

3. Community Background

Introduction

This background chapter offers a summary of key community characteristics and challenges facing the City of Ramsey. An expanded version of this background information is found in Appendix A. The following sections will discuss demographics, facilities, natural resources, water resources and the transportation system in an effort to better understand the key issues and challenges of the community. These issues are explored more fully in later chapters of this Plan.

As a growing community on the edge of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan area, the City of Ramsey has seen many changes, especially in terms of growth over the past several years. The City’s last Comprehensive Plan, which established a vision for the City of Ramsey in 2020, was completed in 2001. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan now required by the Metropolitan Council will focus on planning for the next 20 years and more, until 2030.

Metropolitan Council

In 1967 the Minnesota Legislature created the Metropolitan Council to plan and coordinate the orderly development of the seven-county metropolitan area. Minnesota law requires every municipality and county within the metropolitan area to prepare and to submit a comprehensive plan to the Metropolitan Council that addresses all required components of the 2030 Regional Development Framework. The City’s plan must be consistent with the Metropolitan Council’s systems plans. To assist local governments in this effort, the Metropolitan Council issues “Systems Statements” to each community which describes the specific areas that must be addressed as part of the local comprehensive plan. The City of Ramsey received its revised Systems Statement in December 2005.

The System Statement for the City of Ramsey includes population, household and employment forecasts to aid in planning for the future. The Metropolitan Council provided forecasts for Ramsey, shown in Table 3-1. These numbers have since been revised downward somewhat in further planning and are discussed in later chapters of this Plan.

Table 3-1 Metropolitan Council Forecasts for the City of Ramsey

	1990	2000	Revised Development Framework		
			2010	2020	2030
Population	12,408	18,510	30,000	43,000	44,000
Households	3,620	5,906	10,300	15,500	16,500
Employment	1,941	3,587	6,700	9,100	11,300

The City of Ramsey is classified by the Metropolitan Council as a “Developing Area.” The Metropolitan Council defines “Developing Area” as a part of the region that is in the path of urban growth (Figure 3-1). It includes the communities beyond the fully developed area up to the metropolitan urban service area boundary. The Metropolitan Council’s Regional Development Framework sets an overall minimum residential density standard of 3 to 5 units per acre in developed and developing areas where urban service is located or planned. Ramsey’s System Statement states that as Ramsey plans for the future, it should focus on protecting natural resources, ensuring sufficient public infrastructure, and developing transition strategies to increase density and encourage infill development.

