

# DOWNTOWN CHASKA PASEO PLACEMAKING AND ACTIVATION TOOLKIT

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT | RCP 51

## About the Partner

Chaska is an outer ring suburb located southwest of Minneapolis. It is Carver County's largest city and the county seat. The land was originally occupied by the Mdewakaton Dakota people and, according to the Minnesota Historical Society, the name "Chaska" is derived from a common Dakota name given to a first-born son. The city encompasses 17.7 square miles, and its historic downtown is adjacent to the Minnesota River, which played a significant role in its early identity as a trading post and commerce hub. Chaska was incorporated as a city in 1891, and its industry was first centered on brick manufacturing and agricultural processing. Rapid growth and transition to a metropolitan community began in the 1950s and 60s. In 2020, Chaska had a population of roughly 27,800 people, with a median age of 37.2 and a median household income of \$99,988. The three largest racial/ethnic groups in Chaska are White (Non-Hispanic) (82.2%), Multi-Racial (Hispanic) (3.59%), and Multi-Racial (Non-Hispanic) (3.46%).



City of Chaska

## Project Description

The city of Chaska developed around its historic downtown, which was founded in 1852, and many of its original "Chaska Brick" structures remain. Today, downtown is an active and evolving economic center, including the Chaska Curling and Event Center regional attraction and more than 175 businesses. One of the City's visions for downtown outlined in the Chaska Downtown Master Plan is to "Revitalize downtown Chaska as the hub of community destinations and gathering places that reflect and celebrate our historic character, traditional small-town atmosphere and values."

The City recently reconstructed State Trunk Highway 41 through downtown, which changed Highway 41 from a four-lane highway to a two-lane highway, with turn lanes and significantly wider sidewalks and boulevards. They also constructed paseos (pedestrian walkway systems in alleys) within the commercial core to allow safe pedestrian access to businesses and shops without having to get into their car. These paseos have been designed to create space for public activities and gathering places for social interaction. To help make the paseos vibrant and active spaces, the City seeks research support to create a placemaking/activation plan that can be used by the City, businesses, and the local business district as a guide and inspirational tool to foster social activity that brings people downtown to socialize, shop, eat, and explore. The City's goal is to improve the downtown business environment by drawing more people to the area.



Resilient Communities Project

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas for Students to Explore

1. How can Chaska create opportunities for social connection in public spaces through both large and small-scale programming, installations, amenities, art/mural displays and cultural celebrations?
2. Analyze the physical, political, social, and regulatory barriers that businesses and organizations in downtown Chaska experience when working to create a more engaging downtown environment.
3. Provide recommendations and action steps to help create a more engaging downtown that better reflects what residents and visitors to Chaska want to do and experience in downtown.

## How Student Work Will Build Community Resilience

This project will provide a placemaking toolkit that can be used to support a built environment that is accessible, flexible, and advances community health, equity, and resiliency. Local businesses will use the toolkit to draw community members downtown and better utilize the new paseo network while drawing customers to their business. In addition, this research and toolkit will be made available to other Twin Cities metro area communities through a partnership with the Metropolitan Council.

### Potential Partners or Stakeholders

- Downtown Chaska Business Alliance
- Southwest Metro Chamber of Commerce

### Existing Plans and Reports

- City of Chaska Downtown Master Plan
- City of Chaska 2040 Comprehensive Plan

---

### RCP-UMN Contact

Stina Kielsmeier-Cook, RCP Program  
Coordinator, University of Minnesota  
kiel0054@umn.edu | 612.625.6550

### Chaska Project Lead

Julie Grove, Economic Development  
Coordinator  
jgrove@chaskamn.gov | 952.227.7518