

# The **Morris** Leatherman Company

## ***SUMMARY OF FINDINGS***

### ***2017 City of Andover***

#### ***Quality of Life Issues:***

A substantial 96% rate the quality of life in the city as either “excellent” or “good;” in fact, 55% rate it “excellent,” a 13% increase since the 2014 study, again ranking within the top 10% of suburban communities. Only five percent are more critical, rating the quality of life as “only fair.”

“Strong neighborhoods and quality housing,” expressed by 18%, “small town feel,” cited by 16%, “friendly people,” mentioned by 15%, and “open space and rural nature,” at 13%, are the most liked features of the city. Eleven percent like “quiet and peacefulness,” while eight percent point to “good schools” and seven percent, to “closeness to family and friends.”

The most serious issue facing the City of Andover is “too much growth,” posted by 18%. “High taxes” and “traffic congestion” follow, each at 14%. “Road maintenance,” at eight percent, rounds out the top issues of concern. Boosters – those who see no serious issues facing the community – are 26% of the sample, still comparatively large, but down 12% from the 2014 level.

A comparatively strong 92% rate the sense of community pride in Andover as either “excellent” or “good.” Only seven percent are more negative in their evaluations.

#### ***Community Characteristics:***

In reviewing a list of 14 community characteristics, majorities think the number or amount of each one is “enough,” with five exceptions. Over sixty percent think Andover has enough mid-range cost housing, parks and open space, and trails and bikeways. Between 50% and 59% report the community contains “enough” apartments, townhomes, starter homes for young families, executive housing, entertainment establishments, and dining establishments. But, on six characteristics, over 30% think the City has “too little:” retail shopping establishments, light manufacturing businesses, entertainment establishments, assisted living for seniors, one-level housing for adults 18-to-64 years old, and starter homes for young families.

The table below arrays each city attribute with the percent of residents seeing “too many or too much” of it, the percent of residents seeing “too few or too little” of it, and the difference

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between these two percentages. The attributes are ranked from the most negative difference – greater numbers seeing “too few or too little” -- to the most positive – “greater numbers seeing “too many or too much.”

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Too Much</b>	<b>Too Little</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Light manufacturing businesses	8%	39%	-31%
Retail shopping opportunities	13%	41%	-28%
Entertainment establishments	12%	38%	-26%
Assisted living for seniors	13%	37%	-24%
One-level housing for adults 18-to-64 years old	12%	32%	-20%
One level housing for seniors maintained by an association	14%	29%	-15%
Starter homes for young families	17%	30%	-13%
Dining establishments	19%	27%	-8%
Townhomes	19%	24%	-5%
Apartments	20%	24%	-4%
Mid-range cost housing	18%	15%	+3%
Trails and bikeways	21%	16%	+5%
Parks and open spaces	22%	12%	+10%
Executive housing	22%	12%	+10%

Five attributes should be prioritized for further efforts to attract them to the community: light manufacturing businesses, retail shopping opportunities, entertainment establishments, assisted living for seniors, and one-level housing for adults 18-to-64 years old. Given the current split among residents, efforts to expand parks and open spaces and executive housing opportunities are not currently a priority.

***Tax Climate and City Services:***

City service evaluations are consistently high. Police protection, fire protection, storm drainage and flood control, park maintenance, trail maintenance, and snow plowing are all rated highly by at least 93%. Animal control receives an 87% favorable rating. Street lighting, posting an 81% positive rating and a 20% negative rating, remains at the suburban norm. City street repair and maintenance, with an 80% favorable rating, a 28% increase since the 2014 study, and a 20% unfavorable rating, actually exceeds the average suburban favorable rating by 20%. The mean average of all positive service ratings is a solid 91.9%, up from 85.6% three years ago.

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While 62% would like to see no new or enhanced city services, 18% point to the enhancement of road maintenance and 13% indicate more effort on street lighting.

