



# Fort Collins, CO

Business Climate Report

2017



2955 Valmont Road Suite 300  
Boulder, Colorado 80301  
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863

# Contents

About..... 1

xxHighlights..... 2

Doing Business in Fort Collins ..... 3

Community Characteristics ..... 4

Governance ..... 6

Business Climate..... 8

Workforce ..... 9

Special Topics..... 11

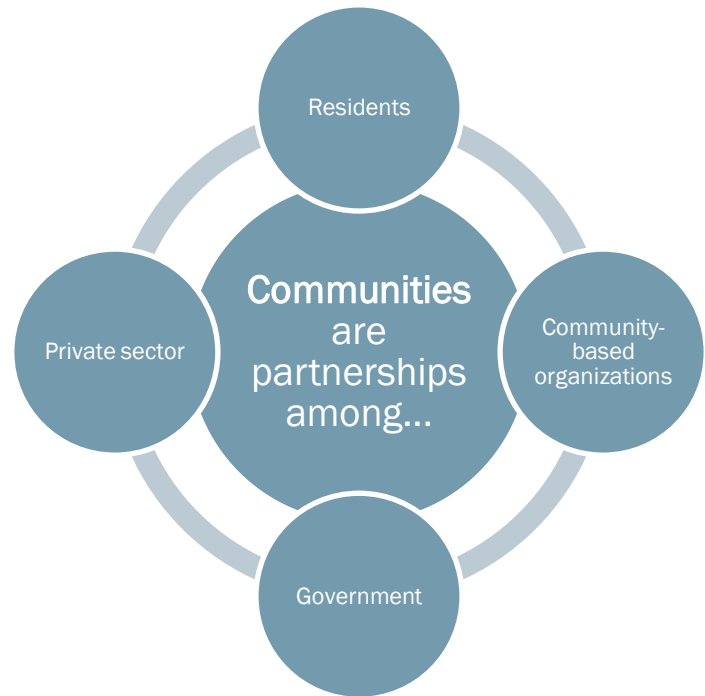
■

# About

The National Business Survey™ (The NBS) report is about the business climate of Fort Collins and provides guidance about community characteristics and services that support local businesses.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NBS captures business owners' and managers' opinions across eight central facets of community livability (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Business Climate Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 546 business owners and managers of the City of Fort Collins. Because no statistical weighting was performed, no traditional margin of error was calculated. However, because not all business owners or managers responded to the survey, NRC recommends using plus or minus five percentage points as the “range of uncertainty” around any given percent reported. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.



# Highlights

## **Fort Collins business owners and managers value the community as a place to do business and feel positively about the business climate.**

Nearly all survey respondents rated their quality of life in the city as excellent or good. Business respondents' ratings of quality of life were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation. When considering Fort Collins as a place to work, 87% of business owners and managers felt it was excellent or good while 94% felt it was an excellent or good place to visit. About 9 in 10 business owners rated Fort Collins' overall image and appearance of the city favorably, each rated higher than the national comparison. Fort Collins as a place to do business was rated positively by about 8 in 10 respondents and a similar percentage would be very or somewhat likely to recommend operating a business in Fort Collins (both ratings similar to the national average). About 9 in 10 respondents planned to keep their business in Fort Collins for the next five years.

## **Economy is important to business owners and Economy ratings are generally strong.**

Business owners chose the overall economic health of Fort Collins as a top area for the Fort Collins community to focus on in the coming years. All five Economy-related Community Characteristics listed in the survey were rated positively by at least 68% of respondents and these ratings were all similar to or higher than the national comparisons (e.g., overall economic health, shopping opportunities, vibrant commercial area, etc.). About three-quarters of respondents gave positive evaluations to economic development within the facet of Governance; however, only half offered positive evaluations to the job the City does at retaining existing businesses and supporting or creating new jobs (both rated lower than the national comparisons). A majority felt positive about the impact of the economy on their revenues in the coming six months; a rating similar to the national comparison.

## **Business owners do not anticipate relocating out of the area but ratings of the applicant pool are low.**

When asked to consider their likelihood of relocating their business outside of Fort Collins or outside of Northern Colorado, a majority of respondents indicated they were very unlikely to relocate out of either Fort Collins or Northern Colorado. With regard to workforce, about 40% of survey respondents planned to hire within the next 6 to 12 months and a similar percentage of survey respondents gave an excellent or good rating to their overall impression of job applicants (43%) and applicant's prior experience (46%) in their most recent hiring experience. Each of these ratings related to applicants were lower than the national comparisons. Only one-third of business owners offered excellent or good ratings to the number of qualified applicants; however, this rating was similar to the national comparison.

