

From: [Todd Larson](#)
To: [Chris Anderson](#)
Subject: FW: Strong Opposition to Sketch Plan – Project No. 26-106 (Thomas Allen Homes LLC, 17400 & 17650 Erkium Street NW – 15-lot subdivision)
Date: Monday, August 24, 2026 10:03:22 AM

From: Amanda Stoltz <stoltzmandy13@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2026 9:20 AM
To: Todd Larson <tlarson@cityoframseymn.gov>
Subject: Strong Opposition to Sketch Plan – Project No. 26-106 (Thomas Allen Homes LLC, 17400 & 17650 Erkium Street NW – 15-lot subdivision)

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Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Amanda Stoltz <stoltzmandy13@gmail.com>
Date: August 23, 2026 at 10:29:41 PM CDT
To: planning@cityoframsey.com
Cc: Todd Larson <tlarson@cityoframseymn.gov>
Subject: Strong Opposition to Sketch Plan – Project No. 26-106 (Thomas Allen Homes LLC, 17400 & 17650 Erkium Street NW – 15-lot subdivision)

Dear Planning Commissioners and Staff,

I am a Ramsey resident living near the proposed Rum River Retreat development. Although my property is not directly adjacent to the proposed development, I have significant concerns about the potential impact this project could have on the rural character, safety, traffic, wildlife, and quality of life in this area of Ramsey.

Adding 15 additional residential properties, along with the associated roads, vehicles, infrastructure, and land clearing, represents a substantial change to an area that has retained much

of its quiet, wooded, rural character. My family, like many others who chose to purchase and invest in this part of Ramsey, values the peace, open space, natural surroundings, and rural atmosphere that make this area unique.

I live near the intersection of Highway 47 and County Road 27, an area that already experiences significant congestion during busy traffic periods. I am concerned that additional homes and the resulting increase in vehicle traffic will place further pressure on an already busy transportation network.

I am also deeply concerned about the impact of the proposed development on wildlife habitat and the existing wooded areas. Clearing land for homes, roads, and infrastructure would permanently change the natural landscape and reduce the wooded buffers that help preserve the rural character of this portion of Ramsey.

This development also raises safety concerns for children in the area. I have two young children who enjoy the nature, open space, and peaceful surroundings of our community. They have friends who live on 177th Avenue NW, and under the current conditions, I feel comfortable with my children walking through the wooded area to visit their friends. The proposed changes to the road and the anticipated increase in traffic would change that. I would have greater concerns about children walking or biking in the area, particularly along a road that could experience substantially more traffic.

I am also concerned about the children who currently wait for their school buses along this road. Increased traffic and changes to the surrounding area could create additional safety risks for these children.

I understand that Ramsey will continue to grow and that property owners have the right to develop their land consistent with applicable regulations. However, I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to carefully consider whether this particular development is appropriate for the existing rural character and

infrastructure of this area.

Once wooded land, wildlife habitat, and the quiet rural nature of a community are replaced by additional roads, homes, and traffic, those characteristics cannot easily be restored. Many of us chose to live and invest in this part of Ramsey specifically because of those qualities, and I am concerned that continued development is gradually eroding what makes this area special.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Planning Commission to carefully evaluate the proposed Rum River Retreat development and its impacts on traffic, road safety, children, wildlife habitat, land clearing, and the rural character of the surrounding community. I respectfully request that the Planning Commission not recommend moving forward with the proposal as currently presented.

Thank you for taking the concerns of area residents into consideration and for your service to the Ramsey community.

Sincerely,

Amanda Stoltz

5750 179th ln NW

Ramsey, MN 55303

August 27, 2026

Via Email (planning@cityoframseymn.gov)

Members of the Planning Commission
City of Ramsey
7550 Sunwood Drive NW
Ramsey, MN 55303

Re: Rum River Retreat
Project #26-106
Our File No. 32858

Dear Planning Commissioners:

We represent Paul and Stephanie Olson, who own and reside on the 35-acre parcel located at 5750 177th Ave NW. Our clients' property is immediately adjacent and to the west of the parcel on which Sundance Woods, LLC, ("the Applicant") proposes to create 15 lots consisting of 14 new homes and one existing home ("the Project"). In order to proceed with the Project, the Applicant requires two variances from the City of Ramsey. Specifically, the applicant seeks a variance from the maximum cul-de-sac length set forth in the City's subdivision ordinance and a variance from the minimum lot depth requirement found in the City's zoning ordinance. For the reasons outlined below, the requested variances must be denied.

As you may be aware, the City's authority to grant variances is governed by statute. As a result, the City may grant a variance only if doing so is consistent with statutory requirements. Here, there are two different statutes at play because the Applicant is seeking variance from two different ordinances. Variances from a requirement of a zoning ordinance are governed by Minn. Stat. § 462.357, whereas Minn. Stat. § 462.358 governs variances from a requirement of a subdivision ordinance. These two statutes impose very different rules for the two types of variance.

