

## **Taking the Pulse of Metro Detroit**

### **Quality of Life Issues**

In November 2006, six of the region's top civic organizations - New Detroit, the Detroit Regional Chamber, Detroit Renaissance, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan - joined forces to form a unified group called *One D: Transforming Regional Detroit* to ensure the region works together to achieve measurable goals in six areas of priority: economic prosperity, educational preparedness, regional transit, race relations, regional cooperation and quality of life. While each of these organizations works to meet specific objectives of its own, all recognize that they have a collective responsibility to the region as well.

Input and data gained from the community, government officials and other organizations outside of One D are extremely important factors in the success of this unprecedented transformation effort, and will be used by One D to build a one-vision, one-plan blueprint for transforming Southeast Michigan. The final blueprint is expected to be unveiled at the 2007 Mackinac Policy Conference.

As part of this data gathering effort, Issue Media Group and United Way for Southeastern Michigan have partnered to regularly survey the Detroit region, on behalf of the One D partnership and each of its member organizations, regarding key quality of life and economic issues in order to get a better handle on *“the pulse of southeast Michigan.”* We want to serve up surveys that will better help us, and others, understand what our residents are thinking. We want to open this capacity to other organizations that are working to make the Detroit region a better place to live and work. We are at an important crossroads for this region and we want to be able to measure our progress through the opinions of its residents. We hope you will want to join us on this journey.

We will be delivering a new survey each month. Upon review and analysis, we will select the most pertinent questions and repeat them at regular intervals over the next several years. In this way we will be able to track perceptual change over time and match that to the demographic and economic indicators that will comprise the One D Report Card.

Our first survey appeared in the February 15 issue of Metro Mode and was designed to obtain feedback on “quality of life” issues in Southeast Michigan. This report provides the results of that survey.

On March 22 we launched a survey designed to obtain feedback related to the new “branding” effort from the Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau. Late in April we hope to look at Race Relations in Metro Detroit. Future surveys will delve into Art and Culture, Transportation, Education, Economic Opportunities and more. We welcome suggestions from organizations and individuals regarding other issues of importance and hope that you will join us as we take the **“Pulse of Metro Detroit.”**

# Quality of Life in Metropolitan Detroit

Our first survey addressed a number of Quality of Life issues in Metro Detroit<sup>1</sup>. Over 1,000 persons took the time to complete the survey during the three weeks it was available. This report provides a summary of the responses received, and ends with a brief overview of respondent demographics.

The first question asked the following:

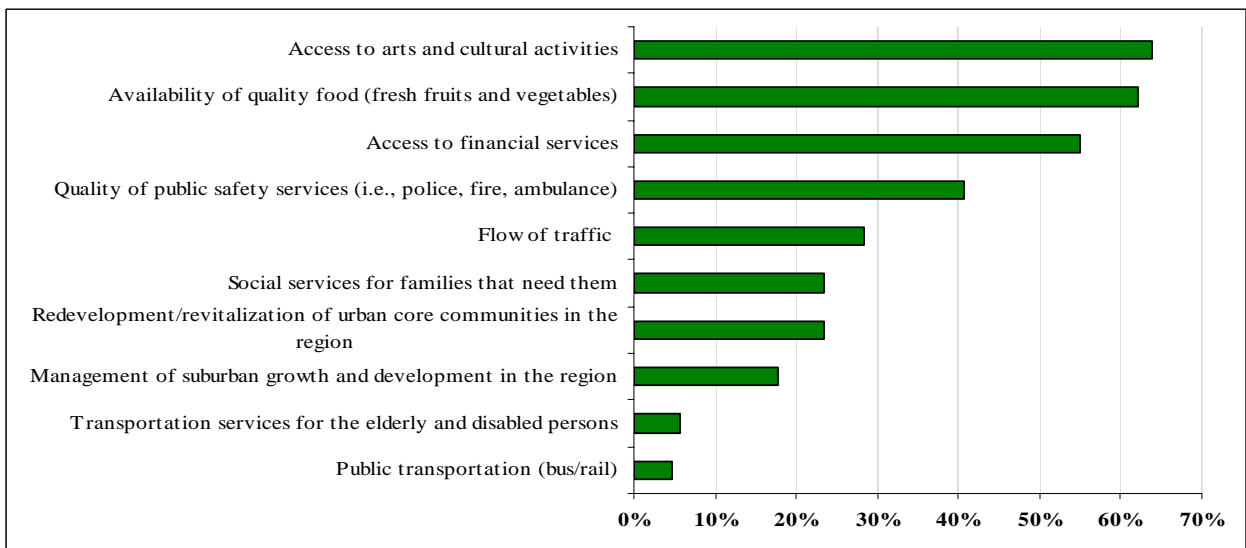
Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means “very satisfied” and 1 means “very dissatisfied,” please rate your satisfaction with each of the following in the *Southeast Michigan region* – and in *Your Community*:

- Quality of public safety services (i.e., police, fire, ambulance)
- Flow of traffic
- Access to arts and cultural activities
- Public transportation (bus/rail)
- Transportation services for the elderly and disabled persons
- Access to financial services
- Social services for families that need them
- Availability of quality food (fresh fruits and vegetables)

*The following only address the Southeast Michigan region*

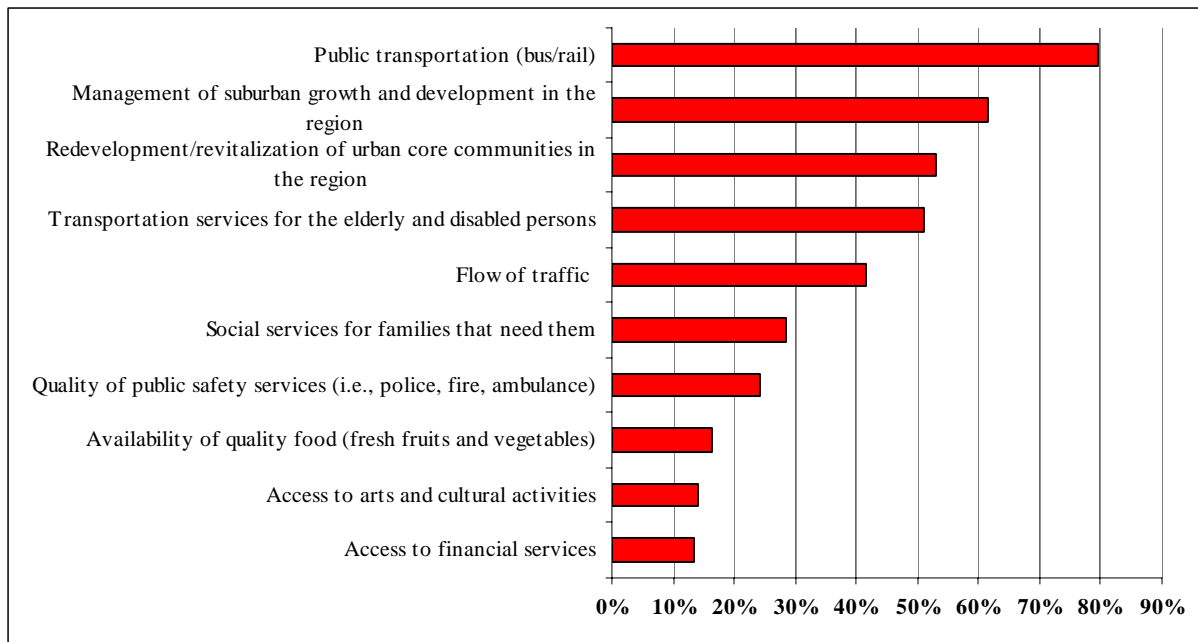
- Redevelopment/revitalization of urban core communities in the region
- Management of suburban growth and development in the region

**Figure 1. Percent of Respondents Answering “Very or Somewhat Satisfied” for the Region**



<sup>1</sup> A copy of the questionnaire is found at the end of this report.

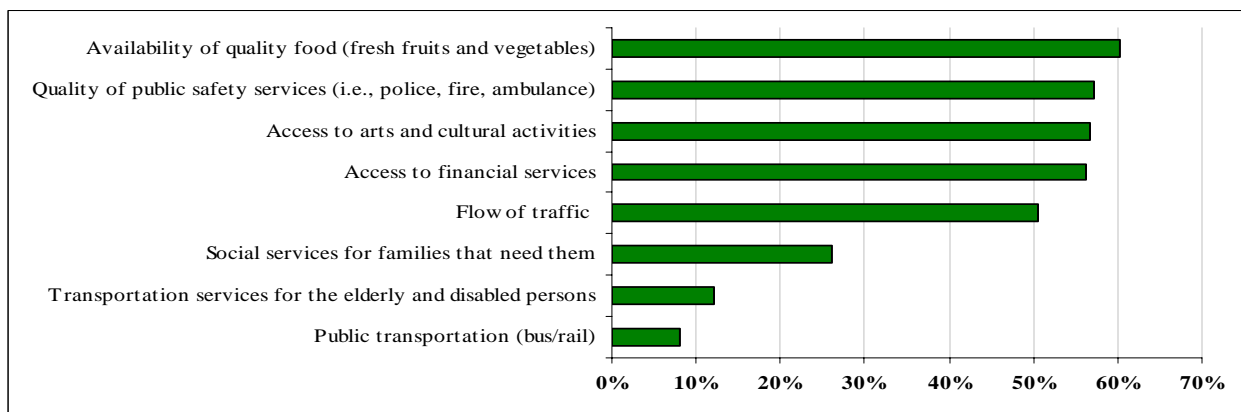
**Figure 2. Percent of Respondents Answering “Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied” for the Region**



Figures 1 and 2 paint a very clear picture of the issues that Detroit area respondents feel are strongly present and those that they feel are lacking in the region as a whole. Over half of respondents indicated satisfaction with the access to arts and cultural activities, access to financial services, and the availability of quality food. The only other category to rise above 40 percent in satisfaction was the “quality of public services.” On the dissatisfaction side of the aisle, nearly four of every five respondents stated that they were dissatisfied with the availability of public transportation. This was followed by recognition of the lack of coordinated efforts to manage suburban growth while working to redevelop and revitalize our urban core communities. Two other transportation-related issues also exceeded a 40 percent level of dissatisfaction – “transportation services for elderly and disabled” and general “traffic flow.”

