



**BOLTON  
& MENK**

Real People. Real Solutions.

# Ravenna Township Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

Approved by the Metropolitan Council August 28, 2019



## Introduction

Ravenna Township participated in a 16-community Rural Collaborative in Dakota County to prepare a comprehensive plan fulfilling the requirements of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act: Minnesota Statutes, Section 473.859. The plan is intended to guide future land use development, redevelopment, and other planning and policy concerns for communities in the Rural Collaborative.

This executive summary is a brief of local information from the Dakota County Rural Collaborative Plan unique to Ravenna Township. The Dakota County Rural Collaborative Plan was prepared in a joint effort by the communities between 2017 and 2018 and replaces the existing Rural Collaborative Comprehensive Plan, dated 2009.

This executive summary contains demographic trend data, growth forecasts, and a Future Land Use map with acreage table unique to Ravenna Township. Also included is the procedure to amend the Comprehensive Plan.

This executive summary is a reference to local information and supplements the Dakota County Rural Collaborative Plan. Please refer to the Dakota County Rural Collaborative Plan for details about additional background data, regional planning data and relationships, natural features, land use descriptions, regional park planning, natural resource management, and transportation planning.

## Goals and Policies

Goals and policies are official community positions that provide the basis for strategies to manage growth and change. Goals are general statements that reflect community values regarding the built and natural environments. Policies are more specific, official positions of communities that guide future planning decisions and implementation strategies. The goals for future growth management are outlined below. Descriptions of policies can be found as a subsection to each goal in the comprehensive plan.

### 1. Agricultural Goals

- Minimize conflicts between land uses.
- Protect the rural atmosphere of the area.
- Minimize the impact on long-term agricultural areas by maintaining very low-density residential development.
- Preserve agriculture as a primary land use and economic opportunity in the area.
- Minimize the conversion or disruption of agricultural land uses by limiting non-farm uses in long-term agricultural areas.

### 2. Residential Goals

- Protect residential uses from potential impacts of incompatible uses.
- Maintain the quality and character of existing residences.
- Promote higher density housing, life-cycle housing, and affordable housing opportunities in the communities with public utilities.

- Support affordable housing opportunities for all age groups.
  - Limit non-farm residences in areas designated long-term agriculture.
  - Educate non-farm residents on the potential impacts from normal farm practices and the support for long-term agriculture as a primary land use in the area.
  - Maintain the rural atmosphere.
3. Commerce/Industry Goals
- Promote the expansion of non-farm business development in area cities and designated rural centers.
  - Support agri-business expansion in the community and retain existing service industries.
  - Promote the economic viability and vitality of long-term agricultural operations.
  - Limit non-farm business development to areas not designated for long-term agriculture and areas where the provisions for higher levels of service may be available.
4. Public Facilities and Services Goals
- Cooperate and coordinate with area communities and governments on issues that have the potential for affecting the long-term goals of the community.
  - Support the preservation of cultural heritage sites.
  - Maintain responsible fiscal management based upon limited tax values and government aids.
  - Protect the health, safety, and welfare of area residents and businesses.
  - Maintain a level of public services appropriate for the rural/agricultural nature of the area, the needs and desires of the community, and the priorities of the community.
  - Ensure that residents have the opportunity to offer input and have access to local government activities.
5. Environmental Resources Goals
- Ensure that all land use activities take place in harmony with natural systems.
  - Protect the open space quality
  - Reduce instances of harmful erosion, sedimentation, and pollutants from affecting water resources.
  - Protect surface waters and wetland areas to promote water quality, natural habitat areas, groundwater recharge, and recreational opportunities.
  - Protect the natural habitat qualities and biodiversity of the area.
  - Protect and preserve natural systems for the collection and dispersion of stormwater and runoff.
  - Protect existing woodlands throughout the area.
  - Protect the quality and quantity of the groundwater supply.
  - Protect high quality aggregate resources for future use.
  - Promote solar access and sustainable energy alternatives for residents and businesses.
6. Recreation and Open Space Goals
- Preserve open spaces that enhance rural aesthetic values, protect natural habitat, allow recreational uses, and promote area-wide greenway corridor potential.
  - Support active youth and senior recreational opportunities and facilities in area cities and schools.

- Support recreational opportunities that are not disruptive to long-term agriculture and are compatible with the rural character of the area.
- Promote regional trails that provide connectivity between communities, regional parks, water resources, and significant natural features.

#### 7. Water Resources Goals

- Maintain and enhance natural systems and water resources for future generations to enjoy.
- Protect the habitat and biodiversity of the area.
- Protect water resources from improper land use resulting in unnecessary impacts.
- Protect surface waters and wetland areas to promote water quality, recreation opportunities, aesthetic qualities, natural habitat areas, and ground water recharge.
- Work with local watershed organizations to improve water resources.

## Demographic Trends in Ravenna Township

The table below shows historical population, household, and employment counts in Ravenna Township. Since 2000, most communities in the Rural Collaborative area saw population declines between 0% and 10%. Ravenna Township saw a 1% decrease in population between 2000 and 2015. Only 4 of the 16 collaborative communities saw growth in this 15-year time frame. Despite this slight decrease in population, the number of housing units increased in Ravenna. This is due in part to the decreasing average number of people per household, a trend seen throughout most of Dakota County and the 7 County Metropolitan Area.

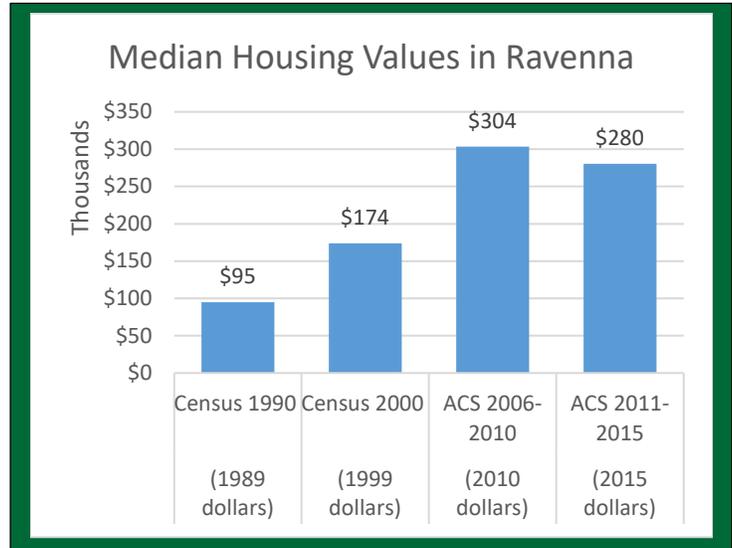
Historical Population, Household, and Employment Trends for Ravenna Township						
Category	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
Population	550	1,683	1,926	2,355	2,336	2,331
Household	120	433	546	734	780	799
Employment	50	20	20	115	38	36

Source: US Census, Metropolitan Council, MN DEED

Population, housing, and employment trends in Ravenna Township typically align with Collaborative averages and medians. However, there are a few exceptions.

Ravenna Township has higher housing values than the Collaborative median. In 2015, the median home value in Ravenna Township was \$280,000, compared to \$248,000 for the Collaborative.

On average, residents in Ravenna Township have about a 3 minute longer commute to and from work than other Collaborative residents.



## Growth Forecasts, 2020 -2040

Population in the collaborative communities is expected to increase by roughly 3,000 persons between 2010 and 2040 and the annual rate of population growth in the collaborative area is projected to be about 0.6%. The Metropolitan Council provides population household, and employment projections for 2020, 2030, and 2040 for each community in the Metropolitan Area (see table below).

Population, Household, and Employment Forecasts for Ravenna Township				
Category	2010	2020	2030	2040
<b>Population</b>	2,336	2,360	2,430	2,500
<b>Household</b>	780	840	920	1,000
<b>Employment</b>	38	50	60	60

*Source: US Census; Metropolitan Council; DEED*

The population of Ravenna Township is projected to grow 7% between 2010 and 2040. Meanwhile, the quantity of households is projected to increase by 28% and employment by 58%.

## Land Use Planning

Ravenna Township is approximately 22 square miles, encompassing over 14,000 square acres. The tables to the right show current land uses and anticipated future land uses for 2030.

The future land use table and the following land use map are a general guide for future development and may be refined and amended over time as the community evolves. This section creates a framework upon which zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations can provide a path to future growth.

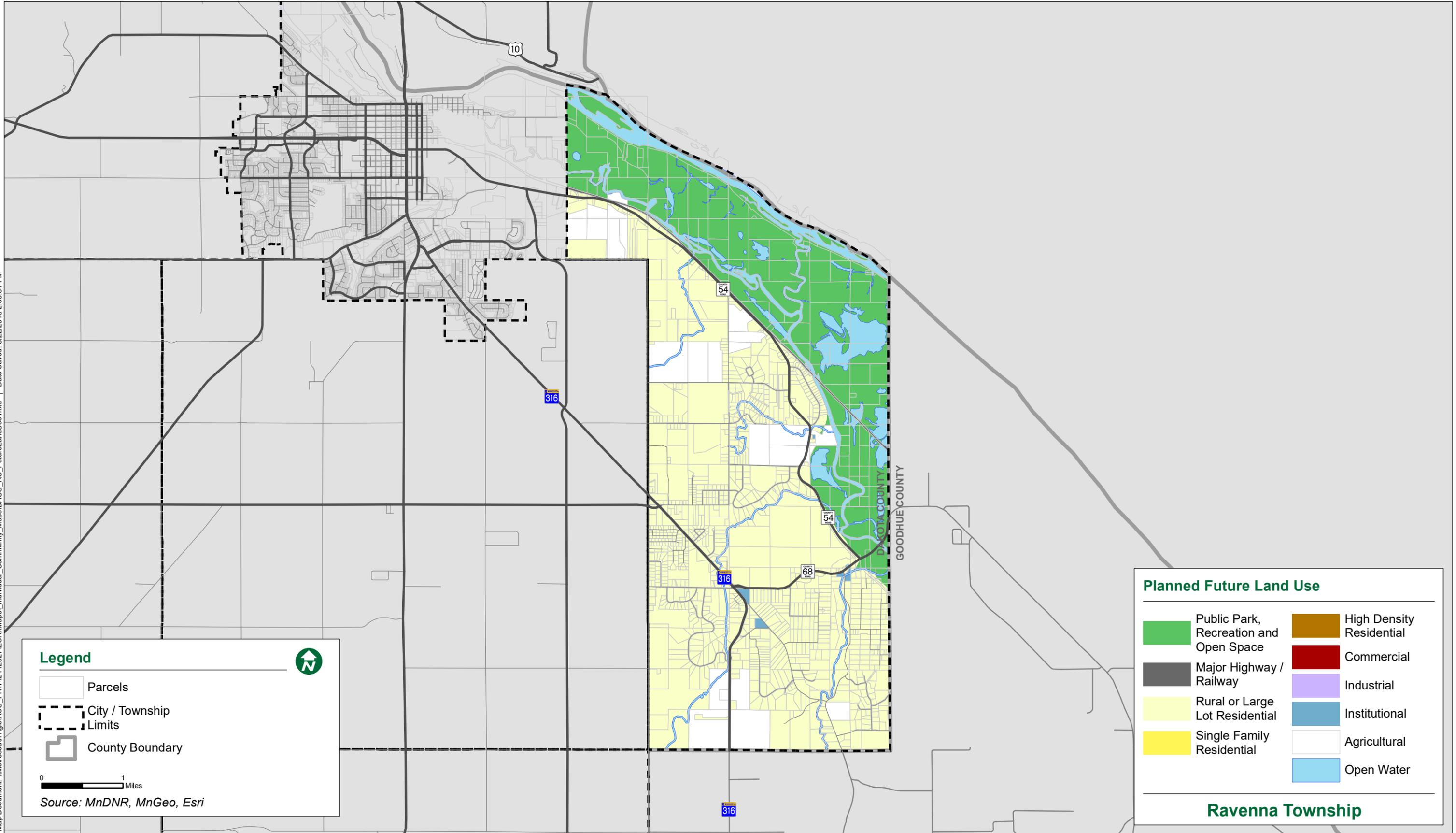
The majority of Ravenna Township is zoned as agricultural and undeveloped and a large portion of the township is located in the Mississippi River bottoms and included in Wildlife Management Areas. Much of Ravenna is also dedicated to park and recreational and residential uses.

