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City Manager's Office

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: John Stufflebean

SUBJECT: PLANT MASTER PLAN -
COMPARATIVE SURVEY RESULTS

DATE: 03-17-11

Approved

Date

3/18/11

INFORMATION

As part of outreach activities for the Master Plan for the San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (Plant), staff used the professional services of Goodwin Simon Strategic Research to conduct two telephone surveys of residents in the Plant's eight-city service area. The first survey of 1,200 residents was conducted in August 2008 as a baseline that explored awareness, attitudes, and values among residents about issues related to the Plant and Plant Master Plan. The second survey, which also reached 1,200 residents and largely replicated the same questions, was conducted in July 2011. Both surveys reflect broad public awareness of and opinions on issues discussed in the Plant Master Plan community workshops; the second survey also provides a measure of the impact of outreach activities that took place in the time between the two surveys.

An information memorandum with highlights of the first survey was distributed in November 2008. This information memorandum highlights the second survey and the comparative analysis of the 2008 and 2010 data. The consultant's full report can be found at <http://www.rebuildtheplant.org/go/doc/1823/254834> (the survey resides under the Resources tab of the website); it provides demographic and city-by-city analysis of responses for each question.

Please note the following when considering the comparative analysis:

- **Changes to 2010 survey.** The 2010 survey question sequence and wording was slightly modified to reflect the evolution of the Plant Master Plan project. New questions were also asked to measure the effect of outreach activities, including a public awareness campaign, media coverage, and community workshops. These modifications, though minor, may have an effect on the 2010 results relative to the 2008 survey.
- **Statistically significant change.** When reviewing the data, please note that the margin of chance error is $\pm 3\%$ for aggregate responses across the service area, and this increases when looking at city-specific data with smaller sample sizes — for example, up to $\pm 8\%$ for a small city such as Cupertino. As shown in the table, to be considered statistically significant, a change between the 2008 and 2010 data at the 95% confidence level must be at least five points for the aggregate results; seven points for San José results; 10

points for Santa Clara, Milpitas, and the four-city area (Campbell, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, and Saratoga); and 11 points for Cupertino.

Margins for Sampling Error and for Comparison to 2008 Baseline Survey, by City

Location	Margin of sampling error (+/-)	Margin of comparison to 2008*
All Respondents	3%	5%
City of San José	5%	7%
City of Santa Clara	7%	10%
City of Milpitas	7%	10%
Campbell, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Saratoga (4-city area)	7%	10%
City of Cupertino	8%	11%

* Minimum change in percentage points for a change to be considered statistically significant

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

Note: Parenthetical presentation of 2008 and 2010 data places the 2008 data first and the 2010 data second. For example, (22%/28%) shows 22% as 2008 data and 28% as 2010 data.

1. Smaller Majority Concerned about Bay Water Quality; 1 in 4 Continues to Identify Plant’s Condition as a Serious Issue

As in 2008, residents were asked first to rate the seriousness of Bay water quality issues and the Plant’s condition in the context of a series of problems facing their area. Traffic (79%/73%) and the quality of local education (66%/60%) again topped the list as the most serious issues. Still rated as serious by half or slightly more than half was Bay water pollution (63%/52%), the condition of the Bay’s salt marshes (57%/51%), and water supplies in event of a drought (70%/50%). The proportion of respondents rating the condition of “your city’s sewage treatment plant” as serious (28%/26%) remained statistically unchanged from 2008. Although this issue did not elicit concern from a majority of residents, this roughly 1 in 4 rating is not inconsequential in a service area of 1.4 million people.

All but two of the issues received significantly lower ratings in 2010 than in 2008; only the issues of crime and the condition of the Plant stayed static, showing no significant change. The sharp 20 point drop in concern about water supplies may be attributable to higher than average rainfall last year. The significant 11 point decline in concern about Bay water pollution may reflect media coverage of spill incidents in the Bay in 2008 and lack of such incidents in 2010; it may be reasonable to also suppose that economic worries may be displacing environmental and social concerns for some residents.

