

Community Assistantship Program

City of Rockford Survey Report

The Community Assistantship Program is made possible by the generous support of the McKnight Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, the Southern Initiative Fund, the Initiative Foundation, the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and the West Central Initiative Fund. Within the University of Minnesota, support is provided by Central Administration, the Rural Development Council, the College of Human Ecology, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the College of Natural Resources, the College of Education and Human Development, the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the Carlson School of Management, the Center for Small Towns, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, and the five Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

City of Rockford Survey Report

Conducted on behalf of
City of Rockford

Prepared by
Jianchong Zhu, Research Assistant,
University of Minnesota
August 2000

CAP Report 014

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center**

City of Rockford Survey Report

Objective

In order to assist the Rockford downtown development project and attract new businesses, the city government wants to know what types of business Rockford residents would support and patronage.

Methodology

Mail survey method was used to conduct this research. The questionnaire is mainly composed of five sections: a) overall perceived living condition of Rockford (question 1, 2, and 6); b) residents' activity patterns (question 3); c) residents' support and past patronage to businesses (question 4 and 5); d) open ended questions (question 7 and 8); and e) demographic questions (question 9, 10, 11, and 12). Detail information about each question is attached to this report as Appendix I.

City of Rockford has a population of 3471. The number of households is 1296, from which a sample of 600 households was randomly selected to receive the questionnaire. Due to the change of mailing addresses, 40 copies of the questionnaire did not reach the potential participants. 155 participants finished and returned the survey. The response rate is 27.7 percent.

Result

a) Demographics

Among 155 respondents, 58 (37.4%) are male and 95 (61.3%) are female. Two respondents did not identify their gender (see chart 1). 149 respondents identified their age, which ranges from 21 to 92 years old. The average age is 46 years old. The average household has three members. 137 respondents identified their household income. 80 households (58.4%) have annual income over 50,000 dollars.

b) Overall Perceived Living Conditions

In general, Rockford residents are satisfied with the current living conditions in Rockford. When asked to rate the neighborhood as a living place from excellent to poor, 90.8 percent of the respondents rated the neighborhood as excellent or good. Only 3 respondents (2%) rate the neighborhood poor. What's more, Rockford residents also demonstrated relatively strong confidence in the development of the community. 148 respondents rated how they felt about the neighborhood in five years. 33.8 percent respondents thought the neighborhood would definitely or probably better in five years, and 58.8 percent believed that the neighborhood would stay the same. Only 7.4 percent respondents gave negative ratings.

All respondents were asked to give opinion on the directions of future development in the City of Rockford. Four possible directions were given them to choose from: more industrial manufacturers, more commercial retail businesses, more commercial office businesses, and more residential areas. Rating options were from strongly support to strongly oppose. No opinion option was also provided. When analyzing the data, those who selected no opinion were eliminated from the sample. 134 respondents' answers were valid for the analysis of this question. Paired-sample t-test was conducted to detect which direction Rockford residents support most. Six paired-sample t-tests were conducted. The result shows that the most favorable direction supported by the residents is to have more commercial retail businesses in town, followed by more commercial office businesses. Both are significant at .001 level. The options of more industrial manufacturers and more residential areas did not demonstrate significant difference, regarding the residents' preference.

Table 1: Statistics of Development Directions

	Mean	Standard Deviation
More Commercial Retail Businesses	1.28	.57
More Commercial Office Businesses	1.71	.72
More Industrial Manufacturers	1.95	.99
More Residential Areas	2.10	.87

c) Leisure Activities

Residents of Rockford participate a variety of recreational activities. Answers to almost all listed activities range from participating everyday or 2-3 times a week to never participate. Only clubbing activity ranges from once a week to never. For most activities, the average frequency is around once a month or less than once a month. However, shopping and gardening demonstrated high frequency among all activities. The average frequency of shopping for Rockford residents is once a week, and of gardening is 2-3 times a month. Activities such as hiking, theater, gym, swimming, biking, jogging, and playing video game clustered between once a month and less than once a month. Not very many respondents participate in the following activities: rollerblading, bowling, playing pool, clubbing, and gambling. However, this may due to the fact that teenagers are not very well represented in this study, since these activities are more popular among them.

d) Support New Businesses

According to the data, grocery store is the most important business that should locate in the city of Rockford, with a mean score of 1.22 from a rating scale of 1 to 4, one being very important and 4 not at all important. Dine-in restaurant also received a high rating of 1.34, perceived significantly more important than other businesses to be located in the city of Rockford. After grocery store and dine-in restaurant, fast food restaurant and teen center ranked 3rd and 4th regarding the perceived importance, followed by swimming pool and senior citizen center. The least important businesses that should be located in the City or Rockford, according to the residents, are pool hall, antique mall, and arcade.

