

Soul of the Community 2009



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Knight Foundation
www.knightfoundation.org

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Soul of the Community

A 3 year \$2.371 million project
funded by Knight Foundation
in partnership with Gallup to understand
resident attachment to place,
what drives it and
why it matters
in 26 U.S. communities.

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SOTC Offers a New Way to Think About...

- ✓ Economic Development
- ✓ Community Development
- ✓ Community Competitive Advantage
- ✓ Talent Recruitment and Retention
- ✓ Community Engagement
- ✓ Community Vitality

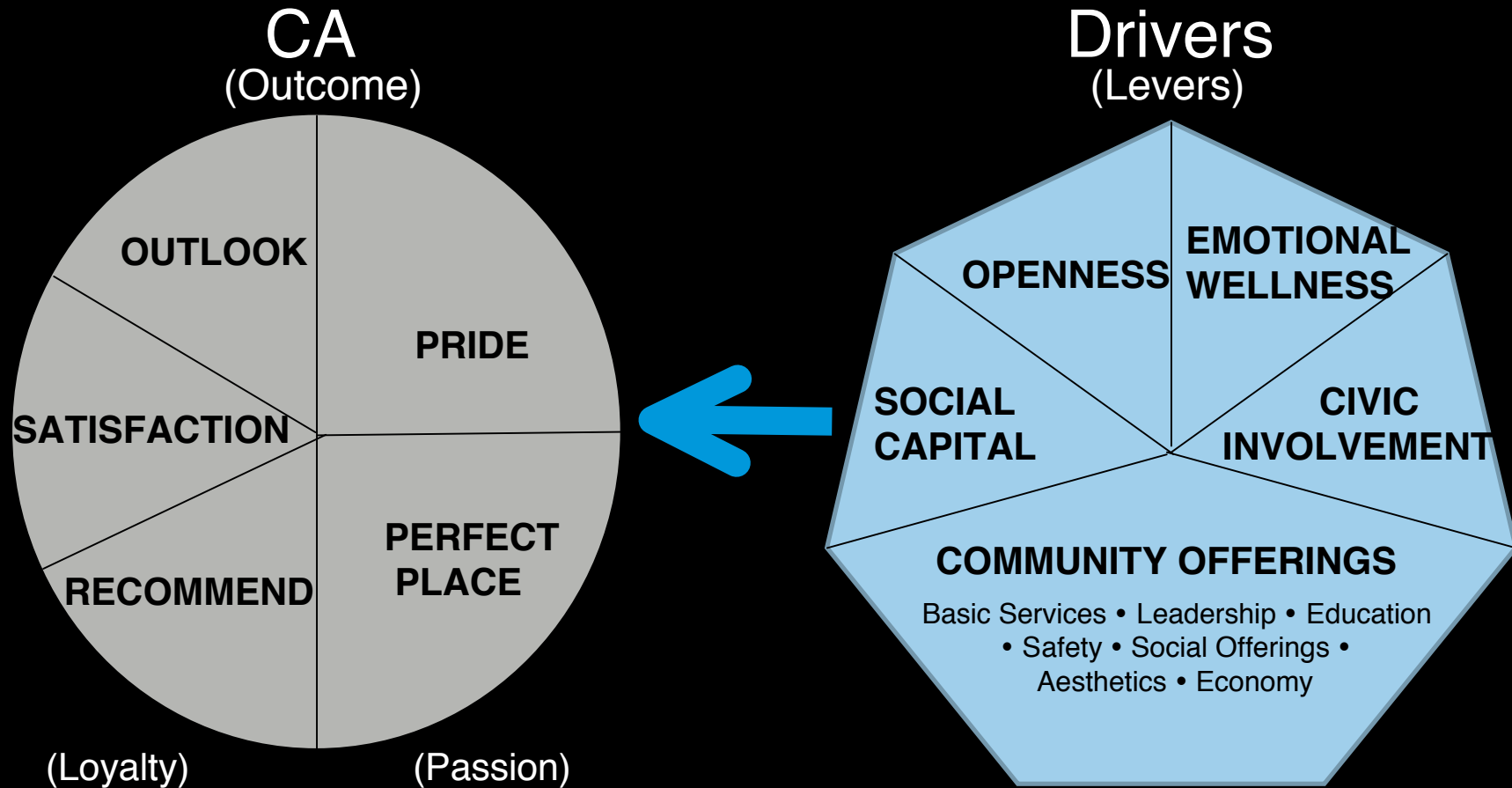
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Communities Studied

