

**CITY OF PIEDMONT  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

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MEETING DATE: September 4, 2007

FROM: Barry Miller, Planning Consultant  
Kate Black, City Planner

SUBJECT: Summary of General Plan Resident Survey

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Review the attached summary information on the General Plan resident survey and related policy issues.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The City of Piedmont is in the process of updating its 1996 General Plan. The project was initiated in January 2007 and will be completed in Spring 2008. The Council was briefed on the project in January 2007. In addition, three special sessions of the Planning Commission were convened in February, April, and May to discuss General Plan land use, transportation, community design, and infrastructure policies. A community workshop on the Plan was conducted on June 25, 2007. Additional opportunities for input will be provided in the coming months.

Since January, the General Plan Consultant has been collecting the data necessary to ensure that the Plan is legally adequate and provides a sound basis for future decisions. A significant part of the data collection has included a resident survey administered to all 3,800 Piedmont households in April 2007. This staff report presents the key survey findings.

**SURVEY FINDINGS**

**Profile of Respondents**

- Approximately 3,750 surveys were mailed. A total of 1,084 surveys were completed and mailed back to the City. In addition, 199 surveys were completed on-line, using the city's website. Thus, 1,284 surveys were tallied.
- Based on the responses to Survey Question 15, it is estimated that 100 households submitted more than one survey (either via US mail or via email). Thus, the total number of households responding was approximately 1,180, or 31 percent of all households in the city.
- The responding households contain approximately 3,500 residents, including 1,100 children and 2,400 adults.

- The survey does not necessarily represent a “statistically valid” sample of Piedmont residents. However, the sheer volume of households responding indicates that a very wide segment of the population is represented.
- Demographic data provided on the surveys confirms that a balanced spectrum of Piedmonters participated:
  - 27% of the respondents were 65 or older; 18% were 45 or younger; and 55% of were between 45 and 64. *The 2000 Census for Piedmont indicated that 25% of all heads of households were 65 or older, 22% were 45 or younger, and 53% were between 45 and 64.*
  - 83% of the respondents were White, 10.5% were Asian, 1.5% were Latino, and 5% were African-American, multi-racial, or other. *The 2000 Census for Piedmont indicated that 77% of the city’s total residents were White, 16% were Asian, 3% were Latino, and 4% were African-American, multi-racial, or other.*
  - 50 % of the respondents have lived in Piedmont 20 years or longer. *The census indicates that 36% of the City’s residents have lived in Piedmont 20 years or longer.*
  - A map of the City was included in the survey and participants were asked to identify where they lived. The responses indicate balanced representation from every part of the City.

### **Likes, Dislikes, and Changes**

- Residents were asked three “open-ended” questions about what they liked best about Piedmont, what they liked least, and what they would most like to change.
- Many residents wrote long, detailed responses. For each of the three opening questions, answers were “post-coded” into about 20 broad categories based on recurring themes.
- The things residents like the most about Piedmont are the schools, the small town character and strong sense of community, the city’s beauty and traditional architecture, its low crime and safety, the walkable neighborhoods, the parks, friendly people, the central location within the Bay Area, the weather, and the responsive City services.
- The things residents like the least about Piedmont are a sense of insularity and elitism, the lack of a gathering place or more active town center, the high cost of living and taxes, traffic and parking issues, overhead utilities, homogeneity, rising crime, and frustration over certain city policies and practices. Many different opinions on these topics were offered, however.
- Not surprisingly, the list of things residents would most like to change relates closely to their lists of “dislikes” – including the development of new city facilities (i.e., better sports fields, a new pool, a post office, a library, etc.), changes to the development review process, stronger parking controls, better traffic enforcement, tree management issues, improved crime prevention, undergrounding of utilities, resolution of specific drainage and sidewalk problems, and changes to city spending practices. Again, the responses were often not in harmony—for example, some strongly advocated for more off-street parking while others strongly advocated against it.

