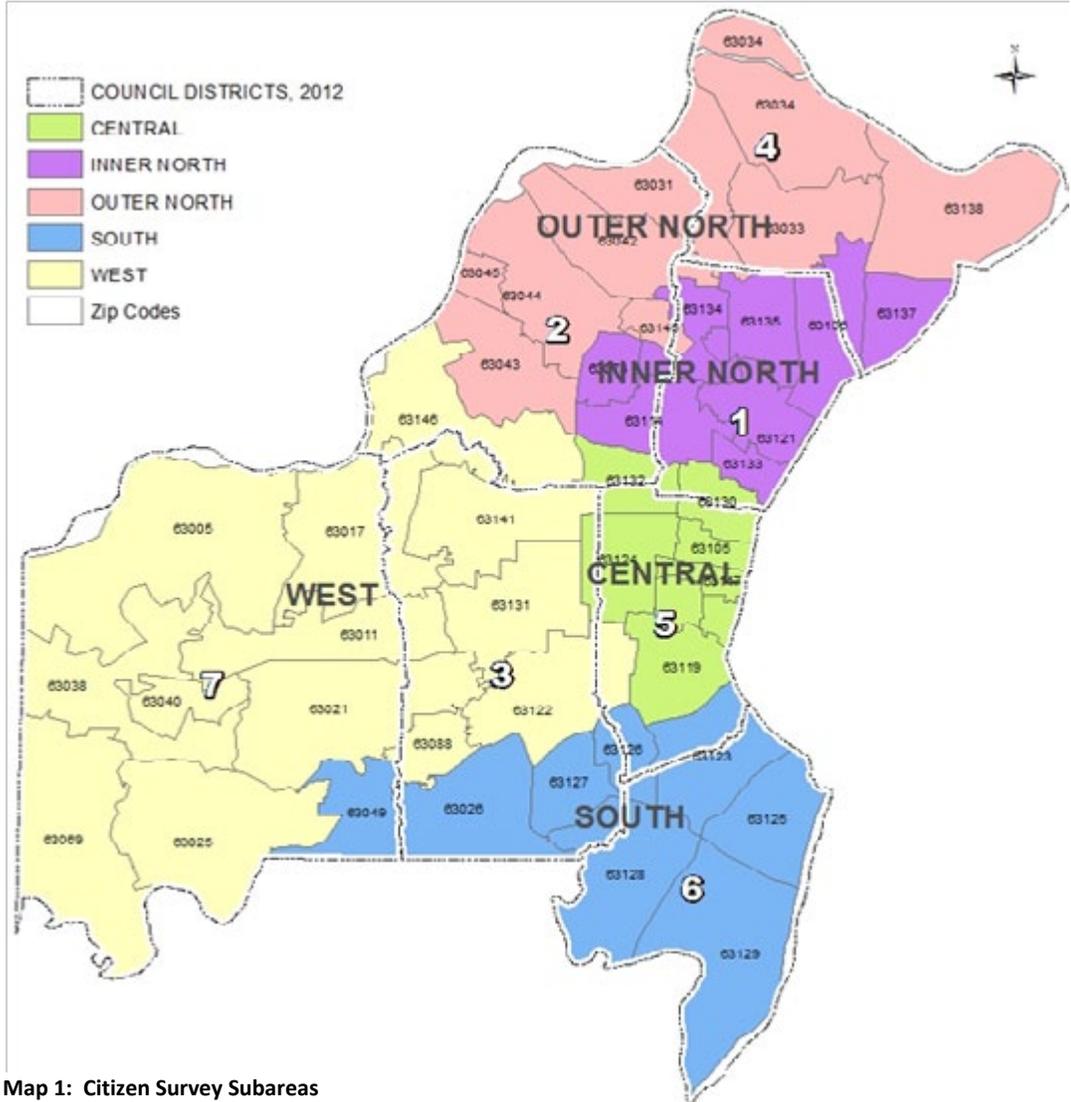


## 2012 St. Louis County Strategic Plan Citizen Survey Summary

The 2012 Citizen Survey is a random-sample telephone survey of County households commissioned by the Department of Planning as part of St. Louis County's Strategic Plan update. The purpose of the survey is to measure public opinion about quality of life in St. Louis County, satisfaction with local services, County Government's customer service, importance of selected County services, and specific policy issues. Similar telephone surveys have been conducted in conjunction with prior planning efforts in 1999 and 2007.

