

# CHAPTER 3 RECREATION PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS

DRAFT | MARCH, 2021



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## CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

One could name a multitude of reasons on why Ramsey is a remarkable city to reside: agricultural roots which provide a sense of authenticity, growing opportunities spurred by new development, extensive parks and trails system to connect residents, and a sense of community drawn from shared experiences. Uniqueness can even be found in the physical shape of Ramsey. Within the winding boundaries formed by the Mighty Mississippi and Wild and Scenic Rum River, a diversity of residents can be found— each with their own individual identity, background, family, means of living, and interests that influenced their reason for calling Ramsey home.

Parks and recreation agencies offer the ability to positively impact their respective communities through safe and accessible ways to recreate. Parks and recreation departments in this capacity work to increase economic value in their community and simultaneously provide ways to improve quality of life for residents. An established parks and recreation department increases the value of property, attracts business opportunities, and reduces costs of health care, social services, and police departments, among many other benefits to be later discussed. On the individual basis, participants in recreation programs gain substantial benefits in both their physical and social health. Participation in recreation offers many assets, some of which are the ability to reduce self-destructive behavior, lower risk of diseases, improve longevity of life, build strong bonds within a community and enhance overall wellbeing (Levitz, 2014). Services from parks and recreation departments are vital to achieve well-balanced human development. Section Three. Reaches of Recreation of this chapter will explore the impacts that a robust parks and recreation system can have on both the community and individual level.

The City of Ramsey encompasses 29 square miles, and boasts 500 acres of municipal parkland which contain 32 parks, 50+ miles of trails, and 17+ miles of shoreline. With natural spaces as such, Ramsey proves to be an attractive place to start a family, retire, or invest. Businesses are drawn to the opportunities presented from a growing population, while residents are still able to appreciate the quaint roots of Ramsey the and extensive green-spaces provided by protected parks, green-ways and open space. As Ramsey continues to grow and change, parks and recreation services are placed in an opportune position to become established in Ramsey and have a long-lasting effect on the community for the children of tomorrow. Ramsey's Park and Recreation department can help solidify positive growth the area has experienced by providing opportunities which



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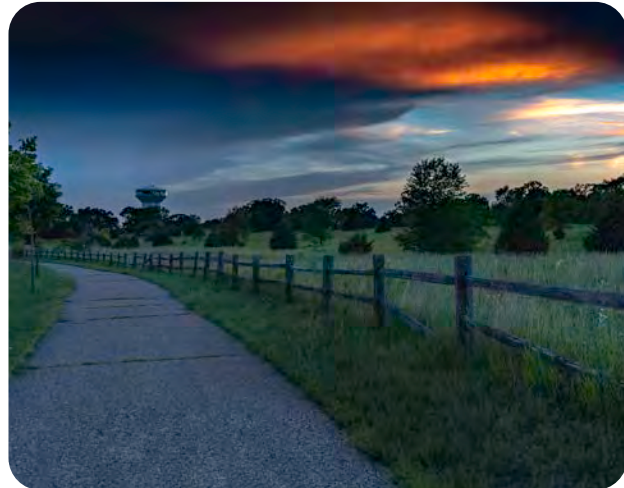
promote healthy ways of living and improve the overall quality and longevity of life. to improve life quality and longevity.

The purpose of the Recreation Programming and Partnership chapter of the Park Systems Plan is to explore relevant theory in recreation programming, identify a framework for future programs, and put in place realistic goals alongside strategies to achieve them. In addition, this chapter emphasizes the significance and impact partnerships have had in Ramsey.

The organization of this chapter is conceptualized into six distinct sections. Primary topics covered are trends, impact of recreation, state of programs in Ramsey, planning considerations, goals, and strategies. Each section of this chapter has been carefully curated with relevant examples and scientific information to synthesize how parks and recreation programming play an active role in community development and residential life. City officials may draw upon examples mentioned throughout to make decisions that are best fit for Ramsey today and in the future. Additionally, this chapter is designed to interconnect with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and approved Strategic Action Plan.

### MISSION AND CORE VALUES

The mission and core values were identified to guide the Parks and Recreation Department in future development that aligns with the City as a whole. The mission statement defines the overarching mission of Ramsey, with core values for support. An established mission and core values help guide the Department with planning and development to best meet the goals of the City.



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### Mission

The City previously has adopted the mission to *“work together to responsibly grow our community, and provide quality, cost-effective, and efficient government services”*. This section briefly describes how the Parks and Recreation Department will instill the City mission throughout parks and recreation planning and initiatives.

### Core Values

The Parks and Recreation Department will reflect all of the City’s Core values in program development, with a focus on the following:

**FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY** The Department will evaluate parks and programs with cost efficiency in mind. Fiscal responsibility can be achieved through careful planning to ensure services offered are beneficial and relevant for residents. Parks and recreation services aim to strike a balance between accessibility, financial stability and overall community benefit. Added community value from parks and recreation can be carefully analyzed and considered when planning for the future of parks and programming. **COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK** The Parks and Recreation Department takes great pride in partnerships. Mutually beneficial relationships are formed with local entities when possible. Healthy partnerships are fundamental to build a strong community and help provide higher quality programs for residents and simultaneously promoting the local economy.

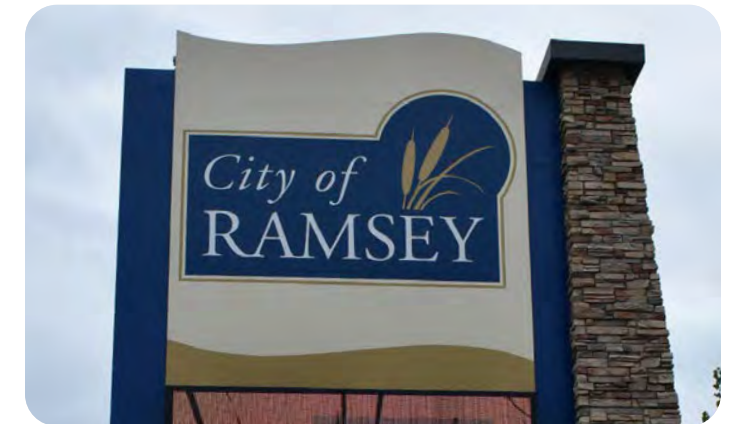
**EXCELLENCE AND QUALITY IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES** Services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department aim to be responsive to residents to ensure programs create added value on the individual and community level. Open communications and feedback from residents are valuable tools in recreation programming.

**ADAPTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING** Parks and Recreation services take pride in promoting continuous learning for all. Programs aim to be adaptable to meet the trends in Ramsey and recreation overall. A variety of services can be offered to keep regular participants engaged as well as encourage new users.

**Core Values:**

- Ethics & Integrity
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Cooperation & Teamwork
- Open & Honest Communications
- Excellence & Quality in the Delivery of Services
- Treating People with Respect & Fairness
- Adaptability & Continuous Learning

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**Mission Statement:**

To work together to responsibly grow our community, and to provide quality, cost-effective, and efficient government services.

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## HISTORY OF RECREATION IN RAMSEY

The history of recreation in the City of Ramsey is relatively brief. Specialized and more comprehensive recreation programming is a new service for residents, heretofore there was only an occasional event, and certainly not anything that was purposeful in terms of reaching Ramsey’s broad demographics and span of age ranges. As Ramsey matures as a community, an appropriate diversity of offerings is something that residents may appreciate, or even expect as a foundational city service. Recreation offerings provide significant benefits to a community in nearly all aspects of living. This document highlights the progression of recreation services in the community—and the unique value and opportunity of working together. This document will touch on the timeline of recreation and how it has progressed throughout, as well as provide a pathway for the future.



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## WHY PROVIDE RECREATION IN RAMSEY?

Parks and Recreation services are not only an important aspect of life in Ramsey, but are among the essential elements to the quality of life. Residents interact with the Parks and Recreation Department on a daily basis—walking paths witness footsteps year round, residents reserve park buildings to celebrate life milestones with loved ones, an amphitheater fills with families enjoying live music, and access to a growing list of recreation programs to participate in.

Parks and recreation programming offer engagement that promotes active living through the facilities and services provided. Established programming can enhance the well-being of residents by providing safe spaces to spend time in nature, foster hobbies through program participation and build community bonds with shared experiences and understanding.

Overtime, recreation programs create an inviting atmosphere and become intertwined in the lives of residents and what it means to be a part of the community. Ramsey’s Summer Concert Series at the Draw may be considered its founding program in recreation. In summer months, residents know to gather every Thursday evening to enjoy live music in the downtown amphitheater. The series has welcomed opportunities to further build the community through partnerships. Each year, sponsorships grow and enrichment activities are expanded such as Art in the Park, a Car Show, and the Trott Brook Benefit Bash.

The Concert Series is one of many examples of how recreation components interact to create a deeper value to what it means to reside in Ramsey. Meaningful programs offer a space to come together, immerse in art and culture, socialize, and spend time outdoors- to name a few. Ramsey has chosen to provide recreation offerings to create formal and informal opportunities for residents to gather and engage in a variety of activities that are productive to the overall wellbeing of the community. Some examples of added community value from recreation programs span from positive economic impacts, to increased livability markers, and enhanced community health. Section 3, The Reaches of Recreation, will discuss in detail the impact of recreation services.



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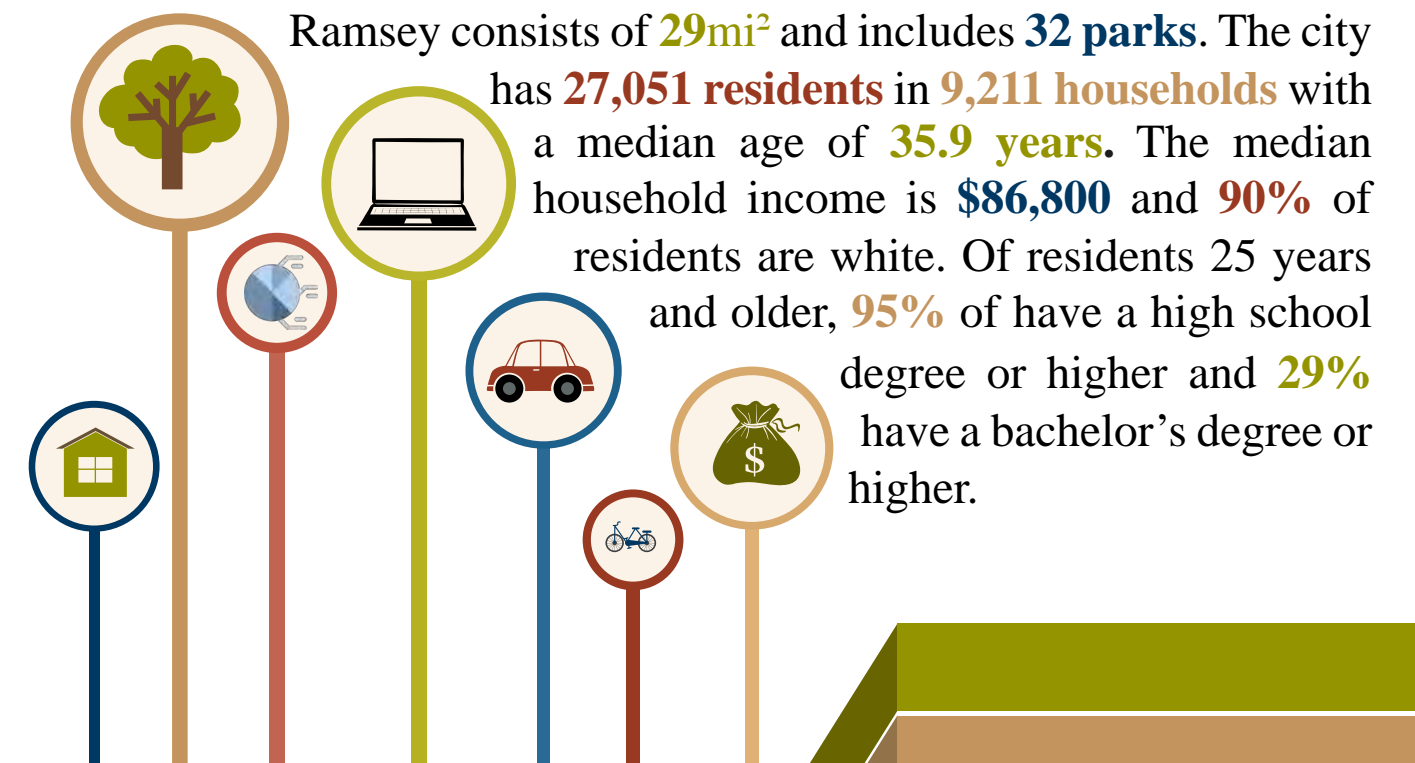
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## SECTION 2 | TRENDS

### INTRODUCTION

Trends are analyzed to provide targeted and relevant services to the residents of Ramsey. A proper trends analysis can aid in the effort to enhance community engagement, be cost efficient, and offer quality services. Demographic and economic factors have an impact on what recreation services are valuable for a specific community, can indicate who may partici-

pate, and can highlight areas to be improved upon. Proactively tracking trends can help cities preemptively account for demographic changes such as population shifts in age, race, ethnicity, and income groups. Additionally, state and national trends in recreation can help predict the direction that outdoor and recreation engagement is headed.



### TRENDS IN RAMSEY

In order to best address the need for recreation programming in Ramsey, the setting of the City itself must be first understood. The following section will look at trends in demographics, economics and recreation. By examining these features, City planners may gain specific insight to where Ramsey residents are at and what programs may best benefit the community.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Demographic Trends in Ramsey

Approximately 27,000 people within 9,211 unique households called Ramsey home. In the past decade, Ramsey has witnessed a rapid expansion, significantly surpassing the Minnesota state growth rate.

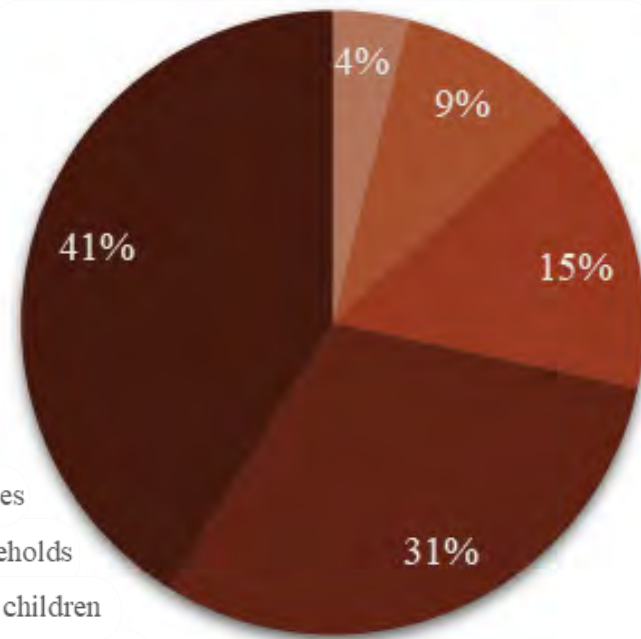
Data points about Ramsey's residents have been collected over the years to provide a snapshot of what Ramsey is like at a certain point of time as well as track trends over time. While current data can provide a snapshot of where Ramsey sits today, a large picture outlook can help gain insight on the direction in which Ramsey may be headed.

### Households of Ramsey

One valuable aspect to examine is household types in the City. Trends in household type can tell city officials valuable information about the life of residents and what programs may be of value. [Provide example, disclaimer that this information alone should not be used, should be combined with age demographics, allude to

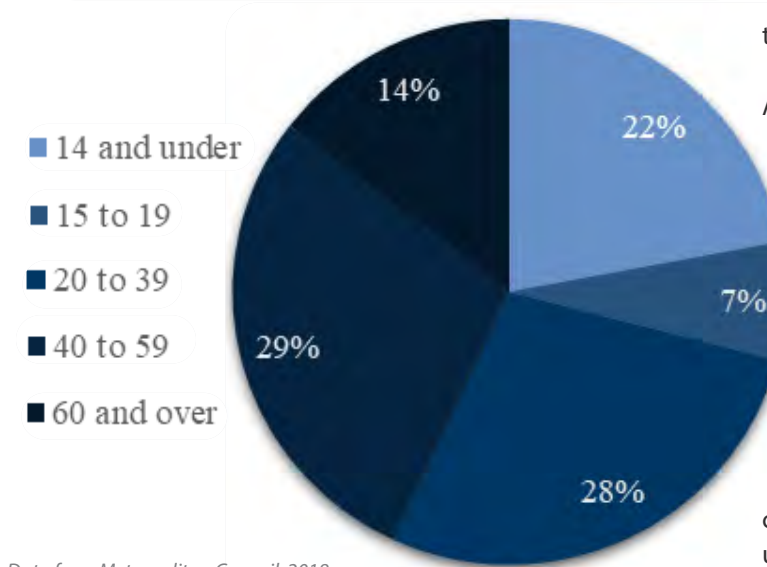
- Lived alone
- Unmarried families
- Non-family households
- Families without children
- Married families with children

## 2017 Household Types



Data from The American Communities Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2017

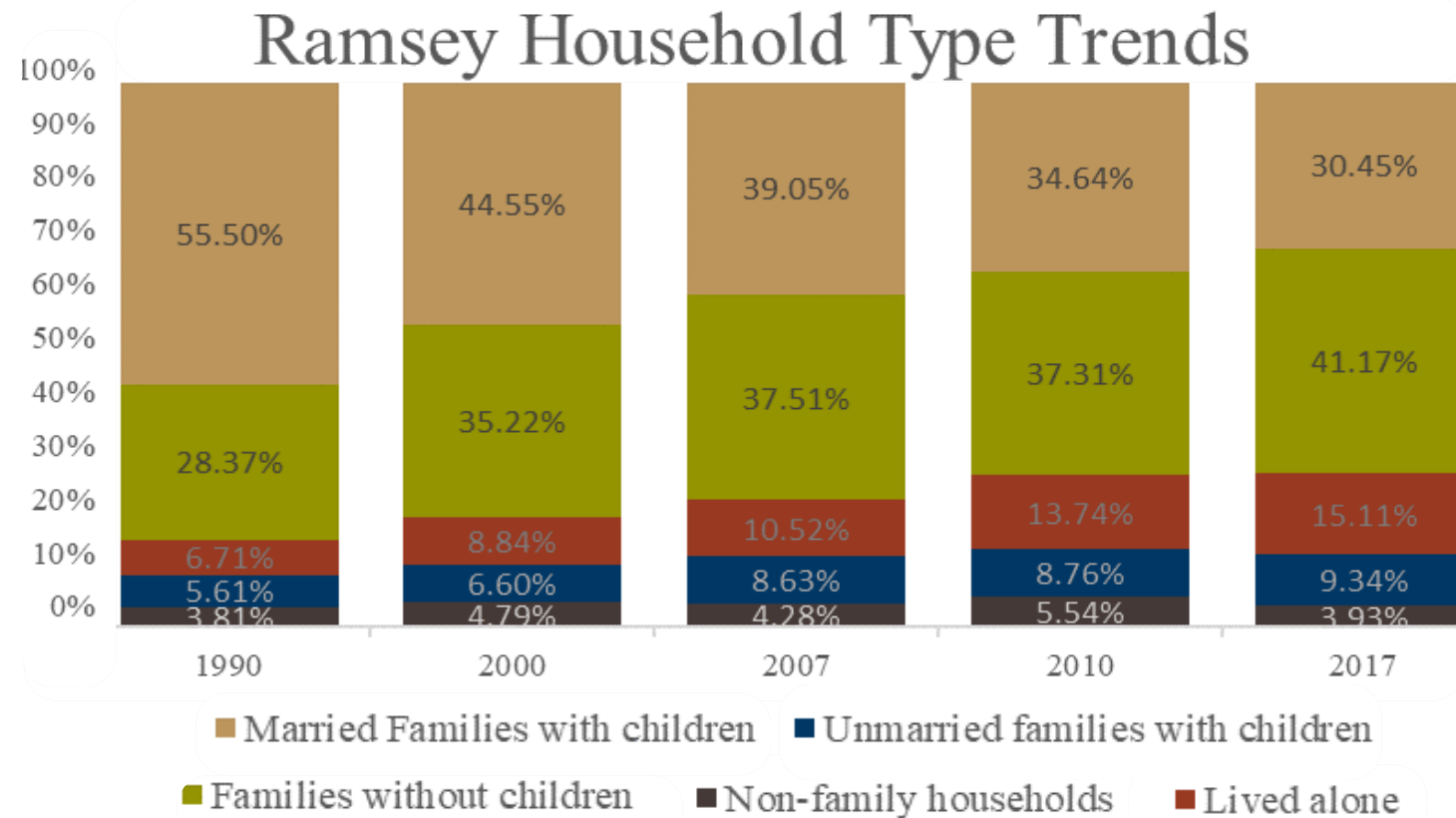
## 2017 Age Demographics



Data from Metropolitan Council, 2018

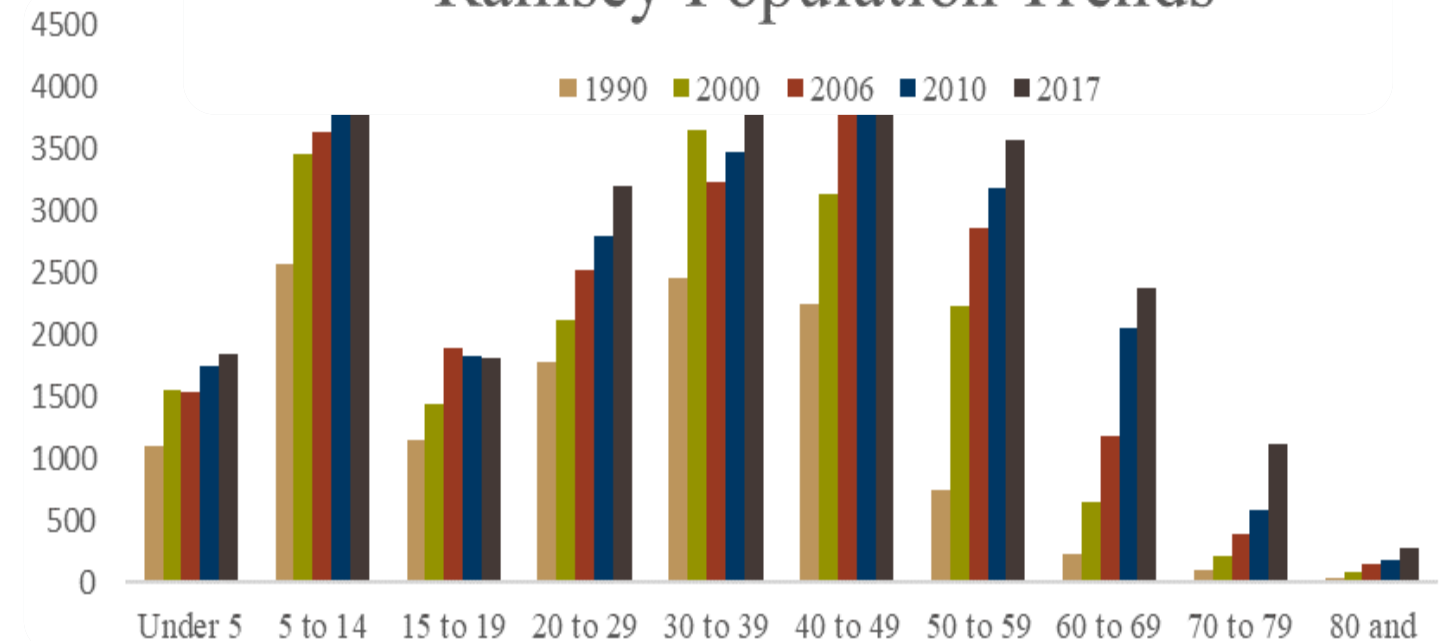
the next section].

A breakdown of Ramsey's 9,211 households is as follows: 30.45 percent are married families with children, 9.34 percent are unmarried families with children, 41.17 percent are families without children, 15.11 percent lived alone, and the remaining 3.93 percent are non-family households (The American Communities Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017). In less than a decade, trends in Ramsey's household types, notable changes can be seen. In comparison to the 2000 data, the most significant being a decrease in married families with children. A portion the reduction may be attributed to the increases of unmarried families with children, families without children, and those who lived alone. Household types can give a glimpse into life in Ramsey however, additional population information is necessary to gain a more encompassing look into who the Ramsey resident is.



Data from The American Communities Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 1990-2017

## Ramsey Population Trends



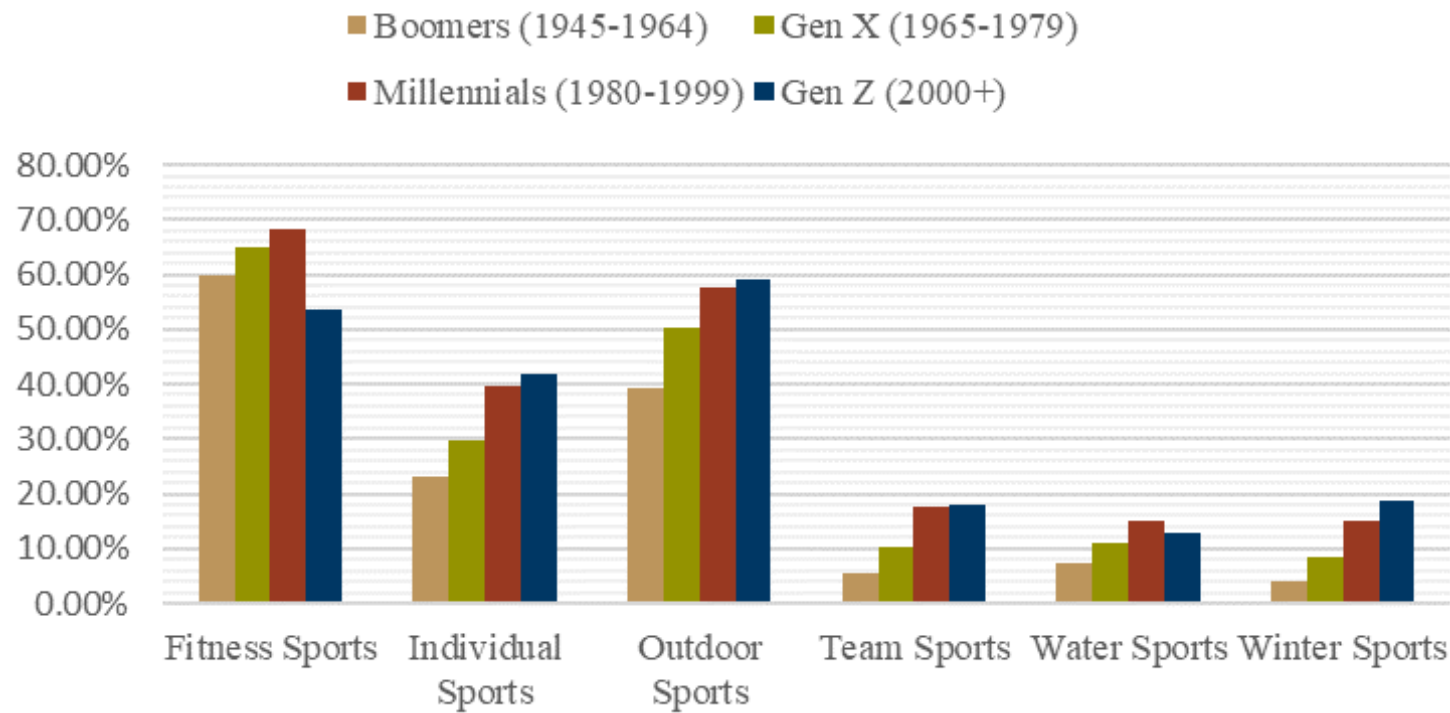
Data from Metropolitan Council, 2018

### Population and Age Demographics

Steady growth in Ramsey's population is seen from the year 2000, when the population was approximately 15,000 (Metropolitan Council, 2018). By 2040, growth in population is projected to reach 39,500 residents within 13,500 households (2040 Comp Plan). Compared to the most recent census in 2010,

Ramsey's population has increased by 16.23 percent, whereas the State of Minnesota has only seen a 7.1 percent population growth rate. When planning for current and future initiatives, it is essential to factor in the growth that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

# 2019 Participation by Generation



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Within population data, specific demographic information can provide a dynamic and insightful lens on Ramsey residents. Not just understanding population growth, but maintaining a grasp on how a population's age changes helps city planners to offer appropriate services for their respective community. Within recreation, departments seek to offer programs that respond to their residents' interests and well-being. By looking specifically at trends in age groupings, parks and recreation agencies are better equipped to anticipate what programming will be meaningful for current residents and remain relevant for the future.

In order to properly utilize Ramsey's demographic information, a cross section of data must be considered. By putting these pieces of the puzzle together, trends can become evident. Over time in Ramsey, a decrease in married families with children is noted alongside a slight but steady increase of families without children. With this information, initially, it would be logical to reduce youth programming and allocate resources elsewhere. However, by factoring in the overall population numbers by

age, an increase in youth under 15 has actually been on the rise. Ramsey is a growing city with a rising population. While family dynamics are shifting, nearly every age category has still seen an overall rise in numbers.

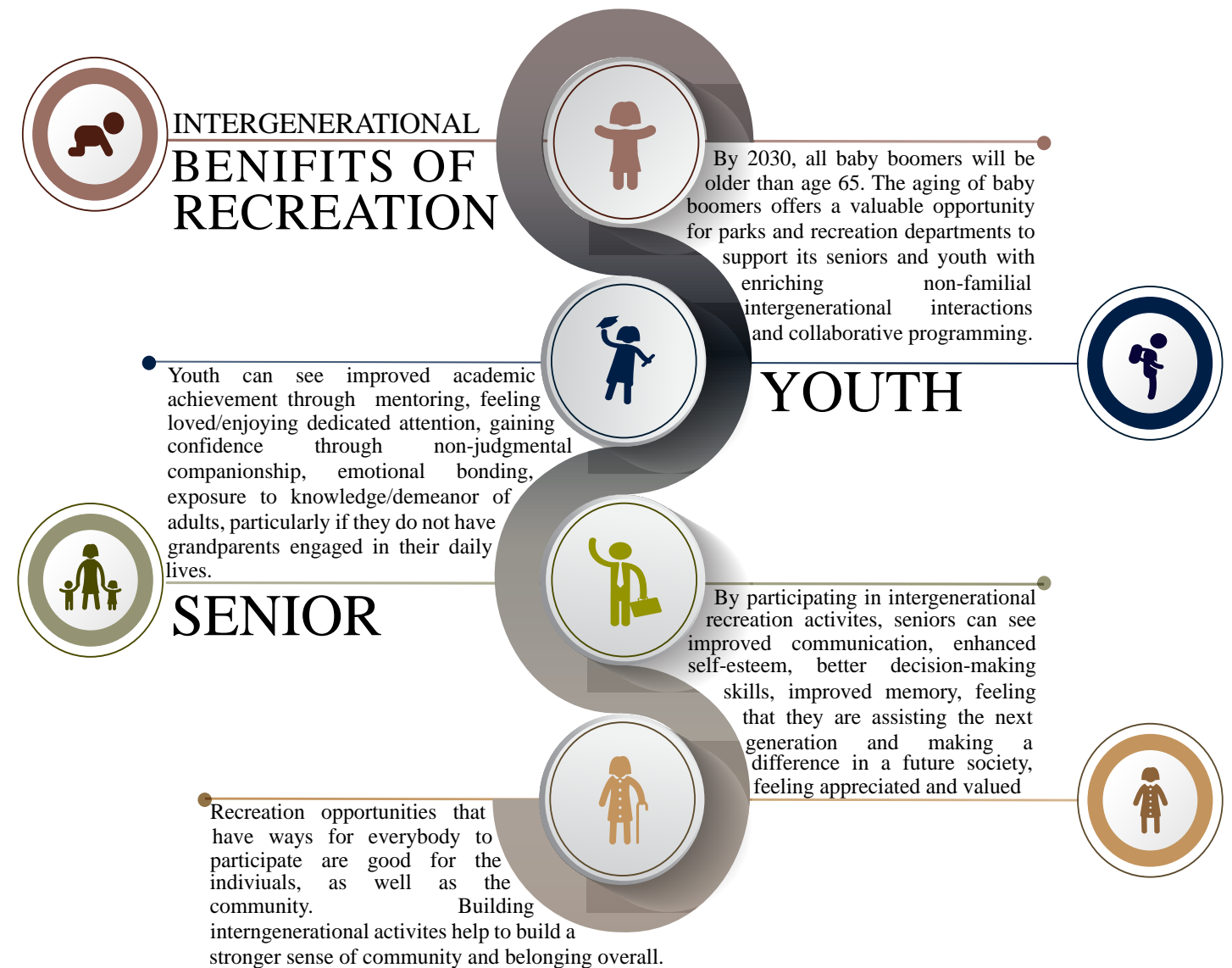
Each population measurement provides a piece to the puzzle of Ramsey's residential life. To get a better idea of the "full picture", many measurements should be used. With the example on youth in Ramsey, combining both pieces of data gave insight how household dynamics are changing as the City continues to expand.

### Demographic Influences on Recreation Age Groupings

Human development is ever-changing. From the point of birth, to the time of retirement, the things required to satisfy interests and well-being shift. Recreation programs are often classified by age as one method to address for these developmental changes over time.

Age categories are frequently broken down into the following categories: 1-5yrs, preschool; 6-12yrs, youth; 13-18yrs, teen; 19-54yrs adult; and 55+, senior. Each grouping is made distinct by the developmental needs of the group. Recreation providers seek to offer programs that contribute a unique set of benefits for those who participate. Grouping by age can help target specific developmental needs.

For example, if a recreation provider offered an intramural sports league, the program may look vastly different based upon the age grouping it is offered for.





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**PRESCHOOL:** Recreational play is a necessity in early childhood development. Activities in playtime include both programmed and unprogrammed aspects that allow children to interact with their peers and engage in stimulating activities. Unstructured outdoor playtime promotes the development of emotional, social, cognitive, and physical aspects of life for that stay with children throughout their life. Specifically, outdoor play has natural elements that are conducive for developing strength, balance and coordination. Young children interact with features such as slopes, rocks, vegetation, and trees in particularly active play to learn about the world around them (Muñoz, 2009). The hands on learning aspect of recreational play engages the child’s senses as a natural way to begin to understand the world about them. Approximately 40 percent of households in Ramsey have children. Those under 5 makeup 7.12 percent of the total population according to the The American Communities Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2017.

**YOUTH:** Time spent outdoors in childhood has been rapidly diminishing, as are the benefits children typically receive. Change in how youth spend their time is significant enough to have sparked a plethora of research into causes and impacts of this generational shift. A well known product of this inquiry is an increased amount of time youth spend in front of screens which coincides with the decrease of time spent outside. Richard Louve coined the phrase, “Nature Deficit Disorder”, to describe a wide range of behavioral problems, directly due to the lack of time spent outdoors. Biologist E.O.Wilson, notes that children

are naturally “biophilic”- or drawn towards wildlife and to the outdoors. Children have a natural affinity for environmental education, making it an effective springboard for the inclusion of many other areas of study and the development of critical life skills (Mann & Hensley, 2002). Not only does this decrease in nature play stifle mental development, but time spent outdoors, or lack thereof, has a significant impact on overall health as youth transition into adulthood. Decreased time recreating in nature contributes to a more sedentary lifestyle that tends to follow youth through adulthood (Bento & Dias, 2017). More information on the impacts of sedentary lifestyles can be found on page 40. In Ramsey, about 15 percent of the population are children ages 5 to 14. This age cohort is currently developing habits that will shape their future. Recreation opportunities for this proportion of the population can provide positive self-esteem, healthy lifestyles and development of skills for a successful adulthood. it. Additional information on impacts of recreation on youth development will be discussed in later sections.

**TEEN:** As youth transition into teenage and early adulthood, they are given the difficult task of developing their sense of self and responsibility. While adolescence find their place in the world, develop their sense of self, they also go through a tremendous amount of biophysical and neurobehavioral changes. Approximately 7 percent of Ramsey’s population is navigating this stage of development (*note: 7 percent is an estimate. Available data encompasses 15 to 19, not 13-18 as adolescence has been defined here*). During this period, the brain is easily shaped by social learning through experience, direct interaction, self-reflection, education, and interaction with adults and peers. Opportunities provided by parks and recreation services act as a catalyst for teenagers to develop their capacities and push them in a positive direction. Parks and Recreation agencies can provide positive role models outside of the home for youth, aid in skill development, and help them feel like a valuable part of the community. Adolescents are valuable resources to invest in, and not problems to be solved (Witt & Caldwell, 2010).

**ADULT:** Adult programs are targeted to a range of ages and interests, as opportunities are typically available to anyone ages 18 years and older. For the ease of clarification, adult and senior programs are separated, even though they often have overlap. Youth and seniors tend to be highly targeted populations in recreation, and occasionally adult programming may be overlooked. It is essential to factor in the benefits adults also receive from recreation, both physical and mental. In the United



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## RECREATIONAL FREE PLAY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

**PHYSICAL**

- Improves strength, balance and coordination
- Builds physically healthier children through increased immunity
- Decrease in likelihood of childhood obesity and development of other preventable diseases

**SOCIAL**

- Develops communication skills and ways to interact with others
- Higher levels of teamwork, sharing and cooperation
- Decrease in solitary play Promotes a positive, lifelong relationship with nature

**COGNITIVE**

- Stimulates creativity
- Develops necessary skills for successful adulthood
- Problem solving through higher levels of sequencing, planning and organizing
- Improves sensory skills and attention span

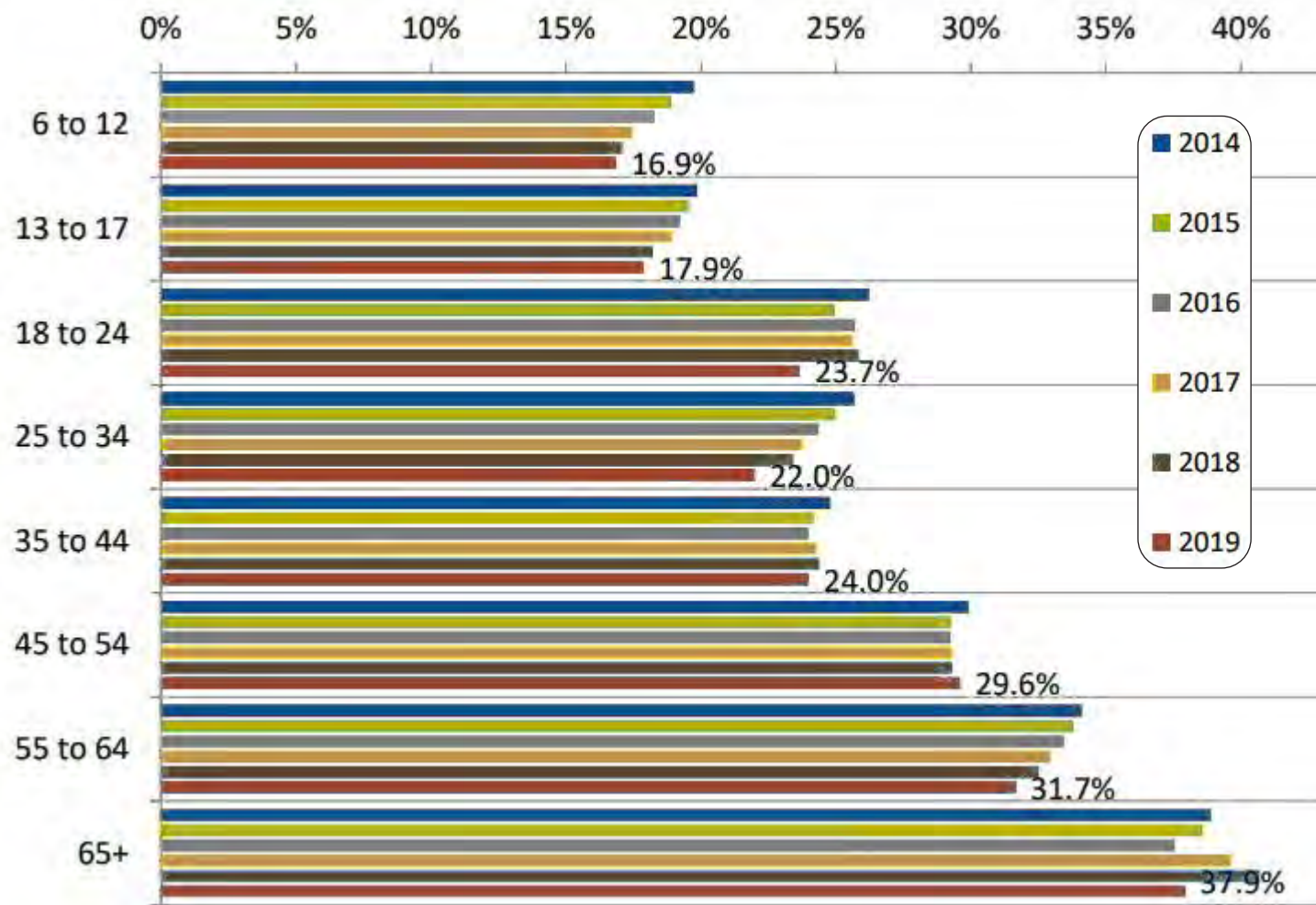
**EMOTIONAL**

- Decrease in symptoms of hyper activity, anxiety, and depression
- Increases self-esteem and confidence
- Development of emotional intelligence
- Helps youth learn about themselves and the world

States Less than 5 percent of adults participate in 30 minutes of physical activity every day (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). The CDC recommends 30 or more minutes of moderate activity at least five days a week and 20 or more minutes of vigorous activity four or more days per week. In Anoka County, only one in every four residents met the CDC recommendation for either vigorous or moderate physical activity. Three in every four get insufficient or no physical activity (Anoka County, 2018). Half of Ramsey's population (50.01 percent) are aged 20-54 and could benefit from safe and engaging ways to participate in physical activities. Beyond physical fitness, parks and recreation services offer increased well-being for adults, and enhanced community development and relationships. These impacts are discussed in detail in Section Three, Reaches of Recreation, in this chapter.

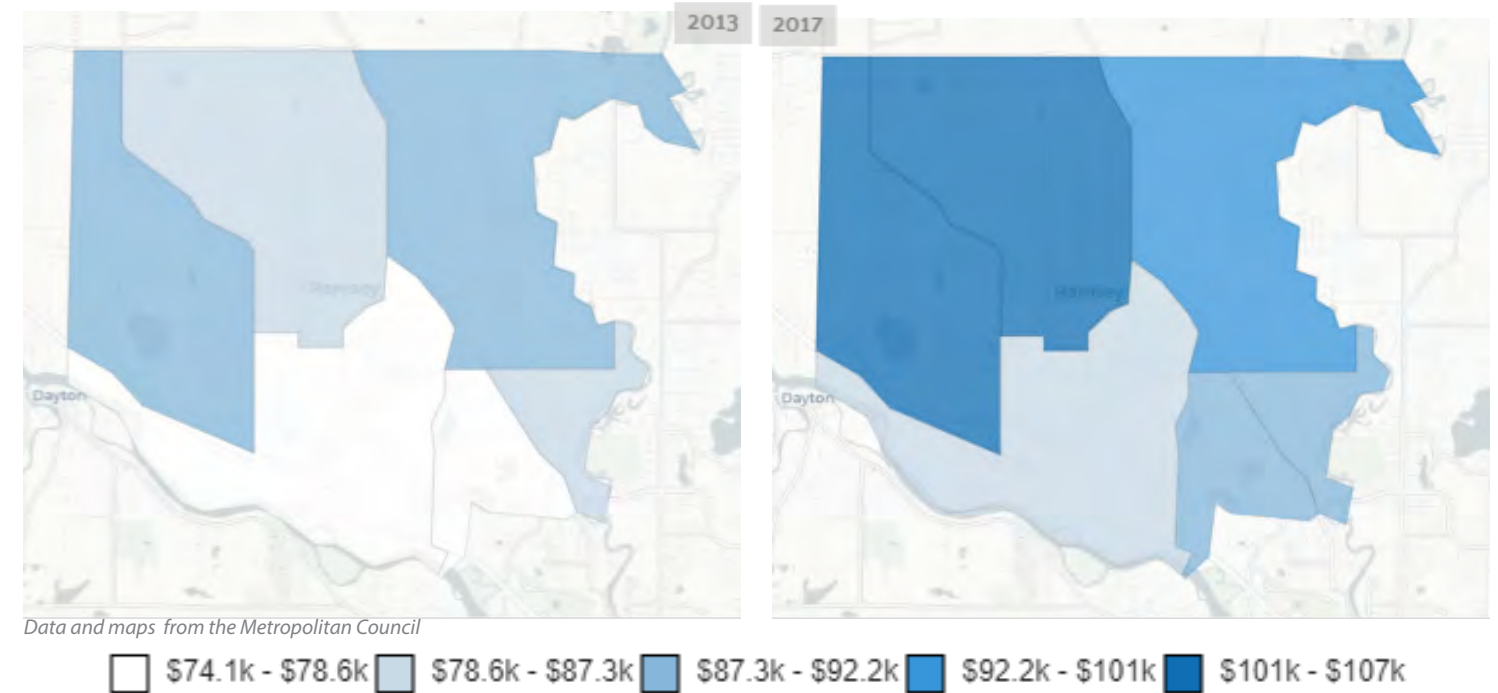
**SENIOR:** As the Baby Boomer generation ages, there will be a greater need for services for seniors. Parks and recreation services can enhance the lives of seniors through providing both lower and higher impact opportunities which promote active living. Seniors who participate in recreation can limit the potential onset of diseases and impairment often associated with aging. Engaging in recreational activities that include a physical element can also help the aging population lead independent lives, by providing ways for to remain mobile, flexible and keep cognitive abilities sharp (California State Parks, 2005). Approximately 1 in 5 (20.87 percent) Ramsey residents fall into the 55+ category, and is likely to increase throughout the near future.

### 2014–2019 Inactivity by Age



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### Median Household Income



### ECONOMY

Economic standing can be indicative of an individual's ability to participate in recreation programs. Common barriers to participation include lack of free time, lack of knowledge, and fees to participate, all of which tend to disproportionately affect those in lower economic standings as they become larger barriers to overcome. Slightly over half (52 percent) of Minnesotans cited that they did not participate or participated less in outdoor activities because they did not have enough time off from work. Similarly, 44 percent of Minnesotans indicated that their family's schedule does not allow the time for outdoor recreation activities. Some other cited barriers were not having the money to buy or rent outdoor equipment/purchase permits, not having the ability to learn skills necessary for outdoor recreation. These economic factors must be addressed by recreation providers in order to offer accessible programming to all residents regardless of economic standing. Accessibility and fee consideration is further discussed in section 5, Planning Factors and Considerations, of this chapter.



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State of the Economy in Ramsey

In 2016, the average annual wage in Ramsey was \$47,527, which is slightly below the Anoka County average of \$49,918. However, the median household income in Ramsey was \$86,800, compared to \$70,900 in Anoka County.

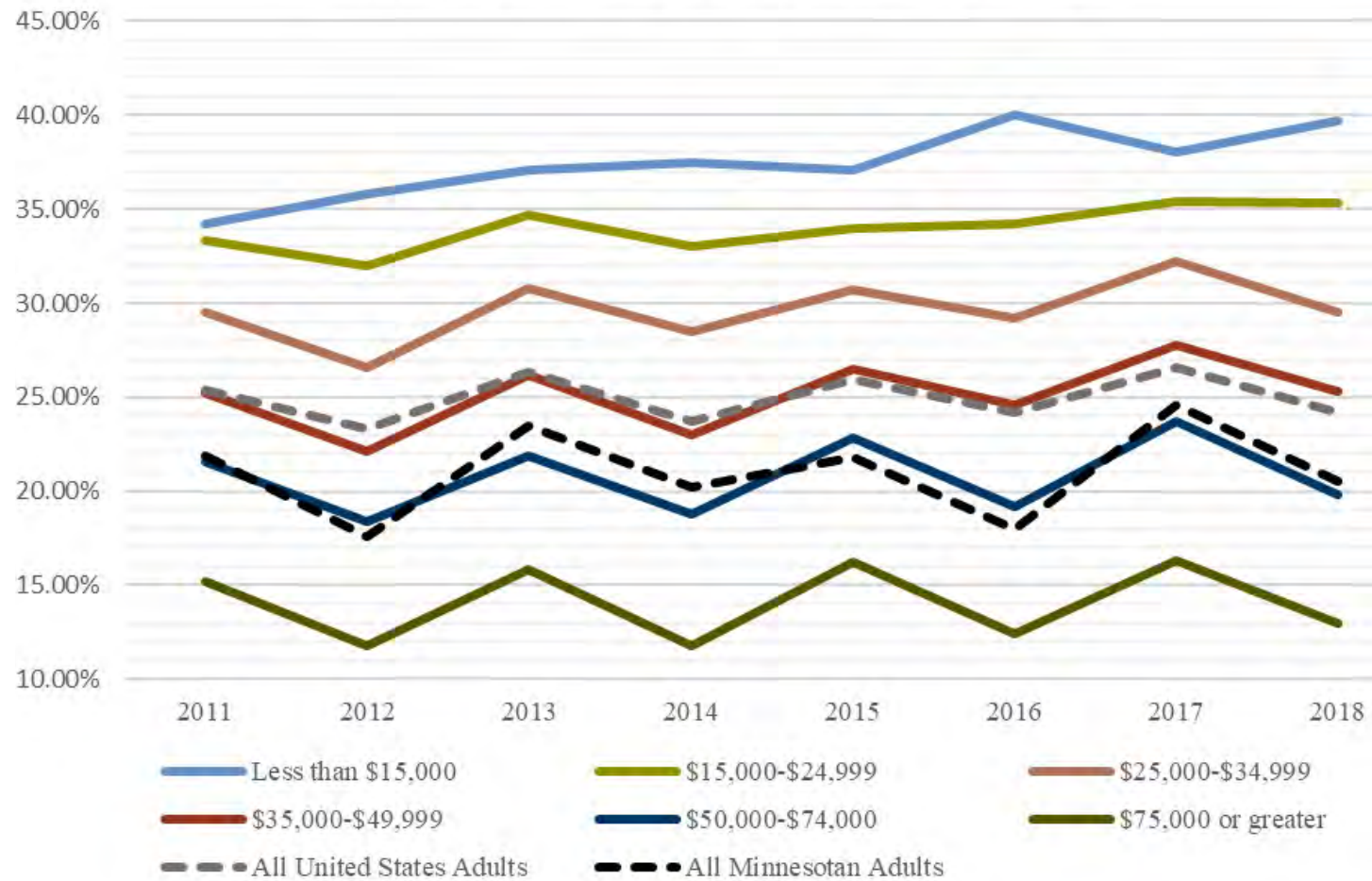
In 2015, approximately 3.5 percent of Ramsey lived below the poverty level (income of \$24,250 per year for a family of four), 4.5 percent between 100 percent and 149 percent, and 5.2 percent between 150 percent and 184 percent of the poverty line.

In 2018, an estimated 6,864 people held jobs in the City. (Metropolitan Council, 2018). The employment forecast is positive, with an estimated increase to 7,500 by the year

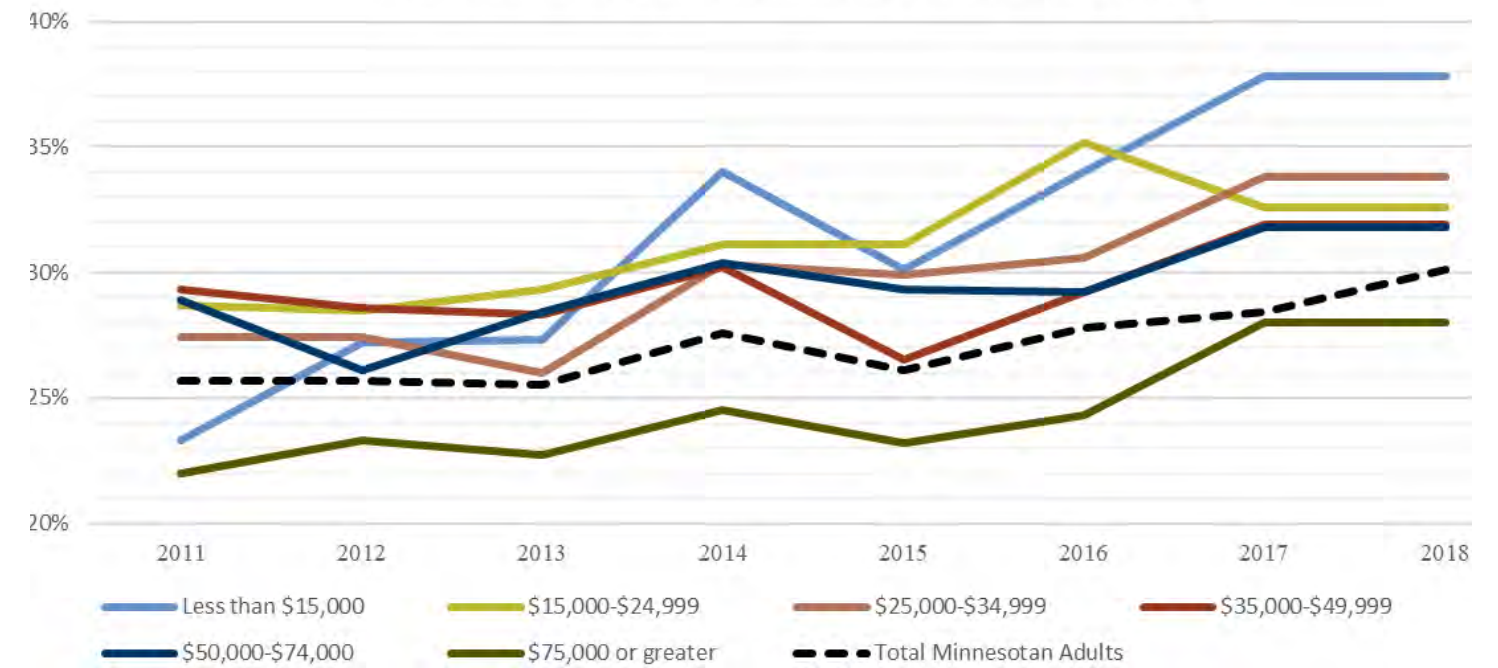
2030, and 8,100 by 2040 (Metropolitan Council, 2018). Unemployment rates remain steady around 3.5 percent. Ramsey falls slightly under the national average of 4 percent according to the National Conference of State Legislature. The positive employment forecast is likely a contributor to the increase in population in the area.

Overall, Ramsey residents tend to be economically well off, with most economic measures on the rise. This could indicate that barriers to participating in recreation programs for Ramsey residents may be lower than residents in other Minnesotan communities overall. However, it is important to remember the benchmarks are averages and do not denote that every Ramsey resident is well off nor does it erase the need for

### Minnesotan Adults who Engage in no Leisure-Time Physical Activity



### Minnesotan Adults Who Have Obesity



accessible facilities and programs so that every resident has the opportunity to engage in recreation offerings.

Economic Barriers to Recreation

Economic standing can have an effect on nearly all aspects of life. One of the more notable is economic standing and how it relates to physical and mental health. Trends show that those in lower economic brackets tend to have lower markers in health, notable in obesity and inactivity. Various factors such as lack of free-time, ability to pay fees, lack of knowledge on the “how tos”, and even

feeling unwelcome in certain settings rank upon the top reasons cited for lack of participation in recreation and leisure activities. These are barriers that are much more difficult to overcome for individuals in lower income brackets. Recreation providers are uniquely poised to help break this negative feedback loop by offering programs that are accessible to all abilities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This is true on a national and local level. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources updated the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Household Survey, or SCORP, found Minnesotans with higher incomes and higher levels of education, too, participated in more Activities, on average, than those with lower household incomes and lower levels of education.

Recreation influences on Economics

Local and regional public park agencies directly provided more than 356,000 jobs in the United States during 2013 (Clower, Chapman, & Song, 2015). In 2015 alone, America’s local public park and recreation agencies generated more than \$154 billion in economic activity and their operations and capital spending supported more than 1.1 million jobs. (National Recreation and Park Association, 2018). Local and regional park systems spent an estimated \$22.4 billion on capital programs, leading to about \$59.7 billion in economic activity, a contribution of

NATIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

IN 2015, AMERICA’S LOCAL PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES GENERATED MORE THAN \$154 BILLION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND THEIR OPERATIONS AND CAPITAL SPENDING SUPPORTED MORE THAN

1.1 MILLION JOBS

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT IN MINNESOTA		
Economic Activity (Transactions)	Labor Income	Employment (Jobs)
\$ 2,520,078,194	\$ 963,778,166	20,338

National Recreation and Park Association, 2018

\$29.2 billion to the GDP, \$19.6 billion in labor income and more than 340,000 jobs. In Minnesota alone, \$2.8 billion in Economic Activity, and 22,411 jobs created (Clower, Chapman, & Song, 2015). The City of Ramsey is fortunate to have two Regional Parks and two Regional trails within its borders.

A University of Minnesota study has found every dollar invested in conserving natural lands nets a return of \$1.70 to \$4.40. During the summer months, Minnesota's state parks generate \$1 million every week from camping, vehicle permits, and sales of wood, pop, ice, and merchandise in state parks. Similarly, Minnesota's non-motorized trail users spend approximately \$2.7 billion annually on trips and equipment, and support 37,000 jobs statewide. Communities located along state and regional trails are the primary beneficiaries of this economic activity. For example, the Paul Bunyan State Trail, Heartland State Trail, and Root River State Trail each generate between \$1.2 million and \$2.2 million for their local regions respectively. The majority of this spending – 90 percent or more – comes from trail users who reside outside the local economy, and thus are "new" dollars that would not otherwise be spent in the community. A similar study in Wisconsin found biking-related tourism and recreation contributes nearly a billion dollars to the state economy (Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, 2014). While this is applicable directly for state parks, the City of

Ramsey has the opportunity to see these impacts on a smaller scale with unique river recreation features and the extensive trail system that connects the community.

RECREATION

Nation Wide Trends in Recreation

Trends in recreation are ever changing both state-wide and nationally. It is important for recreation providers to maintain an understanding of popular programs and activities and monitor their engagement. One example of this that has been witnessed in Ramsey has been the rise and fall of pickleball. The sport gained momentum and expanded in the early 1990s when it was actively played in all 50 states. Since then, there has been a rise and fall in pickleball, primarily among the older generations. A shift can be seen in the last decade of the sport gaining new traction and popularity. Now, according to USA pickleball, 1.3 million Americans are "Core" participants who play at least 8 times a year. From 2015-2018, the sport saw a total growth rate of 29.1 percent. From 2015-2018 the percentage of Core players ages 54 and younger grew from 25 percent to 36, the percentage of Casual players ages 54 and younger grew from 78 percent to 84 percent. These increases in the percentages of both "Core" and "Casual" less than 55 years of age reflect faster growth among younger players. These trends

have also been reflected in the City of Ramsey with the reservations and usage of local courts. Following trends like this can be essential when planning for program and facility usage for years to come.

Recreation in Minnesota

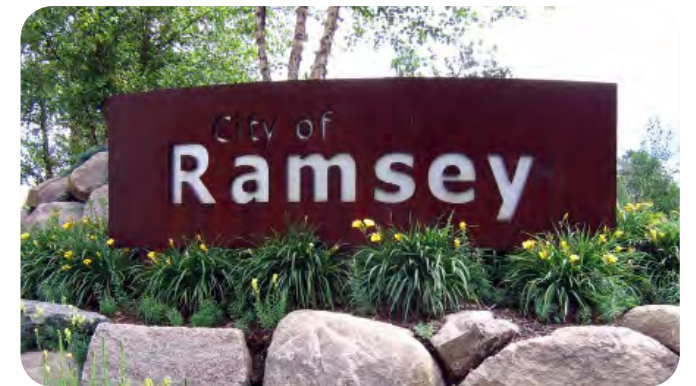
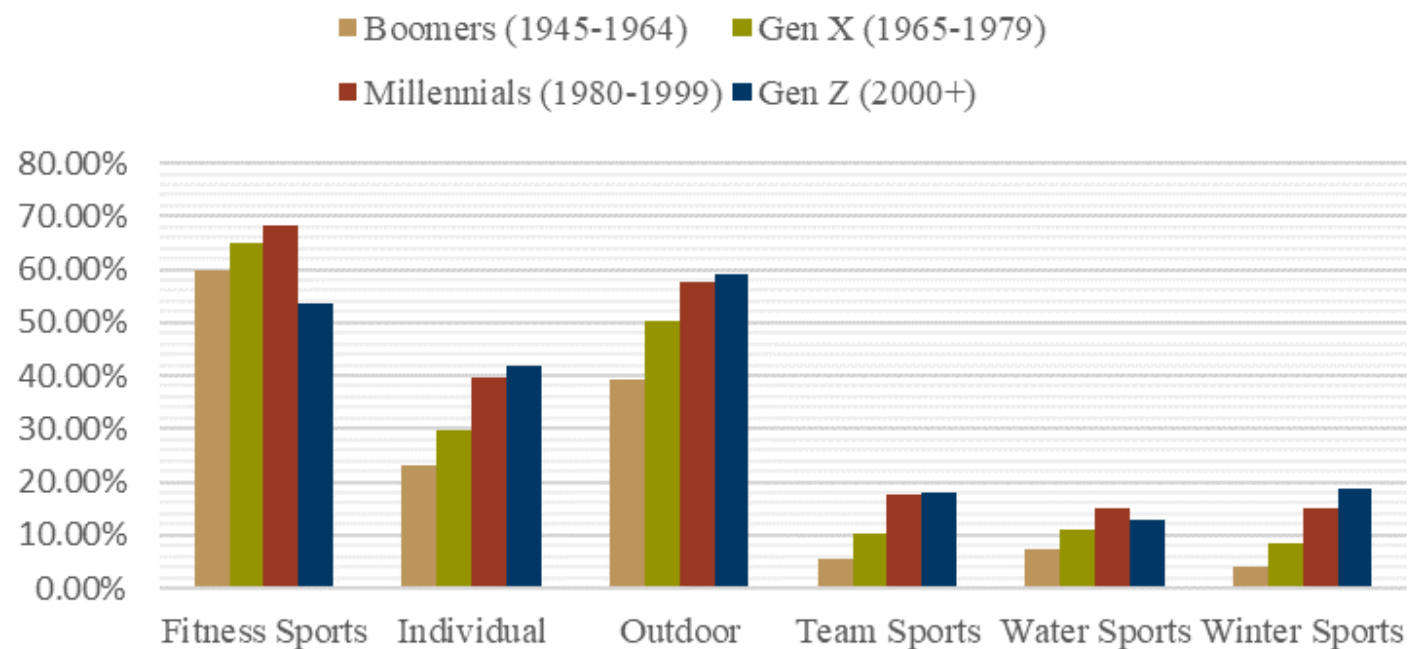
In 2017, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources updated the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Household Survey, or SCORP, that was last conducted in 2004. This survey has been a valuable tool for communities all around the state of Minnesota as it provides insight to impacts that recreation providers have had on Minnesotans, and can gauge the responsiveness from residents to best offer programs. One of the more significant outcomes of this survey included positive news that outdoor activities are an increasingly an important part of most Minnesotan's lives. Previous 2004, data suggested outdoor recreation participation was on the decline. This caused concern for public agencies charged with providing outdoor recreation. The 2017 survey results indicate that from 2004 to 2017, the percentage of Minnesotans who reported that outdoor activities are very important skyrocketed from 57 to 70 percent.

How people spend their days at work, with their families and in leisure time have seen rapid change in the last few decades which coincides with rapid technological advances. Although Minnesotans increasingly are finding outdoor activities as an important aspect of their lives, overall trends in recreation and outdoor activities continue to feel new effects. As dynamics shift, a number of the traditional nature based activities are still declining.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Recreation Plan, outdoor Recreation Participation Minnesota is not escaping this broad trend—evident since the 1990s—of declining per-capita participation in nature-based outdoor recreation in the United States. This is a national trend that impacts national parks, national trails, state parks, state trails and other outdoor recreational facilities. It includes activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and wilderness use (Kelly, 2008).

The Statewide Outdoor Recreation Household Survey shows the decline in recreation activities in Minnesota is not as large as the national decline, however, it is still present and something to address. The primary driving factor behind this trend is a decline in involvement among young adults (ages 20–45) and their children. Today's young adults and youth are not as engaged in traditional nature-based activities as older generations were. Declines in participation translates to a decrease of the number of Minnesotans that receive the personal and community benefits

2019 Participation by Generation



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## Other Key Takeaways

- 

85% of residents rated the City as an excellent or good place to live
- 

Ranking for fitness opportunities, health and wellness are on par with national averages
- 

Ratings for recreational opportunities are lower in comparison to the national benchmark.  
•Prior to 2018, recreation opportunities were primarily conducted by temporary interns. Ramsey is in early development stages of programming recreation offerings.
- 

In regards to governance, 76% of citizens rated City parks at positive, and 59% rated recreation centers as positive.  
•There is not a City-owned recreation center in Ramsey. Respondents may have been referring to school facilities or private businesses.
- 

50% of citizens stated they had attended a City-sponsored event, up from 42% in 2016.  
•Major City-sponsored events include: Safety Camp, The Draw Summer Concert Series, Happy Days, pet clinics, recycling events, Night to Unite, and the Spring Business Expo.
- 

17% of residents have volunteered in the community  
•Lower than comparable communities. Between 2014 and 2018, approximately half of residents have consistently rated opportunities to volunteer positively. This may be indicative of a population who is willing to volunteer at higher rates if opportunities are present.
- 

87% of residents visited a park in Ramsey.

of outdoor recreation. These include physical activity, social and family bonding, sense of place, community pride and overall quality of life benefits that being active outdoors produces.

On a promising note, findings also revealed that Minnesotans see the outdoors as a place to rest and relax, connect with family and friends, and improve their health. The Minnesota Statewide Outdoor Recreation Household Survey suggests a number of interesting possibilities: that Minnesotans prefer activities that require less equipment or advanced skills, and/or that they have not had the opportunity to develop interests and skills to participate in other activities. Programs which provide introduction to the outdoors, access to equipment or help develop skills necessary for outdoor recreation may be an additional area of exploration for Ramsey programs. These types of opportunities may also lead to more engagement from young adults and their children, to rekindle engagement in traditional nature-based activities that older generations experienced. Another positive highlight from the survey denotes that in general, younger Minnesotans participate in more activities, by total number and frequency, than older Minnesotans.

### Recreation Trends in Ramsey

The Community Livability Report is conducted on a biannual basis to better understand residents' perception of Ramsey and their level of local engagement. Data is used to identify trends over time in the community, as well as a benchmark comparison to similar cities around the country. Information gathered from studies such as this may be gathered and referenced further promote the City's responsiveness to residents and stay on top of changing trends and participation.

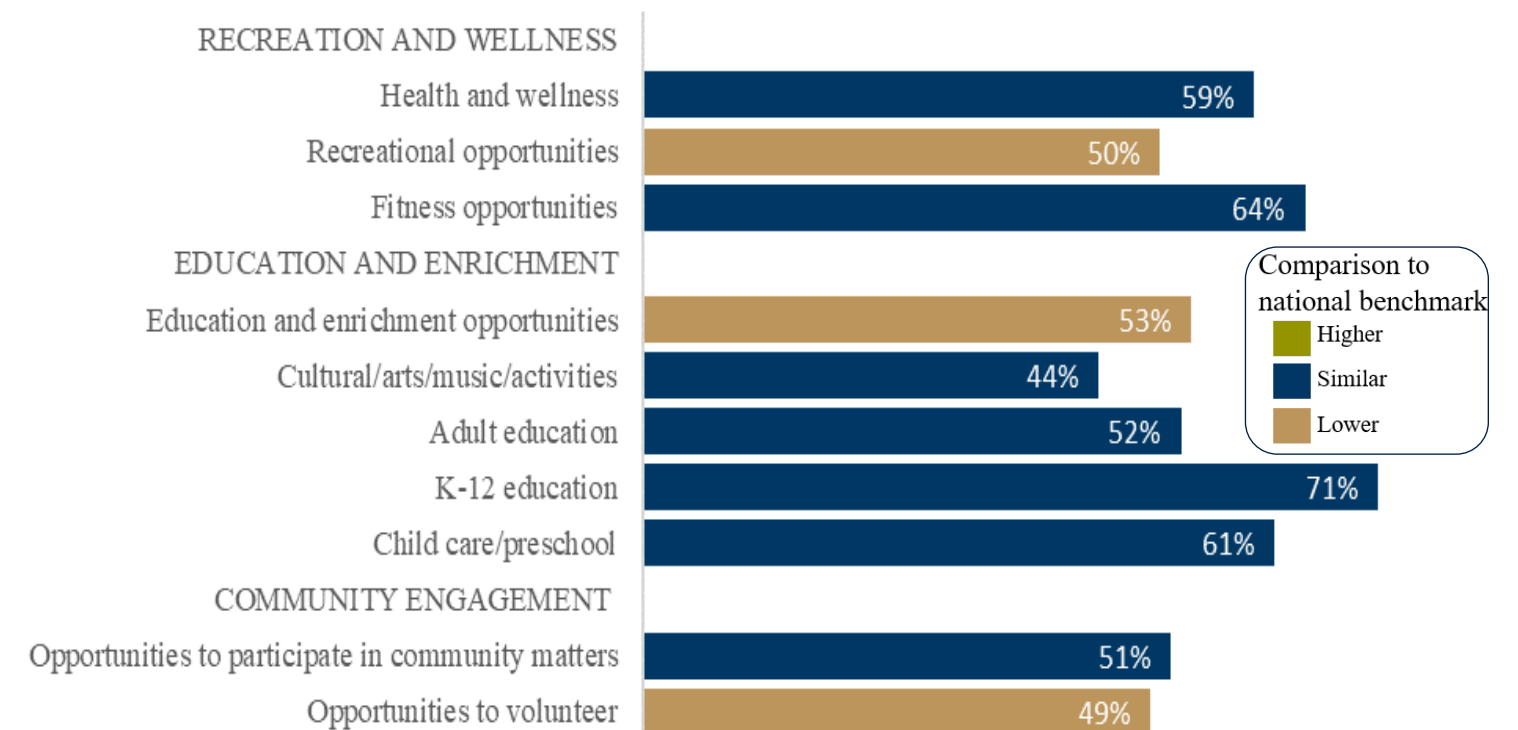
Similar to the Minnesota Statewide Outdoor Recreation Household Survey, promising new trends in recreation and community engagement are emerging in Ramsey. In 2018, the Community Livability Report reveals several factors that suggest Ramsey is headed in the right direction. Overall, ratings in Ramsey for 2018 generally remained stable. Of the 94 items which comparisons were available, 78 items were rated similarly in 2016 and 2018. An increase was seen in 16 items, and no items showed a decrease in ratings. The lack of items showing a decrease in ratings suggests residents are content and even excited for the direction city staff and elected officials are bringing Ramsey.

Survey respondents were more likely in 2018 to favorably rate aspects of government performance such as welcoming citizen involvement and overall confidence in City government. In the pillar of Community Characteristics, Ramsey residents were more likely in 2018 than in 2016 to give positive ratings to the city as a place to retire as well as to employment, fitness and cultural/arts/music activities.

The recent development of Ramsey committing to establish itself as a recreation provider is likely a factor to the increase in benchmarks, and can provide further opportunities to improve and enhance the experience of being a Ramsey Resident. This survey took place prior to the decision to allocate a permanent staff member exclusively to recreation programming when the city was in the early stages of offering the first recreation programs. City staff are optimistic that benchmarks will continue to increase with the commitment to developing recreation offerings in Ramsey.



## Citizen Survey Results: Aspects of Community Characteristics, 2018 Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)



## SECTION 3 | REACHES OF RECREATION

### INTRODUCTION

City leaders, educators, parents, are among those who have rediscovered the value of recreation. A larger proportion of time spent both at work and at home is in front of screens, this trend coincides with less time spent outdoors and recreating than previous generations. With these rapid changes, the benefits gained of outdoor and recreation participation are diminished.

The Ramsey Parks and Recreation Departments is well positioned to add value into the community by providing opportunities for residents to engage in recreation programming that promotes healthy living and community development.

This section will first introduce the status of recreation opportunities in Ramsey and surrounding areas. Following, a set of recommendations are presented upon the results of various surveys to help direct Ramsey in developing a successful future as a recreation provider.

The latter portion of this section will delve deep into the impacts recreation. It is divided up into two portions; impact on the community, and impact on the individual. The reach that recreation can have on communities development is often a second thought. It can be a great benefit to community planning to put these impacts to the forefront as a way to enhance the lives of residents and the well-being of the community .



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## RECREATION NEEDS SURVEY

### Summary

Inventories and surveys are valuable methods to collect data that can help operations. Regular data collection may help parks and recreation departments better predict the direction in which they are headed and properly respond to residents' perceptions. While inventories and surveys focus on different measurements, both aspects are essential pieces of information for decision makers.

Surveys offer insight into the interests of residents and allow organizations to create more targeted program offerings for their respective community. Surveys tend to come in the form of a questionnaire aimed at gathering opinions about specific programs. Some may be open ended to gain a wider perspective of thoughts.

Inventories provide specific information about the surrounding markets. For example, an inventory for recreation programs may include information such as: what has been offered, the geographic distance of offerings, and the demand for program areas. Instead of reaching out to individuals for opinions on surveys, inventories target objective data points from other recreation providers. Information is typically gathered from websites, brochures, and direct contact.

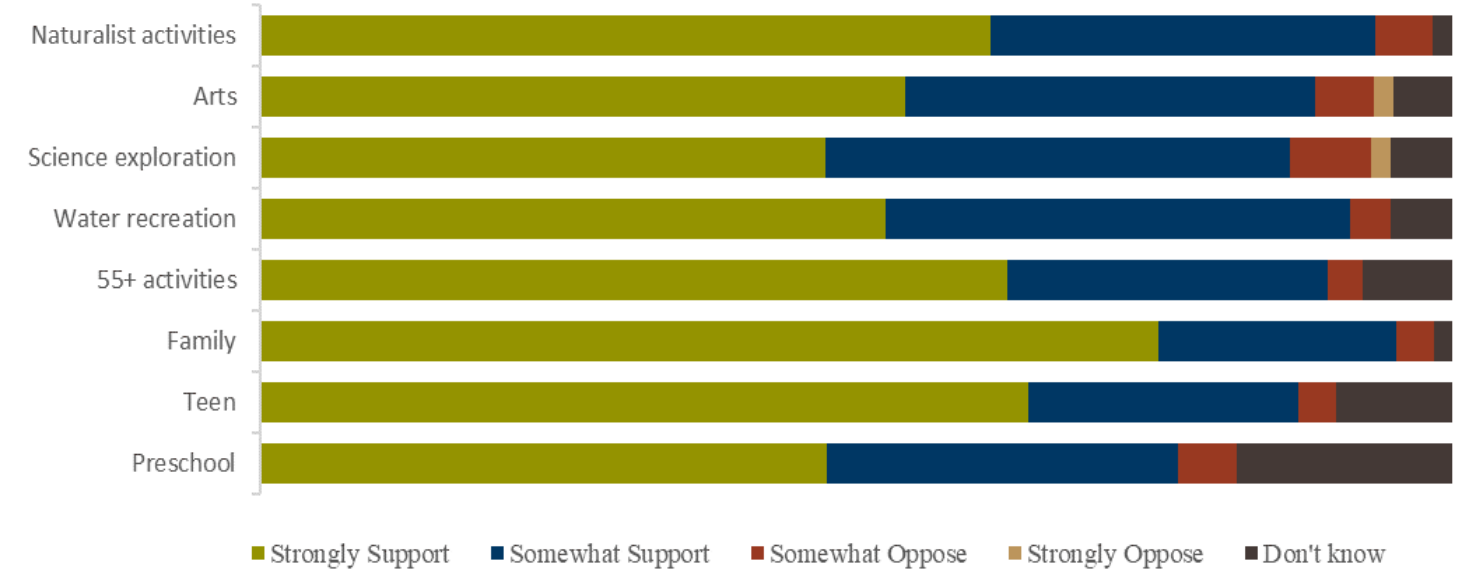
Parks and recreation departments can use information from both surveys and inventories to offer programs that add value to the surrounding community, and not compete with it. They also give city staff insight to public perceptions on established and potential programs.

### Surveys and Inventories in Ramsey

In 2015, city staff conducted a Recreation Inventory Analysis to determine offerings within a 15 minute drive of the city. The purpose of this inventory was to assess the current state of offerings in the surrounding communities, and determine a potential market for the City of Ramsey as a recreation provider. Public and private entities from the following areas were included: Anoka County Parks, Andover, Blaine, Champlin, Coon Rapids, Elk River, Maple Grove, Nowthen, Ramsey, Rogers, Three Rivers Park District, Elk River School District 728, and Anoka-Hennepin School District 11.

The list of programs gathered from this study were separated into a total of 127 various categories. From there, programs were

Aside from partnering with organizations to provide youth athletic programming, the City presently provides little recreation and leisure programming. Please indicate which, if any of the following types of programming the City should consider.



### Findings Overall Trends:

further classified by age group and activity level (athletic, athletic non-competitive, and athletic competitive). Finally, details of each offering were recorded alongside categorizations. Information from the 2015 Recreation Inventory Analysis reiterated the need for Ramsey to provide recreation programming for the residents. The inventory also helped to identify specific areas of programming may be most beneficial to residents.

Following the conclusion of the Recreation Inventory Analysis, a Recreation Opportunities Survey was conducted as a means to gather more specific information, input from the community, and to be responsive to the residents. However, it is important to note that this survey concluded in March 2017, just two months after light programming had first begun in the City of Ramsey.

The information gathered from the Recreation Inventory Analysis alongside the citizen input from the Recreation Opportunities Survey reveals a quickly growing community with interest in recreation programs, but few opportunities in the immediate vicinity. It is important for offerings to be geographically convenient, as 65 percent of outdoor participants traveled 10 miles or less for recreation, with the average being 16 miles (Outdoor Foundation, 2017).

Ramsey residents found themselves with a need to drive to neighboring cities for recreation opportunities. The City of Ramsey does not have a recreation center to provide programming, and has a two privately owned small gyms. Historically, the primary provider or any type of recreation programming in Ramsey has been Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association which focuses on youth sports leagues. While these programs have been popular, there is still a gap in other areas of recreation such as: senior, educational, outdoor/nature, art, and family programming. Survey results support strong positive feedback to provide additional recreation opportunities of all types from the City. As an outcome of the Recreation Inventory Analysis, city staff identified key areas to focus programming based upon resident interest and results of the Recreation Inventory Analysis: revamp of traditional programs, physical activities, education based programs, nature based programs, senior programs, and youth programs. Categories are purposefully broad to both ensure there are opportunities for all, and allow for adaptation alongside city growth. These focus areas have also been identified due to their ability to positively impact the community, and they fall into the scope of programs that meet expectations of residents.

**Revamp of Traditional Programs:**

The Recreation Opportunities Survey showed strong interest from Ramsey residents in family programming, naturalist activities, water recreation, senior programming and art programming. Approximately 75 percent of Ramsey residents stated they were “likely” or “extremely likely” to attend a program centered around outdoor recreation. These subjects encompass areas that parks and recreation departments traditionally program. A revamp of these programs could engage a wide breadth of residents. Some recommended programming in this category may include:

- Programming for all ages and abilities for emerging recreational activities such as stand-up paddle boarding, bubble soccer, ultimate Frisbee, and gardening
- Utilization of new and upcoming technology in programming. Past examples are activities such as geocaching, application based services such as iNaturalist, and Pokemon Go
- New twists on common programming like combining wine and cheese tasting with an art class for adults 21+.

**Physical Activities:**

Physical activity programs can also include youth sports and recreational adult leagues. Although the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association has a large number of participants, preschool aged introductory programs are one area where Ramsey could fill in the gap. In addition, the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association focuses primarily on sports leagues, leaving room for programming in other physical recreation areas such as informal activity, training, and general outdoor programs. Adult recreational leagues are another area that can be pursued in partnership with neighboring cities, but often require hiring and training referees/officials. In the future, other fitness opportunities may include:

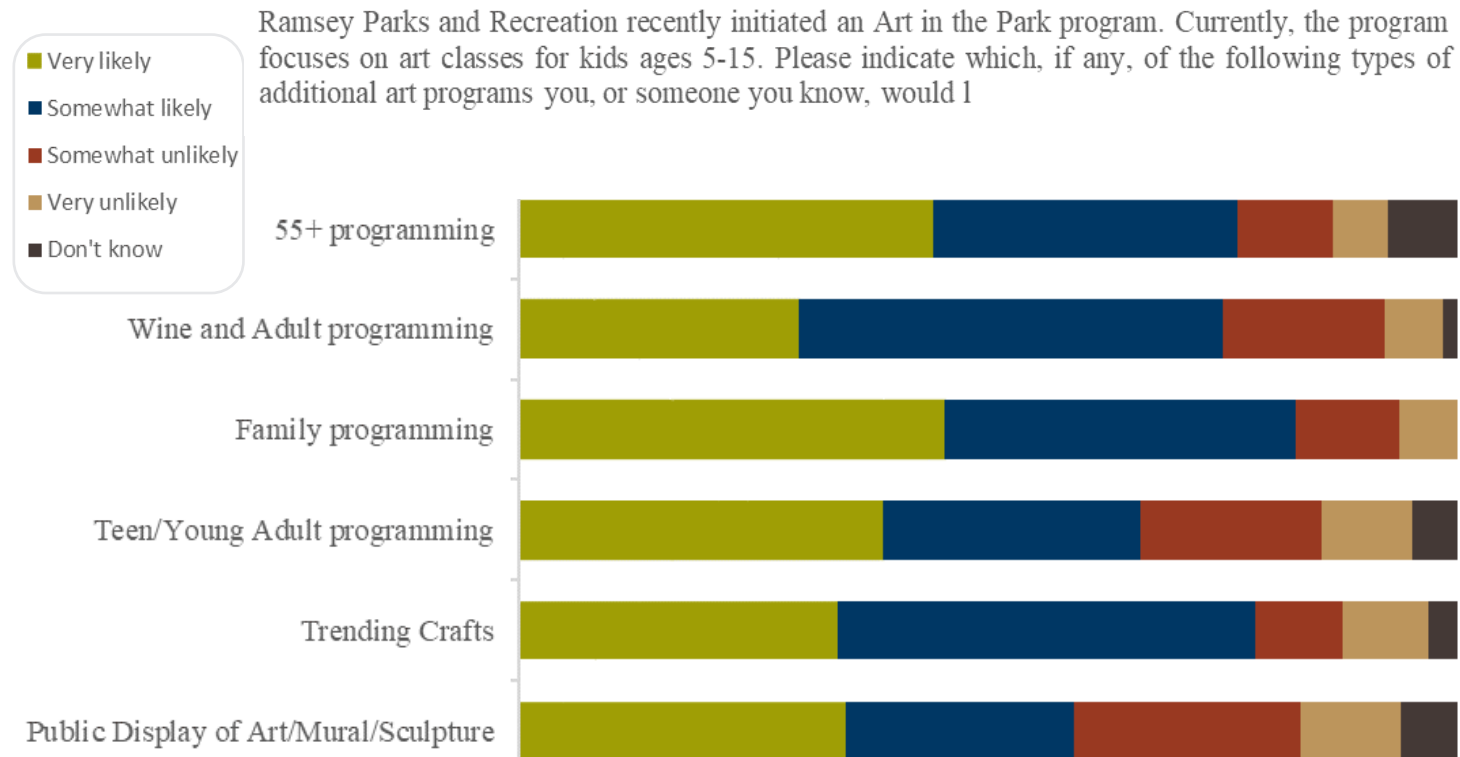
- Pilates, boot camps, strength, cardio kick-boxing, aerobics, core, and senior-focused classes.
- Line dancing, yoga in the parks, zumba, and meditation classes have been upon some historically successful programs offered by Ramsey, starting around 2017.
- Until there is a dedicated fitness/recreation facility, classes should require little to no equipment due to storage and transportation.

Those who participate in and make recreation a priority are more likely to feel satisfied with their lives overall. Benefits reach all age groups and can range from learning new skills, a sense of inclusion/accomplishment, and relationship building.

Lifelong learners not only provide a sense of life fulfillment, it can actually improve emotional balance and help avoid depression.

Youth are more inclined to learn in outdoor settings and tend to develop better attitudes towards the environment and more responsible behaviors.

Older adult education programs provide significant benefits such as: improved memory, increased self-confidence, break down barriers to try something new, and can help create a sense of inclusion in their community.



**Education Based Programs:**

While opportunities for learning can include many different avenues, many parks and recreation agencies target older adult learning programs, youth learning, and some general community classes. General programming that holds significant benefits to specific groups are often offered with nominal fees in order to eliminate barriers to participation and provide the most overall community enrichment. More specialized education programs often charge low fees to recover instructor and material cost. Fee setting policy is further discussed in Section Five.

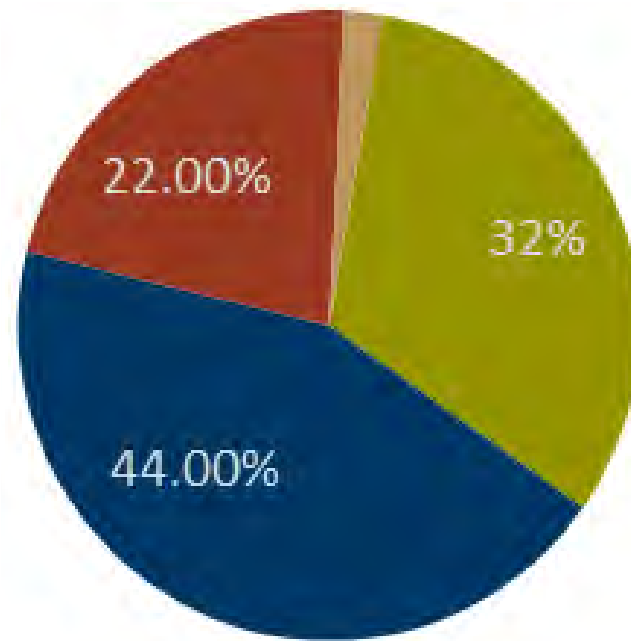
One-fourth of survey respondents in the Recreation Opportunities Survey said they are “extremely likely” to attend a program centered on learning, which demonstrated a reasonable path to forward for the future success of education based programs in Ramsey. Another avenue is outdoor or nature education. Many education based programs have overlap with nature based programs, touched on further in the following subsection. Offering a Lunch with a Naturalist series could be popular as either an indoor or outdoor program.

Other areas that may be beneficial for the City of Ramsey to pursue are:

- Education based programs have a lot of flexibility and breadth that they can cover. The opportunities are nearly endless. Successful programs can come in the form of hands on, formal, informal, activity or place based, and even project based.
- Early education programs for preschool aged youth to explore and develop their skillset. These programs may look like Art in the Park offerings, day camps, and general unstructured play in the parks.
- Summer day camps are popular education based youth programs as they can be easily adapted to the interests of the community and change from year to year.
- The Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer Certification was a popular offering in 2019-2020 for adults in the City of Ramsey to both learn about Minnesota’s natural heritage, but gain expertise on how to engage environmental education in the community.

## How likely are you to attend a program centered around outdoor recreation?

- Extremely likely
- Likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely



### Nature Based Programs:

Outdoor recreation is a major program area for recreation agencies, especially in Minnesota. Over 70 percent of respondents in the Recreation Opportunities Survey say they are “likely” or “extremely likely” to attend an outdoor recreation program.

Ramsey has ample parks and open space that can host such programs, however, one barrier the City of Ramsey may run into may be securing instructors and potential equipment needs.

In 2017, Ramsey began to break into recreation offerings. A few outdoor based programs were first offered in partnership with Anoka County Parks and staff at Wargo Nature Center. Classes offered included birding, canoing, kayaking, and stand-up paddle-boarding. The birding class was offered three times in the spring when there is minimal tree coverage. While there was low attendance, it received very positive feedback. The stand-up paddle-boarding class had full participation with seven people. The instructor taught the basics and ensure all were comfortable on the water. They then moved into more free-time and exploring the lake. One person said it was “lots of fun. Two hours was just the perfect amount of time as was the Sunfish Lake location.” Numerous participants said the instructor was

“terrific, knowledgeable, patient, and very helpful.” The kayaking class was canceled due to weather. Although Anoka County Parks received positive feedback, difficulties arose in regards scheduling, registration, and instructor/equipment availability. Since the first nature based programs were offered in Ramsey, additional partnerships have been secured until the City of Ramsey as resources to offer all programs at full capacity. In the future, assuming instructor and equipment availability works out, potential outdoor recreation programs could include:

- Paddling programs on the lakes and Rum River for all levels.
- Skill based programs such as camping, birding, fishing.
- Interpretive programs such as hiking with a naturalist, full moon hikes, maple syrup tapping.
- Special events to boost attendance, such as events for Earth Day, Arbor Day and nature based volunteer events.
- To ensure program success, programs should be offered at various levels to include all age groups, backgrounds and abilities.

### Senior Programming:

Senior or 55+ programs are a popular category for recreation providers, especially as the Baby Boomer generation ages. In 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 13 percent of the U.S. population was 65+, five years later that percentage rose to 14.9 percent. Seniors are a growing segment of the population that wants to stay active and involved in their community. By 2025, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the senior population will rise by nearly 38 percent. By 2040, seniors will represent approximately 21.7 percent of the population, which will be larger than the percentage of the population under the age of 18.

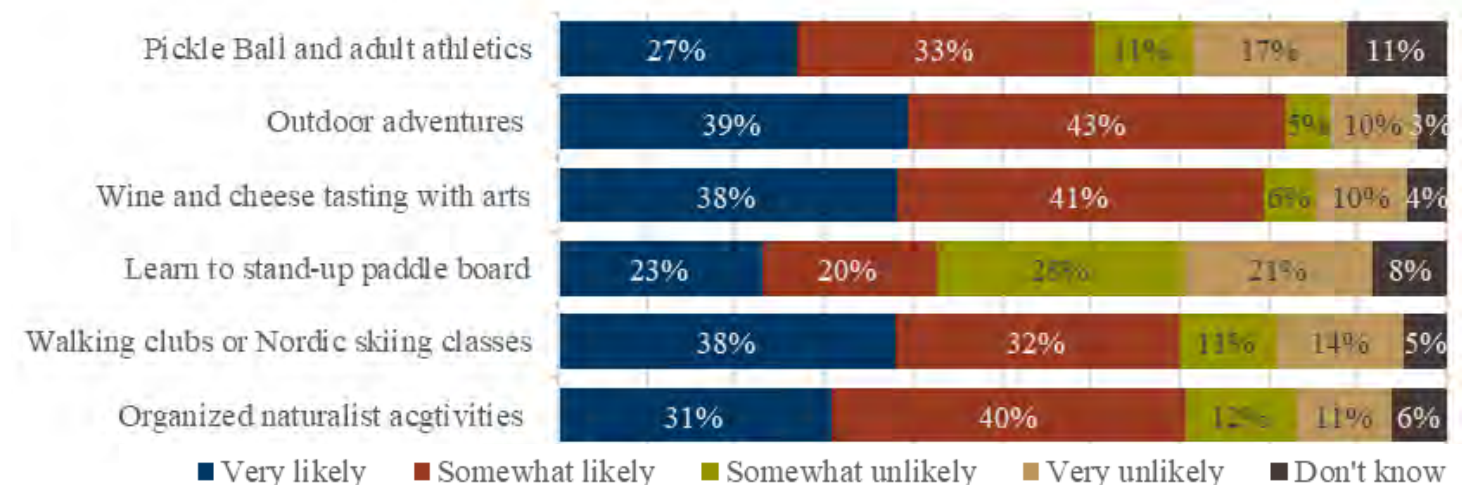
More than nine in 10 park and recreation agencies offer specific programming for older adults. Nearly three-quarters of local parks and recreation agencies are a leader in their respective communities for providing programs for older adults (NRPA & Roth, 2017). The City of Ramsey has the potential to play a significant role in enhancing the lives of the older adults residents by providing opportunities to build skills, feel included in the community, and gain skills to live an active and healthy life for many years to come.

In the City of Ramsey, few recreation programs have been offered specifically for seniors. Some popular programs have included yoga, plein air painting, and access to pickleball courts.

Other community senior program providers tend to be senior centers, they often offer programs for older adults and their care givers on topics such as offering care or a support group for those with memory loss. This is one potential area for the City of Ramsey to look into for a potential partnership and to best utilize staff resources between both agencies. Successful older adult programming overlaps with previously mentioned program areas. Some programs that may be of interest and benefit to Ramsey’s older adult population are:

- Outdoor and athletic programming for ages 55+ such as assisted outdoor adventures, pickleball clubs and classes, walking clubs, birding hikes, and adapted programs such as seated yoga
- Gardening programs and educational series. Opportunities exist to utilize Ramsey’s community gardens and partner with Minnesota Master Gardeners.
- Outdoor Adventures for seniors that include field trips to neighboring parks and communities.
- Art programs such as art clubs and introductory programs
- Practical skills such as personal finance and defensive driving

## Please indicate which, if any, of the following types of leisure and recreation activities geared towards the 55+ community, that you, or someone you know, would likely participate in.





XXXXXXXXXXXX



XXXXXXXXXXXX

**Youth Programming:**

Many recreation providers play a large role in youth development in a community. The City of Ramsey has a youth population that is growing as populations increase and more families begin to settle down in the City. This growth in youth is demonstrated by the opening and filling of a new elementary school within Ramsey's borders. This brings Ramsey's elementary school count up to two, however, there are no middle or high schools within the City's borders, leaving an opening for teen programs. Youth programming provides significant benefits to children who participate, as well as enriches the community as a whole, more on this is discussed in detail in the next section, Reaches of Recreation. The City of Ramsey could benefit from:

- A safe place for teen gathering/teen specific programming. This could include after-school programs in the parks.
- Accessible programming to include children with special needs.
- Out of school time programming for youth and enrichment programs for days off/summer breaks.
- Programming for the whole family and intergenerational programming to increase bonds and build community relationships.
- Enrichment programs for youth to develop skills and boost confidence, some of these may be art programs and other introductory programs.
- As the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association offers significant youth sports league programs, there is a gap for Ramsey Parks and Recreation to Informal athletic and active programming such as programs that allow for unstructured play and skill-based programs.

A large concern in the last decade has been the impact of screen time and social media. In 2000 about 1 in 4 teens used the Internet. Today, nearly 100% of teens are on the Internet, increasingly so in their spare time with the rise of social media.

In a 2019 report by Common Sense Media found tweens spent 4 hours and 44 minutes of leisure time in front of a screen, compared to 7 hours and 22 minutes for teens. In both groups, youth in lower-income homes used nearly two more hours of screen media per day compared to youth in higher income homes.

About 40% of a young-to middle-adolescent's week is comprised of free time (Witt, Caldwell, 2010). If an adolescent uses this time wisely and is engaged in healthy, positive recreation experiences, he or she is much more likely to become a fully functioning adult.

A recent study examined most common ways 15 to 17 year old youth spend their time and found on average, the three most common activities were: sleep (9.5 hours a day), school (5 hours per day), and watching TV (2.4 hours for boys and 2.2 hours for girls). Sports and exercise received about 1 hour for boys and 28 minutes for girls (Wright, Price, Bianchi, and Hunt, 2009).



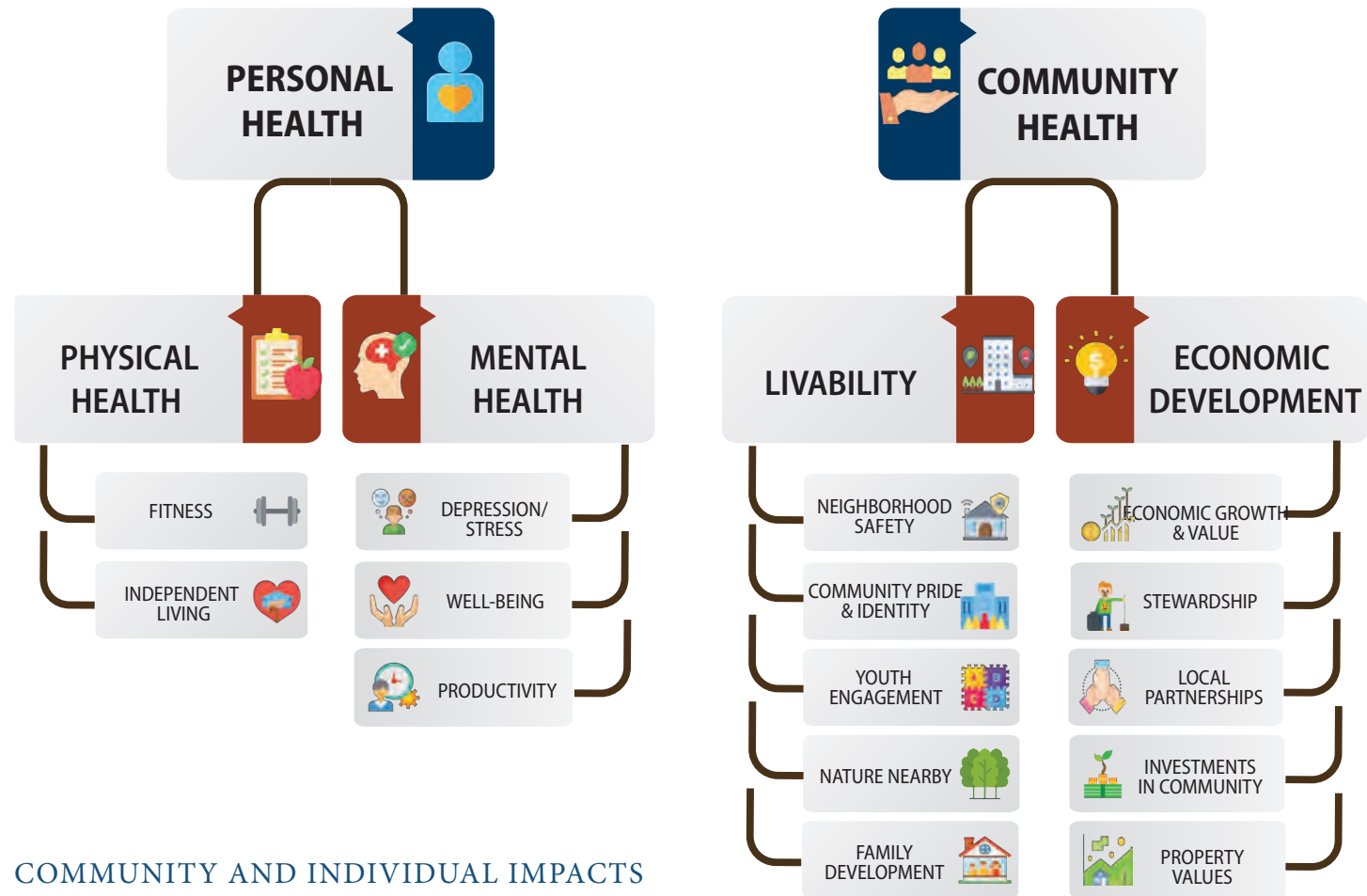
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**What This Means for Ramsey**

Overall, the outcomes of these surveys support resident interest in recreation opportunities. The City of Ramsey has potential to be successful and significantly impact the community as a recreation provider by meeting the interests of residents for unique programs for all groups to be excited, engaged, and connected to their surrounding community.

Additionally, parks and recreation services want to acknowledge areas that are successful to ensure continuation. The survey affirmed the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association is a valuable partner to offer residents a variety of physical sport activities. Page 69 will talk more about partnerships in recreation programming, and Page 110 will outline targeted goals and strategies to expand programming.

# IMPACTS OF RECREATION



## COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS

The multifaceted nature of parks and recreation services allows service providers to have sweeping impacts across both the community and individual level. Often times, the added value of parks and recreation services goes unrecognized which can lead to underutilization of these significant benefits. The impact of parks and recreation services has been a popular topic of study by professionals and scientists. Researchers have now identified more than 100 unique benefits of recreation. The impacts range from increasing property values, lowering the risk of preventable diseases, attracting businesses, uniting communities, to even reducing symptoms of mental health disorders.

The following section will summarize *some* of the ways recreation can have an impact on the well-being of residents

and in Ramsey’s community development. The remainder of this section is separated into three organization levels, as noted above. Going forward, it is necessary to note many categories have overlapping impacts and may not fit solely into one category. The highest level is a distinction between personal health and community health. A second level exists to further specify the type of impact within the section.

Personal Health is organized into subcategories of Physical Health and Mental Health. On the Community Health side, impacts fall under Livability or Economic Development. Finally, the third tier defines a specific impact of recreation, with detailed information found later in this section.

## PROMOTING PERSONAL HEALTH

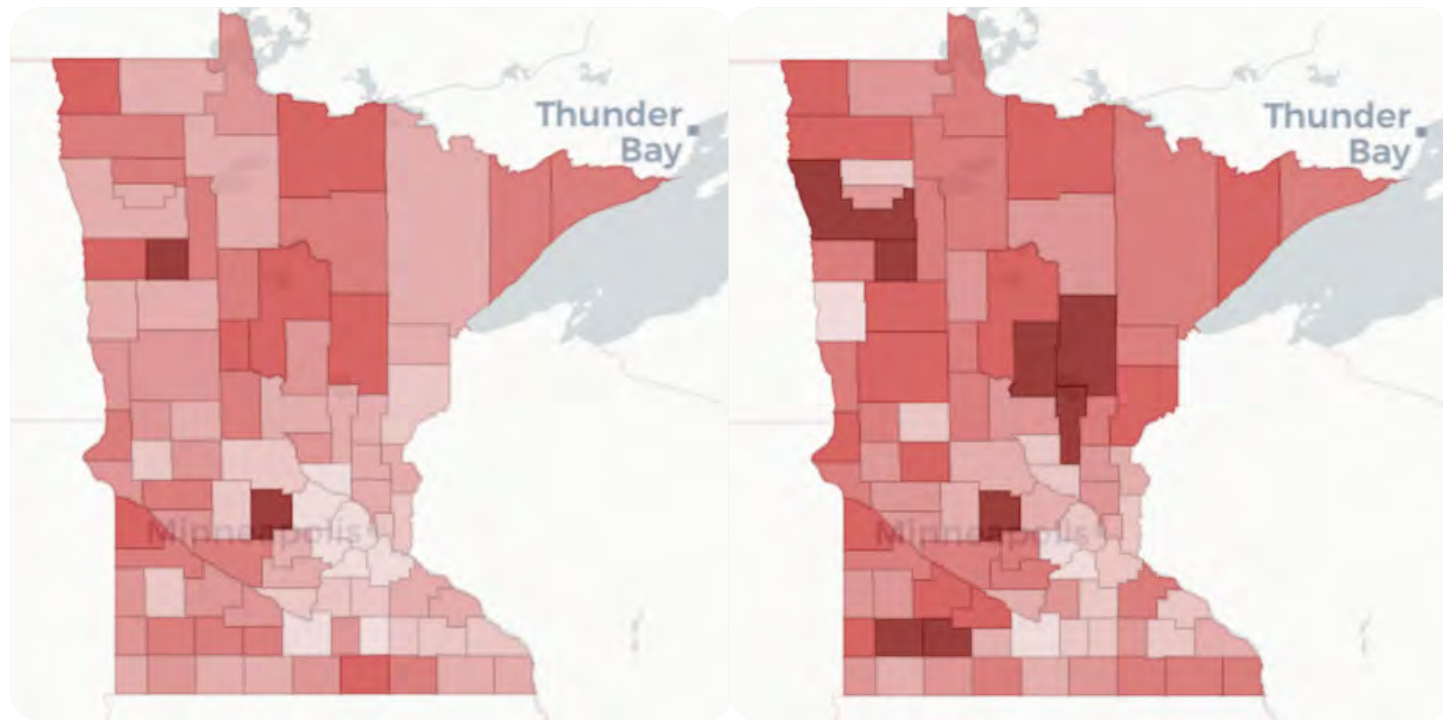
As of 2019, there have been over 400 studies just on the topic of the numerous health benefits that nature provides. Most of the research on health and nature has focused on physical health. Many of the benefits discovered are helpful in preventing leading causes of chronic disease, including stress reduction; reduced blood pressure; faster healing; addiction recovery; and reduced cardiovascular, respiratory and long-term illness.

The benefits of time spent outdoors and exposure to green-spaces on cognitive development continues to be increasingly recognized and researched in the field of education, human development, among policy makers and city officials. Studies continue to affirm nature’s positive effects on attentional restoration, reduced mental fatigue, improved academic

performance, improved cognitive function in children and improved productivity. In terms of mental health for all ages, increased self-esteem, improved mood, reduced anger/frustration, and reduced anxiety have all been demonstrated as key outcomes documented by research on the impact of nature on individuals.

The Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation plan notes: a less well-known, but critically important benefit of time outdoors is the positive social effects at an individual or community public health scale. Several articles have found that nature facilitates social interaction, enables social empowerment, reduces crime rates and violence, and enables interracial interaction, among other positive social behaviors

“There’s a direct link between a lack of exposure to nature and higher rates of attention-deficit disorder, obesity, and depression. In essence, parks and recreation agencies can and are becoming the ‘preferred provider’ for offering this preventative healthcare.” – Fran P. Mainella, former director of the National Park Service and Instructor at Clemson University.



5.6% - 7% 7% - 7.8% 7.8% - 8.5% 8.5% - 9.1% 9.1% - 9.8% 9.8% - 10.9% 10.9% - 13.9%

Percentage of the population in each county diagnosed with diabetes

**Physical Health**  
Fitness

Sedentary lifestyles over the past several decades have progressively increased, especially throughout North America and Europe. Physical inactivity can have potentially serious health effects including several forms of cancer, diabetes, hypertension, coronary and cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and all cause mortality, to name a few. With a larger portion of the population experiencing the effects of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, incidences of these diseases and disorders increase, life expectancy may decrease, and medicine costs will continue to rise (Knight, 2012).

Failure to engage in sufficient physical activity may have serious consequences. An example of this can be seen in Minnesota. Type 2 diabetes is largely preventable by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Exercise along with diet, and habits such as smoking play a large role in the development of this disease. From 2014 to 2018, nearly every county statewide has seen an increase in the proportion of residents who have been diagnosed with diabetes. An estimated 10.8 percent of all deaths in the United States are considered preventable and attributable to physical inactivity.



**WHAT IS SEDENTARY BEHAVIOR?**

In general, sedentary behavior refers to Any waking behavior characterized by a low level of energy expenditure (less than or equal to 1.5 METs) while sitting, reclining, or lying. The guidelines operationalizes the definition of sedentary behavior to include self-reported sitting (leisure-time, occupational, and total), television (TV-viewing or screen time, and low levels of movement measured by devices that assess movement or posture. Standing is another activity with low energy expenditure, but it is distinct from sedentary behavior in how it affects health.

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018)

Physical activity affects multiple systems in the body, particularly the circulatory and musculature systems. One in three U.S. adults over age 20 have hypertension, a cause of both heart disease and stroke. This number is even higher among African Americans, as 44 percent are affected (Cohen, Sturm, Han, & Marsh, 2014).

For adults, the United States Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes to 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. per day five or more days per week and 20 or more minutes of vigorous activity per day four or more days per week.

Only one in three children are physically active every day (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). Early and ongoing opportunities for physical activity are necessary to start at an early age for maximum benefit. Health-related behaviors and disease risk factors track from childhood to adulthood (Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment, Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine , Kohl HW III, & Cook HD, 2013).

Only one-quarter of Anoka County Residents met the recommendation for either vigorous or moderate physical activity. Approximately 22 percent of residents reported they had not participated in any physical activity or exercise in the past 30 days, a slight increase from 15 percent in 2013. In Anoka County, over one-third of residents are considered obese and another one-third are overweight, comparable to statewide benchmarks. (Anoka County, 2018).



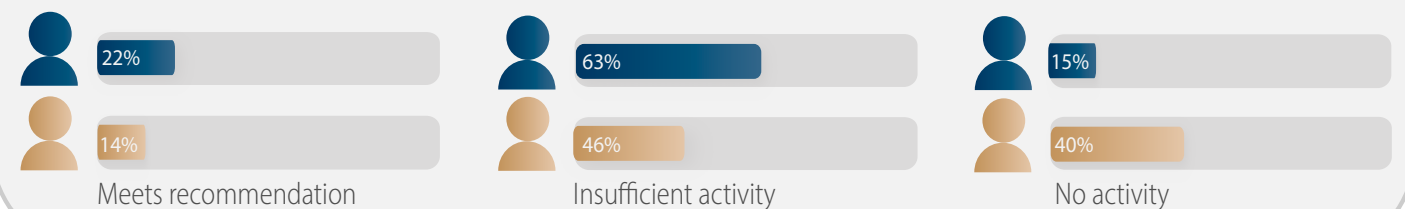
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**ANOKA COUNTY RESIDENTS MEETING RECOMMENDED MODERATE OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Moderate Activity  
Vigorous Activity



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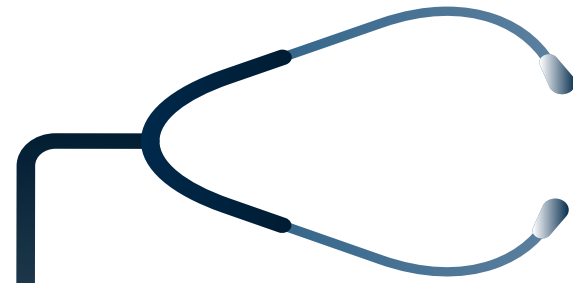
A primarily unhealthy community has an economic impact on everybody, regardless of their personal habits. In 2000, medical costs in Minnesota associated with obesity were \$1.3 billion (Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn & Wang, 2003). A total of 33 U.S. Studies met review criteria. Among the 4 highest quality studies, the 2008 per-person direct medical cost of overweight was \$266 and of obesity was \$1723. The aggregate national cost of overweight and obesity combined was \$113.9 billion (Tsai, Williamson, Glick). It is a safe assumption that these numbers today are equal to or greater than the statistics listed previously, as obesity and health care costs have been on the rise. [cite example cost of insulin cost in 2000, 2008, 2020]

The US Centers for Disease Control found that creating places and opportunities for physical activity could lead to a 25 percent increase in the number of people who exercise at least three days a week (Recreation Management, 2007).

In addition to opportunities for physical activity, just proximity to nature provides positive benefits to physical health. Neighborhoods with more greenspace between homes and a greater proportion of park area are associated with greater physical activity in young children (Roemmich et al., 2006). Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. Research done in hospitals, offices, and schools has found that even a simple plant in a room can have a significant impact on stress and anxiety. Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress and increases pleasant feelings. (University of Minnesota's Earl. E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, 2016).

Parks and recreation departments are able to foster connections between residents and nature around them. This happens through infrastructure provided for informal activities, as well as programmed activities to encourage fitness and outdoor activities. Albeit, exercise and nature alone will not prevent every disease out there, but it is a step in the right direction for increasing health markers, preventative measures, and has proven effects to improve prognosis for those who are suffering with various illnesses. The Center for Disease Control and prevention recognizes new evidence of physical activity, and doctors have even begun to prescribe time outside for various physiological and mental illnesses.

## NEW EVIDENCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BENEFITS



- Improved bone health and weight status for children ages 3 through 5 years
- Improved cognitive function for youth ages 6 to 13 years.
- Reduced risk of cancer at a greater number of sites.
- Brain health benefits, including possible improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety and depression risk, and improved sleep and quality of life.
- For pregnant women, reduced risk of excessive weight gain, gestational diabetes, and postpartum depression.
- For older adults, reduced risk of fall-related injuries.
- For people with various chronic medical conditions, reduced risk of all-cause and disease-specific mortality, improved physical function, and improved quality of life.

*Evidence for the benefits of physical activity has continued to grow since 2008 Guidelines from [insert citation source name] were published. Here are just a few of recently identified benefits. \*CDC cited doc*



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### Independent Living

Recreation services are a valuable asset as we age. Minnesota has consistently been a national leader for various health measures, including life expectancy. Today the average life expectancy in Minnesota is 80.9 years (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2020), with Ramsey just about on par with the average at 80.0 years. As much of Ramsey's population transitions into their golden years, the Department wants to ensure adequate resources to live happy and healthy lives.

It is no surprise there are significant benefits of physical activity. Regular physical activity can help protect elderly residents against chronic diseases and improve their daily functioning. Recreation services have more to offer in terms of independent living and overall wellbeing of seniors. As we age, our risk of depression increases. Often, seniors who live on their own can be prone to feel cut off from their mainstream community. Recreation activities provide opportunities to socialize and reduce feelings of alienation and loneliness. With seniors active in the community there is an increase intergenerational understanding and bonding. Older adults involved in an organizational/recreation activity scored significantly better on the happiness scale than those who were not involved (California State Parks, 2005). Benefits of recreation expand well into the latter years of life. With physically and socially active seniors within our communities, it can help us all live longer, and

happier lives.

Recreation programs for seniors and older adults which can significantly enhance the lives and well beings of participants can be as simple as a competitive game of bingo, crafting, book clubs or other social groups. Social interaction provides a feelings of inclusion and happiness as well as prevents feelings of isolation. Older adults who participate in recreation activities can see increased attention span, alertness, and problem solving. Programs can be developed to aid with gross motor skills such as playing a game that requires the use of hands and fingers can provide the confidence to use those transferable skills to do daily tasks like dressing or bathing. In addition to the social and mental benefits of recreation participation, being an engaged member of the community can increase overall activity levels of all abilities.

Loneliness isn't just an uncomfortable feeling, it can actually have physical health impacts and can be attributed to premature mortality. Seniors without adequate social interaction were twice as likely to die prematurely. This is comparable to other physical health risk factors for mortality such as smoking and alcohol consumption. It exceeds the influence of other risk factors such as inactivity and obesity (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).



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**Mental Health**  
Depression/Stress

Stress has become a major contributor to poor health as society continues to trend towards faster paced and more demanding environments. Left unresolved, long-term stress can lead to immune system issues and illness. The experience of nature is one antidote to stress, and the body's positive response occurs nearly instantly. Studies show that even the visual exposure to nature, such as views of trees, grass and flowers, can effectively reduce stress, particularly if initial stress levels were high.

Major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States and is a leading cause of disability for middle-aged adults in the United States. The prevalence of depressive episodes is higher among females, both adolescents and adults, than among males. Engaging in regular physical activity reduces the risk of developing depression in children and adults and can improve many of the symptoms experienced by people with depression (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018)

Stress and anxiety have been on the rise nationally. In Anoka county, one in four residents have been told by a health care professional that they have anxiety (24 percent) or depression (23 percent). Females were twice as likely to have depression than males (Anoka County, 2018). This does not account for those who have not sought out help or a formal diagnosis, so numbers are likely higher.

Staying physically active is another common and effective way to live with mental health illnesses. Services provided by parks and recreation can be a powerful tool to help those suffering tackle some obstacles they may face. Programming allows for safe and accepting atmospheres to spend time outside, be physically active, foster social interactions and introduce residents to new skills.

Green space may even been important in preventative measures and could lower risk of psychiatric disorders. One study examined the impacts of children who grew up with the lowest levels of green space. Those with the least access to green-spaces had up to 55 percent higher risk of developing a psychiatric disorder, independent from effects of other known risk factors. Stronger association between cumulated green space and risk during childhood constitutes evidence that prolonged presence of green space is important throughout development. Loss of human–nature interactions presents a health risk, and it can also reduce peoples' appreciation of natural environments, creating negative feedback loops. In contrast, positive experiences, such as psychological restoration or social cohesion, can motivate positive ecological behaviors. Increasing urban nature could potentially provide mental health benefits while simultaneously protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services of natural environments. (Engemann et al., 2019).

**Quality of life**

It is becoming more common to identify with the activities we participate in, seeing ourselves as “hikers,” “swimmers” or “soccer players,” rather than with the positions we hold at work. Parks and natural environments also have great spiritual meaning and represent a strong sense of place for many of us. They elicit fond memories of family outings, fun times, bonding with children and freedom, representing the less stressful side of our lives. Personal and Spiritual Growth Self-expression and identity affirmation is positively reinforced through participation in recreation activities. Recreation helps us explore our inner spirit and sense of self, creating new behaviors and a new identity. This is especially important as newer generations feel effects of social media that have resulted in lower self esteem. It makes it to compare ourselves to others' online personas. Recreation activities can help subdue these negative effects as improvements are made on physical abilities and socialization.

Recreation activity is important to personal life satisfaction and those who participate in recreation are notably happier. Those who recreate more often are likely to be completely satisfied with their choice of careers, friends, and their perceived success in life. The evidence strongly suggests that participation in outdoor recreation, particularly as a child, leads people to have more satisfying and fulfilling lives. Nine out of ten outdoor recreation participants express satisfaction with their personal health and fitness while the six out of ten who don't participate are unsatisfied with their personal health and fitness (American Recreation Coalition, 2000). Close to half of those who participate in recreation several times a week say they are “completely satisfied with the quality of their lives, compared to just one quarter of nonparticipants (American Recreation Coalition, 2000). The enjoyable experiences pursued directly affect quality of life.

In addition, nature helps us cope with pain. Because we are genetically programmed to find trees, plants, water, and other nature elements engrossing, we are absorbed by nature scenes and distracted from our pain and discomfort. One classic study demonstrated the impact of nature on recovery. Patients who underwent gallbladder surgery; half had a view of trees and half had a view of a wall. According to the physician who conducted the study, Robert Ulrich, the patients with the view of trees tolerated pain better, appeared to nurses to have fewer negative effects, and spent less time in a hospital. More recent studies have shown similar results with scenes from nature and plants in hospital rooms (University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, 2016).



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**Productivity**

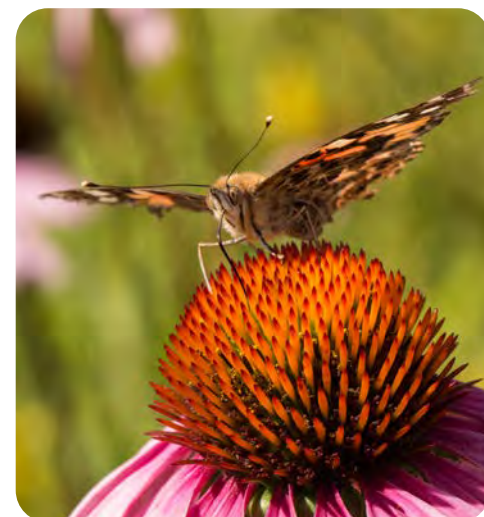
Mental, or cognitive fatigue can occur following periods of intense concentration or directed attention. Symptoms of cognitive fatigue include: irritability, lack of concentration, inability to solve problems, and increased likelihood of making mistakes or causing accidents. Working adults and students alike are prone to cognitive fatigue as there is an increased demand for their concentration for long periods, often without frequent breaks or a changes in scenery. This is especially true at a time where Americans generally tend be overworked . We have more structured activities and tasks that extend far past the end of our workdays.


More than 80 percent of the United States population now lives in developed cities and towns. Not long ago, a majority of Americans lived in rural communities where work and learning were activity based, and often associated with the land. Agriculture used to be a common occupation for Americans, whereas now only 1.3 percent of the population farms for their livelihood (USDA). Even as one of the top agricultural states, Minnesota is no exception. Overall trends categorize this area in unique period of history where it is easier and easier to become disconnected with nature.

In the modern day, work and study involve primarily mental and cognitive processes, and the use of computers has further focused human productivity indoors. The biophilia hypothesis describes an innate attraction that humans have for nature due to a long history of being directly dependent on living things for basic needs. This deep connection persists, and may explain why the experience of nearby nature may help people perform better in the office or at school.


The Attention Restoration Theory, or ART, suggests that certain environments can help individuals recover from mental fatigue. Restorative environments provide time away from tasks that require voluntary or directed attention, which allows the mind to recharge. Natural settings are particularly effective as restorative settings. These environments allow the mind to pay attention with little effort so it can relax and recover. Even brief glimpses or short amounts of time spent in a natural setting can improve brain performance and reduce stress. Visiting parks or engaging in recreation activities can act as a way to be in nature, socialize with others, and gain the benefits from being in a restorative environment.

Compared to inactive people, people who do greater amounts of moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity may experience improvements in cognition, including performance on academic achievement tests, and performance on neuropsychological tests, such as those involving mental processing speed, memory, and executive function. Physical activity also lowers the risk of developing cognitive impairment, such as dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease. These improvements from physical activity are present for people who have normal as well as impaired cognitive health, including conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, and stroke. Healthy older adults, even in the absence of dementia, often show evidence of cognitive decline, especially on measures of processing speed, memory, and executive function. Physical activity may be an effective approach for improving cognitive function in older adults (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018).






**Increasingly, Nurse Practitioners are incorporating nature therapy into patient care plans. Research shows these plans produce positive results, with patients benefitting from exposure to sunlight, open space, and organic environments.**



**CHRONIC DISEASES:**  
When compared to urban areas, forested environments lower cortisol concentrations, pulse rates, blood pressure, and they are beneficial to nerve activity.

**CULTURAL KINSHIP:**  
The Japanese tradition of shinrin-yoku, or “forest bathing”, has demonstrated organic environments better physical and mental health. While the Norwegians have the mindset of friluftsliv, Germany claims a connectedness to nature that only Waldeinsmkeit can bring when in solitude.

**THE IMMUNE SYSTEM**  
Scientists have observed cellular activity associated with nature’s possible anti-cancer effects is also indicative of a general increased immune response for minor ailments like colds, flus, and other infections, specifically when in forest and forest-like surroundings.




**VITAMIN ABSORPTION:**  
Exposure to ultraviolet B light improves synthesis of vitamin D, an important element for well-being

**HEALING TIME:**  
Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh learned that spinal surgery patients experienced less pain and stress if they were exposed to natural light. Reports from China have documented reduced inflammation in recovering patients as well.

**IMPROVED SLEEP:**  
Sunlight naturalizes circadian rhythms, making it easier to stay alert all day. Men and seniors in particular sleep better when they have access to nature, as physical activity induced end-of-day fatigue.

**PROTECTED VISION:**  
Studies show spending time outside guards children and adolescents against nearsightedness, including Computer Vision Syndrome.



**RESTORES ATTENTION:**  
Spending time outdoors can improve children’s behavior, self control, and academic performance

**ENCOURAGES FITNESS:**  
Data shows that children who play outside for about 37 minutes per day have a reduced risk for obesity, while playing outside for 60 minutes per day results in improvements in body mass index

**LOWERS STRESS:**  
A study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that people who strolled through nature for 30 minutes a day reported a decrease in negative thinking.

**REFINES COGNITION:**  
Environmental and behavioral research concluded that kids with access to the outdoors are more likely to demonstrate enhanced memory, judgement, and reasoning.

[//cdn2.online.nursing.georgetown.edu/](http://cdn2.online.nursing.georgetown.edu/)

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## PROMOTING COMMUNITY HEALTH

Parks and recreation departments provide services that enhance and build communities. They offer a place for residents to gather, socialize, and be around friends, family and neighbors. These departments offer so much more than recreation programs, and are vital assets to communities. They have the influence to contribute to long term policy objectives, enhance public health, promote youth development, create job opportunities, build social and cultural exchanges, and act as a community builder.

Park facilities play an especially important and special role for gathering and socializing. Well planned and established facilities offer something for everyone from young children and teens, families, adults and the elderly. In addition to being places to recreate and be in nature, they offer opportunities to en-

gage in arts and music. Parks can host concerts, graduation parties, family reunions, a place to work on personal health goals, and increase the appearance and livability within a community.

Parks are often a community focal point, symbol of a communities vitality and character, adding to the overall health, well-being, and quality of life. Park facilities and natural spaces are widely valued by community members who reside near them, as they provide feelings of pride that their community is a special place to live with meaningful natural settings (Dallman et al., 2010).



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## Livability Safer Neighborhoods

Safety was a top rated concern for residents of Ramsey according to the 2018 Community Survey. Recreation services can be used to provide youth with positive ways to fill out-of-school time and reduce their risk to commit a crime (Kruntz, 2015). The department can service students by providing a safe place to go and engage in stimulating activities when school is not in session. Recreation programs can help staff ensure parks and public spaces are properly maintained for safe use and provide an additional figure outside of home and school for developing youth to look up to.

Youth who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely than those who don't to have higher self-esteem, greater academic achievement and as a result, have lower incidences of delinquency. Additionally, at-risk youth especially benefit from provided recreation programming. Data demonstrates that students who reported spending no time in after-school extracurricular activities were 57 percent more likely to drop out of high school, 49 percent more likely to use drugs and 27 percent more likely to have been arrested than students who spend as much as four hours in structured activities. Park and recreation agencies have the ability to provide the programs that can address the root causes of juvenile crime. Because the types of leisure in which youth participate have profound impacts on social development, active and adult-supervised recreation programming available through park agencies are well positioned to equip youth with the tools that develop positive social and cognitive skills, self-confidence and a sense of community (Kruntz, 2015).

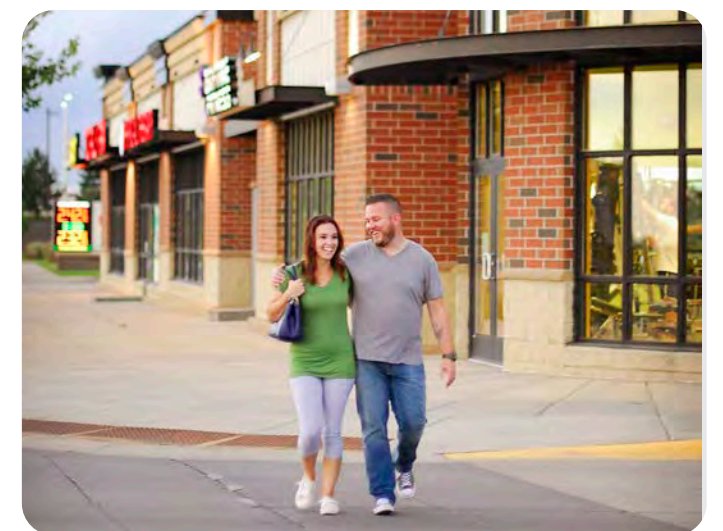
Some 57 percent of all violent crimes by juveniles occur on school days, and 19 percent are in the hours between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. In addition to the added value of safety that standard recreation service provide, specific safety oriented programs can be offered to further promote the City's safety initiatives. Examples of these types of programs include partnerships with other City Departments such as offering park space and facilities for Safety Camp and Home Alone Safety classes. Other popular safety-oriented programs include babysitting courses, First Aid and CPR certifications, and water safety classes such as how to kayak.



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### Nature Nearby

Nature deprivation is defined as lack of time in the natural world. In recent decades, trends have been identified that show significant increases in time spent in front of TV, computer, and phone screens that coincide with significant decreases of time spent outdoors. There appears to be direct relationships between the negative effects of screen-time, and the decrease of benefits received by time spent in nature.

The increased hours spent in front of TV or computer screens have been correlated with increased depression and other mental health disorders in users of all ages. Additional, more surprising outcomes of changes in our technological habits include a recent study that has associated increased screen time with loss of empathy and lack of altruism. In a 2011, study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, time in front of a screen was associated with a higher risk of death, and that was independent of physical activity (University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing).

Opportunities to increase physical activity are not the only benefits from children's use of the outdoors. Just the act of being in contact with nature provides benefits. For example, "greenness", or the degree of contact with nature, in a child's everyday environment is linked to levels of cognitive functioning. Research also suggests that the presence of natural features within the spaces in which children play aids children in developing creative play activities, e.g. trees (Muñoz, 2009)

What people see, hear, and experience at any moment effects not only moods, but how the nervous system, endocrine system, and immune system operates. The stress of an unpleasant environment is shown to cause feelings of anxiousness, sadness, and even helplessness. This in turn can elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension and suppresses the immune system. A pleasing environment acts as an antidote to that and provides benefits to mental health along with a physiological response.

Those who live in "greener" areas, with more vegetation around, have reduced risk of mortality. This is due to improved mental health, enhanced social engagement and increased physical activity that come with proximity to green spaces. Those with most vegetation within 800 feet of their homes had a 12 percent lower rate of mortality from non-accidental causes than those living in the least green spaces. (James, Hart, Benay, & Laden, 2016).



### Community Pride and Identity

Public parks and recreation agencies ensure community members have equal access to recreation opportunities, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, ability, ethnicity, or age. Agencies have the ability to create community "buy-in" and bring people together through nature (National Recreation and Parks Association, American Planning Association, & Low Impact Development Center Inc., 2017). Parks and recreation systems foster social interactions by providing gathering places for residents regardless of their age, economic status or ability to pay for access. This in turn aids in developing a sense of belonging across demographics (Bradley, 2013). Whether visiting a neighborhood park or attending an art class, residents have the chance to meet new people in an inviting setting. This can create community ties and make living in the area more desirable.

Engagement in parks and recreation opportunities are vital to maintaining a healthy community and provide significant positive impacts. Other than bringing neighbors together, participation encourages safer, cleaner neighborhoods and creates a livelier community atmosphere. Facilities provided by parks and recreation help improve a community's image, socioeconomic status and enhance the areas desirability. When individuals move, they seek out a desirable community, when they retire they search for a community that will accommodate their needs. Residents recognize the numerous benefits that well-maintained open spaces and recreation programs can have for a community (California State Parks, 2005).



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**Family Development**

Throughout history across nearly all cultures, family units play a significant role in society. Families at their best provide knowledge passed down from generations, structure and a set of morals, love and shape how the following generation views the world. There are positive correlations between strong, successful families and family participation in outdoor recreational activities (Freeman & Zabriskie, 2002).

An important feature of parks and recreation is creating a space that children and families can create lasting memories in. Parks often serve as places for families and friends to enjoy public spaces in each other's company (Bradley, 2013). Playgrounds may serve as a meeting place for young families, and as a family develops, they are able to use other park amenities, such as sports fields, trails, and open spaces. Families that recreate together tend to be closer and more cohesive, and have a greater chance of staying together (California State Parks, 2005).

By providing the opportunity to create those special memories, recreation agencies create a positive relationship between people and parks and often encourage future participation.



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**Youth Engagement**

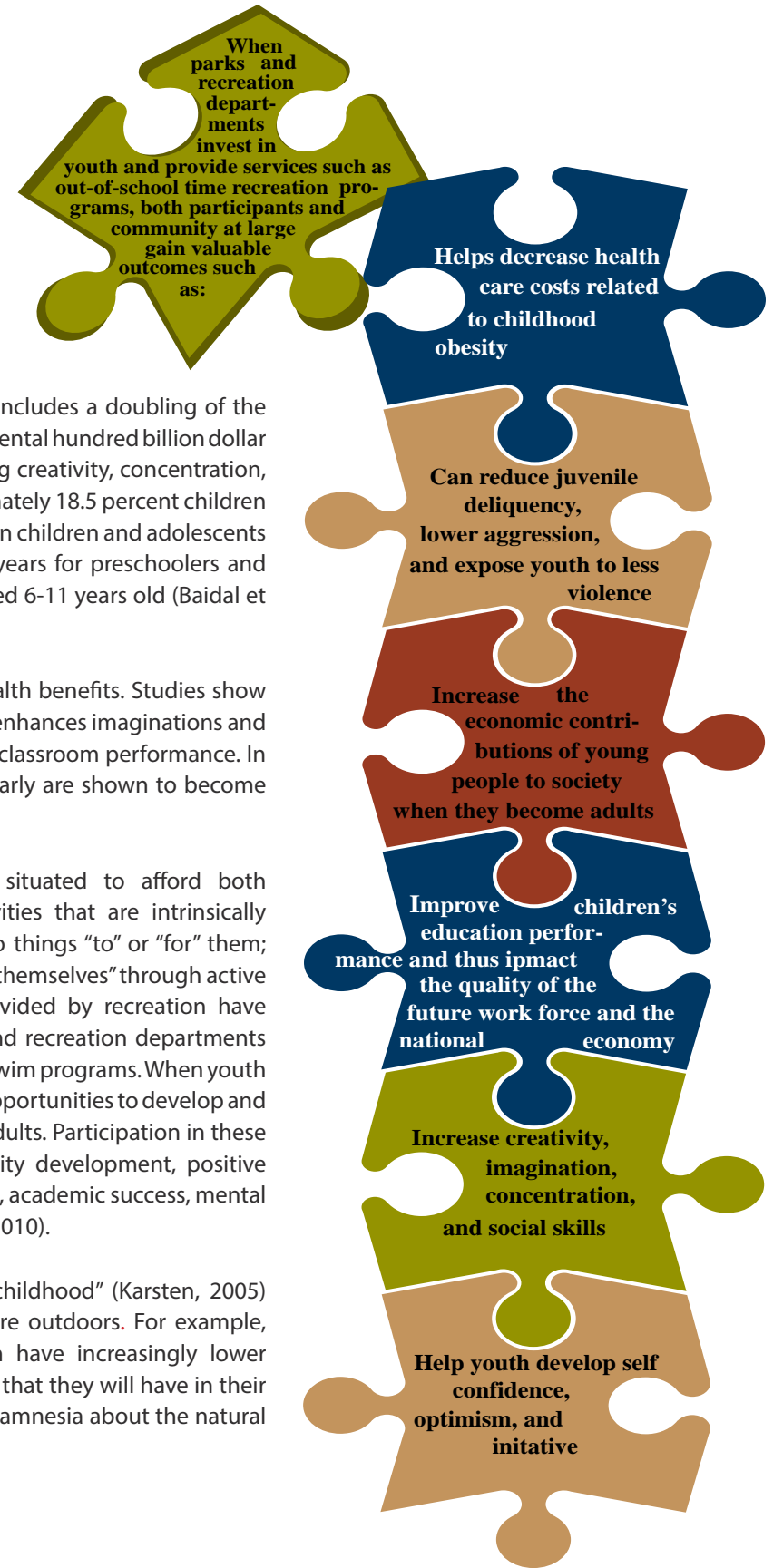
The nature of childhood has changed. The amount of time youth today spend outdoors has rapidly diminished in the last two decades. They are spending about half as much time outdoors as they did 20 years ago, which takes a toll on development, mental and physical health (University of Minnesota's Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, 2016).

The negative impact of decreased time outdoors includes a doubling of the childhood obesity rate—accompanied by an incremental hundred billion dollar cost to our health care system—as well as declining creativity, concentration, and social skills (Witt & Caldwell, 2010). "Approximately 18.5 percent children age 2-19 years are obese, affecting about 13.7 million children and adolescents. Childhood obesity has doubled over the past 30 years for preschoolers and adolescents, and more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years old (Baidal et al., 2016)."

Connecting children and nature has important health benefits. Studies show outdoor time helps children grow lean and strong, enhances imaginations and attention spans, decreases aggression, and boosts classroom performance. In addition, children who spend time in nature regularly are shown to become better stewards of the environment.

Parks and recreation departments are ideally situated to afford both opportunities and adult guidance through activities that are intrinsically motivating. Adolescents do not need adults to do things "to" or "for" them; rather they need to have opportunities to "develop themselves" through active experience or experiential learning. Services provided by recreation have significant impact in youth development. Parks and recreation departments provide more than just fun and games, or gym and swim programs. When youth participate in these programs, they gain excellent opportunities to develop and gain necessary skills to become fully functioning adults. Participation in these activities is associated with autonomy and identity development, positive social relationships, and learning conflict resolution, academic success, mental health, and civic engagement. (Witt and Caldwell, 2010).

Research has started to discuss a "new type of childhood" (Karsten, 2005) in which children spend less time than ever before outdoors. For example, believe that subsequent generations of children have increasingly lower expectations of the amount of contact with nature that they will have in their lives. Herbert (2009) has called this a "generational amnesia about the natural world". (Muñoz, 2009)





<https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2018.pdf>

### Economic Development

Parks and recreation departments have the ability to deliver healthier and happier communities, while simultaneously acting as a powerhouse to spark economic activity. Services provided these agencies create value in varying ways from job creation, promoting volunteers, creating valuable partners, encouraging investment, to raising the standard of living and property values. However, one thing is clear: the conventional market-based tools used to evaluate goods like corn, timber, and real-estate don't necessarily translate into public goods such as clean air, bird-watching, or community bonds created through recreation services. Additional methods to evaluate added value from parks and recreation services are necessary to look beyond markets to estimate the true value of services provided (Keeler & Institute on the Environment, 2014).

Simply put, the economic benefit of parks is a numbers game. Having parks nearby offer many benefits. One of the most notable for cities is increased property values, whether urban, suburban or rural in context. Creating or cultivating green space has been linked to revitalization of economically depressed areas. Furthermore, parks are often factors included when businesses decide where to build or invest in new development. Businesses often want areas where their employees will be happy and healthy citizens, meaning parks are a part of the equation for job and local economic growth (Bradley, 2013).


### Economic Growth and Value


Municipalities with strong parks and recreation systems benefit from improved health and a greater sense of community. In the long term, it translates to lower healthcare costs, higher property values, and increased standard of living. Research shows that areas with a high quality of life attract businesses, as this also attracts and retains high quality workers. Furthermore, parks and recreation agencies generate even more economic value through conservation and resiliency that foster higher overall community approval and increase tourism.


Most critically, park and recreation amenities are the cornerstones to improving a community's quality of life. Established and well used parks and recreation services can be a major factor in attracting potential employers and development. The impact parks and recreation departments can have on the community through economic activity and partnerships, combined with the ability to deliver healthier and happier communities, can be a powerful motivator employers deciding between geographic locations to open a business. This also demonstrates recreation offerings are not just a "nice-to-have" service, but instead are a critical aspect of what makes a community unique, vibrant, and prosperous (Clower, Chapman, & Song, 2015).


On a broader scale, in 2013, operations and capital spending pertaining to parks and recreation created \$2,834,173,626 in economic activity, and supported 22,411 jobs in Minnesota (Clower, Chapman, & Song, 2015). Nationally, parks and recreation created nearly \$140 billion in economic impact, added \$68 billion in GDP, and one million jobs. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 2.2 percent—\$412 billion—of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016, putting the sector's economic contributions on par with those of the food services, broadcasting, and telecoms industries.


The National Association of Home Builders reports that the presence of parks seriously influences 65 percent of homebuyers. A 2001 study conducted by the National Association of Realtors found that 50 percent of survey respondents would be more likely to choose a neighborhood near parks or open spaces, and are willing to pay more to live near a park (Cohen, Sturm, Han, & Marsh, 2014). Emerging areas of research include assessing the economic impacts of parks in terms of carbon mitigation (usually based on vegetation coverage). Increasingly, these studies include estimating and quantifying the economic value of these impacts (National Recreation and Park Association, 2018).

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**\$2,520,078,194**  
in economic activity (transactions) was generated by local parks and recreation in 2015.
- 

**20,338 jobs**  
in Minnesota were supported by parks and recreation in 2015.
- 

**\$459.06**  
in economic activity was generated per person due to parks and recreation in 2015.
- 

**\$963,778,166**  
in salaries, wages and benefits were generated due to parks and recreation in 2015.
- 

For more information or to access Minnesota's Economic Impact toolkit at: <http://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-toolkit-mn.pdf>

**NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY**  
MINNESOTA | SEPTEMBER 24, 2016

13 event sites | 241 volunteers  
\$27,000 value of volunteer service\* | 1146 cumulative service hours

**MASTER NATURALIST VOLUNTEERS**

- ✓ Bud capped trees
- ✓ Planted potted forbs
- ✓ Cleared trails and prairies
- ✓ Collected native plant seeds
- ✓ Removed invasive plant species
- ✓ Educated others on natural resources

MN MasterNat Twitter



**Volunteering/Stewardship**

Time is a valuable asset, especially in this day and age. People have different motives for donate their time for volunteering causes. Five primary motives for volunteering include values, community concern, esteem enhancement, understanding, and personal development (American Psychological Association & Winerman, 2006). To satisfy these goals in volunteering, people tend to pick causes they have personal interest in or that are fun and engaging.

Over 63 million Americans volunteer annually to help their neighbors, serve the community, and utilize their skill sets for a cause they are passionate about. One hour of a Minnesotan’s volunteer time is estimated to be at a value of \$29.44, slightly higher than the national average of \$27.20/hour. Volunteer value has been on a significant increase in the past couple of decades. Nationally, since 2002, the dollar value of a volunteer has risen over \$10/hour. Minnesota saw a 4.6 percent increase since 2008. (Independent Sector, 2019).

[According to the Community Survey, in 2018, just under half (49 percent) of Ramsey Residents rated Ramsey positively for volunteer opportunities. While Parks and recreation is certainly not the only opportunity to volunteer, they can provide an array of topics and options for families to partake in. Recreation covers so many different things, can find something for everybody.

Parks and recreation agencies are a popular and well fit organization to offer volunteer opportunities that engage the community. They can range from environmental issues, community development, education, and general leisure time activities. One example of volunteer opportunities in Ramsey is the 2019/2020 offering of the Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer Program. This program recruits and trains interested individuals to become knowledgeable in the environment of their area and to become leaders for volunteer projects and community engagement. Some local projects from individuals in this program have been work on the Blue Bird Recovery Project and the addition of Blue Bird trails in Ramsey. In 2017, the Minnesota Master Naturalist program hosted events at 12 sites around the state for National Public Lands Day, where 227 volunteers invested over a thousand hours valued at \$27,376.89!

**Encourages Investment**

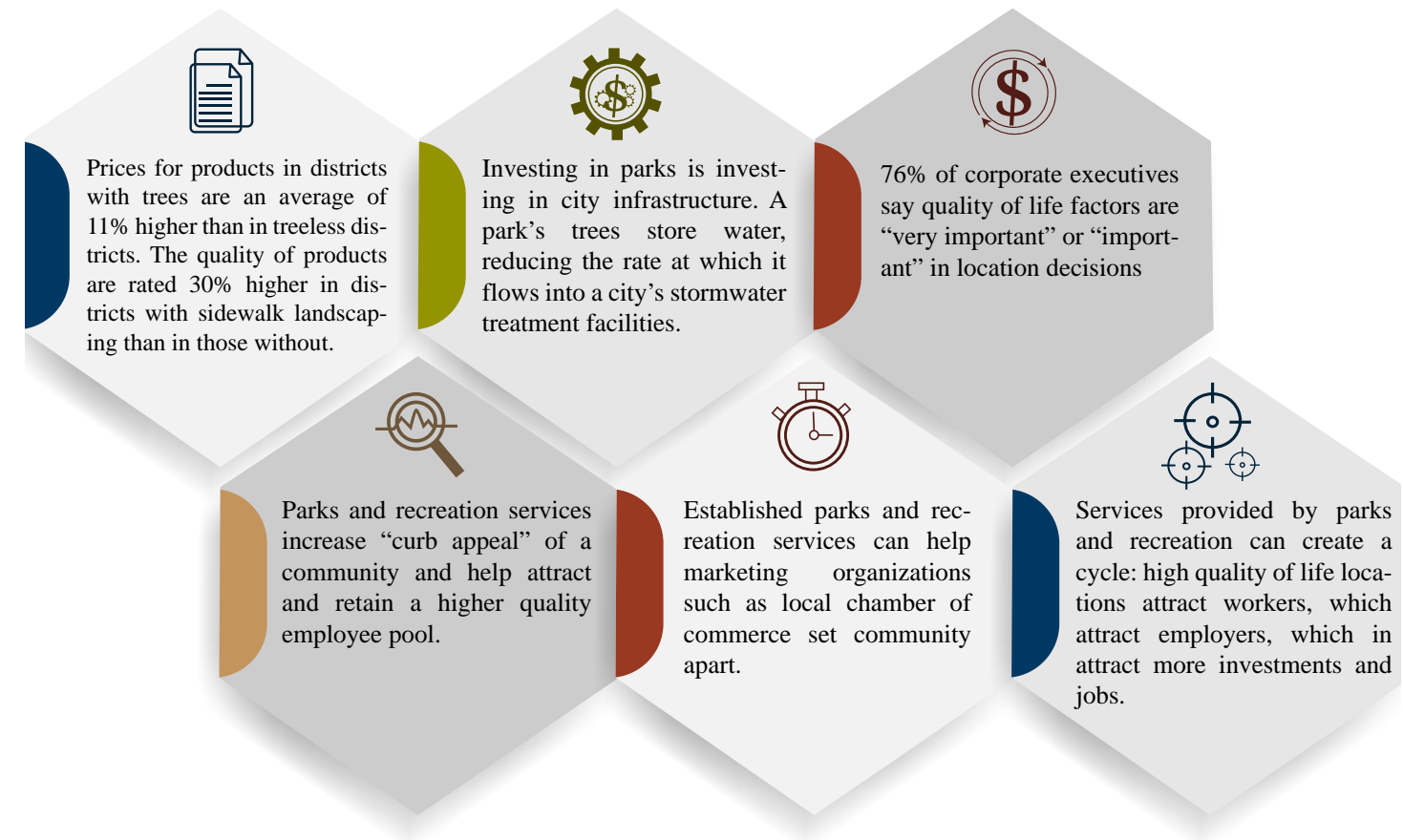
Parks and recreation agencies play a vital, but often undervalued role in economic development. Local parks especially make a variety of economic contributions to a community.

Opportunities for outdoor recreation can attract new business, talented workers as well as keep established businesses competitive. Small business owners have cited quality of life as a key reason for choosing a location. Park, recreation, and open space amenities are among the most important components of quality of life. High quality of life makes it easier for businesses to attract and maintain a highly educated professional workforce (Dallman et al., 2010).

Furthermore, providing and promoting quality outdoor recreational opportunities can be a more sustainable way of attracting and retaining businesses than offering tax or other cash incentives. Companies that relocate to an area for tax incentives alone will likely continue seeking out other tax incentives and move on when they are able. High-quality

outdoor recreational opportunities cannot be so easily replaced (Dallman et al., 2010).

According to Reilly and Renski, investments in improving a community’s quality of life can create a virtuous cycle: high-quality places attract workers, which attract employers, which in turn attract more investments and jobs.5 These factors are particularly important for smaller and more rural communities that lack large markets, talent pools or well-developed identities. McGranahan, Wojan and Lambert find that places with landscape (e.g., woods, water), climate (e.g., sunshine) and recreational appeal (e.g., tourist attractions) are more likely grow through creative and entrepreneurial industries. At the most basic level, park and recreation assets support broader place-promotion efforts of their cities and towns. Community marketing organizations (e.g., the local chamber of commerce) regularly need new and current content that sets their region apart. Park and recreation agencies’ amenities and offerings serve this purpose (Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn, & Wang, 2013).



Local Businesses and Partnerships

Partnerships with local groups and businesses in the City of Ramsey can not be emphasized enough. This subsection should serve as a brief overview of partnerships as Section Four, State of Programs, will further discuss partnerships in programming.

Through partnerships, more users can be reached through a wider diversity of high quality services offered. Ramsey Parks and Recreation has taken great pride in the relationships built throughout the community. Partnerships have been essential to the success of Ramsey’s recreation due to the mutually beneficial results. For example, the Annual Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm was a new program created in 2019. The program is a day long special event for residents to enjoy amenities at the

Pearson Family Farms and celebrate the changing of the seasons with festivities such as pumpkin painting. This program has expanded overtime to welcome an additional partnership with the Rumriver Art Center. Ramsey parks and recreation is able to offer residents a low cost, family friendly program, while driving revenue to a local farm and raising awareness for the nonprofit art group.

Local businesses and organizations are not competitors in recreation programming, but instead an asset. Whenever possible, local groups should be partnered with for programs as a way to support community development and further community connectedness.



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Property Values

As a general guideline, researchers have found nearby parkland increases home values 5 percent-15 percent, depending upon proximity and quality of the park. Trails have a similar effect: researchers estimate homeowners are willing to pay an additional \$4,000-\$9,000 to be located within a thousand feet of a trail. Minnesotans in particular tend to value open space. This led to a Wilder Research analysis to conclude: “the additional future tax revenues generated by residential properties near an open space may be sufficient to pay the debt service on funds borrowed to acquire and/or develop a park.” Overall, the message is clear: Minnesota’s economy benefits when we invest in parks and trails (Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, 2014).

A 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 57 percent of potential home buyers would choose a home close to parks and open space over one that was not. Fifty percent would be willing to pay 10 percent more for a home located near a park or protected open space. Additional findings show the property value added by park areas is separate from the recreational use value gained; property value goes up even if the resident never visits the park. The premium for homes bordering a park can start at 20 percent and extends to homes within three blocks at a gradually declining rate (National Association of Realtors, 2009).

This is evidenced by multiple studies that indicate residents prefer to live in proximity to a quality park system. The National Association of Home Builders reports that the presence of parks seriously influences 65 percent of home buyers. A 2001 study by the National Association of Realtors found that 50 percent of survey respondents would be more likely to choose a neighborhood near parks or open spaces and are willing to pay more to be located close to a park or open space. This has led much of the research to focus on the impacts of parks on nearby property values (National Recreation and Park Association, 2018). The disconnect between critical community issues and whether parks and recreation is viewed as a solution represents both a communication and education opportunity for parks and recreation. Research demonstrates that companies are attracted to areas with a high quality of life that attracts and retains highly educated and motivated workers. Quality of



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# Parks Support Communities

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Homebuyers prefer homes close to parks, open space, and greenery. Proximity to parks increases property value and increases revenue from property taxes. Research of property values has shown that a 5% increase in property values for houses within 500 feet of a park is a conservative estimate of the change in property value due to proximity to a park. The houses within 500-600 feet of open space receive the greatest increase in property value. Community parks of at least 30 acres increase the value of properties out to 1,500 feet, but 75% of the premium value generally occurs within 500-600 feet. Increasing the size of a park tends to increase the rise in property values, but proximity to the park has a greater impact than park size. Access to a park is important, and direct paths to a park and parks surrounded by roads are both factors that will cause a greater boost to nearby property values. A 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 57% of potential homebuyers would choose a home close to parks and open space over one that was not. Fifty percent would be willing to pay 10% more for a home located near a park or protected open space. local economy.

### Residents

Companies choose to locate in communities that offer various values as a means of attracting and retaining quality workers. Parks have been well documented to generate economic value. There are cases where city parks increased the value of nearby commercial real estate by up to 225% and residential real estate by up to 150%. City parks have caused turnover rates to drop to less than 1%. Park improvements can be paid for by returns from increased parking use and concessions. Parks draw visitors from near and far, creating additional revenue to nearby businesses. Traffic and business can be increased by park events such as festivals, concerts and athletics.

### Retailers

Parks attract tourists, filling hotel rooms and bringing customers to local stores and restaurants. As community signature pieces, parks offer a marketing tool for cities to attract business and conventions. Parks can be used to host festivals, concerts and athletics events, bringing additional boosts to the local economy. In Minnesota, Chain of Lakes received 5.5 million visitors in 2001, making it the state's second-biggest attraction after the Mall of America. At Chain of Lakes, residents and tourists enjoy biking, walking, jogging, rollerblading or skiing around five city lakes attached by a 12-mile system of walking and biking paths. Each of the lakes is surrounded by parkland featuring a variety of amenities.

### Revenue

In addition to their many environmental benefits, including preserving plant and animal habitat, decreasing air pollution, and water filtration, parks create economic benefit for both governments and individuals. Creating well planned parks and preserving sufficient land for them can generate financial returns that are often many times greater than the money initially invested into the project even when maintenance costs are factored in. City parks lower the cost of treating storm water and absorb air pollutants. In some cities, stormwater flows off of impervious surfaces like roads and sidewalks, picks up pollutants, and flows into waterways. In other cities, stormwater flows into water treatment plants. During large storms, treatment capacity can be exceeded, resulting in untreated rainwater and household sewage being released into waterways. In parks, unpaved, pervious surfaces absorb rainwater, recharging groundwater supplies and allowing storm runoff to be released more slowly. Vegetation stores water and allows some to be evaporated. The cost savings this provides is significant.

### Resources



## SECTION 4 | STATE OF PROGRAMS

### INTRODUCTION



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Vehicles setting up for the first Drive in Movie in the City of Ramsey, 2020



## RECREATION SERVICES IN RAMSEY

The following section provides four classifications for programs in Ramsey, based on content and community impact. Many programs may meet the descriptions within multiple categories—indeed, recreation programs, by design, tend to be more holistic and interdisciplinary. The purpose of these classifications is not to create fixed placements of programs, but

to ensure a diversity of programs are offered to residents. Each category below is briefly described and includes a set of programs as an example. Program flyers containing detailed information on offerings can be found in the Appendix.



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### Art and Culture:

Art and culture opportunities may simultaneously create identity for the community and contribute to 'sense of place'. Recreation offerings in Art and Culture can vary from traditional art programs like painting, or be larger cultural events such as Ramsey's fall festival, Holiday Tree Lighting or Summer Concert Series. Examples of art and cultural programs include:

- Elmcrest Art Fair
  - Art Classes and Demos
  - Sales of Local Art
- Community Events
  - Paint-A-Plow
  - Movies in the Park
- Concert Series
  - Art in the Park
- Rumriver Art Center Partnership
  - Vitality Arts Program
  - Art in the Park
  - Art classes: Wine and Canvas nights, clay ornaments, birdhouse building, painting, drawing, pottery, etc.



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Even a 20 minute walk in nature can help children with ADHD concentrate better.

Physical activity enhances cognitive function such as improved memory, concentration, and academic achievement in all age groups.

The biggest motivator for outdoor participation is getting exercise.

Exposure to nature can reduce stress levels by as much as 28% in children.

Medical professionals have begun to prescribe time outdoors to help treat obesity, mental-health issues, chronic conditions such as hypertension and Type 2 diabetes.

### Physical Health and Wellbeing

Enhanced physical health and wellbeing is among one of the greatest assets that can result from recreation programming. The Nation continues to see significant increases in preventable chronic health diseases such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. As a result, there is a higher focus on health and wellness and ways in which they can be improved. Recreation programs create opportunities for all abilities and ages to partake in activities that provide benefits to health and wellbeing. Cities that provide adequate recreation programs are able to have real and measurable impacts on their communities; such as breaking down barriers to healthy, and active living, and help residents connect to each other and nature. Some examples of programs that promote physical health and wellbeing in Ramsey:

- Athletic Opportunities
  - Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association offerings
  - Archery lessons and tournament
  - Line Dancing classes
  - Pickleball classes and tournament
  - Qigong Meditation
  - Yoga: Hatha, flow, candlelight, outdoor
  - Zumba classes
- Outdoors Recreation
  - Birding 101
  - Camping partnered with the Boy Scouts of America
  - Canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding
  - Hike with a Naturalist
- Other Healthy Living Activities
  - First Aid/CPR/Home Alone Safety Classes
  - Nutrition education with Coborn's
  - Walking informal weekly group

### Enrichment, Education, and Skill-building:

Recreation programs in this category significantly enhance overall quality of life for residents. They facilitate community building through the development of hobbies, intergenerational understanding, and continuous learning. For youth, these types of opportunities also help develop their sense of self. These programs cover a wide breadth of categories and appeal to a diversity of residents. Examples of past programs in Ramsey that provide enrichment, education and skill building include:

- Kids' Talent Show with Northern Starz
- Gardening Classes and Pollinator Gardens with Anoka County Master Gardeners
- History programs provided by the Anoka County Historical Society
- Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteers
  - Bluebird Restoration Project engagement
  - Bat house interpretive information and projects
- Pollinator Workshops with the Monarch Joint Venture
- Starwatch Parties with Mike Lynch
- Summer Adventure Program (kids day camp)

### Community Events and Festivals

Community events and festivals programs may span to accomplish other objectives or department imperatives beyond recreation programming. Many address economic development with one or more partnerships. Programs tend to be centered around a larger themed engagement piece and act as a large gathering for residents to build a sense of community. Due to their encompassing nature, they can often be placed in one or more category. Examples of such are:

- Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm with Pearson Family Farms
- RAVE- River clean up event
- Dog Days, Alpine Dog Park events
- Happy Days fall festival
- Annual Concert Series at The Draw
- Paint-A-Plow
- Tree Lighting Festival



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## PARTNERS IN PROGRAMS

The appreciation for Ramsey’s partners has been emphasized throughout this chapter—and for good reason. Partnerships are essential for maximizing resident’s return on investment through the sharing of talent, expertise and experience, as well as ideas. Partnerships with existing entities eliminate the duplication of certain services and infrastructure, stretching various program costs for the benefit of all. Moreover, these partnerships are often an ideal marriage of each organization’s mission, with the programming outcome mutually synergistic.

In summary, working together has resulted in expanding both the depth and scope of our program offerings. Alongside the gains in recreation opportunity, partnerships have facilitated the community’s ability to support the local private and nonprofit sectors. Positive partnerships are a valuable asset to the City of Ramsey to both further provide recreation opportunities, as well as facilitate community bonding and promote community development. The following are just a few examples of the value of affiliated programs and the partners:



Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association booth featured at a Summer Concert at the Draw

### Adrenaline Sports

The City of Ramsey has utilized Adrenaline Sports’ indoor sport courts for various recreation programs, (like Zumba, dance and hard court winter activities) as well as the annual Business Expo. In these examples, the city often simply does not have an indoor venue this large or with specialized flooring and high ceilings. By renting the appropriate space, the city can ‘right size’ the program or event without having to build and maintain a public facility and the private sector derives the rent income and exposure to new patrons.



