

Integrating Resources into Our Future



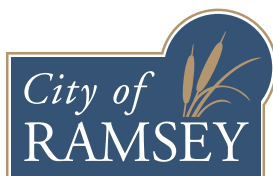
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Integrating Resources into Our Future - City of Ramsey RCP



(Image Source: City of Ramsey Facebook Page, 2015)

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PA 5253: Designing Planning and Participation Processes

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Abstract

The City of Ramsey is currently facing strong growth pressures, placing stress on the city's natural resources and its open spaces. In response, the City of Ramsey, through its comprehensive plan update, is looking for innovative strategies that create a platform for discussion and engagement on the value of natural resources as they pertain to sustainable development. Through the Resilient Communities Project (RCP), our group in the Humphrey School class, PA 5253: Designing Planning and Participation Processes, worked with the City to develop communications strategies for both Ramsey residents and developers, as well as to produce a strategy for ongoing community engagement. We used a series of case studies, literature reviews, and informational interviews with subject matter experts to identify a series of strategic actions for the Ramsey Communications plan. The proposed strategic actions include; to develop and enhance the scope of the Environmental Policy Board, utilize strategic education tools, and launch a frequently asked questions page geared towards developers on the City's website.

Executive Summary

The City of Ramsey, a vibrant municipality located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Rum Rivers in southern Anoka County, has nearly 3,710 acres of natural areas (City of Ramsey, 2007). These areas represent a variety of distinct natural ecosystem types including forest, woodland, shrubland, herbaceous wetlands, and grasslands, as well as areas of open water (lakes and ponds). The city's scenic environment, its proximity to the urban centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and its location along Highway 10 are all contributing factors to strong growth pressures within Ramsey. Currently, over 51% of the land cover within the city is impervious surface and associated areas (City of Ramsey, 2007). This includes residential, commercial, and industrial parcels with impervious cover ranging from 4% to 100%. Growing interest in development could increase the proportion of artificial surface areas in the city. In response to the growing interest in development, Ramsey is looking for innovative strategies to create a platform for discussion and engaging with the community on the value of natural resources as they pertain to sustainable development during the critical time frame of the comprehensive plan update.

The City of Ramsey currently supports an Environmental Policy Board (EPB). The EPB reviews, considers, and recommends policies, plans or projects that could preserve or infringe on the natural environment in the city. Other city-led initiatives include recycling day events, lake management and stormwater plans. These types of events, along with the EPB meetings, act as platforms for natural resource information sessions. However, there are limitations to these types of engagement. The EPB's public meetings, while open to the public to attend, have had historically low attendance rates. Fortunately opportunities exist to expand public outreach at community events, to engage community stakeholders, and to established institutions/groups. Taking advantage of these opportunities allows residents to be more involved in making decisions around the future of their community and its resources.

Strategic Action A: Expand the Scope of the Environmental Policy Board

For the first strategic action, we turned to the City of Eden Prairie for a case study on how natural resource communications can be approached through different models of city boards and commissions. Eden Prairie has a Conservation Commission that looks at natural resources at a high-level of policy, while the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Commission look at the lower-level, more related to technical review, of natural resources. This lower-level policy Commission is responsible for reviewing development plans and city ordinances that address topics within their scope. We recommend that Ramsey further examine the roles and responsibilities of Eden Prairie's commissions to see if there are issue areas or approaches that may resonate with Ramsey residents. This includes the possible creation of a liaison between the Parks Board and the Environmental Policy Board to relay information between groups on major initiatives and projects. Further, we recommend that Ramsey consider working with local high school students by appointing them to an advisory role to the existing EPB. In addition to this younger perspective, the EPB could also bring in speakers from outside of the community to speak on topics in which existing board members may have interest.

Strategic Action B: Increase Learning and Engagement With the Environment Through Key Terms, Signage, and Innovative Communication

Education in effective interaction between the community and developers, with regard to natural resources in Ramsey, is important in preserving the character of the community. An interactive and effective form of education can help create a common understanding of the impact that both developers and the community can have on the natural resources around them. We recommend that strategic educational engagement take a few different forms, in order for it to be easily received by all groups.

1. Key Terms Page

First, we want to direct residents and developers to a newly created key terms page on the city website for definitions and examples of important natural resources in the city. Ramsey has a unique set of natural resources and due to the vast nature of the phrase, it is crucial that this be broken down in an understandable way.

2. Creative Signage

Another educational tool to implement is creative signage placed near recreational locations around the community in order to reach wide audiences. This tool will help bring learning to places in which the community already frequents.

3. Interactive Programming

We also propose more interactive city programming, such as a traveling chalkboard and visual documentation projects, to facilitate engagement with the public at on-going/existing public events in Ramsey. These projects can both give and gather information from the residents surrounding natural resources.

Strategic Action C: Create Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet for Developers

The third strategic action we propose is the implementation of a frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource for developers on the city's website. This web page will act as a signal that the City is both prepared to welcome development proposals, and prepared to communicate effectively with developers and residents. The FAQ could easily incorporate links to city regulations and other resources, like the expanded scope of the EPB or various community groups (eg. youth athletic associations, schools, faith based organizations, and civic groups).

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Rich in natural resources: Opportunities to communicate the value of natural resources to residents

The City of Ramsey is experiencing strong growth pressure due to its scenic environment, proximity to the Twin Cities, and location along Highway 10. The City recognizes this pressure and the stress it places on its natural resources and open space. In response, Ramsey is moving proactively to develop planning policies that will balance growth with natural resource protection. Within Ramsey, there is a strong interest on the part of citizens to maintain a high quality of life. (City of Ramsey, 2007).

The preservation of natural communities and open spaces is often an important component of this goal. Such areas provide opportunities for active and passive recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas and buffers between developed areas, and can serve as landmarks or distinguishing features for the local community. It has also been shown that property values increase near natural open spaces (Geoghegan, 2002), and that effective planning for natural resources can benefit all parties (Groot, 2006).

Preserving natural resources can come into conflict with private property rights, especially in rural areas like Ramsey. When property values increase, landowners have a significant amount of money tied up in their property and not in physical cash. This can cause them to be very protective of their property. Keeping natural resources around private property can help to build its value. It is important to communicate this connection so landowners see the importance in protecting natural resources in the city. With growing developmental pressures, these landowners might feel forced to sell their land to developers without understanding the value of the adjacent resources to their property and to the city overall. Education around the importance of natural resources is how we can overcome this conflict with property owners. It can help the community preserve their rural character, maintain opportunities for recreation, and have a sustainable community. Creative engagement strategies will help landowners become engaged with their city and find new ways to protect the environment.

As Ramsey updates its comprehensive plan, it is crucial to begin looking for innovative strategies to best communicate the value of natural resources as they pertain to sustainable development.

RCP partners with Designing Planning & Participation Processes Course: Developing innovative communications strategies

PA 5253: Designing Planning and Participation Processes, a course at the University of Minnesota taught by Professor Dan Milz in the Fall of 2017 focuses on the design, implementation and evaluation of participatory planning processes. On a high level this course explores theories and designs of participatory planning to investigate challenges with design issues, community engagement, and democratic deliberation. In partnership with project lead Chris Anderson, Ramsey City Planner, our group developed innovative communications strategies surrounding natural resources as part our course and Ramsey's Partnership with RCP.

Natural Resources Communication Challenge with City, Residents, and Developers

Problem: Ramsey's rural character is highly valued as documented by community-wide survey results. This rural character is closely tied with the natural resource base that is present in the city. However, there is a lack of

effective communication with residents on how to go about preserving the natural resource base and the value that comes with this preservation. Specifically, communication is needed to help articulate threats to environmental resources. There is also a lack of effective communication with developers about the loss of natural areas/open space and concerns that residents may have on this issue. Finally, there is a lack of ongoing public engagement opportunities for the residents to express their concerns about natural resources.

Objectives: Ramsey Communications Plan

1. Develop communications strategies for Ramsey
 - a. For residents: public education
 - b. For developers: guidebook and reference materials
 - c. Translating community feedback into an action plan
2. Develop a solution for ongoing community engagement



Image courtesy of the Resilient Communities Project

Methods - Identifying Natural Resource Communication Priorities

We used a series of case studies, in class discussions, a brief literature review, and informational interviews with subject matter experts to identify a series of recommendations for the Ramsey Communications Plan.

Suggested Priorities

As a group we identified and reviewed 14 unique articles, case studies, videos, organizational communications strategies etc., surrounding natural resources. We performed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of each of these strategies. Key themes emerged from the SWOT analysis, as well as readings throughout the semester in PA 5253, and are highlighted below. We used these themes to inform our final recommendations.

