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Ramsey County, ND **Comprehensive Plan**

Ramsey County
by Houston Engineering, Inc.
Spring 2025



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Comprehensive Plan is a compilation of effort by many people, organizations and government entities. This document expresses the great civic pride that exists in Ramsey County. Through the preparation and adoption of this document, the governing officials of Ramsey County have expressed their desire for orderly and efficient development in the area.

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Ramsey County, ND Comprehensive Plan

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
II. Demographics	6
III. Infrastructure Assessment	9
IV. Environmental Constraints	10
V. Existing Land Use Analysis	13
VI. Public Engagement Report	17
VII. Transportation Plan	25
VIII. Growth Management Strategy and Future Land Use	31
IX. Land Development Standards Policies	36
X. Plan Implementation	39
XI. Appendix	41



I. INTRODUCTION

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A. PURPOSE, AUTHORIZATION AND ADOPTION

1. PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a document that guides future land development for the Ramsey County and develops policies that help guide future ordinances, budgets and the master plan for the County.

There are three primary purposes of this document:

- (1) Legal Document: To address the planning requirements of North Dakota state law;
- (2) Private Sector Notice: To provide some predictability about the potential land uses and timing of development so that both public and private sectors can make informed decisions in the area of real estate and capital investments.
- (3) Basis for Public Decisions: Zoning, subdivision, and floodplain ordinances and other land use regulations should be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan should be updated as conditions in Ramsey County change.

2. AUTHORIZATION UNDER STATE LAW

Under Title 11 of the North Dakota Century Code, Counties are required to adopt a comprehensive plan to ensure County Zoning regulations are in accordance with the plan including goals, objectives and policies to guide public and private development.

From NDCC Title 11, Pertaining to Counties, Chapter 11-33, County Zoning

11-33-03. Object of Regulations.

These regulations shall be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan and designed for any or all of the following purposes:

- 1. To protect and guide the development of nonurban areas.*
- 2. To provide for emergency management. "Emergency management" means a comprehensive integrated system at all levels of government and in the private sector which provides for the development and maintenance of an effective capability to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from known and unforeseen hazards or situations, caused by an act of nature or man, which may threaten, injure, damage, or destroy lives, property, or our environment.*
- 3. To regulate and restrict the erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair, or use of buildings and structures, the height, number of stories, and size of buildings and structures, the percentage of lot that may be occupied, the size of courts, yards, and other open spaces, the density of population, and the location and use of buildings, structures, and land for trade, industry, residence, or other purposes.*
- 4. To lessen governmental expenditures.*
- 5. To conserve and develop natural resources.*

These regulations shall be made with a reasonable consideration, among other things, to the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses. The comprehensive plan shall be a statement in documented text setting forth explicit goals, objectives, policies, and standards of the jurisdiction to guide public and private development within its control.

Townships are also required to adopt a comprehensive plan to have effective and enforceable zoning ordinances. This Comprehensive Plan also incorporates goals, objectives and policies of all Townships within Ramsey County that intend to develop zoning ordinances.

From NDCC Title 58, Pertaining to Townships, Chapter 58-03, Powers of Township and of Electors of the Township

58-03-12. Basis for township zoning regulations and restrictions. The regulations and restrictions established in any township zoning district must be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan with reasonable consideration as to the character of such district, its peculiar suitability for particular uses, the normal growth of the municipality, and the various types of occupations, industries, and land uses within the area, and must be designed to facilitate traffic movement, encourage orderly growth and development of the municipality and adjacent areas, promote health, safety, and general welfare, and provide for emergency management. "Emergency management" means a comprehensive integrated system at all levels of government and in the private sector which provides for the development and maintenance of an effective capability to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from known and unforeseen hazards or situations, caused by an act of nature or man, which may threaten, injure, damage, or destroy lives, property, or our environment. The comprehensive plan must be a statement in documented text setting forth explicit goals, objectives, policies, and standards of the jurisdiction to guide public and private development within its control.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

The Ramsey County Commission has adopted this document in accordance with North Dakota Century Code. In developing this Comprehensive Plan, the Ramsey County Planning Commission and a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee have used background research, detailed inventories and assessments, and public engagement with surveys, public meetings, and public hearings. The Comprehensive Plan is a general guideline to guide the County in its implementation of zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, floodplain regulations, capital improvements plans and other related policies.

4. AREA OF PLANNING JURISDICTION

This Comprehensive Plan is a joint effort between Ramsey County and all the cities and counties listed below. All of these entities have agreed to cooperate in managing development in all portions of the County. Therefore, this Plan will act as the Comprehensive Plan for all entities listed below except for the City of Devils Lake that has a separate Comprehensive Planning document. All entities will work in cooperation with the County to control growth and development throughout the County in concert with the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan. The City of Devils Lake is an exception, wherein the City exercises extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction outside of the established corporate limits for a 2-mile area.

- City of Devils Lake (Extra Territorial area only)
- Cities of Brocket, Crary, Edmore, Hampden, Lawton, Starkweather
- Townships of Bartlett, Cato, Chain Lakes, Coulee, Creel, De Groat, Dry Lake, Fancher, Freshwater, Grand Harbor, Hammer, Harding, Highland Center, Hope, Klingstrup, Lawton, Lillehoff, Minnewaukan, Morris, Newbre, Newland, Noonan, North Creel, Northfield, Odessa, Ontario, Overland, Pelican, Poplar Grove, Prospect, Royal, South Minnewaukan, Stevens, Sullivan, Triumph, & Webster.

B. APPROPRIATE USE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

North Dakota laws require that zoning districts and regulations must be in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. It is the intent of this document to show the most appropriate use of land and policies to follow within the study area, based on the potential for growth and development in Ramsey County.

II. Demographics

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A. Population and Population Projections

Ramsey County has generally experienced a slow population decline over the past century. In the past 20 years, Ramsey County population decreased by almost 4%. However, over the past 10 years, the population increased slightly by 1.3% for the first time since 1980.

Another clear trend has been the increase in urban vs rural population within the County. In 1930, only 33% of the county residents lived in urban areas. In 2010, this number increased to 67.5% of the county's residents. In another slight reverse of that trend, in 2020 the number of residents living in urban areas decreased to 65.8% of all county residents. Between 2010 and 2020, each city within Ramsey County experienced a decrease in population except for Devils Lake which increased population from 7141 to 7192.

Ramsey County Population Trends				%chg	#chg	%chg	#chg
	2000	2010	2020	2010-2020	2010-2020	2000-2020	2000-2020
Ramsey County (Total)	12066	11451	11605	1.34%	154	-3.82%	-461
City of Devils Lake	7222	7141	7192	0.71%	51	-0.42%	-30
Town of Brocket	65	57	34	-40.35%	-23	-47.69%	-31
Town of Churchs Ferry	77	12	9	-25.00%	-3	-88.31%	-68
Town of Crary	149	142	113	-20.42%	-29	-24.16%	-36
Town of Edmore	256	182	139	-23.63%	-43	-45.70%	-117
Town of Hampden	60	48	29	-39.58%	-19	-51.67%	-31
Town of Lawton	42	30	15	-50.00%	-15	-64.29%	-27
Town of Starkweather	157	117	100	-14.53%	-17	-36.31%	-57
Total City/Town Pop	8028	7729	7631	-1.27%	-98	-4.95%	-397
Total Rural Pop	4038	3722	3974	6.77%	252	-1.58%	-64
% City/Town of Total	66.53%	67.50%	65.76%				



II. Demographics



The increase in rural population from the 2010 to 2020 census was isolated to nine townships. Hope township increased the most by 143 people. The only other township to see an increase over 30 people was Grand Harbor (+57), Poplar Grove (+79), and South Minnewaukan (+77) townships. This increase could include some people locating or moving outside of the City of Devils Lake to locate closer to the Lake (Devils Lake).

Ramsey County Township Population Trends				%chg	#chg	%chg	#chg	
	2000	2010	2020	2010-2020	2010-2020	2000-2020	2000-2020	
Bartlett	64	71	99	39.44%	28	54.69%	35	
Cato	27	17	3	-82.35%	-14	-88.89%	-24	
Chain Lakes	20	12	10	-16.67%	-2	-50.00%	-10	
Coulee	108	65	48	-26.15%	-17	-55.56%	-60	
Creel	1776	1305	1394	6.82%	89	-21.51%	-382	with North Creel it is +3 and very minor % increase
De Groat	36	22	14	-36.36%	-8	-61.11%	-22	
Dry Lake	59	44	30	-31.82%	-14	-49.15%	-29	
Fancher	63	51	37	-27.45%	-14	-41.27%	-26	
Freshwater	81	75	49	-34.67%	-26	-39.51%	-32	
Grand Harbor	181	163	220	34.97%	57	21.55%	39	
Hammer	85	52	55	5.77%	3	-35.29%	-30	
Harding	41	33	26	-21.21%	-7	-36.59%	-15	
Highland Center	49	43	44	2.33%	1	-10.20%	-5	
Hope (Nixon Twshp in 2000)	15	7	150	2042.86%	143	900.00%	135	New subdivision
Klingstrup	56	46	28	-39.13%	-18	-50.00%	-28	
Lawton	39	28	40	42.86%	12	2.56%	1	
Lillehoff	30	25	41	64.00%	16	36.67%	11	
Minnewaukan	154	199	148	-25.63%	-51	-3.90%	-6	
Morris	57	53	55	3.77%	2	-3.51%	-2	
Newbre	25	36	13	-63.89%	-23	-48.00%	-12	
Newland	41	26	20	-23.08%	-6	-51.22%	-21	
Noonan	47	31	34	9.68%	3	-27.66%	-13	
North Creel		426	385	-9.62%	-41	0.00%	385	North Creel was part of Creel Twshp in 2000
Northfield	46	27	39	44.44%	12	-15.22%	-7	
Odessa	56	49	47	-4.08%	-2	-16.07%	-9	
Ontario	80	72	71	-1.39%	-1	-11.25%	-9	
Overland	21	14	25	78.57%	11	19.05%	4	
Pelican	50	39	33	-15.38%	-6	-34.00%	-17	
Poplar Grove	214	218	297	36.24%	79	38.79%	83	
Prospect	33	26	21	-19.23%	-5	-36.36%	-12	
Royal	30	24	17	-29.17%	-7	-43.33%	-13	
South Minnewaukan	197	225	302	34.22%	77	53.30%	105	
Stevens	66	67	71	5.97%	4	7.58%	5	
Sullivan	33	26	16	-38.46%	-10	-51.52%	-17	
Triumph	58	38	21	-44.74%	-17	-63.79%	-37	
Webster	100	67	71	5.97%	4	-29.00%	-29	
Total Township	4038	3722	3974	6.77%	252	-1.58%	-64	

II. Demographics



The North Dakota State Data Center has projected that Ramsey County will continue to experience a slow decrease in population with a decrease of 5% from 2020 to 2050. In the most recent 2020 Census, there were on average 2.2 residents per household. In 2000, the average residents per household was 2.34 people per household

Projections							%chg	#chg
Year	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2020-2050	2020-2050
Population Projections	11403	11416	11332	11200	11159	11029	-4.96	-576

A. Households and Household Size

Household size has slowly decreased over the past 20 years. In fact, if the people per household rate in 2000 would have stayed at 2000 levels (2.34 persons per household), the overall population of Ramsey County would have slightly increased because housing units have increased over the past 20 years and continue to show an increase through 2023 with an increase of 177 housing units since 2000.

