

### III. EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS

Two confidential questionnaires were completed by many of the City employees who work with development review and approval. A short, close-ended questionnaire, as shown in Appendix B, was completed at a series of staff meetings by 281 employees and collected by the consultants. The raw scores and tallies of this survey are also shown in Appendix B. A longer, 13-page questionnaire (shown in Appendix C) was completed by 126 employees and mailed to the consultants in San Diego to assure confidentiality. Information obtained from these questionnaires was essential to our analysis. The number of questionnaires returned is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Number of Employees Responding to Questionnaire**

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Short Questionnaire</b>	<b>Long Questionnaire</b>
Building	120	16
Fire	30	19
Planning	67	52
Public Works	43	32
Redevelopment	16	6
Transportation	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>126</b>

The short questionnaire also asked employees to list pet peeves and give suggestions for improvements. These comments were used as part of our analysis for this report.

The short, close-ended questionnaire consisted of a series of statements to be rated by the respondents. Responses were tallied and averaged, and the raw scores are displayed in Appendix B. The statements were designed to elicit the mood and feelings of each employee about overall division or department excellence. For each of the 40 statements, the employee was asked to respond as follows:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Somewhat Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

Generally, the higher the rating (i.e., 4’s and 5’s) the better the employee perceives the subject area and the more excellent the division or department.

We've conducted this survey using questions 1 to 28 in many development departments and divisions. Generally, a score below 3.0 is an indication of issues that need to be addressed. We like to see average scores in the high 3's and 4's. We believe that the scores give a reasonably accurate assessment of the employee's view of their division or department.

For this particular survey, we split the questions into two groups. Questions 1 through 28 are similar to questions we have used many times before. This allows us to calibrate the likely significance of the responses. Questions 29 to 40 (twelve questions) were an experiment and were based on a new best selling management book, *First Break All The Rules*. Each set of questions is analyzed as a group below.

### Questions 1 through 28

The average scores for Questions 1 through 28 by each function are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

Function	# of Surveys	Average Response	# of Questions Responded Below 3.00
Building	120	3.32	8
Fire	30	3.25	13
Planning	67	3.03	13
Public Works	43	3.34	6
Redevelopment	16	3.41	7
Transportation	5	3.68	2

**Average Scores for Questions 1 through 28**

Average scores for all functions were in the 3's with no averages in the 4's. The highest average was for Transportation at 3.68 and the lowest was for Planning at 3.03. Fire and Planning also had a high number of questions scored below 3.0, i.e., 13 each or 46%. These scores are below what we often see and are an indication of a variety of issues that need to be addressed. Greater insight is possible by examining the scores question by question.

### Problem Questions

Table 6 below shows the five questions that consistently scored low across all functions or departments.

**Table 6**  
**Scores Generally Below 3.00 for All Functions**

Question	Building	Fire	Planning	Public Works	Redevelopment	Transportation
1. Permit processes in the City are not unnecessarily complex nor burdensome on the applicant.	2.75	2.80	2.65	2.83	2.40	3.00
18. Management discusses objectives, programs and results with employees regularly.	2.71	2.60	2.87	3.00	2.94	3.00
25. I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done.	2.69	2.55	2.25	2.26	2.88	2.60
27. There is good teamwork and communication between the different divisions or departments processing plans and permits in the City.	2.43	2.07	2.55	2.36	2.31	3.20
28. The City has a coordinated one-stop permit process.	2.66	2.10	1.65	2.15	2.00	2.00

Questions 1, 27 and 28 address the lack of a coordinated permit process. The fact that the employees see the problem in addition to customers should be an indication that employees will be open to changes to improve the situation.

Question 18, on the other hand, indicates that managers do not adequately discuss objectives and programs with employees. If issues highlighted in Questions 1, 27 and 28 are to be addressed, management will need to do a better job in communicating with employees.

