This is a Q&A of frequently asked questions received from the public on the proposed Rivers Edge Development and includes questions received at the last Public Open House on August 4, 2003.

DENSITY

Q. I like the rural nature of our community. Why do we have to change?
A. First, it is important to remember that the landowner of this property can choose to sell these 600-plus acres to whomever he chooses. If the City of St. Paul Park does not choose to be a part of the development up front, the project can move forward with the participation of another community. In that case, St. Paul Park may realize all of the traffic and other impacts without any tax revenue or any input up front to ensure that the community's interests are taken into consideration in the project planning.

Change is difficult, but it will occur in our community even if we choose to do nothing. A development like this would provide additional tax revenue that would help ensure we can maintain our current level of city services. It would also provide more opportunities for housing, businesses, a central gathering place, pedestrian access to the river and nature trails for our community.

Q. Provide a brief description of the type of development that will occur.
A. The project would provide housing for people at all stages of life, including affordable townhomes for young families, starter single family homes for young families, larger homes for established families, townhomes for empty nesters and a variety of senior housing including senior condos and assisted living housing units.

In addition, the development would include a neighborhood commercial/service center with shops and facilities that would potentially include businesses such as a medical facility, a drug store, coffee shop, tailor, restaurant, that the whole community could use. The development would also provide a village center - a gathering spot for the community with land that could be used by the City to develop a community center in the future. The village center could include a place to view the river and trails to walk along the river.

Q. What are the developer’s proposed refinements to the original development concept?
A. Below is the list of the developer’s proposed refinements to the plan:
- The focal point of the development's village center was at the edge of the bay, but has been moved back from the bay towards County Road 75.
- New wider setbacks and buffers will be featured along the river and bluffs.
- There will be no dredging in the bay.
- There will be no marina or motorized boat access in the bay or elsewhere in the project.
- There will be no road to the bay, just a trail to the river.
Q. Of the total project acreage, how much is planned for development, how much is open river, and how much is land that is being dedicated to trails, parks or left in its natural state?
A. Of the total project area, 440 acres are buildable upland and approximately 230 acres are unbuildable islands (63 acres), bluffs (22 acres), and open water (145 acres). Within the 440 buildable acres, the project team is exploring an average 100-foot setback from the bluff, which will provide an additional 20 acres of land that can be used potentially for passive parks and trails. Additional parks and open space areas will be integrated in various areas elsewhere in the development. The exact acreage potentially included in these areas is not defined at this time, but will be consistent with city and township ordinance requirements.

Q. Why does the developer have so many housing units in the plan?
A. This type of development is what people are seeking and is typical of many new residential and mixed use developments that are occurring in the Twin Cities area. The overall density is consistent with the guidelines of the Metropolitan Council for new housing in the metro area. In order for the developer to pay for the cost of public improvements, land improvements, and environmental restoration, the developer needs to make a reasonable rate of return. This plan will enable the developer to pay for the costs for those improvements and at the same time meet existing housing needs in the area.

Q. Who is going to live in all of these housing units?
A. Long-time residents from St. Paul Park and Grey Cloud Island Township who no longer wish to maintain a single-family home but wish to remain in the community currently have few options. This development would provide them with housing options, in addition to providing additional housing for our community's young people who are ready to find a home of their own and people who work in the area. The new housing will meet a need in the metropolitan area for additional housing.

Q. What percentage of the housing units will be single-family detached homes and why this mix of single-family and multi-unit housing?
A. Under the current plan, about 1000 housing units would be single-family detached and about 1400 housing units would be multi-unit attached housing. The decision as to the mix and type of housing is based on the market need in the area for housing and the project's overall financial feasibility.

