

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2021 STATE PLATFORM



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RAMSEY COUNTY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Resilience: Building Capacity to Respond,
Adapt and Thrive Under Changing Conditions

Residents First: Effective, Efficient and Accessible Operations

Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power

Aligning Justice System Outcomes with Community Values

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion

Stability Starts with a Place to Call Home

Talent Attraction, Retention and Promotion

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LEGISLATIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2021 State Legislative Platform. In a field as dynamic as the legislative session, these basic tenets inform Ramsey County's response to legislative proposals as they are introduced and move through the process.

RESIDENTS-FIRST FOCUS

- Prioritize support for legislative proposals that clearly improve how government works with and serves Ramsey County residents.
- Evaluate the impact of legislative proposals on residents and provide opportunities for affected communities to publicly discuss and influence legislation.

RESPONSIBLE, RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

- Communicate openly with the public and operate transparently.
- Observe good data practices to protect individual privacy and provide access to public data.
- Equalize access to government resources, opportunity and services across all communities.
- Respond proactively to address the needs of vulnerable children and adults and at-risk families who are experiencing instability and difficulty in meeting basic needs.
- Tend to ongoing maintenance and planning for future infrastructure needs.
- Advance information/data technology and ongoing updates that support program integrity and efficient service delivery.
- Increase citizen access to the polls and voter participation.
- Engage in good stewardship of natural resources.

LEGISLATIVE TOP PRIORITIES

- ✓ Funding Ramsey County's COVID public health emergency response, economic recovery and waivers.
- ✓ Investing in housing stability—affordability and homelessness.
- ✓ Addressing racial disparities in out-of-home displacements.
- ✓ Funding transportation, including new revenues for transit, roads and bridges.
- ✓ Improving mental and behavioral health systems and supports.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS

RAMSEY COUNTY BONDING REQUESTS

Riversedge	\$40M
Rush Line Bus	
Rapid Transit	\$2.5M
Riverview Corridor	\$2.5M

SUPPORT OTHER BONDING REQUESTS

Twin Cities to Milwaukee/Chicago Second Train, MnDOT	\$10M
Gibbs Farm-Pathways to Dakota and Pioneer Life Program Extension, Ramsey County Historical Society	\$7.13M

RESPONSIBLE, RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT *Cont.*

- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, governmental agencies and communities.
- Support local authority to define local priorities.

STABLE, SUFFICIENT, FLEXIBLE FUNDING

- Allocate adequate state funding to counties to carry out state mandates.
- Distribute funding equitably, based on fair and practical distribution formulas.
- Acknowledge county costs for existing or new state mandates.
- Support county innovations in the delivery of mandated service when efficiencies can be gained.
- Respect local government control of their resources and budgetary processes.
- Expend funds for the purposes for which they are collected or allocated.

PRACTICE-BASED POLICY

- Invest in practice-based policies that include ongoing assessment and adjustments to improve effectiveness of services and to save tax dollars.
- Emphasize prevention and early intervention.
- Promote stable families, safe neighborhoods, public safety, health and wellness by engaging individual and community strength.
- Foster economic development, broad access to education and training, and growth of living-wage jobs.
- Pursue policy that is not impinged by excessive, unnecessary regulation.



Racial and Health Equity

Ramsey County supports deconstructing systemic and organizational barriers to create fairer, more inclusive government.

INCREASED HEALTH CARE ACCESS

- Continue to preserve coverage for dependents up to age 26, prohibit the denial of coverage for preexisting conditions and the use of lifetime caps for coverage.
- Address racial disparities in health care access, quality and outcomes.
- Enhance Medicaid asthma services for children and their families by providing home assessment, allergen-reducing equipment and parental education.
- Increase METS funding to develop needed technological improvements that help county financial aid workers address eligibility updates, increased demands for services and the addition of state-mandated data matching activities.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Develop additional community-based mental health placement options and services to shorten stays in state facilities and reduce costs after inpatient care is no longer necessary.
- Support legislation to address the comprehensive mental and behavioral health needs of the community, foster coordination, and ensure parity in services across populations.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

- Support the ratification of the ERA to bolster pay equity, domestic violence laws and pregnancy discrimination protections, among other equity goals.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS

- Support POCI Caucus legislation that further reform the investigation and prosecution of officer-involved deaths and wrongful actions; increases police accountability and transparency; raises standards of conduct and supports officer excellence; partners officers with the communities they serve; repairs and builds community trust and enhances community-centered public safety.

