



2014 Community Development Department Annual Report

I. Annual Summary

The Lake Elmo Community Development Department is submitting its annual report for consideration by the City Council and Planning Commission. The theme of 2014 was development review, as a significant number of residential plats and commercial projects were proposed over the course of the year. The significant level of proposed development follows the approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Village and I-94 Corridor Planning Areas. In addition, sewer and water utilities were extended in various locations to make future development possible. These factors resulted in the busiest year in recent memory in terms of development activity.

In terms of residential development, the City worked on 9 residential subdivisions in various stages of approval this year. Overall, 4 residential final plats have been approved in 2014 (Savona 1st Addition, Savona 2nd Addition, Hunters Crossing 1st Addition and Hammes Estates 1st Addition) as of the date of this report. The approved final plat to date include 190 residential lots. In addition, 7 residential preliminary plats were approved in 2014. Given the amount of plat approved, it is anticipated that final platting and residential development and construction activity will be substantial in 2015.

With regards to commercial development, the City reviewed and approved two projects in 2014: Eagle Point Medical Clinic and Kwik Trip Gasoline Station, both in the I-94 Corridor Planning Area. Both of these projects are currently under construction at the time of this report. In addition to these projects, the City also reviewed and approved a new building for Family Means in the Cimarron Manufactured Home Park.

Regarding public projects, Staff has been heavily involved in both the Lake Elmo Avenue (CSAH 17) and Manning Avenue (CSAH 15) Projects in collaboration with Washington County. In particular, the CSAH 17 Project has required a significant amount of staff resources due to the complexity of the project. In addition to the reconstruction of multiple streets in the downtown area, the City is planning on the installation of sewer and storm sewer infrastructure. It is the goal of the project to make necessary transportation improvements, improve surface water drainage conditions in the downtown, and connect downtown properties to the municipal wastewater system. Staff anticipates that these projects will continue to be of highest priority in 2015, necessitating substantial resources and attention from the City, as well as close collaboration with the County.

In terms of broader planning and policy efforts focused on the future of the community, work is ongoing in a number of areas. First, research and analysis of the City's Rural Planning Area was completed in order to inform future policy recommendations with regards to rural land uses. Areas of investigation include the cost of public services for the various types of rural land uses, as well as the possibility of further subdividing Agricultural and Rural Residential areas into residential lots (i.e. 2.5 acre lots). In addition to the analysis of the rural areas, Staff continued to work with Washington County on the possible Gateway Corridor bus rapid transit facility. The

addition of bus rapid transit along the southern boundary of the community will likely result in land use changes around future station areas. The City continues to be an active participant in the regional planning of the transit line and is initiating preliminary station area planning work on the local level.

One of the greatest achievements in 2014 was the elimination of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Metropolitan Council, relieving the community of mandated growth quotas and potential wastewater inefficiency fees. The Met Council was agreeable to negotiate the elimination of the MOU after the adoption of the two major Comprehensive Plan Amendments in the I-94 Corridor and Village Planning Areas and the extension of municipal utilities. In addition, the review and approval of various development applications provided the Met Council with the confidence to move forward with the elimination of the MOU.

On a staffing level, the Community Development Department added a Planning Intern in 2014, who has provided additional horsepower in the areas of parks and trails planning, rural area analysis, form-based codes and other day-to-day operations. The Building Official continues to make substantial progress at improving the City's Building Inspection operations. In addition, code enforcement activities continued to be a high priority in 2014, as a number of cases and violations were resolved by the Building Official.

II. Annual Review: Major Projects

Major projects/accomplishments for the Community Development Department in 2014 include the following:

Comprehensive Plan Updates. The City completed work on five minor updates to the Comprehensive Plan in 2014, including:

- *9434 Stillwater Boulevard North.* It was proposed by the City Council to change the land use guidance of this parcel from Rural Area Development – Alternate Density (RAD-Alt) to Rural Area Development (RAD). The amendment was not approved, as it did not receive the necessary super-majority vote at the City Council.
- *Density Ranges Amendment.* The density ranges for various land use categories within the Land Use Plan were slightly amended to fill artificial gaps between categories.
- *Holliday Parcel Amendment.* GWSA Land Development, LLC requested that the City amend the future land use guidance of a 14-acre parcel at the northwest corner of 30th Street and Manning Ave. from Rural Area Development (RAD) to Village Urban Low Density Residential (V-LDR). The amendment request was associated with the approved Village Park Preserve preliminary plat.
- *RAD-Alt Land Use Category Elimination.* The City Council approved the elimination of the RAD-Alt land use category from the Land Use Plan. The three parcels that had the RAD-Alt designation were amended to Rural Area Development (RAD) in the Future Land Use Map.
- *Wildflower at Lake Elmo Amendments.* Related to the proposed Wildflower at Lake Elmo residential subdivision, Robert Engstrom Companies requested that two areas guided for Rural Area Development be amended to Village Urban Medium Density (V-MDR) and Village Urban Low Density (V-LDR) respectively. The City approved the amendment request and is awaiting final approval from the Metropolitan Council.

