

Memorandum

To: City of Santa Cruz
From: Ruth Bernstein
Date: June 6, 2006 - DRAFT
Re: Executive Summary of City resident opinion survey

Methodology & Purpose

On behalf of the City of Santa Cruz and working with the General Plan Advisory Committee, Evans/McDonough Company recently completed a telephone survey of Santa Cruz residents. The interviews were conducted May 15th – 21st, 2006. Six hundred (600) residents, ages 18 and over, were contacted by random digit dial (RDD) and interviewed by telephone, by trained professional interviewers in either English or Spanish. The margin of error for the survey is ± 4.0 percentage points. The data has been weighted slightly by age and the resulting demographics of the sample closely match U.S. Census data for the City of Santa Cruz.

- The goal of the survey was to provide information on citizen attitudes on a broad range of issues covered by the General Plan.
- Given the limitations of a survey of this type, many issues were not covered so that a few key issues could be probed in some depth.
- Many of the issues covered in the study are very complex. The survey is designed to evaluate overall “top-of-mind” attitudes and values **today**.
- The survey does not assess the adequacy of city services.
- It does not measure reactions to additional information or changes in the city that may come about during the general plan update process.

General Environment: Santa Cruz residents generally value their unique quality of life and feel optimistic about their City. Transportation, housing and growth loom as issues for the future.

- A plurality (47%) of Santa Cruz residents respond that their City is “headed in the right direction” while 32% say that things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track.
- While most mention positive aspects of life in Santa Cruz (quality of life, the beach, surfing, the weather), many think of problems like the cost of living and traffic when thinking about their city.

- When asked to name the most important issue for the City to consider when planning for the next 10 to 20 years, 35% mention transportation, 21% mention housing and 20% mention growth. Other issues are mentioned by fewer residents.
- 65% strongly agree, and another 23% somewhat agree, with the statement: “It is very important to me that Santa Cruz continues to be unique.” Older residents (over 50) are less likely than younger residents to strongly agree.
- Two-thirds (66%) are not passionately opposed to increases in city taxes or fees while one third (33%) feel that it is very important to avoid such increases.
- Almost half (44%) of residents feel that it is very important for the City to invest in ending homelessness.

Land Use: The majority of Santa Cruz residents appear to be open to changes in neighborhoods that would bring more housing and business – but maintaining a feel and look that is unique to the area is an overarching concern.

- 62% agree (28% strongly agree) that they would like their neighborhood to stay exactly the way it is, and 55% say it is very important to preserve the character of neighborhoods.
- 49% agree and 44% disagree with the statement: “I would like more mixed use development on main streets near my neighborhood so we can have more shopping, services and jobs close by.” However, when asked specifically about more housing and business development in certain areas, over half support more development in each area:
 - 73% favor more housing and business development in the Westside Industrial area
 - Downtown near the City’s center - 63% favor
 - Along streets like Mission, Water, Ocean and Soquel – 60% favor
 - In the Beach Boardwalk area – 59% favor
 - Along the river on Front street – 59% favor
 - In the Harvey West area – 58% favor
 - On the East Side – 58% favor
- Santa Cruzans are divided on the issue of allowing taller buildings in the city.
 - 42% agree and 54% disagree that Santa Cruz should allow taller buildings and higher density housing in commercial areas of the city
 - 49% favor, 49% oppose allowing taller buildings along Mission, Ocean, Soquel, Beach and Water.
 - 48% favor, 49% oppose allowing taller buildings downtown.

Housing: Santa Cruz residents want more low cost housing, but opinions are divided on the types of housing needed. Housing for seniors is likely to be an increasing need.

- Lower cost and senior housing are important to many:
 - 56% rate “providing more lower cost housing” as very important
 - 42% rate providing more housing designed and built for seniors (51% among those age 50 or more) as very important
 - 30% rate increasing the amount of housing as very important
- 65% favor increasing the amount of housing with more single family homes
- 65% favor increasing the amount of housing with more multi-unit or condo buildings
 - Combining this question with those about taller building results in the finding that 31% of Santa Cruz residents generally favor low density development, 33% favor higher density, and 36% are in the middle.

Transportation and Circulation: Santa Cruz residents want it all: less traffic, more parking, more transit and better bike access. While decreasing reliance on the automobile is a wishful goal, few believe the city should plan for that to happen.

