

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res. 2018-077, **Version:** 1

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**Date:** August 21, 2018

**To:** Mayor and City Council  
City Administrator

**From:** Scott Tempel, City Planner

Consider Resolution Approval of the Preliminary Plat of the Bluff View Addition.

**Action Requested:**

Staff recommends approval of a Resolution for the Preliminary Plat of the Bluff View Addition.

**Summary Report:**

Staff is recommending approval of the Bluff View Preliminary Plat consisting of 32.2 acres. This subdivision will provide sixty-one single-family lots, ten twin-home lots, four four-plex lots, and two Neighborhood Commercial lots. The developer hopes to provide quality affordable housing for this area of Northfield.

Vern and Joan Koester are the property owners of this parcel. The Koester's initially contacted staff in 2016 with a preliminary concept plan for the expired Southbridge preliminary plat. They also expressed an interest in partnering with the City on development of the adjacent land owned by the Northfield HRA. The Koester's worked with consultants from I & S Group to develop additional concept plans involving a potential land swap. After several meetings with the HRA, it was determined that the proposed land swap would require additional grading and increase development costs.

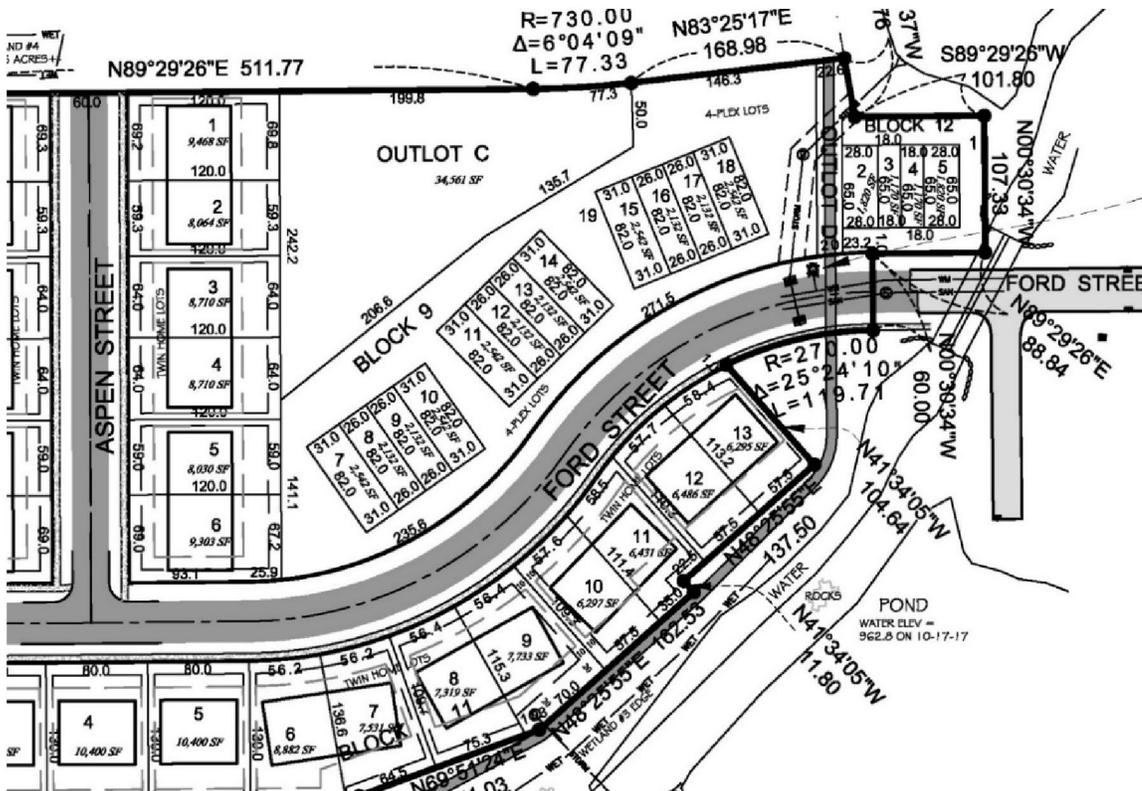
The current preliminary plat proposal utilizes the preliminarily graded street grid. The project will connect with the existing development at Ford Street and future connections at Southbridge Drive, Aspen Street and Brookside Drive. The proposed connection of Southbridge Drive to the west was eliminated as MN/DOT will not allow Southbridge Drive to be connected to 246 due to the proximity of other intersections.

The Bluff View Addition Preliminary Plat was initially included on the City Council agenda for May 15, 2018, but was removed prior to the meeting due to a discrepancy in the plat documents. The applicant initially requested a waiver from installing a sidewalk on the north side of Ford Street (east of Aspen Street) to match the current conditions in that area. The applicant also proposed a reduction in street width for this section of Ford Street.

The Planning Commission reviewed the request for a waiver from installing a sidewalk on the north side of Ford Street and reduced street width. According to the April 19 PC staff report: "Sidewalks will be installed on both sides of every street, except for the north side of part of Ford Street where there is no connecting sidewalk." Planning Commission members did not object to this change if additional 'Complete Street' initiatives were incorporated.

In regards to the proposed reduction in street width, the applicant was informed that Ford Street is a minor collector and requires parking on both sides of the street. The Complete Street Policy allows partial removal of the parking lane with the incorporation of bump-outs or other traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian safety at intersections. Full removal of the parking lane is not allowed without a variance.

The preliminary plat included in the May 15 City Council agenda showed only the reduced street width and not the proposed 'Complete Street' modifications. The agenda item was pulled from the agenda because there was insufficient time for the applicant to make the required changes to the preliminary plat that accurately depicted the required changes.



Since that time, the applicant has agreed to install the sidewalk along both sides of Ford Street and to construct Ford Street to the standard profile. These changes are accurately depicted on the preliminary plat included in the agenda packet. Since both of these changes fully comply with the Land Development Code, additional Planning Commission review of the preliminary plat was not required.

**Background:**

Southbridge was originally proposed by the ARCON Corporation to develop 52 single-family residential lots, 140 row-style townhomes and 124 back-to-back townhome units in 14 buildings with 8-10 units per structure. The single-family lots had a minimum size of 6,500 square feet. The row townhomes were planned in 35 separate 4-unit structures.

Only the first phase of the project was constructed before the housing crash of 2007-2008, which forced ARCON to abandon the project. The final plat for the first addition consisted of 17 multi-family buildings containing 82 units and 10 single-family lots as shown in Attachment 3. Not all of the units were constructed. Several of the multi-family parcels were not developed, but most have now been purchased for development.

In 2008, the remainder of the project was subdivided as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition to allow the HRA to purchase the northern 14.4 acres of the project and the remaining Outlot going to the Koester's. This Outlot they now propose for development as the Bluff View subdivision. The Koester's initially approached the HRA in 2017 with a potential land swap of HRA land for land owned by the Koester's. The HRA obtained site concept plans and soil testing analysis to determine the feasibility of the land trade. Due to time constraints and other considerations, the Koester's decided to move forward with development plans without the land trade.

**Review Process:**

The Koester's submitted an application for Preliminary Plat approval for the Bluff View Addition. The Preliminary Plat was reviewed by staff at the Development Review Committee and direction was provided on required changes. The applicant also requested preliminary input from the Planning Commission at their meeting on February 15, 2018.

The Planning Commission recommended:

- Connectivity from Ford Street leading north, so children will have adequate walking access to the elementary and middle schools
- Connect Southbridge Drive east/west to their development
- Continuation of Aspen Street to the south
- Neighborhood commercial corner lots entering the development on Ford Street from Hwy 246 were encouraged.

The applicant made the recommended changes and the Planning Commission considered the applicant's request for a Preliminary Plat at a duly noticed Public Hearing held on April 19, 2018. Several area residents attended the meeting and discussed their concerns on pedestrian safety, water runoff from the southwest coming from the Dundas development, and traffic through the neighborhood to the north. The Planning Commission reviewed the submitted application and did not have further comments or recommended changes. The commissioners unanimously recommended approval of the Bluff View Preliminary Plat to City Council.

**Analysis:**

**Sanitary Sewer and Water:** All necessary utilities are available adjacent to the site.

**Storm Water:** The required storm water analysis performed by the consulting engineer determined that the storm water detention/infiltration basins proposed for the project would be adequate to gain the required infiltration volume, and the rate and flow control required under the City of Northfield Code. The proposal is for one new storm water pond and a large mid-block raingarden feature.

City of Northfield staff reviewed that analysis, which was performed using Hydro-CAD computer software using as a basis the 2003 Southbridge Hydrology. This most recent analysis determined that this latest phase complies with the provisions of Chapter 22, Article VI of the Northfield City Code currently in effect (opposed to 1998 regulations).

Through the development review process, it was revealed that the Koester's property receives significant stormwater flows from development in the township to the southwest of the site. A 36" pipe is required along the south edge of the development to route this flow to Spring Creek. The City will pay for the cost of the oversized storm sewer line to collect off-site drainage.

**Streets, Sidewalks and Trails:** This project proposes Ford Street to be extended east from Division Street to Maple Street. Subsequent phases will see Edgewood and Sage Drives constructed. Aspen Street will also be constructed as a stub until the HRA development occurs to the north.

Street width and construction will follow Northfield street construction standards. However, Edgewood and Sage Drives are designed with alternating parking on one side of the street to accommodate heavily landscaped boulevards.

Sidewalks will be installed on both sides of every street.

