

CITY OF SANTA CLARA, CA
ETHICS & VALUES PROGRAM

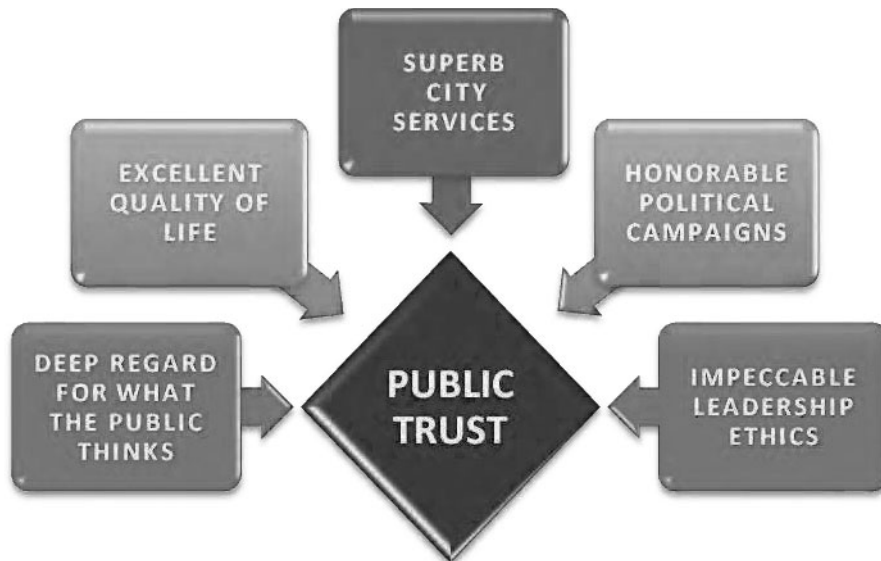
GOOD GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC TRUST
AFTER THE NOVEMBER, 2008 ELECTION
FINDINGS FROM THE CITY SURVEYS

PROGRESS REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report on the state of public trust in the City of Santa Clara after the November, 2008 election. It presents important results from the City of Santa Clara's 2008 *Good Government and Public Trust Survey*, conducted shortly after the election. This was a scientific and objective study of residents' attitudes, opinions, and experiences with their local government. The results from this survey are presented alongside results from similar surveys conducted early in 2006 and in 2007, shortly after the November, 2006 election.

This report focuses on public trust and how it grows in the City of Santa Clara. Figure 1 illustrates one of the key findings from the surveys: Public trust grows as a result of five positive judgments that residents make about the City Council, life in the City, City services, political campaigns, and ethical leadership behavior.



Figure 1: Public trust in Santa Clara City government is influenced by positive action by the City and positive interpretation of those actions by City residents

This document reports on the progress the City has made in earning the positive regard of the City's residents in these five areas and in fostering public trust.

The report also identifies areas for continued work and practical implications of the findings.

Among the most significant findings are the following:

- Residents' positive assessment of leadership ethics and their agreement with the statement that "The City Council cares a great deal about what people like me think" are the top two of five measures most strongly connected with residents' rating of public trust. The other three are positive evaluations of quality of life, City services, and campaign conduct.
- Resident awareness of various components of the Ethics Program (i.e., that the City has a Code of Ethics & Values, holds ethics study sessions for the City Council, provides training for political candidates, or has received state and national recognition for its Ethics & Values Program) leads to stronger perceptions that the City Council has deep regard for what the public thinks; stronger evaluations of quality of life, City services, and leadership ethics; and deeper public trust.
- Residents perceive that campaign conduct is improving, but slowly. Many residents believe candidates continue to engage in unethical conduct. Others are unclear about what constitutes unethical campaign conduct in the first place. Some early warning signals are also identified.

The report concludes that the Ethics & Values Program is succeeding as an educational program whose goal is to foster public trust by encouraging the practice of the City's core values, ethical decision-making, and integrating the Code of Ethics & Values into the operating culture of City Hall. It encourages the City to discuss ways to continue to educate and to raise residents' awareness of the City's commitment to ethics and values.

1. INTRODUCTION

The most recent *Good Government and Public Trust Survey*¹, a scientific and objective study of Santa Clara City residents, was conducted by Sacramento-based J.D. Franz Research from November 9-December 4, 2008. Its goal was to assess residents' attitudes about local government ethics and public trust after the November, 2008 election. The City administered a similar survey early in 2006 and again in its post-November, 2006 election study, completed early in 2007.

This report draws from the three surveys to present the most important findings about the level of public trust after the November, 2008 election, as well as the resident experiences and perceptions which strengthen or weaken trust.

The City of Santa Clara conducts these surveys because it is committed to fostering public trust of the City's government and services. In practice, this means that every individual involved in City government strives to act, interact, and do "the people's business" in such a manner that residents are increasingly confident that the best interests of all the people are being served all the time, both in public and in private.

The City believes that fostering public trust is a duty, a necessity, and a promise made to residents and formalized in the City's Code of Ethics & Values. When officials serve with "the consent of the governed," strong public trust is a requirement for effective and efficient government. If trust weakens, government decisions are routinely challenged; public meetings become difficult and lengthy. When trust dies, many people believe democracy dies.

Figure 2 shows the key finding from the 2006 and 2007 surveys: Public trust rises or falls as residents form positive or negative judgments and perceptions about quality of life in the City, the City's impact on residents, City services, political campaigns, and the ethical behavior of City leaders. It is strongest when residents can describe their experience of the City and its leaders as "excellent," "positive," "superb," "honorable," and "impeccable."



Figure 2: The 2006 and 2007 surveys showed that public trust rises and falls along with five other resident perceptions

The City of Santa Clara understands that such positive perceptions and strong public trust take a long time to build, but can be lost or damaged quickly, especially during political campaigns. These surveys help the City assess public trust, mark progress, provide early warning about problems, involve residents, and broaden the knowledge base required for the City to be *at its best* as it continues to build its Ethics & Values Program and foster Public Trust.

¹ See Jennifer D. Franz, Ph.D. *Survey About Good Government and Public Trust: Final Draft Report* (December, 2008), p. 1.