Land Use Applications. Through the support of the Planning Commission, the Community Development Department worked on 53 land use applications/projects in 2014, including but not limited to amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, preliminary and final plats, conditional use permits, zoning text amendments, and variances. The most significant of the applications reviewed this year remain the residential plats that were processed in 2014, including the following:

- Savona 1st Addition Final Plat
- Hammes Estates Preliminary Plat
- Easton Village Preliminary Plat
- Village Preserve Preliminary Plat
- Hunter's Crossing Preliminary Plat
- Boulder Ponds Preliminary Plat
- Savona 2nd Addition Final Plat
- Village Park Preserve Preliminary Plat
- Hammes Estates 1st Addition Final Plat
- Hunter's Crossing 1st Addition Final Plat
- InWood Preliminary Plat

Additional land use applications that were reviewed in 2014 include but are not limited to the following:

- Lakewood Crossing (Kwik Trip) Preliminary Plat, Final Plat and Conditional Use Permit
- Family Means Conditional Use Permit
- Eagle Point Medical Preliminary and Final PUD Plan
- Halcyon Cemetery Sketch Plan
- Verizon Wireless Cell Tower Conditional Use Permit
- Launch Properties PUD Concept Plan
- Savona Townhome Conditional Use Permit
- Wildflower at Lake Elmo PUD Concept Plan

Board of Adjustment Actions. Planning Staff reviewed 2 variances in 2014:

- Jane Road Lot Size Variance
- Hammes Property Shoreland Variance – request withdrawn by applicant

City Code Amendments. In 2014 the Community Development Department approved/reviewed 12 City Code/Zoning Code Amendments, including the following:

- Zoning Code Cleanup Amendment
- Animal Ordinance
- Driveway Standards Ordinance
- Accessory Structure Standards
- Commercial Wedding Venues Ordinance
- Animal Therapy Ordinance
- Site Plan Review Ordinance – Subdivision Ordinance Cleanup
- Shoreland Ordinance
- Net and Gross Density Definitions
- Urban Low Density Residential Garage Standards
- Exterior Storage
- Screening

Metropolitan Council – MOU. The City successfully negotiated the termination of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Lake Elmo and Met Council. The MOU was the legal document that stipulated the 2030 required growth targets for Lake Elmo. The City received preliminary 2040 forecast number of 20,500. Staff will continue to work towards a reduced population forecast as the Metropolitan Council prepares the release of community system statements in 2015.

CSAH 17 Project. The City has been working in close coordination with Washington County on the planning and design of the downtown street and utility project, which includes Lake Elmo Avenue, 30th Street, Upper 33rd Street, 36th Street and Laverne Avenue. The project will include the installation of sanitary sewer and storm sewer, replacement of old watermain, and the reconstruction of streets with additional pedestrian facilities. At this point, construction is scheduled to occur in two phases in 2015 and 2016. Staff recognizes that successful completion of this impactful project is of the highest priority in the next years. The preliminary design for the improvements will be brought forward for municipal consent in early 2015.

CSAH 15 Project. Staff participated in the future planning for CSAH 15/Manning Avenue as part of the project management team for this project. The overall plans for this county roadway will address issues concerning safety, access, property impacts, and future development plans along the Manning Avenue corridor. A final design for the road will be brought forward for municipal consent in 2015.

Rural Area Discussion. The Planning Commission began discussing the future of the City's rural development areas. The adoption of the 2040 regional development forecast by the Met Council is seen as a crucial next step in determining the appropriate level of development within these areas. The rural area discussion will likely be a component of the Commission's 2015 plan of work.

Gateway Corridor Technical Committee. Staff continues to participate as part of the Gateway Corridor Technical Advisory Committee in an advisory role. In addition, the Mayor and members of the Council serve on the Policy Advisory Committee and Gateway Corridor Commission. A Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the proposed transit project was approved by all affected communities in 2014. The LPA includes the preferred alignment and mode choice (Bus Rapid Transit). Officials and Staff will continue to work with Washington County and the other agencies involved in the Gateway Corridor planning process.

Village AUAR 5-Year Update. Staff drafted a five-year update to the Village Urban Alternative Areawide Review (AUAR). The City Council adopted the five-year update. The update is pending submission to the Environmental Quality Board.

Airport Zoning. Staff has continued to meet with representatives from the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC), who operate Lake Elmo Airport. It should be noted that MAC is in the process of updating the long range Comprehensive Plan for the Lake Elmo Airport. One of the critical decisions being considered is moving the northwest by southeast runway further to the north. While the Planning Department had established a goal to have an airport zoning ordinance adopted in 2014, uncertainty over the runway alignment has contributed to delays in the process. However, Staff have been in contact with potential consultants who could assist the City in developing a future airport zoning ordinance.

Railroad Crossing Study. Staff continued communication with representatives of Union Pacific Railroad to begin the process of created a new railroad crossing for the Village Parkway

roadway. As more detailed plans for the developments adjacent to the railroad have been developed, Staff has distributed these plans for the purposes of planning the future crossing.