**3. Recommendation: Managers in all functions should examine the employee questionnaire responses and develop specific programs to improve communication with employees.**

The low response to Question 25 concerning enough time to do the work was not expected. Given the slow down in new permits it was hoped that staffing levels would have come into balance. We speculate that some workload may be left over from the higher number of permits applied for last year. Additionally, with current budget cutbacks, as vacant positions are removed and other positions reassigned, staff often has a difficult time making the adjustments and then feels they have problems with the workload. Management needs to be particularly sensitive to staff needs during these transition periods.

Other low scores by each function are discussed below.

**Building**

The Building Division had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7  
Scores Below 3.00 for Building Division**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
15. Managers in this organization encourage and advance new ideas from employees.	2.87
19. There is free and open communication between all levels of employees about the work they are performing.	2.86
21. This organization encourages practical risk-taking and supports positive effort.	2.79

Questions 15, 19 and 21 as shown above in Table 7 all speak to management and supervision issues. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Building Division, these issues must be addressed.

**Fire**

The Fire Division had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8  
Scores Below 3.00 For Fire Division**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
7. We have an efficient records management and documentation system.	2.47
12. We have an effective process for listening to citizen or client concerns.	2.93
13. The concern for employees in this organization is more than lip service.	2.97
15. Managers in this organization encourage and advance new ideas from employees.	2.73
16. We have a strong emphasis on training.	2.87
17. This organization seeks to identify problems quickly.	2.50
19. There is free and open communication between all levels of employees about the work they are performing.	2.76
21. This organization encourages practical risk-taking and supports positive effort.	2.63

Questions 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 21 shown above in Table 8 reflect issues with management and supervision. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Fire Division, these issues must be addressed.

**Planning**

The Planning Division had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 9.

**Table 9  
Scores Below 3.00 For Planning Division**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
2. Permit review in this organization is undertaken in a consistent manner.	2.48
3. Plans and permits are reviewed in this organization in a timely manner.	2.92
6. Field inspections in this organization are undertaken in a consistent manner.	2.95
7. We have an efficient records management and documentation system.	1.84
15. Managers in this organization encourage and advance new ideas from employees.	2.99
17. This organization seeks to identify problems quickly.	2.70
19. There is free and open communication between all levels of employees about the work they are performing.	2.86
21. This organization encourages practical risk-taking and supports positive effort.	2.86

Questions 2, 3, 6, 17, 19 and 21 as shown above in Table 9 all speak to management and supervision issues. The exceptionally low score for Question 7 reflects a need for significant change in the way records are maintained. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Planning Division, these issues must be addressed.

**Public Works**

The Public Works Division had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10  
Scores Below 3.00 For Public Works Division**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
7. We have an efficient records management and documentation system.	2.79
10. I am able to meet standard turnaround times for plans and permits as communicated by my supervisor.	2.90

Questions 7 and 10 as shown above in Table 10 relate to issues with management and supervision. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Public Works Division, these issues must be addressed.

**Redevelopment**

The Redevelopment Agency had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11**  
**Scores Below 3.00 For Redevelopment Agency**

Question	Average Score
2. Permit review in this organization is undertaken in a consistent manner.	2.80
26. I am kept abreast of changes that affect me.	2.88

Questions 2 and 26 as shown above in Table 11 speak to management and supervision issues. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Redevelopment Agency, these issues must be addressed.

### **Transportation**

The Transportation Division had scores below 3.0 as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**  
**Scores Below 3.00 For Transportation Division**

Question	Average Score
2. Permit review in this organization is undertaken in a consistent manner.	2.75

Question 2 as shown above in Table 12 relates to management and supervision. In order to foster continuous improvement in the Transportation Division, this issue must be addressed.