## Opinions on City Services

- Questions 4 and 5 polled the public on City services. Residents were asked to indicate whether they were “very satisfied”, “somewhat satisfied”, “mixed”, “somewhat dissatisfied, or “very dissatisfied” with various services.
- 1,250 responses to this question were received. However, these were multi-part questions and some respondents did not answer all parts. Accordingly, the percentages on the attached tables indicate statistics based on all surveys (including “no replies”) and statistics based only on those who replied.
- 96% of those who replied are satisfied or very satisfied with Piedmont as a place to live. 97% of those who replied are satisfied or very satisfied with the city’s physical appearance. Even when the “no replies” are factored in, these statistics are over 92%.
- Many residents are concerned about parking, especially in the civic center area. 30% of those who replied indicated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with current parking conditions in the civic center. However, only about 15% of those who replied have negative views about parking on their own streets (nearly half are “very satisfied” with parking on their street).
- Residents are generally very satisfied with public works-related services, with the highest ratings going to trash collection and recyclables collection. Only 10% of the respondents were dissatisfied with street and sidewalk maintenance and 13% with street lighting. More than two-thirds of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with these services.
- Police and Fire/EMS services are very highly regarded. An impressive 98% of residents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with Fire/EMS, and less than one percent were dissatisfied. Only 4% were dissatisfied with police services. When those who skipped this question are added in, the satisfaction levels are still exceptionally high—85% for police (plus 6% “no reply”, 6% mixed, and 3% dissatisfied) and 86% for fire (plus 12% “no reply”, 1% mixed, and 1% dissatisfied).
- Residents have mixed feelings about the building permit and design review processes. On design review, the responses show a “bell curve” distribution, with 16 % very satisfied, 15 % very dissatisfied, and most residents in the middle. When the 246 “no reply” responses are factored in, these figures drop to 13 % percent very satisfied and 12% very dissatisfied.
- Approximately 60 % of Piedmont residents indicate the City’s design review regulations are about as restrictive as they should be. About 34 % indicate they should be less restrictive and about 6 % indicate they should be more restrictive. When the “no reply” responses are factored in, these figures shift to 43 % who believe the regulations are as restrictive as they should be, 24 % who feel they should be less restrictive, 5 % who think they should be more restrictive, and 25 % who have no opinion or who skipped the question.
- More than 350 surveys contained additional written comments on the design review process, elaborating on why people felt the way they did.
- Park and recreational services were also highly rated. Over 87% of the persons who answered this question said they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the quality of the city’s parks and 80% were very satisfied or satisfied with recreational activities for children. The lowest ranking was for sports fields, with 16% of the respondents

dissatisfied. About 10% were dissatisfied with arts and cultural programs. When the “no reply” surveys are factored in, all of these percentages drop slightly, as a larger base of replies is considered. Only 6% of the respondents skipped the question on park quality, but 16% skipped the question on activities for children, 18% skipped the question on sports fields, and 27% skipped the question on arts and cultural programs.

## Local Policies

- Question 6 asked residents to express their opinions on 15 potential policy statements. 1,243 responses to the question were received. However, not all respondents evaluated all 15 statements.
- 87.5% of the respondents “strongly agreed” that Piedmont’s small town feel should be retained. Another 11% “somewhat agreed”. When the “no replies” are factored in, these percentages drop to 82.2% and 10% respectively.
- Other responses with very high levels of support included providing bulky waste and electronic waste pick-up (81% strongly agree), improving AC transit service to BART (61.5% strongly agree), and encouraging historic preservation (51% strongly agree). When the “no replies” are added in, these percentages drop only slightly.
- Residents appear divided on a number of issues. For instance, 31% strongly agree that more retail should be encouraged in the civic center area, while 26% strongly disagree. (when the “no replies” are added, these figures drop to 28% and 23% respectively). Similarly, 30% are strongly opposed to requiring tree removal permits while 25% are strongly in favor (when the “no replies” are added, these figures drop to 25% and 21% respectively). Residents are also split on requiring “green” construction and food scrap recycling, although both of these concepts have more support than opposition.
- There is strong support (75% or more, among those who replied) for making the civic center a better “gathering place,” providing more opportunities for casual carpooling, improving pedestrian safety on Oakland Avenue, and developing better-defined rules for home additions and remodels.

## Priorities

Question 7 asked residents to express their opinions on 13 possible capital priorities. 1,236 responses to the question were received.

- The strongest levels of support are for undergrounding of utility lines (45% strongly support, 25% somewhat support—although 19% still strongly oppose.). “Landscaping and tree planting” projects also score greater than 70% overall support. A teen center is supported or strongly supported by an even 70 percent of those who expressed an opinion on this question. Even when the “no reply” responses are added in, these continue to be the top three capital improvement categories, garnering 63, 64, and 59 percent support respectively.
- Other projects with more than 60% overall support include “free” WiFi (64%), a community gathering place or plaza (65%), and bike paths or lanes (68%). When the “no reply” responses are added in, these percentages drop to 51, 55, and 59% respectively.
- Residents are sharply divided on the issue of developing a city-owned and maintained swimming pool. While 31% strongly support the idea, 28% are strongly opposed.

Overall support is 56% among those who replied. When the “no replies” are factored in, the statistics are 49% in favor, 38% opposed, and 13% who skipped the question.

- The weakest levels of support are for child care centers and a parking garage in the Civic Center area. In both cases, approximately 60% of the respondents are in opposition and 40% are in support. When the “no replies” are added in, the statistics on the parking garage show 52% opposed, 35% in favor, and 13% skipping the question.
- A significant number of respondents are strongly opposed to any new capital projects and believe the City’s priority should be on maintenance of existing facilities.

### **Greening Piedmont**

- Residents were asked to provide ideas for “greening” Piedmont and making the City more environmentally sustainable. The question was open ended.
- 486 people replied to the question, providing answers ranging from two or three words to two or three pages.
- A summary of the “greening” replies, including many excerpts, will be included in the Survey report. Many excellent suggestions were made.

### NEXT STEPS:

A Summary Report on the survey is currently being prepared. The report will be posted on the City’s website in September, and will provide the foundation for many General Plan policies and actions. The report includes many excerpts from the survey itself, including resident suggestions for streamlining the design review process, improving service delivery, becoming “greener”, and prioritizing capital improvements. Staff and its consultants are continuing to work on the General Plan itself, completing a variety of data collection, analysis, mapping, and policy development tasks. Additional Council briefings on the General Plan will be provided later on in the project.

### CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

No formal City Council action is necessary at this time.

Date report prepared: August 29, 2007

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Responses to Survey Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7

