

7550 Sunwood Drive NW • Ramsey, Minnesota 55303
City Hall: 763-427-1410 • Fax: 763-427-5543
www.cityoframsey.com

April 8, 2014

Metropolitan Council
Attn: ThriveMSP 2040
390 Robert St North
Saint Paul, MN 55101

RE: ThriveMSP 2040 Draft Comments – City of Ramsey

To Whom It May Concern:

To begin, thank you for the opportunity to participate in a variety of citizen engagement and public input sessions surrounding ThriveMSP 2040 (“Thrive”), the Metropolitan Council’s new Regional Development Framework. The City of Ramsey appreciates the opportunity to have additional opportunities to review and comment on the goals of the plan and the growth forecasts that are included (population, households, and employment).

As opposed to a line by line or page by page comment of the Thrive draft, the City of Ramsey would like to share with you key land use and land use related goals we have developed to ensure that our goals remain compatible and heard as part of the Thrive draft and the upcoming System Plans.

Through an extensive and robust citizen engagement process, the City of Ramsey has identified two (2) major categories that we feel important to make as part of the public record in implementing Thrive. While we acknowledge that our Future Land Use Map has the capacity to experience the forecasted growth, we are not convinced that this growth will be experienced under current infrastructure capacity. These categories include the following, and will most likely impact our future growth forecasts if left unaddressed:

1. Transportation:
 - a. Regional Priority #1: US Highway 10
 - b. Regional Priority #2: TH Highway 47
 - c. Regional Priority #3: Future River Crossing (Mississippi River Crossing to City of Dayton)
2. Water Supply
 - a. Balance of groundwater supply and surface water supply along with water conservation efforts

Transportation

As Ramsey reviewed the draft of Thrive, there was nothing specific identified that is in direct conflict with our goals as identified as above, but could be construed as conflicting if the interpretation was within certain context. Ramsey would expect that the System Plan for Transportation reflect the revised growth forecasts and identify project needs for the northwest metro and Highway 10 corridor to supplement the existing conditions, current studies, and Northstar Commuter Rail. Ramsey is pleased to be pursuing the

Armstrong Boulevard Interchange as well as participating in the current Highway 10 Access Planning Study. Both of these scenarios will help address existing development patterns and highway levels of service (note: most of Highway 10 is currently operating as Level of Service 'F' at peak periods).

That being said, the Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Department of Transportation should still consider long-term planning and designing improvements in the area to allow for future capacity improvements.

Secondarily, when considering origin and destinations of many of Ramsey's future growth areas, the importance of addressing Highway 47 becomes an important component of our transportation plan and goals. It will take the partnership of the cities of Ramsey and Anoka, Anoka County, Mn/DOT, and the Metropolitan Council to address this difficult, yet important transportation priority.

Finally, a piece of Ramsey's regional transportation priorities is a future river crossing of the Mississippi River to create a connection to the City of Dayton. Due to anticipated future growth, coupled with existing congestion on the US Highway 169 river crossing at the cities of Anoka and Dayton, it will be important for the success of the area and the region from the perspective of affordable housing, life-cycle housing, economic development, and the inter-related connections between them all, to eliminate this existing barrier and allow for the creation of un-tapped economic development potential.

Water Supply

Ramsey is very encouraged to see that the Metropolitan Council is providing consideration of water supply as a regional issue. Although not as clearly visible as in other areas of the region, the issue of reduced ground water supply is still clearly a concern of our community for a multitude of reasons. We are blessed to be bordered by not one (1), but two (2) rivers; the Mississippi River and the Rum River. We hope that the emphasis placed thus far leads to effective policy, followed by true implementation. Ramsey is willing to work together with others in the region to address this important issue, but we feel that the burden of implementation should not be Ramsey's alone, but rather be shared by the greater region. Although we are located in close proximity to a surface water supply and that we are just now entering as part of the emerging suburban edge, it should not be our burden alone to implement alternative supply and reduced reliance on groundwater supply.

Community Designation

Ramsey also is encouraged to see a new classification of community designations. A key land use goal and priority for Ramsey is to maintain a balance of urban and rural development patterns to provide variety and respect the unique urban, rural, and natural environment character. Generally speaking, Ramsey finds the designation of 'Emerging Suburban Edge' as appropriate. This is with the assumption that Ramsey can maintain the balance of urban and rural character as currently reflected in our Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan as well as maintaining the ability for future MUSA expansions. We desire the ability for local control to make future adjustments only as identified through citizen-focused collaborative processes. We acknowledge the need to work through regional planning processes and partnerships with the Metropolitan Council to identify strategic investments to reach our common goals.

Growth Forecasts

Ramsey appreciates the efforts to revise local forecasts based off our previous response. Ramsey recently hosted a public workshop to take a new look at our Future Land Use Map. At this time, no significant changes were identified as part of that process. The general rate of growth forecasted appears to be more relevant to the current market rate and historical average growth. However, as noted above, we acknowledge that our Future Land Use Map has the capacity to experience this growth, but are not convinced that the existing infrastructure, most notably transportation and water supply, can sustain this growth unless future capacity improvements are made and the current model and distribution is adjusted to provide equity in the region as it relates to strategic infrastructure improvements.

As previously identified, Ramsey has focused on the key land use policy topics of water supply and transportation capacity. Before Ramsey will extend its support to the published forecasts, we feel that it is important to model several scenarios that will illustrate the outcomes of our land use decisions if investments in these two (2) categories are not made.

First, as would be anticipated, we believe that general statistical analysis demonstrates a strong correlation between congestion levels on Highway 10 and growth rates of new development. We feel that, at minimum, an alternative analysis that models forecasts with the assumption that improvements to Highway 10 are not made should be completed. We assume these improvements will be made at some point in the future; however, we do desire to better understand the outcomes of our land use decisions if these improvements are not made in the short term and how that directly relates to these draft forecasts.

Additionally, based on a general recalibration of our 2012 Water Supply Study and substituting average growth rate from the Thrive forecasts to ensure consistency, our future growth will be significantly impacted if the current water supply assumptions and formulas are not adjusted and regional investment is not made. This factor is anticipated to begin impacting Ramsey somewhere between the year 2020 and 2025. In other words, if the issue of water supply is not addressed in the next several years, we would anticipate our growth forecasts to reduce significantly. Ramsey has taken several proactive steps to attempt to reduce our water consumption, including completing surface water supply studies and implementing various water conservation measures such as standing odd/even watering restrictions and organic-rich topsoil requirements for new development. Ramsey is also an active member of the Northwest Metro Water Supply Work Group, and is participating in the Metropolitan Council's Northwest Metro Water Supply Study.

Separately, Ramsey acknowledges several planning efforts that are currently underway, but are not complete. With that in mind, the outcomes of these processes do have the potential to impact our forecasts. We have adopted a more iterative model, continually refining our Comprehensive Plan throughout the regional planning cycle to ensure that is up to date, market relevant, and consistent with our land use goals.

As identified in our previous response, Ramsey is working on three (3) small area plans below:

1. Old Municipal Center
2. 167/47 Node (soon to be re-named)
3. Armstrong West-Future Business Park

Old Municipal Center

Ramsey is considering uses that could bring additional employment opportunities to this twenty (20) acre site. Ramsey is also providing consideration for single-family residential on this site, which could lead to approximately 45 new detached single-family homes. Neither alternative would bring significant changes to the community's forecasts. The City Council will be considering next steps within the next few months, following the recent completion of a citizen study group process.

167/47 Node

This circa-1970s retail node has experienced continual increases in vacancy. The City is in the process of looking at a multitude of options to facilitate the private market's revitalization of this node. Although no significant changes to employment forecasts are anticipated at this stage, the broader land use review could result in changes to housing forecasts specific to this area. There is not sufficient direction at this point to comment directly as part of this stage of the regional planning process.

Armstrong West – Future Business Park

Ramsey has been extremely successful in economic development and redevelopment and has become a well-respected option for future business growth. Ramsey has all but exhausted existing future business park growth identified in our Comprehensive Plan, and is reasonably well served by adjacent infrastructure. Through a holistic land use review, the City expects to forward a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in the very near future. Through this holistic approach, we expect to be able to accomplish this with little to no adjustment to our forecasts. Based on previous conversations, we anticipate this land use exercise to fit within our existing employment forecasts.

Potential Comments on Upcoming System Plans

In an effort to continue the open lines of communication, Ramsey thought it would be helpful to give a preview of some of our comments that are more appropriate at the System Plan stage, but help frame our review of the Thrive document.

Transportation

As noted before, we will likely be commenting on Highway 10, Highway 47, and a future river crossing. Each of these will require to continue to coordinate with Anoka County to ensure each of our plans is properly aligned.

Parks and Open Space

Ramsey has had preliminary discussions with the Anoka County Parks Department on each of these strategies, and additional review is necessary before formal policy direction is provided. Ramsey sees an opportunity to provide for alternative route analysis for the Central Anoka County and Rum River Regional Trails. Ramsey feels with minor modifications to the alignment of these approved regional trails, the region can maximize origin and destination. Additionally, Ramsey would like the regional system plans to identify a future study area to create a greenway and trail corridor along the Trott Brook Greenway connecting a great deal of local, regional, and broader amenities.

Water Supply

As noted above, Ramsey will be seeking to work with the Metropolitan Council to identify and define an implementation strategy surrounding regional groundwater and surface water supply and conservation.

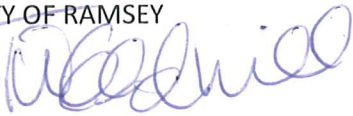
In Closing

Again, our sincerest gratitude for allowing us to participate early in the process of this round of regional planning. We appreciate this opportunity to comment and for the Metropolitan Council to allow us to express our thoughts on the coordination of local and regional planning. We are pleased to provide a Future Land Use Map built on a collaborative public process and community support. We hope that the Metropolitan Council will continue to work with Ramsey to address our infrastructure capacity concerns. Please note that our concerns with the draft forecasts are not about our future land use vision, but how that vision relates to current infrastructure capacity and future infrastructure investment.

We feel we have grown as a community since our last Comprehensive Plan Update and have a better understanding and respect for the process. We have committed to participating early in the process to ensure our goals and priorities are aligned and that we participate in the appropriate stages to ensure our voices are heard. We look forward to the next stages in the process.

Sincerely,

CITY OF RAMSEY



Tim Gladhill

Development Services Manager