

NEWSBRIEF



Date: December 6, 2013

To: Council & Senior Staff

Turn the page for a list of what's included in this packet.

(Items are alphabetized)

1. AMM *Metro Cities* dated: 12/5/13 and 11/26/13
2. Builders Association of the Twin Cities letter re: Metropolitan Council Preliminary Local Population Forecasts Comment
3. Joint Water Commission Meeting Minutes from 11/6/13
4. Minnesota Management & Budget Press Release dated 12/5/13
5. Robbinsdale Area Schools: 2013 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey
6. Robbinsdale Area Schools: *Discover* dated 11/26/13
7. Star Tribune article dated 12/1/13: Twin Cities suburbs are working on their curb appeal
8. SunPost articles dated 11/28/13:
 - *Crystal pawn shop to be shuttered for 30 days, fined*
 - *Crystal PD swears in three new officers*
 - *Crystal Police week of Nov. 21*
 - *New Crystal budget will reduce tax levy slightly*



Search

[About Us](#)[Metro Cities Members](#)[Legislature](#)[Met Council](#)[Metro Cities Task Force Report on Metropolitan Governance](#)[Press and Publications](#)[2014 Legislative Policies](#)[Policy Committees and Members](#)[Current/Archived Newsletters](#)[Metropolitan Area Management Association](#)[Questions, Comments or Suggestions](#)[Staff](#)[Board Application](#)[In Current/Archived Newsletters:](#)[Archives](#)

Metro Cities News

December 5, 2013

State Budget Forecast Shows \$1.086 billion Surplus

The November state budget forecast, released to state lawmakers this morning, shows a positive balance of \$1.086 billion projected for state coffers for the FY 2014-15 biennium. State statutory requirements provide that any positive balance be used to pay the remainder of the K-12 property tax recognition shift, and to repay money transferred previously from the state airport fund. Therefore, the forecast triggers a payment of \$246 million, for the final payment owed on the school shifts and \$15 to the state airport fund. Afterward, the general fund positive balance is forecasted to be \$825 million.

A few things to note about the forecasted surplus for the state budget. Both sides of the state ledger – spending and revenues – are used to develop the forecast. Spending for the next biennium is \$247 million lower than expected at the end of the 2013 legislative session. Revenues are forecasted to be \$787 million higher than anticipated, creating the positive balance. It should be noted that the budget forecast is early in the biennium, reflecting just four months of revenue collections (\$55 million of the \$787 million in projected revenue collections) which is only 7% of the projected increase.

Additionally, there is a fair degree of volatility in the forecast. This is the first forecast for the FY 14-15 biennium since the budget was established in the 2013 session. The revenue forecast has been built on early, incomplete data, and the Department of Minnesota Management and Budget cautions that there remains uncertainty in the overall forecast. However, the Department also struck a positive tone, because Minnesota's economy is performing better than the nation as a whole, and the budget forecast reflects that trend.

Overall, the positive revenues are built on the fact that revenues from the close of the FY 12-13 biennium were significantly higher than anticipated in the February 2013 forecast. This establishes a higher starting point for revenues in the FY 14-15 biennium and significantly contributes to the higher estimated revenues in the November 2013 forecast.

The release of the forecast was followed by press conferences of the Governor and legislative leadership. The Governor noted stronger than expected economic growth and business expansion as well as permanent state spending cuts, and revenue increases in creating a positive balance for the state. He was also quick to say that he would propose elimination of the business-to-business taxes that were passed in 2013 and other measures such as an increase in the working family tax credit, to cut taxes for middle class incomes. He indicated he would take a 'wait and see' approach to increasing the statutory budget reserve

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level, while Senate DFL leaders indicated that adding to the budget reserve would likely be a priority. Republican leaders stressed the need to lower taxes to assist in expanding business growth in the state.

Please contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or patricia@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions or for additional information.

Reminder! Clean Water Inflow Infiltration (I/I) Grant Program Funds Available

Communities identified by the Met Council as having excess I/I issues in their communities (currently 50), are eligible to receive grant funds under the 2013 Clean Water Fund Inflow-Infiltration (I/I) Program. These funds were secured by Metro Cities during the 2013 legislative session, and are intended for I/I mitigation on private properties. Eligible cities must pre-apply and sign a standard Council grant agreement before any eligible expenses can be submitted for reimbursement. [Click](#) for more information. Please contact John Atkins, Grant Program Manager, at 651-602-1010, or john.atkins@metc.state.mn.us for more information on the program.

DEED Redevelopment Funds Available

Following a \$4 million appropriation from the 2013 Minnesota Legislature, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) is encouraging local governments to apply for these redevelopment funds.

The state is offering two programs to help fund local redevelopment projects, with goals of increasing jobs, building the local tax base and providing public benefits. The Redevelopment Grant Program is targeted at applicants who have a project identified and ready to build while the Demolition Loan Program is geared toward sites with potential projects but no developer identified.

While the Redevelopment Grant Program has been in existence since 1998, recently available funds have come from the bonding bill, which limits how the funds may be used. The 2013 appropriation from the general fund expands eligible costs, which include: matching funds for acquisition, infrastructure improvements, soil stabilization, demolition, environmental infrastructure such as ponding, and interior remediation for re-use.

The Demolition Loan Program was created by the legislature for sites which need to have structures taken down or land cleared for a future redevelopment project to proceed. Eligible sites must be owned by the applicant and have been vacant for one year.

Cities, HRAs, EDAs and port authorities are among the eligible applicants for the programs. A resolution in support of the application from the applicant body and municipality should be provided with the application. Additional information and applications can be found at the [DEED website](#). Applications are due by Monday, February 3 by 4:00 p.m.

Grants are competitive, meaning they will be compared against other redevelopment applications. Awards should be announced approximately 6-8 weeks after submittal. DEED has told applicants that projects must begin by the date listed in the agreement, which is usually within 12-18 months of the award. This is important to applicants and developers since extending the terms of grants is becoming more difficult.

Please contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.



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Metro Cities News

November 26, 2013

Reminder – December 1st is Deadline for Feedback on Population Forecasts

As a reminder, December 1st is the deadline for cities to provide feedback to the Metropolitan Council on whether their local population/household forecast was too high or too low, and by what magnitude, as well as the reasons for a city's assessment. Council staff has said that feedback can include an analysis of the city's available land for development, planned employment centers, density assumptions, information on land that is permanently undevelopable, and housing stock market demand. Council staff stressed that any information – formal or informal – as well as questions from cities with respect to local forecast numbers and differences - will be important in assisting with the revisions to the forecasts.

Last week, Metro Cities sent out an informal email survey to city officials to get a snapshot of where cities across the region stand with respect to their individual forecasts. We'll provide more information on these results soon. Questions, please call Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or email: patricia@metrocitiesmn.org

Preliminary Property Tax Levies Receiving Scrutiny

As reported in our last newsletter, the Department of Revenue's recently released [report](#) of preliminary local government levies projects an overall increase of 2.04% over certified 2013 amounts.

The Governor's administration is paying close attention to the proposed levies. Department of Revenue Commissioner Myron Frans has publicly expressed overall concern of the levies in the context of the reinstatement of the sales tax exemption for local governments, enhancements to the state's property tax relief (circuit breaker) program and increase in local government aids that were part of the tax bill package passed in 2013 and intended to provide property tax relief. The Commissioner's concerns are based on a model used during the 2013 session and tax bill debate that assumed that half of the increase in LGA and half of the savings from the new sales tax exemption would result in property tax decreases.

These assumptions, however, do not necessarily account for variations in city circumstances, needs and budgets. (Also, to note, the proposed levies are the third lowest since 1990). Cities, after years of reduced services, delayed capital

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projects, street repairs, equipment upgrades, and so forth are working to make improvements in many areas. For many, property tax levies would have been proposed at higher levels absent the increases in aids and tax policy changes that passed the Legislature year.

As cities work to prepare final budgets, Metro Cities will communicate any information we receive from the Governor's office and the Legislature. Metro Cities encourages cities to provide as much context and information as possible when preparing final levies. Governor Dayton has made property tax relief a key priority in his term. As elections approach next year, political pressures around these issues will only continue to mount around these issues for state policymakers and local governments.

Please contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or email: patricia@metrocitiesmn.org for additional information.

Updated Sales Tax Exemption Fact Sheets

The Department of Revenue has released updated fact sheets regarding the new sales tax exemption for cities and counties, which becomes effective on January 1, 2014. Metro Cities, the LMC and other city and county organizations met with Department staff last month to continue discussion of issues that have been raised regarding the interpretation of the new law, specifically as it pertains to joint powers agreements and goods provided by private businesses. The implementation of the new law has generated dozens of questions from city officials, and the fact sheets have been updated several times since the law was passed earlier this year.

The new documents provide some additional clarifications, but do not alter the essence of the Department's interpretation around the exemption. This means that purchases made under joint powers agreements/entities remain qualified. Metro Cities is continuing to work with the League of MN Cities and other groups to assure that cities receive the full benefit of the exemption, which is supported by our legislative policies. It is possible that a legislative solution to any outstanding issues and questions will be necessary to assure the new law can be fully applied and confusions around its implementation alleviated for state and local officials.

The new fact sheets can be [accessed here](#).

