

General Plan 2002 Community Survey Summary

As the new millennium dawns, the City of Phoenix is preparing to update its General Plan as a planning and development guide for city officials, civic leaders and residents during the next twenty plus years. The City of Phoenix commissioned this research to develop an understanding of resident interest in, reaction to and priorities toward issues of urban services and growth.

The results found in this report are based on a sample of 2,044 Phoenix residents. The research was conducted by phone during the months of December 1999 and January 2000. The average length of interview was just over 20 minutes

A. Perceptions of/Attitudes Toward Phoenix

1. Most Valued Attributes

A portion of respondents was asked to specify what they valued most about the *Metropolitan* Phoenix area as a place to live and work. Despite being asked not to comment on attributes that cannot be affected by the government, more than one of five (22%) mentioned **the weather** as the thing they value most about the area.

Accessibility to needs (20%), job opportunities (13%) and a variety of entertainment options (11%) were also well mentioned.

Hispanic respondents were more likely than the average respondent to mention job opportunities (29%), a laid back lifestyle (10%) and reduced violence (6%). Conversely, Hispanic participants were less likely than the overall sample to mention the weather (9%), accessibility to needs (10%), entertainment options (1%) and the environment (2%).

Implications

The Valley's weather is appreciated by both visitors and residents. The weather can be a strong positive element for any marketing campaign for Phoenix, regardless of the target market.

The Phoenix area generally offers a friendly, safe, laid-back environment for Hispanics to seek employment. It is not surprising the Hispanic population in Phoenix is growing at a fast pace. Expect this population to grow at an even greater rate in the future.

2. Least Liked Attribute

When a portion of respondents was asked what they least liked about living in the *Metropolitan* Phoenix area, more than one of three mentioned the traffic (37%). Nearly one of five respondents cited **air pollution, smog and/or dust (19%)**. The area's **growth/sprawl (14%)**,

crime and drugs (13%) and a perception of poor mass transit (13%) were also mentioned often.

Implications

The issues that top this list are all considered problems by a large and significant portion of the population. Certainly issues relating to traffic and/or transit are most prominent, but concerns about pollution, managed growth and crime and drugs are of critical importance to major segments of the City's residents. These issues should be among the top of agenda items when The General Plan is developed.

3. Perception that Phoenix is a Good Place to Live

All 2,044 respondents were asked questions about living in the City of Phoenix (as opposed to the metropolitan area). Phoenix residents are **generally happy** with Phoenix as a place to live. Nine of ten (91%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Overall, Phoenix is a good place to live." Agreement was high among all analyzed subgroups.

Implications

Residents recognize there are plusses and minuses to living in Phoenix, but most see their residential "balance sheet" flowing with black ink (in the positive). City leaders need to remind and urge their constituents to back organized efforts that *maintain* and protect the factors that make living in Phoenix worthwhile. Residents may not inherently understand the cost of such maintenance, let alone improving quality of life.

4. Things Most Liked About Living in Phoenix

All respondents were asked to specify the one thing they most like about living in the City of Phoenix. Approximately one of three say the weather (34%). (Those who mentioned the weather were probed to think of things other than weather, family or friends.)

Accessibility to needs, such as **shopping and dining (18%), the availability of entertainment and cultural activities (13%) and employment opportunities (9%)** were the next most mentioned responses.

Implications

Interest in and availability of a wide variety of shopping and entertainment venues are good news for both consumers and retailers. A diverse population actively seeking shopping and entertainment choices provides a myriad of opportunities for creative business enterprises.

5. Things Most Disliked About Living in Phoenix

Respondents were then asked to specify the things they least liked about living in Phoenix. One of three respondents cited **traffic issues (34%)**, and about one of six mentioned **air**

pollution (17%). Crime and drugs (13%), growth/sprawl (11%) and poor mass transit (9%) were all mentioned by a significant portion of participants.

Implications

Solutions to problems must be logical and realistic and also appear that way to residents. Despite wanting relief from traffic problems, Phoenix residents have a history of voting down projects that are poorly defined, seem to assist a limited portion of the population or do not generate a sense of high feasibility for success.

