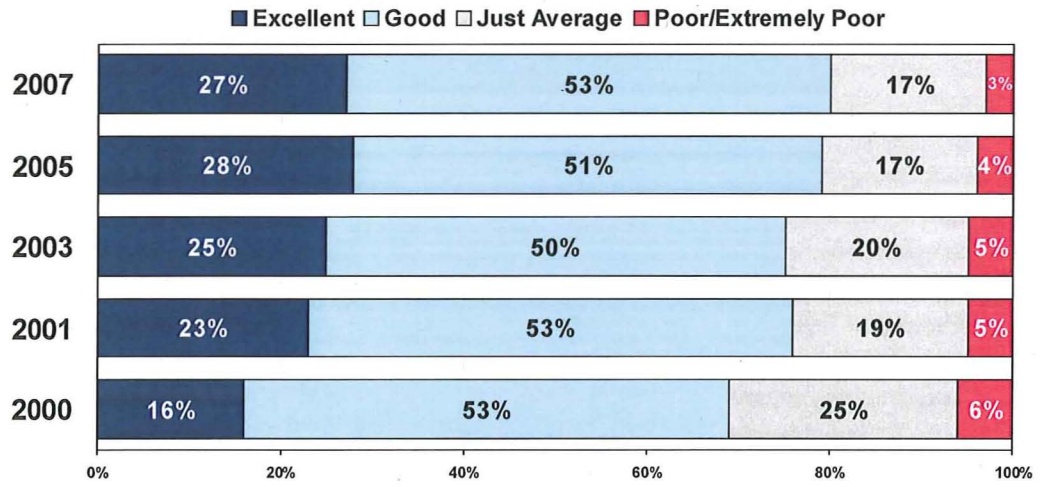
PART 1: THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND MAJOR ISSUES IN SAN JOSÉ

1.1 Quality of Life in San José

Residents are very happy with their community in San José, with four in five (80%) San José residents (80%) believing San José is an "excellent" (27%) or "good" (53%) place to live. Just 17 percent rate the City's quality of life as "just average," and only three percent consider it "poor" or "extremely poor." As shown in **FIGURE 1** below, these ratings are consistent with recent years' surveys, but surpass the two-thirds (69%) who had a positive impression of San José as a place to live in the initial survey in 2000. This represents an 11-point increase in positive views from 2000 to 2007. The proportion giving the City an "excellent" rating as a place to live remains significantly higher than the 16 percent initially observed in 2000.

FIGURE 1:
Residents' Evaluation of San José as a Place to Live, 2000 Through 2007



3. Generally speaking, how would you rate San José as a place to live: is it an excellent place to live, a good place to live, just average, poor, or an extremely poor place to live?

Results Among Subgroups

Those residents who are most well-off continue to have the most positive impression of conditions in the City:

- The proportion who feel San José is an "excellent" or "good" place to live increases with income. While 73 percent of those earning less than $20,000 a year in household income give a positive response about the City's quality of life, 88 percent of those earning $100,000 a year or more do so.

- A similar pattern emerges with educational attainment. Residents without a college degree (76%) are less likely to give a positive rating to the City as a place to live than are those with a college degree (83%) or post-graduate education (88%). College-educated men are particularly positive in their perceptions (89%).

- Homeowners (84%) are also more likely to be positive than renters (71%).

Other demographic distinctions on this question include the following:

- Ratings are also slightly more positive among white residents (84%) than among Latino (78%), African-American (62%), or Asian-American (76%) residents.

- Those registered to vote are more positive than non-voters (82% to 74%).

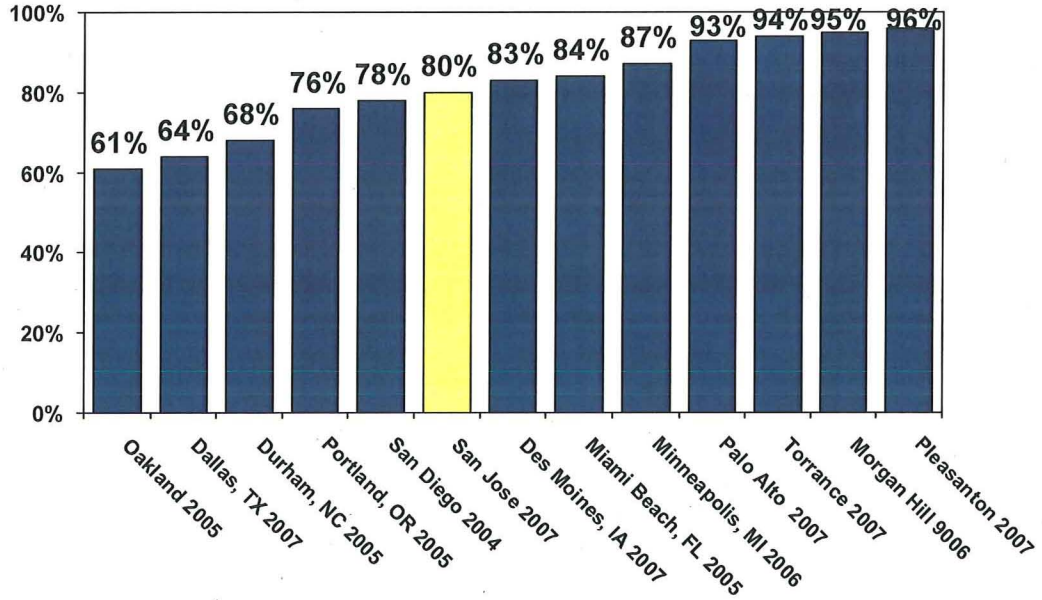
- There are also correlations between positive views of the City's quality of life and age and length of residency in San José. While 74 percent of those who have lived in San José less than five years consider San José an "excellent" or "good" place to live, 83 percent of those living in the City 20 years or more give this response. Seventy-three percent of residents under 30 have a positive impression, compared to 87 percent of those age 65 or older.

- As in past years, the proportion with a negative impression of San José as a place to live is low among all major demographic groups, with no more than five percent of any one demographic group saying the City is a "poor" place to live.

- Residents of SNI neighborhoods are somewhat less likely to offer a positive evaluation of San José's quality of life (72%) than are residents of other parts of the city (82%).

As **FIGURE 2** illustrates, the overall ratings for San José's quality of life resemble those in other cities, including those in California as well as others across the country. Ratings are lower than in more suburban communities, such as Pleasanton, Torrance, Palo Alto, and Morgan Hill, but are equal or greater to those of larger cities, such as San Diego, Portland, Dallas, or Oakland.

FIGURE 2:
San José Quality of Life Ratings Compared to Other Cities



Survey respondents were once again asked to rate a list of individual aspects of life in their neighborhoods. As **FIGURE 3** shows, more than half of residents consider each item to be "excellent" or "good" other than *the availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings in or near your neighborhood.* Respondents offered the strongest positive responses for *the appearance of local parks in or near your neighborhood* (70%"excellent" or "good"), *the physical attractiveness of residences and residential property* (68%), and *the physical condition of trees along your neighborhood's streets* (67%).

As mentioned, the only attribute rated positively by less than half of residents is *the availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings in or near your neighborhood,"* with 47 percent giving this an "excellent" or "good" rating. However, 11 percent are unable to give an opinion, while just 19 percent give a "poor" rating (24% give a "just average" rating).

FIGURE 3:
Rating of Individual Aspects of Quality of Life in Respondent's Neighborhood, 2007
(Ranked by Total Excellent/Good)

Item	TOTAL EXC./ GOOD	Exc.	Good	Just Average	Poor	Ext. Poor	DK/ NA
The appearance of local parks in or near your neighborhood	**70%**	17%	53%	22%	6%	1%	2%
The physical attractiveness of residences and residential property	**68%**	16%	52%	27%	4%	1%	0%
The physical condition of trees along your neighborhood's streets	**67%**	13%	54%	21%	8%	2%	2%
The physical condition of landscaping on city streets other than trees, like on median islands	**63%**	12%	51%	26%	7%	1%	2%
The condition of City sidewalks	**61%**	13%	48%	30%	7%	1%	1%
The condition of your neighborhood's streets	**61%**	10%	51%	26%	11%	2%	0%
The adequacy of street lighting	**59%**	9%	50%	24%	14%	2%	1%
The physical attractiveness of commercial buildings	**57%**	10%	47%	30%	7%	1%	5%
The availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings in or near your neighborhood	**47%**	10%	37%	24%	16%	3%	11%

Results Among Subgroups

- City residents of five years or fewer give slightly more positive ratings than do longer-term residents for *the physical attractiveness of residences and residential property; the physical condition of landscaping on city streets other than trees, like median islands; the condition of city sidewalks; and the physical attractiveness of commercial buildings.*

- Homeowners are slightly more positive than renters about the appearance of residences.

