

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### A. *What is the Comprehensive Plan and who is it for?*

The Comprehensive Plan is a tool to be used by many people and organizations with an interest in the Ramsey community. First and foremost, it is for the people of Ramsey, the policy makers who represent them and the City Staff who support them. But it is also for the businesses and residents who wish to come to the community or scholars and students who might want to learn about Ramsey. The Comprehensive Plan sets out a vision for the future community, a vision that was created by the people. It contains goals that define the vision and public policy that is designed to help realize the vision. It provides an analysis of the forces that have shaped Ramsey since its beginning. Although it is heavily focused on the future physical development of the community, it also addresses the economic and social qualities of Ramsey. Finally, the plan lays out implementation strategies that best use the tax payers' dollars to achieve the vital elements that make the Ramsey Community a safe, high quality, healthy place to live, work and play.

### B. *Why do a Comprehensive Plan?*

Comprehensive Planning for municipalities in the 7 county metropolitan area is mandated by State Legislature. In 1976 the Minnesota Legislature passed the Metropolitan Land Planning Act which required municipalities to develop (or update existing) Comprehensive Plans as a tool to “protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the metropolitan area and to ensure coordinated, orderly and economic development.” Ramsey conformed to this request by updating its 1973 Comprehensive Plan in 1980. Piecemeal updates to this plan have occurred since 1980, including the most recent update in 2002. The Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires local Comprehensive Plans to be reviewed at least once every ten years to ensure conformance with a regional growth strategy for the entire Metropolitan Area.

Ramsey is a growing community on the edge of a rapidly expanding Metropolitan Area. It is a community that faces the challenges of controlling the high demands for urban growth at the edge of a metropolitan area. It depends heavily on the regional transportation system and its ability to move people efficiently and safely. Ramsey is a community with a wealth of natural features and a strong desire to preserve, protect and enhance these features. The Comprehensive Plan is a tool that will guide the community in controlling and managing its growth through the year 2030.

### C. *The unique history of Ramsey's 2008 Comprehensive Pan - RAMSEY<sup>3</sup>*

A small, aging brick building stands like a question mark between a day-care center and a bank. A weathered sign identifies it as the Ramsey Town Hall. Although no longer used, this structure personifies Ramsey today. It asserts **the key issue is not if Ramsey should grow, but how it will it develop.**

To address this issue, a group of residents, some of whom were already active on City commissions, committees and the Council, worked with city staff and Council to conceptualize a McKnight Foundation grant, which the City received in 2006. The project was named Ramsey<sup>3</sup> because it consisted of a three-part planning process. During Ramsey<sup>1</sup> nationally-renowned experts led a series of four public forums and staff/council workshops organized around four critical issues facing metropolitan communities: transportation, innovative zoning, regional intersections, and community ecology. Ramsey<sup>2</sup> used the innovative technique of Open Space Technology to allow participants to create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around central themes of strategic importance. The final stage-- Ramsey<sup>3</sup>--used facilitation tools not commonly used by cities to develop a shared vision and explore unique and cutting-edge tools to implement that vision.

Thus, Ramsey<sup>3</sup> provided the community, which has long-valued citizen participation, a process that went far beyond the traditional public hearings and other methods used in the past. In the end, the process yielded a vision, value statements and checklist, and a land use map all created by citizens and arrived at by consensus. The vision, values, and land use map are incorporated in subsequent sections of this Comprehensive Plan and provide the overall guiding framework with which all land use decisions should be consistent.

Ramsey<sup>3</sup> represents a still-in-process dramatic change in our community that moved us from a place where there was suspicion and even hostility to city government, to a place where, as a long-time resident put it, “This is the most together I have seen this city and I have lived here since 1944.”

Just as Ramsey<sup>3</sup> received high marks of approval from residents, its approach also has been validated by outside experts. A recent report of the finding from McKnight Foundation’s work with communities on the urban/suburban edge, notes, “Proactive communities provide residents with educational workshops that give them the framework for growth and planning. . . . As they learn what is happening elsewhere and what is possible, a city’s leaders and staff, local residents, and businesspeople can gear up to have productive conversations about their visions for the future.”

Ramsey believes this Comprehensive Plan and its methodology offer a positive vision for our community and a model for fostering citizen involvement in comprehensive planning for the greater Twin Cities area.