Q. How tall will the residential and commercial buildings be and how does that correspond to current ordinance, restrictions, and guidelines?
A. The residential and commercial buildings in the village center will range from two to four stories, which would be about a maximum 55 feet for the highest buildings. Homes beyond the village center will range from one to three stories and will not exceed 35 feet in height. St. Paul Park and Grey Cloud Island Township’s ordinances currently limit height to 35 feet. The developer is working carefully with the City, Township, DNR, Met Council, and National Park Service to undertake a view-shed analysis of any buildings higher than 35 feet. Special considerations will be given for architecture, building color, lighting, and the structure setback to the river and bluffs.
TRAFFIC

Q. How would this development impact traffic in St. Paul Park?

A. Traffic volumes would increase as the Rivers Edge development proceeds. The ten or more years for the complete construction of the development would allow time to construct the needed roadway facilities to accommodate this growth in traffic. The transportation improvements that would be needed include the following:

- Third Street, which is designated in the City's Comprehensive Plan as a collector street, would be reconstructed to a three-lane roadway which includes a continuous two-way center left turn lane.

- Ninety-fifth Street in Cottage Grove will be extended westerly with the inclusion of a new bridge over the railroad tracks.

- Signals would be placed at the intersections of Third Street and Broadway and at Summit and Broadway. The intersection of Third Street and Pullman would be monitored to see if, over time, the need for a traffic signal arises.

- No additional improvements would be proposed at the Trunk Highway 61/St. Paul Park interchange beyond what is already planned to be constructed as part of the Wakota Bridge/Trunk Highway 61 major construction project that is presently underway.

Q. How busy would Third Street be when the development is complete?

A. The traffic volumes on Third Street today range from about 2000 vehicles per day at the southern end of the City to about 4000 vehicles per day south of Broadway. Once the development is completely built, which would take ten years or more, Third Street would carry about 10,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day. Traffic of that level would be comparable to Lake Road in Woodbury.

Q. How would the plan for Third Street impact access onto the street from side residential streets and homes along the street?

A. Presently not all of the streets crossing Third Street have stop signs. As volumes grow along Third Street, the City will likely install stop signs for those cross streets. For homes along the street, the middle (left turn) lane would provide an efficient way to turn into the driveways along the street.

Q. How would traffic impact area schools - Pullman Elementary and Oltman Junior High School which are in the vicinity of the development?

A. Although the schools presently feature off-street drop off and pick up areas, it has been observed that several parents drop off and pick up students on the streets in front of the schools. With a growth in traffic volumes it is even more important to encourage off-street drop off and pick up. As final design plans would be developed for Third Street the City would continue to work with the school district to assess circulation patterns and reinforce off street school access opportunities. Third Street would feature a sidewalk and/or a bike path to facilitate bike and pedestrian movements.

Q. How will the traffic flow in and out of the residential areas work?

A. The Rivers Edge site plan is designed around a system of internal roadways feeding onto the main roadway spine of the development. This main roadway would be designed as a parkway
which will connect to existing Third Street. Third Street is already designated as a collector in
the City’s comprehensive plan and it would be upgraded to accommodate the ultimate traffic
volumes. This upgrade would include provision of a three-lane roadway (one traffic lane
northbound, one southbound and a center continuous two-way left turn lane). The center left
turn lane would provide the opportunity for residents to readily turn into their driveways.
Access to Third Street from the existing city cross streets would be unchanged from the current
arrangements.

Q. Will there be a need for alternate routes?
A. The 95th Street connection is the one new route that would be established to help accommodate
Rivers Edge traffic. Third Street, with its proposed upgrade, would have sufficient capacity to
handle the projected future traffic volumes. The amounts of traffic added to other roadways
would not cause a need for improvements to those roadways or for the establishment of
alternative routes.

Q. How would cut-through traffic impact existing residential neighborhoods?
A. With a new development in the nearby proximity there would be additional traffic to some
residential streets. The transportation plan has been designed to facilitate traffic movements to
Third Street and the new 95th Street connection to access external destinations. Other city
streets that would experience traffic increases include Pullman Avenue and Summit Avenue.
The added traffic on these streets would not cause a need for roadway upgrades or significant
changes in traffic control strategies. Other St. Paul Park streets may experience small increases
in traffic volumes as well. The City would monitor neighborhood traffic volumes and modify
traffic control strategies to address impacts that may arise.

