

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2012 City of Champlin

Residential Demographics:

Champlin is both a growing community and a stabilized community, with a sizable proportion of newcomers as well as a core of longer term “settlers.” The growth of newcomers slowed somewhat, but still remains comparatively high. The median residential longevity of adult residents is 15.2 years, indicative of the recent waves of in-migration. Sixteen percent of the sample report moving to the city during the past five years, while another 12% state they had resided there for over three decades.

The typical resident working outside of the home reports a 19.5 minute commute. Fifteen percent have commuter times of less than 10 minutes. But, a similar 13% post times over 30 minutes. Fifty-one percent of commuters have jobs in one of four communities: within Champlin, Minneapolis, Maple Grove or Brooklyn Park. Ninety-three percent of the commuters report they drive alone to their jobs.

The typical household in Champlin contains two adults and one child. Seventeen percent of the city’s households contain senior citizens; in fact, 11% are exclusively composed of senior citizens. Forty-three percent of the households contain school-aged children or pre-schoolers in residence. Eighty-five percent own their current homes, while 14% rent.

The average age of respondents is 48.9 years old. Thirty percent of the sample fall into the over 55 years age range, while 14% are within the less than 35 years old ranges. Women and men are equally represented in the sample. Eighty-eight percent of respondents identify themselves as “White,” while six percent are “African-American,” three percent are “Hispanic-Latino,” and two percent are “Asian-Pacific Islanders.” The precinct of residence of each respondent is noted: a high of 27% each live in Precincts One and Two, while 24% reside in Precinct Four, and 23% in Precinct Three.

Quality of Life:

Five community characteristics are selected by 67% of the residents as what they “like most” about living in Champlin. Nineteen percent cite “housing and neighborhoods” and 18% point to “friendly people.” Sixteen percent mention “location,” while 14% highly value “small town ambience,” and 10% indicate “rural nature and open spaces.”

“Lack of jobs and businesses” at 13%, while “too much growth” and “high taxes,” both at 10%, are the most serious issues currently facing Champlin. Nine percent point to “rising crime.”

“Traffic congestion,” the most serious issue indicted in the last survey, dropped from 14% to seven percent. Twenty-two percent are “boosters,” who see no serious issues facing the City of Champlin, almost four times higher than the suburban norm and quadruple the level of the last survey.

A solid 97% rate the quality of life as either “excellent” or “good;” and the 34% rating it as “excellent” is easily within the top quarter of suburbs within the Metropolitan Area. Only four percent express any dissatisfaction. Residents seem satisfied, even enthusiastically so, with their lives in the city.

Development and Redevelopment:

When asked what they like most about the significant commercial and industrial growth along Highway 169, 22% point to “convenient location.” Sixteen percent each like the “variety of shopping” or “new businesses there.” A significant 20% point specifically at the “Super Target store.” But, eight percent like “nothing” about this growth.

In assessing what they like least about the growth, “traffic congestion” leads the list at 37%. Twenty percent point to “empty buildings,” while six percent point to the “lack of restaurants.” However, a significantly high 22% dislike “nothing.”

Forty-nine percent see too few “restaurants” available in Champlin. Forty-two percent see too little “light manufacturing businesses and jobs,” 32% think there are too few “service and retail establishments,” and 29% think there are not enough “entertainment establishments, such as movie theaters and night clubs.” In thinking about development or redevelopment they would like to see in the city, three types account for the responses of 48% of the sample: “family sit-down restaurant,” at 28%; and, “fine dining restaurant” or “entertainment establishments,” at 10% each. Thirty-one percent, though, wanted no further development or redevelopment.

By a 60%-30% majority, residents support the use of property tax funds to improve the water quality in the mill pond at the intersection of Highway 169 and West River Road. Intense support is almost twice as strong as intense opposition to this tax-financed project.

Ninety-three percent of the sample used at least one of the five roundabouts in the community. Eighty-six percent of the user group use the roundabouts either “daily” or “weekly.” And, 84% think the roundabout is easy to navigate. Seventy percent think it improved the flow of traffic; twenty-six percent disagreed. And, 69% feel the roundabout improved safety; twenty-five percent disagreed.

