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City of Auburn

**CITIZEN OPINIONS OF CITY  
AND CITY GOVERNMENT**

August 2012

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***ER***  
***ELWAY RESEARCH, INC.***



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**Citizens' Opinions of City and  
City Government**

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## City of Auburn

# **Citizens' Opinions of City and City Government**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This report summarizes the results of a telephone survey of Auburn residents about the quality of life in Auburn, priorities for the future, and the level of satisfaction with city government and city services. The survey was conducted on behalf of the City of Auburn by Elway Research.

Specifically, the following subjects have been addressed over the past several years:

- Attitudes and perceptions regarding the overall quality of life in Auburn and specific aspects of quality of life: the natural environment, recreational and cultural opportunities, crime and safety, transportation, and job and economic opportunities.
- Satisfaction with city government in general, and in terms of its effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.
- Use and importance of various city departments and services.
- Satisfaction with departments and services.
- Desire for additional services and willingness to pay.
- Use of downtown Auburn.

Demographic information was included in order to compare and contrast responses from various categories of resident.

Where possible, these findings are compared with findings from similar surveys in 2011, 2009 and 2008.

This report includes Key Findings and a narrative summary of the findings, with analysis. The narrative is followed by annotated charts of the pertinent survey results. A complete set of cross-tabulation tables is presented in the appendix.

## METHODS

<b>SAMPLE:</b>	505 adult heads of household in the City of Auburn were interviewed. Quotas for each neighborhood were established based on population estimates provided by the City.
<b>TECHNIQUE:</b>	Telephone Survey
<b>FIELD DATES:</b>	August 6-12, 2012
<b>MARGIN OF ERROR:</b>	±4.5% at the 95% confidence interval. That is, in theory, had all similarly qualified Auburn residents been interviewed, there is a 95% probability that the results would be within ±4.5% of the results in this survey.
<b>DATA COLLECTION:</b>	Calls were made during weekday evenings and weekend days from a central facility by trained, professional interviewers under supervision. Up to four attempts were made to contact a head of household at each number in the sample before a substitute number was called. Questionnaires were edited for completeness, and a percentage of each interviewer's calls were verified by re-calling.
<b>OPEN-ENDED ITEMS</b>	A number of the questions were open-ended, allowing the respondent to express answers in his/her own words. Responses to these items were recorded as close to verbatim as possible, then categorized and coded for analysis.
<b>DATA WEIGHTING</b>	The data were statistically weighted to more closely reflect the proportion of renters in the population, and to achieve gender balance. The findings presented in this report are based on this weighted data.

It must be kept in mind that survey research cannot predict the future. Although great care was employed in the design, execution and analysis of this survey, these results can be interpreted only as representing the answers given by these respondents to these questions at the time they were interviewed.

## RESPONDENT PROFILE

In interpreting these findings, it is important to keep in mind the characteristics of the people actually interviewed. This table presents a profile of the 500 respondents in the survey, using the weighted data.

**Note:** Here and throughout this report, percentages may not add to 100%, due to rounding.

<b>GENDER:</b>	48% Male 52% Female
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD:</b>	28% North 21% South 1% SE/Chinook 7% West 3% Downtown 13% Lakeland 19% Lea Hill 8% Plateau
<b>AGE:</b>	12% 18-34 11% 35-44 24% 45-54 22% 55-64 28% 65+
<b>LENGTH OF RESIDENCE:</b>	5% 0-1 Year 15% 2-5 Years 22% 6-10 Years 27% 11-20 Years 31% 20+ years
<b>OWN / RENT:</b>	62% Own 36% Rent
<b>HOUSEHOLD TYPE:</b>	29% Couple with children at home 33% Couple with no children at home 25% Single with no children at home 10% Single with children at home
<b>ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME:</b>	21% \$35,000 or less 16% Over \$35,000 to \$50,000 20% Over \$50,000 to \$74,000 11% \$75,000 to \$99,000 12% \$100,000 or more 20% No response

# KEY FINDINGS

## ◆ **Quality of life indicators remain positive:**

- 4 in 10 rated the overall quality of life in Auburn as “highly” positive (8 -10 on a 0-10 point scale);
- This was a slight decrease from 2011 and down from the peak of 49% in 2009.

## ◆ **Natural environment still rated highest aspect of quality of life:**

- Half rated the Environment “high” (8–10), as in the previous three surveys;
- Recreation and Cultural Opportunities ratings were still very positive, but declined from 2011 (to an average rating of 6.6 from 7.0).

## ◆ **“Job and Economic Opportunities” still lowest in “quality of life” ratings:**

- This rating has dropped in each successive survey, with 13% rating it "high."

## ◆ **“Crime and Safety” satisfactory in general, but possible issue for neighborhoods:**

- Around 1 in 4 gave it a “highly positive” rating this year, the same as in 2011.
- It is no longer the most commonly mentioned concern about living in Auburn, with "transportation" now in the top spot.
- More than 4 in 5 still felt safe - in Auburn generally, and even more so in their own neighborhood.
- However, residents feel slightly less safe in their neighborhoods than in 2011.

## ◆ **Most common “plusses” of Auburn life rose slightly:**

- “Atmosphere” (1 in 3) and “location” (1 in 5) were still the most frequently mentioned benefits to living in Auburn; each fell slightly.
- “Amenities” dropped to the fourth-most mentioned benefit.
- "Sense of community" was mentioned by 1 in 10.

◆ **Reviews of city government are still positive, but down slightly:**

- 6 in 10 who had any contact with city staff were generally satisfied, down slightly from 7 in 10 in the previous survey.
- Around half gave the city positive reviews for keeping citizens informed, though positives for keeping them involved in decisions fell from 46% to 40%.
- More now feel that the City focused on the “wrong things” rather than the “right,” by six percentage points. This represents an increase in those answering "wrong things" from 2011, from 29% to 41%.
- Almost 2 in 3 rated “the level of city services for the amount of taxes paid” at the mid-point or above on a 10 point scale (5-10). However, only 1 in 4 gave a “high” rating.
- Fewer than half overall said that their tax dollars were “well spent,” a ten-point decrease from the 6 in 10 who thought so in 2011 and 2009.
- 6 in 10 thought that the city was generally effective, efficient, and/or accountable, though the ratings for efficiency declined.
- Around 15% rated the city government as “very” accountable. About 1 in 10 said “very” efficient or “very” effective.

◆ **Parks and Recreation still most used service:**

- Almost 6 in 10 said they had used the Parks, Arts, and Recreation Department in the past 12 months.
- Second most used was Utility billing, with 1 in 3.
- Despite this, Parks and Recreation was also the service most willing to be cut in order to decrease taxes.

◆ **Police, Parks and Internet Access were “Stars”**

- These services were rated above average for importance and for performance (compared to other departments).
- Community Events and Public Transportation also earned above average grades, although they were relatively less important.
- If respondents had to increase property taxes to maintain any service, they would most often be inclined to do so for police services (1 in 4 would.)

◆ **Street, road and sidewalk conditions consistently highlighted:**

- “Conditions of Streets” and “Street Maintenance” were the two “imperative services”: they scored above average in importance, but below average in performance. Their “grades” were below average (C+/B-).
- “Conditions of Sidewalks” had similar ratings - its performance grade was equally poor, but it was slightly less important.
- "General maintenance" was picked by most to be the highest transportation priority.

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# **SUMMARY**

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# QUALITY OF LIFE

This section summarizes the survey findings and compares this year's results to those of previous years. Several of the measures are slightly lower this year than last. In most instances the differences are not statistically significant, which means they could be the result of random variation in the data rather than actual change in resident thinking. Statistically significant differences are noted. By convention, the standard we use to determine statistical significance is ( $p < .05$ ), which means that there is a less than 5% probability that the results could have occurred due to random variation.

## CONTINUED POSITIVE RATINGS FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Perception of the overall quality of life in Auburn has remained relatively steady. The average rating for 2012 is only one-tenth of a point lower than it was in 2011 on a scale of 0 to 10. This difference is not statistically significant, meaning it could be due to random variation.

41% this year rated the Quality of Life between 8 and 10, compared to  
45% in 2011,  
49% in 2009 and  
42% in 2008;

53% rated it "moderate" (4-7); while only  
6% said that it was "poor" (0-3).

Resident thinking about living in Auburn is measured in several ways in these annual surveys. Respondents were asked in an open-ended question what they liked best about living in Auburn, then asked to rate five quality of life indicators. They were also asked other specific questions about living here.

### Auburn's Atmosphere its Best Quality

Auburn residents continue to enjoy the character of the town more so than any other quality. The top two positive attributes volunteered about Auburn have been "atmosphere" and "location" each year this survey has been conducted, followed by "amenities" and "sense of community."

When asked in an open-ended question what they “like most” about living in Auburn:

31% volunteered something about the city’s atmosphere, including  
9% who said it was quiet or peaceful,  
7% who mentioned their neighborhood or said it was a “nice area,” and  
2% who appreciated the lack of crime.

33% cited the atmosphere in 2011,  
28% did so in 2009, while  
22% did in 2008.

Mention of location, including proximity and convenience, dropped back slightly to the 2009 level:

17% volunteered location this year, down from  
21% in 2011, but up from  
16% in 2009 and  
8% in 2008.

### **Transportation Replaces Crime as Top Concern**

Transportation issues, chiefly street repairs and congestion, replaced crime as the most-cited “problem or issue that concern you about living in Auburn.”

Mentions of crime and public safety dropped to 23% this year, compared to 32% last year.

Some 30% volunteered a transportation issue in response to the open-ended question, up from 19% last year, but not nearly as high as the 50% who named transportation issues in 2008. As noted below, overall rating of transportation as a quality of life indicator decreased from 6.7 on the 0-10 scale last year to 6.0 this year.

### **Quality of Life Indicators Down Slightly in 3 of 5 Categories**

Of the five quality of life categories which residents were asked to assess, three were slightly lower than in 2011: natural environment, jobs/economic opportunities, and recreation/cultural opportunities. The drop was statistically significant for only one of these, however:

- Recreation, which declined to 6.6 from 7.0 in 2011.

The change was not statistically significant for:

- Natural environment, 7.1 (from 7.3 in 2011); nor
- Jobs, 5.0 (from 5.4 in 2011).

Ratings for the two other indicators were virtually unchanged:

- Transportation, to 6.0 (from 5.8 in 2011); and

- Crime and safety, to 5.8 (from 5.7).

### **Crime and Safety Better Generally, Issue for Neighborhoods**

Perceptions of crime as safety were addressed at three different places in the survey. First, as noted, public safety issues were replaced by transportation as the top-mentioned concern about living in Auburn. For the first time since 2008, residents were less likely to bring up crime than transportation in the open-ended question asking respondents to name any “problems or issues that concern you about living in Auburn.” This year

23% cited crime and/or safety as a concern, down from 32% in 2011 and 25% in 2009, though up from 16% in 2008.

Second, it was included in the five overall quality of life ratings, where it was essentially unchanged from last year. The average rating on the 0-10 scale this year was 5.8, exactly the same as last year (10= “excellent”), suggesting that the decreased number of mentions for crime as a problem might be due less to increased satisfaction with safety than with other issues looming larger in importance, especially transportation. Given the steady decline in strong agreement that Auburn is safe in general since 2009 (from 37% then to 27% this year), this may point to crime as a sleeper issue that could resurface in the future.

Third, respondents were asked directly whether they felt safe in Auburn and in their own neighborhood. While residents were slightly less likely to agree that they felt safe in Auburn, this was not statistically significant:

27% "agreed strongly" that they felt safe in Auburn, vs. 31% in 2011 and 37% in 2009; while

16% disagreed that they felt safe in Auburn, vs. 13% in 2011 and 12% in 2009.

There was a significant decline in residents' feelings of safety in their neighborhood. When given the statement "I feel safe in my neighborhood..."

37% agreed strongly, down from 43% in 2011 and 2009; while

13% disagreed, down from 10% in 2011 and 9% in 2009.

In addition to these direct assessments, crime came up again later in a question about the focus of city government. 9% of respondents cited crime as an example of the city being focused on the “right things,” an increase from the 3% who brought it up in 2011. In fact, crime was now almost equal to the 10% in 2009 who cited it as an example of city government working well - a year in which a

nearly equal number of people mentioned crime as a particular problem in Auburn (25% in 2009, 23% in 2012).

### **“Good Place for Families”**

Nine in 10 respondents continued to agree that Auburn was a “good place for families:”

89% agreed this year (37% “strongly agreed”). This was equivalent to 88% in 2011 (44% “strongly”), 89% in 2009 (46% “strongly”), and 90% in 2008 (44% “strongly”).

### **Most Visit Downtown Regularly**

Nearly six in 10 respondents (57%) said they had visited Downtown Auburn 12 times or more in the past 12 months, slightly fewer than in 2011. Almost all respondents (97%) had been downtown at least once in the past year.

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# CITY GOVERNMENT OVERALL PERFORMANCE

## OPINIONS OF CITY GOVERNMENT DOWN SLIGHTLY

Attention to city government was unchanged from 2011:

59% said paid at least some attention to Auburn City Government, including 20% who said they paid “a lot of attention.” This is nearly identical to 2011.

### City Government’s Focus

Opinion about whether the focus of Auburn City Government is appropriate decreased significantly from previous levels. The proportion who has said that the city is generally focused on the “right things has been constant since 2009”

35% said city government is focused on the right things this year  
37% said so in 2011, and  
36% said so in 2009.

The change this years is attributable to an increase in the proportion who said the city is focused on the “wrong things”:

41% said that the City focused on the “wrong things,” compared to 29% last year and 32% in 2009.

As examples of city government being focused on the “right things” respondents volunteered:

23% Roads and street improvements, a marked jump from the 11% who cited streets in 2011;

16% Downtown revitalization (up from 12% in 2011);

13% Parks/recreation (similar to 11% in 2011);

5% Education/schools (down from 10%); and

4% the government/mayor in general

(down from 8% in 2011, and 13% in 2009).

Although more respondents said that government focused on the wrong things, residents were far less likely to converge on a single area than in 2011, when 32% mentioned inefficient or wasteful spending. This year, only 9% did so. Of those who said the city was focused on the “wrong things”:

20% “inefficient government” or wasteful spending

13% said "road and sidewalk maintenance";

12% Downtown revitalization (the same as in 2011);

8% Narrow streets (11% in 2011).

## City Government Performance Ratings Remain Positive

City government performance rating on three criteria were strongly positive and little changed from last year. More than 6 in 10 respondents rated Auburn city government as at least "mostly" effective, efficient and accountable.

While these ratings were slightly less enthusiastic than in 2011, only one represented a statically significant change statistically significant: those saying the government is "**very efficient.**"

64% said city government is **effective**, up from 62% in 2011 (10% said "very effective").

62% rated it **efficient**, down slightly from 64% in 2011 (10% "very efficient," down from the 14% who said so in 2011); and

64% rated it **accountable**, up slightly from the 62% in 2011 and 2009 (16% said "very accountable," down from 20% in 2011);

## General Satisfaction with Tax Expenditures

Most respondents indicated general satisfaction with "the level of city services for the amount of taxes paid." On a scale of 0 ("not at all satisfied") to 10 ("highly satisfied"), 67% gave a rating above the scale mid-point and 25% gave a rating of 8-10. These ratings are almost identical to 2008, after having improved slightly in 2009 and 2011. This year:

25% rated the level of city taxes 8-10 on a 10-point scale, slightly lower than the 30% who did so in 2011 or 2009;

18% gave a 0-3 rating, up slightly from 15% in 2011.

At the end of the survey, just under 5 in 10 respondents said that their tax dollars were "well-spent" in Auburn." This is a significant decline from the 59% who had said so in 2011 and 2009.

49% said "well-spent" (59% in 2011);  
39% said "not well-spent" (30% in 2011); and  
12% had no opinion.

## COMMUNICATING WITH CITIZENS

Several measures were included to assess the communication between city government and citizens.

### Positive Ratings for Informing, Involving Citizens

A majority again rated the city's efforts to inform citizens positively, although the ratings are down from previous years. The decline from 2011 to 2012 is statistically significant for both "keeping citizens informed" and "providing residents an opportunity to be involved" in city decisions.

50% rated the city as "excellent" or "good" as keeping citizens informed, vs. 57% in 2011.

45% rated the city "only fair" or "poor" this year, vs. 36% in 2011

When it came to "providing residents an opportunity to be involved" in city decisions:

40% rated the city "excellent or "good" this year, compared to 46% in 2011 while

49% said "only fair" or "poor" this year, compared to 42% in 2011.

Some 22% of respondents were on a city-sponsored list to receive e-mail updates, This is down significantly from 29% last year, but up from 18% in 2009.

### Satisfaction with City Contact Decreased

One in three respondents (31%) had contacted city government in the past year, virtually the same as in 2011 (33%) and 2009 (34%).

In-person contact with the city was significantly lower than previously, while phone and internet contact each increased. More than twice as many contacted the city via phone (57%) than in-person (27%), a shift from a relatively even split just last year.

Contact with the city government via Internet has consistently, if slightly, increased each year, from 8% in 2009 to 13% this year.

Of those who had contact with city government, 6 in 10 (62%) were "generally satisfied" with the result, significantly down from 75% in 2011, but generally in line with the 66% in 2009.

The departments contacted most often was nearly the same as in 2011:

- The police (30% of contacts, or 9% of all respondents);
- Utilities/water department (17% of contacts, or 5% of all respondents); and
- The mayor's office (12% of contacts; 4% of all respondents).

Every department mentioned had a positive ratio.

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# GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

## USE OF CITY SERVICES

Use of city services has remained relative constant over the 4 years this survey has been conducted.

