

Tom Dimond
2119 Skyway Drive
Saint Paul, MN 55119

April 1, 2015

RE: District 1 Community Plan

Environmental and Recreational Resources

The District 1 Community Plan supports efforts to minimize disturbances of the natural landscape, and preserve environmental resources.

District 1's natural resources are one of its most defining features. The vast woodlands, bluffs, wetlands, streams, lakes, and parkland continue to create a unique character to the area unrivaled in the rest of the city.

It is essential to the character of District 1 to preserve its natural features for wildlife uses and ecological functions while providing better access to open spaces for recreational purposes.

Decades of long range planning by Ramsey County, Saint Paul, Maplewood, Ramsey Washington Watershed District and the Highwood neighborhood have played a key role in the preservation of our natural and environmental resources. Highwood Nature Preserve, Henry Park, Fish Creek, Mississippi Bluffs, and Ponds at Battle Creek are the result of that long range vision and years of community effort.

We are now positioned to implement the long planned for protection of 80 acres of bluff top open space in Highwood when Ramsey County discontinues their current use of the Totem Town property and it becomes available for public open space. This parcel provides a vital link to interconnect parkland in Highwood with trails. Currently there is little access to safe off street walkways and bikeways.

* Saint Paul's Highwood Development Policies were recertified by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2009. In 2011, the Great River Passage was developed.

* Policy G1 - The wooded areas in Highwood, especially along the fragile bluffline, should be preserved and protected.

* Policy G6 - The City and/or the County should institute a plan for acquiring additional open space in the bluff area. Platted, but non-existent streets could provide the basis for a trail system for non-motorized use.

* G7 - Battle Creek - Battle Creek Park and Pigs Eye Lake should be tied to the neighborhood through an open space and trail system. Access to Pigs Eye Lake by trail should be developed.

* G8 - In the event Totem Town becomes available for alternative uses, it should be designated as open space with appropriate areas set aside as undeveloped natural areas representative of the region's ecosystem.

These policies and regulations are the result of a multi-year planning process and partnership between the District One Community Council, the Highwood Task Force (a group of Highwood residents), the Saint Paul Departments of Planning and Economic Development and Public Works, Ramsey County, and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District.

Amend LU4.4 to conform with the adopted area plan for Totem Town

LU4.4 - Ramsey County has determined the current use of Totem Town will be discontinued. Saint Paul and Ramsey County Parks Departments should facilitate an open process to implement the City Council approved plan to retain this property in public ownership as open space and natural areas representative of the region's ecosystem.

In the adopted Highwood Area Plan, the City Council cites the importance of conserving and protecting natural and scenic resources within the Mississippi River Critical Area. The City Council goes on to say they support Ramsey County's acquisition program, but share the neighborhood's frustration that acquisition has slowed. In this case, we have natural and scenic resources that are publicly owned. Ramsey County has a good track record. Not long ago, they discontinued Corrections use of 88 acres in Maplewood and retained it as parkland. **The 80 acres at Totem Town should be retained as public property for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.**

Amend

ENVS5.1 - Pursue grants or other resources to reduce urban pollutants currently impacting Battle Creek, Pine Creek, Ogden Creek, and Fish Creek.

Amend

ENV9.1 - Construct a crossings of Highway 61 and the railroad facilities near Lower Afton Road and near Henry Park as shown in the Bicycle and Pedestrian River Access Plan to connect to the Pig's Eye natural area and riverfront.

HIGHWOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICIES:

A PLAN FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN THE HIGHWOOD AREA OF ST. PAUL

GENERAL

- G1. The wooded areas in Highwood, especially along the fragile bluffline, should be preserved and protected.
- G2. Applicable guidelines and standards for lands within the boundaries of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area should be endorsed.
- G3. The existing mature stand of trees should be preserved, and the natural canopy of vegetative cover on vacant and occupied lots should be maintained.
- G4. Trees with a diameter in excess of 10 inches should be protected.
- G5. A landscape plan should be required for all subdivisions.
- G6. The City and/or County should institute a plan for acquiring additional open space in the bluff area. Platted but non-existent streets (such as Mystic, Elmwood and Brookline) could provide the basis for a trail system for non-motorized use.
- G7. Battle Creek Park and Pigs Eye Lake should be tied to the neighborhood through an open space and trail system. Access to Pigs Eye Lake by trail should be developed.
- G8. In the event Totem Town becomes available for alternative uses, it should be designated as public open space with appropriate areas set aside as undeveloped natural areas representative of the region's ecosystem.
- G9. Lands classified as unsuitable for development by the Task Force (86 acres on vacant parcels) should be acquired by the City or County on a willing-seller basis for open space and for use as holding pond areas. The City should enforce the River Corridor standards. The City supports continuation of County acquisition of steep slope parcels for open space purposes, and encourages Ramsey County to pursue acquisition funds when they become available through the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Program.

This policy addresses two issues regarding steep slope parcels (those with slopes of greater than 18 percent): preservation and acquisition. The City Council agrees that steep slopes, especially within the Mississippi River Critical Area, should be preserved, and that the city's River Corridor standards are reasonable and necessary in order to conserve and protect unique natural and scenic resources. The River Corridor standards prohibit residential development on slopes greater than 18 percent.

The City Council supports Ramsey County's acquisition program, but shares the neighborhood's frustration that acquisition has slowed due to funding constraints. In 1989, the portion of the Mississippi River that flows through the seven-county metropolitan area was designated as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) by Congress. Designation as the MNRRA makes the Mississippi River Critical Area a part of the national park system and requires that a unified comprehensive plan be developed and implemented by federal, state and local governments. Once the comprehensive plan is approved, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to make grants to state and local governments for up to 50 percent of the cost of acquisition and

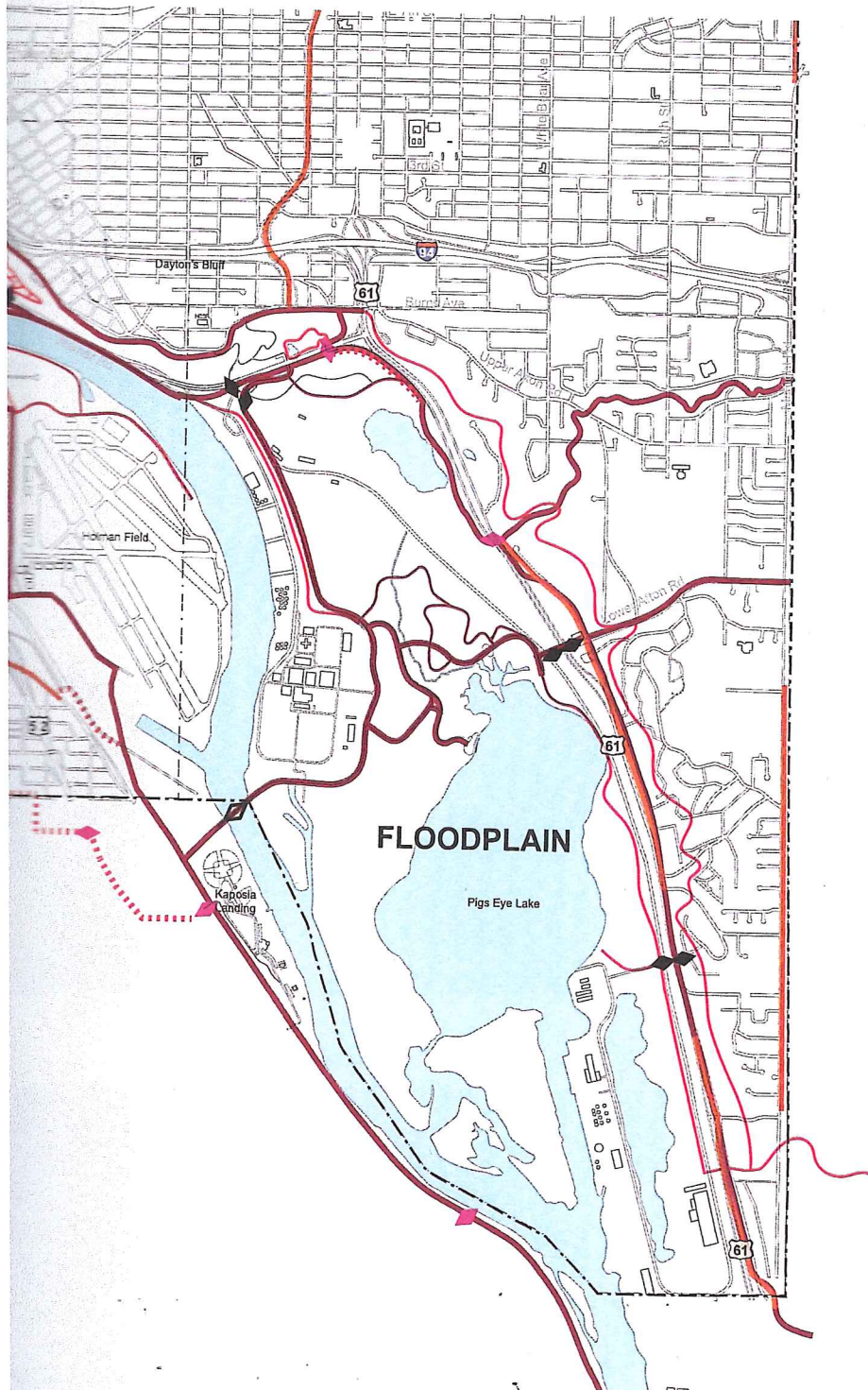
This packet of materials contains development policies and regulations related to the area of Saint Paul commonly referred to as Highwood. For the purposes of these policies and regulations, Highwood is bounded on the north by Lower Afton Road, on the east by McKnight Road, on the south by the city limits and on the west by Highway 61. North Highwood is that area north of Highwood Avenue; South Highwood is that area south of Highwood Avenue.

