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# 2012 Resident Satisfaction

Findings of a March 2012 Resident Satisfaction  
Survey Conducted for the Housing Authority of the  
County of Santa Clara

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# 2012 Resident Satisfaction

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Conducted for the Housing Authority of the County of  
Santa Clara



*Lenzen Gardens*

## Introduction

The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC) is in the process of making major changes to the way it operates its growing portfolio of affordable housing developments, transitioning away from direct management through an in-house affiliate company and instead contracting for property management from third party management agents. The transition began in 2010 and continued throughout 2011. The final properties will be transferred to third party management by June 2012. In order to gauge the ongoing success of this new way of operating, HACSC decided to conduct an annual survey of its residents, asking residents about all aspects of the physical condition of their homes and the quality of the services they receive. The 2012 survey responses provide a snapshot of residents' level of satisfaction, and highlight common issues and concerns across properties. The results also provide insight into particular strengths or weaknesses at individual properties. In addition to being a useful tool to help HACSC asset managers and leadership stay in touch with residents and their concerns, survey results will also be incorporated in HACSC's annual reporting to HUD.

Due to the fact that this first annual Resident Satisfaction Survey is being done at a time of management transition, readers should be mindful that survey respondents may be rating and commenting on old management, new management, or both! Future surveys will be more clearly a reflection on a given management company's performance. In this first year there is no discernable tendency for respondents to rate one management company's performance higher than any other.

## Methodology

The survey asks residents sixteen multiple choice questions: three about the physical condition of their apartment, interior common areas and exterior areas; three about the

quality of management services; four about maintenance services; four about resident support services and three about overall indicators of satisfaction. The survey concludes with one open-ended request for comments or suggestions. A copy of the survey template is attached (**Attachment 1.**)

After notifying residents of the upcoming survey through resident meetings at the beginning of the year, surveys were mailed to all HACSC households in late February. Management companies were also informed about the process and provided with flyers to encourage residents to participate. Lifesteps, the on-site resident services provider, was also consulted. Lifesteps does its own annual resident surveys, and we asked that they refrain from doing surveying during this time period in order to avoid confusion<sup>1</sup>. Residents were given two weeks to mail back their completed surveys, though survey responses received after the deadline date were accepted and included in the results.

The surveys were provided in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to all households, and pre-stamped return envelopes were also supplied. A local mail house distributed and collected the surveys and did the initial data entry of the responses. Consultant Cathy Craig compiled the open-ended comments with the assistance of translators supplied by HACSC.

## Response Rate

A total of 1,033 out of 2718 households responded to the Resident Satisfaction Survey, a response rate of 38%. The response rate from HACSC's senior properties was 50%, from family properties, 26%, and from its one special needs property the response rate was 11%. Only one property, the 9-unit Julian Gardens, had no responses. We are pleased that so many residents took the trouble to respond to the survey, and believe that this level of response is sufficient to allow us to draw valid conclusions from the opinions expressed.

This report will first examine the overall level of satisfaction of respondents across the portfolio as a whole. Next we will analyze the findings by property type. Within each of the subsets of properties we will highlight noteworthy differences – areas in which residents of particular properties expressed significantly higher or lower opinions about one or more aspects of their housing than average for that type of property. Charts summarizing the

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<sup>1</sup> We considered combining the two surveys, however the Lifesteps survey is designed to build relationships with residents and involves door knocking and one-to-one interaction. In contrast, the HACSC survey gives residents the opportunity to respond anonymously.

resident responses from each of the 30 properties participating in the 2012 Resident Satisfaction Survey are shown in **Attachment 2**.