Metro Cities 2014 Policies Adopted

Thank you to Metro Cities' members and city officials who attended and participated in the Policy Adoption/Metro Regional meeting last Wednesday. There was a strong turnout of city officials, and the day was marked by stimulating conversations and presentations.

The proposed slate of 2014 Metro Cities policies were adopted unanimously by Metro Cities' membership, with the policy adoption meeting presided over by Metro Cities President Susan Arntz. Thank you to everyone who served on the policy committees. A special thanks to our committee chairs Danna Elling Schultz, Anne Mavity, Dick Swanson and Jo Emerson for their leadership and presentations at the policy adoption meeting. The 2014 policies can be accessed [HERE](#).

We've received positive feedback on the day's content and evening program, which featured a group of panelists comprised of Met Council Chair Susan Haigh, Greater MSP CEO Michael Langley, former Met Council administrator and current Dorsey attorney Jay Lindgren, and St Paul Chamber President Matt Kramer. We asked them to provide their perspectives on the region's challenges and opportunities, as well as the governance and future of the Metropolitan Council. Panelists focused on the need for the region to leverage the strength of its workforce, for the region's business, civic and local leaders to think more like "regionalists" and the need to take seriously issues of equity and changing

demographics. To no one's surprise, there was a mix of opinions about how the Met Council's governance should be structured. The importance of collaboration by the Met Council with local leaders was noted more than once as a key issue for the Council by several panelists.

The next step for the policies will be for the Metro Cities Board and staff to undertake the work of setting legislative priorities for the coming year, using the recently adopted legislative policies as a framework. Stay tuned for more information.

Legislative Commission Discusses Met Council Budget, Governance

The Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Governance met last week to elect new chairs and hear a presentation of the Metropolitan Council's proposed 2014 budget and levies. The commission elected Sen. Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan) as Chair and Rep. Mike Freiberg (DFL-Golden Valley) as Vice Chair.

Met Council staff presented the proposed 2014 budget, which will receive a final vote by the Met Council in December. At numerous points, legislators asked Council staff about the impact of sequestration, Council employment numbers and trends, the funding and location of affordable housing projects, wastewater fees and transit growth and funding.

Commission members expressed interest in discussing a range of metropolitan governance issues, including discussion on staggered terms, whether Met Council members should be elected, and if local elected officials can or should serve on the Council.

Metro Cities supports the appointment of Metropolitan Council members by the Governor with four year, staggered terms. Metro Cities was a driver behind previous staggered terms legislation. This legislation passed the Legislature with bi-partisan support but was vetoed. Additionally, Metro Cities supports modifications to the nominating committee process for Met Council members in order to assure maximal participation and input by local officials.

The makeup of the Commission is currently as follows:

Senator Jim Carlson (Chair)
Senator Scott Dibble
Senator Karin Housley
Senator Julianne Ortman
Senator Eric Pratt
Senator Bev Scalze
Senator Charles Wiger
Representative Mike Freiberg (Vice Chair)
Representative Mary Liz Holberg
Representative Frank Hornstein
Representative Jason Isaacson
Representative Sandra Masin
Representative Linda Runbeck
Representative Peggy Scott

Please contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Met Council Committee Approves Grants for Housing, Transit Oriented Development

The Metropolitan Council Community Development Committee last week approved grants for Transit Oriented Development projects as well as grants for housing developments across the metro. The committee recommended \$1.5 million in grants for six rental housing projects and two ownership housing projects from the Local Housing Incentives Account (LHIA). The LHIA supports new and/or rehabilitated affordable housing through the Livable Communities

Act.

The eight recommended housing projects will support 281 new housing units and preserve 71 housing units. The Met Council estimated the eight projects will leverage \$39.3 million in additional public investment and \$67 million in private investment. The funding awards are for projects in Eagan/Dakota County, Minneapolis, Richfield, Robbinsdale, St. Paul, and Minnetonka/Hennepin County.

The committee also voted to award **\$3.9 million** in five Livable Communities Demonstration Account Transit-Oriented Development Grants for one development project in Hopkins, two development projects in Minneapolis, and two development projects in St. Paul. The development projects are near four station areas. Council members lauded the TOD application workshops put on by Council staff, noting the training improves project applications and makes the developments transit-oriented.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Your Metro Cities Board of Directors and staff wish you a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday!

Metro Cities News is emailed periodically to all Metro Cities member mayors, councilmembers, city managers and administrators to keep officials abreast of important metro city issues. This information is also intended to be shared with city staff.

If you'd like to sign up to receive Metro Cities News, please email Laurie@metrocitiesmn.org and provide the following: Name, Title, Employer and Email address. Thank you.

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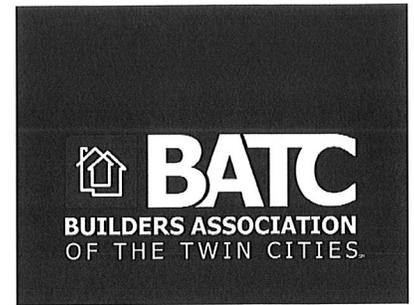
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(FYI for Council)



November 27, 2013

Chair Susan Haigh
Metropolitan Council
390 Robert St. N
St. Paul, MN 55101

VIA E-MAIL & US MAIL

Re: Metropolitan Council Preliminary Local Population Forecasts Comment

Dear Chair Haigh,

I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Builders Association of the Twin Cities ("BATC"), in response to the Metropolitan Council's ("Council") release of its preliminary local population forecasts ("Forecasts") as part of the Thrive 2040 analysis. By way of background, BATC represents nearly 1,100 member firms engaged in all phases of the home building, land development and remodeling industries in the Twin Cities area, including contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. BATC is dedicated to providing a diverse selection of quality and affordably-priced homes in our region.

You may recall that BATC made a significant contribution to the Council's understanding of metro region land supply during the comprehensive planning process in the late 1990s when the Council's analysis projected an abundance of available, buildable land within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area ("MUSA"). BATC's detailed analysis of land supply documented that the Council's assumptions were incorrect; had they been adopted as proposed, the Twin Cities region would have experienced a severe shortfall of buildable lots, hampering growth opportunities throughout the region.

Based on our review of the emerging components of Thrive 2040 in its draft condition, together with the Forecasts, we have the following general concerns:

The preliminary Forecasts as they relate directly to the 2040 framework, policy & system plans, and comprehensive planning processes, will have a substantial impact on BATC's membership and more important, housing consumers. It is our opinion that the Forecasts significantly overstate projected population growth in the urban core and first-ring suburbs, while significantly understating likely population growth in suburban and outer ring cities. If adopted as proposed, they likely will severely impact growth opportunities throughout the metro region and limit choices.

Over the last decade, building permits issued in growing suburbs have consistently outpaced building permits in the urban core and first-ring suburbs. We have seen no compelling evidence that this will change.

The cost of developing new housing in our growth pattern is significantly lower than for fully-developed cities. Neighborhood resistance to redevelopment that brings more density and mass to established areas is well documented.

BATC strongly supports the implementation of transit systems wherever ridership exists to support it. However, the fact remains that the means of travel within our region will remain, for some time to come, the automobile. Projected growth along transit corridors will support only incremental housing growth, as demonstrated by growth patterns along the Hiawatha Line and other major transit corridors.

The presumption that seniors are going to leave their homes or their communities en masse to move to the urban core is overstated. Admittedly some will, but the vast majority, as confirmed by studies, will choose to stay in their home and community.

Strong school districts drive housing choice. The Twin Cities metro area is blessed with many strong school districts, some in the urban core and first-ring suburbs, but many more in the growing suburbs. This factor appears to be overlooked in the Forecasts.

BATC members strongly support a policy of ensuring that housing is affordable to all who desire to own a home. The Council appears to be setting up an argument to change its mission and scope. However, housing as a Regional System is not statutorily authorized. BATC opposes any change to current policies that would expand the Council's regulatory footprint in housing.

Preliminary Population Forecasts

The Council's Forecasts are central to the Thrive 2040 vision and are the first tangible indication of its vision beyond its stated policy priorities of 'stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability'.

The Forecasts are important because, in spite of accuracy limitations, they become drivers and reference points in growth policy discussions. This outsized influence is of significant concern to BATC as the Council's policy and systems plans are developed over the next two years. If the Forecasts are wrong, and we believe they are, they could severely limit growth in areas of the metro region that are poised for growth based on market demand. Given this importance, BATC offers the following comment on the Forecasts;

- I. The Forecasts are not Supported by Objective Market Analysis. Regional Growth Trends will Continue over the Coming Decades with Smaller, Nuanced Shifts to the Developed Suburbs and Urban Core.
- II. Redevelopment Opportunities will be Limited by Cost Pressures, Litigation Exposure and Market Preferences
- III. The Forecasts Strand Infrastructure Investments
- IV. Financial and Market Impacts of the Forecasts Being Wrong
- V. Housing Policy Plan

I. The Forecasts are not Supported by Objective Market Analysis. Regional Growth Trends will Continue over the Coming Decades with Smaller, Nuanced Shifts to the Developed Suburbs and Urban Core.

