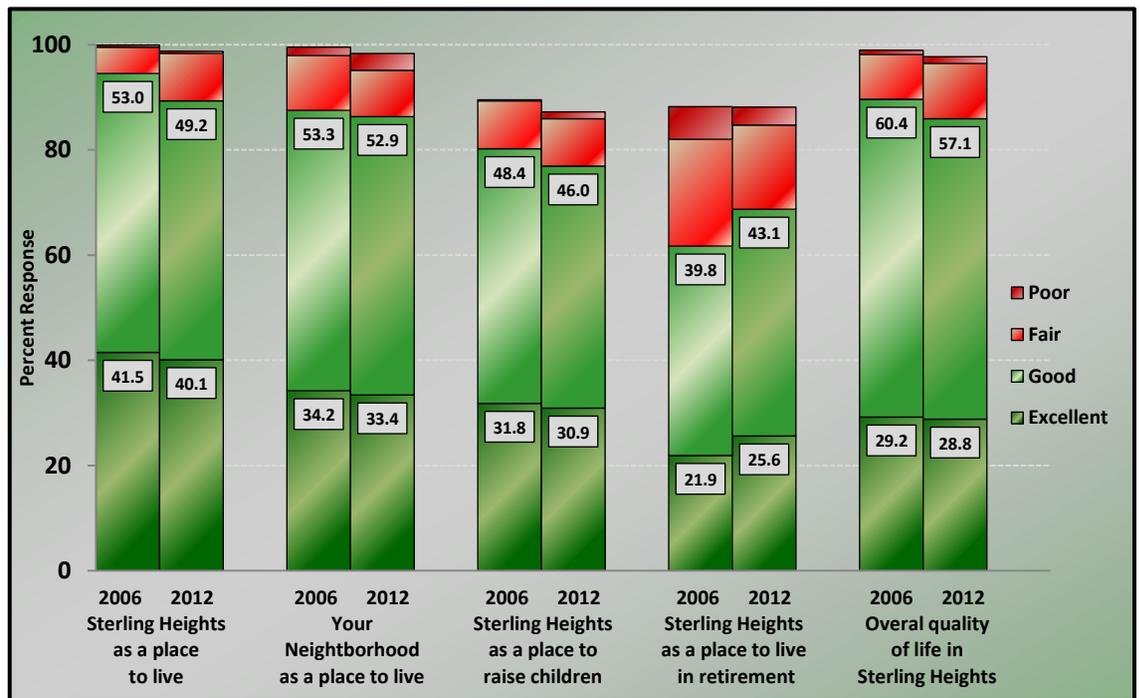


## Executive Summary

The City of Sterling Heights contracted with Infogroup in September, 2012 to conduct the city's 2012 Residential Survey. Consisting of about 90 questions, the survey was designed to help prioritize services, gauge satisfaction levels, and help formulate future policy. Potential respondents were randomly sampled from Infogroup's consumer database and sent a mail or email survey. The sample was selected to achieve a  $\pm 5$  percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level - the same parameters used in the last two city surveys. Survey development commenced in late September and the finalized survey was fielded on November 5, 2012. During the data collection period, follow-up emails and phone calls were made to encourage non-respondents to take part in the survey. Data collection was closed on January 2, 2013 with a total of 476 people responding to the survey. The key findings of the survey are discussed below.

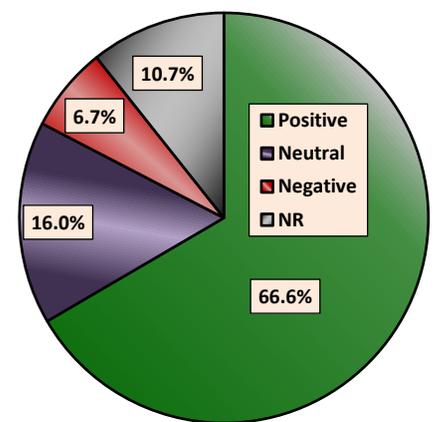
***Sterling Heights is a good place to live*** - survey respondents indicated that Sterling Heights offered a good quality of life, was a good place to raise children, and was a good place to retire. Little differences in this regard were

found between the 2012 survey and the one that was conducted in 2006, as shown in the chart to the right. Differences are well within the margin of error which means that – statistically – there was virtually no change between the two surveys. Considering the