Parks and Recreation continued to be the most used city service, as it has been each year (58% reported having used these services in the last 12 months). As in previous years, Parks was followed, in order, by Utility Billing (32%), Police Services (25%), Finance Utilities (11%) and Public Works (9%).

All of these services except Utility Billing registered an increase over last year. Only the increase in police services (17% to 25%) was statistically significant. Utility billing has been exactly the same since 2009.

## IMPORTANCE, RATINGS OF CITY SERVICES

The perceived importance of various city services has remained relatively stable over the survey years. Respondent are asked to rate the importance of a list of city services on a scale of [0] “not important to you” to [10] “very important to you.” The range of average scores this year was 8.7 to 4.8. In 2011 it was 8.4 to 5.2., while in 2009 it was 8.5 to 5.6.

Compared to last year, the average importance ratings were higher for 5 of the 12 services, lower for 6 and exactly the same for 1. Seven of the changes were statistically significant (indicated with \*):

- Police Services (8.4 to 8.7)\*
- Water Service (7.8 to 7.9)
- Street Maintenance (7.4 to 7.9)\*
- Street Condition (7.5 to 7.7)
- Sidewalks (7.1)
- Parks & Recreation (7.9 to 7.4)\*
- Internet Access (7.5 to 7.1)\*
- Parking (7.1 to 6.9)
- Events (7.1 to 6.6)\*
- Permitting (5.2 to 4.8)
- Street Landscaping (6.8 to 6.3)\*
- Public Transportation (6.8 to 6.1)\*

The ranking of services shifted somewhat from last year:

- Police services were ranked first, as they have been each year
- Parks & Recreation dropped from #2 to #6, moving all the services just below Parks up one position.
- Water service moved up from #3 to #2
- Street maintenance moved up from #4 to #3
- Condition of streets moved up from #5 to #4.

As in previous surveys, only 1 in 5 could think of any additional services that they wished the City would provide. No more than 3% of respondents mentioned the same service (Public transportation).

## GRADING CITY SERVICES

Respondents were again asked to grade these same city services “using letter grades like they do in school” – with A for Excellent, B for Good, C for Satisfactory, D for Unsatisfactory, F for Failing. This year’s sample of residents were much tougher graders than last year’s. Compared to last year, these respondents gave lower grades for every city service.

The highest grades went to:

- Police Services  
31% said “A,” down from 39% in 2011 (GPA = 2.9, down from 3.1 in 2011).
- Community Events Produced by the City  
29% graded this an “A” (down from 40% in 2011) with an overall “GPA” of 3.0;
- Parks & Recreation Services and Programs  
29% gave this an “A” (down from 41% in 2011) with an overall “GPA” of 3.0;

Aside from the Permit Center, which half were unable to grade at all, streets and sidewalk issues had the lowest ratings. They earned the most “Cs,” “Ds,” and “Fs.” This included:

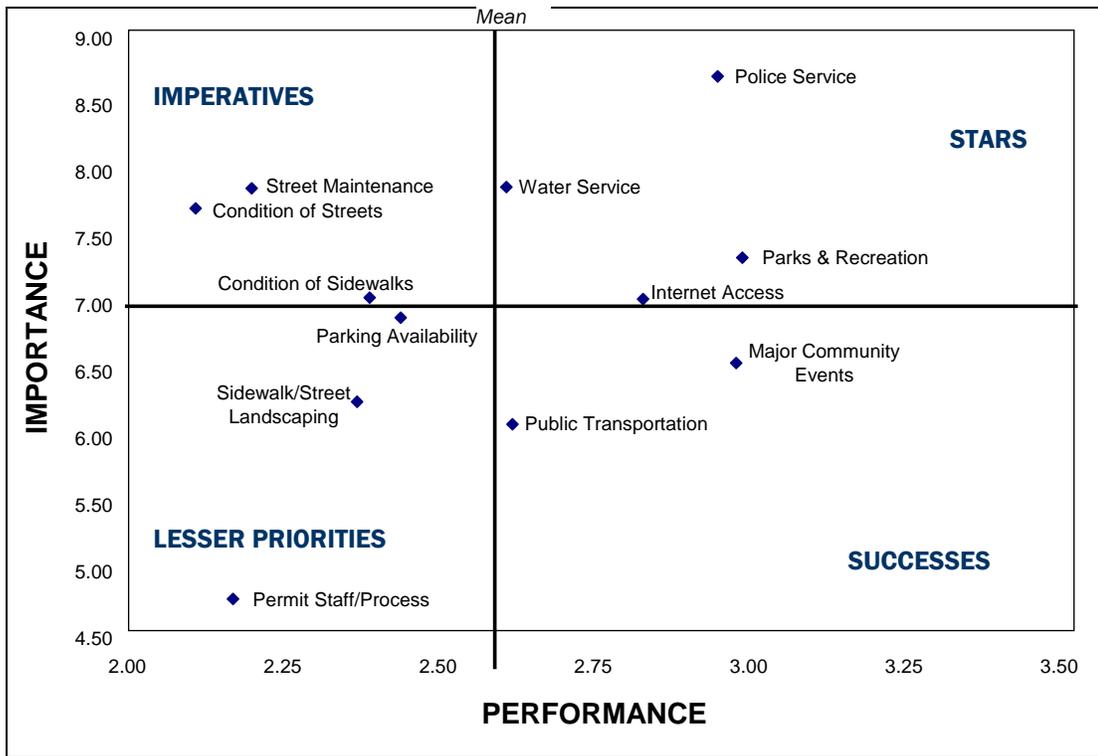
- The condition of the sidewalks (15% grade D or F; GPA=2.4);
- Street maintenance (21% grade D or F; GPA=2.2); and
- The condition of the streets (26% grade D or F; GPA=2.1).

## Police and Parks Still Rated City “Stars”

A quadrant analysis was again used to explore the relationship between importance and performance. This chart simultaneously displays the average importance and performance scores for each service. It then displays the position of each service by both dimensions (see below)

It is important to note that none of the services were rated as unimportant: the lowest importance average was 4.8 on a 0-10 scale. Similarly, the “grade point averages” for performances ranged from 2.1 to 3.0 on the 0-4 scale. The quadrants, therefore, show the departments’ relative positions, around the overall averages for importance and performance. The lines dividing the quadrants on the chart are the average scores for all services.

### CITY SERVICES BY IMPORTANCE, PERFORMANCE



This chart plots the average score for importance and performance for each service. The quadrants are created using the overall average rating for all services for each measure.

**“Stars”**- scored above average for both importance and city performance:

- Police Services (as in 2011 and 2009);
- Parks & Recreation (as in 2011 and 2009);
- Water Service, (up from “Imperative” 2011);
- Internet Access (as in 2011).

**“Imperatives”** - rated above average in importance, but below average for performance.

- Street Maintenance, as in previous years;
- The Condition of Streets, as in previous years; and
- The condition of the sidewalks (up from “Lesser Priority in 2011)

**“Successes”** - scored above average for performance, but below average on importance; these were unchanged from 2011.

- Major Community Events;
- Public Transportation.

**“Lesser Priorities,”** - rated below average in importance and performance. As in 2009 and 2011 they included:

- Parking Availability (just below the average score for importance);
- Sidewalk and Street Landscaping; and
- Permit Staff/Process.

## CITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

### **Police Still Favored For Increase; Parks and Recreation, Job Creation Acceptable to be Cut to Help Taxes**

As a way of determining city budget priorities, respondents were asked if there were city program categories for which they would support a property tax increase in order to keep at current service levels. Then, on the flip side, were there programs they would cut in order to reduce property taxes.

As in previous years, Police Services topped the list of programs to keep and parks headed the list of programs to cut, even though parks and recreation was the most-utilized city service, park usage was up, parks was the third-highest rated city services and it scored as one of the four “star” programs.

When asked which *one* service they would support an increase in property taxes in order to maintain at current service levels:

26% chose “Police,” down from 33% in 2011;  
23% said “Job Creation;”  
23% said Roads, up from 19% in 2011;  
13% said Parks and Recreation; and  
11% would not be willing to accept an increase in property taxes to maintain any service at its current levels (mostly unchanged from 10% in 2011).

They were then asked which one they would cut first in order to reduce property taxes. The top answer was:

28% would not want to see any service cut, even if it would lower taxes.

Two programs stood out:

26% would cut “Parks and Recreation” to reduce taxes; and  
23% would reduce Job Creation.

That “job creation” was #2 on both lists, with exactly the same proportion of voters (23%) saying they would increase taxes to pay for it and would cut it first to reduce taxes, indicates deep public division on what the city’s role should be with regard to economic development.

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# TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

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Despite transportation's persistent place near the top of Auburn residents concerns – indeed topping the list of concerns this year – a transportation improvements measure recently failed at the polls. A number of items were added to the regular questions on transportation issues to help shed light on citizen's thinking about this issue.

Transportation is clearly on the top of Auburn residents' minds. To review the findings in this survey:

- Transportation was the top “problem or concern about living in Auburn,” volunteered by 30% of respondents;
- The rating for transportation as a quality of life indicator has declined over the last two years, from 6.6 on the 0-10 scale in 2009 to 6.0 this year.
- Of those who think city government is focused on the right things, 23% cited street improvements as an example of that – the top issue listed;
- Street maintenance and street condition were the #3 and #4 ranked “city services and facilities,” with 65% and 63% rating them very important (8-10 on a 0-10 scale);
- “Condition of streets” was the lowest rated of 12 city service graded; street maintenance was next to lowest;
- Support for paying an extra \$120 per year for repair of major arterials has been steady for the last three years with a majority at least “moderately likely” to support such a plan, although the proportion of those “highly likely” slipped slightly this year from 30% to 27%;
- 23% of respondents chose roads as the one city service for which they would be willing to support a property tax increase to maintain the current service level – placing it in a tie with job creation and behind only police;
- Only 10% chose roads as the one service they would cut in order to reduce their property taxes – second lowest to police services.

Given this context, the last section of the interview focused on citizens' priorities for transportation improvements and information they want about improvement projects.

## "General Maintenance" Top Transportation Priority

More than half of these respondents chose "general maintenance of existing streets and sidewalks" at the top (33%) or "next highest" (19%) priority for transportation in Auburn. Only 8% said it should be the lowest priority.

Support was also high for "Improving arterials and major roads," with 42% rating it in the top two:

20% said it was the top priority,  
22% the second-highest, and  
12% the lowest.

"Improving streets in neighborhoods" was the only other priority rated in the top two by more than 1 in 3 respondents:

14% said it was top,  
20% said it was second, and  
9% said it was the lowest.

Improving intersections was rated among the top two by 21%, but rated the lowest priority by 14%.

Two of the projects listed were ranked as the lowest priority by more residents than ranking it in the top two:

- Expanding public transportation (25% top two; 26% lowest); and
- Installing and repairing sidewalks (17% top two; 22% lowest).

## ARGUMENTS AND INFORMATION FOR TRANSPORTATION

### Personal Impact Arguments Most Powerful

Respondents generally agreed with all of the arguments presented in favor of improving transportation in Auburn. Of 6 arguments tested for why transportation improvements might be important, all were agreed with by at least 8 in 10 respondents. Arguments that received the strongest support all stressed personal benefit:

61% strongly agreed that "Smooth roads and fewer potholes saves wear and tear on vehicles" (an additional 35% simply "agreed"), while

54% strongly agreed that "Reduced traffic congestion saves everyone time and hassle" (plus 40% "agree").

Three that made an argument in favor of how such projects could benefit the community received relatively weaker support:

43% strongly agreed that "Better roads and sidewalks make for safer neighborhoods and community" (plus 45% "agree");

40% strongly agreed that "Roads projects create immediate jobs in the construction industry" (plus 49% "agree"); and

33% strongly agreed that "Better roads will help attract businesses and jobs to Auburn" (plus 49% "agree").

## Cost Information Most Salient

A focus on money came up in two places:

94% agreed that "It saves money in the long run to fix roads before they fail" (including 51% who agreed strongly);

47% said "information about how much the project will cost" would be the "most useful information" to them in deciding whether to support a specific transportation project; another

36% said a cost-benefit analysis on street improvements would be most helpful.

The cost issues were ranked the #1 and 2 most useful pieces of information in helping respondents to decide whether to support a particular project. Below them on the list were:

33% Maps of where the project will occur;

30% Information on the schedule of the projects to be completed;

26% Information about how the project was selected.

## Auburn Reporter Most Reliable Source of Information

Respondents were also asked what sources they relied on the most for information about transportation projects. Responses were similar to a question asked in previous years about where citizens got their information in general, with newspapers dominating:

55% said the Auburn Reporter,

31% said friends and family, while

18% said the mayor and city council.

## TRANSPORTATION LEVY POST-MORTEM

Supporters of the recent transportation ballot measure outnumbered opponents by better than 2:1. but 1/3 of respondents refused to answer:

47% said they had supported it, while

21% reported opposing it, and

32% would not say.

Given the measure's failure to pass, these data are clearly skewed, most likely by the high refusal rate. This 32% represents the highest refusal rate of any item in the survey, even higher than the 25% would not disclose their income.

Clearly not all of these respondents did not participate in the recent election. It is not possible to separate those who did not vote from those who simply refused to disclose their position. We do know that 25% of these respondents answered "Don't know" to a subsequent question about why the levy might have failed, far higher than the 7% of self-professed supporters and 5% of opponents who did so.

Nevertheless, some trends emerged in answers to this follow-up question about "which reasons contributed to the measure not passing":

46% said "The economy is just too bad right now to raise taxes"  
26% said "The proposal was too expensive"  
25% said "People did not get enough information about the proposal," while  
27% mentioned other reasons, and  
13% didn't know.

However, these trends were not the same for those who opposed the measure and those who supported it.

- Opponents were most likely to cite as reasons:
  - 43% The economy is just too bad right now to raise taxes
  - 38% The proposal was too expensive
  - 17% People did not get enough information about the proposal
  - 18% Too focused on major roads – not enough on local streets
  - 13% There are other things that need money ahead of roads and streets
- Supporters, meanwhile, were more likely to blame the economy in general than the specific proposal:
  - 53% The economy is just too bad right now to raise taxes
  - 24% The proposal was too expensive
  - 25% People did not get enough information about the proposal
  - 13% Too focused on major roads – not enough on local streets
  - 11% There are other things that need money ahead of roads and streets

The question of taxes and spending separated levy supporters and opponents in another question, not directly related to transportation:

63% of levy supporters said they thought their tax dollars were generally well-spent by Auburn city government, whereas

61% of opponents said their taxes were *not* well spent.

Those who would not disclose their position were evenly divided (40% said "well spent" and 39% said "not").

### **Transportation Priorities Differ Only Somewhat**

Supporters and opponents generally agreed on the top priorities for transportation, although opponents were much more likely to say that public transportation should be the lowest priority (39% of opponents vs. 25% of supporters). The table below indicates the first, second and lowest priority for each of the project categories, as ranked by supporters and opponents of the recent measure, plus those who would not disclose their position.

Transportation Priorities of  
Levy Supporters and Opponents

SUPPORTERS	TOP	SECOND	LOWEST	SUM*
General maintenance	31	20	6	45
Arterials	23	23	11	35
Streets	12	20	11	21
Public trans	17	14	25	6
Intersections	7	9	16	0
Sidewalks	6	11	20	-3
<b>OPPONENTS</b>				
General maintenance	34	16	7	43
Streets	19	26	4	41
Arterials	22	23	8	37
Intersections	4	16	15	5
Sidewalks	8	6	24	-10
Public trans	11	8	39	-20
<b>WON'T SAY</b>				
General maintenance	35	20	13	42
Streets	15	17	9	23
Arterials	15	20	14	21
Intersections	8	19	11	16
Public trans	13	9	19	3
Sidewalks	4	13	25	-8

\* SUM = (Top Priority) + (Second) – (Lowest)

There was general concurrence between supporters, opponents and non-disclosers with regard to the test arguments. A majority of each type agreed with every statement. Supporters were more likely to agree “strongly” with each statement than either opponents or non-disclosers.

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# DISCUSSION

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Auburn residents continue to have a relatively positive view of their city and its government. Although ratings of some key quality of life indicators are down slightly this year, residents' overall assessment of Auburn's quality of life has remained positive and stable since the first survey in 2008.

Auburn citizens continue to have generally positive perceptions of city government. Although the ratings were slightly down this year, city government continues to receive positive marks for tax dollar value, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and focus.

Transportation replaced crime as the top concern volunteered by residents, although perceptions of safety were somewhat lower for both the city and respondent's own neighborhood. Ratings of crime as a quality of life indicator was the same as last year, and police services remain the most vital city service

Although residents named transportation issues as a top concern, they were most likely to be thinking of maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure than new projects. All three of the "imperatives" in the importance/performance quadrant analysis were street maintenance items: "street maintenance," conditions of streets" and "condition of sidewalks." When given a list of transportation priorities, they rated as #1 "general maintenance of existing streets and sidewalks."

City government continues to be seen by most as doing a good job of informing citizens. There were some items to watch in the area of communicating with citizens, however. For the first time more respondents gave negative than positive ratings to *involving* citizens in city decisions. Additionally, satisfaction ratings declined among citizens who had personal contact with city staff, as did the number of in-person contacts with city staff.

Although having the indicators move in a positive direction would be more encouraging, few of these differences are statistically significant, meaning that citizens' overall assessment of Auburn City Government is the same as it was last year. Given the prolonged economic difficulties and the subsequent strain on people's wellbeing and optimism, this is not a bad place to be.



