



NORTH ST. PAUL

Resilient Communities Project

Evaluation of City Communications Efforts

Purpose of Evaluation

Graduate students from UMN Evaluation Studies Program will consult and collaborate with staff from the City of North St. Paul to design and implement an evaluation plan to understand how the City can better reach, engage, and serve its residents' communications needs.

Methods

Students and City staff created a short, user-friendly survey and developed a data-collection process to reach a variety of community members. Because a participatory approach and methods were important, students attended staff, business, and community meetings to describe the purpose of the project and gain local buy-in. With business support to reach their patrons, students were positioned at several locations to approach and recruit survey participants. Data were collected primarily at the North St. Paul Library.

Eligibility was limited to North St. Paul residents who were 18 years of age or older. Non-residents were ineligible to participate. A five-dollar Target gift card was given to each participant who completed the eleven-question survey.

Data were collected three times over a two-week span. A total of 68 persons were approached, and 39 completed the survey. A majority of the individuals who did not complete the survey were not residents of North St. Paul.

Sample

The average age of participants was 42-49 years, and they had lived in North St. Paul for an average of 18 years. Moreover, 80% of the respondents self-identified as White. English was the dominant language spoken in the homes of these residents.

Limitations of Survey

The data collection process was limited in scope. Although many locations were recommended by City staff and North St. Paul business owners for data collection, not all were able to be utilized. Though efforts were made to randomly approach potentially eligible respondents, the survey's sample size may not be truly representative of North St. Paul's general population.

In general, because of the limited nature of this short-term project, care should be taken in making conclusions. The following recommendations, however, are somewhat conservative and are suggested for consideration. Using the survey that was developed for this project, City staff may want to repeat survey efforts in various locations to gain a better perspective from a broader selection of North St. Paul residents.

Results

Residents responded to the following questions:



1. *How much communication they received from the city?*

- Enough (71%)
- Not Enough (20%)
- I don't receive anything (9%)
- Too much (0%)



2. *How often have you received information from North St. Paul in the following ways?*

- 32% of North St. Paul residents reported receiving the *Lillie Newspaper* regularly.
- Newsletters are mailed with the monthly utility bill – however, only 65% of residents reported receiving information this way.
- 39% of residents receive communication through direct mail.
- Only 11% of residents reported using the city website
- Majority of North St. Paul residents reported “never” seeking communication through Facebook or Twitter.

3. *How would you prefer to find out what's going on in North St. Paul?*

- 57% of residents would prefer to receive communication by *direct mail*.
- 49% of respondents would prefer to receive communication by *email* – a form of communication that is not yet in place
- 91% of residents would prefer to not receive communication by word of mouth or open houses.

Recommendations

- Solicitation of continuous feedback from its residents was a key goal for the City of North St. Paul.
City of North St. Paul should consider linking the survey to its website as a way to promote and provide better and more regular access for residents to City staff.
- Newer residents were not aware of the City's communications effort and reported not receiving their newsletter (although it is mailed to all residents).
Consider creating a “welcome package” for distribution to new residents that includes overview of City services, important contact information, website address, etc. Collaboration, if possible, with local US postal service, generally notified when residents change their address to a North St. Paul location, might be helpful.
- Though a majority of residents reported a preference for direct mail, nearly half of survey respondents would prefer receiving information from the City by email.
Keep using direct mail, but consider a system to collect and manage email addresses from consenting residents, especially to distribute newsletter—and other communication items. Use website and other media to promote this “green” service, and strategically demonstrate responsiveness to this survey.