Figure 3-1 - Metropolitan Council 2030 Framework

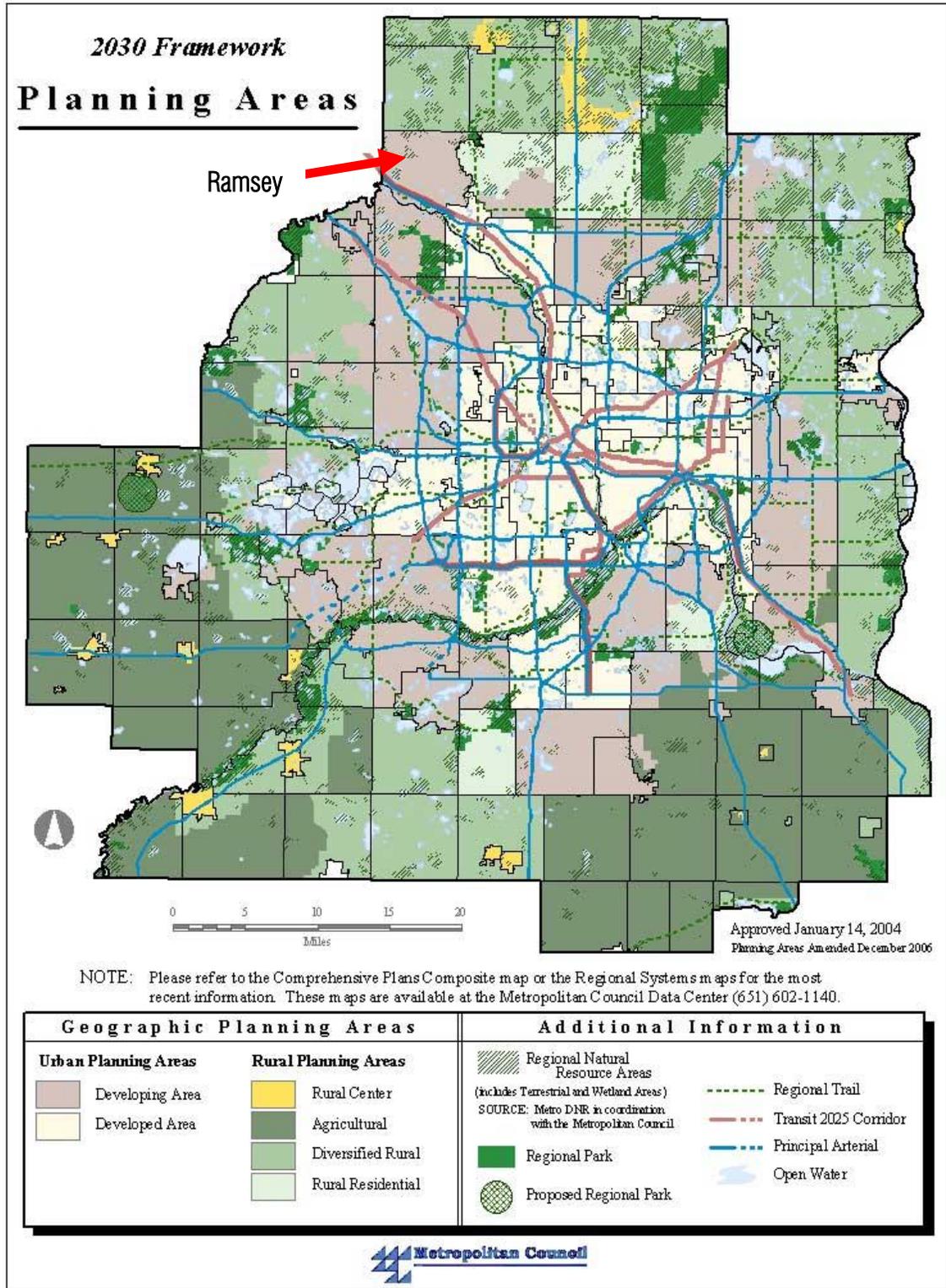
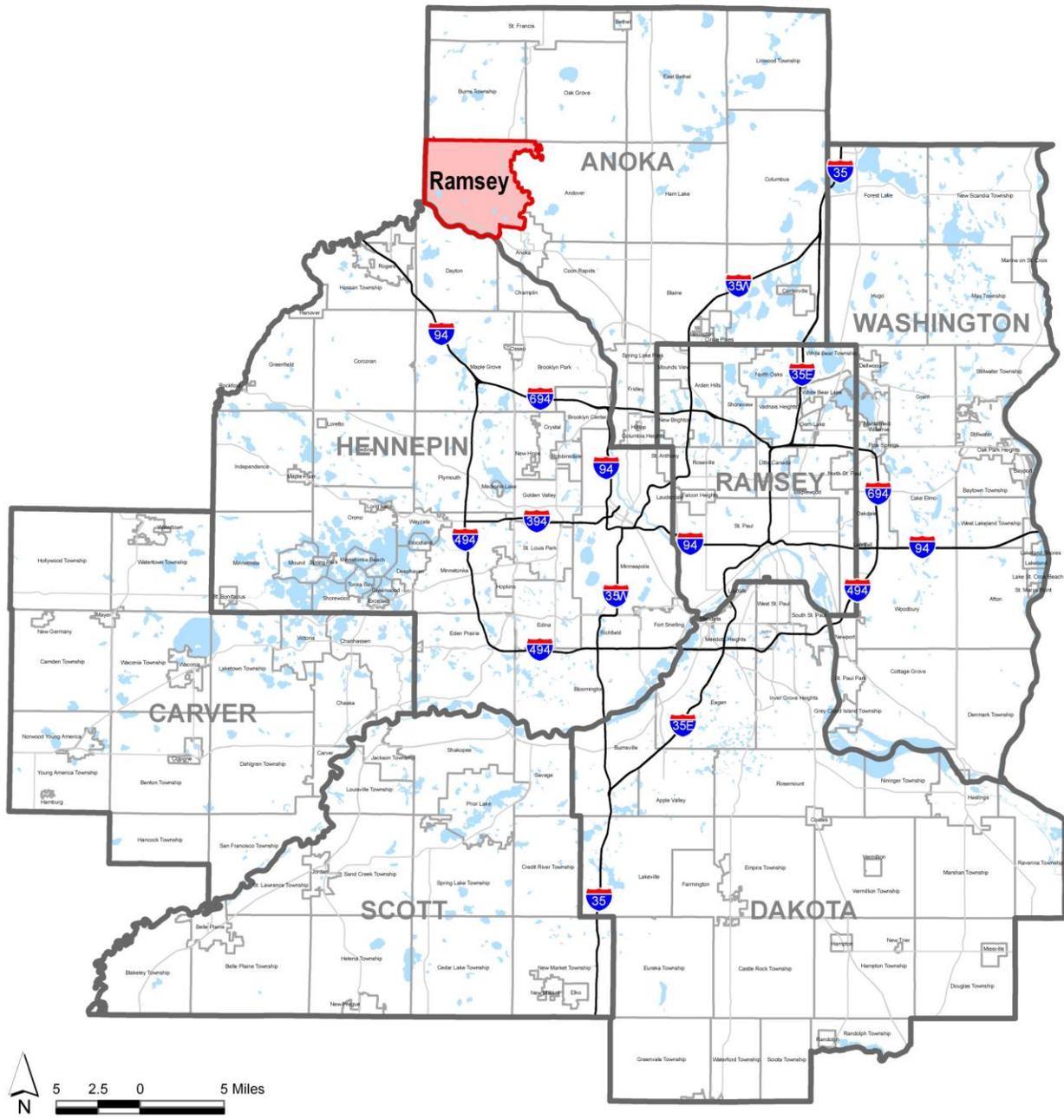


Figure 3-2 - Regional Context



History

The City of Ramsey is located in the southwestern corner of Anoka County, on the northwest edge of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, as shown in Figure 3-2. Two rivers pass through the City of Ramsey, as the Rum River is located at the eastern border of the City and the Mississippi at the southern border. Initial settlement of the Ramsey can be attributed to trade activities along the Mississippi River in the southwest corner of Ramsey at Highway 10 and the Mississippi River. This settlement became a permanent colony in 1850, and was known as Itasca Village. The town grew to include a hotel, trading post, and a post office. The railroad reached Ramsey in 1864. Settlement in the area continued, and the Township of Ramsey was organized in 1857. Originally called Watertown Township, the township was renamed as Ramsey Township in 1858 after Governor Ramsey, the first territorial governor of Minnesota. Many of Ramsey's original settlers had arrived on a steamboat also named after this governor. Ramsey Township incorporated as a city in 1974, with a population of 8,000.

Due to the lack of municipal services, much of Ramsey's growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s consisted of the development of large lot single family homes with septic systems. This residential growth was the primary land use other than agriculture in the City. The city's growth has been driven by its proximity to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area has also experienced rapid growth in recent years, and much of this growth has occurred in northwest communities such as Ramsey. In 1985 municipal sewer and water reached a small area of southeast Ramsey, allowing for denser, more urban development. With the introduction of sewer and water service, industry and commercial uses became more prominent. Today the City consists of farms, large lot single family homes, and more urban single family and multi-family homes in the areas of the City served by sewer, as well as several business parks and commercial areas.

Town Center Project

The City of Ramsey lacks an identifiable downtown but a large cutting edge project is underway to create one. The idea of creating a downtown area from scratch first surfaced in 1998. The City of Ramsey and developer Bruce Nedegaard realized the potential benefit from attracting a stop on the proposed Northstar commuter rail line. They envisioned a transit orientated, pedestrian friendly, mixed use development with a downtown feel. The plan set in motion included restaurants, retail space, city facilities, a charter school, office space, numerous housing options, a large parking ramp and a commuter rail stop.

Work began on the project in spring of 2004 with completion expected in 3-5 years. The project is located north of TH10/169 bordered by Armstrong Blvd. to the west and Ramsey Blvd. to the east. Infrastructure was installed costing the city about \$17 million and the county \$4.2 million. In the fall of 2005, the Coborn's Supermarket opened. Later that fall the developer defaulted on a \$35 million dollar loan, which lead to RTC, LLC estate taking over as the lead lender on the loan. In early October 2006, the new Ramsey Municipal Center opened housing City Hall and the Police Department. Since the completion of these improvements however, the original developer of the project went bankrupt and has passed away. The slowdown in the housing market has also had an effect on the project.

Construction has slowed dramatically on the Town Center Project. The land once owned by Nedegaard's Ramsey Town Center, LLC is now owned by RTC, LLC estate. The City's goal is to preserve the original plan for Town Center.

Previous Community Plans

- Ramsey’s previous Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2001
- A Metro Greenways Report was completed in 2003
- A comprehensive Water System Study was completed in 2004
- A comprehensive Sanitary Sewer System Study was completed in 2004
- A Central Rural Reserve Study was completed in 2006
- A Housing Supply and Needs Analysis Draft Report along with a Housing Survey was completed in 2007
- A Comprehensive Housing Plan was completed in 2008
- A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for Ramsey was completed in 2008
- A Natural Resources Inventory was completed in 2008
- A Surface Water Management Plan was completed in 2008

Demographic Information

The demographic information was collected by utilizing information from the Metropolitan Council forecasts and 2000 Census data. Table 3-3 shows historical census population of the City. The table also contains Metropolitan Councils population forecasts made in April 2005 for 2010, 2020 and 2030. These projections are based on household projections which have since been updated and are detailed later in this Plan. Table 3-4 shows the age breakdown of the City’s and County’s population.

Table 3-3 Population History and Forecasts

	Actual				2005	Forecasts*		
	1970	1980	1990	2000		2010	2020	2030
Ramsey <i>increase</i>	2,360 <i>x</i>	10,093 327.67%	12,408 22.94%	18,510 49.18%	21,749 17.50%	31,300 43.91%	45,000 43.77%	44,000 -2.22%
Anoka Co. <i>increase</i>	154,556 <i>x</i>	195,998 26.81%	243,641 24.31%	298,084 22.35%	320,803 7.62%	360,270 12.30%	407,210 13.03%	427,260 4.92%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

* *Metropolitan Council forecast estimates, April 1, 2005*

Ramsey’s population grew rapidly in the 1970s through the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, the city’s population increased by nearly 50 percent, while Anoka County’s population increased by 22 percent. This population growth is expected to continue. Population forecasts for 2010 through 2030 show that population in Ramsey will continue to increase significantly, as the 2030 population is projected to be more than double the 2005 population. The rate of growth is expected to slow down by 2030, as much of the city’s land will have been developed and the population ages.

Table 3-3 outlines the historical household growth of the community and the County and like Table 3-1, includes a 2005 estimate and forecasts for 2010, 2020, 2030 as determined by the Metropolitan Council.

Table 3-4 Household History and Forecasts

	Actual				Estimate	Forecasts*		
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2020	2030
Ramsey <i>increase</i>	647 <i>x</i>	2,660 <i>311.13%</i>	3,620 <i>36.09%</i>	5,906 <i>63.15%</i>	7,198 <i>21.88%</i>	10,900 <i>51.43%</i>	16,200 <i>48.62%</i>	16,500 <i>1.85%</i>
Anoka Co. <i>increase</i>	39,668 <i>x</i>	60,716 <i>53.06%</i>	82,437 <i>35.77%</i>	106,428 <i>29.10%</i>	117,409 <i>10.32%</i>	135,670 <i>15.55%</i>	157,760 <i>16.28%</i>	168,690 <i>6.93%</i>

Household growth, like population growth, grew rapidly in the 1970s through 1990s. As Table 3-4 demonstrates, household growth in Ramsey occurred at a faster pace than household growth in Anoka County as a whole. This growth is expected to continue through 2030, although more recent projections have been made that are somewhat lower, based on the economic downturn starting in 2006, and on the City’s land use plan developed by the community. These are detailed later in this Plan. As with population growth, household growth will slow by 2030 as the city reaches a fully developed stage. Anoka County’s growth will occur at a faster rate between 2030 due to additional land areas beyond the City of Ramsey available for development.

Market Analysis and Overview

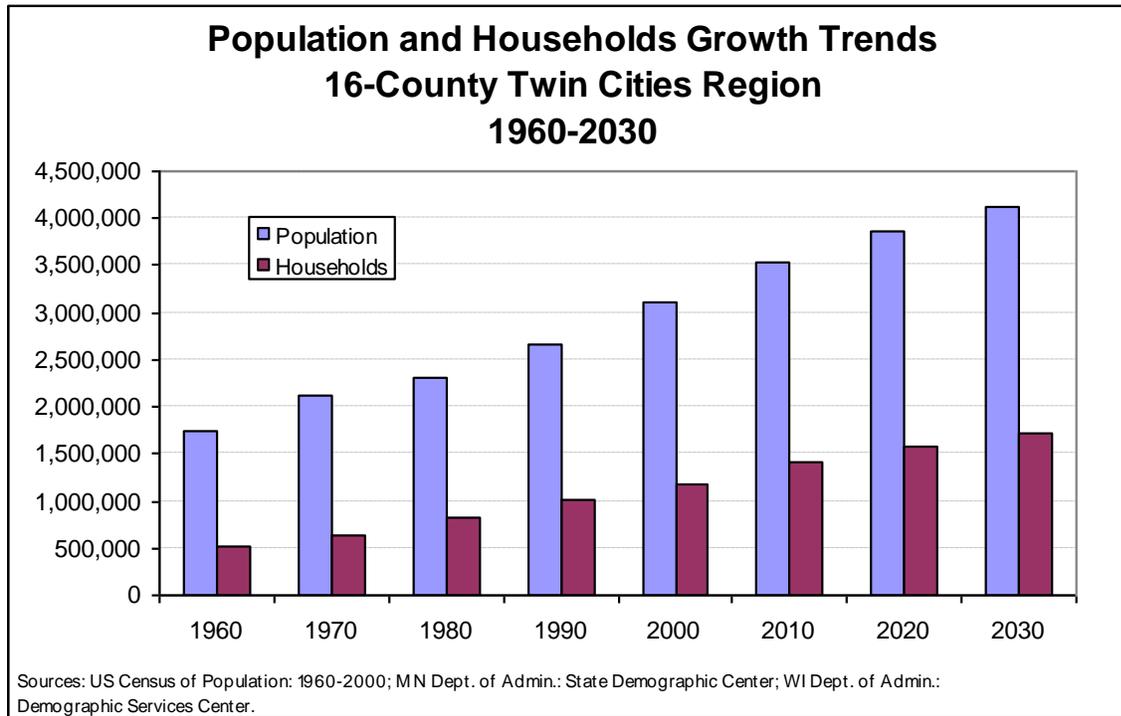
As part of the background information for the Comprehensive Plan a market analysis and overview was undertaken to look at the market conditions affecting residential and commercial-industrial land uses in Ramsey. The full analysis is included in Appendix A. As the city formulates land use strategies for the future these market-related numbers can be used to compare how well the city is matching the anticipated demand for various land uses.

Regional Growth Characteristics Related to Residential Development

Housing markets can vary greatly from one community to another within a large metropolitan region such as the Twin Cities. The forces that determine what type of housing gets built, how much housing gets built, and where that housing gets built can change dramatically from decade to decade or even year to year, often resulting in vastly different development experiences for individual communities such as Ramsey. Nonetheless, metropolitan regions are, by definition, interconnected places. Any long-term projections of the housing market at a local level must first be viewed with an understanding of historical housing market trends at the metropolitan level.

The 16-county region that incorporates the Twin Cities has grown steadily from 1960 to 2000 and is projected to continue its steady rate of growth through 2030. Figure 3-3 indicates that in 1960 there were just over 500,000 households in the 16-county region. By 2030 it is projected that the region will contain over 1.7 million households.

Figure 3-3 - Population and Household Growth Trends



The steady growth of the Twin Cities area is illustrated on Figure 3-4, showing the edge of development in the region by decade from 1950 to 2000. Only in 1990 did this developing edge touch Ramsey and by 2000 it had extended into the southeastern corner of the city. This growth trend will continue and is the basis for continuing planning efforts like this Comprehensive Plan Update.

Figure 3-5 - Expansion of the Contiguous Edge of Development in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area 1950-2000