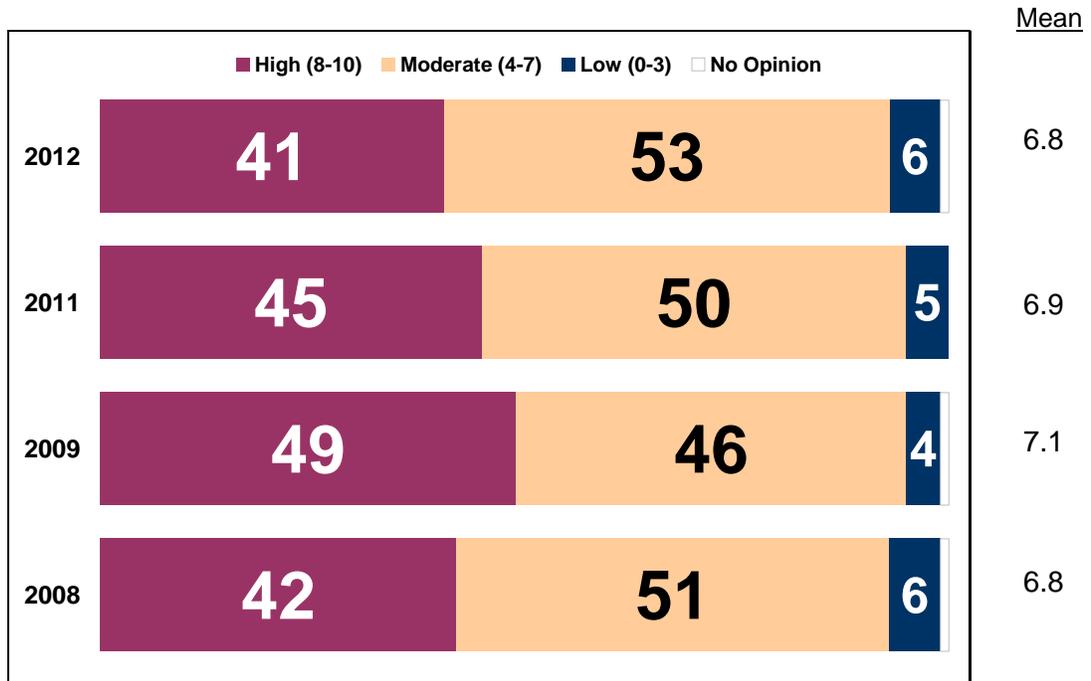
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# FINDINGS

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**ER**  
***ELWAY RESEARCH, INC.***

## Quality of Life Perception Remains Positive, Stable



Question 3: Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in Auburn? Please give a rating on a scale of zero to 10, where 10 means you think the city has an "excellent" quality of life, a "0" means it has a "poor" quality of life. A rating of 5 is in the middle.

### Higher satisfaction among longtime, older residents:

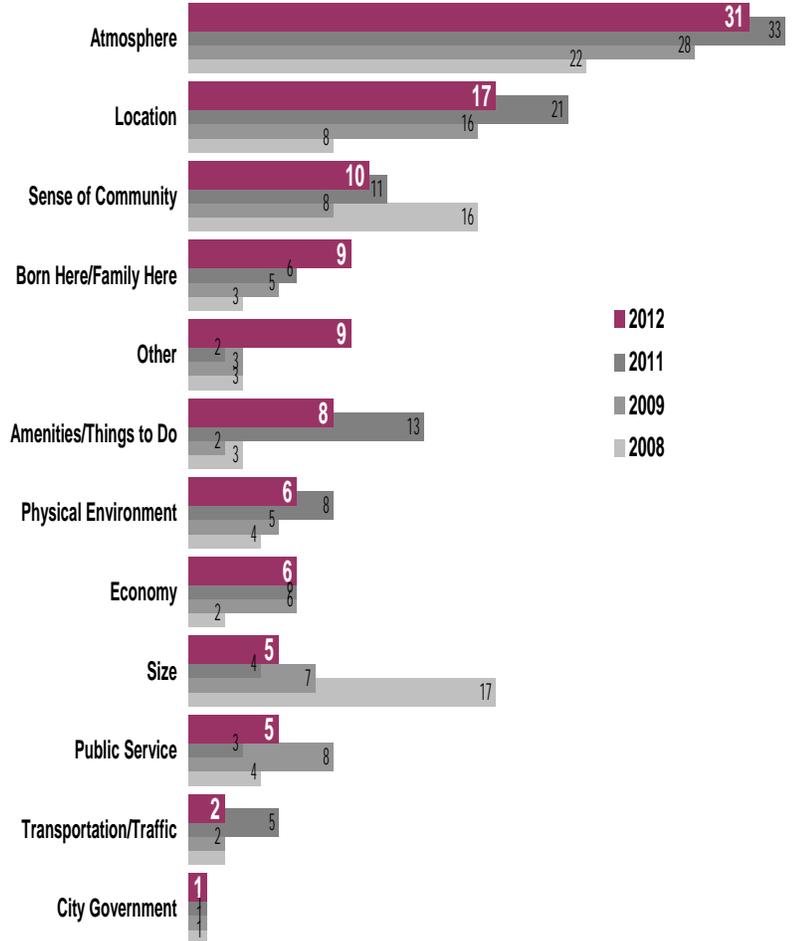
- Those over 65 were most likely to say "excellent" (50%), while 18-34 year olds were the least (37%).
- Residents who had been here less than a year gave fewer "excellent" ratings (22%) than those who had been in Auburn longer than a year (42%).
- Being in Auburn a moderate amount of time (2-5 years) was most likely to result in a "poor" response (10% v. 5% for all others).

### Lower satisfaction among very high, low-income residents:

- Of households with incomes over \$100,000, 37% said the quality of life was "excellent," the least of any income category, except for:
- Those with incomes less than \$35,000, 29% of whom said the quality of life was excellent.

## Residents Consider Auburn's "Atmosphere" Its Most Positive Attribute

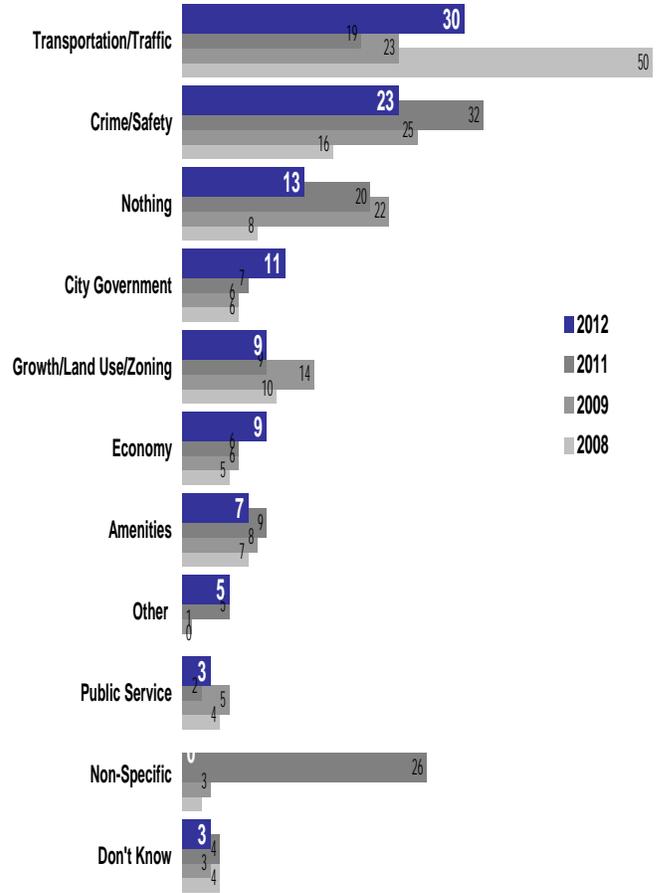
<b>Atmosphere</b>	<b>31</b>
"Atmosphere" (Urban / Small City)	12
Quiet / Peaceful	9
"Nice" Area / Neighborhood	7
Safety / No Crime	2
Comfortable / Slower Pace	1
<b>Location</b>	<b>17</b>
Location / Convenience	10
Proximity To Seattle / Other Cities	3
Proximity to Recreation	2
Other LOCATION	1
<b>Sense Of Community</b>	<b>10</b>
Friendly People	6
Sense of Community	2
Not Overpopulated	1
Diverse Population	1
<b>Born Here / Family Here</b>	<b>9</b>
Family/Friends Here/Family	6
Atmosphere	3
Born here/never lived anywhr else	3
<b>Amenities / Things to do</b>	<b>8</b>
Shopping/Businesses	5
Variety of things to do	1
Downtown	1
Other Non-Govt Amenities	1
<b>Economy</b>	<b>6</b>
Job is here/ close to work	3
Cost of Living/Affordable	2
Housing	1
<b>Physical Environment</b>	<b>6</b>
Scenic beauty	2
"Physical surroundings"	1
Clean	1
Water	1
Other PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	1
<b>Public Services</b>	<b>5</b>
Schools / Education	4
Parks & Recreation	1
<b>Size</b>	<b>5</b>
Small	4
Other SIZE	1
<b>Transportation / Traffic</b>	<b>2</b>
Transportation is convenient	1
Pedestrian Friendly / Can Walk Everywhere	1
<b>City government</b>	<b>1</b>
Listens To Residents	1
<b>Non-Specific</b>	<b>3</b>
Parks / Open Spaces	3
Nothing	5
Everything	1
Other	1
Don't know	4



Question 4: What do you like most about living in Auburn?

## Traffic Replaces Crime as Top Concern

<b>Traffic / Transportation</b>	<b>30</b>
Traffic Congestion	9
Street Repairs / Sidewalks	15
Mass Transit	3
Other	3
<b>Crime / Safety</b>	<b>23</b>
Crime / Public Safety	19
Drug Control	2
Police Department	2
<b>City Government</b>	<b>11</b>
City Government	6
Money Handled Poorly	2
Taxes	2
Other city government	1
<b>Growth / Land Use / Zoning</b>	<b>9</b>
Gangs	3
City Image	1
Downtown Development	2
Overcrowding	1
Other	2
<b>Economy</b>	<b>9</b>
The Economy	2
Lack Of Businesses	2
Lack of Jobs	2
Cost of living is high	1
Housing Costs	2
<b>Amenities</b>	<b>7</b>
No Shopping / Restaurants	4
No Recreation/Activities	1
City Appearance / Clean Up	1
Other AMENITIES	1
<b>Public Services</b>	<b>3</b>
Schools Are Poor	2
Other PUBLIC SERVICES	1
<b>Other</b>	<b>7</b>
Climate/Flooding	1
Gambling, Casinos, Fireworks	1
Racism	1
Poverty / Homelessness	4
Nothing	13
Miscellaneous	5
Don't know	3

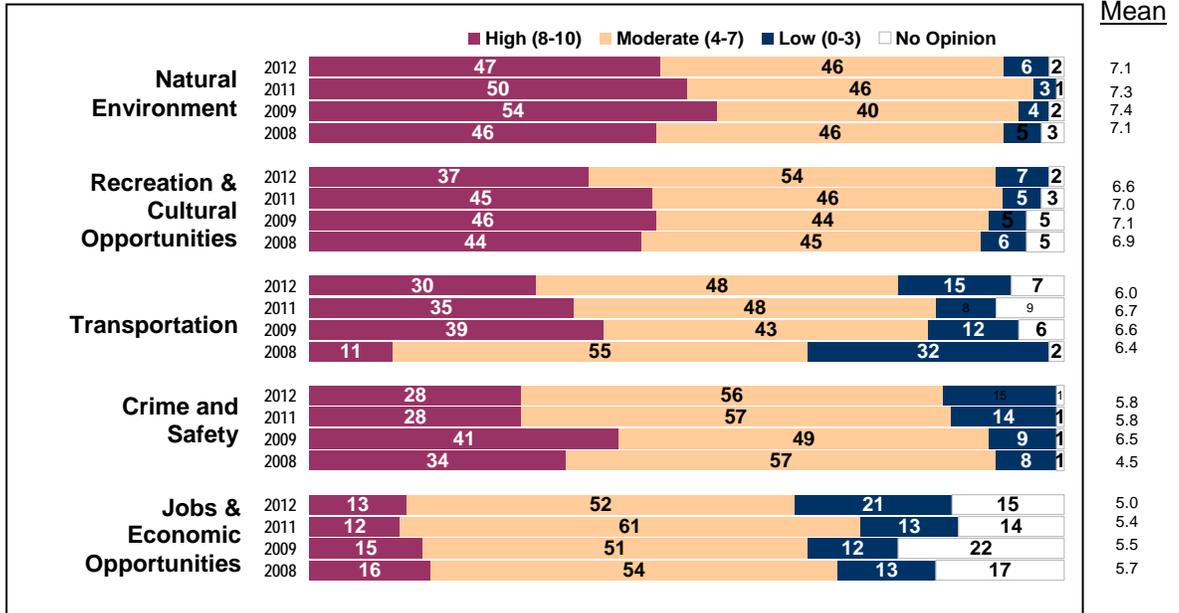


Question 5: What would you say are some problems or issues that concern you about living in Auburn?

### Traffic particular problem for low-income households, Northern neighborhoods

- Low-income residents more likely to note traffic as concern (40% of those making under \$35,000 v. 26% for all others).
- Those in the north (34%) more concerned about traffic than residents in Lea Hill (24%).

## Recreation & Cultural Opportunities, Jobs Most Decreased Quality of Life Indicators



Question 6: I'd like you to rate the quality of life in Auburn in several key areas. For each area I mention, please give a rating on the 0-10 scale, where 0 means "poor" and 10 means "excellent."

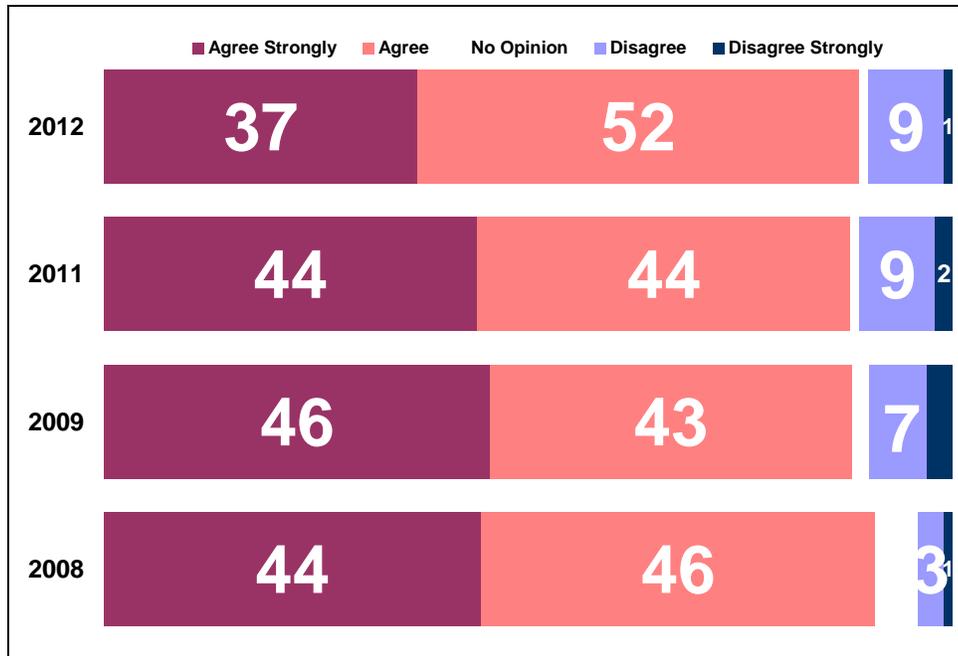
### Younger, newer residents less satisfied with recreation and cultural opportunities:

- Those living in Auburn less than a year considered these opportunities "excellent" only 21% of the time (vs. 38% of all others).
- Residents over 65 were notably more likely to say "excellent" than others (42% v. 35% for those under 65).

### Ratings of excellent for "Job and Economic Opportunities" shifted at the bottom end:

- Lower-income residents far more likely to rate as "poor" (34%) than middle-income (14% of those making \$50-\$100k/year).
- By neighborhood, Plateau residents more likely to rate job situation as poor (31%) than others (20%).

## Auburn Still Considered a “Good Place for Families” But Less Strongly Than In Previous Years



Question 12.1: I am going to read a series of statements about life in Auburn. For each one, tell me whether you Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree or Disagree Strongly. The first one is... Auburn is a good place for families?

### Greatest differences were by income:

- 28% of those making under \$50k agreed strongly, vs.
- 44% of those making \$50k or more.