Diversity Issues:

Seventy-three percent think ethnic diversity “increased” in the City of Champlin during the past ten years. While 43% see ethnic diversity as a “positive community aspect,” 22% think it is a “negative.” Most respondents seeing growing diversity as a “positive” base their opinions on the “way of the world” and “opportunity to learn about other cultures.” But, residents seeing it as a “negative” were most apt to cite “growing crime rate.” Seventy-one percent think the City of Champlin is doing “about the right amount” for ethnic families in the community; twenty-four percent are “unsure.” The only modest criticism of the City’s action focuses on the abundance of low income housing opportunities.

Code Enforcement:

A solid 83% support the City taking a proactive approach to property maintenance and code enforcement by hiring a code enforcement officer to enforce property maintenance code. Eighteen percent “strongly support” this action, down from the 37% percent level in the 2007 study. Only 12% express opposition to this policy and staffing change. Residents rate the general condition and appearance of properties in their neighborhood as “excellent” or “good,” an eight percent increase in five years; a small eight percent rate them more critically, reflecting a one-half reduction during the same time period.

On average, a very solid 79.4% think the City of Champlin is “about right” in its enforcement of City Codes on nuisances. However, 22% think the City is “not tough enough” on the enforcement of codes defining “messy yards,” and 18% feel the same way about the enforcement of “animal control” codes.

Thirty-nine percent think the rental licensing program of single family homes to comply with maintenance codes governing all rental units is at least “somewhat effective.” Twenty-four percent regard it as “ineffective,” and 37% are “unsure.”

By a 53%-19% margin, residents favor the current policy on business signage allowing the use of temporary signs or banners with a permit; twenty-nine percent are “unsure.” Supporters point to the policy “keeps the city looking nice,” while opponents think the policy is “too restrictive.”

Ninety-three percent of the sample report they were aware of the City’s lawn-sprinkling regulations. By an 82%-12% margin, residents favor the lawn sprinkling regulations. And, a 77%-12% majority reports the lawn sprinkling regulations allow them to care adequately for their yard.

City Services:

A very high 88% feel the quality of city services has kept pace with population growth. Only 11% feel differently, citing “police protection,” “street maintenance,” and “code enforcement.”

Since the change in 2011 to a single-sort curbside recycling program, 60% report they recycle “about the same amount” as prior to the change. Thirty-five percent recycle “more,” and three percent recycle “less.” Twenty-one percent reduced the size of their garbage can. A nearly-unanimous 90% like the new recycling program, while only four percent dislike it.

Ninety-eight rate both garbage and recycling services and park maintenance favorably; only two percent are more critical. Ninety-six percent of city residents rate fire protection as either “excellent” or “good,” while one percent rate it as “only fair” or “poor.” Ninety-one percent each similarly rate police protection and sidewalk and trail maintenance. Eighty-three percent rate city sponsored recreational programs as either “excellent” or “good,” while 80% feel the same way about neighborhood property maintenance code enforcement. Seventy-three percent rate the quality and taste of drinking water highly, while 22% rate it more critically.

In considering only city-maintained streets and roads, 89% rate street lighting favorably, while 12% are more negative. Eighty-eight percent rate city sanding and salting of streets as either “excellent” or “good,” and 11% rate it lower. Eighty percent rate snow plowing highly, while 21% rate it more critically. And, 77% rate street repair and maintenance as either “excellent” or “good,” but 23% see it as “only fair” or “poor.” Overall, the average positive rating of city services is 87%, one of the six highest in the Metropolitan Area.

Seventy-eight percent see fire protection as an “essential” service, while 74% feel the same way about police protection. Sixty-seven percent see snow plowing as “essential,” and 64% think the same about city street repair and maintenance. Fifty-six percent think the quality and taste of drinking water is an “essential” service, 54% think the same about garbage and recycling services, and 52% similarly feel about city sanding and salting of streets. Thirty-eight percent view street lighting as an “essential” service, while 32% regard neighborhood property maintenance code enforcement as “essential.” Twenty-nine percent think city-sponsored recreational programs are “essential,” while only 29% deem park maintenance the same way. Overall, the average city service “essential” rating is 49.1%.

City Services and Taxes:

Residents are given the choice to increase funding, maintain current funding, cut funding, or eliminate each of twelve city services. Across the twelve city services, an average of 87.3%

would maintain each service at its current funding level. Four services register a funding increase between 10% and 15%: city street repair and maintenance, quality and taste of drinking water, city sanding and salting of streets, and snow plowing. Three city services post a combined cut or eliminate rating between 12% and 17%: city-sponsored recreational programs, park maintenance, and sidewalk and trail maintenance.

By a 66%-20% margin, residents oppose a reduction in city services even if it would reduce their property taxes. Those in favor of a service reduction pointed to "Administration," "Parks," and "Police." Only six percent noticed any differences in city service delivery during the past three years when cuts were made, with most pointing to "snow plowing." Many residents, 45%, rate the City portion of their property taxes as "about average" in comparison with neighboring communities. Forty-one percent consider them as either "very high" or "somewhat high," while four percent see them as "low." A very solid 84%, an increase of 12% during the past five years, also consider the quality of the services they receive for their property taxes as either "excellent" or "good," while 12% see them as "only fair" or "poor."

If they were empowered to decrease the budget by one percent, 28% would prioritize park and recreation services. But, a comparatively high 56% would not prioritize any of the four major services – police, fire, street maintenance, and snow plowing – for this decrease.

Public Safety:

"Good," at 46%, is the most often given one-or-two words perception of the Champlin Police Department. "Excellent," at 18% follows. Thirteen percent view them as "strict." And, six per post "helpful." Twenty-six percent had personal contact with the Champlin Police Department during the past two years. The most frequent reasons are for traffic violations or providing emergency services. Seventy-six percent think the way the Police handled the situation was either "excellent" or "good;" but, a relatively high 25% rate it as "only fair" or "poor." But, 88% say the time it took the Police Department to respond was prompt, and 84% say the personnel were courteous and acted in a professional manner. Only seven percent report there are areas in Champlin where they do not feel safe. "Parks," "trails," and "along the river," and "apartment developments" are they key areas of concern. "No lights" and "no police patrols" are the major bases for feeling unsafe. Seventy-three percent think the amount of traffic enforcement by the police is "about right;" but, 22%, the highest in the Metropolitan Area, view it as "too much." Eighty-five percent rate the amount of police patrolling in their neighborhood as "about right," reflecting an 18% increase in five years; only 11% feel there is "not enough," down from 28% in the last study. Three public safety problems are considered to be major issues in Champlin: juvenile crime, such as vandalism, at 46%; traffic safety, at 33%; and, residential crimes, such as burglary, theft, or disorderly houses, at 25%. By a decisive 76%-19% majority, residents support

the City using proactive enforcement as a means to achieve traffic safety.

City Government and City Staff:

Citizen empowerment is at a moderate level. An average number of residents — 30% — feel they could **not** have a say about the way the City of Champlin runs things, if they wanted to. Most communities score between 30% and 38% on this query.

Fifty-six percent know either “a great deal” or “fair amount” about the work of the Mayor and City Council, up 12% in five years. Among all residents, 84% approve of the job of the Mayor and City Council, while 11% disapprove of their job; the approval level reflects an increase of 12% since the last study. The current approval rating is among the highest in the Metropolitan Area. Negative judgments are based upon “lack of listening,” “poor development decisions,” and “generally poor job.”

Forty-seven percent had “quite a lot” or “some” first-hand contact with the Champlin City Staff, an increase of 16% in five years. Respondents give the Staff a job approval rating of 83% and a disapproval rating of seven percent; the positive job rating reflects a comparatively huge change of 29% in five years. “Generally good job,” “helpfulness,” and “nice/kind people” are the main reasons for the positive ratings. This rating of the City Staff is at the top of suburban ratings.

Thirty-five percent report they contacted Champlin City Hall during the past year. On three customer service dimensions, over 88% awarded Staff at City Hall either “excellent” or “good” ratings: ease of reaching a City Staff member who could help them, courtesy of the City staff, and efficiency of the City staff. The City Hall Staff exceeds the generally expected threshold on all three dimensions for high quality customer service in the public sector.

Parks and Recreation:

An exceptionally strong 95% rate the maintenance and condition of City parks and trails as either “excellent” or “good,” while only five percent rate them lower. In discussing a specific facility, 44% report members of their household use the Champlin Ice Forum; among Forum visitors, 94% rate the facility highly.