2. Unchanged: 4 in 10 Lack Understanding of Sewer and Storm Drain Systems; Polluting Behaviors Are Occurring

As in 2008, many residents incorrectly answered simple questions about the sanitary and storm drain systems. When asked in Question #3 if wastewater from various sources ends up in the sanitary sewer system, almost half could not affirm that water from toilets (42%/43%), and from bathtubs and sinks (39%/43%) goes into the sewer. In both years, this same proportion, roughly 4 in 10, thought incorrectly that “water that flows down streets and gutters” goes into the sewer system, and that water “that drains off lawns and gardens” goes into the sewer system. It is, perhaps, a greater concern that fewer than half of respondents (47%/43%) could affirm that their wastewater is cleaned at a sewage treatment plant before being released (Question #4). And only about 1 in 4 (23%/25%) are aware that their wastewater ultimately ends up in the Bay (Question #14). We found a similar lack of knowledge about stormwater, which flows directly to creeks and then out to the Bay. In a new question (#28) for the 2010 survey, we asked residents to identify where “water that flows from your yard and streets goes,” about 40% were unsure; 39% said that it went directly to the Bay; 6% said it went into storm drains, 1% said it goes directly into creeks; and 1% said it goes first into creeks and then into the Bay. Eleven percent said the stormwater was treated.

Later in the survey, residents were asked if they flush specific substances down their toilets and sinks (Question #29 in 2010, #27 in 2008). Residents responding yes were as follows: medicines (9%/8%), paint (7%/3%), motor oil (1%/1%), and new for 2010, baby wipes (7%), cooking grease or oil (19%) and any kind of solvent such as paint thinner (1%). These findings indicate a need for continued outreach on preventing pollution of the wastewater system—as called for by the Plant’s regulatory permit.

3. Some Increases in Awareness of Plant by City; Majority Continues to Deem Plant a Fair to Very Good Neighbor

As in 2008, in the aggregate, about 1 in 4 respondents (22%/26%) said they knew the Plant’s general location (Question #5). In Santa Clara, there was a significant 13 point increase (18%/31%) in those who could state the Plant’s general location. Cupertino residents remained the least likely to know where the Plant is located (17%/13%) and Milpitas residents remained the most likely to know (30%/36%). In the aggregate, only 16% said they have heard something about the Plant “in recent years” (Question #7), similar to the 19% found in the 2008 study. Milpitas was the one city that showed a significant upward trend (20%/30%) in those who have heard something about the Plant.

In the aggregate, a strong majority of residents (64%/62%) continues to consider the Plant to be a fair to very good neighbor (Question #9); a significant five point drop occurred in those who called the Plant a poor or very poor neighbor (13%/8%), and the balance were unsure (23%/31%). In Cupertino, the proportion of residents who felt unsure of the Plant’s standing as a neighbor significantly increased (28%/52%), and most of this change came from those who once deemed the Plant to be a good or very good neighbor (42%/28%— a 14 point drop). Continued measurement is needed to determine if this is a momentary shift in opinion or a stable trend.

4. Awareness of Sewage Fees Varies by City and Rate Sensitivity Increased in Some Cities

In the Plant service area, only residents of Santa Clara and Milpitas pay sewage fees on a regular utility bill, and the rest pay a sewer service fee on their annual property tax bill. More than half of residents in Santa Clara (64%/52%) correctly said that they pay monthly, and half of Milpitas residents (62%/50%) correctly said they pay every two months (Question #11), but note that there was a significant 12 point drop in both cities in this number. As in 2008, the vast majority (roughly 8 of 10) of residents of other cities were not aware that sewer service costs are included in their annual property tax bill.

There were also significant changes in how residents of some cities felt about the cost of sewer service (Question #12). In the aggregate, close to half (47%/46%) continue to say the cost is about right or even too little, and a large plurality (36%/40%) remains unsure. But in Milpitas, there was a 16 point increase among those deeming the sewer fee too high (30%/46%). In Cupertino, there was a strong 21 point drop in the number of people who thought the fee was about right (52%/31%), with the number shifting largely into the group of people who were uncertain.

5. 1 in 5 Say Plant Needs Rebuilding; Less Than 1 of 10 Heard of Plant Master Plan

As previously mentioned, one-fourth of residents said the Plant's condition was a serious issue (in Question #2), but when asked specifically about the Plant's condition (Question #13), a large plurality of residents were unsure (49%/43%). Ironically, despite outreach activities and media attention on the Plant's infrastructure needs, there was a seven point increase in those who thought the Plant's condition was good (28%/35%). The proportion who said it is in poor or very poor condition, at 4%, was not significantly different than in 2008.

To further measure community understanding of the Plant and Plant Master Plan, new questions were added to the 2010 survey. In Question #16, residents were asked specifically if they thought the Plant needs rebuilding. A plurality (43%) weren't sure; 21% said it does need rebuilding (a finding that correlates better with the 1 in 4 who say the Plant's condition is a serious issue in Question #2); and the rest said no (36%). When residents were asked if they had heard anything about a plan to rebuild the Plant (Question #17), 8% said they had heard of such a plan, and a similar 8% had heard something about how to give input into the Plant Master Plan (Question #18).

