



Chapter 06: Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Plan (MRCCA)

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Introduction

Designated by Governor's Executive Order in the 1970s, the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is a land corridor along the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area governed by special land planning requirements and land development regulations. These regulations, which are implemented through local MRCCA plans and ordinances, protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and transportation resources of this section of the Mississippi River. The MRCCA comprises 72 miles of river and 54,000 acres of surrounding land in 30 local jurisdictions.

Ramsey adopted its first Critical Area Plan in 1980. Ramsey adopted its first Critical Area Ordinance in 1985, and has processed several amendments since that date.

Ramsey has ensured that plan preparation has included extensive public engagement. In 2013, Ramsey hosted a series of public workshops on the topic, and maintains a contact database. With the 2040 Comprehensive Plan update that included the updating of the MRCCA plan, the City has conducted the most extensive public engagement process to date for any of its Comprehensive Plan updates. Community engagement included both online and in person activities resulting in feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders, many of which had likely not previously participated in community planning efforts.

In 1988, the U.S. Congress established the Mississippi River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a unit of the National Park System. The MNRRA shares the same boundary as the MRCCA, and the park's Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), signed by the Governor and Secretary of the Interior, incorporates by reference the MRCCA program for land use management. Rather than institute a separate layer of federal regulations, the MNRRA largely relies on the MRCCA to manage land use within the park. This reliance establishes a unique partnership and framework for land use management amongst the local, state, and federal governments to protect the intrinsic resources of the Mississippi River Corridor.

Comprehensive Plan Strategic Imperatives

- A Balance of Rural Character and Urban Growth
- An Active Community (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space)
- A Connected Community (Transportation)
- A Positive Learning Environment

Initiatives for the Critical Area

- Protect and Restore Significant Ecological Resources
- Improve Water Quality
- Maintain and Improve Recreation Opportunities along and adjacent to the Mississippi River
- Improve Access to the Mississippi River
- Communicate the Benefits of Protection of Ecological Resources



Progress on MRCCA goals

The City of Ramsey has accomplished many goals described in previously approved plans including the Critical Area Plan.

1. Pearson Place Residential Development – a 12 unit large lot subdivision which is serviced by an extension of Bowers Drive was recently approved by the City. The City maintained large lot standards to improve pretreatment of runoff prior to flowing down to the Mississippi River.
2. Connexus Solar Garden – Connexus Energy recently developed a solar garden near the intersection of Riverdale Dr NW and Llama St NW. The solar garden had native pollinator plants established as ground cover providing additional water treatment benefits as well as increased habitat for area wildlife.
3. Riverwalk Village – a 14 unit single family residential development on the southeastern edge of the City will result in the removal of a former landfill and will have stormwater ponds constructed for additional pretreatment of runoff. The project received Tax Base Revitalization Account (TBRA) funds from the Metropolitan Council to assist with the clean up costs.

Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Districts

The City is not currently aware of any conflicts with future land use designations and the established purpose of the MRCCA districts.

River Neighborhood (CA-RN)

The river neighborhood district is characterized by primarily residential neighborhoods that are riparian or readily visible from the river or that abut riparian parkland. The district includes parks and open space, limited commercial development, marinas, and related land uses.

The river neighborhood district must be managed to maintain the character of the river corridor within the context of existing residential and related neighborhood development, and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas. Minimizing erosion and the flow of untreated storm water into the river and enhancing habitat and shoreline habitat vegetation are priorities in the district.

Rural Open Space (CA-ROS)

The rural and open space district is characterized by rural and low-density development patterns and land uses, and includes land that is riparian or visible from the river, as well as large, undeveloped tracts of high ecological and scenic value, floodplain, and undeveloped islands. Many primary conservation areas exist in the district.

The rural open space district must be managed to sustain and restore the rural and natural character of the corridor and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas.



Separated From River (CA-SR)

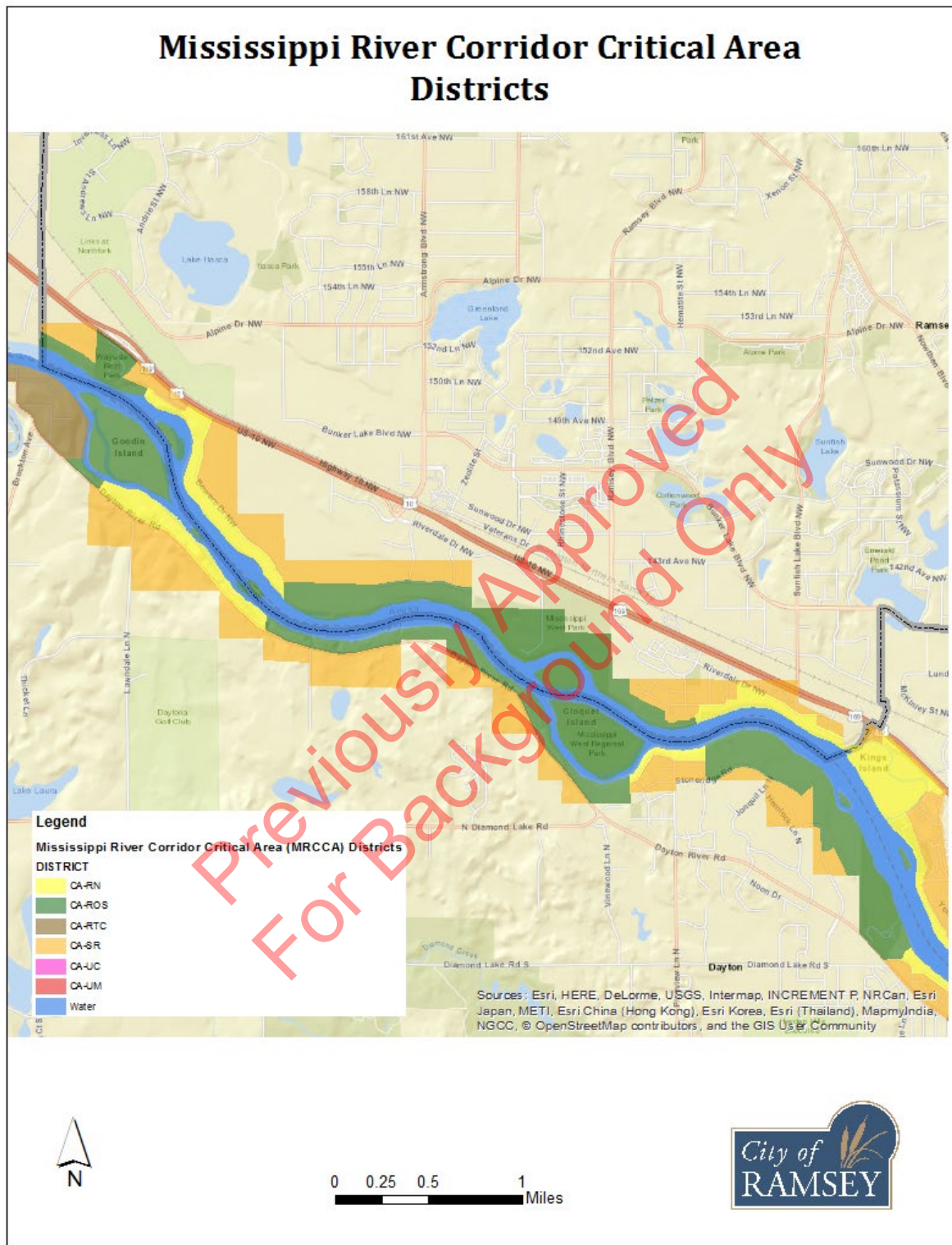
The separated from river district is characterized by its physical and visual distance from the Mississippi River. The district includes land separated from the river by distance, topography, development, or a transportation corridor. The land in this district is not readily visible from the Mississippi River.

