



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 2005 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," 82% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see Banner Table 26). This score is almost identical to the scores of the last five years (80% to 82% depending on the year) and remains 19% higher than the rating given in 1998. Only 6% of respondents gave

Grants Pass a rating of one or two as a place to live. This is the second 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 and younger, 68% gave Grants Pass one of the two highest scores. By age 55 or older, the scores rise from 88% to 92%.

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," 68% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 9% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety has fallen slightly from last year (4%), and at the same time the percentage of respondents who felt the city to be unsafe has doubled (from 4% to 9%). Put in some perspective, these feelings are at almost exactly the same level as they were in 2000.

This feeling of Grants Pass as an unsafe place is highest among respondents ages 34 and younger (14%) and among those over age 65 (12%). In addition, men are more likely to express that they feel unsafe (11%) than are women (7%). Nevertheless, a vast majority of all groups feel safe living in Grants Pass.

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, 54% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods while only 10% 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 Southeast (17%) and the Southwest (14%) and low in the Northwest (5%) or the Northeast (6%).

There was also significant variation between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with homeowners almost twice as likely as renters to feel that their neighborhood is "less safe" (14% vs. 8%).

Grants Pass Growth Rate

At this point in the survey, respondents were asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the city. A majority of respondents (56%) now feel that Grants Pass is growing at "too fast" a pace. A substantial minority of respondents (43%) felt the city was growing "about the right pace", while only 2% felt the city was growing "too slowly." Over the eight 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 another 7% this year. This is

the first year that a clear majority of respondents feel the City is growing too fast. 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, more and better paying jobs, improved shopping, activities for teens and young adults, and improvements in traffic, roads and policing.

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 to these questions in the Topline section.

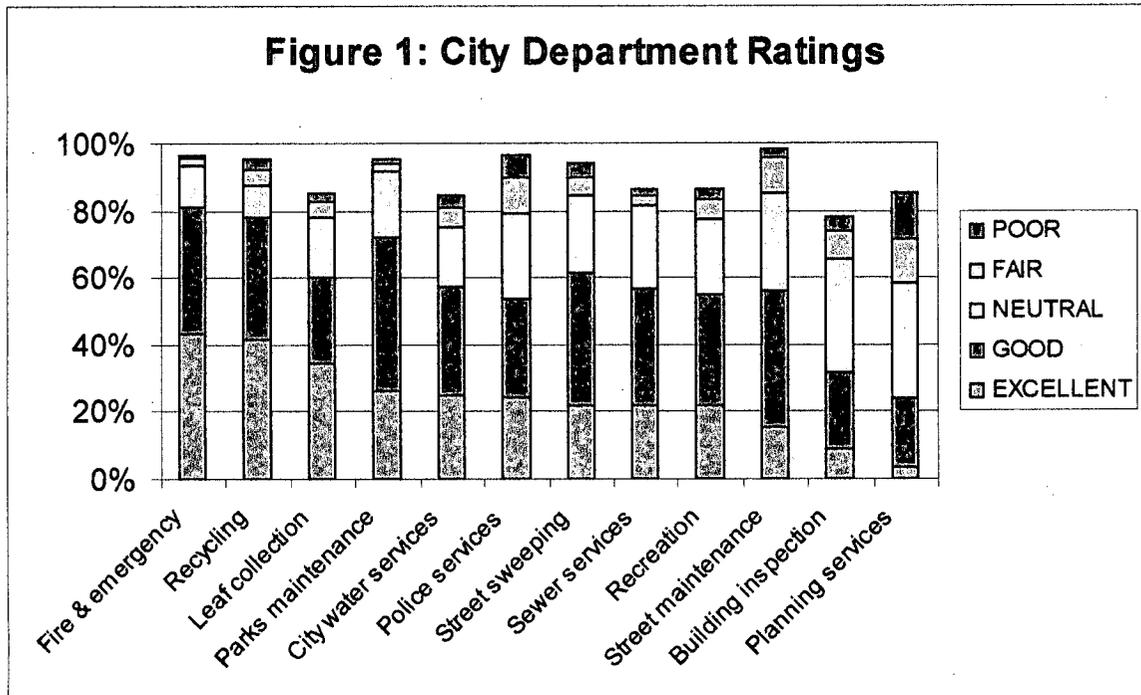
Grants Pass City Services

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 24% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, and Building Inspection, where only 32% gave these scores. For the last three 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, 22% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and an additional 34% gave a neutral rating, which may also be an indicator of difficulty in giving a rating. The case of planning was similar, where 15% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 35% gave a neutral rating. However, in the case of planning, 27% 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, five city services (city water, sewer, recreation, police, and leaf collection) also had large numbers of respondents (33% - 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 7% 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, as well as comments about the Planning Department being too growth-oriented. For more detail see the narrative responses to these question 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 tendency for women to rate services higher than men, and the generally higher ratings given by respondents who had been residents of Grants Pass for five years or less. See the Banner Tables for parks maintenance, street maintenance, and city water for examples of this.

