



# PLANNING COMMISSION SYNOPSIS

Thursday, March 17, 2016

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Nordstrom called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 PM in the McLeod Conference Room of the Bloomington Civic Plaza.

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**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Nordstrom, Willette, Spiess, Batterson, Bennett, Goodrum

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Fischer

**STAFF PRESENT:** Farnham, Desrude, Heyman, O'Day

Chairperson Nordstrom led the attendees in the reciting of *The Pledge of Allegiance*.

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**ITEM 1**  
6:03p.m.

**APPLICANT:** City of Bloomington

**REQUEST:** Normandale Lake District Update #2

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**SPEAKING FOR THE APPLICANT:**

Julie Farnham, Senior Planner  
Liz Heyman, Planner  
Jen Desrude, Civil Engineer  
Kirk Roberts, Traffic/Transportation Engineer

**DISCUSSION:**

Heyman gave a brief overview:

The 2008 District Plan

- Vision for the Normandale Lake District
- Proposed public infrastructure improvements to accommodate projected development
- The implementation plan – priority projects, timing, and funding

Traffic issues

- The 2008 Plan focused on the 84<sup>th</sup> and Normandale Blvd intersection reconstruct required to accommodate proposed significant new office development
- The improvements would be extremely expensive and unlikely to receive grant funding
- The intersection design required removal of at-grade pedestrian movements and addition of a pedestrian bridge across Normandale Blvd.

Land use changes since 2008 Plan adopted

- Shift from office use to residential development on some parcels (example: Covington, Norman Pointe)

I-494 on ramp

- Since adoption of 2008 Plan the I-494 on ramp at East Bush Lake Road became a viable project and is now fully funded

- The ramp will affect the traffic patterns in the District and eliminates need to reconstruct intersection at Normandale Blvd and 84<sup>th</sup>.

Why update the district plan?

- Evaluate the impact of land use changes on public infrastructure needs and priorities
- Incorporate the East Bush Lake Road ramp and findings of updated traffic and utility models

Heyman noted the Plan update evaluated two land use scenarios. The land use scenarios will be the basis for assumptions included in the utility and traffic analyses.

Land use scenario 1: Commercial

- The first scenario is similar to the 2008 land use concept but it reflects the approved land use changes and constructed development that has taken place since 2008.

Land use scenario 2: Mixed use

- This scenario assumes additional parcels will transition from office use to mixed use residential uses

Traffic study

- The ramp was included in the traffic study for both land use scenarios. The impacts are the same with minor traffic impacts.
- The 494 onramp included in the traffic model, eliminates the need to reconstruct the intersection at 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Blvd. Thus, the previously required pedestrian bridge is no longer needed. Study results indicate existing roads have capacity to accommodate most future development. This suggests there may be new opportunities for bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

Utility study

- The same land use scenarios were used for the utility study. In both scenarios, watermain and sanitary sewer upgrades are needed

Desrude presented an overview of projects to be implemented in the short, mid, and long term.

- o Normandale water quality project that will identify the mitigation of curly leaf weed in Normandale Lake. There will be involvement with the Army Corps of Engineers, who has control over the outlet structure. The City will be working with Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and the Army Corps of Engineers to draw down the lake and then most likely use an herbicide to get rid of the vegetation. Staff is aware that the green lake is unsightly, as well as has an odor.

Nordstrom asked where was the source of contaminated vegetation coming from. If it is coming from Nine Mile Creek, how are they dealing with the issue? Desrude stated the City has petitioned the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to work on this project, so there would be no City cost to do this project.

Desrude provided an overview of the proposed Implementation Plan, including project costs for each phase and compared to costs proposed in 2008 Plan.

Costs

- Short term cost – around \$7 million
- Midterm cost - \$100,000+ (there are unknowns at this time)
- Long term cost - \$350,000 (includes the known cost for improvements at Normandale Lake Blvd and American Blvd, but many unknowns)
- In 2008, the projected cost for the implementation plan was \$41.2 million (included 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Blvd, pedestrian bridge improvements, and urban design enhancements)
- The City received a MAP-21 grant and TED grant that is paying for a portion of the East Bush Lake Road ramp. Hennepin County is also paying for a portion of the East Bush Lake Road project cost.

