Response to Comments, Findings of Fact, and Record of Decision

Lexington Waters Residential Development Environmental Assessment Worksheet

August 2021

RGU

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CITY OF BLAINE

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INTRODUCTION

Lexington Waters Residential Development is proposed on 115.45 acres of land in the northeastern part of the City of Blaine, Anoka County, Minnesota. The project will include up to 176 single-family homes, 120 detached townhomes, stormwater basins, wetland preservation, and parkland. Site development will include installation of streets, municipal sewer and water, and mass grading. The project will convert about 45.37 acres of sod field, 36.37 acres of woodland, 16.93 acres of grassland, and 1.65 acre of wetlands and ditches to suburban residential development with homes, streets, lawns, landscaping, and stormwater basins. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space, consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park.

An Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was prepared pursuant to Minnesota Rules Part 4410.4300, Subp. 19.D. (Residential development consistent with a comprehensive plan). The EAW and the respective comments have been reviewed in accordance with Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 to determine if the project has potential for significant environmental effects. This document includes responses to comments received by City of Blaine (City), the Findings of Fact supporting the decision, and the Record of Decision indicating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not necessary for this project.

EAW Notification, Distribution, and Comment Period

In accordance with Minnesota Rules 4410.1500, the EAW was completed and distributed to persons and agencies on the official Environmental Quality Board (EQB) distribution list. The notification was published in the EQB Monitor on June 29, 2021, initiating the 30-day public comment period. A public notice or press release was submitted to the Blaine/Spring Lake Park Life newspaper. The comment period ended on July 29, 2021.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

The City received written comment letters from one resident and six agencies:

1. Annie Lundell (Lundell), June 29, 2021;
2. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), June 25, 2021;
3. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), July 29, 2021; and
4. Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MN SHPO), July 28, 2021;
5. Metropolitan Council (MetC), July 28, 2021;
6. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), July 27, 2021;
7. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR), July 29, 2021.

None of the comments recommended preparation of an EIS. The MnDOT and MDA stated that they have no comments. MetC staff found the EAW complete and accurate with respect to regional concerns and said that an EIS is not necessary for regional purposes.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

This document responds to comments individually, but groups comments and responses together where the content is similar. For example, MnDOT and MDA both said they had no comments, and MPCA and MN DNR both commented on chloride use, water resources, and tree removal.

This narrative includes summaries of comments followed by responses. Complete comment letters are included in **Appendix A**.

Responses to comments are generally confined to substantive issues that "address the accuracy and completeness of the material contained in the EAW, potential impacts that may warrant further investigation before the project is commenced, and the need for an EIS on the proposed project." (MN Rules 4410.1600). Some comments included general remarks, recommendations, or permit requirements. Such comments are noted for the record.

Annie Lundell (Lundell)

Comments

Several new developments are adding homes in Blaine and I am curious about the discussions that the City of Blaine is having with the Anoka-Hennepin School District #11 to accommodate the children of the families that will occupy new homes. What is the content of the discussions the City of Blaine is having with Anoka-Hennepin Schools?

Response

City staff meets with School District administration annually to go over anticipated growth so the District can plan accordingly. As you may be aware, the School District completed a Fit For the Future Study 4 or 5 years ago that looked at district-wide facility planning. City staff took part in that process to assist the School District in understanding where residential growth is planned in Blaine over the next 15 years, when it is anticipated that the City will be fully built out. The School District also has access to and reviewed the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan that identifies growth patterns and projections. The onus falls on the School District to facility plan based on the projected growth. The city cannot stop or say no to development to allow time for the District to construct appropriate facilities. Responsibility falls on the District to determine their space needs based on their situation. Unfortunately, this is a common theme in any growing city/school district throughout the Twin Cities metro area.

As documented in the *ISD 11 Anoka-Hennepin School District Enrollment Projections Packet for 2021 / 2022* (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cCKOnhobVxS810a7h1r73IDGf4cC_qOI/view), the School District uses a variety of data to develop future enrollment projections, including number of building permits issued by cities, number of live births in Hennepin and Anoka Counties, the preschool population census, and enrollment growth patterns. The enrollment for 2021-22 was recently projected at 36,593 students, an increase of 268 students from October of 2020."

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MN SHPO)

Comments

MnDOT had no comments and stated that the proposed project should have little or no impact on the state highway system.

MDA stated they have no comments on the Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW.

SHPO reviewed the Phase I Archaeological Survey for the project area and determined that there are no properties listed in the National or State Registers of Historic Places and no known or suspected archaeological properties in the area that will be affected by this project.

Response

The comments are noted.

Metropolitan Council (Met Council)

Comments

Water Resources

Council staff recommends adding the following items to the list of mitigation measures that the EAW said are expected to minimize potential effects of stormwater runoff of receiving waters and that could help lessen impacts of climate change and GHG emissions:

1. Orient new homes with the sun and horizon to maximize solar energy gain during the winter and minimize solar energy gain in the summer.
2. Select the preservation of mature trees for their ability to shade new homes in the summer and allow solar insolation in the winter.
3. Select home insulation, shingling, and exterior construction materials for minimum embedded greenhouse gas emissions, and for their non-toxic, recyclable, and biodegradable qualities.
4. Orient lawn and right-of-way boulevard grading and landscaping to maximize a site-wide, integrated stormwater management and irrigation network.

Transportation Analysis Zones

The EAW project area is a very small part of Transportation Analysis Zone #184 (TAZ #184). The City of Blaine's TAZ allocations for 2040 indicate TAZ #184 is expected to gain 805 households during 2020-2040. Should the subject development and other planned developments exceed that result, then Council staff would recommend increasing the TAZ allocation in this area.

Response

Water Resources

The additional mitigation measures are included in the EAW record and provided to the project proponent for consideration by virtue of this Response to Comments. The additional mitigation measures may be considered to the extent that they are practicable and compatible with the proposed project design.

