



Information Item

Date: March 14, 2013

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Kathryn Vernez, Deputy City Manager, Special Projects
Subject: Results from 2013 Santa Monica Resident Survey

Introduction

The attached report from Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) provides in-depth information on resident opinions of key issues facing Santa Monica and attitudes about City service delivery. From January 8 – 13, 2013, a total of 404 phone interviews with randomly selected adults living in Santa Monica were completed in Spanish and English, including 112 interviews with adult residents with wireless numbers in the City and 61 interviews conducted with Latino residents. The survey results show that while some positive ratings have slightly declined since 2011, Santa Monica residents continue to have generally positive opinions of Santa Monica overall and of specific aspects of service delivery. The findings provide the basis for additional service improvement, as well as areas for ongoing focus.

Background

The City of Santa Monica conducts a bi-annual 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. On [November 27, 2012](#), FM3 was selected to conduct the 2013 survey based on, among other things, being able to provide detailed survey analysis that places the findings in context with historical data; utilizing the importance and satisfaction matrix, which offers a comparative measure of the importance and satisfaction that residents place on a variety of City services; and in-depth survey knowledge. The survey also tracked a number of years of questions asked as far back as 2002, to determine trends over time. The margin of error for questions asked of all residents is plus or minus 4.9 percent. The results presented in the attached report will guide staff in identifying service priorities and developing workplans for the upcoming fiscal year.

Discussion

Research Findings in Brief

The following is a summary of key survey results. The full report provides detailed analysis. The survey results show that while some positive ratings have slightly declined since 2011, Santa Monica residents continue to have generally positive opinions of Santa Monica overall and in specific aspects of life. They overwhelmingly see the City as an excellent or good place to live (92%), and give the City far more positive than negative reviews for providing City services overall and in specific areas. While residents are not without concerns—in particular about homelessness, traffic, lack of parking, affordability of housing, and growth and development—more than six out of ten are satisfied with the job the City is doing in providing City services overall. Sixty-two percent are very or somewhat satisfied with the job the City of Santa Monica is doing to provide City services (2011,74%). The largest percentage of residents (between 68% and 73%) are satisfied with such specific services as 911 emergency services, trash and recycling collection, public library services and the maintenance of City parks. Further, about one-third of residents reported that they contacted the City in the last year for reasons other than an emergency. Among those who have had direct contact with the City staff, high percentages (between 63% to 74%) rated their interactions positively for staff's *courteousness, knowledge and responsiveness*.

Main Concerns

Residents most frequently mentioned the following issues to be top concerns facing the City of Santa Monica (grouped responses from residents own words):

- Homeless 29% (2009 31%; 2011 22%)
- Traffic/congestion 28% (2009 32%; 2011 24%)
- Lack of parking 13%% (2009 9%; 2011 7%)
- Too much growth and development 10% (2009 13%; 2011 9%)

Respondents were presented with a list of 7 issues and were asked to rate how serious they feel each issues is, with 5 as very serious and 1 as not serious at all. The mean ratings, as well as the percent who consider an issue to be a very “5” or somewhat serious “4” a problem, for the most serious problems are:

- Traffic congestion (3.9, 63%) (2011, 3.7, 58%)
- The affordability of housing (3.8, 63%) (2011, 3.8, 66%)
- The number of homeless people in the city (3.8, 62%) (2011, 3.8, 61%)
- Lack of parking (3.7, 57%) (2011, 3.5, 53%)
- The amount of growth and development (3.2, 43%) (2011, Not asked)

Comparatively less serious:

- Gangs and youth violence (2.4, 15%) (2011, 2.4, 14%)
- Crime (2.6, 20%) (2011, 2.5, 15%)

Residents rate such services as keeping traffic on City streets flowing smoothly (81%) (second to 911 emergency response) and dealing with the homeless (75%) among the top ten most important services of the 23 discussed in the survey. Further, residents perceive that traffic congestion (66%) and number of homeless (36%) have gotten worse, respectively, over the last few years. In spite of the importance placed on these two issues, and the concern expressed that these issues are getting worse, 63 percent of respondents are satisfied or have a neutral opinion about the City’s efforts keeping traffic on City streets flowing smoothly and 65 percent have similar views about City’s efforts in dealing with homeless people in Santa Monica. These indicators suggest that despite strong concern about these issues, residents realize that solving these problems require more than City government action.

Evaluation of City Services

Residents were asked to evaluate 23 unique services, where a rating of 5 indicated a service is very important and a rating of 1 not important. It is noteworthy that all services received a rating of importance above the midpoint of 3.0, suggesting all services are considered important to some degree.

- Top rated City services on an Importance Scale (mean ratings):
 - Providing emergency 911 services (4.6) (2011, 4.7)
 - Maintaining City beaches (4.3) (2011, 4.4)
 - Collecting trash and recycling from your home (4.3) (2011, 4.3)
 - Keeping traffic on City streets flowing smoothly (4.3) (2011, 4.3)
 - Enforcing laws that keep public spaces safe for everyone (4.3) (2011, Not asked)

- Lowest rated City services on an Importance Scale (mean ratings):
 - Providing access for cyclists (3.5) (2011, 3.7)
 - Enforcing the City's noise laws (3.5) (2011, 3.4)
 - Keeping street trees trimmed (3.5) (2011, 3.5)

Residents were also asked to evaluate the same 23 services, where a rating of 5 indicated a resident is very satisfied with a service and a rating of 1 reflected that they are very dissatisfied with a service. In all but two cases, each respective City service received a satisfaction rating above the midpoint of 3.0, suggesting residents on average are satisfied, to various degrees, with 21 of the 23 City services mentioned.

- Highest rated City services on a Satisfaction Scale (mean ratings):
 - Providing emergency 911 services (4.2) (2011, 4.4)
 - Collecting trash and recycling from home (4.1) (2011, 4.2)
 - Providing public library services (4.1) (2011, 4.4)
 - Maintaining City parks (4.0) (2011, 4.2)
 - Offering public transportation alternatives, such as the Big Blue Bus (3.9) (2011, 4.1)
 - Maintaining City beaches (3.9) (2011, 3.9)

The City receives less positive ratings for dealing with homeless people in Santa Monica, ensuring traffic flow and affordable housing.

- Lowest rated City services on a Satisfaction Scale (mean ratings):
 - Ensuring there is affordable housing (3.1) (2011, 3.0)
 - Keeping traffic on City streets flowing smoothly (3.0) (2011, 3.0)
 - Dealing with homeless people in Santa Monica (3.0) (2011,3.0)

Emergency Preparedness Issues:

- About one-third (34%) have seen or heard anything about the City's emergency preparedness efforts, with only 11% saying they have seen or heard a lot.
- Half of all respondents (50%) said their household has at least seven days of supplies on hand in case of an emergency, such as an earthquake. This percentage remains constant over the last two years.

Community Benefit Preferences Associated with Large Development Project

Agreements with the City:

- Affordable housing (4.0); employment and training opportunities (3.9); alternative transportation options such as walking paths, bike lanes and public transit (3.9); and community open space (3.8) are considered by Santa Monica residents to be among the most important community benefits to be included in City development agreements for large new projects.

Similar to 2011, historic building preservation (3.5) and arts and culture venues (3.6) and childcare (3.6) are considered by residents to be among the least important benefits that could be considered in large development agreements in the City.

Transportation-related Issues:

- The greatest percentage of Santa Monica residents get around the City a few times a week or more by driving in a car (82%) or walking (79%). Less than one-quarter of residents use a bicycle (23%), ride the Big Blue Bus (17%) or use other public transportation other than the City's bus line (12%) a few times a week or more to get around the City.
- When considering road safety issues, almost six in every ten residents (59%) consider it very or somewhat safe to walk around the City. A further 15 percent consider it to be not at all or not too safe to walk around the City (3.7).
- Among the ninety-four percent of residents who ride a bike around the City about once a month or more, 48 percent feel it to be somewhat or very safe to do so. Alternatively, 20 percent report they feel not at all safe or not too safe when riding a bike around the City (3.5).

Resident Contact with the City:

- About one third of Santa Monica residents (34%) contacted the City for any reason other than an emergency in 2012, a decrease of nine percent from 2010 (45%). These residents contacted the City:
 - By telephone (83%)
 - In-person (61%)
 - Through the City's website (53%)
 - Via e-mail (42%)
- Satisfaction ratings with City staff remain relatively high on various service dimensions compared to previous years, in the following areas:
 - Courteous (74% very or somewhat satisfied, 4.1)
 - Knowledgeable (67% very or somewhat satisfied, 3.9)
 - Responsive to needs (63% very or somewhat satisfied, 3.8)

- Fifty-five percent of Santa Monica residents conducted one or more business transactions with the City in 2012. Residents conducted these business transactions:
 - Through the City's website (54%)
 - By regular mail (53%)
 - By telephone (52%)
 - Via e-mail (27%)

- Sixty-three percent of residents said they feel they have an opportunity to voice their concerns to the City on major community decisions that affect their lives (approximately 70% reported similar feelings in 2011 and 2009).

- Forty-three percent reported that they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the City's efforts to communicate with Santa Monica residents through newsletters, the internet and other means (mean score of 3.3). The percentage of residents who were satisfied declined from 2011, where 57 percent were somewhat or very satisfied (mean score of 3.7).

- Top City of Santa Monica-sponsored sources of information about City programs, events and issues (% of residents who frequently/occasionally use that source):
 - Seascope (45%)
 - City of Santa Monica website (36%)
 - City TV, cable channel 16 (33%)
 - E-mails or e-newsletters from the City (28%)

- Fifty-one percent reported having taken the Big Blue Bus in 2012. The percentage having said they took the City Bus declined seven percent from 2010 (58%), but is similar to survey findings in 2009 where half the respondents said they had taken the Big Blue Bus that year.