Ravenna is designated as Diversified Rural, which includes a mix of large-lot residential and agricultural uses. The future land use plan dedicates a large portion of currently agricultural and undeveloped land to rural and large-lot residential uses to increase residential capacity.

Existing Land Use Characteristics		
Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Agricultural and Undeveloped	8,837	63%
Institutional	4	0.03%
Commercial	10	0.07%
Industrial	84	.6%
Park and Recreational	2,933	20.9%
Major Roadways	66	0.47%
Residential	1,234	8.79%
Open Water	863	6.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,031</b>	<b>100%</b>

Future Land Use Characteristics (2030)		
Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total
Agriculture	1,046.70	7.46%
Institutional	33.4	0.24%
Open Space or Restrictive Use	3,518.60	25.08%
Railway (including LRT)	66.2	0.47%
Rights-of-Way (i.e., Roads)	69.3	0.49%
Rural and Large-Lot Residential	8,114.50	57.83%
Open Water	1,182.30	8.43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,031</b>	<b>100%</b>

Map Document: \\Metrosouth1\gis\RSC\_PRT\42112927\ESRI\Maps\_Individual\_Community\_Maps\DACO\_RC\_FutureLandUse.mxd | Date Saved: 5/22/2018 2:03:34 PM



**Legend**

- Parcels
- City / Township Limits
- County Boundary



0 1 Miles

Source: MnDNR, MnGeo, Esri

**Planned Future Land Use**

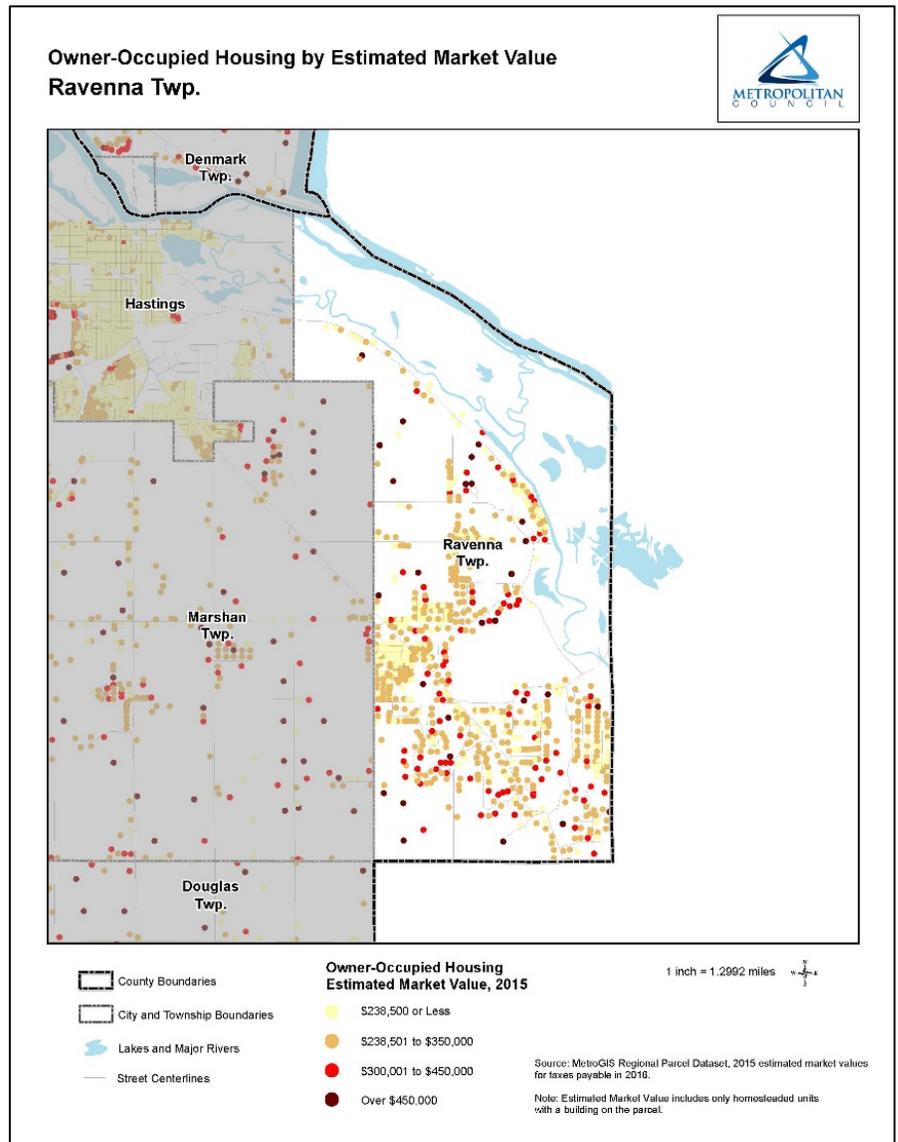
- Public Park, Recreation and Open Space
- High Density Residential
- Major Highway / Railway
- Commercial
- Rural or Large Lot Residential
- Industrial
- Single Family Residential
- Institutional
- Agricultural
- Open Water

**Ravenna Township**

## Housing

The amount of housing units in Ravenna are forecasted to increase by about 220 units from 2010 to 2040 which is an increase of 28%. In 2015, all of Ravenna's housing were single-family detached homes with 96% being owner occupied. The median housing value was \$280,000 in 2015 and from 2010 to 2015, median gross rent increased by 43% from \$785 to \$1,223. In Ravenna, 21% of all households are cost burdened spending more than 30% of income on housing. Due to the recent increase in median gross rent, 56% of renters spend more than 30% of income on housing.

There are available housing tools to assist with multi-generational community living, the maintenance of existing housing units, and housing affordability. Most available housing tools must be implemented by the Dakota County Community Development Agency as townships do not have the statutory authority to administer these tools themselves.



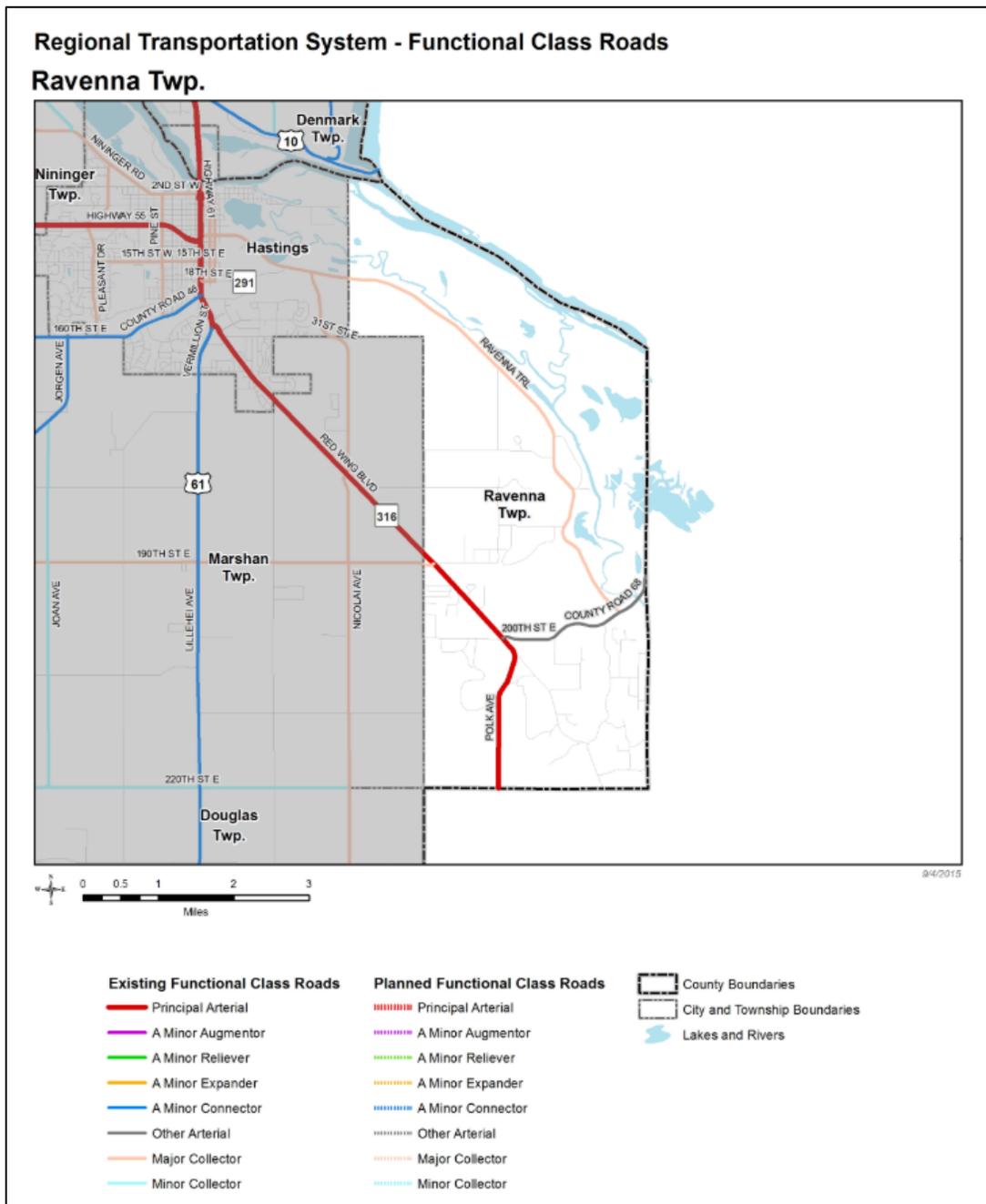
## The Natural Environment

Environmentally sensitive areas and open spaces help define the community's character and enhance the quality of life. Lakes, tributaries, bluffs, wooded areas, wetlands, and ponds are valuable for their role in stormwater management, ground water recharge, nutrient assimilation, wildlife habitat, recreation, and aesthetic appeal.

