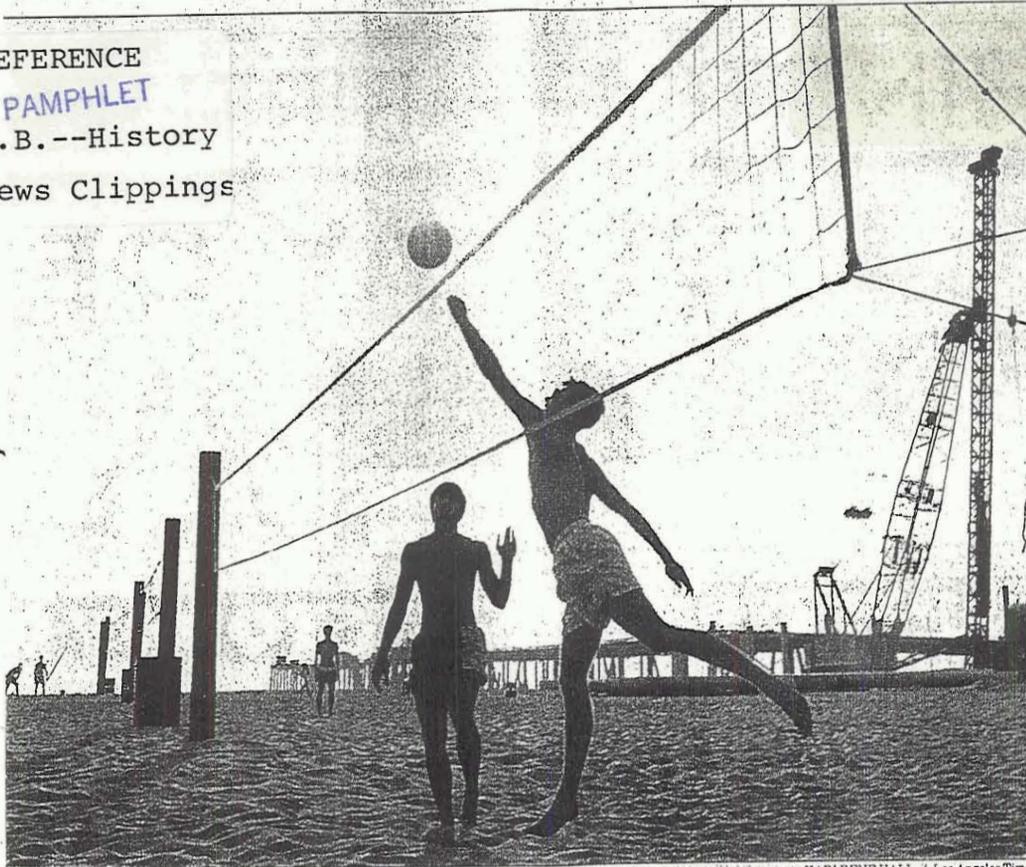


Surf Drowns Out City's Drawbacks

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KARI RENE HALL / Los Angeles Times

There's work and play at the beach: volleyball and pier reconstruction, above. Below, Jack's Surfboards' door is painted.

■ **Image:** Despite traffic and environmental concerns, Huntington Beach gets a favorable rating from 98% of the surveyed residents.

By BILL BILLITER
 TIMES STAFF WRITER
L.A. Times
 2-18-91

HUNTINGTON BEACH—Call it a very fervent love affair. Residents here don't just like living here; they revel in it. The Times Orange County Poll found that 98% have a favorable opinion of their city—an astonishingly high degree of citizen satisfaction, said pollster Mark Baldassare. "Huntington Beach has an incredibly positive image among residents, and it would be hard to conceive of many places in California that would have such a high image," he said. Despite this approval rating, the poll also showed that residents think Huntington Beach has some significant problems. Residents have a somewhat cynical view of local politics, believing that developers and oil companies carry far more influence than average citizens or environmental groups. Traffic and wor-

