



Northwest Survey & Data Services

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 2006 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 enjoy about living in Grants Pass; what they would like to change; what was wrong with any city services they rated as poor; and what they saw as the disadvantages and the advantages of growth in the community. Additionally, new questions about using cameras in public areas to deter traffic violations and crime were also asked. Finally, readers should look at the Annual Trends section to see graphs which reflect changes in the responses from 1998 through 2005 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," 78% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see Banner Table 26). This score is slightly lower than the scores of the last five years (80% to 82% depending on the year) and remains 15% higher than the rating given in 1998. Only 7% of respondents gave Grants Pass a rating of one or two as a place to live.

The belief that Grants Pass is a great place to live is stronger among older respondents. For those 34 or younger, 67% gave Grants Pass one of the two highest scores. For those age 35 or older, from 75% to 87% rate Grants Pass with a four or a five.

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 at all safe" and five was "very safe," 68% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 8% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety is the same as last year, and at the same time the percentage of respondents who felt the city to be unsafe has also stayed the same. Put in some perspective, these feelings are at almost exactly the same level as they were in 2000.

The feeling of Grants Pass as an unsafe place is highest among those who live in the Southeast portion of the city (18%) and by those over age 65 (13%). In addition, men continue to be slightly more likely to express that they feel unsafe than do women, although this year only by one percent (8% vs. 7%). Nevertheless, a vast majority of all groups feel safe living in Grants Pass. See Banner Table 27.

This general 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, 52% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods while 13% felt their neighborhood was "less safe." This perception of living in a neighborhood that is safer than others has been stable for the last few years, although the percentage of people who feel their neighborhood to be "less safe" has gone up slightly. In addition, 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 Southeast (16%) and the Southwest (15%) and lower in the Northwest (11%) and the Northeast (8%). For the Northwest, this is a significant change from last year, where only 5% thought their neighborhood less safe than other neighborhoods.

There was also significant variation between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with homeowners almost three times as likely as renters to feel that their neighborhood is "less safe" (25% vs. 9%). For renters, this feeling of not being "as safe" as other neighborhoods has increased a dramatic 11% compared to last year. See Banner Table 28.

Grants Pass Growth Rate

At this point in the survey, respondents were asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the city. A large majority of respondents (66%) now feel that Grants Pass is growing at "too fast" a pace. A minority of respondents (27%) felt the city was growing at "about the right pace", while only 3% felt the city was growing "too slowly." Over the nine 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" increased about 5% each year from 2000 to 2004 and then jumped 7% in 2005 and an even larger 10% this year. Last year was the first year that a clear majority of respondents feel the City is growing too fast, now this feeling is held by two out of every three residents. 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 range of topics, however, the most common changes people would like to see include limits to growth and population; control over housing prices, including subsidized low income housing; more and better paying jobs; improved shopping, including a wider variety of stores; activities for teens and young adults; improvements in traffic control and roads; and increased policing, particularly for speeding and drug use.

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, in particular the river and the parks. Finally, many people like the nature of the city and value highly the small town atmosphere and the friendly attitude of other residents.

For more information see the narrative responses to these questions in the Topline section.

