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STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 15, 2005
TO: Minneapolis City Planning Commission
FROM: Beth Elliott, CPED Community Planning
RE: Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan

The *Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan* was initiated by the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association to provide planning and future development detail for a neighborhood where we are now seeing significant interest on the part of the development community. The plan area corresponds with the official Bryn Mawr neighborhood, bounded by Highway 394 and France Avenue on the south, Glenwood Avenue on the north, and the city's western boundary. Upon adoption of this plan, it will be used like *The Minneapolis Plan* to guide development activities in the project area.

BACKGROUND

The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association has spent the last few of years developing a framework to facilitate discussions about the future direction of development within the neighborhood. The culmination of this process is the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan. In December 2003, the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association approved the plan and requested that the City of Minneapolis CPED Planning Division review the plan and recommend it for adoption by the City Planning Commission and City Council.

The Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan was presented to the Planning Commission at the Committee of the Whole meeting on August 12, 2004 for approval. The staff report included calculations of the possible number of housing units for each redevelopment site based on the land use/zoning recommendations in the plan. Considering that housing units in Bryn Mawr could be doubled if this plan is carried out as proposed, the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association decided to suspend the approval process to digest the new information. The BMNA is bringing the plan back for approval at this time in its original form.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In May 2002, the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association formed a Land Use Committee that was charged with providing a framework to facilitate a discussion about the future development direction of the neighborhood. This work included an education component, quantifying and mapping neighborhood characteristics, and meshing Bryn Mawr's vision with the City's vision for land use as articulated in *The Minneapolis Plan*. The Land Use Committee met every other week for eighteen months.

The Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan was first presented to the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association in August 2003. This was done after three community meetings were held in the neighborhood. The BMNA determined that they could offer final approval of the plan once two more public meetings were held for interested stakeholders. The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association approved the land use plan in December 2003.

SUMMARY

The following is a much abbreviated summary of the recommendations within the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan. Generally the plan is consistent with many policies, guidelines, and requirements set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* and the *Zoning Code*. Such themes prevalent in both City documents and the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan include preserving the historic character of the neighborhood, community-building through development, and taking advantage of the juxtaposition of natural amenities and the built environment. The Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan is a vision that is based on a general design framework as well as recommendations for nine specific redevelopment sites within the neighborhood.

Plan Recommendations for Design Framework

Recommendations related to the Design Framework are described below. However, they are discussed in more detail within the plan.

Land Use –The housing mix within the neighborhood should be expanded and diversified, potentially with medium-density housing. The sites in or next to the commercial nodes should address a wide range of housing needs, particularly those of seniors and empty-nesters. Future commercial uses should be concentrated in Downtown Bryn Mawr, the South Gateway and South Frontage areas, North Frontage Site, and the Target Site. These uses should try to serve the local community.

For large development sites, mixed uses are strongly encouraged. This includes vertical and horizontal mixture for residential, office, and retail. The structures should have a stylistic unity with the surrounding area and be multi-storied.

Building Design – Design should complement the existing character of surrounding buildings and the natural environment through the materials used, a structure's fenestration, and its relationship to the street. Main entrances should face the street and at least 40

percent of the ground floor façade of a commercial building should be transparent. Commercial buildings should also have awnings as well as pedestrian-oriented signage and lighting.

Transportation – As a public space, street use should be balanced among cars, transit, pedestrians, bicycles and other transportation modes. Traffic-calming measures, such as the redesign of on-street parking and bump-outs, are needed along Penn Avenue and Cedar Lake Road South. Sidewalks should also be provided along all public street frontages.

Public Spaces – Downtown Bryn Mawr is the most important gathering place for residents, so improvements include: improving landscaping and streetscape, calming traffic, and narrowing the street to provide wider sidewalks and more space for people to gather. Public spaces should also be created as part of new development.

Plan Recommendations for Redevelopment Sites

The recommendations are described below. However, they are discussed in a more detailed manner within the plan.

Fruen Mill – A plan for this area should: preserve the natural environment, especially Bassett’s Creek and MPRB Vegetation and Habitat Restoration Areas; improve the visual image; and be compatible with current and surrounding land uses. The recommendation is for development that is an upscale, medium-density residential use that is respectful of the surrounding parkland. If possible, future development should preserve the historic value of the site and retain the current mill for residential use. In order to change the land use on this site, it is recommended that a rezoning occur from Light-Industry (I1) to Multi-Family Residential or Light Industry with residential overlay. This will potentially add 49-137 housing units on the site.