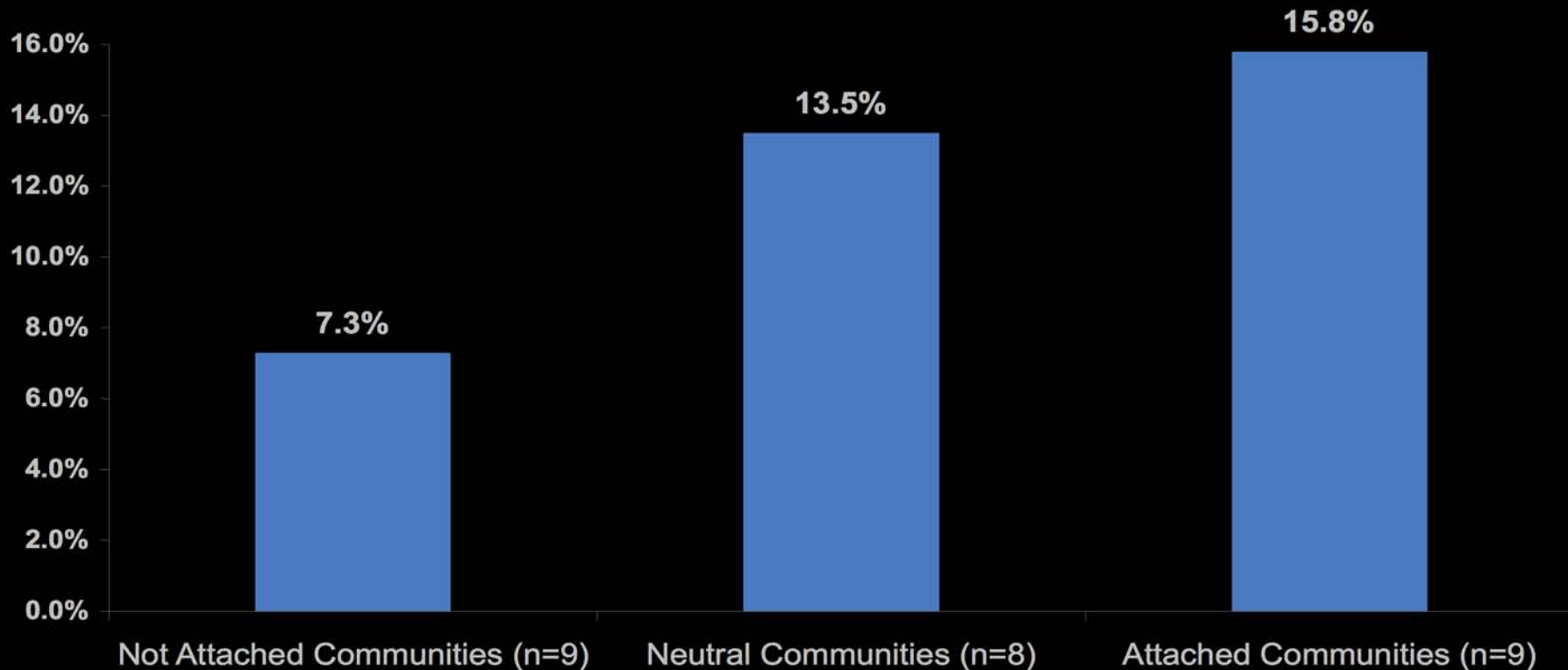


Community Attachment Model



Attachment to Place Matters in Knight Communities

GDP Growth by Levels of Community Attachment



Correlation of Attachment and GDP Growth (02-06) = .431

Headlines

Continues to be an important and now significant relationship between community attachment and GDP growth.

In Year 2 of the study, economy is **STILL** not key in influencing residents' attachment to community--even less important than in 2008.

Instead: social offerings, openness and aesthetics are most important in attaching residents to place.

In Knight Communities overall, optimism for the community's future and job satisfaction also tied to residents' connection to place.

In Knight communities, young, college graduates are perceived to be one of the least welcome groups in the community.

Potential upcoming shuffle in talent requires community optimization.

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Main Findings

- There is an important and significant correlation between resident attachment and the local economic growth of a community.
- Resident perceptions of a community's openness, social offerings and aesthetics are key to attaching residents to community -- regardless of the community's size, demographics, economies or geography
- Despite the recent economic downturn, overall attachment of the 26 communities have stayed flat.