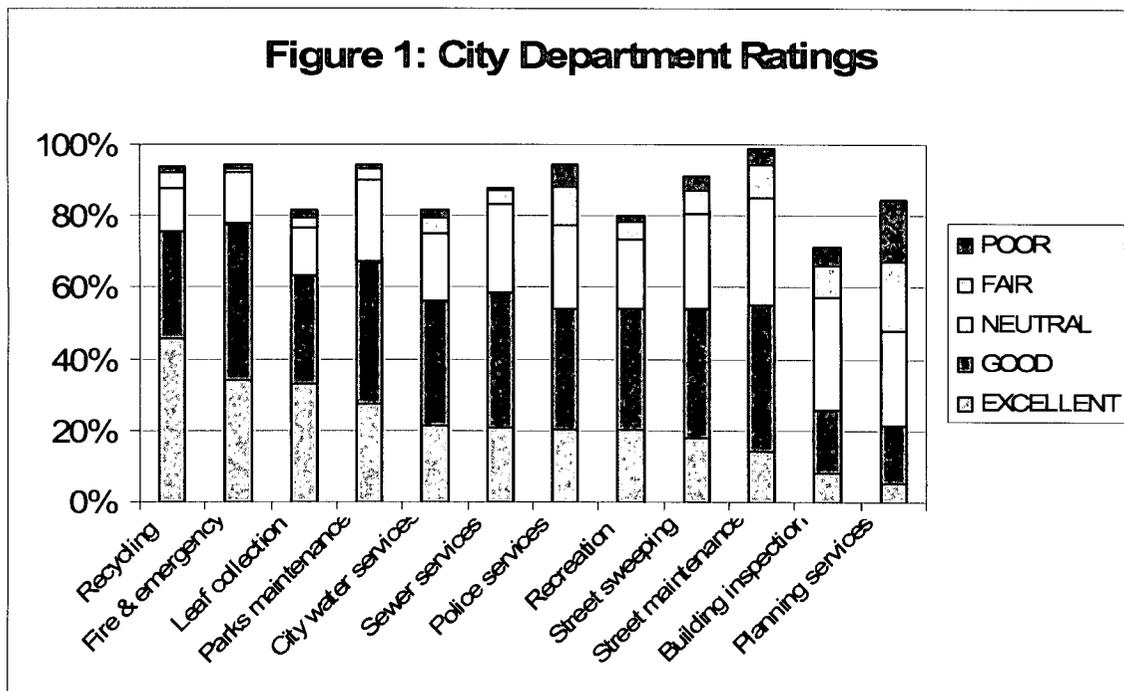
Grants Pass City Services

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 21% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, and Building Inspection, where only 26% gave these scores. For the last four 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, 29% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and an additional 32% gave a neutral rating, which may also be an indicator of difficulty in giving a rating. The case of planning was similar, where 16% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 27% gave a neutral rating. However, in the case of planning, 36% 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 and is 9% greater than it was just one year ago.

Even though they were among the 10 highly rated services, six city services (street maintenance, city water, sewer, recreation, street sweeping, and leaf collection) also had large numbers of respondents (31% - 37%) 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 6% to less than 1%. 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”. Most commonly, the comments reflect personal interactions the respondent had with the service in question. However, there are quite a number of specific comments on Police services and the low priority given to property crimes. In addition, the comments about the Planning Department speak specifically to the reason planning is rated poorly by so many respondents. Almost all comments about the Planning Department are about the respondent’s ever increasing concern with city growth, or about the difficulties respondents see in obtaining services and permits. For more detail see the narrative responses to these questions in the Topline section of the report. See Figure 1 for departmental ratings.



For most 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 were a strong tendency to rate most services higher if the respondent was 55 or older, a slight tendency for women to rate services higher than men, and the generally higher ratings given by respondents who have been residents of Grants Pass for five years or less. See Banner Tables 1-12 for examples.

Attitudes Toward the Value of Government

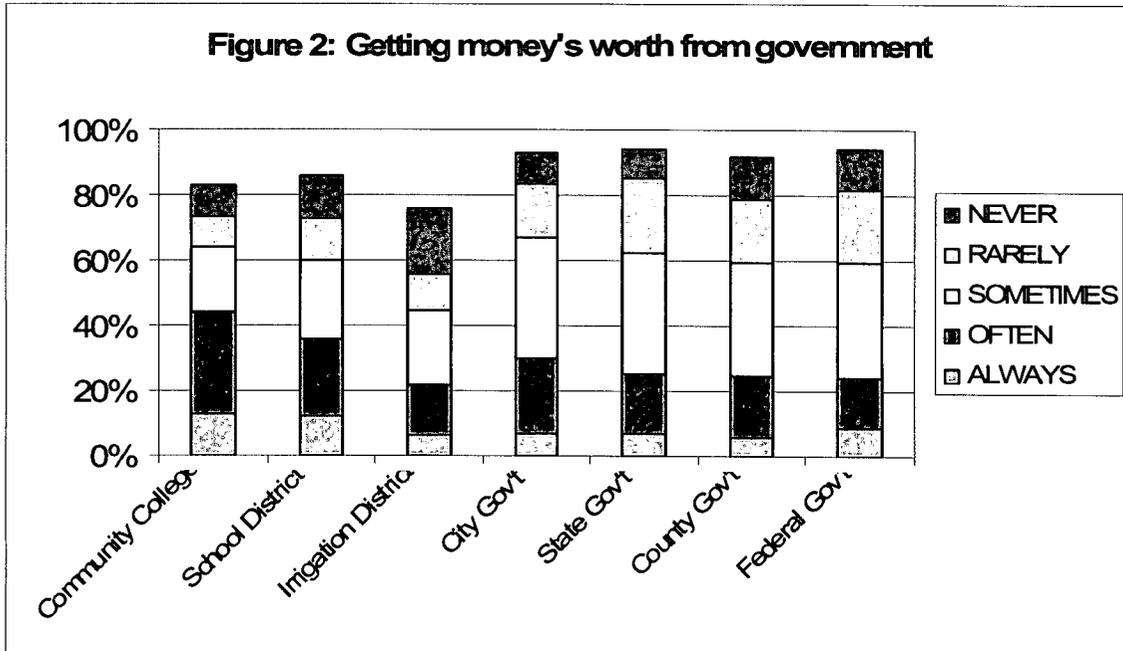
Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal, State, County, and City. In addition, they were asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents 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 is generally higher for smaller and more local units of government. See Banner Tables 13-19.

