

BACKGROUND AND PLANNING HISTORY

The 20.2-acre parcel between Green Valley Drive and Norman Center Drive now owned by the Duke Weeks Realty Partnership has been an established commercial office area since the early 1970s.

The first development occurred in the late 1960s, after I-494 was constructed and included three two-story office buildings with surface parking for approximately 700 vehicles. The primary land use in the southwestern quadrant of I-494 and Normandale Boulevard is commercial office use, including Normandale Lake Office Park and Norman Center office development.

The Duke-Weeks property and adjacent area has been consistently guided for high intensity office, commercial and mixed used development.

- The area was initially designated for high intensity development in the 1963 citywide land use plan.
- In the 1975 Western Area the site and adjoining lands was guided for office use.
- The 1980 Comprehensive Plan designated the area as Mixed Use, a land use category based on intensive development of varied and interrelated commercial, residential, and sometimes industrial uses in locations adjacent to interchanges with principal arterials.
- The Northwest Area District Plan of the Comprehensive Plan designated the area as Mixed Use with Mixed Focus and provided for the basis for the rezoning of the property to C0-1 Commercial Office, a high intensity zoning district. The Northwest Area District Plan was adopted and the area rezoned in 1991.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In August 1999 approved plans for a 7-story (216,000 sq. ft.) office building that was completed in 2000. In February, 2000 Duke-Weeks initiated an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to study the extent of any potential project impacts related to project to redevelopment the entire Duke-Weeks property holding. The City Council approved the adequacy of the EIS on December 18, 2000 pursuant to Minnesota Environmental Quality Board rules. The EIS is on the City website in the Planning Department section under Environmental Reviews.

The EIS analyzed three development alternatives:

- A “no-build” alternative.
- A proposed project alternative of consisting of three new office buildings and a hotel with a total of 1.08 million square feet; and
- An alternative development consisting of three new office buildings and a hotel with a total of 1.31 million square feet. The existing Norman Pointe I building was included in the EIS analysis.

Based on the traffic analysis, proposed Building No. 2 of the project could be constructed with traffic signal improvement at Normandale Center Drive and Bridge Road to mitigate an impact from the Duke-Weeks building.

Recommended roadway system improvements were identified in the EIS to mitigate traffic impacts related to additional development beyond Building No. 2. The following improvements should be open to traffic prior to the construction of buildings No. 3 and No. 4:

- The 494 3rd Lane project. This will add a third lane west of Hwy 100 to Hwy 212 in Eden Prairie and is anticipated to begin in 2002 and be completed in 2003/4.
- West 78th Street/East Bush Lake Road interchange project. This would include the addition of a second northbound lane and interchange improvement that would allow for access to and from 494 in both directions.
- East Bush Lake Road/Green Valley Drive improvement. Green Valley Road would be realigned so that it intersected with East Bush Lake Road south of where it does today. This is part of the planned 3rd Lane project as the revised interchange requires that it be moved.
- Normandale Boulevard/West 84th Street intersection improvement.
- West 84th Street/East Bush Lake Road improvement. This project would add a southbound right turn lane and a second southbound left turn lane.
- East Bush Lake Road/Highwood Drive improvement. This project would modify the intersection to improve approach and departure lanes.
- Norman Center Drive/Normandale Lake Boulevard improvement. A project involving installation of a traffic signal and additional turn lanes at the intersection.
- West 84th Street/Normandale Lake improvement. A project that would result in modification of signal timing/phasing.

The improvements to I-494 are moving ahead separately and are not contingent on the decision on the Duke Weeks development. These projects were included in the EIS traffic analysis. The funding for the two I-494 improvements at Normandale and 84th and at 84th and East Bush Lake Road have not to date received approval.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL APPROACH

When Duke Weeks sought approval for the second building they originally intended to apply for a final site and building plan under the current zoning, which classifies offices as a permitted use. Bloomington City staff encouraged them to lay out their entire development plan now and apply for a Planned Development rezoning. As a planned development rezoning, the project would proceed under a deliberate process that would accomplish the following:

- Give those interested in the project a better understanding of what was coming
- Provide a development that would allow for greater mitigation of impacts on adjacent properties through design flexibility and attention to design details, and coordinated circulation and site development. It would also allow the City Council to condition transportation system improvements set forth in the EIS with the subsequent phases of redevelopment.

An alternative development approach that could have been taken by the developer would be to submit an application of for Building No. 2 as a final site and building plans request based on current land use designation and zoning and then proceed in a similar manner with Building No. 3. Staff did not recommend this incremental approach because it would not formally tie redevelopment to the transportation improvements recommended in the EIS.