

# Survey Findings – Issues for Pacific Grove

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## The Survey Process

During September and October of 2008, 52 residents of Pacific Grove completed a survey on 16 topics in our city. The survey asked for their personal views on the importance of each topic. The intent of the survey was to gain a more objective understanding of the priorities of our citizens. The results can be especially important in times where our finances are forcing choices among competing interests.

The results in this report represent the views of a wide range of citizens. A sample copy of the survey is in the Appendix. Surveys were passed out at various campaign meetings and given to many interested citizens ad hoc. The current version of the survey evolved from two prior trial versions.

The order of the questions was randomized, so that every survey had a different sequence of questions. This mixing of the questions eliminates the bias that many surveys create based on the ordering of questions.

The topics covered in this survey are listed here. The codes are used for labels in the graphs that follow.

Topic	Code
1 Business and downtown revitalization	Biz
2 City Budget and cost management	Budg
3 City personnel costs and benefits	Pers
4 Community recreation programs	Rec
5 Golf Course (price, availability)	Golf
6 Library services and programs	Lib
7 Natural History Museum services and programs	Musm
8 Parks	Pks
9 Planning Department effectiveness	Plan
10 Public safety (police, fire, medical response)	Safe
11 Shoreline and Recreation Trail upkeep	Shor
12 Special events (Parades, Good Old Days, etc.)	Specl
13 Streets, sidewalks and sewers	Strts
14 Strict Historical Preservation	Hist
15 Sustainability, Conservation, Green Issues	Sust
16 Tourism and hotel improvements	Tour

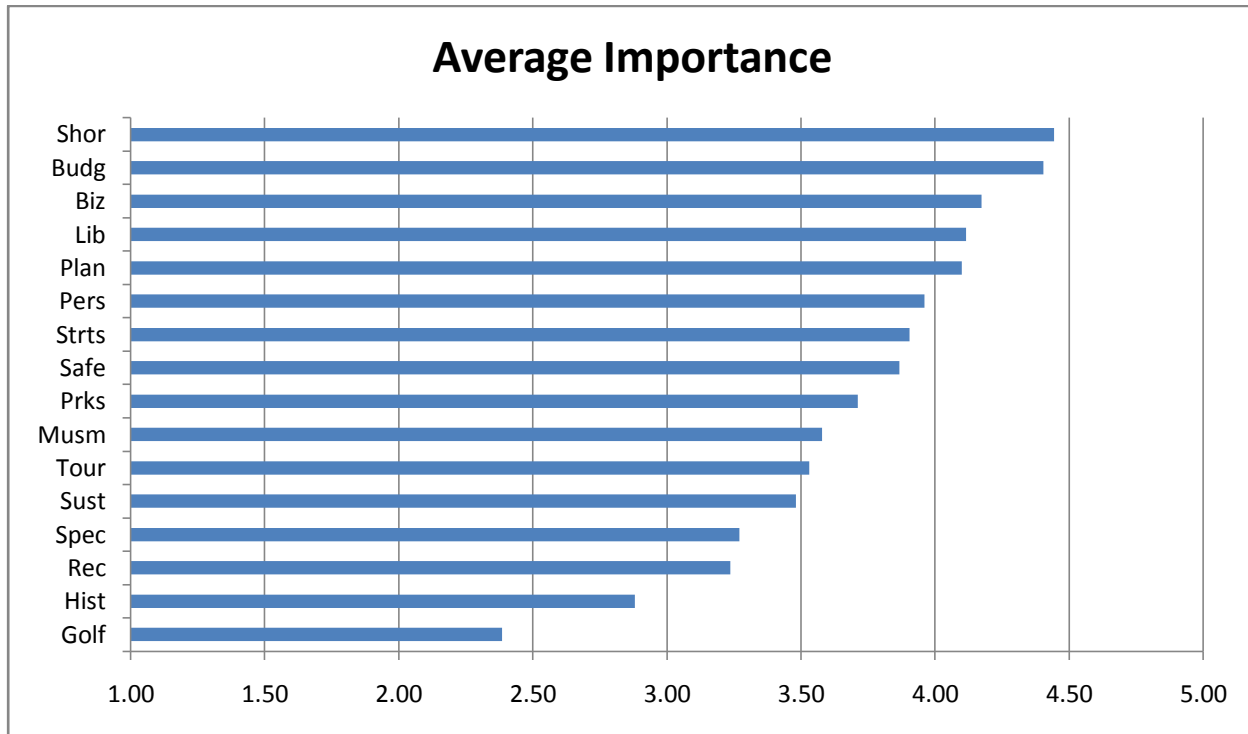
## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain insights on issues in Pacific Grove and to take more effective action as a result. This and any such survey must be interpreted with some common sense and calibrated by many discussions with the citizens of our city. From those conversations, I feel the results presented on the following pages give a fair sense of the community on this range of issues. And on a number of topics, the results create even more questions to be answered as the topic comes up for action by the city leadership.

*Bill Kampe*

## Importance Ratings

The average importance is based on all responses to each question. Among the higher scores, the topic is typically seen as very important by most respondents. Please keep in mind that the range of error in this survey is about 0.3 points. If the topics are near each other, we can't claim a significant difference. Yet it is clear that topics near the top of this chart are much more important to our citizens in general than the ones toward the lower part of the list.



## Observations

Based on these results, and supported by many conversations with citizens, here are some comments on some of the topics:

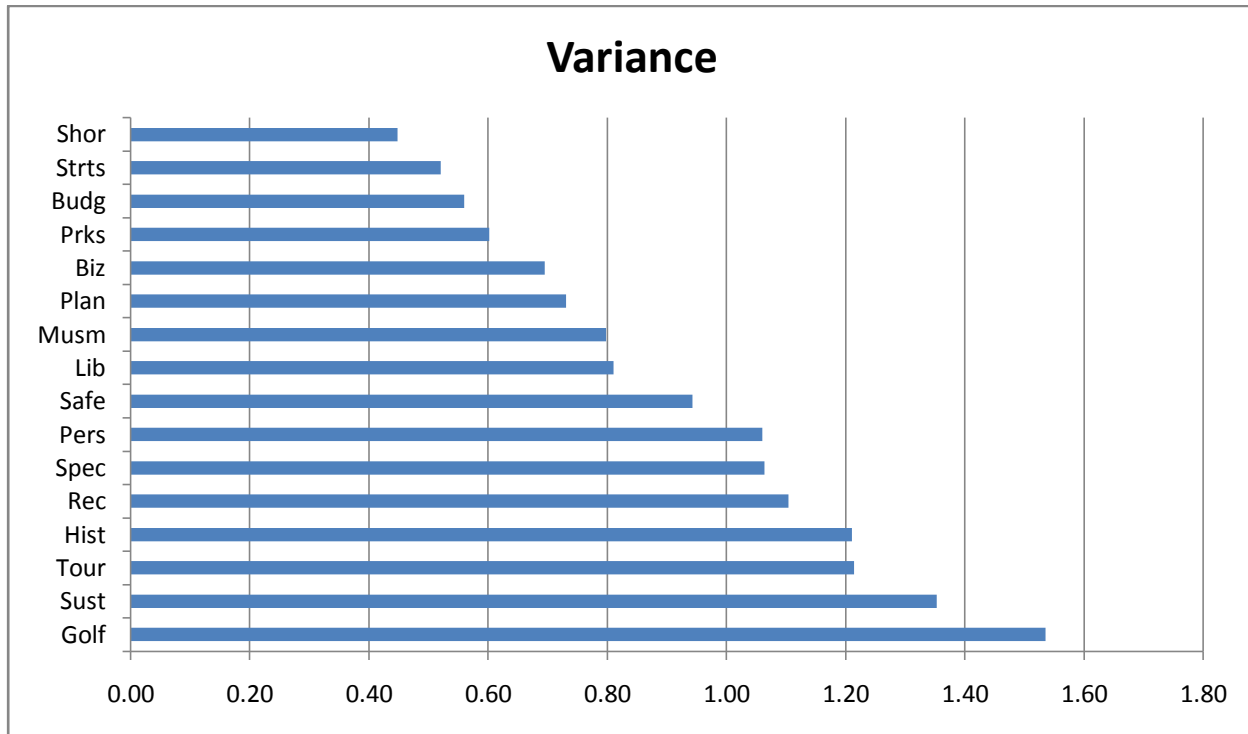
1. The shoreline is our most cherished asset for the city.
2. Budget – citizens are widely aware of our budget challenges. Note that City Personnel Costs are ranked several positions lower.
3. Business health – We are concerned about empty stores and the implications for our city.
4. Library – This resource is viewed as very important by a wide range of our citizens.
5. Streets and Sewers – These topics don't make for exciting headlines, but we are expressing our concern for the importance of good maintenance on this fundamental topic.
6. Public Safety – This middle-of-the-pack position is a surprise. This result is a mix of those who say it's very important and those who say our town is very safe and we have more than we need.

