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## ELEVATE HOPE HOUSE

City-Owned Parcel #47C  
Sunwood Drive & Yolite Street, Ramsey, MN  
Melinda McDermott, Founder  
[melinda@elevatehopehouse.org](mailto:melinda@elevatehopehouse.org)

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# Architectural Feasibility Letter

*May 4, 2026*

To the City of Ramsey and the Elevate Hope House Development Team:

I have reviewed the updated program and vision for the proposed mixed-use development at City-Owned Parcel #47C at Sunwood Drive and Yolite Street in Ramsey, Minnesota. Based on my professional assessment, and reflecting the program direction confirmed with Melinda McDermott through April 30 and the first week of May, I can confirm that this project is architecturally feasible as described and that the program is well-suited to the identified site and the applicable regulatory framework.

Resilience Architecture + Design is prepared to provide architectural services as this project advances into formal planning and design phases.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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The proposed development is a two-story mixed-use building of approximately 8,700 square feet of conditioned space, plus an exterior patio and pergola at the northeast corner of the site. The program comprises:

- First Floor (~5,700 SF): A community-centered café and gathering space branded as Gather, including coffee and tea service, large flexible seating with a permanent gather table for 12+, two reservable community rooms with collapsible walls, a children's play area, a creative / craft space, an artisan marketplace integrated into the storefront, a co-op workspace, the Elevate Hope House program office (relocated from the second floor), ADA-accessible restrooms, and back-of-house support operations.
- Second Floor (~3,000 SF): Three two-bedroom transitional apartments serving the families supported by Elevate Hope House, with shared circulation and two stair cores.
- Exterior Patio (~1,300 SF): A front patio at the building, with a 10' x 10' pergola at the northeast corner providing privacy at the back rail and a structural anchor for a string-light run between the building and the pergola.

## ZONING CONFIRMATION

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The parcel is confirmed as COR-1: Mixed-Use Core Subdistrict under City of Ramsey Zoning Code Chapter 106. This is the most favorable zoning designation available in Ramsey for this program type. The COR Design Framework (City

of Ramsey, February 2012) has been received from Todd Larson, Planning Manager, and reviewed against the proposed scheme. The following uses are confirmed as Permitted Uses in COR-1, requiring no conditional use permit:

- Restaurant / cafe (Gather): Permitted Use per Sec. 106-621
- Multiple-family residential (transitional apartments): Permitted Use per Sec. 106-621
- Outdoor dining and patio: Permitted Accessory Use per Sec. 106-622

Notably, the city's own zoning code explicitly states that “vertically-integrated mixed-use projects with retail, restaurant and service uses, especially at corner locations, are strongly encouraged” in the COR-1 subdistrict (Sec. 106-611(c)(1)). This project is a near-exact articulation of the stated intent of the COR-1 district.

## **BUILDING CODE FRAMEWORK**

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This project falls under the Minnesota State Building Code, which adopts the International Building Code (IBC). The mixed-use program triggers a multi-occupancy classification with the following key implications:

- First Floor: Assembly (A-2) or Business (B) occupancy, depending on final capacity and configuration of gathering spaces.
- Second Floor: Residential (R-2) occupancy for the three apartment units.
- Vertical separation between occupancy groups will require fire-rated construction per IBC Table 508, typically a minimum 1-hour fire barrier between R-2 and A-2/B occupancies.
- Sprinkler system required: At approximately 8,700 SF of total building area, the project exceeds the 4,500 SF threshold that triggers an automatic sprinkler system in a mixed-use building under the IBC. Both floors count toward this total, and treating the cafe and the residential portion as two completely separate buildings is not feasible given the vertically stacked program. Preliminary planning numbers suggest a sprinkler system in the range of \$4 to \$7 per square foot of building area, to be confirmed by a licensed fire suppression consultant during design.
- Two means of egress required upstairs: With three two-bedroom apartments, the second-floor occupant load is anticipated to exceed the 10-occupant threshold that triggers a second means of egress. The current scheme accommodates this with two stair cores extending from the first to the second floor.
- Elevator not required: Based on current code interpretation, an elevator (and a LULA limited-use platform) is not required so long as the project does not exceed three R-2 dwelling units. Relocating the Elevate Hope House office to the first floor keeps that program element clear of any residential accessibility triggers, while preserving an accessible path of travel to all required first-floor uses.
- ADA-compliant restrooms on the first floor and an accessible path of travel from the public right-of-way are required, and are provided in the proposed scheme.
- COR-1 requires a minimum building height of 22 feet with a two-story appearance (Sec. 106-630). The proposed two-story design is consistent with this requirement.

## PRELIMINARY PROGRAM SUMMARY

The table below reflects the working program as of May 4, 2026. Square footages are preliminary planning estimates and are subject to refinement through schematic design.

SPACE	APPROX. SF	NOTES
Coffee + Tea Bar / Back Bar	~700	Espresso, drip, tea service, digital menu boards
Back-of-House Operations	~300	Triple sink, dishwasher, cold storage, ice machine, dry storage
Flexible Gathering + Seating + Entry + Co-op	~3050	Daily café seating, large gather table, adaptable layout for events
Community Rooms (x2)	~400	~12' x 16' each (~192 SF); collapsible walls; seats 8 per room
Children's Room	~200	Visible, family-safe play area
Artisan Marketplace	Integrated	Built-in shelving along storefront windows
Elevate Hope House Office	~200	Relocated to first floor; private program administration
ADA Restrooms	~150	Code-required, publicly accessible
Stair Cores (x2) + Circulation	~400	Two means of egress required for upstairs occupancy
Storage / Mechanical / Utilities	~300	Back-of-house support; final layout TBD
<b>FIRST FLOOR SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>~5,700 SF</b>	
Apt. #1 — 2BR	~850	Transitional housing unit
Apt. #2 — 2BR	~850	Transitional housing unit
Apt. #3 — 2BR	~850	Transitional housing unit
Shared Circulation + Stair Landings	~350	Two stair cores extending from first floor; corridor access
Mechanical / Utilities	Individual Units	HVAC, water heater, panel area
<b>SECOND FLOOR SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>~3,000 SF</b>	

SPACE	APPROX. SF	NOTES
Front + Side Patios	~1,300	Outdoor gathering; pergola at NE corner with privacy wall and string-light run
<b>EXTERIOR PATIO SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>~1300 SF</b>	
<b>TOTAL CONDITIONED BUILDING</b>	<b>~8,700 SF</b>	<b>First + second floor</b>

## PRELIMINARY SITE DIMENSIONS

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The lot width is approximately 84 feet, with an estimated lot depth of approximately 275 feet based on the stated 0.53-acre lot area. These figures yield a site area of approximately 23,090 SF.

Based on these dimensions and the ~5,700 SF first-floor target, the anticipated first-floor building footprint is:

- Building width: 50-60 feet, after final COR-1 setbacks and build-to line are confirmed
- Building depth: 100-125 feet, to achieve approximately 5,700 SF at the working width

Per the civil engineer (Matt Davich, EGR&UD), there are no significant setback or onsite parking requirements for this lot, and stormwater is handled offsite through a regional pond. Final setback and build-to line requirements will be confirmed against the COR Design Framework now in hand, in coordination with the City of Ramsey Planning Division.

## PRELIMINARY COST FRAMEWORK

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New mixed-use construction in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro currently ranges from approximately \$200 to \$325 per square foot for hard construction costs alone. At ~8,700 SF, that range yields an unassisted hard-cost band of approximately \$1,740,000 to \$2,827,500.

Hard construction costs do not include:

- Architectural, engineering, and consulting fees (typically 8 to 12% of construction cost)
- Site preparation, utility connections, and civil work
- Furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E)
- Permitting and city fees
- Owner contingency (recommended at 10 to 15% at this stage of design)
- Sprinkler system, estimated at \$4 to \$7 per SF (~\$35,000 to \$61,000 at this building size)

Layered together, an unassisted, market-rate, all-in budget for a project of this size in this market typically lands in the range of approximately \$2,200,000 to \$3,700,000. In-kind contributions have meaningful potential to compress these numbers.

If holding the project under the \$1,000,000 ceiling identified by Elevate Hope House remains the priority, the most direct levers are: reducing total enclosed square footage (for example by leaving the second floor as a partially-finished shell for later buildout), simplifying exterior detail and finishes, and continuing to expand the in-kind donation and trade-partnership network. These are choices best made jointly with the selected general contractor once their pricing input is on the table.

### **Indicative Phase 1 budget:**

On an unassisted, market-rate basis, Phase 1 hard construction costs are anticipated in the range of approximately \$1,400,000 to \$2,300,000, before soft costs and contingency. The realistic path to bringing this number down toward Elevate Hope House's \$1,000,000 Phase 1 fundraising ceiling runs primarily through in-kind contributions, and the depth and breadth of those contributions is what will ultimately determine where Phase 1 lands.

Reaching the \$1,000,000 ceiling will depend on materially expanding the roster of in-kind sponsors, including donated or heavily discounted labor across the major trades (framing, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and finishes), donated windows, doors, and millwork, sponsored major building systems (sprinklers, HVAC, cabinetry, and café kitchen equipment), and a sustained volunteer labor program coordinated alongside the trades-program work. Sponsor-named spaces and room-by-room dedications are a proven path for capital projects of this kind and can be a meaningful contributor to bridging the gap.

Each major trade donation that comes in compresses construction cost meaningfully. At this scale, a deep stack of in-kind contributions across labor, materials, and major systems can plausibly trim 30 to 40 percent off the unassisted market-rate cost. The earlier these commitments are firmed up during the design phase, the more confidently the project can be priced and the more leverage Elevate Hope House will have in its fundraising conversations.

### **Indicative Phase 2 budget:**

Apartment fit-out in 2028 is anticipated in the range of approximately \$450,000 to \$650,000, depending on finish level and whether the three units are completed simultaneously or sequentially as additional funding becomes available. The same in-kind contribution strategy will carry forward into Phase 2 and is expected to compress these numbers as well.

These figures are pre-design planning estimates. They are provided in good faith for proposal and fundraising conversations, and are not a guaranteed or fixed price. Final pricing for this project will be determined by the general contractor selected by Elevate Hope House, based on detailed construction documents, market conditions at the time of bid, the scope of in-kind contributions actually realized, and decisions made during design. Resilience Architecture + Design is not responsible for, and does not warrant, the final construction price; that responsibility rests with the general contractor and the project owner.

## CONCLUSION

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The Elevate Hope House mixed-use development at Parcel #47C is a well-conceived, mission-driven project with a program that is architecturally sound and appropriate for the site. The proposed use of a COR-1 corner parcel for vertically-integrated community-serving commercial and residential development is not merely compatible with the city's zoning intent, it is precisely what COR-1 was written to produce.

Resilience Architecture + Design is honored to be part of this team and is committed to delivering thoughtful, code-compliant architectural services that serve both the operational needs of Gather and the housing mission of Elevate Hope House.

Respectfully submitted,



**Olivia Sprosty, AIA**

Architect | Owner, Resilience Architecture PLLC

AIA Minnesota License #64414

olivia@resilience-architecture.com | (608) 379-2108

Date: 05/04/2026

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*This letter is provided for proposal, planning, and fundraising purposes only and does not constitute a design contract, professional certification, or code compliance determination. Final building code interpretations are subject to review by the Authority Having Jurisdiction. Final construction pricing is the responsibility of the general contractor selected by the Owner.*