Attitudes Toward the Value of Government

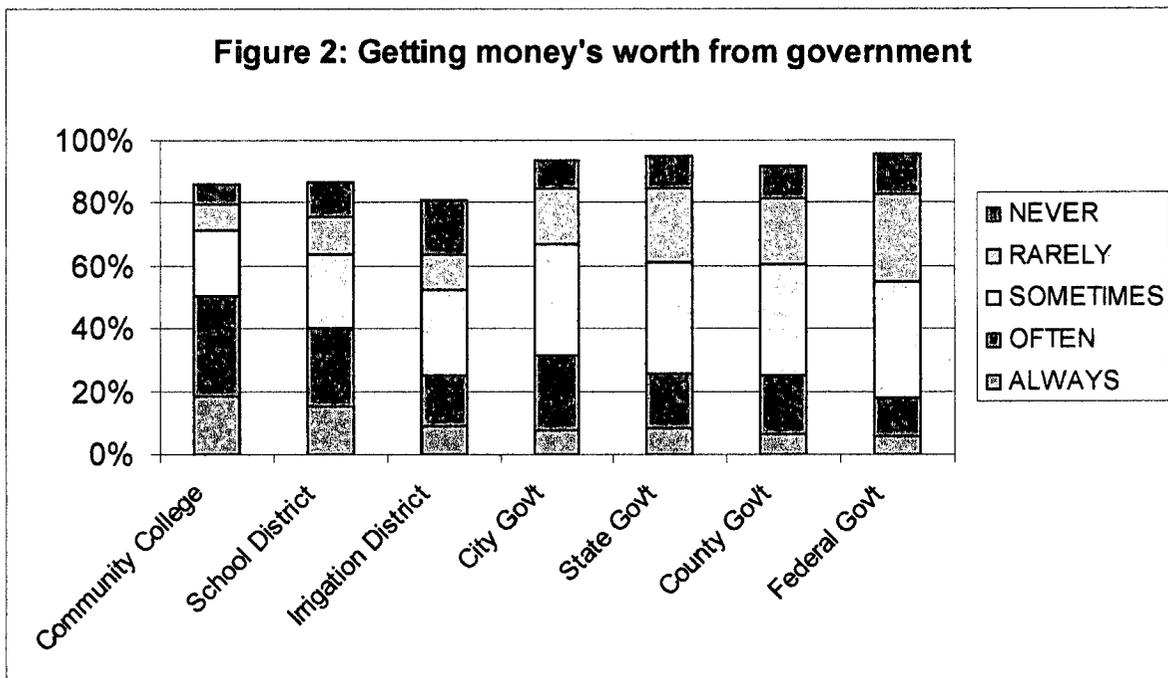
Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal, State, County, and City. In addition, they were asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents 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 13-19.

The least support for the idea of getting their money's worth from government was with the Federal government (18%), followed closely by State and County governments, where only 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 31% 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 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, 50% 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 40% 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 asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see Banner Tables 20-25). 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 19% 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, 60% versus 51% – a finding that has been true for the last three years. Additionally, respondents who have lived in Grants Pass 11 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 (39%) 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 are least likely to have volunteered. It is also interesting to note that those who volunteer are almost twice as likely to have attended a city meeting when compared with those who do not volunteer (26% vs. 14%).

Forty-six percent of respondents feel that the city does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 72% answer affirmatively that the city meets their information needs. The score for informing residents about city issues declined slightly from last year, while the score for information needs is up one percent from last year. The most useful source of city information was reported to be the city newspaper followed by television and radio. This result has been consistent over the years.