Q.4: PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH...		Total replies and percentages, including those who did not answer								Percent of those answering the question (excludes skipped replies)				
		Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	No Opinion/ No Answer	Total Expressing Opinion	Weighted Average	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
a	Piedmont as a place to live	7 0.5%	8 0.6%	31 2.4%	167 13.0%	1021 79.5%	50 3.9%	1234	4.77	0.6%	0.6%	2.5%	13.5%	82.7%
b	City's physical appearance	7 0.5%	8 0.6%	22 1.7%	232 18.1%	966 75.2%	49 3.8%	1235	4.73	0.6%	0.6%	1.8%	18.8%	78.2%
c	Safety and Security on your street	28 2.2%	62 4.8%	161 12.5%	384 29.9%	595 46.3%	54 4.2%	1230	4.18	2.3%	5.0%	13.1%	31.2%	48.4%
d	Availability of on-street parking on your street	74 5.8%	114 8.9%	172 13.4%	276 21.5%	575 44.8%	73 5.7%	1211	3.96	6.1%	9.4%	14.2%	22.8%	47.5%
e	Availability of parking in the civic center area	106 8.3%	238 18.5%	319 24.8%	318 24.8%	154 12.0%	149 11.6%	1135	3.16	9.3%	21.0%	28.1%	28.0%	13.6%
f	Traffic flow in and through the city	40 3.1%	66 5.1%	212 16.5%	446 34.7%	445 34.7%	75 5.8%	1209	3.98	3.3%	5.5%	17.5%	36.9%	36.8%
g	Adequacy of the Piedmont website to provide information to residents	26 2.0%	56 4.4%	122 9.5%	250 19.5%	194 15.1%	636 49.5%	648	3.82	4.0%	8.6%	18.8%	38.6%	29.9%
h	Maintenance of streets and sidewalks	39 3.0%	85 6.6%	183 14.3%	473 36.8%	448 34.9%	56 4.4%	1228	3.98	3.2%	6.9%	14.9%	38.5%	36.5%
i	Street lighting	40 3.1%	115 9.0%	231 18.0%	435 33.9%	388 30.2%	75 5.8%	1209	3.84	3.3%	9.5%	19.1%	36.0%	32.1%
j	Trash collection	22 1.7%	38 3.0%	90 7.0%	331 25.8%	746 58.1%	57 4.4%	1227	4.42	1.8%	3.1%	7.3%	27.0%	60.8%
k	Recyclables collection	25 1.9%	56 4.4%	84 6.5%	342 26.6%	714 55.6%	63 4.9%	1221	4.36	2.0%	4.6%	6.9%	28.0%	58.5%
l	Green waste collection	35 2.7%	64 5.0%	99 7.7%	310 24.1%	609 47.4%	167 13.0%	1117	4.25	3.1%	5.7%	8.9%	27.8%	54.5%
m	Bulky waste/ electronic waste collection	53 4.1%	98 7.6%	154 12.0%	258 20.1%	387 30.1%	334 26.0%	950	3.87	5.6%	10.3%	16.2%	27.2%	40.7%
n	Police services	20 1.6%	31 2.4%	78 6.1%	248 19.3%	837 65.2%	70 5.5%	1214	4.52	1.6%	2.6%	6.4%	20.4%	68.9%
o	Fire and EMS services	6 0.5%	1 0.1%	14 1.1%	127 9.9%	977 76.1%	159 12.4%	1125	4.84	0.5%	0.1%	1.2%	11.3%	86.8%
p	Enforcement of traffic rules	38 3.0%	60 4.7%	161 12.5%	373 29.0%	462 36.0%	190 14.8%	1094	4.06	3.5%	5.5%	14.7%	34.1%	42.2%

Q.4 CONTINUED: PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH...		Total replies and percentages, including those who did not answer								Percent of those answering the question (excludes skipped replies)				
		Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	No Opinion/ No Answer	Total Expressing Opinion	Weighted Average	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
q	Building permit process	110 8.6%	151 11.8%	281 21.9%	319 24.8%	196 15.3%	227 17.7%	1057	3.32	10.4%	14.3%	26.6%	30.2%	18.5%
r	Design review requirements	154 12.0%	177 13.8%	287 22.4%	254 19.8%	166 12.9%	246 19.2%	1038	3.1	14.8%	17.1%	27.6%	24.5%	16.0%
s	City development policies	84 6.5%	120 9.3%	331 25.8%	238 18.5%	133 10.4%	378 29.4%	906	3.24	9.3%	13.2%	36.5%	26.3%	14.7%
t	Quality and number of Piedmont's parks	15 1.2%	46 3.6%	88 6.9%	331 25.8%	731 56.9%	73 5.7%	1211	4.42	1.2%	3.8%	7.3%	27.3%	60.4%
u	Recreational activities for children	16 1.2%	39 3.0%	90 7.0%	298 23.2%	615 47.9%	226 17.6%	1058	4.38	1.5%	3.7%	8.5%	28.2%	58.1%
v	Recreational activities for adults	17 1.3%	67 5.2%	167 13.0%	356 27.7%	383 29.8%	294 22.9%	990	4.03	1.7%	6.8%	16.9%	36.0%	38.7%
w	Adequacy of sports fields	59 4.6%	110 8.6%	183 14.3%	311 24.2%	384 29.9%	237 18.5%	1047	3.81	5.6%	10.5%	17.5%	29.7%	36.7%
x	Adequacy of off-leash dog areas	24 1.9%	51 4.0%	111 8.6%	207 16.1%	397 30.9%	494 38.5%	790	4.14	3.0%	6.5%	14.1%	26.2%	50.3%
y	Arts and cultural programs	20 1.6%	71 5.5%	212 16.5%	340 26.5%	289 22.5%	352 27.4%	932	3.87	2.1%	7.6%	22.7%	36.5%	31.0%
z	Community gatherings and special events	11 0.9%	47 3.7%	166 12.9%	359 28.0%	456 35.5%	245 19.1%	1039	4.16	1.1%	4.5%	16.0%	34.6%	43.9%

