



CIVIC HEALTH CHECK™ COMMUNITY AUDITS



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Prepared for:
City Administrator Adam Sonntag



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We extend special thanks to all City of Ripon staff who participated in the employee survey and workshop.

Introduction to City of Ripon Civic Health Check™ Report

Civic Health Check™ is a customized organizational audit for local government clients. This proprietary approach provides an affordable means for organizations to better understand their challenges and pain points so that they can develop a short-term plan to enhance their organizational culture. Developed by Allyson Brunette Consulting in 2022, Civic Health Check™ is a unique product offering that gives a high-level report on organizational health and a short-term prescription for revitalizing their organization.

Allyson Brunette Consulting worked with the City of Ripon in September and October 2023 through a series of surveys, one-on-one interviews, and two workshops to better understand organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as to evaluate organizational health. The two in-person workshops facilitated in the City of Ripon focused on finding consensus between staff and elected officials on organizational vision, mission, and core values.

Our Process

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| Data Gathering (Anonymous) | Anonymous surveys for staff and elected officials |
| Data Gathering (Identified & Confidential) | Confidential one-on-one interviews with department heads and elected officials |
| Community Tour | Tour of municipal facilities to better understand organizational environment and municipal projects |
| Mission, Vision, and Values Workshops | Facilitated in-person workshops to build consensus between staff and elected officials |
| Report Generation and Delivery | Final report developed including research, organizational health scores, SWOT analysis, and mission and vision statements |

Data Gathering: Anonymous

Digital surveys were launched in early September for Ripon employees and elected officials to complete anonymously. While participants were asked some questions about their departments (for employees) and tenure of serving on City Council (elected officials), there were efforts made to not directly identify survey respondents. Survey responses were used to better inform questions included in one-on-one interviews. Survey questions related to organizational efficiencies (and inefficiencies), budget priorities, community perceptions, and concerns or opportunities for the future of the organization and community. 33 responses were received across both surveys during the two weeks that the survey tool was live.

Data Gathering: Identified and Confidential

45-60 minute one-on-one interviews were completed via telephone or video conference with department heads and elected officials in the weeks following the digital survey tool deployment. These questions were developed based on digital survey feedback and related more to organizational processes, turnover, recruitment, and departmental specific feedback. Participants were granted confidentiality in their interviews to ensure candid responses were received. While feedback is summarized in this report, we have gone to great lengths to anonymize and summarize findings to protect the identities of participants.

Community Tour

City Administrator Adam Sonntag provided Allyson Brunette with a 90-minute community wide tour on October 24th highlighting residential areas, industrial and commercial areas, the downtown corridor and municipal parks and facilities. This tour highlighted areas where municipally budgeted projects have been high priorities as well as areas where community involvement and feedback has been received at a higher level.

Mission, Vision and Values Workshops

Two identical workshops were facilitated on October 24th by Allyson Brunette Consulting. The earlier afternoon workshop was held with non-management department participants, and the evening workshop was held with department heads and elected officials. The workshops aimed to help the group find consensus around organizational core values, as well as to identify a future vision for the City of Ripon as a community and as a government organization. The groups also worked toward assembling the components of a mission statement (audiences, contributions, and distinctions). Our team used these components to develop a series of mission

and vision statements for consideration. A follow-up survey was sent out and the mission and vision statements which garnered the most support are included in this final report. The summary findings (in full) of these workshops are included in this report.

Organizational SWOT Analysis

A key starting point for organizational development analyses is conducting a SWOT analysis. This step requires elected officials and staff to look internally (and often look past an inherent ego that we bring to our professions). All organizations have positive features (strengths), and all organizations have room for improvement (weaknesses). An honest assessment of where an organization can grow and improve itself is key to having production conversations and to facilitate effective decision-making. As consultants, we always remind client organizations that organizational problems do not have to become personal problems. But individual staff and elected officials can play an important role in their organizations' continual self-improvement.

The analysis was developed following the completion of 17 one-on-one interviews with elected officials and department heads in the City of Ripon. This report strives to serve as an honest and complete summary of the many perspectives our team heard in one-on-one interviews. The report is largely thematic and is generalized enough to not point fingers at individual respondents but instead to call attention to recurring themes which were heard.

Strengths

Strengths are the things that set you apart as an organization of choice. These define your image, reputation, brand. As these assets begin to degrade, your reputation and brand may face the same consequence. Some of these strengths represent the community at-large, and others represent the organization.