Q. How was the estimate of trips for Rivers Edge developed?
A. The traffic estimate for this development was based on land use “trip generation rates” that are
consistent with the Metropolitan Council’s Regional Traffic Forecast Model. Washington
County in its response to the AUAR stated that they concur with the trip generation estimates.

Q. Has any safety assessment of traffic impacts been conducted?
A. The transportation planning for this project and all subsequent roadway designs are conducted to
accommodate the traffic volumes in a safe and efficient manner. The design of all roadways
and traffic control devices is an integral process that includes provision for traffic flow and
attention to safety of motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Q. How will the widening of Third Street impact front yards?
A. Third Street is a collector roadway in the City’s comprehensive plan. North of Pullman Avenue
the street was built to a 43 width within an 80 foot City right of way. South of Pullman the
street is 27 to 30 feet wide, also within an 80 foot right of way. Because of the unique
characteristics of Third Street, the City work with the residents to establish the final section for
Third Street during the detail design stage. The impact to individual front yards will vary based
on specific design parameters for that location (e.g., provision of parking, tree preservation,
etc.).
Q. Will there be a need for another bridge across the River?
A. No. The Wakota Bridge has alleviated the need for an additional river crossing. The new traffic from Rivers Edge does not warrant construction of an additional bridge in this area.

Q. I understand there are many trains at the railroad that runs parallel to Third Street. How will increased traffic be accommodated at railroad crossings in town?
A. There are presently three at-grade railroad crossings in St. Paul Park (at Broadway, 9th Avenue and Pullman Avenue). The busiest of these crossings – the one at Broadway – will be aided in the future by the construction of a new bridge over the railroad tracks north of Broadway. This work, which is being done as part of the Wakota Bridge/Trunk Highway 61 major construction project, will provide an alternative path to the at-grade Third Street crossing. In addition, the new 95th Street connection will feature a bridge over the railroad tracks, providing another means to avoiding conflicts with the railroad.

Q. How will the heavy trucks and equipment during construction impact the streets? Will the circular turn-arounds in the plan be abandoned to accommodate the heavy trucks?
A. The traffic circles planned as part of the Rivers Edge parkway concept design will be built to current design standards sufficient to accommodate a truck turning radius. The heavy trucks and equipment needed for construction will primarily use Third Street to access the Rivers Edge development. Third Street will be built to sufficient roadway strength to accommodate this volume of truck traffic.

Q. How will the costs of these traffic improvements be covered?
A. The developer will be responsible for infrastructure costs directly caused by the Rivers Edge development. The developer will pay for the upgrade of Third Street and for development’s share of the costs for the new 95th Street bridge.

Q. Wouldn’t the traffic volumes on Third Street exceed the volumes set for a three-lane road in the Washington County Traffic Plan?
A. No, the projected volumes for Third Street – based on conservative, or “worst case” traffic forecasts - range from about 10,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day. This traffic level can be readily accommodated by a three-lane design. The Washington County Transportation Plan states that a three lane roadway can accommodate 16,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day.

Q. How will loss of residential parking along Third Street be handled?
A. During the final design phase the City will work with the residents along Third Street in a public input process to determine the exact roadway cross section width and other design features along the roadway. Provisions for parking will be addressed during that phase of design.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS
Q. What is the condition of the land on which this development would be located?
A. The property has been in agricultural production or pasture, including two stockyards, for more than a century. These agricultural uses destroyed native prairie, oak barrens, and hardwood forest and caused serious bluff erosion. There is bare ground resulting from shady areas created
by the dense non-native, invasive shrubs and saplings that took over after native species were disrupted and that has resulted in bluff erosion and badly degraded forest and woodland conditions. Several dumps/material storage areas and a wood chipping/mulching operation have also impacted the site. In addition there is a stockyard manure pit that is on the edge of the river just north of the bay, and an existing stormwater discharge pipe that discharges into this stockyard manure pit.

