

# The Morris Leatherman Company

## 2023 CITY OF GOLDEN VALLEY

### REPORT OF FINDINGS

#### **Likely Voters in a Special Election:**

Respondents were asked three 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.

*As you may know, there are many types of elections. In Presidential and Gubernatorial elections, Minnesota has a 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?*

| <b><i>Past Elections Voting</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Always voted                        | 50%                   |
| Often voted                         | 32%                   |
| Rarely voted                        | 12%                   |
| Never voted                         | 5%                    |
| Unsure                              | 0%                    |

Fifty percent report they have always voted in past elections, while 82% always or often voted.

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

| <b><i>Likelihood</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Absolutely certain       | 54%                   |
| Very likely              | 25%                   |
| Half-half                | 11%                   |
| Not too likely           | 6%                    |
| Not at all likely        | 3%                    |
| Unsure                   | 1%                    |

Fifty-four percent report they are absolutely certain to vote in the upcoming 2023 November election, while 79% are either absolutely certain or very likely to do so.

A “likely voter” in a 2023 November Election would possess the characteristics discussed above and additionally be aware of the upcoming referendum. Consequently, the projected turnout in this upcoming November election is 24% of registered voters.

**Characteristics of the City of Golden Valley:**

Residents were initially asked:

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

Ninety-four percent of residents rate the quality of life favorably; in fact, 38% rate the quality of life as “excellent.”

| <b><i>Quality of Life Rating</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent                            | 38%                   |
| Good                                 | 56%                   |
| Only fair                            | 6%                    |
| Poor                                 | 0%                    |
| Unsure                               | 0%                    |

Only six percent post unfavorable ratings. Contrary to the trend across the Greater Metropolitan Area suburbs, “excellent” ratings remain very high, not slipping into “good” ratings. In other words, the intensity of favorable ratings is distinctly high.

Next, residents were queried:

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

Five issues are posted by four percent or more of the sample: “rising crime,” “shortage of police,” “high taxes,” “high cost of housing,” and “too much growth.”

| <b><i>Most Serious Issue</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Nothing</b>                   | <b>20%</b>            |
| <b>Rising crime</b>              | <b>25%</b>            |
| <b>Shortage of police</b>        | <b>11%</b>            |
| <b>High taxes</b>                | <b>8%</b>             |
| <b>High cost of housing</b>      | <b>4%</b>             |
| <b>Too much growth</b>           | <b>4%</b>             |
| Condition of streets             | 3%                    |
| Poor City services               | 3%                    |
| Lack of public transit           | 3%                    |
| High traffic volume              | 3%                    |
| Speeding/Reckless driving        | 2%                    |
| Vacant/Closed businesses         | 2%                    |
| Poor City spending               | 2%                    |
| Scattered                        | 4%                    |
| Unsure                           | 6%                    |

A large 20% think there are no serious issues facing Golden Valley; this “booster” core is among the top four Greater Metropolitan Area suburbs.

**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 from the City of Golden Valley, how would you rate the value – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?*

Seventy-two percent rate the value of city services favorably, while 23% are more critical.

| <b>Rating</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------|----------------|
| Excellent     | 12%            |
| Good          | 60%            |
| Only fair     | 18%            |
| Poor          | 4%             |
| Unsure        | 6%             |

The over three-to-one favorable-to-unfavorable ratio is within the top quartile of Greater Metropolitan Area suburban communities.

Next, respondents were told:

*I would like to read you a list of a few city services. For each one, please tell me whether you would rate the quality of the service as excellent, good, only fair, or poor. In the case of the last two city services, please consider only their job on city-maintained streets and roads. That means excluding interstate highways, state and county roads taken care of by other levels of government. Hence, Interstate 394, Highway 55, Highway 100, County Road 156 or Winnetka Avenue, should not be considered.*

| <b>Rating</b>                                   | <b>Excellent or Good</b> | <b>Only Fair or Poor</b> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Police protection                               | 83%                      | 18%                      |
| Fire protection                                 | 92%                      | 6%                       |
| Park maintenance                                | 92%                      | 8%                       |
| Water and sanitary sewer repair and maintenance | 81%                      | 14%                      |
| City street repair and maintenance              | 80%                      | 21%                      |
| Snow plowing                                    | 82%                      | 18%                      |

At least 80% rate the six services favorably. Higher unfavorable ratings group between 18% and 21%. While lower than the 30% found in many suburbs, these three services are viewed as core city functions and prioritized highly by most residents.

