

Executive Summary

Summary of Survey Methods

The 2026 City of Fort Collins Community Survey provided residents with the opportunity to rate the quality of life in Fort Collins, as well as the quality-of-service delivery and overall workings of local government. The survey also permitted residents to provide feedback on parks and recreation satisfaction and needs, and to share their priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

Surveys were mailed to 4,400 randomly selected resident households in April 2026. A total of 537 surveys were completed, yielding a response rate of 13%. In addition to the scientific survey of randomly selected households, a link to an online, community-wide, open participation survey was publicized through various community channels. This open participation survey was identical to the scientific survey and open to all Fort Collins residents. A total of 363 online surveys were completed, yielding a total count of 900 survey responses.

Survey results were weighted so that respondent gender, age, housing type (attached or detached), housing tenure (rent or own), race, and council district were represented in proportions reflective of the entire adult population of the city. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points around any given percentage point reported for all survey respondents.

Because Fort Collins has administered resident surveys before, some comparisons could be made between 2026 responses and those from previous survey iterations. The body of the report presents data from 2013 to 2026.

Fort Collins also elected to have its results compared to those of other jurisdictions across the nation and in the Front Range of Colorado. Comparisons are made possible through a national benchmark database created and maintained by Polco. This database contains resident perspectives gathered in resident surveys from over 400 jurisdictions over the past five years.

Key Findings

Residents value living in Fort Collins, while affordability remains a challenge.

- Overall perceptions of quality of life remained exceptionally strong in 2026. Eighty-seven percent of residents rated the quality of life in Fort Collins as very good or good, matching the 2025 result and remaining comparable to both the national and Front Range benchmarks.
- Residents continued to view many aspects of living in Fort Collins favorably as well. About 9 in 10 rated the city as a good place to live, attend college, and raise children. Around 7 in 10 gave positive ratings to the quality of public schools and Fort Collins as a place to retire, while about 6 in 10 viewed the community as welcoming and accepting of people from diverse backgrounds.
- Affordability remained the city's weakest-rated quality-of-life dimension. Fewer than 20% of residents rated the availability of affordable, quality childcare positively, and fewer than 10% gave favorable ratings to the availability of affordable, quality housing.
- Residents also demonstrated a strong commitment to their community. Nearly 9 in 10 said they were likely to recommend Fort Collins as a place to live and expected to remain in the city over the next five years. Both measures were unchanged from 2025 and continue to rank among the highest levels recorded over the past decade.

Residents continue to feel safe throughout Fort Collins.

- Residents' overall sense of safety remained high in 2026. About 9 in 10 respondents rated the overall feeling of safety in Fort Collins as very good or good, unchanged from 2025 and comparable to both the national and Front Range benchmarks.
- Feelings of safety were strongest during the daytime. At least 9 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in their neighborhood, throughout Fort Collins, in downtown, and when visiting recreation facilities during the day. Approximately 8 in 10 also felt safe in parks, natural areas and open spaces, on trails, and in their neighborhood at night.
- Perceptions of safety after dark remained positive, although somewhat lower than daytime ratings. About 7 in 10 residents reported feeling safe in Fort Collins overall and in downtown at night, while about two-thirds felt safe using Transfort/MAX. Compared with 2025, ratings were stable across nearly all locations. The only statistically significant change was a slight decline in perceived safety on trails, though a large majority of residents continued to report feeling safe there.

Active travel leads satisfaction, biking and walking remain highly rated.

- Active transportation continued to receive the strongest ratings in 2026. More than 8 in 10 residents rated the ease of traveling by bicycle as very good or good, making it the highest-rated transportation measure once again. Positive ratings were also common for ease of walking, the Northern Colorado Regional Airport/Shuttle Service, street maintenance, and ease of travel by car, each receiving favorable ratings from at least 6 in 10 respondents. About half of residents also rated downtown parking availability and safety from motor vehicle accidents positively.
- Residents were less satisfied with transportation accessibility and mobility options. About 4 in 10 respondents gave positive ratings to accessibility for people with disabilities, while about 3 in 10 rated the ease of traveling by public transportation, the availability of electric vehicle charging stations, and traffic flow as very good or good.
- Several transportation measures declined compared with 2025. The largest decreases were recorded for ease of traveling by public transportation (down 8 percentage points), accessibility for people with disabilities (down 7 points), availability of electric vehicle charging stations (down 6 points), and both street maintenance and traffic flow (down 5 points each).