Year	Households	Persons/HH	Housing Units	Vacancy Rate
2000	4,957	2.34	5,729	13.5%
2010	4,955	NA	5,615	13.3%
2020	4,947	2.20	5,843	NA
2023	5,049	2.20	5,906	17.0%

B. Employment

The County has seen a slight decrease in employment levels over the past 30 years.

Year	Employed Labor Force
1990	5,983
1995	6,407
2000	5,983
2005	5,800
2010	5,827
2015	5,453
2020	5,478
2023	5,539

Source: Labor Market Information Center,
Job Service North Dakota

III. Infrastructure Assessment

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Transportation

Ramsey County maintains 106 miles of paved road, 74 miles of gravel roads and 38 miles of gravel road owned by other agencies such as townships. In addition, township or subdivision roadways make up the remaining roadway miles. Many of those roadways are maintained through agreements with each Township.

Water and Wastewater

Greater Ramsey Water District (GRWD) serves most Ramsey County households and businesses. A significant portion of the County around Devils Lake is also served by an extensive sanitary sewer system provided by GRWD. Eastern Ramsey County is served by either Northeast Regional Water District or Tri-County Water District.

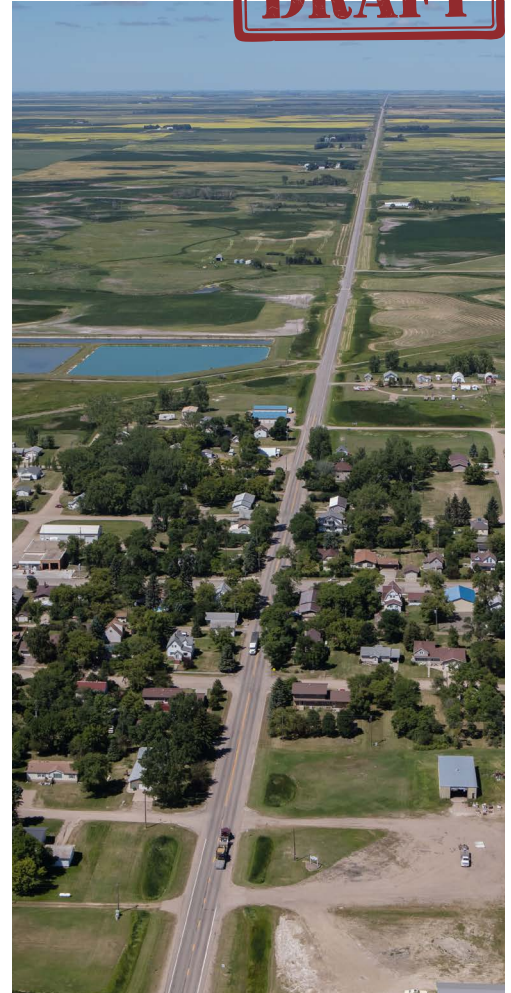
Rural Electricity

Ramsey County is served by four electrical cooperatives or electrical power companies. Ottertail Power Company is the service provider for the city of Devils Lake and the other small cities in the county.

A small portion of Ramsey County is being served by Northern Plains Electric Co-op. The accounts consist of mostly rural farmsteads. The Cooperative is losing accounts to a rise in the nearby watershed. They work with other Cooperative's to find the best and most affordable service for new accounts. Their largest user is the campgrounds around the lake during the summer months. Cavalier Rural Electric Cooperative and Nodak Electric Cooperative provide electricity to the remaining rural customers in Ramsey County.

Natural Gas

Natural Gas is available to most of the City of Devils Lake area through Montana-Dakota Utilities Company. No other communities or areas in the county are served with natural gas.



IV. Environmental Constraints

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Floodplain

Floodplain is a significant development constraint in Ramsey County, especially near Devils Lake and in the entire western portion of the county. The State of North Dakota and FEMA are in the process of developing an updated FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The current FIRM map was completed for the area in 2001. The current FIRM map has not been adopted by Ramsey County at this time. The floodplain was generally set 1460 feet above sea level or lower. **Map 1** (pg 11) illustrates the area that generally is affected by flooding in Ramsey County. In addition, this map also shows FEMA Open Space properties that have been acquired and deed restricted through federal Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) programs that must remain compliant with open space requirements.

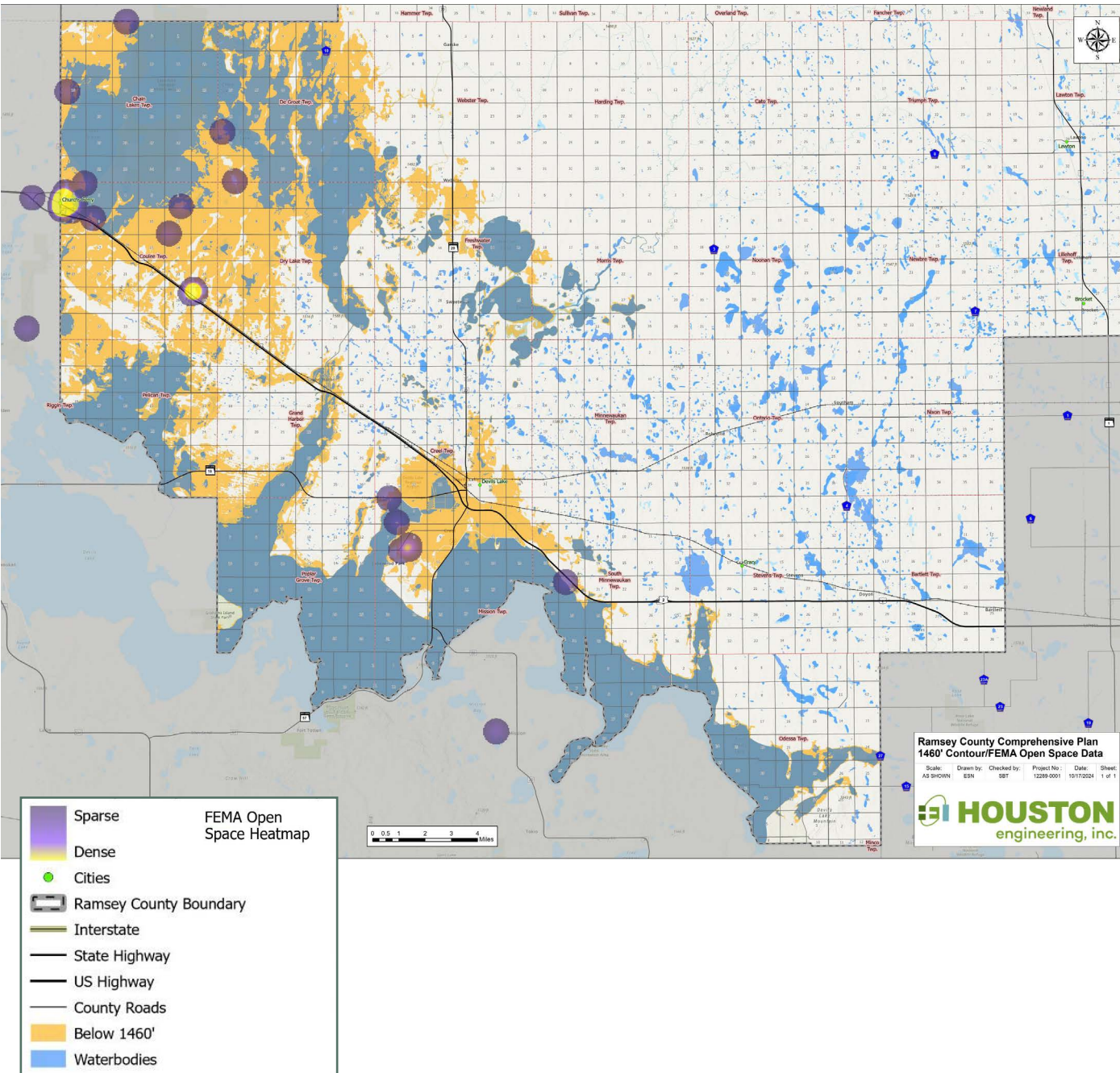
Shoreline Management of Devils Lake

Ramsey County does not have shoreline management ordinances in place at the current time. However, the State of North Dakota has a law and program that manages shoreline areas of navigable lakes and rivers. North Dakota's sovereign lands are those areas, including beds and islands, lying within the ordinary high watermarks of navigable lakes and streams. In Ramsey County, Devils Lake has been designated as a navigable lake. The State of North Dakota plays an important role in the management of sovereign land through the State of North Dakota Department of Water Resources (DWR), which is responsible for administering the state's non-mineral interests in North Dakota's sovereign lands. Any land disturbing activities within the shore zone are required to complete a Sovereign Land Permit application.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) manage, operate, and supervise North Dakota's sovereign land, for multiple uses, that are in the best interest of present and future generations. Meeting these goals can be challenging given the increasing popularity of water-based recreation, and the draw of waterfront property for development. The uses and issues surrounding North Dakota's sovereign lands continue to increase, and this in turn has prompted the DWR to take a more active role in managing this popular resource.



