

Summary of Results

City of Grants Pass Survey

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Introduction

The City of Grants Pass uses a variety of methods to inform its' citizens and to encourage active participation in city government. As part of these efforts Grants Pass has for many years conducted an annual survey to assess the opinions of residents on the quality of city services, the quality of life in the city, and attitudes toward immediate issues currently before the city government. Working closely with Grants Pass Assistant City Manager, Laurel Samson, Northwest Survey & Data Services (NSDS) planned and implemented the 2004 annual telephone survey of Grants Pass residents.

Survey Results

This report summarizes the major survey results. Readers can look at the Topline Frequencies section of the report for the exact question wording and the summarized responses to each question. Readers may refer to the tables in the Banners section of this report for more detail and to find cross-tabulations of each question with a wide range of demographic information. In addition, readers should look at the open-ended responses inside the Narrative Responses section, where respondents give narrative answers to questions. The open-ended questions asked what they like most about Grants Pass, what they would like to change, what was wrong with any city services they rated as poor, and what suggestions they have for the city's involvement with affordable housing. Finally, readers should look at the Annual Trends section to see graphs which reflect changes in the responses from 1998 through 2004 to the standard questions.

For information on how this survey was conducted please see the Sample and Methods Report section.

Grants Pass as a Place to Live

In general, residents think Grants Pass is a great place to live. When asked to rate living in Grants Pass on a five point scale, where one is "poor" and five is "excellent," 82% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see Banner Table 28). This score is almost identical to the scores of the last four years (80% or 81% depending on the year) and remains 19% higher than the rating given in 1998. Only 5% of respondents gave Grants Pass a rating of one or two. This is the smallest percentage of low ratings the city has ever received on this issue.

The belief that Grants Pass is a great place to live is stronger among older respondents. For those 34 or younger, 74% gave Grants Pass one of the two highest scores. By age 45 or older, the scores rise from 85% to 88%.

This pattern of generally favorable responses is repeated when respondents were asked to rate how safe they felt living in Grants Pass. On a five-point scale, where one was "not safe" and five was "very safe," 72% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 4% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety has risen slightly over the last seven years, although it has been stable for the last three.

This feeling of safety was universally true among all groups of respondents. In previous years, feelings of safety had varied by the area of town, but this is no longer the case.

This feeling of safety was further reinforced by responses to a follow-up question where respondents were asked to compare the safety of their neighborhood to other neighborhoods in Grants Pass. On this question, 55% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods while only 7% felt their neighborhood was "less safe." This perception has also been stable for the last few years. However, people's comparative feeling of safety in their neighborhood varied somewhat depending on what section of Grants Pass they lived in. The percentage of respondents who were likely to feel that their neighborhood was "less safe" was much higher in the Southwest (19%) and the Southeast (12%) and low in the Northwest (2%) or the Northeast (4%).

There was also significant variation between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with homeowners more than twice as likely as renters to feel that their neighborhood is "less safe" (12% vs. 5%).

Grants Pass Growth Rate

At this point in the survey, respondents were asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the city. The most common response (49%) was that Grants Pass is growing at "too fast" a pace. Almost as many respondents (43%) felt the city was growing "about the right pace", while only 6% felt the city was growing "too slowly." Over the seven years that NSDS has conducted this survey for the city, the responses to this question have changed significantly. The percentage of respondents who feel the city is growing "about the right pace" has steadily declined since 1999. At the same time, the percentage of respondents who feel the city is growing at "too fast a pace" has increased about 5% each year since 2000 and has become the most common opinion. See the Annual Trends section for more detail.

What People Would Like to Change and What They Enjoy about Grants Pass

At the end of the survey respondents are asked what they would like to change about Grants Pass and what they like most about Grants Pass. The responses to these questions cover a wide area of topics, however, the most common changes people would like to see include limits to growth and population, control over housing prices, more and better paying jobs, activities for teens and young adults, and improvements in traffic and roads.

The things people enjoy about Grants Pass are first and foremost the weather or climate and the scenery. In addition many people list outdoor pursuits and nature issues. Finally, many people like the small town atmosphere and the friendly attitude of other residents.

For more information see the Narrative Responses section.

