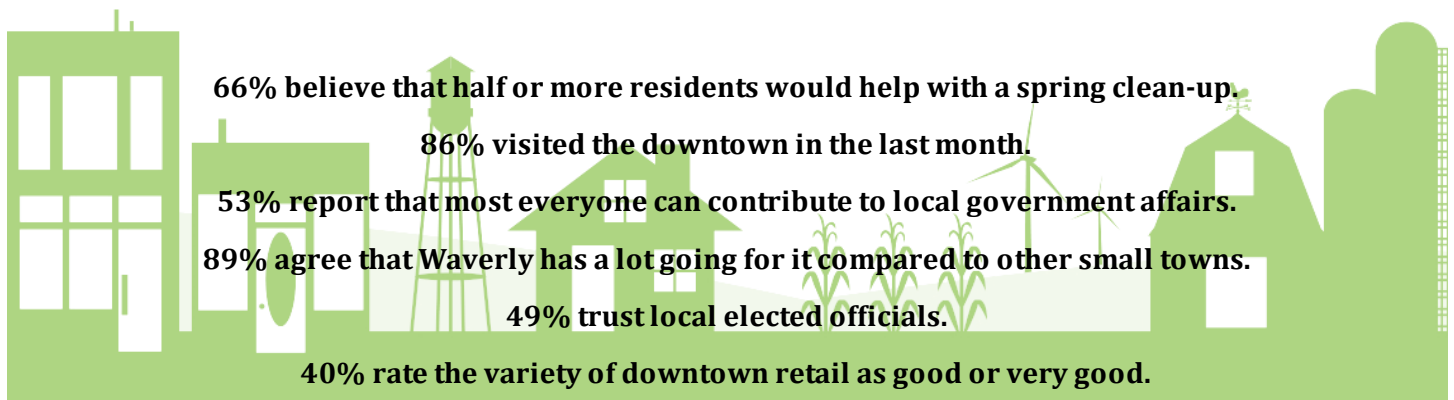


A PROFILE OF WAVERLY FROM 1994 TO 2014

Waverly was one of 99 Iowa small towns randomly selected in 1994 for an Iowa State University study of life in small towns. The study was repeated in 2004 and again in 2014. 150 residents of Waverly were randomly selected in each year to participate in the study. In 2014, 73 residents returned completed surveys. In this report, we show the changes that have occurred in residents' assessment of the quality of life, their description of the social environment, and their level of attachment to and involvement in the community during the past two decades.

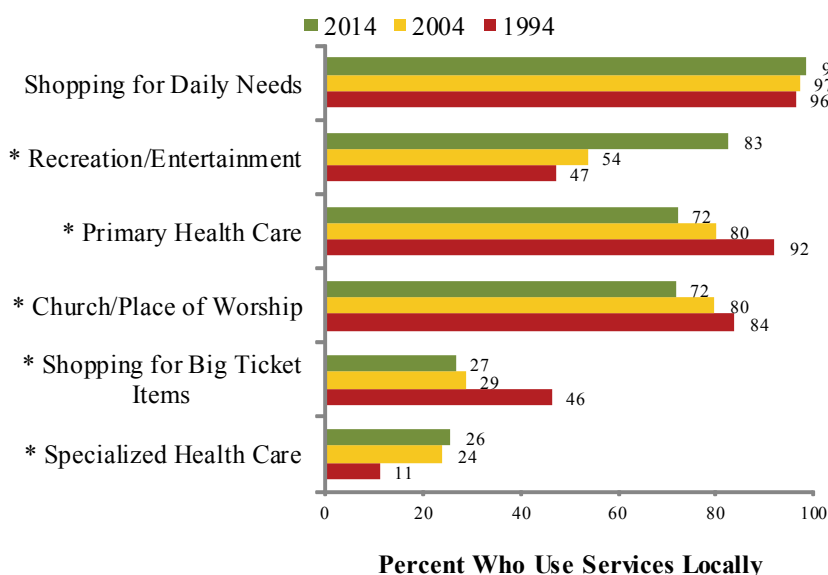
LIFE IN WAVERLY

Waverly is a community of 9,949 located on the Cedar River in northeastern Iowa. Incorporated in 1859, it serves as the county seat of Bremer County. The town boasts a wide variety of recreational opportunities including a community pool, many parks, a community garden, a rail trail, an 18-hole golf course, and an off-leash dog park. Additional services include a public library, civic center, and an area hospital. Wartburg College, a 4-year liberal arts college, is located in Waverly. Respondents to the 2014 survey reported that the top three reasons for their choice to live in Waverly are that it is close to one's job, close to relatives/in-laws, and that they grew up there. These reasons closely match those listed in 1994, except that in 1994 more emphasis was placed on the strong school system than growing up in the area.



