

San Rafael General Plan 2040

Spanish Language Community Engagement Program Survey Findings

Executive Summary

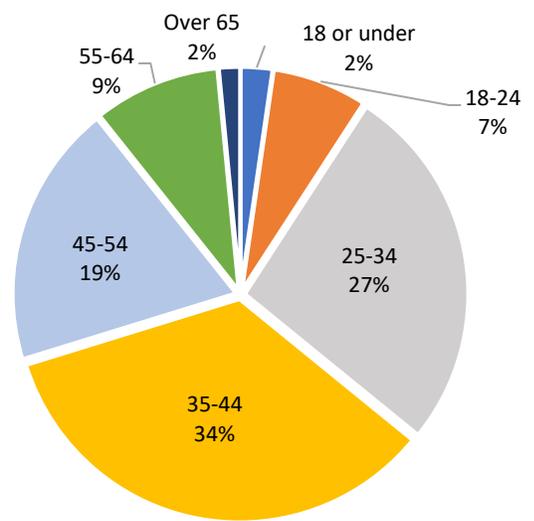
This report summarizes the findings of a Spanish-language resident survey completed during Winter 2019-20 as part of the 2040 San Rafael General Plan Update. The City recognized a critical, unmet need to engage Spanish-speaking residents in the General Plan process. Nearly one in six San Rafael residents speaks limited English. Many of these residents face enormous housing, economic, transportation, and health care challenges. A Spanish language workshop held early in the General Plan process was poorly attended, highlighting the need for a more proactive engagement strategy. The City retained the consulting firm Communities in Collaboration to administer this effort, working in partnership with Canal Alliance and Ricardo G. Huerta Nino, consultant and faculty member in UC Berkeley’s Department of City and Regional Planning.

Canal Alliance’s long-standing advocacy work with the Latino community provided the historical context, community trust, and legitimacy to make the survey an effective effort. The effort was reinforced by Canal Alliance’s prior work documenting priorities in the community, including *Voces del Canal* (Voices of the Canal) in 2013. Building on that work, a group of 12 residents agreed to participate as a volunteer Leadership Team for General Plan 2040. The team convened twice monthly for several months to discuss planning and governance principles, as well as broader engagement strategies. The survey ultimately developed by this group was administered in Fall 2019 and Winter 2019-20.

Characteristics of Respondents

There were 135 survey respondents. Key characteristics included:

- 95% lived or worked near the Canal neighborhood
- 94% lived in ZIP code 94901
- 61% worked in San Rafael and 94% worked in Marin County
- 84% were renters; 13% were staying with family or friends
2% were homeowners; 1% answered “other”
- 31% were male, 67% were female, and 2% answered “other”
- 87% indicated there were children in the household
 - 62% indicated there were 1-2 children in the household
 - 19% indicated there were 3-4 children in the household
 - 6% indicated there were 5 or more children in the household
- 55% lived in households with five or more people
- Age of respondents is shown in the chart at right



