

Foundation

Section A

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

This comprehensive plan update presents information related to Ramsey County’s role in addressing land and public infrastructure issues within the County. It is being prepared in accordance with Minnesota Statute 473.851 – 473.871 under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act for approval by the Metropolitan Council. To achieve the goals of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, State law requires the Metropolitan Council to adopt a comprehensive *Metropolitan Development Guide* that establishes parameters for regional infrastructure and local planning. Local units are required to review and update their comprehensive plans at least once every 10 years. In addition, updates to local plans may be required by 1) the release of systems statements, or 2) notice of revision to a metropolitan system plan.

The Metropolitan Council reviews comprehensive plans to determine:

- Conformity with metropolitan system plans;
- Consistency with other adopted plans of the Council; and
- Compatibility with each other.

Ramsey County—unlike all other metropolitan counties with the exception of Hennepin—has no land use planning authority, since land use jurisdiction falls within the domains of the municipalities located within the County. As such, Ramsey County’s comprehensive plan has fewer required sections. The purpose of this section of the plan—the Foundation—is to provide information that puts the comprehensive plan within a broader community context. It provides population and employment information and discusses the implications of the information for activities included in the comprehensive plan.

Metropolitan Council 2030 Regional Development Framework

Ramsey County is part of a large metropolitan area that has strong economic ties across jurisdictions and significant flows of people and goods between jurisdictions. The Twin Cities Metropolitan Council was created by the state of Minnesota to provide regional leadership on growth and development issues. The Council has identified the principles it believes are important in its *Regional Development Framework*. The Council is also part of Minnesota's Smart Growth initiative.

The Regional Development Framework sets out four policies addressing growth, transportation, housing, and natural resources. The four policies are summarized by the Metropolitan Council as:

Policy 1: Work with local communities to accommodate growth in a flexible, connected and efficient manner.

Under this policy, local communities have discretion in staging growth, recognizing that development opportunities do not always occur in a contiguous manner. The strategies encourage land-use patterns that connect a variety of uses, take advantage of existing sewer infrastructure, and have convenient access to transportation corridors.

Policy 2: Plan and invest in multi-modal transportation choices, based on the full range of costs and benefits, to slow the growth of congestion and serve the region's economic needs.

The transportation policy gives priority to maintaining the existing metro highway system, reducing bottlenecks that impede travel, implementing new strategies to improve the system's efficiency and adding capacity where possible. It also supports the expansion of the transit system.

Policy 3: Encourage expanded choices in housing location and types, and improved access to jobs and opportunities.

This policy supports communities' focus on increasing housing options to meet the changing market preferences, supports the production and preservation of affordable housing, and emphasizes the importance of creating linkages between housing and jobs, services and amenities that are easily accessible by auto, transit, biking and walking. The Metropolitan Council recognizes the importance of Ramsey County as a regional center for employment, housing and services.

Policy 4: Work with local and regional partners to reclaim, conserve, protect and enhance the region's vital natural resources.

The policy on natural-resource protection encourages the integration of natural-resource conservation strategies in regional and local land use decisions. Its emphasis on protection and management of the region's water resources is consistent with the Minnesota State's initiative to protect water resources statewide. Monitoring the air quality is of regional importance and requires a broad collaboration among regional partners.

Ramsey County's Comprehensive Plan addresses these policies with sound strategies. The County has one of the highest population densities in the United States. It is—and has been for decades—facing the need for compact growth strategies. The County's efforts appear to have been successful. Despite its limited land area and urban core related concerns, its growth rate has been higher than anticipated.

Community Background

Introduction to Ramsey County

Ramsey County is the first and only Minnesota County to be governed by Home Rule. The Charter is like a constitution for the County; it outlines the duties and responsibilities of the county government. The Home Rule was adopted by voters in 1990 and implemented in 1992, and has been amended in 1994, 2002 and most recently 2002.

The Charter Commission is a 17-member standing commission appointed by the District Court. It consists of two members from each County Board Commissioner District and three at-large members. The Commission's duty is to periodically review the charter and propose necessary amendments. It also reviews and recommends proposals from others. The Commission has the authority to submit proposed amendments to an election.

Ramsey County Board of Commissioners

The Charter provides for a Board of Commissioners of Ramsey County composed of seven elected officials, representing seven districts throughout Ramsey County. The Board is the policy-determining body of the county. Except as otherwise provided by the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, or by the Charter, the County Board has all the powers of the county.

Figure 1 includes the County Mission, Values and Operating Principles as approved by the Board of Commissioners for 2007 – 2009.

Goals and Critical Success Indicators

In 2007, the Board of Commissioners adopted six goals to guide the work of the County. Each goal has identified "indicators", which demonstrate what successful achievement of the goal would look like.

Figure 1



Mission Statement
Ramsey County -Working With You
to Enhance Our Quality of Life

Values Statement
Ramsey County is community centered and serves the citizens with integrity, honesty, respect, innovation, and responsibility.

Operating Principles
The following principles guide our daily work:

- **Service Comes First** – ensuring the public's health and safety is our top priority.
- **Excellence** – carry out the work of the County with professionalism and high standards.
- **Valuing Employees** – treat employees in our diverse workplace with respect and dignity so they can achieve excellence in their work.
- **Fiscal Accountability** – practice good stewardship of public funds and maximize resources.
- **Communication** – seek and encourage citizen input and feedback, and inform and educate citizens about the County's needs and services.
- **Responsiveness** – understand the urgency of our work and do what it takes to get the job done.
- **Collaboration** – work together to build strong communities.
- **Results Focused** – be proactive about community issues with an emphasis on prevention and outcomes.

These are referred to as “Critical Success Indicators”. Below, in **Figure 2**, are the goals and their corresponding Critical Success Indicators (CSIs):

Figure 2

Ramsey County Goals and Critical Success Indicators

Goal: Be a leader in financial and operational management.

- All County resources are professionally and effectively managed (finances, capital assets, staff, technology).
- Business support services enable the effective and efficient delivery of high quality County services.
- Information (for internal and external use) is accurate, available, and protected and makes use of technological advances.
- Facilities are functional, safe, and accessible.
- The public is able to access County information and services through a variety of means, including mail, telephone and in person, and also transact business electronically.
- Effective partnerships with public and private systems result in improved benefit to the community.

Goal: : Promote multi-modal transit and transportation solutions that effectively serve our citizens.

- A variety of safe and effective transportation options benefit the community.

Goal: Prevent crime and improve public safety.

- The response to criminal behavior is effective.
- Prevention strategies are effective in reducing criminal behavior.
- The County is prepared for emergencies and responds effectively.
- Vulnerable children and adults are safe.
- Over-representation of people of color in the criminal justice system is reduced.

Goal: Be a leader in responding to the changing demographics in Ramsey County.

- Disparities in access and outcomes for diverse populations are reduced.
- Services are culturally sensitive and responsive to diverse populations.
- County services adapt to meet the needs of the aging population.
- Staff reflect the demographics of the working age population of the County.

Goal: Proactively deliver services that improve the quality of life for children and families, and individuals with special needs.

- The basic needs (food, shelter, health care) of residents are met.
- Residents with special needs are healthy and safe in the community.
- Cultural and recreational services are accessible and available.
- Partnerships increase the number of children who go to school ready to learn
- The Ramsey County Libraries continue to be accessible and serve all residents of the County.

Goal: Protect our natural resources and the quality of our environment.

- Services that support environmental stewardship are provided for residents and property owners.
- Natural resources are managed to sustain and enhance the environment.
- Policies and practices reflect sound environmental principles.
- The impact of waste on the environment is minimized.

