

Alley Plowing in St. Paul

Task 7 Report

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1 Background

2 Methodology

3 Analysis

4 Conclusions

Historically, the City of St. Paul has never plowed alleys in winter. Residents must determine how and when to plow their alleys. Many residents in St. Paul work with their neighbors to hire private contractors for alley snow plowing. The City is conducting an analysis to better understand current alley plowing situations and examine potential options.

Researchers from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota worked with the City of St. Paul to develop a survey in order to:

- Capture perceptions and concerns of residents
- Get feedback of current situation and costs
- Gather input related to potential options for alley plowing

Survey Development

- **Format:**
 - Paper
 - Online: Qualtrics
- **Questionnaire:**
 - Paper: 28 questions
 - Four questions were required
 - Online: 29 questions
 - Do you live in St. Paul?



Alley Snow Plowing in St. Paul



The City of St. Paul does not plow alleys in winter. Residents in St. Paul usually work with their neighbors to hire private contractors for alley snow plowing. Currently, the City is exploring the options to provide this service.

Researchers from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota worked together with the City of St. Paul to develop this survey. The purpose of this survey is to capture perceptions and concerns of the residents in the city as well as get feedback as to preference for any future change with associated costs.



This survey is anonymous and will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you want to take this survey online, scan the QR code on the right. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to respond to this survey. Your feedback is valuable to the City for developing its next steps.

Please put your completed survey in the pre-paid envelope, and put it in the mail by May 3.

Need this translated? Call us at 651-266-6100
¿Necesita esta traducción? Comuníquese con nosotros al 651-266-6100
Ma u baahan tahay tarjamaan Nago soo wac 651-266-6100
Xav tau qhov no bhais los? Hu rau peb ntawm 651-266-6100

1. Do you have an alley?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No (**go to question 14**)
2. On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being extremely poor and 10 extremely good, overall, how would you rate the condition of your alley?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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3. In what ways do you use your alley? (select all that apply):
 - I access my garage through the alley
 - The City picks up recycling from the alley
 - The City picks up the garbage from the alley
 - Emergency vehicles (e.g. fire trucks, police, ambulance) have access through the alley
 - Other (please specify): _____

Survey Development

- Single choice, multiple choice, and open-ended questions
- Anonymous
- Available for verbal translation
 - Spanish, Somali, and Hmong

Survey Topics

- Demographics:
 - Included age, race, income, zip code, property ownership/renter
 - Respondents were asked to provide this information to assess if the survey was representative
- Alley plowing related:
 - Current arrangements, costs, timing, and level of satisfaction
 - Ongoing issues or concerns
 - Reactions to potential changes
 - Expectations

- Online:
 - Distributed through the City social media outlets (Facebook and Twitter)
 - Available through a link and QR code
 - Timeline: April 17- May 3
- Paper:
 - 250 paper surveys were mailed to St. Paul addresses randomized at the zip code level
 - Timeline: April 15- May 3

Survey	Total Surveys	Total Surveys Analyzed ⁽¹⁾
Online ⁽²⁾	8,045	7,749
Paper ⁽³⁾	86	85

Notes: ⁽¹⁾ Of the online surveys, 167 were blank and 130 individuals did not live in St. Paul. Of the paper surveys, only 1 survey was not completed. ⁽²⁾ 10 online surveys were accessed through the QR code provided in the paper version. ⁽³⁾ Paper survey response rate: 34%.

Demographics - All respondents

Age (n=7,152)

Age	St. Paul	Survey
18-22	11.4%	0.4%
23-35	29.4%	18.0%
36-50	23.9%	34.1%
51-65	22.3%	31.6%
65 or over	13.0%	16.0%

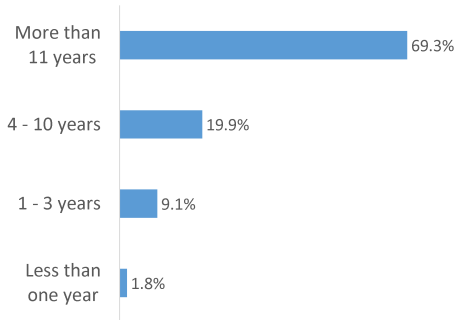
Demographics - All respondents

Race (n=6,878)

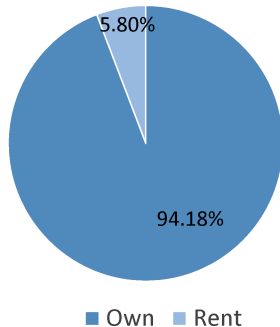
Race	St. Paul	Survey
White	52.1%	84.6%
Hispanic or Latino	9.7%	1.7%
Black or African American	15.5%	2.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%	0.6%
Asian or Asian American	17.9%	2.7%
Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%
Other	4.2%	8.3%

Demographics - All respondents

Years lived in St. Paul (n=7,172)

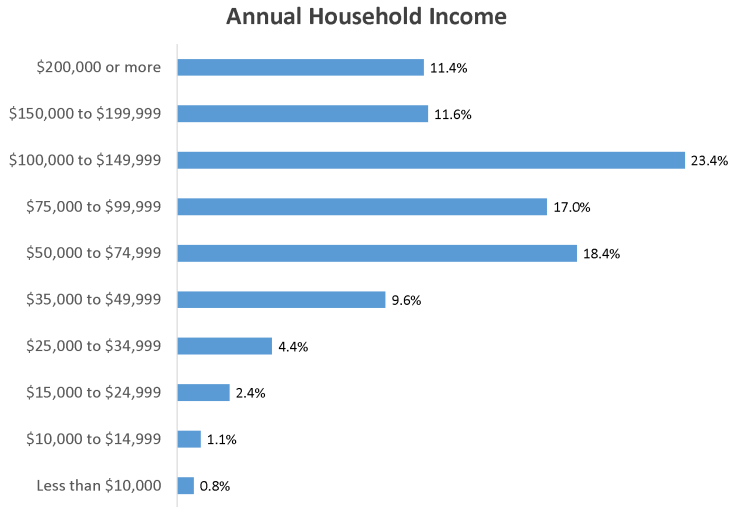


Property owner/renter (n=7,205)



