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**Godbe** Research & Analysis

# Community Assessment Survey

Conducted for the  
City of Henderson

June 2004

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## Table of Contents

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List of Figures .....	ii
List of Tables .....	iii
Introduction.....	iv
Executive Summary .....	1
Methodology.....	9
Summary of Findings.....	17
General Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services.....	17
Most Important Issue Facing Residents .....	19
Quality of Life.....	21
Sense of Community.....	25
Report Card: General City Issues .....	30
Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:All Services.....	32
Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:General Services .....	34
Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:Recreation Services .....	39
Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:Growth and Economic Issues .....	43
Importance and Satisfaction Ratings:Public Safety Services .....	47
Interaction with City Departments.....	51
City-Resident Communication.....	54
Additional Demographic and Behavioral Information .....	58
Appendix A.....	A-1

## List of Figures

---

Figure 1 Satisfaction with the City’s Provision of Services .....	17
Figure 2 Most Important Issue Facing the City of Henderson.....	19
Figure 3 Overall Quality of Life .....	21
Figure 4 Importance of Local Issues on the Quality of Life.....	23
Figure 5 Sense of Community Levels.....	26
Figure 6 Community Identification .....	28
Figure 7 Report Card for General City Issues .....	30
Figure 8 Importance of General Services .....	34
Figure 9 Satisfaction with General Services .....	36
Figure 10 Satisfaction-Importance Matrix for General Services.....	38
Figure 11 Importance of Recreation Services.....	39
Figure 12 Satisfaction with Recreation Services .....	41
Figure 13 Satisfaction-Importance Matrix for Recreation Services .....	42
Figure 14 Importance of Growth and Economic Issues.....	43
Figure 15 Satisfaction with City in Addressing Growth and Economic Issues .....	44
Figure 16 Satisfaction-Importance Matrix for Growth and Economic Issues .....	46
Figure 17 Importance of Public Safety Services.....	47
Figure 18 Satisfaction with Public Safety Services .....	48
Figure 19 Satisfaction-Importance Matrix for Public Safety Services .....	50
Figure 20 Interaction with City Departments .....	51
Figure 21 Service Ratings for City Employees.....	52
Figure 22 Satisfaction with City-Resident Communication .....	54
Figure 23 Preferred Method to Access City Service Information .....	55
Figure 24 Heard about 50-year Anniversary in Past Six Months .....	56
Figure 25 Type of Anniversary Recall.....	57
Figure 26 Zip Code of Residence .....	58
Figure 27 Length of Residence.....	59
Figure 28 Place of Origin.....	60
Figure 29 US Region of Origin.....	60
Figure 30 Place of Work.....	61
Figure 31 Visited City’s Website.....	61
Figure 32 Times Visited City’s Website.....	62
Figure 33 Number of Children in Household Under 19 .....	62
Figure 34 Own or Rent .....	63
Figure 35 Belong to HOA.....	63
Figure 36 Household Income.....	64
Figure 37 Age .....	64
Figure 38 Gender .....	65

List of Tables

---

Table 1 Methodology .....	9
Table 2 Subgroup Labels .....	10
Table 3 Margin of Error .....	12
Table 4 Quality of Life by Sense of Community Levels .....	13
Table 5 Means Questions and Corresponding Scales .....	14
Table 6 Importance of Local Issues on the Quality of Life by Gender .....	15
Table 7 Satisfaction with the City’s Provision of Services by Quality of Life and Sense of Community Levels .....	18
Table 8 Satisfaction with the City’s Provision of Services by Length of Residence .....	18
Table 9 Most Important Issue Facing the City of Henderson by Length of Residence .....	20
Table 10 Overall Quality of Life by Children in Household .....	21
Table 11 Overall Quality of Life by Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services .....	22
Table 12 Overall Quality of Life by Sense of Community Level .....	22
Table 13 Importance of Local Issues on the Quality of Life by Number of Children .....	24
Table 14 Sense of Community .....	26
Table 15 Sense of Community by Length of Residence .....	27
Table 16 Sense of Community by Number of Children and Home Ownership .....	27
Table 17 Sense of Community by Age .....	28
Table 18 Sense of Community by Community Identification .....	29
Table 19 Report Card for General City Issues by Sense of Community, Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services, and Length of Residence .....	31
Table 20 Satisfaction-Importance Ratings for All Services .....	33
Table 21 Importance of General Services by Sense of Community Levels .....	35
Table 22 Satisfaction with General Services by Sense of Community Levels and Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services .....	36
Table 23 Importance of Recreation Services by Children in Household and Length of Residence .....	40
Table 24 Importance of Recreation Services by Sense of Community Levels and Quality of Life .....	40
Table 25 Satisfaction with City in Addressing Growth and Economic Issues by Length of Residence and Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services .....	45
Table 26 Satisfaction with Public Safety Services by Age .....	49
Table 27 Percentage of “Excellent” or “Good” Service Ratings for City Employees by Department of Interaction .....	53
Table 28 Preferred Method to Access City Service Information by Age .....	56

