

*2015 City of Columbia  
DirectionFinder® Survey*

**Findings Report**

*Submitted to*

*The City of Columbia, MO*



725 W. Frontier Circle

Olathe, KS 66061

(913) 829- 1215

February 2016

# Contents

## **Findings Report**

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	i
<b>Section 1: Charts and Graphs with Trends</b> .....	1
<b>Section 2: Benchmarking Data</b> .....	32
<b>Section 3: Importance-Satisfaction Analysis</b> .....	42
<b>Section 4: Tabular Data</b> .....	57
<b>Section 5: Survey Instrument</b> .....	105
<b>Section 6: Focus Group Summary Report</b> .....	114

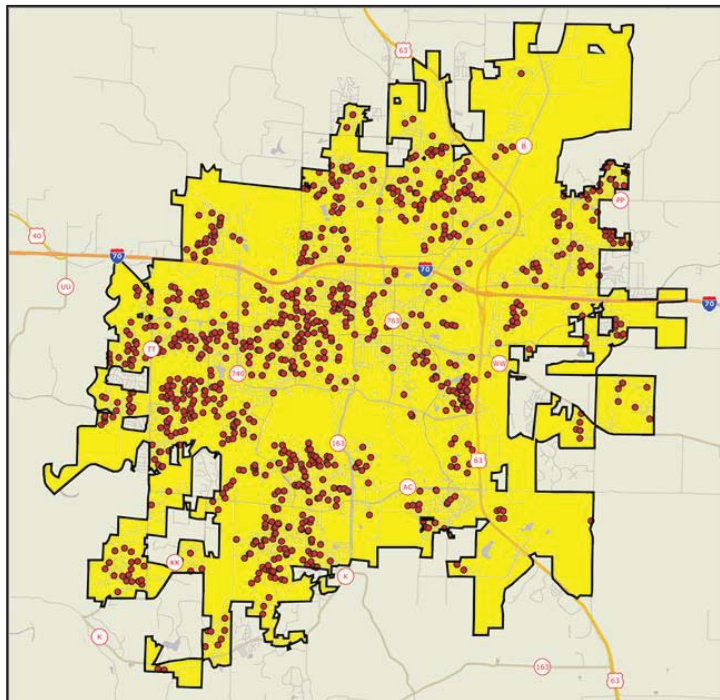
# 2015 City of Columbia DirectionFinder<sup>®</sup> Survey Executive Summary

## Overview and Methodology

The City of Columbia conducted its seventh *DirectionFinder* survey during the winter of 2015. The City's first *DirectionFinder* survey was conducted in the spring of 2003. The purpose of this survey was to assist the City in its on-going effort to identify and respond to resident concerns while also assessing citizen satisfaction with the delivery of major city services, helping determine priorities for the community and measuring strategic performance.

The survey packet, which included a cover letter, the seven-page survey and a postage paid return envelope, was mailed to a random sample of households in the City of Columbia. The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and encouraged residents to return their surveys via mail or online. Approximately 10 days after the surveys were mailed, residents who received the survey were also contacted by phone. Those who indicated that they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone. Of the households that received a survey, a total of 1,016 completed the survey.

The results for the random sample of 1,016 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 3.0%. There were no statistically significant differences in the results of the survey based on the method of administration (phone vs. mail vs. online). In order to better understand how well services are being delivered by the city, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. The map to the right shows the physical distribution of survey respondents based on the locations of their homes.



In addition to the Executive Summary, this report contains:

- charts depicting the overall results of the survey (Section 1)
- benchmarking data that shows how the survey results for Columbia compared to other communities (Section 2)
- importance satisfaction analysis (Section 3)
- tabular data for all questions on the survey (Section 4)
- a copy of the survey instrument (Section 5)
- a focus group summary report (Section 6)

**Interpretation of “Don’t Know” Responses.** The percentage of persons who provide “don’t know” responses is important because it often reflects the level of utilization of city services. For graphical purposes, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded to facilitate valid comparisons with data from previous years. The percentage of “don’t know” responses for each question is provided in the Tabular Data Section of this report. When the “don’t know” responses have been excluded, the text of this report will indicate that the responses have been excluded with the phrase “*who had an opinion.*”

### **Perceptions of Columbia**

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) with the overall quality of life in the City; 54% of residents were satisfied with the overall feeling of safety in the City and 55% were satisfied with the overall value received for City taxes and fees.

### **Overall Satisfaction with City Services**

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the residents surveyed, *who had an opinion*, were satisfied (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) with the overall quality of services provided by the City; 17% were neutral and only 6% of residents were dissatisfied with the overall quality of City services. The major categories of City services with the highest satisfaction ratings, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: the quality of City parks and recreation programs/facilities (88%), solid waste services (86%), City utility services (85%), and customer service received from City employees (72%). Residents were least satisfied with the condition of City streets (32%).

### **Overall Priorities**

The major categories of City services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide were: 1) public safety services, 2) City utility services (water, electric and sewer), 3) the condition of City streets and 4) solid waste services. These were also rated as the top four most important City services in the 2014 survey.

