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## Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

David J. Drozd

*University of Nebraska at Omaha*, [ddrozd@unomaha.edu](mailto:ddrozd@unomaha.edu)

Gary L. Anderson

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# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

Survey Methodology

Residents' Views of the Best and Worst Aspects of the Omaha Area

Outlook on the Future, Quality of Life, and Local Leadership

Charitable Giving by Omaha-Area Residents

Citizen Evaluation of Services, Facilities, and Programs

Attitudes and Experiences in Omaha Neighborhoods

David J. Drozd, Center for Public Affairs Research

Gary L. Anderson, School of Public Administration

2005

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Center for Public Affairs Research

# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Survey Methodology

**By: David J. Drozd, Research Associate  
Center for Public Affairs Research**

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was conducted through telephone interviews with adults from a random sample of Omaha-area households. The sample was drawn from households in the Nebraska portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Washington, and Saunders Counties comprise the Nebraska portion of the Omaha MSA.

Telephone numbers were selected for the sample using a random digit dialing design. This design allows for the inclusion of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers in the sample.

### **Respondent Interviews**

Professional interviewers from The MSR Group conducted the interviews between April 8 and April 27, 2004.

After making contact with someone at a selected telephone number, interviewers asked to speak with the person who was 19 years old or older and had the next birthday in the household. Interviewers asked for the adult with the next birthday to avoid biasing the sample in favor of persons more likely to be at home or answer the phone. Interviewers made at least two callbacks if the correct household member was not available.

Respondents were promised that their responses would remain confidential. In addition, any respondents concerned about the legitimacy of the survey were given the telephone number of the survey's lead agency, the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Spanish-speaking interviewers were available to complete interviews if necessary. Surveys were conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing. The MSR Group provided CPAR with separate data files of closed-question and open-ended responses. Data cleaning, coding, and analysis were completed by CPAR.

### **Error and Confidence Levels**

As with all sample surveys, the Omaha Conditions Survey results are assumed to contain some degree of error. The reliability of survey results depends upon the degree of care exercised during survey administration, the sample size, the extent to which the sampling frame corresponds to the population, and the amount of nonresponse.

### Survey Administration

Errors can creep into data in a number of ways during survey administration. For example, respondents may misunderstand questions, or interviewers may misunderstand or

misrecord answers. The extent of such errors cannot be estimated. Researchers made every effort to minimize the potential for these types of errors throughout the survey process, and their effect on the results of the Omaha Conditions Survey is likely very small.

### Sample Size

Another source of error stems from using a sample of persons to estimate the characteristics of a specific, larger population. Stated as a question, how large a difference is there likely to be between the results of the sample survey and the results one would obtain from interviewing the entire population? This difference, or sampling error, can be estimated for a random sample using accepted statistical techniques.

The 2000 Census indicated that the five-county Nebraska portion of the Omaha MSA had 461,799 persons ages 19 and older. The sample consisted of 806 respondents. The sample has a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence. In other words, there is a 95 percent likelihood that the true value of an item is no more than 3.5 percentage points higher or lower than the value reported.

This estimate of sampling error assumes a random sample—that is, all members of the population under study had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. However, telephone surveys can violate the basic assumption of randomness because the sampling frame does not correspond perfectly to the population and due to nonresponse.

### Sampling Frame

The sampling frame is the list of units from which the sample is drawn. Ideally, the sampling frame consists of all members of the population under study. In practice such a list is rarely available, so a list that approximates the ideal is used. This is the case with the Omaha Conditions Survey where the population under study is adults in the Omaha area and the sampling frame is a list of telephone numbers. As a consequence, not all Omaha area adults had a known, equal chance of being included in the sample. Instead, a person's probability of being included in the sample varied depending on how many telephone numbers served the residence and how many adults lived in the household.

Persons living in households without telephones had no chance of inclusion in the survey sample. The exclusion of persons without telephones can result in the under representation of certain groups, such as those with lower incomes, less education, minorities, and more mobile persons within the area. Conversely, persons living in households with multiple telephone numbers had a greater chance of inclusion than persons living in households with one telephone number.

A person's probability of being interviewed also varied according to the number of adults in the household. For example, a household with one adult living alone would be interviewed with certainty when the phone number was selected. Each person in a household with two adults had a one in two chance of being interviewed upon having their phone number selected and each person in a household with three adults had a one in three chance and so on.

### Nonresponse

Survey nonresponse is the failure to obtain measurements on those selected for sampling. This occurs when an eligible individual is unable or unwilling to complete the interview or to answer specific questions. This type of error is probably the most difficult to work with since the characteristics of the nonrespondents are typically unknown. Researchers took reasonable steps

throughout the survey process to minimize nonresponse. For example, up to three callbacks were utilized to complete the interview with the appropriate individual at each selected phone number.

## **Respondent Characteristics**

An inherent goal when utilizing sampling is to have a representative sample of the overall population. As mentioned above, the exclusion of households without telephones, the overrepresentation of households with multiple telephones, and nonresponse all affect how representative the sample is and overall survey results.

Table 1 compares sex, age, race, and income characteristics of the survey sample to those in the same geographic area as reported by the 2000 Census. The percentage of respondents in the survey sample is similar to that of the 2000 Census for sex and race. For household income, the sample appears slightly underrepresented in the lower income categories and overrepresented in the higher income categories. Part of the reason for this may be that low-income households are less likely to have telephones and thus were unable to be surveyed. Another reason may be that the Census reports income in 1999 and the Omaha Conditions Survey reflects respondents' views of incomes for 2003 or 2004; one would expect the percentages in the higher income categories to increase due to inflation and wage increases over time.

Regarding age, younger persons were underrepresented in the sample while older persons were overrepresented. Those under 35 represented 23.1 percent of the sample versus being 32.8 percent of the population. In contrast, 44.5 percent of the sample consisted of those over 50 while this age category comprised 34.0 percent of the population. Thus, the percentages of those under 35 and over 50 differed by approximately 10 percent from the population of the Omaha area. The sample was representative for the age category of 35 to 49 years.

The overrepresentation of people over 50 years old likely stemmed from increased phone accessibility to this portion of the population. These older individuals were more likely to be home and have available time to complete the survey when interviewers called as they are more often retired and have fewer time constraints, such as needing to care for young children. Those under 35 are less likely to be at home given work schedules and other activities outside the home (dating, entertainment, sports participation, etc.). These factors led, in part, to the survey's specific age distribution of respondents.

## **Weights**

The data were weighted for analysis. The purpose of weighting is to adjust the data for the over or underrepresentation of certain groups. The previous section detailed how the sample compared to the overall population for the Nebraska portion of the Omaha area. Differences were noted regarding income and age.

Weights were not used to account for differences in income levels. Although the lack of a household phone likely excluded some lower income households from the survey, this factor did not likely have a large effect on survey respondents. The 2000 Census showed that only 1.5 percent of occupied housing units in the five-county area did not have telephone service. In addition, the assumed overrepresentation of higher income households might be somewhat muted by the comparison of 1999 incomes from the Census versus respondents stating current 2003 or 2004 incomes in the survey. Income increases/inflation during this interim would be

expected. Thus, weighting based on income would potentially change figures away from what they truly are in current reality.

Figures were weighted to account for differences in age. To more accurately calculate weights, both age and gender were analyzed. This allowed a distinction to be made between males and females of the same age group and have a separate weight assigned for each. Table 2 shows the number and percent of respondents by sex and age for the 2004 survey versus the 2000 Census. The data shows that women under 35 and over 50 were more greatly underrepresented and overrepresented respectively. Thus, weights were assigned based upon the measure needed to make the sample more representative of the entire population. Utilizing weights improved the ability to draw conclusions on the opinions and viewpoints of Omaha-area residents as a whole.

### **Comparability with Prior Omaha Conditions Surveys**

Differences in geographic coverage and seasonality affect comparisons of the 2004 Omaha Conditions Survey results with those from prior years.

The 2004 survey includes Saunders County while earlier surveys do not. This reflects the addition of Saunders County to the Omaha Metropolitan Statistical Area in December 2003.

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was conducted during the spring; the 1994 survey was conducted in the fall. The season during which the survey is conducted may affect responses to some items such as opinions on schools and roads. Of note, the 2004 survey was conducted after the Omaha area received record levels of snowfall during the winter of 2003.

Readers should consider these differences when making comparisons of Omaha Conditions Survey results over time.

**Table 1: Comparison of 2004 Sample with 2000 Census Data for the Five-County Nebraska Portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Area for Select Characteristics**

	2004 Survey Sample		2000 Census	
	Number*	Percent	Number	Percent
A. Total Persons 19 Years and Older	806	100.0	461,799	100.0
B. Persons 19 Years and Older by Sex:				
Male	397	49.3	223,170	48.3
Female	409	50.7	238,629	51.7
C. Persons 19 Years and Older by Age:				
19-24	50	6.3	54,546	11.8
25-34	133	16.8	97,099	21.0
35-49	256	32.4	153,061	33.1
50-64	184	23.3	89,707	19.4
65 and over	168	21.2	67,386	14.6
D. Persons 19 Years and Older by Race and Hispanic Origin				
White, non-Hispanic	705	88.9	388,954	84.2
Black, non-Hispanic	35	4.4	36,536	7.9
American Indian, non-Hispanic	8	1.0	1,965	0.4
Asian, non-Hispanic	7	0.9	7,978	1.7
Other, non-Hispanic	5	0.6	4,094	0.9
Hispanic	33	4.2	22,272	4.8
E. Total Households	806	100.0	249,654	100.0
F. Households by Household Income:				
Under \$10,000	16	2.2	17,004	6.8
\$10,000 - \$19,999	53	7.4	26,854	10.8
\$20,000 - \$29,999	78	10.9	32,611	13.1
\$30,000 - \$39,999	73	10.2	31,674	12.7
\$40,000 - \$49,999	90	12.6	28,049	11.2
\$50,000 - \$59,999	85	11.9	25,496	10.2
\$60,000 or more	318	44.6	87,966	35.2

\* Unweighted counts; Sample numbers may not sum to totals due to missing data.

**Table 2: Comparison of Sex and Age of 2004 Sample with 2000 Census Data for the Five-County Nebraska Portion of the Omaha Metropolitan Area**

	Survey Sample, 2004		2000 Census	
	Number*	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Persons 19 Years and Older	806	100.0	461,799	100.0
Males by Age:				
19-24	29	3.7	27,249	5.9
25-34	71	9.0	48,855	10.6
35-49	141	17.8	75,734	16.4
50-64	80	10.1	43,902	9.5
65 and over	67	8.5	27,430	5.9
Females by Age:				
19-24	21	2.7	27,297	5.9
25-34	62	7.8	48,244	10.4
35-49	115	14.5	77,327	16.7
50-64	104	13.1	45,805	9.9
65 and over	101	12.8	39,956	8.7

\* Unweighted counts; Sample numbers may not sum to totals due to missing data.



# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Residents' Views of the Best and Worst Aspects of the Omaha Area

By: David J. Drozd, Research Associate  
Center for Public Affairs Research

One of the primary purposes of the Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was to collect information on how residents view the Omaha area and their neighborhoods—what the best and worst attributes are and what problems leaders should be addressing. The 1994 Omaha Conditions Survey had a similar focus; thus, comparing the survey results depicts how perceptions have changed over the ten-year period.

Separate open-ended survey questions asked respondents what they felt were the three best and the three worst aspects of the Omaha area. Another open ended question asked their opinion on the three most important problems the Omaha area should be trying to address. Respondents who listed combinations of crime, drugs, or gangs for the worst aspects and/or problems to address were given the opportunity to mention additional items.

Likewise, the same question about the most important problem to address was asked regarding the respondent's neighborhood. However, respondents were asked to state only one item, versus listing three items when answering about the entire Omaha area.

The open-ended format was used since it allows respondents to characterize issues in their own words. In addition, answers to open-ended questions show all of the respondents' priority issues, including those that researchers might not anticipate

or include as specific answer choices when developing a social survey.

To classify the open-ended responses, categories were developed and the responses were assigned to the most appropriate category. Responses that listed multiple items were assigned to a maximum of two categories; specifically, the first two separate items listed were analyzed and classified, with additional items excluded from the analysis.

Placing limits on the number of items mentioned prevented the overrepresentation of one respondent's viewpoints. The first two items mentioned were viewed as having primary importance, with additional statements related to and often used to further describe the already mentioned item(s). Thus, a hypothetical response such as "all the crime—we need policemen" was assigned to two categories: *crime* and *law enforcement*. Similar statements like "the crime, we need more police; they say there's no budget to hire more police" were also assigned to two categories, the first two listed: *crime* and *law enforcement* while the statement regarding the "budget" was not classified into a category.

The total number of responses classified into each specific category represented the sum total for each category. These category totals were then divided by the total number of persons who gave a classifiable response to the question and multiplied by 100 to express the figures as percentages. The percentages do not add up to 100 percent since each respondent could give up to three separate responses and responses could be classified into two categories. All of the tables

in this report are constructed as a ranking of the various categories' percentages, indicating how often a category was mentioned relative to all other categories.

## Best Aspects of the Omaha Area

Table 1 presents summary information on the categories of items most often mentioned in response to the question “In your opinion, what are the three best things about the Omaha area?”.

Entertainment, cultural activities, or other comments about “many things to do” were mentioned most frequently by 32.9 percent of respondents as being a best aspect about the Omaha area. Five other attributes were mentioned by 20 percent or more of the respondents: schools and education (26.5 percent), friendly people (24.4 percent), comments about the size of the city (23.3 percent), the quality of life or being a good place to live (22.7 percent), and jobs and business opportunities (21.7 percent).

Filling out the top 10 most mentioned items were ease of travel and short travel times, low crime, shopping, and the low cost of living.

## Variations in the Perceptions of the Best Aspects of the Omaha Area

To better understand respondents' views, the five most frequently mentioned categories of items were examined across population subgroups using demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, race,<sup>1</sup> marital status, family status (children under 18 in household), income, educational attainment, and whether the respondents indicated they lived in a neighborhood. Several interesting patterns were identified and are highlighted in the following sections.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Respondents' Views of the Best Things About the Omaha Area, 2004**

Rank	Description	Percent
1	Entertainment and cultural activities (many things to do)	32.9
2	Schools, education	26.5
3	Friendly people	24.4
4	Size of city	23.3
5	Quality of life, good place to live	22.7
6	Jobs and business opportunities	21.7
7	Ease of travel, short distances/travel times	18.7
8	Low crime, safe	11.7
9	Shopping	11.1
10	Low cost of living	9.9
11	Downtown, Old Market, Qwest Center	9.5
12	Location	7.9
13	Eating and drinking places	7.3
14	Medical and health	6.7
15	Quality of the environment	6.2
16	Weather, climate	6.0
17	Sports (including golf courses)	5.5
18	Growth, development	5.4
19	Parks, recreation, trails	5.3
20	Family here, born here, home	5.0
21	Good government and services	4.2
22	Cultures, diversity	2.7
23	Churches	1.5
24	Housing	1.4
24	Good police/fire protection	1.4
26	Good leaders, people trying to improve the city	1.1

Valid cases: 772

### Entertainment and Cultural Activities:

Little variation was noted among the Omaha-area residents who listed entertainment and cultural activities as a best aspect of the Omaha area. Thus, the plurality of respondents who listed an item related to “many things to do” did not vary much by demographic characteristics—entertainment and cultural activities were viewed as an attribute by young and old, White and non-White, and married and non-married alike (among others). Women, when compared to men, did list this item significantly more often statistically.

**Schools and Education:** Not surprisingly, schools and education were mentioned most frequently by people who had children under age 18 living in their household. However, no statistically significant differences were noted by age, showing that various age groups such as those 35 to 49 most likely to be parents, those 65 and older, and college ages of 19 to 24 all listed schools and education about the same amount.

Those defined as living in a neighborhood listed schools and education more often than those not living in a neighborhood.

**Friendly People:** Respondents with a Bachelor's Degree or more education listed the people being friendly most often compared to other education levels. Those living in a neighborhood also listed friendly people more often—the percentage of those living in a neighborhood mentioning friendly people was twice as high as among those not living in a neighborhood.

**City Size:** Those mentioning comments about the city's size varied significantly statistically by three demographic characteristics. Those with higher incomes and those with more education listed this item more frequently. Additionally, Whites mentioned the size of the city more often than non-Whites.

**Quality of Life, Good Place to Live:** Non-Whites and those respondents living in neighborhoods were most likely to indicate the quality of life as a best aspect of the Omaha area. One in three non-Whites mentioned Omaha being a good place to live compared to about one in five Whites doing likewise. This trend by race is the reverse of the previously-mentioned item regarding city size.

### **Comparisons with 1994**

Table 2 (end of report) presents comparisons among the top items listed regarding the best aspects of Omaha in the 1994 and 2004 Omaha Conditions Surveys. The categories and methods used to classify the open-ended responses are not identical, as some categories have been added and others deleted between the surveys. Generally, the items mentioned as the best aspects of Omaha have a great deal of similarity between 1994 and 2004. The top 10 items in 2004 were all in the

top 10 in 1994, with the exception of shopping, which was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in 1994. Some changes occurred in the percentage of respondents mentioning the specific categories.

One major difference was the decline in the ranking and percentage of those listing jobs and business opportunities as a best aspect of Omaha. Jobs slipped from being the most mentioned item in 1994 at 33.8 percent to 6<sup>th</sup> at 21.7 percent in 2004. The response patterns likely reflect differing economic conditions in 1994 and 2004 to an extent, but the decline of 12 percentage points mentioning jobs was substantial.

The percentage stating entertainment and cultural activities rose by about 4 percentage points and now ranks highest among all categories in 2004 versus being 4<sup>th</sup> in 1994. New features added to the Henry Doorly Zoo since 1994 and an increase in entertainment events offered by the recently-opened Qwest Center likely led in part to this increase. Specific mentions of the Qwest Center were classified in a separate category; the Qwest Center, when combined with items related to downtown and the Old Market, ranked 11<sup>th</sup> overall regarding best aspects of Omaha (Table 1).

Schools and education and friendly people continued to hold the second and third highest rankings in 2004. The percentage of respondents mentioning these specific items did decrease several percentage points however. Conversely, the percentage indicating quality of life was essentially unchanged while maintaining its fifth-place ranking.

The mention of an aspect related to the size of the city increased several percentage points, raising the ranking of this item from 7<sup>th</sup> in 1994 to 4<sup>th</sup> in 2004. The opposite is true regarding low crime, which declined several percentage points and fell from ranking 6<sup>th</sup> in 1994 to 8<sup>th</sup> in 2004.

