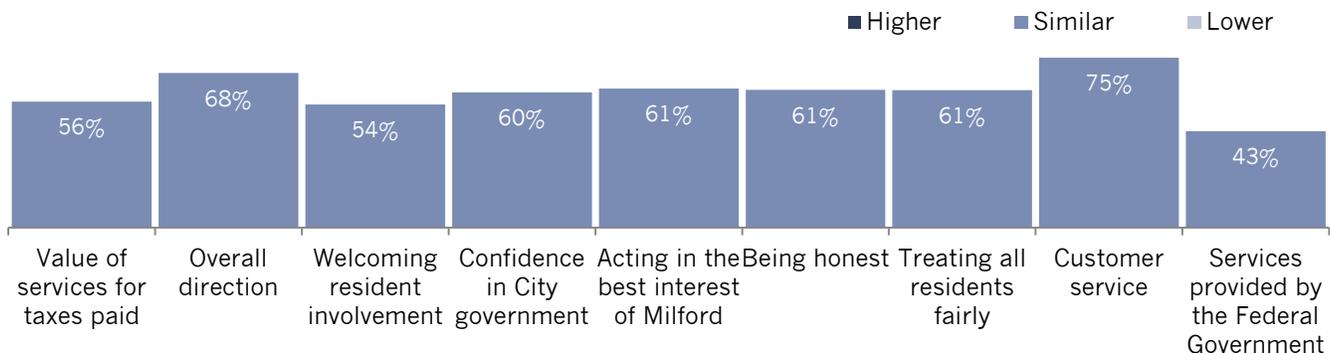
Overall Quality of City Services



Respondents were less pleased with assessments of drinking water (45% excellent or good), which was lower than the national benchmark. Ratings for three aspects of Mobility declined from 2017 to 2019: traffic enforcement, street repair and street lighting.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark



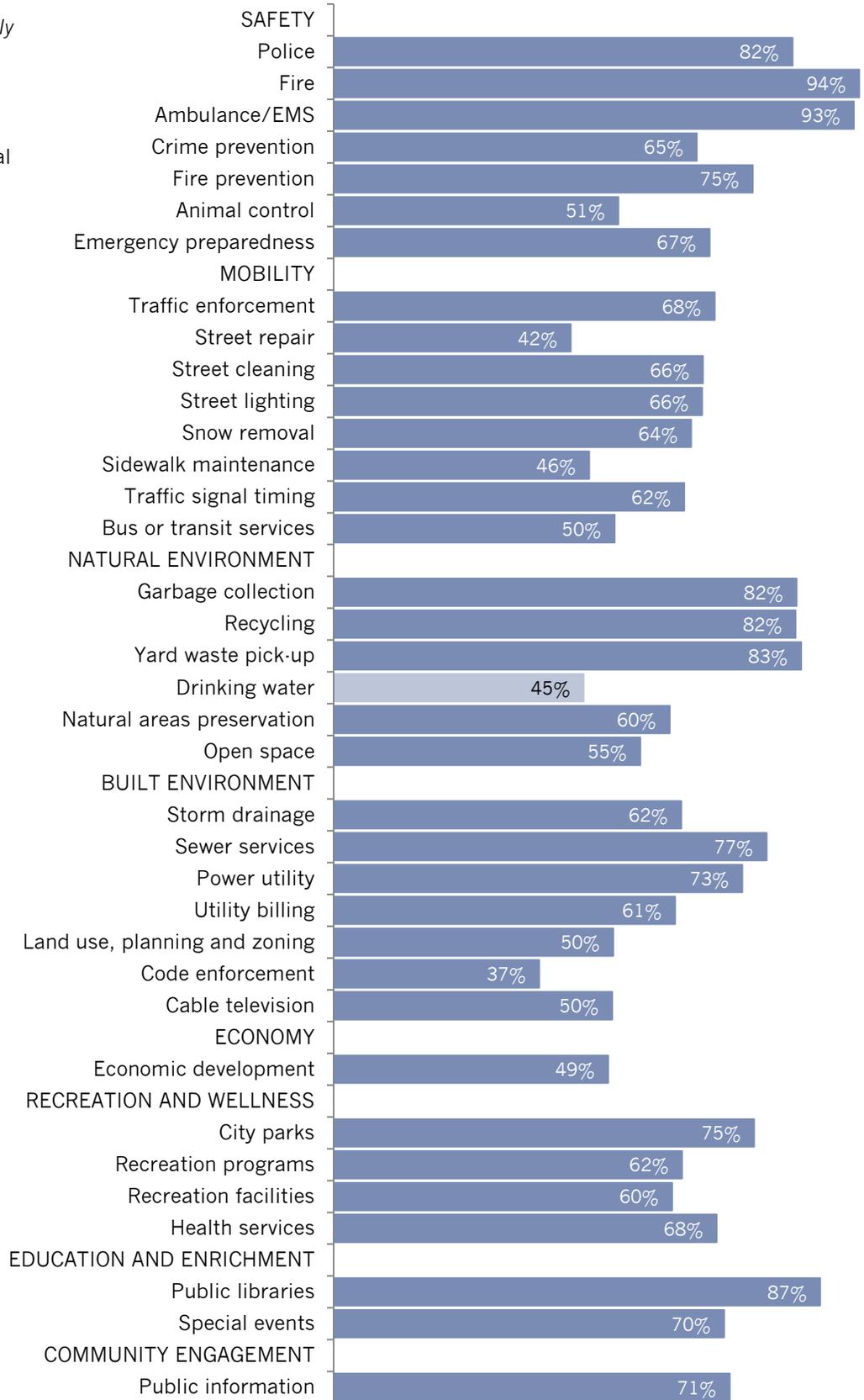
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent rating positively  
(e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



