

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Small Area Plan/Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Date: November 13, 2006

Project Name: Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan 2006

Submitted By: CPED Planning Division

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Wards: 5, 7

Neighborhood Organizations:

- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association

Background

The Bassett Creek Valley (BCV) Area is around 230 acres of land, bounded on the west by Cedar Lake Road, on the east by I-94, on the north by the Heritage Park development, and on the south by I-394. It is named for Bassett Creek, which enters the area from the West, and enters an underground stormwater system in the center of the BCV Area on its way to the Mississippi River. The BCV Area currently encompasses a mix of land uses, including large and prominent features such as the city's Impound Lot, and Bryn Mawr Meadows Park. It is traversed by active rail lines, and in the future may support light rail and commuter rail lines. It supports two bicycle trails—the Cedar Lake Trail and the Bassett Creek Trail. Van White Memorial Boulevard is currently under construction, and will connect Interstate 394 at the current Dunwoody Boulevard exit to north Minneapolis through this area. The BCV Area is home to many industrial and commercial businesses, and some single family homes.

The Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan (also referred to in this report as “the Plan” or “the 2006 Plan”) is a proposed long-range plan for the BCV Area. It bears the same name as, and is proposed to supercede, the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan that was approved by the City Council in 2000 (also referred to in this report as “the 2000 Plan”). The 2006 Plan was developed over the course of 2005 and 2006 by the Bassett Creek Valley Redevelopment Oversight Committee (ROC) in collaboration with Ryan Development. Hoisington Koegler was contracted for consultant services to produce the Plan and facilitate the planning process. During this period numerous opportunities were provided for community input. The public events that provided opportunities to review and comment on the work in progress were extremely well attended. City staff served as a resource to the BCV ROC/Ryan Development collaboration during this period, but were not the project manager, nor the primary client for the consultant services. On two occasions, city staff submitted formal comments on the evolving plan.

The 2006 Plan is complex and has a number of important implications related to city operations and city development support. For this reason the recommendation on the plan by CPED Planning staff needs to take into full consideration the response of other city staff to the plan.

Because this internal review isn't complete yet, the staff recommendation is to take public testimony but continue the public hearing to November 27, 2006.

A number of comments on the Plan have been received from interested parties. They are attached in their entirety. Major themes in these comments will be summarized in the November 27 CPC staff report.

Plan Summary

An executive summary of the 2006 Plan is available which provides background and highlights many of the most important elements of the Plan.

The 2006 Plan attempts to build on the 2000 Plan in several ways. It offers a development scenario and development guidelines that are more specific than the fairly general guidance that was offered in the 2000 Plan. It proposes some modifications to the proposed land use and development guidelines of the 2000 Plan. It provides additional information and analysis relative to the feasibility of the redevelopment it proposes. And it suggests implementation strategies that might further the realization of the plan.

Elements of the 2006 Plan. The Plan offers guidance relative to the following elements.

- Land use
- An enhanced street network
- Specific and considerable improvements to the area's open space elements
- Housing mix with respect to rental vs ownership and on an affordability continuum
- Design guidelines for streets and buildings
- Appropriate density levels for different plan areas

In addition to this guidance framework, the plan offers an analysis of the feasibility of the proposed development. As part of this analysis it estimates the costs of redevelopment by sub-area. These include development costs related to site assembly, the structural implications of the poor soil conditions in much of the area, and environmental remediation. The Plan also attempts to calculate the cost of providing the public infrastructure associated with development—i.e. the streets and utilities, and desired streetscape elements.

The Plan outlines important principles and potential resources relative to implementation of the Plan.

Major changes from the 2000 Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan. This section highlights important differences between the 2000 and 2006 versions of the BCV Master Plan.

- **Land use along I-394.** The 2000 Plan called for the area between the current Linden Yards area north of I-394 to be commercial and industrial to the east of Van White Memorial Drive, and exclusively commercial to the west of Van White. The 2006 Plan proposes an adjustment to the land use guidance in both of these areas. To the east of Van White, it proposes commercial office development, except for an area that is designated for

“civic use”. Industrial development is not included as an option. To the west of Van White, it proposes a mix of office and residential.

- **Development intensity along I-394.** The 2000 Plan did not specify a specific density level for development along I-394, but it indicated that it would be appropriate for new buildings to exceed the height of the freeway by a modest amount. The 2006 Plan proposes a higher level of development intensity. It proposes that buildings of up to 25 stories be allowed. However, these building heights are not required in order to build out the area according to the other proposed density measures—up to 150 dwelling units per acre, and a floor area ratio of a little over three.
- **Land use along Van White north of railroad line.** The 2000 Plan called for industrial development on the east side of Van White between the railroad lines and Bassett Creek. The 2006 Plan proposes that housing and office uses are more appropriate for some of this area, extending about two blocks to the east of Van White. This is a reduction of industrially guided land and corresponding increase in anticipated housing units and office space.
- **Lower density residential development.** The 2000 Plan called for a mix of housing in the western part of the plan area north of Bassett Creek—including single-family houses, apartments, condominiums, townhouses and artist lofts—with height generally not to exceed 3 stories. The 2006 Plan makes a distinction between residential blocks north and south of Currie Avenue. To the south of Currie Avenue it proposes medium density residential development with a density of up to 110 housing units per acre. To the north of Currie it proposes lower density residential development with a density of up to 30 units per acre so as to provide development that is more compatible with single family housing north of 2nd Avenue.
- **Park expansion.** The 2000 Plan envisioned Bryn Mawr Meadows Park would be expanded northward up to and encompassing Bassett Creek itself along its northern edge. The new area would provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation. The 2006 Plan calls the park expansion Bassett Creek Commons, and envisions it as a passive open space without active recreational facilities—providing habitat, trail, and stormwater mitigation functions.
- **Street network.** The 2000 Plan does not illustrate a proposed street network to serve the new development. The 2006 Plan proposes a street network that serves the developed areas. The network includes a road along the north side of Bassett Creek that serves to delineate private development from the creek and associated park and trail system. It also proposes a couple of green streets, as well as and a bridge over the BN Railroad line in addition to the Van White bridge.
- **Housing mix.** The 2000 Plan was silent on the subject of the provision of affordable housing. 2006 Plan sets ambitious and fairly specific goals for the mix of housing to be built in the area. It proposes that a minimum of 60% of housing units be owner-occupied units, and that specific and aggressive targets be set for numbers of affordable units within the rental component and the ownership component.

Recommendation

**Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
– Planning Division:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission **continue** the public hearing to the meeting of November 27, 2006.