

5.05: Review Comparison Document of The COR Development Plan and Original Ramsey Town Center Master Plan Prepared by the Planning Commission

Community Development Director Gladhill presented the staff report. He gave an overview of the most current version of The COR Development Plan. He reviewed the original Ramsey Town Center Master Plan. This discussion will focus on the changes between the two in an effort to ensure all policy makers are on the same page. A broader discussion will be held in September and he wanted to capture and changes to be made ahead of that meeting.

Board Member Bentz stated he would like to look at what has been built, and what is not there. He asked if there are provisions for affordable housing.

Chairperson Stodola responded there has been a plan for lower income apartment housing.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted there are housing goals. The City cannot dictate exactly what types of housing it prefers, but it can work toward goals. Ultimately, it would be best to mix levels of income, and that will start to play out in decision making along the way. He stated sometimes density brings the affordable housing.

Board Member Lewis questioned what kind of opportunities there will be to review this.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied the plan is to get through all the Boards and Committees in August. It has not been determined how the final document will be fabricated. It will become a survey of all these groups, the public and other surveys. It could mean a collaboration meeting of interested parties for more discussion.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if he was looking for input relative to this particular body or input relative to how this fits in the community.

Community Development Director Gladhill responded both. He said the natural resources plan of the Comprehensive Plan is what is more related to this Body.

Board Member Lewis stated he has not seen anything on this document that deviates from the original plan from an environmental standpoint.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated from a natural resources standpoint, one of the features that is different is The Draw and the amphitheater. The amphitheater made a fairly significant change to the natural resources. He pointed out the original plan had a strong parks program, and the current plan has a strong master parks and trail plan. He also noted the drainage system has changed. The area west of Lake Ramsey is lower than it was going to be.

Councilmember LeTourneau mentioned some of the wetland drainage area in the western part of the city is being taken away. He questioned what will be done to mitigate that.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied there have been Wetland Credits purchased, and there are enhancements in other areas. That will need to continue.

Board Member Lewis said he thought there was a discussion about the big box anchor mall on the west side of Armstrong Boulevard.

Community Development Director Gladhill responded the City did publicize this and there was an effort to look at eminent domain. He explained that statute has now changed. However, the zoning is still there for a retail setting. It still could occur.

Councilmember LeTourneau commented he continually hears that people want restaurants. He said some people want the food to be locally produced. Others want chains to come in. He said his thought process is that it will evolve when there is enough density to support it. So that becomes a marketing issue. He said here is not enough density here for chains like Chipotle. He pointed out the City now has something like 2000 housing units. He questioned what the density needs to be. Once that density is reached, maybe then it would be feasible to revisit the west side of Armstrong Boulevard for the big box retail mall. He asked how the City can play a role in facilitating that.

Board Member Valentine mentioned there are a lot of small malls around the Cities that are empty. He warned the Board to be careful of this. He suggested in the scope of this Board, we should consider the sites as if they are individual sites. There should be some stormwater management before deciding what could go in there. If housing is considered, how does the density affect the impervious area, compared to single homes.

Board Member Lewis pointed out the City would be sacrificing trails and shoulders with the big box potential mall development. The pedestrian orientation from the area west of Zeolite Street became less important and more auto centric. He stated some of the new housing south of Bunker Lake Boulevard may not be interested in looking at a large Kmart type building where the anchor retails was planned.

Community Development Director Gladhill said in discussions with all the Boards, something may come up to make that area more palatable. We can take the best of some neighboring communities and try to come up with something more attractive.

Board Member Lewis commented it would be difficult to get a developer to do an upscale shopping area without the housing to support it.

Board Member Bentz said he was disappointed in the notes in regards to blue stream. He questioned if any of that would be coming forward from the open space discussion.

Community Development Director Gladhill responded staff is working on how to best present that information. Staff is getting feedback in regard to Lake Ramsey Commons being a shared property between the surrounding parcels.

Board Member Bentz suggested planning more with Lake Ramsey and consider whether it could be made a usable lake. He suggested looking at putting in storm draining before it hits the river. He further advised to create a list of all the things we do not want to happen again.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated this could be a good addition to the questions for the other Boards. It would be helpful to solicit input as to what they think the issues have been and ask if this is the right direction aesthetically.

Councilmember LeTourneau went back to the point of the view shed for those homeowners that are now looking at retail buildings. He asked if the original aesthetics are in place, or if they should be revisited. He noted the diameter of the trees was changed, and other designs were left out due to cost. He questioned if design standards have changed.

Board Member Lewis posed the question of which is faster – bringing in big box retailing, or housing.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated this all originated from a joint meeting. One of the questions from that meeting was what is the goal for that development. Sometimes it feels like there are multiple goals. He asked if the development should happen quickly so it can get on the tax role, or if it is consensus to wait for the long term vision to come.

Board Member Bentz commented the issue is with the interchange. People do not like using frontage roads because they are difficult to use. The interchange does not seem welcoming right now. Ramsey has resources to market. If Ramsey wants to attract businesses, we need to look at parking issues when there are events, maybe looking at a water park or other features geared toward families. He said he doesn't see a big box store doing much of anything.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained the Planning Commission is not suggesting the original plan be followed. The Commission acknowledged that was aggressive for the market that is Ramsey. The Commission would like to put together a plan that matches the goals. He said he has hopefully captured some of the additional topics needed for that survey. Each Board has come up with more questions along the way. He said Staff recommends the City Council adopt this document, with the understanding that it will be revised as it goes through the different Boards and Agencies.

Motion by Board Member Lewis and seconded by Board Member Valentine to recommend that the City Council adopt the attached Comparison Document for The COR, including the revisions and questions suggested at this meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Lewis, Valentine, Bentz, and Covart. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Bernard, and Hiatt.