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Summary of Results

City of Grants Pass Survey

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February 2009

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 the Grants Pass Assistant City Manager, Laurel Samson, Steve Johnson & Associates planned and implemented the 2009 annual telephone survey of Grants Pass residents.

Survey Results

This report summarizes the major survey results. Readers can look at the Topline Results 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 about the city; what was wrong with any city services they rated as poor; what streets need improvements; and what they like and dislike about the changing image signs businesses have installed in the city. Finally, readers should look at the Annual Trends section to see graphs which reflect changes in the responses from 1999 through 2009 to the standard questions.

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," 80% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see Banner Table 33). This score is one percent higher than last year and only 2% lower than the highest rating of the last 10

years (82% in 2005). In addition, more people (45%) give Grants Pass a score of "excellent" as a place to live than any other score. Only 6% 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. Among those respondents 34 or younger, only 23% gave Grants Pass an "excellent" rating, while by age 65 or older, 57% rated Grants Pass as "excellent." Respondents in between these ages give Grants Pass an "excellent" rating that range from 37% to 49%. However, for all age-groups, a majority of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of either four or 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," 74% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 8% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety is improved 3% from last year and 6% from two years ago. At the same time the percentage of respondents who felt the City to be unsafe has stayed at the same very low level. Put in some perspective, the feeling that people are safe living in Grants Pass is higher than it was 10 years ago, and now equals the highest ratings in our 11 year involvement with this survey.

Perhaps more important than the high number of people who feel safe in Grants Pass is the fact that almost no one feels unsafe. Only 8% of the people report any sense of feeling unsafe and only 2.5% say they feel "not at all safe."

The feeling of Grants Pass as an unsafe place is highest among those who live in the Northeast and Southeast portions of the City (12%). This is a switch from previous years, where residents in the Northwest were the most likely to feel unsafe. The newly annexed portions of the City are also areas where people feel safe and very few people (6%) feel unsafe. Even with these variations among neighborhoods, a vast majority of all groups feel safe living in Grants Pass. See Banner Table 34.

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, 58% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods while 9% felt their neighborhood was "less safe." This perception of living in a neighborhood that is safer than others improved for each of the last two years, while for the same time the percentage of people who feel their neighborhood to be "less safe" went down. 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 (18%) and lower in the Northeast (3%) and the Northwest (6%).

Over the last two years an important change has taken place with the feelings of neighborhood safety among renters. Two years ago 25% of renters felt their neighborhood was "less safe." Last year that number was down to 11%, and this year it

is only 8%. For the first time renters and home owners both have the same feeling of safety in their neighborhoods. See Banner Table 35.

Grants Pass City Services

Respondents were asked a set of questions about 13 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 1-13.

Of the 13 services respondents were asked about, nine services received "good" or "excellent" ratings by over 50% of respondents, and the tenth (recreation programs) by 48%. The three services that did not get high ratings were Planning, where only 23% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, Building Inspection, where only 26% gave these scores, and Code Enforcement, where 27% gave ratings of 4 or 5. For the last five years the same 10 services were highly rated and Building Inspection and Planning have had low ratings. This was the second year the survey has asked about Code Enforcement, following the 2007 survey where specific questions about the importance of enforcing codes were asked.

