ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT:

TOWARD EXCELLENCE
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT:

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A COMMUNITY BLUEPRINT:

March 15, 2006

Dear Residents of Rock Creek,

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the community blueprint for the City of Rock Creek.

Six dedicated committees, made up of 29 citizens, have worked diligently to develop this plan, which will help us with our decision-making over the next couple of decades.

We can never be certain what the future holds for our City, but we can feel more comfortable that we have planned for it. We are a growing community but, rest-assured, we can preserve the high quality of life that we have here in Rock Creek.

Thanks to your effort!

Sincerely,

Dennis Bonk
Mayor
March 15, 2006

To all of Rock Creek,

I am thoroughly impressed by how much you care about Rock Creek. Thank you for showing me your dedication throughout the past year as we have crafted this plan together.

Together, we have charted the future of the City and, I assure you, what you have contributed throughout this process has made a tremendous difference.

Whether you have completed a survey that was mailed to you in order to give us necessary feedback; have joined a committee to revise the Comprehensive Plan; or are reading through the plan for the first time to become familiar with it and assist in putting its goals and policies to use; you have demonstrated your commitment to Rock Creek.

Keep up the good work, planners!

Respectfully yours,

Nathan Johnson
City Planner
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LEgal FrameWork for Planning and Comprehensive Planning

For nearly five decades, the Minnesota Legislature has passed laws that enable communities to develop plans and exercise growth management authorities. However, even earlier than that, the Minnesota Supreme Court sanctioned the use of Comprehensive planning and zoning as legitimate tools for promoting the general welfare of the public in the 1925 *Berry v. Houghton* case. Listed below are other laws that have formed the foundation for comprehensive planning and growth management in this state.

1939  **Township planning and Zoning.** (Minnesota Statutes, section 366.10-.1) Authorized townships to plan and regulate land use to, among other things, prevent excessive concentration or wasteful scattering of population.

1965  **Municipal Planning Enabling Act.** (Minnesota Statutes Sections 462.351-.365) Authorized cities to adopt planning tools and land use controls.

1969  **Regional Development Act.** (Minnesota Statutes Sections 462.381-397) Authorized creation of regional development commissions in 12 areas of the state outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

1996  **Sustainable Development for Local Governments.** (Minnesota Statutes, Section 4A.07). Required Minnesota Planning to develop and periodically update a sustainable development planning guide, as well as a model ordinance for use by local governments.

**History of Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan**

The first Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1973. The plan was last reviewed in 1993. At that review, very little was changed. According to some, the changes amounted to as little as two words. Census data has been updated as it has become available.

The existing document fulfilled its mission of helping a township evolve into a city. However, with the growth and development that has occurred in the last five to ten years, it is clear that revisions are needed to provide a community vision for dealing with this growth and ensuring that the community meets the needs of its citizens. This Comprehensive Plan is intended to be that document. It will incorporate the existing Comprehensive Plan into a new plan.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

REASONS THIS PLAN HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED

Legal Justification. Provides legal justification for a Rock Creek’s land use decisions and ordinances.
Residents’ Contribution. Creates an opportunity for Rock Creek residents to guide a community’s future.
Guidance. Helps Rock Creek identify issues, stay ahead of trends and accommodate change. This plan provides an opportunity to consider future impacts of today’s decisions.
Cooperation. Offers a process for joint problem-solving and leveraging scarce resources among neighboring jurisdictions.
Protection. Protects and makes the most of public investments; also, protects property rights and property values.
Strategy. Helps Rock Creek maintain its resource base and other ‘natural capital’. Also, ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS PLAN

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This plan is organized into various sections as stated in the table of contents. Where appropriate, within each section is the following:
1. Background
2. Existing and Future Land Uses / Conditions
3. Goals and Objectives
4. Specific Policies in which to achieve Goals
5. Implementation Strategy

Goals and policies are italicized in order to stress their importance throughout the plan.
WHERE WE STAND

Rock Creek is at a crossroads in its existence. Its location has left it relatively isolated from the rapid growth of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area until the last five years.

This rapid metropolitan growth has largely exhausted the available land within the “belt” freeways of Interstate 494 and 694. Growth has continued along the I-94 corridor west toward St. Cloud and east through Hudson and western Wisconsin. It has also continued southeast along Highway 61 through communities such as Hastings and Red Wing. The growth has continued along U.S. 12 toward Hutchinson, down Highway 212 through Scott County and along I-35 southbound toward Northfield. Now, the “final frontier” is northward along I-35. Already, communities such as Lino Lakes, Forest Lake, and Wyoming have been impacted by the growth. Further along the interstate, North Branch and Stacy have had solid growth trends. Now, communities such as Rush City, Rock Creek, and Pine City are facing issues of growth and development of a potential scale that they have not seen in recent memory.

As growth from the Twin Cities metropolitan region continues northward along Interstate 35 (I-35), the same pressure that other communities have felt from landowners and developers will be felt here. Like many of these other communities, Rock Creek has a history of rural, agricultural-based economy and development. Many Rock Creek residents value this rural feel and seek to maintain it. Many seek to have their land bought and developed. Creating a plan that can ensure that both are able to exercise their rights and privileges will be an essential challenge.

For much of its history, both as a township and a village/city, Rock Creek has been able to remain relatively isolated from the changes that have faced its nearby neighbors in Pine City and Rush City. With no municipal water and sewer, residential development has occurred at a rural, large lot size with personal wells and septic systems. Other than state and county roads, many of the roads are unpaved. These two factors, working in concert, have ensured that Rock Creek has not been a focal point for developers, despite relatively inexpensive land. The lack of infrastructure has been a deterrent. With the growth along the I-35 corridor rocketing through Chisago County and rapidly advancing toward and through Pine County, many developers will start looking at the potential for creating large-lot estate subdivisions.

Stopping this growth will be almost impossible. Rock Creek will face growth and development. There are no means a municipality can utilize to permanently halt development. An attempt to figuratively “build a wall” around Rock Creek would result in countless lawsuits by developers and property owners asserting that the City of Rock Creek had engaged in a de facto “taking,” or denying a property owner reasonable use of their property without just compensation.

Instead, what Rock Creek must do is to guide this growth into a form that will more reflect the desires of the residents. Due to location, land costs, and type of permissible development, Rock Creek will become a prime site for large-lot residential development. The City must use this and other leverage to help create better development.
GROWTH STRATEGIES
From an initial analysis, it would appear that there are four major strategies for dealing with potential growth:

1. Do nothing;
2. Enact a growth moratorium;
3. Growth management;
4. Raising development standards;

Do nothing. There are those who would make the argument that Rock Creek isn’t broken, so why try to fix our current zoning and development system. The danger with that type of thought process is that, unlike a chair or a car, when a community becomes “broken”, it isn’t a quick or easy repair to fix it. A car or chair can be repaired or replaced. The decisions that a community makes are often generational in nature; a poor planning or development decision can have impacts for decades. Redevelopment of poorly planned and development decisions can create costs in the hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions of dollars.

The “do nothing” philosophy would lead to increased growth of the variety that is currently happening. There would be no opportunity to increase development standards to get a higher quality development than what the community currently enjoys, ensuring that after a quick “boom” period, many of the people would leave within a generation in a rural form of the suburban flight so common in the metropolitan areas.

Growth moratoria. Communities do have the right to enact a moratorium on development under certain conditions, among them while a Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Code are being revisited and rewritten. Once the City Council enacts the revised Comprehensive Plan and/or Zoning Code, legally and ethically, a moratorium must be rescinded. A failure to do so would likely lead to legal action from developers, builders, land owners, and property rights advocates. The City of Rock Creek likely does not have the financial means to engage in lengthy legal contests with corporations, landowners, and advocates with considerably deeper “pockets.”

Again, this is not to say that a moratorium could not have a place for a period of time while the City takes stock and potentially makes changes that would influence future growth. Instead, what this document asserts is that such an action, taken as a permanent solution to growth pressures, would be a step toward costly and lengthy legal proceedings from which the City would not likely prevail victorious.

Such defeats could influence a City Council or Planning Commission toward weakening legally defensible standards in order to avoid future legal conflicts. Such an action would be ruinous and could lead to increased development of a standard not conducive or acceptable to the residents of Rock Creek.
Growth Management. Growth management is often achieved by setting a limit for
how many lots may be platted or building permits issued annually. In theory, this
restricts development. In practice, it results in “phasing” developments, which
would likely increase the length of time that there is construction in each
subdivision. Increasing the time builders spend in subdivisions will also increase
the wear and tear on subdivision streets. Potentially, certain streets could be
dedicated to the City while still being damaged by heavy construction equipment
unless the City was able to craft developer’s agreements to take this possibility into
account.

Growth management would also result in increased workload for city inspectors and
other staff to keep track of what lots could be developed in what year and whether
lots were being developed ahead of the phasing schedule. With three half-time
employees, and two joint powers positions that are less than quarter-time, it could
be difficult to ensure compliance.

Raise Standards. Strengthening development standards primarily does three things:
1.) It creates higher quality developments that are more likely to withstand the
“boom and bust” cycle of real estate; 2.) It makes it more likely that developers that
are looking for a quick profit will be less likely to attempt to develop in Rock
Creek; 3.) Developers may bypass Rock Creek initially to go to areas with less
stringent standards, allowing Rock Creek to remain predominantly rural for a longer
period of time.

Rock Creek is becoming a desirable community. Despite, or perhaps because of, its
lack of municipally maintained infrastructure and required large lot sizes, land for
developers will seek such developments. Concepts such as development fees
dedicated to infrastructure, parks and recreation, and storm water and erosion
remediation could be considered as a part of a standard development application. Other
concepts, such as subdivision association maintenance of private common
grounds, street and storm water infrastructure within their own development could
be considered as well.

