
City of St. Cloud

2002 Citizen and Business Survey Research Report

MARKET ● TRENDS ● RESEARCH
INCORPORATED

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St. Cloud Citizen and Business Survey Executive Summary

Peter Dominowski
Market Trends Research, Inc.
January, 2003

- This survey was mailed during December of 2002. A total of 8,568 households and businesses in St. Cloud received the survey, and 2,574 [more than 30%] returned a usable survey by the December 31, 2002 deadline. This is an excellent response rate.
- Residents were asked to indicate the sources of information they used to find information about St. Cloud. The results were:

- **81%** - Osceola News Gazette
 - **59%** - Orlando Sentinel
 - **52%** - Dateline newsletter in utility bills
 - **42%** - Public Access TV channel 9
 - **29%** - St. Cloud "In the News"
- Residents were asked whether they had attended, or watched on television, specific city-related meetings in the past twelve months. The percentage of persons who participated in or views any of these activities at least once was:
 - **44%** - City Council meetings
 - **9%** - Advisory Board meetings
 - **5%** - Breakfast with the Mayor
 - **1%** - Organizational meetings
- The most utilized facilities in St. Cloud were:
 - Downtown – used by 82%
 - Activities at the Lake – used by 68%
 - Library – used by 61%
- 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 [49%], improving traffic flow [30%], attracting more restaurants and shops [30%], improving roads, water and sewer [26%], attracting more high paying jobs [26%], and reducing crime [25%].
- The strengths of St. Cloud, as identified in the survey:
 - most residents want the small town atmosphere of St. Cloud preserved. Nearly 90% of all survey respondents agreed with this as an important aspect of the city.
 - nearly 80% agreed that St. Cloud city employees are generally responsive and professional.
 - the emergency and public safety services of St. Cloud – police, fire department, and EMS – were considered responsive and professional by more than 80% of residents.
 - the overall maintenance of parks and recreation facilities received high marks from 85% of citizens in the survey.
 - the quality of library facilities and services was complimented by more than 82% of residents.
 - the overall cleanliness of city was praised by 80% of residents.
 - The overall character and personality of the city was considered a strength by 78% of residents. This connects closely with the small town atmosphere of St. Cloud.
 - The amount of senior citizens programs was cited as a strength by 77% of responding

residents.

- regarding personal safety, 85% or more of residents felt safe in all of the locations in St. Cloud mentioned on the survey.
- The areas that residents indicated needing most improvement in St. Cloud were:
 - the variety and quality of restaurants in city, 56% indicated these choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'
 - the variety of shops and stores in the city 58% felt that the current available choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'
 - the availability of event/banquet/meeting facilities was found lacking by 59% of responding residents.
 - the overall traffic flow and driving conditions in St. Cloud were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 55% of responding residents.
 - the quality of St. Cloud drinking water was considered to be 'fair' or 'poor' by 52% of responding residents.
 - fewer than half of responding residents – only 45% - agreed that schools in St. Cloud are above average. 69% rated class size in St. Cloud schools as 'fair' or 'poor.'
 - continuing education and vocational/technical programs were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 60% of citizens.
 - the quality and/or number of educational courses for seniors were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 53% of responding residents.

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MARKET ● TRENDS ● RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Market Trends Research, Inc. conducted a survey research project for the City of St. Cloud during December of 2002. The survey was mailed to all households and businesses located within the city.

A total of 8,568 persons and businesses received the survey, and 2,574 completed and returned a usable survey by the December 31, 2002 deadline. This is a return rate of more than 30%, an excellent response rate that is considerably above expectations.

Surveys that were illegible, returned blank, or that did not follow the instructions for answering 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, this means that if 57% of citizens indicate agreement with a question, the answer would be between 54% and 60% at least ninety-five out of one hundred times if this survey were to be duplicated. This 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 only 109 surveys from this segment of the population, the standard error for these totals are + or - 10%.

Since this survey is scheduled to be repeated over a minimum of three years, many of these questions will be repeated in order to discover any changes in attitudes, awareness, or behavior among residents and businesses in St. Cloud. This study will provide much usable information, but equally as important, it will act as a benchmark for future results.

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

Any significant difference in the response for these groups is noted in the analysis of the data.

Market Trends Research appreciates the opportunity to 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.

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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, these are the percentages of persons completing the survey:

Male	Female	Male & Female Together	Business Owner
26%	46%	23%	4%

When divided into male and female responses, the percentages compare to the St. Cloud population thusly:

Survey response: Male 40% - Female 60%
Population totals: Male 48% - Female 52%

Since business owners and managers in St. Cloud were identified, **any significant differences between the opinions of business owners and the total survey response will be noted in the report.** Keep in mind that there are just over one hundred responses from businesses, so the statistical significance of these results must be considered accordingly.

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Age

These are the age category percentages of the residents that completed the survey.

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
2%	14%	20%	19%	16%	16%	13%

The median age of the persons completing the survey was between 45 and 54.

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
6 years or younger	6.7% [<5 years]	8.2%
7 – 11 years old	7.1% [5-9 years]	6.3%
12 – 17 years old	13.9% [10-19 years]	8.1%
18 – 24 years old	5.5% [20-24 years]	6.4%
25 – 34 years old	13.6%	11.2%
35 – 44 years old	16.1%	15.2%
45 – 54 years old	11.1%	13.9%
55 – 64 years old	8.6%	12.1%
65 – 74 years old	8.5%	10.4%
75 years or older	8.9%	7.8%

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

- Females are slightly over-represented
- Males are slightly under-represented
- Ages 44 and under, and 75 and older slightly under-represented
- Ages 45 to 74 slightly over-represented

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Employment

Based on the classifications provided, here is how survey respondents described their employment.