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| Ripon offers a welcoming community culture | Ripon is described by numerous participants as a warm and welcoming community, much more so than similarly sized smaller cities / villages in the state. Perhaps this can be credited to the frequent turnover that comes with a college, or perhaps there is just something truly special about Ripon. Either way, this welcoming and inclusive culture makes Ripon a community where people want to live and raise their families. |
| Downtown Ripon is a vibrant destination | Ripon's historic downtown is a gem and has become a destination for visitors and locals alike. The downtown's vibrancy has been the result of joint partnerships from the Main Street program, the City and the Chamber of Commerce. Ripon has some homegrown success stories of entrepreneurs who have invested heavily in the downtown area. |
| City policies are increasingly aligning with organizational values | Ripon has embraced recent updates to its employee handbook and policies - efforts which have helped to better reflect shared values of work/life balance, family as a priority, and flexibility. |
| City of Ripon is a highly collaborative organization | Current City management is invested in bringing together leaders within the organization to weigh issues and brainstorm solutions. While some |

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| | managers aren't open to feedback, that isn't the case in Ripon. Employees feel that they have ownership in solving issues, that their ideas are valued, and that they are listened to by leadership. |
| Investments in the community are being noticed and are generating excitement | City staff and elected officials shared excitement about the recent investment in municipal parks, grant funding opportunities, new Public Works facilities, and private investments at Ripon College. These investments reinforce that Ripon is a vibrant place and is helping to generate additional civic pride in the community. |

Weaknesses

Weaknesses are the things your organization is grappling with in the present day. These are fires, whereas Threats are smoke. You can't ignore weaknesses, and you cannot simply put them on the back burner.

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| The organization is digging its way out of a deep hole of deferred investment | Present elected officials and staff find themselves in the unenviable position of replacing and upgrading aging facilities and infrastructure that suffered from long-deferred maintenance. As a result, equipment, roads, and facilities for many departments are in poor shape and will take a significant number of years to bring up to par. |
| There is a need for more mentoring, coaching, and HR soft skills in Administration Department | With a lean number of team members in the Administration Department, the City Administrator's office is torn between managing operations and providing the coaching and mentorship that direct reports desire. Department heads have expressed a desire for more intentional coaching on setting goals, stay interviews outside of performance reviews / compensation discussions, and more one-on-one training in management skills. |
| Lack of a proactive approach to organizational succession planning | Multiple departments have shared that department head transitions have been challenging as there was poor or limited documentation by predecessors, or that departments had to be "dragged" into the 21st century. It poses an undue burden on incoming department heads to dig themselves out of the mess a predecessor left. Making process guidelines, SOPs, and implementing technology de facto will set departments up for greater success in the future when leadership transitions. This also lays the groundwork to ensure Ripon attracts top candidates when positions do open. |
| Current inability to calculate actual cost of inefficiencies and cost savings that might be realized | The City of Ripon relies heavily on processes and technology that have not kept pace with the private sector (for example: licensing, packet development). As the public sector relies heavily on exempt (salaried) roles and does not calculate billable hours for employees, it is difficult to |

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| | quantify the cost of inefficiency. Developing a mechanism to calculate the cost of low-tech processes vs. implementation and cost savings of tech implementation would help Council to better understand the cost of improvements and cost savings that might be realized. |
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Opportunities

Opportunities are the tools or strategies you can leverage to address organizational problems. Some of these were the early stages of solutions that we heard YOU mention in survey responses or interviews, and some are high level solutions that we've seen peer organizations apply in similar circumstances. How you use these tools is up to you - but they are in your toolkit at your disposal.

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| Explore innovative ways to spur housing development in community | Housing development is a major priority for all elected officials we spoke with, and they see this as a direct need to protect Ripon's employers. There is a sense that City department heads should prioritize bringing forward unique and innovative opportunities to incentivize housing development ranging in type (from multifamily to two family and single family). |
| Explore project management tools; focus time to limit workplace distractions | Team members expressed frustration that constant interruptions make it difficult for them to complete their work tasks within business hours. Implementation of new business hours, communication policies, or project management tools may help employees to better manage their workflow and reduce workplace distractions. |
| Explore creation of Communications role in Administration Department | Departments manage their own marketing and communications with mixed results. There could be benefits of investing in a marketing and communications role that could focus on delivering all City communications (DPW, Clerk, Library, Recreation, etc.) in a cohesive way across multiple platforms. |
| Maximize benefit of existing department head meetings by adding more structure | Department heads all agree that the bi-monthly meetings add value to their role by ensuring that departments do not remain siloed. These meetings might add more value if the location rotated among City buildings (as a reminder that the City is present across multiple buildings) and perhaps adopted a more formal structure. These meetings could be used for issue discussion and resolution, leadership development, departmental highlights to raise education on City operations, or debriefing following Council meetings. |
| Reduce isolation of Utility Department through joint office space | The water and wastewater utility departments are unique in that they operate in a remote facility and do not often engage with City Hall staff. This has resulted in this department, which is facing staffing shortages, feeling cut off and isolated. The department could greatly use the benefit of having additional administrative support. This could be |

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| | realized through shared FTE or cross-trained staff in a joint office space. |
| Develop clear expectations on communications between staff and elected officials | There can be a communication void between City Council and Department heads. Some City Council members understand that they are not to contact department heads directly but should always go through the City Administrator. The City can look to develop clear expectations and decision-tree maps on where to direct questions and feedback to keep operations humming and avoid micromanagement. |
| Continue to enhance and develop more education for City Council on process and procedure | Some elected officials expressed a desire for enhanced training to help them to understand how to bring ideas forth, how ideas are referred to committee or staff, and how to advocate for policy changes and engage community members to do the same. A better understanding of the procedural elements of being an elected official would empower City Council to assume (and understand) their role as policy makers. |
| Devote more time to workshop issues and ideas to benefit decision-making bodies | By the time issues come before the City Council, they have most likely already been "workshopped" by staff. Adjusting the City Council / Committee of the Whole model may empower citizens and committee members to play a more active role in addressing community issues. |

Threats

Threats are things your organization is beginning to realize or which very well may be realized in the next 3-5 years. These are smoke, whereas weaknesses are fire. You might not need to jump immediately into solution-generating for these issues, but you don't want to wholly ignore them either.