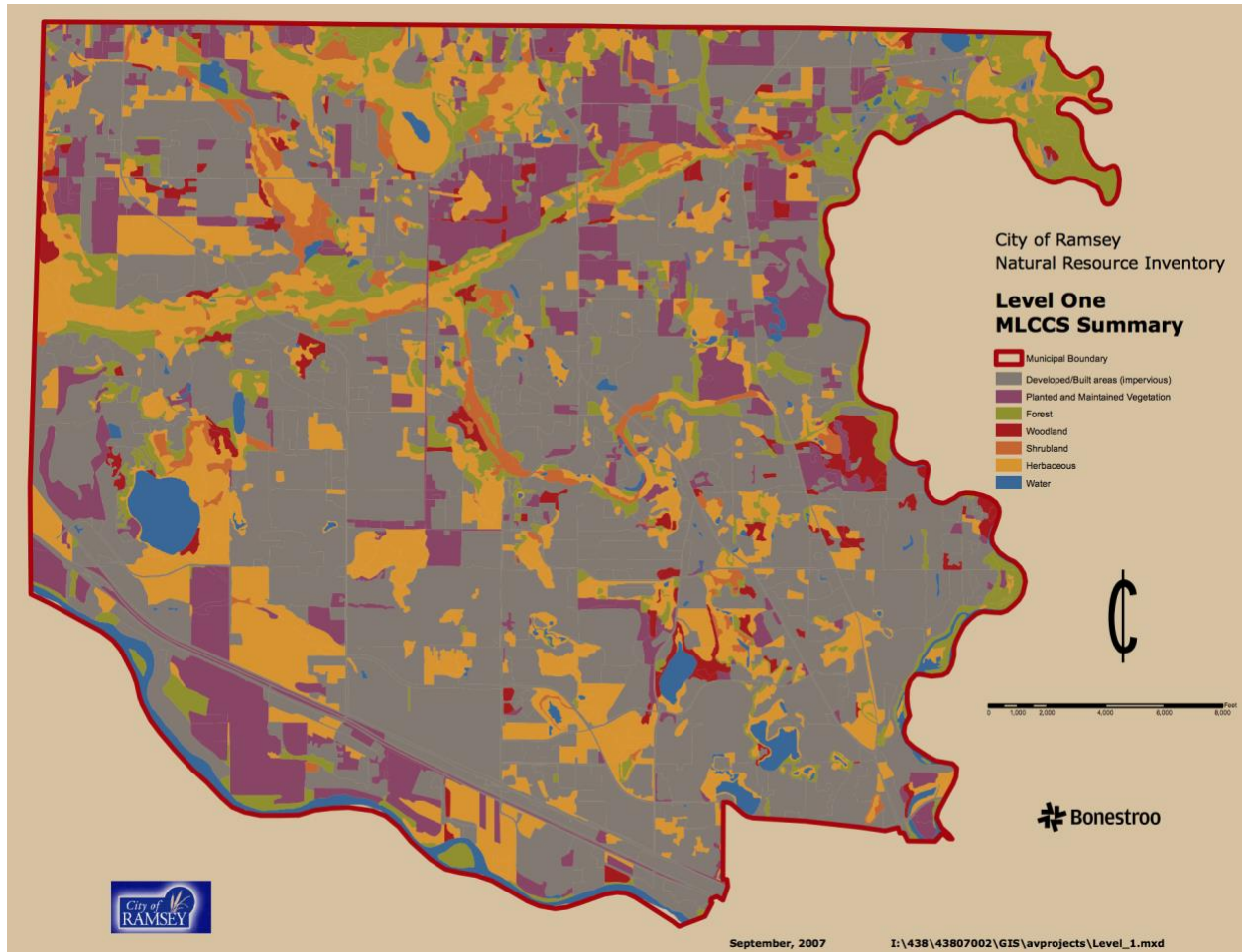
Figure 1. Suggested Communications Priorities

Natural Resources Communications Issue	Suggested Priorities
<p>Natural Resources may be an alienating topic because it contains inherently complicated subject matter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get everyone on the same page by identifying key terms early on in the process ● Embrace various learning styles by incorporating visual materials for communication
<p>Natural Resources and their management strategies impact a broad range of residents, businesses, organizations, as well as both current and future community members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify Key Stakeholders to understand the specific community members and their unique communication needs ● Go to them. Target key stakeholders where they already gather.
<p>Natural resources communications strategies that lack cohesive messaging are ineffective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain cohesive messaging throughout all platforms of communication to increase impact.
<p>Residents may feel they lack ownership of and feel distanced from the broad management of natural resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through innovative communications empower citizens by showing them how their input is valued and used by planning staff ● Be present and available for community members, prioritize transparency
<p>Short-term Land Use Management decisions may hinder long range health of natural resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner long range vision with ad hoc decision making.
<p>The preservation of natural resources in rural areas may cause tension with private property rights, and land owners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be transparent with the community, be prepared to address concerns of natural resource beneficiaries and stakeholders with clarity. Take a proactive voice in educating the public through creative communication.
<p>Preserving natural resources can conflict with the desired outcomes for development projects. Financial losses or increased red tape can be dissuasive to developers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilize community and developer communications strategies with specific framing that increases the intrinsic value of natural resources within the community, creating buy-in from developers, current community members, and future residents

Background

Inventory Report documents Ramsey's Diverse Natural Resources

To plan effectively for natural resources, the City conducted a study on the status of the existing natural resources in Ramsey. Based on information collected through the Natural Resource Inventory Report, nearly 3,710 acres of natural areas were documented as representing a variety of distinct natural community types including forest, woodland, shrubland, herbaceous wetlands, and grasslands, as well as areas of open water (lakes and ponds). The results from the study concluded that 51% of the land cover in the City of Ramsey is artificial surface and associated areas (this includes residential, commercial, and industrial areas with impervious cover ranging from 4% to 100%). Planted cover, which includes cropland, pastures, gardens, and tree plantations, as well as areas of mowed grass, accounted for 13% of land cover. Herbaceous vegetation types were prevalent, making up 19% of the land cover in Ramsey. Open water only makes up 3% of land cover in the city (City of Ramsey, 2007).



(City of Ramsey, 2007).

Partnering Demographic Growth with Ramsey's Rural Character

Taking stock of existing natural resources in Ramsey and planning for future preservation and integration of these resources will be important for the current residents as well as future residents of the city. Identifying the existing demographics in Ramsey allows us to understand how to educate and engage residents on the importance of natural resources. Based on 2010 Census data, Ramsey only has 3.2% of the population sitting at or below the poverty line. This is almost 7 percentage points below the Minnesota average and five times less than the national average (15%). As previously mentioned, Ramsey is experiencing a population growth and has seen an increase of 10.7% to its population compared to only 4.1% in Minnesota. This population increase highlights the urgency to preserve natural resources to support residents' quality of life.