## Implications

The natural interpretation here is that the items highest on the list should get the most attention and resources. In a broad sense, that's true. Still, there is more to the story.

## Variance of Responses

While our shoreline brings mostly 4's and 5's in the scoring, other topics produce a much wider range of responses. The golf course tends to produce 5's from the golfers, and often 1's and 2's from non-golfers. The statistical term for this effect is Variance. The chart below shows the variance of all responses in each topic. Where variance is low, we can be confident that the importance rating expresses a broad view of the community. Where variance is high, we have more polarized views of the topics.



## Observations

1. There is general agreement on the importance of the topics with the lowest variance – Shoreline, Streets, Budget, and Parks.
2. For other topics, the importance scores are a blend of very high responses plus much lower scores from those with little interest. And in some cases it is clear that some segments of our city are negative on the topic. The Golf Course, Sustainability, Tourism, and Historic Preservation fall into this category.

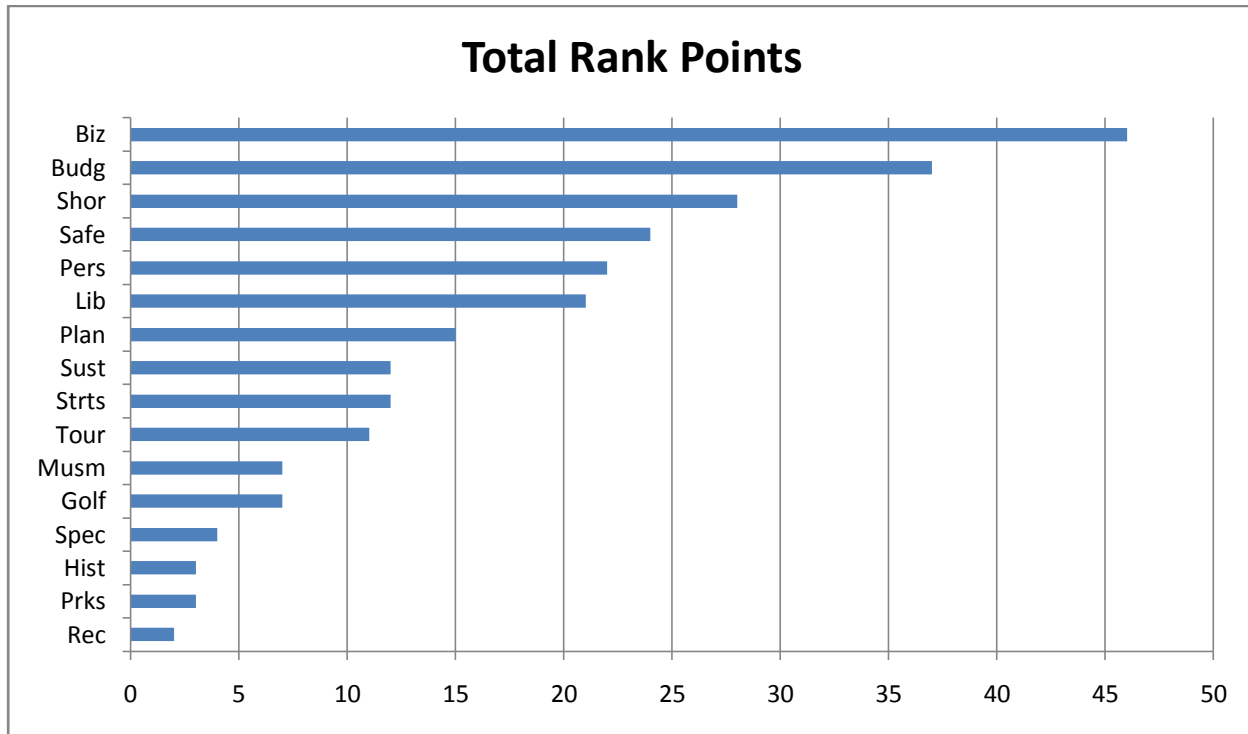
## Implications

When setting public policies or budgets, we should know the variance of opinions, interest, and priority on the topics at issue. Where we have low variance, i.e. a generally common view of a topic, we can act with confidence that the policy will be embraced or accepted in a similar way by a large portion of our citizens.