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| Political divisiveness and focus on national or cultural issues is seeping into local, non-partisan politics | Elected officials shared that national and cultural identity politics are seeping into local, non-partisan politics. This is not solely a Ripon issue but is a trend happening nationally. This is exacerbated by a loss of independent journalism, the spread of mis/disinformation on social media platforms, and a general trend toward incivility between members of the public. What can Ripon do to help community members unite behind non-divisive causes within their community AND communicate accurate and unbiased messaging from the City? |
| There is limited interest in elected office opportunities in Ripon | A limited pool of applicants expresses interest in running for Ripon City Council. The public seems hyper focused on issues such as taxes, road quality, and the recycling center. Generating an informative community academy (as modeled by other municipalities nationally) can educate residents, create grassroots advocates, and generate interest in public service opportunities. |

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| <p>Service delivery is marked by inefficient, outdated approaches</p> | <p>As mentioned under the Weaknesses section of this report, the City of Ripon can be a skeptical organization when it comes to implementing change. In a challenging labor economy and with the rapid pace of technological advancements, staff need to innovate to find ways to deliver services with fewer FTE. Shifting to a culture that encourages innovation will take intentionality and training.</p> |
| <p>Administrator has too great a management span</p> | <p>The present organizational chart indicates that the City Administrator has nine direct reports, but functionally, two additional staff members noted that they treat the City Administrator as their direct supervisor. Reducing the Administrator's direct reports or management span will ensure that the Administrator is not spread too thin.</p> |
| <p>Organization has a skepticism toward change that must be overcome</p> | <p>"We've always done it this way" has defined organizational decisions in the City of Ripon for at least a decade. As a result, there is a definitive need for new policies and procedures to be implemented. Department heads and Council members need to explore innovative ways of finding cost savings, which requires an openness to change from business as usual. How can a culture that is comfortable with the status quo shift to become more innovative?</p> |

Indicators of Organizational Health

There are many methodologies when it comes to measuring organizational health. From analyzing multiple approaches, our Civic Health Check™ tool measures six areas of organizational health. Our report defines each area of health and provides metrics that you can in turn track to measure your future health performance. For areas where organizational health can be improved, our report includes a prescription of short-term actions the municipality can take that will hopefully move the needle in that specific health area.

Organizational Alignment

In a well-aligned municipal organization, employees and elected officials have a clear consensus on the organization's "why." By sharing a strong consensus on core values, organizational vision and mission, all parties consistently understand how their role (no matter how big or small) directly correlates to the organization's big-picture goal. In a well-aligned organization,

- Departments can work together easily, and individuals understand the goals, functions, and processes within adjacent departments. In other words, silos are broken down.
- There are clear broad goals for the organization, and departments and individual team members have clearly documented goals, which are revisited during performance reviews and employee check-ins.
- Individuals understand their role and the roles of their colleagues. This ties directly into the next organizational health outcome: processes and workflows. Team members can communicate clearly and respectfully with colleagues when there is role confusion or if an outcome is not on track to be reached.

On an individual level, employees in a well-aligned organization have a well-supported *spiritual capacity*. This does not, as one might think, hold a religious connotation. Instead, this speaks to an employee's self-awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as an understanding of their personal core values. By understanding one's personal values and drivers, team members better understand one another and how to work effectively together.

Clear Processes and Workflows

"Clear processes and workflows" means that teams have established, documented, and repeatable mechanisms for executing departmental functions. These processes are reviewed regularly to ensure that inefficiencies are removed; technology is used when possible to remove low value tasks; and processes are used as a manual for ensuring cross-departmental training. Communications are clear, too, between team members. Not only does this mean that employees feel comfortable receiving and providing feedback to one another on efforts, it also means that:

- A delicate balance is achieved between maintaining employee confidentiality when needed, but there is not a culture of secrecy where departments feel that they are out of the loop.
- Clear expectations are set about how quick responses are necessary for communications; what time of day/hours of the day communications are expected; and how to communicate internally and externally to maintain utmost professionalism.

Organizations that have clear processes and workflows make efforts to build employee *intellectual capacity*. Employees are offered opportunities to enhance their performance in their

current role by establishing good workplace habits and routines, ensuring productive and consistent structure in the workday. Regularly offering opportunities for continuous learning in the workplace ensures employees are best prepared for their present roles and gives employees and leadership opportunities to understand leadership development trajectories.

Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing often is reduced to the consideration of only physical health. As employees continue to navigate a post-pandemic world of work that is executed in a hybrid fashion (between work and home), employee physical wellbeing extends to mental health. Organizations that are invested in raising the bar for employees' *physical capacity* ensure that team members are:

- Energized and focused at work – not coming into work overly tired, stressed, or prone to making errors.
- Able to get more work done in less time by minimizing stressors and promoting health habits, such as mindfulness.
- Able to find balance by disconnecting from work tasks at the end of day.
- Granted time off and are able to take time off without undue stressors about obligations or projects falling through the cracks.
- Given opportunities to maximize physical well-being, through opportunities such as wellness reimbursement, access to exercise facilities, friendly wellness challenges, etc.