COVID-19 RESPONSE SUPPORT

- Support funding resources directed to COVID-19 response, including, but not limited to, community education and outreach, case investigation and contact tracing, testing, delivery of essential services, and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available.



Residents First

Ramsey County supports improvements in service delivery and facilities, with an emphasis on engaging residents and employees, process efficiency, innovative technology and accessibility.

DATA PRACTICE AND PRIVACY REFORMS

- Maintain flexibility in local governments' data retention schedules and reporting requirements to avoid overwhelming local technical capabilities.
- Consider local costs and improved public access when considering data practice updates.
- Address the use of intentionally disruptive and expensive data requests that provide little or no public benefit.

HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

- Hold counties harmless for DHS overpayment of approximately \$9M in Medicaid funds for chemical health services.
- Ensure state compliance with federal background check requirements that endanger Title IV-E reimbursements.
- Continue health and human services waivers that demonstrate administrative efficiency and improve outcomes and service delivery.
- Support the modernization of human services programs, processes and technology to maintain and improve effectiveness and sustainability.
- Support a health care eligibility system that serves as a sustainable platform for performing health care functions and fully integrates with other health and human services technology systems.

FUNDING FOR LIBRARIES AND PARKS

- Increase Regional Library Basic System Support to \$17M to enhance free access to online digital resources and database services for Ramsey County residents.
- Support library construction and remodeling grants to help fund safety and construction and renovations at the Ramsey County libraries.
- Maintain Arts & Cultural Heritage Legacy funding for regional public library systems to support arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage.
- Ensure that the Ramsey County park system receives a fair share of revenues from Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding, and LCCMR funding or other environmental stewardship grants.

A Holistic Approach to Strengthening Families

Ramsey County supports listening to families' needs, understanding needs and providing non-traditional services and opportunities that promote wellbeing for infants, children, youth and their families.

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION ACT

- Support AAFPA legislation encouraging county case management and support services to accommodate cultural differences, address challenges and build on strengths to remedy the disproportionate placements of children of color into foster care and other out-of-home displacements.

FAMILIES FIRST

- Support Families First legislation allowing states and counties to use federal Title IV-E funds to focus child protection efforts on engaging families, building support networks and providing culturally informed services that help avoid compounding the trauma out-of-home displacements often cause.

COURT-APPOINTED COUNSEL FOR CHIPS CASES

- Require judges to appoint counsel to all parents and caretakers involved in child protection cases to enhance the rights and stability of at-risk families during court proceedings.

CHILD CARE REFORMS

- Support child care licensing practice improvements to simplify rules and promote improved relations between providers and regulators.
- Implement refinements to training, county liability insurance and other requirements to foster best practices in all childcare settings.
- Support state compliance with the Federal Child Care Block Grant Act of 2014 to prevent the loss of federal funding and support additional state investments in child care infrastructure.
- Maximize the use of all available child care subsidy funds through strategic waitlist changes that allow more families who have not used MFIP to access essential work-related support.

CHILD SUPPORT REFORMS

- Align language with the law's legislative intent related to one-parent support when a child is not living with either parent.
- Update child support guidelines to address inequities that require parents with lower incomes to pay higher percentages of their earnings.
- Stop charging interest on past-due child support to keep paying parents from going deeper in debt and allow all payments to go directly to support the child.
- Allow discretion in reporting arrears to the Credit Bureau to prevent negative credit ratings from adding to families' financial challenges.
- Provide flexibility in collecting child support and other cost-of-care funds when a child is in foster care to reduce financial instability for families in crisis and decrease collection costs.



Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion

Ramsey County supports strategies that advance economic competitiveness and inclusiveness by creating greater prosperity and opportunity for all.

STATE-LOCAL FISCAL PARTNERSHIP

- Maintain County Program Aid (CPA) with indexing funding and increasing the base appropriation after the COVID-19 economic recovery.
- Consider a 2021 omnibus bonding bill that addresses the backlog of the state's growing public infrastructure needs.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

- Support efforts to align local, regional and statewide investments for workforce development programs to ensure the unique needs of businesses are met while supporting job seekers with career pathways needed to obtain family sustaining wage and benefits.
- Address existing economic, racial and gender disparities, especially among Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities, by coupling training and education with equity efforts in housing, transportation, child care and other stabilizing factors.
- Dedicate sufficient, ongoing state funding to provide workforce programming targeted to those who are unemployed, under-employed or under-represented in the workforce as a means to reduce disparities and to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce.

FLEXIBILITY FOR SNAP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Make participation in SNAP Education and Training Programs voluntary so that local programs can strategically match these vital support services to specific participants.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT FUNDING

- Support statewide transportation funding that adequately invests in the long-term sustainability of local communities and addresses deferred basic maintenance, safety concerns, mounting congestion and missed economic growth opportunities for businesses and commuters.
- Amend the Motor Vehicle Leased Sales Tax to include Ramsey and Hennepin counties as recipients so revenues can be spent in the metro-area counties where most funds are collected.
- Invest in MnDOT's Local Bridge Replacement and Local Road Improvement Programs to fund the replacement, rehabilitation or removal of deficient bridges on the local road systems and for the construction or reconstruction of local roads.
- Support the UP Railroad/BNSF Railway Grade Separation project adjacent to Westminster Junction to the east of downtown Saint Paul, which has been identified as a critical junction for addressing regional rail line congestion.

RIVERSEEDGE

- Riversedge is an innovative public-private project revitalizing the historic riverfront and expanding public access to the Mississippi River. Ramsey County seeks \$40 million in the state's bonding bill for design and construction of a land bridge extension of public realm space over Shepard Road and the adjacent railway extending downtown Saint Paul directly to the river and doubling the usable area of the site.



Justice System Outcomes

Ramsey County supports policies that align justice system transformation with state and community values.

CIVIL COMMITMENT AND COMPETENCY REFORMS

- Make civil commitment statute more responsive to defendants experiencing mental illness and provide funding for competency restoration to ensure those who are not civilly committed are referred to mental health services and those who are can transfer to state facilities in a timely manner.

PROBATION REFORMS

- Cap probation lengths to five years or similar outcome-based time limits to address racial disparities and give offenders the best shot at positive community and family involvement while improving public safety and saving taxpayer dollars.

EXTENSION OF POST-CONVICTION RELIEF

- Extend the current two-year post-conviction relief time limit for immigrants who face deportation proceedings or are otherwise unable to apply for immigration benefits due to improper, defective or outdated misdemeanor convictions.

FELON VOTING RIGHTS

- Clarify the reestablishment of voting rights for felons who have served their time and are not living, working and paying taxes in their home communities so they do not have to complete extensive probationary periods before they are able to vote.

GUN SAFETY

- Support mandated background checks for all firearm purchases to reduce firearm-related crime.
- Provide a legal means for families and others to initiate the temporary seizure of firearms from an individual who is exhibiting erratic and violent behavior.

UNIFORM COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF CONVICTION ACT

- Support legislation that gives those who have become permanently or temporarily ineligible for some licenses, employment or housing a means to apply for a restoration of their rights and notifies individuals when they are criminally charged, and again when they are sentenced and released, about the sanctions that apply to them.

FINES & FEES

- Increase flexibility to waive fines and fees charged in the criminal justice system. Remove the requirement to suspend drivers' licenses for failure to pay.