The Federal Government State and County governments all had relatively low levels of support for the idea of getting your money's worth from government where only 24% - 25% of respondents respectively 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 30% of respondents felt that they "always" or "often" got their money's worth. This was a slight decrease in the rating the City government received in 2005 and 2004, but exactly in line with the ratings the city received from 2001 to 2003.

Interestingly, 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. At the same time, those who find it "easy" to participate in Grants Pass city government 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.

For the other three governmental institutions, respondents held widely different views about their value. At the high end, 44% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth from the Community College, while at the other extreme only 22% 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. See Figure 2 for a comparison of the various levels of government.

Figure 2: Getting money's worth from government



Participation in City Government

Respondents were asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see Banner Tables 20-25). The majority of respondents (52%) 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 24% 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, 54% versus 44% – a finding that has been true for the last four years.

Even though attending public meetings may not be popular, almost twice as many respondents (41%) 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 over 65 least likely to have volunteered (33%), while those between ages 35 and 44 are much more likely to be volunteers (57%). It is also interesting to note that those who volunteer are more than twice as likely to have attended a city meeting when compared with those who do not volunteer (37% vs. 15%).

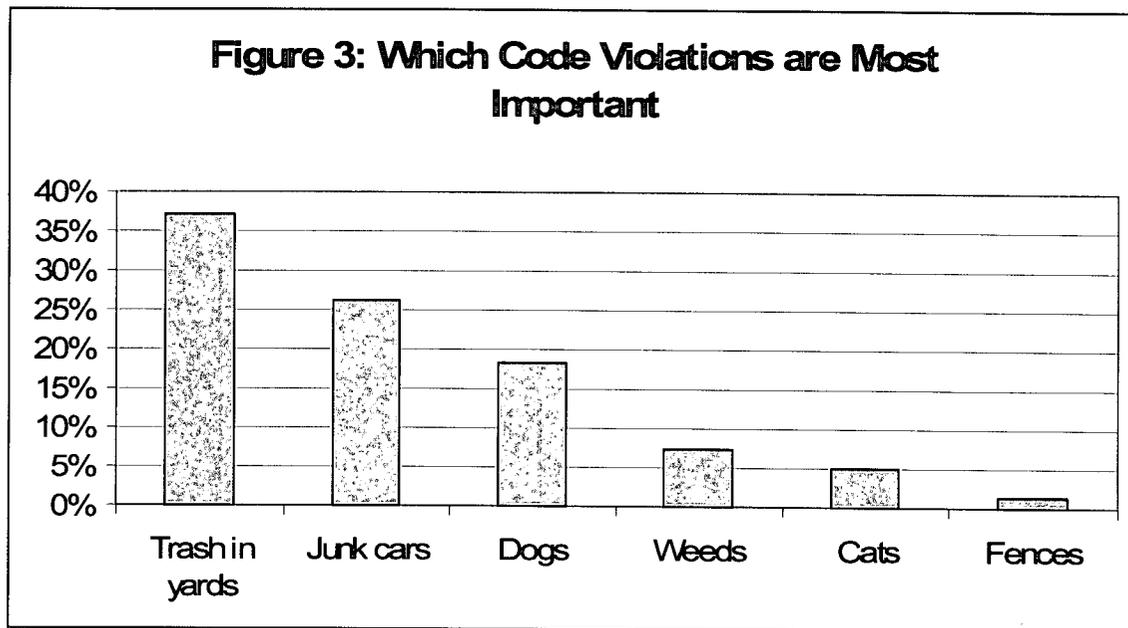
Forty-three percent of respondents feel that the city does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 65% answer affirmatively that the city meets their information needs. The score for informing residents about city issues declined slightly for the second year in a row, while the score for information needs saw a larger decline of seven percent from last year. The most useful source of city information was reported to be the city newspaper followed by television, newspaper ads and radio. This result has been essentially consistent over the years.

Public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 3.7% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities.

Code Enforcement

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 a new city program of increased code enforcement started by the city in January of 2006. Most respondents (72%) have not heard about the program. In addition, most respondents have not noticed any changes in the city (75%) or in their own neighborhood (84%) because of increased code enforcement.

Although respondents may have been unaware of the new code enforcement program, when asked about which of six possible code violations were most important to enforce, people had clear preferences. The two largest concerns were “trash in yards” (37%), followed by “junk cars” (26%). In addition, respondents were asked to pick a second choice among the six possible violations for enforcement and the only change was that “trash in yards” and “junk cars” reversed positions, but stayed as the top two concerns. See Figure 3 for percentage of respondents who thought each of six possible code violation issues was most important to enforce.