Creating a culture that emphasizes and encourages employee wellbeing distills down to two key practices: Following the leader (having leadership model good work/life balance) and building better habits as a team (acknowledging and rewarding employees for prioritizing balance, modeling organizational habits that prioritize focus and limit distractions).

Organizational Fairness

An organization which is fair is one in which employees feel respected and that they are treated as equals within the workplace. This has three key areas: pay equity, policy development and enforcement, and the consistency with which poor performance is addressed and corrected by management. There is no magic wand to wave to have employees perceive a workplace as a fair one, but benchmarks of a workplace which treats employees fairly often include policies and practices such as:

- Clear performance assessment techniques tied to compensation.
- Open and honest conversations about employee performance and career paths within the organization.
- Workplace benefits which are inclusive of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.
- Implementing wage analysis comparing organizational wages to peer organizations and understanding wage gaps, if existing, between genders within the organization.

Meaningful Work

In local government, the work which the organization does impacts the lives of every individual and organization which operates in or enters the community. The impact which employees have can be lost in the mundane or stressors of the day-to-day. Post-pandemic, emotions and tempers have run high within the public, which has resulted in an increasingly stressful workplace environment for many public servants. Finding ways to connect employees with the

importance of their work and to ensure that they feel valued for the meaningful work they are doing can lead to outcomes such as:

- Increased employee motivation.
- Increased employee retention.
- A greater commitment to solving problems and finding client solutions vs. just checking the box at work.
- A chance to boost employee morale through recognition and celebration of meaningful accomplishments.

Innovation and Resilience

Organizations which are innovative are constantly seeking solutions to problems and improvement of the status quo. Resilient organizations recognize the fact that there will be hurdles ahead. Post-pandemic, organizations are working with lower staffing levels, increased threats of cybersecurity or civil unrest, and climate change realities which tax public safety responses in local government. Resilient organizations see these hurdles and have a plan to continue delivering essential services despite the hurdles. Interestingly, one of the biggest drivers for developing innovative and resilient organizations is investing in employees' *emotional capacity*.

Organizations which welcome vulnerability and strengthen employees' sense of working in a psychologically safe place foster teams which communicate more effectively, have strong relationships of trust, and which can accept and heed critical feedback. These organizations are more adaptive and flexible in their leadership, and employees feel a stronger sense of social belonging within their teams. The benefits of creating a psychologically safe workplace extend well beyond crisis response. Organizations can see cost-saving results such as:

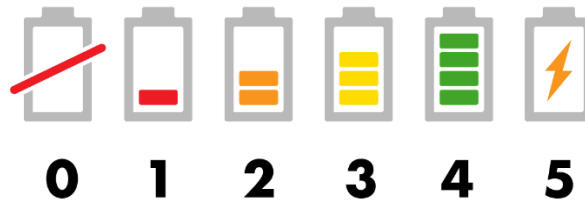
- Decreased employee turnover.
- Higher job performance.
- Reduced sick days.

An innovative and resilient workplace should be both comfortable and challenging. These may seem to cancel one another out, but one empowers the other. A comfortable team dynamic - which invites honesty, feedback, and accountability where team members feel that they belong - directly results in a team which is more apt to take responsible risks, experiment and innovate together, and push the limits when it comes to seeking out solutions.

City of Ripon Organizational Health Scores

Organizational health scores are based on a ranking system which awards up to 15 points in each category, for an overall "perfect" score of 90. Obviously no organization is perfect at any given time, so we remind clients that the goal is to maintain high scores in categories where they have already achieved success and work toward raising low scores in opportunity areas. We represent scores visually with a battery indicator. Batteries indicate the ability to recharge – whereas letter grades can at times seem unmovable. The battery serves as a visual reminder that by making an intentional effort to recharge a weak cell, organizations can advance their health and continuously improve.

Organizational Health Indicator Scores



The City of Ripon's organizational health indicator scores in each section are noted below.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------------|
| Organizational Alignment |  | 4/5 |
| Clear Processes & Workflows |  | 2/5 |
| Employee Wellbeing |  | 3/5 |
| Organizational Fairness |  | 3/5 |
| Meaningful Work |  | 4/5 |
| Innovation & Resilience |  | 2/5 |

Additional notes about health indicator scores are detailed below.

1. Organizational Alignment (4/5)

We were impressed while facilitating the organizational mission, vision and values workshops in October how aligned staff members, department heads, and elected officials were on organizational vision and values – despite having not participating in a structured values or vision workshop prior to this occasion. Organizational alignment must be rooted in authentic,

shared values; you can't simply declare that you have a value – you must live it daily. It is evident that City of Ripon team members live their values authentically at work.

Areas where the organization could work to strengthen its Organizational Alignment score toward a score of 5/5 might include:

- Developing a formal employee check-in meeting which is employee-led, and which is goals-focused (vs. compensation - and performance-focused, as is the case with the annual performance review). Having employees establish and stick to outcomes-focused goals serves as a reminder of how an individual's work ties into the larger organizational goal.
- Participating in strengths-focused employee leadership training where teams which routinely work together learn about one another's personal strengths, weaknesses, and values. Self-awareness in teams and within management results in higher operational functioning. This tool can also guide interview processes to ensure candidates fit your existing team.
- Continuing to put the pieces together from the October 2023 workshop to establish and adopt an organizational vision and mission statement. Reinforce these statements on internal documents and use it as a north star to guide decisions.

2. Clear Processes and Workflows (2/5)

Process and workflows can very much be enhanced within the City of Ripon. While there is room for improvement, some of this challenge stems from recent organizational turnover in a number of departments. Processes are established, documented, and repeated mechanisms for accomplishing tasks within an organization. Our impression from department head interviews is that few processes are formally documented, and recent financial questions in some departments stress the need for established, documented, and repeatable processes.

With a relatively lean administrative staff, team members need to be able to rely on one another to cover for one another when they are out of office or on leave. Process documentation greatly helps to ensure that customers receive the service and solutions they need, regardless of who is in office on any given day. Process documentation can also point to inefficiencies, help guide opportunities to outsource or modernize, and aid in training of new employees.

Another theme that emerged was that some employees do not feel that they have the tools or organizational habits to maximize their work day. Employees' intellectual capacity can be strengthened by coaching good workplace habits, providing technology and tools to enable productivity, and offering continuing education to employees in areas that empower their strengths. Some specific areas where Ripon could work to increase its Processes and Workflow scores are:

- Engage in process mapping exercises at the departmental level. Identify where inefficiencies or service gaps occur in a process and find opportunities to automate and "lean down" cumbersome or time-consuming processes.
- Work on cross-training and have employees from different teams establish specific goals on a monthly or quarterly basis to train a team member on how to execute a certain process.

- Develop a formal communications role within the City. Ripon is a smaller organization and we sensed from interviews that team members support one another like an extended family, but that there can be gossip and negative communication practices. Gossip often emerges when there is a communication void and people feel that information is being withheld or answers are not available to them. Developing a formal communication role may help to reduce gossip and ensure a more trusting relationship with management.
- Set clear expectations around reducing distractions in the workplace and encourage more mindful use of email when communicating internally and externally. Aligned with the next measure of employee wellbeing, employees shared that they feel particularly stressed about responding to emails in a timely fashion. One recommended, easy-to-implement email measure might be the two-minute/two-hour rule: If an email can be responded to and resolved in under two minutes, respond at that time. If it takes more than two minutes to formulate a response, batch emails and respond at a set time within the next two hours.

3. Employee Wellbeing (3/5)

Employee wellbeing goes well beyond compensation: it is shaped by the habits, productivity, and healthy relationship we form with our jobs – and it is highly individual in nature. Managers can coax efficient and productive outcomes from employees by coaching employees in how to make the best use of the workday.

We heard recurring themes from employees of struggles with time and project management. Some opportunities for Ripon to increase its Employee Wellbeing score from a 3/5 include:

- Exempt employees who regularly require 45+ hours weekly to execute their job functions can be coached in time blocking. By identifying high-priority tasks and time blocking one's day, employees can spend more time in focused, productive work, rather than having to reestablish focus while switching between tasks.
- Consider expanded use of a project management app, such as Microsoft Teams, Asana, or Monday.com. Teams is often already in use in local government organizations as a part of the subscription to Microsoft Office Suite. This program allows employees to break down projects into steps, assign deadlines, communicate asynchronously with team members, and trigger calendar reminders.
- Encourage employees to reduce their stress in the workplace by offering opportunities and incentives for mindfulness – such as supporting the use of a meditation app, agreeing upon environmental enhancements that make the workplace more agreeable (such as a no-music-without-headphones policy), or reducing volumes on phone ringers.
- Offer wellness incentives that are flexible to help employees be physically active – such as reimbursement for exercise equipment, subscriptions to wellness apps, or even diet and lifestyle memberships.
- Make wellness accessible in the workplace. This reminds employees that their wellness is a goal of management. We were pleased to hear that Ripon is considering the addition of an employee fitness center in the lower level of City Hall.
- Set expectations clearly with employees about workplace flexibility. We were pleased to hear that Ripon supports employees taking the time they need to take care of family (an important element of an employee's wellbeing), but it seems that not all employees

understand that flexibility is a two-way street. Rather than using the handbook as a stick, encourage frank conversations with management and employees about deliverables and outcomes to ensure they are being met.

4. Organizational Fairness (3/5)

Organizational fairness often has an outsized emphasis on compensation. In today's employee-driven labor economy, compensation is often used as a recruitment tool, and harder-to-fill roles may be paying above average wages. Municipal governments, unlike private companies, are subject to government transparency and sunshine standards. Ripon should be recognized for some recent updates to the employee handbook to empower workplace flexibility, paid family leave, and the ability to support colleagues through a formal PTO donation process. The City can continue to increase its Organizational Fairness metric by:

- Studying gender parity within the organization in both management roles and compensation.
- Routinely performing a wage analysis against peer communities to ensure that wages are in alignment with industry averages.
- Following the employee handbook consistently and ensuring that should there be situations that might be interpreted as unfair, formal communication is issued from management (where possible, without violating employee confidentiality).
- Soliciting and listening to employee feedback on an ongoing basis. Ask employees to share their concerns during check-ins or via anonymous submission if individuals do not feel safe sharing feedback.
- Considering revisions to employee performance reviews to 360° reviews, where employees share feedback on their colleagues' performance.