2. CARING A GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHAT RESIDENTS THINK

In the 2008 survey, one of the questions designed to assess residents' opinions about their ability to accomplish goals within the City's political system was found to be almost as important to public trust as residents' ratings of the ethical behavior of City leaders. "Deep regard for what the public thinks" replaced "positive daily impact" on the list of the five most important opinions which influence public trust, as illustrated in Figure 3.

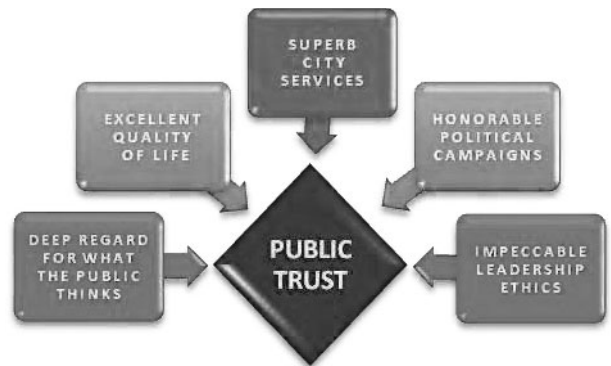


Figure 3: The 2008 Good Government Survey identified these five resident perceptions as most important to fostering public trust in the City

Residents were asked how much they agreed with the statement: "Generally speaking, the people you elect to the Santa Clara City Council care a great deal about what people like you think."

Residents could choose any number between "1" ("strongly disagreed") and "6" ("strongly agreed").

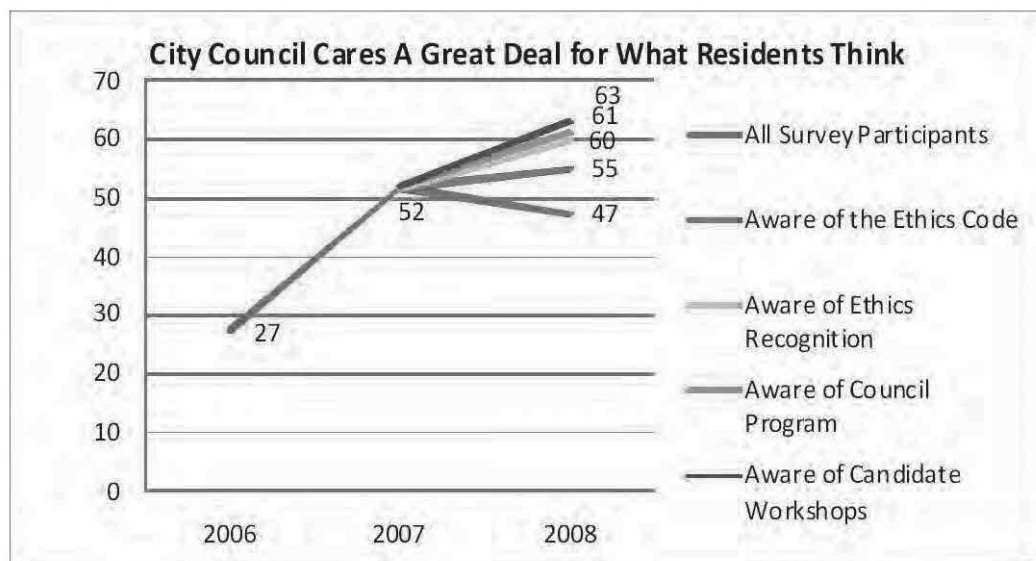


Figure 4: While a smaller percentage (47%) of the 2008 general population strongly agreed that "the City Council cares a great deal about what residents like you think," percentages ranging from 55% to 63% of ethics-aware residents strongly agreed with the statement

Figure 4 shows that in the population at large the percentage of people strongly agreeing that the City Council "cares a great deal about what people like you think" rose from 27% in 2006 to 52% in 2007 and then declined slightly to 47% in 2008.

However, Figure 4 also shows one of the most important findings to emerge in this report: the importance of awareness of the ethics program. Compared to a decline from 52% to 47% of the people in the general population saying the Council cared a great deal about what they thought, the percentage increased to 55% among those who were aware of the Ethics & Values Code, 60% of those aware that the City had received recognition for the Ethics Program, 61% of

those who knew about ethics study sessions for the City Council, and 63% of those aware of ethics training for political candidates.

In summary, then:

FINDING 1: The more a resident believes the City Council cares a great deal about what he or she thinks, the more trust the resident has for City government. The opposite is also true: public trust drops as residents perceive that the City Council does not care a great deal “what people like you” think.

FINDING 2: The percentage of people who believe the Council cares a great deal about what people like them think almost doubled from 27% in 2006 to 52% in 2007. It dropped in 2008 in the general population to 47% but rose to anywhere from 55% to 63% among the groups who were aware of various parts of the Ethics Program.

FINDING 3: The perception that the Council cares a great deal about what residents think has a very strong influence on the residents’ perception of whether the Council acts ethically or not. A positive perception leads to higher rating of leadership ethics.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: The *Behavioral Standards* for the City Council, approved in 2008 and available online, is a good resource for ways to communicate care for what residents think. Other resources are available online at the new Collaborative Governance Initiative of the Institute for Local Government, the research arm of the League of California Cities.

