



# Knight Soul of the Community 2010

Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A Local Perspective

Michigan

# DETROIT

[www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org)

KNIGHT

Soul of the Community

A PROJECT OF JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION

in partnership with GALLUP



At the Knight Foundation, our mission is to create more informed and engaged communities. We emphasize transformational projects. The Soul of the Community project reflects this mission. This study offers leaders a radically new way to think about their community and invites creative approaches for improvement. The report, based on interviews with residents in 26 Knight communities, proves that a significant connection exists between residents' levels of emotional attachment to their community and its economic growth. It presents surprising and nearly universal findings about why people form lasting emotional bonds to where they live.

We hope these discoveries inspire renewed engagement in all residents and create lasting, positive change.

Paula Lynn Ellis, Vice President/Strategic Initiatives  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Lynn Ellis".

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# Introduction

On behalf of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup, we are pleased to present the third annual Soul of the Community report. This study was conducted over three years in 26 cities across the United States where Knight Foundation is active. It was designed to find out what emotionally attaches people to a community — what makes them want to put down roots and build a life there.

In today's challenging economic climate, community leaders are seeking new ways to attract and retain people, develop prosperous economies, add intellectual capital, and create jobs. This report provides a fresh perspective about the current driving factors of passion and loyalty in a community. Most importantly, it represents the voice of the residents themselves. Gallup gathered insights from nearly 43,000 individuals, and the resulting picture will help community leaders to answer important questions such as: What makes residents love where they live? What draws people to a place and keeps them there?

The study provides empirical evidence that the drivers that create emotional bonds between people and their community are consistent in virtually every city and can be reduced to just a few categories. Interestingly, the usual suspects — jobs, the economy, and safety — are not among the top drivers. Rather, people consistently give higher ratings for elements that relate directly to their daily quality of life: an area's physical beauty, opportunities for socializing, and a community's openness to all people.

Remarkably, the study also showed that the communities with the highest levels of attachment had the highest rates of gross domestic product growth. Discoveries like these open numerous possibilities for leaders from all sectors to inform their decisions and policies with concrete data about what generates community *and* economic benefits.

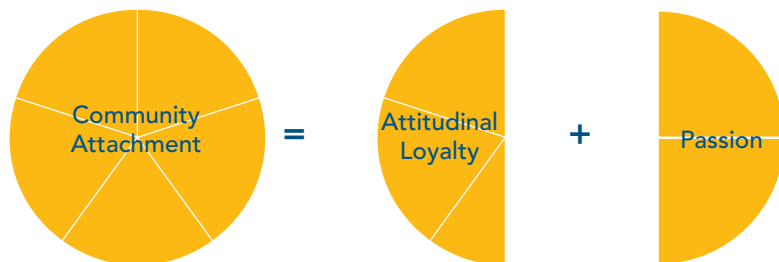
This report is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to inform and engage leaders in new thinking and action. We hope you will read it, share it, and discuss with others what it might mean for the future of communities across our country. Our hope is that this leads to new conversations and partnerships, and new ways for all of us to work together to increase people's attachment, to strengthen our cities, and to ensure a brighter future for all people and communities.

# COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT:

## AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Community attachment is an emotional connection to a place that transcends satisfaction, loyalty, and even passion. A community's most attached residents have strong pride in it, a positive outlook on the community's future, and a sense that it is the perfect place for them.

They are less likely to want to leave than residents without this emotional connection. They feel a bond to their community that is stronger than just being happy about where they live.

