

NORMAN POINTE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT EIS INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

The City Council is considering the adequacy of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Norman Pointe Office Development project being proposed by Duke-Weeks. The Norman Pointe Office Development project would be located between Green Valley Drive and Norman Center Drive and adjacent to I-494.

It is the responsibility of the City Council to determine the adequacy or validity of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prior to any official action (such as a rezoning or a preliminary or final development plan approval). The Environmental Review stage is the first step in a development process that would involve the City of Bloomington and other public agencies. Duke-Weeks has not officially applied to the City to request rezoning of the property, preliminary development plan approval of the entire project, or final development plan approval for any development phase.

The process being conducted under State guidelines by the City is an information-gathering process and not a decision-making process.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The State of Minnesota Environmental Review regulations require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) when a proposed project fits a mandatory EIS category. The Norman Pointe Office Development project currently being considered by Duke-Weeks (the project proposer) fits within a mandatory EIS category requiring the preparation of an EIS.

There are four steps in the EIS process:

1. Preparation of a scoping document to determine the focus or topics to be considered in further detail in the EIS. The Norman Pointe Office Development scoping document was prepared in February, 2000.
2. Preparation of a Draft EIS (DEIS) of those topics identified in the scoping document.
3. Public review of the DEIS and preparation of a Final EIS (FEIS) including responses to comments on the draft document.
4. Determination of the "adequacy" of the EIS or is the information and analysis contained in the EIS adequate in addressing the topics to be studied.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)?

An EIS is a study that provides information on the extent of potential environmental impacts related to a project and how impacts may be avoided or minimized. The EIS is then used by government decision-makers (such as the Bloomington City Council), the project proposer and the public as a guide in the consideration of a project. The EIS must be completed prior to the City Council action on any specific aspect of the project.

The document Guide to Minnesota Environmental Review Rules published by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board states:

A key point: the EIS is not a means to approve or disapprove a project, but is simply a source of information to guide approval decisions. Occasionally, the information results in an alternative site or design being selected. More commonly, the information suggests changes or mitigative measures to minimize potential impacts that can later be imposed via governmental approvals. However, the legal basis for choosing an alternative other than the proposer's preference or for imposing mitigative measure comes from other statutory authorities. Again, the EIS can only point out problems and solutions, it cannot enforce them.

The project as proposed for study in the Environmental Impact Statement has not been considered by the City Council. No formal application for City approval has been made by the project proposer.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Norman Pointe Office Development project is a phased mixed-use development consisting of three office buildings and a 150 room hotel on a 20.2 acre site. Total net development would be 988,810 square feet supported by a net parking total of 3,104 parking spaces. In the EIS, this project is listed as Alternative 1 and is based on a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.2 and designated as the preferred project alternative.

A second project alternative, Alternative 2, is the same project developed at a floor area ratio of 1.5 resulting in a net new development of 1,315,704 square feet and 4,608 parking spaces. This project would fall within the City's zoning regulations and would represent a worst-case scenario in analyzing environmental impacts for the EIS. The EIS, also, takes into consideration a 'no build' alternative for the year 2003 and assesses impacts should the project not be undertaken.

The Norman Pointe Office Development is located in Policy Area No. 4 of the Northwest Area District Plan that was adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan in 1991. Rezoning of the property to Commercial Office CO-1 in accordance with the Northwest District Plan occurred in 1991.

The project does not propose any development for either the southeast or southwest corner of West 84th Street and Normandale Boulevard. There is no intent to privately developed these two areas. The use of this land is for park and open space and stormwater management purposes.

EIS SUMMARY

A list of the scoped items addressed in the EIS is as follows: visual (shadow cast analysis), traffic, traffic related noise, vehicle-related air emissions, surface water quality, water-related land use management districts, roads, and cumulative impacts.

A major element of the EIS is the traffic analysis. The EIS traffic analysis includes Mn/DOT programmed construction of a third lane on I-494 between TH 100 and TH 169 for the year 2002. This Mn/DOT I-494 project includes improvements to the TH 100 and East Bush Lake Road interchanges. The traffic analysis includes the new Duke-Weeks office building on Green Valley Drive and the United Properties office building at West 84th Street and Normandale Boulevard.

The EIS traffic analysis evaluates 8 development scenarios in relation to traffic in the immediate area based on a projected level of service at intersections. Included in the analysis of the 8 development scenarios is a listing of roadway improvements to mitigate traffic impacts. As a phased project, final development plan approval for a project phase would be related to roadway improvements that may be required in order to mitigate impacts.

A list of recommended roadway improvements is shown in Table 1.1 of the Final EIS. Included in this list are the following improvements:

- East Bush Lake Road / 78th Street north bound turn lane
- Normandale Boulevard / 84th Street grade separated interchange
- East Bush Lake Road / 84th Street south bound turn and through lanes
- East Bush Lake Road / Highwood Drive additions—south bound turn lane, east bound turn lane and west bound turn lanes
- Norman Center Drive / Bridge Road traffic signal
- Norman Center Drive / Normandale Lake Boulevard traffic signal and south bound, east bound and west bound turn lanes.

RELATED ITEM – WEST 84TH STREET AND NORMANDALE BOULEVARD INTERSECTION

The focus of the Norman Pointe Office Development EIS is the study of environmental effects related to the proposed project. Included in the traffic analysis is a listing of roadway improvements that are recommended to mitigate traffic impacts. The traffic analysis notes that roadway improvements (including the West 84th Street and Normandale Boulevard grade separated interchange) are recommended whether or not the proposed project proceeds under the year 2003 ‘no build’ alternative.

The concept, which is being developed for the 84th Street and Normandale “interchange”, is a single point interchange with Normandale Boulevard raised above 84th Street. The 84th Street intersection would continue to be signalized. This design would facilitate through traffic on Normandale Boulevard/TH 100 and improve the operation of the existing intersection of 84th Street and Normandale Boulevard. The potential impacts of intersection reconstruction would require environmental analysis, depending on the proposed design and funding sources.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS—NEXT STEPS

Should the City Council approve the Final EIS as Adequate, this would allow Duke-Weeks, the project proposer, to submit land use applications for a project. This would involve City Council action on four types of requests:

- Rezoning to Planned Development
- Preliminary Development Plan – a master plan for the entire development
- Final Development Plan – detailed plan of what is being built—it could be one building or multiple buildings and must be in accordance with the Preliminary Development Plan
- Preliminary and Final Plat –replatting of the property, as necessary, to allow for a unified development parcel.

These requests would go to the Planning Commission and to the Traffic and Transportation Advisory Commission (TTAC) for review prior to City Council consideration. There is public notification of property owners within 500 feet of a project prior to a Planning Commission public hearing.

SUMMARY

City Council is not being requested to approve a West 84th Street and Normandale Boulevard grade separated interchange. City Council is only being requested to consider whether the nature and scope of environmental impacts were adequately addressed in the Norman Pointe Office Development EIS

Should you have further questions please feel free to contact the City Planning Division at (952) 563-8920.