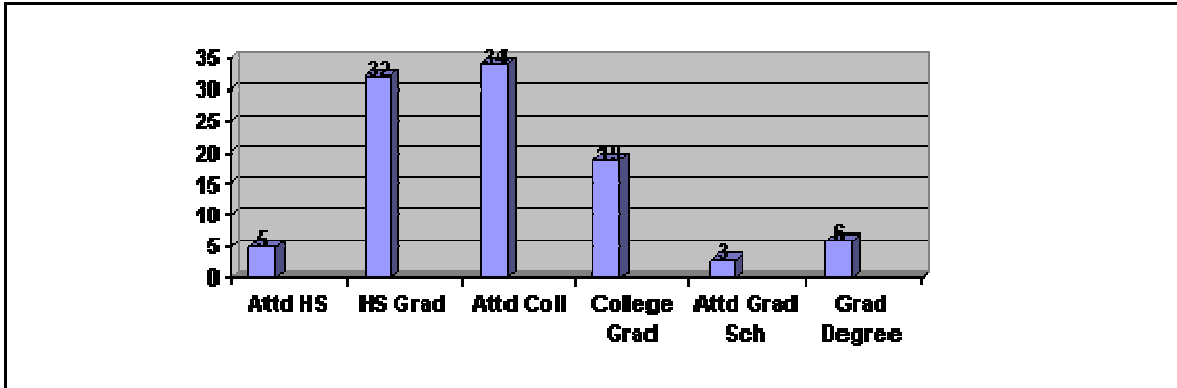
Professional	Management	Technical	Mid-management	Clerical
23%	8%	6%	4%	7%

Labor	Service	Self-employed	Retired	Not employed
4%	8%	7%	29%	4%

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Education

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

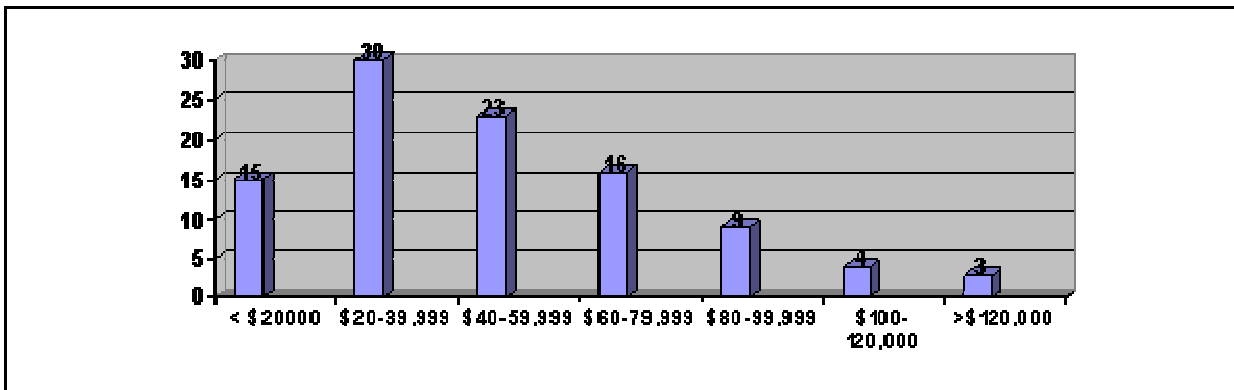


The average educational level of the persons returning the survey was attending college.

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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.

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LIVING CONDITIONS & RELATIONSHIP WITH ST. CLOUD

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

Home Ownership

Own	Rent	Live with family or friends	Other
88%	10%	1%	1%

The surveys were returned primarily by individuals who identified themselves as homeowners.

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Time Spent Living in St. Cloud

While responses came from brand new residents and from those living in St. Cloud for over forty years, on average, survey respondents had lived in St. Cloud for twelve years.

There were no significant differences in the survey results when comparing persons who had lived in St. Cloud for less than ten years, with those who have lived in the city longer than ten years.

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Other Family Members in St. Cloud

Do any family members who do not live with you also live in St. Cloud?

Yes	No
43%	56%

Well over forty percent of persons completing the survey claim to have other family members also living in the city. This may accentuate the close-knit aspect of the city in the experiences of many residents, and could be one reason for residents to desire to continue living in the city.

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Staying in St. Cloud

How likely are residents to continue living in St. Cloud for the next twelve months? More than 94% of those completing the survey indicate that they are very likely to remain living in St. Cloud for at least the next year. Only about 3% believe it likely that they will not be living in St. Cloud in a year. While new residents may move in, most of those currently living in St. Cloud

will apparently remain here next year.

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Resident Status

Full or part year St. Cloud resident

Full Year	Part Year
93%	7%

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

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Workplace Location

Taking into account the 34% of surveys returned by residents who are retired or not currently working, slightly less than one in three residents have their workplace located within the city of St. Cloud.

Workplace in St. Cloud	Workplace Not in St. Cloud
29%	71%

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Average Commuting Time

Residents who do not work in St. Cloud reported that their average commuting time to work on a typical day was thirty minutes. About 53% of residents who work outside of the city report their average commuting time as a half hour or less. Only about 2% indicate that they commute for an hour or more.

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INTERNET ACCESS

Do you have Internet access at home?

Yes	No
68%	32%

Slightly more than two-thirds of those completing the survey can access the Internet at their home. Only 51% of persons 55 and older had Internet access at home. More than 80% of persons younger than 55 have Internet access at home.

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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.** Questions are listed in the descending order, from most to least positive result, based on the mean [average] in this and in each section of the report.

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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%

Mean: 1.60

Median: 1.00

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

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%

Mean: 1.91

Median: 2.00

Overall, this result appears to be very positive, the average result is 'strongly agree,' and in total, about 80% agree that city employees are responsive and professional, and only 6% disagree.

Persons 55 and older are even more likely to respond positively to this question; as 80% 'strongly' or 'somewhat agree.' Conversely, persons 54 and younger responded slightly less positively.

