Carson City: What Do You Think?
2007 Community Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The mission of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) is “to discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of people.” In order to be effective in improving the quality of life for people in our communities, Extension Educators develop educational programs based on community needs. Educational programs alone may not address every need identified in an assessment and entities other than UNCE may better address some needs. By identifying critical issues, UNCE can provide support and direction in resolving the needs of the community, both directly through programming and indirectly through a cooperative effort with other community-based organizations.

This research project served two primary goals. The first was to identify how UNCE could best serve Carson City residents, English or Spanish speaking, by having them identify what areas presented in the survey were most important to them. The second was to build a prioritized list of outreach needs to determine educational programming for UNCE in Carson City for the next five years.

BACKGROUND

Carson City is a consolidated municipality, combining both city and county government. It covers 146 square miles and has a population of 56,528 (ESRI 2008 estimate). It is a dynamic, rapidly changing community. The population has increased dramatically — up 57% since 1980 (Figure 1).
The previous UNCE Carson City needs analysis conducted in 2003 used both subjective and objective data (Skelly and Skelly, 2004). Subjective measures included results of a number of polls conducted by the local government and opinion surveys conducted by community service organizations. Objective data originated with the Nevada State Demographer, the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Geological Survey. Most of the data analyzed for this 2003 assessment were collected prior to 2001 and the analysis noted that current data was needed. Another need identified in the 2003 analysis was for UNCE to “improve its outreach to the diverse cultural populations contributing to the makeup of Carson City. Every reasonable effort should be made to assure the representativeness of sampling from the community…” It was imperative to collect current data from both English and Spanish-speaking audiences.

**CONDUCTING THE ASSESSMENT**

We, the authors, discussed various assessment techniques and brainstormed creative strategies to increase response rates. We purposefully chose not to overwhelm target audiences with an excess of cumbersome requests for information, as is often the case in surveys. We refrained from designing a traditional mailed survey. Instead, we utilized unusual shapes, colors and interesting pictures to capture the attention of potential respondents (See Appendices A and B).

Mailed surveys often rely on voter registration lists to generate a random sample. We felt that using voter lists would limit our responses to traditional respondents with little or no feedback from underserved audiences. Over 15 percent of Carson City’s residents speak a language other than English at home, primarily Spanish (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the Hispanic population for Carson City at 18.5 percent - the fifth highest in the state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Rarely is this audience targeted for input. Therefore, we decided to have the survey translated into Spanish and work to get their responses.
Our limited budget precluded surveying each household in Carson City (over 20,000). Canvassing on street corners or door-to-door was impractical because of the limited hours and personnel available. The question was how to get valid and reliable data from a smaller sample size of both English and Spanish speakers.

Furthermore, participation had to be voluntary, anonymous, random and reflect the actual make-up of Carson City. The best answer we could devise was a map-based sampling procedure. This approach allowed households from each neighborhood to participate equally. Carson City is already geographically divided into neighborhoods, or census tracts, by the U.S. Census Bureau. Carson City’s ten census tracts range from 1,075 to 3,900 households per tract (Figure 2). Forty to 50 responses (400-500 total) from each census tract would provide a reasonable survey.

**FIGURE 2**

**Carson City Census Tracts Response Rate**
Based on UNCE programmatic capability, five major program domains were examined: *Natural Environment, Health, Community, Youth* and *Education*. Six to ten key words and phrases further identified specific topics within each domain. This allowed participants to select as many specific topics as they wanted, among about three dozen choices. We invited them to rank these choices. We organized the five main program domains graphically. An additional question was included to improve Extension communication with residents in the community. Participants could select their preferred mode or modes of communication about Carson City, such as print, broadcast or internet. Finally, participants could make open-ended comments or suggestions that might provide additional useful information. The heart of the data was the selection of key words or phrases and identification of respondent’s census tract number.

Since each survey was labeled with a first class business reply mail stamp, respondents could mail completed surveys to UNCE. They could also respond online using a web-based version of the survey.

Working with the local newspaper, *The Nevada Appeal*, we had 20,000 copies in English printed with plans to insert 18,000 into subscribers’ billing statements and distribute the rest at community events, meetings, churches, family resource centers, the senior center, health department and childcare outlets. We also sent electronic copies out with hard copy attachments and links to the website to numerous email contact lists. We had 5,000 copies printed in Spanish. These were distributed at various Latino events and through multiple organizations serving Latino audiences. We advertised in the newspaper that a survey was coming out in their newspaper billing statements and that it was also available online at http://www.YourCarsonCity.org.

