

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

**Morro Bay, CA**  
Community Livability Report

2016



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# Contents

About..... 1

Quality of Life in Morro Bay ..... 2

Community Characteristics ..... 3

Governance ..... 5

Participation ..... 7

Special Topics..... 9

Conclusions ..... 14



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# About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Morro Bay. 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).

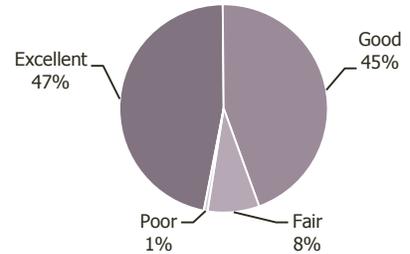
The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 534 residents of the City of Morro Bay. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 4% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Quality of Life in Morro Bay

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Morro Bay as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the national benchmark comparison (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

**Overall Quality of Life**



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.

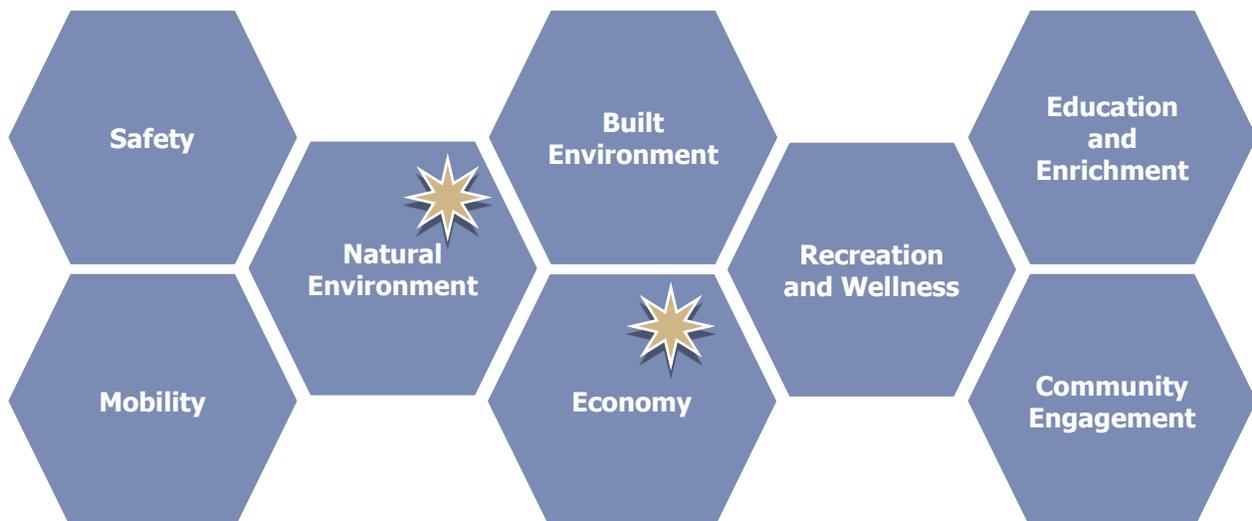
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Natural Environment and Economy as priorities for the Morro Bay community in the coming two years. Ratings for all facets (Safety, Economy, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement) were positive and similar to other communities. 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 Morro Bay’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 Morro Bay, 94% rated the City as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Morro Bay as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation.

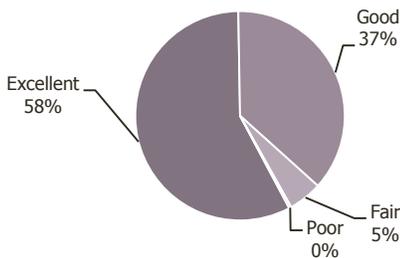
In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Morro Bay as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Morro Bay and its overall appearance. About 4 in 5 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to their neighborhoods as places to live, Morro Bay as a place to raise children and the overall image and appearance of the City; these ratings were similar to ratings seen in other communities. Close to 9 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to Morro Bay as a place to retire, which is higher than the national benchmark comparison.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Ratings within the pillar of Community Characteristics tended to be mixed. At least 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to all aspects of Safety, ratings which were all similar to the benchmark. Within Mobility, at least three-quarters of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall ease of travel in Morro Bay, ease of travel by walking, travel by bicycle and travel by car; all of these ratings were higher than ratings seen in comparison communities. Ratings within the facet of Natural Environment were similarly strong: almost all residents gave favorable ratings to the overall natural environment and the air quality

in Morro Bay, and these ratings were higher than the national benchmarks. Ratings within the facets of Built Environment and Education and Enrichment tended to be somewhat lower. While more than half of participants gave excellent or good ratings to public places where people like to spend time and the overall built environment, less than one-third gave high marks to the availability of affordable quality housing, variety of housing options and the availability of affordable quality child care/preschool; these aspects were rated lower than the benchmarks. Ratings in the facet of Economy varied: more than 9 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to Morro Bay as a place to visit (a rating that was higher than the benchmark), but ratings were lower for the overall economic health of Morro Bay (40% excellent or good), the City

as a place to work (45%), shopping opportunities (31%), cost of living (16%) and employment opportunities (8%), which were all lower than the benchmarks. Within Recreation and Wellness, about 7 in 10 participants gave positive ratings to recreational opportunities and fitness opportunities. However, only about one-quarter of residents gave favorable ratings to the availability of affordable quality health care and preventive health care and only about 1 in 10 were pleased with the availability of affordable quality mental health care; all of these ratings were lower than ratings seen in comparison communities. All aspects of Community Engagement were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to the national benchmarks.

