



Engaging Citizens in Community Decisions

Valley Center Citizen Survey

Prepared by

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September 2019

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Section 1. Commitment to Community

Part 1: The Public Interest

It is becoming increasingly important that local governments and the communities they serve find better ways of engaging citizens in the decisions that will ultimately determine their wellbeing and future. These survey results are an important avenue for beginning a dialogue with citizens to better understand their values and priorities. It is not only important that citizens be engaged, but the format for citizen engagement is also crucial. We are all driven by self-interest, but in an age of growing challenges and limited resources it is critical that we develop our capacity to balance self-interest and community wellbeing. This is difficult when our daily lives are flooded with new and growing challenges. In response, we instinctively become increasingly concerned with our personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of our families at the expense of the broader community and the public interest. Disregard for the public interest contributes to community decline and communities become unsustainable.

Some of the measures used in this section have been used for more than 25 years and have demonstrated utility in providing clues about sustainability and community capacity. When community leaders engage citizens in important public investment decisions through dialogue focused on the public interest and demonstrate that they can be trusted to invest accordingly, citizens are more likely to become willing contributors to community wellbeing.

The Public Interest: Balancing Community and Self-Interest

This survey encourages citizens to respond to items in ways that they feel are consistent with community wellbeing. The items in Table 1-1 directly address the paradoxical tension between community and self-interest that resides in all of us. Our behavior is driven by a combination of how we see ourselves and the anticipated behavior on the part of fellow residents. In other words, if a person recognizes that they have a responsibility to the broader community and for advancing the public interest they will behave differently than a person focused more narrowly on self-interest. Consistent with this understanding, the first item in Table 1-1 indicates that nearly two-thirds (61.3%) of the respondents report that they are willing to put community interests

above personal interest. In sharp contrast, only about a third (33.0%) expect similar behavior on the part of most people. In other words, two-thirds are favorably predisposed to behave in ways consistent with the wellbeing of community but some will fail to act on this predisposition because they feel that their fellow citizens may not do their part to advance community wellbeing. Interestingly, the results associated with commitment to community did not vary significantly based on demographics (such as age, income, marital status, gender). In other words, the community is fairly homogeneous based on this initial assessment of commitment to the public interest.

Table 1-1
Section 1. Commitment to Community
Part 1: The Public Interest

Support for Advancing the Public Interest	Percentages			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Balancing Community and Self-Interest				
I am willing to put community interests above personal interests	07.0	31.0	50.2	11.1
Most people are willing to put community interests above personal interests	11.8	55.2	31.4	01.6
Balancing the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations				
I am willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center	08.0	30.1	54.6	07.2
Most residents are willing make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center	11.9	50.7	35.6	01.8
Range of N= 509-512; Standardized Cronbach's Alpha= .841				

The Public Interest: Balancing the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations

The second set of measures discussed in this section (Table 1-1) focus on intergenerational responsibility. The future of the community and the advancement of the public interest depends in part on investments that reflect balanced concern for the wellbeing of current and future generations. Consistent with previous research, citizens tend to be particularly concerned about the wellbeing of future generations and, accordingly, are willing to make sacrifices if they believe these sacrifices will have a positive influence on the future generations. Findings reported in Table 1-1 indicate that

approximately two-thirds (61.8%) of the respondents report a willingness to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center. Households earning \$100,000 or more annually (68.0%) are more likely to indicate a willingness to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center compared to those earning between \$40,000 and \$59,999 (50.6%). In sharp contrast, slightly more than a third (37.4%) of the respondents have confidence that most residents are willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center. Once again, actual behavior is driven by a mixture of how we see ourselves in combination with the behavior we expect from others. Those who are willing to sacrifice to advance the wellbeing of future generations and who expect similar behavior on the part of others are more likely to act on their predisposition.

Public Interest Index and Classification of Respondents

The scores on the items reported in Table 1-1 (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree) have been combined to form an index (overall score). Each person responding to all four items has been assigned a **Public Interest Index** score between 4 and 16 and these summated scores have been used to characterize levels of commitment to the public interest (Weak= 4-8, Moderate= 9-10, Strong= 11-12, Very Strong= 13-16). Respondents registering “Strong” and “Very Strong” levels of commitment to the public interest are particularly likely to behave in ways consistent with the wellbeing of the community. Conversely, those with a “Weak” commitment are more likely to make demands on government based on self-interest or personal concerns at the expense of the broader community. Conversely, households registering “Strong” or “Very Strong” levels of commitment to the public interest are more likely to work with city government, community organizations and their fellow residents to strengthen Valley Center as a community. These public interest characterizations will be used throughout the report to provide a better understanding of the community in relationship to public policy.