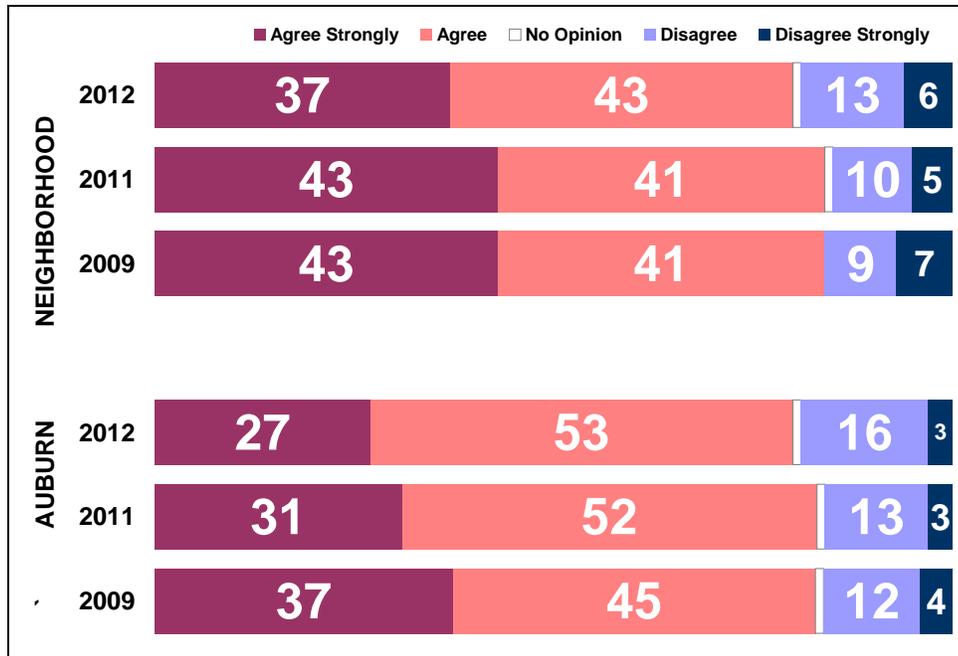
### Agreement also stronger among men, couples

- 43% of men agreed strongly, vs. 32% of women
- Couples agreed strongly 41% of the time, vs. 30% of those without a partner

### More "agree strongly" responses in some neighborhoods

- 47% in Lakeland, and
- 43% in Lea Hill; vs.
- 35% in South Auburn, and
- 35% in Plateau.

## Nearly All Continue to Feel Safe in Auburn, Neighborhood



Question 12.2 & 12.3: I am going to read a series of statements about life in Auburn. For each one, tell me whether you Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree or Disagree Strongly. The first second is... I feel safe in my neighborhood? I feel safe in Auburn?

**Most likely to “agree strongly” that they felt safe in the neighborhood were Lakeland residents (54%). This compares with:**

- 25% in the South,
- 34% in Lea Hill,
- 37% in the North, and
- 40% in Plateau and West.

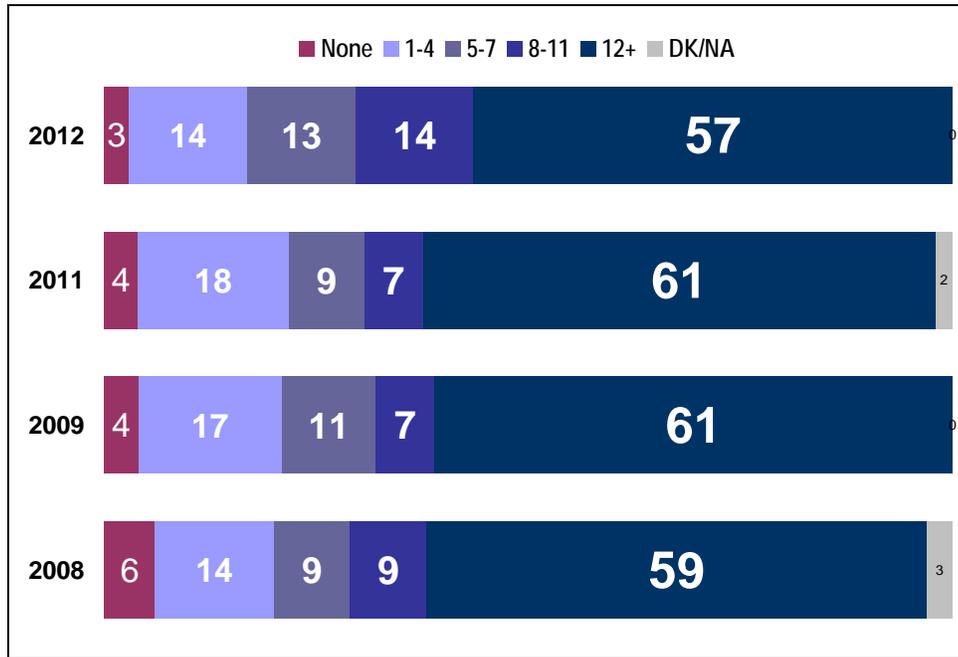
**Low-income residents feel least safe in neighborhoods:**

- 31% of those making under \$35k "agree strongly" that neighborhood is safe, vs.
- 38% of all others.

**Those without children feel Auburn is safer than those with:**

- 29% of those with no children, vs.
- 23% of those who do have kids.

## Downtown Visits Frequent, Steady

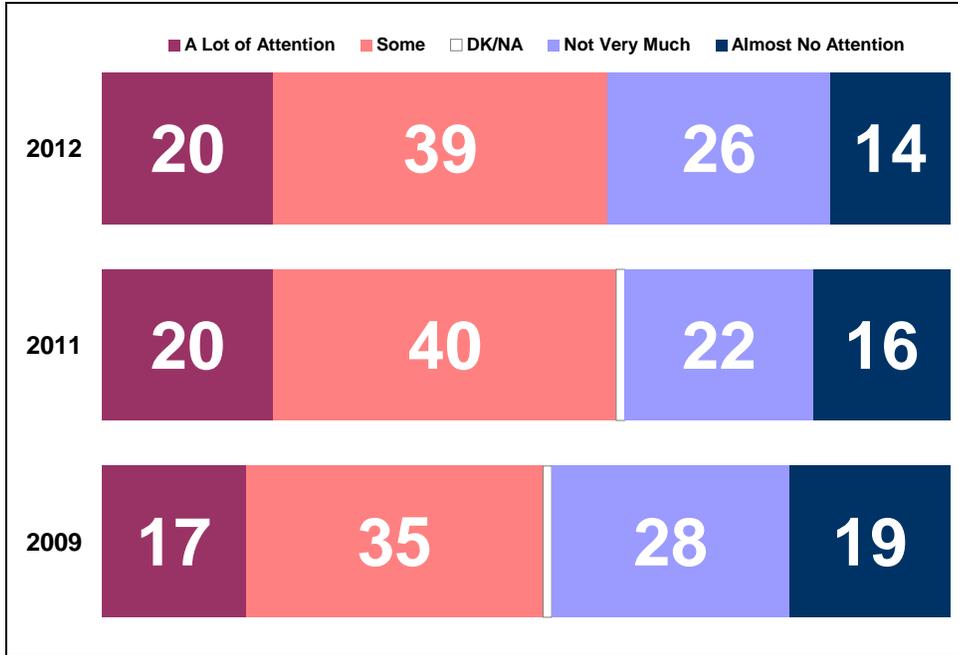


Question 28: How often have you visited Downtown Auburn in the last 12 months, for any reason?

### Younger residents far less likely to visit regularly:

- 42% of those under 35 visited at least monthly, as opposed to 55% of those 35-44, and 60% of all others.

## No Change in Attention Paid to Auburn City Government



Question 7: Let's talk about the City Government. First, in general, how much attention would you say you pay to Auburn City government? Would you say you pay...?

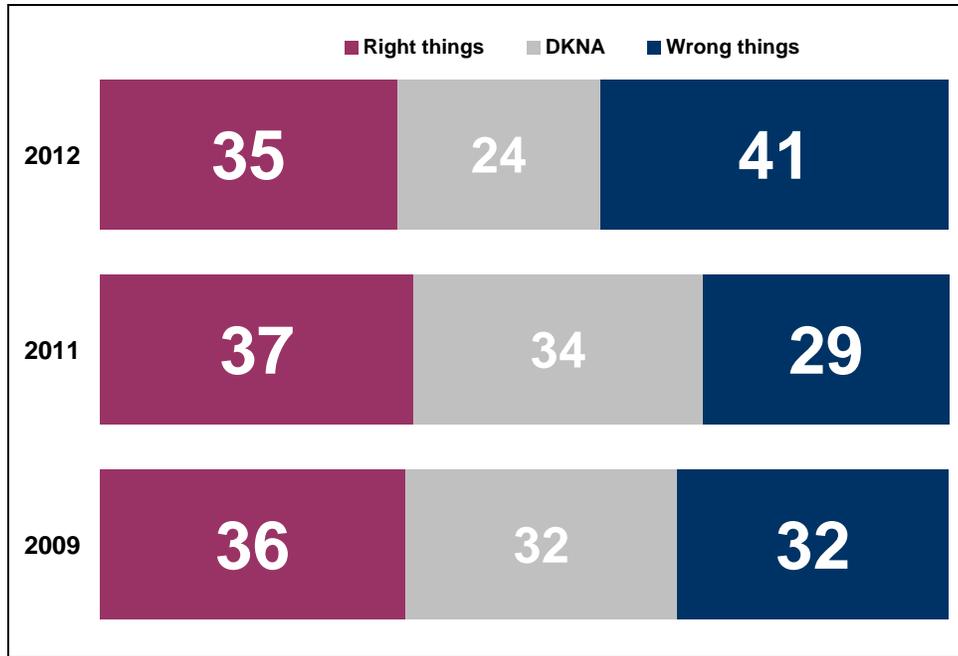
### Longtime residents pay far more attention:

- 27% of those with over 20 years of residence said "a lot," vs. 18% of all others;
- 39% of those with less than a year said "almost none," vs. only 9% of those here for 20 or more years.

### Under age 35 more often paid "almost no attention":

- 31% of the youngest age group said "almost no attention," vs.
- 12% of those older.

## 4 in 10 Now Think Government Focuses on Wrong Things

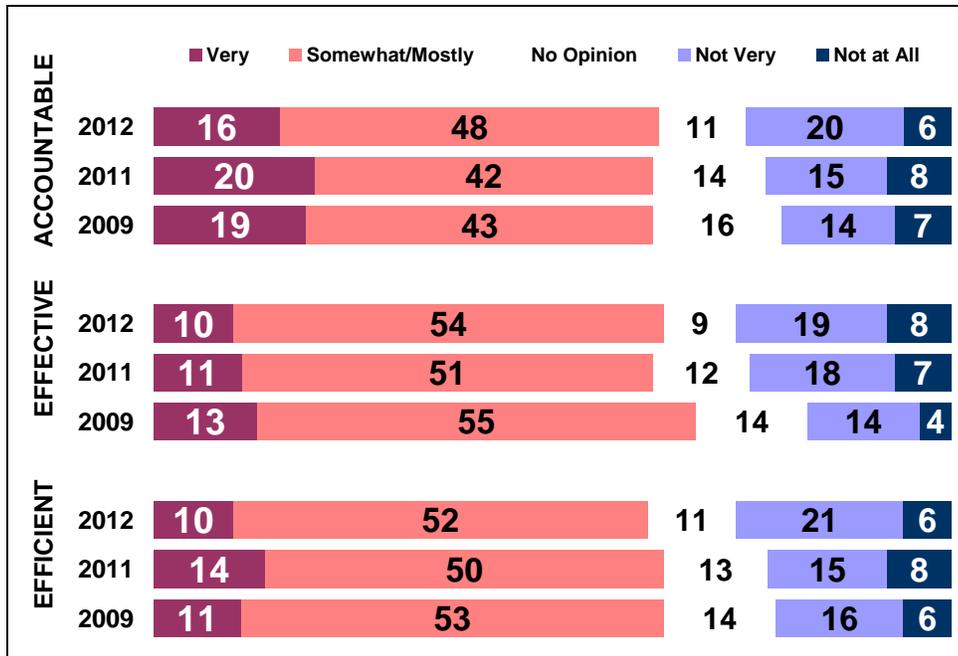


Question 8: In your opinion, is the Auburn City government focused on the right things? Or does it spend too much time on things it should not be doing? Question 8.1/8.2: What would you say is an example of that (Wrong things/Right things)?

Right Things	
Roads/Streets Improvement	23
Downtown Revitalization	16
Parks & Recreation	13
Other	11
Low Crime Rate/Public Safety	9
Economic Dev/Attracting Busin	7
Police/Fire/EMS	6
Education/Schools/Kids	5
Govt / Mayor Did Good Job	4
Good Communication	4
Beautification	3
Better Govt Spending	3
Traffic Issues Solved	2
Community Involvement	2
Keeping Up With Growth	2
No Answer	9

Wrong Things	
Road/sidewalk maintenance	13
Downtown Revitalization	12
Inefficient Govt	11
Govt Spending Wasteful	9
Narrow Streets/Roads	8
Other	7
Economic Dev/Lack of Business	7
Transportation/Traffic	7
Jobs	4
Crime/Public Safety	6
Construction/Torn Down Buildings	4
More Focus on School Kids	4
High Taxes	3
Police Department	2
Lack of Dev Planning	2
Keep Up The Parks	2
Parking	2
Too Much Development	1
No Answer	10

## City Government Performance Ratings Remain Positive



Question 9: Three ways that people often measure how well an organization is running are effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Effectiveness means accomplishing what you are supposed to accomplish. Thinking about the City of Auburn, how effective would you say city government is? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is... Very Effective, Mostly Effective, Mostly Ineffective, Very Ineffective?

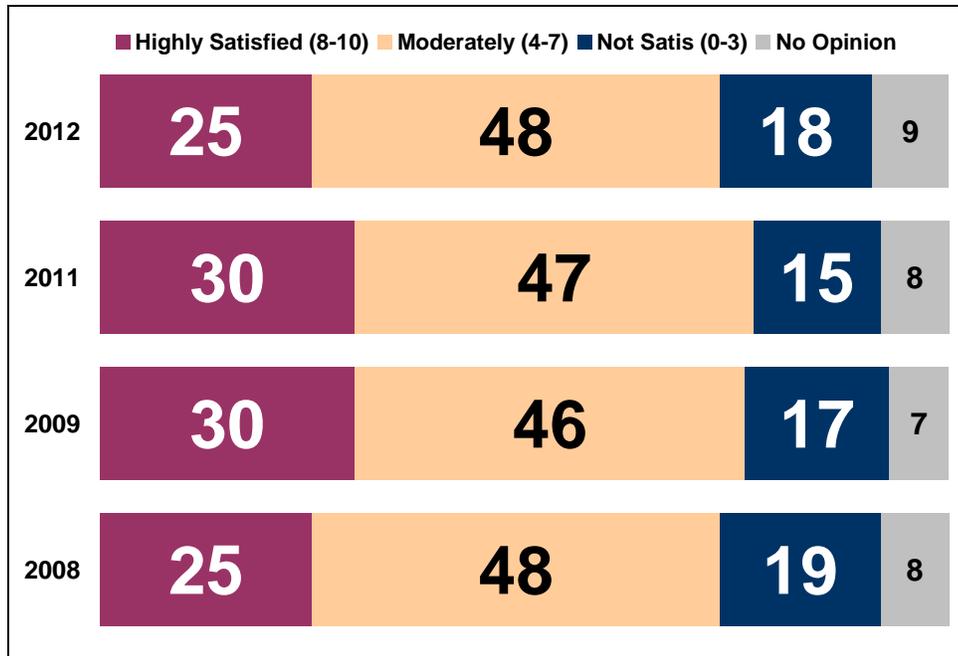
Q10: How efficient would you say the City of Auburn government is? That is, does it deliver valuable services at reasonable cost? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is... Very Efficient, Mostly Efficient, Mostly Inefficient, Very Inefficient?

Q11: How accountable would you say the City of Auburn government is? That is, does it answer to the public for its action? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is... Very Accountable, Somewhat Accountable, Not Very Accountable, Not at all Accountable?

### Younger and male residents rate government more highly:

- 21% of men said city government "very" accountable, vs. 11% of women
- 18% of those under 45 said city government "very" or "somewhat" ineffective, vs. 30% of those over 45

## Satisfaction with City Taxes Retreats to 2008 Levels After Slight Improvement



Question 21: The average house in Auburn is assessed at \$300,000. The owner of that average house would pay \$3,700 in total property taxes, of which the City would receive around \$434 per year. Thinking about your situation and the value of all the City services that Auburn provides how satisfied are you with the level of city taxes? Use the same scale where 10 is "highly satisfied" and 0 is "not at all satisfied?"

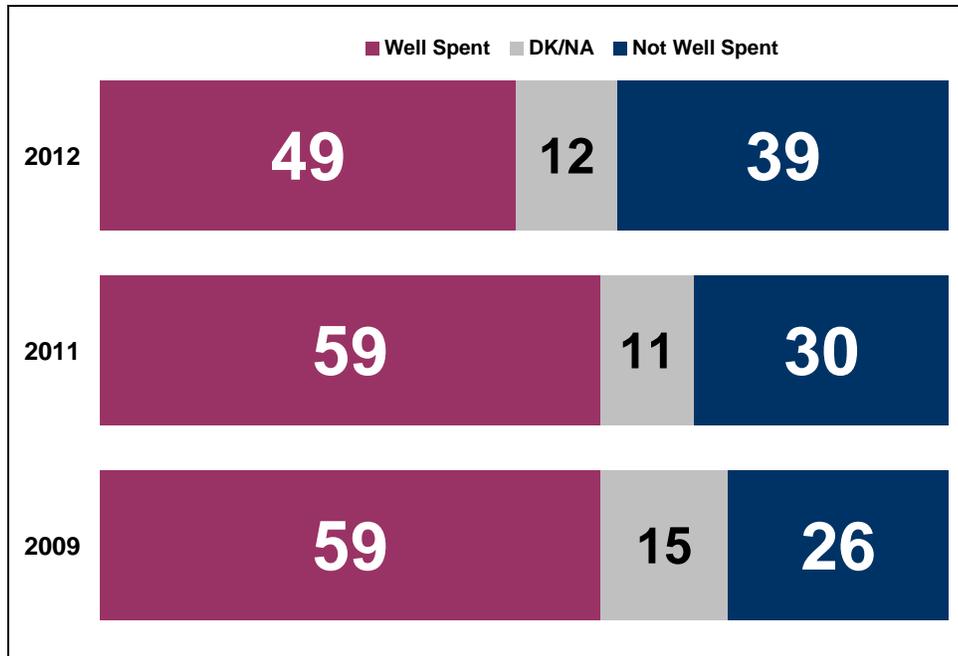
### ◆ Satisfaction differs by income:

- 33% of those making over \$100k were "highly" satisfied (vs. 23% of all others), but 26% of those making between \$50-75k had a low level of satisfaction (vs. 16% of all others)

### Property owners had markedly higher satisfaction:

- 30% said they were "highly" satisfied with taxes, vs. 17% of those who rent.

