A Gathering Within: An Attraction Beyond
The COR Development Engagement Plan

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A Gathering Within: An Attraction Beyond

The COR Development Engagement Plan
A Gathering Within: An Attraction Beyond
The COR Development Plan Update

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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2017, the City of Ramsey partnered with students from the University of Minnesota who formed the City of Ramsey (COR) Development team, to develop an engagement plan designed to gather input from the public and incorporate community preferences into an update of the COR Development Plan. The COR Development Plan is a planned development which will integrate mixed-use, transit-oriented development around the Northstar Commuter Rail stop in the City of Ramsey. The City’s vision for the COR is to transform the area into a vibrant destination for the citizens of Ramsey and for visitors from outside the City alike by creating a walkable environment with access to a variety of uses with varying intensities.

Though elements of the COR Development Plan have already been established fairly thoroughly, the COR Development team of students was brought on to consult Ramsey on how to ensure that the COR Development Plan update continues to align with the community’s preferences and create a plan that achieves this goal through meaningful engagement. As such, this report presents a number of recommendations that were developed through the exploration of a variety of sources.

First, a review of related literature in planning on community engagement was conducted. A variety of sources were thoroughly reviewed that touched on central topics such as summarizing and defining the roles of public and private sector stakeholders, as well as lessons on how to successfully engage marginalized stakeholders. Additionally, a number of case studies were conducted that explored the experiences of communities that share core characteristics with Ramsey, such as their location along a commuter rail line and their focus on horizontal mixed-use development.

This research combined to inform a number of key recommendations as well as an engagement plan. Recommendations from the literature include the intentional creation of authentic spaces, the use of relatable language, acknowledging the historical significance of development and planning as it relates to race and place, building shared power among stakeholders and diversifying engagement techniques to increase the total number of community members reached.

In order to aid Ramsey’s implementation of these recommendations, a number of engagement tools were developed and suggested. First, a “Tour of the COR” is recommended to achieve Ramsey’s goal of informing stakeholders about the location of the COR and its purpose. This should be followed by in-person map engagement to encourage authentic interaction between stakeholders and gather significant data about the public’s preferences. During or following the in-person map engagement an online engagement map tool (one of which was developed by the COR group) should be piloted to complement these in-person practices by engaging stakeholders who either prefer not to, or were unable to, participate in in-person meetings. Throughout the process applications of social media are suggested in order to help promote and inform Ramsey’s engagement exercises and maintain continuity throughout the entirety of the engagement plan. In the middle of the engagement period, multi-day charrettes can be used to allow more in-depth conversations in which community members have multiple chances to come back to the activity and make planning decisions. Finally, stakeholders who play more of a consulting rather than informing role in decision making should be invited to small round-table breakfast conversations. Together these strategies fulfill Ramsey’s goals of informing the public about the COR, the development process, and the urban planning process, as well as learning from case studies of similar communities.
The COR Development Engagement Plan Overview

Introduction

The purpose of the partnership between the City of Ramsey and the COR Development team of PA 5253 is to identify appropriate strategies that will engage and involve the public in the process of updating the COR Development Plan. The first step in the COR group’s process was to gather (1) public engagement related literature related to best engagement practices and (2) to identify case studies of communities similar to Ramsey. For the best practices literature, we aim to summarize literature defining the roles of the public and private sectors and efforts to engage specific populations that have been left out of the process in the past. Based on Ramsey’s recommendations, we also identify case studies of communities with (1) horizontal mixed use development and (2) commuter rail. Based on this research, engagement tools and related recommendations for Ramsey to build off from these case studies and background research are outlined. Our findings create a platform of knowledge to allow for continued development of an engagement plan for a vibrant COR.

Challenges

This partnership aimed to address the following existing challenges in Ramsey as identified by the city:

- Identify the public’s involvement/interest in the COR
- Understand the public’s perception of the current development plan
- Clarify how residents engage in conversation with the city about the development plan and communicate their questions and concerns
- Develop case studies of how other cities successfully involved public participation in their development plans and outline their challenges
- Understand how the development plan serves to educate the public on the urban planning process
- Identify how other cities communicated the overall importance of city planning to their residents

PURPOSE

Identify strategies to engage property owners and developers actively in engagement to enhance their understanding of the COR development purpose and location, how it matches their current land use interests, and increase their knowledge of the planning process.
Project Location and Context

Ramsey is an emerging suburban community northwest of the Twin Cities. It is located in the fastest growing corridor in the Midwest, bordered by Highway 10, which is a major transit route to St. Cloud, MN. It has a population of 26,206 people which exceeds the 2020 population estimate by the Metropolitan Council. Located on the Northstar Commuter Light Rail, it has a direct connection to downtown Minneapolis and other growing suburban communities such as Coon Rapids, Anoka, and Fridley. The development of the COR project plans to leverage its position near the Northstar Commuter Light Rail to create a destination location for visitors and residents and offer a city lifestyle that reflects those that call the area home.

Planning for the COR in the past has involved work sessions by the planning commission to create a land use map, development and design standards, and a policy framework presented to the city council for formal considerations. Planning for the COR also involved receiving comments on the interim plan from the Economic Development Authority (EDA), which was followed up, based on recommendations, to solicit feedback from developers on Request for Proposal processes, uses of city owned land, and the COR marketing strategy. To test their assumptions of the plan, property owners were also engaged as well as residents to identify what they would like to see in their backyard.

