



COLOGNE Community of Belonging

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Cologne completes 'Community of Belonging' survey

A recent survey of Cologne residents found that people who live there like much of what the greater Cologne-area has to offer while identifying opportunities to help more feel that they are part of and engaged in the community.

The survey was sponsored by local residents – representing the Cologne “Community of Belonging” initiative – and Carver County Public Health, and it was conducted as part of a local and County effort to create thriving and welcoming communities for all.

“We’re interested in making Cologne a place where everyone – no matter who they are, where they live, work or attend school – feels like they are part of the community, regardless of their

individual differences,” said John Hendel, Cologne Community of Belonging leadership team. “We conducted this survey to explore how to best make that happen.”

The survey found that residents believe that Cologne is made special by friendly, respectful, and helpful people, and that greater Cologne provides a small-town feeling of safety and affordability. Residents also noted that local activities – such as the annual Glad Days summer festival, the Cologne Hollanders town baseball team games, and the Cologne Fire & Relief Association annual steak fry events – all help to create a strong sense of community.

Survey respondents also identified that improvements can be made to make

Cologne a more welcoming community, including more gathering spaces, especially those where food or beverages are served.

They also noted that a more vibrant downtown and a grocery store, and possibly a manufacturing or an industrial park to provide job opportunities, would help to strengthen the community. Only ~16 percent of survey respondents work in Cologne but 40 percent wish they could.

Residents also asked for better communication about what is happening in Cologne and the surrounding area, including how to become involved or participate, and ensuring that everyone is always welcomed.

“Cologne has so many positive attributes but it’s

clear that residents want to do even more to improve opportunities now and into the future to create a thriving, vibrant community where everyone feels welcomed, connected and supported,” said Gracia Hegener, Cologne Community of Belonging leadership team.

Roger Storms, also a member of the group’s leadership team, explained that plans are under way for a larger Community of Belonging Work Group meeting in the next four to six weeks. Group members will review the survey results and use the data to prioritize next steps and action items.

The survey was sent to 1914 residents living in the Cologne 55322 Zip code and the surrounding Cologne Fire District area. A total of

414 surveys were returned resulting in an overall response rate of 22 percent.

The survey and local effort are an outgrowth of the County’s community health improvement plan, which is designed to improve the overall health of Carver County. When individuals feel safe and supported in a community, they also tend to be healthier and more resilient. Cologne is the one community that is farthest along in the Communities of Belonging work, but Pat Stieg, Public Health Specialist, reports there are at least a handful of residents in seven other communities that are just getting started – Carver, Chanhassen, Chaska, Norwood Young America, Victoria, Waconia and Watertown.