

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – MONTHLY PROCESS UPDATE

PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

Background

At the August 19th Planning Commission meeting, the public hearing was held for the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission fielded questions from several interested parties regarding future land use, trails, parks, transportation and water resources. There appeared to be little interest regarding South Maplewood as the Planning Commission, at a previous meeting, had voted to retain the future South Maplewood density as 1-2 acre lots (0.5-1 units per acre of **developable** property).

Throughout the process, staff and consultants have given the Planning Commission quite a bit of information about rural density and future zoning development policies that might support sewerer rural-type neighborhoods. The Task Force, Planning Commission, Advisory Panel, Park Commission and a few Council members prepared a top 10 list (see below) of priorities for South Maplewood in order to understand opportunities and threats to the future of the last undeveloped area of the City.

- Efficient Use of Land
- Low-Impact Development
- Natural Habitat Corridors
- Wetlands Protection
- Cluster Development
- Large Wooded Areas
- Nature Preserves
- Infrastructure Costs
- Density
- Stormwater/Impervious Surface
- Trails Connections
- Tree Preservation
- Prairie Restoration
- Active Parks
- Slope Buffer/Preservation
- Lot Sizes
- Historic Preservation
- Additional Shoreline Buffers
- Passive Parks
- Affordable Housing
- Energy Efficiency
- View Shed/Corridors
- Group Septic Systems

Top 10 Results

1. Efficient Use of Land
2. Low-Impact Development
3. Natural Habitat Corridors
4. Wetlands Protection
5. Cluster Development
6. Large Wooded Areas
7. Nature Preserves
8. Infrastructure Costs
9. Density
10. Stormwater

South Maplewood Density Final Discussion

The majority of the area south of Carver Avenue, east of Interstate 494 is being proposed to be guided Rural/Low Density Residential. There is a strong desire by all the commissions and many of the property owners to protect the south portion of Maplewood because of the quality of the environment and rural way of life in the area. As part of the comprehensive plan update, the City hired an ecologist to establish natural resource corridors that identify sensitive and valuable natural areas.

The results of the study, walking tours, top 10 priorities list, executive report and all other research shows that the City has a strong desire to protect the rural character of South Maplewood while allowing for some reasonable development. Development and Preservation are two goals that are difficult to achieve together without creative density and zoning. Staff brought the density discussion back to the table at the last meeting in order to ensure that the Planning Commission realized that the opinion of staff and consultants was that 1-2 acre lot density doesn't fully accomplish both goals.

The top 10 results that would be incorporated into the future zoning district, things like... Efficient Use of Land, Low-Impact Development and Natural Habitat Corridors don't seem to logically make sense with 1-2 acre lots as developers don't do these things as they are an added cost and not cost effective under that density scenario.

South Maplewood Rural Low Density Calculations

In the future all subdivisions in the entire community will be reviewed under a net density calculation. In determining net density, variables that get deducted for any plat are abundant in South Maplewood. Review the picture on the following page (Rural Low Density parcels in the dull yellow color east of Interstate 494). The purple represents all the slopes over 18% and wetlands and their buffers are also represented. In the future, all conservation easements and trails would also be deducted from the gross acreage.