Transportation Analysis Zones

The City has reviewed the 2040 allocation for TAZ #184 and does not believe it is necessary to revise the allocation for TAZ #184 at this time.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR)

Comments

Chloride Use

MPCA – Chloride use creates significant impacts to surface water, ground water, and soils. It is often fatal to wildlife. Chlorides are used to some extent in almost all developments, especially in northern climates. They are added for dust control, de-icing of driving and walking surfaces, and softening water among other uses. … Please provide a discussion of chloride impacts and solutions to address these impacts.

MN DNR – Many Minnesota municipalities are wrestling with high chloride levels in their wastewater. Chloride is one of the components of salt, which is used in forms such as sodium chloride (table salt), calcium chloride and magnesium chloride (road salts). Sodium chloride is commonly used in home water softeners and by water treatment plants to treat "hard" water.

The majority of home water softeners use sodium chloride (NaCl) in a softening process that replaces calcium and magnesium ions with sodium, while the chloride ions are discharged in the wastewater and eventually end up in the environment.

Each community needs to determine which tool is appropriate for their situation. (See https://www.wrc.umn.edu/sites/wrc.umn.edu/files/umnresidentialbmps_final.pdf and https://www.wrc.umn.edu/communitywatershed-scale). ... We suggest that as this development moves forward, the City of Blaine consider what strategies can be used to minimize chloride use.

Water Resources

MPCA – The list of permits and approvals in the EAW does not includes the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 Permit or the MPCA 401 Water Quality Certification. Also, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, the Project should include the MPCA as a regulator of all surface waters as defined by Minn. Stat. § 115.01, subd. 22. Waters of the state. Although surface waters may lack USACE jurisdiction or be exempt from the Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), all surface waters are regulated by the MPCA and any surface water impact needs to be described in the application and may require mitigation.

If, after further review and comment, a USACE Section 404 permit is required, then MPCA 401 Water Quality Certification, will also be required as well. The 401 Water Quality Certification becomes an enforceable component of the associated federal license or permit.

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System General Construction Stormwater permit (CSW Permit) requires 50-foot buffers or double silt fence around wetlands on the site. The SWPPP for the project will need to include plans to protect the infiltration basin from compaction and sedimentation during construction.

Wetlands and Rare Features

MN DNR – Page 19, Wetland and Ditch Impacts. Does #3 propose to maintain "post-development" wetland hydrology, or should that say, "pre-development" wetland hydrology?

Wetland 8 – A stormwater feature is being proposed directly south of Wetland 8. We are concerned that placing a stormwater pond this close to a wetland could have unintended impacts to wetland hydrology. It is unclear if the proposer intends to avoid impacts to species of special concern in Wetland 8 or will attempt to transplant them. This should be further explained through the WCA regulatory process.

Wetland 10 – A 15-foot-wide buffer of natural vegetation surrounding wetlands is required. We recommend using a wider buffer strip around Wetland 10 in order to avoid impacting rare plant species. It is unclear how wetland hydrology will be maintained on Wetland 10 when development will surround nearly the entire wetland with some lots being proposed within the 15-foot vegetative buffer. We recommend setting lots back further from this wetland if possible. It is unclear from this description how placing Wetland 10 under a drainage and utility easement will protect it.

Native Vegetation

MPCA – The project proposers are encouraged to plant native vegetation in common areas and reduce impervious areas.

MN DNR – We encourage the development to incorporate native plants and seed mixes to the greatest degree possible in stormwater features and landscaping to provide habitat for pollinators.

Tree Removal

MPCA – The EAW indicates the project proposes approximately 36 acres of tree removal. Trees can store carbon, mitigate climate change, reduce urban heat island effects, improve air quality and aid in stormwater retention. The MPCA strongly encourages the City of Blaine and the Project proposer to rethink how to complete this development in a manner that is more environmentally beneficial.

MN DNR – The destruction of 36.37 acres of woodland is a significant impact. We encourage the proposer to preserve as much of the remaining woodland as possible. It is important to consider the cumulative effect of wildlife habitat fragmentation and loss in a region when evaluating projects that propose significant land conversion, deforestation, and wetland impacts.

Response

Chloride Use

This review of the environmental effect of chloride use in road salt and water softening is incorporated into the EAW record by virtue of this Response to Comments.

Chlorides are used on roads, driveways, patios and sidewalks as a deicing agent, affecting surface water as a product of runoff, and groundwater as it dissolves and infiltrates. Wildlife are attracted to the pellets, causing harm through ingestion, and increasing the likelihood of contact with moving vehicles. Small amphibians in contact with the salt can become severely dehydrated, causing death. It can also kill or harm vegetation and, if windblown, can negatively affect human health.

Chloride use is common in water softeners. A single residence using one 40-pound bag of water softener salt per month will discharge 480 pounds of chlorides annually to either an underground septic treatment system, or a municipal wastewater treatment facility. The chlorides are seldom removed and will

ultimately be discharged to a surface water where they will accumulate over time and increase in concentration, negatively affecting water quality and aquatic life. As this proposal is for a maximum of 296 units, the potential annual discharge of chlorides is approximately 142,080 pounds annually. Salt-reducing strategies that may be applied in construction or maintenance on a case-by-case site-specific basis include using:

1. pervious pavers instead of impervious surfaces for driveways, sidewalks, or patios where possible, allowing water/snow to infiltrate rather than accumulate;
2. alternate means of ice removal (scraping, shoveling, etc.); and
3. alternative products to improve traction on these surfaces (sand or grit).

The City of Blaine has participated in Smart Salt training and intends to continue participation in upcoming years as part of the MS4 Permit requirements. The City is reviewing and will consider implementing educational and long-term chloride recommendations from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area Chloride Management Plan (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-iw11-06ff.pdf). Educational programs such as the Smart Salting Training may be made available to private contractors as well as City staff. In addition, the project proponent has the ability to require that water softeners installed in new homes are metered by water use rather than by time, softening only when necessary. Accordingly, chloride reduction strategies will be considered to the extent practicable.