Grants Pass City Services

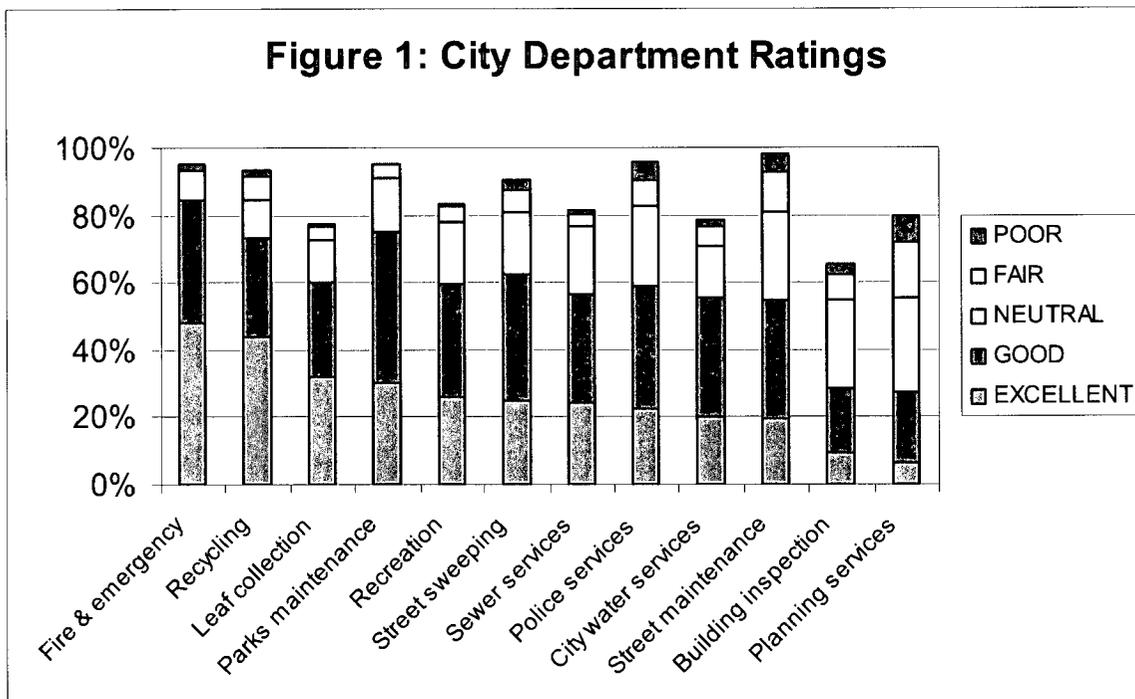
Respondents were asked a set of questions about 12 city services that people could reasonably be expected to have opinions about, even if they had not contacted the service providers directly. Grants Pass residents feel that these services generally provide excellent or close to excellent service on a five-point scale where one indicated poor service and five indicated excellent service (See Banner Tables 3-14). Of the 12 services respondents were asked about, 10 services received "good" or "excellent" ratings by over 50% of respondents. The two services that did not get high ratings were planning, where only 27% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, and building inspection, where only 29% gave these scores. For the last two years the same 10 services were highly rated and the same two had low ratings.

However, the two lower rated services were also services where large numbers of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of building inspections, 34% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and an additional 27% gave a neutral rating, which may also be an indicator of difficulty in giving a rating. The case of planning was similar, where 21% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 28% gave a neutral rating. However, in the case of planning, 24% of respondents also rated the service as "fair" or "poor." This was the largest percentage of low ratings given to any of the city services measured.

Even though they were among the 10 highly rated services, four city services (city water, sewer, recreation, and leaf collection) also had large numbers of respondents (36% - 38%) who could not give a rating or gave a neutral rating, depending on the service.

It is also important to note that Grants Pass services rarely received a large number of "poor" ratings. With the exception of Planning Services, as previously discussed, the ratings of "poor" range from 17% to less than 4%. However, when a respondent did give a rating of "poor" for any city service, they were then asked to explain why they thought that service was "poor". In general, the comments reflect personal interactions the respondent had with the service in question. See the Narrative Section of the report for the verbatim comments. Please see Figure 1 for departmental ratings.

Figure 1: City Department Ratings



For some of the twelve services, there were significant differences in how they were rated based on the characteristics of the respondent. The most significant of these was a general tendency to rate most services higher if the respondent was 55 or older. See the Banner Tables for parks maintenance, street maintenance, and city water for examples of this. In addition, men were much more likely to rate Planning Services and Police as “poor” than were women.

