



RAMSEY COUNTY

2024-2028

CLIMATE EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Responding to Climate Change and Increasing Community Resilience



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Visit ramseycounty.us/ClimateAction
for more information.

From the Board Chair

Our climate is changing rapidly. This is a reality that impacts our individual health as well as the health of our natural environment. In recognizing the growing needs of our community, Ramsey County is well-positioned to pursue new opportunities and approaches to address climate change that can improve our shared infrastructure, advance our local economy, and expand life-sustaining career pathways that will build our community resilience.

In 2022, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners affirmed that responding to climate change and increasing community resilience must be a key strategic priority. On behalf of the entire Board of Commissioners, I am pleased to present Ramsey County's first Climate Equity Action Plan (CEAP). This plan serves as a comprehensive guide for our staff and partners to reduce the county's contributions to climate change, address the negative impacts of climate change in our community, and leverage related opportunities when they appear.

As this plan demonstrates, nobody is immune to the impacts of climate change. However, we also know that underrecognized and climate-vulnerable communities are the most impacted due to the compounding effects of racism, poverty, chronic illness, and other life stressors. Therefore, this plan emphasizes actions that each county department can take to reduce these disparate impacts on our Ramsey County community.

This plan was developed as the result of several years of intentional community and county staff engagement, and we are proud of the goals and strategies. We also recognize that the publication of this plan is only the first step in our response. The county board reaffirms our ongoing commitment to continuously listening to and partnering with community to ensure that the climate actions we take together reflect the experiences and needs of everyone, especially our most vulnerable communities. Additionally, we are committed to strategically building our internal capacity to advance the actions outlined in this plan while being accountable and forthright in our progress to reaching these goals. Together we can achieve our vision of building a county where all are valued and thrive.

I hope that you will stay join us in our work to build resilience and adapt to climate change.

Sincerely,



Trista Martinson

Ramsey County Board Chair

Introduction

Climate Change in Ramsey County

From extreme heat and poor air quality to changes in precipitation and more severe storms, climate change impacts everyone in Ramsey County. Climate change affects our physical and mental health, natural environment, and the economy. Stroke and heat-related illnesses increase during periods of extreme heat. Both extreme heat and poor air quality worsen existing physical and mental health conditions such as asthma, heart disease, depression and anxiety.

Property damage from flooding or severe storms are added stressors. The animals, plants and waterways in the county also suffer during these extreme climate conditions, and ecosystem imbalances have led to problems like a loss of trees from Emerald Ash Borer and an increase in Lyme disease rates from tick bites. New pressures also exist for businesses to adapt to the changing climate to develop and retain their customers and employees more effectively.

Nobody is immune to the impacts of climate change but specific communities, referred to in this framework as **underrecognized and climate-vulnerable**, tend to face more severe impacts. The communities experiencing greater social, economic, physical and/or health stress include:

- Black/African American, American Indian, Latin/o/a/x, Asian and other underrepresented communities, due to the effects of racism and oppression.
- Immunocompromised people, people with chronic illness or health complications, and pregnant people whose physical ability to endure environmental stress is limited.
- People who work outside or are unhoused, due to their increased exposure to climate conditions.
- People with limited mobility, who may not be able to reach assistance during climate emergencies. This includes: elderly people, people with disabilities, people without cars and people who are incarcerated.
- People who are dependent on community support such as low-income families, children, recent immigrants, and non-English speakers. They may not have easy access to resources and/or may be focused on addressing other life stressors.





County-led mitigation and adaptation strategies overlap in some areas such as building weatherization and clean economy workforce training.

To address these issues, the county needs to pursue both greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation strategies.

- **Mitigation strategies** are actions taken to reduce emissions or remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. One example would be to improve insulation in county-owned buildings. This would reduce the county's greenhouse gas emissions by minimizing energy usage during periods of extreme heat or cold.
- **Adaptation strategies** involve action to prepare for and adjust to current and projected impacts of climate change. For example, the county could develop a workforce training program that equitably helps workers transition into family-sustaining, career pathways in climate-responsive positions such as an energy auditor or a worker installing electric vehicle chargers. This would help residents build economic stability by adapting to the industry changes that result from climate change.

Ramsey County is well positioned to partner with community members, community based-organizations, businesses, cities, neighboring counties and the state to address the causes of climate change and advance equitable climate resilience. The county recognizes and supports the efforts and progress of residents working toward shared goals and laying the groundwork for climate action and will work with community to set goals for future progress.

The County's Climate Response

In 2022 the county developed a strategic priority to “Respond to Climate Change and Increase Community Resilience.” This priority commits the county to take intentional, strategic, accountable steps to partner with community in both greenhouse gas reduction and to develop resources that equitably help community survive and thrive in changing climate conditions.

Building on the work of the county's past Energy Governance Team, the Strategic Energy Plan, Ramsey County's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the State of Minnesota's Climate Equity Action Plan and community input, this climate equity action plan outlines the near-, middle-, and long-term actions planned to respond to climate change and increase community resilience. The climate equity action plan development process was designed to include community member's stated needs and consider the role and capacity of Ramsey County to advance this work.

In December 2022, the State of Minnesota's Climate Action Framework was identified by county staff as a template and starting point. The state's framework provided a recently- and thoroughly- developed set of action items that Ramsey County could adapt to its capabilities and to community needs and priorities.