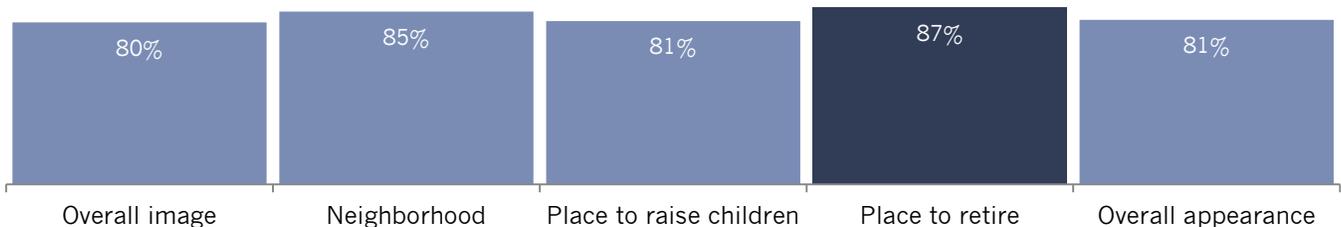
**Place to Live**



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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



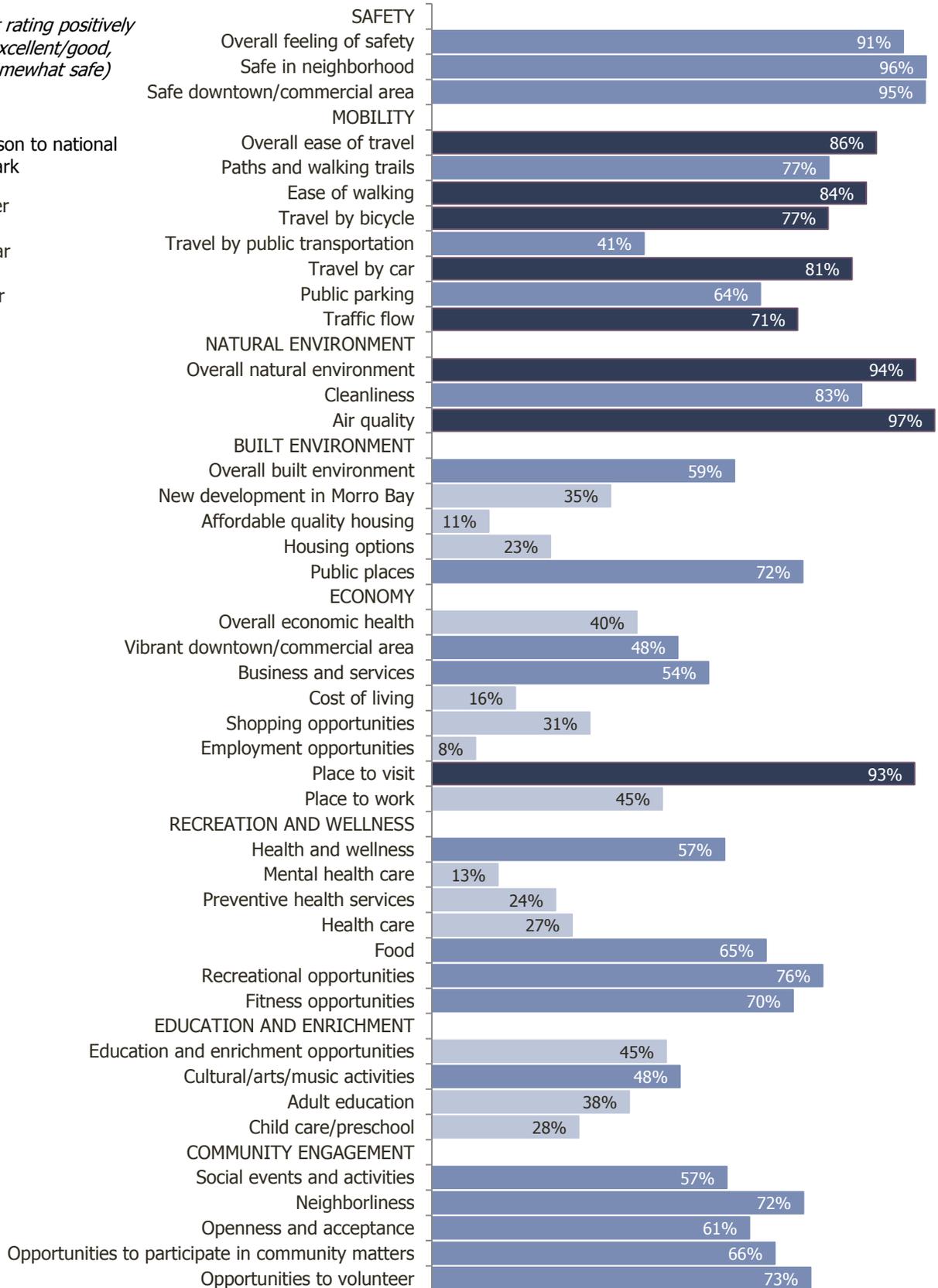
# The National Citizen Survey™

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 Morro Bay meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

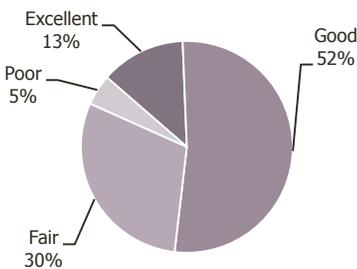
The overall quality of the services provided by Morro Bay as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About 65% of residents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of City services, while about one-third gave positive ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government. Both of these ratings were similar to the national benchmarks.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Morro Bay’s leadership and governance. About 7 in 10 residents gave positive ratings to the customer service provided by City employees. About 4 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction of the City, the job the City does at welcoming citizen involvement, acting in the best interest of Morro Bay, being honest and treating all residents fairly. Ratings for aspects of Morro Bay’s leadership and governance were generally similar to ratings seen in comparison communities; however, ratings for the overall direction of the City, confidence in City government, the job the City does at treating all residents fairly and acting in the best interest of Morro Bay were lower than the national benchmarks.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Morro Bay. Ratings within the pillar of Governance were mostly similar to ratings seen in comparison communities. Within the facet of Safety, about three-quarters or more of participants gave high marks to police, fire and ambulance/EMS services as well as to crime prevention and fire prevention. Within Mobility, about 6 in 10 survey participants gave excellent or good ratings to traffic enforcement and traffic signal timing. However, sidewalk maintenance, street repair and street cleaning were rated positively by fewer than half of residents, and these ratings were lower than ratings for these services in other communities across the nation. Ratings in the facet of Natural Environment were generally

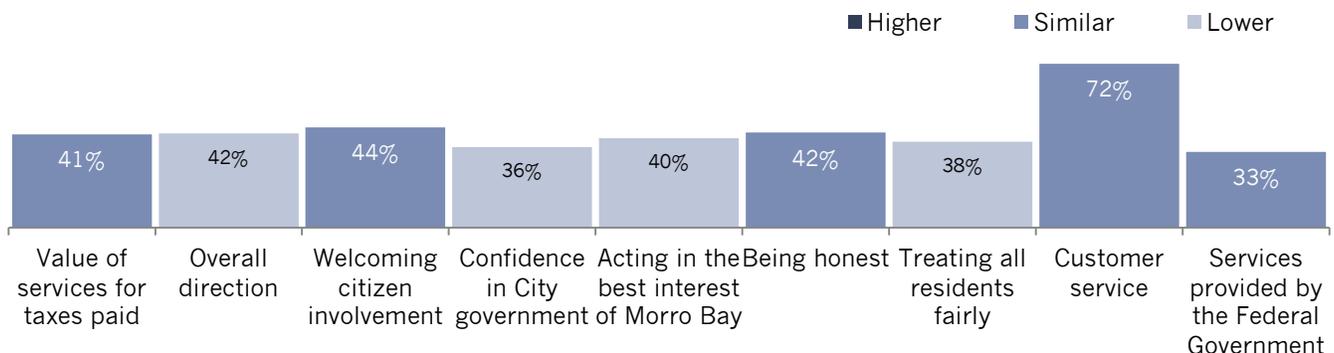
strong and similar to the benchmarks. About 9 in 10 residents gave high marks to garbage collection services and about 8 in 10 positively rated recycling services; however, only about one-third of residents gave positive ratings to drinking water in Morro Bay, which was lower than ratings seen in comparison communities. In Built Environment, only about 3 in 10 respondents gave high marks to land use, planning and zoning, but at least half of residents gave favorable ratings to storm drainage, sewer services and utility billing. Economic development was rated positively by about one-quarter of residents, a rating which was lower than seen in other communities. At least 6 in 10 residents gave high marks to all aspects of Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement; all of these ratings were similar to ratings seen in communities elsewhere.

