

City of Ramsey
Agenda
Environmental Policy Board (EPB)
Monday February 2, 2015
6:30 pm
The COR Room, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Citizen Input**
- 3. Approve Agenda**
- 4. Approve Minutes**
 1. Approve Meeting Minutes Dated January 5, 2015
- 5. Policy Board Business**
 1. Tree Sale & Environmental Expo Status
 2. Consider Change of Regular Meeting Day to Third Monday of Each Month
 3. Distribute Chapter 13 (Environmental Protection/Resource Management) of the Comprehensive Plan
- 6. Board/Staff Input**
 - Update on Review of Purpose Statement
- 7. Adjournment**

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

4. 1.

Meeting Date: 02/02/2015

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Approve Meeting Minutes Dated January 5, 2015

Action:

Attachments

Draft Meeting Minutes Dated January 5, 2015

Form Review

Inbox

Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 01/30/2015

Reviewed By

Chris Anderson

Date

01/30/2015 08:25 AM
Started On: 01/30/2015 08:11 AM

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

On Monday, January 5, 2015, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the COR Conference Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Bob Bentz (arrived at 6:36 p.m.)
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Board Member Larry Lewis
 Board Member Tara Prendergast

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 Council Liaison John LeTourneau

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Stodola called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Valentine to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Hiatt, Valentine, and Bernard.
Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Bentz, Lewis, and Prendergast.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated December 1, 2014

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to approve the regular meeting minutes dated December 1, 2014.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Bernard, Hiatt, and Valentine.
Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Bentz, Lewis, and Prendergast.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Review of Draft Statement of Purpose and Scope of Work

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report.

Board Member Bentz arrived at 6:36 p.m.

City Planner Anderson reviewed the Draft Statement of Purpose and provided example items that would be reviewed by the Board through the process proposed, under the existing framework. He explained that a land use application could be brought forward before the EPB prior to the review by the Planning Commission, with the recommendations from those Boards moving forward to the City Council. He stated that the intent is to move forward with this process for the review of land use applications for a one-year period, noting that a review would then be completed to determine if any amendments are necessary before formalizing this process. He advised that the EPB would also be involved with the Comprehensive Plan, education, emerging issues, and review of the Zoning Code. He stated that this process will make the Board more proactive and able to provide additional input. He explained that this Statement of Purpose and duties had been composed based on the input received at the previous meeting and asked for feedback.

Board Member Hiatt questioned if the Board schedule would interfere with the 60-day review deadline for land use applications.

City Planner Anderson explained that land use applications are required 30 days before the next Planning Commission meeting, which would ensure that the Board would meet prior to the scheduled Planning Commission meeting. He noted that staff thoroughly discussed that aspect to ensure that the actions could occur within the review period.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he appreciates the ability to be involved in the review process and simply wanted to ensure that this review opportunity would not interfere with the review timeline for applicants.

City Planner Anderson noted that the Board would review and provide feedback on natural resource aspects of applications.

Board Member Valentine commended staff for the creation of the document and also appreciated the ability to be more involved.

City Planner Anderson explained that this document is meant to clarify how the Board serves the community and to provide a framework for the intent and responsibility of the Board. He encouraged all the Board Members to attend the future City Council Work Session at which this information will be presented and discussed.

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Bernard to forward the Draft Statement of Purpose to a future City Council Work Session for review with the City Council.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Valentine, Bernard, Bentz, and Hiatt. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Lewis and Prendergast.

5.02: Review Draft Closed Landfill Land Use Plan; Case of Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He reviewed the land use case, specifically in regard to the ground water area of concern identified by the MPCA and to the oak savanna. He recommended that the Board support the MPCA's desire to provide permanent protection and restoration efforts to the oak savanna on the western portion of the lot.

City Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the Board should also consider if preservation of the oak savanna would interfere with the concept of a business park and increased tax base for the City.

City Planner Anderson provided additional input, identifying the oak savanna on the concept plan, which is shown as open space. He noted that the opinion of this Board may not match the opinions of the Economic Development Authority and the Planning Commission. He advised that all the comments will then be provided to the MPCA as feedback.

Chairperson Stodola questioned the current zoning of the area. He stated that it seemed to him that if business was going to exist in that area it would be along the roadway and identified an area that is very wet on that site. He stated that the wetland could not be filled, so in essence that makes the area in discussion very small.

City Councilmember LeTourneau explained that he views the area as a larger area that needs to be platted. He noted that hypothetically the wetland could be filled as well, if wetland credits are purchased to offset that.

Board Member Hiatt questioned if there is demand for business park area within Ramsey.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that business park is in high demand within Ramsey as there are businesses that would like to come to the City and those within Ramsey that would like to expand. He stated that this area is currently zoned E-1, which is one of the two employment districts within Ramsey.

Board Member Bentz stated that in his experience previous land use sites are not found desirable by businesses. He stated that even though the site would be monitored there is still the risk of what is not yet known.

Board Member Valentine stated that he believes the MPCA makes the distinction between properties that will be serviced by City sewer and water and those that have their own wells. He stated that the oak savanna is a high quality aspect in an area that may not be attractive for future development and therefore would support the preservation of the oak savanna. He agreed that the remaining area should be made available for development, noting that potential businesses should be alerted to the previous use.