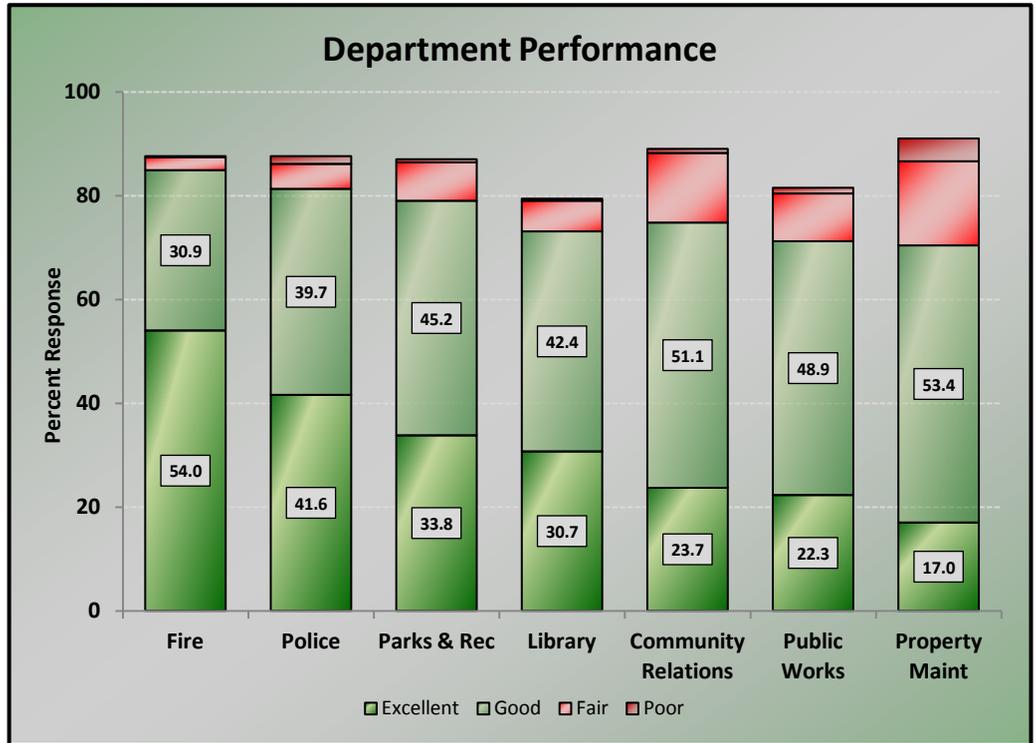
difficult economic conditions faced by the city during the years between these two surveys, maintaining high service delivery ratings is a significant accomplishment.

***Residents have a positive perception of the city*** - When asked to describe Sterling Heights in a single word - and then rating that word as positive, negative, or neutral - almost 67 percent rated it as “positive”. The most common descriptions of the city were “Home/Family” (13.7%), “Safe” (11.3%), and “Nice/Clean” (10.3%).



**The performance of all city departments is rated highly**

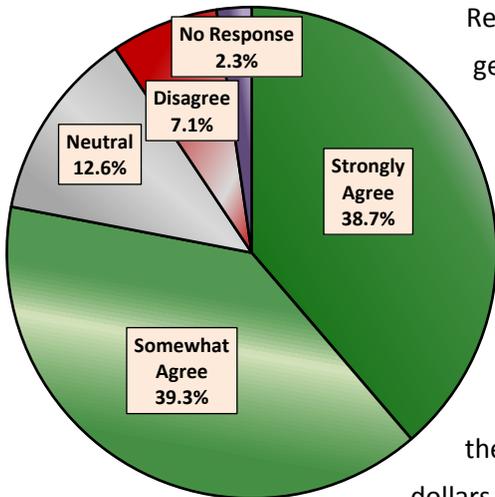
The performance of the Fire, Police, and Parks & Recreation departments were the highest rated in the city, all of which were rated as “good” or “excellent” by over 79 percent of respondents. Property Maintenance was the lowest rated but it, too, was rated “good” or “excellent” by over 70 percent of those surveyed.



The Library, Community Relations, and Public Works were also rated highly.

**People feel they not only get a good value for the taxes they pay, but that the city uses those tax dollars wisely**

**Receive a Good Value for Taxes Paid**

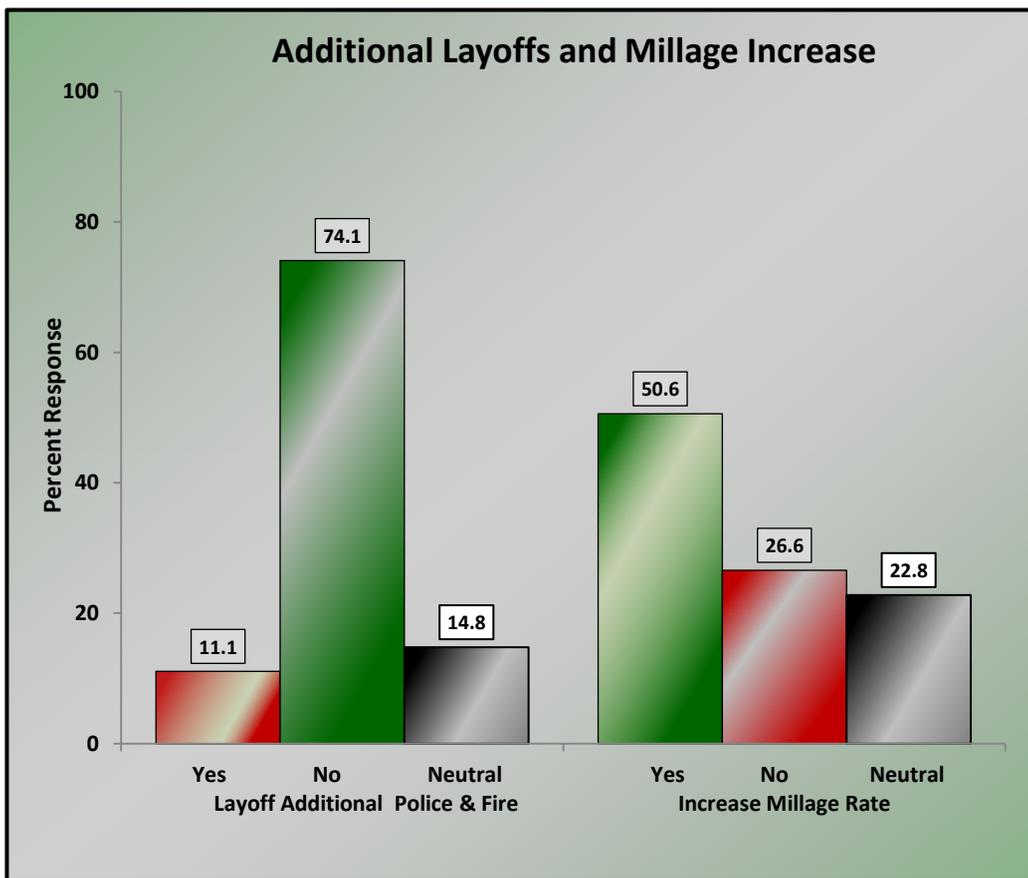


Respondents were asked two tax questions – do they agree/disagree that they get a good value for the taxes they pay, and does the city use their tax dollars wisely. Fully 78 percent indicate that they receive a good value for the taxes they pay as shown in the chart to the left. Just over 7 percent felt otherwise while the rest were neutral or had no opinion. When compared with the question about the city using tax dollars wisely, 58 percent felt that they received a good value for their taxes AND that the city spent those tax dollars wisely. Another 20 percent were neutral about the city using tax dollars wisely but still felt they got a good value for their taxes, a clear indication that respondents feel the city is using their tax dollars appropriately.