The purpose of such regulations is not to make it more difficult to develop. Instead,
the intent is to create development of a higher quality and higher standard,
developments that will maintain and increase in valuation faster than similar
developments in other community. Rock Creek has the chance to steer
development in a manner unseen in Pine County and even much of the Twin Cites.
It would be remiss to dismiss such an opportunity.

When growth is likely inevitable, as it seems to be in Rock Creek, perhaps the best
strategy is to do as a popular song once said and “…accentuate the positive and
eliminate the negative . . .” The best way to do this is to raise standards. It may
slow the oncoming growth while ensuring that the community is able to deal with
any growth in a manner that best reflects the desires of the residents.

LAND USE

Types of Uses
The majority of the land in Rock Creek is zoned agricultural, meaning that is theoretically is used for farming purposes. However, farming has become far less common in not only Rock Creek or Pine County, but Minnesota and the Midwest as well. This is not to say that the work of the farmer is any less important, just that it is being done with fewer people on less land than it was in the past.

The agricultural zone allows for relatively dense development, 1 dwelling unit per every 2.5 acres. Although the district is termed “Agricultural”, other uses such as schools, day cares, cemeteries, farm implement, and apartments are either permitted or conditional uses.

Nearer to Interstate 35 and County Highway 61, a large pocket of land is zoned Residential. Like the agricultural zones, residential zones must be a minimum of 2.5 acres. Fittingly, the permitted and conditional uses are more in line with strictly residential uses.

Most of the commercial zoned properties in the City are zoned Commercial B. However, the parcels are, in essence, a de facto mixed use district as the front 300 or 660 feet of a parcel, in many cases, are zoned Commercial B with the remainder of the parcel zoned in another district.

Between Chengwatana State Forest, the Wild and Scenic Saint Croix River, the Rock Marsh Wildlife Management Area, and other federal, state, county, and local lands, a large amount of Section 20 is in a sort of conservation status.

Zoning Districts
The City of Rock Creek currently has five zoning districts
1. Agricultural: The purpose of the recreational district is to primarily allow for agricultural or farming uses.
2. Residential: The purpose of the recreational district is to allow for both residential and agricultural/farming uses
3. Commercial: The purpose of the Commercial District is to allow for commercial and agricultural purposes. Residential should be discouraged.
4. Recreational: The purpose of the Recreational District is to allow for seasonal-recreational, residential, commercial, or agricultural purposes.
5. Recreational Commercial B: The purpose of the Recreational Commercial B district is to allow for seasonal-recreational, residential, commercial, and agricultural purposes.

One of the primary functions of a zoning districts, and zoning codes in general, is to create distinct areas where differing and/or conflicting land uses can be separated and buffered from each other.

With the limited types of permitted commercial uses and the lack of a light industrial or other manufacturing district, most commercial or industrial uses are required to either seek a Conditional Use Permit for in-home and home occupations in all districts but the Commercial District, or as an in-home or home occupation in the Commercial District. This is significant because both in-home and home occupations require a dwelling to be present. Two neighboring parcels with home
or in-home occupations could have operations or hours that conflict or irritate the neighboring dwelling.

**LAND USE GOALS AND POLICIES**

Goal: To identify areas suitable for development, prevent incompatible land uses, preserve agricultural productive lands and guide development to where public infrastructure makes sense.

**LAND USE POLICIES:**

1. No structural development such as the construction of commercial, industrial, or residential structures should be permitted on soils with severe or very severe limitations unless acceptable engineering safeguards are employed.

2. Structural development shall be allowed only in such locations and at such densities that existing public services can be provided at the most efficient cost.

3. Agricultural areas—Agricultural and residential uses should be considered the primary land uses in the city.

4. Commercial areas—Commercial areas should be designated near the junction of I-35 and Highway 70; also along I-35, south on 61 from Highway 70, east on Highway 70 in the recreational area. Commercial establishments shall be located as not to impede traffic flows of existing highways, and should be on all-weather roads.

5. Recreational—These types of uses should occur in designated areas that possess natural features that should be protected from development, and in areas that have characteristics not conducive to development. Both active and passive activities should be accommodated in these areas to provide for the recreational needs of all residents of the community.

6. New zoning classifications should be employed to better address certain land uses, including cluster residential and industrial.

Goal: To provide for a cost effective, suitable level of services consistent with the rural characteristics and land use goals and policies of the City.

**GENERAL POLICIES:**

1. The City’s public services and facility standards should be maintained and improved when necessary to accommodate existing development while not encouraging development patterns which requires additional services not in existence.

2. The City shall maintain a limited level of public services and facilities, consisting primarily of fire protection, law enforcement and road maintenance.

3. Instituting appropriate land use and access controls as not to exceed the capacity or reduce the function of the system should protect the investment and mobility of the existing transportation system.
WHERE WE STAND
According to the Census Bureau, Rock Creek has faced growth since the 1970’s. The pace of growth has slowly increased since incorporation, but regardless of incorporation, growth would have occurred. The geographic location of the community has been and will be a driving factor in this population increase.

As the southernmost Pine County community along Interstate 35, Rock Creek will face the same development pressures as have been faced by communities in Anoka, Washington, and Chisago counties to the south. As more “rooftops” move to second and third ring counties, more service sector businesses, such as insurance, banking, and retail move to those counties as well. Once this “convenience commercial” becomes established, then the area seems more viable for office and industrial uses.

Compared to land prices in the metropolitan area, the cost of land in southern Pine County is still relatively cheap. Metro and nationwide builders and developers have been and will continue to acquire land along the Interstate 35 corridor and hold it for future development.

Commercial developments continue to move north. Convenience commercial has moved through northern Washington and Chisago counties (Forest Lake and North Branch) and, with recent developments in Pine City and Hinckley, has emerged in Pine County as well. Office style buildings are continuing to pop up throughout the area.

The map at left shows the percentage of population that has grown in the last twenty years, either from birth or in-migration. The darkest gray areas, in Washington, Dakota, and Scott counties, have gained over 40% of their current population in the last twenty years. The counties, in lighter gray, Wright, Anoka, and Chisago have gained between 20% and 25% of their population in the last twenty years. Darker gray counties, such as Isanti and Pine have gained 15% and 20% in the last twenty years. The counties colored in white, Carlton, Kanabec, Hennepin, and Ramsey, have gained less than fifteen percent of their population in the last twenty years.

POPULATION STATISTICS
Since the 1950’s, the agriculture industry in Pine County has undergone a numerical decline. This is not to say that farmers are less productive or less important, just less numerous.
As shown in the graph to the left, the rural farm population in the county has diminished from 63% in 1950 to 9% in 1990 and finally to 6% in 2000. With the growth of Pine City above 2,500 in 1990, the county had an “urban” population. With the incoming growth in Rock Creek, it is not inconceivable that Rock Creek could become “urban”, even with an average population density of only 57 persons per square mile, much less than neighboring Pine City’s 1,076 persons per square mile or even Minneapolis’s 6,970 persons per square mile.

As farmland becomes developed into non-farm uses, such as residential, commercial, and industrial uses and if the increase in “corporate agriculture” continues, the farm population will continue to decrease.

Between the ages of 19 and 64, Rock Creek is a near mirror of Pine County. However, Rock Creek has more of a percentage of persons under the age of 18 while Pine County as a whole has a higher percentage of elderly residents.

This is not entirely surprising. Communities in emerging growth areas often have populations that trend younger than communities that are not in growth area. At this point, northern and central Pine County have not faced the same growth pressure that the I-35 corridor in southern Pine County has faced.

The graph at left shows how the State of Minnesota has projected the continued growth of Rock Creek in the last decade. The numbers for the 2000 are not projections, but actual Census data. In the years prior to the 2000 Census, the state overestimated the number of residents, but was fairly accurate in the number of households.

The number of households continues to grow. In 2004, almost fifty new single family homes were constructed in Rock Creek, bringing the total number of households to nearly 500. With an
average household size of 2.9 persons per household, Rock Creek is nearing 1,500 residents and will likely cross that threshold in 2005.

**POPULATION PROFILE 1970-2000**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Under 18</th>
<th>Over 65</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Person Per Household</th>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>233</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>389</td>
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In the last thirty years, Rock Creek has added slightly more than 300 people. Despite the large number of new residents, the number of total persons over the age of 65 and under the age of 18 changed by only 16 persons. The chart to left shows how these populations have declined in percentage.

Males continue to comprise approximately 52% of the population, as they have since 1970. While this would be a statistical aberration nationally, it is consistent with the male/female ratio for Pine County.

While the number of persons per household has dropped, it is consistent with the decennial census numbers since 1980. In 1990 and 2000, each new household added an average of 2.8 residents. This average, of course, does not account for births, deaths, or residents moving in or out of Rock Creek.

**PROJECTIONS**

In the next fifteen years, Rock Creek will undoubtedly face growth. In the last four years, the City has averaged almost twenty-seven new homes per year and an average of over forty in the last two years alone. Whether this rapid pace of growth continues is dependent upon many factors, including regulation, availability of land, and the housing market in general. Two of the factors, availability of land and the housing market, would tend to trend toward continued growth. The real variable in this equation is regulation. With the current regulation, growth may increase. With stronger regulation, growth may slow until developers determine that the stronger regulations are offset by a profit margin. Weakened regulations would likely lead to rapid, uncontrollable, and likely detrimental growth.