Q. What protection and restoration strategies are proposed by the developer?
A. The following strategies for protection and restoration are proposed by the developer.
   - Restore oak savanna and forests along the river bluffs by removing non-native, invasive species and planting native trees and shrubs.
   - Restore shoreline vegetation by removal of non-native, invasive species, planting native species and allowing light to get through and provide a healthy environment to stabilize the bluff.
   - Provide only passive recreational opportunities along the river and within the bay such as outlooks, trails, and perhaps a pedestrian boardwalk.
   - Only allow the opportunity for portaging and launching non-motorized watercraft (e.g. canoes and kayaks).

Q. How has and will the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) be involved in this project?
A. The project will comply with all local, state, and federal environmental regulations and in fact the developer is working closely with the DNR to address the agency's questions and comments regarding environmental issues. The DNR is responsible for review of the environmental document - the Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) -- as it relates to natural resources. The DNR is also responsible for reviewing and approving plans and regulations that affect lands and waters within the Critical Area, which is located west of County Road 75 within the proposed Rivers Edge project site. Therefore, the DNR has review and approval authority over any plan or ordinance amendments affecting lands and waters west of County Road 75.

Q. What agencies are responsible for reviewing the AUAR environmental document?
A. There are 21 agencies and local units of government who received the AUAR for review and comment. They include: Board of Water and Soil Resources, City of Cottage Grove, City of St. Paul Park, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Public Services, Department of Transportation, Environmental Quality Board, Grey Cloud Island Township, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Park Service, South Washington County Schools – District No. 833, South Washington Watershed District, U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Conservation District, and Washington County.

Q. Would there be commercial mining?
A. No commercial mining would occur within the project area.
**Q.** Have/Will the impacts of carbon monoxide (CO) emissions be studied?

**A.** The project’s environmental document – the Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) -- included a detailed analysis of vehicle related carbon monoxide emissions (Appendix G of the AUAR). Without the Rivers Edge project, the highest concentration of CO within the City at the peak traffic hour is 6.5 parts per million (ppm). By adding the traffic projected for Rivers Edge, the highest concentration of CO within the City is 7.9 ppm, which is an increase of 2.1 ppm. The analysis shows that carbon monoxide emissions related to the River’s Edge project will be well below the ambient air quality standard of 30 ppm for carbon monoxide emissions.

**Q.** What will be the noise impacts of the traffic?

**A.** Noise impacts from traffic associated with the development are anticipated to not exceed typical noise levels of current residential developments is St. Paul Park. Trees, other vegetation buffers, design and placement of open space, and buildings are anticipated to attenuate and screen noise from occupied areas.

**Q.** How does this project conform to Critical Areas guidelines and Washington County ordinances on the setback of development from the bluff?

**A.** The project will be in conformance with the Township’s 40-foot bluff setback (the County only requires a 30-foot bluff setback). The project team is exploring an average structure setback of 100 feet from the bluffline to provide greater protection than what is currently required by ordinance.

**Q.** How will this project impact the level of boat traffic on the river?

**A.** The project is not anticipated to contribute any additional motorized boat traffic. It is anticipated that an occasional canoe or other small non-motorized craft may be portaged to the bay and launched onto the river. No measurable impact from boat traffic on the river is expected from this project.

**Q.** Has this land been designated an “outstanding” natural resource area by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)?

**A.** Originally, based on aerial photographs and existing data, the Metropolitan Council and DNR’s regional natural resource assessment identified and ranked the Mississippi River and portions of the Critical Area as an “outstanding” natural resource area. However, once the DNR had the opportunity to conduct a site visit, a large portion of the “outstanding” area was determined by the DNR to be an old agricultural field rather than a high quality prairie area. The majority of the remaining “outstanding” natural resource areas occur along the river islands, bluffs and bluff buffer areas and will not be developed.

**Q.** Can you tell me if there are any protected categories of wildlife or plants found in the development area and if so, how will they be protected?

