



“Quality of Life” Survey EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Presented by
Community Services Coalition
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BACKGROUND

The Community Services Coalition was established back in 2012 to focus on “quality of life” issues in Agoura Hills. The City Council thought it was important to have a committee that would stay focused on issues relating to residents and life in Agoura Hills. After spending a couple of years reviewing already identified issues, the Coalition decided to survey the residents of Agoura Hills to see what “Quality of Life” meant to them. They were interested in hearing what residents had to say about life in Agoura Hills while staying committed to looking to the future. After months of discussion, in June 2016, the Coalition created a series of questions and developed a survey. They distributed the survey through emails, social media, ads in the newspaper, all directing people to visit the website and take the survey online. After they distributed the survey, they spent a couple of months analyzing the results. Now, in January 2017, the Community Services Coalition is presenting the results to the City Council in a comprehensive Executive Summary.

The Coalition designed a survey that was short, simple, very straightforward, and easily accessible for residents. The goal would be to understand who lives in Agoura Hills, what their household looks like, and what is important to them and their future. The Coalition designed four open-ended questions, with eight closed-ended questions. It was important for respondents to have an opportunity to communicate their thoughts. Here is the list of questions that the Coalition included on the survey:

Questions:

1. Are you a male or female?
2. How long have you lived in Agoura Hills?
3. How many are in your household?
4. What is your age?
5. What do you like most about Agoura Hills?
6. If anything, what in the City would you like to see improved?
7. What concerns do you have about your future here in Agoura Hills?
8. What City services could be improved?
9. What City services have you participated in?
10. Have you attended any City special events?
11. When you hear “Quality of Life” in Agoura Hills, what does that mean to you?
12. How do you hear about events and activities that are going on in the City?

QUESTION OVERVIEW

Almost four hundred surveys were collected over a two-month period. Of those four hundred responses, about 73% were answered by females and 27% were answered by males. The majority of the respondents were between the ages 45 to 54 years of age, with the next largest group being 35 to 44, and then, 55 to 64. The amount of time that people have lived in their household varied greatly from one year to over forty years. The number of people in the household also varied from living alone to having five or six

people in the house. There were four questions on the survey that were open-ended allowing people to respond in their own words. The questions were:

1. What do you like most about Agoura Hills?
2. If anything, what in the City would you like to see improved?
3. What concerns do you have about your future here in Agoura Hills?
4. When you hear “Quality of Life” in Agoura Hills, what does that mean to you?

Most of the responses were submitted within two weeks of the survey being available which shows that residents were eager to give their input and provide feedback to the Coalition.

QUESTION SUMMARIES

CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS: The closed-ended questions were extremely informative for the Coalition as they provided some instant answers to questions of concern. Here are some of what the results produced: People responded to what City services could be improved with Traffic/Transportation being the most important, and it was followed up by Arts, Cultural, and Recreational Events. When asked, what City Services or activities have you participated in, Reyes Adobe Days was the winner, followed by recreation classes, and Community Service Days. Almost 80% of the respondents claimed to have attended a City special event. Agoura Hills residents hear about events and activities going on in the City through the Acorn Newspaper, the Recreation Brochure, and the City C-Mail/E-Mail.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS: The open ended questions offered many more answers. While some of them were more colorful than others, they were still very informative.

Question #5: “What do you like most about Agoura Hills?”

This question produced many answers, suggestions, and points of discussion. Respondents often commented on the good quality of the schools in Agoura Hills. Many appreciated the quiet peacefulness of our open spaces. Lots of residents consider Agoura Hills very “clean and beautiful” and they enjoy the parks, the weather, the oak trees, greenery and wild life. Several replies came in about our beaches. Assuming the close proximity was good enough that they feel our near-ocean front property is a cool thing. The Library and City Hall received some acknowledgement as well as the Senior Programs. However, they came in behind the popularity of our “Entertainment & Events” (concerts, sports, classes, art exhibits and “The Great Race”). People also approve of our biking routes, lanes and trails. Many people consider that our small town, rural setting is worthy of comment, too.

Physical Environment: Respondents overwhelmingly commented that the schools, the open space, and the quiet and peacefulness of Agoura Hills is very important. They also appreciate the clean and beautiful landscape. Entertainment and Events (Concerts, Sports, Classes, Art Exhibits, etc.) were a priority in responses. Parks and close proximity to outdoors, such as the beach, hiking trails, and parks were important. Respondents

rated the plants, the wildlife, the great weather, oak trees and the overall rural environment as valuable. The physical access to the Library and City Hall is easy and respondents appreciated that. Some other characteristics of the important "Quality of Life" characteristics included being bike-friendly, offering senior programs, having a low homeless rate, and having access to equestrian activities.

Public Safety: People liked the safe community and small town feeling. Lots of people like the small town, family-friendly relaxed vibe of Agoura Hills. It feels peaceful and safe to them. Agoura Hills is a family friendly environment that has a wholesome, quiet, and peaceful feel to it. The relaxed atmosphere/vibe is what people love most, coupled with the rural environment and small town feel.

Transportation: People like available parking without having to feed meters.

Recreation: People like sport activities for the kids. Respondents thought it will be nice to get L.A. Fitness built someday on Agoura Road. People do appreciate the new Recreation and Event Center. They also commented that the City does a good job providing access to recreation for the young and the elderly. Clean and beautiful parks were important. So many senior programs being offered were cited as an area that people appreciated.

Accessibility: As stated above, the lack of parking meters is a positive. Our shopping centers have available parking, and traffic flows well for the most part (except Kanan Road between Laro Drive and Agoura Road). Agoura Hills is close to many treasured areas, including the beach. Respondents appreciated the accessibility of City Hall and the Library, and easy access to most everything. They liked free parking and no congestion. Agoura Hills is close to valuable places such as the beach, library, and shopping malls.

