

#### **5.04: Review Tree Preservation Plan Request for Trott Brook North**

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to review a request from the Excelsior Group on the project generally known as Trott Brook North which is the area between Variolite Street and Nowthen Boulevard NW, north of Trott Brook. The application has requested a deviation from the City's standard tree preservation plan.

Board Member Little asked for input as to what would be considered a negative in allowing this plan to move forward.

City Planner Anderson commented that on the surface the concern would be whether the standards are being applied consistently and fairly. He stated that the tree inventory is based on inches rather than total trees and therefore there could be a deviation, although perhaps not significantly. He explained that there will be a lot of plantings with this large development along with areas of tree preservation. He noted that the applicant has stated that there would be more time and cost to provide a review in inches. He asked if the Board feels that this method would provide a fairly accurate depiction of what exists and what would need to be replaced.

Board Member Little commented that he has experience working with trees and he believes that this method would provide accurate information. He stated that in his opinion he believes that this would be an accurate method but agreed the question would be whether the City wants to deviate from policy.

Board Member Hiatt recognized that this was a planted area and therefore the type and size should be similar for the trees as they were planted at the same time. He stated that if this method is going to be allowed it should be noted that this was a planted area and not naturally occurring, in order to prevent precedent from being set.

Board Member Little stated that if this method is approved, he would agree to specify that was allowed because it was an artificially planted area.

Board Member Hiatt asked how staff feels about this method.

City Planner Anderson commented that he agrees it would give a fair representation of what is out there. He agreed that it would be critical to mention that this was allowed because it is unique in that it was a planted area in order to avoid setting precedent. He stated that the hardest challenge would be determining reforestation requirements if the removal threshold is exceeded.

Board Member Fetterley commented that this would be an exception to the normal process, and she would be hesitant although this seems like a fair method proposed. She asked if the Board wants to allow another reason for exceptions. She asked if there are other areas similar to this in Ramsey.

Board Member Valentine commented that this would seem to be a situation that points out a need for the City to have a process to systematically address variances. He stated that perhaps the developer would need to follow a variance request to request this approach for evaluating the site.

He stated that there probably would not be a problem with this method but would be hesitant without having a more systematic variance request the developer could follow. He commented that if this approach is going to be allowed there should be a thorough statistical analysis.

Board Member Little asked how many more plots would exist to this.

City Planner Anderson commented that there are other pockets of plantings similar in nature but did not have an estimate. He stated that the group could choose to support this because of the planted setting along with perhaps consideration of a potential ordinance amendment that would dictate that this approach would be acceptable in certain circumstances. He stated that he could speak with the City Attorney to determine if the variance process could be applied in this case. He stated that a third option would be to state that this method does not meet the Code and the typical process would need to be followed.

Chair Covart commented that she likes efficiency and understands the request from the developer but would prefer to follow City Code.

Board Member Fetterley asked if a sample of accuracy could be provided. She commented that she does not feel that she has enough information to say an exception could be granted.

Board Member Hiatt stated that it might be helpful to know what the developer is looking at in terms of cost savings and energy savings. He stated that if the potential to be reasonably accurate is there and it would cost five times as much to complete the review required by Code, he would see that as a reasonable request. He stated that he wants to work with developers when it makes sense. He noted that City Planner Anderson stated that this method could be fairly accurate, and the statement could be made that this is being allowed because it is unique in that it was a planted area. He believed that the developer should provide that additional information to support their request. He stated that two examples were given of where this method is used, but neither seems really comparable to this situation.

Board Member Valentine commented that it is not that complex to determine whether or not this would be a similar method for calculation and characterization of the area. He stated that it does not appear there is full support for this approach as of yet.

Chair Covart asked that staff bring this back at the next meeting with additional information provided and an invitation for the developer to attend.

City Planner Anderson stated that he agrees from a forestry standpoint this would be accurate, but the question would be related to the deviation from policy. He stated that if this method is found to be acceptable, he would prefer direction to amend the Code to allow an alternative method such as this when certain conditions are met.

Board Member Moore commented that she is unsure that she would feel comfortable changing Code requirements for this type of development. She noted that from the aerial map there are two properties that could fall under the same characterization, along with other areas in Ramsey. She stated that she would not be comfortable changing the requirements for the tree count and

vegetation count for this type of development. She stated that the role of the EPB is not to make it easier for developers.

Chair Covart commented that perhaps the developer would not need to attend the July meeting and the information desired could simply be provided by staff.

Board Member Little stated that he would be curious as to the cost of doing the calculation under Code as well as the cost to use the method proposed by the developer. He stated that he would find that information helpful in making a determination on whether it would be appropriate to consider amending the Code.