

RAMSEY CITY OWNED LANDS PROJECT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Each February the Ramsey City Council develops, and prioritizes, strategic goals for the upcoming year. In 2011, the Ramsey City Council identified the need to develop an inventory of City owned lands as a high priority.

The objective of developing an inventory of City owned lands was to specifically identify City owned parcels that are underutilized; and, to evaluate which parcels should be considered for disposition. As outlined by the City Council, disposition of underutilized City owned properties has a number of benefits: reduced property maintenance costs, reduced City liability and an increase of taxable parcels. NOTE: Increasing the number of taxable parcels within the City reduces the tax burden per property.

GENERAL FINDINGS

The City of Ramsey owns over 250 parcels city-wide. The majority of these parcels are wetlands, existing or planned trails, existing or future right of ways (ROW) and greenways. The remaining parcels are open spaces, existing or planned parks, Ramsey Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) properties, Ramsey Economic Development Authority (EDA) properties and locations of various municipal facilities.

Under direction of the City Council, City staff identified a list of City owned parcels that are underutilized, potentially developable and no longer needed by the City. Furthermore, staff investigated the disposition process for each of the said properties.

In summary, staff identified 36 total properties as underutilized and potentially developable. After further investigation, of the 36 total properties 24 properties were found to be legally dedicated/restricted and eight properties were found to have free and clear title. The remaining four properties were omitted for various reasons.

DEDICATED PROPERTIES

The majority of dedicated/ restricted parcels were acquired from developers and originally intended for park use. However, for a number of reasons, were never developed into parks and have stood vacant for many years (more than twenty years in most cases).

The most common title restriction of the 24 properties dedicated properties is a "public use only forever" dedication. Meaning, the 24 dedicated properties cannot legally be used for anything but a public use, regardless of the owner. Furthermore, because the City is a trustee of the 24 said properties, and not a free and clear owner, the City does not have the ability to sell said properties.

In order for the City to release dedicated parcels, the "public use only forever" restriction would first need to be removed. After removal of title restrictions, properties would need to be offered back to the original owners. At this point, the City is investigating which of the 24 dedicated/restricted properties should be taken through the legal process to attain clean title and be returned to the original property owner.

NON DEDICATED PROPERTIES

Regarding the eight properties found to have free and clear title, five parcels are currently being marketed by the Ramsey EDA for economic development purposes. Of the remaining three parcels, one parcel was acquired as part of the Legacy Christian Academy development; and is planned to be marketed and sold. The second parcel is an open space located off 178th Avenue and Vicuna Street in the northwest portion of the City; and is planned to be marketed and sold. The third property identified by staff to have free and clear title is a lot known as 'Peltzer Park', located on 146th Lane and Kamacite Street. For various reasons, outlined below, the City is considering disposition of Peltzer Park.

PELTZER PARK

As expressed by the City Council, the demand for parks is shifting away from small neighborhood pocket parks to larger regional community parks. Furthermore, the cost to maintain a large number of small neighborhood pocket parks can be greater than the cost to maintain a small number of regional community parks.

After review by City staff, it has been determined that Peltzer Park is an underutilized 'pocket park'; when compared to other improved and maintained parks within the City. One reason Peltzer Park may be underutilized is its relatively close proximity to Alpine Park (highly improved, large and well maintained community park).

As a result of the concerns outlined above, the City Council is considering closing Peltzer Park. In conjunction with the potential closing of Peltzer Park, the City is planning to develop North Commons Park; which is located west of Peltzer Park in the northern portion of the COR. The development of North Commons Park aligns with the City's comprehensive plan, the COR master plan and the City Council's strategic goals.

North Commons Park has a very high density of potential users, when compared to Peltzer Park, and is expected to significantly increase as the COR develops. The development of North Commons Park is expected to reduce the demand for Peltzer Park; and in addition, would provide residents near Peltzer Park with a second park option (besides Alpine Park). If Peltzer Park was closed, the City Council would be committed to connect North Commons Park to the neighborhoods surrounding Peltzer Park with trails and crosswalks. Furthermore, the existing play equipment used at Peltzer Park would be transferred to North Commons Park.

It is important to note, Peltzer Park is one single property and does not include the complex of wetlands that run through the surrounding neighborhoods. If the Peltzer Park property is disposed of, all other existing wetlands and open space would remain.

CONTACT THE CITY

Persons wishing to learn more about the City Owned Lands Project, or the disposition of Peltzer Park and relocation of the play structure, may come to an open house just before the Mayor's Town Hall Meeting between 6 and 7 pm on March 12, 2012 in the Lake Itasca Room at the Ramsey Municipal

Center. The City Owned Lands Project may also be discussed at a subsequent City Council Work Session or Council meeting.

If you would like additional information on any of the properties under consideration for disposition, please contact Patrick Brama, 763-433-9903, pbrama@ci.ramsey.mn.us.

REFERENCE MAP