County department leaders and staff developed and reviewed action items over the course of six months. An internal county staff work group was formed around six areas of focus (described in subsequent chapters of this framework) to participate in a review process. Work group members were all subject matter experts and many worked closely with community. These staff provided insight and connections to related county efforts and plans. This review process kept the expectations of the climate equity action plan realistic and progressive by considering how the county could weave actions into existing programs, where additional resources need to be identified to support new actions and what climate impacts community members want to see the county addressing.

In-tandem to internal review team meetings, the county facilitated a yearlong engagement process to better understand community members' needs, concerns and experiences related to climate change by:

- Hiring Equity Strategies, LLC. to conduct seven virtual listening sessions, attended by 100+ residents.
- Offering an online survey for individuals unable to attend the listening sessions which received 100+ responses.
- Partnering with the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project to develop an iterative, ongoing climate action community engagement plan.
- Hosting two climate action community conversations: In June 2023, 82 community members convened to discuss and prioritize action items from the state's framework; in October 2023, another 48 community members convened to critique a draft of the county's framework, which incorporated feedback from internal county review teams and community engagement efforts.

Timeline of Past Work

2011

- Energy and Sustainability Planner hired.
- Board adopts first strategic energy plan.
- Cross-departmental energy efficiency gap analysis conducted.
- County adopts energy use reduction goals tracking to State of MN Goals.

2012

- Solar thermal installation at the Law Enforcement Center.

2013

- County wide fleet performance, energy use and pollution reduction analysis.
- Energy efficient vehicle use policy adopted.

2015

- County includes Resilience Chapter in 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

2016

- Energy Action Plan developed for Parks and Recreation Facilities.
- Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment conducted.

2017

- Strategic energy plan updated laying foundation for energy governance team's work.
- County signed up for three community solar garden subscriptions to reduce electric bills.

2018

- Solar panels installed at Parks Admin building and The Ponds golf course.
- Green Fleet Goals and Action Plan developed for County Fleet.
- Energy Governance Team is formed.
- Public Health Strategic Plan highlights climate response as department priority.
- Resilient Communities Project (RCP) University of Minnesota student partners develop eight reports related to resilience, energy, sustainability, and climate adaptation in vulnerable communities.

2019

- Solar feasibility analysis completed for county facilities.
- County receives Sol Smart designation.
- Resilience Team convened.
- County updated goals for reducing energy use and greenhouse gas pollution.

2020

- Climate action planning paused due to COVID -19 redeployments.

2021

- The Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County launched a Green Jobs - Construction Committee

2022

- Climate and Health Planner hired.
- Strategic priority adapted to focus on climate response.
- Green Ramsey newsletter launched "On Climate Justice" column.
- Equity Strategies facilitates community listening sessions.
- Minnesota Climate Action Framework identified as template for county action plan.

2023

- RCP Students pilot climate response gap analysis process, propose iterative climate action engagement plan and outline structure to increase staff capacity for climate action.
- County held two Climate Action Community – Conversations.
- County staff developed draft countywide Climate Equity Action Plan.
- Institute for Building Technology and Safety assessed climate action work for equitable climate resilience opportunities.

2024

- County Equity Action Plan published.
- Initiate near term action steps outlined in Climate Equity Action Plan.
- County to convene climate action advisory council.

Overarching Goals and Activities

The county's framework organizes actions to address six areas of focus, in alignment with the State of Minnesota's framework:



Each focus area has a dedicated table of goals with near-, mid-, and long-term actions the county plans to take.

- **Near-term actions** were identified based on what work county staff already have underway or could easily begin without pursuing additional resources.
- **Mid-term actions** require additional resources — such as funding or staff capacity — to accomplish but are still high priorities due to their potential for positive impacts.
- **Long-term actions** require significant additional resources or time for planning. The county recognizes the importance of this work and as possible, will work to identify resources and develop plans to accomplish these actions.

The tables in each focus area also articulate the role of the county, as a lead, partner, or support in relation to each activity. Actions where:

- The county is a **lead** clearly align with the scope of work and services provided by existing county departments.
- The county is a **partner** rely on another entity (such as community-based organizations, cities, or schools) to succeed.
- The county is a **support** would be led by another entity (such as community-based organizations, cities, or schools) with financial or technical support provided by the county.

In some cases, the county needs to play multiple roles, based on collaborating partners' needs. For example the county may provide support in the form of technical assistance to a city on a particular issue while partnering with a community-based organization to provide services that address the same issue. Or, the county may lead work on a particular issue within the county and partner with an academic institution to advance the same work beyond the county.

The county is also developing measures to transparently communicate progress on many of the goals in this framework. These measures will be made available on the county's climate action website in 2024.

An appendix at the end of this document provides definitions of many of the terms used throughout the framework.

The goals and activities on this page apply to, depend on, or help to advance the work outlined across all six focus areas in the county framework.

Collaboration and Transparency

- Convene an Equitable Climate Action Resident Advisory Team to review climate-related programs, processes, and progress and ensure alignment with the needs of climate-vulnerable communities.
- Host opportunities for meaningful community involvement in county-led climate action.
- Provide transparent progress updates on county-led climate action.
- Build capacity of local communities to increase resilience in the face of climate change.
- Share information and resources to help individual residents act beyond county-led initiatives.

Planning

- Perform gap analysis of existing climate response work in the county to determine additional ways to advance climate action across the goals in the climate equity action plan.
- Expand and optimize funding for climate action across departments.
- Expand staff capacity for climate change mitigation and adaptation across departments.
- Educate existing staff about addressing the impacts of climate change through their work.
- Develop climate justice guidance to apply to future requests for board action to ensure county projects consider climate impacts.
- Prepare for near term and continuous climate migration to the county, in all service areas.
- Prioritize climate actions that benefit geographic areas disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Provide uninterrupted services and develop trust-based relationships with community.
- Develop annual climate change legislative platform and support other legislative efforts to advance climate goals in public policy. For 2024 we will support legislation that:
 - *Addresses climate change, protects, and enhances natural environments, addresses the need to expand adaptation and resilience efforts, responds to the potential impact of severe weather events, and promotes sustainability in county operations.*
 - *Focuses on increasing use of clean energy to create jobs and diversify the local economy.*
 - *Increases funding to address reforestation needs for communities impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer.*
- Develop annual climate equity recognition program for community and staff.

Funding

- Track and apply for funding, coordinating across departments, to support climate actions.
- Provide micro-grants for community-led climate action in the county.

Clean Transportation



- Connect people to places through a safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation system.
- Maintain and improve multi-modal transportation connections to reduce air pollution, connect communities and encourage active transportation and public transit use.
- Maximize resiliency and greenhouse gas mitigation in transportation projects and corridors.

GOAL 1

Plan a transportation network that supports sustainable, multi-modal transportation in alignment with the county’s Equitable Development Framework and racial equity policy.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY’S ROLE
Track state and federal funding opportunities and collaborate with the Metropolitan Council (Met Council) to direct more resources towards non-motorized transportation and public transit. Funds would support improved pedestrian, bicycle and public transit facilities that are accessible, safe, and desirable to people of all ages, abilities and skill levels.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Use community input and data to understand evolving transportation needs of underserved and climate-vulnerable communities, apply findings to transportation plans.	SUPPORT
Prioritize new or reconstructed multi-modal transportation projects that close infrastructure gaps, such as sidewalks, bike trails, and bus stations for people walking, bicycling, rolling, and taking transit. Ensure these projects are prioritized to improve equitable access to infrastructure, safety, and roadway function.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY’S ROLE
Promote multi-modal transportation options, including pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit, in county plans and projects.	LEAD & PARTNER
Review and advocate for MnDOT and Met Council transportation plans to prioritize new or reconstructed multi-modal transportation projects that: 1) include facilities for people walking, bicycling, rolling, and taking transit, and 2) increase frequency and quality of electrically powered transit service.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Use the Equitable Development Framework to encourage developers, employers, and communities to adopt practices and policies that equitably expand spaces for people to walk, bike and roll.	SUPPORT



GOAL 2

Make it equitable and easier for all ages and abilities to use the multi-modal transportation network.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Improve access to and accessibility of non-motorized vehicle infrastructure and support Met Council and Metro Transit in providing free or reduced cost transit.	SUPPORT
Advocate for safety-related improvements to public transit, such as cleanliness, on-time performance and expanded routes as well as connections for riders to community security contacts and social service providers.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Provide educational opportunities for residents on how to safely use and access public transit and multi-modal networks.	PARTNER
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Launch projects that temporarily demonstrate improvements for people walking and biking to assess opportunities for permanent improvements.	SUPPORT
Research options for an affordable, county-wide bike share program that is accessible to everyone, including people who do not have bank accounts.	SUPPORT
Encourage local governments to implement transportation demand management policies.	SUPPORT

HOW CLEAN TRANSPORTATION CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Climate Smart Natural Land

Multi-modal transportation users rely on tree canopy for comfort during extreme heat.



Thriving Communities

Transportation networks provide connectivity between underrecognized and vulnerable residents and critical resources for resilience.



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

Energy sources for transportation impact county wide greenhouse gas emissions.



GOAL 3

Reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions within the county.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Offer telecommuting as an emissions reduction strategy through increased flexibility in telework and hybrid work schedules for county staff, particularly on poor air quality and extreme weather days.	LEAD
Coordinate with partners to manage stormwater and support transportation infrastructure resilience to extreme weather.	PARTNER
Share information about grant funding to support electric vehicle purchases and charging station installation for residents and local governments.	SUPPORT
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Encourage clean vehicle targets for city government and private sector fleets.	PARTNER
Accelerate the retirement and replacement of inefficient county vehicles.	LEAD
Advocate for state and federal standards that prioritize the reuse of materials throughout construction processes to minimize carbon footprint of transportation construction projects.	LEAD
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Research options for a county-wide, affordable, electric vehicle car rental/share system.	LEAD & SUPPORT
Put safe and accessible bike facilities at county-owned facilities where feasible based on facility use.	LEAD
Support state-level actions that increase electric vehicle charging infrastructure, increase electric vehicle access and availability, and educate communities about financial support available to purchase electric vehicles.	SUPPORT
Establish clean vehicle expectations for county procurement contracts.	SUPPORT

HOW CLEAN TRANSPORTATION CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Healthy Lives

Clean transportation could reduce sensory and air pollution which contributes to cardiovascular, respiratory and mental health.



Clean Economy

The clean transportation industry will continue to expand job and business opportunities for individuals trained in operating, maintaining and repairing electric vehicles.

Climate Smart Natural Land



- Manage county land to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support healthy landscapes, and increase environmental resilience.
- Support land management practices that build environmentally responsible social, and economic resilience.
- Help natural ecosystems within the county adapt to the impacts of climate change.

GOAL 1

Maintain, expand and manage forests and urban tree canopies, following the Natural Resources Management Plan.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Where appropriate, plant, seed and maintain tree species and vegetation projected to do well under changing conditions.	LEAD & PARTNER
Plant a variety of trees to expand urban tree canopy cover in underrecognized and vulnerable communities experiencing the urban heat island effect, prioritizing areas with minimal tree canopy cover.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Assess urban canopy cover and other urban tree baseline data across the county to help track and measure changes in tree canopy coverage.	PARTNER
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Help residents manage emerald ash borer and other plant pests and diseases, particularly in underrepresented and climate vulnerable communities, through treatment, removal/replacement, and proper disposal.	LEAD & PARTNER
Preserve mature trees by encouraging heritage tree preservation and general tree maintenance. Assist underrecognized and climate-vulnerable communities in advocating for tree ordinances and policies to protect urban tree canopy—especially within commercial and residential building sites.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Plant and maintain climate-adaptive shade trees across the county. Prioritize underrecognized and climate vulnerable communities, to decrease energy use in homes and buildings, mitigate heat islands and provide funding for replacing pest infected or diseased trees.	SUPPORT
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Partner to produce climate-adapted tree species for planting in Ramsey County.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Provide guidance for residents and landowners on climate adapted tree species.	PARTNER



GOAL 2

Protect, restore and manage peatlands, wetlands and watersheds.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
In alignment with Wetland Conservation Act: Protect and restore existing wetlands through conservation easements, wetland banking, and other stormwater best management practices.	PARTNER
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Partner on resilience studies with watershed management organizations within the county.	PARTNER
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Provide community education on importance of, and strategies for, protecting watersheds and wetlands.	SUPPORT

GOAL 3

Use land management practices that enhance climate resilience.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Work with local governments in developing local land conservation plans, collaboratively identifying priority locations for protection, restoration and greater natural corridor connectivity.	LEAD
Increase native-and adapted-species diversity in county owned or managed grasslands and forests through restoration and management. Use locally appropriate seed and plant mixes and alternative forest management practices.	LEAD & SUPPORT
Engage with underrecognized communities to balance the various needs of residents in public open spaces.	LEAD & SUPPORT
Identify, remove and dispose of trees at risk of spreading disease or invasive pests.	LEAD & PARTNER

GOAL 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

HOW CLIMATE SMART NATURAL LAND CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Transportation

Multi-modal transportation users rely on tree canopy for comfort during extreme heat.



Thriving Communities

Increases in tree canopy and improvements to soil increase resilience to extreme heat and flooding.



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

Climate-smart design and construction practices include stormwater and sustainable land management best practices.



GOAL 3 CONTINUED

Use land management practices that enhance climate resilience.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Promote the right to exist and inherent value of wildlife and plants by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting trees and vegetation that provide food or shelter to wildlife. Protecting wildlife habitat through community education. 	LEAD & PARTNER
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Provide education focused on land management practices that residents and businesses can use to enhance climate resilience on their property or in their neighborhood. Share information with residents about how many small-scale projects – like a native and/or adapted pollinator garden, a suburban boulevard tree, an urban agriculture garden or an alternative land management strategy — build meaningful climate benefits.	LEAD & PARTNER
Improve parks, community gardens and green spaces in underrepresented and climate-vulnerable communities.	LEAD
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Manage invasive species.	LEAD
Collaborate between departments to increase climate resilience of landscape management practices around county-owned buildings.	LEAD & PARTNER
Develop an herbivore management or herbivore mimicry plan for managing invasive species in county parks and natural lands.	LEAD
Determine if the county can offer incentives to residents and businesses for replacing lawns with climate friendly, native/adapted, sustainable plants.	SUPPORT
Maintain and support tribal authority to forage.	LEAD & PARTNER

HOW CLIMATE SMART NATURAL LAND CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Healthy Lives

Access to public green space can improve physical and mental health.



Clean Economy

Career pathways into alternative land management and sustainable agriculture are needed to support the health of natural lands and the people who rely on them.

Thriving Communities



- Collaboratively build the capacity of Ramsey County communities to equitably protect against the effects of climate change and survive and thrive in changing conditions.
- Limit the impacts of climate change by assessing vulnerabilities, planning for and implementing adaptation strategies that increase public and critical facilities' ability to withstand the impacts of climate change, and continuing to operate during climate emergencies.

GOAL 1

Provide technical assistance, tools and data.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Develop metrics that help residents understand how and where the county is making progress towards greater community resilience.	PARTNER
Create web content that improves visibility of and access to climate information, identifies strategies to help communities expand their resilience and includes translated material.	LEAD & PARTNER
Overlay environmental justice areas of concern with map of where people at greatest risk to climate impacts live and where community assets exist to focus resources on communities at greatest risk of experiencing the negative impacts of climate change.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Integrate ongoing adaptation strategies into county hazard mitigation plans using Minnesota's state hazard mitigation plan as a resource. Work with underrepresented and climate vulnerable communities, to ensure individuals have a plan for extreme weather events, including contingencies for multiple events such as a heat wave after flooding.	LEAD

GOAL 2

Support information sharing and learning through community networks.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Host community conversations with residents to ensure the county is meeting community needs. Continuously improve outreach methods based on feedback from community.	LEAD & SUPPORT

GOAL 2 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →



GOAL 2 CONTINUED

Support information sharing and learning through community networks.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Participate in underrecognized and climate vulnerable community-led events and conversations. Develop authentic, trust-based relationships and programs and services, based on changing community vulnerabilities and needs.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Provide training on county climate action to trusted messengers or hire climate navigators to provide residents with information about available resources.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Provide technical assistance to Ramsey County cities to develop and share adaptation resources across communities.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Engage with partners to utilize up-to-date climate modeling data, technical assistance and research on building adaptation strategies.	SUPPORT
Increase capacity within the county to develop and implement programs, best practices, resources, incentives and communications with residents to encourage more sustainable consumption, behaviors and use of sustainable materials and products.	LEAD

GOAL 3

Protect culturally important activities.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Work with underrepresented and climate-vulnerable communities to support and co-develop projects that acknowledge and address the impacts of changing ecosystems on mental health and wellbeing.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Protect and restore outdoor spaces from extreme weather impacts by collaborating with outdoor recreational stakeholders and partners that have staff and leadership who represent their communities.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Collaborate with underrepresented and vulnerable communities, and community-based organizations to identify and protect culturally significant places threatened by climate change.	PARTNER & SUPPORT



GOAL 4

Pursue resilient infrastructure and critical facilities updates.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Develop quantifiable metrics to measure and communicate information related to safe and sufficient drinking water.	LEAD & PARTNER
Assess vulnerabilities and develop a financial plan for improvements to county owned critical facilities. Use climate projections to identify ways to ensure continuity of operations.	LEAD
Collaborate with communities, local organizations and local governments to create resilience hubs based in community centers or other public buildings. These would provide culturally responsive services and support during climate-related events, such as extreme heat, extreme cold, flooding, air quality alerts and power loss.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
Increase water storage and water management to hold or distribute water during and after large rain events in urban landscapes. This includes restoring wetlands to support water storage in flood-prone areas which would protect buildings and infrastructure and support watershed health.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
Reduce consumption and support reuse of water to increase resilience to drought.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Identify and mitigate risk in areas beyond current FEMA-mapped floodplain areas and encourage no-net-loss of floodplain storage in response to projected climate conditions.	SUPPORT
Provide information to help residents reuse water for increased resilience to drought.	LEAD & PARTNER
Include the use of green stormwater infrastructure practices in county-funded and/or owned developments and along roadways within stormwater regulatory programs to increase resilience to floods.	LEAD & PARTNER

HOW THRIVING COMMUNITIES CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Transportation

Transportation networks provide connectivity between underrecognized and vulnerable residents and critical resources.



Climate Smart Natural Land

Increases in tree canopy and improvements in soil health increase community resilience to extreme heat and flooding.



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will slow the progress of climate change allowing communities more time to prepare and adapt.



GOAL 5

Reduce waste and promote beneficial use of materials.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Develop and implement programs that increase composting across the county to build soil health.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT
Reduce barriers for local and regional food donation and food rescue organizations, and climate sensitive food-to-animal programs.	LEAD
Expand access to waste reduction strategies such as public or commercial anaerobic digestion and compost facilities.	LEAD
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Provide local governments with guidance and resources to conduct public education campaigns focused on prevention of wasted food, zero waste challenges and building stronger food security networks.	LEAD
Incentivize beneficial uses for wood and debris that results from increased tree pests, diseases and more frequent storms.	LEAD

HOW THRIVING COMMUNITIES CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Healthy Lives

The mental and physical health of community members affects their capacity to thrive, and health-based services provide critical support in emergencies.



Clean Economy

Financial security found through the development of green technology helps individuals, families and communities thrive.



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

- Pursue 100% carbon-free, reliable and affordable electrical power and heat sources through policies, investments and partnerships.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in buildings by promoting conservation and efficiency. Reduce emissions from construction by promoting lower-carbon design, material re-use and alternative fuels.
- Invest in infrastructure that supports living-wage jobs and careers and clean energy and contributes to a more stable climate.

GOAL 1

Track and reduce energy use and pursue 100% carbon-free energy sources in county-owned facilities.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Identify opportunities to electrify energy used in county owned buildings.	LEAD
Invest in infrastructure updates that reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency in county-owned buildings.	LEAD
Expand training for county facilities managers on best practices for reducing energy use.	LEAD
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Create renewable energy guidelines for county-owned buildings.	LEAD
Explore options for an internal county financial energy reduction incentive to encourage and expand department-based reductions in energy use, including facilities and transportation energy.	LEAD

HOW CLEAN ENERGY AND EFFICIENT BUILDINGS CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Transportation

Energy sources for transportation impact county wide greenhouse gas emissions.



Climate Smart Natural Land

Climate-smart design and construction include stormwater and sustainable land management.



Thriving Communities

Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable improvements to buildings will increase community resilience.



GOAL 2

Increase ability of county-owned and county-funded buildings to withstand the impacts of climate change.

NEAR TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Adopt requirements based on best management practices for reducing energy use for county programs that invest in new or rehabbed buildings.	LEAD
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Evaluate reuse/recovery of wasted thermal energy to heat and cool existing buildings.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Encourage developers of new county-owned or county-funded housing construction and rehabilitation to plan for resiliency/adaptation (e.g., electrification, waterproofing, raising mechanicals, coordinating energy improvements, installing passive cooling building and landscape features), while increasing affordability and maintaining urban density.	PARTNER
Research options for lowering energy burden through design criteria for affordable housing.	PARTNER
Adapt energy goals for county-owned buildings utilizing real-time monitoring of building energy consumption and recommend strategies for energy use reduction.	LEAD & SUPPORT

GOAL 3

Provide resources to residents on alternative energy and energy efficiency options.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Research options for financially supporting underrepresented and climate vulnerable residents to reduce energy burden by utilizing alternative energy at home.	LEAD

GOAL 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

HOW CLEAN ENERGY AND EFFICIENT BUILDINGS CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Healthy Lives

Climate-smart design and construction benefits physical and mental health through environmental health protections and improved indoor air quality.



Clean Economy

Sustainable infrastructure development can create living-wage careers and alternative energy sources can lower energy burden for low-income families.



GOAL 3 CONTINUED

Provide resources to residents on alternative energy and energy efficiency options.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Identify opportunities to consolidate and streamline programs providing energy assistance, weatherization, and utility efficiency to make them easier to access, navigate and scale up in both multifamily and single-family buildings. Develop strategies specific to both renters and homeowners - especially in multi-family housing upgrades and for underrecognized and climate vulnerable communities.	LEAD
Share clear guidance on alternative energy resources for Ramsey County's cities to share with residents.	LEAD
Develop policies and support community-based organizations to ensure efficient and functional heating/cooling is provided to tenants.	LEAD

GOAL 4

Design and build climate-smart new buildings.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Adopt standards for incorporating climate resilience into design and construction of county development projects.	LEAD
Support and promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings to reduce construction waste and retain embodied carbon in existing construction materials.	LEAD
Create a policy around electric vehicle readiness in county facilities.	LEAD
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Support recycling of construction waste that cannot be reused in the construction market. Invest in the development and expansion of recycling markets for building materials.	SUPPORT
Promote the use of low-carbon and reused and recycled construction materials in new building designs.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Expand deconstruction and reuse of construction materials where demolition cannot be avoided.	LEAD & PARTNER

Healthy Lives



- Partner with community to reduce the direct and indirect health impacts of climate change.
- Use public health resources to help community respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

GOAL 1	
Co-develop plans and utilize data to influence policies and systems that support healthy communities and workplaces.	
NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Evaluate safety of people living within Ramsey County jails, shelters, and other congregate settings during extreme weather events, particularly heat waves, by engaging with those individuals and propose infrastructure adaptations to support resilience.	LEAD & PARTNER
Reevaluate preparedness and response plans at regular intervals, and identify resources needed for planning and responding to climate-related events such as extreme heat, drought, flood and severe storms.	LEAD
Collaborate with community members to co-create strategies to lessen the impact of climate-related illnesses on physical and mental health for communities at greatest risk.	PARTNER
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Update the county's climate change vulnerability assessment with current data, in a user-friendly format, incorporating data on the social determinants of health and climate change projections to identify and anticipate the health impacts of climate change.	LEAD & PARTNER
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Review the potential health, environmental justice and pollution reduction impacts of sites chosen for new county-owned or county-funded construction projects.	SUPPORT

HOW HEALTHY LIVES CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Transportation

Climate-smart transportation reduces air and noise pollution, in turn contributing to better cardiovascular, respiratory and mental health for residents.



Climate Smart Natural Land

Access to public green space is correlated with improvements in physical and mental health.



Thriving Communities

The mental and physical health of community members affects their capacity to be resilient particularly in underrecognized and vulnerable communities.



GOAL 2

Share information and resources that supports healthy communities and workplaces.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Co-create, with underrecognized and climate-vulnerable community members, a climate and health community engagement plan that meets people where they are and reaches multiple parts of society.	PARTNER
Provide guidance to county employees on extreme heat and poor air quality to protect the health and safety of outdoor workers and others who spend time outside.	LEAD
Partner with underrecognized and climate vulnerable communities, to raise awareness of the health impacts of climate change, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to vector-borne, respiratory, cardiovascular and waterborne diseases. • Heat illnesses. • Poor mental health. Share resources for reducing these impacts.	PARTNER
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Partner with educational institutions to teach students about the mental and physical health impacts of climate change and adaptation strategies.	PARTNER & SUPPORT

GOAL 3

Implement programs that support healthy communities and workplaces.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Promote access to culturally-responsive, affordable healthcare and mental health services to protect public health and create a healthy foundation for climate resilience.	PARTNER

GOAL 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

HOW HEALTHY LIVES CONNECT TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

Climate smart design and construction contributes to environmental health which supports physical and mental health.



Clean Economy

Financial, job and housing security can contribute to improved mental and physical health.



GOAL 3 CONTINUED

Implement programs that support healthy communities and workplaces.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Ensure uninterrupted access to culturally-responsive healthcare and mental health services provided by the county during and after disasters and expand trauma-informed training for staff.	LEAD
Prioritize climate actions that also reduce other types of pollution, especially in areas disproportionately impacted by pollution and climate change.	LEAD, PARTNER & SUPPORT

GOAL 4

Advance food security efforts in alignment with the Strategic Food Security Plan.

NEAR-TERMS ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Work with local organizations and governments to promote actions that reduce food insecurity and increase access to culturally and medically appropriate foods that meet dietary needs in the face of climate change.	LEAD & PARTNER
Strengthen the food safety net system; Break down barriers to food distribution, food sharing and food rescue.	LEAD & PARTNER
Expand food availability and affordability. Support farmers markets with resources and infrastructure, with support from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, State Health Insurance Assistance Program and Women, Infants and Children.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Advocate for policy changes that support local and community-based agriculture to improve transportation and increase food access, especially in underrepresented and climate vulnerable communities.	LEAD
Develop and support policy and infrastructure updates to protect and expand existing community gardens.	LEAD
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Expand urban agriculture. Provide community resources to support development of more urban food gardens.	LEAD



Clean Economy

- Build an economy that addresses climate change and creates equitable opportunities for people.
- Support workers and entrepreneurs to adapt their skills to green business needs, through inclusive strategies that help ensure living-wage careers in new and existing green industries.
- Become a leader in clean economy innovation by equitably supporting the growth of green businesses within the county.

GOAL 1

Help resident and business owner applicants in Ramsey County leverage applicable funding.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Develop web resource that describes current funding opportunities applicable to county residents and businesses in plain language.	PARTNER
MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Develop print resources to share information about funding opportunities in community.	PARTNER
Provide technical assistance, data, resources and support to cities and community-based organizations with a presence in Ramsey County to pursue and leverage climate-focused funding opportunities.	PARTNER

GOAL 2

Support the development and growth of businesses leading the just transition to a clean economy in alignment with the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Work with regional partners to develop strategies that foster sustainable business development and coordination, tailored to each business district within the county.	PARTNER
Offer technical assistance to help businesses reduce their or their customers/clients' carbon emissions/carbon footprint.	LEAD
Promote more sustainable consumption where products are more durable, easier to repair, rent or share through training of employees, educating county residents and offering financial incentives for businesses that design sustainable products.	LEAD & SUPPORT

GOAL 2 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →



GOAL 2 CONTINUED

Support the development and growth of businesses leading the just transition to a clean economy in alignment with the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Grow clean economy businesses through engagement with underrecognized and climate-vulnerable communities and partnerships with community-based organizations, educational institutions, commercial consortiums, unions and research labs.	LEAD & PARTNER
Support policies that expand transparency and documentation of the durability and reparability of products and materials.	PARTNER & SUPPORT
Develop climate goals and standards within development agreements.	LEAD & SUPPORT

GOAL 3

Support just workforce transitions into the green economy.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Identify and address barriers to learning about, training for and transitioning to new climate driven career pathways for residents who are unemployed or underemployed. Make efforts that are community-informed.	LEAD
Develop a "Workforce in the Green Economy Plan" for internal and partner use.	LEAD
Create and share a green economy page on the Ramsey County Means Business website. Provide information on job market trends and positions available in the clean economy.	LEAD
Invest in and support climate driven career paths in partnership with the Workforce Innovation Board of Ramsey County. Support jobseekers from underrecognized communities through innovative, holistic employment supports and partnerships with community-based organizations, educational institutions and other industry stakeholders.	LEAD

GOAL 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

HOW CLEAN ECONOMY CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Transportation

Multi-modal transportation networks increase the ability of underrecognized and vulnerable people to reach training and job centers.



Climate Smart Natural Land

Career pathways into alternative land management and sustainable agriculture are needed to keep natural lands healthy.



Thriving Communities

Support for underrecognized and vulnerable communities, such as housing stability, provides the foundation for a stable career.



GOAL 3 CONTINUED

Support just workforce transitions into the green economy.

MID-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Promote wage growth by creating and partnering with programs that train and upskill residents to adapt to careers in climate resilient industries.	LEAD & PARTNER
Provide training and technical assistance to current and emerging green businesses. Encourage them to be inclusive employers that support and retain employees who are underrepresented and climate-vulnerable residents.	LEAD
LONG-TERM ACTIONS	COUNTY'S ROLE
Expand or replicate community- and school-based programs that support STEM learning, career awareness and technical education programs within underrecognized and climate-vulnerable communities.	PARTNER

HOW CLEAN ECONOMY CONNECTS TO OTHER FOCUS AREAS



Clean Energy and Efficient Buildings

Sustainable infrastructure development can create living wage careers and new business opportunities.



Healthy Lives

Financial, job and housing security can contribute to improved mental and physical health.

Glossary

Adaptation Strategies: taking action to prepare for and adjust to both the current and projected impacts from climate change in both natural and built systems.

Air Quality: a measure of how clean or polluted the air is.

Alternative Energy: a source of energy that does not use resources in the direct production of energy, such as wind, solar, or tidal energy. These require materials to build, but not to produce energy. This term usually excludes nuclear energy, and always excludes fossil fuels.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂): a naturally occurring gas, CO₂ is also a by-product of burning fossil fuels (such as oil, gas, and coal), of burning biomass, of land use changes, and of industrial processes (e.g., cement production). It is the principal greenhouse gas produced by human activities.

Carbon Footprint: the amount of greenhouse gases and specifically carbon dioxide emitted by something (such as a person's activities or a product's manufacture, transport and use) during a given period.

Carbon-Neutral: achieving net-zero carbon dioxide emissions through the balance of residual carbon dioxide emissions with the same amount of carbon dioxide removal.

Clean Economy: an economy that is low-carbon and that produces goods and services with an environmental benefit.

Clean Energy: energy generated from renewable or carbon-free sources, as well as energy saved through energy efficiency measures.

Clean Transportation: technologies aimed at energy efficiency in transportation systems, switching from fossil fuels to renewable and clean technologies, improvements in public transit and non-motorized transportation systems and infrastructure, and travel demand management to reduce the negative effects caused by conventional technologies. Examples include light rail, bus rapid transit vehicles and systems, multimodal transit hubs, and traffic signal prioritization and coordination systems.

Climate Driven Career Pathways: life-sustaining jobs that contribute to climate change monitoring, planning, mitigation and/or adaptation activities.

Climate Navigators: communication professionals who increase community's understanding of both climate science and actions to take to prevent and respond to climate change.

Climate Smart: an adjective for a method or product that is designed to: (A) contribute as little as possible to climate change, and/or (B) one that plans to withstand a climate that has changed in the future.

County Funded: buildings or projects that may be owned by the county or received funding from county programs.

Environmental Justice Areas of Concern: census tracts where the number of people of color and/or Indigenous people is greater than 50% and/or more than 40% of the households have a household income of less than 185% of the federal poverty level. Also includes communities within Tribal boundaries.

Environmental Justice: the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, income, and educational levels with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of protective environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Equity: the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce fairness in power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency.

GHG Emissions: refers to the release of greenhouse gasses and the gasses themselves. Common examples include carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane gas (CH₄).

Food Insecurity: a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life.

Climate Driven Career Pathways: life-sustaining jobs that contribute to climate change monitoring, planning, mitigation and/or adaptation activities.

Herbivore Mimicry: an invasive plant management strategy that capitalizes on or imitates the low-impact of grazing animals.

Mitigation (of climate change): actions taken to reduce emissions or remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

MnDOT: Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Multi-modal Transportation Options: transportation and land use planning that considers diverse transportation options, typically including walking, bicycling, public transit, and automobile, and accounts for land use factors (such as land use density and mix) that affect access to destinations.

Resilience (to Climate Change): the capacity of individuals, communities, businesses, buildings, infrastructure, or the natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to and recover from disruptive events and continue to perform despite persistent stresses imposed by climate change. Both mitigation and adaptation are necessary for long-term resilience.

STEM: acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields.

Sustainability: creating and maintaining the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.

Telecommuting: working from home, usually by using the phone or the internet.

Transportation Demand Management Policies: these policies prioritize increasing travelers' choices. Options to use different routes, using different modes of transportation, at different times of day are all encouraged by this design approach.

Trusted Messengers: a Ramsey County initiative started in 2020 to share COVID-19 information. The initiative uses a variety of community partnerships to deliver culturally relevant and language-appropriate information on Ramsey County programs and information.

Urban Heat Island: locations where the building materials and industrial activity make urban areas unusually hot compared to the surrounding region.

Vulnerability: the degree to which a system or community is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes.

Other Plans Referenced in This Document

Strategic Priority – Responding to climate change and increasing community resilience has been a county priority since July 2022. The county is committed to pursuing equitable, measurable, and impactful outcomes through climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in partnership with residents and community partners.

2040 Comprehensive Plan – Ramsey County’s draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan describes the county’s unique role in addressing regional prosperity, equity, livability, stewardship and sustainability over the next 20 years.

State of MN Climate Action Framework – This plan sets a vision for how our state will address and prepare for climate change. It identifies immediate, near-term actions we must take to achieve our long-term goal of a carbon-neutral, resilient, and equitable future for Minnesota.

Equitable Development Framework – The intent of this framework is to center racial equity in County land use development and economic development decisions. This means significantly reducing racial disparities, recognizing and working with community towards reconciliation for harm caused by historical racism and current conditions, and partnering with impacted neighborhoods and populations to create vibrant communities (with housing that is affordable to all, quality education, living wage jobs, etc.)

Racial Equity Policy – This policy is to advance racial equity by reducing racial and ethnic-based disparities. The county will do this by being equitable, inclusive, transparent, respectful, and impactful in how we serve and engage with residents, as well as the people who work for Ramsey County. The county recognizes and acknowledges this requires deconstructing barriers and changing systems, structures, policies, and outcomes.

Natural Resources Management Plan – Parks & Recreation’s mission in managing plant, animal and water resources is to provide an adequate sustainable habitat to support populations of native wildlife species within the county’s park system as defined by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. This plan describes how the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Department will work to manage the diversity and quantity of our natural resources to provide the largest possible tracts of land that contain key wildlife habitats within the Ramsey County park system.

Strategic Food Security Plan – Ramsey County’s food security work centers equity to improve health and wellbeing by advancing food sovereignty, access, and justice to create a sustainable and resilient future that allows communities to thrive.

Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan – Ramsey County is guided by a comprehensive economic development strategy, centered on equitable growth and strengthening economic competitiveness.

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