

Minnesota State Auditor Releases City Spending Data

The Minnesota State Auditor maintains a data base including annual operational spending for municipalities statewide. The City of Cottage Grove uses the data to compare its own spending levels with 35 similarly sized Twin Cities metro area communities on a per capita basis. The Cottage Grove City Council uses that information to ensure that local government spending by the City does not exceed historically modest levels.

The most recent data provided by the State Auditor is for 2006 spending. For that year, according to the data, Cottage Grove per capita operational spending was 23% below average spending among comparative cities. This is a reduction of five percent (5%) from 2005 comparisons in which year Cottage Grove spent 18% per capita below the average comparison community. 2006 total operational spending in Cottage Grove was at \$406 per capita with the market average at \$527 per capita.

Moreover, Cottage Grove municipal spending continued to reflect City Council goals. Spending in Public Works (street maintenance, snow plowing etc.) was effectively at mean levels at 2% below the 35 City averages. Spending in Public Safety (police and fire) was within 13% of the citywide average excluding the City owned Ambulance service which is operated as a separate enterprise. Spending on Park and Recreation has been consistently growing on a per capita basis in Cottage Grove. However, spending in this division has grown faster in peer communities with Cottage Grove operational spending at 26% below the mean in 2006. The 35 city comparatives also include spending on general government, community development and economic development for which spending in Cottage Grove was 40% below the market mean in 2006. Capital spending for such as new roadways, wells, and the like are not included.

Per Capita Spending by Governmental Function

	Cottage Grove	Market
General Government	\$114	\$189
Public Safety	\$149	\$172
Public Works	\$ 82	\$ 84
Park/Recreation	\$ 61	\$ 82
Total 2006 Spending	\$406	\$527

Per Capita operational spending is a measure of sound leadership, prudent fiscal management, and dedicated employees delivering quality services at lower costs than elsewhere in the market. Cottage Grove has ranked well among its peer communities in this comparison over the last several years. In fact, over the period 2002-2006 there have only been seven communities with per capita spending levels lower than Cottage Grove out of this 35 City group. With operational efficiencies affected in 2007, 2008 and pending for 2009 the City Council anticipates continued comparative modest spending levels going forward.