Total Respondents 1250  
(skipped this question entirely) 34

**Q5: WHEN IT COMES TO PERMITS FOR MAJOR HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN THE CITY OF PIEDMONT WHICH IS CLOSEST TO YOUR OPINION**

		% OF	% OF
	TOTAL	1284	924
The City should have less restrictive rules about what is allowed	313	24.4%	33.9%
The City should have more restrictive rules about what is allowed	62	4.8%	6.7%
The City is just about as restrictive as it should be	549	42.8%	59.4%
No interest/ No opinion	323	25.2%	-----
Other (please specify)	37	2.9%	-----
Total respondents selecting one of the three options	924		



Q6: PLEASE EXPRESS YOUR OPINION ON THE FOLLOWING LOCAL POLICY OPTIONS: Over the next 20 years Piedmont's City leaders should...		Total replies and percentages, including those who did not answer						Percent of those answering the question (excludes skipped replies)				
		strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	somewhat agree	strongly agree	no opinion/ no answer	Expressed Opinion	weighted average	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	somewhat agree	strongly agree
a	...maintain Piedmont's small town feel	9 0.7%	14 1.1%	128 10.0%	1055 82.2%	78 6.1%	1206	3.85	0.7%	1.2%	10.6%	87.5%
b	...improve pedestrian safety on Oakland Avenue"	35 2.7%	123 9.6%	377 29.4%	476 37.1%	273 21.3%	1011	3.28	3.5%	12.2%	37.3%	47.1%
c	...support better A/C Transit service to BART"	23 1.8%	68 5.3%	312 24.3%	645 50.2%	236 18.4%	1048	3.51	2.2%	6.5%	29.8%	61.5%
d	...provide more opportunities for casual carpooling"	58 4.5%	153 11.9%	355 27.6%	383 29.8%	335 26.1%	949	3.12	6.1%	16.1%	37.4%	40.4%
e	...create more retail in the Civic Center area"	296 23.1%	239 18.6%	265 20.6%	359 28.0%	125 9.7%	1159	2.59	25.5%	20.6%	22.9%	31.0%
f	...work harder to reduce noise levels in the City"	81 6.3%	241 18.8%	380 29.6%	269 21.0%	313 24.4%	971	2.86	8.3%	24.8%	39.1%	27.7%
g	...encourage historic preservation"	34 2.6%	95 7.4%	411 32.0%	563 43.8%	181 14.1%	1103	3.36	3.1%	8.6%	37.3%	51.0%
h	...make the area around City Hall (Vista/ Highland) more of a town center and gathering place"	106 8.3%	110 8.6%	393 30.6%	522 40.7%	153 11.9%	1131	3.18	9.4%	9.7%	34.7%	46.2%
i	...encourage mixed uses (housing and retail) on Grand Avenue within the Piedmont City limits"	167 13.0%	146 11.4%	360 28.0%	411 32.0%	200 15.6%	1084	2.94	15.4%	13.5%	33.2%	37.9%
j	...start requiring permits for large tree removals"	319 24.8%	257 20.0%	234 18.2%	271 21.1%	203 15.8%	1081	2.42	29.5%	23.8%	21.6%	25.1%
k	...require "greener" construction practices even if it means higher fees and construction costs"	219 17.1%	226 17.6%	379 29.5%	319 24.8%	141 11.0%	1143	2.7	19.2%	19.8%	33.2%	27.9%
l	...implement a food scrap composting program as part of green waste service"	183 14.3%	177 13.8%	294 22.9%	396 30.8%	234 18.2%	1050	2.86	17.4%	16.9%	28.0%	37.7%
m	...continue providing on-demand bulky waste and electronic waste pick-up"	10 0.8%	14 1.1%	197 15.3%	950 74.0%	113 8.8%	1171	3.78	0.9%	1.2%	16.8%	81.1%
n	...rely more heavily on e-mail to communicate with residents"	120 9.3%	154 12.0%	375 29.2%	420 32.7%	215 16.7%	1069	3.02	11.2%	14.4%	35.1%	39.3%
o	...develop better-defined rules for home additions and remodels"	76 5.9%	149 11.6%	410 31.9%	429 33.4%	220 17.1%	1064	3.12	7.1%	14.0%	38.5%	40.3%
Total Respondents		1243										
(skipped this question)		41										