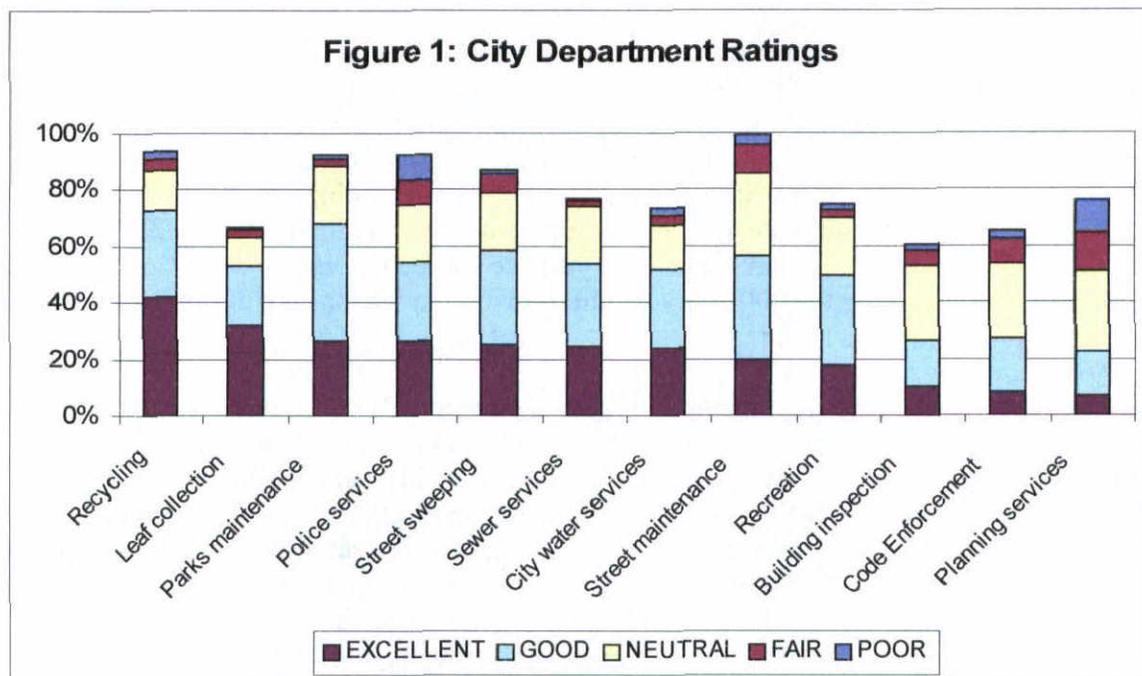
It should be noted, however, that the lower rated services, Building Inspection, Planning, and Code Enforcement, were also services where large numbers of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of Building Inspection, 39% 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 24% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 29% gave a neutral rating. Code Enforcement was similar to Building Inspection, with 35% unable to give a rating and 27% giving a neutral rating.

Additionally, in the case of Planning, 38% 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 11% greater than it was just two years ago. Code Enforcement also had a large number of people (22%) thinking the service is either "poor" or "fair."

Even among the 10 highly rated services, eight city services (parks maintenance, police services, street maintenance, city water, leaf collection, recreation programs, street sweeping, and sewer) also had large numbers of respondents (28% - 46%) 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 9% 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, or a belief that city government is inefficient.

However, there are quite a number of specific comments on Police services and the low priority given to property crimes or difficulty of getting service. 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 difficulties in obtaining services and permits, or their concerns with city growth. For more detail see the Narrative Responses section of the report. See Figure 1 for departmental ratings.



For most of the thirteen services, there were significant differences in how they were rated based on the characteristics of the respondent. The most significant differences were based on age and length of residence in Grants Pass, with respondents aged 55 or older and those who have been residents of Grants Pass for 21 years or more generally giving higher ratings than their counterparts. Additionally, women were slightly more likely to give higher ratings for services. See Banner Tables 1-13 for examples.

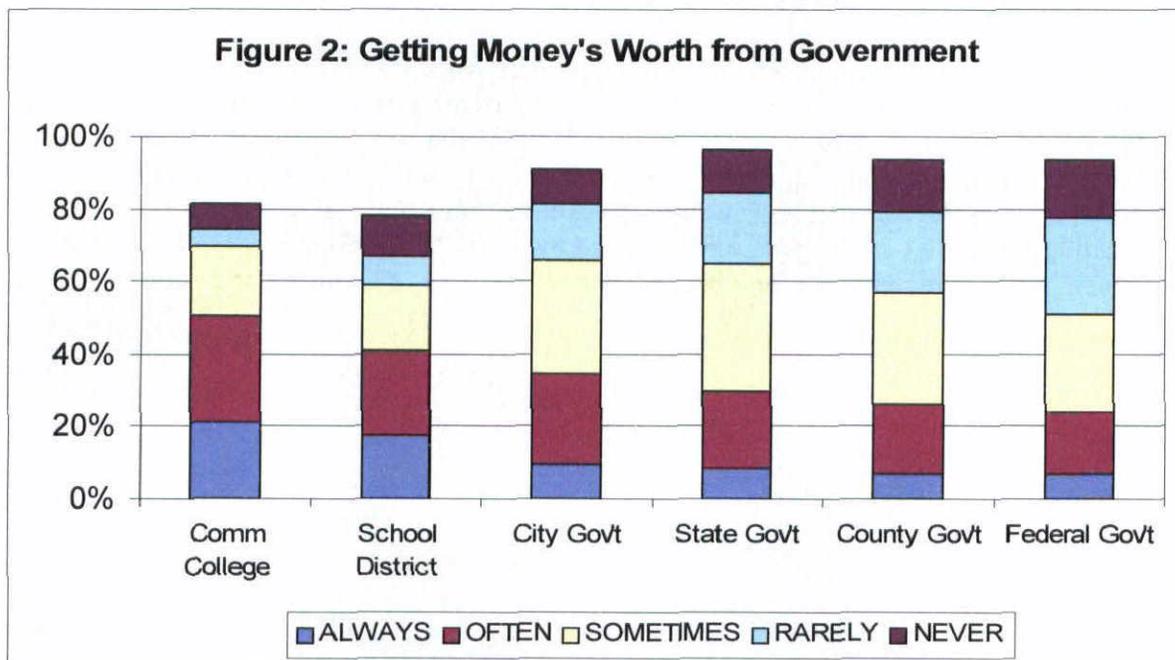
Attitudes Toward the Value of Government