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### Anoka County Parks

A logical partner with the same mission (and shared constituents) is the county park system with two Regional Parks within the city. Program opportunities may occur in either the municipal or county parks—or at river locations, where in October of 2019, a collaboration resulted in the cross promotion of a Voyager Canoe paddle on the Rum River, using the county owned watercraft.



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### Anoka Historical Society

Sense of Place is an important aspect of community engagement and the county historical society is well equipped to share resources and programming on site and within Ramsey, like the free Halloween themed educational programs held at City Hall. Many additional opportunities exist to be developed that facilitate connecting existing and new residents to Ramsey’s past.



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### Anoka School District #11, Elk River #728 and area Community Education

Ramsey is served by two school districts, each with many synergies in serving shared constituents to be explored. Anoka High School regularly uses Ramsey’s tennis courts at Rivers’ Bend Park, and Elk River’s Spectrum High School has used Ramsey’s parks since their inception.



### Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association

The Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (formally Ramsey Youth Athletic Association) has positively touched thousands of families over the last four decades through youth athletics within Ramsey parks. Their favorable impact simply cannot be overstated. This long-standing partnership has many layers, but at its essence, is a partnership that finds the City building millions of dollars of outdoor athletic facilities, buildings and support infrastructure and maintenance services—with ARAA providing tens of thousands in hours of volunteer contributions every year—all of which are available to every interested youth in the community.



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**Anoka Woman of Today**

Bingo has been the subject of a straightforward enterprise with the non-profit Anoka Woman of Today. The City provided the space and promotion, with the Anoka Woman of Today hosting the Bingo event. Residents socialized, enjoyed the recreational outing, with some taking home prize money—with the host group taking the remaining proceeds to apply to philanthropic projects in and around Ramsey.

**Coborn's Super Store**

Coborn's store is an excellent example of collaboration between the private and public sector. For many years, they have sponsored a concert at The Draw Summer Event Series, and since 2005 have donated goods and services for many city functions—and even their advertising calls attention to the relationship with the city and their proximity to the Mississippi River Trail. They have been a willing and able partner in specific programs, like staffing the Farmers' Market with a professional Nutritionist, aiding residents and market patrons with advice and tips for healthy cooking and living.

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**The Kitchen Table**

The Kitchen Table is an example of a private business serving as a three-way hub of collaboration. One successful incidence is the reoccurring Wine and Canvas classes held in their community room. Ramsey Parks and Recreation promotes the classes, Rumriver Arts supplies the supplies and artist, with the restaurant providing participants the beverage and snacks of their choice—all of this covered by the class enrollee's registration fee of \$35 dollars.

**National Park Service & Mississippi Park Connection**

One of the more unique National Parks' in America celebrates Ramsey as its upstream beginning, with Hastings Minnesota to the South. The 72-mile long Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), includes a nonprofit partner, Mississippi Park Connection and together are developing programming with the city with significant opportunity for expanding. Canoe RAVEs (RIVER ACTION VOLUNTEER EVENTS) have been popular throughout the Twin Cities Metro, including Ramsey—with volunteers turned away after the maximum participation at the last event. That RAVE had 50 volunteers working on needed maintenance in Mississippi West Regional Park, and learning canoe skills at the same time to reach the two islands for that activity.

**Northstar Commuter Rail & Metropolitan Transit**

Ramsey residents ride the Northstar train to work, to the airport and also recreation and leisure pursuits like traveling to athletic games and events like the Holidazzel Parade in the cities. Occasionally individuals and groups ride the train to a destination and pedal back on the Mississippi River Trail. Many other recreational partnerships with Metro Transit exist to be explored—including pairing the Northstar and new riders to participate in 'Bike to Work Week' and others.

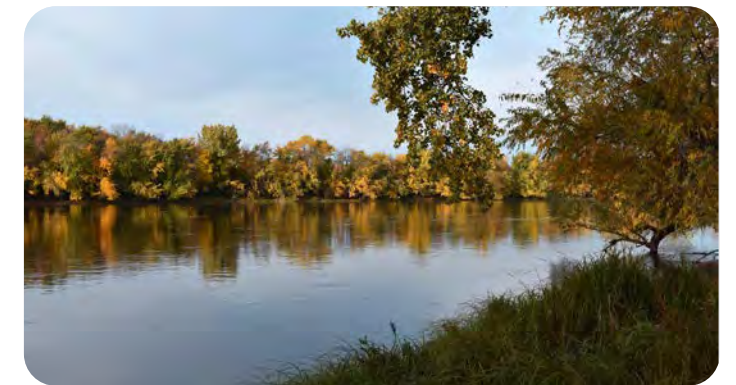
**PACT Charter School**

One of the first entities to invest in Ramsey's new downtown was PACT School in 2005, which included the agreement by the city to build and maintain the multi-use athletic field that the school uses as its home field.

The 7-12 grade school also uses the park as part of their physical education curriculum, even in the Winter. The agreement calls for modest maintenance payment to the City by PACT, and the park is utilized by other youth athletic organizations and the public—with all benefiting from the park known as The Draw.



Staff members at the Kitchen Table



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Northstar pulling into the Ramsey station



PACT Charter School Girls' Soccer Team, first place winners



Pearson Family Farm barn decorated with fresh pumpkins and flowers

### Pearson Family Farm

The Pearson Family Farm is a prime example of a private, family owned partnership, financially benefiting from City advertising for a recreational 'Resident Day at the Farm. In this instance, the Pearson's hosted the event, dozens of residents enjoyed a multifaceted Halloween themed afternoon at the farm, and City costs of co-hosting were almost non-existent.

### Ramsey Foundation

The Summer Concert Series may be the quintessential partnership, in this case involving the 501c3 Ramsey Foundation, the Park and Recreation Commission, the businesses who help pay for performances, the resident food vendor who offers service to patrons—and Ramsey Lions who dispense beverages, with those proceeds being returned to the community in various philanthropic ways. The last concert of the season is also all about partnerships, with the Trott Brook Benefit Bash raising \$10's of thousands of dollars each year for scholarships and other worthwhile endeavors.



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### Ramsey Garden Club

The City and the garden club have partnered for decades on beautification projects like the entrance monument at Emerald Pond Park and the south entrance to City Hall, as well as the seasonal décor within, each December—with that holiday tree a poignant backdrop to for children's pictures with Santa at the tree lighting event.

### Rumriver Art Center

The City's relationship with the art center is relative new—but growing exponentially, highlights include; Art in the Park, Vitality Art program, ornament making as part of the tree lighting festivities, Wine and Canvas night for adults, and of course the annual Art Fair at Elmcrest Park.



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**Scouting**

Boy and Girl Scouts’ contributions to the City’s park and recreation services are almost immeasurable, with partnerships regularly occurring each year. Recent projects included the development and installation of an Osprey Platform at Cottonwood Park with interpretive signage, or the hands-on contributions to the new Nature-based Playground in the western portion of the City. Another meaningful project by Girl Scout Troop # was the fundraising and installation of the Gaga Ball Pit at North Commons park in Ramsey’s downtown

**Youth First**

Youth First contributes significantly to the well-being of youth in the City of Ramsey and surrounding areas. The nonprofit seeks to actively engage youth, their families, and the community to ensure youth have the five fundamental promises they need to succeed: Caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education, and opportunities to help others



**University of Minnesota Extension (Tree Care Advisor, Master Gardener, MN Master Naturalist)**

2020 was the second year the City offered the Minnesota Master Naturalist program in Ramsey. This is both a programmed service for residents desiring to professionalize and learn more about Minnesota’s ecology and natural history—but also a wellspring in terms of developing a corps of informed individuals who will ‘give back’ to maintain their Master Naturalist certification. As of this writing, the program is already generating volunteer contributions for the City. In one instance a student of the program is developing a Blue Bird recovery project, and also hosting a seminar at Elmcrest Park for birding enthusiasts to learn more about ornithology and habitat conservation locally.

*Image from Youth First’s “About Us” page.*



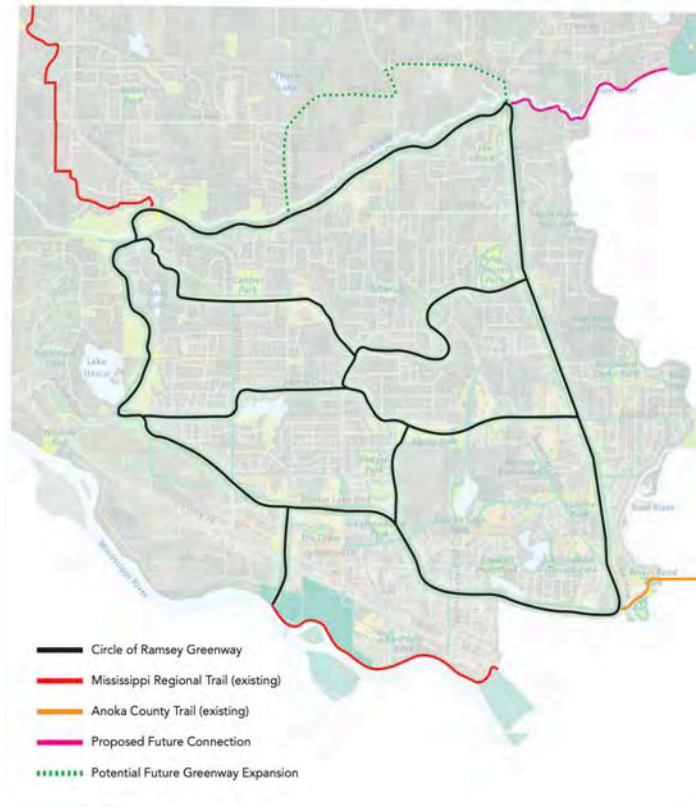
*Image from University of Minnesota Master Gardener Extension Program*



**CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD**

Partnerships have been and will continue to be a valuable asset to the City of Ramsey. Recreation programming acts as a common ground to build and strengthen relationships with other entities in the community, creating a more unified place of living. With continued synergistic promotion and development of programs, Ramsey can offer ever-more valued programming, bringing to the entire community; art,

culture, enrichment, education, skill-building, opportunities for promoting physical health and wellbeing, and recognized community events that are beloved by so many residents. As Ramsey continues to grow, the Parks and Recreation Department intends to strengthen established relationships within the community, as well as forge new ones in an effort to create a healthier and more engaged Ramsey.



## ACHIEVEMENTS IN RECREATION

### Square One - Building a Foundation

Over the years, parks, trails and natural open spaces are increasingly recognized as vital to the quality of life in Ramsey, and in many ways, define and connect the community. Ramsey's park system emerged from the conversion of agricultural land to an increasing suburban land use in the 1970's with open space dedicated to small park areas.

The first prominent park was created in the early 1980's, to meet the need for youth athletics' play fields. Ramsey's flagship park, Central Park, was envisioned as a community park and continues to serve this purpose today. In the 1990's trails began to be added to Ramsey's landscape and were embraced every bit as much as parks.

Within the last three decades, the City has seen the addition of many different park spaces and almost 100 miles of trails, boardwalk and sidewalk providing community connections, and opportunity for healthy lifestyles. As the city continued to make investments in the community to enhance quality of life, formal recreation programming was added or expanded beginning

in 2017. Since then, programs have continued to increase in popularity and engagement—much of this by way of 'word of mouth' as residents have favorable experiences.

Today, some established popular events which have become annual hallmark events residents look forward each year. An emblematic example of Ramsey's recreation services growth is the Summer Concert Series at The Draw—and how this has become a summertime staple of activity for thousands or residents.

The following section highlights some key success areas to act as examples for city officials and program planners of what has been shown to work in Ramsey. Acknowledging strengths and successes can help lay a sturdy foundation to build upon to provide efficient and meaningful services to residents.

### Connecting People and Parks

Ramsey's 29 square mile park system will be an interconnected one, spanning 10 large Recreational Districts, linking approximately 32 City parks and 2 Regional Parks—all to be well connected by the Circle of Ramsey, promoting healthy

living and active transportation. This extensive trail and park system provides ample room for both formal and informal opportunities. With parks dispersed throughout the City in a way that each area may have unique opportunities to recreate—trails connecting neighborhoods, and parks to each other, together creating a safe and active system that includes non-motorized transportation options. With a system as such, it is no surprise Ramsey residents have a high visiting rate of parks at 87% of the population regularly utilizing park facilities (as reported in a recent Citizen Survey).

### Synergistic Partnerships

As rightfully emphasized in the previous section, synergistic partnerships are essential to the provision of cost-effective recreation in Ramsey. Partnerships with the private sector and can also benefit the economy by sourcing locally and creating awareness of small businesses at the same time.

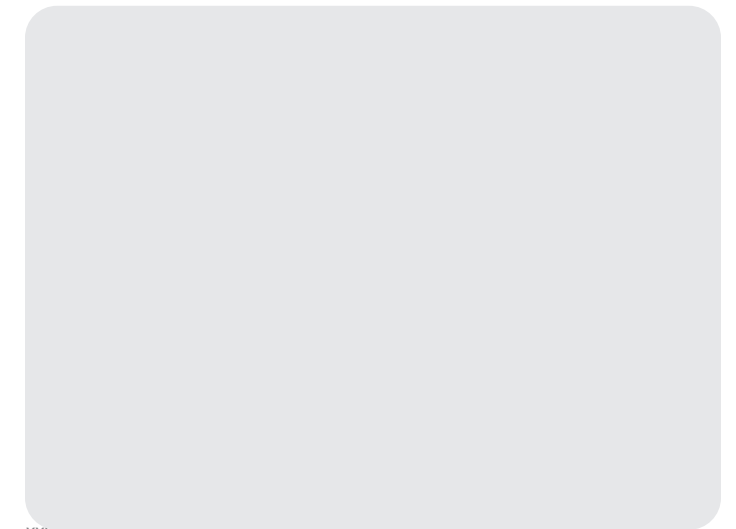
These partnerships can be demonstrably valuable. One example was the 'Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm' created in 2019 as a partnership with the Pearson Family Farms. This event included their typical farm activities (hay rides, pumpkin games, antique tractor displays, etc.) along with an added pumpkin painting activity. The City purchased acrylic paints and reimbursed the farm for small pumpkins grown on site that children painted there and later took home. Turnout that day in sales was far beyond a typical Saturday for this small business enterprise. The City's investment was simply additional promotion through the recreation program and the Pearson Family Farm saw a boost in revenue to the already established venue. This program was so popular, that it is expected to be a reoccurring annual event. In 2020, the Rumriver Art Center was brought aboard to staff the pumpkin painting aspects, as the previous year had much higher turnout than anticipated, and were greater than what the farm staff could oversee.

### Art for All

Art and culture can be far more than a nice living room painting—when integrated in day to day of residents, it can contribute to that 'sense of place' that is valued by the community. A close partnership with area nonprofit, Rumriver Art Center, has led to a variety of successful art programs for all ages, along with the establishment of the annual Elmcrest Art fair to promote local talents and vendors. Other cultural events have become year-around traditions for residents, such as the Annual Tree Lighting, Summer Concert Series, and Movies in the Park.



Rumriver Art Center Director Susan Yee with Art Fair Winner Amy Kulseth



**FREE** **Ramsey Foundation Concert Series •2010•**



Back by popular demand - **Big Walter Smith**

Sponsored by **Village Bank** Member FDIC

Brought to you by the **CITY OF RAMSEY FOUNDATION**

Join us for the **first ever concert** at Ramsey's new amphitheater in the **COR**, at the corner of Rhinestone Street NW and Ramsey Parkway E.  
Thursday, August 5, 2010  
5:00 - 7:00 pm

Be sure to check out the brand new farmer's market before the concert! The all new Ramsey Farmers Market is open Thursdays from 3:00 - 7:00 pm at Rhinestone Commons, 14455 Rhinestone Street (west of PACT Charter School).

For more information, please visit:  
**[www.cityoframseyfoundation.org](http://www.cityoframseyfoundation.org)**



2011 Concert



2013 Concert



2016 Concert



2020 Concert

**Decade of Summer Concerts**

In 2010, a single event concert was hosted at the new amphitheater. Since then, it has led to a series that continues to grow. Today it has become a popular family outing, serving many thousands over the course of a summer. In the upcoming 2021 series, 11 concerts with sponsors, food trucks, supplemental programs and offerings will take place. This is a

prime example of the nexus between recreation programming and the benefits to local businesses.



## CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT IN RECREATION

### Where to go from here, and Outreach

As parks and recreation offerings expand, there are ample opportunities for continued improvement of both the efficiency and quality of services. The following section has identified three areas that can enhance recreation services for the community. Consistent outreach as an example helps to strengthen and enhance Ramsey’s brand and identity as a remarkable place to reside. Marketing and branding is a key component to program enrollment and success. Simply put, residents are not able to participate in services programs they are unaware of. A varied outreach strategy may be beneficial to reach larger proportions of the community.

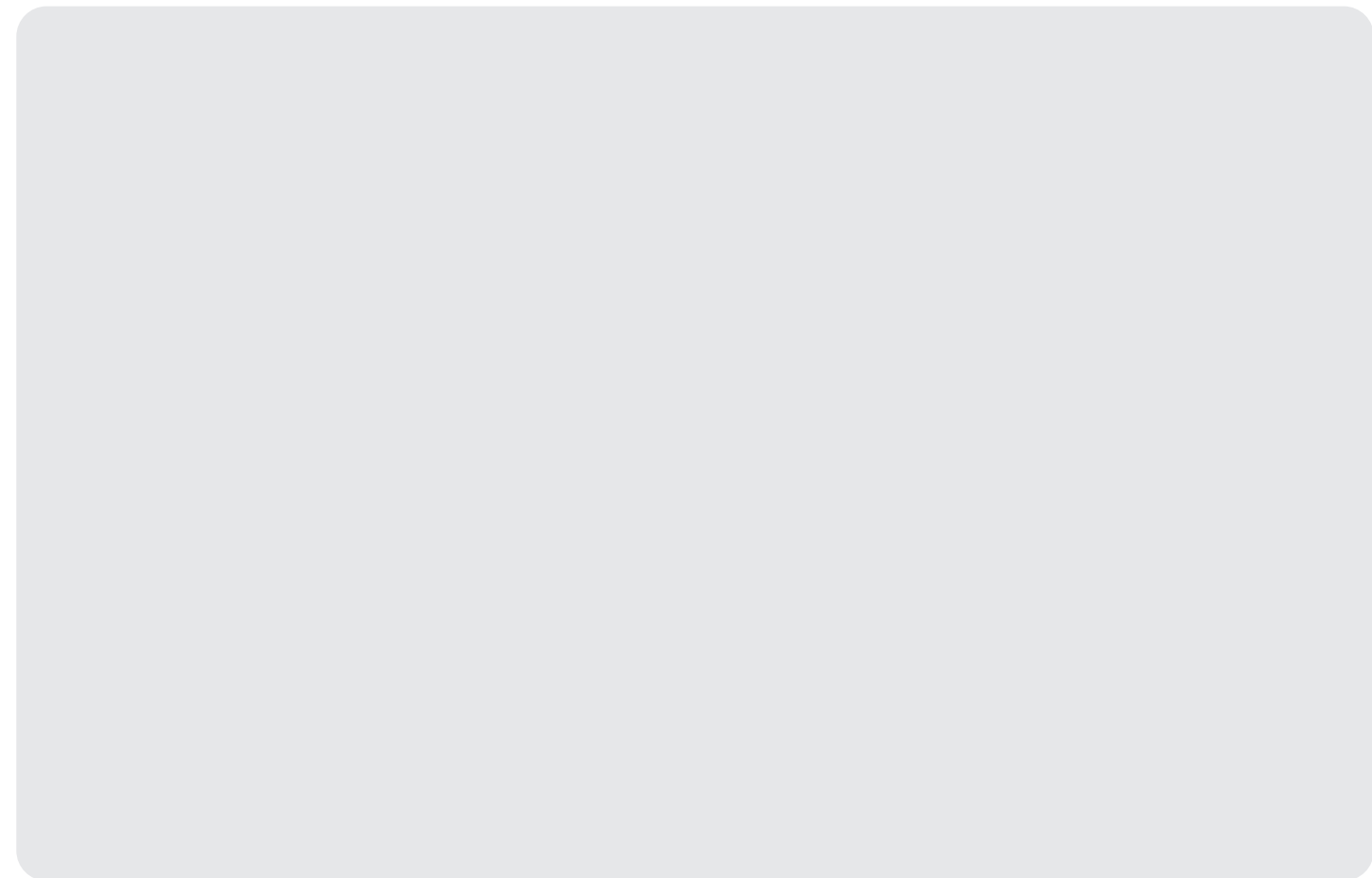
### Program Consistency, Regular Evaluation of Return on Investment

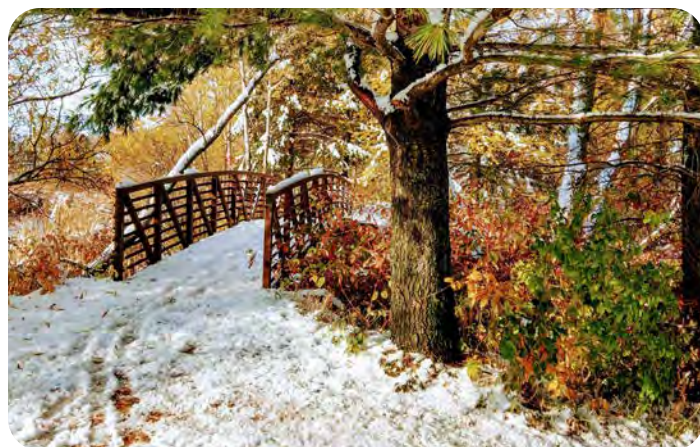
In anticipation of an expanding population, Ramsey may consider increasing the scope and scale of recreation programs based upon resident feedback and desires. This evaluation will take the form of formal and informal surveys, assessments on the success of existing programs and available budgets. In the future, Ramsey leadership and officials may find an allocation of additional resources and services may fully leverage an increased return on investment.



## SECTION 5 | PLANNING FACTORS & CONSIDERATIONS

### INTRODUCTION





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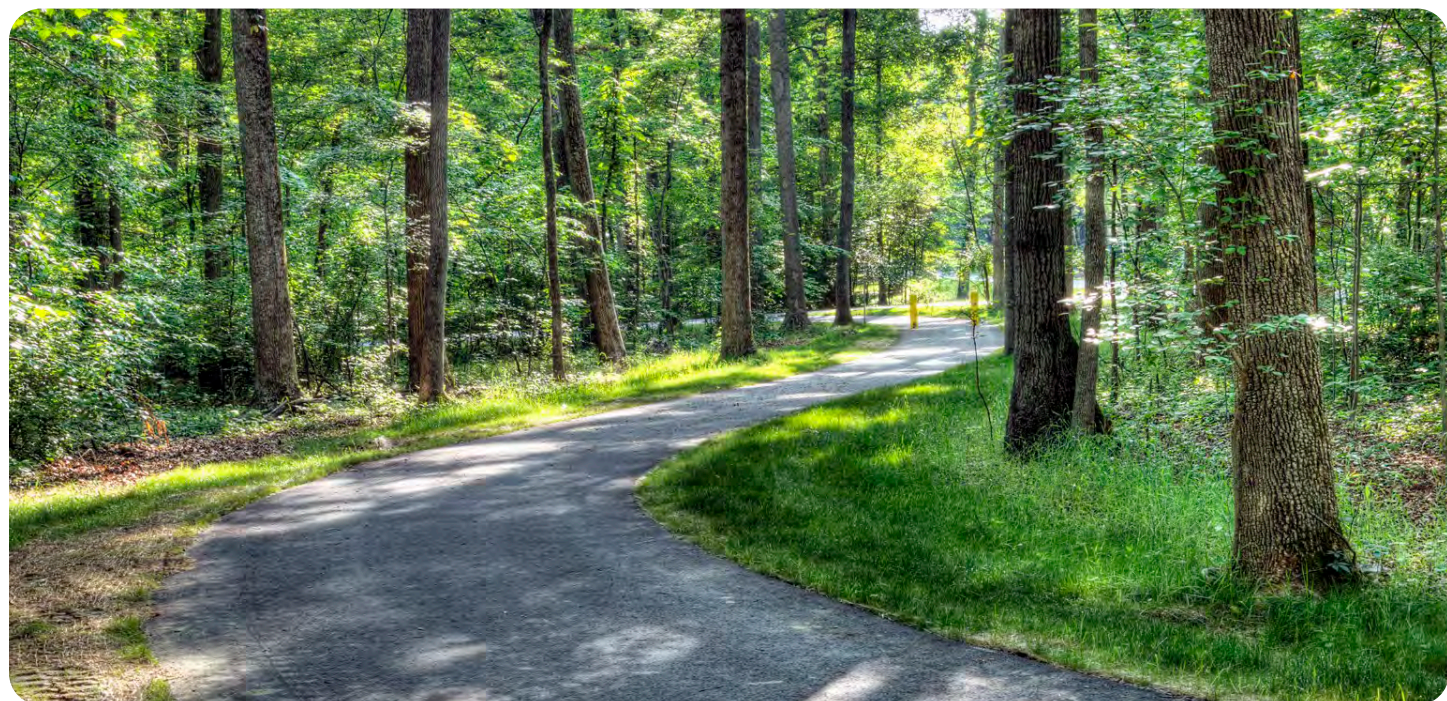
### PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The City of Ramsey has established a Parks and Recreation System as a means to better and diversify the lives of residents. Ramsey should continue to provide relevant and quality services which improve residents' overall well-being, support local partners, all while taking care of the infrastructure we already have. Ramsey strives to maintain these objectives by remaining responsive to residents. To ensure maintenance of positive programming, Ramsey Parks and Recreation must anticipate the future of recreation services be prepared to adapt in order to best serve the community. The purpose of the following section is to outline factors and considerations that may factor in to future planning.

### Vision for the Future

Parks and recreation departments of all sizes have significance influence to shape an evolving community. In addition to recreation and park specific goals, Ramsey Parks and Recreation aims to support the City of Ramsey's established goals and overall vision. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan calls for Ramsey to evolve through citizen-drive, collaborative process that respect the balance and connectivity between its unique urban, rural, and natural environment for current and future generations.

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Cottonwood Park

As the City of Ramsey continues to see upward trends in growth, the Parks and Recreation Department can provide ways to assist in community development through recreation opportunities. Recreation programming serves as a way to connect to the community and remain responsive to residents' trends. Many of the recreation programs take place in Ramsey's established parks and green-spaces. Participations in these programs create an opportunity for participants to feel connected to natural and rural environments areas in their own community. Building a strong parks and recreation department centered around a collaborative citizen-drive can help to build a strong community which is able to adapt and have room to expand for generations to come.

Considering Ramsey is relatively new to recreation programming during a period of rapid change and expansion in the community and surrounding area, it is imperative to set proper focus to develop a strong foundation for services to expand and adapt with this growth. One goals of Parks and Recreation is to provide meaningful services to enhance the lives of residents and connect people to the community through their parks system. Services that are meaningful are accessible add value to the community; including opportunities for healthy living, engaging local businesses, and creating a sense of community pride. Information specific to the added value parks and recreation services create can be found in section X, on page Y.

To achieve this vision, the department will continuously reevaluate program planning and offerings to create an active and connected community. The purpose of the following section is not to set specific guidelines and targets, but to lay the foundation for success. -- cannot anticipate exact programs in 5, 10, or 25 years, but can anticipate "needs" such as larger population etc.-

### PROGRAM PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

There are many behind the scenes factors must be carefully considered to host a successful program or class. The very base of recreation programs are Facilities, Staff, and Funds. Programs cannot be carried out without adequately establishing these the resources to run it such place, staff, and proper resources. In addition, the physical necessities of a program, other feasibility factors such as Demographics, Demand, Community Benefit, and Program Categories must be considered.



Mississippi West County Park



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Rum River Central Park



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### Facilities, Staff, and Funds

**FACILITIES:** Facilities are one of the base components of programming, as they can limit or expand opportunities. Ramsey has utilized City facilities such as Ramsey City Hall, Elmcrest Park, and Central Park for regular programming. These are high use facilities for both the City and private residential requests. Additionally, local elementary schools and Adrenaline Sports have been reserved for some fitness classes, however there are rental fees and other programs that take priority in these highly desired spaces.

The City of Ramsey hosts and maintains an impressive list of facilities, that include fields, buildings and parks for both City programming and rental to the public. In addition to facilities are utilized for recreation programming and rentals by resident, unscheduled areas are valuable to have, such as picnic tables and shelters for families to visit. Users frequently rent out spaces for graduation parties, life celebrations, and family reunions. This system is especially valuable as it provides a sense of home and belonging within the community, a place to build memories, and some additional revenue for the City to offset the cost of maintenance for the facilities.

In the future, facilities dedicated to parks and recreation programming will improve the quality, quantity and cost of programs. In the meantime, the Department can make improvements on current spaces to allow them to be multi-use for programming, maintain mutually positive partnerships in the community to use other space when necessary. When creating new park facilities, they should be planned with a multi-use mindset.

**STAFFING:** Staff is another base component of programming, and has the capacity to strengthen program impact. At this time, Ramsey is in the beginning stages of developing recreation programs and does not employ any full time staff to recreation programming. Current instructors for programs are primarily "outsourced" or offered in conjunction with valuable partners. As a product, strong relationships have been made in the community. As Ramsey expands and the Parks and Recreation Department continues to be developed and refined, staff as well as other resources may be evaluated maintain responsiveness to residents. When the time comes, city leaders may decide to specialize staff for programming to offer a wider breadth of opportunities to keep up with a growing population.

**FUNDING:** Resources and funds are the final base component to the foundation of recreation services. As funds are finite, a system has been developed to prioritize program offerings which provide the most community benefit, this system is often referred to in parks and



Flintwood Terrace Park grass field



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recreation as the Pyramid Methodology and is further discussed in the following section. Services are evaluated in multifaceted terms, which may include overall added value, cost per participant and responsiveness to residents. City leaders may choose to adjust funding in the future based upon this methodology in conjunction to the growth of the city.

### Program Factors

**DEMOGRAPHICS AND DEMAND:** As discussed in Section X on demographics, maintaining information on a community can offer insight into what programs will be successful and useful to a community. Programs will vary over time as trends in recreation change. Surveys and data from participation are useful tools in regards to anticipating resident interest and response to specific programs.

**COMMUNITY BENEFIT:** Defining types of value is important when evaluating programs that are most beneficial for a specific community.



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**PROGRAM PROVIDER CATEGORIES:** Defining programs by provider can help determine priority, funding, fee setting. Programs will fall into one of the following categories:

- **Community events-** One-time or annual events, little to no fees, open to the public.
- **Parks & Recreation Department-** These types of programs are essential to recreation and community needs. They are the typical offerings that people think of with recreation, and direct costs subsidized to residents.
- **Partnership-** beyond basic program offerings and provide more specialized offerings.
- **Contracted-** very specialized, typically sought out for a specific program or service that cannot be provided in house.

Based upon staffing and available resources, programs offered in different organizations may fall into a different category based on their foundations in recreation. For example, a city with a naturalist on staff may offer interpretive programs in house, where as a city without, interpretive programs would fall into the partnership or contracted category. Each category is important can offer different strengths. To help maintain a robust offering, it can be useful to offer programs from a variety of these categories.



