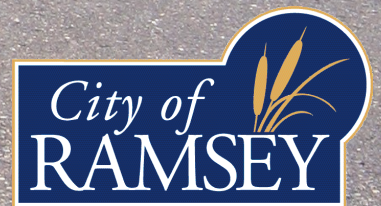


City of Ramsey  
Health Impact Assessment



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## Introduction & Purpose

This document is a product of collaboration between the City of Ramsey, The University of Minnesota's Design for Health project and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. BCBS has identified the Design for Health project as a service provider to implement some of the broader goals of their program, Prevention Minnesota. Prevention Minnesota is Blue Cross' long-term, statewide initiative to improve the health of Minnesotans by investing in prevention with a focus on the following goals: to significantly decrease the prevalence of tobacco use, to significantly decrease the prevalence of risk factors for heart disease, and to significantly decrease the prevalence of risk factors for cancer and increase early detection of cancer.

The City of Ramsey applied for and received a grant from BCBS to undertake a Health Impact Assessment with guidance from the Design for Health project. Health Impact Assessment (HIA) identifies and evaluates the effects of policies, plans, programs, and designs on health. From awareness-raising rapid assessment methods to more data-intensive approaches, HIA comes in a variety of forms. The City of Ramsey chose to use the Threshold Analysis method developed by Design for Health, which uses a point-based scoring system to assess achievement across a wide variety of planning-related topics. The box below describes how the Threshold Analysis approach works and how it relates to the research. This summary is taken from the Design for Health Threshold Analysis Workbook.

### HOW THE HIA WORKS

*The HIA focuses on a set of topics where there is evidence for links between human health and the built environment. Each health topic includes one or more thresholds or associations to be addressed in order for the comprehensive plan or policy to receive points. Plans or projects with more positive impacts on health, receive more points. For the purposes of this HIA, thresholds and associations are drawn from previous research examining the link between human health and the built environment are defined as follows:*

- Thresholds are based on research evidence that provides numerical targets for healthy development. They are derived from a careful reading of existing literature, taking into account where several research studies agree on a particular phenomenon. There is great agreement, for example, that air quality within a few hundred meters of major roads can be a health problem, particularly for vulnerable groups, such as children. Please refer to the key questions sheets for each topical area.*
- Associations are conditions that should be accounted for and, through a careful reading of existing research literature, have been shown to have positive or negative health effects. While there may be agreement on the nature and direction of the indicated associations, the particular phenomena may not lend itself well to the numerical precision suggested in the thresholds. For example, a number of studies have found that views of even small amounts of vegetation can improve mental health; the numerical precision of how much green space, however, remains unclear.*

The topics addressed in this HIA include:

- Accessibility
- Air Quality
- Environment and Housing Quality
- Food
- Mental Health
- Physical Activity
- Safety
- Social Capital
- Water Quality

This document does not provide summaries of research for each topic area. Design for Health provides a number of materials explaining research questions and summaries of evidence-based consensus on the topics contained in this HIA. This material can be found at their website: [www.designforhealth.net](http://www.designforhealth.net).

*Purpose*

The purpose of this document is to use the most current and accurate knowledge and tools to assess the potential health impacts of current planning practice in Ramsey on the City's residents, to set goals for improvement, and develop policy directions for future work. Each topic area explains in some detail suggestions for policy changes to produce movement towards the goal. In future phases, the City hopes to develop more specific policy strategies and tools to begin implementation to meet the goals established in this document.

This document is intended for use by Ramsey's residents, elected officials and City staff. We hope that this work can encourage a broad conversation and result in an increased awareness of the impacts of planning and policy decisions on human health.

## Executive Summary

This document was developed using the Threshold Analysis process described in the Introduction. City staff from Ramsey attended a number of training sessions sponsored by BCBS and the Design for Health project in 2007 to learn more about the various types of Health Impact Assessments and how to complete an assessment. In late 2007 planners from Bonestroo began working with City staff to complete the Threshold Analysis HIA in conjunction with the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update. The final HIA document was completed in April of 2008.

The results of the HIA, spelled out in detail in the rest of the document, provide an analysis of current conditions in Ramsey for those factors which can be objectively shown to affect the health of residents, according to the HIA support materials. Threshold Analysis, the type of Health Impact Assessment Ramsey chose to use, was developed by BCBS and partners and uses a point system to help readers identify where substantial progress has been made on indicators of health, and where more work still needs to be done. Out of a total of 100 possible points, Ramsey achieved 32 points. The best scoring indicators were for air quality, housing quality, mental health, safety, and social capital. Unfortunately, as a standard rural/suburban community, access to transit or densities to support transit, close retail/supermarket opportunities, urban services, and an extensive sidewalk/trail system are limited. However, Ramsey is currently updating its plan for parks and trails, and there is great potential for an extensive park system when the community is fully developed.

In summary, this document reflects the fact that Ramsey provides a relatively healthy environment in terms of the factors in which the City scores high, however continued planning and implementation is necessary to address accessibility, access to healthy foods, protection of surface waters and the promotion and support of physical activity. The last page of this document contains a table that summarizes Ramsey's achievement in each HIA threshold, as well as future policy directions. This table can serve as the first step towards implementing policies for building a healthier citizenry, particularly for these topics for which there are substantial opportunities for improvement.



# Accessibility

## HIA THRESHOLD

The primary indicator in the Threshold Analysis for assessing adequate transit service is density of land uses. According to the Threshold Analysis and research cited within, 4 units per acre is the absolute minimum required for hourly transit service to be feasible. Encouraging residential uses at an average of at 7 units per acre is the preferred alternative under the threshold analysis.

The second indicator identified by the Threshold Analysis HIA is the level of hourly transit service. Hourly service is the minimum used to determine hours of service and LOS (level of service). The more densely developed a residential area is, the more likely the possibility for transit service.

## CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS=0)

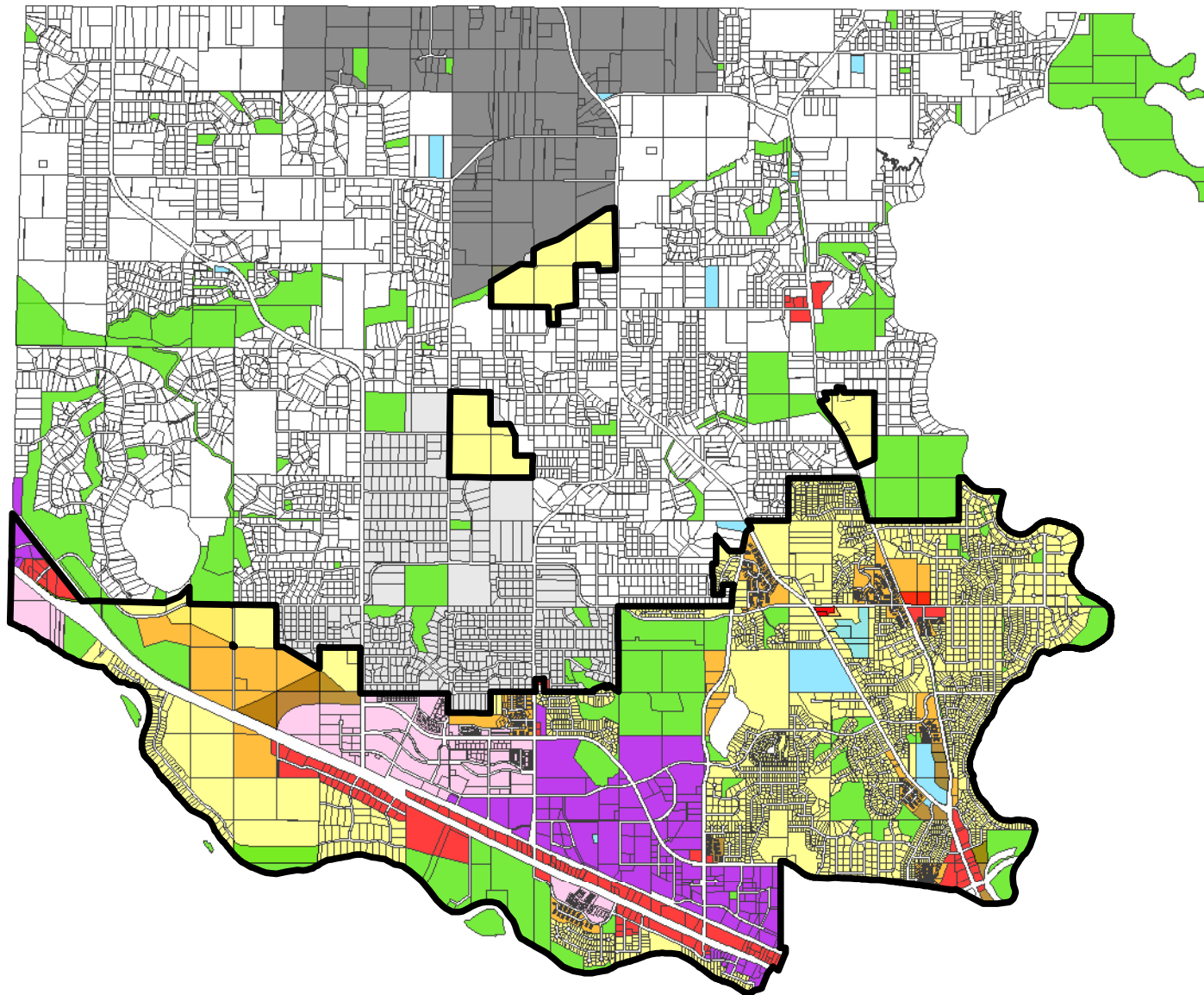
Ramsey has an extremely diverse development pattern and future land use plan. Over 70% of the land guided for residential development is designated as "Rural Developing," which only allows very low density (1 unit per 2.5 acres.) However, the Ramsey Town Center's average density target is over 15 units per acre. Ramsey's Future Land Use Map (see Figure #1) guides about 13,000 acres for residential land uses, which is 77% of its total land area. Of that 12,933 residential acres, 2,323, or about 18% is zoned "reserve" or "preserve" and is not slated for development until after 2020. Therefore, it will be excluded from the analysis, leaving 10,610 acres. Based on the household projections (an increase in approximately 8,400 households by 2020) and the amount of gross land guided for residential development, the overall density equates to about 1.26 units per gross acre. However, it is unrealistic to think that all of Ramsey residential areas will completely built-out by 2020 (especially with increasing land prices driving up the cost of large lot, rural development). It is more realistic to predict that the majority of development will occur in the areas served with sewer and water, which would result in a more suburban density, an average density of 3 units per gross acre. This is still below the threshold that would support transit service of 4 units per gross acre. Therefore, no points are awarded under this category.

ACCESSIBILITY IS MEASURED BY BOTH DENSITY AND THE LEVEL OF EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICE. WHILE RAMSEY HAS A VARIETY OF DENSITIES, IT MAY NEVER REACH THE HIA TARGET. TRANSIT SERVICE IS CURRENTLY QUITE LIMITED. HOWEVER, THE ADDITION OF THE NORTH STAR COMMUTER RAIL WILL IMPROVE TRANSIT ACCESS IN THE CITY.

