

Ramsey County Update

Economic Development Authority & Building Stronger Together

Saint Paul Policy Committee

May 6, 2026

Agenda

- Economic Development Authority Update
- Building Stronger Together

Economic Development Authority (EDA) Update



Background

- May 2025 - MN Legislature Approves ‘Ramsey County EDA’ legislation.
- On Dec. 2nd, 2025, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners took an initial step to formally create the Ramsey County Economic Development Authority (EDA).
- While the legislation allowed for the creation of EDA, it outlined two important conditions:
 - Ramsey County EDA will have no taxing authority.
 - Each City is required to ‘Opt In’ to this enhanced business programming.
- EDA allows the county to utilize a portion of HRA levy funding for purposes of enhanced business programming.

‘Opt-In’ Process

- The process for a City to Opt-in requires a city resolution by June 1, 2026.
 - Both Saint Paul City Council and HRA are required to adopt resolutions
- Receipt of approved resolutions from cities will create a map that shows the EDA’s Area of Operation.
- Eight cities already opted in. Another six cities in-process.
- Ramsey County establishes the EDA Area of Operation on or by June 15th, 2026.
- Enhanced business programming will begin January 1, 2027.

Tentative Plan for EDA Programming

- Tentative allocation of \$1.5 - \$2 million yearly from the existing HRA levy towards business focused programming.
- Identified five core focus areas for enhanced business support:
 - ▶ Improve the capacity of Business Support Organizations
 - ▶ Expand technical assistance service offerings to businesses
 - ▶ Create new cohort-based learning opportunities
 - ▶ Establish data gathering, research & reporting capabilities
 - ▶ Provide direct support to projects and businesses that deliver business growth
- Advancing strategies and recommended actions identified in Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion (ECI) Plan
- Maintains existing HRA Spending Parity (i.e. 50/50)



- ▶ **Improve the Capacity of Business Support Organizations**
- ▶ **Expand Technical Assistance Service Offerings to Businesses**

- Business Support Organizations (BCOs) are important lifelines to the growth, retention and attraction of entrepreneurs & small businesses.
- ***Business Reimagination Center*** initiative is piloting efforts in 2026 that support capacity of BCOs and additional technical assistance offerings. This piloted effort will further inform future programming.
- High Level Budget Estimates for both focus areas: \$250,000
- Opportunities for City-County Deeper Impact:
 - Greater coordination and collaboration in business retention, expansion and retention efforts.
 - Commercial Corridors Program.

▶ Create New Cohort-Based Learning Opportunities

- Supporting proven business retention and expansion models that allow business leaders to learn with and alongside their peers.
- Current portfolio of cohort-based learning programs includes:
 - *CEO Next*
 - *CEO Now*
 - *Emerging and Diverse Developers*
- High Level Budget Estimate: \$250,000
- County is exploring greater frequency of cohorts, feasibility of county only cohorts and additional cohorts serving business at different growth stages and/or sectors.



2025 Emerging and Diverse Developers Cohort

▶ **Establish Data Gathering, Research & Reporting Capabilities**

- Decision making driven by robust data can foster transformational impacts in assisting businesses in their growth, as well as support more robust and coordinated business retention, expansion and attraction efforts by the county and cities.
- High Level Budget Estimate: \$250,000
- Opportunities for City-County Deeper Impact:
 - Support of shared business retention, expansion and attraction tools
 - Business corridor profiles

▶ Provide Direct Support to Projects and Businesses That Deliver Business Growth

- Support business growth by providing direct, targeted support to projects and businesses with strong economic potential through mechanisms such as grants, low-interest loans, etc.
- High Level Budget Estimate: \$1,000,000
- Opportunities for City-County Deeper Impact:
 - Downtown Vitality Fund
 - Business Assistance Fund