The percentage mentioning short travel times and distances increased from 15.4 percent in 1994 to 18.7 percent in 2004, raising its ranking one notch from 8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>. The 2004 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that Omaha had the

5<sup>th</sup> lowest commute time out of 70 major U.S. cities having 250,000 or more population at 17.8 minutes.<sup>3</sup>

## Worst Aspects of the Omaha Area

Table 3 summarizes the categories of items mentioned in response to the question “In your opinion, what are the three worst things about the Omaha area?”. The data in Table 3 were developed using the process described earlier. Table 3 shows that the category of items mentioned most often related to road and streets. This included items on road conditions, road construction, and the planning of road and construction projects. Road items were listed by 41.0 percent of respondents.

Traffic and traffic congestion were a separate category. Items related to traffic were mentioned by 13.1 percent of respondents, the sixth highest total among all categories. Thus, road items and traffic were viewed as key items regarding worst aspects of the Omaha area by a large portion of respondents.

Recall that short distances/travel times ranked 7<sup>th</sup> regarding the best aspects of the Omaha area, an apparent contradiction. One explanation is that Omaha-area residents believe they have short travel times even though they have to fight traffic congestion and construction while making their way through the city.

Another explanation is that Omaha-area residents are polarized regarding road construction and traffic, either being a big problem if routinely traveling in areas with construction and congestion, or travel times being a positive if normal personal routes avoid such areas. The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 shows that over one-third of respondents considered both the smoothness or roads/streets and traffic flow to be important and that they were dissatisfied with them at the present time,

by far the highest level of all conditions/services asked about in the survey.

**Table 3: Respondents' Views of the Worst Things About the Omaha Area, 2004**

Rank	Description	Percent
1	Roads, road construction, roads planning	41.0
2	High taxes (includes vehicle licensing)	34.7
3	Crime, violence	22.0
4	Local government	17.9
5	Climate, weather	16.5
6	Traffic	13.1
7	Entertainment, not enough to do	13.0
8	Neighborhood improvement, beautification	8.5
9	People and community attitude	7.7
10	Race relations and issues, immigration	7.6
11	Suburban and urban development	7.3
12	Lack of jobs and business opportunities	6.0
13	Get better leaders	5.5
14	Youth needs	5.2
15	Location and natural resources	5.1
16	Law enforcement	4.6
17	Gambling issue	4.3
18	Size (city too big/too small)	3.8
18	Schools, education	3.8
20	Public transportation	3.3
21	Cost of living	2.5
21	Gangs	2.5
21	Infrastructure expansion	2.5
24	Drugs	2.0
24	General safety issues	2.0
24	City image	2.0
27	Quality of the environment, recycling	1.7
28	Housing problems and issues	1.6
29	Big business/corporations; mass media	1.5
29	Better jobs, higher wages	1.5
31	General infrastructure issues	1.4
31	General social issues	1.4
33	Poverty	1.3
33	Balance the budget, stay within the budget	1.3
35	Keeping people in Omaha (especially younger residents)	1.0
36	Homelessness	0.9

Valid Cases: 761

Respondents mentioned items related to taxation or paying a “high” level of taxes second most frequently regarding the worst aspects of Omaha. Nearly 35 percent of respondents listed an item related to taxation. Following third was crime and violence at 22.0 percent. The local government was mentioned by 17.9 percent of respondents and complaints regarding the climate and weather in Omaha rounded out the top 5 worst aspects of the Omaha area (16.5 percent). The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 was conducted in the spring after the Omaha area

had received record snowfall in the preceding winter months.

Like traffic congestion and short travel times, the lack of entertainment and things to do was in the top 10 worst items (13.0 percent) while a related item, entertainment and cultural activities, was listed in the top 10 best items, ranking first. Thus, while entertainment is commonly cited as a best part of Omaha, expanded entertainment and “things to do” are sought by area residents. The same pattern regarding entertainment being in the top 10 best and worst aspects also occurred in the 1994 Omaha Conditions Survey.

Other items in the top 10 worst aspects included the need for neighborhood improvement and beautification, the people and community attitude, and issues related to race relations and immigration.

### **Variations in the Perceptions of the Worst Aspects of the Omaha Area**

The following sections compare the five items ranked as worst about the Omaha area across demographic characteristics of the respondents. The characteristics compared are the same as those used in the previous section regarding the best aspects of the Omaha area (age, gender, income, etc.).

**Roads, Road Construction, Roads Planning:** Respondents who listed road items did not vary much by demographic characteristics—roads were viewed as a worst part of Omaha by young and old, White and non-White, and married and non-married alike (among others). Those with higher incomes did list road items significantly more often. Omaha-area residents with higher incomes tend to live in the western parts of Douglas County or surrounding metro-area counties, where road construction projects have been numerous. Road planning in these areas

has had increased importance given new housing development and associated new road construction, coupled with a strained capacity of existing roads.

**High Taxes:** In contrast to roads, those who listed high taxes as a worst part of Omaha varied significantly statistically by several demographic characteristics. Not surprisingly, homeowners listed taxes more often than renters as they pay property taxes on the homes they own. Those persons who were married and those living in a neighborhood also listed this item more often. Those aged 50 to 64 years were most likely to say high taxes while people aged 19 to 24 were least likely to list this item. In addition, those with higher incomes listed high taxes more often. Many of these demographic characteristics are correlated with home ownership, as those older, married, and with higher incomes are more likely to own their residences and pay associated property taxes.

**Crime:** Those mentioning crime also varied by several demographic characteristics. In general, trends by demographic characteristics for those mentioning crime were the opposite from those who mentioned high taxes described above. Renters, those not living in a neighborhood, those with lower incomes, and those with less education listed crime significantly more often statistically. In addition, women and those who were widowed listed crime more often.<sup>4</sup> Thus, response patterns show two separate demographic groups who indicated either crime or high taxes as a worst aspect of the Omaha area.

**Local Government:** Those who listed aspects of local government differed by age and neighborhood status. Those 65 and over were most likely to mention local government, followed by those 50 to 64 and then by those 35 to 49. Those who indicated that they lived in a neighborhood also listed items related to local government significantly more often than those who did not consider themselves living in a neighborhood.

**Climate and Weather:** Men listed the climate and weather of Omaha as a worst aspect more often than women. Those without children under 18 living in the household and those with more education also mentioned this item more often. Those listing the climate and weather did not vary significantly statistically by the other demographic characteristics compared.

### **Comparisons with 1994**

Several substantial changes in both the ranking and percent of respondents listing specific items have occurred in the ten-year period between the 1994 and 2004 Omaha Conditions Surveys. Most notably, the percentage of respondents indicating crime as a worst aspect of Omaha dropped sharply between 1994 and 2004. In 1994, crime was overwhelmingly the most mentioned item, with 67.5 percent of respondents mentioning crime (Table 4). That figure was only 22.0 percent in 2004, about one-third the 1994 level. Among all items, crime ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most mentioned item in 2004, after being by far the item mentioned most often in 1994.

Conversely, the percentage indicating road items and high taxes as a worst aspect of Omaha both doubled between 1994 and 2004. Road items were mentioned 2<sup>nd</sup> most often in 1994 by 20.3 percent of respondents. The 2004 figure for road items of 41.0 percent made it the item most often mentioned in the 2004 survey. The relative ranking regarding high taxes also increased from 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned in 1994 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> most mentioned in 2004. As indicated above, the percentage citing high taxes was twice as high in 2004 (34.7 percent) as in 1994 (15.3 percent).

The relative ranking also increased for responses regarding the local government and climate/weather. In 2004, local government had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of

responses versus being 5<sup>th</sup> in 1994. The percentage citing local government items increased a small amount, from 15.1 percent in 1994 to 17.9 percent in 2004. The percentage citing climate and weather items increased a larger amount, from 9.4 percent in 1994 to 16.5 percent in 2004. This increased the ranking of climate and weather to the 5<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item in 2004, after being 8<sup>th</sup> in 1994. The responses regarding climate and weather are likely related to the timing of the 2004 Omaha Conditions Survey, which was conducted in April of 2004 after the Omaha area experienced record snowfall in the preceding winter months.

The relative ranking regarding traffic and lack of entertainment held steady when comparing the 1994 and 2004 surveys. Respondents cited traffic as a worst aspect of Omaha 6<sup>th</sup> most often in both surveys while the lack of entertainment ranked 7<sup>th</sup> highest in each survey. The percentage mentioning each of these items did increase a small amount between 1994 and 2004.

The percentage mentioning the people and community attitude nearly doubled from 4.2 percent in 1994 to 8.1 percent in 2004. This ranked the people and community attitude the 9<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item in 2004, a new item in the top 10 after being ranked 17<sup>th</sup> highest in 2004. The jump of 8 spots from 17<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> most mentioned was the largest ranking movement among the various categories of responses regarding the worst aspects of the Omaha area.

### **Most Important Problems for the Omaha Area to Address**

When asked about “the three most important problems that the Omaha area should be trying to address”, one-third of respondents (33.6 percent) mentioned an item related to roads (Table 5). Road items included responses regarding street conditions, road construction, and roads planning (construction projects and new roads). Similar to the question on the worst aspects of the Omaha area, road items were the most mentioned

category of items regarding priority problems to address.

The next most mentioned categories of items regarded high taxes and the tax system, and crime and violence, with about 3 in 10 respondents mentioning these items (30.5 and 29.5 percent respectively). These items also ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> regarding worst aspects of Omaha, although the percentages had more separation (Table 3: 34.7 percent regarding high taxes versus 22.0 percent for crime and violence).

Somewhat fewer respondents mentioned schools and education as a priority problem to address. Approximately 20 percent of respondents mentioned this item, versus around 30 percent for the three most mentioned items.

While the three most mentioned items regarding priority problems were also the three most mentioned items regarding worst aspects of the Omaha area, schools and education as the 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned priority problem, was rarely mentioned regarding the worst aspects of Omaha. Only 3.8 percent mentioned schools or education as a worst aspect, ranking this item 18<sup>th</sup> highest (Table 3). In comparison, schools and education ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> regarding best aspects of Omaha, with 26.5 percent listing this item (Table 1). Thus, Omaha-area residents consider schools and education more of a best aspect than a worst aspect, but many consider it an area to address or improve.

Respondents mentioned items relating to local government 5<sup>th</sup> most often, at 16.7 percent. A similar percentage listed local government as a worst aspect of Omaha, ranking it the 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item (Table 3).

Rounding out the top 10 priority problems to address were suburban and urban development, lack of jobs or business opportunities, law enforcement,

budgetary issues, and youth needs. Each item ranking in the top 10 priority problems had at least 10 percent of respondents mentioning the item.

**Table 5: Respondents' Views of the Most Important Problems to Address in the Omaha Area, 2004**

Rank	Description	Percent
1	Roads, road construction, roads planning	33.6
2	High taxes, tax system (includes vehicle licensing)	30.5
3	Crime, violence	29.5
4	Schools, education	19.8
5	Local government	16.7
6	Suburban and urban development	15.4
7	Lack of jobs or business opportunities	13.4
8	Law enforcement	11.0
9	Balance the budget, stay within the budget	10.7
10	Youth needs	10.1
11	Race relations and issues, immigration	8.7
12	Traffic	8.4
13	Drugs	7.8
14	Neighborhood improvement, beautification	7.0
15	Entertainment, things to do	5.3
16	Gambling issue	5.2
17	Gangs	5.1
18	Attracting business(es) to Omaha	4.2
19	General social issues	2.8
19	General infrastructure issues	2.8
21	Better jobs, higher wages	2.7
22	Homelessness	2.6
23	Housing problems and issues	2.5
24	Health and health care	2.4
25	Get better leaders	2.1
25	Keeping people in Omaha (especially younger residents)	2.1
27	Poverty	1.9
28	General safety issues	1.6
29	Cost of living	1.5
29	Community relations	1.5
29	Elderly needs and issues	1.5
32	Public transportation	1.4
33	City image	1.1

Valid Cases: 763

### **Variations in the Perceptions of the Most Important Problems for the Omaha Area to Address**

The following sections compare the five items ranked as highest priority problems to address for the Omaha area across demographic characteristics of the respondents. The characteristics compared are the same as those used in previous sections.

**Roads, Road Construction, Roads Planning:** Those mentioning road items as a priority problem did not differ by any of the

demographic characteristics analyzed. Hence, respondents viewed road items as a priority problem regardless of their age, race, marital status, income, education level, or other demographic characteristics.

**High Taxes:** In contrast to roads, those who listed high taxes as a priority problem varied significantly statistically by several demographic characteristics. Not surprisingly, homeowners listed taxes more often than renters since they are responsible for paying property taxes on the homes they own. Those persons who were married and Whites also listed this item more often. Those aged 50 to 64 years along with those 35 to 49 were most likely to say high taxes while people aged 19 to 24 were least likely to list this item. In addition, those with higher incomes and more education listed high taxes more often. Many of these demographic characteristics are correlated with home ownership, as those older, married, and with higher incomes are more likely to own their residences and pay associated property taxes.

**Crime:** Those mentioning crime varied by gender and educational attainment. Women listed this item more often as did those who had less education. Those listing crime as a priority problem did not vary by as many demographic characteristics as those who listed crime as a worst aspect of Omaha. Thus, similar to schools and education mentioned above, many Omaha-area residents likely view crime as an area where improvements can be made, regardless of most demographic characteristics of the residents.

**Schools and Education:** Those mentioning schools and education also varied by gender and educational attainment. Women listed this item more often as did those who had more education. The finding that those citing schools and education did not vary by many

demographic characteristics gives support to the idea that many Omaha-area residents, regardless of most background characteristics, view schools and education as an area for continued improvement.

**Local Government:** Those who listed aspects of local government differed only by age. Those 65 and over were most likely to mention local government and the percentage citing local government decreased at each successively younger age category. Once again, the relatively few differences by demographic characteristics show that residents view aspects of local government as a priority problem to address or improve, regardless of their background characteristics.

### Comparisons with 1994

Changes in both the ranking and percent of respondents listing specific priority problems between 1994 and 2004 were similar to those previously described regarding the worst aspects of Omaha. The percentage of respondents indicating crime again dropped sharply between 1994 and 2004. In 1994, crime was overwhelmingly the most mentioned item, with 75.1 percent of respondents mentioning crime (Table 6). That figure was only 29.5 percent in 2004, roughly one-third the 1994 level. Among all items, crime ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most mentioned priority problem in 2004, after being by far the item mentioned most often in 1994.

The percentage indicating both road items and high taxes as priority problems also doubled between 1994 and 2004. Road items were mentioned by 14.6 percent of respondents in 1994, the 6<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item. In 2004 road items jumped to the highest ranked or most frequently mentioned category of responses, at 33.6 percent of respondents mentioning an aspect of roads as an issue to address. The relative ranking regarding high taxes also increased five places, from 7<sup>th</sup> most mentioned in 1994 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> most mentioned in 2004. As described above, the percentage citing high taxes was twice as



high in 2004 (30.5 percent) as in 1994 (14.1 percent).

The relative ranking regarding schools and education and local government held steady when comparing the 1994 and 2004 surveys. Respondents cited schools and education as a priority problem 4<sup>th</sup> most often in both surveys while aspects of local government were listed 5<sup>th</sup> highest in each survey. The percentage mentioning each of these items remained almost exactly the same in 2004 as in 1994 (Table 6).

Items having higher importance based on an increased level of responses in 2004 include suburban and urban development and law enforcement. The percentage citing suburban and urban development nearly tripled from 5.3 percent in 1994 to 15.4 percent in 2004. This made suburban and urban development the 6<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item in 2004 after being 13<sup>th</sup> in 1994. The percentage indicating law enforcement as an issue to address nearly doubled from 5.9 percent in 1994 to 11.0 percent in 2004, raising its ranking from 12<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>.

These changes show that the quite rapid westward expansion of Omaha in Douglas County and development in other metro counties apparently has impacted local residents, especially regarding related items such as road construction and road planning that were also mentioned often. Law enforcement issues such as racial profiling and the need for police officers have also come to the forefront and been issues of debate in recent years.

The category regarding jobs and business opportunities received fewer responses in 2004 relative to 1994. Respondents listed the lack of jobs and business opportunities 2<sup>nd</sup> most often in 1994, with nearly one in four respondents mentioning the item (23.1 percent). In 2004, closer to one in eight mentioned jobs or business opportunities as an important

problem to address (13.4 percent), the 7<sup>th</sup> most mentioned category. Thus, fewer Omaha-area residents view jobs and business opportunities as a priority problem to address, with relatively more people citing a need to focus on roads, taxes, and development.

## **Perceptions of the Most Important Problems to Address in the Respondent's Neighborhood**

In addition to being asked about the best and worst aspects of the Omaha area as well as the most important problems for the area to address, respondents were asked to give their views on the most important problem for their neighborhood to address. In contrast to listing three items for the Omaha area, respondents were asked to list only one item for their neighborhood<sup>5</sup> to address. Therefore, the percentages listed are not comparable between those for the Omaha area and those for the respondent's neighborhood.

Crime and violence was perceived to be the most important problem to address in the respondents' neighborhoods, mentioned by 11.8 percent of respondents (Table 7). Respondents listed crime as a priority problem 3<sup>rd</sup> most often for the entire Omaha area (Table 5).

Roads and road construction were listed second most often, with 10.2 percent of respondents mentioning this category of items. Respondents cited a related item, traffic, 7.6 percent of the time, the 5<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item. The relative ranking for roads was similar to the question for the Omaha area, where road items received the most responses, while relatively more people cited traffic as a neighborhood problem, as traffic ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among priority problems for the Omaha area to address (Table 5).

A separate transportation item related to neighborhoods, speeders and speeding, was cited often by respondents. The numerous listings of speeders and speeding prompted the creation of a separate category for this item in the analysis of

neighborhood problems to address.<sup>6</sup> Speeding was mentioned 3<sup>rd</sup> most often, by 9.3 percent of respondents.

Suburban and urban development was also an important neighborhood issue. This item was mentioned by 7.7 percent of respondents, ranking suburban and urban development the 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned item. This item ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among Omaha-area issues to address.

Rounding out the top 10 most mentioned items were neighborhood improvement and beautification, high taxes, local government, housing issues, and drugs. Taxes and local government had a higher ranking regarding the entire Omaha area while neighborhood improvement and housing issues as viewed more often as neighborhood issues, ranking lower on the question for the entire Omaha area.

