



MAPLEWOOD  
MINNESOTA

TOGETHERWE CAN

City Council- Staff  
Retreat

February 5, 2010

Executive Summary

PREPARED BY:

BARBARA K. STRANDELL

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WHAT WORKS INC.  
651.298.9898  
BKSTRANDELL@MAC.COM

*City Of Maplewood Council/Staff Retreat*  
**Executive Summary: Vision, Goals, Priorities, and Action Items**  
*Observations and Conclusions Made By Participants*

Those who attended the retreat were Mayor Will Rossbach; Councilmembers Kathy Juenemann, John Nephew, James Llanas and Julie Wasiluk; City Manager Jim Antonen and Assistant City Manager Chuck Ahl; Department Heads Karen Guilfoile, Steve Lukin, Dave Thomalla, Dewey Konewko, Mychal Fowlds, Chuck Bethel, Alan Kantrud and Michael Thompson; Student intern John Helci and facilitator Barbara Strandell.

The retreat was held on city property at Fire Station #2 on February 5, 2010. Several citizens also attended the meeting as observers. It began at 8:00 AM and ended at 5:00 PM.

**PURPOSE of RETREAT:**

In planning this retreat the City Manager and Mayor determined that the purpose of it would be threefold:

- ➔ Set Council Direction and Goals for next 2 – 3 Years
- ➔ Identify Short-Term Priorities
- ➔ Build Trust and Better Ways of Working Between Staff and Council

**ELEMENTS of OUR VISION** *(Draft)*

Participants engaged in a discussion about the “what elements” would they like to see in a vision for the city. While not final, below is a vision statement for the city that captures the major themes of the retreat discussion. The city council and staff will revise this as needed.

*The City of Maplewood will be recognized as beautiful place to live, work, do business and enjoy the natural environment within minutes of two large urban cities. We will continue to be a progressive, safe town that respects and welcomes diversity in its citizens. Maplewood is a vibrant, sustainable community of older neighborhoods, single-family homes, parks, trails, open spaces, modern mixed-use developments and a strong infrastructure. Once Maplewood residents move here, they stay here. City leaders will use the principals of “good government” to continuously strive to make Maplewood a “green” city, a walkable city, one that is being revitalized and known as a hub of activities for all ages.*

## 2010 - THREE YEAR GOALS

(Ranked by City Council)

### Goal No. 1: Restore Reputation of Maplewood:

Re-establish Maplewood's reputation as an attractive, viable community with good management, financial stability, sensible leadership, professional and dedicated staff, and a realistic, progressive vision.

#### Restoration of Reputation Focus for 2010-2011:

- a. Create an open and welcoming council that engages all citizens.
  - b. Take steps to restore trust and respect between the citizens, staff and elected officials.
  - c. Develop/restore a "Pride in our City" positive image for Maplewood with our residents, the media, and other government entities.
  - d. Achieve All-American City Award.
  - e. Improve our standing with League of MN Cities.
  - f. Create a recognition award for citizens; for doing great things in Maplewood "THE BEST OF MAPLEWOOD" to be given at council meetings.
  - g. Re-establish the Human Relations Commission.
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### Goal No. 2: Good Government:

Make Maplewood city government transparent and accessible; operate within an environment of efficiency and mutual respect.

#### Good Government Focus for 2010-2011:

- a. Welcome and encourage citizen involvement.
- b. Do not let the city's path be dictated simply by the loudest and most persistent voices that show up at city meetings.
- c. Be committed to the public good.
- d. Fully discuss issues at workshops, to arrive at consensus, or agree to disagree.
- e. Consider having an ethics policy and/or ordinance.
- f. Modify city department structure to reflect citizen/service needs.
- g. Conduct a Citizen Survey to find out the needs and ideas of our citizens.
- h. Revise the budget process:
  - i. Start preparation and discussions earlier in the year.
  - ii. Have an open House or similar event.
- i. Hold the line on COLAs in 2011 labor agreements.

**Goal No. 3: Parks and Recreation Department:**

Re-establish a Parks and Recreation Department; revitalize leadership, establish new direction, program determination/stabilization, and possible joint venture with neighboring communities.