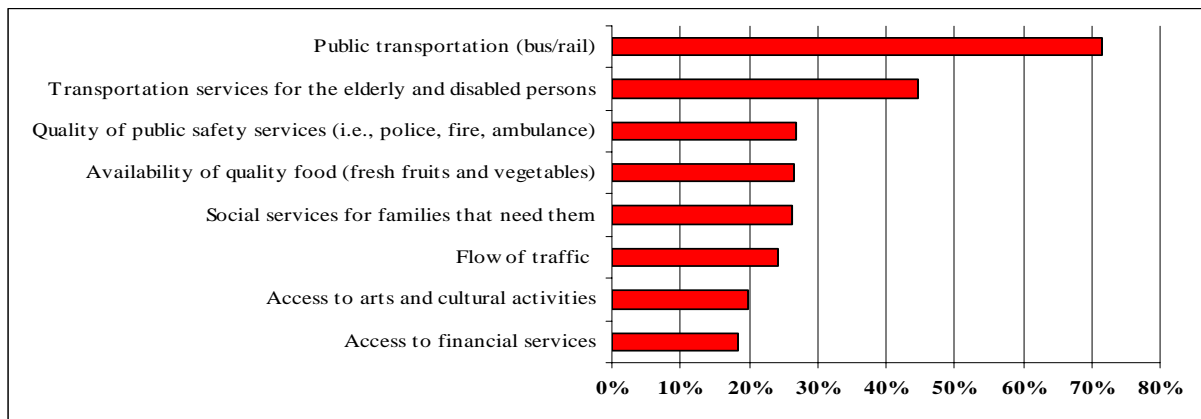
We also asked respondents to rank the majority of these issues<sup>2</sup> from the perspective of their own communities.

**Figure 3. Percent of Respondents Answering “Very or Somewhat Satisfied” for Their Community**



<sup>2</sup> Suburban growth and urban revitalization were only asked in a regional context.

**Figure 4. Percent of Respondents Answering “Very or Somewhat Dissatisfied” for Their Community**



The results provided some interesting counterpoints to the regional opinions – a result similar to that found when respondents look at politics on the national and local level. In general, respondents show greater satisfaction, and less dissatisfaction, at the smaller geographic level. Services – both public (government) and private (food and finances) received high satisfaction ratings. The high preponderance of arts and culture in Detroit tended to lower the satisfaction score for this issue. Transportation, however, remained the principal issue of concern – garnering dissatisfaction responses from over 70 percent of the respondents.

Due to concerns about public safety and the lack of services – particularly grocery stores – in Detroit, we took a separate look at how Detroit residents answered this question. Only 42 percent were satisfied with the availability of quality food, while 34 percent expressed satisfaction with the quality of public safety services. On the negative side, Detroiters agreed that public transportation leaves a great deal to be desired – 71 percent were dissatisfied, with 47 percent of responses being “very dissatisfied.”

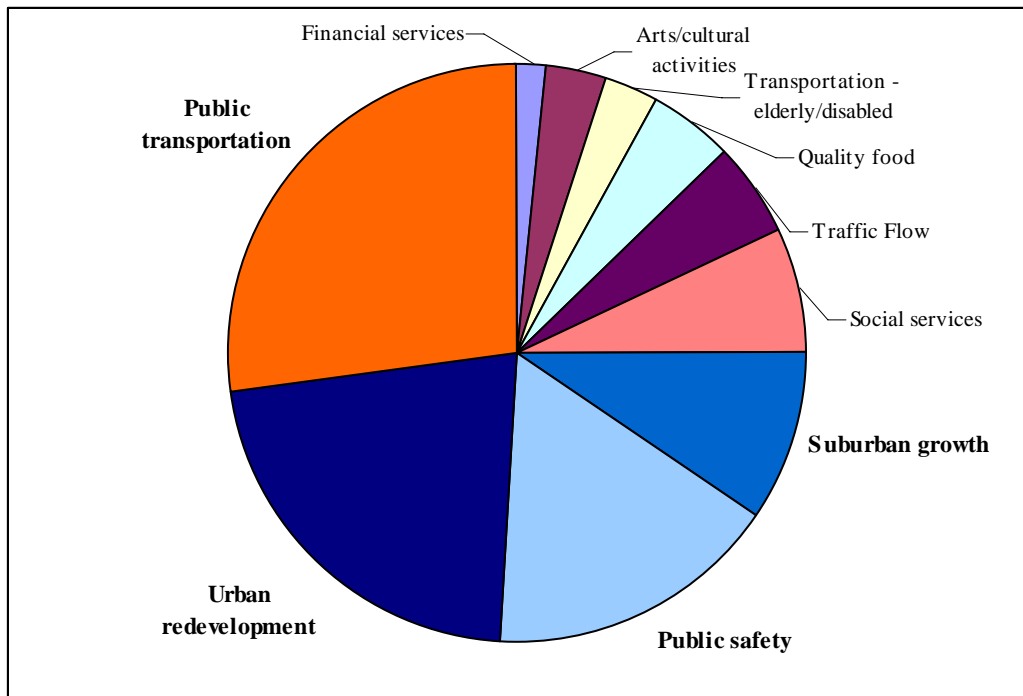
We next asked respondents to consider the issues in Question 1 and tell us:

**Which THREE of these items do you think should receive the most emphasis from community leaders over the next THREE Years?**

The results are shown in Figure 5. Consistent with the views expressed in Question 1, respondents overwhelmingly listed Public Transportation as the issue that should receive emphasis from community leaders. Thirty-eight percent of respondents listed this as a “first priority,” while 81 percent of all respondents listed it as one of their three top issues. Coming in second was the need to invest in the redevelopment/revitalization of Detroit and our other older, urban core communities. An assessment of the quality of public safety services, and improvements where necessary, came in a close third, followed by the issue of managing suburban growth and development.

The importance of these responses is that they point to issues that we must look at on a regional basis. We cannot continue to expect individual leaders to solve the problems. Rather, we must work across historical geographic and racial lines to get the job done. Respondents are tired of the “rhetoric” and want to see “action.”

**Figure 5. Percent of Total Responses – Three Items for Community Leader Emphasis**



Our next question asked the following:

Several items that may influence your perception of living in the **Southeast Michigan region** are listed below. Please rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “very satisfied” and 1 means “very unsatisfied.”

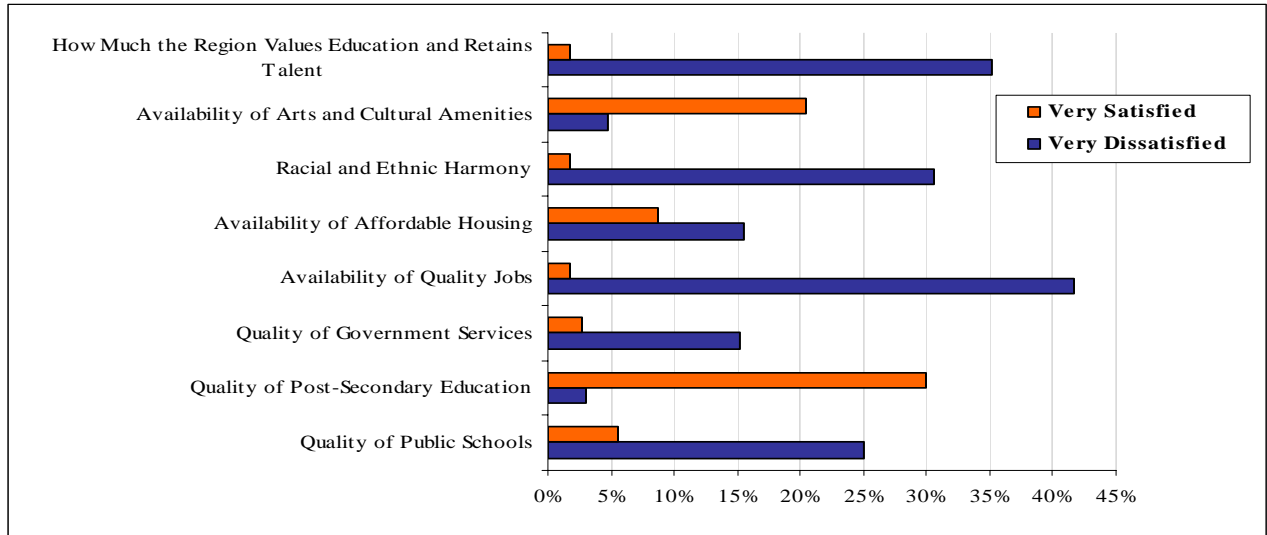
- Quality of public schools
- Quality of post-secondary education (colleges, universities, vocational)
- Quality of governmental services
- Availability of quality jobs
- Availability of affordable housing
- Racial and ethnic harmony
- Availability of arts and cultural amenities
- How much the region values education and retains talent

Figure 6 provides a summary of the two ends of the spectrum – 5 (very satisfied) and 1 (very dissatisfied).

While dissatisfaction ruled the day for most of the factors listed, respondents did show a great deal of satisfaction with the “quality of the region’s post-secondary education” and the “availability of arts and cultural amenities.” 72 percent of respondents were satisfied (very or somewhat) with our post-secondary educational opportunities, while 58% were satisfied with the region’s arts and cultural opportunities.