Fifty-three percent, up 13% in three years, see their property taxes as “high” in comparison with nearby cities. Forty-two percent views them as “about average,” only two four percent report they are “low.” When considering the value of city services — quality versus cost — 87% rate it highly, with 11% more critical.

A solid 91% feel the quality of city services has kept pace with growth in the community. Among the small six percent disagreeing, a majority of these respondents point to “lagging road maintenance.”

***Public Safety Issues:***

Forty-nine percent rate “traffic speeding” as the first or second greatest public safety concern in the City of Andover. “Youth crime and vandalism” follows at 36%, while “drugs” and “break-ins and theft from automobiles” are third ranked at 22% each. A 76% majority of residents, though, are satisfied with the amount of patrolling by the Anoka County Sheriff’s Department in their neighborhood; but, 22% think there is not enough patrolling in their immediate area.

***Transportation Issues:***

An extremely large 89% are satisfied with their ability to get where they need to go in the city within a reasonable amount of time; only 12% are dissatisfied with intra-city travel times, based on the “many potholes” and “traffic congestion.”

***Code Enforcement:***

By a 55%-40% majority, residents favor a more active approach by the City in the enforcement of residential property codes; this judgment reverses the close split **against** a more active approach found in 2014. There are four types of code enforcement regarded by over 30% as “not tough enough.” junk cars on residential property, tall grass, invasive plants and weeds, and storage of RVs on residential property.

***Parks and Recreational Issues:***

A comparatively large 82% report they are aware of open space areas in the city, an increase of 33% since the last study. Sixty-one percent report household members visited them; the most popular of these destinations are Northwoods Preserve, Martin Meadows, and Maple View.

Sixty-four percent report their household members use city trails at least “occasionally;” twenty-five percent do so “frequently.” Fifty-eight percent use them mostly for “walking,” while 23% use them for “running or jogging,” and 19%, for “bicycling.” By a 59%-38% majority, residents support the use of city funding for additional trails in the City; however, the margin has dropped significantly from the 71%-29% majority three years ago. Most users, 75%, also have no suggestions for changes or improvements to the city’s trails. There are three main reasons given by city trail non-users for their lack of household use: “age/health issues,” mentioned by 35%, “no interest,” cited by 27%, and “too busy,” stated by 21%.

The typical resident would support a property tax increase of only \$7.70 per year to fund improvements and additions to city trails. Much more challenging, though, is the 42% who are unwilling to support **any** tax increase for this purpose.

A very high 97% rate the city parks and recreation facilities in Andover as either “excellent” or “good;” only three percent rate them lower. Eighty-five percent, an unusually high level, are able to correctly name their neighborhood park. Fifty-one percent do not feel their park needs any improvements; twelve percent cite “more restrooms,” while ten percent each mention “updated equipment” or “more lights.” A very high 98% report they feel at least “somewhat safe” when visiting city parks; in fact, 70% feel “very safe.” Ninety-seven percent report household members use city parks and recreation facilities at least “occasionally;” twenty-five percent do so “frequently.” “Exercise,” at 46%, “using playground equipment,” at 22%, and “family gatherings,” at 19%, are the major reasons for using the parks and recreation facilities.

Thirty-two percent of city households report members who joined the Andover YMCA. Members like most the “fitness center,” at 28%, as well as “family activities,” the “swimming pool,” and “classes,” at 13% each. Most members, 88%, could think of no additional programs and offerings they would like to see established. Non-members cited five major reasons for their status: “no interest,” at 40%, “too busy,” at 20%, “preference for other activities,” at 13%, and “age or health issues” or “high cost,” each at 10%.

Forty-seven percent report household members used the Andover Community Center during the past year. Among non-Community Center users, only 36% are aware Andover residents can visit

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the YMCA four times per year for free. Ninety-nine percent of the visitors rate the Community Center as either “excellent” or “good;” in fact, 51% see the facility as “excellent,” and increase of 10% in three years. Only one percent rates the Center unfavorably. An almost identical 96% report they are either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the current offerings at the Community Center. The very small four percent reporting they are not “very satisfied” cite “lack of offerings for seniors,” “lack of offerings for hobbyists,” and “lack of offerings for teenagers.”