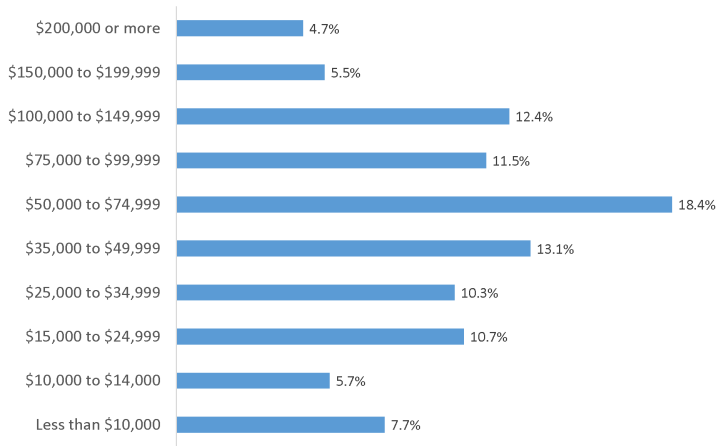
Demographics - All respondents

Annual household income (n=6,360)



Annual household income St. Paul

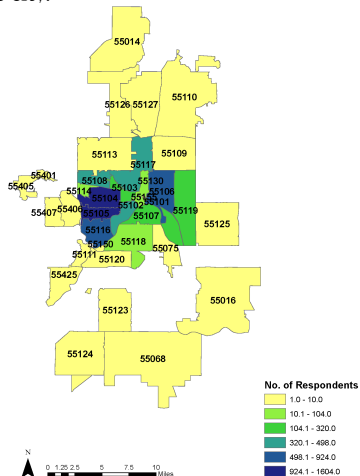
Household Income - St. Paul



Demographics

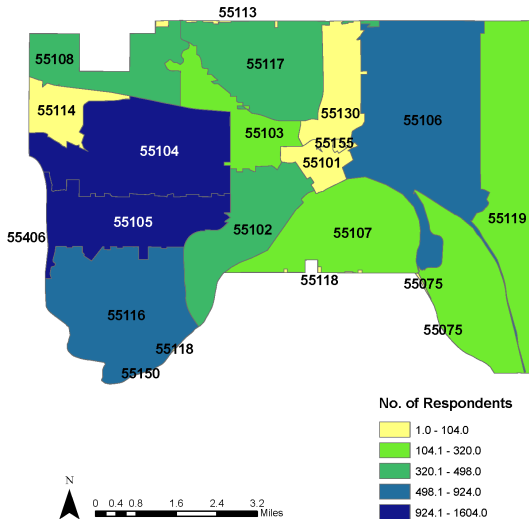
Zip code of respondents

Of all surveys, 32 were completed by respondents in a zip code in the borders of St. Paul and 18 in zip codes outside of the city.



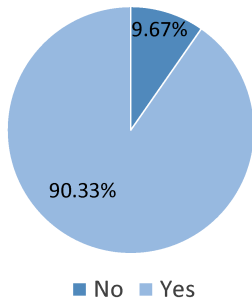
Demographics

Zip code of respondents

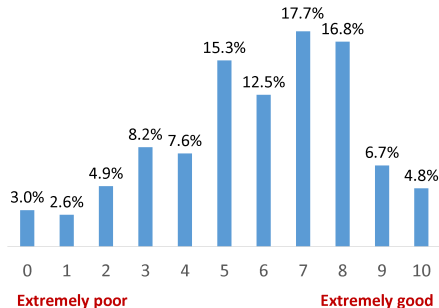


Current Arrangements

Do you have an alley (n=8,717)

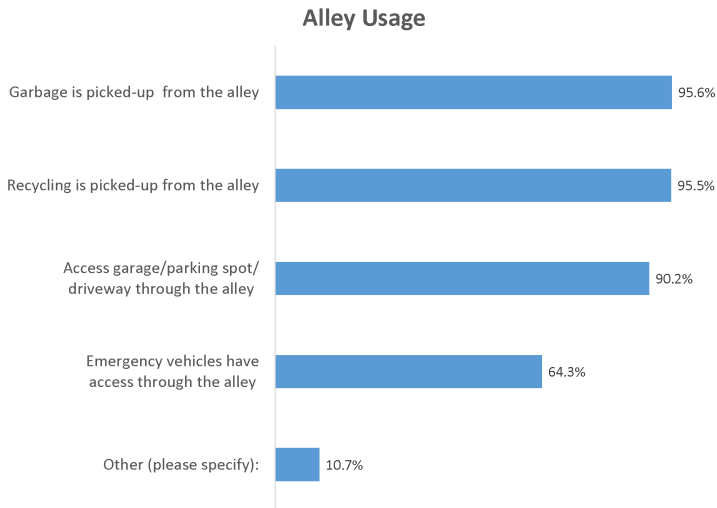


Alley condition (n=6,833)



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Alley usage (n=6,888) - more than one answer



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

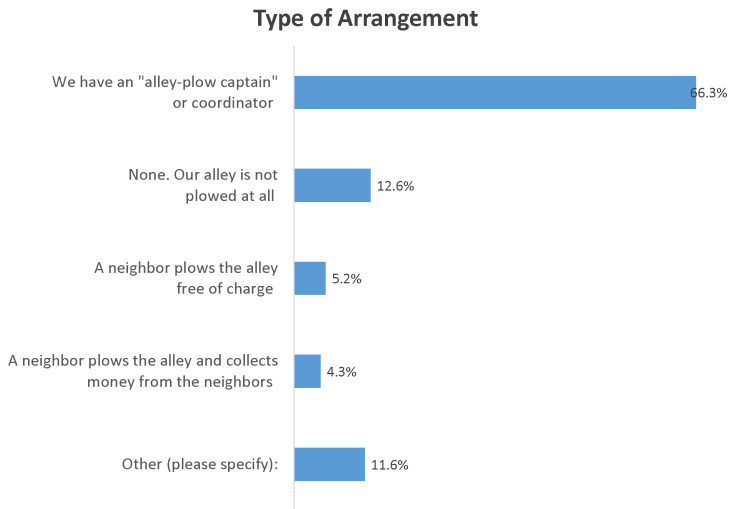
Alley usage

Other (n=734) - Top themes:

- **Recreational (41%):** Kids play zone, zone to play Basketball, ride bicycles
- **Walking (35%):** Walking the dog, shortcut, access bus station
- **Utility companies/contractors use the alley (21%):** Cable, phone, electric, and mail services; moving trucks; private alley plowing contractors; construction contractors
- **Interacting with neighbors (18%):** Place to meet and talk to neighbors, annual block parties, garage sales
- **Gardening along the alley (16%)**
- **Receiving deliveries (9%)**
- **Driving through the neighborhood (7%):** Shortcut, as a way to drive to main streets when there is a lot of snow in the streets

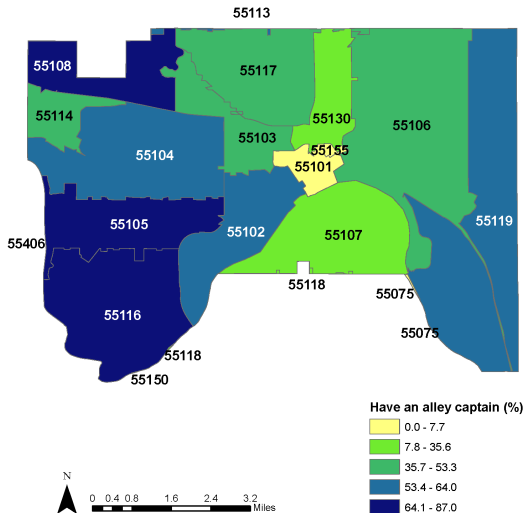
Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Type of arrangement (n=6,867)



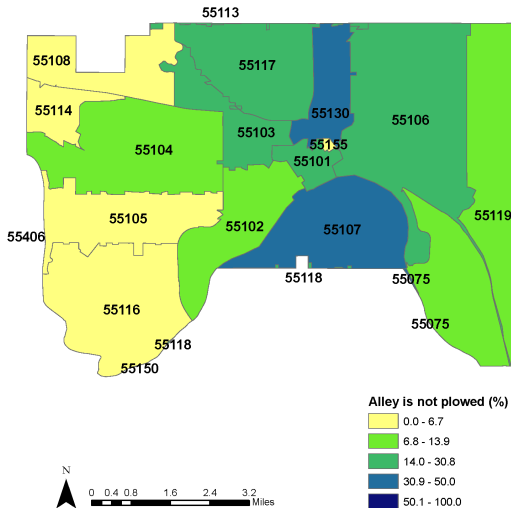
Current Arrangements

Type of arrangement by zip code: Have an alley captain



Current Arrangements

Type of arrangement by zip code: Alley is not plowed



Type of arrangement

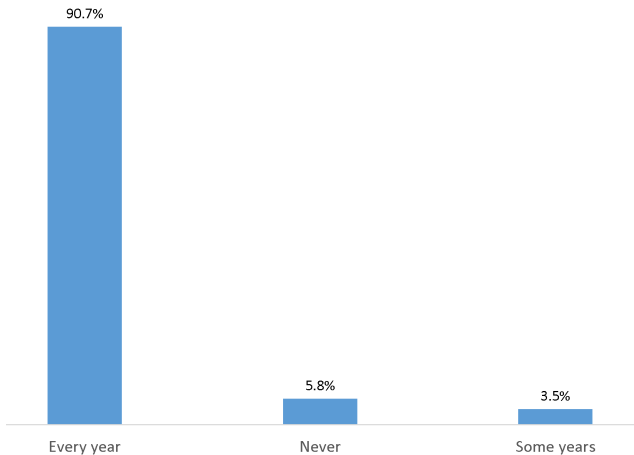
Other (n=804) - Top themes:

- Directly billed by a private plowing company (24%)
- Neighbors shovel (21%)
- Rely on a business, church, or school to plow alleys (6%)
- Do not know (8%)

Current Arrangements - Respondents with an arrangement

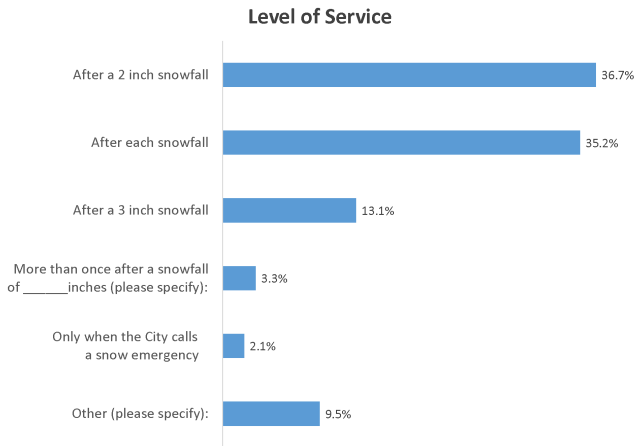
Participation in the arrangement (n=5,875)

Participation in the arrangement



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an arrangement

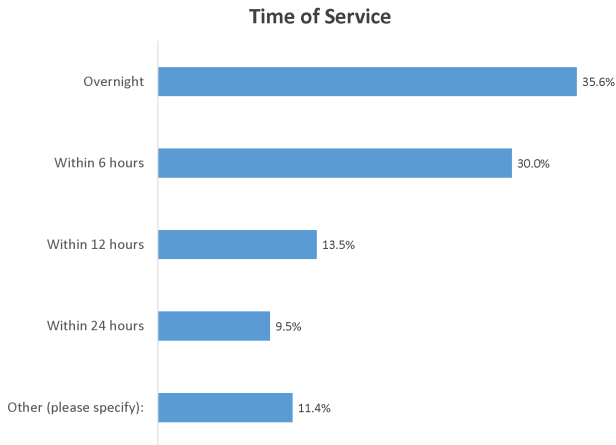
Time of service (n=5,868)



Other (n=596): Sporadically (15%), As needed (12%), Whenever the residents do it (11%), Not sure/I do not know (33%).

