

II. CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS

A. COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY

The survey shown in Figure 2 was sent to 931 customers of the City's development review and approval process. Sixty-nine surveys were returned with bad addresses, leaving 862 delivered. One hundred eleven surveys were returned for a return rate of 12.9%.

The overall response to the survey is also shown in Figure 2. The question statements were designed so that checking a "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" category is a sign of a satisfied customer. A "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" is a sign of a dissatisfied customer. The percentages shown in the margins to the right indicate the percent of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question statement. The "Not Applicable" category was excluded from this calculation.

Normally, when negative response of "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" exceed 15%, the responses indicate an area of possible concern. Less than 15% normally indicates this category of question is satisfying the customers. Percentages higher than 15% but below 30% are areas that should be examined for possible customer service concerns. Negative percentages of 30% or higher indicate areas needing early attention since roughly one third or more of the customers have concerns about service.

Some believe that only customers who have problems will return a survey of this type. While it is possible that customers with problems may be more likely to return the surveys, our experience with this and dozens of similar surveys indicate that they still produce valid information. For example, we've worked in other communities where the negative responses seldom exceeded 15%. Within San Jose, as surveys are segmented by topics such as inspection, we also received responses where negative comments were less than the 15% threshold. In these cases, 85% or more of the customers feel positive about the service.

It should also be noted that a survey of this type is not a scientific, statistically controlled sample. Nevertheless, when high numbers of respondents express concerns, they are indications of problems that need to be addressed.

Question 9 addresses plan review and approval times for all functions combined. A negative response of 39.8% indicates serious problems. These are addressed throughout this report.

**Figure 2
Customer Survey Responses**

1. Please indicate what the permit or approval was for.							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New single-family or two-family residence						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New apartments						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Remodel or addition to single-family or two-family residence						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Remodel or addition to apartments						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	New commercial or industrial building						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Remodel or tenant improvement to commercial or industrial building						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (list) _____						
2. Please indicate how often you work with the City's development review and approval process.							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	One-time user of the development review and approval process						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frequent user of the development review and approval process						
QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE	
3. When making an application, I generally found City staff to be responsive and helpful in the functions of?							
Building	18	47	6	9	5	8	16.5%
Fire	17	32	14	9	2	10	14.9%
Planning	10	30	6	13	8	8	31.3%
Public Works	16	26	13	9	3	9	17.9%
4. In general, City staff dealt with me in a positive manner, providing options when they were available and attempting to help me through the process, in the functions of:							
Building	20	44	4	8	6	8	17.1%
Fire	21	28	18	5	2	12	9.5%
Planning	13	31	4	10	11	8	30.4%
Public Works	19	21	13	7	6	9	19.7%
5. Plan checking is complete and accurate. Additional problems that should have been caught by City staff in the initial review did not surface later in the functions of:							
Building	16	32	12	15	4	7	24.1%
Fire	16	26	15	9	4	13	18.6%
Planning	9	24	9	13	8	11	33.3%
Public Works	9	22	18	8	3	13	18.3%
6. The plan check turnaround time for my project was clearly explained to me in the functions of:							
Building	11	33	11	13	8	9	27.6%
Fire	15	21	18	11	5	14	22.9%
Planning	7	22	12	14	12	10	38.8%
Public Works	9	19	18	10	3	16	22.0%

Customer Survey Responses continued

QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE	
7. Plan checking turnaround time was acceptable. I did not have to wait an excessive amount of time to get plans back or find out about problems that needed to be corrected in the functions of:							
Building	10	27	9	17	11	10	37.8%
Fire	18	20	16	13	6	14	26.0%
Planning	6	17	9	18	15	11	50.8%
Public Works	11	18	18	14	2	13	25.4%
8. Codes and policies are applied by City staff in a fair and practical manner in the functions of:							
Building	14	37	14	10	5	7	18.8%
Fire	18	28	16	11	2	9	17.3%
Planning	8	28	10	10	10	7	30.3%
Public Works	12	24	19	7	2	9	14.1%
9. The turnaround time for review and approval or disapproval of my application was not any longer at the City of San Jose than other cities or counties where I have filed applications.							
	15	26	15	19	18	8	39.8%
10. Inspectors were timely in responding to my requests for construction inspections associated with the functions of:							
Building	17	29	6	5	3	17	13.3%
Fire	16	19	12	1	2	21	6.0%
Planning	9	16	11	2	2	21	10.0%
Public Works	11	17	12	1	1	20	4.8%
11. City staff was courteous and respectful in the functions of:							
	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Building	22	42	8	2	5	9	8.9%
Fire	22	32	14	2	1	13	4.2%
Planning	11	37	8	8	5	8	18.8%
Public Works	17	29	12	4	1	11	7.9%
12. City inspectors were knowledgeable, thorough and clear in explaining any problems found and what options I had to correct problems and get approval from the inspectors of:							
Building	14	37	10	7	6	14	17.6%
Fire	15	33	14	3	1	18	6.1%
Planning	8	24	15	5	6	17	19.0%
Public Works	9	22	21	3	1	19	7.1%