On the other end of the spectrum, only 7 percent of respondents were satisfied with the “availability of quality jobs” (77% were dissatisfied), and only 10 percent were satisfied with “how the region values education and retains talent” (69% were dissatisfied).

**Figure 6. Percent of Total Responses – Three Items for Community Leader Emphasis**

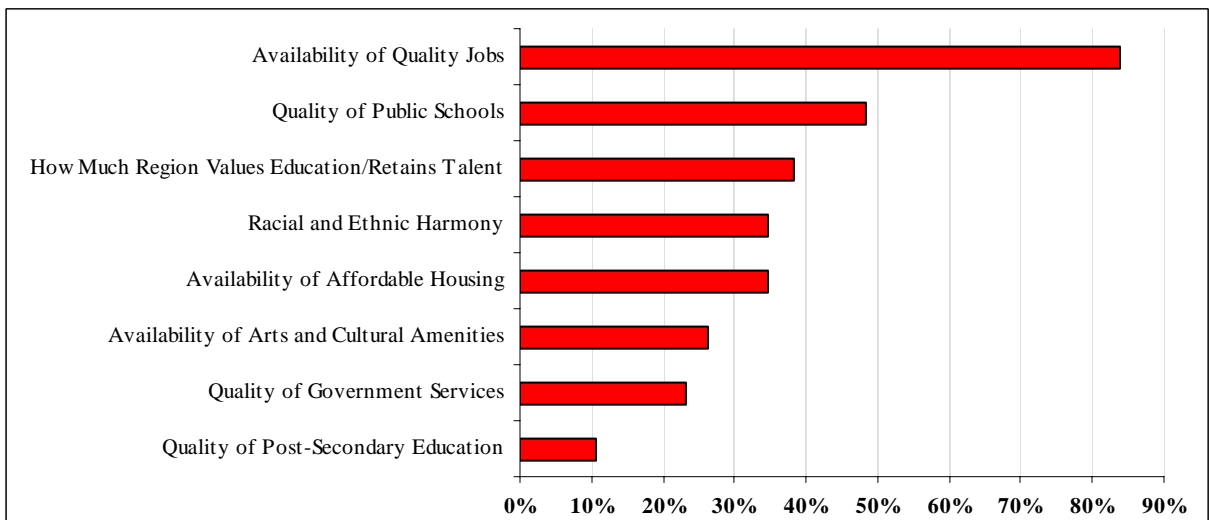


We followed up the ranking question with the following:

**Which THREE of these reasons will have the most impact on your decision to stay in the Southeast Michigan Region for the next 10 years?**

An analysis of the results (Figure 7) spells trouble for our region. The availability of quality jobs far outdistanced any other response with 84 percent of all respondents listing it in their top 3 – and 48 percent listing it as number 1. The quality of public schools came in distant second at 48 percent, with regional values of education and talent retention placing third at 38 percent. All three of these issues ranked very low in their “satisfaction ratings.”

**Figure 7. Percent of Respondents Who Listed Item as Impacting Decision to Stay in SE Michigan**



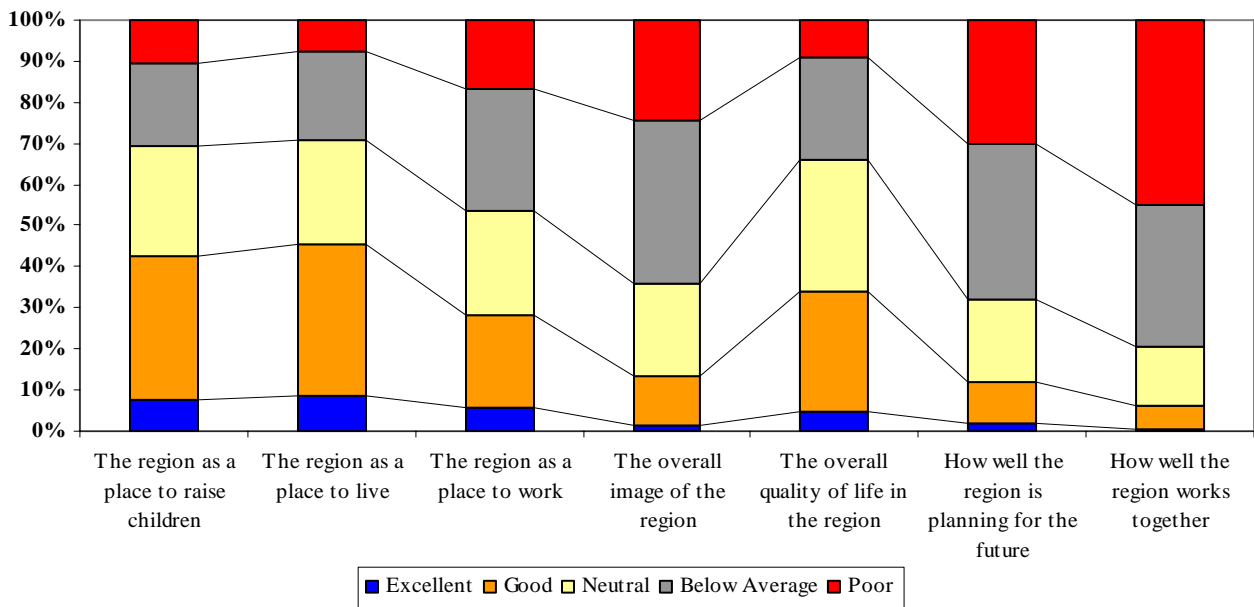
We also found that a number of respondents (almost 9 percent) wanted to provided other issues that were of importance to them. While they covered a wide range of issues, the primary categories were family, crime, cost-of-living, taxes and transportation.