Current Arrangements - Respondents with an arrangement

Time of service (n=5,849)

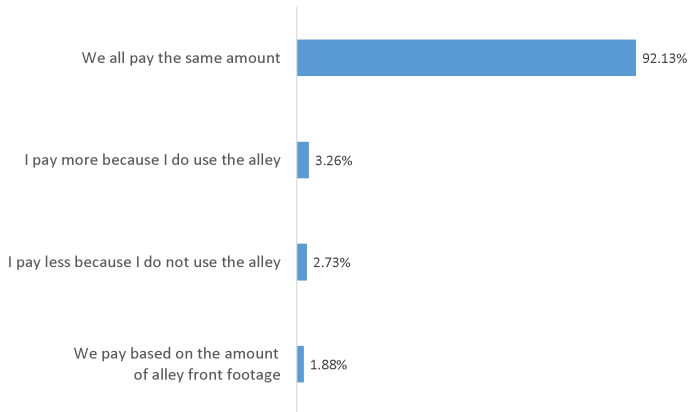


Other (n=663): Not sure (15%), Sporadically (15%), Immediately after a snowfall (13%), Within a couple hours of a snowfall (13%), My alley does not get plowed (8%).

Current Arrangements - Respondents with an arrangement

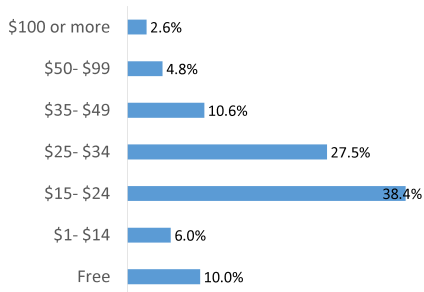
Flexibility of prices (n=5,529)

Flexibility of Prices

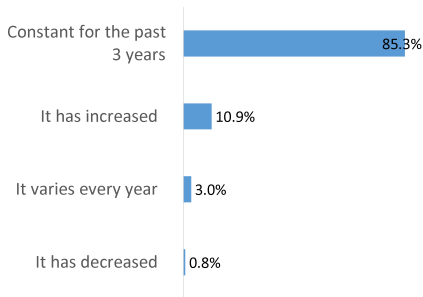


Current Arrangements - Respondents with an arrangement

Cost per season (n=5,636)

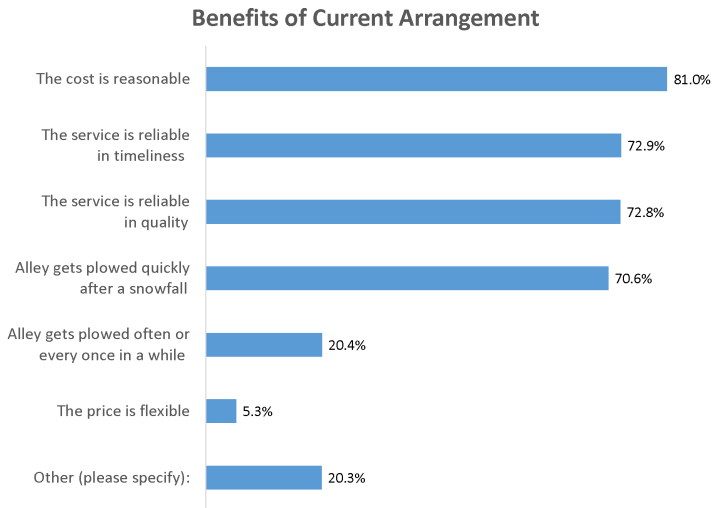


Change in costs per season (n=5,480)



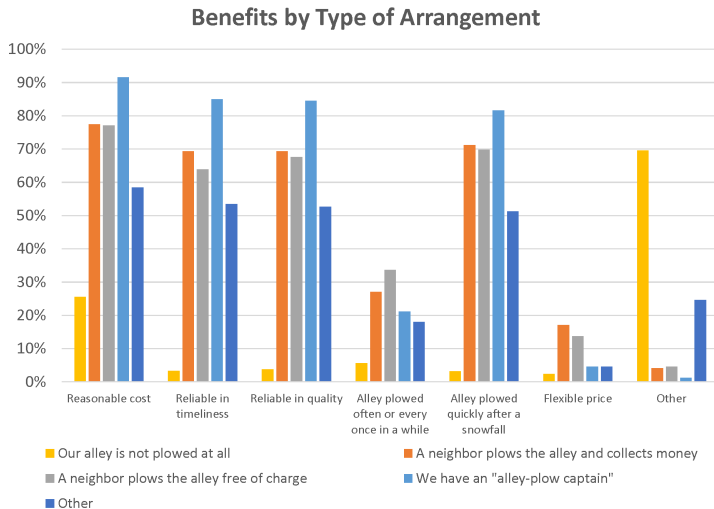
Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Benefits (n=6,187) - more than one answer



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Benefits by arrangement (n=6,187)



Current Arrangements

Benefits by arrangement - Breakdown Other category

Other (n=1,257) - Top themes:

We have an alley-plow captain (n=529)

- Compared to City Streets
 - Alley is plowed before/faster (62)
 - Alley is plowed better (46)
 - Alley is plowed more often (26)
 - Alley plowing is more reliable (22)
- Comments
 - Our current arrangement is excellent (51)
 - It brings neighbors together / It builds community (34)
 - Having the flexibility of choosing contractors (32)
 - Support local businesses (23)
 - The City does not plow the alley (22)

Current Arrangements

Benefits by arrangement - Breakdown Other category (cont.)

Other (n=1,257) - Top themes

None. Our alley is not plowed (n=359)

- The alley does not get plowed (135)
- No benefits (103)
- We plow/shovel/blow our own (24)

A neighbor plows the alley free of charge (n=40)

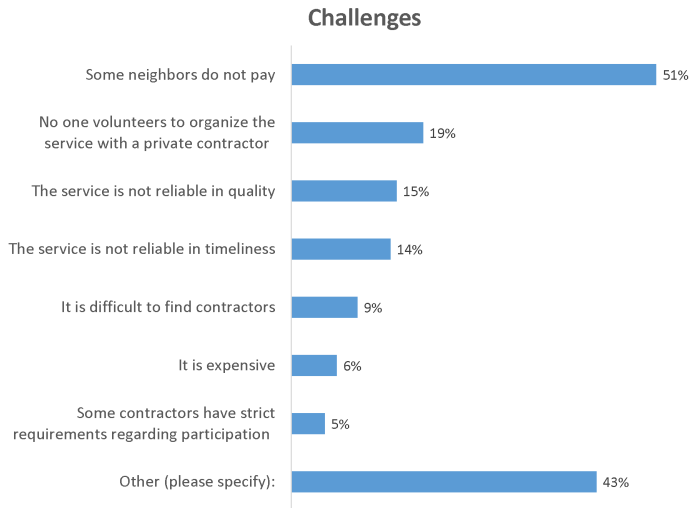
- It is free (16)