## Introduction

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Godbe Research & Analysis (Godbe Research) is pleased to present the results of a resident research project conducted for the City of Henderson. This report is organized into the following sections:

- The *Executive Summary* includes a summary of the *Key Findings* from the survey as well as a *Conclusions* section.
- The *Methodology* section explains the methods and procedures used to conduct this research.
- The *Summary of Findings* section offers a question-by-question analysis of the survey. The discussion is organized into the following sections:
  - General Satisfaction with City’s Provision of Services
  - Most Important Issue Facing Residents
  - Quality of Life
  - Sense of Community
  - Report Card: General City Issues
  - Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: All Services
  - Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: General Services
  - Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: Recreation Services
  - Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: Growth and Economic Issues
  - Importance and Satisfaction Ratings: Public Safety Services
  - Interaction with City Departments
  - Additional Demographic and Behavioral Information
- *Appendix A* provides the questionnaire with overall topline results.

## Executive Summary

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### *Introduction to the Study*

In August 2003, the City of Henderson hired Godbe Research to conduct a community assessment survey of residents. The survey took place in February 2004. The primary objectives of the research were to: assess residents' satisfaction with the City's general provision of services; identify the importance of, and residents' satisfaction with, specific services provided by the City; examine residents' perceptions of their quality of life and the relative importance of various items on quality of life; assess residents' sense of community; and evaluate residents' satisfaction with City-resident communication. In total, 1,000 adult residents in the City of Henderson were surveyed, resulting in a margin of error +/-3.09 percent for questions answered by all 1,000 residents.

### *Key Findings*

Based on an analysis of the survey data, Godbe Research offers the following key findings to the City of Henderson:

#### ***General Satisfaction with City's Provision of Services***

Early in the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether, overall, they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of Henderson was doing to provide City services. Since respondents were asked to consider the City's performance in general, responses to this question can be viewed as a general performance rating for the City. An overwhelming majority, 89 percent, of respondents reported being "Very satisfied" (49%) or "Somewhat satisfied" (40%) with the City's efforts to provide municipal services.

Overall, general satisfaction with the City's provision of services was higher among respondents who had lived in the City 14 years or less, respondents with a "High" sense of community, and those who felt the quality of life in Henderson was "Getting better" or "Staying about the same."

#### ***Most Important Issue Facing Residents***

When asked to reveal, in an open-ended format, the single most important issue facing Henderson residents, 22 percent indicated managing growth and development. Other notable issues included traffic congestion (14%), crime prevention and safety (9%), water availability (9%), and water quality (8%).

As respondents' length of residence increased, the percentage of respondents who identified managing growth and development as the number one issue facing Henderson also increased.

#### ***Quality of Life***

Overall, 42 percent of respondents indicated that the quality of life in Henderson was "Staying about the same." Thirty-seven percent of residents believed that the quality of life in Henderson was improving ("Getting better"), which was more than twice the percentage of respondents who viewed the quality of life as "Getting worse" (17%).

Higher percentages of the following resident subgroups felt the quality of life was “Getting better”:

- Residents with children compared to residents without children.
- Respondents who were satisfied with the City’s overall provision of services compared with those who were dissatisfied.
- Respondents with a “High” sense of community compared to those with lower sense of community levels.