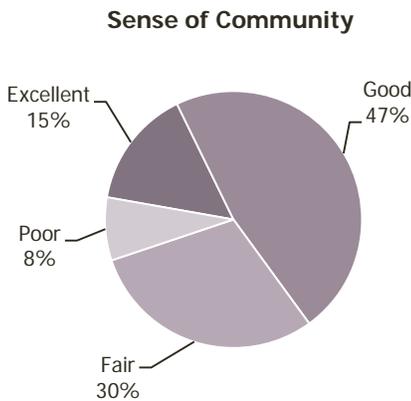
# Participation

*Are the residents of Milford connected to the community and each other?*

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community, a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. Similar to other communities in the U.S., about 6 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good scores to the sense of community in Milford. More residents reported a strong sense of community in 2019 than in 2017.

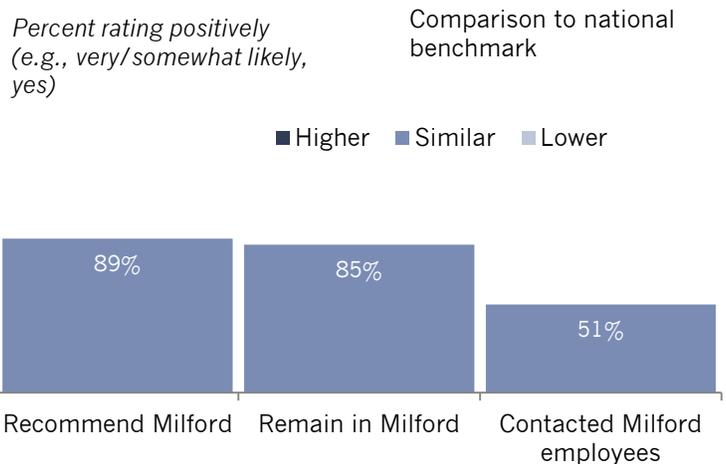
About 8 in 10 survey respondents indicated they would recommend living in Milford to someone who asked and planned to remain in the community for the next five years. About half of residents reported they had contacted Milford employees. These ratings were similar to those reported across the nation.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Levels of Participation varied widely across the different facets, making the benchmark comparisons, as well as comparisons to Milford over time, useful for interpreting the results. About 9 in 10 respondents had recycled at home, purchased goods or services in the city or talked to or visited with a neighbor.