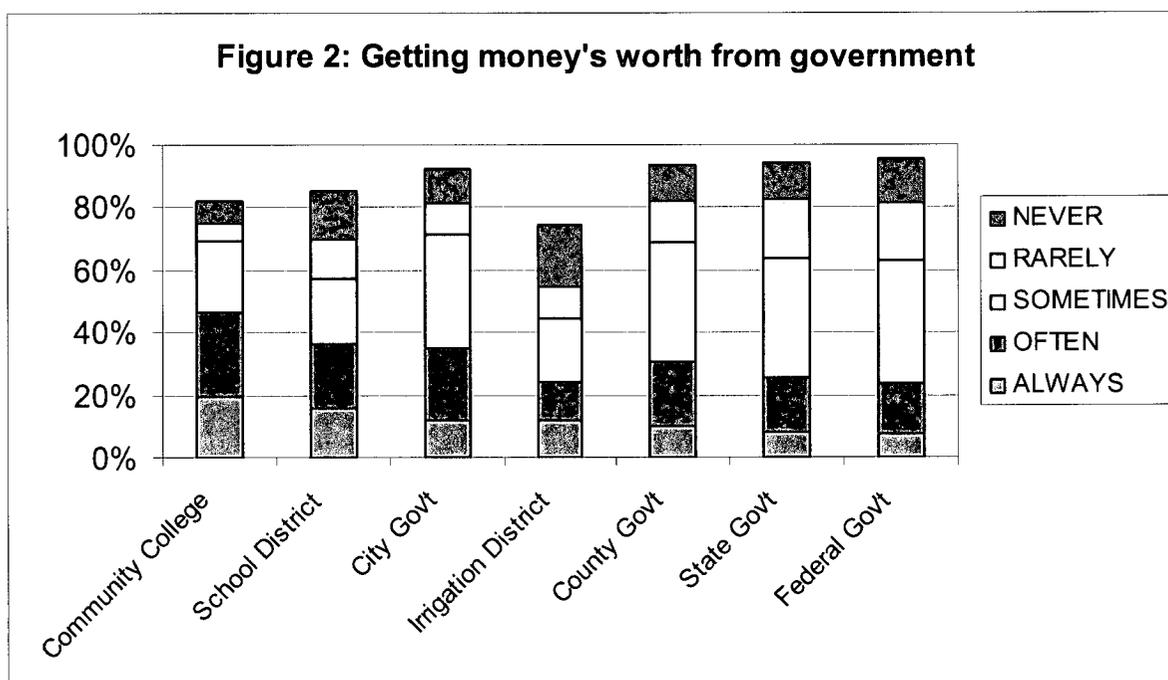
Attitudes Toward the Value of Government

Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal, State, County, and City. In addition, they were asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents were asked how often they felt they were getting their money's worth, using the response scale: "never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always." Respondents' belief that they get their "money's worth" from government generally increased as the unit of government got smaller. (See Banner Tables 15-21).

The least support for the idea of getting their money's worth from government was with the Federal government, followed closely by State governments, where only 23% and 26% of respondents felt that they “always” or “often” got their money's worth. The greatest support for the idea of getting your money’s worth from government was with the Grants Pass City Government, where 35% of respondents felt that they “always” or “often” got their money's worth. Interestingly, after three years of declining ratings for the Grants Pass City Government, the percentage of respondents who felt they got their money’s worth increased for the third year. In addition, those residents who feel they “always” get their money’s worth from the Grants Pass City Government almost always feel Grants Pass is an “excellent” place to live.

For the other three governmental institutions, respondents held widely different views about their value. At the high end, 46% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth from the Community College, while at the other extreme only 25% of respondents felt they always or often got their money's worth from the Irrigation District. The School District received a higher rating than other general forms of government, with 36% of respondents feeling that they got their money's worth. The School District fell slightly for the third year in a row.

For Grants Pass City Government, those who find it “easy” to participate and those who feel the pace of growth is “about” right, are more likely to feel they get their money’s worth from city government. See Figure 2.



Participation in City Government

Respondents were asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see Banner Tables 22-27). The majority of respondents (61%) felt that the City of Grants Pass provides adequate opportunities for participation and influence in city decisions. Interestingly enough, this belief exists even though only 16% have attended some form of local government or public meeting on city issues during the past 12 months. In fact, those who have not attended public meetings are more likely to feel that it is easy to participate in city government than are those who have attended public meetings, 62% versus 56% – a finding that has been true for the last two years. Additionally, respondents who have lived in Grants Pass 21 years or more are less likely to find it easy to participate in city government.

Even though attending public meetings may not be popular, more than twice as many respondents (35%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. The only demographic variations in this activity level were due to age, with respondents from 35 through 54 most likely to volunteer and those over 65 least likely. It is also interesting to note that those who volunteer are almost three times as likely to have attended a city meeting when compared with those who do not volunteer (27% vs. 10%).

Fifty percent of respondents feel that the city does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 71% answer affirmatively that the city meets their information needs. The score for informing residents about city issues is up for the second year in a row, and the score for information needs is also up from last year. The most useful source of city information was reported to be the newspaper followed by television and radio. This result has been fairly consistent over the years.