One interesting item not ranking in the top 10 most mentioned items for neighborhood improvement was schools. Respondents listed schools as a neighborhood issue to address only 3.3 percent of the time, ranking this item 13<sup>th</sup> most mentioned. This compares to ranking 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned regarding the Omaha area. Thus, respondents may not view their local school as a priority problem but believe that schools, including those outside their local neighborhood, and the education system in the Omaha area as a whole are worth addressing.

### **Comparisons with 1994**

Respondents also listed crime as the most important neighborhood problem in 1994. Recall that crime, by far, was the most often listed worst aspect of Omaha and problem for Omaha to address in 1994. The response pattern was similar regarding neighborhood problems to address in 1994, as 40.7 percent of respondents listed crime

(Table 8). The number listing crime in 2004 (11.8 percent) was only about one-fourth the 1994 level. Thus, similar to the questions regarding the Omaha area, the percentage listing crime as a neighborhood problem to address has dropped dramatically.

The issues of roads and suburban and urban development have risen in importance. The percentage listing each of these items has increased and the relative ranking rose six places for each item. These items are related as expanding development has led to road construction and expansion.

As mentioned previously, speeders and speeding are a new category of often-mentioned items. There was not a separate category for this item in 1994 for comparison. Thus, the relative importance of addressing speeders and speeding has likely increased greatly since 1994.

The percentage listing traffic as a neighborhood problem to address was 7.6 percent in both 1994 and 2004. The relative ranking did decline from 2<sup>nd</sup> most often mentioned in 1994 to 5<sup>th</sup> in 2004.

**Table 7: Respondents' Views of the Most Important Problems for their Neighborhoods to Address, 2004**

Rank	Description	Percent
1	Crime, violence	11.8
2	Roads, road construction	10.2
3	Speeders and speeding	9.3
4	Suburban and urban development	7.7
5	Traffic	7.6
6	Neighborhood improvement, beautification	7.5
7	Taxes are too high (includes vehicle licensing)	6.3
8	Local government	5.5
9	Housing problems and issues	4.8
10	Drugs	4.5
11	General infrastructure issues	3.8
12	Youth needs	3.4
13	Schools	3.3
14	Jobs and business opportunities	2.9
15	Noise, loud music	2.8
16	Law enforcement	2.6
17	Neighborhoods general issues	2.0
18	Community relations	1.7
18	Neighborhood watch	1.7
18	General social issues	1.7
21	General safety issues	1.6
22	Race relations and issues, immigration	1.3
23	Entertainment, tourism	1.2
24	Cost of living	0.9

Valid Cases: 632

**Table 2: Respondents' Views of the Best Things About the Omaha Area, 1994 and 2004**

Category	2004		1994	
	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
Entertainment and cultural activities (many things to do)	1	32.9	4	29.3
Schools, education	2	26.5	2	32.2
Friendly people	3	24.4	3	31.9
Size of city	4	23.3	7	17.0
Quality of life, good place to live	5	22.6	5	22.5
Jobs and business opportunities	6	21.7	1	33.8
Ease of travel, short distances/travel times	7	18.7	8	15.4
Low crime, safe	8	11.7	6	17.3
Shopping	9	11.1	11	9.7
Low cost of living	10	9.9	9	11.4

Valid cases: 772

764

**Table 4: Respondents' Views of the Worst Things About the Omaha Area, 1994 and 2004**

Category	2004		1994	
	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
Roads, road construction, roads planning	1	41.0	2	20.3
High taxes (includes vehicle licensing)	2	34.7	4	15.3
Crime, violence	3	22.0	1	67.5
Local government	4	17.9	5	15.1
Climate, weather	5	16.5	8	9.4
Traffic	6	13.1	6	12.1
Entertainment, not enough to do	7	13.0	7	10.4
Neighborhood improvement, beautification	8	8.5	25*	1.6
People and community attitude	9	8.1	17	4.2
Race relations and issues, immigration	10	7.7	13**	5.6

Valid cases: 761 763

\* The closest comparison was the 1994 category called "Run-down neighborhoods" which was more specific than the generalized 2004 category of neighborhood improvement.

\*\* "Discrimination" was the title for this category in 1994.

**Table 6: Respondents' Views of the Most Important Problems to Address in the Omaha Area, 1994 and 2004**

Category	2004		1994	
	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
Roads, road construction, roads planning	1	33.6	6	14.6
High taxes, tax system (includes vehicle licensing)	2	30.5	7	14.1
Crime, violence	3	29.5	1	75.1
Schools, education	4	19.8	4	19.2
Local government	5	16.7	5	16.8
Suburban and urban development	6	15.4	13	5.3
Lack of jobs or business opportunities	7	13.4	2	23.1
Law enforcement	8	11.0	12	5.9
Balance the budget, stay within the budget	9	10.7	**	**
Youth needs	10	10.1	9	9.2

Valid cases: 763 780

\*\* No separate category for this item in 1994.

**Table 8: Respondents' Views of the Most Important Problems for their Neighborhoods to Address, 1994 and 2004**

Category	2004		1994	
	Rank	Percent	Rank	Percent
Crime, violence	1	11.8	1	40.7
Roads, road construction	2	10.2	8	3.4
Speeders and speeding	3	9.3	**	**
Suburban and urban development	4	7.7	10	2.5
Traffic	5	7.6	2	7.6

Valid cases: 632 565

\*\* No separate category for this item in 1994.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparisons across racial/ethnic groups are reported as differences between Whites and non-Whites. The number of respondents for each racial group was too small for separate analysis, so the grouping of minorities was required to make accurate comparisons.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned differences among population subgroups are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level of significance.

<sup>3</sup> 2004 American Community Survey Ranking Tables for Places, United States Census Bureau, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

<sup>4</sup> The comparison was statistically significant across the four marital status groups of now married, single, divorced/separated, and widowed rather than the comparison of those currently married versus those currently not married.

<sup>5</sup> The question was worded “In your opinion what is the one most important problem that your neighborhood or area should be trying to address?”. The words “or area” helped define the question for those respondents who did not live in a neighborhood, such as a rural residence.

<sup>6</sup> The few responses regarding speeding for the question regarding priority problems in the Omaha area were placed into the law enforcement category.

# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Outlook on the Future, Quality of Life, and Local Leadership

By: David J. Drozd, Research Associate  
Center for Public Affairs Research

How do residents view the Omaha-area's outlook for the future, quality of life, need for change, quality of leadership, and retention of high school graduates?

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 asked respondents about these facets of life in the greater Omaha area. Respondents stated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with seven statements concerning these topics.

This report presents the results obtained from all 806 respondents living in the Nebraska portion of the greater Omaha area. It also identifies whether responses differ among population subgroups based on age, race,<sup>1</sup> gender, housing tenure (owners versus renters), education, and household income. In addition, it notes any differences in opinion based upon the residential locations of respondents throughout 12 geographic sub-areas within the Nebraska portion of the greater Omaha area.

Table 1 summarizes responses to each of the seven statements about the Omaha area.

### Outlook on the Future

About nine out of ten respondents (88.3 percent) said they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "The Omaha area's future looks bright."

The outlook on the future varied according to income and education as well as geographic sub-area.

Those with higher incomes and more education tended to agree with this statement more often than those with lower incomes and less education. For example, the percentage agreeing with this statement was 91.6 percent among those having a Bachelor Degree or more education versus 84.2 percent of those having a high school diploma or less education.

Map 1 shows differences in responses by geographic sub-area. In general, the eastern parts of Douglas and Sarpy Counties tended to agree with the statement less often. Specific levels of agreement by geographic sub-area are shown in Table 2. The consolidated zip codes comprising the geographic sub-areas are shown on a reference map at the end of this report.

### Omaha as a Place to Live

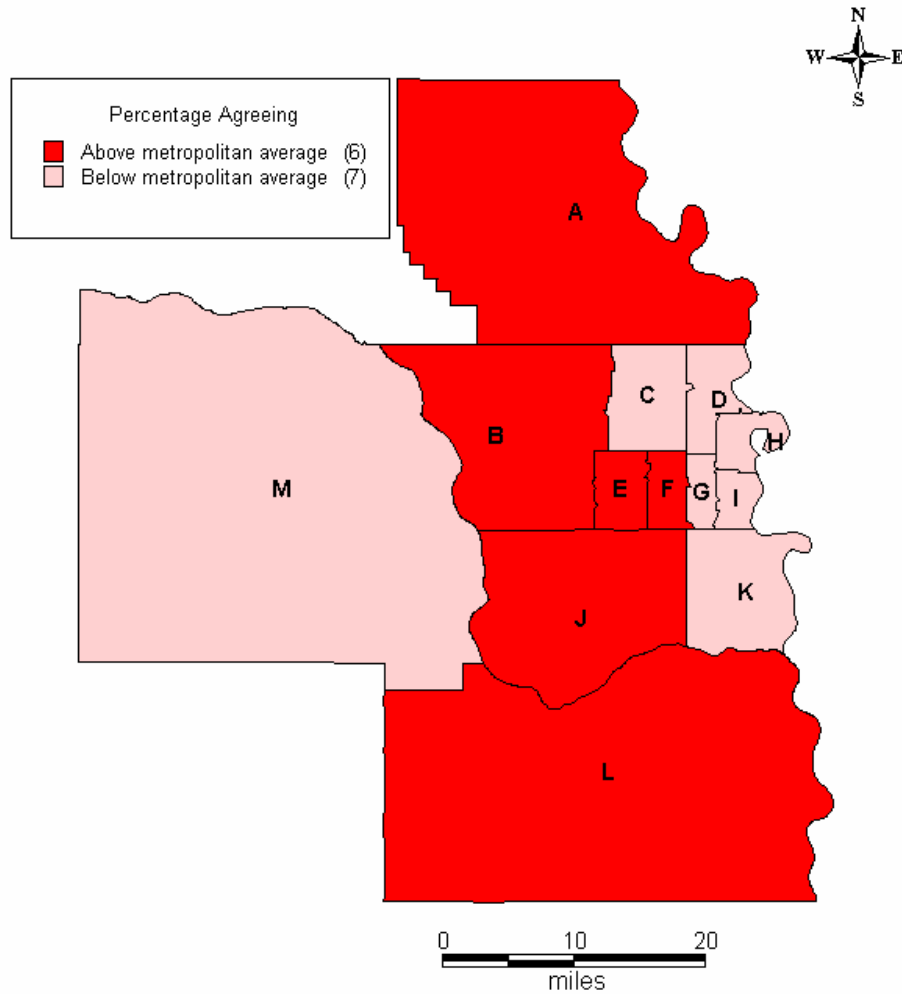
Over eight out of ten respondents (86.3 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "The Omaha area is an ideal place to live."

Respondents' opinions varied by education level and geographic sub-area.

Nearly 90 percent (89.8) of those having a Bachelor Degree or more education agreed with this statement versus 80.5 percent of those having a high school diploma or less education.

Map 2 shows differences in responses by geographic sub-area. In general, the eastern parts of Douglas and Sarpy Counties tended to agree with the statement less often.

### Map 1: The Omaha Area's Future Looks Bright by Consolidated Zip Codes



#### The Need for Change

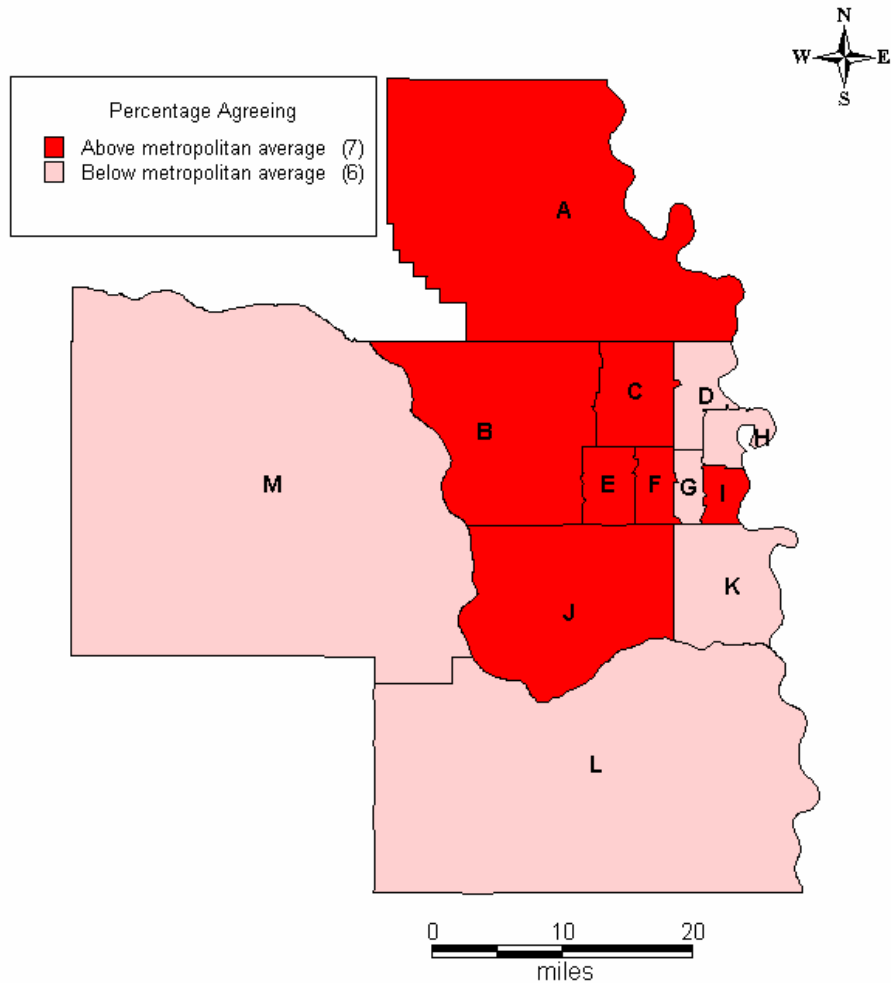
Although the overwhelming majority of respondents believed the Omaha area has a bright future and is an ideal place to live, many respondents also felt a need for change. Two statements measured attitudes toward needing change. The first was “Most residents of the Omaha area are satisfied with things as they are” with the second being “The Omaha area is good enough as it is without trying to change it.”

Six out of ten respondents (60.3 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that most residents are satisfied with things as they are.

Responses varied by age, race, gender, income, education, and geographic sub-area.



## Map 2: The Omaha Area is An Ideal Place to Live by Consolidated Zip Codes



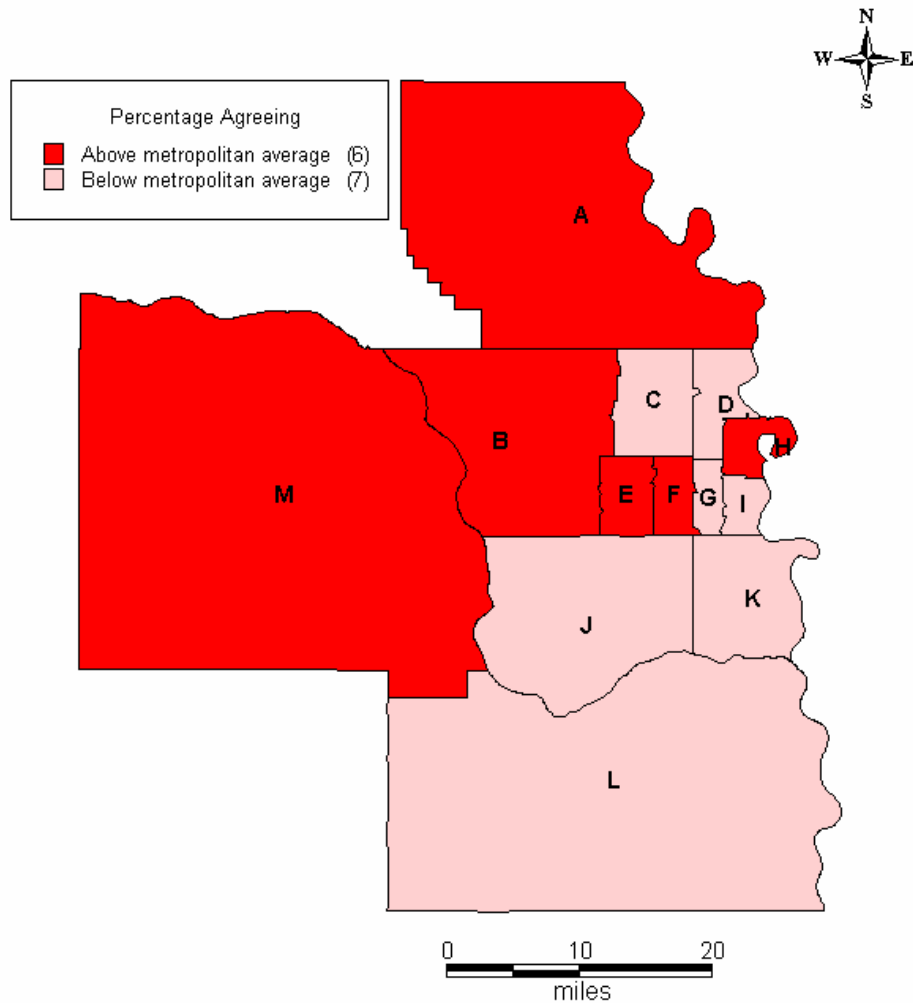
Those in older age groups were less likely to agree that residents were satisfied with things as they are. The percentage agreeing with this statement was 70.0 percent among those 19 to 34 years old, 58.7 percent among those 35 to 64 years old, and 45.7 percent among those 65 and older. Non-Whites were less likely to agree with the statement than Whites as were women when compared to men.

Those with lower incomes and less education stated the need for change more often. The percentage agreeing with this statement (satisfied with things) was 58.2 percent among those having household incomes under \$30,000 versus 67.4 percent of those having household incomes of \$60,000 or more. The disparity was even greater when comparing education. The percentage agreeing with the statement was 46.9 percent among those with a high school diploma or less education versus 70.6 percent among those with a Bachelor Degree or more education.

Map 3 shows differences in responses to the statement that most Omaha area residents are satisfied with things as they are by geographic sub-area. In general, the eastern part of

Douglas County and southern portion of the metropolitan area agreed with the statement less often.

### Map 3: Most Residents are Satisfied With Things As They Are by Consolidated Zip Codes



While six out of ten respondents were satisfied with things as they are, fewer than three out of ten (28.4 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the area is good enough as it is.

This view was consistent across sub-group populations and geographic locations as responses were not significantly different statistically. Thus, all respondents felt a similar need to change (improve) the Omaha area regardless of their residential location or background characteristics. Thus, programs and other efforts aimed at community improvement would likely be well received by the public.