Projecting population is an inexact science, mainly because of the factors listed in the paragraph above. Continued population expansion out of the Twin Cities metropolitan area in all directions is dependent on market factors, economic conditions varying from job growth, geographic areas of job creation, and price of gasoline, among other factors.
Even with these variable trends, the main question isn’t whether Rock Creek will grow, but by how much. Enough growth has occurred in the northern Twin Cities metro and through Chisago and Pine Counties to create increased housing demand in Rock Creek.

Based upon population trends of the last thirty years, partially weighted to give more emphasis to more recent data, three projections for future population have been created; low, moderate, and high growth scenarios.

- The low growth scenario, based upon data from 1970 to 2004, shows growth by 2020 up to 1,986.
- The moderate growth scenario, based upon weighted building permit data from 1970 to 2004 shows a population by 2020 of 2,260.
- The high growth scenario, based upon data that has had the last four years weighted more, shows a population of 2,994 by 2020.

Even with the high growth scenario, the city would remain largely rural, with an average of approximately 69 persons per square mile, or slightly over a tenth of a person per acre. Depending on where the growth occurred, parts of the city might not even have a change in density at all.

Obviously, these projections could be accurate or they could be wildly inaccurate, depending on many economic and development trends. As any investment banker would say, “Past trends do not indicate future performance.” However, a trend of growth lasting over thirty years, with growth in the last four does give one confidence in projecting future growth and development.

**Economics**

Income in Rock Creek has increased since the 1990 Census, both in per capita and median status.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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<td>Per Capita Income</td>
<td>$9,194</td>
<td>$17,281</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Income per Household</td>
<td>$24,762</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons below poverty status</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent below poverty status</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>1119</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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Despite the increase in population, the number and percent of persons below poverty status has decreased.
The graph above shows a breakdown of population in Rock Creek by age from the 2000 Census. As is typical of many outstate communities, the number of persons aged 20 to 35 is significantly lower than those younger and those older. Outstate communities are perceived by some of that age group to lack the requisite job opportunities that they feel are in other, more metropolitan areas, such as Minneapolis/Saint Paul, Duluth, Saint Cloud, Rochester, or even Fargo/Moorhead.

The commuting time for Rock Creek residents remains relatively short, averaging just over 30 minutes. Over half of the workers have a commute less than 30 minutes and over 80% have a commute of less than an hour. Considering that (depending upon where one lives in Rock Creek) an hour of commuting can have a worker to downtown Minneapolis or Saint Paul, well into western Wisconsin, north through Pine City, Hinckley, Sandstone, and to Moose Lake, and westward over 2/3 of the way to Saint Cloud. Clearly, this “footprint” offers a wide range and variety of employment options that might not be available within the corporate limits of Rock Creek.
WHERE WE STAND
Rock Creek is a community of single-family housing. With its individual well and septic system style development, multiple family housing is inherently difficult, but not impossible, to develop.

While this style of infrastructure has slowed, if not halted, the development of multiple family housing, it has not had a significant effect on the amount of single family residences being platted, constructed, and occupied. As shown in the graph to the left, approximately 30% of the single family housing in Rock Creek was constructed in the last four years. In terms of “raw numbers”, that amounts to over 160 homes. That number could easily be eclipsed in just the next one to two years alone with all the currently platted lots.

Rock Creek’s housing is predominantly non-vacant compared to Pine County. Over 93% of the housing in Rock Creek is occupied on a full time manner with less than four percent being utilized on a seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. With the rapid growth in the community, lack of major lakes or watercourses with build-able lots, and proximity to the Twin Cities, this is not especially surprising. Rock Creek is poised to potentially become a bedroom community for people who work in the northern Twin Cities suburbs. Should this happen, the City faces potential conflicts with residents who may have moved up from those northern suburbs who want more municipal services, such as water,
sewer, curb and gutter, sidewalks, more improved paved roads and highways, as well as active code enforcement. With its current staff, tax base, and tax rate, the City of Rock Creek would have difficulty meeting such demands.

Rock Creek also has higher percentage of owner occupied homes when compared to Pine County. This also should not be a surprise. Communities like Pine City, Hinckley, and Sandstone, with municipal water and sewer, have an ability to create more units on smaller parcels of land, in some cases more than ten units per acre. These units are often rental units. This type of development, whether desirous or not to the residents of Rock Creek, is not as financially feasible with septic and well systems.

Without municipal water and sewer, Rock Creek has created a future of large lot homes with very little city maintenance required. This may keep city-based property taxes lower than communities like Pine City, Hinckley, and Sandstone in the short term, but it will also keep Rock Creek from establishing either a commercial or industrial base to offset residential growth. This will ensure that residents will face a larger percentage of the tax bite than in other communities with a more diverse land use.

This statement is not intended as a critique of the current style of development or a call for municipal water and sewerage, merely as a precursor to the type of financial constraints that the community may or may not face. However, creating a water and sewer system would be a serious financial constraint in itself. Laying such infrastructure and maintaining it would be an expense that would be difficult for a community the size of Rock Creek to cover. Even if it were to work with nearby watered and sewered communities, such a cost could likely run to an amount that would make it cost-ineffective.

A limited water and sewer district could cause rampant land speculation, rapid growth, and a constant need for expansion. Not creating or accepting water or sewer could lead to the inefficient use of land, rapid growth, and a chance of septic failures polluting the potable water supply.

Clearly, either choice that the community may choose, costs may outstrip the ability of the community to provide the services that the community needs and desires. An “easy choice” is not among the options.
In the last 26 years, the City of Rock Creek has approved 261 lots for development. As shown above, much of this development (74%) has occurred since 2001 and 55% since 2003. In the developments listed above, not all of the lots have been turned into homes. In some cases, lots have been bought and combined with adjacent lots or bought simply to provide an easement to an adjacent property.

Exemptions have created over 400 lots since 1984. Some of these lots have not and likely will not be developed into single family homes. Many exempted lots are for hunting or recreational activities. Some are for vacation or recreational cabins for people living outside the general area. Some lots are not developable due to soils or wetlands issues.
As of the 2000 Census, there were 32 rental structures in Rock Creek. Almost one half of these rental units were constructed prior to 1940. These units are likely not the typical “apartment” or town home style units. More likely, these are older homes that are being rented as one unit to a person or family. The median age of construction is 1965. Compared to the rest of the United States, Rock Creek does not have a lot of rental units. Under 10 percent of total housing units in Rock Creek are rentals compared to almost 34% nationwide.

Although the age of the rental units varies quite a bit, the “move-in” date does not vary quite as much. A clear majority of the renters have moved in between 1990 and 2000.
**WHERE WE STAND**

While there are several businesses that operate in Rock Creek, they have considerably changed their form since Rock Creek’s incorporation as a city. Whereas commercial activity used to be concentrated in “Old Downtown” Rock Creek, it now exists primarily along Highway 70 near Interstate 35. Examples of businesses in this area include fueling stations, taverns and a motel. The remaining businesses, many of which are home-based, are widespread throughout Rock Creek. This business displacement seemed to happen as a result of re-routing Highway 61 through Rock Creek as well as the addition of the Interstate.

Examples of the types of businesses that residents would like to see locate in Rock Creek include more retailing, a hotel, fast food and entertainment venues (such as an indoor/outdoor theater, roller rink, pool and a bowling alley). Examples of the types of businesses that residents of Rock Creek would not like to see include additional liquor establishments, tattoo parlors and adult-industry businesses.

There is sentiment within the community that Rock Creek has lost some of its identity over the years as the “Old Downtown” has been displaced. Having a Rock Creek business center, whether or not it is located at “Old Downtown”, could essentially recreate an identity for the City.

There are no formal business organizations within Rock Creek. Some local businesses choose to belong to either the Pine City or Rush City Chambers of Commerce, or both.

Currently, there are no industrial parks located within Rock Creek in large part because there are no municipal sewer and water lines available to run to such an area. Residents feel mixed about whether or not to encourage industrial development.

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GOALS AND POLICIES**

**GOALS:** Develop a plan for the creation of a business district; increase commercial and industrial opportunity by attracting new business and industry while retaining current business. Also, encourage appropriate economic development activities in the City of Rock Creek in a planned and orderly fashion.

**GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY POLICIES:**

1. Encourage development proposals that would recreate downtown Rock Creek.
2. Encourage buffering as appropriate between commercial and residential uses. Especially ensure sufficient buffering between industrial and residential uses.
3. Consider additional zoning classifications to address commercial and industrial uses not yet accounted for.
4. Research the feasibility of sewer and water in certain areas of Rock Creek and consider it as a valid option where it would make economic sense for the community.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PLANNING POLICIES:

1. Utilize the future land use map (Exhibit E) to direct commercial activities seeking to locate in Rock Creek.
2. Areas having a moderate to high concentration of commercial development should coordinate transportation access via frontage roads.
3. Periodically review and update the Comprehensive Plan as necessary.
4. Encourage and facilitate redevelopment of underutilized or distressed properties into viable commercial, industrial and retail development by working with property owners and interested developers.

SIGNS:
1. Discourage the use of billboards near existing or anticipated future residential development.

INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES:

1. Development activities that may require significant municipal services such as sewer and water should be encouraged to locate in areas that are deemed appropriate and are planned for such infrastructure.
2. Work with local businesses and industry and the Rush Line Corridor Task Force to advance and improve upon the delivery of transit services to Rock Creek.
3. Encourage and promote the development of advanced, state of the are telecommunication technology to and within the City of Rock Creek.
4. Research the feasibility of facilitating industrial and commercial development through master planned industrial parks or business parks.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BR&E) POLICIES:

1. Identify target markets (or local market niche) and prepare and implement a marketing plan to attract businesses that fit this market.
2. Work with local business and industry to insure needs for expansion and development are adequately met and maintain an open line of communication with the business sector through participation in area Chambers of Commerce.
3. Acknowledge and appreciate the business community for providing jobs and services for strengthening the community.