But where the variance is high, we are looking at relatively polarized opinions, and can expect lively debate. In a sense, these topics are often driven by special interests. These special interests can be important for the health of the city. Yet we must be careful to balance the views of those who are passionately engaged on the topic with the welfare and interests of the broader population of the city.

## Rankings of Topics

In rating the importance of topics, many people give high scores to several topics. The request to specify the #1, #2, and #3 most important topics forces a choice. We can't really have everything be a high priority. The scoring for this part of the survey gives 3 points for a #1, 2 points for a #2, and 1 point for a #3. Then the points for all ranked topics are added up to create the ranking score. The interesting phenomenon here is that the order of ranking changes a bit from the order we see in the Average Importance Chart.



## Observations

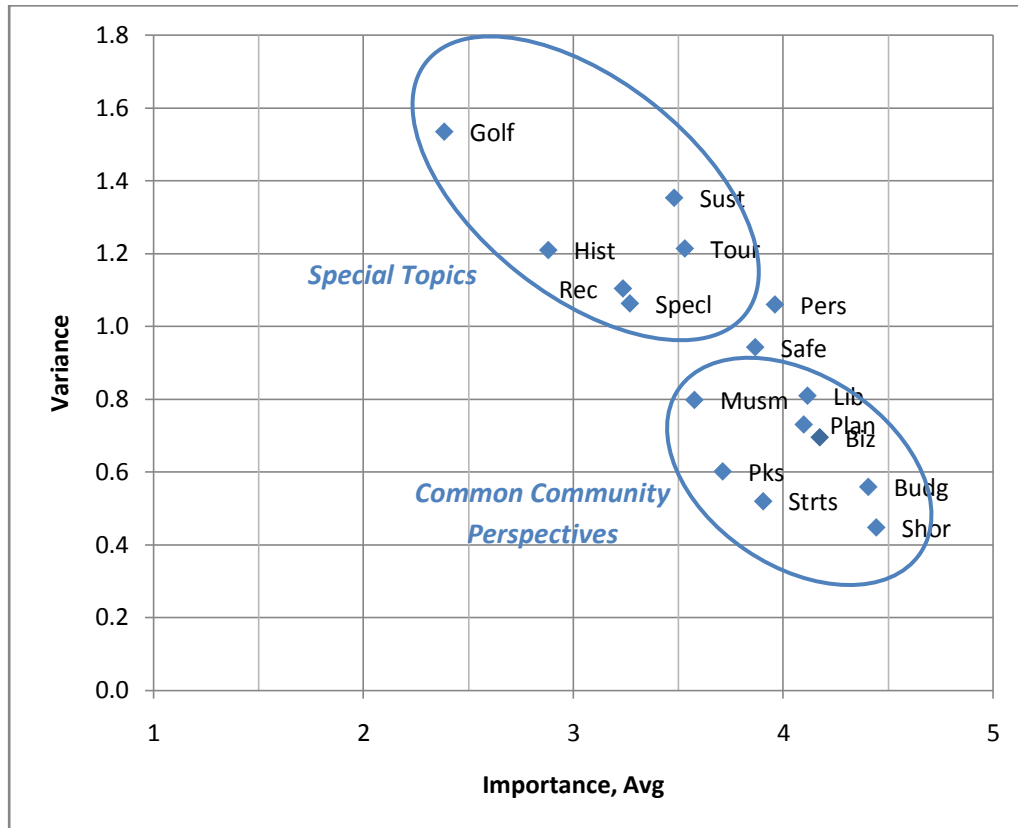
1. We see some shifts in the position of some of the topics
2. The Shoreline drops a bit. It's very important, but it's doing OK, and getting needed repairs.
3. Public safety moves up a few notches. We really do care that we have police protection and good fire and medical response.
4. Sustainability and Golf go up several positions. The advocates put their votes here.
5. Parks drop quite a few places. We love our parks, but they are pretty good as is, and other topics need more attention.

## Implications

This ranking helps uncover some subtle but significant aspects of the issues before us. It's simply part of helping to understand the outlooks we have in Pacific Grove.

## Importance and Variance

As the average importance decreases, we see the variance, increase. The variance indicates how polarized we are on the topic. Topics with high variance are often topics of special interest to focused groups of people who are often well organized to express their views.