Although Ramsey’s current processes have engaged many of the key stakeholders, challenges remain with the lack of public awareness about the development plan and the location and purpose of the COR. It has also been challenging for Ramsey residents to understand the urban planning process and its value despite opportunities for comment and feedback from the public. Additionally, there have been negative perceptions about the type of development that will happen in the COR, due to property owners perception that primarily affordable housing is being built without other types of development. This engagement plan will work to fill these gaps.
Stakeholders

**Mayor and City Council** - Decision making body for major changes in Ramsey. Approve longer term and more weighty changes related to the COR development.

**Planning Commission** - Responsible for land use changes. They have the power to change land use to match community needs after engagement activities.

**Economic Development Authority** – Guide, oversee, and promote development in the City of Ramsey to expand commercial, retail, and industrial growth.

**Environmental Policy Board** - Recognized citizen group that reviews, considers, initiates, and recommends policies, plans or projects to the City Council.

**Park and Recreation Commission** - Elected advisory committee that makes recommendations to the City on all matters relating to parks and recreation programs, facilities and services.

**Property Owners** - Spend time in the COR or potentially own property in the COR. Their perspective is crucial to a COR development that meets community interests.
  - New residents - City staff are particularly interested in the priorities of new property owners who were recently attracted to the community.

**Developers** - Their investment in the COR is necessary for continued growth of commercial and residential development.

**Downtown Businesses** - Care about the number of businesses and their success, walkability, safety, accessibility, design etc. of the COR to make their businesses more successful. To attract new business and retain current businesses, their land use interests should be consulted.
Engagement Literature

To inform Ramsey’s engagement strategies we start with a review of two topics of interest, diverging strategies in government and public sector engagement and resident and enfranchised group engagement. Then a more narrow look at literature in the form of case studies is reviewed to identify engagement strategies in communities similar to the City of Ramsey. Recommendations from this section are woven into the Recommended Engagement Strategies section.

**Government and Private Sector Engagement**

A major component of project development and implementation is stakeholder involvement and collaboration. In the planning process, residents, visitors, and other identified stakeholders should have significant involvement. Various sources identify successful theories and practices currently being utilized in the government and private sector to engage the public. Projects with a great deal of public engagement involved in the process lead to more productive and efficient project development.

In the government sector, a prominent public engagement strategy is identifying specific user groups of the proposed area in development and asking them to give input on the plan from the start\(^1\). A common phenomenon found with this strategy is certain group activities conflicting with one another and resulting in difficulty managing the user groups’ feedback process. This can be attributed to the lack of facilitated opportunities for the user groups to speak to each other; this can be solved by bringing user groups together. We found the Institute of Local Government’s following principles of local government public engagement to be a valuable resource in evaluating engagement processes for government sectors:

- Inclusive Planning
- Transparency
- Authentic Intent
- Breadth of Participation
- Informed Participation
- Accessible Participation
- Appropriate Processes
- Authentic Use of Information Received
- Feedback to Participants
- Evaluation

The private sector, much like the public sector, recognizes the value of public engagement as an integral part of the planning process and project implementation. This sector concentrates on effective public engagement through the following best practices:

- Articulate Goals and Responsibilities
- Partnering
- Facilitating
- Managing
- Implementing/Endorsing
- Evaluation
- Plan for What’s Next

\(^1\) Global CCS Institute, Towards Public Communication and Engagement Strategy. (2017)
Engagement Literature

Below is one tool found in the public sector literature to evaluate public engagement. It's practicality for Ramsey is demonstrated later in the recommendations section by having it filled out with where Ramsey falls on each public participation indicator.

### Table 1. Public Participation Indicator Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Participation Indicators</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a permanent multi-stakeholder planning committee?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do stakeholders meet regularly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are all relevant stakeholders included in the planning process?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is consensus-based negotiation utilized in multi-stakeholder processes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there public comment periods?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Were the stakeholders and public involved early on in the decision making process?</td>
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### Resident and Enfranchised Group Engagement

As an urban redevelopment strategy, the goals of mixed-use development are often discussed in the terms of building “community.” Building community is defined as the shaping of environments, opportunities, and social arrangements that promote healthy neighborhood life. Neighborhood effects suggest that compositional factors and social organization have an impact on well-being and development trajectories. Community is invoked as a unit of belonging and action that can be used to mobilize change, by using resources, skills, and participation of the community to inform, shape and contribute to solutions. Expectations for using mixed-use development for building community differs significantly due to the fact that some stakeholders are focused on the impact of development on the people who live there, while other stakeholders are thinking about the impact of development on the place.