EDUCATION AND MARKETING:

1. Pursue ways to more efficiently review the development approval process, while still maintaining high standards.
2. Participate in professional economic development organizations and subscribe to industry-leading literature to remain educated on current market conditions and development tools and to network with professional real estate brokers and developers.
When it comes to the topic of transportation, Rock Creek benefits and suffers from the transportation system that serves it. For instance, Interstate 35 allows Rock Creek residents to access commercial, entertainment, and other opportunities not found in the City. On the other hand, the presence of this Interstate 35 has helped create the current pace of growth by allowing residents to be close enough to these areas to conveniently use them while living in a largely rural area. The unimproved city roads have slowed growth and development to an extent, but will create calls for improvements such as widening, all-weather surfacing, and perhaps even curb-and-gutter. Highway 70 provides relatively quick, convenient access to Wisconsin— one of three crossover points into Wisconsin between the Twin Cities metropolitan area and the Twin Ports, but has become incapable of handing the growth of weekend tourist traffic in an acceptable manner.

The State of Minnesota maintains three roadways in Rock Creek, Interstate 35, Trunk Highway 70, and Trunk Highway 361. These roads are all-weather surfaced with either concrete or a bituminous roadway.

Interstate 35 has two northbound and two southbound lanes and is a limited access roadway extending from Duluth, Minnesota through the Twin Cities, Des Moines, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, through Texas to near the Texas/Mexico border.

This roadway is slated for concrete pavement repair, unbonded concrete overlays and thick bituminous overlays beginning in late 2006 and continuing through 2008. In the interim, Minnesota Department of Transportation maintenance crews will continue to patch cracks and potholes until the more permanent improvements are completed.

Trunk Highway 70 has one east-bound and one west-bound lane. This roadway extends from north of Braham through Wisconsin to Michigan. The Department of Transportation is slated to take traffic counts on this roadway, including weekend traffic counts, in the summer of 2005. For the 2015 to 2023 planning period, Mn/DOT is planning reconstruction activities for this roadway. Roadway reconstruction includes activities such as widening shoulders, adding turn lanes where applicable, and leveling hills.

Trunk Highway 361 has one north-bound and one south-bound lane and intersects with Trunk Highway 70 just west of the City Hall. This roadway, formerly U.S. 61, extends from the U.S.-Canadian border to the U.S.-Mexican border. From the intersection of Trunk Highway 70 to downtown Pine City, the roadway has been turned over to Pine County. Parts of Trunk Highway 361 are slated for reconditioning in 2006. Reconditioning activities are generally what are referred to as “mill and pave”, which involves removing the uppermost three to five inches of asphalt, grinding it up, re-mixing the ground up asphalt with some new materials, and re-applying it to the roadway. The remainder of T.H. 361, from T.H. 70 to the Chisago county line, is scheduled to be turned over to Pine County sometime around 2010.
With the tightening of state budgets and the unlikely prospects of an increase in dedicated funding toward outstate roadways, it is doubtful that additional work will be scheduled in the next twenty years, barring a extreme change in conditions.

**County**
Pine County maintains approximately 45 miles of roadway, ranging from roads like former U.S. 61 to county roads like 2, 3, 4, 23, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, and 110. The surfaces range from all-weather asphalt surfaces to gravel roads. Over the next three years, the Pine County Highway Department has listed the following projects in Rock Creek:

- **2005**
  - C.S.A.H 2—Mill and Pave (Completed)

- **2007**
  - C.S.A.H 23—Grading
  - C.R. 106 (Government Road)—Grade and Pave

- **2008**
  - C.S.A.H 23—Pave

**City**
The City of Rock Creek maintains approximately 39 miles of gravel roads, both thoroughfare and individual subdivision roads. These roads are plowed in the winter by the City, as well as re-rocked and graded by the City grader. As these roads gain in usage and the number of residents on these roads increase, a call for all-weather surfacing could emerge from the residents. However, the City does not currently own machinery for paving or maintaining paved roads.

5. Moving forward

**Road Standards**
In recent years, the City has moved to improve its road standards, requiring paving and improved design over the prior gravel road standards. These standards should be continued with an eye toward a stronger set of standards for commercial or industrial development or larger subdivisions, should the City’s Engineer feel that it is necessary to do so.
TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL: Ensure an appropriate and safe transportation system for the City of Rock Creek.

GENERAL POLICIES:

1. Identify the need for frontage roads and access points.
   a. Coordinate a joint meeting between the City, Mn/DOT and Pine County to review roadway design standards and permitting processes to ensure compliance at all levels by new land use developments.
   b. When reviewing land subdivisions and driveway permit requests, encourage the development of frontage roads to minimize the number of access points along local, county and state roadways.
   c. Consider the development of an ordinance specific to commercial frontage roads.

2. Identify truck routes and alternate routes to the City of Rock Creek’s industrial uses.
   a. Work with the City of Rock Creek in developing correspondence to local businesses encouraging truck routes along roads that are designed to accommodate specific transportation services.

3. Support and provide where applicable pedestrian, bicycle, snowmobile and other modes of transportation.
   a. Encourage cluster developments that provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to conservation easements and open space.
   b. Work with Pine County and other organizations providing specialized transportation services to ensure all eligible residents of the City have access to transit services.
   c. Encourage appropriate development, which might include a town center, in proximity to the Rush Line Corridor, park and pool/ride facilities, and bus routes.
   d. Work with power line companies and land owners to facilitate easements for snowmobile and other recreational trails.

4. Continue to maintain and upgrade local City roads.
   a. Upgrade local roads when warranted based on roadway conditions, traffic patterns and existing or future development.
   b. Seek funding assistance from Pine County and the State of Minnesota when applicable.

5. Encourage citizens to carpool and make use of other available technologies in an effort to alleviate traffic congestion.
INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this portion of the comprehensive plan is to provide consistent access management in the Trunk Highway 70 Corridor through the City of Rock Creek. To do this, it provides a framework for the coordination of land use and transportation along those portions of the Corridor under the jurisdiction of the City of Rock Creek and the State of Minnesota.

Trunk Highway 70 extends from north of Braham through Wisconsin to Michigan. For the purposes of this plan, the segment included for planning purposes is only that twelve (12) mile segment that lies entirely within Rock Creek.

The roadway, with one eastbound and one westbound lane, is one of the primary transportation routes to and from Wisconsin north of the Twin Cities. Thus, maintaining the safety and mobility of Trunk Highway 70 is critical to the long term health, safety and economic vitality of those it serves. In addition, safe and convenient access to and from Trunk Highway 70 and the surrounding area is important for the community livability and continued local economic development.

In order to maintain the safety and mobility of Trunk Highway 70 while providing safe and convenient access to private property, it is essential that the City of Rock Creek plans for and regulates land use, access and local circulation in a consistent and coordinated manner. This plan sets forth policies and guidelines that ensure existing and planned land uses are served by convenient and suitable access. It also ensures that Trunk Highway 70 will continue to operate safely and efficiently.

To accomplish these goals, this plan provides for the development of an inter-connected framework as part of local comprehensive plans and incorporating it into local zoning and subdivision decisions, the City of Rock Creek can achieve the consistency and coordination necessary to protect this valuable transportation asset.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

This plan is organized in four parts:
1. Background
2. Existing and Future Land Use and Highway Conditions
3. Access Management Planning Areas and Policies
4. Implementation Strategy
BACKGROUND:

In June of 2005, a transportation committee formed of interested citizens to address the needs of Trunk Highway 70. Planning and engineering staff from the City of Rock Creek served on the committee that developed overall goals and policies relating to transportation networks throughout Rock Creek.

The committee’s objectives included:
- Preserving the viability of long-term road improvements,
- Promoting orderly development,
- Maintaining the economic viability of the City of Rock Creek, and
- Improving traffic flow.

Recommendations for implementation included:
- Continuing coordination between the City of Rock Creek and Mn/DOT on access management issues.

In March of 2002, Mn/DOT adopted the Access Management Policy for the state trunk highway system in March of 2002, which evaluates access management policies and practices. The Land Use Access Management Unit in Mn/DOT’s Office of Investment Management provided technical assistance in developing access standards that could be incorporated into existing plans and ordinances.

HIGHWAY CHARACTERISTICS:

Trunk Highway 70 is classified as a Principal Arterial from Interstate 35 east to the Wisconsin border. It is classified as a Minor Arterial from Interstate 35 westward. Within the state trunk highway system, Trunk Highway 70 is designated as a Regional Corridor that links the Twin Cities and East-Central Minnesota to Northwestern Wisconsin. As such, Trunk Highway 70 is expected to carry traffic safely and efficiently. The planned minimum operating speed is 50 mph.

Along the Corridor, Trunk Highway 70 is a two-lane, undivided highway. Public intersections generally have right-turn lanes. In these rural areas, there are no plans to expand the highway during the 10-year planning period. For the 2015 to 2030 planning period, Mn/DOT is planning reconstruction activities for this roadway. Roadway reconstruction includes activities such as widening shoulders, adding turn lanes where applicable and leveling hills.

Typical traffic volumes through most of the Corridor are in the range of 4000 to 5000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT). The highest volumes are found east of Interstate 35.