e) Patronage Businesses or Services in the Last 12 Months

Grocery store is most frequently visited by Rockford residents, between 2-3 times a week and once a week. Dine-in restaurant and fast food restaurant also revealed frequent patronage between once a week and 2-3 times a month. Coffee shop, theater, swimming pool, dry cleaner, health club, and flower shop were ranked from 2 to 7, according to the patronage frequency. All these businesses received a patronage frequency between once

a month and less than once a month. The least frequently patronage businesses include teen center, senior center, and arcade. This may due to the fact that teenagers are not well represented in this research. The low patronage may also due to the fact that these facilities do not exist in the city of Rockford or the surrounding areas.

f) Open-ended questions

Two open-ended questions are included in the questionnaire. Question no. 7 asks about interested or joined community service organizations. The mostly frequently mentioned community organizations are those listed in the questionnaire, Jaycees, Lion, and Garden club. Only nine respondents identified their interests or membership in Jaycees; while eight respondents mentioned Lion; only seven mentioned Garden club. This may due to the fact that these three organizations' names were listed in the question as examples, which may biased the respondents. Other than the three organizations, legion is another community organization mentioned in the open-ended question. Other mentioned community organizations include VFW, literary circle, boy/girl scout, and chamber of commerce. The data shows that not many people have joined or are aware of the existing community organizations. Most people are confused about the function of community organizations, or what they can get out of community organizations.

The second open-ended question intended to complement the close-ended question asking what kinds of business the residents would support. The need of a nice dine-in restaurant stands out. 25 respondents, without any kind of body or language suggestion, reported that a family-oriented nice dine-in restaurant would be ideal to the people in City of Rockford. Other types of restaurants, such as fast food store and bakery, were also mentioned frequently by respondents. 18 respondents believed that a new pharmacy should be located in Rockford, which is not reflected in the close-ended question. Many residents think the current grocery store is pricey and inconvenient. A bigger grocery store, such as Rainbow Food or Cub Food, is in demand. Other types of businesses mentioned relatively frequently include video rental store, discount department store like

Target and Wal-Mart, home supply stores like Home Depot or Menard, clinic, community center, catholic church, biking and hiking trail, and theater.

Implications and Limitations

- The study confirmed that people think City of Rockford as a “bedroom city”, and do everything in the city or the surrounding areas, such as Buffalo and Plymouth. This may very possibly due to the fact that there is nothing provided in the city of Rockford. Therefore, there is considerable room for the community development.

- According to Rockford residents, what is mostly needed in Rockford is commercial retail business. It seems that people are more looking for places to consume, rather than places that provide employment opportunities, such as commercial office business and industrial manufacturers.

- Gardening seems like a very popular recreational activity in the City of Rockford, related businesses such as garden supply stores or flower shops may consider exploring further business opportunities.

- Rockford residents specifically desire a family-oriented dine-in restaurant that opens everyday.

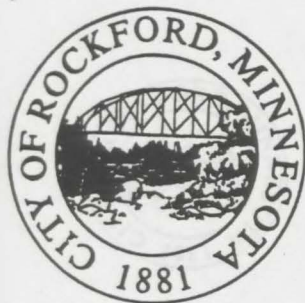
- A less expensive grocery store is also in demand by Rockford residents. A grocery with pharmacy is even better, since pharmacy is mentioned by many respondents as very important to be in town.

- Since the head of the household was asked to finish the survey, teenagers are significantly underrepresented in this research. In order to have a correct view of what is really needed by the people in general, decision makers need to consider the results of this study together with the results of other research done on teenagers.

- The 27.7 percent response rate may also pose doubts in the reliability of the conclusion of this research. However, the problem is limited, due to the homogeneity of the residents in the City of Rockford.

Conclusion

The research general meets the objective set in the beginning, which is “in order to assist the Rockford downtown development project and attract new businesses, the city government wants to know what types of business Rockford residents would support and patronage”. The result answered several questions related to the research objective. Most importantly it answered the question of what kinds of businesses Rockford residents would support in town, and how often they use these kinds of businesses. Decisions made solely upon this research should be extremely cautious, since attracting new businesses are far more than just public opinion, even though it is definitely one of the most crucial facets. Together with other sources of information, this research may contribute to make decisions on what direction the city of Rockford should develop and what types of businesses the city of Rockford should introduce in town.



City of Rockford

6031 Main Street • Rockford, MN 55373 • (763) 477-6565 • Fax (763) 477-4393

MISSION STATEMENT: *To recognize and fulfill our citizens' needs for all services in a respectful, efficient, and economical manner.*

August 3, 2000

Dear Resident:

In order to better serve the needs of our residents and develop our community, the City of Rockford would like to hear what kind of communities people like yourself want to live in and what you think about future development of our community. Your opinion could greatly affect the direction our community takes in the near future.

Our city was able to obtain a grant from the University of Minnesota this summer for a research assistant who has worked with city staff to prepare the attached survey. Once your surveys have been submitted our research assistant will provide an in depth report of the results. Our research assistant has experience in surveying and compiling the results.

Your household is one of a small number in which people are being asked to give their opinion on these matters. Names were drawn in a random sample of the entire city. In order that the results will truly represent the ideas of the people of Rockford, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire is absolutely anonymous. The results of this research will be made available to our city council and posted on the web and in our future newsletter.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call me at 763-477-6565.

Thank you for your cooperation and please send your surveys in no later than August 18th. You may also drop off you survey at the library, city hall, or in the drop box at city hall.

Sincerely,

Nancy Evers
Administrator



CITY OF ROCKFORD: RESIDENT SURVEY

This information will be used as a planning tool for staff and potential developer's of the city.

Please circle the number or letter which corresponds to the answer closest to your opinion or your current situation. ALL INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

1. In general, how would you rate your neighborhood as a living place? (Circle one answer.)

Excellent 1	Good 2	Fair 3	Poor 4
----------------	-----------	-----------	-----------

2. In general, how do you feel about your neighborhood in 5 years? (Circle one answer.)

Definitely Better Than Now 1	Probably Better Than Now 2	Stay the Same 3	Probably Worse Than Now 4	Definitely Worse Than Now 5
------------------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------------------------

3. In the past 12 months, about how often did you participate in the following recreational activities? (Circle one answer for each item.)

Activity	Every day	2-3 Times A Week	Once A Week	2-3 times A Month	Once A Month	Less Than Once A Month	Never
a. Rollerblading	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Hiking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Bowling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Pool/Billiard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Shopping	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Going to theaters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Going to a gym	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Clubbing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Swimming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. Biking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Jogging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Gardening	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Gambling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Playing video game	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. Others please specify							
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. How important do you think it is that the following businesses or services are located in the city or Rockford? (Circle one answer for each item.)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important
a. Dine-in restaurant	1	2	3	4
b. Fast food restaurant	1	2	3	4
c. Health club	1	2	3	4
d. Coffee shop	1	2	3	4
e. Senior citizen center	1	2	3	4
f. Teen center	1	2	3	4
g. Bowling alley	1	2	3	4
h. Theater	1	2	3	4
i. Pool hall	1	2	3	4
j. Flower shop	1	2	3	4
k. Dry cleaner	1	2	3	4
l. Grocery store	1	2	3	4
m. Antique mall	1	2	3	4
n. Arcade	1	2	3	4
o. Swimming pool	1	2	3	4

5. During the last 12 months, how often did you go to or use the following services? (Circle one answer for each item.)

	Every day	2-3 Times A Week	Once A Week	2-3 times A Month	Once A Month	Less Than Once A Month	Never
a. Dine-in restaurant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Fast food restaurant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Health club	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Coffee shop	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Senior citizen center	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Teen center	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Bowling alley	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Theater	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Pool hall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. Flower shop	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Dry cleaner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. Grocery store	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. Antique mall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. Arcade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o. Swimming pool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. How much do you support or oppose the following developments in the City of Rockford? (Circle one answer for each item.)

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	No Opinion
a. More industrial manufacturers	1	2	3	4	5
b. More commercial retail businesses	1	2	3	4	5
c. More commercial office businesses	1	2	3	4	5
d. More residential areas	1	2	3	4	5

7. What kind of community service organizations (Lions Club, Jaycees, Garden Club) would you like to join or have you already joined in the city of Rockford?

8. What other businesses or services besides those listed previously would you like to see in the City of Rockford?

9. Gender (Circle one): 1 Male 2 Female

10. What year were you born? 1 9 ____

11. Including yourself, how many people are living in your household now?

(Number) _____

12. What was your total household income, before taxes, in 1999? (Circle one.)

- a. Under \$15,000 per year
- b. \$15,000 – \$19,999
- c. \$20,000 – \$24,999
- d. \$25,000 – \$29,999
- e. \$30,000 – \$39,999
- f. \$40,000 – \$49,999
- g. \$50,000 or over