While Ramsey has no hourly service anywhere in the city at this time, therefore no points are awarded under this threshold. However, there may be opportunities for its development within key locations of Ramsey Town Center. Currently, there is commuter coach service from Town Center to downtown Minneapolis, and it is realistic to assume there will be a growing demand for

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

## Figure #1 Future Land Use



### Legend

Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)

### Land Use

- Low-Density Residential
- Medium-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Places to Shop
- Places to Work
- Mixed Use
- Park and Open Space
- Public/Quasi-Public
- Rural Developing
- Central Rural Reserve
- Rural Preserve



### Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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this type of service to various metro locations as the population increases and traffic congestion increases.

#### RAMSEY'S GOAL

Given the fact that Ramsey will continue to have a very diverse mixture of residential densities beyond 2020, the City's goal is to plan for this diversity. High density, mixed-use urban development will occur in and around Town Center, with a density at or near 15 units per acre. These densities are planned to capitalize on the commuter rail station, which Ramsey hopes to locate in the Town Center. Low/medium density residential development (between 4 and 7 units per acre) will surround the Town Center area, and will likely be the predominate use inside the MUSA boundary. Outside the MUSA boundary, low density residential, agricultural and open space will likely remain the predominate land uses. The focus for future development in this area will be on high-quality, cluster and open space development that preserves rural character while protecting open space.

Ramsey is not currently designated as a stop on the new Northstar commuter rail system. However, the City's goal is to become designated as a stop. Whether this occurs during the initial build-out and first stage of operation or during a later expansion is still uncertain at this time. According to information from the Northstar Commuter Rail website ([www.mn-getonboard.org](http://www.mn-getonboard.org)), up to 12 trips could make stops during weekday "mornings, afternoons and evenings". While this would not equate to "hourly transit service" as defined by the Threshold Analysis, the number of trips would mirror peak demand times.

#### POLICY DIRECTIONS

Ramsey will meet its goals by implementing the Comprehensive Plan through the zoning ordinance as well as individual development review. At the time of this writing, the Comprehensive Plan Update is not yet complete, however, there is already a strong consensus forming that most new high-density residential development should be located in and around the Town Center area. Developable land outside of the Town Center area but within the MUSA boundary will most likely be planned to develop at between 3 and 4 units per acre on average, excluding wetlands.

In addition, the plan for the phasing of municipal services (primarily sanitary sewer), may change as the Comprehensive Plan Update is developed. If the amount of land with access to urban services changes, the total density of the

City could also change because sewer development will generally be developed at a higher density.

Ramsey will continue to plan for residential and commercial growth consistent with the goals stated above. Because of the limited availability of transit service in Ramsey, the highest density residential development will continue to be planned for the Town Center area, near the possible future commuter rail station. The policy tools used will be the Comprehensive Plan (updated in 2008), and the zoning code. Ramsey already has a zoning code and master plan in place that encourages the development of walkable, high-density, mixed-use development within the Town Center. Areas directly adjacent to Town Center are guided for medium and high density residential development as well as an employment district or "Places to Work".

Ramsey will continue to pursue policies and strategies to bring a commuter rail stop to the City. While Ramsey will be aggressively pursuing a station, the final decision is not under the control of Ramsey's elected officials.



In the HIA, air quality is measured by exposure to both point-source pollutants (like businesses that create emissions) and major roads (such as interstates) which have been shown to reduce air quality. Ramsey's goal is to improve air quality by preserving existing tree canopy and adding to canopy cover whenever possible, especially along Highway 10.

## Air Quality

### HIA THRESHOLD

The first indicator to describe the extent of air quality within the Threshold Analysis Assessment is the "distance from major roads for residential uses and uses occupied by children." All residential areas, schools, daycare facilities, playgrounds, and sports fields should be more than 200 meters from any "major road" to obtain any points in this indicator.

Another air quality indicator is the existence of polluting businesses within the community. Points are awarded on an all-or-nothing basis, and result in 6 points if there are no polluting uses OR the sources are regulated locally as well as by state or federal governments.

The final indicator is air quality mitigation, as defined by the existence of significant tree canopy cover, with focus on areas around major roads. In order to achieve any points in this category, at least 50% of "major roads" must be lined with street trees OR if a tree preservation plan is in place.

### CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS= 12)

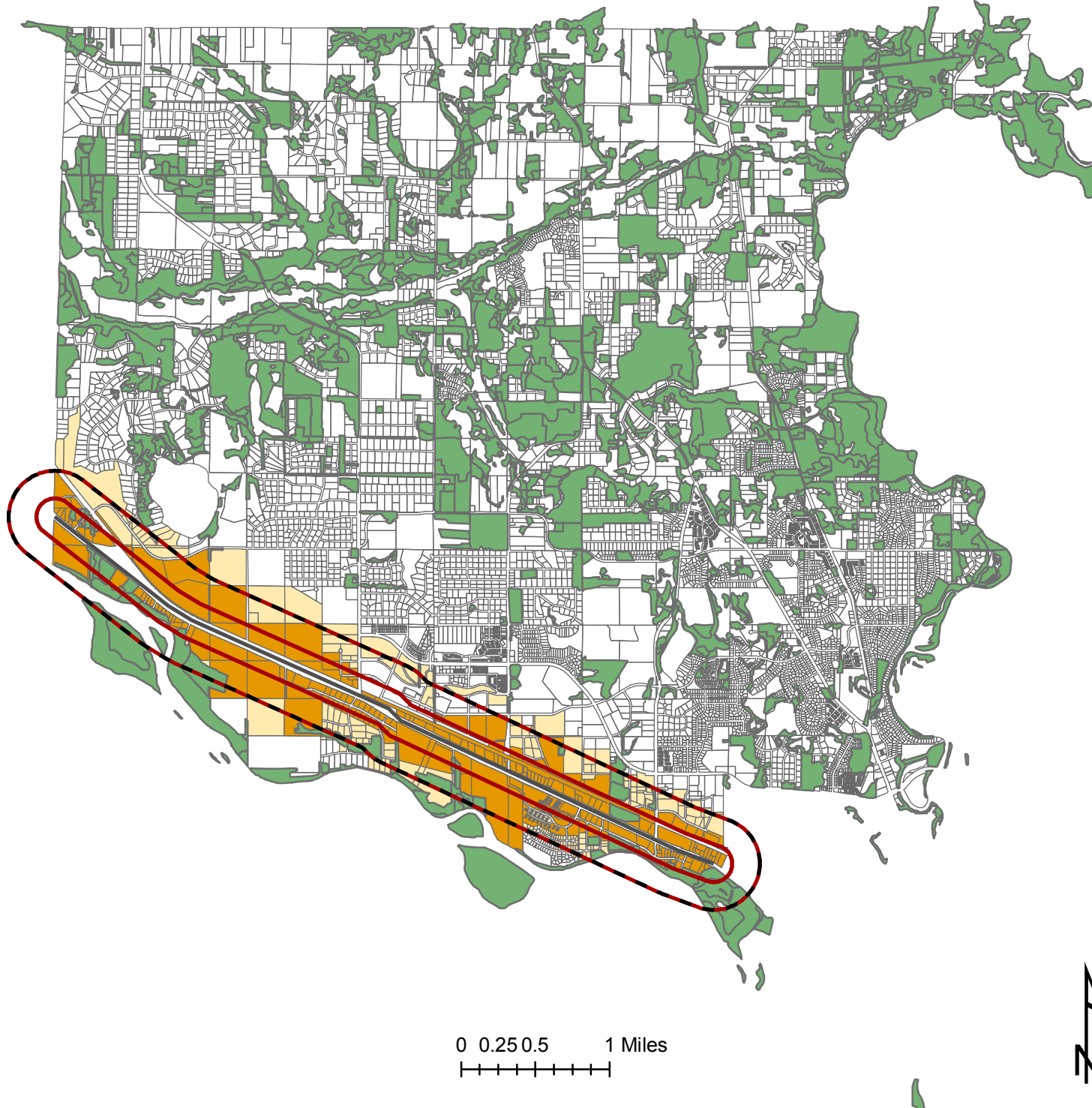
#### *Distance from a Major Road-9 points*

Currently, there are no "major roads", as defined by having more than 40,000 AADT, in Ramsey. Therefore, Ramsey has obtained all points in this category.







However, Highway 10 could reach these traffic levels by 2030. A buffer of 200 meters and 500 meters reveals that there are no daycares or schools within close proximity to Highway 10. However, there is one after-school program geared towards teens and three sports field at one commercial location within the buffer area. There is a substantial amount of residential land uses within each buffer (see Figure #2). There are approximately 190 residential parcels within 200 meters, mostly townhouse units. Within 500 meters, there are approximately 525 residential parcels or lots. However, there are thousands of housing units planned within the 500 meter buffer of Highway 10. Most of the community's denser development is concentrated near the major transportation corridors in the Town Center area. Also, there are four park areas within the buffer, but only one is developed as an active park at this time. The Mississippi River West Regional Park is planned to be an active park, but is not at this time. This park has significant canopy cover, which may mitigate some of the negative effects on air quality caused by proximity to Highway 10.

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

*Figure #2  
Air Quality*



## Legend

-  Residential Land-200 meters
-  Residential Land-500 meters
-  200 foot Buffer
-  500 foot Buffer
-  Canopy Cover
-  Parcels



**Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey**

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#### *Point Source Pollution-0 points*

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, there are three businesses that emit point source pollution. These three businesses are regulated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, but not all are regulated locally (see Figure #3). The asphalt plant is regulated by the issuance of the Conditional Use Permit that must be renewed every five years. Additionally, there are three establishments under a NAICS code identified to be potential air pollutants (8123 or 811120). None of these are regulated locally or by the state with regard to pollution mitigation. Therefore, no points are awarded in this subsection.

#### *Air Quality Mitigation-3 points*

While the City has significant canopy cover within its boundaries, the majority exists in the central and northern portion of the city (See Figure #4). Trunk Highway 10 is situated in the southern portion of Ramsey, which has historically been dominated by agricultural land uses. Those areas that have not been developed with residential or industrial uses remain farmland, leaving the majority of area surrounding Highway 10 with little or no canopy cover. The exception is those areas along the Mississippi River and the undeveloped Mississippi West parkland. These developed and undeveloped areas have retained their canopy cover. However, because no road within Ramsey meets the qualification as a “major road,” all points were awarded in this category.

### **RAMSEY’S GOAL**

#### *Major Roads*

Ramsey will continue to focus some residential growth near Highway 10, particularly in the Town Center area. However, as the number of trips on Highway 10 grows, it may meet this definition sometime in the future. Furthermore, Ramsey’s goal will be to mitigate the negative impacts of decreased air quality near major roads by preserving its existing tree canopy near Highway #10, especially when new parks, trails, day cares or schools are developed.