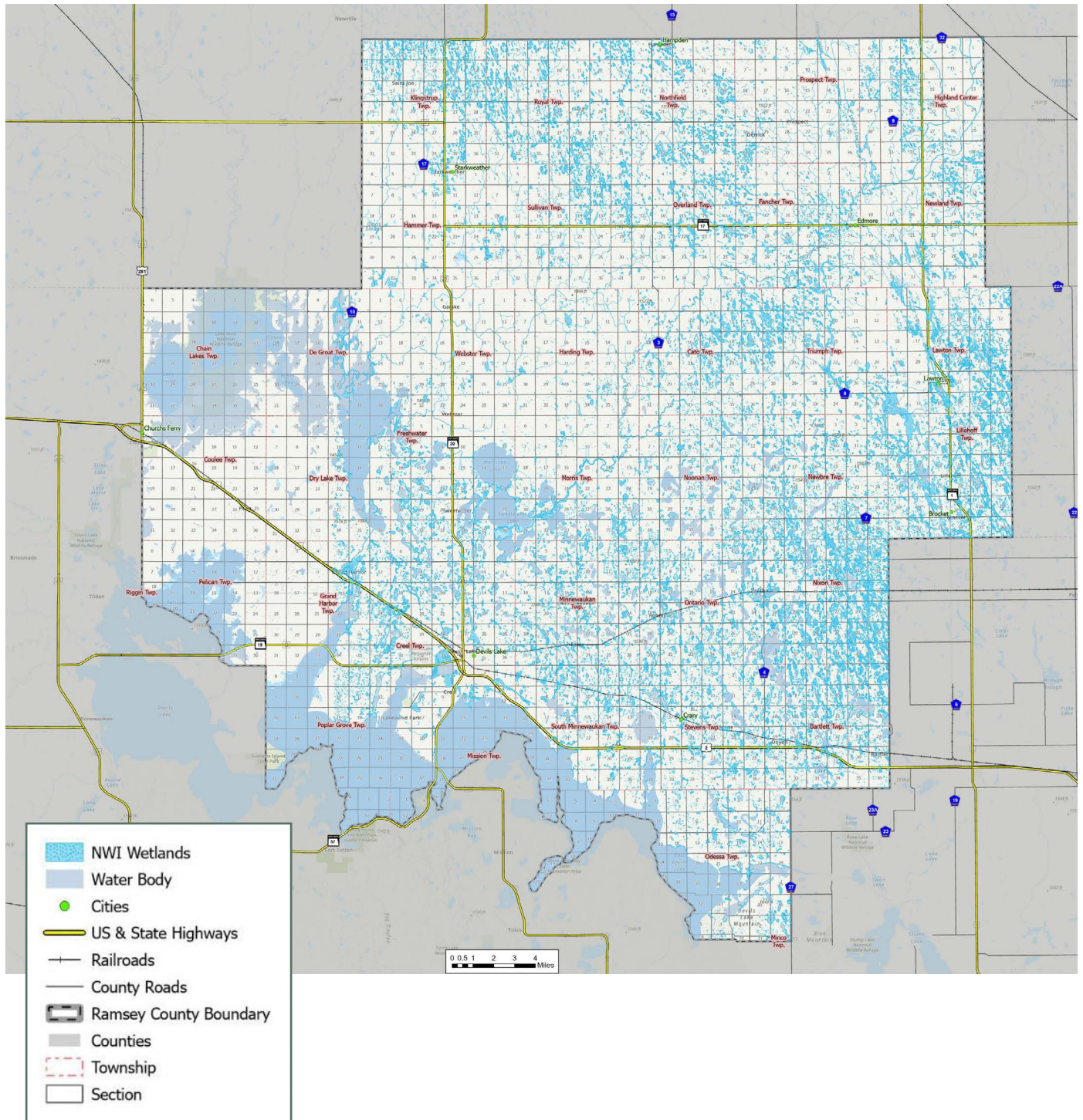
Map 1
Flood-prone Areas



Wetlands

Development should incorporate standards for drainage that includes mitigation of wetland areas. **Map 2** identifies all wetlands according to the Wetlands Inventory Map from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Map 2
Wetlands Inventory

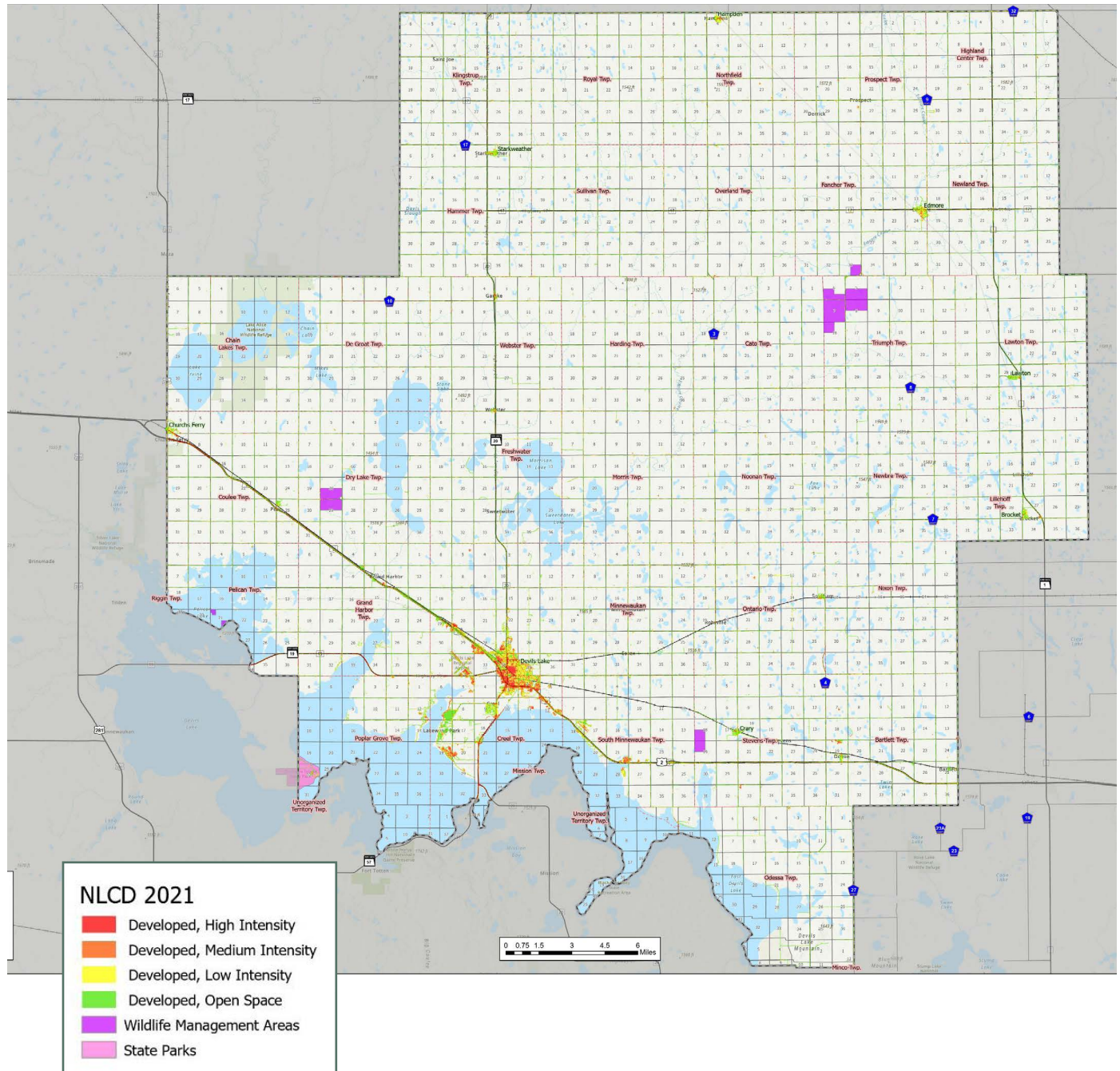


V. Existing Land Use Analysis

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Most of the county is agricultural or open space with most residential, commercial, or industrial developed areas in the City of Devils Lake and near Devils Lake. There are six smaller communities that also show some developed areas, but at a much smaller scale. **Map 3** details the different levels of land use throughout the County. In addition, the map identifies Wildlife Management Areas and State Parks as a more protected form of open space.

Map 3
Current Land Use



Current Zoning Review Analysis

City of Devils Lake

The City of Devils Lake is the only community within Ramsey County to have an active Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the City of Devils Lake exercises exclusive 1-mile extraterritorial zoning authority outside of the City of Devils Lake. The City of Devils Lake and Ramsey County also exercise joint zoning authority for between 1-mile and 2 miles from the City of Devils Lake city limits. Ramsey County has allowed the City of Devils Lake to administer the entire 2-mile area and provides input into all decisions within the extraterritorial area. See Map 4 to see the boundary and zoning districts within the extraterritorial zoning area.

Township Zoning areas

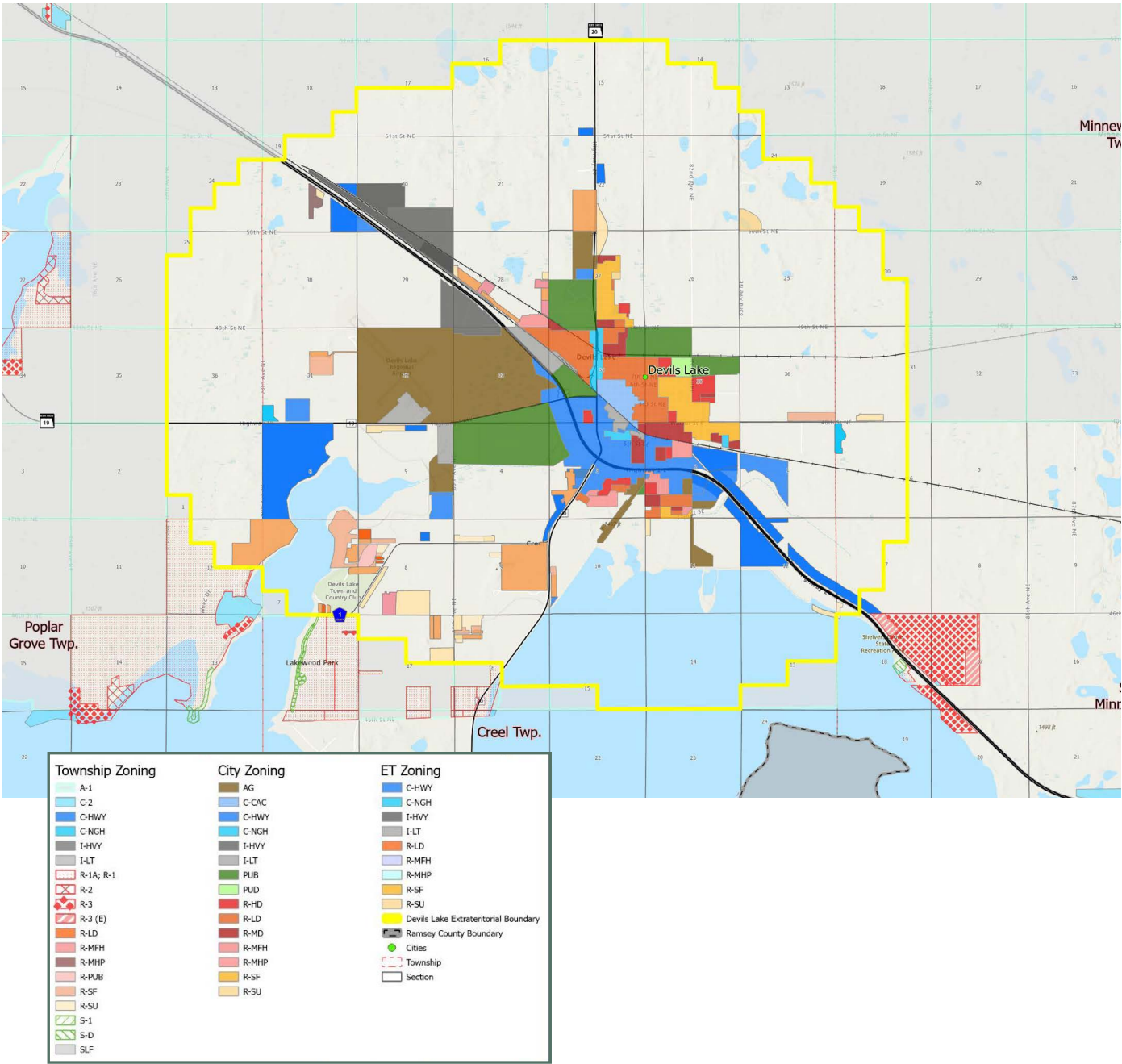
Ramsey County has six townships with active Zoning Ordinances. Those townships are:

- Creel
- Grand Harbor
- Poplar Grove
- South Minnewaukan
- North Creel
- Minnewaukan

All townships administer their own zoning ordinances. **Map 4** (pg 15) shows the zoning districts set by each of the township zoning ordinances. Each township has slightly different zoning district names. The map does show zoning districts that are generally in common by consistent color schemes.



Map 4
Zoning Jurisdiction

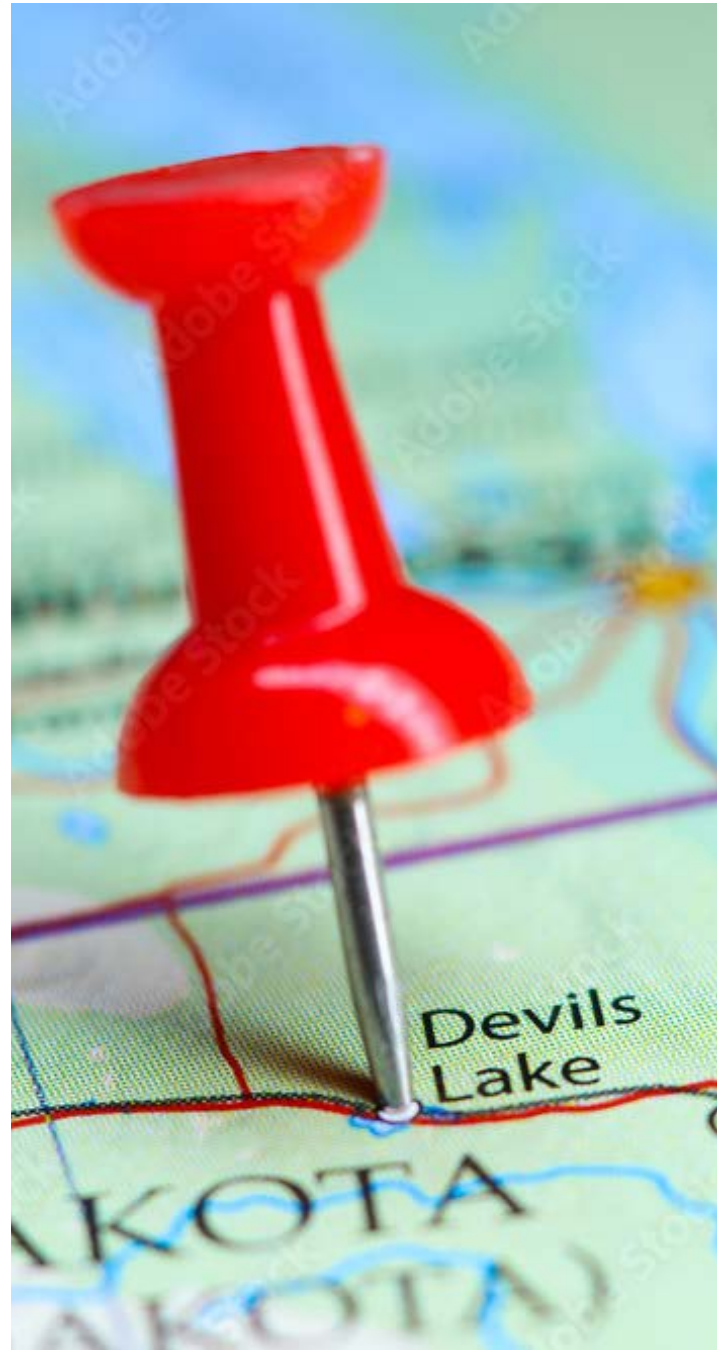


County Zoning

Beyond the zoning of the above six townships and the City of Devils Lake zoning and extraterritorial zoning areas, the remaining portions of Ramsey County are currently unzoned. North Dakota Law allows for Counties to zone any area of the County that Townships determine not to exercise their zoning authority.

Zoning Challenges/ Issues

Land that is currently zoned is under the auspices of seven different zoning ordinances. So, many of the zoning district have different nomenclature and different standards. This makes it difficult to understand what requirements developers and other people must follow to meet the minimum standard of each Zoning Ordinance. In addition, on the current zoning ordinance maps, many existing parcels that are zoned, but now underwater due to the rise in Devils Lake is under control of the State of ND State Sovereign Permit rules. If Devils Lake recedes and the land no longer is submerged by water, then the landowner may not need to follow State Sovereign Land requirements. (see Shoreline Management section for more about ND State Sovereign Land program)



VI. Public Engagement Report

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Steering Committee

The Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan was directed by a Steering Committee made up of ten (10) Ramsey County citizens. There were six meetings held throughout the course of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Interview Summary

Over the course of 3-4 weeks in late September through early October, HEI completed 20 stakeholder surveys. The people interviewed included Ramsey County staff and Commissioners, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee members, members of the business community, and City of Devils Lake staff and Commissioners. The goal of the survey was to:

1. Find the main issues and opportunities that are predominant in the county when it comes to growth, development and land use. This information can then be utilized in the public engagement section of the plan including a citizen survey.
2. Understand the existing situation in Ramsey County in a more complete way to help in developing the Comprehensive Plan.

The interviews identified some common themes that we will highlight in this report. Below are some common words that came up during the interviews.



For the purposes of this project, the HEI team identified some common statements that were made during the interviews to help understand the current situation.

Each statement provides a view into the issues and opportunities of the County:

- Coordination among City, Townships, and County would be great but not everyone might agree.
- Steering development to the most appropriate locations is important.
- Landowners want to know what they can do with their land if water recedes.
- There are not any official building and fire codes in the County.
- Floodplain and drainage plans are an issue.
- CAFOs and other feedlots are an issue.
- Everything is so outdated.
- Tourism is a big opportunity and can be an issue.
- A challenge is to find ways to create collaboration to improve the area's health care facilities and services. (hospital, senior care, detox)
- Devils Lake is the hub of the lake area region and that requires the community to be a full-service community.
- Most of our issues are agricultural-based and that should be the focus.
- The Water District provides sewer services around the lake with 600 customer and one special assessment district.
- Infrastructure is big issue – we need to beef up our roads, but how do we pay for it?
- We need to minimize regulations but still need reasonable regulations too.
- 1460 feet is an issue of how to regulate floodplain to that level.
- How should we best manage the floodplain and who should manage it?
- What should the floodplain ordinance look like – we need more details/education.
- How do we recruit the younger generation to this area?
- Administration of regulations are an issue.
- Affordable housing is an issue.
- We need more housing in the area.
- Floodplain is a big issue.
- Lack of education/coordination is a big issue.
- Subdivision standards are an issue.
- Floodplain management is an issue.
- No consistency in regulations.
- Some level of regulations to maintain quality of life is maybe a good thing.
- Subdivisions/Engineering/Roads area all an issue.
- We need more industry and jobs coming into this region.
- Protect lake but not too much regulation.
- Devils Lake is a recreation destination.
- Not much development occurring on Devils Lake area now.
- No available housing.

Major Issues to address in Comprehensive Plan

Over the course of the stakeholder interviews, the following common themes emerged that need to be addressed in the Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan:

- Predictable and understandable regulations.
- Reasonable regulations.
- Better coordination and cooperation with regulations among township, city, county.
- Better consistency of regulations with township, city, and county.
- Accommodating/encouraging growth.
- Flood management.
- Lake levels.
- Access to property.
- Building regulations.
- Reasonable use of property.
- Zoning regulations.
- Steering development toward locations that have adequate infrastructure and services.
- Rural subdivision and road conditions/standards.
- Adequate road, water, sewer, drainage and access standards for the property.
- Heavy agricultural uses (such as concentrated feeding operations/wind farms).
- Encouraging industry to locate here.
- Enhance agriculture economy.
- Adding affordable single-family housing options.
- Enhance tourism/recreation industry.
- Improving health care, detox, and senior services and facilities.
- Improving school facilities.
- Improving law enforcement center facilities.
- Encourage younger people to locate to the area.

Based on these common themes, a survey was developed to bring the views of all of the people of Ramsey County. This survey was developed as a part of the public engagement for the project and was hosted on the project website.

In-person Open House

A Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan Open House was held on October 29th at Lake Region State College. Approximately 15 people attended the open house that was held from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Two presentations were provided for attendees with also time for attendees to talk one-on-one to consultant staff. The information generally provided information on existing conditions and stakeholder survey results. However, most importantly the Open House served as a kick-off for the Ramsey County citizen survey. Attendees of the Open House had the opportunity to take the survey either on-line or with a paper copy option. Attendees provided valuable feedback about methods to get the survey out to the public and great feedback was also provide in regard to the following:

- ✓ Protecting our natural resources
- ✓ Regulating subdivisions – roads
- ✓ Lake should be allowed to rise and fall
- ✓ Lack of roads/access to property
- ✓ More single-family affordable housing
- ✓ More career opportunities
- ✓ Development should be focused on major roads
- ✓ Lake region cooperation is important
- ✓ Balance landowner rights and need for common sense regulation
- ✓ Wind corridors/CAFOs



Social Pinpoint Survey Results – what do the results tell us?

As a part of the public engagement process for the Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan, an on-line survey was conducted through the project website (Social Pinpoint). The survey was conducted from late October through late November. Almost 100 people completed the survey, and this information was utilized to help provide a direction for the Ramsey County Comprehensive Plan.

Below are results from the survey and how the results should be used moving forward.

Question 1: Rank the following

The top ranked issues out of eight questions were:

- Improving school facilities – average rank [3.52](#)
- Improving health care, detox, and senior services and facilities – avg rank [3.53](#)
- Encourage younger people to locate to the area – avg rank [3.68](#)
- Encourage industry to locate here – average rank [3.70](#)
- Adding affordable single-family housing options – average rank [3.87](#)

The bottom ranked issues were:

- Enhance agriculture economy – average rank [6.19](#)
- Enhance tourism/recreation industry – average rank [5.56](#)
- Improve law enforcement center – average rank [5.37](#)

The top ranked issues show that the public is very supportive of diversifying the economy and encouraging and supporting growth for the next generation. The County should then develop budgets, policies, and ordinances that help implement this vision.

The bottom ranked issues reflect only people's priorities compared to the top ranked issues. Both agriculture and tourism are very important to the Ramsey County economy, but this may show a need to help the public understand the importance of both to the local economy. The law enforcement center ranked in the top four for 36% of the respondents, but some additional education on the importance of this project may need to also occur.

Question 2: How important are these development issues for Ramsey County

The top ranked issues for development based on how important they were rated included:

- Reasonable regulations to maintain your quality of life
42.7% very much 89% somewhat/very much
- Encourage growth where services and utilities are available
46% very much 84% somewhat/very much

The County's plan should focus on these two issues as guiding **objectives** for all development policies. Other issues that also ranked fairly high include:

- Better coordination and cooperation with regulations among township, city, county –
36% very much 73% somewhat/very much
- Private Property rights/Low regulations
35% very much 76% somewhat/very much
- Better consistency of regulations with township, city, and county
37% very much 73% somewhat/very much
- Local control
35% very much 74% somewhat/very much
- Predictable and understandable regulations –
28% very much 74% somewhat/very much

All the other issues are at least somewhat important to the community with about 80% of the respondents. Although not guiding visions, each development policy in this plan should also ensure that each of the above issues are accommodated to at least a moderate degree.

Question 3: In regard to flood issues in Ramsey County, how important are these issues to you?

- Protecting the lake from flood events

37% very much
72% somewhat/very much
- Allowing some reasonable use of property that is no longer flooded

27% very much
65% somewhat/very much
- Reasonable building regulations to ensure homes and businesses can withstand floods

27% very much
67% somewhat/very much
- Consistent lake levels

29.2% very much
64% somewhat/very much
- Maintaining the flood insurance program for landowners and ability to obtain grants for flood control.

23.6% very much
60% somewhat/very much
- Access to property cut off by flood

14.6% very much
48.3% somewhat/very much

The results here were much less definitive than other questions asked in this survey. Most of the respondents were only somewhat supportive of the flood issue questions. The recommendation based upon this question for floodplain regulation should be to develop flood regulations that provide the minimum regulations required to help protect the lake and to maintain flood insurance rules. However, it is also obvious that the public is not strongly supportive of trying to maintain consistent lake levels. This tells us that the public is supportive of planning to some degree for the need for a lakes natural rise and fall.

Protection of the lake from flood events was the highest-ranking answer, but still only 37% were very supportive. On the other hand, 72% were somewhat supportive which indicates that it is important to develop some basic environmental/floodplain policies and initiatives to protect the natural environment of the lakes in Ramsey County. Allowing reasonable access to property was the second highest answer, but again it had only 27% of respondents very supportive.

Question #4: Regarding land use issues in Ramsey County, how important are these issues to you?

- Adequate road, water, sewer, drainage and access standards for the property

53% very much
87% at least somewhat
- Improving rural subdivision road standards

43% very much
79% at least somewhat
- Steering development toward locations that have adequate infrastructure and services

34% very much
80% at least somewhat
- Agricultural preservation

31% very much
70% at least somewhat
- Separating incompatible land uses (industrial from single-family housing)

25% very much
66% at least somewhat
- Controlling heavy agricultural uses (such as concentrated feeding operations/wind farms)

31% very much
54% at least somewhat
- Signage standards

15% very much
46% at least somewhat

The most definitive results came regarding the development of subdivision and infrastructure design standards and rural road standards. All zoning related issues that were surveyed rated lower on the intensity scale. Based on these ratings, our team recommends that zoning development standards should be developed with very modest zoning controls.

Plan Vision

Based on the survey and stakeholder interviews, it is our recommendation that the County develop a seamless zoning ordinance that can be approved by all jurisdictions wishing to implement zoning ordinances. This zoning ordinance should be modest in its scale and effect to stay true to the public engagement results, but still incorporate:

- **Reasonable regulations to maintain your quality of life.**

The Comprehensive Plan also shall provide for a future land use plan that will take into consideration all areas of the county that have roads, utilities and services that can best accommodate growth and development. Through a zoning process, the County or Township will allow for rezonings that are consistent with this future land use plan (and map) that will be based on the County's vision to:

- **Encourage growth where services and utilities are available.**

VII. Transportation Plan

The County has a 5-year improvements plan to adequately address the road maintenance needs of the County. The County also has road design standards that address what is required for the County to maintain a roadway whether it is a County, Township, or subdivision roadway. In addition, the Highway Department will manage access of roadways depending on traffic and speed of the roadway and the density of the surrounding development.

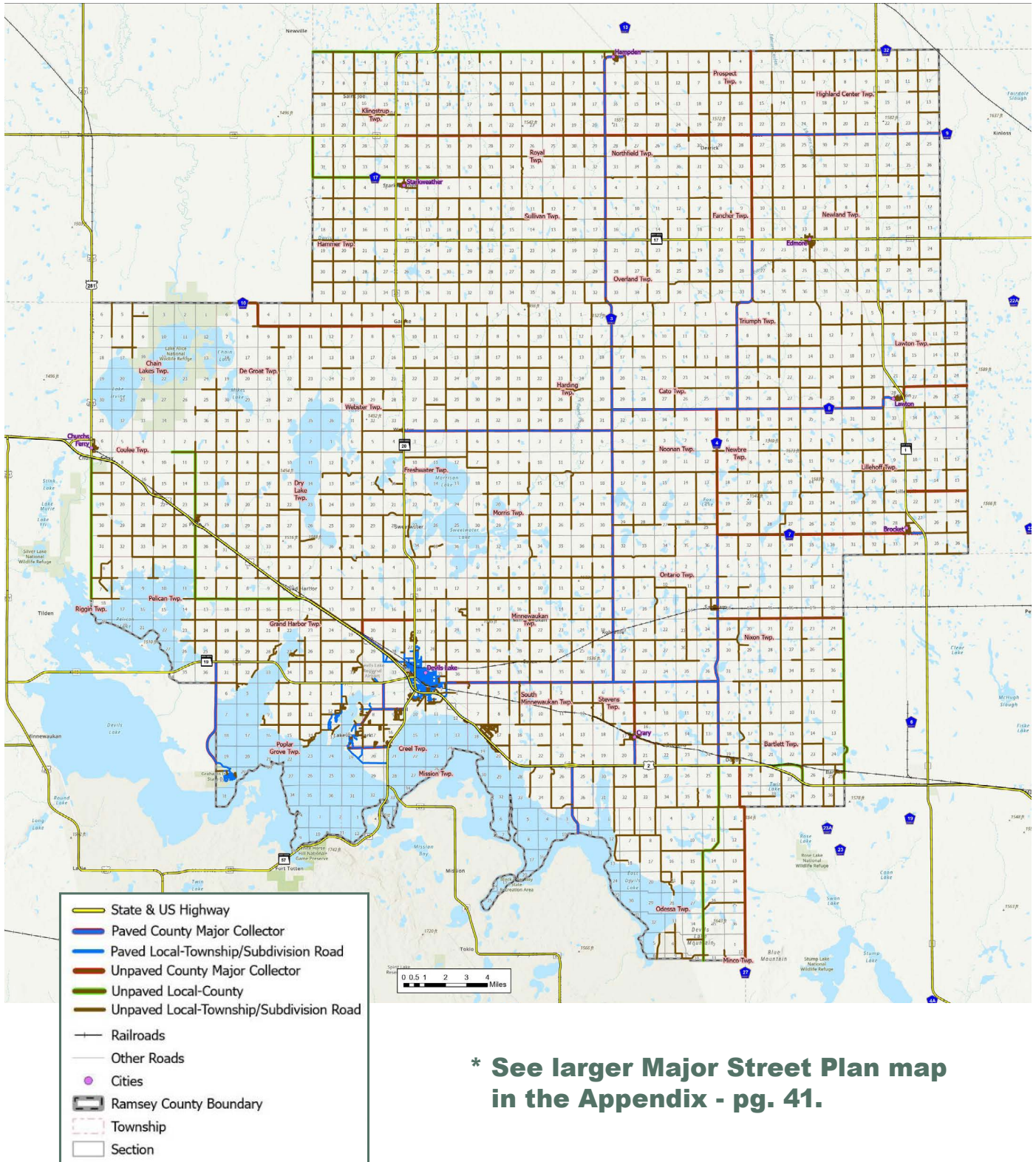
Major Street Plan

The Major Street Plan identifies ROW requirements and describes common characteristics of each major street type. These road descriptions then will be used as the basis the County's Subdivision Regulations and Design Standards.

Major Street Designation	Description	Right-of-Way
Arterial	State or Federal Highways	150 feet or more
County Major Collector	Provides connectivity from major state highways to local road system.	150 feet
Local - County	A minor collector roadway to distribute traffic to major collectors and arterials	66 feet
Local - Township	Typically gravel but also trail or primitive roadways on section-lines to access local rural areas.	66 feet
Local - Subdivision	Designed to access rural subdivision residences	60-66 feet

A Major Street Plan map (Map 5) has been identified on page 26 with all of the above roadway classifications included.

Map 5 Major Street Plan Map*



County Roadway Design Standards

County roadway design standards are set to ensure that the roadway can be efficiently and effectively maintained and that all traffic and emergency vehicles can access businesses and households that are connected by the public right of way. To ensure county roadways are constructed to a standard that the County can maintain effectively, the following changes should be considered.

1. Update the Local Roads (Other) to include 3 feet of separation from road top to ditch bottom to allow for more snow storage area.
2. Explore increasing County road weight limit standards from 80,000 pounds to 105,500 pounds. With this increase in weight standards, road standards would also need to increase including the road base thickness and/or pavement thickness. A geotechnical review would need to be included in some cases.
3. Subgrade preparation should be included with roads standards to clarify that it is required.
4. There are road requirements for subdivisions and private approaches that augment the county road standards to ensure that subdivision roads are properly constructed and maintained.
5. Ensure County roadway standards are implemented by coordinating the subdivision review process with townships and the City of Devils Lake in the extraterritorial area.