In general, residents of Sterling Heights also **feel safe in the city**. About 92 percent feel safe during the day. While this percentage drops during nighttime hours, over 80 percent indicate they still feel safe at night in the city.

Feel Safe:	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Disagree/ NR
During the day	55.7%	36.3%	3.8%	4.2%
At night	36.3%	43.9%	11.3%	8.4%

**Most respondents are supportive of raising the millage rate to avoid additional Police Department AND Fire Department layoffs** - results clearly indicate that Sterling Heights is a good place to live and that residents feel safe in the city. Respondents also clearly indicate that it is important to maintain police and fire staffing levels for safety and to insure both departments have good response times. As such, when asked if the city should layoff additional police and fire positions as a result of lost property revenue, 74 percent disagreed (i.e., they **DO NOT** support further layoffs). When asked if the millage rate should be increased to maintain police and fire staffing at current levels, 51 percent were supportive while 23 percent were neutral or expressed no opinion. Thus, almost three-fourths of survey respondents are at least **NOT OPPOSED** to a millage increase.



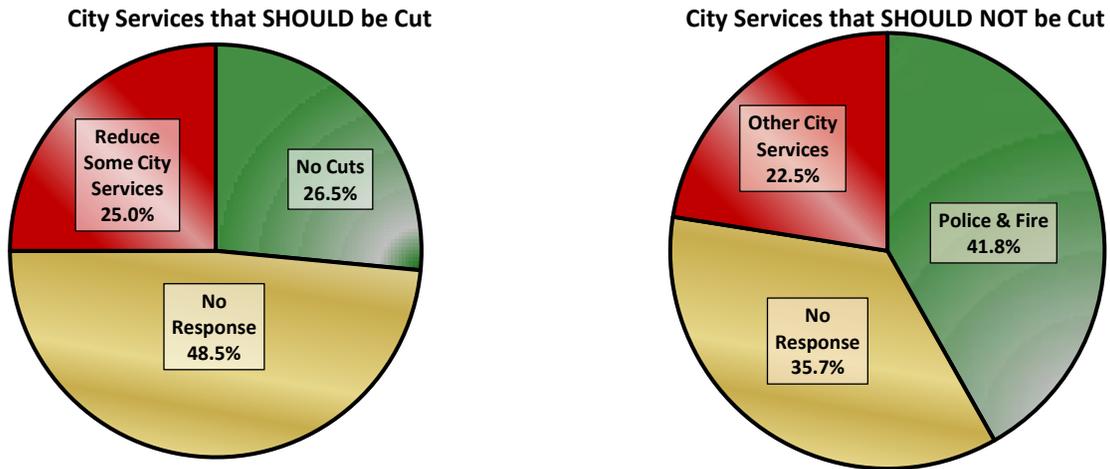
Taken a step further, about one-fourth (21%) feel **strongly** that staffing levels should be maintained and **strongly support** a millage increase. An additional 26 percent at least partially agree that staffing levels need to be maintained while tending to support a millage rate increase. As a result, 47 percent indicate support for avoiding additional layoffs and also support raising the millage rate to achieve this end.