3. EXCELLENT QUALITY OF LIFE

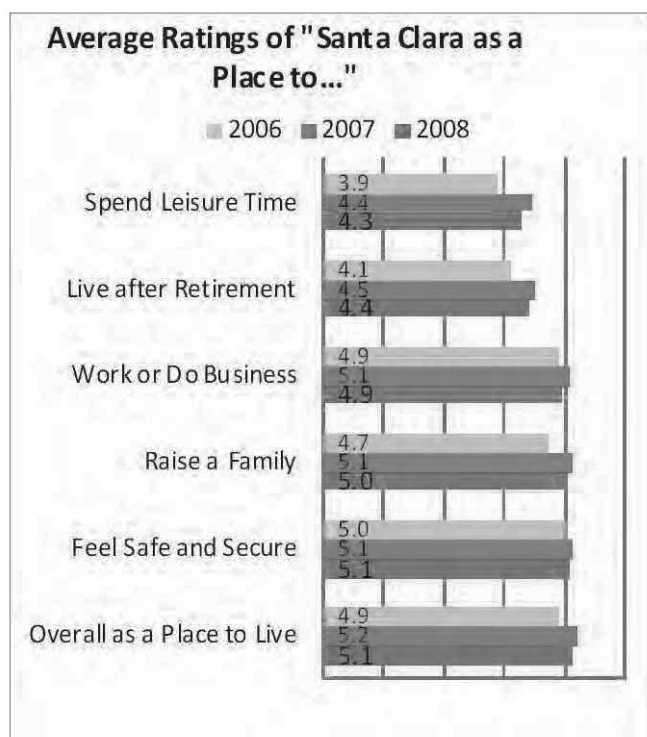


Figure 5: Average ratings on various City activities relating to 'quality of life' (1=Poor/6=Excellent)

To measure “quality of life” residents were asked, “Where 1 = poor and 6 = excellent, how would you rate the City of Santa Clara as a place to...” Residents were asked about each item in Figure 5, including the overall item at the bottom of the list. In 2006, just one of the six items received a score of “5” on a six-point scale. By 2008, three received a score of “5”; one was at “4.9”, the same score it had in 2006. All the other scores increased over the years.

FINDING 4: Santa Clara as a place to “to spend leisure time” and “live after retirement” received a 3.9 and a 4.1 respectively in 2006. The averages rose slightly to 4.3 and 4.4 respectively by 2008.

FINDING 5: In 2006, residents gave the City higher marks on “work or do business,” “raise a family,” “feel safe and secure,” and “overall as a place to live.” Over the three years, work or do business

started at 4.9, rose to 5.1, and then dropped back to 4.9. “Raise a family,” “feel safe and secure,” and “overall as a place to live” all showed small increases to 5.0 and 5.1.

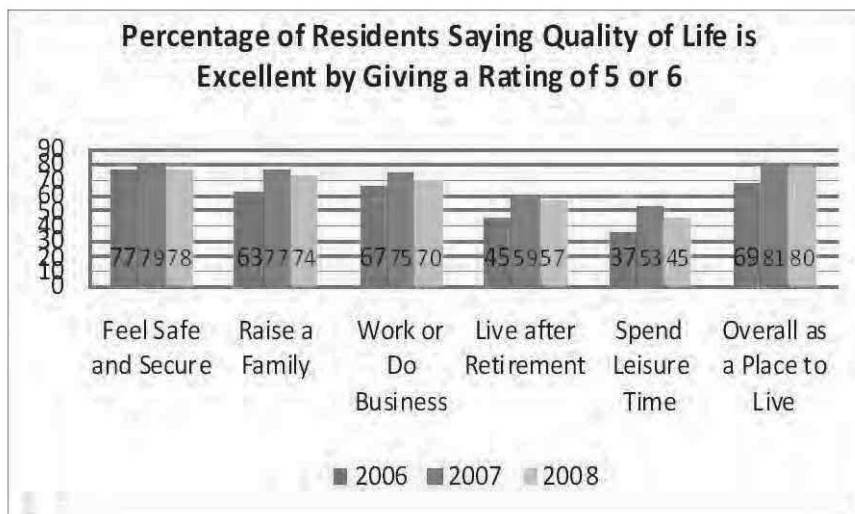


Figure 6: Percentages of residents assigning "excellent" ratings to one or more quality of life measures

Residents' evaluations of quality of life improved much more than just these small changes in average scores.

Figure 6 shows the percentages of residents rating Santa Clara as an "excellent" (scores of "5" or "6") place for various things. In every case, the 2008 percentages are higher than 2006 percentages, but lower than 2007 percentages.

FINDING 6: 69% gave the

City an excellent rating for "overall as a place to live" in 2006. That percentage increased to 81% and then dropped to 80% by 2008.

FINDING 7: "Feeling safe and secure" received excellent ratings consistently from more than three out of four residents over the three years. "Raise a family" rose from 63% in 2006 to 77% in 2007, and then dropped slightly to 74% in 2008. "Work or do business" rose from 67% to 75% and then dropped to 70% in 2008. "Live after retirement" and "spend leisure time" show the same patterns: 2008 results are higher than 2006 results, but lower than 2007 results.

4. ETHICS PROGRAM AWARENESS

The pattern of large positive increases from 2006 to 2007, followed in 2008 either by small increases (for example, in "regard for the public's thinking") or small decreases (for example, in some of the "Santa Clara as a place for..." ratings) appears to be related to ethics program awareness. Figure 7 shows large increases in awareness from 2006 to 2007, and then either small increases or small decreases from 2007 to 2008.

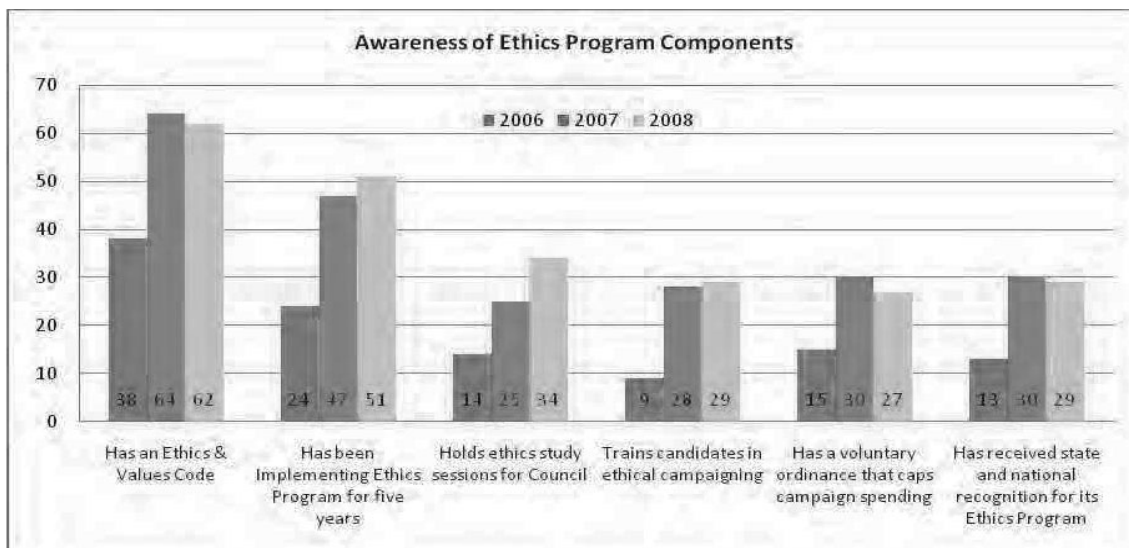


Figure 7: Percentages of residents reporting any level of awareness (4, 5, or 6)