Anwatin Woods – The site was formerly a pond and green space before it was used as a city construction landfill. The vision for this area includes: preservation of the natural environment; restoration of wetland; and compatibility with current and surrounding land uses. Some site limitations are that there is possible land contamination and no direct access exists to some of the lots. Single-family residential is the recommended use for the lots on Washburn Avenue South, and lots along Vincent Avenue should be preserved as park use/green space with the possibility of an environmental learning center. This will potentially add 15 housing units on the site. No rezoning is necessary.

North Frontage – This site directly north of I-394 is currently the office park for Qwest. The vision for the site includes: preserving the natural environment; mitigating the effect of freeway noise on the residential area to the north; addressing speeding on neighborhood streets; improving the visual image; and making the site compatible with current and surrounding land uses. If Qwest vacates the site and the site is redeveloped, the recommended future use is medium-density residential. The development could be a mix of retail, rental, and for sale units with different types of housing on the site. It is recommended that the site be rezoned from Office District (OR2) to a medium-density residential district (R4). This will potentially add 369 housing units on the site.

South Frontage – Directly south of I-394, this site is bounded by residential areas on the east, south, and west. The vision for this site is that development will: improve the visual image; mitigate the effect of freeway noise on the surrounding residential uses; take better advantage of the views of downtown; enhance the quality of life for residents living south of the site; and be compatible with current and surrounding land uses. The recommended use is a mixed-use development with residential on upper floors and businesses on the ground floor. Residential should be low to medium density, a mix of affordable and market-rate units and high-quality for-sale housing. This will potentially add 175 housing units on the site. No change in zoning is recommended.

South Gateway – A plan for the area would include: improving the visual image of the neighborhood gateway; mitigating traffic and congestion at Penn Avenue and I-394; creating a pedestrian-friendly environment; mitigating freeway noise; creating views of downtown; providing better connections to the park, lakes, and trail systems; and better utilization of the opportunities provided by the proposed LRT station at this location. Mixed-use development is recommended, with residential being high-quality and market rate, for-sale housing. A rezoning from Light Industrial (I1) to Office Residential (OR2) would be needed for a mixed-use of moderate dwellings and offices with additional small scale retail sales and services. This will potentially add 309 housing units to the site.

Downtown Bryn Mawr – The intersection of Penn Avenue and Cedar Lake Road South is a designated Neighborhood Commercial Node. A vision for this area adheres to: soft commercial uses; keeping its current size; mixed uses and greening; pedestrian-orientation; common themes for building facades; and providing moderate parking space. A mixed-use building with higher-density housing for seniors is recommended for the southwest corner of the intersection. This will potentially add 12 housing units under existing zoning. If higher-density housing is desired and a zoning change is made, there is potential for 21-47 additional housing units in the downtown.

Some incremental improvements will make the area more walkable and safe, e.g. through the planting of trees, improving lighting and reconfiguring the traffic flow at Cedar Lake Road South and Laurel Avenue West. By widening the sidewalk and adding angled parking along Cedar Lake Road South, the street can be narrowed, making it safer for pedestrians to cross.

Downtown Bryn Mawr is recommended to have moderate off-street parking available. Potential parking sites include the tailor's site on Penn Avenue, the Downtown Qwest building site, and the commercial property on the northeast corner of Cedar Lake Road and Oliver Avenue South.

North Gateway – South of the site is residential, north and west of the site is Bassett's Creek Park. Running alongside Bassett's Creek are two regional rail tracks. The vision for the site is: an improved visual image; better utilization of the environmental assets; preservation of parkland; improved accessibility to Bassett's Creek from the street; and to be compatible with current and surrounding land uses. It is recommended that the old Burma Shave Company building be converted to a community center combined with art/studio space on the upper levels. Since the site currently has no off-street parking, the recommendation

includes tearing down the eastern section of the building for a small parking lot. The recommendation includes a rezoning from Light Industry (I1) to High Density Office Residential (OR2) to allow a community center.

Target – The site was originally part of the Minneapolis Park System and is still surrounded by park property. A plan for this area should include: improved visual image of the site; better utilization of the environmental assets; and compatibility with current and surrounding land uses. If Target vacates the site and the site is redeveloped, the recommendation is for high quality, medium-density residential uses that can benefit from the views of Brownie and Cedar Lakes. This will potentially add 585-974 housing units on the site. The parkland surrounding Brownie Lake should remain undeveloped. No change in zoning is recommended.

“The Banana” – Bassett Creek Valley – A vision for this site includes: improving its visual image; better utilization of downtown and park views; preserving parkland; better accessibility to the site; a pedestrian-friendly environment; strengthening connections between built and natural amenities; and better compatibility with the current and surrounding land uses. Recommended future uses for the site include residential, school, studios, markets, and a hotel. This will potentially add 309-862 housing units to the site. A planned unit development is recommended instead of zoning changes.

