

7550 Sunwood Drive NW • Ramsey, MN 55303

City Hall: 763.427.1410 • Fax: 763.427.5543

www.cityoframsey.com

September 15, 2016

Resilient Communities Program
Attn: RCP Director Mike Greco

Re: Letter of Intent for the Resilient Communities Program

We are both thankful for and excited about the opportunity to submit our Letter of Intent for the Resilient Communities Project (RCP). The City of Ramsey is a growing community located in the northwest metro area. We believe that Ramsey is an ideal candidate for RCP as we are classified as an Emerging Suburban Edge community and have a healthy mix of existing residential and commercial sexisting housing and developable land. Both present opportunities for improvement through sound, sustainable policy development and implementation.

Below are the required components for consideration to be invited to formally apply to be the Community Partner.

1. Community Information. City of Ramsey. City Administrator: Kurt Ulrich. The designated RCP Program Coordinator for the City of Ramsey will be our Community Development Director Tim Gladhill. In his role as Community Development Director, Mr. Gladhill is part of the City's Management Team and is responsible for both our Planning and Building Divisions. He also serves as the Staff Liaison to our Planning Commission. His contact information is: tgladhill@cityoframsey.com, 763-433-9826, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, MN 55303.
2. Sustainability. The City's [Strategic Plan](#) includes four (4) Goals and Imperatives, including a "Smart, Citizen-Focused Government" and "A Connected Community". The City strives to have

*It is our mission to work together to responsibly grow our community,
and to provide quality, cost-effective, and efficient government services.*

safe and thriving neighborhoods and business districts, and a clean environment. Additionally, the City wants to ensure connectivity both within the City as well as the region for ease of navigation and to attract business development. These two imperatives really aim at enhancing community livability and environmental health. The Strategic Initiatives (and the tactics to accomplish them) guide the City on the path to achieve these goals. Many of our proposed projects involve The COR, a Transit Oriented Development focused around the Northstar Commuter Rail Station. The COR was envisioned to absorb much of the planned growth of the community preserving some of the rural elements across the city. As there is still a significant amount of undeveloped land within The COR, it presents immense opportunity to provide lifecycle housing with a mix of affordable and market rate options, walkability, significant retail growth, and innovative stormwater management (including reuse). The partnership with RCP would provide an opportunity to research and analyze a range of aspects from parking concepts to stormwater management, and whether market realities align with the City's vision.

3. Administrative Capacity. The City of Ramsey has seventy-five (75) full time employees across seven (7) departments (Administration, Community Development, Engineering, Finance, Fire, Police and Public Works). Team members have a broad range of disciplines, specialties and interests. The City has experience with service learning projects through past work with Anoka Ramsey Community College and has found that it can produce desirable outcomes while providing students 'real world' experience. Many of the anticipated project leads serve as either a staff liaison to one of our advisory boards or have regular interaction with our City Council, providing an efficient means of keeping the policy makers and the public informed and up to date with RCP projects. Furthermore, we also utilized our local cable access programming as a means to keep the public informed.

4. Proposed Projects

- **Parking Strategies for The COR.** The City's land use plan for The COR is that of transit-oriented development. However, the community's market and public support for financial incentives to making necessary parking districts has proven to be challenging. The City desires to update its Master Parking Plan for The COR to maintain the vision for shared parking, while balancing market factors.
- **Stormwater Design for The COR.** The COR Development Plan aims to require innovated stormwater strategies. Overall stormwater needs are captured regionally, versus site by site. This stormwater system is also the key recreation component of the area, serving as an active park and home to our weekly summer concert series and farmer's market. Recent rule changes have required the City to re-evaluate the regional system and find ways to reduce the amount of the stormwater system that enter to begin with. This approach has competing factors with public well protection area.
- **Citizen Engagement for the Comprehensive Plan Update.** In 2006, the City embarked on a major overhaul of how it approached policy analysis and public engagement through a grass roots effort known as Ramsey3. Since then, the City has refined its approach, focusing on natural and organic conversations through existing events, gatherings, and neighborhood focus. The City looks for assistance finalizing this citizen engagement strategy and assistance with its execution.
- **Update of the Natural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan.** The City is beginning the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, including the Natural Resources component, and desires to develop innovative strategies to better define how to accomplish our goals.