Public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 1.5% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities. This result has declined from last year.

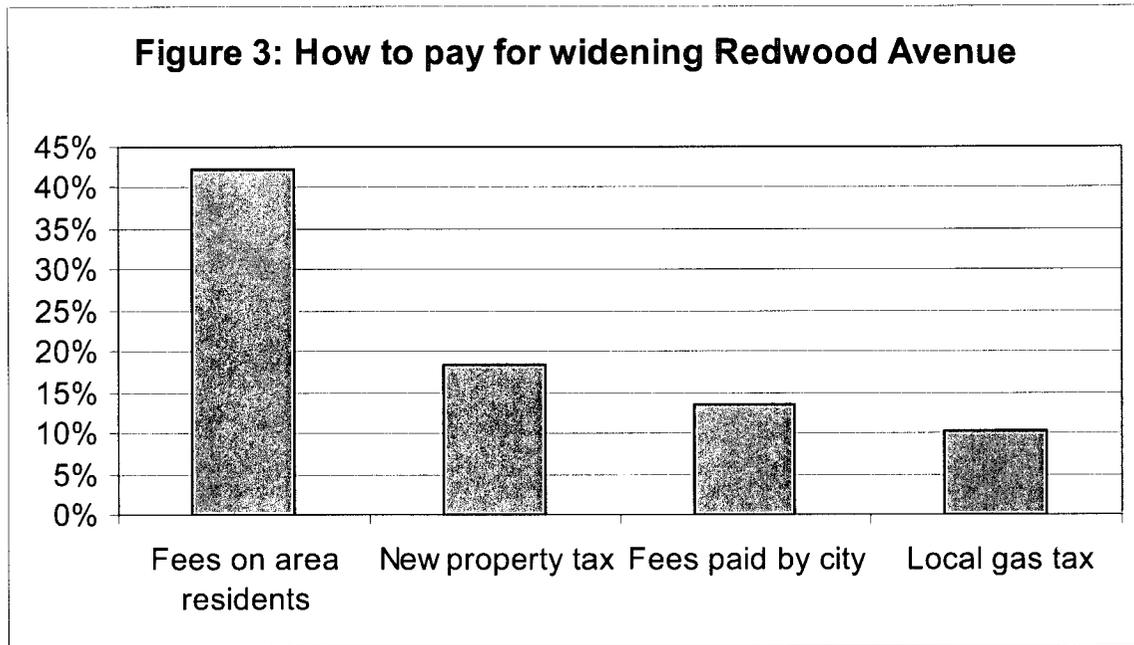
Transportation Concerns and Preferences

Each year the City of Grants Pass adds a series of questions to the survey on issues of immediate concern to the city council. The first set of questions this year concerned transportation. Respondents were first asked to rate the road system in the city from excellent to poor. Many respondents (36%) expressed a middle position, indicating that they felt the roads to be neither notably good nor notably bad. However, another 31% thought the roads were “good”, with an additional 13% thinking they were “excellent,” while 20% thought the roads were “fair” or “poor.” The only characteristic of respondents that appeared to effect their opinion of the roads was the section of town where the respondent lived. Respondents from the southeast were much more likely to rate roads as “good” or “excellent” (62%), than residents from the southwest (35%).

Respondents were next asked about the importance they placed on widening Redwood Avenue. A majority of respondents (51%) thought it was “very important” to widen Redwood Avenue. Another 18% thought it was “important”, while only 15% thought it was either “not very important” or “not at all important.” The importance of this project cuts across almost all demographic divisions in Grants Pass. As an example, support is not effected by what a respondent thinks about the speed of growth in Grants Pass. The only segments where support for widening Redwood Avenue diminishes, is among those who are new to Grants Pass, and those who live in the northeast, and even these groups have a majority who support the project.