“The Banana” is also part of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan, which was adopted by the City Council in March 2000. Instead of referring this section to that plan, the Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association chose to make a formal presentation of its uses for “The Banana” to the BCV Redevelopment Oversight Committee (ROC) for approval.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier, the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan is generally consistent with *The Minneapolis Plan* and the *Zoning Code*. The plan incorporates the goals from these documents to achieve a higher level of urban design that contributes to the vitality of the community. The plan expands on those goals through design policies that address building orientation, placement, height, massing, and use, integrating parking, accommodating pedestrian circulation, and encouraging mixed uses. The plan also illustrates numerous examples and possibilities of how development can be accommodated in the neighborhood to meet those goals.

The plan makes a few recommendations for implementation by the City. They are:

1. To adopt this plan as a supplement to the City’s comprehensive plan;
2. To rezone Fruen Mill and North/South Gateway from Light Industry (I1) to OR2 and OR1, respectively, and North Frontage from OR2 to R4; and
3. To comply with the plan in the development review process.

The Minneapolis Plan is the City of Minneapolis’ comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan analyzes trends in the city’s population, economic growth, and neighborhood livability. It also

proposes a vision for the physical development of the city and identifies steps that the city must take in order to achieve that vision. It does not discuss detailed neighborhood planning efforts. In addition, the Land Use Policy Map is intended to illustrate the general location and distribution of the various categories of land uses anticipated by the comprehensive plan policies over the life of the plan; it is not currently intended to provide the basis for rezones and other legislative and quasi-judicial decisions, for which the decision makers must look to the comprehensive plan policies and various implementing regulations.

Based on the above discussion, no amendments to *The Minneapolis Plan* are necessary as recommended by the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan. However, upon adoption, the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan will serve as an adjunct to *The Minneapolis Plan* and will provide an additional implementation tool by which development proposals will be reviewed against.

The plan recommends that a number of parcels be rezoned for future development. The City generally evaluates the rezoning of property based on individual development proposals. The recommendation of that rezoning is reviewed against numerous approved documents. Currently, the existing zoning on these sites would accommodate much of the plan's intentions through the use of various methods in the *Zoning Code* such as planned unit developments, density bonuses, variances, etc. However, in the instances where the current zoning classification is not appropriate, staff will work towards ensuring that rezonings in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood are consistent with the intent of the recommended land use development patterns within the plan.

If the nine designated sites are eventually redeveloped to the plan's specifications, there is the potential for 1,828-2,893 new housing units (with density bonuses) to be added to the neighborhood. If this scale of development occurs, the total number of housing units in the neighborhood would more than double.

APPLICABLE POLICIES FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS PLAN

There are numerous policies and implementation steps set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* in which the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan is in compliance. To list them all individually would be quite lengthy. Therefore, the following are the overall goals the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan is in compliance with.

The first goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to "Increase the city's population and tax base by developing and supporting housing choices citywide through preservation of existing housing and new construction."

The fourth goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to "Create strong vital commercial corridors city-wide through mixed use development, including a variety of businesses and creative housing."

The sixth goal set forth in *The Minneapolis Plan* is to "Preserve, enhance and create a sustainable natural and historic environment citywide."

The Minneapolis Plan designates Penn Avenue and Cedar Lake Road South as Community Corridors. Community Corridors are locations that support new residential development at medium density and increased housing diversity in neighborhoods. They support limited commercial uses,

which are measured against their impacts on residential character, such as the production of fumes or noise or negative aesthetics. Design and development along these streets is oriented towards the pedestrian experience. The streets, which form the spine of the community corridors, carry fairly high volumes of traffic, but must balance vehicular travel against residential quality of life. The streets are also important identifiers and travel routes for neighborhood residents and pass-through traffic.

The Minneapolis Plan designates the intersection of Penn Avenue and Cedar Lake Road South as a Neighborhood Commercial Node. These areas are typically comprised of a handful of small and medium sized businesses focused around one intersection that primarily serves the needs of the immediate surrounding area, although they may well also contain specialty stores that serve a regional audience. Neighborhood Commercial Nodes are generally pedestrian oriented in scale and design. Their character is defined by the limited impact and scale of businesses operating in these locations, making them good neighbors to the surrounding residential uses.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DIVISION:

Recommended Motion: The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission **approve** the Bryn Mawr Land Use Plan subject to the following condition:

1. All references to the rezoning of parcels shall be eliminated from the document. Instead, the plan shall be amended to reference desired future land uses.