Water Resources

MPCA – The project was not expected to require a USACE Section 404 Permit or MPCA Water Quality Certification at the time the EAW was prepared. During recent consultation with the USACE, the indicated to the project proponent that only two of the onsite wetlands are federally regulated (Wetland 8 and Wetland 11). As a result, the project will require authorization from the USACE under a Section 404 Nationwide Permit. The proposed project will need to comply with the conditions listed in the MPCA's conditional Section 401 Water Quality Certification for Nationwide Permits in Minnesota (available at: https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-gen2-18d.pdf). The City and project proponent are aware that the MPCA is the regulatory authority for Waters of the State, which include virtually all waters. Surface water impacts were described in the EAW and the comment did not identify any parts of the surface water impact descriptions that were incomplete or inaccurate.

The City and project proponent realize there may be a potential need for mitigation for surface waters not regulated under other federal, WCA, or local authorities. The project will include compensatory mitigation for wetland impacts regulated under WCA. The project will also include a constructed surface water management system, which is generally designed to mitigate and replace many existing surface water functions in the post-development landscape.

An EAW is intended to assess potential for significant environmental effects and appropriate mitigation measures, but it is not intended to list unnecessary permits. The USACE has determined that most wetlands in the project area lack federal jurisdiction and the USACE is expected to determine that wetlands in the Koepp and Breen delineation (southwestern part of the project) also lack federal jurisdiction. The City and the project proponent understand that if the USACE requires an Individual Section 4040 Permit, the MPCA would then require Individual Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the project. Although such requirements are not anticipated, the project will be required to avoid and minimize wetland impacts and implement erosion and sediment controls to protect receiving waters.

The NPDES/CSW Permit and SWPPP requirements are noted.

Wetlands and Rare Features

MN DNR – Page 19, Wetland and Ditch Impacts. Yes, #3 should have said "designing water and ground surface elevations and drainage *to maintain pre-development wetland hydrology*" rather than "*to maintain post-development hydrology*."

Wetland 8 – Potential effects of stormwater basins and groundwater elevations on wetland hydrology is routinely questioned, investigated in detail, and resolved during the Watershed District approval process in the City of Blaine and other parts of the Anoka Sand Plain. This investigation is underway for Wetland 8. Experience on past projects with similar conditions demonstrates that a path to resolution is achievable. The stormwater basin is not expected to impact the hydrology of Wetland 8 in a post-development setting.

The project proponent is exploring options for minimizing effects on Wetland 8 and the population of special concern plant species growing in the wetland. The EAW indicated Wetland 8 may be excavated and restored. This restoration was not counted as wetland impact in the EAW because the wetland is partially drained and because excavation of Type 2 wetlands is not regulated under the WCA. However, excavation and restoration of Wetland 8 would involve temporary impact followed by native seeding and enhancement. Under this scenario, special concern plants identified in the wetland may be transplanted to a suitable location, and could potentially replanted in the wetland as part of the restoration. Because the Minnesota Endangered Species Act does not protect special concern species, transplanting of special concern species does not require special permits. As suggested by MN DNR, details on Wetland 8 impact minimization will be worked out under the WCA permitting process.

Wetland 10 – The project will provide at least the 15-foot minimum buffer around Wetland 10 and potential opportunities to widen the buffer beyond 15 feet will be reviewed as the project design progresses. The hydrology of Wetland 10 and the practices to maintain hydrology after construction will are currently under review as part of the WCA and Watershed District approval process, as noted for Wetland 8 above. Drainage and utility easements are routinely used by municipalities to protect and manage wetlands and other water resources, as they give municipalities authority to access wetlands and manage water levels.

Native Vegetation

The EAW stated that avoided wetlands will be protected by buffers that will be seeded to native grasses and forbs. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park. Wetland buffers are expected to cover about 3.25 acres and the EAW stated that wetland buffers will be seeded to native grasses and forbs. Native grasses and wildflowers will also be considered for seeding/seeded in areas around stormwater basins and the excavated lake.

Tree Removal

The proposed project design and residential density is consistent with the City of Blaine 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the project approval process will be consistent with City of Blaine Tree Preservation Standards, which are set forth under Chapter 33.09 of the City Code. The Comprehensive Plan guides the site for LDR Low Density Residential, which is intended for residential development with 2.5 to 6 units/acre. The proposed project design is on low end of this range, with a gross density of 2.5 units/acre and a net density of 2.7 units/acre. Metropolitan Council policy also encourages high residential densities because they align with efficient use of infrastructure.

Trees cover about 34% of the project area. It is not practicable to preserve large wooded areas on this site without shifting public policy to reduce density or allocating public funds to acquire and preserve woodland. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park. The high water table in the project area results in a design that allocates considerable open space to stormwater basins and an excavated lake. The large area required for water resources and to borrow material to elevate development areas further limits the potential to preserve large areas of trees. However, the 36.37 acres of tree removal estimated in the EAW is the maximum estimate, and opportunities for additional tree preservation will be considered as the project design advances.

The project will result in some habitat loss and woodland fragmentation. This habitat loss is unavoidable if the project is to respond to the demand for housing at the densities desired by local and regional agencies. If the project were revised to lower the residential density and preserve large blocks of intact habitat, the residential growth would be displaced to another location that could have similar habitat impacts.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Project Description

Proposed Project

Lexington Waters Residential Development is proposed on 115.45 acres of land in the northeastern part of the City of Blaine, Anoka County, Minnesota. The project will include up to 176 single-family homes, 120 detached townhomes, stormwater basins, wetland preservation, and parkland. Site development will include installation of streets, municipal sewer and water, and mass grading. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space, consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park.

An Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was prepared pursuant to Minnesota Rules Part 4410.4300, Subp. 19.D. (Residential development consistent with a comprehensive plan). The EAW and the respective comments have been reviewed in accordance with Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 to determine if the project has potential for significant environmental effects.

Site Description and Existing Conditions

The project area is about 39% sod field, 34% woodland, 17% grassland, 7% wetlands and ditches, and 2% developed. The soils on the site include sand, sandy loam, and mucky peat. Site topography is relatively flat with 14 feet of elevation change.

Decision Regarding the Potential for Significant Environmental Effects

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700, Subp. 7 lists four criteria that shall be considered in deciding whether a project has the potential for significant environmental effects. Those criteria and the City's findings are presented below.

A. Type, Extent, and Reversibility of Environmental Effects

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 Subp. 7 (A) indicates the first factor that the City must consider is the "type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects." The City's findings are set forth below.

1. **Cover Types**. The project will convert about 45.37 acres of sod field, 36.37 acres of woodland, 16.93 acres of grassland, and 1.65 acre of wetlands and ditches to suburban residential development with homes, streets, lawns, landscaping, and stormwater basins. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park.

2. **Shorelands and Floodplains**. The project area is not located in or adjacent to a shoreland overlay district, mapped floodplain, wild and scenic river, critical area, or agricultural preserve.

3. **Land Use**. The project is compatible with surrounding land uses, which include sod fields, cropland, sewered and unsewered residential development, and woodland. The project is consistent with the City of Blaine 2040 Comprehensive Plan, which guides the site for LDR Low Density Residential use. The site will be rezoned from FR - Farm Residence to DF - Development Flex and the project is compatible with the proposed zoning.

4. **Geology and Soils**. Residential development grading is expected to affect about 105 to 110 acres of land and involve movement of about 700,000 cubic yards of soil to construct streets, residential building pads, and stormwater features.

5. **Water Quality**. Compliance with stormwater requirements will minimize and mitigate potential adverse effects on receiving waters. Project construction will add about 35 acres of impervious surface to the site, consisting of streets, homes, driveways, and parking areas. Stormwater rate and volume controls will limit increases in runoff volume and associated pollutant transport. The stormwater basins and infiltration basin are expected to mitigate potential adverse effects on water quality.

6. **Wetlands and Surface Waters**. Project construction is expected to impact about 1.53 acre of wetland distributed among seven basins and 11 ditch segments with a total area of 0.85 acre, including the conversion of Anoka County Ditch 44 to an excavated lake. The project will need wetland replacement plan approval from the Coon Creek Watershed District and will need to consider design alternatives that avoid and minimize effects on wetlands to the extent practicable. The project is also expected to need a Section 404 Nationwide Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

7. **Wastewater**. The project is expected to produce normal domestic wastewater that will be typical of residential developments. Wastewater conveyance and treatment facilities of the City of Blaine and Metropolitan Council have been designed with sufficient capacity in anticipation of continued development in the area.

8. **Hazardous Materials**. The site includes six existing homes, sod fields, woodlands, grassland, and wetlands. The homestead in the southwestern corner of the site was constructed prior to 1938. Other homes were constructed between 1963 and 1994. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment identified one underground storage tank and recommended removal and offsite disposal of the tank and any remaining fuel when it will no longer be used. The project proponent will need to obtain appropriate permits prior to demolition of buildings on the site.

9. **Ecological Resources**. Project development will convert about 45.37 acres of sod field, 36.37 acres of woodland, 16.93 acres of grassland, and 1.65 acre of wetlands and ditches to suburban residential development with homes, streets, lawns, landscaping, and stormwater basins. The project will include about 27.66 acres of open space consisting of stormwater basins, an excavated lake, wetlands, woodland, buffers, and a park. The project may affect the number and type of wildlife species in the area, but changes in wildlife abundance are not expected to be

regionally significant. Rare plants have been documented in two locations within wetlands on the southern part of the site. One wetland has state-listed threatened plant species, and these plants will be avoided by development. Another wetland has state special concern plant species, which are not protected under state law. This wetland may be excavated to restore and maintain its hydrology. If this becomes the case, the special concern plant species may be transplanted to an appropriate location.

10. **Historic Resources**. The State Historic Preservation Office determined that there are no properties listed in the National or State Registers of Historic Places and no known or suspected archaeological properties in the area that will be affected by this project.

11. **Visual Resources**. Most existing views of the site include sod fields, woodlands, wetlands, open fields, and rural residences. There are no prominent scenic vistas on or near the property, but part of the property has views of an existing excavated lake and park located immediately to the southeast. Substantial effects on visual resources are not anticipated in conjunction with project development.

12. **Air**. The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board is working on integrating greenhouse gas (GHG) assessment into environmental review. GHG are expected to result from home heating, travel, and other activities. The mitigation and adaption measures listed in the EAW can help reduce GHG generation and limit climate change impacts.

13. **Noise**. Local noise levels are expected to increase temporarily during project construction, but noise levels are expected to be at or near existing levels after construction is complete. Noise generated by construction equipment and building construction will be limited primarily to daylight hours when noise levels are commonly higher than at night. Traffic noise may affect the project because the site is located adjacent to Lexington Ave NE (CSAH 17). Traffic noise mitigation measures include a low berm, backyard buffer zones, tree preservation, fencing, and sound reducing building materials.

14. **Transportation**. The Traffic Study indicated that all intersections in the area are expected to operate at acceptable LOS C or better with manageable vehicle queues under the No-Build and Build conditions. It also noted that the westbound movement at the intersection of 131st Avenue NE and Lexington Avenue NE will experience long delays during the 2040 PM peak time. The Traffic Study suggested monitoring of this intersection as the year 2040 approaches to determine if traffic movements should be limited or if a traffic control change may be needed.

B. Cumulative Potential Effects

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 Subp. 7 (B) indicates the second factor the City must consider is "whether the cumulative potential effect is significant; whether the contribution from the project is significant when viewed in connection with other contributions to the cumulative potential effect; the degree to which the project complies with approved mitigation measures specifically designed to address the cumulative potential effect; and the efforts of the proposer to minimize the contributions from the project." The City's findings are set forth below.