As Ravenna Township grows and changes, it will be important to compatibly integrate land uses and new development with the natural environment. Ongoing efforts to preserve the quality of natural resources include lake and river water quality protection and preserving agricultural lands.

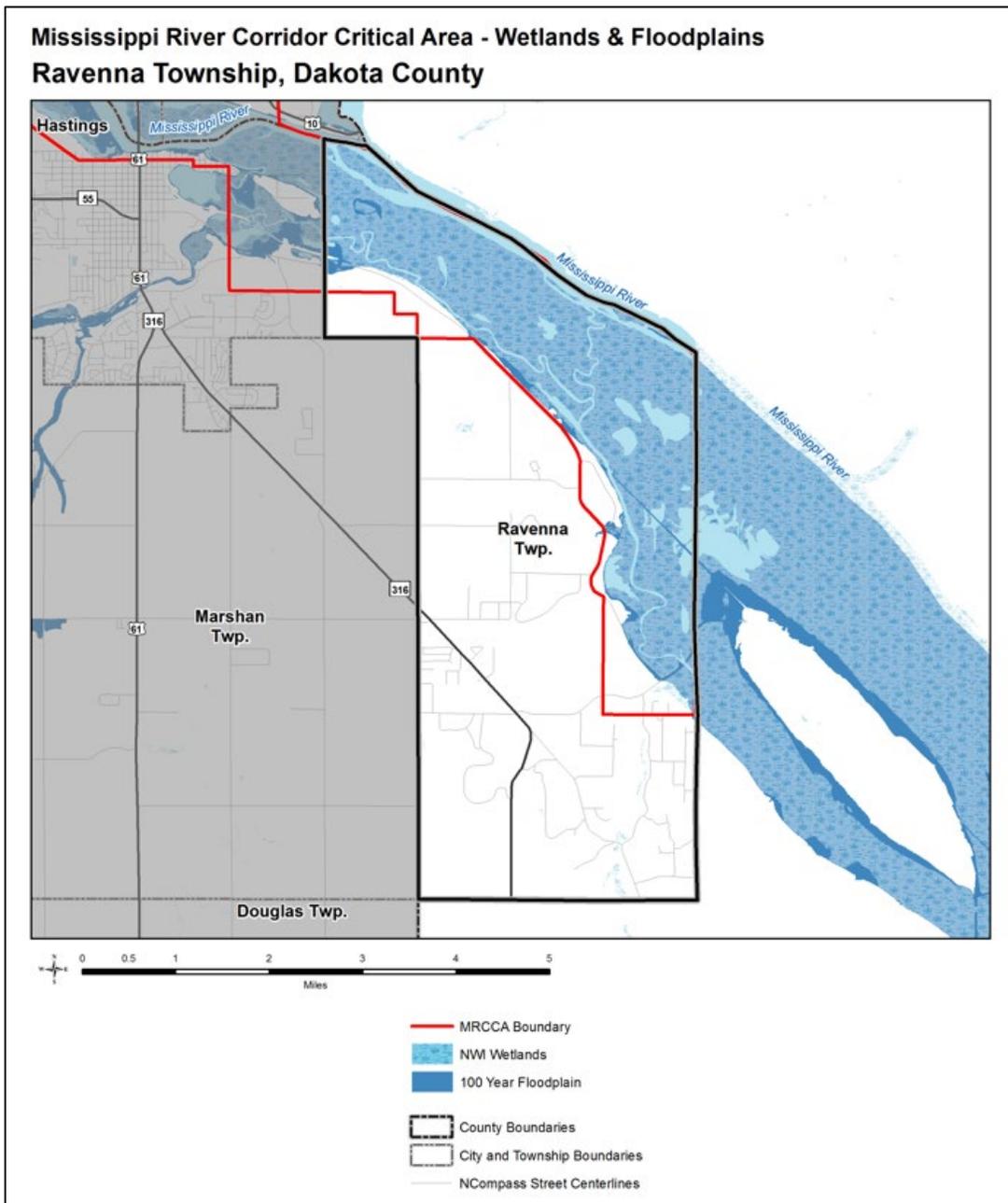
## Transportation

The goal of the Transportation chapter is to provide guidance to community members and elected officials regarding the implementation of transportation facilities and programs throughout the 2040 planning timeframe. In general, the transportation network in Ravenna and southern Dakota County is sufficient to meet community needs at current and forecasted capacities. If growth occurs faster than expected, transportation system improvements may become necessary.



## Water Resources

The Local Water Management Plan (LWMP) meets Minnesota Statute requirements and are consistent with the goals and policies of the management organizations that have jurisdiction in the township. Ravenna has a primary responsibility for enforcement of the County Shoreland and Floodplain Management Regulations to protect rivers, streams, and lakes. Ravenna has adopted the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Plan (Appendix), and the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. These plans and managing organizations have the primary purpose of protecting and preserving natural drainage systems, surface water quality, and groundwater quality. They also assure that local water management plans have been properly and consistently implemented.



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## Implementation

Ravenna Township will be evaluating the existing zoning and subdivision ordinances for consistency with the Rural Collaborative Plan. Once the Collaborative Plan is approved by all communities and the Metropolitan Council, the Township will update zoning ordinances to remove any inconsistencies. Subdivision and platting of land within townships are required to conform to local zoning and subdivision ordinances. Local zoning ordinances have performance standards that address development requirements as they relate to densities, lot size, and other dimensional standards. Ravenna Township is responsible for the adoption and enforcement of local zoning and subdivision ordinances. Provisions of the ordinances will be maintained throughout the term of the Comprehensive Plan, unless formally amended. Amendments to the local zoning ordinances will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

When considering amendments to this plan, local units will use the following procedure:

1. Landowners, the Planning Commission, the Town Board/City Council or other interested parties may initiate amendments.
2. The Planning Commission will conduct a thorough analysis of the proposed amendment.
3. The Planning Commission will prepare a report analyzing the proposed changes, including their findings and recommendations regarding the proposed plan amendment.
4. The Planning Commission will hold a formal public hearing on the proposed amendment.
5. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Town Board/City Council.
6. The Town Board/City Council will receive the recommendation from the Planning Commission and make a final decision on whether to adopt the amendment.
7. All amendments to the plan will be submitted to adjacent and affected jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Council for review prior to implementation, as required by State law.

## Appendix: Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Plan (MRCCA)

## I. Introduction

Designated by Governor's Executive Order in the 1970s, the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is a land corridor along the Mississippi River impacting Ravenna and Nininger Township and governed by special land development and planning regulations. These regulations, which are implemented through local MRCCA plans and ordinances, protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and transportation resources of the Mississippi River. The MRCCA comprises 72 miles of river and 54,000 acres of surrounding land in 30 local jurisdictions. Minnesota Rules, chapter 6106, lay out the land planning and regulatory framework. These rules became effective on January 4, 2017, and replace Executive Order 79-19, which previously governed land use in the MRCCA. The rules require that local governments update their MRCCA plans and ordinances for consistency with the rules as part of the community's Comprehensive Plan.

The Critical Areas Act (Minn. Stat., §116G) provides a general regulatory framework for protecting specific areas of the state that possess important historic, cultural, or aesthetic values or natural systems through a defined local-regional planning and regulation process. The MRCCA was the first and remains the only critical area in the state. The MRCCA protects these resources through local governments' land use plans and zoning ordinances that regulate structure placement, height, vegetation clearing, land alteration, and subdivision of land. Following is a timeline of key milestones in the MRCCA.

- 1973** Minnesota passes Critical Areas Act of 1973 (MN Statutes, Chapter 116G) Environmental Quality Board adopts rules to implement Act (MN Rules, parts 4410.8100 – 4410.9910)
- 1976** Mississippi River and adjacent corridor designated a state critical area by Governor Wendell Anderson (Executive Order No. 130)
- 1979** Designation continued by Governor Albert Quie (Executive Order 79-19) Metropolitan Council acts to make designation permanent (Resolution 79-48)
- 1988** Mississippi National River and Recreational Area (MNRRA) established by Congress as unit of National Parks Service (MNRRA shares same boundary as Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area)
- 1991** MNRRA designated a state critical area per Critical Areas Act (MN Statutes, section 116G.15)
- 1995** Responsibility shifts from Environmental Quality Board to DNR by Governor Arne Carlson (Reorganization Order 170)
- 2007** Legislature directs DNR to prepare report on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (Completed January 2008)
- 2009** Legislature amends MN Statutes, section 116G.15 and directs DNR to conduct rulemaking for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MN Laws 2009, Chapter 172, Article 2, Section 5.e.)
- 2011** DNR develops draft rule after participatory stakeholder process, but rulemaking authority lapses
- 2013** Legislature directs DNR to resume rulemaking process in consultation with local governments
- 2017** Rules become effective January 4.

Ravenna and Nininger Township have been successful in preserving and making restoration progress towards the Critical Areas within the 2030 MRCCA plan. Critical Area policies, as developed as part of

the previous planning efforts, are being updated as part of this process and in compliance with rules and policies. Once the MRCCA plan has been updated, Ravenna and Nininger will also update their MRCCA zoning ordinance.

