



2023 CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
From: Michelle Leise, Community Engagement Facilitator
Meeting Date: August 14, 2023
Agenda Item Number: 11.C.

Title – Consider Motion to Approve the 2023 Red Wing Community Survey.

Purpose – The purpose of this item is for Council to discuss the attached second draft of the survey by the Morris Leatherman Company and decide if the Council wants to approve this version or give feedback for more changes. The final deadline for approving the survey is at the Council's August 28 meeting so it can be conducted with the public in September.

Attachments

- 1) Draft 2 of the 2023 Red Wing Community Survey

Alignment with 2019 Strategic Plan

- Strategy #62: Continue to find ways for the public to give input into the decisions that affect them.

Background

The City Council expressed an interest in conducting a scientific community survey this year to assist in upcoming strategic planning and decision-making for the 2024 budget. Red Wing last conducted scientific community surveys in 2005, 2013, and 2017. These past three surveys have all been conducted by the Morris Leatherman Company from Minneapolis.

At the Council's June 26, 2023, meeting, Council members weighed the options of two different companies for this service (the other was Polco using the National Community Survey). The Council voted unanimously to work again with the Morris Leatherman Company (MLC), and at the July 10, 2023, Council meeting, Council members unanimously approved the contract. Council expressed these reasons for choosing the Morris Leatherman Company: (a) MLC can guarantee demographic results that equal or are extremely close to the percentages of Red Wing's overall population; (b) MLC has a trusted track record with Red Wing; (c) MLC can supply comparisons to how our community answered the same questions in the past; (d) MLC can share how Red Wing compares to other Minnesota cities with similar demographics on specific questions that Red Wing and MLC agree upon; and (e) MLC's method draws out

answers from residents that are more detailed and in-depth and often provide reasons why someone feels a certain way.

Survey Method: The Morris Leatherman Company uses the phone method, calling a random sample of landlines and cell phone numbers and ensuring all demographic groups and geographic wards are represented. While fewer surveys utilize the phone method today, Peter Leatherman, who has conducted the last three surveys for Red Wing, uses this method because he believes it is the most representative and accurate.

Interviewers call the representative sample of phone numbers many times (sometimes as many as 20 times) and leave messages so respondents can call back and either answer the survey right away or schedule a future time. Using the call method, the interviewers make sure that each demographic group is accurately represented by its percentage in the Red Wing population (age, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic area, rent/own, etc.).

MLC uses a random, scientific sample of residents and provides a statistically significant result with a margin of error of plus or minus 5% of the entire population 95% of the time, which means getting responses from roughly 400 people. (These were the same parameters for the other survey company that was considered, as well.)

When the City publicizes the survey throughout the community, we will share this phone number so residents will hopefully be looking for it on their phones. No mailers specifically from MLC are sent. The City, however, will publicize the survey in multiple ways, including an insert with the utility bill, on social media, the newspaper and radio, our online newsletter (City Beat), and at events like the Neighborhood Listening Sessions in August. Not everyone will be randomly chosen for the survey, but it will be helpful to publicize it so residents know this is a trusted project (not a scam) and that by completing it, they will be helping their community.

The survey that was conducted in 2017, and the results, were published in the Council packet of the June 26, 2023, meeting. More information on MLC is at morris-leatherman.com/.

Discussion

At the July 24 meeting, Council members discussed a first draft of the 2023 survey. That draft kept many questions from the 2017 version, and based on early feedback from the Council, included new questions related to how people feel about their city taxes and the value of city services they receive.

The second draft attached to this report has additional changes, based on the Council's conversation from the July 24 meeting, and some additional feedback from staff. New questions and questions that have been edited from the first draft have been highlighted in yellow.

****Note:** Some of the July 24th Council discussion was around asking for specifics about the kinds of amenities people may want, such as dining, groceries, entertainment, etc. This overarching scientific survey is intended to get at the big picture on what people feel is lacking or not – so we can follow up afterward with other tools that will do deeper dives into those specifics. For instance, staff will use our Balancing Act “Priority” software tool to ask residents over the coming weeks and months about what specific kinds of dining are most wanted, then entertainment, retail, housing, etc. For that reason, the second draft of the survey still does not go into a huge amount of detail on these topics.

Summary of Updates

- Questions #34 and #35: Based on conversations in the community over the last two years and based on the high number of responses in our non-scientific River City Days survey, these two questions have been added that ask for opinions on the number of activities and places for children and teenagers. While the Council does not usually have direct control over these, the answers will help our Community Development Department, along with our Advisory Planning Commission and Port Authority, and numerous local nonprofits who may want to utilize this data for grant acquisition purposes and continued community growth in these areas (based on the survey’s results).
- Question #70. This question has been added to include dining and entertainment establishments, per Council direction on July 24.
- Questions #71-73: Some staff and Council members have mentioned the League of Minnesota Cities sessions this summer that discussed revenue-generating options the City may look into in the future. It was mentioned that these questions may be something the Council would want to “test the waters” on and check public opinion. The Council will most likely want to discuss these on August 14. All three new questions could be included, they could all be pulled off, or just one or two could be pulled off.
- Question #80 from the first draft has been removed. This was a follow-up question that asked residents how specifically they would like to interact with their Council -- if they stated earlier they wanted more. After further discussion with Peter Leatherman, it was decided this is a better question for a small group or meeting and not in a survey. If the Council still likes this question, staff can follow up with our Priority software questionnaire in the future.
- Question #97 has been added based on Council discussion on July 24. This question asks whether or not residents support the City’s continued efforts to incorporate climate change and its effects into City planning, projects, and policies. The wording here is different from 2017, when the question asked if the City *should* do this; now the survey asks if people support that the City *does* this as a matter of regular business.

- Question #123 now has larger amounts listed for the choices in residential housing price ranges, based on today's housing values. This was a request made by Council.

Staff is asking Council to discuss these changes and either approve the survey as written, approve the survey with suggested changes, or give detailed suggestions so the survey can come back to the Council at the August 28 meeting, which is the deadline for Council approval.

The Morris Leatherman Company will use an aggressive timeline to conduct the survey with residents in September, starting immediately after the Labor Day holiday weekend, and get results to City Council at the October 10 meeting.

Financial Plan and Impact – The cost for the Morris Leatherman Company survey services will not exceed \$28,000. The funds will come from internal labor costs that have been saved this year due to staffing shortages across the city organization. This plan was approved at the July 10, 2023, City Council meeting.

Options -

- Approve the 2023 Community Survey as written.
- Approve the 2023 Community Survey with modifications made by the Council.
- Provide specific feedback for changes so a revised survey can come back to the Council a final time for approval on August 28.