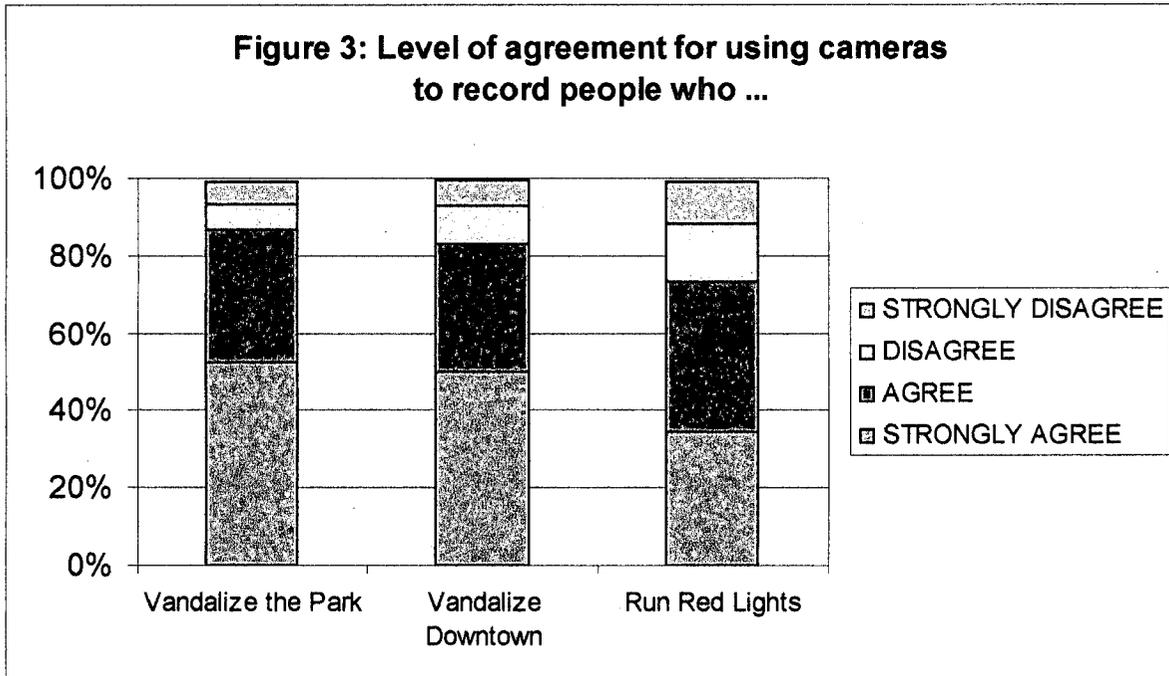
Public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 2.5% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities.

Video Camera Surveillance

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 the possible use of video camera surveillance as a way of reducing crime and identifying criminals. Respondents were asked their level of agreement with the use of video cameras at stoplights, in the parks, and downtown. For all three situations a very large majority of respondents agreed with the idea of using video cameras. Agreement ranged from 73% for video cameras at stoplights, up to 87% for the use of video cameras in the parks. In fact, for the idea of video cameras in the parks and downtown, 50% or more of respondents “strongly agreed” with this proposed use.

Although support for the use of video cameras is very strong, it is not equally supported by all segments of the Grants Pass population. In general, support is stronger among women than men, with opposition usually twice as strong among men as women. In particular on the issue of using video cameras at red lights, 20% of all men are strongly

opposed, but only 6% of women. In addition, respondents younger than 34 are universally less supportive than respondents from any other age group. See Banner Tables 29-31 for more detail. See Figure 3 for the support levels for video cameras.



Advantages and Disadvantages of Growth

After the video camera issue, respondents were asked three open-ended questions about growth in the community. First, respondents were asked what they thought was the main advantage of growth in the community. Respondents mentioned two main advantages to growth. First, that it would create more and better jobs in the community. Second, that growth would increase the tax base and make it possible for the city to offer more and better services. In addition, people mentioned a variety of other advantages, including increased diversity, better restaurants, better schools, increased property values, and economic stability. Finally, some respondents claimed that there was no advantage to growth and used the question to talk about what they saw as negative aspects of growth.

Respondents were next asked the opposite question, “what are the main disadvantages of growth in the community?” Respondents repeatedly listed several things they saw as disadvantages. These were primarily increased vehicles and traffic related problems, potential increases in crime and violence, congestion in general, the loss of the “small town” atmosphere, increases in prices, and the inability of services to keep up with growth. In addition, some people mentioned pollution, the demographics of recent arrivals to Grants Pass (primarily that they tended to be retired and not supportive of schools or taxes), the loss of the hillsides, and that the growth was not in the right job sectors.

Finally, respondents were asked what policies and procedures the City should put in place as Grants Pass grows. Respondents had more difficulty with this question and many were unable to provide any suggestion. However, among those who did there were some common themes. The suggestion most commonly mentioned was to increase both police and fire protection. The next most common set of ideas focused on issues related to improving roads and traffic. Additionally, many people wanted to see limits or new standards applied to new construction of buildings or houses. Some respondents also wanted to see the City try and limit or stop growth and control pressure on the Urban Growth Boundary.

For additional information, see the narrative answers to these questions in the Topline section.

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.