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Executive Summary

In January 2011, Zenith Research Group facilitated three focus groups with 40 residents of Duluth in an effort to gain greater understanding of government-delivered services, citizen perspectives regarding government priorities, and performance measures. The research effort was to be paid for by a grant from The National Center for Civic Innovation. The participants were evenly divided by sex, represented 18 of Duluth's 31 neighborhoods, ranged in age from early 20's to mid 70's, had lived in Duluth for periods of less than 2 years and more than 50 years, and were well-educated with many employed in professional careers. Participant household incomes ranged from less than \$25,000 to more than \$150,000. Most of the group was not actively involved in community or neighborhood organizations, although they were modestly aware of actions taken by the Duluth City Council. All participants were registered voters.

Overall, the comments provided by the focus group participants indicated there is a very positive attitude about the City of Duluth. Although there were some complaints and a few negative comments, the general belief on the part of each of the three panels seemed to be that Duluth is a good place to live and has a positive future. Based on the residents assembled, there is clearly a well informed and interested citizenry eager to better understand more about the city's needs, and interested in being actively engaged and involved in providing solutions to any problems Duluth may face in the future.

The tone of each group was very supportive of the city administration and encouraged by the current direction of the city. Although there were a few criticisms about leadership there was never a sense that problems or weaknesses (perceived or real) within the city were too great to overcome. Participants exhibited greater interest in seeking positive solutions to city challenges than they did in focusing on any problem currently facing the city as insurmountable or an obstacle that couldn't be resolved satisfactorily.

Since most participants in the focus groups acknowledged they measure whether the city is doing a good job in providing services based upon personal observation or experience, it's not surprising they listed as most important those services which would have the greatest personal impact on their lives and other residents.

Public safety, planning and zoning, utilities and parks are integral parts of the fabric of any community, and important elements to sense of community in Duluth. These also hold top of mind awareness with participants of the focus groups because of their daily life impact. When asked to select the most important service provided by the City of Duluth, the combined rankings determined it was quality drinking water. Lake Superior and water quality issues have been visible in local dialogue for decades making the selection not necessarily surprising, but a good focus for future city decisions that might impact the overall quality of Lake Superior.

Having cited their personal experience as the manner in which they judge the services provided by the City of Duluth, it was reasonable – but still interesting to note – that there was no overall positive sentiment about the best source of information about how well or poorly the city was performing the delivery of basic services. All groups presented a broad understanding of various information sources including the official city website, but no one source was generally relied upon.

In discussing the concept of better informing the public, more transparency was viewed as a positive way to build trust among city residents. Comments made during a discussion about the release of information indicated there's an impression among residents that city leaders are overly concerned about public image and unwilling to be forthright with citizens when there's a challenge facing the community. This hesitancy (real or perceived) in engaging in reporting the straight story to the public led neatly to a discussion of one of the newest endeavors to inform the community about city affairs.

The Duluth Quarterly seems to be well accepted. With only one issue upon which to judge success, there is a strong awareness of the publication and a remarkably high readership for a premiere issue. Typically, this would indicate a strong interest among residents to know about the internal workings of the community. However, based on comments offered on the content there appears to be a stronger demand for factual reporting on the important issues confronting the city, reporting that would include details on possible solutions and ideas for change and improvement. Participants clearly indicated they prefer hard news coverage and less light feature stories. The administration should consider how to present candid assessments and presentation of its positions without resorting to what the panelists labeled as "fluff."

The Truth in Taxation document presented for review was too technical to appeal to most participants. However, there were suggestions that acknowledged the information within the document was valuable. Panelists suggested condensing the information into a user friendly version for presentation in *The Duluth Quarterly*.

The panel was more likely to consider print options as their preferred source of information about the delivery of city services, although a significant number favored an email format.

A surprisingly high percentage of participants had recent experience with the city's website. The group offered solid suggestions for improvement, including a critical comment or suggestion link. The site's current configuration and ease of navigation is viewed negatively. In particular, contact information should be more visible and easier to access, and quick reference to basic information should be highlighted.

Concerning performance measures, there was a general sense that most residents are not likely to have enough information or understanding of the various city departments to make a reasonable judgment about success or failure. At the same time, there was interest expressed about having a method for public input in the measurement process. A grading system for public satisfaction and awareness allowing citizen involvement in a constructive manner might be a consideration. In its current form, there is too much information lacking from the performance measures to warrant a continuation of the existing format. A review of citizen comments about this topic is recommended for department heads and the administration. As suggested by several of the participants, the city should consider utilizing *The Duluth Quarterly* as a vehicle for education and information about challenges confronting the community, the goals set for meeting for the challenges, and the performance outcomes.

Duluth's leaders should be enthused about the interest and general awareness in city government and the levels of support and desire for success from residents of the community, regardless of age, income bracket or neighborhood. It's true residents desire more effective communication and information, but they're willing to assist in making the changes needed to ensure a positive future

for all Duluthians. There was a great deal of optimism in each of the focus group sessions, far more optimism than pessimism. In spite of an awareness of serious fiscal concerns, economic development challenges, and increasing infrastructure demands there is a strong sense of a community binding together to confront any obstacles. In this sense, the city can wisely serve the desires, needs, wants and wishes of its citizens by improving its communication with as much transparency as possible when reporting both the positive and disappointing features of the community. Listening and acting upon their input is likely to return benefits many times greater than the investment.

In conclusion, the relationship between the city and community residents is strong and important. Residents involved in this process have provided guidance and the city stands to benefit greatly from their shared wisdom and advice.