**CHALLENGES and LIMITATIONS**

During the first week of survey availability, we received a few online responses, but no surveys were returned by mail. Since reply mail is often delivered more slowly than regular mail, we were not initially concerned. Supposedly, more surveys were mailed out each week in statements to newspaper subscribers and surveys were also available at locations throughout the city and via the website. Distribution through the newspaper seemed like a viable alternative to mailed surveys, however, the surveys were not inserted into billing statements in a timely manner because the shipment to the out-of-state inserter was lost for several weeks. In fact, surveys were delayed almost four weeks, and did not start going out until after the deadline printed on the surveys. Although 8,000 surveys were sent out in statements, we decided statement stuffing was not a timely means of distribution. We asked that the remaining 10,000 surveys be returned, which took an additional week.

We then hired a company to distribute 5,000 surveys as door hangers in census tracts 5 and 10 where they distributed 3,000 English surveys and 2,000 Spanish surveys by the first week in October 2007. In all, 18,400 surveys in English and 2,500 surveys in Spanish were distributed. Although we reached our target of 40 to 50 responses in eight out of ten census tracts, the study is cross-sectional and we cannot infer causality; the data are self-report and subject to bias.
RESULTS and PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

UNCE staff entered the raw data into an Excel spreadsheet. This was then tabulated and analyzed by the Center for Program Evaluation at the University of Nevada, Reno. The survey was completed by 524 respondents, 388 (74 percent) responded in English and 136 (26 percent) responded in Spanish. The Census tract map (Figure 2 on the preceding page) shows only 464 responses because 60 respondents did not designate a tract or were out of the Carson City area.

Respondents circled and ranked the areas most important to them in five categories: *Natural Environment, Health, Community, Youth and Education*. They were also invited to rank the topics they circled in each domain. The percentages reported throughout the publication reflect the participants’ indication of the area as important, whether they ranked it or just circled it. Since everyone did not rank his or her priorities, we included any indication that an area was important. Overall, combining English and Spanish responses, the most respondents (35% or more) chose the following areas as being important:

**FIGURE 3**
Top Areas of Importance to Respondents

- **Youth: Avoiding gangs** 47.1%
- **Youth: Avoiding drugs** 46.2%
- **Natural Environment: Water Quality** 43.5%
- **Education: Parenting** 41.8%
- **Natural Environment: Water Conservation** 41.2%
- **Community: Respect for all cultures** 40.3%
- **Natural Environment: Wildfire Safety** 39.3%
- **Community: Family Programs** 39.1%
- **Health: Affording Healthcare** 37.8%
- **Youth: Healthy fun out of school** 37.0%
- **Education: Lifelong learning** 36.6%
The top two priorities overall concerned youth. The first was youth avoiding gangs (47.1 percent) and the second youth avoiding drugs (46.2 percent). UNCE Carson City currently provides a number of programs designed to help children avoid gang involvement. Although the life skills taught in the 4-H youth program are designed to help children avoid negative behaviors, such as drug use, we do not have a specific drug-education program. There are options for UNCE outreach in this area. A first step will be to identify what drug education programs already exist in the community and see if there are partnership opportunities with other community-based organizations. We can also help these organizations by promoting their drug-education programs to increase awareness of availability. If gaps in education about avoiding drugs are identified, UNCE is able to find resources to implement additional community drug education.

Since the third priority concerned water quality (43.5 percent) and the fifth priority was water conservation (41.2 percent), programs on water quality and quantity continue to be warranted. UNCE has two water quality education specialists in the Western Area who provide programs about these two topics.

Parenting (41.8 percent) in the Education domain is the fourth area of importance for respondents overall. UNCE Carson City currently offers a nationally recognized parent-training program for parents with difficult or out-of-control children and teenagers called The Parent Project. In addition, UNCE has state and area specialists for this topic. Other agencies in Carson City also provide parenting programs. We can make the community aware of these programs and explore partnering opportunities.

Respect for all cultures, under the domain Community, was the sixth priority (40.3 percent). This presents an exciting opportunity for UNCE to explore effective methods of educating Carson City residents, agencies and government about appreciation of diversity and the advantages of a multicultural community.

The seventh priority (39.3 percent) was wildfire safety in the domain Environment. UNCE works very closely with the Carson City Fire Department, Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and other firefighting and community organizations to deliver a consistent wildfire education message called Living with Fire. This includes developing six Nevada Fire Safe Council Chapters in Carson City. UNCE has a natural resources specialist who focuses on wildfire threat reduction education. This finding supports continuing our Living with Fire efforts.

Responders want family programs (39.1 percent) for the community as the eighth area of importance. 4-H is a program that involves youth and their parents. Roles for UNCE are to promote 4-H more, find additional program opportunities and to make people aware of what family programs other organizations provide in the community.