- **Development and Execution of an EPB Communications Plan/Library.** The City's Environmental Policy Board desires to develop a comprehensive outreach program across multiple mediums that focuses on environmentally related issues to educate and inform the community. Communications would address a range of topics such as water (conservation, groundwater, stormwater, and how all three interact), invasive species (aquatic and terrestrial), waste reduction, and community forestry.
- **Mixed Use Market Analysis.** The COR Development Plan vision includes mixed use buildings immediately surrounding the Northstar Commuter Rail – Ramsey Station. While the land use plan allows for, and the City proactively seeks out, the return has not been as successful as anticipated. The City is looking for market feasibility of this approach and methods to better encourage a mixed-use style of development.
- **Housing Analysis and Housing Plan.** The City's housing plan was last updated in 2008. Since then, the City's housing goals have had great successes, especially in terms of workforce housing and senior housing. Unfortunately, public support for many of our housing goals continues to drop. The City desires to update its housing plan, as well as a communication strategy about the needs for various housing types and the value they add to our community, especially in terms of economic development.
- **Development of a Gateway District Plan.** This is a sub-set of the Council's Strategic Plan Goal to improve the image of key corridors in the community. Many of the buildings at our gateways are either vacant, blighted, or both. The City desires to create a redevelopment plan for these areas, focused on an incentive-based approach.
- **Development of a Corridor Improvement Program.** The City's Strategic Plan has a goal to improve the image of our key transportation corridors through an incentive based approach. In October, 2016, the City will be engaging key stakeholders to kick this project

off. The City is looking for incentives the community can provide to invest in building and site improvements.

- **Public Tree Inventory.** Over the last decade or so, the City has begun encouraging planting boulevard/street trees as part of new development. As our street tree population grows, both physiologically and in actual number of trees, we are in need of an inventory to manage this often overlooked community asset. A completed inventory would allow the City to utilize tools such as i-tree to inform and educate both the public and policy makers on both the environmental and financial benefits street trees provide.
- **Exploration of Organics Collection Program (curbside or drop-off).** The City has a successful curbside recycling program for standard recyclables; however, food and paper waste (organics) constitute the largest component of our waste stream. We would like to research, analyze and implement an optional organics program (whether curbside and/or small scale drop-off) for residents.
- **Floodplain Modelling.** The City's Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which were just updated by FEMA in December of 2015, still include a number of areas identified as floodplain but without detailed analyses to provide a Base Flood Elevation (BFE). This has created some difficulty for various property owners and the City desires to complete modelling of these areas to be able to provide at least an estimated BFE that could be used as part of a Letter of Map Change application to FEMA.
- **Volunteer Opportunities and Program Development.** The City participates in a bi-annual statistically-significant citizen survey benchmarked against peer communities. One of the primary findings of this survey continues to be strategies to create additional opportunities for residents to participate in the community.

- **Develop a Business Incubator Program.** The City continues to have a successful business retention and expansion program. Our economic development success has been focused on small-business growth and expansion. The City looks to capitalize on this success and create new and exciting opportunities for small businesses to get their initial start through policies, financial incentives, and physical space.
 - **Market Analysis of Community Center and Movie Theater.** The community continues to desire a community space to gather year round. Within The COR, the City has set aside a large area for a large community-based user such as a community recreation center or theater. The City needs assistance marketing this asset and building successful and innovative strategies to make this a reality.
5. **Public Involvement.** Smart, Citizen-Focused Government is identified as one of the Goals and Imperatives in the City's [Strategic Plan](#). The City emphasizes stakeholder involvement and public engagement as we explore and analyze potential improvements and/or programs. Rather than staff identifying alternatives for public consideration on a particular topic, the City has developed a unique public engagement strategy that aims to ensure public involvement. This is accomplished by identifying a topic, providing a brief overview of it, and asking attendees to identify issues or subtopics that they feel need to be addressed or considered. It's a combination of small and large group discussions that ultimately outline alternatives and/or solutions for consideration. This approach has proven to be very effective and would be utilized throughout the RCP year. Informing the public and other stakeholders would be accomplished through mediums such as our website, newsletter, and possibly direct mailings. Additionally, we will utilize a 'mobile kiosk' concept at public events, such as our Summer Concert Series and our community festival Happy Days, where City Staff brings the information to the public.