**Overall Quality of City Services**



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

Comparison to national benchmark



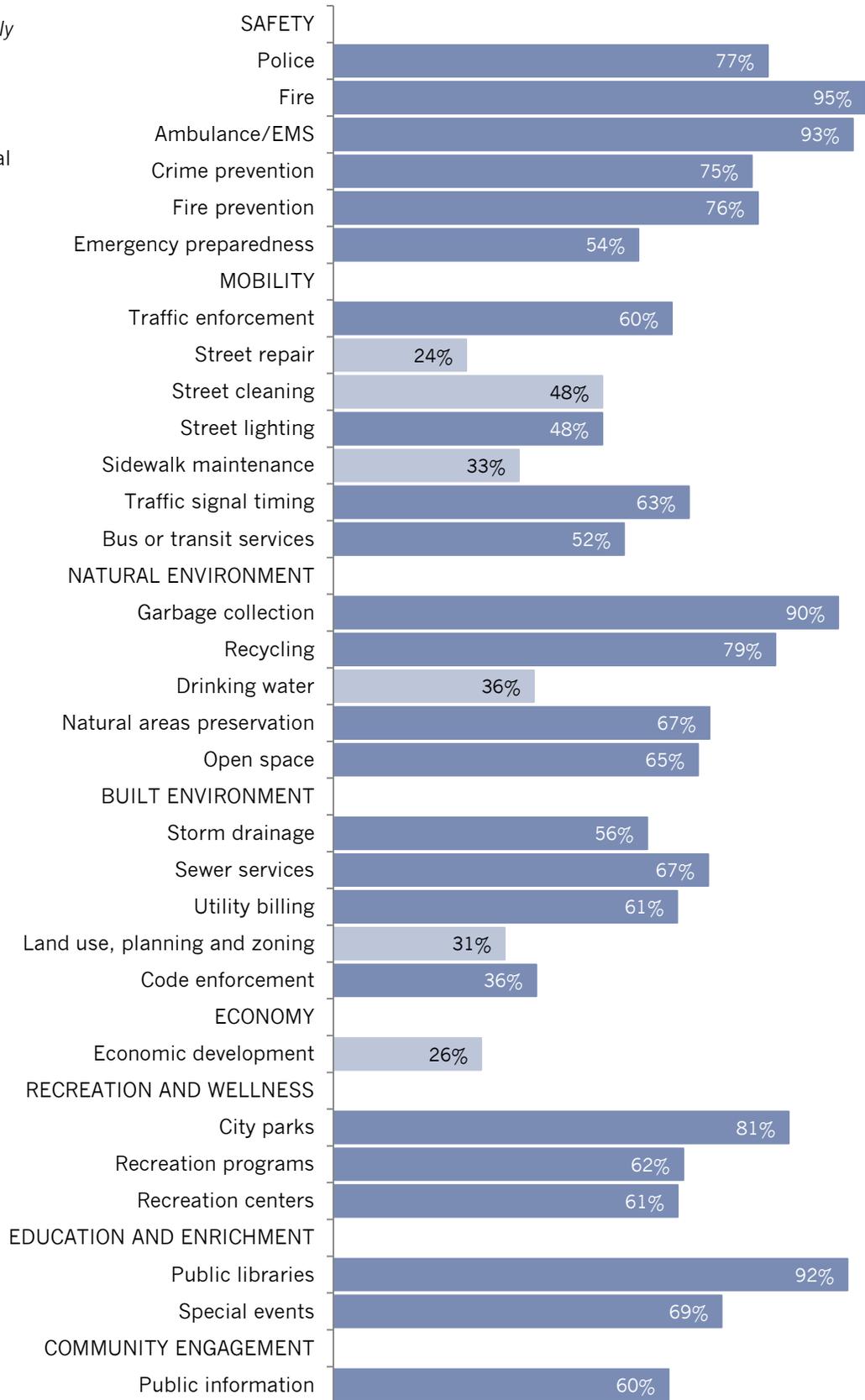
# The National Citizen Survey™

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

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

Comparison to national  
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

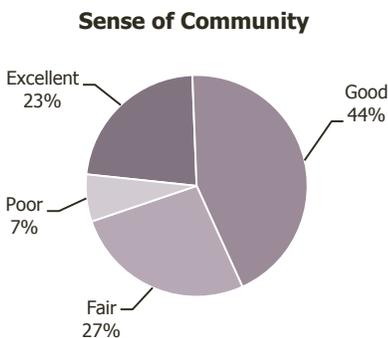


# Participation

*Are the residents of Morro Bay 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. About two-thirds of Morro Bay residents rated the sense of community as excellent or good, which was similar to ratings given in other communities nationwide. More than 4 in 5 respondents reported that they would recommend Morro Bay to someone who asked and about 9 in 10 planned to remain in the City for the next five years. About half of participants reported that they had contacted City of Morro Bay employees in the past 12 months. All of these participation rates were similar to rates observed elsewhere.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. About three-quarters of residents did not report a crime and more than 8 in 10 had not been the victim of a crime in the 12 months prior to the survey. When compared to other communities, more participants in Morro Bay had stocked supplies for an emergency in the past year (49%). Within the facets of Mobility and Natural Environment, levels of participation were strong and mostly higher than the national benchmarks. More than half of participants reported that they had carpooled instead of driving alone and about 8 in 10 had walked or biked instead of driving. Almost all residents indicated that they had made efforts to conserve water (98%) and had recycled at home (99%) in the 12 months prior to the survey. Within Economy, almost all residents reported that they had purchased goods or services in Morro Bay, but only about 3 in 10 reported that they worked in Morro Bay, which was lower than rates seen elsewhere. More than 7 in 10 survey participants indicated that they had attended a City-sponsored event, which was higher than rates reported in other communities. Rates of Participation in Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were strong and similar to the rates seen in other communities across the nation.



Percent rating positively  
(e.g., very/somewhat likely,  
yes)

Comparison to national  
benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



