

**RAMSEY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

On Monday, March 13, 2017, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee met at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Present: Tim Gladhill, Community Development Director
Mark Riverblood, Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent
Bruce Westby, City Engineer
Scott Mareck, WSB
[REDACTED] Bennett, Committee Chairperson
Randy Bauer
Scott Breuer
Christopher Ouelette
Leslie Roering
Dan Torgerson
Michael Valentine

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION

Mr. Gladhill welcomed the Steering Committee members and meeting attendees. He stated Erica Sitz, a City resident who has been attending the Steering Committee meetings, is no longer able to participate. He added there will hopefully be a new resident attendee, Meghan Mathson, who previously worked as an intern for the City of Ramsey, and was recently appointed to the Anoka County Commute Solutions TMO. He noted her father, Bruce, is the owner of Fairway Liquors.

Mr. Gladhill stated the Kick-Off Public Workshop was held on February 28, and feedback and comments were received from many residents. He added the Public Workshop was very productive, and everyone who attended had an opportunity to provide their input and comments. He noted many residents expressed the importance of maintaining the rural character of the City, including preservation of natural resources and maintaining large lot sizes, and how these issues are affected by the metropolitan urban service area.

Mr. Gladhill stated the discussion centered around maintaining a healthy balance between encouraging urban growth in certain areas but also maintaining large lot sizes and rural areas. He added there was a lot of discussion about a possible community recreation center, as well as

transportation systems and schools. He noted the School District has indicated a new elementary school will be opening in Ramsey in the fall of 2019.

Mr. Gladhill stated another topic of discussion was visions and resources for developing the COR and affordable housing, and many residents had specific development issues they wanted to discuss. He added the larger group broke out into four smaller groups to review and define the following issues: rural character strategies; Parks and Recreation; schools; and transportation and roads. He noted these topics will continue to filter throughout the process, and are good points for beginning the Comprehensive Plan discussion.

Mr. Gladhill stated many residents left comments in the comment box about specific topics, and City staff intends to follow up on those issues.

Mr. Bauer stated a key issue is maintaining areas for small, local farms, as that type of land use is dependent upon the economy and not something over which the City has much control. Mr. Gladhill stated there are strategies and tools for land use preservation that the City can explore.

Mr. Gladhill reviewed a document compiled from staff's notes from the first Workshop, specifically related to Transportation and Parks and Recreation. He added there is some overlap between these two areas, especially when it comes to trails planning. He noted the April 10 Workshop will include more specific discussions on existing goals and strategies, and staff's compilation includes 3-4 goals per chapter with implementation strategies for each goal.

Mr. Gladhill stated the City's existing 2030 Comprehensive Plan goals include planning and design stages for Highway 10 and an updated Access Management Plan, which is now called the Access Planning Study. He added the new Comprehensive Plan will incorporate this Study, as well as roadway improvement projects and possible funding sources, local traffic control and access improvements, and development plans for the north side of the COR. He noted a key area of focus will be the need for an additional east/west collector in the northern part of the City.

Mr. Gladhill stated the issue of non-motorized accessibility will be an important component of the Transportation Plan, including sufficient right of way for bike paths. He added a Green Valley Road resident attended the first Workshop and expressed concern about pedestrian safety on that 2-lane roadway with minimal amount of shoulder. He noted this location should be reviewed for pedestrian access and safety.

Mr. Gladhill stated the Committee should consider issues related to public transport and connectivity with regional transportation corridors and other transit. He added another area for discussion is the completion of a master trail plan, major segments of which have been completed. Mr. Riverblood confirmed that a trail segment will be completed and open for use in early Spring 2017.

Mr. Gladhill stated an Anoka County initiative called The Greater Minnesota Gateway brings adjacent communities together to advocate for changes and improvements to the Highway 10 corridor. He added Ramsey's involvement with this initiative will provide much-needed regional support for and attention to this transportation issue.

Mr. Gladhill requested the Committee's feedback and comments on the goals and strategies that have been discussed so far.

Mr. Bauer stated the 2030 Comprehensive Plan includes some items related to Highway 47 that are on schedule to be completed. He added it might be unnecessary to include items in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan that could potentially be resolved in 20 years. Mr. Valentine agreed.