Residents were read a short list of parks and recreation facilities in Andover. They were then asked, for each one, whether the City has “too many,” “too little,” and “enough.” In each case, a majority, ranging from 51% to 70%, think the City has “enough.” The table below arrays each type of facility with the percent of residents seeing “too many” of it, the percent of residents seeing “too little” of it, and the difference between these two percentages. The attributes are ranked from the most negative difference – greater numbers seeing “too little” -- to the most positive – “greater numbers seeing “too much.”

<b>Parks and Recreation Facilities</b>	<b>Too Much</b>	<b>Too Little</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Facilities for teenagers	10%	31%	-21%
Facilities for seniors	8%	28%	-20%
Facilities for children under 12	15%	19%	-4%
Indoor ice rinks for skating and hockey	15%	16%	-1%
Meeting room space	16%	14%	+2%
Outdoor ballfields for baseball, football, lacrosse and soccer	17%	12%	+5%
Fieldhouse space for indoor sports	20%	14%	+6%

Two recreation facilities should be considered secondary priorities for future expansions: facilities for teenagers and facilities for seniors.

By a 50%-38% majority, residents oppose the use of city funds to provide additional recreational facilities in the City. Among the minority of supporters, the most intense focus is on a teen center, an indoor fieldhouse, and a senior center. Even so, the typical resident would not support any property tax increase to fund improvements and additions to recreational facilities in Andover.

***City Communications:***

Clearly, the City has developed a tri-legged communications system. The city newsletter, “Andover Today,” is key to 49% in providing information about city government and its activities. The “City website” is relied upon by 19%, and “cable television,” by 12%. The City

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Newsletter remains the dominant information channel, but has decreased by 22% during the past three years. “Andover Today,” indicated by 48%, is also the most preferred way for residents to receive information about City government. Twenty-three percent prefers the “City website,” followed by “cable television,” at eight percent. Residents in the main, then, prefer to receive their information first-hand, from the City of Andover.

Eighty percent regularly receive and read “Andover Today,” down 12% in three years. Among readers, 99% rate the content as either “excellent” or “good.” Two suggestions for additional content include “City Council decisions” and “City events news.” A unanimous 100% rate the format and appearance of the newsletter as “excellent” or “good.” And, a remarkable 90% also report they read “all of it” or “most of it.” “Andover Today” still ranks among the top city newsletters in the Metropolitan Area.

Sixty-one percent of the surveyed households subscribe to cable television, up six percent since the 2014 study. A comparatively large 38% either “frequently” or “occasionally” watch Andover City Council Meetings or Commission Meetings on Channel 16. If Andover had a local news program on Channel 16, 38% would be at least “somewhat likely” to watch it; in fact, using standard market projection techniques, an estimated 12% of city households would tune in.

Eighty-eight percent of the sample report access to the Internet; forty-six percent have a cable modem, 29% use wireless, and 11% have DSL. Seventy-nine percent accessed the City of Andover’s website, up 23% in three years. The effective reach of the City’s website is 70% of the households in the community. Website users, 98%, were able to find the information they sought, usually general information, parks and recreation information, new about city events, and non-specific browsing. Sixty-one percent of Internet users are at least “somewhat interested” in subscribing to receive e-mails containing city information and news; using standard market projection techniques, an estimated 22% of Internet users would subscribe to this new service. Sixty-seven percent of Internet users report awareness of the City of Andover’s Facebook presence; in fact, 45% have actually viewed the City’s Facebook page.

In grading the City’s overall performance in communicating key local issues to residents in its publications, newspaper columns, and on cable television, 92% award it “excellent” or “good” evaluations, while seven percent prove more critical. This rating remains among the highest across the Metropolitan Area.