Section 1. Commitment to Community

Part 2: Community of Choice

Part 2 of Section 1 shifts from measurements of commitment to the public interest to assessments of whether Valley Center is a “Community of Choice.” In other words, Part 2 assesses the extent to which residents have elected to live in Valley Center based on attributes of the community generally related to quality of life as opposed to more pragmatic concerns, such as proximity to employment.

Importance of Friends and Family

There are many attributes or assets that contribute to or detract from the attractiveness of a community. The importance of each of these attributes tends to vary between households and are dynamic in nature, tending to change as the needs and concerns of the household change. Arguably, one of the most important contributors to quality of life and determinants of the attractiveness of a particular community hinges on the strength of social connections. In the age of the internet, individuals are at greater risk of becoming socially isolated. Therefore, communities with strong bonds including friends and family are an important contributor to a place becoming a community of choice. Households tend to be drawn to and commit to living in a community with strong social connections. More than three-quarters of the respondents (Table 1-2, 76.6%) feel that most people choose to live in Valley Center because of connections to friends and family. Friends and family represent a powerful force or anchor to the community of Valley Center. Interestingly, single respondents (86.6%) are somewhat more likely than married (73.4%) to indicate the importance of connections with friends or family. Respondents registering a very strong (85.7%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely than those with a weak (68.9%) commitment to agree that most people choose to live in Valley Center because of connections to friends and family.

Recruit New Residents

Previous findings provide evidence that Valley Center’s residents are committed to the community and represent a solid base of support. However, strong social connections does not necessarily mean that residents see growth in a positive light and actively encourage others to consider making Valley Center their home. A surprisingly large percentage (84.9%) of responding residents report that they encourage people to

consider Valley Center as a place of residence. Younger groups of citizens, those who are 35 years of age and younger (94.2%) and those between the ages of 36 and 45 years of age (91.7%) are especially likely to encourage people to consider Valley Center as a place of residence. Respondents registering the strongest commitment (95.2%) to the public interest are particularly likely to recruit people to consider Valley Center as a place of residents compared to those with the weakest commitment (74.8%) to the public interest.

Table 1-2
Section 1. Commitment to Community
Part 2: Community of Choice

Attributes of Community of Choice	Percentages			
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most people choose to live in Valley Center because of connections to friends and family	02.3	21.2	58.5	18.1
I encourage people to consider Valley Center as a place of residence	02.3	12.8	52.0	32.9
Valley Center makes newcomers feel welcome	07.2	24.0	56.1	12.8
Valley Center is a good place to raise a family	00.4	03.2	44.0	52.4
I expect to be living in Valley Center 5 years from now	03.5	07.7	39.6	49.2

Range of N= 517-529

Welcome Newcomers

Recruitment increases the potential for community vibrancy and growth, but treatment of newcomers will have much to do with whether Valley Center is considered an attractive place to live. In some cases, the more established residents of a community are not particularly welcoming to outsiders. Long-time residents sometimes feel that they are more invested in community wellbeing and that newcomers do not know or appreciate the history of the community and the sacrifices that have been made. Two-thirds (68.9%) of the respondents report that Valley Center makes newcomers feel welcome. Respondents registering strong (85.9%) or very strong (83.3%) commitments to the public interest are particularly likely to feel that Valley

Center makes newcomers feel welcome compared to those with the weakest (54.4%) level of commitment.

Good Place to Raise a Family

The suitability of a community to raise a family is a particularly important community attribute from the perspective of parents and grandparents. Nobody wants to raise a family in a place that is inhospitable or an environment that is in some important way inconsistent with the development of their children. Consistent with this understanding, a convincing 96.4 percent of the responding residents characterized Valley Center as a good place to raise a family. One hundred percent of those registering strong or very strong commitments to the public interest reported that Valley Center is a good place to raise a family.

Likely to Move

The final item discussed in Section 1-2 (Table 1-2) focuses on the extent to which the resident has a long-term commitment to the community. Those who expect to move sometime in the immediate future are naturally going to disinvest in the community they are living in and to adjust their focus on expectations as they relate to their future home. Nearly 90 percent (88.8%) of the respondents reported that they expect to be living in Valley Center five years from now. Households 35 years of age and younger (95.6%) are the most likely to report that they expect to be living in Valley Center five years from now and those between 54 and 64 years of age are the least likely (81.1%) to expect to be living in Valley Center five years from now. Respondents with the weakest commitment (78.4%) to the public interest are the least likely of any public interest classification to indicate that they expect to be living in Valley Center five years from now.

Section 2. Demonstrated Trust: Approval of Previous Investments

Generally speaking, citizens would like more involvement with the decisions of city government but meaningful citizen engagement is challenging for a number of reasons. For example, citizens often lack the information foundation necessary for meaningful participation. Legitimate citizen participation in the decisions of government

requires that citizens have a reasonable understanding of how city government is “investing” tax dollars and that they can trust that government listens to citizens and acts on the will of the community. Citizens want to know that they can trust government to invest, rather than simply spend, public dollars. Building trust between citizens and government involves demonstrations of how tax dollars have been invested. Consistent with demonstrations of trust, citizens were asked to review a list of capital investments and to provide city government feedback about which investments meet their approval for how tax dollars have been invested, based on what they feel is best for the community. Table 2 lists these capital investments in descending order based on their approval rating. Previous research indicates that there is a strong relationship between demonstrated trust, citizen commitment to the public interest and willingness to pay taxes. Although the exact nature of the relationship between demonstrated trust and commitment to the public interest is not fully understood, it is safe to say that they interact in reinforcing ways. In other words, when local government demonstrates to citizens that it can be trusted to invest public dollars it simultaneously strengthens commitment to the public interest.

Table 2
Section 2. Demonstrated Trust: Approval of Previous Investments

Support for Previous Investments	Percentages			
	Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Approve	Strongly Approve
Meridian Avenue/Ford Street stormwater and street improvements	03.7	03.7	40.2	52.3
Library and Community Center	03.9	05.8	42.8	47.5
Resurfacing of Meridian Avenue (between the railroad line and 69 th Street)	02.4	08.0	53.2	36.4
Reconstruction of 5 th Street (between the floodway and Broadway)	05.4	09.0	43.5	42.2
Construction of a new community dog park	23.4	26.9	36.5	13.2

Range of N= 535-539 Cronbach's Alpha for Demonstrated Trust= .735

The first two items reported in Table 2 indicate that more than 90 percent of the responding citizens indicate that they support the Meridian Avenue/Ford Street stormwater and street improvements (92.5%) and the Library and Community Center (90.3%). The resurfacing of Meridian Avenue (89.6%) and the reconstruction of Fifth Street (85.7%) are also strongly supported capital investments. About half (49.7%) of the responding citizens indicated support for the construction of the new Community Dog Park.

The scores for all five items (1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve) reported in Table 2 are summed to form an index that characterizes strength of Demonstrated Trust for each citizen that responded to all the items reported in Table 2 (Weak=5-12, Moderate=13-14, Strong=15-17, Very Strong=18-20). These Demonstrated Trust characterizations will be used throughout the remainder of the report to better understand how strength of Demonstrated Trust relates to a variety of investment concerns.

Section 3. Investment

Part 1. Support for Change/Growth

Part 1 of the third section assesses the change orientation of Valley Center residents. Some residents embrace change and are more likely to view growth as an important contributor to quality of life. Others move to communities like Valley Center to avoid the annoyances and the concerns associated with larger cities and consequently, are more resistant to economic development or any policy that promotes growth. This section asks respondents to assess the truthfulness of statements regarding attitudes toward investment and its impact on the long-term wellbeing of the community. Part 1 of Section 3 provides insight about the overall growth orientation of residents. Part 2 focuses more specifically on citizen support for a selected investment.

Preserve Small-Town Atmosphere

More than four-fifths (Table 3-1, 82.1%) of the respondents indicate that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that focus on preserving the small-town atmosphere. A superficial interpretation of this finding would seem to indicate considerable resistance to growth. A more realistic

interpretation provides insight about the extent to which the residents of the community are “on the bubble” between support for growth and maintaining a “small-town” atmosphere. Previous research indicates that it is possible to support growth and at the same time consider a “small-town” atmosphere desirable. For example, a recent study associated with Project Wichita found that many area residents would like to see progress and growth but at the same time want to preserve a “small-town” atmosphere. What constitutes “small-town” has different meanings contingent on the community being studied. In any case, it is not unusual for residents of communities like Valley Center to carry conflicting values as they relate to growth.

Support Population Growth

The next item presented in Table 3-1 uses a more direct approach to assess public support for policy that promotes growth. Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of the responding citizens indicated that it is probably or definitely true that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that encourage population growth. Respondent registering strong (79.6%) or very strong (71.4%) commitments to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak commitments (53.5%) to define investments that encourage population growth as a positive contributor to the long-term wellbeing of community. Previous research indicates that commitment to the public interest and demonstrated trust interact in important ways. Trust characterizations as they are presented here are an assessment of the extent to which residents approve of how government in Valley Center is investing public dollars in regards to consistency with the wellbeing of the community. Respondents registering the strongest level (72.4%) of trust of government are much more likely than those registering weak levels of trust (46.5%) to feel that the long-term wellbeing of the community is advanced when public investments are used to encourage population growth.

Support Business Growth

Nearly 90 percent (88.9%) of the responding citizens report that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that encourage business investment. Citizens registering a very strong (97.7%) commitment to the public interest are more likely than those with a weak commitment (82.4%) to feel that

community wellbeing is advanced through investments that encourage business investment. Similarly, those registering the strongest levels of trust of local government (94.5%) are more likely than those registering the weakest levels (74.2%) of trust to see actions that encourage business investment in a positive light.