The CA-SR district provides flexibility in managing development without negatively affecting the key resources and features of the river corridor. Minimizing negative impacts to primary conservation areas and minimizing erosion and flow of untreated storm water into the Mississippi River are priorities in the district.

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Figure 33: Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Districts



Primary Conservation Areas

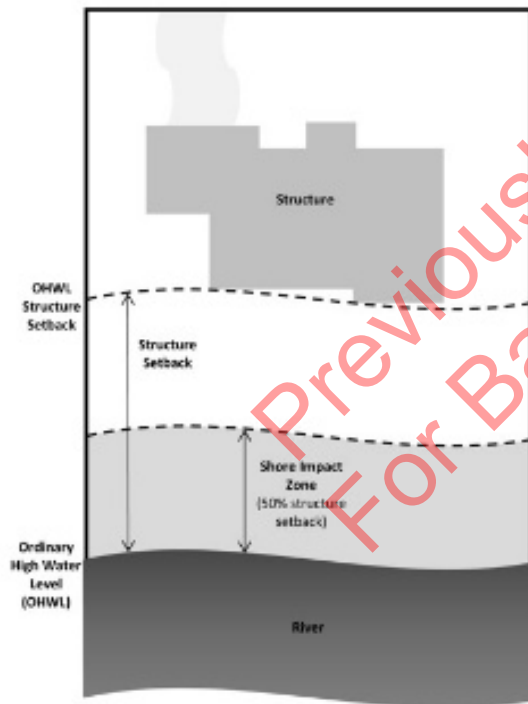
"Primary conservation areas" means key resources and features, including shore impact zones, bluff impact zones, floodplains, wetlands, gorges, areas of confluence with tributaries, natural drainage routes, unstable soils and bedrock, native plant communities, cultural and historic properties, significant existing vegetative stands, tree canopies, and other resources identified in local government plans.

General Overview and Description

The City recognizes bluffs, wetlands, floodplains, natural drainage routes, bluff impact zones, cultural and historic properties, unstable soils and bedrock, as well as shore impact zones and DNR identified native plant communities as primary conservation areas (PCAs) within the MRCCA boundary in the City. These areas are shown on Figures 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39. The City will strive to protect these areas from public and private development and land use activities.

Shore Impact Zones

"Shore impact zone" means land located between the ordinary high water level of public waters and a line parallel to it at a setback of 50 percent of the required structure setback or, for areas in agricultural use, 50 feet landward of the ordinary high water level.



Floodplains and Wetlands

"Floodplain" means the areas adjoining a watercourse which has been or hereafter may be covered by the regional flood.

Confluence with Key Tributaries

There are no confluences with key tributaries within Ramsey.

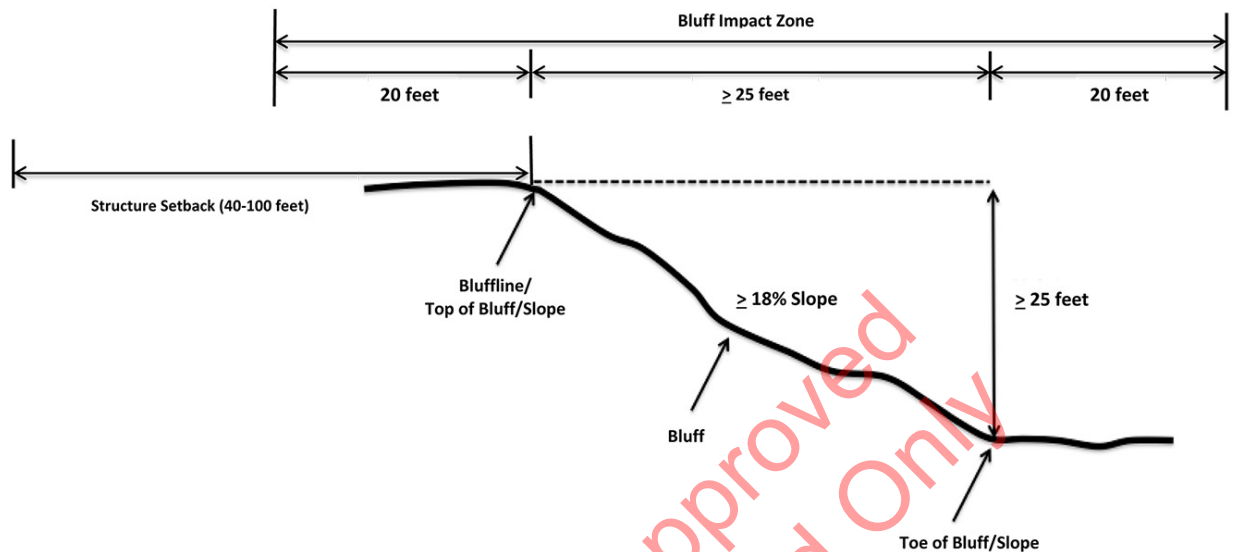


Natural Drainage Areas

The Critical Area Plan includes mapping of natural drainage areas that impact the Mississippi River.