Henderson residents ranked the “Overall feeling of safety” (2.31) as the most important factor in contributing to the quality of life in Henderson, followed by “Quality of drinking water” (2.21), “Air quality” (2.18), “Overall appearance and cleanliness” (2.06), “Condition of the streets and roads” (2.02), “Affordability of housing” (1.92), “Availability of job opportunities” (1.75), “Recreational opportunities” (1.66), “Sense of community” (1.63), “Shopping opportunities” (1.52), “Arts and cultural opportunities” (1.37), and “Availability of public transportation” (1.17).

### *Sense of Community*

Recent scholarship has shown that there are three dimensions underlying a general sense of community: “Community values,” “Social connections,” and “Mutual concerns.” Henderson residents believe it is important to have shared “Community values.” Seventy-four percent believed that “It is very important for me to feel a sense of community with other residents” and 67 percent reported that they felt either a “Somewhat strong” or “Very strong” sense of community living in Henderson. When it comes to making “Social connections,” residents were pretty evenly split. For example, 46 percent of the respondents agreed that they “...can recognize most of the people who live in my community.” On the other hand, 46 percent of the respondents disagreed with this statement. Nearly two-thirds of the residents in the sample agreed with the items used to measure “Mutual concerns.” About 66 percent agreed with the statement, “My neighbors and I want the same things from this community” and another 67 percent believed that “If there is a problem in this community, people who live here can get it solved.”

Residents that agreed with at least six of the seven sense of community questions<sup>i</sup> were categorized as feeling a “High” sense of community. Conversely, respondents that agreed with only one or none of the questions were classified as having a “Low” sense of community. Residents in between these two extremes were identified as having a “Medium” sense of community. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents in the survey had a “High” sense of community, 62 percent had a “Medium” sense of community, and 12 percent had a “Low” sense of community. Higher percentages of respondents who had lived in Henderson for five years or more, had children, and owned a home had a “High” sense of community compared with their subgroup counterparts.

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<sup>i</sup> After adjusting for reverse coding.

### ***Report Card: General City Issues***

Respondents were presented with a list of four general issues and were asked to think about present conditions and the quality of life in the City before assigning each issue a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F, and for grades A through D, they could specify a plus or a minus). A “C” grade would indicate a passing, or average, grade. Consistently, residents rated each issue tested above average. Of the four issues tested, “The housing in the City-which includes the availability and affordability of a variety of housing types such as condominiums, single family homes, and apartments” received the highest mean rating (2.80, B-), followed by “The economic health of the City-which includes the availability of jobs and job skills training programs” (2.77, B-), “The environment of the City-which includes the preservation of open space and natural habitat and air and water quality” (2.61, B-), and “The transportation system of the City-which includes the freeways, local streets and roads, and the public transit system” (2.54, B-/C+).

Respondents with a “High” sense of community as well as those generally satisfied with the City’s provision of services reported higher grades for each City issue compared to those with lower sense of community levels and the dissatisfied.

### ***Importance and Satisfaction Ratings***

The next series of questions in the survey asked respondents to rank the importance of specific services offered by the City as well as their level of satisfaction with the City’s efforts to provide each of the services tested. For convenience, and to help organize the services for the respondents, similar services were presented together. In each case, respondents were first asked whether they thought a service was “Extremely important,” “Very important,” “Somewhat important,” or “Not at all important.” The responses to these questions were coded to their level of importance (“Extremely important” = +3, “Very important” = +2, “Somewhat important” = +1, “Not at all important” = 0). Respondents were next asked to identify their level of satisfaction with the City’s efforts to provide the service. Responses to these questions were also recoded: “Very satisfied” = +2, “Somewhat satisfied” = +1, “Somewhat dissatisfied” = -1, “Very dissatisfied” = -2. The responses were then aggregated to form a mean for importance and a mean for satisfaction for each service tested.

Having a measure of the importance of a service to each respondent as well as a measure of the respondent’s satisfaction with the City’s efforts to provide that service enables an examination of the relationship between these two measures to determine the areas where the City has the greatest opportunity, as well as the greatest need, to improve its services. The importance and satisfaction ratings of each service were examined relative to:

- the *overall* average importance and satisfaction ratings of all 31 services tested throughout the survey (summarized under the heading “All 31 Services”) *and*
- the average importance and satisfaction ratings within each specific service grouping (presented under the headings “General City Services,” “Recreation Services,” “Growth and Economic Issues,” and “Public Safety Services”).