Changing topics, Golden Valley residents were informed:

*As you may know, property taxes are divided between the City of Golden Valley, Hennepin County, and your local school district.*

*Thinking about the amount going to the City....*

*Do you think the city portion of your property taxes, which funds City services in Golden Valley is very high, somewhat high, about average, somewhat low, or very low in comparison with nearby suburban communities?*

Forty-eight percent view the city portion of their property taxes as “high,” and 41% rate them as “about average” compared to neighboring communities.

| <b><i>City Portion of Property Tax</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|--|-----------------------|
| Very high                                  | 17%                   |
| Somewhat high                              | 31%                   |
| About average                              | 41%                   |
| Somewhat low                               | 0%                    |
| Very low                                   | 0%                    |
| Unsure                                     | 11%                   |

Using standard tax climate measurements, the Golden Valley property tax climate is rated “borderline hostile.” This means that any property tax referendum effort will require an aggressive information and persuasion campaign.

**Resident Involvement in City Decisions:**

Golden Valley residents were queried:

*How would you rate the efforts to involve residents in important decisions facing the City – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?*

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

| <b><i>Rating</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent            | 15%                   |
| Good                 | 52%                   |
| Only fair            | 22%                   |
| Poor                 | 5%                    |
| Unsure               | 6%                    |

By a 67%-27% majority, sample members highly rate the City’s efforts to involve residents in important decisions.

**Predisposition toward a Tax Increase:**

City residents were asked:

*When you think about on-going investments to improve city buildings and facilities...*

*Which of the following statements best describes your feelings:*

- A) I would vote AGAINST almost any tax increase to improve city facilities and buildings;
- B) I would vote for a tax increase under some conditions, but against it under other conditions;
- C) I would vote FOR almost any tax increase to improve city facilities and buildings.

Two-thirds of the sample indicated Statement B.

| <b>Predisposition</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Statement A           | 16%            |
| Statement B           | 67%            |
| Statement C           | 13%            |
| Unsure                | 4%             |

The “Quick Difference” – core support minus core opposition – is -3%. This means that at the start of a referendum campaign, supporters trail opponents by 3%.

**City Facilities Tax Increase:**

Golden Valley 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 in the same way as the state sales tax, meaning that items such as clothes and groceries are exempt from the tax. During the 2023 legislative session, the City of Golden Valley was given permission to hold a sales tax referendum this November to buy land and build a new Public Works building on it, and then build a new Police and Fire headquarters, for modern police and fire emergency response systems on the current Public Works building site.*

They were then asked:

*Prior to this survey, were you aware of the sales tax referendum this November?*

Forty-five percent report awareness of the upcoming sales tax referendum.

| <b>Awareness of November Sales Tax Referendum</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Yes   | 45%            |
| No  | 55%            |
| Unsure  | 1%             |

At this point in the election cycle, the level of awareness is higher than the norm for cities pursuing tax finance elections in November.

Aware residents were asked a follow-up query:

*Would you say you are very familiar with it, somewhat familiar with it, or not too familiar with it?*

Twenty percent are “very familiar” with the sales tax increase proposal.

| <b>Familiarity with November Sales Tax Referendum</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Very familiar   | 20%            |
| Somewhat familiar                                     | 59%            |
| Not too familiar                                      | 21%            |
| Unsure  | 0%             |

A comparatively low 21% of aware residents are “not too familiar.”