In 2019, residents were less likely to be under housing cost stress and more likely to believe the local economy would have a positive impact on their income than in 2017.

Compared to municipalities across the country, fewer Milford residents reported using public transportation instead of driving, working in Milford or visiting a City park. In 2019, fewer residents used Milford recreation facilities or their services.



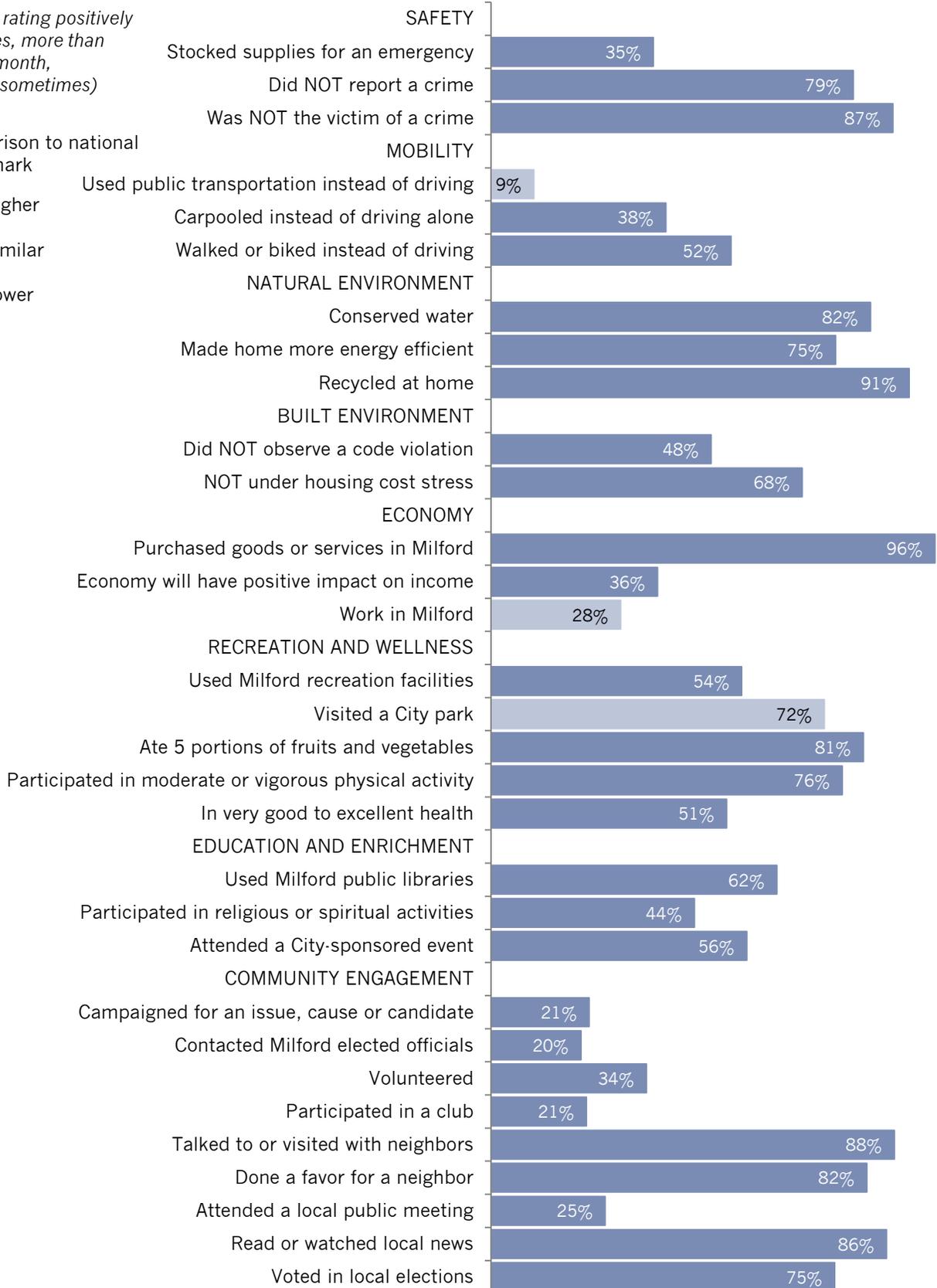
# The National Community Survey™

Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively  
(e.g., yes, more than  
once a month,  
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