Twenty-two percent of the households in the community report members at least “occasionally” using the pedestrian bridge over Highway 169. Fifty percent cross the pedestrian bridge for “recreation,” while 16% do so to reach a “specific destination,” and 31% cite “both reasons” for their bridge use.

Residents tied at 48%-48% in the use of city funds to build an outdoor performance area. A 53%-33% majority support its use to develop large meeting or banquet rooms with kitchen facilities for uses such as weddings and community events. By a 61%-33% verdict, residents oppose the use of city funds to build more gymnasium space. A 64%-29% margin opposed the use of city money for expansion of the skate park facilities at Northland Park. And, a compelling 68%-26% majority oppose using city funds for the development of a skate park in the northwest area of the city.

Ninety-four percent think the current mix of City-sponsored park and recreation programming meets the needs of their households; only five percent disagree.

During the past five years, 75% report members of their household attended the Father Hennepin Festival. Among participants, 92% rate their experience as either “excellent” or “good,” while eight percent rate it as “only fair” or “poor.”

City Communications:

The “Champlin Chronicle” city newsletter is the primary source of information about City government and its activities for 46% of the sample, an increase of eight percent in five years. Nineteen percent point to the “Champlin-Dayton Press,” and 13% cite “the grapevine.” If they could choose the way to receive information, 50% would use the “Champlin Chronicle,” while 16% would rely upon the “Champlin-Dayton Press,” and 12%, on “mailings.”

A high 87% regularly read the city newsletter during the past year; among readers, 91% rate the newsletter’s quality highly. Seventy-five percent think the current five times per year publication of the “Champlin Chronicle” is “about the right frequency.” Seventeen percent, though, would like to see the city newsletter published “more often.” In comparison, 72% recall receiving the quarterly City Park and Recreation Brochure during the past year.

Sixty percent report receiving and reading the “Champlin-Dayton Press.” Fifty-nine percent of the survey respondents subscribe to cable television; an additional 32% have satellite television. Among non-subscribers to either service, a small nine percent population segment, only 25% report access to local government access QCTV, Channel 16. Most of this small segment is not aware they could receive local government access channels free of charge. Forty percent of cable subscribers at least “occasionally” watch Champlin City Meetings on Channel 16. Sixty-one percent rate the quality of the telecasts as either “excellent” or “good,” while a small eight percent feel it is “only fair” or “poor.”

Ninety-two percent of the households in the community have access to the Internet either at work

or at home. Among those on-line households, 51% accessed the City's new website. Ninety-five percent of the web site visitors rate the content as either "excellent" or "good." An equally impressive 94% highly rate the ease of navigation. An overwhelming 71% would add no further information to the site; they think it is "fine, as is."

While 53% of the sample would be interested in receiving the city's newsletter in an electronic-only format, 47% would not. Using standard market projection techniques, about 18% of the households in the community would actually use the new format. Fifty-one percent would also be interested in subscribing to e-mails containing city information and news; forty-eight percent would not. Again using standard market projection, about 17% would avail themselves of this new service. Only 36% are aware they can watch past city meetings on QCTV's website; not surprisingly, only eight percent have viewed any archived meetings.

Among social media, "Facebook," at 22% of city households likely to use it for information about the city, ranks as the most effective choice. Fifty-two percent already have a "Facebook" presence, far exceeding all other social media; this advantage would allow the City of Champlin to urge a greater audience on to its "Facebook" page. "YouTube" would be a second priority with its somewhat lower reach among residents and lower, but significant, likelihood of use as an information source.

Summary and Conclusions:

In general, Champlin residents are even more satisfied with their community than five years ago. The solid base in 2007 has been augmented by about 15% during the past five years. The key issues facing decision-makers have changed to addressing perceptions concerning growth and high taxes. Finally, residents express high positive ratings of all city services and a reluctance to cut or eliminate any current offerings. A pruning approach, rather than a chopping approach, is indicated as budget tighten.

Overall, the city enterprise is viewed very strongly. The City Council and City Staff are rated among the top in the Metropolitan Area. Interactions with City Hall tend to boost ratings, rather than lower them. Residents rate their quality of life highly and give the City good grades on maintaining its natural ambience and cohesiveness. The City has established a large reservoir of good will across the community; this will surely serve it well in the years ahead, as the growth and development rates subside and the focus switches to issues of maintenance and balance.