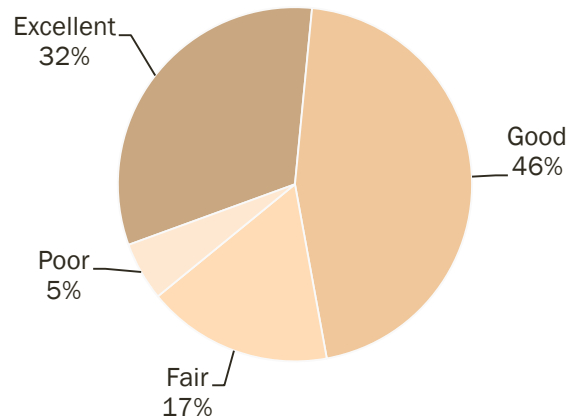
# Doing Business in Fort Collins

Knowing where to focus resources to establish or preserve a thriving business climate requires information that targets features that are most important to the business community. Overall, about 8 in 10 business owners rated Fort Collins as a place to do business as excellent or good. This rating was similar to ratings in comparison communities (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Business owners rated eight facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement) in two dimensions on the survey, first by their overall quality and then how important each was for the City to focus on in the next two years. The chart below summarizes these ratings by showing how each facet's quality compared to the benchmark; stars indicate the areas deemed most important for Fort Collins's efforts in the future.

Business owners identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Fort Collins community in the coming two years. Ratings for Economy and Natural Environment were strong and higher than the national benchmark while ratings for Safety and Mobility were lower than the national benchmark. Ratings for the remaining facets were similar to the national benchmark. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where businesses see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