Using a series of interviews, field observations and review of documentary data, researchers were able to divide perspectives of mixed use development into four broad categories: (1) expectations for promoting social interaction, (2) expectations for neighborhood change, (3) expectations for promoting changes and improvements for residents and (4) expectations for addressing broader issues such as racism and prejudices. Expectations for promoting social interaction, which tend to speak more to arguments of increased social capital, tend to be more modest than we may think. Expectations for the development of social networks beyond

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Engagement Literature

casual and informal interaction tend to be limited. Expectations for neighborhood change tend to be frequently invoked, most notably by those at the macro-level. At a basic level, development is expected to provide well-constructed and clean housing units although some stakeholders emphasize safety, clean streets and better amenities. Expectations for promoting changes and improvements for residents were most notable at the macro-level of stakeholders. Those expectations in particular included changes in education outcomes, employment, and access to opportunity. Expectations regarding prejudice and race seemed to be the least notable although some people expected some promise of breaking down racial and cultural divisions.³
Case Studies

Engaging Comparable Communities

To assist Ramsey with developing a framework for development in the COR, a review of engagement strategies in similarly sized cities and cities with horizontal development are provided as case studies. After a review of the literature, no comprehensive engagement related to communities with commuter rail were found so that is not included. The following case studies set the stage for policy and planning recommendations for meeting engagement goals for the COR development

Engagement for Small to Medium Sized Cities

Ramsey has a population of about 26,000 and is growing. Looking at communities of similar size and resources is valuable to understand how city’s with smaller scale budgets and limited staff, relative to places like the Twin Cities, are engaging the public.

City of West Fargo, North Dakota

The City of West Fargo (pop. 34,858) is in the process of developing a new comprehensive plan and has been using a variety of participation techniques with the help of their consultant - Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC). West Fargo was chosen because their size is similar to Ramsey and because of their comprehensive engagement strategies.

One online strategy that West Fargo and TPUDC set up was a website designed for connecting with the community by providing updates and gathering additional input outside of the traditional planning sphere. The website features different sections allowing residents to engage further with the city and consultants to provide ideas and suggestions for improvements and future growth. Along with traditional public meetings, the website and other technology which could be employed, helps supplement the narrative and creates a gathering space online allowing the conversation to continue after the meeting has ended. One example is their contribute page http://www.wf2point0.com/contribute. City staff can provide prompts for residents to interact with the website and leave comments. Once residents leave a comment, other residents and city staff can continue to interact and provide additional feedback or suggestions on comments to create additional engagement outside of the traditional office setting.

Facebook has also been used to identify what types of development residents would like to see and provide updates of the planning process. One example of Facebook engagement used pictures featuring different styles of housing. Residents were encouraged to vote by ‘Liking’ and using emojis to gauge which styles residents would like to see incorporated in the community.

West Fargo also does in person engagement with the public. TPUDC hosts their trademarked charrette, Planapalooza, a week-long of intensive planning exercises. Residents use maps to indicate where they would like to see future growth, what types of activities they would like to see encouraged and where, and what styles of development they feel would be best for the community.
Case Studies

By using traditional methods, such as public hearings and charrettes, as well as technology to supplement and continue the conversation after the meeting has ended, West Fargo has developed an engagement strategy that helps residents, developers, and stakeholders better understand the urban planning process and their development plans, and does much of this engagement through new tools such as social media and interactive website engagement, areas that Ramsey are interested in exploring.

**Engagement with Communities with Horizontal Mixed-Use Development**

Ramsey has outlined a horizontal mixed use strategy for the COR. Horizontal mixed-use development has potential to set a regulatory framework that can attract interest from the development community that the City has been targeting in its COR Development Plan. The flexibility of this zoning designation reduces regulatory barriers and enables developers to design projects that incorporate the retail components that match the communities’ interest and the housing components that the City has identified as a priority to accommodate the population growth that is anticipated in Ramsey.

The City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota is a good example of the purpose and intent of horizontal mixed-use zoning in its policy statement. The first policy for their approach to horizontal mixed-use is simply including multiple buildings with more than one land use within a single project. These buildings are to be connected by internal streets, pathways and pedestrian connections. Project components may also have common features. The second policy laid out by Sioux Falls is that the city and the developer must adopt a specific development plan for each project including an agreement that establishes such things as densities, setbacks, and building envelopes, overall parking requirements, circulation (including internal circulation) and public space.

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Unfortunately, the availability of literature and case studies is sparse but the implementation of horizontal mixed use in these early adopters can lay the groundwork for inspiring ideas about how to involved the public in Ramsey’s application of mixed-use development. The following case studies aim to show how the interests of the community can be realized in a way that is congruent with the economic development strategies that the city has put in place.

City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota

To provide background that can inform the City of Ramsey’s approach to engaging the community around a vision for mixed-use style of development in the COR Development Area, case studies from the City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Apple Valley, Minnesota are presented. These cases offer value in that they specifically articulate the concept of a horizontal mixed-use approach to development. The City of Sioux Falls, Vertical Mixed Use Development. (Accessed City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota

https://placeshakers.tiles.wordpress.com/2012/07/horizontal-mixed-use-block-copy1.jpeg

4 City of Sioux Falls, Vertical Mixed Use Development. (Accessed
The transportation network within horizontal mixed-use developments is also a focus. It should be composed of a network of public streets, private streets and pedestrian ways. All pedestrian connections must be safe, pleasant and secure, without obstacles such as vast expanses of parking lots or dangerous road crossings. The transportation network should also connect to adjacent single-family neighborhoods and open spaces. The policy statement also outlines the guideline that horizontal mixed-use developments should generally have no more than 60% of the gross floor area devoted to any single land use category. Finally, all mixed-use developments should have flexible parking requirements. Peak demand generated by different uses occurs at different times. Therefore, intentionally mixing uses holds the potential to reduce the total amount of space needed to accommodate peak parking demand. As such, the City of Sioux Falls holds that parking requirements should be determined on a project-by-project basis in order to look for shared parking opportunities.