Form Based Codes. The Planning Intern conducted further research about the possible implementation of a form-based code for the Village Mixed-Use Area in downtown Lake Elmo. Included in the research are performance standards that may be appropriate for these areas. Staff will present the findings of this research in 2015.

InWood Planned Development EAW. The InWood Planned Development was large enough that it required a mandatory Environmental Assessment Worksheet. Although the document was prepared by the developer's consultants, City Staff was involved in the processing and review of the document.

Trail Planning. The Planning intern completed a Trail Audit for the Lake Elmo trail system. The audit evaluates the location and condition of public and private trails within the community. In addition, the audit presents recommendations for future trail connections. Finally, Staff has been working with Washington County parks and trails staff on possible trail improvements along Lake Elmo Ave., Manning Ave., and other County roads as part of future construction projects.

Building Permits. The City of Lake Elmo processed 267 building permits, not including plumbing and mechanical permits, in 2014. The number of permits issued in the past year is generally consistent with amount of building activity over the past 5 years. However, it should be noted that 2014 marks the first full year of the permit works tracing system, so the data may be slightly different. In terms of new single family homes, the City has issued permits for 34 new homes in 2014 to date, which represents the highest number in over 10 years. Given the number of platted lots in the urban planning areas, as well as the lots likely to be platted in the new future, the Staff is anticipating an extremely significant increase in new home construction in 2015. Staff is projecting that over 100 single family homes will be constructed in the urban planning areas next year.

Permit Works Utilization. 2014 was the first year of full utilization of the permit works system. The system continues to provide improvements in accuracy and efficiency with regards to the issuance and tracking of building permits.

Development Escrow Fee System. The City Council adopted a new fee schedule in 2013 that requires the submission of an escrow deposit for larger land use applications. Staff has been diligent in tracking time spent on reviewing development projects in 2014, and this time has been reimbursed by developers/landowners.

Annual State Planning Conference. The Community Development Director and City Planner attended the State Planning Conference in Duluth, MN in September of this year. The theme for the conference was Port of Call: Charting the Course to Resiliency.

Staffing. Over the course of the year, the City of Lake Elmo added an intern to the Community Development Department. The Planning Intern is Catherine Riley, who joined the department in May of 2014. Catherine has been extremely helpful in supporting the planning department during a year of record workload. In addition, she has led multiple projects related to parks and trail planning, serving as staff support for the Park Commission. In addition to the Planning Intern, the Community Development Department also utilized contract inspection services for the increased building activity.

III. Statistical Information

A. Planning Commission Meetings

1. Regular Meetings: 23
2. Workshop Meetings (with City Council): 2
3. Public Hearings: 30

B. Planning and Zoning Permits

2014 Planning and Zoning Applications					
Planning Applications	Approved	Denied	Pending	Reviewed	Total
Comprehensive Plan Amendments	4	1			5
Zoning Map Amendments	3				3
Zoning Text Amendments	5			3	8
City Code Amendments	4				4
Conditional Use Permits	4				4
Interim Use Permits				1	1
Sketch Plans	5 ^a				5
PUD Concept Plans	3				3
Preliminary Plats	8				8
Final Plats	5		1		6
Minor Subdivisions					0
Lot Line Adjustments	3				3
Variances	1			1	2
Vacations					0
Sign Permits	11				11
Appeals	1				1
Other	0				0

- a. Sketch Plan reviews do not require formal action by the City.

C. Building Permits: 5-Year Summary

Building Permits Issued (by type): 5-Year Summary								
Year	SF Dwellings - Remodel/Repair	Demo	Manufactured Homes	Multi-Family	Commercial/Ind Remodel/Repair	New Commercial	Single Family	Total
2010	265	10	6	0	20	0	26	327
2011	320	2	0	0	24	0	24	370
2012	250	3	8	0	19	0	31	311
2013 ^a	254	4	0	0	16	0	32	306
2014 ^{bc}	191	5	16	0	17	5	34	268
Total Units	1280	24	30	0	96	5	147	1582
Average	256.0	4.8	6.0	0	19.2	1.0	29.4	316.4

- a. Total valuation of construction in Lake Elmo during 2013 was \$20,944,000.
- b. Total valuation of construction in Lake Elmo through December 4th, 2014 is \$27,691,000.
- c. 2014 was the first full year of the City's utilization of the permit works tracking system

D. Housing Starts: 5-Year Summary

Housing Starts in Lake Elmo: 5-Year Summary					
Year	Single Family	Multi-Family	Manufactured Homes	Dwellings Demolished	Net Increase in Dwelling Units
2010	26	0	1	8	19
2011	24	0	0	0	24
2012	29	0	8	3	34
2013	32	0	0	4	28
2014	34	0	4	5	33
Total Units	145	0	13	20	138
Average	29.0	0	2.6	4.0	27.6

Respectfully Submitted,



Kyle Klatt
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