Question # 6: "If anything, what in the City would you like to see improved?"

With many responses, the top five areas of consideration, in order, were:

The area that received the most responses of concern, by more than double of any other issue, was traffic. In particular, the respondents mentioned the traffic on Kanan Road, especially where it meets the 101 Freeway. Also cited was traffic around the schools and the Vons and Ralphs shopping centers. Included in that response were comments related to the timing of traffic lights around the city, stating that wait time for lights were too long and not timed properly to allow for smooth traffic flow.

The next major concern was the request for updating the shopping centers in the city. Most frequently mentioned were the Vons and Ralphs centers, as well as the one near the freeway where the Pizza Hut used to be, the Whizin Center and the Canyon Club. Residents often compared them to Westlake Village and acknowledged how nice the newly updated centers near Lindero Canyon Boulevard looked. People suggested that there should be a wider variety of stores in shopping centers.

The third most frequently mentioned issue was the desire for more interesting, non-chain restaurants and nightspots. Residents felt we needed a greater variety and also wanted them to be affordable and not "break the bank." Updating the shopping centers and adding more restaurants carried almost the same weight among respondents.

In a variety of responses, the concern was the overall look of the city, including beautification, removing billboards, repairing streets, repairing or painting walls and cleaning up trash and debris. The next most frequently mentioned issue was the desire for a central gathering place like the Village in Woodland Hills.

Although the above were the top 5 concerns, there were many other areas that were mentioned. There were quite a few requests for a dog park, improved and added sidewalks and bike lanes. Residents wanted to preserve open space and have less development within the city. Other requests included better parks and recreation activities, improved concerts in the park and greatly improved restroom facilities at the parks. Others were concerned about the lack of public transportation. Crime was noted as a rising concern and requests were made for increased security. Residents were also interested in increased cultural activities.

There were mentions that city government should be more responsive and more communicative about what was going on in the City. It was felt that local businesses should be promoted more. Respondents wanted a larger business tax base and thus, greater employment opportunities. While some respondents knew of plans for the new Agoura Village, they thought that the plans about the Village were not communicated sufficiently. They didn't know specifics and mentioned that the Acorn does not provide detailed information.

Question #7: What concerns do you have about your future here in Agoura Hills?

First, people were concerned about "maintaining our small town atmosphere." This was the highest named concern of all responses. "Stop building on open space," "I don't like the valley, and no more office buildings," were other comments.

Second, traffic and transportation were concerns for respondents' future in Agoura Hills. All were concerned with the traffic on Kanan Road. Both north and south of the freeway. The respondents cited beach and Oak Park traffic as concern. One person wrote that the traffic on Kanan Road is horrible at all times during the day. The same person mentioned that the City should have allowed Costco and Target to build here. Transportation for people over 60 years of age was a concern and that overall, public transportation could be very useful and was necessary.

Public Safety, crime and drugs were the next concern. Crime in their neighborhoods was up and so was break-ins of automobiles and homes.

Housing affordability and availability was very popular. The age group of 35-44 years responded the most to this question. This age group was concerned that they would not be able to "move up" in Agoura Hills because they could not afford a bigger home. The

availability concern by seniors and new residents to the area was availability of affordable housing.

There were other concerns regarding their future in Agoura Hills, several residents were troubled about our tax base, not enough retail in the city to support growing needs. There was a minor mention of the drought and lack of water, which would create more problems with respect to fire protection.

Question #11: When you hear “Quality of Life” in Agoura Hills, what does that mean to you?

Here is a summary of what the respondents had as the top descriptors for this question:

Agoura Hills is a safe, clean, beautiful environment adjacent to open space with accessibility to trails, beach, nature, businesses, and restaurants. Agoura Hills has a quiet, small town feel with family friendly neighborhoods where there are good schools and city services including nice parks, accessible cultural and community events, a wide range of activities at the community center and within the city, and available public transportation.

A couple of survey descriptions are: “Small enough to be a part of a community and large enough to have services and stores that are accessible and needed,” and “Living in nature’s beauty with human conveniences.”

Public Safety/Law Enforcement

The top respondents were safe city/low crime and safe/secure family friendly neighborhoods were apparent.

Schools

Overall, people believed that good schools contributed to their quality of life in Agoura Hills.

City Services (Government)/Infrastructure and Community Services

There were many characteristics that added to what people believed to be a quality of life and they were related to city services and government infrastructure. Some of those characteristics were: beautiful parks, good traffic control/no traffic and a wide range of activities for all ages/community center. Public transportation was also a factor, along with accessible cultural and community events, the Library, the functional/quality city services here in town, the slow growth, and the well-maintained public areas.

Physical Environment Location

Physical environment was very important to people when describing their quality of life. Aspects such as natural environment/open space, a small town feel, and quiet/peaceful/calm neighborhood rated high. People also wanted to be connected to nature/environment, loved the surrounding beautiful areas and the clean air that Agoura Hills is known for. They stated that we have beautiful neighborhoods that are close to

trails/hiking and to the beach. The best part is that Agoura Hills has great weather. It is a clean city with lots of well-maintained landscapes.

Lifestyle and Recreation

Respondents commented on all of the good outdoor activities that Agoura Hills has to offer. People are friendly and there are family friendly neighborhoods with a strong sense of community. Many people commented that it's a good place to raise your kids/family. People mentioned businesses as they want access to more shops and locally run stores, which also included more good restaurants. People do want access to good medical care and as they grow older. They want access to the Senior programs offered at the Recreation Center.

SUMMARY

Overall, the Community Services Coalition was extremely pleased with the response from the survey. With almost four hundred responses, hundreds of comments, and hundreds of suggestions, the residents provided valuable feedback to the Coalition, Staff, and the City Council.