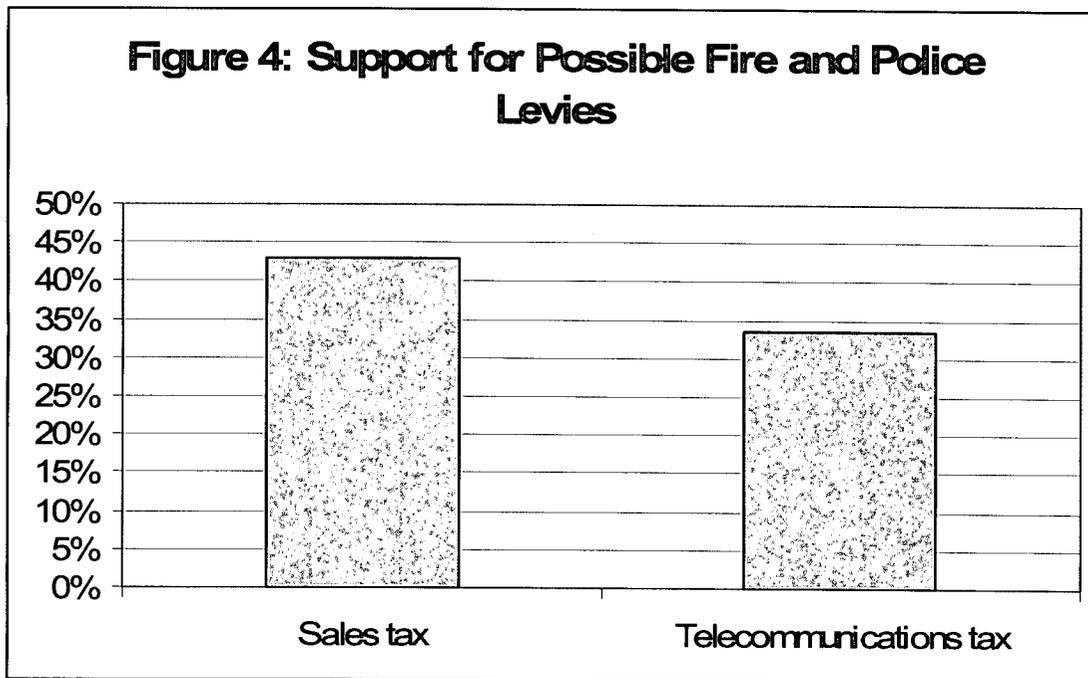


In addition to the importance of enforcement for the six possible code violations mentioned, respondents were also asked for suggestions on any other possible code violations that should be enforced. Many respondents had ideas about enforcement, but often the things mentioned were outside of the code enforcement arena, such as speeding, drug use, and other forms of criminal behavior. However, some respondents did mention

things such as control over substandard housing, forms of brush and vegetation control, evening curfews, and noise control. See the Narrative Section for more information.

Police and Fire Levy

After the code enforcement issue, respondents were given information about the current property tax levy that expires and its relationship to police and fire services. Respondents were then asked first if they would support a sales tax dedicated to fire and police, and afterwards asked if they would support a telecommunications fee for fire and police. Neither form of taxation was supported by a majority of respondents, although the idea of a sales tax did have a fairly high level of support (43%). Figure 4 below shows the level of support for each of these issues.



Although support for neither form of taxation was over 50%, there were segments of Grants Pass where a majority of respondents did support sales tax. In particular, respondents were more supportive the younger they were and the less time they had lived in the city. In addition women were more supportive than men (47% vs. 37%). See Banner Table 36 for more information.

Broadcast of City Council Meetings

Currently, Grants Pass does not have City Council meetings broadcast on television. However, the meetings of the County Commissioners are broadcast. In an effort to gauge public interest in the broadcast of council meetings respondents were asked first about their current viewing of county commission meetings. Most respondents (70%) had not watched a meeting of the county commission during the past month, while 20% had watched once or twice. Only 7% had watched the commissioners four or more times. Respondents were then asked how many times a month they thought they would watch

City Council meetings if they were available. The Majority of respondents (66%) said that they would watch one or more times, although only 24% said they would be frequent viewers (three or more times in a month). See Banner Table 39 for more information.

For the final question in this series, respondents were asked if they thought the city should spend \$75,000 in start-up fees and \$40,000 annually to broadcast council meetings. Overwhelmingly (71%) respondents were opposed to this level of expenditure. See Banner Table 40 for more information.

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.

However, this year's survey does show a substantial increase in the concerns about growth and the desire to see limits on growth and development. For the first time a clear majority of respondents think the growth rate is too fast and many oppose one or more aspects of development or the outcome of development. At the same time concerns about possible crime and violence are up, as well as the desire for increased policing and criticisms about the police. All of this shows that the change in attitudes about growth and its outcome, opinions that have been steadily growing for the past several years, may have now passed a threshold. Concern about growth now appears to be the primary community issue in Grants Pass.

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 third 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, growth, and attitudes about living in Grants Pass.