Background

Zenith Research Group, Inc., was contacted by a representative of the City of Duluth in October 2010, and invited to submit a proposal to conduct focus group research about government-delivered services, citizen perspectives regarding government priorities, and performance measures, research designed to strengthen the relationship between the city and its residents. The city administration was particularly interested in understanding how citizens perceived and determined how well or poorly city government was delivering core services, and whether current performance measure reviews provided sufficient information upon which citizens could determine performance results.

Zenith Research Group presented its proposal in November 2010. Upon acceptance of the proposal, a contract between the City of Duluth and Zenith Research Group was implemented in December 2010. A grant from The National Center for Civic Innovation paid for the research.

Zenith Research Group proposed a series of three focus group panels, suggesting citizens would be recruited through an internet-based application and telephone contacts, if necessary, to obtain a representative cross-section of community members. Additionally, it was determined paper applications would be provided at select locations throughout the community for those citizens who did not have access to an internet-linked computer. The application is available for review in the report appendix.

City staff prepared a media release which was distributed on December 16 to local media outlets in Duluth announcing the focus group research and participant recruitment process. The media release is available for review in the report appendix. Online application links were provided on the City of Duluth and Zenith Research Group websites. The first online application was completed on December 20, 2010. The final online application was completed on January 14, 2011. Five additional applications were received in paper form. A total of 140 applications were received. However, thirty-three (33) applicants failed to provide a name, other contact information, or complete personal details and were excluded from further consideration.

As participant recruitment began, representatives of Zenith Research Group and the City of Duluth began the development of the focus group discussion guide. City staff provided examples of printed handouts that would be distributed for review during the focus group sessions. Copies of these materials are available in the report appendix.

The first draft of the discussion guide was submitted for review on January 5, 2011. A final document was approved on January 23. A copy of the discussion guide is available in the report appendix.

The selection of 45 focus group participants occurred on January 18. Those applicants selected were notified by electronic mail on January 19.

The three focus group sessions were held on January 25 and January 26 in Room 328 of Duluth City Hall. A light meal was available for each participant, and each participant was paid \$35 at the conclusion of their session. Each of the sessions were recorded by representatives of PACT-TV with a video copy of each distributed to a representative of the city administration and Zenith Research Group. This video is not available for public review.

Participant Selection

A decision was made early in the focus group planning process to segment the focus group participants primarily by age, with consideration given to other demographic characteristics gathered during the application process to ensure a representative sampling of Duluth citizens was seated for the panels. A complete review of the applicant, participant and group profiles appears on the following pages.

Included in the selection process:

- " Neighborhood
- " Sex
- " Age
- " Race
- " Home Ownership
- " Length of Residency
- " Household Size, Children Under 17 in Household
- " Marital Status
- " Education
- " Occupation
- " Household Income
- " Involvement Within Community Organizations
- " Experience with Duluth City Council
- " Voting Status

Following their application, each of the prospective candidates who had provided contact information was contacted by electronic mail and informed about the dates the focus groups would be held. To assist in scheduling, each was asked to respond with their preferred day and time. Based on the responses, the final selection of panelists was determined. During the selection process, all applicant names were removed and the selection proceeded based solely on the demographic profiles. Although not listed, two individuals were disabled and required wheelchair assistance.

Group 1 was composed of participants between 35 and 54 years of age. The group met at 6:00pm on Tuesday, January 25.

Group 2 was composed of participants 55 years of age or older. The group met at 5:30pm on Wednesday, January 26.

Group 3 was composed of participants between 18 and 34 years of age. The group met at 7:30pm on Wednesday, January 26.

Each of the selected panelists was informed through email about their selection and requested to confirm their attendance. Two of the selections eventually cited conflicts and were replaced with other applicants. A confirmation telephone call was placed to each of those selected on the day prior to the panel.

Of the 45 applicants selected, 40 attended. Only Group 1 experienced a reduction in numbers with 10 of the 15 selected citizens attending.

Applicant Profile

Neighborhood	Applicants	Neighborhood	Applicants
Central	26	West of West Duluth	4
Canal Park	0	Fond du Lac	0
Central Hillside	8	Gary-New Duluth	1
Downtown	1	Norton Park	1
East Hillside	11	Morgan Park	2
Park Point	4	Riverside	0
Observation Hill	2	Smithville	0
East Duluth	60	West Duluth	10
Chester Park – UMD	10	Bayview Heights	1
Congdon Park	14	Cody	0
East End – Endion	6	Denfeld	4
Hunter’s Park	11	Fairmount	0
Lakeside – Lester Park	19	Irving	1
Morley Heights – Parkview	0	Oneota	0
North Shore	0	Spirit Valley	4
Above the Hill	22	West End	7
Duluth Heights	5	Lincoln Park	7
Kenwood	6		
Piedmont Heights	5		
Woodland	6		

Sex	Applicants
Male	54
Female	73
Age	
17 or under	1
18 to 24	3
25 to 34	31
35 to 44	20
45 to 54	32
55 to 64	27
65 to 74	11
75 or older	2

Race	Applicants
Caucasian	119
African-African American	2
Asian-Asian American	0
Hispanic-Latino	0
American Indian-Native American	6
Home Ownership	
Own Home	100
Rent	26
Previous Home Owner	
Yes	1
No	25

Applicant Profile

Length of Residency	Applicants
Less than 1 year	1
1 year to 2 years	6
3 years to 5 years	21
6 years to 10 years	21
11 years to 15 years	14
16 years to 20 years	10
21 years to 30 years	22
31 years to 40 years	11
41 years to 50 years	7
More than 50 years	13
Household Size	
One	21
Two	44
Three	28
Four	17
Five or More	16
Children Under 17	
None	54
One	15
Two	24
Three	7
Four	0
Five or More	5
Marital Status	
Never Married	21
Married	66
Engaged to be Married	2
Partner/Committed Relationship	13
Divorced	18
Widowed	2