Implications for economic rebuilding, community planning and talent recruitment and retention are significant.

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Young Talent

Photo: reckless6275 on Flickr

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Community Outlook

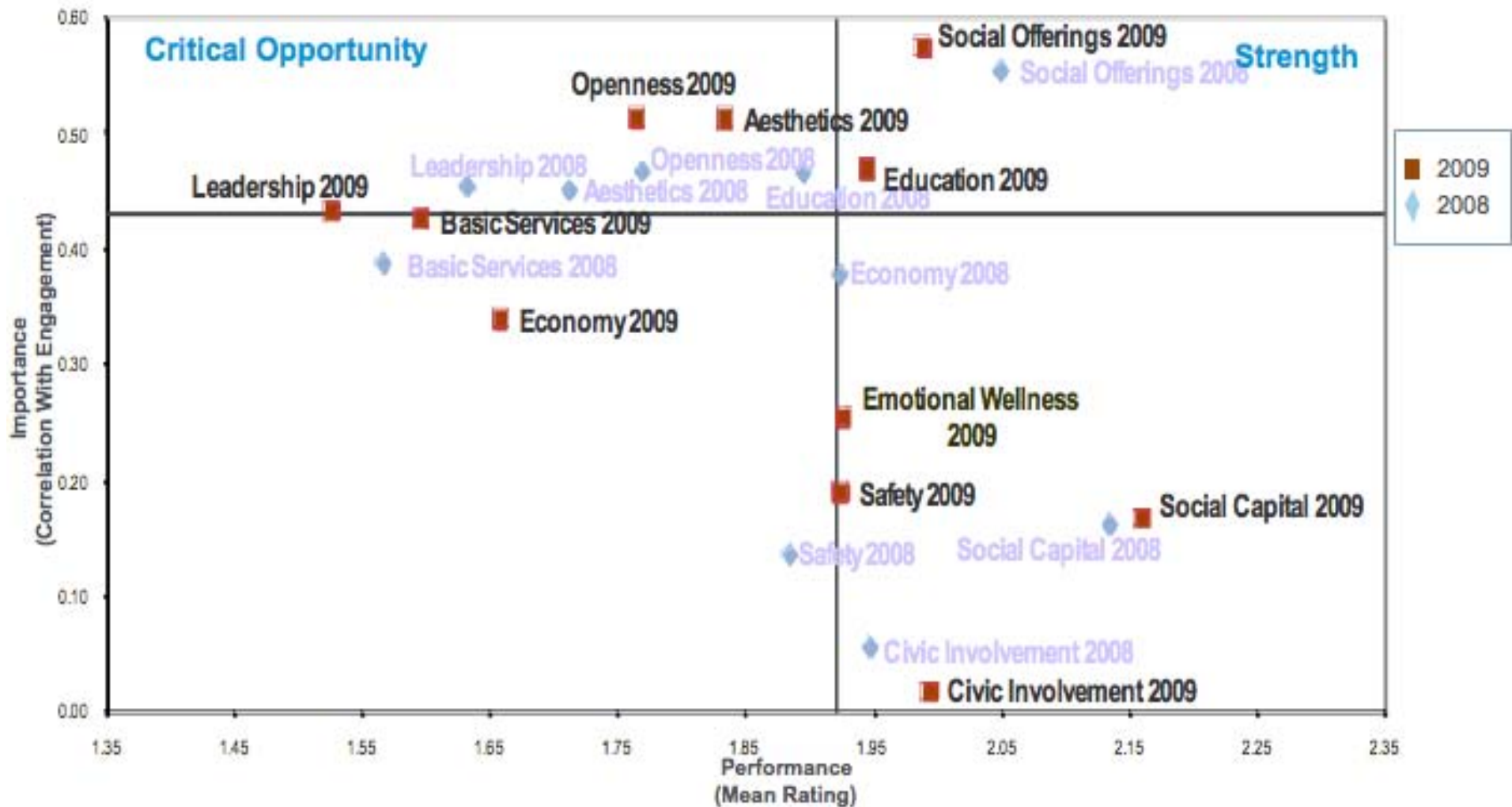


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Strengths-Weaknesses Opportunity Map

