The Morris Leatherman Company
2022 CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
Residential Survey of Parks and Recreation Opinions
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Likely Voters in a Special Election:

Respondents were asked four questions about their past voting behavior to determine the likelihood of their voting in a non-general election; that is, in elections other than Presidential or Gubernatorial elections.

Are you registered to vote at your current address?

Registered Voter	***Percent***
Yes	93%
No	5%
Don't know/refused	3%

Ninety-three percent report they are registered to vote at their current address.

Did you vote in the 2018 Gubernatorial election?

Voted in 2018 Gubernatorial Election	***Percent***
Yes	67%
No	32%
Don't know/refused	1%

Sixty-seven percent report voting in the November 2018 election.

As you may know, there are many types of elections. In Presidential and Gubernatorial elections, Minnesota has very high voter turnout. In off-year and special elections, voter turnout is much lower.

In past elections, would you say you have always voted, often voted, rarely voted, or never voted?

Past Elections Voting	***Percent***
Always voted	33%
Often voted	44%
Rarely voted	22%
Never voted	1%
Don't know/refused	0%

Thirty-three percent report they have always voted in past elections, while 77% always or often voted.

How likely are you to vote in the coming November election – absolutely certain, very likely, ½-½, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Likelihood	***Percent***
Absolutely certain	37%
Very likely	31%
Half-half	20%
Not too likely	8%
Not at all likely	2%
Don't know/refused	2%

Thirty-eight percent report they are absolutely certain to vote in the 2022 November election, while 68% are either absolutely certain or very likely to do so.

A "likely voter" in a 2023 Special Election would possess the characteristics discussed above. Consequently, the projected turnout in this election the upcoming November election is 36% of registered voters.

In the remaining tables, if a question is repeated from the 2019 study, the percent given in the parentheses reflects the *statistically significant* change.

<u>Characteristics of the City of Bloomington:</u>

Residents were initially asked:

How would you rate the quality of life in Bloomington – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Ninety-three percent of residents rate the quality of life favorably; in fact, 26% rate the quality of life as "excellent."

Rating	***Percent***
Excellent	26% (-11%)
Good	67% (+9%)
Only fair	7%
Poor	1%
Don't know/refused	0%

Only eight percent post unfavorable ratings. The major change from the 2019 study, reflective of a trend across the Greater Metropolitan Area suburbs, is lower "excellent" ratings slipping into "good" ratings. In other words, the intensity of favorable ratings is lower.

Next, residents were queried:

What do you like most about living in Bloomington?

Two community characteristics are posted by ten percent or more: "shopping/dining/service establishments" and "friendly people."

Like Most	***Percent***
Shopping/Dining/Service Establishments	16%
Friendly People	12%
Quiet and Peaceful	9% (-6%)
Housing/Neighborhood	9%
Close to Job	9%
Close to Family/Friends	8%
Safe	8%
Parks and Trails	7%
Convenient location	6% (+6%)
Schools	6%
Well-Maintained City	3%
Open Space	2%
Scattered	5%

Eight additional factors are posted by between six percent and nine percent: "quiet and peaceful," "housing/neighborhood," "closeness to job location," "closeness to family/friends," "safe," "parks and trails," "convenient location," and "schools." The increase in the number of statistically significant aspects of the community indicates a richness of perceptions about Bloomington.

Next, respondents were asked about pressing issues:

In general, what do you think is the most serious issue facing the community today?

Six issues are posted by five percent or more of the sample: "rising crime," "high taxes," "careless driving," "traffic congestion," "too much growth," and "inflation/economy."

Most Serious Issue	***Percent***
Nothing	**14% (-12%)**
Rising Crime	**15%**
High Taxes	**13%**
Careless Driving	**9%**
Traffic Congestion	**8%**
Too Much Growth	**6%**
Inflation/Economy	**5%**
Vacant Businesses	4%
Road Construction	3%
Aging Infrastructure	2%
Lack of Workers	2%
COVID-19 Pandemic	2%
Air Pollution	2%
Scattered	6%
Unsure	9%

Fourteen percent, down 12% since the 2019 study, think there are no serious issues facing Bloomington; this "booster" core is double the Greater Metropolitan Area suburban norm.