Education	Applicants
No High School Diploma	2
High School Graduate	11
2-year College-Technical Degree	13
4-year College Degree	57
Master's Degree or Higher	39
Occupation	
Administrative	11
Business Owner	5
Laborer	1
Clerical Worker	4
Homemaker	8
Professional	49
Retired	20
Sales-Marketing	14
Self Employed	10
Student	9
Service	3
Unemployed	5
Household Income	
Less than \$25,000	19
\$25,001 to \$35,000	19
\$35,001 to \$45,000	10
\$45,001 to \$60,000	22
\$60,001 to \$75,000	13
\$75,001 to \$90,000	10
\$90,001 to \$100,000	3
\$100,001 to \$125,000	10
\$125,001 to \$150,000	7
More than \$150,000	9

Applicant Profile

Community Involvement	Applicants
Very Involved	23
Somewhat Involved	26
Not Very Involved	27
Not At All Involved	22
Unaware of Association-Group	22
Attend-View-Listen to City Council	
Very Often	16
Sometimes	59
Rarely	25
Never	20

Registered to Vote	Applicants
Yes	117
No	3
Vote November 2, 2010	
Yes	105
No	15

Participant Profile

Neighborhood	Panelists	Neighborhood	Panelists
Central	9	West of West Duluth	3
Canal Park	0	Fond du Lac	0
Central Hillside	3	Gary-New Duluth	0
Downtown	0	Norton Park	1
East Hillside	3	Morgan Park	2
Park Point	2	Riverside	0
Observation Hill	1	Smithville	0
East Duluth	21	West Duluth	4
Chester Park – UMD	6	Bayview Heights	1
Congdon Park	5	Cody	0
East End – Endion	1	Denfeld	2
Hunter’s Park	4	Fairmount	0
Lakeside – Lester Park	5	Irving	0
Morley Heights – Parkview	0	Oneota	0
North Shore	0	Spirit Valley	1
Above the Hill	5	West End	3
Duluth Heights	3	Lincoln Park	3
Kenwood	1		
Piedmont Heights	0		
Woodland	1		

Sex	Panelists
Male	22
Female	23
Age	
17 or under	0
18 to 24	1
25 to 34	14
35 to 44	5
45 to 54	10
55 to 64	11
65 to 74	4
75 or older	0

Race	Panelists
Caucasian	43
African-African American	1
Asian-Asian American	0
Hispanic-Latino	0
American Indian-Native American	1
Home Ownership	
Own Home	35
Rent	10
Previous Home Owner	
Yes	0
No	10

Participant Profile

Length of Residency	Panelists
Less than 1 year	0
1 year to 2 years	3
3 years to 5 years	11
6 years to 10 years	5
11 years to 15 years	5
16 years to 20 years	5
21 years to 30 years	6
31 years to 40 years	3
41 years to 50 years	3
More than 50 years	4
Household Size	
One	12
Two	16
Three	8
Four	4
Five or More	5
Children Under 17	
None	30
One	4
Two	6
Three	3
Four	0
Five or More	2
Marital Status	
Never Married	10
Married	16
Engaged to be Married	0
Partner/Committed Relationship	7
Divorced	10
Widowed	2

Education	Panelists
No High School Diploma	0
High School Graduate	3
2-year College-Technical Degree	4
4-year College Degree	23
Master's Degree or Higher	15
Occupation	
Administrative	5
Business Owner	2
Laborer	0
Clerical Worker	1
Homemaker	1
Professional	15
Retired	8
Sales-Marketing	7
Self Employed	3
Student	1
Service	0
Unemployed	1
Household Income	
Less than \$25,000	6
\$25,001 to \$35,000	11
\$35,001 to \$45,000	4
\$45,001 to \$60,000	5
\$60,001 to \$75,000	4
\$75,001 to \$90,000	3
\$90,001 to \$100,000	2
\$100,001 to \$125,000	3
\$125,001 to \$150,000	4
More than \$150,000	3

Participant Profile

Community Involvement	Panelists
Very Involved	9
Somewhat Involved	5
Not Very Involved	16
Not At All Involved	10
Unaware of Association-Group	5
Attend-View-Listen to City Council	
Very Often	6
Sometimes	28
Rarely	6
Never	5

Registered to Vote	Panelists
Yes	45
No	0
Vote November 2, 2010	
Yes	42
No	3

Group Profile

Neighborhood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Neighborhood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Central	3	2	5	West of West Duluth	1	1	1
Canal Park	0	0	0	Fond du Lac	0	0	0
Central Hillside	1	1	2	Gary-New Duluth	0	0	0
Downtown	0	0	0	Norton Park	0	0	1
East Hillside	1	0	2	Morgan Park	1	1	0
Park Point	1	1	0	Riverside	0	0	0
Observation Hill	0	0	1	Smithville	0	0	
East Duluth	7	9	5	West Duluth	2	1	1
Chester Park – UMD	2	2	2	Bayview Heights	1	0	0
Congdon Park	2	3	0	Cody	0	0	0
East End – Endion	0	1	0	Denfeld	1	0	1
Hunter’s Park	1	1	2	Fairmount	0	0	0
Lakeside – Lester Park	2	2	1	Irving	0	0	0
Morley Heights – Parkview	0	0	0	Oneota	0	0	0
North Shore	0	0	0	Spirit Valley	0	1	0
Above the Hill	1	2	2	West End	1	0	1
Duluth Heights	0	1	2	Lincoln Park	1		1
Kenwood	1	0	0				
Piedmont Heights	0	0	0				
Woodland	0	1	0				