The 2012 survey was conducted by Dr. E. Terrence Jones, between June 18 and 28, with 813 randomly selected St. Louis County residents. Statistically, precision for the survey results is at +/- three percent with a 95 percent confidence level. The survey included more than 60 questions, including demographic information about the respondent. Along with overall responses to questions, results were tabulated by



Map 1: Citizen Survey Subareas

This summary of the citizen survey is produced by the St. Louis County Department of Planning as part of the 2012 Strategic Plan.



various characteristics of the respondents. Those characteristics or “segments” included: age, race, gender, years of education, place of residence (incorporated or unincorporated), years of residence in St. Louis County, whether there were children 18 and under in the home, and how closely respondents follow local issues in St. Louis County. In addition to demographic segments, survey results were categorized and analyzed by where respondents live in St. Louis County: Central County, Inner North County, Outer North County, South County, and West County.

## Quality of Life in St. Louis County

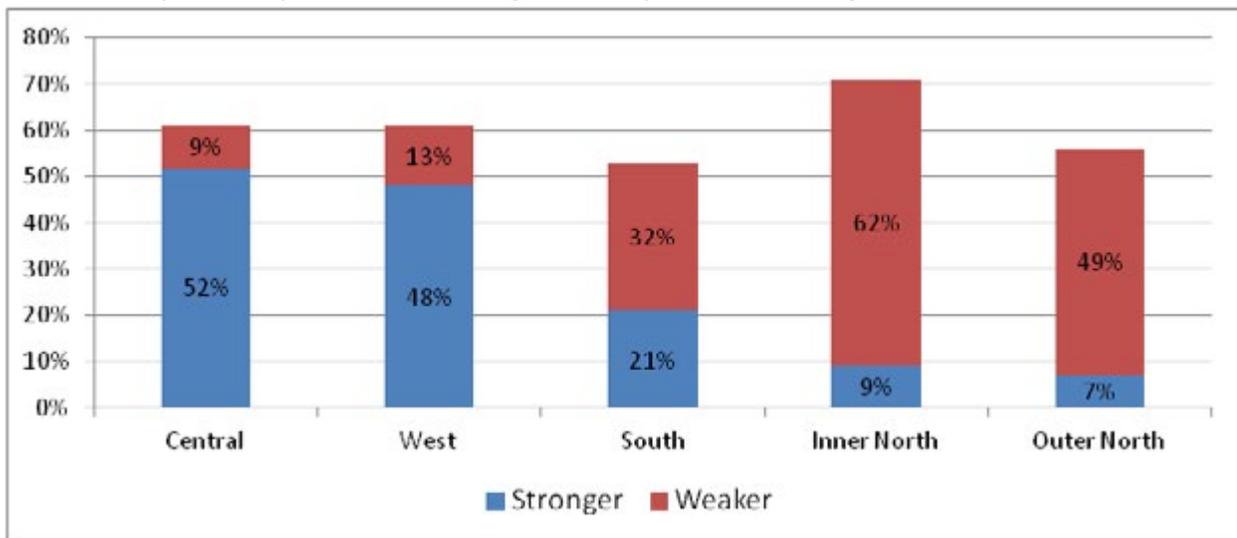
**Moving in the Right Direction?** A standard question on both national and local surveys is whether people think things are “moving in the right direction?” Among County residents, 44 percent think that things in St. Louis County are moving in the right direction. While the response was higher in 2007 at 62 percent, the current response among St. Louis County residents compares favorably to the national response, where only 30 percent of people think the country is moving in the right direction.

**A Place to Live and Raise Children.** More optimistically, 89 percent of County survey respondents say that St. Louis County is an excellent or very good place to “live and raise children,” which is similar to the results in 2007. Just over 70 percent of respondents think St. Louis County has either become a better place to live and raise children over the past five years or stayed the same.

