

Summary of Results

City of Grants Pass Survey

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Introduction

The City of Grants Pass uses a variety of methods to inform its' citizens and to encourage active participation in city government. As part of these efforts Grants Pass conducts an annual survey to assess the opinions of residents on the quality of city services, the quality of life in the city, and attitudes toward immediate issues currently before the city government. Working closely with Grants Pass Assistant City Manager, Laurel Samson, Northwest Survey & Data Services (NSDS) planned and implemented a telephone survey of 403 Grants Pass residents.

Survey Results

This report summarizes the major survey results. Readers can look at the Topline Frequencies section of the report for the exact question wording and the summarized responses to each question. Readers may refer to the tables in the Banners section of this report for more detail and to find cross-tabulations of each question with a wide range of demographic information. In addition, readers should look at the open-ended responses inside the Topline section, where respondents give narrative answers to questions. The open-ended questions asked what they like most about Grants Pass, what they would like to change, what was wrong with any city services they rated as poor, and what suggestions they have for Riverside Park.

For information on how this survey was conducted please see the Sample and Methods Report section.

Grants Pass as a Place to Live

In general, residents think Grants Pass is a great place to live. When asked to rate living in Grants Pass on a five point scale, where one is "poor" and five is "excellent," 80% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see banner table 26). This score is essentially unchanged from the scores of the last three years (80%, 80% and 81%), and remains 19% higher than the rating given in 1998. Only 7% of respondents gave Grants Pass a rating of one or two. The belief that Grants Pass is a great place to live went up with the age of the respondent. For those 34 or younger, 69% gave Grants Pass one of the two highest scores. By age 65 or older, this score was up to 92%.

This pattern of generally favorable responses is repeated when respondents were asked to rate how safe they felt living in Grants Pass. On a five-point scale, where one was "not safe" and five was "very safe," 79% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 5% gave a rating of one or two. Respondents feel slightly safer this year than compared with last years' scores (74%). This feeling of safety was true regardless of gender. However, feelings of safety did vary by the area of town, with those in the southeast having the lowest percentage of respondents giving high safety scores (71%), while those in the northwest had the highest score (87%).

This feeling of safety was further reinforced by responses to a follow-up question where respondents were asked to compare the safety of their neighborhood to other neighborhoods in Grants Pass. On this question, 58% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods (up from 54% last year), while only 9% felt their neighborhood was "less safe" (up from 7% last year). However, people's comparative feeling of safety in their neighborhood varied somewhat depending on what section of Grants Pass they lived in. The percentage of respondents who were likely to feel that their neighborhood was "less safe" was much higher in the Southwest (12%) than in the Southeast (7%), Northwest (8%), or the Northeast (4%).

There was significant variation between respondents who own their own home and those who rent, with homeowners more than twice as likely as renters (14% vs. 6%) to feel that their neighborhood is "less safe."

At this time respondents were also asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the city. The most common response (45%) was that Grants Pass is growing at "too fast" a pace. Almost as many respondents (43%) felt the city was growing "about the right pace", while only 9% felt the city was growing "too slowly."

At the end of the survey respondents are asked what they would like to change about Grants Pass and what they like most about Grants Pass. The responses to these questions range over a wide area of topics, with the most common issues including more and better paying jobs, activities for teens and young adults, improvements in traffic and roads, and limits to growth and population. For more information see the narrative responses in the Topline Frequencies section.

Grants Pass City Services

Respondents were asked a set of questions about 12 city services that people could reasonably be expected to have opinions about, even if they had not contacted the service providers directly. Grants Pass residents feel that these services generally provide excellent or close to excellent service on a five-point scale where one indicated poor service and five indicated excellent service. (See Banner Tables 1-12). Of the 12 services respondents were asked about, 10 services received "good" or "excellent" ratings by over 50% of respondents. The two services that did not get high ratings were planning, where only 24% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, and building inspection,

where only 26% gave these scores. Last year the same 10 services were highly rated and the same two had low ratings.

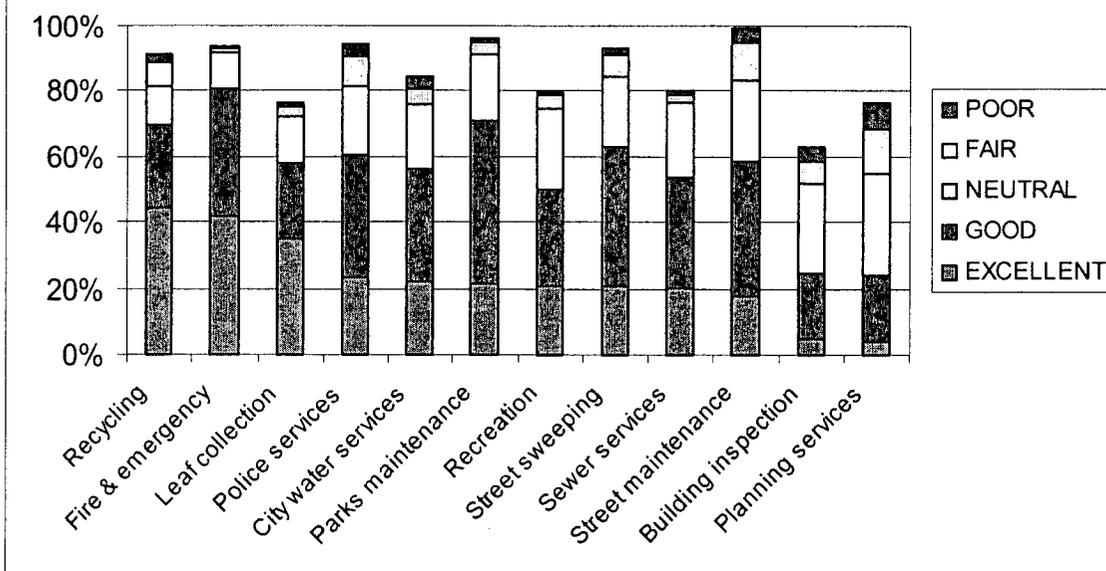
However, the two lower rated services were also services where large numbers of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of planning, 24% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and an additional 31% gave a neutral rating, which may also be an indicator of difficulty in giving a rating. The case of building inspections was similar, where a very large 36% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 27% gave a neutral rating.

Even though they were among the 10 highly rated services, four city services (city water, sewer, recreation, and leaf collection) also had large numbers of respondents (37% - 45%) who could not give a rating, or gave a neutral rating, depending on the service.

It is also important to note that no Grants Pass service received a large number of "poor" ratings. Ratings of "poor" range from 8% to less than 1%. However, when a respondent did give a rating of "poor" for any city service, they were then asked to explain what problem they were aware of with that service. In general, the comments reflect personal interactions the respondent has had with the service in question. See the narrative section of the report for the verbatim comments.

For some of the twelve services there were significant differences in how they were rated based on the characteristics of the respondent. Parks maintenance was rated higher the older the age of the respondent, while street maintenance was rated lower the longer the respondent had lived in Grants Pass. Leaf collection and recreation services ratings went up the longer people had lived in Grants Pass. Men were much more likely to rate planning services and building inspection services as "poor" than were women. Finally, there was a general tendency to rate most services higher if the respondent was 65 or older. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: City Department Ratings



Attitudes Toward the Value of Government

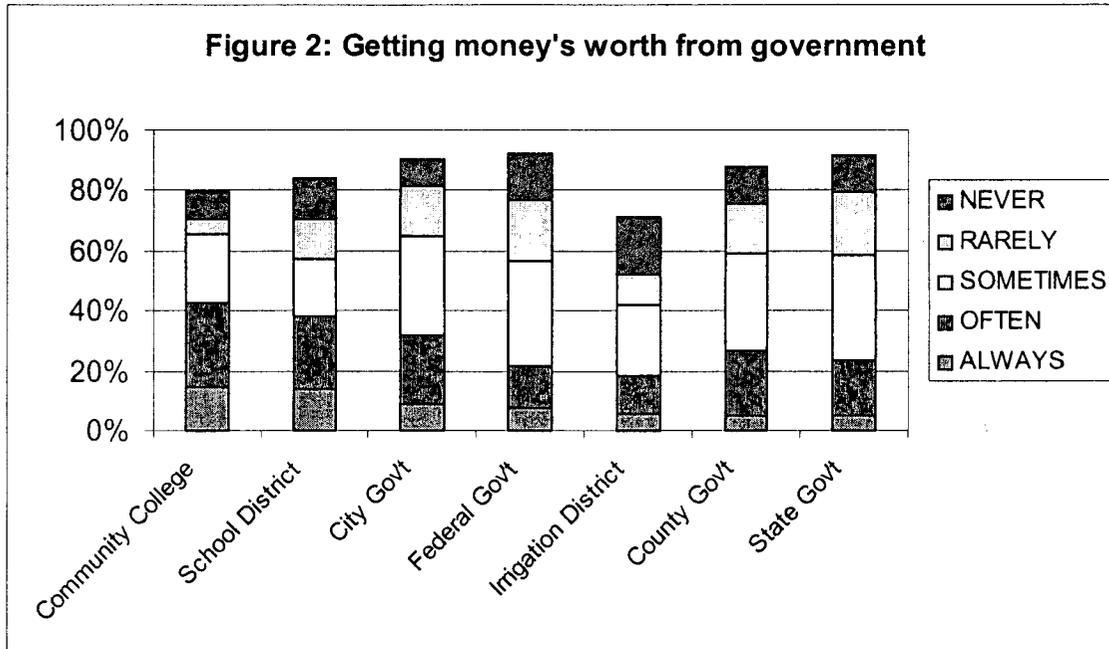
Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the value of four levels of government: Federal, State, County, and City. In addition, they were asked about the value of the school district, the local community college, and the local irrigation district. For each of these institutions, respondents were asked how often they felt they were getting their money's worth, using the response scale: "never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always." Respondents' belief that they get their "money's worth" from government generally increased as the unit of government got smaller. (See Banner Tables 13-19).

