

**April/May, 2008**

**Gulf Shores Citizen Survey:  
Quality of Life, Growth, & Development**

Commissioned by:  
**City of Gulf Shores, Alabama**

Conducted by:  
**University of South Alabama Polling Group**

Report compiled by:  
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# **Gulf Shores ACE – Sustainable Growth Committee**

## **Survey of Public Opinion Regarding Quality of Life, Growth, and Development**

### **I. Project Overview**

The USA Polling Group conducted a telephone survey of adult residents of the City of Gulf Shores, Alabama. The primary purpose of the survey was to gather data on the attitudes of area residents regarding quality of life, and the preferred means of enhancing quality of life through planning for growth and development.

#### **Questionnaire**

An appropriate survey instrument was developed by Gulf Shores ACE Sustainable Growth Committee. The questionnaire consisted of 51 items: a standard introduction screening for city residents, 43 questions regarding citizen attitudes and preferences, and seven demographic measures. The questionnaire was pre-tested by USA Polling Group and minor suggestions made for revisions. Final approval of question wording and order was the responsibility of Gulf Shores officials. The final version of the questionnaire with introductory script and interviewer instructions is included as Appendix Item 1.

#### **Sample**

A standard random-digit dialed sample of telephone numbers was obtained from ASDE Survey Sampler. In the initial contact, respondents were screened to insure residence within Gulf Shores city limits. Within households, participants were randomized using most recent birthday criteria. With 410 completed interviews, sampling error for the survey is +/-4.8% at the 95% confidence level. This means we are 95% sure that these results are within 4.8% of the results that would have been obtained if we had interviewed the entire population.

#### **Interviews**

Telephone interviews were conducted at Polling Group facilities by employees of the Polling Group. A total of 410 interviews were conducted between April 28 and May 8, 2008. A total of 760 households were contacted in order to obtain the 410 interviews, yielding a participation rate of 54%. For this type survey, this is a relatively high participation rate, reflecting significant interest and cooperation on the part of Gulf Shores citizens. Interviews took an average of 12 minutes, with the shortest taking just under 7 minutes and the longest taking 38 minutes.

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**II. BASIC FREQUENCIES**

1. Is your household within the city limits of Gulf Shores? (*screening question; if not within city limits, respondent is not interviewed*)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	410	100%
Total	410	100%

2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Gulf Shores? Would you say . . . ?

	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	173	42%
Good	201	49
Only fair	26	7
Poor	9	2
DK/NA	1	--*
Total	410	100%

*\*less than 1/2 of 1%*

3. Next, I want you to rate the importance of several issues when it comes to enhancing the area's quality of life. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least important and 5 being most important, how would you rate the importance of controlling development?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	17	4%
2	17	4
3	66	16
4	75	19
5 - Most important	234	57
Don't Know/No Answer	1	--
Total	410	100%

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the importance of controlling traffic?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	12	3%
2	18	4
3	54	13
4	93	23
5 - Most important	232	57
Don't Know/No Answer	1	--
Total	410	100%

5. And what about providing affordable housing?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	56	14%
2	56	14
3	107	26
4	64	16
5 - Most important	109	26
Don't Know/No Answer	18	4
Total	410	100%

6. Insuring government accountability?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	13	3%
2	10	2
3	50	12
4	59	15
5 - Most important	268	66
Don't Know/No Answer	10	2
Total	410	100%

7. Protecting the environment?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	10	2%
2	13	3
3	57	14
4	89	22
5 - Most important	231	56
Don't Know/No Answer	10	2
Total	410	100%

8. Improving education?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	21	5%
2	15	4
3	49	12
4	83	20
5 - Most important	225	55
Don't Know/No Answer	17	4
Total	410	100%

9. Developing public transportation?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	66	16%
2	60	15
3	105	26
4	76	18
5 - Most important	95	23
Don't Know/No Answer	8	2
Total	410	100%

10. Next, tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: The City of Gulf Shores is a family oriented resort with a unique character that must be protected. Do you . . . ?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	192	47%
Agree	181	44
Disagree	20	5
Strongly disagree	8	2
Neutral	6	1
DK/NA	3	1
Total	410	100%

11. City officials are doing a good job of protecting our area's unique character and environment.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	38	9%
Agree	216	53
Disagree	96	23
Strongly disagree	40	10
Neutral	18	4
DK/NA	2	1
Total	410	100%

12. The City should be more involved in controlling color and style of new construction.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	59	15%
Agree	184	45
Disagree	108	26
Strongly disagree	28	7
Neutral	28	6
DK/NA	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>100%</b>

13. City projects typically look as good as private development projects.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	47	12%
Agree	239	58
Disagree	70	17
Strongly disagree	15	4
Neutral	21	5
DK/NA	18	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>100%</b>