The next question asked respondents to do the following:

Please rate the Southeast Michigan region on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means “excellent” and 1 means “poor” with regard to each of the following:

- The region as a place to raise children
- The region as a place to live
- The region as a place to work
- The overall image of the region
- The overall quality of life in the region
- How well the region is planning for the future
- How well the region works together

Figure 8. Percent Distribution of Responses Rating SE Michigan Region by Category



While respondents were stingy on giving an excellent rating to any of our quality of life categories, the region was rated positively by at least 40 percent of respondents as ‘a place to live’ and as ‘a place to raise children.’ Almost 35 percent of respondents rated the overall quality of life positively. On the negative side, almost 80 percent of respondents rated the region as below average or poor in the area of “how well the region works together.” “Planning for the future” and “the overall image” also came out on the negative end for almost 70 percent of respondents.

While the image is being worked on by a number of organizations, with the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau (DMCVB) taking the lead in changing our brand,<sup>3</sup> the low ratings for regional collaboration and planning should sound a clarion call to all “regional leaders.” The ability to attract and retain young, educated residents and thereby build a

<sup>3</sup> Our next report will summarize the findings from the branding survey that was launched on March 22 in conjunction with DMCVB.

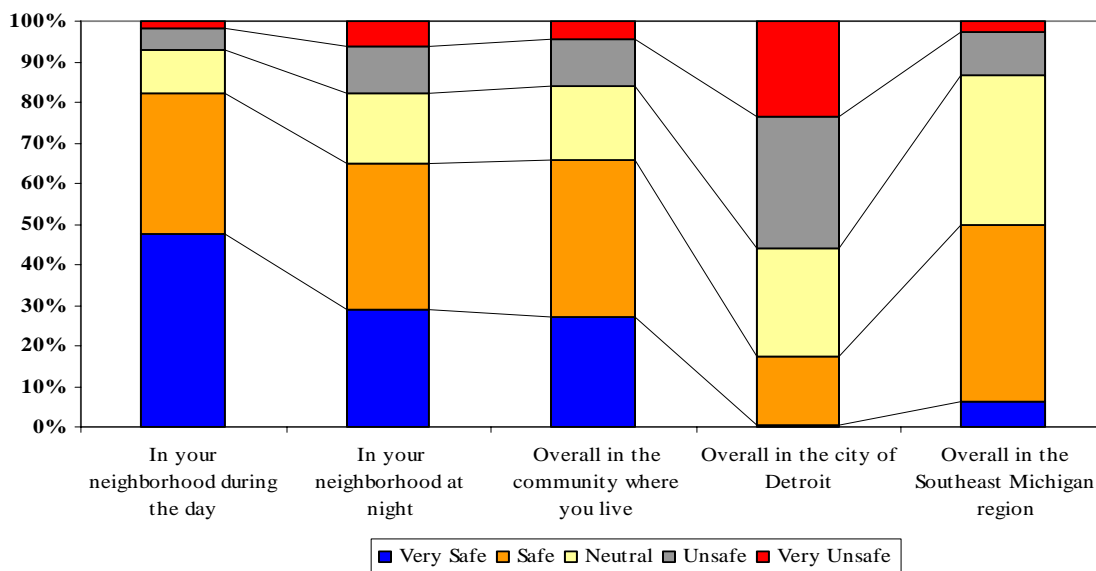
knowledge-based economy that is attractive to a wide range of individuals and companies requires that we begin to work together as a region and develop regional plans for land use, transportation – public/mass and highways, housing, cultural amenities, and much more.

Our final question asked the following:

**On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “very safe” and 1 means “very unsafe,” please rate how safe you feel in the following situations:**

- In your neighborhood during the day
- In your neighborhood at night
- Overall in the community where you live
- Overall in the city of Detroit
- Overall in the Southeast Michigan region

**Figure 9. Percent Distribution of Responses on Feelings of Safety by Location**



Southeast Michigan residents generally feel safe in their neighborhoods, communities, and throughout Southeast Michigan. The only area where safety was an issue was in the City of Detroit. Nearly three in five (57 percent) respondents expressed feeling “unsafe” or “very unsafe” in the City of Detroit. An analysis by geography shows that Detroit residents feel somewhat safer in their city than nonresidents – 21% vs. 15%. Nevertheless, 50 percent of Detroit residents reported feeling “unsafe” or “very unsafe,” as compared to 60 percent of nonresidents.

It is obvious from these results that the image of Detroit<sup>4</sup> must be changed by addressing the issue of crime and safety. Mayor Kilpatrick made crime a major topic of his 2007 State of the City address. He stated:

“The crime issue in the city of Detroit has consistently and constantly undermined any notion of recovery and revitalization or renaissance in this city for more than 40 years. No matter what we do – host the Super Bowl ... host the All-Star Game ... lead the region in new housing ... sell million dollar condos downtown ... build more housing than ever ... open three new neighborhood recreation centers ... fix streets ... fix parks ... host the Grand Prix on Belle Isle – the crime issue constantly undermines any notion of recovery all the time.

But the new officers and new tactics by themselves are not the only answer to our crime problem. One mistake we make in our community when we discuss crime is to immediately discuss police and police only. We must look at the nature of the crime we experience and develop strategies out of what we learn. And we must have a very candid conversation within this community about what we are doing to ourselves.

My Beloved Community, I truly understand the history of African American people in this country. But we have come to a point in our community where this is no conspiracy by Outsiders doing this to us. This is us killing us. This is mostly African Americans killing African Americans. This is some family member of mine or yours killing some family member of yours or mine. And we, as a community, have to stop it now. Nobody’s coming to save us. We have to stand up for ourselves and stand up now.”

While this is certainly an issue that Detroiters must be ready and willing to tackle, it must be understood that the Southeast Michigan Region can be healthy and safe unless all its components – with Detroit being the largest component of all – are healthy and safe. This is an issue that we all must be willing to tackle.

We ended the survey with the following open-ended question:

Based on the questions above, in a couple sentences, what is your opinion on the overall quality of life in your community and in the region?

Almost 900 respondents took the time to give us their thoughts. I do not plan to lengthen this report with an accounting of all the responses (they are available upon request). Needless to say, the comments covered the broad spectrum of issues and ranged from very negative to very positive. I think that the response that sums things up the best is the following (which was provided in all caps as shown):

**“DESPITE THE REGION'S SHAKY IMAGE, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO LIVE ANYWHERE ELSE”**

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<sup>4</sup> A previous study of Crime in Downtown Detroit by this author showed that the core of the city was safer than many communities in Southeast Michigan, as well as other downtowns in cities across the country.

## Demographic Summary

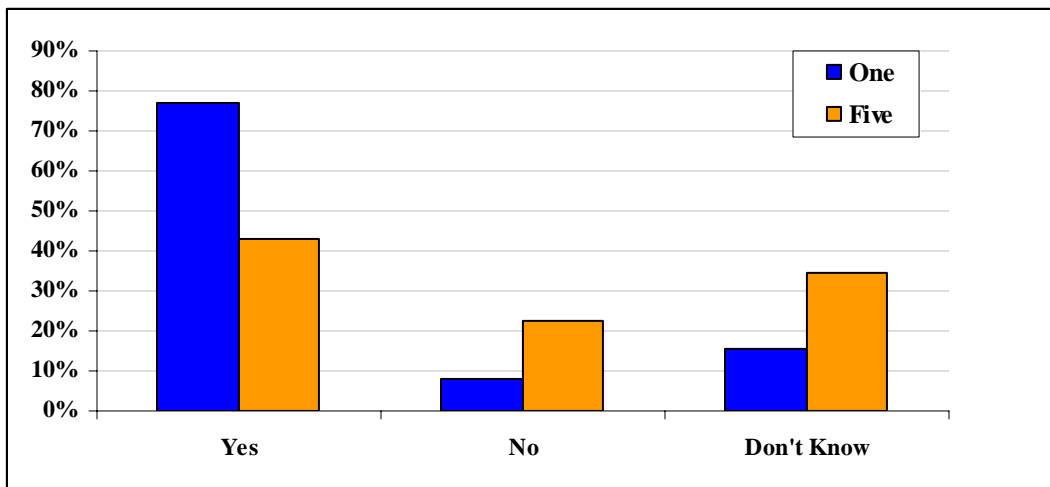
The survey was conducted strictly via the web. A number of outlets were used, in addition to MetroMode and ModelD, to get the word out as to its availability. No incentives were provided to respondents. A relatively detailed set of demographics was collected from our respondents. This section only reports the results of several of the questions.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. What is your current county of residence (identified through question on ZIP Code)?

Macomb County	5%
Oakland County	30%
Wayne County	60%
City of Detroit	32%
Out-Wayne County	28%
Elsewhere	5%

A quick review of the table shows that Macomb County is extremely underrepresented, when compared with other counties in the region. While several reasons for this may be put forth, there is no way to substantiate any of them. Suffice it to say, efforts to increase Macomb responses will be undertaken for future surveys.