One way that Sioux Falls engages and informs residents about their development and land use plan updates is through an ArcGIS online map. Their public map can be found here: http://cityofsfgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eeecb42437e0042eb30ec65e38c6bef. The map has an “About this Map” section that describes the three tiers of future growth and a series of layers that people can turn on and off including the city limits, planned urbanized area, joint-jurisdiction boundary, future development tiers, neighboring growth area, urban and land use.

The city also used a series of images and had the public rate them to identify preferences. They called this a visual listening survey and were able to get high participation with 1,500 citizens participating in rating 167 images that showed development examples from other cities. Stakeholders interpreted the visual listening survey through a series of 6 meetings. One of the 11 “citizen preferences” that resulted from the visual learning survey was a preference for mixed use development.5


Village Pointe Plaza - Apple Valley, MN

Village Pointe Plaza in Apple Valley, MN is a development of 58 senior cooperative units employing a horizontal mixed-use style of development. Located on the southwest corner of Galaxy Avenue and 153rd Street, this development is located very close to the METRO Red Line bus rapid transit route. Its proximity to the Red Line led to the adoption of zoning standards in the area that encourage transit-oriented development through requirements of a mixed-use walkable form. Specifically, Village Pointe Plaza is located in an area that is zoned PD 739, SubZone 2, which only permits residential development when it is combined with office or retail in the building. However, through its market analysis, the developer of this project determined that mixing the desired senior living facility and the planned commercial and office use in the same building would be incongruent and concluded that a horizontal delineation would be better than vertical. The developer successfully applied to amend the provisions of the zoning code and the resulting project stands as an example of horizontal mixed-use development. In this case, amending the zoning code allowed the developer’s project to pencil out and still retain some degree of compact walkability in a mixed-use area.6

Because little is available about specific public engagement related to horizontal mixed use development, the following websites and contact information for these communities are provided to allow Ramsey staff to reference at later dates as more information likely will become available. Contact information for these cities is also provided for more in depth conversations with city staff.

• Sioux Falls, SD
  o Website: http://www.siouxfalls.org/planning.aspx
  o Contact information: 224 W. Ninth St. PO Box 7402, Sioux Falls, SD 57117
  Phone: 605-367-8888

• Apple Valley, MN
  o Website: https://www.ci.apple-valley.mn.us/index.aspx?nid=83
  o Contact information: Bruce Nordquist, Community Development Director
  Phone: (952) 953-2576
  Email: commdev@ci.apple-valley.mn.us
In order to fulfill the City of Ramsey’s goals of having stakeholders better understand the urban planning process, development plan, and what the COR is and where it is located, the following six strategies are recommended. The overarching goal is to engage the key stakeholders in new public participation tools that will complement Ramsey’s existing engagement strategies and address Ramsey’s current challenges. Over the course of six months to one year, the tools seen in Table 2 (on page 13) can be implemented in two rounds. Once at the beginning of the process, before a new round of land use planning for the COR, and a second time halfway through the process to check in on how planning staff is doing and to see if interests have changed. Yet, most of these tools have benefits when implemented individually as well. If the City of Ramsey were limited in their choices or resources, Table 2 can be thought of as a toolbox rather than an overarching strategy. In other words, we recommend a timeline and sequence, yet there is flexibility in that implementation. These strategies aim to provide comprehensive engagement that reaches diverse populations through a mix of in person and online tools. Below lists the six engagement strategies that are recommended:

1. Large format map engagement

2. Online map engagement

3. Tour of the COR

4. Social Media

5. Multi-day Charrettes

6. Small Group Format Breakfast Meetings
### Table 2. Engagement Plan Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Timeline*</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour of the COR</td>
<td>(1) Familiarize stakeholders with the COR area (2) Allows for in-depth conversations about land use and future development</td>
<td>0% (ideally in warmer months)</td>
<td>City planner or volunteer/ intern with the city.</td>
<td>Post-tour survey</td>
<td>Meet at an appropriate public space in the COR such as the Ramsey municipal plaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large format map engagement</td>
<td>(1) Help residents and developers become familiar with the COR. (2) Demonstrate the urban planning process through a fun activity that allows stakeholders to move from individual interests to collaborative decisions about land use.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ramsey city planners and additional Ramsey staff. It is recommended to have at least five facilitators.</td>
<td>Feedback box at the activity.</td>
<td>Public meeting space such as the library, community center, church etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online map engagement</td>
<td>(1) Engage new, elderly, and non-local stakeholders who do not show up at meetings. (2) Gather ideas from people who were unable to express thoughts and ideas or came up after the in person engagement.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>GIS staff member to tweak the map and analyze the data. Communications and planning staff to distribute the survey to target populations.</td>
<td>Allow comments so people have more flexibility to share about the process. Share how the public’s ideas were incorporated on the Ramsey website.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>(1) Share information about the COR through platforms such as Snapchat geofilters. (2) Use platforms such as Facebook to gather information about building type preferences through number of “likes.” (4) Hold Twitter town halls.</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
<td>Communications Staff</td>
<td>Post on social media accounts before and after engagement.</td>
<td>Library could have computer station(s) encouraging social media engagement for those who do not have computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-day Charrettes</td>
<td>(1) Encourages participants to come back to an activity repeatedly and bring others in the community with them. (2) Allows an exchange of information between planning staff and stakeholders</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Planning staff. A minimum of 3 staff people are recommended.</td>
<td>Report back information to contact list collected and on website.</td>
<td>Public meeting space such as the library, community center, church etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate small group format meetings with city commissions and key staff, developers, and business owners.</td>
<td>(1) Allows planners to understand specific group’s interests in a venue where they feel like their perspective is valuable</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Only one planning staff representative is needed</td>
<td>Send out online survey to collect additional feedback and evaluate the sessions immediately after meetings.</td>
<td>Go to key group’s meeting location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Timeline indicates the percentage of the engagement process completed at each stage.*
Recommended Engagement Strategies