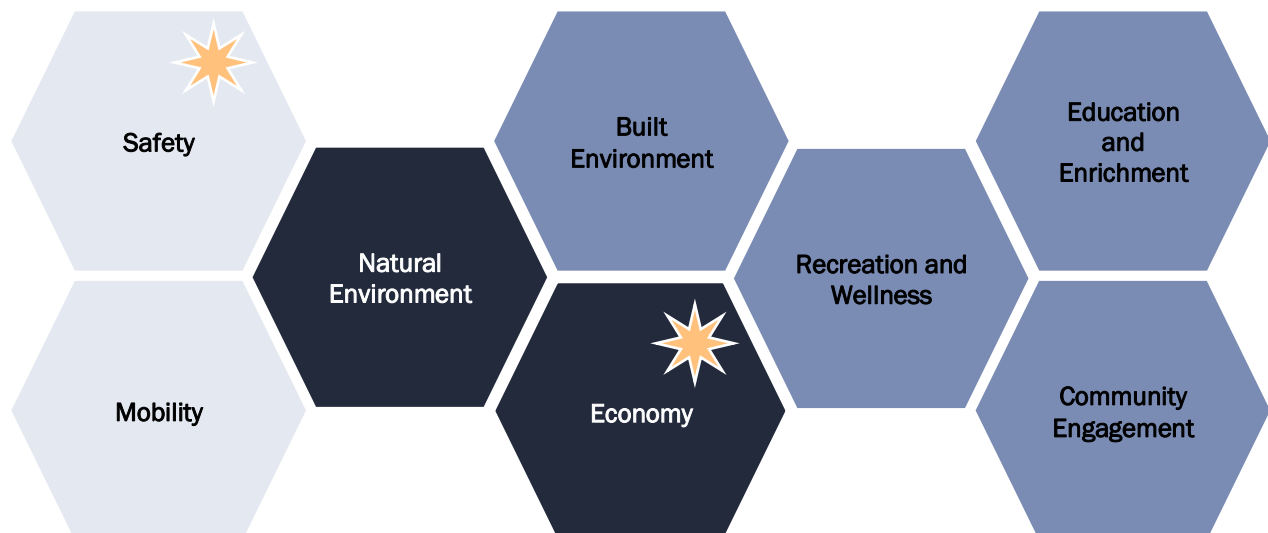
Place to do business



## Legend

- Higher than benchmark
- Similar to benchmark
- Lower than benchmark

★ Most important

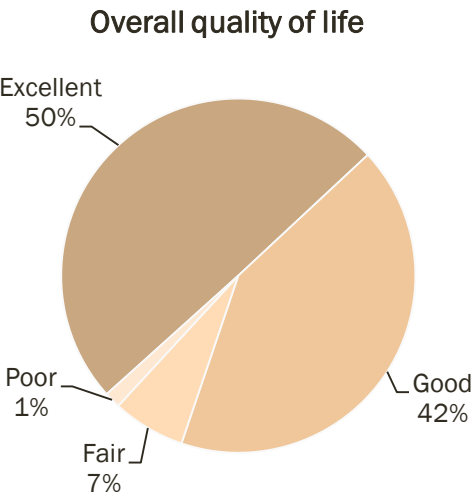


# Community Characteristics

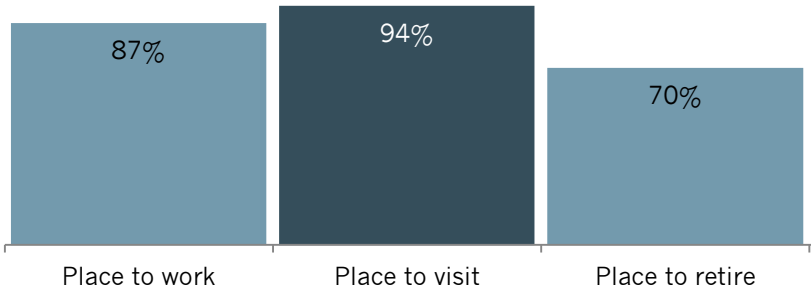
Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How the business community views the overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Fort Collins, 92% felt the city had an excellent or good quality of life. Respondents' ratings of quality of life were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the city as a place to live, business owners and managers rated several aspects of community quality including Fort Collins as a place to work, to retire and to visit, the overall image or reputation of Fort Collins and its overall appearance. Overall, most respondents rated each of these aspects favorably, with Fort Collins as a place to visit, Fort Collins' overall appearance and overall image being the most positively rated aspects with 91% or more of survey respondents saying these were excellent or good; further, these ratings were also higher than the national comparisons. A high proportion of respondents also felt that Fort Collins was an excellent or good place to work (87%) and to retire (70%).

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 25 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. National benchmark ratings were mixed with six aspects rated higher, nine rated lower and 12 rated similar to the national benchmarks (a benchmark was not available for ease of public parking). Mobility housed three aspects that were rated higher than the national comparisons (ease of travel by bicycle, ease of walking and paths and walking trails) and five aspects that were rated lower (overall ease of travel, traffic flow, amount of public parking, ease of travel by car and ease of travel by public transportation). Ratings of Natural Environment were strong with at least 84% of respondents offering excellent or good ratings to each aspect listed including overall natural environment which was rated higher than the national comparison. Ratings of Economy were also strong with at least 7 in 10 offering positive evaluations to each aspect listed with overall quality of business establishments and vibrant downtown/commercial area at the top of the list. Safety and Built Environment housed items rated lower than the national averages (i.e., overall feeling of safety, housing options, etc.).



Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)



Comparison to benchmark

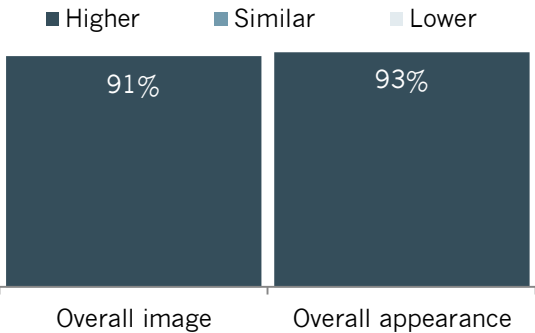
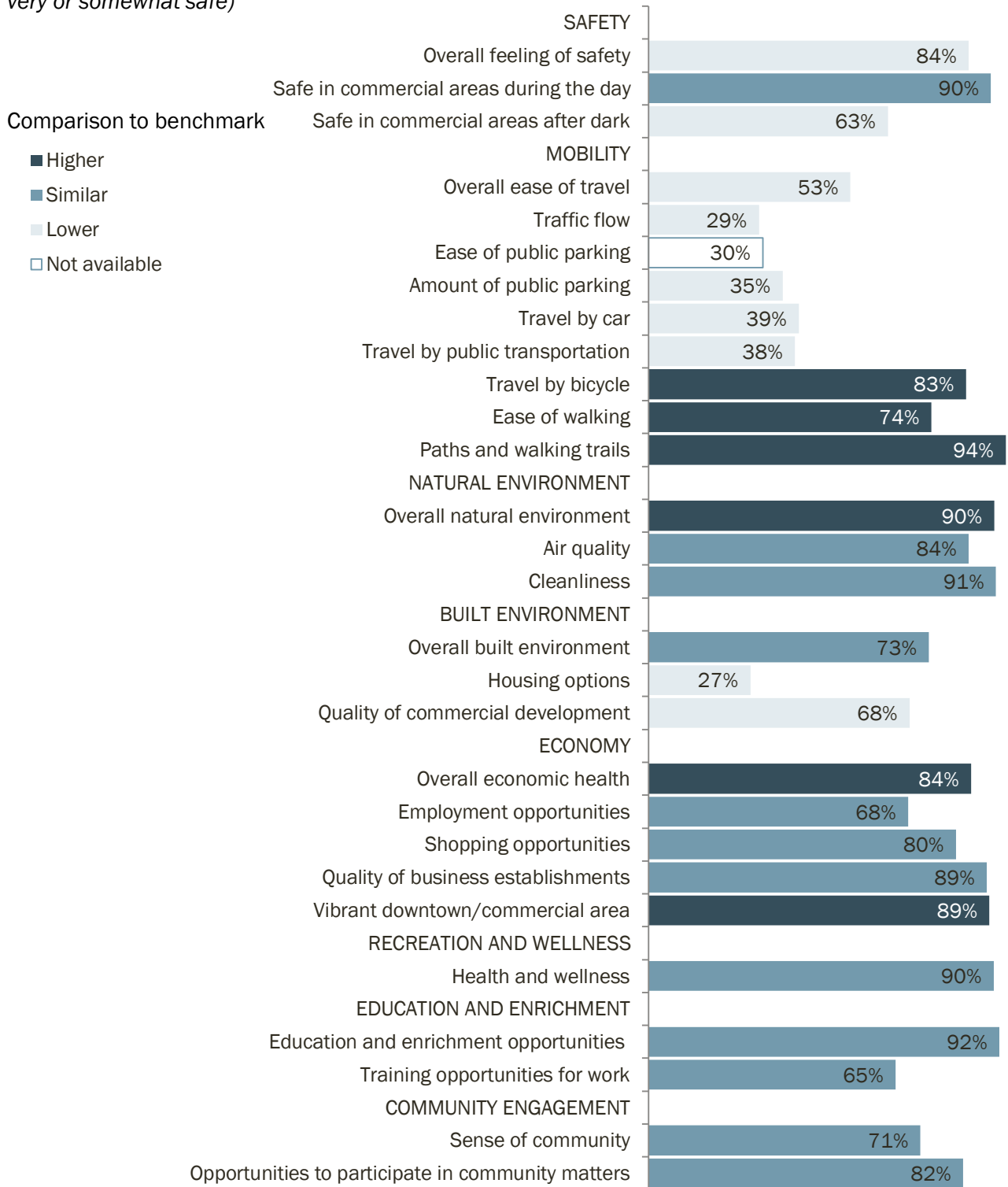