**A Place to Grow Old.** In a new question introduced in the 2012 survey, residents were asked to rate St. Louis County as a place “to grow old.” Among respondents, 76 percent think that St. Louis County is an excellent or good location to grow old and 74 percent think it has become a better place to grow old or stayed the same. (Note: Fifty-four percent of St. Louis County’s population is 45 years old or older according to the 2010 U.S. Census.)

**Housing Values.** When asked about housing values in their part of St. Louis County compared to other parts of the St. Louis region, 29 percent of respondents think their housing values are stronger, 31 percent think they are weaker, and 36 percent think they are about the same. However, a closer look at the results shows that there are dramatic geographic differences within St. Louis County.

**Table 1: Perception of Respondent’s Local Housing Values Compared to St. Louis Region’s**



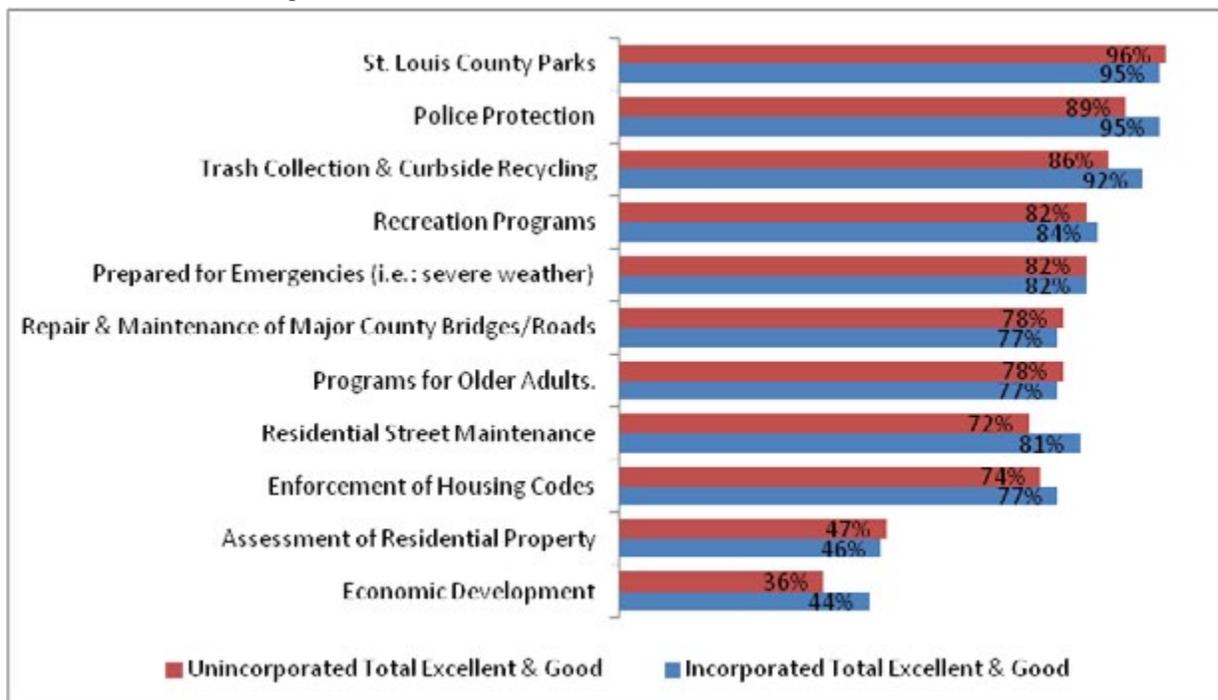
Among Central and West County residents, 52 percent and 48 percent, respectively, feel their housing values are stronger than other parts of the region. By contrast, only 9 percent of Inner North County and 7 percent of Outer North County residents feel that their housing values are stronger when compared to other parts of the region. South County residents' perceptions of their housing values fall between those of Central/West County and Inner/Outer North County; 21 percent of residents consider their housing values as stronger compared to other parts of the region.

