

# The **MORRIS** LEATHERMAN Company

## *Report of Findings* **2017 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 12.5 years, indicative of the recent waves of in-migration. Twenty-two percent of the sample report moving to the city during the past five years, up six percent since the 2012 survey, while another 30% state they have lived here for over three decades.

The typical resident working outside of the home reports a 20.8-minute commute. Sixteen percent have commuter times of less than 10 minutes. But, 22% post times over 30 minutes. Seventy-three percent of commuters have jobs in one of three communities: within Champlin, Minneapolis, or Saint Paul. Eighty-five percent, down eight percent in five years, of the commuters report they “drive alone” to their jobs.

The typical household in Champlin contains two adults and one child. Eighteen percent of the city’s households contain senior citizens; in fact, 10% are exclusively composed of senior citizens. Forty percent of the households have school-aged children or pre-schoolers in residence. Eighty-four percent own their current homes, while 15% rent.

The average age of respondents is 46.7 years old. Thirty percent of the sample fall into the over 55 years age range, while 20% are within the less than 35 years old ranges. Women and men are equally represented in the sample. Seventy-eight percent of respondents, down ten percent in five years, identify themselves as “White,” while ten percent are “African-American,” four percent are “Hispanic-Latino,” and four percent are “Asian-Pacific Islanders.” The ward of residence is again noted: a high of 28% live in Ward One and 27% live in Ward Two, while 23% reside in Ward Four, and 22% live in Ward Three.

### *Quality of Life:*

Six community characteristics are selected by 82% of the residents as what they “like most” about living in Champlin. Nineteen percent each cite “housing and neighborhoods” or “friendly people.” Fifteen percent mention “small town feel,” while 13% highly value “good schools,” nine percent indicate “rural nature and open spaces,” and seven percent cite “safe community.”

“Too much growth” at 17%, “rising crime,” at 16%, and “high taxes” or “traffic congestion,” each at 11%, are the most-often listed serious issues currently facing Champlin. Nine percent

also point to “lack of jobs and businesses,” and eight percent focus on “growing diversity.” Sixteen percent are “boosters,” who see no serious issues facing the City of Champlin, over twice as high as the suburban norm.

A solid 96% rate the quality of life as either “excellent” or “good;” the 39% 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 the quality of life in the city.

Ninety-six percent rate Champlin as either “excellent” or “good” as a place to raise children; similarly, 91% rate the community the same way as a place to retire. Ninety-six percent would recommend living in Champlin to others. And, by a 96%-5% majority, residents favorably rate the general sense of community among Champlin residents; in fact, 35% think it is “excellent.” The small number of critics would like to see the sense of community improved through more “neighborhood events.” A very impressive 98% report they feel accepted, valued and welcomed in the City of Champlin.

In assessing aspects of the community that should be fixed or improved in the future, three attributes are listed by eight percent each: “pedestrian safety,” “crime rate,” and “street maintenance.” “Jobs” or “parks and trails” are cited by five percent each. But, a sizable 33% think there is “nothing” in need of fixing or improving, and 11% are “uncertain.” In discussing things currently missing from Champlin which, if present, could improve the quality of life for residents, 54% report there is “nothing,” and 11% are “unsure.” Only “recreational facilities,” at six percent, registers as a potential, albeit limited, topic for further consideration.

### ***Development and Redevelopment:***

When asked what they like most about the significant commercial and industrial growth along Highway 169, 22% point to “variety of offerings.” Nineteen percent like the “new businesses there.” A significant 18% point specifically to “convenience.” Another twelve percent like the “Super Target,” and 11% cite “new restaurants.” Only five percent report they like “nothing” about the commercial and retail growth along the Highway 169 corridor.

In assessing what they like least about the growth, “traffic congestion” leads the list at 38%. Eleven percent point to “too much growth,” while seven percent unhappily point to the “numerous chain stores.” However, a significantly high 29% dislike “nothing,” seven percent higher than the 2012 study.

Respondents were asked to rate each of seven characteristics about their abundance in Champlin. Residents could indicate there were currently “too much or too many,” “about the right amount or number,” or “too few or too little.” In every case, no fewer than 64% deemed each as “about

the right amount or number.” The table below shows each characteristic followed by those thinking there are “too few or little” and the percentage seeing “too much or too many.”