Sex	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Male	8	8	7
Female	7	7	8
Age			
17 or under	0	0	0
18 to 24	0	0	1
25 to 34	0	0	14
35 to 44	5	0	0
45 to 54	10	0	0
55 to 64	0	11	0
65 to 74	0	4	0
75 or older	0	0	0

Race	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Caucasian	15	14	14
African-African American	0	1	0
Asian-Asian American	0	0	0
Hispanic-Latino	0	0	0
American Indian-Native American	0	0	1
Home Ownership			
Own Home	14	14	7
Rent	1	1	8
Previous Home Owner			
Yes	0	0	0
No	1	1	8

Group Profile

Length of Residency	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Less than 1 year	0	0	0
1 year to 2 years	1	0	2
3 years to 5 years	3	0	8
6 years to 10 years	3	1	1
11 years to 15 years	2	2	1
16 years to 20 years	2	3	0
21 years to 30 years	3	0	3
31 years to 40 years	1	2	0
41 years to 50 years	0	3	0
More than 50 years	0	4	0
Household Size			
One	2	8	2
Two	4	5	7
Three	2	2	4
Four	3	0	1
Five or More	4	0	1
Children Under 17			
None	5	14	11
One	2	0	2
Two	4	1	1
Three	2	0	1
Four	0	0	0
Five or More	2	0	0
Marital Status			
Never Married	1	1	8
Married	9	4	3
Engaged to be Married	0	0	0
Partner/Committed Relationship	2	1	4
Divorced	3	7	0
Widowed	0	2	0

Education	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
No High School Diploma	0	0	0
High School Graduate	1	2	0
2-year College-Technical Degree	3	1	0
4-year College Degree	6	7	10
Master's Degree or Higher	5	5	5
Occupation			
Administrative	2	1	2
Business Owner	0	2	0
Laborer	0	0	0
Clerical Worker	0	0	1
Homemaker	1	0	0
Professional	4	5	6
Retired	1	7	0
Sales-Marketing	5	0	2
Self Employed	1	0	2
Student	1	0	1
Service	0	0	0
Unemployed	0	0	1
Household Income			
Less than \$25,000	0	2	4
\$25,001 to \$35,000	3	4	4
\$35,001 to \$45,000	2	1	1
\$45,001 to \$60,000	0	2	3
\$60,001 to \$75,000	2	1	1
\$75,001 to \$90,000	0	2	1
\$90,001 to \$100,000	2	0	0
\$100,001 to \$125,000	1	2	0
\$125,001 to \$150,000	3	1	0
More than \$150,000	2	0	1

Group Profile

Community Involvement	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Very Involved	4	3	2
Somewhat Involved	1	2	2
Not Very Involved	7	5	4
Not At All Involved	1	3	6
Unaware of Association-Group	2	2	1
Attend-View-Listen to City Council			
Very Often	2	1	3
Sometimes	8	11	9
Rarely	3	1	2
Never	2	2	1

Registered to Vote	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Yes	15	15	15
No	0	0	0
Vote November 2, 2010			
Yes	13	15	14
No	2	0	1

Key Findings

The key findings within the report are presented by question and/or topic as each was discussed within the groups, generally coinciding with the outline of the discussion guide. Where appropriate, significant comments will be labeled by the group within which they were made. Each focus group session began with an introduction by Zenith Research Group facilitators Duke Skorich and Patty McNulty who explained the purpose of the focus group, and the guidelines under which the session would be conducted. There were no questions prior to the introduction of panel members. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves, identify the neighborhood in which they lived, and to identify how long they have lived in Duluth.

What one word comes to mind when you think of the city of Duluth?

In each of the three groups, citizen ties to the outdoors and Lake Superior were obvious based on their initial responses. Secondary to the comments about the natural environment were mixed suggestions about the state of the local economy. Where some say opportunity, others saw continued struggles.

In order, the responses were: nice, lake (Superior), beautiful, water, poly-chromatic, diverse, beautiful terrain, expansive, cold, beautiful, Lake Superior, home, cold, Lake Superior, outdoors, outdoors, love, versatile, nature, Lake Superior, behind times, concerned, picturesque, peaceful, cold, potential, struggling, history, scenic, outdoorsy, wild, boring, recreation, beautiful, amazing, outdoor, opportunity, opportunity, growing pains, rugged.

What's important to you about living in Duluth?

Public safety was foremost on the minds of the participants, with several characterizing Duluth as having a small town feeling that translated into a safe place to live and raise a family. One panelist noted it was possible to leave town and have a neighbor “watch over your home and take in the trash all without having to ask.” The city was lauded for its “sense of community” and its “small city urban scene” that offers great opportunity for networking and a “vibrant culture” to its citizens, without the burden of rush hour traffic. Although the small town atmosphere was lauded many of the panelists discussed the lack of career opportunities, especially for younger residents who want to stay in and live in Duluth, which they indicated has led to a “brain drain.” Others indicated Duluth needed to be more innovative to capitalize on its strengths which would spur population growth and economic development. “An updated attitude is important,” said one panelist, who suggested Duluth residents could be more welcoming of diversity which would open up the city’s quality of life to people of color and low income who might otherwise be turned away even though they present opportunity for growth and innovation. It was clear in the discussion of what’s important that Duluth’s many outdoor recreational opportunities are cherished by the residents who value the city’s park and trail system. There was also considerable discussion about the ease of mobility in Duluth, with several suggestions for improved service by the Duluth Transit Authority. This topic was most fully explored by the panel of 18 to 34 year olds.

We’re going to talk about government services – those services that include any service the City of Duluth provides to the community. When you think of city services, what services come to mind?

