

Members of the City Council, Administrator Ulrich and City staff, and fellow Ramsey residents:

It is my honor this evening to present Ramsey's State of the City. 2016 was another year of achievement for Ramsey, and I believe as we launch into 2017, the opportunity to shape Ramsey's future has never been greater.

Our Council, staff, and residents continue to work together to responsibly grow our community and to provide quality, cost-effective, and efficient government services. We continued to achieve results from our strategic plan, and I'd like to share some of last year's highlights.

Financial Stability

The City remains in a strong financial position, thanks to the Council's work to grow revenue by expanding our tax base while balancing expenditures.

Over the past year, we've welcomed 7 new businesses to Ramsey and congratulated 5 businesses on expanding. One of these expansions was a 100,000 square foot expansion by long-time Ramsey business Anderson-Dahlen – one of the largest expansions in Ramsey history. On the housing side, we saw 86 new homes built in Ramsey.

The total new construction value of both residential and commercial/industrial projects invested in the community in 2016 was \$31,000,000.

We again modestly increased our levy to capture this new value for strategic investments while keeping our tax rate stable. As a reflection of our sound financial management, Ramsey's AA+ bond rating was once again reaffirmed in 2016, and the City earned the Achievement in Financial Reporting for the 22nd consecutive year.

We continued our improvements to the City's budget process. We extended the planning horizon of our Capital Improvement plan from 5 years to 10 years, allowing us to better plan for large capital items and better understand how our budget decisions today affect Ramsey's budget of the future.

A Connected Community

Our second strategic imperative is a Connected Community. Highway 10 remains our top priority. We continue to work with the County, other cities, and our state and federal elected officials to secure funding for improvements.

In 2016 we celebrated the full completion of the Armstrong interchange construction. The celebration brought many dignitaries to Ramsey, including Senator Amy Klobuchar, Congressman Tom Emmer, and Lt. Governor Tina Smith as well as our long-time partners from Anoka County and neighboring cities.

We continue to address the maintenance and condition of our local roads, using the assessment process put in place in 2015. This past year we completed a significant road reconstruction project on Andrie Street. While reaching consensus between the City and the neighbors and even among the neighbors themselves was a long road, the process by which everyone came together is to be commended. Kudos go to our City staff as well as the Northfork HOA for hard work and patience to get this project across the finish line.

Ramsey also has been a leader in developing a popular network of parks and trails that connect places within our community and beyond. The Draw Park is quickly becoming a favorite destination, whether you arrive by bike, on foot, or by car. The Draw Summer Event Series takes place every Thursday night during the summer, and each night features a different musical performer. Last year's series drew record crowds, perhaps fueled by extraordinary weather. I guarantee you won't want to miss a single event next year.

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government

The next area of focus in our plan is smart, citizen-focused government. Our goal in this area is to continue the delivery of quality services to ensure the City will have safe and thriving neighborhoods and business districts, and a clean environment.

Service to our residents continues to meet the benchmarks set by the City Council in our strategic plan. Our 2016 citizen survey continued to

demonstrate Ramsey's satisfaction with City services. 81% of respondents rated customer service excellent/good, 90% rated police excellent/good, and 93% rated fire service excellent/good.

The City also continued its commitment to citizen engagement in the decisions that affect our community. In 2016, we formed our Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, the group that will guide a series of workshops and pop-up meetings throughout the community this spring and fall.

In 2016, a time when police departments across the country struggled with community relations, the Ramsey Police Department continued its proactive and innovative approach to community outreach. Our community resource officers coordinate crime prevention programs, work with our schools, manage the public safety Facebook page, and organize special events such as Safety Camp, Night to Unite, and Coffee with a Cop.

The department also held its first-ever Citizen's Academy, an intensive and interactive hands on course designed to give participants information and experiences that demonstrate our police operations and strengthen police/community relations. During the 9-week academy, 12 Ramsey residents learned about Ramsey's police operations, were encouraged to share their ideas, and built lasting relationships. Upon graduating, these residents will continue to serve as ambassadors for our police department.

I want to thank Ramsey residents for supporting our police department, but I also want to thank Chief Katers and his officers for recognizing that trust can be lost and for continually working to ensure that Ramsey's trust in you is never lost.

Effective Organization

The final area of focus in our plan is building and maintaining an effective organization.

The Building Division successfully launched ePermits, bringing the customer convenience of 24/7 access to building permit applications and allowing our staff a more efficient work flow.

Spring brought new growth to our Fire Department. In March, the City opened the new Fire Station #2, a multi-disciplinary facility that improves emergency response to eastern and northern Ramsey. And, in April, we welcomed Matt Kohner to the role of Fire Chief, after the retirement of Chief Dean Kapler. Chief Kohner's experience with Ramsey fire has made the transition smooth, and our Department is in good hands.

By these measures, there's no doubt 2016 was a year of success for Ramsey. But what about the future?

One key task ahead of developing a successful exit strategy for the COR. This strategy will rely on recommitting to a vision, and the Planning Commission and Council have initiated discussion on this vision. As we continue that work, I want to offer a piece of advice – that Ramsey's history offers a strong platform for our future.

When the City first began work on the Ramsey Town Center, I often heard people talk about the project as a way for Ramsey to gain an identity. That never sat right with me because I think Ramsey has a strong identity, and I believe The COR should be a reflection of that identity rather than a replacement.

So what are the elements of Ramsey's identity that can be found in our past?

- Connection to the River (Reflecting our humble beginnings as Itasca Village along the Mississippi, the COR still sits along a major transportation route + River featured prominently in the open space design of the COR)
- Connection to the outdoors more broadly (Ramsey is home of Game Fair, still offer hunting within our city limits, and one of 1st 2 snowmobile friendly cities in the state)
- Entrepreneurial spirit and innovation – many of Ramsey's successful business got their start in someone's basement, garage, or shed. These businesses were built from the ground up and from within our community. There seems to be some lessons for the COR there.

As we celebrate 2016 and look toward the future, I'd like to recognize my colleagues on the City Council. Each of you is a full participant, diligently dedicating yourself to the task of governing.

I also want to thank our staff, volunteers, and residents. The time and talents you share with us ensure Ramsey's success on the road ahead.