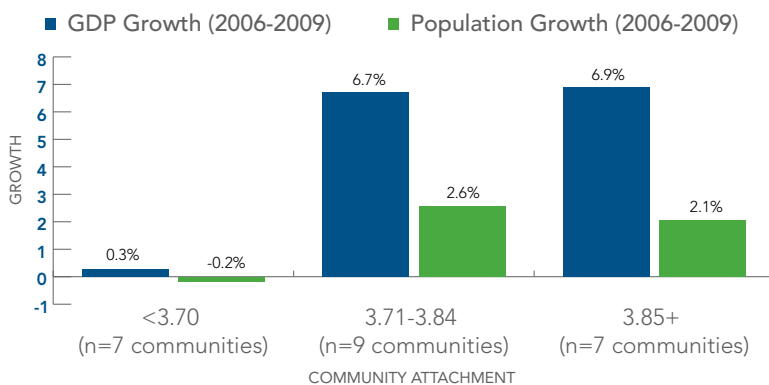


## Why Attachment Matters

Over the past three years, the Soul of the Community study has found a positive correlation between community attachment and local GDP growth. Across the 26 Knight communities, those whose residents were more attached saw more local GDP growth. This is a key metric in assessing community success because local GDP growth not only measures a community's economic success, but also its ability to grow and meet residents' needs.

### Local GDP Growth by Levels of Community Attachment

CA Correlation to GDP Growth=.411  
CA Correlation to Population Growth=.374



GDP and population growth figures available for 23 of the 26 communities.

Gallup research proving the link between employee engagement in a workplace to business outcomes such as productivity, profitability, and employee retention helps to underscore why emotional attachment matters. Just as actively engaged employees are more productive and committed to the success of their organizations, highly attached residents are more likely to actively contribute to a community's growth.

# The Relationship to Community Outcomes

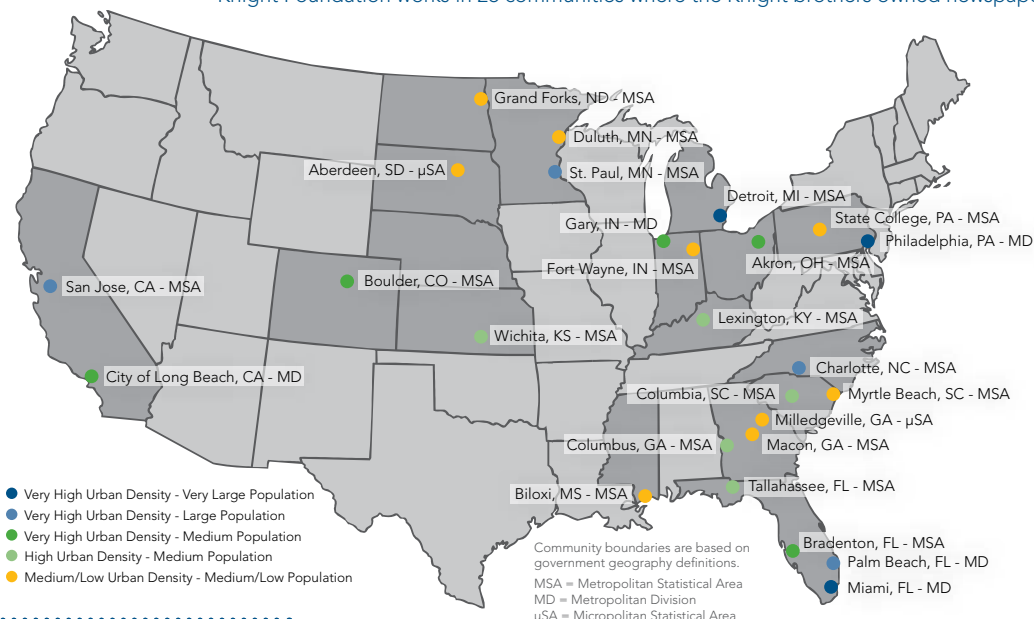
Precisely how community attachment affects community outcomes is at best a scientific guess at this point. However, the data make clear that highly attached residents are more likely to want to stay in their current communities. When this is true for college graduates and other productive residents, it increases the number of talented, highly educated workers striving to positively affect economic growth.



Highly attached residents are also more likely to see their communities as being open to many kinds of people, including talented, young college graduates and families with young children. Communities that are more open to diversity are better able to compete for talent.

Attachment is also higher when residents agree that their communities provide the social offerings and aesthetics they enjoy. When residents enjoy their community's offerings, they are more likely to spend their money on local activities and businesses, directly benefiting the local economy.

Knights Foundation works in 26 communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers.





Highly attached residents are more likely to see their communities as being open to many kinds of people.



# How Gallup Found the Factors With the Strongest Links to Attachment

To find out what drives attachment, Gallup asked residents five questions examining their level of attachment to their community and then asked them to rate various aspects of the community such as basic services, the local economy, social offerings, and openness.

Gallup then analyzed the relationship between the overall level of community attachment and residents' perceptions of aspects of the community itself to reveal the strongest links. The greater the correlation between attachment and a given factor, the stronger the link. Using this analysis, Gallup ranked the aspects of communities that have the strongest links to attachment, understanding that even small differences can be very meaningful.

Community Attribute	Correlation to Attachment*		
	2008	2009	2010
Social Offerings	0.49	0.52	0.54
Openness	0.53	0.52	0.50
Aesthetics	0.51	0.50	0.49
Education	0.47	0.44	0.47
Basic Services	0.41	0.34	0.42
Leadership	0.41	0.40	0.39
Economy	0.41	0.39	0.36
Safety	0.22	0.19	0.23
Social Capital	0.14	0.16	0.15
Civic Involvement	0.06	0.04	0.04

\*The higher the correlation, the more closely the attribute is related to attachment.

# What Matters Most

What attaches residents to their communities doesn't change much from place to place. While one might expect the drivers of attachment would be different in Miami from those in Macon, Ga., in fact the main drivers of attachment differ little across communities. Whether you live in San Jose, Calif., or State College, Pa., the things that connect you to your community are generally the same.

When examining each factor in the study and its relationship to attachment, the same items rise to the top, year after year:

- **Social Offerings** — Places for people to meet each other and the feeling that people in the community care about each other
- **Openness** — How welcoming the community is to different types of people, including families with young children, minorities, and talented college graduates
- **Aesthetics** — The physical beauty of the community including the availability of parks and green spaces

## Key Drivers of Attachment in 2010

Knight Community	Social Offerings	Openness	Aesthetics
	Attribute Rank in 2010		
Overall	1	2	3
Aberdeen, SD	1	3	2
Akron, OH	1	3	1
Biloxi, MS	1	3	2
Boulder, CO	1	3	1
Bradenton, FL	1	3	1
Charlotte, NC	1	3	1
Columbia, SC	1	2	2
Columbus, GA	1	2	2
Detroit, MI	1	2	4
Duluth, MN	1	3	2
Fort Wayne, IN	1	3	2
Gary, IN	1	3	1
Grand Forks, ND	1	3	2
Lexington, KY	1	2	2
City of Long Beach, CA	1	3	1
Macon, GA	1	3	2
Miami, FL	1	2	4
Milledgeville, GA	1	3	2
Myrtle Beach, SC	1	3	2
Palm Beach, FL	1	3	2
Philadelphia, PA	1	2	4
San Jose, CA	1	3	2
St. Paul, MN	1	3	2
State College, PA	1	3	2
Tallahassee, FL	1	2	2
Wichita, KS	1	2	2





## Key Community Attributes

While the study also measures perceptions of the local economy and basic services, these three factors are always more important in terms of their relationship to community attachment. This is not to say that communities should focus on building parks when jobs aren't available. However, it does make it clear that these other factors, beyond basic needs, should be included when thinking about economic growth and development. These seemingly softer needs have an even larger effect than previously thought when it comes to residents' attachment to their communities.

Generally, demographics are not the strongest drivers of attachment. In almost every community Gallup studied, attachment is more strongly related to certain perceptions of the community than to residents' age, race, income, or other demographic characteristics. In other words, whether a resident is young or old, wealthy or poor, or black, white, or Hispanic matters less than his or her perceptions of the community. This reality gives community leaders a powerful tool to influence residents' attachment to the community, no matter who they are.