## Fewer than Half Think Tax Revenue Well Spent



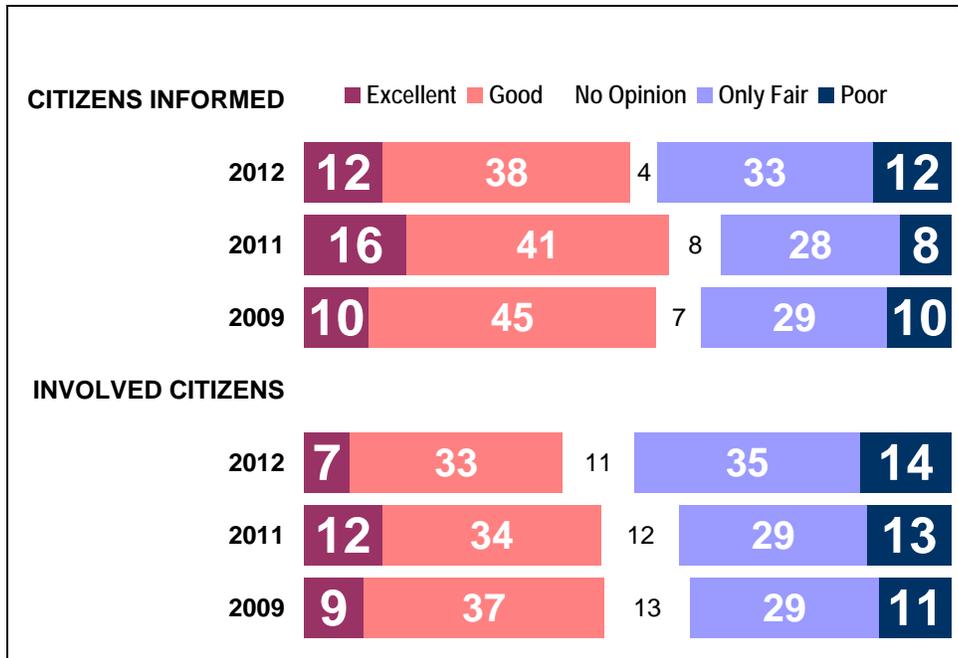
Question 36: Thinking now about all the things we have talked about, as a citizen of Auburn, do you think that your tax dollars are being well spent here? Or not?

### High support among young (62% of under-35s think tax money well spent)

#### Most likely to reply that taxes are not well spent:

- High-income (50% of those making over \$100k, vs. 37% of others)
- Long-term residents (48% of those living in Auburn over 20 years, vs. 36% of others)
- Plateau (53%) and West (46%) residents

## Bare Majority for Keeping Citizens Informed; Decreased Positives for Keeping Them Involved



Question 25: In terms of keeping citizens informed about what is happening in city government -- How good a job do you think the City of Auburn does at that? Would you say...?

Question 27: How would you rate the city's performance in providing residents the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect city government? How good a job do you think the City of Auburn does at that? Would you say...

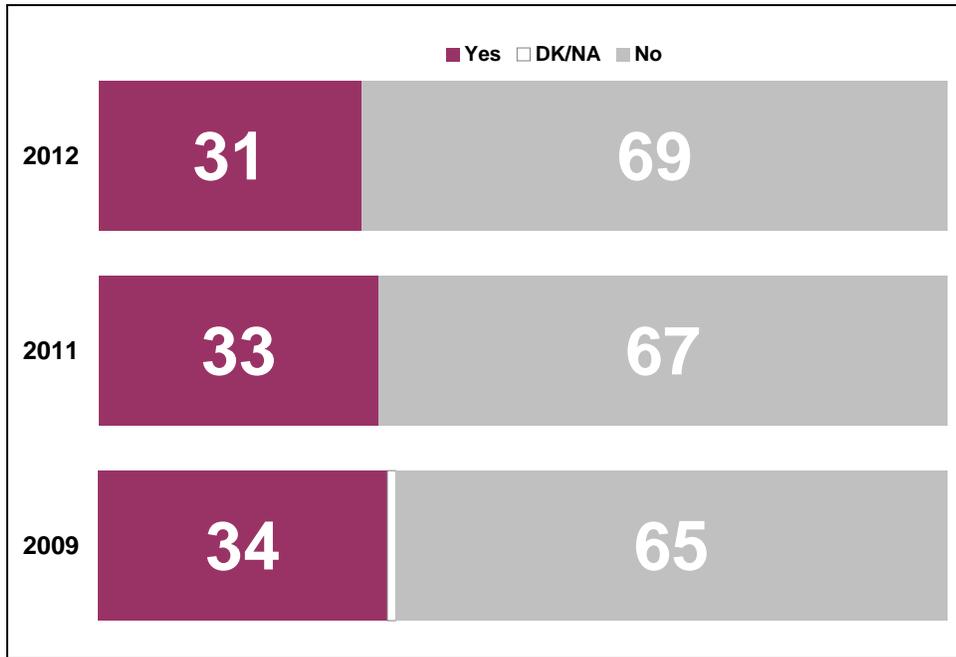
### Respondents were consistent across questions:

- 66% assessed both qualities either positively (31%) or negatively (35%)
- 14% said the city kept residents "informed" well but "involved" poorly
- 7% said the city was good at involving citizens, but bad at keeping them informed

### Most consistently negative were middle-aged, high-income, long-term residents

- 42% of those 45-64, vs. 32% of those under 45
- 46% of those making over \$100k, vs. 34% of others
- 41% of those who lived in Auburn 20 years or more, vs. 32% of others

## Slightly Fewer Contacted City



Question 17: During the past 12 months, have you contacted any City Official or City Department to seek service or information, or to make a compliment or complaint?

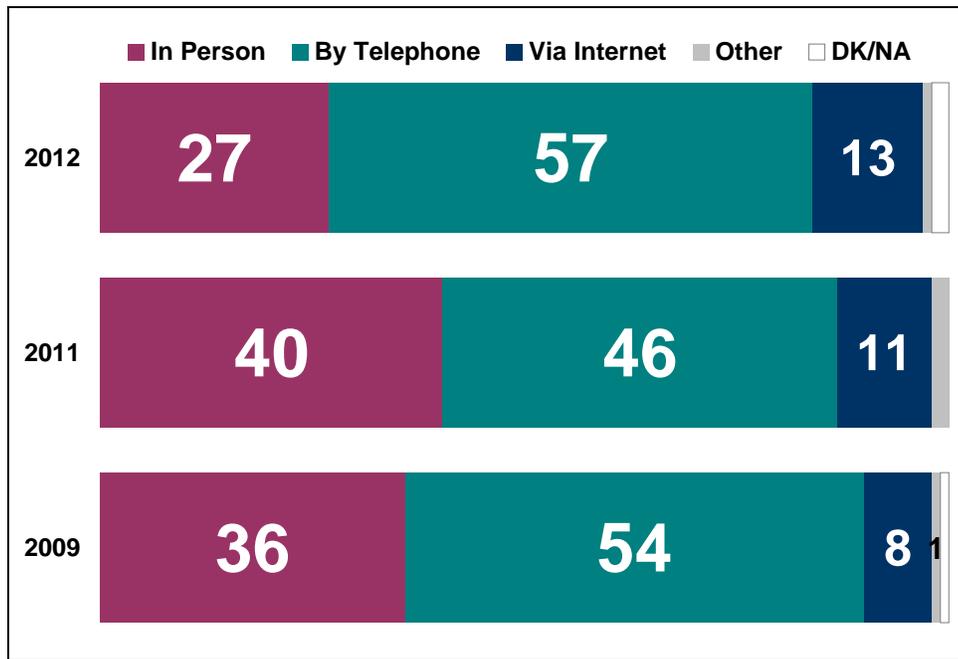
### Higher-income residents more likely to have contact:

- 25% of those making less than \$50k had contact, vs.
- 39% of those making over \$100k.

### More time in Auburn resulted in less contact:

- 76% of 0-5 year residents had no contact, vs.  
71% of 6-10 year residents, and  
66% of those who lived in Auburn more than 10 years.

## In-Person Contact With City Drops Sharply



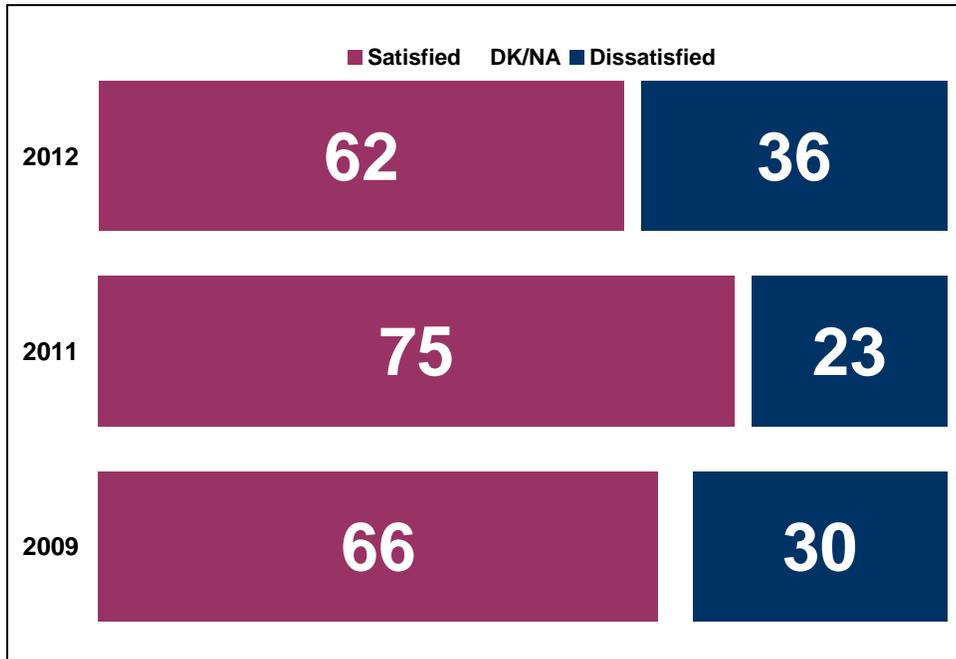
Question 18: The last time you contacted a city official, was your most recent contact...

Question 19: What department did you contact?

ASKED OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAID "YES" IN Q17, N=155

Police Department	30
Utilities / Water Dept.	17
Mayor's Office	12
Parks & Recreation	8
Planning	5
City Council	4
Department of Sanitation	4
Administrative Services	3
Road Department	3
Permit Department	2
City Hall	2
Fire Department	2
Justice System/Courts	1
Other	6
Don't Know	3

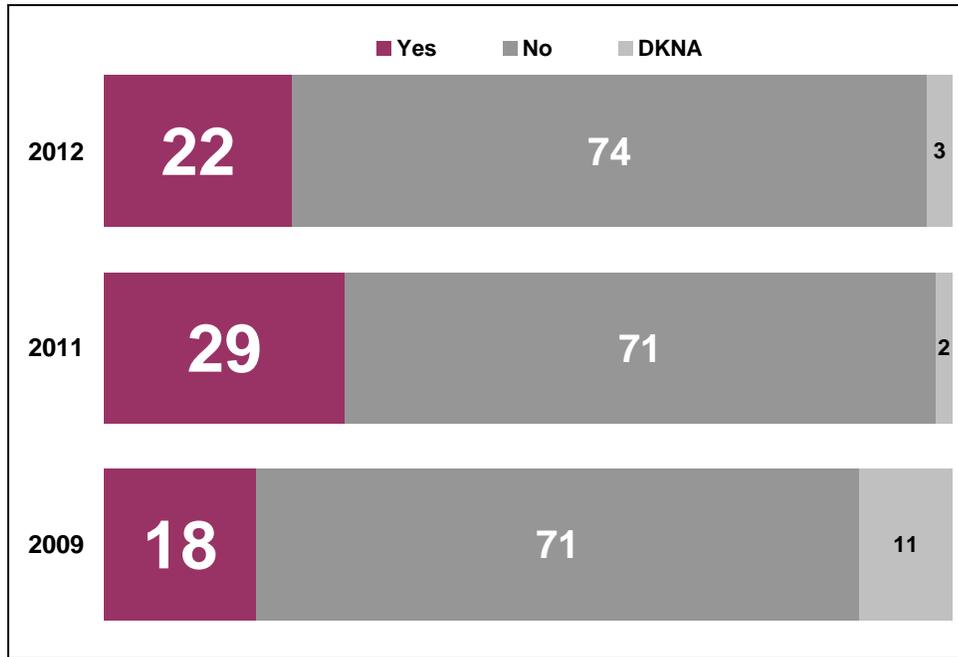
## Decreased Satisfaction with City Contacts



Question 20: Were you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the response you got? ASKED OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAID "YES" IN Q19, N=165.

**The number of contacts per department was usually too low to report out "satisfaction percentages" for all departments.**

## Decreased Use of City E-mail List



Question 26 Are you on a city sponsored email list of updates?

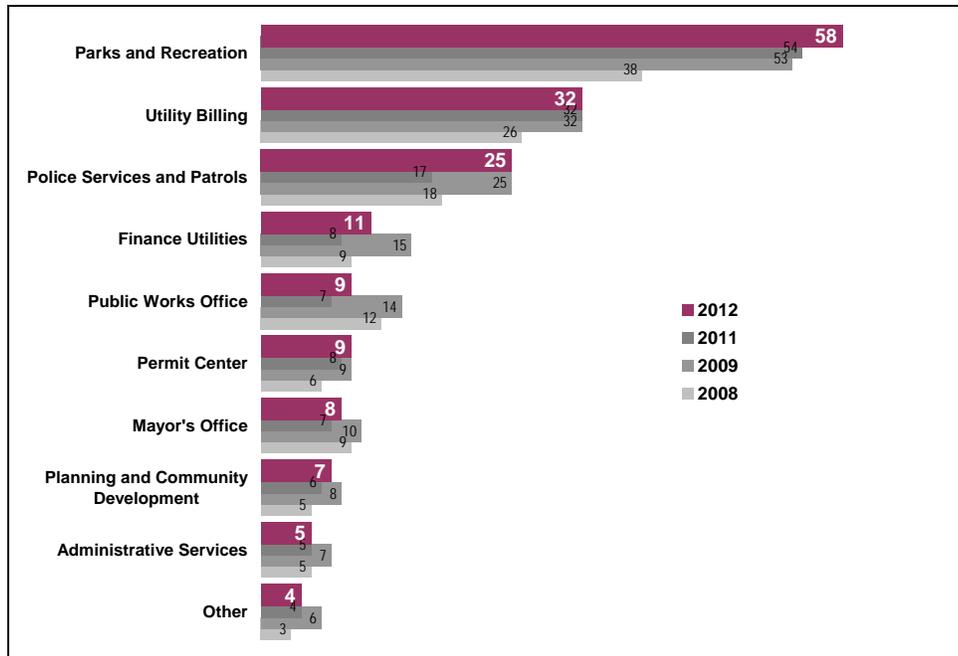
**Respondents with incomes of \$50,000+ were most likely to be on a city-sponsored email list:**

- 29% were, compared to
- 16% with incomes under \$50,000.

**Men, homeowners, and longtime residents also more likely**

- 26% of men were (vs. 19% of women)
- 26% of homeowners were (vs. 16% of renters)
- 25% of those who had lived in Auburn 6 or more years were (vs. 10% of 0-5 year residents)

## Increased Service Usage In General, Especially for Police

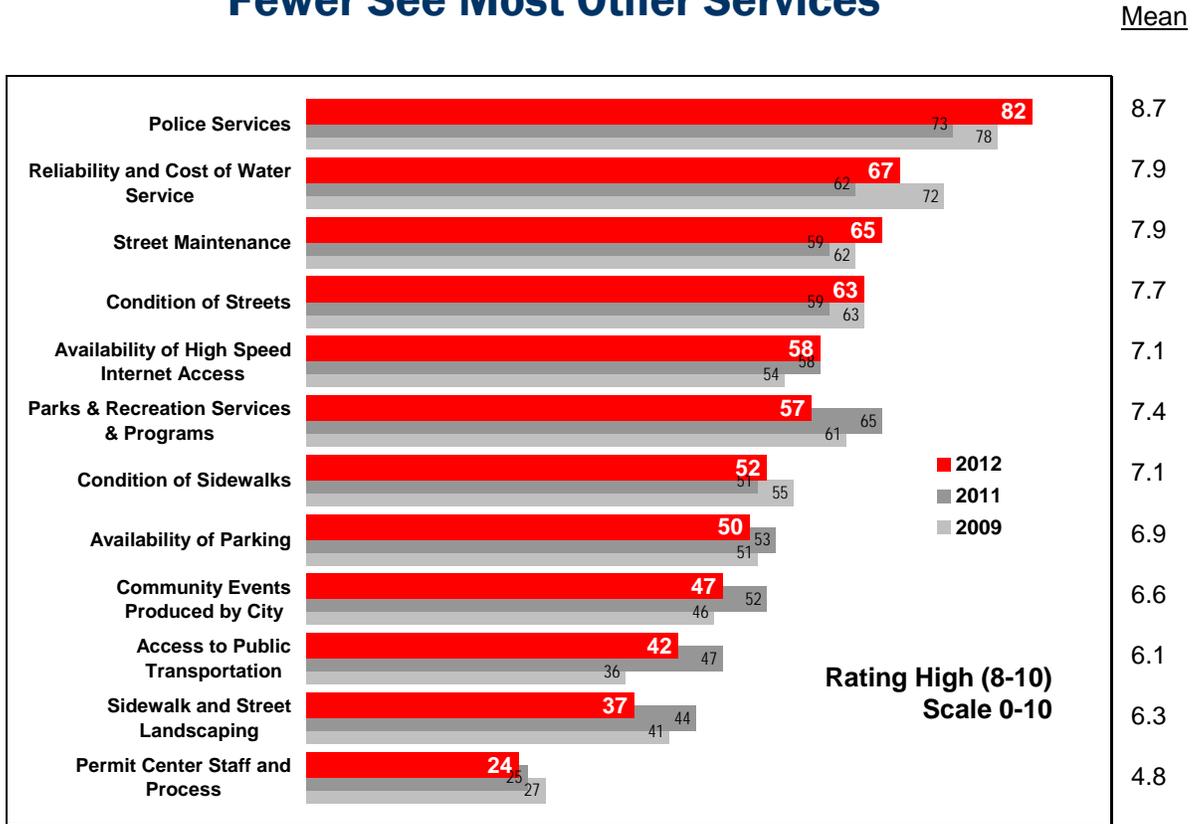


Question 13: Which of the following City departments, – if any have you used in the last 12 months?