Variance from the maximum cul-de-sac length

The Subdivision Ordinance, and specifically Sec.117-614(c)(7), provides that "[t]he maximum length of cul-de-sac streets shall be 600 feet[.]" Neither the project narrative nor the staff report provides the length of the proposed unnamed east-west cul-de-sac that is part of the Project, but from the proposed preliminary plat it appears that that street is over 1,100 feet in length.

Section 462.358 authorizes the City to grant variances from the Subdivision Ordinance, but places an important limitation on that power. The relevant subdivision reads as follows:

Subdivision regulations may provide for a procedure for varying the regulations as they apply to specific properties where an unusual hardship on the land exists, **but variances may be granted only upon the specific grounds set forth in the regulations.**

Minn. Stat. § 462.358, subd. 6. Based on the bold language in subdivision 6, a city may grant a variance from a requirement of its subdivision ordinance but only on the specific grounds stated in the subdivision ordinance.

Review of the City's Subdivision Ordinance shows that it allows for variances to be granted in three different circumstances, none of which applies here.

1. Section 117-048 provides for the possibility of a variance from strict conformity with "this subdivision." The subdivision in which Sec. 117-048 is found is the Stormwater Pollution Control subdivision, set forth in Secs. 117-383 through Sec. 117-410. The maximum cul-de-sac length restriction is not found in the Stormwater Pollution Control subdivision.
2. Section 117-426(d) provides that "[v]ariations from the strict enforcement of this chapter may be granted in accordance with the procedures and requirements of section 117-51." Section 117-51 does not appear to exist. It was either previously repealed or never enacted in the first place.
3. Finally, Section 117-561 provides for procedural variances. Specifically, that section provides that "[t]he board of adjustment may adopt a resolution to grant a variance from procedural requirements of this chapter[.]" A variance from the maximum cul-de-sac length would be a variance from a substantive requirement of the Subdivision Ordinance, not a procedural requirement.

Because the legislature has not authorized the City to grant variances from its Subdivision Ordinance beyond those specifically identified in the Subdivision Ordinance, and because the City's Subdivision Ordinance does not authorize variances from substantive requirements such as the maximum length of a cul-de-sac, the City does not have the legal authority to grant the requested variance. *See Costley v. Caromin House, Inc.*, 313 N.W.2d 21, 27 (Minn. 1981) ("In Minnesota, ... a municipality has no inherent power to enact zoning regulations [and...] cannot exceed the limitations imposed by the enabling legislation.")

The cul-de-sac variance must be denied for lack of statutory authority, but it should be noted that even if statutory authority existed it would still have to be denied for the lack of a showing of any "unusual hardship." The length of the cul-de-sac is the result of design choices made by the Applicant to maximize the number of homes and therefore the revenue that can be generated from this project. It is therefore the product of choice, not any unusual hardship. This would require denial of the variance even if it had a proper statutory basis.

Moreover, the justification for the variance provided in the staff report—that the non-compliant cul-de-sac will just be temporary—is lacking any support in record. The contemplated future connection to the west would require an extension across property owned by the Olsons, which is not part of this application and is not controlled by the Applicant. The Applicant has identified no existing easement, right-of-way, development agreement, construction deadline, or other legally enforceable mechanism requiring that connection. Finally, the Olsons have no intention of selling their land, at any price. The City must therefore evaluate the road as what the present application actually creates: an indefinite 1,100-foot dead-end street, nearly twice the maximum length allowed by ordinance.

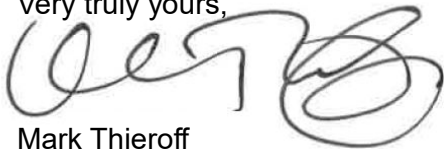
Variance from the 200' lot depth minimum

The zoning ordinance, and specifically Sec. 106-430, imposes a minimum lot depth of 200 feet for lots in the RR zoning district. Two of the lots proposed as part of the Project are only 185 feet deep. The Zoning Code and specifically Sec. 106-220 authorizes the City to grant a variance from the minimum lot depth requirement, but only if certain criteria are satisfied. Those criteria include that the "plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner" and that "economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties."

Neither of those requirements is satisfied here. The proffered justification for the variance is the location of an existing dedicated right of way, but the Applicant can take the necessary steps to shift that right of way slightly to the west. This is not an immutable characteristic of the property, and thus not a unique circumstance. The Applicant has simply chosen to seek a variance rather than eliminate the need for the variance in order to maximize the development potential of the property.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Olsons request that the Planning Commission recommend denial of Resolution #26-187 and the preliminary plat dependent upon it.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Thieroff', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Thieroff

612-337-6102 | Direct
markthieroff@siegelbrill.com

cc. Chris Anderson (via email: canderson@cityoframseymn.gov)