



DirectionFinder Changes in Satisfaction from 2017 to 2018

In his presentation to the City Council, Chris Tatham of ETC institute will highlight several significant changes that occurred from the 2017 to 2018 citizen satisfaction survey. Staff have prepared the following analysis of the most significant changes observed with selected questions:

NOTABLE INCREASE IN SATISFACTION

Wastewater

- **Odor from City Wastewater Treatment Centers (65% in 2017 to 70% in 2018)**

Due to the proximity of many residents to the Harold Street Wastewater Treatment Facility, minimizing odor as well as informing residents when there may be temporary increases in odor is extremely important to the City's communication efforts as well as the quality of life of residents. In the last five years, the City has seen survey scores increase an average of almost 1% for each quarter surveyed. These increases in satisfaction are likely due to continual communication over periods of temporary odor increases with residents on social media platforms such as Nextdoor, as well as recent rehabilitation projects at the Harold Street Wastewater Treatment Facility that have reduced odor in neighboring areas. The facility now utilizes three methods of odor control, and the technologies are highlighted on tours for the Olathe School District, Johnson County Community College, and other organizations.

- **Overall Quality of the City's Wastewater System (78% in 2017 to 83% in 2018)**

Citizen satisfaction with Olathe's wastewater system has risen in every survey in 2018. At 83%, this measure also has the distinction of having no residents answer "Very Dissatisfied" with the service, and only 1% of residents answer "Dissatisfied". Olathe's citizen satisfaction with the quality of the wastewater system is in the top 5% in the nation, is 11% higher than the national average, and 13% higher than the Kansas City metro average.

Notable service and communication improvements to the wastewater system have been a rehabilitation project at the Harold Street Facility. Additionally, there have been strategic social media posts for Earth Day, World Toilet Day, and announcing the City's Gold Compliance awards from the National Association of Clean Water Agencies. Olathe Residents may also be satisfied with consistent rate increases (as seen by citizen satisfaction scores for wastewater fees consistently above the 50% target). This is counter to the City of Kansas City, Missouri, which has seen substantial wastewater fee increases due to a cleanup agreement with the EPA, as well as Johnson County Wastewater, which is seeing 7.75% annual fee increases in the next several years to pay for the new Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Parks & Recreation

- **City Swimming Pools (79% in 2017 to 84% in 2018)**

Several factors may have contributed to the increased satisfaction with the City swimming pools. In 2018, a weekly deep clean of the four outdoor pools was implemented through a contracted cleaning company. Customer service staff received additional training, and the swim lesson student to instructor ratio was lowered. A deck attendant was scheduled on the first night of lessons to be available to answer parent questions. In addition, we saw consistent warm temperatures in June & July allowing for greater usage of the pools.

Major Categories of City Services

- **Overall Flow of Traffic and Congestion Management (60% in 2017 to 53% in 2018)**

Traffic flow and congestion management has been prioritized by residents as the top service that should receive the most emphasis over the next two years. The City has made several efforts to improve traffic flow and congestion. Although there have been some declines in transportation-related satisfaction measures recently, continual investment in the transportation network will pay dividends in the future. Some of the recent street projects continued further into the year which may have impacted satisfaction negatively. Some of these projects include:

-Parker/K-7, Santa Fe to Old 56 – Utility relocation impacted Parker for the relocation of KCP&L, AT&T, and Atmos infrastructure.

-151st and Mur-Len – Right turn lanes and additional left turn lanes were constructed at this intersection. Large stormwater structures beneath the pavement were also replaced resulting in disruptions to traffic.

-143rd Street, Pflumm to Quivira – Improved from a rural roadway to a roadway with a better vertical profile and center turn lane. Construction required Pflumm to be closed for a period to accommodate the needed grading and stormwater improvements.

Another important effort the City has undertaken is a pilot project that uses live traffic data along with timing optimization software to adjust traffic signal times. Since introduction of the pilot project, an average of 90 seconds has been shaved off the average travel time in both directions on Santa Fe.

