

Ramsey County Equitable Development Framework

Community & Economic Development



I. Background + Purpose

The intent of the Equitable Development 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.).

Ramsey County Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

Ramsey County Goals & Priorities

Ramsey County seeks to advance racial equity and eliminate ethnic-based disparities where all residents can experience fair outcomes including the highest level of health, wellbeing and opportunities for advancement and growth. Other key strategic goals include:

- i.** Cultivating economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with social vulnerability through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.
- ii.** Enhancing access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.
- iii.** Fostering strong communities and people by recognizing and building on racially and ethnically diverse communities' existing capacity for self-determination, and anticipating and preventing displacement of vulnerable residents, businesses, and community organizations.
- iv.** Increasing opportunities for low-income households of color to live in all neighborhoods, with access to home ownership and rental opportunities.
- v.** Fostering places that are healthy, vibrant, and resilient.

II. About the Framework

The Equitable Development Framework provides criteria to guide internal evaluation of property acquisition, disposal and development decisions, and to advance County goals related to transportation, housing, and community and economic development.

This framework uses the term “project” throughout, but the framework may also be used to evaluate plans or other related decisions.

The goal of equitable development is to meet the needs of underserved communities by reducing disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant.



Equitable Development Drivers

- 1 Advance economic opportunity.** Promote local economic development and entrepreneurial opportunities, enhance community-serving establishments, and increase quality living wage jobs for people in all neighborhoods.
- 2 Prevent displacement.** Develop policies and programs that allow anyone who wants to live in the community to do so, especially current residents, and discourage displacement of viable small businesses that serve community needs.
- 3 Preserve and expand affordable housing options.** Create healthy, safe, and affordable housing, including pathways to home ownership, for all family sizes and incomes in all neighborhoods.
- 4 Understand and respond to local context.** Preserve and strengthen neighborhoods, building upon their local assets and resources.
- 5 Promote broader mobility and connectivity.** Prioritize an effective and affordable public transportation network that supports transit-dependent communities and provides equitable access to core services and amenities, including employment, education, and health and social services.

Equitable Development Drivers continued

- 6 Practice meaningful community engagement. Require local community participation and leadership in decision-making to reflect a diversity of voices, including targeted strategies to engage racial populations that are most disproportionately harmed by disinvestment. Build cultural competence and responsiveness among all stakeholders, and structure planning processes to be clear, accessible, and engaging.
- 7 Develop healthy and safe communities. Create built environments that enhance community health through public amenities (schools, parks, open spaces, complete streets, health care, and other services), access to affordable healthy food, improved air quality, and safe and inviting environments.
- 8 Promote environmental justice. Eliminate disproportionate environmental burdens and ensure an equitable share of environmental benefits for existing communities. Secure resources to mitigate and reverse the effects of environmental hazards past and present.
- 9 Achieve full accessibility. Ensure that results from investments in the built environment is accessible and welcoming to people regardless of age, race or ethnicity, physical condition, or language.

These drivers are not designed to be deployed independently; their inter-relationship is fundamental to undoing the structural racism perpetuating current disparities. If implemented piecemeal or in isolation, they will result in transactional wins that do not produce lasting change. The Equitable Development Framework presents an integrated fabric of strategies to close racial inequities. Used together, these drivers have the potential to transform systems and shift from the current trajectory of growth that marginalizes many populations and compromises the diversity that makes communities strong.



III. Equitable Development Principles and Guiding Questions

Equitable Community Engagement & Alignment ensures that vulnerable populations within Ramsey County, especially low-wealth residents, Black, American Indian, Latino, and Asian, neighborhood groups, community organizations, people living with disabilities, immigrants, and small businesses are centered in the project. These guiding questions can inform internal evaluation decisions. A scale of High-Medium-Low can be used in evaluating the responses to each question.

- 1 How does the project address an issue already identified by the county or the affected community (i.e., racial inequities in homelessness or homeownership)?
- 2 How were affected community members involved in the development of the project?
- 3 How are engagement practices tailored to the affected community? For example, how are Black and American Indian (or racially and ethnically diverse) residents, immigrants, low-income residents, renters, youth/young adults, residents with disabilities, multilingual communities, and others represented in the engagement process?
- 4 How does the project reflect the priorities of Ramsey County's Economic Inclusion Plan?
- 5 Do contractors display a commitment to diverse hiring, etc.?
- 6 What is the quality of communication with the affected community? How is communication shared through multiple platforms (i.e., include mail, social media and e-mail, community newsletters, community-based organizations, and community meetings or events)?
- 7 What are the advantages or disadvantages of creating a community governance group for this project?

