

2005 DirectionFinder Survey

Final Report



conducted for
The City of Des Moines, Iowa

by
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2005 DirectionFinder[®] Survey

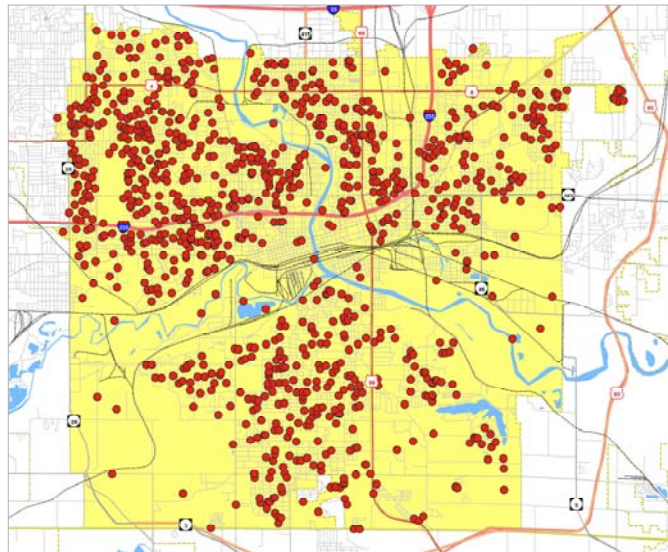
Executive Summary Report

Overview and Methodology

During May 2005, ETC Institute administered a *DirectionFinder*[®] Survey for the City of Des Moines to assess citizen satisfaction with the delivery of major city services and to help determine priorities for the community as part of the City's ongoing planning process. This was the second time the City had administered the *DirectionFinder*[®] Survey. It was first administered during the Fall of 2004.

The 2005 survey was eight (8) pages long and took the average person approximately 20 minutes to complete. It was administered by mail and phone to a random sample of 1217 residents during May and June 2005. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least +/-3% at the 95% level of confidence.

GIS maps: In order to better understand how well services are being delivered by the City, ETC Institute geocoded the home address of respondents to the survey. Maps that show the results of the survey based on the location of the respondent's home are provided in Section 3 of this report. The map to the right shows the physical distribution of survey respondents based on the location of their home.



This report contains:

- an executive summary of the methodology and major findings (Section 1)
- charts depicting the overall results of the survey (Section 2)
- GIS maps that show the results for selected questions on the survey (Section 3)

- benchmarking data that shows how the survey results for Des Moines compare to other cities in the United States (Section 4)
- importance-satisfaction analysis to help the City use survey data to set priorities (Section 5)
- tabular data for the overall results to each question of the survey (Section 6)
- crosstabulations that show the result of selected questions based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents (Section 7)
- a copy of the survey instrument (Section 8)

Interpretation of “Don’t Know” Responses: The percentage of persons who gave “don’t know” responses is important because it often reflects the level of utilization of City services. For graphical purposes, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded to facilitate valid comparisons with other communities and the results of the 2004 survey. The percentage of “don’t know” responses for each question is provided in the Tabular Data Section of this report. When the “don’t know” responses have been excluded, the text of this report will indicate that the responses have been excluded with the phrase “*who had an opinion.*”

Major Findings

- **Top Ratings in the Country.** Compared to other cities in the United States, the City of Des Moines rated in the top 25% of all cities in seven areas:
 - Overall quality of life
 - Overall quality of fire services
 - Overall quality of police services
 - Quality of animal control
 - Number of walking and biking trails
 - Quality of city swimming pools
 - Ease of registering for parks and recreation programs
- **Residents were generally satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by the City of Des Moines.** Most of the residents surveyed *who had an opinion* were satisfied with the quality of fire protection services (88%), the quality of City Libraries (75%), the quality of police protection services (73%), and the quality of City parks (68%). Residents were least satisfied with the condition of City streets (24%).

- **Services that residents thought were most important for the City to provide.** The three major areas that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the condition of City streets, (2) the quality of police protection, and (3) the management of the flow of traffic and congestion. The top three issues were the same in 2004 and 2005.
- **Police Services.** The highest levels of satisfaction with police services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses from residents who had an opinion, were the professionalism of City police officers (70%) and how quickly police respond to emergencies (69%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of traffic laws on neighborhood streets (42%). The two police services that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the visibility of police in neighborhoods and (2) how quickly police respond to emergencies. There were no significant changes in satisfaction with any police services that were rated in both 2004 and 2005.
- **Fire Services.** The highest levels of satisfaction with fire services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses from residents who had an opinion, were how quickly fire personnel respond to emergencies (84%) and the overall quality of ambulance services (82%). None of the fire services rated had dissatisfaction levels above 5%. The two areas of fire service that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) how quickly fire department responds to emergencies and (2) the overall quality of ambulance service. There were no significant changes in satisfaction with any fire services that were rated in both 2004 and 2005.
- **Parks and Recreation.** The highest levels of satisfaction with parks and recreation services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses from residents who had an opinion, were the condition of City parks (70%), the number of walking and biking trails in the City (68%), and special events sponsored by the City (67%). None of the parks and recreation services rated had dissatisfaction levels above 15%. The two areas of parks and recreation that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the condition of City parks and (2) mowing/trimming along City streets.
 - Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (increases > 3%)
 - Mowing/trimming along City streets (+5%)
 - Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (decreases > 3%)
 - Number and location of City parks (-4%)
- **Public Works.** The highest levels of satisfaction with public works services, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses of residents *who had an opinion*, was the residential garbage collection services (79%), snow removal on major City streets (73%), and recyclables collection (71%).

