

Amy Biren

From: Gregory W Willhite <gwwillhite@cfaith.com>
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2018 2:51 PM
To: City Hall
Subject: Public Planning - zoning change

Good Afternoon,

My name is Gregory Willhite and I reside at:

10528 Rosedale Ave N

and I would like to state that I am opposed to the rezoning of my property.

Thanks for your consideration,

Greg

October 22nd, 2018
Nick Bovee-Gazett

Comments on the City of Hanover 2040 Comprehensive Plan Review

The City of Hanover has been my home for less than a year but my family has found a welcoming and safe community here. We love that we have access to wonderful local amenities, like Settlers Park, the Beebe Lake Road walking trail, and our favorite nearby restaurants and stores. My wife and I have reasonable commutes to work and we have access to the excellent local school system for our children. We have truly found a place that we are proud to call home. I was so pleased by our new city that I chose to run for city council in Hanover this year so that I can contribute my time and energy to keeping it such a great place to live.

I find much to be encouraged by in the City of Hanover 2040 Comprehensive Plan. I appreciate that the City Council and Planning Commission have committed to principles such as creating opportunities to connect the community through trails and sidewalks, striving to minimize the tax burden while maintaining quality level of service, and to protecting and enhancing the existing rural character and natural environment. These are well-stated and actionable guiding principles that I believe can form the basis for good policy in the future.

I also recognize that Hanover is a growing city. A 2017 report by the Minnesota State Demographer forecasts that by 2030 (only 11 years from now) the City of Hanover will be home to over 5,000 residents. My own family is part of this growth and we are fortunate that housing options existed to allow us to move here. I note with approval that the 2040 Comprehensive Plan also includes a statement about the need for "a range of housing choices and styles...to meet the needs of a growing community and to enable existing residents to find housing that permits them to stay in Hanover". I believe this is so important as a community is ultimately the people in it and we want to ensure that people who have lived in Hanover all their lives can retire here and continue to contribute to community life.

As the City considers further developments such as Hanover Cove and Crow River Heights West I urge our local government to keep all of these principles in mind and work with the community to find ways to realize them. Based on input from residents and my own research, I believe that there are opportunities to better fulfill both the Hanover Planning Principles and the Goals and Policies stated in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, especially as they relate to the proposed Hanover Cove development.

Current plans for this development would see the building of 286 single-family and patio homes. Of concern to many residents in Hanover is the impact this development would have on traffic in the area. The traffic impact study prepared this year by Swing Traffic Solutions states that by 2025 site generated traffic will be 2,700 trips per day and that "the intersection of Labeaux Avenue NE and River Road West will experience long vehicle queues in the southbound direction in the AM and northbound in the PM". The study suggests that Labeaux be expanded to include 2 through traffic lanes in each direction from 15th Street NE to the Crow River Bridge to accommodate the extra traffic. The study notes that "at this time no improvements are expected to occur to study area intersections or roadways prior to 2025".

The Comprehensive Plan, Goals 5 and 8 speak to the City's commitment to provide "a safe, convenient, and efficient local transportation system" and to "ensure improvement of the City's infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective manner". The results of this study indicate that additional city infrastructure is needed to ensure that residents can enjoy reasonable commute times. I believe it would be prudent and in keeping with its goals for the City to identify a solution that can be implemented prior to 2025 for traffic mitigation or adjust the current development plans to lessen the traffic impact.

The Hanover Cove plans also do not include any additional trails and only a half-acre addition to an existing park. The development would require the removal of 756 trees, primarily on the northern and southwestern edges of the site. This represents 82.4% of all trees on or adjacent to the development site. The impact to the natural environment extends to rare wildlife as well. A Minnesota DNR Natural Heritage Review report found that development of the site would impact habitat for the blanding turtle, a State-listed threatened species, through "direct fatalities or habitat disturbance or destruction due to dewatering, excavation, fill, or other construction activities...".

In keeping with the principle of "protecting open space and natural resources" I ask that the City consider ways to minimize the potential environmental impacts of the Hanover Cove development. The City should work with the community, developers, and property owner to find solutions that truly serve to enhance and integrate the natural environment into this proposed development so that current and future residents can enjoy the quality of life these kinds of resources provide. Our rural character is a key part of our identity and this and other developments should strive to retain and enhance it.

We should also consider the opportunity cost of proceeding with the current plans for Hanover Cove. This site is only about one mile from our downtown area and could be an advantageous location for mixed-use development. This would be in keeping with the principle of "expansion of commercial, office, and light industrial uses...to diversify the tax base and expand service options to residents". The building of 286 additional residences would limit opportunities for these kinds of uses and grow the City's dependence on residential property taxes, consequently exposing the City to housing market risks. As the City already experienced in 2007 with the Crow River Heights West development, plans can fall through during a recession or market downturns and developments be left incomplete for almost a decade. Therefore, it may be more financially responsible and better in keeping with our Planning Principles to consider alternatives, such as mixed-use development for Hanover Cove.

I believe that Hanover Cove and other developments in and around Hanover have the potential to improve quality-of-life by providing flexible housing opportunities, linking residents to new amenities, and creating strong neighborhoods. I also think that the principles outlined in the Comprehensive Plan can enable this to happen. However, the City must carefully review how it is applying these principles in practice. I offer the following recommendations to consider:

- Develop strategies and methods to fund and implement a road improvement project on Labeaux/CSAH 19 prior to 2025.

- Reduce the current housing density of the Hanover Cove development and / or consider mixed-use or other strategies to maintain financial viability. This could have the added benefit of encouraging commercial, office, or light industrial uses and diversifying the City's tax base and service options for residents.
- Expand the amount of trails and parks in planned developments to ensure they are within walking or biking distance of residents and serve to link neighborhoods together.
- Build on Goal 12 of the Comprehensive Plan by developing an environmental conservation strategy (other Minnesota cities have explicit conservation policies in place that could be adapted for Hanover).
- Promote community involvement in land use goals and policies to achieve maximum consensus in future land use decisions.

We are and will continue to be a growing city but we should find ways to leverage this growth that is in keeping with our own principles and identity. I thank the City Council and Planning Commission for their attention and consideration of these comments.

Nick Bovee-Gazett