

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA		DATE:
SECTION: Report of the Community Development Director		January 7, 2014
DEPARTMENT: Community Development: Molly Koivumaki; Janet Jeremiah	ITEM DESCRIPTION: Green Neighborhood Update	ITEM NO.:

Requested Action: None

Synopsis

Update on the Green Neighborhood Development Initiative

Background Information

The Green Neighborhood is proposed on an 8 acre site, currently owned by MNDOT, in the southwest corner of Scenic Heights Rd and Eden Prairie Rd. The Strategic Plan for Housing and Economic Development, approved by the City Council in October 2012, identified the project as high priority and included potential strategies for establishing a green neighborhood with mid-market housing on the site. Through an RFP process, four developers submitted concept plans and purchase offers to develop the site. Three of the four developers met the criteria to be interviewed and one, Homestead Partners, was eventually selected during a Council workshop in August, 2013. At that time, the City Council expressed interest in considering some market rate units along with the mid-market to hopefully prevent the need for any cash subsidy. The City Council also indicated its intent to use its HRA to simultaneously purchase the property from MNDOT and sell it to Homestead upon final development approval and private financing. The HRA purchase requires a substantial proportion of mid-market units in order to meet the public purpose criteria. During the August, 2013 workshop, the Council also confirmed its interest in requiring green neighborhood and building features.

Schedule

Homestead Partners intends to submit complete preliminary PUD/Plat plans as well as other necessary Planning applications on January 17, 2014. Once the application materials are submitted, staff will make them available on the City's website for neighborhood review. If the January 17th submittal deadline is met, a public hearing will be held at the Planning Commission on February 24, 2014 and a City Council public hearing would follow as early as March 18, 2014.

Neighborhood Meetings

Three neighborhood meetings have taken place to date: April 24, 2013 in the Heritage Rooms; September 25th at Cedar Ridge Elementary School, primarily for the neighbors with property immediately abutting the new neighborhood; and September 29th, again at Cedar Ridge

Elementary School for the greater neighborhood. For the larger meetings, notices were mailed to over 300 residents of the surrounding neighborhood. Public comments were recorded by staff at all three meetings and supplied to the developer. City Connect has also been used to elicit comments.

Traffic Analysis

An analysis of traffic impacts to the existing neighborhood is being completed. The traffic analysis will be part of the Preliminary Plat/PUD documents and will be made available to the public.

Plan Revisions

The developer has revised the original concept plan to reflect many of the comments of the neighbors. Specifically, the developer has removed the pool feature and included more public access to the common area. The developer has also reoriented the lots that abut existing neighbors so that side yards meet side yards and back yards meet back yards. The homes immediately adjacent to existing neighbors are now proposed to be “front-loaded” to eliminate private drives or alleys adjacent to existing neighbors. These lot changes result in more adjoining green space. The adjacent homes will also be market rate, anticipated to be in the \$400,000 range, to address neighborhood value concerns. The neighborhood has not yet seen these design changes, but they will be reflected in the preliminary PUD/Plat plans.

The developer has also revised the concept plan to reflect staff concerns with excessive dead ends and access/maneuverability for emergency vehicles and other large vehicles such as garbage trucks and school buses. The developer is also incorporating more neighborhood green features as described below.

Green Features

The developer is proposing green, energy-efficient features for all of the homes to achieve Green Path certification. Further, the developer will construct the model home with solar panels and will design other homes so that buyers can select solar panels as an option.

The developer proposes a central common area that will feature a pavilion with solar panels on the south side of the roof. The solar will be used to power bollard lighting around the common area sidewalk. The north side of the pavilion roof is proposed to be a “green roof”. The common area will also include garden plots that can be used by residents to grow their own vegetables. Staff is working with the developer to include a recycled irrigation system and other green storm water features. Staff is also working with the developer to incorporate permeable pavers where practical and landscaping throughout the development that promotes water conservation and requires no mowing. Street lights will likely be solar LED.

The Conservation Commission has reviewed the green features and will continue to be involved.

Market Interest

There has been substantial market interest in the homes from a wide range of potential buyers including Eden Prairie firefighters and an existing resident of the Fairfield neighborhood.