The Forecasts' projection for a sea change in population and growth trends concentrating in our region's urban core and first-ring suburbs is not supported by an objective review and understanding of our

region's real estate market. Over the past several decades the regional growth pattern has been well established and has remained relatively stable. Growth has and continues to occur primarily in suburban settings with proximity to key transportation corridors, natural resources, recreational amenities and strong school districts. While demographic changes forecasted by the Council are also anticipated by the homebuilding industry, BATC doesn't share the Council's view of a major shift in preferences and growth patterns resulting from these changes.

The planned activity in our market for the foreseeable future points to a largely similar growth pattern with limited, nuanced shifts to the urban core and developed suburbs. As illustrated below, the growth pattern over the past 15 years has been distinct and consistent.

Leading Growth Cities by Permit for Minneapolis-St. Paul Region 1999-2013 Source: Keystone Report

1999 Permits Woodbury 800 Lakeville 671 Maple Grove 567 Blaine 443 Shakopee 459	2000 Permits Lakeville 505 Shakopee 485 Maple Grove & Woodbury 471 Blaine 431	2001 Permits Blaine 508 Shakopee 499 Lakeville 418 Maple Grove 336 Woodbury 328
2002 Permits Blaine 527 Lakeville 375 St. Michael 370 Maple Grove 346 Shakopee 314	2003 Permits Blaine 520 Lakeville 488 Shakopee 473 Maple Grove 371 Elk River 334	2004 Permits Woodbury 598 Blaine 595 Lakeville 482 Shakopee 477 Brooklyn Park 407
2005 Permits Woodbury 514 Shakopee 399 Blaine 363 Lakeville 349 Brooklyn Park & Hugo 348	2006 Permits Woodbury 394 Brooklyn Park 327 Otsego 304 Lakeville 272 Blaine 271	2007 Permits Woodbury 301 Blaine 226 Maple Grove 216 Lakeville 215 Otsego 206
2008 Permits Maple Grove 221 Blaine 190 Woodbury 175 Lakeville 151 Shakopee 104	2009 Permits Shakopee 304 Blaine 203 Maple Grove 197 Woodbury 181 Lakeville 140	2010 Permits Maple Grove 266 Blaine 253 Woodbury 193 Shakopee 176 Lakeville 134
2011 Permits Blaine 248 Maple Grove 213 Woodbury 210 Plymouth 192 Lakeville 129	2012 Permits Blaine 366 Woodbury 271 Lakeville 263 Plymouth 248 Maple Grove 195	2013 Permits YTD Woodbury 306 Lakeville 302 Blaine 245 Plymouth 227 Maple Grove 180

This is further illustrated by a review of the housing market activity and future lot inventory. Where the Forecasts call for substantial spikes in growth in cities like Hopkins, Bloomington, and St. Louis Park; the lack of developable residential land in these cities will limit even the most ambitious plans for large scale redevelopment.

Hopkins – The Forecasts call for a 56% increase (9,809 residents) in population for Hopkins by 2040, following a decade of virtually no population growth from 2000-2010. According to a Metro Study report

prepared for BATC, Hopkins currently has less than .01% of the future lot inventory for the 7-County Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA. Since 2010, Hopkins has had 32 housing starts.

Bloomington – The Forecasts call for a 37% increase (30,707 residents) in population for Bloomington by 2040, following a loss of over 2,000 residents from 2000-2010. According to a Metro Study report prepared for BATC, Bloomington currently has less than .01% of the future lot inventory for the 7-County Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA. Since 2010, Bloomington has had 263 housing starts.

St. Louis Park - The Forecasts call for a 51% increase (22,950 residents) in population for St. Louis Park by 2040, following a decade of virtually no population growth from 2000-2010. According to a Metro Study report prepared for BATC, St. Louis Park currently has less than .01% of the future lot inventory for the 7-County Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA. Since 2010, St. Louis Park has had 138 housing starts.

According to Metro Study there are over 48,000 future lots in the 7-county metro in the latest measured period, the third quarter of 2013. The three example cities included make up *less than 1/10th of one percent* (emphasis added) of the future lot inventory during this most recent period. Conversely, the top 25 growth cities comprise nearly 70% of future lot inventory, including the following projections for our leading growth cities.

Woodbury: As the leading growth city in our region in 2013, Woodbury has 1.5% of the 7-county future lot inventory.

Lakeville: As the second leading growth city in our region in 2013, Lakeville has 5% of the 7-county future lot inventory.

Blaine - As the third leading growth city in our region in 2013, Blaine has 4% of the 7-county future lot inventory.

These market facts illustrate our basic premise that the growth pattern of the past 15 years is positioned to remain stable. This means that scaled growth forecasted by the Council in the first-ring suburbs and urban core would require large-scale redevelopment, which is not feasible due to a host of factors.

II. Redevelopment Opportunities will be Limited by Cost Pressures, Litigation Exposure and Market Preferences

To implement the population growth in the Forecasts would require substantial high density redevelopment in many areas across the region. Cities like Minneapolis, Hopkins, Golden Valley and Bloomington lack the developable land for green field development, leaving redevelopment as their primary vehicle to support growth. At the levels forecasted by the Council this is not feasible given the high redevelopment costs, litigation costs connected to association-maintained properties, and existing resident resistance to high density development.

Redevelopment costs generally exceed green field development by two to three times due to site complexities and other limitations. In addition to the elevated development costs, surging legal actions associated with Home Owner Associations (HOA) have a chilling effect on developers' ability and willingness to undertake multi-family projects. Minnesota's Statutory Warranty Law (Chapter 327A) coupled with provisions allowing prevailing party attorney fees and the extended statute of limitations provisions in the Minnesota Common Interest Community Ownership Act (Chapter 515B) have provided a fertile ground for HOA lawsuits to be brought against project developers. These legal actions often

include frivolous demands to multi-family developers. Absent legislative changes to moderate the risks associated with multi-family development, developers will not build these projects.

a. Transit-Oriented Development Will Serve a Limited Market Niche

The Forecasts call for substantial growth along existing and proposed transit corridors. BATC supports transit oriented development (TOD) but believes that it represents a limited market segment in our region. Reliance on TOD should be a small part of a larger, diverse housing menu that is responsive to our market.

Travel decisions and our growth pattern support this approach. As the Council reported in its most recent Travel Behavior Inventory, transit use makes up just 3% of the travel for our residents, while 84% of the trips are made by automobile. While it's likely that these numbers will marginally adjust over time, there is a disconnect between the Council's promotion of TOD and the market's interest and acceptance of it as a viable option for a substantial segment of our marketplace.

b. Senior Housing Demand will not Concentrate in our Region's Core

Demographic changes will increase the number of seniors over the next three decades but assumptions about their flight to the urban core and first-ring suburbs are misplaced. According to a recent American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) study, nearly 90 percent of those over age 65 want to stay in their residence for as long as possible, and 80 percent believe their current residence is where they will always live. The National Association of Home Builders reports that aging-in-place modifications are the fastest growing segment of the remodeling industry. Aging in place means either living in one's home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age or ability level or at least staying in their neighborhood and community.

Market experience among BATC builders, remodelers and developers in our region confirms that seniors strongly prefer to stay in their communities or shadow-migrate to their children who predominately live in the suburbs. A recent report by National Investment Center (NIC), a Washington, D.C.-based senior housing research firm, showed that the Twin Cities had added assisted-living units at a faster pace than the average for the nation's 31 largest metro areas, with recent developments in Lakeville, Hugo, Blaine and Maplewood. BATC believes that meeting this demand will result in the majority of senior housing development occurring within the well established growth pattern of our region.

c. School Districts Must be Considered

The strength of a local school district is a significant factor influencing a homebuyer's decision, joining affordability, proximity to amenities, and access to transportation corridors as top considerations when purchasing a home. BATC has long known that strong schools attract families with school-age children, but statistics show that school districts are a factor across the entire real estate market. According to a recent Realtor.com survey of potential homebuyers, 91% of people believe school districts are important. The same survey found that more than 50% would pay between 1-20% more for a home in the right school district. It's true that the right school district varies for individuals, but BATC believes the region's growth patterns track closely with the desire to live in strong school districts. Regional school districts forecast for growth and planning purposes; the Council should utilize these projections as they adjust the

Forecasts. Failing to include school district strength in the forecasting methodology weakens it considerably.

d. Millennial Real Estate Patterns

BATC sees the Millennial Generation's delay of major life events as the biggest reason they are currently choosing to rent and why current demand is strong in the first-ring and core rental markets. Affordability concerns play a substantial role in this even with low interest rates. As many as one-third of college graduates have returned to live with their parents and many are straddled with high student loan debt. This leads to a delay in major life events such as marriage and having children. Industry research shows us that people are buying homes for the same reason they've always bought homes: changing family size, job relocation, and increased income. Delaying these changes impacts their access and appetite for housing, but shouldn't be taken out of context as an assumption that fundamental housing preference changes have swept into our region.

III. The Forecasts Strand Infrastructure Investments

BATC has heard from several local governments in our region concerned about infrastructure investments they have made which would be stranded if the Forecasts, in their current form, influence the comprehensive planning process. Stranding these investments is poor fiscal management and counter to the policy goals of efficient delivery of growth supports for our growing region. In Woodbury, for example, the Council has invested millions in the sewer interceptor, lift station, and other infrastructure only to decrease growth projections by nearly 12,000 residents as compared to the 2030 forecast. This raises the concern about the broader issue of stranded investments left behind by a sharp turn in forecasting and planning for our region.

IV. Financial and Market Impacts of the Forecasts Being Wrong

The large swings in vision and forecasting from the 2030 to the 2040 illustrate the challenges and limitations of long-range forecasting. A flawed forecast will restrict the amount of developable land and contribute to increased housing prices and leapfrog development patterns. This result violates the very premise of the Council's existence as a regional planning entity. Recent history confirms that the flight to exurban cities will occur in our region to fulfill the demand for affordably priced homes. The Council's role to efficiently coordinate and manage land supply must be market responsive and objective to ensure that the housing demand is adequately supported.

V. Housing Policy Plan

The shortcomings of the Forecasts and simultaneous development of a Housing Policy Plan (HPP) raise concerns about the Council's broadening vision for housing oversight. The Council must stay sharply focused on its limited, statutorily-authorized mission of coordinated planning and providing growth supports to our region's cities in a market responsive and efficient fashion. BATC strongly opposes any attempt to expand the regulatory footprint of the Council in housing policy and is concerned that the Forecasts and HPP will ultimately increase regulatory costs on all housing.

BATC reiterates its call over the past year for the Council to join the homebuilding industry in addressing the affordability challenges across the housing spectrum due to cost increases related to increased regulation. We believe reducing the regulatory costs in housing is the best housing policy benefitting all in our region.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Substantial adjustments to the Forecasts must be made to reflect the region's growth pattern. Failure to adjust the Forecasts in front of the Council's policy, systems, and comprehensive planning processes will create deeper policy challenges and threaten housing affordability. As homebuilding and land development professionals we have a valuable perspective that can help the Council reach market-responsive and achievable Forecasts. We strongly urge the Council to utilize BATC and other market expertise in this process.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela Belz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pamela Belz
2013 President, BATC

Cc:
Governor Mark Dayton
Metropolitan Council Members

**JOINT WATER COMMISSION MINUTES
Golden Valley - Crystal - New Hope
Meeting of November 6, 2013**

The Golden Valley – Crystal – New Hope Joint Water Commission meeting was called to order at 1:32 p.m. in the City of Golden Valley Council Conference Room.

Commissioners Present

Tom Burt, City Manager, Golden Valley
Kirk McDonald, City Manager, New Hope
Anne Norris, City Manager, Crystal

Staff Present

Tom Mathisen, City Engineer, Crystal
Randy Kloepper, Utilities Superintendent, Crystal
Bob Paschke, Director of Public Works, New Hope
Sue Virnig, Finance Director, Golden Valley
Jeannine Clancy, Director of Public Works, Golden Valley
Jeff Oliver, City Engineer, Golden Valley
Bert Tracy, Public Works Utility Manager, Golden Valley
Kelley Janes, Utilities Supervisor, Golden Valley
Mitch Hoeft, Utility Engineer, Golden Valley
Pat Schutrop, Administrative Assistant, Golden Valley

Others Present

Scott Harder, Environmental Financial Group, Inc.
Bernie Bullert, Director of Water Treatment and Distribution Services, City of Minneapolis
Glen Gerads, Assistant Director of Water Treatment and Distribution Services, City of Minneapolis

Minutes of October 2, 2013 Meeting

MOVED by Norris and seconded by McDonald to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2013 meeting as presented. Motion carried.

Amendment to Minneapolis Water Agreement

The JWC engaged the services of Scott Harder, EFG, Inc., to work with the City of Minneapolis on the water rate study. Minneapolis hired HDR to take a critical look at the rate study process and what determined the costs to its customers. This current process will result in more transparency, consistency, and demonstrates to Minneapolis customers what they are paying for. Key areas addressed in the amendment include:

1. 2014 water rate will be \$1.97/100 cubic feet. This amount is pending approval by the Minneapolis City Council.
2. A revised definition of "Minneapolis Inside City Residential Rate" was replaced in the new amendment.
3. The interval schedule for cost of service studies will change from 5 years to 3 years. 2015 will be the next cost of service cycle affecting rates starting in 2017; in 2018, affecting rates in 2020; and the last cycle will run to the end of the contract.

4. Both Minneapolis and the JWC are beginning to develop emergency backup groundwater supply systems. Text was added to the amendment clarifying how the groundwater supply costs will be identified and apportioned resulting in a more equitable and transparent allocation of costs and assurance that the JWC will not be paying for two systems. Bullert added drilling wells is 10 years out because the Minneapolis City Council will not approve drilling right away.
5. The agreement reconfirms both parties will keep the service off peak as much as possible. Peak hours are from 9 am to 9 pm. In the event Minneapolis has an interruption of service, Minneapolis may ask the JWC to draw water from its emergency backup supply during an emergency in Minneapolis. The emergency would be a "true" emergency and not used to manage water quality issues such as temperature or hardness control, etc.

MOVED by McDonald and seconded by Norris to direct the JWC Chair to approve the amendment to the Minneapolis Water Purchase Agreement. Motion carried.

The commissioners will present to their city councils for information only.

Update on Emergency Backup Water Supply Plan

The work is focused on locating well sites, meeting with the Minnesota Department of Health and talking to property owners regarding easements. As stated in the feasibility study prepared by Barr Engineering Co., the estimated cost for the wells will be about \$4.5 million. Request for proposals were distributed to five consultants and TAC requested Bolton & Menk, Inc. be awarded the contract. An updated 80% design cost estimate will be completed by November 25, but the three cities financial directors can use the \$4.5 million knowing that amount will change when the new cost comes in.

Burt added the JWC has a lot of projects that need to be completed and asked where the wells will fit in the prioritization process (i.e., faulty pipe may be more important than drilling the wells). Clancy added that looking at the County Road 9 project and what the JWC is committed to, there is about one mile of the JWC 36-inch water transmission line from Minneapolis that is programmed to be replaced at a 72.5% JWC/27.5% Hennepin County cost share. The estimated total for JWC will be \$1,260,733. The JWC has \$1,300,000 budgeted which includes replacing the meter vault at York Avenue.

Discussion followed regarding the infrastructure and evaluating its integrity. Burt wants the TAC to review the entire CIP and consider drilling the wells in sections.

Bolton & Menk, Inc. submitted a professional services agreement in the amount of \$128,035. The work scope approach proposed is a two-phase approach. Phase I is the design and bidding (\$77,805) and Phase II is providing construction services (\$50,230).

MOVED by Norris and seconded by McDonald to approve the professional services agreement with Bolton & Menk, Inc. in the amount of \$128,035. Motion carried.

The TAC will review and update the CIP to coordinate with the County Road 9 project, drilling wells and the Crystal emergency generator. The TAC will report back to the JWC at the December meeting an amended CIP.

Update on Crystal Pump Station Emergency Generator and Costs

Crystal is continuing to work toward the purchase of a generator from Cat Ziegler. Xcel Energy meter records indicates an 800 kW generator will be able to handle the three 300 ph pumps. The estimated cost is \$500,000 and will be brought back to the Commission for financing and approval at the December meeting.

Update on Crystal Reservoir Fill from System Project

Crystal is looking at removing #5 pump and installing a butterfly valve that would allow backfilling the Crystal reservoir during off hours through that pump column. The flows would not affect the Golden Valley system. Total cost is about \$15,000 to remove pump and install the valve. The pump has been recently rebuilt and should not require a total rebuild. Mathisen will be ordering some parts for the project after the first of the year.

Approve Leak Detection Study of 36-Inch Pipeline as Part of County Road 9 Project

Pure Technologies submitted a budgetary proposal to provide an internal SmartBall inspection for a lump sum cost of \$53,300.

MOVED by Norris and seconded by McDonald to approve the proposal with Pure Technologies to provide a pipeline inspection as part of the County Road 9 project in the amount not to exceed \$53,300. Motion carried.

Mathisen will prepare a contract document with Pure Technologies for the project.

System Evaluation Due to Pending County Road Projects

Mathisen reported that he will not be getting back to Smart technology because it has some limitations.

December 4, 2013 Tri-City Council Meeting

The JWC decided to postpone the December 4 Tri-City Council meeting to allow the TAC to meet and evaluate the CIP and for the three cities' finance directors to develop the finance plan for the emergency backup water supply. The meeting will be rescheduled for early January 2014. Clancy will contact Bonnie Morey, SEN, Inc., to see if she is available to facilitate the meeting.

Other Business

The New Hope City Council approved the contract amount of \$49,355 to Dave Perkins Contracting, Inc. for the replacement of one 18-inch water valve at the intersection of Boone and 54th avenues.

MOVED by Norris and seconded by Burt to approve the reimbursement amount of \$49,355 to the City of New Hope for the repair of the 18-inch water valve at the intersection of Boone and 54th avenues in the City of New Hope. Motion carried.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is December 4, 2013 at 1:30 pm.

Adjournment

Chair Burt adjourned the meeting at 3:12 p.m.

Thomas D. Burt, Chair

ATTEST:

Pat Schutrop, Recording Secretary

DRAFT



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2013

CONTACT: John Pollard
Legislative & Communications Director
651-201-8039

Minnesota's Budget Outlook Improves
K-12 Shifts Completely Repaid; \$825 Million Balance Remains

Changes in forecast general fund revenue and expenditures for the current biennium have increased the projected balance for fiscal year 2014-15 to \$1.086 billion. As in recent forecasts, current law requires any forecast balance be used to repay K-12 shifts. The first \$246 million of the balance will be used to complete repayment of the K-12 school property tax recognition shift. Additionally, \$15 million is transferred to the state airports fund, restoring money originally borrowed in 2008. This forecast completes repayment of accounting shifts from prior budget solutions, reducing the forecast balance to \$825 million.

--30--



2013 Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey Overall Summary of Perceptions and Conclusions

Overview:

In July and August of 2013, The Morris Leatherman Company, a market research firm, conducted surveys with groups of Robbinsdale Area Schools stakeholders. There were three groups surveyed: 400 randomly selected adult residents of the district; 250 parents within the district; and 300 randomly selected “outbound” parents (these parents chose to open-enroll their child to a charter school or another public school). The firm provided a detailed report that can be found on the school district website. An overview of the findings is listed below.

Overall Current Parent Perceptions:

Ninety-two percent feel their children are taught by teachers who care about them; in fact, 20% feel strongly that way. Eighty-one percent believe their children’s teachers are highly trained and effective, 16% feel they are sometimes, and three percent think they are not. Seventy-eight percent believe their children’s teachers monitor their progress adequately, 19% feel they are sometimes, and three percent think they are not. Eighty percent believe their children’s teachers meet the individual learning needs, 18% think they are sometimes, and two percent feel they are not. Seventy-seven believe there is adequate communication about their children’s academic progress between them and their children’s teachers, 12% think they are sometimes, and 11% believe they are not.

In rating the overall elementary school curriculum, 94% rate it favorably while three percent post unfavorable ratings. In fact, 29% think the elementary school curriculum is “excellent.” The only significant suggestion to improve the curriculum focuses on “a better mathematics program.” In an overall rating of the middle school curriculum, 78% of the parents post favorable ratings, while two percent post unfavorable ratings and 19% are uncertain. Critics see the need for a “more challenging,” “more interesting,” and “more hands-on learning” curriculum.

Summary of Key Findings from “Outbound” Parents

- By the time a student reaches Kindergarten age, 42% have made the decision to open enroll out of the Robbinsdale Area Public Schools.
- In listing the one or two reasons for sending their child to her current school instead of the Robbinsdale Area Public Schools, four clusters can be found. The first cluster, 44%, is motivated by general academic reputation and curriculum offerings. The second cluster, at 20%, is motivated by non-District reasons, such as a recent move or the school location. For the third cluster, at 27%, the major concerns focus on non-academic school district characteristics, such as better discipline, safety, or smaller class sizes.
- Four interrelated factors are the top ranked reasons to enroll their children elsewhere. “Personal attention by teachers” and “meeting the learning needs of individual students” have average importance ratings of 3.29 and 3.38, respectively, on a 1-to-5 ascending scale. “Lower class sizes” ranks next at 3.01.

- Parents of outbound students post moderately high ratings of the quality of education provided by the Robbinsdale Area Schools.
- In comparing their student's current school district with their former school district, Robbinsdale Area Public Schools are felt to be significantly lacking in five areas: "personalizing education for each student," "student behavior," "academic achievement" and "responsiveness to student needs."
- Twenty-four percent report the first thing that comes to mind in describing the Robbinsdale Area Public Schools is "good schools." Four other words or phrases are offered by a total of 60%: "declining," "average," "large class sizes," or "poor teachers."

Overall Conclusions:

Robbinsdale Area Public Schools rank in the top quartile of Metropolitan Area School Districts. The quality of education rating is solid, with a comparatively large 31% rating the quality as "excellent." The only critique which appears throughout this study is the concern about large class sizes. Even so, an 81% majority rates the quality positively.

Respondents score three goals as "top priorities:" a strong emphasis on academic achievement, a safe and secure learning environment, and teachers who care about their students' academic progress and success. They also want to be compared favorably with both neighboring school districts and large suburban school districts.

The School District is viewed very positively on a number of dimensions. It is awarded one of the highest Metropolitan Area ratings for spending tax money effectively and efficiently. Trust in the operation as a whole is at one of the highest levels in the suburbs. The District is viewed as inclusive in its decision-making and honest in its communications with residents.

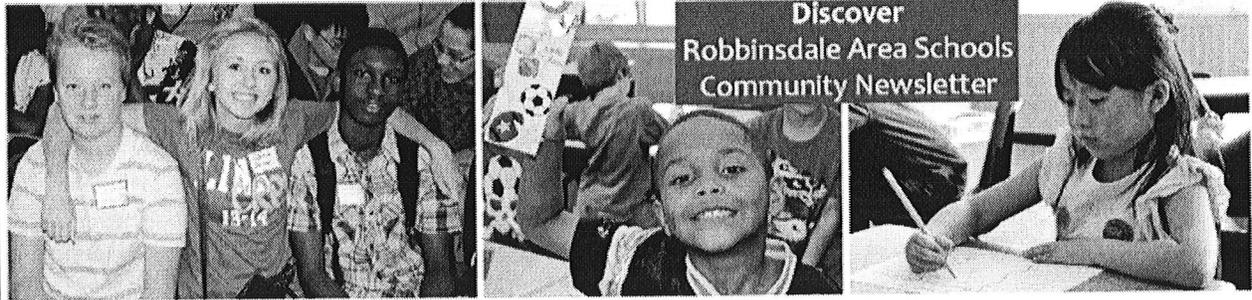
Residents feel the School District excels in four areas: "music, theater and visual arts programs," "instruction in regular academics," "educational opportunities for academically advanced students," and "extra-curricular athletic and academic activities." Additionally, a large majority thinks the schools meet the learning needs of all or most students.

The job performance ratings of the School Board, Superintendent and District Office Administration, School Building Principals and Administrators, and teachers and instruction staff score among the top 10% in the Metropolitan Area. Positive ratings for the first three groups are in the mid 70% range, while positive ratings for teachers and instruction staff are in the low-to-mid 80% range. And, the financial management of the School District, at 62% positive, exceeds the Metropolitan Area norm by 10%.

Parents rely upon the School District newsletter, the School District website, and discussions with teachers and staff. Other residents draw upon the District newsletter, the local newspaper, the School District website, and the "grapevine." An impressive 86% of all residents and 94% of current parents are satisfied with the amount of information they receive from the School District.

Anne Norris

From: Robbinsdale Area Schools [robbinsdaleareaschools@rdale.org]
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2013 6:05 PM
To: Anne Norris
Subject: Discover - Nov. 26, Honeywell Donates Thanksgiving Baskets to 100 Families



Tuesday, Nov. 26

District News

School Board member Patsy Green named to All State School Board

Robbinsdale Area School Board member Patsy Green has been named to the 2014 All State School Board, which is the Minnesota School Boards Association's (MSBA) most prestigious award. The award will be given during a luncheon on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2014, at MSBA's annual Leadership Conference. [Click here](#) to read more about the award.

Enrollment Information for the 2014-2015 School Year

If you are new to Robbinsdale Area Schools or are enrolling at a high school, middle school or applying for a magnet program, please visit our [Enrollment Center](#) section on the website.

School News

Honeywell Donates Thanksgiving Baskets to 100 Forest First Grade Families

The current and retired Honeywell employees that read to first grade students on a weekly basis at Forest Elementary donated 100 Thanksgiving gift baskets to each first grade family. The baskets included a turkey, potatoes, vegetables, bread, fixings for pumpkin pie and more. Thank you to the generous employees of Honeywell for the Thanksgiving baskets and the weekly readings!

Digital Discovery

Meadow Lake Elementary tried to answer a question on everyone's minds: What does the fox say? [Click here](#) to watch the video.

News Clips

Sun Post

Why did some Robbinsdale Area Schools MCA test scores increase?

[Robins fly to another state crown](#)

Patch.com

[Robins Win Adapted Soccer PI State Championship](#)

Check out our ["Media Room"](#) page on the website!

Upcoming Events

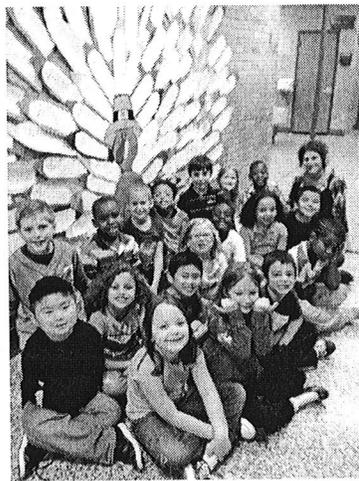
Meadow Lake Book Fair Fundraiser



Photo: Honeywell current and retired employees distributed Thanksgiving baskets to families after school on Monday.

Meadow Lake Gives 52 Thanksgiving Baskets to Students

For the past six years, first grade teacher Leslie Peterson has collected donations for Thanksgiving baskets for Meadow Lake families in need. This year, the daughter of Head Cook Denise Davis coordinated a bake sale at Omnicare to raise \$700 towards the cause. Thank you to Omnicare and Meadow Lake staff and students for the food and money donations. Because of the generosity, Leslie was able to deliver 52 baskets to families at the school.



Lakeview Students Tour Semi-Truck

On Tuesday, Nov 12 kindergartners at Lakeview received a visit from a semi-truck. The students are learning about transportation as part of their International Baccalaureate (IB) unit of inquiry. They were able to ask the truck driver many questions and go inside the cab of the truck.



