

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

The City of Santa Monica asked Goodwin Simon Victoria Research to conduct a telephone survey of Santa Monica residents to assess attitudes about city services and to identify changes in attitudes compared to similar studies conducted in previous years. Since most of the questions changed starting in 2005, most findings presented in this study are compared only to the 2005 study.

A total of 400 interviews were completed citywide with randomly selected adults living in Santa Monica, plus an additional 17 interviews conducted with Latino residents. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish between January 24 and 29, 2007. The margin of error for this study for citywide results is about plus or minus 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

## FINDINGS

### OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH CITY SERVICES REMAINS HIGH

- As was seen in previous years, Santa Monica residents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the services provided to them by city government. Eighty-four percent say they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with “the job the city of Santa Monica is doing to provide city services.” This figure is nearly identical to what has been found in previous surveys. Only 15 percent are dissatisfied.

### RESIDENTS REMAIN DIVIDED ON RATING OF CITY FOR ADDRESSING NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

- While the vast majority of residents are satisfied with the job the city is doing to provide city services, residents are nearly divided on how well the city is “addressing neighborhood concerns.” Forty-four percent give the city a positive (“excellent” or “good” rating) in this area, while a near identical 42 percent give the city a negative (“fair” or “poor”) rating. Fourteen percent are unable to rate the city for addressing neighborhood concerns.
- These ratings are unchanged from 2005.

## **RESIDENTS EXPRESS MUCH IMPROVED BUT STILL MIXED VIEWS ABOUT CITY SPENDING PRIORITIES AND OPERATING EFFICIENCY**

- No ratings for the city were more improved from 2005 to 2007 than those for whether the city is “spending money in the right areas and on the right problems” and whether the city is “operating efficiently.” While views are still quite mixed for both items, there has been a net substantial improvement in ratings. That is, positive ratings have increased, and negative ratings have decreased for these two items more than any other rating in the survey.
- Positive opinions about whether the city is “spending money in the right areas and on the right problems” have improved since 2005. Two years ago, 24 percent felt the city was doing an “excellent” or “good” job in this regard and 54 percent gave a “fair” or “poor” rating indicating a negative view. In the current study, 39 percent have a positive impression and 47 percent rate the city negatively. While this represents an improvement (a narrowing of the gap from -30 points to -8 points), negative ratings still outweigh positive views on this topic.
- In 2005, forty-six percent rated the city positively and 40 percent rated it negatively for “operating efficiently.” In the current study, positive ratings outweigh negative ratings by nearly 2-to-1, with 56 percent having a positive view and 28 percent a negative impression.

## **HOMELESSNESS AND TRAFFIC REMAIN MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING CITY; INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT CRIME**

- Traffic and homelessness remain at the forefront of residents’ attention, and concern about them has been growing.
  - In response to an open-ended question asking residents to state the one or two most important issues facing the city, 48 percent said the most important issue facing the city is the number of homeless on the streets or lack of services for the homeless. This is near equal to the 45 percent giving this response in 2005. However, there has been a gradual upward trend in concern since 2002 when just 33 percent expressed concern in this area.
  - Nearly one-third (32%) said that traffic is the most important issue, up from 25 percent in 2005 and 18 percent in 2002.

- Concern about crime, including gangs, has doubled since 2002, when seven percent called this their top concern. In 2005 that number rose to 11 percent. Today it stands at 14 percent – twice as high as 2002 levels.
- Concern about growth and development continues to be salient. In the current study, 13 percent volunteer growth or overcrowding as one of the most important issues facing the city – an insignificant drop from 16 percent in 2005 and equal to the 13 percent giving this response in 2002.
- Concern about parking was mentioned by eight percent – a drop from 16 percent in 2005 and equal to the eight percent giving this response in 2002.
- In a closed-ended battery of questions asking residents to rate the seriousness of problems facing the city, the survey found again that homelessness is seen as the most pressing concern (76% rated it as serious), followed by the lack of affordable housing (69%), and traffic (65%). As we found in the open-ended question, concern about parking fell from 2005, from 62 percent calling it serious then to 48 percent in the current study. While public safety issues may have grown in salience, when asked specifically about how serious a problem are gangs and crime, these issues generated a relatively low level of concern (31 percent and 24 percent respectively). In fact, they were the two weakest items of the seven tested.
- The same is true of affordable housing: residents rated it as a very serious problem in this closed-ended question battery, but it ranked far below homelessness and traffic in the open-ended question, when residents were asked to choose the single MOST serious problem.
- The findings from the open-end and close-ended question clearly show that traffic and homelessness are at the forefront of residents' attention. Affordable housing may not be as salient, but is a top order concern when the issue is introduced. Second tier concerns include parking, growth and development, and crime.