### Greater Parks & Recreation usage among certain groups:

- 72% of 18-34 year olds (v. 44% of 65+)
- 69% of those making over \$75k (v. 56% of those making under \$35k)
- 69% of couples with children (v. 52% of non-couples, with or without children)
- 66% of South residents and 64% of those in Lakeland (v. 49% in North Auburn and 56% in Lea Hill)

## More See Police Services As Highly Important, Fewer See Most Other Services

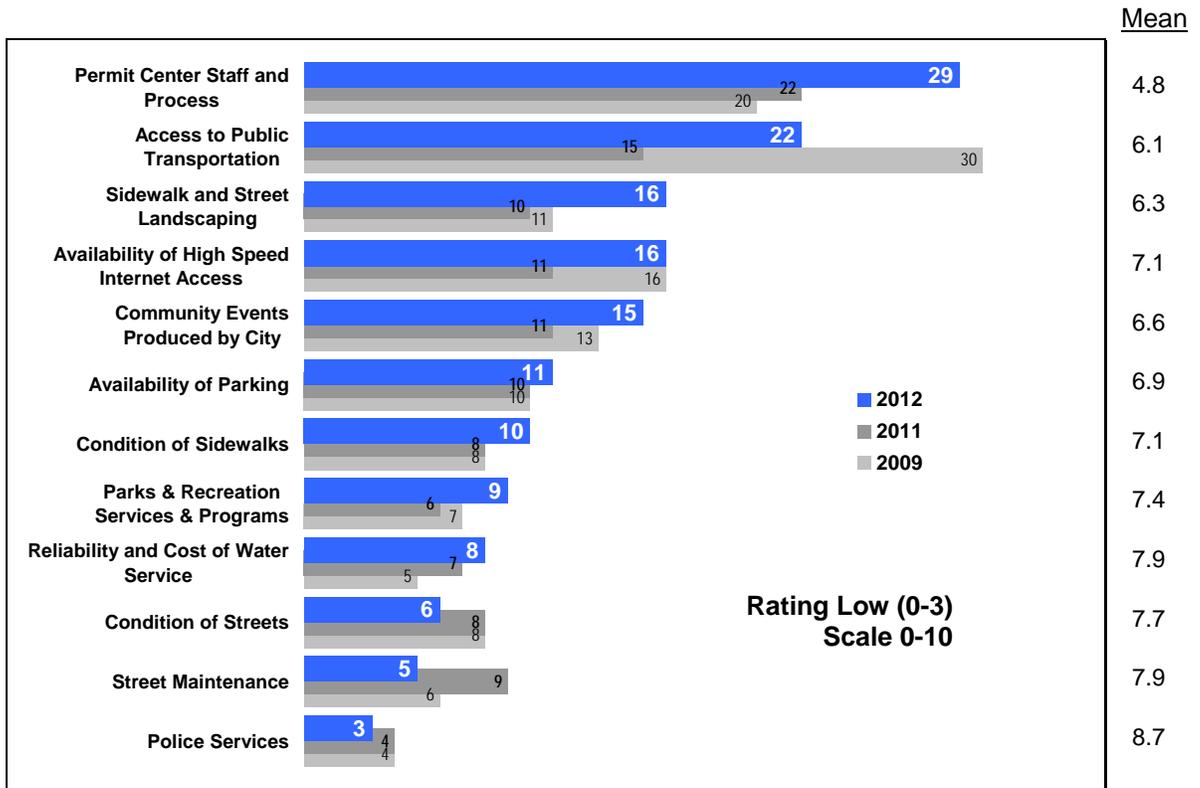


Question 14: Next I am going to read a list of services and facilities here in Auburn. As I read each one, tell me how important that is to you and your household. We will use a scale of zero to ten, where zero means it is Not something that is important to you and 10 means it is Very Important to you or your household. The first one is...?

### Residents most likely to term each “important” (8-10) included:

- Public Transportation – single parents (62%)
- Condition of Streets – residents of West (75%) and Lakeland (72%)
- Condition of Sidewalks – ages 18-34 (63%), South residents (61%)
- Availability of parking – families making \$75-99k (59%)
- Street Maintenance – ages 18-44 (74%), West residents (75%)
- Sidewalk and Street Landscaping – 18-34 year olds (56%)
- High-speed Internet Access – Lakeland residents (71%), those under 45 (69%), those making over \$100k (69%)
- Police Services - West residents (88%), 35-44 year olds (92%)
- Reliability/Cost of Water – \$75-99k earners (80%)
- Parks and Recreation Services/Programs – parents (62%), Lakeland (68%) & Plateau (65%) residents, those under 45 (65%)

## “Low Importance” Ratings

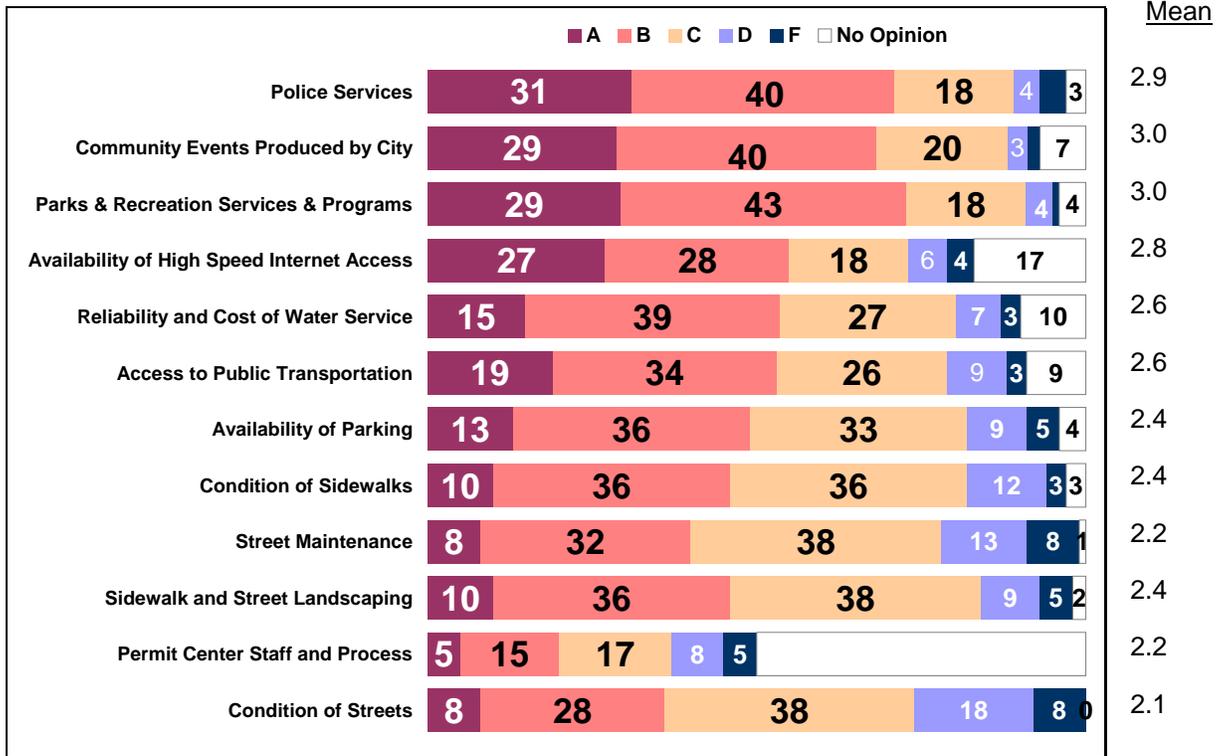


Question 14: Next I am going to read a list of services and facilities here in Auburn. As I read each one, tell my how important that is to you and your household. We will use a scale of zero to ten, where zero means it is Not something that is important to you and 10 means it is Very Important to you or your household. The first one is...?

### More likely to term rate services as “low” importance (0-3) were:

- High-speed Internet Access – single people (22%), 20+ year residents (23%)
- Condition of Sidewalks– 45-64 year olds (14%)
- The Condition of Streets – those making less than \$35k (13%)
- Access to Public Transportation – those over 65 (32%)
- Parks and Recreation – those over 65 (16%)

## Police Services, Community Events Graded Highly



Question 16: I am going to read through that list again, this time; I would like you to tell me how well you think the city is doing in that area. As I read each service, I'd like you to give it a letter grade, like they give in school. A for Excellent, B for Good, C for Satisfactory, D for Unsatisfactory, F for Failing.

**There were the most "A's" for access to public transportation from Plateau residents (23%) and those under 35 (25%).**

**Fewest "A's" for High-Speed Internet Access from those making less than \$35k (16%), most from those making \$35-50k (37%)**

**Police services receive most "A's" from new (<1 year) residents (52%)**

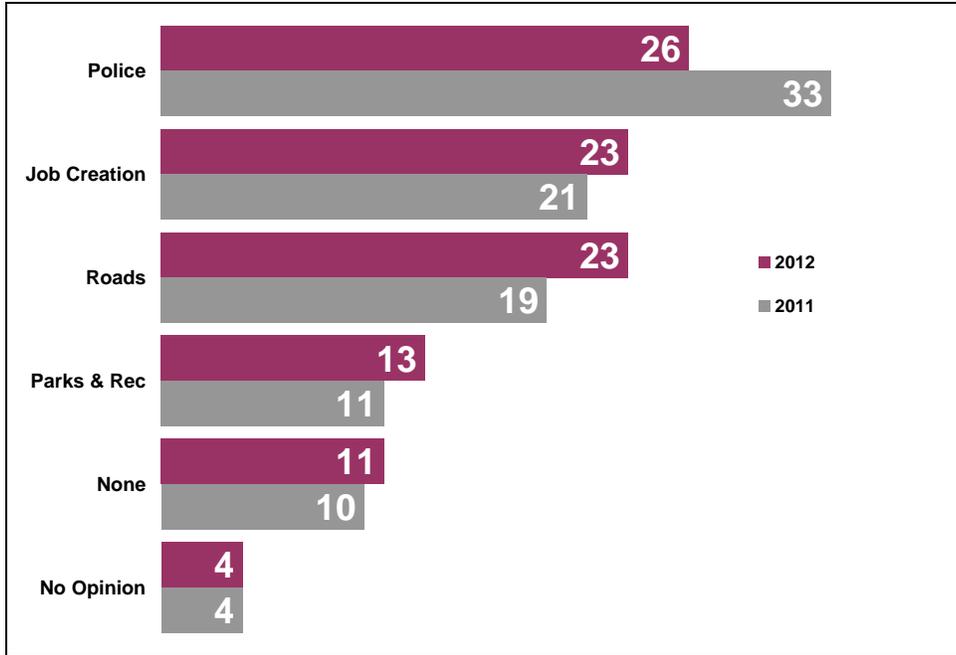
**The most Parking "A's" came from Lea Hill (31%) and the fewest from West (13%).**

**Younger residents (18-34 year olds) give most "A's" to Parks & Rec (36%), Community Events (41%)**

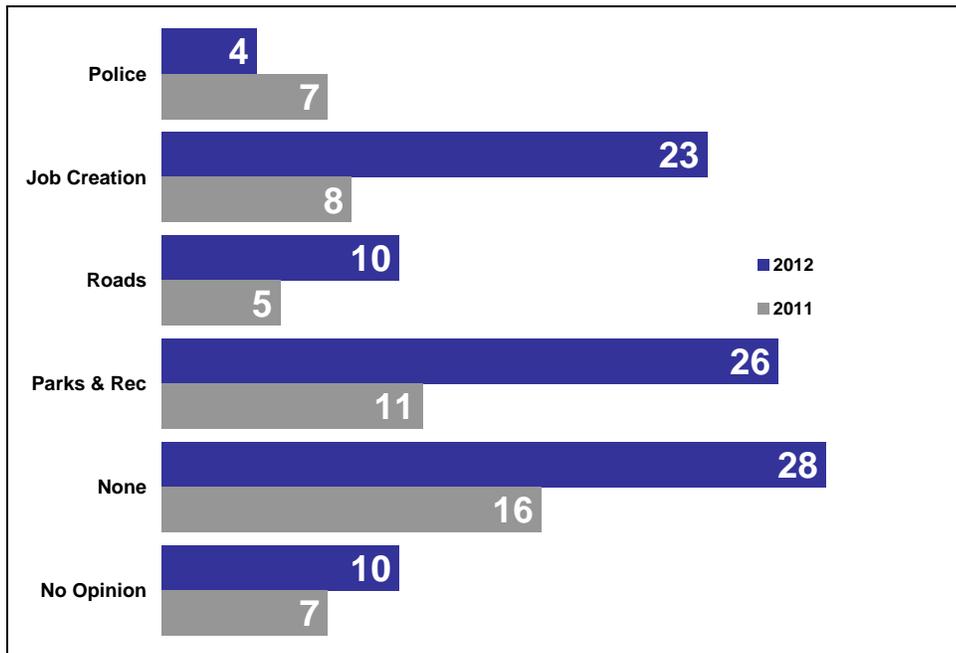
**Parks & Recreational Services grades varied by neighborhood:**

- 37% gave it an "A" in South and 39% in Lakeland, vs. 22% in Lea Hill and 21% in Plateau.

## Taxes OK For Police, Jobs, Roads; Willingness To Cut Parks

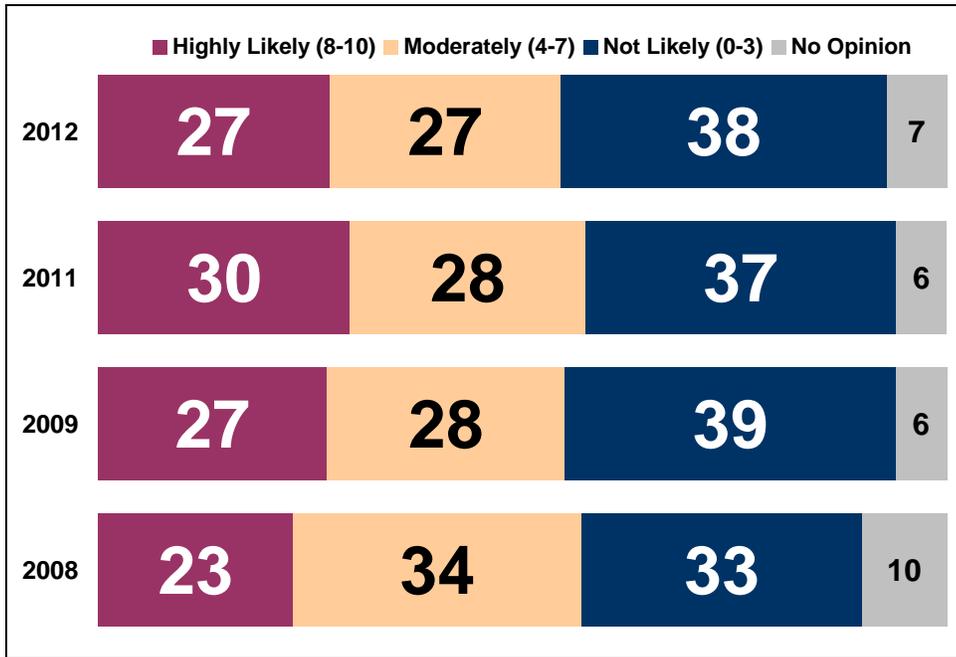


Question 23: If there needed to be a property tax increase to maintain the current level of service in the following areas, which one of the following city services would you be most likely to support?



Question 24: If you could reduce your property taxes by cutting back service in one of the following areas, which one of the following services would you be most likely to cut back?

## Support for Street Repairs Recedes



Question 22: How likely would you be to approve paying up to an extra \$10 a month, or \$120 a year, in property taxes to repair major arterial streets including Auburn Way, A Street, M Street, I Street, and others? Use a 0-10 scale, where 10 is "highly likely" and 0 is "not at all likely?"