City Taxes and Services:

Residents were asked:

Let's talk about city services for a moment....

When you consider the property taxes you pay and the services you receive, how would you rate the value – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

A high 73%, down seven percent since the last study, rate the value of city services favorably, while 20% are more critical.

Rating	***Percent***
Excellent	6% (-5%)
Good	67%
Only fair	19%
Poor	1%
Don't know/refused	7%

The over seven-to-two favorable-to-unfavorable ratio is well within the top quartile of Greater Metropolitan Area suburban communities.

Respondents were asked a second question:

Compared to neighboring communities, do you consider the total property taxes in your community to be very high, somewhat high, about average, somewhat low, or very low?

Forty-seven percent view their total property taxes as "high," and 42% rate them as "about average" compared to neighboring communities.

Total Property Tax Level	***Percent***
Very high	10%
Somewhat high	37%
About average	42%
Somewhat low	1%
Very low	1%
Don't know/refused	10%

Using standard tax climate measurements, the Bloomington Property Tax Climate is rated "borderline hostile." This means that any tax referendum effort will require an aggressive information and persuasion campaign.

Park and Recreation Facilities and Trails:

Respondents were initially queried:

Turning to parks and recreation, specifically...

The Bloomington Park and Recreation System is composed of neighborhood parks, ballfields, trails, the Bloomington Ice Garden, the Creekside Community Center, Bloomington Center for the Arts, the Bloomington Family Aquatic Center, and Dwan Golf Course.

How would you rate park and recreational facilities and trails in Bloomington – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Eighty-nine percent, a drop of five percent since the 2019 study, rated park and recreational facilities and trails in Bloomington as either "excellent" or "good;" in fact, 24%, down eight percent, see them as "excellent:"

Rating	***Percent***
Excellent	24% (-8%)
Good	62%
Only fair	10% (+5%)
Poor	0%
Don't know/refused	1%

Ten percent rate them more critically.

Next, respondents were asked about their affordability:

How would you rate the affordability of recreational facilities and programs in the city – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Seventy-two percent, a decline of ten percent, positively rate affordability:

Affordability of Facilities and Programs	***Percent***
Excellent	13% (-6%)
Good	59%
Only fair	17% (+6%)
Poor	1%
Don't know/refused	11% (+5%)

Eighteen percent are negative in their evaluations.

Accessibility was considered next:

Do you think recreational facilities and programs are accessible to all residents? Do you feel strongly that way?

Eighty percent, a decline of eight percent, believe Bloomington recreational facilities and programs are accessible to all residents.

Accessibility	***Percent***
Strongly yes	18% (-10%)
Yes	62%
No	6%
Strongly no	2%
Don't know/refused	13% (+10%)

Only eight percent are negative in their evaluations.

Equity in recreational facilities and programs was discussed:

Equity in recreational facilities and programs means residents across the city have access to similar facilities and programs.

Do you believe Bloomington provides equitable recreational facilities and programs across the city? Do you feel strongly that way?

Eighty-one percent, a drop of five percent since the 2019 study, think Bloomington provides equitable recreational facilities and programs across the community.

Equity	***Percent***
Strongly yes	20%
Yes	61%
No	4%
Strongly no	4%
Don't know/refused	13% (+6%)

Only eight percent disagree.

The importance of facilities and programs on the general quality of life was examined:

When you consider your quality of life in the city....

How important are park and recreational facilities and trails to you – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Seventy-nine percent think park and recreational facilities and trails are "important" to their quality of life; thirty percent, a 10% decrease, regard them as "very important."

Importance to City Quality of Life	***Percent***
Very important	30% (-10%)
Somewhat important	49% (+7%)
Not too important	19%
Not all important	2%
Don't know/refused	0%

Twenty-one percent see park and recreational facilities and trails as "not important."

Finally, the impact on home values was discussed:

When you consider the value to your home....

How important are the park and recreational facilities and trails – very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Seventy-eight percent, a 13% decrease in three years, think park and recreational facilities and trails are "important" to their home values; thirty percent, a 16% decrease, see them as "very important."