Bluff Impact Zone

"Bluff impact zone" means the bluff and land within 20 feet of the bluff.



Native Plant Communities and Significant Existing Vegetative Stands

"Native plant community" means a plant community that has been identified as part of the Minnesota biological survey or biological survey issued or adopted by a local, state, or federal agency. Significant existing vegetative stands refers to vegetation considered 'significant'. The plant communities are significant based on their state of being largely intact and connected and contain a sufficient representation of the original native plant community. This vegetation provides high ecological value in addition to the water quality and scenic values of "natural vegetation".

Cultural & Historic Properties

"Historic property" means an archaeological site, standing structure, site, district, or other property that is:

- Listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places or locally designated as a historic site under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 471;
- Determined to meet the criteria for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places; or
- An unplatted cemetery that falls under the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 307, in consultation with the Office of the State Archeologist.

One area of cultural and historic significance is located in the corridor. It does not meet the definition above. The location of the first settlement in Ramsey is located within the corridor, originally known as Itasca Village. There are no remaining structures or assets from this original settlement.



Gorges

There are no gorges located in Ramsey.

Unstable Soils and Bedrock

There are significant areas of shoreline erosion located along Ramsey's Mississippi River Shoreline. This erosion is documented through a 2016 Anoka Conservation District Survey. The results of said survey are incorporated into this document by reference. Ramsey will be utilizing this information for education, outreach, and funding purposes to restore priority areas from further erosion.

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Figure 34: Shore Impact Zone Map



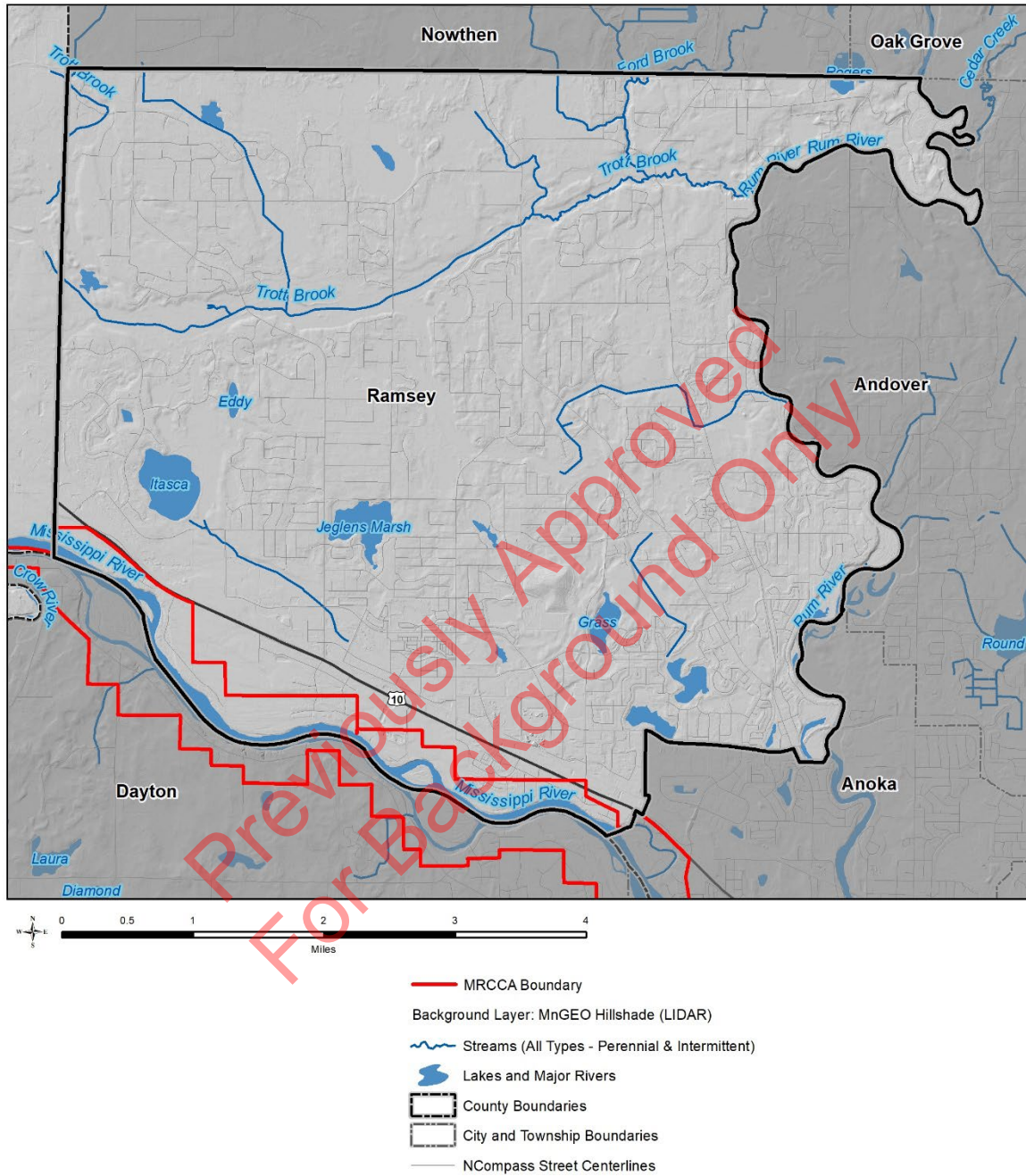
Figure 35: Floodplains and Wetland

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Figure 36: Natural Drainage Areas

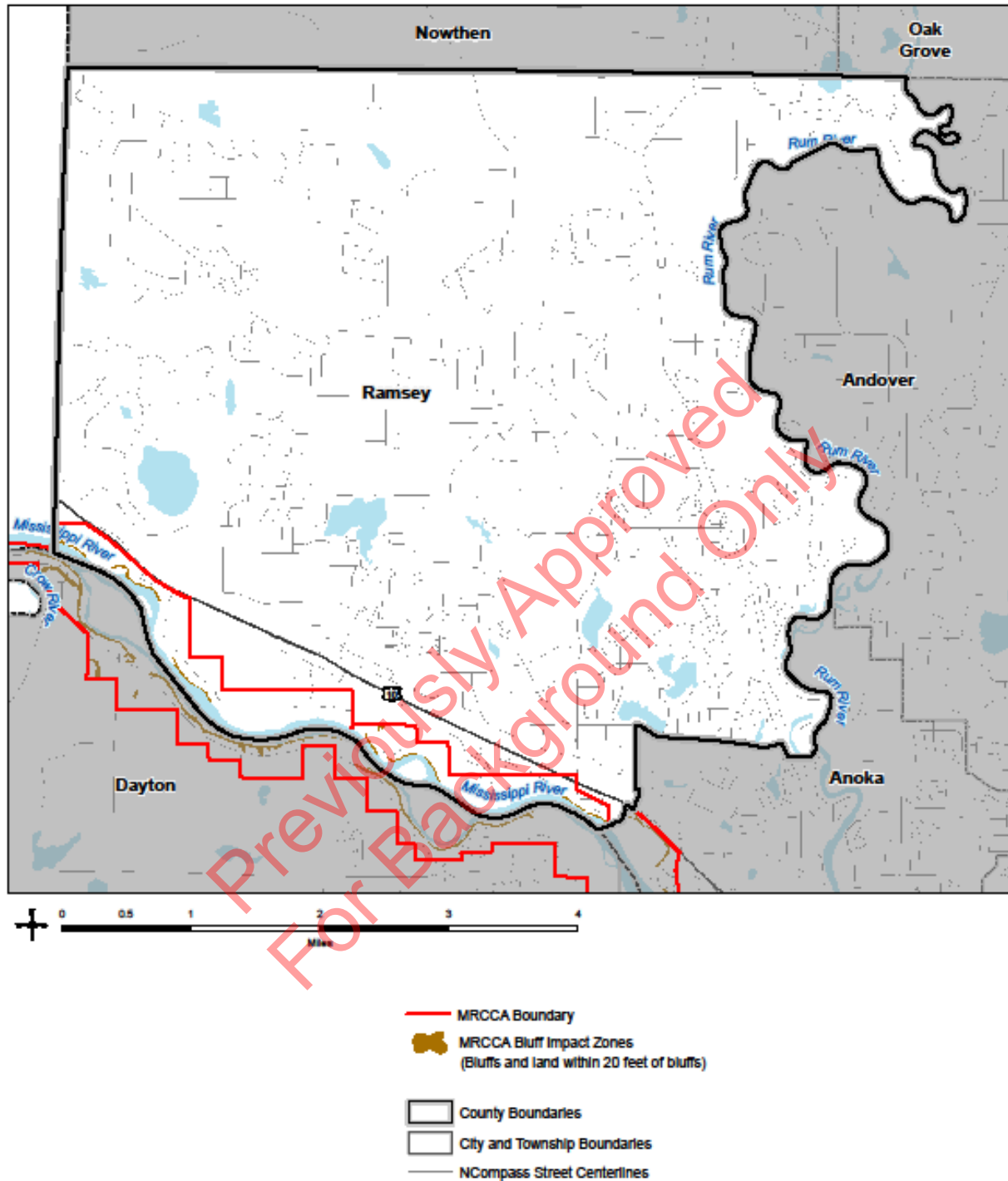
**Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area - Major Natural Drainage Routes
City of Ramsey, Anoka County**



The Mississippi River serves as the only natural drainage route within the MRCCA within the City's municipal boundary.



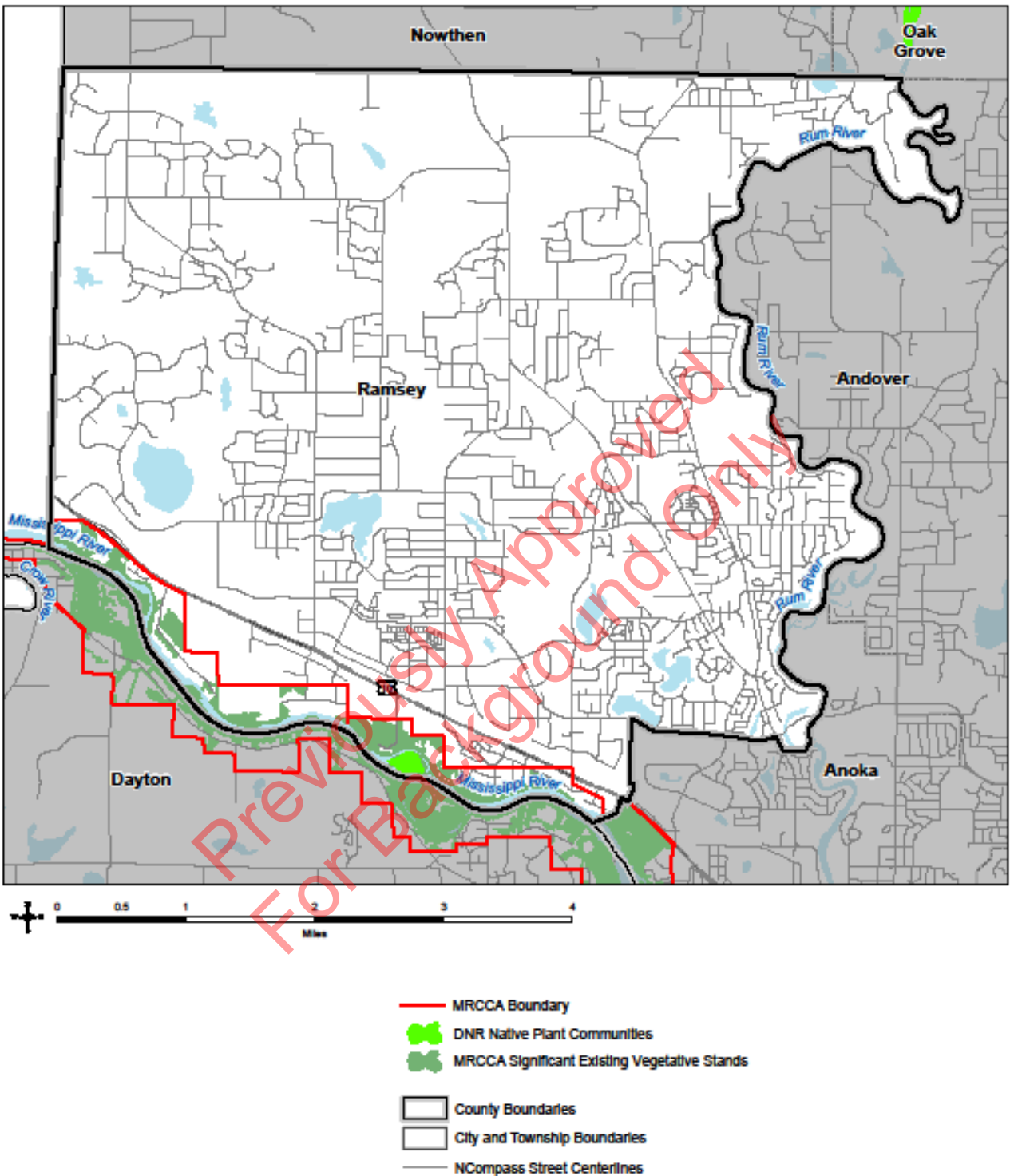
Figure 37: Bluffs and Bluff Impact Zones



Bluffs are located on both the City of Ramsey as well as City of Dayton sides of the river. These bluffs are visible from the adjacent communities and provide valuable scenic views due to the bluffs themselves as well as the vegetation which exists along the bluffs. These views are of scenic value to those on land as well as river users.



Figure 38: Native Plant Communities & Significant Existing Vegetative Stands



Public River Corridor Views

General Overview

The City of Ramsey is fortunate to have the Mississippi West Regional Park from which residents and visitors can view the Mississippi River. The location of this park is shown on Map 39. A key component of the Critical Area Plan is to when possible to improve access to public river corridor views and protect the views of bluffs from the river.

Views Toward River from Public Places (PRCV)

Two views were identified by Staff as being key public river corridor views (PRCVs) which are showing below as well as the location of the PRCV mapped with the direction of the view included.



PRCV View 1

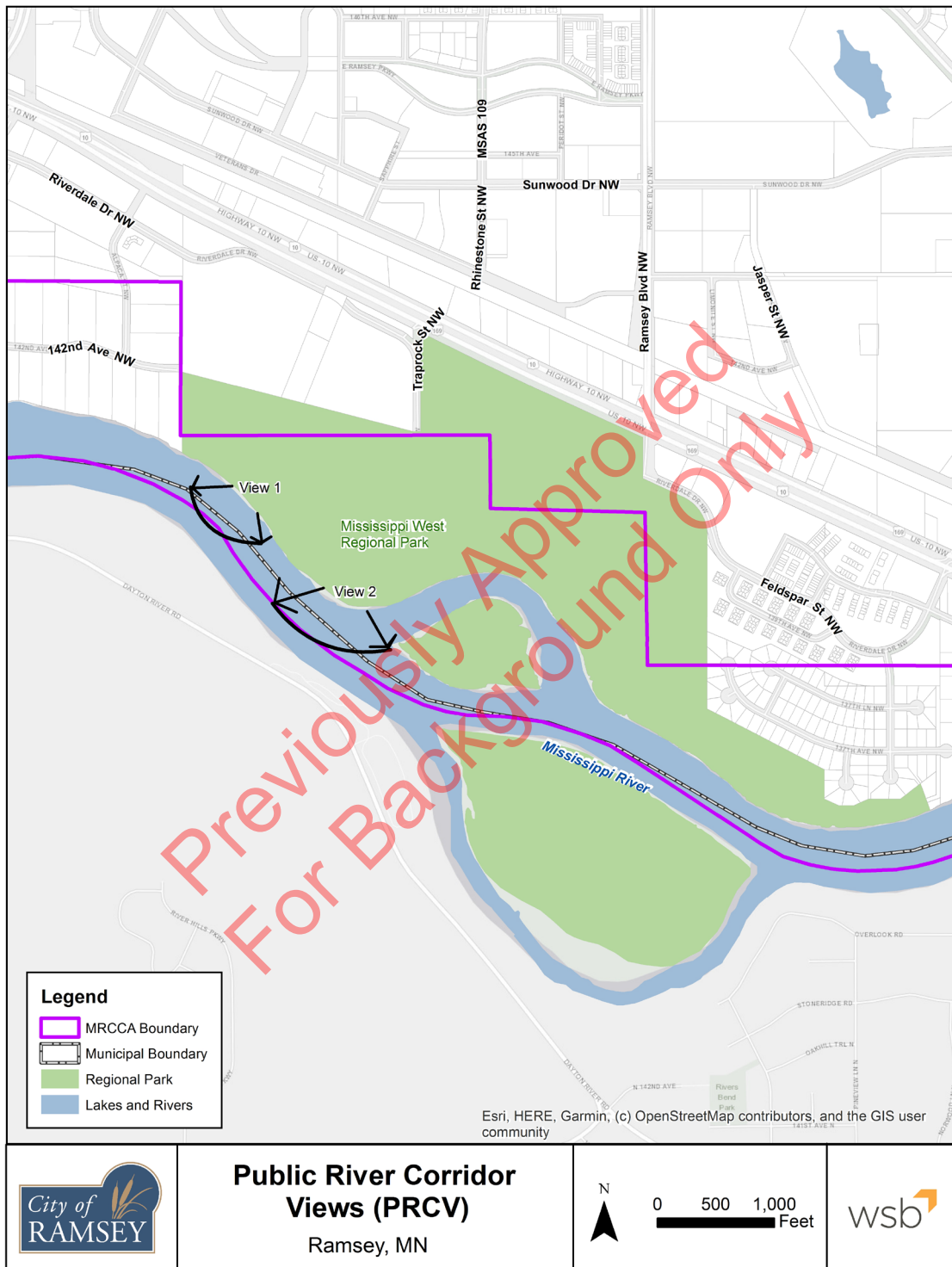


PRCV View 2

View 1 and 2 are deemed important PRCV's due to their direct pedestrian (view 1) and vehicular (view 2) access to the waterfront as well as existing dense vegetation at both sites. Loss of vegetation at either site may result in erosion that could reduce water quality in the area and thus degrade the overall aesthetic of the area.



Figure 39: Public River Corridor View Location



Priorities for Restoration

Ramsey's priority for restoration within the Corridor is protecting the Corridor from significant erosion as identified by the 2017 Anoka Conservation District Mississippi River Shoreline Inventory for Ramsey.

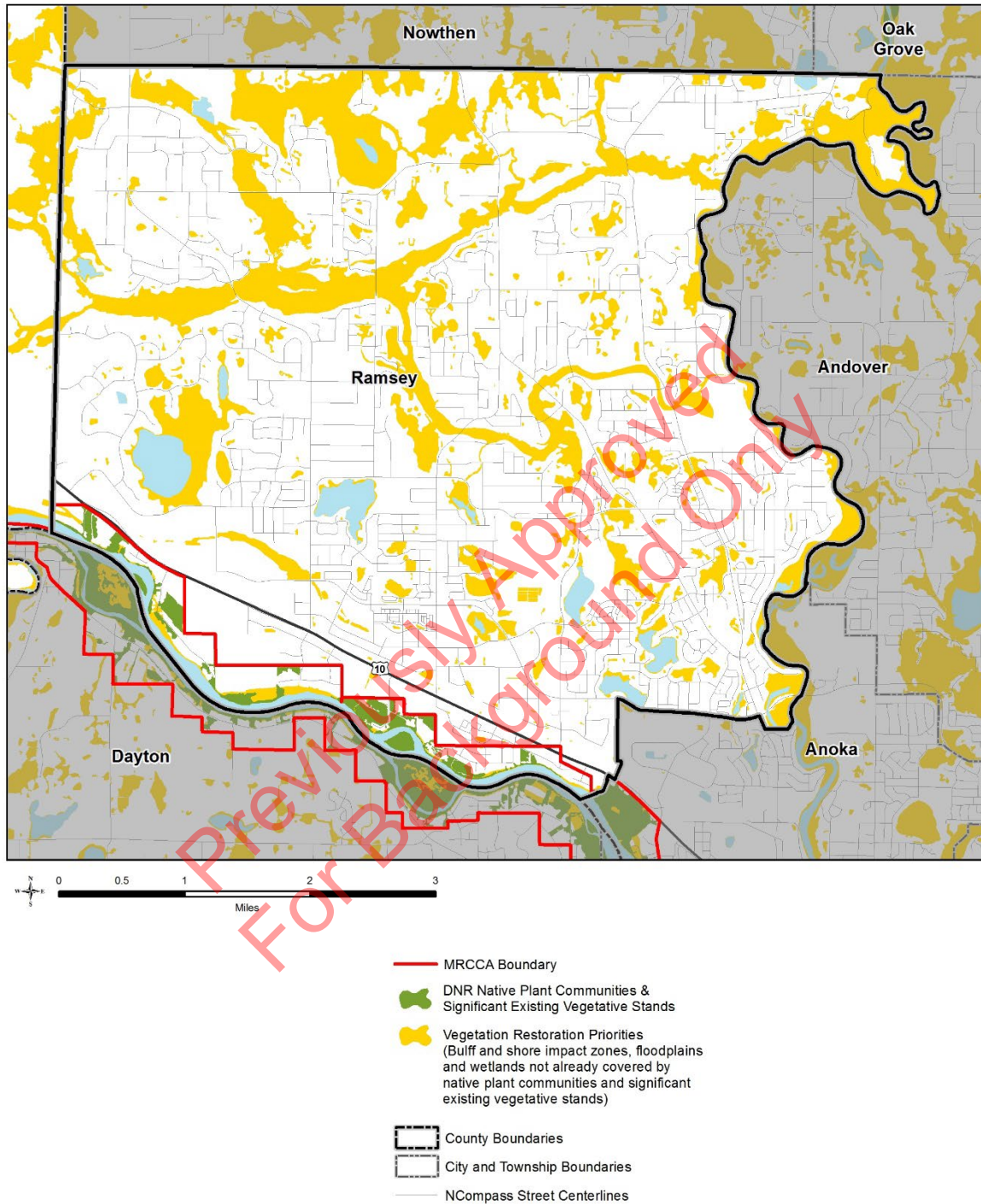
The City will work to make available the location of natural vegetation restoration priorities and the relevant ordinance requirements that apply to their property for project planning and permitting.

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Figure 40: Vegetation Restoration Priorities

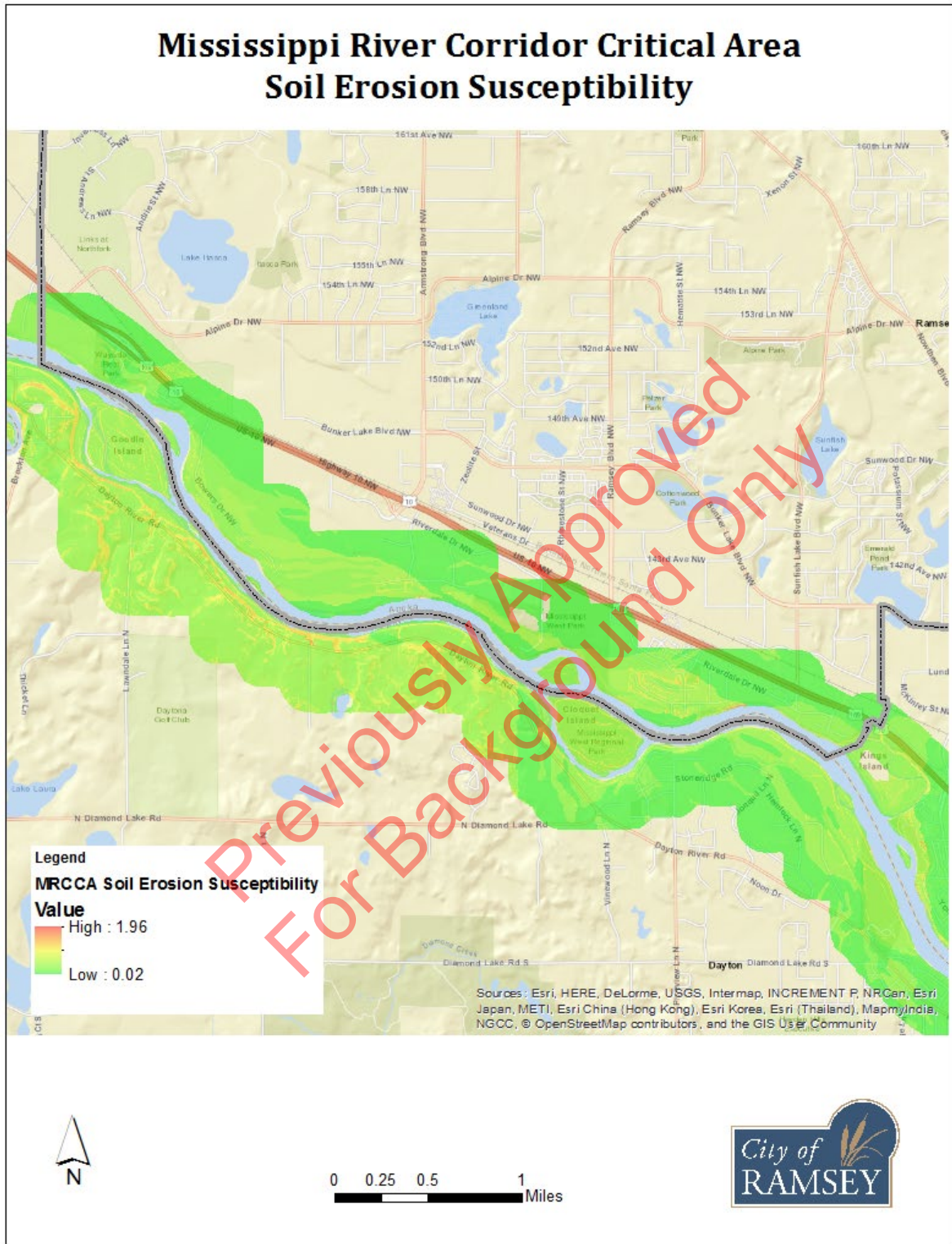
**Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area - Vegetation Restoration Priorities
City of Ramsey, Anoka County**



Vegetation restoration priorities are shore and bluff impact zones, floodplains and wetland that do not have native or natural vegetation cover and are susceptible to erosion or degradation because they are not stabilized with high quality vegetation. Restoration priorities are composed of both vegetation establishment as well as erosion and bank stabilization.



Figure 41: Soil Erosion Susceptibility



Those areas with higher erosion susceptibility are of increased importance for vegetation restoration and bank and slope stabilization as the likelihood of damage is higher due to the increase susceptibility of soil erosion in these areas.



Surface Water Uses

Surface water Uses can have negative impacts on riverbank erosion. The City is aware that recreational boat uses have known impacts on the Coon Rapids Dam Pool. The City does not currently regulate any surface water use under Chapter 86B (MR 6110.3000 – 6110.3800).

Open Space & Recreational Facilities

Existing Recreation Facilities

The Mississippi River Trail, Mississippi West Regional Park, and Riverdale Park are currently located within the Corridor.

Future Recreation Facilities

The future Mississippi West Regional Park is located within the Corridor. In addition, the future alignment of Central Anoka County Regional Trail connects to the Corridor. A future component of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail is a grade-separated pedestrian crossing over the BNSF/Northstar Commuter Rail Corridor and U.S. Highway 10, known as the Mississippi Skyway.

Water-Oriented Land Uses

Water oriented land uses are land uses on land riparian to the river that need to be there because they are water-oriented, such as a marina or restaurant with views of the river. As such, a boat launch classifies as a water-oriented land use.

Water-Oriented Use

Currently there is a boat launch at the site of the planned Mississippi River West Regional Park. This is an important community asset for the purposes of public river access. The Mississippi West Regional Park will be a primary access to encourage interaction with the Mississippi River. There is also a future local park planned west of Mississippi West Regional Park. The location of this water-oriented use is identified as “view 2” on the Public River Corridor View figure.

Transportation & Public Utilities

An existing Connexus Energy Electric Transmission Line current crosses the Mississippi River connecting Ramsey and Dayton. Ramsey continues to plan for a future River Crossing between Ramsey and Dayton which is shown in Figure 23 in the Transportation chapter.

Figure 42: Mississippi River Bridge/Crossing





There are currently no electric power generating facilities installed within the MRCCA boundary. There is however a solar garden owned and operated by Connexus Energy just outside of the boundary. The City and will work with Connexus Energy to minimize the visual impact future transmission lines to the system would have on PCAs and PRCVs in the area. Solar power generating facilities are allowed as an accessory use in all city zoning districts. Ground mounted solar energy systems are required to comply with all building setbacks in the applicable zoning district. The height of ground mounted solar energy systems at maximum designed tilt shall not exceed the distance from the nearest property boundary or the maximum allowable building height for the applicable zoning district, whichever is more restrictive. Building mounted solar energy systems shall comply with the maximum allowable building height for the applicable zoning district. The limitations on height to be in conformance with height of other structures in the zoning district will limit the amount of impact a solar energy system could have on area PRCV's.

MRCCA Policies

Districts/Land Use

Policy 1: The City will implement the policies of the Critical Area by adopting the new MRCCA districts within our Zoning Code and amend the City's Zoning Map accordingly.

Policy 2: The City will protect native and existing vegetation during the development process and require restoration if any is removed by development. Priorities for restoration shall include stabilization of erodible soils, riparian buffers and bluffs or steep slopes visible from the river.

Policy 3: Identify and encourage connection of CA-SR district land to existing and planned parks and trails for Local Governing Units (LGUs) with developable land in CA-SR districts.



Policy 4: Encourage that land dedication requirements be used to acquire land suitable for public river access.

Policy 5: Guide land use and development consistent with management purpose of each district.

Policy 6: Amending existing or adopting new MRCCA ordinance overlay district compliant with the goals of the MRCCA Plan and Minnesota Rules, part 6106.0070, Subp. 5 – Content of Ordinances

Primary Conservation Areas

Policy 1: The City will encourage conservation subdivision design to protect Primary Conservation Areas.

Policy 2: Conservation Subdivision Design will be utilized to allow the clustering of lots in exchange for permanent protection of Primary Conservation Areas.

Policy 3: The City will continue its proactive approach to subdivision design by encouraging setbacks and adequate lot depth to preserve Primary Conservation Areas.

Policy 4: The City will support mitigation of impacts to PCAs through subdivisions/PUDs, variances, CUPs, and other permits.

Policy 5: The City will where possible and feasible restore previously removed native plant communities and natural vegetation in riparian areas a high priority during development.

Policy 6: The City will seek to establish permanent protection of PCAs through either public acquisition, conservation easement, or deed restrictions.

Policy 7: The City will seek to minimize impacts to PCAs from solar and wind generation facilities, public transportation facilities and public utilities.

Policy 8: The City will protect Primary Conservation Areas as shown and described within this MRCCA plan.