FINDING 8: By 2008, eight years after its adoption, 60% of residents are aware of the Code of Ethics & Values. Half the residents are aware that the City has been implementing an ethics program, up from just a quarter of the people with that knowledge in 2006. About 30% of residents are aware of the other program components.

The fact that ethics awareness showed the same pattern of a steep increase from 2006 to 2007, followed by either some decrease or some increase from 2007 to 2008 led to further exploration of the impact of ethics awareness on the measures of most interest to the City.

5. IMPACT OF ETHICS AWARENESS ON 2008 QUALITY OF LIFE

Figure 8 looks just at the 2008 results for Santa Clara “overall as a place to live.”

The first column shows that 80% of the whole sample in 2008 gave an “excellent” rating to this overall measure. Looking just at the group of people in 2008 who said they were aware of the Ethics Code, the percentage assigning an “excellent” rating jumps to 86%. It jumps to its highest percentage (88%) in 2008 among the group of people aware of Council ethics study sessions, while 84% of both the group aware of candidate ethics training and among those aware of ethics recognition rated the City as “excellent” overall as a place to live.

Ethics awareness also makes a difference in all the other 2008 “Santa Clara as a place to...” ratings: “Feel safe and secure” receives excellent ratings from 78% of the whole population, but from 85% of those aware of ethics recognition from outside the City.

“Raise a family” receives excellent ratings from 74% of the whole population, but from 82% of those aware of Council ethics study sessions. “Work or do business” receives excellent ratings from 70% of the whole population, but from 77% of those aware of ethics recognition. “Place to spend leisure” receives excellent ratings from 57% of the whole population, but from 54% of those aware of candidate ethics training. “Live after retirement” receives excellent ratings from 57% of the whole population, but from 69% of those aware of Council study sessions.

FINDING 9: In 2008, those who are aware of any component of the Ethics Program are more likely to say the City is an “excellent” place than residents who are not aware of the Ethics Program.

The results show that awareness of various components of the ethics program in 2008 contribute to residents’ positive perceptions of the quality of life in the City. This is consistent with the goal of the Ethics & Values Program: to foster public trust by earning the positive perceptions of residents in a number of key areas

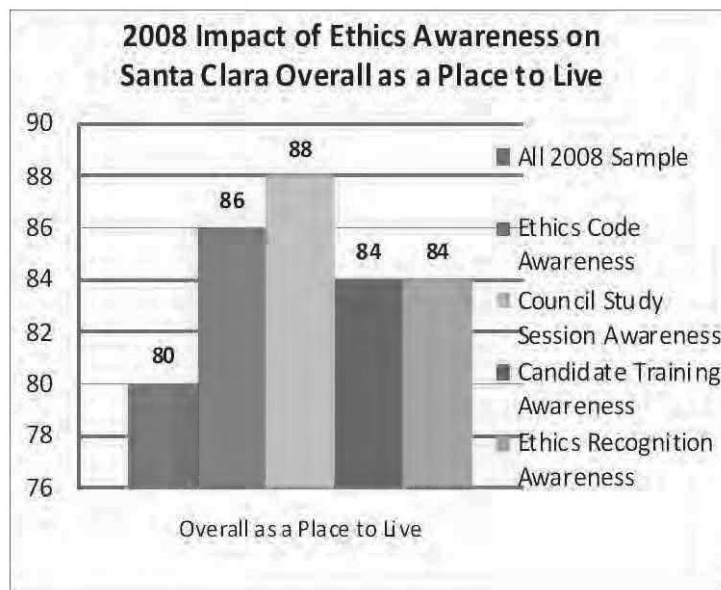


Figure 8: Percentages giving "excellent" ratings ("5" or "6") to City overall as a place to live in 2008. First column is percentage of whole sample. Other columns look only at people with different types of ethics awareness

6. SUPERB CITY SERVICES

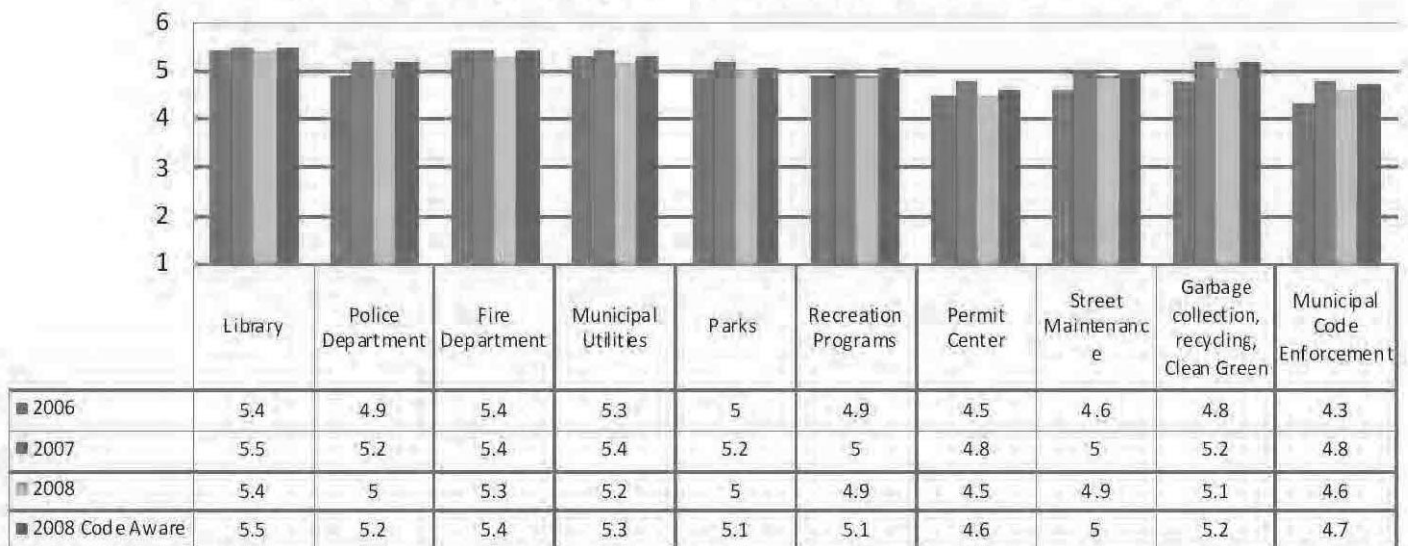
Another example of the positive influence of Ethics Program awareness is seen in the ratings of City services in Figure 9. The average ratings given to City services by the whole sample in 2006, 2007, and 2008 are listed in the first three rows of numbers in the table below the colored bars. The last row of numbers in the table shows the average ratings given in 2008 just by those who said they were aware that the City had an Ethics & Values Code.

The colored bars represent the numbers in the table. For example, the first three bars from the left represent the average rating for the City's library on a scale of "1" to "6" for 2006, 2007, and 2008. The next bar represents the 2008 average rating for the library by those aware that the City has an Ethics & Values Code. Then there is a white space. The next set of bars present the data for the Police Department, etc.

City services are rated very highly in all the years. In 2006, four out of ten services are rated "5" or over. In 2007, the number rises to eight out of ten rated "5" or over, with two at "4.8." In

Figure 9: Average Ratings of City Services 2006-2008

and 2008 Average Ratings by Those Aware of the Code of Ethics & Values



2008, six services are rated at "5" or over with two at "4.9".

While the numbers are very close, the pattern of a large increase from 2006 to 2007, followed by a slight drop from 2007 – 2008 can be seen in the population as a whole. However, among the 2008 people aware of the Ethics Code, the ratings return virtually to the higher 2007 level.

FINDING 10: Awareness that the City has an Ethics Code leads to a more positive perception of City services in 2008. The same positive perception is visible among those who are aware in 2008 of City recognition and those aware of City Council Ethics Study Sessions.

7. HONORABLE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Vote Ethics is a non-political educational program that uses various media to provide residents with critical thinking tools they may choose to use to hold candidates accountable in the ballot box for following the City's Code of Ethics & Values and the State's voluntary Code of Fair Campaign Practices, signed by all 2006 and 2008 candidates.

The results show that residents are making increased use of City sources as sources of news and local information, as well as increasing use of Vote Ethics materials.

FINDING 11: In 2008, the City Web Site became the most important source for "local news and information." It holds this position using average score (4.33 out of 6.0) or percentage of residents (52%) who consider that source "extremely important" (and give it a score of "5" or "6").

Three of the top four sources are now City sources, with *Mission City Scenes* (the monthly utility bill insert) in second place and *Inside Santa Clara*, the City quarterly newspaper, in fourth place. The *San José Mercury News* is now in third place.

Table 1 shows the news sources listed in descending order according to their 2008 rank. The number in parentheses is the percentage of residents who rated that source a "5" or a "6." The list is based on average scores or percentage scores. Residents were not asked to rank order the sources.

Table 1: Most Important to Least Important 2008 Sources of Local News and Information
(Parenthesis lists percentage of all residents giving that source importance scores of "5" or "6")

	2006	2007	2008
City Web Site	7 (36)	5 (40)	1 (52)
<i>Mission City Scenes</i>	4 (55)	3 (47)	2 (49)
<i>San José Mercury News</i>	1 (68)	1 (53)	3 (48)
<i>Inside Santa Clara Newspaper</i>	5 (51)	4 (45)	4 (47)
Local TV News	2 (60)	2 (51)	5 (44)
<i>Santa Clara Weekly</i>	3 (56)	6 (38)	6 (42)
Council on Ch. 15	9 (23)	6 (38)	7 (40)
Cable Ch. 15	8 (23)	8 (35)	8 (39)
Local Radio News	6 (51)	9 (28)	9 (33)

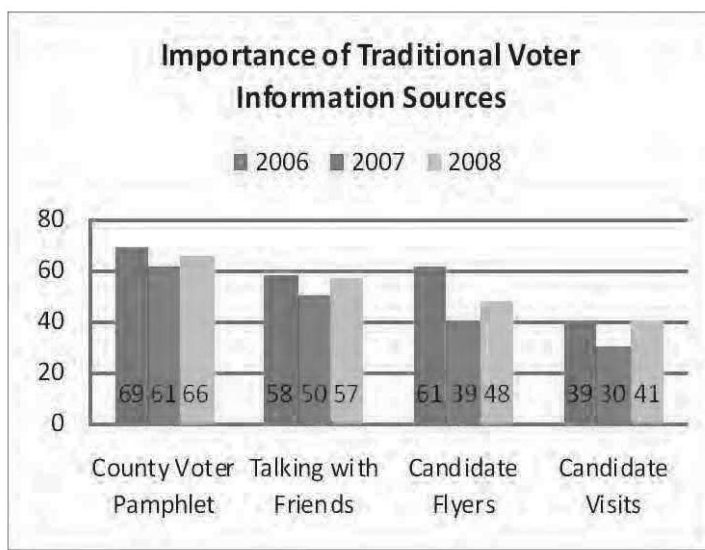


Figure 10: Percentages of people rating these as very important (5 or 6) during that year's election

Just about 40% of the ratings received by Cable Channel 15, the government access television channel, were 5s and 6s, meaning that Cable Channel 15, while rated 7 and 8 (out of 9), is considered an important news source by a solid percentage of City residents.

Figure 10 shows traditional sources of information voters have had available to them for some time in the City. The numbers are the percentages of people each year who rated these sources as "very important" (5 or 6 on a 6-point scale) as a source of information during the recent City election.