The least support for the idea of getting their money's worth from government was with the Federal and State governments, where only 22% of respondents felt that they "always" or "often" got their money's worth. The greatest support for the idea of getting your money's worth with government was with the Grants Pass City Government, where 32% of respondents felt that they "always" or "often" got their money's worth. Interestingly, after four years of declining ratings for the Grants Pass City Government, the percentage of respondents who felt they got their money's worth increased last year and held steady this year. In addition, those residents who feel they "always" get their money's worth from the Grants Pass City Government almost always feel Grants Pass is an "excellent" place to live.

For the other three governmental institutions, respondents held widely different views about their value. At the high end, 43% of respondents felt that they always or often got their money's worth from the Community College, while at the other extreme only 18% of respondents felt they always or often got their money's worth from the Irrigation District. The School District received a higher value rating than other general forms of

government, with 38% of respondents feeling that they got their money's worth. The ratings for the Community College and the School District fell slightly for the second year in a row.

For Grants Pass City Government, those who find it “easy” to participate and those who feel the pace of growth is “about” right, are more likely to feel they get their money’s worth from city government. See Figure 2.



Participation in City Government

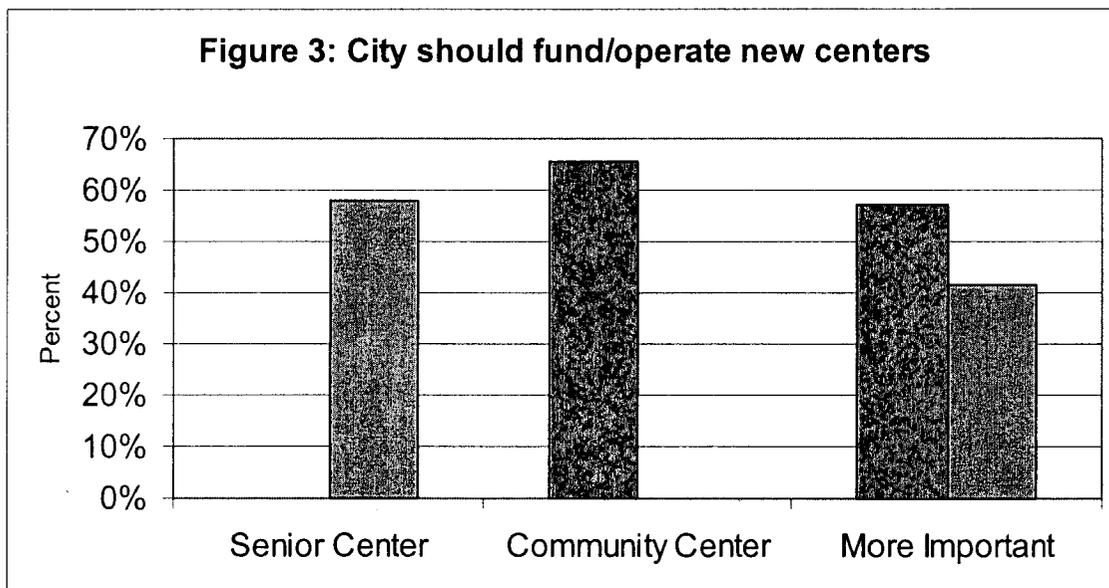
Respondents were asked a series of questions about public involvement and public information (see Banner Tables 20-25). The majority of respondents (60%) felt that the City of Grants Pass provides adequate opportunities for participation and influence in city decisions. Interestingly enough, this belief exists even though only 14% have attended some form of local government or public meeting on city issues during the past 12 months. In fact, those who have not attended public meetings are more likely to feel that it is easy to participate in city government than are those who have attended public meetings, 62% versus 53% – a finding that was also true last year. Additionally, older respondents (over 65) and those who are either new to town or have lived in Grants Pass 21 years or more are less likely to find it easy to participate in city government.

Even though attending public meetings may not be popular, about two and a half times as many respondents (36%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. The only demographic variations in this activity level were due to age, with respondents from 35 through 54 most likely to volunteer and those over 65 least likely.

Forty-eight percent of respondents feel that the city does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 68% answer affirmatively that the city meets their information needs. The first of these scores is up 5% from last year and the second score is identical to last year. The most useful source of city information was reported to be the newspaper followed by television and radio. This result has been fairly consistent over the years. Public meetings were thought to be of very low value for informing citizens, with only 3% of respondents listing such meetings as the most useful way to keep up with city issues and activities. This result has also been consistent from year to year.

New Senior and Community Centers

Each year the City of Grants Pass adds a series of questions on issues of immediate concern to the city council. This year these questions included two topic areas: senior and community centers; and preferences for development at Riverside Park. Respondents were asked whether or not the city should fund and operate a new senior center and a new community center. A majority of respondents were in favor of both proposals, with 58% in support of a new senior center and 66% in support of a new community center. Because of this possibility, the 2003 survey also asked respondents to choose which of these two centers was more important. Fifty-seven percent favored a new community center, while 41% favored a senior center. See Figure 3.