Projects typically combine to produce cumulative effects on municipal resources like drinking water and wastewater treatment. The City of Blaine has planned for growth and increased capacity to address these cumulative effects. The proposed project will implement approved mitigation measures and be consistent with land use policies for areas served by municipal sewer and water.

Cumulative effects of residential development on natural resources may include the loss of agricultural land, relocation of wetlands, and the loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitat like woodland and grassland. Surface water runoff from the project area will be treated prior to discharge to wetlands and receiving waters. Stormwater regulations and water quality BMPs are expected to minimize cumulative effects of post-development runoff on downstream waters.

C. Extent to Which the Environmental Effects are Subject to Mitigation

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 Subp. 7 (C) indicates the third factor the City must consider is the "extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority." The City's findings are set forth below.

Environmental effects on water quality, wetlands, and traffic are subject to additional approvals and/or mitigation through requirements of local, state, and federal regulations, ordinances, management plans, and permitting processes. The following permits and approvals are required for the project addressed under the EAW. These processes will provide additional opportunity to require mitigation.

Potential environmental effects associated with this project will be mitigated in accordance with applicable rules and regulations. The City of Blaine therefore finds that potential environmental effects of the project are less than significant and "subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority."

Table 1. Permits and Approvals

Unit of Government	Type of Application	Status
City of Blaine	EIS Need Decision	Submitted
City of Blaine	Rezoning and Preliminary Plat	Submitted
City of Blaine	Final Plat	To be submitted
City of Blaine	Grading Permit	To be submitted
City of Blaine	Building Permit	To be submitted
City of Blaine	Stormwater Management and Erosion Control	To be submitted
City of Blaine	Municipal Water Connection Permit	To be submitted
City of Blaine	Sanitary Sewer Connection Permit	To be submitted
Coon Creek Watershed District	Wetland Impact and Replacement Approval	Submitted
Coon Creek Watershed District	Stormwater, Erosion Control, and Site Plan Approval	To be submitted
Coon Creek Watershed District	Wetland Delineation Approval	Approved
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Water Appropriation Permit	To be submitted if needed
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	NPDES/SDS General Permit	To be submitted
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers	Nationwide Permit	Submitted
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers	Wetland Delineation Concurrence	Approved

D. Extent to Which Environmental Effects can be Anticipated and Controlled

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 Subp. 7 (D) indicates the final factor the City must consider is the "extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other environmental studies

undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs." The City's findings are set forth below.

1. The proposed project design, plans, EAW, related studies, and mitigation measures apply knowledge, approaches, standards, and best management practices gained from previous experience and projects that have, in general, successfully mitigated potential offsite environmental effects.

2. The EAW, in conjunction with this document, contains or references the known studies that provide information or guidance regarding environmental effects that can be anticipated and controlled.

3. Other projects studied under environmental reviews in Minnesota have included studies and mitigation measures comparable to those included in this EAW.

4. There are no elements of the project that pose the potential for significant environmental effects that cannot be addressed by the project design, assessment, permitting and development processes and by ensuring conformance with regional and local plans.

5. The environmental effects of this development can be anticipated and controlled by the application and review processes of the City, the Watershed District, and others.

6. Considering the results of environmental review and permitting processes for similar projects, the City of Blaine finds that the environmental effects of the project can be adequately anticipated and controlled.

Based on the EAW, comments received, responses to comments, and criteria above, the City of Blaine finds that Lexington Waters Residential Development does not have the potential for significant environmental effects and does not require the preparation of an EIS.

RECORD OF DECISION

Based on the EAW, the response to comments, and the Findings of Fact, the City of Blaine, the RGU for this environmental review, concludes the following:

1. The EAW was prepared in compliance with the procedures of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Minnesota Rules, Parts 4410.1000 to 4410.1700 (2015);

2. The EAW satisfactorily addressed the issues for which existing information could have been reasonably obtained;

3. Based on the criteria established in Minnesota Rules 4410.1700, the project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects;

4. The City makes a "Negative Declaration;" and

5. **An EIS is not required.**

City of Blaine
Anoka County, Minnesota

Resolution RES 21-___

Resolution Finding No Need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Lexington Waters Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

WHEREAS, Minnesota Rules 4410.4300, Subp. 19.D. requires that an EAW be prepared for projects with at least 250 detached residential units in a city within the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area that has adopted a comprehensive plan under Minnesota Statutes, Section 473.859; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2021, an EAW was completed for Lexington Waters Residential Development, which will consist of up to 296 single-family homes and 120 townhomes; and

WHEREAS, on June 28, 2021, copies of the EAW were distributed to all persons and agencies on the official Environmental Quality Board (EQB) distribution list and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2021, the EAW was publicly noticed in the EQB Monitor, commencing the 30-day public comment period; and

WHEREAS, a press release or public notice was submitted to the Blaine/Spring Lake Park Life newspaper announcing the completion of the EAW, its availability to interested parties, and the process for submitting comments on the EAW; and

WHEREAS, the 30-day comment period ended on July 29, 2021 at 4:30 p.m., and the City of Blaine accepted and responded to all written comments received; and

WHEREAS, none of the comments received recommended preparation of an EIS, and none suggested the project had the potential to cause significant environmental effects.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Blaine that:

1. The EAW was prepared in compliance with the procedures of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Minnesota Rules, Parts 4410.1000 to 4410.1700;
2. The EAW satisfactorily addressed the environmental issues for which existing information could have been reasonably obtained;
3. Based on the criteria established in Minnesota Rules 4410.1700, the project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects;
4. The City makes a "Negative Declaration;"
5. **An EIS is not required**; and
6. The City adopts the Response to Comments, Findings of Fact, and Record of Decision for Lexington Waters Residential Development Environmental Assessment Worksheet (Record

of Decision) and directs the Community Development Director to maintain the Record of Decision and distribute it in accordance with Minnesota Rules.