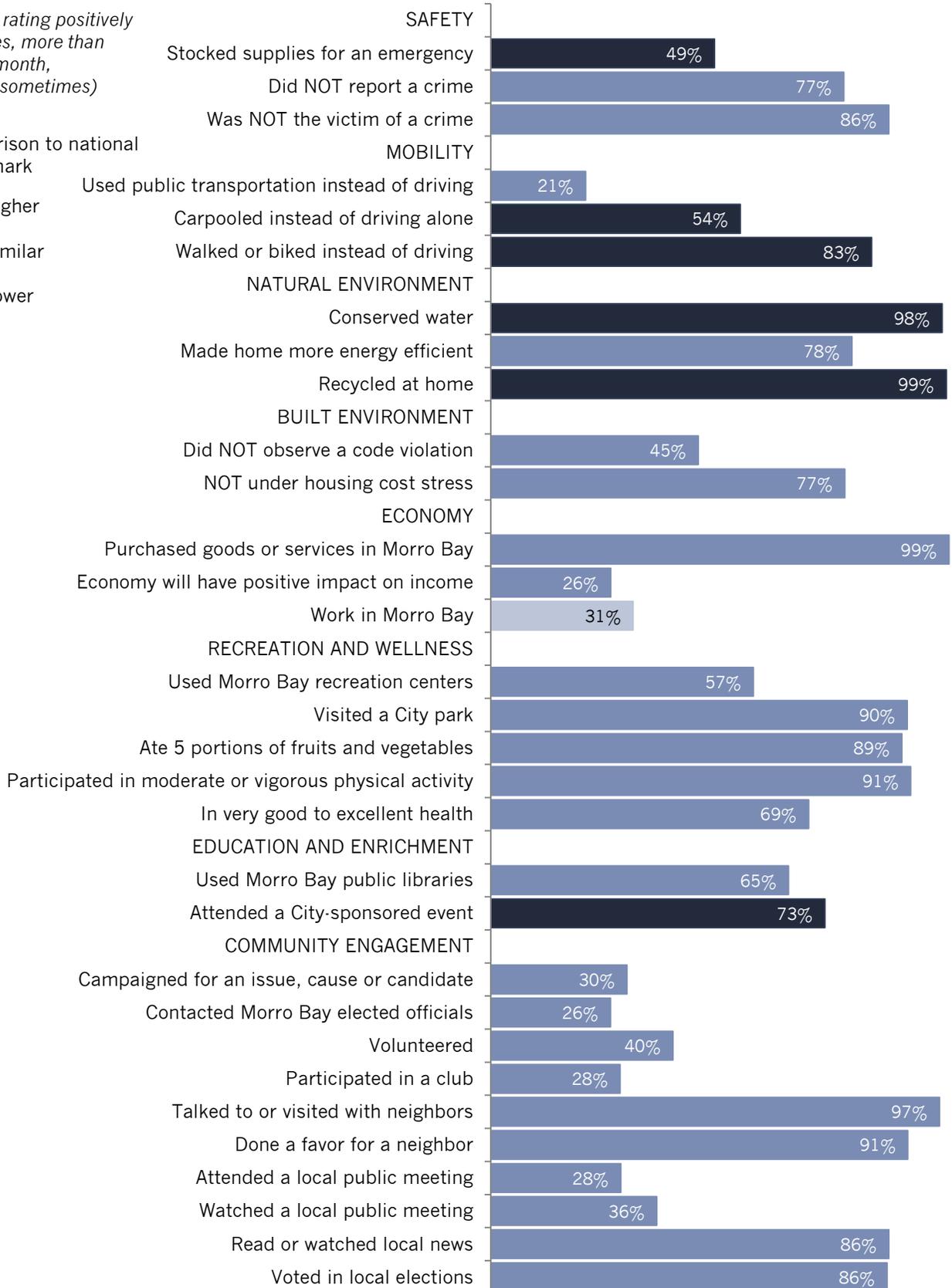
## The National Citizen Survey™

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

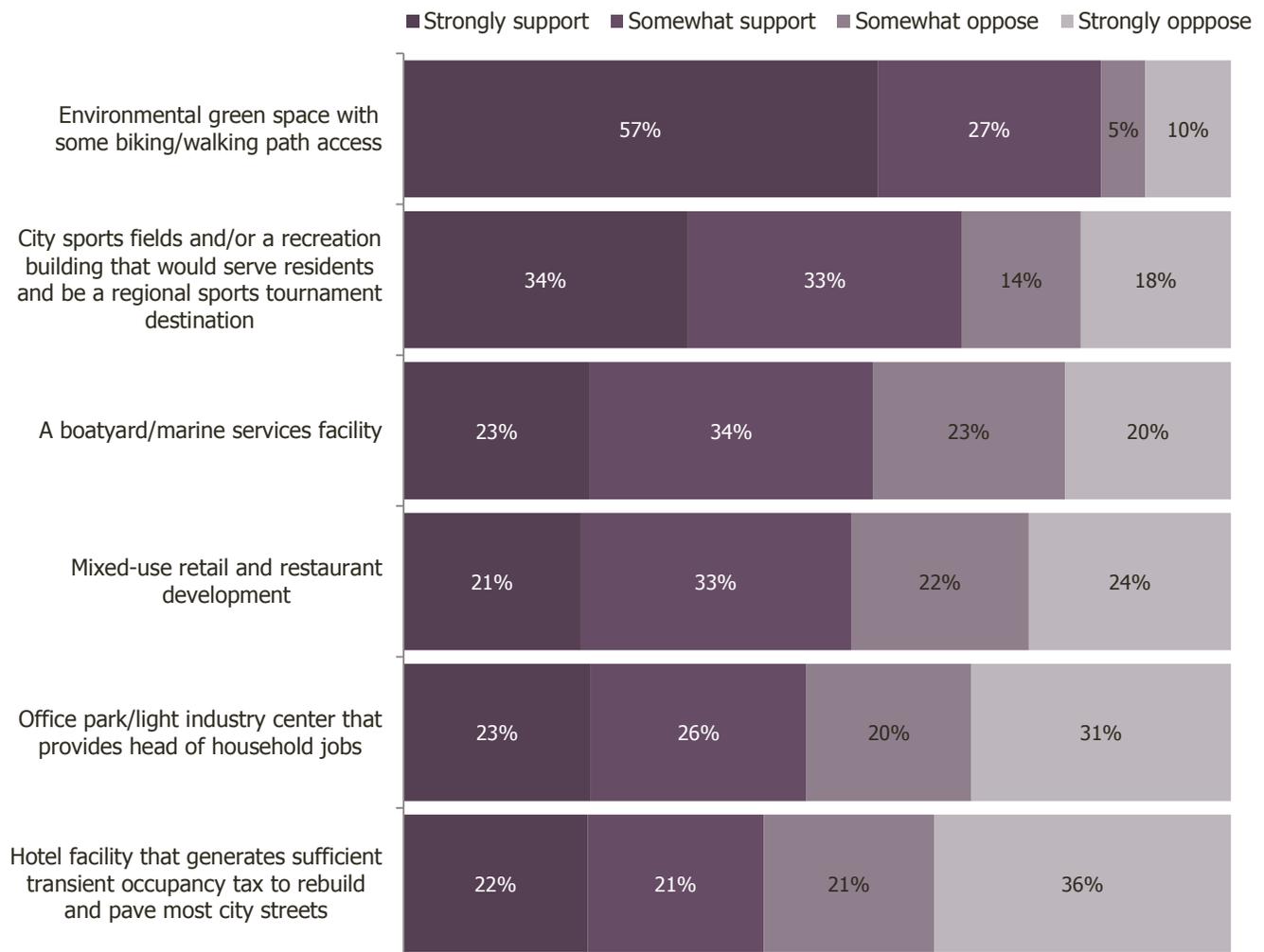


# Special Topics

The City of Morro Bay included seven questions of special interest on The NCS. The first special-interest question asked residents to what extent they would support various plans to redevelop the Morro Bay Power Plant site. More than 8 in 10 respondents indicated they would support developing the site into an environmental green space and about two-thirds indicated that they would support building a City sports field and/or a recreation building. Plans to use the site to build an office park/light industry center or hotel facility were opposed by a slight majority of residents.