	<i><b>Too Few/ Too Little</b></i>	<i><b>Too Much/ Too Many</b></i>
Entertainment establishments	31%	7%
Restaurants	29%	5%
Arts and cultural opportunities	28%	2%
Community celebrations and special events	27%	1%
Service and shopping opportunities	17%	13%
Access to the Mississippi River	15%	2%
Parks, trails and open spaces	15%	5%

Over one-quarter of the sample see a need for more “entertainment establishments,” “restaurants,” “arts and cultural opportunities,” and “community celebrations and special events.” The thrust of the first three on the list reveals a community need for more “in-town” amenities.

By a 66%-24% majority, residents oppose the City providing financial incentives to attract specific types of development; in fact, intense opposition is almost five times higher than intense support for this approach. Among the minority of supporters of financial development incentives, the use of incentives to attract restaurants, family entertainment options, and gainful employment opportunities have the most support.

If a hotel were built in Champlin, 54% of the sample report friends or family would be likely to use it “frequently” or “occasionally.” Using standard market projection techniques, 18% of the households in the community could be expected to use the new hotel.

Next, housing options for residents were considered. Respondents were asked to rate each of eight housing options on their adequacy in Champlin. Residents could indicate there were currently “too much or too many,” “about the right amount or number,” or “too few or too little.” In every case, no fewer than 59% deemed each as “about the right amount or number.” The table below shows each characteristic followed by those thinking there are “too few or little” and the percentage seeing “too much or too many.”

	<i><b>Too Few/ Too Little</b></i>	<i><b>Too Much/ Too Many</b></i>
Starter homes for young families costing between \$200,000 and \$300,000	30%	5%
Rental units with modern amenities, such as in-unit washer and dryer and underground parking with under \$1,200 per month rents	23%	9%
One-level housing for seniors maintained by an association	21%	2%
Assisted living for seniors	20%	4%
Townhouses	19%	17%
Rental units with higher-end amenities, such as outdoor pool, activity and common areas and theater rooms with over \$1,200 per month rent	17%	6%
“Move up” housing for families looking for a larger home costing between \$300,000 and \$400,000	12%	5%
Executive high-end housing costing more than \$400,000	9%	14%

Only one type of housing is seen lacking in Champlin by over 25% of the sample: “starter homes for young families costing between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

By a 76%-20% majority, residents oppose the City providing financial incentives to attract specific types of housing development; in fact, intense opposition is almost seven times higher than intense support for this approach. Among the minority of supporters of financial development incentives, the use of incentives to attract affordable rental units and starter homes have the most support.

By an 81%-13% majority, residents support the City offering a program to make funds available to homeowners for remodeling or home improvements; Strong support is four times higher than strong opposition to this proposal.

***Code Enforcement:***

A solid 73% support the City taking a more active approach to property maintenance and code enforcement. Twenty-five percent “strongly support” this action. Only 25% express opposition to this policy. Ninety-nine percent of residents rate the general condition and appearance of properties in their neighborhood as “excellent” or “good;” only two percent rate them more critically.

On average, a very solid 75.4% think the City of Champlin is “about right” in its enforcement of city codes on nuisances. However, 24% think the City is “not tough enough” on the

enforcement of codes governing yard maintenance, and 23% feel the same way about the enforcement of codes dealing with storage and parking of vehicles, boats and trailers.

Sixty-seven percent think the rental licensing program of single family homes to comply with maintenance codes governing all rental units is at least “somewhat effective,” almost double the 2012 level. Seventeen percent each regard it as “ineffective” or are “unsure.”

Sixty-seven percent of the sample is aware of rental properties in their neighborhoods. Twenty-one percent of aware residents report contacting the City with a complaint regarding a rental home in their neighborhood; in fact, 74% were satisfied with the City’s response to their complaints.

By almost identical majorities, 62% oppose the City allowing the raising of chickens in single-family housing zoned neighborhoods and 61% oppose the raising of bees in these neighborhoods.

***City Services:***

A high 77% feel the quality of city services has kept pace with population growth. Twenty percent feel differently, principally citing “street maintenance.”

The table below arrays each of 14 city services with its positive rating – “excellent” or “good” – its negative ratings – “only fair” or “poor” – and the change in its positive since the 2012 study.