5. Meaningful Work (4/5)

Many employees who work in local government are called to the profession from a desire to serve others and give back to the community where they live or have family connections. While the nature of serving others is evident in roles such as emergency responders, the connection between inherently bureaucratic work and a noble mission can be lost in the day-to-day. Employees want to feel that the work that they do connects to a bigger purpose, and feeling that work is meaningful is an often-cited metric for something that Millennials and Gen Z seek from their employment, sometimes even a more important metric to them than compensation.

Ripon has scored high in the Meaningful Work measure, but some ways that the community can continue to increase its score include:

- Inviting opportunities for employees to share examples of positive customer interactions / evidence of City work making a difference in citizen lives.
- Reinforcing organizational mission and vision statements in frequently seen locations.
- Recognizing employees who live the organizational mission and vision for their work. Understand employees well enough to know their preferred way of being recognized (not everyone likes the spotlight!).
- Designating time to escape the hamster wheel of day-to-day work by establishing problem-solving meetings where employees bring forward inefficiencies, issues, or problems that need additional brainpower to resolve. Creative work that doesn't fit the

mold of the day-to-day helps employees feel that they are accomplishing something and encourages innovation, the theme of our next organizational health indicator.

6. Innovation and Resilience (2/5)

Working toward creating an innovative and resilient workplace is imperative in local government. The industry has seen persistent challenges in hiring and threats which disrupt government service delivery (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-related severe weather events, civil unrest, and cybersecurity threats). Building teams that can be innovative and resilient requires that organizations invest in the psychological and emotional safety of their team members.

Ripon has room to improve the City's Innovation and Resilience score up from 2/5. Some ways that the city can approach this include:

- Finding ways to incorporate team feedback into processes, and eliminating the shame associated with receiving negative feedback. Normalized feedback as an opportunity to grow and improve in the workplace.
- Continuing to find ways for employees to build social bonds in and outside the workplace. Ripon has experimented with an employee volleyball team – an excellent way to build team dynamics inside and outside the workplace.
- Encouraging team members to brainstorm or model how service delivery would continue in Ripon if key systems were jeopardized – such as if email servers, software, or payment processing were compromised.
- Assigning teams the opportunity to identify and reduce inefficiency in their departments. Task employees with finding multiple solutions to the inefficiency and calculating the cost of how a process or task is performed currently and what savings could be realized with an innovation.

Achieving innovation within a team requires striking a delicate balance as a manager between having employees feel comfortable and safe within their team and pushing them outside their comfort zone in how they approach their job. Employees should not plateau in their role where all of the job functions can be performed with their eyes closed (metaphorically); rather, employees should be challenged by their job.

Prescriptions for Organizational Excellence

The following short-term projects are initiatives that the City of Ripon can undertake in the next 1-3 years to improve organizational health. These are separated into initiatives that require budgetary support, initiatives which require policy support, and initiatives which require management action.

BUDGETARY SUPPORT

- ✓ Bring in an outside consultant to facilitate strengths leadership training for employees. Perhaps start with a training for department heads and boil down to the staff level on teams as budget permits. Some accessible trainings include DiSC Profile, Enneagram, Real Colors, and Clifton Strengths Assessment.
- ✓ Work with an outside facilitator or internally develop process maps for complex processes in the City of Ripon at a departmental level.

- ✓ Explore creating a communications role which has internal and external communication functions.
- ✓ Implement the use of a project management tool with project tracking to help foster better organizational habits.
- ✓ Expand or begin offering employee wellness incentives.
- ✓ Perform a wage analysis at least once every three years. Internally evaluate wage and title parity.
- ✓ Expand opportunities for employees to connect socially inside and outside the workplace.
- ✓ Develop a Ripon Citizen Academy focused on municipal government to encourage better public awareness and education about government service delivery.

POLICY SUPPORT

- ✓ Refine and adopt a formal mission and vision statement for the City of Ripon.
- ✓ Set clear expectations on email response times and encourage more productive email habits.
- ✓ Evaluate reducing hours of operation when City offices are open to the public to provide 1 hour of distraction-free time for focus work for team members each day.
- ✓ Shift from two City Council meetings on a monthly basis to one Committee of the Whole meeting and one formal Council meeting to empower workshopping in public meetings.

MANAGEMENT ACTION

- ✓ Develop employee check-ins between supervisors and direct reports on a semi-annual basis. These check-ins should incorporate employee goal-setting and remain separate from compensation discussion.
- ✓ Establish a goal for cross-training between departments throughout the year.
- ✓ Implement time blocking for employee calendars to reduce distractions and increase focus work.
- ✓ Encourage flexible workplace practices, but have clear conversations with employees about expectations to prevent abuse of the policy.
- ✓ Regularly solicit and accept employee feedback.
- ✓ Consider switching to 360° employee performance reviews.
- ✓ Celebrate positive feedback and community wins when City employees go above and beyond to deliver great service.
- ✓ Engage in problem solving with employees – escape the hamster wheel of day-to-day work and reignite a sense of purpose in teams.
- ✓ Model emergency scenarios and how departments would remain resilient in government service delivery. These practice scenarios invite innovation and help your team to be prepared for setbacks and challenges.
- ✓ Recognize employees who identify and resolve inefficiencies in their departments.

