# Mutual Heights Internet survey

## *Survey report*
**March 2007**

# Background

### *History*

Early in 2006 the idea of an "Internet survey" at Mutual Heights was proposed. Trustees agreed the idea would be useful, and the internet service provider (Dynacom: http://www.dynacomm.co.za) affirmed their interest in the idea. A detailed survey form or questionnaire was designed and circulated for comments, and comments were incorporated.

### *Purpose*

The survey was directed at a range of issues, for example:

- making our lives easer
- making our lives safer
- making our lives more fulfilling

Questions addressed respondents' general experience of the web, views on current service levels, on the contribution that the Internet service makes to lifestyle, and ideas that they would like to see implemented at Mutual Heights.

### *Response*

There were 20 usable responses. Given that there are some 170 units in the building, and others (such as absent landlords) who would be expected to want to be involved, at first sight this is disappointing. However, it is possible that up to half of the units are not actively occupied, and that many occupiers spend extended periods away. It follows that this outcome could represent some 50% of active Mutual Heights internet users – that makes it significant and useful.

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# Results

The following paragraphs summarise the results according to the structure of the questionnaire. Not all respondents answered all questions, so the number of respondents in each case is not always the same.

## *Background information*

### 1. About your unit and your "status" as tenant or owner

- *Out of 19:* 7 respondents indicated that there are two occupants of the unit, 11 are occupied by only one (but one replied "Varies").
- *Out of 19:* 5 were "live-in tenants, 8 were "live-in owners", 5 were "absent owners", one was a "visitor".

### 2. About your internet connection in your unit

- *Out of 19:* 4 declined to indicate whether they have an internet connection. Not sure why, perhaps they are the absent respondents who simply do not know.
- *Out of 19:* about half have more than one computer in the unit (including laptops plugged in temporarily).
- *Out of 19:* about half have visitors who would wish to use the connection.
- *Out of 19:* most are happy with the connection and consider it easy to use (there seem to be two potential "problem cases").
- *Out of 20:* 13 are between 20 and 40 years old, 6 were older than 40, 1 declined to answer.
- *Out of 20:* 15 are educated to postgraduate level, 4 to a lesser level, and 1 declined to answer.
- *Out of 20:* 13 are male and 6 are female, 1 declined to answer.
- *Out of 20:* Respondents are generally earning in excess of average wages. There is a range of incomes as indicated below:

| 4. What is your approximate income ('000 per month) : | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| < R3 000 | | 5% | 1 |
| R3 000 <> 10 000 | | 10% | 2 |
| R10 000 <> 30 000 | | 35% | 7 |
| > R30 000 | | 40% | 8 |
| Decline to answer | | 10% | 2 |
| | Total Respondents | | 20 |
| | (skipped this question) | | 1 |

**Table 1: Distribution of earnings**

- *Out of 20:* 9 are married, 9 are single, 1 partnered, 1 declined to answer.
- *Out of 20:* the majority (17) are "professional", 1 retired, 2 decline to answer.
- *Out of 20:* 16 are "white", 2 are "coloured", 2 decline to answer.

### 3. About your internet and computer experience

- *Out of 19:* 9 rate themselves as "basic" in terms of PC skills, 8 "expert" and 2 "super expert"
- *Out of 19:* There is an interesting range of applications of the PC and the internet (as shown in the table below)



**2. What are your areas of particular computer and internet interest?**
*(Check as many as are appropriate)*

|  |  | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Writing | | 73.7% | 14 |
| Spreadsheets | | 26.3% | 5 |
| Presentations | | 57.9% | 11 |
| Databases | | 26.3% | 5 |
| Web design | | 10.5% | 2 |
| Programming | | 10.5% | 2 |
| Networks | | 10.5% | 2 |
| Technical | | 15.8% | 3 |
| **E-mail** | | **94.7**% | **18** |
| News services | | 63.2% | 12 |
| Weather services | | 42.1% | 8 |
| Other services | | 47.4% | 9 |
| Decline to answer | | 0% | 0 |
| **Total Respondents** | | | **19** |
| (skipped this question) | | | 2 |

**Table 2:  Use of the internet**

### 4. About the time you spend using the internet

- *Out of 19:* the majority (7) see themselves as using the internet several hours per day, but only on some days.  9 use the internet more heavily than that, and 3 less than that.