## Observations

1. The most commonly held perspectives are for the items in the lower right of the chart.
2. The more specialized interests are represented in the upper left.
3. Our views on public safety and city personnel costs are mixed. These two topics are very much linked on the Measure Y/CalPERS issue.

## Implications

When setting city policies and budgets, we can consider the area of Common Community Perspectives for city leadership and action, in proportion to the importance of the topic.

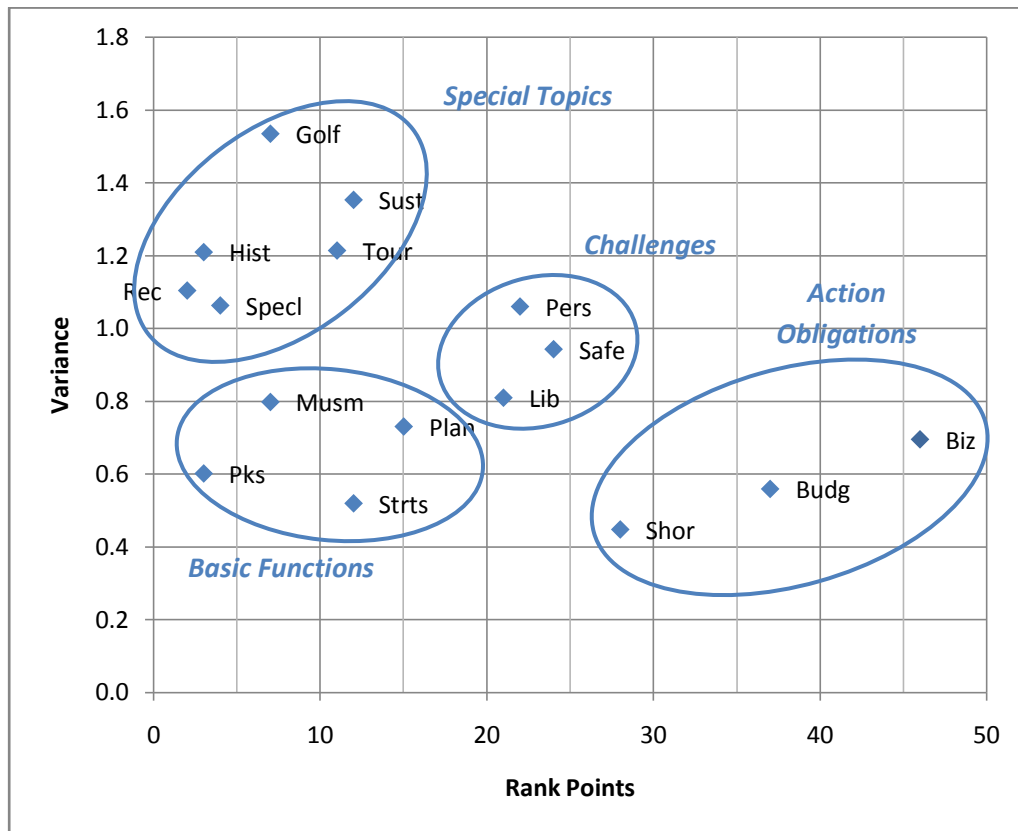
For the more specialized interests, the city needs to consider two aspects in any actions taken:

- In supporting any of these topics, does city action respect the views and rights of those who are not interested, or who will be affected and possibly burdened at some future time?
- Is the funding method appropriate for the topic? Especially, we should not assume that a general city funding approach is suitable when many citizens do not perceive a benefit.

In both clusters, communication to citizens is very important.

## Ranking and Variance

This view of the results gives more dispersion of the topics, though, the fundamental messages are similar. One of the biggest differences is that it reveals groupings in the mid-range of the rank positions.