*Cypress Gardens*

### Levels of Satisfaction: All Respondents

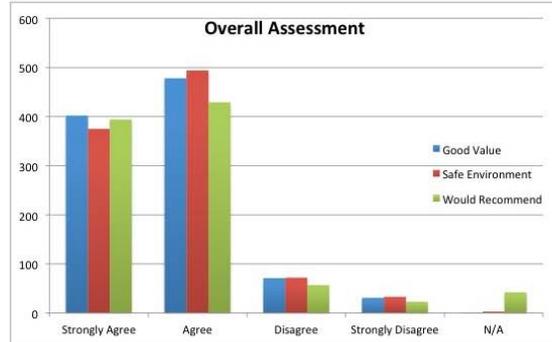
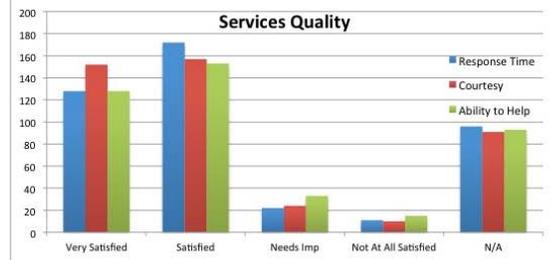
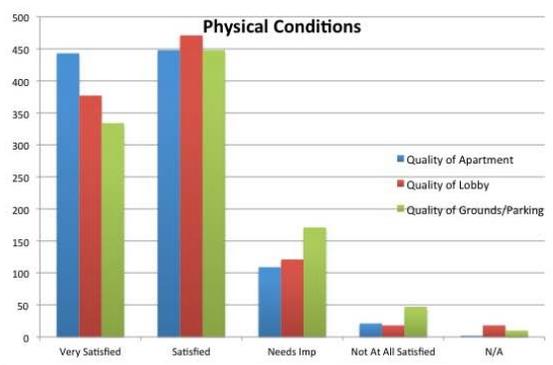
Taken as a whole, HACSC can feel good about the level of satisfaction among its residents.

- 90% of respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement: “I am satisfied with the value of my apartment for the rent I pay.”
- 89% of respondents strongly agree or agree “This housing provides a safe, secure environment.”
- 90% of respondents strongly agree or agree “I would recommend this housing to a friend of family member.”

In their comments many respondents expressed thankfulness for their housing situation and said, “Keep up the good work.” When they were critical, residents cited some of the same issues that concern people everywhere –parking difficulties, rent burden, disputes with neighbors and staff. Respondents cited the HACSC no-smoking policy numerous times; urging stricter enforcement.

**ALL PROPERTIES**

Response Rate: 38% (1033/2718)



The above charts show that a high number of respondents had a positive opinion of their housing situation, answering either Very Satisfied/Satisfied/Strongly Agree/Agree to all the questions. Note that the highest amount of unfavorable responses were about Physical Conditions, particularly conditions of Grounds & Parking Areas, where a more substantial number, though still a minority, rated the conditions as either Needs Improvement or Not At All Satisfied.

You will see that there are fewer responses to the Maintenance Quality and Services Quality questions than to the others. For these questions respondents were first asked if they had requested a repair or accessed services in the past year. Many had not, so did not answer the subsequent questions on that topic.

## Senior Properties

Seven hundred seniors in HACSC's thirteen senior properties responded to the survey – a 50% response rate – and people gave serious attention to their input. Praise was heartfelt: “The manager is the best we've had since I've lived here for the last 15 years”, and “I always feel safe and secure. I love the quiet.”

Critiques were pointed: “ The lobby is depressing and needs to be upgraded.” and “There is an unpleasant dog on the first floor.”

Themes emerged from certain properties – the security of parking lots in some cases, lack of visitor parking at others. Multiple residents at certain properties expressed concern about rent increases. Seniors at several properties especially value their community rooms and some mention wanting these rooms to be open more often.