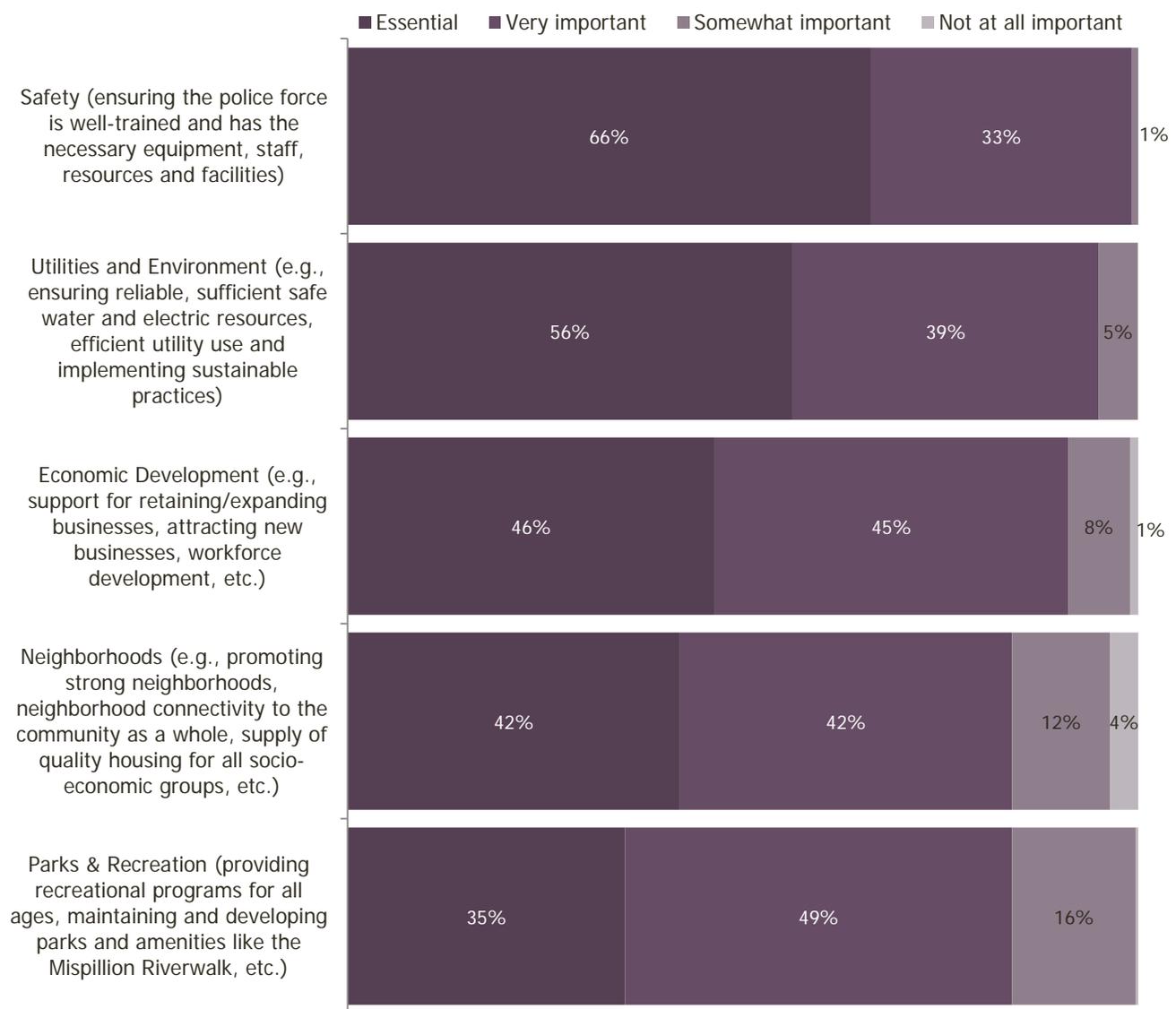
# Special Topics

The City of Milford included five questions of special interest on The NCS, with topics related to City priorities, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday events and activities, and expanded business hours downtown.