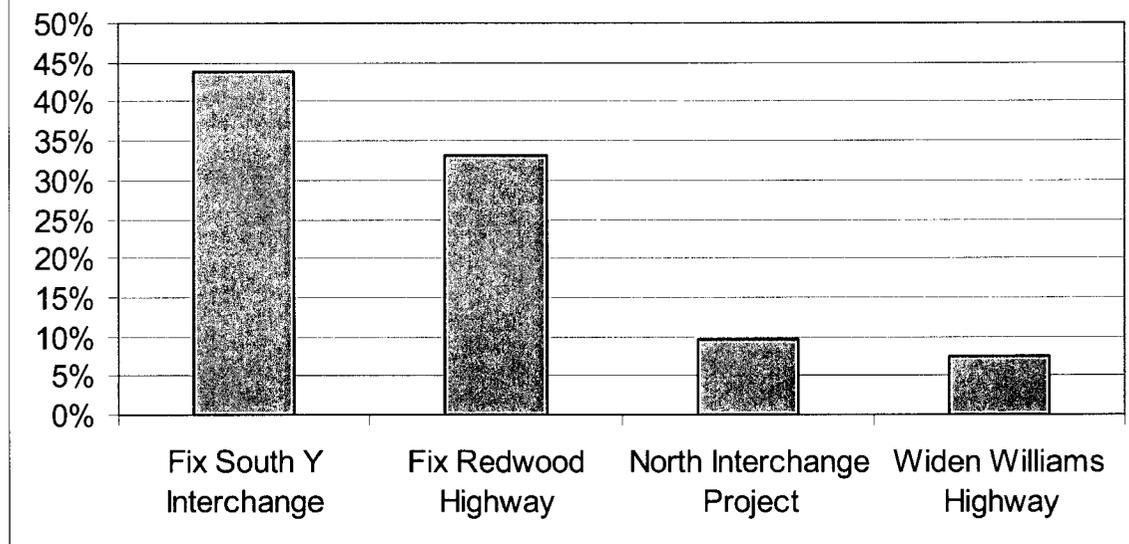
Since the fees charged for new development are not sufficient to pay for the widening of Redwood Avenue, respondents were asked their preference between four alternative funding proposals. By more than a two to one margin, respondents would prefer to see the additional monies collected by imposing fees on Redwood area residents (42%). The second most popular method of collecting the additional monies needed was with an

additional property tax (18%), followed closely by the idea of all residents paying a fee (14%). A gas tax was the least popular idea, with only 10% choosing it as their preference. Please see the following Figure 3.



Respondents were next asked to choose the most important highway project from four state-funded projects. The largest number of respondents (44%) chose fixing the South Y interchange by Bi-Mart. However, there was also strong support (33%) for fixing Redwood Highway from the South Y interchange out to the College. There was almost no support for either the Williams Highway or North Interchange projects. Support for the South Y project was the most common priority across all demographic groups. See Figure 4 following.

Figure 4: Most important highway project



The final set of transportation questions concerned a possible fourth bridge. Respondents were first asked to judge the importance of this fourth bridge. Responses to this question were fairly evenly distributed, with 45% thinking the bridge was either “very important” or “important”, while 30% thought the bridge was “not at all important” or “not very important.” Using these same measures as an indicator of support or lack of support, support was higher among people who had lived in Grants Pass 21 or more years (49%) and lower among those who had lived in the city 5 years or less (37%). Support was also higher among men than women (51% vs. 42%) and higher in the southwest portion of the city (55%) than in the northeast (37%).

Since the city would have to fund a fourth bridge on it’s own, respondents who expressed support for the bridge were asked to give their preference between four funding alternatives. The most popular option was a bridge toll (29%), followed by a special property tax (20%) and a gas tax (17%). There was almost no support for the idea of a monthly resident fee (10%). The only exception to this trend were among renters and younger residents, who favored a property tax over a toll, probably because they felt they would less likely have to pay a property tax.

Concerns for the Future

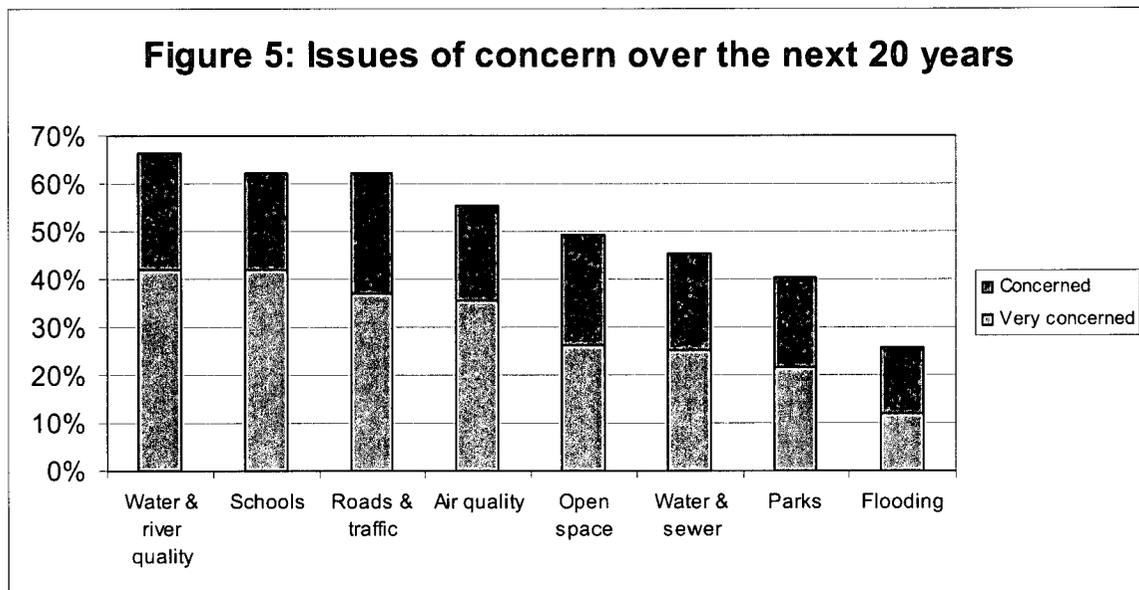
After the transportation issues, respondents were asked to give their level of concern for eight issues the city might conceivably have problems with over the next 20 years. The eight issues were randomized during the survey, so the order of the issue varied from respondent to respondent.

