

# The MORRIS LEATHERMAN Company *Report of Findings* **2023 City of Champlin**

## ***Residential Demographics:***

Champlin remains both a growing community as well as a stabilized community, with a sizable proportion of newcomers and a core of longer term “settlers.” The growth of newcomers slowed somewhat but is still comparatively high. The median residential longevity of adult residents is 11.8 years. Twenty-nine percent of the sample report moving to the city during the past five years, up six percent since the 2018 survey, while another 32% state they have lived here for over two decades.

The typical household in Champlin consists of two adults and one child. Twenty-five percent of the city’s households contain senior citizens, up seven percent in five years; in fact, 19% are exclusively composed of senior citizens, almost double the level in the previous study. Thirty-six percent of the households have school-aged children or pre-schoolers in residence. Eighty-six percent own their current homes, while 13% rent.

The average age of respondents is 46.5 years old. Thirty-nine percent of the sample fall into the over 55 years age range, while 46% are within the less than 45 years old range. Women outnumber men in the sample by four percent. Seventy-four percent of respondents identify themselves as “White,” while twelve percent are “African-American,” four percent each are “Hispanic-Latino,” or “Asian-Pacific Islanders.” Four percent also classify themselves as “mixed or biracial.” The ward of residence is again noted: a high of 27% live in Ward Two and 24% live in Ward One, while 25% each reside in Ward Three or in Ward Four.

## ***Quality of Life:***

Ten statistically significant community characteristics are selected by 97% of the residents as what they “like most” about living in Champlin. Sixteen percent say “housing and neighborhoods,” while 15% cite “small town feel,” 13% highly value “friendly people,” and 11% point to “good schools.” Nine percent most like “parks and trails,” eight percent value “safety,” seven percent greatly appreciate “shopping and restaurant opportunities,” and six percent each post “rural nature and open spaces,” “closeness to job,” or “location.”

“High taxes” at 18%, “traffic congestion,” at 13%, and “rising crime,” at 11% are the most-often listed serious issues currently facing Champlin. Nine percent also point to “too much growth,”

and eight percent focus on “lack of jobs and businesses.” Twenty-one percent, a five percent increase in five years, are “boosters,” who see no serious issues facing the City of Champlin, nearly three times as high as the suburban norm.

A solid 95% rate the quality of life as either “excellent” or “good”; the 28% rating it as “excellent,” an 11% drop in five years, remains within the top quarter of suburbs within the Metropolitan Area. Only five percent express any dissatisfaction. Residents seem satisfied, even enthusiastically so, with the quality of life in the city.

Ninety-one percent would recommend living in Champlin to others, a five percent decrease in five years. And, by a 91%-9% majority, residents favorably rate the general sense of community among Champlin residents; in fact, 32% think it is “excellent.” A very impressive 96% report they feel accepted, valued, and welcomed in the City of Champlin.

In assessing aspects of the community that need improvement or are missing from the community and, if present, would greatly improve the quality of life. Two statistically significant attributes are listed by six percent -- “more restaurants – and five percent – “more recreational amenities.” A sizable 35% think there is “nothing” missing or needing improvement and seven percent are “uncertain.”

#### ***Code Enforcement:***

A solid 86% support the City taking a more active approach to property maintenance and code enforcement, a 13% increase in five years. Fifteen percent “strongly support” this action. Only ten percent express opposition to this policy. Ninety-six percent of residents rate the general condition and appearance of properties in their neighborhood as “excellent” or “good”; only five percent rate them more critically, focusing on “rundown residential properties” and “tall weeds or grass.”

On average, a very solid 83.2% think the City of Champlin is “about right” in its enforcement of city codes on nuisances; this is a statistically significant increase of 7.8% in five years. However, 16% think the City is “not tough enough” on “animal control,” and 12% feel the same about “storage and parking of vehicles, boats, and trailers outside.” Eleven percent each feel the same about “exterior home maintenance” and “storage of garbage, recycling, and composting cans.” At the bottom, 10% feel the City is “not tough enough” enforcing codes about “yard maintenance.” All of these criticisms are about one-half the level in the 2018 study.

Seventy-six percent, up nine percent in five years, think the rental licensing program of single family homes to comply with maintenance codes governing all rental units is at least “somewhat effective.” Only eight percent think it is “ineffective.”

By an 81%-12% supermajority, residents support a City-sponsored program with funding available to homeowners for remodeling or home improvements. Twenty percent “strongly favor” this type of offering.

Respondents were reminded the City recently enacted a rental density cap limiting the number of rentals in an area of the community. By a 58%-35% majority, residents support limiting the number of rental homes in their neighborhood. Only seven percent, one-third the level of the 2018 study, report contacting the City with a complaint regarding a rental home in their neighborhood; fifty-nine percent were not satisfied with the City’s response to their complaints.