Figure 4: Support for Redevelopment of Morro Bay Power Plant Site

*If the Morro Bay Power Plant were to be demolished and the site were redeveloped, please indicate to what extent you would support or oppose inclusion of the following on that site:*

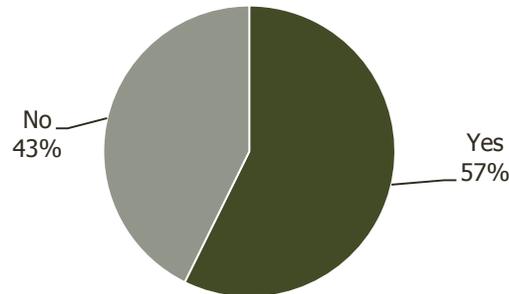


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Residents were next asked if they would support preserving the Morro Bay Power Plant stacks as a part of redevelopment. A majority of residents (57%) indicated that they would like to preserve one or more stacks.

Figure 5: Support for Preservation of Morro Bay Power Plant Stacks

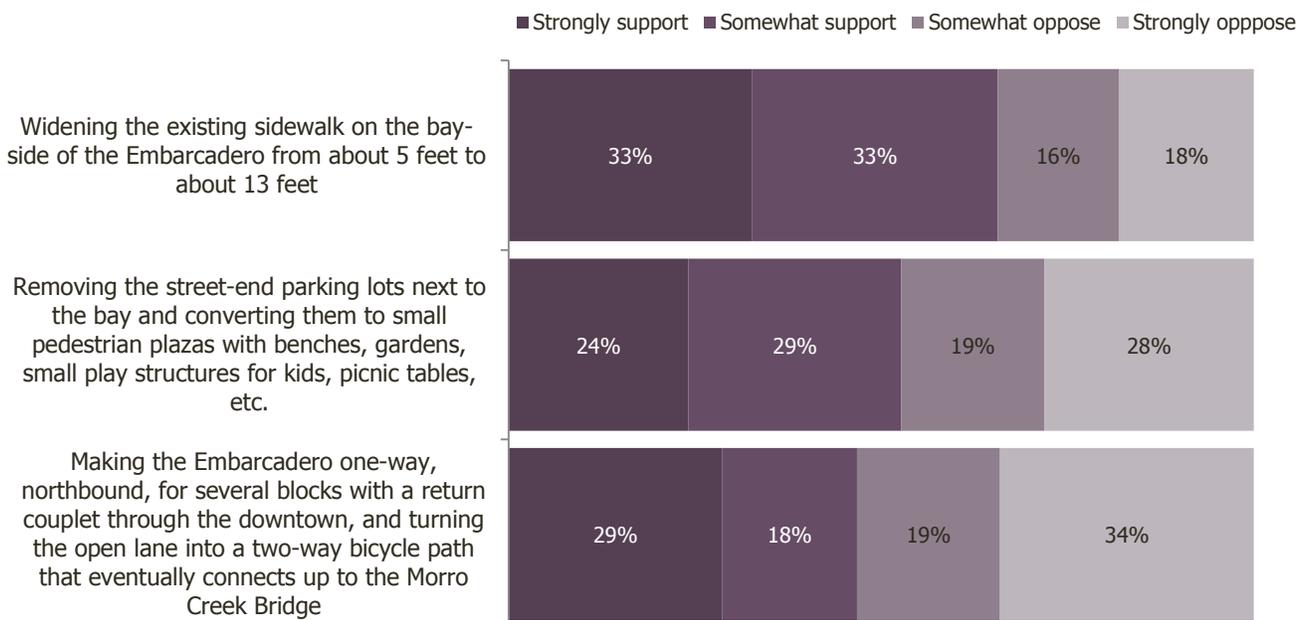
*If the Morro Bay Power Plant were redeveloped, would you like to see one or more stacks - or parts thereof - retained and integrated into the new design?*



The third special-interest question asked residents to indicate their support for various proposed improvements to the Embarcadero. About two-thirds of respondents reported that they strongly or somewhat support widening the existing sidewalk from 5 feet to about 13 feet. A majority of residents indicated that they would support removing the street-end parking lots to the bay and converting them to small green spaces. About half of residents opposed making the Embarcadero one-way northbound for several blocks, and about one-third of residents strongly opposed doing so.

Figure 6: Support for Improvements to the Embarcadero

*The City is considering ways to improve the Embarcadero experience for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, and to better link the Embarcadero area with our Downtown. To what extent would you support or oppose the following:*