Projects to be constructed this year to help reduce congestion include:

-Parker/K-7, Santa Fe to Old 56 – Additional turn lanes and medians will be added to improve traffic flow.

-119th & Pflumm – Adding right and additional left turn lanes in all directions.

-151st & Mur-Len – Completion of median and turn lane improvements.

-151st & Ridgeview – Addition of right turn lane and additional left turn lanes.

Staff continues to communicate with residents about pending construction projects (such as the Johnson County Courthouse) regarding disruptions and alternative routes. An area of concern for residents may also be about Olathe city limits. A resident experiencing frequent traffic or congestion issues on interstate or expressway roadways such as K-10 or I-35 may cause them to perceive them as an Olathe issue.

Transportation

- **Ease of North/South Travel (75% in 2017 to 69% in 2018)**

This measure was included in last year's significant changes as it rose from 68% in 2016 to 75%. One of the main reasons for that was the completion of I-35 reconstruction which reduced the amount of detouring traffic onto Olathe streets. The decline from 2017 to 2018 may be a result of residents becoming used to the "new normal".

Specific projects that may have impacted satisfaction include Parker/K-7, Santa Fe to Old 56 and 151st & Mur-Len. As seen through geographical analysis, much of the dissatisfaction in this measure was from residents around Parker and K-7 as well as throughout Black Bob Road. Upcoming projects such as additional turn lanes and medians on Parker/K7 to Old 56, 119th & Pflumm, 151st & Mur-Len, and 151st & Ridgeview should ease traffic and congestion in the long-term.

Perceptions of the City

- **Overall Quality of New Commercial Development (71% in 2017 to 66% in 2018)**

Over the last few years, citizen satisfaction with new commercial development has been trending downwards. There are several possible reasons for the annual decline in this measure:

-As Olathe continues to expand in population, new residents may have certain expectations for commercial development that is not being met. On the other side, long-time residents may feel the City is expanding too rapidly. Residents may also think that we have enough new commercial development, but it is not the right type of commercial development.

-While the Great Mall site development project will likely help satisfaction with new commercial development in the future, much of the news surrounding it in 2018 revolved around incentives for developers and competition with the City of Overland Park's own development project. Negative satisfaction for these reasons would indicate a short-term decrease, but then increase once residents began enjoying the completed development.

-New commercial development has periods of grading and land disturbance. Negative responses may be impacted by numerous areas of construction and unfinished projects, leading to negative satisfaction until the projects are completed.

- **Overall Value Received for City Tax Dollars and Fees (73% in 2017 to 68% in 2018)**

The City of Olathe monitors this measure closely as a key indicator for assessing the effectiveness of service delivery. This question is designed to help local governments objectively assess whether, or not, increased levels of satisfaction are being obtained at a price that is reasonable to residents. Olathe continues to set a high standard satisfaction within the delicate subject of tax dollar value received. In 2018 the City's score of 68% placed it within the top 10% of all cities for highest satisfaction. The City was 30% higher than the national average of 38% and 23% higher than the KC Metro average of 45%. This measure narrowly qualified as a significant change and has been stable with similar results seen from quarter to quarter in recent years.

The City continues to work closely with the City Council to be very transparent with its budgeting process, engaging citizens through social media platforms, with videos, and various in-person events (open house, workshops and presentations). Every year, the City's adopted budget book is fully available to view online in its entirety.

City Maintenance

- **Adequacy of City Street Lighting (79% in 2017 to 75% in 2018)**

Starting in 2015, the City of Olathe began converting City-owned high-pressure sodium street light fixtures into LED fixtures. In 2017, the project was expanded to include the newly purchased KCP&L lights, making the total lights to be replaced 7,264.

While LED fixtures provide light which is more reliable and consistent in appearance while using less energy, some individuals still prefer the warm glow of the high-pressure sodium street lights. Furthermore, the City has taken an approach to street light replacement as replacing high-pressure sodium lights if there is an outage or other repairs needed. This has led to some areas having a mix of LED lights and high-pressure sodium lights. Over time though, these areas will have less high-pressure sodium lights as they are continually replaced.