May 6, 2026

Building Stronger Together

Presentation to Saint Paul Policy Committee



Unprecedented property tax pressures

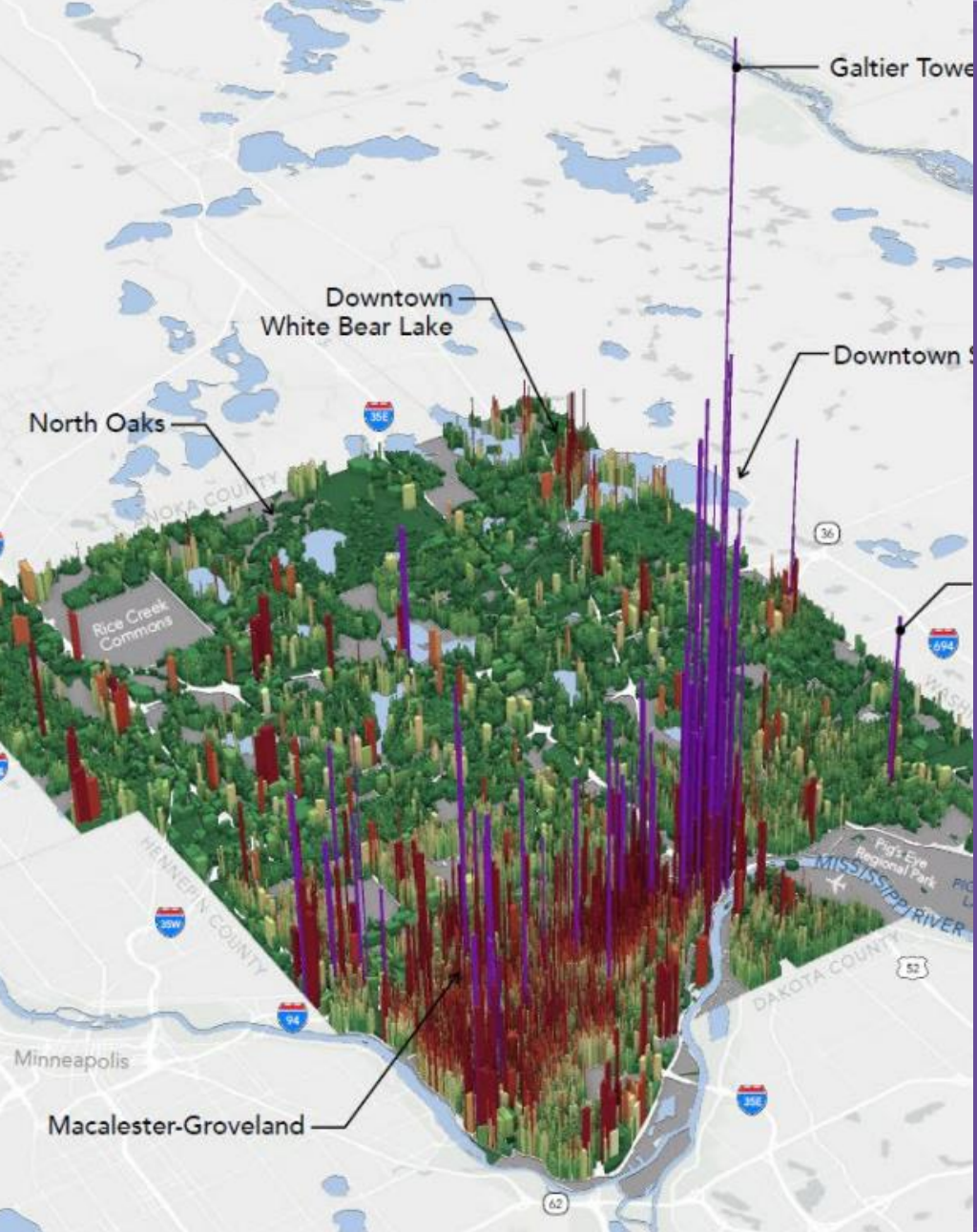
Limited tax base (revenue)

- High proportion of tax-exempt property (14%).
- Lowest per capita net tax capacity in the seven-county metro area.
- Small, densely populated, and fully developed = few new development opportunities.
- Higher-cost redevelopment requires partnership, investment and time.
- Property tax shift to residential property.

Cost pressures (expenses)

- Cost shifts and unfunded/underfunded mandates, including:
 - Federal: \$1 trillion shift over next 10 years to state and local governments.
 - State: Potential cost shifts.

**8.25% property
tax levy in 2026**



What the data tells us

- Fiscal Health Analysis is a starting point to understanding our land use composition and budget constraints.
- Value is one input to calculating tax base.
- Downtown is important to County's overall fiscal health.
- Abundance of tax-exempt property, especially county-owned, is part of the county story and demonstrates a big opportunity.
- The need to find ways for infill development to create greater density when possible.

Downtown Offers the most opportunity

- 49% of Estimated Market Value in downtown is exempt.
- Untapped potential is significant.
- Downtown's contribution to the County's tax capacity is declining.
- Home to Ramsey County facilities and redevelopment assets as well as other important tax-exempt sites.