	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Change since 2012</i>
Police protection	94%	6%	+5%
Fire protection	93%	1%	-3%
Park maintenance	89%	9%	-9%
Garbage and recycling services	88%	12%	-10%
The City cemetery	85%	7%	NA
Neighborhood property maintenance code enforcement	84%	16%	+4%
Building inspection	81%	8%	NA
City-sponsored recreational services	81%	13%	-2%
Snow plowing	81%	19%	+1%
Quality and taste of drinking water	81%	20%	NA
Sidewalk and trail maintenance	80%	20%	-11%
City sanding and salting of streets	76%	22%	-12%
Street lighting	72%	28%	-17%
City street repair and maintenance	69%	32%	-8%

Four services post positive rating decreases of at least 10%: “garbage and recycling services,” “sidewalk and trail maintenance,” “city sanding and salting of streets,” and “street lighting.” The mean positive city services rating is a still solid 82.4%, but with a decrease of 4.6% in five years.

The primary rationale for a negative rating of the quality and taste of drinking water is “bad taste.”

Next, respondents were asked about the importance of each of the 14 service services. The table below arrays each city service with the percent of residents deeming it “essential,” the percent of residents considering it to be “very important,” and the change in the “essential” rating since the 2012 study.

	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Change since 2012</i>
Fire protection	93%	7%	+15%
Police protection	91%	9%	+17%
City street repair and maintenance	70%	26%	+6%
Snow plowing	68%	27%	-1%
Quality and taste of drinking water	57%	33%	NA
Street lighting	55%	39%	+17%
City sanding and salting of streets	54%	40%	+2%
Garbage and recycling services	50%	42%	-4%
The City cemetery	42%	31%	NA
Building inspection	35%	46%	NA
Sidewalk and trail maintenance	35%	29%	-6%
Park maintenance	28%	48%	+7%
Neighborhood property maintenance code enforcement	28%	43%	-4%
City-sponsored recreational services	20%	46%	-4%

Three city services post significant increases in their “essential” scores since 2012: “police protection,” “fire protection,” and “street lighting.” Two of these three services also are at the top of the list. Overall, the average city service “essential” rating is 51.8%.

***City Services and Taxes:***

By a 78%-21% 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

willing instead to cut the parks and trails budget, suggested by 23%, or code enforcement programs, at 20%. Twenty percent, though, would be unwilling to cut any city services as an alternative to the property tax increase. But, by an equally decisive majority, 74%-23%, city residents also oppose a property tax increase to improve and enhance current city services; among the approximately one-quarter of residents supporting a property tax increase, respondents would target funding for street maintenance, police services, sidewalk maintenance, or drinking water improvements. Similarly, by a 74%-22% majority, residents also oppose a reduction in city services to reduce their current property taxes; a majority of supporters think that by simply cutting waste this could be achieved by no major service cuts.

Many residents, 59%, an 18% increase in five years, rate the City portion of their property taxes as “high” in comparison with neighboring communities. Thirty-four percent consider them “about average,” while one percent see them as “low.” A very solid 86% also consider the quality of the services they receive for their property taxes as either “excellent” or “good,” while 13% see them as “only fair” or “poor.”

### ***Environmental Issues:***

Eighty-two percent rate the water quality of rivers, lakes and streams in Champlin as “excellent” or “good;” eighteen percent see it as “only fair” or “poor.” A comparatively high 89% think it is at least “somewhat important” for the City to improve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; in fact, 54% consider this action to be “very important.”

If a curbside collection program for compostable waste were available, 24% say their household would be “very likely” to participate in it and 30% think their household would be “somewhat likely” to do so. Using standard market projection techniques, 20% of city households would be expected to take part in this program. A nominal cost of \$1.00 to \$2.00 per month to use the program would deter only 15% of the likely participating households.

Prior to this survey, 77% report awareness Champlin residents can use the yard waste disposal site in Maple Grove without a fee; forty-three percent use this disposal site. Site users can be divided into three groups: 33% use the site once per month or more frequently; 34% do so two-to-four times each year; and 33% use the disposal site once each year. Similarly, 80% report awareness of the potential weekly pick-up of yard waste by their garbage hauler for a fee; thirty-four percent avail themselves of this option.

Prior to this survey, 88% report awareness of city lawn-sprinkling regulations. Among those caring for their yards, 91% think the lawn sprinkling regulations allow them to adequately care for their yard.

**Public Safety:**

Twenty-two percent had personal contact with the Champlin Police Department during the past four years. The most frequent reasons are for minor crimes, at 31%, general crime, at 14%, traffic accidents, at 12%, and noise disturbances, at 11%. Eighty-one percent rate the contact as either “excellent” or “good;” but, a somewhat high 18% rate it as “only fair” or “poor.” Reasons for lower ratings include “lack of interest,” “harassed,” “slow response,” and “seeming racial profiling.” But, 85% say the time it took the Police Department to respond was “prompt.” Respondents were read a short list of six possible descriptions of the Champlin Police Department. The table below arrays each description with the percent of residents seeing it as “very accurate” and the percent thinking it is “somewhat accurate.”