The MRCCA contains many significant natural and cultural resources, including: scenic views, water, navigational capabilities, geology and soils, vegetation, minerals, flora and fauna, cultural and historic resources and land and water-based recreational resources. The MRCCA is home to a full range of residential neighborhoods and parks, as well as river-related commerce, industry, and transportation. Though the river corridor has been extensively developed, many intact and remnant natural areas remain, including bluffs, islands, floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. Six districts are defined in the MRCCA rules. The districts are based on the natural and built character of different areas of the river corridor. Structure setbacks from the OHWL and bluffs, building height limits, and the amount of open space required for subdivisions/redevelopment vary by district.

## **II. Districts**

The six districts of the MRCCA are as follows:

- Rural and Open Space District (CA-ROS)
- River Neighborhood District (CA-RN)
- River Towns and Crossings District (CA-RTC)
- Separated from River District (CA-SR)
- Urban Mixed District (CA-UM)
- Urban Core District (CA-UC)

Ravenna Township includes the River Neighborhood District (CA-RN), Separated from River District (CA-SR), and Rural and Open Space District (CA-ROS). The River Neighborhood District, Separated from River District, and Rural and Open Space District are defined as follows:

### **Rural and Open Space District (CA-ROS).**

The rural and open space district (CA-ROS) is characterized by rural and low-density development patterns and land uses, and includes land that is riparian or visible from the river, as well as large, undeveloped tracts of high ecological and scenic value, floodplain, and undeveloped islands. Many primary conservation areas exist in Ravenna and Nininger Townships

The CA-ROS district must be managed to sustain and restore the rural and natural character of the corridor and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas.

### **River Neighborhood District (CA-RN).**

The river neighborhood district (CA-RN) is characterized by primarily residential neighborhoods that are riparian or readily visible from the river or that abut riparian parkland. The district includes parks and open space, limited commercial development, marinas, and related land uses.

The CA-RN district must be managed to maintain the character of the river corridor within the context of existing residential and related neighborhood development, and to protect and enhance habitat, parks and open space, public river corridor views, and scenic, natural, and historic areas. Minimizing erosion and the flow of untreated storm water into the river and enhancing habitat and shoreline vegetation are priorities in the district.

### **Separated from River District (CA-SR).**

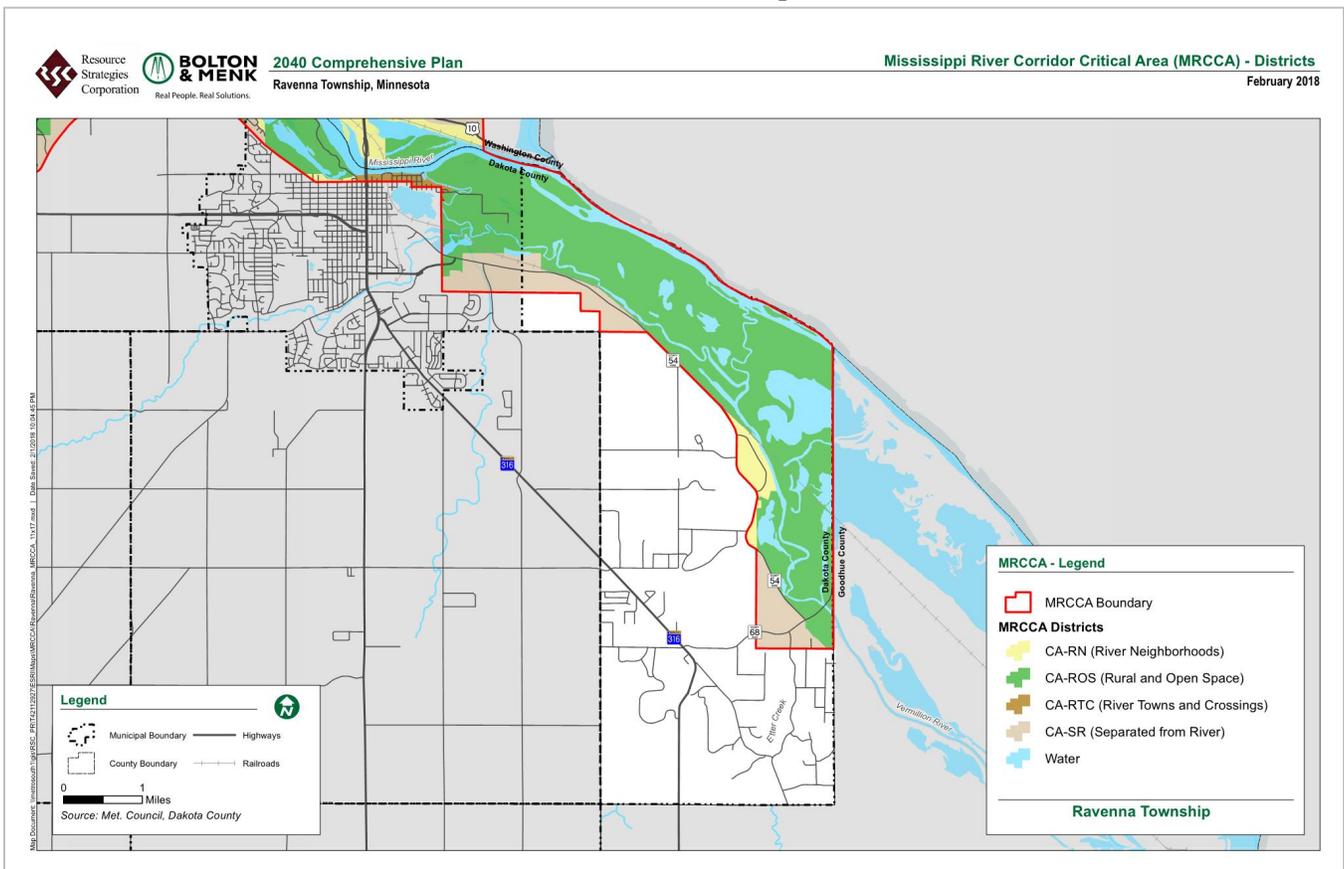
The separated from river district (CA-SR) is characterized by its physical and visual distance

from the Mississippi River. The district includes land separated from the river by distance, topography, development, or a transportation corridor. The land in this district is not readily visible from the Mississippi River. The CA-SR district provides flexibility in managing development without negatively affecting the key resources and features of the river corridor. Minimizing negative impacts to primary conservation areas and minimizing erosion and flow of untreated storm water into the Mississippi River are priorities in the district.

Future land uses in the Critical Areas fit the purpose and goals of the MRCCA districts, and no conflicts have been identified.

The following figure shows the areas in the Mississippi River Critical Areas and the respective districts.

### Ravenna Township

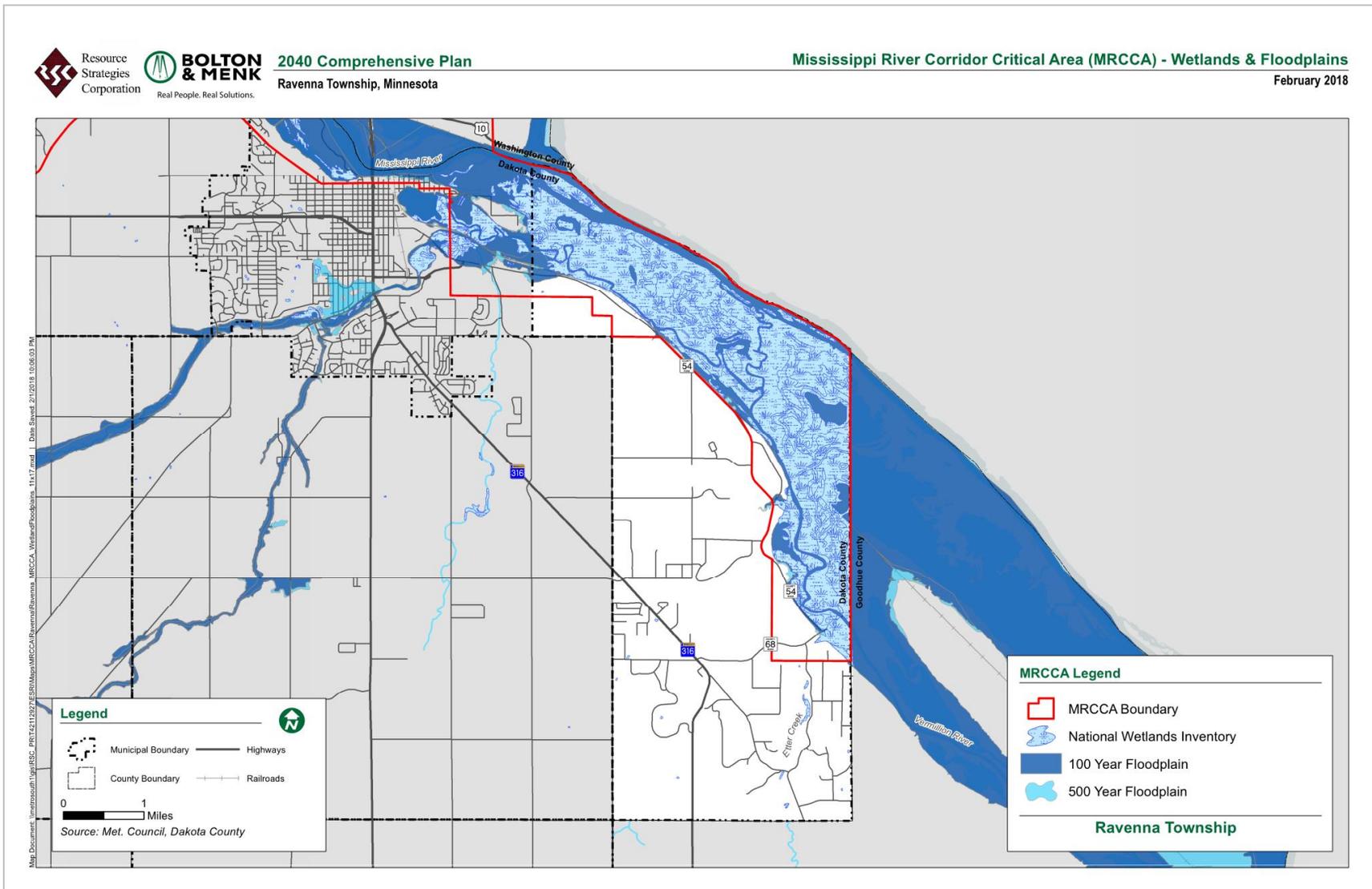


**Ravenna Township.** Much of the area in the immediate area surrounding the Mississippi River is designated Wildlife Management Area and owned by the DNR. Because of this, the area is free from development pressure and will be preserved for continued open, scenic and natural characteristics and ecological function. Other areas are developed with residential land uses managed to protect the character of the MRCCA.

### **III. Primary Conservation Areas**

Primary Conservation Areas (PCAs) are defined in the MRCCA rules (6106.0050, Subp. 53) as key resources and features, including shore impact zones (SIZ), bluff impact zones (BIZ), floodplains, wetlands, gorges, areas of confluence with tributaries, natural drainage routes, unstable soils and bedrock, native plant communities, cultural and historic properties, significant existing vegetative stands, tree canopies and “other resources” identified in local government MRCCA plans and shown in the following figures.

### Ravenna Township MRCCA Wetlands and Floodplains



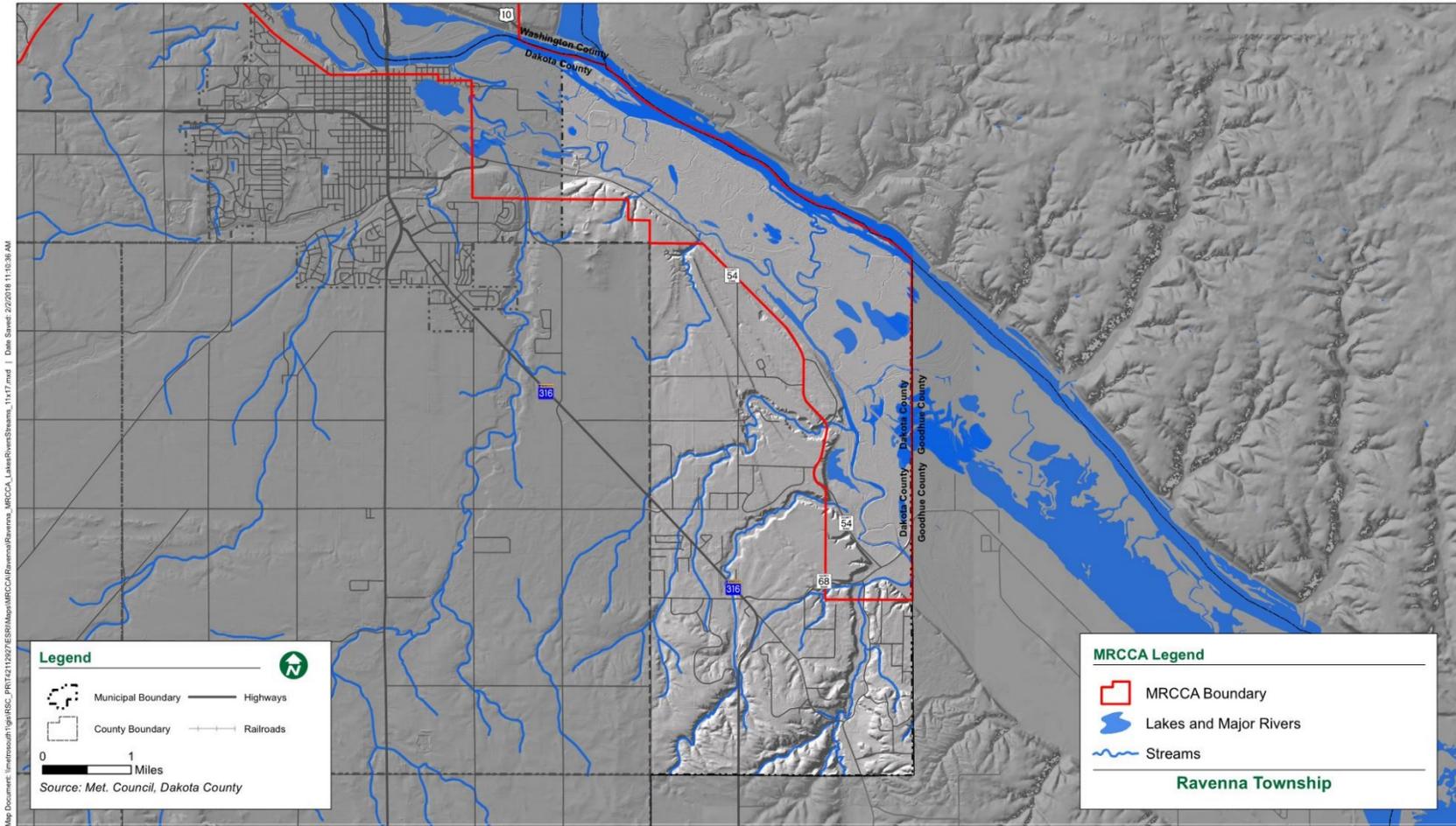
### Ravenna Township MRCCA Major Drainage Routes



2040 Comprehensive Plan  
Ravenna Township, Minnesota

Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) - Major Natural Drainage Routes