While the numbers vary slightly from year to year, the County Voter pamphlet is considered the most important source for voting information by about two out of three people. Just over half the people find talking with friends important. These two sources have not grown in use.

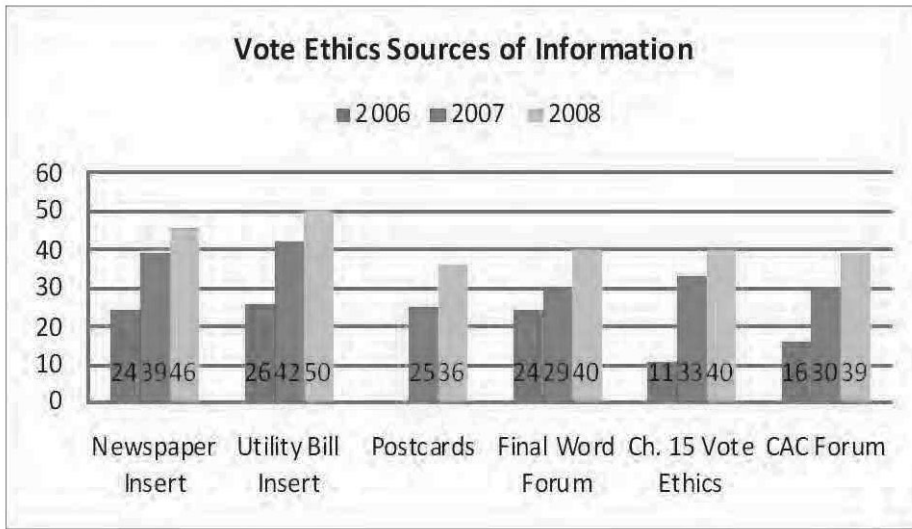


Figure 11: Percentages of residents rating new City voter information sources as very important (a 5 or 6 rating)

It is hard to tell what the trend is with candidate flyers and visits. Flyers dropped from 61% finding them very important in 2006 to 39% in 2007 to 48% in 2008. Similarly, visits went from 39% finding them important to 30% and back to 41% in 2008.

This is in contrast to the increasing importance of Vote Ethics materials, which Figure 11 shows.

FINDING 12:

Figure 11 shows the rapid rise in use and importance of the new Vote Ethics materials begun with the 2004 election and the large postcards used for the first time for the November, 2006 election. These are the percentages of people saying that these sources were very important to them during that year's election.

Despite these dramatic increases, these materials are still not used yet by large number of voters and about one in three voters in the population at large still feel they have too little information on which to base their decisions. Going forward, it is important to consider ways to increase awareness of the Ethics & Values Program and the use of these materials.



Figure 12: Percentage who believe all or most candidates will do whatever it takes to win is dropping and running clean campaigns is increasing

Residents are perceiving that campaign behavior is improving slowly, but campaign conduct continues to put public trust at risk.

First the good news: Figure 12 shows that in 2006 two out of three residents believed all or most candidates would do whatever it takes to win; that dropped to 46% in 2007, but rose to 51% in 2008.

FINDING 13: In other words, half the residents in 2008 believed that most or all candidates would do whatever it takes to win, while a little less than half do not believe that about most or all candidates. Similarly, just over half the

residents now believe that most or all candidates run clean campaigns, increasing from 43% in 2006 to 49% in 2007 to 54% in 2008.

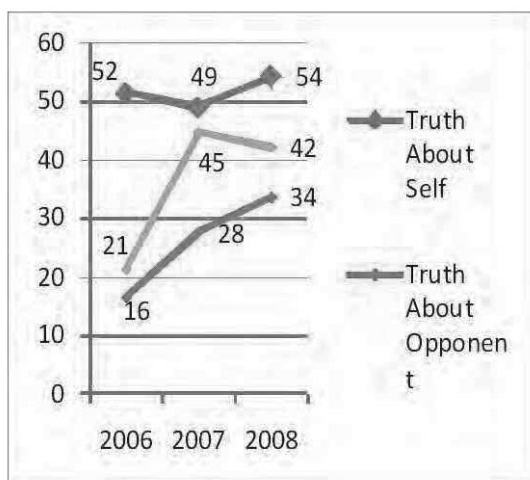


Figure 13: Numbers represent percentages of residents each year who believe all or most candidates engage in this behavior

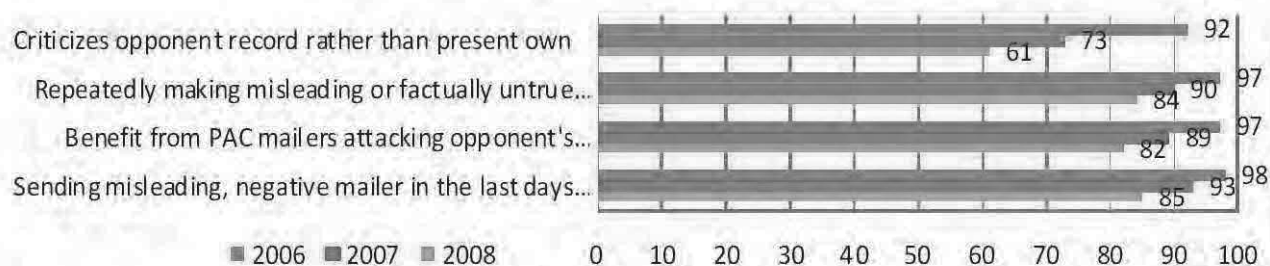
Figure 13 looks at the percentage of residents who believe all or most candidates tell the truth about themselves, tell the truth about opponents, and believe they have the responsibility to try to stop supporters from unfair attacks on opponents. It shows a consistent positive trend about telling the truth about opponents. This percentage rose dramatically from 16% who believed candidates told the truth about opponents in 2006 to 28% in 2007 and to 34% in 2008. In 2006, 21% believed candidates would try to stop unfair attacks by supporters. The percentage rose to 45% of residents who believed this in 2007. It dropped slightly in 2008 to 42%, still double the number of residents who believed most candidates would try to stop supporters from unfair attacks on opponents.