B. Attitude Toward City Tax/Spending Considerations

Respondents were read a list of 25 ways tax money could be spent over the next twenty years and asked to specify how important it was for each item to receive funding.

Reducing air pollution (86%), increasing crime reduction efforts (82%), conserving the water supply (79%) and protecting residents from hazardous materials and contaminants (75%) were each considered very important by at least three of four respondents. Fifteen of the twenty-five subjects were each considered very important by at least half of the sample. The issues of attracting more tourists (21%) and conventions (27%) received the least support.

It is important to note ratings for desert preserves and city parks may not be fully representative of how strongly residents feel about the importance of these land uses. This research was conducted very shortly after the citizens of Phoenix passed a proposition calling for the purchase of state trust lands for the Sonoran Desert open space and the development of regional and neighborhood parks to enhance community safety and recreation (Proposition 101, passed in September 1999).

Implications

The issues which respondents previously stated they felt were negatives to living in Phoenix top this list (freeway development is a county/state issue and thus is not addressed). This list appears to accurately reflect the priorities of Phoenix residents.

C. Perception of How to Improve City

1. Most Important Thing City of Phoenix Can Improve

When respondents were asked what they considered the one most important thing the City of Phoenix can do to improve the quality of life for residents, **increasing crime reduction efforts (17%) and reducing air pollution (15%)** were the two most frequent responses.

Five of next nine most voiced comments dealt with **transportation issues: add light rail (8%), expand bus service (5%), improve mass transit (4%), widen major streets (3%) and improve traffic flow (3%)**. Other responses of three percent or more included: rehabilitate

depressed neighborhoods (4%), stop growth/urban sprawl (4%), increase employment opportunities (3%) and improve schools (3%).

Implications

Again, issues of traffic and transit, pollution and crime are voiced most often by residents as the primary factors that need to be addressed to maintain (or improve) the quality of life in Phoenix.

2. Suggestions Relating to Specific Changes

After giving their opinion of what they considered the most important thing the City of Phoenix can do to improve their quality of life, respondents were asked what they would suggest about implementing that improvement. Nearly half of the respondents who most wanted to have crime reduction effort increased suggested the city needs to **improve or expand law enforcement 47%**. Many felt there should be more **strict laws** for criminal activity (18%).

Respondents who most wanted a reduction in air pollution suggested **lowering emissions through carpooling, alternative fueling or stricter testing (51%), improving/expanding the transit system (20%) and developing a light rail system (18%)**.

Implications

Residents know what they do not like about the City and have some general ideas about how to make improvements. City leaders need to formulate solutions that meet the hopes and expectations of citizens in a palatable and realistic manner.

3. Perceptions of Importance of Potential Improvements to Sky Harbor Airport

A sub-sample of respondents were read a list of five factors that could improve Sky Harbor Airport and asked their perception of the importance of each item. Seven of ten (71%) felt that **direct access to the airport for public transit** was very important; more than 9 of 10 (94%) considered it at least somewhat important. Half or nearly half felt more short term parking (50%) and maintaining a competitive advantage (45%) were very important. About a third considered using more land for buffer zones (36%) and expanding the airport (32%) to be very important.

Implications

Residents showed concern for convenience for themselves and their visitors in their strong support for public transit access to the airport.

Though support for airport expansion and buffer zones is lower than that for access and parking, residents may not fully understand these issues. Phoenix is a major hub for air traffic and the public needs to be educated about significant increases in flight activity expected in the future.

4. Perception of Importance of Potential Improvements to City Parks

A randomly selected portion of respondents was read a list of ten ways in which city parks could be improved and asked to rate their perception of the need for each improvement. **Night time security lighting (72%), restrooms (64%), increased accessibility for persons with disabilities (61%), children's play equipment (59%) and walking/biking paths (52%)** were each considered very important by more than half the respondents.

Implications

All improvements were considered at least somewhat important by two-thirds or more of the sample. Residents value and want parks. This, then, is a priority list. Safety and basic comforts are considered to be of greatest importance.

While importance is rated highly, it is important to note ratings for city parks may still be understated. This research was conducted very shortly after the citizens of Phoenix passed a proposition calling for the development of regional and neighborhood parks to enhance community safety and recreation (Proposition 101, passed in September 1999).