<u>County</u>	<u>Land Area (acres)</u>
Anoka	269,596
Carver	226,467
Dakota	362,185
Hennepin	353,171
Scott	224,761
Washington	245,296
Ramsey County	98,380
Metro Area TOTAL	1,779,856
Ramsey as % of Metro Area	5.5%

Metropolitan Council 2020 Land Use Data

Ramsey County is **less than 100,000 acres** in size and contains **5.5% of the total land area** in the region

A Closer Look at LAND within Ramsey County

Availability of Land is a key wealth generation factor and predictor of future development and economic growth.

Building Stronger Together

Building Stronger Together



Building a Dynamic Downtown



Selling County-owned Land

Building a Dynamic Downtown

\$250 Million

- *Catalyze key projects* – Invest in properties, like the Park at RiversEdge, to expand businesses, housing and public spaces.
- *Support downtown housing* – Establish a housing fund and support office-to-residential development. This housing fund will be funded through bonding by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA).
- *Enhance public spaces* – Improve transit and elevate central downtown corridors that better connect residents, workers, and visitors through high-impact public realm enhancements.
- *Activate business growth* – Use existing program and future flexibility created by the newly formed Economic Development Authority to establish business activation resources to attract and support new businesses downtown.



Park at RiversEdge

- Despite the pandemic, market challenges and shifts, the project maintained strong momentum and seized key opportunities to advance to today.
- Pedestrian land bridge that reconnects downtown Saint Paul to the Mississippi River, creating accessible walking and biking connections and a welcoming public destination.
- Brings a mix of housing, retail, and workers to create more density just a short walk from Union Depot and multiple transit lines.
- Enables street-level activity, improves access, supports ADA connectivity across the steep site, and helps position downtown as a more connected, vibrant, and investment-ready environment.

Selling County-owned Land

\$70 Million

- Expediate real estate project readiness and jumpstart the large portfolio of underutilized properties owned by Ramsey County. This includes Rice Creek Commons.
- Invest in public infrastructure that fosters economic opportunities and contributes to sustaining and enhancing vitality.
- Cultivate new and enhanced partnerships to strengthen the tax base.

Where does funding come from?

- This strategy does not increase property tax levy.
- Funding comes from existing dedicated resources and strategic bonding.
 - Existing dedicated resources include previously established project budgets, existing and future state funding awards, transportation funding where eligible, and through dedicated support from existing HRA programming.
 - Funding will be additionally augmented by strategic bonding through a capital improvement bond and by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA).
- County investment will augment existing and future support from other public and philanthropic partners as well as leverage private investment.

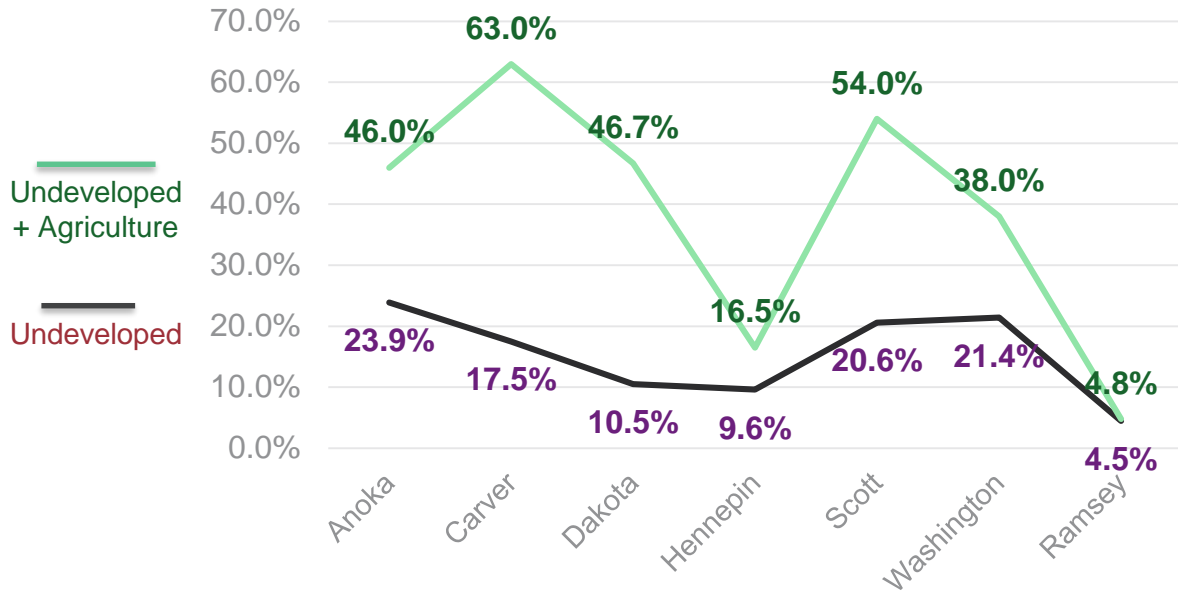
What's next?

