



Council Worksession  
July 26, 2022  
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas  
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle (attending via Zoom)  
Councilmember Graeme Allen (attending via Zoom)  
Councilmember Pam Axberg  
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth (attending via Zoom)

Absent:

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Ben Gozola, Craig Schlichting

Guests in Attendance: Jeff Miller, HKGi

Vision Silver Lake Road 2040 Phase II Feedback and Next Steps

Massopust explained staff would be providing the Council with a presentation on the vision for Silver Lake Road. He reported the City received a Corridor Revitalization Grant from Ramsey County which led a partnership with HKGi for this project.

Gozola discussed the history of this project noting the City's Comprehensive Plan was focused on the redevelopment of Old Highway 8 throughout the community, especially the area north of I-694. He reported these plans led to the New Brighton Exchange. After this area redeveloped the City was then told to focus on more housing and restaurant options along with the redevelopment of Silver Lake Road. He commented further on the proposed mixed use nodes that were proposed along Silver Lake Road.

Jeff Miller, HKGi, introduced himself to the Council noting he was excited to be working with the City on this project. He reviewed the concepts for Silver Lake Road further focusing on the plans for the three mixed use nodes. The mixed use nodes were located at Rice Street and Mississippi Street, I-694 and St. Anthony/County Road E West. The proposed plans and improvements for each node were detailed. These improvements included mixed use buildings with housing, outdoor dining, new commercial uses, expanded pedestrian/bike facilities and more trees. Lastly, he reviewed the community engagement responses he received from the public for each of the mixed use nodes.

Councilmember Axberg requested further information regarding the proposed sidewalks around Rice Creek Rd and Mississippi Street. Mr. Miller reviewed the sidewalks that were planned for the Rice Creek Rd and Mississippi Street node.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked how tall the proposed housing would be. Mr. Miller reported mixed use housing would generally be three or four stories tall while regional housing was generally six stories tall. Staff commented further on the density differences between the mixed use node and the regional node. It was noted four stories were typically pursued by developers over a three story apartment building.

Councilmember Allen requested further comment on the housing proposed near the golf course. Gozola stated

the thought was to provide additional opportunities to keep the golf course viable by offering a clubhouse and restaurant along with more housing adjacent to the golf course. Massopust reported this would require a public/private partnership with a developer.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated she really liked the Brookview facility in Golden Valley.

Councilmember Abdulle recommended more commercial uses be located near I-694 versus residential housing. He commented on the adverse long term health effects of living near major freeways and how this has impacted minority populations. He recommended that other alternatives be considered than large parking lots. Mr. Miller explained no new parking was being proposed near I-694 noting the mixed use parking would be underground or on the first floor of the building.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned how the designs could be facilitated to encouraged bus node transportation models. Mr. Miller stated mixed use developments would be key along with having higher density buildings close to the street. He reported biking and pedestrian facilities were also critical.

Councilmember Allen recommended a lot more trees be considered near the I-694 corridor to assist with managing the air quality.

Further discussion ensued on how the market will dictate what develops in these areas.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned how the City addresses sound walls. Schlichting reported the City has applied for a stand alone sound wall for the west side of Silver Lake Road for the north and south side of I-694. He explained the City did not score well enough to be selected for the 2026/2027 construction time period. He indicated the City would continue to partner with Fridley and Columbia Heights in order to pursue this stand alone project.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas recommended the sound wall be included on the plans in order to properly show the City's aspirations for this area.

Councilmember Abdulle recommended a dream version of the trails and sidewalk connectivity map be in place to ensure that future developments have proper connections in place. Schlichting reported this would be part of the City's complete and living streets plan. He noted this work would be completed in 2023.

Councilmember Axberg suggested the City review its drive-thru standards given the fact COVID has changed the number of businesses that now had drive-thrus.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commented she did not want the existing small business owners, particularly if these were people of color to be impacted by the proposed concepts. She suggested micro-business models be considered within the Silver Lake Road/County Road E West mixed use node.

Councilmember Abdulle recommended the concerns regarding the County road be shared with Ramsey County.

Councilmember Allen stated he has greatly appreciated the approach the City has taken for these redevelopment areas. He indicated this plan gives the City leverage in deciding what comes next as opposed to waiting to see what developers bring forward.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Mr. Miller for his detailed presentation.

Massopust noted the next step would be to bring this plan back to the Council in late August or September and the Council would be approving the two proposed zoning districts in October.

Worksession adjourned at 6:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Terri Spangrud".

Terri Spangrud  
City Clerk