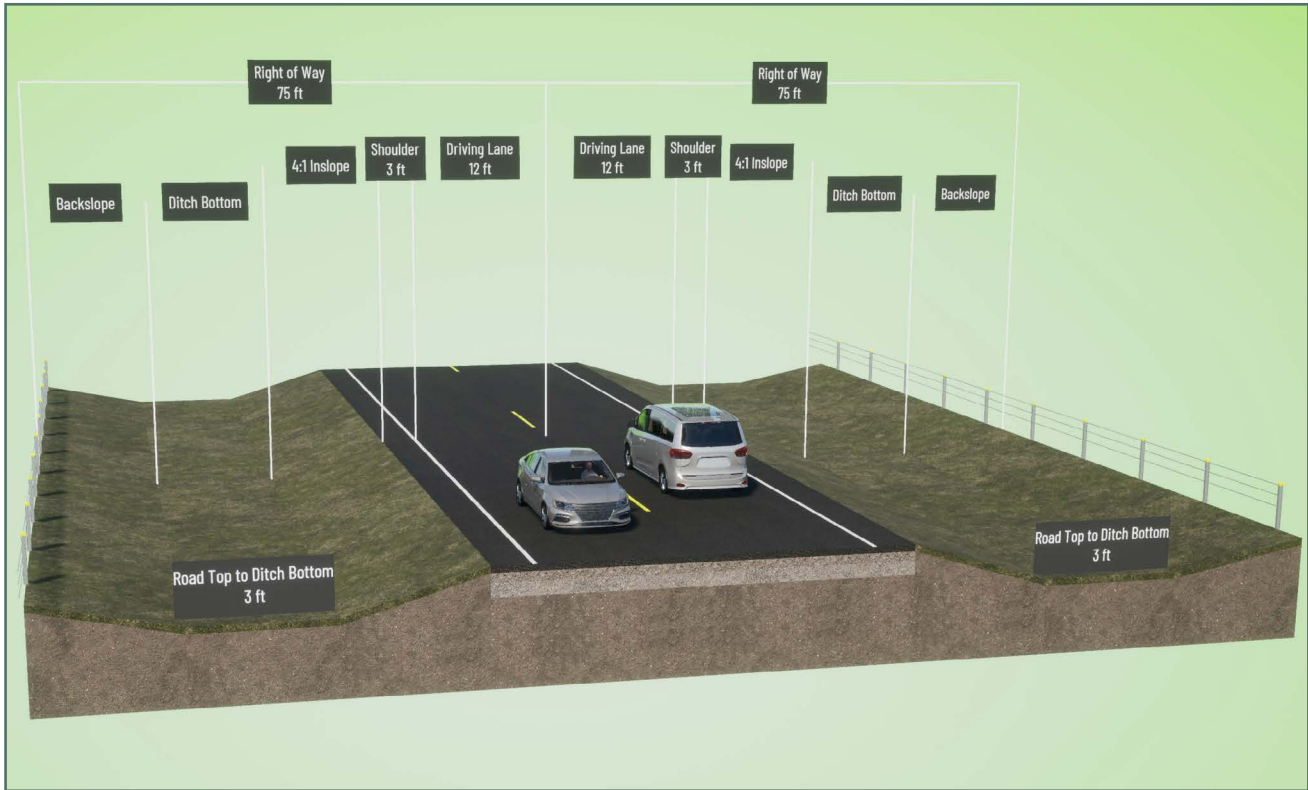
On the following pages, is a table of the current road standards for Ramsey County and typical sections for each of the roadway classifications.



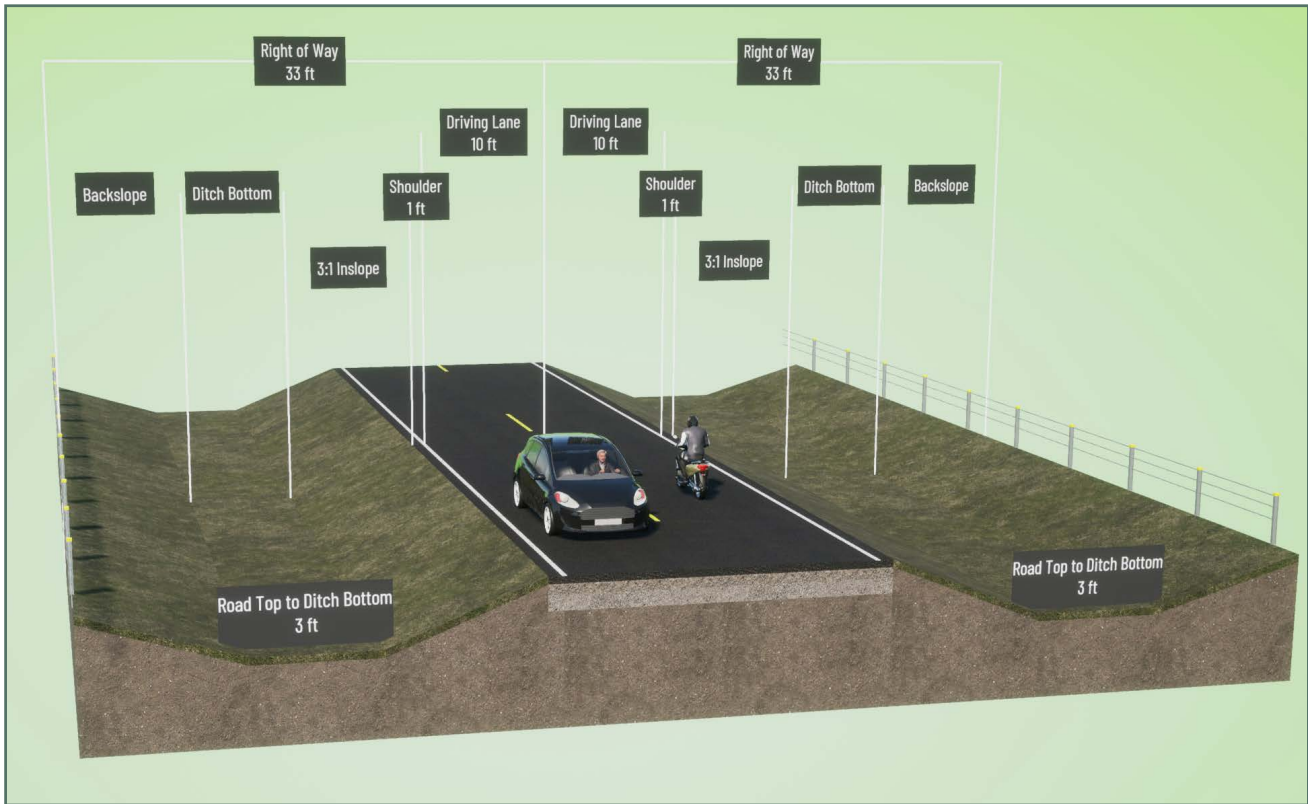
Current Road Standards

	COUNTY MAJOR COLLECTORS (CMC) "ON-SYSTEM"	LOCAL ROADS (COUNTY) "OFF-SYSTEM"	LOCAL ROADS (TOWNSHIP) "OFF-SYSTEM"	LOCAL ROADS (OTHER) "OFF-SYSTEM"
BRIDGE WIDTH (CLEAR ROADWAY	28'	28'	28'	28'
STORM DESIGN FLOOD FREQUENCY (BRIDGES)	25 YEAR	25 YEAR	15 YEAR	15 YEAR
DESIGN LOADING (BRIDGES)	HS-25	HS-25	HS-25	HS-25
CULVERT DESIGN FLOOD FREQUENCY	10 YEAR	10 YEAR	10 YEAR	10 YEAR
GRADED ROADBED WIDTH (SUB-GRADE) - PAVED SURFACE	36'	28'	24'	22'
- MINIMUM TRAVEL WAY WIDTH (BOTH LANES + SHOULDERS)	30'	22'	22'	20'
- MINIMUM PAVEMENT SECTION (BASE AND HBP)	8" AGG BASE 4" HBP	6" AGG BASE 4" HBP	6" AGG BASE 4" HBP	6" AGG BASE 3" HBP
GRADED ROADBED WIDTH (SUB-GGRADE) - GRAVEL SURFACE	36'	28'	24'	22'
- MINIMUM TRAVEL WAY WIDTH (BOTH LANES + SHOULDERS)	30'	24'	24'	20'
- MINIMUM GRAVEL THICKNESS	4" - 8"	4" - 8"	4" - 8"	4"
DESIGN SPEED	65	55	55	55
RIGHT OF WAY WIDTH	150'	66'	66'	66'
INSLOPE RATIO	4 TO 1	4 TO 1	3 TO 1	3 TO 1
SEPARATION (ROAD TOP TO DITCH BOTTOM)	3'	3'	3'	3'
PAVEMENT REPAIR	22" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 12" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 6" AGGREGATE BASE 4" HBP	22" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 12" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 6" AGGREGATE BASE 4" HBP	22" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 12" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 6" AGGREGATE BASE 4" HBP	22" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 12" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 6" AGGREGATE BASE 4" HBP
SUBGRADE REPAIR - GRAVEL ROAD	18" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 14" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 4" AGGREGATE BASE	18" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 14" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 4" AGGREGATE BASE	18" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 14" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 4" AGGREGATE BASE	18" SUBCUT GEOTEXTILE FABRIC 14" AGGREGATE SUB-BASE 4" AGGREGATE BASE
DESIGN AGGREGATE SURFACE COURSE (NEW)	4" AGGREGATE SURFACE	4" AGGREGATE SURFACE	4" AGGREGATE SURFACE	4" AGGREGATE SURFACE

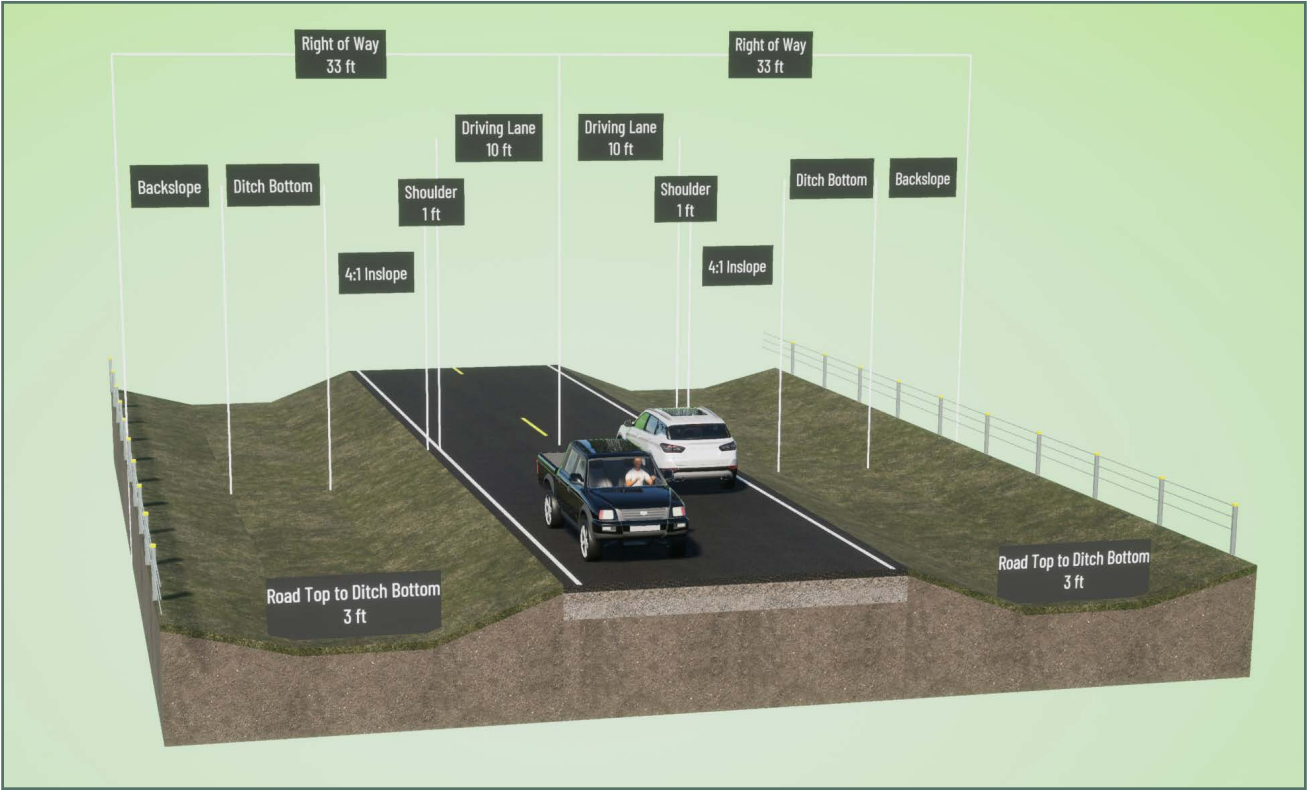
County Major Collector Typical Section



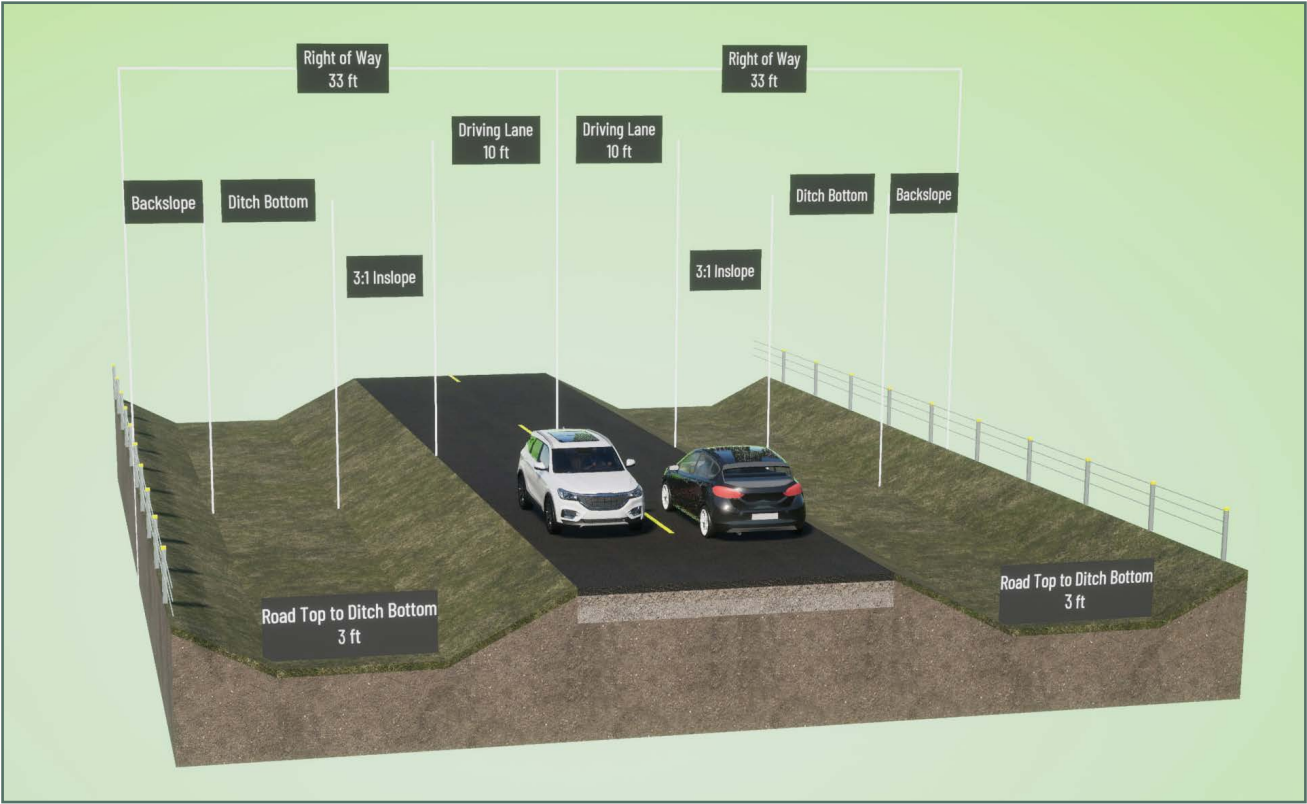
Local County Typical Section



Local Township Typical Section



Local Subdivision Typical Section



VIII. Growth Management Strategy and Future Land Use

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Future Land Use Standards and Map

Consistent with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use of the County is based on the below standards and map. Ramsey County adopts this Comprehensive Plan to provide a framework for specific future land-use and growth management policies and recommendations. Standards have been set that best to encourage growth where services and utilities are available for the Ramsey County jurisdiction. The Map identifies five future land use areas based on these standards and determined through a GIS analysis. The output of this analysis will allow Ramsey County to provide some predictability about the potential land uses and timing of development so that both public and private sectors can make informed decisions in the area of real estate and capital investments.

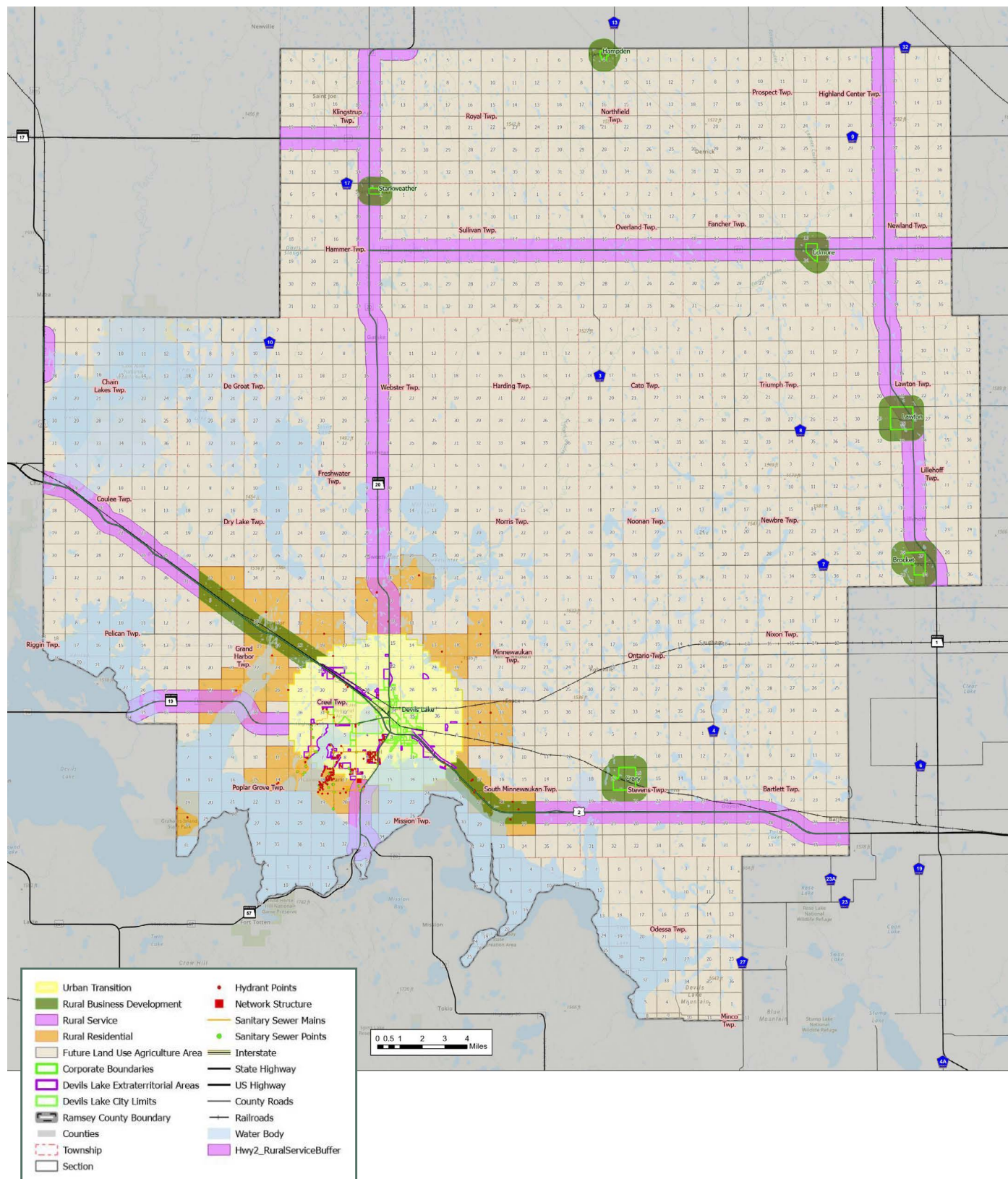
Within each area, specific future land uses are identified to be followed as a part of the implementation process of Ramsey County. The Future Land Use Map (Map 6) is on the following page.

Future land use standards will help guide the development and implementation of land use regulations in Ramsey County. The standards are designed to be a dynamic and flexible process to accommodate the changing needs of Ramsey County population, yet steady enough to allow for reasonable long-term investment strategies by both public and private sectors.

Future Land Use (FLU) Areas

FLU Area	Determination	Map Color
Urban Transition	City of Devils Lake 2-mile extraterritorial area	Yellow
Rural Residential	Water/Sewer Services current and future service areas	Orange
Rural Service	Along Arterial Roads without sewer available	Pink
Rural Business Development	Along US Highway 2 and within GRWD sewer service area or within ½ mile of small town sewer system	Green
Agriculture	All other areas of County	Light Orange

Map 6 Future Land Use Map





Urban Transition Area Standards

The area of future urban development for the City of Devils Lake consists of lands within the City of Devils Lake Extra Territorial Zoning area. This area is designated on the Future Land Use Map as "City of Devils Lake Transition Area". This area's land use regulations are governed by the City of Devils Lake Comprehensive Plan. However, this area is also still governed by Ramsey County and the following Townships:

- Grand Harbor
- Poplar Grove
- Creel
- South Minnewaukan
- Minnewaukan
- North Creel

The following standards guide the urban transition area:

1. Ultimately annexation into the City of Devils Lake is the goal of this area.
2. The City of Devils Lake will enforce zoning and subdivision ordinances in this area.
3. The City of Devils Lake will enforce Floodplain regulations in this area.
4. Ramsey County will maintain all roadways in this area that are developed per Ramsey County's Road standards.
5. Greater Ramsey Water District will maintain all water and sewer within this area.



Rural Residential Area Standards

This area is designated as “Rural Residential” on the Future Land Use Map consists of lands with rural water and sewer infrastructure and rural roadways that are adequate to accommodate moderate densities of 2-3 units per acre. Coordination with Township, County, and Greater Ramsey Water District are key to ensure adequate infrastructure is a part of subdivision developments in this area. Other standards include:

1. Sewer and water service should be available before rezoning is allowed.
2. Roadway improvements should be coordinated with the County and Township through the subdivision process.
3. Intensive agricultural operations such as CAFOs should be discouraged from this area unless it is found that compatibility with residential areas can be maintained.



Rural Service Area Standards

The Rural Service area consists of lands that are along and near major highway intersections in Ramsey County designated as “Rural Service” on the Future Land Use Map. This area is encouraged to develop small commercial and industrial operations along the major highway intersections in Ramsey County. Other standards include:

1. Existing road infrastructure should be able to accommodate traffic impacts of development.
2. Septic tank and rural water services should be able to accommodate demands of the development.
3. Provide convenience and agricultural-based services level sufficient to meet the needs of the County's agricultural population and an anticipated growth at major highway intersections.
4. Large Lot Single-Family Residential District may also be considered within Rural Business Development Areas especially within the smaller communities of Ramsey County. However, transitional land uses and/or buffers to industrial and commercial businesses should be incorporated as part of the site planning process.



Rural Business Development Area Standards

The Rural Business Development area consists of lands that are along and near major highways in Ramsey County and include adequate water, sewer, and other necessary private utilities. This area is encouraged to develop somewhat larger commercial and industrial operations in Ramsey County that require sanitary sewer services. Other standards include:

1. Encourage planned development of businesses (particularly agriculturally oriented) along the designated major highway corridor development area.
 2. When considering the location of agribusiness, commercial, and industrial developments there should be consideration for road infrastructure, water and sewer capacity, utility access, drainage, environmental impact, and safety.
 3. Large Lot Single-Family Residential District uses may also be considered within Rural Business Development Areas especially within the smaller communities of Ramsey County. However, transitional land uses and/or buffers to industrial and commercial businesses should be incorporated as part of the site planning process.
-



Agricultural Area Standards

The areas designated on the Future Land Use Map as “Agricultural Area” are encouraged to be maintained as agricultural areas. Preventing scattered and haphazard development patterns in this area is important ensure the farming and agriculture industry remain the backbone of the Ramsey County’s economy. The limitation of high density and rural conflicts in agricultural areas are important to this area’s continued viability.

1. Maintain a low density of residential and non-residential uses.
2. Limit construction on sites which are environmentally unsuited for buildings or septic systems.
3. Set very modest CAFO standards with reasonable setback standards consistent with environmental standards of State of North Dakota.
4. Set very modest wind energy standards and setback and be consistent with State of ND rules.
5. Set cell tower regulations with modest setbacks regulations.
6. Other issues – i.e. – solar farms and data centers.

IX. Land Development Standards Policies

Zoning standards in the County (including Township options) should include the following types zoning districts to be compatible with the above Future Land Use Map and Standards:

District	Description	FLU Area
Agriculture District	That allows for all agricultural uses and other “compatible uses”	Agriculture
Rural Single-Family Residential Districts	1 unit per acre or less that allows for low density residential and allow for septic tanks	Agriculture
Large Lot Single-Family Residential District	2-3 units per acres that allow for slightly higher density when sewer and adequate road services are available.	Rural Residential Rural Service and Rural Business Development (with appropriate land use transitions to higher intensity uses)
Urban Single-Family Residential District	4-5 units per acres; Only allowed in areas with full city services	Urban Transition (Covered by City of Devils Lake Zoning Ordinance)
Limited Commercial/Industrial District	Ag support and limited industrial/warehouse or convenience commercial	Rural Service
Highway Commercial District	That are encourage in areas with appropriate level of services.	Rural Business Development
Rural Industrial District	That are encourage in areas with appropriate level of services. (Possible to split into heavy and light industrial districts)	Rural Business Development

Subdivision Standards

The public engagement process identified the following:

Regarding subdivision controls, a Major Street Plan should be developed and a method to consistently approve subdivisions that set a reasonable design standards that are consistent across jurisdictions.

This process for roadways could include the following options:

- Approve developer-built roads to a common roadway design standard before the road is dedicated to the county or township.
- Approve developer-built roads to a common private roadway standard with a requirement for a road district or homeowner association dedicated to maintenance.

In addition, a subdivision ordinance should include a process to approve water, sewer, and drainage plans for a subdivision through common engineering design standards. This process should include a preliminary engineering plat to review the entire subdivision as a whole. A common subdivision ordinance should be adopted by all townships, city, and county entities that would want subdivision and platting controls.

The process will include a map that identifies the platting jurisdiction for each entity. As a part of the subdivision ordinance, there should be clear and concise approval process.

Floodplain Recommended Standards

Through Ramsey County's public engagement process, a goal was recommended to have Floodplain regulations to include the basic rules required by FEMA to maintain or institute the FEMA Flood Insurance program and enforced in a consistent manner across jurisdictions. Any assistance for property cut-off by access should be developed in cooperation with property owners and through updated subdivision rules and regulations.

Therefore, it is recommended that flood regulations be developed through a process with a facilitated educational and feedback session that includes the State of ND, townships, cities, and Ramsey County that are interested to help determine a consistent policy for all entities for floodplain rules.

Shoreline Management Standards

Ramsey County will utilize the current State of North Dakota Sovereign Lands permit process to avoid duplication of effort and maintain consistency with shoreline management of Devils Lake. To ensure that consistency, any building permit that includes shoreline activities should include a requirement that a Sovereign Land permit be completed.

A permit is required for any land disturbing activities within the shore zone (anything between the high-water mark and low-water mark) to ensure it does not have an adverse effect to State Sovereign Land resources. This could include any removal of natural resources including Trees, shrubs, vines, plants, soil, gravel, fill, rocks, fossils, sod, water, firewood, posts, poles, or other public property including cultural resources. For more information about the State of North Dakota State Sovereign Land program go to https://www.dwr.nd.gov/reg_approp/sovereign_land/

Septic Tank Standards

Most agricultural and rural service areas will utilize on-site wastewater treatment systems (septic systems). Septic systems are acceptable when used in low density development areas. A septic system must be located where:

- the lot is at least an acre in size,
- soils have acceptable percolation rates,
- there is a minimum drain field size, and
- other minimum standards that will be included within the Ramsey County Zoning Ordinance.

Where septic systems standards cannot be met because of soil percolation issues there should also be alternative standards for on-site holding tanks in which the contents are pumped and disposed off-site. To help enforcement, the building permit process will include a septic tank review in the zoning ordinance and should be reviewed and approved by the Lake Region Health District Unit.

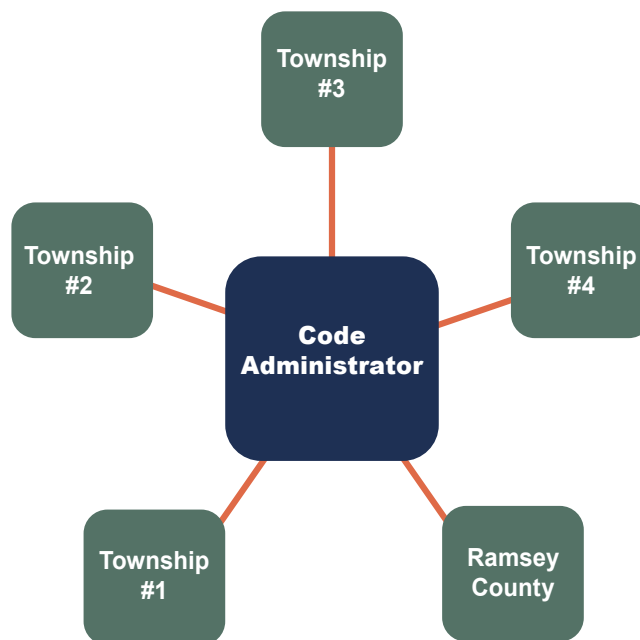
X. Plan Implementation

The best possible way to implement a comprehensive plan is to consistently enforce all of the following regulations in order to influence development in a positive manner. Below are regulations that have been developed or are planned to be developed that will be instrumental in implementing this Comprehensive Plan for Ramsey County and Townships.

Although it is recognized that any Township or City in Ramsey County has the authority to enforce and administer their own regulations, this plan provides recommendations to develop consistency and coordination among jurisdictions in Ramsey County. Specifically, it is recommended that a common code administrator be hired or contracted with to provide a “one-stop shop” for all County and Township land use, subdivision floodplain and other regulation permits. The Code Administrator would only process and enforce current regulations through a more formalized building permit process. The unified building permit process would be required to adequately and efficiently review and approve for all the below regulations. Any building permits that require a public hearing, the Code Administrator would set up a public hearing and provide a staff report to the Township Planning Commission and Board and the County Planning Commission and County Commission.

Option 1 – Code Administrator (Townships and Ramsey County)

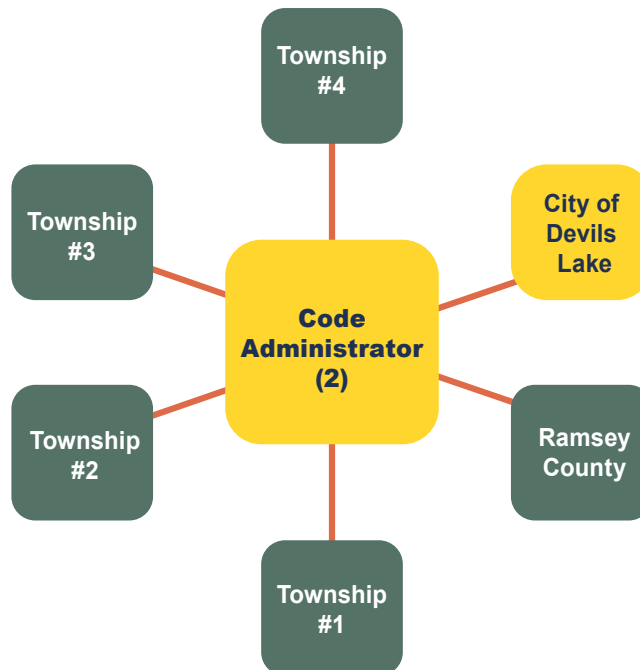
1. Townships Zoning Ordinances
2. Ramsey County Subdivision Ordinance (Model ordinances available for each Township)
3. Ramsey County Zoning Ordinances (Model ordinances available for each Township)
4. Floodplain Regulations (FEMA)
5. Septic Tank Standards (Lake Region Health District Unit)
6. State of ND Sovereign Land Statute (Shoreline Protection)

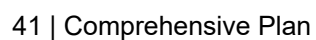


Option 2 – Code Administrators (County, Township and City of Devils Lake)

An additional option is to also include the City of Devils Lake as a part of the coordination process. In that case the code administrator would add the following regulations to be reviewed. This may be too heavy a lift for one person though and the office would likely require 2 full-time staff.

1. City of Devils Lake Zoning and Subdivision ordinance (including extraterritorial ordinance)
2. City of Devils Lake Floodplain ordinance





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Ramsey County, ND
Comprehensive Plan