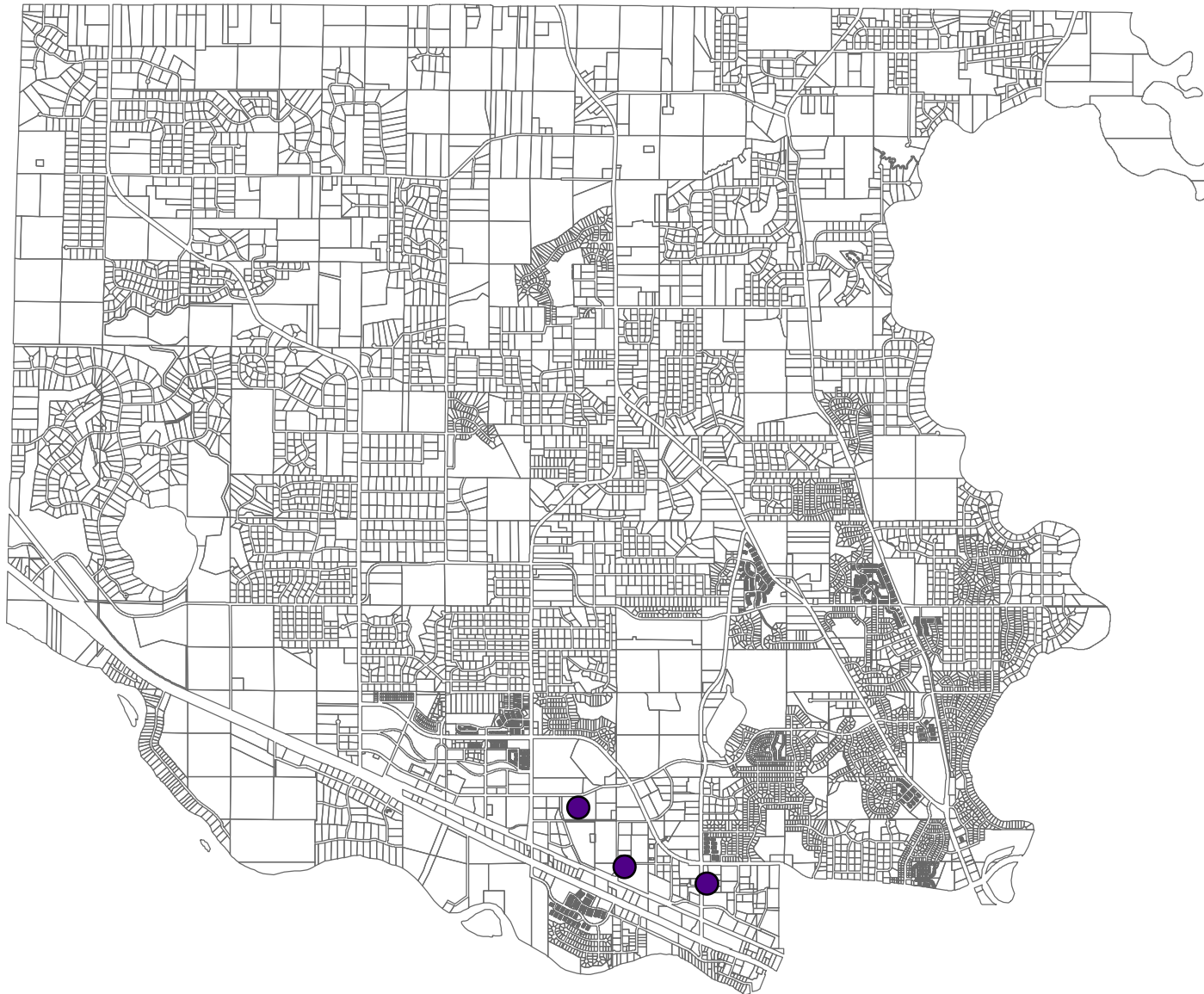
#### *Point Source Pollution*

Ramsey does not have plans to increase the level of regulation on these polluting sources beyond what is already in place. The asphalt plant will continue to be monitored using the conditional use permit process every five years.

#### *Air Quality Mitigation*

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

**Figure #3  
Air Quality**



### Legend

- Point Source Polluters
- Parcels



### Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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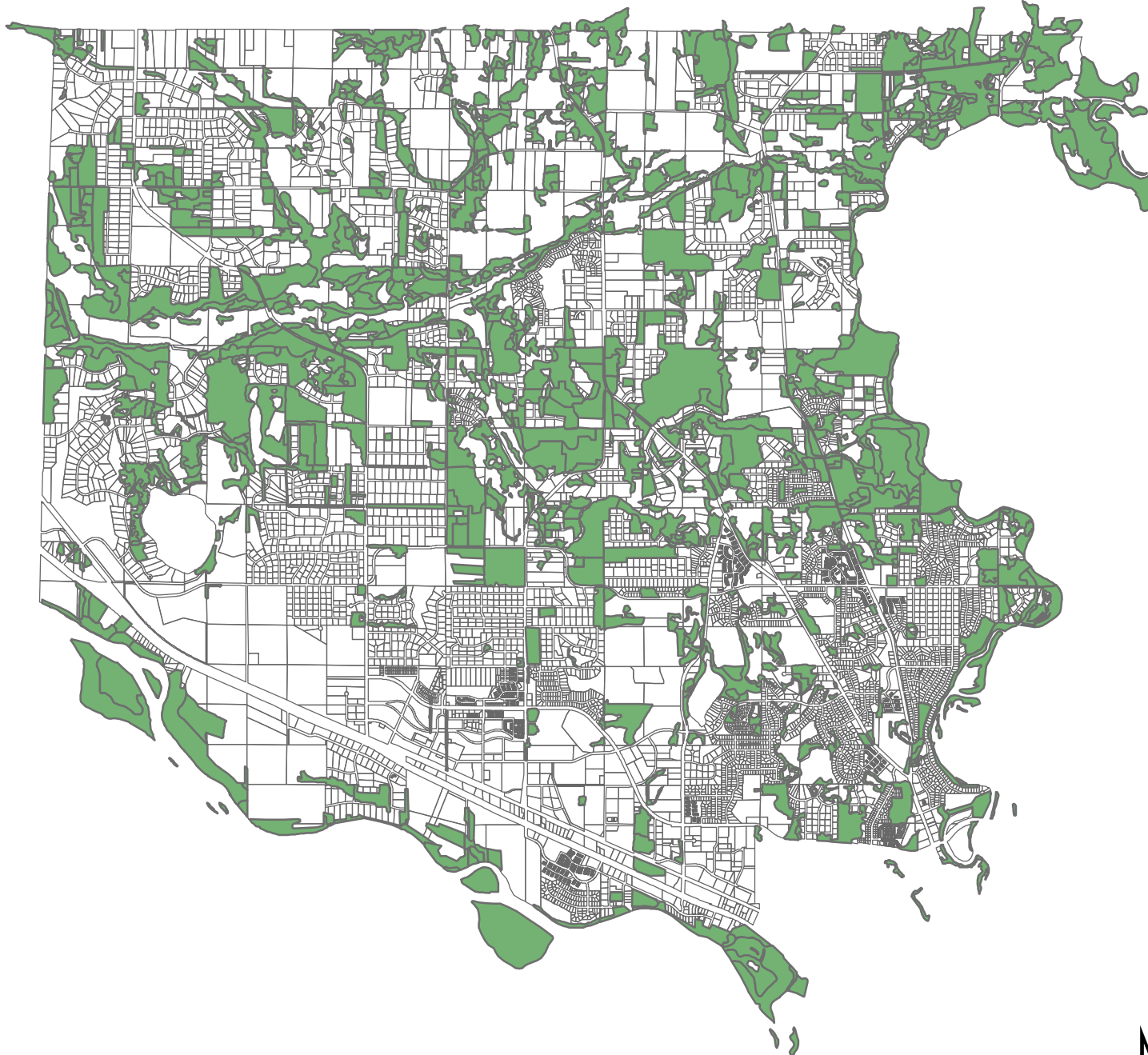
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# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

Figure #4  
Air Quality



## Legend

-  Canopy Cover
-  Parcels

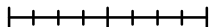


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Because little existing tree canopy cover exists in the buffer area around Highway 10, new tree plantings will be incorporated to the greatest extent possible when development or redevelopment takes place. The focus of this planting will be on the north side of Highway 10, to act as a buffer between the road and high-density development which is predominately located north of the road. A continuous line of street trees along Highway 10 will be the goal.

## POLICY DIRECTIONS

### *Major Roads*

The Comprehensive Plan can be used to ensure that no new parks are guided within 500 meters of Highway 10. The plan can also recommend against the establishment of any new day cares or schools within 500 meters of Highway 10. However, an overlay zone or specific zoning requirement would need to be used to explicitly exclude these uses from being established within zones in which these uses are typically permitted if the location is within 500 meters of Highway 10.

Additional residential development is and very likely will continue to be planned for the Town Center area which is adjacent to Highway 10. The Comprehensive Plan and zoning code are the primary policy tools that will be used to do this.

As noted above, Ramsey will not necessarily always meet this goal, as Highway 10 (and possibly other roads) may exceed 40,000 AADT at some point in the future. Because of other planning goals, such as focusing high-density residential development near existing infrastructure (both roads and transit), and making efficient use of land, it is likely that the number of points Ramsey qualifies for under this threshold will go down in the future. In fact, it could be argued that this threshold is in conflict with other health goals, such as increasing accessibility. As residential density increases, so too does the need for expanded transportation infrastructure. Even in areas of dense, mixed-use development, and high walkability, the number of auto trips can be very high, and therefore, air pollution can be very high.

Since communities rarely charge residents for the cost of roads based on their use (or miles driven), but rather use bonds or require developers to pay for road construction and “free” parking, the costs of road construction and increased auto use (health impacts, for example) is dispersed and often times not made a tangible part of any economic transaction. Internalizing these externalities may be an effective way of achieving both goals of high accessibility and high air quality.



### *Point Source Pollution*

The conditional use permit process will be the policy tool used to regulate the asphalt plant. If new polluting sources are proposed to be located within the City, it is likely that a conditional use permit would need to be granted to allow such a use. The exact requirements of that permit would be determined at the time of the application.

This threshold (as well as Major Roads), was the source of some discussion during the analysis process. It should be noted that the elimination or restriction of pollution point-sources may result in Ramsey being at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring cities. It may be desirable from an economic development standpoint to allow a new pollution point-source to be opened in Ramsey in the future. Also, the simple demands of an increasing population may result in the need for additional pollution point-sources. For examples, energy generation and waste disposal may result in additional point-source pollution, and yet may be necessary for the broader community health and benefit.

The ultimate goal of eliminating human contact with hazardous pollution may be something that is best regulated at the state and/or federal level to eliminate the influence of hyper-local influences and to share the economic cost of additional regulation across a broader population.

