

# City of St. Cloud

## 2004 Citizen and Business Survey Research Report

**MARKET ● TRENDS ● RESEARCH**  
INCORPORATED

January 2005

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE SURVEY RESULTS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Age .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Education .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Household Income .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>HOUSING STATUS &amp; RELATIONSHIP WITH ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Home Ownership .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Time Spent Living in St. Cloud .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Resident Status .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>INTERNET ACCESS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GENERAL OPINIONS ABOUT ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SERVICES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>OSCEOLA COUNTY GOVERNMENT .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY IN ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES IN ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Priorities – All Responding Residents 2004-2003 .....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Priorities – All Responding Residents 2003-2002 .....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Priorities – Business Owners &amp; Managers 2004-2003 .....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Priorities – St. Cloud Business Owners &amp; Managers 2003-2002 .....</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CITY GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>RESIDENT COMMENTS .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>IMPROVEMENTS AND TAXES .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>WHAT RESIDENTS LIKE ABOUT ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<i>Hurricanes .....</i>	<i>53</i>
<b>WHAT RESIDENTS DISLIKE OR WOULD CHANGE ABOUT ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<i>Traffic .....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Lack of Shopping, Entertainment, and Restaurants .....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Lack of Good Paying Jobs .....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Safety and Security .....</i>	<i>61</i>
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>STRENGTHS OF ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>PRIORITIES FOR ST. CLOUD .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>OPTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<i>Continue conducting the citizen survey every year .....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Continue the annual citizen survey, but sent only to a sampling of residents each year .....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Conduct Focus Groups .....</i>	<i>68</i>

## St. Cloud 2004 Citizen and Business Survey Executive Summary

Peter Dominowski  
Market Trends Research, Inc.  
January, 2005

- This survey was mailed during November of 2004. A total of 9,984 households and businesses in St. Cloud received the survey, and 2,244 [more than 22%] returned a usable survey. More surveys were returned in 2004 than in 2003.
- The most important sources of information about St. Cloud for residents were:
  - **83%** - Osceola News Gazette
  - **66%** - St. Cloud "In the News"
  - **59%** - Orlando Sentinel
  - **44%** - Public Access TV channel 9
  - **29%** - Dateline newsletter
  - **20%** - Internet ([www.stcloud.org](http://www.stcloud.org))
- The percentage of residents who attended, or watched on television, specific city-related meetings at least once in the past twelve months increased:
  - **49%** - City Council meetings
  - **12%** - Advisory Board meetings
  - **8%** - Breakfast with the Mayor
  - **2%** - Organizational meetings
- Residents were asked to select three priorities for the city in the coming year. The most frequently chosen were: preserving St. Cloud's small town atmosphere [48%], improving traffic flow [43%], attracting more restaurants and shops [30%], improving roads, water and sewer [24%], and attracting more high paying jobs [24%]

- A large majority of surveyed residents agreed with these positive aspects of St. Cloud:
  - 92% agreed that St. Cloud was a good place to raise a family
  - 90% agreed the city provides good overall service
  - 84% agreed that St. Cloud city employees are generally responsive and professional
  - St. Cloud police, fire department, and EMS were considered responsive and professional by 85% or more residents
  - 78% agreed that the city generally does a good job of seeking comments from residents, and 77% approved of the information provided by city government
  - overall maintenance of parks and recreation facilities received high marks from 83% of citizens in the survey
  - quality of library services was complimented by 80% of residents
  - 80% of residents believe that the amount of programs for seniors in St. Cloud is either 'excellent' or 'good'
  - regarding personal safety, 85% or more of residents felt safe in all of the locations in St. Cloud mentioned in the survey
  - 67% of residents agree that the city of St. Cloud does a good job satisfying their concerns
  
- The major areas that residents rated least positively were:
  - 60% [the same as 2003] said the variety and quality of restaurants in the city were 'fair' or 'poor'
  - 61% felt that the current choices of shops and stores in the city were 'fair' or 'poor'
  - overall traffic flow and driving conditions in St. Cloud were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 64% of responding residents
  - the quality of St. Cloud drinking water was considered to be 'fair' or 'poor' by 50% of responding residents
  - 63% rated class size in St. Cloud schools as 'fair' or 'poor'
  - 53% rated availability of child care as 'fair' or 'poor'
  
- The most significant changes in survey results compared to 2002:
  - The most improved result – since 2002, the percentage of residents agreeing that the city does a good job of seeking citizen input, has increased by 22%
  - Since 2002 there has been a 15% increase in residents agreeing that St. Cloud generally satisfies their concerns
  - 10% more residents agree that St. Cloud provides good information to citizens than in 2002



## INTRODUCTION

Market Trends Research, Inc. conducted survey research for the City of St. Cloud during November and December of 2004. The survey was mailed to all households and businesses located within the city.

A total of 9,984 households and businesses received the survey, and 2,244 completed and returned a usable survey. This is a return rate of more than 22%, a very good response rate. This compares with a 21% response rate in 2003 and a 30% return rate in 2002.

As in previous years, surveys that were illegible, returned blank, or that did not follow the instructions for answering specific questions were excluded; however, whenever possible, partial survey responses were used and included in the final results.

The primary objective of using a mail survey was to allow each household and business in St. Cloud an equal opportunity to share their opinions. The result of this methodology is data that represent a considerable percentage of households and businesses in the city, but does not necessarily correspond exactly with its population demographics.

Standard error for this sample size is well under plus or minus three percent at the ninety-five percent confidence level. However, it is always prudent to be conservative in interpreting statistical results, so we recommend that all results that include all the data be considered as + or – 3%.

*As an example, if 57% of citizens indicate agreement with a question, the actual answer would be between 54% and 60% at least ninety-five out of one hundred times if this survey were duplicated.* This margin of error is comparable to many of the well-known national political and public opinion polls.

Some totals in this report provide the results of St. Cloud business owners or managers. With 233 surveys from this segment of the population, the standard error for these totals are + or – 7%.

This study provides much usable information, but equally as important, it is a benchmark for future results, tracking changes and trends in citizen opinions.

**Note that due to rounding, some percentage totals in the results may not equal 100%.**

Statistical analysis was performed for the entire data set, as well as:

- Comparing all data to the responses of St. Cloud business owners and managers
- Comparing responses from men and women
- Comparing responses from persons 55 and older to those of persons younger than 55
- Comparing responses from persons who have lived in St. Cloud 10 years or longer, with those who have been residents for less than 10 years

**There were very few instances where any significant differences in the response for these different demographic groups occurred.** Any exceptions are noted in the analysis of the data.

Market Trends Research appreciates the opportunity to again be of service to the city of St. Cloud. We will be happy to answer any questions about this information, and look forward to conducting future surveys for the city.

Market Trends Research may be reached at (727) 784-0967, or via our Web site at [www.MarketTrendsResearch.com](http://www.MarketTrendsResearch.com).

## THE SURVEY RESULTS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic questions describe the persons who completed the survey, the age composition of the households that returned the survey, and the income, education, and occupational information of survey respondents.

Based on the categories provided, this is a demographic profile of the persons completing the survey:

Male	Female	Couple Completed Together
26%	46%	23%
	↑ 2002 2003 ↓	
29%	51%	20%
	↑ 2003 2004 ↓	
<b>29%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>24%</b>

### Age

These are the age category percentages of the residents that completed the survey. There was little change compared to the last two years of results.

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2%	14%	20%	19%	16%	16%	13%
		↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
2%	13%	21%	20%	18%	14%	12%
		↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The median age of the persons completing the survey was between 65 and 74. This is an older median age than the previous survey, but the individual age categories do not vary by more than two or three percent compared to the previous demographic history.

Here is how the age composition of the households represented in the survey compare with the total population of St. Cloud.

Age Category	Census	Survey
0 – 24 years old	33.1%	28.56%
25 – 34 years old	13.7%	9.34%
35 – 44 years old	16.0%	14.29%
45 – 54 years old	11.0%	14.9%
55 – 64 years old	8.5%	11.6%
65 – 74 years old	8.4%	9.8%
75 years or older	8.8%	7.8%

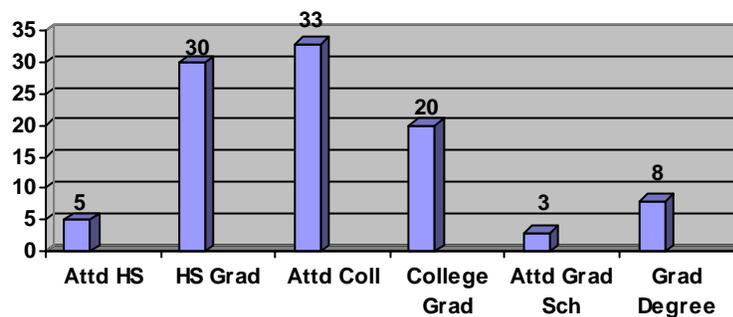
*\*all figures approximate, +/- 1%*

How do these figures compare with the actual population of St. Cloud?

- Ages 45 to 74 are slightly over-represented in the survey
- Ages 1 to 44, and 75 and older, are slightly under-represented in the survey

## Education

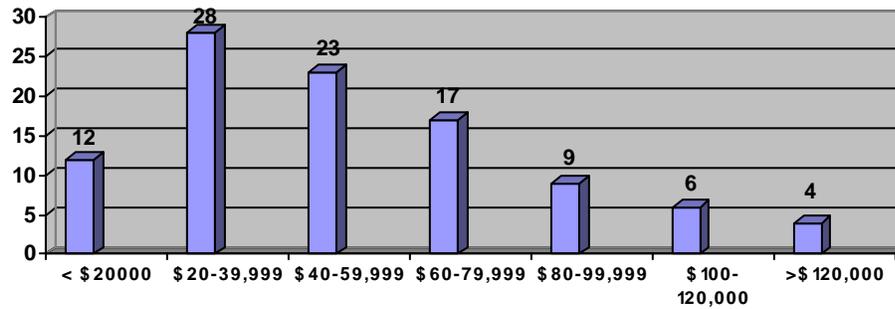
This graph represents the percentages in each category of educational attainment.



