

CITY OF JEROME CITIZEN SURVEY: 2009

Overview

This report presents the findings from a probability survey of 257 City of Jerome registered voters conducted between February 5 and February 11, 2009. The questions cover the City's direction and livability, what residents like and dislike about the City, what problems they anticipate in the near future, what they want the City to accomplish during the next year, ratings of City services, assessment of regulatory enforcement, feelings about safety, usage of and reactions to the City's web site and lack of a local news source, opinions about financial issues and the City's revenue adequacy, views on the value of residential diversity, reaction to a possible sales tax earmarked for infrastructure projects, internet usage, and residential employment patterns. If results by subgroup (e.g., precinct, age, gender, length of residence) are not reported, it means they did not differ significantly from the overall percentage distribution.

Quality of Life

City Direction. Fifty-six percent of the citizens say "things in Jerome are generally going in the right direction," 23% think they are "off on the wrong track," 15% have a mixed assessment, and 6% express no opinion.

The share responding "right direction" is higher among those with one or more children 18 or under (65% right/15% wrong), those who have lived in Jerome less than ten years (65% right/10% wrong), and those ages 18 to 44 (64% right/15% wrong).

It is lower among those who have been Jerome residents twenty years or more (48% right/29% wrong) and those age 55 and older (49% right/31% wrong).

Place To Raise a Family. Twenty percent think Jerome is an excellent place to raise a family, 58% good, 15% only fair, 5% poor, and 2% express no opinion.

The combined excellent/good ratings (78% overall) are higher among those 44 and younger (88% excellent/good).

Trend: Past Five Years. Sixteen percent think Jerome is an even better (5% a lot, 11% somewhat) place to live compared to five years ago, 53% say it is about the same, 23% regard it as worse (6% a lot, 17% somewhat), and 8% express no opinion. Those viewing the trend as worse are more frequent among those 55 and older (31% worse).

Projection: Next Five Years. Looking ahead five years, 31% (6% a lot, 25% somewhat) predict Jerome will be an even better place to live, 41% expect it to be about the same, and 18% (6% a lot, 12% somewhat) think it will be worse. Those with children 18 or under are more optimistic (44% better/15% worse) as are those who have been Jerome residents fewer than ten years (44% better/11% worse).

What Do Residents Like Most? Asked an open-ended question about what they liked most about Jerome, by far the most popular reason (43%) is that it is a small town and that is their preference for a place to live.

Trailing at considerable distance is friendly people/sense of community (12%) followed by relaxed/quiet (10%), and family associations/connections (8%).

Other things mentioned by at least one percent of the sample are the location/scenery/climate (5%), shopping availability (3%), fine schools (2%), economic opportunities (2%), nice homes (2%), growing community (1%), safe (1%), parks and recreation facilities (1%), clean/unpolluted (1%), churches (1%), and history/tradition (1%).

What Do Residents Dislike Most? Given the opportunity to say what they dislike the most about Jerome, 20% reply that there is nothing in particular that bothers them. The substantive responses from the remaining 80% are scattered across many items.

Finishing first (12%) is the poor condition/maintenance of the streets and roads followed by lack of shops/restaurants (11%), a deteriorating downtown (10%), increase in number of Mexican immigrants (8%), increase in crime/drugs/gangs (7%), abandoned/dilapidating buildings (5%), and being dirty/unclean/smelly (4%).

Other matters mentioned by at least one percent are lack of jobs (3%), too rapid a growth rate (3%), poor snow removal (2%), high taxes/government waste (2%), boring (2%), poor dog control (1%), rude/unfriendly people (1%), poor schools (1%), inadequate sidewalks (1%), lack of residential upkeep (1%), noisy/loud residents (1%), and unpleasant climate (1%).

Problems. Toward the end of the survey, citizens were asked what they thought are the two biggest problems facing Jerome during the next five years. Percentages are expressed as the proportion of the 257 citizens in the overall sample.

The lack of jobs/decline in the economy is mentioned most often (23%) followed by managing growth (19%). Other problems mentioned by ten percent or more are the challenges of dealing with Hispanic immigration (18%), gangs/drugs/crime (14%), overcrowded schools (13%), and street/road adequacy/quality (10%).

These are followed by providing adequate city services with limited revenues (8%), downtown deterioration (7%), water quality (6%), traffic (6%), dairy pollution (4%), lack of shops (3%), high taxes (2%), lack of activities/facilities for youth (2%), lack of affordable housing (2%), lack of leadership (2%), property upkeep (2%), public corruption (1%), home foreclosures (1%), and lack of sidewalks (1%).

