



Agenda Item # _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Montgomery and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Bruce Moe, Finance Director

DATE: September 2, 2008

SUBJECT: Award of Professional Services Contract to True North Research to Conduct the City's Biennial Resident Satisfaction Survey (\$22,920)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council award a contract to True North Research in the amount of \$22,920 to perform the City's biennial Resident Satisfaction Survey.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

Funds totaling \$30,000 are budgeted in FY 2008-2009 for the survey.

BACKGROUND:

In 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006, the City performed statistically valid resident satisfaction surveys. The results have been consistently outstanding, with the City receiving very high scores for overall satisfaction with our services. It was Council's intention that we perform this survey every two years to gauge our progress. Therefore, we have anticipated and budgeted for the fifth survey in the current fiscal year.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the survey is to determine our citizens' satisfaction with the breadth and quality of services we offer, and to measure those results over time in order to monitor our progress. It also provides us the opportunity gain input on current events, as well as give the residents another avenue to tell us what issues they find important.

For example, our most recent survey in 2006 indicated a continued high level of overall satisfaction. Additionally, the residents indicated several areas which are of high importance, including managing traffic congestion, enforcing animal control laws, enforcing zoning regulations/addressing mansionization, maintaining and repairing local streets and roads, protecting beaches and the ocean from pollution, and maintaining sewer and storm drain systems. This valuable survey input will help guide planning and policy setting.

The basic survey instrument we have utilized in prior years remains unchanged. The same basic set of questions will be used, augmented by four "current events" questions which will be

developed by staff and the consultant in the coming weeks (in the last survey, those questions addressed the wish list for the Community Facilities Strategic Plan).

Gathering statistically valid results requires the assistance of a firm experienced in performing surveys. For the 2004 survey, staff received ten proposals from qualified firms. After careful consideration, staff recommended that Council award a contract to True North Research. Staff made this recommendation based on a number of factors, including: True North's prior experience and familiarity with the City in performing past Manhattan Beach surveys for the City, as well as with the General Plan survey and a revenue feasibility survey; the firm's thorough understanding of the project; and the cost effectiveness of their proposal. As a result, staff recommends that Council award the contract for the 2008 survey to True North Research in the amount of \$22,920.

True North Research will conduct a telephone survey of four hundred residents, who will be selected utilizing the Random Digital Dial (RDD) sampling method. The RDD sample is drawn by determining the active telephone exchanges (prefixes such as 545) within our zip code, and then producing a random list of all active residential phone numbers in the area (both listed and unlisted). The sample will have a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ with a confidence level of 95%.

The actual survey work is scheduled to be performed between November 11th and 22nd, after the General Election but before the Thanksgiving holiday. The calls will take place between 5:30 PM and 9:00 PM weekdays, and 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekends.

The results of the survey are scheduled to be presented to the Council and Community on January 20, 2009.

Attachment:

A – True North Research Proposal



PROPOSAL TO DESIGN & CONDUCT A
COMMUNITY SATISFACTION STUDY

PRESENTED TO THE
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

AUGUST 2008

True North
RESEARCH

741 GARDEN VIEW COURT SUITE 208
ENCINITAS, CALIFORNIA 92024
PHONE 760.632.9900 FAX 760.632.9993
WEB WWW.TN-RESEARCH.COM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
Research Work Plan & Costs	1
Scope of Services	1
Time Line	2
Costs	2
About True North	3



RESEARCH WORK PLAN & COSTS

True North Research, Inc. (True North) is pleased to once again have the opportunity to partner with the City of Manhattan Beach to design and conduct a statistically reliable survey of residents. As in previous years, True North understands that Manhattan Beach is interested in measuring residents' perceptions of—and satisfaction with—municipal services, as well as comparing the results with the findings of similar surveys conducted in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006. Ultimately, the survey results and analyses will provide Council and staff with information that can be used to make sound, strategic decisions in a variety of areas, such as performance measurement, service improvements and enhancements, planning, educational outreach and budgeting.

Our past experiences working with the City on similar studies have been quite helpful in understanding the City's objectives and needs with respect to the upcoming survey, and we have crafted this summary description of the proposed work scope and associated costs accordingly. However, if we missed an important detail—or if other issues have arisen that should be factored into the study—please feel free to contact us (760.632.9900) and we'll be happy to revise this estimate.