February 2018

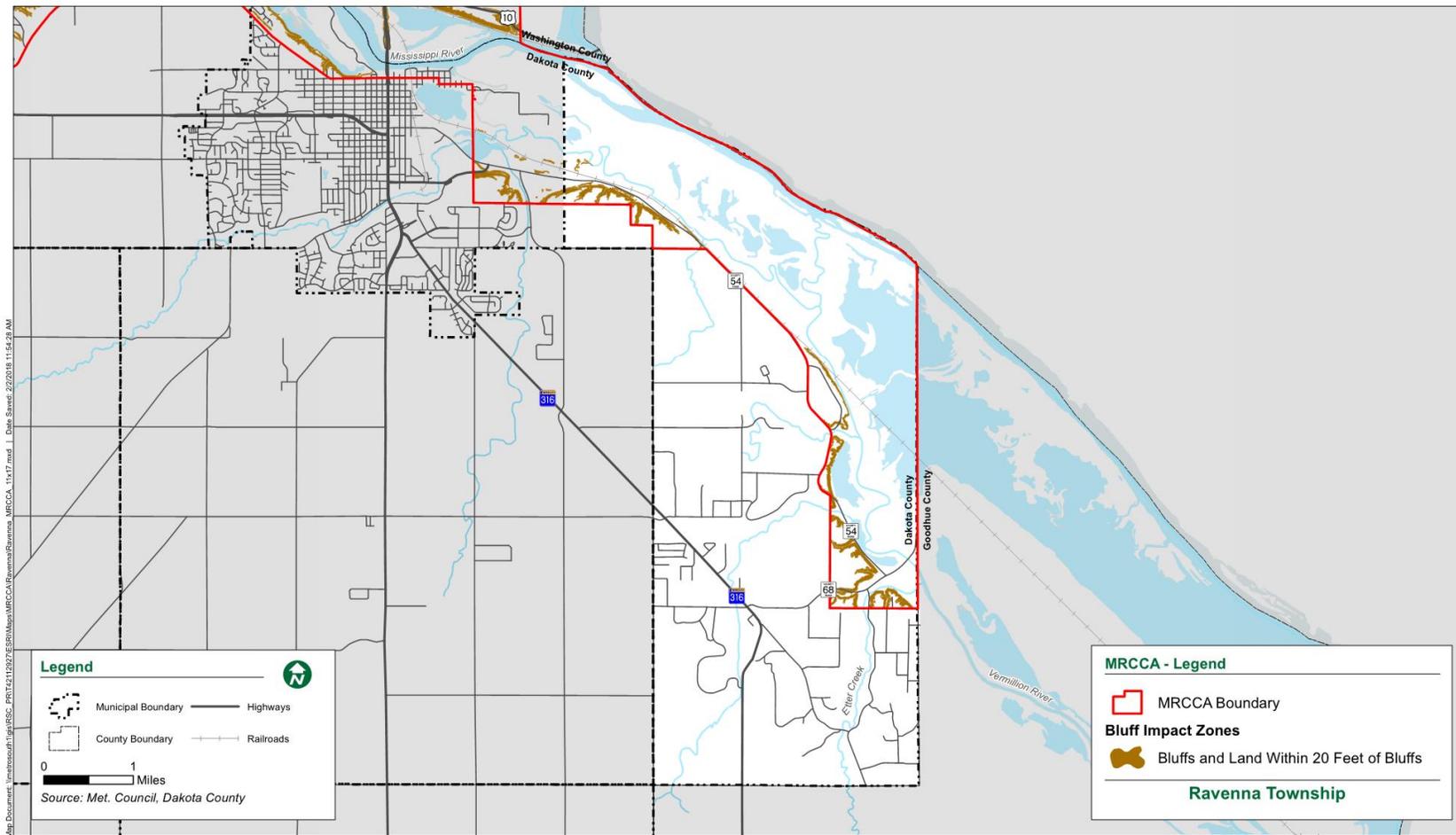


### Ravenna Township MRCCA Bluff Impact Zones

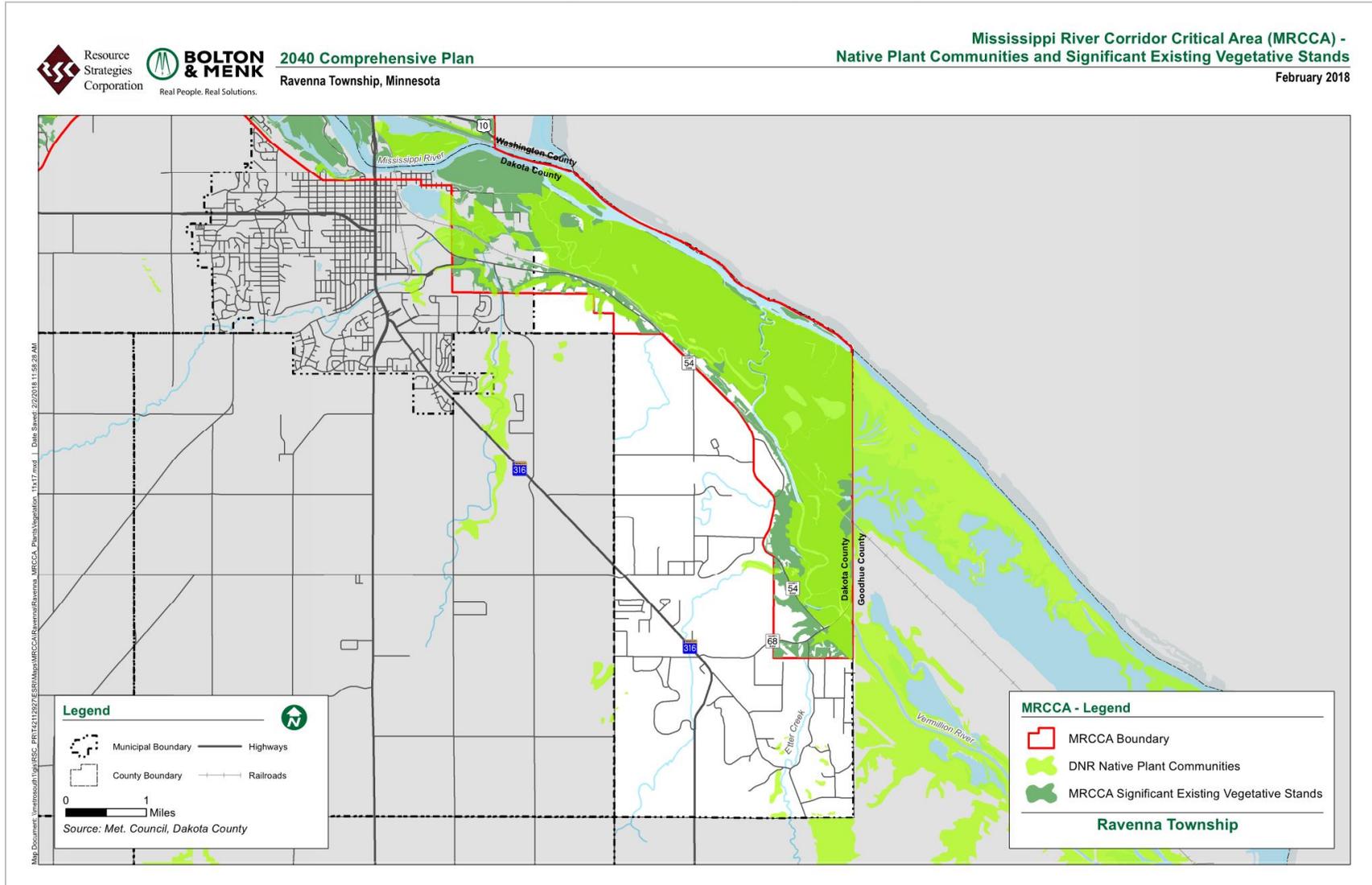


**2040 Comprehensive Plan**  
Ravenna Township, Minnesota

**Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) - Bluff Impact Zones**  
February 2018



### Ravenna Township Native Plants and Significant Vegetation



Ravenna and Nininger Township protect and minimize impacts to Primary Conservation Areas from public and private development and land use activities such as landscape maintenance, river use, walking/hiking, etc. This is achieved by implementing design standards such as conservation design, transfer of development density, or other zoning and site design techniques that achieve better protections or restoration of Primary Conservation Areas. Permanent protection measures such as public acquisition, conservation easement, or deed restrictions have also been utilized to protect and ensure long-term protection.

The features of the Primary Conservation Areas are described below:

**Shore impact zones (SIZs).** SIZs apply to the Mississippi and all of its backwaters, as well as to its four key tributaries, including the Crow, Rum, Minnesota, and Vermillion rivers. The shore impact zone is half of the required structure setback from the river and fifty feet for agricultural land uses. Restricting impacts to the SIZ's is important to preserve the valued area in the immediate vicinity of the Mississippi river and its backwaters.

**Wetlands, Floodplains, and Areas of Confluence with key Tributaries.** The area of confluence with key tributaries is the general floodplain area at the confluences of the Mississippi with the Crow, Rum, Minnesota, and Vermillion rivers. The confluence is outside both Ravenna and Nininger Township. A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally, such that it takes on the characteristics of a distinct ecosystem. The primary factor that distinguishes wetlands from other land forms or water bodies is the characteristic vegetation of aquatic plants, adapted to the unique hydric soil. A floodplain is an area of land adjacent to a stream or river which experiences flooding during periods of high discharge.

**Natural Drainage Routes.** Natural Drainage routes identify major river and stream centerlines and identify natural drainage routes.

**Bluff Impact Zones (BIZs)** includes a bluff (slopes over 18%) and land located within 20 feet from the top of a bluff. The figure identifies the bluff impact zone including the buffer area.

**Native Plant Communities and Significant Existing Vegetative Stands.** Native plant communities are mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) and identifies sites that are 5 acres or greater and meet the criteria established by the MBS to qualify as a native plant community.

The plant communities identified are significant because they are largely intact, connected and contain the original native plant community. Much of this vegetation includes an overstory or tree canopy that contributes to the scenic value of the MRCCA and provides significant ecological value, an asset to water quality and offers scenic value. Ecologically, this vegetation provides species diversity, habitat for endangered and threatened plants, and a continuous corridor where plants and animals can naturally spread and disperse. These vegetation areas serve as living remnants of the original native communities that existed in the corridor.

**Cultural and Historic Properties.** There are no National Register of Historic Places sites or landmarks within the MRCCA areas of Ravenna or Nininger Township. Nothing has been determined as eligible for national historic status nor are there any sites identified as having local cultural or historical significance.

**Unstable Soils and Bedrock.** There are no known areas of bedrock or unstable soils within the MRCCA areas of Ravenna or Nininger Township.

#### **IV. Public River Corridor Views**

The Mississippi River Corridor contains some of the most iconic and cherished scenic vistas in Minnesota and is one of the reasons the corridor was designated a critical area. Public River Corridor Views (PRCVs) is a term defined in rules and used as a means to protect scenic views. Local governments need to identify scenic resources through the planning process and then protect those identified views through ordinance requirements and ordinance administration.

Public River Corridor Views protect and minimize impacts from public and private development activities, vegetation management activities (landscape maintenance). Variances, CUP's and building permits must evaluate any possible negative impact to the Public River Corridor Views. This may include maps, plans, visual impact assessment and other materials that identifies and describes Public River Corridor Views and evaluates development impacts. Any structure including public and private facilities, trails, and viewing areas, signs and kiosks and wireless communication towers must evaluate and minimize impacts on Public River Corridor Views. Platting of lots and subdivision permit applications must ensure that vegetative clearing is the minimum necessary and designed to blend with the natural terrain.

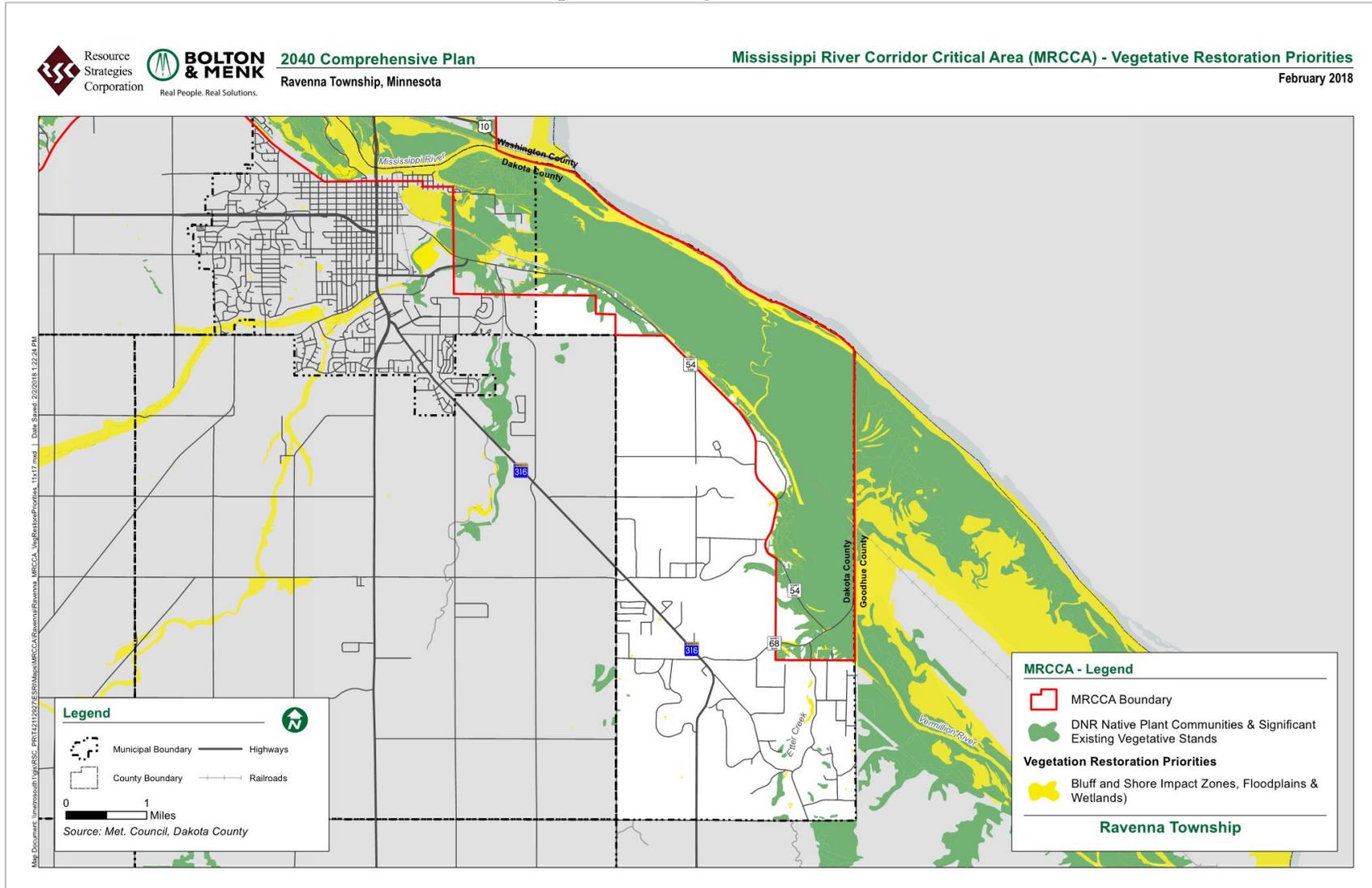
Metropolitan Council guidance instructs jurisdictions to identify specific public river corridor views, map, describe and document the view toward the bluff of the opposite shore. Since Ravenna Township has Wisconsin land on the opposite shore and are not subject to Metropolitan council rules, no public river corridor views are included as part of this plan.

