



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

National Citizens Survey Results (Information Only)

BACKGROUND

Sunnyvale participates in the National Citizen Survey (NCS) biennially in odd-numbered years. The NCS is based on a national template of questions in categories such as safety, mobility, natural and built environments, economy, recreation, and community engagement. The standardized assessment tool allows cities to benchmark a community's characteristics, governance, and resident participation against similar communities and understand trends over time.

The NCS is under new leadership. Previously, the National Research Center Inc. (NRC) conducted the NCS survey as an independent company. Polco acquired the NRC in 2019. In 2021, the NCS was refreshed. While much of the survey remains the same, some trend data was impacted due to wording modifications that potentially could have altered the meaning for some respondents.

The NCS was sent to 2,700 randomly selected households in Sunnyvale from April 30 to June 18 of 2021. The survey received an 11% response rate. The sample size was 285 with a margin of error of 6% and a 95% confidence interval. Staff received a final NCS Report in July 2021 (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION

Sunnyvale generally received positive marks from residents on the 2021 NCS. Overall, the findings suggest that most residents experience a favorable quality of life in Sunnyvale, with 92% of survey respondents rating Sunnyvale as a "good" or "excellent" place to live and 84% rating their overall feeling of safety as "good" or "excellent." Sunnyvale also ranked higher than benchmark cities in attracting people from diverse backgrounds and valuing/respecting residents from diverse backgrounds.

Most of Sunnyvale's ratings were similar to national benchmarks and show that Sunnyvale continues to be a great place to live. The NCS highlights Sunnyvale's strong economic health compared to most communities in the US with favorable rankings in employment opportunities, as a place to work, and in economic development efforts. Ratings for the overall quality of business and service establishments along with the vibrancy of downtown increased in 2021 compared to 2019.

The updated NCS survey identifies issues residents would like the City to focus in the coming two years. The top community issue was the "feeling of safety" (86%). It was closely followed by the quality of utility infrastructure, quality of natural environment, and quality of parks and recreation opportunities (all at 84%).

Community design was also an important focus area in the next two years for about 8 in 10 residents.

The survey shows measurable improvements in this area. Ratings for the overall design or layout of residential and commercial areas, along with the variety of housing options, and land use, planning and zoning all increased in 2021 compared to 2019. Four new community design aspects on the 2021 survey were each given positive ratings by about half of residents on par with national averages.

Governance ratings held steady despite the COVID-19 pandemic and were similar compared to benchmark cities. The quality of services provided by the City of Sunnyvale was rated positively by nearly 8 in 10 survey respondents. A similar proportion of residents gave positive evaluations to overall customer service by Sunnyvale employees. About 7 in 10 respondents felt that the City treats all residents fairly and with respect, while about 6 in 10 gave positive evaluations to the overall direction Sunnyvale is taking, the overall confidence in Sunnyvale government, and the City being honest and generally acting in the best interest of the community. The City included in this year's survey a few custom questions and one open-ended question. Data from the City's custom questions reveal that 72% of residents read the Horizon newsletter and 64% visited the City's website. Strong majorities view these information sources favorably.

The pandemic appears to have positively and negatively impacted ratings in certain areas. Residents were more satisfied with Mobility issues compared to prior years. Ratings for traffic flow on major streets, ease of public parking, and ease of travel by car all improved significantly. In addition, residents increased their use of alternative modes of transportation with 79% of respondents walking or biking instead of driving. This represents a 12-percentage point jump compared to 2019 and is much higher compared to benchmark communities. Not surprisingly, residents felt less connected and engaged with their community. Recreation and entertainment opportunities took a dip given the prolonged lock down.

Affordability continues to be a concern for Sunnyvale residents. Like 2019, the NRC noted that the City ranks below the nation average on cost of living and affordable housing options.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, Sunnyvale Public Library and Department of Public Safety. In addition, the agenda and report are available at the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. 2021 NCS Report