Importance to Home Value	*Percent*
Very important	30% (-16%)
Somewhat important	48%
Not too important	16% (+10%)
Not all important	3%
Don't know/refused	4%

Nineteen percent, a 12% increase, see them as "not important" for their home values.

<u>Use and Rating of Park and Recreation System Components</u>:

Respondents were asked:

For each facility, please tell me if you or members of your household use that facility? Then, for each one you use, please tell me if you would rate that facility as excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Household use ranged between 85%, for community trails, to 39%, for the Dwan Golf Course.

Park and Recreation System Components	*Not Use*	*Use/Positive*	*Use/Negative*
Trails	15%	78%	7%
Neighborhood parks	19%	77%	5%
Bloomington Center for the Arts	46%	51%	3%
The Creekside Community Center	55%	42%	3%
Ballfields	54%	44%	3%
Bloomington Family Aquatic Center	46%	52%	3%
Dwan Golf Course	57%	35%	8%
The Bloomington Ice Garden	61%	29%	10%

Considering only users of each facility, positive ratings by users ranged between 74% and 95%. The high positive rating, at 95%, is posted for the Bloomington Family Aquatic Center; the low positive rating of 74% is for the Bloomington Ice Garden.

A second question was asked:

For each of the following, please tell me if you think the City of Bloomington has too many, too few, or the right amount.

Facility	*About Right*	*Too Many*	*Too Few*
Aquatic and Pool Facilities	61%	9%	21%
Meeting and Gathering Spaces	58%	10%	20%
Indoor Recreation Areas	54%	11%	25%
Arts and Event Spaces	53%	4%	31%
Fitness Centers and Equipment	52%	11%	31%
Gymnasiums	44%	13%	29%

At least 29% of respondents think the City of Bloomington has too few arts and events spaces, fitness centers and equipment, and gymnasiums. In all but the case of gymnasiums, a majority think the numbers are about right; even in the case of gymnasiums, a 44% plurality see the number similarly. Potential opposition based on perceived overabundance is limited to at most 13%.

<u>Barriers to the Use of City Park and Recreation Facilities or Participating in Recreation Programming</u>:

Respondents were queried:

What is the biggest barrier for you to using park and recreation facilities or participating in park and recreation programs?

Barrier	*Percent*
Too busy/No time	**26%**
Age/Health	**24%**
No interest	**11%**
Cost	4%
Transportation	2%
Lack of information	2%
Prefer to go elsewhere	2%
Scattered	6%
Unsure	1%
Nothing	22%

The three most frequently posted barriers will be very hard for the City to do much about in the short term. They include "no time/too busy," "age/health," and "no interest." The remedies to these barriers would include shorter time commitments, special services for the elderly and frail, and expansion of the current program content.

<u>Park and Recreation System Tax Increase</u>:

Bloomington interviewees were told:

In Minnesota, cities and counties are permitted to ask the Legislature for permission to hold a public vote on an increase in the local sales tax to pay for improvements that are regionally significant. The sales tax is assessed the same way as the state sales tax, meaning that items such as clothes and groceries are exempt from the tax. During the 2022 legislative session, the City of Bloomington sought permission to hold a sales tax referendum this November for construction of a new Community Health and Wellness Center and improvements to the Bloomington Ice Garden, the Bloomington Center for the Arts, and

Dwan Golf Course. As you may know, the State Legislature did not pass any new legislation in 2022 authorizing any Minnesota city to hold a sales tax referendum.

They were then told:

In 2023, the City plans to seek the same authority from the Legislature and could ask voters to consider four uses of a new local ½ cent sales tax increase for up to 20 years. For your information, a ½ cent sales tax increase would be 50¢ on every $100.00 of taxable purchases in the City of Bloomington. The local sales tax would expire once the projects are completed.

Purposes for the additional funding were considered:

For each of the following, please tell me if you would strongly support a ½ cent sales tax increase for that purpose, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the sales tax increase.