## Satisfaction by Specific City Services

- **Public Safety Services.** The public safety services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: the overall quality of City fire protection (87%) and how quickly fire department personnel respond to emergencies (86%). The public safety services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide were: 1) crime prevention, 2) how quickly police respond to emergencies and 3) how quickly fire department personnel respond to emergencies.
- **Parks and Recreation.** The parks and recreation services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: the quality of City parks (91%), the quality of walking and biking trails in the City (90%) and the quality of outdoor athletic fields (83%). The parks and recreation services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide were: 1) the quality of City parks and 2) the quality of walking and biking trails in the City.
- **Streets and Sidewalks.** The streets and sidewalks services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: snow removal on major City streets (65%), the availability of sidewalks in the city (48%), and City street cleaning services (48%). The street and sidewalk services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide were: 1) City maintenance and repair services for major City streets, 2) snow removal on major City streets and 3) City maintenance and repair services for neighborhood streets.
- **Code Enforcement and Neighborhood Services.** The code enforcement and neighborhood services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: maintenance of residential property (56%), maintenance of business property (53%), and the enforcement of residential building codes (52%). The code enforcement and neighborhood services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide were: 1) the clean-up of trash and litter, 2) the maintenance of residential property, and 3) the enforcement of residential building codes.
- **City Communication.** Residents were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements related to City communication. The statements that residents agreed with most, based upon the combined percentage of residents who “strongly agree” or “agree” among those *who had an opinion*, were: the City’s website provides useful information (60%), the City government is a trusted source of

## 2015 City of Columbia DirectionFinder Survey: Findings Report

information (64%) and the City newsletter provides useful information (65%).

- **City Customer Service.** Residents were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements related to their interactions with City employees during the past year. The statements that residents agreed with most, based upon the combined percentage of residents who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” among those *who had an opinion*, were: the City employee who helped me was courteous and polite (82%), the hours that City employees were available met my needs (80%) and City employees were knowledgeable (71%).
- **Utility Services.** Residents were generally satisfied with the quality of utility services provided by the City; over 80% of the residents surveyed were satisfied with all six of the utility services rated. The utility services that residents were most satisfied with, based upon the combined percentage of residents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” among those *who had an opinion*, were: residential trash collection service (93%), curbside recycling (92%) and City water service (91%).

### Other Findings

- Ninety-five percent (95%) of residents felt safe walking in their neighborhood during the day; 84% felt safe in Downtown Columbia during the day; and 64% felt safe walking in their neighborhood at night. When asked about their likelihood of encountering various situations in the City, 42% felt they would be likely to hear gun shots, and 37% indicated they would be likely to be a victim of property crime.
- Eighty-two percent (82%) of residents “strongly agree” or “agree” that Columbia is a great place to live, work, learn and play. Other statements in which residents either “strongly agree” or “agree” include: I earn a wage that allows me to meet basic needs (79%), Columbia is a place where I can thrive (74%), and Columbia has jobs for which I am qualified (70%).
- The top sources where residents receive information about City issues, services and events were: the City newsletter that comes with the utility bill (72%), the television news (52%), the local newspaper (51%), and the radio (31%).
- Forty-three percent (43%) of residents have called or visited the City with a question, problem, or complaint during the past year; of the 43% that have contacted the City with a question, problem, or complaint, 39% contacted the City to report a problem, 20% contacted the City to get information, and 16% contacted the City to request service.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of residents go to a doctor’s office when they are sick or need advice about their health; 22% go to an urgent care center.

- Ninety-four percent (94%) of residents were able to get medical care when they needed it during the past 12 months.
- Eighty-seven percent (87%) of residents were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the condition of housing in the City of Columbia. Other areas where residents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” include: overall appearance of neighborhoods (87%), overall quality of services in neighborhoods (76%), and neighborhood parks (73%).
- Eighty-five percent (85%) of residents surveyed visited a City park during the past year; 52% have visited a community recreation center, and 38% have used the Columbia Airport.

### **Trends in Satisfaction Ratings**

Overall satisfaction with the quality of City services decreased from 81% in 2014 to 77% in 2015. There were significant changes (changes of 4% or more) in satisfaction ratings in several of the specific City services that were rated. The most significant changes in satisfaction ratings from 2014 to 2015 are listed below:

#### **Most Significant Increases from 2014 to 2015:**

- Information from the City government is clear/accurate and meets my needs (+8%)
- It’s easy to get the information I need from City government (+7%)
- Satisfaction with City water, electric, and sewer services (+4%)
- Quality of walking/biking trails in the City (+4%)
- Quality of outdoor athletic fields (+4%)
- Availability of information on City parks and recreation programs (+4%)
- The City government is a trusted source of information (+4%)

#### **Most Significant Decreases from 2014 to 2015:**

- City maintenance and repair services for major City streets (-13%)
- Stormwater runoff/stormwater management system (-6%)
- Condition of City sidewalks (-6%)
- How quickly police respond to emergencies (-6%)
- Public safety services provided by the City (-5%)
- City maintenance and repair services for neighborhood streets (-5%)
- Condition of pavement markings (-5%)
- Police efforts to prevent crime (-5%)
- Clean-up of trash and litter (-5%)

## Focus Groups

ETC Institute conducted two focus groups with residents who live in the City of Columbia. The focus groups were conducted as a follow-up to the *DirectionFinder* survey that ETC administered for the City during the winter of 2015. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather more in-depth information from residents regarding issues related to public safety services provided by the City.

The focus groups were held at 5:30pm and 7:30pm on April 7<sup>th</sup> at the Activity and Recreation Center. Focus group participants were selected at random from a list of households who had previously completed a 2015 *DirectionFinder* survey for the City. The focus group was designed to gather detailed feedback about the following issues:

- 1) General Perceptions of Public Safety Services
- 2) Perceptions of Police Services
- 3) Perceptions of Safety in Columbia
- 4) Perceptions of Fire Services
- 5) Planning for Growth
- 6) Final Comments

A total of 19 residents attended the focus groups. The focus groups were each 90 minutes long and were moderated by a representative from ETC Institute.

A summary of the topics and major findings of the focus group are provided in Section 6 of this report.