

What area residents think about issues

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How Watsonville-area residents feel about such local issues as growth, population and beautification became known today with the release by the city of a comprehensive survey.

More than anything else, the survey shows, Watsonville residents want is an assurance that new development is not allowed without matching improvements in public services.

They also want to keep agriculture as a mainstay, to create new jobs, to make traffic improvements, and to build more single-family houses instead of multi-family units.

What they don't want is a regional shopping center and an 18-hole golf course.

The city Planning Department received 754 responses to its survey, which was taken to help guide city officials in revising the General Plan. The plan will outline city growth

policies to the year 2005.

Of those who responded, half live in the city and one-quarter live within one mile of the city; 41 percent work in the city; 36 percent own property in the city and 22 percent own a business in the city.

The ethnic breakdown of respondents does not match the city's ethnic breakdown as a whole. While the city is 49 percent Hispanic, only 19 percent of those who answered the survey are Hispanic; 70 percent

of the respondents are Anglo, 3 percent are Asian and the rest fall into other ethnic groups or did not state their ethnic background. (The city's Asian population is about 6 percent.)

Planner Pat Dellin, who compiled the survey results, said the city should put greater weight on the responses by the minority groups that were under-represented in the survey group.

The Planning Department has prepared a 64-page analysis of

the survey results, breaking them down by individual question, by issue, and the group that distributed the surveys and the ethnic background of the respondents.

Taking all the responses together, the one statement on the survey that gained the most support was to allow development only if matched by development of public facilities including schools, sewers, parks and roads.

A summary of the survey

results, by issue, follows:

—**Agriculture** — There is strong support for the preservation of agricultural land and great opposition to using agricultural lands surrounding the city for development. Respondents agreed to a statement that the continued dominance of agriculture in the local economy should be encouraged, but almost as significant was the support for a contradictory statement, which said the city

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should diversify the economy, attracting commercial and industrial development not associated with food production and processing.

—**Population growth** — There is some support for the city to provide for increased population by allowing more apartments, townhouses and condominiums. Few people believe the city should discourage growth by limiting housing, or by slowing down commercial and industrial growth.

—**Housing** — Although there was some support for building more multi-family units, as mentioned above, more respondents also indicated they believe the city should favor single-family housing over multi-unit developments. The planning staff interpreted the survey results as showing people want to see a mix of different types of housing.

—**Downtown redevelopment** — There is strong support for making downtown redevelopment one of the city's highest priorities. There was no consensus, however, on whether Main Street should be made into a semi-mall with limited traffic. Many who responded felt there is a need for a multi-level parking garage downtown.

—**Traffic** — Existing roads should be widened, respondents said, Highway 152 should be rerouted out of the downtown and the city should build new through streets to connect existing and future neighborhoods. There is also limited support for improvements in public transportation.

—**Parks and recreation** — while a majority of respondents want to see more parks and recreation facilities, about half said they don't want an 18-hole golf course — something the City Council has considered and rejected — and another 25 percent said that issue isn't important to them.

—**Beautification** — Watsonville-area residents want to see more landscaping along city streets and an intensification of the city's beautification efforts.

—**Other facilities** — Many who responded want to see more and improved schools and additional library services.

When survey results are analyzed by ethnic groups, there is a wide disparity between Hispanics and whites on several issues. Hispanics show greater support for parks and other recreation facilities, for a downtown parking garage, for

more multi-unit housing developments, for more libraries, for a new large-scale regional shopping center, to use agricultural land outside the city for future development and to make Main Street a semi-mall downtown.

The Watsonville Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture conducted its own survey on General Plan issues.

That survey showed support for slowing down the city's growth, for diversifying the city's economy and preserving agricultural lands. Many who responded were opposed to the idea of creating a new regional shopping center away from the downtown.

The survey also showed some support for annexing lands to the city, with almost equal support for annexing lands both west of the freeway and east along Green Valley Road and for going in other directions, annexing the developed areas of Freedom and the Kelly Lake-College Road areas.