The National Citizen Survey™

McAllen, TX

Community Livability Report

2013

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About

The National Citizen Survey[™] (The NCS) report is about the "livability" of McAllen. 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 selected from 1,200 residents of the City of McAllen. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 7% for the entire sample (215 completed surveys). The methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



Quality of Life in McAllen

Most residents rate the quality of life in McAllen as "excellent" or "good." This was similar to the national benchmark.

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 dark purple; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest purple. 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 to residents' overall quality of life. Residents identified these facets of community life (Safety and Natural Environment) as the most central to what makes McAllen their home. Ratings for all facets 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 McAllen's unique questions.



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 McAllen, 84% rated McAllen as an "excellent" or "good" place to live. Respondents' ratings of McAllen as a place to live were similar to ratings in other communities across the nation (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

In addition to rating the City as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including McAllen as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of McAllen and its overall appearance. These aspects were all rated as "excellent" or "good" by at least 6 in 10 respondents and received ratings similar to other communities across the nation.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Most of these aspects were rated as "excellent" or "good" by a majority of respondents, and benchmark comparisons tended to be similar to the national benchmark. At least 7 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to Safety in McAllen; however the rating for safety downtown/commercial



area was below the benchmark. Two aspects of Economy were above the benchmark comparison; cost of living and shopping opportunities. Two aspects of Recreation and Wellness were below the benchmark; fitness opportunities and recreational opportunities.

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

Comparison to national benchmark Higher Similar Lower Not available



Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

Percent rating positively	SAFETY	
(e.g., excellent/good,	Overall feeling of safety	70%
very/somewhat safe)	Safe in neighborhood	91%
	Safe downtown/commercial area MOBILITY	70%
		85%
omparison to national	Paths and walking trails	55%
enchmark	Ease of walking	55%
Higher	Travel by bicycle	43%
Similar	Travel by public transportation	59%
	Travel by public transportation	80%
Lower	Public parking	58%
Not available	Traffic flow	62%
	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	
	Overall natural environment	69%
	Cleanliness	64%
	Air quality	72%
	BUILT ENVIRONMENT	
	Overall built environment	56%
	New development in McAllen	62%
	Affordable quality housing	47%
	Housing options	52%
	Public places	59%
	ECONOMY	
	Overall economic health	65%
V	ibrant downtown/commercial area	48%
	Business and services	67%
	Cost of living	53%
	Shopping opportunities	75%
	Employment opportunities	44%
	Place to visit	65%
	Place to work	69%
	RECREATION AND WELLNESS	
	Health and wellness	67%
	Mental health care	44%
	Preventive health services	65%
	Health care	66%
	Food	67%
	Recreational opportunities	46%
	Fitness opportunities	61%
Educa	tion and enrichment opportunities	68%
	us or spiritual events and activities	68%
Religio	Cultural/arts/music activities	42%
	Adult education	
	K-12 education	74%
	Child care/preschool	71%
	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
	Social events and activities	52%
	Neighborliness	53%
	Openness and acceptance	49%
Opportunities to	participate in community matters	55%

Governance

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

The overall quality of the services provided by McAllen as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. About three-quarters of residents rated the overall quality of City services as "excellent" or "good," while about half gave "excellent" or "good" ratings to the Federal Government. Ratings for the services provided by McAllen were similar to the national benchmark comparison while ratings for services provided by the Federal government were higher.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of McAllen's leadership and governance. Most aspects were rated as "excellent" or "good" by a majority of residents and were similar to the benchmark. While 63% rated customer service as "excellent" or "good," this rating was lower than in comparison communities.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in McAllen. Most of these services and amenities were rated positively by at least half of the respondents. All aspects of Mobility, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement were similar to the benchmark comparison. Most aspects of Safety were similar to the benchmark comparison, however ambulance or emergency medical services was rated lower. Half of the aspects of Natural Environment were lower than the benchmark; yard waste pick-up, drinking water and open space. In Economy, economic development was the single aspect rated and was above the benchmark comparison but received a rating lower compared to 2011 ratings (see *Trends over Time* provided under separate cover).



Overall Quality of City Services

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

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower □ Not available

48%	70%	56%	62%	61%	57%	53%	63%	57%
Value of services for taxes paid	Overall direction	Welcoming citizen involvement	in City	best interest	Being honest	Treating all residents fairly	Customer service	Services provided by the Federal Government

Figure 2: Aspects of Governance



Participation

Are the residents of McAllen connected to the community and each other?

An engaged community is a livable community. 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 3 in 5 residents rated the sense of community as "excellent" or "good," this rating was similar to the benchmark comparison and similar to 2011 ratings (see *Trends over Time* provided under separate cover).

Most residents would recommend living in McAllen (87% "somewhat" or "very" likely). About 8 in 10 residents reported they were "somewhat" or "very" likely to remain in the city. These ratings were similar to other communities across the nation. Nearly half of residents reported contacting a McAllen employee within the last 12 months, which was a similar contact rate compared to other communities.

The survey included over 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. The facets with higher rates of Participation were Natural Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Education and Enrichment. Participation in Economy-related activities was mixed; nearly all respondents had purchased goods or services in McAllen while one-third believed the economy would have a positive impact on their income (a rating higher than the benchmark comparison). All aspects of Mobility were lower than the benchmark and rated positively by less than 40% of respondents. Community Engagement ratings were also rated less positively, however these ratings were similar to the benchmark comparisons when available.





Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating po	-]
(e.g., yes, more a once a month,	than Stocked supplies for an emergency	-
always/sometim	Did NOT report a crime	_
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	-
Comparison to	national MOBILITY	_
benchmark	Used public transportation instead of driving	18%
Higher	Carpooled instead of driving alone	_
Similar	Walked or biked instead of driving	-
Lower	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	_
□ Not available	Conserved water	-
	Made home more energy efficient	-
	Recycled at home	-
	BUILT ENVIRONMENT	
	Did NOT observe a code violation	-
	NOT under housing cost stress	-
	ECONOMY	
	Purchased goods or services in McAllen	-
	Economy will have positive impact on income	_
	Work in McAllen	
	RECREATION AND WELLNESS	
	Used McAllen recreation centers	-
	Visited a City park	-
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	
Particip	pated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	
	In very good to excellent health	
	EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT	-
	Used McAllen public libraries	-
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	
	Attended a City-sponsored event	
	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	-
	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	26
	Contacted McAllen elected officials	22%
	Volunteered	
	Participated in a club	
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	22%
	Done a favor for a neighbor	
	Attended a local public meeting	2
	Watched a local public meeting	
	Read or watched local news	
	Voted in local elections	



Special Topics

The City of McAllen included three questions of special interest on The NCS. These questions asked residents for their opinions about City priorities as well as about how information is received regarding McAllen City Government.

At least 4 in 5 residents indicated that it was at least "very important" for McAllen to address: improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, improving infrastructure to prevent flooding, improving environmental quality, affordable housing, improving street conditions, recycling, code enforcement and increasing job training and development programs. While a majority of residents rated all items in question 13a as "essential" or "very important," the items that received the lowest ratings were displaying more public art and programming on MCN (City cable channel).

Eccential

Very important

Figure 4: Question 13a

How important, if at all, are the following issues for the City to Address?

	Es 🛛	sential	Very	importa	nt		
Improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety		41%		47	7% 87%		
Improving infrastructure to prevent flooding		43%	6		41%	6 85%	
Improving environmental quality		38%			45%	83%	
Affordable housing		37%			45%	82%	
Improving street pavement conditions		43%	6		39%	81%	
Recycling		39%			42%	81%	
Code enforcement		32%				80%	
Increasing job training and development programs		38%			42%		
Improving main thoroughfares		31%			48%		
Passenger air service		27%		51		78%	
Library services		30%			47% 77%		
Expanding after school programs (K-12)		36%	5%		% 7	5%	
Renovating community centers/expanding programming		28%	46%		⁄o 74	54%	
Improving parking/providing more parks/open space		32%	41%		6 73	8%	
Preserving historic buildings	21%	21% 5		52%	52% 72%		
Downtown development	20%			51%	719	/o	
Installing more surveillance cameras throughout the City	30%			40% 70)	
Increasing bus & paratransit service	2	.6%		44%	69%)	
Increasing downtown lighting	31%		38% 69		69%	1	
City of McAllen Website	26%		43% 699		69%		
Bike trail system	30%		39% 699		69%		
McAllen Nature Center		30%		37%	66%		
Programming on MCN (City cable channel)	16%		37%	53%			
Displaying more public art	17%		36%	52%			

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Almost all residents "somewhat" or "strongly" agreed that McAllen should place a higher priority on the health of its citizens; only 2% "strongly" disagreed with this statement and 6% "somewhat" disagreed.

Figure 5: Question 13b

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The City of McAllen should place a higher priority on the health of its citizens."



A majority of residents indicated that local TV news/ads, newspaper, radio and insert in water bill were "major" sources of information about the City Government. Least likely to be viewed as a "major" source of information were McAllen City Twitter, McAllen City Facebook pages and posts, McAllen 311 City app and emails from the City.

Figure 6: Question 13c

Please indicate whether each of the following is a major source, minor source, or not a source of information regarding McAllen City Government.

	Major source			Not a	a source		
Local TV news/ads	72%				26%	2%	
Newspaper	62%			30%		8%	
Radio	60%			30%		10%	
Insert in water bill	51%	27	7%	22%	6		
Code Red (automated phone service from City)	47%	47% 21%			33%		
City of McAllen Web site (www.mcallen.net)	43%			46%		11%	
Word of mouth	39%		45%		169		
MCN (City Cable Channel)	36%		40%		24%		
McAllen 311 Center (681-3111)	34% 30%		, 0	37%			
E-mails from the City	33% 38%		8%	30%			
- McAllen 311 City app (iPhone and Android)	33%	30%		37%			
McAllen City Facebook pages and posts	33%	38%			29%		
McAllen City Twitter	26% 38%				36%		

Conclusions

McAllen residents enjoy a positive quality of life.

About 4 in 5 residents rated their overall quality of life and McAllen as a place to live as "excellent" or "good." The 2013 ratings were similar to those in 2011. Overall, many facets that make a community livable were rated positively by a majority of respondents and were similar to other communities across the nation. These positive ratings translated to a majority of residents being likely to recommend McAllen and remain in the city for the next five years.

Safety is a feature that makes McAllen a livable community.

Safety was identified as one of the facets most important to residents' quality of life, and, overall, McAllen performed solidly within this facet. Most aspects of safety were rated positively by a majority of respondents and most McAllen ratings were similar to those in other communities across the nation. Aspects of Safety saw some decreases compared to 2011 ratings; the aspects that declined were: safe downtown/commercial area, fire prevention, emergency preparedness, police services and crime prevention.

A strong Economy is another feature that makes McAllen a desirable community.

A majority of respondents viewed the overall economic health of McAllen positively and appreciated the City's economic development efforts. Most residents worked in McAllen and appreciated the work-friendly atmosphere of the community, although less than half rated the employment opportunities as "excellent" or "good." Residents supported the local economy by making purchases from a good variety of local businesses and indicated they had sufficient shopping opportunities available to them.