MN T.H. 70 Traffic Volumes between I-35 and 361:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AADT 2000</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2006*</th>
<th>2025**</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>7,550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* estimated.
** projected.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ROCK CREEK ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLANNING:

This plan sets forth policies regarding the location of public intersections and private property access in the Trunk Highway 70 Corridor.

GENERAL ACCESS MANAGEMENT POLICIES:

In general, this plan supports the development of an interconnected local road network in conjunction with local growth. This network is necessary both to support traffic movement and to provide property access. To ensure development of this network and provision of adequate private access, all new public and private access in the Trunk Highway 70 Corridor should conform to the policies in this plan.

All existing public and private access may remain in use. To the extent possible, existing access that does not conform to this plan should be brought into conformance at the time the property is developed or redeveloped or when highway improvements are made.

SPECIFIC ACCESS MANAGEMENT POLICIES:

Along Trunk Highway 70, Rock Creek is characterized by the existence of long-term agricultural uses and limited residential and commercial development. The highway is planned to operate at higher speeds, typically 50 mph or more.

Although generally agricultural in nature, this area also includes scattered large lot residential and isolated commercial development. Existing public access is generally located at one-mile intervals. Most existing private property access serves single-family rural residential or agricultural uses, although there is also some private access serving commercial uses. Generally, the posted speed along Trunk Highway 70 is 55 mph.

To the extent possible, access to Trunk Highway 70 should be provided by existing public street connections. However, due to low densities and the scattered nature of development in this area, a fully interconnected local road network is not planned. Thus, it may be necessary to provide direct private access to some properties. However, an additional public intersection or private access point should be introduced only where it can be clearly demonstrated that it is not feasible to attain access from the local road network.

1. **Public street connections should be spaced at one-mile intervals.**

   Existing public street connections that do not conform to spacing provisions may remain in use, but may be subject to modification or closure when the adjacent property is redeveloped or highway improvements are made.

2. **New public street connections should be constructed with turn lanes and/or bypass lanes on Trunk Highway 70, consistent with Mn/DOT guidelines.**

   New public street connections that do not conform with spacing provisions should be provided only if there is no other alternative for providing access to areas isolated by topography or unique natural features.
3. *Direct private access to Trunk Highway 70 is discouraged.*

Existing access to private property that does not conform to access policies may remain in use, but may be subject to modification or closure when the land use is intensified, the property redeveloped, or the highway improved.

New access to private property should be provided by the existing local road network whenever possible. If reasonably convenient and suitable access is not attainable from the local road network, a parcel may be allowed in one direct access to Trunk Highway 70.

4. *Changes in zoning to provide for additional commercial development should occur only in areas where direct property access is available from the existing local road network.*

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

Implementation of these policies will be undertaken as follows:

1. Adoption of the comprehensive plan.

   This provides a guide for the development of a connected local street network and the location of public intersections and private property access within the Trunk Highway 70 Corridor.

2. Review all proposed development or redevelopment for conformance with this plan and continue to work with Mn/DOT to ensure effective coordination in the management of access to Trunk Highway 70.
WHERE WE STAND  
PUBLIC SAFETY

Police
Police protection is provided by the Pine County Sheriffs Department. The Department is based out of Pine City and is located approximately four miles from the City Hall.

Within the organization, there is one Sheriff and one Chief Deputy. Also, the department includes two Sergeants, 17 Deputies, four Investigators and two Canine Officers.

Fire
Fire protection services are provided by the Pine City Fire Department and Rush City Fire Department. Most of the City is covered by the Pine City Fire Department. The Pine City Fire Department is located in downtown Pine City, approximately four miles north of the Rock Creek City Hall. The Rush City Fire Department is located in Rush City, approximately five miles south of the Rock Creek City Hall.

Ambulance
Ambulance and paramedic services are provided by Pine County Ambulance, headquartered out of Pine City.

Hospitals
Lakeside Medical Center in Pine City is the closest hospital for most residents. It offers ten beds, with outpatient surgery, in-patient surgery and many healthcare specialists. There is also a 72 bed nursing home attached to it.

Burnett Medical Center, just across the state border in Grantsburg, is the closest hospital for some of Rock Creek’s eastern residents. The facility is licensed for 25 beds and is staffed for 17. It is a 24-hour emergency facility.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

City Hall
The City Hall for Rock Creek is located at 7080 State Highway 70, at the intersection of State Highway 70 and State Highway 361/County Highway 61. The building consists of an workspace for the City Clerk/Administrator, Deputy Clerk, and City Planner; a kitchen and meeting facility for approximately 150 people, and restrooms.

Across the parking lot from the City Hall are maintenance and storage facilities for city equipment, such as the road grader. To the immediate south of the City Hall is a playground. The City Hall and playground were built by the Rock Creek Lions Club and dedicated to the City.
The current facility meets the space need of both city staff. City Staff utilizes the workspace for approximately 20-25 hours a week, open for business only during morning hours, and occasionally for night meetings. Should development increase to require full-time staffing of City Hall, space could be at a premium.

The facility also meets many of the space rental needs of the community. The facility is well used for civic, personal, and other community uses and is well maintained. Although some scheduling conflicts do occasionally occur, the use is not of a frequency to merit increasing the rental space available.

Libraries
There are no libraries located within the corporate limits of Rock Creek. The nearest libraries are located in Pine City and Rush City. Both libraries are part of the East Central Library System. The Pine City library is currently looking to expand or replace its structure with a larger facility.

Gravel Pits
The City of Rock Creek operates two gravel pits, primarily for the purpose of obtaining aggregate for city maintained roads.

Parks
Other than the park facility adjacent to City Hall, the City of Rock Creek does not maintain or have any park facilities. With its current staffing, it is unlikely that the City would invest in any municipal parks. Such an investment would require personnel for maintenance, as well as land acquisition, design, construction, and maintenance costs.

Educational
Rock Creek lies within two school districts, Pine City School District No. 578 and Rush City School District No. 139.

PINE CITY SCHOOLS
The student to teacher ratio at Pine City is 15.77 students per licensed instructional staff, K-12. Home of the “Dragons”, this district has held steady in enrollment numbers in recent years and is expected to see modest growth.

RUSH CITY SCHOOLS
The student to teacher ratio at Rush City is 20.75 students per licensed instructional staff, K-12. Home of the “Tigers”, this district has seen growth in enrollment in recent years and is expected to continue to grow.

Post Offices
Three post offices serve Rock Creek. They are Pine City (55063), Rock Creek (55067), Rush City (55069). Most residents are served by the Pine City post office, followed by the Rush City post office. Both of these post offices have mail delivery, whereas the Rock Creek post office does not. The Rock Creek post office is located in “Old Downtown”.

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ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Power
The provider of electricity is East Central Energy. The utility does not operate any power generation or major substations within the community, only transmission, distribution, and smaller scale substation and individual transformers.

Natural Gas
Natural gas service is not available within Rock Creek. Aquila provides natural gas service to Pine City and Rush City. According to the Minnesota Public Utilities regulations, Aquila would require an average of one residential unit for every 100 feet of natural gas piping to install without a surcharge. This requirement becomes less strict when commercial or industrial properties are involved, as commercial and industrial properties generally use more natural gas than residential properties, providing a greater ability for the utility to recoup the cost of construction. Should natural gas service be extended, a logical place for such an extension would be along Highway 70 between Interstate 36 and Highway 61, and then extended northward along Highway 61 to Pine City.

CATV
Cable television service is not available within Rock Creek. The nearest cable television service is available in Pine City. It is unclear how much of a market would exist for cable television. Most residents currently utilize satellite dish or roof mounted antennae to receive television broadcasts.

Phone
Qwest Communications provides the telecommunications services for Rock Creek. Qwest does not have any facilities within the community other than individual service lines.

Water
Water utility service is not available within Rock Creek. Water services is available in Pine City and Rush City, two neighboring communities. Water transmission lines would need to be run from those communities or from a new City well, as well as individual distribution lines to individual homes. As a generality, cities are usually responsible for the line up to the point of the edge of the public right-of-way, leaving individual homeowners responsible for the remaining piping.

Sewer
Public sewer service is not available within Rock Creek. The nearest public sewer service are available in Pine City and Rush City. To ensure the most cost-effective distribution of services, best practices call for the joint trenching of water and sewer whenever possible. Required separation of the lines would need to be followed to ensure that wastewater did not infiltrate potable water. As with public water, public sewer would require a costly setup cost regardless of whether the service was constructed in Rock Creek or extended from a nearby community.

Pine City is looking at the feasibility of creating a sewer service district by 2012 including Rock Creek, Rush City and the adjoining townships.
Community Profile

Rock Creek is the southernmost community in Pine County. The City is bordered by Chisago County on the south. The Saint Croix River forms the eastern border of the City, with the State of Wisconsin across the river. Pine City, 1.5 miles north and Rush City, 3 miles south, are the nearest municipalities and provide many services to the City, including education and fire services.

Three major roadways bisect the community, Interstate 35 and State Highway 361/County Highway 61 run north/south through the community, carrying over 25,000 vehicles per weekday with a majority on Interstate 35. State Highway 70 is the other major roadway, carrying over 3,000 vehicles per weekday from Interstate 35 to Wisconsin and approximately 1,000 from Interstate 35 westbound toward Braham.

Geography

Rock Creek is located approximately 60 miles north of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. This location has left it relatively isolated from the rapid growth of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area until the last five years. Now, communities such as Rush City, Rock Creek, and Pine City are facing issues of growth and development of a potential scale that they have not seen in recent memory.