Ramsey County’s Strategic Plan

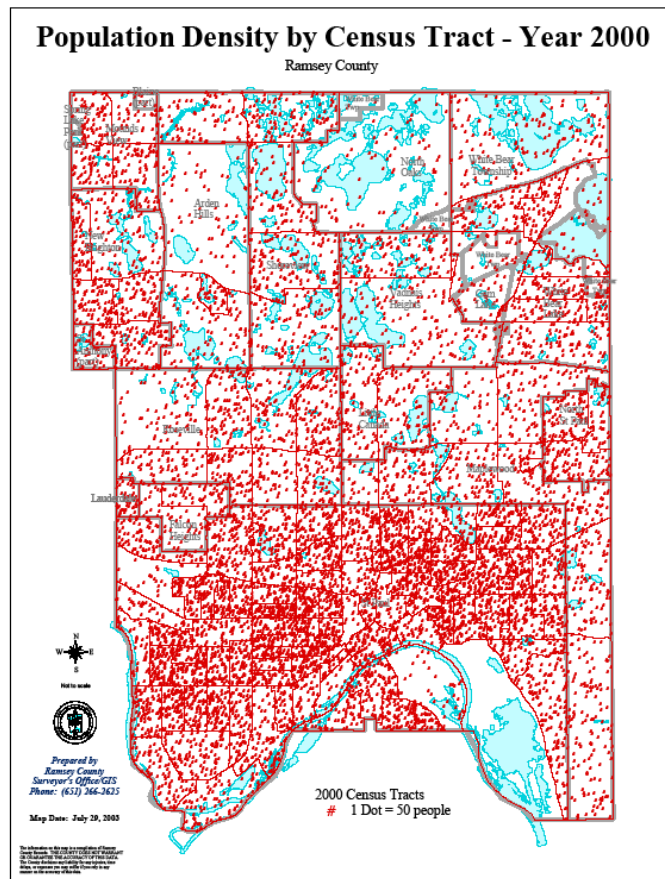
In 1994, 450 citizens and stakeholders from the private, non-profit, and public sectors came together and created a shared vision of the future for each of 15 areas of discussion. Critical issues were identified in each of the 15 “vision” areas. In 1995, fifteen thousand citizens responded to a request to review the visions. Of these, 11,000 people actually reviewed all or parts of these visions and critical issues, with 80% of the reviewers agreeing with them. In 1996, approximately 400 citizens and key stakeholders from all sectors in Ramsey County provided input into forming the basis for how to reach the accepted vision.

The Strategic Plan was included in the 1998 Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan. While more than a decade has passed since its inception, the Strategic Plan has served as a statement of vision for guiding decisions and developing plans for the future. Excerpts from this document are incorporated through sections of this Comprehensive Plan.

Current Population, Land Area and Density

Ramsey County is the second largest county in Minnesota and the Twin Cities metropolitan area, not by land area, but by population. Population and land area are fundamental factors that play a major part in determining both the type and volume of services that residents may need or want. In many instances, a greater number of people means a greater volume of services are needed. On the other hand, a small land mass may require fewer miles of roadways than a larger jurisdiction would need. The combined impact of population and land area on a jurisdiction can be measured by the jurisdiction's *population density*; the number of residents per square mile (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3



Ramsey County is an unusual county by a number of measures. According to the 2000 Census figures:

- Ramsey County's population is 511,035. It has the second highest county population in the state. It is the 108th largest of the 3,141 county-type jurisdictions in the U.S.
- Ramsey County's land area is 155.8 square miles. This is the smallest county in Minnesota. On the national scale, it is ranked 3,051th out of the 3,141 county-type governments in the U.S. for largest size – only 89 county entities are smaller than Ramsey County.
- Ramsey County's population density is estimated at 3,280 people per square mile. It is the highest population density in Minnesota, and 32nd highest density of the 3,141 county-type jurisdictions in the U.S.

As a result of this population density, the County needs to provide many services to meet the needs of the residents, but its space in which to provide those services is quite limited. There are key implications of the County’s high density with respect to components in the comprehensive plan:

- Transit and transportation services must have the capacity to handle a large volume of users.
- Open space and recreation space are likely to be scarce, heavily used and valuable.
- Proximity to open space and recreational spaces is likely to be viewed as amenities that increase a property’s value.
- Public facilities such as roads and parks are likely to deteriorate at a faster rate than in other jurisdictions, due to the high volume of use, unless appropriate design standards and construction standards are used.
- The inner city and inner ring suburban areas are at a greater risk of decay and vulnerability due to the age of the infrastructure and the intensity of its use.
- Due to the small amount of undeveloped area in the County, redevelopment of existing systems and facilities is of greater significance than expansion into undeveloped areas.

