

STATUS REPORT ON PUBLIC TRUST IN THE CITY OF SANTA CLARA

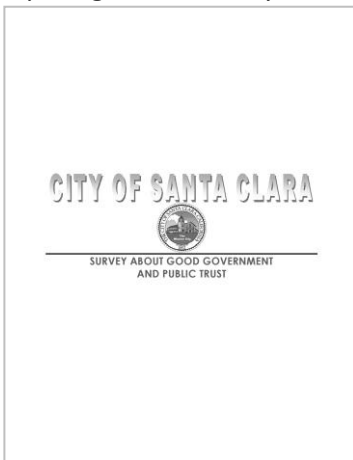
Thomas E. Shanks, Ph.D.

City Ethics Consultant

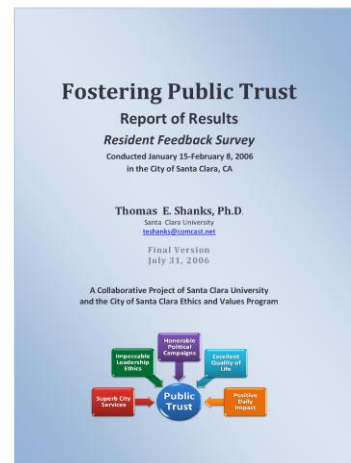
April 12, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comparing the 2007 City survey with baseline data from 2006 shows that:



- Residents consider the City's quality of life, highly rated last year, even better today
- All City services, many of which were already very highly rated, received even higher scores
- Residents continue to believe that the City has a more positive impact on their daily lives than the Federal, State, or County governments
- City leaders continue to be ranked higher for ethical behavior, and trusted more, than leaders of the other government levels
- General awareness of the City's Ethics Program jumped dramatically in just one year, although more work remains to be done in this area
- Residents aware of the City's Ethics Code and residents aware of national recognition of the Ethics Program rate the City significantly higher than unaware residents on daily impact, quality of life, ethical behavior, and public trust
- In contrast with 2006, residents have begun to notice some positive changes in the conduct of political candidates
- Residents were more likely to say that they could make an impact, especially by voting and that the City Council listened to them.



Two next steps are described in some detail:

1. Plan now to continue the very effective Campaign Ethics, Vote Ethics, and Final Word Programs in the 2008 election
2. Develop a sustainable post-election ethics program which makes the Ethics Code and Ethics Pocket Card (i.e., ethical decision-making method) an integral, important, and visible part of major decisions made by the City Council, City Commissions, and the Senior Staff.



The Ethics Company

INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS AT THEIR BEST

1682 Cherry Grove Drive
San Jose, CA 95125-5509
408-529-5318
www.ethicscompany.com

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Thomas E. Shanks, Ph.D.

This is a report on the current state of public trust and good government in the City of Santa Clara. It compares the answers of two random samples of Santa Clara residents asked the same questions asked in the *2006 Resident Feedback Survey* and in the *2007 Good Government and Public Trust Survey*. It presents ten conclusions about public trust in the City, along with a brief description of the supporting data. It ends with suggested next steps for the City's Ethics and Values Program.

ESTABLISHING THE BASELINE DATA

In early 2006, a research team of Santa Clara University and City staff researchers, led by the City's ethics consultant, developed and administered the *Resident Feedback Survey*. The survey:

- measured the public's trust and confidence in the City's government and services
- assessed the impact of the City's Ethics and Values Program
- discovered the other factors that play an important role in the public's judgment of local government
- provided the City Council and City management with objective data to take the Ethics Program to the next level.

The *Resident Feedback Survey* asked questions designed to be repeated in future surveys. It invited a scientifically-selected random sample of City residents to answer them for the first time. Their answers are the baseline answers for any future comparisons.

The 2006 survey gave the City its first comprehensive picture of the public's trust and pride in the City; resident perceptions of quality of life, the City's impact on daily life, and leadership ethics; and evaluations of City services and campaign conduct.