5. Perceptions/Use of Preserves

A randomly selected portion of respondents was asked if they use any preserve or open space in the city of Phoenix. Nearly two of five (37%) said they did make use of such areas.

Respondents who said they did use preserves or open spaces within the City of Phoenix were read a list of ten ways such areas could be improved and asked their perception of the need for each improvement. **Maintaining the natural landscape** was considered very important by seven of ten respondents (70%). Also considered very important by more than half of those sampled were **picnic areas with shade (58%), trails for hiking, jogging or biking (57%) and park rangers for security (55%)**.

Implications

Once again, respondents are saying the quality of life is here, please maintain it (preserve the natural landscape). Also, each improvement was considered at least somewhat important by most respondents. None of the issues are regarded as poor ideas, they are simply measured against overall priorities.

It is important to note ratings for desert preserves may not be fully representative of how strongly residents feel about the importance of these lands. This research was conducted very shortly after the citizens of Phoenix passed a proposition calling for the purchase of state trust lands for the Sonoran Desert open space (Proposition 101, passed in September 1999).

D. Perception of/Attitude Toward Neighborhood

1. Main Reasons for Location of Home

All respondents were asked to give their three main reasons for why they chose to live where they do in Phoenix. The three most mentioned reasons were each voiced by about one of five respondents: **family (20%), proximity to work (20%) and the low cost of living (19%)**. One of six respondents said they liked the look of the neighborhood (17%) and a like percentage simply stated they liked the weather where they live (17%).

Implications

The high percentage of comments regarding a desire to be close to one's place of work is probably due to the frustration with traffic and transportation issues seen in other responses.

A large portion of respondents said "family" was a factor in their choice of home location. This may spell an opportunity to promote Phoenix as one's hometown (not just someplace to which they have moved).

2. One Thing City Could Do to Improve Neighborhood

Each respondent was asked to specify the one thing the city could do to improve their neighborhood. A wide range of responses was given, headed by **more police patrols/quicker response times (11%) and reducing/slowing neighborhood traffic (10%)**.

Implications

These issues are symptomatic of urban growth and increased population density. As the city population continues to expand, there will be increasing need for protecting the public and enforcing traffic laws.

3. Perception of Factors to Improve Neighborhood

All respondents were read a list of nine ways neighborhoods could be improved and asked their perception of the importance of each improvement. About two of three said **reducing dust and odors was very important (66%)**. Other issues considered very important by more than half of the sample include **increasing the privacy of yards from shops and freeways (54%), work places within a few miles of home (52%), reducing cut-through traffic (51%) and developing land toward the center of the city before land near the edge of the city (51%)**.

Implications

All of the nine factors were felt to be at least somewhat important by more than half the sample. Further, eight of the nine were supported (strongly or somewhat) by three-quarters or more of the sample. This is another listing of priorities.

Solutions to one problem, freeways and other major traffic arteries, impact another problem - dust and odors.

4. Incentives for Developing Vacant Land

Respondents were asked how they felt about the city giving incentives to developers for building on vacant land. Approximately one of three said they were very favorable to this idea; three of four stated they were at least somewhat favorable.

Implications

While the majority seem to favor the idea of incentives to develop vacant land, support is not as strong as for other ideas measured in this study. It is unclear what issues might trigger "somewhat favorable" reactions from residents. For example, issues such as traffic, privacy and a perception of inappropriate land use could be among those causing less than strong support.

5. Importance of Additional City Services/Amenities

Some randomly selected respondents were told the city is considering locating city services such as police, building safety, water, parks and recreation programs and other departments in neighborhoods. Participants were then asked how important they thought it was the city do this in their neighborhood. Nearly half felt it was very important (48%) and about five of six thought it was at least somewhat important (84%).

These respondents were also asked about adding community meeting rooms for nonprofit groups and neighborhood associations to use. Three of ten participants (30%) felt it was a very important measure for the city to consider. More than three of four thought the idea was at least somewhat important (77%).

Implications

These ideas are valued in greater proportion by major subgroups of citizens, such as lower income residents, minorities and women. Perhaps the City should place pilot projects with these services in areas of the city with high concentrations of citizens most favorable to them to test and refine the elements of these services.