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, and the local community college. 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 more often believe that they get their "money's worth" from the smaller and more local units of government over the larger units. See Banner Tables 14-19.

Respondents ranked the Federal, State and County governments lower than others; only 24% - 29% 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. This is an increase in the ratings the City has received for the last eight years, since 2000.

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 (82%). 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 two governmental institutions, the community college and the school district, respondents were very likely to feel they got their money's worth. At the high end, 51% of respondents felt they always or often got their money's worth from the Community College, while the School District received a higher rating than the general forms of government, with 41% of respondents feeling that they got their money's worth. See Figure 2 for a comparison of the various levels of government.



Participation in City Government

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see Banner Tables 20-32). The majority of respondents (58%) 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 18% have attended

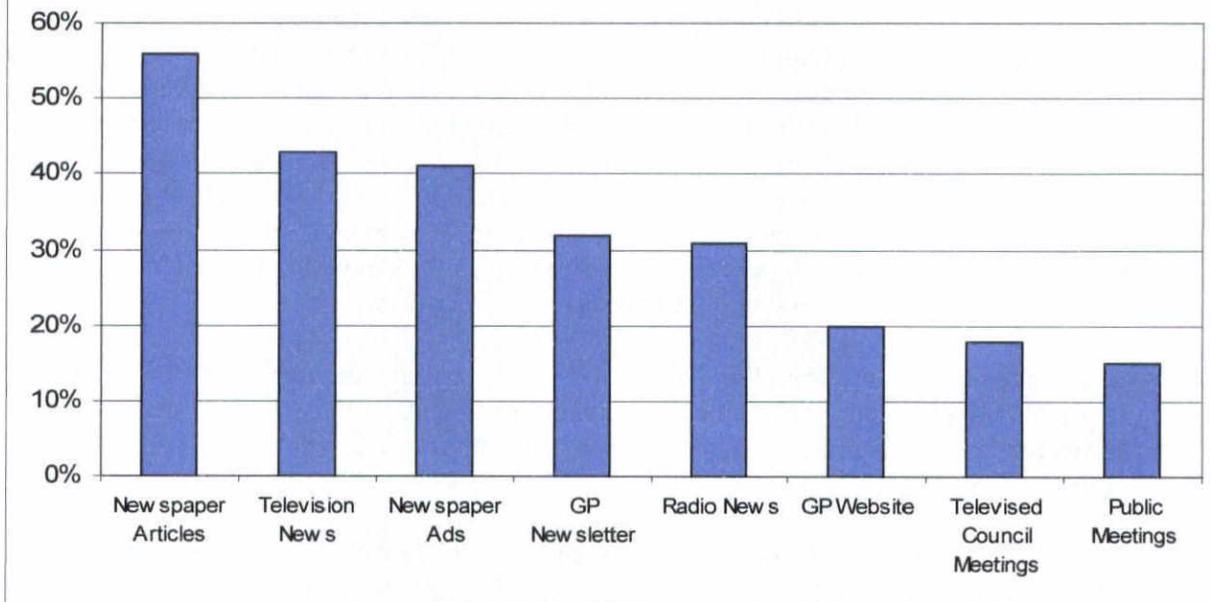
some form of local government or public meeting on city issues during the past 12 months. In fact, those who have not attended public meetings are more likely to feel that it is easy to participate in city government than are those who have attended public meetings, 61% versus 48% – a finding that has been true for the last six years.

Even though attending public meetings may not be popular, almost twice as many respondents (43% vs. 22%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. There are variations based on personal characteristics in those who are more likely to volunteer. Respondents over 65 are less likely to have volunteered (31%), while those between ages 35 and 44 are much more likely to be volunteers (54%). In addition, residents in the Northeast section of the city are least likely to volunteer (36%). It is also interesting to note that those who volunteer are more likely to have attended a city meeting when compared with those who do not volunteer (29% vs. 16%). See Banner Table 22.

Forty-nine percent of respondents feel that the City does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 69% answer affirmatively that the City meets their information needs. The score for informing residents about city issues increased slightly for the second year in a row, while the score for meeting information needs declined an insignificant half of a percent.

Respondents were asked about their use of a variety of sources that provide information on city issues. The most useful source of city information was reported to be articles in the local newspaper, used by 56% of respondents. Television news was a source of city information for 43% of respondents, newspaper ads by 41%, the City of Grants Pass Newsletter by 32% and radio news by 31%. Public meetings, televised Council meetings, and the City website were all used by a smaller number of respondents, 20% or fewer. See Figure 3 below for a breakdown on the use of all sources of information.

Figure 3: Sources that Provide City Information



Grants Pass Growth Rate

Toward the end of the survey, respondents were asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the City. The largest percentage of respondents (47%) now feel that Grants Pass is growing at "too fast" a pace. An almost equally large number of respondents (42%) felt the city was growing at "about the right pace", while only 7% felt the City was growing "too slowly." Over the eleven years that we have 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" steadily declined from 1999 through 2006. 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% in 2006.

Starting with 2007, for the first time in seven years, residents of Grants Pass increased their support for the idea that growth was at about the right pace. This year the support for the idea that growth is at the right pace increased again by another 6%. In 2007 the increased support came almost exclusively from men. In 2008/2009 the change came primarily from women. In addition, new residents are much less likely to think growth is too fast, when compared to residents who have lived in the City 5 or more years (34% vs. 50%).

However, even with support for the current growth rate higher than it has been for two years, it is still much lower than it was during the period from 1998 through 2002. See Banner Table 36.

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

At the end of the standard survey questions, respondents were 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: more and better paying jobs; increased economic opportunities; reduction in crime; more funding for the library; activities for teens and young adults; improvements in traffic control and roads; and increased policing, particularly for speeding and drug use. Some issues that were very common in almost every past survey for the last 10 years (i.e. limits to growth and population; control over housing prices; improved shopping) were rarely mentioned this year. However, many people continue to express a fear that Grants Pass is losing its small town feel and want to see changes that will preserve the town as they would like to see it.

Most of the changes between this survey and previous years surveys are probably due to the drastically changed economic circumstances of late 2008 and 2009. In the midst of a serious recession it is to be expected that jobs and economic concerns are more likely to be mentioned.

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. The things people enjoy about Grants Pass have remained the same for many years and did not change this year.

For the complete responses to what people would like to change and what they enjoy, see the Narrative Responses section.