City Goals. Also late in the interview, respondents were asked to propose up to two things the City of Jerome should accomplish over the next year. Again, the complete sample (257) is the base for the percentages.

First is maintaining/improving roads/streets (16%) followed by increasing the number of jobs/businesses (12%), improving safety/adding police (11%), adding/improving school facilities (8%), promoting cleaner town/enforcing codes (7%), adding/improving sidewalks (7%), lessening traffic congestion/improving traffic safety (6%), improving downtown (4%), improving water/waste water treatment (4%), attracting more stores (3%), providing citizens with more information (2%), more lighting (2%), more parks (2%), stricter regulation of dairies (2%), enforcing regulations about illegal immigrants (2%), lowering taxes (2%), finishing the senior citizen center

(2%), having more activities/facilities for youth (2%), increasing recycling (1%), sponsoring more community events (1%), expanding medical services (1%), helping the needy (1%), and expanding/improving the jail (1%).

Rating City Services

Police Department. Eleven percent rate the Jerome Police Department's performance as excellent, 49% good, 21% only fair, 10% poor, and 9% express no opinion.

The ratings are similar among the 48% of the residents who have had contact with the police during the past 24 months: 15% excellent, 48% good, 18% only fair, 11% poor, and 8% no opinion.

Trash Collection. Thirty-three percent think trash collection services for their residence are excellent, 54% rate them as good, 10% only fair, and 3% poor.

Street Maintenance. Five percent think the City of Jerome street maintenance is excellent, 34% say it is good, 36% only fair, and 26% poor.

Ratings are lower among those who have lived in Jerome less than ten years (30% excellent/good, 70% only fair/poor) and those 34 and younger (28% excellent/good, 72% only fair/poor).

Drinking Water Quality. Twenty-one percent rate the quality of drinking water as excellent, 49% good, 17% only fair, 9% poor, and 4% express no opinion.

Ratings are lower among parents of children 18 or younger (57% excellent/good, 39% only fair/poor), those who have lived in Jerome less than ten years (53% excellent/good, 43% only fair/poor), those ages 35 to 44 (53% excellent/good, 42% only fair/poor), and women (61% excellent/good, 35% only fair/poor).

Wastewater Treatment. Eight percent rate wastewater treatment as excellent, 43% good, 18% only fair, 7% poor, and 23% express no opinion.

Parks and Recreation Facilities. Twenty-six percent think the parks and recreation facilities in Jerome are excellent, 54%

rate them good, 11% only fair, 5% poor, and 4% express no opinion.

Street Lighting. Twelve percent rate the street lighting throughout Jerome as excellent, 44% say it is good, 32% only fair, 11% poor, and 1% express no opinion.

Within their own neighborhood, 42% want more lighting, 3% less lighting, 53% about the same level as exists now, and 2% express no opinion.

Spending Effectiveness. Three percent think the City of Jerome does an excellent job spending tax dollars effectively, 35% say it does a good job, 39% only fair, 12% poor, and 11% express no opinion.

Those replying "only fair" or "poor" were asked "what concerns you the most about the way Jerome spends your tax dollars?" Eight percent of the overall citizenry mention ineffective/inefficient spending on roads and streets, 6% reply waste in general, 4% say the public schools waste money, 3% think the City's spending reflects the wrong priorities, and 1% each say the City overpays its employees, that too little is spent on youth activities, and that there is a lack of accountability.

Citizen Advice and Input. Seven percent say the City of Jerome does an excellent job getting advice and input from citizens, 32% score it as good, 33% only fair, 18% poor, and 10% express no opinion.

Fire Protection. Thirty-six percent rate the fire protection as excellent, 50% good, 5% only fair, 0% poor, and 9% express no opinion.

Emergency Medical Services. Thirty-two percent think the emergency medical services are excellent, 48% good, 7% only fair, 2% poor, and 11% express no opinion.

Sidewalk Quality. Seven percent rate the quality of sidewalks as excellent, 26% good, 27% only fair, 37% poor, and 2% express no opinion. More critical are citizens 55 and older (26% excellent/good, 70% only fair/poor) and women (27% excellent/good, 71% only fair/poor).

Library Performance. Forty-five percent rate the library's performance as excellent, 38% good, 4% only fair, 2% poor, and 12% express no opinion.

Overall City Performance. Looking at all the things the City of Jerome does, 6% rate its performance as excellent, 50% good, 34% only fair, 7% poor, and 3% express no opinion.

Citizen Contact

Thirty-two percent of the residents contacted the City of Jerome government at least once during the past twelve months. The contact rates are higher among parents of children 18 or younger (41%), those who have lived in Jerome less than ten years (43%), renters (44%), and those 34 and younger (44%).