### *Air Quality Mitigation*

The Comprehensive Plan could be used to promote the introduction of tree canopy along Highway 10. However, a more effective method would be using an overlay zone or other specific zoning requirement to stipulate tree planting that must occur whenever development or redevelopment takes place on parcels adjacent to Highway 10. The City could pursue an active street tree-planting policy in addition to encouraging street trees within proposed developments. A continuous line of trees along Highway 10 may be possible, although breaks would be needed for intersections and other access points. The pace and type of development and redevelopment will also have an effect on how additional landscaping occurs adjacent to the roadway. The goal may be achieved most quickly by simply requiring planting whenever development or redevelopment occurs, but the policy may be more politically palatable if planting is incentivized rather than required. Density bonuses or an expedited approval process are examples of incentives used to encourage higher quality development in other zoning codes.

Ramsey's tree protection ordinance could also be used to identify this specific area and require or encourage additional tree planting.

Ramsey's tree protection ordinance could also be used to identify this specific area and require or encourage additional tree planting.

The possible expansion of Highway 10 and rules governing landscaping imposed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation could also restrict street tree planting depending on the size of right of way available after any expansion.



# Environmental and Housing Quality

## HIA THRESHOLD

An indicator of Environmental and Housing Quality is the potential exposure to lead substances. There are two major sources of potential lead exposure, lead paint and lead piping, in building construction. The City is eligible for all points within this category if planning policies are in place that require that lead-bearing substances are not used in any exposed surface of a dwelling unit, child care facility, school, or recreational facility used by children.



## CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS=7)

The City of Ramsey Building Division of the Community Development Department has officially adopted the Minnesota State Building Code as the official building code for the City of Ramsey through a perpetual clause. Ramsey City Code States:

### 8.01.01 Building Code

The Minnesota State Building Code, as adopted by the Commissioner of Administration pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 16B.59 to 16B.75, including all of the amendments, rules and regulations established, adopted and published from time to time by the Minnesota Commissioner of Administration, through the Building Codes and Standards Division is hereby adopted by reference with the exception of the optional chapters. The Minnesota State Building Code is hereby incorporated into this ordinance as if fully set out herein.



Lead exposure occurs primarily from peeling paint and lead pipes and other materials used in building construction. Ramsey restricts the use of lead-bearing materials in construction through the enforcement of the State building code.

### 8.01.02 Application, Administration, and Enforcement

The application, administration, and enforcement of the code shall be in accordance with Minnesota State Building Code. The code shall be enforced within the extraterritorial limits permitted by Minnesota Statutes, 16B.62, subdivision 1, when so established by this ordinance.

The Building Department of the City shall be the enforcing agency. The code shall be enforced by the Minnesota Certified Building Official, designated by the City to administer the code (Minnesota statute 16B.65) subdivision 1.

The Minnesota State Building Code does not allow lead substances on exposed surfaces. Specifically, Minnesota Rules state:

### **7025.0010 Applicability**

Parts 7025.0010 to 7025.0080 establish the procedure that a contractor shall follow to test for the presence of lead paint prior to abrasive blasting and to remove lead paint by abrasive blasting of the exterior of any residential building, child care building, or any building within 100 feet of a residential, child care, or school building, or a playground.

STAT AUTH: MS s 116.07; 144.878

Finally, the Minnesota State Building Code names the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) regarding lead based substances. The MPCA does not allow the use of lead paint, piping, or pipe fittings in building construction.

### **RAMSEY'S GOAL**

Ramsey will continue to regulate the use of lead-bearing substances in all buildings, pursuant to the Minnesota State Building Code.

### **POLICY DIRECTIONS**

The Building Code will continue to be used as the method to regulate the use of lead-bearing substances in buildings.



Access to fresh fruit and vegetables allows residents to make healthy food choices. Currently, access to stores that sell these items is somewhat limited in Ramsey.

## Food

### HIA THRESHOLD

The primary indicator for this subject area is that all residential areas are within 1,600 meters of supermarkets where fruits and vegetables are sold.

### CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS=0)

Currently, there are two (2) grocery stores that carry fresh fruit and vegetables in the City of Ramsey. Unfortunately, only 6.8% of parcels are within a 1,600-meter buffer of these stores (See Figure #5).

However, the area within these buffers includes much undeveloped land that is zoned for medium, high density or town center residential housing. In addition to the 2,000+ units planned for Town Center, the southern 1,600 meter buffer area includes 115 acres of undeveloped land that is zoned for medium or high density housing and 30 acres of single family housing. Over the next 10 to 20 years, this can accommodate up to 900 additional housing units, for a total of 2,900 housing units to be added to the buffer area. This will more than double the amount of residential housing within 1 mile of a grocery store. However, by 2030, the City is expected to have 16,500 households, and assuming the addition of no new grocery stores, the percentage of households within the buffer will remain near 6.8 percent.

### RAMSEY'S GOAL

Through implementation of the following policies, Ramsey hopes to ensure that 50% of the residential units in the City are within 1,600 meters of a supermarket or fruit and vegetable shop.

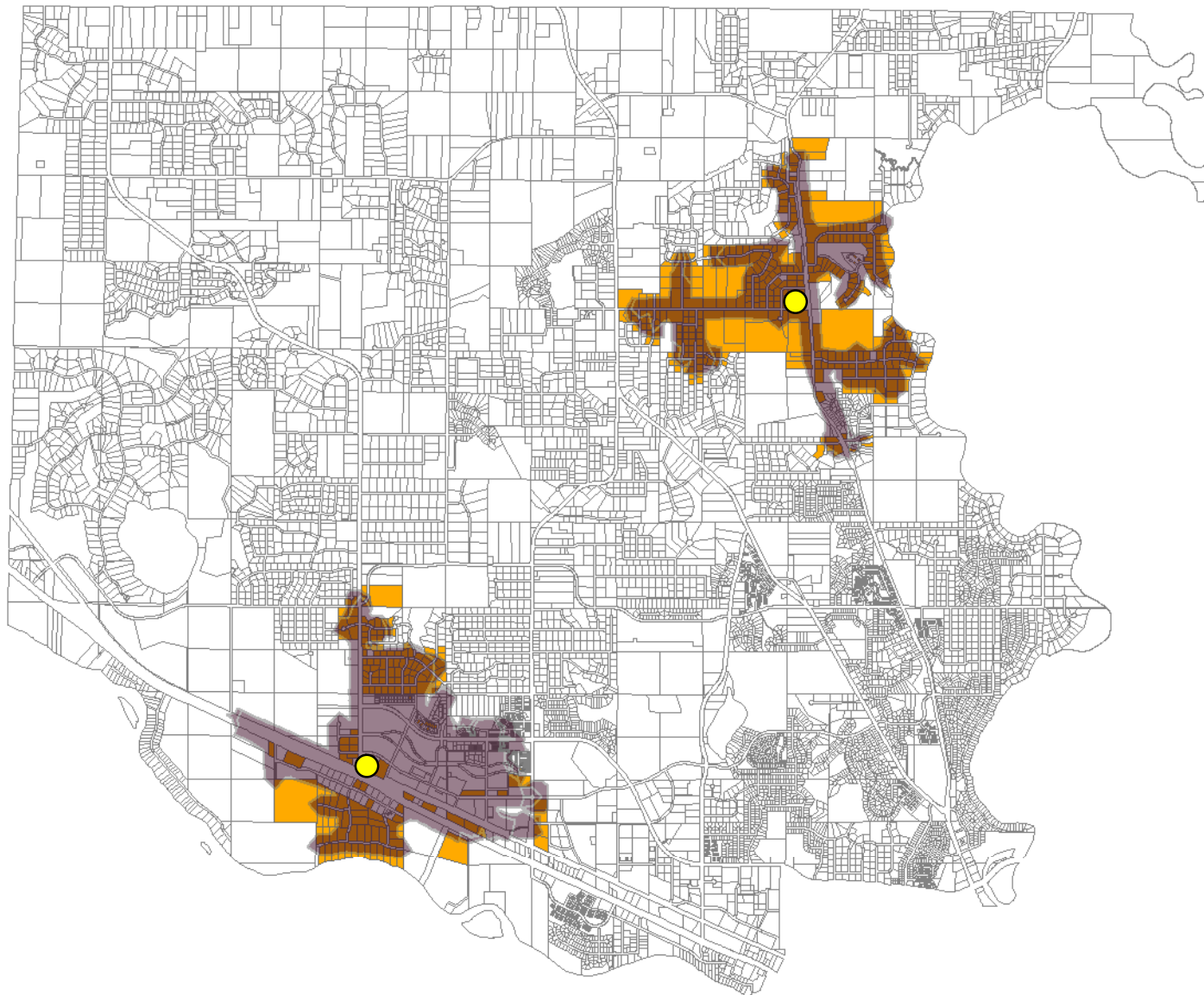
### POLICY DIRECTIONS

As previously described, because the City's total population will continue to increase as undeveloped land within the current supermarket buffers becomes developed, the overall percentage of residential units will continue to remain relatively constant near 7 percent. Assuming this population growth, the only effective method of increasing the number of units within the buffer is to increase the number of supermarkets or fruit and vegetable shops in Ramsey.





Ramsey could be closer to its goal if at least one more large food retail store were located in the city, preferably in the southeastern portion of the City.

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

*Figure 5  
Access to Supermarkets*



## Legend

-  Super Markets
-  Service Area
-  Developed Parcels
-  Parcels



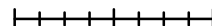
## Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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However, if large amounts of development occurred outside the 1,600-meter radii, or if food retailers were concentrated in one area, the goal may not be reached. For example, large scale food retailers (like Cub or Rainbow) will sometimes choose locations directly adjacent to one another within one suburban-style shopping center. While the market may support this style of development (in the Town Center for example), this configuration would do little to help the city meet its goal because both stores would be serving largely similar 1,600 meter areas.

Another policy alternative to reach the goal would be to encourage the development of a weekly farmer's market. By partnering with existing Ramsey farmers and other neighboring farms, Ramsey could build a farmer's market. Ideally, the farmer's market could be hosted at various sites within the community.

It is unlikely that the City of Ramsey will choose to operate a municipal supermarket; therefore the private sector will be the source of any new food retail in the city. Land use controls and location availability will be the primary areas in which to focus policy directives to encourage additional food retail in Ramsey.

*Land use controls.* The city may be able to reach its goal more quickly by encouraging a number of neighborhood-serving retail developments that included fresh fruit and vegetables. However, this type of store would probably require neighborhood development with a different design and an increased density compared to what is traditionally seen in Ramsey outside of the Town Center area.

Both the City's Comprehensive Plan as well as the zoning controls used to implement the plan will be important for encouraging additional food retail. The Comprehensive Plan can encourage the development of neighborhoods with both residential and small retail uses within walking distance and connected by sidewalks. This would serve as an alternative to more typical suburban retail development, that includes large concentrations of retail in one area, segregated from residential uses. Zoning controls must follow a change in the Comprehensive plan, both to allow commercial uses in areas of change, and also to provide some standards for the form of commercial uses in close proximity to residential areas.