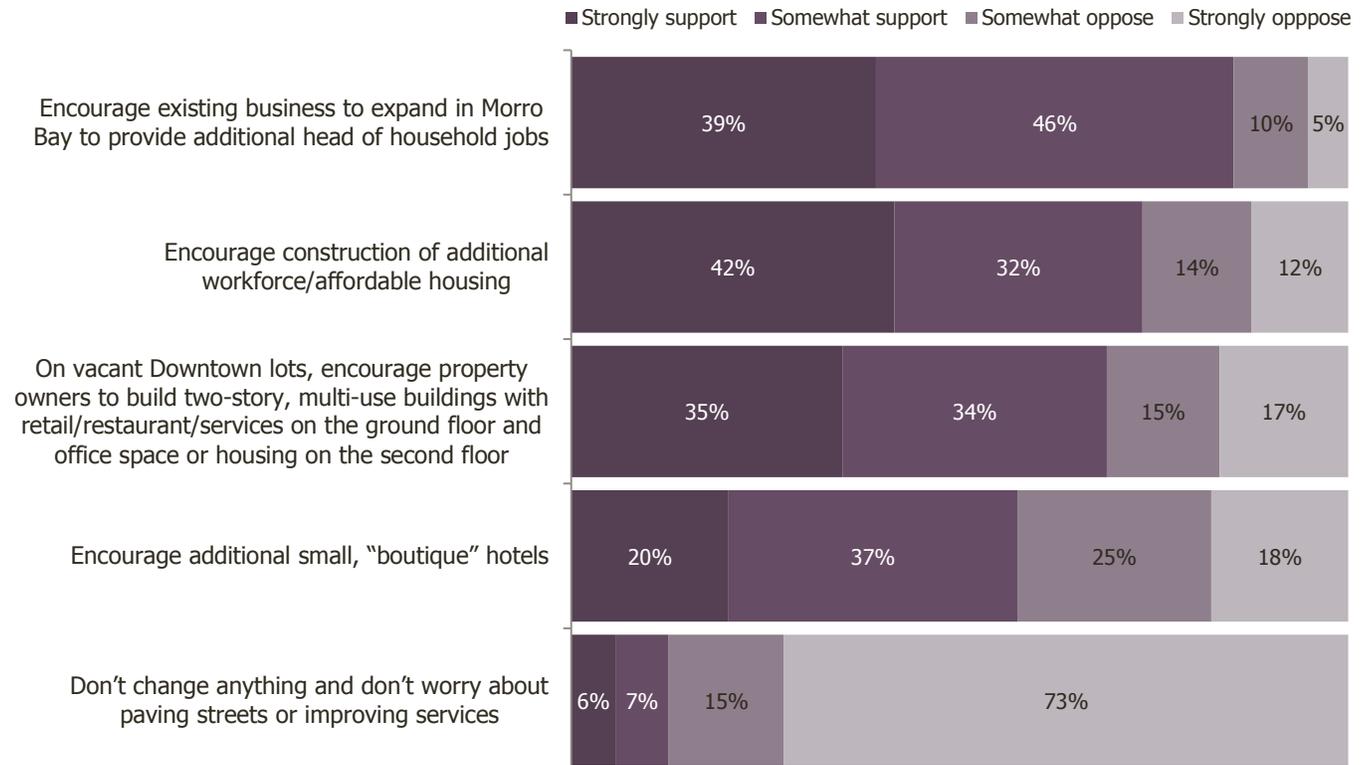


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Residents were next asked to indicate their support for various strategies to improve the City’s finances and help generate revenue to pave streets, repair infrastructure, improve recreation programs and maintain safety and harbor services. More than 8 in 10 respondents reported they would support encouraging existing businesses in Morro Bay to expand to provide additional jobs, and about three-quarters would support the construction of additional affordable housing. A vast majority of residents (88%) were opposed to the statement “Don’t change anything and don’t worry about paving street or improving services”.

Figure 7: Support for Strategies to Improve City’s Finances

*The City requires additional revenue to pave streets, replace aging infrastructure, improve recreation programs and maintain/improve our Police, Fire and Harbor services. To what extent do you support or oppose the each of the following to improve the City’s finances:*

