

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

2008 DAKOTA COUNTY PERFORMANCE PROFILES

At the heart of achieving the Dakota County mission of *efficient, effective, responsive government* is a commitment to performance excellence. Achieving performance excellence requires that we measure our progress to assure that we are on the right course to achieve our goals. The purpose of the *2008 Dakota County Performance Profiles: Taking Action and Getting Results* report is to communicate how well we performed in 2008 against the four stakeholder strategic objectives of Dakota County government:

- Assuring safe, healthy residents.
- Providing for a quality physical environment.
- Sustaining a vital prosperous community and economy.
- Supplying efficient, effective, responsive government.

The report highlights:

- The challenges we face and the opportunities that exist.
- The actions we took in response to those challenges and opportunities
- The results achieved through those actions
- What the results mean and what this implies is next to be done.

By providing information on 2008 performance successes and stresses that will affect future needs and performance, the report also provides decision-making information for the Board of Commissioners as it sets future priorities and strategic objectives.

This executive summary provides an overview of the report's findings.

2008 Successes

Performance is strong with respect to:

Quality of service.

Nine out of 10 residents find that the services provided by Dakota County are important to their quality of life in the County and an equal share rate the overall quality of services provided by the County as "excellent" or "good." The County ranks at or above the norm in nearly all categories where performance can be compared to other local governments.

Maintaining a strong financial position.

Over the last 15 years, property taxes as a percent of personal income (i.e., the net price of government) have declined and are at the same level (0.67%) in 2008 as in 1998. The per capita levy has grown at a rate less than inflation over the last 10 years. Among Minnesota counties, taxes payable on homes of equal value are lowest in Dakota County. Less than 2% of the counties in Nation have received the Aaa bond rating that Dakota County has received.

Safety of residents.

Residents feel safe in their neighborhoods from both violent and property crimes. The perception of safety is above the norm when compared to other jurisdictions. Crime rates have declined during the decade.

Helping children thrive.

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is meeting health outcome goals for children. The average share of repeat maltreatment cases is below the rate for the State of Minnesota and out-of-home placements have been reduced by nearly one-third since 2000. Child support collections exceed \$67 million annually.

Preserving natural areas.

Through October 2008, nearly 4,500 acres of farmland and natural areas has been protected under Dakota County's first-in-the-state FNAP Program, exceeding the target by 14%. Including parks, farmland, and State of Minnesota land holdings, Dakota County has more than 33 acres of protected lands per 1,000 population.

Creating and maintaining community assets.

Dakota County libraries and parks are strongly valued by residents. Visits to libraries increased by 14% over the last five years. More than three-quarters of a million people visited County parks in 2007, participation in parks programming is up 284% from 2003 to 2007, and customer satisfaction ratings for major park facilities available for rent is high (94% excellent to above average rating).

Retaining employees and employee satisfaction.

Dakota County's job turnover rate is low, compared to data available for national, state, and other local jurisdictions. Overall, employee satisfaction with Dakota County as an employer is between "good" and "excellent," based on a 2008 employee survey.

2008 Stresses

Stress is apparent in recent results in areas including:

Access to health care.

While more than 92% of residents report having health insurance during the last 12 months, the share of Dakota County residents served by publicly funded health insurance programs grew from 12% of the population in 2001 to 18% in 2007, with the average monthly caseload rising to 16,000. The increase in the number of residents seeking publicly-funded health insurance has contributed to a doubling of assistance applications pending for more than 60 days in 2008 compared to 2006.

Services to families with economic need.

While three out of four families assisted with supported housing 12 months previously were in stable housing in 2008, the share of households who are not able to transition to stable housing has increased from 4% in 2004 to 25% in 2008. The average number of families receiving food support grew by 189% from 2000 to 2008. The average monthly visitors to Workforce Centers are up sharply and welfare-to-work clients continue to be the least successful in being placed in jobs. Economic indicators – high unemployment rates, the growing share of families eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program, and stagnant growth in household income in real dollar terms – suggest continued stress on services for families with economic needs.

Providing affordable housing.

While Dakota County's home ownership rate exceeds the state and national averages, the share of home owners who are "cost burdened" in Dakota County has grown from 17% in 2000 to 32% in 2007. The elevated burden exacerbated by the economic downturn has foreclosures shooting upward, with nearly a six-fold increase since 2005.

Groundwater management.

Total groundwater appropriations in Dakota County have increased by over 60% in the last decade and more needs to be learned about the sustainability of supplies in the face of such growth. While important steps in protecting groundwater quality have been taken (e.g., in completing the Compliant Septic System Initiative and sealing of abandoned wells), a comparison of tests on private drinking water wells in the Hastings area for nitrates found more wells exceeded health standards in 2008 than in 2000 (32% in 2008 compared to 26% in 2000).

Waste management.

Waste generation increased faster than population but slower than Minnesota's economic activity between 2000 and 2007. However, Dakota County's recycling rate has been the second highest among metropolitan area partners in the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board for the last two years. Household hazardous waste received at the Recycling Zone increased by 33% over 2007, with half of the material received electronic wastes, which are anticipated to continue to present a major portion of these materials.

The transportation system.

Combining the condition of roads, traffic congestion, and bridge and river crossing concerns, transportation system issues are the 3rd most serious concern of residents (just behind taxes and growth/development). The perception of the condition of roads has declined from 2004 to 2008. Residents give the availability of public transportation/transit some of the lowest quality of service ratings among government services, with the perception of inadequate services particularly strong in areas not served by Metro Transit or MVTA.

2008 Board Goal Progress

Results can also be measured in terms of performance on the annual tactical goals established by the Board of Commissioners. Through November 2008, about two-thirds of these goals were completed or on schedule. Only one Board goal – meeting MFIP work participation rate – was critically below targets. Progress was being made on all other goals established by the Board, although there were some cautionary signs being monitored with respect to each of these 13 remaining measures.