Large Format Map Engagement

Large format map engagement is a longstanding and effective tool to engage the public in land use decision making. In the way this tool was piloted by the COR group, facilitators worked with small groups around a blank map of the COR and stickers and markers were used to mark where “the public” (classmates) wanted to see different land uses in the future. Laminated sheets were placed on top of the maps so that later on, those same sheets could be placed over an existing land use map to evaluate differences. Facilitators worked with each group to guide the conversation in-case recommended strategies went off course in a way that would be hard to reconcile in later evaluation of the activity. When this tool was initially piloted with the Designing Planning and Participation Processes class, a few elements were very successful, while others needed tweaking.

Successes:
- Use of small groups with facilitators
- Powerful effect of laminated sheets
- Produced a significant amount of data points
- Allowed participants to become more familiar with the COR
- The public was excited and willing to be involved. Lots of voices were heard.

Challenges:
- Lacking the option for participants to make comments to help explain decision making
- Some land use categories, such as downtown, were confusing and unclear.
- There was no evidence that the data collected would be used

Future changes:
- Bring post-its to allow for comments
- Define and clarify land use categories at the beginning of the activity, and have definitions accessible throughout the activity
- Collect information from participants such as, contact information and demographics
- Send a follow up email with comments collected and how they will be considered

Ramsey staff should continue their practice of doing map engagement and consider this specific activity using the laminated sheets and strong facilitation to test one method that the COR group found was successful.

Pilot Engagement Activity

Step 1: Produce COR Development land use categories, and identify the area.

Step 2: Have stakeholders place stickers or draw with markers on a laminated sheet placed over the blank COR map.

Step 3: Planning staff places laminated sheets over their planned land use map to see where interests differ and align.

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Alternative Mapping Options

Instead of using dots, the pilot engagement activity can be just as or more effective when participants are given markers to color in areas to identify certain land use preferences. The advantage of using markers and coloring in areas is that it allows for a more accurate representations of the land uses. Land uses are often identified as a group of parcels. Therefore, putting a dot on a map isn’t very clear as it merely designates a point. Below are images that demonstrate how coloring in maps could be more beneficial over placing dots.

The three images above the text are demonstrations of how “map coloring” can be done to facilitate the COR Development Plan in the planning process. Each map would represent a land use category. While providing participants with land use category definitions, each participant would color in the map based on their preference of where they would like to see a particular land use within the designated COR development area.
Online Map Engagement

It is best practice to follow up in-person map engagement with online map engagement. With regards to timing, it is recommended for an online engagement map to “go-live” after the first in-person map engagement activity has concluded and provide the link to participants. Participants of the in-person activity will have the opportunity to add additional comments, and populations which have difficulty attending in-person activities, such as residents working multiple jobs, disabled residents, elderly etc. will have the opportunity to still participate.

Online map engagement can also be used during a public meeting or in combination with the in-person map engagement. For example, the facilitator could use the online map engagement tool with their small group to enter individual and group preferences during the small group discussions. This would make later data analysis easier. The online map that the COR group piloted used ArcGIS online. In this tool, each entry is a separate shapefile, and staff would easily be able to look at results based on land use. A sample map created for Ramsey can be found here: http://umn.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Editor/index.html?appid=19ff927a9af4903e9bbcbfbd067cc644. As long as they are partners with UMN and RCP, this mapping tool is available for Ramsey’s use.
Recommended Engagement Strategies

Tour of the COR
To fulfill Ramsey’s goal of having residents better familiarized with the COR development area and plan, a walking tour of the COR is recommended to engage residents in in-depth conversations with planners about existing land use, why the COR development area was developed, future plans etc. Stops on the tour can be designed to be at different land use areas. For example, the tour can start in the downtown land use and then move to office, green space, residential, public, and retail. The goal would be to show existing land use and inform the public about areas of development. Rather than gathering feedback about existing plans, the tour is more of an information sharing engagement that allows participants to better engage in the following engagement tools because they will have the necessary context about what the COR is after participating in the tour.

A walking or biking tour can be done of the COR as part of the engagement plan to better educate and inform stakeholders.

Social Media
Social media is an effective tool to use throughout the engagement process. While it’s primarily used to share information, it can also be used to gather information from stakeholders. The following three social media engagement strategies could help Ramsey share information about the COR, demonstrate the urban planning process through a tool that is familiar to much of the public, and gathers the public’s perspectives.

