

County selected for U of M's Resilient Communities Project

The University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (RCP) announced last month that Ramsey County and Scott County have been selected as its community partners for the 2018–2019 academic year. Due to both finalists' strong proposals, it marks the first time in its six-year history the program will assist two partners in a given year.

"We are very excited to partner with the University of Minnesota to undertake research that will help advance our long-range 2040 comprehensive plan," said Scott County Planning Manager Brad Davis. "The timing is perfect. Looking at all of the community feedback and input gathered over the past two years as part of the 2040 planning process, we have identified some important research and analysis topics to move forward, and now we can match those research needs with University students, faculty, and coursework. This is a unique opportunity to move right from plan creation into plan implementation with all of the great University resources at our side ready to assist."

RCP, housed within the U of M's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, seeks to connect students' innovation, ingenuity, and fresh perspectives with local government agencies to learn about their needs, conduct research, and develop solutions. In the coming months, staff will define the scope and purpose of individual projects before matching them with courses offered at the University.

"We're very excited about our upcoming collaborations with Scott and Ramsey Counties," said RCP's Director Mike Greco. "Each community brings

to the table a unique set of issues and projects. Working with staff, residents, and other partners in these communities will provide U of M students with incredible experiential learning opportunities, while increasing each county's capacity to remain resilient in the face of rapid economic, social, and environmental changes."

Scott County's proposal identified 14 potential projects, including investigating self-serve libraries, planting edible landscapes, diversifying agricultural production, managing hazardous waste, improving early childhood education, fostering employer-assisted housing, increasing participation in rental-assistance programs, planning for autonomous vehicles, promoting active living, and investigating the cost of services in rural areas.

"This partnership will allow us to examine policy, project, and program initiatives identified by our community in a well-defined and collaborative way," said Scott County Board Chair Tom Wolf. Beginning in September, the University and counties will collaborate on more than a dozen multidisciplinary projects to advance resilience and sustainability.

Once paired, counties can enhance their capacity to address complex issues by gaining access to thousands of hours of research from hundreds of students and faculty in a wide range of programs and disciplines—from architecture, planning and engineering, to business, environmental sciences and the humanities. Students will present their findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the semester.