Special assessments were used to pay for work that was already completed from 2008-2011. Tax abatement will pay for implementation projects excluding the East Bush Lake Road ramp

Desrude described the funding strategy, which includes:

#### Special assessments

- In 2008, public improvement agreements were signed with all Class A office buildings in the district
  - o The improvements were split into two phases
  - o The first phase is already complete and paid for
  - o The second phase was only applied to the 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Blvd intersection and is no longer valid as this project is not needed now
    - City Council may terminate the existing agreements for the second phase as the project is no longer needed.

#### Tax abatement

- Similar to TIF, it gathers taxes for new development and allocates the tax to new infrastructure improvements. The collection starts 2 years after new developments open. All redevelopment is projected to occur by 2026.

#### Next steps

- City Council study meeting in April
- Open house on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016
- Ensuring projects meet the abatement eligibility criteria
- Drafting the final report
- Public hearings at Planning Commission and City Council, and Met Council review

Nordstrom asked when the westbound 494 access is completed, does staff think 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Blvd will be fully adequate to handle expected traffic?

Roberts said, based on assumptions, the intersection should meet the traffic needs. Peak hour will always be busy.

Willette stated there are 7 or more lanes to cross Normandale Blvd at 84<sup>th</sup> Street. How would staff handle the signaling for pedestrians?

Roberts stated it would be an at grade crossing and would operate as is. There is potential to change the signal phasing to benefit pedestrians.

Willette is concerned about safety for children crossing the long intersection, particularly during events. Roberts noted the pedestrian signal time has increased. There is also an ability to change the signal timing for specific events.

Batterson has noticed groups of people crossing Normandale Blvd to get to the retail areas. The lack of pedestrian access is a huge concern.

Spiess agreed and recommended painting to make the crosswalks more visible.

Roberts reiterated that the intersection is very long. He appreciated the feedback.

The commission agreed more vividly painted crosswalks could help pedestrians.

Goodrum stated the land use changes support improving the pedestrian environment. Normandale Blvd and 84<sup>th</sup> Street is a key intersection.

Heyman noted the walking distances within the Normandale Lake District are not that long. She

suggested adding signage to direct people to the existing American Blvd bridge over Normandale Blvd.

Goodrum noted people often avoid using the bridge.

Farnham suggested that improvements to the existing bridge could make it more comfortable and entice pedestrians to use it. The 2008 Plan looked at adding a short cut connection from American between the apartments to get to the shopping center.

Roberts suggested a two-pronged approach that includes priorities to 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Boulevard and internal pedestrian wayfinding within the Normandale Lake District.

Willette asked if the bridge is 4 lanes and asked if it can decrease to 2 lanes. Roberts said the PM peak traffic is high on American Blvd. But, it may be possible to take out a lane for AM peak and dedicate it to pedestrian and bike use only. Willette suggested using signage to indicate use of the southbound and northbound lanes. Roberts will look into the option.

Batterson noted it takes a while to get from the offices to the bridge. There is an underutilized retail center that is difficult to access by foot. Farnham stated it is not as far as it may seem. It's actually closer for new development on the northern portion of the district. The pedestrian movements will change over time as new development occurs. Goodrum agreed and recommended to improve the 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Normandale Blvd intersection as development grows.

Bennett asked about the wayfinding signage cost. The presentation should read \$7,000 instead of \$700,000.

Heyman confirmed that was an error and wayfinding cost should be \$7,000.

Goodrum asked if there is opportunity to alter the land use scenarios. Heyman clarified they are not suggesting any land use changes with this update and the current zoning would allow both scenarios. They were both modeled to study the impacts. Farnham said the zoning is very broad and allows for a wide range of use.

Batterson said limiting a left turn lane to the Holiday Station Store gets difficult. He understands the difficulty but would like to see an analysis to study the left turns. Roberts suggests a video study with crash data to evaluate how many left turns are taken.

Batterson commented on the apartments to the east of Normandale Blvd. Farnham stated the apartments are aging and it's possible they will redevelop, though may remain residential or perhaps mixed use. Batterson said retail would work nicely there.