**Parks and Recreation Focus for 2010-2011:**

- a. Survey interest groups/stakeholders
  - b. Partnerships: other communities, school districts, youth organizations, legislators
  - c. Organizational plan/time frames: natural resource piece, land management piece
  - d. Funding:
    - i. Internal - council comfort zone, referendum, park foundation
    - ii. External - collaboration, grants, private sources
  - e. Resident participation in all aspects of new programs
  - f. Department leadership: provide direction, sustainable, long-term plan
  - g. Park redevelopment - Economic Development PACs
  - h. Cultural (Arts) Board
    - i. Arts
    - ii. Cultural diversity
  - i. Work in conjunction with Parks Board
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**Goal No. 4: Environmental Planning:**

Further develop processes for "going green," sustainability.

**Environmental Planning Focus for 2010-2011:**

- a. Create incentives for green development;
- b. Enhance and fund open space management.
- c. Consider bonding for Fish Creek

**Goal No. 5: Fiscal Responsibility:**

Managing the city's finances and financial planning effectively, with an eye to providing stability and maximum value in the long term for our residents.

**Fiscal Responsibility Focus for 2010-2011:**

- a. Work to improve Maplewood's bond rating.
  - b. Re-emphasize council, department head and staff input into budget process.
  - c. Reestablish confidence in the Finance Department,
  - d. Hold department heads to be fiscally responsible in managing their budgets.
  - e. Ensure that accurate and updated information be provided by the Finance Department.
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**Goal No. 6: Infrastructure**

Complete Infrastructure upgrades.

**Infrastructure Focus for 2010-2011:**

- a. Complete Infrastructure upgrades.
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**Goal No. 7: Redevelopment Plan:**

Create and commit to a redevelopment plan for the city. (Reinvigorate/expand for city)

**Redevelopment Plan Focus for 2010-2011:**

- a. Prioritize areas: Gladstone - existing efforts; Hillcrest; TH 36/English; Century Avenue
- b. Review finance tools and/or approaches: Site cleanup; Property buyouts; Maplewood Bowl; Cleanup Savanna; Transit Station (Rush Line); ARRA II; Met Council; Marketing to developers; EDA - purchase/levy
- c. Update Master Plan with zoning
- d. Consider: Low interest loan money for housing rehab, "Incentives" for business/mixed use redevelopment.

## OBJECTIVES OR SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES: 2010 - 2012

(Ranked)

These priorities are the things that both council and staff will focus on in the next couple of years to meet their stated goals, in addition to the "focus" elements under each goal. Council and staff ranked the Priorities as follows:

1. **Quality Services** – Maintaining a high quality of services as the city goes through tough economic times and a transition to "good government".
2. **Integration of Parks and Recreation Parks Funding:** We need to commit a portion of the levy to capital funding for existing parks, or find another dedicated revenue source. Investigate possible co-operation programs with neighboring communities, when feasible.
3. **Economic Development:** Increasing and diversifying Maplewood's tax base by working with the newly formed Economic Development Authority.
4. **Redevelopment:** Investment into redevelopment issues and development of a plan.
5. **Organized Trash Collection:** Using the free market (competitive bidding) and collaborating with private industry, the city can organize collection on a neighborhood basis to reduce costs, reduce pollution, and extend the life of our roads.
6. **Survey:** Complete an in-depth survey of citizens. Use it to further define goals.
7. **Infrastructure:** Maintaining investment into infrastructure and cleaning up polluted storm water runoff.
8. **Budget/ Finance:** Stabilize/revitalize budget process; restore and reestablish confidence in the Finance Department.
9. Complete and institute **a marketing plan and PR campaign**. Also, suggestions from small group discussion:
  - ✚ Calendar of events and city services and opportunities
  - ✚ Section in MM for citizens and business recognition and in council chambers
  - ✚ Clear Channel Boards - recognizing the above
  - ✚ More involvement with St Paul Chamber
  - ✚ Collaboration with WBABA
  - ✚ Monthly ad or article in Maplewood Review
  - ✚ Don't be afraid to TOOT our own HORN!
  - ✚ Create cable TV show - Just do it!
10. **Achieve successful negotiation of its 2011** labor contracts between the city and all of its collective bargaining groups.

### BIGGEST OBSTACLES OR BARRIERS THE CITY WILL FACE

These are forces that the council and staff identified as obstacles to be overcome or “manage around” for the city achieve the goals and priorities identified at the retreat.

