



City of
SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

CHIEF OF POLICE



Community Input Survey

COMMUNITY

SURVEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

TOP 3 QUALITIES, QUALIFICATIONS, AND SKILLS FOR NEW CHIEF OF POLICE



OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH CITY OF SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT



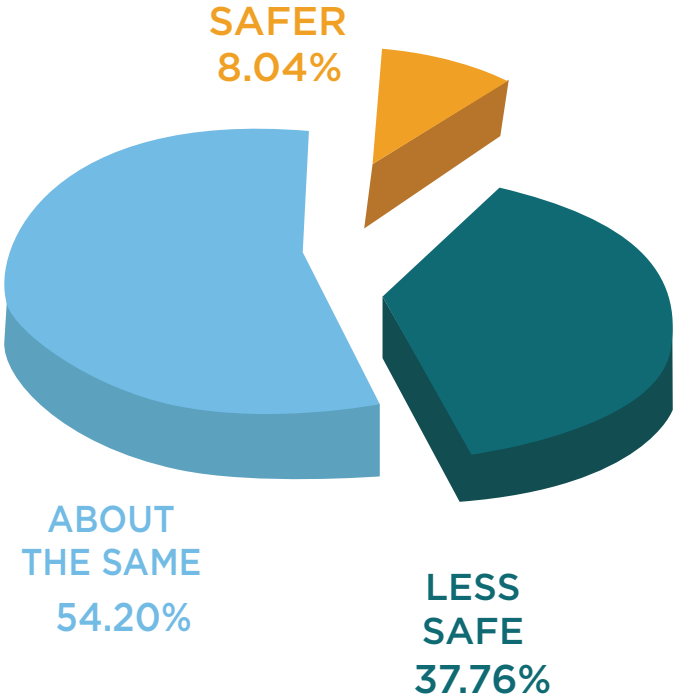
COMMUNITY

SURVEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

TOP 3 DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES



COMPARATIVE SAFETY OF SAN MARCOS TO A YEAR AGO



SAN MARCOS RESIDENTS	YES	87.04%
	NO	12.96%
WORK IN SAN MARCOS AREA	YES	73.62%
	NO	26.38%
WORK FOR CITY OF SAN MARCOS	YES	9.21%
	NO	90.79%

METHODOLOGY – COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES

This report summarizes the results of the Community Input Survey conducted as part of the City of San Marcos Chief of Police recruitment and selection process. The survey was customized to allow respondents the ability to provide input related to the Chief of Police search and the Department as a whole. Additionally, participants answered questions related to the qualities, qualifications, and skills they believed are essential for the next Chief of Police to possess.

The Community Input Survey was distributed by the City and published through Survey Monkey. The survey was available in both English and Spanish; the questions were the same in each survey. The two surveys were available between July 17, 2020 and August 7, 2020. A total of 1,089 responses were collected; for the purposes of this report, all responses from both the English and Spanish translations have been combined and analyzed together.

The survey was conducted during a period of national protest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota during an incident with the Minneapolis Police Department. Statements made by participants throughout the survey reflect these conversations in both the City of San Marcos and nationally.

What follows are results obtained from the Community Input Survey, including demographics of survey participants, top survey results in key categories, and a summary of comments collected from the participants.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

A total of **1,089** individuals participated in the Community Input Survey. Most of the respondents live in the City of San Marcos (87.04%), and the majority (73.62%) work in the City (9.21% work for the City of San Marcos).

RECAP OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

A summary of the Community Input Survey is provided below.

TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY OF SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT TO FOCUS ON:

Survey respondents were asked to rank what priorities they thought the San Marcos Police Department should focus on. The results indicated that “fair and just policing” was the most important priority. The second most selected priority was “crime solving/investigations,” and “increased training for officers and staff” and “crime prevention” tied for third-most selected.

Survey respondents were provided an opportunity to identify other areas of priority. Common themes identified included:

- Transparency with the community on Department procedures and actions; officer accountability;
- Encouraging more positive community actions between officers and civilians; some respondents felt like there is an “us vs. them” mentality;
- Mixed comments on staffing and budget; some comments related to the idea of defunding the police and moving some of the Department’s money to community and mental health programs, while some comments called for an increase in funds and officers;
- Offer more training to officers on de-escalation and mental health issues; racial bias training;
- Some respondents felt the Department should focus more on violent crimes and less on minor offenses, including traffic violations;
- Several respondents offered encouragement and stated no need for a change of focus for the Department;
- The Department should focus on follow-up and customer service; several comments were concerned about a lack of follow-up for online forms;
- The Department should focus on sexual assault cases and clearing the backlog; and
- Several respondents called for police reform and adaptability in the face of the national conversation around police reform and the Black Lives Matter movement.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE IN HOW THE POLICE DEPARTMENT INTERACTS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY?