The following sections present the overall results for the 31 services and for each specific service grouping.

### **All 31 Services**

Comparing the mean importance scores for all 31 services, Henderson residents rated “Providing emergency medical services,” “Maintaining a low crime rate,” and “Dispatching personnel quickly and efficiently” as the top three most important services. Comparing the mean satisfaction scores for all 31 services, residents were most satisfied with “Providing fire protection and prevention services,” “Providing emergency medical services,” and “Maintaining parks and recreation facilities.”

After assessing both importance and satisfaction, each service was compared to the average satisfaction and average importance scores across all 31 specific services tested in the survey. The average importance score across the 31 services was 2.04 (“Very important”) and the average satisfaction score was 0.99 (“Somewhat satisfied”).

Eleven of the 31 services can be labeled as “High Importance-High Satisfaction” relative to the average of all services. Of those 11, seven were public safety services. The “High Importance-High Satisfaction” group included:

- “Providing emergency medical services”
- “Maintaining a low crime rate”
- “Dispatching personnel quickly and efficiently”
- “Providing fire protection and prevention services”
- “Investigating criminal activity”
- “Preparing the City for emergencies”
- “Maintaining parks and recreation facilities”
- “Providing recreation programs for youth”
- “Providing crime prevention programs”
- “Preventing floods”
- “Providing and maintaining street lights.”

Five of the 31 services were labeled as “High Importance-Low Satisfaction” relative to the average across all services. This group included:

- “Reducing traffic congestion”
- “Managing the City’s finances”
- “Repairing and maintaining local streets and roads”
- “Managing residential growth and development”
- “Providing neighborhood police patrols.”

Although “Managing the City’s finances” did place in the “High Importance-Low Satisfaction” quadrant, its satisfaction score (0.96) was not significantly below the overall average satisfaction score (0.99) of the 31 services evaluated.

### **General City Services**

Overall, Henderson residents ranked “Managing the City’s finances” (2.27) as the most important service of those tested within the general City services section. Most likely related to the road improvement projects underway during survey data collection, “Repairing and maintaining local streets and roads” (2.22) was rated as the second most important general City service. Possibly as a reaction to the recent flooding that occurred last August as well as in July 1999, “Preventing floods” (2.10) had an average rating of “Very important.” “Providing and maintaining street lights” (2.07) also ranked high in importance. Each of the services tested in this section received an average importance rating between “Somewhat” and “Extremely important” (i.e., a mean of 1.00 or higher).

Overall, residents reported positive satisfaction levels for each of the services tested. Residents reported the highest level of satisfaction with the City's efforts to "Prevent floods" (1.38) and "Provide and maintain street lights" (1.35). On average, Henderson residents were also "Somewhat satisfied" with the City's ability to "Inform the community about services and events" (1.13) and "Provide graffiti removal services" (1.11).

Examining only the seven general services tested in this section (relative to the average importance and satisfaction of those seven services), Henderson residents were relatively satisfied with the following services that they also considered relatively important: "Preventing floods" and "Providing and maintaining street lights." The relative importance to satisfaction was below average for "Managing the City's finances" and "Repairing and maintaining local streets and roads."

### **Recreation Services**

Henderson residents believed that "Providing recreation programs for youth" (2.15) and "Maintaining parks and recreation facilities" (2.15) were, on average, "Very important" recreation services. Comparatively, "Increasing the number of trails and walking paths" (1.55) and "Providing recreation programs for adults" (1.59) did not merit as much importance by respondents, however, they were still considered "Somewhat important" to Henderson residents.

Henderson residents reported positive satisfaction levels for each of the recreation services tested, with four of the six mean responses falling between "Somewhat satisfied" and "Very satisfied." Residents were most satisfied with the City's efforts to "Maintain parks and recreation facilities" (1.40). In addition, respondents reacted favorably to the City's endeavor to provide recreation programs across all age groups ("Youth programs": 1.22, "Adult programs": 1.16, and "Senior programs": 1.16). Comparatively, respondents were not as satisfied with the job the City was doing to "Preserve open space" (0.62).