Ms. Roering stated removing Highway 47 improvements from the Comprehensive Plan could be misconstrued. Mr. Gladhill stated it is helpful to leave potential improvements in the plan, in terms of goals, strategies, funding and resources.

Mr. Valentine stressed the importance of being cognizant about use of time and resources about projects in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, such as completion of an east/west collector. Mr. Ouelette stated it makes sense to leave Armstrong Boulevard in the Plan because of increased traffic patterns. Mr. Gladhill agreed, adding a review is included in the Council's strategic plan.

Mr. Bennett stated many of the review items are very specific rather than an overall vision document. He added residents at the community meeting were focused on future connectivity and growth in the long term. Mr. Gladhill stated a general time frame could be used instead of a specific year.

Mr. Bauer asked why the river bridge crossing project is not included. Mr. Gladhill stated that project is included in the transportation map, but was not included in the Comprehensive Plan as there is no support for it from the Met Council. He added the City will continue to plan land use and build support for the project, but Highway 10 improvements is the City Council's priority.

Ms. Roering asked, with regard to Rum River crossing, whether the City can look at different ways to cross the river beyond Highway 7. She added new transportation technologies and planning should be considered. Mr. Valentine agreed.

Mr. Bennett stated the main bullet points should be better aligned and the language should be more clear. Mr. Gladhill agreed to have City staff draft a document from the first Workshop.

Scott Mareck, WSB Transportation Planner, stated a regional transportation plan has been compiled by the Metropolitan Council that identifies priority projects. He added there are components being addressed by roadway authorities that relate to Anoka County, which include Highways 47 and 169.

Mr. Mareck reviewed the regional transportation plan, which takes into account the local population. He added the plan shows that Highways 10 and 47 are major growth corridors, with significant growth on Bunker Lake Boulevard as well.

Mr. Bauer stated the 4-lane highways are both at maximum capacity for daily counts. He asked how that can be addressed at the regional level. Mr. Mareck stated the transportation plan identifies and attempts to address facilities that are under-sized, and develops strategies to determine priorities for which corridors are important to address first. He added the plan also reviews infrastructure problems, funding sources, and possible solutions.

Mr. Mareck stated the first issue to be addressed is funding, and Mn/DOT has possible sources of funding available for Highway 47 improvements, and discussions are under way with Anoka County as well. He added the whole corridor will be assessed, including volumes, safety issues, congestion and increased access.

Mr. Breuer stated, in terms of securing funding, traffic safety and efficient traffic flow are important issues and should be a good place to start. Mr. Westby stated Mn/DOT focuses on channelizing and restricting access. Mr. Mareck agreed, adding railroad crossings and frontage roads are also a high priority for Mn/DOT.

Mr. Bauer asked whether a possible bridge connection collaboration could be discussed with Andover. Mr. Mareck stated that could be suggested to Andover and Anoka County, although a “wish list” prioritization of projects needs to be determined.

Ms. Roering stated the Mississippi River crossing should stay in the Comprehensive Plan so it remains a focus, and as residents feel strongly about it. Mr. Ouelette agreed, adding it will show that the City is pursuing plans for a river bridge, and the Comprehensive Plan should show a specific location. Mr. Gladhill stated that will be shown under the Armstrong Boulevard improvements.

Ms. Roering stated it would be interesting to show what the east/west connector options are. She added that is an issue that residents are talking about. There was consensus among the Committee members that inclusion of east/west connector plans is an important goal for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Mareck stated there is currently not an overall non-motorized trails map of the City and the COR. He added a separate marked bike lane should be considered, including paved shoulders and sidewalks, with pedestrian overpasses, and there should be a pedestrian crossing near the civic center. He noted other cities are currently doing “multi-modal” reviews of bike paths, and developing trails plans that are destination-based.

Mr. Mareck stated a Master Park and Trail Plan is being planned depicting the City's existing sidewalks and proposed connectivity, using a model from Anoka County and the Metropolitan Council. He added this is helpful as it shows where there are currently on-street bike lanes.

Ms. Roering asked whether the map colors could be changed, and make the background more opaque, to make it easier to see pathway connections. Mr. Mareck agreed.

Mr. Mareck stated the North Star commuter rail station is an important part of the community infrastructure. He added a circular shuttle service is being considered, and the City of Fridley is doing a pilot project with van service from the rail station to local businesses. He noted these are important aspects of the City's multi-modal transportation plan.