Table 3-1
Section 3. Investment
Part 1. Support for Change/Growth

“The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that....”	Percentages			
	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
Limit Change				
...focus on preserving our small town atmosphere	03.1	14.8	39.9	42.2
Embrace Change/Growth				
...encourage population growth	07.8	28.1	47.5	16.7
...encourage business investment	02.1	09.0	48.1	40.8

Range of N= 516-525

Section 3. Investment
Part 2. Support for Investment Options

The discussion in Part 2 of Section 3 moves from general growth orientations to specific investment options and the extent to which each option will best advance the long-term wellbeing of the community from the perspective of Valley Center residents.

Basic Infrastructure

The first item (Table 3-2) examines support for investment in basic infrastructure. Nearly 94 percent (93.5%) of the respondents indicated support for investments that focus on the basics such as street and road improvement to improve the long-term wellbeing of the community. It is noteworthy that support for investment in basic infrastructure is stronger than any other investment option. Households 35 years of age and younger (85.5%) are somewhat less likely than those 65 years of age and older (95.9%) to support an investment strategy that focuses on the basics such as street and road improvements. Respondents registering very strong (98.6%) levels of trust of

government are more likely than those with weak (88.0%) trust levels to support investments focused on basic infrastructure to improve the long-term wellbeing of the community.

Recreation Options for Families

The second subdivision in Part 2 of Section 3 assesses support for investments in a variety of features generally intended to improve quality of life. Eighty-five percent (85.1%) of the respondents support investments to improve recreation options for families because they contribute to the long-term wellbeing of the community.

Consistent with self-interest, individuals 35 years of age and younger (97.5%) are more likely than those 65 years of age and older (79.7%) to indicate that investments to improve recreation options for families contribute to the long-term wellbeing of the community. Individuals with a very strong (95.2%) commitment to the public interest are much more likely than those with a weak commitment (74.7%) to support investment to improve recreation options for families to improve the long-term wellbeing of the community. Similarly, those registering very strong (94.5%) levels of trust of government are much more likely than those with weak levels of trust (63.8) to support investment to improve recreation options for families.

Residential and Long-Term Care for Seniors

There is concern that older Valley Center residents who no longer wish to or are no longer capable of living in a single-family residence may be forced to move from Valley Center to find suitable long-term care facilities elsewhere. Nearly three-quarters (73.8%) of the respondents indicate that the long-term wellbeing of the community can be improved by encouraging investment in residential and long-term care facilities for seniors. Consistent with expectations, the oldest class of respondents (83.6%) are much more likely than the youngest respondents (53.6%) to support investment in long-term care facilities. Those registering strong (83.9%) or very strong (78.6%) commitments to the public interest are more supportive of investment in long-term care facilities for seniors compared to those with weak (62.7%) commitments. Similarly, those registering very strong (81.9%) levels of trust of government are much likely that those recording weak (55.1%) levels of trust to support actions that encourage investment in residential and long-term care facilities for seniors.

Table 3-2
Section 3. Investment
Part 2. Support for Investment Options

“The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that....”	Percentages			
	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
Type of Investment: Basic Infrastructure				
...focus on the basics such as street and road improvements	01.0	05.3	48.4	45.1
Type of Investment: Quality of Life Improvements				
...improve recreation options for families	02.3	12.6	51.7	33.4
...encourage investment in residential and long-term care facilities for seniors	04.6	21.6	50.1	23.7
...improve options for grocery shopping	02.5	08.1	24.6	64.8
...improve pharmacy options	03.3	16.4	34.4	45.9
Type of Investment: Creating a Sense of Place				
...improve the visual appearance of the community	02.5	13.0	47.8	36.8
...promote downtown shopping and entertainment district	05.4	17.6	47.4	29.6
...create opportunities for family dining downtown*	04.8	09.5	42.2	43.5

Range of N= 315*-528

Grocery Shopping Options

After the closing of Leeker’s Family Foods, Valley Center residents feel that their grocery shopping options are too limited. Consistent with this concern, nearly 90 percent (89.4%) of the responding residents report that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that improve options for grocery shopping. Those registering very strong (97.6%) commitments to the public interest are particularly interested in improving grocery shopping options, compared to those with weak (84.0%) commitments to the public interest. Much as expected, those registering very strong (93.7%) levels of trust of government are more likely than residents with weak (72.0%) levels of trust to support investments to improve options for grocery shopping.

Pharmacy Options

The final item assessed in this segment of the research focuses on the extent to which current pharmacy options in Valley Center are adequate. Four-fifths (80.3%) of the responding residents feel that the long-term wellbeing of the community could be improved through investments that improve pharmacy options. Residents who are most strongly (83.4%) committed to the public interest are somewhat more supportive of improved pharmacy options compared to those recording the weakest level of commitment (77.9%). Those registering very strong (85.2%) levels of trust of city government are more likely to support improved pharmacy options compared to those with weak (67.2%) levels of trust in local government.

Section 3. Investment

Part 3. Support for Creating a Sense of Place

Place-based economic development is a strategy that has been growing in popularity in communities throughout the United States. Place-based economic development is built on the assumption that the development of a talented labor pool has much to do with attracting business investment and that the attraction and retention of this labor pool is driven by high quality of life. Quality of life, particularly on the part of the younger members of the labor pool, is linked to the creation of a place where shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities are concentrated in ways that create a sense of vibrancy and opportunities to socialize. Wichita has and continues to invest in ways that create this sense of place in and around the central business district in downtown Wichita. Wichita State University, in combination with local government and private business collaborations, is creating a sense of place on and in the areas surrounding its campus.

The question is, should Valley Center use its resources to develop a more attractive place downtown? Or would the community be smarter to use proximity to Wichita to draw the labor force to the general area and use its resources to make the community more attractive for housing investment? Some area residents are willing to venture into more congested parts of the urban area for employment but prefer to retreat to a more peaceful living environment at night and on weekends. Other

residents would prefer to stay in Valley Center if it were more vibrant and had more amenities.

Visual Appearance of the Community

More than four-fifths (84.6%) of the responding residents feel that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that improve the visual appearance of the community. Households that are very strongly (92.9%) committed to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak commitments (73.7%) to support improvements to the visual appearance of the community. Nearly 95 percent (94.4%) of respondents registering the strongest levels of trust in Valley Center city government support investment that improves the visual appearance of the community compared to about 70 percent (70.7%) of those registering the weakest level of trust.

Downtown Shopping and Entertainment District: Place-Based Development

Approximately three-quarters (77.0%) of the responding residents reported that the long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that promote downtown shopping and entertainment. Females (83.1%) are more supportive than males (71.0%) of investments that promote downtown shopping and entertainment. Those who are very strongly (95.2%) committed to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak (61.5%) commitments to support investment that promotes a downtown shopping and entertainment district. Similarly, those with very strong levels of trust (87.6%) are much more likely than those registering the lowest levels of trust (61.5%) to support investment that promotes a downtown shopping and entertainment district.

Family Dining Downtown: Place-Based Development

The final item in Section 3 explores the extent to which residents feel that the long-term wellbeing of Valley Center can best be improved through investments that create opportunities for family dining downtown. It should be noted that there is a lower response to this item compared to other items in Section 3 as a result of an error which included the omission of the numbers associated with the item attributes. In any case, 315 individuals responded to this item and nearly 86 percent (85.7%) supported investment that create opportunities for dining downtown. Females (90.8%) are more

supportive than males (80.4%) of investments that create opportunities for family dining downtown. Households 35 (95.9%) years of age and younger are particularly supportive of investments that create opportunities for family dining downtown compared to those 65 (81.1%) years of age and older. Interestingly, there are no important differences based on commitment to the public interest or trust in city government.

Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions: Municipal Swimming Pool and Recycling

Valley Center is facing two investment decisions that must be made immediately and citizen input on these decisions is particularly important. The first of these decisions relates to a capital investment in a municipal swimming pool. Swimming pools are not only expensive to build but also create an ongoing operating expense. Unfortunately, operation expenses associated with municipal pools tend to increase over time. Consequently, Valley Center city government needs a better understanding of the extent to which residents value a municipal swimming pool.

Option 1: Eliminate Swimming Pool

The first option involves closing the municipal swimming pool to eliminate ongoing maintenance expenses and avoid a new capital investment. Citizen feedback clearly indicates that the municipal pool closure option is unacceptable. Approximately one-tenth (Table 4-1, 11.3%) of the respondents feel that the wellbeing of the community would be advanced and consequently recommend closing the pool.

Option 2: Renovate Current Swimming Pool

The second option is to renovate the current pool and continue operation. More than two-thirds (69.3%) of the responding residents recommended renovation of the current pool and felt that this option is consistent with the wellbeing of the community. Respondents 35 years of age and younger (84.1%) are particularly supportive of swimming pool renovation while those between 56 and 64 (55.5%) are less supportive of this option. Households that currently have schoolchildren attending Valley Center schools (75.0%) are more supportive of the swimming renovation option compared to those who do not (66.3%).