The average educational level of the persons returning the survey was Attended College, the same as in the previous survey.

## Household Income

This graph shows the pre-tax household incomes represented in this survey.



The median annual household income of the persons returning the survey was between \$40,000 and \$59,999 per year, the same result as in 2002 and last year.

## HOUSING STATUS & RELATIONSHIP WITH ST. CLOUD

This information sheds light on the housing situation of survey participants, and describes the amount of time residents have lived in St. Cloud.

### Home Ownership

Own	Rent	Live with family or friends	Other
88%	10%	1%	1%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
86%	12%	<1%	1%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>86%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>1%</b>

Over 85% of the surveys were returned by individuals who identified themselves as homeowners in each year.

### Time Spent Living in St. Cloud

While responses came from new residents and from those living in St. Cloud for over seventy years, on average, survey respondents had lived in St. Cloud for approximately twelve and one-half years. This is almost identical to the average result of the previous survey.

### Resident Status

<i>Full or part year St. Cloud resident</i>	
Full Year	Part Year
93%	7%
↑ 2002	2003 ↓
94%	6%
↑ 2003	2004 ↓
<b>92%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Once again, nearly all those returning the survey are twelve month, full-time residents of the city.

## INTERNET ACCESS

### *Do you have Internet access at home?*

Yes	No
68%	32%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓	
72%	28%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓	
<b>71%</b>	<b>28%</b>

Nearly three in four of those completing the survey can access the Internet at their home, and 57% of persons 55 and older had Internet access at home.

### *How do you connect to the Internet at home?*

Dialup	DSL	Cable	Other
51%	14%	33%	1%

This is a new question for 2004, so no historical information is available. Home internet connections are split almost equally between dialup and some type of high-speed access.

In July of 2004, St. Cloud launched the Cyber Spot program, which provides free high-speed Internet access in the downtown area.

### *How likely would citizens be to use this free service if it were available throughout the city?*

Very likely	Likely	Not sure	Unlikely	Very unlikely
51%	14%	14%	7%	13%

Based on this initial result, two in three [66%] would utilize Cyber Spot in this and other locations around the city.

## GENERAL OPINIONS ABOUT ST. CLOUD

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the City of St. Cloud. The questions were on a five point scale, with '1' meaning "strongly agree" and '5' meaning "strongly disagree." **The lower the mean and median figures, the greater the agreement with the statement.**

The questions are ranked in order, from most to least positive, based on the mean [average] result.

*St. Cloud Police, Fire, and EMS services all received very positive results once again.*

### *The St. Cloud Fire Department is responsive and professional*

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
63%	21%	14%	<1%	<1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
66%	19%	14%	<1%	<1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>69%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.44**

**Median: 1.00**

89% agree with the responsiveness and professionalism of the St. Cloud Fire Department, with less than 2% disagreeing.

**Three year trend:** *Began positively in 2002, concluded even more positively in 2004*

***St. Cloud is a good place to raise a family***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
55%	34%	7%	2%	1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
54%	37%	6%	3%	1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>63%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.48**

**Median: 1.00**

**Three year trend:** *Began positively in 2002, concluded even more positively in 2004*

This is a very positive result – more than 90% agree that St. Cloud is a good place to raise a family; and well over half of respondents **strongly agree** with this statement. Fewer than 5% disagree. This is probably about as close to unanimous agreement as can be obtained in a survey of citizens.

***The St. Cloud EMS [paramedics] are responsive and professional***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
64%	19%	16%	<1%	<1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
65%	17%	17%	<1%	<1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>67%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.49**

**Median: 1.00**

As with the Fire Department, 85% agree with the responsiveness and professionalism of the St. Cloud EMS services, with less than 2% disagreeing.

**Three year trend:** *Began positively in 2002, concluded even more positively in 2004*

***The St. Cloud Police Department is responsive and professional***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
56%	26%	10%	5%	3%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
58%	26%	9%	5%	3%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>59%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>

**Mean: 1.63**

**Median: 1.00**

Positive reaction to St. Cloud Police was also 85%, and slightly improved over 2003. The negatives are only slightly higher than fire or EMS, with 6% disagreeing with this statement.

***The City of St. Cloud provides good overall service to residents***

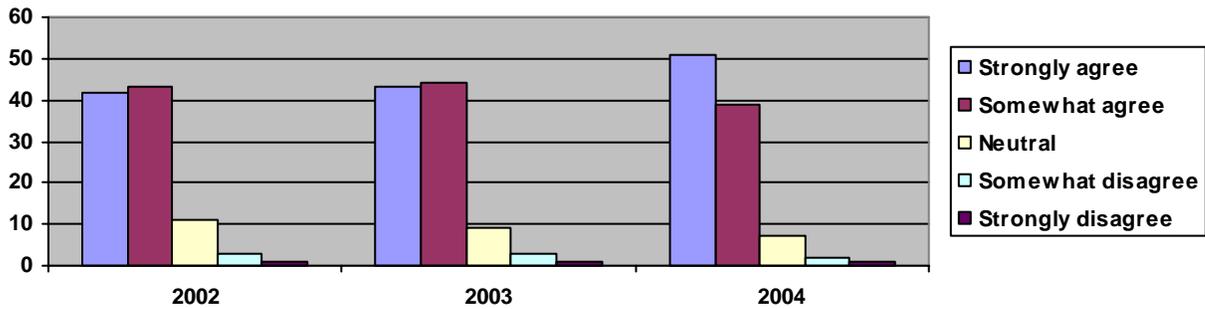
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
42%	43%	11%	3%	1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
43%	44%	9%	3%	1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>51%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.63**

**Median: 1.00**

***This is a significant result – for the first time in three years of surveys, the median response to this question shows that citizens strongly agree that the city provides good overall service to residents.***

**90% of responding residents agree with this question.**



**Three year trend: A significant positive improvement since 2002!**

The questions above had a median response of 'strongly agree,' the highest possible rating. The median response to the next several questions is 'somewhat agree,' but these are nonetheless very positive results.

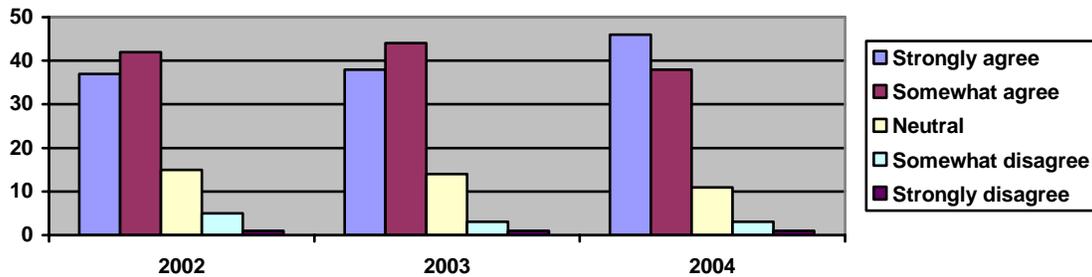
***In general, city employees are responsive and professional***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
37%	42%	15%	5%	1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
38%	44%	14%	3%	1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
46%	38%	11%	3%	1%

**Mean: 1.75**

**Median: 2.00**

This result again is very positive, as more than 80% agree that city employees are responsive and professional, and fewer than 5% disagree. This represents an improvement over both the 2002 and 2003 results.



**Three year trend:** *A consistent positive improvement since 2002*

***In general, the City does a good job of seeking comments from residents***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
21%	35%	27%	11%	5%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
35%	38%	16%	7%	4%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>43%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>

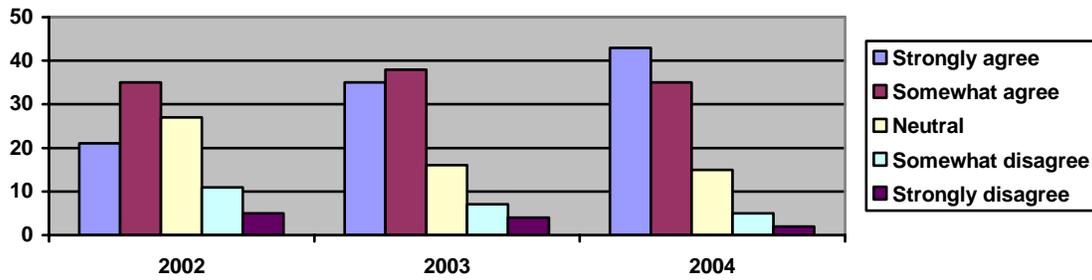
**Mean: 1.89**

**Median: 2.00**

This is a substantially improved result from the 2002 and 2003 surveys. **While over half agreed that the city does a good job of seeking citizen input in 2002, this figure increased to 78% in 2004!**

***This is one of the most significant improvements reflected in the entire survey.***

- The percentage of citizens who feel that the City does a good job of seeking comments from residents has increased 22% in two years – this is a very significant improvement!
- The average [mean] response improved to 1.89, from 2.07 in 2003, and 2.45 in 2002. This is also significant.
- Negative responses to this question decreased by 9% from 2002.