St. Cloud is convenient to where I work

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
45%	28%	12%	8%	7%

Mean: 2.05

Median: 2.00

Nearly three in four persons agree that St. Cloud is convenient to the location of their employment.

Business owners – Not surprisingly, 80% of those who own or manage businesses in St. Cloud 'strongly agree' that they find it convenient to their workplace.

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%

Mean: 2.24

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.

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%

Mean: 2.45

Median: 2.00

Although this survey was designed to seek comments from residents, just over half agree that the city does a good job of soliciting citizen input. Two of three persons 55 and older 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed with this level of responsiveness.

It will be interesting to see if the reaction to this question changes as residents are provided with an annual survey for the next several years, and/or the city provides other avenues for citizen input.

Business owners – These opinions are less positive than for the survey as a whole. Only 45% 'strongly' or 'somewhat agree' that the city does a good job seeking their comments. However,

businesses are also slightly more likely to agree that the city satisfies the concerns expressed by its residents.

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%

Mean: 2.55

Median: 2.00

The responses to this question virtually mirror those that discuss the city seeking comments from residents. A bit over half the responding residents agree that St. Cloud does a good job satisfying their concerns.

St. Cloud schools are above average

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
15%	30%	32%	15%	8%

Mean: 2.72

Median: 3.00

Education is important in any city, and these questions demonstrate that the perceived quality of education in St. Cloud may not be among the strong points of the city. Fewer than half of responding residents rate St. Cloud schools as above average. This was the least positive response to any of the questions in this section of the survey.

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

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OPINIONS ABOUT CITY SERVICES & AMENITIES

These questions are 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 among participating residents.**

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

The St. Cloud Fire Department is responsive and professional

Strongly	Somewhat	Neither	Somewhat	Strongly
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agree	agree	agree nor disagree	disagree	disagree
63%	21%	14%	<1%	<1%

Mean: 1.54

Median: 1.00

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

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%

Mean: 1.56

Median: 1.00

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

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%

Mean: 1.73

Median: 1.00

Positive reaction to St. Cloud Police is also over 80%. The negatives are slightly higher, with about 8% 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%

Mean: 1.78

Median: 2.00

When presented as a general statement, there is considerable agreement that St. Cloud provides good overall service to residents, as 85% agree.

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SERVICES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. CLOUD

These questions 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.**

Quality of library facilities and services

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
31%	50%	16%	2%

Mean: 1.91

Median: 2.00

The St. Cloud library receives very high ratings; about one in three residents consider it 'excellent,' and more than three in four rate it positively.

Maintenance of city parks and recreation facilities

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
25%	60%	13%	2%

Mean: 1.92

Median: 2.00

More than three in four residents felt positively about parks and recreation facility maintenance.

Overall cleanliness of St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
21%	59%	18%	2%

Mean: 2.01

Median: 2.00

This data suggests that residents perceive St. Cloud to be a relatively clean city, as 80% rate its cleanliness to be 'excellent' or 'good.' Despite this result, many comments from residents indicate that some perceive code enforcement to be less than optimal. This will be discussed further later in the report, including comments from residents about what they like least about living in St. Cloud.

Amount of programs for seniors in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
24%	53%	20%	3%

Mean: 2.02

Median: 2.00

More than three in four residents believe that the amount of programs for seniors in St. Cloud is

either 'excellent' or 'good.'

Overall character and personality of the city

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
21%	57%	19%	3%

Mean: 2.04

Median: 2.00

This is a broad question, asking residents to evaluate the overall character and personality of St. Cloud. As with most of these ratings, the overall impression is positive; more than three in four residents rate the city 'good' or 'excellent' in this category. It should also be noted that while the overall result is positive, **more than twice as many residents felt the city's character and personality was 'good' rather than 'excellent.'** This means that room for improvement remains.

Overall variety and quality of housing options

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
17%	52%	25%	5%

Mean: 2.18

Median: 2.00

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

Business owners – They are slightly less likely than residents to respond positively to this question, as only 62% rate housing options to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

Overall variety and quality of recreational facilities and programs

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	54%	26%	4%

Mean: 2.19

Median: 2.00

More than two in three residents consider the overall variety and quality of recreational facilities and programs in St. Cloud positively.

Information about St. Cloud provided by city government

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
20%	47%	26%	6%

Mean: 2.18

Median: 2.00

More than two in three residents believe rate the city government positively in the information

it provides to residents. But as with many of these questions, note that the ratings of 'good' are more than twice that of the 'excellent' ratings.

Business owners – It may be that their expectations are higher, but business owners give the city a lower rating on this question. Only 57% say that the city does an 'excellent' or 'good' job at providing information about city government.

Overall quality of medical and hospital services in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
19%	47%	25%	8%

Mean: 2.24

Median: 2.00

Two in three respondents rate medical and hospital services in St. Cloud as 'excellent' or 'good.' Persons 55 and older rate these services about 10% higher, overall.

Physical appearance of the city

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
14%	51%	29%	6%

Mean: 2.29

Median: 2.00

About two in three rate St. Cloud's overall physical appearance positively.

Business owners – Only just over half [54%] of business owners rate St. Cloud as either 'excellent' or 'good' in this category.

Amount of youth programs in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	47%	27%	10%

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.'

Amount of health care services available in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
16%	46%	30%	9%

Mean: 2.32

Median: 2.00

Nearly two in three residents give a 'good' or 'excellent' rating to the amount of health care services available in St. Cloud. Persons younger than 55 give health care a slightly less positive overall rating.

Amount of cultural events in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
13%	47%	31%	9%

Mean: 2.37

Median: 2.00

While cultural events do not seem to be an area where St. Cloud excels, as residents gave the city a moderately positive rating, with 60% rating cultural events as 'excellent' or 'good.'

The following questions have less positive responses in the survey.