Community members rated the importance of the City prioritizing potential focus areas over the next five years. Almost all residents (99%) reported it was essential or very important to prioritize safety. About 9 in 10 residents felt it was important for the City to focus on utilities and environment and economic development, while about 8 in 10 felt it was important to focus on neighborhoods and parks and recreation.

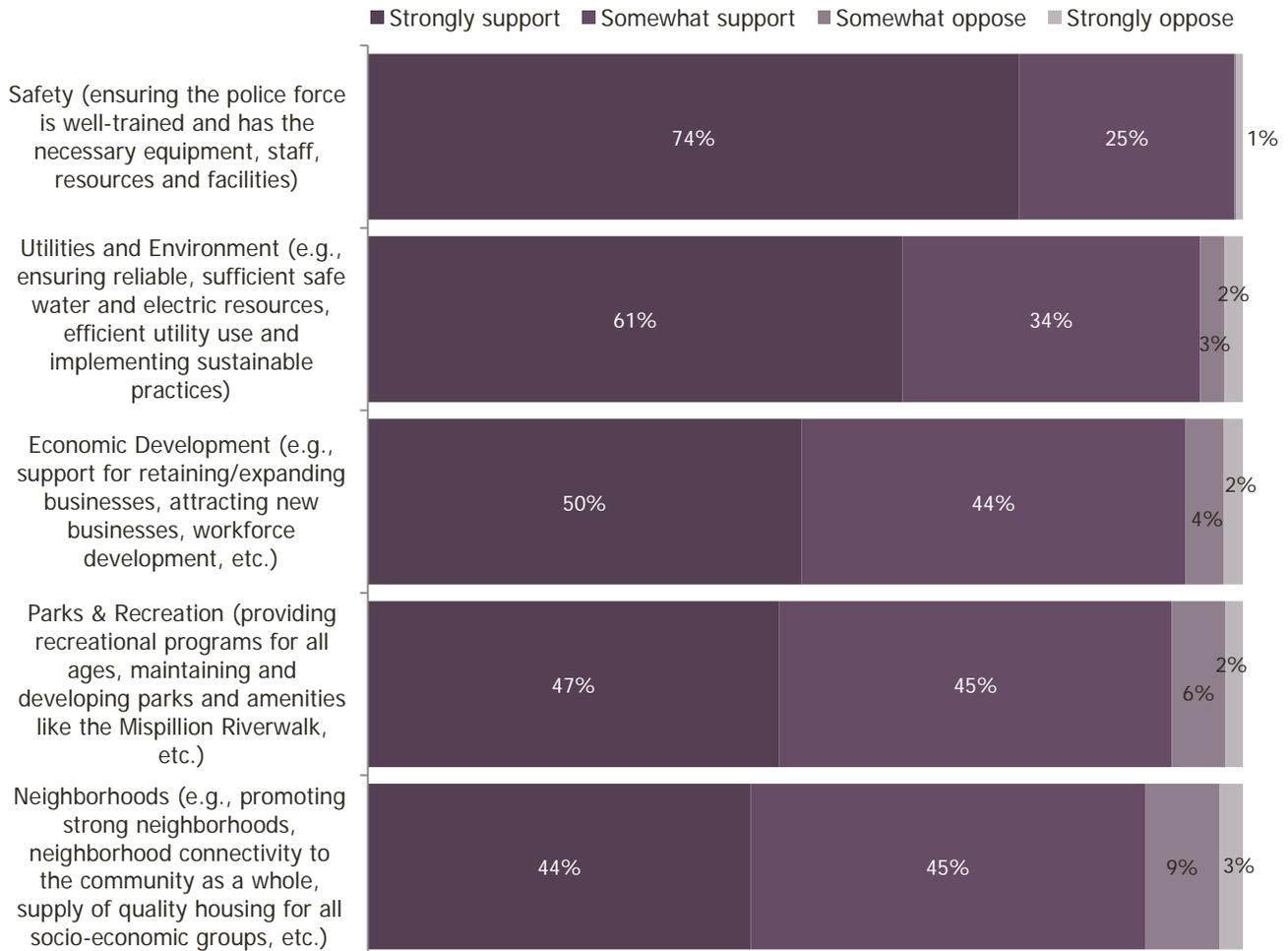
Figure 4: Importance of Potential Focus Areas for the City