Municipalities

Ramsey County is home to all or parts of 19 cities (**Figure 4**):

Arden Hills, Blaine (part), Falcon Heights, Gem Lake, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Maplewood, Mounds View, New Brighton, North Oaks, North St. Paul, Roseville, Saint Anthony (part), Saint Paul, Shoreview, Spring Lake Park (part), Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake (part) and White Bear Township.

Table 1 on the following page compares the population and household estimates from the 2000 Census to 2007 data estimates for Ramsey County and its municipalities.

Figure 4

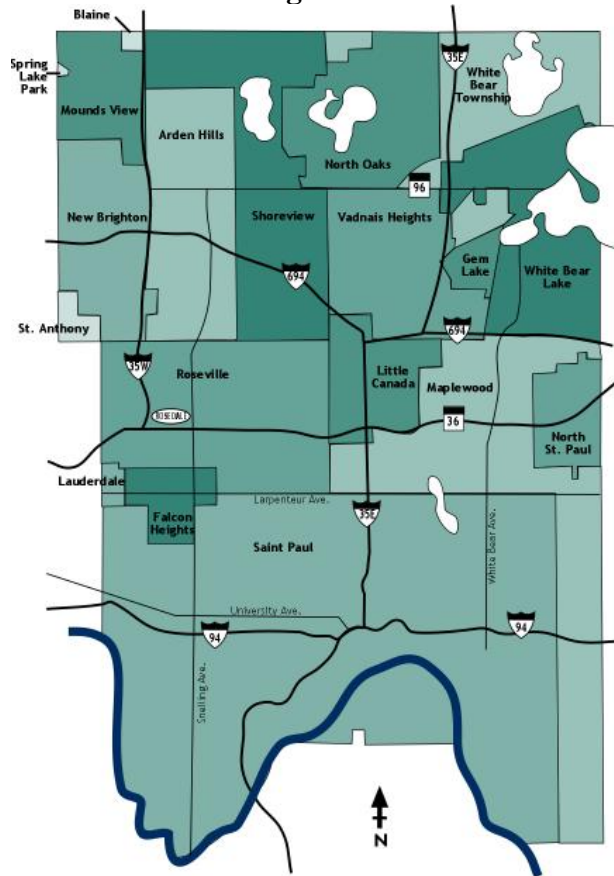
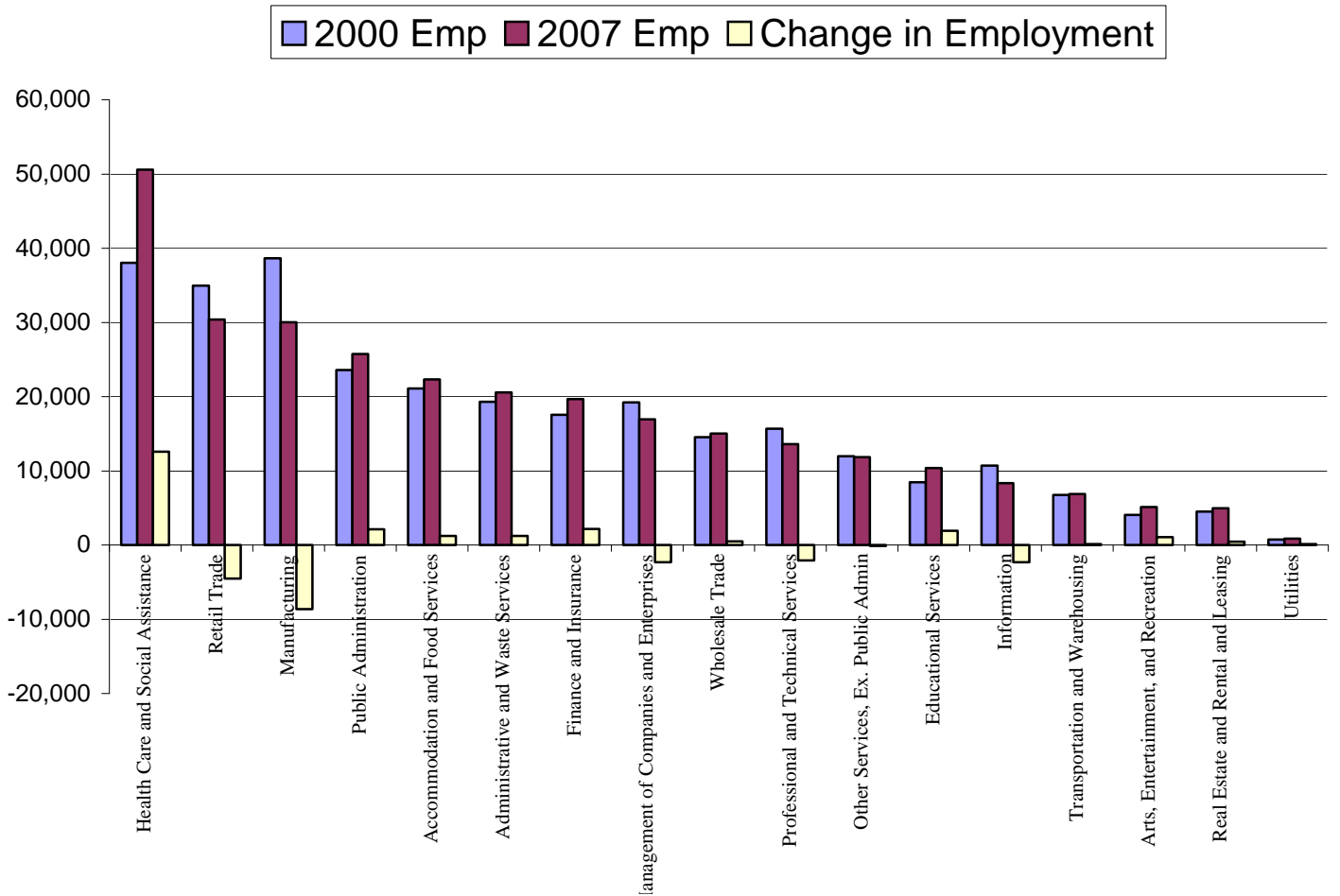