- Mini Board workshops – to be scheduled throughout 2026.
- County staff will work in close partnership with municipalities, chambers of commerce and the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance to lead coordinated work teams and advance implementation.
- County Board to authorize bonding authority this Fall.
- Other related actions to support the ***Building Stronger Together*** strategy through actions at Ramsey County Board, the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority, and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

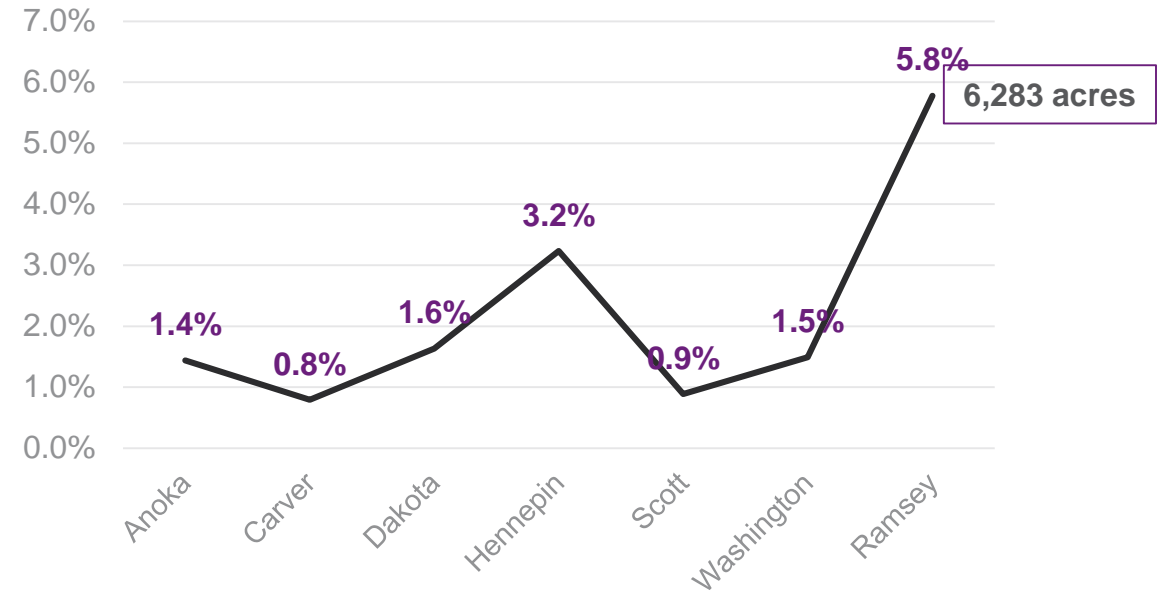
Appendix

A Closer Look at Land within Ramsey County

Percent Undeveloped Land



Percent Institutional Land

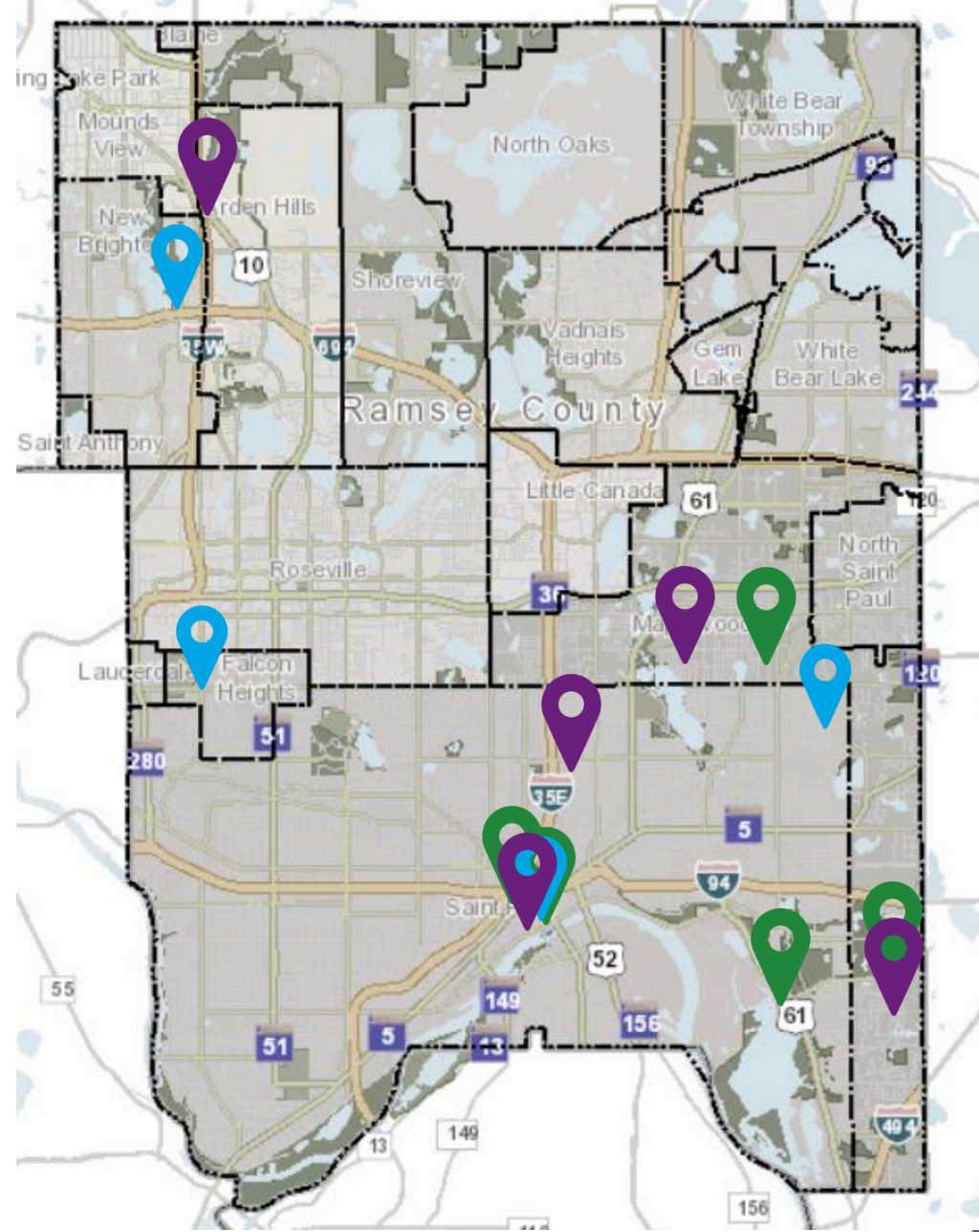


Source: Metropolitan Council 2020 Land Use Data

“State Capitol Communities” often have a higher proportions of institutional land uses. And when combined with little undeveloped land or greenfield development, **every development and redevelopment opportunity** in the County is significant.

Funding Uses and Sources

Amount	Use	Source
Dynamic Downtown		
\$20 million	Catalyze key projects - Park at RiversEdge	Current state bonding request
\$20 million	Catalyze key projects - Park at RiversEdge	County bonding – County board approval process in Fall 2026
\$100 million	Catalyze key projects - Park at RiversEdge	Ramsey County Transit and Transportation Investment Plan