In addition to neighborhood-serving retail that could be located within or near residential neighborhoods, appropriate locations should be identified for larger

food retail stores that may serve a larger market. Based on the location of existing supermarkets, the northeast and southeast corners of the city may provide the greatest opportunities for new sites. The Comprehensive Plan could specifically identify potential sites with vacant parcels, or simply identify a larger area appropriate for new retail development given access and other characteristics. Zoning controls would be changed if necessary to allow a new commercial use.

*Location Availability.* Location availability may be the factor affecting the potential for new retail development over which the City has the least control. Traditional food retail development will require a large site, usually between 4 and 10 acres depending on the type of store, with good access to major roads and relatively good visibility. In addition, retailers may want to be located in areas that have a high level of traffic and activity, or areas where this level of activity is anticipated in the near future. Areas of higher density development will be more attractive to retailers. The northern portions of Ramsey that currently have relatively low densities may not be as likely to attract retailers unless new development is planned at densities sufficient to support a store. Even though large tracts may be available in these areas, smaller, neighborhood-scale retail may be more appropriate here as part of well-planned conservation development if the city chooses to keep these areas at a low gross density.

To preserve locations attractive to food retail developers, the Comprehensive Plan could identify locations with good access and visibility from major roads, in or near areas that expect moderate density development to occur in the near future. These could be guided for commercial uses (if they are not already) to ensure that they do not develop as another use. Given its planned density and vicinity to major transportation corridors, Town Center may be able to support a second food retailer. The other major transportation corridor in Ramsey is Highway 47, but it may be difficult to find a location suitable in size along this corridor given that much of it is already built out.





A green space plan from Silver Spring, Maryland. Providing access and views to green space improves mental health. Ramsey scores high in this area given the semi-rural nature of most residential lots.

## Mental Health

### HIA THRESHOLD

Within the threshold analysis framework, a key component to mental health assessment is determining the accessibility to green spaces within a community. Seven points are awarded if a majority of streets are lined with trees; OR there are several pocket parks or larger around major employment and residential areas; OR there are views of green from the windows of most housing/work locations.

### CURRENT ACHEIVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS=7)

Within Ramsey, almost half of the residential housing units are located on large lots (1+ acre lots). Therefore, it is assumed that these lots would provide adequate access to green spaces in the form of natural woods areas and significant lawn and yard spaces. However, the remaining half of residential housing units is located within relatively new housing developments. While some of these units have access to parks, wetlands, and natural forests, the majority rely on plantings and landscaping that is relatively young, like the housing stock within the neighborhood.

Furthermore, based on a comparison of canopy cover in relation to Ramsey's street centerline file, it was found that 39 percent of the street centerline miles intersect with the canopy-cover shapefile (See Figure #6). While not meeting the threshold of "majority of streets are lined with streets" this percentage is relatively high given the amount of new streets with small, non-canopy trees in the City.

### RAMSEY'S GOAL

It is expected that additional green space will be added through the normal course of development, including through the Park Trust Fund, the trail development fund, the construction of park and trail facilities, and normal landscaping. It is Ramsey's goal to provide tree canopy along over 50% of street centerlines and to incorporate a viewshed analysis into the design review process for new development to ensure that a majority of building occupants have a view to green space. Ramsey's goal is to keep at least a majority of streets lined with trees.

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

Figure #6  
Mental Health

## Legend

- Streets With Canopy Cover
- Canopy Cover
- Parks
- Parcels

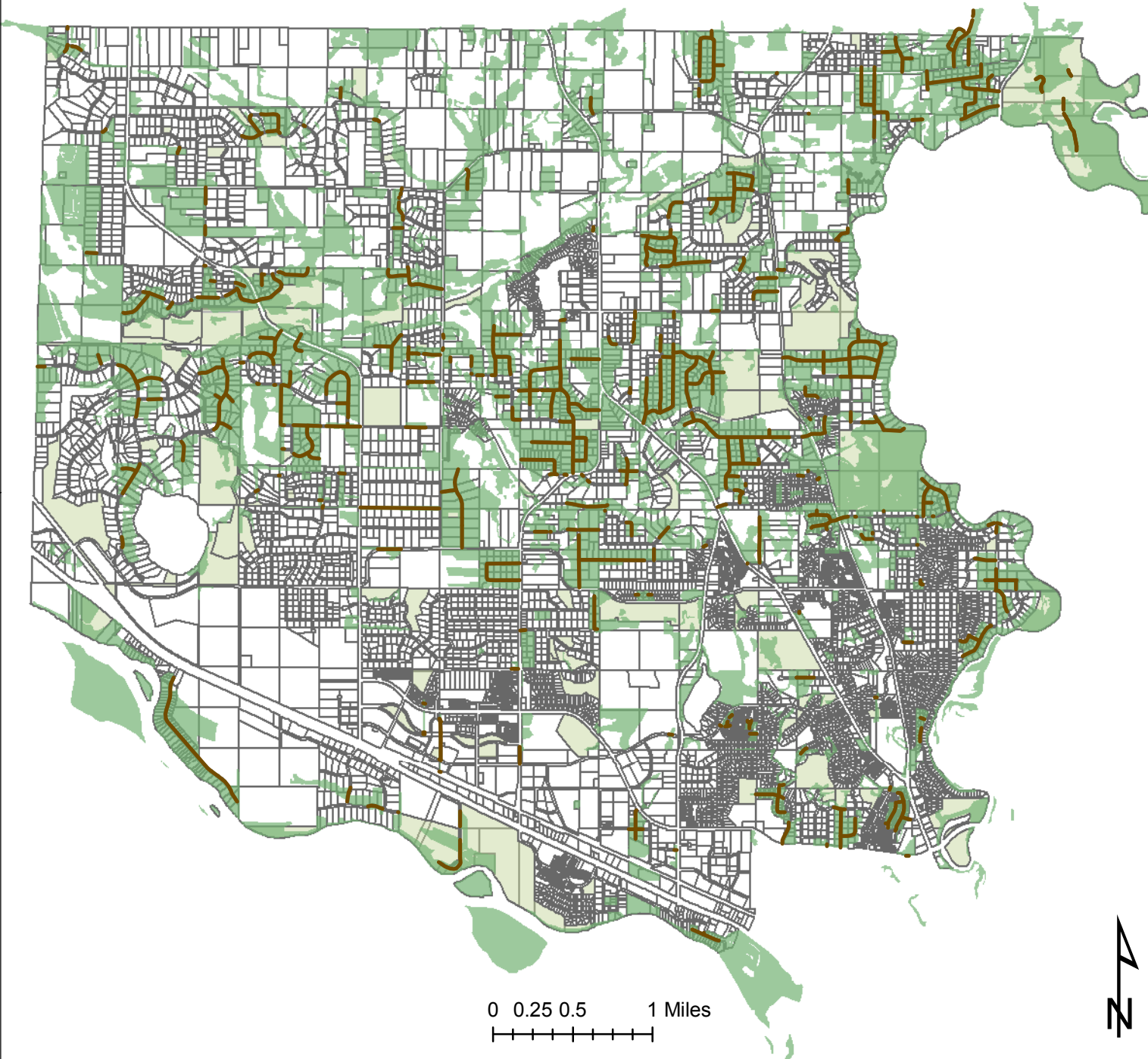


### Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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## POLICY DIRECTIONS

Since 39 percent of the street centerlines already include tree canopy, it seems likely that Ramsey could meet its goal by requiring tree canopy along new streets as well as wherever practical for redevelopment projects. It is likely that this goal will be met largely through the increase in tree canopy provided along streets where new development is occurring. The typical development pattern in Ramsey of single-family homes on larger lots also will help to provide natural access and viewsheds to green space. New office, commercial and residential development near town center may have less access to these amenities, but robust landscaping requirements as well as a large park integrated into the Town Center design will help provide access to green spaces for these residents and workers. Progress towards this goal may also be met by continuing to use the park dedication ordinance to secure land or funds for additional park and open space where new development is occurring. These two latter items will occur given the status quo; however the former may require additional policy changes.

The City will need to enhance its existing landscaping requirements for new development to ensure that tree canopy is provided on at least one side of new streets. Part of the design review for redevelopment will need to include an analysis of existing tree canopy along right-of-ways and the potential for increasing the tree canopy during redevelopment. Both of these measures could be implemented through the City's landscape requirements ordinance.

The City could also engage in a proactive tree planting campaign to retrofit existing streets with additional canopy where needed. Where public right-of-way is available, and where safety considerations allow, additional trees could be planted to increase views to green space. A tree planting program would require funding for both the cost of plants as well as the cost of time to do plantings. The location of any new trees along existing right of way would also need to be reviewed and approved by the city engineer, planning commission and possibly other authorities such as Anoka County to ensure that the plan for plantings met existing safety requirements. In the United States, tree plantings near high speed roadways are often restricted to prevent serious automobile crashes. Since this program would not be dependent on new development or redevelopment, a funding source would have to be identified if this option were pursued.



Providing access to parks and trails for pedestrians and bicyclists can improve physical activity. Ramsey is currently building its trail system and its goal is to have 50% of residents be within a 600 meter walk of an active park space and trail.

Image: © Regents of the University of Minnesota. Used with the permission of Metropolitan Design Center

## Physical Activity

### HIA THRESHOLD

Access to park locations, open space, and trail/sidewalk systems is an important indicator of physical activity. Under the first indicator, points are awarded on a sliding scale by the percentage of residences that are within 400 or 600 meters of a park or open space area. The second indicator measures the same percentage of residences within 400 or 600 meters of a trail access point.

### CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS= 0)

The City of Ramsey has an extensive parks and trail system. The City has approximately 565 acres of parks and open space. Currently, 23.6% of Ramsey residents live within a 400 meter buffer of an active park and 35.2% of Ramsey residents live within a 600 meter buffer of an active park (See Figure #7). Additionally, the City has adopted a Master Trail Plan to create a regional, interconnected trail system. 40.3% of residents live within a 400 meter buffer of a current trail or sidewalk and 49.3% live within a 600 meter buffer (See Figure #8). Furthermore, the percentage of residents living within the buffer of a trail or sidewalk will substantially increase upon full build out of the trail system.

Also, the Ramsey Town Center development is a transit-oriented, pedestrian friendly development currently under construction. This mixed use development is proposed to provide services to local residents and reduce dependency on the automobile by locating these services within walking distance. A parking facility with bike lockers has already been completed near Ramsey City Hall. This facility is intended to serve commuters using the Northstar Commuter Rail. Although the entire development is not completed, the City continues to seek opportunities to complete important pedestrian connections.

