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## CHAPTER 4. INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

### SERVICE MISSION

Implement a policy of timely maintenance of publicly owned buildings and infrastructure to protect the city's substantial investment. Develop attractive infrastructure projects that promote new growth in residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

The Infrastructure Strategy has four goals:

1. Ensure that sufficient funds are dedicated to maintenance and repair of the existing infrastructure.
2. Develop a revenue source for replacing deteriorated infrastructure.
3. Establish a system of reserves for new public infrastructure projects that will serve to fund ongoing maintenance and repair of those projects.
4. Commit sufficient funds to retrofit city facilities for accessibility for disabled persons.

### RESULTS

Respondents were asked about quality of life issues and city services. In the latter instances, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with a number of basic services provided by the city (such as police and fire services). Quality of life issues ranged from questions about K-12

education, health care, and the city's Web site. As Table 4-1 shows, respondents were generally satisfied with the aspects of city life posed on the survey. However, the results for three of the issues stand out from the rest. The first is technical education, the second is the city's Web site, and the third is the cost of airline tickets. They are distinguished from the rest by the high percentage ratings of dissatisfaction, or the percent of respondents who selected the "Don't know" option.

Although it is not known why the percentage of "Don't know" for technical education is rather high, it is probable that this is a reflection of the survey demographics, which show a comparatively high percentage of respondents who have attained a higher level of advanced education (MA, PhD) than the general population.

Respondents were most dissatisfied with the cost of airline tickets (79%), as seen in Figure 4-1. In the comments, participants' felt not only that ticket prices were too high, but also that there weren't enough flights offered to a variety of destinations.

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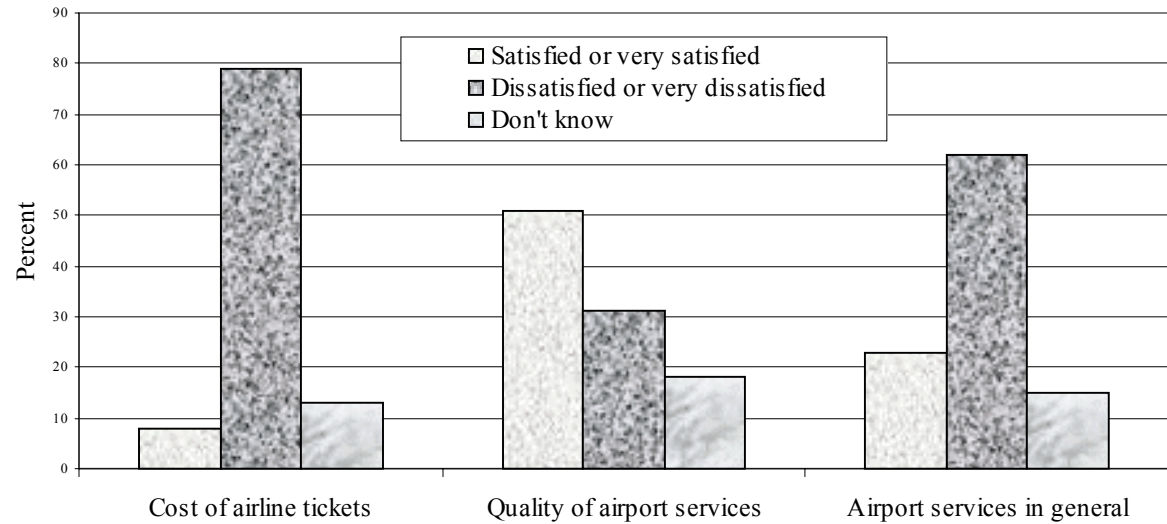
**Table 4-1. Percent Satisfaction with Aspects of Living in Des Moines**

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	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
Friends	93	5	2
Telephone book	87	11	2
Health care	84	13	2
Drive time	83	10	7
Radio	82	15	3
Parks and recreation	79	11	9
Television	70	27	3
Higher education	69	12	19
Meeting places	68	17	15
Newspapers	67	29	4
City employees	61	23	16
Technical education	57	12	31
K-12 education	55	25	20
City officials	53	34	13
Airport services	51	31	18
City's Web site	29	8	63
Cost of airline tickets	8	79	13

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**Figure 4-1. Quality of Airport Facilities**



The quality of airport service fared better than ticket prices, with 51 percent of the respondents reporting satisfaction.

