

The National

CITIZEN SURVEY™

2004

Summary Report for The City of El Cerrito, California



Submitted by:

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SURVEY BACKGROUND

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SURVEY™

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and The International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

Survey Administration

Following the mailing of a pre-survey notification postcard to a random sample of 1,200 households, surveys were mailed to the same residences approximately one week later. A reminder letter and a new survey were sent to the same households after two weeks. Of the mailed postcards, 29 were undeliverable due to vacant or “not found” addresses. Completed surveys were received from 476 residents, for a response rate of 41%. Typically, the response rates obtained on citizen surveys range from 25% to 40%.

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a “level of confidence” (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey of 1,200 residents is generally no greater than plus or minus 5 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample.

The results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of all residents in the City of El Cerrito. (For more information on the survey methodology, see Appendix II in the Report of Results. A copy of the survey materials can be found in Appendix III of the Report of Results.)

Use of the “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor” Response Scale

The scale on which respondents are asked to record their opinions about service and community quality is “excellent,” “good,” “fair” or “poor” (EGFP). While symmetrical scales often are the right choice in other measurement tasks, we have found that ratings of almost every local government service in almost every jurisdiction tend, on average, to be positive (that is, above the scale midpoint). Therefore, to permit finer distinctions among positively rated services, EGFP offers three options across which to spread those ratings. EGFP is more neutral because it requires no positive statement of service quality to judge (as agree-disagree scales require) and, finally, EGFP intends to measure absolute quality of service delivery or community quality (unlike satisfaction scales which ignore residents’ perceptions of quality in favor of their report on the acceptability of the level of service offered).

Putting Evaluations Onto a 100-Point Scale

Although responses to many of the evaluative questions were made on a 4 point scale with 4 representing the best rating and 1 the worst, many of the results in this summary are reported on a common scale where 0 is the worst possible rating and 100 is the best possible rating. If everyone reported “excellent,” then the result would be 100 on the 100-point scale. Likewise, if all respondents gave a “poor” rating, the result would be 0 on the 100-point scale. If the average rating for quality of life was “good,” then the result would be 67 on a 100-point scale; “fair” would be 33 on the 100-point scale. The 95 percent confidence interval around an average score on the 100-point scale is no greater than plus or minus 5 points based on all respondents.

C COMMUNITY LIFE

The National Citizen Survey™ contained many questions related to the life of residents in the community. Survey participants were asked to rate their overall quality of life, as well as other aspects of quality of life in El Cerrito. They also evaluated characteristics of the community, and gave their perceptions of safety in the City of El Cerrito. The questionnaire assessed use of the amenities of the community and involvement by respondents in the civic and economic life of El Cerrito.

- **QUALITY OF LIFE**

When asked to rate the overall quality of life in El Cerrito, 15% of respondents thought it was “excellent.” Only 1% rated overall quality of life as “poor.” El Cerrito as a place to live received an average rating of 70 on a 100-point scale.

- **RATINGS OF COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS IN EL CERRITO**

The highest rated characteristics of El Cerrito were shopping opportunities, recreational opportunities, and overall appearance. When asked about potential problems in El Cerrito, the three concerns rated by the highest proportion of respondents as a “major problem” were traffic congestion, taxes, and unsupervised youth, noise and run down buildings, weed lots or junk vehicles. The rate of population growth in El Cerrito was viewed as “too fast” by 30% of respondents, while 2% thought it was “too slow.”

- **PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY**

When evaluating safety in the community, 66% of respondents felt “somewhat” or “very safe” from violent crimes in El Cerrito. In their neighborhood after dark, 64% of survey participants felt “somewhat” or “very safe.”

As assessed by the survey, 20% of households reported that at least one member had been the victim of one or more crimes in the past year. Of those who had been the victim of a crime, 81% had reported it to police.

- COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Participation in the civic, social and economic life of El Cerrito during the past year was assessed on the survey. Voter status was also estimated.¹ Among those completing the questionnaire, 82% reported visiting a El Cerrito park in the past year.

¹ In general on a survey, a greater proportion of people will report having voted, than actual voting records verify.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Several aspects of the government of the City of El Cerrito were evaluated by residents completing The National Citizen Survey.™ They were asked how much trust they placed in their local government, and what they felt about the services they receive from the City of El Cerrito. Those who had any contact with a City of El Cerrito employee in the past year gave their impressions of the most recent encounter.

- PUBLIC TRUST

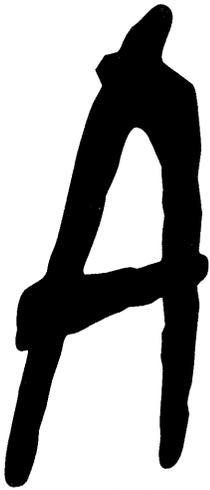
When asked to evaluate whether they felt they received good value for taxes they pay, residents gave an average rating of 66 on a 100-point scale.

- SERVICES PROVIDED BY EL CERRITO

The overall quality of services provided by the City of El Cerrito was rated as 59 on a 100-point scale.

- THE CITY OF EL CERRITO EMPLOYEES

Impressions of the City of El Cerrito employees were assessed on the questionnaire. Those who had been in contact with a City of El Cerrito employee in the past year (56%) rated their overall impression as 66 on a 100-point scale.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Three additional questions were asked by the City of El Cerrito. The results for these questions are displayed below.

Policy question #1	
To what extent do you support or oppose continuing the current utility user's tax , which is used to fund local services such as police, fire and medical response, recreation, child care, senior services, landscape and park maintenance, public works, planning and other basic City services ?	Percent of Respondents
strongly support	37%
somewhat support	35%
neither support nor oppose	13%
somewhat oppose	4%
strongly oppose	4%
don't know	8%
Total	100%

Policy question #2	
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with local cable television programming in general, such as meetings of the El Cerrito City Council or other community groups, educational programs, and public access programs?	Percent of Respondents
very satisfied	4%
somewhat satisfied	14%
neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19%
somewhat dissatisfied	5%
very dissatisfied	3%
don't know	54%
Total	100%

Policy question #3	
The City is considering renovation of the Cerrito Theater with a restaurant/theater operator, funded by a loan to the operator from redevelopment funds, which are restricted to redevelopment projects and would not increase your taxes. To what extent do you support or oppose this project?	Percent of Respondents
strongly support	45%
somewhat support	27%
neither support nor oppose	14%
somewhat oppose	6%
strongly oppose	3%
don't know	5%
Total	100%