Each of the groups generated lists of services which were recorded on a white board for their review. Not all services listed are directly supplied by city government. The responses are listed in the order of mention and do not represent importance.

Group Generated City Services		
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Infrastructure (Streets, Utilities, Water/Sewer)	Police	Water, Gas, Street Lights, Utilities
Public Safety (Police, Fire)	Water, Gas, Sewer	Police
Schools	Environmental	Fire
Social Services	Fire	Economic Development
Duluth Transit Authority	Schools	Parks & Recreation
Economic Development	Parks	Community Development
Records, Permits, Legal	Duluth Transit Authority	Housing Redevelopment Authority
Parks	Building Safety	Spirit Mountain
Libraries	Streets	Planning
Work Force Center	Trees	Steam Plant
Planning, Zoning	Housing Redevelopment Authority	Building Inspection
Community Development	Libraries	Libraries
Tourism, Conventions	Golf	Schools
	Taxation, Fees	Engineering
	Planning	Streets
	Legal	Commissions
	Administration	Golf
	Public Relations	Duluth Transit Authority
	Inter-governmental	Norshor Theater
	Port Authority	
	Duluth Entertainment Center	
	Spirit Mountain	
	Airport Authority	

Which of these services do you think are the most important?

Seven of the 10 members of Group 1 chose the city’s infrastructure as the most important. The other members selected public safety. Six of the 15 members of Group 2 selected police services as most important followed by the water, gas and sewer services. Six of the 15 members of Group 3 chose public safety as the most important city service followed by water, gas and utility services.

Of the services you've listed, how do you measure whether the city is doing what needs to be done?

Panelists were more likely to agree that personal observation or experience is their primary measure for determining the city's performance. To a lesser extent, some said they learn about the city's fulfilling need through basic news coverage or information received through community organizations. There was a brief discussion on the need for citizen involvement to become more aware, informed and invested in the city's future.

We often say that someone is doing a "good job." How do you define "good job?"

Few of the panelists offered any opinion, with some suggesting there would be a need to develop a measurement system to compare local performance to cities elsewhere.

Of all the services you've listed, which do you think the city does the best?

In each of the three panels, the service that was chosen as the most important was replaced by another service when the participants were asked to choose which the city does best from among those they had listed. Group 1 had chosen Infrastructure as most important, but decided the city did best at providing "Public Safety." This group also gave high marks for the city's "Planning and Zoning" efforts. Group 2 had chosen "Police" as the most important service, but recognized "Water, Gas & Sewer" in terms of best performance. Group 3 believed "Public Safety (Police, Fire)" was most important, but chose "Parks" as the area where the city did best, closely followed by "Utilities."

Following the initial series of questions and discussion on services as listed by the participants, each group was presented with a listing and description of city services prepared by the city administration. This document is available in the appendix. The panelists were asked to engage in three rating exercises:

1. Rate the importance of each service using a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing "not at all important" and 4 representing "very important."
2. Rate how well the city is doing in providing each service using a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing "Poor" and 4 representing "excellent."
3. Rate the amount of information they would like to receive about the city's performance for each service on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing "not important to know" and 4 representing "very important to know."

Following the completion of the ratings, each panel discussed their choices. A review of individual and overall group ratings appears on the following pages. In each case, a mean score has been applied to represent each panel's overall rating. A mean score is the central tendency or the sum of all rankings divided by the number of cases.

Panel Service Ratings: Group 1

	Service Area	Type of Services	Importance	Performance	Information
Police Department Public Administration	Police Services	Ensure the safety and security of citizens through crime prevention, investigation and reduction	3.80	3.30	2.80
	Animal Control	Protect public safety and animal care through sheltering, education and animal law enforcement	1.90	2.20	2.10
	Graffiti Removal	Remove graffiti from homes, businesses and other structures; encourage citizens to report, prevent and remove graffiti	2.50	2.50	1.70
Fire Department	Fire Protection Emergency Response	Protect the lives and property of citizens from fire hazards and other emergency conditions through quick response	3.50	3.60	2.80
	Unkempt Properties	Promote neighborhood safety through inspection and citation of problem properties	2.30	2.40	2.20
	Housing Inspection		2.30	2.10	2.40
Public Works Public Administration	Quality Drinking Water	Repair and maintain city water filtration and delivery system to ensure the sufficiency, quality and security of the city's water supply	3.70	3.30	3.00
	Sewer Services	Repair and maintain sewer collection systems and treat wastewater and sewage to maintain and enhance water quality in the water sources around the city	3.50	2.90	3.60
	Street/Alley Repairs	Inspect, maintain and repair all transportation infrastructure, including traffic signal, parking and street lighting systems	3.20	2.10	2.50
Public Administration	Street Cleaning	Maintain street and sidewalk cleanliness through clearing dirt, snow and ice from city streets, collecting and disposing of refuse	2.80	3.10	2.10
	Parks & Recreation	Develop and maintain parks and trails facilities and supporting recreational services in the community	2.70	2.50	3.10
	Library Services	Offer free access to books, periodicals, electronic resources and non-print materials, reference services and internet access to adults and children	2.50	2.70	2.50
Business Community Development	Jobs Economic Development	Generates jobs, helps retain existing jobs, and stimulates industrial and commercial development in the city	2.90	2.20	2.60
	Neighborhood Funding	Encourage and support neighborhood based initiatives	2.30	2.30	2.30
	Affordable Housing Development	Optimize access to affordable housing to low and moderate income families in public and private housing developments	2.10	2.90	2.30
City	Planning & Zoning	Guides city land use and development, including zoning and subdivision regulations	3.00	2.80	3.10

