

THE MORRIS LEATHERMAN COMPANY

Report of Findings 2017 City of Red Wing

City Demographics:

Twenty-three percent of Red Wing residents report moving to the community within the past five years, an increase of eight percent in three years, while 21%, down eleven percent, lived there for more than thirty years. The median residential longevity is 15.5 years, consistent with the higher numbers of more recent arrivals.

Seniors live in 27% of the community's residences, with 17% of the city's households composed exclusively of seniors. School-aged or pre-school children are found in 32% of the households. The average age of an adult resident is 51.2 years old. Forty-three percent of the population lies in the 35-54-year age range or in the over 55-year age range. Women outnumber men by four percent in the sample.

Seventy percent of the sample report owning their current residence. The median residential home value is \$175,000.00, up \$30,000.00 in three years. Thirty-nine percent are "financially insecure" – either their "monthly expenses are exceeding their income" or "meeting their monthly expenses but are putting aside little or no savings." Sixty percent, though, are "financially secure" – either "managing comfortably while putting some money aside" or "managing very well."

The typical resident has post-secondary educational experience, but is not a college graduate. Twenty-six percent have high school educations or less, while 38% are college graduates.

Twenty-six percent reside in either Ward One or Ward Three, while 25% live in Ward Two. At the low end, 23% reside in Precinct Four.

Quality of Life Issues:

Red Wing citizens remain contented with their community. Ninety-three percent rate their quality of life as "excellent" or "good;" thirty-five percent say "excellent." This level of satisfaction is among the top decile across the State of Minnesota. When asked what they like most about the community, 22% point to "small town ambience." Sixteen percent each cite "housing/neighborhood," "friendly people," or "river/natural ambience. "Closeness to family" and "closeness to job" follow at 14% and 12%, respectively. Four moderately serious issues facing the community were identified: "high taxes," at 16%, "growth," at 14%, "lack of businesses," at 12%, and "lack of jobs," at 11%. A very large "booster" group, at 24% of the sample, saw no "major serious issues" facing the community; in three years, this group declined by 11% as more issues emerge.

Eighty-five percent rated the City of Red Wing as either “excellent” or “good” as a place to raise children, down ten percent in three years; ninety-one percent rated the city the same way as a place to retire. Ninety-seven percent rate the general sense of community among residents as either “excellent” or “good;” only three percent rate it lower. A nearly unanimous 97% feel accepted, valued and welcomed in Red Wing; only two percent disagree.

Eighty percent would recommend living in Red Wing to others, while 13% would not do so. Residents recommending Red Wing will do so because of its “small town ambience,” “friendliness,” “safeness,” “quiet and peacefulness,” “beauty and natural surroundings,” and “solid sense of community.” Residents not recommending Red Wing point to “lack of jobs,” “lack of recreation,” “need for more retail,” “lack of entertainment,” and “high taxes.”

In looking at the connection to their neighborhood, 53% report they have frequent contact with one-to-three neighbors, 28% have frequent contact with four-to-eight neighbors, and six percent have frequent contact with more than eight neighbors. Only 13% have no contact with their neighbors. A comparatively high 26% report doing or receiving a “a lot” of favors from their neighbors. Forty-seven percent report “sometimes” receiving or doing favors for their neighbors, while 26% either “rarely” or “never” do.

A total of 24% point to three aspects of the community needing to be fixed or improved in the future: “not enough retail,” “quality of schools,” and “lack of jobs.” But, 28% think there is nothing to be fixed or improved in the future and 14% are “unsure.” Similarly, 24% point to two currently missing community aspects which would greatly improve the quality of life for residents: “a shopping mall” and “entertainment opportunities.” This time 34% think there is nothing currently missing and 11% are “unsure.”

Community Characteristics:

Respondents were read a list of 12 community characteristics; they were asked if Red Wing currently has too many or too much, too few or too little, or about the right amount. In each case, fifty percent or more of the sample think the community has “about the right amount.” The table is arrayed from highest to lowest by the percent thinking there is “too few or little.”

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Too Few</i>	<i>Too Many</i>
Entertainment opportunities	42%	4%
Dining opportunities	27%	9%
Affordable health care services	25%	3%
Job training programs	25%	3%
Apartments	23%	14%

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Too Few</i>	<i>Too Many</i>
Housing people can afford	22%	8%
Affordable childcare	21%	3%
Preschool programs	19%	3%
Mental health services	15%	4%
Trails and bikeways	8%	19%
Parks and open spaces	6%	15%
Lifelong learning opportunities for adults	4%	2%

The major development deficit in the community is “entertainment opportunities.” “Dining opportunities,” “affordable health care services,” and “job training programs” form a second tier, with between 25% and 27% thinking there is currently “too few” of these opportunities.

Ninety-five percent of the sample are satisfied with housing opportunities for them and their families; only five percent report dissatisfaction.

When informed Red Wing’s population grew very modestly between 2000 and 2015, sixty-six percent view population growth as “about right.” Twenty-one percent regard it as “too slow,” and 11% see it as “too fast.” But, by a 66%-28% majority, residents support City actions and policies encouraging greater population growth; in fact, strong supporters outnumber strong opponents by two-to-one, at 25% versus 13%.

Forty-seven percent report household members attended an arts, history or cultural event in Red Wing during the past year. Among attendees, the four most popular are: “the Art Fair,” at 24%; “River City Days,” at 20%; “a Native American event,” at nine percent; and, “a Sheldon Theater production,” at eight percent. Non-attendees do not participate due to “no interest” or “no time.”

City Services and Taxes:

City service ratings proved to be within the top five percent of Greater Minnesota cities. The table below lists each of twenty city services, followed by its positive rating – “excellent” or “good” – and its negative rating – “only fair” or “poor.”

<i>City Service</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Trail maintenance	98%	2%
Park maintenance	98%	2%
Garbage collection	97%	3%
Recycling service	96%	2%
Police protection	94%	6%

<i>City Service</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Sidewalk maintenance	94%	6%
Animal control	94%	5%
Water and sanitary sewer services	94%	5%
Fire protection	93%	1%
911 emergency dispatch service	93%	2%
Ambulance service	93%	1%
Cemeteries	93%	0%
Recreational services and programs	93%	5%
Accommodation and control of storm water run-off	92%	5%
Snow plowing	89%	10%
Park security	89%	2%
Library services	89%	4%
Building inspection	86%	1%
Community planning and zoning	85%	7%
Pavement repair and patching on city streets	83%	17%

Fourteen city services register solid positive ratings, above 90%; the lowest rated service – pavement repair and patching on city streets – at 83% is still 21% higher than the statewide norm. The average positive rating of the 20 city services is a very strong 92.2%. When asked for the basis of negative ratings, five key rationales emerged: “poor street repair,” “slow response time,” “poor plowing,” “too few services or offerings,” and “poor drinking water.” The first two criticisms account for 40% of the dissatisfaction.

A solid 86% percent think the value of city services for the taxes they pay is “excellent” or “good.” Twelve percent rate it lower.

City Government:

A super-majority of 81% feel they could have a say about the way things are run in this community, beyond their vote. A comparatively very low 11% disagree; most disagreement stems from the view they will not be listened to.

Fifty-one percent feel they know “a great deal” or “a fair amount” about the work of the Mayor and City Council. Forty-nine percent, though, feel they know “very little” or “nothing” about their work. By a 66%-11% approval-to-disapproval rating, residents endorse the job of the Mayor and City Council; but, an unusually large 24% are unable to respond to this query. Approval ratings are based on: “no problems,” “listen,” “do what is best for residents,” and “made improvements.” Disapproval ratings stem from: “do not listen,” “poor past spending,” and “wrong priorities.”

City Staff:

A very high 52% report having “quite a lot” or “some” contact with Red Wing City Staff, 20% above the statewide norm. Eighty-six percent rate staff job performance as either “excellent” or “good,” while ten percent see it as “only fair” or “poor.” This rating remains within the top ten percent of Greater Minnesota communities.

By a uniquely high 88%-4% super-majority, respondents believe City Staff works in residents’ best interests. The very small percentage of negative responses stems from the feeling that staff has its own agenda.

Sustainability:

Respondents were told “sustainability” is defined as the ability to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Ninety percent regard the City of Red Wings’ work to become more sustainable as at least “somewhat important;” forty-five percent see it as “very important.” Only ten percent rate it less so. Eighty-six percent think global climate change or global warming should be recognized by the City in its actions and policies; thirty-five percent feel strongly so. Only 12% disagree. Ninety-two percent support continued efforts by the City to encourage the use of renewable energy for businesses and homes; a very small two percent disagree.

Parks and Recreation:

A solid 93% feel the current mix of recreational facilities in the city sufficiently met the needs of their household members. Among the small number who regard them as insufficient, most see the need for more center-based activities, such as a youth center, community center or senior center. Reinforcing this satisfaction level is the 71% who report they do not regularly leave the City of Red Wing to recreate elsewhere because facilities were unavailable there. The remainder leaving the community regularly went to lakes for aquatic or boating activities, to play in sports leagues, or to golf. A very large ninety-three percent rate the parks and trails in Red Wing as either “excellent” or “good;” only six percent rate them lower. And, by a 97%-2% super-majority, residents support efforts by the City to preserve and conserve natural open space; in fact, 50% “strongly support” these actions.

Public Safety Issues:

During the past two years, 63% think crime has “remained about the same.” Twenty-three percent think it “increased,” while eight percent think it “decreased.” Ninety percent generally feel safe walking in their neighborhood alone at night; ten percent do not, generally because of inadequate lighting, drug problems, loitering youth, and rising crime.

Fourteen percent report members of their households were a victim of a crime in the community during the past twelve months. Ninety-one percent reported the crime to the police; nine percent did not, due to it being a minor incident or handling it themselves.

The Red Wing Police Department is very highly regarded. The table below shows a list of five descriptions, followed by the percent of respondents think the description is “very accurate,” the percent think it is “somewhat accurate,” and the percent deeming it “inaccurate.” In each case the percent of residents thinking the description is “accurate” exceeds 85%.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Very Accurate</i>	<i>Somewhat Accurate</i>	<i>Not Accurate</i>
Professional	56%	39%	4%
Respectful	58%	34%	7%
Making a positive impact in the community	57%	33%	7%
Trustworthy	57%	31%	9%
Fair and consistent	48%	38%	13%

The only description which posts a borderline troublesome percent of “inaccurate” ratings is “fair and consistent;” even so, 86% think that description is “accurate.”

By a 96%-3% super-majority, residents approve of Red Wing police officers wearing body cameras; forty percent “strongly approve.”

Barn Bluff Rock Face:

Respondents were told, over the last two years discussions took place in Red Wing about people climbing Barn Bluff and painting the large rock face visible from Downtown. Forty-nine percent believe “painting on Barn Bluff should never be allowed; eighteen percent think “painting on Bard Bluff should be allowed with some restrictions; and, 23% think “painting on Barn Bluff should be allowed without any restrictions.” Restrictions supported by middle-of-the-road citizens include: “no offensive language,” at 51%; “no hate messages,” at 15%; and “educational and informative messages only,” at 11%. Sixty percent think it is either “very important” or “somewhat important” to control the painting of Barn Bluff, while thirty percent consider it “not too important” or “not at all important.”

Transportation Concerns:

Sixty-one percent of the sample work outside of the home: twenty-nine percent work in the City of Red Wing, while 32% do not currently work. Seventy percent favorably rate the ease of getting to and from work and eight percent rate the ease lower.

Sixteen percent of workers outside of the home report household members ride public transportation on a regular basis. Eighty-two percent rate the quality of the transit service in Red Wing as either “excellent” or “good;” eighteen percent rate the service as “only fair” or “poor,” primarily because of its “limited times” and “unreliability.” Non-transit service users cite “preference to drive,” at 67%, “takes too long,” at ten percent, and “need car at work,” at seven percent, as the main barriers.

By a 96%-4% super-majority, residents rate the ease of getting from place to place within the City of Red Wing as “excellent” or “good.” The major reasons for more critical ratings are “road construction” and “few transit options.”

Health and Wellness:

Residents were told it is recommended people get at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week. But, in considering their amount of physical activity, only 17% think the community can do anything to increase their own amount. Three main suggestions by residents believing the City can help are made to increase activity: “neighborhood walking groups,” “construction of a community center,” and “more walking/running events.” Among those not believing the City can help, 55% report they already get enough physical activity, 25% think there is nothing the community can do to help them become more physically active, and 20% just do not want to be more physically active.

Eighty-four percent think there are enough healthy grocery food options they can easily purchase in Red Wing; fifteen percent disagree. Dissenters have three main reasons: fifty-two percent think healthy food options are too expensive in Red Wing; thirty-eight percent feel there is not enough variety of healthy food options; and, 11% report there are not healthy food options close to where they live.

Residents were next told guidelines suggest adults and children limit their daily recreational screen time – including time using computers, televisions, cell phones and tablets – to stay as healthy as possible. The typical resident’s best estimate of their daily recreational screen time is 1.6 hours. Thirty-three percent report it is one hour or less, while 12% say it is more than four hours.

Communications Issues:

The “City Website” is pointed to by a large 30% as their principal source of information about city government and its activities. The “Red Wing Republican Eagle” and “direct mail” follow, each at 16%, with social media,” at 15%, and “Channel Six,” ranking next. Unlike the previous study, the communications network is not dominated by a single source of information. If they could choose the best way to receive this type of information, 27% indicate they would use “a City Newsletter or other mailings,” 22% would use the “City Website,” 15% would rely upon “social media,” 11%, on “Channel Six,” and 10% on “local newspapers.”

Eighty-six percent, an increase of seven percent since the previous study, have access to the Internet. Among those with access, 57% express some interest in subscribing to receive e-mails containing city information and news. Using standard market projection techniques, 20% of on-line households would be expected to subscribe.

Conclusions:

Demographically, Red Wing is a mature and stable regional center city. Residents tend to be somewhat older than the norm, less well educated than the average, more financially secure. They highly value the small-town ambience, the natural beauty and local river vistas, and community connectedness. But, they are also concerned about the tax base and lack of economic development in the community. The City is still regarded as an exceptional place to both raise children and retire, a balance maintained by few other areas. In fact, a “booster” core of citizens – those who see no serious issues facing the City – is present; this booster group is three times higher than the average percentage in the State, but also has declined by 11% since the last study.

The high expectations among residents about city services are exceeded across-the-board. The average positive rating of city services is a very high 92.2%. Even the bottom-rated service, pavement repair and patching on city streets, receives a positive rating of 83%, almost twenty percent higher than the Greater Metropolitan Area norm. As a result, City Staff remain exceptionally highly and positively rated.

Among residents expressing an opinion, 86% approve of the job of the Mayor and City Council; but, a somewhat high 24% do not have enough information to make a judgment. Widespread support is found on a number of City Council actions and emphases: efforts to make more arts and cultural experiences available to residents, sustainability initiatives, preservation and conservation efforts, body cameras for on-duty police officers – although their rating is very high – restrictions on the painting of Barn Bluff, and local public transit services.

The economic development priorities of residents are typical of exurban areas: entertainment and dining options, retail shopping areas, more affordable housing and starter homes for young families, health care services, and job training programs. Interestingly, while residents view the current growth rate as about right, most residents would support City actions and policies encouraging greater and moderate population growth.

Geographically, there are two distinct groups of residents. Ward One and Ward Three contain people who are not as enamored with the City and its services. While still positive, they tend to be less intensely so. Wards Two and Four residents are more solid supporters of city efforts. They rate every aspect of City government activities and policies highly, consistently posting the most positive results in comparison with the other wards. Again, as suggested in the previous study, it will be necessary for the City to enhance its communications in Wards One and Three and try other ways to build closer relationships there.

The summary phrase reflecting the current mode of residents is “incremental change.” In other words, policies should focus on reflecting the “humanness” of a “small town” in mass society, whenever possible, while improving on the conveniences and available choices reflective of a “suburb.” Community planning, for example, should aim more at attracting tax revenue-generators, in addition to attracting services and entertainment or retail establishments. But, even with these changed preferences for the future, the City of Red Wing is still rated by its residents as among the best run and functioning cities in the Greater Metropolitan Area.