Ramsey has a high homeownership rate at 89.1% compared to Minnesota at 71%. Because of the large stock of single family homes, Ramsey has relatively low-density rates. This means that efforts need to be focused on educating homeowners on the importance of natural resources as well as encouraging developers to implement practices that do not decrease the quantity or quality of the natural resources that already exist.

Existing Natural Resource Engagement through Environmental Policy Board and Parks Department

Currently, the City of Ramsey has an EPB as well as a Parks and Recreation Commission. The Parks and Recreation Commission focuses more on parks and open space planning, while the EPB focuses more on technical aspects such as Landscape and Tree Preservation plan reviews, innovative stormwater management opportunities, and recycling.

The EPB reviews development proposals that infringe on natural resources in Ramsey. This board makes recommendations to City Staff and the City Council. The City also host annual events like the Game Fair, where people can gather for the nation's largest outdoor sporting event. These types of events, and other community programs such as the Happy Days Festival, Summer Concert Series, or Youth Athletic Associations, can act as platforms for natural resource information sessions.

Existing Limitations for Natural Resource Communications

While there are efforts being made to educate and provide tools for natural resource education on a local governmental level, there are also some limitations. The EPB is one way for residents to participate in decisions directly influencing local policy. However, it can not be the only method of public participation. These public meetings are consistently held at the same time and place, which may be inconvenient for some residents. The lack of public turn-out at these meetings, proves that there must be alternative forms for public input made available to community members.

Another limitation is the lack of public outreach around natural resources at community events. The City hosts many community events but there has been little engagement or targeted conversation around natural resources. These community gathering spaces are not yet being capitalized on to integrate and educate residents around the importance of preserving and protecting natural resources.

While the City of Ramsey has taken on responsibility for natural resource integration in its comprehensive plan and policies, more responsibility can be put on community stakeholders and established institutions/groups to integrate policies that can be easily followed and understood. By doing this, the residents can become more involved in decision making around the future of their community and its resources.

Continuing to provide tools and resources through the City will be important, while also assigning responsibility to community stakeholders to act upon and give input on city initiatives.

The final limitation around current community engagement practices is the historical conflict of prioritizing development around a growing economy and respecting natural resources. Changing the priorities around preservation of resources, and holding them to the same level of importance as development, will be crucial for the future of Ramsey. Fortunately, there are ways that a city can respond to growth while also being conscious of environmental stressors.

Regulating Natural Resources through Permitting and Overlay Districts

Currently, Ramsey has implemented overlay districts over portions of the community to protect existing resources (e.g. Wild and Scenic Overlay District along the Rum River and the Critical River Overlay District along the Mississippi River). The City has also adopted various legal measures (ordinances) to take this one step further. The implementation of environmental permitting standards, reforestation requirements, topsoil requirements, and the required use of water efficient technologies in irrigation systems are just a few examples. These types of legal actions can allow development while also protecting the existing resource base, which will be important as Ramsey grows and changes in the coming decades.

Proposed Strategic Actions

A. Expand the Scope of the Environmental Policy Board

City boards and commissions help to advise and guide city staff in their decision-making in particular areas. Ramsey currently has a Charter Commission, Economic Development Authority, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, and an Environmental Policy Board (EPB). The EPB's objective is to "review, consider, initiate and recommend to the City Council such policies, plans or projects which will enhance and preserve the natural environment of the City". (City of Ramsey Website, 2017). The scope of the EPB "shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, matters of the preservation of the community forest, water quality, wetland preservation, groundwater protection, control of soil erosion and air, noise and light pollution." (City of Ramsey Website, 2017). This existing board should be leveraged to maximize community engagement on the topic of natural resources.

We turned to the City of Eden Prairie for a case study on how natural resource communications can be approached utilizing municipal boards and commissions. Eden Prairie has a Conservation Commission that looks at natural resources at a high level. The commission focuses on city-wide programs like recycling, lake management, and stormwater plans. The commission also makes recommendations to City Council on how to approach these issues, while dedicating time to doing public outreach at city events. The City takes the commission's recommendations and incorporates them into plans, and may also take some ideas for high level planning from the commission's own original priorities.

On a more technical level, Eden Prairie also has a Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources Commission that is responsible for reviewing development plans and city ordinances that address topics within its scope. This commission works more with residents to make sure their concerns are heard and brought to a larger stage. This commission takes on more of an education role, engaging with residents and maintaining accessibility. We

recommend that Ramsey further examine the roles and responsibilities of Eden Prairie’s commissions to see if there are issue areas or approaches that may resonate with Ramsey residents.

Further, we recommend that Ramsey consider working with local students, appointing one in an advisory role to the existing EPB. The student could work with EPB members to discuss topics of importance to them, and bring attention to the priorities of a new generation. In addition to this younger perspective, the EPB could also bring in speakers from outside of the community to speak on topics in which board members may not be as fluent. Educating existing and potential board members in key areas could help to frame the city’s priorities and ensure a consistent agenda.