These policies and regulations are the result of a multi-year planning process and partnership between the District One Community Council, the Highwood Task Force (a group of Highwood residents), the Saint Paul Departments of Planning & Economic Development and Public Works, Ramsey County and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District.

For further information, please contact Lucy Thompson, Department of Planning and Economic Development, at 266-6578, or the District One Community Council at 292-7828.

Bicycle and Pedestrian River Access Plan 5.2

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Other

- City Boundary
- Reach Boundary

surface)
e)
potential for future trail access and are
ts. Should they decide to discontinue or
feasibility of trail conversion(s).

Fish Creek

Fish Creek Forever The Creek

On December 11, 2013, Maplewood acquired the 70-acre Fish Creek property! For over 20 years, the dream of preserving land south of Carver Road has been gathering momentum. Maplewood thanks the many partners and residents that have worked to make this dream come true.



Protecting this land will increase the buffer for Fish Creek, preserve wildlife habitat, provide public access to the bluff top, enhance access to existing county open space, and provide a segment of land needed for the Fish Creek Hiking Trail.

The Bluffland

The Conservation Fund purchased the site in 2011 and agreed to hold it for 2 years to give the city and its primary partners, Ramsey County and Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, time to raise the \$2.2 million needed. Generous donations from the Maplewood-based 3M Foundation, Friends of the



Mississippi River and individual donors were provided. A Natural and Scenic Area grant from Department of Natural Resources, a grant from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, and bonding funds from the State of Minnesota provided nearly half the funding, making this conservation achievement possible.