**A.** There are no categories of protected wildlife in the development area. However, in adjacent areas such as on islands and within the river there are nesting bald eagles and special status freshwater mussels. The development has been designed to avoid the area with the eagle nest using proposed setbacks encouraged by the DNR. No impacts are to be associated with the development to the river and potential freshwater mussel habitats.
Q. How much natural, wooded land will remain and what if any protections will be made for existing wildlife? Is it a pristine wildlife area?
A. Little wildlife is believed to occupy the actively farmed agricultural lands that are not annually displaced by farming operations. The development is anticipated to provide some more stable habitat areas in green habitat areas that may be utilized by wildlife from these areas.

Setbacks from the bluffline, the area from the bluffline to the river’s edge, the river islands, and the open water of the river, are the main wildlife protection areas and habitat movement corridors to be protected under this plan. The area included in this zone is approximately 260 acres. Additional open space areas and habitat restoration areas are anticipated to be integrated in various areas elsewhere in the development. The exact acreage potentially included in these areas is not defined at this time.

Q. Will the bluffs be impacted by construction?
A. Bluffs with a slope of 18 percent or greater, and most areas of 12 percent or greater slopes will be protected and restored and not impacted by construction activities. Construction will occur in three primary locations through the bluffs. These included a foot trail routing, and two road crossings. Both road crossings and the main trail crossing will be placed in locations that currently are highly disturbed by existing farm roads or farm buildings. As a result of the placement of the new roads and trails in these disturbed locations, minimal construction impacts will occur on the bluff.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Q. Who would pay for the cost of infrastructure improvements necessary to this project - sewer, water, streets, etc.?
A. The developer has committed to pay for the necessary infrastructure for this development. This includes sewer, water and roads within the development and street improvements, water mains, elevated water reservoir, sewer mains, and other related public improvements external to the development. The total estimated cost of these external improvements is about $10 million.

Q. How can we be sure the developer will keep his commitment?
A. In order to ensure this agreement, the City would execute a contract with the developer. The agreement will require performance bonds to guarantee completion of all required infrastructure. Executing a contract like this is a critical step in any development such as this and ensures that all responsibilities are clear and enforceable.

Q. Who would pay for improvements to existing streets that are required to be improved for the development?
A. The developer has agreed to pay for these costs for all owner-occupied residential property owners. However, there may be an assessment of a fair share of the costs to commercial property owners and property that is subdivided if these properties benefit from the improvements.

Q. Who would pay for the additional city services needed as a result of this project (police, fire, etc.)?
A. The property tax revenue provided by the new development would be more than sufficient to pay for the new services. Housing units in the new development would range in value from
$160,000 to $600,000, and in addition, there will be several million dollars of commercial development. A typical St. Paul Park home valued at $250,000 would produce $886 in property tax revenue to the City. These properties would also produce tax revenue for the school district and the county.

Q. Would the proposed Rivers Edge development impact property values in the City?
A. Yes. In general, other communities with development and redevelopment projects have found that, dependent on the location, development will generally enhance property values in the community, according to Mary Bujold, President of Maxfield Research. In general, the positive impact on property values is more pronounced the closer a property is to the development, said Bujold, whose firm specializes in real estate market feasibility and consulting.

Q. Would I be able to sell my home on Third Street with the increased traffic from this project? How would this project impact the value of my property on Third Street?
A. Traffic volumes along Third Street would increase gradually over the ten or more years it takes to complete the project. When the project is complete, it is likely that the volume of traffic on Third Street would make homes along the street more difficult to sell because the traffic will eliminate some potential buyers, such as families with small children. In other communities where traffic volumes have increased substantially on streets, property values do not necessarily become depressed, but they do not see as significant an appreciation when traffic volumes grow, according to Mary Bujold of Maxfield Research.

Q. Will the South Washington County School District need to build more schools or add capacity to existing schools because of this development? Who will pay for those improvements?
A. The development is within the attendance boundaries of Pullman Elementary School, Oltman Junior High School, and Park High. These schools do not have sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the total enrollment increases expected from Rivers Edge and other developments that will occur in the future. School District officials are monitoring student growth in the area and will plan for new facilities or expansion to existing facilities as the demand warrants.