In terms of physical boundaries, Rock Creek is one of the largest cities in the state, comprising nearly 43 square miles of land area. Of the remaining nine, three are among the most populated cities in the state, (Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Duluth) four are Iron Range towns where iron and taconite mines have likely been annexed (Hibbing, Babbitt, Hoyt Lakes, Mountain Iron) and the other two are rapid growth suburbs to the north and northwest of Minneapolis (East Bethel and Elk River).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Persons per Square Mile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Landfall</td>
<td>8996.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Minneapolis</td>
<td>6970.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hilltop</td>
<td>6111.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lauderdale</td>
<td>5597.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 St. Paul</td>
<td>5441.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>857 ROCK CREEK</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>863 The Lakes</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>864 Hatfield</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>865 Tamarack</td>
<td>16.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>866 Babbitt</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>867 Fifty Lakes</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, this large physical size with relatively small population has led to the community having one of the lowest number of people per square mile in the state. Not surprisingly, the top five cities in terms of highest density are in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. As a means of comparison, Pine City is the 261st most dense community in the state, with 1076.3 persons per square mile and Rush City is 413th with 698.3 persons per square mile. If Rock Creek had been developed at the density of even Rush City, it would have over 29,600 residents. Had it been developed at the density of Pine City, it would have over 46,000 residents. Clearly, this is a community developed in a rural manner.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Notable physical characteristics
The topography of Rock Creek is of a gently rolling variety. Generally, it slopes toward the Saint Croix River, dropping approximately 150 feet in elevation from the western portion of the city to the river, of which approximately 50 feet of fall is at the bluffs of the river.

Glaciation has occurred many times in the history of Minnesota and Wisconsin, most notably the Late Wisconsin era glaciation. The presence of Alluvial soils shows that river and melt water action has deposited rock and soils in the greater Rock Creek area. The four major soil types in the area are generally glacial moraine or glacial depression based. Glacial Lake Lind covered Rock Creek and much of southern Pine County for about 1,000 years approximately 18,500 years ago and has left much of the clayey and surficial soils.

This is not uncommon in Minnesota. Much of the state has been scoured by glaciers not once, but several times, leaving moraines, kettle lakes, and former glacial meltwater riverbeds across the landscape. The Saint Croix River and valley in eastern Rock Creek was formed primarily as a meltwater river from glacial Lake Duluth during the end of the Late Wisconsin era, approximately 12,000 years ago.
Environmental Quality

Shoreland management/Wild and Scenic River
The City of Rock Creek has an area that would normally fall under the area of shoreland management, the Saint Croix River. This river, which forms the boundary between Minnesota and Wisconsin, has been designated as a Wild and Scenic River by the State of Minnesota and the United States government. This places the river outside of the jurisdiction of the City of Rock Creek and into a special management program for the waters and shorelands. This designation means that the river is considered to have natural, scenic, and recreational properties of both state and national significance.

Flood Plains
The Federal Emergency Management Agency has not produced a FIRM map for Rock Creek. The Saint Croix River would have to rise approximately fifty feet in some areas before it would create much of a flood hazard. The City only has small and intermittent streams, like Rock Creek and Stevens Creek.

Wetlands
Wetlands areas are scattered throughout Rock Creek, consisting of swamps, bogs, and marshes. Along with being areas of ponding, these areas also help to recharge the groundwater, act as habitat for certain kinds of wildlife and handle some stormwater runoff.

Critical Areas
With the existing way of life in Rock Creek being very dependent upon individual water and septic, anything that can impact the groundwater is critical, from septic failures to illegal disposal of solid or liquid waste material.

According to the Geologic Atlas of Pine County, most of the uppermost bedrock aquifers have a low immediate sensitivity to pollution the filtration from the surficial areas to the aquifers is a slow process. In many cases, this filtration has been observed to take anywhere from a decade to a century. In some areas around the Government Road and the lowlands of eastern Rock Creek, the groundwater is much more sensitive, with this filtration time being estimated from hours to months.

Regardless of the estimated time for contaminants to reach the groundwater, care must be taken to protect this resource. Pollutants, whether they are as obvious as barrels of toxins or as subtle as the former practice of spreading used motor oil on roads, do not have a statute of limitations. Actions taken years ago can have an effect today or in the future.

Another concern is that if the time for groundwater to recharge is, in most cases, from decades to a century in duration, can the City handle a large amount of development utilizing wells? It is very difficult to economically determine the capacity of an aquifer, short of pumping until it cannot produce any water and seeing how long it takes to recharge.
Again, this is not a call for municipal water, instead, it is a thought for residents, elected, and appointed officials to keep in mind as development occurs. Potable water is a finite resource. Care must be taken to ensure that it does not become polluted or depleted.

Natural Resources

Soils
To the untrained eye, soil is nothing more than dirt. To those whose livelihoods depend on soils, however, soil is essential and the differences understood. Farmers require certain types of soil to ensure that crops grow to their greatest potential. While it is true that, with modern tools and fertilizers, soils can be improved, certain soils will never be able to support certain crops.

The same is true for non-agricultural uses as well. Roads built on poor soils are more likely to encounter maintenance problems such as frost action or flooding, and require more maintenance than roads on other soils. Structures require soils that will allow proper drainage of water away from foundations. Again, both roads and structures can, through the use of soil removal and replacement, have their soils improved, but it is not a cheap endeavor.

In a rural community with on-site septic and wells, soils are even more critical. Soils, along with wetlands, play an important part in determining where a home, driveway, and septic system can be located. The soils have the proper characteristics to allow a septic system to work correctly. Without an effective method for dealing with wastewater, a site cannot be developed.

Soils in Rock Creek consist generally of the following: Adolph, Bluffton, Braham, and Cushing series.

Adolph. The Adolph series consists of very deep, poorly and very poorly drained soils in a loamy mantle and dense glacial till on moraines. The particles that make up the soil are mixed, but mostly igneous rocks. The soil series is associated with the glaciation of the Late Wisconsin Age. Surface water runoff is low to ponded. Most Adolph soils are in a forest, cropland, or pasture state. Native vegetation included grasses and sedges with some shrubs (alder and willow) and few scattered deciduous trees. This soil series is located generally in east central Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Adolph soils have severe limitations for structural development.

Bluffton. The Bluffton series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils that formed in a mantle of loamy alluvium from glacial till and in underlying loamy glacial till on glacial moraines. The Bluffton series is of a mixed lithology. The series is generally located in depressions, swales, and drainageways on glacial moraines. The lower part of the soils has generally been deposited by the Des Moines Lobe, including the St. Louis and Grantsburg sublobes of the Late Wisconsin Age glaciation. Some of the soils in this series are in native vegetation; some are used for pasture; and some are drained and used for small grain, corn, and soybeans. Native vegetation is a mixture of water tolerant grasses, deciduous trees, and coniferous trees. Principal species are alder, black ash, black spruce, willow, and sedges. The Bluffton series has severe limitations for structural development.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Braham.  The Braham series consists of very deep, well drained soils that formed in a sandy glacial outwash or eolian mantle and underlying calcareous loamy till. Like Adolph soils, the Braham soil is of a mixed mineralogy. This type of soil have convex slopes of 6 to 30 percent in general. This well drained soil are primarily cropped to soybeans, corn, small grain, and hay in their southern range and pasture and forest uses in the northern part of the range. Native vegetation is mixed hardwood, spruce, and pine species. The Braham soil series is moderately extensive in north central, east central, and west central Minnesota. Slight limitation for development.

Cushing.  The Cushing series consists of very deep, well drained soils that formed in loamy calcareous till on ground moraines. The soil ranged from moderately acidic to moderately alkaline. Surface runoff is medium. Most areas with Cushing soils have been cleared and are being used for general farming and pasture. Corn, small grains, and forages are the major crops grown. Native vegetation is grass, mixed deciduous, and coniferous forests with northern red oak, maple, elm, American basswood, eastern white pine and red pine predominating. These soils are generally distributed in northwestern Wisconsin and parts of east central Minnesota. Moderate limitation for development.

Due to the presence of a wide variety of soils with differing limitations for development, the current on-site soil evaluation procedures should be continued prior to the permitting of individual site or subdivision development within the City of Rock Creek. The risk of permitting a development on poor soils, at the minimum, would affect the individual residents, and, at a minimum could affect a portion of the immediate watershed.
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Overview

The City of Rock Creek recognizes its unique and important role as a gateway community to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Also, the Chengwatana State Forest extends into a substantial area of the City. Both public and privately owned lands are included within its boundaries. The Rock Marsh Wildlife Management area is located entirely within the Chengwatana State Forest. These interests and uses are deemed important to protect by the City’s residents.

A “viewscape” is essentially what is able to be seen in over the landscape of a particular area of the city. The larger viewscape in the Eastern portion of the City has a prominent ridge feature that is most apparent when driving south of Highway 70 on Co. Rd. 3 and looking east. Views of the larger St. Croix Valley are seen driving east on Co. Rd. 2 and Co. Rd. 104. Views from private land in the area are especially prominent.

Approaching the City from Wisconsin, the far end of the viewscape can be defined by the cellular communication tower northeast of Highway 70 and Co. Rd. 3.

Driving east on 70 and cresting the ridgeline past Co. Rd. 3 the “flats” and entrance to the St. Croix Valley come into view.

These features should be formally identified as important features, as stated in the following policies, worthy of consideration in the future planning of development in the City.

The geography heightens the distance and intensity that sound can travel. This should be recognized as an important consideration for future development. The proliferation of unshielded outdoor lighting in this area can have a negative impact upon the dark sky and scenic values of this special area. This applies throughout the City.