BOLD = HIGHEST
BOLD = LOWEST

Panel Service Ratings: Group 2

	Service Area	Type of Services	Importance	Performance	Information
Police Department Public Administration	Police Services	Ensure the safety and security of citizens through crime prevention, investigation and reduction	3.67	3.20	3.00
	Animal Control	Protect public safety and animal care through sheltering, education and animal law enforcement	2.07	2.47	1.73
	Graffiti Removal	Remove graffiti from homes, businesses and other structures; encourage citizens to report, prevent and remove graffiti	2.13	2.40	1.53
Fire Department	Fire Protection Emergency Response	Protect the lives and property of citizens from fire hazards and other emergency conditions through quick response	3.80	3.53	2.53
	Unkempt Properties	Promote neighborhood safety through inspection and citation of problem properties	2.67	2.27	2.27
	Housing Inspection		2.80	2.40	2.27
Public Works Public Administration	Quality Drinking Water	Repair and maintain city water filtration and delivery system to ensure the sufficiency, quality and security of the city's water supply	4.00	3.67	2.87
	Sewer Services	Repair and maintain sewer collection systems and treat wastewater and sewage to maintain and enhance water quality in the water sources around the city	3.80	3.33	2.60
	Street/Alley Repairs	Inspect, maintain and repair all transportation infrastructure, including traffic signal, parking and street lighting systems	3.87	1.93	2.87
Public Administration	Street Cleaning	Maintain street and sidewalk cleanliness through clearing dirt, snow and ice from city streets, collecting and disposing of refuse	2.73	2.87	2.07
	Parks & Recreation	Develop and maintain parks and trails facilities and supporting recreational services in the community	2.93	2.47	2.60
	Library Services	Offer free access to books, periodicals, electronic resources and non-print materials, reference services and internet access to adults and children	2.93	2.53	2.40
Business Community Development	Jobs Economic Development	Generates jobs, helps retain existing jobs, and stimulates industrial and commercial development in the city	3.73	2.07	3.27
	Neighborhood Funding	Encourage and support neighborhood based initiatives	2.87	2.40	2.67
	Affordable Housing Development	Optimize access to affordable housing to low and moderate income families in public and private housing developments	2.47	2.20	2.33
City	Planning & Zoning	Guides city land use and development, including zoning and subdivision regulations	3.07	2.40	2.47

BOLD = HIGHEST
BOLD = LOWEST

Panel Service Ratings: Group 3

	Service Area	Type of Services	Importance	Performance	Information
Police Department Public Administration	Police Services	Ensure the safety and security of citizens through crime prevention, investigation and reduction	3.73	3.00	3.33
	Animal Control	Protect public safety and animal care through sheltering, education and animal law enforcement	1.93	2.13	1.73
	Graffiti Removal	Remove graffiti from homes, businesses and other structures; encourage citizens to report, prevent and remove graffiti	2.13	2.47	1.87
Fire Department	Fire Protection Emergency Response	Protect the lives and property of citizens from fire hazards and other emergency conditions through quick response	3.87	3.47	3.20
	Unkempt Properties	Promote neighborhood safety through inspection and citation of problem properties	2.93	2.47	2.13
	Housing Inspection		2.93	2.13	2.33
Public Works Public Administration	Quality Drinking Water	Repair and maintain city water filtration and delivery system to ensure the sufficiency, quality and security of the city's water supply	3.93	3.33	2.87
	Sewer Services	Repair and maintain sewer collection systems and treat wastewater and sewage to maintain and enhance water quality in the water sources around the city	3.60	2.33	2.47
	Street/Alley Repairs	Inspect, maintain and repair all transportation infrastructure, including traffic signal, parking and street lighting systems	2.93	2.47	2.27
Public Administration	Street Cleaning	Maintain street and sidewalk cleanliness through clearing dirt, snow and ice from city streets, collecting and disposing of refuse	2.93	3.00	1.87
	Parks & Recreation	Develop and maintain parks and trails facilities and supporting recreational services in the community	3.40	2.60	3.13
	Library Services	Offer free access to books, periodicals, electronic resources and non-print materials, reference services and internet access to adults and children	3.47	2.40	3.00
Business Community Development	Jobs Economic Development	Generates jobs, helps retain existing jobs, and stimulates industrial and commercial development in the city	3.73	2.07	3.47
	Neighborhood Funding	Encourage and support neighborhood based initiatives	2.87	2.07	2.60
	Affordable Housing Development	Optimize access to affordable housing to low and moderate income families in public and private housing developments	2.93	2.07	2.67
City	Planning & Zoning	Guides city land use and development, including zoning and subdivision regulations	3.27	2.93	3.07