Mission, Vision, and Values Workshop

A Mission, Vision, and Values workshop was facilitated across two workshops with the City staff, City Council and Department heads on October 24, 2023. During this session, we challenged participants to revisit their broad community vision, consider holistically the desires of intersecting groups (residents, elected officials, appointed staff), and identify the City's audiences, contributions, and distinctions.

Identifying Core Values

Participants identified 2-3 individuals who were top of mind when thinking of a positive individual who played a major role within either the Ripon community or government organization. The values that this person demonstrated which represent Ripon at its best were documented and shared with the entire group. The list of core values was refined through a voting process to reach four core values. The full list of core values is included in the appendix of this plan.

The final core values list that the group agreed upon included the following values (separated out by workshop):



Vision for the Future of Ripon

In our next exercise (across both workshops), we asked participants to write words or short phrases that described what they anticipated or hoped would be different in Ripon 5 years into the future. While the groups worked on a later exercise, the facilitator assembled the words into like categories to paint a picture of the future of the community and local government organization. The full list of vision statements is included in the appendix of this plan.

The summary visual of each group's vision is included below:

Ripon
Wisconsin

DEPARTMENT HEAD AND CITY COUNCIL VISION FOR 2028



2028

ECONOMICALLY THRIVING

WELL-MAINTAINED CITY ASSETS

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL



CITY IS KNOWN AS A GREAT EMPLOYER

GROWING COMMUNITY WITH AVAILABLE HOUSING

HIGH-FUNCTIONING CITY GOVERNMENT

SOCIALLY-CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Ripon
Wisconsin

STAFF VISION FOR 2028



CITY IS A BETTER PLACE TO WORK

WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO DO OUR JOBS WELL

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL AGES & INCOMES



WELL-MAINTAINED CITY ASSETS

ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH ROOM FOR ALL

SOCIALLY-CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Our team took the components of the workshops and developed three cohesive vision statements for review. A follow-up survey was sent out to workshop participants for their review with the three vision statements. 35 respondents participated in the survey. The vision statement which received overwhelming support (>47%) was as follows:

In Ripon, our businesses and our community members THRIVE. We are driven by our motivation to TAKE CARE: of our community assets, our employees, our local business community, and of the needs of fellow community members.

We recommend that the City Council adopt this vision statement.

Breaking Down the Pieces of a Mission Statement

Our last exercise was building out the components of a mission statement by identifying the audiences, contributions and distinctions which set Ripon apart both as a community and as a local government organization. We have grouped the audiences generated by the group into distinct categories. The full lists generated from both workshops are included in the appendix of this plan, while summary images are generated and included below.





SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF RIPON



PUBLIC SAFETY



MUNICIPAL SERVICES



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



DISTINCTIONS OF THE CITY OF RIPON



STRONG COMMUNITY NETWORKS



HISTORY IS MADE HERE



UNIQUE COMMUNITY SPACES



INDEPENDENT YET COLLABORATIVE

Our team took the components of the workshops and developed three cohesive mission statements for review. A follow-up survey was sent out to workshop participants for their review with the three vision statements. 35 respondents participated in the survey. The mission statement which received overwhelming support (>60%) was as follows:

The City of Ripon invites businesses, residents, and customers to be a part of our strong community networks. We are proud to provide exceptional community spaces, public safety, municipal services, and community programs to all Riponites.

We recommend that the City Council adopt this mission statement.

APPENDIX I

The detailed list of **all core values** from both workshops are sorted by category here:

Personable:

- Enthusiastic
- Outgoing
- Caring
- Fun to be around
- Easy to talk to
- Cool cat / positive
- Phone-a-friend
- Team player
- Talks about their family
- Kind
- Thoughtful
- Giving
- Asks me about my day
- Welcoming
- Friendly / approachable
- Easygoing
- Great teacher / mentor
- Relationship-builder
- Strong family values
- Gregarious / comic relief
- Relatable
- Empathetic
- Supportive
- Generous
- Considerate

Professional:

- Organized
- Hardworking
- Fair
- Calm
- Diligent in their work
- Discretion
- Helpful
- Does the right thing
- Personal integrity
- Intelligent / informed
- Strives for perfection / high standards / talented
- Respectful

- Considerate
- Accountability
- Consistent
- Great communicator
- Square shooter
- Dependable
- Patient
- Frugal
- Honorable
- Current in the field
- Strong leadership

Service-minded:

- Involved in the community
- Cares about citizens
- Goes the extra mile
- Trustworthy / Honesty
- Serves the customer above all else
- Responsive to diverse needs
- Problem solver
- Advocate for good government
- Accommodating
- Passionate
- Dedicated
- Inclusive / accepting

Innovator:

- Confident / ambitious / go-getter
- Strong-willed
- Open-minded
- Visionary / Sees the big picture
- Appreciates our history
- Willing to change
- Unwilling to settle
- Growth-minded / Always learning
- Creative thinker
- Open to new ideas/collaborations
- High-reaching goals
- Diverse skills
- Resilient / Willing to face adversity
- Smart

APPENDIX II

The detailed lists of **vision statements** from both workshops are sorted by category here:

City is known as a great employer / Better place to work:

- Better internal controls
- Improved government finances
- More public awareness / transparency
- The Fire District will get along better with City
- Executing the plan
- Better employment / consistent staffing
- City is an employer of choice
- Better relationships between City employees
- Better organizational structure
- Leaders, not followers
- High opinion of public employees
- Great work product

Well-maintained city assets:

- Alternative fire work location
- Updated City Hall
- Improved physical facilities
- Better roads
- Maintained and/or improved infrastructure
- New Public Works building
- Renovated Library grounds with inclusive, public access to Silver Creek
- Improved parks and public spaces
- Enhanced water / sewers
- Better private property maintenance
- Older homes restored
- We aren't trying to "catch up" and can be proactive
- Updated police facilities
- More trees planted
- Roundabouts at certain intersections
- More improved streets in residential neighborhoods

Economically thriving:

- Better downtown
- More shopping choices
- Improved economic development
- Ripon College is solid
- More industry / viable industry
- More jobs and businesses

Growing community with housing available:

- Family housing availability
- Affordable housing
- More housing options
- Population growth
- City is a destination

Socially-connected community:

- More connected with Ripon College
- Harmony
- More entities collaborating with City
- More community engagement
- Better relationship with school district
- Connections and awareness of efforts among institutions, clubs and non-profits
- More community collaboration
- Everyone knows where the library is!
- Environmentally conscious
- Regular community events
- Local support for community events
- Cohesive and close community

High quality of life for all ages and incomes:

- Drug free
- Better (car-free) parade routes
- Homelessness resources
- Safe community
- Internet for all
- Emergency services

- Parks are in-demand
- More amenities
- Park system upgrades
- Continues to be a great place to live, work, and play
- Lower taxes
- Basic needs of all met
- More opportunities for teens
- More family activities
- Strong literacy programs

- More arts

We have the tools to do our jobs well:

- Updated equipment
- Reliable infrastructure
- Trucks that we need for the job, not what sells best
- More technology
- Interactive website

APPENDIX III

The detailed lists of audiences, contributions and distinctions from both workshops are sorted by category here:

AUDIENCES

Businesses:

- Big businesses
- Entrepreneurs
- Contractors
- Small businesses
- Investors
- Ripon College
- Hospitals
- School District
- Downtown businesses
- Potential industry
- Chain stores
- Railroad
- Farmers

Employees:

- City employees
- Professionals
- Healthcare workers
- Educators

Visitors or part-time residents:

- Students at Ripon College
- Parents of Ripon College
- Tourists
- Seasonal (Green Lake) residents
- Pass-throughs / transients
- Consumers

Community Groups and Partners:

- Media
- Ministry
- Social groups
- Government (local, county, state and federal)
- Non-profits
- Faith groups
- Conservation groups

Full-time Residents:

- Youth
- Seniors
- Future residents
- Families
- Kids
- Teens
- Working families
- Immigrants
- Minorities
- People with disabilities
- Marginalized groups
- Homeless populations
- Pets of residents

City Customers:

- Library patrons
- Senior Center users
- Recreation program attendees
- Voters
- Cable TV subscribers
- YouTube viewers

CONTRIBUTIONS

Public Safety:

- Overall safety and wellbeing
- Peace of mind
- Fire
- Police
- EMS

Municipal Services:

- Water
- Sewer
- Snow plowing
- Leaf collection
- Keeping the community clean
- City Hall
- Streets
- Elections
- Economic development
- Cemeteries
- Garbage / recycling

- Permitting and licensing
- Planning and inspections
- Weights and measures
- Forestry
- Compost center

Community Programming:

- Education
- Video / capturing community history
- Library
- Reference services
- Legal services
- Taxi service
- Technology training
- Early literacy initiatives
- Parks and recreation
- Senior Center
- Collaboration with service organizations
- Community development

DISTINCTIONS

Strong Community Network:

- Ripon College
- Ripon Area School District
- Chamber of Commerce
- Ripon Main Street
- Service clubs and organizations
- Hospital
- Library

History is Made Here:

- Birthplace of Republican Party
- Ripon Good Cookies
- Little White School House
- Historical Society
- Ceresco Longhouse
- First Marcus Theatre
- Birthplace of Carrie Chapman Catt
- Political history
- Unique neighborhoods

- Washing machines i.e., Speed Queen

Unique Community Spaces:

- Historical homes
- Quaint and active downtown district
- Unique neighborhoods
- Abundant trails and parks
- South Woods Nature Preserve

Independent yet Collaborative:

- Self-sufficient community
- Culturally different from rest of Fond du Lac County
- Diverse due to Ripon College
- White collar / blue collar juxtaposition
- Self-reliant
- Rural outpost from Fond du Lac
- Institutions collaborate with one another rather than compete