- A. **Money issues**, including citizen resistance to property tax increases and a general reluctance from council and staff to propose increases.
- B. **Council and Staff Meeting** - Inability of city council and staff to meet informally, “off camera” to brainstorm, work things through, etc.
- C. **Economic Environment** - Residents are hurting in their personal finances; businesses face not only the economic downturn but the relative shifts in property values for commercial versus residential, which is putting more of the tax burden on them
- D. **Funding/lack of funding** - Market Value Homestead Credit (MVHC); State and county mandates without funding sources. The budget.
- E. **Aging Population** — This brings numerous challenges, including changing needs for city services and amenities, plus the fact that seniors tend to be hit harder than workforce-age adults by the shifting of tax burden away from income and toward regressive property taxes (and sales taxes).
- F. **Fear of the unknown.**
- G. **Health Care Costs** — Continuing to provide health care to city employees, even with the savings of the HSA/High Deductible plan, will hurt other priorities as health care costs continue to rocket up.
- H. **Workload of Staff** – Due to cuts and elimination of a number of positions within the City over the past few years, there is limited staff capacity to take on new initiatives.
- I. **The Usual Malcontents** — Various folks, well known to the council and staff who are likely to continue to seek any opportunity to create controversy, propagate misinformation, and generally derail city government.
- J. **Public Perception.** Constant, relentless (abnormally), unfounded criticism and counterproductive activity by a group of negative citizens, including two public access cable TV hosts. This negativity does effect public perception.

### OTHER TOPICS – Direction from Council

- 1) Administrative Fines (Ramsey County sheriff is implementing); Maplewood PD will not be implementing this program.
- 2) Fire Station Inventory / Feasibility: Council will discuss in a workshop; Chief Lukin will prepare inventory and options.
- 3) Organized Collection: Dewey Konewko will take the lead to come up with a plan, timeframe.
- 4) Maplewood Community Center: Staff will put together and list of issues, budget, and options for council review, workshop.
- 5) HR policies: impact on levy and attracting the best. Chuck Bethel will prepare report for council.

### OPERATIONS OF COUNCIL

Suggestions on how the operations of the Council can be improved were made by the mayor and council members:

1. Mayor expects council and staff help him run meetings
2. Be concise in comments
3. Have fun
4. Listen and learn in workshops; conduct business in cc meetings (Mayor)
5. Don't take selves so seriously
6. Try not to pile up the workshop agendas
7. Disagree without being disagreeable
8. Staff - does the work -- not paid to agree/disagree
9. Consider pre-agenda meeting
10. Council to provide clear direction to staff
11. Change voting method (Mayor)
12. Be proactive vs. reactive
13. Council make suggestions about topics going to workshop, not just staff.
14. Have the courage to have informal discussions with staff
15. Argue your case (before the vote, not after the vote)

### COUNCIL AND STAFF (TOGETHER) TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

One of the small groups was asked to come up with ideas on how to improve the council/staff working relation ship. Their input, along with input from the pre-retreat surveys is included below.

- ✚ Council to have informal interactions with all staff.
- ✚ Practice a proactive method of governance.
- ✚ "Just working together"
- ✚ Council: clear on the policy direction and staff needs to implement outcomes.
- ✚ Both being engaged and committed.
- ✚ Retreat is a large step in the right direction.
- ✚ (Already established) Staff can weigh-in at Council meetings.
- ✚ Re-establish trust (already moving ahead on that).
- ✚ Have a retreat or "mini-retreat" each quarter of the year.



**ACTION ITEMS**

1) Develop a management action plan (MAP) for implementation of the goals and priorities set by the council and staff at the retreat. Include the action items herein, regarding who will be assigned to them and a target date for completion. Example:

Goal/ Priority	Program, Focus, Initiative, Objective	Who: CC- Staff	Target dates	Comments, status

- 2) Refine the "Vision Statement" draft. Send to the city council for refinement, rewording and acceptance.
- 3) Engage the public in the budgeting process.
- 4) Implement "Council Operations" suggestions.
- 5) Communicate departmental goals and objectives to council – a review (venue to be determined).
- 6) Consider (both Council and Staff) using all the suggestions made regarding Council and Staff effectiveness.
- 6) Communicate to necessary parties that Maplewood PD will not be implementing the administrative fine program.
- 7) Chief Lukin will prepare inventory and options regarding the Fire Station Inventory / Feasibility: Council will discuss in a workshop.
- 8) Dewey Konewko will take the lead on Organized Collection -- come up with a plan, timeframe.
- 9) Maplewood Community Center: Staff will put together and list of issues, budget, and options for council review, workshop.
- 10) Chuck Bethel will prepare report for council on the impact of HR policies on levy and attracting the best employees.
- 11) Begin development of a marketing plan and PR campaign for city.
- 12) Develop an approach to Redevelopment – a plan.

End of Summary  
Prepared by Barbara Strandell