### **Questions 29 to 40**

Questions 29 to 40 (twelve questions) were an experiment and were based on a new best selling management book, *First Break All The Rules*. The book suggests that: “Measuring the strength of a workplace can be simplified to twelve questions. These twelve questions don’t capture everything you may want to know about your workplace, but they do capture the *most* information and the *most important* information. They measure the core elements needed to attract, focus, and keep the most talented employees.” This work was based on in-depth interviews by the Gallup Organization of over 80,000 managers in over 400 companies. Supposedly, this is the largest study of its kind ever undertaken. As management and organizational consultants, we find the twelve questions appealing. However, until we use these questions in numerous organizations, we will find it hard to calibrate the data. Nonetheless, we believe the questions do provide some insight about the San Jose functions. Table 13 below indicates the average score by function for the twelve questions in each unit.

**Table 13**  
**“First Break All The Rules” Questionnaire Responses**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Average Responses</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Building	3.50	120
Fire	3.54	30
Planning	3.50	97
Public Works	3.74	43
Redevelopment	4.07	16
Transportation	4.13	5
		<b>311</b>

Table 14 below indicates the percent of respondents who rated each question as “5” or “Strongly Agree” and the average response for each function to each question.

Since this is a new research effort for us, the data must be read with some caution. The Gallup Organization used the data to compare one organization to another. While we do not have data from other cities, we can use the data to compare one San Jose function to another. Does it make a difference? Gallup had the following findings for the private sector:

- ✍ Stores scoring in the top 25% on the employee opinion survey were, on average, 4.56% over their sales budget for the year, while those scoring in the bottom 25% were 0.84% below budget.
- ✍ The top 25% of stores on the survey ended the year almost 14% over their profit budget. Those stores in the bottom group missed their profit goals by a full 30%.
- ✍ Staff turnover in the top 25% was also much lower than the other stores.

Our preliminary thoughts for San Jose are:

- ✍ The most questions with the lowest number of employees responding “5” were in Fire (four questions), and Planning (four questions). Public Works and Transportation had the lowest response for one question each.
- ✍ Using the average response for comparison shows Building with the lowest scores on five questions, Planning with four, and Fire with three.

**Table 14**  
**“First Break All the Rules” Questionnaire Responses**  
**Percent Rating Each Question 5 and Average Responses to Each Question**

Question	Building	Fire	Planning	Public Works	Redevelopment	Transportation
29. I know what is expected of me at work.	42% 4.11	53% 4.50	28% 3.79	51% 4.30	44% 4.44	40% 3.80
30. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my job right.	27% 3.70	23% 3.43	13% 3.21	44% 3.81	31% 4.19	40% 4.21
31. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	27% 3.71	29% 3.79	21% 3.28	19% 3.77	38% 4.06	40% 3.60
32. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	16% 2.26	10% 2.86	24% 3.03	19% 2.98	31% 3.88	40% 3.80
33. My supervisor or someone at work seems to care about me as a person.	23% 3.35	50% 4.03	37% 3.78	40% 4.07	50% 4.31	60% 4.60
34. There is someone at work who encourages my development.	18% 3.11	17% 3.20	22% 3.33	37% 3.72	38% 3.88	40% 4.00
35. At work, my opinions seem to count.	12% 3.21	20% 3.23	13% 3.37	21% 3.42	19% 3.94	60% 4.20
36. The mission/purpose of my department makes me feel my job is important.	29% 3.56	17% 3.40	27% 3.59	33% 3.76	56% 4.25	40% 4.20
37. My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work.	43% 4.14	37% 4.00	36% 4.09	42% 4.09	63% 4.50	40% 4.20
38. I have a best friend at work.	19% 3.18	14% 2.75	33% 3.55	27% 3.32	20% 3.53	40% 4.20
39. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	31% 3.47	34% 3.41	20% 2.89	31% 3.50	50% 3.81	80% 4.60
40. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	35% 3.84	37% 3.90	46% 4.03	44% 4.14	31% 4.00	20% 4.20

**4. Recommendation:** Managers in the permit functions should review the responses to Questions 29 to 40 and use these as a focus for staff discussions. Particular attention to this topic should take place in Building, Fire and Planning. Managers are encouraged to read *First, Break All The Rules*, to assist them in this effort.