### 2. Do you expect to be living in Southeast Michigan – 1 year from now; 5 years from now?



These results are quite positive in that almost 80 percent of respondents say that they will be in Southeast Michigan over the next year, while only 8 percent are sure that they will not. While the “stayers” drop to 43 percent when the length of time is extended to 5 years, the drop is more a factor of uncertainty (35%) rather than an intention to leave (22%). It may be assumed that a regional thrust toward cooperation and planning, coupled with increased attention to issues of public safety and a changing economic climate, will change these “Don’t Knows,” as well as some of the “Nos,” to “Yeses.”

<sup>5</sup> A more detailed demographic analysis is available upon request.

# Quality of Life Survey

1. Using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means “very satisfied” and 1 means “very dissatisfied,” please rate your satisfaction with each of the following in the Southeast Michigan region – and in Your Community

<u>How satisfied are you with:</u>	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Satisfied</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
(A) Quality of public safety services (i.e., police, fire, ambulance)						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(B) Flow of traffic						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(C) Access to arts and cultural activities						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(D) Public transportation (bus/rail)						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(E) Transportation services for the elderly and disabled persons						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(F) Access to financial services						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(G) Social services for families that need them						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(H) Availability of quality food (fresh fruits and vegetables)						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
in your community .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(I) Redevelopment/revitalization of urban core communities						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(J) Management of suburban growth and development						
in the region .....	5	4	3	2	1	9

2. Which **THREE** of these items do you think should receive the most emphasis from community leaders over the next **THREE** Years? [Write in the letters below using the letters from the list in Question 1 above].

            
1st
            
2nd
            
3rd

3. Several items that may influence your perception of living in the **Southeast Michigan region** are listed below. Please rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “very satisfied” and 1 means “very dissatisfied.”

<u><i>How satisfied are you with:</i></u>	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Satisfied</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
(A) Quality of public schools .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(B) Quality of post-secondary education (colleges, universities, vocational).....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(C) Quality of governmental services .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(D) Availability of quality jobs .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(E) Availability of affordable housing.....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(F) Racial and ethnic harmony.....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(G) Availability of arts and cultural amenities .....	5	4	3	2	1	9
(H) How much the region values education and retains talent .....	5	4	3	2	1	9

4. Which **THREE** of these reasons will have the most impact on your decision to **stay** in the **Southeast Michigan region** for the next 10 years? [write the letters for your top 3 choices below using the letters in Question 3 above].

            
1st
            
2nd
            
3rd

5. Please rate the Southeast Michigan region on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means “excellent” and 1 means “poor” with regard to each of the following:

<u>How would you rate:</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Below Average</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
(A) The region as a place to raise children .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(B) The region as a place to live.....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(C) The region as a place to work .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(D) The overall image of the region .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(E) The overall quality of life in the region .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(F) How well the region is planning for the future .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(G) How well the region works together? .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means “very safe” and 1 means “very unsafe,” please rate how safe you feel in the following situations:

<u>How safe do you feel:</u>	<u>Very safe</u>	<u>Safe</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Unsafe</u>	<u>Very Unsafe</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
(A) In your neighborhood during the day.....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(B) In your neighborhood at night.....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(C) Overall in the community where you live.....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(D) Overall in the city of Detroit .....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9
(E) Overall in the Southeast Michigan region.....	5.....	4.....	3.....	2.....	1.....	9

7. Based on the questions above, in a couple sentences, what is your opinion on the overall quality of life in your community and in the region? \_\_\_\_\_

## DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What is your current ZIP Code of residence?
2. When did you move there?
3. What was your previous ZIP Code of residence?
4. Do you expect to be living in Southeast Michigan 1 year from now? Yes No DK Refused
5. Do you expect to be living in Southeast Michigan 5 years from now? Yes No DK Refused
6. What is your age?
7. What is your current marital status? Married / Separated / Divorced / Widowed / Never married /  
Refused
8. Are you currently employed? Yes / No / Refused
9. If currently employed, approximately how many miles do you travel between home and work?
10. If currently employed, do you have health insurance through your employer?
11. Would you say your total annual household income is:  
\_\_\_ (1) Under \$20,000      \_\_\_ (4) \$75,000 to \$99,999  
\_\_\_ (2) \$20,000 to \$49,999      \_\_\_ (5) \$100,000-\$149,999  
\_\_\_ (3) \$50,000 to \$74,999      \_\_\_ (6) \$150,000 and up
12. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (check all that apply)  
\_\_\_ (1) American Indian      \_\_\_ (5) Arab/Middle Eastern  
\_\_\_ (2) Asian/Pacific Islander      \_\_\_ (6) White  
\_\_\_ (3) Black/African-American      \_\_\_ (7) Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ (4) Hispanic/Latino
13. Your gender: \_\_\_ (1) Male      \_\_\_ (2) Female
14. Do you rent or own your home? \_\_\_ (1) Rent      \_\_\_ (2) Own
15. Are you currently registered to vote? Yes / No / Not eligible to vote / DK / Refused

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If you would like to receive the survey results, please provide your email address. [Your address will be separated from your responses and only maintained for results to follow up]

**This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time.**