The exact impact of this development on the district's plans would depend on the speed with which construction would occur. The additional tax base from the new development would help pay for any new schools or improvements to existing schools. Therefore, the net impact of the development on tax rates for debt service on school facilities is expected to be very small. It is also important to remember that in the same way property taxpayers from throughout the South Washington County School District have helped to pay for new schools in other growing communities in the district, districtwide taxpayers would help pay for school improvements in St. Paul Park.

Q. How would this development affect the school district's operating costs?
A. The new students coming from the proposed development would cause an increase in the school district's operating costs. However, school operating costs are funded through a combination of state aids and local property taxes; the funding each district receives is based directly on enrollment. So the new students would also result in additional revenue, which is expected to be sufficient to cover the additional operating costs.
Q. How can this project be expected to impact the property taxes on my $150,000 home over the next five to ten years?
A. Based on the fiscal analysis prepared for the City by public financial advisor Ehlers & Associates, taxes on existing properties should not be impacted and will not increase as a result of the development. In fact, there may be some economies of scale that will benefit existing property owners and ensure state budget cutbacks do not impact the quality of city services that they receive.

Q. Wouldn’t more commercial-industrial property in the development provide for a larger tax base and more tax relief? If so, why isn’t there more commercial industrial in the development?
A. Yes, potentially the City could realize a greater increase in taxbase with commercial-industrial development. However, there are a number of other land use considerations with a commercial land use in that area, especially traffic impacts. The traffic impacts of commercial industrial development are much more concentrated and specific than residential development and make commercial-industrial development a much less attractive option for this land.

Q. Will current residents have to pay for 75 percent of the curb and gutter costs of the project?
A. No. No residential property owners will be assessed for infrastructure improvements as part of this project. However, commercial property owners and any property that is subdivided may be assessed if improvements to existing infrastructure – such as streets – benefit them and increase their property value.

Q. How will this development impact the number of businesses in the community?
A. There will be several new businesses in the community as a part of this development, including some neighborhood retail and services. It’s important to remember that the primary factor behind supporting new businesses is the number of households that exist in the area. An increase in the number of businesses in any community helps to support existing and potential new businesses.

Q. Who will pay for maintenance of the River Islands if the developer gives them to the City as a gift?
A. It is anticipated that the City would pay for the maintenance and that has been factored into the project costs. The maintenance is expected to be limited to one maintenance day per year and one piece of equipment to cleanup debris.

COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
Q. Have there been any opportunities for the public to become involved in this project to date?
A. Yes. Below is a list.

   Feb. 5, ’03 - Developer hosts neighborhood meeting for residents of City and Township on proposed project.

   Feb. 24, ’03 - Joint public hearing before Township and City Planning Commission.
Jan. 13; Feb. 10; Mar. 10; Mar. 24; Apr. 8; Apr. 21; May 5, Aug. 13; Sept 2 '03 - City Council and Township hold joint workshops open to the public.

June 2; Sept. 15, '03 - Site made available for tours and inspections to general public and City Council.

Aug. 4, '03 - Open house to identify project issues and concerns.

Oct. 1, '03 - Open house to provide feedback to public on addressing issues & concerns; review refined site plan and mitigation measures.

Q. How will residents along Third Street be informed and involved regarding the future of that street?
A. As improvements become necessary to Third Street, neighbors will be engaged in discussions and meetings as part of the planning process on those improvements. Neighbors will be individually contacted to ensure they can be involved in that planning process.

Q. What opportunities will there be for public involvement in the future?
A. Workshops and/or public hearings will be held before the City Council and Township Board approve each of the following items:
- Comprehensive Plan amendment
- Critical Area Plan and Ordinance amendment
- Shoreland Management Ordinance
- Planned Unit Development (PUD) Ordinance amendment
- Rivers Edge PUD District Ordinance established to control development
- Master Development Plan