Henderson residents were quite satisfied with the City's effort in "Maintaining parks and recreation facilities" and "Providing recreation programs for youth," two services that were also considered relatively important (when compared to the average scores of recreation services only). Only one service, "Preserving open space," was rated as both high in importance and low in satisfaction. However, this service was not rated that much higher in importance relative to the mean importance score (1.88 vs. 1.85).

### **Growth and Economic Issues**

"Reducing traffic congestion" (2.34) and "Managing residential growth" (2.19) were the most important growth and economic issues to Henderson residents, followed by "Increasing job opportunities" (2.01).

Residents were most satisfied with the City's effort to "Improve the business climate in Henderson" (1.00), followed by the City's efforts to "Increase job opportunities" (0.70), "Regulate commercial development" (0.61), and "Provide affordable housing" (0.56). Respondents in the sample were least satisfied with the job the City is doing to "Reduce traffic congestion" (0.10).

While “Reducing traffic congestion” and “Managing residential growth” were, on average, the most important growth and economic issues to Henderson residents, they were also the issues that residents were least satisfied with in this section. Among the growth and economic issues tested in the survey, none were classified as both high in importance and high in satisfaction.

### ***Public Safety Services***

All of the public safety services were given a high level of importance by Henderson residents. Nine out of the 12 services received ratings between “Very” and “Extremely important.” “Providing emergency medical services” (2.49), “Maintaining a low crime rate” (2.48), and “Dispatching personnel quickly and efficiently” (2.47) were ranked very high in importance by respondents in the survey, as were “Providing fire protection and prevention services” (2.43), “Investigating criminal activity” (2.36), and “Preparing the City for emergencies” (2.24).

On average, residents were “Somewhat” to “Very satisfied” with eight out of the 12 public safety services. The remaining issues also received positive levels of satisfaction. Overall, residents of Henderson were most satisfied with the City’s efforts to “Provide fire protection and prevention services” (1.52), followed by the City’s ability to “Provide emergency medical services” (1.49), “Dispatch personnel quickly and efficiently” (1.18), “Maintain a low crime rate” (1.14), “Prepare the City for emergencies” (1.07), “Enforce animal control laws” (1.04), and “Provide crime prevention programs” (1.02).

The top four public safety services in terms of importance, “Providing emergency medical services” (2.49), “Maintaining a low crime rate” (2.48), “Dispatching personnel quickly and efficiently” (2.47), and “Providing fire protection and prevention services” (2.43), also received satisfaction ratings above the average for all of the public safety services. In other words, among those public safety services that are the most important to Henderson residents, the City is also doing a good job in meeting resident expectations. “Preparing the City for emergencies” was also rated as high in both importance and satisfaction relative to the average.

“Investigating criminal activity” was the only public safety service of those tested that was rated as both high in importance and low in satisfaction. However, the satisfaction score for this item was very close to the overall average satisfaction score for public safety services (1.07 vs. 1.10). In other words, satisfaction was not significantly below the average.

### ***Interaction with City Departments***

Overall, 64 percent of residents had interacted with a City department in the past year. Henderson residents had the most interaction with the Parks and Recreation Department (23%), followed by the Police Department (22%) and the Utility Services Department (19%). In general, Henderson residents who had interacted with a department positively rated all aspects of customer service provided by City employees. The respondents were most impressed by the “Courtesy” displayed by City employees, with 83 percent rating this aspect of service as “Excellent” or “Good.” Large majorities of City residents also gave “Excellent” or “Good” ratings for “Professionalism” (79%), “Competency” (74%), and “Timeliness of response” (70%). Service ratings were highest among respondents who had interacted with the Community Development and Public Works Departments.

### ***City-Resident Communication***

Overall, 79 percent of respondents were satisfied with the City's efforts to communicate with residents through public notices, the Internet, and other means.

Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated a preference for accessing City service information from a mailer or newsletter, 31 percent preferred the Internet, 10 percent indicated the newspaper, and nine percent preferred the phone. Younger respondents were more likely to indicate a preference for accessing information via the Internet compared with respondents in other age groups.