Residents were least satisfied with the condition of major City streets (35%). The two areas of public works that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the condition of major City streets and (2) the condition of streets in neighborhoods.

- Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (increases > 3%)
 - City's street lighting system (+10%)
 - City's sanitary sewer system (+7%)
 - Yard waste collection (+6%)
 - Garbage collection (+5%)
- Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (decreases > 3%)
 - Maintenance of traffic signals and street signs (-9%)
 - Snow removal on neighborhood streets (-4%)
- **Community Development.** The highest levels of satisfaction with community development, based upon the combined percentage of "very satisfied" and "satisfied" responses of residents *who had an opinion*, was the overall quality of new development (64%), the quality of redevelopment in the City (53%), and how well the City is planning for growth (49%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of maintenance of rental homes and apartments (25%). The two areas of community development that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) enforcing the clean-up of litter and debris and (2) enforcement of the maintenance of rental property in the City.
 - Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (increases > 3%)
 - How well the City is planning for growth (+8%)
 - Enforcement of sign regulations (+6%)
 - Overall quality of new development in the City (+6%)
 - Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (decreases > 3%)
 - Enforcement of the clean up of litter and debris (-9%)
 - Enforcement of the clean up of junk/ derelict cars (-7%)
- **Public Libraries.** The highest levels of satisfaction with public libraries, based upon the combined percentage of "very satisfied" and "satisfied" responses of residents *who had an opinion*, were the location of library branches (87%), the helpfulness of the library staff (86%), and the availability of materials needed (84%). Residents were least satisfied with the hours the libraries are open (61%). The two library services that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) hours libraries are open and (2) the availability of library materials.
 - Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (increases > 3%)
 - Number of public access terminals in libraries (+10%)
 - Quality of children's library programs (+8%)

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- Hours libraries are open (+5%)
- Adequacy of on-line (Internet) information/services (+4%)
- Availability of library materials (+4%)

- Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2004 to 2005 (decreases > 3%)
 - None

- **If given \$100, residents were asked how they would spend the money on City services.** The mean distribution based on the amounts reported by residents are provided below.
 - Police services \$15.85
 - Maintenance of streets \$15.81
 - Fire prevention \$ 9.78
 - Economic Development \$ 8.30
 - Ambulance services \$ 8.23
 - Parks \$ 6.82
 - Public Library \$ 5.99
 - Storm Sewers \$ 5.67
 - Sanitary Sewers \$ 5.13
 - Recreation programs \$ 5.11
 - Garbage collection \$ 5.06
 - Code enforcement \$ 4.72
 - Planning services \$ 3.52

- **Customer Service.** More than one-third (37%) of the residents surveyed had called or visited the City with a question, problem, or complaint during the past year. Among those who had contacted the City, 78% thought it was “very” or “somewhat easy” to reach the right person. This was a significant improvement compared to the previous survey. In 2004, 63% of those surveyed thought it was “very” or “somewhat easy” to reach the right person. Overall satisfaction with customer service varied based on the City Department residents had contacted most recently as shown in the table below.

Customer Service Ratings by Department	% Thought Staff Were "Very" or "Somewhat Easy" to Reach	% Thought Staff Were "Always" or "Usually" Polite	% Thought Staff "Always" or "Usually" Gave Accurate Answers	% Thought Staff "Always" or "Usually" Did What They Said They Would Do	% Thought Staff "Always" or "Usually" Helped Resolve An Issue
Community Development (N=24)	64%	91%	50%	48%	43%
Public Works - Streets (N=63)	82%	90%	75%	56%	50%
Public Works - Other (N=61)	90%	93%	86%	81%	82%
Permit Development Center (N=19)	83%	92%	83%	82%	92%
Animal Control (N=17)	80%	73%	87%	50%	36%
Police (N=97)	82%	69%	64%	52%	54%
Overall (N=447)	78%	81%	69%	62%	56%
<i>Note: Data is only shown for Departments that were rated by at least 15 respondents (excluding don't knows). Data is not statistically significant for departments with fewer than 30 responses.</i>					

- 73% of those surveyed would support the development of a one-call, one-stop center that could be used for non-emergency city requests or questions; 7% did not like the idea, and 20% did not have an opinion.

Other Findings:

- Residents currently acquire information about Des Moines from two primary sources: Television news (80%) and The Des Moines Register (74%). The top two ways that residents would prefer to receive information would be from City newsletters mailed to residents' homes (57%) and City newsletters inserted into newspapers (43%).
- 27% of those surveyed have visited the City's website in the last year.
- 39% of the residents surveyed had watched the City Cable Channel 7 in the past year.
- 76% thought sales taxes were a good way to pay for City services; less than half (43%) thought property taxes were a good way to pay for City services.
- 69% thought fees were a good way to pay for City services.
- 72% indicated that they would rather pay more sales tax than higher property tax.
- 63% of those surveyed had used a City of Des Moines Public Library during the past year.
- 64% of those surveyed were satisfied with the appearance of private property in their neighborhood; 30% were not satisfied, and 6% did not have an opinion.
- 50% of those surveyed thought their neighborhood had improved over the past five years; 30% thought their neighborhood had stayed the same or gotten worse, and 20% did not have an opinion.