

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January and February of 2019, the City of Shakopee performed a citizen survey process in coordination with National Citizen Survey (NCS). Approximately 1600 paper surveys were mailed to random households in the city. 408 responses were obtained through the paper survey and another 400 were gathered through an online opt-in survey made available on the city's website. The methodology of the survey and the response rate results in a +/- five percent margin of error. This means that if the city were to do a survey and obtain a 100% response rate, we are statistically confident that the results would be accurate within five percent in either direction.

THE OVERARCHING RESULTS of the survey are that, while there are some residents who perceive Shakopee as an “excellent” or “good” place to live, work, and play, there are many who do not feel this way. Comparing Shakopee to approximately 20 other Twin Cities metro cities who have participated in the survey in the last two years, Shakopee consistently ranks low in resident perceptions of the characteristics of the city.

RESIDENT PERCEPTION IS REALITY. It is important to understand such perceptions. In certain circumstances we can use objective data to demonstrate that Shakopee should rank higher in some categories. An example is the responses to the question of overall feeling of safety in Shakopee. Residents report feeling positive about overall safety at a rate of 64%, which is more than 10% lower than the benchmark and ranks 18 out of 18 comparable cities. While this question is inherently subjective because the question asks for a “feeling,” objective data demonstrates Shakopee is a safer city compared to at least some of the benchmark comparisons (e.g., crime rates, clearance rates).

TO BE A COMMUNITY OF CHOICE where residents can live well, and where businesses can thrive, Shakopee needs to have assets and these survey results present us with an opportunity to acknowledge what we have. The results are consistently average. Shakopee can continue to accept these results or the city can engage and choose our vision, effectively plan, efficiently execute, and learn from our experiences to make our community an even better place to live.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Acknowledge we have work to do and take these results as an opportunity.
- Identify what is important and set goals.
- Communicate strategically so residents can form informed opinions.
- Communicate proactively to build trust between the city government and the community.
- Engage in strategic planning.

SURVEY METHOD AND VALIDITY

For a detailed explanation of the survey methods used, and to understand the validity of the survey, see the document titled [Guide to Understanding and Using Your Reports, Page 17](#).

SURVEY METHOD. In January and February of 2019, the City of Shakopee performed a citizen survey process in coordination with National Citizen Survey (NCS). Approximately 1,600 paper surveys were mailed to random households in the city. 408 responses were obtained through the paper survey. The methodology of the survey and the response rate results in a +/- five percent margin of error. This means that if the city were to do a survey and obtain a 100% response rate we are statistically confident (95%) that the results would be within five percent in either direction.

The results you see in all but one of the attached reports track back to the paper survey. The city also made an “opt-in” survey available on the city’s website. 400 people started the survey (many did not finish). The results of the opt-in survey are made available in the document titled Supplementary Online Survey Results but are not included in the other reports.

THE SURVEY IS METHODOLOGICALLY SOUND AND THE SURVEY IS SCIENTIFICALLY VALID. Participant households were chosen at random through use of an address database, enough survey responses were received to make the survey statistically valid, and responses were weighted using proven techniques to ensure an accurate representation of the population.

Several data points further support the accuracy of this survey.

- Replicability. The results between the 2016 and 2019 are similar. There are differences, of course, but broadly there are now two surveys using the same methods that have produced similar results. Also, the online “opt-in” survey produced similar results to the paper-based, statistically valid, survey. When similar results are achieved across multiple survey iterations, it is more likely that the survey is valid.
- Several of examples exist in the survey data where the responses align with other data or anecdotal knowledge. The results for availability of preschool/child care are an example of a significant improvement was made and is likely due to the opening of four new preschool/child care facilities in the last two years. Another example is the differences between the paper survey and the online survey. The responses that were different between the two surveys are reasonable. For example, those who took the online survey report higher levels of engagement than those who took the paper survey. This is reasonable because people who took the online survey sought out the opportunity to share their opinions and are likely more engaged on the whole.

TRENDS ANALYSIS

This analysis follows the document titled NCS Trends Over Time Shakopee 2019.

THE MAJORITY OF RESPONSES IN THE 2019 SURVEY ARE SIMILAR TO RESPONSES FROM 2016. A brief review of the trends document suggests that most measures have not changed. Those results that changed by 7% or more are noted as being either “higher” or “lower.” There are eight responses that were marked as trending higher and 11 that trended lower.

UPWARD TRENDS ARE CONNECTED TO ACTION AND CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY. Responses that trended higher are not surprising and we can track those results back to activities and changes within the city. For example, the results increasing for a vibrant downtown, special events, and attendance at city-sponsored events makes sense. The city has taken clear action to improve the downtown and to promote special events in the downtown. And, while those events are typically not city-sponsored, there is a perception that they are. Another area of great success is the increase in customer service ratings. As a staff, we focus every day on making the resident/customer experience as positive as we can, and that has shown through with customer service positive ratings increasing 9%! The takeaway from this general trend may be that when the city takes action we will see results in the community and in the community survey.

DOWNWARD TRENDS ARE NOT AS EASILY EXPLAINABLE. Of the 11 results that trended lower, it is harder to make a connection to objective data or actions. Overall quality of life and overall feeling of safety are big overarching and subjective survey questions. What doesn't make sense is that from an objective point of view data points exist that suggest overall quality of life is improving. Many economic factors and community engagement data suggest that quality of life is improving for residents of Shakopee. Unemployment is low, median wages are up, and use of community amenities is up. However, an overall perception of lower quality of life persists.

It may be easier to explain why overall feeling of safety is lower because there have been a couple of larger public safety incidents in Shakopee in the last two years. But objectively we can clearly see that Shakopee's crime rate has been consistently trending down in the long term, and even some of the results in the survey (feeling safe in neighborhood) suggest Shakopee is a place where people should feel safe.

A GENERAL DOWNWARD TREND IS NOTICEABLE. While it is not statistically significant, another possible trend is hidden in the data. Specifically, most of the results (83/125 or 66%) decreased between 2016 and 2019. Taken independently, these results could be explained by the margin of error of the survey. Taken as a whole, however, it could be interpreted that, generally, resident perceptions are trending lower.

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

This analysis follows the document titled NCS Technical Appendices 2019, Appendix B.

The benchmarking analysis shows Shakopee in comparison to other local governments that have participated in the National Citizen Survey in the last two years. These results are presented both as a national comparison (the first part of the Appendix B) and comparison to Minnesota cities (the second part of Appendix B). This analysis will focus on the comparison to Minnesota cities. While there are similarities between Minnesota cities and cities throughout the nation, it is most reasonable to compare to those localities that are our likely “competition” and are likely to provide same or similar services to similar populations.

RESIDENT PERCEPTION OF SHAKOPEE IS GENERALLY LOWER THAN BENCHMARK COMPARISONS. A brief look at the comparison data shows that resident perception of Shakopee is consistently in the lower half of the comparison and often in the bottom two or three. Of 125 survey questions, resident perception ranks in the top half in 10 of them (8%).

THERE ARE SOME BRIGHT SPOTS IN THE BENCHMARK COMPARISONS. While Shakopee does not rank very high in comparison to benchmark communities, there are some areas where a strong foundation exists. Overall mobility (Table 78, Mobility) is an area of relative strength, as is overall economy (Table 78, Economy). Shakopee also enjoys some of our best rankings in participation (Table 82), indicating an overall engaged community.

BETTER COMMUNICATION MAY ASSIST IN SOME AREAS. As in the trends analysis, there are some areas where Shakopee resident perception is lower than actual data would suggest. Again with the question of overall feeling of safety, using actual data shows Shakopee ranks about seventh out of 18 of the comparable cities in crime rate. In this and other survey response areas, if the city were to communicate our strategy, goals, results, efforts at improvement and intentionally learn from feedback from the community the opportunity may exist for survey responses to improve.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

This analysis follows the document titled NCS Comparison by Demographic Subgroups 2019.

Part of the NCS survey is a report by demographic subgroup. The report we receive shows responses split by age group, male/female, race, renter/homeowner and detached/attached home. These responses help us get a little bit deeper in to the findings and to understand how each of these subgroups perceives the city.

PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 35 TEND TO HAVE A LESS FAVORABLE VIEW OF SHAKOPEE. In approximately 30% of all responses, those in the age group of 18-35 report having a lower perception of the City of Shakopee than those in the older age groups. Staff has a couple of theories as to why this may be but cannot confirm those theories at this time. This is

important because if this perception does not change over time resident perception will continue to drop as those in the younger demographic age. The city may consider an approach to evaluate why younger residents have persistently lower perception of Shakopee and adopt strategies to resolve this perception.

FEMALES TEND TO HAVE A MORE FAVORABLE VIEW OF SHAKOPEE THAN

MALES. Approximately 12% of the responses from females are statistically more positive than those responses from males. A brief look at the data suggests that this is consistent even when the discrepancy is not statistically significant (six percent or more difference). There is not a consistent pattern to suggest why females have a more positive view of Shakopee, although information from the survey consultant suggests this a frequent finding.

ALL RACES HAVE SIMILAR PERCEPTIONS OF SHAKOPEE IN MOST SURVEY

RESPONSES. White residents tend to have a higher feeling of safety and a more positive view of public safety services in the community than non-white residents (Tables 2, 11). White residents also tend to report higher levels of engagement in the community (Table 9, 18, 27) Non-white residents tend to have a more positive perspective on multi-modal transportation options (Table 3). There are certain specific survey results that indicate room for improvement in terms of inclusivity, but there are also results that suggest Shakopee has a foundation to be a welcoming community for all residents.

RESIDENTS WHO OWN THEIR HOMES AND LIVE IN DETACHED UNITS TEND TO

HAVE HIGHER PERCEPTION OF SHAKOPEE. Spotting patterns in these demographic characteristics is somewhat difficult. Owners and those living in detached homes tend to have a more positive perception of city government and public safety services (Table 10, 11) and of their neighborhoods in general, including safety, streets, and maintenance. Residents who own and live in detached homes also report higher levels of engagement overall.

GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

This analysis follows the document titled NCS Comparison by Geographic Subgroups 2019.

For the purposes of this survey we have the city broken up in to four different sub areas. The map included as Attachment 1 to this document shows where the boundary lines for the geographic subareas are. There are no surveys collected in subarea 6, which is all commercial/industrial area.

The purpose of the geographic analysis is to give the city an idea of areas of the city we may be missing; due to the total number of surveys in any of the geographic subareas the likelihood that any of the responses on their own are statistically significant is low. For this reason, the analysis on the geographic comparison is best performed in conjunction with other analysis and as confirmation information rather than results in and of themselves.

For example, as the city is considering adoption of a parks master plan we may wish to look at the geographic results for the percent of people in each area rating availability of paths and walking trails. From the results of the geographic analysis we can see that residents in subarea 1 and 2 tend to rate the availability of paths and walking trails higher than subarea 3 and 4. If the master plan draft calls for a higher level of resources for paths and walking trails in subarea 1 and 2 than in subareas 3 and 4, we may wish to consider adjustment of the plan.

SPECIAL TOPICS

This analysis follows the section Special Topics (Page 9) of the document titled NCS Community Livability Report.

In an effort to better understand issues, concerns and ideas specific to the City of Shakopee, staff added a few custom questions to the NCS survey. This information is intended to give the council and staff an understanding of circumstances, perceptions and support for projects in the community moving forward.

63% OF RESIDENTS THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL OR VERY IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN THE SMALL-TOWN FEEL OF SHAKOPEE. This question was developed because council and staff often hears that one of the good things of Shakopee is the small-town feel. We heard it through the comprehensive planning process and it frequently comes up in vision discussion with residents as well as the council. One of the issues with this statement is that we often cannot articulate what it means, part of this is because it can mean different things to different people. Overall, the results of the survey show that feeling safe, having walkable neighborhoods, knowing and being friendly with your neighbors and easy access to amenities are the characteristics that seem to mean the most to maintain a small town feel.

THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND ITS CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SHAKOPEE RESIDENTS. A vibrant downtown is a continual theme throughout the community engagement efforts from Envision Shakopee and in both the 2016 and 2019 community surveys improving downtown was reported as essential or very important to more than half of Shakopee residents. In addition, the idea to improve the riverfront at Huber Park improved from 40% supported to 54% supported. Many suburban communities strive to have a vibrant downtown and Shakopee is fortunate to have an existing downtown that is becoming more vibrant as the city continues to focus on the appearance and viability of Downtown Shakopee.

A MAJORITY OF SHAKOPEE RESIDENTS FEEL AS THOUGH THE VALUE FOR CITY SERVICES IS EXCELLENT OR GOOD ACROSS ALL CATEGORIES. This question is somewhat redundant of other survey questions but was an opportunity for respondents to make the connection between their property tax bill and city services, within the context that their city property tax is approximately one third of their total property tax bill.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A majority of Shakopee residents have generally positive perceptions of the City of Shakopee. Across all three pillars (community characteristics, governance and participation) the results show that a majority of residents think the community characteristics of Shakopee are positive, the city government operates efficiently and effectively and is a good value, and residents of Shakopee are engaged within their community. All of these factors should lead to an overall perception of a high quality of life.

However, the City of Shakopee ranks low among our peers and comparable cities in almost all survey response areas. Cities generally strive to provide a foundation for everyone in the community to have an opportunity for a high quality of life. In the perception of about 1/3 of residents' quality of life in Shakopee is only "fair" or "poor." Bluntly, Shakopee's ratings in quality of life categories consistently rank in the bottom three of comparable cities in the Twin Cities metro area.

It seems likely that Shakopee has a significant perception problem. There are areas of the survey where objective data do not match up with the perception of residents. There are also areas of the survey where the respondents' answers do not make sense. An example of this dissonance in perception is 80% of residents would recommend living in Shakopee but only 48% of residents think that Shakopee has a positive image.

The 2019 Community Survey therefore presents an opportunity. The city has very few areas where we are lower than the benchmark comparisons, and a majority of residents perceive the city positively. The opportunity that this survey gives the City of Shakopee is to choose what we want to be excellent at and what we want to be known for. Envision Shakopee provides an excellent vision for what the City of Shakopee could be, and if we plan an approach, strategically execute and learn from our experiences in the context of that vision, our results in the community survey will improve – and likely quickly.

The following are recommended actions for the council and staff to take in the context of the current situation in Shakopee, including imminent completion of the comprehensive plan, these survey results, internal discussions and engagement with the community.

ACKNOWLEDGE WE HAVE WORK TO DO AND TAKE THESE RESULTS AS AN OPPORTUNITY.

From a staff perspective, we believe the results of the 2019 community survey are not where Shakopee wants to be. When we, as staff, engage with the community the great majority of comments we hear are that Shakopee is a great place to live, and we hear that Shakopee government is starting to make great strides, particularly in Downtown Shakopee, overall economic development, customer service and in our presence in the community. Staff recommends acknowledging that these survey results are not what we want

to see and that Shakopee commits to moving forward with those strategies, projects and day-to-day work that will improve the community.

IDENTIFY WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND SET GOALS. Shakopee cannot be good at everything, nor should we strive to be. Not all the areas of the survey are as important as others. For example, the percentage of residents who stock supplies in the event of an emergency is not as important as the percentage of residents who feel safe in the community. Also, Envision Shakopee sets forth some aspirational big ideas, trying to work on all of them at the same time would likely result in only partial success. The council should clearly identify those community characteristics and big ideas Shakopee should be focused on, identify measures, set goals and hold staff accountable to execute.

COMMUNICATE STRATEGICALLY SO RESIDENTS CAN FORM INFORMED

OPINIONS. A common theme throughout this analysis is that there may be misalignment between perception and reality. While we can objectively state using data that perception is not aligned with reality in certain areas of this survey, a person's perception is their reality. Where the city has objective data and information that is available that may change perception, the city should strategically communicate that data and information. We cannot and should never expect to create opinions for people, but an informed public that trusts data and information provided by the city will gradually use that information to form their own opinions.

COMMUNICATE PROACTIVELY TO BUILD TRUST BETWEEN THE CITY

GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY. Many of the results related to the governance pillar are about trust – welcoming citizen involvement, confidence in city government, acting in the best interest of Shakopee and being honest among others are all trust-related questions. The city should, in all cases as practicable, communicate what we plan to do, why we are going to do it, and what the results are.

ENGAGE IN STRATEGIC PLANNING. All the points above lead to the need for a strategic plan that incorporates the vision of Envision Shakopee (and past strategic planning dating back to 2004), establishes clear values, objectives, measures and goals. By engaging in this strategic planning the city can tie all of our decisions back to an overarching vision for the city. For example, when the city moves to create a new police officer position we can discuss that it supports an objective to have a safe community, that adding a new police officer position will improve visibility in the community, improve response times to emergency calls and ultimately reduce the crime rate and make the community even safer. We will then be able to communicate what we are doing, why we are doing it and what our desired results are more effectively. We can also report the impacts of our decisions on the community to demonstrate that that our strategies work, or, and just as importantly, sometimes to say that our strategy needs more work. Strategic planning and execution provides the best opportunity to make Envision Shakopee a living document, by closing the gap between the long term vision of the comprehensive plan, and the day-to-day/year-to-year planning we do as a matter of practice.