Biloxi
MSA



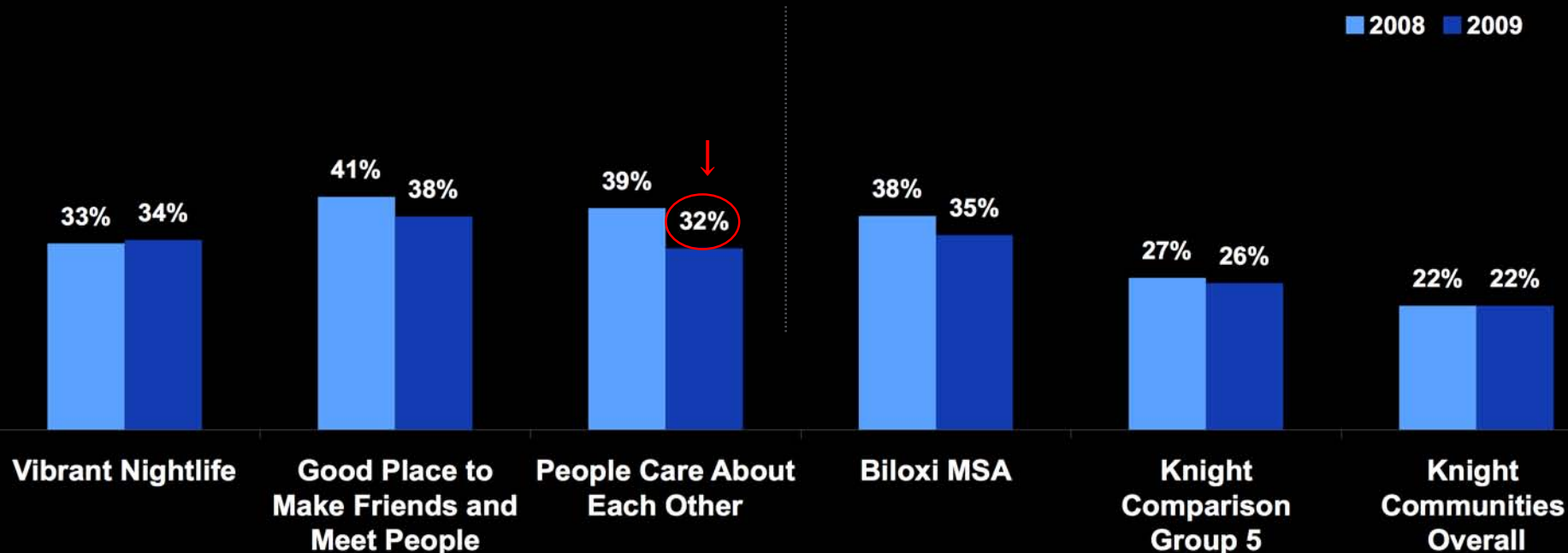
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Social Offerings

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MSA*

The entertainment infrastructure for people to meet each other, and resident caring

% High Rating on Social Offerings Measures



Overall Social Offerings

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Knight Comparison Group 5: Fort Wayne, IN – MSA; Duluth, MN – MSA; Macon, GA – MSA; Biloxi, MS – MSA; Grand Forks, ND – MSA; Myrtle Beach, SC – MSA; State College, PA – MSA; Milledgeville, GA – μMSA; Aberdeen, SD – μMSA