### RAMSEY'S GOAL

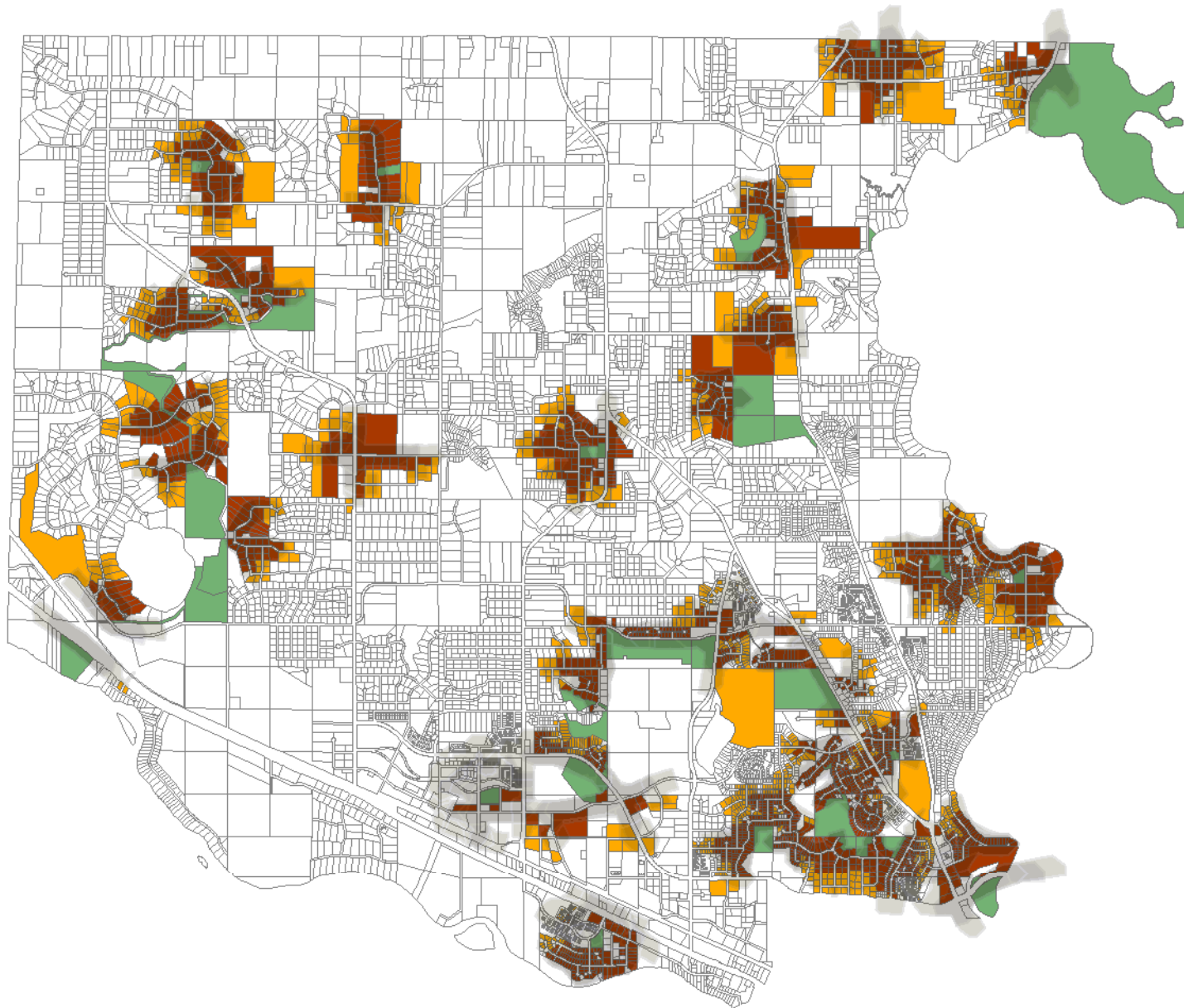
Ramsey's goal is to ensure that when the city is fully developed, at least 50% of residents live within a 600 meter walking buffer of an active park space and a trail.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS







Ramsey is already close to achieving the goal for access to trails. No significant barriers to achieving the trails goal are foreseen. The trail plan will continue to

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

*Figure 7  
Physical Activity*



### Legend

-  400 M Parcels
-  600 M Parcels
-  400 M Service Area
-  600 M Service Area
-  Active Parks
-  Parcels




### Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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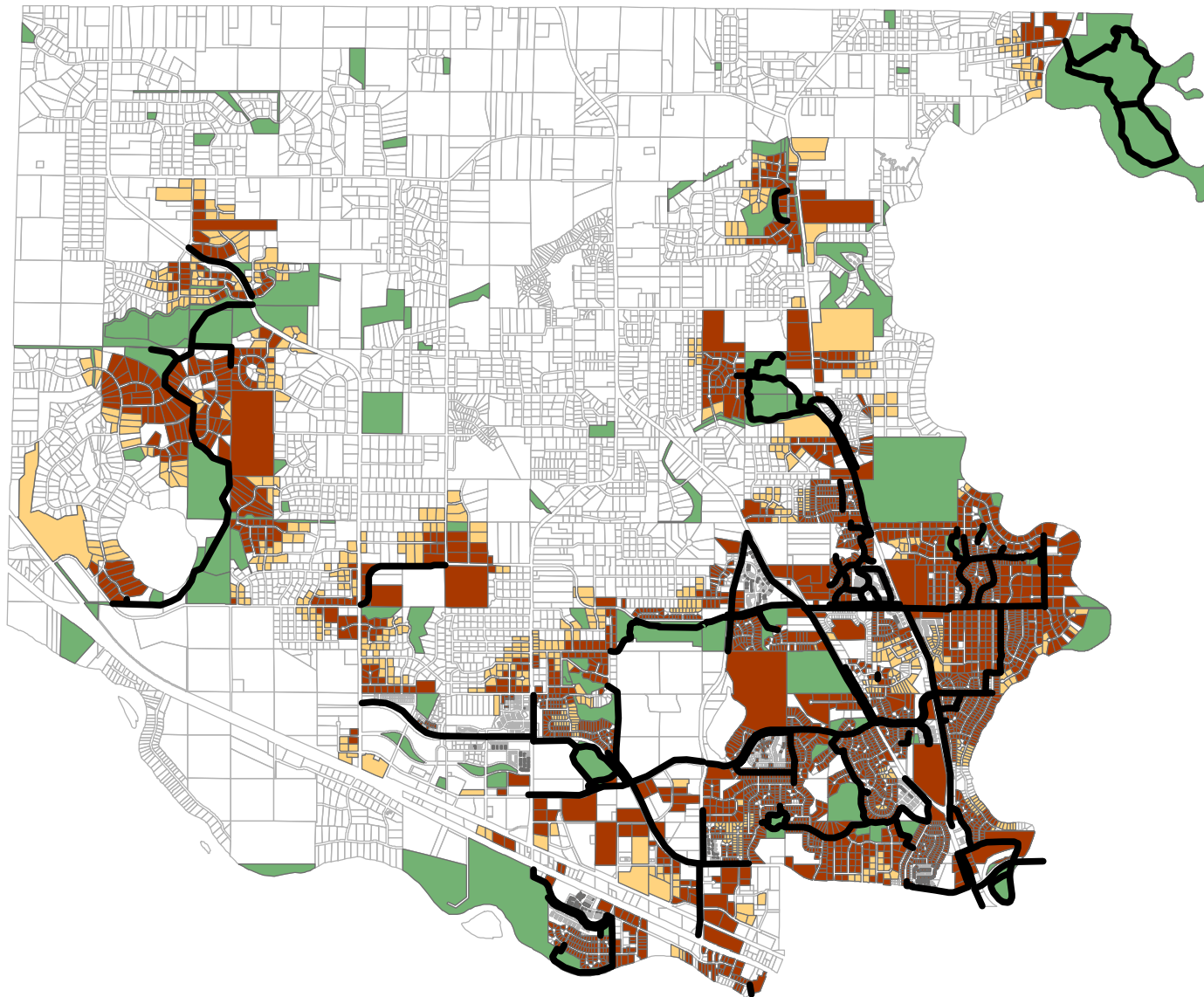
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# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

*Figure 8  
Physical Activity*



## Legend

-  Trails
-  400 M Service Area
-  600 M Service Area
-  Parks



## Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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be updated to plan for a robust and accessible trail system. As development occurs, the system will continue to be constructed. Planning and park staff can reassess accessibility in 5 year increments through a mapping exercise to ensure that the goal is being met. The main policy direction to ensure that access to trails continues to increase will likely be the implementation of the Master Trail Plan, which identifies the locations of future trails. This document is likely to be revised as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update process, and language could be added to identify the goal of ensuring access to trails for a majority of residents within 600 meters of their homes.

The Parks and Trails section of the Comprehensive Plan can also be updated to include public access to active open spaces for a majority of the population as a goal.

Another policy direction could be the addition of incentives for development that meets park and trail access goals. For example, developers who show that new residents will have walking access to active open space and trails would be provided with an incentive such as expedited review or density bonuses. (This type of incentive system could be applied more broadly to include all HIA goals.)

Acquisition of additional park land (or funds to buy park land) will also be done through the use of the park dedication requirements. While the park dedication requirements are seen as adequate for acquiring the necessary amount of land to meet the goal, the actual implementation of the park plan may present challenges. First, adequate staff is necessary to plan for park needs, review development proposals for the inclusion of park space, and to facilitate the purchase, design and construction of new parks and recreation facilities.

A second challenge may be public perception of park service needs. During the Comprehensive Plan Update process, it was mentioned by many members of the public that Ramsey should focus on larger park space with more activities at each park rather than smaller, neighborhood-serving parks. Before these small parks are developed, they appear to be just vacant open spaces rather than useful park space. Small parks also cannot accommodate large, active uses such as baseball diamonds, soccer fields, or other large play areas which some residents expressed a desire for. The goal of providing many small parks within a short distance of most homes may be at odds with the desires of residents to have fewer large, centrally located parks that serve larger areas (although through use of a private automobile). One solution may be to fully develop these small neighborhood parks more quickly after they are acquired so that neighbors are aware they are park land and assign them more value.



ADEQUATE LIGHTING IS AND INDICATOR OF SAFETY. RAMSEY SCORES HIGH IN THIS AREA, WITH 80 PERCENT OF STREETS HAVING ADEQUATE LIGHTING



COMPLETE STREETS INCLUDE FACILITIES FOR ALL MODES OF TRAVEL, PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLIST AND AUTOMOBILE. 20 PERCENT OF RAMSEY'S STREETS HAVE SIDEWALKS

## Safety

### HIA THRESHOLD

There are two indicators related to the topic of safety. The first is in regards to adequate street lighting. Four points are obtained with 80% of the streets within the City have adequate lighting.

The second indicator refers to a “complete streets” policy. Eight points can be achieved if the City has a complete streets policy AND incorporates several traffic calming strategies OR if 90% of lane miles are posted at 30 mph or less AND have sidewalks. Four points can be obtained if the community has a complete street policy, OR incorporates traffic calming strategies OR 70% of the lane miles are posted at 30 mph or less AND have sidewalks.

### CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

(TOTAL POINTS= 4)

Currently, the City of Ramsey has approximately 800 street lights. In the mid-1990s, the City embarked on a priority street light policy to illuminate the City’s streets. At that time, key intersections were prioritized and new street lights were installed based on a phasing plan. All new subdivisions were required to install street lights at 300 foot intervals. To date, the priority street lighting has been completed and all streets within the city are adequately lit.

Ramsey does not currently have a “complete streets” policy, but does attempt to integrate traffic-calming measures wherever possible on a case-by-case basis. Approximately 20% of the streets in Ramsey have sidewalks or trails.

### RAMSEY’S GOAL

#### *Street Lighting*

Ramsey intends to maintain safe and well-lit streets in new and existing development by providing street lights at at least 300 foot intervals along sidewalks and roads.

#### *Complete Streets*

Ramsey will provide safe circulation routes for multiple uses or modes in order to support and encourage travel by means other than the automobile.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS

#### *Street Lighting*



Ramsey will continue to require the installation of street lights along circulation routes to meet the goal. The policy will continue to be enforced through the City's ordinance.

#### *Complete Streets*

One possible policy direction is the adoption of a "Complete Streets" ordinance or policy that requires the incorporation of traffic-calming measures and provisions for the safety of all modes into all new development. Other examples of Complete Streets policies from around the country include the traffic-calming measures and additional facilities for bicycles and pedestrians mentioned in the HIA workbook. "Complete the Streets" is a national coalition of groups that advocate for complete streets policies. They define complete streets as follows:

*"Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street."*

This type of policy could be a separate document adopted by the City Council that defines a complete street, identifies the goal, and describes the process of implementation including design examples. To be most effective, the City's ordinances could be updated to refer to the complete streets policy for the design and construction of transportation improvements.

This would require a somewhat new approach to transportation and subdivision design, which would be challenging to implement. There will likely be an increased cost (or a perceived increase in cost) to incorporate additional facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists into new street designs. There will almost certainly be an increased cost to incorporate these features into existing roadways. A second barrier may be the time and cost to familiarize City staff with new policies and design review procedures necessary to implement a complete streets policy.

Although such a policy would be most effective if implemented on a citywide basis, it is probably more realistic to consider implementing complete streets design principles on a project-by-project basis. The drawback to this approach is that safe functioning of many of these features (separate, on-street lanes, improved pedestrian crossings, advanced stops, etc.) depends on their connectivity over a large area. Commuters are not likely to remain totally within one development and thus their safe passage depends on these

measures being implemented over a larger area. Thus, some commitment to citywide implementation should be in place.



AN EXAMPLE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN Minneapolis. 57 percent of housing in Ramsey meets the HIA threshold definition of affordable. Ramsey also provides a variety of housing types.

## Social Capital

### HIA THRESHOLD

This indicator focuses on the importance of a diversity of housing types and prices in contributing to social capital. Two points are possible if at least 20% of every census tract is rental and 20% of every census tract is owner-occupied OR at least 50% of the residential units are affordable to people at or below the median household income (in the metro area, the AMI is \$73,100 and that income could afford a home up to \$225,000).

### CURRENT SITUATION

(TOTAL POINTS=2)

The census tract with the highest percentage of rental licenses has 101 rental units out of 2,021 residential parcels, which is only about 5 percent. However, of the 6 census tracts in the city, 4 of them meet the affordability threshold. 4,779 of the 8,432 residential parcels (57%) are affordable to a household earning 100% of the median household income (See Figure #9). In terms of varied structure types, 17% of Ramsey's housing are townhomes, 3% are apartments, and the remainder of single-family lots. However, Ramsey offers small, medium, and large-lot single-family options that attract a variety of family types and socio-economic strata.

### RAMSEY'S GOAL

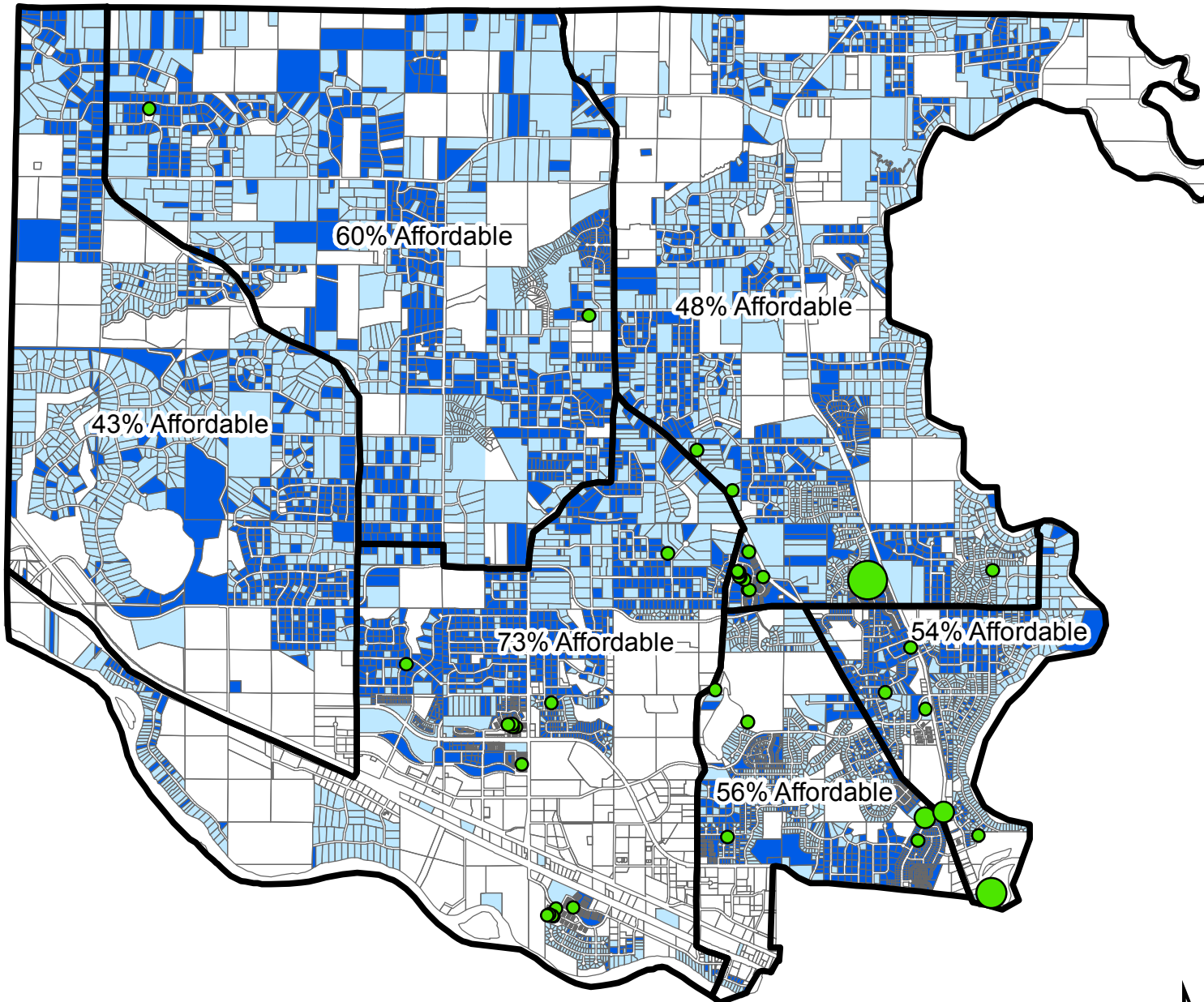
Ramsey's goal is to support strong social relationships by providing a mixture of housing types and tenures, and identifying opportunities to maintain at least 50 percent of the housing stock in the City at a level affordable to households earning 100 percent of the area median income.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS

Through the Comprehensive Plan, Ramsey plans for a variety of housing types throughout the City. The Town Center area does, and will continue to, provide the majority of the high-density, attached housing in the form of multi-story apartment and condo buildings and townhomes. Areas east of Town Center also contain a significant number of townhomes. Outside of the southeast corner of the City, Ramsey plans for a mixture of small- to large-lot single family housing types. The policy tools to continue support for a mixture of housing types and tenures will continue to be the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

# City of Ramsey Health Impact Assessment

Figure #9  
Social Capital



## Legend

- Rental Locations
- Census Tracts
- Parcels
- Affordable to Median Income
- Residential Parcels



Source: Anoka County, City of Ramsey

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Encouraging a mixture of housing types will also support affordability goals. By providing plans and zones that allow for attached and smaller lot detached housing, many units will be built as “affordable” simply given housing and land prices in Ramsey. Ramsey will also pursue a proactive approach to providing affordable housing, such as a Crestview Senior Communities and ACCAP project proposal for the Town Center area.



Trott Brook runs through Ramsey and is an example of surface water that can be protected by using public sewer systems and requiring buffers around water bodies.

## Water Quality

### HIA THRESHOLD

There are two indicators outlined in the Threshold Analysis with respect to water quality. The first is the general availability of urban sewer and water services. Five points are awarded if all development is planned where sewer and water is planned. One point can be obtained if there is a management plan for septic/on-site wastewater systems (but only if the development is outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area).

The Threshold Analysis method states that requiring a buffer around water bodies will have a positive impact on surface water quality because impervious surface and runoff is correlated with a degradation of nearby water sources. It goes a step further to suggest that mowed turf acts more similarly to impervious surface than a natural, vegetative material, and should be subtracted from the analysis of vegetation around water bodies. Under this indicator, seven points can be obtained if a buffer of 50 meters is preserved around all water bodies. Three points are eligible if there's a buffer of 20 meters around all water bodies.

### CURRENT SITUATION

(TOTAL POINTS=0)

#### *Groundwater and Drinking Water Quality*

Public water and sewer systems are not readily available to over half the land area of the City, although the City and Metropolitan Council have showed a history of willingly extending these services upon demand. However, the City does allow rural, septic system development in a large portion of the City.

The City does have a septic system pumping and inspection requirement within City Code. This ordinance was passed in 2003 and the Community Development Department tracks and manages this process.

#### *Surface Water Quality*

The City has a shoreland protection ordinance that limits construction 300 feet from streams and rivers and 1,000 feet from lakes. However, the ordinance does not limit the ability of a property owner to mow the protection area. Furthermore, the City recently adopted a wetland buffer ordinance, which requires a buffer from delineated wetland boundaries, varying in size depending on the quality of the wetland (from 20 to 40 feet). However, neither of these methods is credited in the Threshold Analysis.

## RAMSEY'S GOAL

Ramsey's goal is to ensure clean and safe water for recreation, consumption and natural habitat in Ramsey for residents and wildlife.

## POLICY DIRECTIONS

### *Groundwater and Drinking water quality*

Since Ramsey is still developing, urban services (sewer and water) will continue to be extended in a equitable and phased manner. Ramsey is currently in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as a guide in determining the amount of land that will be served, and at what time or in what phase. In general, Ramsey's goal is to provide these services in an incremental and contiguous manner, and to protect the interests of existing landowners and new development takes place.