Support for senior and community centers was influenced by the age of the respondent and by the length of residence in the city. Interestingly, support for a senior center did not go up with age, even among senior citizens. Support for a senior center did increase the longer people had lived in the city, reaching a high of 66% for those who had lived in Grants Pass for 21 or more years. Support for a community center was much higher for younger respondents than it was for middle-aged or seniors, reaching a high of 79% among 18-34 year-olds and a low of 50% among those aged 55-64. However, support for a community center was not effected by how long people had lived in Grants Pass. Put another way, the longer you have lived in Grants Pass the more need you see for a senior

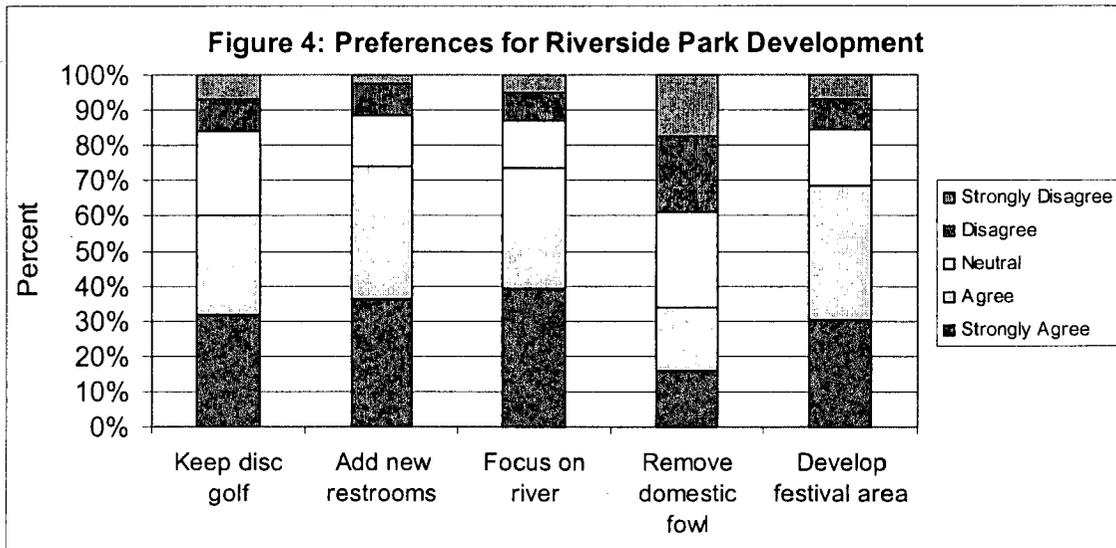
center, while a community center appeals most to younger people. This point is also made clear when the choice question is examined. By far the biggest difference among people is age, where younger respondents are up to 22% less likely to choose a senior center than older respondents.

Riverside Park Development

Respondents were asked about five possible developments to Riverside Park. Two possible projects had very strong public support. The first was very pragmatic, the addition of new restrooms to the park. Seventy-two percent of respondents either “strongly agreed” or agreed” with the idea of new restrooms, while only 11% disagreed, with just a small fraction of that disagreement registered as “strongly disagree.” The other highly popular issue aesthetic, 72% of respondents want park to increase its focus on the river with walk, river views and landscaping. Disagreement was also low on this issue, with 13% in opposition.

Two other park issues had moderate to moderately high support. Sixty-seven percent want a festival developed for the park, with 15% in opposition. In addition, 56% of respondents favor keeping disc golf in the park, also with 15% opposition. However, one age group strongly favors disc golf. Among respondents 18-34 years old, 83% want to retain disc golf and are more supportive of this issue than any of the other park issues presented.

The only park issue for which there was not a clear majority of respondents in support was the removal of domestic ducks and geese from the park. Thirty-three percent of respondents want the ducks and geese removed, while 37% oppose this action. The remaining 30% are either neutral; (26%) or have no opinion (4%). See Figure 4.



In addition to the questions on specific park improvements, respondents were asked for their opinion on anything else that should be added or removed from the park. By far the most common suggestions or concerns had to do with the use of the park by people they

considered undesirable or dangerous to others. Other suggestions did include very specific park changes, such as adding specific types of equipment or play structures. See the narrative response to this question in the Topline Frequencies section for more information.

Although it is clear that there is strong support for improvements to the park, these issues were asked without respondents being forced to either prioritize which project(s) they want most, and with no information on costs or how such projects would be financed. Priority and cost would influence some of these results.

Conclusions

Once again this year's survey continues to show that residents of Grants Pass like the community that they live in very much and that they have a high opinion of local government and the services it provides. Residents also feel informed and able to participate in their government. In addition, they generally feel safe in their neighborhoods.

As in previous surveys, many residents continue to feel Grants Pass is growing to quickly, although an almost equal number people feel the rate of growth is about right.

On the question of new community and senior centers, residents would prefer to have both new centers built and operated by the city. If forced to choose they would choose the community center, although that choice is primarily driven by younger residents.

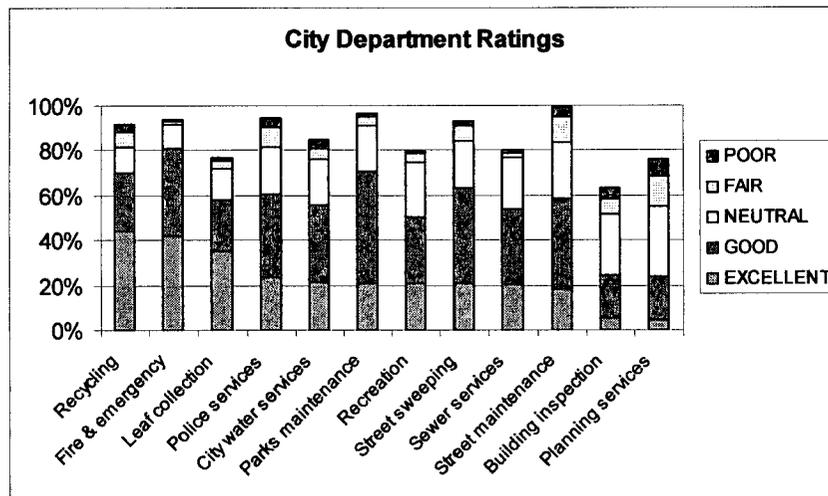
When it comes to Riverside Park, residents essentially want every new project proposed by the city in the survey, with the exception of domestic fowl removal, where there are equal numbers of supporters and opponents and a large number of respondents who do not have a strong opinion on the matter.

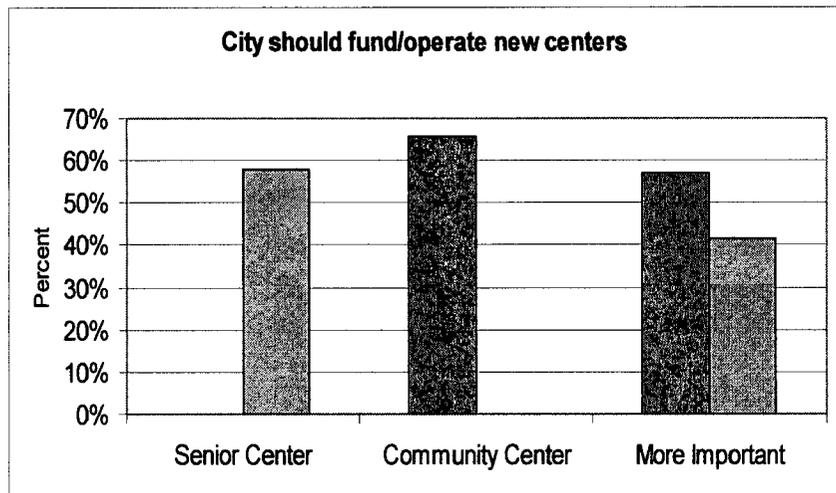
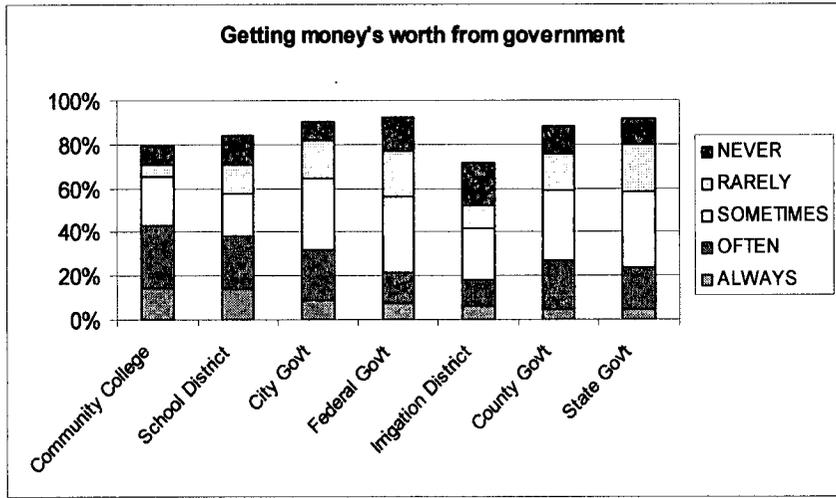
Finally, since the city has been asking many of the questions in this survey for a number of years, the trends and the changes in public attitudes are worth examining. This year the report contains a new section including annual trend graphs. See this section for a long-term perspective on reoccurring issues of city services and attitudes about living in Grants Pass.

City of Grants Pass Survey 2003 Results & Trends

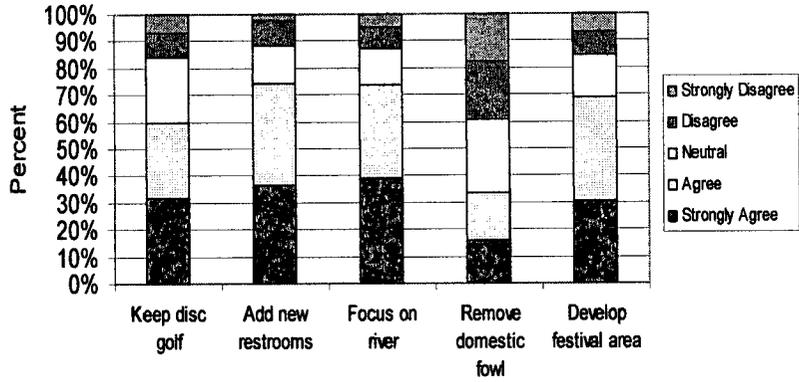


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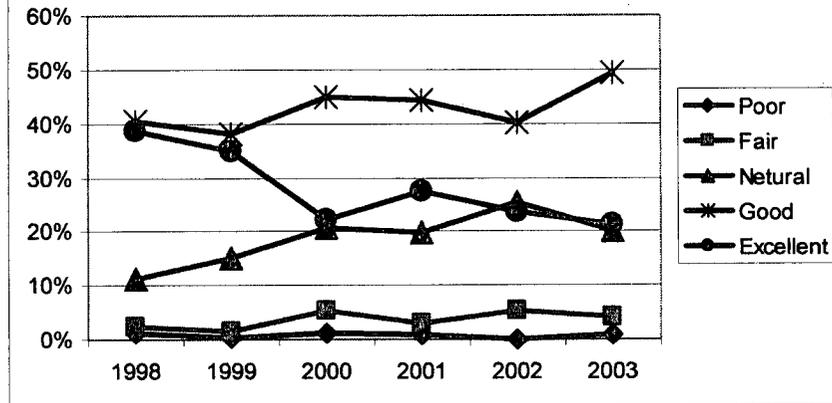


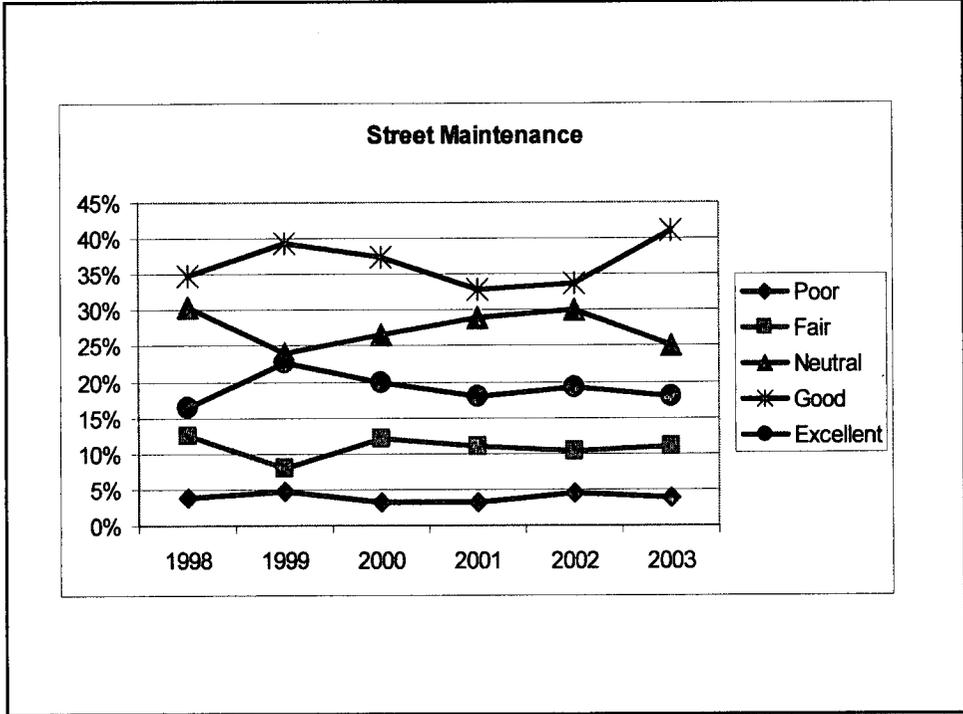
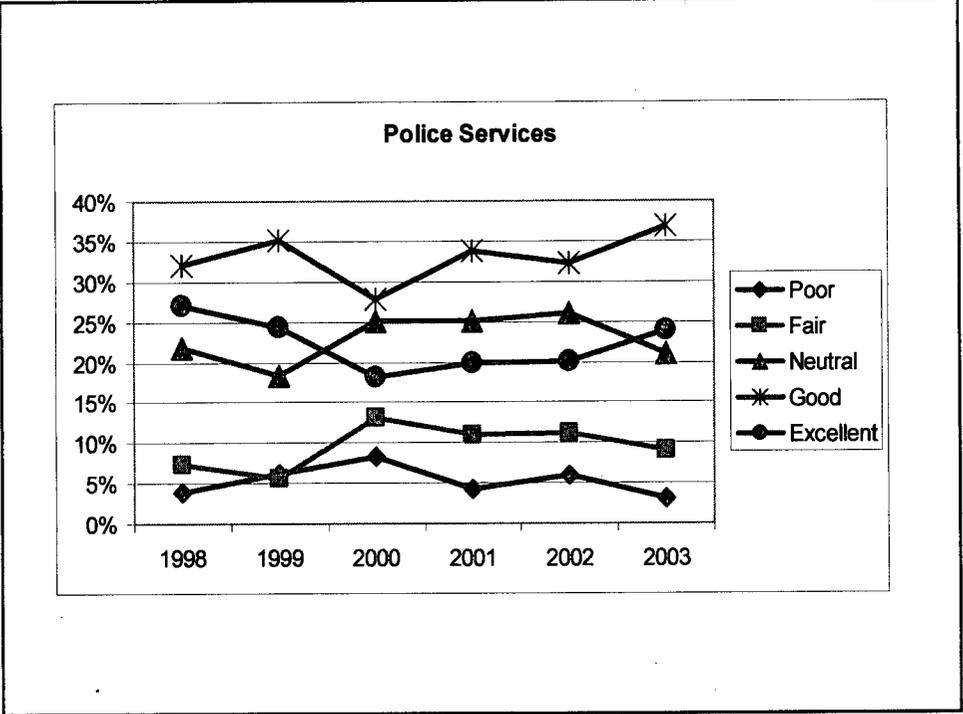


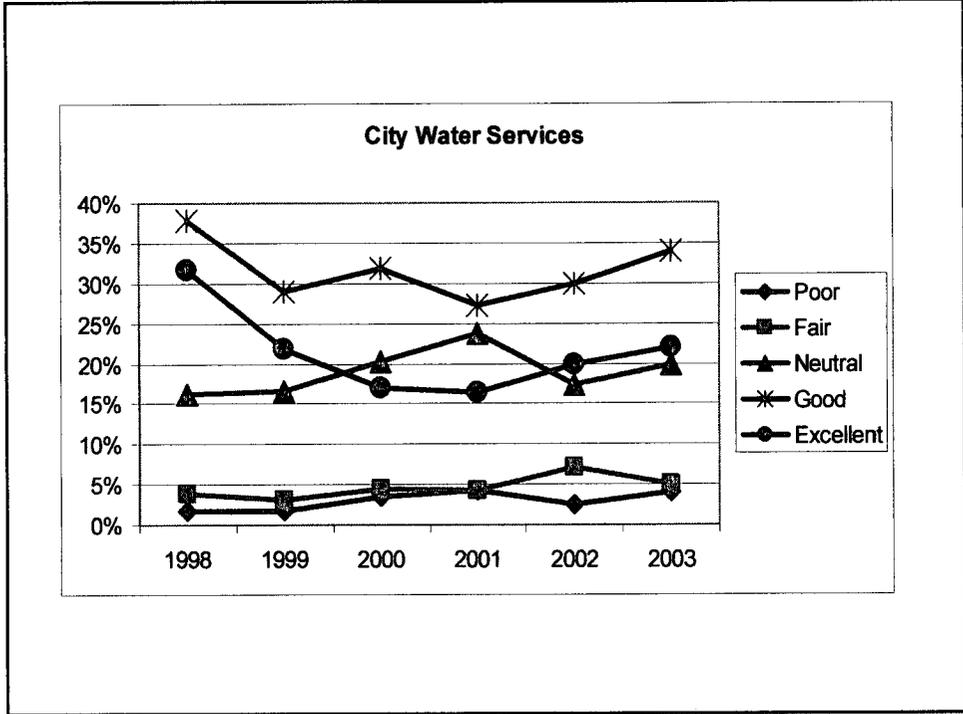
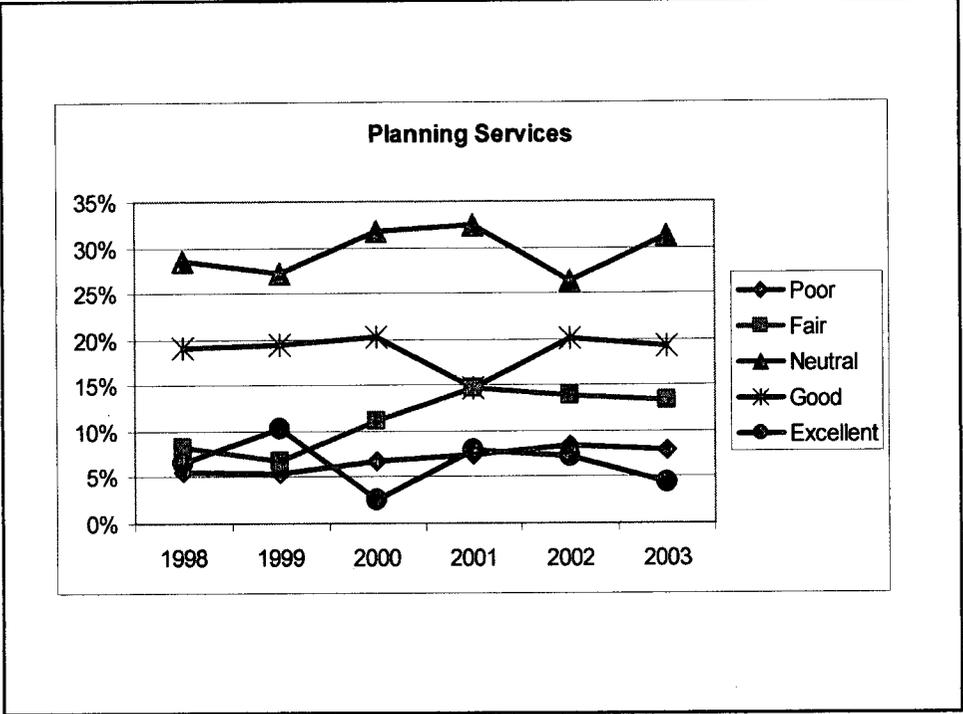
Preferences for Riverside Park Development

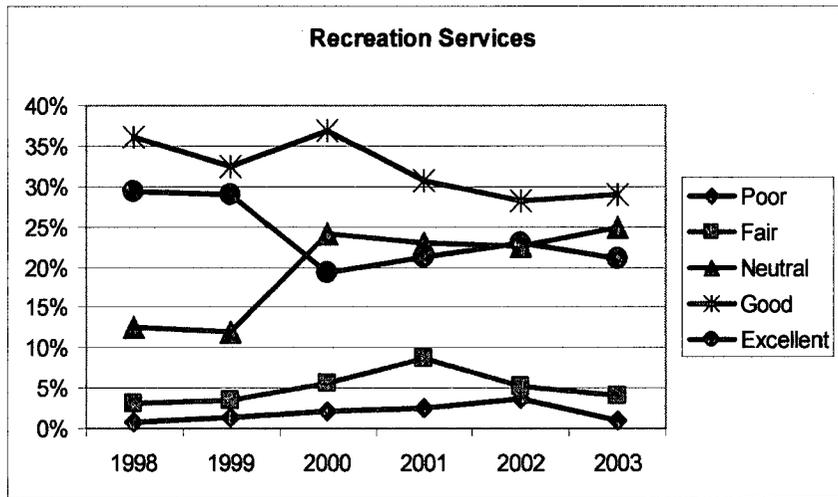
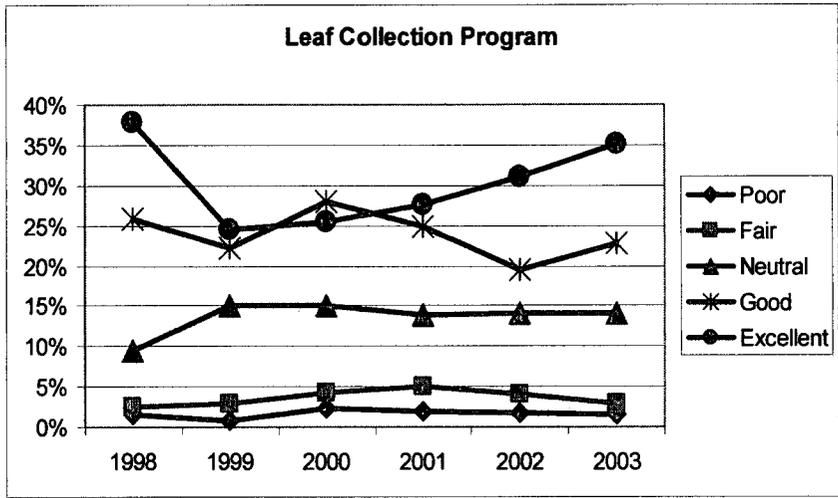


Parks Maintenance

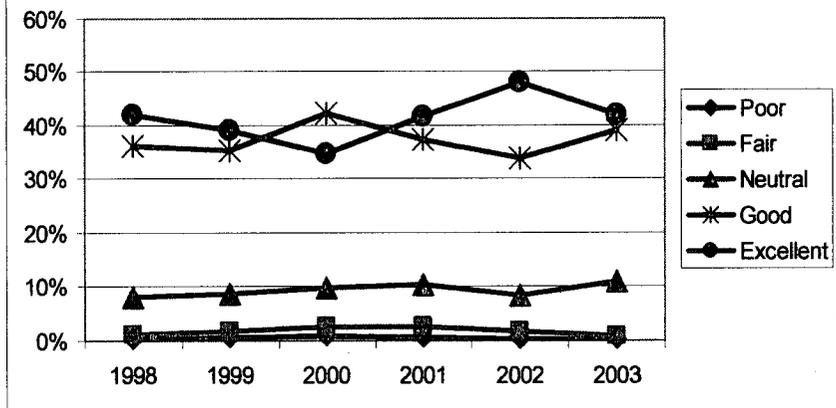








Fire & Emergency Services



Street Sweeping Services