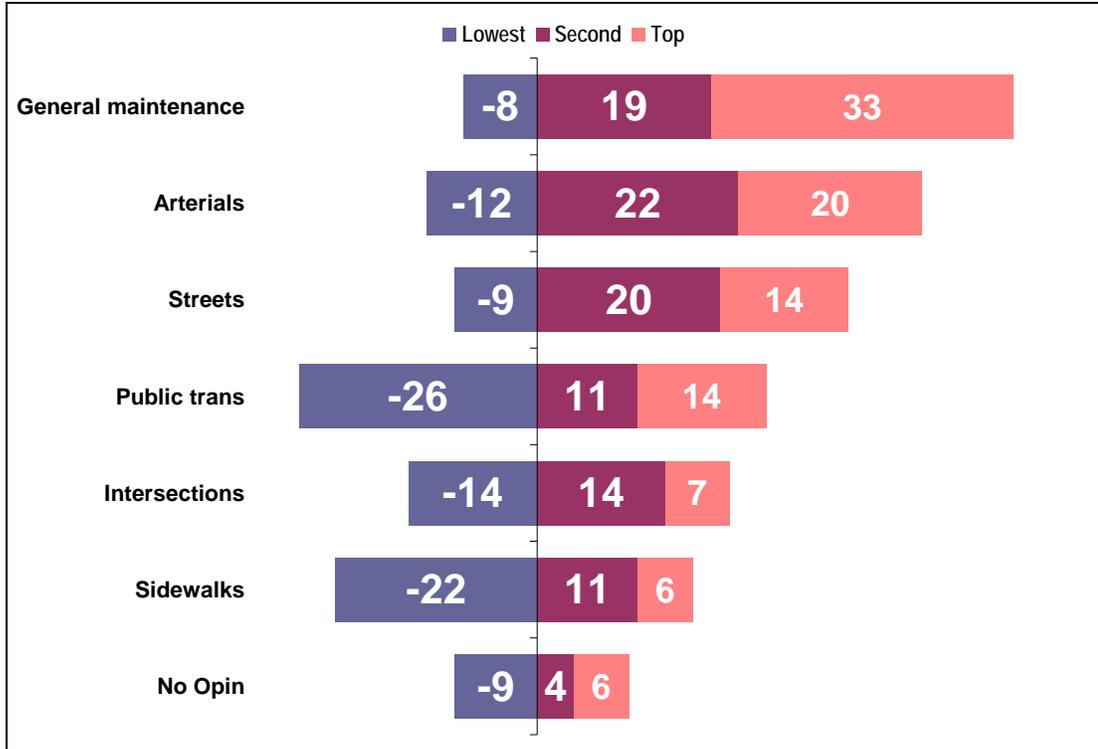
### Most likely to give be "highly likely" to support were:

- Those aged 35-44 (39%, vs. 21% of those under 35)
- People making over \$100k (41%, compared to 23% for those making less than \$35k)
- Plateau residents (38%)

### Couples without children and single parents most likely to express low levels of support:

- 46% did, vs. 32% of all others.

## Public Transportation, Sidewalks Lowest Priorities; Maintenance & Arterials Highest



Question 30: Let's talk about transportation issues in Auburn. Which of the following should be the Top Priority for transportation in Auburn?

:What would you say is the Next Highest priority?

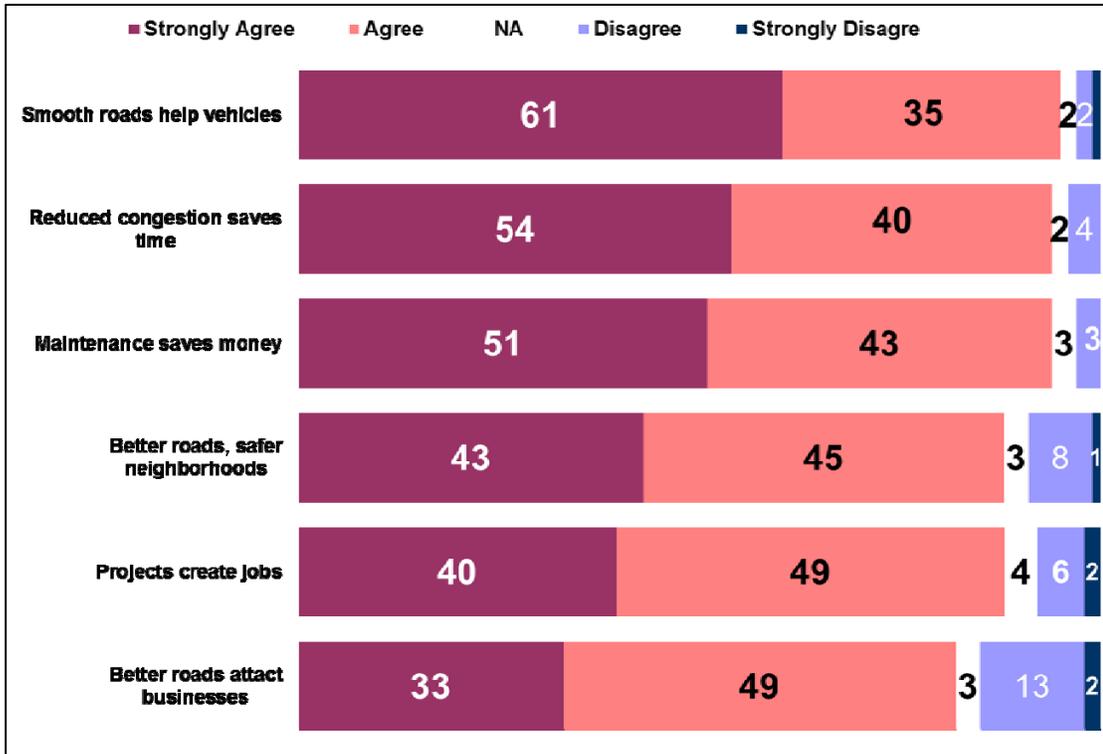
And which of these is the Lowest Priority, in your opinion?

### Most likely to pick public transportation as highest priority:

- Senior citizens (20% of those over 65)
- Low-income households (22% of those making less than \$35k)
- Single people (20% vs. 11% of couples)

**These groups were also most likely to pick maintenance as lowest priority.**

## Personal Benefit Strongest Argument For Transportation Improvements



Question 31: I am going to read you some statements about transportation in Auburn. As I read each one, tell me whether you Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree or Disagree Strongly with each statement. The first one is?

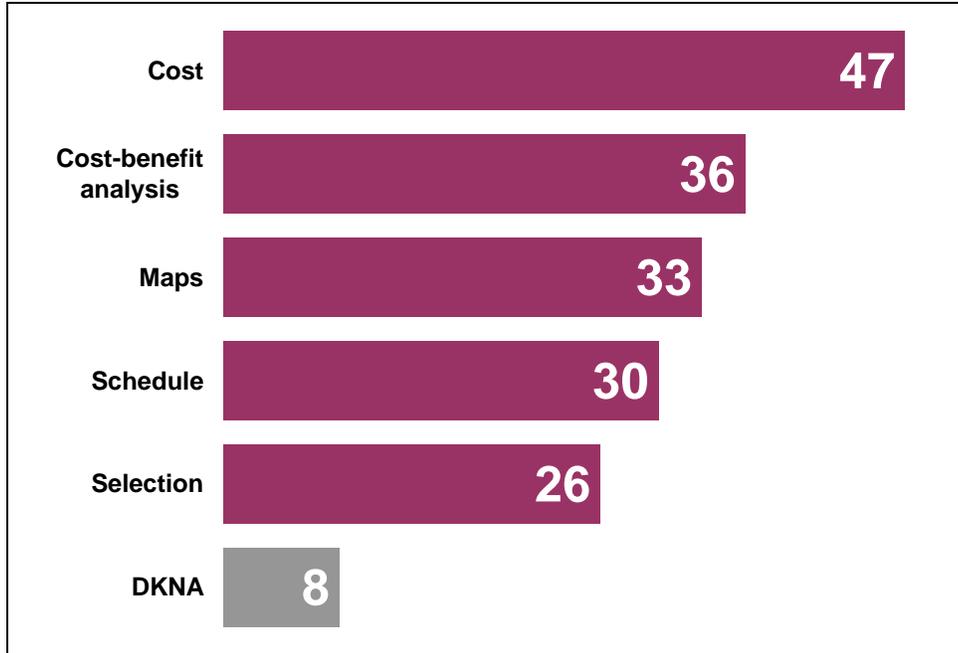
- Better roads and sidewalks make for safer neighborhoods and community
- Reduced traffic congestion saves everyone time and hassle
- Smooth roads and fewer potholes saves wear and tear on vehicles
- It saves money in the long run to fix roads before they fail
- Roads projects create immediate jobs in the construction industry
- Better roads will help attract businesses and jobs to Auburn

**Arguments stressing the personal benefit of transportation improvements (reducing wear on vehicles, saving time) received the strongest agreement.**

**Arguments emphasizing community benefits received the weakest agreement.**

**All arguments were agreed with by at least 8 in 10.**

## Cost More Important Than Plans For Transportation Projects



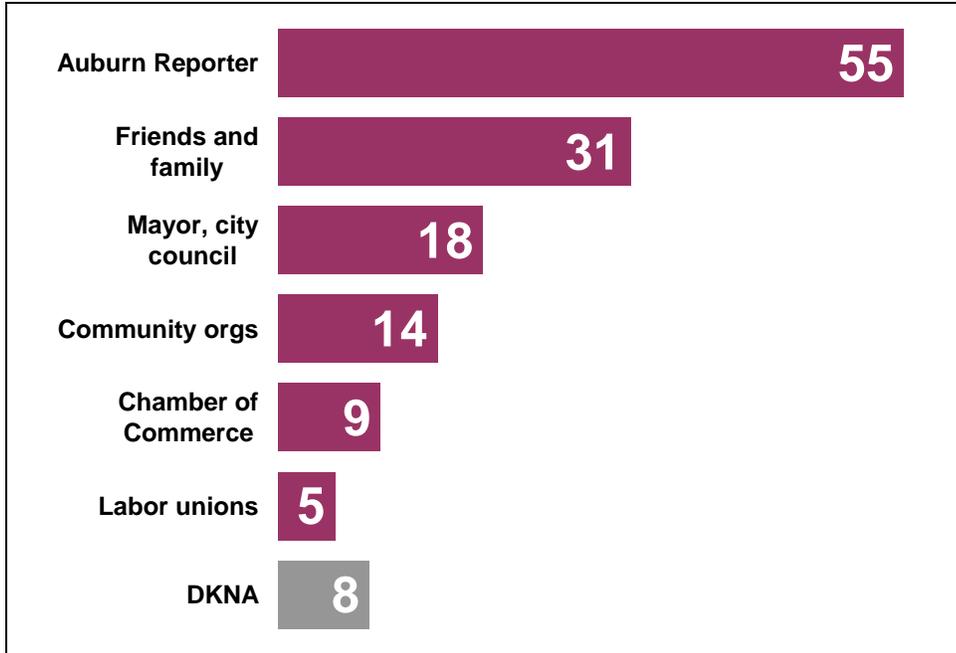
Question 32 What types of information would be most useful to you in deciding whether to support a specific transportation project?

- Information on how much the projects will cost
- A cost-benefit analysis on street improvements
- Maps of where the project will occur
- Information on the schedule of the projects to be completed
- Information about how the project was selected

### Particularly interested in cost were:

- Lakeland residents (54%)
- Middle-aged (52% of those 45-54)
- Middle-income earners (53% of those making \$50-75k)

## Reporter Most Common Source of Information About Transportation Projects



Question 33: When it comes to transportation projects in Auburn, which of the following organizations or sources of information are you most likely to rely on for accurate and reliable information?

- The Auburn Reporter
- Friends and family
- The mayor and city council
- Community organizations like service clubs, the PTA and so on
- The Auburn Chamber of Commerce
- Local labor unions

### Most turn to paper, but some use other sources highly as well:

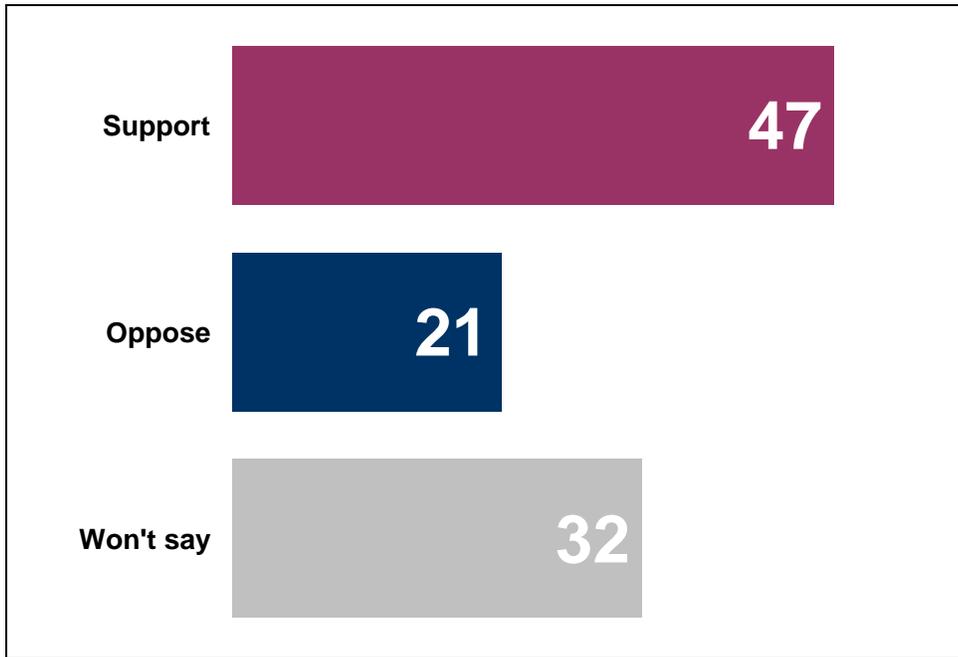
- Those making over \$100k rely on mayor and city council (32%), friends and family (41%)
- Under-35s use community orgs (23%), friends & family (39%)

**New residents (less than a year) rely on friends and family (53%) more than paper (40%)**

### Most rely on only one information source:

- 65% used one source
- 18% rely on two
- 9% rely on more than two

## Respondents Reluctant to Discuss Ballot Measure

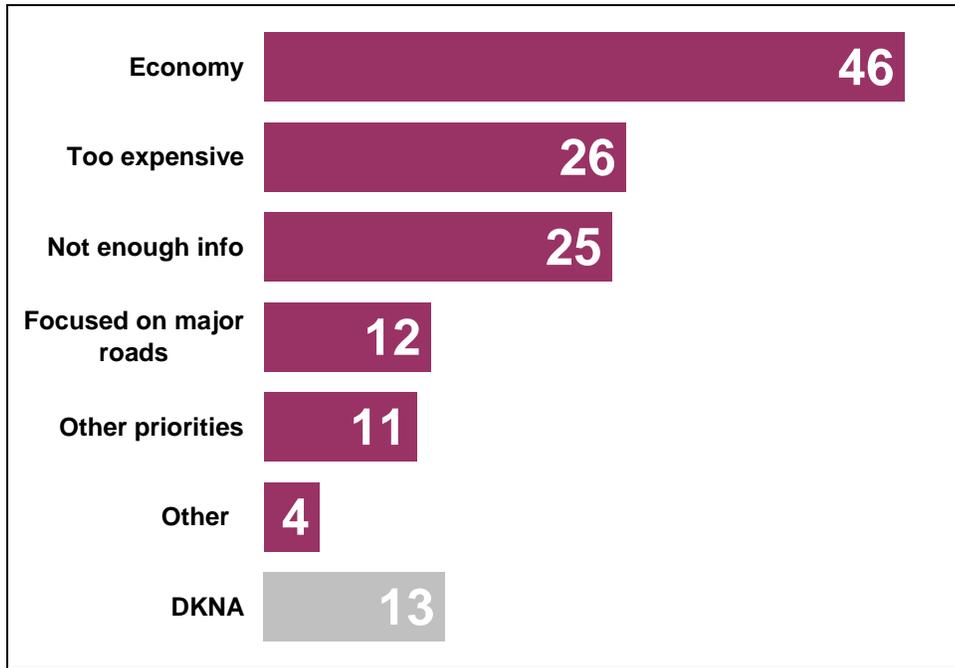


Question 34: Last April, there was a ballot measure to fund transportation improvements in the City of Auburn. Did you support or oppose that measure?

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## Reasons for Failure



Question 35 As you know, that transportation measure failed to pass. In your opinion, which of the following reasons contributed to the measure not passing?

- The economy is just too bad right now to raise taxes
- The proposal was too expensive
- People did not get enough information about the proposal
- Too focused on major roads – not enough on local streets
- There are other things that need money ahead of roads and streets

**Those who opposed levy more likely than supporters to say:**

- "Expensive" (38%, vs. 24% of supporters)
- "Focus on arterials" (18%, vs. 13% of supporters)

**Those who opposed levy less likely to say:**

- "Economy" (43%, vs. 53% of supporters)
- "Not enough info" (17%, vs. 28% of supporters)

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# APPENDIX

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## TOPLINE DATA

This summary presents response frequency distributions for the survey of Auburn residents on behalf of the City of Auburn.

Telephone interviews were completed with 500 Auburn heads of household between August 6-12, 2012. The overall margin of sampling error is  $\pm 4.5\%$ . That means, in theory, there is a 95% probability that the results of this survey are within  $\pm 4.5\%$  of the results that would have been obtained by interviewing all Auburn heads of household.