Finally, we recommend that Ramsey create a liaison between the Parks Commission and the EPB, with the possibility of joint meetings. There is a substantial amount of overlap and collaborative opportunities for these two groups and opening communications with a liaison would be an excellent first step.

This strategic action is important because of the potential for unguided growth that can harm natural resources in the community. Future development in Ramsey can benefit the environment if planned and implemented correctly. It is important for the EPB to take community feedback and deliver clear development guidelines to city planners. An efficient and clear governance structure between the EPB, the Parks Commission and the city is essential. Ramsey can take what works for Eden Prairie and adjust it to create a structure that works for them. This will help build authority in the EPB and solve the pressing issue of rapid development impact on resources in the community.



Image courtesy of the Resilient Communities Project

B. Increase Learning and Engagement With the Environment Through Key Terms, Signage, and Innovative Communication

How the community and developers interact with natural resources in Ramsey is important to preserving the character of the city. Many people in the area care about its rural character and a key aspect of this is the surrounding natural environment. An interactive and effective form of education can help create a common understanding on the impact developers and the community can have on the natural resources around them. Building knowledge around what natural resources means to the community is an important first step and is necessary in building strategies to protect specific assets in the city. We suggest that strategic educational engagement take a few different forms including: a key terms page centrally located on the city website, creative signage placed near recreational activities in the community and an interactive chalkboard activity that gives the EPB an opportunity to discuss natural resources directly with the community. take a few different forms.

A key terms page will define natural resources that are important to the community. Clear examples and definitions on the city website will build credibility and a reference for development or projects interact with these resources. The list can encompass and define important words and phrases the community feels are important when describing natural resources and the environment. To build the list the EPB can utilize engagement strategies like a chalkboard activity (expanded upon in Appendix A) and other surveys. Some examples of terms include “natural resources, stormwater, watershed, vegetated buffer, rain garden, native plants and pollinator species.” Creative visuals or videos (Figure 2) go a long way in helping people understand complicated environmental terms and issues. The community will get a better understanding of what natural resources means when they see real examples from their daily lives. Pictures taken from the city and maps showing the location of where the community interacts with natural resources can help create meaning to the key terms list.

A key terms list on the city website forces the community and developers to actively seek out information. Integrating educational tools into places the community may already be can broaden the audience. There are bike paths, parks, rivers and other recreational activities in which to integrate signage to educate people about the importance of natural resources protection. Education can be fun for residents and can enhance the experience people have with the outdoors. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has several educational activities, typically run through schools, which Ramsey could leverage. The DNR has posters already created (Figure 3) for resources like

Figure 2. Example of Visual Learning Aid



Image from the Center for Urban Pedagogy

Figure 3. Example of Learning Poster



lex.html

trees, water, pollinators and animals. Custom signage created by Ramsey can add to these signs and can build off of the key terms information from the website. By tying these two educational tools together it can help create a cohesive story of natural resources in the city.

Engaging the community in an interactive activity that is used for public good can be a powerful tool of communication. A case study in Argentina (Balestrini, et.al, 2014) used video recording to determine how heritage preservation was important to the community. Members of the community were asked to create a short video explaining what was important to them so that it could be preserved. We suggest taking a similar approach to natural resources in Ramsey. The EPB can interact with the community by using a chalkboard (Figure 4) to create simple text or pictures of important resources. In order to collect data outside of regular city meetings, city staff and the EPB can go to public functions and ask the community to write, for example, which natural resources are important to them and why. The answers given on the chalkboard will be summarized and presented at EPB and planning meetings as a way to center focus on the voices of residents. Integrating community input into something that will actually be used is an important step in engagement. This can foster future discussions and build an engaged and active community looking to learn more about how they can improve and protect the environment in their city (Appendix A).

Figure 4. Chalkboard Activity



Image courtesy of Liz Scherber

Education is important in helping solve the concern Ramsey has to create innovative strategies to best communicate the value of natural resources. The community cares about its environment and wants to find new ways to communicate that back to city leaders and developers. Historically, EPB meetings and other traditional city meetings have low attendance. The voice of many in the community isn't being heard. This strategic action can help overcome that through creative techniques to both deliver and gather information and suggestions.

C. Create Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet for Developers

The third strategic action we propose is the implementation of a frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource for developers on the city's website. Because this FAQ will be made public by the City, it will be accessible not only to developers but also to Ramsey's residents. Residents will be able to access some important regulations and have a better understanding of the development process in their community.

This web page will also act as a signal that the City is both prepared to welcome development proposals, and prepared to communicate effectively with developers and residents. The FAQ could easily incorporate links to city regulations and other resources, like the EPB or various community groups. An example of this is the "Going Green Pledge" survey at the City of Edina (Appendix C). Some potential questions and answers, identified by city staff, that may be useful for inquisitive developers are:

Why do I have to do a tree inventory? What trees need to be included?

We have a definition in City Code that specifies what a Significant Tree is considered, and those must be included in the inventory.

We do allow an exemption for trees clearly outside the limits of construction.

Are there any reforestation requirements?