BOLD = HIGHEST
BOLD = LOWEST

Panel Service Ratings: Combined

	Service Area	Type of Services	Importance	Performance	Information
Police Department Public Administration	Police Services	Ensure the safety and security of citizens through crime prevention, investigation and reduction	3.73	3.15	3.08
	Animal Control	Protect public safety and animal care through sheltering, education and animal law enforcement	1.98	2.28	1.83
	Graffiti Removal	Remove graffiti from homes, businesses and other structures; encourage citizens to report, prevent and remove graffiti	2.23	2.45	1.70
Fire Department	Fire Protection Emergency Response	Protect the lives and property of citizens from fire hazards and other emergency conditions through quick response	3.75	3.53	2.85
	Unkempt Properties	Promote neighborhood safety through inspection and citation of problem properties	2.68	2.38	2.20
	Housing Inspection		2.73	2.23	2.33
Public Works Public Administration	Quality Drinking Water	Repair and maintain city water filtration and delivery system to ensure the sufficiency, quality and security of the city's water supply	3.90	3.45	2.90
	Sewer Services	Repair and maintain sewer collection systems and treat wastewater and sewage to maintain and enhance water quality in the water sources around the city	3.65	2.85	2.80
	Street/Alley Repairs	Inspect, maintain and repair all transportation infrastructure, including traffic signal, parking and street lighting systems	3.35	2.18	2.55
Public Administration	Street Cleaning	Maintain street and sidewalk cleanliness through clearing dirt, snow and ice from city streets, collecting and disposing of refuse	2.83	2.98	2.00
	Parks & Recreation	Develop and maintain parks and trails facilities and supporting recreational services in the community	3.05	2.53	2.93
	Library Services	Offer free access to books, periodicals, electronic resources and non-print materials, reference services and internet access to adults and children	3.03	2.53	2.65
Business Community Development	Jobs Economic Development	Generates jobs, helps retain existing jobs, and stimulates industrial and commercial development in the city	3.53	2.10	3.18
	Neighborhood Funding	Encourage and support neighborhood based initiatives	2.73	2.25	2.55
	Affordable Housing Development	Optimize access to affordable housing to low and moderate income families in public and private housing developments	2.55	2.33	2.45
City	Planning & Zoning	Guides city land use and development, including zoning and subdivision regulations	3.13	2.70	2.85

BOLD = HIGHEST
BOLD = LOWEST

Ratings: Importance

Combined, the three groups chose “Quality Drinking Water” as the most important city service and “Animal Control” as least important.

Ratings: Performance

In terms of performance, the highest rating was for “Fire Protection-Emergency Response” with the lowest rating for “Jobs-Economic Development.”

Ratings: Information

Panel members said it would be most important for them to know more about “Jobs-Economic Development” while it was least important for them to receive more information about “Graffiti Removal.”

Based on what you said about the importance of services and the information you consider vital, how satisfied are you that you’re getting good information about city services?

The group expressed mixed sentiments about the quality of the information they receive. Some indicated they relied on personal experience and observation as well as word-of-mouth information from neighbors. Others indicated they seek out elected officials or involvement in community organizations to access information. While many indicated they relied on the news media, not everyone was satisfied with the media’s performance. “I think the media can give us enough information, but I’m not sold on the quality and diversity of opinions because the media definitely has their own agenda, and I need to keep that in mind, it’s filtered through that.” Others believed there was sufficient information about issues that the public really needed or wanted to know more about, particularly the larger issues impacting the city. Several indicated the city’s website was helpful in providing information of importance.

How do you define public awareness? What is the goal of public awareness? How do you rate the quality of the information your currently receive from the city on the delivery of services that matter most to you?

There is consensus that people in Duluth generally know what the city wants them to know about. But, many suggested the issue is much larger. “I don’t know how the issues affect me every day. I know that they do, but sometimes not how,” said one panelist whose views were shared by others. There was considerable discussion about awareness and engagement, the similarities and differences between the two, and whether one was an outgrowth of the other. “Can we have aware people that aren’t engaged?” The group’s questioned whether education or engagement are more important than awareness, although there was general agreement that more information leads to better choices. Still there was some doubt about the quality of the information. “Sometimes we have too much information, but I still question how informed we really are.” While the city was lauded for dispensing the information, there is concern is that the public has not accepted its responsibility to act accordingly. “Sometimes we just see the same people (at meetings) while others are happy to complain. They don’t do anything about it (informing themselves).” Many agreed the overall goal of awareness is to create a “community conversation” which would lead to education, participation and engagement. “We are the public,

we are the community.” There was some concern about transparency, whether the city administration has been “open and clear about why decisions are being made” and whether some elected officials “listen to their own personal beliefs and don’t listen to the public.” It was suggested that residents could benefit from a “quality source of independent information” or a “go-to” source of information that was trusted. A suggestion was also offered that the city engage in more outreach to citizens who might not be actively involved and feel disenfranchised. This was viewed as a way to build public trust. Along these lines, it was suggested the city worry less about image when major issues are confronted. “We worry too much about how this will make us look.” Opinions are not always welcoming messages, said one panelist.

Participants were provided with two examples of publications the City of Duluth uses to keep citizens informed about city functions. Each is available for inspection in the appendix. *The Duluth Quarterly* is a new publication first printed in December 2010, produced by New Ventures Publishing Corporation of Duluth. The 24 page publication was distributed throughout the community to various outlets including grocery stores, newsstands and locations within city hall. The issue was printed at no cost to city taxpayers, relying on advertising revenue to cover all costs. The second publication presented for review was the document the city prepared for the Truth in Taxation Public Hearing on the 2011 proposed city budget and levy. The 13 page document , available for review on December 6, 2010, was not distributed to the public, but was available at the public hearing and on the city’s website.

The Duluth Quarterly

Overall, 26 of the 40 participants indicated they had seen the first issue of the publication, although there was confusion among the panelists about where they might have seen or received a copy of the issue. The publication was not mailed to residents, but several members of the panels indicated they had received it in the mail at their home. The panelists were pleased the publication was printed without taxpayer assistance, and mostly viewed it as effective. “I think it’s effective as long as it gets in the hands of Duluth residents.” While some members of the panels offered high praise for the publication, others labeled in as “two-thirds fluff” and even “propaganda,” although they were generally pleased it “puts a personal face on people who work for the city.” In commenting about the overall content of the publication, some members felt it important the city address some of the “not-so-good things” that are happening in the community and what the city is doing to address the issues. Overall, the groups thought the publication was an “appropriate way to present what the city actually does” and expressed a hope the publication would increase citizen engagement. Twenty-two (22) of the 40 panelists rated the publication as a very effective component of the city’s communications effort.