**In essence, there is substantial support for raising the millage rate to avert additional police and fire layoffs. However, there are also a number of respondents opposed to a millage increase.**

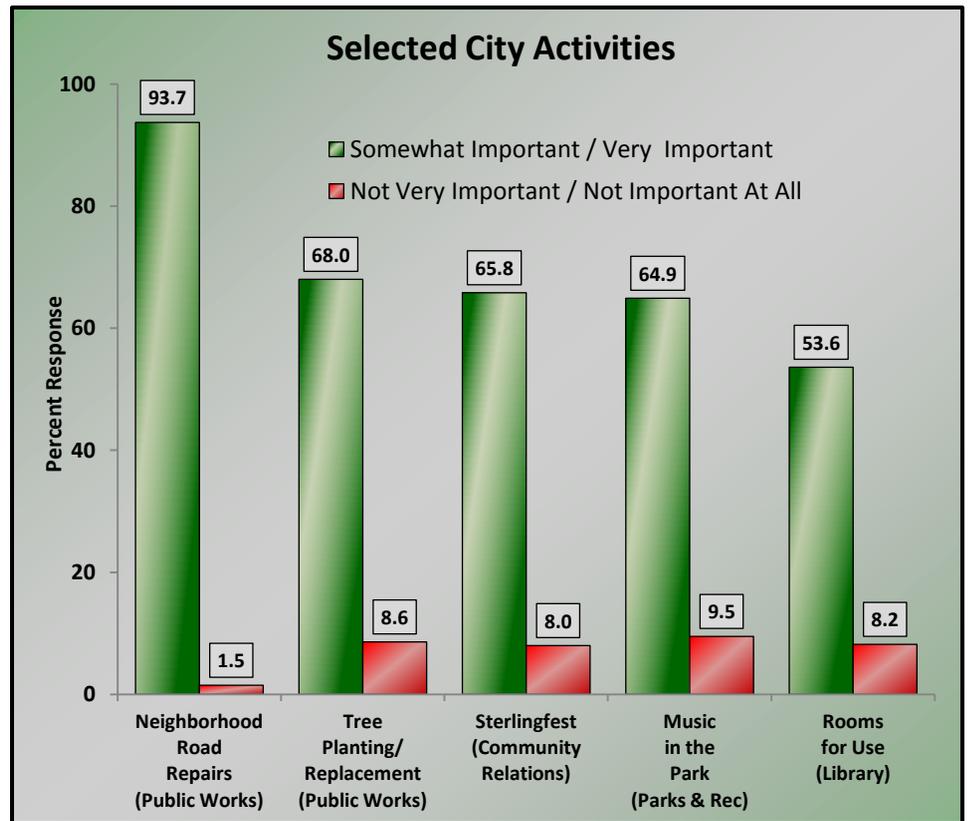
- 59 percent indicated they were not opposed to a millage rate increase to save police/fire positions
- 16 percent want to maintain police and fire staffing but are opposed to a millage rate increase
- 8 percent do not support a millage rate increase and are in favor of additional layoffs
- 17 percent are neutral or expressed no opinion on either of these questions

Other questions in the survey sought to elicit resident suggestions about what city services could be cut and which ones should not be cut. On balance, only a small percentage of respondents provided information useful in this regard, as shown in the figures below. Of note, almost 42 percent indicated that Police & Fire service **SHOULD NOT** be reduced, which is very much in-line with the 47 percent who would support a millage rate increase to maintain

police and fire staffing. Also, only 25 percent of respondents thought anything should be cut while over 60 percent indicated areas that should not be cut. As noted previously, respondents like their city services.



All city service areas were rated highly (over 50% positive in all areas). However, there were some services that also had sizable negative ratings (“not very important”, “not at all important”) which occurred in every city department. The chart at the right shows a few city services with their “positive” and “negative” ratings. Road maintenance is rated important by almost everyone (94%) and very few rated this function negatively (1.5%). However, while rooms for use in the library were deemed important by over half of the respondents (54%), there were many (8%) who thought this was a relatively unimportant activity.



Negative ratings can tend to have more influence than their percentages indicate and they need to be considered carefully in many instances. However, this does not mean these services and activities can or should be eliminated but, instead, suggest areas that could be further explored in relation to a cost/benefit assessment. For example, the Cultural Exchange is not rated very important by over 15% of respondents but is very much supported by minorities. Similarly, the Memorial Day Parade is not very important to over 11 percent of respondents but has much support among older residents.