Figure 1: Aspects of the Community

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat safe)



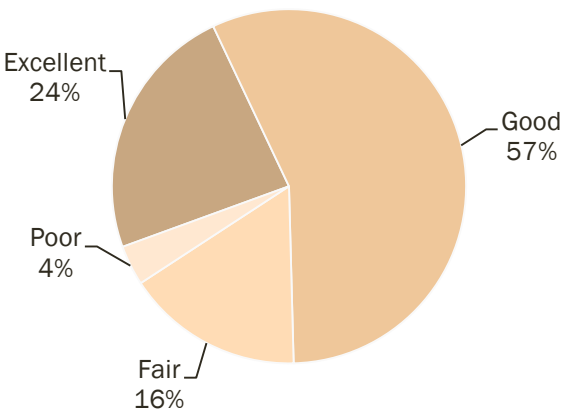
# Governance

The overall quality of the services provided by Fort Collins as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how the business community rates their quality of life and the City as a place to do business. About 8 in 10 business owners or managers gave excellent or good ratings to the overall quality of services provided by the City of Fort Collins which was a rating similar to the national comparison. In comparison, only one-third of respondents gave excellent or good ratings to the services provided by the Federal Government (a rating lower than the national comparison).

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Fort Collins' leadership and governance, which tended to be rated lower than the national comparisons. About 8 in 10 business owners or managers offered positive evaluations to the customer service provided by Fort Collins employee(s) while about 6 in 10 or fewer offered positive evaluations to the remaining aspects listed.

Respondents evaluated over 20 individual services and amenities available in Fort Collins. While three-quarters of respondents offered positive ratings to economic development (a rating higher than the national comparison) only half offered positive evaluations to the job the City does at retaining existing businesses and supporting or creating new jobs (both rated lower than the national comparisons). All services and amenities related to Mobility were given positive ratings between 63% and 79% however benchmark comparisons were mixed with traffic enforcement rated lower than the benchmark and street repair and sidewalk maintenance rated higher. Safety services were rated similar to the national comparisons with at least three-quarters offering positive ratings to the listed items (police services, crime prevention and emergency preparedness).