Economic ratings remain stable despite ongoing business concerns.

- Fort Collins continued to receive positive ratings as a place to work. About 7 in 10 residents rated the city favorably in this area, a slight decline from 2025. Despite the decrease, Fort Collins remained above the Front Range benchmark and comparable to the national benchmark in this area.
- Residents expressed the most favorable views of healthcare and consumer amenities. Approximately two-thirds rated the availability of quality healthcare, entertainment opportunities, and dining options as very good or good, while about 6 in 10 gave positive ratings to shopping opportunities. By comparison, only one-fourth of respondents rated the availability of job opportunities positively.
- Economic health ratings remained largely stable, with one notable exception. The availability of job opportunities declined by 10 percentage points, from 35% in 2025 to 25% in 2026, representing the lowest rating recorded for this measure over the trend period.
- Business health indicators also reveal mixed confidence among residents. About half of respondents rated the City positively for encouraging a variety of businesses, while roughly one-third offered favorable assessments of efforts to attract new businesses and retain existing ones. Compared with 2025, ratings for attracting new businesses declined further, whereas the other two measures remained stable.

Strong service delivery continues across City operations.

- Residents continued to express strong satisfaction with City services overall. About three-fourths of respondents rated the overall quality of City services as very good or good, a level that has remained remarkably stable since 2018. Fort Collins' overall service rating was comparable to both the national and Front Range benchmarks.
- City utilities continued to earn exceptionally high marks from their customers. Most respondents reported receiving electric (93%) and water (84%) services from Fort Collins Utilities, while about half subscribed to Connexion broadband. Satisfaction with these services remained high, with about 9 in 10 customers giving positive ratings to electric and water services and about 8 in 10 rating Connexion positively.
- Residents who interacted with City employees continued to report positive service experiences. Nearly 9 in 10 rated employees' courtesy as very good or good, while about 8 in 10 gave favorable ratings to employees' promptness, knowledge, and overall service. Approximately three-fourths felt valued during their interaction. Ratings for all aspects of customer service were consistent with those reported in 2025.
- Perceptions of the City's leadership and governance were generally positive, although some areas received more modest ratings. Around two-thirds of residents felt the City respects all community members regardless of background. Approximately 6 in 10 gave favorable ratings to the City's overall direction, commitment to sustainability, efforts to foster a welcoming and inclusive community, efficient delivery of programs and services, and openness to community involvement. Lower ratings, at about 4 in 10, were given to the City's partnership with the community on climate change, its approach to balancing development and growth, its responsiveness to resident input, and its long-term planning for growth.

Survey Background

The City of Fort Collins contracted with Polco to conduct a community-wide resident survey. The primary goal of the survey was to assess the attitudes and opinions of residents by:

- Evaluating city programs and services.
- Determining general perceptions of the quality of life in Fort Collins.
- Comparing survey results to other communities across the nation.
- Establishing trendlines to measure government performance over time.

The City of Fort Collins Community Survey serves as a consumer report card for Fort Collins by providing residents with the opportunity to rate the quality of life in the city, as well as the community's amenities, service delivery and their satisfaction with local government. Residents also provide feedback on what is working well and what is not and communicate their priorities for community planning and resource allocation.

Focus on quality-of-service delivery helps city leaders, staff, and the public to set priorities for budget decisions and lays the groundwork for tracking community opinions about the core responsibilities of the City of Fort Collins government, helping to assure maximum service quality over time.

This type of survey gets at the key services that local government controls to create a quality community. It is akin to private sector customer surveys that are used regularly by many corporations to monitor where there are weaknesses in product or service delivery before customers defect into competition or before other problems from dissatisfied customers arise.

This is the 17th iteration of the City of Fort Collins Community Survey since the baseline study conducted in 2001.