1. Share information about the COR through platforms such as Snapchat geofilters.
   One social media strategy to help stakeholders better understand the limits of the COR development area is to create a Snapchat geofilter that is available in the COR. Snapchat geofilters are location bound and would show up as an optional filter for any user who takes a picture in the COR. Because Snapchat users are primarily young people, this would be an effective strategy to engage that section of the population in asking questions about the COR development. It could be paired with signs placed around the COR with FAQs about the COR. With regards to timing, this social media campaign could be launched for one week while a multi-day charrette is occurring. It would be best to pair the timing of the Snapchat geofilter with other engagement activity.

2. Use platforms such as Facebook to gather information about building type preferences through the number of “likes.”
   The city of West Fargo, ND used social media to engage residents. By posting different types of housing, and asking residents to like the photos of housing that they wanted to see, they found a way to have significant data as evidence or residents’ residential preferences. One challenge with social media is gathering data. Counting “likes” is one concrete way to overcome that challenge.

3. Hold Twitter town halls.
   This tactic is described in the article titled “10 Lessons in More Engaging Citizen Engagement” in Planetizen (https://www.planetizen.com/node/67656). Time can be scheduled for questions to be asked through a hashtag. Then the mayor or city council responds. By having a specific time, computers can also be made available in the library for people who do not have access to computers in their homes. Ramsey could have a Twitter town hall specifically focused on future development in the COR.
**Recommended Engagement Strategies**

**Multi-day Charrettes**

Similar to West Fargo’s Planapalooza, Ramsey should consider their own week long charrette. This could be combined with other activities, such as the SnapChat social media engagement mentioned above. This will allow residents to indicate where growth and development should occur. The multi-day nature is very important. Multi-day engagement allows the public to come back multiple times, and often residents will bring neighbors and friends to come back with them. For this to be effective, it is critical that the location of the multi-day charrette be somewhere the community is comfortable. Planning staff should meet stakeholders in their space, rather than having the public come to them.

![Multi-day Charrette Image](c) Steve Schneider, 2017

Any public gathering events can be opportunities for charrettes.

**Small Group Format Breakfast Meetings**

Small group meetings are an effective platform to engage key stakeholder groups that you want to collaborate with rather than inform or consult. This could take the form of workshops or focus groups. To supplement the previous engagement strategies listed above, this step is necessary to gather specific feedback from the EDA, EPB, and any other commissions. It can also be used with developers and business owners. These groups should be engaged separately rather than as a mixed group. As described in the section on government sector engagement, this strategy is often used to engage key stakeholders and can result in difficulty reconciling each group’s particular interests which can often be in conflict. To avoid this conflict and the time investment that would be needed to overcome this conflict on the part of Ramsey staff, small group breakfast meetings and focus groups could involve two stakeholder groups, such as developers and the EDA. Particularly attention should be paid to putting together groups that may have divisive interests could lead to collaborative conflict resolution rather than putting the onus of conflict resolution solely on the Ramsey staff.

![Breakfast Meetings Image](c) Steve Schneider, 2017

Breakfast meetings can be a way to get different stakeholders to discuss matters in a more informal but still productive setting.

- EDA
- EPB Businesses
- Parks and Recreation & Planning Commission
- Developers
- EDA

The following stakeholders would be the groups that would be best targeted with these types of meetings.
**Stakeholder Engagement**

The City of Ramsey should be equipped with the right tools and resources to manage the differing views and opinions of stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement is an important part of planning evaluation. Table 3 lists the indicators for stakeholder involvement and public participation which can be used to help evaluate the COR Development Plan. Several indicators for the overarching criteria of stakeholder collaboration and involvement measured stakeholders and public involvement, how well their ideas and values were incorporated into the plan and how well the stakeholders and public were educated and informed about the plan.

**Table 3. Public Communication and Engagement Strategy Evaluation Applied to Ramsey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Participation Indicators</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a permanent multi-stakeholder planning committee?</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
<td>No, there wasn’t a planning review committee made of a select group of diverse citizen interests for the COR framework and design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do stakeholders meet regularly?</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
<td>No, there is no indication that stakeholders meet over the course of the planning process. No clear schedule identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are all relevant stakeholders included in the planning process?</td>
<td>Partially Met</td>
<td>Yes, but some were involved later than others in the process which indicates unequal weight between the stakeholders involved. Still no clear identification of which stakeholders are still involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there public comment periods?</td>
<td>Partially Met</td>
<td>Through website analysis (<a href="http://www.ci.ramsey.mn.us/US10-public-involvement">http://www.ci.ramsey.mn.us/US10-public-involvement</a>, December 10, 2017), during the course of the semester, we have found that there is public comment periods that gives residents and property owners an opportunity to discuss their concerns and share recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were the stakeholders and public involved early on in the decision making process?</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
<td>No formal conflict management identified throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended Engagement Strategies

(Recommendations from the Best Practices Literature continued...)

Shared Use of Power

It is recommended that the City of Ramsey focus on learning from and managing the expectations of all the stakeholders involved in its development plan. This can be done in a multitude of ways but should be done by creating authentic spaces for engagement. Ramsey staff should work to create shared use of power by using language that is relatable to stakeholders at all levels of educational attainment. Staff should also work to acknowledge the historical significance of development and its relationship to race and place. These critical steps help to create an environment that is welcoming regardless of the stakeholders level of introduction to the content at hand. Creating opportunities for groups members to think through information together in smaller groups allows for shared power throughout the group instead of a top-down approach in the form of a public hearing, lecture or facilitated meeting. Ramsey staff should work in an observant role where they can then observe the expectations of stakeholders through their answers.