#### Quality of Leadership

Two statements focused on leadership quality in the Omaha area: “The Omaha area has good governmental leaders” and “The Omaha area has good corporate leaders.”

About two-thirds of respondents (67.2 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders.

Responses varied by gender and geographic sub-area.

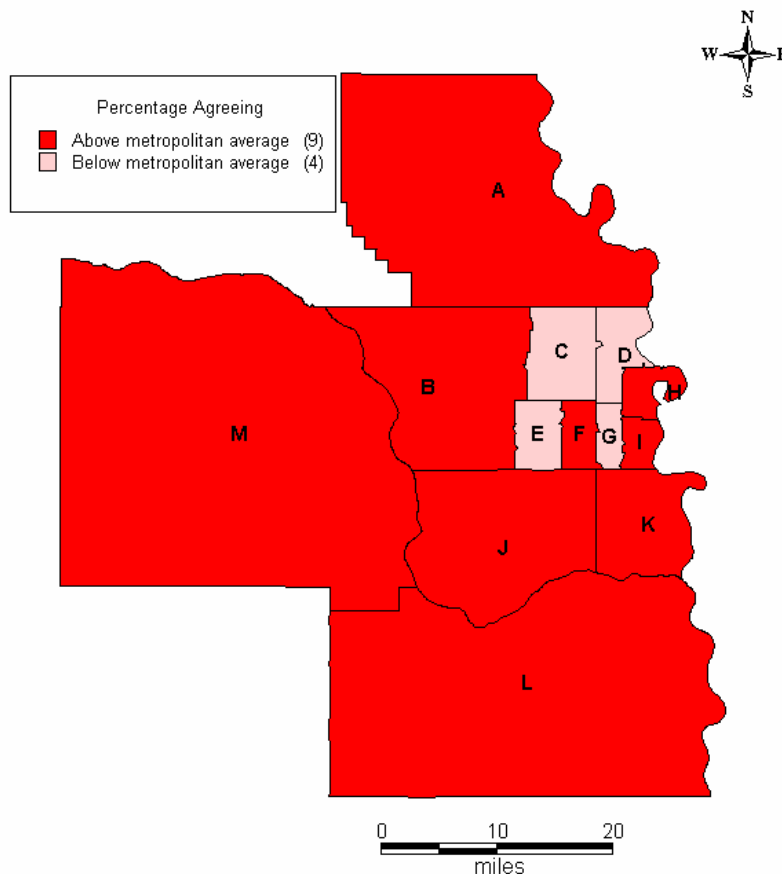
Women were more likely than men to agree that the Omaha area has good governmental leaders. The percentage agreeing with this statement was 70.4 percent among women versus 63.6 percent among men.

Map 4 shows differences in responses by geographic sub-area. In general, parts of Douglas County tended to agree with the statement less often while other counties in the metropolitan area tended to agree more often. This trend may be a cause of concern for Douglas County officials, especially given how their policies and decisions impact the most residents (core) of the Omaha metropolitan area.

The quality of corporate leadership was rated higher than the quality of government leadership. Over eight out of ten respondents (84.8 percent) strongly agreed or agreed that the Omaha area has good corporate leaders.

Opinions of corporate leadership varied by housing tenure, income, and education. Homeowners' agreement with the statement regarding good corporate leaders was higher than that among renters. Agreement with the statement increased as household income increased. Those with a Bachelor Degree or more education were more likely to agree with the statement than other education levels.

**Map 4: The Omaha Area Has Good Government Leaders by Consolidated Zip Codes**



## Retention of Younger Residents After High School

Less than six out of ten respondents (56.1 percent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Younger residents of the Omaha area tend to stay here after high school.”

Responses to this statement differed only by race.

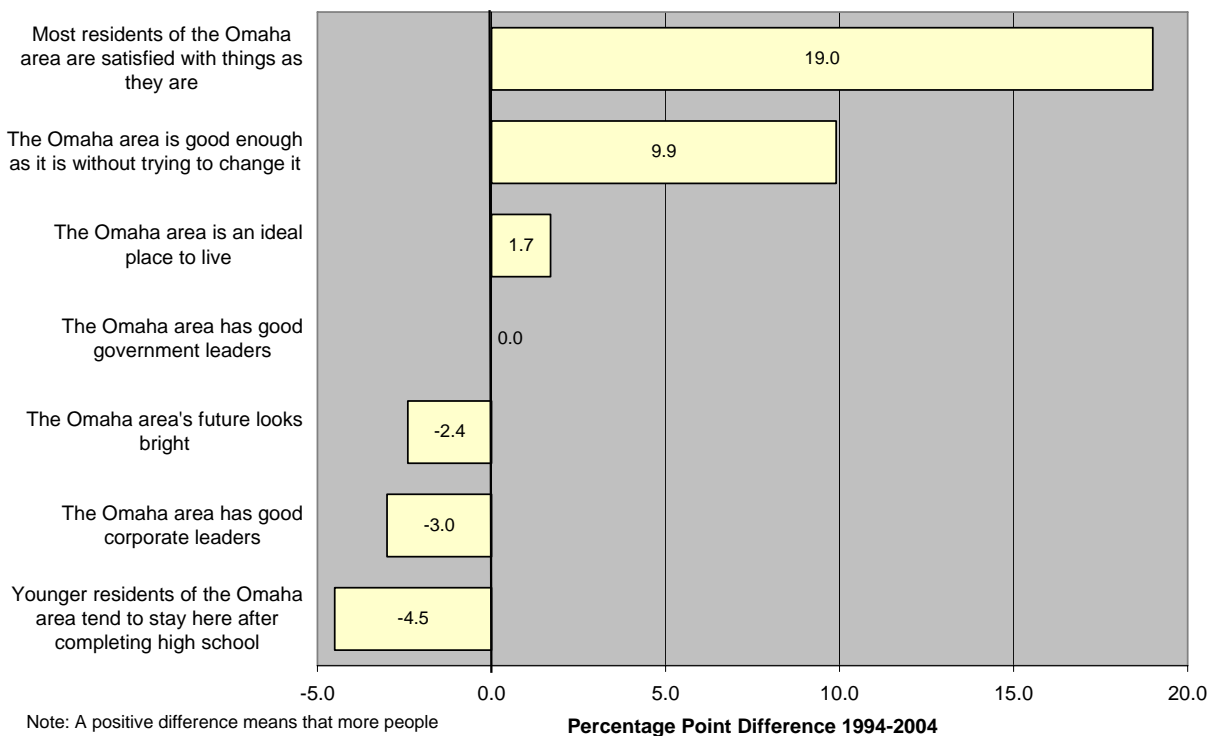
Whites tended to agree with this statement more often than non-Whites as 57.6 percent of Whites agreed that younger residents stay in Omaha versus 48.0 percent among non-Whites.

## Historical Comparison with 1994 Results

Figure 1 compares results from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 with those from the 1994 survey. Specifically, the percentage point change between 1994 and 2004 of those agreeing with each statement is shown. The specific percentages agreeing with each statement are shown in Table 3.

2004 respondents indicated a higher level of agreement regarding Omaha area residents being satisfied with things as they are and the Omaha area being good enough as it is without trying to change it. In 1994, the percentage agreeing that Omaha residents were satisfied was only 41.3 percent versus 60.3 percent in 2004, a 19.0 percentage point increase. Similarly, the agreeing percentage regarding the area being good enough as it is rose from 18.5 percent in 1994 to 28.4 percent in 2004, a 9.9 percentage point difference. Both of these changes show a more-positive response level, where fewer people are unsatisfied with current conditions in the Omaha area. However, responses show that more than 70 percent believe that the Omaha area is not good enough as it is without trying to change it.

**Figure 1: Change in the Percent of Respondents Agreeing with Various Statements, 1994 to 2004**



The largest percentage point decline concerned younger residents staying in Omaha after high school. The percentage agreeing with this statement fell from 60.6 percent in 1994 to 56.1 in 2004, a 4.5 percentage point decline. The percentage agreeing in 2004 also fell below the level observed in 1990 when the Omaha Conditions Survey was first completed (Table 3). Thus, fewer people believe that young people are staying in Omaha, rendering this a possible area for policy considerations.

Figure 1 illustrates that the remaining percentage point differences between 1994 and 2004 were fairly small. Slightly more people viewed Omaha as an ideal place to live in 2004 while a slightly smaller percentage agreed that Omaha had good corporate leaders and had a bright future. The percentage agreeing that Omaha had good governmental leaders did not change between 1994 and 2004, remaining at 67.2 percent. However, Table 3 shows that the percentage agreeing in 1990 was considerably higher, at 77.4 percent. The Omaha Conditions Survey: 1994 report cited that part of the reason for the decline between 1990 and 1994 was likely due to the 1994 interviews being completed during the fall election season. With 2004 surveys being completed during the spring, the mentioned election factor is not as prevalent, indicating that the percentage of area residents agreeing that Omaha has good governmental leaders has truly declined between 1990 and 2004.

**Table 1: Summary of Responses to Statements About the Omaha Area**

Statement About the Omaha Area	Number				Percent of Responses			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Future looks bright	124	567	83	8	15.8	72.5	10.6
An ideal place to live	154	533	94	16	19.4	66.9	11.8	2.0
Most residents are satisfied with things as they are	24	436	275	28	3.2	57.1	36.0	3.7
Good enough as it is without trying to change it	20	205	493	73	2.6	25.9	62.4	9.2
Has good governmental leaders	34	468	198	47	4.5	62.6	26.5	6.3
Has good corporate leaders	85	535	91	20	11.6	73.2	12.5	2.7
Younger residents tend to stay here after high school	19	370	269	35	2.7	53.4	38.8	5.1

**Table 2: Percentage of Omaha Area Respondents Agreeing with Select Statements by Geographic Sub-Area**

Statement	Percentage who Strongly Agreed or Agreed													
	Metro Area	Geographic Sub-Area												
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Future looks bright *	88.3	100.0	98.8	87.5	87.3	93.6	90.5	81.7	75.6	78.8	88.7	84.5	89.7	87.5
Ideal place to live *	86.3	95.7	97.6	88.2	84.2	87.2	91.9	79.0	82.5	88.9	87.5	83.5	62.1	77.3
Most people satisfied *	60.3	89.5	68.7	56.0	50.0	66.7	73.0	49.2	61.5	52.8	57.1	57.5	44.0	68.4
Area good enough	28.4	38.1	28.0	21.3	22.7	33.3	28.2	24.2	23.8	35.2	20.3	30.5	44.8	39.1
Good government leaders *	67.2	68.4	75.3	54.9	54.1	62.2	80.6	56.9	70.7	70.4	72.4	69.8	79.2	82.6
Good corporate leaders	84.8	89.5	91.1	80.6	80.8	87.9	85.9	75.0	73.2	92.0	87.5	85.7	88.5	88.2
Stay after high school	56.1	73.3	53.9	54.0	52.9	51.1	56.3	49.1	54.1	72.9	59.6	59.3	45.5	63.2

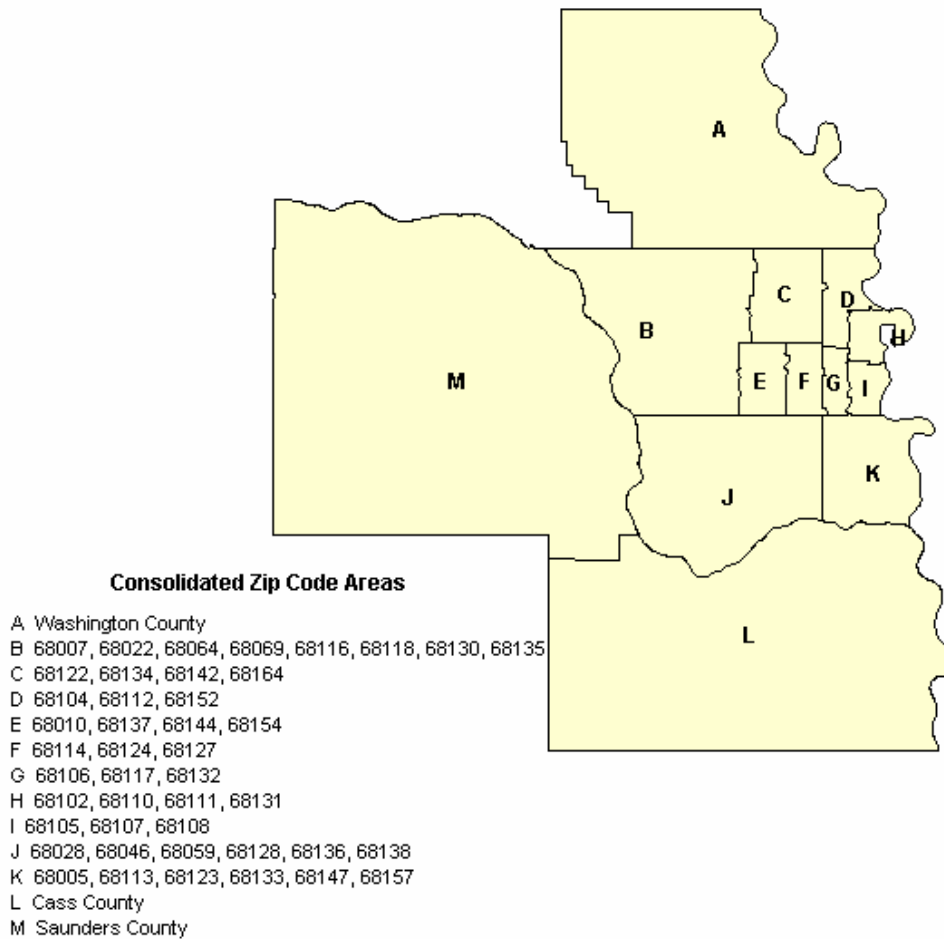
\* Differences across areas are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level of significance.

**Table 3: Percent of Respondents Agreeing with Statements About the Omaha Area**

Statement About the Omaha Area	Percentage who strongly agreed or agreed			Difference in percentages		
	1990	1994	2004	1990-1994	1994-2004	1990-2004
Future looks bright	89.3	90.7	88.3	1.4	-2.4	-1.0
An ideal place to live	85.0	84.6	86.3	-0.4	1.7	1.3
Most residents are satisfied with things as they are	45.1	41.3	60.3	-3.8	19.0 *	15.2 *
Good enough as it is without trying to change it	17.0	18.5	28.4	1.5	9.9 *	11.4 *
Has good governmental leaders	77.4	67.2	67.2	-10.2 *	0.0	-10.2 *
Has good corporate leaders	84.8	87.8	84.8	3.0	-3.0	0.0
Younger residents tend to stay here after high school	57.7	60.6	56.1	2.9	-4.5	-1.6

\* Statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level

**Reference Map Showing Consolidated Zip Code Sub-Areas within the Omaha Area**



<sup>1</sup> Comparisons across racial/ethnic groups are reported as differences between Whites and non-Whites. The number of respondents for each racial group was too small for separate analysis, so the grouping of minorities was required to make accurate comparisons.

# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Citizen Evaluation of Services, Facilities, and Programs

By: David J. Drozd, Research Associate  
Center for Public Affairs Research

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 assessed Omaha-area resident's views of local services and facilities. The survey included questions about services in public safety (e.g. fire protection), daily needs (shopping facilities), leisure time (parks and playgrounds), transportation (smoothness of streets), and neighborhoods (litter control).

This report summarizes citizen feedback regarding selected services, facilities, and programs in the Omaha area. Changes in response patterns since 1990 are noted and thematic maps portray variations in service evaluations across geographic sub-areas.

### **The Value of Citizen Feedback**

Evaluations of services by local citizens play an important part in any effort to better understand and improve public services. They provide a "consumer perspective" of services for which the consumer often has no alternative choices. In most cases, surveying citizens is the only way this information can be obtained.

Properly collected survey data can be far more representative of community feelings than complaint data. It is also more reliable than personal observations by government employees and elected officials who hear mainly from dissatisfied persons or those representing special interests.

Surveys tap the opinions of a representative sample of the population, including both those satisfied and dissatisfied with the selected items mentioned in the survey interview. The opinions of satisfied persons are especially important as research suggests that only about 20 percent of residents will contact their local government officials for any reason, and would not be represented in complaint or personal observation data.

### **The Evaluation of Services**

Evaluations of services by local citizens do have several limitations. One major limitation is that different individuals or groups of "clients" may have varying expectations of a given service. Thus, two people or groups might rate the same service differently even though they received identical treatment. Additionally, not all services are used by each citizen.

A third consideration is that citizens often differ in the priority or importance they attach to a given service. As a result, service satisfaction information can be misleading if information regarding the priority or importance of the service is not taken into account.

### **Measuring Service Satisfaction**

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with 20 various services, facilities, and programs along with the degree of importance of each item to the respondent. For every item, the respondent was first asked "How important is [the item] to

you?”. The respondent was asked to choose from four levels of importance: very important, somewhat important, slightly important, and not important.

Next, each respondent was asked “How satisfied are you with [the item] at the present time?” Response categories to this question included: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied.

Responses were charted on a 4 X 4 or 16-cell matrix that incorporated each possible combination of responses from the importance and satisfaction questions. (See Figure 1) Each respondent’s responses placed them into one of the 16 cells and one of four major summary quadrants: A, B, C, or D.

The summary quadrants represent the satisfaction-dissatisfaction and important-unimportant levels reported by the respondent. As Figure 1 shows, quadrant A contains responses showing satisfaction with a service that was unimportant to the respondent. Quadrant B shows satisfaction with an important service while quadrant C contains responses showing dissatisfaction with an unimportant service. Finally, quadrant D represents dissatisfaction with important services.

The classification scheme represented in Figure 1 simplifies a complex set of citizen-based evaluations. The matrix portrays major differences in the assessment of services. Quadrant B, showing satisfaction with important services, provides a broad view of how well a particular service, facility, or program is performing. On the other hand, Quadrant D, showing dissatisfaction with important services, shows possible “red flags”. If left unaddressed, such dissatisfaction could produce public outcry and a backlash. Quadrants A and C identify those citizens that attach little importance to the service. This reports

deals primarily with analyzing quadrants B and D, the relative satisfaction with important services.

**Figure 1: Importance/Satisfaction Categories for Citizen Evaluation of Selected Services, Facilities, and Programs**

		Importance to Respondent			
		Not Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Satisfaction of Respondent	Very Satisfied				
	Somewhat Satisfied	<b>A</b>			<b>B</b>
	Somewhat Dissatisfied				
	Very Dissatisfied	<b>C</b>			<b>D</b>

### Service, Facility, and Program Ratings

Table 1 presents the percentage of responses in each of the four rating quadrants for all 20 services. The services are categorized by type and then sorted from the highest to the lowest percentage in quadrant B.

Looking first at Column B, which shows responses indicating satisfaction with an important service, one sees that public safety and daily needs items tended to be rated highly. Conversely, street and transportation items had relatively low ratings.

Specifically, fire protection attained the highest satisfaction rating at 97.3 percent. Other public safety items such as emergency rescue service and police protection also had more than 90 percent satisfaction. The fourth and fifth highest ranked items were for daily needs: garbage collection and shopping facilities. The other daily needs item of public transportation received the lowest satisfaction rating, but that was largely due to respondents indicating this item was unimportant (Columns A and C).

More than 35 percent of respondents said that traffic engineering and street smoothness were important and that they were dissatisfied



(Column D), lowering the percentage satisfied to less than 60 percent.

Most items in the leisure time category received satisfaction ratings in the low 70s, with parks and playgrounds being rated somewhat better at 79.4 percent. Besides parks and playgrounds, roughly 10 percent of respondents indicated they were satisfied but the leisure time item was not important to them. Around 15 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with each item in the leisure category.

Satisfaction with important neighborhood items ranged from 64.8 percent for traffic enforcement to 82.8 percent for crime control. Neighborhood items tended to be considered important by Omaha-area residents as illustrated by the low percentages in Columns A and C. Dissatisfaction with these services ranged from 10.2 to 27.6 percent, a somewhat wider range when compared to the leisure time category. The items with the third and fourth highest levels of dissatisfaction were in the neighborhoods category: traffic enforcement and litter control.

### **Change in Ratings over Time**

The Omaha Conditions Survey has asked identical questions regarding the importance and satisfaction with select services in 1990 and 1993. Thus, the 2004 results can be compared with those from prior surveys to identify how satisfaction has changed over time.

Table 2 shows the percentages that indicated satisfaction or dissatisfaction with important services from each survey. These data were represented in Columns B and D in Table 1. Table 2 only lists those items that were asked in all three survey years: 1990, 1993 and 2004.

Satisfaction with fire protection and emergency rescue services has been extremely high since 1990, with column B

percentages ranging only slightly from 95 to 97 percent. Satisfaction with police protection has increased in each subsequent survey.

Dissatisfaction with police protection increased slightly between 1990 and 1993 before declining to 8.5 percent in 2004.

Satisfaction percentages regarding garbage collection have remained virtually identical. However, dissatisfaction has risen in each survey and is now at 9.3 percent in 2004 after being only 5.8 percent in 1990.

Satisfaction with shopping facilities for daily needs has eroded from 93.8 percent in 1990 to 89.4 percent in 1993 to the current 86.4 percent in 2004. Dissatisfaction has doubled from 4.0 to 8.2 percent over this time period.

Satisfaction with public transportation has varied while dissatisfaction has increased in each survey. The overall level of dissatisfaction has only risen slightly from 17.3 percent in 1990 to 19.7 percent in 2004.

Satisfaction with parks/playgrounds and recreation programs/activities dipped between 1990 and 1993 but rebounded between 1993 and 2004. The percent indicating the service was important and that they were dissatisfied is about the same in 2004 as it was in 1990.

The largest variation in ratings has occurred in road items. Satisfaction with traffic flow and street smoothness declined between 1990 and 1993 but improved between 1993 and 2004. The satisfaction with street smoothness jumped more than 20 percentage points to 56.4 percent in 2004, the highest percentage recorded in the three surveys.

### **Variation in Ratings by Respondent Demographic Characteristics**

It is not only important to recognize which services residents are dissatisfied with, but also who the dissatisfied residents tend to be. Analyzing the demographic characteristics of the respondents creates a profile of those who were dissatisfied with each service and how they differ from those who were satisfied.

Various demographic characteristics were compared including age, gender, race,<sup>1</sup> income, education, and marital status among others. The comparisons were made for those people who indicated they were dissatisfied with a service they considered important (those in Column D on Table 1).

Table 4 explains the statistically significant differences among demographic characteristics for each service the survey inquired about. The following patterns are illustrated on Table 4:

- Younger persons were dissatisfied with each item regarding leisure time (parks and playgrounds; trails, etc.).
- Not surprisingly, those living in a neighborhood tended to be more dissatisfied with items in the neighborhoods category (noise, housing code enforcement, etc.).
- The only statistically significant difference by gender regarded shopping facilities, with women being more dissatisfied. Those not living in a neighborhood, often those residing in the more rural Cass, Saunders, and Washington Counties were also more dissatisfied with shopping facilities.
- Non-Whites tended to express more dissatisfaction than Whites.
- In general, most differences make intuitive sense or follow what one would hypothesize, such as older persons being more dissatisfied with noise and those living in the suburbs who tend to have more education, higher incomes, and longer commuting times being more dissatisfied with traffic flow.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparisons across racial/ethnic groups are reported as differences between Whites and non-Whites. The number of respondents for each racial group was too small for separate analysis, so the grouping of minorities was required to make accurate comparisons.

## Variation of Ratings within the Omaha Area

Analyzing satisfaction response patterns by geographic sub-areas within the Omaha area provides additional insight. By consolidating zip codes and utilizing existing county boundaries, 13 separate sub-areas can be compared. A reference map at the end of this report shows the various zip codes that comprise the sub-areas.

Table 3 shows the percentage of the respondents who were dissatisfied with an important service by geographic sub-area. The responses for these seven services differed significantly statistically by geographic sub-area and had at least 15 percent of all respondents being dissatisfied with the service.

Maps 1 to 7 show the geographic distribution of the data contained in Table 3, organized in descending order by the overall level of dissatisfaction. These maps show two general categories: those geographic sub-areas where the percentage of dissatisfaction within that specific area was *above* or *below* the overall Omaha-area average.

Map 1 shows that eastern and central Douglas County areas along with Washington County were more dissatisfied with street smoothness. Dissatisfaction in these areas tended to be near 45 percent while only around 25 percent in other areas. Table 3 shows that, while below the metropolitan average of 38.0 percent, sub-area F in central Douglas County was very near this level with 36.8 percent dissatisfaction, which aligns it closely with surrounding areas that were above the metropolitan average.

A different pattern emerges regarding traffic flow on Map 2. Those most dissatisfied with this item resided in western Douglas County and eastern Sarpy County. This area of Sarpy County, however, was just barely above the metropolitan average (35.1 versus 35.0 percent). Those in western Douglas County reporting dissatisfaction were substantially higher than the metropolitan average, at more than 45 percent.

Maps 3 and 5 regarding litter control and crime control are identical. Residents of eastern

Douglas County and Cass County were most dissatisfied with these services. Map 6 regarding housing code enforcement is similar, with Washington County rather than area C in north central Douglas County being above the metropolitan average. A correlation exists between these three items (crime control, litter control, housing code enforcement) and improvements in one area would likely lead to improvements in the others.

Those residing outside Douglas County had relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with interesting and fun places to go while most Douglas County residents had relatively low dissatisfaction with this item (Map 4). Differences exist among those outside Douglas County, as the level of dissatisfaction in Washington County (18.7 percent) was near the metropolitan average of 17.7 percent while more than 40 percent of Cass County residents expressed dissatisfaction.

Those residing in Douglas County would have easier access to such interesting places but non-Douglas County residents also have access, albeit at a greater traveling distance. Thus, Omaha-area residents residing outside Douglas County would likely welcome various shops, galleries, open spaces, etc. if located or redeveloped in their local area.

Map 7 shows that those most dissatisfied with noise lived in Douglas County. Area H, which includes Eppley Airfield, had the highest level of dissatisfaction at 32.3 percent. Not surprisingly, the more “rural” Cass, Saunders, and Washington Counties had

the least dissatisfaction with noise, with only 5-7 percent of respondents in these counties expressing dissatisfaction.

## Summary

Overall, residents of the Omaha area gave good marks to various services, programs, and facilities examined in the Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004. Among the 20 items, the highest ratings went to services that regarded public safety and daily needs. The smoothness of streets received the lowest evaluation, as measured by the percentage of responses in Column D (dissatisfied with an important service). These patterns also occurred in prior surveys.

Column D provides a potential “red flag” for services that could need additional assessment. If a threshold of 10 percent in Column D was used, 15 services or 75 percent of those analyzed would be worthy of further assessment. Only 4 services would be higher than a 20 percent threshold—street smoothness, traffic flow, traffic enforcement, and litter control. As noted in a separate report, street and traffic items were repeatedly mentioned on other 2004 survey questions regarding the worst aspects of the Omaha area and priority problems for the Omaha area to address.

While community leaders and policy makers must ultimately decide which threshold or what services should be addressed, these community service ratings indicate that at least some services in the Omaha area warrant additional assessment. This report’s analyses of change over time and the geographic areas expressing the greatest concern provide such leaders with a starting point for service analysis and improvement.

**Table 1: Satisfaction and Importance Ratings for Selected Services, Facilities, and Programs, 2004**

Service/Facility/Program	Percentage of Responses*			
	A Satisfied, Unimportant	B Satisfied, Important	C Dissatisfied, Unimportant	D Dissatisfied, Important
<b>Public Safety:</b>				
Fire protection (N=767) <sup>†</sup>	0.3	<b>97.3</b>	0.2	<b>2.3</b>
Emergency rescue service (N=742)	0.3	<b>97.1</b>	0.1	<b>2.5</b>
Police protection (N=795)	0.6	<b>90.6</b>	0.3	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Daily Needs and Services:</b>				
Garbage collection (N=793)	1.4	<b>88.9</b>	0.5	<b>9.3</b>
Shopping facilities for daily needs (N=801)	5.3	<b>86.4</b>	0.1	<b>8.2</b>
Public transportation (N=587)	28.8	<b>45.2</b>	6.3	<b>19.7</b>
<b>Leisure Time:</b>				
Parks and playgrounds (N=786)	5.6	<b>79.4</b>	1.4	<b>13.6</b>
Trails for walking, skating, biking (N=759)	12.8	<b>72.8</b>	2.1	<b>12.4</b>
Recreation programs and activities (N=754)	11.2	<b>72.4</b>	1.7	<b>14.7</b>
Interesting, fun things to do (N=785)	9.7	<b>72.2</b>	1.9	<b>16.1</b>
Interesting, fun places to go (N=780)	10.0	<b>70.9</b>	1.4	<b>17.7</b>
<b>Streets/Transportation:</b>				
Traffic engineering (traffic flow) (N=794)	4.8	<b>59.7</b>	0.5	<b>35.0</b>
Smoothness of streets and roads (N=801)	3.7	<b>56.4</b>	1.8	<b>38.0</b>
<b>Neighborhoods:</b>				
Crime control (N=789)	0.7	<b>82.8</b>	0.1	<b>16.4</b>
Graffiti cleanup (N=672)	7.9	<b>81.6</b>	0.3	<b>10.2</b>
Maintenance of sidewalks and public areas (N=779)	3.8	<b>77.8</b>	0.5	<b>18.0</b>
Litter control (N=792)	3.0	<b>74.2</b>	0.4	<b>22.4</b>
Housing code enforcement (N=713)	9.0	<b>73.9</b>	1.5	<b>15.6</b>
Noise (N=769)	11.3	<b>72.2</b>	1.4	<b>15.1</b>
Traffic enforcement (speeding, etc) (N=798)	5.9	<b>64.8</b>	1.7	<b>27.6</b>

\* Category A: Respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with services that were slightly or not important to them; B: Respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with services that were somewhat or very important to them; C: Respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied with services that were slightly or not important to them; D: Respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied with services that were somewhat or very important to them.

<sup>†</sup> N is the number of valid responses to the questions

**Table 2: Comparison of Rating Percentages for Selected Services, Facilities, and Programs: 1990, 1993, and 2004**

Service/Facility/Program	B			D		
	Satisfied, Important			Dissatisfied, Important		
	1990	1993	2004	1990	1993	2004
Fire protection	94.8	97.4	97.3	3.3	1.5	2.3
Emergency rescue service	95.3	95.0	97.1	3.0	4.3	2.5
Police protection	84.6	85.2	90.6	11.3	12.4	8.5
Garbage collection	88.9	88.3	88.9	5.8	8.4	9.3
Shopping facilities for daily needs	93.8	89.4	86.4	4.0	6.0	8.2
Public transportation	49.2	43.5	45.2	17.3	19.4	19.7
Parks and playgrounds	79.6	75.9	79.4	13.2	12.7	13.6
Recreation programs and activities	76.6	68.1	72.4	13.9	18.5	14.7
Traffic engineering (traffic flow)	63.2	53.5	59.7	33.2	39.0	35.0
Smoothness of streets and roads	40.3	34.7	56.4	56.6	63.5	38.0

**Table 3: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Seven Selected Services by Geographic Sub-Area\***

Service	Metro Area	Sub-Area												
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Smoothness of Streets	38.0	41.7	35.1	53.0	44.2	41.5	36.8	40.7	57.0	45.1	24.4	26.8	15.8	21.8
Traffic engineering (flow)	35.0	29.6	45.5	49.7	27.5	50.9	33.2	32.6	23.5	17.3	31.3	35.1	12.8	23.4
Litter control	22.4	13.5	19.9	30.1	32.2	20.3	11.4	28.9	48.7	31.3	11.4	12.0	27.7	7.8
Fun, interesting places to go	17.7	18.7	15.6	11.7	21.6	8.4	12.2	16.4	17.3	10.0	26.3	23.6	41.4	30.1
Crime control	16.4	5.3	7.6	18.3	25.5	15.2	12.4	21.7	47.4	24.4	11.1	5.5	19.3	4.0
Housing code enforcement	15.6	20.3	10.0	14.3	21.5	13.9	10.8	19.2	18.8	33.2	7.6	13.3	23.6	8.8
Noise	15.1	6.6	10.8	30.5	24.4	15.4	10.3	6.5	32.3	23.6	10.8	5.2	5.0	5.5

\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them.

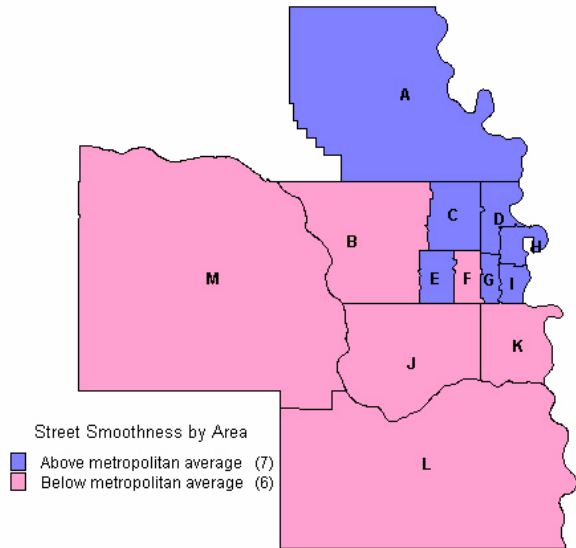
**Table 4: Characteristics of Those who were Dissatisfied with a Service They Identified as Being Important**

Service, Program, or Facility	Characteristics of those Dissatisfied <sup>†</sup>
Fire protection	No statistically significant differences
Emergency rescue service	No statistically significant differences
Police protection	Those with less education
Garbage collection	Homeowners
Shopping facilities for daily needs	Women; those not living in a neighborhood
Public transportation	Non-Whites
Parks and playgrounds	Younger persons; those living in a neighborhood
Trails for walking, skating, biking	Younger persons
Recreation programs and activities	Younger persons; single persons*; those with children under 18 in the household
Interesting, fun things to do	Younger persons; those who have less education; single persons*
Interesting, fun places to go	Younger persons; those who have less education; those with children under 18 in the household
Traffic engineering (traffic flow)	Homeowners; those with higher incomes; those with more education; those currently married
Smoothness of streets and roads	Younger persons; home renters; single persons*
Crime control	Home renters; those with lower incomes; those with less education; non-Whites
Graffiti cleanup	Those living in a neighborhood; those with lower incomes
Maintenance of sidewalks and public areas	Those not currently married; non-Whites
Litter control	Those living in a neighborhood
Housing code enforcement	Those currently married
Noise	Older persons; those living in a neighborhood; homeowners
Traffic enforcement	Those living in a neighborhood; those with less education; those currently married

<sup>†</sup> Differences among groups statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level

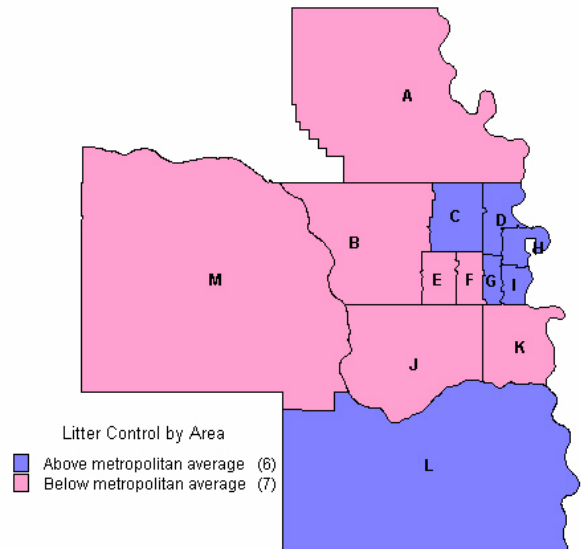
\* Comparison significant between all 4 marital status groups: married, single, divorced/separated, and widowed rather than those currently married versus those not currently married

**Map 1: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Smoothness of Streets\***



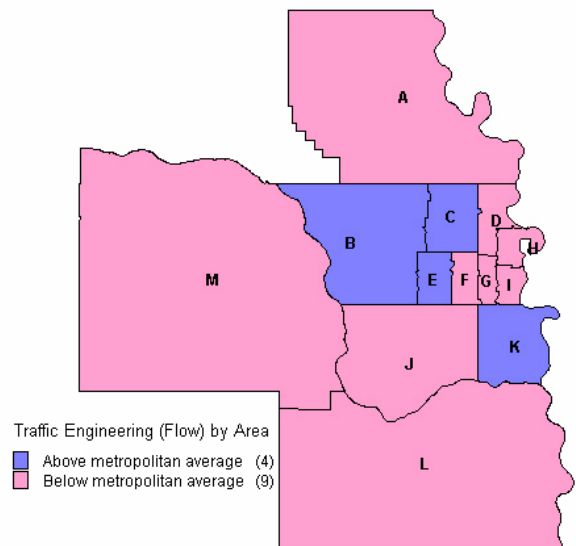
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 3: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Litter Control\***



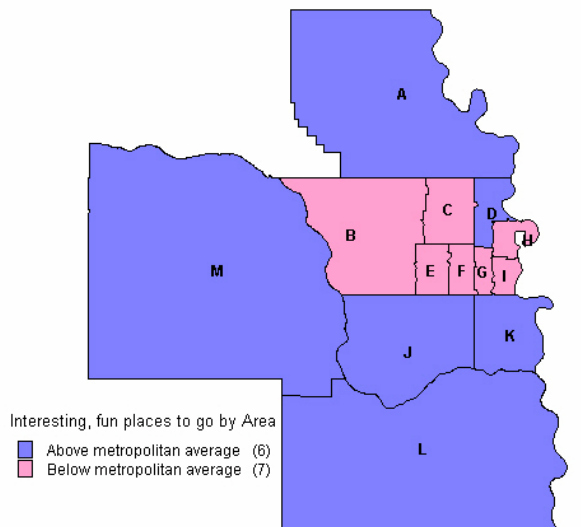
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 2: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Traffic Engineering (flow)\***



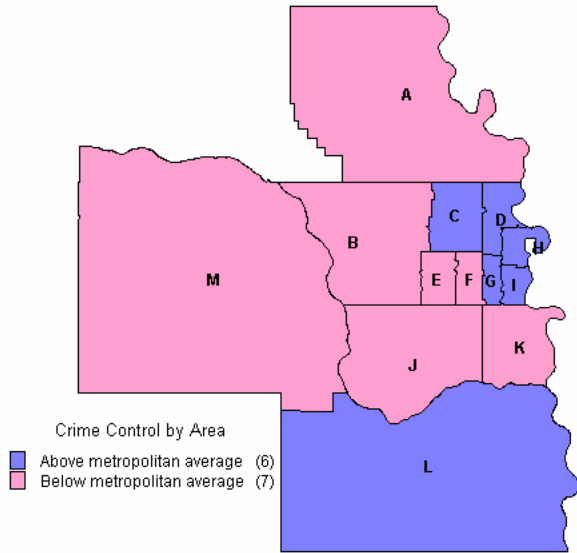
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 4: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Interesting, Fun Places to Go\***



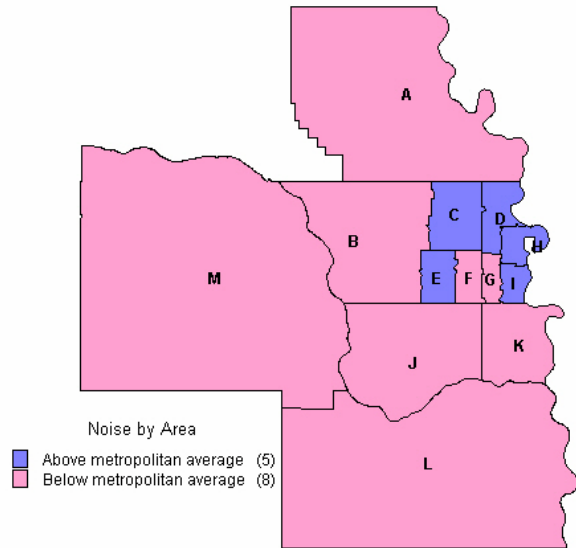
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 5: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Crime Control\***



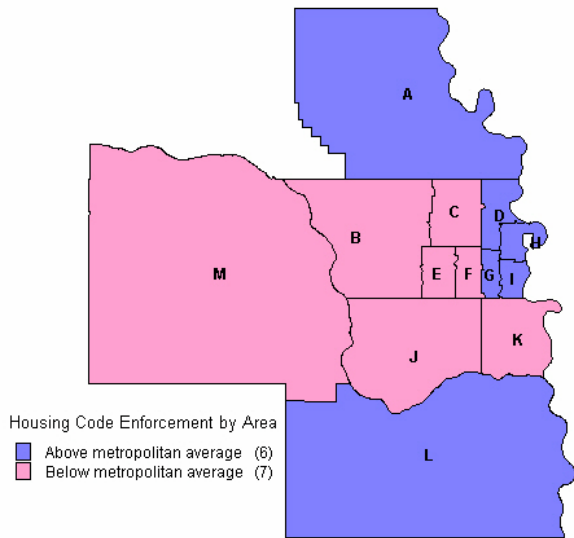
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 7: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Noise\***



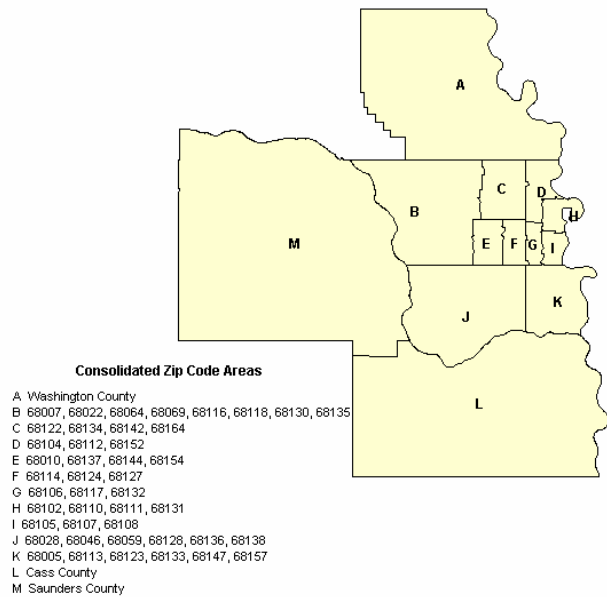
\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Map 6: Percentage of Respondents Dissatisfied with Housing Code Enforcement\***



\* Respondents reporting they were dissatisfied with the service and that it was important to them

**Reference Map Showing Consolidated Zip Code Sub-Areas within the Omaha Area**





# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Charitable Giving by Omaha-Area Residents

By: David J. Drozd, Research Associate  
Center for Public Affairs Research

What percentage of Omaha-area residents contribute annually to charities or charitable causes? What types of organizations do they support? What percentage of their charitable gifts stays locally and goes to support organizations in the Omaha area?

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 sought to answer these types of questions regarding charitable giving. In addition, respondents selected a category or level of giving that best described their annual dollar amount of charitable donations. The survey also detailed reasons for not making annual charitable contributions.

This report presents the results obtained from all 806 respondents living in the greater Omaha area. It also identifies whether responses differed among population subgroups based on age, race,<sup>1</sup> gender, marital status,<sup>2</sup> housing tenure (owners versus renters), household income, and education. In addition, this report describes the relationship between charitable giving and membership in various associations or organizations.

### Questionnaire Design

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 section on charitable giving began by asking whether the respondent contributed annually to charitable causes. The response to this lead-in question divided respondents into two groups—those contributing to charitable causes (givers) and those not contributing to such causes (non givers).

The lead-in question response and subsequent grouping of respondents determined the next set of questions asked.<sup>3</sup> Non givers responded to applicable questions regarding possible reasons for why they had not donated, while givers described their level of donations, percentage for Omaha-area charities, and specific types of charitable organizations they supported. Completing the applicable questions concluded the charitable giving section for both groups.

### Results

Table 1 summarizes the percentage of respondents contributing to charitable causes including percentages for various population subgroups.

More than eight out of ten respondents (85.5 percent) said they contributed annually to charitable causes.

Whether respondents made annual charitable contributions varied according to age, race, marital status, housing tenure, income, and education.

Older respondents, Whites, those currently married, and homeowners contributed to charitable organizations more often than people ages 19 to 34, non-Whites, those currently not married, and those renting their residence. Those with relatively high incomes above \$40,000

and more education also contributed more often than those with relatively low incomes and less education. For example, among those having a Bachelor Degree or more education, 92.3 percent gave to charitable organizations annually versus 74.4 percent of those having a high school diploma or less education (Table 1).

### **Contribution Amounts**

When read categories of charitable giving dollar amounts, those contributing to charities indicated their total annual gifts represented the “\$100 to \$499” category most often, followed by the category of “less than \$100”. Thus, relatively small contributions occur frequently and larger contributions and contributors, not surprisingly, are fewer in number.

Table 2 shows response percentages regarding annual charitable giving amounts among givers and all respondents. Over half the charitable givers and 60 percent of all respondents gave less than \$500 to charitable organizations. Hence, people donating \$500 or more reached a special plateau of charitable giving.

Respondents giving \$500 or more annually differed according to each background characteristic listed on Table 1.

People ages 35 to 64 gave \$500 or more most often, at 47.9 percent of respondents in this age group, versus 20.0 percent of those 19 to 34 years old and 38.1 percent of those 65 and over. Those 65 and over often are retired and have fixed incomes while those under 35 are more likely to be attending college and not working full-time. Those giving \$500 or more tended to be Whites, males, those currently married, homeowners, those with higher incomes, and those with more education.

The largest differences were by home tenure and income. More than 45 percent of homeowners and those with incomes of \$40,000 or more reached the \$500 giving plateau versus only about 10 percent of renters and those with incomes under \$40,000. Separate cross tabulations show that more than half of homeowners with incomes of \$40,000 or more gave \$500 annually (51.9 percent), nearly ten times the 5.5 percent of renters with incomes of less than \$40,000 doing likewise.

### **Support of Charities in the Omaha Area**

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 also asked those giving to charities to select from a range of percentages that best described their percentage of charitable donations that supported charities in the Omaha area.

Figure 1 portrays responses to this question. More than 35 percent of respondents selected the “75 percent or more” category when describing their percentage of charitable donations supporting Omaha-area charities. The next most frequently selected category was “1 to 24 percent”. Only 8 percent of respondents said that none of their charitable donations went to support local charities in the Omaha area.

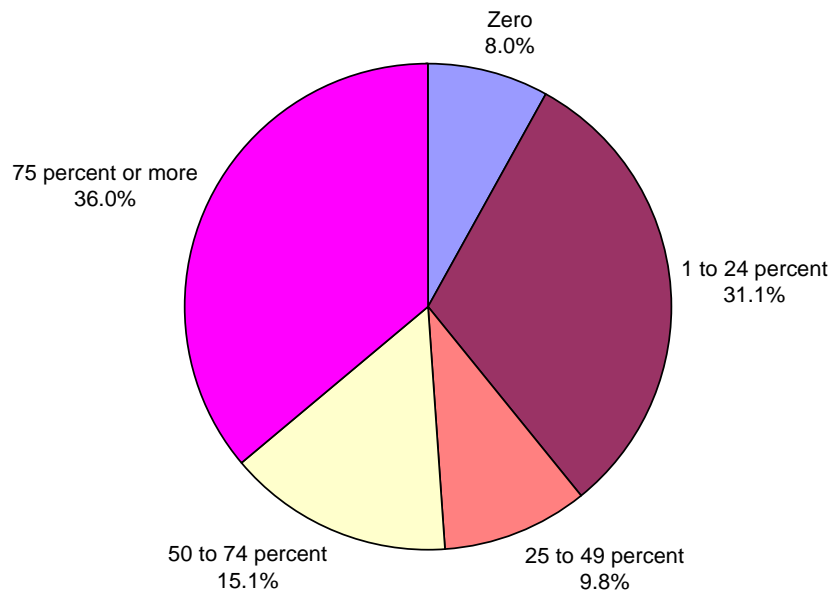
Just over half (51.0 percent) of the respondents said that 50 percent or more of their charitable donations supported Omaha-area charities. This split in respondents’ giving patterns denoted another important plateau regarding charitable giving tendencies.

Comparisons of those giving 50 percent or more of their charitable donations in the Omaha area varied by race, gender, and education (Table 1).

More than half of Whites gave 50 percent or more of their charitable donations to organizations in the Omaha area (53.0 percent) compared to 30.2 percent for non-Whites. Women made more contributions in the Omaha area than men as did those with more education when compared to those with less education.

Intuitively, one expects few differences in the local giving percentages among population subgroups. Possible explanations for differences witnessed include varying associations with national organizations and giving to the national rather than local level, differing knowledge of existing local organizations in need of charitable support, and varying connections with such organizations. For example, women might volunteer at local charitable organizations more often than men, increasing their connection to the organization and influencing their percentage given locally. However, these explanations cannot be substantiated from the questions asked in this survey.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Total Charitable Gifts that Support Charities in the Omaha Area**



### **Specific Organizations Supported**

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 delved into the types of local charitable organizations that charitable givers supported. The survey asked charitable givers if they had donated to ten different types of local charitable organizations in the past three years.

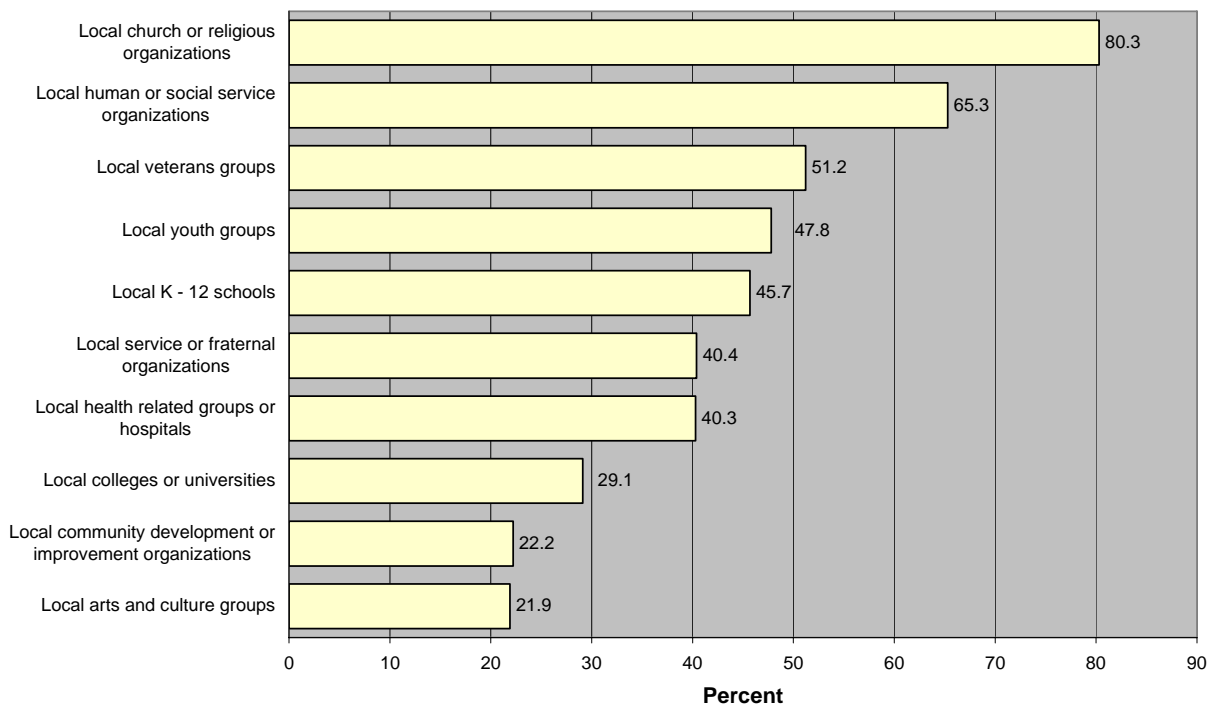
Figure 2 ranks the level of support for each type of organization. Local churches or religious organizations received support most often, by more than 8 out of 10 charitable givers. Over 65 percent of charitable givers supported local human or social service organizations. A majority of charitable givers also supported local veterans groups.

Local youth groups, local K-12 schools, local service or fraternal organizations, and local health related groups or hospitals received somewhat less support. Support for these organizations ranged from 40.3 to 47.8 percent of those annually contributing to charities.

Local colleges and universities, local community development or improvement organizations, and local arts and culture groups comprised the bottom tier of organizations receiving support. Less than one in three charitable givers donated to these types of organizations in the past three years.

The range in support from 21.9 percent for local arts and culture groups to 80.3 percent for local churches or religious organizations shows that Omaha-area residents support different types of charitable organizations to varying degrees. Omaha-area residents likely make distinctions between the various types of charitable organizations when determining which organizations to support.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Charitable Givers who Supported Specific Organizations**



### Factors for Not Supporting Charitable Organizations

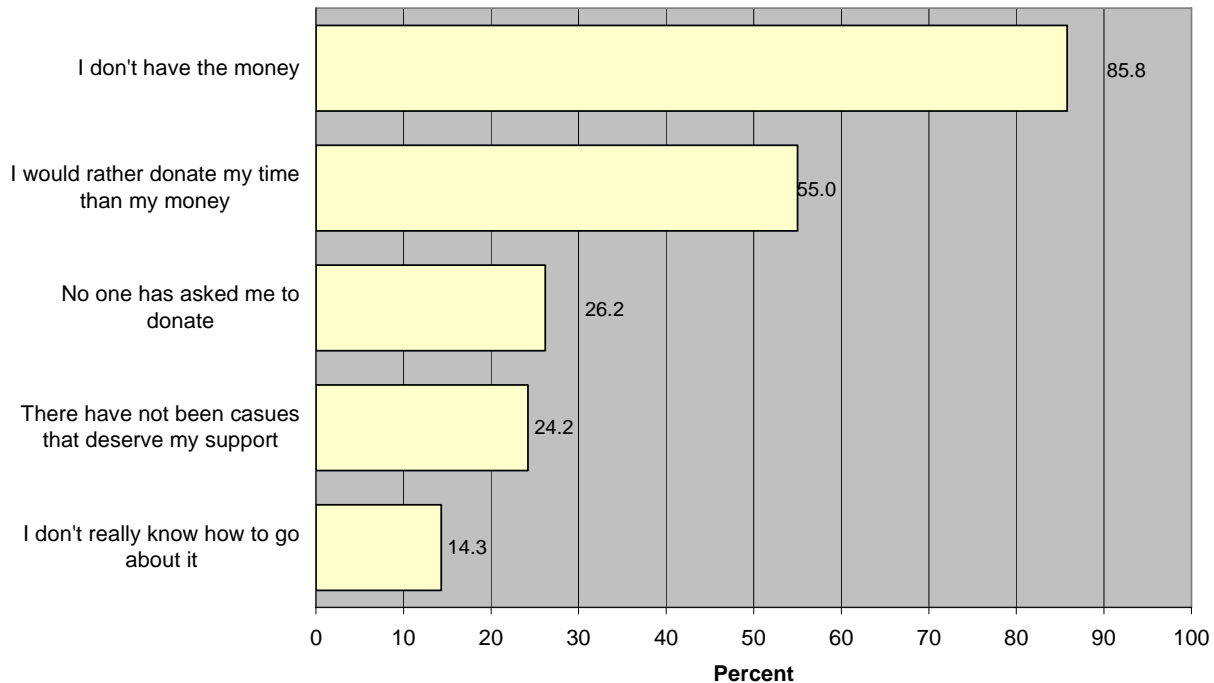
Those who indicated they did not contribute to charitable organizations were asked several questions regarding possible reasons they did not support such organizations. Figure 3 details the responses given.

Most respondents cited a monetary concern for not supporting charitable organizations. More than 8 out of 10 non givers said they did not have the money for lending support. A majority of non givers also indicated they would rather donate their time than their money.

Few respondents had questions regarding charitable giving. Less than 15 percent cited that they “did not really know how to go about it”, so most people have a good understanding regarding charitable giving. Additionally, relatively few people have not been asked to donate

(26.2 percent) and only 24.2 percent believe that there are not causes worthy of their support. Thus, most people who have not given to charities do know how to do so, have been asked in the past, and feel that at least certain charitable organizations are worthy of their support. However, they likely view their financial situation as not having the means to support such charities.

**Figure 3: Percentage of those Not Contributing to Charitable Causes Citing Specific Reasons for Not Contributing**



### **Impact of Organizational Membership on Charitable Giving**

The Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 included a section on community participation. Part of this section dealt with memberships in various types of organizations. A hypothesis existed that community involvement and membership participation might be related to an individual's charitable giving. This section explores that relationship.

The design of the survey asked respondents about membership in three different types of organizations: a) a business or professional association, b) a civic or political association,<sup>4</sup> and c) a local church, synagogue, or other religious or spiritual organization. Thus, this design learned both specific memberships and total memberships, with the maximum number of memberships being equal to three.

Table 3 compares responses to charitable giving questions based on the number of memberships indicated by the respondent.

Those not having any memberships in the three types of organizations listed gave to charitable causes 73.4 percent of the time, versus 86.0 percent of those with exactly one membership and an astounding 97.3 percent of those with two or more memberships. Similarly, the percentage giving \$500 or more annually to charities rose dramatically as the number of memberships increased. The percentage giving \$500 or more was nearly four times higher among those with two or more memberships than among those with no memberships.

When comparing donations to specific types of charitable organizations, the percentage providing support increased as the number of memberships rose. For each and every type of charitable organization, those having two or more memberships gave more frequently than those with exactly one membership. Additionally, those with one membership gave more frequently than those not having any memberships. The difference in support between those having no memberships and those having two or more memberships often exceeded 20 percentage points (e.g. 26.8 percent versus 54.7 percent for local youth groups).

The preceding paragraphs show that a higher number of organizational memberships have a positive influence on charitable giving. This finding prompts additional questions such as if certain types of memberships relate more positively than others. Table 3 also provides figures for each specific type of organizational membership.

When comparing between members and nonmembers, the percentage supporting charities is higher among members of all three groups. The difference is significantly higher statistically for members of business or professional associations and members of a local church, synagogue, or other religious or spiritual organization (hereafter referred to as church). Donating to charities varies most according to church membership, with more than 90 percent of church members donating versus less than 75 percent of nonmembers supporting charities annually.

Members tended to be larger contributors as well, with members of all three organizations reaching the \$500 or more giving plateau more often than respective nonmembers, each difference being statistically significant. A majority (59.2 percent) of civic or political association members reached the \$500 giving plateau, compared to 37.1 percent for all respondents. Once again, the largest percentage point difference occurred according to church membership as more than 45 percent of church members gave over \$500 to charities versus less than 20 percent of non-church members doing likewise.

Donating to specific types of charities varied significantly according to each type of membership in most cases. Not surprisingly, church members gave to “local church or religious organizations” significantly more often than non-church members. Thirty percent of non-church members gave to a local church or religious organization, a considerable number given their limited connection with such organizations.

Also of note, while members of each organization gave more often to local colleges and universities than respective non-members, the largest percentage point difference in support occurred among members of business or professional associations. These members likely have college degrees from such institutions of higher learning and associated strong ties with them (alumni activities).

Local service or fraternal organizations and local human or social service organizations also received significantly more support from members of all three types of organizations. Each type of charitable organization received significantly more support from at least two types of organization members except local veterans groups, where only business or professional association members made charitable donations more frequently.

### Charitable Donation Dollar Amounts by Membership

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant item shown on Table 3 is the relationship between organizational membership and the percentage of respondents giving \$500 or more to charitable organizations. The percentage donating this amount increased greatly as the number of

memberships increased and each type of organizational member reached this plateau significantly more often than respective nonmembers.

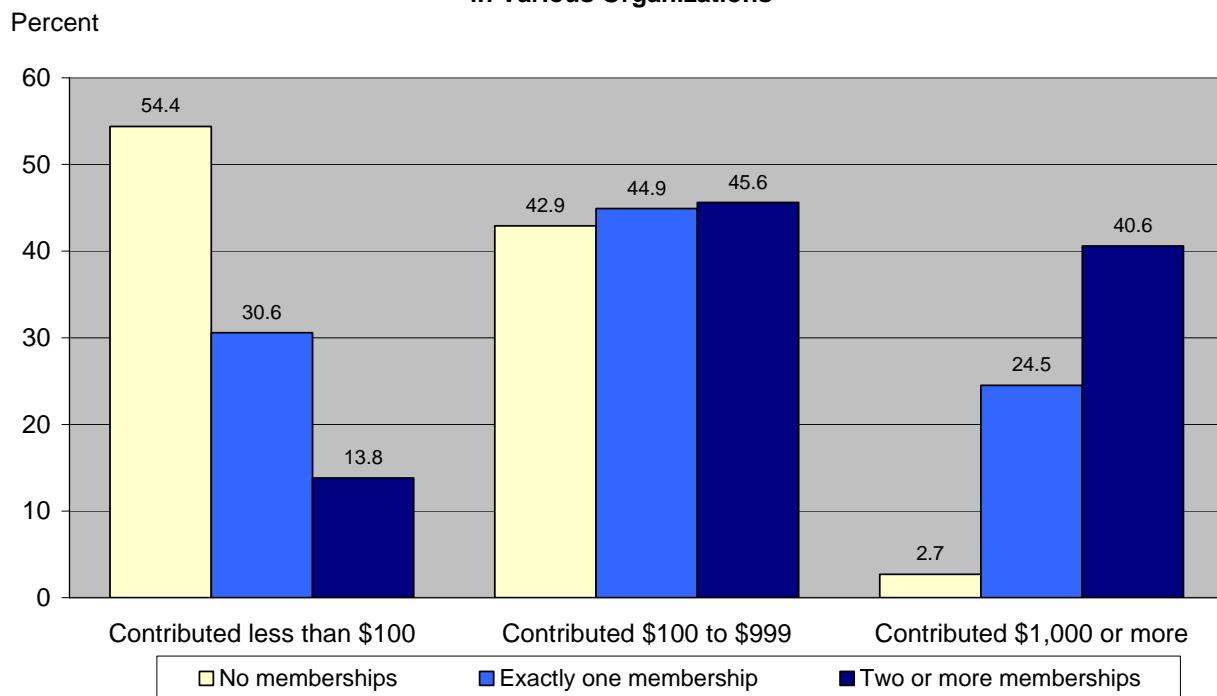
The \$500 giving plateau effectively summarized the question where respondents selected a category or level of giving that best described their annual dollar amount of charitable donations. However, analyzing the percentage of responses in each category provides additional insight. Table 4 details these responses by the respondent's number of memberships.

Differences at the extremes of the donations dollar categories stand out on Table 4. Those not having memberships did not contribute to charitable causes 28.2 percent of the time, far higher than the 15.1 and 3.1 percentages for people with exactly one and two or more memberships respectively. Conversely, no one with zero organizational memberships gave \$5,000 or more versus 15.0 percent of those with two or more memberships making this largest donation. The same patterns hold for the second lowest and highest levels of giving (i.e. less than \$100, \$2,500 to \$4,999).

The percentages in the middle categories of \$100 to \$499 and \$500 to \$999 are roughly equal as membership changes. Thus, while those with no memberships and two or more memberships have opposite charitable giving trends, few differences exist among medium donation levels.

Figure 4 presents these results graphically. A majority of respondents having no organizational memberships gave less than \$100 to charitable causes (54.4 percent), while those having memberships gave this amount substantially less often.

**Figure 4: Charitable Donations by Number of Memberships in Various Organizations**



Note: Number of memberships determined by yes/no questions regarding membership in a business or professional association, a civic or political association, and a church, synagogue, or other religious or spiritual organization (maximum of three memberships).

Combining the moderate giving-level categories shows that around 45 percent contributed \$100 to \$999 regardless of the number of memberships. However, when analyzing donations of \$1,000 or more, the percentage making such sizeable donations increases as the

number of memberships increases, from 2.7 percent of those with no memberships to over 40 percent of those with two or more memberships. Hence, charitable donation levels are clearly tied to participation in various types of organizations.

Do these patterns hold among the three specific types of organizations? The simple answer is yes. Table 4 also provides a breakdown of charitable donation amounts by membership status in the three types of organizations. Nonmembers of each type of organization gave less than \$100 substantially more often than respective organizational members. Percentages in the \$100 to \$499 and \$500 to \$999 categories are similar between members and nonmembers of each organization. Members gave sizeable donations of \$1,000 or more with greater frequency than nonmembers in each case.

Among various memberships, church members were most likely to give \$100 or less, with 24.7 percent of members donating such an amount, compared to roughly 18 percent among other organizational members (summation from Table 4). Church members also gave the largest donation of \$5,000 or more less frequently than other organizational members.

When comparing among members and nonmembers, however, church membership led to the largest distinction in providing sizeable charitable donations of \$1,000 or more. Exactly 30.2 percent of church members donated \$1,000 or more, but only 7.0 percent of non-church members gave the same amount, a gap of 23.2 percentage points. The gap among members and nonmembers of business or professional associations was 15.9 percentage points and 13.0 percentage points regarding civic or political associations. However, a relatively large number of non-members of these groups gave \$1,000 or more (around 20 percent) compared to the mentioned 7.0 percent among non-church members. Hence, nonmembers of business or professional associations and civic or political associations are somewhat more likely to give a sizeable charitable donation than are nonmembers of churches.

This finding implies that when charities conduct funding appeals attempting to attain sizeable donations, they should try to screen for church members since non-church members rarely give sizeable donations. Time spent filtering mailing lists or asking screening questions in phone interviews may be worth the time and effort required and improve fundraising efficiency.

## **Summary**

Most Omaha-area residents make annual contributions to charitable organizations, with about half of such givers providing 50 percent or more of donations to Omaha-area charities. Relatively small annual charitable giving amounts occur more frequently than relatively large dollar amounts, with those contributing \$500 or more annually reaching a special plateau of charitable giving. Respondents giving \$500 or more differed according to each population subgroup comparison, showing a specific profile for those likely to contribute such an amount.

Local churches/religious organizations and local human or social service organizations receive support from Omaha-area residents most often. Even those not viewing themselves as a member of a church give to local churches/religious organizations fairly often.

Charitable giving is clearly tied to community participation through organizational memberships. Those having memberships contribute to charities more frequently and also give larger dollar amounts. Charitable organizations may improve fundraising success through efforts to identify and cater to members of various professional, civic, or religious organizations while screening out those who are not members of churches, who tend to make charitable donations less often and rarely donate “large” dollar amounts.



**Table 1: Percentage of Respondents at Various Charitable Giving Plateaus by Population Characteristics**

Plateau	Overall	Race		Gender		Marital Status		Home Tenure	
		White	Non-White	Male	Female	Married	Not Married	Renter	Owner
Contributes annually to charitable causes	85.5	86.4	75.6 *	87.7	83.3	92.4	73.0 *	65.7	90.9 *
Contributes \$500 or more annually to charitable causes**	37.1	39.1	18.1 *	44.5	30.3 *	46.7	20.0 *	10.0	45.3 *
50 percent or more of total annual contributions go to support charities in the Omaha area**	51.0	53.0	30.2 *	46.5	55.5 *	50.2	53.1	51.0	51.4

Plateau	Age			Income		Education		
	19-34	35-64	65+	Under \$40,000	\$40,000 and Over	High School Diploma or less	Some College (less than 4 years)	Bachelor Degree or more
Contributes annually to charitable causes	69.6	92.5	94.0 *	73.5	90.4 *	74.4	85.8	92.3 *
Contributes \$500 or more annually to charitable causes**	20.0	47.9	38.1 *	11.6	48.6 *	21.2	28.4	54.6 *
50 percent or more of total annual contributions go to support charities in the Omaha area**	47.1	53.9	46.0	50.0	51.7	36.0	53.3	57.1 *

\* Differences across subpopulations are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level of significance.

\*\* Question only asked of those respondents who indicated they contributed annually to charitable causes.

**Table 2: Percentage of Respondents at Various Charitable Giving Levels**

Dollar Amount	Among Givers to Charities	Among All Respondents
Did not give to charities*	N/A	15.6
Less than \$100	20.3	17.2
\$100 to \$499	35.7	30.1
\$500 to \$999	17.1	14.5
\$1,000 to \$2,499	13.7	11.5
\$2,500 to \$4,999	6.5	5.5
\$5,000 or more	6.7	5.6

\* The true percentage of all respondents that did not give to charities is 14.5 percent. The 15.6 percent shown reflects non-response to the level of giving question.

**Table 3: Percentage of Respondents Giving to Charitable Causes by Number of Memberships in Various Organizations and Three Specific Memberships**

Three separate questions asked about being a member in "a business or professional association", "a civic or political association", and "a local church, synagogue, or other religious or spiritual organization". Thus, a respondent could have a maximum of three different memberships.

Figures provided are for all respondents; includes both those respondents who did and did not give to charities.

Item	Overall	Number of Memberships**			Member of ...					
		None	Exactly One	Two or More	Business or professional association		Civic or political association		Church, synagogue, or religious organization	
					Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Contributes annually to charitable causes	85.5	73.4	86.0	97.3	94.4	82.4 *	90.0	85.0	90.6	74.6 *
Gives \$500 or more annually to charitable causes	37.1	14.7	39.7	56.0	49.0	33.4 *	59.2	35.0 *	45.4	19.6 *
Donated in the last three years to:										
Local church or religious organizations	68.4	31.4	74.5	94.0	79.5	64.5 *	77.2	67.5	86.5	30.0 *
Local community development or improvement organizations	18.9	10.8	20.1	25.0	22.7	17.5	35.2	17.3 *	21.7	12.9 *
Local K - 12 schools	38.9	25.0	39.4	52.9	48.3	35.5 *	47.3	38.1	44.6	27.0 *
Local colleges and universities	24.7	11.9	24.2	40.2	38.9	20.0 *	37.4	23.6 *	29.3	15.2 *
Local health related groups or hospitals	34.2	24.3	33.8	46.3	38.5	32.7	48.1	33.0 *	39.0	24.5 *
Local veterans groups	43.6	38.7	42.7	51.6	50.4	41.6 *	47.3	43.2	45.7	39.2
Local service or fraternal organizations	34.5	25.5	34.8	43.9	41.0	32.0 *	56.0	32.4 *	37.3	28.5 *
Local youth groups	40.7	26.8	41.2	54.7	46.3	38.7	65.4	38.4 *	46.9	27.8 *
Local human or social service organizations	55.5	40.0	57.0	68.6	62.4	53.2 *	71.5	53.9 *	61.3	43.2 *
Local arts and culture groups	18.6	11.4	19.9	23.3	26.0	16.2 *	24.3	18.2	20.5	14.9 *

\* Difference is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level of significance.

\*\* Each difference among the number of memberships is significant at the  $p < .05$  level of significance.

**Table 4: Percentage of Respondents Giving Select Donations to Charitable Causes by Number of Memberships in Various Organizations and Three Specific Memberships**

Three separate questions asked about being a member in "a business or professional association", "a civic or political association", and "a local church, synagogue, or other religious or spiritual organization". Thus, a respondent could have a maximum of three different memberships.

Figures provided are for all respondents; includes both those respondents who did and did not give to charities.

Annual Contribution Level	Overall	Number of Memberships			Member of ...					
		None	Exactly One	Two or More	Business or professional association		Civic or political association		Church, synagogue, or religious organization	
					Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Did not contribute to charitable causes*	15.7	28.2	15.1	3.1	6.0	18.8	10.9	16.0	10.3	26.9
Less than \$100	17.2	26.5	15.6	10.6	12.5	18.8	6.3	18.2	14.4	22.7
\$100 to \$499	30.0	30.4	29.9	30.0	32.6	29.0	23.4	30.8	29.8	30.6
\$500 to \$999	14.5	12.2	15.1	15.6	14.1	14.7	25.0	13.5	15.2	12.8
\$1,000 to \$2,499	11.5	1.7	14.1	16.3	14.7	10.6	17.2	11.0	15.2	4.1
\$2,500 to \$4,999	5.5	1.1	5.9	9.4	8.7	4.5	4.7	5.4	7.3	1.7
\$5,000 or more	5.6	0.0	4.4	15.0	11.4	3.8	12.5	5.0	7.7	1.2

Numbers may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

\* The true percentage of all respondents that did not give to charities is 14.5 percent. The 15.7 percent shown reflects non-response to the level of giving and membership questions.

<sup>1</sup> Comparisons across racial/ethnic groups are reported as differences between Whites and non-Whites. The number of respondents for each racial group was too small for separate analysis, so the grouping of minorities was required to make accurate comparisons.

<sup>2</sup> The comparison for marital status is among differences between those currently married and those currently not married. Those currently not married include single persons never married, those divorced, and those widowed.

<sup>3</sup> Those who refused to respond or did not know the answer to the lead-in question were not asked any subsequent charitable giving questions.

<sup>4</sup> Does not include membership in a certain political party, only various political groups or associations.

# Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004

## Attitudes and Experiences in Omaha Neighborhoods

By: Gary L. Anderson, Ph.D. Student  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
School of Public Administration

Neighborhoods are a crucial element of any urban landscape (Garrioch & Peel, 2006). From their physical characteristics such as streets, trees, and other landmarks to their social characteristics such as the ability of residents to openly interact with one another at their convenience, neighborhoods impact not only the lives of residents but also others who may be transitioning from one part of a city to the next. As Jane Jacobs (1961) argues, neighborhoods have the capacity to assimilate people into an “intricate sidewalk ballet,” whereby residents participate in highly ritualistic actions (p. 50). Examples include the man who sweeps his porch at night, the woman who cautiously watches her children as they depart for school each morning, or the traffic cop who routinely issues parking tickets to abandoned vehicles. It is these “city rhythms” that provide insight into how people interact with each other and their environment (Massey, Allen, & Pile, 1999).

Jacobs’ meticulously documented observations of sidewalk life in New York City, in conjunction with Massey, Allen, and Pile’s conceptualization of city rhythms, could easily apply to other cities and their corresponding neighborhoods throughout the United States. In this regard, the Omaha metropolitan area is a logical community of interest. Expanding on a similar report that was written in 1993, the forthcoming analysis investigates the attitudes of residents toward their neighborhoods in 2004. In particular, emphasis is placed on neighborhood connections in the form of locational attachment and personal linkages to family and friends. Additionally, individual relationships and perceptions of residential service importance and satisfaction, along with perceptions of neighborhood change and stability, are evaluated. As with the 1993 report, the 2004 report attempts to answer the fundamental question of how Omahans view their neighborhoods and corresponding community.

Data for this report are drawn from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 conducted between April 8 and April 27, 2004 (See the report *Survey Methodology* for a description of the survey approach.). 806 respondents from Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, Cass, and Saunders counties were selected using a random digit dialing design, which affords researchers the opportunity to draw on both listed and unlisted telephone numbers. Of the 806 surveyed respondents, only residents of Douglas and Sarpy counties (a total of 728 respondents) are considered for most of this report. To acquire a more representative sample in terms of the general population, and hence correct for sampling error, the data are weighted according to age and gender.

## **Neighborhood Connections**

At the societal level, many scholars stipulate that a decline in the overall character of personal relationships has contributed to rampant individualism and isolationist tendencies. In particular, it is suggested that such tendencies extend to neighborhoods, as most of us do not live in “tight-knit ethnic urban enclaves” (Palen, 2005, p. 163). Despite the myriad threats to neighborhood cohesion, residents may still engage in meaningful discourse. Relatives and friends who live in the same neighborhood, for instance, may bolster neighborhood bonding efforts due to their close proximity. Likewise, those suffering from limited mobility (e.g., the elderly and young mothers) may also form close relationships with nearby residents. For these people, functional interdependence is of the utmost importance (Palen, 2005). This section subsequently puts neighborhood connections into context via neighborhood identification, neighborhoods and families, and neighborhoods and friends.

### ***Neighborhood Identification***

Neighborhood identification is the minimal connection to an area reported by residents with respect to where they grew up or where they currently live. In this regard, 78.5 percent of the respondents were able to report the name of their respective neighborhood or subdivision. Breaking it down by race, of the non-whites (11.6 percent overall), 74.7 percent were able to identify their neighborhood or subdivision. Of the whites (88.4 percent overall), 79.2 percent were able to identify their neighborhood or subdivision. In terms of income (for all adults in the household), 30.5 percent of respondents who could identify their neighborhood or subdivision reported a total income of less than \$40,000 and 69.5 percent reported a total income greater than \$40,000. Overall, the survey results suggest that most respondents have established at least a minimal connection with their neighborhood in terms of basic name recognition.

### ***Neighborhoods & Families***

A second method of assessing personal linkages to neighborhoods is through family ties. As Palen (2005) contends, stronger family ties to a neighborhood may influence the degree of individual attachment.

Respondents were asked if they grew up in the neighborhood where they currently live or if they grew up in that specific part of town. Of those surveyed, 86.4 percent reported not growing up in their current neighborhood. And, for those who reported not growing up in their current neighborhood, 71.5 percent indicated not growing up in that specific part of town. This demonstrates that the vast majority of residents have, at some point, become physically detached from their childhood neighborhood or area of upbringing.

When considering race, 35.1 percent of non-whites reported growing up in their current neighborhood or in that specific part of town, while 24.7 percent of whites reported growing up in their current neighborhood or in that specific part of town. This indicates (although by a small percentage) that whites are more likely than non-whites to be new to their current neighborhood.

With respect to income, 38.5 percent of those who grew up in the neighborhood earned less than \$40,000 dollars while the same figure among those not growing up in the neighborhood was 31.0 percent, a 7.5 percentage point difference. Similar results are observed for respondents who reported growing up in a specific part of town. More than one-third of the respondents who grew up in the part of town where they currently reside (36.2 percent) earned less than \$40,000 versus 31.3 percent among new residents. Overall, the results seem to suggest a correlation between living in the same neighborhood or part of town in which one grew up and a household's total reported earnings.

***Neighborhoods & Friends***

It has been suggested that if more friends live in a neighborhood then stronger personal linkages may become manifest. In this survey, respondents were asked if most of their friends live in their neighborhood or if they live farther away. A majority (64.8 percent) said that most of their friends were likely to live farther away while 19.7 percent said that some of their friends live in the neighborhood and some do not. Only 15.5 percent of the respondents indicated that most of their friends live in the neighborhood. The respective percentages for race and the location of friends (Table 1) and income and the location of friends (Table 2) can be observed below. Overall, the findings suggest that neighborhood-based friendship linkages in the Omaha area are minimal at best.

**Table 1. Friends In Neighborhood By Race**

	White (percent)	Non-White (percent)	All Races (percent)
Most friends live in neighborhood	15.2	17.3	15.5
Some friends live in neighborhood	19.6	21.0	19.7
Most friends live outside of neighborhood	<u>65.2</u>	<u>61.7</u>	<u>64.8</u>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 2. Friends In Neighborhood By Income**

	Income < \$40,000 (percent)	Income > \$40,000 (percent)	All Incomes (percent)
Most friends live in neighborhood	18.8	13.6	15.2
Some friends live in neighborhood	17.4	21.2	20.0
Most friends live outside of neighborhood	<u>63.8</u>	<u>65.2</u>	<u>64.8</u>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

## **Perceptions of Residential Service Satisfaction**

Residential service satisfaction is another important concept that many scholars have attempted to address (Fitzgerald & Durant, 1980; DeHoog, Lowery, & Lyons, 1990; Swindell & Kelly, 2005; Kearney, 2006; Donahue & Miller, 2006; Devereaux & Weisbrod, 2006; Funk, Allan, & Chappell, 2007). This section examines service satisfaction in light of three particular areas: public safety, daily needs, and neighborhoods.

### ***Public Safety Satisfaction***

Public safety satisfaction is comprised of three elements: emergency rescue services, police protection, and fire protection. With respect to emergency rescue services, the vast majority of respondents indicated that these services are very important (95.4 percent). When considering satisfaction levels for emergency rescue services, the overwhelming majority were pleased with how these services were delivered (70.2 percent were very satisfied and 19.4 percent were somewhat satisfied). For police protection, 91.9 percent of the respondents stated it is important. As with emergency rescue services, most respondents thought that police protection services were adequately provided (53.0 percent were very satisfied and 36.9 percent were somewhat satisfied). Finally, for fire protection, 96.8 percent of the respondents indicated that such protection is very important. Accordingly, 74.1 percent were very satisfied, 18.5 percent were somewhat satisfied, 1.8 percent were somewhat dissatisfied, and only 0.8 percent were very dissatisfied. As these percentages confirm, residents seem to be content with how public safety services have been delivered.

In terms of public safety, it is interesting to note that there is a statistically significant relationship between police satisfaction and individual perceptions of neighbors' interest in problems ( $R = .163$  significant at  $\alpha = .01$ ) and fire satisfaction and individual perceptions of neighbors' interest in problems ( $R = .117$  significant at  $\alpha =$

.01). These findings suggest that, if there is a perception that neighbors are interested in problems, then satisfaction with police and fire services is more likely to be reported. A further examination of police and fire satisfaction by race, income, and location reveals that, of these three demographic variables, only location is a statistically significant factor.

**Table 3. Police Satisfaction By Race, Income, & Location**

Values stated as percentages.

	Non-White	White	Under \$40,000	Over \$40,000	East of 72 <sup>nd</sup> Street	West of 72 <sup>nd</sup> Street
Very Satisfied	45.7	54.4	53.2	53.6	51.2	53.8
Somewhat Satisfied	38.3	37.6	37	37.5	38.4	37.5
Somewhat Dissatisfied	7.4	4.7	4.2	5.5	4.6	4.9
Very Dissatisfied	<u>8.6</u>	<u>3.4</u>	<u>5.6</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>5.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>
Total*	100.0	100.1	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.1

\*Totals may not add to 100.0 percent due to rounding.

**Table 4. Fire Satisfaction By Race, Income, & Location**

Values stated as percentages.

	Non-White	White	Under \$40,000	Over \$40,000	East of 72 <sup>nd</sup> Street	West of 72 <sup>nd</sup> Street
Very Satisfied	70.7	79.0	78.1	78.3	73.1	81.5
Somewhat Satisfied	25.6	18.3	19.0	18.9	22.2	17.4
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2.4	1.8	1.9	2.1	3.5	0.5
Very Dissatisfied	<u>1.2</u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>0.7</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>0.5</u>
Total*	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.1	99.9

\*Totals may not add to 100.0 percent due to rounding.



### ***Daily Needs Satisfaction***

Daily needs include public transportation, garbage collection, and shopping facilities. With regard to public transportation, only one-third of the respondents considered this need to be very important. 55.8 percent were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, 9.5 percent were somewhat dissatisfied, and 10.2 percent were very dissatisfied. 24.5 percent of the respondents either refused to answer the question or were uncertain. This refusal or uncertainty likely indicates that some respondents are not utilizing public transportation to the point that they are able to effectively rate it. Garbage collection was rated very important by 87.5 percent of the respondents. 89.0 percent were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, 6.6 percent were somewhat dissatisfied, and 3.4 percent were very dissatisfied. Shopping facilities for daily needs were rated very important by 68.3 percent of the respondents with 92.1 percent of the respondents reporting that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied, 5.1 percent reporting that they were somewhat dissatisfied, and 2.4 percent stating that they are very dissatisfied. In all, the vast majority of respondents seem to be happy with how daily needs services have been provided.

### ***Neighborhood Satisfaction***

Assessing neighborhood satisfaction entails an examination of seven items: crime control, housing code enforcement, traffic enforcement, litter control, maintenance of sidewalks and public areas, graffiti cleanup, and noise. When considering crime control, 93.0 percent of respondents believed that it is very important. In terms of overall satisfaction, nearly four-fifths of the respondents (81.1 percent) were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with crime control efforts. In this light, the analysis suggests that there may be a link between membership in neighborhood associations and feelings of neighborhood safety ( $R = .144$  significant at  $\alpha = .05$ ). That is, if a person belongs to a neighborhood association he or she is more likely to report feeling safe. The percentage breakdowns for the remaining six items of neighborhood importance and satisfaction are listed below.

**Table 5. Neighborhood Service Importance**

Values stated as percentages.

	Housing Code Enforcement	Traffic Enforcement	Litter Control	Sidewalk & Public Area Maintenance	Graffiti Cleanup	Noise
Very Important	54.0	69.9	71.7	68.0	69.4	56.3
Somewhat Important	28.6	22.0	24.0	26.7	16.0	28.1
Slightly Important	4.0	2.8	1.9	1.9	2.3	5.6
Not Important	<u>6.4</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>7.1</u>
Total*	93.0	99.3	99.0	98.2	92.9	97.1

\* Totals may not add to 100.0 percent because some residents refused to respond or didn't know.

**Table 6. Neighborhood Service Satisfaction**

Values stated as percentages.

	Housing Code Enforcement	Traffic Enforcement	Litter Control	Sidewalk & Public Area Maintenance	Graffiti Cleanup	Noise
Very Satisfied	28.5	27.3	35.8	31.0	46.6	41.6
Somewhat Satisfied	46.3	42.0	39.5	48.4	29.8	38.0
Somewhat Dissatisfied	9.7	16.7	13.6	12.4	5.5	8.1
Very Dissatisfied	<u>5.3</u>	<u>13.2</u>	<u>9.4</u>	<u>6.0</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>8.8</u>
Total*	89.8	99.2	98.3	97.8	86.1	96.5

\* Totals may not add to 100.0 percent because some residents refused to respond or didn't know.

## **Neighborhood Change & Stability**

Perceptions of neighborhood change and stability are often tied to growth and economic development efforts. In addressing the sustainability of neighborhood life, various authors contend that growth and development, when poorly administered, may lead to a loss of neighborhood identity (Vale & Vale, 1996; Sternberg, 2000). On the other hand, if done properly, growth and development can stimulate and reinforce spatial identity. This section examines residents' conceptions of neighborhood stability and change in light of how they perceive growth and economic development efforts in the Omaha area.

### ***Perceptions of Change & Stability***

Survey respondents were asked if they believe that their neighborhood would remain as it is or change in some way over the next five years. While 48.5 percent indicated that their neighborhood would likely remain the same, the other half (51.5 percent) acknowledged that a change is inevitable. When asked to describe the type of neighborhood change, 50.2 percent of those who responded to a follow-up question stated that the neighborhood would most likely improve, 25.0 percent thought that the neighborhood would decline, and 26.8 percent were uncertain as to how the neighborhood would change.

In terms of race, most non-white respondents concluded that their neighborhood would improve for the better (61.5 percent of non-whites vs. 48.1 percent of whites), whereas whites were more uncertain as to how their neighborhood would change (27.1 percent of whites were uncertain vs. 13.5 percent of non-whites). As far as neighborhood perceptions are concerned, it might be speculated that non-whites currently live in neighborhoods that are not as well maintained as those neighborhoods in which whites live. Thus, one possible argument is that, given the neighborhood's condition, non-whites are more likely to see additional opportunity for improvement. Alternatively, visible signs of progress (e.g., the award of neighborhood grant money, more resident involvement in neighborhood association activities, etc.) may be responsible for the difference in attitudes among non-whites and whites. In either case, however, this is certainly a finding that merits some additional analysis. Finally, with regard to projected neighborhood change and other demographic variables, for household income there were no significant differences between those who reported earning more than \$40,000 and those who reported earning less than \$40,000 in a given year. And, in terms of location, there were no significant differences when comparing residents east of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street with residents west of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street.

**Table 7. Neighborhood Change By Race, Income, & Location**

	Non-White (percent)	White (percent)	Under \$40,000 (percent)	Over \$40,000 (percent)	East of 72nd (percent)	West of 72nd (percent)
Improve	61.5	48.1	51.2	50.3	50.3	50.1
Decline	25.0	24.8	24.0	24.6	26.0	25.1
Uncertain	<u>13.5</u>	<u>27.1</u>	<u>24.8</u>	<u>25.1</u>	<u>23.8</u>	<u>24.8</u>
Total*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0

\*Totals may not add to 100.0 percent due to rounding.

When questioned specifically about growth, respondents generally acknowledged that growth in any part of the Greater Omaha area benefits the entire metropolitan area. More than three-fourths of the respondents (78.2 percent) agreed that growth is beneficial (22.2 percent strongly agreed and 56.0 percent agreed) while 19.1 percent disagreed (3.1 percent strongly disagreed and 16.0 percent disagreed). When asked whether development and zoning policies used by the City of Omaha were also good for other communities in the metropolitan area, a majority of respondents affirmed this point (15.7 percent strongly agreed and 52.9 percent agreed). Not surprisingly, there appears to be a significant relationship between growth as a benefit to the entire metropolitan area and attitudes toward development and zoning policies ( $R = .256$  significant at  $\alpha = .01$ ).

When explicitly asked about sprawl, slightly more than half of the respondents agreed (35.8 percent) or strongly agreed (19.1 percent) that ex-urban or fringe areas of Omaha are developing too rapidly and contributing to sprawl-related problems. It is, however, surprising to note the apparent contradiction between positive perceptions of growth and perceptions of sprawl-related problems. For example, a Chi-Square analysis reveals that there is a significant relationship between the notion that growth in one area benefits the entire metropolitan area and the notion that fringe areas are expanding too rapidly, thereby contributing to sprawl-related problems. In examining the results, one could make the argument that when people believe too much sprawl has occurred they are *less* likely to report that growth is a benefit to the entire metropolitan area.

**Table 8. X<sup>2</sup> For Growth As A Benefit To Entire Metro Area & Too Much Sprawl**

	Value	Degrees of Freedom	Asymptotic Significance
Pearson X <sup>2</sup>	81.021	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	72.629	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.034	1	.000
Valid Cases	659		

**Table 9. Symmetric Measures: Growth As A Benefit To Entire Metro Area & Too Much Sprawl**

	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error	Approximate T	Approximate Significance
Pearson's R	-.191	.043	-4.991	.000
Spearman Correlation	-.172	.042	-4.482	.000
Valid Cases	659			

Finally, with respect to development and diverse older neighborhoods, respondents overwhelmingly concluded that such neighborhoods are indeed beneficial to the metropolitan area (35.8 percent strongly agreed and 55.7 percent agreed). For the most part, it is surmised that respondents seem to value community stability while at the same time acknowledging that change in the form of growth and economic development cannot and, in some cases, should not be avoided.

## Summary

This report used information from the Omaha Conditions Survey: 2004 to examine residential attitudes pertaining to neighborhoods, specifically, and the Omaha community, generally. The analysis provides insight into a wide array of topics including neighborhood and community identification, perceptions of service satisfaction, and perceptions of economic growth and development. A brief summary of the findings gleaned from this report include the following:

- Most respondents are able to identify the neighborhood or area in which they live. This demonstrates a basic sense of neighborhood or community attachment.
- Most respondents report that they did not grow up in their current neighborhood (or part of town) and that most of their friends live farther away (i.e., outside of their neighborhood).
- Respondents are generally satisfied with the services that they receive. Perceptions of neighbors' interest in problems are positively correlated with reported police and fire satisfaction levels. It is further confirmed that neighborhood association membership is positively correlated with satisfaction with police services.
- Of all the daily needs, public transportation is considered to be the least important, with only 33.5 percent saying that it is important.
- With regard to neighborhood satisfaction, 93.0 percent believe that crime control is very important, and there appears to be a significant link between membership in neighborhood associations and feelings of security.
- A slight majority of respondents (51.5 percent) believes that neighborhood change is inevitable. Most respondents also believe that their particular neighborhood will improve over a five-year period.
- Respondents think that growth in any part of the Greater Omaha area benefits the entire metropolitan area.
- 54.9 percent believe that ex-urban and fringe areas are expanding too rapidly and thereby contributing to sprawl-related problems.
- Older neighborhoods are still seen as beneficial to the metropolitan area.

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