Figure 6 compares the largest employment industries in Ramsey County, including the number of employees, between years 2000 and 2007.

Figure 6

Ramsey County Employment by Industry



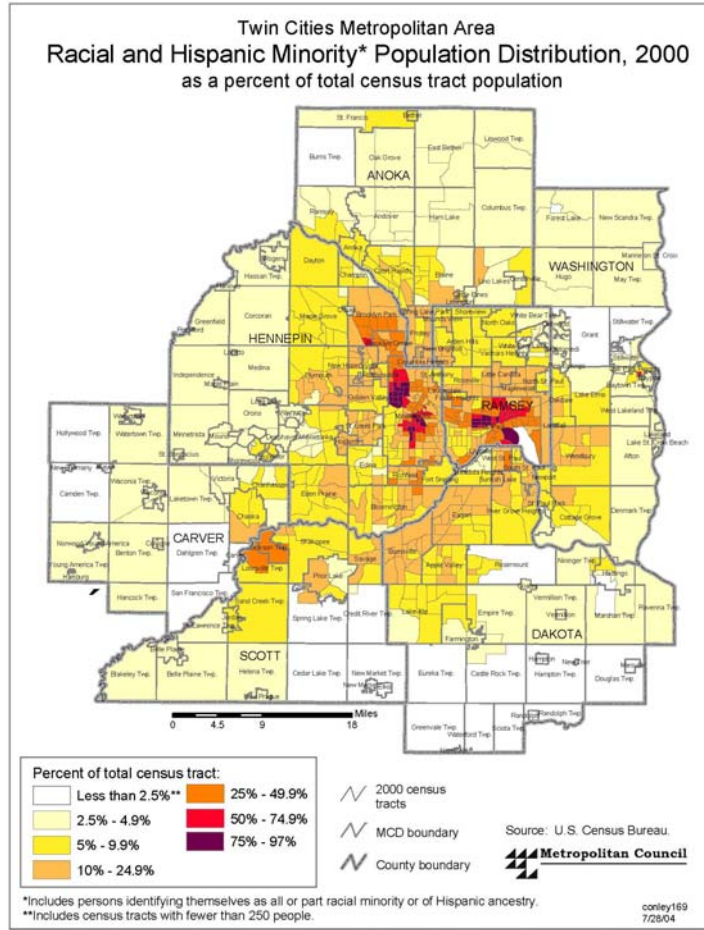
Other Employment Characteristics

Three additional factors of the County's population are noteworthy to mention: The County is home to a diverse population, an aging population, and a significant percent of population that lives below the poverty level.

➤ Diversity:

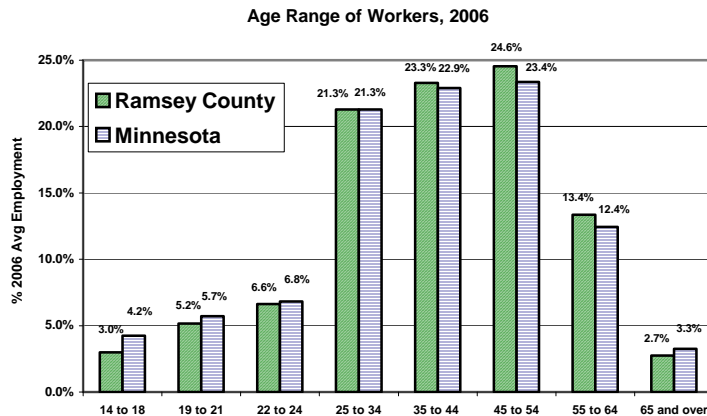
Geographically, the county as a whole has a greater concentration of racial and ethnic diversity than any of the other six metropolitan counties (**Figure 7** on the following page).

Figure 7



➤ Age:
In 2006 Ramsey County’s total number of workers between ages 35 to 64 outstripped the state average for the same age groups (Figure 8).

Figure 8



➤ Income and Poverty:

Table 2 shows median household income and the percent of persons below poverty in the seven-county metro area, according to the 2000 census data. Ramsey County ranked the highest in its poverty rate among the seven county metro area, and lowest in median household income.

Table 2
Median Household Income and Poverty Rate, 1999
 (From the 2000 Census)

County	Area Median Household Income	Percent of Persons Below Poverty Level
Anoka	\$57,754	4.2%
Carver	\$65,540	3.5%
Dakota	\$61,863	3.6%
Hennepin	\$51,711	8.3%
Ramsey	\$45,722	10.6%
Scott	\$66,612	3.4%
Washington	\$66,305	2.9%

Employment Implications

The composite data regarding Ramsey County’s population and employment characteristics hold significant implications regarding land use and infrastructure resources and decision-making. A number of these implications include the following:

- The benefits of activities in Ramsey County spread significantly beyond its borders and influence the seven-county metro areas;
- The County’s infrastructure is an integral part of the critical backbone that supports the whole metropolitan area’s economic activity;
- The County population’s characteristics significantly influence employment and economic development, housing, use of recreational facilities, transit services and transportation, utilization of County services, and other system infrastructures
- Maintenance and redevelopment of the County’s infrastructure is critical to the well-being of the County’s communities and the metropolitan region at large.

Future Trends

The Twin Cities Metropolitan Council has prepared population and employment forecasts for the region that suggest Ramsey County will continue to grow in both population and employment (**Table 3** on the following page). The densities of population and economic activity are both projected to increase.

Table 3

Metropolitan Council's Forecasts for Ramsey County				
<i>(Source: Metropolitan Council's Revised Development Framework)</i>				
	2000	2010	2020	2030
Population	511,035	547,700	570,860	598,900
Households	201,236	219,170	231,670	246,290
Employment	329,145	370,530	402,480	427,640

Summary

In summary, the forecasts suggest that while the percentage of change in rates of growth for Ramsey County over the next two decades may appear small, the total amount of change is still substantial because the population and employment baselines are large. In addition, Ramsey County will play a key role in addressing urban sprawl issues because its location and existing systems will continue to make it a central part of the more concentrated activities supported by the Metropolitan Council and the state of Minnesota.

