

Ordinance Survey

Background

The Ramsey County park ordinance was adopted in 1992 and last amended in 2007. The purpose is to promote the safety, health, enjoyment and welfare of everyone in their use of the park, and to protect park property and resources.

The current ordinance revision process aims to:

- Respond to long-standing community feedback about park access.
- Minimize or eliminate regulations that may be enforced in a discriminatory way, and increase racial inequity.
- Modernize the ordinance and address contemporary park issues.

Changes should result in an ordinance that is equitable, consistent and streamlined; promotes greater enjoyment of the parks; increases user safety; and protects park facilities, property and natural resources for everyone to enjoy.

Follow along with the project at ramseycounty.us/ParkOrdinanceProject.

The questions below focus on changes on three topics: park hours, tobacco and vaping, and fines and penalties. At the end is information on how to comment on other sections of the ordinance.

First, a bit about you...

What is your home ZIP Code?

How do you describe your race or ethnicity?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian
- Other (please specify)

Are you Hispanic / Latino / Latinx?

- Yes
- No

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Park Hours

Background: Park staff have heard concerns from the public about limited park hours.

Issues and information:

- Park hours are currently a half hour before sunrise and a half hour after sunset. However, due to the size and accessibility of park entrances, no park is physically closed to prevent entry.
- In contrast to Ramsey County parks, most city and regional parks have hours from 5 or 6 a.m. until 10 or 11 p.m.
- Most city sidewalks and boulevards have no scheduled hours of use.
- With limited winter daylight hours, the current park hours prohibit early morning and evening recreation and uses such as bike commuting on regional trails.
- Most Ramsey County parks do not currently have lighting.
- Regardless of current or future park hours:
 - Various City Curfew Ordinances for people under 18 remain in effect and apply to parks.
 - Ramsey County park noise ordinance and city noise ordinances remain in effect and apply to parks.
- Sheriff's Department park patrols currently run from noon to 10:00 pm; The Sheriff's Office noted that crime can more easily occur in cover of darkness, but more people recreating in a park may deter some criminal activity.

Options for Park Hours

Below are options for park hours (Note: Facility hours, such as bathrooms, would likely remain unchanged due to operational considerations.)

Option A: Setting year-round park hours from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Option B: Eliminating park hours, making them accessible 24/7.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Feel free to use the space below to offer ideas other than the two proposed options.

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Tobacco in Parks

Research has definitively shown that smoking or vaping tobacco are damaging to the smoker's or vaper's health and to those nearby through secondhand smoke. The proposed alternatives to limit tobacco use in Ramsey County parks would not apply to ceremonial, cultural or spiritual practices.

Options for Tobacco Use in Parks

Below are options for controlling tobacco use in the parks.

Option A: Prohibit smoking and tobacco use within 25 feet of any park building, outdoor event, playground, beach or nature center grounds.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Option B: Prohibit smoking and tobacco use everywhere except parking lots.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Option C: Prohibit smoking and tobacco use everywhere on park property.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Feel free to use the space below to offer ideas other than the three proposed options.

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Fines and Penalties for Ordinance Violations

Currently, every ordinance violation can be cited as a misdemeanor, which is a criminal penalty carrying a maximum of a \$1,000 fine and 90 days in jail. This applies to all violations, damaging park property to walking on a ski trail in winter. These penalties have negative equity impacts, and go on a person's permanent record as a criminal offense that can affect job status, college or rent applications, or immigration status.

In practice, however, the Sheriff's Office typically uses education to change behavior that is unsafe or violates the ordinance, and issues citations as a last resort. The vast majority of citations are for parking violations, with a few others for being in a park after hours and similar.

Options for Fines and Penalties

Instead of misdemeanor penalties, Ramsey County is considering the following options for ordinance violations (Note: Serious criminal behavior violates state law and is prosecuted accordingly.)

Option A: Violations are petty misdemeanors. This is a non-criminal offense with a maximum penalty of \$300. Appeals are through the court system. A petty misdemeanor may show up in an employment background check.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Option B: Violations result in an administrative fine. This is a non-criminal offense with the fine set by the Ramsey County Board at likely \$100 or less. Appeals are through a small hearing panel, with the possibility of volunteer work being substituted for the fine. Failure to pay the fine or participate in volunteer work could result in it being converted to a misdemeanor with a maximum \$1,000 fine and up to 90 days in jail.

What's appealing about this?

Please use this space for questions or concerns *and* suggested solutions.

Feel free to use the space below to offer ideas other than the two proposed options.

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Other Potential Ordinance Changes

Click on the link below to see a table showing current and draft language for each section of the ordinance. Use the space below to offer feedback on any of these, making sure to **clearly note the section number** on which you are commenting.

Link no longer available.

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Thank you!

Thank you for your feedback! Please follow along with the project at ramseycounty.us/ParkOrdinanceProject