Yes, 40% of significant tree diameter at breast height (DBH) must be retained for residential development, 30% of significant tree DBH must be retained for commercial/industrial development.

If a project exceeds the threshold above, for every 1" removed beyond the threshold, developers must replace with 1.25" of new trees or pay \$125 per inch.

See City Code Section 117-327.

Is there any type of topsoil requirement?

Yes, the City has a requirement for 4" of topsoil meeting a certain specification to be applied to all disturbed areas not otherwise improved with buildings, driveways, or other impervious surfaces.

See City Code Section 117-348 (i).

Is in-ground irrigation required?

No, City Code was recently amended to eliminate that requirement and instead require the use of water efficient technologies such as soil moisture sensors, smart controllers, etc. if an irrigation system is installed.

See City Code Section 117-111 (g) (4).

What is Density Transitioning and is it applicable to my development?

This has to do with higher density development adjacent to lower density development. That often times requires transitioning and most commonly developers use landscaping to satisfy this, but there are other alternatives as well.

See City Code Section 117-110.

What is the lot depth standard?

This standard was recently developed to try and ensure a certain amount of 'usable' land in newly created lots.

See City Code Section 117-614 (h) (11).

Are there wetland and/or stormwater pond setbacks?

Yes, See City Code Section 117-289.

Another useful communication tool between the City and prospective developers could be a natural resources survey, following the model of other Minnesota cities like Eagan. This survey could be a required step in the development process, as part of the City's building policy, making it a potential regulation tool as well. Eagan's survey is a questionnaire for developers to review and complete, and gets them thinking about bigger impacts of their projects. The questionnaire also helps inform the city council, environmental boards, and planning staff on the development project and its impacts. Eagan prioritizes this survey as part of their larger sustainability goals, and can use survey feedback and data as a policy driver going forward. Ramsey may be interested in utilizing tools like this, and other recommended strategic actions mentioned in this section.

Residents expect development to follow regulations and direction set forth by the community. One objective of this project is to deliver reference materials or a guidebook for developers and the community to have access to. An open and clear set of expectations and information will help deliver community goals and protect natural resources.

Implementation

The three proposed strategic actions should be implemented in a timely manner. The following matrix defines when and how each strategy should be rolled out:

Proposed strategic action	Timeframe	Implemented by
A. Expand the scope of the environmental policy board	Medium-term (within 2-5 years)	City Council, Environmental Policy Board
B. Increase learning and engagement with the environment	Short-term and incidental implementation (within 1 year, and in conjunction with scheduled events like Happy Days, Summer Concert Series)	City Staff
C. Create an FAQ sheet for developers	Short-term (within 1 year)	City Staff

Conclusion

The City of Ramsey is at a crucial moment in their planning process. With strong growth projections and an increased interest in development, Ramsey’s comprehensive plan update has the opportunity to protect natural resources and open space, while guiding future development in a way that is sustainable for future generations. By utilizing innovative communication strategies, the City of Ramsey can effectively communicate to residents and developers the value of natural resources as they pertain to sustainable development. The recommendations laid out in this report help to move the City of Ramsey from an ad-hoc planning approach for natural resources as individual developers come to the city with their plans, to a strategic approach with a long-term, comprehensive vision of natural resources in Ramsey leading the conversation.

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Appendix A

Class Demonstration Report

Project Leaders: Max Dickson, Olivia Dorow Hovland, Nellie Jerome, Sam Neill, Liz Scherber, Josh Pansch

Activity Purpose

The natural resources group practiced a chalkboard engagement activity and mock Environmental Policy Board meeting in class on November 9th, 2017. The purpose of the demonstration was to practice each in a real life setting, gather feedback and improve our recommendations prior to presenting to Ramsey.

One problem we are trying to solve for is a lack of effective communication to residents about the value of natural resources: specifically, education that articulates threats to environmental resources. One way of solving this lack of effective communication is by engaging with the community in places they will already be. Many public engagement activities expect the community to go to places outside of their day to day lives like a public board meeting at city hall. The chalkboard activity was meant to engage with community members not typically represented in these meetings. In order to solve our problem around education we need to build outreach to more than just a few residents. The purpose of this type of engagement activity is to lift the level of knowledge and interaction with everyone in the community instead of just the few attending public meetings at city hall.

Our second engagement meeting was an Environmental Policy Board meeting meant to follow the chalkboard activity. We created this type of activity to meet the purpose of the second part of our problem that there is a lack of effective communication to developers about the loss of natural areas/open space from the view of the residents. We view the Environmental Policy Board as an advocate for the concern of the community about protecting and enhancing the natural and rural environment of Ramsey. The chalkboard activity is there to gather the input of a diverse group of people and the purpose of the board meeting is to summarize and express the point of view of the community. The content and result of the board meeting should be an accurate representation of feedback gathered at the chalkboard activity.