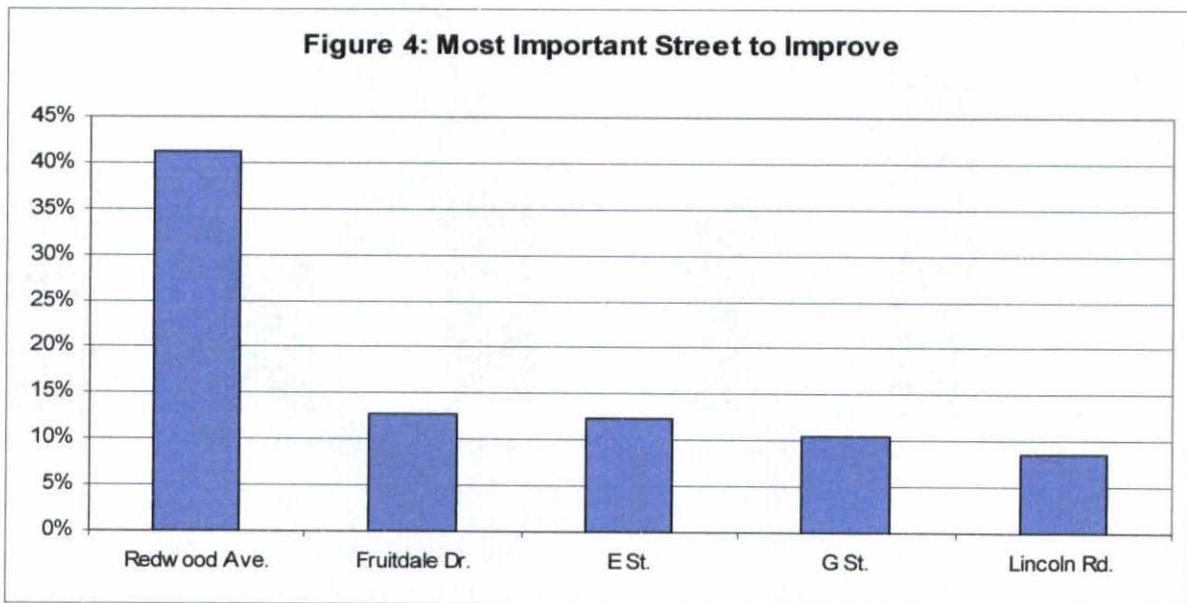
Street and Sidewalk Repair

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 questions this year asked respondents what streets and what sidewalks should have the highest priority for improvement. Respondents were first given the opportunity to name any streets and any sidewalks that they wished. Afterwards they were then asked to pick their first and second priorities from a list of street projects and a list of sidewalk projects that a city traffic study had previously recommended.

When asked the open-ended question about streets, respondents named many different streets in Grants Pass. The most common was Redwood Highway or Redwood Avenue (13%). Other commonly named streets included Williams Highway, Leonard, 6th and 7th, Fruitdale, G street, and Bridge. See the Narrative Response section for the complete list of streets people would like to see improved.

Respondents next picked the road they thought was most important to improve from a list of five possible roads. Redwood Avenue was on this list and was picked by the largest number of respondents (41%). All of the other four roads had respondents who thought

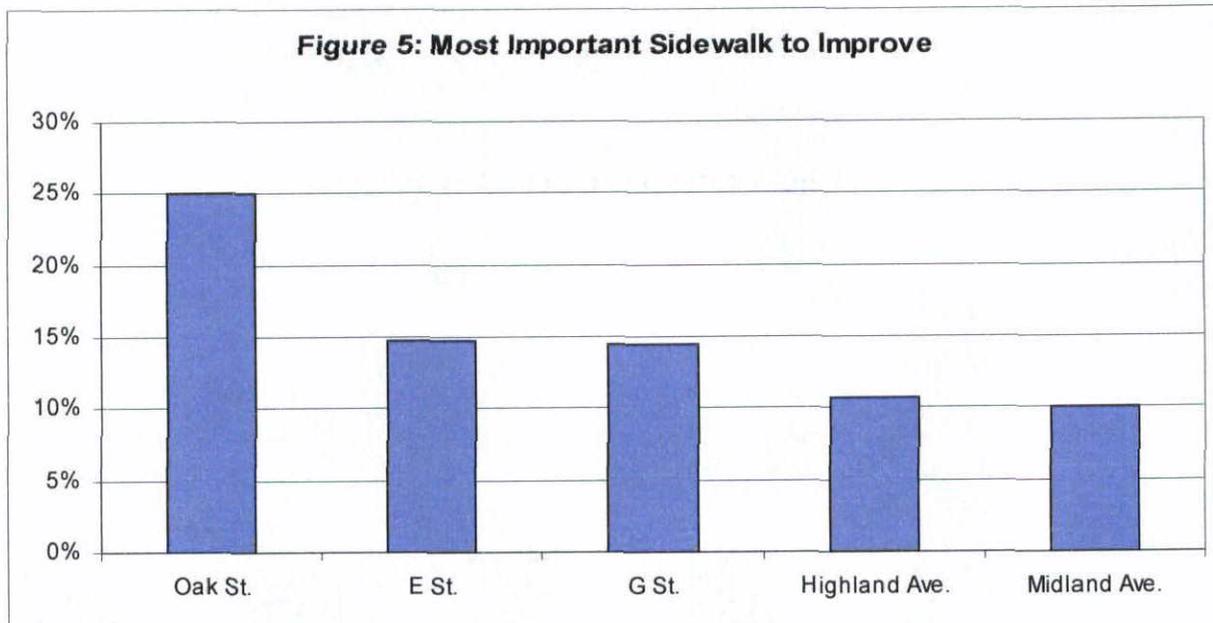
it was the most important to improve, but no other road had more than 15% of respondents who thought it was the most important. See Figure 4 for the complete results to this question.