Please rate how important, if at all, it is for the City of Milford to prioritize each of the following potential focus areas over the next five years:



Residents indicated whether they supported or opposed funding each of the potential focus areas. Roughly 9 in 10 respondents strongly or somewhat supported funding each of the focus areas. Safety efforts to ensure the police force was well-trained and had the necessary equipment, staff, resources and facilities received the most support from Milford residents.

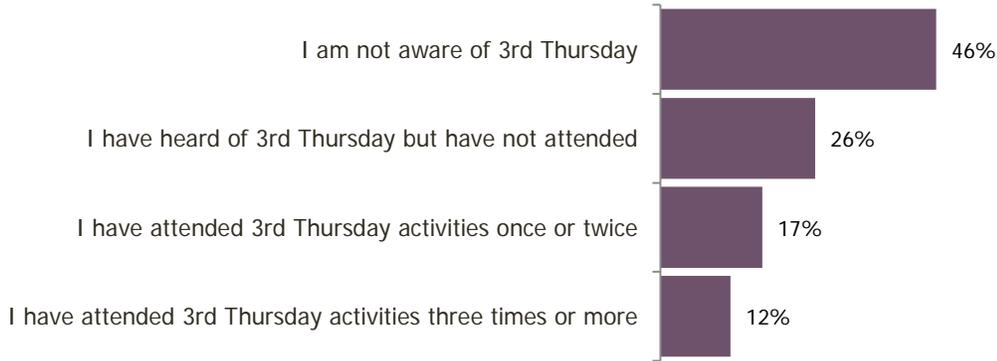
Figure 5: Support for Funding Potential Focus Areas for the City  
*How much do you support or oppose additional financial resources for each of the following focus areas?*



When asked about their familiarity and attendance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday events and activities in Downtown Milford, about 4 in 10 residents reported they were not aware of 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday. About one-quarter of residents had heard of 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday but had not attended. About 3 in 10 residents had attended 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday activities.

Figure 6: Level of Participation in 3rd Thursday Events and Activities

*Many Milford businesses stay open for expanded hours on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month. Please select the option that comes closest to your level of participation in 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday events and activities in Downtown Milford in the last 12 months.*



Three-quarters of residents were not aware of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday discount shopping button. About 2 in 10 residents were aware of the discount shopping button but had not used it, while less than 1 in 10 residents had used the discount shopping button.

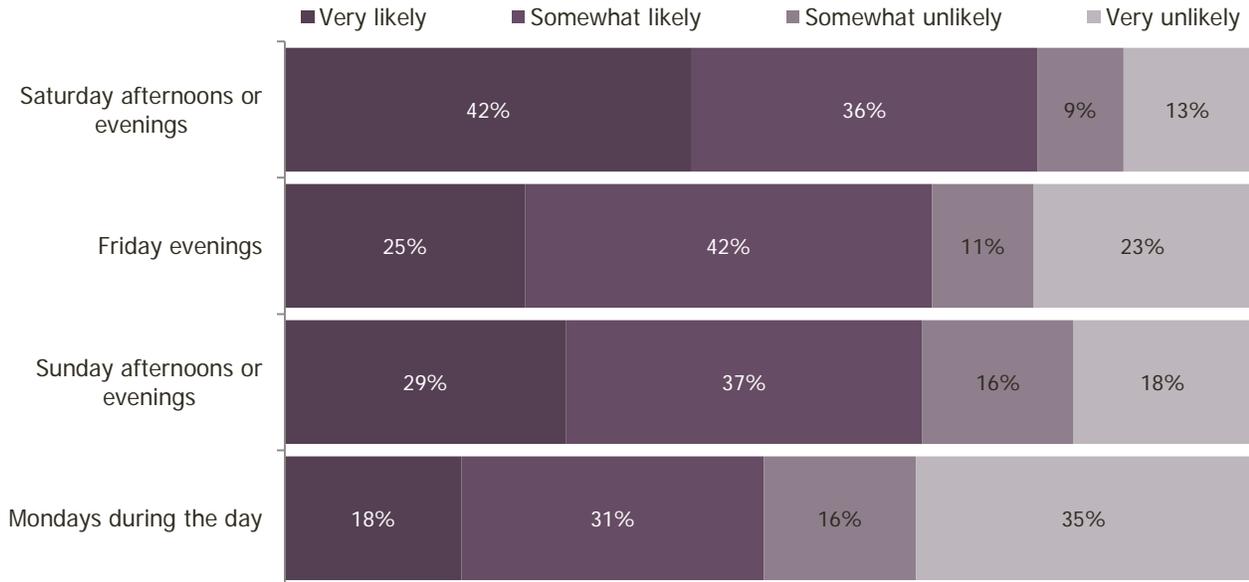
Figure 7: Awareness and Use of the 3rd Thursday Discount Shopping Button