Come to the Barnes & Noble in Maple Grove on Thursday, Dec. 5 for a book fair benefiting Meadow Lake PTO. The PTO receives a percentage of purchases in-store that evening and online at bn.com (valid Dec. 5 - 19) if you tell the cashier you are with the book fair, bring the voucher ([link below](#)) or enter the bookfair ID 11195179 at checkout. Cheesecake Factory and Cafe purchases are also applicable. [Click here](#) to see a schedule of events and more information.

Silver Platter Day at Cooper High School

A ceremony known as "Silver Platter Day" is planned for Friday, Dec. 6, in room 241 at Cooper. Students will gather at 12:30 p.m. to don academic robes and place their essays on silver platters present them to their mentors. There will be a party in room 241 following the distribution. Parents, media, district staff and all interested parties are welcome to join in the fun from start to finish. [Click here](#) for more information and a list of the 29 participating students.

Plymouth Middle School Presents Once Upon a Mattress
Plymouth Middle School will perform *Once Upon a Mattress* at Robbinsdale Middle School at 7 p.m. on Dec. 6,7,13 and 14. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$4 for kids and students.

School Board News

Robbinsdale Area School Board Meetings

The School Board will meet on Dec. 2 for truth in taxation, business meeting and a work session. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook to get important votes and other news live during the regular and business meetings. For more School Board news,

Community Ed News

Thank You to the MAX From Seven Dreams



Over \$12,000 was raised on "Give to the Max Day" for the [Seven Dreams Education Foundation \(SDEF\)](#). Thank you for making dreams come true for students and staff in our schools!

From hands-on learning classroom grants to the [Instruments 4 Kids](#) campaign, as well as partnerships with Community Ed, the Teacher and Educational Assistant of the Year program, and alumni, SDEF continues to grow and change -- continuing a legacy of giving in our community. This fall, SDEF contributed \$17,000 to [Robbinsdale Middle School](#) for science and technology equipment. There is a plan to match this contribution at [Plymouth Middle School](#) next year.

Plan to attend the much anticipated inaugural **Bird Bash** on Saturday, Feb. 8, 2014. Celebrate with your community and show support for our students and schools. Join us for a fun evening with dinner, entertainment, and silent, live and fund-the-need auctions. Tickets go on sale Dec. 1 and are available to purchase on the [Seven Dreams website](#).

We Remember

Longtime Psychologist in Robbinsdale Area Schools Passes Away

Linda Manning, a school psychologist in many of our schools for 24 years, passed away in Iowa on Sunday, Nov. 17. She had a great love for her work at schools and for her family. Her memorial service will be at 2 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 2 at the Immanuel United Methodist Church in Des Moines, IA.



click on Minutes, Podcast and Webcast below.

School Board Resources:

- [Agenda](#)
 - [Calendar](#)
 - [Minutes, Podcast and Webcast](#)
-

Stay Connected



To find more social media links for our schools, activities and community education programs, click [here](#).

[Robbinsdale Area Schools website](#)

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Robbinsdale Area Schools | 4148 Winnetka Ave N | New Hope | MN | 55427

StarTribune

Twin Cities suburbs are working on their curb appeal

Article by: Shannon Prather
Star Tribune
November 30, 2013 - 10:25 PM

Coon Rapids came of age when the suburbs were chic. Built out in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the Anoka County city of 61,000 was designed with the auto and other suburban ideals in mind, including space and privacy. Young families lapped it up.

Today, a new generation is less sold on the suburbs, development experts say. Many young Americans put more value in walkability, easy access to stores, restaurants, mass transit and other urban amenities.

That changing marketplace is forcing Coon Rapids, a city with 341 cul-de-sacs and an aging housing stock heavy on split-levels and ramblers, to reinvent itself. It is just one of dozens of Twin Cities suburbs, shiny and new in the '70s and '80s, that are now plotting, planning and redeveloping for future generations.

"The younger generations are looking for a different kind of lifestyle. They are not as enamored with the car," said Caren Dewar, executive director of the nonprofit Urban Land Institute Minnesota. "The marketplace is definitely responding to that. In order for suburban communities to stay competitive, they will have to respond to that, too."

It isn't a quick change, and it isn't cheap.

Coon Rapids has a three-front approach to revitalization:

- Spur business and home redevelopment along Coon Rapids Boulevard, a main thoroughfare. The city has spent \$20 million on land purchases, demolition, cleanup and relocating some businesses during the past 15 years, city officials said.
- Pour \$100,000 into a home-remodeling program and offer money to homeowners investing in large-scale renovations.
- Spend \$17.4 million on a parks face-lift, with one-third of the money going to trails to improve connectivity.

'The New Normal'

Coon Rapids has invested heavily in redevelopment — using controversial eminent domain powers in the past to acquire some land — but leaders say it will pay off and keep the city competitive, especially with neighboring suburbs that are courting businesses and residents with undeveloped land. Over the years, especially during the recession, some residents questioned the expense.

"Long-term, we think it's important for us to invest in the city's future," said Mayor Tim Howe. "We've gotten to that point of near full development. We've turned our focus on what we can do to improve our city."

Suburban leaders across the Twin Cities are rethinking their futures and finding creative ways to meet changing demands. The Urban Land Institute has met with leaders from two dozen cities to talk about "Navigating the New Normal" — how to redevelop under post-Great Recession economic realities.

"I do think Coon Rapids is very conscious of the need to look at the future vision of the community and are making some efforts to be proactive in that," said Cathy Capone Bennett, of the Urban Land Institute's housing initiative. "The biggest challenge for residents and for policy leaders to understand is that it takes years to make those transformational changes. Redevelopment is not a quick fix."

Development along 'ports'

A generation ago, Coon Rapids Boulevard was the pulse of the city's business district. It was Hwy. 10 through the city and where people shopped. Then the highway was redirected in the 1970s, and Coon Rapids Boulevard languished. Target and other retailers moved out to a new shopping hub, Riverdale.

In 2000, the city first laid out a long-term plan to rebuild along parts of the boulevard, buying land, razing older buildings, cleaning up contamination and wooing developers. The blueprint, updated in 2010, emphasizes building on businesses and institutions anchoring the boulevard, including Mercy Hospital and Anoka-Ramsey Community College.

Coon Rapids has focused on four "port" areas: Port Wellness around Mercy, where a new medical office building is nearing completion; Port Campus Square around Anoka-Ramsey; Port Riverwalk, near the entrance to Coon Rapids Dam, and Port Evergreen, on the border with Blaine near a park-and-ride, which city officials hope will one day be a second Coon Rapids stop on the Northstar commuter rail line and a proposed passenger rail line to Duluth. In the Campus Square and Riverwalk areas, the city has prepared 25 and 32 acres, respectively, for development.

Taking the lead

Marc Nevinski, Coon Rapids' community development director, said the city has acted as a master developer in several of the ports, buying small pieces of land, cleaning them up and combining them to create acreage for bigger projects. Coon



The corner of Hanson and Coon Rapids Boulevards in 2012. Among Coon Rapids' revitalization efforts is a focus to spur business and home redevelopment along Coon Rapids Boulevard.

Megan Tan, Special To The Star Tribune

Tribune

Rapids, like many suburban cities, has to do the initial land acquisition and cleanup for redevelopment because developers won't, he said.

"We had to lead the charge. We have been courting the private market for years and not getting anywhere. ... We need to do site assembly to attract the larger developers," he said. "The talk of public investment gets the private sector engaged."

Mayor Howe said that he and others on the council understand the city needs to shepherd this project and that it does require public investment. "It's a tough sell to the community itself. We have to make a major investment, but long term, we think it's worth it," Howe said.

Land is another issue. Coon Rapids Boulevard is surrounded by established neighborhoods, which can limit the scale of any project. "We don't have a lot of depth to the properties. They are all sort of small parcels," Nevinski said.

Assembling larger sites for redevelopment can take years. The city, with the help of state dollars, has cleaned up after an old gas station, a dry cleaner and an unofficial dump site, where crews unearthed 2,000 old tires.

Redevelopment also means change for residents, many of whom still favor older suburban ideals and don't always embrace the idea of mixed use — new offices and businesses near their neighborhood.

Finally, it takes patience.

"This stuff gets measured in decades. It takes time to do the site assembly. It takes time to attract developers and buyers, and it takes time to absorb. You can only absorb so much housing at one time," Nevinski said.

One other goal is to change the mood of the boulevard: to add sidewalks, vegetation, trail connections to the community to make it visually appealing and pedestrian-friendly. The city wants to tie the boulevard to the beauty of Coon Creek, the Coon Rapids Dam and other sites. "It's extremely scenic. We are trying to leverage that," Nevinski said.

Rethinking Coon Rapids' future means looking beyond the commercial hub, city leaders say. To attract new residents, the city is also investing in its neighborhoods house by house. Its "Home for Generations" program has attracted national attention.

The city bought five older homes, including a 1960s rambler and a 1970s split level, and remodeled them for modern living. More than 8,000 residents toured the model homes, and the city believes it spurred more than 100 remodels in surrounding neighborhoods, judging by building permit data.

Now the city is offering up to \$5,000 to homeowners undertaking large-scale remodels. More than 40 homeowners have approached officials about the grant program.

In November, voters agreed to spend \$17.4 million to redo nine city parks, build a new park and expand the trails system. City leaders say a flourishing parks and trails system will keep Coon Rapids competitive.

At the same time, Nevinski said that even amid the wave of empty nesters and millennials moving to the urban core, suburbs are still a great place to raise a family and that some reinvestment by cities will add to that strength.

"There will always be a percentage of the population that wants to be in a very urban environment," he said. "There are more people who want to be in a suburban environment. You have more space. You can own your own home. You've got a yard, good schools and safe neighborhoods. And we've got great parks."

Shannon Prather • 612-673-4804

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Sun Post
11-28-13

Crystal pawn shop to be shuttered for 30 days, fined

BY JOE BOWEN
SUN POST NEWSPAPERS

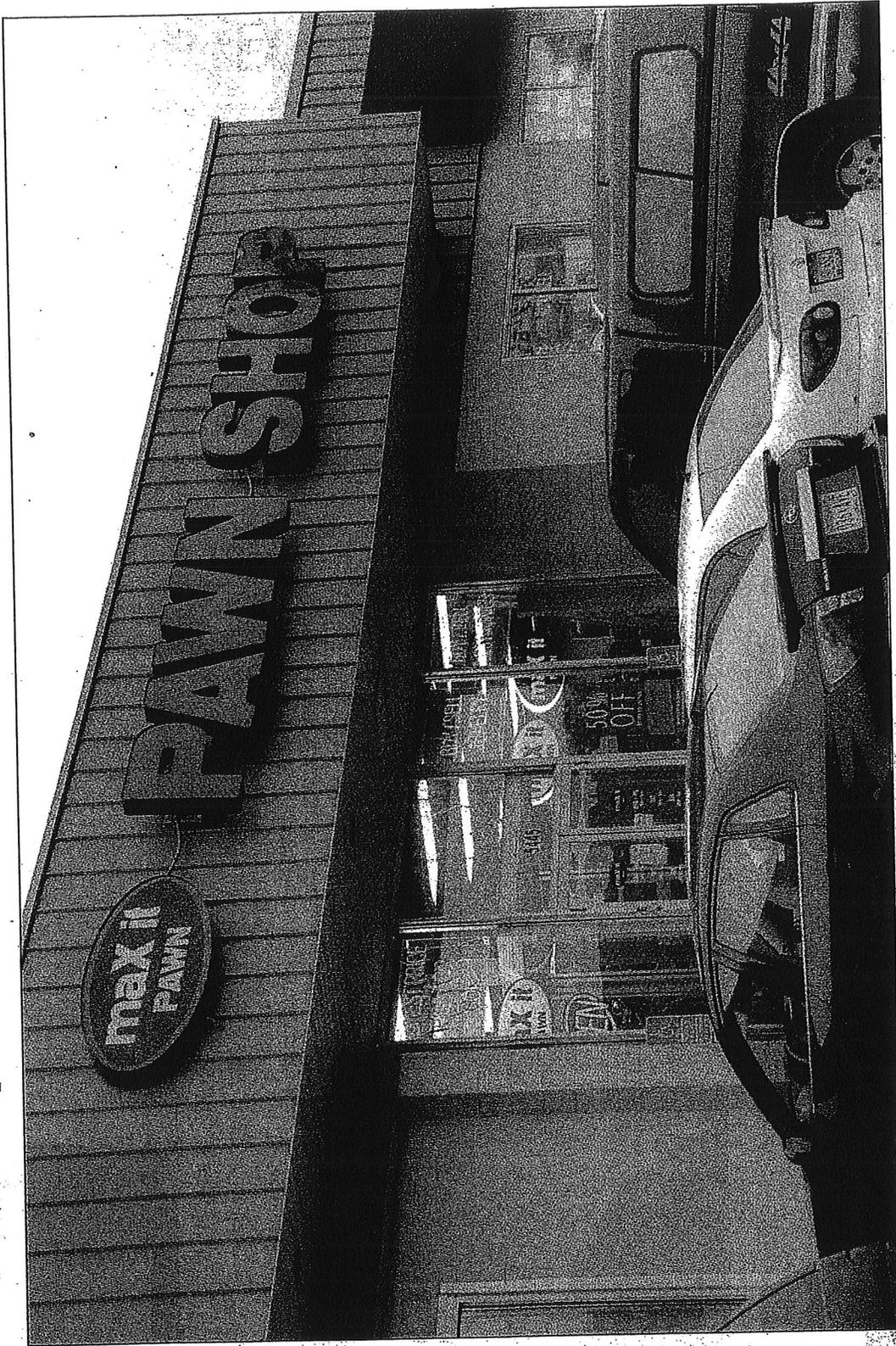
The Crystal City Council voted unanimously to penalize Crystal's Max It Pawn by levying a fine of \$1,000 and suspending the shop's business license for 30 non-consecutive days.

Max It Pawn, part of a larger, interstate chain of pawn shops that covers Minnesota, Indiana, and Missouri, failed a random police compliance check on August 13 conducted by the Robbinsdale Police Department.

"The pawn shop has certain guidelines and laws and ordinances that they have to follow in order to be open for business," said Crystal Police Chief Stephanie Revinger. "They were not in compliance with the random audit we conducted."

The random audit discovered two violations of city code.

The first violation was mislabeling items on the sales floor. Out of 50 compliance checks, Crystal officers found 29 items ranging



Crystal's Max It Pawn, located at 5445 Lakeland Avenue, was recently fined \$1,000 and had its business license revoked for 30 non-consecutive days. (Sun Post staff photo by Joe Bowen)

Pawn

FROM PAGE 1

from power tools to stereo equipment, that displayed incorrect model and serial numbers.

"Models and prices were not what they were," said Revering.

This can be a problem because pawn shops are required by state law to catalogue items in a large scale database, so that officers can track potential stolen

goods. Pawn shop employees had been neglecting to enter sales items into the database and placing them on the sales floor regardless, and vice versa.

Mislabeled sales items makes it difficult for the system to be accurate and could allow thieves to sell stolen belongings, although Revering said she did not believe that was the case at Max It Pawn.

"I believe human error happens often when we have to deal with numbers and computers," Revering

said. Aimee Dayhoff, a legal representative for EZCorp, which owns Max It Pawn, argued that the incorrect models and serial numbers were the result of human error when entering newly-received items into the database.

"Of those 29 violations," she said, referring to the 29 items that were found to be in non-compliance, "I believe 15 of those were related to human error...the others were related to the APS system and it's a map-

ping issue." Dayhoff explained that EZCorp's proprietary data entry system did not work well the police department's database.

"We have this very, very specific system," she said. "With relation to jewelry, we have 150 different specific codes that [the police system] doesn't recognize."

Max It Pawn's employees were entering specific information into EZCorp's system that was not recognized by the state system, Dayhoff said, causing it to

be logged as "other," which caused many of the issues.

The second violation of city code concerned the store's security footage. The law requires pawn shops to keep security recordings for 90 days so law enforcement officials can identify people who might pawn or try to pawn stolen goods. Max It Pawn had only been holding its video for up to 30 days, Revering said.

"We did receive an action plan from them...which indicates the photo and video issue is solved," she said at

the council meeting on Nov. 19.

Because 30 days without business would cripple the store or perhaps close it completely, the store will be closed for two days per week for the next 15 weeks, Revering said. The two days each week will change from week to week.

"The point is not to be punitive, it's to make sure that this doesn't happen again," she said.

Contact Joe Bowen at joe.bowen@ecm-inc.com

Sun Post 11-28-13

Crystal PD swears in three new officers

Three new police officers were officially inducted into the Crystal Police Department Nov. 19.

Mike Meehan, Jake Albers and Bryan Elfstrom were sworn in by Crystal Mayor Jim Adams in the city's council chambers, which were nearly filled with the new officers' friends and family.

"This is quite an honor for our police department to have not just two swearing ins, but three," said Crystal Police Chief Stephanie Revering.

The three officers swore to uphold the U.S. Constitution, the laws of the State of Minnesota and ordinances of the city of Crystal. They further affirmed that they will faithfully and impartially discharge their duties as police officers in providing assistance and service to all who look to them for help to the best of their abilities.



From left to right, Officer Jake Albers, Deputy Chief Mike Meehan and Officer Bryan Elfstrom are sworn in by Crystal Mayor Jim Adams on Nov. 19. (Photo courtesy of Crystal Police Department)

After having their badges pinned to their uniforms by specially-chosen spouses or family members, the newly-minted officers shook hands with members of the city council and staff before exiting the council chambers with the crowd of well-wishers.

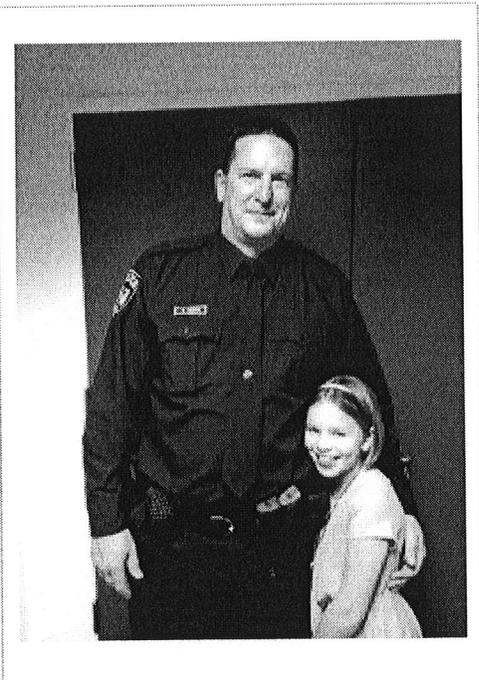
A reception was held before the swearing in ceremony in the basement of the Crystal administrative building.

Deputy Chief Mike Meehan

Mike Meehan spent 19 years with the Golden Valley Police Department before he was hired in Crystal. With Golden Valley, Meehan held the positions of community service officer for two years, patrol officer for six years, sergeant for another six years and divided his final few years with the department as operations commander and patrol commander. At various time he also was assigned to be the department's Counteract officer, field training officer, bike patrol officer, firearms instructor, and SWAT team member.

The move to Crystal also includes a promotion for Meehan, who will be the city's new deputy chief.

"I made the switch because I thought it was an interesting and better opportunity in Crystal. I was ready for a new challenge working in a different place ... I wanted to work in a new



environment in a new place and move up to the position of deputy chief and deal with new challenges in that capacity," Meehan said in a phone interview.

Deputy Chief Mike Meehan and daughter Emma.
(Sun Post staff photo by Joe Bowen)

Meehan's responsibilities as deputy chief, the position formerly held by Revering before her promotion to Chief, will be to supervise the patrol and investigative lieutenants and the support services coordinator.

"What's cool about the deputy chief is you're not relegated to any one side of the department like patrol or investigations," Meehan said.

Meehan said he wanted to be a cop because the job offered opportunities to serve the community and for "some adventure."

"The adventure is the exciting calls for service – whether it's responding to a robbery or a burglary or in-progress calls you go to. Or just working traffic enforcement because you never know what it's going to turn out to be," Meehan said.

"The variety is also an appeal," he said. "Every day is a little different."

Mike was joined at the swearing in by his two children and wife Rachel, who is a sergeant with the Minnetonka Police Department.

Officer Jake Albers

Before joining the Crystal police department, Albers served as a police reserve officer in Robbinsdale.

"Jake demonstrated strong leadership skills and he has donated countless hours of time to their city," Revering said.

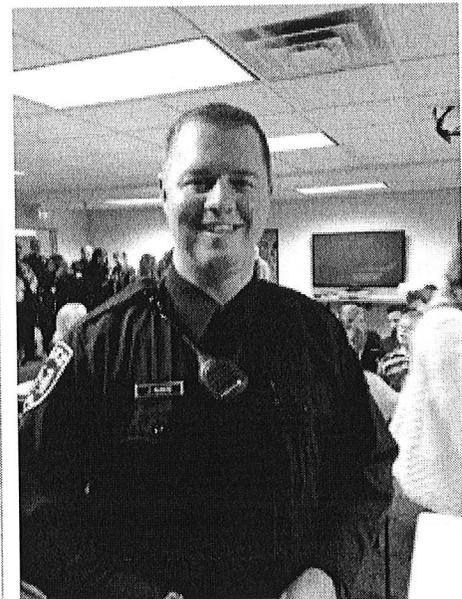
New to the department and the job itself, Albers obtained his associates degree in law enforcement from North Hennepin Community College before transferring to Hennepin Technical College to earn his certificate in law enforcement. He taught as Foss Swim School while attending college.

Albers was unavailable for comment due to his schedule with the department.

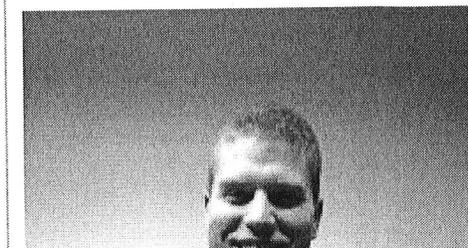
Officer Bryan Elfstrom

Elfstrom served as a reserve deputy with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office for three years before being hired by the city of Crystal.

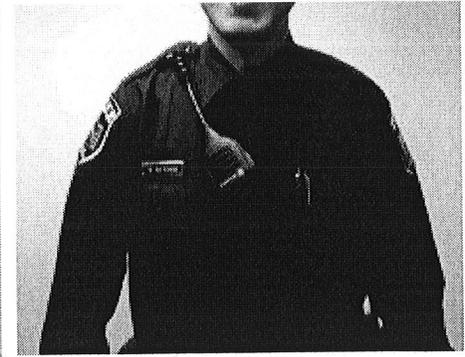
He obtained his bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a minor in psychology from St. Cloud State University before transferring to Alexandria Technical College at St. Cloud State to learn policing skills. He worked at United Hospital as a security officer after college, as well.



Officer Jake Albers. (Sun Post staff photo by Joe Bowen)



Elfstrom, too, was unavailable for comment due to his new work schedule with the department.



Officer Bryan Elfstrom. (Sun Post staff photo by Joe Bowen)

Sun Post
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Crystal Police week of Nov. 21

Following are some of the incidents reported recently to Crystal Police:

ASSAULT

- Nov. 13 on Jersey Avenue North.
- Nov. 17 on 56th Avenue North.
- Nov. 17 on Kentucky Avenue North.

BURGLARY

- Nov. 14 on Florida Avenue North.
- Nov. 16 on Douglas Drive North.

THEFT

- Nov. 14 on 36th Avenue North.
- Nov. 16 on 56th Avenue North.
- Nov. 16 on Douglas Drive North.
- Nov. 18 on 59th Avenue North.
- Nov. 18 on West Broadway Avenue.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

- Nov. 15 on West Broadway Avenue.

OTHER

Crystal Police made four arrests for suspected driving while intoxicated.

New Crystal budget will reduce tax levy slightly

1.17% increase over 2013 now at 1.07%

**BY JOE BOWEN
SUN POST NEWSPAPERS**

The city of Crystal's latest proposed 2014 budget still slightly increases the property tax burden for the city's residents.

However, the budget featured at a Nov. 19 city council work session showed less of an increase than the preliminary budget that was approved on Sept. 3 when the city passed its preliminary tax levies and budget.

The previous general fund levy increased 1.17 percent from 2013. Documents provided at the work session indicate that the final levy will increase 1.07 percent — which means the city will have \$8000 less to spend in 2014.

"On an eight-million-dollar tax levy you're not going to notice the difference," said Crystal Finance Director Charles Hansen.

Smaller levies for debt incurred while renovating the Crystal community pool, the city's share of a reconstruction project along County Highway 81, and operating money for the Crystal Economic

Development Authority, stayed the same or went down slightly compared to 2013 but remained unchanged from the Sept. 3 budget.

In all, the newest proposed budget would increase the property tax burden by 0.59 percent, down from a 0.68 percent increase in the earlier, preliminary budget.

Some council members, including Mayor Jim Adams, pushed for the levy to remain unchanged from last year.

"It's nothing more than keeping government in check and controlling our expenses. It's not a huge deal. I think we've done a fairly good job of keeping our expenses in check," Adams said in a phone interview.

While the city will receive a slight bump in revenue, major expenditures in its budget will remain largely unchanged from last year.

The increase in the general fund levy is the result of inflation throughout the general fund budget, Hansen said.

"We're looking at the total expenditures of the general fund increasing by 1.2 percent," he said, adding that the inflation ap-

plies to a wide variety of line items such as city employee wages and benefits, utility funds, and so on.

"The only subtleties in the budget are changes to a clerical position," City Manager Anne Norris explained, referring to a part-time position at the Crystal Community Center, which is scheduled for more hours in 2014.

The levies, she said, are primarily about "maintaining what we've got and reinvesting in what we've got."

Some of those ideas for "reinvestment" include the possibility of a new city snow plow, a new protective coating for the water slide at the city pool and upgraded television equipment in the city council chamber.

The money for those projects would come from Robbinsdale's capital fund, and the equipment upgrade would be partially financed by "franchise fees" — fees that result from third-party use of city equipment — from the Northwest Suburbs Cable Communication Commission, which airs council meetings on Channel 12.

BUDGET - TO PAGE 12

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Budget

FROM PAGE 1

The council will approve the final budget and levies at either its Dec. 3 or Dec. 17 meetings.

The final property tax levy amounts are due to

Hennepin County and the overall budget must be reported to the state by Dec. 28.

If council members are unable to agree on a final budget after the meeting on the 17th, they could schedule a special session in order to meet that deadline, although Han-

sen said he has yet to see such a situation arise.

"Since the council didn't give me any direction to do anything different, I'm assuming that will be the final budget," he said, referring to the budget presented at the work session.

"They can still make

changes if they decide they're unhappy with it," Hansen said, adding that "simple" changes — such as a small revenue source or specific expenditure cut — could be made at either of the normally-scheduled meetings before the budget passes and, therefore, would not

require a delay.

Citywide "Truth in Taxation" notices will be mailed in early December, and city officials have scheduled a Truth in Taxation meeting Dec. 3 in the city council chambers.

Any city with a population greater than 500

residents is required to hold such a meeting, the purpose of which is to give citizens an opportunity to express their concerns and opinions on the proposed budget and property tax levies.

Contact Joe Bowen at joe.bowen@ecm-inc.com