Overview of the Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan

Ramsey County's Comprehensive Plan incorporates several components that were prepared by specialists in departments responsible for providing the relevant services. However, Ramsey County is not required to prepare all elements of a Comprehensive Plan. This overview is intended to outline these components in relation to the comprehensive planning requirements in the Metropolitan Council's *Local Planning Handbook*.

The Metropolitan Council issued three System Statements for Ramsey County¹ pertaining to requirements for Ramsey County's Comprehensive Plan. These include:

- Transportation / Transit
- Surface Water Management
- Parks and Open Space

¹ For more information, see the Metropolitan Council website at http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/assistance/SysStmnts/ramsey_county.pdf

The Comprehensive Plan prepared by Ramsey County includes these required elements and several optional elements. Ramsey County is not required to submit a plan for Land Use. However, information is provided for some land use planning topics that are relevant to Ramsey County.

Table 4 outlines the planning elements identified by the Metropolitan Council in its *Local Planning Handbook*, and indicates whether they are required and/or included in Ramsey County’s Comprehensive Plan.

Table 4			
Components of Ramsey County’s 2008 Comprehensive Plan compared to Metropolitan Council’s Requirements			
Section	Topic	Required of Ramsey County	Included in County’s Plan
Public Facilities/Land Use Topics:			
B	Transportation /Transit	Yes	Yes
B	Surface Water	Yes	Yes
B	Waste Water	No	Yes ²
	Water Supply	No	No
C	Parks and Open Space	Yes	Yes
	Land Use		
	Existing and Future Land Use	No	No ³
D	Critical Area/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area	No	Yes ⁴
E	Solid Waste	No	Yes ⁵
F	Housing	No	Yes ⁶
Other Topics:			
F	Economic Development	No	Yes
A	Intergovernmental Coordination	Yes	Yes
G	Active Living Ramsey County	No	Yes
H	Implementation: Official Actions/Ordinances	Yes	Yes
H	Capital Improvement Plan	Yes	Yes
	Historic Preservation	No	No
	Solar Access Protection	No	No

² Although not required due to the municipalities’ jurisdictional policies regarding individual sewage system (septic systems), a clarifying statement is included regarding the County’s perspective

³ Except as identified in the Mississippi Critical Area/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Plan

⁴ Although not required, it is required in order to be compliant with MN Executive order 79-19, and it reflects the close relationship between the Mississippi River and County facilities and activities.

⁵ Although not required, the County actively participates in the *Regional Solid Waste Master Plan*.

⁶ Although not required, the County is involved in several housing-related activities.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Ramsey County participates extensively in intergovernmental activities and utilizes citizen participation and input to plan and implement its activities. Although a certain amount of both intergovernmental coordination and citizen involvement is required for preparing plans or permits, a significant amount of this occurs because it is the best way to do business. Two of the County's operating principles stress the importance placed on involvement and collaboration with others:

- *“Communication – seek and encourage citizen input and feedback, and inform and educate citizens about the County's needs and services”*
- *“Collaboration – work together to build strong communities”*

One of the Critical Success Indicators supports collaboration as well:

- *“Effective partnerships with public and private systems result in improved benefit to the community.”*

Ramsey County's commitment to citizen involvement and intergovernmental cooperation is demonstrated through numerous examples. These include the Central Corridor planning; the Counties Transportation Improvement Board and sales tax implementation for transit; the merger of City of St. Paul and Ramsey County public health departments to create St. Paul Ramsey County Public Health; the Joint Property Tax Advisory Committee, the Regional Solid Waste Plan, the 800 Megahertz communication system, Workforce Solutions and the Workforce Investment Board, and Heading Home Ramsey/Heading Home Minnesota. Throughout this Comprehensive Plan, there are references to both intergovernmental activities and citizen participation in Ramsey County activities.