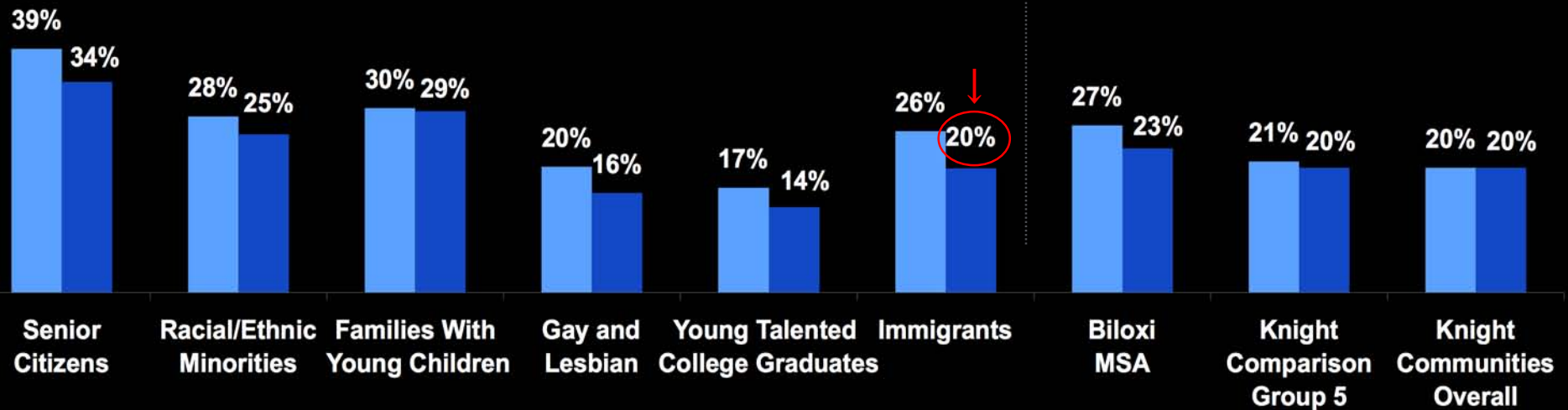
Openness

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How welcoming the community is to different types of people

% High Rating on Openness Measures

■ 2008 ■ 2009



Community Good For...

Overall Openness

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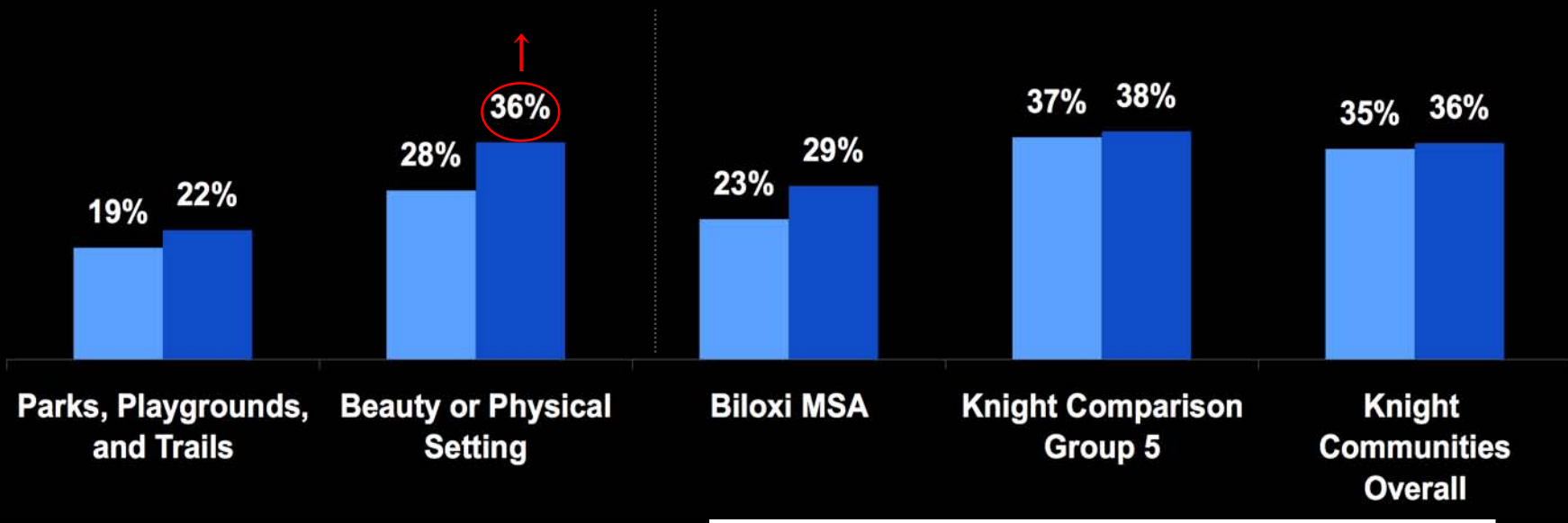
Aesthetics

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The physical beauty and availability of parks and green spaces for residents

% High Rating on Aesthetics Measures

■ 2008 ■ 2009



Overall Aesthetics

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Demographic Profiles of Attachment

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Most Likely to Be Attached

- .55 years of age or older
- .HS or less education
- .Long-term
- .Homeowners
- .Retired