LOCAL PATRONAGE PATTERNS

Figure 1

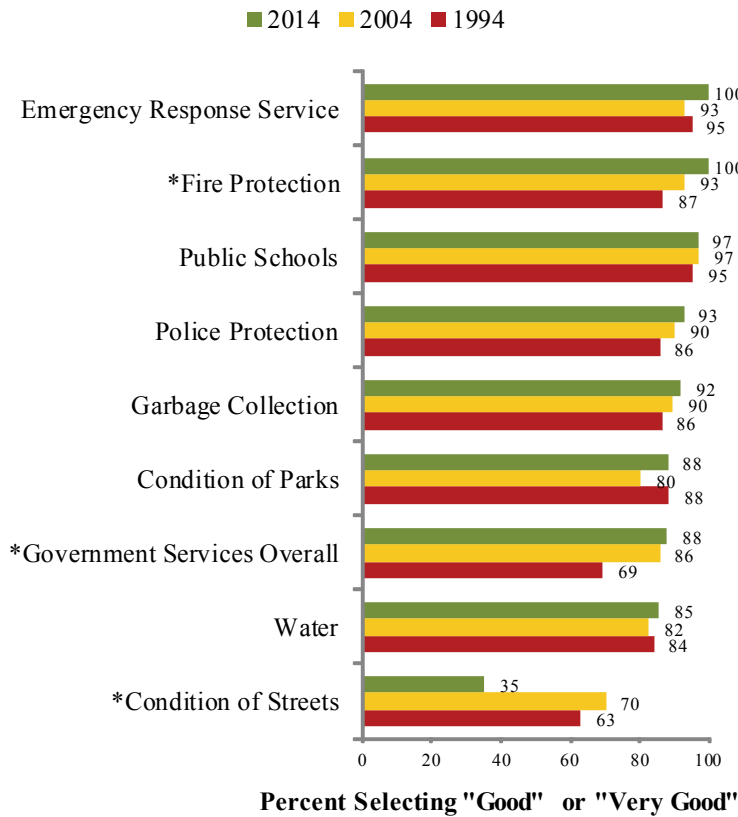


It is a common characteristic of small-town living that one must shop for some goods/services in nearby cities. Waverly is unusual in that in 2014 at least 70 percent of residents used local establishments for four of the six services shown in Figure 1. Nevertheless, fewer residents utilized local facilities for shopping big ticket items, worship services, and primary health care in 2014 as compared with 1994. Significantly more residents reported using local recreation/entertainment venues and specialized health care in 2014 than in 1994.

* A note on Interpretation: For Waverly, differences in percentages between 2014 and 1994 of less than 11 should be considered a statistical dead-heat. That is, they fall within the margin of error range, which occurs whenever samples are used to draw conclusions about a larger group. With a modest sample size used in this study, the differences must be relatively large before we can be confident that they are real. Throughout the report, differences that are equal to or exceed 11 percent are statistically significant and are indicated with an asterisk (*).

RATINGS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES

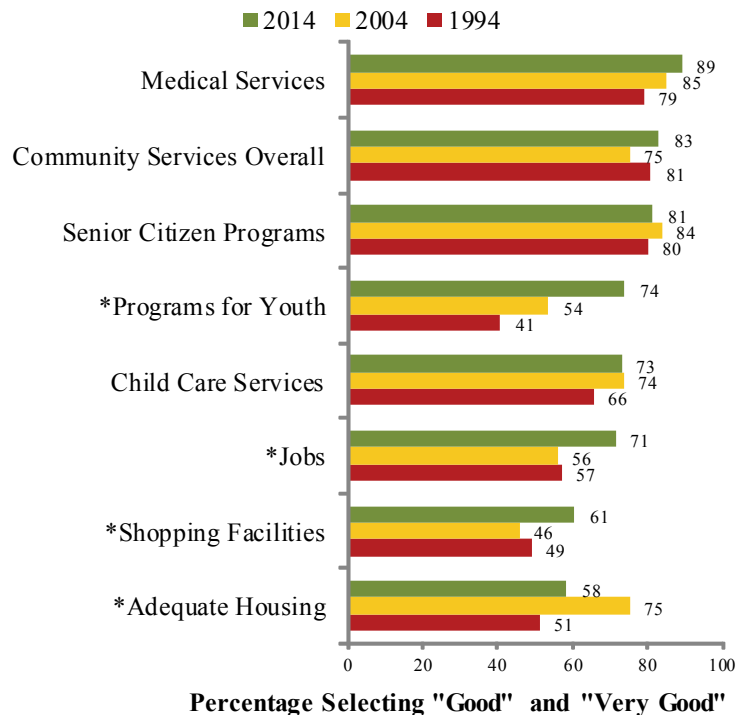
Figure 2



Waverly residents were asked to rate eight services typically provided by local governments and to furnish an overall rating of government services. Figure 2 shows the percent of residents who rated the service as good or very good in 1994, 2004, and 2014. In 2014, all services except condition of the streets received positive ratings from at least eight of ten residents. Overall government services, emergency response services, fire protection, public schools, police protection, garbage collection, and condition of the parks were rated highly in all three surveys. Larger percentages of residents gave fire protection and government services overall positive scores in 2014. The condition of the streets received the lowest rating in 2014 and it is substantially lower than its ratings in previous years. Low ratings for condition of the streets is not unusual for towns of any size located in areas with a harsh winter climate. All other changes over the past 20 years are within the 11 percent margin of error for Waverly.

