

# North Liberty Community Survey



## 2017 Report

## About the Survey

At the request of city administration, the Communications Advisory Commission and the Communications Department staff constructed and conducted a survey of North Liberty residents about a variety of the services the city provides.

This survey had two goals:

1. Set quantitative benchmarks against which the city could compare satisfaction over time
2. Solicit qualitative input from respondents

To achieve the first goal, we asked participants to score statements, listed at the end of this document, on a scale of 0 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Because this is the first time we've conducted this survey, we have very limited data with which to compare these benchmarks. We do not have the data that would allow us to make comparisons to other communities.

Additionally, we're hesitant to draw conclusions about the satisfaction with specific services relative to each other. For example, we can expect lower satisfaction levels with paid utilities than with free library programming.

While the survey conducted this year was composed mostly of quantitative questions for which we did not already have a benchmark, it also included eight that had been asked on a survey conducted in 2011. This survey, conducted for the City of North Liberty by Dan Wiese Marketing Research of Cedar Rapids, focused on transportation but included other questions to obscure that focus. These questions, and the mean response for each, are below. The remainder of the quantitative questions, and the mean responses, are also below in a separate table.

The qualitative question offers some results that are useful in the short-term by offering insight into the concerns, frustrations and thoughts. These responses, summarized below, were solicited through a simple "additional comments" field after the quantitative section and before demographic questions.

This survey was conducted between May 16 and June 20, 2017. A postcard was mailed to 9,090 North Liberty addresses, inviting the recipients to visit a website and respond to the survey. The survey and postcard were in English, Spanish, French and Mandarin. In all, 387 responses were gathered.

When comparing the 2011 and 2017 means, it is important to keep in mind the different methodologies of these two surveys. These vast differences in the methodology (e.g., differences in wording, number, and ordering of the questions and response categories, sampling procedures and mode of survey) preclude the ability to directly compare findings.

In addition to asking survey respondents to rank these statements between 0 and 10, we asked for qualitative responses with a simple "additional comments" open field. In the end, we received nearly two dozen pages' worth of comments. These comments are summarized below.

## Demographics

Below compares the demographics of this survey's sample and the 2015 special census. Our sample overrepresented females and households with individuals under 18 years. Our sample underrepresented Hispanic and Latino and non-white populations.

|   | <b>2015<br/>Special<br/>Census</b> | <b>2017<br/>Survey</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Age (median)</b>                       | 36.5 years                         | 38 years               |
| <b>Sex</b>                                |                                    |                        |
| Male                                      | 48.9%                              | 40.3%                  |
| Female                                    | 51.1%                              | 58.7%                  |
| No response                               |                                    | (1.0%) <sup>1</sup>    |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                          |                                    |                        |
| Hispanic or Latino                        | 4.4%                               | 2.2%                   |
| No response                               |                                    | (3.1%) <sup>2</sup>    |
| <b>Race</b>                               |                                    |                        |
| White                                     | 88.2%                              | 92.6%                  |
| Black or African American                 | 4.7%                               | 0.8%                   |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native         | 0.2%                               | 0.3%                   |
| Asian                                     | 2.3%                               | 2.2%                   |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0.0%                               | 0.0%                   |
| Some other race                           | 1.3%                               | 1.3%                   |
| Two or more races                         | 3.2%                               | 2.7%                   |
| No response                               |                                    | (3.7%) <sup>3</sup>    |

## Households

Household size      The average respondent reported living in a household of 2.9 people

Length of residency      The average respondent reported living in North Liberty for 9.2 years

Homeownership      81.9% of respondents were homeowners, 16% were not.

<sup>1</sup> An additional 1% of the survey respondents chose not to respond. The survey percentages presented are among North Liberty respondents who chose either "Male" or "Female".

<sup>2</sup> An additional 12 (3.1%) survey respondents chose not to respond. The survey percentages presented are among survey respondents who chose one of the other ethnicity categories.

<sup>3</sup> An additional 14 (3.7%) survey respondents chose not to respond. The survey percentages presented are among survey respondents who chose one of the other race categories.

