

<p style="text-align: center;">COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT <i>Robert A. Graham, City Planner</i></p>

SUMMARY

The mission of the division of Community Development is to guide and lead the preservation and growth of the community in accordance with an established sustainable vision and Comprehensive Plan. This division assists and supports the activities of the City Council through the City Manager's Office, the City's Advisory Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Land Between the Lakes Action Team, various citizen subcommittees for specific interest groups, and citizens of the community through the public hearing and forum process.

This division is responsible for city planning and community development activities. The staff supports the City, interested developers, and citizens by providing professional planning assistance, counseling, site plan development and review, interagency and interdepartmental coordination, subdivision and administrative plat development, zoning interpretation, development alternatives, and financial loan and grant counseling. Special emphasis is placed on a coordinated development review process that assists the development community in reaching mutual city and developer objectives.

The staff manages loan programs and grant funds provided through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the City's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), the Southeast Minnesota Initiative Fund, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and other public and private entities.

Assistance is provided to the City Manager's office, Planning Commission, Economic Development Agency, Housing Authority, Heritage Preservation Commission, County Planning Office, various citizen groups, and developers in the collection of data and the preparation of plans and strategies, and recommends policies to take advantage of future opportunity and to manage change to generally improve the community.

STAFF

The Community Development Division consists of a two person staff. City Planner Bob Graham has a degree and 40 years of experience in professional city and county planning, economic development, redevelopment, housing administration, grants management, area planning and concept development, site design, land subdivision, and land acquisition and relocation. He is a certified Grants Manager, Certified Economic Development Finance Professional, and a Certified Housing Manager. The City Planner directs the activities of the Community Development Division.

Wendy Flugum has several years of experience in financial and public administrative support services including loan management, scheduling, budgeting, research, and office management. Wendy manages projects within the division and coordinates various commissions and study groups such as the Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Commission, Land Between the Lakes Action Team, and various citizen committees. She prepares documents such as the Capital Improvements Program and promotional materials, prepares and closes loan documents, processes acquisition and relocation payments, monitors wage requirements (Davis-Bacon), coordinates construction activity on city buildings such as the Freeborn Bank and Jacobsen Buildings, serves as the City Liaison to the downtown business community and heritage district, oversees document publication, and is the primary public contact for the division.

DEVELOPMENT CONTACT POINT

The Community Development Division is the primary contact point for the development community. The division works closely with building inspection, engineering, parks, county offices, utilities and the city manager to coordinate proposals and lead developers and citizens through the planning process in an efficient and friendly manner.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Development Review Committee is a city staff organization consisting of the city planner, city engineer, and fire chief that reviews proposed developments to assist the developer in understanding ordinances and community objectives and in overcoming any problem areas. (This committee was formalized this year; it reviews policies, procedures, and check lists were established and are managed by the division staff. Twenty-nine projects were reviewed this year.)

GENERAL PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Interest in private development from within and outside of the community increased this year. The staff worked with 70 representatives of the development community that resulted in 30 projects. The development community is seeking strong market communities that are progressive, development friendly, and show growth stability.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

The division reviewed development proposals that resulted in new or expanded business and industry including Love's Travel Center, Flying J Travel Center, ALDI grocery store, expansion of Tiger Hills Subdivision, and Walgreen's redevelopment for the Bridge Avenue site. Significant time was spent on subdivision proposals including the potential redevelopment of the Albert Lea Country Club for Eagles Rest Subdivision and potential development of land adjacent to Pickerel Lake for the proposed Wedgewood Cove residential and golf course subdivision. The review of these subdivisions also resulted in updates to assessment policies and development agreements. The expansion of the Albert Lea Medical Center is a significant new development for the year. Industrial reviews included the Larson Manufacturing Distribution Center now under construction in the Habben Industrial Park, Zumbro River Brand in Northaire Industrial Park, and a proposed industrial park off Margaretha Avenue. The staff also assisted with business and industrial recruitment.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

This program plans capital expenditures for five years and is updated each year by the planning staff. The document was prepared by Wendy Flugum and coordinated through department heads and the City Manager. The Capital Improvement Program was adopted by the City Council.

FREEBORN BANK AND JACOBSEN APARTMENTS BUILDINGS

The Freeborn Bank Building and Jacobsen Apartments are located at the original 100% corner of downtown Albert Lea and are in the National Historic Commercial District. The building is currently in the ownership of the City. The staff coordinated major exterior renovation of these buildings during the year with work continuing in 2007. This work includes tuck pointing exterior surfaces, cleaning, replacement of windows and storefront, roof replacement, installation of a skylight, repair and replacement of openings under the sidewalks, and removal of asbestos. The City staff has prepared marketing books "Opportunity for Development" and continues to make contact and show the building to potential developers.

TRANSPORTATION

The Planner worked with the Director of Public Works, County Engineer and consultants to collect data and project land use and traffic volumes for the Bridge Avenue corridor study and the East Main Street/I-35 interchange area development.

GRANTS/LOANS

A grant of \$400,000 was received from DEED to assist the Pickerel Park Townhome development in the construction of 24 additional homes for low income working families. The required additional funding from MHFA was not approved in the first application and this development has not moved forward but continues to review financing options.

A grant was received from DEED for \$250,000 for financing assistance for Zumbro River Brand, a new Albert Lea industry. The funds were loaned to the company and when repaid will become additional funding in the City's Economic Development Revolving Fund.

A grant in the amount of \$250,000 was administered for the Albert Lea Select Foods development. This grant was closed out in mid 2006. Construction of Albert Lea Select Foods was started in the fall of 2004 and operations began in July 2005.

Grants were received from DEED and DNR for mitigation of the East Main Street flood area. These grant funds were provided through State bonding and totaled \$1,200,000 for this project. The department administers the grant and property acquisition. Properties were acquired from five owners and a sixth is pending at the end of the year. Demolition of the acquired properties was started in January '07.

A grant was prepared by the staff and received from Kiwanis International to assist with the purchase and installation of playground equipment at Frank Hall Park. Local Kiwanis clubs also assisted in providing funds and installation.

The staff assisted Accessible Space Incorporated (ASI) to obtain HUD funding for an accessible housing development to be located at the northwest corner of South Washington Avenue and Mill Street. The City will sell this property to ASI. The property was acquired by the City through a Small Cities Development Program Grant for the south central area of the city in 1988.

The City also agreed to sell land south of southeast Marshall Street between St. Peter Avenue and David Avenue to a developer for 20 townhomes to be constructed. This land was acquired by the division staff with the assistance of a HUD grant in 1980.

The staff also assisted a developer in obtaining State funding to acquire and rehabilitate the Channelview Apartments. These apartments were constructed in 1978 on land that was acquired by the City for the Channelview Redevelopment Project beginning in about 1970.

The division continues to be responsible for the management of loans and grants for Community Development programs.

BLAZING STAR LANDING

Farmland Foods and its predecessors, Seaboard Farms, Farmstead Foods and Wilson Co. Inc., slaughtered and processed meat products on this site from 1916 until the plant was destroyed by fire in 2001. This 55 acre site was cleared of all buildings and turned over to the City in 2004. The site was the focus of one of the Albert Lea Area Listens groups; a concept for the site was previously prepared by the staff and a second concept was introduced by the Minnesota Design Team. The site was renamed "Blazing Star Landing." A focus team continues to review options for the site. This

team is supported by the planning staff. The staff prepared a marketing booklet “Opportunity for Development” to promote the site.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVOLVING FUND

This fund is used to make loans to local industry to assist with new development and expansion. It is a leverage program intended to fill the financing gap that banks don’t cover, often 20% of a project. The funding for this program comes from the repayment of loans made to industry through State grants to the City. The City is permitted to keep the repayments and is expected to revolve the funds. The staff manages this program including review of applications, preparation of loan documents, closing, monitoring repayments, and reporting to the state on the use of funds. The department processed Economic Development Revolving Fund loans for Church Offset Printing, INNOVANCE, and Marketing Plus.

JOBZ

The staff continued to assist the Economic Development Agency and consultant in packaging applications for the JOBZ program. This assistance was primarily provided by Wendy Flugum, and consisted of coordination of parcel information, maps, and meetings. The intent of this program is to create economic development and jobs. The program produces additional economic activity such as housing, retail, and support services such as truck and travel fueling centers. At the end of the year the JOBZ program has accounted for 491 new jobs in the community and two additional projects were started during the year.

LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES ACTION TEAM (LBTL)

This team is an ad hoc citizen organization established to be a catalyst in the implementation of concepts from Albert Lea Area Listens, Minnesota Design Team and the Comprehensive Plan. Wendy Flugum manages the activities of the LBTL and associated action teams.

MINNESOTA DESIGN TEAM RE-VISIT

In December, an invitation from The Land Between the Lakes Action Team was sent to consultants from the Minnesota Design Team requesting a follow-up visit to Albert Lea. Wendy Flugum coordinated scheduling details and an itinerary for consultants Michael Schroeder, Michael Fischer, and Jason Aune to visit Albert Lea in early 2006. The 2006 visit included an open forum with the community emphasizing the need for a more detailed plan for the Blazing Star Landing and adjacent lands to the east and west including the channel between the lakes. The visit resulted in additional concepts to help develop a vision for this area and to market the site.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The staff assists the Planning Commission in the review of applications for zoning changes, conditional uses, and subdivisions, as well as special studies and long range planning. Specific cases are listed under “Summary of 2006 Data.” Special workshops were held to meet with residents of the Government Acres Subdivision, the Albert Lea Medical Center, and Select Foods. New subdivision development review was a major part of the Commission’s activity for the year.

HISTORIC DISTRICT / HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The downtown National Historic Commercial District was expanded in 2004 and provides an opportunity for developers to use Historic Tax Credits to assist in financing the rehabilitation of historic properties. In 2005 a Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) was formed and the Commission was certified by the National Historic Trust of the Department of Interior as a Certified Local Government.

The staff prepared the “Heritage Preservation Commission Handbook” for owners and developers in the district. A Commission reception was held to introduce the Commission and Handbook to the Heritage District community and was attended by approximately 100 people. The staff also publishes “Heritage News.”

DOWNTOWN LIAISON

Wendy Flugum added the position of Downtown Liaison to her Community Development duties in February. Her goal is to help develop a positive, unified image of downtown and increase awareness of historic preservation as a means to economic development. Visits with downtown business and building owners, establishing a low-interest revolving loan fund, downtown beautification projects, and publicity events will continue to be in the forefront of this position.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Bob Graham continued to chair the Freeborn County Family Services Collaborative Board of Directors for the ninth year. This is a joint-powers organization established to facilitate and be a catalyst for the collaboration of services to families with children. The Planner also serves on the Chamber of Commerce Housing Committee, the State Job Services Advisory Committee, the Citizen Planner’s Education Team of the Minnesota Planning Association, was reelected to the Board of Directors of the State Chapter of the American Planning Association, and is a 25 year member of the Daybreakers Kiwanis Club.

Wendy Flugum had an active role in the City’s Sesquicentennial celebration as a member of the August committee and helped to create ShineFest 2006 which is the Faith Community doing practical service in the community. Among other activities the group provided a shelter for Memorial Park. Wendy continues to participate with ShineFest 2007 and is planning service and activities for August 2007.

SUMMARY OF 2006 DATA

• ADMINISTRATIVE PLATS

13-Feb	Lot 1, Blk 5, Chapeau Shores 9th	Brett Richards
19-Apr	Lot 8, 9 & 10, Blk 1, Summer Dale Addn	Doug Lembke
22-May	Lots 15 & 16, Block 21, Original Village	Peggy Rochow
14-Aug	Section 17-T102N-R21W, Albert Lea, MN	City Garage
25-Sep	Lots 4 & 5, Block 2, Sundance Subd	Roy Nystrom
25-Sep	Lot 4, Block 2, Bridgeport Subd	Cody Lembke

• PLANNING COMMISSION

Workshops & Special Meetings

1. Minnesota Design Team Visit (Jan)
2. Workshop re: Weiks Property / collector street (March)
3. Workshop re: Re-zoning & development options for Government Acres (May)
4. 2006 Projects Tour (June)
5. Special meeting: Tiger Hills setbacks & Eagles Rest plat (July)
6. Workshop re: Wedgewood Golf Club (July)
7. Special meeting: Parkview Hills traffic study & Concept plan for Weiks Farm (Sept)

Conditional Use Permits

1. Tiger Hills Development
2. Albert Lea Medical Center
3. Parkview Hills Townhome Association
4. Summerdale 2nd Addition
5. Green Lea Golf Course

Preliminary & Final Plats

1. American Bank Subdivision
2. Bridgeport 5th Subdivision
3. Registered Land Survey No. 13
4. Walgreens Addition
5. Eagles Rest Subdivision
6. Port Authority Plat No. 3
7. Main Plaza Subdivision
8. Westwood Hill Subdivision
9. Wedgewood Cove Subdivision
10. Parkview Hills Subdivision
11. Chadwick Marketplace 2nd Addition

Interstate Development District Reviews

1. Chadwick Marketplace 2nd Addition
2. Larson Manufacturing

Rezoning

1. Blazing Star Landing – from I-1 Limited Industrial to PD Planned Development
2. Walgreens Addition – from R-3 Multi-Family to B-2 Community Business
3. Chadwick Marketplace – from PD Planned Development to IDD Interstate Development
4. Wedgewood Cove rezoning from R-1 Single Family Residential to PD Planned Development

Ordinances & Amendments

1. Zoning Ordinance amended – Flood Plain
2. Amendment to Comprehensive Plan – remove County Park and connector street
3. Amendment to Planning Commission By-Laws (meeting dates & times)

Annexations

1. Margaretha Industrial Park
2. O'Marro property
3. Eagles Rest

• STAFF STUDIES / REPORTS & REVIEWS

1. Comprehensive Plan Review – Weiks Farm/Collector System
2. Comprehensive Plan – Request For Qualifications & Request For Proposals

• ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOANS

City Revolving Loan Funds (State/Federal grants)

	<u>Ongoing Administration:</u>	<u>Loan Balance 12/31/06</u>
1.	Lou Rich	\$ 181,146.18
2.	Rink Systems Inc.	23,048.24
3.	Church Offset Inc.	136,026.58
4.	Marketing Plus	25,617.68
5.	Scott Knutson	34,521.96
6.	D.J. Development Co.	116,896.46
7.	ALBDC	16,000.00
8.	Daisy Blue Naturals	22,375.35
9.	ABG Properties LLP	237,583.37
10.	MetroPlains Development	600,000.00