SCOPE OF SERVICES The scope of services that we will perform for the City includes all tasks associated with designing and conducting the survey, as well as presenting the results. The scope is essentially identical to that performed in prior years and includes:

- Meet with City staff and representatives to discuss the research objectives, methodology, and potential challenges and issues surrounding the study.
- Develop a sampling plan that will produce data that is representative of adult residents in the City of Manhattan Beach.
- Develop a draft questionnaire for the City's review and make revisions as needed until all parties approve of the instrument.
- Pre-test the survey instrument to ensure its integrity.
- CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) program the finalized survey instrument to ensure accurate and reliable data collection using live telephone interviewers.
- Collect 400 quality telephone interviews according to a strict interviewing protocol.
- Provide City staff with web-based access to the survey results as data collection proceeds.
- Process the data, which includes conducting validity checks, cleaning, recoding, coding any open-end responses, and adjusting for strategic oversampling (if used) through a statistical procedure known as 'weighting'.
- Conduct significance tests (e.g., Mann-Whitney U test, independent samples t-tests and z-tests) to identify whether differences that are observed between the current survey results and the prior studies are statistically significant or likely due to chance associated with independently drawn samples.
- Analyze the survey results and prepare a thorough report on the findings, including a detailed question-by-question analysis, description of the methodology, an executive summary of the key findings and conclusions/recommendations, as well as a comprehensive set of crosstabulations showing how the answers varied by subgroups of respondents. The report will include extensive full-color graphics displaying the findings, a comparison of the

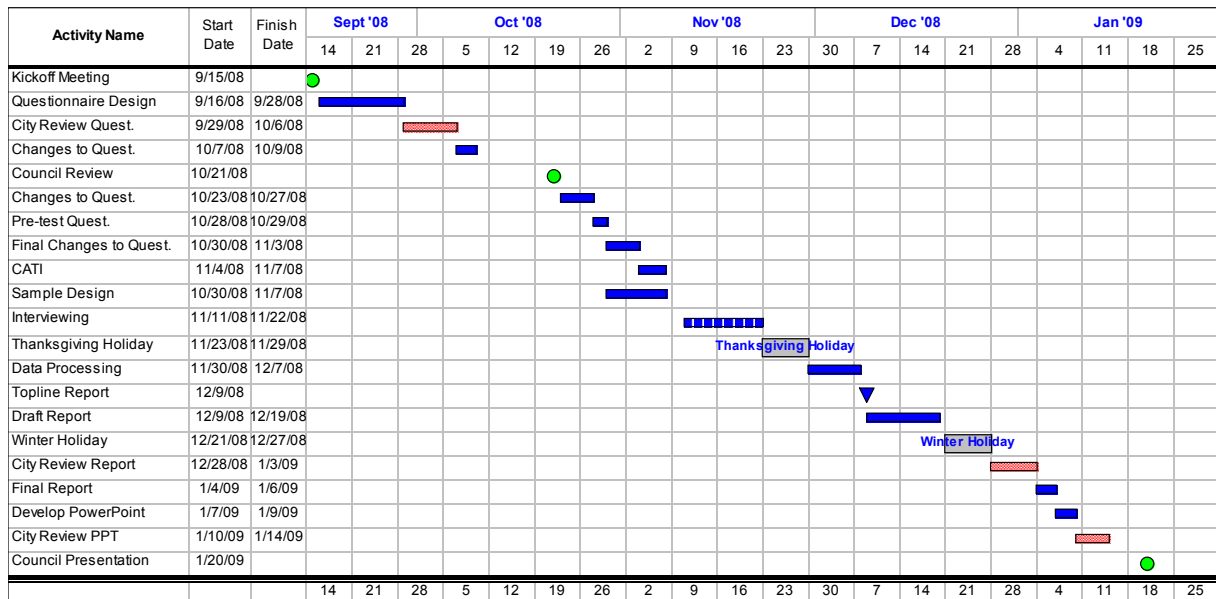
question results tracked from prior surveys, as well as insightful narrative discussion of the results and their implications.

- Finalize the report based on the City’s review and comments on the draft version.
- Prepare three full-color hard-copies of the final report, as well as an electronic copy to allow the City to post the report on its website and reproduce the report as needed.
- Prepare a PowerPoint presentation of the results and present the results to staff and representatives of the City of Manhattan Beach.
- Provide a CD that includes all data and deliverables associated with the study.

TIME LINE Figure 1 shows each of the tasks needed to complete the study, as well as the proposed start date and duration for each task. This time line takes into consideration the need to have Council approve the project contract in early September, a desire to avoid interviewing prior to the November 4 general election, as well as holiday schedules. We will be happy to adjust this schedule, as needed, to best meet the City’s needs.

For the reader’s reference, the green dots indicate project meetings that will involve City staff and/or representatives, whereas the red bars indicate periods where the City will be reviewing materials and deliverables. All other tasks are handled by True North without need for City staff or resources.

