

# DECISION RESOURCES, LTD.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *City of Golden Valley Residential Study*

Golden Valley citizens remain very pleased with their community — city services, City Staff and City Council. In almost every case, very favorable ratings are either stable or improved from five years ago. Community identity and neighborliness remain at remarkably high levels for an inner-ring suburban community. And, “boosterism,” already very strong, dramatically increases to include one-third of the sample; the suburban norm is just six percent.

Other key findings:

1. Ninety-two percent think the City of Golden Valley is “headed in the right direction;” a very small six percent think “things are off on the wrong track.” This is the top rating in the Metropolitan Area.
2. Concern about the city portion of property taxes has dropped significantly. Seven years ago, 57% rated them as “very high” or “somewhat high;” this year, 48% see them as “about average.” “About average” is the choice of 44% this year, almost double the 2006 level of 23%.
3. All but one of 17 city services scored favorable ratings of at least 90%; the 80% favorable rating of city street repair and maintenance, however, still is 25% above the suburban norm. This consistency of very high positive ratings sets Golden Valley among the top three communities in the Metropolitan Area. Not unexpectedly, 84% rate the value of city services as either “excellent” or “good,” while ten percent rate it as “only fair” or “poor.” More to the point, a 54%-39% majority favors a property tax increase to maintain city services if it were needed to maintain city services at their current levels, reversing a 43%-36% plurality opposed in 2006.
4. Eighty-one percent rate general economic development in the City of Golden Valley as “excellent” or “good.” Only 19% rate them lower. Similarly, 82% highly rate the City’s efforts to attract new businesses, while 16% are more critical. The City of Golden Valley also posts the strongest support in the Metropolitan Area for providing financial incentives to attract specific types of development: 71% in favor, and 27% in opposition.
5. Perceptions of the Golden Valley Police Department are impressively solid. Ninety-nine percent rate police protection as either “excellent” or “good.” The three most-offered one-or-two word descriptions are “excellent,” “good,” and “helpful.” Thirty-nine percent report household members had contact with the Police Department through community programs;

again, 99% highly rated their experience with the community programs. Twenty-nine percent report another type of contact with the Department, most often through the provision of emergency services. These contacts were also highly rated: ninety percent rate the way the Police Department handled the situation as “excellent” or “good;” ninety-five percent see the response time as “prompt;” and, ninety-three percent feel the Police Department personnel are courteous and act in a professional manner. Together with the fact that only 12% feel there are any areas in Golden Valley where they do not feel safe – the lowest among first-ring suburbs -- the Golden Valley Police Department is the one of the three most highly rated departments in the Metropolitan Area.

6. There is moderate support for the construction of a community center. In the abstract, residents support its construction by a 65%-31% majority. Fifty percent think household members would use the facility. But, the typical respondent would support only a \$3.36-\$5.00 per month in their property taxes to fund this construction. And, only four of 17 potential offerings in a new structure received support of at least 65% of the respondents: space for senior programs, space for teen programs, fitness center, and indoor track. Another three offerings were supported by over 60% of the sample: child care center, banquet rooms, and indoor swimming pool. Unlike in other suburbs, indoor aquatic offerings or ice arenas, then, would not be the focus of a community center in Golden Valley.

7. A compellingly high 82% believe they could have a say about the way the City of Golden Valley runs things, other than by voting; this level reflects a 21% increase since the 2006 survey. Knowledge about the work of the Mayor and City Council increased from 37% in 2006 to 63% in 2013. Simultaneously, a 57%-12% favorable job approval rating in 2006 became an 89%-7% favorable job approval rating in 2013 – one the three strongest in the Metropolitan Area. First-hand contact with the City Staff changed from 35% to 46% during the seven year interim between studies. But, similar to the change in the job approval rating for the Mayor and City Council, a favorable rating of 58%-6%, with 36% uncertain, moved to an 89%-8% favorable rating, with only three percent uncertain. Residents are particularly pleased with the Mayor and City Council, as well as City Staff.

Through sound policies, and a well-defined plan for the future, residents of the City of Golden Valley have transformed from contented citizens to enthusiastic citizens. They feel informed and empowered. In fact, they feel confident. This will prove to be critical in the coming years, particularly as the City confronts issues of a more Metropolitan nature. The level of trust among the citizenry will allow decision-makers to make possibly tougher judgments based upon a solid foundation of popular consent.

This study contains the results of a telephone survey of 400 randomly selected residents of the City of Golden Valley. Survey responses were gathered by professional interviewers across the community between May 21<sup>st</sup> and June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The average interview took thirty minutes. In general, random samples such as this yield results projectable to the entire universe of adult Golden Valley residents within  $\pm 5.0$  percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases.