

2020 Strategic Plan

August 1, 2020

Foreword

The Ramsey County 2020 Strategic Plan, while published midyear, outlines a set of strategic priorities aligned with the county's vision for a vibrant community where all are valued and thrive. The strategic priorities are indicative of an 18-month outlook and include work built upon previous years' priorities, all of which combined, further the [county's four goals](#) to strengthen wellbeing, cultivate prosperity, enhance opportunity, and model accountability.

The 2020 Strategic Plan is a fully integrated component of the biennial budget and [performance measurement](#) process and is the fourth [strategic plan](#) update and biennial budget process since the County Manager announced the realignment of the organization from departments into service teams in 2015. The realignment has allowed the county to leverage the collaborative power of service teams and community to accelerate and expand the organization's ability to achieve successful outcomes.

In January 2020, during a strategic planning board workshop, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners provided feedback on eight refocused and realigned strategic priorities in 2019 and reaffirmed the county's vision, mission and goals. Even in the midst of a pandemic and in response to social unrest after the death of Mr. George Floyd, the 2020 Strategic Plan sets the stage for countywide strategic investment, conversations and action in partnership with community to strengthen the interconnections between strategy, planning, implementation, funding and evaluation.

The county's strategic plan incorporates the feedback from community and staff from across the organization and is a candid representation of the county's progress to date and challenges that remain. There are areas where the county excels and areas of opportunity where the county can and must improve to be held accountable to community, leadership and county staff. Modeling, upholding and advancing the county's core values of People, Integrity, Community, Leadership and Equity with measurable results will be necessary for leaders, staff, partners and residents to come together in building a high-performing organization and in achieving better outcomes. The Strategic Plan provides benchmarks for advancement and measures of success to ensure that the organization remains committed to continuous improvement, results-based accountability and racial and economic inclusion.

Ramsey County invites all its partners and residents to ask hard questions about these priorities and key actions, support the important work ahead, and be empowered in opportunities that align with their passions and expertise in advancing our strategic priorities. Ramsey County is a diverse community within a strong, collaborative region in the Twin Cities and is poised to further advance its vision of being a vibrant community in which all are valued and thrive.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Tolzmann

Director of Policy and Planning

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Vision, Mission and Goals

Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

Goals



WELL-BEING

Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



PROSPERITY

Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



OPPORTUNITY

Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



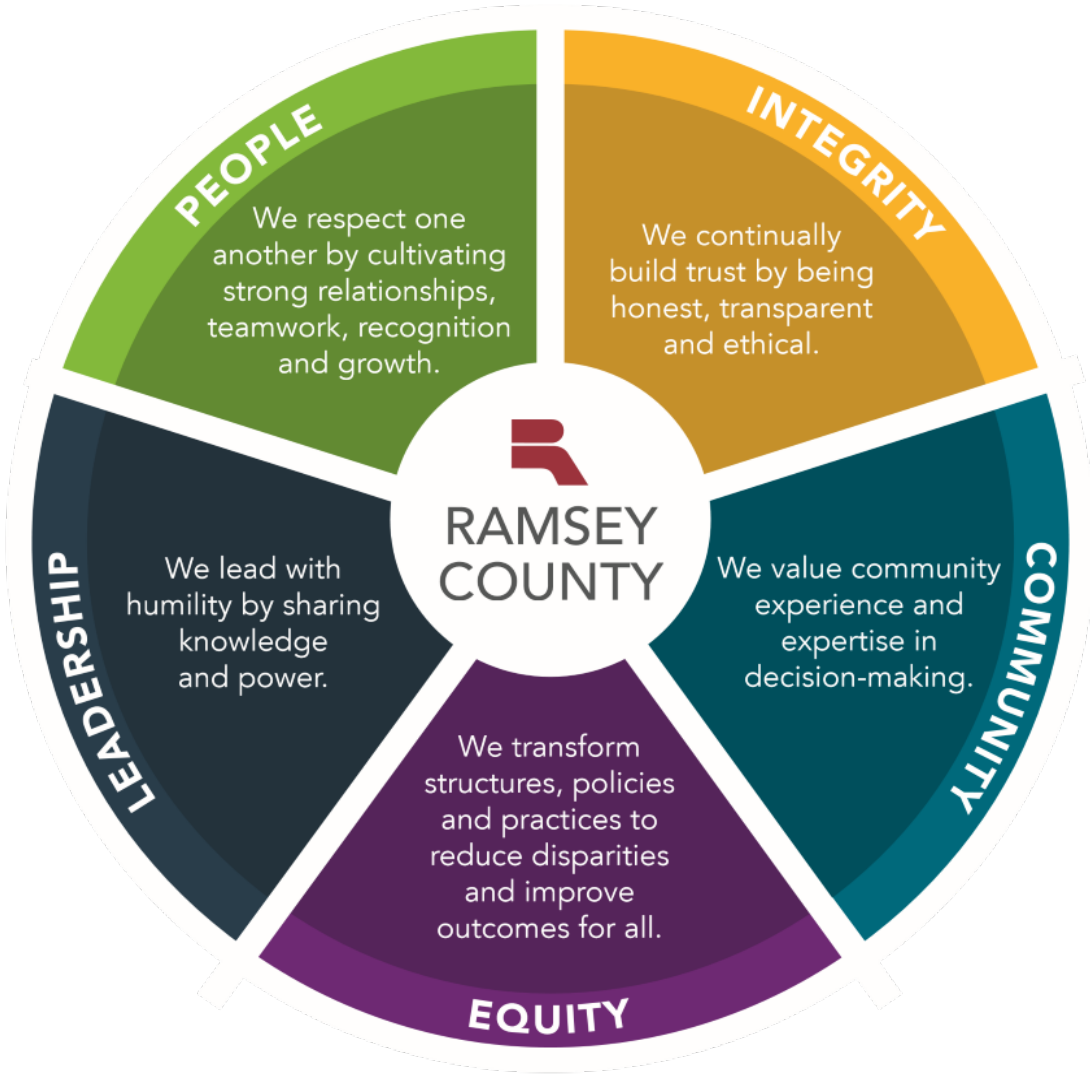
ACCOUNTABILITY

Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments

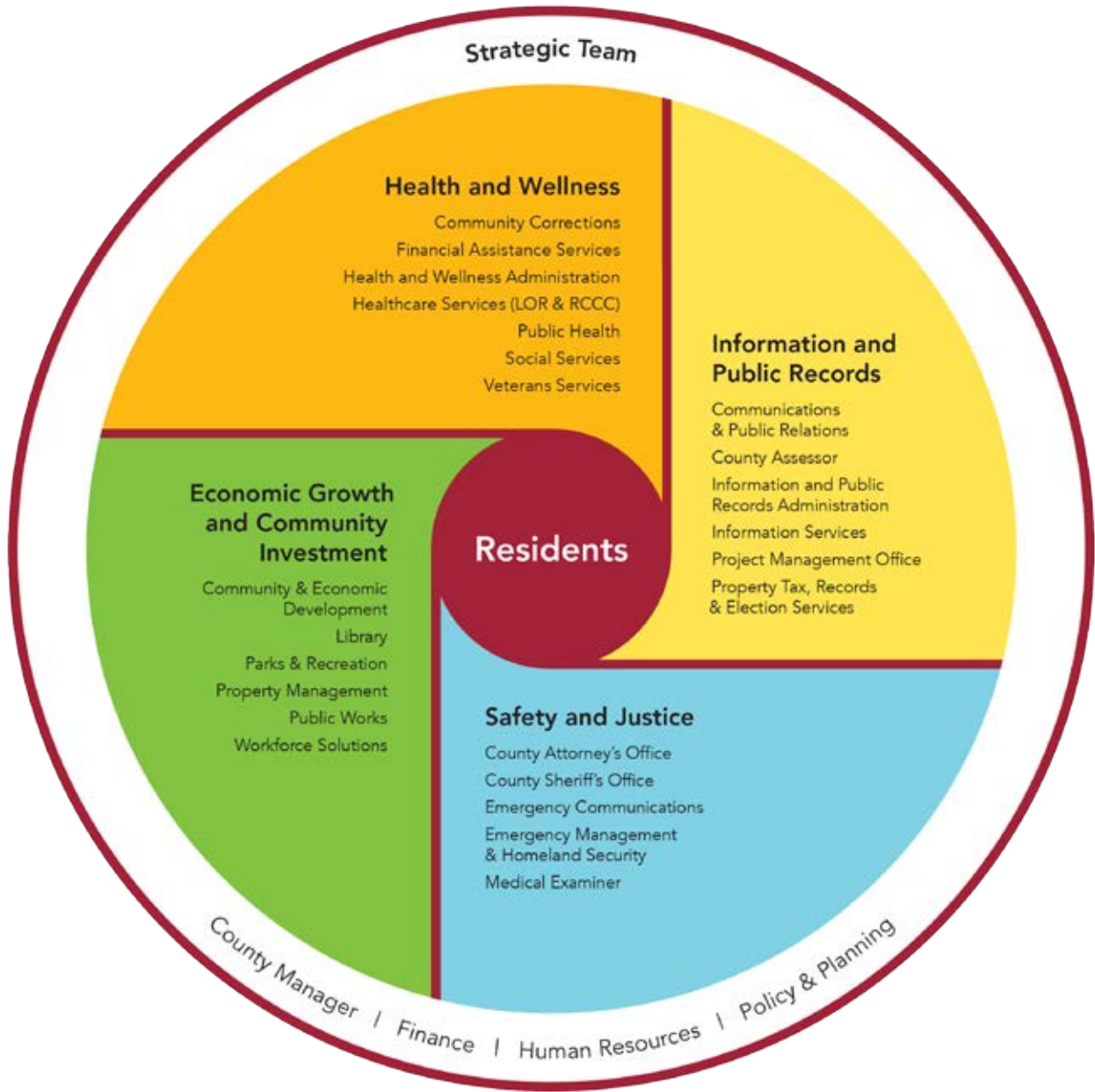
through professional operations and financial management.

OUR VALUES

Ramsey County is a welcoming, accessible and inclusive organization. Our core values define our culture. They guide who we are as a county, our individual behaviors and operational decision-making.



Invest in People • Serve with Integrity • Value Community • Advance Equity • Empower Leadership at All Levels



2020 Strategic Priorities

Overview

2020 has been an unprecedented year for residents, businesses and the overall community. The first half of 2020 brought upon the unexpected onset of an ongoing pandemic (COVID-19) that impacted the world, our nation, its economy and our community in mid-March. The murder of Mr. George Floyd at the end of May in Minneapolis spearheaded protest advocating for police reform in over sixty international countries and nationwide, making the protests the largest in U.S. history. Both incidents, while traumatic, devastating and disruptive, merely reaffirmed the ongoing institutional and historic racism and racial disparities that exist in public health, housing, employment, education and social justice, particularly to our Black and Indigenous communities.

Despite all this occurring in late spring and early summer, the eight strategic priorities that Ramsey County developed in January sustained its intent, meaning, spirit and strategic direction. A new strategic priority, Community Resilience, was in the works and now opens the 2020 strategic plan with Ramsey County's capacity to build, respond, adapt and thrive in changing conditions as if foreshadowing what was to come with the pandemic and spotlight in race relations in our nation. During the pandemic, housing stability, basic needs, and service delivery with a residents first lens became the focus areas of the Incident Management Team while integrating compliance and oversight and racial equity and community engagement alongside the civil unrest response. These focus areas reflect and reaffirm the strategic priorities of Stability Starts with a Place to Call Home, Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations, and Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power in Decision-making.

The role of community has never been more prevalent in these dire times while acknowledging that the legacies of racism requires recognition, reconciliation and repair. The strategic priorities of Aligning Justice System Outcomes with Community Values and Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families speak to the heart of including community at the table and to empower them in decision-making and in deconstructing and reconstructing structural and systematic changes that result in disparate outcomes. Lastly, in anticipation of an upcoming economic downturn and possible recession, Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion and Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion remain important strategic priorities to reimagine and rebuild a community for all and to retain a strong and talented workforce as furloughs increase across the country.

In all the above, Ramsey County recognizes its critical role in ensuring critical county services through a lens of racial equity; when we need to convene key stakeholders and influential policy makers in collaborative and aligned strategies; our commitment in partnering with community in transforming our services; and where we need to lead courageously and innovatively in building an organization and vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

Resilience: Building Capacity to Respond, Adapt and Thrive Under Changing Conditions

Ramsey County will examine and adjust operations, service delivery and facilities to ensure that it is resilient to changing environmental, economic and social conditions.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County and its residents face increased physical, social, health and financial risks when challenged with environmental, economic and social change such as the recent Coronavirus pandemic and the death of Mr. George Floyd. During economic recessions, county services become financially constrained, again affecting vulnerable people and businesses. Emerging societal trends, such as political polarization or growing mistrust of institutions can affect delivery of services as well. The economy and society are becoming increasingly intertwined as today's issues grow more complex. Ramsey County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan defines resilience as "the capacity to respond, adapt and thrive under changing conditions" and identifies resilience as a priority. Ramsey County must leverage a strategic approach to use resilience as a tool to ensure it can withstand events that will shock or stress its systems. Events that disrupt the ability of the county to provide necessary services can impede progress in achieving the county's vision, mission and goals. Building resilience through a process for anticipating, responding to and recovering from such events can be used by the county to prevent such downturns.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

Ramsey County is well prepared to respond at a community level to certain events, such as disasters, through its emergency planning. Internal resilience—in which departments are prepared for disruptive events—has not been as ready. The Comprehensive Plan's chapter on resilience focuses on effects of a changing climate, but the COVID-19 pandemic shows that other events can be just as disruptive if we do not prepare or plan for them. By participating in the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project last year, and by learning from the county's response to COVID-19, the county can learn about opportunities to grow more resilient. Resilience is a dynamic process of anticipation and preparation. Ramsey County will focus its efforts across service teams on strategies to assess risk, learn, adapt, expect and respond to disruptions.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Significant and persistent racial disparities exist among Ramsey County residents; residents of color make considerably less than their white neighbors. Vulnerability assessments demonstrate that access to housing, income, race and health are significant determinants in whether residents are more liable to be affected by disruptive events. Increasing the county's resilience by strengthening internal capacity can help reduce that vulnerability ensuring that services and resources are available to support residents when they need it most. In developing its resilience strategy, Ramsey County will engage with community, especially those most vulnerable to disruption and displacement, to better understand the risks these communities face and how to design the most effective and equitable response and recovery processes.

Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations

Ramsey County will drive improvements in service delivery and facilities, with an emphasis on engaging residents and employees, process efficiency, innovative technology and accessibility.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County is committed to be a resident-centered organization. We seek to exceed the expectations of the community by delivering effective and efficient services in accessible and welcoming facilities. Service delivery and facilities of the future will be streamlined and refined with input received directly from the resident and customer, informed by experience and expertise of empowered employees and enabled by innovative technology. Facilities will be redesigned to offer a better resident experience including co-locating to allow for more services at a single location.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

The Residents First program is built on the Modernization Program approach and the [Accessible Service Delivery & Facilities Action Plan](#). The Residents First Program conducted enterprise-wide analysis of operations to find gaps and overlaps in how services are provided, worked directly with residents to include their input in recommended changes and engaged employees to improve the resident and employee experience. Key deliverables include:

- Comprehensive Residents First facilities plan endorsed by the Ramsey County Board
- Service catalog detailing 194 needs-based services that the county provides its residents and accompanying resident facing services capability model that helps identify gaps in service delivery (people, process and technology)
- Launch of the St. Paul Opportunity Center to provide collocated, coordinated services to those experiencing homelessness
- Modernization projects in Human Resources (HR), Information and Public Records (IPR) and Information Services (IS) to support Resident First operations (e.g. - unified customer service team in IPR, transformation of HR organizational structure to align with leadership and enhance employee experience, foundational technology investments to accelerate the efficient and effective delivery of Resident First services)

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Operationalizing the advancement of racial equity and empowering community by engaging them at all levels of decision-making continues to be key to an outcome driven Residents First Program. Learnings from the county's response to COVID-19 have underscored racial disparities and stressed the need for racial and ethnic communities to be engaged in decision-making that affects their wellbeing. Processes, practices, technology and facilities will continue to be improved and upgraded, and services redesigned to make them more effective, efficient and accessible. To ensure all residents have equitable and fair access to services, authentic community engagement and partnership efforts (from development to implementation to accountability) must intentionally include communities that are most in need and are disproportionately racial and ethnic communities.

Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power in Decision-making

Ramsey County will strengthen our countywide approach to leverage programs, processes and policies and prioritize innovations in governance and operations to advance racial and health equity, including addressing historical and long-standing race-based disproportional outcomes. Ramsey County will also deconstruct systemic and organizational barriers to be more fair, inclusive and transparent in how we share power with residents and communities in order to build a more equitable, responsive and effective organization.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County's vision for a vibrant community where all are valued and thrive is dependent on being a community where all residents can experience fair outcomes including the highest level of health and wellbeing and opportunities for advancement and growth. Many of the communities and residents impacted by county programs and services have not historically had a voice in planning and implementation. Ramsey County must assess and modernize long-standing structures and legacy systems to better meet the emerging needs of all residents. Ramsey County must develop, identify and use a broad range of strategies grounded in sharing power to ensure all residents and communities, especially racial and ethnic groups who are experiencing inequities, have a voice in realizing beneficial outcomes across the county.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

In 2018, this priority has evolved to place racial equity alongside health equity at the center of decision-making. In 2020, Racial and Health Equity was combined with the Community Engagement strategic priority and changed to shared community power. By "power", we mean by sharing power with community to make decisions that are crucial for a specific outcome. This approach lifts up race and health equity and shared power as countywide principles and drives a framework for how the county operates.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Ramsey County has initiated community-wide conversations on equity to increase awareness and accountability. A broad range of resources and tools, including participatory methods and Results Based Accountability in organizational planning have been applied to structurally advance equity and measure outcomes. Additional learning and development trainings on the Role of Government for Advancing Racial Equity, has also been offered for formal leaders and new employees. Specific relationships with racially and ethnically diverse communities are vital to helping ensure that equity remains a central focus. Honoring community knowledge and wisdom early on and before budgetary investments, program decisions or new projects are launched helps build trust and is critical to helping actively involve our most impacted communities in creating a better future, where all are valued and thrive.

Aligning Justice System Outcomes with Community Values

Alongside the leadership of the community and systems, Ramsey County will strategically align its justice system transformation with community values.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County's justice system is not structured to produce just outcomes for all. The current structure disproportionately impacts and harms the wellbeing of low-wealth and low-income communities, and especially communities of color, all while limiting those communities' voices. In order to truly transform the justice system, promote wellbeing and not cause harm, Ramsey County must take responsibility for its role in the disparate outcomes our community experiences. The county must work in partnership with the community in redesigning our government systems and directly correcting disparate outcomes to achieve our vision of a county where all are valued and thrive. Through the strategic organization of our justice system reform efforts, we will work towards long-term, positive outcomes for the communities we serve and the intentional reconstruction of our institution.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

Since fall 2018, Ramsey County has partnered with the W. Haywood Burns Institute to challenge leadership to confront historical and institutional racism, as well as reimagine our government structured around values rather than mandates and outputs. This work has directly influenced existing and new justice transformation initiatives across departments and collaborative tables. Significant reform efforts progress within adult pretrial justice, youth detention and displacement, probation revocation, mental and chemical health connections, reducing criminal fines and fees, as well as child welfare. Additionally, COVID-19 has also presented opportunities for collaborative justice reform outcomes around reducing incarceration populations at the Adult Detention Center and Ramsey County Correctional Facility. Going forward, Ramsey County will continue to join with community and system leadership to ensure that ongoing justice reform is centered on community voice, community values, and racial equity. We look forward to expanding partnerships and uplifting the perspectives of those with lived experience in our systems.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Our justice system targets Black, Latinx and American Indian communities, prohibiting opportunity for development without debilitating disparities. Additionally, opposition to genuine power sharing with these communities structurally excludes their voices from directing services to which they are equitably entitled. As we develop and implement this work, we will engage with the communities most impacted by these disparities to partner in shared decision-making and intentionally dismantle and reconstruct our government around serving their needs.

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

Ramsey County will strengthen families by listening to and understanding families' needs and barriers while providing non-traditional services and opportunities that promote wellbeing for infants, children, youth and their families.

Why this is a priority

Systems do not always fairly respond to and meet the needs of all residents. Families and residents, particularly African American and American Indian communities, deserve better responses to their needs. Wellbeing is determined in part by political, social and economic opportunities, resources and supports. The physical environments of the neighborhoods where we live, learn, play and work also contribute to our wellbeing. Infants, children and youth (ages 0-24) who have healthy minds and bodies have greater success in their formative years and as adults. We believe that early and ongoing investment in families yields better educational outcomes; greater generational economic prosperity; asset and wealth-building; and stronger communities for all.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

Communities have historically communicated that county and county funded services do not meet their needs early enough. Coupled with the Youth Continuum of Care work, the county developed a baseline of county contracted and direct services for youth in 2018. The county used this baseline to track how its investment in service changes over time as efforts continue to shift from intensive to preventive interventions. The county is making changes to policies, structures and procedures that influence how our communities are served, particularly Black/African American and American Indian communities that have experienced the greatest disparities throughout county systems. Current efforts also include coordinated efforts in partnership with community to ensure the growth and development of children in early childhood by connecting families to services and early childhood resources. In addition, the county is committed to child welfare reform initiatives in partnership with community to keep children in their homes and reduce out-of-home displacements.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

A racial and health equity approach is required if we are to truly serve infants, children, youth and their families. Services and programs must be voiced and developed by the communities most impacted by our work while incorporating the principles of safety, choice, relationship, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment. Ramsey County has convened diverse communities in various formats to learn and hear from communities most impacted by county services and programs, including early childhood initiative community advisory groups, Black/African American community and Saint Paul Indians in Action (SIA). The county also used a parent voices survey, community visioning workshops and Public Health's community health assessment to learn which issues matter most to community and how community must have a role in defining and shaping county services, resources and programs.

Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion

Ramsey County will build and implement strategies that advance economic competitiveness and inclusiveness creating greater prosperity and opportunity for all.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County Community & Economic Development and partners are currently leading the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan, which will identify a vision and implementation for strategic investments to create opportunities for all residents to prosper. The focus on competitiveness is that our region can prosper from increased investment if we invest strategically and equitably in our residents and businesses.

Racial disparities in employment, educational attainment, income and housing currently hold Ramsey County residents back in the regional economy. Full participation by all residents will create wealth, expand the talent pool and increase wellbeing. Residents' incomes must grow through living wage jobs and stable employment. Ramsey County will focus on four cross-sector workgroups: 1) Housing Development and Affordability, 2) Community Investment and Wealth Building, 3) Jobs and Industry Growth, and 4) Strengthening Place-Based Assets, including transit and commercial corridors.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

Economic prosperity is best achieved through a strong, collaborative approach. Continued engagement with cities, partner agencies, community organizations, businesses and residents will be essential in developing and implementing this work. Beyond the vision plan, the Community & Economic Development department also expanded its programming in 2019 to include the economic development platform, RamseyCountyMeansBusiness.com, the Corridor Revitalization Program and Open to Business. These programs are budgeted to continue through 2021 in serving residents countywide.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Significant and persistent racial disparities exist between income levels of Ramsey County residents; residents of color make considerably less than their white neighbors. Because of these disparities, racial equity is at the center of the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan. The Plan will map the history of redlining in Ramsey County and develop strategies to build wealth in terms of both residential and commercial real estate opportunities. All recommendations coming out of the Plan's Community Investment and Wealth Building workgroup, specifically, will keenly focus on eliminating disparities in employment, educational attainment and income through investment in low-income people and communities of color. Additionally, Workforce Solutions and the Workforce Innovation Board (WIB) are a big partner in developing and brainstorming innovative workforce and career pathways for residents. Internally, Ramsey County will be working to track minority workforce inclusion and support construction pathways for people of color in our community. Lastly, the Plan has a strong emphasis in assessing the role of the county in housing affordability and affordable housing. The goal is intended to strategically align future resources to help alleviate the crisis in accessing affordable housing that disproportionately affects communities of color.

Stability Starts with a Place to Call Home

Ramsey County will provide access to housing options for all residents, particularly those who are experiencing homelessness, by effectively coordinating efforts across county departments and service teams, those impacted, and community-based organizations to provide safe, healthy, stable and accessible housing for all.

Why this is a priority

Safe shelter is a basic need. Without stable housing, children, adults and families face significant challenges to their wellbeing and will not thrive. Region-wide, lack of affordable housing and increasing rents make it difficult for more residents to secure stable housing, especially those with low incomes, mental health and substance abuse issues, unemployed or underemployed, or other barriers such as prior involvement in the criminal justice system.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

Housing stability for our residents has been a focus of Ramsey County for the last decade, but progress and coordination across stakeholders has been difficult to achieve. Building on the work of the Interdepartmental Housing Council, in 2019 an interim manager of Housing Stability was appointed to increase responsiveness and improve service coordination. The 2020-2021 budget included an initiative to effectively address homelessness by reducing the fragmentation in our current system through reorganization. Within the Economic Growth and Community Investment Service Team, a new Housing Stability Office will be established to consolidate all county housing services (demand side) and the housing infrastructure functions (supply side) will be integrated into the Community & Economic Development Department; this restructure has a January 2021 target implementation date.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

Discrimination and racism in the private sector housing market and public policies contribute greatly to the current inequity in housing status in the county and nationwide. Racial disparities are even greater when poverty rates are disaggregated between people of color and non-Hispanic whites. Recognizing the need for greater system reform to achieve housing stability for all, we must work across the county and with external partners to identify and eliminate barriers to housing. A focus on racial equity must be integrated more effectively in all the work being done.

Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion

Ramsey County will ensure that it is recognized by current employees and talented job seekers as the premier public sector employer of choice within the region.

Why this is a priority

Ramsey County must be an organization that attracts, retains and promotes a diverse and talented workforce to meet the evolving demographics and dynamic changing workforce needs of our community. Ramsey County must be viewed by employees across races, classes and cultures as a welcoming place where they are valued and where employees at all levels authentically model the individual behaviors of the county's core values of people, integrity, community, leadership and equity.

Building on previous work and lessons learned

In light of COVID-19 and the difficult workforce challenges that it presents for the next several months, focused efforts, strategic alignment and organization-wide commitment must continue based on the significant investments made in the last five years to ensure meaningful progress of this priority. Leaders across all service teams have collective responsibilities in implementation and demonstration of targeted efforts in effectively attracting the next generation of diverse, talented employees. In this past year, five organizational values were developed and co-created with staff across all levels of the organization. Human Resources also restructured and launched action teams to focus on improving the effectiveness of general services, process improvements within the hiring process and laying the foundation for a new performance management process to align with countywide culture and values. Further, the project to modernize Ramsey County's personnel rules, job classifications and compensation plans to align with our core values continues with recommendations expected within the year.

Ensure racial equity and shared power with community is applied

The development of the public sector pathways program, approved by the County Board in the 2020 budget, will intentionally and meaningfully diversify our workforce, align and streamline internship, fellowship and pathway programs across the organization; and develop advancement or lateral opportunities for key classifications within the county for leveraging staff talent, broadening skills and promoting development. Further, we will continue to collect and assess data through our workforce statistics report and continually develop, adapt, implement and measure strategies and countywide performance metrics to increase workforce diversity. Given our adopted core value of equity, we must ensure that all the work, behaviors and operating decisions are led through a lens of racial equity in ensuring talent attraction, retention and promotion.

Additional Resources and Contact Information

To access this document and/or stay apprised of progress associated with any of the plans described in the Ramsey County Strategic Plan please visit:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/strategicplan>

Questions or comments about the Ramsey County Strategic Plan or related work? Want to schedule a presentation or group conversation about any of Ramsey County’s work or the community data trends informing the County’s initiatives? Please contact:

Name	Title	Phone Number	Key Subject Areas
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