## **CITY MARKS FOR ENFORCING LAWS AGAINST HOMELESS FALL FURTHER**

- Nearly six in ten (57%) residents give the city negative (“fair” or “poor”) ratings for “enforcing laws against aggressing begging or panhandling,” up from 51 percent in 2005. Fifty-four percent give the city negative ratings for

“enforcing laws against overnight camping in parks and doorways.” This also represents an increase in negative ratings in this area from 2005 when 47 percent did so.

- However, the city does earn net positive ratings for “enforcing laws that keep public spaces clean and safe for everyone.” Fifty-four percent gave the city a positive rating for this, with 39% rating the city negatively.

## EVALUATIONS OF SPECIFIC SERVICES

- The survey asked residents to rate a battery of specific services offered by the city. Most ratings are far more positive than negative. The areas where residents show the greatest satisfaction are in library services (83% give the city a positive job rating in this area), communicating with residents (81%), landscaping (77%), trash and recycling collection (76% positive), fire services (75%), and tree trimming (69%) – all areas at the top of the list in 2005 as well.
- Some services -- such as senior services, airport noise prevention, and funding for the arts -- receive lower positive ratings simply because residents are less familiar with them and, therefore, are more likely to give a “not sure” response.
- The city receives its weakest ratings for keeping traffic flowing smoothly, with two-thirds (66%) giving the city a negative rating in this regard (little changed from 2005). As noted above, the city also gets higher negative ratings for enforcing laws against aggressive begging and panhandling (57%) and overnight camping (54%), and for spending money in the right areas (47%), for keeping public spaces clean and safe (39%), keeping streets and alleys clean (36%), enforcing building and zoning laws (35%), enforcing noise laws (34%), and protecting pedestrian safety (34%).
- Positive ratings for each service are as follows:
  - Library (83%, up from 71% in 2005)
  - Communicating with residents (81%, up from 70%)
  - Landscaping (76%, down insignificantly from 79%)
  - Trash collection (76%, down insignificantly from 80%)
  - Fire Department (75%, unchanged from 74%)
  - Tree trimming (69%, unchanged from 68%)
  - Protecting the environment (62%, up insignificantly from 58%)

- Street/alley cleaning (61%, up insignificantly from 58%)
- Emergency 911 services (61%, down slightly from 69%)
- Pedestrian safety (59%, down insignificantly from 62%)
- Historic preservation (59%, up from 52%)
- Recreation and sports programs (58%, down insignificantly from 60%)
- Youth services (56%, up from 49%)
- Enforcing noise laws (55%, down insignificantly from 60%)
- Enforcing laws that keep public spaces clean and safe (54%, not asked in 2005)
- Senior services (51%, unchanged from 51%)
- Arts funding (50%, up insignificantly from 44%)
- Enforcing zoning and building laws (48%, up insignificantly from 44%)
- Addressing neighborhood concerns (44%, down insignificantly from 45%)
- Enforcing airport noise limits (40%, up insignificantly from 35%)
- Keeping traffic flowing smoothly (32%, down insignificantly from 37%)
- Enforcing begging/panhandling laws (35%, down insignificantly from 35%)
- Enforcing overnight camping laws (30%, down insignificantly from 34%)

**MOST RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO FEEL SAFE IN SANTA MONICA, AND ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH POLICE RESPONSE TIME**

- While more residents volunteered public safety related issues as a top concern, just two in ten Santa Monica residents (20%) say that crime has gotten worse in the past few years, with 25 percent saying it has gotten better, and 45 percent saying it has stayed the same. This is essentially unchanged from 2005.
- More than nine in ten (93%) feel safe walking in their own neighborhood during the day and 90 percent feel safe walking in the city's business areas during the day. At night, 68 percent feel safe in their own neighborhood, with 63 percent who feel safe walking in the city's business areas at night. These findings are virtually unchanged from 2002 and 2005. Women are more likely than men to report feeling unsafe in these locations after dark, but not during the day.

- Nearly one in five residents – 18 percent-- report that they or someone in their household made a 911 call requesting emergency assistance from the Police Department in 2006 (equal to the proportion in the 2005 study). Of those who called 911, 65 percent were satisfied with the response time. This is down from 76 percent in 2005, but this difference is not statistically significant.
- When asked to choose between five options for assigning additional officers in their neighborhood, there was no clear favorite. Approximately two in ten picked each option offered, including wanting more officers to patrol in police cars in their neighborhood (23%, down from 30% in 2005), to work with local residents to prevent crime (22%, unchanged from 21%), to patrol on foot (19%, up from 10%), to work with local kids to prevent gangs and youth crime (18%, unchanged), and 15 percent choosing more patrolling near the schools in their neighborhood (unchanged from 2005).