FIGURE 1 PROPOSED TIME LINE



COSTS The costs of data collection have increased more than 25% over the past three years—and nearly 40% over the past four years in the Los Angeles County markets. Naturally, this has led to the general increase in the costs associated with community surveys. Despite these trends, in 2006 we honored the same competitive pricing structure that we offered in 2004. Although some adjustment is now needed to reflect four consecutive years of cost increases, as a show of our appreciation for continuing to choose True North as the City’s research partner and for the positive references that the City has provided for our work, we are

offering a competitive pricing structure that is just 10% greater than that we originally offered in 2004. The fixed-fee costs for the 20 minute resident survey will be \$22,920—inclusive of all tasks, travel and expenses associated with the study.

ABOUT TRUE NORTH True North is a full-service survey research firm that is dedicated to providing public agencies with a clear understanding of the values, perceptions, priorities and concerns of their residents, businesses and customers. Through designing and implementing scientific surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews, as well as expert interpretation of the findings, True North helps its clients to move with confidence when making strategic decisions in a variety of areas—such as planning, policy evaluation, performance management, organizational development, establishing fiscal priorities, and developing effective public information campaigns.

If the ultimate goal of this study is to be able to make sound, strategic decisions based upon the data that is collected, it is critical that the data be collected according to rigorous methodological standards. Indeed, although it may be easy to conduct a 'survey', it is quite challenging to design and implement a survey that A) produces *valid*¹ and *reliable*² measures of the opinions and behaviors of interest, and B) produces data that is *representative*³ of the population of individuals that is the focus of a study. Only by satisfying both of these conditions will the proposed study produce data that is trustworthy and thus a sound basis for making decisions.

Designing and implementing custom survey research studies that adhere to rigorous methodological standards is both the purpose and the passion of True North Research. In addition to being recognized experts in survey research methodology,⁴ Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have also *personally* designed and conducted more research studies to assist cities in meeting their performance goals than any other individual researchers in the State. The advantage of working with True North is that this experience is particularly helpful not only in the design of the research, it also enables the team to provide reliable benchmarking information and meaningfully interpret (and provide context to) the results of the surveys. This includes the ability to compare the City's overall performance to those of other cities throughout the State and across the nation,⁵ if desired.

In addition to personally designing and conducting six prior surveys for the City of Manhattan Beach including community satisfaction surveys in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006, Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles of True North have designed and conducted over 200 similar studies for California

1. Validity refers to the degree to which a question actually measures the underlying attitude or construct that it was designed to measure. For example, asking people whether they own "stock" to measure their financial savings behavior is sufficiently ambiguous such that it has low validity. Research has shown that people in farming communities are more likely to interpret "stock" to mean livestock—not financial stocks.
2. Reliability refers to the degree to which the observed results for a survey question are free of measurement errors and thus accurately measure the true value among the survey participants.
3. In this context, representative refers to the degree to which the results found among the survey participants match what would have been found if all adults in the City participated in the survey. A probability-based sample free from the many possible sources of selection bias is the key to obtaining representative results.
4. For example, Dr. McLarney has served as an expert witness in survey research methodology for California legal cases, has published research methodologies in peer-reviewed academic journals, and on the basis of his research has been honored as a Visiting Scholar at U.C. Berkeley's Institute for Governmental Studies.
5. True North recently sponsored a national survey to gather reliable data on how residents view the performance of their local governments.

municipalities. Cities for which Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have personally designed and conducted survey research studies include the cities of Agoura Hills, Aliso Viejo, Anaheim, Azusa, Brea, Burbank, Campbell, Cerritos, Chino, Claremont, Clayton, Costa Mesa, Dana Point, El Cajon, Encinitas, Folsom, Fontana, Fremont, Gilroy, Glendale, Half Moon Bay, Hesperia, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Canada-Flintridge, Laguna Beach, Laguna Niguel, Lake Forest, La Mesa, Lathrop, La Verne, Lompoc, Long Beach, Los Gatos, Malibu, Manhattan Beach, Mission Viejo, Moorpark, Murrieta, Newport Beach, Norwalk, Oxnard, Palmdale, Pico Rivera, Port Hueneme, Rancho Palos Verdes, Rancho Santa Margarita, Redondo Beach, Riverside, Rocklin, San Carlos, San Clemente, San Diego, San Gabriel, San Jose, San Marino, Santa Clarita, Santa Monica, Temecula, Truckee, Upland, Ventura, WestLake Village, Watsonville, Whittier and Yorba Linda.