CASH BAIL REFORM

- Eliminate harm to community caused by the cash bail system by allowing the use of a risk assessment tool to release individuals back into the community if they are determined not to be a risk to society.

AUTOMATIC EXPUNGEMENTS

- Centralize and automate the process of sealing criminal records for low-level felonies and lesser crimes after the waiting periods in the expungement statute. Criminal records and the collateral consequences that follow long after people have fulfilled their obligations to the justice system serve as barriers to jobs, housing, education and more, preventing people from serving as productive members of our community.

PROSECUTOR-INITIATED RESENTENCING

- Enable prosecutors to initiate a motion to the court to reduce a person's sentence based upon their success in programming, abiding by conditions of supervised release, furthering their rehabilitation, and/or other factors that have subsequently reduced the person's risk for recidivism or indicate that a sentence reduction is in the interest of justice.

EXTENDED JUVENILE JURISDICTION (EJJ)

- Support legislation requiring the Department of Corrections and probation offices to collect and report statistics related to the number of individuals designated EJJ, the demographics of those individuals, and the outcomes of individuals designated EJJ.



Housing Stability

Ramsey County supports programs that provide access to safe, healthy, stable and accessible housing options for all residents.

AFFORDABLE AND STABLE HOUSING

- Increasing public funds and attention to the preparation of homeowners and the production and preservation of affordable ownership housing.
- Advancing policy and practice reforms that reduce barriers to affordable homeownership, such as reducing the cost of production.
- Increase funding for affordable housing and housing programs focused on specific populations in need of additional assistance, including those experiencing mental illness, or other disabilities, individuals with criminal records, large families, veterans and those who are homeless.
- Create a dedicated fund for the development of affordable housing that enrolls private investors into the production of affordable housing to benefit local businesses, creates jobs and contributes to the overall growth of the economy.
- Expand Housing Support Demonstration capacity to include all seven metro-area counties to increase access to Housing Support for traditional rental assistance and support services for people experiencing homelessness.

FEDERAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS FOR HOMESTEAD APPLICATIONS

- Allow use of FINs in lieu of Social Security numbers on homestead classification applications to expand access to Minnesota's Property Tax Homestead Credit Refund.

INTEREST RATES ON TAX-FORFEITED PROPERTY

- Allow flexible interest rates on contracts for deed on tax-forfeited properties to reduce barriers for low-income families interested in purchasing or repurchasing these properties and provide a low-barrier pathway to homeownership for those with more modest incomes.