When asked whether they had heard, read, or seen any news story, advertisement, or announcement about the City of Henderson's 50-year anniversary in the past six months, 53 percent of respondents indicated they had. As a follow-up question, those respondents who indicated that they had heard about the anniversary were asked to detail what they remembered. Of the 53 percent who indicated having heard about the anniversary, 58 percent were able to recall something specific and 30 percent recalled something general about the news story, advertisement, or announcement.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on the research objectives for this study and the findings of the analyses, Godbe Research offers the following conclusions to the City of Henderson:

### ***City Satisfaction***

Henderson residents, overall, appear to be satisfied with the City's efforts to provide municipal services, with 89 percent satisfied with the City's general provision of services. Further, more residents were "Very satisfied" (49%) than "Somewhat satisfied" (40%). If the 89 percent of residents who were satisfied with the City's general provision of services were interpreted as a grade score, Henderson would receive a B+/A-.

By providing their perceived importance of, as well as their level of satisfaction with, specific municipal services, Henderson residents identified several important areas where the City has an opportunity to improve specific service provision. Examining all 31 services together, Henderson residents expressed the greatest interest in seeing improvements in "Reducing traffic congestion," "Managing residential growth and development," "Managing the City's finances," "Providing neighborhood police patrols," and "Repairing and maintaining local streets and roads."

It is interesting to note that throughout the survey, respondents with a "High" sense of community as well as those who believed that the quality of life in Henderson was "Getting better" were consistently more satisfied than respondents with lower sense of community levels and those who felt Henderson was "Getting worse." In addition, the survey found that "Overall feeling of safety," "Quality of drinking water," and "Air quality" were the three most important factors contributing to residents' quality of life. To the extent that the City can foster an increased sense of community and quality of life, satisfaction with the City and its efforts to provide specific services is also likely to increase.

### ***Growth Related Issues***

As the third fastest growing city in the United States<sup>ii</sup>, the City of Henderson is obviously aware that issues related to growth management should continue to be given utmost consideration when planning the future of Henderson. Twenty-two percent of the residents in the sample spontaneously cited “Managing growth and development” as the most important issue facing the City of Henderson and another 14 percent mentioned “Traffic congestion” as the most important issue facing the City. Although traffic related issues may have received slightly inflated ratings because of the close time proximity of the area road construction projects and data collection, these two issues were the most frequently mentioned issues among respondents within the open-ended format. Out of the 31 specific services tested in the survey, “Reducing traffic congestion” (6 of 31 in importance, 31 of 31 in satisfaction), “Managing residential growth” (10 of 31 in importance, 30 of 31 in satisfaction), and “Repairing and maintaining local streets and roads” (9 of 31 in importance, 22 of 31 in satisfaction) -- all issues related to a fast growing city -- were three of the five services rated relatively high in importance but low in satisfaction.

### ***City-Resident Communication***

Most residents of Henderson were satisfied with the City’s efforts to communicate with residents, with 84 percent indicating they were satisfied with the City’s efforts to “Inform the community about services and events.” In addition, 79 percent were satisfied with the City’s efforts to communicate with residents through public notices, the Internet, and other means. Of those respondents who were “Very dissatisfied,” the most frequently cited reason for their dissatisfaction was “Do not receive any information from the City” (however, this was only mentioned by three percent of all 1,000 respondents).

Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated that their preferred method of accessing information about City services was through a mailer or newsletter and 31 percent preferred the Internet. In addition, 45 percent of respondents have visited the City’s website. Continuing to develop and promote the City’s website would provide the City with the opportunity to reach large numbers of residents through the Internet in the future. To the extent that the City can use conventional media sources to improve residents’ awareness of the City’s home page and the types of information available to residents through the Internet, the City may be able to strengthen the communication link between the City and residents. Promotion of the City’s home page may also enable the City to obtain feedback from subgroups of Henderson residents, such as younger residents, that may not take advantage of conventional avenues of reaching City representatives. In addition, the City could use the website to survey customer groups within specific City departments, further strengthening the City’s communication link with resident users.

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<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau: “Fastest-Growing Cities (100,000 or More Population) from April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2002.”