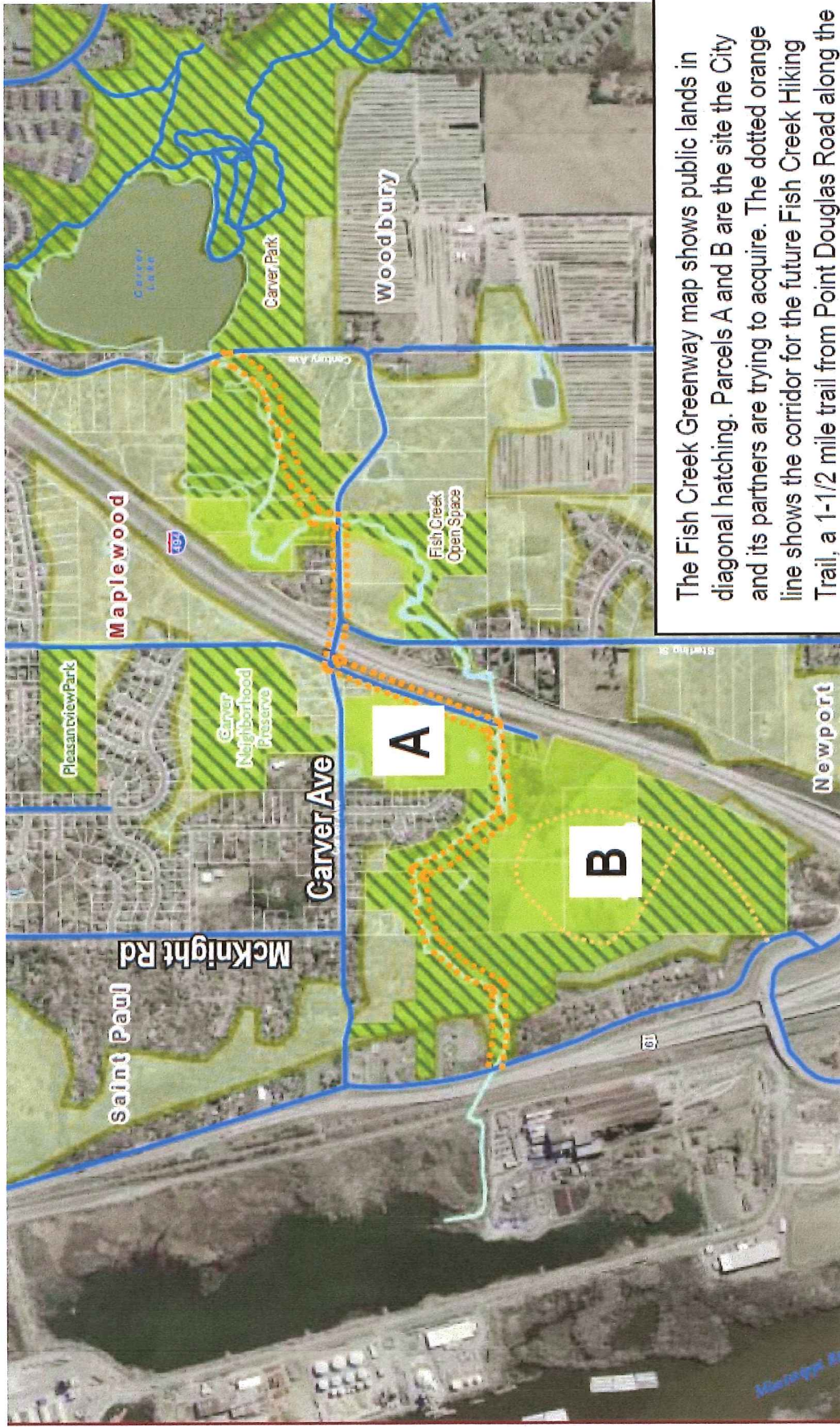
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Funding

How was This Project Funded?

