

# 2014 City Council Retreat

## Retreat Summary and Outcomes

January 24-25, 2014

Bunker Hills GC Conference Center

This retreat was constructed based on a November, 2013 workshop in which City Council and the Management Team were asked to answer the question: "What are the most important elements of a successful 2014 Retreat?" The answers to that question generated four main goals:

- Create a "Vision" that is both "high level" and accessible to "real" projects and activities.
- Learn more about our communication and decision-making styles.
- Be able to talk about actual issues and ideas that are relevant to our City.
- Produce an outcome this weekend that is meaningful to the community.

These goals resolved into four Retreat workshop items:

- Part I: Build some kind of "Visioning Tool" that allows projects and initiatives, big and small, to be evaluated against Council's vision for the City
- Part II: Have a management/leadership style workshop, where we can learn about how better to communicate and work with each other
- Part III: Take the tool that we build and apply it to the most important issues facing the City in 2014.
- Part IV: Produce City Council workshops in 2014 based on the results of Parts I, II, and III.

For Part I, staff created the framework for what it named the "AIM" Tool, which stands for "Activity Impact Measurement" Tool. This tool would have a number of "impact benchmarks" in four different areas: Nature, Economy, Society, and Well Being. The task for the Retreat group in Part I was to produce those benchmarks, which could then be used to evaluate projects and activities in Part III. The benchmarks, as a whole, would constitute a representation of the "Vision" that individual projects and initiatives could be weighed against.

The AIM Tool works generally as follows:

(1) A project or activity has to be defined in sufficient detail so that a person or group of persons can apply the AIM benchmarks. An example of an activity might be "Uniform Trail and Transportation System along the Coon Rapids Boulevard Corridor," together with anticipated costs and other data. An AIM Nature benchmark might be "Impact on Water Bodies Based on Runoff." An AIM Economy benchmark might be "Impact on Taxpayers."

(2) An AIM Worksheet, which contains all the benchmarks, is used to assign numerical values of the impacts of the project to each benchmark.

(3) AIM Impact Levels and AIM Activity Scores are then generated by adding up the scores.

(4) A high negative Aim Score indicates a project or activity that does not conform to the benchmarks, and thus, the Council's Vision. A positive score indicates a project that should be undertaken.

(5) AIM also produces an overall Impact Level, which simply is a measure of how involved the high-level decision makers should be in the project or activity. A low Impact Level suggests City Council need not be actively involved in the project.

Staff is currently evaluating the existing benchmarks for rough proportionality to one another so that the AIM Worksheet will produce appropriate results for projects and activities in the City.

For Part II, Council and the Management Team completed the Leadership Behavior Inventory (LBI). The purpose of this exercise was to help each person to better understand his or her leadership strengths and how each style contributes to building an effective organization. The LBI is the same assessment tool that was used by trainer Liz Weatherhead when she visited the City last summer.

In preparation for Part III, Council and the Management Team were polled for the most important "big picture" topics to discuss. The following four topics were selected:

- Economic development strategy (attract, retain, expand private employers)
- Anticipating demographic changes, aging and diversity
- Redevelopment Priorities (Ports, specific sites, Non-Coon Rapids Blvd. areas)
- Marketing Coon Rapids

The participants were asked to formulate specific ideas, activities, or initiatives to advance each topic in a more "concrete" way, so as to be accessible to the AIM Tool. Teams were then formed to evaluate the proposed initiatives, integrate or select among the best of them, and produce an action plan with respect to each topic. Formulated projects were subjected to the AIM benchmarks, with AIM Impact Levels being generated in the range of 36-70 points on a 100 scale (a 100 would represent an extreme impact such as a natural disaster or massive transportation realignment). An AIM Activity Score was not completed for any of these initiatives, that being beyond the scope of this Retreat's work.

Specifics of the sub-team findings are as follows:

1. Economic development strategy (attract, retain, expand private employers)
  - "Program Delta" (Resources, Partnerships, Identity)
    - Partnerships:
      - Identify partners and goals

- Find commonalities, build relationships deliberately, create program around the relationships (similar to Cities Unlimited)
  - Resources:
    - External (grants, DEED, etc.), internal (TIF, subsidies, etc.)
    - Market opportunities
  - Identity:
    - Identify strengths and weaknesses of community, agree on which to promote and to address
    - Understand what we have to offer, market that to new opportunities. Strengthen relationships with current businesses.
- 2. Anticipating demographic changes, aging and diversity
  - Workshop:
    - Collect and analyze demographic data
    - Consider creating a “Diversity Commission”
  - Anticipating needs for aging population
  - Attracting your families
- 3. Redevelopment Priorities (Ports, specific sites, Non-Coon Rapids Blvd. areas)
  - Where:
    - Riverwalk (revisit current agreement)
    - Phase II Community Center, library, Campus Squaare
    - Northdale and Foley, Foley TOD, Riverdale TOD, Port Evergreen “Triangle”
  - What:
    - Promote market ready development (condos, senior housing)
    - Revisit existing plans and review acquisition strategy
    - Marketing (strategy for specific business/industry)
    - Use of “tools” to make deals happen
    - Site visits to learn about larger market and retaining current business
- Marketing Coon Rapids
  - Understanding demographics (who is here, who will be)
    - Age, race, ethnicity, income, culture, etc.
    - Employers
  - Define audience
  - Celebrate positives (Riverdale, Mercy, etc.)
  - City image/perception management
  - Marketing platforms

In Part IV, each team presented its action plan and AIM Impact Levels to the large group. In the next few weeks, staff intends to present a summary of the initiatives to City Council, then build appropriate workshops to advance Council’s final determinations.