Respondents expressed high levels of concern for seven of the eight issues. Two items in particular, *fresh water & river quality* and *schoolshad* had a large number of respondents

who were “very concerned” (42%). In addition another 24% and 20% of respondents, respectively, were also “concerned” about these two issues.

Roads & traffic and *air quality* also had a high level of “very concerned” respondents (37% & 36%). *Open space*, *water & sewer* and *parks* had a smaller number of “very concerned” respondents (27% to 22%), while only the issue of *flooding* had a relatively small number of “very concerned” respondents (12%).

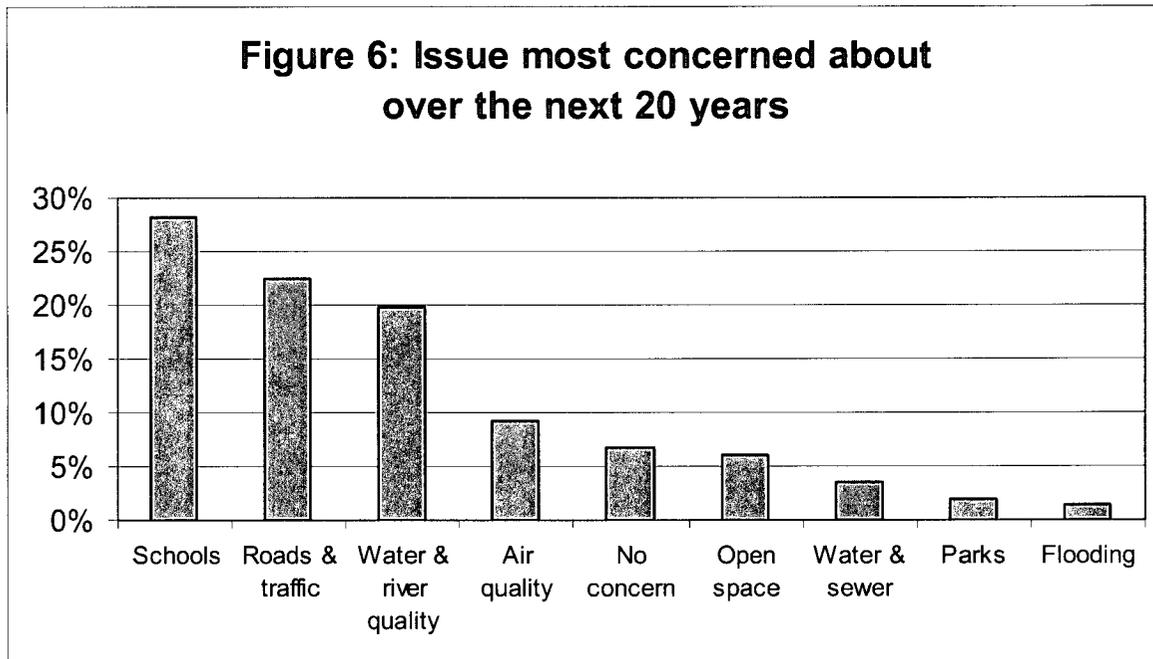
When these eight items are looked at and the number of respondents who are not only “very concerned”, but also “concerned” are added together, all issues except *flooding* have a total level of concerned respondents that is greater than 40%, and in three cases over 60%. See Figure 5 below.