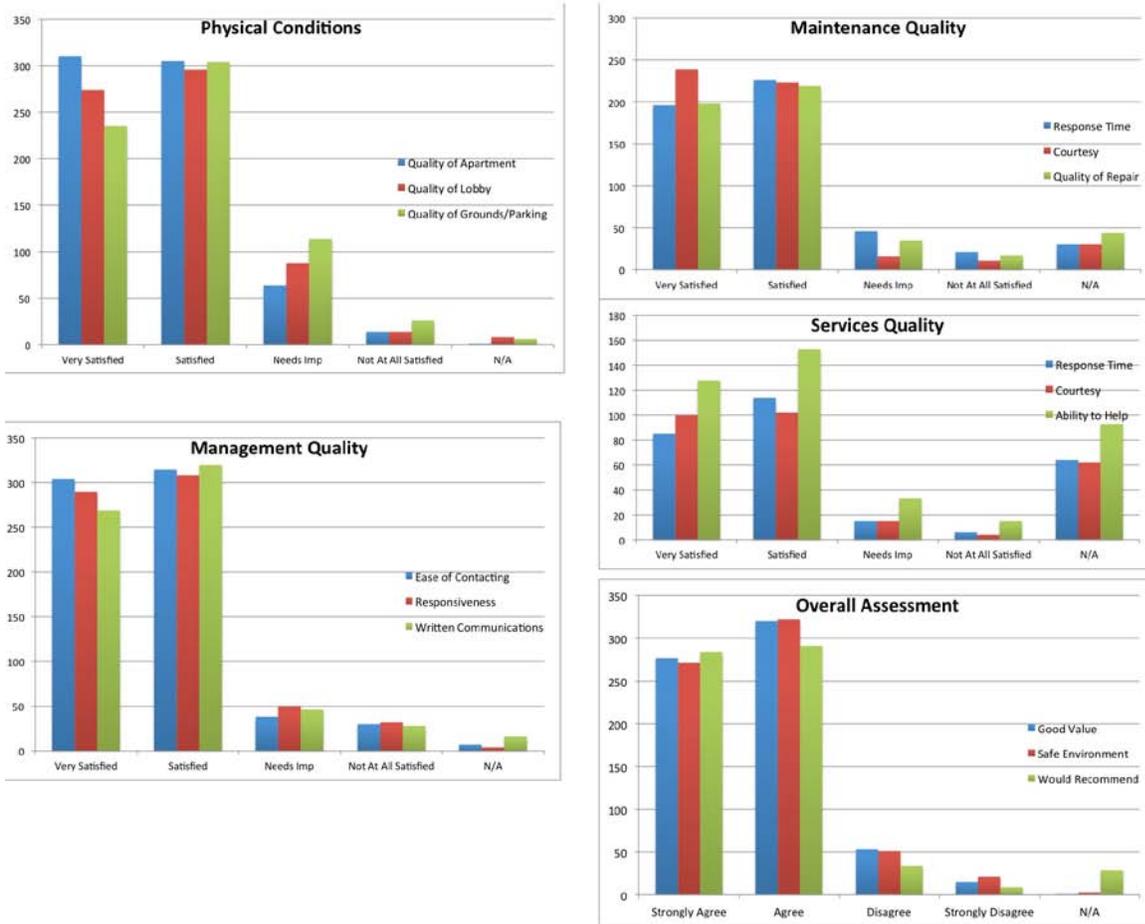
Respondents' opinions about management (ease of contacting, responsiveness and written communications) were usually high, and satisfaction with management at Bracher, El Parador and John Burns was particularly high. Villa Hermosa stands out as a site where respondents were much less satisfied with management.

While people mentioned specific work order requests and had their issues with their complexes' physical conditions, satisfaction with the courtesy of maintenance staff was uniformly high.

Resident services did not draw many comments, and the one site where satisfaction with services was lower than elsewhere, the sample size was so small that further exploration would be needed before concluding that any problems exist.

**SENIOR PROPERTIES**

Response Rate: 50% (700/1400)



**Special Needs Property (Opportunity Center)**

The one special needs property in the HACSC portfolio is the Opportunity Center. Only eleven residents of this 89-unit property responded to the Resident Satisfaction Survey, a relatively low response rate. An additional caveat is that the transition of management to a new third-party management agent occurred just prior to the surveying. It is difficult to say whether respondents were commenting on the new management or the old. That said, the results of the Opportunity Center survey are that:

- 73-82% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the physical condition of the site;

- only 50% were satisfied with the management responsiveness, though respondents gave higher marks for ease of contacting management and management’s written communications;
- 67% approved of maintenance responsiveness; 83% were satisfied with maintenance courtesy and 90% approved of the quality of repairs;
- Services received relatively high ratings – 90% were very satisfied or satisfied with responsiveness; 80% satisfied with courtesy and 70% said service were helpful.
- On the overall indicators of satisfaction, 80% were satisfied with the value of their apartment, 64% agreed that their site was safe and secure, and 64% would recommend it to others.

## Family Properties

More than a quarter of the residents of HACSC’s family properties responded to the Resident Satisfaction Survey; 322 out of 1229 households participated (26%). As mentioned above, one small property had no responses (Julian Gardens) and the number of responses from two other small properties was too low to be totally reliable. (Only one response from the 4-unit Deborah site and only two responses from the 17-unit Klamath Garden.)



*Miramar Way Apartments*

Overall, the level of satisfaction at the family properties was high, and not too different from the senior properties in most categories. Family respondents were somewhat less satisfied with the condition of parking areas and grounds (76% approval versus 79%) and somewhat less satisfied with maintenance response time, courtesy, and quality of repair (78%, 89% and 82% for families versus 86%, 94% and 89% for seniors.) All other questions yielded positive responses from 85-90% of the respondents.

Respondents from the family sites raised some of the same issues raised in comments from the senior respondents. Laundry room hours and upkeep of laundry equipment came up,

and security of cars in the parking areas was also a concern at some properties. Quality of playgrounds and other child-related aspects drew comments too.

A high level of satisfaction with quality of the units in some of the family properties (Corde Terra Apartments, Klamath, Lucretia, Miramar and Poco Way) masked a significantly lower rating on unit quality in several other properties (Blossom River, Huff, Pinmore, San Pedro Gardens and Villa Garcia.) “15 years: same paint, carpet, linoleum, bathroom” and “...living here feels like we are living in the 70s and 80s.”

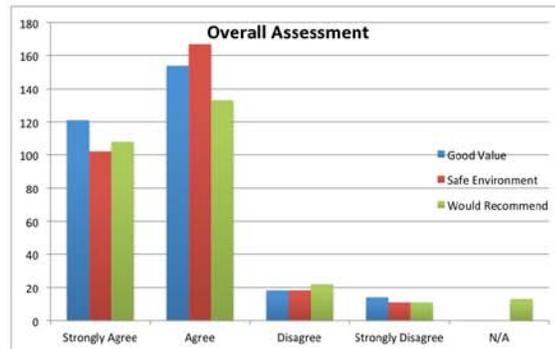
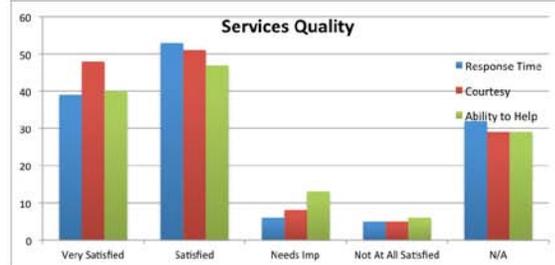
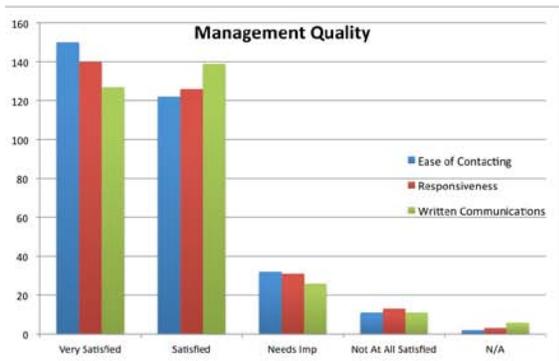
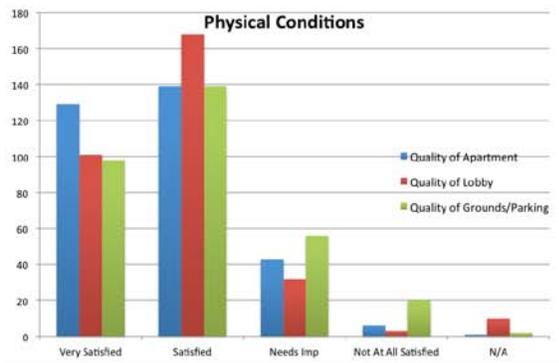
Blossom River residents were less satisfied with their complex than most. Respondents rated the property 10 or more percentage points lower than the average HACSC family property in multiple categories. Huff Gardens and Rivertown also merit some further investigation due to lower than average ratings in key indicators.



*Lucretia Gardens*

**FAMILY PROPERTIES**

Response Rate: 26% (322/1229)



### Follow Up Action Plan

HACSC Asset Management staff met is meeting with management agents to review the survey results, and each asset manager has been charged with prioritizing and monitoring the follow up for each site. If residents asked for an individual response to a maintenance or rent issue they had, those requests will be flagged and HACSC has made a commitment to respond. Broader site specific issues identified through the surveys will inform how resources are prioritized in the coming year. Because of the frequency of comments, HACSC will review the no-smoking policy and its enforcement with management of every property, and will also see what, if anything, can be done to increase resident satisfaction with parking arrangements at each site.

In addition to responding one-on-one to residents who requested a specific response, HACSC and the management companies will collaborate to produce an article reporting on survey results for upcoming resident newsletters.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Survey Template

Attachment 2: Property Profiles

Attachment 3: Comparisons Against Average Rating, by Property Type