Among those having contacts with the City of Jerome, 16% were extremely satisfied with the way the contact was handled, 36% very satisfied, 17% somewhat satisfied, 14% not very satisfied, and 17% not at all satisfied.

Enforcing Regulations

Traffic Regulations. Sixty percent think the City's enforcement of traffic regulations is about right, 26% say it is not strict enough, 9% reply it is too strict, and 5% express no opinion. Thirty-six percent of those 55 and older say traffic enforcement is not strict enough.

City Code Regulations. Sixty-two percent say the City's enforcement of city code regulations is about right, 17% think it is not strict enough, 7% regard it as too strict, and 4% express no opinion.

Safety

Daytime. Sixty-two percent of the residents always feel safe walking around their neighborhood during the day, 30% usually feel safe, 5% sometimes feel unsafe, 2% usually feel unsafe, and 1% decline to say.

Nighttime. The proportion feeling always safe walking around their neighborhood at night is 20%. Another 34% usually feel

safe, 26% sometimes feel unsafe, 14% usually feel unsafe, and 6% express no opinion. Feeling sometimes or usually unsafe (40% overall) is more frequent among Precinct 202 residents (57%), women (49%), and those 55 and older (46%).

Children. Twenty-three percent say their neighborhood is very safe for children playing unattended during the day, 48% think it is somewhat safe, 17% somewhat unsafe, 4% very unsafe, and 8% decline to say. The proportions are similar for those having one or more children 18 or under.

City Services: Value Received and Revenue Adequacy

Value Received. Asked "to consider the services you receive from the City of Jerome compare to the taxes you pay to the City," 6% (1% a lot, 5% somewhat) say their household receives more than its money's worth, 58% say they get about their money's worth, 28% (9% a lot, 19% somewhat) say they get less than their money's worth, and 7% express no opinion.

Revenue Adequacy. Forty-one percent think the City of Jerome "has about the right amount of revenues...to provide the current levels of service," 24% say it has more than enough, 11% less than enough, and 24% express no opinion. Precinct 202 residents are more likely to say (35%) the City has more than enough.

Community Involvement

Interest. Three percent are extremely interested in "becoming more involved in community and civic affairs in Jerome," 9% are very interested, 42% somewhat interested, 20% not very interested, 23% not at all interested, and 3% decline to say. The extremely/very interested share (12% overall) is considerably higher (27%) among those ages 55 to 64.

Familiarity. Those replying that they are extremely, very, or somewhat interested in becoming more involved in community and civic affairs were then asked "if you wanted to become more involved in community and civic affairs, how familiar are you with how you might arrange to do that?" Ten percent say they are extremely familiar, 18% very familiar, 38% somewhat familiar, 23% not very familiar, 10% not at all familiar, and 1% express no opinion.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Seven percent think it is extremely important that "the residential population of Jerome be racially and ethnically diverse," 22% say it is very important, 41% somewhat important, 15% not very important, 10% not at all important, and 4% decline to say.

City Communications

Web Site. Thirty percent of the residents have visited the City of Jerome web site at least once during the past twelve months. Three percent have visited the site 20 or more times, 3% between 10 and 19 times, 3% between five and nine times, 6% three or four times, and 15% once or twice. Among residents 65 and over, only 16% have visited the web site.

Of the those using the web site, 8% rate it as excellent, 47% good, 21% only fair, 10% poor, and 13% express no opinion.

Internet Access. Seventy-one percent of the residential households have internet access at home. The access rate is higher among those with children 18 or under (86%) and those 44 and younger (87%). It is lower among those 65 and older (44%).

Local News Source. After being reminded that "in August 2008 the North Side News stopped publishing," residents were asked "how important is it to you that the community have its own local news source." Twenty percent say it is extremely important, 25% very important, 26% somewhat important, 20% not very important, 8% not at all important, and 1% express no opinion.

Earmarked Sales Tax for Infrastructure

Fifty-one percent oppose while 43% favor "a local option sales tax of one percent where the funds could only be used to pay for infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and City facilities." The remaining 6% are undecided or decline to say. Among those with strong views, 36% oppose and 17% favor.

The measure does better among those 44 and younger (53% favor/47% oppose) than among those 65 and older (33% favor/57%

oppose).

Residential Employment Patterns

From the 257 sample households, there are 288 persons who currently work 35 hours or more a week. Out of these 288, 160 (56%) work inside the City of Jerome.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted between February 5 and 11, 2009. Only registered voters were included in the survey. For results based on the entire sample, the sampling error (95% confidence level), adjusted for the sampling fraction, is approximately plus-or-minus five percent. Because of rounding, not all totals are precisely 100%.