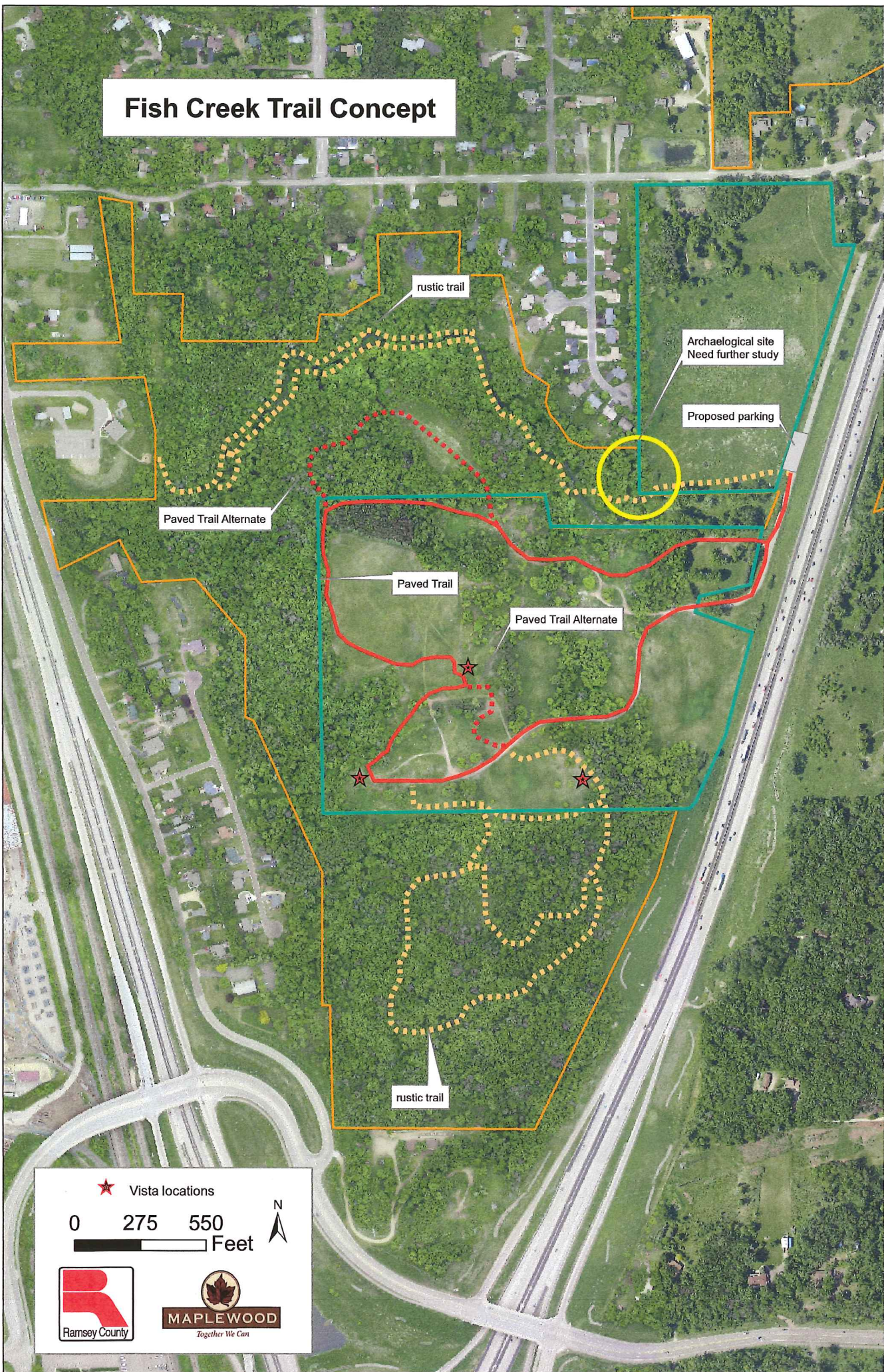
Funds have been raised to permanently protect this 70-acre site. Generous contributions were made by the following:

- 3M Foundation: \$200,000
- City of Maplewood: \$425,000
- DNR Natural and Scenic Area Grants: \$500,000
(funded by Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund)
- Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR): \$13,000
- Grant procured by FMR, funded by Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund: \$162,000
- Individual donors
- Ramsey County: \$425,000
- Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District: \$175,000
- State of Minnesota bonding: \$318,000



The Fish Creek Greenway map shows public lands in diagonal hatching. Parcels A and B are the site the City and its partners are trying to acquire. The dotted orange line shows the corridor for the future Fish Creek Hiking Trail, a 1-1/2 mile trail from Point Douglas Road along the creek to Carver Lake Park.

Fish Creek Trail Concept



★ Vista locations

0 275 550
Feet



Dear Madam Chair and Commissioners,

My name is Betsy Leach and I am the executive director and one of the community organizers for the District 1 Community Council. I will be speaking today specifically about the process by which we developed the community plan before you.

First of all, it is important to understand the constraints under which we were working. We are the largest of the City's district councils by area, and the fifth largest in terms of population. For the 10 years that I have been working for the Council, we have had one of the smallest operating budgets of all the district councils, which means that for most of those 10 years we have had less than one FTE conducting our work. I am happy to say that in recent years this has improved, but we still do not have any staff members working more than part time.