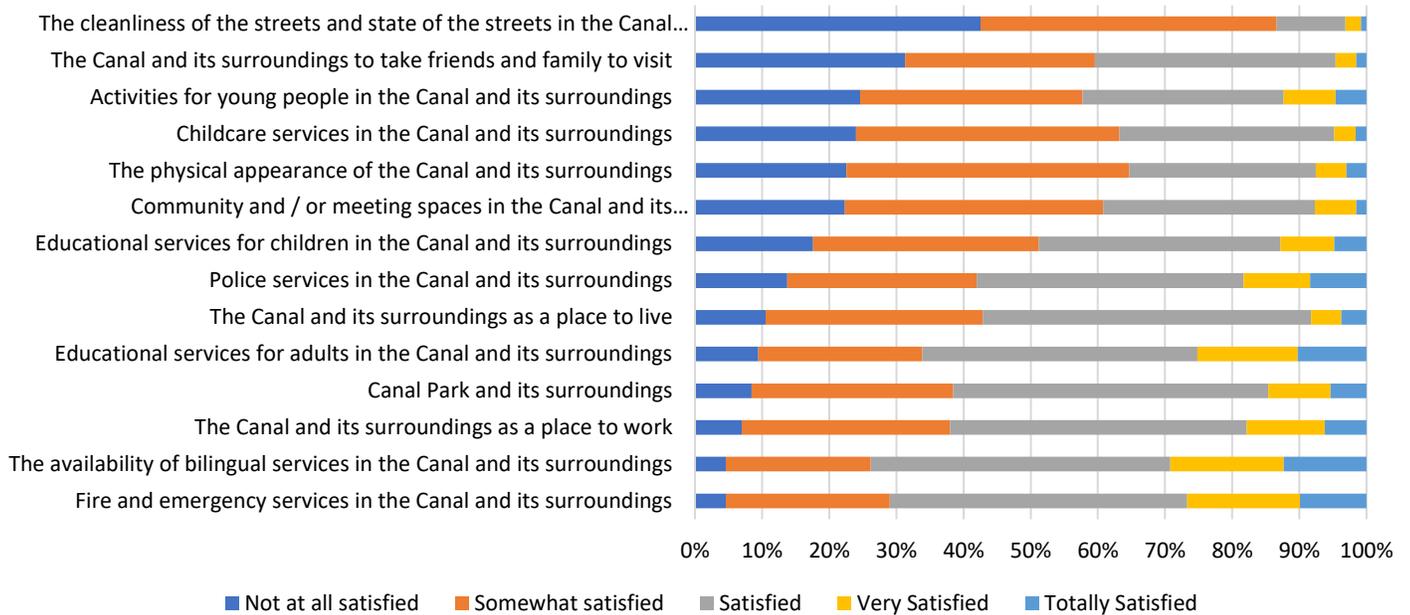
Age of Respondents

Quality of Life

Respondents expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with Fire/EMS, availability of bilingual services, adult educational services, Pickleweed Park, and the Canal as a place to work.

Respondents expressed relatively low levels of satisfaction with the Canal’s physical appearance (especially street cleanliness and conditions), childcare services, activities for young people, and the Canal as a place for visiting family.

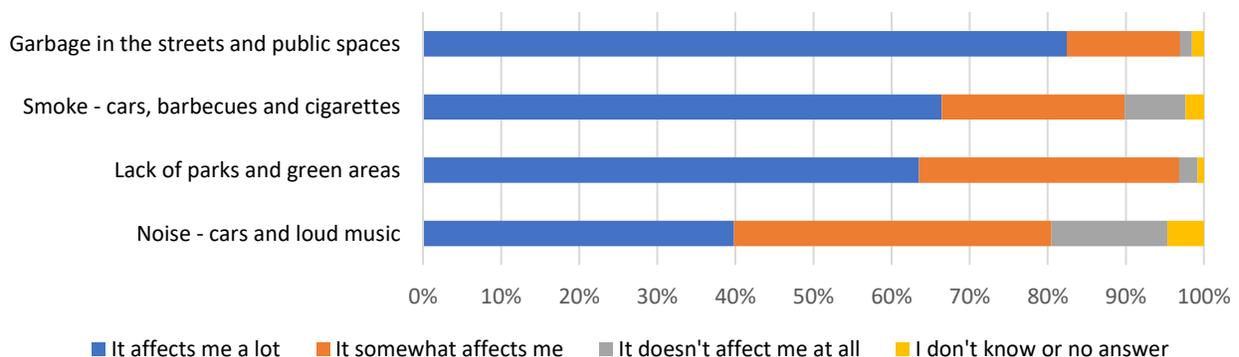
How satisfied are you with the following? (n=135)



Nuisances

Respondents were especially bothered by garbage/litter in public spaces, and the lack of green spaces in the neighborhood. Smoke and fumes were an issue for 90% of the respondents. Noise was less of an issue, with only 40% indicating this was a problem.

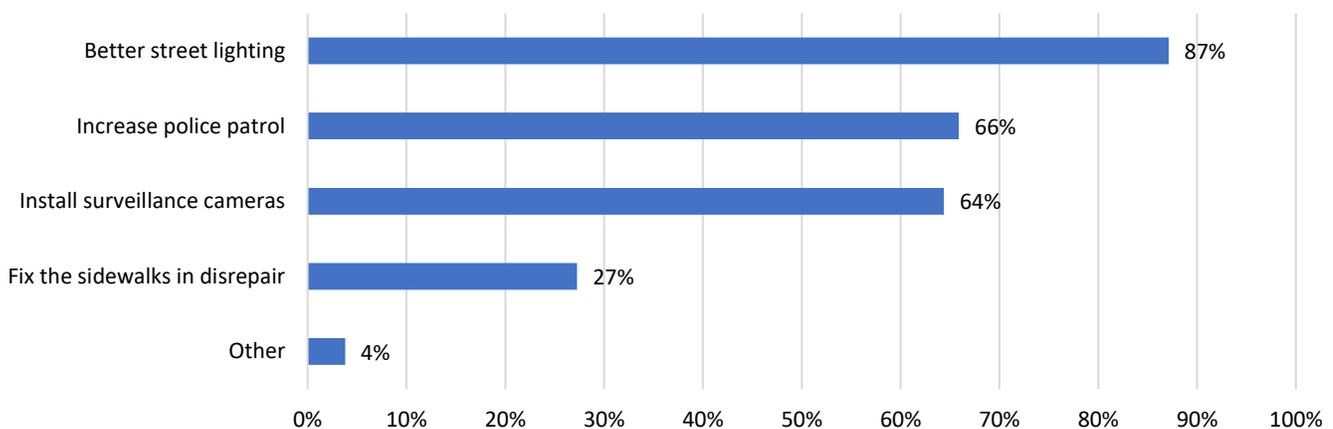
How much do the following problems affect you? (n=133)



Safety

Personal safety remains a major concern for residents of the Canal neighborhood—90% of the respondents reported that they **do not** “feel safe walking at night in the Canal” Respondents were also asked, “*What do you think can improve safety at night in the Canal?*” Improved street lighting was selected by 87% of respondents, increased police patrol by 66% and surveillance cameras by 64%. The latter two responses require important caveats – there are still deep concerns and debates about the impact of additional police and surveillance on a large number of community members, including undocumented residents. Additional ideas for improving safety included youth curfews, more community events, and better lighting at bus stops.

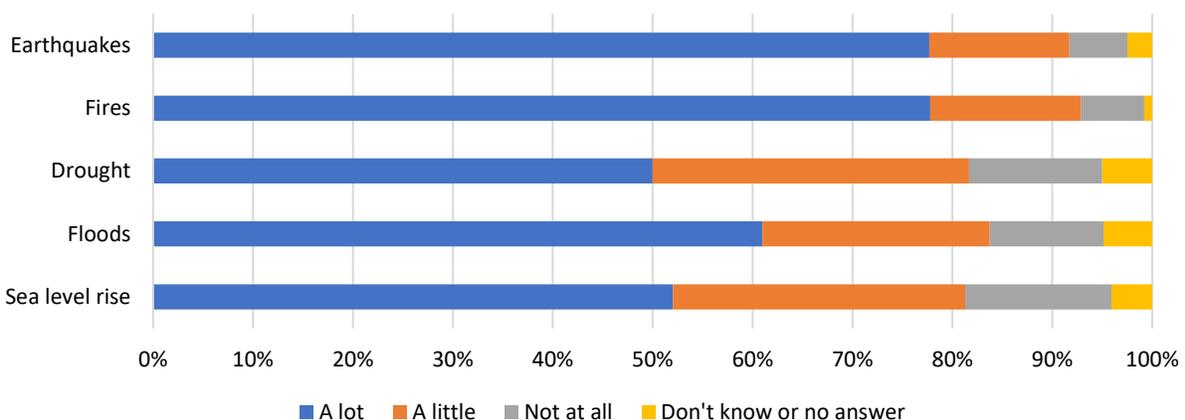
What do you think can be done to improve safety in the Canal at night? (participants chose up to 2, n=132)



Hazards

The survey asked, “*How much do you worry about these potential dangers in the community?*” The highest responses were for fires (93% somewhat to a lot) and earthquakes (92% somewhat to a lot). However, all five major hazard areas listed were named as concerns by at least 80% of respondents.