***Facilitating and Coordinating Volunteer Opportunities:***

Respondents were informed the City of Andover is considering a role in facilitating and coordinating volunteer opportunities in the community. A solid majority of 78% views this as a “good idea;” moreover, 34% strongly feel that way. Only five percent see it as a “bad idea,” while 17% are “unsure.” Positive respondents base their perceptions on: “helping people give back to the community,” at 23%; “enhancing sense of community,” at 23%; “providing more activities for residents,” at 14%; and, “building character of residents,” at 10%. The small percentage of negative respondents state two arguments: “not a proper role for the City” and “enough current opportunities.”

***Residential Demographics:***

Andover continues to be a growingly stable, comparatively young and relatively upscale community. The median longevity of adult residents is 10.8 years. Ten percent of the sample report moving to the city during the past two years, while 18% were there for over two decades.

Forty-two percent of the households contain at least one school-aged child or preschooler, down six percent from the level in the 2014 study. Nineteen percent report the presence of senior citizens; twelve percent of the households are composed exclusively of senior citizens. The average age of respondents is 44.5 years old. Fifty-three percent of the sample fall into the 35-54 years old age range; Twenty-two percent report ages under 35 years old and 25%, over 54 years old. Women outnumber men by two percent in the sample.

Ninety-one percent own their present residences. The median valued home in Andover is \$275,000.00, with 31%, almost double the 2014 level, valued over \$300,000.00. Twenty-one percent report living in the Eastern Precincts One and Two. Thirty-two percent reside in South Central Precincts Three, Four and Ten. Twenty-one percent indicate they live in Northwest Precincts Five and Six. Twenty-seven percent reside in Southwestern Precincts Seven, Eight and Nine.

***Conclusions:***

In comparison with two opinion surveys conducted in 2006 and 2014, Andover residents are very satisfied with their community. The survey found a large number — 26% — of residents who see no major problem facing the City of Andover, down from the level three years ago, but still triple the Metropolitan Area suburban norm. Concerns about growth, taxes and traffic congestion are at or below normal levels for an outer-ring suburban community. Residents rate

the quality of life in Andover highly, and express a real sense of community pride.

The key issues still facing decision-makers in the future remain balancing growth and development with natural ambience and the efficient provision of city services. Even so, in balancing the wishes of residents against their concerns as taxpayers, City government and staff strike an excellent balance when compared with other suburban communities. Tax hostility continues to cool off somewhat from 2014 levels, but passage of a park bond referendum would be difficult at this time: forty-two percent oppose any tax increase for this purpose, while the typical resident would support only a \$7.70 per year increase. Additionally, there is very little appetite for using city funds to provide additional recreational facilities in the community, a reversal from the earlier 67%-30% majority in favor to a 50%-38% majority against.

Generally strong city service ratings are posted across the board, with a very large majority thinking services have kept pace with growth. The only key non-majority criticism is primarily focused on “not enough street lighting.” And, public safety concerns remain focused on traffic speeding and youth crimes and vandalism.

Development and redevelopment preferences are changing. Residents see a need for additional amenities – retail shopping and entertainment opportunities – and constituent-specific housing – one-level housing for adults 18-to-64 years old and assisted living for seniors. These reflect a shift from the past focus on recreational offerings and amenities.

The City of Andover continues to do an exceptional job in communicating with residents about city government and policies. “Andover Today” remains among the most well-read and regarded city newsletters in the Metropolitan Area. However, it is now only the first of a three-legged communications system, one which includes the City website and cable television. In essence, residents of the City of Andover want to receive information directly from the City with no secondary filters required.

As in the 2014 study, Andover is still “working.” Residents are very happy with their community. They endorse the direction the City is taking and are confident about its future.

***Methodology:***

This study contains the results of a telephone survey of 400 randomly selected adult residents of the City of Andover. Survey responses were gathered by professional interviewers across the community between March 20<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. The non-response rate was 3.7%. The average interview took 23 minutes. In general, random samples such as this yield results projectable to the entire universe of adult Andover residents within  $\pm 5.0$  percentage points in 95 out of 100 cases.