Truth in Taxation Document

Only about a dozen of the panelists had previously seen the document. While many in the three groups agreed the information presented was meaningful and meant to be effective in presenting the tax information, most indicated they wouldn’t be drawn to read it in its current form. “There’s

no need to publish this. People don't like taxes, but they aren't going to spend time looking at the charts in here." There were many who suggested the document be available for viewing on the city's website, although this wouldn't serve the needs of citizens who lacked internet access. To accommodate those individuals, a suggestion was made to include some of the document's information within the pages of *The Duluth Quarterly*. Less than a dozen members thought the document was an effective use of city resources.

The participants were presented a listing of several other methods that might be used to communicate with citizens about how well services are being performed.

Communications Method	Number of Panelists			
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Hard copy of annual report	5	0	2	7
Program on public access television	8	1	3	12
Announcements on local radio stations	6	5	9	20
Articles in the <i>Duluth News Tribune</i>	8	14	11	33
Articles in neighborhood or community newspapers	7	6	15	28
Email announcements from the city you subscribe to	8	10	15	33
Email/print newsletters from city council member or mayor	4	4	14	22

Articles in the *Duluth News Tribune* or email announcements that citizens could subscribe to were rated as the most effective of the other forms of communicating with citizens. Some of the members did suggest they appreciated the opportunity to discuss city issues with the mayor during his publicly scheduled sessions, although they did have some concern about the event timing.

City Website

All three groups spent about 10 minutes each reviewing the city's website: www.duluthmn.gov. Just two of the 40 participants had no previous experience with the site. There was general agreement that the site could benefit from improved navigation and search features, and a more thoughtful approach to presentation of basic city information. Some called the site "dense," suggesting too much information was presented which required unnecessary scrolling. Panelists suggested a location should be provided where citizens could comment about an ongoing issue or register a complaint or suggestion for service. A frequent complaint concerned the difficulty in locating telephone numbers or contact information for city officials. Overall, the groups agreed the site required too much learning time and wasn't immediately user friendly.

Performance Measurement

The panel members were given one final opportunity to judge whether the city’s efforts to provide services and judge performance have been successful. Prior to the sessions, city administration prepared a document designed to outline department goals, the performance measures that would be applied, the target for success and the 6-month result. A copy of the document highlighting the period from January through June 2010 is available for review in the appendix.

There was general agreement the document was a good tool for the citizens to hold city departments accountable, but that it had limitations that prevented it from being more useful. “Some goals are too generally stated and basic. It’s not possible for us to judge real success.” The primary criticisms centered on the lack of “steps” departments were going to take to fulfill the goals outlined, the lack of any meaningful benchmark data, and the lack of detail about financial resources that would be applied to meet each of the goals. There was also concern about the lack of citizen involvement in establishing the goals. “Citizens should be involved in talking about the goals and the steps we should take to get there.” While some believe the city would benefit from a wide range of citizen opinion, others were concerned whether the public should be micro-managing government. “Let’s leave it to the experts.” Many agreed the presentation format might be suitable as an in-house document, but would be confusing for many citizens. Two of the groups discussed presenting the more meaningful and interesting information within the pages of *The Duluth Quarterly*. More than 30 of the participants indicated they would like to see the goals and outcomes broken down by neighborhoods to allow for more meaningful evaluation and to highlight any disparities. More than half of the panelists also wished to see statistics or trends over a period of time, although some questioned whether there were too many variables to apply. The group was not as interested in comparisons with cities of comparable size because of differing performance measures and too many impacting variables. “That’s like comparing your three children.” Overall, the groups indicated the document would be more useful internally than it would be for members of the public to review, although some did suggest the document be available for public review on an annual basis, perhaps during the mayor’s annual state of the city address.

Before the panels concluded, each participant was provided with a copy of the 2011 National Citizens Survey. Most were unaware of the survey.

Panelists were also offered an opportunity to make any final comments for consideration.

“My family, who lives in very, very large cities is astounded that I can actually pick up the phone and leave a message for the mayor and, you know what, he’ll get back to me. Those kinds of things are really unique to the city of Duluth, and I think that’s important.”

“I wish city offices would answer their phones and return phone calls. I’ve had real bad luck with that, getting an automated system and leaving a message and not getting a call back. The city does a bad job at that. City services are the kind that are personal and relate close to people.”

“I think he (mayor) needs to lead the council in the direction of less money available over the next few years. Budgets that they’re going to be putting together need to be very, very careful. Invariably, they’re going to have to be reduced. That’s just the way the world is today.”

“There really is potential. But, I think in some aspects the city is doing too much. People mentioned the Norshor, Spirit Mountain, golf. I really don’t think the city should be providing services like that. Let the city focus on your core stuff.”

“We need to look at what are the city revenue generators versus revenue sinks.”

“The city is always going to have a credibility issue because everyone knows they’re the very ones that come up with the standards.”

“I think the city needs to continue trying to engage younger people, the kids that are coming for college who live here for four years and then more away someplace else because there’s not a whole lot of investment in them that’s happening, other than complaints being made about them. There’s a lot of great things college students can contribute to this community and make it a place they want to stay.”

“Duluth is facing the challenges many other cities in this country are facing. They’re being asked to do more with less, budget-wise. There could be some more creative solutions in the city does not outreach to the neighborhoods and gets people’s opinions on just what solutions are out there.”

“I think the city sets the tone and I think that is where it’s got to start and continue to lead. I think collaboration is a big part of that, with citizens, non-profits and business. And that’s where we need to see the leadership in terms of tone, leadership and collaboration.”

For a complete review of materials referenced in this report, please see the appendix which was presented as a separate document.

Citizen's Perspective Priorities & Performance

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