- The data are presented here in the same order the questions were asked in the interview.
- The figures in **bold type** are **percentages** of respondents who gave each answer.
- The data have been statistically weighted to bring the proportions of renters into closer approximation of their proportion of the population.
- Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

NEIGHBORHOOD:	AUBURN NORTH... <b>28</b>	DOWNTOWN... <b>3</b>
	AUBURN SOUTH.. <b>21</b>	LAKELAND... <b>13</b>
	AUBURN SOUTH EAST.. <b>1</b>	LEA HILL... <b>19</b>
	WEST HILL ... <b>7</b>	PLATEAU... <b>8</b>
	SEX: MALE... <b>48</b> FEMALE... <b>52</b>	

**1.** Do you live within City limits of Auburn? Yes – **100**

**2.** How long have you lived in the City of Auburn?

0-1 years... <b>5</b>
2-5 years... <b>15</b>
6-10 years... <b>22</b>
11 to 20 years... <b>27</b>
More than 20 years... <b>31</b>

**3.** Overall, how would you rate the quality of life in Auburn? Please give a rating on a scale of zero to 10, where 10 means you think the city has an “excellent” quality of life, a “0” means it has a “poor” quality of life. A rating of 5 is in the middle.

POOR = **2...0...1...2...4...19...9...20...24...7...10** = EXCELLENT [ 1 = DK/NA]

**4.** What do you like most about living in Auburn? [SEE BELOW]

**5.** What would you say are some problems or issues that concern you about living in Auburn? [SEE BELOW]

**6.** I'd like you to rate the quality of life in Auburn in several key areas. For each area I mention, please give a rating on the 0-10 scale, where 0 means "poor" and 10 means "excellent."

ROTATE	<POOR	EXCELLENT>	DK
1. Crime and Safety.....	4	2 4 5 9 22 11 14 16 8 5	1
2. Recreational & Cultural Opps...	3	0 1 3 4 17 14 19 20 9 7	2
3. The Natural Environment .....	1	0 2 2 2 13 8 22 23 12 11	2
4. Job & Economic Opps .....	7	2 4 8 9 23 8 13 8 1 4	15
5. Transportation.....	4	1 3 6 6 22 7 13 16 7 7	7

**7.** Let's talk about the City Government. First, in general, how much attention would you say you pay to Auburn City government? Would you say you pay...?

A Lot of Attention...**20**  
 Some...**39**  
 Not Very Much...**26**  
 Almost No Attention ...**14**  
 DK/NA...**0**

**8.** In your opinion, is the Auburn City government focused on the right things? Or does it spend too much time on things it should not be doing?

RIGHT THINGS...**35**  
 TOO MUCH TIME ON WRONG THINGS...**41**  
 DK/NA...**24**

**8.1 IF WRONG THINGS:** What would you say is an example of the city focusing on the wrong things?

[SEE BELOW]

**8.2 IF RIGHT THINGS:** What would you say is an example of the city focusing on the right things?

[SEE BELOW]

**9.** Three ways that people often measure how well an organization is running are effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Effectiveness means accomplishing what you are supposed to accomplish. Thinking about the City of Auburn, how effective would you say city government is? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is?

Very Effective...**10**  
 Mostly Effective...**54**  
 Mostly Ineffective...**19**  
Very Ineffective...8  
 DK/NA...**9**

**10.** How efficient would you say the City of Auburn government is? That is, does it deliver valuable services at reasonable cost? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is...?

Very Efficient...**10**  
 Mostly Efficient...**52**  
 Mostly Inefficient...**21**  
Very Inefficient...6  
 DK/NA...**11**

**11.** How accountable would you say the City of Auburn government is? That is, does it answer to the public for its action? Compared to other cities or other levels of government, do you think that the City of Auburn is...?

Very Accountable...**16**  
 Somewhat Accountable...**48**  
 Not Very Accountable...**20**  
Not At All Accountable...6  
 DK/NA...**11**

**12.** I am going to read a series of statements about life in Auburn. For each one, tell me whether you Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree or Disagree Strongly. The first one is...

	STRONGLY <u>AGREE</u>	<u>AGREE</u>	<u>DISAG</u>	STRONGLY <u>DISAG</u>	<u>NA</u>
1. Auburn in a good place for families .....	<b>37</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
2. I feel safe in my neighborhood.....	<b>37</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
3. I feel safe in Auburn.....	<b>27</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>

**13.** Which of the following City departments, – if any have you used in the last 12 months?

**READ: CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY**

- Parks, Arts & Recreation (including community centers)...**58**
- Utility billing (such as to discuss a water or sewer bill)...**32**
- Police services and patrols...**25**
- Finance Utilities...**11**
- Public Works office...**9**
- Permit Center...**9**
- Mayor’s Office...**8**
- Planning and Community Development...**7**
- Administrative services (such as legal services, finance, human resources or other)...**5**
- < Other...**4**
- [DK/NA]...**12**

**14.** Next I am going to read a list of services and facilities here in Auburn. As I read each one, tell my how important that is to you and your household. We will use a scale of zero to ten, where zero means it is Not something that is important to you and 10 means it is Very Important to you or your household. The first one is...

ROTATE	<NOT	_____	VERY>	DK								
1. Access to public trans.....	11	3	5	3	3	16	6	10	14	8	19	2
2. Condition of streets .....	2	1	2	2	3	10	6	13	19	13	32	0
3. Condition of sidewalks.....	3	1	4	2	3	12	8	15	22	11	20	1
4. Availability of parking.....	5	1	2	2	3	12	9	13	20	11	19	2
5. Street maintenance... ..	1	1	1	2	2	8	7	14	20	12	32	0
6. Sidewalk, street landscaping ..	6	1	4	5	4	17	11	14	17	5	15	1
7. High speed internet access. ..	11	2	1	2	2	9	4	9	15	10	33	4
8. Police services.....	2	0	1	1	1	4	4	5	13	15	54	1
9. Water service.....	4	0	2	2	2	7	4	7	15	12	39	4
10. Parks & Recreation .....	5	1	2	2	2	9	6	16	18	14	26	1
11. Permit center. ....	18	2	6	3	3	14	5	5	10	6	8	19
12. Community events.....	6	3	3	3	5	15	6	12	19	9	19	1

**15.** Is there a service or program that the city does not currently provide, that you believe should be provided. One that you would be willing to pay taxes to support? [What is that service or program?]

[SEE BELOW]

**16.** I am going to read through that list again, this time; I would like you to tell me how well you think the city is doing in that area. As I read each service, I'd like you to give it a letter grade, like they give in school. A for Excellent, B for Good, C for Satisfactory, D for Unsatisfactory, F for Failing.

ROTATE	<u>F</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>DK</u>
1. Access to public transportation.....	3	9	26	34	19	9
2. Condition of streets .....	8	18	38	28	8	0
3. Condition of sidewalks.....	3	12	36	36	10	3
4. Availability of parking.....	5	9	33	36	13	4
5. Street maintenance... ..	8	13	38	32	8	1
6. Sidewalk and street landscaping .....	5	9	38	36	10	2
7. Availability of high speed internet access. ....	4	6	18	28	27	17
8. Police services.....	4	4	18	40	31	3
9. Reliability and cost of water service.....	3	7	27	39	15	10
10. Parks & Recreational services & programs .....	1	4	18	43	29	4
11. The City's permit center staff and process of getting a permit.....	5	8	17	15	5	50
12. Community events produced by the City, such as the Veterans Day parade, Shades of Summer, BRAVO performances, 4th of July and Clean Sweep .....	2	3	20	40	29	7

**17.** During the past 12 months, have you contacted any City Official or City Department to seek service or information, or to make a compliment or complaint?

YES...**31** NO...**69**  
NA...**0**

**18.** [IF YES] The last time you contacted a city official, was your most recent contact...

In Person...**27**  
By Telephone...**57**  
Via The Internet...**13**  
By Some Other Means...**1**  
[DK/NA]...**2**

**19.** What department did you contact? [see below]

**20.** Were you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the response you got?  
 SATISFIED...**62** DISSATISFIED...**36**  
 [DK/NA]...**2**

**21.** The average house in Auburn is assessed at \$300,000. The owner of that average house would pay \$3,700 in total property taxes, of which the City would receive around \$434 per year. Thinking about your situation and the value of all the City services that Auburn provides how satisfied are you with the level of city taxes? Use the same scale where 10 is “highly satisfied” and 0 is “not at all satisfied.”

NOT AT ALL = **11...1...2...4...6...20...8...14...13...4...8** = HIGHLY [DK/NA = **9**]

**22.** How likely would you be to approve paying up to an extra \$10 a month, or \$120 a year, in property taxes to repair major arterial streets including Auburn Way, A Street, M Street, I Street, and others? Use a 0-10 scale, where 10 is “highly likely” and 0 is “not at all likely”?

NOT AT ALL = **27...3...5...4...2...13...4...9...7...3...17**= HIGHLY [DK/NA = **7**]

**23.** If there needed to be a property tax increase to maintain the current level of service in the following areas, which one of the following city services would you be most likely to support?

Parks and Recreation...**13**  
 Police...**26**  
 Roads...**23**  
Attracting New Businesses...**23**  
 NONE...**11**  
 DK/NA...**4**

**24.** If you could reduce your property taxes by cutting back service in one of the following areas, which one of the following services would you be most likely to cut back?

Parks and Recreation...**26**  
 Police...**4**  
 Roads...**10**  
Attracting New Businesses...**23**  
 NONE...**28**  
 DK/NA...**10**

**25.** In terms of keeping citizens informed about what is happening in city government -- How good a job do you think the City of Auburn does at that? Would you say...?

Excellent...**12** Good...**38**  
 Only Fair...**33** Poor...**12**  
 DK/NA...**4**

**26.** Are you on a city sponsored email list of updates? YES...**22** NO...**74**  
DK/NA...**3**

**27.** How would you rate the city’s performance in providing residents the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect city government? How good a job do you think the City of Auburn does at that? Would you say...?  
Excellent...**7**  
Good...**33**  
Only Fair...**35**  
Poor...**14**  
DK/NA...**11**

**28.** How often have you visited Downtown Auburn in the last 12 months, for any reason?  
TIMES **0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12+ DK/NA**  
**3 2 5 3 4 6 4 2 3 2 8 1 57 0**

**29.** [IF 0, ASK:] What are the main reasons why you haven’t been downtown?  
[SEE BELOW]

**30.** Let’s talk about transportation issues in Auburn. Which of the following should be the Top Priority for transportation in Auburn?

- 33** General maintenance of existing streets and sidewalks
- 20** Improving arterials and major roads
- 14** Improving streets in neighborhoods
- 14** Expanding public transportation
- 7** Improving intersections
- 6** Installing and repairing sidewalks
- 6** DKNA

**30.1** What would you say is the Next Highest priority?

- 22** Improving arterials and major roads
- 20** Improving streets in neighborhoods
- 19** General maintenance of existing streets and sidewalks
- 14** Improving intersections
- 11** Installing and repairing sidewalks
- 11** Expanding public transportation
- 4** DKNA

**30.2** And which of these is the Lowest Priority, in your opinion?

- 26** Expanding public transportation
- 22** Installing and repairing sidewalks
- 14** Improving intersections
- 12** Improving arterials and major roads
- 9** Improving streets in neighborhoods
- 8** General maintenance of existing streets and sidewalks
- 9** DKNA

**31.** I am going to read you some statements about transportation in Auburn. As I read each one, tell me whether you Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree or Disagree Strongly with each statement. The first one is...

	STRONGLY <u>AGREE</u>	<u>AGREE</u>	<u>DISAG</u>	STRONGLY <u>DISAG</u>	<u>NA</u>
1. Better roads and sidewalks make for safer neighborhoods and community.....	43	45	8	1	3
2. Reduced traffic congestion saves everyone time and hassle .....	54	40	4	0	2
3. Smooth roads and fewer potholes saves wear and tear on vehicles .....	61	35	2	1	2
4. It saves money in the long run to fix roads before they fail .....	51	43	3	0	3
5. Roads projects create immediate jobs in the construction industry.....	40	49	6	2	4
6. Better roads will help attract businesses and jobs to Auburn.....	33	49	13	2	3

**32.** What types of information would be most useful to you in deciding whether to support a specific transportation project?

- 47** Information on how much the projects will cost
- 36** A cost-benefit analysis on street improvements
- 33** Maps of where the project will occur
- 30** Information on the schedule of the projects to be completed
- 26** Information about how the project was selected
- 8** DKNA

**33.** When it comes to transportation projects in Auburn, which of the following organizations or sources of information are you most likely to rely on for accurate and reliable information?

- 55** The Auburn Reporter
- 31** Friends and family
- 18** The mayor and city council
- 14** Community organizations like service clubs, the PTA and so on
- 9** The Auburn Chamber of Commerce
- 5** Local labor unions
- 8** DKNA

**34.** Last April, there was a ballot measure to fund transportation improvements in the City of Auburn. Did you support or oppose that measure?

- SUPPORT...**47**
- OPPOSE...**21**
- WON'T SAY...**32**

**35.** As you know, that transportation measure failed to pass. In your opinion, which of the following reasons contributed to the measure not passing?

- 46** The economy is just too bad right now to raise taxes
- 26** The proposal was too expensive
- 25** People did not get enough information about the proposal
- 12** Too focused on major roads – not enough on local streets
- 11** There are other things that need money ahead of roads and streets
- 4** OTHER
- 13** DKNA

**36.** Thinking now about all the things we have talked about, as a citizen of Auburn, do you think that your tax dollars are being well spent here? Or not?

WELL SPENT...**49** NOT...**39**  
DK/NA...**12**

**37.** I have just a few last questions for our statistical analysis. How old are you?

18-34...**12**  
35-44...**11**  
45-54...**24**  
55-64...**22**  
65+...**28**  
NA...**3**

**38.** Which of the following best describes your household:

Couple with children at home...**29**  
Couple with no children at home...**33**  
Single with children at home...**10**  
Single with no children at home...**25**  
NA...**3**

**39.** Do you own or rent the place in which you live?

OWN....**62** RENT.....**36** DK/NA...**2**

**40.** Finally, I am going to list some broad categories. Just stop me when I get to the category that best describes your approximate household income - before taxes - for this year.

ROTATE TOP/BOTTOM  
\$35,000 or less...**21**  
Over \$35,000 to \$50,000...**16**  
Over \$50,000 to \$74,000...**20**  
\$75,000 to \$99,000...**11**  
Over \$100,000...**12**  
NA...**20**

**RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS****4. What do you like most about living in Auburn?**

- 31 Atmosphere
- 17 Location
- 10 Sense Of Community
- 9 Born Here / Family Here
- 8 Amenities / Things to do
- 6 Economy
- 6 Physical Environment
- 5 Public Services
- 5 Size
- 2 Transportation / Traffic
- 1 City government
- 3 Non-Specific
- 9 Other
- 4 DK/NA

**5. What would you say are some problems or issues that concern you about living in Auburn?**

- 30 Traffic, Transportation
- 23 Crime, Safety
- 11 City Government
- 9 Economy
- 9 Growth, Land Use, Zoning
- 7 Lack of Amenities
- 3 Public Services
- 25 Other
- 3 DKNA

**8.1 IF WRONG THINGS: What would you say is an example of the city focusing on the wrong things?**

- 13 Road/street/sidewalk maintenance
- 12 Downtown Revitalization
- 11 Inefficient Government
- 9 Government Spending / Wasteful Spending
- 8 Narrow Streets / Roads
- 7 Transportation / Traffic / Traffic Control
- 7 Economic Development / Lack of Business
- 6 Crime / Public Safety
- 4 Jobs
- 4 Construction / Torn Down Buildings
- 4 More Focus on School / Kids
- 3 High Taxes
- 2 Police Department
- 2 Parking
- 2 Lack of Development Planning
- 2 Keep Up The Parks
- 1 Too Much Development
- 1 Casino Issues
- 7 Other
- 10 DK/NA/REFUSED

**8.2 IF RIGHT THINGS: What would you say is an example of the city focusing on the right things?**

- 23 Roads/ Streets Improvement
- 16 Downtown Revitalization
- 13 Parks & Recreation
- 9 Low Crime Rate / Public Safety
- 7 Economic Development / Attracting Businesses
- 6 Police/Fire/Emergency Services
- 5 Education / Schools / Kids
- 4 Good Communication
- 4 Government / Mayor Did Good Job
- 3 Better Government Spending
- 3 Beautification
- 2 Traffic Issues Solved
- 2 Community Involvement
- 2 Keeping Up With Growth
- 1 Elderly / Senior Issues
- 3 General positive
- 8 Other
- 9 DK/NA/refused

**15. Is there a service or program that the city does not currently provide, that you believe should be provided. One that you would be willing to pay taxes to support?**

- 3 Public transportation/bus service/light rail
- 2 More/better education
- 2 Resources for the homeless
- 1 Youth activities
- 1 More police/fire/emergency services
- 1 Jobs/job resources
- 1 More parks & recreation activities
- 1 Traffic congestion
- 1 Road/street maintenance
- 1 Social services
- 1 Senior programs/services
- 65 No/none/nothing
- 5 Other
- 13 DK/NA/refused

**19. What department did you contact?**

- 30 Police Department
- 17 Utilities / Water Dept. / Public Works
- 12 Mayor's Office
- 8 Parks & Recreation
- 5 Planning
- 4 City Council
- 4 Department of Sanitation
- 3 Administrative Services
- 3 Road Department
- 2 Permit Department
- 2 City Hall
- 2 Fire Department
- 1 Justice System / Courts
- 6 Other
- 3 DK/NA/refused

**29. [IF 0, ASK:] What are the main reasons why you haven't been downtown?**

- 69 No Need / Not Interested / Nothing To Do There
- 15 Housebound / Don't Go Out Much / Disabled
- 5 Safety
- 5 Parking Is Terrible
- 5 Age