The survey process seems to have contributed to the perception of more open lines of communication between city government and residents.

**Three year trend:** *A significant positive improvement since 2002 – perhaps **the most marked improvement in the results since the survey process began!***

*In general, the city satisfies the concerns expressed by residents*

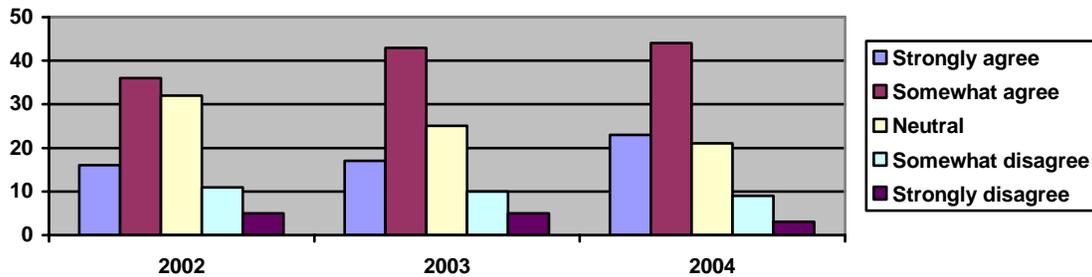
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
16%	36%	32%	11%	5%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
17%	43%	25%	10%	5%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>23%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**Mean: 2.24**

**Median: 2.00**

More than 65% of those responding residents agree that St. Cloud does a good job satisfying their concerns.

This is another solid improvement over the 2002 data, with 14% more of residents responding positively, and the average [mean] response improving from 2.55 in 2002 to 2.24 in 2004.



**Three year trend:** *A significant positive improvement since 2002 – one of the most important improvements in the results since the survey process began!*

***St. Cloud has a relatively low cost of living***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
24%	46%	15%	11%	4%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
21%	52%	10%	11%	5%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>21%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>

**Mean: 2.26**

**Median: 2.00**

Overall, the perception is that St. Cloud enjoys a relatively low cost of living. Based on the survey results, nearly three in four residents agree. The results are almost identical in all three years of surveys.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are relatively unchanged since 2002*

***St. Cloud schools are above average***

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
15%	30%	32%	15%	8%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓				
16%	36%	30%	12%	7%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓				
<b>18%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Mean: 2.55**

**Median: 2.00**

Education is important in any city, and these questions demonstrated that the perceived quality of education in St. Cloud may not be among the strong points of the city.

Half of responding residents rated St. Cloud schools as above average.

The good news is that:

- These results show slight improvement over 2002, with overall agreement with the question increasing by 5%
- The average [mean] result in 2004 is 2.55, compared with 2.59 in 2003, and 2.72 in 2002
- The median result in 2004 and 2003 was 'somewhat agree,' while in 2002 it was 'neither agree nor disagree'

The bad news is that:

- This was again the least positive average response to any of the questions in this section of the survey.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are relatively unchanged, but slightly improved, since 2002*

More specific information about perceptions of education quality and facilities in St. Cloud is provided in a later section of this report.

## SERVICES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. CLOUD

What do residents think about a variety of different services offered by the City of St. Cloud? These questions provide answers on a four point scale, with '1' meaning "excellent" and '4' meaning "poor." **The lower the mean and median figures, the higher the rating from participating residents.**

### *Amount of programs for seniors in St. Cloud*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
24%	53%	20%	3%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
29%	52%	17%	2%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>28%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>2%</b>

**Mean: 1.94**

**Median: 2.00**

80% of residents believe that the amount of programs for seniors in St. Cloud is either 'excellent' or 'good.' Persons 55 years and older share an almost identical perception.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are relatively unchanged, but slightly improved, since 2002*

### *Quality of library facilities and services*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
31%	50%	16%	2%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
27%	50%	19%	3%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>29%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**Mean: 1.94**

**Median: 2.00**

St. Cloud library facilities and services again receive high ratings; more than one in four residents consider them 'excellent,' and more than three in four rate it positively.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

***Maintenance of city parks and recreation facilities***

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
25%	60%	13%	2%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
24%	61%	14%	1%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>23%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Mean: 1.95**

**Median: 2.00**

About 85% of residents felt positively about parks and recreation facility maintenance. The results are excellent, but virtually unchanged from 2002.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

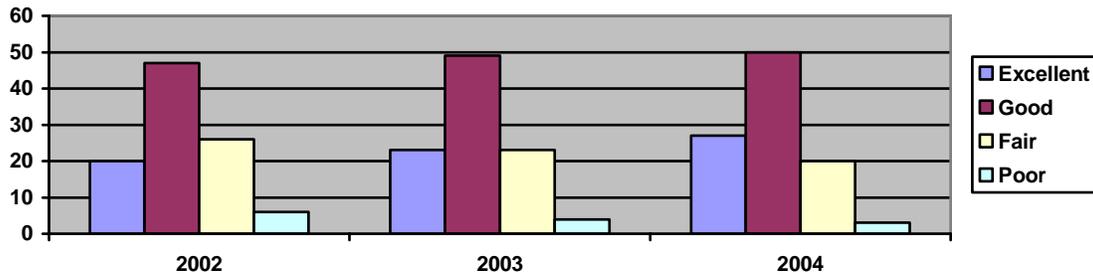
***Information about St. Cloud provided by city government***

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
20%	47%	26%	6%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
23%	49%	23%	4%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>27%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>3%</b>

**Mean: 1.98**

**Median: 2.00**

More than three in four residents rate the city government positively in the information it provides to residents. **Positive response since 2002 improved by a significant 10%!**



**Three year trend:** *A significant positive improvement since 2002 – one of the most important improvements in the results since the survey process began!*

**Overall variety and quality of housing options**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
17%	52%	25%	5%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
16%	55%	24%	5%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
16%	53%	25%	5%

**Mean: 2.20**

**Median: 2.00**

Few residents believe the housing options in St. Cloud are excellent, but responding residents provide a rating that is substantially more positive than negative.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are somewhat positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

**Overall variety and quality of recreational facilities and programs**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	54%	26%	4%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
15%	53%	27%	4%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>15%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>4%</b>

**Mean: 2.22**

**Median: 2.00**

More than two in three residents consider the overall variety and quality of recreational facilities and programs in St. Cloud positively. 2002, 2003, and results are essentially unchanged.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

**Overall quality of medical and hospital services in St. Cloud**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
19%	47%	25%	8%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
20%	46%	26%	8%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>19%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>8%</b>

**Mean: 2.24**

**Median: 2.00**

About two in three respondents rate medical and hospital services in St. Cloud as 'excellent' or 'good.' Persons 55 and older rate these services at about the same level as the overall population.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall but relatively unchanged since 2002*

### *Physical appearance of the city*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
14%	51%	29%	6%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
14%	53%	29%	5%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>14%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Mean: 2.27**

**Median: 2.00**

More than two in three rate St. Cloud's overall physical appearance positively, although most rate the appearance as 'good' rather than 'excellent'. 2002, 2003, and results are nearly identical.

Residents made a number of comments again this year about areas where they feel the appearance of the city leaves something to be desired. This will be discussed in the citizen comments section of the report.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall but relatively unchanged since 2002*

### *Amount of cultural events in St. Cloud*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
13%	47%	31%	9%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
15%	46%	30%	9%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>16%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>7%</b>

**Mean: 2.28**

**Median: 2.00**

Cultural events do not seem to be an area where St. Cloud excels, as residents gave the city a moderately positive rating, with 63% rating cultural events as 'excellent' or 'good.' The results over the past three years are nearly identical.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall but relatively unchanged since 2002*

**Amount of health care services available in St. Cloud**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	46%	30%	9%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
15%	47%	29%	9%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>16%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>9%</b>

**Mean: 2.33**

**Median: 2.00**

The past three years of results are nearly identical, as nearly two in three residents give a 'good' or 'excellent' rating to the amount of health care services available in St. Cloud.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

**Amount of youth programs in St. Cloud**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	47%	27%	10%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
15%	45%	30%	10%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>16%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>9%</b>

**Mean: 2.33**

**Median: 2.00**

Residents gave the city a moderately positive rating in the amount of programs available for youth. Slightly fewer than two in three respondents rated youth programs as 'excellent' or 'good.' The 2002 and 2003 results are nearly identical, with the positive totals for 2004 three percent lower than those in 2002.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are generally somewhat positive but relatively unchanged since 2002*

The median results for the remaining questions are 'Fair.'

### *Quality of drinking water*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	40%	33%	19%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
7%	38%	35%	19%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>9%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>17%</b>

**Mean: 2.58**

**Median: 2.50**

Water quality has been an issue for the past three years and although there was slight improvement this year, most of the responses were in the middle, with almost twice as many residents rating water quality 'poor' instead of 'excellent.'

This one of the few questions in this series where the average response dips to the midpoint [2.50], and where the sum total of 'excellent' and 'good' responses only equals 50%.

These results are virtually unchanged from 2002.

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with little change in perceptions since 2002*

### *Overall variety and quality of shops and stores in the city*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	33%	40%	19%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
9%	32%	40%	19%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>7%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Mean: 2.73**

**Median: 3.00**

Clearly, despite their desire to 'retain the small town atmosphere' of St. Cloud, residents would prefer additional options for shopping within the city of St. Cloud. Fewer than 10% of residents rate the current shopping options as 'excellent.' These results are virtually unchanged from 2002.

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with a slight increase in negative perceptions since 2002*

**Overall variety and quality of restaurants in the city**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	34%	37%	20%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
9%	31%	36%	24%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
9%	31%	39%	21%

**Mean: 2.73**

**Median: 3.00**

This is one of the categories where more residents judge the options to be 'fair' or 'poor' than 'good' or 'excellent.' Many of the comments and suggestions on this survey also mentioned a lack of non-fast food restaurants in the city.

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with a slight increase in negative perceptions since 2002*

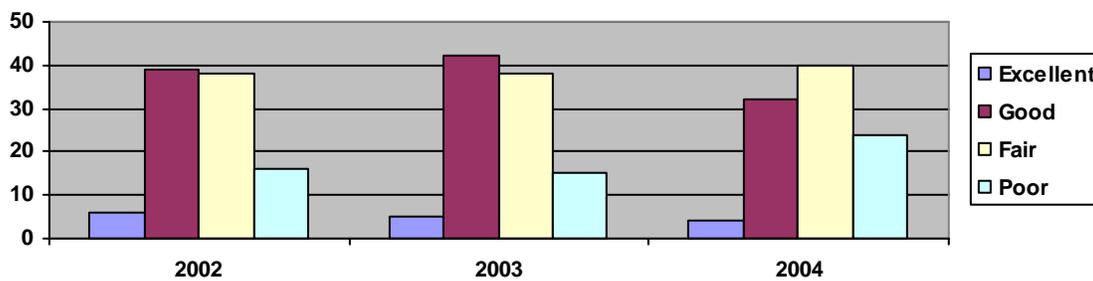
**Overall traffic flow and driving conditions in St. Cloud**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6%	39%	38%	16%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
5%	42%	38%	15%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
4%	32%	40%	24%

**Mean: 2.85**

**Median: 3.00**

These results have changed nine percent more negatively since 2002.



The fact that only 4% of residents rated traffic conditions in the city as 'excellent' is a strong indication of dissatisfaction. About six times as many respondents rated traffic and driving conditions as 'poor,' rather than 'excellent.' More residents described traffic conditions as 'fair' rather than 'good.'

More comments from residents about this issue are discussed later in the report.

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with an increase in negative perceptions since 2002*

**The quality of drinking water, traffic problems, and a shortage of shopping and dining options continue to top the list of characteristics about St. Cloud that residents would like to see improved, based on this set of questions.**

## OSCEOLA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

For the first time, a question was included asking about citizen perceptions of Osceola County government.

***As a resident of St. Cloud and Osceola County, you pay taxes to both governments. How would you rate the overall quality and quantity of services you receive from Osceola County?***

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	56%	29%	6%

**Mean: 2.33**

**Median: 2.00**

While 65% rate county government as 'excellent' or 'good,' the vast majority rate county services as 'good.'

No question asks precisely the same questions about St. Cloud city government, but responses to some similar questions may provide a clue as to how listeners compare city and county government.

***The City of St. Cloud provides good overall service to residents***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
51%	39%	7%	2%	<1%

**Mean: 1.63**

**Median: 1.00**

***In general, city employees are responsive and professional***

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
46%	38%	11%	3%	1%

**Mean: 1.75**

**Median: 2.00**

When the average [mean] responses to these representative questions are compared to the response for Osceola County, the city of St. Cloud enjoys both a better average [mean] response, and a significantly higher percentage of residents who 'strongly agree' with the positive aspects of city services and employees.

Clearly, there would be benefit in exploring this subject in greater detail with more detailed and comparative questions in future research.

## PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY IN ST. CLOUD

Residents were asked in general, how safe and secure they feel at several different locations in St. Cloud.

These questions are on a four point scale, with '1' meaning "very safe" and '4' meaning "very concerned for safety." **The lower the mean and median figures, the safer participating residents perceive themselves to be in the following locations.**

Most of these results are essentially unchanged from 2002 and 2003. The safety perceptions of women and persons 55 years and older were virtually identical to those for the overall population.

### *At home*

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
54%	42%	3%	1%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
51%	45%	3%	<1%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>58%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.45**

**Median: 1.00**

The highest levels of perceived safety by far are at individual's homes. Fewer than 4% of residents are concerned for their safety at home.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall and slightly improved since 2002*

***In city government buildings***

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
47%	50%	3%	<1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓			
46%	52%	2%	<1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓			
<b>57%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.45**

**Median: 1.00**

Only about 2% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in city government buildings.

The large improvement in 2004 is likely due to the new St. Cloud city hall building.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall and considerably improved since 2002*

***At the lakefront***

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
25%	62%	12%	1%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓			
23%	66%	10%	1%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓			
<b>26%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Mean: 1.67**

**Median: 2.00**

Only 12% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while at the lakefront. There is no significant change from 2002 results.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall and slightly improved since 2002*

*In shopping centers*

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
24%	61%	13%	2%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
24%	64%	12%	1%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>24%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.90****Median: 2.00**

About 13% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in shopping areas. Most residents feel safe in these locations.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall basically unchanged since 2002*

*Downtown*

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
29%	60%	9%	1%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
24%	63%	12%	2%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>31%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Mean: 1.79****Median: 2.00**

Only about 9% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in downtown St. Cloud. There is a very small overall decrease in safety concerns about downtown St. Cloud from 2002 to 2004.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall and basically unchanged since 2002*

*In parks and recreation facilities*

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
23%	63%	12%	1%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
20%	67%	11%	1%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>24%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Mean: 1.89****Median: 2.00**

About 12% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in parks and recreation facilities. Otherwise the results are similar to previous years.

The mean [average] result for each of these questions is under '2' on a four point scale, which is good. However, 10% to 13% of persons responding to the survey had at least some concern for their safety in one or more of the locations, and this insecurity should remain a concern and area for additional examination and action.

There are no significant differences in the responses from women or residents 55 and older.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are positive overall and basically unchanged since 2002*

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES IN ST. CLOUD

These questions about educational opportunities in St. Cloud are on a four point scale, with '1' meaning "excellent" and '4' meaning "poor." **The lower the mean and median figures, the higher the rating from participating residents.**

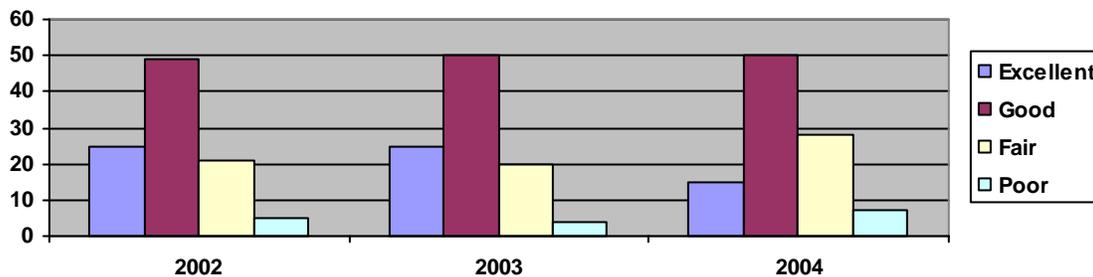
### *Public Elementary, Middle, and High schools*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
25%	49%	21%	5%
↑ 2002 2003 ↓			
25%	50%	20%	4%
↑ 2003 2004 ↓			
15%	50%	28%	7%

**Mean: 2.26**

**Median: 2.00**

**These results show a 10% decrease in positive perceptions since 2002.**



Despite this, about two in three residents rate St. Cloud elementary schools to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with overall positive results but an increase in negative perceptions since 2002*

### *Courses for Seniors*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	37%	36%	17%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
12%	44%	33%	11%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>10%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>11%</b>

**Mean: 2.46**

**Median: 2.00**

The response to this question improved significantly when compared to 2002. More than 50% of the responding residents rate courses for seniors as 'excellent' or 'good.' The 'excellent' and 'good' responses were 9% higher in 2004 than in 2002.

### *Overall quality of educational facilities*

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	45%	36%	10%
↑ 2002    2003 ↓			
10%	49%	33%	9%
↑ 2003    2004 ↓			
<b>8%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Mean: 2.47**

**Median: 2.00**

Most residents responding to this survey rate educational facilities and opportunities in St. Cloud to be either 'good' or 'fair.' About the same number of residents rate educational facilities as 'excellent' and 'poor.' These data are similar to 2003, but still show room for improvement.

**Three year trend:** *An ongoing area of concern, with overall positive results but a slight increase in negative perceptions since 2002*

### Vocational/Technical programs

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	30%	28%	32%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
10%	37%	31%	22%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>11%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>15%</b>

**Mean: 2.52**

**Median: 2.00**

Vocational and technical programs scored slightly better again this year. The percentage of residents who rate these programs as 'excellent' or 'good' has increased by 13% since 2002.

*This is one of the biggest improvements in any of the survey questions over three years.*

**Three year trend:** *A significant positive improvement since 2002 – one of the most important improvements in the results since the survey process began!*

### Child care

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	40%	35%	14%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
10%	42%	36%	11%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>8%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Mean: 2.54**

**Median: 3.00**

These results are similar to the responses from 2002. The opinions about child care are nearly divided, with about half of the responding residents rate them as 'excellent' or 'good,' and the other half rate them 'fair' or 'poor.'

It should be noted that the median result for this question is 'fair.'

**Three year trend:** *An area about equally divided between positive and negative results*

**After-school activities**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	40%	35%	14%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
10%	42%	36%	11%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>10%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>12%</b>

**Mean: 2.55****Median: 3.00**

This question was grouped together with child care for the first two years of the survey.

As with child care, the median result for this question is 'fair.'

**Three year trend:** *An area about equally divided between positive and negative results*

**Class size in schools**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6%	26%	37%	31%
	↑ 2002	2003 ↓	
5%	29%	41%	25%
	↑ 2003	2004 ↓	
<b>6%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>22%</b>

**Mean: 2.80****Median: 3.00**

Nearly two in three responding residents rate class size in St. Cloud schools as 'fair' or 'poor.' This is the lowest ranking of any question in the education section of the survey, although the results are marginally better than in the 2002 survey.

**Three year trend:** *Perceptions are negative overall and basically unchanged since 2002*

## FUTURE PRIORITIES for ST. CLOUD

Residents were given a choice of sixteen priorities for the city in the coming year. They could choose one, two, or three of these priorities, based upon what they believed to be most important for the future of St. Cloud.

This chart compares the results from the two most recent surveys – 2004 and 2003. The color-shaded areas group together priorities with similar overall ratings.

Priorities – All Responding Residents			
2004		2003	
48%	Preserve the small town atmosphere	49%	Preserve the small town atmosphere
43%	Improve traffic flow	34%	Attract more restaurants and shops
30%	Attract more restaurants and shops	31%	Improve traffic flow
24%	Improve roads, water and sewer	28%	Attract more high paying jobs
21%	Attract more high paying Jobs	24%	Improve roads, water and sewer
15%	Reduce crime	20%	Improve water quality/services/pressure
15%	Enhance the lakefront	18%	Reduce crime
14%	Improve water quality, services/pressure	13%	Enhance the lakefront
11%	Downtown redevelopment	10%	Downtown redevelopment
10%	City beautification	10%	City beautification
7%	Improved street maintenance	7%	Improved street maintenance
7%	Create more open spaces and parks	5%	Create more open spaces and parks
4%	More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud	5%	More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud
4%	Communication with citizens	4%	Communication with citizens
3%	Expand recreational programs	4%	Expand recreational facilities
1%	Build more housing	2%	Build more housing
1%	Improve garbage collection	2%	Improve garbage collection

By a very large margin, responding residents felt that two priorities were most important for St. Cloud. **Maintaining the small town atmosphere and improving traffic flow should be the most important priorities for St. Cloud in the coming year.** Nearly one-half of the surveys included this among their top three priorities.

These are far and away the highest priorities for citizens in the survey.

The next two priorities – **attracting more restaurants and shops, improving roads, water, and sewer, and attracting more high-paying jobs** - were mentioned by about one of four responding households. This is a significant number, but considerably lower than the top two priorities.

A continuing trend is that most residents appear to be in favor of specific types of commercial development, such as restaurants and shops, but remain generally opposed to additional residential development, particularly of apartments, at least without corresponding expansion of infrastructure.

The next priorities were mentioned by about 10-15% of residents. They are: **reducing crime, improving water quality, services and pressure, enhance lakefront, downtown redevelopment and city beautification.**

The remaining priorities drew considerably lower response – below 10% of responding residents.

It should be kept in mind that this question was designed only for residents to react to the potential priorities provided – while the options were selected with care, it is possible that there are other areas of importance to residents that were not included on this list. Some of these are discussed in the citizen comment section of the report.

This chart provides a historical perspective by comparing the results from the first two surveys – 2002 and 2003.

Priorities – All Responding Residents	
2003	2002
<b>42%</b> Preserve the small town atmosphere	<b>49%</b> Preserve the small town atmosphere
<b>34%</b> Attract more restaurants and shops	<b>30%</b> Improve traffic flow
<b>31%</b> Improve traffic flow	<b>30%</b> Attract more restaurants and shops
<b>28%</b> Attract more high paying Jobs	<b>26%</b> Improve roads, water and sewer
<b>24%</b> Improve roads, water and Sewer	<b>26%</b> Attract more high paying jobs
<b>20%</b> Improve water quality, services/pressure	<b>25%</b> Reduce crime
<b>18%</b> Reduce crime	<b>16%</b> Improve water quality/services/pressure
<b>13%</b> Enhance the lakefront	<b>14%</b> City beautification
<b>10%</b> Downtown redevelopment	<b>13%</b> Enhance the lakefront
<b>10%</b> City beautification	<b>12%</b> Downtown redevelopment
<b>7%</b> Improved street maintenance	<b>8%</b> Improved street maintenance
<b>5%</b> Create more open spaces and parks	<b>7%</b> Create more open spaces and parks
<b>5%</b> More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud	<b>7%</b> Communication with citizens
<b>4%</b> Communication with citizens	<b>4%</b> Expand recreational facilities
<b>4%</b> Expand recreational programs	<b>2%</b> Build more housing
<b>2%</b> Build more housing	<b>1%</b> Improve garbage collection services
<b>2%</b> Improve garbage collection	

The priorities for business owners and managers fall into similar categories, with totals that are not generally significantly different.

Priorities – St. Cloud Business Owners & Managers			
2004		2003	
<b>44%</b>	Preserve the small town atmosphere	<b>42%</b>	Preserve the small town atmosphere
<b>44%</b>	Improve traffic flow	<b>34%</b>	Attract more restaurants and shops
<b>28%</b>	Attract more restaurants and shops	<b>31%</b>	Improve traffic flow
<b>26%</b>	Improve roads, water and sewer	<b>28%</b>	Attract more high paying jobs
<b>22%</b>	Attract more high paying Jobs	<b>24%</b>	Improve roads, water and sewer
<b>14%</b>	Enhance the lakefront	<b>20%</b>	Improve water quality/services/pressure
<b>12%</b>	Reduce crime	<b>18%</b>	Reduce crime
<b>11%</b>	Downtown redevelopment	<b>13%</b>	Enhance the lakefront
<b>11%</b>	City beautification	<b>10%</b>	Downtown redevelopment
<b>7%</b>	Improved street maintenance	<b>10%</b>	City beautification
<b>6%</b>	Create more open spaces and parks	<b>7%</b>	Improved street maintenance
<b>6%</b>	Improve water quality, services/pressure	<b>5%</b>	Create more open spaces and parks
<b>6%</b>	Expand recreational programs	<b>5%</b>	More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud
<b>3%</b>	More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud	<b>4%</b>	Communication with citizens
<b>2%</b>	Communication with citizens	<b>4%</b>	Expand recreational programs
<b>1%</b>	Build more housing	<b>2%</b>	Build more housing
<b>0%</b>	Improve garbage collection	<b>2%</b>	Improve garbage collection

The largest change is concern about improved water quality – 20% rated it a high priority in 2003, but only 6% feel the same in 2004.

These are the priorities of business owners in the previous two surveys.

Priorities – St. Cloud Business Owners & Managers			
2003		2002	
<b>42%</b>	Preserve the small town Atmosphere	<b>36%</b>	Preserve the small town atmosphere
<b>34%</b>	Attract more restaurants and shops	<b>36%</b>	Improve traffic flow
<b>31%</b>	Improve traffic flow	<b>31%</b>	Reduce crime
<b>28%</b>	Attract more high paying Jobs	<b>27%</b>	Attract more restaurants and shops
<b>24%</b>	Improve roads, water and Sewer	<b>25%</b>	Attract more high paying jobs
<b>20%</b>	Improve water quality, services/pressure	<b>22%</b>	Improve roads, water and sewer
<b>18%</b>	Reduce crime	<b>16%</b>	City beautification
<b>13%</b>	Enhance the lakefront	<b>14%</b>	Improve water quality/services/pressure
<b>10%</b>	Downtown redevelopment	<b>13%</b>	Enhance the lakefront
<b>10%</b>	City beautification	<b>13%</b>	Downtown redevelopment
<b>7%</b>	Improved street maintenance	<b>6%</b>	Build more housing
<b>5%</b>	Create more open spaces and parks	<b>6%</b>	Communication with citizens
<b>5%</b>	More fitness and wellness facilities in St. Cloud	<b>5%</b>	Improved street maintenance
<b>4%</b>	Communication with citizens	<b>5%</b>	Expand recreational facilities
<b>4%</b>	Expand recreational programs	<b>4%</b>	Create more open spaces and parks
<b>2%</b>	Build more housing	<b>0%</b>	Improve garbage collection services
<b>2%</b>	Improve garbage collection		

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT ST. CLOUD

Residents were asked about the sources of information they have used to receive information about the city of St. Cloud. Most results were fairly similar to the 2003 results.

### 2004

**83%** - Osceola News Gazette

**66%** - St. Cloud "In the News"  
**59%** - Orlando Sentinel  
**44%** - Public Access TV channel 9

**29%** - Dateline newsletter  
**20%** - Internet ([www.stcloud.org](http://www.stcloud.org))  
**13%** - Radio  
**10%** - Chamber of Commerce

### 2003

**85%** - Osceola News Gazette

**63%** - Orlando Sentinel  
**60%** - St. Cloud "In the News"  
**41%** - Public Access TV channel 9

**25%** - Dateline newsletter  
**23%** - Internet ([www.stcloud.org](http://www.stcloud.org))  
**14%** - Chamber of Commerce  
**12%** - Radio

### 2002

**81%** - Osceola News Gazette

**59%** - Orlando Sentinel  
**52%** - Dateline newsletter

**42%** - Public Access TV channel 9  
**29%** - St. Cloud "In the News"

**11%** - Internet ([www.stcloud.org](http://www.stcloud.org))  
**9%** - Chamber of Commerce  
**7%** - Radio

In terms of media uses and sources of information, several conclusions are clear:

- The Osceola News-Gazette remains the source used by the most persons [83%] responding to the survey. In terms of being used by the most residents, it leads the pack.
- The Orlando Sentinel and 'St. Cloud In the News' newsletter were also reported to be used by more than half of responding residents. This is still very significant exposure.
- The next most significant usage was for public access TV 9, and for the Dateline Newsletter. More than one in four persons used these as sources of information about the city. Reported use of the Dateline Newsletter dropped by half.
- Reported use of the St. Cloud Internet remains at about one in five city residents.

**Business owners** – Compared to the overall survey results, business owners had only one significant difference. 26% reported using Chamber of Commerce information, compared to 10% of the general population. This is a similar result to past surveys.

## CITY GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION

Residents were asked whether they had attended, or watched on television, specific city-related meetings in the past twelve months.

### 2004

**49%** - City Council meetings

**12%** - Advisory Board meetings

**8%** - Organizational meetings

**2%** - Breakfast with the Mayor

### 2003

**47%** - City Council meetings

**12%** - Advisory Board meetings

**6%** - Organizational meetings

**2%** - Breakfast with the Mayor

### 2002

**44%** - City Council meetings

**9%** - Advisory Board meetings

**5%** - Breakfast with the Mayor

**1%** - Organizational meetings

There were no significant changes from 2002 to 2004.

Business owners were slightly more likely than the general population to have attended a City Council or Advisory Board meeting.

## RESIDENT COMMENTS

While statistics are invaluable in determining the number of citizens that hold different points of view about St. Cloud, written comments provide an indication of the intensity of their feelings, and insight on other subjects not specifically covered in the survey questions.

These comments are representative of those on the surveys; however, they are not intended to be measured quantitatively. For example, if one subject received eight comments and another four, this does NOT mean that one was necessarily mentioned twice as often as the other, or that it is somehow twice as important.

## IMPROVEMENTS AND TAXES

Residents were asked to describe which new or improved services, if any, provided by the City of St. Cloud, that they would be willing to support by paying additional taxes.

The most common answer to this question, in 2004 as in both previous years, requested no new taxes or fees! The reasons provided for this opinion were similar to previous survey responses:

- Residents already pay a sufficient amount of taxes
- Current tax revenues should be utilized more wisely and/or efficiently
- Developers and businesses who benefit from new construction should pay to develop the necessary infrastructure for growth

Here are several typical comments about the possibility of new taxes to fund additional services:

- *"If we bring in more businesses to the City of St. Cloud the people would not have to support additional fees and/or taxes.*
- *"I would only support additional fees & taxes if there is some thought & common sense planning into any new or improved services."*

Despite these feelings, some residents would be willing to fund certain improvements with taxation or other fees. A typical comment was:

- *"We would support the City of St. Cloud by paying additional fees or taxes, any improvements that would enhance the quality of living here while maintaining its small town atmosphere."*

The most frequent requests were for:

- improved traffic flow and better roads
- city beautification and code enforcement, and dealing with the implications of development
- *"Anything pertaining to our roads & traffic flow."*
- *"Improve drainage, so roads don't flood."*
- *"Improve/changes in traffic flow throughout the city."*
- *"A city beautification tax. To improve the appearance of the city."*
- *"I would be inning to pay higher taxes to support the purchase of open spaces or for the preservation of ranch land/farms I don't want to find myself living in the country seeing that the only things being raised are new buildings."*

While traffic and road conditions have been citizen concerns since the first survey in 2002, overall concern for these areas appears to be increasing. Many more comments about traffic appear later in the report.

The same is true for the concern about development and the overall appearance of St. Cloud – some concerns have been mentioned since the 2002 citizen survey, but apprehension about the appearance and growth of the city seems to be increasing.

- *“Continue with the beautification process in downtown and also by adding (or repairing) sidewalks. This would enhance the ‘small town’ atmosphere which we have enjoyed for many years.”*
- *“I would like to see the image of downtown cleaned up. I don’t think we represent a hometown image with this kind of atmosphere. Maybe if we could help others on 192 with cleaning up their businesses, especially the run down areas.”*
- *“There are too many unkempt buildings, lots, houses & businesses. Junk & debris around yards & businesses need to be removed. New Paint & signs on businesses.”*
- *“City Beautification”*
- *“I would love to see a beautification effort – we have so much to offer but the houses are in neglect and nothing is being done – half of the homes just driving to downtown look like Sanford & Sons live there.”*
- *“Limit building of homes & developments. We are a bedroom community but I see that fading fast.”*
- *“Need more roads and less development until roads, schools have caught up.”*
- *“The appearance of the city needs to be improved, too many used car dealerships & poor up-keep on frontage properties. The city needs to landscape 192 & the downtown area.”*
- *“You build all these housing & apartments but no schools, no sidewalks for the kids that have to walk to school.”*
- *“The country like atmosphere although with continuous homes being built & trees being town down for this building it is taking away this atmosphere. Please consider a hold on additional communities. We do not have the roads to support more traffic nor do we have the stores to support additional people & schools to support additional students.”*

Other services for which some citizens would be willing to pay additional taxes or fees include:

- additional or upgraded police and emergency services
- More and/or improved schools
- Controlling growth and development
- improved water quality

Several representative comments include:

- *"Inadequate funding for schools to keep down class size and eliminate 'temporary facilities.'"*
- *"Improving the quality of the education provided in public schools by reducing class sizes & promoting honors classes."*
- *"Keeping local police equipped with whatever is needed to fully do jobs in competitive manner with other outside agencies & protect them from criminals who obviously have more equipment & advanced technology than oftentimes our own police do."*

As in both previous surveys, some residents felt that investing in police and emergency services would be a worthy use of new tax revenue.

The survey results show some dissatisfaction with the overall quality of education and class sizes on St. Cloud. Paying for educational improvements were among the most frequent reasons residents might agree to additional fees or taxes.

## WHAT RESIDENTS LIKE ABOUT ST. CLOUD

What did residents say when asked what they like most about living in St. Cloud?

Overwhelmingly, for the third consecutive year, the most common response was St. Cloud's 'small town atmosphere.' The next most frequent responses are that St. Cloud has a small town atmosphere.

- *"The pace! The friendliness, and the weather. Everything is close for shopping, but we need more businesses."*
- *"I love having the small town events – Spring Fling, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc. I like having easy access to the stores and restaurants."*
- *"It would be the people not only those in my neighborhood but people in every walk of daily life. People in St. Cloud are bonded to each other. They are friendly and always willing to give a helping hand. It is a wonderful thing to live around happy people."*
- *"Our atmosphere in our little village is like one-step below heaven-friendly, warm, courteous to one another."*
- *"Small town, family oriented" life. We need many more "Family Recreational Programs" where we have families participating together instead of "adult programs" and "youth programs." The next step beyond "Celebrating Small Town Life" is "Celebrating Family Life" This...will cure a lot of our societies' problems - let St Cloud "Lead the Way."*
- *"I moved here to better the lives of my family and hopefully find a job that fits my qualifications. It's peaceful & friendly."*
- *"Our wonderful neighborhood (the 'state' streets) the different style homes, eclectic mix of people, young & old, our beautiful downtown & lakefront."*
- *"We enjoy living near the lake and downtown and we see that the city is striving to improve those two areas. We enjoy being able to walk down town and to the lake to enjoy different events the city has to offer."*

Many other residents value St. Cloud for closely-related aspects, including its relative peace and quiet, its location, the generally-favorable weather, and its central location.

The vast majority of comments about St. Cloud government were positive, complimenting government communication, responsiveness, and swift reaction to hurricane cleanup operations.

- *"I like the innovative vision our City government has had over the years, such as Access St. Cloud, the lakefront, Cyber Spot, economic development, etc."*
- *"Government is much more responsive than Kissimmee although city council members never answer their e-mail."*
- *"City meeting on Cable 9—Thanks."*
- *"I like the way the council makes their meetings & information available to all citizens. It makes you feel a part of the city."*
- *"Fairly progressive government."*
- *"Our city council. I have never been exposed to a more concerned and caring group. Yes, there are times when they cannot accommodate everyone's wishes but responses are ALWAYS polite and professional. And our mayor should get a medal for keeping his cool so well!"*
- *"We as seniors really feel respected & encouraged by our city officials as well as our police & fire depts."*
- *"A genuine sense of concern from the City Council."*
- *"Increase surveys—ask more questions about the city on a more frequent basis. For example, do the parks & rec. survey every 6 months; traffic every year. Also—send out survey results and progress reports throughout the year."*
- *"I guess St. Cloud is one of Florida's best kept secrets. We have a fine sense of the cultural offerings with a fine library, a small but excellent art and drama center. Our downtown center is in constant change for the better and new restaurants continue to come our way. We have an energized Mayor. Rare indeed. Our city government building catapulted St. Cloud to a professional arena. Residents have a new sense of pride. It is noticeable in how they respond to the election process, how they care for their homes and schools and how they react at public functions. Guess you can tell we are very happy here."*
- *"I feel our mayor and council are doing their best to help our citizens."*
- *"We appreciate City Council for all of their hard work and dedication to St. Cloud and its citizens. Thank you very much to all of you and your families."*
- *"Thank you to the St. Cloud Police Dept and Chief Kelly for making us feel that you really do care about our community and its citizens."*

- *“We moved to St. Cloud from Palm Beach County FL. After extensive research throughout central Florida, we chose St. Cloud. We enjoy the small town atmosphere, affordable housing, and community activities. The Downtown and Lakefront events support the small town quality of living here in St. Cloud. Our recent move to St. Cloud is something we have not regretted, and we look forward to raising our children here.”*
- *“Overall the city has made great strides in improving the quality of life in St. Cloud.”*
- *“I like still having a small town feeling for now. – But I know there is growth all around us.”*

## Hurricanes

With the number and magnitude of hurricanes experienced in our area during 2004, this was a new and significant issue on the minds of many citizens. However, the vast number of comments praised the reaction and follow-up of the city to the hurricane problems.