### **SOCIAL OFFERINGS** INCLUDES PERCEPTIONS OF:

- Vibrant nightlife
- Good place to meet people
- Other people care about each other
- Availability of arts and cultural opportunities\*
- Availability of social community events\*

### **OPENNESS** INCLUDES PERCEPTIONS OF:

- Good place for older people
- Good place for racial and ethnic minorities
- Good place for families with young children
- Good place for gays and lesbians
- Good place for young, talented college graduates looking for work
- Good place for immigrants
- Good place for young adults without children\*

### **AESTHETICS** INCLUDES PERCEPTIONS OF:

- Availability of parks, playgrounds, and trails
- Beauty or physical setting

*\*New in 2010. Not included in overall attribute score to allow for trending to previous years.*

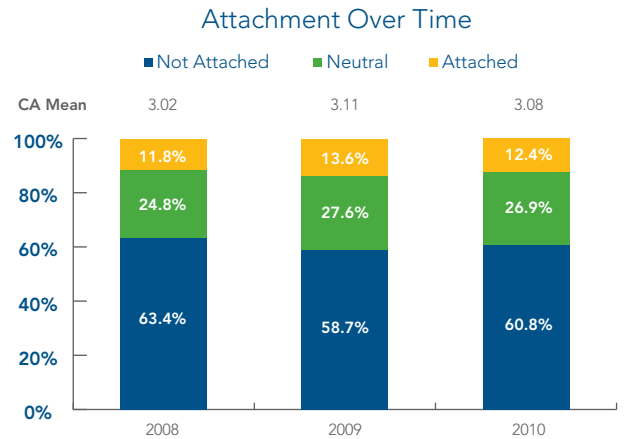
# FINDINGS FOR DETROIT

## METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA

### OVERALL ATTACHMENT

Detroit's 2010 attachment mean score decreased to 3.08 out of a possible 5.00 from 3.11 in 2009, reversing an increase from 3.02 in 2008. The results reflect surveys conducted in Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne counties. This level of attachment is lower than the average score for the comparison group of other very high urban density, very large population Knight communities of Philadelphia (3.52) and Miami (3.43).

Findings in this report represent the Detroit MSA unless otherwise noted.



### Community Attachment in All Very Large Population — Very High Urban Density Communities

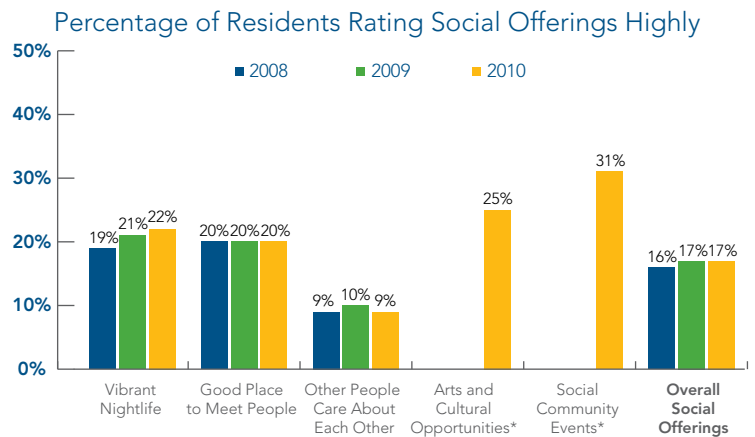
	2008	2009	2010
Detroit, MI	3.02	3.11	3.08
Miami, FL	3.46	3.62	3.43
Philadelphia, PA	3.54	3.52	3.52
<b>Comparison Group Mean</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>3.32</b>

## KEY DRIVERS OF ATTACHMENT

Detroit's social offerings, openness, education, and aesthetics are, in that order, the most likely to influence the attachment of its residents. Education became even more important to Detroit residents in 2010 than in the past.