By a narrow 54%-46% split, residents think the City should allow chickens to be raised in single-family neighborhoods. By an even narrower 49%-47% split, residents also think the City should allow bees to be raised in single-family neighborhoods. These issues seemingly polarize the community, and more analysis may be needed to gain clearer mandates. Similarly, by a 51%-45% split, respondents support allowing golf carts on local streets. Again, a topic requiring further discussion and analysis.

### ***City Services:***

A high 80% feel the quality of city services has kept pace with population growth. Only 12%, about one-half the 2018 level, feel differently.

The table below arrays each of 13 city services with its positive rating – “excellent” or “good” – its negative rating – “only fair” or “poor” – and the change in its positive since the 2018 study.

|   | <b><i>Positive</i></b> | <b><i>Negative</i></b> | <b><i>Change since 2018</i></b> |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Police protection                         | 93%                    | 7%                     | -1%                             |
| Fire protection                           | 100%                   | 0%                     | +7%                             |
| Park maintenance                          | 98%                    | 2%                     | +9%                             |
| Garbage and recycling services            | 91%                    | 9%                     | +3%                             |
| The City cemetery                         | 99%                    | 1%                     | +11%                            |
| Property maintenance and code enforcement | 88%                    | 12%                    | +4%                             |
| Building inspection                       | 93%                    | 7%                     | +12%                            |
| City-sponsored recreational programs      | 92%                    | 8%                     | +11%                            |
| Snow plowing                              | 76%                    | 24%                    | -5%                             |
| Quality and taste of drinking water       | 88%                    | 12%                    | +7%                             |
| Sidewalk and trail maintenance            | 91%                    | 9%                     | +11%                            |
| Street lighting                           | 89%                    | 11%                    | +17%                            |
| City street repair and maintenance        | 76%                    | 24%                    | +7%                             |

Only two services post positive rating decreases: “snow plowing” and “police protection.” Neither of those decreases are statistically significant. The mean positive city services rating is a very solid 90.3%, with an increase of 7.9% in five years. The primary rationales for a negative rating of the quality and taste of drinking water are “poor taste” and “bad odor.”

#### ***City Services and Taxes:***

By a 74%-17% majority, residents support an increase in their City property taxes if it were needed to maintain city services at their current level. Respondents opposing this increase were instead willing to “cut the parks and trails budget,” suggested by nine percent, or “waste collection programs,” at eight percent. Forty-nine percent, though, over twice the 2018 level, would be unwilling to cut any city services as an alternative to the property tax increase; they believe the budget can be balanced through the elimination of wasteful spending. By an equally decisive majority, 69%-19%, city residents also oppose a property tax increase to improve and enhance current city services; among the approximately one-fifth of residents supporting a property tax increase, respondents would target funding for “road repair,” “snow plowing,” and “street lights.”

Residents were reminded that property taxes are divided between the City of Champlin, Hennepin County, and the Anoka-Hennepin School District. They were asked to consider the proportion of property paid and the quality of services they received – respondents could rate the general quality of services as “favorable” – “excellent” or “good” – or “unfavorable” – “only fair” or “poor.” In first place is the City of Champlin, with an 82% favorable rating and 17% unfavorable rating. Next, the Anoka-Hennepin School District received a 73% favorable rating and a 19% unfavorable rating. In last place is Hennepin County, posting a 67% favorable rating and 28% unfavorable rating.

#### ***Waste Disposal and Local Environmental Issues:***

Respondents were informed the City has a contract for organized garbage and recycling services for single-family homes in the community. A nearly unanimous 96% report satisfaction with hauler services; in fact, 46% are “very satisfied.” Only three percent are “not satisfied” due to the high cost and messiness of the services. If a curbside organics collection program for a fee, charged regardless of participation, 15% say their household would be “very likely” to participate in it and 33% think their household would be “somewhat likely” to do so. Using standard market projection techniques, 24% of city households would be expected to take part in this program.

Prior to this survey, 60%, a drop of 17% in five years, report awareness Champlin residents can use the yard waste disposal site in Maple Grove without a fee; thirty-two percent, down 11% since the last study, use this disposal site. Site users can be divided into three groups: 33% use the site once per month or more frequently; 40% do so two-to-four times each year; and 27% use the disposal site once each year. Similarly, 59%, down 21% since the 2018 study, report awareness of the potential weekly pick-up of yard waste by their garbage hauler for a fee; fifteen percent, down 19% in five years, avail themselves of this option.

Prior to this survey, 76%, down 12% since the last study, report awareness of city lawn-sprinkling regulations.