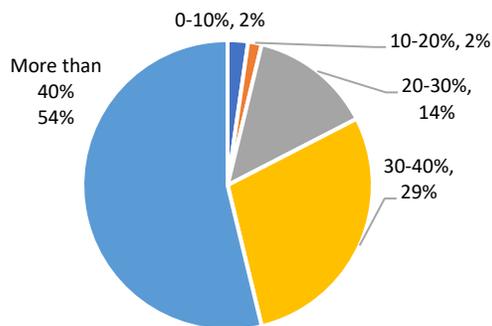
How much do you worry about the following? (n=129)



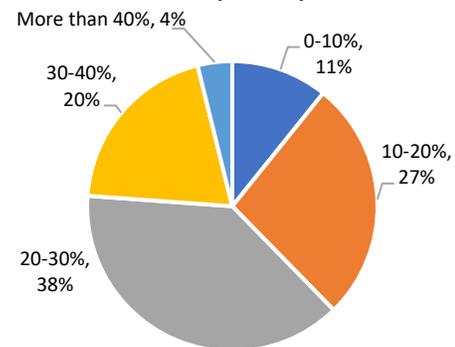
Housing

Concerns about displacement, rising rents, overcrowding, and housing cost burdens were expressed throughout the survey. Housing was described by many as the most urgent and threatening issue for the community. About 40% reported that their rents had doubled in the past five years. Over half of the respondents paid more than 40% of their incomes on rent. Respondents were asked what percentage of their incomes would seem “fair” to allocate—the most frequently selected choice was 20-30%. The survey also showed strong support for rent control and construction of new low-income housing,

What percentage of your income goes to rent? (n=132)



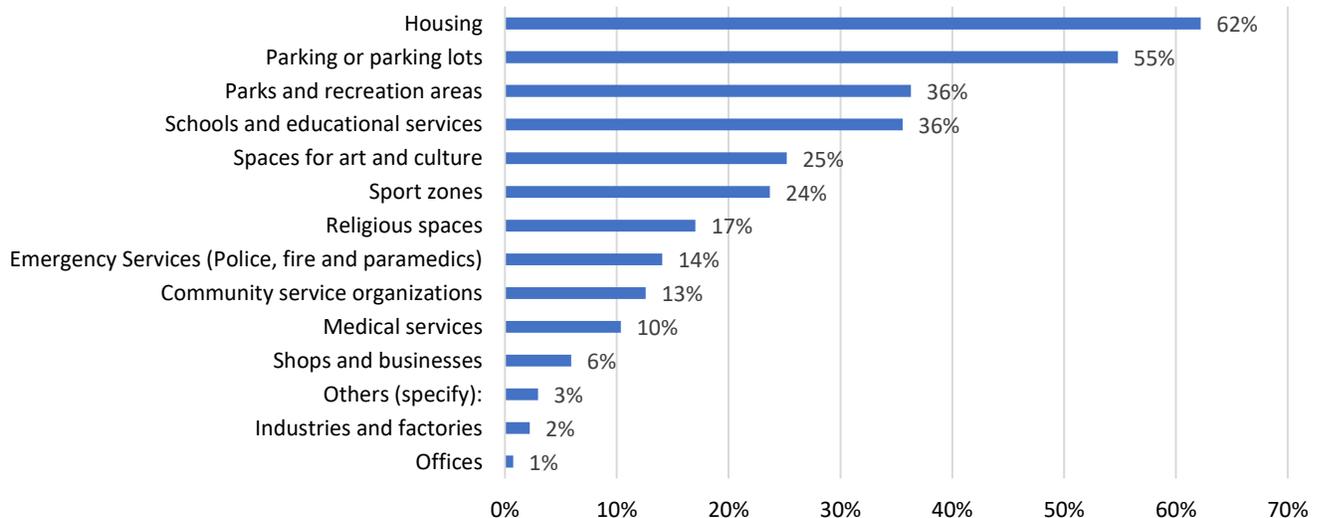
What percentage of your income would seem fair to allocate for rent (n=130)