RATINGS OF LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

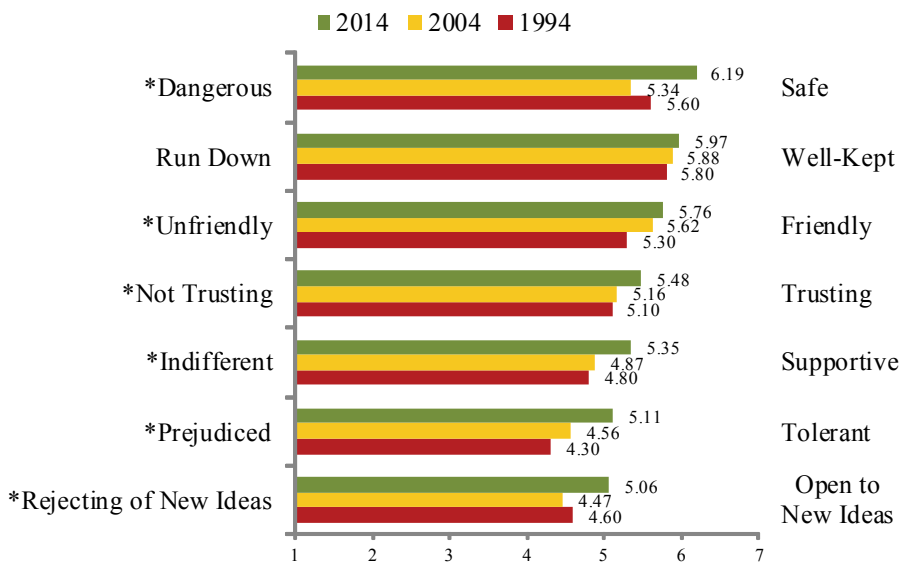
Figure 3



Non-governmental community services in Waverly received lower ratings as a group compared with the residents' assessment of local government services, a typical finding for towns of any size or location. Still, the ratings were quite strong compared with those found in most small towns. Over 50 percent of the 2014 respondents rated all services and facilities as good to very good in 2014. This finding is especially unusual for jobs, which typically are a source of dissatisfaction. The 2014 rating for jobs was statistically higher than the ratings shown in previous surveys. Improved ratings in 2014 were shown as well for programs for youth and shopping facilities. Ratings for adequate housing dipped from those reported in 2004.

WAVERLY'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Figure 4: Average Rating of Social Qualities



The margin of error is calculated differently for averages, and will sometimes vary from question to question within the survey depending on how many people answered each question. Thus, changes of the same size may exceed the margin of error for some items in Figure 4, but not for others. Only those items designated by asterisks () have differences large enough to fall outside of the statistical margin of error and can thus be considered to have changed since 1994.

It is for good reason that small towns are praised for having favorable social climates. Several questions in the survey were designed to evaluate this aspect of small town life. Residents were presented with a list of seven sets of qualities and asked to describe where their town fits on each. As shown in Figure 4, residents report that among all the qualities listed, Waverly is safe, well-kept, friendly, trusting, supportive, tolerant, and open to new ideas. All of these indicators of social environment except for town appearance improved over scores reported in 1994.

SOCIAL TIES

Everybody knows everybody else often is cited as a feature of small towns. This statement sometimes can be more myth than reality, but describes Waverly in some respects. In all three surveys, about one in four residents reported that they know half or more of the people in town by name. In 2014, about half the respondents said that half or more of their close friends live in town. This percentage has declined sharply over the past two decades, in that in 1994 and 2004 65 percent said that half or more of the friends lived in town. About one in five residents reported that half or more of their relatives live in town in all three years.

One way that people come to know and trust each other and learn to work together is through socializing at gathering places in town. We asked residents to indicate how often they socialize with other residents in eight potential gathering places in 2004, and 12 places in 2014. In Waverly, the gas station/convenience store is the most common place to meet, with residents socializing there twice a month. Other popular gathering places are eating establishments where people socialized about once a month.

