

# *2007 DirectionFinder® Survey* **Findings Report**

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conducted for  
**The City of Des Moines, Iowa**

by  
**ETC Institute**

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# *2007 DirectionFinder<sup>®</sup> Survey* Executive Summary Report

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## ***Overview and Methodology***

During the spring of 2007, ETC Institute administered a *DirectionFinder<sup>®</sup>* 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 fourth time the City had administered the *DirectionFinder<sup>®</sup>* Survey. The survey was previously administered in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

The 2007 survey was seven (7) pages long and took the average person approximately 20 minutes to complete. It was administered by mail and phone to a random sample of 821 residents during May and June 2007. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least +/-3.5% at the 95% level of confidence.

This report contains:

- an executive summary of the methodology and major findings
- charts depicting the overall results of the survey
- GIS maps that show results of selected questions on maps of the City
- importance-satisfaction analysis to help the City use survey data to set priorities
- benchmarking data that shows how the survey results for Des Moines compare to other cities in the United States
- tabular data for the overall results to each question of the survey
- a copy of the survey instrument.

**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 previous surveys. 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
  - Number of City parks
  - Quality of City swimming pools
  
- **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 City libraries (91%), the quality of fire protection services (89%), the quality of the Des Moines International Airport (82%), and the quality of police protection services (76%). Residents were least satisfied with the overall fairness of city taxes and fees (21%).
  
- **City issues that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize.** Among 13 major issues that were assessed on the survey, residents thought it was most important for the City to emphasize the following items over the next two years: (1) the fairness of city taxes and fees and (2) the overall quality of jobs and the economy.

- **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 (72%) and how quickly police respond to emergencies (67%). Residents were least satisfied with the responsiveness of police to traffic complaints (55%). 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.
  - *Areas with Significantly **HIGHER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq$  4%).*
    - None
  - *Areas with Significantly **LOWER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq$  4%)*
    - How quickly police respond to emergencies (-6%)
- **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 (88%) and the overall quality of ambulance and paramedic services (87%). 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 personnel respond to emergencies and (2) the overall quality of ambulance service.
  - *Areas with Significantly **HIGHER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq$  4%).*
    - Fire Department’s fire inspection program (+5%)
  - *Areas with Significantly **LOWER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq$  4%)*
    - None
- **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 overall beauty of the city (72%), the number and location of City parks (70%), the number of walking and biking trails in the City (69%), and the special events sponsored by the City (68%). Residents were least satisfied with the availability of special recreation facilities, such as dog parks and skate parks (48%). 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 overall quality of city parks and (2) the overall beauty of the City.

- **Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq$  4%).**
  - None
- **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq$  4%).**
  - Use of “green practices” (-9%)
- **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 (83%), snow removal on major City streets (74%), and maintenance of traffic signals and street signs (72%). Residents were least satisfied with the ability to safely ride a bicycle on city streets (24%). 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 overall condition of city streets and (2) the condition of streets in your neighborhood.
  - **Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq$  4%)**
    - Garbage collection (+4)
  - **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq$  4%)**
    - City’s sanitary sewer system (-8%)
    - Responsiveness of City staff to street, garbage, and sewer request (-8%)
    - City’s storm water sewer system (-7%)
    - Condition of streets in your neighborhood (-6%)
- **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 quality of redevelopment in the City (57%), the overall quality of new development (56%), and the overall enforcement of city ordinances (51%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of the maintenance and upkeep of rental homes and apartments (28%). 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 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq 4\%$ )**
  - Overall enforcement of city ordinances (+8%)
  
- **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq 4\%$ )**
  - Overall quality of new development (-9%)
  - Process for getting a permit (buildings, signs, sound, fences, etc.) (-9%)
  - How well the City is planning growth (-8%)
  - Enforcement of sign regulations (-8%)
  - Enforcement of city land use regulations (-6%)
  
- **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 overall quality of city libraries (91%), the availability of materials needed (89%), the helpfulness of the library staff (89%), and the adequacy of on-line information and services (84%). Residents were least satisfied with the hours the libraries are open (73%). 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 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq 4\%$ )**
  - Adequacy of on-line information and services (+7%)
  - Quality of children’s programs (+7%)
  - Hours libraries are open (+5%)
  
- **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq 4\%$ )**
  - None
  
- **Airport**. The highest levels of satisfaction with Des Moines International Airport, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses of residents *who had an opinion*, were the cleanliness of facilities (85%), the helpfulness of signs and other directions (85%), and the overall quality of the Airport (82%). Residents were least satisfied with the food, beverage and other concessions (49%). The two airport services that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the price of parking and (2) the ease of moving through airport security. 54% of those surveyed had used the airport during the past year.

- *Areas with Significantly **HIGHER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (increases  $\geq$  4%).*
  - None
  
- *Areas with Significantly **LOWER** Ratings from 2006 to 2007 (decreases  $\geq$  4%)*
  - Price of parking (-7%)
  - Helpfulness of signage (-5%)

### ***Customer Service Findings:***

- The percentage of respondents who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the overall quality of customer service provided by City employees increased 5% from 60% in 2006 to 65% in 2007.
  
- The percentage of residents who thought it was “very” or “somewhat easy” to contact the right person at the City increased from 70% in 2006 to 75% in 2007.

### ***Other Findings:***

- 51% of those surveyed thought the level of traffic enforcement by police in the City of Des Moines was “appropriate”; 3% thought the level of enforcement was “too much”; 31% thought it was “not enough”; 15% did not have an opinion.
  
- 82% of those surveyed felt safe in their neighborhood.
  
- Residents currently acquire information about the City of Des Moines from two primary sources: Television news (72%) and The Des Moines Register (68%).
  
- 31% of those surveyed indicated that they had visited the City’s website in the last year.
  
- 66% of those surveyed indicated that someone in their household who had read the *CitySource* Newsletter.

- 28% of those surveyed indicated that someone in their household had read the 2006 Performance Report. Of those who indicated that they had read the 2006 Performance Report, 83% were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the quality of the report.
- According to those surveyed the most preferred methods of paying for city services were: (1) user fees and (2) sales tax.
- More than half (53%) of the residents surveyed felt that their neighborhood had improved over the past five years.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of those surveyed were satisfied with the appearance of private property in their neighborhood.