Another way of looking at the level of concern with these eight issues is to see what percentage of respondents expressed only a low level of concern for each issue. By this measure, *flooding* is by far the issue that people are least concerned about, with 54% of respondents saying they are either only “slightly concerned” or “not concerned at all.” On the issue of *parks*, people were almost equally divided with 38% expressing one of the two lowest levels of concern and 40% expressing one of the two highest levels of concern. For the remaining six items, the percentage of people expressing little concern, is lower than those expressing a higher degrees of concern.

The only systematic difference between respondents on their level of concern for these eight issues was between male and female respondents. For seven of the eight issues, women were more likely to reply that they were “very concerned.” On the eighth issue, *water & sewer services*, both genders were essentially tied in the percentage of “very concerned” respondents. For two issues, *air quality* and *fresh water & river quality*, a much higher percentage of women were “very concerned” (11% higher for both issues).

Because many respondents expressed high levels of concern for several of the eight issues, respondents were asked to pick the issue they were most concerned about from among all issues that they had replied they were either “very concerned” or “concerned” about. This question produced a result almost identical to the previous questions about each issue. The top three issues, *schools*, *roads & transportation*, and *river & water quality* were also the top three issues in Figure 6. However, by using this method of having respondents choose among issues, all five remaining issues almost disappear, with less than 10% of concerned respondents choosing any of the five issues. See Figure 6 below.

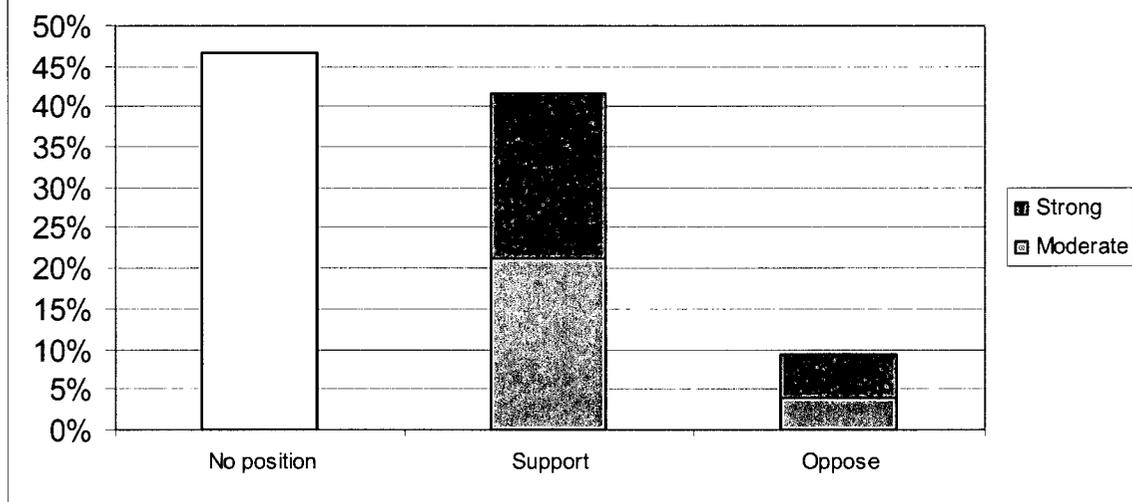


Riverfront Trail

Respondents were next asked about their support or opposition to the construction of a riverfront trail from Riverside Park to Tussing Park. Most commonly (47%), respondents had no position on the construction the riverfront trail. However almost as common, was a position of support for the new trail (42%). Very few people (105) were opposed to the trail.

In order to learn more about the strength of opposition or support, respondents who expressed an opinion were asked if they held their position moderately or strongly. On this question opponents split with 58% strong opposition and 42% moderate opposition. For the supporters the split was almost down the middle, with 49% strong support and 51% moderate support. It is worth noting that just the strong supporters outnumber all opponents by more than two to one. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Level of support or opposition to Riverside Trail



Interestingly, the longer respondents had lived in Grants Pass the more likely it was that they would oppose the trail and less likely that they would support the trail, although opposition still never rose above 14%.

Affordable Housing

The last segment of topical questions for this year’s survey concerned affordable housing. Taking the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines and adapting them to the Census Department estimates of income for Grants Pass, we first asked respondents whether or not the city should help develop “affordable housing.” For this question the upper boundary of affordable housing was defined as a \$120,000 dollar house and monthly payments of \$850 or less. A large majority of respondents (70%) replied that they thought the city should help develop affordable housing.