#### **V. Restoration priorities**

Sensitive areas like bluff impact zones, shore impact zones, floodplains and wetlands are important for vegetation restoration. Restoration measures are often needed to maintain resource integrity and water quality. Development and redevelopment activities represent opportunities to restore natural vegetation, prevent erosion and stabilize slopes. This plan has not identified areas that are priorities for restoration of natural vegetation and erosion prevention, bank and slope stabilization, or other restoration activity. Continuous efforts and plan updates will be undertaken if there are ever identified any areas of concern.

The following figure shows areas of significant vegetative stands and vegetation restoration priorities.

### Ravenna Township MRCCA Vegetation Restoration Priorities



## VI. Open Space and Recreational Facilities

Township policy encourages the creation, connection, and maintenance of open space and recreation facilities and identify potential public access points and trail locations. Open space and recreational facilities, such as parks, trails, scenic overlooks, natural areas, islands, and wildlife areas add to the quality of a community and increase opportunities for the public to access the river.

Ravenna and Nininger Townships, as part of their long-range planning, encourage creation, connection, and maintenance of open space, recreational facilities and public access to the river. Both Ravenna and Nininger Township have areas identified as River Neighborhood District (CA-SR); Metropolitan Council policy encourages jurisdictions to encourage connection of these districts to existing and planned parks and trails. Ordinance requirements and performance standards are designed to achieve these objectives, maintain a high level of aesthetics, and maintain compatible land use in the area.

**Regional Parks:** Spring Lake Park, located in Nininger Township and within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, is identified in the Metropolitan Council park plan as a ‘park reserves’. Park reserves, like regional parks, are expected to provide for a diversity of outdoor recreational activities. The major feature that distinguishes the park reserve from a regional park is that the park reserve is also intended to provide, protect, and manage representative areas of the original major landscape types in the metropolitan area and enable appreciation and enjoyment of the natural resources that influenced the region’s development.

**Regional Trails:** Regional trail corridors are intended to provide for recreational travel along pathways throughout the metropolitan area. They are selected to traverse areas of scenic appeal and/or historical, architectural and developmental interest while assuring that the trail will have no adverse effect on the natural resource base. Regional trails are selected to pass through or provide connections between components in the Regional Parks System and perform the important function of providing places for parking, comfort facilities and safe water supplies.

The Mississippi River Regional Trail provides 25 miles of public trail access from Hastings to South St. Paul, including through Nininger Township and the Mississippi River Critical Area. Regional plans have identified a regional trail search corridor along the Mississippi River and within Ravenna Township.

The following map identifies the parks and trails within the MRCCA in Ravenna Township.

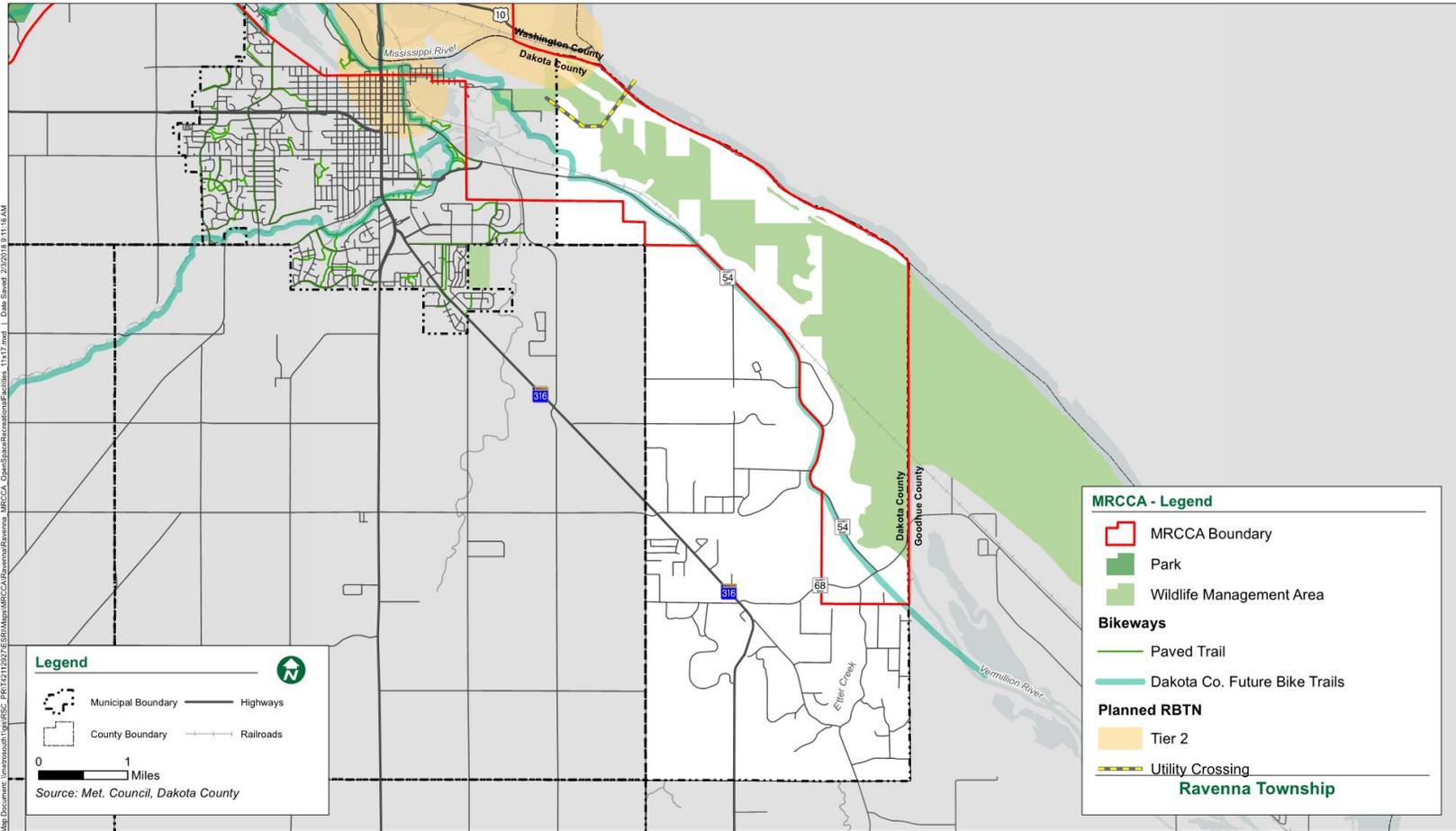
### Ravenna Township MRCCA Parks and Trails



**2040 Comprehensive Plan**  
Ravenna Township, Minnesota

**Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) - Open Space and Recreational Facilities**

February 2018



## **VII. Transportation and utilities**

Public transportation facilities and public utilities plans provide public infrastructure in a manner consistent with Chapter 6106. Public transportation facilities are defined as all transportation facilities provided by federal, state, or local government and dedicated to public use, such as roadways, transit facilities, railroads, and bikeways. Public utilities are defined as electric power facilities, essential services, and transmissions services. Electric power facilities, essential services, and transmission services are further defined in the rules. Transportation and utilities can have negative impacts on scenic views, habitat and soil erosion. Development of these facilities must be conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts. Development of public transportation facilities and public utilities should describe methods for minimizing impacts to the corridor's resources. Exhibits of existing and future public transportation facilities and Regional Bicycle Transportation Network (RBTN) alignments can be found in the transportation chapter. No planned transportation facilities will impact the MRCCA district. A tier 2 Regional Bicycle Transportation Network alignment can be found in close proximity to Nininger Township.

**Utility Infrastructure:** There is one utility line crossing in Ravenna Township crossing the Mississippi River, as indicated in the Open Space and Recreational Facilities figure. Ravenna and Nininger Township recognizes that there is a need for various utility transmission and communication facilities to serve the State and the metropolitan area. There is a desire to minimize the impact of these facilities on existing and future residents. Specific regulations will be developed in its Zoning Ordinance related to the siting of utility lines and telecommunication towers in the area and will encourage the use of existing river crossings for any proposed facilities. There are no planned additional utility crossings in either township. There are no existing or planned power generating facilities in the Critical Areas of the MRCCA. No facilities are allowed in this area.

## **VIII. Surface water uses**

Surface water uses such as barge fleeting, recreational boating, and commercial riverboat tours uses may cause surface water use conflicts. Where these uses exist, local governments should address them through policies to minimize conflicts.

The Mississippi River is a “working river” and important to the economy of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the Midwest. An assembly of barges travel the Mississippi River and complete loading and unloading activities at barge terminals. Fleeting areas (barge parking areas) are necessary for staging of large and difficult to maneuver barges while loading and unloading occurs. Just west of Nininger Township is CF Industries which includes two barge terminals. There are no terminals located in either Ravenna or Nininger Township. There are no identified barge fleeting areas in the areas that surround Ravenna or Nininger Township. There are no identified surface water conflicts with barge, recreational or commercial riverboat activities.

## **IX. Water-Oriented Uses**

MRCCA communities provide for existing and future commercial and industrial uses that require water access, including but not limited to barge terminals and recreational marinas. Water-oriented uses, such as barge terminals and recreational marinas, provide economic benefits as well as external impacts (traffic, hours of operation, noise, water surface use). There are two boat access points in Ravenna Township providing boat access to the Vermillion River and secondarily to the Mississippi River. Nininger Township has one public boat access directly to the Mississippi River. Riverfront development should address how external impacts are being managed and to minimize land use conflicts. Township policies provide design standards and river and bluff setbacks for facilities associated with “public recreational use” and “river-dependent use.” Rules define “river-dependent use” as use of land for commercial, industrial, or utility purposes, where access to and use of a public water feature is an integral part of the

normal conduct of business and where the use is dependent on shoreline facilities. “Shoreline facilities” are facilities that require a location adjoining public waters for ingress and egress, loading and unloading, etc. No commercial or industrial business utilizes the Mississippi River as part of its integral business operations.

## **X. Goals and Policies**

The land within the Critical Area is primarily undeveloped and contains considerable opportunity to preserve natural habitats and other resources. Issues that the Townships have identified within the Corridor are similar to those identified in the public workshops, discussed in the previous section of this Plan. Specifically, the Township will address the following issues within the Corridor:

- Regulation and restrictions on commercial uses;
- Conservation of the natural area that consists of floodplain for the Mississippi and Vermillion Rivers;
- Preservation of site views and standards for siting of utility structures;
- Establish rural residential densities consistent with Metropolitan Council policies;
- Address environmental issues related to the Corridor, including groundwater and surface water pollution.
- Identify and coordinate trail corridor locations in cooperation with Dakota County and DNR.
- Provide access to the River Corridor to enable recreational opportunities.
- A majority of the Corridor is either undevelopable or has been developed in primarily rural residential densities.