- 74% agree (43% strongly) that “We must accept that people need cars to get around and should have long term planning in Santa Cruz that will result in efficient parking and un-congested roadways.”
- 72% agree (41% strongly) that “We need to drastically reduce our reliance on cars in Santa Cruz, even if doing so is difficult for us today.”
- Among those who believe the City should plan for parking and uncongested roadways, two-thirds (66%) also agree that we need to drastically reduce our reliance on cars.
- Over half of residents favor transportation policies that wouldn’t negatively impact their own ability to drive:
 - 86% favor creating a tourist transit or shuttle service to discourage tourists from using their cars
 - 61% favor widening local roads to improve traffic congestion
 - 54% favor adding a third road into the University
 - 58% oppose limiting the availability of parking in commercial areas to discourage use of cars

- While residents want improved public transit and bike/pedestrian access, they also want to use their cars:
 - 65% rate improving public transit as very important
 - 64% rate reducing traffic congestion as very important
 - 58% rate improving access and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists as very important
 - 32% rate discouraging the use of cars as very important
- Based on a combination of five survey questions
 - 25% of Santa Cruz residents are generally in favor of planning for non-auto transportation
 - 22% are generally in favor of planning based on the ongoing use of cars
 - 54% are in the middle

Economic Development: Santa Cruz residents place a high value on protecting local business, although many would like more local jobs and diversity of goods & services. Supporting tourism is also important to many.

- Protecting local business is a strong Santa Cruz value
 - 92% agree (65% strongly) that “Our local businesses are crucial to our unique quality of life in Santa Cruz, the City should encourage, promote and protect existing and new local businesses.”
 - 66% rate supporting local businesses as very important
- Support for new jobs is also high.
 - 66% agree (32% strongly) that “We need more local jobs. The city should have policies that attract new businesses and industries to Santa Cruz even if they are not locally owned.”
 - 56% rate promoting economic growth and job creation as very important
- The community is somewhat divided about large chain stores, but opposition is larger and more passionate – 44% favor (21% strongly) and 55% oppose (35% strongly) bringing in a few large chain stores that offer products and brands that aren’t currently available.
- Promoting the arts and expanding tourism is popular:
 - The vast majority (69%) agree that “tourism is an essential part of our local economy. The City should do more to encourage tourism and expand it to a year-round business.”
 - 80% favor encouraging the growth of arts and cultural activities that will bring more year-round tourists.
 - 40% rate investing in the arts as important
 - 61% rate preserving historic areas, landmarks and cultural heritage sites as important
 - 24% rate growing the tourism industry as important

UC Santa Cruz: While the majority of residents want the City to plan for the inevitable growth of the University, many have strong opinions about specific housing and transportation issues. Most, however, are fine with students living in the neighborhoods.

- A majority strongly agree that the City should plan for UCSC growth – one-third strongly believe the City should fight growth
 - 81% agree (55% strongly) that “UCSC is going to grow even if we don’t want it to. The City should plan now for housing, traffic, and other impacts of that growth.”
 - 54% agree (35% strongly) that “I don’t want UCSC to get any bigger. The City should fight University growth.”
 - Among those who want to stop UCSC growth (54% of respondents), 71% agree that the City should plan now for housing, traffic and other impacts of the growth that will occur even if they don’t like it.
 - Among UCSC families (those with a student or employee in the family, 28% of respondents), only 38% think that the City should fight University growth. Among those without a student or employee in the family, 59% support fighting growth.
- A majority, even among non-University households, support students living in neighborhoods.
 - Overall, 67% **disagree** (42% strongly) that “UCSC plays an important role in our city but it would be better if students didn’t live in our neighborhoods.”
 - Among UCSC families, 82% disagree
 - Among non-UCSC families (no student or employee in family), 62% disagree
- Those who are closely related to the University are much more likely to want more off-campus student housing.
 - 37% of those with a UCSC student or employee in the family rate providing more off-campus student housing as very important compared to only 16% among those with no UCSC student/employee in family.
 - 75% of UCSC families favor (41% strongly) developing concentrated off-campus student housing with easy access to the University, downtown and other areas where students usually go. 61% of non-UCSC families support, but 35% are opposed.
- Those in University households are divided over a third road, and many have strong opinions. 48% favor (28% strongly) adding a third road into the University, but 52% oppose (29% strongly). Among non-UCSC households, 54% favor and 39% oppose.
- A new non-car entry into the University is a popular idea. Overall, 81% support adding a new entry into the University that is not accessible to cars but could be used by transit, bikers and pedestrians.

The Environment: Santa Cruz residents care about the environment and support City policies that reflect their values. Many are open to park amenities in the green belt, but it is not a strong concern for most.

- Strict environmental regulations on new development are very popular: 92% agree (69% strongly) that “New development should have requirements for energy and water efficiency as well as environmentally safe products and practices.”
- Preserving open space is very important, as is decreasing reliance on non-renewable energy
 - 73% rate preserving our green belt and open spaces as important
 - 64% rate decreasing reliance on non-renewable energy as important
 - 53% rate investing in parks and recreation facilities as important
- 65% favor (27% strongly) building sports fields, playgrounds and other park amenities in the green belt.