In addition to these constraints we have been operating in a dynamic social landscape. As the plan outlines, we have been experiencing a very rapid demographic change in the past 10 years. When I started we were about 75% white and we are now almost 60% people of color.

These constraints and dynamism mean that we have had to be creative in how we developed this plan. The principle underlying our work on the plan was that we would listen to ALL people in the neighborhood, and not just those who have traditionally been involved in our organization. In addition, we would use all the data about our neighborhood that we could find, and we are grateful to the University of Minnesota CURA, Minnesota Compass, PED, and in-house volunteer efforts to track down the data. But to understand the stories behind these data, we decided that we needed to incorporate community visioning into our on-going work, taking every opportunity to listen to people whenever and wherever we met them – in our storefront office, at social gatherings, at a variety of community meetings held by other organizations, in small gatherings, in chance encounters and so on. In addition, we conducted surveys via our neighborhood newspaper and online, held meetings specifically about issues covered in the plan and about sites that were, would be, or should be under development.

We worked over several years in this way and then began to compile the various elements of the plan. We examined all previous plans and the existing City Comprehensive Plan to assure that we covered what we needed to. As this comparative and compilation process dragged on, given that it was largely dependent on volunteer efforts, we hired a consultant to help format our work. The final refinements of the draft were a joint effort, but largely guided by Paul Sawyer. We presented the draft to the community in a couple of meetings, took feedback from those meetings and incorporated it, then addressed comments by City reviewers.

We feel that the District 1 Community Plan reflects the best thinking and dreaming of the very diverse voices that call our neighborhoods home. We feel that it provides us and the City with a realistic and inclusive roadmap for the future.

Good morning madam chair and commissioners. My name is Paul Sawyer and I am president of the District 1 Community Council. I am excited to bring our community plan before you for comment. Our executive director Betsy Leach [has spoken/will speak] on the lengthy community engagement process that brought us to this point. So instead, I want to focus my comments on a few areas of the plan.

In less than a decade, the METRO Gold Line will be running service through our district providing much needed transit connections for our residents. I had the pleasure of chairing the task force that guided the development of the Station Area Plans. Much of the content and the spirit of those plans have been incorporated into our community plan. Those plans chart an exciting path forward into the future of our district where the current problems of poor walkability, limited neighborhood-serving uses, and poor access to jobs will be replaced with dense, attractive, walkable corridors and nodes surrounding stations that will connect us to the rest of the region. The entire Land Use chapter of our plan helps strategize how to make this future a reality.

One concern I would like to express is about a change that was made at the committee level to policy LU1.4. While we understand that private market conditions will dictate when and how the Sun Ray site is redeveloped, we expect the City to play an active role in promoting that redevelopment and pursuing the most optimum use of the new T4 zoning. We are concerned that the language added removes any role for the city to play in that future redevelopment.

One other committee change also has us deeply concerned, and that is in reference to policy LU4.4. It is looking quite certain that Ramsey County will no longer be operating the Boys Totem Town site within a few years. That facility and associated site is of significant importance to our community. Due to the nature of the size and potential uses of the site, we originally requested a development moratorium so that the community could weigh in on current values, hopes, and concerns about the future of the site. Removing the language about the moratorium opens up the potential of a change on the site that could be devastating to the community. We strongly ask that you restore the original language to LU4.4.

I wanted to close by highlighting some other portions of our plan. The Housing chapter attempts to address many housing issues in our district where 55% of our renters are cost-burdened and paying a higher median rent than the city as a whole. The Environmental and Recreational Resources chapter celebrates the tremendous natural assets that define much of our district and works to ensure that our green space and recreational services are able to be enjoyed by everyone within our community. Finally, the Transportation chapter is a reformatting of our district's Transportation Plan and comprehensively addresses every mode moving in our district, and provides a robust plan to help our residents shift from the automobile preference built into our district while it was developed in the 1960s and 1970s to less expensive, healthier modes to ease the crippling transportation costs many of our residents face.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today. I look forward to the adoption of our plan.