Table 4-1
Section 4. Immediate Investment Decisions: Municipal Pool and Recycling

“For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we……”	Percentages			
	Definitely Unacceptable	Probably Unacceptable	Probably Acceptable	Definitely Acceptable
Support for Pool Related Investments				
...close the pool to eliminate maintenance expenses	67.1	21.5	07.0	04.3
...invest in a major renovation of the current pool	11.5	19.3	46.3	23.0
...invest in a new pool	17.5	22.8	37.3	22.4
...invest in a new pool and waterpark	21.2	25.0	27.0	26.8
Support for Recycling				
...continue to recycle at the individual household level and increase the collection fee	30.2	23.1	32.2	14.5
Range of N= 509-537				

It is one thing to support pool renovation but support does not necessarily mean willingness to pay for an investment. The evidence found in Table 4-2 indicates that willingness to pay increased taxes is almost as strong as general support with three-fifths (60.3%) of the responding residents indicating some level of willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to fund municipal renovation. Those who have children in Valley Center schools (70.8%) are particularly willing to pay, while those who do not are less likely to indicate a willingness to pay (56.5%). Those registering the weakest levels of trust (44.8%) are the least likely to indicate a willingness to pay for pool renovation compared to all stronger levels of trust of government.

Option 3: Build New Swimming Pool

The third option involves the construction of a new municipal pool. Three-fifths (59.7%) of the responding residents indicate that they feel that an investment in a new municipal pool is consistent with the wellbeing of the community. Those who have children attending Valley Center schools (71.8%) are more likely than those who do not (55.6%) to support construction of a new municipal pool. Those registering the strongest (71.8%) commitment to the public interest are more likely to support the

construction of a new pool compared to those with weak (52.5%) with weak commitments. Those registering very strong (71.2%) levels of trust of city government are much more likely than those with weak (33.9%) trust levels to support new pool construction.

Approximately half (48.3%) of the responding residents indicate they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for the construction of a new pool. Three-fifths (60.0%) of the respondents 35 years of age and younger indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes in support of new pool construction compared to approximately two-fifths (41.2%) between the ages of 56 and 64. Respondents who have children in the Valley Center schools (65.9%) are much more likely than those who do not (42.9%) to report a willingness to pay increased taxes in support of the construction of a new pool. Residents with a very strong commitment to the public interest (66.6%) are much more likely than those with weak commitments (36.7%) to indicate willingness to pay for a new pool. Similarly, residents registering very strong (59.6%) levels of trust of Valley Center government are much more likely than those with weak (23.8%) levels of trust to report a willingness to pay increased taxes to support the construction of a new municipal pool.

Table 4-2
Section 4. Community Investment Priorities
Immediate Investment Decisions: Swimming Pool and Recycling

“I’m willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for.....”	Percentages			
	Definitely Not Willing to Pay	Probably Not Willing To Pay	Probably Willing to Pay	Definitely Willing to Pay
Types of Investment: Swimming Pool				
...major improvements of the current city pool	20.1	19.7	40.2	20.1
...construction of a new city pool	26.1	24.6	30.8	18.5
...construction of a new city pool and waterpark	31.0	24.1	24.6	20.3
Type of Investment: Recycling				
...continue recycling at the individual household level	25.4	22.6	33.4	18.7

Range of N= 523-540

Option 4: Build New Pool and Waterpark

Slightly more than half (53.8%) of the respondents feel that it is consistent with community wellbeing and accordingly, recommend investment in a new swimming pool and waterpark. Females (59.1%) are more likely than males (48.5%) to support investment in a new pool and waterpark. Households with children in Valley Center schools (61.2%) are more likely to support a new pool and waterpark compared to those who do not (50.5%). Residents registering very strong (68.3%) commitments to the public interest are more likely than those with weak commitments (50.4%) to support investment in a new pool and waterpark. Individuals reporting the strongest (64.8%) levels of trust in city government are much more likely to support investment in a new pool and waterpark compared to those registering weak (39.0%) levels of trust.

Approximately 45 percent (44.9%) of the responding residents indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes in support of investment in a new pool and waterpark. Those with children in Valley Center schools (57.8%) are more likely than those who do not (39.4%) to indicate a willingness to pay for an investment in a new pool and waterpark. Those who are very strongly committed to the public interest (61.9%) are much more likely to report a willingness to pay increased taxes to support investment in a new pool and water park compared to those with weak (37.1%) commitments. Residents registering the strongest levels (55.9%) of trust of city government are much more likely than those registering weak (30.0%) levels of trust to report a willingness to pay increased taxes in support of an investment in a new municipal swimming pool and waterpark.

Recycling

The final immediate investment decision relates to recycling and rising costs. Approximately half (46.7%) recommend that Valley Center continue to recycle at the individual household level and support an increased collection fee for the wellbeing of the community. Individuals 35 years of age and younger (55.7%) are more likely than those between the ages of 56 and 64 (37.7%) to support continued recycling at the individual household level and increase the collection fee. Those registering very high (57.2%) levels of trust of city government are much more likely than those with the lowest (16.4%) trust levels of local government to recommend continuing recycling.