In addition, respondents were also asked to pick from the same list which street they thought was the second most important to improve. In this case no single street received a large percentage of respondents who “voted” for it as their second choice. However, Redwood Avenue did receive an additional 15% of respondents who, although it was not their first choice for improvement, did consider it important enough to be their second choice. See the Topline Section and Banner Tables 37 & 38 for more information.

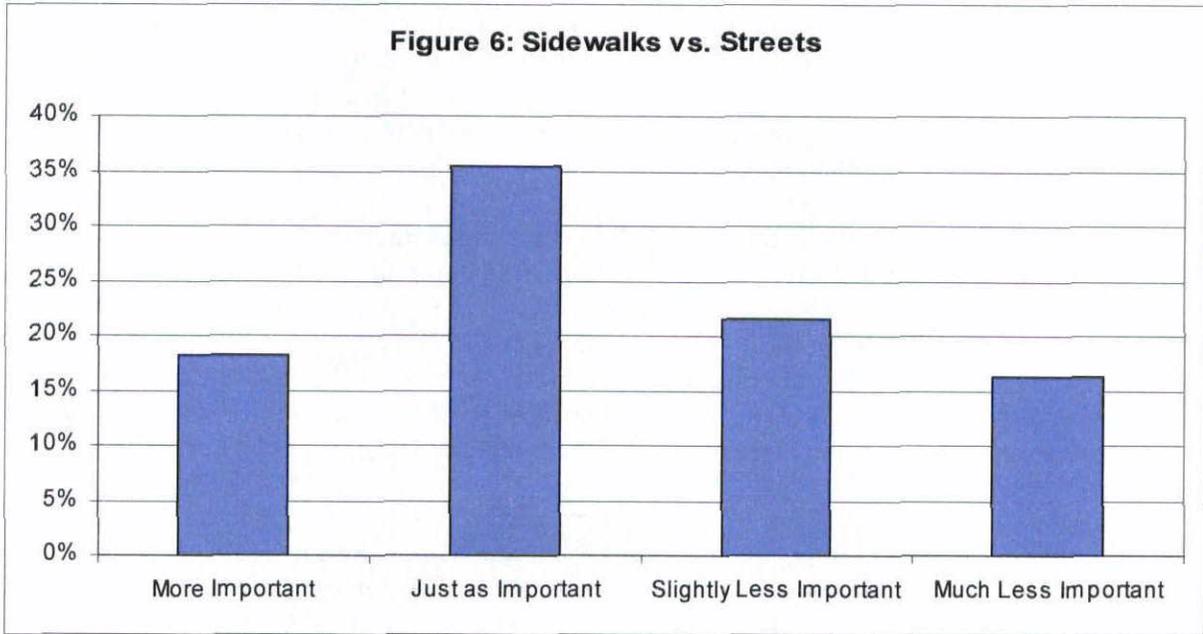
The same set of questions was also asked about sidewalk improvements. When asked the open-ended sidewalk question, respondents again mentioned a large number of streets and locations. However, many respondents thought Redwood Avenue; E, F, & G Streets; and Leonard Street were where sidewalks needed the most help. See the Narrative Response section for the complete list of sidewalks people would like to see improved.

When respondents were asked to pick their highest priority sidewalk project from a list of five possible projects, there was not a strong consensus for any of the projects. Twenty-five percent of respondents picked the Oak Street bike lanes and sidewalks from G to Bridge Street. However, 25% did not have an opinion and would not pick a project from the list. Of those who were willing to pick a project, the Oak Street project was almost twice as likely to be picked as any of the other four projects. See Figure 5 for the complete results to this question.