## Observations

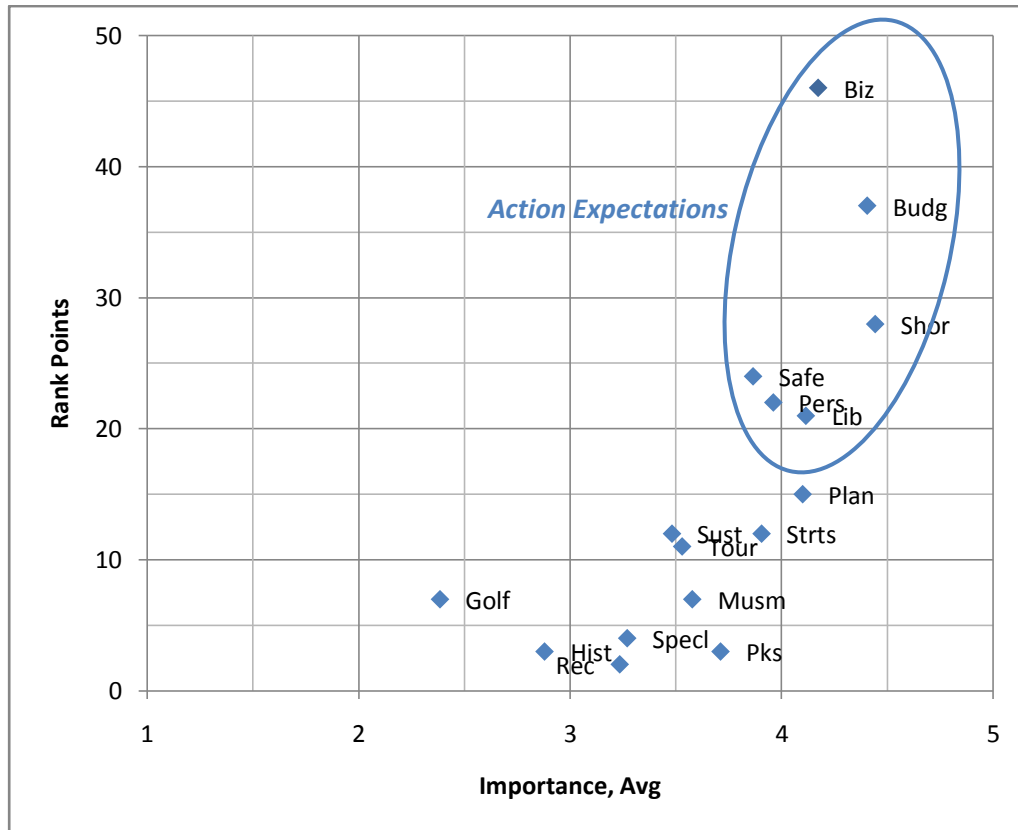
1. This chart reinforces the attention needed for Business, Budget, and Shoreline. While shoreline repairs are moving ahead well, our Business situation and our Budget remain major challenges.
2. The Special Topics category is reinforced here.
3. The Basic Functions include Planning, Streets and Sewers, and Parks. The surprise is that our Museum receives very similar scores from our citizens.
4. The Challenges represent some of the current topics receiving attention today in our city – Library, Public Safety, and Personnel Costs.

## Implications

These categories give indicators about where our city council and city staff should place priorities and attention.

## Importance and Ranking

On the surface, these two scores sound very similar. If the results mean the same thing, the data points should be on a relatively straight line from lower left to upper right. But they are not. The responses here appear to be filtered by topics of top personal interest and tempered by an expectation that something can or should be done about them.



## Observations

1. This chart features topics that lie up and to the left of a straight line thru the points. These topics are the ones that emerge when we are asked to name a few top issues. Here we see Business health, the City Budget, Public Safety, and City Personnel costs, and the Library as topics that capture attention from many people.
2. Our Shoreline retains a strong position.

## Appendix – The Survey Questionnaire

### Survey: Pacific Grove Topics and Opinions

**Step 1.** For each of the topics below, please rate the importance of the topic for action by the city, based on your own opinion.

	Topic	Importance					Step 2. Rank Top 3  (Enter 1, 2, 3)  _____
		Low	Some	Med.	High	V. high	
1	Public safety (police, fire, medical response)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2	Golf Course (price, availability)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3	City Budget and cost management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4	Community recreation programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5	Business and downtown revitalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6	Shoreline and Recreation Trail upkeep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
7	Parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
8	Planning Department effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
9	Special events (Parades, Good Old Days, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
10	Natural History Museum services and programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
11	City personnel costs and benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
12	Tourism and hotel improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
13	Library services and programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
14	Strict Historical Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
15	Sustainability, Conservation, Green Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
16	Streets, sidewalks and sewers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

**Step 3.** Finally, please comment in your own words on any topic that you feel needs attention:

Thank you! Your inputs are valuable and greatly appreciated.  
 Survey Sponsored by the Committee to Elect Bill Kampe, Pacific Grove, CA 93950