*Please select the option that best describes you:*



When asked about likelihood of going to downtown businesses if hours were expanded, at least two-thirds of residents reported they were very likely or somewhat likely to frequent businesses on Saturday afternoons or evenings, Friday evenings, and Sunday afternoons or evenings. About half of residents reported they were likely to frequent businesses Mondays during the day.

Figure 8: Likelihood of Frequenting Downtown Businesses during Expanded Hours  
 Downtown Milford businesses could consider expanding their normal hours (most businesses are currently open on weekdays with limited evening and/or weekend hours). How likely, if at all, would you be to frequent Downtown Milford businesses at the following times?



# Conclusions

## Milford continues to be a desirable place to live, with Safety as a feature that contributes to quality of life.

At least 7 in 10 community members gave high marks to the overall quality of life in Milford, the city and their neighborhood as a place to live, and Milford as a place to raise children and retire. In 2019, more residents gave positive scores to Milford as a place to retire than in 2017. About 6 in 10 residents positively rated the overall image or reputation of Milford and its overall appearance, while 8 in 10 residents were likely to recommend living in Milford to someone who asked and planned to remain in Milford for the next five years. About 6 in 10 residents favorably evaluated the sense of community in the city, which was an improvement from 2017.

As in 2017, residents indicated that Safety was an important focus area for the City to address in the coming years. About 9 in 10 respondents felt safe in their neighborhoods and in the downtown area. Out of all City services, fire and ambulance/EMS were given the most positive reviews. Almost all residents (99%) reported that it was important for the City of Milford to prioritize Safety over the next five years to ensure the police force is well-trained and has the necessary equipment, staff, resources and facilities. Additionally, 99% of respondents supported directing additional funding to safety initiatives.

## Residents are pleased with Mobility, but some ratings have declined over time.

About 8 in 10 residents positively assessed the overall ease of travel in Milford. At least two-thirds of respondents gave high marks to traffic flow, ease of travel by car and walking, traffic enforcement, street cleaning and street lighting. Assessments of traffic flow were strong and higher than the national benchmark. Half of residents reported they had walked or biked instead of driving, which was on par with comparison communities nationwide. However, fewer residents in Milford reported using public transportation instead of driving compared to the national average. Most of Milford's downward trends were concentrated within Mobility. Ratings for ease of walking, availability of paths and walking trails, traffic enforcement, street repair and street lighting decreased from 2017 to 2019.

## Residents value Economy and there have been gains in the local economy.

As in 2017, survey participants highlighted the Economy as a priority for the City in the next two years. Similar to comparison communities, half of residents positively rated the overall economic health of Milford, the city as a place to visit and work, cost of living, new development in Milford, economic development and overall quality of business and service establishments. In 2019, fewer residents were under housing cost stress than in the previous survey. Other improvements were seen in assessments of employment opportunities, cost of living, Milford as a place to work and new development in Milford. Additionally, more residents believed the local economy would have a positive impact on their income in 2019 compared to 2017.