Equitable Land Use and Design ensures that the vision and implementation of a plan or a project prioritizes promoting people's health, well-being and prosperity; prevents displacement of the current residents; and benefits all residents.

- 1 How does the project assess and document beneficial and harmful impacts on environmental health and economic prosperity in partnership with the community?
- 2 How does the project connect to the existing neighborhood? Do publicly accessible amenities including green space, biking/walking trails, community gardens, shade and trees connect to the existing neighborhood?
- 3 How does the project mitigate any existing water, air and soil contamination on site?
- 4 What resilient features are incorporated, including energy reduction features, stormwater management techniques, biking/pedestrian amenities, etc.?
- 5 If the project is located along major transit corridors, how does it increase density and/or reduce minimum parking requirements?
- 6 If the project results in significant changes in land use, how does it include provisions for community ownership of land?
- 7 How does currently zoned industrial and commercial lands promote an increase in living wage and/or entrepreneurial opportunities for all residents?

Equitable Housing ensures that all current and future households across the county have access to affordable housing choices.

- 1 How does the project improve housing stability for communities with a record of historic wealth extraction?
- 2 What is the provision of affordable housing? Does the project ensure that at least 20% of units are available at 30-50% of AMI?
- 3 Are housing choice vouchers accepted in rental buildings?
- 4 How are affordable home ownership opportunities provided, when applicable?
- 5 How is new housing developed with energy efficiency features to help cut down on utility bills for its lowest income residents?

Equitable Transportation assures that development integrates transit and bike/pedestrian friendly land use practices to enhance healthy living within low-income communities and communities of color.

- 1 How does infrastructure provide access to pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems?
- 2 How does the project include traffic calming, where applicable, and pedestrian safety features?
- 3 How do wayfinding installations, when applicable, use best practices for inclusivity and accessibility?
- 4 How does the project maintain and improve public transportation services?
- 5 Is the proposed development within 1/2 mile of Metro Transit's high-frequency transit system? If so, how does it respond (i.e. avoiding over provision of parking, increasing density)?
- 6 How does parking accommodate bicycle use and storage, and address access or passage to pedestrians and people with disabilities? How does the project encourage people to walk, bike, and/or use public transit?



Equitable Economic Development assures that policies and programs associated with a plan or development prioritize equitable, sustainable wealth creation and high-quality job opportunities that prevent displacement of residents and small businesses from low-income communities and communities of color.

- 1 How do lease agreements prioritize business opportunities results in local investment?
- 2 How does the project use existing workforce programs to connect residents to construction jobs and long-term employment within the project?
- 3 How do a substantial number of jobs created pay living wage and hire local residents (especially those with barriers to employment)?
- 4 How is employee growth, training and mentorship promoted?
- 5 How does the project invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty?
- 6 How do residential buildings incorporate ADA and/or transit accessible features?

Other Factors to Consider (Feasibility, Fiscal Impact, etc.)

- 1 Costs & Risks
 - » Price (Acquisition or Sales)
 - » Appraised Value
 - » Other Potential Costs (Relocation, Remediation, Demolition)
 - » Total Costs (Transaction Cost, Consultants, Due Diligence)
- 2 Project alignment with local Comprehensive Plan and current Zoning
- 3 Project benefits
 - » Total Costs (Transaction Cost, Consultants, Due Diligence)
 - » Resale Potential of Land for Development
 - » Change in Market Value and Tax Base
 - » Grant Eligibility
- 4 Gap Analysis (Subsidy Requirement, etc.)
- 5 Project Timeline

Equitable Development Review Elements

- 1 Project/Plan Name
- 2 Location of Project/Plan
- 3 Public Investment
- 4 Developer Contact Info
- 5 Developer Financial Subsidy Request (if applicable)
- 6 Public Partner(s) Contact Info
- 7 Other Stakeholders
- 8 Description of the Project/Plan
- 9 Community Profile (Key Comments)