Board Member Bentz stated that he would prioritize the available land for business use. He stated that perhaps industrial manufacturers would not be as concerned with the risk because they also generate waste.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps the oak savanna could be preserved on that portion of the site with a business park developed on the other portion of the site.

City Councilmember LeTourneau confirmed that could be done. He stated that the current business park being developed is 93 acres. He stated that the challenge currently is that the desire is for some of the larger scale tracts of business park development.

City Planner Anderson stated that the responsibility of the Board is to review applications relating to natural resources. He stated that this is a unique ecotype that could accommodate preservation of the oak savanna while still allowing for future development on the larger site. He acknowledged the well thought out statements from the Board regarding potential contamination concerns from prospective business owners.

City Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he would agree with the desire to preserve the oak savanna, noting that in terms of development the site would be low priority.

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to recommend to the MPCA that the City will commit to preserving the oak savanna in return for the City being allowed to pursue commercial development on the eastern portion of the site, contingent upon the City providing municipal services to avoid the use of ground water.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Valentine, Hiatt, Bentz and Bernard. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Lewis and Prendergast.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the oak savanna is high quality but has not been maintained and described some of the maintenance activities being discussed for the area.

5.03: Consider Potential Recycling Activities/Opportunities

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report and reviewed the potential recycling events currently being considered that would qualify for Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) funding. He asked for feedback from the Board, including any additional recycling ideas. He stated that the funding request must be submit to the County by the end of February, noting that the Board could continue to think about ideas and provide that input at the February Board meeting.

Chairperson Stodola stated that he would be in favor of a zero waste Happy Days event, as that would not only be a recycling event but also an educational opportunity.

City Planner Anderson stated that the public works staff has received many positive comments acknowledging the opportunity to recycle at Happy Days the past few years.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he would support the promotion of apartment complex recycling event as apartment complexes have the lowest rate of recycling currently. He stated would

provide an educational aspect that could increase the recycling participation of that portion of the community.

City Councilmember LeTourneau noted that would also be a service provided by the City to those residents.

Board Member Bentz stated that perhaps businesses could be targeted for recycling as well.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that would be beneficial as well but would not count against the tonnage thresholds of the City.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps recognition could be provided to businesses that increase their recycling efforts, noting that would reward businesses with positive promotion for their efforts.

Board Member Bentz stated that he would like to see recycling bins outside of gas stations.

City Planner Anderson stated that staff can investigate that option for on the go recycling if there is a gas station within the City that would like to pursue that opportunity. He noted that he can also investigate a program that could recognize businesses that increase their recycling efforts.

City Councilmember LeTourneau stated that if the efforts were increased the news story could move beyond a local story to a regional story.

City Planner Anderson stated that the County does recognize businesses for recycling and advised that the Board could make a recommendation should a local business standout.

Board Member Bentz stated that perhaps household chemicals could be collected as well during recycling events.

City Planner Anderson stated that he could investigate that option but stated that it is a very rigorous process because of the transportation of hazardous waste, which is why the regional household hazardous waste facility was created. He noted that the County does have a traveling program. He stated that perhaps the City could coordinate with the County to create a site in Ramsey that could be used for a one-day event.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Board Member Bentz referenced the painting program that has started and asked for additional information.

City Planner Anderson explained that there is a paint care stewardship program that took effect November 1st in Minnesota, noting that Sherwin Williams and Hirshfield's are participating. He explained that unused paint can be returned to these stores for disposal, noting that there are some limitations on the amount that can be brought in at one time. He stated that he will advertise that item in an upcoming newsletter.

City Councilmember LeTourneau stated that Commission appointments are completed annually at this time of year. He stated that he would like to continue as the Council Liaison to this Board but was unsure which designation would be made.

The Board thanked City Councilmember LeTourneau for his efforts and attendance over the past year.

City Planner Anderson stated that this Friday night is the annual appreciation and holiday party event. He also asked the opinion of the Board in terms of utilizing the third Monday of the month for monthly meetings rather than the first Monday of the month because of staffing conflicts. He stated that this would not interfere with the 60-review period for land use applications. He clarified that moving to the third Monday would actually allow the Board to review the application two weeks earlier into the timeline.

The Board was open to moving the monthly meeting to the third Monday of each month, as long as the change would not interfere with the 60-review period for land use applications.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that there will be an open house at City Hall in the Council Chambers this Thursday at 5:30 p.m., prior to the 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission meeting, to discuss Fire Station #2 and a concept plan for a residential development on the former municipal site.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.

Meeting Date: 02/02/2015

By: Chris Anderson, Community Development

Information

Title:

Tree Sale & Environmental Expo Status

Purpose/Background:

The purpose of this case is to update the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) regarding both the Tree Sale program and the Environmental Expo event. Staff has reviewed each of these offerings for the past three years and noted that both have been generally trending downward. As a result of the downward trend of each, Staff believes it is time to move away from these programs and look at other opportunities to promote tree planting and environmental awareness.

Observations/Alternatives:

Tree Sale

In 2012, the Tree Sale format was redesigned out of necessity (the former vendors that participated all opted out for various reasons, one of which was declining sales). The City began working directly with a wholesaler and purchased trees directly to offer through a pre-order program. This provided an opportunity for residents to purchase trees at wholesale prices and encouraged planting trees within the community. However, this new format also provided direct competition with the private market.