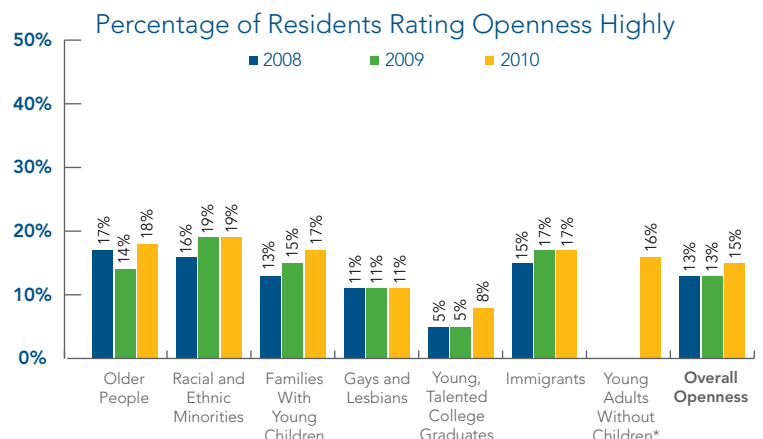
- Social Offerings:** Detroit residents rate the availability of arts and cultural opportunities and social community events in their community — two social offerings Gallup asked about for the first time this year — the highest among other metrics measured. They rate the availability of vibrant nightlife and the perception that the community is a good place to meet people lower. Few residents say that people care about each other in Detroit, with nearly 7 in 10 rating this dimension the lowest.
- Openness:** While openness is a key driver of attachment in Detroit, the majority of residents rate the dimensions medium or low, contributing to the community's overall poor performance on this metric. No more than one in five residents rate Detroit as a good place to live for any of the demographic groups studied. Fewer than 1 in 10 say Detroit is a good place for young, talented college graduates. Thus, Detroit has much room for improvement on this metric critical not only to attachment, but also to attracting the best and brightest to the community.

### Social Offerings



\*New in 2010. Not included in domain score to allow trending.

### Openness

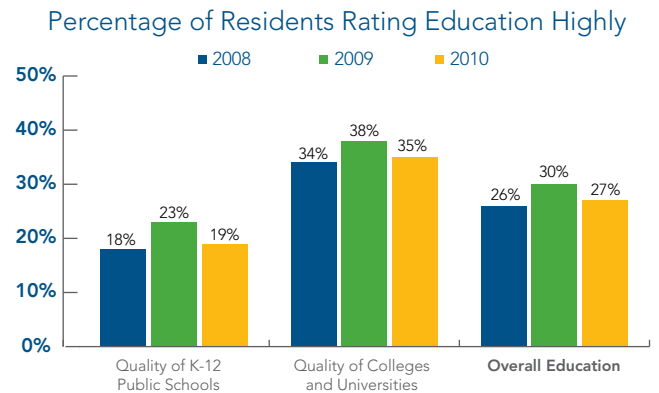


\*New in 2010. Not included in domain score to allow trending.

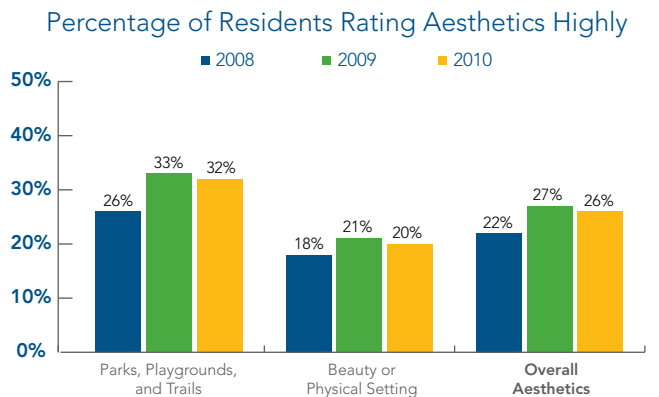
- Education:** Compared with the low ratings of openness and social offerings, higher education is a relative strength for Detroit, with more than one-third of residents rating the quality of local colleges and universities high. Still, their ratings of the higher education available in their community are lower than in comparable communities. What's more, less than one-fifth of Detroit residents are positive about the K-12 education available, and these ratings are down since last year.