Other (n=302)

- It is free (when other property/company/neighbor plows)
- It brings neighbors together / It builds community (when each property does its part)

Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

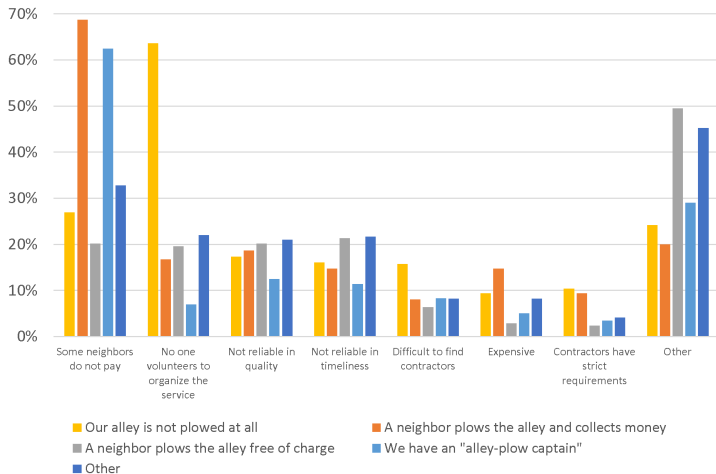
Challenges (n=4,445) - more than one answer



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Challenges by arrangement (n=4,445)

Challenges by Arrangement



Challenges - Breakdown Other category

Other (n=1,911) - Top themes:

We have an alley-plow captain (n=1,167)

- There are no challenges (589)
- Burden falls on the alley-plow captain (183)
- Collecting money (129)
- Covering the difference of those that do not pay (45)
- No one willing to head up responsibility for alley plowing (44)
- Uncertainty if the alley captain leaves/decides not to continue (43)
- The contract ends too early in the spring (13)
- Do not know (31)

Challenges - Breakdown Other category (Cont.)

Other (n=1,911) - Top themes:

None. Our alley is not plowed (n=229)

- The alley is not plowed (96)
- Collecting money (29)
- Neighbors inconsistently shovel/plow (20)
- Renters are not committed to a plowing agreement (16)

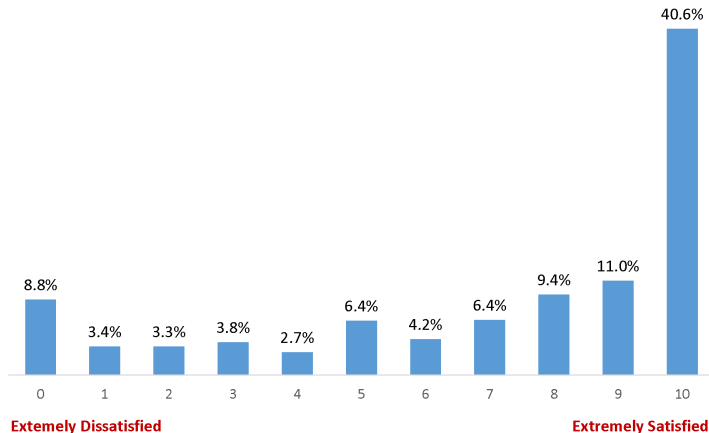
A neighbor plows the alley free of charge (n=105)

- There are no challenges (48)
- Alleys are not plowed if the neighbor that plows goes on vacation or leaves (14)

Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

Satisfaction with current arrangement (n=6,593)

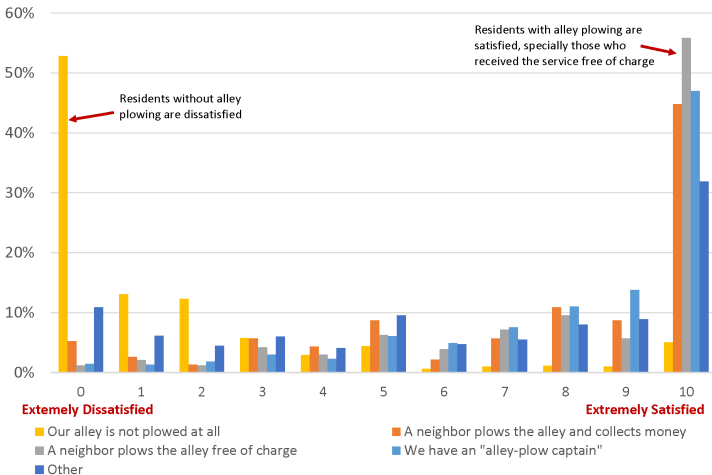
Satisfaction Level



Current Arrangements - Respondents with an alley

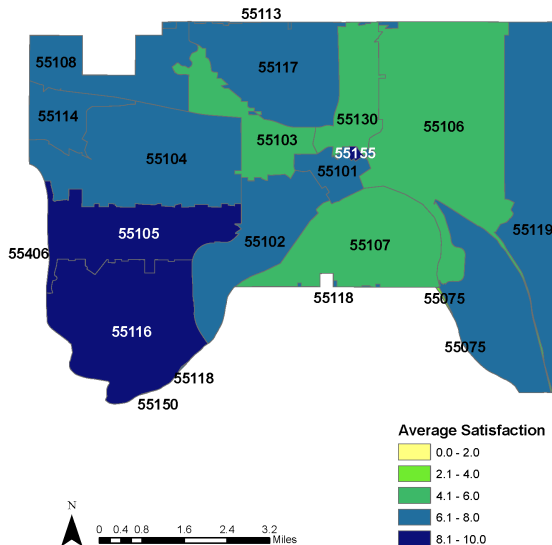
Satisfaction by arrangement (n=6,593)