**Safety.** Overall, residents in St. Louis County feel safe in their neighborhoods. Survey respondents were asked how safe they feel walking around their neighborhood during the day, how safe they feel walking around their neighborhood at night, and how safe their neighborhood is for children playing unattended during the day. Overall, 96 percent of respondents said they always or usually feel safe walking around their neighborhood during the day. At night, 83 percent of respondents said they always or usually feel safe after dark in their neighborhood, an increase from 74 percent in the 2007 survey. Only 15 percent of respondent said they feel unsafe in their neighborhood after dark, which compares favorably to the national figure of 32 percent. Finally, 83 percent of respondents said their neighborhood is very or somewhat safe for children playing unattended during the day, a slightly higher response than in the 2007 survey.

### Rating Local Government Services

St. Louis County residents are satisfied with the overall level of public services they receive, both in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of St Louis County. When asked to rate eleven different public services, residents rated all but two services as excellent or good. While nine of the services received positive ratings by over 70 percent of the respondents, residential property assessment and economic development received positive ratings from less than half of all respondents. In the case of economic development, the service rating has decreased by almost 20 percent since the 2007 citizen survey, likely due to the national economic recession.

**Table 2: Public Service Ratings**



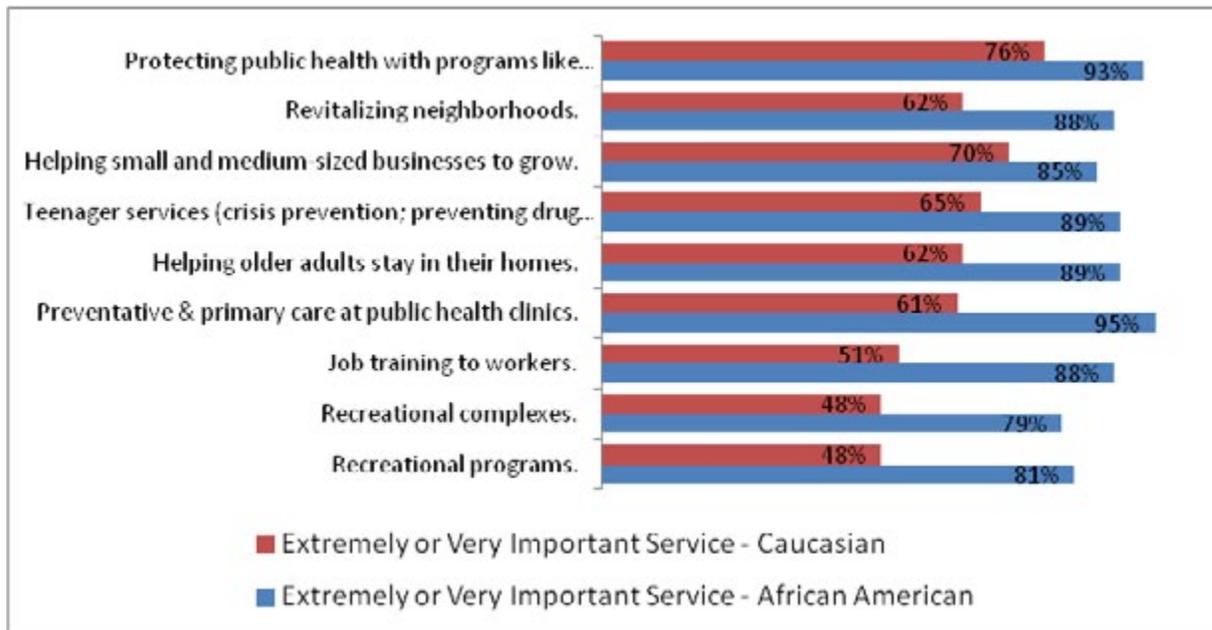
The highest rated services in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas are police protection and County parks, similar to the results from the 2007 citizen survey. Trash collection services also received excellent or good ratings in both incorporated areas (92 percent) and unincorporated areas (86 percent). In rating emergency preparation, satisfaction ratings increased significantly since the 2007 survey, likely as a result of improvements funded by the dedicated E-911 tax approved by voters in 2009. Finally, in looking at service satisfaction levels between unincorporated residents in North, South, and West County, ratings are very similar across the three areas.