## *Detailed attitude survey results*

*In the tables that follow, the "statements" provided on the original questionnaire are tabulated, using a simple ranking mechanism that scores the statements between +10 and –10, indicating strength of agreement (positive) and disagreement (negative). At this stage there is no attempt to refine the results by comparing males and females, or re-evaluating according to internet expertise.*

## 5. About your lifestyle and use of the internet and the web

The issue of lifestyle was dealt with using a range of "statements" with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree.

The results show that respondents are generally happy living in their units, and that they are not worried about their use of the internet. Email has already featured as a key application of the internet, and this is confirmed by the strong interest in keeping in touch with family and friends. Only a few respondents have technical interests in using the internet (such as for FTP) but they are in information-intensive work that means it is useful to be able to "work from home". 13 out of the 17 who responded to this section of the questionnaire agree or strongly agree that "Mutual Heights really suits my life style". Generally a happy picture.

However, 10 out of the 17 feel no strong sense of community within Mutual Heights and an equal number do not feel informed about living here. The general satisfaction with the internet services is contrasted by a wish by more than half to have more specialised services, and the evidence that there are ideas amongst respondents for new services.

| Table 3: Lifestyle | |
|---|---|
| **Statement** | **Ranking** |
| I do a lot of emailing to keep in contact with friends and family | 10 |
| I am happy to spend time in my unit | 10 |
| I do a lot of emailing for my work | 8 |
| I have fun using the internet | 8 |
| Mutual Heights really suits my life style | 7 |
| I have booked tickets (movies, concerts etc) on the internet | 7 |
| I have booked travel on the internet | 7 |
| I enjoy shopping for nice (discretionary) things | 7 |
| My job involves working extensively with information | 6 |
| I rely heavily on the Internet for my work | 6 |
| We need more specialised internet services in Mutual Heights | 5 |
| I enjoy outdoor things such as sport (playing or watching) | 4 |
| I am able to do much of my work in the unit | 2 |
| I enjoy shopping for essential things | 1 |
| There are no additional internet services that I can think of | -1 |
| The internet at Mutual Heights does everything I want it to | -1 |
| I rarely use the Internet for social purposes | -3 |
| I do FTP and other technical things with the internet | -3 |
| I have no idea about shops and facilities near Mutual Heights | -4 |
| I feel well informed about living in Mutual Heights | -4 |
| I feel a strong sense of community within Mutual Heights | -4 |
| I am worried about security in Mutual Heights | -5 |
| I am only in my unit occasionally | -5 |
| I enjoy developing web sites myself | -6 |
| I do not get out very often and I would like to get out more | -6 |
| I waste time in the unit doing too many chores | -9 |
| I am very worried about using the internet | -10 |

## 6.  About your internet usage at Mutual Heights

Respondents are mostly experienced internet users, and were already using it before they came to Mutual Heights.  The "broad band" service that we enjoy seems to be an improvement for most respondents, compared with what they had before – 8 out of the 15 that responded admit that their internet usage has increased greatly since they moved in and there is a pattern of quite heavy usage.  8 also agree that they are very happy with the service, 4 choose to disagree;  as half indicate that they use the internet a great deal elsewhere, there is some basis for making judgement about our service by comparing it with others.  Email recurs as a key facility that almost everyone uses over the service;  half of the respondents indicate that they travel extensively and so perhaps the need for email goes both ways (at and away from home).  Interestingly, most respondents indicated that they have more than one email account.  All except one use internet banking but there is no consensus about doing away with banking paperwork!  The internet is not seen as a source of complication in life;  on the contrary, life gets better for most.  The internet is revealed to be a key source of information for almost all respondents.

A majority consider that internet services could be improved, and the next section of the questionnaire exercised the question of new uses

| Table 4:  Internet usage | |
|---|---|
| **Statement** | **Ranking** |
| Emailing services are very important to me | 10 |
| My employment demands that I use the internet | 8 |
| I do internet banking | 8 |
| Information gathering on the web is very important to me | 8 |
| I use the internet a great deal at Mutual Heights | 7 |
| My life gets better the more I learn how to use the internet | 5 |
| I have more than one email account | 5 |
| Internet services at Mutual Heights could be improved | 3 |
| I use the internet to do shopping | 3 |
| I travel extensively | 2 |
| I need to use the internet a lot when I am away from home | 2 |
| I find that I am often helping friends to use the internet better | 1 |
| I am very happy with the internet service at Mutual Heights | 1 |
| My internet use has increased greatly since I moved in | 1 |
| The internet services at Mutual Heights fulfil all my needs | 0 |
| I use the internet a great deal elsewhere | 0 |
| I prefer my bank statements and similar stuff on paper | 0 |
| I have been  using the internet almost since it was invented | -2 |
| I solve all my own internet problems | -2 |
| I had good broadband access at home before Mutual Heights | -3 |
| I never previously had fast access to the internet at home | -3 |
| I do not spend much time surfing the web | -8 |
| Using the internet has made my life very complicated | -8 |
| I rarely used the internet before I moved into Mutual Heights | -9 |
| I am new to the internet so I do not really know what it does | -11 |

## 7.  About new uses for the internet at Mutual Heights

There is broad agreement that use of the internet should be expanded (although there is a predictable reluctance to agree to pay more for additional services).  The idea of administering levies and other charges over the internet brought a mixed response, suggesting that although nearly everyone does internet banking there are limits to what is acceptable at this time.

There was general interest in the services identified in the questionnaire, as indicated in the table below:

| Table 5:  New uses | |
|---|---|
| **Statement** | **Ranking** |
| I would like a calendar showing significant events | 10 |
| I would like more information about the Body Corporate | 9 |
| We need a "Mutual Heights community notice board" facility | 9 |
| There should be a polling mechanism on the internet for voting about important decisions affecting us all | 9 |
| I want to see the minutes of Trustees' meetings on the internet | 9 |
| I would like to be able to log maintenance requests | 9 |
| I think that the internet will build the Mutual Heights community | 9 |
| There should be a "Mutual Heights rants and raves" facility | 9 |
| I would like information about the building on the internet | 8 |
| I would like letting services provided on the internet | 7 |
| Other service providers should be directly linked to the internet | 7 |
| Local shops should take orders over the internet | 7 |
| Local restaurants should take orders over the internet | 6 |
| We need "blogs" and "discussion boards" on the internet | 6 |
| I want a Mutual Heights web site for my friends and family | 6 |
| I would like the internet to be used to make us more secure | 6 |
| I need to communicate more easily with the manager's office | 5 |
| I would like laundry services via the internet | 4 |
| I would like contact information for all residents on the internet | 2 |
| The internet should be used as the basis of entry control | 2 |
| I want a "Mutual Heights" email address | 1 |
| I would be happy to pay a reasonable sum for technical help | 1 |
| I would be happy to deal with levies and all other charges over the internet | -4 |
| Some uses of the internet should be charged as "extras" | -5 |
| It is reasonable to pay more the more I use the internet | -6 |

## 8. About needs of owners not in residence

Those who are not in residence were asked to rank similar statements, that were intended to recognise their different circumstances.

