



TWO HARBORS PLANNING COMMISSION

Serving the People of Two Harbors

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TWO HARBORS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN Planning Commission Report August 17, 2010

Two Harbors Comprehensive Plan Vision

“In the future the city of Two Harbors is a true small town gateway that showcases Lake Superior and the recreational opportunities that exist in the area, which also thrives in and of itself with quality housing, jobs, and services.

The city’s high quality of life and modern infrastructure attracts residents, visitors, and business and industry.”

The Planning Commission noted that ideas including “pedestrian friendly”, “livability”, and Lake Superior shoreline protection and public accessibility were reflected in a “small town atmosphere”, “quality of life”, and being a “gateway that showcases Lake Superior.” These details will be expressed through out the plan in the appropriate places.

HISTORY

The History section of the 1999 Comprehensive Plan needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the community in the past decade. The 2005 Waterfront Action Plan contains a few items regarding the sale of property along the waterfront. Major events that should be mentioned include:

- Sale of Rail Road and subsequent sale of Rail Road land along the waterfront and elsewhere
- Construction of new high school north of town and demolition of old high school building
- Closure of John A. Johnson, consolidation of students at Minnehaha and new high school
- Annexation of land along Burlington Bay and construction of Blue Waters.
- Oldest continuous city band in Minnesota

What other important milestones should be included in the history section?

WATERFRONT AREA REVIEW

In 2004 the City began planning for the Waterfront area. The planning process culminated in the 2005 Two Harbors Waterfront Action Plan and 2005 and 2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

The Waterfront Planning Area stretches from the recently annexed area along Burlington Bay to Lighthouse Point to the west end of Agate Bay and included adjacent properties inland. The Waterfront Action Plan set two goals for the Two Harbors Waterfront.

Goal 1: The Waterfront should be a significant contributor to the city's economy, particularly through increased downtown business.

Goal 2: The Two Harbors Waterfront should be, where feasible and safe, a publicly accessible natural and recreational area that is attractive to residents and visitors.

Question

Do the stated goals reflect the desired future of the Waterfront? Expand, retract, or eliminate portions of goals?

The Waterfront Action Plan made the following recommendations to help achieve the goals set by the Planning Commission. (The following recommendations have been summarized. Full explanations can be read in the 2005 Waterfront Action Plan which has been posted online at www.arrowheadplanning.org/twoharbors.)

Burlington Bay: This area includes the east end of Burlington Bay that the City annexed, existing campground, the site of the pending campground expansion and commercial area west of that, Skunk Creek Woods and Lake View Park. No changes were recommended for the annexed property or the existing City campground.

Burlington Bay West: The Plan recommends that City (a) reacquire the school district property on Burlington Bay, (b) rezone the former school district property and existing commercial area east of 4th Street and south of 7th Avenue to Mixed Use Waterfront, and (c) encourage tourism related commercial development. No significant changes have occurred in land use or development that affects those recommendations.

Burlington Bay Central: The Plan recommends that a large portion of the vacant area across Park Road from Burlington Bay be developed into an expansion of the City campground. The Plan recommends that the southerly 1.5 acres of the vacant area and the existing overflow campground/parking should be formalized into parking for visitors to the area. The Plan acknowledges that the southerly 1.5 acres may be shrunk in size to accommodate the campground expansion. The campground expansion as proposed will expand into all of the 1.5 acres and the overflow camping area. The purposed of the Plan recommendations seems to be to allow for a view shed from the commercial area and so that the area can be used for events such as the Kayak Festival. No changes were recommended to the public beach except that the City should work to identify the source of occasional pollution and plan to alleviate it.

The Plan also recommends using the R.J. Houle location as the site of a future trailhead for the North Shore. R.J. Houle Center staff were proposed to staff the trailhead or if that did not work self serve kiosks should be used. The Chamber of Commerce intends to discontinue use of the site and build a new office and North Shore Trailhead at the west entrance to town. The City Council and Planning Commission formally supported this proposal. The site may now be used as part of the

City campground expansion. The City may want to consider locating parking spots and self serve kiosks there as part of a pared down trailhead.

Burlington Bay South: The Plan recommends maintaining Skunk Creek Woods and Lake View Park East as green space. Following the 2005 Waterfront Action Plan process the Planning Commission developed a new Park Preserve ordinance to protect green space areas in the city. The 2006 (December) Comprehensive Plan Amendment recommended zoning both of these areas to Park Preserve. The Planning Commission discussed further protection of these two areas through covenants or conservation easements but made no formal recommendation.

Questions

Do the recommendations still fit the current situation in Burlington Bay and the vision of the area for the future?

The campground expansion has become the focus of the Burlington Bay Central area. Is it important to address view sheds from the commercial area? Is it important to address public events such as the Kayak Festival?

What do the Chamber's future office and trailhead plans mean for the development of Burlington Bay? Does a smaller, self-serve trailhead and parking facility make sense? Are there other uses for this property than for the campground or trailhead?

Lighthouse Point

Privately Owned Land: The settlement agreement between the City of Two Harbors and Ed Cave and Sons / Port City Development provides basic guidance for the future land use and development on Lighthouse Point. The final land uses set in the settlement agreement are similar to those proposed in the 2005 Waterfront Action Plan. A Planned Unit Development will likely be used to develop the property on Lighthouse Point.

The portion of Lighthouse Point south of South Avenue and north and east of the City sewer plant will be zoned MUW with a PUD residential development.

The portion of Lighthouse Point south of the city sewer plant and west of the Point ridge will also be zoned MUW and developed. Hotel and tourism related hospitality developments are likely. The development must be constructed at an elevation of 640 feet above sea level or less in order to protect views of the Point ridge.