City services



Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to benchmark

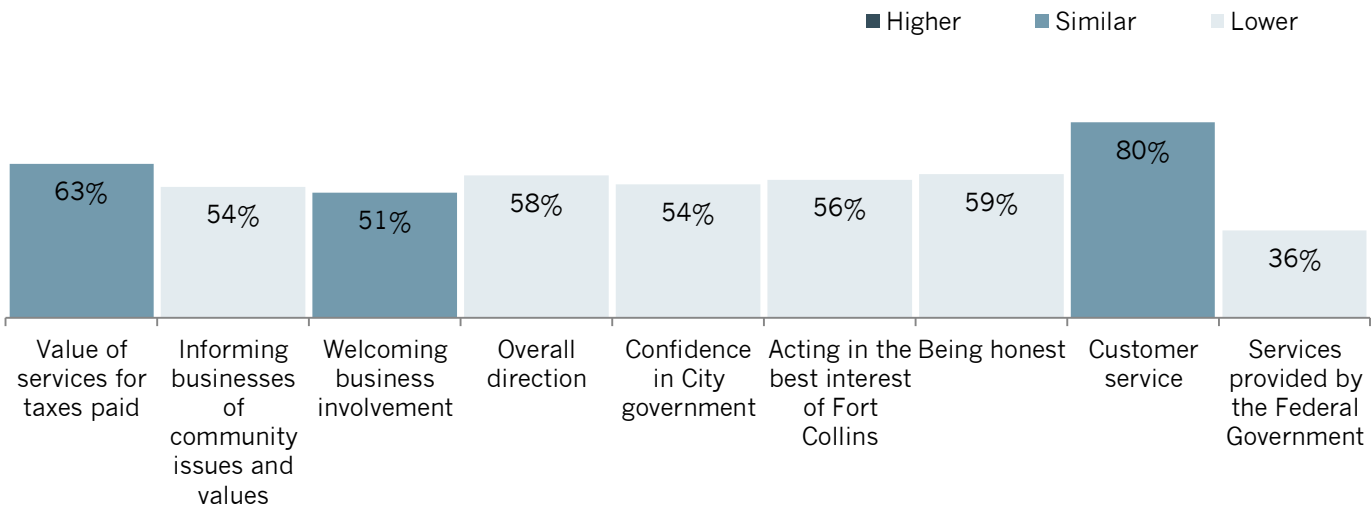


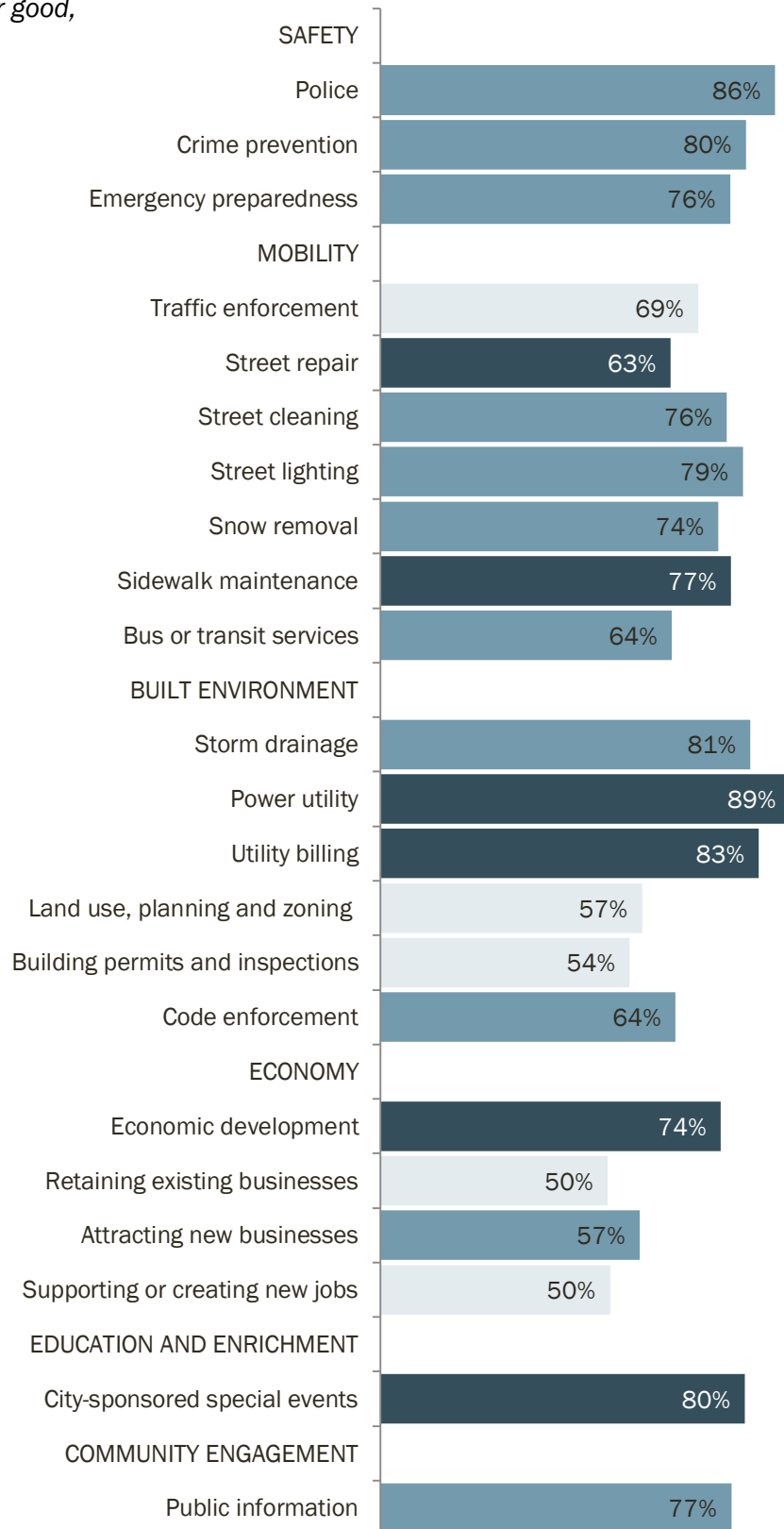


Figure 2: Aspects of the Governance

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, very or somewhat beneficial)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

