

Strategic Plan Findings
As of December 14, 2007

General notes & observations on surveys and citizen groups:

Citizens will always respond differently between random groups and non-random groups.

If generally satisfied, citizens will not allocate time and make an effort to tell the leadership that they are satisfied by a physical presence at a meeting.

If they have an issue that they feel strongly about, they are more likely to allocate time and effort to talk to leadership about the issue.

Random surveys tend to provide a fairly accurate picture of how the community feels – so long as the survey is not too long or takes too much effort to complete. We used a random phone survey and on line surveys to gather data. The random phone survey will be the most accurate – based on minimal effort required by respondents. The next most accurate survey will be the in-line surveys used from neighborhood leaders and youth outreach, since they would not take more than a few minutes and could be done without leaving where they were being contacted.

Focus groups that are self-selecting (invitation or open invitation) tend to be a less accurate indicator of community direction, but provide much better detail about what major issues may be, and sometimes are able to provide an idea of the “why” we get a response on a survey.

- We used a random survey of 600 households
- We used a targeted survey of 60 neighborhood’s leaders
- We used a reward-based survey of youth at CouvFest (music Festival) and got 151 responses in the targeted age group.

Messages:

- We need a clear, succinct, and compelling vision for the future
 - It should provide a unifying identity (east/west) yet be distinct from Portland
 - It should include history, downtown, waterfront
- The initial vision “should” come from our city’s leaders
- We need to resolve the county-city relationship problems
- We need to make tough decisions now (financial, economic development, city direction) for the future
- The waterfront is important

Top three issues in the long term

- (37%) Growth management & planning: neighborhoods, infill, business mix & location
- (31%) Transportation, traffic congestion, mass transit, bridge, I5 commutes
- (16%) Jobs

Results are consistent with our previous community surveys;

- Same top two issues.
- Crime still a low concern in this community
- Jobs are a growing concern

Results are consistent with the National Citizen Survey (Representing more than 14 million people in the 118 communities) 2006 finding:

- The majority of residents feel that population growth is too fast and job growth is too slow
- Drug and traffic congestion problems rank highest while fewest residents find that graffiti or noise are significant local problems.
- The percent of residents turning to the Internet to conduct business with their local government has grown by more than 50% in the five years of the NCS

Growth

General

- Managing growth is the top priority, even above police protection
- Perception is that we do not do it as well as we should (This is a national perception)
- However, Vancouver has been generally heading in the right direction
- People generally feel like they are getting their money's worth for services
- We are generally making the right community investments – ESB, Downtown
- It is extremely important for us to develop the waterfront

What are the components of the problem?

- Transportation congestion is part, but not all of it
- Infill is a component – type, location, size, design
- Accessibility of community amenities is a component – ease to get to stores, entertainment, restaurants. "Ease" is changing from "easy to drive to" to "Within easy walking distance" in many cases

Perceived inequities/inconsistencies between east and west city is a component

- East city does not get the planning effort west city gets
- Growth is more sprawled, less walkable
- More "strip mall" and less community oriented.
- No "gathering places" (although Firstenburg Center may become that place)

Transportation

- A good transportation system is important to the community's livability
- Expanding mass transit is highly important
- "Mass transit" is currently seen as nearly synonymous with "light rail" for CoV (76% vs 74%). This means more discussion and education may be appropriate.

- Many want light rail in Vancouver (67.5% yes) but it depends where it goes and how.
- Top reason for light rail is to reduce congestion (54%, n=212)
- Cost is the single greatest reason to not support light rail as a solution (54%, n= 82)

Neighborhoods

While there are consistencies, there are also significant differences between how neighborhoods view the future depending on their specific situation. When surveyed, we received nearly twice as many positive responses as we did from the citizen group. This is consistent with citizen groups that are not random: Those citizens with strong or emotional issues will make the effort to attend; most who are generally satisfied will not take the time to attend a session.

- Neighborhoods that attended the citizen group were those who generally feel disconnected, unimportant, and not listened to; they feel tolerated but feel actions are taken despite their input. (Consistent with community survey but more pronounced)
- Neighborhoods that responded to the neighborhood survey are significantly more positive about the direction the city has been going.
- Neighborhoods generally do not want change in their area, except to improve parks and some support for mass transit.
- They are not supportive of building, road, diversity, social services, or transit improvements that may affect their homes, taxes, or the "look and feel" of their existing neighborhood.
- Walking trails, green space, and parks are also very important

City

- CoV efforts at transparency and accountability are highly important
- Sustainability and recycling efforts are also important, but to a lesser degree

Overall

- Single purpose citizen groups more "polarized" in responses
- Single purpose groups tended to vote strongly positive for their citizen area
- Discussion was easy to stimulate in all groups
- Not all groups were able to step back strategically, but all addressed the issues