

**1. Organization Name and Project Title:** City of Ramsey's MAJESTY OF THE COMMONS

- 2. Project Purpose:** In contrast to the 'Tragedy of the Commons', this unified planting project engages the residents within this livable community in the communal care, education and ongoing stewardship of their shared park space named North Commons. The outcome will be a diverse array of trees that are well adapted to the Anoka Sand Plain for this new public space; *and*, the endeavor will also meet the Environmental Policy Board's strategic goal of implementing a 'mini-arboretum' showcasing species that perform well in sandy soils. Small, didactic placards will be installed adjacent to the individual species as on-going tools for public education. Additional, larger interpretive signs will be strategically placed throughout the park highlighting the many benefits trees provide.

Complimenting the foresting effort will be a one-year scientific analysis of varying mixtures and depths of topsoil at the park, and their precise effectiveness of retaining water - utilizing integrated soil moisture sensors. The results of this review will provide quantitative data the City can use to establish topsoil specs for new landscapes (a critical issue within the Anoka Sand Plain). The combination of native trees and a comprehensive examination of topsoil requirements will better position *both* the City and its residents in a continuing movement toward more sustainable growth and development.

- 3. Project Location Description:** The project will occur in North Commons, a park within Ramsey's pedestrian and transit oriented, master-planned community known as The COR. The park is just over seven (7) acres in size, located in the south central portion of the community and connects the higher density urban area with the existing larger, rural lot neighborhoods to the north and east. The northern and northeastern portions of the property are wetland with the remainder of the site being upland consisting of sandy soil (Hubbard-Nymore association). The western half of the site is fairly flat while the eastern portion slopes downward to the wetland area.

- 4. Document Public Ownership:** The project site's legal description is Outlot D Ramsey Town Center 8<sup>th</sup> Add (see attached map).

- 5. Project Goals:** Engage residents from the adjacent neighborhood and townhome associations, who have expressed their desire to initiate park improvements, in the place-making practice of planting trees to create an aesthetically pleasing, inviting and functional public space. The project will also serve as an educational tool for the community by showcasing species well adapted to the area, their growth characteristics (habit and form), and pertinent facts about the needs, benefits and care of trees (*e.g.* what is considered 'adequate' watering for trees, retention of storm water, pruning needs). This project will provide living examples of tree species that perform well in sandy soils, which residents can see, touch and replicate as they landscape or reforest their property. The project will incorporate participation of a K-12 school, within walking distance of North Commons, to develop language for interpretive signage to highlight the benefit of trees and community/urban forests. Finally, the project will provide valuable, hands-on training for volunteers by an ISA Certified Arborist to ensure proper planting techniques are utilized and what constitutes critical short and long-term maintenance needs for trees.

- 6. Methods:** City Staff will enhance the concept plan for North Commons by developing a diverse species palette and assigning planting locations within the park. In the spring of 2012, City Staff will work with the principal and faculty of PACT Charter School to incorporate benefits of trees into lesson plans such that the students can quite literally develop the educational content for the placards and interpretive signs. In October of 2012, City Staff will prep the site, including pre-digging holes and placing trees with attendant soil work (pre and post planting). Volunteers, (assisted by City Staff) will plant the trees in October of 2012. Spring of 2013, the placards will be installed by City Staff

adjacent to the individual species identifying them by both common and scientific names and larger, interpretive signs will be placed throughout the park with information on the *majesty* of trees in addressing storm water management, carbon sequestration, diversifying the landscape and wildlife habitat.

**7. Personnel:** The following staff will be active participants in this project:

- Chris Anderson, Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator, ISA Certified Arborist (PN-1767A)—responsible for development of landscape plan as well as training/instructing team of volunteers that will conduct the plantings (emphasis will be placed on correct planting depth and corrective/structural pruning over the first three [3] years after planting).
- Mark Riverblood, Parks Supervisor, MN Certified Tree Inspector—responsible for the new park’s development, overseeing site preparation by Parks Staff, and coordination of volunteers.
- Mike Berge, Parks Lead, MN Certified Tree Inspector—will be responsible for material delivery, site preparation, assisting with plantings and on-going maintenance.
- Volunteers—will assist with installation of 106 trees. Prior to planting, proper planting techniques will be demonstrated by ISA Certified Arborist to emphasis hole prep and depth, locating 1<sup>st</sup> set of primary roots for proper planting depth, and mulching. The training will also review necessary maintenance, such as pruning, watering, and winter protection for the first three (3) years of a newly installed tree.
- PACT Charter School—Dan DeBruyn, Principal, work with his faculty to incorporate into their Science lesson plans the benefits trees provide. Students will then be involved in developing the text and content for the interpretive signs at the site.

**8. Maintenance and Management Plan**

- A.** One time activities at time of planting: application of slow-release fertilizer (Parks Staff), pruning of dead/broken limbs only (Parks Staff/Volunteers). On-going maintenance activities (all by Parks Staff) over the first three (3) growing seasons: watering, as needed, May-October, pruning (corrective and structural) November-March, liquid fence application April, September/October, installing and removing tree wrap/guards November and April/May respectively. Monitoring/assessing trees occurs each time the site is visited, regardless of the maintenance activity, and any symptoms/signs that are evident are investigated and addressed as necessary.
- B.** The City has developed a draft Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan in an effort to prepare for the inevitable appearance of this insect. The City does employ an ISA Certified Arborist that routinely monitors the community forest (both public and private lands) for oak wilt and Dutch elm disease to limit the impacts of these destructive pathogens. When detected, contact is made with the property owner to discuss appropriate management strategies and actions. The City will also continue its comprehensive public outreach including the newsletter, website and cable TV spots to keep residents and businesses aware and informed of current tree related issues (*e.g.* drought, hail damage, pine bark beetles, European pine sawfly oak wilt and EAB).