It is worth noting that, over the last three years, the trendline for this satisfaction measure has stayed relatively stable. Unless this measure continues to fall, the decrease in satisfaction should be considered more of an outlier than the norm. While falling from the previous year, the City of Olathe's satisfaction score is still in the top 10% in the nation, 14% higher than the Kansas City metro average, and 19% higher than the U.S. average.

Water Services

- **Informed about Water Disruptions (76% in 2017 to 70% in 2018)**

In 2017, this satisfaction measure saw an increase of 5% from 71% in 2016 to 76% in 2017. In the last three years, 76% has been the highest satisfaction result. While satisfaction has declined, the number of residents answering “Neutral” towards this measure has increasingly trended upwards. The amount of water distribution asset failures also increased from a five-year low in 2017, which indicates that more residents may be frustrated with the amount of water disruptions in 2018 compared to 2017.

Communication with residents regarding water disruptions continues to be a priority for the City, as it has been indicated that keeping residents informed about water disruptions is one of the most important water-related satisfaction measures when considering citizen perceptions towards “Services Provided by the City” and the “Value of Tax Dollars & Fees”. The City continues to extend information to residents through social media, including the neighborhood-based site Nextdoor. Currently, the City has 29,908 members on Nextdoor, representing 56,385 households. This is a total of 38% of homes, a 6% increase from last year, allowing staff to easily communicate with specific neighborhoods and residents when water service disruptions occur. Social media outreach has continued to increase in the last year with a 16% increase in Twitter followers, a 12% increase in Facebook “likes”, and a 7% increase in average monthly video views.

- **How Quickly Water Personnel Respond to Requests (72% in 2017 to 66% in 2018)**

A 6% decline in this measure is consistent with the 6% decline in citizen satisfaction of information about water disruptions due to the interrelatedness of the two measures. Water distribution asset failures have increased in 2018 compared to 2017, leading to more personnel responses and more opportunities for impacted residents being frustrated with the response time (or frustrated with the inconvenience of losing water service/pressure for a short period of time). Staff will begin surveying more residents after projects to gain feedback for improvement, as well as utilizing NotifyJoCo to alert residents and businesses of utility service impacts.

While this measure has fallen in 2018, the three-year trendline indicates that citizen satisfaction in this category is stable. Also, of the 34% of respondents who were not satisfied, only 3% were listed as dissatisfied as 31% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This indicates that although satisfaction may be down in the short-term, dissatisfaction has stayed consistently low.

Ratings of the City

- **As a Place Where You Would Buy Your Next Home (89% in 2017 to 83% in 2018)**

In 2018, SmartAsset ranked Olathe as the number one city where millennials are buying homes. They stated that over 50% of millennial households living in Olathe own their homes, which is an increase of 5% from 2007. Many reasons could exist why the amount of Olathe residents that would buy their next home in Olathe has fallen from 2017. To determine those reasons as well as to correctly allocate resources and plan long-term, the City has been conducting a comprehensive housing study with Hanna:Keelan Associates. This study will evaluate existing housing in Olathe, as well as housing wants and needs. It will document housing trends and projections, target housing demands for all income levels, and provide recommendations and implementation programs through a five-year housing plan. The work from this study will ensure that the City can strive for a housing market that meets the needs of current and prospective residents.

Public Safety

- **Fire Related Education Programs (77% in 2017 to 72% in 2018)**

In 2018, the Fire Department reached 54,261 citizens through our public education and outreach activities. This is the most citizens reached in the past four years. When compared to 2017, the department has quadrupled the number of people trained in CPR. Furthermore, there were two additions to our public education curriculum. Remembering When and Milo and Moxie are programs geared towards the elderly and Spanish speaking children. These programs were added because of needs voiced by the community. Although the perception of Fire Related Education Programs is lower in 2018, the department has already taken proactive measures to ensure the quality of our programs meet the needs of the community we serve. Additionally, the department is exploring new programs to better serve low income and ESL families. Finally, our performance for this measure continues to exceed the KC metro and National averages made available by ETC.