- Aesthetics:** Aesthetics is a key driver of attachment in Detroit, and perceptions of the community in this regard leave a great deal of room for improvement. Residents are more negative than positive about the parks, playgrounds, and trails available in the community and the beauty or the physical setting of the community. Views have hardly budged since last year, and Detroit residents are less positive about overall beauty and the physical setting compared with comparable communities.

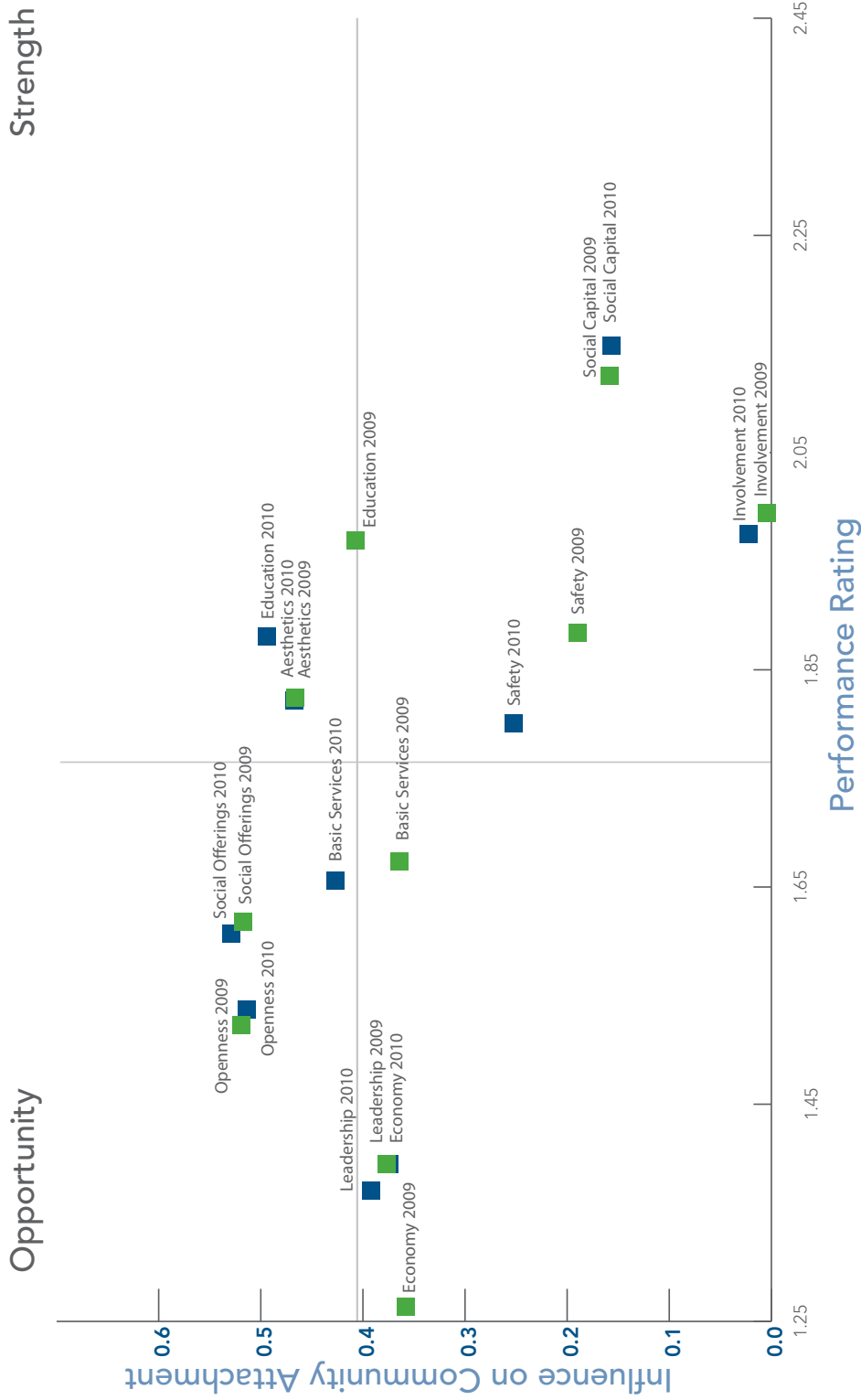
## Education



## Aesthetics



## Summary Table of Strengths and Opportunities



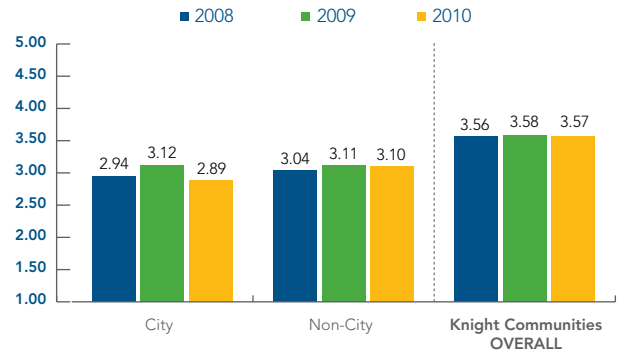
Drivers positioned farther up are more influential in causing emotional attachment. Drivers positioned farther to the right are rated by respondents as being better performing in a community. A driver that is both influential in causing emotional attachment and not rated as well performing (i.e., one that is positioned in the