6. Ideas to Make Community Safer

A random sample of respondents were asked what they thought the police department could do to make their community a safer place to live. The primary responses given centered on **police being more visible, available and in contact with the community.**

Implications

Many residents appear to feel there may not be a sufficient level of police patrols/ officers in their neighborhood.

E. Commuting Issues

1. Commuting Time to Work

Respondents who commute were asked how long it takes them to travel to work as well as how long they were willing to take to travel to work. The median time respondents are **willing to travel is 30 minutes**, while the current median time is 20 minutes.

Most (62%) said they were willing to travel at least 20 minutes before they would consider changing jobs or moving. However, more than half (56%) currently travel less than twenty minutes. Only four percent said they spend more than 45 minutes getting to work.

Implications

Respondents indicate a willingness, and perhaps a knowing resignation, to accept longer travel times than they currently have.

2. Likelihood to Consider Mass Transit

Respondents who work outside their home were asked how likely they would be to take mass transit to work if parking were a minimum of 25 dollars a month and a transit ticket were given to them for free. Nearly half (46%) said they would be very likely to use mass transit in such a case and about three of five (61%) said they would be at least somewhat likely to consider mass transit as an option for getting to and from work.

Implications

The high level of positive reaction toward using mass transit is surprising. It may be that respondents are assuming transit options and schedules will improve and expand at the same time.

3. Likelihood to Consider Car Pooling

Respondents who work outside their home were asked how likely they would be to form or join a car pool to work if parking were a minimum of 25 dollars a month and a car pool parking space were provided for free. About two of five (41%) said they would be very likely to become involved in a car pool given this scenario, and about three of five (60%) said they would be at least somewhat likely to consider car pooling if parking at work cost a significant amount.

Implications

These are strong positive figures. However, actual involvement will probably be less due to problems relating to development and coordination of carpooling programs. The city and major employers must work to design incentives/rewards that encourage (and retain) high levels of participation.

F. Growth/Expansion Issues

1. General Attitude Toward Future Growth

A randomly selected sample of respondents were asked if they felt the continued growth of the city would bring more benefits or problems. Approximately three of five (59%) questioned said they felt **continued growth would bring more problems**, three of ten (31%) envisioned more benefits and one of ten (10%) was not sure what the future would hold with a continued growth.

Implications

Residents are more likely to be concerned with problems of growth than they are interested in the benefits. Good solutions to transportation problems, air pollution, and crime might generate more enthusiasm for growth.

2. Location of New Landfill

A portion of respondents were randomly selected and asked about their preference for the site of a new solid waste landfill. These respondents were told a site within the city would cost less and offer lower fees, but would bring the landfill closer to neighborhoods. Higher costs and fees would occur if the landfill were away from neighborhoods and outside of the city limits. Three of four (75%) said they felt **the landfill should be located outside of the city limits even if they had to pay higher fees**. About one of six (17%) said they would prefer to have the landfill located within the city, allowing for lower fees.

Implications

Support for the landfill to be located away from neighborhoods is dominant in virtually all parts of the City.

3. Allocation of Housing Resources

Randomly selected respondents were read a list of five ways housing resources may be allocated and asked their perception of the importance of each type of allocation.

Each type of resource allocation was considered very important by more than half the sample, and three were considered very important by at least seven of ten respondents - **housing assistance for special needs groups (73%), stop housing discrimination (73%) and increase home ownership opportunities (70%)**.

Implications

Each of these allocations is considered at least somewhat important by nine of ten respondents. Generally, residents appear to consider all these issues to be basic rights.

4. New Development Fees

Respondents were randomly selected and asked if the city should continue to charge development fees to cover the cost to build facilities that serve new developments. More than two of three (69%) felt such fees should continue to be imposed.

Implications

The majority of respondents want new developments to pay their own way, and thus do not want to share in the costs for facilities that will serve these new developments.

5. Taxes for New Development

Two of three (67%) randomly selected respondents feel additional taxes and fees for building facilities needed to serve new developments should be limited to those benefiting from the facilities and **not imposed on all residents**.

Implications

Unless it can be shown that these facilities will benefit more than a limited population (e.g. a housing subdivision) the percentage favoring imposition of fees/taxes on all citizens will be low.