Purpose	***Support***	***Oppose***	***Unsure***
Renovation of the Bloomington Ice Garden, including roofs, mechanical systems, ADA accessibility, and new training areas and locker rooms	58%	35%	7%
Construction of a new Health and Wellness Center to provide recreational, educational, and fitness programming	76%	**22%**	3%
Expansion of the Bloomington Center for the Arts, including a new concert hall and rehearsal space	72%	27%	2%
Improvements to the Dwan Golf Course, including a new clubhouse	62%	33%	6%

A strong majority supports each of the four purposes; apart from the new Health and Wellness Center, which registers a low resistance percentage, opposition for the other three purposes stays in the moderate range of 27%-to-35%. There is no clear "deal-killer" in the proposals.

Thirty percent of the sample supports all four uses, while 13% oppose all four uses. The key reasons for supporting all uses include "important city amenities," "reasonable cost," "city visitors contribute to cost," and "good for the community." The main reasons for opposing all four uses are "sales tax too high," "only minor improvements needed," "not high priorities for the community."

Next, respondents were asked about the impact of four facts about the referendum proposal.

First, they were told:

A sales tax increase would not only capture sales tax from city residents, but also from people outside of the city who make purchases in Bloomington. A University of Minnesota study projected 75% of the new sales tax revenue would come from people who live outside of Bloomington.

Residents were then asked:

Does that make you much more likely to support a sales tax increase, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely, or does it make no difference to you?

Sixty-seven percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax option; in fact, 33% are “much more likely to do so.”

Sales Tax Captures Visitors’ Purchases	***Percent***
Much more likely	33%
Somewhat more likely	34%
Somewhat less likely	3%
Much less likely	5%
No difference	24%
Don’t know/refused	1%

The main impact of this argument reinforces respondents already supporting the sales tax increase.

Next, a message about the impact on Bloomington residents was read:

It is projected with a ½¢ sales tax increase that the typical Bloomington resident would pay an additional $6.00 per month in sales tax.

They were asked:

Does this make you much more likely to support a sales tax increase, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely, or does it make no difference?

Forty-eight percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax increase, but 20% are “less likely” to support it.

Typical Resident Pays Additional $6.00 per Month in Sales Tax	***Percent***
Much more likely	19%
Somewhat more likely	29%
Somewhat less likely	9%
Much less likely	11%
No difference	30%
Don’t know/refused	3%

Again, the main impact of this argument reinforces respondents already supporting or opposing the sales tax option.

Next, a message about the recourse to a property tax increase was read:

The current city budget does not have the funding to make these improvements. If the sales tax increases are not approved, the City could consider a property tax increase which only Bloomington residents and businesses would pay.

They were queried:

Does this make you much more likely to support a sales tax increase, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely, or does it make no difference?

Fifty-four percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax increase, but 19% are “less likely” to support it.

Recourse to Property Tax Increase	*Percent*
Much more likely	27%
Somewhat more likely	27%
Somewhat less likely	9%
Much less likely	10%
No difference	24%
Don't know/refused	3%

Again, the main impact of this argument reinforces respondents already supporting or opposing the sales tax option; some positive shifting does occur in "more likely" responses.

The proposal to build a new Community Health and Wellness Center was considered as a "game changer:"

The City is proposing to build a new Community Health and Wellness Center at the current Creekside Center location.

They were asked:

Does this make you much more likely to support a sales tax increase, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely, or does it make no difference?

Forty-five percent are "more likely" to support the sales tax increase, but 14% are "less likely" to support it.

New Community Health and Wellness Center	*Percent*
Much more likely	20%
Somewhat more likely	25%
Somewhat less likely	5%
Much less likely	9%
No difference	37%
Don't know/refused	5%

Not as strong an argument in reinforcing respondents already supporting or opposing the sales tax option, it causes the most positive shifting to "more likely" responses, concentrated among parents and seniors.

The potential closing of the Bloomington Ice Garden was also considered as a "game changer:"

The Bloomington Ice Garden may no longer be able to operate because the ice-making equipment has been discontinued and significant upgrades are needed.

They were then queried:

Does this make you much more likely to support a sales tax increase, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely, or does it make no difference?

Forty-five percent are "more likely" to support the sales tax increase, but 12% are "less likely" to support it.

New Community Health and Wellness Center	*Percent*
Much more likely	17%
Somewhat more likely	28%
Somewhat less likely	5%
Much less likely	7%
No difference	39%
Don't know/refused	5%

This is a classic "niche" argument. The positive shift in the likelihood of support is striking among current users of the Bloomington Ice Garden.

There is no serious drawback for publicizing each of the five arguments. The cost of the sales tax increase to Bloomington residents needs to be paired with the revenue estimates from visitors. Also, the $6.00 per month sales tax increase for residents should be compared to everyday "humorous" purchase prices of "non-necessity" items for a myriad of demographic groups.

<u>Communications Issues</u>:

Interviewees were asked:

What is the most effective way for you to receive information from the City of Bloomington – mailed newsletter, electronic newsletter or e-mail, the City website, social media, the local newspaper, word-of-mouth, watching or attending City Council meetings, or something else?

What is the second most effective way for you to receive information?

The table below shows each information source followed by the percent of the sample calling it the "most effective" and the percent calling it either the "most effective" or "second most effective."

Source of Information	*Most Effective*	*First or Second*
Mailed newsletter	**47%**	**63%**
E-Newsletter or e-mail	**17%**	**27%**
City website	**15%**	**38%**
Social media	**10%**	**24%**
Local Newspaper	**8%**	**25%**
Word of Mouth	3%	13%
Watching/Attending City Council meetings	1%	7%
Unsure/Refused	0%	1%

There are five sources of information which together dominate the communications system. The most effective sources of information are the "City newsletter" and the "City website."

Conclusions and Implications:

1. The Bloomington Park and Recreation System facilities and programs are very well regarded – even by non-users. Evaluations of individual facilities by clientele are at the peak of Metropolitan Area suburban ratings. Similarly, programs and offerings are rated very highly. Very small percentages of Bloomington households leave the city for facilities or recreational and sports programs in other communities. No imminent needs are seen by residents; as a result, the City will need to inform the public about the benefits of any changes proposed in a tax referendum.
2. Residents significantly prefer a local sales tax over a property tax increase; however, in view of action by the State Legislature a local option sales tax referendum cannot be called until next year. Since no referendum package was tested in the survey, it will be necessary to create a surrogate measure of support.
3. By using the supportive demographic groups from the last study, target groups can be determined by their shortfall in the likelihood of their voting. These results strongly show the need for a grassroots support organization as well as endorsements and targeted contacts at these groups.
    - Residents for less than five years
    - Non-senior households
    - Households containing children
    - Young renters
    - Residents less than 35 years old
    - Democrats and Independents
    - Moderates, Liberal leaners, and Liberals
    - Women
    - Ward One and Ward Three residents
4. The most effective means of communication for a referendum are "mailings from the City" and the "City website." Both reach large majorities of supporters and significantly high numbers of undecided voters. The "City newsletter" has a split audience, with an opposition plurality, but reaches the largest group of undecided voters.

Sample Demographics:

Respondents were told:

Now just a few more questions for demographic purposes....

Residential longevity was determined:

Approximately how many years have you lived in the City of Bloomington?

The typical residents lived in Bloomington for 10.3 years.

Residential Longevity	*Percent*
Less than two years	8%
Two to five years	16%
Six to ten years	27%
11 to 20 years	20%
Over 20 years	29%
Don't know/refused	0%

Twenty-four percent lived there for less than five years. Twenty-seven percent resided in Bloomington for six to ten years, while 20% lived there for 11 to 20 years. Twenty-nine percent were Bloomington residents for over 20 years.

Next household composition was examined:

Could you please tell me how many people in each of the following age groups live in your household? Let's start oldest to youngest and be sure to include yourself....

First, persons 65 and over?

Twenty-eight percent of the households contain seniors.

Seniors in Household	*Percent*
None	72%
One	12%
Two or more	16%

Single seniors and senior couples are about even in the community.

Adults under 65?

Twenty-one percent are senior-only households.

Non-Senior Adults in Household	*Percent*
None	21%
One	19%
Two	56%
Three or more	5%

The typical residence contains two non-senior adults.

Children, 18 and under?

Seventy-three percent are "empty-nesters."

Children in Household	*Percent*
None	73%
One	8%
Two	15%
Three or more	5%

The typical residence containing children have two in residence.

Home ownership was discussed next.

Do you own or rent your present residence? (IF OWN, ASK:) Which of the following categories contains the approximate value of your residential property – under $150,000, $150,000-$250,000, $250,001-$350,000, $350,001-$450,000, or over $450,000?

Twenty-nine percent of the sample is renters.

Home Ownership and Home Value	***Percent***
Rent	29%
Own/Under $150k	6%
Own/$150k-$250k	18%
Own/$250,001-$350k	31%
Own/$350,001-$450k	12%
Own/Over $450k	4%
Don't know	1%
Refused	0%

The median value of an owner-occupied home in the city is $308,500.00. Twenty-four percent report home values of $250,000.00 or less, 31% post home values in the $250,001-$350,000 range, and 16% indicate home values over $350,000.

Age was considered next.

The median adult resident in Bloomington is 47.8 years old.

Age of Respondent	***Percent***
18-24	7%
25-34	19%
35-44	20%
45-54	15%
55-64	16%
65 and over	24%
Refused	0%

Twenty-six percent report ages less than 35, thirty-five percent are in the 35-54 years old range, and 40% are 55 years old or older.

Partisan affiliation was ascertained.

Which political party do you consider yourself most closely aligned with – Republican, Democrat, Independence Party, or Green Party?

"Democrats" are 43% of the sample, while "Republicans" are 37%, and "Independents" are 18%.

Party Alignment	***Percent***
Republican	37%
Democrat	43%
Independence party	0%
Green party	0%
Independent (Vol.)	18%
Something else (Vol.)	0%
Don't know/refused	2%

Minor party presence is minimal.

Next, political ideology was determined.

In politics, do you consider yourself to be a conservative, a liberal, or a moderate? (IF CONSERVATIVE OR LIBERAL, ASK:) Do you think of yourself as very (conservative/liberal)? (IF MODERATE, ASK:) Do you lean closer to conservative or liberal?

Thirty-nine percent are "conservative or leaning Conservative."

Political Ideology	***Percent***
Very conservative	3%
Conservative	26%
Moderate/conservative	10%
Moderate	28%
Moderate/liberal	10%
Liberal	19%
Very Liberal	3%
Something else (Vol.)	0%
Don't know/refused	2%

Twenty-eight percent are "Moderate," and 32% are "Liberal or leaning Liberal."

Household financial stress was determined.

Finally, thinking about your household finances, how would you describe your financial situation, would you say that – (A) Your monthly expenses are exceeding your income; (B) You are meeting your monthly expenses but are putting aside little or no savings; (C) You are managing comfortably while putting some money aside; (D) Managing very well?

Forty-four percent are "financially stressed" – choosing Statement A or B.

Financial Situation	***Percent***
Statement A	7%
Statement B	37%
Statement C	37%
Statement D	18%
Don't know/refused	2%

A large 55% are "financially managing" – choosing Statement C or D.

The gender of each respondent was noted.

Gender?

Women and men are equally represented in the sample.

Gender of Respondent	***Percent***
Male	50%
Female	50%

This result is consistent with other Metropolitan Area first- or second-ring suburbs.

Then, the Ward of residence was determined.

Region of City?

Wards Two and Three had the largest sample representation, at 27% each.

Ward of Residence	***Percent***
Ward One	25%
Ward Two	27%
Ward Three	27%
Ward Four	22%

Ward One follows at 25%, while Ward Four trails at 22%.

Methodology:

This study contains the results of a sample of 400 randomly selected adult residents in the City of Bloomington. Professional interviewers conducted the survey by telephone between July 27th and August 11th, 2022. The typical respondent took 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The non-response rate was 5.5%. The results of the study are projectable to all adult City of Bloomington residents within ± 5.0 % in 95 out of 100 cases.