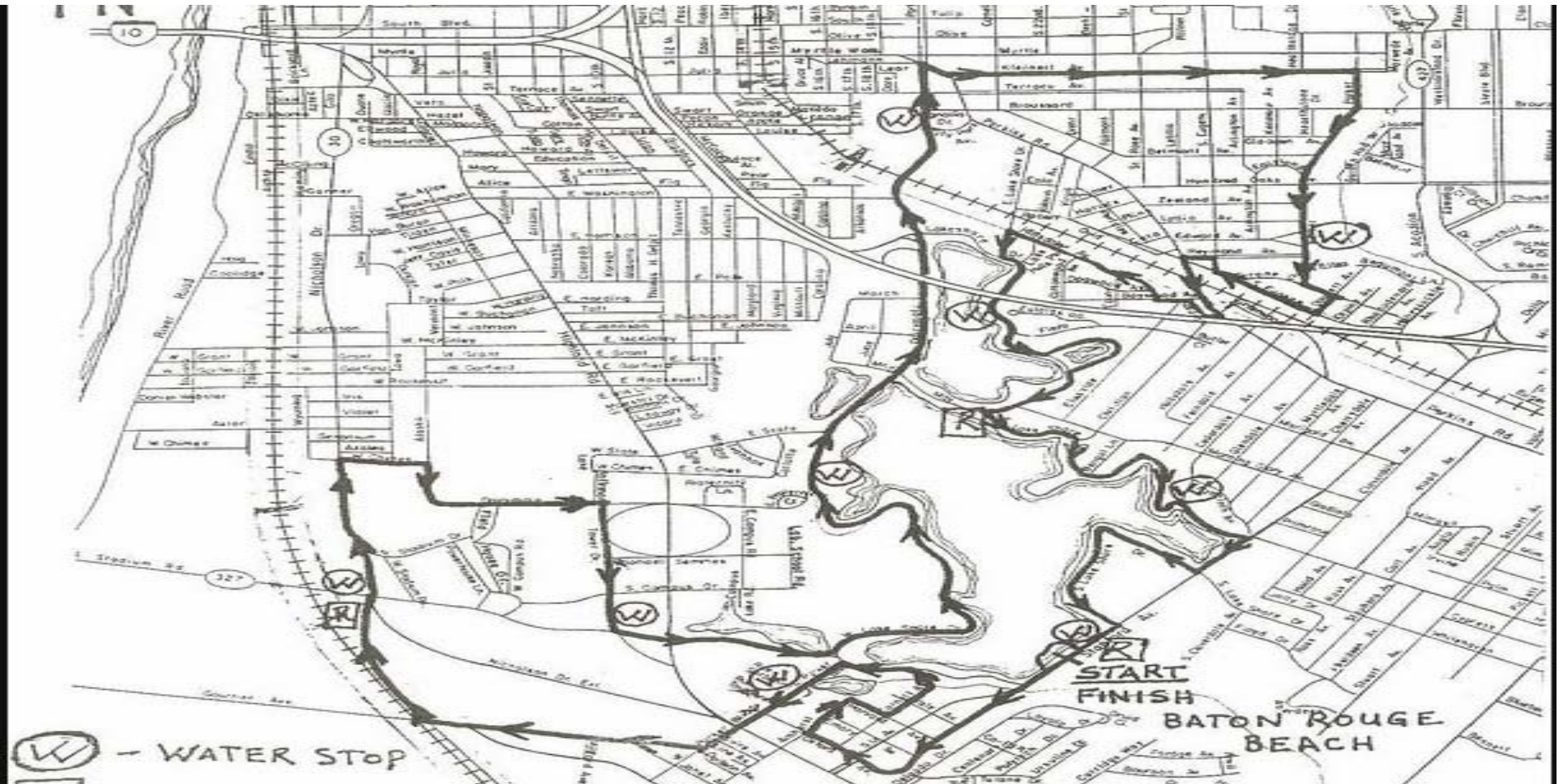
Least Likely to Be Attached

- .18 to 34 year olds
- .Married/divorced
- .Full-time employed
- .Higher income

Significant decrease in attachment of full-time employed residents in 2009.
Significant increase in attachment of retired residents in 2009.

Back to the Big Picture

- We want our communities to be the destination where people want to live, work and play.
 - Residents are telling you what attaches them here -- and want to keep them here to contribute to the economy and in other ways.
- Emotional investment may matter to economic growth.
 - The “so what?” here is clear.
 - So want to introduce these ideas into existing economic development conversations.
- What we do today will impact what happens tomorrow.
 - The potential reshuffling of the talent-force is a pending opportunity.




Finding Your Soul

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For more information on the Soul of the Community
go to:
www.soulofthecommunity.org

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