#### ***Public Safety:***

Fifteen percent report recent contact with the Champlin Police Department. Seventy-nine percent rate the contact as either “excellent” or “good”; but, a somewhat high 20% rate it as “only fair” or “poor.” Reasons for lower ratings include “slow response” and “poor attitude.” Overall, 86% say the time it took the Police Department to respond was “prompt,” and the same percentage think Police Department personnel were courteous and acted in a professional manner.

Ninety-six percent report they feel safe living in Champlin. The small percentage who disagree point to the “lack of police patrols.” Seventy-four percent regard the amount of traffic enforcement by police as “about right,” while 22% see it as “not enough.” Similarly, 77% rate the amount of police patrolling in their residential neighborhood as “about the right amount,” while 22% consider it as “not enough.”

The three most statistically significant public safety problems in Champlin are “speeding/dangerous driving,” at 28%, “drugs,” at six percent, and “care break-ins,” at five percent. Fifteen percent view “nothing” as the greatest public safety problem and nine percent are “unsure.”

#### ***City Government and City Staff:***

Citizen empowerment is at a very high level. Sixteen percent, down eight percent since the last study, feel they could **not** have a say about the way the City of Champlin runs things if they wanted to. Most communities score between 25% and 35% on this query.

Sixty-one percent, up nine percent, know either “a great deal” or “fair amount” about the work of the Mayor and City Council. Among all residents, 82% approve of the job of the Mayor and

City Council, while only ten percent disapprove of their job. The current approval rating remains among the highest in the Metropolitan Area. Negative judgments are based upon “in-fighting,” “poor past spending decisions,” and “poor development decisions.”

Thirty-six percent report “quite a lot” or “some” first-hand contact with the Champlin City Staff, reflective of a maturing community. Respondents give the Staff a job approval rating of 81% and a disapproval rating of 11%; “generally good job,” “helpfulness,” and “nice/kind people” are again the main reasons for the positive ratings. This rating of the City Staff is at the top of suburban ratings.

Thirty-four percent, a six percent decrease, report they have contacted Champlin City Hall during the past year. On three customer service dimensions, over 90% 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 accepted threshold of 80% on all three dimensions for high quality customer service in the public sector.

#### ***Parks and Recreation:***

An exceptionally strong 98%, up nine percent since the previous study, rate the maintenance and condition of City parks and trails as either “excellent” or “good,” while only two percent rate them lower. Next, the use and evaluation of eight specific facilities were examined. The table below arrays each facility with its household usage, positive evaluations by users, and negative evaluations by users.

| <b><i>Facility</i></b>                            | <b><i>Usage</i></b> | <b><i>Positive</i></b> | <b><i>Negative</i></b> |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Trails  | 79%                 | 96%                    | 4%                     |
| Smaller neighborhood parks                        | 70%                 | 99%                    | 1%                     |
| Larger community parks                            | 68%                 | 100%                   | 0%                     |
| Mississippi Crossings                             | 65%                 | 98%                    | 2%                     |
| Andrews Park Softball Complex                     | 29%                 | 97%                    | 3%                     |
| Andrews Park Splash Pad                           | 26%                 | 96%                    | 4%                     |
| The Ice Forum                                     | 25%                 | 96%                    | 4%                     |
| Outdoor ice rinks and neighborhood warming houses | 23%                 | 100%                   | 0%                     |
| Galloway Park Disc Golf Course                    | 21%                 | 100%                   | 0%                     |

Four facilities are used by at least 65% of the city’s households: trails, at 79%; smaller neighborhood parks, at 70%; larger community parks, at 68%; and Mississippi Crossings, at

65%. Positive ratings by users of each facility never drop below a high 96%, while negative ratings never exceed five percent. Usage has fallen somewhat since the last study, but evaluations by users of each facility have significantly improved.

Respondents were asked to consider three community facilities which could be developed in the city in the future. By a 64%-30% majority, residents support the use of city funding for additional indoor sports facilities, such as a multi-use indoor sports facility or dome. By a 56%-39% split, residents support the use of city funds for a second sheet of ice at the Ice Forum. By a 53%-39% majority, respondents support an expansion of the skate park facilities at Northland Park.

By a supermajority of 96%-2%, respondents see the current mix of park and recreation programming as meeting the needs of their households. Currently, 34% of the sample report household members play pickleball. Thirty-nine percent report they or household members would be at least “somewhat likely” to use a pickleball complex if one were built in Champlin. Using standard market projection techniques, 20% of city households would be expected to use the pickleball complex.

Sixty-six percent of the sample report household members visiting Mississippi Crossings. Among visitors, 98% rate their experiences favorably.