All respondents were informed:

*The City will ask voters to approve three questions for a new local 1.25 percent sales tax increase for up to 30 years. For your information, a 1.25 percent sales tax increase would be ten cents on every \$8.00 of taxable purchases in the City of Golden Valley. The local sales tax would expire once the approved projects are fully funded.*

The table below shows the support, opposition, and uncertainty about each project, if the election were today.

| <b>Project</b>                                | <b>Support</b> | <b>Oppose</b> | <b>Unsure</b> |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Purchase land for a new Public Works building | 65%            | 29%           | 7%            |
| Build new Public Works buildings              | 65%            | 30%           | 6%            |
| Build new Police and Fire headquarters        | 65%            | 32%           | 3%            |

A solid majority support each of the three projects.

Respondents taking a position on each proposal were asked for the reasons behind their decision. The table below compiles these reasons for each of the three.

| <b>Reason</b>                   | <b>Purchase Land</b> | <b>Public Works</b> | <b>Police/Fire</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Support</b>                  |                      |                     |                    |
| Prefer to property tax increase | 28%                  | 29%                 | 27%                |
| Reasonable cost                 | 26%                  | 25%                 | 24%                |
| Needed                          | 13%                  | 14%                 | 17%                |
| Scattered                       | 1%                   | 1%                  | 0%                 |
| <b>Oppose</b>                   |                      |                     |                    |
| Poor spending                   | 8%                   | 11%                 | 12%                |
| Inflation/Economy               | 4%                   | 5%                  | 7%                 |
| Not needed                      | 7%                   | 7%                  | 8%                 |
| Too high tax increase           | 6%                   | 5%                  | 4%                 |
| Taxes already too high          | 3%                   | 0%                  | 0%                 |
| Prefer property tax increase    | 2%                   | 2%                  | 0%                 |
| Scattered                       | 2%                   | 1%                  | 1%                 |
| Unsure                          | 0%                   | 0%                  | 0%                 |

Three statistically significant reasons for their decisions are given by supporters, while four reasons are given by opponents. Supporters cite “prefer sales tax increase to property tax increase,” “reasonable cost,” and “needed.” Opponents indicate “poor spending,” “inflation/uncertain economy,” “not needed,” and “too high tax increase.”

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 Golden Valley. A University of Minnesota study projected 61.6% of the new sales tax revenue would come from people who live outside of Golden Valley and use city services.*

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-one percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax option; additionally, 31% are “much more likely to do so.”

| <b><i>Sales Tax Captures Visitors' Use of Services</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|--|-----------------------|
| Much more likely   | 31%                   |
| Somewhat more likely                                       | 30%                   |
| Somewhat less likely                                       | 3%                    |
| Much less likely   | 5%                    |
| No difference  | 29%                   |
| Unsure   | 1%                    |

The main impact of this argument reinforces respondents already supporting the sales tax increase, convinces residents unsure about it, and switches opponents to supporters.

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

*It is projected with a 1.25 percent sales tax increase that the typical Golden Valley resident would pay an additional \$9.89 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?*

Fifty-one percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax increase, but 13% are “less likely” to support it.

| <b>Typical Resident Pays Additional \$9.89 per Month in Sales Tax</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Much more likely  | 24%            |
| Somewhat more likely  | 27%            |
| Somewhat less likely  | 5%             |
| Much less likely  | 8%             |
| No difference   | 35%            |
| Unsure  | 2%             |

This time, 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 include funding to make these improvements. If the sales tax increase is not approved, the City could consider a property tax increase which only Golden Valley residents and businesses would pay. These projects could cost the owner of a \$400,000 home in Golden Valley about \$42.00 per month for the improvements only.*

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?*

Sixty-three percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax increase, but 11% are “less likely” to support it.

| <b>Recourse to Property Tax Increase</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Much more likely                         | 39%            |
| Somewhat more likely                     | 24%            |
| Somewhat less likely                     | 3%             |
| Much less likely                         | 8%             |
| No difference                            | 25%            |
| Unsure                                   | 1%             |

Like the first argument tested, the main impact of this argument reinforces respondents already supporting the sales tax increase, convinces residents unsure about it, and switches opponents to supporters.