top left quadrant) represents an area of opportunity as an improvement in performance will have a particularly high impact on improving emotional attachment.

## WHO IS MOST ATTACHED IN DETROIT

While demographic characteristics don't have as much effect on attachment as residents' perceptions of their communities, patterns do emerge among various groups.

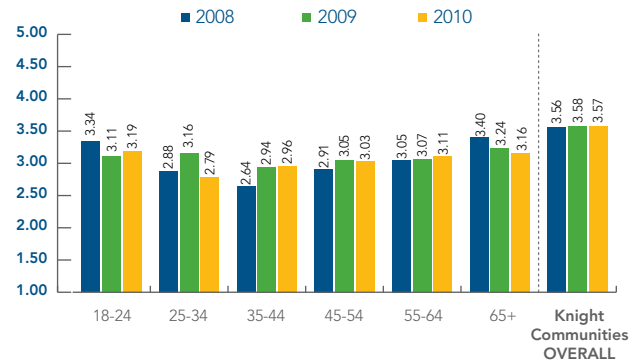
- Geography:** Those residents in the Detroit area who live outside the primary city limits are more attached to the community than those who live inside Detroit.

Community Attachment by Geography



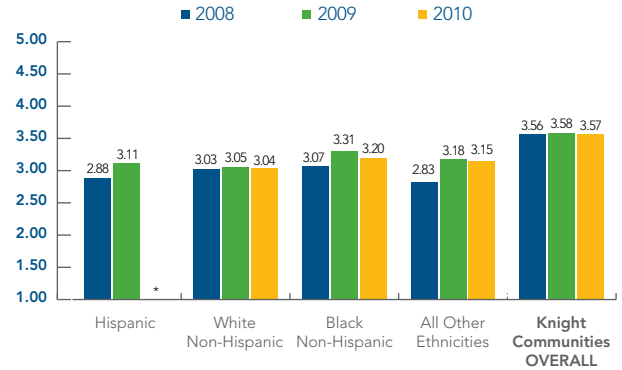
- Age:** Detroit residents aged 18 to 24, 55 to 64, and 65 and older are the most attached, with attachment scores slightly above the community average. Attachment among residents aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 decreased slightly since last year; residents aged 25 to 34 are the least attached among age groups measured.