Survey Administration

A postcard was mailed to 4,400 Fort Collins households, selected at random, notifying residents that they had been chosen to participate in the survey. A paper copy of the survey followed in the mail after one week. Both mailings included a web link so that residents could take the survey online, if desired. The survey was also available online in Spanish. All mailing contained instructions in Spanish on how to access the online survey. There were 537 respondents to the mailed questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 13%. In addition to the scientific, random sample, a link to an online "opt-in" survey was publicized through various community channels. This opt-in survey was identical to the scientific survey and open to all Fort Collins residents. A total of 363 online surveys were completed, yielding a total count of 900 survey responses. There were three completed surveys in Spanish. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points around any given percentage for all respondents.

Survey results were weighted so that respondent gender, age, housing type (attached or detached), housing tenure (rent or own), race, and council district were represented in proportions reflective of the entire adult population of the city. More information about the survey methodology can be found in *Appendix G: Survey Methodology*.

How the Results are Reported

For the most part, the full set of frequencies or the “percent positive” are presented in the body and narrative of the report. The percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., “very good” and “good,” “very safe” and “somewhat safe,” “strongly support” and “somewhat support,” etc.).

On many of the questions in the survey, respondents could give an answer of “don’t know.” The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in *Appendix B: Complete Survey Frequencies* and is noted in the body of this report if it is 30% or greater. However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in the body of the report, unless otherwise indicated. In other words, the majority of the tables and graphs in the body of the report display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item.

For some questions, respondents were permitted to select multiple responses. When the total exceeds 100% in a table for a multiple response question, it is because some respondents are counted in multiple categories. When a table for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice rounding values to the nearest whole number.

Precision of Estimates

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” and accompanying “confidence interval” (or margin of error). The margin of error for this survey is generally no greater than plus or minus three percentage points around any given percentage reported for the entire sample (N=900).

Comparison of Results Over Time and by Subgroups

Because this survey was the 17th iteration of the Fort Collins Community Survey, the 2026 results are presented along with past ratings when available. To simplify, the body of the report presents data from 2013 to 2026, when available. The full set of trends can be found in *Appendix F: Comparisons of Survey Results by Year*. Differences between years can be considered “statistically significant” if they are plus or minus three points on the 100-point scale or are plus or minus five percentage points or more around any given percent.

This metric can sometimes be a bit confusing, so it’s worth noting that the average rating is not the percentage of respondents who rated the item as “excellent” or “good.” Instead, it’s an average on a 100-point scale. You can think of it like a United Way fundraising thermometer—the higher the average rating, the closer it is to 100.

Selected survey results were compared by respondent characteristics and council district of residence. The full set of results by demographic characteristics and council districts can be found in *Appendix D: Responses to Selected Survey Questions by Respondent Characteristics*. For each pair of subgroups that has a statistically significant difference, an upper-case letter denoting significance is shown in the category with the larger column proportion.

Comparing Survey Results to Other Communities

Polco's database of comparative resident opinion comprises resident perspectives gathered in resident surveys from approximately 400 communities whose residents evaluated their services. National benchmark comparisons and Front Range benchmark comparisons have been provided when similar questions on the Fort Collins survey are included in Polco's database, and there were at least five communities in which the question was asked.

Where comparisons for quality ratings were available, Fort Collins' results were generally noted as being "higher" than the benchmark, "lower" than the benchmark, or "similar" to the benchmark. In instances where ratings are considerably higher or lower than the benchmark, these ratings have been further demarcated by the attribute of "much," (for example, "much lower" or "much higher"). These labels come from a comparison of Fort Collins' rating to the benchmark where a rating is considered "similar" if it is within the standard margin of error (10 points or less on the 100-point scale); "higher" or "lower" if the difference between Fort Collins' rating and the benchmark is greater than 10 points, but 20 points or less; and "much higher" or "much lower" if the difference between Fort Collins' rating and the benchmark is more than twice the standard margin of error (greater than 20 points). Comparisons for a number of items in the survey are not available in the benchmark database. These items are excluded from the benchmark tables.