STAKEHOLDERS
Mayor and City Council
Planning Commission
EDA
EPB
Park and Recreation Commission
Property Owners
Residents
Developers
Businesses

$
Digital Maps

Over the years, online map surveys have become a very popular way to collect direct data, allowing the public and participants of the online map survey to directly locate a point of interest. One of the biggest benefits of online map surveys is the preciseness of data collection. Online mapping survey tools like WikiMapping allows for these data points to be transformed into ArcGIS shapefiles; it is important that the data points can be converted into ArcGIS shapefiles because this allows for data analysts to effectively utilize the information collected. There are several different organizations that provide this online mapping survey service.

WikiMapping

Over the years, online map surveys have become a very popular way to collect direct data, allowing the public and participants of the online map survey to directly locate a point of interest. One of the biggest benefits of online map surveys is the preciseness of data collection. Online mapping survey tools like WikiMapping allows for these data points to be transformed into ArcGIS shapefiles; it is important that the data points can be converted into ArcGIS shapefiles because this allows for data analysts to effectively utilize the information collected. There are several different organizations that provide this online mapping survey service.

- Toole Design (Private firm focusing on bicycle and pedestrian plans)
- Nelson Nygaard
- Alta Planning
- Minnesota State Bicycle Plan
- Bellevue Washington Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Charleston, SC
- Fort Collins, CO
- Clean Air Council
- East Coast Greenway

ArcGIS Online - “Story Map”

In addition to WikiMapping, Esri’s ArcGIS Online also provides a great way to inform the public using maps. There is a tool on ArcGIS Online that is called “Story Map.” The interactive features of the map not only keep the public engaged and informed during the process of exploring the Story Map. With short captions and descriptions for each feature on the map, the public can have a better understanding of the map elements. Story is a part of ArcGIS Online and is priced at $42 per month per user and users are billed annually. Esri does have a similar service as WikiMapping that allows for people to collect data however it isn’t as user-friendly or non-ArcGIS user-friendly. It is a little more complicated and has more restrictions and limitations.

WikiMapping, Arc Story Map, and other commonly used platforms are listed in Table 4 on the next page.

Esri’s Story Map is a great way to tell a narrative in an interactive manner.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Solicit feedback on specific projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>$320 / year</td>
<td><a href="http://communityengagement.com/faq/">http://communityengagement.com/faq/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators can respond to comments through portal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WikiMapping</td>
<td>Easy to use and customizable</td>
<td>ArcGIS data organization knowledge needed</td>
<td>$350/ project/ year</td>
<td><a href="http://wikimap.png.com/wiki/map/admin/index.php?op=a_projects&amp;_ne">http://wikimap.png.com/wiki/map/admin/index.php?op=a_projects&amp;_ne</a> w=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Records signs</td>
<td>Subpar mobile capability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maptive</td>
<td>Mobile phone friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free trial or 45 day pass</td>
<td><a href="https://www.m">https://www.m</a> aptive.com/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ArcGIS Online</td>
<td>Data driven</td>
<td>Can be complicated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Powerful analysis tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arc Story Map</td>
<td>New way to inform the public</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free at UVMN</td>
<td><a href="https://storymap.ps.arcgis.com/en/">https://storymap.ps.arcgis.com/en/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Useful for sharing information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MetroQuest</td>
<td>Fun and engaging surveys (Videogame like)</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>Contract based</td>
<td><a href="http://metroque">http://metroque</a> st.com/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional font</td>
<td>Limited customization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jotform - Map Plugins</td>
<td>Easy to use interface</td>
<td>Form map plugin settings are not customizable</td>
<td>Free to implement</td>
<td><a href="https://widgets.jotform.com/category/mapping">https://widgets.jotform.com/category/mapping</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form elements are customizabl e with CSS styling</td>
<td>Limited analytics compared to other survey tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Interactive & Online Mapping Tools
Engagement Toolkits

Social Media

With high speed internet and access to smartphones, social media has established itself as one of the fastest, easiest, and sometimes the least expensive form of communication. Most social media tools are free to users. If used right, social media can be a powerful tool to not only keep stakeholders informed regarding the COR Development Plan but it can also be an effective way to reach out to the public for input. The table below is a list of social media tools that can be adopted to engage stakeholders in the COR development process.

Table 5. Social Media Tools

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Platform</th>
<th>Pros</th>
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<th>Cost</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Easy to reach large groups of people</td>
<td>Data analytics</td>
<td>Free or city can set a marketing budget and promote certain events or posts to reach and engage more people.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/">https://www.facebook.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>Fun and easy way for users to take pictures and engage</td>
<td>Requires a smartphone</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Easy to reach and inform the public</td>
<td>Limited character count for making posts</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MindMixer / mySidewalk</td>
<td>Helps gather feedback by people who are most affected and reaches a wider demographic.</td>
<td>Ability to incentivize feedback with Rewards.</td>
<td>Cost associated with the platform</td>
<td><a href="https://www.mindmixer.com/">https://www.mindmixer.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final step of the engagement process is to understand if the employed engagement strategies were successful at reaching the public. Although this is the final stage of the process, a plan for evaluating engagement strategies should ideally be created at the beginning of the planning process so that evaluation can be ongoing. This will allow strategies that are unsuccessful to be identified early in the process and changes to be made. For example, if the first round of online engagement results in many people placing the downtown land use in residential areas that can’t be developed, then the map could be changed to exclude the downtown land use. Evaluation is needed to identify these type of problems and adjust before the online map is used again. With each engagement strategy, Ramsey staff should be able to answer the question “how will we know if this was effective at reaching the public?” Table 2 lists some specific strategies for evaluating each tool that we have recommended. Below are a few overarching strategies for evaluation that should be taken into account throughout Ramsey’s implementation of this engagement plan:

1. Development an engagement plan from the beginning of the engagement planning process

2. Use surveys for quantitative data

3. Set goals for attendance or participation numbers

4. Provide contact information so engagement participants can contact planning staff with feedback
Conclusion

This engagement plan aims to address challenges identified by staff at the City of Ramsey with new participation tools and a robust literature review. The COR group partnered with Ramsey to understand the City’s challenges around the COR development plan including the public’s lack of understanding about where the COR is and what it is, limited engagement with the current development plan, and a lack of understanding of the urban planning process. This plan provides six engagement strategies that together address these challenges through in person and online engagement. These strategies are supported by literature about best practices and case studies of communities similar to Ramsey. Additionally, toolkits related to digital mapping and social media are provided to support future online engagement strategies and allow Ramsey staff to visualize the scope of options within each of those engagement strategies. To assess whether these engagement strategies and tools meet their goals related to increased engagement around the COR development, Ramsey staff should create a comprehensive evaluation plan from the beginning of the planning process, use surveys to evaluate engagement activities, record attendance goals and numbers, and provide accessible contact information to receive comments from the public.


# Recommended Engagement Strategies

## Table 2. Engagement Plan Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Timeline*</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour of the COR</td>
<td>(1) Familiarize stakeholders with the COR area (2) Allows for in-depth conversations about land use and future development</td>
<td>0% (ideally in warmer months)</td>
<td>City planner or volunteer/ intern with the city.</td>
<td>Post-tour survey</td>
<td>Meet at an appropriate public space in the COR such as the Ramsey municipal plaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large format map engagement</td>
<td>(1) Help residents and developers become familiar with the COR. (2) Demonstrate the urban planning process through a fun activity that allows stakeholders to move from individual interests to collaborative decisions about land use.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ramsey city planners and additional Ramsey staff. It is recommended to have at least five facilitators.</td>
<td>Feedback box at the activity.</td>
<td>Public meeting space such as the library, community center, church etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online map engagement</td>
<td>(1) Engage new, elderly, and non-local stakeholders who do not show up at meetings. (2) Gather ideas from people who were unable to express thoughts and ideas or came up after the in person engagement.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>GIS staff member to tweak the map and analyze the data. Communications and planning staff to distribute the survey to target populations.</td>
<td>Allow comments so people have more flexibility to share about the process. Share how the public’s ideas were incorporated on the Ramsey website.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>(1) Share information about the COR through platforms such as Snapchat geofilters. (2) Use platforms such as Facebook to gather information about building type preferences through number of “likes.” (4) Hold Twitter town halls.</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
<td>Communications Staff</td>
<td>Post on social media accounts before and after engagement.</td>
<td>Library could have computer station(s) encouraging social media engagement for those who do not have computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-day Charrettes</td>
<td>(1) Encourages participants to come back to an activity repeatedly and bring others in the community with them. (2) Allows an exchange of information between planning staff and stakeholders</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Planning staff. A minimum of 3 staff people are recommended.</td>
<td>Report back information to contact list collected and on website.</td>
<td>Public meeting space such as the library, community center, church etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate small group format meetings with city commissions and key staff, developers, and business owners.</td>
<td>(1) Allows planners to understand specific group’s interests in a venue where they feel like their perspective is valuable</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Only one planning staff representative is needed</td>
<td>Send out online survey to collect additional feedback and evaluate the sessions immediately after meetings.</td>
<td>Go to key group’s meeting location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 4. Interactive & Online Mapping Tools

<table>
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<td>• Subpar mobile capability</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Records sign ins</td>
<td>• Can be complicated</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Customer support</td>
<td>• New way to inform the public</td>
<td>Free trial or 45 day pass</td>
<td><a href="https://www.maptive.com/">https://www.maptive.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inexpensive relative to other platforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>MetroQuest</td>
<td>• Engaging surveys (video game like)</td>
<td>• Contract based</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://metroquest.com/">http://metroquest.com/</a></td>
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<td>Easy to reach large groups of people</td>
<td>Data analytics</td>
<td>Free or city can set a marketing budget and promote certain events or posts to reach and engage more people.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/">https://www.facebook.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>Fun and easy way for users to take pictures and engage</td>
<td>Requires a smartphone</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Easy to reach and inform the public</td>
<td>Limited character count for making posts</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MindMixer / mySidewalk</td>
<td>Helps gather feedback by people who are most affected and reaches a wider demographic.</td>
<td>Ability to incentivize feedback with Rewards, Measurable Impact.</td>
<td>Cost associated with the platform</td>
<td><a href="https://www.minidmixer.com/">https://www.minidmixer.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>