14. Future plans should include the conversion of the Beach Highway 182 in Gulf Shores to be pedestrian-friendly.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	135	33%
Agree	206	50
Disagree	40	10
Strongly disagree	11	3
Neutral	8	2
DK/NA	10	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>100%</b>

15. Existing zoning in Gulf Shores adequately protects neighborhoods from incompatible development.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	41	10%
Agree	165	40
Disagree	113	28
Strongly disagree	42	10
Neutral	19	5
DK/NA	30	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>100%</b>

16. The City's decisions on zoning and density adequately preserve the existing character and environment of neighborhoods from fundamental change by new development.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	21	5%
Agree	161	39
Disagree	142	35
Strongly disagree	48	12
Neutral	11	3
DK/NA	27	6
Total	410	100%

17. High-rise buildings of six stories or more should not be allowed away from the beach area.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	114	28%
Agree	158	38
Disagree	90	22
Strongly disagree	24	6
Neutral	19	5
DK/NA	5	1
Total	410	100%

18. The City's sign ordinance should prohibit large digital signs.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	96	23%
Agree	191	47
Disagree	74	18
Strongly disagree	22	5
Neutral	21	5
DK/NA	6	2
Total	410	100%

19. The City makes good decisions regarding approval of development applications.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	8	2%
Agree	174	43
Disagree	116	28
Strongly disagree	50	12
Neutral	33	8
DK/NA	29	7
Total	410	100%

20. City roads are well maintained.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	45	11%
Agree	276	67
Disagree	58	14
Strongly disagree	15	4
Neutral	15	4
DK/NA	1	--
Total	410	100%

21. Area roads should be designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	111	27%
Agree	250	61
Disagree	34	8
Strongly disagree	6	1
Neutral	7	2
DK/NA	2	1
Total	410	100%

22. Safer crosswalks should be constructed on the area's busiest streets, such as State Highway 59 and Fort Morgan Road.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	139	34%
Agree	228	55
Disagree	25	6
Strongly disagree	4	1
Neutral	11	3
DK/NA	3	1
Total	410	100%

23. Golf carts and scooters, operated by licensed drivers, should be allowed on some low-speed city streets.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	27	7%
Agree	160	39
Disagree	166	40
Strongly disagree	40	10
Neutral	10	2
DK/NA	7	2
Total	410	100%

24. Now, when thinking of city services that might need improvement, what one area of concern comes to mind first? (*responses collapsed into categories; full set responses included as Appendix Item 2*)

None	140	34%	
Traffic control, congestion	29	7	
Police, public safety issues	25	6	
Road conditions, maintenance	19	5	
Storm drainage, flooding	15	4	
City environment, appearance		13	3
Recreation, options, facilities	13	3	
Insect, mosquito control	12	3	
Accommodating pedestrians	11	3	
Zoning regulation, enforcement	10	2	
Public transportation	10	2	
Garbage collection, sanitation		9	2
Municipal governance, general	8	2	
Controlling, limiting development	8	2	
Facilitating business, development	7	2	
Utilities, general	7	2	
Education issues	6	2	
Need for recycling	6	2	
Utilities, water	5	1	
Utilities, Sewerage	5	1	
Insurance cost, controls	5	1	
Trash collection	5	1	
Animal control	4	1	
Utilities, electricity	4	1	
Miscellaneous	34	8	
Total	410	100%	

25. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important, please rate the importance to you personally of the recreational opportunities provided by the City. First, how would you rate public beach access?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	25	6%
2	16	4
3	79	19
4	88	21
5 - Most important	200	49
Don't Know/No Answer	2	1
Total	410	100%

26. What about swimming pools?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	122	30%
2	53	13
3	89	22
4	50	12
5 - Most important	79	19
Don't Know/No Answer	17	4
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Total	410	100%

27. Tennis courts?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	120	29%
2	43	10
3	76	19
4	49	12
5 - Most important	109	27
Don't Know/No Answer	13	3
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Total	410	100%

28. Youth sports facilities?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	48	12%
2	22	5
3	60	15
4	87	21
5 - Most important	178	43
Don't Know/No Answer	15	4
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Total	410	100%

29. Senior activities?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	40	10%
2	24	6
3	65	16
4	100	24
5 - Most important	161	39
Don't Know/No Answer	20	5
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Total	410	100%

30. Dog parks?

	Frequency	Percent
1- Least important	127	31%
2	43	10
3	68	17
4	62	15
5 - Most important	88	22
Don't Know/No Answer	22	5
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Total	410	100%

31. Now, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this last series of statements. The City should acquire for preservation more open areas such as wetlands, woodlands, and waterfront property for public access and enjoyment. Do you . . . ?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	186	45%
Agree	160	39
Disagree	41	10
Strongly disagree	16	4
Neutral	4	1
DK/NA	3	1
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Total	410	100%

32. The City should actively plan for the acquisition of lands for future schools.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	105	25%
Agree	200	49
Disagree	73	18
Strongly disagree	13	3
Neutral	16	4
DK/NA	3	1
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Total	410	100%

33. The city's public beach area is well maintained and attractive.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	103	25%
Agree	263	64
Disagree	23	6
Strongly disagree	8	2
Neutral	7	2
DK/NA	6	1
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Total	410	100%

34. There is adequate parking at public beaches.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	18	5%
Agree	151	37
Disagree	164	40
Strongly disagree	38	9
Neutral	14	3
DK/NA	25	6
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Total	410	100%

35. The proposed North-South highway through the Gulf State Park connecting the beach highway to the Foley Beach Express is a good idea.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	85	21%
Agree	167	41
Disagree	64	16
Strongly disagree	64	16
Neutral	18	4
DK/NA	12	3
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Total	410	100%

36. The city needs to develop comprehensive recycling programs for residents, visitors, and businesses.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	157	38%
Agree	201	49
Disagree	27	7
Strongly disagree	5	1
Neutral	14	3
DK/NA	6	2
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Total	410	100%

37. The city should disallow septic tanks by requiring all residents of Gulf Shores to connect to public sewage systems.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	88	21%
Agree	161	39
Disagree	90	22
Strongly disagree	24	6
Neutral	24	6
DK/NA	23	6
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Total	410	100%

38. City officials adequately represent the needs of residents.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	18	5%
Agree	202	49
Disagree	113	28
Strongly disagree	34	8
Neutral	29	7
DK/NA	14	3
Total	410	100%

39. City officials adequately represent the needs of developers.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	113	27%
Agree	209	51
Disagree	16	4
Strongly disagree	4	1
Neutral	32	8
DK/NA	36	9
Total	410	100%

40. City officials adequately represent the needs of business owners.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	30	7%
Agree	223	55
Disagree	59	14
Strongly disagree	13	3
Neutral	33	8
DK/NA	52	13
Total	410	100%

41. The citizens of Gulf Shores have ample opportunity to voice their opinions concerning new developments.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	29	7%
Agree	204	50
Disagree	104	25
Strongly disagree	34	8
Neutral	16	4
DK/NA	23	6
Total	410	100%

42. There is enough notice given to affected residents and neighborhoods when a development is being considered.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	23	5%
Agree	175	43
Disagree	123	30
Strongly disagree	44	11
Neutral	12	3
DK/NA	33	8
Total	410	100%

43. What would you say is your main source of information about growth and development in Gulf Shores?

	Frequency	Percent
Newspapers	222	54%
Word of mouth	71	17
Personal observation	28	7
City officials	23	6
Internet	14	3
Radio	1	--
Other *	47	12
DK/NA	4	1
Total	410	100%

*\*Other responses included as Appendix Item 3*

44. Are there any other issues you would like to comment on at this time?

	Frequency	Percent
Offered comment*	233	57%
No comment	177	43
Total	410	100%

*\*Actual open-ended comments included as Appendix Item 4*

45. Now, for statistical purposes, I need to ask a few questions about you. Would you mind telling me if your age is . . .

	Frequency	Percent
18 – 25	7	2%
26 – 40	37	9
41 – 55	112	27
56 – 65	95	23
65 and older	149	36
Refused	10	3
Total	410	100%

46. When it comes to employment, are you currently . . . . . ?

	Frequency	Percent
Working part-time	33	8%
Working full time	168	41
Not currently employed	21	5
Retired	178	43
Refused/NA	10	3
Total	410	100%

47. Is your race . . . ?

	Frequency	Percent
White	381	93%
African American	1	--
Other	15	4
Refused	13	3
Total	410	100%

48. Is your residence in Gulf Shores north or south of the Intra-coastal Waterway?

	Frequency	Percent
North	100	24%
South	301	74
DK/NA	9	2
Total	410	100%

49. How long have you lived in Gulf Shores?

	Frequency	Percent
2 or fewer	22	5%
3-5	83	20
6-10	96	23
11-20	126	31
More than 20	76	19
DK/NA	7	2
Total	410	100%

50. And finally, is your total household income before taxes . . .

	Frequency	Percent
Under \$30,000	23	5%
\$30,000 to \$60,000	109	27
\$60,000 to \$100,000	124	30
Over \$100,000	101	25
Refused/DK/NA	53	13
Total	410	100%

51. Thank you for your participation. This is the end of the interview.

*Enter respondent's sex:*

	Frequency	Percent
Male	202	49%
Female	208	51
Total	410	100%