EVICITION PROTECTIONS

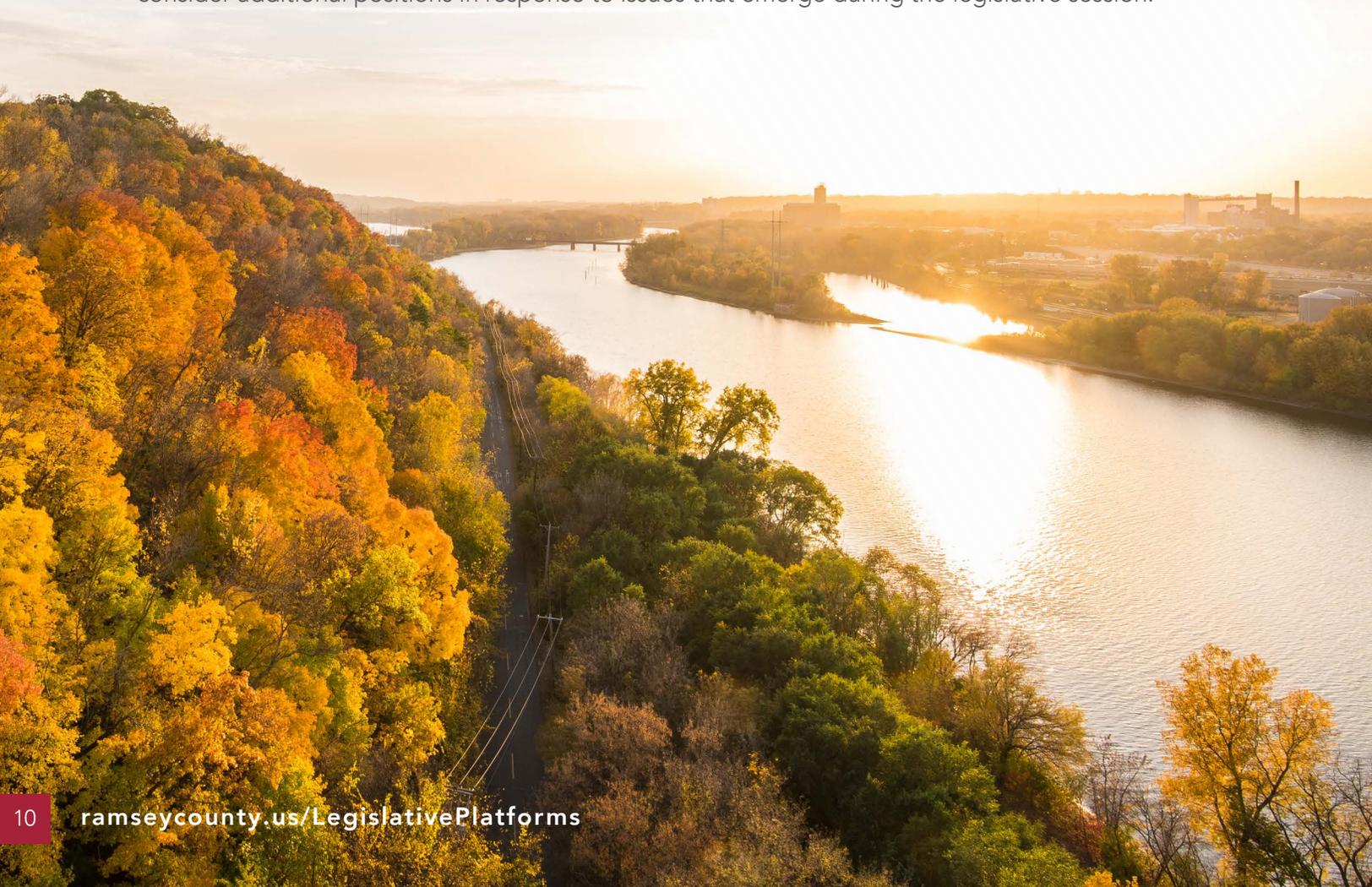
- Ramsey County supports creating a right to counsel for tenants in cases brought by landlords alleging breach of lease in public housing evictions, which tend to raise more complicated issues that are harder for tenants to address without a lawyer's help. Providing for legal representation will improve outcomes for tenants facing eviction and level the playing field for our most vulnerable residents as the landlord is always represented by an attorney paid for by Public Housing Authority funds.

RAMSEY COUNTY **SUPPORT OF OTHER POSITIONS**

In addition to the initiatives contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the local units of government within the county and organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

- Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and its associated professional organizations, including:
 - Local Public Health Association of MN (LPHA).
 - Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).
 - Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO).
 - Minnesota Community Corrections Act Counties (MCCAC).
 - Minnesota County IT Leadership Association (MCITLA).
- Minnesota County Engineer Association (MCEA).
- Ramsey/Washington Recycling and Energy Board.
- Partnership on Waste and Energy.
- Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MWAD).
- Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM).
- Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA).
- Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).
- Metropolitan Library Services Association (MLSA).

The county board may choose to take a different position on individual items within the platforms of these and other organizations whose platforms they generally support. The county board may also consider additional positions in response to issues that emerge during the legislative session.



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Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

Goals



WELL-BEING

Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



PROSPERITY

Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



OPPORTUNITY

Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments

through professional operations and financial management.

Information about how the county is pursuing its mission and goals is available in the county's strategic plan at ramseycounty.us/StrategicPlan

Information about performance measures related to the county's mission and goals is available in the county's Open Data Portal at opendata.ramseycounty.us



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ramseycounty.us