The remaining privately owned land on Lighthouse Point will be transferred to the city to be preserved as a park for public recreation. This area will be zoned Park Preserve.

The three areas described above equal about 35 acres. Exact boundaries between developable areas and preservation area have yet to be determined. Property surveys are under way. The three areas total about 35 acres. The acreage split between the developable and preservation areas will be about 50:50.

The settlement agreement keeps in place the goal of public access to the waterfront by requiring the maintenance of trails along the shore side of future developments.

Publicly Owned Land: The Minnesota DNR owns approximately 8 acres on the Agate Bay side of Lighthouse Point. This is the location of the DNR boat launch and parking lot. This area is currently zoned Industrial Waterfront. It should be rezoned to Parks and Recreation.

The Lake County Historical Society owns approximately 2 acres on Lighthouse Point. It is currently zoned Parks and Recreation. It should remain zoned Parks and Recreation.

Question

Areas that will remain zoned Parks and Recreation generally exhibit a higher level of development – Marina, Lighthouse w/B&B, Campground, Golf Course. These may require private ventures to make them successful. For example, the marina may have a private operator, private concessions, and possibly allow private vendors. The Campground and Golf Course may have similar needs.

How should the Parks and Recreation Ordinance be amended to help ensure the success of these types of recreation?

The City sewer plant and water plant have been recommended to be rezoned to MUW while remaining public facilities. Does this zoning make sense? Is there a need for a public facilities zoning designation for these and other public facilities?

Agate Bay

The Waterfront Action Plan states that Agate Bay has elements that contribute to economic development and natural and historic preservation.

Agate Bay West: The Plan recommends redeveloping the JJ Castings and Roundhouse as industrial. The City has been exploring options to redevelop the property. Using the area as boat storage in support of the marina until permanent redevelopment is completed is recommended.

The Planning Commission discussed this at its last meeting. The Plan recommends a mixture of commercial and residential development in the area between the JJ Castings property and a zoning designation of MUW. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan Amendment recommends that all of the Van Hoeven Park remain a park and zone Parks and Recreation. This was changed because the settlement agreement stated that all of Van Hoeven Park would become City owned.

The Plan recommended that the Community Center be redeveloped as a hotel or restaurant. This recommendation was made when the property was privately owned. Under the terms of the settlement agreement the property on which the Community Center sits will be turned over to the City. What does the Planning Commission believe should be done with this property now?

The remaining recommendations for Agate Bay concern development of the DNR Marina. The plan supports the Marina and recommends providing adequate road access, trail connections, public accessibility, and protection of view sheds from the Depot, and inclusion of the Edna G.

Question

Do the recommendations still fit the current situation in Agate Bay and the vision of the area for the future?

Are there further issues that should be discussed regarding the Marina?

How do we discuss the connection between the downtown business district and the waterfront including the marina and future development on Lighthouse Point?

Waterfront Business District

Most of the existing commercial area in the downtown was left out of the Waterfront Action Plan. Per the Planning Commission's request I have been researching strategies the City can implement to spur revitalization of the area. I will have a more detailed summary of options after I have further discussions early next week. As requested, I am looking into redevelopment tools including redevelopment districts and TIF, among others.

The Planning Commission should be prepared to offer guidance on these items:

What are the boundaries of the Downtown Waterfront Business District?

Within those boundaries, who/what should be the focus of revitalization efforts?

The importance of strategies involving the public space – signage, pedestrian facilities, lighting, etc.- and strategies involving private property – redevelopment, desired types of businesses, etc...

The timing of these efforts with the Marina development?

Goal: Revitalize the downtown as an entertainment, hospitality, retail, and waterfront historic district relating to the development of a marina in Agate Bay.

- Waterfront Business District vs. downtown
 - What is the difference? Does downtown include more? Do we want to swap terms in goal statement?

Public Infrastructure: The clearest and most important role of the City in downtown revitalization is to provide adequate public infrastructure. Public infrastructure issues include:

- Construction of the DNR Marina
 - Does this need to occur before implementation of strategies? If so, which ones?
- Waterfront Drive terminus as statement that Two Harbors Waterfront is a destination.

- Marina concept of parking and turn around off of Waterfront Drive. Is not on marina property. Will be turned over to City as part of Settlement Agreement. Roadway south of train tracks still privately owned.
 - What should City do regarding this proposal?
- Provide the casual visitor access to the marina.
 - Parking close by, access to coal dock, public promenade, connection from west end of marina to Lighthouse Point.
 - Ability to park and walk to and between marina/lakefront and WFBD
- Provide way-finding for auto and pedestrian/bicyclists.
 - Signage and kiosks/ped signage from 7th Avenue all across waterfront
- What other public infrastructure and transportation issues exist that affect revitalization?

Private Sector: The City can play a role in assisting the private sector: Issues include:

- Encourage new private development alongside marina, throughout downtown
 - Look at zoning recommendations in report and discuss old public works property
- Fill empty storefronts along 1st avenue and rest of WFBD with good viable businesses
 - Tourism, entertainment, artisans, craftsman, hospitality businesses
- Storefront Revitalization, building rehab is most important; Addressing rear of buildings is important but secondary. City could provide:
 - Tax incentives to businesses to locate in WFBD
 - Assistance with storefronts (and backs), rehabilitation
 - Storefront Loan program promoted, updated
 - Marketing of area as location for business
 - TIF District/Tax Abatement (see handouts)
- Primary focus should be 1st Avenue and 2nd Avenue, and along Waterfront Drive.
- City should define WFBD for purposes of targeting redevelopment assistance.
 - Is it the same as the current B-2 Downtown Business Zoning District?

The Arts Commission role (according to John Gregor) is to add details/amenities after PC/Council has decided on big picture. Streetscape amenities are an example.