The ninth concern was affording healthcare (37.8 percent). While UNCE cannot make health care more affordable, we can provide programs that can help people improve their health working with our Western Area nutrition specialist.
The final two of the top 11 areas of importance are in the domains of Youth and Education. Responders want healthy fun out of school for their children and teens (37.0 percent) and opportunities for lifelong learning (36.6 percent). Many people wrote comments about needing youth activities, recreation activities, sports and safe places for youth to congregate. Youth development is a primary focus for UNCE and that includes clubs, projects and afterschool programs. UNCE’s mission is to provide lifelong learning based on community needs. We have learning opportunities for all ages with programs such as 4-H, Master Gardeners and more. We will continue to look for ways to meet this need.

Although the number of respondents differed in the English and Spanish speaking audiences, we ranked the responses in each domain to allow us to examine similarities and differences for each population. The results indicate that it may be most important to Spanish-speaking residents to focus programming efforts on wildfire safety, coping with drugs, family programs, and parenting education. Programming focused on water quality and conservation, affording healthcare, respect for all cultures and using money wisely may be most important to English-speaking residents. Both populations noted avoiding gangs and drugs as their top youth priorities. Responses by census tract for each topic area within the five domains are available upon request.

FIGURE 4
Comparing English and Spanish Responses by Domain and Topic Area
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

![Diagram showing comparisons between English and Spanish responses for natural environment topics.]
FIGURE 5
Comparing English and Spanish Responses by Domain and Topic Area
HEALTH

FIGURE 6
Comparing English and Spanish Responses by Domain and Topic Area
COMMUNITY
FIGURE 7  
Comparing English and Spanish Responses by Domain and Topic Area  
**YOUTH**

![Graph comparing English and Spanish responses by domain and topic area for youth.](image)

FIGURE 8  
Comparing English and Spanish Responses by Domain and Topic Area  
**EDUCATION**

![Graph comparing English and Spanish responses by domain and topic area for education.](image)
In order to find out how best to reach people in the community, we asked participants how they like to get news about Carson City. Newspapers and television were the most frequently indicated responses (see Table below). English-speakers were more likely than Spanish-speakers to prefer newspapers, the Internet and mailers. Spanish-speakers were more likely than English-speakers to prefer radio and brochures.

**FIGURE 9**

*How do you like to get news about Carson City?*

![Bar chart showing preferences for news sources, with overall, English, and Spanish percentages for each category.]

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

To keep the survey brief, we did not ask demographic questions. Therefore, to infer demographic information, respondents were asked to indicate in which of the 10 Census tracts of Carson City they lived. The most respondents lived in areas 4, 6, 3 and 2 (see Figure 2 page 4). English-speakers were more likely than Spanish-speakers to live in areas 1, 2 and 3. Spanish-speakers were more likely than English-speakers to live in areas 4 and 7. This information will help UNCE and others to more effectively target specific populations if needed.

In Figure 10, some general demographics such as gender, median household income, median age, schooling and culture/ethnicity are broken out by Census tract.
### FIGURE 10: Demographic Data by Census Tract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Tract</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td><strong>Number of Respondents</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Respondents</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td><strong>Overall Population 2005</strong></td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>3,627</td>
<td>4,258</td>
<td>3,816</td>
<td>9,443</td>
<td>6,534</td>
<td>7,659</td>
<td>6,534</td>
<td>4,503</td>
<td>5,105</td>
<td>56,525</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Population Estimate 2008</strong></td>
<td>3,208</td>
<td>3,526</td>
<td>4,158</td>
<td>3,898</td>
<td>4,028</td>
<td>2,293</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>2,405</td>
<td>4,256</td>
<td>29,121</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Households</strong></td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>1,628</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>2,293</td>
<td>2,921</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>2,818</td>
<td>21,639</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Male, 2005</strong></td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>2,144</td>
<td>1,921</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>3,834</td>
<td>3,645</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>2,405</td>
<td>4,256</td>
<td>29,121</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Female, 2005</strong></td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>1,873</td>
<td>2,115</td>
<td>1,895</td>
<td>4,843</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>4,014</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>2,701</td>
<td>4,060</td>
<td>27,405</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median age</strong></td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>40.3</td>
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<td><strong>Median household Income $</strong></td>
<td>48,668</td>
<td>63,139</td>
<td>87,935</td>
<td>60,764</td>
<td>43,806</td>
<td>47,344</td>
<td>60,703</td>
<td>65,486</td>
<td>46,192</td>
<td>58,213</td>
<td>54,140</td>
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<td><strong>Own home percent</strong></td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
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<td>80.5%</td>
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<td><strong>Rent home percent</strong></td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent High School Diploma or Equivalent, 2005</strong></td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Percent Bachelors Degree, 2005</strong></td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Graduate/ Professional Degree, 2005</strong></td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race and Ethnicity Percent of total</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White Alone**</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
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<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Alone**</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander Alone**</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race Alone**</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or More Races Alone**</td>
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<td>1.7%</td>
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<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<td>Hispanic Origin** (Any Race)*</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*January 2005 Estimates Nevada Small Business Development Center

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LESSONS LEARNED

Three months proved a gross underestimate of the time required to collect enough data. The time required to collect 500 responses was far greater than expected. The original completion date was August 15, 2007. This date was first extended to September 15 and then to October 31, 2007. We chose not to use voter lists to randomly identify participants because we felt it left out non-traditional audiences. However, it is a simpler, more controlled and more measurable process than the methods we used. Our method of distributing thousands of surveys throughout the City to collect 500 responses didn’t allow us to measure our response rate. While it saved postage costs, it was expensive from a time standpoint.