Trails were constructed by the previous developer along Spring Creek. A new trail connection will be built on the southeast edge of the development connecting to this network. A trail will be installed mid-block through the raingardens at the end of Brookside Drive. The trail along the east side of Division Street will be extended to the south edge of the development and a connection to this trail is shown in Outlot A on the north end of the development.

**Park Dedication:** Park dedication was fulfilled through land conveyance to the City of parkland along during previous phases of the project. However, the Koester farmstead was not included in this original calculation. Since the Southbridge project has already dedicated excess parkland, the equivalent amount will be credited towards installing the Division Street trail.

**Adjacent Property:** The property to the south is farmland out of the city limits. To the north lays Aspen Park and single-family homes. The east side of the development connects to the original Southbridge development of single and multi-family homes.

**Conformance of request to Comprehensive Plan:** The project is shown as in the pipeline for residential development in the Land Use section of the Comprehensive Plan. The new streets will accommodate pedestrians and increase street connectivity.

Approval Criteria:

The city council shall consider the following criteria in the review of a preliminary plat. Criteria (a) and (g) must be met and (b) through (f) shall be considered:

- (a) The proposed subdivision must be in full compliance with the provisions of this LDC;
- (b) The proposed subdivision must be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the city's comprehensive plan, capital improvements program, or other city policy or regulation;
- (c) The physical characteristics of the site, including but not limited to topography, vegetation, susceptibility to erosion and sedimentation, susceptibility to flooding, water storage, and retention, must be such that the site is suitable for the type of development or use contemplated;
- (d) The site must be physically suitable for the intensity or type of development or use contemplated;
- (e) The design of the subdivision or the proposed improvements must not be likely to cause substantial and irreversible environmental damage;
- (f) The design of the subdivision or the type of improvements must not be detrimental to the health, safety, or general

welfare of the public; and

- (g) The design of the subdivision or the type of improvement must not conflict with easements on record, unless those easements are vacated, or with easements established by judgment of a court.

**Findings:**

- (a) The proposed subdivision was found to be in full compliance with the LDC through review by the City Planner and the Development Review Committee.
- (b) This subdivision is in compliance with the Northfield Comprehensive Plan.  
Intent - reflecting the spirit and values of the 12 land use principles.
- **The small town character will be enhanced** - The development enhances the small town character by respecting the desired grid pattern, being sensitive to pedestrian issues and providing a mix of uses.
  - **The natural environment will be protected, enhanced and better integrated in the community** - The development respects the environmentally sensitive streams and employs up to date stormwater management techniques. New trails are to be added on the east and west side of the project. New greenspaces are being added including a two block long community raingarden.
  - **New and redeveloped residential communities will have strong neighborhood qualities** - The development will have strong neighborhood qualities such as narrower streets, sidewalks, trails and a neighborhood commercial node.
  - **Neighborhood serving commercial will be small scale and integrated with the residential context** - The development provides small scale neighborhood serving commercial sites. There are two lots sized for neighborhood commercial uses at the intersection of Ford Street and Division Street.
  - **A wider range of housing choices will be encouraged** - A range of three housing types is provided. Four multi-family lots containing 16 units are proposed on Ford Street bordering the existing and planned multi-family lots. A transition area of 20 duplex lots continues to the west to join with the 61 single-family homes.
  - **Streets will create an attractive public realm and be exceptional places for people** - Edgewood and Sage Drives are proposed to have meandering landscaped boulevards to create an attractive public realm and walking environment.
  - **Places will be better connected, opportunities will be created to walk and bike** - The development has a connected grid street network with walking and biking opportunities. This will be achieved by alternating parking on one side of the streets.
- (c) The physical characteristics of the site are conducive to development. Stormwater management practices will be up to current standards. New ponds will be installed as will a large community raingarden feature.
- (d) This flat farmland is well suited for residential development. Previous preliminary grading makes the site even more suitable. During previous phases of the development, several lots near the creek were identified as needing additional soil correction to accommodate structures. This is common in areas of loamy soils and increases the development costs.
- (e) The subdivision design will not cause irreversible environmental damage. Land Development Code regulations, MPCA stormwater management and the employment of best practices will ensure this.
- (f) The design of the subdivision is in no way detrimental to the health, safety, or general welfare of the public.
- (g) There are no conflicting easements in the development.

**Alternative Options:**

After the Planning Commission's recommendation is made, the City Council shall approve the request, approve with conditions (where allowed by law), or deny the request.

**Financial Impacts:**

There are no public financial impacts associated with the Preliminary Plat application. A Development Agreement will outline the developer obligations with the Final Plat.

**Timeline:**

The Final Plat for the first phase of the development is attached. The project will be constructed from east to west as that is the direction utilities are coming from. Prior to the City's execution of a Final Plat, the Applicant must enter into a Development Agreement with the City for the installation of all required improvements and financial obligations associated with that phase. These will come before the City Council in four to six weeks.