

Burger joint tops wish list

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Poway Road has been criticized as being less a downtown and more 3½ miles of strip malls and fast food restaurants. For years, city officials have worked on transforming that image.

So what types of eateries would residents most like to see move into the city? In-N-Out Burger, Arby's and Wendy's.

The fast foot outlets were at or near the top of the list in a city survey asking residents about their shopping habits and what businesses they want in Poway.



NELVIN C. CEPEDA / Union-Tribune
A city survey found that 64 percent of Poway residents patronize the Poway Road corridor (above) for meals.

Gastronomical delight in Poway, it seems, comes in the form of fast food. City officials good-naturedly endorsed the findings.

The people have spoken, Councilman Bob Emery said. “Poway should look like what its citizens want,” he said. “I am one of those who want fast food. I want In-N-Out.”

“I love In-N-Out,” Councilwoman Merrilee Boyack said. “I always order a hamburger – animal style – a Neapolitan shake and french fries. I’m in heaven.”

Highlights:

The patty in an animal-style burger is cooked with mustard and smothered with pickles, grilled onions and extra dressing, an In-N-Out spokesman said.

What about cholesterol?

Who cares, said Councilman Don Higginson, who also wants In-N-Out to move in.

“I hope I have cholesterol,” Higginson said. “My grandfather died when he was 94, and he ate eggs every morning his whole life.”

The survey, which cost the city \$1,000, will be used as a barometer for development efforts, said Kim Schmidt, Poway's economic development manager.

It was conducted by the city in October with the help of seniors at California State University San Marcos. Questionnaires were mailed to 7,500 randomly selected households, and 2,000 were returned. Of those, 823 were tabulated. The results have a 95 percent confidence level, the city said.

The results don't mean the city will abandon plans to change the look of its main drag so it has more of a downtown feel.

“There's nothing wrong with strip centers,” City Manager Rod Gould said. “But we want more than just strip centers.”

He said the proposed town center, which envisions specialty retail and dining along with housing on 53 acres on the south side of Poway Road, east and west of Civic Center Drive, is an example of what would be an ideal development.

Poway survey of shopping habits

Local shopping: 70 percent of Poway residents regularly patronize local shops.

Restaurants wanted: In-N-Out Burger, Arby's, Souplantation, Wendy's, HomeTown Buffet, Applebee's, Red Lobster, Macaroni Grill, The Cheesecake Factory, a steakhouse, California Pizza Kitchen

Stores wanted: Trader Joe's, Wal-Mart Supercenter, Lowe's, Barnes & Noble, Best Buy, Sports Authority, Old Navy, Whole Foods, Ross, Jimbo's, Macy's

Stores/services city lacks: Restaurants, apparel, entertainment, convenience, home decor

Neither Emery nor Higginson said he thought the city's taste for fast food contributes to the strip-mall look of Poway Road. The sprawling malls were there before the city incorporated, Emery said.

“Not every family can afford to eat at midrange restaurants,” Boyack said.

And to be fair, the responses to “specific restaurants you would like to see in Poway” were not all of the “Fast Food Nation” variety. Souplantation, which specializes in elaborate salads, edged out Wendy's for third place. Respondents also said they wanted more upscale eateries, such as The Cheesecake Factory.

Trader Joe's, a Wal-Mart Supercenter and Lowe's topped the list of the most wanted stores.

The survey also found that 70 percent of residents shop regularly in Poway, with 73 percent of them patronizing the Poway Road corridor for groceries and 64 percent going there for meals.

That was mostly good news to city leaders, who are trying to promote local shopping in hopes of boosting sales tax revenue. It is projected at \$11.5 million this fiscal year, roughly 32 percent of the city's \$36 million general fund.

A “Poway Your First Choice” branding campaign began last fall and is ongoing.

“People haven't always shopped in Poway,” Boyack said. “But we have made consistent efforts to bring in Costco, Staples, Kohl's. A lot of shopping is shifting back to Poway. That's great.”