In order to achieve the objectives identified for the corridor, the following goals and policies have been identified for the area. Following the completion of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MCRRA) plan, Ravenna and Nininger Township will review ordinance standards to look for opportunities to achieve these objectives.

### **MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR GOALS**

It is the goal of Ravenna Township to:

- Preserve and enhance the natural aesthetic value of the Mississippi River Critical Area in Ravenna Township.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas within the designated Critical Area
- Conserve and protect scenic, historic, cultural, natural and scientific values in the district.
- Assure consistency of Township plans and regulations with Critical Area requirements and policies of the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area.

### **MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR POLICIES**

It is the policy of Ravenna and Nininger Township to:

- Enforce specific requirements for the designated Critical Area in Ravenna and Nininger Township in Township ordinances, including:
  - Guide land use/development consistent with the management purposes of each district.
  - Setbacks of structures from the normal high-water mark shall be at least 200 feet.
  - The Shoreland Impact Zone is generally restrictive of roads, driveways, public recreational facilities, and cell phone towers.

- The Bluff Impact Zone is generally restrictive of structures, impervious, roads, driveways, trails, viewing areas, decks, patios and cell phone towers.
- Setbacks of structures from blufflines shall be at least 40 feet.
- Clearcutting of vegetation will be prohibited on islands, public recreation lands, on bluff faces and slopes, within 200 feet of the normal high-water Mark, and within 40 feet landward of bluffs.
- Clearcutting of vegetation within the SIZ, BIZ, within 50 feet of wetlands or natural drainage ways, native plant communities, and significant vegetative strands is not allowed except by permit and the minimum impact for development is only allowed per 6106.0180
- Conditions shall be attached to permits to minimize vegetative removal, soil exposure, assure steep slopes are stabilized, and vegetative restoration occurs
- Mining or mineral extraction operation will not be allowed in the SIZ, BIZ and will require appropriate screening from the Mississippi River.
- Mining operations proposed in an area requiring more than 20 acres will be required to receive approval of the appropriate State agencies, consistent with Critical Area procedures for review and approval.
- Notify DNR when the following may be proposed in the Critical Area:
  - Any development requiring discretionary action or a public hearing
  - Development on slopes greater than 12 percent
  - Removal of five or more contiguous acres of vegetative cover
  - Alteration of more than 50 linear feet of riverbank
  - Grading or filling of 20 or more acres of land
  - Withdrawal or discharge of river water.
  - Any Metropolitan Council action or review
  - Any rezoning, variance, ordinance amendment or conditional use permit
  - Activities that change the course, current or cross-section of a protected water below the ordinary high water level or appropriation and use of waters of the State.
- Variances, CUPs and all building permits in Ravenna and Nininger Township will require submission of relevant project information to evaluate how proposed development complies with MRCCA plans and ordinances and will evaluate negative impacts to Primary Conservation Areas and require mitigation when appropriate.
- Variances, CUPs and subdivisions of property will seek opportunities to restore vegetation in priority areas.
- Vegetative cutting will be restricted in order to protect bluffs, slopes, views and floodplain forests.
- Make restoration of removed Native Plant Communities and natural vegetation in riparian areas a high priority during development.
- Prohibit commercial, industrial or institutional uses in the designated River Corridor.
- Protect PCAs (shore impact zones, wetlands, floodplains, areas of confluence with key tributaries, natural drainage routes, bluff impact zones, native plant communities, significant existing vegetative stands, cultural and historic properties, and unstable soils and bedrock) and minimize impact to PCAs from public and private development and land use activities (landscape maintenance, river use, walking/hiking, etc.).
- Support mitigation of impacts to PCAs through subdivisions/PUDs, variances, CUPs, and other permits.

- Support alternative design standards that protect the LGU’s identified PCAs, such as conservation design, transfer of development density, or other zoning and site design techniques that achieve better protections or restoration of primary conservation areas.
- Make permanent protection measures (such as public acquisition, conservation easement, deed restrictions, etc.) that protect PCAs a high priority.
- Review of developments within the River Corridor will consider the impact of views and insure buffering from the River through revegetation plans and screening.
- Placement of overhead transmission lines should take into consideration the impact on views and the appearance of the structures as much as practicable.
- Protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private development activities.
- Protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs from public and private vegetation management activities.
- Protect PRCVs located within the community and identified by other communities (adjacent or across the river).
- Cleared portions of rights-of-way for proposed transmission lines should be minimized.
- Existing rights-of-way for transmission lines and other utility lines should be used to the greatest extent possible, and river crossings for utility lines should be minimized.
- Routes for transmission lines should avoid areas of steep slopes, scenic intrusions into streams and valleys, wetlands, soils susceptible to erosion and other unstable soils, open space recreation areas, and forests by running along the fringe of wooded areas.
- Advertising signs are prohibited from visibility from the River, and procedures for removal of non-conforming general advertising signs will be developed.
- Support maintenance of the nine-foot navigation channel of the Mississippi River, including siting of dredge spoil use areas, to insure continued safe and economical navigation of the River.
- New roads shall not be constructed within 200 feet of the normal high water mark or 100 feet of a bluffline.
- Insure that riverbanks and bluffs remain in their natural state, and support maintaining the natural cover of bluffs to protect natural views from the Mississippi River.
- Encourage the State and Dakota County to incorporate scenic road design concepts into road construction projects.
- Review of site plans for developments that impact Public River Corridor Views will be conducted by the Township and will consider the impact of views and insure buffering from the River through revegetation plans, screening, landscaping and prevention of runoff.
- Strongly encourage the placement of underground utilities, when feasible.
- Develop and implement an education and outreach strategy to get the word out to property owners about restoration priorities identified in this plan and what it means to them if a restoration priority area exists on their property.
- Work with DNR and Gores Wildlife Management Area to identify opportunities for access from a regional trail corridor to the River.
- Establish a Conservation District to protect environmental and cultural resources, to protect floodplain forests, habitats, islands and open space and to retain the archaeological and cultural heritage of the area. Support uses that are consistent with maintaining or enhancing the natural state of the area and which have minimal impact on the natural environment in the designated “Conservation District” identified in the Township’s Growth Management Plan.

- Protect native and existing vegetation during the development process, and require restoration if any is removed by development. Priorities for restoration shall include stabilization of erodible soils, riparian buffers and bluffs or steep slopes visible from the river.
- Seek opportunities to restore vegetation to protect and enhance PRCVs identified in this plan.
- Seek opportunities to restore vegetation in restoration priority areas identified in this plan through the CUP, variance, vegetation permit and subdivision/PUD processes.
- Sustain and enhance ecological functions (habitat value) during vegetation restorations.
- Evaluate proposed development sites for erosion prevention and bank and slope stabilization issues and require restoration as part of the development process.
- Encourage creation, connection, and maintenance of open space, recreational facilities, including public access to the river.
- Identify and encourage connection of CA-SR district land to existing and planned parks and trails for LGUs with developable land in CA-SR districts. (Not applicable in communities with no CA-SR district.)
- Encourage that land dedication requirements be used to acquire land suitable for public river access.
- Minimize impacts to PCAs and PRCVs from solar and wind generation facilities, public transportation facilities and public utilities.
- Recognize the Mississippi River as a “working river” that is important to the economy of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the Midwest.
- Minimize potential conflict of water surface uses authorized under Minn. Statute, Chapter 86B (MR 6110.3000 – 6110.3800). State whether your community is regulating surface water use under Chapter 86B. If so, there needs to be a policy to minimize conflict of surface water uses. If not, then this requirement does not apply.
- Provide for barge fleeting, if applicable, and identify areas where barge fleeting could have a negative impact on PCAs and should be avoided.
- Seek to balance commercial and recreational surface water uses.
- Acknowledge existing and future water-oriented uses and provide for their protection. If none, please state so.
- Minimize potential conflict of water-oriented uses with other land uses.

### **MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

Following the completion of the MRCCA plan, Ravenna and Nininger Township will:

- Amend existing or adopt new MRCCA ordinance overlay district compliant with the goals and policies of the MRCCA Plan and Minnesota Rules, part 6106.0070, Subp. 5 – Content of Ordinances.
- Amend zoning map to reflect new MRCCA districts.
- Ensure that information on the location of PCAs is readily available to property owners to understand how PCA-relevant ordinance requirements, such as vegetation management and land alteration permits, apply to their property for project planning and permitting.
- Establish procedures and criteria for processing applications with potential impacts to PCAs, including:
  - identifying the information that must be submitted and how it will be evaluated,

- determining appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs,
- establishing evaluation criteria for protecting PCAs when a development site contains multiple types of PCAs and the total area of PCAs exceed the required set aside percentages.
- developing administrative procedures for integrating DNR and local permitting of riprap, walls and other hard armoring.
- Ensure that information on the location of PRCVs is readily available to property owners to understand how PRCV-relevant ordinance requirements, such as vegetation management and land alteration permits, apply to their property for project planning and permitting.
- Establish procedures for processing applications with potential impacts to PRCVs, including:
  - identifying the information that must be submitted and how it will be evaluated, and
  - determining appropriate mitigation procedures/methods for variances and CUPs.
- Actively communicate with other communities to protect views other communities have identified in LGU that are valuable, and vice versa.
- Ensure that information on the location of natural vegetation restoration priorities is readily available to property owners to understand how relevant ordinance requirements apply to their property for project planning and permitting.
- Establish a vegetation permitting process that includes permit review procedures to ensure consideration of restoration priorities identified in this plan in permit issuance, as well as standard conditions requiring vegetation restoration for those priority areas.
- Establish process for evaluating priorities for natural vegetation restoration, erosion prevention and bank and slope stabilization, or other restoration priorities identified in this plan in CUP, variances and subdivision/PUD processes.
- Include facilities in the capital improvement program for parks and open space facilities (if relevant).
- Develop a system for reviewing, tracking, and monitoring open space required as part of the subdivision process.
- Include transportation facilities in the capital improvement program, if applicable, identify which facilities, or portions of facilities, are in the MRCCA.
- Incorporate specific design and placement conditions into local permits for solar and wind generation facilities and essential and transmission services (if allowed or within the community's permitting authority) that minimize impacts to PCAs and PRCVs.
- Adopt surface water regulations authorized under Minn. Statute, Chapter 86B (MR 6110.3000 – 6110.3800).
- Provide for water-oriented uses in the ordinance (if applicable).