As for telling the truth about oneself, with some slight variation, the percentage has remained relatively constant across the three years, with about one out of two residents believing all or most candidates tell the truth about themselves.

FINDING 14: Residents are noticing improvement in some campaign behaviors. The percentages of residents who believe all or most candidates would stop unfair attacks by supporters and tell the truth about opponents has doubled in three years. Yet, from about 50% to 66% of residents believe most or all candidates do not tell the truth about themselves or their opponents, nor do the majority believe that candidates would try to stop supporters from unfair attacks of opponents.

FINDING 15: Figure 14 shows that a small, but growing, number of residents in the population at large find legal, but ethically questionable, practices more acceptable in 2008 than three years ago. For example, 15% of residents in 2008 find it acceptable to send “a misleading and negative mailer in the last days of a campaign” and 16% say it is acceptable to “repeatedly make statements about an opponent that are misleading or factually untrue.” Just under 20%

Figure 14: Percentages of People Saying These Legal Practices Are Unacceptable in the City of Santa Clara (Scores 1, 2, or 3 out of 6)



say it is acceptable for a candidate to benefit “from an independent political action committee that sends weekly mailers with unsubstantiated allegations about the opponent’s character. Finally, 39% say it is acceptable to focus on criticisms of an opponent’s record and positions rather than presenting one’s own record and positions.

However, Figures 15 and 16, along with Tables 2 and 3 below, may provide some evidence that the answer to this disturbing trend may also lie with increasing awareness of the Ethics & Values Program and increasing use of Vote Ethics materials. At the same time, these findings may also be a set of very early warning signals for City officials and candidates.

A drop of 10% from 2007 to 2008 among those who say they are “very proud” to say they live in

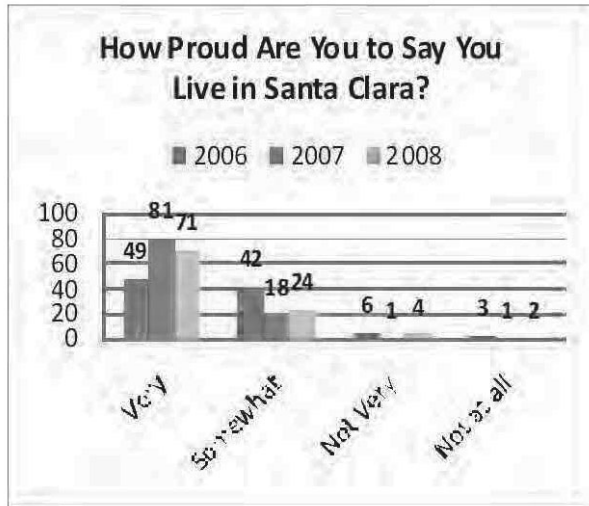


Figure 15: Percentage of residents each year who say they are very proud of the City jumped dramatically from 2006 to 2007, and then dropped 10% in 2008

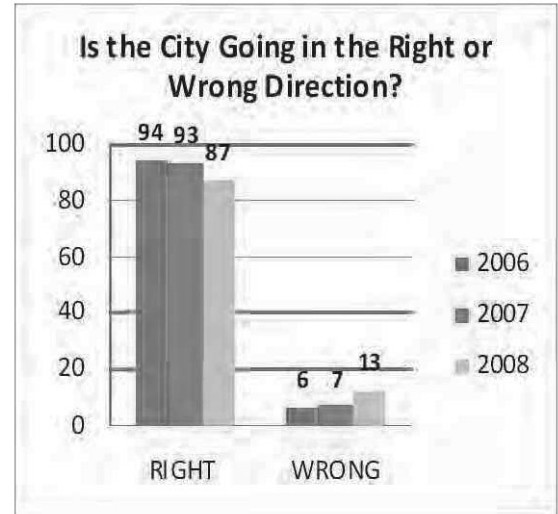


Figure 16: Percentage of those saying the City is going in the right direction in 2008 dropped below the 2006 baseline

the City in Figure 15 may seem as insignificant as a drop of 6% in the percentage of people saying the City is going in the right direction in Figure 16. Both were explored further because Figure 16 shows results in 2008 that fell below the 2006 baseline and because changes in these measures may indicate some problem that can be easily resolved if caught early.

	2007	2008	% Decline
Ethics Code Aware	85	78	7
Aware of Council Ethics Sessions	90	80	10
Aware of Ethics Recognition	86	77	9
Aware of Campaign Ethics	84	77	7

FINDING 16: Table 2 shows the percentage of residents aware of the Ethics Program who were very proud after the 2006 election and after the 2008 election. In every case, we see a drop in pride after the 2008 election.

At least two explanations present themselves: First, residents may be learning from the Vote Ethics materials that expectations may not be fully met. Second, City officials rarely discuss publicly the ethical criteria they apply to decisions or take opportunities to educate the public about good government as it happens. In the absence of such communication or discussion, residents are left to

their own judgments and perceptions of what ethics looks like and does not look like. This is worth further discussion.

Table 3 raises similar issues, except in the case of a decline in the City’s direction, the evidence seems to point more to expectations residents had for the 2008 campaign.

FINDING 17: After the November, 2006 election, 95% of those aware of campaign ethics workshops thought the City was going in the right direction. After the November, 2008 election, 86% thought the City was going in the right direction. It also appears that when residents hear that the City has been honored for its Ethics work, it raises expectations for candidate behavior during an election.

Table 3: Percentage of Ethics Awareness Groups Saying The City is Going in the Right Direction

	2007	2008	% Decline
Ethics Code Aware	95	91	4
Aware of Council Ethics Sessions	93	90	3
Aware of Ethics Recognition	95	87	8
Aware of Campaign Ethics	95	86	9

This is a reminder, though not a dire one, that public trust is at risk during campaigns. It also implies that some residents are holding candidates accountable for the promises they have made and believe that candidate behavior does impact on the future direction of the City.

8. IMPECCABLE LEADERSHIP ETHICS FOSTERS PUBLIC TRUST

In these surveys, leadership ethics is measured by asking, “On a scale where ‘1’ equals ‘poor’ and ‘6’ equals ‘excellent,’ how would you rate the ethical behavior of Santa Clara City Government?”