**ITEM 2**  
7:00 p.m.

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**APPLICANT:** City of Bloomington

**REQUEST:** Overview of the process to update the City's Comprehensive Plan

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**SPEAKING FOR THE APPLICANT:**

Julie Farnham, Senior Planner

**DISCUSSION:**

Farnham gave a brief overview of the Comprehensive Plan update process.

#### Why update?

- Statutory requirement
- Regional coordination
- Update city goals and implementation priorities

#### Regional coordination

- Thrive MSP is Met Council's regional development guide and describes desired outcomes
- Met Council updates their system and policy plans on transportation, parks, housing, etc
- Local system statements were received in September 2015
- Community designations define and designate range of urban, suburban, rural, etc. Bloomington classified as "urban"

#### Community designation

- Characteristics of "urban" designation:
  - o Post WWII growth period
  - o Auto-oriented development pattern
  - o Redeveloping mix use, transportation improvements, etc
  - o Similar cities include Edina, St. Louis Park, Roseville

#### Bloomington system statement includes:

- 2040 forecasts for population, households and employment
- Density guidance for "urban" designation includes 10 units per acre for new and redevelopment
- The Met Council calculates the affordable housing "need" and allocates to individual communities that throughout the region. In 2008, the goal for Bloomington was creation of 961 units from 2011-2020. The updated goals is 586 units from 2021-2030.
- Summary of System Plan changes affecting Bloomington

#### Comprehensive plan elements

- No substantive changes in required elements since 2008 Plan. The biggest change is Thrive 2040 emphasizes key outcomes that we will need to address in the plan update.

#### Timeline

- 2016 will focus on forecasts, existing conditions and the overall vision for the community
- 2017 will focus on technical details and implementation steps for each plan element (land use, transportation, utilities, community facilities and parks)
- 2018 will focus on completing the draft for preliminary review. The draft must be sent to the surrounding communities who have a 6 month comment period before the public hearings, that will need to occur in fall 2018.
- The final Comprehensive Plan must be submitted to the Met Council at the end of 2018
- She noted the City Council is currently embarking on strategic planning that focuses on action items that will be valuable to the visioning process

#### Engagement

- Engagement may include an advisory committee comprised of Planning Commission members and others
- It will also involve the City Council, the community, stakeholders, other commissioners, and technical staff work groups

#### Engagement methods

- Methods will include open houses, social media, focus groups, surveys and events. An early activity will include having a presence at the farmers market to share information, answer questions and gather input from residents

## Next steps

- City Council strategic planning will end in June
- Establish the Comprehensive Plan advisory committee
- Begin the visioning engagement in the summer
- Hold info sessions throughout the summer and fall
- She noted that other ongoing planning efforts, including the neighborhood commercial study and industrial obsolescence study, will also provide valuable information and insights for the Comp Plan.

Goodrum asked if the work is being done in house.  
Farnham confirmed.

Batterson noted the neighborhood commercial study and the industrial obsolescence study will be very helpful and valuable in drafting the Comprehensive Plan.

Nordstrom asked about the difference between the previous Comprehensive Plan and the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

Farnham stated the main theme in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan update was to address redevelopment and complete plans for the three development districts. That was a successful strategy and redevelopment will continue to be the major focus of the updated plan. A key issue to address in the Plan update will be the major demographics changes occurring locally and beyond. What are implications of those changes? Also, the need to upgrade aging infrastructure is becoming more acute as many facilities are 30-50 years old.

Nordstrom stated the biggest increase in employment has occurred within the service industry. Can the industrial and commercial industries provide an employment increase, too?

Farnham discussed the employment patterns in Bloomington. One objective of the industrial obsolescence study is to identify potential redevelopable opportunities; to see if any older industrial sites are better suited as a residential or commercial use. There is also a challenge to provide housing for employees in the service industry. How can we address the mismatch between lower household incomes and increasing housing costs?

Batterson commented on the recent investment in industrial areas. West Bloomington has huge parcels of industrial areas. There is a stronger desire for housing in West Bloomington.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

**Prepared By:** EO **Reviewed By:** JF, EH, JD

**Approved By Planning Commission:** April 21, 2016