Land Use

Respondents were asked “What should be built on empty lots in the community?” A list of uses was provided and respondents were asked to pick their top three choices. As the chart below indicates, there is strong support for housing. The percentage may be low due to the strongly competing options and may not fully reflect the deep need and urgency for housing. Especially notable in the responses is the support for parking. Industry was mentioned by only 2%, of the respondents and shops and business were mentioned by only 6%.

What should be built in the empty lots of the Canal and its surroundings? (participants were able to pick up to 3, n=135)

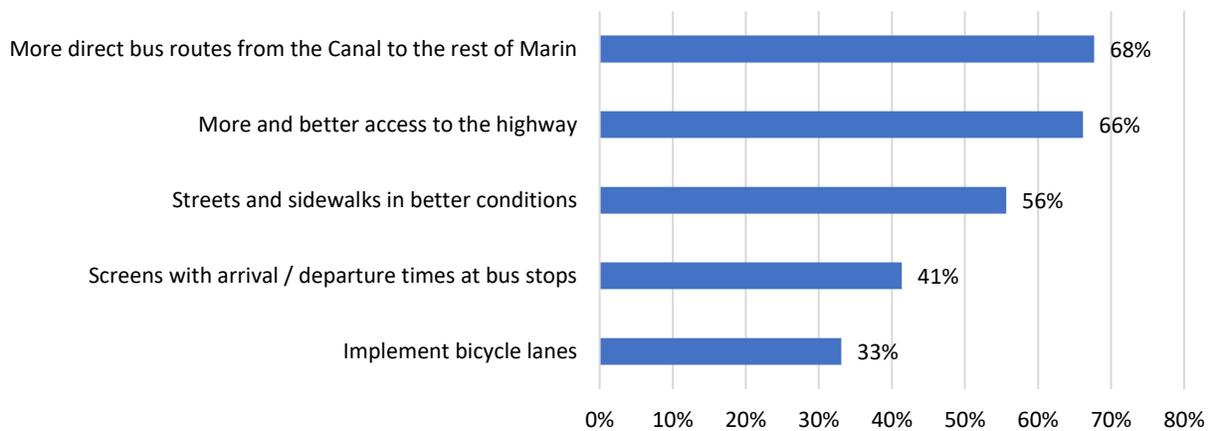


Transportation

Respondents were asked about their mode of travel during the commute hour. Some 70% use a car as their principal mode of travel. About 20% use the bus. Many of the qualitative responses addressed transit deficiencies, such as overcrowded buses and poorly timed transfers.

the inefficiency of bus service. 82% described driving in the Canal during rush hour as “hard” to “very hard.” Respondents were asked what transportation changes they would like to see in the future. As the chart below indicates, direct bus service to other Marin cities was the top answer, closely followed by more and better highway access.

What would be a change you would like to see regarding transportation? (participants chose up to 3, n=133)



Parking

The problem of parking in the Canal is complex and long standing. It remains one of the top concerns that the community shares widely, along with housing. The survey asked respondents, “*What is the solution to the parking problem?*” offering a series of options from which they were to choose their top 4. Building a parking structure was a clear top choice, selected by more than three out of four respondents. Allowing overnight parking on private lots followed at 58% of all respondents. “Other” responses including limiting car ownership, eliminating cars, and picking up old cars.

In your opinion, what is the solution to the problem of parking in the Canal? (participants chose up to 2, n=133)