Quality of drinking water

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	40%	33%	19%

Mean: 2.62

Median: 3.00

Most of the responses were in the middle, with about twice as many rating water quality 'poor' instead of 'excellent.' This is also the first question in this series where the average response dips below 2.50%, and where the sum total of 'excellent' and 'good' responses fall below 50%. Persons over 55 were slightly more likely to find the quality of the water to be acceptable.

Overall traffic flow and driving conditions in St. Cloud

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6%	39%	38%	16%

Mean: 2.65

Median: 3.00

While it is difficult to determine a satisfactory score on this question without some historic data, the fact that only 6% of residents rated traffic conditions in the city as 'excellent' is a strong indication of dissatisfaction. More than twice as many respondents rated traffic and driving conditions as 'poor,' rather than 'excellent.' Virtually the same number described traffic conditions as 'good' and 'fair.'

Overall variety and quality of restaurants in the city

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	34%	37%	20%

Mean: 2.68

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. Residents under the age of 55 give particularly low ratings to the current availability of restaurants in St. Cloud.

Overall variety and quality of shops and stores in the city

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	33%	40%	19%

Mean: 2.68

Median: 3.00

These data are virtually identical to the results for restaurants. Clearly, 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.'

Availability of event/banquet/meeting facilities

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
8%	33%	42%	17%

Mean: 2.69

Median: 3.00

Availability of meeting and banquet facilities are rated similarly to the variety and quality of restaurants in St. Cloud; most responding residents the consider options only 'fair' or 'poor.'

Traffic problems, and a shortage of shopping and dining options top the list of characteristics about St. Cloud that residents would like to see improved, based on this set of questions.

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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.**

At home

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
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54%	42%	3%	1%
Mean: 1.51		Median: 1.00	

The highest levels of perceived safety by far are at individual's homes. Fewer than 5% are concerned for their safety at home.

In city government buildings

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
47%	50%	3%	<1%
Mean: 1.57		Median: 2.00	

Only about 3% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in city government buildings.

Downtown

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
29%	60%	9%	1%
Mean: 1.84		Median: 2.00	

About 10% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in downtown St. Cloud.

At the lakefront

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
25%	62%	12%	1%
Mean: 1.84		Median: 2.00	

About 13% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while at the lakefront.

In parks and recreation facilities

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
23%	63%	12%	1%
Mean: 1.92		Median: 2.00	

About 13% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in parks and recreation facilities.

In shopping centers

Very safe	Safe	Concerned for Safety	Very concerned for safety
24%	61%	13%	2%

Mean: 1.93

Median: 2.00

About 15% of responding residents have concerns about their safety while in shopping areas. Of the areas residents were asked about, these were they perceived to be the least safe.

The mean [average] result for each of these questions is under '2' on a four point scale, which is good. However, 10% to 15% 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.

Do responses to these questions about safety vary significantly based on age or gender? In general, they do not. The response from women varies only by a few percent for each question, and the data do not suggest that senior citizens in St. Cloud feel significantly different about these safety issues than does the general population.

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USE OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES and ACTIVITIES IN ST. CLOUD

Residents were asked which of the following facilities they or someone in their family had used during the past twelve months.

- 68% Activities at the Lake
- 61% Library
- 55% Festivals

More than half of the residents or their family members utilized these three facilities or activities. Just under half used one or more of the city parks, other than Veteran’s Park.

- 44% Other city parks

The remaining activities or facilities were utilized by about 25% or fewer residents and their

families in the past year.

- 26% Concerts
- 22% Community Center
- 22% Swimming Pool
- 21% Veterans Park
- 18% Ball Fields
- 14% Senior Center
- 3% Wheel Parks

In terms of frequency, this identifies the most utilized recreational facilities and activities in the city.

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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 schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
25%	49%	21%	5%

Mean: 2.07

Median: 2.00

Nearly three in four residents rate St. Cloud elementary schools to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

Private schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
19%	47%	27%	8%

Mean: 2.24

Median: 2.00

About one in three residents rate St. Cloud private schools to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

Public Middle schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
17%	45%	28%	9%

Mean: 2.30

Median: 2.00

The positive ratings of St. Cloud schools decrease as grade level increases. Only about one in three residents rate St. Cloud middle schools to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

Safety and security in schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
13%	45%	33%	8%

Mean: 2.37

Median: 2.00

Somewhat more than half of residents responding rated overall safety in schools to be 'excellent' or 'good. While the rating scales used are different, **it is interesting to note that these results would rank as the lowest if compared to the other questions about safety in different areas of St. Cloud.**

Public High schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
13%	42%	30%	14%

Mean: 2.46

Median: 2.00

Just over half of responding residents rate St. Cloud high schools to be 'excellent' or 'good.'

Overall quality of educational facilities

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	45%	36%	10%

Mean: 2.46

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 definitely show room for improvement in this area.

Business owners – They give a lower rating to the overall quality of educational facilities, as only 43% rate them as either 'excellent' or 'good.'

Child care and after-school activities

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	40%	35%	14%

Mean: 2.54

Median: 2.00

The opinions about child care and after school activities are neatly divided with about half of the responding residents rate them as 'excellent' or 'good,' and the other half rate them 'fair' or 'poor.'

Business owners – In this category, business owners score the child care facilities in St' Cloud more positively than residents; 65% rate them as either 'excellent' or 'good.'

Courses for Seniors

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	37%	36%	17%

Mean: 2.61

Median: 3.00

The response to this question is virtually split down the middle. Just fewer than half of the responding residents rate courses for seniors as 'excellent' or good,' and slightly more than half rate them 'fair' or 'poor.' This is the first question about education where the median response drops to 'fair.'

Continuing education courses

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
9%	31%	29%	31%

Mean: 2.82

Median: 3.00

Continuing education in St. Cloud scores poorly, as well over half the responding residents give it a 'fair' or 'poor' rating.

Vocational/Technical programs

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
10%	30%	28%	32%

Mean: 2.82

Median: 3.00

Vocational and technical programs also score poorly, with well over half the responding residents give it a 'fair' or 'poor' rating.

Class size in schools

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6%	26%	37%	31%

Mean: 2.94

Median: 3.00

Greater than 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.

Business owners – Although this is the lowest rated category in education by all residents, business owners rate it even lower, as only 20% say that class size in schools is either 'excellent' or 'good.'

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 St. Cloud.

Priorities – All Responding Residents

49% - Preserve the small town atmosphere

30% - Improve traffic flow

30% - Attract more restaurants and shops

26% - Improve roads, water and sewer

26% - Attract more high paying jobs

25% - Reduce crime

16% - Improve water quality/services/pressure

14% - City beautification

13% - Enhance the lakefront

12% - Downtown redevelopment

8% - Improved street maintenance

7% - Create more open spaces and parks

7% - Communication with citizens

4% - Expand recreational facilities

2% - Build more housing

1% - Improve garbage collection services

By a very large margin – 19% greater than the next most frequently mentioned priority – responding residents felt that **maintaining the small town atmosphere should be the most important priority for St. Cloud in the coming year. One-half of the surveys included this among their top priorities.**

The next two priorities – **improving traffic flow and attracting more restaurants and shops** - were mentioned with the same frequency. An interesting trend among the results is that residents appear to be much more in favor of specific types of commercial development, such as restaurants and shops, but generally opposed to much additional residential development, at least without corresponding expansion of infrastructure. Whether this is a realistic expectation remains to be seen.

The next group of three priorities were also mentioned with virtually the same frequency. They are: **improving roads, water, and sewer, attracting more high paying jobs, and reducing crime**. All were a top priority to about one in four of responding residents.

The above areas represent a reasonable consensus among at least one in four of the responding residents. The remaining priorities drew considerably lower response. The most significant of these were improving water quality, city beautification, enhancing the lakefront, and downtown redevelopment.

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.

These totals for business owners fall into similar categories, with totals that are not generally significantly different. Although it is the number one priority for both residents and businesses, the percentage of business owners or managers selecting 'preserving a small town atmosphere' is 13% less than that of residents.

Priorities – St. Cloud Business Owners or Managers

36 % - Preserve the small town atmosphere

36% - Improve traffic flow

31% - Reduce crime

27% - Attract more restaurants and shops

25% - Attract more high paying jobs

22% - Improve roads, water and sewer

16% - City beautification

14% - Improve water quality/services/pressure

13% - Enhance the lakefront

13% - Downtown redevelopment

6% - Build more housing

6% - Communication with citizens

5% - Improved street maintenance

5% - Expand recreational facilities

4% - Create more open spaces and parks

0% - Improve garbage collection services

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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.

81% - Osceola News Gazette

59% - Orlando Sentinel
52% - Dateline newsletter in utility bills

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

11% - Internet (www.stcloud.org)
9% - Chamber of Commerce
7% - Radio
4% - Main Street Bugler
2% - Water cooler News (city employees newsletter)
<1% - e-Better Place

In terms of media uses and sources of information, several clear distinctions emerge from the data.

The Osceola News-Gazette is the source used by the most persons [more than 80%] responding to the survey. In terms of being used by the most residents, it leads the pack.

The Orlando Sentinel and 'Dateline' utility 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 St. Cloud 'In the News.' More than one in four persons used these as sources of information about the city.

All other sources of city information do not compare with the others in terms of reach. They were used only by 11% or fewer of the responding resident population.

Business owners – Compared to the overall survey results, business owners had several different tendencies to use certain sources of information. 44% used the St. Cloud 'In the News,' and 28% Chamber of Commerce information.

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CITY GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION

Residents were asked whether they had attended, or watched on television, specific city-related

meetings in the past twelve months.

44% - City Council meetings

9% - Advisory Board meetings

5% - Breakfast with the Mayor

1% - Organizational meetings

While more than 40% of responding residents claimed to have attended or watched on television a St. Cloud City Council meeting, the remainder of the activities have been observed, in person or on television, by less than 10% of those responding to the survey.

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RESIDENT COMMENTS

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

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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.

Not surprisingly, a common answer to this question requested no new taxes! The reasons provided for this opinion were most commonly:

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

Here are several typical comments about the possibility of new taxes:

"We pay enough taxes! We need better planning! When people see tax dollars wasted we are not going to support more taxes until we see the results of what the city now has."

"They are not wise at spending what is already paid. I certainly don't want to pay more!"

"Taxes are higher than in South Florida where salaries and real estate values are higher."

"Let developers help to pay for new schools."

"Stop expanding until we get more schools – let the developers pay, since they get the money for new housing."

Among the residents willing to consider supporting improvements with taxation, the most frequent requests were for:

- better schools and smaller class sizes
- road improvement and repairs
- improved traffic flow and conditions
- improved water quality
- crime reduction/additional police

Paying for educational improvements were the most frequent reasons residents might be willing to fund with additional of tax dollars:

"Better schools and more professional teachers."

"Schools and education are vital! SCMS and SCHS are deplorable! There is little-to-no atmosphere to entice learning. Both are inadequate. NO PORT-O-CABINS! They are unacceptable! Children deserve a classroom!"

"I would like to see a school like TECO in St. Cloud for adults to get training for better jobs."

"We need more after school activities and recreational things for kids. There isn't anything for them to do."

"Better schools bring more educated people to a city. Education brings living standards to a higher level."

"More teachers in high schools with smaller classes – more one on one attention."

"More money for teacher salaries and benefits and activities for children."

"Lowering class sizes in schools and building new schools."

"We need more money for education – that should be a priority."

"Any program involved with helping children, i.e. daycare, after school programs, athletic programs, special Olympics, etc."

"Build the new schools before the overcrowding happens. Learn from the other cities who went through the development boom St. Cloud is on the verge of facing."