#### **HIGH SATISFACTION WITH RESPONSE TO PARAMEDIC SERVICES ALTHOUGH SATISFACTION HAS DECLINED SOMEWHAT**

- Unchanged from 2005, 12 percent of residents say that they or someone in their household called 911 seeking paramedics or emergency medical assistance in 2006. This includes 16 percent of seniors.
- Of those calling for this service, 82 percent were satisfied and just 11 percent dissatisfied.

#### **NEARLY HALF THE CITY'S ADULT RESIDENTS CONTACTED A CITY DEPARTMENT FOR NON-EMERGENCY PURPOSES; CITY GETS SOLID MARKS**

- Forty-nine percent of city residents report having contacted a city department for a non-emergency purpose, up insignificantly from 45 percent in 2005.
- Over half (57%) contacted the city to report or solve a problem, while 27 percent did so to get information and 11 percent for both reasons.
- Sixty-nine percent of those who contacted the city rate the staff as being responsive, 71 percent rate them as being knowledgeable, and 80 percent say they were courteous. These positive evaluations are little changed from 2005.

## **MOST ARE SATISFIED WITH CITY COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS**

- Eight in ten (81%) say they are satisfied with the city's efforts to communicate with residents. This is up from seven in ten in 2005. Moreover, 76 percent say they feel they have the opportunity to voice their concerns to the city on major community decisions (up insignificantly from 71%).
- The main sources of information used to learn about city news are *Seascope*, the *Santa Monica Daily Press*, the city's web site, the *Santa Monica Mirror*, city TV, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

## **WIDESPREAD USE OF THE INTERNET FOR INTERACTING WITH THE CITY**

- Nearly 80 percent (79%) of respondents report having Internet access at home. However, just 52 percent of those over age 65 do so.
- Nearly half (48%) say they have gone on-line to get information on issues facing the city. Far fewer have registered for classes or other recreation activities on line (29%), paid a city bill on line (24%), or sent e-mail to city staff or elected officials (21%). The number who have paid a bill on line has increased from 16 percent in 2005 to 24 percent.

## **HIGH USE OF PARKS REPORTED, WITH VERY POSITIVE RATINGS**

- Eighty-six percent of respondents report that they visit city parks. Only 14 percent say they do not visit parks (2% of whom are not sure), with 37 percent visiting a park 25 times or more. The mean number of visits is 49 per year and the median is 12 visits per year (reflecting many trips by a small number of residents).
- Of those who have visited the parks, 86 percent were satisfied with their overall experience, with half (49%) "very satisfied." Just 11 percent were dissatisfied.
- Over 80 percent report city parks to be safe (83%), clean (84%), and well-maintained (88%), and 90 percent say parks are convenient.
- Perceptions of safety (81%) are near equal about Santa Monica's beaches. However, fewer consider the beaches well-maintained (albeit a still high 74

percent) or clean (71%). It should be noted that the proportion considering it “very” accurate to say the beaches are safe, clean, and well maintained is lower than the proportion feeling this way about the parks.

### **NEAR MAJORITY HAVE ATTENDED ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS IN SANTA MONICA IN PAST YEAR**

- Just about half (49%) of residents say they have attended an arts or cultural activity in Santa Monica in the past year, and an even higher 61 percent have done so in communities surround Santa Monica.

### **HIGH SATISFACTION WITH THE APPEARANCE OF RETAIL STORES AND RESTAURANTS NEAR WHERE THEY LIVE**

- Nearly nine in ten (89%) residents are satisfied with the appearance of restaurants and retail stores on the major streets nearest to where they live. In fact, 54 percent are “very satisfied.”

### **NEARLY TWO-THIRDS HAVE INTENTIONALLY NOT USED THEIR CAR FOR A TRIP; OVER HALF HAVE TAKEN THE BIG BLUE BUS**

- Sixty-three percent said they intentionally chose not to use their car for a trip and instead used another form of transportation, such as a bus, a bicycle, walking or an alternatively fueled vehicle. This proportion is down from 72% in 2005 and 72% in 2002.
- Fifty-four percent report having used the Big Blue Bus in the past year, including 73 percent of Latinos. This is nearly unchanged from results in past years.