In the future (beyond 2030), all of Ramsey may be served by public sewer and water systems. At this time, many of the septic and private water systems that currently exist may be voluntarily removed and connected to public utilities. Until that time however, the City will continue to assess the need for the expansion of urban services consistent with the City's goals and direction from the Metropolitan Council as required under state law.

The City will continue to enforce septic pumping and inspection requirements consistent with the existing policy. Through the Comprehensive Plan, the City will discourage the development of septic systems for new development outside of the existing MUSA boundary.

### *Surface Water Quality*

The City will continue to use the shoreland protection ordinance and wetland buffer ordinance in areas where private development is occurring adjacent to water bodies in order to protect water quality. The City will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these two policies and suggest changes as necessary to meet future goals. However, the City may never meet the HIA threshold of providing 66-foot buffers around all surface water bodies. Landowner education, enforcement of existing ordinances and acquisition of important natural resources areas will continue to improve protection of surface water.

During the Comprehensive Plan update process, the concept of a strong landowner education campaign has been discussed, and the City may develop this further to encourage additional protection of surface water. This effort

could include newspaper articles, clinics, and/or targeted mailings to landowners whose property contains surface water. This education campaign would encourage additional buffering (60 to 160 feet or greater), elimination of mowing in the buffer zone, information on native plantings, and contact information for additional resources.

Through the Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Trails Master Plan, the City also makes it a priority to acquire areas for parks that include surface water bodies. This can be done through the Park Dedication Ordinance, or possibly in the future, a Natural Resources Acquisition Fund. By acquiring these areas, the City can implement larger, permanent buffers to protect water bodies from runoff. Examples of this policy include the City's acquisition of areas around Trott Brook and Lake Itasca.



## Conclusion

The analysis undertaken in this exercise revealed the accomplishments and limitations of current policies affecting health in Ramsey. Out of a total of 100 possible points, Ramsey achieved 32 points. The best scoring indicators were for air quality, housing quality, mental health, safety, and social capital. These aspects are rather intuitive, as Ramsey has been a historically rural area. It is reasonable to assume that access to green space, a substantial canopy cover, and a good mix of housing prices are available. Unfortunately, as a standard rural/suburban community, access to transit or densities to support transit, close retail/supermarket opportunities, urban services, and an extensive sidewalk/trail system are limited.

As we assess the areas of priority in moving forward, it is important to consider Ramsey's historical development pattern as well as its location within the region. Some indicators will be easier for the City to achieve, while it may be unrealistic to improve on others. Striving to ensure all residences have a park and/or trail within walking distance is a realistic priority. Twelve additional points could be obtained if the goals in the above analysis were achieved. Also, guiding land use to encourage the development of a supermarket within the southeast or south-central portion of the city is another realistic goal that could add 12 points. Examining key opportunities for traffic calming measures could provide Ramsey eight additional points. Ensuring most new development is connected to urban services would provide 5 points.

Ramsey's priorities will ultimately lie in the hands of the policy makers. The purpose of this report is to inform those choices. Identifying how to achieve the maximum number of points should not be the only purpose of the Threshold Analysis exercise. Rather, it should help policy makers identify opportunities for improvement of resident's health. Many policies and ordinances that have been enacted, and that are based on completely logical goals and desires, may in fact have unintended consequences for the health of Ramsey's residents. For example, the development of large-lot single family development is based on the desires of buyers in the market. However, the pervasive use of this development pattern can reduce accessibility and social interactions and leave vulnerable populations without a reliable means of transportation. The information provided by the HIA can be used as one of many tools that planners and other policy makers can use to make decisions about the form they want their communities to take.

The next steps in this process will be to distribute the HIA document among the public and policy makers. Ramsey also intends to pursue the next round of grant funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield to undertake specific implementation efforts based on the policy directions set out in each topic area. Information from the HIA will also be incorporated directly into the Comprehensive Plan as part of a Health and Wellness chapter.

SUMMARY OF TOPICS, GOALS AND POLICY DIRECTIONS

TOPIC	HIA THRESHOLD	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT	GOAL	POLICY DIRECTIONS
Accessibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residential Density at 4 u/acre.</li> <li>2. Employment and Residential uses within ¼ mile of hourly transit service.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At build-out, density will be ~ 3 u/acre.</li> <li>2. No transit service in the City currently.</li> </ol>	Encourage dense residential development in appropriate locations to capitalize on transit service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the plan for Town Center</li> <li>2. Secure a stop on the Northstar Commuter Rail Line</li> </ol>
Air Quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No residential areas, schools, day care, playgrounds, sports fields within 650 feet of a major road.</li> <li>2. Polluting point sources regulated locally and by the state or feds.</li> <li>3. Provide tree canopy to mitigate air pollution.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One after-school program and three sports field within buffer area. Substantial residential use and some parks within buffer.</li> <li>2. 5 polluting sources, only regulated by State of MN, not locally</li> <li>3. Little tree canopy along Highway 10.</li> </ol>	Reduce the impact of air pollution on children and other vulnerable populations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan land uses with populations of children away from major roads.</li> <li>2. Continue to use local permitting process and state controls to regulate point-source polluters.</li> <li>3. Encourage the addition of tree canopy along Highway 10 and other future “major roads”.</li> </ol>
Environmental and Housing Quality	Document policies that restrict lead-bearing substances in exposed surfaces of dwelling units and other areas inhabited by children.	Lead-bearing substances are regulated by the building code consistent with State standards.	Limit or eliminate the use of lead in buildings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to use the building code and state regulations to limit the use of lead-bearing substances.</li> </ol>
Food	Supermarkets and fruit and vegetable stores within 1 mile of all residential areas.	6.8% of residential parcels are within a 1 mile buffer of existing grocery stores.	Provide at least 50% of residences with walking access to fresh fruit and vegetables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage the development of more neighborhood-serving grocery</li> <li>2. Identify and reserve locations suitable for grocery store development</li> </ol>
Mental Health	Provide views of greenspace with canopy trees from all buildings.	39% of streets have canopy cover. A majority of housing has views to greenspace.	Provide views to green space from new development and establish tree canopy on 50% of street centerlines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use park dedication to increase views to green space.</li> <li>2. Continue to plan developments with views to open/green space.</li> <li>3. Require tree canopy on new streets.</li> </ol>
Physical Activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residential areas are within 1300 – 1900 feet of an active open space or park.</li> <li>2. Residential areas are within 1900 feet of an off-street trail.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 35.2% of residential parcels are within 1900 feet of an active park.</li> <li>2. 49.3% of residential parcels are within 1900 feet of an off-street trail.</li> </ol>	Provide walking access to active parks and trails for at least 50% of all residents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the Master Trail Plan.</li> <li>2. Plan for park land to serve populations within walking distance.</li> <li>3. Acquire additional park land when necessary.</li> </ol>
Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure adequate lighting on all circulation corridors.</li> <li>2. Adopt “Complete Streets” policy and implement traffic calming strategies.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate lighting is provided on all streets.</li> <li>2. No Complete Streets policy, some traffic calming measures in some locations.</li> </ol>	Complete, safe and well lit streets and circulation corridors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to require adequate lighting on all streets.</li> <li>2. Explore adoption of a complete streets policy and/or ordinance.</li> </ol>
Social Capital	Provide a mixture of housing types, tenures and affordability levels.	57% of Ramsey’s housing is currently affordable. Many housing types are currently available in the City and will continue to be so in the future.	Support social relationships through a mixture of housing types, tenures and affordability levels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to plan for a variety of housing types and tenures.</li> <li>2. Selectively support subsidized housing projects.</li> </ol>
Water Quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Construct housing in areas served by public water and sewer.</li> <li>2. Provide a 66 – 164 foot unmowed, vegetated buffer along all water bodies.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More than half the City does not have access to public water and sewer.</li> <li>2. Shoreland and Wetland Buffer ordinance provide some protection for water bodies (20 to 1,000 feet depending on water body, and not always against mowing).</li> </ol>	Clean, safe ground and drinking water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discourage new development on septic systems.</li> <li>2. Utilize shoreland &amp; wetland buffer ordinances.</li> <li>3. Acquire sensitive natural resources areas.</li> </ol>

## LESSONS LEARNED

Being one of the first cities to embark on completing a Health Impact Assessment utilizing the Threshold Analysis prepared by Design for Health at the University of Minnesota, we would like to take the chance to outline the challenges and learning opportunities we encountered when testing this analysis. In general, we believe it will be very difficult for suburban communities to score well using the scale proposed given the pattern of development focused on open spaces, low density, and auto dependence. Whether that is because suburban communities are generally less healthy or whether the indicators are urban-biased is impossible to determine without a thorough understanding of the supporting research. It seems there may be some indicators of health, such as quality of life, average age, and/or use of health services that could be included to support the connection between aspects of urban environments and general health.

More specifically, there were a number of instances where the indicators had no clear goal for which to strive. An example of this is limiting amount of pollutants in the plan. The Threshold Analysis awards 6 points if there are no polluting non-residential uses within the plan, but according to the MPCA website, all cities within the metropolitan area have polluting uses. No city would be eligible under that specific criterion. Furthermore, it would seem redundant for a city to regulate polluting sources when state and federal regulations are in place. Therefore, the second award also is not applicable. Another example of an indicator with no clear goal is the safety indicator. The section discusses the importance of perceived safety, yet the only indicator available is lighting. It is our opinion that there are a number of other ways to increase the perceived level of safety within a community. The reported level of crime within a community would be a clear alternative. Street lights will not necessarily increase the level of perceived safety in all environments.

The final indicator that does not provide a clear goal for Ramsey is the assertion that septic systems lead to groundwater contamination. It is unfounded to suggest that the overall water quality of a city or region will be safer if a City prohibits septic systems. Surface water quality is negatively affected by the wastewater treatment process, which in turn impacts potable water sources in many communities. It would not necessarily be beneficial to the region's water supply to eliminate all functioning septic systems and ship our waste to the Mississippi River. A closer examination of the impacts of functioning septic systems would be required in order to make this assertion.

Another challenge to the Threshold Analysis is the fact that these indicators may be at distinct odds with other important planning goals. For example, while the research may point to the advantages of locating schools, residential areas, and sports facilities away from major roads, it does not consider the additional driving requirements, and in turn, additional pollution when locating these uses away from major roads. This would no doubt have a negative impact on vehicle miles traveled. Furthermore, it is

sound planning policy to emphasize density and intensity near major roadways for transportation planning purposes, which is at odds with air quality goals. While we realize the focus of analysis is health, it may be pertinent to include discussions about other planning goals that may be in conflict with these stated indicators.

While there may be some challenges for applying these criteria within an environment like Ramsey, the research resulted in a series of policy alternatives for the City to consider. Overall, the Threshold Analysis allows research-oriented, data analysis method of reaching priorities with regard to impacting the built environment and increasing health within a community. The City of Ramsey will be able to look to this Health Impact Assessment when preparing a draft of the Comprehensive Plan and outlining policy changes to implement the plan.