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- 1 Increased economic development efforts
- 2 Able to offer additional resources
- 3 Wider array of programming opportunities
- 4 Increased organization awareness and revenue
- 5 More creative space for ideas and brainstorming
- 6 Shared responsibilities for more effective programing

**PARTNERSHIPS AND PROVIDERS:** Partnerships are opportunities to expand recreation programming while devoting less resources. Partnerships may be with schools, other recreation agencies, or private businesses. However, for any partnership to be successful, both parties must receive equal value in the exchange.

Partnerships are a valuable asset to recreation programming and well-being of residents. Section X on page Y can provide specific information on partnerships within the context of Ramsey.

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### Evaluation and Analysis

**PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND INVENTORY:** As a public service, parks and recreation departments are tasked with efficiently serving the community to maximize the return on investment. Funds must be carefully allocated to provide programs that provide added value to the community.

Unfortunately for program providers, there is no “one price fits all” method for fee setting. The following section is intended as a fluid pricing guideline that can adapt with the City for years to come. This type of framework is intended to maximize the return on investment, allocate funds to opportunities which most enhance the overall community, and develop a deeper commitment to valuable recreation resources. Every dollar invested in Ramsey’s Parks and Recreation system can help to build a connected community, improve health, encourage business investment, set children up for success, increase markers for happiness, and build lasting memories that give meaning to residing in Ramsey. This section gives an in-depth explanation of the Pyramid Methodology followed by an outline of a Passport Program that utilizes the theory behind the Pyramid Methodology.



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### ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

In order to be successful, the Department must continue to engage those who participate **and** make it accessible for those who may have not. In addition to inclusion in program offering, recreation programs can utilize community engagement pieces to be responsive to residents. Traditional programs are a great opportunity as they typically yield high attendance and cover a wide variety of interests. These types of programs, such as art, yoga, and sports programs through Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association, should continue to be available to all.

#### Engagement

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Community input may be gathered through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and workshops to help focus programming to residents of the respective community. By promoting engagement opportunities, service providers can gain awareness and increase participation. Results can be used to determine what types of programs are relevant, for which age groups, and in which areas.

Programs that are responsive to the community will have higher engagement in participation. This can help promote additional activities from the organization. If participants have a positive experience with one program, they may be more likely to branch out to try a new program.

#### Inclusion:

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act outlines program access obligations, which states that recreation programs and facilities must be accessible to people with disabilities (Great Plains ADA Center). How can a public entity meet this obligation? The best way is to have facilities, equipment, and outdoor areas compliant with accessibility standards.

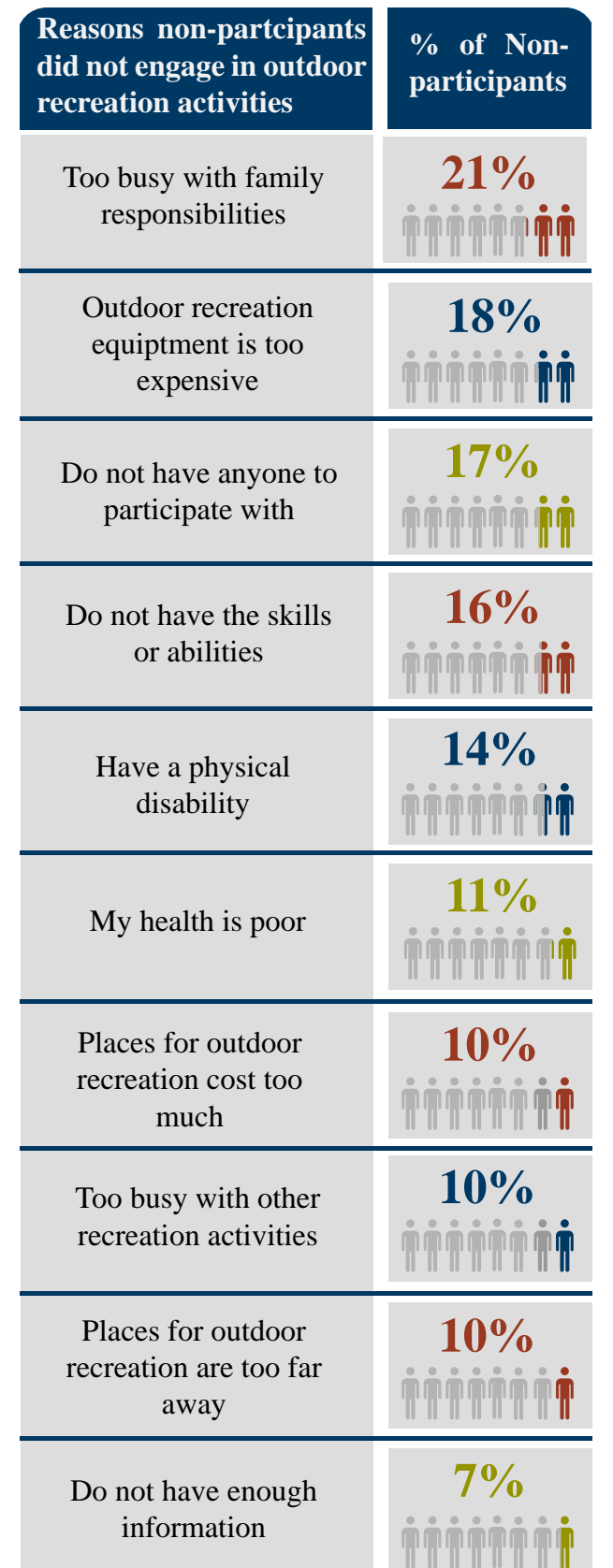
Unfortunately, this can’t always be the case. Limited budgets, lack of resources, and technical in-feasibility can make converting current facilities and equipment into compliance difficult, if not impossible.

The ADA regulations provide flexibility for this reality by providing exceptions for actions that cause “undue hardship.” Public entities are not required to take actions that change the “fundamental nature” of an activity or service. There is no exemption, however, for the obligation to provide program access to individuals with disabilities. This obligation is more than just “getting people in the door.” Program Access requires that use of facilities and services be equal to what other individuals receive, and it must be provided in an integrated setting with other members of the community.

While some agencies may have an Inclusion/Adaptive Recreation Specialist who develops access plans for participants with disabilities, there are not many options for adaptive recreation in the cities inventoried. Anoka-Hennepin and Elk River School Districts offer sports leagues for adults with disabilities, and it appears there is a community-based Special Olympics team in Anoka County.

A cooperative program between neighboring cities may be an efficient way to begin offering adaptive programs. Adaptive Recreation & Learning Exchange (ARLE) is a community-based resource for people with disabilities in the cities of Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Edina, and Richfield. The program offers a range of physical activities and sports, social programs, and classes for independent living.

Ramsey can continue work with partners to provide opportunities, offer a variety of programs to cover a wide breadth of interests. When program expansion is considered, accessibility should be in mind/planning for a future to break down barriers to participation. For example, if offering an additional yoga program, seated yoga may be an option. Programs that are low to no cost should also be continued to allow for participation opportunities regardless of economic status.



torindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Outdoor-Recreation-P



**1 BROAD COMMUNITY BENEFIT** These services are the foundation of the pyramid and include programs and services which mostly benefit the community as a whole. They may increase property values, improve community safety, address social needs, and enhance quality of life. These programs are typically offered for little to no charge.

**2 CONSIDERABLE COMMUNITY BENEFIT** The second level of the pyramid includes services that enhance individual well-being. Programs in this category tend to be expected services from the city and are typically catered towards beginner level programs intended for skill development. As they provide considerable community benefit, services are offered for little to no charge.

**3 BALANCED COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT** The middle of the pyramid represents programs that promote mental and physical well-being, but provide a higher level of skill development. Low fees are set for programs in this category to recover some of the direct and indirect costs.

**4 CONSIDERABLE INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT** The second smallest category is comprised of specialized services that are generally targeted to specific groups and skill-sets. This category may have some programs that are competitive. Fees are set to recover most or all of the cost.

**5 MOSTLY INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT** These services are found in the smallest portion at the top of the pyramid. They may be in the same market as the private sector. These programs are designed to recover costs, and have the potential to create a profit margin. Programs are often less frequent and smaller due to a niche community of participants and economic factors.

**Fee Setting Framework:**

The Pyramid Methodology was developed and adopted as a best practice system for recreation providers to appropriately allocate funds and resources. The Framework seeks to balance financial control, equity in programs, and identify core offerings for an organization. The structure is set up based upon the “benefit”, or added value of services to each specific community, and not simply “what has been done before”, or “what are others doing”. The Pyramid Methodology is especially useful as it accounts for the uniqueness of individual communities to help ensure programs provide the most benefit.

The foundational basis of the pyramid, has base services that provide broad scale community benefit on the bottom. These services tend to be baseline offerings from parks and recreation departments. On the other end, programs towards the top are more specific individual benefits and niche groups. Recreation

**FEE CONSIDERATIONS**

As a public service, parks and recreation departments are tasked with efficiently serving the community to maximize the return on investment. Funds must be carefully allocated to provide programs that provide added value to the community.

invested in Ramsey’s Parks and Recreation services helps build a connected community, improve health, encourage business investment, set children up for success, increase markers for happiness, and build lasting memories that give meaning to residing in Ramsey. This section gives an in-depth explanation of the Pyramid Methodology followed by an outline of a Passport Program that utilizes the theory behind the Pyramid Methodology. These two combined create a strong foundation for Ramsey Parks and Recreation and can easily be adapted for decades to come as the city continues to grow.

Unfortunately for program providers, there is no “one price fits all” method for fee setting. The following section is intended as a fluid pricing guideline that can adapt with the City for years to come. This type of framework is intended to maximize the return on investment, allocate funds to opportunities which most enhance the overall community, and develop a deeper commitment to valuable recreation resources. Every dollar



Residents enjoying food trucks at the Summer Concert Series

providers tend to initially focus resources in the bottom portion of the pyramid, and as they expand in time and resources are able to successfully work their way up the pyramid. While not impossible, it is difficult for providers to work their way inversely down the pyramid. In addition to providing broader community benefit, programs towards the bottom help to establish providers.

Existing programs can be easily categorized in the pyramid to consider fee level and prioritization. This can be a helpful tool as programs are being developed to allocate resources, staff, and gauge community impact. Pricing levels should reflect the community and align with the organizations mission and vision.

The Pyramid Methodology is an effective starting point to prioritize programs. However, the pyramid exists on a sliding scale and categories are not black and white. Other factors

may influence final positioning on the pyramid. Other than the general reach of the program, the following are essential factors that may influence community value and pyramid placement that should be accounted for during program development and fee consideration:

**BENEFIT** – What are the benefits to this service or program? Who receives the benefit? Are benefits excluding or favoring certain groups? Does this service or program benefit just those who participate, or does it have impact on the community as a whole? What other opportunities to the public provide this benefit?

**ACCESS** – Is this service or program accessible to everyone equally? Does it directly exclude anybody or is it restricted by diversity factors? Can it help bring different groups of people together?



**Examples:**

- Community-wide festivals and events
  - The Draw Summer Concert Series, Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm, Elmcrest Art Fair, Farmers Markets, Happy Days
- Open gyms/informal Fitness Clubs
- Facility accessibility
- Park maintenance and public art
- Scholarship and fee assistance programs

**Examples:**

- Fitness Classes as:
  - Yoga
  - Zumba
  - Line dancing, etc.
- Formal and informal interpretive programs
- Out of school time youth programming
- Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteer Program

**Examples:**

- Adult and youth sports leagues
- Specialty summer day camps
- Family education programs, such as "How to Camp"
- Archery tournament and workshop

**Examples:**

- Starwatch Party
- Gardening classes
- Wine and Canvas
- Book clubs
- Specialty classes

**Examples:**

- Elite sport teams
- One-on-one specialty training
- Food concessions
- Birthday parties

**RESPONSIBILITY** – Is the organization responsible for providing the service through legal mandates or mission? Is this a service that residents have been requesting or that would add considerable value to the community as a whole?

**SOCIAL VALUE** – What is the perceived public value by constituents, city staff, community leadership, and policy makers? Does it support other local initiatives? Is it a community builder?

**ANTICIPATED IMPACTS** – What is the impact on existing resources, other users, and the environment? What are the benefits added from this service? are they just to the individual or to the community as a whole?

**RELATIVE COST TO PROVIDE** – What is the cost per participant? What are the financial realities of the community? How does this cost compare to other similar programs? What is impact of this cost to the overall budget?

**DISCOUNTS** – Are there circumstances where a price cut or surcharge may be added? Is there early registration or group rates? Is there a membership or annual pass that encourages return customers? Is there a price incentive for residents vs nonresidents? Does this program help promote a non-profit or cause?

**SPONSORSHIPS** – Is there additional agencies who may have shared interest in this program? Is there a local business that could be contracted to supply material for the program? Is there opportunity for outside funds to be brought in?

**RECREATION CLIMATE** – Is there a high demand or urgent need for this program to aid current issues in the community? Are there special safety protocols for the program necessary to run it? What are the current regulations around hosting this program? Is it beneficial to offer this program at a lower cost to test program success or establish offering?



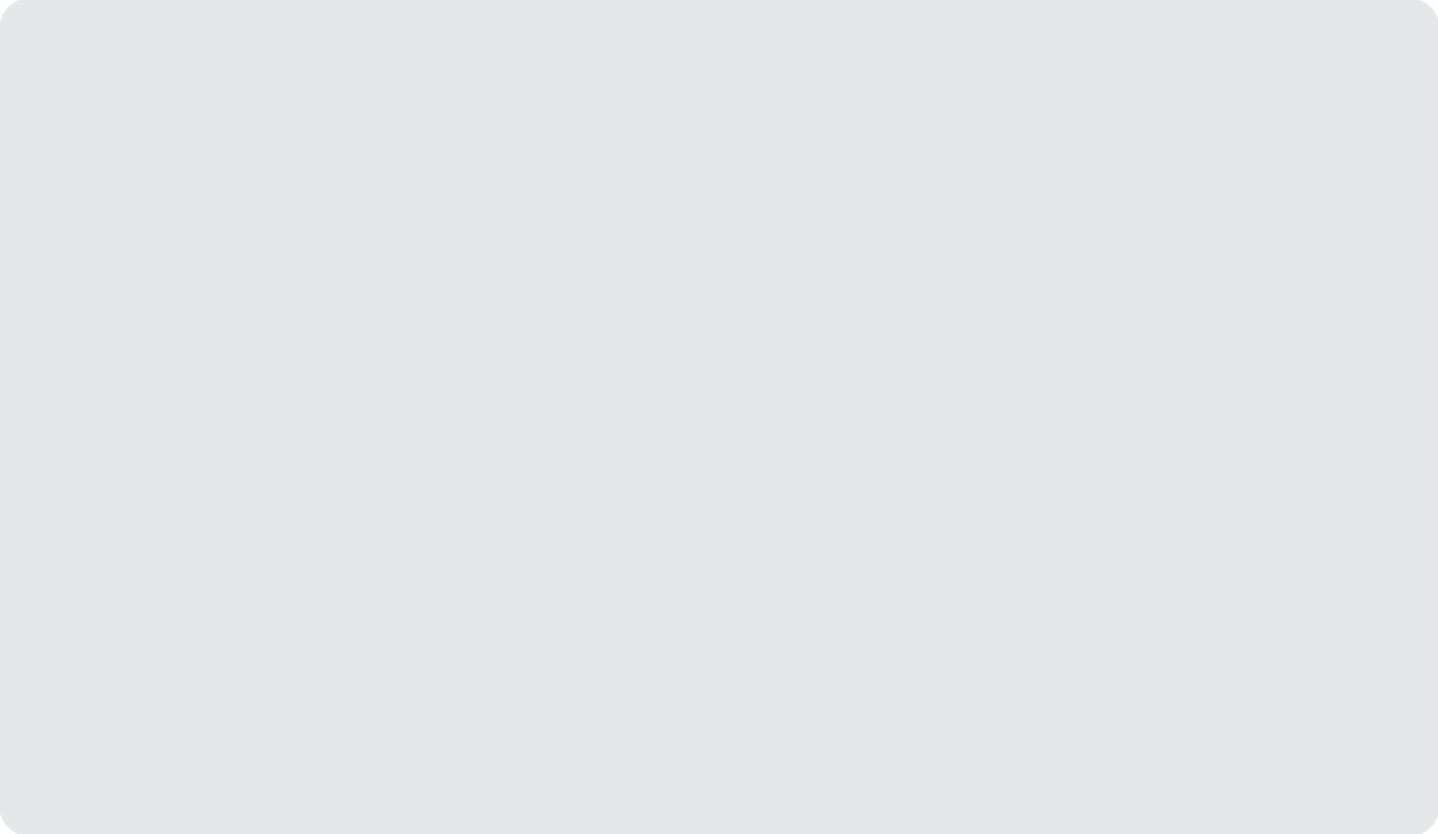
Food Trucks at 2020 Summer Concert Series



Youth participating in Safety Camp



Families enjoying an afternoon at Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm



**Fee Consideration Theory**

Determining fees for programs is no simple task, as there are many variables that influence the process, as seen in the previous section. This plan’s premise is to provide a working framework that efficiently engages as many residents as possible, provides the most added value to the community, while striving for excellence and quality of services. The Pyramid Methodology that follows can help prioritize and achieve these goals.

Initially, the City may focus on programs in the lower portion of the pyramid. These are programs with the highest proportion of community benefit over individual benefit and are offered at low to no cost. When adequate staple programs are established, the City may begin to offer additional programming in the upper portion of the pyramid, programs which offer significant individual benefit and aim for a higher cost recovery percentage.

Ramsey may most benefit by [this] to build a strong foundation

in recreation that will support expansion in the future. The Passport Program touched on in the following subsections may be an deal complimentary program to promote the expansion and encourage higher participation from new and existing users.

**Accounting for the Future**

As Ramsey’s population grows, and Parks and Recreation offerings become established, the demand for recreation services will likely rise. Ramsey’s fee policy should reflect these anticipated changes and be structured in a way to adapt alongside the city. An increase in residents will coincide with changes in overall demographics and needs as a city. Adaptations to the fee setting policy may become necessary. As policy makers evaluate municipal services city-wide, the option for a Parks and Recreation Passport system may become a more viable prospect as an option to balance access with program fees.

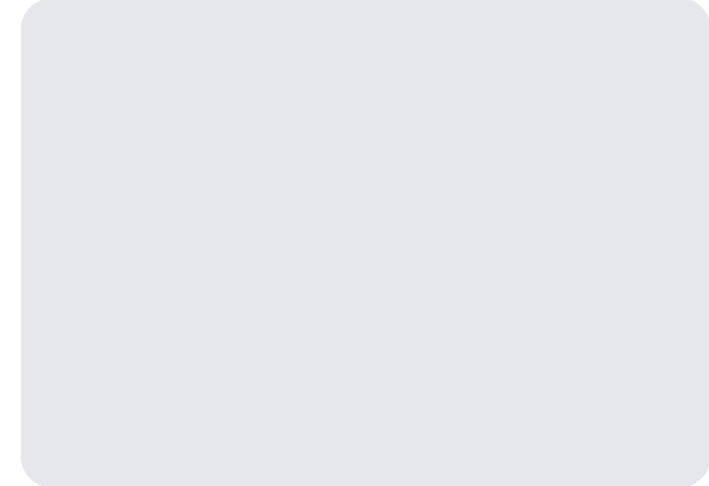
**Parks and Recreation Passport**

An annual Passport fee can help offset direct costs for programs that promote overall well-being and healthy living to the community as a whole, or provide the most community benefit as referenced in the lower portion of the Pyramid Methodology. An annual Passport fee can help offset direct costs for programs that promote overall well-being and healthy living to the community as a whole, or provide the most community benefit as referenced in the lower portion of the Pyramid Methodology.

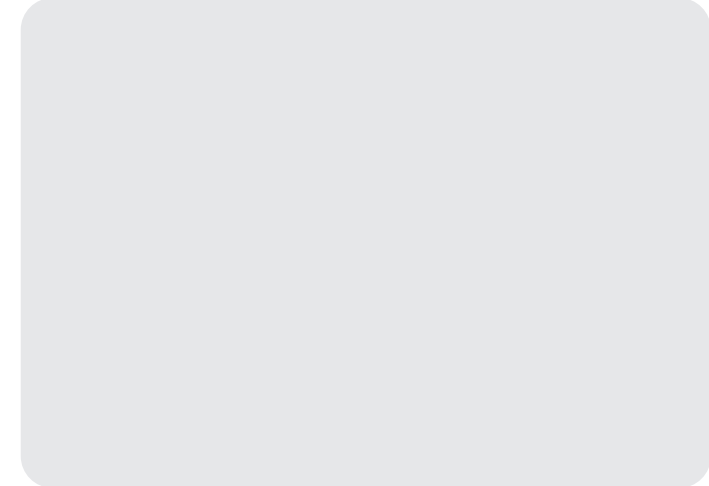
A Program Passport becomes especially valuable to the City and residents alike once programs are established with wide variety of offerings. The City would collect a fee for the Passport, while the residents receive the benefits of being a Passport holder, which can range from discounts, free admission, early registration, and sponsor promotions. This type of “membership” structure allows the necessary flexibility to adapt overtime alongside Ramsey.

While typically cities with a dedicated recreation facility partake in these programs, it can still offer a lot for Ramsey, and be adapted over time if facilities and resources are gained. For example, common benefits of being a pass-holder which are applicable to Ramsey now could include:

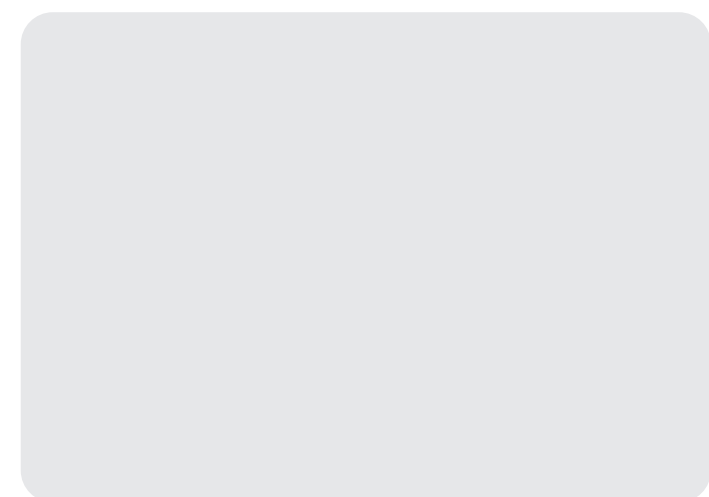
- Reduced or waived fees for programs that promote healthy and active living
- Reduced fees for last minute unfilled spaces in classes
- Discount for bringing a first time user
- Email newsletter with “first to know” about new offerings
- Exclusive events for pass holders
- Access or discount to services from partnered private providers



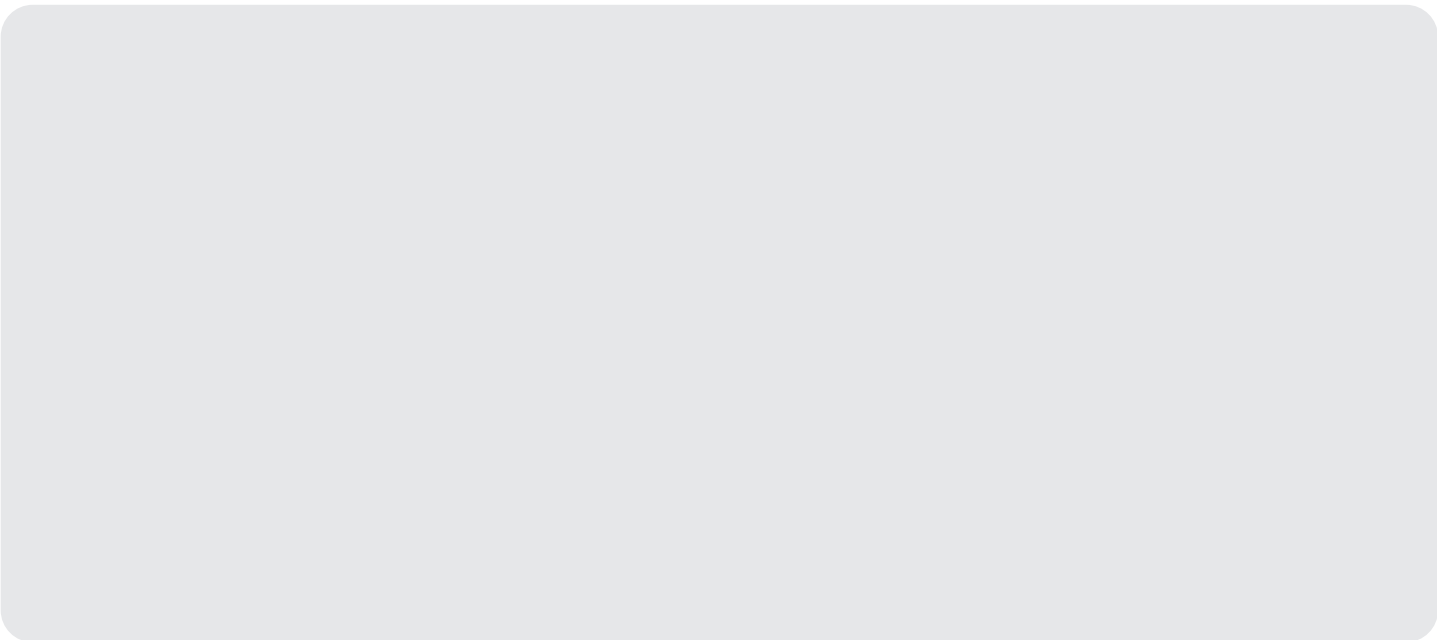
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**Examples**

Frequently, providers who develop membership-based pass programs have a dedicated recreation facility with ample resources to support the higher staffing demands. However, there are pass programs that do not focus exclusively on a centralized recreation center and may provide further direction to developing Ramsey’s pass. Different variations can be observed locally: program centered, accessibility centered, facility centered, and a hybrid focus. The following section highlights examples of what these programs look like in practice and are followed by a recommendation that draws pieces from each to develop a robust and relevant framework for a membership based pass program in Ramsey.

**PROGRAM CENTERED PASS:** The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation has created an ActivePass which allows access to programs that are exclusively for members. This is particularly successful due to the high demand and wide scope of programs offered by the city.

Example for one not based around a fitness center. Fee paid for activepass, allows access to specific programs exclusively for activepass members. Programs provide community value, yoga in the park, basketball (5 on 5, 3 on 3), 500 club ages 50+, computer lab, teen open gym, zumba. Because of the high demand in this geographic area, they some programs go as far as to only be open to pass-holders.

**ACCESSIBILITY CENTERED PASS:** Agencies may choose to selectively offer pass programs to those who may benefit the most from membership. This type of structure focuses on individuals and groups who face higher barriers to participate such as economic hardships or being apart of an underrepresented population in recreation.

A local example of this need-based pass is the Three Rivers Park District. In addition to their Recreation Pass, they offer a Recreation Pass Plus as a card that offers free equipment rentals, discounts on programs and events, and two free recreation passes per individual family member. These recreation passes include archery, swim ponds, dog off-leash areas, disc golf, boat trailer parking and cross-country skiing.

In order to be a Recreation Pass Plus holder, certain qualifications must be met. Families and individuals who live in Hennepin County and are experiencing financial difficulty are eligible.

**COMMUNITY CENTER RECREATION PASSES:** Cities such as Eagan and Inver Grove have passes centered around access to a community center. In addition to facility access, the pass includes wellness and fitness classes.

**RAMSEY’S PASSPORT-A HYBRID SET UP TO GROW** To best ensure success of the Passport, programs should be well established and classified to determine qualification. Programs that

promote active living and have significant community value should have the largest incentive for pass-holders.

For example, offerings that are under a “group fitness” category may be structured as the following:

- Included as part of the Park Passport
- \$5 for non-Park Passport holding resident
- \$10 for non-residents

By structuring programs in this way, pass-holders are incentivised to engage in additional healthy living activities, yet it does not exclude non-residents or non-pass-holders.

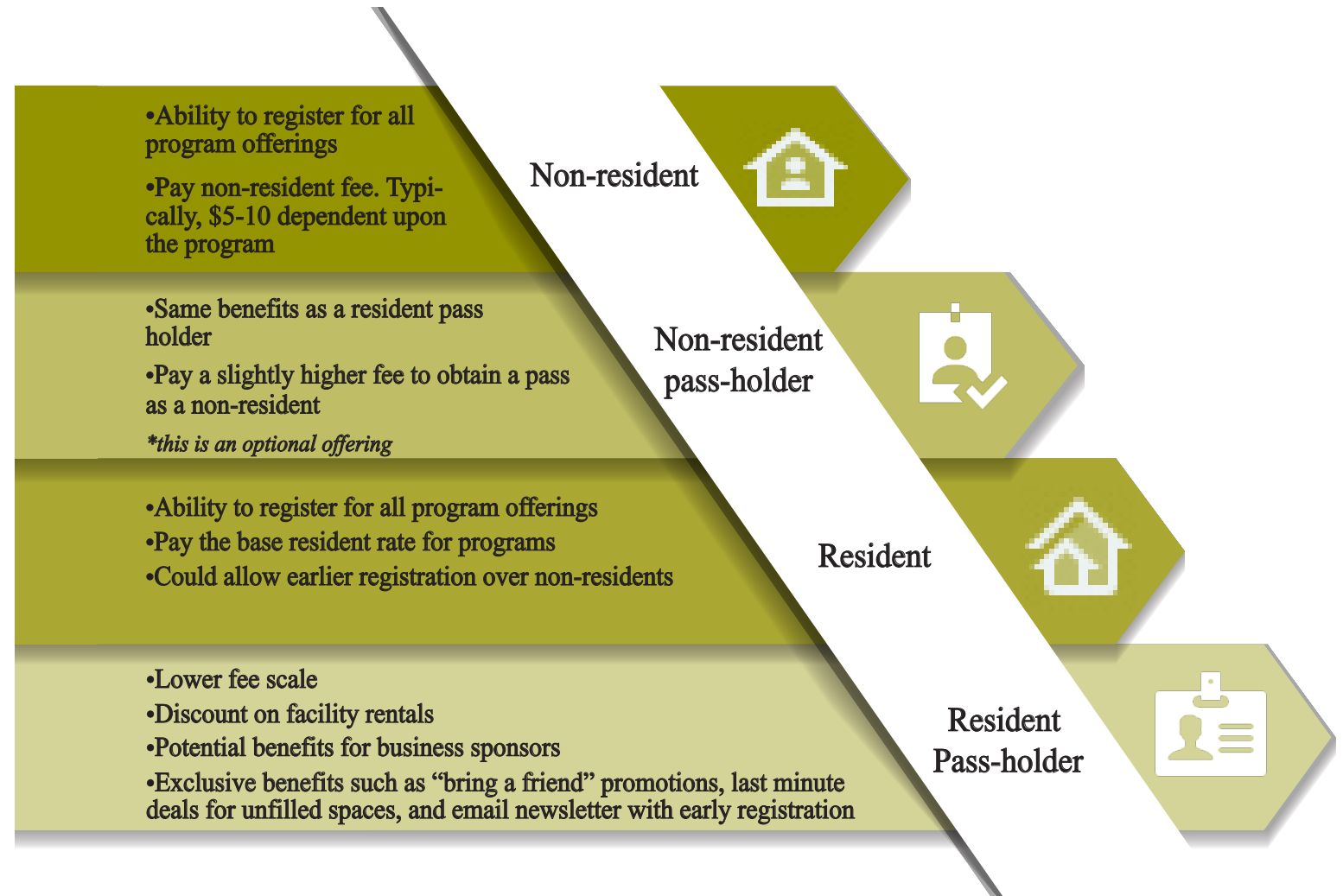
**Recreation Passport Startup**

For a pass program to be successful, certain benchmarks in programming should be met. The fee setting policy must have adequate time to change and notify residents of their options.

