



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

From: City Manager

Report Type: STUDY SESSION

Lead Department: City Manager

Meeting Date: January 23, 2023

TITLE

Presentation of the 2022 City of Palo Alto Community Survey Results

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council receive the Report of Results for the 2022 City of Palo Alto Community Survey by Polco/National Research Center, Inc. (Polco).

BACKGROUND

The City has annually or biennially conducted a community survey to gain insights into residents' perspectives about the community, including local amenities, services, public trust, resident participation, and other aspects of the community. Survey information is used to support budgeting, land use and strategic planning, and communication efforts with the community. Palo Alto has been surveying residents since 2003. This report was conducted starting October 2022 through December 2022.

ANALYSIS

Polco will present and discuss the survey results to the City Council, offering years of benchmarking and other city comparisons to explain information received. The City values community feedback and the information will be used by to evaluate programs and services, as well as inform performance metrics through the annual budget process. Palo Alto residents will continue to be surveyed annually, with the next survey to be completed in 2023.

The National Community Survey is one method of many ways used to engage the community and to assess the quality of City services. This year, the response rate was lower than previous years (with a total of 398 surveys returned compared to 768 responses in 2021). On average, the total number of survey responses is about 750. Though lower, this year's response rate of 12% is still statistically significant and tracks with the average range observed in other jurisdictions (of between 12%-20% response rate). One way staff hopes to increase response

rates in the 2023 survey is to conduct the survey earlier in the fall around August/September after the summer recess.

A few highlights in the Key Findings section based on respondent perspectives of the report include:

- **Residents rate the quality of life in Palo Alto highly.** Residents continue to give high marks to their neighborhood as a place to live, raise children, and overall quality of life. About 9 in 10 residents rated each of these items positively. About 4 in 5 residents gave favorable ratings to Palo Alto as a place to work, which was higher than the national benchmark.
- **While residents value City services and events, civic participation has decreased.** Palo Alto's data reflects national trends that show more frequent use of City services and decreased resident involvement over time. In 2022, residents reported more frequent use of a number of City services in the last 12 months such as 72% reporting use of public libraries and their services. Nearly 3 in 5 residents indicated they contacted the City in the last 12 months. Though decreased, 6 out of 10 responding residents reported excellent or good opportunities to learn about City services through social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Similar to national benchmarks, perceptions of Palo Alto government welcoming resident involvement continue to decrease over time.
- **Residents value Palo Alto's natural environment.** Nearly 9 in 10 residents rated the overall quality of the natural environment in Palo Alto as excellent or good. Preservation of natural areas (open space, farmlands, greenbelts, etc.) was rated positively by over 4 in 5 residents, higher than the national average.
- **Affordability and cost of living continue to be community concerns.** Affordability-related measures such as cost of living and availability of affordable housing were much lower than the benchmark comparisons. The variety of housing options, rated positively by 1 in 5 residents was lower than the national average.
- **Residents are supportive of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.** When asked to rate how important it is for Palo Alto to focus on reducing community greenhouse gas emissions in the coming two years, 7 in 10 residents indicated it to be essential or very important. Residents were also likely to make changes in their home, 3 in 5 residents indicated they were somewhat likely to replace their gas water heater with a heat pump water heater, and gas furnace with a heat pump HVAC system.

The attached report includes information on trends over time, geographic and demographic comparisons, national benchmark comparisons, and verbatim responses to open-ended questions.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

Funding for the Polco contract was approved in the FY 2023 budget. No additional funding is requested at this time.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The National Community Survey is one method of many ways used to engage the community and to assess the quality of City services. The 2022 Palo Alto Community Survey process is a community feedback tool that helps the City Council and City staff understand community perspectives on current services and programs, as well as unmet needs and priorities. Staff continues to implement the existing community engagement workplan as discussed with Council in March 2022. In March 2023 staff plans to review, with Council, planned community engagement efforts implementing the Council priority workplans. In the coming year, staff will also work to gain additional input from the community on some of the civic participation options described in the Polco survey report. This could help inform future Council discussions on community engagement.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Council action on this item is not a project as defined by CEQA because the Community Survey is a continuing administrative or maintenance activity. CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(2).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Palo Alto Community Survey 2022 Report of Results

APPROVED BY:

Ed Shikada, City Manager

Report #:

{{item.custom_tracking_number}}