Our attempt to produce a graphically-oriented assessment that could be completed quickly and easily was successful. In general, participants responded favorably to the survey instrument itself. Participants found the survey visually appealing and simple to complete. Participants at community events were far more likely to complete a survey on the spot than complete and return it later. The widespread distribution of the survey achieved another valuable goal by broadly publicizing and promoting UNCE’s role in the community. Many Carson City residents saw the survey even if they did not respond. Repeated use of the University’s logo on the survey emphasized UNCE’s relationship with University of Nevada, Reno.

Of the 524 responses we received, 26 percent were in Spanish. We felt this was an excellent representation of the Spanish-speaking community. We attained a very important goal for the project, gathering input from this underrepresented audience. The sample wasn’t truly random, as we targeted specific census tracts to reach our response rate goals, but this sampling technique is a common method used when trying to reach a specific audience. In addition with the way the sample was collected for the survey we were unable to calculate or report error accurately.

Chi-square results are available upon request.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Sample of the Carson City Survey 2007 – English Version, front

Carson City: What do YOU think?

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension helps Carson City through education.

1. How can we best serve you?
   If you live in Carson City and are 18 or older, take a minute to circle the area or areas most important to you. Number the most important #1. Number as many or as few as you want (#2, 3, 4, etc).

   Health
   Preventing disease
   Healthcare
   Coping with alcohol
   Coping with tobacco
   Coping with drugs
   Activity & fitness

   Natural Environment
   Water quality
   Water conservation
   Open space
   Recycling
   Gardening
   Pest control

   Community
   Respect for all cultures
   Volunteering
   Access to social services
   Senior programs
   Family programs
   Adult programs

   Education
   Parenting
   Learning job skills
   Community organizing
   Life long learning
   Dealing with life changes
   Anger management

   Youth
   Avoiding alcohol
   Job training
   Avoiding drugs
   Supportive family structure
   Healthy fun out of school

2. How do you like to get news about Carson City? Please circle one or more: brochures email friends family Internet mailers newspaper radio television workshops

Please turn over and complete the other side.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

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APPENDIX A (continued)
Sample of the Carson City Survey 2007 – English Version, back

3. Where do you live?
Please circle one of the numbers on the map.

Comments & Suggestions:

For more information: 887-2252 or shellfy@unce.unr.edu. Fax: 887-2065.
Thank you!
www.YourCarsonCity.org

Please fold & tape before mailing.
APPENDIX B
Sample of the Carson City Survey 2007 – Spanish Version, front

Carson City: ¿Qué crees?
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension ayuda a Carson City a través de la educación.

1. Cómo podemos servirle
Si vives en Carson City y tienes 18 años o más (círculo) el o las áreas más importantes para ti. Marca el más importante #1. Marca tantas o pocas como quieras #2,3,4 etc.

Salud
Prevención enfermedad
Previsión enfermedad
Información de cuidado de la salud
Hacer frente al alcohol
Hacer frente al tabaco
Hacer frente a las drogas
Actividad y ejercicio
Nutrición
Salud al alcance
Seguridad del alimento

Ambiente Natural
Calidad de agua
Conservación del agua
Espacios abiertos
Reciclaje
Jardinería
Control de plagas
Seguridad contra inundación
Habitat de la flora
Seguridad contra incendios forestales

Comunidad
Respeto para todas las culturas
Voluntariado
Acceso a servicios sociales
Programas para adultos
Programas para la segunda edad

Jóvenes
Combatiendo el alcohol
Combatiendo el tabaco
Combatiendo la violencia
Diversidad sostenible afuera de la escuela
Familia estructurada y fortalecida

Edición
Clases de los padres
Entrenando los cambios de vida
Control de temperamento
Adquiriendo habilidades para el trabajo
Aprendiendo para toda la vida

2. Cómo te gustaría obtener noticias de Carson City? Por favor circula una o más:
- Sellos correo electrónico
- Asamblea del pueblo
- Internet
- Periódico
- Radio televisión"
APPENDIX B (continued)
Sample of the Carson City Survey 2007 – Spanish Version, back

3. Donde vives?
Por favor circula una de los numeros por el mapa.

Comentarios y Sugerencias:

Per favor doble y cierre antes de enviar.

Para más información: 687-2232 e skellyj@unce.unr.edu. Fax: 687-2465.
Gracias!
www.YourCarsonCity.org

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