In a specific question directed only to unincorporated St. Louis County residents, survey respondents were asked if St. Louis County Government’s enforcement of the residential property maintenance code was too strict, not strict enough, or about right. Over half of respondents felt enforcement was about right, 20 percent believed it is not strict enough, and about 10 percent thought it was too strict.

### Service Priorities for St. Louis County Government

To better understand which County services are priorities for residents, survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of fourteen different services provided by County Government. Specifically, residents rated each service as extremely, very, somewhat, not very, or not at all important. All of the fourteen services received majority support from respondents who rated them as extremely or very important. However, the ratings of extremely and very important ranged from a low of 53 percent for recreation programs to a high of 86 percent to attract new companies.

**Table 3: Service Priorities by Race**



Respondents rated four County services as extremely and very important regardless of demographics or place of residence: 1) attracting new companies and retaining large employers, 2) keeping County Parks in good shape, 3) coordinating and being the first responders in disasters and emergencies, and 4) providing up-to-date public safety services. The nine other County services were rated differently by different segments of the population. Most notably, there is a distinct difference between African-American and Caucasian

responses. African-American were more likely to rate County services as extremely or very important, especially for providing job training to workers, recreational programs, and preventative and primary healthcare at public clinics.

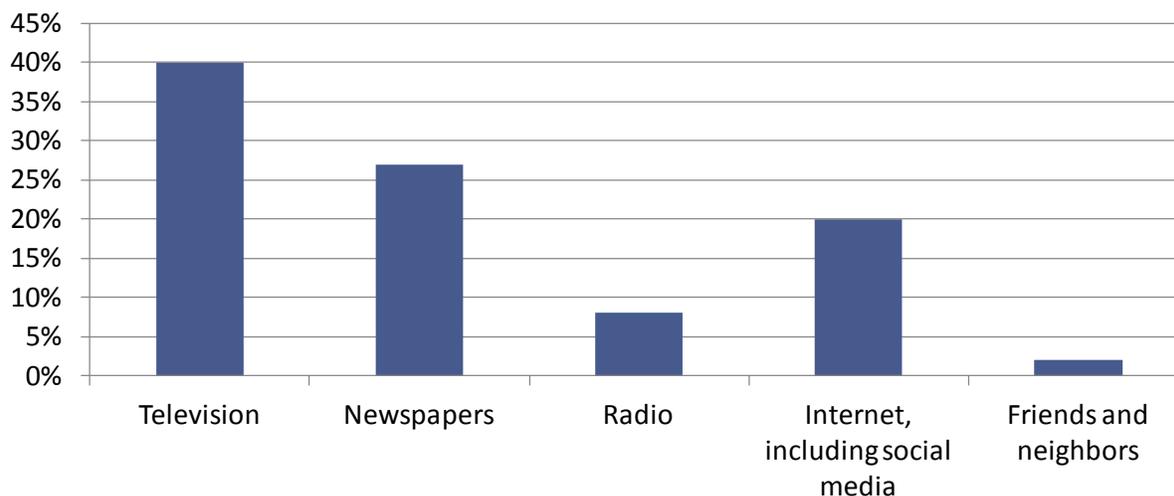
## Customer Service

According to the survey results, nearly half of respondents (49 percent) said they had contacted St. Louis County Government in the last two years. Overall, 80 percent said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the service they received. When asked how well “friendly and helpful” and “efficient and business-like” describe St. Louis County Government, 81 percent and 76 percent, respectively, said it describes St. Louis County Government very or moderately well. On the flip side, when asked if “impersonal and bureaucratic” and “takes too long to get a response” describes St. Louis County Government, 56 percent and 60 percent, respectively, said it describes St. Louis County Government very or moderately well.

## Communications

When asked about the source of where residents receive news about St. Louis County Government, 40 percent of respondents indicated they receive news from the television, followed by 27 percent in the newspapers, and 20 percent on the internet. Not surprisingly, the internet is a more prominent source of news for those 34 years old and younger. Use of social media to get news about public issues was asked for the first time, with 29 percent of respondents indicating they regularly or sometimes get news through Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites.