6. Unchanged: Majorities Support Habitat and Wetlands Protection and Oppose Development

Somewhat similar to questions asked of the community on use of Plant lands during the period of public engagement on the Plant Master Plan (the Land Use Questionnaire distributed at May 2010 workshops and offered online through June 30, 2010), residents were asked to rate eleven possible uses for the land around the Plant (Question #21). Question #22 also measured how residents felt about leasing the Plant lands for possible types of development (retail, industrial, and office space). Highlights of these results were:

- **Habitat** – As in 2008, a strong majority also supported creating habitat for endangered species (59%), and for restoring wetlands (56%).

- **Retail and Industrial Uses**—In 2008, these were discussed in a combined manner and elicited 16% support and 62% opposition that year. When the 2008 study asked in a general way about *leasing or selling* Plant lands for private development, it found 28% supported the idea and 43% were opposed. In the 2010 study, “light industrial uses” garnered 17% support and 46% opposition in Question #21, but stronger opposition emerged in Question #22, where the question was phrased as leasing the land for three possible types of “private development.” The finding was that 58% of residents opposed leasing Plant lands for retail, 53% opposed light industrial, and 57% opposed using the land for office space. It should be noted that in both years, residents were informed that such uses could help reduce the need for future sewage fee increases.
- **“Green” development** - The 2010 study found majority support for certain types of “green” development and recreational uses, such as the previously mentioned research institute to support clean technology jobs (61%), extracting energy from food waste (55%), and solar panels (52%).
- **Recreation and open space** - In 2010, a majority or strong plurality also supported a regional park (50%), a nature museum (49%), connecting existing trails to the regional Bay Trail (49%), and keeping the entire area as open space (45%). Residents were closely divided over the idea of using the land for boating and other water recreation with 37% supported the idea while 31% were opposed.

7. Outreach Efforts across Large Service Area Reflect Some Progress; Newspaper Articles and Radio Proves Effective

Media coverage associated with the May 2010 Plant Master Plan community workshops and a public education campaign in June-July 2010 (with some tactics lingering through August) made some small strides in increasing public awareness of the Plant and the master planning effort to rebuild the Plant (Questions #23 - #27 and Question #30). Without any prompts, in Question #23, a small proportion (3%) of residents could recall images from the awareness campaign (the main message was: *Indoor Water Goes to the Bay—Aren't You Glad We Clean It First? Let's Keep Our Wastewater Treatment Plant Working. Learn more at rebuildtheplant.org.) When prompted, 9% remembered the image of a toddler next to a toilet (Question #24), and 14% recalled the yellow duck near a drain (Question #26).*

When asked if they could remember the radio ad (Question #30), 29% of residents remembered (after prompting) hearing the phrase “*Indoor water goes to the Bay, aren't you glad we clean it first?*” on the radio. There was a correlation between residents who heard the radio ad and those who were more likely to rate the issues of water pollution, salt marshes, and accumulations of toxins in food as serious problems. They, along with residents who recalled one of the advertising images, were also more likely to say the Plant needs to be rebuilt, and to believe that it releases clean water into the Bay. It is not clear if these differences are a consequence of encountering the ads, but it is nonetheless a positive correlation. Continued public outreach to increase awareness and interest in the Plant and in the Master Plan may help build residents’ recognition of the Plant’s value. Fostering an understanding of the stormwater and wastewater systems, with a focus on preventing pollution of those systems, is required to keep in compliance with discharge permits.

The data shows that Plant tours have helped disseminate information and spread awareness, albeit to a small proportion of the population (2% said they had heard about the Plant from a tour). To reach a greater audience, however, as resources allow, the use of more wide-reaching media is needed. Two-thirds of those who heard about ways to give input to the Master Plan read about it in a newspaper article, more than three times as many as heard about it in any other particular way.

USE OF SURVEY FINDINGS

This information gives Plant administrators, the Plant Master Plan team, and tributary partners a sense of current public understanding and opinion across the Plant service area and within tributary cities. It is helpful to staff in developing outreach messages and tactics relating to the Plant Master Plan and wastewater programs.

/s/

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For questions, please contact Jennifer Garnett, Communication Manager, Communications Division, ESD at 535-8554.

For the full report, visit: <http://www.rebuildtheplant.org/go/doc/1823/254834> (the survey resides under the Resources tab of the website)