Finally, respondents were told:

*The current city buildings that house police, fire, and public works can no longer adequately support the efficient delivery of services. They lack equitable and inclusive restrooms and locker room spaces, proper space for training, and proper storage for modern equipment and vehicles.*

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-seven percent are “more likely” to support the sales tax increase, but 10% are “less likely” to support it.

| <b>Current City Buildings Inadequate</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Much more likely                         | 29%            |
| Somewhat more likely                     | 28%            |
| Somewhat less likely                     | 2%             |
| Much less likely                         | 8%             |
| No difference                            | 31%            |
| Unsure                                   | 2%             |

The main impact of this statement reinforces respondents already supporting the sales tax increase for this purpose.

**Communications Issues:**

Interviewees were asked:

*What is the most effective way for you to receive information from the City of Golden Valley – mailed newsletter, electronic newsletter or email, 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.”

| <b>Source of Information</b>             | <b>Most Effective</b> | <b>First or Second</b> |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Mailed newsletter                        | 49%                   | 62%                    |
| E-Newsletter or email                    | 15%                   | 26%                    |
| City website                             | 12%                   | 30%                    |
| Social media                             | 10%                   | 25%                    |
| Local newspaper                          | 6%                    | 18%                    |
| Word of mouth                            | 5%                    | 26%                    |
| Watching/attending City Council meetings | 2%                    | 6%                     |
| Something else                           | 1%                    | 5%                     |
| Unsure                                   | 0%                    | 2%                     |

There are six sources of information which together dominate the communications system. The most effective sources of information are the “Mailed newsletter,” “E-Newsletter or email,” “City website,” “social media,” “local newspaper,” and “word of mouth.” Together they are relied upon by 97% of the households in Golden Valley.

**Conclusions and Implications:**

1. By using the supportive demographic groups from this 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 aimed at these groups.

- More than five year residents
  - Single senior households
  - Households containing children under 18 years old
  - Owner-occupied homes worth between \$350,000 and \$550,000
  - Residents less than 55 years old
  - Moderates, Liberal leaners, and Liberals
  - Women
  - Precinct 2, 5, 6, & 7 residents
2. The most effective means of communication for a referendum are the “mailed newsletter,” “e-newsletter and email,” and the “City website.” Each reach large majorities of supporters and high numbers of undecided voters. The “local newspaper” has a split audience, with a slight majority in favor of the referendums and a higher opposition plurality, but also reaches the largest group of undecided voters. The “grapevine” supports the referendums by almost two-to-one, but moderate-to-liberal venues should be given the top priority. For each opposition Letter-to-the-Editor, supporters should respond with two – the first, rebutting or re-framing the content of the opponent; the second, again stating one of the key arguments in favor of the referendum.

**Sample Demographics:**

Residential longevity was determined:

*Approximately how many years have you lived in the City of Golden Valley?*

The typical resident has lived in Golden Valley for 13.0 years.

| <b><i>Residential Longevity</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Two years or less                   | 9%                    |
| Three to five years                 | 15%                   |
| Six to ten years                    | 21%                   |
| 11 to 20 years                      | 24%                   |
| Over 20 years                       | 32%                   |
| Unsure                              | 0%                    |

Twenty-four percent have lived there for not more than five years. Twenty-one percent have resided in Golden Valley for six to ten years, while 24% have lived there for 11 to 20 years. Thirty-two percent have been Golden Valley 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-nine percent of the households contain seniors.

| <b>Seniors in Household</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| None                        | 71%            |
| One                         | 15%            |
| Two or more                 | 14%            |

Senior couples and single seniors are approximately equal.

*Adults under 65?*

Twenty-four percent are senior-only households.

| <b>Non-Senior Adults in Household</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| None                                  | 24%            |
| One                                   | 18%            |
| Two                                   | 53%            |
| Three or more                         | 6%             |

The typical residence contains two non-senior adults.