Mr. Riverblood stated the 2030 Comprehensive Plan's transportation component (Chapter 10) is focused on goals and strategies. He added the first seven strategies identified by the Comprehensive Plan have been completed, which gives an indication of how useful the Comprehensive Plan is at identifying viable goals.

Mr. Riverblood stated one of the top 4 current imperatives is a "connected community". He added the City has increased its trail connectivity south of Bunker Lake Boulevard in recent years, and is now included in the Anoka County Regional Trails System.

Mr. Riverblood stated the City received funding from the National Park Service to construct a pedestrian bridge connecting the Mississippi River Trail. He added that connectivity will increase the number of North Star Rail users along Ramsey Boulevard.

Mr. Riverblood stated a new community park is planned near Itasca Lake on an area of land that was purchased by the City in Spring 2016.

Mr. Breuer asked whether the Park Trust Fund comes from fees from developers. Mr. Riverblood stated park dedication fees are paid to the City when new development occurs, but they do not cover parks and trails costs.

Mr. Bauer stated the City's green spaces currently do not require much maintenance. Mr. Gladhill agreed, adding Lacrosse fields are expected to be in high demand, and that will require some additional planning and field changes. He noted larger parks can be reconfigured for new uses.

Mr. Bennett stated many residents ask why the City spends more money on trails than on sports fields and playing areas. He added this should be addressed as a long-term planning issue. Mr. Riverblood stated there is a give and take in terms of available funding for parks, and it is a misconception that a disproportionate amount of funds is spent on trails.

Mr. Ouelette stated he likes the concept of trails connecting and defining neighborhoods within the City. Mr. Riverblood stated a lot community feedback has been received about the value of trails as a natural resource.

Mr. Gladhill stated a potential community center continues to resurface as an amenity that the City's residents support. He added the City Council has reviewed public and private partnership and funding scenarios but further review is necessary and a feasibility study is planned.

Mr. Gladhill stated Adrenaline Sports Center, an indoor sports facility with a variety of indoor sports programs, hopes to relocate to Ramsey. Ms. Roering stated a community center, as well as the City's parks, should have programs and services that appeal to all the City's residents.

Mr. Riverblood stated the data is available and the larger neighborhoods can be studied to determine who is using the parks. Mr. Bennett stated he likes the idea of parks that can be adjusted to suit the people who are using them.

Mr. Torgerson stated parks that have amenities that cater to every age group are ideal as there is less of a cyclical component. Mr. Riverblood stated Parks Planning was previously carried out with that in mind, to accommodate as many age groups as possible. He added it is important to have a balance of park uses, including trails, to reach a wider demographic range.

Ms. Roering stated the five large parks, which are the City's priority, should have a variety of amenities for all age groups. Mr. Riverblood stated each of the five parks has its own focus or emphasis. He added, for instance, Riverbend is the most actively-used community park, with park users from all different demographics. Mr. Bennett stated community parks with a variety of amenities, such as a municipal plaza or water feature, are a significant draw for park users.

Mr. Gladhill stated the parks maps would be available at the Committee's next meeting, as well as Workshop meeting notes. He added finalizing the Comprehensive Plan will be a two-part process, with a draft plan ready by October 2017 followed by a review phase. He added the April 10 Workshop will be held at 6:00 p.m. at [REDACTED] so there will be more room as a larger crowd is expected. He noted the third Workshop will be held June 12, 2017.

Mr. Gladhill stated the City was recently selected by the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project to be the Partner Community for the 2017-18 school year. He added the project will be a significant investment for the City, but resources are already allocated for strategic planning, and this is an exciting opportunity for Ramsey.

Mr. Gladhill stated City staff created a Facebook page, "City of Ramsey Comprehensive Plan Update". He encouraged the Committee members to visit the Facebook page and share this information with other residents.

Mr. Ouelette asked whether City staff can initiate a Twitter feed, like many other communities have been doing. Mr. Riverblood agreed to look into it. He added the City Council is currently reviewing the City's communication plan, which includes social media tools. He noted the final plan should be adopted at the end of March, and could potentially coincide with a City Twitter feed.

Mr. Gladhill noted that Planning Commissioner Patrick Surma was in attendance at the meeting, and thanked him for coming.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Gladhill
Community Development Director

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Mary Mullen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.