Other residents felt that investing in police and emergency services would be a worthy use of new tax revenue:

"I'd pay more for police who can solve crimes and not just issue traffic tickets!"

"Additional police, especially for downtown. I'd like to see police walk the downtown area at night."

"We need more police patrols around the high school!"

"I would gladly pay added taxes for increased or more efficient law enforcement to rid St.

Cloud of drugs."

"Improved traffic law enforcement to catch speeders and red light runners."

"I'd pay more to increase the pay of police and firefighters."

"More police and sheriff recruits to improve safety and security."

"More police to maintain traffic and keep us safe on the road, maybe have a substation downtown – to maintain peace and try to clean up the area from riff-raff."

"Better fire and EMS protection. I would like to see both paramedic units always in service. I would like more firefighters."

Other comments favored using any additional tax revenue to improve roads and traffic, purchase green space not to be developed, provide a more visually appealing environment, and improve water quality.

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Roads and Traffic

"Adding an extra entrance to the turnpike is an excellent idea."

"Better roads and flow of traffic."

"Added access to Florida Turnpike near Kissimmee Park Road or Old Canoe Creek Road."

Traffic flow improvement – drive down Kissimmee Park Road at rush hour – town council should be ashamed – allowing all those apartments to be built with no road improvements!"

"Better alternative routes to alleviate constant, heavy traffic jams; light rail or other transit alternatives."

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Open Space and City Beautification

"Purchase of open space – land that will never be developed, not even for parks."

"Beautification of the town, while preserving our history and nature."

"City beautification – I believe when things look nice people take more pride in where they live and feel better overall."

"Get the city out of the land development business and put that money toward park acquisitions."

"The Lakefront is a treasure. A magnet for families, boaters, joggers, and civic events. So far it's been safe from the ravages of bad planning...the public should provide input to help create a Master Plan for future improvements."

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Water

"Road, water, and sewer improvements."

"Access to reclaimed water for residential irrigation."

"Improved drinking water and the use of reclaimed water in existing communities."

"Our water here is slime and also has a bad odor."

"Improved water quality. I can smell the chlorine when I shower and brush my teeth."

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WHAT RESIDENTS LIKE ABOUT ST. CLOUD

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

Overwhelmingly, the most common response was St. Cloud's 'small town atmosphere.' The next most frequent responses are that St. Cloud is 'a quiet place,' with 'friendly people,' both of which are characteristics many would associate with a small town atmosphere.

"Relaxed atmosphere, not as hectic as Orlando or Kissimmee."

"St. Cloud has not fallen into the trap of bigger is better. Better comes from controlled and managed growth with a purpose. We have this and need to keep it. Manage change, don't be managed by it."

"St. Cloud is a wonderful place to live because it is mainly quiet without all the hustle and bustle you get in bigger cities. I'm very satisfied with the cost of living and feel the city has done a wonderful job in all aspects."

"It's nice to have so many 'free' things to do with the kids."

"We love St. Cloud and plan to grow old here. Great place to raise kids, too."

"I like living here, it is a good place for my son and daughter to grow up. It is a nice place, and I like the small town."

"We chose St. Cloud because of its charm and it is a true community. I am so thrilled that the city has taken such an interest in the growth of our town. I feel assured that St. Cloud will remain the 'community' we moved to."

"It has the appeal and setting of a Norman Rockwell painting! Also, the people of St. Cloud make it a special place to live."

"The small town community feel. I appreciate that progress is good for St. Cloud, but I like that tourism hasn't crowded our town."

"Small town atmosphere, beautiful neighborhoods, less traffic than Orlando, beautiful weather."

"Please don't turn St. Cloud into another Kissimmee. We love our country living!"

"Convenient access to parks, the city pool, and the Turnpike."

A significant number of residents also mentioned that St. Cloud was 'conveniently located,' 'safe,' and had 'good weather.'

Note that these positives reflect only the comments made by respondents. The many other aspects of St. Cloud that citizens rated positively are delineated throughout the report.

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WHAT RESIDENTS DISLIKE 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. Each of these correspond with the results of the statistical portion of the survey.

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Lack of Shopping, Entertainment, and Restaurants

Resident comments perceived few restaurant choices other than fast food in St. Cloud, and extremely limited choices for shopping. Not only would many resident 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.

"I think a lot of us like to eat out, and we'd love to have a better selection."

"We need more stores and shops; I would rather spend my money in St. Cloud than in Kissimmee or Orlando. Wal-Mart shouldn't be our only option!"

"The only place there is to buy clothing is Wal-Mart."

"We DO NOT need any more gas stations, tire stores, or pharmacies!"

"We have enough fast food – there is nowhere to go for a special occasion."

"The fact that you have to go to Orlando to get a decent meal out!"

"We would like to see a well thought-out plan for adding convenient, upper-scale shopping and restaurants, such as Target, Outback, Home Depot, etc."

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Concerns About Excessive Growth

While development of shopping and dining options are encouraged, many comments expressed concern about the overall growth and planning [or perceived lack of planning] in and around St. Cloud.

"Maintain open spaces between developments for a small town look. Open spacing and landscaping at industrial and commercial sites."

"The uncontrolled, poorly planned development, the city must be more demanding and regulate commercial architecture along US 192."

"Let's avoid St. Cloud becoming a whistle-stop station between Kissimmee and

Melbourne.”

“The growth of St. Cloud reminds me of a teenage boy growing up so fast that his parents can’t keep up with his clothing needs.”

“Letting more and more development use up precious land for wildlife.”

“Every time you turn around another apartment complex is going up – St. Cloud is bursting at the seams, Stop building or build more schools!”

“I would like to see controlled, planned growth. St. Cloud is growing haphazardly. If I wanted to live in a town like we are becoming, I would have moved to Orlando, Miami, or Jacksonville.”

We don’t approve of the city going into land development, it will only add more problems to schools, traffic, and political ‘hanky-panky.’”

“I don’t like the growth – I don’t think we should develop the ‘plantation’ area – I think it brings the wrong kind of reputation to St. Cloud – it will no longer have the small town appeal.”

“Stop the development! Do not bring industries that will pollute our air and harm our children.”

“St. Cloud government needs to ignore comments from ‘old timers’ with their 1950’s mentality, and pursue a direction of growth and expansion more adaptable to this century.”

“Constant development and loss of land. Vacant buildings abandoned as new stores are built.”

“Developers plow down every tree and slap together big subdivisions seemingly without thought to traffic flow and educational needs.”

“The abandoned buildings that have and will be coming up, like the old Wal-Mart and upcoming Publix and Walgreens.”

“I would like to see new thinking as it applies to growth. The current policy seems to be ‘Bigger is Better.’ This is without regard for water, sewer, trash removal, and overcrowded schools.”

“Stop trying to make St. Cloud into a ‘mini-Orlando.’ Be selective with development of all kinds. Do something with buildings that are already standing instead of abandoning them. These empty buildings...will become eyesores.”

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Growth In Housing and Loss of Open Spaces

Many comments about growth and development focused specifically on housing growth in St. Cloud. These comments generally expressed concerns about loss, of open space, the pace of housing growth compared with the growth of infrastructure, and the perceived proliferation of apartment housing and its impact on the city.

“I am concerned about the number of ‘low income’ housing developments and the quality of people it attracts to our city. I moved here to get away from that. This also puts new stress on our already stressed school system.”

"We moved to St. Cloud because of the country look and feel. Once there were cows in the field – now there are apartments – which seem to bring problems. Call a moratorium on building for awhile and catch up on services and schools."

"Growth is permitted without the proper infrastructure. High density low income housing growth excessive."

"The schools are already overcrowded and understaffed, but you keep letting homes be built!"

"It seems that growth has tripled in the last ten years."

"The apartments that keep going up. The garbage has increased around them, along with shopping carts in the streets. This was something you didn't see before the apartments."

"Our city government is ruining the town with its unrestrained growth and transient housing [apartments]."

"We need to limit the number of subsidized apartment complexes within the city."

"I am really disappointed that the apartments were built next to Wal-Mart This is going to bring in too many people...I feel the crime rate will go up due to this growth."

"Do whatever you can do legally to control rental properties to keep them in a satisfactory condition. Valued property owners will not stay if rental properties continue to decrease the market value of their homes."

"High prices and the constant building are destroying the small town effect. Nobody seems to have a clue. Getting people to live here with no decent jobs in obscene."

"I think we need to 'upscale' our community – that's the way to go – we could become the next Mt. Dora!"

"Let's not outgrow ourselves into a population boom. Careful planning is necessary for guiding St. Cloud to maturity."

"Let's not become another Kissimmee, please!"

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Appearance of the City

While the survey did not indicate that as a major drawback within the city, many comments show concern about the perception of a gradual degradation of the physical appearance of St. Cloud.

"The city needs to eliminate the 'trailer park' appearance by not allowing boats, trailers, motor homes, unused cars and trucks to be parked in front or beside residences."

"You can make a town beautiful by keeping your roads paved and your buildings painted. Raising taxes and not getting either of these done will not attract people to bring revenue to the city."

"Clean up - brighten up – fix up – they will come!"

"Clean up the trashy look. Rundown homes and trashy yards."

"Rundown homes are a disgrace to the city – plus lots of junk in yards and alleyways. Years ago city used to clean it up, now nobody takes pride – too many eye sores."

"The code enforcement office should get busy, and make sure that everyone follows the code in this city."

"The absence of codes or enforcement thereof – allowing filth and slum-like conditions to exist. Clean up this hole!"

"People don't take care of their properties or homes. Junk out in yards, old vehicles, etc. Such an eyesore! There should be ordinances that outline what is acceptable."

"Some areas need better upkeep; homes with yards full of trash."

"Lots of junk cars sitting around. Sub-standard housing that needs to be torn down and replaced by new housing."

"Trash, too much clutter, messy homes. Need more code enforcement."

"The number of vehicles, boats, RV's and just plain junk in front yards."

"Redneck feel of town. Cars parked in yards, indigent, drunk men wandering around."

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Traffic Congestion and Safety

The survey results and resident comments both indicate that issues regarding traffic congestion and safety are also of considerable concern to some residents.

"The other day I drove to Home Depot in Kissimmee and counted 17 sets of traffic lights – that's ridiculous! If you have to have that many lights, synchronize them!"

"St. Cloud has great potential. The strip from 192 [city limits] to Harmony should set the tone for future development."

"Kissimmee has done a great job of identifying the entrance to the city from 192. St. Cloud could benefit from a similar project."

"I am concerned about the increasing traffic accidents due to increasing subdivision development."

"Too many roads being built with no improvement in roads or adding additional lanes."

"Relieve traffic congestion by an additional turnpike interchange and a bypass around the town."

"US 192 needs to be widened between the Turnpike and Kissimmee – NOT Neptune Road!"

"The traffic is terrible. The 192 & Commerce Center Drive intersection is like a speedway. The cars go through there at 60 mph at night."

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Enhancing Downtown St. Cloud

Many residents are convinced that downtown St. Cloud has great potential. They feel that the proper kind of downtown development would both make the city a more enjoyable place to live,

and be an attract for tourism and residents of other Florida cities.

"Downtown has lots of potential – it needs a serious marketing plan and some serious money to make it happen. Encourage economic development, which could include shops and restaurants."

"Need to revitalize downtown, it can be very charming and draw more people to shop and eat."

"I hope downtown takes on the look of Mt. Dora – that would help promote it."

"Preserve the small town atmosphere, but spruce it up; with potted plants and benches along the sidewalks – something like Mt. Dora, with a special charm and ambiance to attract both residents and tourists."

"We would like to see the downtown area improved to the level of Winter Garden, DeBary, and Deland."

"The city is constantly trying to make this a 'historic' town, but they are not doing anything to drive people to downtown. They need to promote the historic side of St. Cloud to more than its residents."

"We need a bank downtown – it would give folks who live outside of the town center a reason to visit."

"Downtown is promoted as the Historical District – why is an ultra modern City Hall being built?"

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SUMMARY

"You folks are trying and doing the best you can to improve life in St. Cloud. You are hampered by many things and people – but keep trying!"

***"This community is becoming a haven for crime, selfishness, and overcrowding. When will it stop?
When we turn into Kissimmee?"***

Based on this first 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?

Since this is the first citizen survey for the city of St. Cloud, there are no historical data or benchmarks to precisely determine which results are positive or negative. This is by nature somewhat subjective.

However, lacking this history, our judgment for the statistical results is that:

any percentage of 75% or more for combined totals of 'excellent' and 'good,' [or 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'],
and/or 50% or more for 'excellent' or 'strongly agree'

should be considered a strength for the city.

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STRENGTHS of ST. CLOUD

These are the strengths of St. Cloud, as identified by the citizens responding to the survey.

- The small town atmosphere, and being a good place to raise a family, are the major strengths of St. Cloud, and the aspects that most residents fervently want to be preserved. Nearly 90% of all survey respondents agreed with these as important aspects of the city.
- Nearly 80% agreed that St. Cloud city employees are generally responsive and professional.
- All of the emergency and public safety services of St. Cloud – police, fire department, and EMS – were considered responsive and professional by more than 80% of responding residents.
- Citizens also gave high marks to the overall maintenance of parks and recreation facilities in St. Cloud, as 85% agreed this was a positive aspect of the city.
- The quality of library facilities and services in St. Cloud was praised by more than 82% of residents. It seems that many residents both use and appreciate their library.
- The overall cleanliness of city was a strength praised by 80% of survey respondents. However, some of the comments in the next section of the report show that there is some concern that this aspect of life in St. Cloud may be changing for the worse.
- The overall character and personality of the city was considered to be a strength by 78% of responding residents. This connects closely with the positives associated with the small town atmosphere of St. Cloud.
- The amount of senior citizens programs in the city was cited as a strength by 77% of responding residents.
- In terms of perceptions about personal safety, 85% or more of residents felt safe in all of the locations within St. Cloud that were mentioned on the survey.
- Most utilized facilities in St. Cloud were:
 - Downtown – used by 82%
 - Activities at the Lake – used by 68%
 - Library – used by 61%

- None of the educational programs or facilities included in the survey met the 75% criteria, but elementary schools came the closest, with 73% agreeing that their quality was 'excellent' or 'good.'

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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. For our purposes in this initial survey, these will be questions where

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

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

When rating the variety and quality of restaurants in city, 56% indicated these choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'

Also, when rating the variety of shops and stores in the city 58% felt that the current available choices were 'fair' or 'poor.'

Similarly, the availability of event/banquet/meeting facilities was found lacking by 59% of responding residents.

Two other important areas where most 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 55% of responding residents.

The quality of St. Cloud drinking water was considered to be 'fair' or 'poor' by 52% of responding residents.

Education was an area that consistently rated below average in many of the survey questions.

Fewer than half of responding residents – only 45% - agreed that schools in St. Cloud are above average.

Continuing education and vocational/technical programs were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 60% of citizens responding to the survey.

The quality and/or number of educational courses for seniors were rated as 'fair' or 'poor' by 53% of responding residents.

The most critical area for education in the survey related to school class sizes. Seemingly in line

with the results of the 2002 statewide elections, 69% rated class size in St. Cloud schools as 'fair' or 'poor.'

While not directly quantified by the survey questions, there were many comments and concerns included with the survey about code enforcement issues, overdevelopment of residential apartments and a perceived overabundance of certain types of commercial building, including gas stations, fast food restaurants, pharmacies, and automobile tire stores.

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PRIORITIES FOR ST. CLOUD

This survey was not designed to provide information about how St. Cloud should build upon its strengths and cope with areas identified for improvement. But the survey does 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.

Preserve the small town atmosphere – residents feel that St. Cloud is, and should be, different than the surrounding cities of Orlando and Kissimmee.

Improve traffic flow and roads – as with so many places in Florida, residents feel that roads have not kept pace with growth and development. Either the roads must quickly and significantly be improved, or development should be significantly curtailed.

Capitalize on the potential of downtown St. Cloud, and attract more non-fast food restaurants and retail stores – selective development would be welcomed by most residents, particularly the commercial growth that would result in satisfying these three perceived needs.

Improve water quality – the survey indicates that the quality of city water falls short of expectations for many residents.

Attract more high paying jobs – this would seemingly also require some selective development, and might also be necessary to attract the kinds of restaurants and retail shopping many citizens indicate they desire.

Reduce crime – while most residents generally feel safe in the city, comments on the survey indicate that there is a growing undercurrent of feeling that crime is on the rise and could become a serious problem if not dealt with in the near future.

Better and more schools with smaller class sizes and fewer portable or temporary classrooms – most questions regarding education showed that this is an area where many residents feel there is significant room for improvement.

Many of these priorities are areas that require the assistance and cooperation of a number of agencies outside the city; including other municipalities, Osceola County, and the state of Florida. The city does not operate in a vacuum. However, the survey responses provide some clear direction on how residents view the major challenges remain in the future.

In future surveys, any changes in the needs or perceptions of residents, as well as any measurable changes in the areas identified as strengths or weaknesses can be determined. Additionally, a history of responses will be developed that can track changes in the city; how, in the eyes of its citizens, St. Cloud excels, and in where it may not meet their expectations.

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Market Trends Research appreciates the opportunity to 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.

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