- *"After the hurricanes, I appreciated everyone's helpfulness. The contacts I've had with city offices/employees have always been professional and pleasant."*
- *"I believe the city did an outstanding job of working through the hurricane recovery process—an enormous task well done, by people going above and beyond—as bad as it was, it was one of the best things to happen to my neighborhood, and a truly great experience in my life."*
- *"Because I don't live in the town year-around, I'd like to comment the city and all of it's employees for their response to the number and severity of hurricanes and storms that came thru the area. The town's website was an invaluable source of information, so that I know what was happening at the time."*
- *"From everything I've seen and read, the city and its people were prepared for the hurricanes, & performed outstanding in dealing with the aftermath and cleanup effort. I'd like to thank everyone for their efforts, knowing that many of these employees also had to deal with damage to their houses."*
- *"The response by the city of St. Cloud to the 3 hurricanes was amazing. I was very impressed by the clean-up efforts & was also impressed by the briefings on TV. The city officials showed real concern for the residents of St. Cloud and Osceola County."*
- *"Words cannot express how impressed I was with all the work & cleanup after the storms. Neighbors would return home & let me know about blocked roads, downed lines but within a day or just several hours the ways were cleared. I found the mobilization of town crews, electric & cable superb. Listening to friends & coworkers discussing their towns and problems reinforced my choice of new "home" town. Some people think I am living in the boonies but I am always proud to say I live in St. Cloud!!"*
- *"I know everyone worked very hard during the hurricanes. We are all grateful for everything that everyone has done for us."*
- *"Hurricane Season led us to a discovery-city has no way of communicating with us. All info on TV/radio was about counties-we needed to know if our water was safe to drink. This needs to be worked on before next season. Otherwise, city hurricane response was great."*

## **WHAT RESIDENTS DISLIKE OR WOULD CHANGE ABOUT ST. CLOUD**

When asked what they liked least about living in St. Cloud, or what they would change or improve, several areas were mentioned by a significant number of residents.

Inclusion of these comments is not intended to be overly critical of the city, but rather to provide a balanced portrait of the areas where some residents feel that room for improvement exists.

Many of the comments continue to reflect the paradox of a developing small town. People long to cling to the 'small town atmosphere,' but yet request amenities that require at least some measure of growth.

## Traffic

While it has been a concern throughout the past two years, the number of negative comments relating to traffic problems increased significantly in 2004. As evidenced by both the survey results and these comments, this would appear to be a problem that many residents perceive as continually getting worse.

- *"The amount of traffic. We need more traffic lights. We have a lot of speeders and careless drivers."*
- *"Traffic is rapidly approaching gridlock and the city leaders seem to want development at any cost. By any cost I mean overcrowding, traffic gridlock and overrunning services."*
- *"Traffic is a bear. [Especially] The lack of roads linking east to west."*
- *"Instead of the traffic lights working independent of each other, the lights should be synchronized to the speed limits. That allows traffic to move more freely. This system works in large and small cities all over the country."*
- *"Lake Shore Blvd., which should be called St. Cloud Bypass! Who in their right mind would encourage heavy traffic by increasing the speed limit? One stop sign for 12 miles and all of this in a St. Cloud Recreational area. There is no police during the rush hour traffic but they are there on the weekends."*
- *"The way cars are driving along the lake front road is much too fast and police should issue tickets. I almost got hit by one of those fast drivers when I stopped on the road for a moment to pick up a big turtle in the road and carried it to the lake."*
- *"The traffic & the lack of traffic lights obedience...and no enforcement of the law...like red-light-running!! It's critical to safety."*
- *"Rush hour traffic, but you have that everywhere. Would be nice to have a Northbound entry to Turnpike."*

The same is true for concerns about growth and development. Although these concerns have been expressed since the initial survey in 2002, they have become more frequent and outspoken in this 2004 survey. Closely connected with concerns about growth are:

- feelings about the lack of a perceived 'small town atmosphere'
- perceived lack of code enforcement leading to some areas having a run down appearance
- perceptions of needs being larger than the infrastructure available to support residents
- perceptions about the loss of open spaces and undeveloped land

Following are some representative comments from residents on this subject:

- *"It is getting very crowded – especially businesses. Water will be getting scarce soon and I don't see much urgency in developing new resources."*
- *"I've only been here a year in November but am amazed at what appears to be rapid growth. I don't want to see the country/small town side pushed back to make way for too many homes & businesses."*
- *"Too much development on 192. Soon we will look like Kissimmee which is UGLY."*
- *"It looks old, dirty (in some areas) and lost in time."*
- *"I can't stand living here. I want out. I am reminded of this every time I'm waiting for yet another cycle of the traffic light in hopes that I might make it through the intersection next time. I am reminded of this every time I pass by what used to be a nice grove or pasture and now has tractors and bulldozers plotting out the next 'ideal' community."*
- *"I really like Saint Cloud, but with thousands of more houses on the books to be built, along with the shopping centers in my backyard & the hoards of traffic jams, I'm leaving next year. I am building a house in an area where small town living really still exists."*
- *"Growth and annexation are necessary for tax-base but downtown area still looks bad and city does not have infrastructure to support all its dreams."*
- *"There appear to be no plans for infrastructure."*
- *"Can we handle all the growth so fast? You say (at the council meetings) that growth is good. Who is it good for? Certainly not the citizens, who have to fight the already crowded roads and have our kids in crowded class rooms."*
- *"It's growing too fast. We expect some growth but our quality of life is/will be affected by it."*
- *"More & more areas are being developed into condos & apartments."*

Of course, not all development would be perceived as negative.

- *“All of the new buildings downtown look so nice. It always seems like someone is always working on something, which show dedication to make this a great little town to live in.”*
- *“I think the greatest thing that St. Cloud can do is to provide commercial development, shops, restaurants, etc. at the lakefront. This would provide a place for people to gather for fresh breezes and waterfront views.”*
- *“Am thrilled with the downtown beautification going on. It looks great! The murals around are wonderful. Keep up the good work.”*
- *“The city of St. Cloud needs to be updated big time! There is nothing in St. Cloud.”*

Certain types of expanded shopping and dining opportunities would also be welcomed by many residents.

### **Lack of Shopping, Entertainment, and Restaurants**

As in the last two surveys, resident comments perceived few restaurant choices other than fast food in St. Cloud, and limited choices for shopping [other than Wal-Mart]. Not only would many residents appreciate the convenience of expanded dining and shopping options within St. Cloud, they would also like to be able to spend their money in the city, not in Kissimmee, Orlando, or elsewhere.

- *"Lack of restaurants (sit down, not take out). If we had restaurants we would be helping the city with taxes from these establishments as well as providing local jobs for residents. Lack of a retail store such as Target. Wal-Mart appears to have a monopoly on this city. An additional department store will provide additional jobs & taxes. Again, a plus & win."*
- *"If we had a Target, Outback, Chili's, or TJ Maxx (more shopping), I'd never drive to Orlando."*
- *"I would love to see downtown look more like Park Avenue in Winter Park. There are a lot of opportunities for growth & revitalization, and downtown St. Cloud could very well become on heck of a neat business district with more stores & businesses, parks."*
- *"We would like to see a few more stores go in...specifically Target, Joann Fabrics or Michaels, Office Supply Store, & Best Buys or some kind of technology store. While we know we are trying to preserve a small town atmosphere it is so nice when we don't have to leave St. Cloud & drive 20 minutes to shop. Plus, higher end stores help the quality of living. Also, a bookstore with a coffee shop!"*
- *"Winter Park I love! All the newer shops, outside cafes, modern looking, everything is up scale!"*
- *"We need more chain restaurants, for example a Ruby Tuesday or Outback Steakhouse."*
- *"Lack of restaurants...I tire of cooking every night and just how much Wendy's/Sonic can we eat?"*
- *"There is not enough shopping & up-scale restaurants. The city continues to bring fast-food restaurants in to the city. This is not a way to promote St. Cloud as an active city or healthy."*
- *"Only a few good restaurants. Would love to see something like Red Lobster or Olive Garden or Panera Bread or Cracker Barrel. Also would love to see a Target come in, and more development on the east side of St. Cloud."*
- *"There is no movie theater, bowling alley, skating rink for the young people. There should be a YMCA or YWCA in St. Cloud, not Kissimmee."*
- *"There are no restaurants and bars here, nothing to do unless you go to Orlando."*
- *"Too far to shopping Mall & restaurants such as Perkins, Sweet Tomatoes, Chili's (not too expensive but not mom & pop places.)"*
- *"Having to travel long distance to mall. Choices for shopping at quality department stores etc. are limited."*
- *"Could use a few more restaurants or at least a greater variety."*

## Lack of Good Paying Jobs

An ongoing observations involves many resident's wishes for additional employment opportunities in St. Cloud. Of course, this would require additional growth and development, which not everyone favors.