Finally, most of the respondents who knew about the city’s web site were satisfied with it. However, 63 percent responded that they didn’t know when asked about the city’s Web site (Table 4-2). This is not an unexpected result, given the age spread of the respondents. It has been well documented that there are clear generational differences in people’s ability to use the Web<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 4-2. City Web Site**

	Percent
Very dissatisfied	2
Dissatisfied	6
Satisfied	26
Very satisfied	3
Don’t know	63

Satisfaction with city services generally was high among respondents (Table 4-3). More than 85 percent of respondents were satisfied with fire services (91%), emergency medical services (88%), police services (88%), and the city library (86%).

About half of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with city street repaving and repairs (48%) and the enforcement of the nuisance ordinance (47%). About one-third were dissatisfied with affordable housing (32%) and sidewalk maintenance and repair (30%).

**Table 4-3. Percent Satisfaction with Services Related to Infrastructure**

	Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
Fire services	91	2	7
Emergency medical services	88	3	9
Police services	86	11	3
City library	86	6	8
Parks and recreation	82	11	7
Sanitary services, sewers	80	16	4
Snow removal	78	21	1
Solid waste and recycling	74	24	2
Storm water drainage system	70	24	6
Animal control	69	18	13
Traffic management	65	25	10
Airport	62	23	15
Sidewalk maintenance, repair	56	30	14
Affordable housing	53	32	15
City street repaving, street repair	50	48	2
Enforcement of nuisance ordinance	41	47	12
Youth activities	34	21	45

## COMMENTS

As shown in Table 4-3, 45 percent of the respondents marked that they didn't know their level of satisfaction with youth activities. This may suggest a couple of things. First, respondents may not be aware of any youth activities, so they couldn't assess them. Second, and more probable, is that the results are a reflection of the survey sample, with a majority of respondents at or over 45 years of age, possibly with grown children who do not access these services.

A total of 534 comments received were pertinent to the issues identified in this area. Of these, 502 (94%) related directly to infrastructure items and the remaining 32 (6%) were more generalized comments (Table 4-4). This is a large number of comments, even when considering the number of items to which respondents were asked to respond, and should be reviewed and considered carefully.

Thirty-one percent of the comments (153) stated that the streets, curbs, and alleyways were in poor condition and badly in need of repair, repaving, and/or maintaining/cleaning. Others remarked about the poor timing of street repair, particularly in filling potholes, or holes in the street that could damage vehicles.

A second set of comments noted concerns with the enforcement of nuisance ordinances. The most commonly mentioned nuisance ordinances needing enforcement were noise/odor (40 comments), animal control (35), and the removal of junk cars/cleaning junky areas (34).

Garbage removal was also a common grievance. There were many remarks about the high cost of the lawn/leaf bags. Additionally, respondents noted the need for assistance in removing appliances and other large items, as well as increasing the number of pickup days. The general sense is that respondents wanted the city to provide more assistance in keeping their neighborhoods and streets clean in a more affordable fashion.

Sidewalk repair also was mentioned frequently. Most of these comments indicated that respondents wanted the city to repair/fix sidewalks, install new sidewalks, and maintain the existing ones. There were a few general comments about sidewalks, including a suggestion that the city should spread the cost of fixing sidewalks to all taxpayers. Currently, sidewalk repair in front of properties is the financial burden of the property owner, with some assistance provided to people of low income.

**Table 4-4. Infrastructure Strategy Comment Categories**

	Number	Examples
Airport	12	Fares too expensive; improve services; increase flights; add Southwest Airlines
Basic services	10	Too expensive; improve basic services; give discounts for delayed service repair; likes services
Garbage	55	Appliance pickup too expensive; more cleanup days; generally improve; lawn/leaf bags too expensive; expand, improve pickup
Nuisance	128	Animal; noise/odor; dumping/litter/abatement; graffiti removal; junk cars/areas
Sidewalks	43	Repair; install; maintain
Snow removal	29	Improve service; better response time; too much salt/sand
Solid waste, recycling	34	Too expensive; nicer employees; expand type of bottles accepted; weekly recycling pickup; expand recycling program
Storm/sewer	38	Add to and improve storm drains; repair; improve for better flood control
Streets, curbs, alleyways	153	Repair; clean; maintain; add; fix potholes; pave

**NOTES**

Youth activity comments are detailed in Chapter 10, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

More comments about street conditions are in Chapter 11, Transportation.

<sup>1</sup>Eszter Hargittai (April 2002). Second-Level Digital Divide: Differences in People's Online Skills, First Monday, 7(4).  
[http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_4/hargittai/index.html](http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_4/hargittai/index.html)