



Agenda Item Summary

File #: ID 20-029, **Version:** 1

Submitted By

Cara Pavlicek, Village Manager

Reviewed By

LKS

Agenda Item Title

Presentation and Discussion of the 2019 Village of Oak Park National Citizen Survey Results

Overview

The National Research Center of Boulder, Colorado, completed analysis of the 2019 National Citizen Survey results and staff will present the final reports for discussion. Community surveys also were conducted in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017. This most recent survey provides the opinions of a representative sample of residents about community quality of life, service delivery, civic participation and unique issues of local interest. A periodic sounding of resident opinion offers staff, elected officials and other stakeholders an opportunity to identify challenges and to plan for and evaluate improvements, and to sustain services and amenities for long-term success.

Recommendation

Presentation Only

Fiscal Impact

N/A

Background

The National Citizen Survey (NCS) report is about the *livability* of Oak Park. The phrase “livable community” is used to characterize cities not only as places where people live, but where they want to live. The latest survey, conducted in late 2019, provides the opinions of a representative sample of 696 residents of the Village of Oak Park. The margin of error is 4 percent, or as researchers would say, there is a 96 percent level of confidence in the validity of the overall findings.

The NCS captures residents’ opinions within what are characterized as the three pillars of a community - Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. Results are compiled across eight central facets of community - Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education, and Enrichment and Community Engagement. There are four overall conclusions which are detailed in the attached Community Livability Report:

- Sense of community is strong in Oak Park and residents remain loyal.
- Although residents feel safe, safety remains a community priority.

- Residents praise the local economy, but are concerned about cost of living.
- Education and Enrichment opportunities in Oak Park are an asset that residents appreciate.

Additionally, the NCS is also able to benchmark results from Oak Park's survey to NRC's database of comparative resident opinion is comprised of resident perspectives gathered in surveys from over 600 communities whose residents evaluated the same kinds of topics. The comparison evaluations are from the most recent survey completed in each community. Quality of Life Responses for Oak Park which exceeded national benchmarks are:

- Ease of walking
- Travel by bicycle
- Overall built environment
- Vibrant downtown/commercial area
- Place to visit
- Openness and acceptance
- Opportunities to participate
- Opportunities to volunteer

A mail-out/mail back method with a url for online completion was used, with recipients chosen at random in quadrants to ensure geographic representation of the community. Multi-family housing units were over-sampled to improve response from what tend to be hard-to-reach lower income and apartment dwellers.

Overall, ratings in Oak Park for 2019 generally remained stable. Of the 131 items for which comparisons were available, 109 items were rated similarly in 2017 and 2019, two items showed a decrease in ratings and 20 showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends included the following:

+Within the pillar of Community Characteristics, ratings for seven aspects increased from 2017 to 2019, including overall built environment, availability of paths and walking trails, employment opportunities and Oak Park as a place to work. Assessments of shopping opportunities, employment opportunities and availability of affordable health care have been on the rise since 2008 (with increases of 26%, 21%, and 18%, respectively, over the last decade).

+More than half of the 20 items that saw rating improvements were within Governance. Evaluations for fire prevention, emergency preparedness, yard waste pick-up, open space and natural areas preservation increased from 2017 to 2019. Residents gave higher marks to three items related to government performance. These were overall customer service of Oak Park employees, welcoming resident involvement and being honest. In addition, reviews for public information, sewer services, storm drain, land use, planning and zoning increased from 2017 to 2019. While ratings for economic development remained stable from 2017 to 2019, assessments have increased from 33% assigning ratings of excellent or good in 2011 to 56% in 2019.

+From 2017 to 2019, levels of Participation for most items remained stable in Oak Park. Fewer community members reported a crime in 2019. However, residents reported lower levels of volunteering and doing a favor for a neighbor in 2019 compared to 2017.

Full details of the survey are attached. They are compiled in six, separate documents: Livability Report, which is an overview of findings, Dashboard, which provides a national perspective, Demographic Crosstabs, Geographic Crosstabs, Trends Over Time and Technical Appendices.

Alternatives

N/A

Previous Board Action

The Village Board reviewed the 2017 survey results in February 2018.

Citizen Advisory Commission Action

N/A

Anticipated Future Actions/Commitments

Survey results may be used by staff, elected officials and other stakeholders for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement and policy-making. Staff considers budget recommendations for resource commitments within the context of survey findings.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Opportunities

N/A