The unique geography (low lands) can concentrate air pollution. The proliferation of outdoor boilers using various fuel sources should be addressed as well. The following goals and policies are meant to address these concerns.
ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND POLICIES
Goal: To identify and protect from development and harmful agricultural activities, unique features and environmentally sensitive areas; and ensure that environmental concerns are addressed in future City decisions.

GENERAL POLICIES:
1. The City’s agriculturally productive soils, flood plains, wetlands, water, shorelands, and woodland resources should be identified, evaluated, and protected from marginal, incompatible or premature development.
2. Development should be prohibited from areas with significant environment or ecological vulnerability or which are otherwise unsuitable for or hazardous to development.
3. The quantity and quality of surface water and ground water resources should be preserved by the appropriate regulations of all development activities, including irrigations and commercial use of sprays, fertilizers, or other products which may have the potential of impacting the water resources of the City.

The importance of the forests, lakes, streams, and other natural features or characteristics on the quality of life should be recognized and appropriately managed to be preserved for future generations.

NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION:
1. Preserve sensitive natural areas and habitats.
2. Identify unique features and environmentally sensitive areas that should be protected from development and harmful agricultural activities.

LAND USE:
1. Encourage the preservation of the family farm.
2. Maintain the “Rural” character of Rock Creek.
3. Set aside space for future development near the City Center.
4. Encourage re-routing or burying existing power lines along Highway 70 should changes be considered by the Utilities.
5. Consider light and sound as important factors in new developments.
6. Enact ordinances that protect the environment in Rock Creek, such as an outdoor heating device ordinance.

PARKS AND TRAILS:
1. Build upon and improve the present City park system.
2. Maintain the City park(s) so they are safe and clean.
WHERE WE STAND

In almost every Comprehensive Plan, the decisions being faced by the community are touted as the most important ever faced. To an extent, this is true; the decisions to be made are important, the direction of the community is set by these decisions. This Comprehensive Plan is no different.

This plan calls for the community to go in a different direction. This direction is not one of rapid growth and development, nor is it an anti-growth direction. As stated earlier, growth is neither good nor bad. It is the impacts of growth that are good or bad.

It’s often been said that the best way to predict the future is to create it.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan for Rock Creek is not the end of the planning process; instead it is part of the continual planning cycle of input, analysis, evaluation, plan development, and action. Although actions of implementation produce results, those results become another input into the planning process. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan and implementation is incremental and cumulative—occasionally involving a large-scale project, however, more frequently involving small projects and the day-to-day decisions effecting the growth and development of the city.

The decisions that put the plan into action come from a variety of sources—both public and private—and from a variety of perspectives—regulatory, fiscal and strategic. The City of Rock Creek’s role in implementation touches all of these categories and there are many tools in the implementation “toolbox”

Tools

Implementation tools available to Rock Creek include: the Zoning Code, Subdivision Regulations, public infrastructure extension policies; capital improvement programming, impact analysis, strategic alliances with other public and private implementing authorities, and other policies. Each of these tools serves a slightly different purpose. Yet, the tools must maintain a strong connection to planned goals in order to ensure an integrated and continuing implementation process.

Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Under Minnesota Statutes, cities are authorized to develop regulations over private land activities to further common goals and implement a comprehensive plan. Primarily, this regulation involves subdivision and zoning of property, and can also include site design and development standards.

Subdivision regulations

Regulation of the division of land is a major regulatory means of implementing the
Comprehensive Plan. In contrast to zoning, subdivision regulations deal with ensuring that ownership patterns, infrastructure, and roadways are laid out in a consistent and efficient manner promoting the long-term vision of the community through the platting process. Much of the plat details that are designed according to subdivision regulations establish long-standing patterns within the community, which are not easily changed or altered. Therefore, subdivision regulations have an inherent and immediate link to a long-term Comprehensive Plan.

**Zoning**
While subdivision regulations determine the physical framework of the community, zoning arranges the development within that framework. Zoning is the act of establishing districts and regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of lots and structures. Application of zoning district standards is more flexible than subdivision regulations, in that zoning may change more easily with market conditions, demographic trends, or political priorities. The physical patterns established by subdivision regulations are less flexible than the location and type of land uses established through zoning.

**Capital Improvement Programming**
A long-range capital improvement program (CIP) is generally a five-year plan that directs resource allocation for capital projects which can include streets, equipment, sewers, water, storm water, or parks. The long-range CIP should reflect the size, approximate location, and estimated costs of improvements needed to serve anticipated growth for the next fifteen to twenty years. The plan is not a detailed engineering or financial document, but it should provide enough specificity to determine the costs that are required to remedy existing deficiencies and the costs that provide new capacity that will be necessary to serve the demand created by new development. The CIP includes a financing plan for multi-year projects and a schedule for high priority projects. A key component of the CIP is a one-year adopted capital improvements budget.

**Impact Analysis**
Review of proposed developments at a subdivision or rezoning level could include: an analysis of on-site and off-site development impacts such as traffic generation; road maintenance; storm and waste water; emergency services; and open space/park/trail provisions. For projects of a pre-determined size or in specified locations, review could also include environmental, conservation, or other physical impacts.

An impact analysis can serve a number of implementation functions. In coordination with the zoning code and subdivision regulations, and with an approved Capital Improvements Program, an impact analysis can determine the adequacy of public or “quasi-public” facilities to serve a proposed development. Any identified deficiencies between development impacts and planned capital facilities should then be used to phase in growth consistent with the ability to handle those impacts. Alternatively, these deficiencies may be used to identify the potential need for public/private partnerships and to assist in structuring strategies to approximately share the cost of construction of new infrastructure facilities between new development and the existing residents.
**Public Infrastructure Extension Policies**
Each new development has an impact on the level of service provided by existing or proposed infrastructure. As part of the planning process, the City can incorporate level-of-service standards for specific facilities and services (water, sewer, storm water, streets) and require that all new development ensure that adequate facilities exist to serve the proposed new development. Service level standards may vary from tier to tier.

**Strategic Alliances with Other Public and Private Implementing Entities**
Implementation of the Plan is not the sole responsibility of the City. Many other entities will share roles and responsibilities—both individually and collectively. However, one of the most important functions of a Comprehensive Plan is to identify areas where these entities share roles and responsibilities, and to align efforts toward a common vision. Thus, strategic alliances between the City and other public and private entities become a powerful tool for plan implementation. Such alliances could involve other public entities such as school districts, water or sewer districts, other municipalities, as well as county, regional and state entities.

**Reviews and Studies**
In order to ensure orderly development, as well as development that meets or exceeds minimum standards as set up in the Zoning Code, the City could require certain reviews and studies to be conducted as a part of subdivision. Among other benefits, properly used, such reviews and studies can ensure that developments pay more of the external costs of developing land.

**Subdivision Review, Building Permits, and Engineering Escrows.**
These currently are requirements for all subdivisions. Subdivision review involves the preliminary and final plat processes. Building permits involve the inspection and approval of dwellings and other structures. Engineering escrows involves the setting aside of money to pay for engineering fees accrued by the City in reviewing subdivisions.
# ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<td>Exhibit D—Transportation and Recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibit E—Recommended Land Use Map</td>
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<td>Exhibit F—Proposed Zoning Districts</td>
<td>xx</td>
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SURVEYS

SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1: Do you plan to subdivide (or sell your land for subdivision) within the next ten to fifteen years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2: Would you be interested in putting your land into a permanent no-development easement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3: Would you like to see the population for Rock Creek:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain the Same</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: What is the smallest lot size that should be allowed for new homes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot Size</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1 acres</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2.5 acres</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 5 acres</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 acres</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 acres</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 acres</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5: Should the City of Rock Creek pursue municipal sewer and water?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Part of Town</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: The age of my septic system is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 years</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 years</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 Years</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7: I plan to update, upgrade, or replace my septic system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 1 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If something breaks</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8: How long have you resided in Rock Creek (consecutively or non-consecutively):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5 years</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 years</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer/non resident</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
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</table>

Question 9: What is the age range for the people in the house (check all that apply):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 18 years old</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 35 years old</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 45 years old</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 55 years old</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 65 years old</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65 years old</td>
<td>61</td>
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</table>

Question 10. Should the City more actively enforce codes relating to junk, nuisance, and inoperable vehicles?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan

Question 11 Would you be interested in the City participating in a joint powers agreement for Fire and Police protection?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 12 Would you be willing to pay more taxes in order to increase the number of hours City Hall is open?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question 13 Would you be interested in participating in meetings about the Comprehensive Plan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 14 Which range do you live in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Answer</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Survey Comments

Population, Development, and Lot Size

- You have incorporated the entire Rock Creek Township into Rock Creek. There is much rural lifestyles in the outer areas. Let it stay so
- We would like to see Rock Creek remain a rural community
- We would like to see Hwy 70 rezoned and maybe (illegible) land at Rolling Rock Landscaping
- We are losing our rural quality of life. With growth comes problems
- Waaaay too much development!!! Subdivisions suck
- Put a moratorium on building more homes
- More people means more problems
- More longterm investment by the owners of subdivisions, for longterm expense. It is too easy for them to walk in, buy land, subdivide and leave. There is no commitment by these people. They don't even live here.
- Limit the smaller lot size to the area where growth is coming in, between freeway and old 61, perhaps sections 27, 28, and 29
- In time, the demand for new housing should level out
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Growth is inevitable, but it needs to be done in a controlled manner
- Increase setbacks from roads and property lines
- Stop the development boom or at least slow it.
- Construction is my business and to stop building would be stopping my income
- A plan should be in place so not all same houses are built in the neighborhood. The new ones are all split levels exactly the same-yuck.
- Depends on zoning
  - 1-2.5 acres residential
  - 2.5-5 acres Residential
  - More than 20 acres-agricultural
- Cluster development allowed-
- Existing lots should be grandfathered in
- What a stupid question
- Slowly
- I don't think you can stop the increase
- Growth in an appropriate area. Residential next to interstate!
- Varies by 61 and freeway along 70
- 1-2.5 acres in a residential zone, 5-10 acres in Ag. Zone