Community Attachment by Age



- **Race and Ethnicity:** Detroit's black residents are the most attached to the community when compared with other residents.

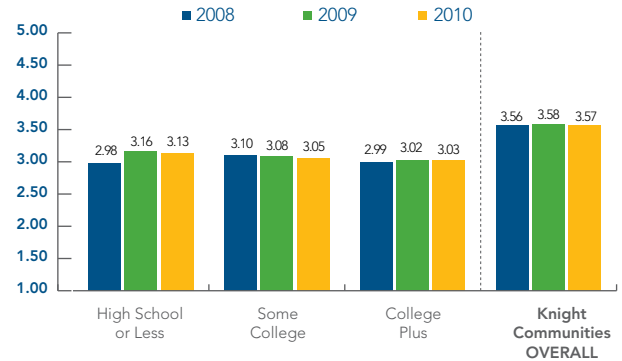
Community Attachment by Race and Ethnicity



\*Not reported due to insufficient sample size.

- **Education:** Detroit residents with at least some college education are less attached than the community average, posing potential problems for the community as it seeks to retain highly educated individuals. Those with a high school education or less are slightly more attached.

Community Attachment by Education



# IMPLICATIONS FOR DETROIT

For more detailed recommendations please go to [www.soulofthecommunity.org/detroit](http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/detroit)

## STRENGTHS TO LEVERAGE

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Relative to other factors, **higher education** is a strength for Detroit, with residents rating local colleges and universities among the most positive aspects of the community. Further support of this area of clear value to residents will help to achieve higher levels of attachment.

The availability of **social community events** is an area in which continued investment could pay dividends. The community should continue to invest in events that foster a social and welcoming atmosphere in Detroit. Leaders can further capitalize on these events by using them to raise awareness about other happenings in the community.

Detroit's level of access to **parks, playgrounds, and trails** is among its more positive features. The community should continue to maintain and promote these offerings so that even greater numbers of residents feel positively about them.

Together, these factors contribute to Detroit residents' attachment and are positive aspects of the community for leaders to promote.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO PRIORITIZE

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Detroit residents tend to give the community low marks for **the extent to which residents truly care about each other**. Leaders should consider ways in which residents interact and relate to one another in thinking about means for improving this important dimension.

The **quality of K-12 schools** is a weakness for Detroit, which could reduce the community's appeal to families. Lackluster K-12 education also leaves students poorly prepared for jobs or college. Prioritizing education should improve community attachment its future talent pool.

Further, few residents rate Detroit positively for its desirability as a place to live for **young, talented college graduates looking to enter the job market**. The recent economic downturn no doubt contributes greatly to this perception. Detroit should consider ways to create more jobs that attract talented young people.

Greater attention to these areas is likely to improve attachment in Detroit in the short and the long term.

# METHODOLOGY

The Gallup study is a 15-minute phone survey conducted in the 26 communities the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation serves, including Detroit. The survey is available in English and Spanish, and both landlines and cell phones are called.

Each year, a random sample of at least 400 residents, aged 18 and older, is interviewed in each community, with additional interviews conducted in selected resident communities. In 2010, 15,200 interviews were conducted, with 1,000 conducted in eight resident communities, including Detroit. The 2010 study also included 200 interviews among residents aged 18 to 34 in the resident communities to give Gallup more information about that age group. Overall data were adjusted to ensure an accurate representation of the real demographic makeup of each community based on U.S. Census Bureau data.

Gallup also used U.S. Census classifications to choose the geographical area included in each community. For the most part, Gallup used the Metropolitan Statistical Area. However, in a few cases, Gallup used other accepted definitions of the community area. These census definitions allow Gallup to compare other information such as local GDP and population growth so that Gallup can more closely examine community attachment and key community outcomes.

In Detroit, Gallup interviewed residents in Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, and Wayne counties.



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### About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation advances journalism in the digital age and invests in the vitality of communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects that promote informed and engaged communities and lead to transformational change. For more, visit [www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org)

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