Moreover, in reviewing the Tree Sale program over the last three (3) years (since changing to current format), sales have not rebounded like we had hoped. While it is true that the total number of trees sold in 2014 more than doubled as shown in the table below, six (6) orders combined to account for seventy-three (73) trees. Typically, there's a limit to how many trees one can order because we only have a limited number to begin with but when the sales are lagging, we have had to try and work with what residents have requested.

Year	Total # of Orders	Total # of Trees Sold
2012	14	60
2013	15	49
2014	23	129*

*73 trees were purchased through 6 orders

Each year, it is conservatively estimated that about twenty (20) hours of Staff time goes into the Tree Sale program, including working with the wholesaler, marketing, webpage development, receiving orders, addressing questions about trees, confirming orders, and coordinating the pick-up of purchased trees. When this position was more evenly split between environmental and planning responsibilities, the time commitment was more manageable. However, with the reorganization of responsibilities, the time commitment has become problematic.

When looking at the number of residents this program has served over the past three (3) years, it appears that the Tree Sale program no longer has the value it once did. Additionally, the Anoka Conservation District has their own, well established seedling sale. While that program focusing on seedlings rather than the larger stock the City's Tree Sale typically offers, it provides residents an extremely inexpensive option to purchase and plant trees. These factors, along with the fact the City's program provides direct competition with the private landscaping/nursery market, has led to the decision to not offer the Tree Sale in 2015. Staff may reconsider and re-evaluate the program if there is public demand or desire for it to be brought back in future years.

Environmental Expo

This event used to be a partnership between the City and Ramsey Elementary School. The event previously was held at the elementary school in conjunction with the Tree Sale. However, in 2007, the elementary school notified the City that it could no longer commit staff time to the event and the partnership dissolved and there was no expo event in 2007.

In 2008, the City brought back the Environmental Expo in a revamped format at the Ramsey Municipal Center. This site was not ideal for an expo venue but nonetheless, from 2008 to 2012, it was home to the event. Attendance at the event has always been an estimation, but it is estimated the event had anywhere from 100-200 attendees annually while it was held at the Municipal Center. The number of vendors typically ranged from 25-30 each year.

In 2013, in an attempt to reinvigorate the program and to capitalize on cost efficiencies and greater community visibility, the Environmental Expo was incorporated into Happy Days. Again, attendance was hard to gauge but it appears that foot traffic through the expo tent did increase (although, how much of that was really just wandering through without much or any interaction with exhibitors is not known). However, participation of exhibitors began to decline. In 2013, there were fourteen (14) exhibitors and by 2014, there were only seven (7) exhibitors.

Considering the amount of staff time that goes in to coordinating this event, the overall cost of the event (has ranged from about \$4,500 to \$6,000), and the declining trend of exhibitors interested in participating, Staff believes that it is time to look at alternative ways to promote awareness of environmental issues.

Rather than focusing some much time and effort on seeking out interested exhibitors for the Environmental Expo, more benefit could come from having an EPB presence at other venues, such as The Draw Summer Event Series and/or the Spring Business Expo. If exhibitors that typically would have been a good fit for the Environmental Expo were looking for an opportunity to promote their message, Happy Days still has the business and craft expo components, which could accommodate those exhibitors if so desired. This would allow more time for Staff to focus on making Happy Days (and other community events) more sustainable overall, including working toward becoming a zero-waste event (which could be funded through the recycling program SCORE funds).

In terms of promoting sustainability and environmental awareness and education, key themes of the Environmental Expo, there are other opportunities to accomplish this. First, the EPB could, if it so desired, still sponsor an exhibit at Happy Days. This could involve bringing in an organization with live raptors and reptiles, one of if not the most popular exhibit at past expo events, or bringing in a theater group with an environmental message (such as recycling, watersheds, conservation, etc.) to perform. Additionally, as noted previously, The Draw Summer Event Series continues to grow in popularity and would be an opportunity for the EPB to have a presence and promote awareness of current environmental issues.

Action:

No action is necessary.

Attachments

No file(s) attached.

Form Review

Inbox

Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 01/30/2015

Reviewed By

Chris Anderson

Date

01/30/2015 08:25 AM
Started On: 01/23/2015 04:07 PM

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

5. 2.

Meeting Date: 02/02/2015

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Consider Change of Regular Meeting Day to Third Monday of Each Month

Purpose/Background:

As the Board will recall, at the January meeting Staff raised the question of potentially shifting the regular meeting date of the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) from the first Monday of each month to the third Monday of each month. There was general consensus amongst the Board that changing the regularly scheduled meeting day to the third Monday of each month was acceptable as long as that change didn't impact the EPB's opportunity to have more involvement with review of certain land use applications.

In reviewing the development review timeline, shifting the regular monthly meeting to the third Monday will actually improve that process. As part of the discussion regarding the EPB's purpose and function, which included active participation in the review of certain land use applications, the Board and City Staff were in agreement that the EPB review should occur prior to the Planning Commission meeting. This would ensure that any comments or recommendations of the EPB were available prior to any public hearing, typically held by the Planning Commission. Currently, there are some months in which the Planning Commission meeting, which is held on the first Thursday of each month, occurs prior to the EPB meeting, which could impact the City's ability to maintain compliance with the sixty (60) day rule established in state statute. Changing the meeting date to the third Monday of the month will ensure that the EPB's review would occur prior to the Planning Commission but would still fall within the existing development review framework and timeframe.

Action:

Motion to officially change the regular meeting day of the Environmental Policy Board to the third Monday of each month beginning in April, 2015.

Attachments

Development Review Flow Chart

Form Review

Inbox

Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 01/30/2015

Reviewed By

Chris Anderson

Date

01/30/2015 08:25 AM
Started On: 01/27/2015 03:32 PM

Milestone	Date
Applications Due	First Thursday of Month
Development Review Meeting (City Staff)	Second Tuesday of Month
Environmental Policy Board Agenda	Second Friday of Month
Environmental Policy Board Meeting	Third Monday of Month
Planning Commission Agenda	Last Friday of Month
Planning Commission Meeting	First Thursday of Month

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)**5.3.****Meeting Date:** 02/02/2015**By:** Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information**Title:**

Distribute Chapter 13 (Environmental Protection/Resource Management) of the Comprehensive Plan

Purpose/Background:

At the most recent City Council Work Session, the City Council reviewed the framework for the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update the City will be undertaking. While the official update process has not yet begun, Staff wanted to take this opportunity to distribute the Environmental Protection/Resource Management Chapter of the current Comprehensive Plan to the Board. The intent will be for the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) to be the lead reviewer of this chapter for the Comprehensive Plan Update. As part of the update process, there will be some sort of public forum to solicit comments and input from the public that will be held prior to officially updating this chapter. However, Staff is open to receiving any informal comments or suggested revisions any time. The purpose of this case is just to ensure that the Board has a copy of this chapter that members can begin to review individually in advance of the formal process.

Action:

No action is necessary.

AttachmentsChapter 13 (Environmental Protection/Resource Management)

Form Review**Inbox**Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 01/30/2015**Reviewed By**

Chris Anderson

Date01/30/2015 10:07 AM
Started On: 01/30/2015 08:28 AM

13. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION/ RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A. Existing Conditions

Ramsey is fortunate to have an ample amount of natural resources and open space areas and a community attitude that is increasingly concerned about the environment. The inventory of natural resources and open spaces include a variety of wetlands, woodlands, farmlands, parkland and two golf courses. Many native plants and trees are evident in the community. Early settlers cleared much of the land for farming in the early settlement days, but since then residential development has been the main force behind the loss of native vegetation allowing for the introduction of new species into the Ramsey community. The following is a limited description of the natural features and their characteristics that can be found in the Ramsey community and surrounding areas of the Anoka Sandplain. This inventory includes information that has been gathered at a regional level including sources such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Army Corp of Engineering, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Metropolitan Council and other federal, state and regional resources. Information has also been obtained by local studies conducted by the City of Ramsey.

1. Wetlands

The City of Ramsey has an abundance of wetlands in a variety of wetland types. The following inventory includes two sources of data: the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) and the DNR's Protected Waters Map (see Figure 13-1). The National Wetland Inventory put together by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers includes a more thorough inventory of land areas that have an impact on maintaining and enhancing the quality of the water. Table 13-1 represents the wetland types as designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services that can be found in the City of Ramsey.

Table 13-1 NWI Wetland types found in the City of Ramsey

Wetland Type	Wetland Description
Type 1	Floodplain Forest and Seasonally-Flooded Basin
Type 2	Wet Meadow or Prairie
Type 3	Shallow Marsh
Type 4	Deep Marsh
Type 5	Open Water (Pond)
Type 6	Scrub Shrub Swamp
Type 7	Wooded Swamp

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) of 1991 outlined a program for the conservation of wetlands. The WCA is directed through the Minnesota Board of

Water and Soil Resources (MBWSR) with the DNR acting as the enforcement agency. The Act places implementation responsibilities in Local Units of Government. The Local Unit of Government that monitors wetland activities in the City of Ramsey is the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization. The DNR’s inventory includes those wetlands that are classified as Type 3, 4, or 5 of the NWI. Figure 13-1 illustrates the City of Ramsey’s wetlands.

2. Shorelands

The City has several lakes and marshes that are classified as part of the shoreland management program. The following table highlights the various shorelands in Ramsey:

Table 13-2 Shorelands of the Ramsey Shoreland Overlay District

Natural Environment Lakes	Recreational Development Lakes	General Development Lakes	General Development Streams
Shack Eddy	Jeglens Marsh	Ramsey Terrace	Trott Brook (part)
Itasca	Peltzer	Magnesium Street	Ford Brook (part)
Rogers	Grass (Sunfish)	Industry Avenue	

3. Soils

The predominant soil types in Ramsey consist of the Hubbard–Nymore Association. These soils are nearly level to gently sloping, excessively drained soils that are sandy throughout. This association is well suited to most urban uses and is moderately well suited to farming and to recreational uses. This soil type is mostly found in the central and southern portions of the City while in the northeast part of the City the Zimmerman-Isanti-Lino Association is prominent. This soil association is also dominated by sandy soil conditions, is well suited to urban uses and moderately well suited to farming. The dominant soils of these associations include Hubbard, Nymore, Zimmerman and Isanti. Some of the sub-soils include Markey, Rifle, Dickman, Anoka, Duelm and Becker. A complete inventory map of Anoka County including the City of Ramsey can be found in the Soil Survey of Anoka County found at City Hall or Anoka County Surveyors office.

4. Rivers, Urban Streams and Drainage Ditches

The Mississippi River forms the southern border of Ramsey and one of its tributaries, the Rum River, forms the eastern border. These two rivers are the drainage basins for the entire City. Much of southern Ramsey is part of the Mississippi River Watershed. The northern and central portions of the City are located in the Lower Rum River Watershed. Trott Brook and Ford Brook are two main ditches in a series of county ditches that provide drainage ways through the northern portion of the City and drain into the Rum River.

5. Floodplains

A good portion of the Cities natural resources are located within designated floodway

or floodplain areas. Floodplain areas can be found along Trott Brook, Ford Brook, many of the drainage ditches and wetlands within the community and the Mississippi and Rum Rivers. Characteristics of floodplains include mucky soils that are poorly drained and seasonally flooded and wetland vegetation. Often, floodplains are used for agriculture purposes because of the high nutrient and organic soils that are unsuitable to development.

6. Woodlands

The City of Ramsey conducted tree inventories in 1979 and again in 1992. These inventories indicate a predominance of bur oak, box elder and red oak. The area was originally higher in oak species; however, clear-cutting for agriculture greatly reduced tree cover. Also the oak population is suffering from oak wilt, which has been increasing in recent years. In addition to disease, residential development has reduced much of the wooded population. As the older tree population begins to die off or be removed, new species are introduced. These species are not very well documented. The City of Ramsey has been designated by the National Arbor Day Foundation as a member of Tree City USA since roughly 1986.

7. Natural Resources Inventory

In 2007, the City completed a Natural Resources Inventory to collect and evaluate information on the natural resources of Ramsey. This document also described potential strategies for the protection of these resources. Figure 13-3 shows the existing natural areas in Ramsey and their ranking.

8. Existing Management Efforts

The following programs are currently being implemented by the City of Ramsey to protect the natural resource base:

The Shoreland Management Program provides orderly development of the shoreland and protects lakes and rivers from pollution by individual sewage treatment systems and other non-point sources. The intent of the program is to encourage development of our shorelands in such a way that the water quality is enhanced and the scenic resources are preserved.

The Floodplain Management Program is intended to minimize the threat to life and property resulting from flooding. This program restricts development in floodplains by preventing structures from being built at too low an elevation in areas that have a high risk of flooding. It also controls encroachment so that the floodplain's capacity to hold floodwater will not be reduced, causing flooding to properly located structures.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Program is a program to preserve and protect rivers with outstanding scenic, recreational, natural, historical and scientific values. The program is designed to prevent damage to these exceptional rivers caused by intensive development and recreational overuse. Both the Mississippi and Rum Rivers are protected under the Wild and Scenic River's Act. The Mississippi River is designated as a "recreational" river through the City of Ramsey while the Rum River is designated as "scenic."

The Critical Areas Act is a program to protect areas, which are of significant regional or statewide public value or interest. The program is designed to protect, preserve and enhance a unique and valuable resource; its biological and ecological functions; its natural, aesthetic, cultural and historical values; and its significance to the transportation, sewer and water and recreational systems for the benefit of the citizens of the state, region and nation. It is also to prevent and mitigate irreversible damage resulting from urbanization. The Mississippi River is designated as a State Critical Area through Ramsey.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Program is a program that furthers the intent of the Critical Areas Act by emphasizing the preservation and enhancement of the historical, scenic, recreational and cultural values of the Mississippi River Corridor. The program is designed to assist and coordinate from a national, regional and local level, activities and projects that emphasize such things as historic/cultural interpretation, public access or native vegetation restoration.

The American Heritage Rivers Program is intended to improve access to federal expertise and resources for riverfront revitalization. The Mississippi River through the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area received designation as an American Heritage River in 1998.

The City Forester and Recycling Coordinator are staff persons hired by the City to provide assistance to residents and business with tree care and recycling needs. The recycling program is funded through Anoka County Integrated Waste Management, while the City Forester is funded through the City. Citizen volunteer groups also contribute to tree preservation and recycling efforts.

Monitoring of Public Wells. As a condition of the approval of Well #8, the latest municipal well to be constructed in the City of Ramsey, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the City of Ramsey began an initiative to monitor the effects of city wells on nearby wetlands and surface water. The purpose of this initiative was the result of concerns by the DNR of using a single aquifer that may result in depleting the resource and possibly lowering the water table. In addition, the City is studying the possibility of using surface water from the Mississippi River as a source for municipal water.

B. A Plan for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management

A very important piece to the vitality of the Ramsey community is the protection, preservation and restoration of the native vegetation that covers the community. The following goals and implementation strategies are intended to act as a framework for environmental protection.

1. Natural resources are protected

STRATEGIES:

- a) Identify and prioritize natural areas in the City based on the Natural resource Inventory (NRI)
- b) Use cluster ordinances, density credits, and conservation development practices to minimize impact on identified natural resources
- c) Explore ways to put an economic value on habitat and other natural areas
- d) Provide incentives to homeowners for the permanent protection of high-value natural resource areas
- e) Establish a revenue stream dedicated to the permanent protection of natural resource areas such as a dedicated City tax enacted through referendum
- f) Manage invasive species and promote the use and protection of native species for private and public development
- g) Develop educational materials, such as kiosks, Ramsey Resident article, and maps to inform public about the value of natural resources

2. Recreation opportunities are integrated into protected natural areas

STRATEGIES:

- a) Coordinate protection and enhancement of natural corridors with neighboring communities
- b) Develop a suitability analysis method for reviewing new development that measures both environmental suitability and efficiency of infrastructure use
- c) Prioritize the preservation of large, contiguous natural areas (greenways) that provide the greatest opportunities for animal and plant habitat, as well as a contiguous trail system

3. Clean water and clean air for the current and future generations of Ramsey citizens and businesses

STRATEGIES:

- a) Preserve existing tree canopy and promote additional tree planting in new development, both public and private
- b) Explore options other than ground water for municipal water supply
- c) Manage stormwater on site by using alternative stormwater treatment systems, as described in the Storm Water Management Plan
- d) Monitor the quality and quantity of groundwater in aquifers and adopt measures to ensure long-term sustainability
- e) Seek out alliances and partnerships with non-profit and governmental agencies to assist in securing funding and other resources to assist in achieving this goal
- f) Continue to participate in the North Metro Water Supply Group organized by the Metropolitan Council

4. Reduce waste that goes to the landfill from both private and public sources

STRATEGIES:

- a) Continue to improve upon the City's award-winning recycling program
- b) Seek out alliances and partnerships with non-profit and governmental agencies to assist in securing funding and other resources to assist in implementing this goal
- c) Develop educational materials, kiosks, Ramsey Resident articles and maps to inform public about the value of natural resources

C. Implementation Strategies

The following strategies are a suggested means to achieving the goals set forth in the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management element of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. Data and Information inventory

A critical step in being able to implement an Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management plan is to have information that can be analyzed. Such information might include native species, rare habitat, wetlands, soils, diseased areas, septic system problems or other significant natural resource information. Much of this data is already available from federal, state, county or local agencies: however, this data is often outdated, in a variety of different formats (which makes analysis difficult) or too general to provide analysis information. With advances in modern technology, federal, regional and local governments have been able to provide information in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) making data management and information analysis much more feasible and cost effective. The financial ability to establish such a comprehensive inventory could be made possible through supportive funding by the City in partnership with such agencies as the DNR, Office of Environmental Assistance, Department of Agriculture, private foundations and local businesses. Significant research and grant writing would be involved in securing funding for such an analysis and inventory. A critical element of building an inventory of data is having a database that can manage it and allow easy cost effective retrieval and analysis.

2. The Greenway

Greenway corridors mainly include natural resources such as wetlands, hydric soils, tree canopy, natural vegetation, and unique wildlife habitat. It also includes some lands that may not be environmentally unique but instead simply create a link between other open space areas such as parks or wetlands. Some of the elements within greenways are protected through ordinance or other legal means, while others are not. These corridors may be environmentally sensitive areas, which allow for protection of water quality, wildlife movement, scenic views, and a continuous trail system. The intent of the Greenway is not to prohibit development within this corridor but rather to preserve the existing resource base and return areas to their natural state where possible.

The corridor boundary reflecting the Greenway is not a fixed boundary line. This boundary is intended to reflect general (broad) areas that may fall within the Greenway designation, and should send a message to the developers of lands near or obviously within the greenway to develop in the highest environmentally sensitive way possible.

Implementation of the greenway could be handled in a couple of ways. It could be implemented by creating an overlay-zoning ordinance that simply places a layer of regulation over existing zoning districts. This overlay would not replace existing environmental overlay ordinances nor would it be intended to further restrict areas already regulated by existing ordinances rather it would guide development in areas that are not covered by existing environmental ordinances. If the overlay ordinance is the preferred choice of implementation, a more defined boundary should be

established through more site-specific analysis including field study. The other, and less controlling approach, is to refer to the greenway as voluntary means to preserve the environment and create high quality places to live. This could be done through park dedication, conservation easements or clustering housing techniques that can provide incentives to developers to preserve areas that are not otherwise protected by ordinance. This would be handled through the subdivision and site planning process.

3. Scenic Roadways

Some stretches of roadway in Ramsey provide opportunities for scenic vistas that preserve the rural character of the community. An overlay district that designates roadways as having significant scenic values would apply design and planning principles to preserve the rural character of the community. Such principles might include setback criteria, landscaping guidelines, roadway improvement standards or sign regulations.

4. Land Protection Tools

Many tools are available for efforts to protect areas of significant natural resources. These efforts are summarized in many publications one of which is a publication by the Minnesota DNR Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program “*Natural Areas: Protecting a Vital Community Asset.*” For extensive information about open space preservation tools and techniques, the City should consult organizations such as the Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, The Minnesota Land Trust, The Urban Land Institute and many others. The following is a brief explanation of some of the tools and strategies available:

a) Open-space zoning or cluster zoning

The purpose for establishing an open-space or cluster zoning district is to direct development in an effort to preserve large amounts of contiguous open space and protect natural resources that otherwise may be destroyed. These zoning techniques do not reduce overall density rather they simply transfer density from desired preservation areas to development areas. This way, private property owners are granted the reasonable economic use of their property without negatively impacting the remaining natural or open space areas that the community strongly desires. Residential developments would be clustered together in effort to minimize street and utility construction needs and to systematically provide contiguous open space areas.

Primary components of open-space or cluster zoning

- Smaller lot sizes, street widths, or setbacks in effort to maintain an overall density on a portion of the site that otherwise would be spread over an entire site.
- The developer would be required to preserve a percentage of the land within the development as *permanent open space* by placing the land in a permanent conservation easement or other land preservation tool such as dedication to the City.
- Identification of preservation areas on a community-wide basis, such as the greenway corridor, Wild and Scenic Rivers Area or Mississippi River Critical Area.

b) Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are the voluntary transfer of specified development and land use rights from a landowner to a qualifying organization such as a public body or non-profit agency. Conservation easements can be in the form of permanent easements (lasting forever) or “term” easements (lasting for a period of time at which the land use may be changed). Conservation easements in Ramsey should be used to protect natural resources or to permanently preserve areas of the greenway corridor.

c) Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of development rights allows landowners who may wish to preserve their lands to still receive a profit from the sale of development rights. The purchaser of the development rights would then be able to develop at greater densities. This technique requires the community to establish (on a community wide basis) sending zones, which are areas the community wishes to preserve and receiving zones, which are areas that are most easily served by utilities and are the most logical growth expansion areas. Examples of sending zones may include lands within the greenway corridor, lands identified as containing significant natural resources or lands within the Mississippi River Critical Area corridor. Receiving zones may be located where utilities are readily available or could be easily extended or possibly within the existing MUSA area.

d) Purchase of Development Rights

Purchase of development rights (PDR) operates basically the same way as in the TDR program except instead of transferring development rights the development rights are basically retired or lost. Development rights are typically purchased by the government or non-profit organizations and the land is put into a permanent conservation easement. This program is more of a tool to reduce total growth and can potentially lead to sprawl or leap frog development when areas adjacent to urban services lose their development rights. This program should be used carefully. Residential lands within the Mississippi River Critical Area may be good candidates for the PDR program.

e) Preferential Taxation

Preferential taxation can be used to protect wetlands, agricultural lands or open space. Several of these programs currently exist such as the Agricultural Preserves and Green Acres program, which provide tax breaks for agricultural uses and the Wetland Tax Exemption program which exempts wetland areas from property tax assessments. The purpose for preferential taxation programs is to level the playing field by acknowledging the land’s actual use rather than a market value based approach on uses to which the landowner has no intention of putting the land.

f) Property Acquisition

Property acquisition is probably the simplest form of open space preservation to understand in that it simply means the public buys the land. This technique gives the public control over the use of the property; however, this technique can be very expensive and may not always enjoy strong public support.

g) Land Banking

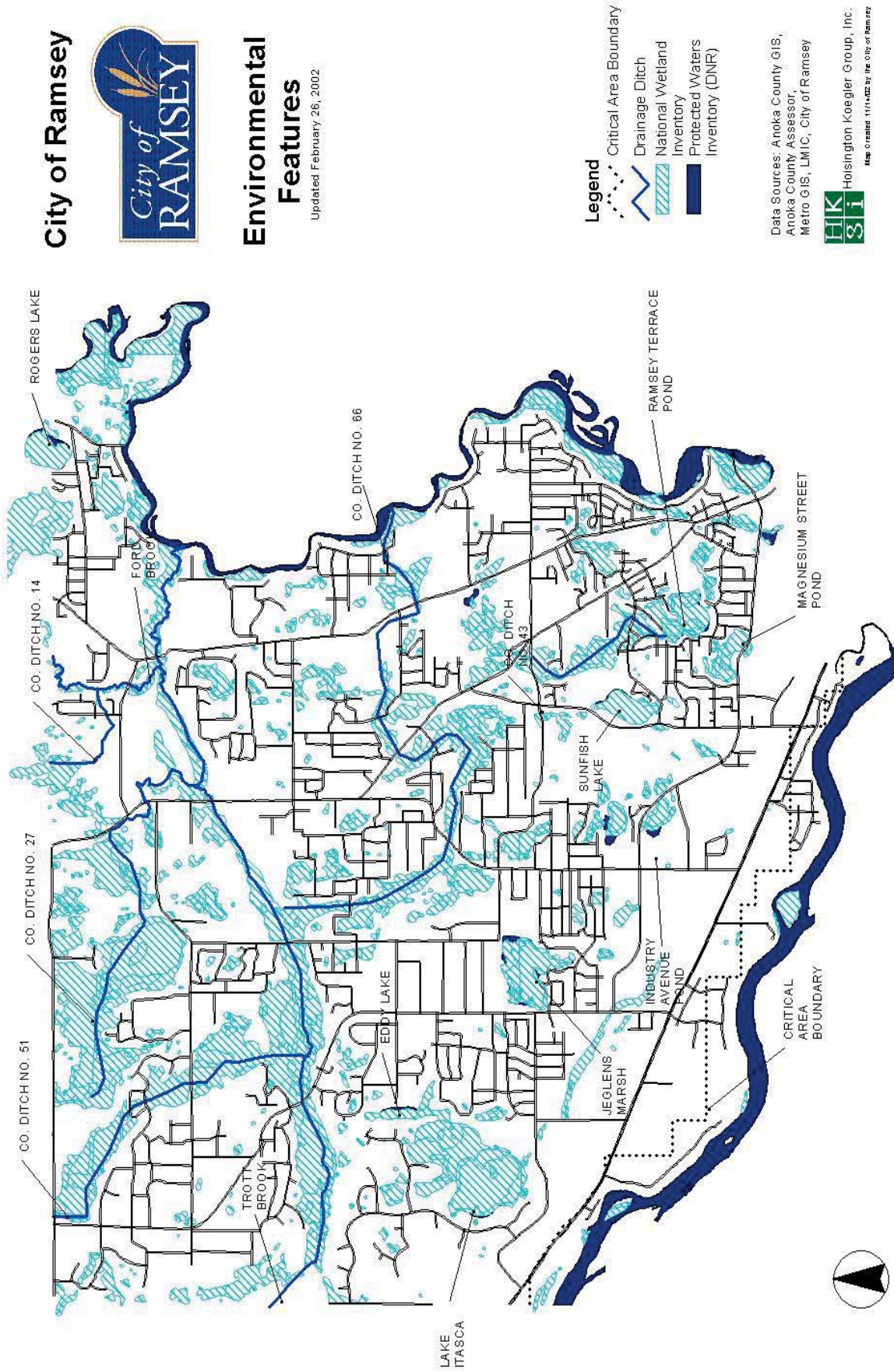
This is a tool similar to property acquisition where the public (City of Ramsey) purchases the land before it is ready to develop. When the area is ready to develop, the City can sell the land with restrictions that preserve open space or limit development. This technique may also be referred to as advanced acquisition.

D. Funding Sources

One of the key obstacles to utilizing some of the tools described above is adequate funding. The following is a list of potential funding sources for implementation of the above-mentioned programs.

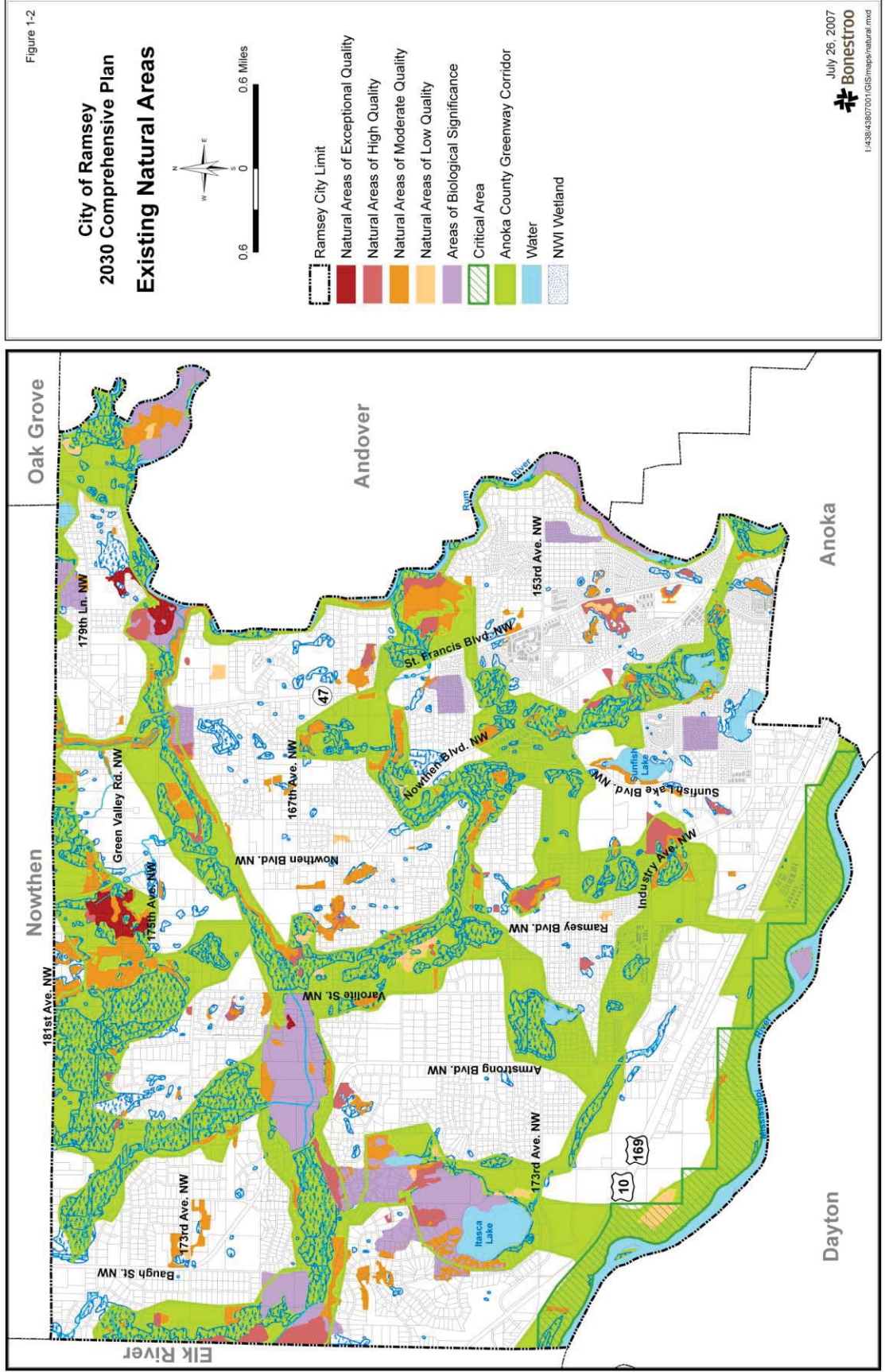
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- National Park Service
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Land Trust
- Trust for Public Lands
- 1,000 Friends of Minnesota
- City referendum
- Park dedication from development

Figure 13-1 Wetlands (NWI and DNR Protected Waters) and Natural Drainage



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Figure 13-3 Natural Resources Inventory



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