Activity Description

Our first activity was a chalkboard engagement session where members of our project group acted as the Environmental Policy Board and engaged with our classmates as if they were the Ramsey community. This practice session took place as if it was at the Ramsey Happy Days festival. Our recommendation will be for members of the board to use this activity to get into

the community and gather feedback and point of view of a group they do not normally interact with during board meetings. Members of the board were tasked with asking festival goers “*What do natural resources mean to you?*” The question was asked open ended and gave each person the opportunity to answer with their own words. The board member wasn’t tasked with any additional information regarding a definition of natural resources or examples of natural resources in the city. Answers to the question were written one at a time on a chalkboard and pictures were taken (*Appendix A.1*) of each person that participated in the activity.

The results of the chalkboard activity were then compiled into a simple bar chart (*Appendix A.2*) in order to present at a later board meeting. We ran our meeting according to Robert’s Rules and had a great turnout from the community. We created an agenda and attempted to follow the prescribed format throughout. Some community input steered the conversation away from the intended purpose but we were able to get back on topic after allowing the attendee to voice their opinion. The meeting concluded with an approved resolution to take the community feedback to the city and integrate it into developer guidelines.

What We Learned

The activities (community chalkboard event and board meeting) were selected because they are two very different approaches to community engagement. In this in-class demonstration we wanted to test both in their effectiveness in communicating the value of natural resources in Ramsey. While initially thinking that one would stand out as a more effective approach, we learned that both approaches have their benefits and that they should be used together. This paired approach to community engagement can effectively communicate the value of natural resources to both Ramsey residents and developers.

The chalkboard activity was great at getting into the community and hearing how residents of Ramsey view natural resources and how they interact with them in their own lives. Each response, while personal, started to form a larger view of natural resources in the city and reveal what is important to the community. We also learned that taking a person’s picture and attaching it to their response is a powerful tool. In one sense it can be good because people can then see themselves and feel a stronger connection to the project. However, it can also create pressure and a forced commitment to a response a person may not have given much thought to. Overall, we thought the image of the person with their response was an effective engagement tool, especially when it came to the board meeting.

The Environmental Policy Board meeting is a more formal engagement method. It is traditionally not great at engaging the community, so to help solve that barrier, we presented the images of residents at the Ramsey Happy Days Festival with their responses to the question we asked. By showing these images we helped bridge the gap between the informal community event and the formal policy meeting. It was also a way to show community members that their responses and thoughts about natural resources were being used to directly inform policy decisions in the city. This is important in creating transparency, building community trust, and holding the board accountable for representing the community.

Feedback & Next Steps

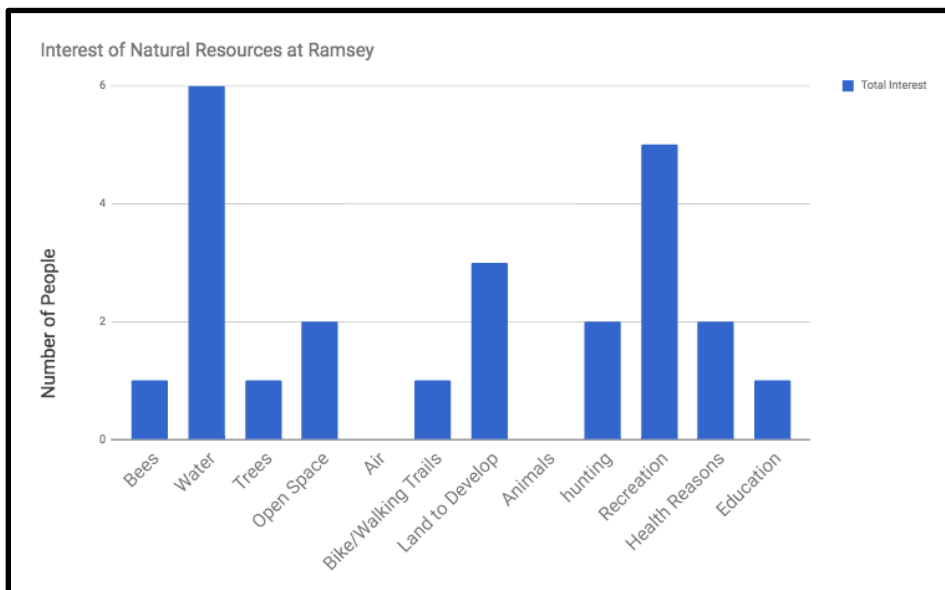
By presenting these activities to our peers we were able to gain some valuable feedback and insights that will be helpful in future refinement of the engagement strategies. It is important for city staff or whoever may be conducting engagement to be mindful of the question they are asking and the format they are presenting/gathering community feedback. Both of those things can have an impact on the comments or type of comments that are received. In our activity, we asked a broad, open-ended question - What do natural resources mean to you? It may be more helpful in the future if we add more specificity to the question or add a definition of natural resources. Some people may not know what we are asking since natural resources is a confusing term. By adding key terms or further explanations, we may receive more refined comments from residents. Another thing we should be aware of is asking people to write down their response. In asking them to do this we are assuming many things - that they are literate, fluent in English, comfortable spelling, etc. Another way of getting responses might be to have images - cut-outs of trees, river, clouds, fishing, etc. - that people can use for their response. This might appeal to and reach a larger audience, allowing more community voices to be heard.