Adopted by the City Council of Blaine this 16th day of August 2021.

Signed by: _____
Mayor

Attest by: _____
City Clerk

Appendix A
Written Comments Submitted to the City of Blaine

Record of Decision
Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW

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From: Annie Lundell
To: Thorvig, Erik
Subject: Lextington Waters Residential Development Environmental Assessment Worksheet - Comments
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 11:38:01 AM

Good morning Mr. Thorvig,

I found your contact information on the Lexington Waters Residential Development Environmental Assessment Worksheet. According to that document, the comment period begins today and all comments should be submitting to you no later than July 29th.

I wanted to inquire with you about the proposed housing within this plan of 176 single family homes and 120 detached townhomes.

https://blaine.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4987747&GUID=7AF11DEE- 2D96-4C4E-AEDA-DC15C5B5903F&Options=&Search

https://blaine.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9483762&GUID=1758711F-5893- 43A6-A96B-DA8448BEDF1B

Knowing that the Mill Ponds (93), Oakwood Ponds (211), Woodridge (56), Lexington Cove (97), and Lexington Woods (66) neighborhoods will have 523 total homes, I am curious about the discussions that the City of Blaine is having with the Anoka Hennepin School District #11 to accommodate the children of these families. (For math purposes, that is 819 families proposed for the northeast corner of Blaine alone. This figure does not include the DR Horton neighborhoods, Harpers Street, North Meadows, Quail Creek, or any other proposed growth in Ham Lake that affects AHSchools.)

All of these homes are being build to accommodate families with children; most are two-story homes with 3-5 bedrooms, and 3-4 bathrooms.

What is the content of the discussions the City of Blaine is having with AHSchools? Sunrise Elementary was at capacity prior to it even opening, and Blaine High School just completed an addition to accommodate *existing* students. How will the city of Blaine ensure that the school district can handle the extreme influx in students, while maintaining it's existing education standards, with the development of these new neighborhoods? It is particularly concerning that there is little to no information coming from the City of Blaine about the educational impact of all these new residential developments.

Proposed growth isn't always a bad thing, but we need to ensure that our education system can handle the extreme population growth while maintaining the level of support and educational success of its residents.

The 2040 Plan does not clearly indicate that education is a focus for the City of Blaine.
If the plan is to attract families, education would be a good place to start.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you,
Annie Lundell
Blaine resident

From:	Muhic, P Cameron (DOT)
To:	Thorvig, Erik
Cc:	Sherman, Tod (DOT); Kratz, David (DOT); Goff, William (DOT)
Subject:	Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW
Date:	Friday, June 25, 2021 9:18:20 AM

Dear Mr. Thorvig,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the **Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW**.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed the plans and has no comments, as the proposed project should have little or no impact on MnDOT's highway system.

Cordially,

Cameron Muhic
Senior Planner
MnDOT Metro District
651-234-7797
Cameron.Muhic@state.mn.us

From: Roos, Stephan (MDA) <stephan.roos@state.mn.us>
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2021 9:53 AM
To: ethorvig@blainemn.gov
Cc: Rob Bouta <robb@kjolhaugenv.com>
Subject: RE: Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW Available for Comment

Hello Mr. Thorvig,
The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has no comments to make on the Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW. However, we do appreciate the opportunity.
Sincerely,
Steve Roos

Steve Roos, PLA, ASLA
Environmental Planner
Energy and Environment Section
Agricultural Marketing and Development Division
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
625 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55155-2538
Ph: 651-201-6631 office, 651-245-2392 cell

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

www.mda.state.mn.us

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

July 28, 2021

Erik Thorvig
Community Development Director
City of Blaine
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

RE: EAW – Lexington Waters Residential Development
T131 R23 S1 NW, Blaine, Anoka County
SHPO Number: 2021-2326

Dear Erik Thorvig:

Thank you for providing this office with a copy of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the above-referenced project.

Based on our review of the project information, we conclude that there are no properties listed in the National or State Registers of Historic Places and no known or suspected archaeological properties in the area that will be affected by this project.

Please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36 CFR § 800. If this project is considered for federal financial assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, then review and consultation with our office will need to be initiated by the lead federal agency. Be advised that comments and recommendations provided by our office for this state-level review may differ from findings and determinations made by the federal agency as part of review and consultation under Section 106.

Please contact Kelly Gragg-Johnson, Environmental Review Specialist, at kelly.graggjohnson@state.mn.us if you have any questions regarding our review of this project.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Beimers

Sarah J. Beimers
Environmental Review Program Manager

July 28, 2021

Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director
City of Blaine
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

RE: City of Blaine - Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) – Lexington Waters Residential Development
Metropolitan Council Review No. 22582-1
Metropolitan Council District No. 10

Dear Eric Thorvig:

The Metropolitan Council received the EAW for the Lexington Water Residential Development project on June 22, 2021. The proposed project is located on the east side of Lexington Avenue (CSAH 17), immediately south of the City of Ham Lake/City of Blaine boundary, and north of 125th Avenue NE. The proposed development consists of 115.45 acres to construct 176 single-family homes, 120 detached townhomes, municipal streets, stormwater basins, wetland preservation, and parkland.

The staff review finds that the EAW is complete and accurate with respect to regional concerns and does not raise major issues of consistency with Council policies. An EIS is not necessary for regional purposes.

We offer the following comments for your consideration.

Item 11.b.ii (Water Resources) and Item 16.a (Air) (Cameran Bailey, 651-602-1212)
Council staff recommends adding the following to the list within the EAW titled "The following mitigation measures are expected to minimize potential effects of stormwater runoff of receiving waters" and "Mitigation and adaption measures could help the project lessen the impacts of climate change and GHG emissions":

- Orient new homes with the sun and horizon to maximize solar energy gain during the winter and minimize solar energy gain in the summer.
- Select the preservation of mature trees for their ability to shade new homes in the summer and allow solar insolation in the winter.
- Select home insulation, shingling, and exterior construction materials for minimum embedded greenhouse gas emissions, and for their non-toxic, recyclable, and biodegradable qualities.
- Orient lawn and right-of-way boulevard grading and landscaping to maximize a site-wide, integrated stormwater management and irrigation network. Example: Front lawns designed with bioswales that guide excess water to fill right-of-way boulevards that are designed to function as raingardens. The network of raingardens may then flow into the planned location of stormwater management ponds. The cumulative effect may reduce the overall needs for grading and excavation to create new stormwater ponds.

Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) (Todd Graham, 651-602-1322)
The EAW study site is a very small part of Transportation Analysis Zone #184 (the eastern side of Blaine between Lexington Ave NE and the City boundary). TAZ allocations for 2040 have been prepared by the City. The City's Plan expects TAZ #184 will gain +805 households and +2060 population during 2020-2040. Should the subject development and other planned developments exceed that result, then Council staff would recommend increasing the TAZ allocation in this area.

This concludes the Council's review of the EAW. The Council will not take formal action on the EAW. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Eric Wojchik, Principal Reviewer, at 651-602-1300 or via email at Eric.Wojchik@metc.state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Angela R. Torres, AICP, Manager
Local Planning Assistance

CC: Tod Sherman, Development Reviews Coordinator, MnDOT - Metro Division
Peter Lindstrom, Metropolitan Council District 10
Eric Wojchik, Sector Representative/Principal Reviewer
Reviews Coordinator

N:\CommDev\LPA\Communities\Blaine\Letters\2021 Blaine Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW 22582-1.docx

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

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800-657-3864 | Use your preferred relay service | info.pca@state.mn.us | Equal Opportunity Employer

July 27, 2021

Erik Thorvig
Community Development Director
City of Blaine
10801 Town Square Drive Northeast
Blaine, MN 55449

RE: Lexington Waters Residential Development Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Erik Thorvig:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Lexington Waters Residential Development project (Project) in the City of Blaine, Anoka County, Minnesota. The Project consists of a new residential development. Regarding matters for which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has regulatory responsibility or other interests, the MPCA staff has the following comments for your consideration.

Cover Types (Item 7)

This section of the EAW indicates the Project proposes approximately 36 acres of tree removal, the equivalent of a small forest. As you may be aware, trees store carbon and transform it into biomass, making them an excellent source of climate change mitigation. Leaving the forested area intact and planning the development around the forested area would help to reduce the Project's greenhouse gas footprint, as well as make the Project site aesthetically more pleasing. In addition, trees can reduce urban heat island effects, energy usage of nearby buildings, noise impacts and flooding. Trees can also improve air quality and aid in stormwater retention. The MPCA strongly encourages the City of Blaine and the Project proposer to rethink how to complete this development in a manner that is more environmentally beneficial.

Permits and Approvals (Item 8)

This section of the EAW does not includes the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404 Permit or the MPCA 401 Water Quality Certification. The EAW indicates that the USACE has determined that water resources over most of the site lack federal jurisdiction. However, after development, the Project will impact 1.65 acres of wetlands and ditches and that wetland replacement will occur onsite and at wetland banks located outside the Project area. If after further review and comment the USACE Section 404 permit is then required, the MPCA 401 Water Quality Certification, will also be required as well.

In addition, please note that the 401 Water Quality Certification becomes an enforceable component of the associated federal license or permit – issued under either Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. The scope of a Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification is limited to assuring that a discharge from a federally licensed or permitted activity will comply with water quality requirements.

Revisions to the Section 401 rule became effective in September 2020, and now require applicants to request a pre-filing meeting from the certifying agency at least 30 days prior to submitting a 401 Water Quality Certification request. The MPCA is the certifying authority in the State of Minnesota.

Also, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, the Project should include the MPCA as a regulator of all surface waters as defined by Minn. Stat. § 115.01, subd. 22. Waters of the state. "Waters of the state" means all streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, watercourses, waterways, wells, springs, reservoirs, aquifers, irrigation systems, drainage systems and all other bodies or accumulations of water, surface or underground, natural or artificial, public or private, which are contained within, flow through, or border upon the state or any portion thereof. Even though there may be surface waters that are determined to be USACE non-jurisdictional, or exempt from the Wetlands Conservation Act, *all surface waters are regulated by the MPCA* and any surface water impact needs to be described in the application and may require mitigation. For further information about the 401 Water Quality Certification process, please contact Bill Wilde at 651-757-2825 or at william.wilde@state.mn.us.

Water Resources (Item 11)

- The Project proposers are encouraged to plant native vegetation instead of lawns in common areas and the infiltration basin to help absorb stormwater as well as provide pollinator habitat. In addition, consider reducing impervious areas using narrower streets and sidewalks within the development.

- The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System General Construction Stormwater permit (CSW Permit) requires an undisturbed preservation of at least 50 feet of existing buffers to the wetlands on the site during construction, unless encroachment is necessary to complete the construction. In that case, redundant (double) downgradient sediment controls are required to protect these waterbodies. This requirement should be specified in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the Project.

- The SWPPP for the Project will also need to include plans to protect the location for the infiltration basin from compaction during construction as well as efforts to keep all sediment away from the basin during the construction activity. Please direct questions regarding CSW Permit requirements to Roberta Getman at 507-206-2629 or at roberta.getman@state.mn.us.

Other Potential Environmental Effects (Item 20)

Chloride use creates significant impacts to surface water, ground water, and soils. It is often fatal to wildlife. Chlorides are used to some extent in almost all developments, especially in northern climates. They are added for dust control, de-icing of driving and walking surfaces, and softening water among other uses.

Pervious surfaces for driveways and sidewalks can reduce the need for chloride use and reduce stormwater runoff. Centralized water softening systems can reduce chloride use and reduce the quantity of chlorides that enter surface waters via wastewater plants. These are important considerations when proposing any type of development that includes an increase in water use or hard surfaces. Please provide a discussion of chloride impacts and solutions to address these impacts.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Project. Please provide your specific responses to our comments and notice of decision on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement. Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this EAW, please contact me by email at karen.kromar@state.mn.us or by telephone at 651-757-2508.

Sincerely,

Karen Kromar

This document has been electronically signed.

Karen Kromar
Project Manager
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK/WW/RG:vs

cc: Dan Card, MPCA, St. Paul
Bill Wilde, MPCA, St. Paul
Roberta Getman, MPCA, Rochester

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Division of Ecological and Water Resources
Region 3 Headquarters
1200 Warner Road
Saint Paul, MN 55106

Transmitted by Email

July 29, 2021

Erik Thorvig
Community Development Director
City of Blaine
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

Dear Erik Thorvig,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Lexington Waters Residential Development EAW. The DNR respectfully submits the following comments for your consideration:

1. Page 13, Wastewater. The proposed plan to add up to 296 residential units would presumably add a comparable number of residential water softeners due to the water hardness levels of the City of Blaine municipal water supply. Many Minnesota municipalities are wrestling with high chloride levels in their wastewater (See this recent study on sources of chloride in Minnesota). Chloride is one of the components of salt, which is used in forms such as sodium chloride (table salt), calcium chloride and magnesium chloride (road salts). Sodium chloride is commonly used in home water softeners and by water treatment plants to treat "hard" water. Minnesota generally has groundwater with high levels of calcium and magnesium that must be removed through softening in order to improve taste and prevent lime scale buildup in appliances, pipes and water fixtures. The majority of home water softeners use sodium chloride (NaCl) in a softening process that replaces calcium and magnesium ions with sodium, while the chloride ions are discharged in the wastewater and eventually end up in the environment.

   Each community needs to determine which tool is appropriate for their situation. This factsheet suggests ways for homeowners to optimize their water softener salt use, while this link provides resources for cities and examples of how other communities in Minnesota are addressing their high chloride levels. We suggest that as this development moves forward, the City of Lakeville consider what strategies can be used to minimize chloride use.

2. Page 14, Post-Construction Site Runoff. The planned increase in impervious surfaces will also increase the amount of road salt used in the project area. Chloride released into local lakes and streams does not break down, and instead accumulates in the environment, potentially reaching levels that are toxic to aquatic wildlife and plants. Consider promoting local business and city participation in the Smart Salting Training offered through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. There are a variety of classes available for road applicators, sidewalk applicators, and property managers. More information and resources can be found at this website. Many winter maintenance staff who have attended the Smart Salting training — both from cities and counties and from private companies — have used their knowledge to reduce salt use and save money for their organizations.

   We also encourage cities and counties to provide public outreach to reduce the overuse of chloride. Here are some educational resources for residents as well as a sample ordinance regarding chloride use.

3. Page 14, Post-Construction Site Runoff. We are pleased to see that the development will use water from the stormwater ponds and the "Lake" for irrigation of the development landscaping. We also encourage the development to incorporate native plants and seed mixes to the greatest degree possible in stormwater features and landscaping to provide habitat for pollinators.

4. Page 15, Stormwater. In the Blaine City Code for Stormwater Management, a 15 foot wide buffer of natural vegetation surrounding wetlands is required. We recommend using a wider buffer strip around Wetland 10 in order to avoid impacting rare plant species.

5. Page 16, Stormwater. A stormwater feature is being proposed directly south of Wetland 8. We are concerned that placing a stormwater pond this close to a wetland could have unintended impacts to wetland hydrology. We recommend placing greater distance between the stormwater pond and the wetland or monitoring wetland hydrology in order to ensure that a change is not detected.

6. Page 19, Wetland and Ditch Impacts. Does #3 propose to maintain "post-development" wetland hydrology, or should that say, "pre-development" wetland hydrology?

7. Page 19, Wetland and Ditch Impacts. It is unclear how wetland hydrology will be maintained on Wetland 10, which contains state-protected rare plant species, when development will surround nearly the entire wetland with some lots being proposed within the 15 foot vegetative buffer. We recommend setting lots back further from this wetland if possible.

8. Page 27, Rare Features. DNR concurs with the analysis of rare features identified within Section 13. We appreciate the initiative taken by the proposer to conduct a rare plant survey and will follow up with further communication regarding the results of that survey.

9. Page 29, Rare Features. The destruction of 36.37 acres of woodland is a significant impact. We encourage the proposer to preserve as much of the remaining woodland as possible.
10. Page 29, Rare Features. It is unclear from this description how placing Wetland 10 under a drainage and utility easement will protect it, especially as it will be nearly completely surrounded by development. Please clarify this further while working through the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) regulatory process.
11. Page 29, Rare Features. Though there are species of special concern located in Wetland 8, we are generally supportive of restorative actions that could remove invasive species and restore the native seed bank within this wetland. It is unclear from this description if the proposer intends to avoid impacts to species of special concern in Wetland 8 or will attempt to transplant them. This should be further explained through the WCA regulatory process.
12. Page 30, Rare Features. We appreciate that the proposer will use wildlife-friendly erosion control materials and use BMP's to minimize the spread of oak wilt.
13. Page 38, Cumulative Effects. We appreciate that the EAW includes a discussion of recent and future developments within the vicinity of the project area. It is important to consider the cumulative effect of wildlife habitat fragmentation and loss in a region when evaluating projects that propose significant land conversion, deforestation, and wetland impacts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review this document. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Melissa Collins
Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist | Ecological and Water Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
1200 Warner Road
St. Paul, MN 55106
Phone: 651-259-5755
Email: melissa.collins@state.mn.us

CC: Tracey Rust, The Excelsior Group

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