Again the general picture was very positive, with communication a main feature of preferences across the board. An interesting feature of this set of responses is the willingness to use the internet, for general purposes paper is not favoured. Where residents are very keen on having "polls" as a means of taking decisions about the building, non-residents are not so keen on this idea (although one resident was concerned that polls should only "influence" decisions, not be some kind of absolute basis for decisions). As with residents, there is no strong interest in having a "Mutual Heights" email address, but there is interest in having more information about the building (and their own units).

| Table 6: Owners not in residence | |
|---|---|
| Statement | Ranking |
| The internet is a great way to communicate with people | 10 |
| I want to see information about the building on the Internet | 10 |
| I am interested in letting my unit using the internet | 8 |
| It would be good if there were a Mutual Heights "calendar" | 8 |
| The internet contributes to the investment value of my unit | 8 |
| I want to administer my unit using the internet | 8 |
| There are many other things we could do with the internet for the benefit of owners | 8 |
| I would use the internet to keep in touch with the community | 7 |
| I want to have my contact information provided on the internet | 7 |
| I would like to see the status of my unit using the internet. | 5 |
| I would like access to information from the Body Corporate | 5 |
| I want to be involved in the Mutual Heights community | 5 |
| I am not sure who to contact about issues concerning my unit | 3 |
| Trustees' decisions should be based on internet opinion polls | 2 |
| Communications with the trustees are a problem | 0 |
| I have a problem dealing with maintenance of my unit | 0 |
| I think that basic internet services are all that are needed | 0 |
| I do not want a Mutual Heights email address | -2 |
| I am not interested in the management of the building | -5 |
| I am not interested in services (shopping, cleaning, security) | -8 |
| There is too much information on the internet I prefer paper | -8 |

# Final comments

## 9.  And finally (for all respondents) …

### *Final comments on internet usage*

Respondents were asked to make any final comments about internet usage and their new ideas. Having such a positive response in general terms (concerning the expansion of internet services) it was disappointing to read that one respondent was unable to provide details:

> *Sorry, can't think of any!*

There is a minority that would like more bandwidth to play with:

> *I was informed by Dynacomm that these lines are not ideal for up and downloading great amounts of data, and so I have not done this (yet). It would be nice if this were possible, however. Not a necessity though - other things are more important, like setting up a web site with information, notice boards, discussion forums etc.*

This comment probably relates to the complaint about restrictions, (see below).  The user quoted above seems to be holding back, but at least one other "heavy" user has fallen foul of the technical bandwidth management restrictions that Dynacomm have chosen to put into place (for the general good, that is):

> *I am not happy with the firewall which is in place as it is restricting my usage of the internet. I want to download music and can not do so due to the current restrictions in place. I used to be able to utilise one site but suddenly I could not download from it. I don't think that this control should be in the hands of dynacom. It should be open for us to use as we choose.*

This really looks like a case for extra payment, though.  However, it is not all about simple bandwidth, there is the question of providing access through the "ports" that some applications require to be opened:

> *Would be nice if we could get specific ports opened.*

Some services (such as Skype) work better when specific "ports" are opened, and some require that specific ports are opened.

Not everyone is entirely dependent on the Mutual Heights service of course.  One respondent was able to comment:

> *Not applicable - we have our own internet service*

### *Final, final comments*

Final comments were few and far between, understandable given the length and detail of the questionnaire. It is always a risk to try for too much information.  However, the following are deserving of quotation here:

> *This is a great initiative! Looking forward to the results of this survey and future developments.*

That is encouraging!

> *STOP THE RESTRICTIONS ON USE!*

It is probable that this respondent has suffered the restrictions that arise from excessive "peer-to-peer" usage, a mode of that is especially demanding on shared bandwidth.

> *Disappointed that the broadband is shared ... would like to use VOIP*

This is almost certainly another highly consumptive user.  I am surprised at the comment on VOIP (that is what we know as "Skype", and related "free" or "low cost" internet telephone services), as I use it regularly without problems.  We should clarify some of these high-usage issues with Dynacomm.

13 respondents asked for a copy of the results, and provided contact information that would allow the results to be forwarded.  This is encouraging, and there are signs that we could usefully open this up for discussion by a select group of residents, in conjunction with Dynacomm.

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*5th November 2006 (Edited for final distribution: March 2007)*