Satisfaction by Arrangement



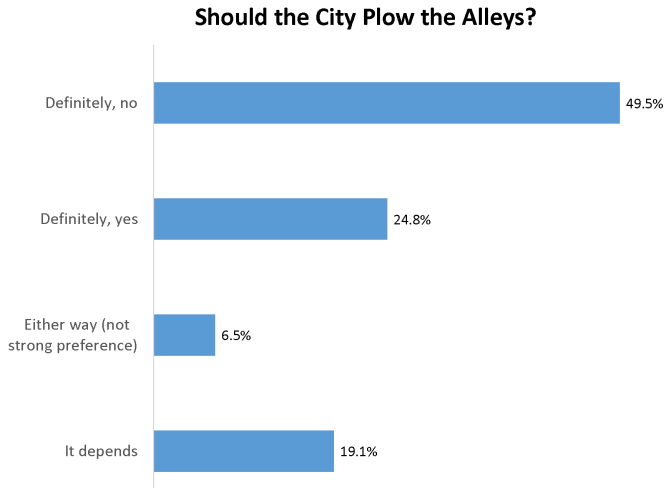
Current Arrangements

Satisfaction by zip code



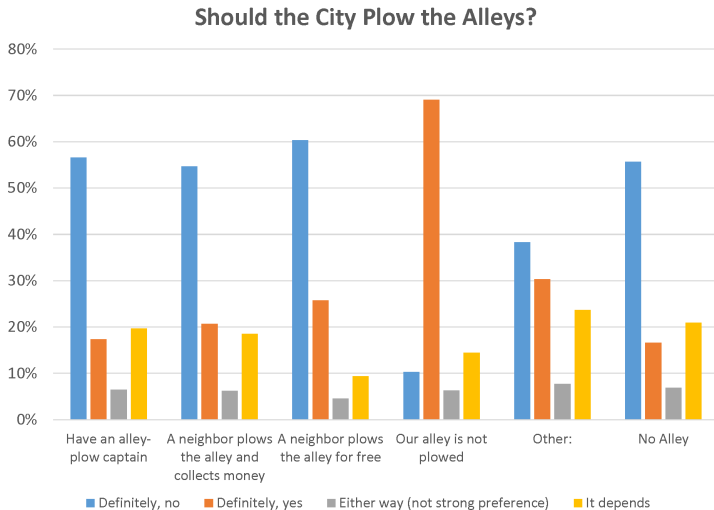
Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

Should the City plow the alleys? (n=7,282)



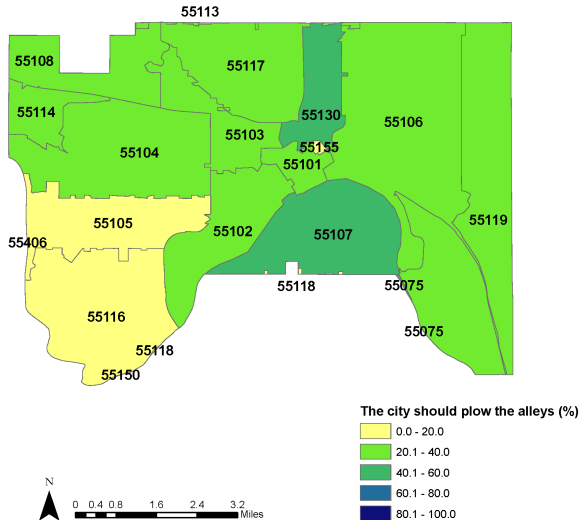
Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

Should the City plow the alleys? By type of arrangement (n=7,282)



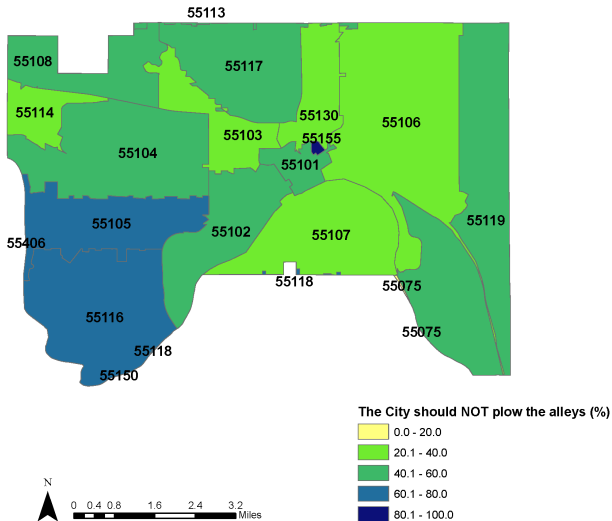
Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

The City should plow the alleys by zip code



Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

The City should NOT plow the alleys by zip code



Should the City plow the alleys? - Breakdown It Depends category

It depends (n=1,382) - Top themes:

We have an alley-plow captain (n=862)

- Cost (248)
- Hesitant due to current street plowing (182)
- Quality (105)
- Timeliness (97)
- Hesitant due to trash collection management (95)
- On how fast it is done (77)
- No more taxes (20)
- It should be part of the alley/street assessment cost

Should the City plow the alleys? - Breakdown It Depends category (cont.)

It depends (n=1,382) - Top themes:

None. Our alley is not plowed (n=112)

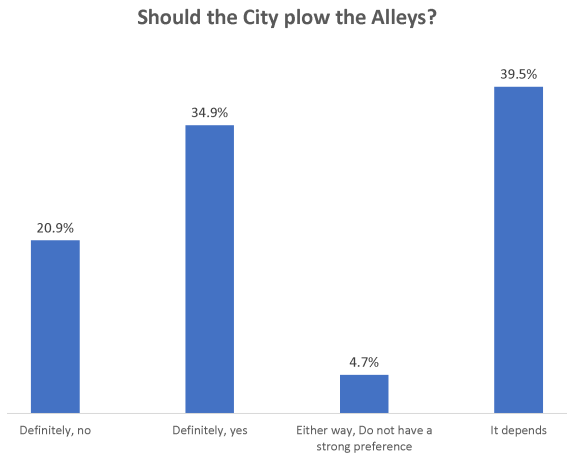
- Cost (33)
- Hesitant due to current street plowing (16)
- Hesitant due to trash collection management (7)

Other (n=183):

- Cost (51)
- Hesitant due to current street plowing (26)
- Hesitant due to trash collection management (25)

Reactions to Potential Change

Should the City plow the alleys? (n=43) – Respondents who self-identified as Alley Captain