The majority of responses were related to changes the Department could make in their interactions with the community. Regular community and youth interaction, outreach, and continually seeking input from the community were frequently mentioned by participants. While there were several respondents that indicated that there was no need to change anything with how the Department interacts with the community, the majority noted that current community interaction could be improved. More training around de-escalation, mental health, racial bias, etc., were seen as areas that the Department could improve in to help community interaction. Additionally, there were several

comments asking for additional foot patrol in areas and reducing response on minor calls (many felt the minor calls were overstaffed). Several comments also called to “defund the police” and redirect funds to other social service departments/agencies.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE CITY AND POLICE DEPARTMENT DO DIFFERENTLY TO HELP YOU FEEL SAFE

The trends found in the community responses were similar to the previous question with a large majority of respondents wanting an increased value placed on community relationships and de-escalation techniques used by officers. Participants would like the Department to focus more on officer training, including improved mental health training. Many respondents indicated that they would like to see additional patrol officers, while some indicated that they would like to see less neighborhood patrol; the comments related to patrol were largely mixed. Additionally, multiple respondents commented that they felt racial profiling was common and felt that new patrol procedures and training should be implemented to correct this.

There was a perception in the comments that officers do not seem approachable, or sincere, and appear not to take instances with Texas State University seriously, particularly as it related to sexual assault or sexual harassment. Several people commented throughout the survey that they would like to see officers be friendlier and work with the University on serious matters, including sexual assault.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT DO DIFFERENTLY IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN ITS TRUST WITH THE COMMUNITY?

While some participants indicated that they felt safe and trusted the Department fully, many participants noted that there was a lack of trust in the Department. Several participants indicated that there needs to be more community outreach through programs, education, town hall style meetings, and increased social media presence. Several stated that “coffee with a cop” is a good example of a positive program the community would like to see more of. Transparency with the community and opportunities to interact with officers in a relaxed setting was encouraged. Respondents would like to see the Department engage more with various community groups, including homeless groups, Mano Amiga, Black Lives Matter, schools, and other groups to open dialogues and seek out additional training.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY SHOULD BE THE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT CITY OF SAN MARCOS CHIEF OF POLICE?

A primary area of concern among participants was community engagement and transparency. According to several respondents, the next Chief needs to make sure there is accountability in the Department and that all citizens are treated fairly and equally. The next Chief should lead by example and be visible and accessible to the Community. Many respondents felt that the next Chief should engage with the national conversation around racial justice and police reform; the Chief should evaluate the needs of the Department and community. In addition to community engagement, many felt that the next Chief should work on a collaborative relationship with Texas State University.

Survey participants also called on the Chief to focus on training for the officers, including mental health, racial bias, and de-escalation training.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NEXT CHIEF OF POLICE?

The following is a summary of prominent concepts provided by the community as areas of focus or suggestions for the next Chief of Police:

- Lead both the Department and community by example. The Chief should be a strong leader, compassionate, and a good listener;
- The next Chief should have the strength to make difficult decisions and rise above politics;
- Create positive community and Department interactions; the Chief should be a bridge between the community and officers;
- Treat all members of the community fairly and equally, regardless of ethnicity. The Chief should be committed to diversity in the Department; several participants indicated they would like a Chief that meets the current moment;
- Work with Texas State University, particularly regarding sexual assault cases;
- Constant public outreach and engagement; and
- The next Chief should focus on integrity, accountability, and transparency in the Department.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES, QUALIFICATIONS, OR SKILLS THAT A NEW CITY OF SAN MARCOS CHIEF OF POLICE SHOULD HAVE?

Respondents were asked to select/rank three qualities or qualifications out of a predetermined list that are the most important to them personally to see in the next Chief of Police. The results found that “integrity,” “accountable,” and “strong leader for officers and professional staff” were the responses with the highest rankings.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH THE CITY OF SAN MARCOS POLICE DEPARTMENT?

Survey respondents were asked to select one option for how they would rank their overall experience with the Department; the results showed:

- Excellent – 31.54%
- Good – 32.10%
- Only fair – 18%
- Poor – 9.36%
- No experience – 9%

COMPARED TO A YEAR AGO, DO YOU FEEL THAT THE CITY OF SAN MARCOS IS SAFER, LESS SAFE, OR ABOUT THE SAME?

Survey respondents were asked to select one option for how they would rank their feeling of safety in San Marcos compared to one year ago, the results showed:

- Safer – 8.04%
- Less safe – 37.76%
- About the same – 54.20%

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN THINK OF THAT THE CITY SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING THE NEXT CHIEF OF POLICE?

A major trend in responses showed that the respondents would like the City to select a candidate that can improve relationships with the community, specifically through outreach and dialogue with the community. Several participants indicated that they would like the City to engage the community in the hiring process of the next Chief by asking diverse community groups to offer input.

Comments throughout the survey were generally mixed when discussing Department funding. A majority of participants suggested that the City look at reallocating funds away from the Department towards other agencies that can address mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, etc. Other respondents felt that the amount of funding should not be decreased for the Department, and in some instances, should be increased. While some participants felt that change was needed to align with the national conversation around police reform, other survey participants indicated that no change was needed and the new Chief should not change the Department.

In summary, the majority of respondents ask that the City hire someone that can engage the community through outreach and transparency; better train officers on matters of racial bias, de-escalation, and mental health; and keep the Department accountable.



RALPH ANDERSEN & ASSOCIATES

www.ralphandersen.com