There should also be an adequate number of programs in a variety of categories offered to make it worth it for residents of all backgrounds to sign up.

Other considerations include establishing adequate technological and staff resources to distribute and track passes. This may be in some sort of physical pass or online eligibility code.

Recreation passes are popular programs among larger cities as they often incorporate gyms or pool use. A program like this is adaptable to work both on a larger and smaller scale, and can be amended as cities expand. They can be used exclusively internally for programs and rentals, or be expanded to incorporate economic development initiatives and offer discounts to participating businesses that choose to partner, extending economic development opportunities with the private sector.

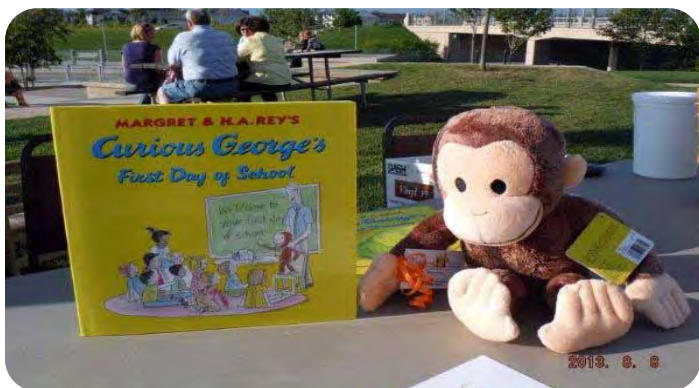




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### Fee Assistance

An added barrier to participation is those who need assistance often have many hoops to jump through in order to apply. Cities offer fee assistance as a means to not exclude populations to participate while encouraging the benefits of recreation to all users, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Some participants may be deterred by the stigma of financial aid. A successful fee assistance policy should be easy for users to find and clearly outlined on online and printed publications.

Fee assistance is necessary to allow all users who want to participate in a program do so. Eliminating economic barriers is key to growing an involved community, as well as enriching people's lives through parks and recreation. Ramsey residents may reach out to the Recreation Specialist or refer to the City Website to request fee assistance for a program. The fee assistance policy may be reevaluated as necessary alongside the fee policy as recreation services expand.

Many agencies offer financial assistance to those who qualify, but there is not a uniform policy as demand and resources vary between communities. Communities may fund these programs through community foundations, grants, sponsors, or other program revenues. Information on fee assistance programs in surrounding communities is as follows:

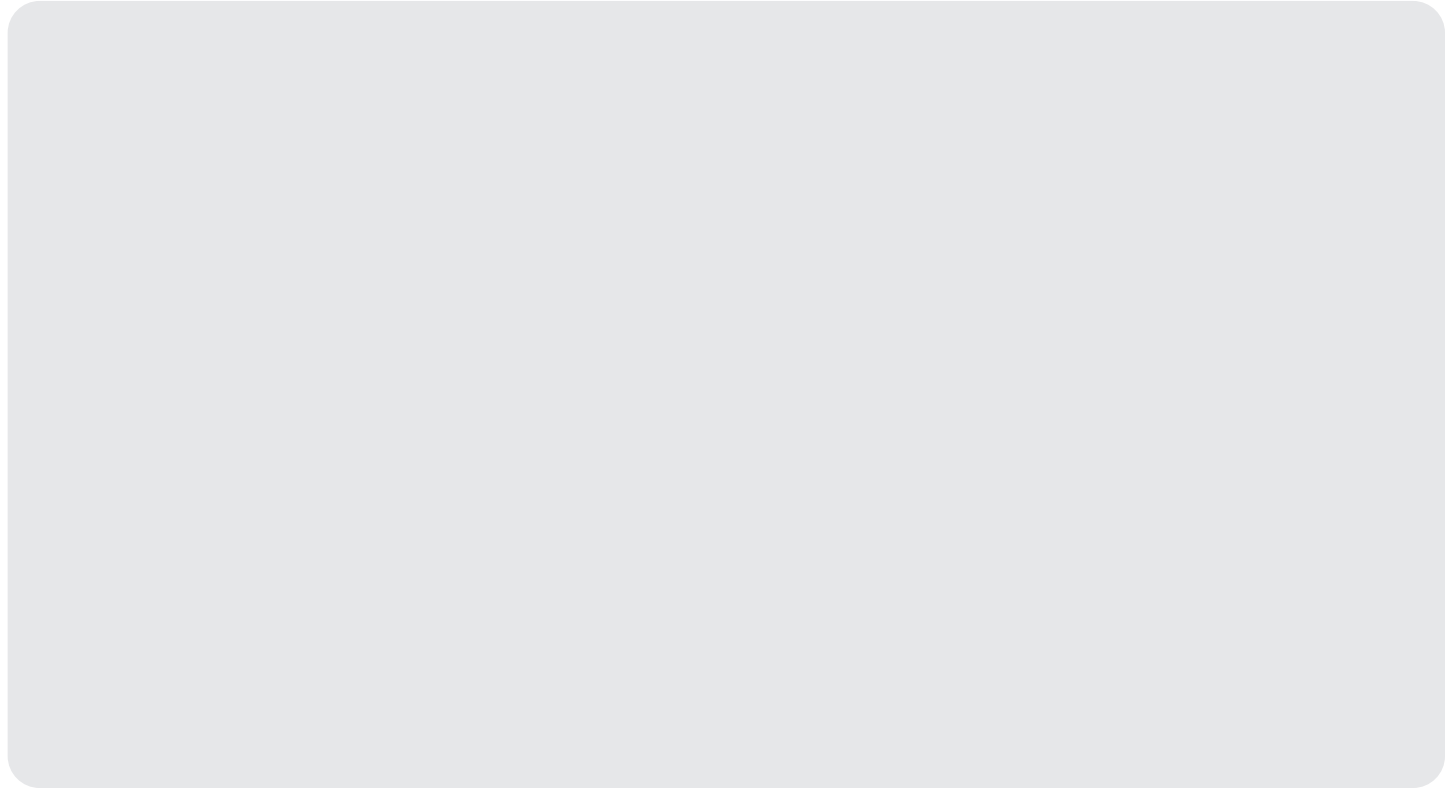
**ANOKA-HENNEPIN COMMUNITY EDUCATION** – Apply by calling the community education office of the desired program.

- Youth – families who qualify for free or reduced-price meals may request fee assistance.
- Adult – contact adult learning registration line to request assistance and eligibility information.
- Early learners – ECFE activities, classes, and tuition are based on a sliding scale.

**ELK RIVER PARKS & RECREATION** – Fee assistance is available for Elk River residents. Please inquire when registering for more information.

**ISD 728 COMMUNITY EDUCATION** –Fee assistance is available for most youth programs (except childcare, outings, some private lessons, and BTW training).

**MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD** – Minneapolis residents must meet the current Income Guidelines,



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complete an application, and provide additional documentation as outlined. Fee assistance is only for the instructional portion of fees and does not cover extra fees due to supplies, admission costs, or field trips. If the application is approved, register for classes at your local recreation center. Fee assistance is good for the calendar year applied for, and an application must be resubmitted every year. City of Minneapolis proof of residency AND one of the following:

- Copy of the two most recent pay stubs of all income earners in your household
- Copy of your previous year's federal tax return
- If you have no income and do not file income taxes, attach a brief note explaining that you have no income

**SAINT PAUL PARKS & RECREATION** –Helps pay for youth classes and activities. Can be requested by families who meet the following requirements:

- Youth must live in Saint Paul, be 18 years old or younger, and qualify for free/reduced lunches. Proof of residency must be demonstrated prior to final

registration.

- Youth who qualify can receive up to \$100 in fee assistance per year. Parents may request up to 50 percent of the cost of an activity. Refunds will not be issued for unused credits. Cannot be used for facility memberships, season passes, or daycare fees.

**Non-residents:** Parks and recreation agencies often offer a reduced rate for their residents, thus encouraging residents to participate in activities where they reside. Increased local participation can aid in building a community identity and increasing overall engagement. For example:

**ELK RIVER PARKS & RECREATION** adds a \$5 non-resident fee to programs under \$49 and a \$10 fee for programs \$50 and over.

**ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION** adds a 50 percent surcharge to the regular resident rate, which is much greater than other agencies. St. Paul has such a drastic difference due to the high demand of their programs and the fact they recently began allowing non-residents to participate in youth sports.

## Ramsey Parks & Recreation 2017 Spring and Summer Program Sampler

To register for these classes & more, visit our website:  
CityofRamsey.com/ParkEvents

### Art in the Park

April 14, May 12, June 17, July 25, August 21, and September 26, 6:30—8:00 pm  
Elmcrest Park, meeting room

Rumriver Art Center Instructors will lead participants step-by-step through a different project each month, allowing you to understand the process of each technique and still be able to create your own version. Visit our website to learn more about these monthly classes.



### Performing in the Parks: Theatre and Vocal Workshops

June 26-28, 9:00—11:00 am; July 10-13 and August 8-10, 9:00 am-12:00pm  
Elmcrest Park



**June and July:** Students will work together to create a script through improvisation games. This is a great class for children who love to use their creativity daily.

**August:** An interactive vocal seminar for students to explore singing styles. The workshop will focus on technique for the solo singer and elements of group singing.

### Learn to Kayak with Wahoo! Adventures

June 3, 8:30—10:00 am or 10:30 am—12:00 pm  
Sunfish Lake Park

Join us to kick off summer with a paddle around Sunfish Lake. You will discover why kayaking is one of Minnesota's fastest growing outdoor adventures. From learning how to paddle to packing for a day on the water, you will learn how to have a relaxing day on the lake. Children under 11 must be accompanied by an adult.



For more information:

tbailey@cityoframsey.com, 763-576-4309



## OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

Program promotion may be continuously improved as user habits change, to ensure that service offerings are able to reach residents in an effective way. The Ramsey Resident has been a primary source of information to residents, alongside the City's website. A recent addition to the toolbox of communications has been the utilization of social media and new technology.

The Ramsey Resident is a city newsletter distributed bi-monthly to every home in Ramsey. It delivers information on community-related announcements. Although it has broad reach to residents, it may not provide the level of detail on services that the website can, and does not allow for registration. While readers are encouraged to visit the Parks and Recreation Events page for more information, it cannot be guaranteed all opportunities reach them.

The city website acts as a central hub for pertinent information for residents. Navigating to find information on the website requires the user to seek out the information they are looking for rather than delivering it directly to their mailbox. Hosting a formal city website may require additional resources from staff to ensure we are presenting timely content in a way that is easy to navigate.

The prevalence of social media in day to day lives is on the rise. Today, a larger portion of the population can access a wide variety of social media sites from their mobile device, tablet or desktop and can use it as a central hub for news, information, and events. This is especially true in the younger populations. The City may utilize this powerful tool to quickly connect residents to opportunities in their area, encourage them to share events with their friends, connect with partners, and reach potential new users. As convenient and useful as social media can be, it is not inclusive of the entire population. According to the NCS <spell this out! survey, 63 percent of Ramsey residents are either very or somewhat likely to engage with the City on Facebook, 38 percent are not likely at all. These proportions will continue to change as technology advances.

To be most effective with program promotion, a mix of these services may be used to reach the broadest portion of the community. Publications in the Ramsey Resident can be used to deliver broad information to a large portion of residents, with a notice to look at the website for full listings or programs of interest. Events may be created on social media platforms to quickly spread the word about new offerings and reach new users. For registration and details, the social media event posting may redirect users the

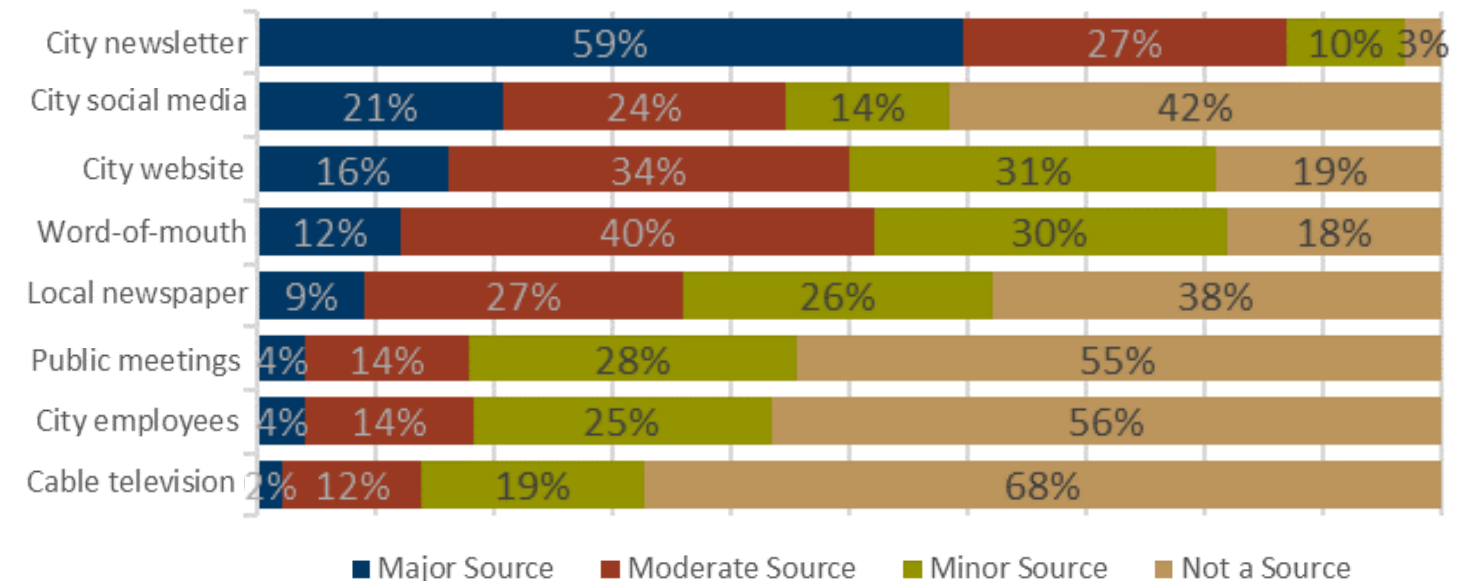
City website. As parks and recreation opportunities expand, an automated monthly email newsletter or text alerts may become beneficial to notify users of new opportunities.

Other methods may include flyers, signs, banners and other public postings. Yard signs have been effective in the past for select events and way-finding for community events. Alternative methods have been used to promote specific events such as outdoor movie nights, the art fair, and the summer adventure program.

A mix of channels to reach residents and potential users is beneficial to the City of Ramsey both in participation recruitment, and as a brand strategy for the city. Consistent outreach is an effective tool for "brand enhancing" and making the City of Ramsey recognizable as a reputable recreation provider.

## Sources of City Information

To what extent are each of the following a source of information for you about Ramsey city government and its activities?



## SECTION 6 | INITIATIVES & STRATEGIES

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to put in place realistic goals and actions that align with the City's vision for the future of recreation programming in Ramsey. The broad goal is to ensure that programming provides valuable services to the community and is consistent with the both the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Plan objectives.

The state of Minnesota has released the 2020-2040 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), based upon thorough research from public engagement efforts and a survey of local recreation providers. The City of Ramsey can reference this plan to help prepare for future trends in recreation locally.

Four key elements provide the framework for the Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation plan are consistent with Ramsey's goals in recreation. The following four elements from the SCORP and can be seen as overarching themes throughout the following section.

#### Connect People and the Outdoors:

Develop Minnesota's stewards of tomorrow through efforts to increase life-long participation in outdoor recreation and appreciation for our natural heritage.

#### Create Opportunities:

Evaluate the creation of new parks, trail and recreation opportunities to satisfy current users as well as to reach out to new ones.

#### Care for What We Have:

Provide safe, high-quality park and trail experiences by regular reinvestment in park and trail infrastructure, and natural resource management. Take advantage of existing infrastructure as multi-purpose

#### Coordinate Among Partners:

Enhance coordination across the large and complex network of public, private and nonprofit partners that support Minnesota's parks and trails to ensure seamless, enjoyable park and trail experiences for Minnesotans.

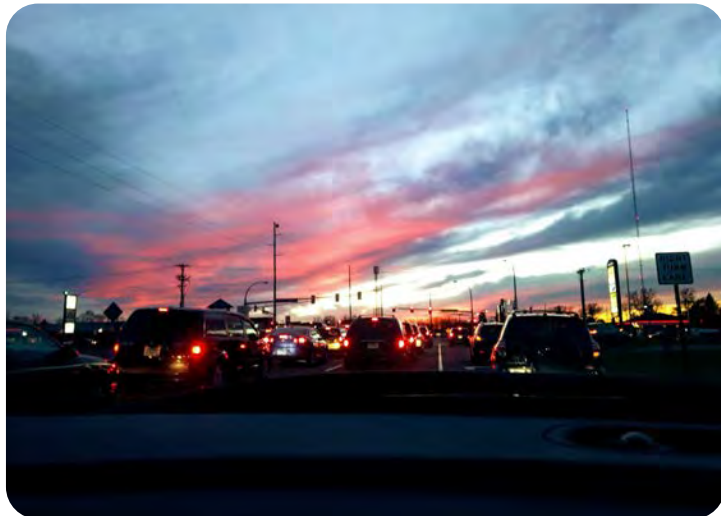


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**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN ELEMENTS:**

On an annual basis, the Ramsey City Council meets with staff to review and revise a Strategic Action Plan with the purpose to guide and focus the City's work. The Parks and Recreation Department seeks to support the efforts of the City's initiatives outlined in the approved Strategic Action Plan. With unity in shared goals, the City will be better equipped to work efficiently and provide the highest quality services possible to our residents. Five specific elements from the most recent 2019 Strategic Action Plan have been identified as areas in which recreation programming can specifically support.

**Promote economic growth and development:**

Recruit new industry and market-ready major retail businesses to Ramsey

- Parks and recreation services and opportunities build community identity, involvement, and approval. These are among some of the key elements that contribute to sustaining value of a community and aspects potential businesses find appealing when determining a location
- Established parks system can be a signal of a higher quality of life and well-being, making the City an enticing place to invest in for potential industries and retailers
- Trails, greenspace and recreation opportunities are valuable assets that can help attract high quality workers to and their families to Ramsey

**Seek public and private partnerships:**

Optimize use of non-city funding through joint projects, grants, and partnerships

- Seek out available grants for recreation programming. This may include working alongside regional, state and national outdoor recreation providers and their facilities
- Recreation programs can be used as a tool to increase public/private partnerships that further expand programming

**Improve and maintain the safety of the community:**

Reduce crime and illicit drug activity in the community.

- Recreation programs and facilities provide safe and productive environments for out of school time can reduce risk for risky behaviors
- Youth engagement in recreation programs helps them develop skills needed for a successful adulthood

**Strengthen Ramsey's identity and brand:**

Create a strong positive image for residential neighborhoods, business districts and key corridors

- Parks often act as the heart of a community or neighborhood, while enhancing a strong positive image of the area for both residents and retailers
- Hosting formal and informal activities and programs in parks shows they are well liked, area is safe, and increases community engagement and connectivity
- Effective recreation programming is a strong tool for community building by creating a sense of shared place and identity. Additionally, those who feel connected to their residential location are more likely to stay and speak favorably of it
- Regular recreation programming or events become embedded in the City as a tradition for residents to look forward to. These types of programs enhance community livelihoods, which is among the key deciding factors for potential residents. Examples of such events are the Annual Tree Lighting, Happy Days, Elmcrest Art Fair and the Summer Concert Series.

**Enhance community engagement:**

Identify opportunities for community volunteer work and citizen recognition

- Recreation centers, nature preserves, and parks and recreation departments frequently host volunteer programs. As community members find something they are passionate about, they more are likely to volunteer for that cause. Recreation programs often provide opportunities for residents to get involved and volunteer within their community in an impactful way.
- When possible, partner and contract with program providers and instructors locally as a way to promote our local economy, talents and further create a connected community
- Offer recreation opportunities that encourage community engagement and recognition, such as the photo contest. The annual photo contest calls for residents to share the beauty of Ramsey, highlight local talents in various City publications and increase resident engagement with City efforts.





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## 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

By the year 2040, approximately 39,500 people within 13,500 households will call Ramsey home. To account for this growth in population and diversity, it is essential to build a strong foundation in parks and recreation to support the changes to come.

In addition to being aligned with the City's short term goals through the Strategic Action Plan, the Department wishes to plan for the long term success of recreation through support of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan initiatives.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Park Systems Plan has the vision for Ramsey to evolve through citizen-drive, collaborative processes that respect the balance and connectivity between its unique urban, rural, and natural environment for current and future generations.

### A Balance of Rural and Urban Character

- Preserve and enhance continuous open space corridors for conservation, positive effects of nature near-by and opportunities for unstructured play
- Promote use of walking and biking trails for connectivity to neighborhoods and for users to immerse in some of the open space that gives Ramsey its rural character
- Balance a variety of smaller neighborhood parks and larger community parks to provide a variety in recreation opportunities and that also allow for unstructured play
- With a variety of parks, residents can appreciate the amenities of larger facilities, as well as the quietude of natural areas and open spaces

### An Active Community

- Expand opportunities for community recreation programming for all age groups, including low impact offerings
- Ensure equitable access to recreation programs and facilities
- Create a healthy community through a diverse and robust offering of recreation programs
- Provide programs that promote healthy and active living



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### A Connected Community

- Ensure connected regional and local parks have purposeful open spaces to allow for children to have unstructured play as well as places for community members to gather and create lasting memories
- Coordinated planning efforts across multiple jurisdictions, both within City Departments and local nonprofit and private entities.
- Provide programs and events that act as community builders

### Smart, Citizen-Focused Government

- Maximize joint use facilities and recreation opportunities
- Strengthen relationships with local youth organizations
- Create a positive learning environment for residents to explore their interests and become engaged members of the community

### Financial Stability

- Prioritize desired recreation amenities with goal for financial stability in maintaining a Park System Plan
- Establish a well rounded recreation system to increase wellbeing in the city, one of the key markers for potential investors
- Promote engagement in recreation activities that promote overall health and wellness. Healthier communities have decreased costs in health care spending.



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### RECREATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

The Department created an initiative along with a set of goals and strategies to guide the development of Ramsey's recreation services. The initiative corresponds to City Council's adopted Strategic Plan Strategy to, "connect the community both physically and socially to destinations, services and activities" with the Action item to, "Deliver a diversity of programs that finds a balance of revenue and access". Following the development of the Parks and Recreation Initiative, a set of eight specific goals were developed to support the success of the initiative. Each goal contains a set of realistic strategies to help achieve the goals.

#### Parks and Recreation Initiative:

To offer appropriately robust recreational opportunities to engage the entire community, while promoting health and wellness.

#### Goal 1: Offer a diversity of recreational opportunities

##### STRATEGIES:

- Ensure recreation programming meets Ramsey's unique demographics and changing trends through questionnaires, observation, focus groups, open house events and regular evaluation of the portfolio of services.
- Provide a range of formal and informal opportunities for the community to enjoy outdoor space and build connections to their community.
- Improve current and future program offerings through detailed planning, implementation, and monitoring of trends.
- Offer effective programming to promote healthy living and wellbeing for the cross-section of the community.
- Create a diversity of geographic places within the community to recreate as well as programs to participate in [reference PSP. Playgrounds and Essential Elements].

#### Goal 2: Create and maintain synergistic partnerships

##### STRATEGIES:

- Prioritize longterm, valuable partners in serving the community through successful recreation offerings, such as the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association.
- Offer higher quality and more efficient programs through synergistic relationships to area non-profits such as the Ramsey Rotary, Rumriver Art Center, and Ramsey Foundation.
- Support the business community through mutually advantageous programming and facility use.
- Seek additional partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and private businesses to offer recreation programs in varied facilities.
- Engage in longterm planning efforts with established protected areas and recreation providers such as the County Parks System and National Parks System.



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**Goal 3: Ensure pertinent programming opportunities for all ages**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Monitor the dynamics of a growing and changing population to anticipate future trends in recreation for all residents.
- Gather community input for appropriate, targeted recreation opportunities for ages 55+ . Input may take the form of formal or informal surveys and feedback.
- Develop multi-faceted groups and clubs to include social aspects, in areas such as the arts, physical activity, volunteering, hobbies, and education.
- Offer programming to encourage productive and safe out-of-school time activities.
- Create opportunities for youth to engage in unstructured play and receive the benefits of green-spaces.
- Provide opportunities for low-impact and family friendly activities to promote health and wellness.

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**Goal 4: Ensure equitable access to recreation programs.**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Ensure reasonable accommodations are available upon request for recreation programs and services, as mandated by the ADA.
- Promote awareness for programs with Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association to promote equitable access to youth sports programs.
- Seek out additional resources and grants that can help increase access to recreation programs or facilities.
- Appropriate funds for scholarships as necessary through park programming, to include: grants, donations, sponsorships, and local philanthropic organizations.
- Offer programs that help break down barriers to participation in recreation such as work schedules, cost, and ability/previous recreation experience.

**Goal 5: Encourage an active and healthy community**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Offer programs that are conducive to active and healthy living, including both higher and lower intensity opportunities.
- Invest in a variety of spaces and facilities to allow for multi-use opportunities, open spaces, and general community use.
- Take advantage of new technology and implement aspects of advancements into programming, such as geocaching opportunities and enhanced interpretive opportunities through various app resources such as iNaturalist.
- Provide adequate resources and promotion of existing parks infrastructure such as bike trails, walking paths, and open spaces to recreate.
- \*Reference health & wellness of having greenspace within neighborhoods \* relevance of circle of Ramsey to park spaces as resource for fitness\*



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**Goal 6: Promote a positive economic impact**

**STRATEGIES:**

- Create recreation programs that produce significant added value on the community level.
- Maintain facilities to allow for larger regional events such as the Minnesota Archers Alliance North Star Open and Voyageur Cup and Soccer Tournaments through the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association.
- When possible, engage local service providers and instructors for programming to further support the community.
- Promote locally made products through events such as the Elmcrest Art Fair, Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm, Farmers Market and space for food trucks at larger events.
- Establish successful recreation programs to increase benchmarks, such as quality of life, that play a critical role in economic development.
- Coordinate with local businesses to provide and promote programs for employee wellness.
- Attract employers and employees to the area with established open space, trails, and sidewalk system.



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**Goal 7: Incorporate a diversity of art and culture into recreation**

**STRATEGIES**

- Create a large scope of inclusive community cultural events such as Happy Days, Community festivals, Holiday Tree lighting, Ramsey Resident Day on the Farm to engage larger proportions of the community in events with art and cultural aspects.
- Maintain summer concerts at the amphitheater for a family friendly opportunity to be connected with the community, and partake in supplemental partnered programs such as Art in the Park.
- Encourage community engagement and create local ties through the annual photo contest. Winner's photos can be seen throughout the community in displays and in publications.
- Incorporate art when feasible throughout the City to highlight unique features of Ramsey as well as talents of residents.
- Collaborate with area nonprofit Rumriver Art Center to support local art initiatives and expand the scope of program offerings to our residents.
- Continue to host community events such as the annual Elmcrest Art Fair to highlight members of the community and to provide a way for everybody to participate in art through viewing and introductory classes.



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**Goal 8: Utilize existing infrastructure**

**STRATEGIES:**

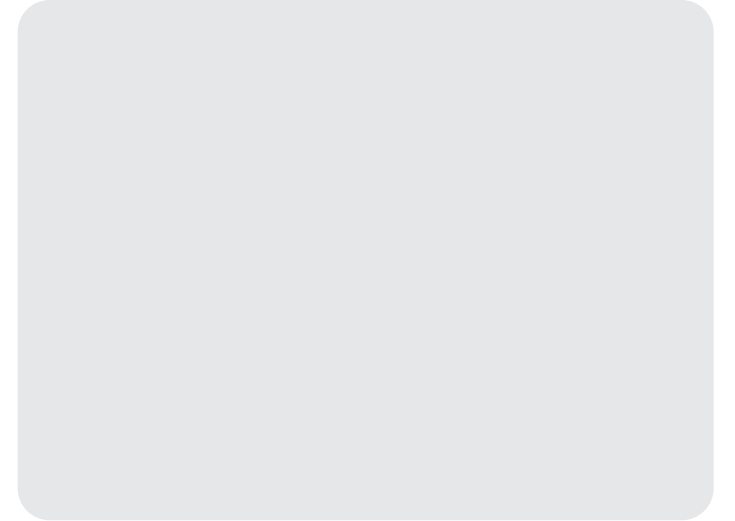
- Create multi-use facilities that provide programmable space, opportunities for residents to gather, and free play areas for children.
- Maintain what we have and promote use of established trail and park lands through recreation programming and outreach.
- Enhance resident communications and provide user friendly, up to date resources on current facilities usage and rentals.
- Program opportunities that highlight and take advantage of existing infrastructure.
- Invest in infrastructure that adds value to the community such as programmable spaces,
- Provide awareness for connectivity in formal and informal ...\* reference Circle of Ramsey.



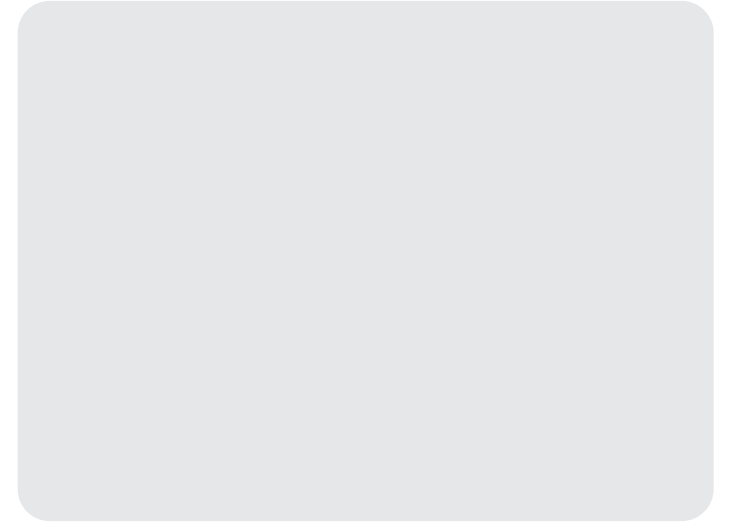
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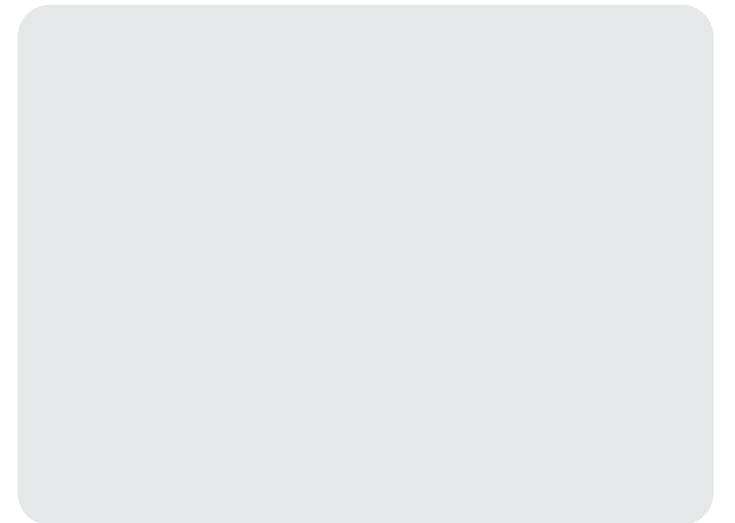
## CHAPTER 7 | [CONCLUSION]



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## APPENDIX | CONTENTS







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