6. Long-Term Benefits. This unique program provides the City an opportunity to complete a number of initiatives needed as we delve into our Comprehensive Plan Update and assess our current vision for The COR. As the Community Partner, we also see this as a fantastic opportunity to promote Ramsey and its many offerings, both for commercial and residential sectors. The results of many of our proposed projects will help inform and guide our policy makers, advisory boards, staff and stakeholders through our long-term planning and visioning exercises. We anticipate that the deliverables will either be incorporated into our planning documents and/or implemented as new or augmented programming. Finally, Ramsey has had tremendous success over the years with grooming interns for full-time employment with the City and some of those are now part of our Management Team. While we have a sincere interest in the deliverables from the proposed projects, we are certainly cognizant of the potential that some students may demonstrate for possible future employment with the City.
7. Demonstration of Support. On September 13, 2016, the Ramsey City Council authorized staff to prepare and submit this Letter of Intent. While not in the form of a formal resolution, the DRAFT minutes from that discussion are attached. Also attached is a letter of support from our Community Development Director, who would also serve as the program coordinator if Ramsey is selected as the Community Partner.
8. Acknowledgment of Local Financial Contribution. The Ramsey City Council discussed the RCP program at their September 13, 2016 meeting. The required local financial contribution was a component of that discussion. While much of their discussion focused on the innovation this program opportunity presents, the cost was also discussed. Ultimately, the City Council authorized staff to prepare and submit this Letter of Intent acknowledging that, if selected as the Community Partner, the City would be responsible for a local financial contribution of an amount

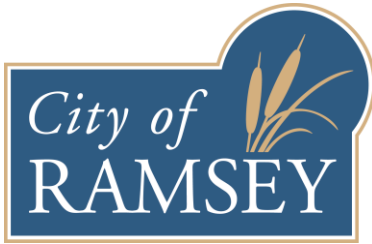
not to exceed \$80,000 (understanding that we are limiting our proposed projects to no more than twenty [20]).

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to submit this Letter of Intent. If you have any questions on this Letter of Intent, or if you would like additional information on anything, please feel free to contact me at 763-433-9817 or via email at canderson@cityoframsey.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris Anderson
City Planner



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Resilient Communities Project
Attn: RCP Director Mike Greco

Re: Letter of Support Accompanying the City of Ramsey's Letter of Intent

Mr. Grecco,

On behalf of the City of Ramsey, I am excited to offer this Letter of Support in regards to our Letter of Intent to apply for the Resilient Communities Program with the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. On September 13, our City Council directed us to submit our Letter of Intent.

We have a range of policy topics and programs that we feel will match the program goals with meaningful and exciting opportunities for these students. While we are excited to provide students an opportunity to work on real world projects that are already part of our planning documents, we are even more excited about the innovation that this program can provide that may not exist without our participation in this program.

Our Comprehensive Plan Update underway, along with our Council's Strategic Plan, is serving as a foundation for many policy topics like never before in our community, and the amount of public engagement is exciting. These plans are serving as a spring board for a number of broad professional experiences that the students would access. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, land use planning, transit-oriented development planning, economic development policies, long-range parks and recreation planning, and natural resource policy to name a few. Our community's vision and commitment to meaningful public engagement and innovation will set us apart from our peer communities.

Aside from the benefits to our organization, this program also hits one of my primary goals as a planning and community development professional; to provide excellent professional development opportunities to those just entering the profession. As a student, I either didn't take advantage of, or have access to a program of this high quality. Whether it through professional organizations such as the American Planning Association or my primary employer/organization, I continue to look for opportunities such as this to give back to the profession.

We look forward to future conversations and hope to be your next partner community.

Sincerely,

CITY OF RAMSEY

Tim Gladhill
Community Development Director

7.14: Discuss Opportunity for Assistance from University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to Complete Pending Land Use Studies and Strategic Plan Initiatives

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report and asked for input from the Council as to whether or not to submit a letter of intent to the Resilient Communities Project for consideration.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he appreciates the time staff has put into this but was not thrilled with the cost to hire interns and therefore would not support the action.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes the innovation and different perspectives that would be provided as well as the fact that the skills the students have align with the projects in Ramsey but was concerned with the cost. He asked if the value gained would exceed the cost. He asked where the commitment would become non-returnable, whether that would be with the letter of intent or later in the process.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that he does not have the complete picture of the value compared to the cost. He noted that there would not be a commitment from the City with the letter of intent, which would simply provide the City with additional information and an ability to determine if the City would qualify.

Councilmember Riley noted the large amount of staff time that would be needed that would potentially outweigh the value that would be gained. He noted that he would not support this request.

Councilmember Shryock stated that if you look at the number of projects on the list, the cost for the City to complete those projects on their own and the amount of staff time would be huge. She stated that this would provide a different perspective and she would be interested in applying to determine if the City could qualify.

Mayor Strommen asked the amount of time that would take to develop the letter of intent.

Community Development Director Gladhill estimated eight to ten hours to develop the letter of intent.

Mayor Strommen stated that it appears the City has little to lose by submitting the letter of intent to see where Ramsey stands in comparison to other communities and finding out more information.

Councilmember Williams stated that with the staff time that will be needed for the Comprehensive Plan, along with other items, she would support submission of the letter of intent.

Mayor Strommen confirmed a majority consensus of the Council to submit the letter of intent.