- Eighty-three percent of City residents indicated that they visited the Santa Monica Pier in 2012, with 20 percent having visited the Pier only one or two times and more than one third (34%) having visited the Santa Monica Pier ten or more times.

Next steps

The survey results have been provided to the City's Leadership Team as important feedback for development of workplans for the coming year. Several areas of focus are underway as follows:

Addressing Homelessness-

The City's response to homelessness will continue to be guided by the *Action Plan to Address Homelessness in Santa Monica*. In the coming months, the City will refocus collaborative efforts of City departments (CCS, SMPD, HED, SMFD, and CAO) and local non-profit service providers around key actions that will identify and house those individuals known to have been in Santa Monica the longest, while re-directing individuals who are new to this community back to resources in their hometowns. Specific measures are being coordinated to address new "hot spots" identified in the January 2013 Homeless Count, and to reduce the impact of homelessness in the downtown area.

Addressing Traffic

A recent City Council study session on [February 12, 2013](#) provided a comprehensive update on the City's policies and strategies to address vehicle congestion and expand transportation options. Solutions include:

- **Signal technology:** Construction of Phase 4c of a \$20 million five-phase Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) project is underway. Upon completion of Phase 4 this year, 95% of city's signal system will be upgraded. ATMS infrastructure improvements include upgrades to traffic signals, traffic signal controllers, traffic signal cameras, and wireless devices. The resulting infrastructure and technologies

allows the City to set, monitor, and manage signals remotely in real-time. The ATMS will facilitate smoother traffic flows to reduce congestion, especially at intersections.

- **Making walking, biking, transit and carpooling more attractive:** Since adoption of the Bike Action Plan in 2011 an impressive list of bicycle improvements has already been implemented. The City recently initiated a Pedestrian Action Plan that will include priorities for physical improvements as well as safety and education programs. New development is being held to the highest standards of vehicle trip reduction and requirements for transportation demand management (TDM). Safe Routes to Schools programs among other strategies will reduce single occupancy trips. Longer term, an interdepartmental working group is refining access options for the three Expo light rail stations opening in early 2016, focusing attention on first-and-last mile connectivity for Santa Monica residents and people traveling to Santa Monica.
- **Proactive construction management:** an interdepartmental team regularly reviews and updates potential traffic impacts on major streets and corridors resulting from private and public construction projects and provides up-to-date construction notifications and detour information on the *Be Excited Be Prepared* website, through SM Alerts and the *Know Before You Go* newspaper and website notifications. More than 30 individual projects are monitored on a weekly basis.

Parking

Parking and traffic congestion are linked, as lack of parking information can create traffic congestion. Some of the current efforts to reduce traffic congestion and optimize parking include:

- **Parking management and pricing:** Staff has been actively managing City-owned parking resources. Careful pricing adjustments and close monitoring of utilization has included measures such as adjusting monthly parker assignments to create more convenient spaces for short-term visitors to downtown.

- **Parking Supply:** In the near term spaces are being added to Parking Structure 6 in the downtown and have been proposed as part of private development projects. The Bergamot Area Plan, the Downtown Specific Plan and the Zoning Ordinance update are addressing parking supply comprehensively.
- **Real-time Parking Information:** A smart phone app has been developed to communicate real-time parking availability and price for public structures, public lots and on-street spaces to direct drivers immediately to the most available and cost-effective spaces. A real-time wayfinding system is being implemented this year to serve the downtown gateways and coastal parking lots, with changeable message signs at the 4th/5th Street freeway exit and at the entrance to each beach lot.
- **Preferential Parking:** Since July 2010, new or modified preferential parking regulations have been added to approximately 45 residential blocks throughout Santa Monica, including addressing SMC student parking, commercial spillover parking and other concerns.

Development

Following the adoption of the City's Land use and Circulation Element (LUCE), Santa Monica has received a large number of development agreement applications. While there are a large number of applications, the negotiated process requires discretionary approval by Council, and provides no certainty that a project will be approved as proposed. Council addressed the issue of processing the applications on [January 8, 2013](#), with a follow-up discussion on [February 12, 2013](#) to identify priorities for processing project applications. Council identified the following priorities: projects that generate revenue for the City, such as hotels, auto dealers and movie theaters, projects that produce a higher level of affordable housing, projects that provide a mix of unit types, educational institutions and projects by the same developer where sites are combined for a more comprehensive approach. To date, only eight Development Agreements involving new construction have been approved in the two-and-a-half years since the adoption of LUCE.

Improving Communication

The survey findings also illustrate that the City must increase its efforts to communicate with its residents directly through a combination of City-sponsored information sources and other sources to ensure that residents feel informed as to what the City is doing on their behalf. Special effort will be made on outreach to neighborhood groups on neighborhood specific issues and concerns.

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[*2013 Santa Monica Resident Survey Summary of Results*](#)