<i>Description</i>	<i>Very Accurate</i>	<i>Somewhat Accurate</i>
Respectful	61%	27%
Courteous	67%	26%
Professional	65%	29%
Trustworthy	62%	28%
Fair	61%	29%
Making a positive impact in the community	61%	27%

In each case, over 60% judged each description as “very accurate.” Overall, in no case did more than a very low ten percent view the description as “inaccurate.”

By a decisive 94%-3% super-majority, residents approve of Champlin police officers wearing body cameras; in fact, 46% register “strong approval.”

Sixteen percent report there are areas in Champlin where they do not feel safe, over double the 2012 level. “Along the river” and “retail areas” are the key areas of concern. “No police patrols,” “no lights,” and “loitering teenagers”

Respondents were reminded the Champlin Police Department implemented a Traffic Enforcement Safety Program in 2009. They were further told the annual results showed while the number of citations and warnings increased, the number of personal injury accidents were significantly reduced. By a solid 89%-10% majority, residents support the use of the proactive enforcement to achieve traffic safety. Eighty-one percent rate the amount of police patrolling in their residential neighborhood as “about right,” while 16% view it as “not enough.”

The two greatest public safety problems in Champlin involve traffic: “speeding,” at 21%, and “distracted driving,” at 18%. “Robberies” and “juvenile crime” follow at seven percent each, while “violent crime” is cited by six percent and “pedestrian safety,” by five percent, 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 very high level. Twenty percent feel they could **not** have a say about the way the City of Champlin runs things, if they wanted to, a ten percent decrease in five years. Most communities score between 30% and 38% on this query.

Fifty-two percent know either “a great deal” or “fair amount” about the work of the Mayor and City Council. Among all residents, 88% approve of the job of the Mayor and City Council, while only seven percent disapprove of their job; the approval level reflects an increase of four percent since the last study. The current approval rating remains among the highest in the Metropolitan Area. Negative judgments are based upon “lack of listening” and “poor development decisions.”

Thirty-four percent had “quite a lot” or “some” first-hand contact with the Champlin City Staff, a decrease of 13% in five years and also reflective of a maturing community. Respondents give the Staff a job approval rating of 84% and a disapproval rating of sixteen percent; the positive job consolidates the comparatively huge change of 29% in five years. “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.

Forty percent report they 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 89% rate the maintenance and condition of City parks and trails as either “excellent” or “good,” while ten percent rate them lower; these results show a shift of five percent toward the negative. 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.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Usage</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Trails	87%	86%	14%
Large community parks	84%	92%	8%
Smaller neighborhood parks	83%	89%	11%
Outdoor ice rinks and warming houses	47%	98%	2%
Champlin Ice Forum	46%	94%	6%
Andrews Park Softball Complex	44%	98%	2%
Andrews Park Splash Pad	38%	95%	5%
Galloway Park Disc Golf Course	24%	92%	8%

Three facilities are used by over 80% of the city’s households: trails, at 87%, large community parks, at 84%, and smaller neighborhood parks, at 83%. Positive ratings by users of each facility never drop below a high 86%, while negative ratings exceed ten percent in only two cases – trails and smaller neighborhood parks.

Respondents considered four community facilities which could be developed in the city in the future. By a 79%-17% residents support the use of city funding for waterfront park amenities, such as docks, a swimming area, an outdoor performance area and rental water equipment. By a 75%-22% majority, they also support the use of city funds for large meeting and/or banquet rooms with kitchen facilities for rental for wedding and community events. By a 70%-26% margin, they feel the same about additional indoor sports facilities, such as gymnasiums. And, by a 66%-29% majority, residents support the use of city funds for a second sheet of ice at the Ice Forum.

Sixty-one percent of the sample report household members used the Mississippi River. “Walking,” at 22%, “boating,” at 15%, and “fishing,” at 11%, are the primary activities there. Sixty-nine percent report household members use the Elm Creek Park Preserve; Major activities include “walking,” at 33%, and “biking,” at 14%.

During the past five years, 73% report members of their household attended the Father Hennepin Festival. Among participants, 93% rate their experience as either “excellent” or “good,” while seven percent rate it as “only fair” or “poor.”