Customer Survey Responses continued

QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE	
13. The conditions of approval applied to my project were reasonable and justified from the functions of:							
Building	11	43	13	8	3	10	14.1%
Fire	15	35	15	6	2	11	11.0%
Planning	6	32	12	9	9	9	26.5%
Public Works	8	27	20	8	1	11	14.1%
14. City of San Jose staff were easily accessible when I needed assistance in resolving problems in the functions of:							
Building	15	39	11	9	6	7	18.8%
Fire	21	29	12	8	2	12	13.9%
Planning	9	31	11	12	8	8	28.2%
Public Works	11	33	11	6	1	11	11.3%
15. I found the handouts supplied by the City of San Jose to be useful and informative in explaining the requirements I must meet for the functions of:							
Building	13	31	19	8	4	14	16.0%
Fire	16	22	23	3	2	18	7.6%
Planning	10	26	18	6	7	12	19.4%
Public Works	10	20	19	7	3	16	16.9%
16. City inspectors rarely found errors in the field during construction that should have been caught during the plan checking process from the functions of:							
Building	7	27	16	14	6	16	28.6%
Fire	12	25	19	9	0	18	13.8%
Planning	6	23	19	4	3	19	12.7%
Public Works	6	21	23	4	1	19	9.1%
17. City of San Jose staff worked in a coordinated manner to resolve my project issues in the functions of:							
Building	11	33	20	10	6	10	20.0%
Fire	14	28	17	8	3	12	15.7%
Planning	6	22	15	12	9	9	32.8%
Public Works	5	20	22	11	1	14	20.3%
18. If you experienced coordination problems between any two divisions or functions, please list them below.							
Coordination problems between _____ and _____							
Coordination problems between _____ and _____							
Coordination problems between _____ and _____							

Table 2 summarizes the responses for each of the four primary functions.

Table 2
Number and Percent of Negative Customer Survey Responses by Function

Function	Less than 15% Negative		15% to 30% Negative		More than 30% Negative	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Building	3	21	9	64	2	14
Fire	9	64	5	36	0	0
Planning	2	14	5	36	7	50
Public Works	6	34	8	57	0	0

According to this survey, Fire and Public Works are performing reasonably well, as no questions received negative scores exceeding 30%. Public Works has 8 questions or 57% with negative scores exceeding 15%. Fire has 5 negative questions or 36%.

Building has 2 questions exceeding 30% negative and 9 exceeding 15% negative. These numbers indicate a number of areas needing attention.

Planning has 7 questions exceeding 30% negative. This is half of all the questions asked and indicates considerable concern. Planning also had another 5 questions exceeding 15 % negative.

Each function is further analyzed as follows:

Building

High negatives for Building included:

- ✍ 5. Plan checking is complete and accurate – 24.1% negative.
- ✍ 6. Plan check turnaround time was clearly explained – 27.6% negative
- ✍ 7. Plan check turnaround time was acceptable – 37.8% negative
- ✍ 16. Inspectors found errors in the field that should have been caught in plan checking – 28.6% negative

As is obvious, the key concerns in Building relate to the plan checking process.

Fire

High negatives for Fire included:

- ✍ 6. Plan check turnaround time was clearly explained – 22.9% negative
- ✍ 7. Plan check turnaround time was acceptable – 26% negative

As with Building, the key concerns in Fire relate to the plan checking process.

Planning

High negatives for Planning included:

- ✍ 3. Responsive staff – 31.3% negative
- ✍ 4. Staff dealing in a positive manner – 30.4% negative
- ✍ 5. Plan checking is complete and accurate – 33.3% negative
- ✍ 6. Plan check turnaround time was clearly explained – 38.8% negative
- ✍ 7. Plan check turnaround time was acceptable – 50.8% negative
- ✍ 8. Codes and policies applied fairly – 30.3% negative
- ✍ 13. Conditions of approval were reasonable – 26.5% negative
- ✍ 14. Staff was easily accessible – 28.2% negative
- ✍ 17. Staff worked in a coordinated manner – 32.8% negative

Plan checking and turnaround times are clear concerns in planning. Questions 4, 8, 14 and 17 also indicate some content and staffing issues. On a more positive note, 81.2% found Planners to be courteous and respectful.

Public Works

High negatives for Public Works included:

- ✍ 6. Plan check turnaround time was clearly explained – 22% negative
- ✍ 7. Plan check turnaround time was acceptable – 25.4% negative

In order to gain additional insight into the customers concerns, all customer narrative comments were typed and are shown in Appendix D. Additionally, survey responses were grouped and tallied by sub-category. Where sufficient data was received, the responses were also grouped by frequent and one-time permittees. While in some cases the number of surveys received is small, if the data is compared to the summary data shown in Figure 2 and compared to the narrative responses additional insight is possible. For example, the negative responses for one-time single-family permittees is substantially higher than for frequent users, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Number of Questions with Negative Scores Exceeding 15%

Function	Frequent Permittee	One-Time Permittee
Building	5	13
Planning	6	11

- 2. *Recommendation:* The managers of the permitting functions should review the survey responses and discuss them with staff to brainstorm possible responses to customer concerns.**