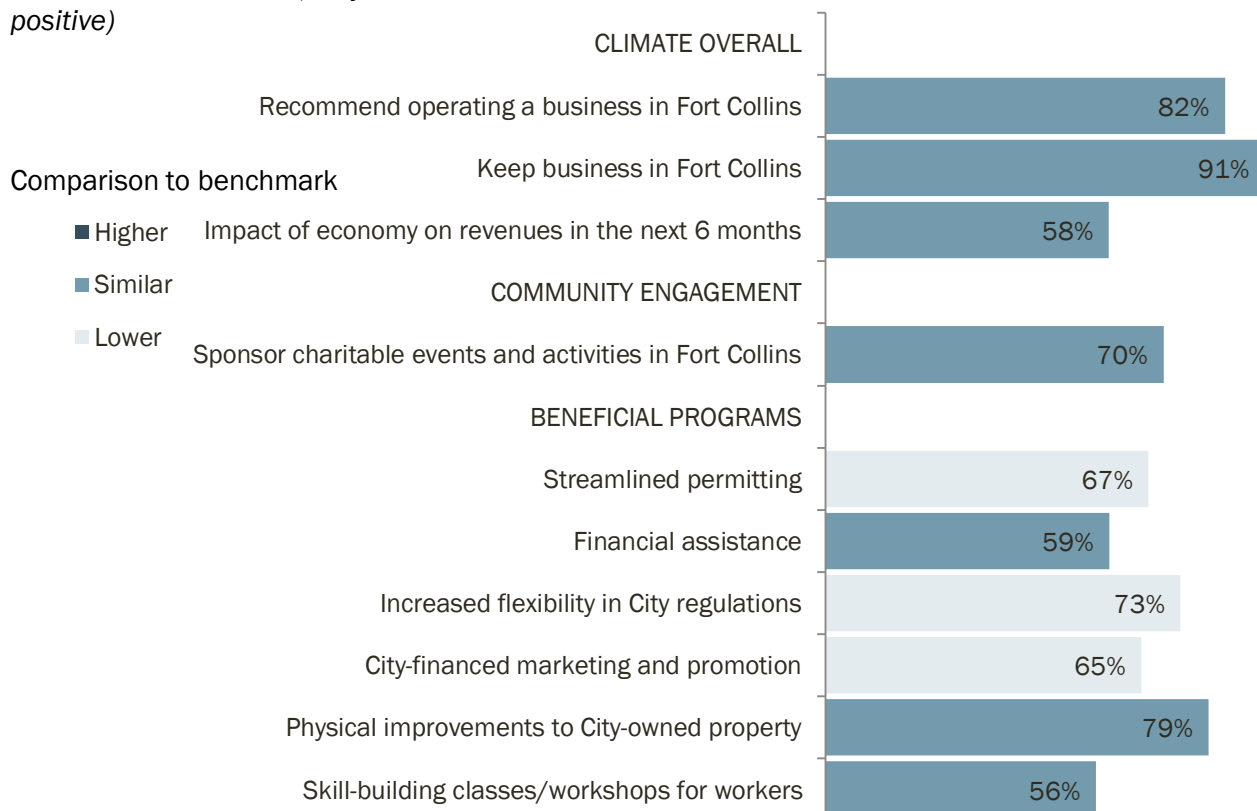


# Business Climate

City businesses weighed in on the business climate of Fort Collins. Of those surveyed, 82% would be very or somewhat likely to recommend operating a business in Fort Collins, which was similar to other municipalities across the nation. Slightly more were likely to keep their business in Fort Collins for the next five years and 58% felt positive about the impact of the economy on their revenues in the coming six months.

When asked about potential programs and services to benefit businesses in Fort Collins, physical improvements to City-owned property topped the list with about 8 in 10 respondents indicating this would be somewhat or very beneficial. Between 56% and 73% offered these same ratings to the remaining programs and services listed.

*Percent positive (e.g., very or somewhat likely, very or somewhat beneficial, very or somewhat positive)*



# Workforce

Business owners and managers evaluated several aspects of Fort Collins's workforce, including whether they planned to hire in the near future, the types of positions needed as well as the quality of the applicants they have encountered in past. Owners and managers also indicated the extent to which they used various hiring resources available in the community.

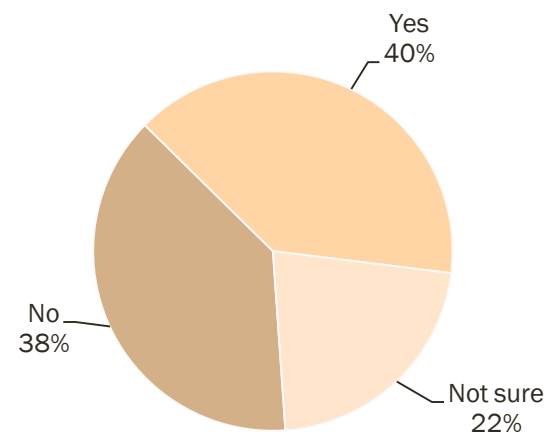
About 4 in 10 survey respondents planned to hire within the next 6 to 12 months; about 22% were unsure if they would be hiring.