By a 76%-20% margin, residents are unwilling to pay \$3.00 to \$5.00 more in property taxes per year to offer more community-wide special events. But, 57% are at least “somewhat likely” to attend an outdoor community concert in Champlin; using standard market projection techniques, 24% of the households in the community could be expected to attend.

**City Communications:**

The “Champlin Chronicle” city newsletter is the principal source of information about City government and its activities for 35% of the sample, a decrease of 11% in five years. Twenty-six percent rely upon “mailings,” while 24% point to the “city website.” If they could choose the way they receive information, 32% would use the “Champlin Chronicle,” while 19% would rely upon “mailings,” and 21% on the “city website.”

Seventy-five percent, down 12% in five years, regularly read the city newsletter during the past year; among readers, 94% rate the newsletter’s quality highly. If the City were to discontinue the printed version of the “Champlin Chronicle,” 86% would be able to access the electronic version on a computer or mobile device.

In comparison, 75% recall receiving the quarterly City Park and Recreation Brochure during the past year. But, respondents point to several information channels as their principal source about parks and recreation facilities and activities: “mail,” at 24%; “City Newsletter,” at 22%; “Park and Recreation Catalog,” at 21%; and, “City website,” at 19%.

Fifty-two percent, down eight percent in five years, report receiving and reading the “Champlin-Dayton Press.” Sixty-one percent of the survey respondents subscribe to cable television; an additional 29% have satellite television. Among non-subscribers to either service, a small ten percent population segment, only 15% report access to local government access QCTV, Channel 16, even though 60% report awareness of this service. Among cable television subscribers, 13% report they at least “occasionally” watch Champlin City Meetings, Advisory Commission Meetings, or City Manager Updates on Channel 16. Thirty-six percent rate the quality of the telecasts as either “excellent” or “good,” while a small 11% feel it is “only fair” or “poor;” a 53% majority is “unsure.” Fifty-one percent are aware residents can watch past city meetings on QCTV’s website; eleven percent had actually done so.

Fifty-three percent of sampled households accessed the City’s new website. Ninety-one percent of the website visitors rate the content as either “excellent” or “good.” An equally impressive 89% highly rate the ease of navigation. An 56% majority would add no further information to the site; they think it is “fine, as is;” limited percentages would like to see “city events,” “real time traffic and road construction information” and “crime statistics” added to the website. Seventy-two percent are aware the City of Champlin provides weekly e-mail updates for residents who sign up for this service; presently, 24% subscribe to the updates.

Among social media outlets, “Facebook,” at 68% of city households likely to use it for information about the city, ranks as the most effective choice. Thirty-six percent are likely to use “YouTube” for city information, while 32% are likely to use “Twitter.” Nineteen percent report interest in following blogs for city information, and 10% would listen to podcasts for the same reason.

***Summary and Conclusions:***

Champlin residents are even more satisfied with their community than five years ago. The growing and solidly positive base in 2012 is now about seven percent higher. The key issues facing decision-makers run the gamut from growth rates and rising crime to taxes and traffic congestion. Concern about city street maintenance doubled since the 2012 study, in line with trends in other third-ring and outer-ring communities. But, at the same time, 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:

- Development along the Highway 169 corridor is generally popular with residents. Residents appreciate the variety of offerings, new businesses, and convenience of this area. But, traffic congestion in this part of the city will need to be addressed, since it is the only significant negative respondents post about the corridor.
- General development preferences focus on residential amenities, such as entertainment establishments, restaurants and arts and 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 waterfront park amenities and large meeting/banquet rooms.
- A shift has also occurred in the acceptance of proactive enforcement of existing city codes and state laws. There is widespread support for actions on owning-to-rental property conversions, water resources protection, and traffic enforcement, to avoid problems rather than remedy their aftereffects.
- Preferences for future housing development center on generational issues. There are good levels of support for starter homes for young families, rental units with modern amenities for both younger residents and downsizing empty-nesters, and one-level housing maintained by an association or assisted living for seniors.

The city enterprise is again viewed very strongly. The City Council and City Staff ratings remain 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 on maintaining its natural environment and city cohesiveness. The City does an exceptional job in communicating with residents; but the almost 50-50 split in written word/mailings preference over electronic media will require further straddling in news

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delivery methods for the immediate future. The City still retains a large reservoir of good will across the community; this will surely serve it as well in the years ahead as it has in the past.