Approximately half (52.1%) of the responding residents indicated that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for continued recycling at the individual level. Citizens registering very strong (61.2%) trust of Valley Center city government are particularly likely to be willing to pay increased taxes or fees to continue recycling at the individual household level.

Section 5. Community Investment Priorities

Willingness to Pay for Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements

Section 5 focuses on community investment priorities as defined by willingness to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for increased investment. The investments examined here range from basic infrastructure to investments that have more to do with advancing quality of life. Earlier sections provided a general feel for level of public support. This section adds to that understanding by establishing willingness to pay.

Type of Investment: Basic Infrastructure

The first item in this section (Table 5) establishes that three-fifths (60.3%) of the responding residents indicate that they would be willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc. Those registering strong (73.1%) and very strong (65.9%) commitments to the public interest are particularly willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of investment in water and sewer lines and improvements related to storm water drainage compared to those with a weak commitment (40.5%). Similarly, those with strong (72.1%) or very strong (69.9%) levels of trust in Valley Center government are much more likely than those with weak (20.3%) levels of trust to support increased taxes or fees to pay for a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc.

The second basic infrastructure item focuses on road surfaces and street improvements. Once again, three-fifths (60.3%) of the responding residents indicated that they would be willing to pay increased taxes or fees for more aggressive street improvements including road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc. Those who are most strongly (73.8%) committed to the public interest are much more willing, while those registering the weakest (42.6%) commitment are less likely to report

they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of street improvements. Those registering strong (73.0%) and very strong (68.7%) levels of trust of Valley Center city government are much more likely than those who are least (25.0%) trusting of government to be willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for street improvements.

Type of Investment: Quality of Life

Earlier assessments indicated strong support for actions that encourage investments that increase grocery and pharmacy options in Valley Center. The findings in this section provide insight about just how important these quality of life items really are. Nearly three-quarters (71.6%) of the responding residents indicated that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for incentives to encourage the development of grocery and pharmacy options. Households that make less than \$40,000 annually (84.8%) are particularly willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of improving grocery and pharmacy options. Individuals that are very trusting (77.6%) of Valley Center government are much more supportive of increased taxes or fees to improve grocery and pharmacy options compared to those registering the lowest (55.0%) level of trust.

Slightly less than half (47.7%) of the responding residents indicated that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for incentives to encourage the development of assisted living and long-term care facilities for seniors. Interestingly, two-thirds (68.5%) of the individuals living in households with an income less than \$40,000 indicate that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for incentives to promote senior living options. Individuals 65 years of age and older (64.2%) are much more willing than those 35 years of age and younger (30.4%) to pay increased taxes or fees in support of improved senior living options. Logically, age and income are interacting in important ways to define level of support for senior living. Individuals who are strongly (62.3%) or very strongly (53.7%) committed to the public interest are much more likely than those registering weak (31.0%) connections to the public interest to indicate a willingness to pay increased taxes or fees in support of senior living. Willingness to pay increased taxes or fees in support of senior living is directly related to strength of trust in Valley Center city government.

Type of Investment: Creating a Sense of Place Downtown

Slightly more than two-fifths (43.8%) indicated that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for incentives to promote the development of a downtown shopping and entertainment district. Females (50.2%) are more likely than males (37.1%) to indicate that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees in support of downtown development. Finally, individuals with very strong (57.1%) commitments to the public interest are much more likely than those with weak (21.8%) commitments to indicate that they are willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for incentives to promote the development of a downtown shopping and entertainment district.

**Table 5-1
Section 5. Community Investment Priorities
Basic Infrastructure and Quality of Life Improvements**

"I'm willing to pay increased taxes or fees to pay for....."	Percentages			
	Definitely Not Willing to Pay	Probably Not Willing To Pay	Probably Willing to Pay	Definitely Willing to Pay
Types of Investment: Basic Infrastructure				
...a more aggressive strategy for replacing water and sewer lines, storm water drainage improvements, etc.	12.4	27.3	48.2	12.1
...more aggressive street improvements including road surfaces, number of lanes, turn lanes, intersections, etc.	09.9	29.8	48.7	11.6
Types of Investment: Quality of Life				
...incentives to encourage the development of grocery and pharmacy options	10.4	18.0	36.8	34.8
...incentives to encourage the development of assisted living and long-term care facilities for seniors	15.8	36.5	35.8	11.9
Type of Investment: Creating a Sense of Place				
...incentives to promote the development of a downtown shopping and entertainment district	17.6	38.6	32.0	11.8

Range of N= 531-538

Appendix A

Profile of Respondents

Demographic Profile of Respondents						
			Frequency	Percent		
Race			Age			
Caucasian	489	95.0	Below 25	3	00.6	
African-American	1	00.2	25-35	67	13.0	
Hispanics	5	01.0	36-45	73	14.2	
Native American	7	01.4	46-55	88	17.1	
Other	13	02.5	56-64	100	19.5	
			65 and Above	183	35.6	
Gender			Household Income			
Males	229	45.3	Less Than \$20,000	19	04.0	
Females	276	54.7	\$20,000-\$39,999	73	15.2	
			\$40,000-\$59,999	85	17.7	
Property Ownership			\$60,000-\$79,999	97	20.2	
Own	499	96.0	\$80,000-\$99,999	75	15.6	
Rent	21		\$100,000 & Above	131	27.3	
Education			Marital Status			
Not High School Grad	4	00.8	Married	393	77.1	
High School Graduate	83	16.2	Single	117	22.9	
Some College	139	27.2				
College Graduate	163	31.9	Household Member Attends Valley Center Schools			
Some Graduate Study	35	06.8	Yes	143	27.9	
Graduate Degree	87	17.0	No	369	72.1	

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Valley Center: Involving Citizens in Strategic Decisions

Section 1. Connections to Community				
This section assesses the strength of the connections to Valley Center. Please circle the number that best describes your level of agreement with each of the following statements.				
Connections to Community	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
01. Most people choose to live in Valley Center because of connections to friends and family.....	1	2	3	4
02. Valley Center is a good place to raise a family.....	1	2	3	4
03. Valley Center makes newcomers feel welcome.....	1	2	3	4
04. I encourage people to consider Valley Center as a place of residence.....	1	2	3	4
05. I am willing to put community interests above personal interests	1	2	3	4
06. Most people are willing to put community interests above personal interests.....	1	2	3	4
07. I am willing to make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center.....	1	2	3	4
08. Most residents are willing make personal sacrifices to improve the future of Valley Center.....	1	2	3	4
09. I expect to be living in Valley Center 5 years from now.....	1	2	3	4

Section 2. Investment Strategies for Building a Better Community				
Some residents of Valley Center think that the community should take risks to promote growth. Others prefer the “small town” atmosphere and support limited change. Please indicate which actions you feel will make Valley Center a better place to live by circling the number that best describes the truthfulness of each of the following statements.				
“The long-term wellbeing of the community can best be improved through investments that....”	Definitely False	Probably False	Probably True	Definitely True
01. ...focus on the basics such as street and road improvements...	1	2	3	4
02. ...improve recreation options for families.....	1	2	3	4
03. ...encourage population growth.....	1	2	3	4
04. ...encourage business investment.....	1	2	3	4
05. ...improve the visual appearance of the community.....	1	2	3	4
06. ...promote downtown shopping and entertainment district....	1	2	3	4
07. ...create opportunities for family dining downtown.....	1	2	3	4
08. ...improve options for grocery shopping.....	1	2	3	4
09. ...improve pharmacy options.....	1	2	3	4
10. ...encourage investment in residential and long-term care facilities for seniors.....	1	2	3	4
11. ...focus on preserving our small town atmosphere.....	1	2	3	4

Valley Center: Involving Citizens in Strategic Decisions

Section 3. Specific Community Investment Decisions

We need your input on two community decisions and how best to use limited resources. First, the municipal swimming pool is getting old and maintenance costs are increasing. Second, rising recycling costs have forced a decision. **Circle the number** that best describes whether a particular option is acceptable.

“For the wellbeing of the community I recommend that we.....”

Options	Decision 1. Swimming Pool	Definitely Unacceptable	Probably Unacceptable	Probably Acceptable	Definitely Acceptable
01....close the pool to eliminate maintenance expenses...		1	2	3	4
02....invest in a major renovation of the current pool.....		1	2	3	4
03....invest in a new pool.....		1	2	3	4
04....invest in a new pool and waterpark.....		1	2	3	4
Options	Decision 2. Recycling	Definitely Unacceptable	Probably Unacceptable	Probably Acceptable	Definitely Acceptable
01....continue to recycle at the individual household level and increase the collection fee.....		1	2	3	4

Section 4. Approval of Previous Investments

We would like your feedback about which investments meet your approval for how your tax dollars have been invested based on what you feel is best for the community.

Please **circle the number** that best describes your level of approval of the following public investments:
1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve.

Approval of Previous Investments	Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Approve	Strongly Approve
01. Library and Community Center	1	2	3	4
02. Construction of a new community dog park	1	2	3	4
03. Meridian Avenue/Ford Street stormwater and street improvements	1	2	3	4
04. Resurfacing of Meridian Avenue (between the railroad line and 69 th Street)	1	2	3	4
05. Reconstruction of 5 th Street (between the floodway and Broadway)	1	2	3	4

Comments _____