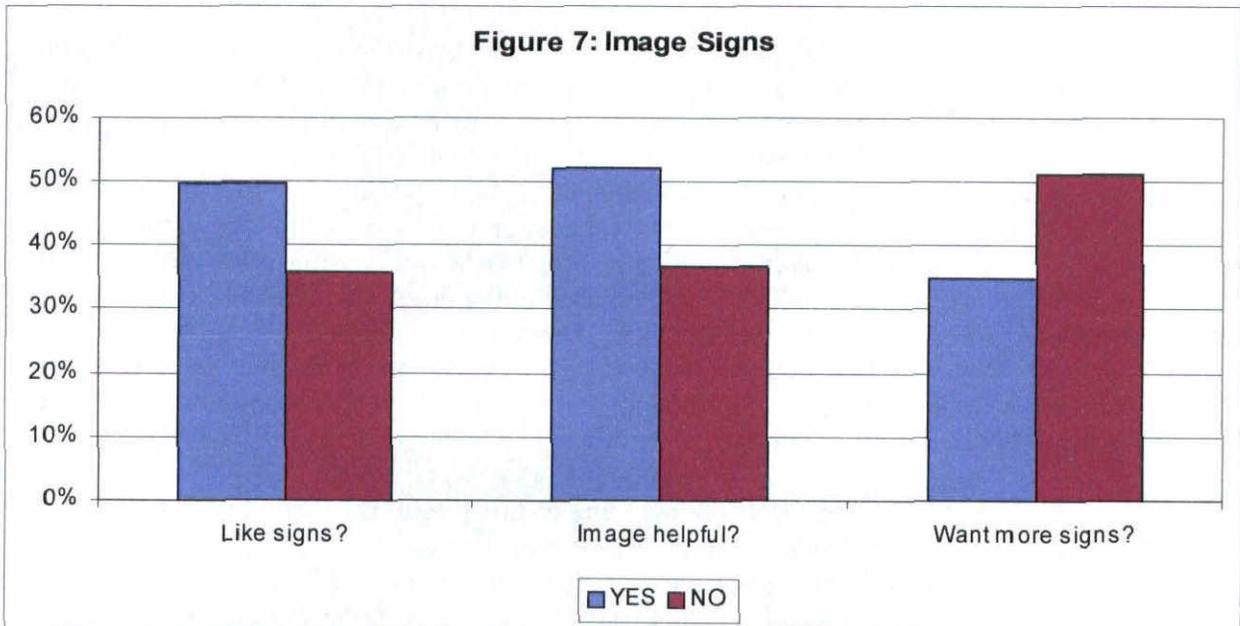
When asked to pick a second priority for a sidewalk project, there was no clear favorite, although the Oak Street project did pick up another 13% of respondents. At the same time, those respondents who could not make a choice also increased, with 33% of respondents unable to pick a project. See the Topline Section and Banner Tables 39 & 40 for more information.

The final question about street and sidewalk improvement was about the importance of sidewalk projects when compared to street projects. Respondents were asked to choose if sidewalk projects were “more important,” “just as important,” “slightly less important,” or “much less important” than street projects. A majority of respondents (54%) thought the sidewalk projects were either “just as important” or “more important” than street projects. See Figure 6 for the results to this question.



Changing Image Signs

The second set of questions added to this year's survey concerned the changing image signs some businesses have recently installed in Grants Pass. Respondents were asked if they liked the signs, if they found the signs helpful, and if they wanted to see more of these signs in the City. Figure 7 shows the percentage of respondents who said "yes" or "no" to each of these questions.



As you can see from Figure 7, more people like the current image sign than dislike them. In addition, a majority of people find the signs helpful, including a small number of people who do not like them. However, a majority of people do not want more of these signs in the City, including some people who both like them and find them useful. For more information see Banner Tables 42, 43, & 44.

To try and understand more about the image signs, respondents who disliked them were asked what they disliked. By far, the most common complaint was that they were a distraction and that they increased the danger of driving. Other respondents also made aesthetic complaints about their effect on the view and visual environment. For those respondents who said they found the signs helpful, a similar question was asked. Here too respondents had one primary answer, the signs provided useful information and they were easy to read. See the Narrative Responses section for the complete responses to these two questions.

Clearly, residents of Grants Pass are split on the issues related to image signs. The most likely reasons most people do not want more of them is that they are concerned about what the City would look like if image signs became common, and they are concerned about the distraction an increase in the number of these signs might pose.

Conclusion

Once again this year's survey continues to show that residents of Grants Pass like the community they live in very much and 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 shows a substantial change in the main concerns of Grants Pass citizens. For the past several years concerns about growth and the desire to see limits on growth and development have been the primary concerns. Today this has to a large degree been replaced by economic concerns related to jobs and development. Concerns about growth are still mentioned and a plurality still think the City is growing too fast, but the current state of the national economy can clearly be seen in the concerns of Grants Pass residents. At the same time concerns about possible crime and violence remain high, as well as the desire for increased policing. All of this shows that the current economic crisis has caused a local change in the relative importance of attitudes that support growth, development and jobs. However, many of the older concerns about over-development, city aesthetics, and the environment have not been erased, but instead pushed them into the background for now.

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 fifth year, this report now contains a section of 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.