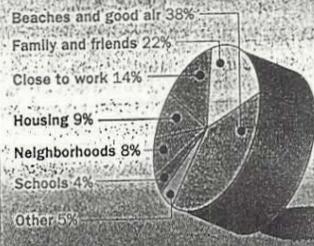
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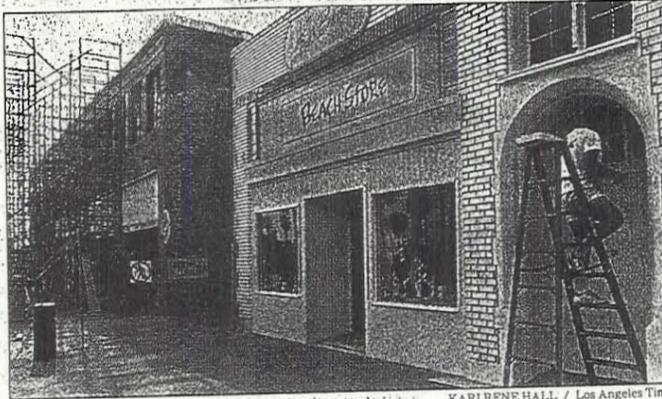
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Why Huntington Beach?

What is the main reason you chose to live in Huntington Beach?



Sources: The Times Orange County Poll
 Los Angeles Times



KARI RENE HALL / Los Angeles Times

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BEACH: Happy Residents

Continued from B1
ries over the environment and too much development are also prime concerns, the poll showed.

Six hundred Huntington Beach residents were interviewed for The Times Orange County Poll, conducted by Mark Baldassare & Associates. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4%.

Beaches are the top-ranked feature of life in Huntington Beach, rated "very satisfactory" by three in four residents. And beaches and air quality are the main reasons most residents give for choosing to live in Huntington Beach. Beaches are an especially big draw in the downtown area, where 51% of residents said that was their main reason for living in Huntington Beach, contrasted with one in three elsewhere in the city.

Roland Munson, a 25-year Huntington Beach resident who took part in the poll, said he has always been "a water person."

"I like living near a nice, clean beach that's easily accessible," said Munson, 41. "When I'm home, I usually go to the beach three or four times a week. I also like the air quality here."

Munson said he worries about development. "I live close to the Bolsa Chica preserve, and some of that is soon to be developed," he said. Developers, he added, "pretty much get what they want" from the city's government.

Nonetheless, 61% of residents rated city government "excellent" or "good," and 29% rated it "fair."

"Despite this rather cynical view

of city government—that big companies wield power and local businesses, environmental groups and residents have little influence—most residents give good grades to city government's performance," Baldassare said.

But he said that Huntington Beach's city government benefits from residents' overall satisfaction with the outdoor lifestyle and with the safety of living in the city.

"For a city of its size, it lacks significant urban problems usually associated with such large communities, such as high degrees of concern about crime and poor schools," Baldassare said.

Only 16% of the residents cited crime and gang violence as a "big" problem in the city, with 41% saying crime is somewhat of a problem. By contrast, 48% called traffic congestion a big problem, 37% said the same of too much growth and development and 33% called pollution a big problem in Huntington Beach.

"I like the feeling of security in the city," said Shelley Young, 31, an 11-year resident. "I feel very safe living here."

But when it comes to city politics, Young joins the majority of residents who think developers and oil companies have more sway with the City Council than do average residents. The Times Orange County Poll showed that 66% of residents believe developers have "a lot" of influence over city politics, and 54% believe the same about oil companies.

In contrast, just 14% of residents believe that average citizens have "a lot" of influence.

"If I were to go down to the City Council with a problem and if I were opposed by a developer or an oil company, I don't think I'd have a ghost of a chance," Young said.

The poll also showed that Huntington Beach residents believe that their city hasn't changed much in the last five years. Most also think that the city will be pretty much the same five years from now, and given residents' high satisfaction with life in Huntington Beach, that seems just the way they want it.

"Huntington Beach," Baldassare concluded, "offers aspects of the California lifestyle which are becoming extinct elsewhere today."



Los Angeles Times

How the Poll Was Conducted

The Times Orange County Poll was conducted Jan. 19 to 21 by Mark Baldassare & Associates. The telephone survey of 600 adult residents of Huntington Beach was conducted on weekend days and weekday nights using a computer-generated random sample of listed and unlisted telephone numbers in Huntington Beach.

The survey divided Huntington Beach into four areas. The margin of error for the total sample is plus or minus 4%. For subgroups, such as residents of a particular ZIP code area, the margin of error would be larger.

Sampling error is just one type of error that can affect opinion polls. Results can also be affected by question wording, survey timing and other variables. All responses were anonymous, but some respondents agreed to be re-interviewed later for a news story.