



SIENA COLLEGE COMD 210 RESEARCH TEAM

SIENA COLLEGE, LOUDONVILLE, NY

Siena Research Institute

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Siena College Poll: Town of Colonie Quality of Life Study

73% say Colonie on Right Track; Satisfaction with Safety, Good Place to Raise Family, Right Amount in Taxes, Availability of Goods/Services, Quality of Library and Schools

Top needs to address: Traffic & Infrastructure

Mixed Feelings Towards Development; Half Miss Small Town Feel

Colonie, NY. A large majority of Colonie residents – 73 percent – say the town is on the right track, while 19 percent say it is headed in the wrong direction, according to a new Siena College Poll of Colonie residents released today. An overwhelming 97 percent of Colonie residents agree that Colonie is “a great place to raise a family,” while 96 percent rate the job done by local firefighters as either excellent or good, and 91 percent say the same about the job done by police. In addition, 7 out of 10 residents say they pay “about the right amount” in taxes given the services they receive, while more than 9 out of 10 rate “the availability of goods and services” in the town as either excellent or good. A similar amount – 88 percent – rate the “quality of library services” as either excellent or good and 89 percent say the statement, “One reason to live here in Colonie is the excellent quality of our schools” is either completely or somewhat descriptive of the town.

When asked whether or not it was a problem, 80 percent of people polled said that traffic congestion is a very significant or somewhat significant problem for the town of Colonie. Additionally, about half of town residents – 48 percent – believe that the quality of infrastructure including water and sewage lines is a problem. When asked what the most important issue to address first is, the quality of infrastructure takes the top spot, at 27 percent, while 22 percent say traffic congestion.

Seventy percent of Colonie residents believe the statement, “the recent economic development has improved local quality of life” is completely or somewhat descriptive of the Town of Colonie. Moreover, 94 percent of residents say Colonie Center is an asset to Colonie, while 79 percent say the same about Latham Farms. At the same time, more than half – 52 percent – of Colonie residents say the statement “Colonie just doesn’t have that small town feel where people know and help one another” is a completely or somewhat descriptive statement, and exactly half say “the rate of commercial development” in the town is a somewhat or very significant problem.

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“While a large majority of Colonie residents appreciate the availability of goods and services here in the town, and for the most part view the economic development as something that has improved the quality of life here, still half say that the community does not have that ‘small town feel’ and they are concerned about how quickly the development is happening,” said Kelsey DelMastro, a Siena student and member of the research team that conducted this study.

Town Services

Of the residents surveyed, 53 percent said that they used the William K. Sanford Town of Colonie Library very or somewhat often. Moreover, when residents were asked whether or not they would support or oppose a plan to close and sell the current library building and split it into three smaller regional libraries that function under the current library budget, 65 percent opposed the idea. Additionally, ninety-three percent of town residents surveyed said that the quality of town parks and recreation facilities are either excellent or good. For the Crossings specifically, 95 percent view it as a significant asset or somewhat of an asset, while 72 percent of those said they have gone to the Crossings either very often or somewhat often in the past 12 months.

A number of Colonie shopping centers are viewed favorably and used frequently. According to Colonie residents, 94 percent say that Colonie Center is either a significant asset or somewhat of an asset and 84 percent of people go to Colonie Center either very often or somewhat often to either shop, eat out, or see a movie. With regards to Latham Farms, 79 percent of people said that Latham Farms was at least somewhat of an asset for the community. Comparatively, the Ciccotti Family Recreation Center is viewed as a significant asset or somewhat of an asset by 68 percent of residents surveyed. However, the Recreation Center is used either very often or somewhat often by only 18 percent of residents surveyed while 73 percent said they haven’t used the Center at all in the past year.

Problems and Needs

In addition to traffic congestion being considered a significant problem by 80 percent of residents, and the quality of infrastructure being perceived as the most important issue to address first by 27 percent of residents, the survey asked about a series of other potential issues as well. Exactly half of those surveyed said that the rate of commercial development in Colonie is a very significant or somewhat significant problem, and 49 percent said the same about town taxes. Forty-six percent of residents said that having affordable housing in the town is a very significant or somewhat problem, while about 4 in 10 said the same about the availability of childcare. About 8 in 10 Colonie residents – 79 percent – said that “feeling safe and secure in the neighborhood” is a not very significant or not at all significant problem for them.

Relationship with Town Government

The Town of Colonie’s elected officials scored favor with a majority of residents, with 56 percent rating their job performance as either good or excellent. Similarly, 54 percent of residents rated the “responsiveness of local government” as either excellent or good. However, when people were asked how often they attended any public meetings in the Town of Colonie in which there was a discussion of neighborhood or school affairs in the past 12 months, only 17 percent said they attended very or somewhat often.

“While elected officials in the Town of Colonie are viewed favorably by more than half of residents – which is strong relative to other surrounding areas – fewer than 2 out of every 10 residents say they attend public meetings” said James Bascom, a Siena student and member of the Research Team that conducted this study.

Education

Eighty percent of residents think the North Colonie School District is excellent or good, while 70 percent say the same about the South Colonie School District. Eighty-nine percent of residents say that one reason to live here in Colonie is the excellent quality of the schools.

“All in all, the residents of Colonie seem quite happy with life here in the town, especially regarding goods and services, the job done by public safety officers, the amount they pay in taxes, the quality of the schools and the library, and the job done by local elected officials. At the same time, if Colonie were to work on anything moving forward, residents say it should be improving the quality of the infrastructure including water and sewage lines, and alleviating traffic congestion,” said Emma Henderschedt, a student member of the research team.

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This Siena College Poll was conducted April 3-6, 2016 by telephone calls conducted in English to 343 Town of Colonie residents. The margin of error for this survey is ± 6.1 percentage points, including the design effects resulting from weighting. The study was done as part of a Community-Based Research course at Siena taught by SRI Director Don Levy. The 13 students in the course studied the Town of Colonie and developed the survey instrument so as to assess the quality of life in the town. Sampling was conducted via a stratified multi-frame probability sample of both landline and cell phone telephone numbers from Survey Sampling International. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For survey crosstabs: www.Siena.edu/SRI.

Appendix 1

How significant a problem is each of the following in the Town of Colonie?