Q7: FOR WHICH TYPES OF PROJECTS WOULD YOU SUPPORT INCREASES IN CITY TAXES OR FEES?	Total replies and percentages, including those who did not answer							Percent of those answering the question (excludes skipped replies)			
	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support	No Opinion/ No Answer	Total with opinion	Response Average	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support
Additional recreational facilities	225 17.5%	194 15.1%	398 31.0%	299 23.3%	168 13.1%	1116	2.69	20.2%	17.4%	35.7%	26.8%
Landscaping and tree planting	154 12.0%	175 13.6%	496 38.6%	330 25.7%	129 10.0%	1155	2.87	13.3%	15.2%	42.9%	28.6%
City-owned and maintained competitive-sized swimming pool	318 24.8%	170 13.2%	287 22.4%	349 27.2%	160 12.5%	1124	2.59	28.3%	15.1%	25.5%	31.0%
Undergrounding of overhead utility wires	214 16.7%	137 10.7%	290 22.6%	518 40.3%	125 9.7%	1159	2.96	18.5%	11.8%	25.0%	44.7%
A parking garage in the City Hall area	425 33.1%	243 18.9%	251 19.5%	203 15.8%	162 12.6%	1122	2.21	37.9%	21.7%	22.4%	18.1%
More child care centers	274 21.3%	259 20.2%	288 22.4%	111 8.6%	352 27.4%	932	2.25	29.4%	27.8%	30.9%	11.9%
A teen center	191 14.9%	133 10.4%	387 30.1%	372 29.0%	201 15.7%	1083	2.87	17.6%	12.3%	35.7%	34.3%
Bike paths and marked bike lanes	162 12.6%	182 14.2%	404 31.5%	347 27.0%	189 14.7%	1095	2.85	14.8%	16.6%	36.9%	31.7%
Creating a community gathering place or plaza	193 15.0%	181 14.1%	379 29.5%	327 25.5%	204 15.9%	1080	2.78	17.9%	16.8%	35.1%	30.3%
City arts and cultural center	237 18.5%	213 16.6%	392 30.5%	225 17.5%	217 16.9%	1067	2.57	22.2%	20.0%	36.7%	21.1%
Larger wheeled mixed materials recycling carts	222 17.3%	209 16.3%	291 22.7%	281 21.9%	281 21.9%	1003	2.63	22.1%	20.8%	29.0%	28.0%
Backyard service for recycling or green waste	233 18.1%	212 16.5%	272 21.2%	281 21.9%	286 22.3%	998	2.60	23.3%	21.2%	27.3%	28.2%
Free citywide wireless (WiFi) internet service	232 18.1%	139 10.8%	265 20.6%	394 30.7%	254 19.8%	1030	2.80	22.5%	13.5%	25.7%	38.3%

Total Respondents 1236  
(skipped this question) 48