It also assessed public awareness of various parts of the City's Ethics and Values Program, the usefulness of different information sources, and the public's perceptions about the City's Vote Ethics Program and Campaign Finance Ordinance.

Overall, the study found that public trust is strongest when residents experience superb city services, impeccable leadership ethics, honorable political campaigns, excellent quality of life, and the positive daily impact of the City on residents' lives.



These findings had a direct influence on the City's Ethics and Values Program during the November, 2006 City elections. The City expanded the communication activities of the Vote Ethics Program, used direct mail postcards to raise awareness, revamped the Final Word Forum, and made the ethics consultant more available for facilitation, problem solving, and communication between candidates.

SURVEYING RESIDENTS IN 2007

The Good Government and Public Trust Survey, conducted by J.D. Franz Research in early 2007, used the critical questions from the baseline study and thus allows direct comparison with earlier answers. The baseline survey was conducted online and on paper; the *Good Government Survey* was a telephone survey. Despite the difference in methods and the higher response rate for the 2007 survey, the margin of error for both are about the same (at +/- 5%) and both samples are representative of the whole population of the City.

CONCLUSIONS

1. RESIDENTS TODAY ARE EVEN MORE PROUD AND POSITIVE ABOUT THE CITY AND ITS QUALITY OF LIFE THAN THEY WERE IN 2006.

- a. In both surveys, over 90% of residents said they were “proud” or “very proud” to tell people they lived in the City of Santa Clara. The big news is in the “very proud” category. In 2007, 77% of residents said they were “very proud” about the City, a 28% increase over the 49% who said they were “very proud” in 2006.
- b. Ratings for all quality of life measures rose during the past year. Residents continued to give their highest ratings (5+ out of 6) to Santa Clara as a safe place, a good place to work or do business, and a good place to raise a family. This year, residents were more positive about the City as a place to spend leisure time and to retire, giving these indicators on average about a half point jump over last year’s rating to around 4.5 out of 6.
- c. Both years, the average score for “Santa Clara overall as a place to live” was just under 5 out of 6. This year, however, 43% gave the City 6 out of 6 on this measure, compared to 27% a year ago.
- d. Over 80% of Santa Clara residents in both years said the City is going in the right direction.

2. HIGHLY RATED IN 2006, ALL CITY SERVICES RECEIVED EVEN HIGHER RATINGS IN 2007.

- a. In 2006, four City services out of eleven received a 5 or more (out of 6). In 2007, nine out of eleven received a 5 or more. The final two services (Municipal Code Enforcement and the Permit Center) both rose from their 2006 scores to about a 4.8.
- b. The top-rated services in both surveys were the Library, the Fire Department, Municipal Utilities, and Parks, in that order. Close behind in 2007 was the Police Department.

3. CITY AND STATE REMAIN STATISTICALLY TIED FOR FIRST PLACE FOR IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE.

- a. In 2006, residents said the County had the least impact, then the Federal Government, and then the City and the State. The City received an average impact score of 4.08 and the State 4.22, but statistical tests do not find a true difference between these numbers. The difference could be due simply to chance.

- b. In 2007, residents said the Federal Government had the least impact, followed by the County, then the State and the City. On a 6-point scale, the State was rated 4.15 and the City 4.24. Statistical tests again find no true difference between them.

4. IN BOTH YEARS, ABOUT 70% OF RESIDENTS SAW THE CITY'S IMPACT AS POSITIVE, THE LARGEST POSITIVE PERCENTAGE OF THE FOUR GOVERNMENT LEVELS.

- a. The City's impact is considered positive by more people than Federal, State, or County governments. In both years, about 70% said the impact was positive and about 5% negative.
- b. In 2007, 19% said the impact was too little to tell and 6% had no opinion, compared with 25% who said the impact was too little to tell in 2006.
- c. Seven out of 10 residents describe the City's impact as positive. The other 3 of 10 believe the impact is too little to tell, negative, or have no opinion.

5. IN BOTH YEARS, RATINGS FOR CITY LEADERSHIP ETHICS ARE THE HIGHEST OF THE FOUR GOVERNMENT LEVELS, BUT THIS IS AN AREA FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT.

- a. Table 1 shows that ethics ratings rose for all government levels, but the City received the smallest increase. The State score in 2007 improved by .7, the Federal government by .5, the County by .3, and the City by .2.
- b. In both years, the average ethics score was just over 4 out of 6, demonstrating that public perceptions of ethics improve slowly.
- c. Today, City ethics are seen in a positive light, but not as positive a light as needed to deepen public trust. Residents have the right to ethical leadership, and City leaders the duty to provide it. City leaders need to continue to work at being credible role models for the City's core values.

TABLE 1	2006	2007
Federal	2.2	2.7
State	2.7	3.4
County	3.6	3.9
City	4.1	4.3

6. SIMILARLY, PUBLIC TRUST OF CITY LEADERS CONTINUES TO BE THE HIGHEST OF THE FOUR GOVERNMENT LEVELS, BUT THIS IS ALSO AN AREA FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT.

- a. Table 2 shows a pattern similar to Table 1. Public trust ratings rose for all government levels, with the City again receiving the smallest increase. The State improved by .6, the Federal government by .3, the County by .3, and the City by .1.
- b. This is an area for continued improvement. Every action and every decision of City leaders, individually and as a group, either strengthen public trust or weaken it. Public trust is the responsibility of each leader. The 2007 recommendation to City leaders is the same as it was last year: Take no action without first considering its impact on public trust.

TABLE 2	2006	2007
Federal	2.5	2.8
State	2.9	3.5
County	3.6	3.9
City	4.2	4.3

7. GENERAL AWARENESS OF THE CITY'S ETHICS PROGRAM GREW REMARKABLY IN ONE YEAR, BUT MORE WORK REMAINS IN THIS AREA.

- a. Table 3 shows that awareness jumped from 24% to 48% over the year. The percentage of those who now say they are "very aware" is four times what it was a year ago.
- b. The percentage of those saying they were "not very aware" or "not at all aware" dropped from 76% to 53%.
- c. By 2007, residents had spent a year using the 2006 City calendar which highlighted a different component of the Ethics and Values Program each month. From September to November, residents received a number of communications from the Vote Ethics Program and an expanded number of media were used to communicate with them.

TABLE 3	2006	2007
Very aware	6	23
Somewhat aware	18	24
Not Very aware	24	17
Not at all aware	52	36

- d. Table 4 shows the increases in awareness for various parts of the ethics program. It took six years for 38% of residents to become aware of the Code of Ethics and Values. In just one year, that number jumped to 63%. After just two years, 52% are aware of the Vote Ethics Program.

Table 4 AWARENESS OF VARIOUS CITY ETHICS ACTIVITIES		
	Total Awareness	
	2006	2007
Encouraged Citizens To "Vote Ethics" In The November, 2006 Election	21%	52%
Has A Code Of Ethics And Values	38%	63%
Holds Ethics Orientation Sessions For City Commissioners	10%	24%
Holds Ethics Study Sessions For The City Council	13%	25%
Provides Training For Political Candidates On How To Hold Ethical Political Campaigns	9%	28%
Has A Voluntary Ordinance That Caps Campaign Spending At \$29,300	15%	29%
Has Received State And National Recognition For Its Ethics And Values Program	12%	30%

8. AWARENESS OF THE ETHICS PROGRAM POSITIVELY IMPACTS THE WAY RESIDENTS LOOK AT THE CITY AND CITY LEADERS.

- a. Those aware of the Code of Ethics and of the national recognition the City has received for its Ethics Program gave statistically higher scores than unaware residents on positive impact, quality of life, leadership ethics, and public trust.
- b. Those aware of the Ethics Code had average public trust ratings of 4.5, compared to 4.0 for those unaware of the Code. Ethics scores were also half a point higher if someone was aware of the Code.
- c. Someone aware of national recognition typically gave a 4.6 on public trust,

someone unaware 4.2. On ethics, 4.7 vs. 4.3. These are statistically significant different scores.

- d. Awareness of the Campaign Finance Ordinance, Commissioner Orientations, and Council Study Sessions also led to higher scores on one or two of the measures, but not all four. Awareness of any of these components of the Ethics Program led to significantly higher scores for leadership ethics.

9. RESIDENTS ARE BEGINNING TO PAY ATTENTION TO CAMPAIGN CONDUCT AND HAVE BEGUN TO NOTICE SOME POSITIVE CHANGES IN CANDIDATE CONDUCT.

- a. Changing people's perceptions of candidates and campaigns is perhaps the most difficult challenge for at least three reasons: many people believe that candidates will do anything to win; candidates have had difficulty in the past controlling the negative behavior of their supporters, especially in the last days before the election; and media often reinforce the worst stereotypes.
- b. Residents appear to have noticed some positive changes. On the question of whether campaigns in Santa Clara have gotten better, worse, or remained the same in terms of ethics, in 2007, just 19% said they had no opinion, compared with 48% a year ago. As people have formed opinions, those who believe campaigns have gotten worse rose from 5% to about 7% while those who believe they have gotten better went from 12% to 23% and those who believe they remained the same went from 35% to about 51%.
- c. Residents believe that many more candidates now take responsibility for stopping their supporters from unfairly attacking opponents. In 2007, 12.8% said all candidates do this, compared to about 2% who believed that a year ago.
- d. In 2007, 10.1% said all candidates told the truth about themselves, compared to .4% a year ago.
- e. In 2007, 6.2% said all candidates told the truth about opponents, compared to 0% who said this a year ago.
- f. More work remains to be done in this area. While more than 60% of residents both years said "some," "most," or "all" candidates conduct what residents consider to be clean or ethical campaigns, more than 60% of residents both years said "some," "most," or "all" candidates "do whatever it takes to win."

10. IN 2007, PEOPLE WERE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO AGREE THAT THEY CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON THE CITY, THAT VOTING IS THE MAJOR WAY TO INFLUENCE THE CITY, AND THAT CITY LEADERS LISTEN TO PEOPLE LIKE THEM.

- a. In both surveys, 70% of residents say they typically vote in City elections. The fact that residents were more likely to agree with these statements in 2007 could very well be explained by the practice of candidates walking precincts and actually listening to residents, by residents receiving many City communications reminding them that they do make a difference by voting, and by voters seeing the direct impact of their votes on a ballot measure which was defeated. The earlier study was well before the election.

- b. The 2006 survey asked residents to identify the leadership behaviors that most contributed to public trust. While the 2007 survey did not ask that same question, residents' answers are consistent with the 2006 list in the box below.
- c. If leaders hear just one thing from residents, they should hear that residents consider these behaviors fundamental for public trust. The City considers them so fundamental to public trust it has incorporated them into the City's Code of Ethics and Values and made them the moral obligation of every candidate and City leader.

Trustworthy Leaders

Residents said that these are the most important behaviors for leaders to practice in order to foster public trust. Leaders must:

- Be honest and tell the truth to citizens, colleagues, and staff;
- Be dependable and do what they say they will do;
- Make prudent financial decisions, taking into account both short-term needs and long-term financial stability;
- Act with integrity, and seek to do the right thing for the City in public and in private;
- Take responsibility for their actions, even when it is uncomfortable or unpopular to do so;
- Make impartial decisions, free of any interests that might compromise or appear to compromise leaders' independence of judgment;
- Be accountable, willing to explain actions and to accept fair consequences when leaders make mistakes.