About half indicated they would be adding technically skilled jobs, 4 in 10 would be adding administratively skilled jobs and 3 in 10 would be adding unskilled labor. Only 14% of business owners and managers were likely to hire for unskilled administrative positions.

When asked about their impression of job applicants in their most recent hiring experience, survey respondents gave the most positive ratings to applicants' prior experience with 46% giving an excellent or good rating; however, this rating was lower than the national comparison. When indicating their overall impression of applicants, 43% gave an excellent or good rating (also lower than the national comparison). About one-third offered positive evaluations to the number of qualified applicants, which was a rating similar to the national comparison.

Job websites were the most relied upon hiring resources followed by the business' website and social networks.

Planning to hire in the next 6 to 12 months



Types of positions needed

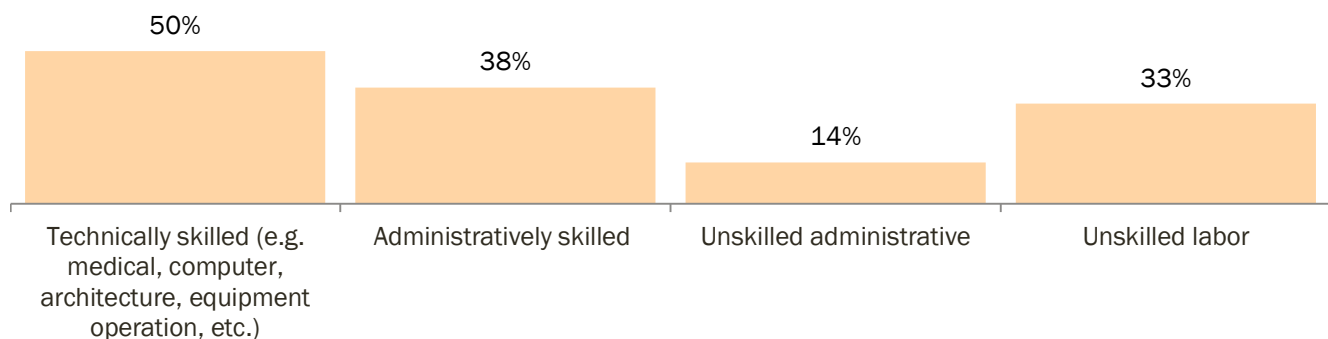
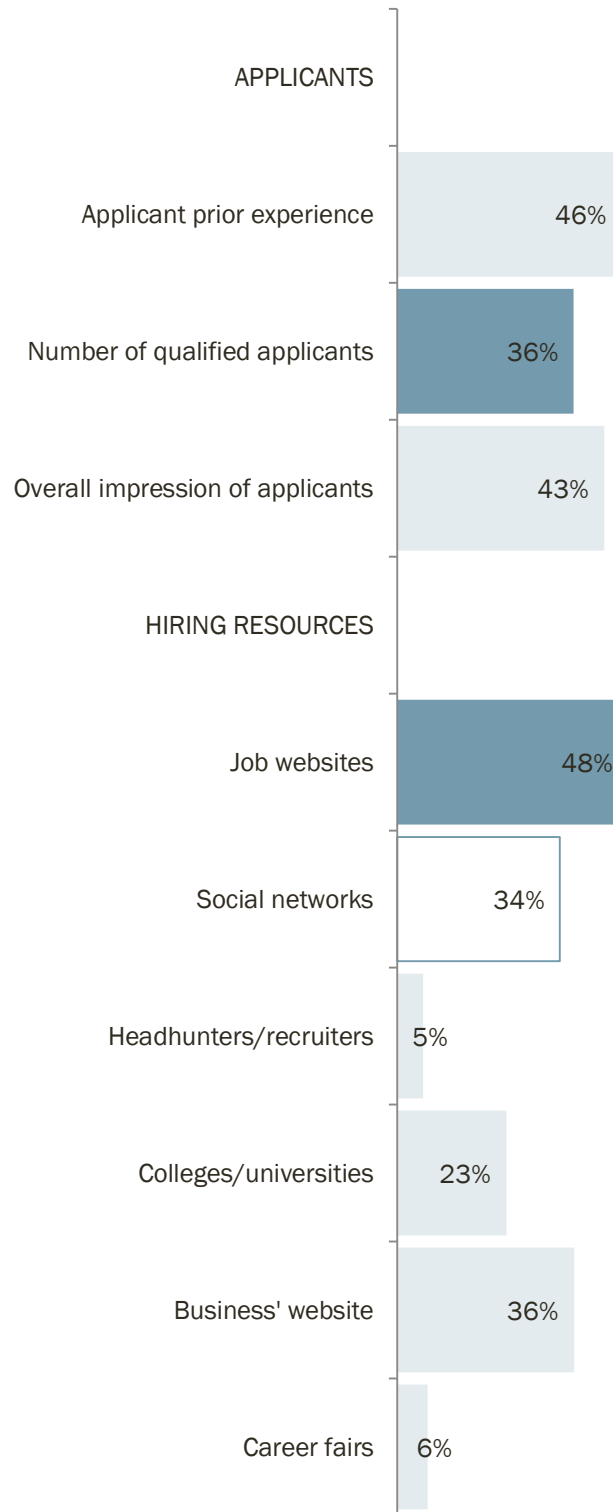