Primary language 93.3% of respondents reported English as the primary language in their home. 0.5% reported Chinese. 6.2% did not respond.

|  | <b>2015<br/>Special<br/>Census</b> | <b>2017<br/>Survey</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>With individuals under 18 years</b> | 39.4%                              | 51.7%                  |
| <b>With individuals over 65 years</b>  | 10.3%                              | 8.8%                   |

## Questions for which we have historical data

Below are questions that appeared on both the 2011 and 2017 surveys. As noted, when comparing these means, the different methodologies of these two surveys preclude the ability to directly compare findings.

|   | 2011<br>mean <sup>4</sup> | 2017<br>mean |
|---|---------------------------|--------------|
| <b>How would you rate the accessibility of...</b>   |                           |              |
| North Liberty's Mayor and City Council members?   | 6.3                       | 6.7          |
| North Liberty department heads and other officials?                                       | 7.5                       | 6.8          |
| <b>How would you rate the quality of...</b>   |                           |              |
| your water in North Liberty?  | 5.4                       | 5.3          |
| the general condition of North Liberty's streets?   | 5.9                       | 7.2          |
| recreation programs (e.g. swimming lessons and fitness classes)? <sup>5</sup>             | 6.7                       | 7.6          |
| park amenities (e.g. trails, play structures, shelters and sports fields)? <sup>6</sup>   | 5.9                       | 7.8          |
| recreation facilities (e.g. pools, indoor track, weight equipment and gyms)? <sup>7</sup> | 7.1                       | 7.7          |
| <b>How would you rate the value of...</b>   |                           |              |
| water and sewer services?   | 4.5                       | 6.5          |

<sup>4</sup> The 2011 survey offered respondents only four choices (excellent, good, fair and poor). We assigned a value of 3, 2, 1 or 0 and adjusted the mean to a 0- to 10-point scale.

<sup>5</sup> The 2011 survey question did not offer examples of recreation programs.

<sup>6</sup> The question of the 2011 survey differed, instead asking "How do you rate current North Liberty park facilities?"

<sup>7</sup> 2011 survey question did not offer examples of recreation facilities.

## Questions for which we do not have historical data

Below are questions that appeared only on 2017. As noted, variables in services make preclude comparing scores between departments. Resident interactions with police, fire, library, recreation and city hall personnel can all be under vastly different circumstances, for example.

|  | <b>2017<br/>mean</b> |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>How would you rate your trust in North Liberty's city officials to make informed decisions that most benefit the community?</b> | 6.8                  |
| <b>How would you rate the accessibility of...</b>  |                      |
| information on the city's website  | 7.0                  |
| <b>How would you rate the quality of...</b>  |                      |
| snow removal on North Liberty's main streets?  | 7.4                  |
| snow removal on North Liberty's residential streets?   | 6.3                  |
| library programs (e.g. storytimes, tech help, and author readings)?  | 8.1                  |
| <b>How would you rate interactions with city staff...</b>  |                      |
| at the recreation center?  | 7.7                  |
| at the community library?  | 8.3                  |
| at city hall?  | 7.3                  |
| in the field?  | 7.4                  |
| at the police department?  | 7.8                  |
| at the fire department?  | 8.1                  |
| in the building inspection department?   | 7.1                  |
| online through social media, such as Facebook and Twitter?   | 7.5                  |
| through email?   | 7.4                  |
| on the phone?  | 7.3                  |
| <b>How would you rate the value of...</b>  |                      |
| trash, recycling and yard-waste collection?  | 7.2                  |
| annual spring cleanup day trash drop off?  | 7.3                  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| North Liberty's fixed-route commuter and midday loop buses?                   | 6.2 |
| the city's social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter)?                          | 7.2 |
| the city's video services (e.g. public meetings and informational segments)?  | 7.0 |
| <b>How would you rate your satisfaction with...</b>                           |     |
| community events and activities (e.g. Blues & BBQ, and free fishing weekend)? | 8.0 |
| the variety of things to do in North Liberty?                                 | 6.7 |



## **Additional Comments**

Staff categorized the comments into general topics and, in what follows, summarized those impressions, comments and sentiments that were relevant to city operations (for example, feedback concerning school overcrowding, youth sports not operated by the city and state election law have been left out).

The topics are presented in order of the general volume of feedback concerning it, with the most common topics presented first.

### **Traffic/streets**

The most common topic raised was traffic concerns. Many respondents complained about congestion and mentioned the need for road upgrades and additional traffic lights to meet our growing population. The traffic on our major arterials, Ranshaw Way (Highway 965) and Penn Street, were mentioned often as would be expected, as was traffic on some of our collector streets. Many of these streets are currently in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Some respondents expressed an impression that the city was wasting effort on beatification elements instead of practical improvements.

Respondents also expressed a willingness to accept — and the appropriateness of — roundabouts and additional traffic lights to improve traffic flow.

Many respondents expressed negative sentiments about infrastructure failing to be in place before development took place.

### **Water**

Many respondents expressed negative impressions of the price of city utilities, the taste of our water or both.

### **Trash/recycling**

Many respondents requested elimination of trash stickers and expressed the desire to include the cost of the service in city utility bills. Respondents expressed a desire to have city-provided wheeled trash and recycling bins. Some felt the cost outstripped the service.

Recycling, on the other hand, was viewed positively, though some residents noted the difficulty of recycling for those living in apartments, since North Liberty neither requires the service for multifamily housing nor has a recycling dropoff point.

### **Land Use**

Some respondents expressed frustration with the amount of multifamily, duplex and townhome construction. Several respondents noted the lack of a central commercial district and negative sentiments about the number of mini-malls. Several respondents expressed concerns about the rapid rate of growth.

## **Parks**

The feedback about parks was overwhelmingly positive, but many respondents expressed the desire for a dog park in North Liberty, which is currently included in the Parks plan.

## **Recreation**

Many respondents noted the inadequate size of our aquatics center for both outdoor leisure activity and to provide additional swimming lesson times, the later making it difficult to register children for classes.

## **Leisure activities**

There was some feedback that expressed the desire to see the opening of the proposed family entertainment center and the need for additional leisure opportunities in North Liberty.

## **Lack of enforcement**

Several respondents expressed frustration with certain ordinances going unenforced. Specifically mentioned issues included: no parking during snow emergencies, unmaintained lawn and illegally parked trailers.

## **Police**

Some respondent expressed a negative impression of the police department and expressed concerns with racially disproportionate stops or police contact.

## **Transportation**

Several respondents expressed frustration with the lack of transit opportunities outside of personal vehicles, including a dearth of public transit options and incomplete sidewalks.

## **Library**

Feedback on the library was overwhelmingly positive.

## **Customer service**

Comments concerning customer service ran the spectrum from positive to neutral to negative with no clear consensus.

## Survey Questions

**How would you rate your trust in North Liberty's city officials to make informed decisions that most benefit the community?**

**How would you rate the *accessibility* of...**

North Liberty's Mayor and City Council members?

North Liberty department heads and other officials?

information on the city's website?

**How would you rate the *quality* of...**

your water in North Liberty?

snow removal on North Liberty's main streets?

snow removal on North Liberty's residential streets?

the general condition of North Liberty's streets?

library programs (e.g. storytimes, tech help, and author readings)?

recreation programs (e.g. swimming lessons and fitness classes)?

park amenities (e.g. trails, play structures, shelters and sports fields)?

recreation facilities (e.g. pools, indoor track, weight equipment and gyms)?

**How would you rate interactions with city staff...**

at the recreation center?

at the community library?

at city hall?

in the field?

at the police department?

at the fire department?

in the building inspection department?

online through social media, such as Facebook and Twitter?

through email?

on the phone?

**How would you rate the value of...**

trash, recycling and yard-waste collection services?

annual spring cleanup day trash drop off?

North Liberty's fixed-route commuter and midday loop buses?

water and sewer services?

the city's social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter)?

the city's video services (e.g. public meetings and informational segments)?

**How would you rate your satisfaction with...**

community events and activities (e.g. Blues & BBQ, and free fishing weekend)?

the variety of things to do in North Liberty?