- College-educated residents are slightly more positive than residents without a college degree regarding physical attractiveness of residences, condition of landscaping, and the condition of neighborhood streets.

- Dissatisfaction is higher among residents under the age of 30 than among older residents for *the availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings on or near your neighborhood.* Dissatisfaction is also slightly higher among those earning less than $60,000 a year in household income (22%) than among those earning more than this amount (15%). The proportion giving a "poor" rating is lower among Asian-American residents (12%) and slightly higher among Latino residents (23%). Among almost all demographic subgroups, this issue generates some of the strongest negative ratings of all items tested.

- Sixteen percent of residents also give a "poor" rating to *the adequacy of street lighting,* little changed from prior years. Not surprisingly, significantly more residents who feel unsafe at night in their neighborhood give a poor rating to *the adequacy of street lighting* (25%) than those who feel safe (14%). However, as seen in 2005, those who feel unsafe during the day or night are more likely to give "poor" ratings to nearly every aspect of life in their community.

- Ratings for *the adequacy of street lighting* are also weaker among the small group of African-American residents (39% "poor") than among Latino (19%), Asian-American (13%), or white (15%) residents. White men, however, are far more negative (21%) than are white women (11%). Residents under the age of 30 are more negative (24%) than are those older (14%). Unlike in 2005, there is little notable difference on this issue by education or homeownership.

- Ratings for *the condition of neighborhood streets* are more negative among renters than among homeowners (18% "poor" compared to 11%); among those under 30 (18%) than among those older (13%); and among those earning less than $30,000 a year in household income (22%) than among those earning $30,000 to $60,000 (16%) or more (10%).

- Generally speaking, respondents in SNI neighborhoods are less likely than those in other parts of the City to rate these aspects of San José's quality of life as "excellent" or "good" in their community. In every case but three, ratings are at least six points lower in SNI neighborhoods than in other parts of the City. On the issues of landscaping and arts and cultural events, responses from SNI and non-SNI neighborhoods are essentially identical.

Residents continue to offer positive evaluations of most individual elements of their neighborhood quality of life, as shown in **FIGURE 4**. Asked for the first time in 2003, *the condition of City sidewalks* receives a slightly more positive rating in the current survey (61% "excellent" or "good") than in 2003 (56%), but is essentially the same as in 2005. Ratings for *the availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings in or near your neighborhood* continued an upward trend, from 39 percent in 2003 to 43 percent in 2005,

and 47 percent currently. The proportion giving a "poor" rating is 19 percent, down from 22 percent in 2005 and 25 percent in 2003 – indicating a noteworthy improvement in residents' perception of arts and cultural offerings over the past few years. Other items show smaller amounts of change over both the short- and long-term.

FIGURE 4:
Change in Rating of Individual Aspects of Quality of Life in Respondent's Neighborhood as "Excellent" or "Good", 2000 Through 2007
(*Ranked by Change in Rating*)

Item	2007	2005	2003	2001	2000	*7-Year Change*
The availability and variety of arts and cultural offerings in or near your neighborhood*	47%	43%	39%	NA	NA	*+8%*
The condition of City sidewalks*	61%	62%	56%	NA	NA	*+5%*
The physical attractiveness of commercial buildings	57%	56%	54%	53%	53%	*+4%*
The physical condition of landscaping on city streets other than trees, like on median islands**	63%	59%	NA	NA	NA	*+4%*
The condition of your neighborhood's streets	61%	59%	56%	61%	58%	*+3%*
The appearance of local parks in or near your neighborhood	70%	68%	72%	69%	68%	*+2%*
The physical attractiveness of residences and residential property	68%	65%	66%	65%	67%	*+1%*
The physical condition of trees along your neighborhood's streets	67%	65%	66%	69%	67%	*0%*
The adequacy of street lighting	59%	59%	60%	61%	60%	*-1%*

** This item was asked only in 2007, 2005 and 2003. The change in rating is, therefore, from 2003 to 2007.*
*** This item was only asked in 2007 and 2005.*

1.2 Issue Concerns

As in past years, respondents were asked to name the most serious issue that they would like San José's City government address. The question was open-ended, meaning that respondents were asked to respond in their own words. As in past years, the same four issues continue to be the most salient to residents: traffic, crime (including gangs, drugs, and police enforcement), housing costs, and education. The issue of street maintenance now ranks right alongside education. **FIGURE 5** on the following page illustrates the results.

- The proportion volunteering a crime-related issue as the most serious issue (including mentions of crime generally, gangs, drugs, and police enforcement – and, in prior years, speeding and unsafe driving) continues to increase, with 22 percent mentioning a crime-related issue as their top concern this year, compared to 14 percent in 2005 and 2003, 11 percent in 2001, and nine percent dating back to 2000.

- The proportion volunteering housing costs as what concerns them most has remained the same over the past three studies, but is down from 2001 and 2000.

- The proportion volunteering street maintenance as the most serious issue facing residents rose to seven percent this year – an insignificant change from the five percent giving this response in 2005. However, there has been a modest increase in the proportion naming this issue since 2000 and 2001, when just three percent did so.

- Concern about traffic congestion rose slightly to 15 percent from 11 percent in 2005, but remains down from 20 percent in 2001 and 28 percent in 2000.

- The cost of living was not salient in 2000, when only one percent volunteered it as the issue that concerned them most. This number has shifted notably in each survey subsequently, growing to seven percent in 2001, declining to three percent in 2003, rising again to seven percent in 2005, and falling again to two percent this year.

- The proportion volunteering jobs and related issues as their top concern reached nine percent in 2003, which was up from four percent in 2001 and one percent in 2000. In 2005, the proportion mentioning this issue fell to five percent and now has declined further to two percent.

- The proportion mentioning education has remained fairly consistent, as has the proportion naming homelessness, growth and development, immigration issues, and public transportation.

FIGURE 5:
The Most Serious Issue Facing City Government, 2000 Through 2007
(Includes Only Responses Over 2%; Responses Grouped; Ranked by 2007 Rating)

Item	2007	2005	2003	2001	2000	*7-Year Change*
Crime/Drugs/Gangs/More police	**22%**	14%	14%	11%	9%	*+13%*
Traffic congestion	**15%**	11%	13%	20%	28%	*-13%*
Housing costs/affordable housing	**9%**	8%	9%	15%	25%	*-16%*
Education/public schools	**7%**	9%	9%	5%	8%	*-1%*
Street maintenance	**7%**	5%	4%	3%	3%	*+4%*
Homelessness	**3%**	3%	3%	2%	2%	*+1%*
Cost of living	**2%**	7%	3%	7%	1%	*+1%*
Jobs/keeping businesses	**2%**	5%	9%	4%	1%	*+1%*
Public transportation/buses/rail	**2%**	3%	3%	3%	5%	*-3%*
Growth and development	**2%**	1%	1%	2%	1%	*+1%*
Immigration issues	**2%**	2%	1%	1%	0%	*+2%*

Results Among Subgroups

Demographic differences in concern about these issues are highlighted below:

- **Crime, drugs and gangs:** Those most concerned about crime, drugs, and gangs include the less well-educated (crime-related issues are named by 35% of those with less than a high school education), Latino residents, those under the age of 30, non-English speaking residents, and those in SNI neighborhoods.

- **Traffic congestion:** The proportion naming traffic congestion as their top concern is higher among homeowners than renters (18% to 10%); higher among those with a college degree (20%) than among non-college educated residents (12%); higher among Asian-American (20%), white (15%) and Latino (12%) residents than among African-American residents (3%); and higher among those earning $75,000 or more in household income (25%) than among those earning less (11%). Those under the age of 30 express less concern about this issue (7%) than those older (19% among those 30 to 49 and 14% among those older).

- **Housing costs:** The issue of housing costs was named by slightly more residents who work outside of San José (14%) compared to those who work inside the City (8%). However, there is little notable variation among other demographic subgroups.

- **Education:** Concern about education is only slightly greater among those with school-age children (9%) than among those without children (5%). The issue was also named slightly more often by women ages 18 to 49 (12%), Latino women (12%), residents of less than five years (11%), renters (11%), and those under age 40 (10%).

- **Street maintenance:** There is little demographic variation in the proportion naming street maintenance as their top issue, with five to nine percent generally giving this response among most subgroups of the population. Concern is slightly higher with men age 50 or older (13%), retired residents (13%), and those 65 years of age or older generally (13%).

In SNI neighborhoods, crime (26%) is the top concern (in particular gang violence, at 12%), followed by traffic congestion (15%), housing costs (12%), homelessness (8%), education (6%), and street maintenance (5%). Thos not living in an SNI neighborhood are far less concerned about crime (16%) and homelessness (3%), but express similar levels of concern in other areas.