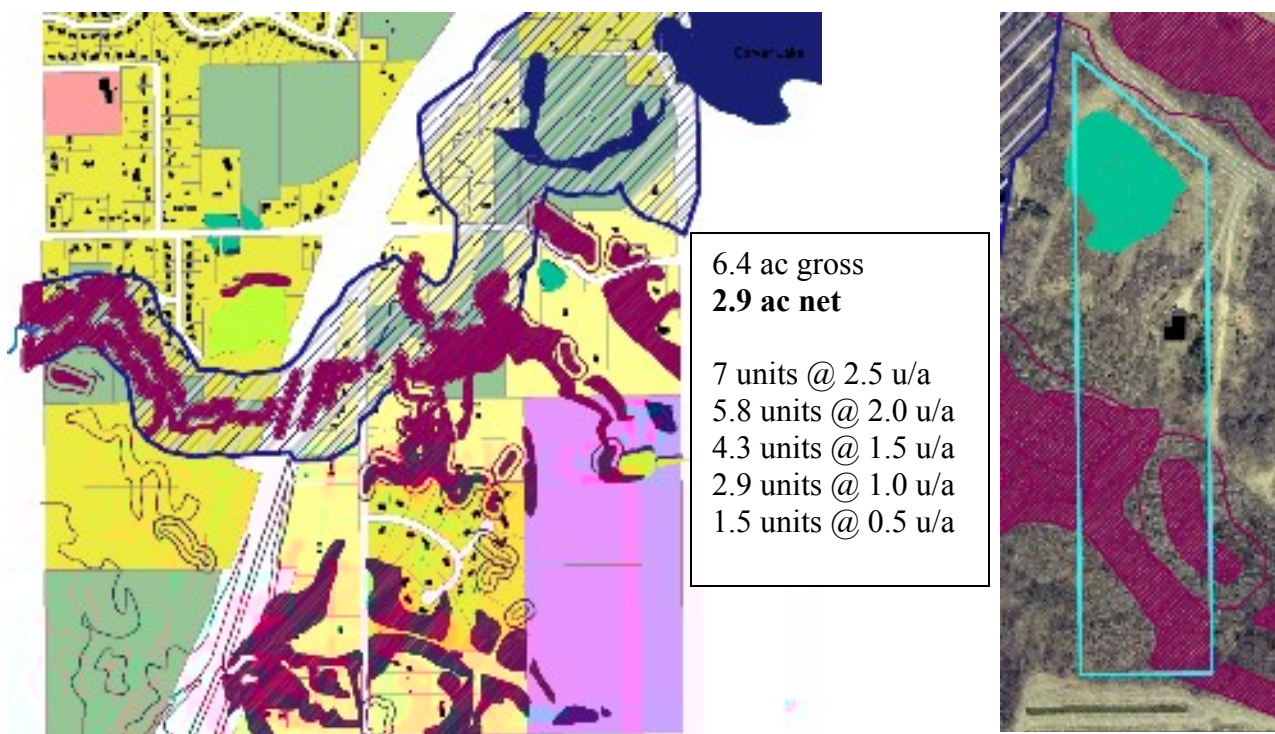
The numbers are as follows:

	North of Carver	South of Carver	Combined
Parcel Count	9	35	43
Min. Parcel Size	0.38 ac	0.32 ac	0.32 ac
Max. Parcel Size	8.82 ac	9.99 ac	9.99 ac
Total Acres Gross	26.79 ac	129.36 ac	155.83 ac
Net Acres Gross	23.74 ac	74.50 ac	98.24 ac (63%)

Units Per Acre	Units Developable
2.5 u/a	246 units
2.0 u/a	196 units
1.5 u/a	147 units
1.0 u/a	98 units
0.5 u/a	49 units

2030 Proposed Land Use Guide Plan:

Example Parcel:



Zoning Ordinance

Consultants discussed preserving rural character through the new zoning district for South Maplewood by incorporating the top 10 results as an incentive-based density possibility. What this meant is that each developer would have to go through the list, preservation variable by preservation variable, and with each policy met, additional lots would be given so that the maximum density would only be achieved if all the policies could be met in that particular development.

If you look at the example parcel above, there is only 2.9 acres of developable property in 6.4 gross acres of land. The developer who wanted to subdivide this property would start with 2.9 acres and would be entitled to the base number of units which would be 1.5 unites. The developer could get up to 7 units only if they meet the top ten policies in the ordinance. This policy or something very similar to it achieves a win-win for the city and the developer. The developer would preserve slopes, trees, open spaces, etc. and then achieve the maximum density, and those lots could be clustered to further retain the rural character.

Final Discussion Summary

The Met Council reviewed the overall MUSA density in Maplewood and concurred that the density in the community was over 6 units per acre. What this means is that the Met Council will work with the City on unique large sewered lots. However, the Met Council is currently unaware of the City's desire to also achieve other policy measures in this

area such as conservation and preservation of rural character. Developers, under a traditional 1-2 acre subdivision requirement, are not likely to give the City trees, open spaces and additional slope protection without some concession of additional lots, or some cost savings for the development. There is also the discussion of taxes, tax base and the efficiency of services that have to be run several hundred feet to serve a small development. The City currently assessed affected property owners for the services that benefit them. Under a rural large lot sewered development, those costs will have to be absorbed by fewer lots and thus will be more expensive for all property owners. Staff and consultants wanted the Planning Commission to know all the issues presented here in this final staff report before making a final recommendation for the City Council.