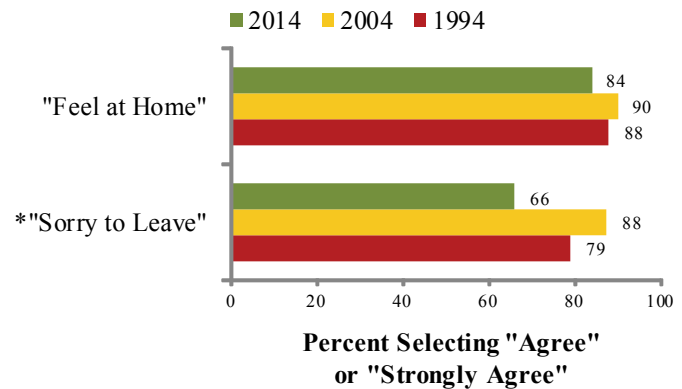
SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN WAVERLY

An important aspect of the small town social environment is how well people work together to solve problems and support each other. Waverly has experienced a some decline from 1994 to 2014 in assessments of this factor. In 1994, 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed that local clubs and organizations are interested in what is best for all residents. In 2014, 49 percent agreed with the statement. Fifty-nine percent agreed in 1994 that when something needs to get done, the whole community gets behind it, as compared with 41 percent in 2014. In 1994, about half of the residents believed that the town was receptive to new residents in leadership positions. By 2014, however, the proportion had dropped to slightly more than one in three. Respondents were more favorable about the amount of support they personally receive from the community, but at slightly lower levels than in 1994. In 2014, 65 percent reported that they could find someone to talk to if they just wanted to socialize, down from 84 percent in 1994. However, about the same percentage in both years (81% in 2014 compared with 90% in 1994) agreed that if they had an emergency even strangers in town would help them.

COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

According to the results shown in Figure 5, Waverly residents are attached to their community, but less so than in 1994. In 1994, nearly nine of ten residents agreed or strongly agreed that they “feel at home” in Waverly and about eight of ten would be “sorry if they had to leave town.” By 2014, the proportion who feel at home was about the same as in past years, but significantly fewer residents would be sorry if they had to leave town.

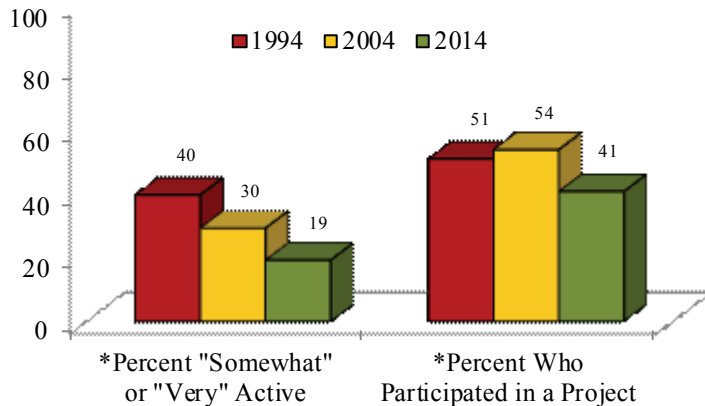
Figure 5: Community Attachment



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Residents working together to improve the quality of life is an important feature of communities. Forty-one percent of Waverly residents participated in a community improvement project in 2014, down from 54 percent in 2004. A larger decline is evident in the percent who describe themselves as active in the community. In 1994, 40 percent indicated they were very or somewhat active, as compared with just 19 percent in 2014. Additionally in 2014, 61 percent reported that they belong to at least one local organization (for example church, civic, or recreational organizations), while in 1994, 75 percent were members. The major reasons provided by Waverly residents in 2014 for not participating in the community were that they had not been asked to volunteer (37%) and they do not know how to get involved (27%).

Figure 6: Informal Participation



In 2014 we asked residents to describe local leadership in Waverly on seven dimensions: trustworthiness, team building, open mindedness, concentrated vs. dispersed, informed, effectiveness, and inclusiveness. Waverly leaders are perceived positively on all dimensions, especially as being trustworthy and effective. Good leadership can help communities weather unforeseen setbacks as well as improve planning for the future.

SUMMARY

This study provides residents of 99 selected small towns a snapshot of the local quality of life and residents' attachment and involvement over the past twenty years. Waverly has experienced significant changes in many categories. Since 1990, the population has increased noticeably, by 17 percent. Government services continue to earn strong positive ratings, with emergency response services, fire protection, public schools, police protection, garbage collection, condition of the parks, and water receiving favorable scores from at least 80 percent of the 2014 survey respondents. Non-government services are rated less favorably. However, ratings of medical services, senior citizen programs, programs for youth, child care services, and jobs are highly favorable. Waverly is perceived to be a safe, well-kept and friendly town. Social ties have weakened in Waverly and fewer residents would be sorry to leave. Even so most persons still feel at home.