

Summary Proposed Work Plan

To: Shaunna Johnson, City Administrator

City of Waite Park
19 13th Avenue North
Waite Park, MN 56340
Office: (320) 252-6822 ext. 217
shaunna.johnson@ci.waitepark.mn.us

From: Catherine M. (Cathy) Perme, Managing Partner

Perme & Peterson Associates, LLC
3801 W. 98th Street, Suite 207
Bloomington, MN 55431
Office: (952) 831-4131
Mobile: (612) 251-7292
cathy@permepeterson.com



PERME & PETERSON
ASSOCIATES, LLC

Date: February 10, 2021

Cc: Amber Peterson, Consulting Partner

Re: Strategic Planning for 2021 and Beyond

Thank you for the opportunity to work with the City of Waite Park as you make strategic choices about the future direction of the City. Based on our discussion on January 28th, we understand that:

- The City of Waite Park has operated as a “small town community” since its incorporation in 1893.
- In recent years, as other nearby communities (especially St. Cloud) have grown, Waite Park has been impacted by population increases, business growth, and suburb-type stressors (such as an increase in human trafficking incidents). And even though the community has about 7,000 residents, a typical weekday sees over 35,000 people traveling through your city.
- The leadership within the City, including the City Council and your City Management Team, have struggled to land on a shared vision for the future of Waite Park. Whether you keep Waite Park “a small town” or embrace it as a burgeoning suburb, your decision will change the strategic choices you will all need to make to support your community best.
- Your city recently engaged in a culture assessment to evaluate the needs of your internal environment. You are now ready to assess the needs of your external environment, particularly around community needs.

Your objectives are to:

- Align City leadership (City Council and the City Management Team) on the future direction of Waite Park by coming to a shared understanding of current reality and a shared vision for the future. This includes engaging City staff and community stakeholders in the process.
- Identify strategic goals to support your vision and to provide guidance for city decisions for the next 3-5 years.
- Make strategic choices and tactical plans for the next 12-18 months to start enacting your vision.

What you want from us as consultants is to:

- Help City leadership come to a shared understanding of current reality, and develop a shared vision for the future.
- Guide and facilitate a high-engagement strategic planning process, one that aligns City leadership in the journey based on: 1) input and feedback from the recent culture assessment, and 2) input from City staff and community stakeholders on their needs, wants, and vision for the future of Waite Park.

What follows is an outline of specific services that we would provide, based on this approach. We see this proposed work plan as a tool for discussion, refinement, and a future working relationship.

Organize and Kick Off the Project

Objectives:

- Clarify/reaffirm project objectives, select process options and organize it with dates/timelines and parameters for participation.
- Determine who is on the planning team
- Brief city staff and others as desired about the process and invite them to participate.

Participants: City Management Team and City Council

Phase 1 of Strategic Planning – Current Reality and a Vision for the Future

Objectives:

- Identify the lessons from the past and the current realities of the City ó internally and externally.
- Gather information from community stakeholders and City staff on their needs, wants, and vision for Waite Park’s future

Participants: There are two ways we could achieve this phase, depending on your preference.

- Each option would take approximately the same amount of effort; they differ on how much engagement you would like from City staff and community stakeholders. Both could be done virtually.
- See Attachment B for more info on each option

Design Option A: Robust “Future Search” with Multiple Stakeholders	Design Option B: Traditional Engagement with Planning Team and Stakeholder Input
A representative group of 35-80 people who have a stake in the City and its future work together over 10-12 hours to create a shared understanding of current reality and to draft a vision for the future of Waite Park.	A strategic planning team is tasked with assessing current reality and drafting a vision for the future of Waite Park, with input from stakeholders.

Phase 2 of Strategic Planning – Define Goals, Strategy, and Tactics

Objectives:

- Identify strategic goals and choices.
- Gather feedback from all City staff on the goals along with their input for strategy and tactics.
- Develop an overall City tactical plan for the next 12-18 months to focus resources and energy on the strategic priorities and make progress on the vision.

Participants: City Council, City Management, and/or Cross-Functional Planning Team (to include City leaders).

Checkpoint Progress

Objectives:

- Create an accountability mechanism with the City Management Team for implementation of results.
- Identify and address concerns as they come up with implementation of the strategic plan.

Participants: City Council and City Management

Expectations and Cost Assumptions

Estimated Services Total = \$19,975

Travel costs (for in-person meetings) and materials costs are unknown at this time

- Services are estimated at a blended rate of about \$120/hour for a consulting team comprised of a Senior Consultant, a Process Consultant, and a documentation specialist.
- You and your organization will coordinate participation for all meetings, and provide the facilities, refreshments, and meeting equipment as needed for in-person meetings. We will provide the platforms for virtual meetings.
- Materials (beyond meeting handouts) and travel costs for onsite work will be billed in addition to service costs, at actual expense. Mileage will be billed at the standard rate set by the IRS for 2021.
- Travel expenses for onsite, in person work will be billed in addition to service costs, at actual expense.
- You, your City Management Team, the City Council, and planning team members will be available and committed to completing the work on a timely basis and will work with us to ensure success.

We suggest establishing a ñnot to exceedö contract to includes services and potential travel costs. If we can do the work for less, we will. You will only be billed for actual time worked.

We are pleased to have an opportunity to work the City leadership of Waite Park to support you all as you commence your strategic journey. I will call you on Thursday to set up a time next week to discuss this proposal in more detail and answer any questions you may have.

We look forward to facilitating your success!



Catherine M. Perme
Managing Partner



Amber Peterson
Consulting Partner

ATTACHMENTS: Consultant Bios

Attachment A: Consultant Bios

We are a woman-owned, regional consulting firm that facilitates high engagement strategic planning and provides on-target culture assessments and roadmaps for change. We have been in business since 1990 under the name of C. M. Perme & Associates, LLC. The firm evolved in 2019 as Perme & Peterson Associates, LLC when Amber Peterson joined as a consulting partner, enriching our passion for our work with organizational culture and public safety.



Cathy Perme

Cathy is a change agent with deep experience in whole system change, who has worked with public sector organizations for over 30 years, at all levels of government, from the state and local level to federal agencies. Through that work, Cathy has developed a great understanding of the needs and challenges of public sector organizations. She has been designing and facilitating high-engagement “Future Searches” and strategic planning with public sector clients since 1995.



Cathy is a versatile consultant and facilitator, and has been consistently recognized for leadership, critical thinking, communication, and results. Cathy has a BA in Leadership Development from the University of Minnesota, and an MA in Human Development (with an emphasis on whole systems change) from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota. She has published two books in recent years, as well as numerous articles and contributions to various periodicals and blogs.

Amber Peterson

Amber is a passionate and energetic innovator who joins organizational culture and excellence with employee wellness. Amber’s practical experience in law enforcement informs her knowledge and expertise in building strong teams, meaningful connections with stakeholders and community members, a calm, deliberate approach to strategy, and personal resilience.



Before joining the private sector, Amber was an integral part of the strategic planning team for the Duluth Police Department, in which she conducted interviews with each of the 210 staff members as part of a SWOT analysis. Since then, she has focused in on designing custom strategic and development planning processes for public sector groups, including cities, police departments, and fire departments, paying close attention to their specific needs.

Amber has an MA in Human Development (with a focus on Employee Wellness) from St. Mary’s University of MN, an MA in Criminology from the University of MN – Duluth, and an AA in Law Enforcement from Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College. Her research on the connections between employee wellness and organizational culture was published in the *International Society for Organizational Development and Change* in 2019.

Attachment B: More Info on Design Options

Design Option A: Robust “Future Search” with Multiple Stakeholders

Who:

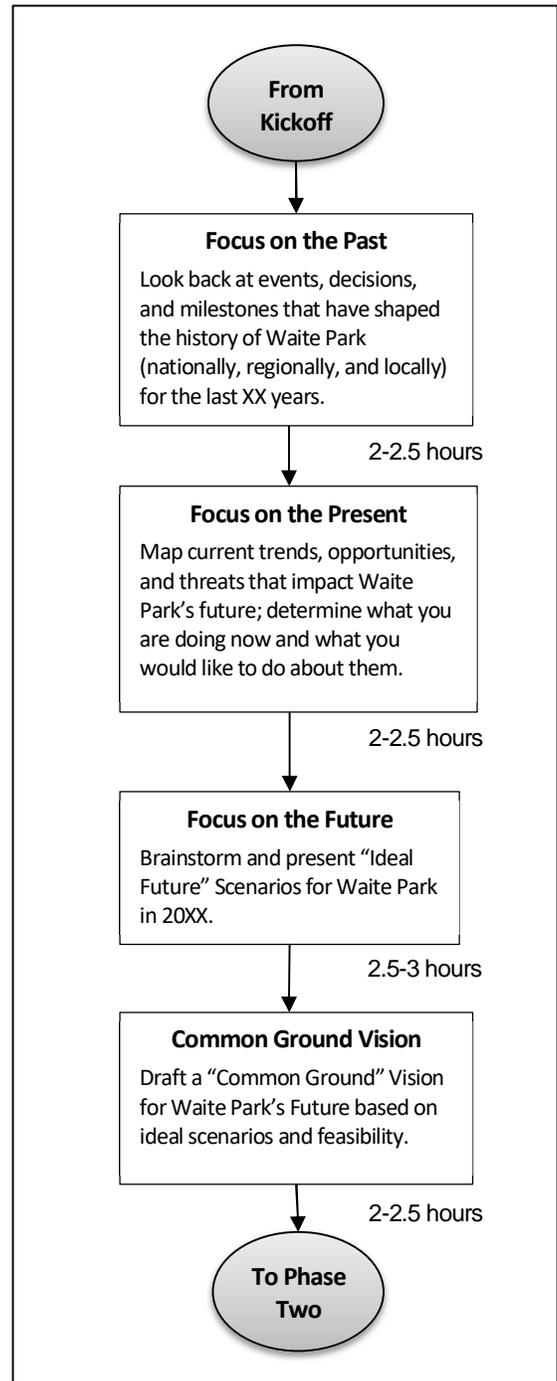
- A representative group of 35-80 people who have a stake in the City and its future work together over 10-12 hours to create a shared understanding of current reality and to draft a vision for the future of Waite Park, that is taken to the next phase of strategic planning.
- Representatives from the City Council, City Management, City staff, residents, businesses, community associations, governmental partners, etc. could be invited to participate.

How:

- The group works together in 4 facilitated workshops of 2-3 hours each to:
 - Share the story of how Waite Park has developed over the last xx years and what has impacted its development.
 - Identify and assess current trends, opportunities, and threats that may impact Waite Park’s future, and what they would like to do about them.
 - Draft a shared vision for the future of Waite Park.
- There *is* background prep work for participants to be actively engaged, especially if conducting this virtually ó totaling about 2 hours extra.
- Note that these workshops can be done virtually (one online workshop per week for 4 weeks) or packaged together in person (all sessions done over 2-4 day timeframe).
- We could also do a hybrid ó conduct a couple of sessions in person, and a couple of sessions virtually.

Benefits and Costs of this Design Approach

- + Gets a wide cross section of people involved in the visioning process, building natural support for results.
- + Provides opportunities for various constituencies to have their say and be heard, as well as contribute to the visioning process.
- Participants would have to commit to be part of the *whole* process, up to 12 hours of their time.



Design Option B: Traditional Engagement with a Planning Team and Input from Stakeholders

Who:

- A strategic planning team is tasked with assessing current reality and drafting a vision for the future of Waite Park.
- Data gathering could come from two sources:
 - Focus groups with key stakeholders might include City staff, residents, businesses, community organizations, etc.
 - Inquiry with other communities that have experienced similar issues as Waite Park to learn what worked, and what did not, for them.

How:

- Consultants will conduct 2 or more focus groups, one with community stakeholders (possibly with the business community and select residents) and one with City staff, to gather info, opinions and concerns regarding the future direction of Waite Park.
- City Management, with the help of Consultants, will identify nearby communities, or those of a comparable size to Waite Park, who are making similar strategic choices for their cities or have navigated through the small town to suburbia change.
 - Planning Team members will pair up in groups of two to *appreciatively interview* leaders from identified communities and learn what others are doing in the midst of growth and change.
- Consultants will work with the planning team to draft the vision for the City of Waite Park in XX years.
- Consultants will facilitate one feedback meeting and prepare the Planning Team to present and get feedback on their vision from other stakeholder groups.

Benefits and Costs of this Design Approach

- + Fewer people are involved, and for a shorter amount of time. May be easier to get commitment for engagement as a result.
- Data gathering is filtered either through the consultant or planning team members.
- Stakeholders are not necessarily at the table, creating more opportunity for resistance to change.