Figure 3: Aspects of the Workforce

Percent positive (e.g., excellent or good, great or moderate extent)

Comparison to benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower
- Not available

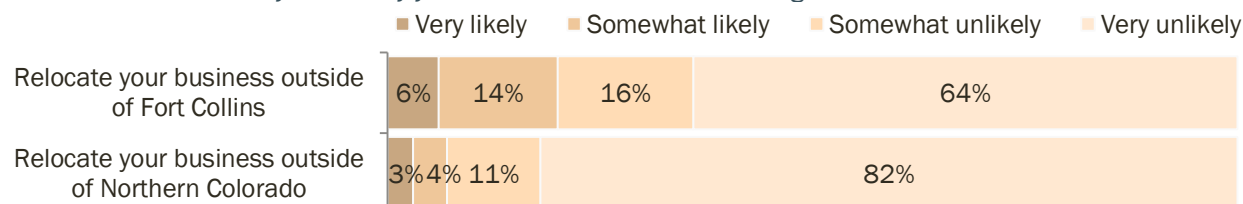


# Special Topics

The City of Fort Collins included three questions of special interest on The NBS. The first asked respondents to indicate how likely, if at all, they would be to relocate their business outside of Fort Collins or relocate outside of Northern Colorado. A majority of respondents indicated they were very unlikely to relocate out of either Fort Collins or Northern Colorado.

Figure 4: Likelihood of Relocating Business

Please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to do each of the following:



When asked if their business currently exports product(s) internationally, only 10% indicated yes. Those who indicated that they do not export internationally were asked to indicate, from a list of potential reasons, why they do not export internationally. Nearly all respondents indicated that exporting internationally did not apply to their business.

Figure 5: Export Internationally

Does your business currently export your product(s) internationally?

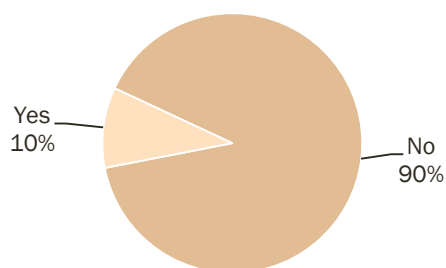
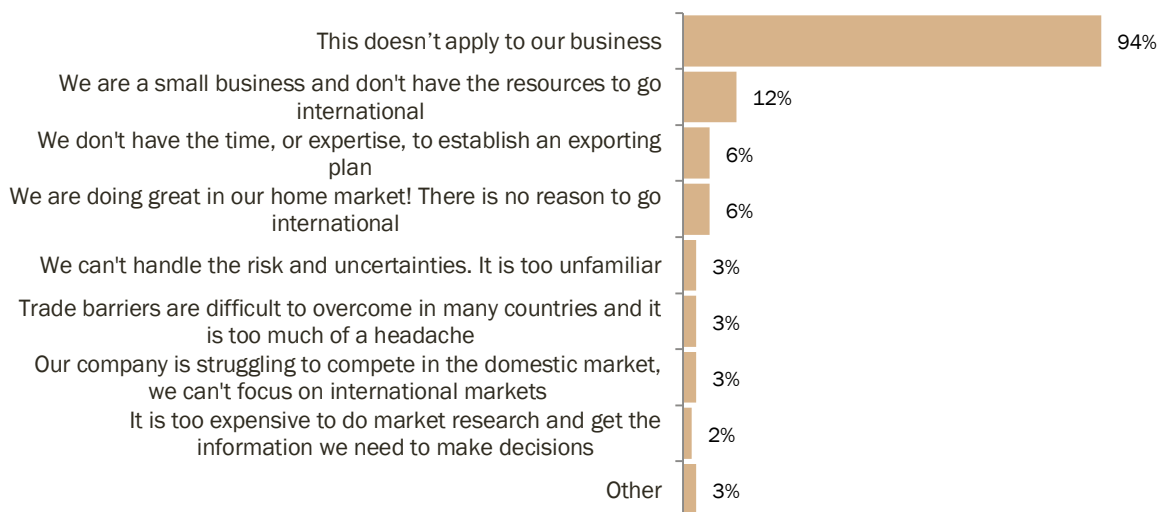


Figure 6: Reasons for Not Exporting Internationally

Please indicate which of the following, if any, are reasons your business does not export product(s) internationally:



Total may exceed 100% as respondents could select more than one option.