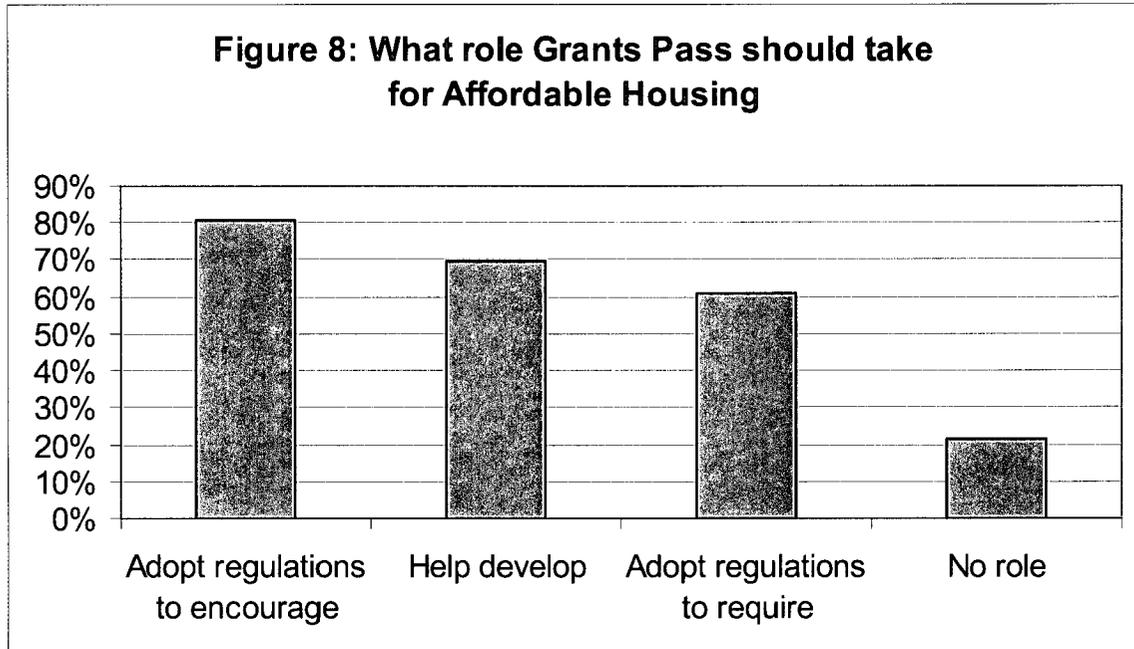
The biggest difference in support levels occurred between those who own their own home (63%) and those who rent their home (83%). Such a difference is not surprising since many owners would probably buy homes if they could afford them. In addition, women were slightly more inclined to see the city help with affordable housing than were men, and those over 55 years of age were slightly less supportive. However, in all of these cases a majority was still in support of the idea of city involvement.

Next respondents were asked if the city should adopt regulations to “encourage” affordable housing. Again, respondents overwhelmingly supported this idea (81%).

This idea was then pushed further by asking whether or not the city should adopt regulations to “require” affordable housing. Here support fell off dramatically, but a solid majority (61%) still supported this idea. The only demographic difference that

showed support below 50% was gender, where only 47% of men supported the idea of a requirement, while 69% of women supported the idea.

Finally, respondents were asked if the city should stay away from the issue of affordable housing and “take no role.” Support for this position was very small at only 22%. See Figure 8 below.



Respondents were also asked if they had any suggestions around the issue of affordable housing. Many people expressed support for programs such as Habitat for Humanity, and for tax and regulation changes. Many people also thought the issue was more related to wages and income than to housing cost. See the Narrative section for more detail.

Conclusions

Once again this year’s survey continues to show that residents of Grants Pass like the community that they live in very much and that they have a high opinion of local government and the services it provides. Residents also feel informed and able to participate in their government. In addition, they generally feel safe in their neighborhoods.

An increasing number of residents feel Grants Pass is growing to quickly, although a large number people feel the rate of growth is about right.

For this year's issues concerning transportation, there is strong support for widening Redwood Avenue, fixing the South Y interchange by Bi-Mart, and for fixing Redwood

Highway from the South Y interchange out to the College. Additionally, there was support for a fourth bridge.

When asked about concerns for the future, residents are generally concerned about almost every issue they were questioned about. In particular, schools, transportation and water quality were issues of very high concern.

Residents were also very supportive of the city involving itself in the issue of “affordable housing.” Support was expressed for almost anything the city might do, including imposing regulations to require affordable housing efforts.

Finally, since the city has been asking many of the questions in this survey for a number of years, the trends and changes in public attitudes are worth examining. For the second year, this report now contains a section including annual trend graphs. Please see this section for a long-term perspective of reoccurring issues regarding city services and attitudes about living in Grants Pass.