The same question was asked for the Federal, California State, and Santa Clara County governments.

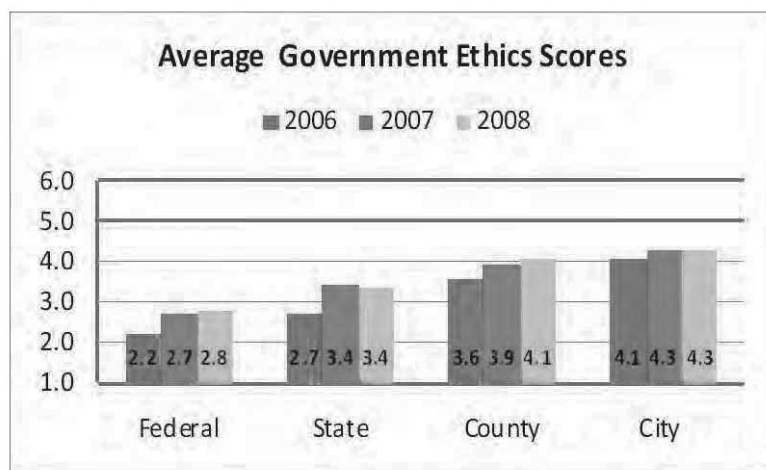


Figure 17: Average Government Ethics Scores for the Whole Sample

When measured in the whole population, residents give the City of Santa Clara higher ethics scores than any other level. However, as Figure 17 shows, the score has changed by only a few tenths of a point during three years, despite significant expansion and increased awareness of the Ethics Program.

Nevertheless, the findings presented earlier suggest that large numbers of City residents are still unaware of much of the work

of the Ethics & Values Program. The results suggest that increasing awareness of the Ethics & Values Program, integrating ethics discussion as a regular part of policy discussions, and practicing the behaviors outlined in the *Behavioral Standards* document should lead to stronger resident perceptions in this area.

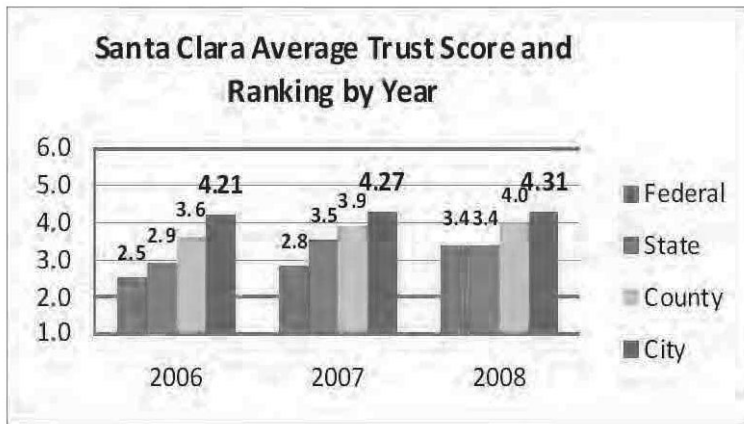


Figure 18: Annual Average City Trust Scores and Levels of Government Trust

Public Trust is measured by asking, “On a six-point scale where ‘1’ means you have ‘no trust’ and ‘6’ means you have a ‘great deal’ of trust, how much trust do you have that the Santa Clara City government will serve the best interests of the people it is elected to represent?”

Figure 18 tells much the same story as the ethics measure. Among the population at large, the average City trust score has risen slightly over the years, while the other government levels have seen dramatic increases.

However, Figure 19 shows something else going on with public trust when the analysis again looks not only at average trust scores for the whole sample, but what is going on with trust when residents are aware of different components of the Ethics Program.

As we have seen throughout this report, awareness of various components of the program are related to higher levels of public trust. Instead of trust remaining at the 4.3 level, it is higher, sometimes quite a bit higher, depending on the awareness residents have of the Program.

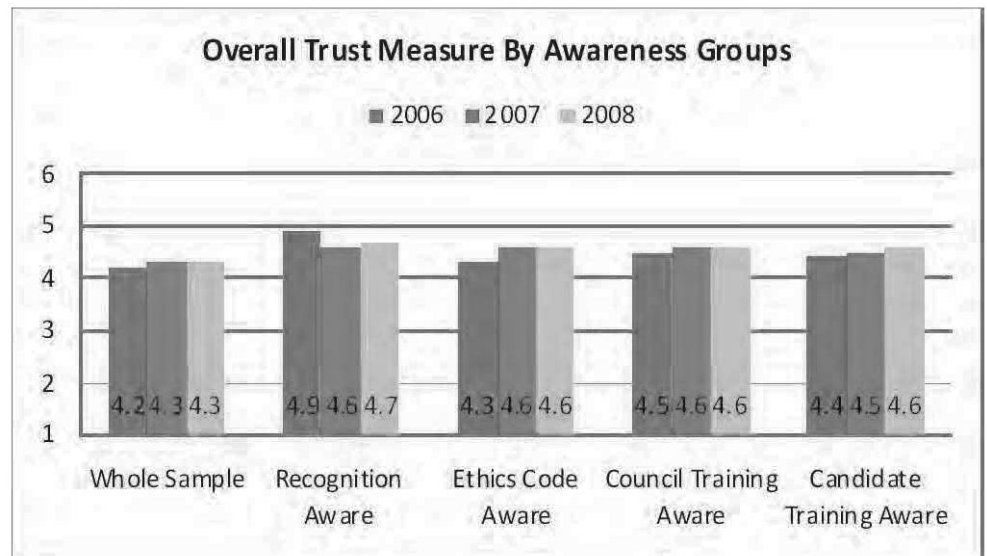


Figure 19: When the trust measure is looked at from the perspective of an awareness group, public trust in the City becomes a dynamic process

FINDING 18: When the standard measure of public trust is looked at as an average of the whole population, very little change is seen over time. When, however, it is examined from the perspective of groups with awareness of various components of the Ethics Program, varying levels of public trust are the result.

Throughout this study, the impact of varying types of program awareness has been explored. Discussion of ways to increase awareness and enhance the educational capacity of the Ethics & Values Program is recommended.