- *"The extremely high cost of living versus the rate of pay at jobs. How anyone can pay \$130,000 dollars for a 'fixerup' home and work for 9 dollars an hour is beyond me."*
- *"Abundance of low paying jobs attract low-income families where generally (not always) – education is not a priority. Lack of parental involvement – (always working, never home etc.) affects child's behavior/performance in school which impacts everyone. Community needs to be more involved in the schools!"*
- *"The area's average household income levels & lack of high paying job availabilities."*
- *"We need more non-tourist dependant businesses in St. Cloud. Higher paying technical jobs. For example, when Lockheed Martin is awarded a contract, they are required to subcontract a portion of the work out to other businesses. Why doesn't St. Cloud take advantage of this by giving tax incentives to potential subcontractors that provide support to Lockheed Martin's awarded contracts. These are high dollar jobs that would generate a sustainable revenue to the city, as well as provide high income job opportunities to the citizens. Tax incentives for these types of businesses, to set-up shop in St. Cloud, would bring a return of higher tax revenue to the city. In addition, it would attract employees of these businesses to live in our quality community."*
- *"We would not like St. Cloud to become like Kissimmee, it would be better served to become something like Winter Park, which seems a closer comparison. St. Cloud could then encourage higher paid jobs that would contribute to the economy. This would then also bring good businesses to the area which would ultimately help the value of our lives as well as our homes."*
- *"We need better paying jobs in the area to keep the place respectful."*

## Safety and Security

While the survey results indicate that most residents feel secure in St. Cloud, some concerns about crime and drugs remain.

- *"The most important item I dislike about St. Cloud is the rampant drug problem that exists in our city. While we put a beautiful face on ourselves, just below the surface is an insidious tragedy. When my children and their friends tell me drugs are readily available on every street in St. Cloud, that really concerns me."*
- *"Something needs to be done to control crime in the down town area more emphasis on foot or bicycle patrols, a re-opening of a down town police office. The lake front is getting bad too. More patrols there."*
- *"Even with the revitalization of downtown St. Cloud, I am reluctant to dine and shop there with my family, as I do not feel safe. There seems to be a high number of vagrants, perhaps half-way houses, undesirable loiterers, dilapidated buildings that make me feel unsafe. Also, lack of parking lots to attend events, keep me from attending."*
- *"In the last 5 years crime in this town has grown. I would like to see more for the young people to do i.e.; bowling alley, movie complex game room civic involvement. There have been too many young people doing crime and drugs. Do something to get rid of the drug problem!"*
- *"More police in areas of schools too much trouble, littering and property destruction in school areas, too much crime."*
- *"Is a good place but the city has to stop drug dealers around downtown."*

## SUMMARY

*“Keep up the good work! We are very pleased with the direction St. Cloud is headed. The city council, police, and fire personnel all do a great job and seem to really care about the residents of St. Cloud.”*

*“More law enforcement and code enforcement is the only thing that is going to save our town - it gets worse every year. St. Cloud is starting to look very slummy and there is too much crime!”*

Based on this third resident survey, how do residents perceive the strengths of St. Cloud, and what are the areas that citizens believe would benefit from the most improvement?

Our judgment for evaluating the statistical results is that:

- **any percentage of about 70% or more for combined totals of ‘excellent’ and ‘good,’ [or ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’]**

should be considered a significant strength for the city.

## **STRENGTHS of ST. CLOUD**

These are the strengths of St. Cloud, as identified by the citizens responding to the survey. There is much in these results in which the city can take pride.

- Being a good place to raise a family remains a major strength of St. Cloud. 92% of all survey respondents agreed with this as an important aspect of the city.
- City employees scored high - 90% agreed that the city provides good overall service to residents, and 84% agreed that St. Cloud city employees are generally responsive and professional. While comparable data to other municipalities is not available, providing service which is satisfactory to 90% of residents would seem to be a superb rating.
- Significant strength was also demonstrated in information and communications, as 78% agreed that the city generally does a good job of seeking comments from residents, and 77% believes that the city provides good or excellent information
- The emergency and public safety services of St. Cloud – police, fire department, and EMS – were considered responsive and professional by 86% or more residents
- 72% of responding residents agreed that St. Cloud has a relatively low cost of living.
- Citizens also gave high marks to overall maintenance of parks and recreation facilities again received high marks from 84% of citizens in the survey.
- The quality of library facilities and services in St. Cloud was praised by more than 80% of residents. Many residents apparently both use and appreciate their library.
- The amount of senior citizens programs in the city was cited as a strength by 81% of responding residents.
- In terms of perceptions about personal safety, 87% or more residents felt safe in all of the locations within St. Cloud that were mentioned on the survey. For most locations, the total percentage of citizens who felt safe was over 90%.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ST. CLOUD

Just as criteria were devised to determine the primary strengths of St. Cloud, similar criteria must be used to determine the areas on the survey where residents felt that the most potential for improvement exists. In this survey, these will be questions where:

- **the totals of 'excellent' and 'good' [or 'Strongly agree' and 'agree'] are less than 50% for all responses.**

Two related categories led the way with the fewest overall positive responses:

- When rating the variety and quality of restaurants in city, 60% indicated these choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'
- Also, when rating the variety of shops and stores in the city 61% felt that the current available choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'

Two other important areas where many residents found current conditions lacking involved traffic, roads, and drinking water quality.

- The overall traffic flow and driving conditions in St. Cloud were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 64% of responding residents. This is on a downward trend, as it is the least positive response in the three years of the survey
- The quality of St. Cloud drinking water was considered to be 'fair' or 'poor' by 50% of responding residents.

Education – related areas were often rated below average in many of the survey questions.

- The most critical area for education in the survey related to school class sizes. 63% rated class size in St. Cloud schools as 'fair' or 'poor.'
- The overall positive rating of schools in St. Cloud just reached 51%
- The quality of day care in St. Cloud was rated 'fair' or 'poor' by 53% of respondents
- The availability of after school activities in St. Cloud was rated 'fair' or 'poor' by 53% of respondents

There appears to be an increasing trend of concern about educational and youth-related activities in the city.

## PRIORITIES FOR ST. CLOUD

This series of three surveys helps St. Cloud track changes in citizen perceptions over time, provide a clear indication about what the citizens responding to the survey feel are the city's stronger and weaker points, and give some indications of what they believe to be some of the primary concerns that should be priorities for the city.

As any accurate survey would, the results highlight many triumphs achieved by the city – and many challenges still to be faced.

Among the many positive achievements:

- Police fire and EMS services were rated positively by 85% or more residents
- More than 90% of residents agree that St. Cloud is a good place to raise a family
- There has been a significant [22%] increase in the number of citizens who agree that the city does a good job of seeking comments from residents – 56% agreed in the 2002 survey, 78% agreed in 2004
- More than 65% of residents agree that St. Cloud government does a good job satisfying their concerns – a 15% improvement compared to 2002
- More than three in four residents rate the city government positively in the information it provides to residents. Positive response since 2002 has improved by a significant 10%
- Despite some increasing misgivings about education, half of responding residents rated St. Cloud schools as above average

The city has the ongoing challenge of maintaining a difficult balancing act between preserving a small-town feeling, while encouraging suitable development, bringing new shops and restaurants into the area, and expanding the economic opportunities for citizens. Naturally, this is a difficult task, and not all citizens will agree with each decision that is made.

Along with the many successes, there are some concerns of residents for the future:

- Poor water quality remains an issue - almost twice as many residents rate water quality 'poor' instead of 'excellent'
- Despite their desire to 'retain the small town atmosphere,' most residents would prefer additional options for shopping and dining within the city of St. Cloud. Fewer than 10% of residents rate the current shopping and dining options as 'excellent.' This result is consistent since 2002
- Only 4% rated traffic conditions in the city as 'excellent' - a strong indication of dissatisfaction. This is an ongoing problem that appears to be getting worse
- Rating the overall quality of schools showed a 10% decrease in positive perceptions since 2002

Many of these areas are beyond the direct control of the city – but still significantly impact the quality of life for residents

The priorities that residents felt most important for St. Cloud were:

- Preserve the small town atmosphere
- Improve traffic flow
- Attract more restaurants and shops
- Improve roads, water and sewer
- Attract more high paying jobs

## OPTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the opinions of citizens, the 2002, 2003, and 2004 surveys sponsored by the City of St. Cloud have improved channels of communication and perceptions of a responsive city government. An annual survey, open to all, where each citizen has the opportunity to express their opinion, contributes to a closer connection between residents and government. This is a tangible demonstration of the value that research brings to the city.

- *By clearly delineating the strengths of the city, St. Cloud can represent itself favorably and honestly to current and potential residents and businesses.*
- *By identifying areas where citizens and businesses see room for improvement, St. Cloud is in a more favorable position to address current or potential problems in a timely and effective fashion.*
- *By conducting a research activity each year, St. Cloud benefits from current, up-to-date information, which is more useful to citizens and government, and more accurate and credible.*

The city of St. Cloud has several research options for 2005 and beyond:

- **Continue conducting the citizen survey every year**

### ADVANTAGES:

- Most accurate and up to date
- The widest breadth of information can be determined
- Directly contacts each household and business in St. Cloud
- Questions can be revised extensively to reflect current issues and concerns
- Some questions need be asked only on alternate years

- **Continue the annual citizen survey, but sent only to a sampling of residents each year**

### ADVANTAGES:

- Reduce printing and mailing costs while obtaining updated information each year
- Continue receiving up to date information from citizens annually
- Lower cost than a survey sent to all residents, with little reduction in accuracy of results

- **Conduct Focus Groups**

ADVANTAGES:

- An excellent complement to the citizen survey
- Provide information not previously available from the survey
- Talk in small groups to specific residents and business owners
- Ability to talk in depth about specific topics of interest to the city and residents
- Ability to introduce and explain more complex issues and subjects than is possible in a mailed survey

One possibility would be to alternate between focus groups and a citizen survey every other year

+ + +

Market Trends Research appreciates the opportunity to again be of service to the City of St. Cloud. Please let us know if we may answer any questions about this information, or add value to this research in any other way.

**Market Trends Research may be reached at (727) 784-0967, or via our Web site at [www.MarketTrendsResearch.com](http://www.MarketTrendsResearch.com).**