Table 4: Source of St. Louis County Government News



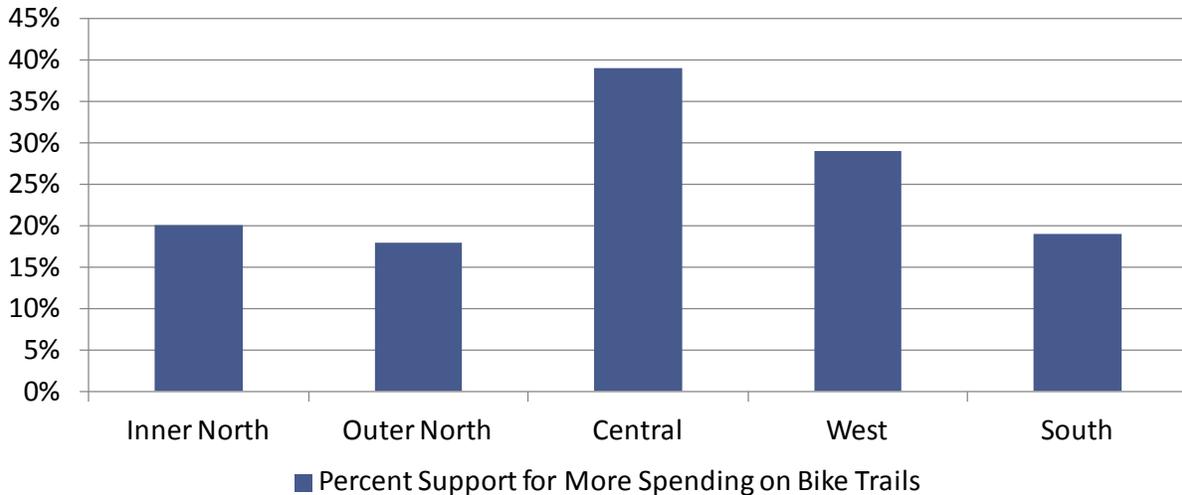
An increasing number of people are using St. Louis County’s website. During the past twelve months, 62 percent of respondents said they had visited St. Louis County’s website, a sharp increase from the 34 percent who reported visiting the site in 2007. Of those using the website, 85 percent rated it as excellent or good, a similar response as in 2007. Overall, 54 percent of survey respondents said St. Louis County was doing an excellent or good job of communicating through its website and other sources.

## Policy Issues

The 2012 citizen survey focused on two different policy issues: bike trails/lanes and the reentry of the City of St. Louis into St. Louis County.

**Bike Trails and Lanes.** The survey asked residents their opinion about the level of County spending on bicycle trails and lanes. Nearly half of survey respondents indicated that St. Louis County Government should maintain its current level of spending on bike trails and lanes, while 24 percent want more spending and 28 percent prefer less spending. When analyzed by segments, most support for bike trails and lanes came from residents who live in Central County, have lived in the County less than ten years, and have a postgraduate education.

Table 5: Support for Bike Trails



**City Reenter County?** The survey asked residents whether they favor the City of St. Louis reentering St. Louis County. The question noted that in 1876 the City of St. Louis separated from St. Louis County and became its own city and county, and then asked if residents would favor or oppose the City of St. Louis reentering St. Louis County as the 91st municipality. Resident responses on this policy issue are about even, with 44 percent in favor and 48 percent in opposition to City reentry into the County. Support for City reentry into St. Louis County was greater among college graduates and residents living in Central County.

## Conclusion

Collectively, input from the 2012 citizen survey indicates that St. Louis County is a desirable place to live, residents enjoy a good quality of life, and St. Louis County government is doing a good job providing services. However, with the downturn in the national economy and the impact it has had on business and employment, residents indicated that they want to see economic development, employment opportunities, and job training improve. The survey also revealed that County government service priorities are viewed differently in the different geographies of St. Louis County and among different segments of the population. The citizen survey serves as a vital tool to understand the attitudes and opinions of St. Louis County residents and will be used to inform the update of St. Louis County's Strategic Plan.