



# CITY OF SAN MATEO

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## Agenda Report

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**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Drew Corbett, City Manager  
**PREPARED BY:** City Manager's Department  
**MEETING DATE:** May 18, 2020

**SUBJECT:**  
2020 Community Survey Results

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive an informational report about the results of the City's Community Survey, conducted in January 2020 by True North Research.

### **BACKGROUND:**

In the City's ongoing efforts to engage the public and be responsive to the community's interests, the City hired True North Research to conduct a statistically-reliable survey about community opinions on a variety of topics. Following Council's direction, an interdepartmental team of staff worked with True North Research to develop a comprehensive survey on resident opinions about satisfaction with city services, quality of life, housing and building, recreation, and communication.

True North Research was selected as the consultant for this work through a competitive request for proposal process. Staff selected True North based on its years of experience conducting surveys for California municipalities, proposed methodology, and high success rate in predicting ballot measure outcomes. True North Research President Dr. Timothy McLarney led the project and will present the findings of his independent research firm during the Council meeting.

The survey was issued between January 27 and February 6, 2020 in English and Spanish, with over 1,200 residents participating via phone and online. The study employed a methodology that would provide statistically reliable results by surveying a random sample of residents who represent San Mateo's demographics. San Mateo residents completed the survey at a much higher rate than initially anticipated, resulting in a statistical margin of error of just 2.7%.

It is important to note that while current conditions have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey captured community sentiment during what were otherwise more normal conditions. As with any survey, this one provides a snapshot of participants opinions at the time it was issued. A complete copy of the report is included as Attachment 1.

True North Research is also conducting a survey on potential revenue enhancement measures, which will poll voter sentiment on a potential increase to the City's transient occupancy tax. The results of that survey will be presented during a future Council meeting.

### **Purpose of the Community Survey**

The City regularly hears from members of the public about their individual feedback regarding the City's performance and policies. For the most part, the City's outreach mechanisms rely on residents who are motivated to participate in the feedback process. Residents willing to initiate feedback tend to be those who are either very pleased or very displeased with a particular service or policy. Often, this results in a self-selection bias and feedback that's not necessarily representative of the City's resident population as a whole.

Similar to many other cities, San Mateo sought to conduct a survey that would avoid the self-selection bias and provide a statistically-reliable understanding of residents' satisfaction, priorities and concerns as they relate to City services, facilities and policies. In addition to gauging opinions about municipal services and quality of life, the City also sought to include questions that could help inform priorities for funding recreation programs and facilities, as well as the General Plan Update process. The General Plan 2040 Update, a long-range planning process, was temporarily put on hold due to COVID-19 and the Countywide Shelter in Place orders. Staff are evaluating methods for conducting robust community outreach during this time.

### **Survey Results & Report**

True North Research authored a robust report detailing the survey results and analysis. This information can be used to make strategic decisions in a variety of areas including service improvements, tracking internal performance, budgeting and community outreach.

Overall, San Mateo residents are generally satisfied with the City's efforts to provide services, as well as the quality of life in the City. Key areas for improvement identified by residents included providing affordable housing, reducing traffic congestion, limiting growth/preserving open space, addressing homelessness, and maintaining local streets and roads.

Residents were also surveyed on their opinions regarding housing, building heights and densities, and how to accommodate future growth. The survey provides insights on residents' use of recreation facilities and programs, as well as their preferences for what improvements should be prioritized. In addition to residents' opinions on varied services and policies, the survey also captured communication preferences that can help inform the City's ongoing outreach to constituents.

### **BUDGET IMPACT:**

The Community Survey cost \$29,530 to complete and was paid for by current budget allocations within the Community Development Department.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

This Review of the 2020 Community Survey Results is not a project subject to CEQA, because it can be seen with certainty that it will not cause a physical change in the environment. (Public Resources Code Section 21065.)

### **NOTICE PROVIDED**

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Att 1 - Community Opinion Survey Report

### **STAFF CONTACT**

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