Appendix A.1



iz Scherber

Appendix A.2



Appendix B

Link to Minnesota DNR Educational Tools: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/education/index.html>



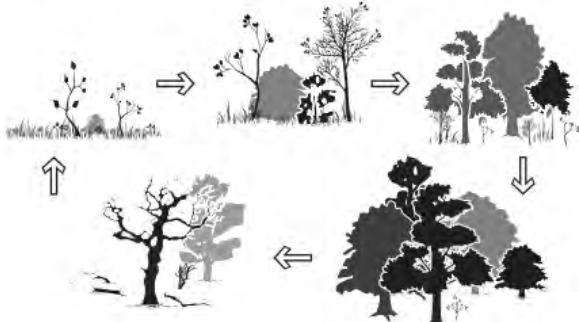
WHAT IS SUCCESSION?

Plant communities flourish or perish depending on their environmental conditions. As these conditions change, the types of plants that make up the community may also change. This process is called succession. In a stable community, the plants are well suited to the amount of water, nutrients, and sunlight available to them. As the availability of these resources change, the conditions may favor a different set of plants, and these plants will become more abundant. This causes a shift in the makeup of the plant community. In effect, the new plants succeed the old, creating a slightly different community. Events can cause change in a plant community. Such disturbances can include windstorms, wildfires, insect infestations, and widespread disease.

In a mature deciduous forest dominated by maple and basswood trees, fire can provide a dramatic example of succession. Following a fire disturbance, the charred land is friendly terrain for some species, and hostile to others. Grasses and other nonwoody plants are first to pioneer the newly disturbed area. These are soon followed by bushes such as raspberry. Species that do well in full sun such as boxelder, ash, and cherry are the first trees to recolonize the area. As these trees mature, they shade the forest floor, making it difficult for their own young to grow. Shade-loving species such as maple and basswood find themselves at a competitive advantage, and the species composition of the forest slowly shifts. Over time, the older sun-loving trees die out and the shade-tolerant species take over. The process may take hundreds of years, but left undisturbed, this forest will evolve into a plant community dominated once again by maple and basswood.

SUCCESSION IN A DECIDUOUS FOREST

In an undisturbed setting, succession progresses from pioneer grasses and shrubs to mature trees that return to pioneer grasses. However, disturbance, such as a wildfire, windstorm, or insect infestation, can happen at anytime and interrupt the cycle. This returns the forest to an earlier stage of success and the process begins again.



MINNESOTA'S PRAIRIE GRASSLAND BIOME

On a prairie the lines of the landscape are clean. No trees clutter the horizon. Nothing blocks the view extending forever. Ripples run through the grasses so they seem to advance in front of the wind. These are the waves that early settlers saw as an ocean, a sea of grass and unbroken soil stretching as far as the eye could see. Minnesota once had 18 million acres of prairie that stretched across the state from southeast to northwest. Fertile prairie soil grew good agricultural crops, however, and most of the prairie was plowed. The patches of prairie remaining are mostly the remnants that could not be plowed.

WHAT IS A PRAIRIE?

Prairies are defined as extensive areas of flat or rolling grasslands. In Minnesota these grasslands range from sparsely vegetated sand dunes to vast fields of big bluestem up to 8 feet tall, from wet meadows to shortgrass prairies high on the bluffs of the Minnesota River.

FOUNDATIONS OF TODAY'S PRAIRIE GRASSLAND

The last glacial episodes in Minnesota advanced across the state leaving behind the soils that the prairie formed upon. The northern parts of the prairie biome were primarily influenced by Glacial Lake Agassiz. The south and southwestern parts feature a high plateau of quartz bedrock topped with glacial debris.

CLIMATE IS KEY

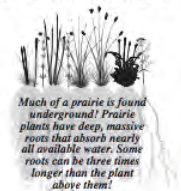
Rainfall and temperature play a major role in where prairies form. Prairies develop where rainfall is generally lower and summer temperatures are higher compared to Minnesota's other biomes.

FIRE, BISON, DROUGHT

Three major factors have influenced the prairie grasslands. Fire eliminates trees and shrubs while improving the growth of prairie wildflowers and grasses. Prairie plants have adapted to grazing by bison and other large herbivores (plant eaters) by having underground growing points that quickly sprout after being eaten. Many prairie plants can go dormant during a drought then begin growing again after the drought ends.



FUN FACT



Much of a prairie is found underground! Prairie plants have deep, massive roots that absorb nearly all available water. Some roots can be three times longer than the plant above them!

Appendix C

Edina Going Green Pledge

<https://edinamn.gov/FormCenter/Sustainability-Forms-30/Going-Green-Pledge-106>

Going Green Pledge Sign in to Save Progress

Steps

- ✓ [Step One](#)
- 2. [Pledge](#)**
- 3. [Helpful Contacts](#)

Pledge

I commit to taking the following actions (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Attending an event put on by the City of Edina on energy conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing renewable energy options
<input type="checkbox"/> Contacting CenterPoint Energy's Business Customer Hotline	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing your businesses' energy story
<input type="checkbox"/> Contacting Xcel Energy's Business Solutions Center	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Requesting Xcel Energy's Turn Key Services	

My business has already taken the following actions to save energy: