

2008 DirectionFinder® Survey

Final Report



conducted for
The City of Des Moines, Iowa

by
ETC Institute

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2008 DirectionFinder[®] Survey

Executive Summary Report

Overview and Methodology

During the summer of 2008, 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 fifth time the City had administered the *DirectionFinder[®]* Survey. The survey was previously administered in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

The 2008 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 855 residents during June and July 2008. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least +/-3.3% 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

- **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 overall quality of city libraries (91%), the quality of fire protection (90%), the quality of the Des Moines International Airport (83%) and the quality of police protection services (77%). Residents were least satisfied with the overall fairness of city taxes and fees (30%).
- **City issues that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize.** Among the 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. These were the same City services residents identified in the 2007 survey as the most important issues for city leaders to emphasize over the next two years.
- **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 (76%) and how quickly police respond to emergencies (66%). Residents were least satisfied with the visibility of police in retail areas (56%). 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 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%).***
 - Quality of animal control (+4%)
 - Professionalism of City police officers (+4%)

- **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (decreases \geq 4%)**
 - None

- **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 fire personnel response time to emergencies (88%) and the overall quality of ambulance and paramedic services (88%). 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.

- **No Areas had Significantly HIGHER or LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%).**

- **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 quality of city parks (77%), the overall beauty of the city (72%), the number and location of city parks (71%), and the condition of sports facilities (70%). Residents were least satisfied with the availability of special recreation facilities, such as dog parks and skate parks (47%).

- **Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%).**
 - None
 - **Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (decreases \geq 4%).**
 - Condition of city buildings (-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 (85%), the maintenance of traffic signals and streets signs (76%), recyclable collection (74%), and snow removal on major City streets (71%). Residents were least satisfied with the ability to safely ride a bicycle on city streets (23%). The area of public works that residents thought was most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years was the overall condition of city streets.

- **Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%)**
 - Overall flow of traffic (+6%)

- Special item collection (+5%)
 - Maintenance of traffic signals and street signs (+4%)
- ***Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (decreases \geq 4%)***
 - Snow removal on streets in your neighborhood (-5%)
 - City's sanitary sewer system (-5%)
- **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 new development in the City (56%), enforcement of City ordinances (54%), redevelopment in the City (53%), and how well the City is planning growth (52%). Residents were least satisfied with the enforcement of the maintenance and upkeep of rental homes and apartments (29%). 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 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%)***
 - Enforcement of clean up of junk cars (+5%)
 - Enforcement of the clean up litter and debris (+4%)
 - ***Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (decreases \geq 4%)***
 - Overall quality of redevelopment (-4%)
- **Communication**. The highest levels of satisfaction with City communications, based upon the combined percentage of "very satisfied" and "satisfied" responses of residents *who had an opinion*, were the quality of the CitySource newsletter (65%), and the overall effectiveness of city communication (64%). The most important communication service that residents felt city leaders should emphasize over the next two years was the level of public involvement in local decision making.
 - ***There were Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%) in All Seven of The Communication Services Accessed on the Survey.***
 - Overall effectiveness of City communication (+10%)
 - Public involvement in local decision making (+10%)
 - Quality of the City's cable television channel (+8%)
 - Availability of information about the City's programs and services (+6%)
 - City's efforts to keep residents informed (+5%)

- Quality of the City’s webpage (+5%)
- Quality of the CitySource newsletter (+4%)

- **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 location of library buildings (89%), the availability of materials needed (89%), and the helpfulness of library staff (89%). Residents were least satisfied with the quality of programs for adults (71%). The two library services that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the availability of library materials and (2) the hours libraries are open. There was also a significant increase in the percentage of people who indicated they had visited the Des Moines Library from 53% in 2007 to 64% in 2008.

- ***No Areas had Significantly HIGHER or LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%).***

- **Airport.** The highest levels of satisfaction with the Des Moines International Airport, based upon the combined percentage of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” responses of residents *who had an opinion*, were the helpfulness of signs and other directions (86%), the cleanliness of facilities (84%), and the overall quality of the Airport (83%). Residents were least satisfied with the food, beverage and other concessions (45%). The two airport services that residents thought were most important for the City to emphasize over the next two years were: (1) the ease of moving through the airport and (2) price of parking.

- ***Areas with Significantly HIGHER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (increases \geq 4%).***
 - Price of parking (+4%)

- ***Areas with Significantly LOWER Ratings from 2007 to 2008 (decreases \geq 4%).***
 - Food, beverage and other concessions (-4%)

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 11% from 58% in 2005 to 69% in 2008.

- The percentage of residents who indicated City employees “always” or “usually” helped them resolve an issue to their satisfaction increased 4% from 52% in 2007 to 56% in 2008.

Public Transportation Findings:

- Eighty percent (80%) of residents indicated they had not used the Des Moines Area Regional Transit system or DART in the last year and 20% indicated they had.
- Of those residents who indicated they *had* used the Des Moines Area Regional Transit or DART, residents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with Free Downtown Shuttle (79%), the courtesy of the drivers (79%) and the overall quality of the bus (78%).

Other Findings:

- There were significantly higher ratings from 2007 to 2008 in the percentage of residents who indicated they felt “very safe” or “safe” in Downtown Des Moines (+11%), in City parks (8%) and in their overall feeling of safety in the City (+4%).
- The percentage of residents who indicated they had used the City’s website increased from 31% in 2007 to 42% in 2008.
- The percentage of residents who indicated they had called, emailed or visited the City’s Action Center significantly increased from 14% in 2007 to 21% in 2008.
- There was a significant increase in the percentage of residents who indicated they or someone in their household had read the CitySource newsletter from 66% in 2007 to 75% in 2008.
- The percentage of residents who indicated they would be in favor of creating a one-call, one-stop center staffed by people to answer their questions and that would cost households \$2 per month to fund increased significantly from 23% in 2007 to 33% in 2008.