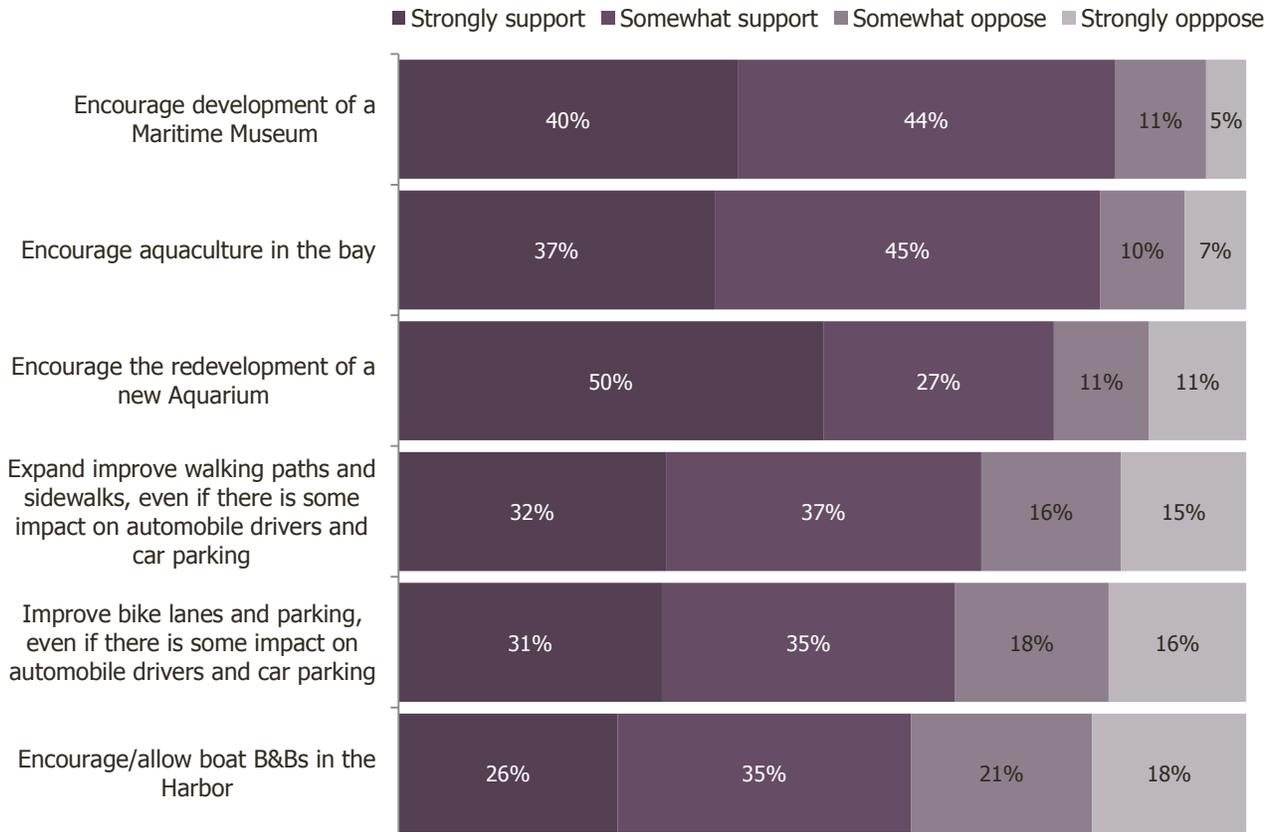


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The next special-interest question asked residents to indicate the extent to which they supported various development ideas that would serve both residents and visitors. At least 8 in 10 respondents strongly or somewhat supported encouraging the development of a Maritime Museum and encouraging aquaculture in the bay. At least a majority of residents were in favor of all other proposed development ideas.

Figure 8: Support for Development of Attractions for Residents and Visitors

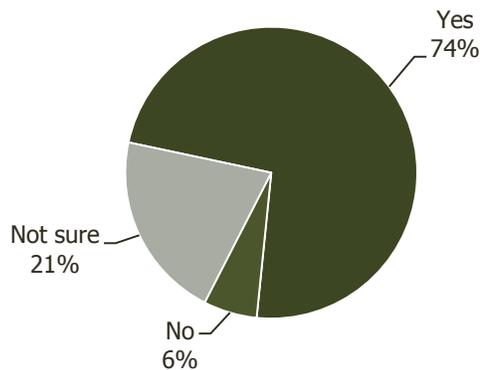
*To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following ideas to serve both residents and visitors:*



The next special-interest question asked residents if they would attend free summer evening concerts in the Downtown or a City park. About three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would go to a free summer evening concert; an additional 2 in 10 weren't sure whether they would attend.

Figure 9: Interest in Free Summer-Evening Concerts

*Would you come to free summer-evening concerts in the Downtown or a City park?*

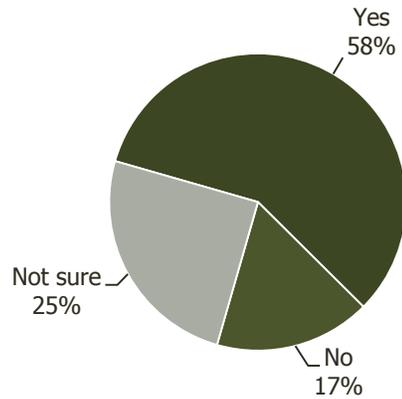


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The final special-interest question asked residents if they would support the City spending resources to host a weekend concert series in the fall. More than half of residents reported that they would support the city spending resources on this concert series, while about 2 in 10 opposed the expenditure. About one-quarter of respondents weren't sure.

Figure 10: Support for City Expenditures for Fall Concert Series

*Would you want the City to expend resources to help host a concert series on some fall weekends?*



# Conclusions

## **Morro Bay residents enjoy a high quality of life.**

Almost all respondents (91%) rated the overall quality of life in Morro Bay as excellent or good. At least 8 in 10 residents gave high marks to the City as a place to raise children and as a place to retire; ratings for Morro Bay as a place to retire were higher than ratings in comparable communities. The City's overall image and overall appearance were rated positively by about 8 in 10 survey participants. Additionally, about 9 in 10 residents said they would recommend living in Morro Bay to someone who asked and plan to remain living Morro Bay for the next five years.

## **The Economy is a top priority for residents.**

More than 8 in 10 residents identified Economy as a key focus area for the community in the coming two years. Ratings within the facet of Economy tended to be mixed. About 9 in 10 residents gave excellent or good ratings to Morro Bay as a place to visit; this rating was higher than ratings seen in comparison communities. Almost all residents (99%) reported that they had purchased goods or services in Morro Bay, and about half of participants gave favorable ratings to the overall quality of business and service establishments in the City and the vibrancy of Morro Bay's downtown/commercial area. However, only about 4 in 10 respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the overall economic health of Morro Bay and less than a third gave favorable ratings to shopping opportunities and the cost of living in the City; these ratings were lower than ratings seen elsewhere. Further, less than half of residents gave favorable ratings to the Morro Bay as a place to work and only 8% gave excellent or good ratings to employment opportunities in the City. More than 8 in 10 participants indicated that they would support encouraging existing businesses in Morro Bay to expand to provide additional jobs as a strategy to improve City finances.

## **The Natural Environment is an important and positive feature of the community.**

The Natural Environment was also identified as a key focus area for the community in the next two years. Residents of Morro Bay tended to give high ratings to aspects of Natural Environment. Almost all survey participants gave excellent or good ratings to the overall natural environment (94%) and air quality in the City (97%); both of these ratings were higher than ratings seen in other communities nationwide. Natural Environment-related City services also received strong ratings: about two-thirds or more of residents gave favorable ratings to garbage collection, recycling services and natural areas preservation. Further, more Morro Bay residents indicated that they had made efforts to conserve water and had recycled at home than residents in other communities nationwide. About 85% of residents indicated that they somewhat or strongly support the Morro Bay Power Plant site being turned into an environmental green space with some trail access.