Public River Corridor Views

Policy 1: The City will strive to work with applicable partners, especially Anoka County Parks, to improve access to Public River Corridor Views.

Policy 2: When feasible, the City will protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private development activities.

Policy 3: The City will protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private vegetation management activities.

Policy 4: The City will protect PRCVs located within the community and identified by other communities adjacent or across the river.

Policy 5: The City will seek to minimize impacts on PRCVs from solar and wind generation facilities, public transportation facilities and public utilities.

Restoration Priorities

Policy 1: The City will continue to implement pilot demonstration projects and incentives to encourage restoration of priority areas.



Policy 2: The City will seek opportunities to restore vegetation to protect and enhance PRCVs identified in this plan.

Policy 3: The City will seek opportunities to restore vegetation in restoration priority areas identified in this plan through the CUP, variance, vegetation permit and subdivision/PUD processes.

Policy 4: The City will work to sustain and enhance ecological functions (habitat value) during vegetation restorations.

Policy 5: The City will require that proposed development sites be evaluated for erosion prevention and bank and slope stabilization issues and require restoration as part of the development process.

Surface Water Uses

Policy 1: The City will continue to support Anoka County's operation of a Boat Launch along Traprock Street.

Policy 2: The City recognizes the Mississippi River as a "working river" that is important to the economy of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the Midwest.

Policy 3: The City does not currently regulate surface water use under Minn. Statute, Chapter 86B and does not intend to assume that responsibility.

Policy 4: Where applicable, the City will seek to balance commercial and recreational surface water uses.

Water Oriented Uses

Policy 1: The City will work to minimize potential conflicts of water-oriented uses with other land uses.

Policy 2: The City acknowledges the existing water oriented uses described in this MRCCA plan and will protect those uses within the MRCCA boundary.

Open Space & Recreation Facilities

Ramsey will continue to support planning and implementation for Mississippi West. Ramsey will continue to own and maintain Riverdale Park. Ramsey will continue to plan for a new municipal park along the Mississippi River between the Alpaca Estates and Bowers neighborhoods.

Transportation & Public Utilities

Ramsey will continue to support future planning for the future Mississippi River Crossing to the City of Dayton in Hennepin County.

Ramsey will continue to support Connexus Energy's electric transmission line across the Mississippi River to the City of Dayton.

Natural Resources Planning

Ramsey undertook two (2) comprehensive inventories in the mid-2000s; a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) and a Wetland Inventory. Both of these data sets are referenced any time a new development is proposed. These data sets help inform Ramsey if there are significant and/or high value natural resources within a development site that may warrant greater protections. While both provide valuable insight, Ramsey acknowledges that both require periodic updates to ensure that the data is accurate and relevant. There has been no specific timeframe identified for updates



to either, but for this data to remain useful, they should be revisited no less than every ten (10) to fifteen (15) years. This may be useful as Ramsey continues to consider partnering with other agencies, especially as it relates to shoreline stabilization efforts.

City Code Amendments

In order to properly administer this amended plan, the City will need to make certain amendments to City Code. These amendments include but are not necessarily limited to the following.

- Establish General Land Use Review Procedures.
- Develop administrative procedures for shoreline stabilization.
- Establish a vegetation permitting process that includes permit review procedures to ensure consideration of restoration priorities identified in this plan in permit issuance, as well as standard conditions requiring vegetation restoration for those priority areas.
- Establish process for evaluating priorities for natural vegetation restoration, erosion prevention and bank and slope stabilization, or other restoration priorities identified in this plan in CUP, variances and subdivision/PUD processes.
- Develop visual analysis approach for CUPs for additional height in the RTC and UM districts (if applicable), as well as for proposed PUDs and variances.
- Develop a system for reviewing, tracking, and monitoring open space required as part of the subdivision process.

Previously Approved
For Background Only



Critical Area Implementation Plan

Strategy: Protect and Restore Significant Ecological Resources

- Update Zoning Code to reflect Amended Plan
- Establish a plan to reduce erosion, protect canopy coverage, protect significant vegetative areas, and encourage pollinator-friendly landscapes
- Ensure that information on the location of PRCVs is readily available to property owners to understand how PRCV-relevant ordinance requirements, such as vegetation management and land alteration permits, apply to their property for project planning and permitting.
- Actively communicate with other communities to protect views they have identified in your community that are valuable, and vice versa
- Establish procedures for processing applications with potential impacts to PRCVs including
 - Identifying the information that must be submitted and how it will be evaluated
 - Determining appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs

Strategy: Improve Water Quality

- Establish a plan to reduce the amount of sediment and phosphorus entering the river.

Strategy: Maintain and Improve Recreation Opportunities along and adjacent to the Mississippi River

- Prioritize areas for acquisition to increase opportunities to access the river
- Coordinate jurisdictional planning efforts

Strategy: Improve Access to the Mississippi River

- Encourage creation, connection, and maintenance of open space, recreational facilities, including public access to the river
- Create and maintain access facilities for public access
- Complete the Central Anoka County Regional Trail Connection
- Update the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to reflect the amended Plan
- Update Surface Water Use Regulations
- Provide Guidance to Private Property Owners for Private Accesses

Strategy: Communicate the Benefits of Protection of Ecological Resources

- Create Informational Packets that provide the location of PCAs and information for property owners to understand how PCA-relevant ordinance requirements, such as vegetation management and land alternation permits apply to their property for project planning and permitting
- Establish procedures and criteria for processing applications with potential impacts to PCA's including:
 - Identify what information must be submitted for projects within the MRCCA boundary and the way in which it will be evaluated
 - Determine appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs
 - Establish evaluation criteria for protecting PCAs when a development site contains multiple types of PCAs and the total area of PCAs exceed the required set aside percentages



- Develop administrative procedures for integrating DNR and local permitting of riprap, walls and other hard armoring.
- Develop a Communications Plan
- Create a new Critical Area Webpage
- Create a Signage Package for Public Spaces
- Provide information on the location of natural vegetation restoration priorities to property owners to help them understand how relevant ordinance requirements apply to their property for project planning and permitting.

Strategy: Prioritize Areas of Preservation

- Focus efforts on stabilizing erosion at Mississippi West Regional Park
- Work collaboratively with owners of undeveloped land with shoreline to partner of preservation and flexibility in subdivision design

Previously Approved
For Background Only