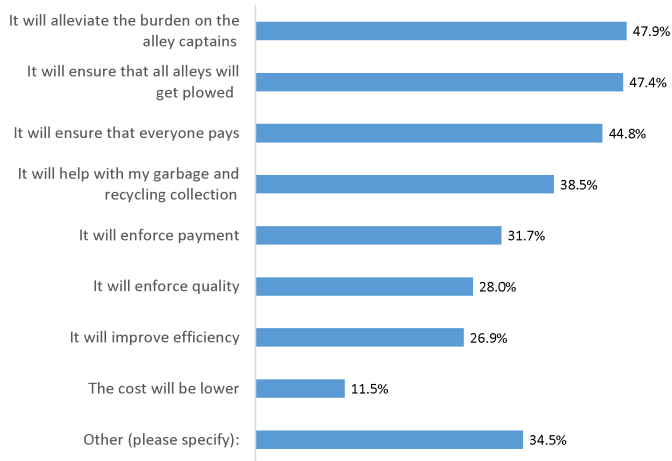


It depends (n=17): On timeliness, cost, quality.

Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City do it? (n=4,938) - more than one answer

Why should the City plow alleys?



Reactions to Potential Change

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City do it? - Breakdown

Other category

Other (n=1,706) - Top themes

We have an alley-plow captain (n=1,012)

- The City should not plow alleys (812)
- To ensure everyone has access to this service (34)
- It is a basic service the City should provide (31)

None. Our alley is not plowed at all (n=125)

- The City should not plow alleys (35)
- To ensure access to garage/parking (20)
- To ensure everyone has access to this service (11)
- It is a basic service the City should provide (11)

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City do it? (cont.)

Other (n=1,706) - Top themes

A neighbor plows the alley free of charge (n=92)

- The City should not plow alleys (79)

A neighbor plows the alley for money (n=56)

- They City should not plow alleys (46)

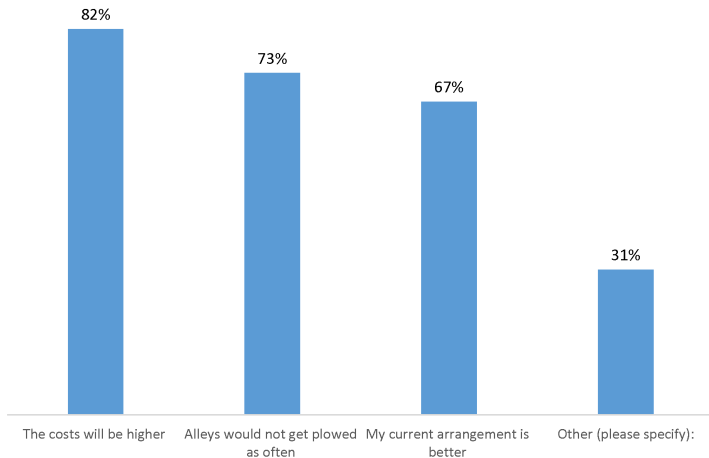
Other (n=255)

- The City should not plow alleys (161)

Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City NOT do it?
(n=6,092) - more than one answer

Why the City should NOT plow alleys?



Reactions to Potential Change

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City NOT do it? -
Breakdown Other category

Other (n=1,880) - Top themes:

We have an alley-plow captain(n=1,188)

- The City is not equipped to do this efficiently based on
 - Street plowing experience (374)
 - Trash collection experience (288)
- City provided service will not be timely (105)

None. Our alley is not plowed at all (n=122)

- The City should plow alleys (29)
- The City is not equipped to do this efficiently based on street plowing experience (21)

If City were to provide alley plowing: Why should the City NOT do it? (cont.)

A neighbor plows the alley free of charge (n=68)

- The City is not equipped to do this efficiently based on:
 - Street plowing experience (20)
 - Trash collection experience (10)

A neighbor plows the alley for money (n=56)

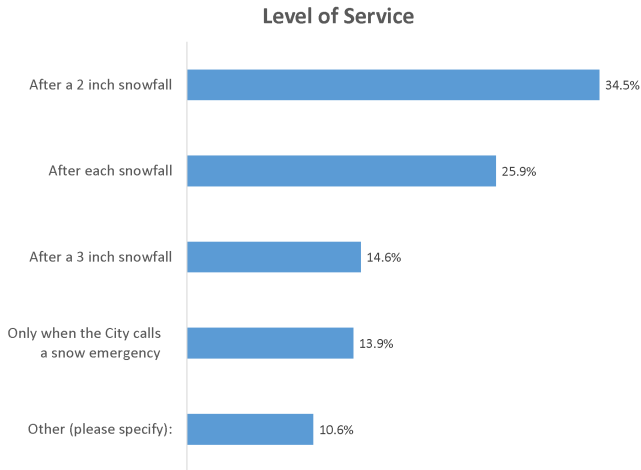
- The City is not equipped to do this efficiently based on:
 - Street plowing experience (16)
 - Trash collection experience (15)

Other (n=251)

- The City is not equipped to do this efficiently based on:
 - Street plowing experience (56)
 - Trash collection experience (41)

Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

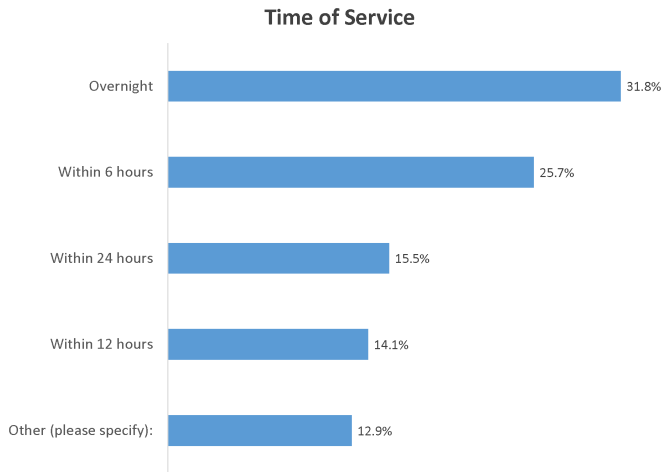
Level of service (n=7,100)



Other (n=751): Do not want the City to plow the alleys (51%), within 2-3" of snowfall (8%), multiple times during a storm (4%).

Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

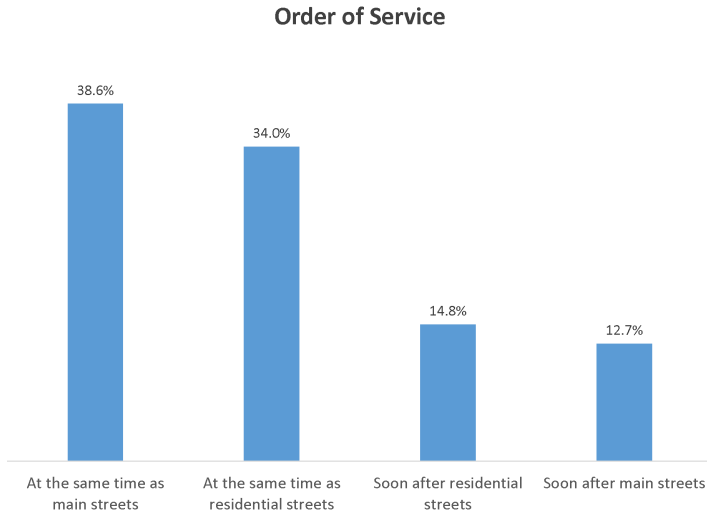
Time of service (n=7,059)



Other (n=910): Do not want the city to plow the alleys (27%), within a few hours after a snowfall (9%), after the streets are cleared (4%).

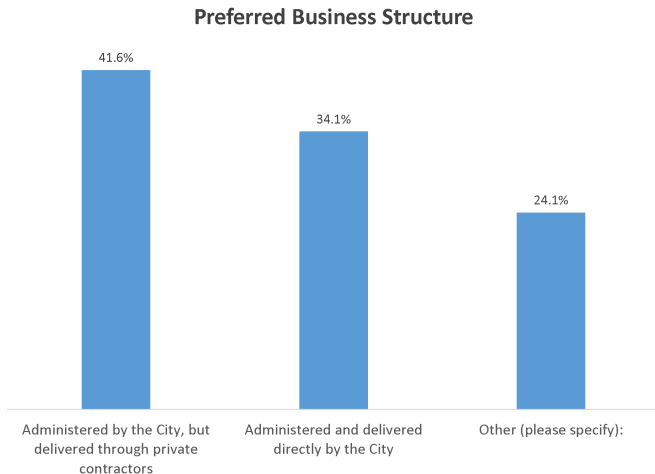
Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

Order of service (n=6,758)



Reactions to Potential Change - All respondents

Preferred business structure (n=6,606)



Other (n=1,595): Do not want the city to plow the alleys (58%), no preference (9%), whichever is better in terms of quality and cost (9%).

Reactions to Potential Change

Willingness to pay (n=6,273) – Respondents with an alley

(%) Willing	Current Payment							n/a
	Free	\$1-\$14	\$15-\$24	\$25-\$34	\$35-\$49	\$50-\$99	\$100 >	
< \$15	55.6	82.5	30.5	20.4	20.2	15.6	19.7	23.9
\$15-\$24	7.2	11.8	55.2	13.9	7.2	5.1	7.7	14.0
\$25-\$34	11.2	3.2	9.9	50.8	19.9	10.5	11.3	14.0
\$35-\$44	5.9	0.3	1.9	8.5	31.9	8.6	8.5	9.7
\$45-\$54	10.2	1.9	1.6	4.2	15.3	25.7	10.6	16.4
\$55-\$99	6.7	0.0	0.4	1.5	4.2	30.7	21.8	13.6
\$100 >	3.1	0.3	0.5	0.7	1.2	3.9	19.7	8.3

Reactions to Potential Change

Willingness to pay (n=583) – Respondents without an alley

Willing	(%)
< \$15	74.4
\$15-\$24	9.6
\$25-\$34	5.8
\$35-\$44	2.6
\$45-\$54	3.4
\$55-\$99	2.9
\$100 >	1.2

Top themes

- Please, do not let the City to take on this task
- Bad experiences with trash collection
- The City does not do a good job plowing the streets
- Do not think the City can manage it
- Do not tax those without alleys
- We pay maintenance fee, it should cover alley plowing

Other Comments - All respondents

- Improve other things:
 - ① Street plowing
 - ② Road conditions (streets/alleys)
 - ③ Improve trash collection services
 - ④ Sidewalk shoveling
- Put it to a vote
- Thanks for this survey / Asking for the results of the survey
- Suggestions
- Comments about previous questions or the survey

Demographics

- Majority of the respondents were white, high-income, between 36-65 years of age, have lived in St. Paul for more than 11 years, and own their homes

Current Arrangements and Service Level

- 66% of the respondents have an “alley captain” who coordinates the service with a private contractor
- 12% stated that their alleys are not plowed at all
- 36% of respondents said their alleys are plowed after a 2-inch snowfall and 35% said it was plowed overnight
- Majority of respondents pay between \$15- \$34 per season

Ongoing Issues

- Benefits of current arrangements: Reasonable cost, timeliness, and quality
- Challenges of current arrangements: Enforcing payment and difficulties finding a volunteer to organize alley plowing
- Overall, benefits and challenges of current arrangements vary across the type of arrangement
- Overall, 41% of the respondents rated their current arrangement 10
 - Most of the residents with any alley plowing arrangement are very satisfied with it
 - Residents without alley plowing arrangements are very dissatisfied

Reactions to Potential Change

- Reactions to whether or not the City should provide the service:
 - Respondents in south-west St. Paul consider that City should not plow the alleys
 - 60% of residents with an arrangement believe that the City should not provide the service
 - 70% of the residents that do not have an arrangement believe that the City should provide the service
- Those mentioning “It depends” refer to the cost and quality as main factors, but are hesitant/skeptical due to (1) current street plowing and (2) trash collection management

Expectations

If the City of St. Paul were to provide the service residents expect:

- The City to plow the alleys after each snowfall or after a 2-inch snowfall
- The alleys to be plowed at the same time as main streets or at the same time as residential streets
- Residents with an alley are willing to pay the amount they are currently paying for alley plowing or less. People without an alley are willing to pay less than \$15 a season (or nothing at all)