\$9 million	Catalyze key projects - Park at RiversEdge	Existing project budget, including prior \$6 million state bonding award
\$50 million	Grow downtown housing - Downtown Housing Fund	Ramsey County Housing and Redevelopment Authority Bond – HRA board approval process in Fall 2026
\$50 million	Enhance public spaces - Downtown improvements	Ramsey County Transit and Transportation Investment Plan
\$1 million	Activate Business growth	Existing Ramsey County Community & Economic Development programming
Selling County Owned Land		
\$70 million	Construction of Rice Creek Blvd, Rice Creek Commons site infrastructure, project support for other county-owned redevelopment sites	Ramsey County Transportation Improvement Plan and existing redevelopment project budgets



Abundant Opportunities

County-Owned Site – Active opportunities

Total ± 525 Acres

County owned sites include Rice Creek Commons, RiversEdge, Maplewood Properties South, Payne & Maryland, Frost and English, Ramsey County East Building, 555 Cedar.

Additional County-Owned Sites

Total ± 105 Acres

County owned sites include Boys Totem Town, Maplewood North Parcel, other underutilized rights-of-way, etc.

Tax Exempt Sites by Others

Total ± 274 Acres

Non-County owned sites include the Les Bolstad Gold Course, The Heights, etc.
 *Other high-profile projects not included in figure - Highland Bridge, United Village

At ± 904 acres or 14% of institutional land use acres
 represent ample opportunities to move tax base needles.