*Children, under 18 years old?*

Seventy-seven percent are “empty-nesters.”

| <b>Children in Household</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| None                         | 77%            |
| One                          | 11%            |
| Two                          | 9%             |
| Three or more                | 3%             |

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 \$250,000, \$250,000-\$350,000, \$350,001-\$450,000, \$450,001-\$550,000, or over \$550,000?*

| <b>Home Ownership and Home Value</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Rent                                 | 26%            |
| Own/Under \$250k                     | 10%            |
| Own/\$250k-\$350k                    | 24%            |
| Own/\$350,001-\$450k                 | 20%            |
| Own/\$450,001-\$550k                 | 9%             |
| Own/Over \$550k                      | 7%             |
| Unsure/Refused                       | 4%             |

Twenty-six percent of the sample are renters. The median value of an owner-occupied home in the city is \$357,500. Ten percent report home values of \$250,000 or less, 24% post home values in the \$250,001-\$350,000 range, 20% indicate home values in the \$350,001-\$450,000 range, and 16% report home values over \$450,000.

Age was considered next.

The median adult resident in Golden Valley is 50.6 years old.

| <b><i>Age of Respondent</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-24                           | 2%                    |
| 25-34                           | 17%                   |
| 35-44                           | 21%                   |
| 45-54                           | 18%                   |
| 55-64                           | 16%                   |
| 65 and over                     | 27%                   |

Nineteen percent report ages less than 35, thirty-nine percent are in the 35-54 years old range, and 43% are 55 years old or older.

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?*

Twenty-nine percent are “Conservative or leaning Conservative,” while 39% are “Liberal or leaning Liberal.”

| <b><i>Political Ideology</i></b> | <b><i>Percent</i></b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Very conservative                | 4%                    |
| Conservative                     | 19%                   |
| Moderate/conservative            | 6%                    |
| Moderate                         | 29%                   |
| Moderate/liberal                 | 12%                   |
| Liberal                          | 23%                   |
| Very liberal                     | 4%                    |
| Something else (Vol.)            | 1%                    |
| Unsure                           | 2%                    |

Twenty-nine percent are “Moderate.”

The ethnicity of residents was ascertained through the question:

*Which of the following categories represents your ethnicity – White, African-American, Hispanic-Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, Native America, or something else? What would that be?*

Seventy-five percent indicate they are “White.”

| <b>Ethnicity</b>       | <b>Percent</b> |
|------------------------|----------------|
| White                  | 75%            |
| African-American       | 11%            |
| Hispanic-Latino        | 3%             |
| Asian-Pacific Islander | 3%             |
| Native American        | 1%             |
| Something else         | 0%             |
| Mixed/Bi-racial        | 4%             |
| Refused                | 3%             |

Eleven percent are “African-American.”

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.

| <b>Financial Situation</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Statement A                | 4%             |
| Statement B                | 40%            |
| Statement C                | 37%            |
| Statement D                | 17%            |
| Unsure                     | 2%             |

A large 54% are “financially managing” – choosing Statement C or D.

The gender of each respondent was noted.

*Gender?*

Women outnumber men by two percent in the sample.

| <b>Gender of Respondent</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Male                        | 49%            |
| Female                      | 51%            |

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

*Region of City?*

The City of Golden Valley was split into two regions, following School District boundaries.

| <b>Region of City</b>                             | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Robbinsdale School District (Precincts 1,2,4,6,7) | 62%            |
| Hopkins School District (Precincts 3,5,8)         | 38%            |

The Robbinsdale Area School District Region has the largest subsample size, at 62%.

***Methodology:***

This study contains the results of a sample of 625 randomly selected adult residents in the City of Golden Valley. Professional interviewers conducted the survey by telephone between August 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The typical respondent took five minutes to complete the questionnaire. The non-response rate was 6%. The results of the study are projectable to all adult City of Golden Valley residents within  $\pm$  4.0 % in 95 out of 100 cases.