Residency

- We own real estate but do not reside in Rock Creek
- We own a lot but have not built on it. Our lot is 10 acres
- We only have seasonal property in Rock Creek area. We don't live there at this time
- We have 40 acres of hunting land that is swamp land. We do not reside in Rock Creek
- We do not live in Rock Creek
- We love Rock Creek
- We are a landowner, not a resident
- Seasonal-no house
- Own land in city No house
- I do not live in Rock Creek, I own land there
- I do not live in Rock Creek.
- Hunting land. Rock Creek has a real problem with junk vehicles and buildings. Also with advertising signs on Highway 70
- Land only
- It’s a nice place to live, keep the losers out! Junk cars, loose dogs, public assistance, etc
- Don't live in Rock Creek, just own land there.
- Business
- Building this year
- At present, I just own bare land-20 acres
- Owned, not resided
- 15 acres, bare and undeveloped
- Own raw land
- I don't reside in Rock Creek
- No septic, raw land
**ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**Water/Sewer**
- No city sewer
- Just a drainfield
- Each developer should put in one deeper well. Homeowners share cost

**Code Enforcement**
- You do need to enforce junk cars, etc. It is an eyesore
- We're tired of all the transplants and retirees trying to impose their regs on us. If we wanted all the stupid regs of the Cities, we would live there.
- We need a leash law
- We don't need more government control
- Our cabin burnt down a few years ago. Since the cabin has burnt down, people have decided that I want their junk. The City needs to find a way to prevent people from dumping trash on other people's property.
- Keep the 4-wheelers off the road. Slow/watch for children signs
- Need to get rid of home made junk yards
- Need ordinance for keeping dogs on property, gunshots in residential area, 4-wheel recreational vehicles and snowmobiles banned from City road
- And nuisance dogs. Must have a leash ordinance for aggressive, nasty dogs (Ostrand St Croix Vistas) Enforcement of current ordinances needs to be a part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Do not make rules that cannot be enforced. People moving to the country from a metro area should accept the rural area as it is (including stray dogs, old cars, farm noises, and smells, etc).
- Some places are a mess.
- Aspen Cir. Sanford and Sons yard. Rats, cars, trucks, trash, no pickup. Trail buses, you name it, they have it. Gross, safe, Health Dept should go there.
- Picking on locals
- To enforce codes for junk, need to give notice with date to remove
- No backyard junkyards. Clean it up.
- Actively enforce
- To a point
- No more cars than occupants.
- It's time you start
- If they do the same for township officials
- If it includes farmers and is fairly executed
- Depends on individuals
- Definitely:
- Town looks terribly by the post office and railroad tracks
- Enforce codes on junk cars more actively
- Absolutely about time

**City Operations**
- Sandy, you do a great job--Nancy too
- It would be nice if the City could inform residents of new ordinances, election results, or other important info
- Have a plan to welcome people to Rock Creek.
- Develop a list of ethics for elected officials
- Don't have three people from one family in government
Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan

- Do workers need more time? I'm not opposed to paying more taxes if there is a need
- City hall open 2 days a week from 1-5 pm.
- Change the hours from 1 pm to 5:30 pm
- Keep up the good work
- Too much help now Clerk = morning deputy = after 11 am
- Depends on what has to be done to keep city business done
- Think a board member shouldn't have two city jobs, one as a board member and one as a grader operation, even pt time-

Roads and Transportation

- What is the feasibility of paving Nature Avenue
- We do not like 540th Street to be a low maintenance road
- Speed limit on Emerald Avenue-road is used a lot-speeders
- Please consider paving Emerald Ave and 570th street due to increase in housing and traffic
- Mallard Creek trail needs to be paved like other new developments as taxes are plenty high. City pays for road paving
- Grader operator should take vacation in summer so can plow in winter. Should grade roads once a month, not once a week
- Do a better job on roads and ditches-pull up ditch banks and remove brush!
- Blacktop new housing development roads
- Please limit the # of private driveways on Highway 70. There should be an access road for safety.

Taxes

- Lower taxes in Rock Creek
- Lower tax would be nice
- Last tax raise for 2005 is outrageous
- I feel strongly that people building new homes should bear the brunt of real estate taxes--those of us that live in older homes should not have increases in taxes as the value of new homes should not affect the value of one that is over 100 years old
- No more taxes.
- Your taxing us out of this area
- Go back to County Assessors for tax assessment

Survey/Comprehensive Plan

- I think this questionnaire should have been sent out before all the lots and development has taken place, not when 200+ lots are already here.
- Good job on survey
- Can we get the results sent to us?
- Why wasn't this plan started 20+ years ago before the city got so messed up.
- Continue efforts to get more community input.
- This survey is 10-15 years too late.

No-Development Easement

- Would it increase our taxes
- Yes, maybe
ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

☐ This would be very limiting
☐ Need more information
☐ Possibly
☐ NO!
☐ Not currently
☐ I need more info on this

Fire/Police
☐ Police had suggest house number as in Pine
☐ What's wrong with the system now
☐ Don't know what you mean by this
☐ When are we going to get house #s
☐ County covers police (Fire-yes)

Miscellaneous
☐ Why not be annexed by Pine City and get rural designation. Save costs
☐ Work on natural gas
☐ Although I am a new resident, I have roots in Rock Creek going back 100+ years. From the items I have seen since moving here last summer, you don’t make the new residents seem welcomed to the community, or should I say people purchasing new homes. I was particularly offended by the campaign notice taped to my door by our new mayor asking me to support him for election while he states his position is to put a moratorium on new homes—Rather ironic when I live in one of those same new homes. I don’t understand the negativity, the homes are very nice and I think Rock Creek would welcome the growth and tax revenues.

SUMMARY OF FEBRUARY 22, 2005 PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

POSITIVES:
- Rural open space feel
- Easy access to I-35
- Fresh Air
- Good location
- Large lot size
- Agricultural feel
- Diversity of land use types
- Feeling of community
- Roots/family history
- Wildlife
- Access to river
- Freedom
- Access to basic services
- Low taxes
- Convenient to shopping
- Good people

CONCERNS/ACTION AREAS:
- Enforce all ordinances
**ROCK CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

- Enforce junk ordinance
- Vacant/unfinished homes
- Need higher quality outbuildings
- Loss of rural feel
- Lack of commercial tax base hampering services
- Billboards
- Will all of Rock Creek become small lots?
- Weekend traffic on Hwy 70.
- Meth.
- Line of sight issues on Hwy 70
- Hwy 70/61 intersection
- Lack of parks
- Lack of nearby emergency medical personnel
- Unshielded lighting
- Unpredictable nature of development
- Noise
- Lack of in-town employment
- Lack of police protection/neighborhood watch issues
- Too many driveway cuts onto Hwy 70.

**POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES AND STEPS TO BE TAKEN**

- Enforce ordinances
- Petition for Hwy 70 improvements
- Adequate facilities ordinance
- Proactive neighborhood/area planning
- Open space/cluster development
- Exemptions?
- Newsletters/increased lines of communications
- Rural Mail Delivery
- Address highway access issues

Technical issues/specifications
Road Projects Scheduled for Rock Creek


C.R. 106 (Government Road)—Grade/Pave (2007)

TH-70—Traffic Counts (2005), Shoulder, turn lane, and hill leveling (2015-2023)

I-35—Concrete and Asphalt repairs (2006-2008)

CSAH 2—Reclaim (2005)

Turned over to Pine County (est. 2010)

MN DoT Plans for 2005-2023
Pine County Highway Department Plans 2005-2008
Average lot size per section 1985 – 2004

Average lot size in section
- 2.5 — 24 acres
- 24 — 48 acres
- 48 — 72 acres
- 72 — 96 acres
- Over 96 acres

Change in Density from 1985 to 2004

- Average lots per acre increased faster than the overall city.
- Average lots per acre increased at approximately the same rate as the overall city.
- Average lots per acre increased slower than the overall city.
**Rock Creek Comprehensive Plan**

**Committee Members**

**Brown Team**  
**—Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donna Mae Johnson</th>
<th>Gwen Goretsas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Marty</td>
<td>Kelly Friegen</td>
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<td>Don Moulton</td>
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**Red Team**  
**—Land Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lee Radabaugh</th>
<th>Glen Heintz</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank Christopherson</td>
<td>Justin Wilhelm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Jane Larson</td>
<td>Lynn Zeleny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernard Witzmann</td>
<td>Dale Larson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eileen Anderson</td>
<td>Nancy Rys</td>
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**Green Team**  
**—Environmental/Historical**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donald Burger</th>
<th>Pat Mavity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gayla Marty</td>
<td>Kari Holmberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dianna Phetteplace</td>
<td>Steve Olson</td>
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**Orange Team**  
**—Transportation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cindy Vogt</th>
<th>Lee Williams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warren White</td>
<td>Ron Teeman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl Rukavina</td>
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**Yellow Team**  
**—Business/Economic Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christine Heintz</th>
<th>Sara Larson</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candace Wilhelm</td>
<td>Craig Saari</td>
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**Blue Team**  
**—Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edwin “Bud” Peters</th>
<th>Nathan Johnson</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mayor Dennis Bonk</td>
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