Sixty percent of the sample report members of their household attended the Father Hennepin Festival. Among participants, 97% rate their experience as either “excellent” or “good,” while only three percent rate it as “only fair” or “poor.” No statistically significant suggestions were made for changes or improvements at the Father Hennepin Festival. Twenty-nine percent of respondents report household members attended the Shed Fest Rock Concert in the Public Works Yard. Among attendees, 97% rate their experience as “excellent” or “good.”

#### ***City Communications:***

The “Champlin Chronicle” city newsletter is the principal source of information about City government and its activities for 39% of the sample. Twenty percent rely upon the “City website,” while 15% point to the “social media.” If they could choose the way they receive information, 43% would use the “Champlin Chronicle,” up 11% in five years, while 19% would rely on the “City website,” and 13% on “social media.”

Seventy-one percent regularly read the city newsletter during the past year; among readers, 95% rate the newsletter’s quality highly. Fifty-one percent of the sample would be either “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to access the City’s newsletter in an electronic format. Using standard market projection techniques, 29% of city households would be expected to access the

electronic version.

In comparison, 67%, down eight percent in five years, recall receiving the quarterly City Park and Recreation Brochure during the past year. Respondents point to several information channels as their principal source about parks and recreation facilities and activities: “city newsletter,” at 28%; “City website,” at 21%; the “grapevine,” at 14%; and “social media,” at 12%.

Among households accessing local Comcast Channels SD 16 or HD 799, or the QCTV website, 16% report they at least “occasionally” watch Champlin City Meetings or Advisory Commission Meetings.

Forty-eight percent of sampled households accessed the City’s website. An impressive 96% highly rate the ease of navigation. A 66% majority would add no further information to the site; they think it is “fine, as is”; limited percentages would like to see “city events,” “recreation programs,” and “planning and development information” added to the website. Fifty-eight percent, down 14% since the last study, are aware the City of Champlin provides monthly electronic updates for residents who sign up for this service; presently, there is a potential audience of five percent likely to subscribe to the updates.

Among social media outlets, “Facebook,” at 49% of city households likely to use it for information about the city, ranks as the most effective choice. Twenty-four percent are likely to use “Twitter” for city information, while 23% are likely to use “YouTube.” Seventeen percent report interest in using Instagram for city information, and 13% would listen to podcasts for the same reason.

### ***Summary and Conclusions:***

Champlin residents are much more satisfied with their community than five years ago. The positive changes noted this year are the largest among suburban communities in the Metropolitan Area. The growing and solidly positive base in 2018 is now about twelve percent higher. The key issues facing decision-makers again run the gamut from managing growth and rising crime to city spending and traffic congestion. Ratings of city services are extraordinarily high and the value for taxes levied rose markedly. Simultaneously, anti-tax attitudes are weaker, particularly with respect to maintaining the quality of city services and several proposed park and recreation system amenities.

There are several implications decision-makers and staff may wish to bear in mind:

- There is solid majority support for a program with funding available to homeowners for

remodeling or home improvements. In addition, traditional concerns about the lax enforcement of city codes on nuisances, such as exterior home maintenance or storage and parking of vehicles outside have literally disappeared. Widespread support for the rental licensing program of single family homes has greatly impacted neighborhood quality, even though some dissatisfaction with city responses to complaints are present.

- General development preferences focus on residential amenities, such as entertainment establishments, recreational opportunities, and arts/cultural opportunities. This change in focus from concerns about the overall growth rate to specific types of desirable community additions is standard in maturing communities – in fact, it is generally referred to a Type II growth, reflective of the waning concern about speedy residential development. This change of perspective is also consistent with the reversal in opposition to the use of city funds in the development of community facilities, such as indoor sports facilities.

The city enterprise is again viewed very strongly. The City Council and City Staff ratings remain are among the top in the Metropolitan Area. And, as in the past, interactions with City Hall tend to boost ratings, rather than lower them. Residents still rate their quality of life highly and give the City good grades in maintaining its natural environment and city cohesiveness. The City does an exceptional job in communicating with residents; but the on-going almost 50-50 split in written word/mailings preference over electronic media will require further straddling in news delivery methods for the immediate future. The City also has one of the highest reservoirs of goodwill in the Metropolitan Area; this will surely serve it as well in the years ahead as it has in the past. In fact, the reservoir of goodwill is evolving into a “glue” tightly linking city decision-makers with residents into a consensus direction for the community.

**Methodology:**

This study contains the results of a sample of 400 randomly selected adult residents residing in the City of Champlin. Professional interviewers conducted the survey by telephone between September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The typical respondent took sixteen minutes to complete the questionnaire. The non-response rate was 6.0%. The results of the study are projectable to all adult Champlin residents within  $\pm$  5.0% in 95 out of 100 cases. Cellphone only households are 53% of the sample, while landline only households are ten percent, and both landline and cellphone households are 37%.