

TO: St. Francis Planning Commission
FROM: Beth Richmond, Planner
SUBJECT: The Bluffs of Rum River
DATE: 7-9-2025 for 7-16-2025 meeting
APPLICANT: The Bluffs of Rum River LLC (Todd Christenson)
LOCATION: 23925 St Francis Blvd NW
COMP PLAN: Commercial, Medium Density Residential (MDR), Open Space
ZONING: B-2 General Business, R-3 High Density Residential

OVERVIEW:

The City has received applications for an amendment to an existing preliminary plat and an associated Conditional Use Permit for the creation of a public road in the Urban Rum River Management overlay district for “The Bluffs of Rum River” development.

A preliminary plat for a multi-phase, mixed use development on this site was approved on October 3, 2022 (Resolution 2022-51). The 2022 preliminary plat included a 3-acre commercial site and 302 total housing units. For context, the Planning Commission memo from the original preliminary plat approval is attached. A final plat for this area has not yet been submitted to the City. The deadline to submit a final plat for this area is October 3, 2025.

The amended preliminary plat proposes a layout similar to that of the original preliminary plat. The development is still proposed to be phased, beginning with the southernmost residential lots. The main differences between the original plat and the amended plat include:

- Lots with access to the western street (Public Street N-S) are proposed to be detached villas instead of attached rowhouses
- Additional detached villa lots are proposed along Public Street A and 241st Avenue NW, resulting in a reduced average lot size
- Western street (Public Street N-S) will now be public instead of private, resulting in the need for a CUP
- 6 parking stalls along 241st Ave NW to serve the attached rowhouses in Blocks 8 and 9

These changes result in a shift in the composition of housing types proposed as shown in the table below:

Housing Types	2022 Preliminary Plat	2025 Preliminary Plat Amendment
Single-unit	40 units	40 units (Blocks 1, 4, 5)
Detached townhome/villa	40 units	115 units (Blocks 2, 3, 6, 7)
Attached rowhouse	102 units	26 units (Blocks 8, 9)
Apartment	120 units	120 units (Block 10)
Total	302 units	301 units

The residential portions of this site are guided for Medium Density Residential (3-7 units per net acre) use by the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed density for the amended preliminary plat is within this range (4.5 units per net acre).

The unit count proposed in the amended preliminary plat meets the threshold for a required Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) per Minnesota Statutes 4410.4300 subd. 19. Staff has discussed this with the applicant. The applicant has indicated a preference to adjust the unit counts slightly to eliminate the need for an EAW. A condition of approval is suggested that the unit counts be adjusted in the plans. A second condition clarifies that Staff will re-calculate the need for an EAW with each phase of the project to ensure Statute is followed.

In order for this project to move forward, the following approvals are needed:

- Preliminary Plat Amendment (public hearing on 7/16)
- Conditional Use Permit for creation of public road in uRRM District (public hearing on 7/16)
- PUD Ordinance – 2nd Reading
- Final Plat(s)

REVIEW PROCEDURE

60-Day Land Use Application Review Process

Pursuant to Minnesota State Statutes Section 15.99, local government agencies are required to approve or deny land use requests within 60 days. Within the 60-day period, an automatic extension of no more than 60 days can be obtained by providing the applicant written notice containing the reason for the extension and specifying how much additional time is needed. The deadline for the CUP request is August 19, 2025.

120-Day Subdivision Review Process

Pursuant to Minnesota State Statutes Section 462.358, local government agencies are required to approve or deny subdivision requests, such as the preliminary plat, within 120 days. The 120-day timeline for the review of the preliminary plat expires on October 18, 2025.

Public Hearing

City Code requires that a public hearing for review of the land use and subdivision requests be held by the Planning Commission. The public hearing notice was published in the Anoka County Union Herald on July 04, 2025 and posted on the City Hall bulletin board on July 03, 2025. The public hearing notice was mailed to all affected property owners located within 350 feet of the subject property on July 03, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

Action to be Considered:

The Planning Commission is requested to hold the public hearing for the preliminary plat amendment and CUP. Following the public hearing, Commissioners are requested to take action on the requests and provide a recommendation to Council.

Suggested Motions:

1. Move to recommend approval of the preliminary plat amendment for The Bluffs of Rum River project with conditions and findings of fact as presented by Staff.

2. Move to recommend approval of the public road CUP for The Bluffs of Rum River project with conditions and findings as presented by Staff.

Findings of Fact – Preliminary Plat Amendment

1. The proposed preliminary plat is consistent with the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan as amended and is compatible with present and future land uses of the area.
2. Excluding the exceptions granted by the PUD, the development is consistent with the City's Zoning Ordinance with noted conditions.
3. The development is designed to preserve existing natural features on the site and provides additional opportunities for the creation of multiple different types of housing in the City.
4. City services have adequate capacity to serve the proposed development.

Conditions – Preliminary Plat Amendment

1. Approval of this request is subject to the concurrent approval of the related land use requests pertaining to The Bluffs project.
2. The project was conditionally approved by the DNR on November 22, 2022. Approvals granted by the City Council for this project are conditioned upon the MnDNR's full approval of the project.
3. Applicant shall work with MnDOT to finalize the northern access point and intersection that incorporates phasing and the completed traffic study. Applicant shall address all comments relating to the project provided by MnDOT.
4. Applicant shall work with Anoka County to finalize an intersection layout for the public street/Ambassador Blvd intersection that incorporates phasing and the traffic study. Applicant shall address all comments relating to the project provided by Anoka County in their July 29, 2022 memo.
5. Applicant shall address the comments included in the Engineering Review Memo dated July 8, 2025 to the City Engineer's satisfaction.
6. Applicant shall dedicate land below the OHW of the Rum River as public.
7. The project shall be completed as a phased development. Applicant shall provide an updated Phasing Plan.
8. As proposed, the project requires an EAW which must be completed prior to final plat approval. The applicant may choose to modify the preliminary plat such that the project falls below the thresholds for a mandatory EAW as specified in Minnesota Statutes 4410.4300 subd. 19. In this case, an EAW would not be required.
9. For each subsequent phase of the project, City Staff shall review Minnesota Statutes 4410.4300 to determine if an EAW is required.
10. Adequate provisions for an off-street trail along Ambassador Blvd shall be made at the time that the commercial lot (Block 11 Lot 1) is final platted.
11. Applicant shall provide off-street guest parking meeting City Code standards for the attached rowhouses. If possible, guest parking should be located near Blocks 8 and 9.
12. Landscaping
 - a. Applicant should identify the size and type of existing trees which are planned to be removed or preserved. Additional revisions to the landscaping plan may be required depending on the size and type of trees removed.
 - b. Future landscaping plans for the apartment and commercial lots shall provide landscaping and vegetation which complements the landscaping established for the residential units in this plat.
 - c. Applicant shall revise the landscaping plan to ensure that there is one front yard tree for each housing unit in Block 8.

- d. Trees of the same genus shall make up no more than 25% of the total amount of required trees. Applicant shall revise the proposed tree mix for evergreen trees to meet this requirement.
 - e. Ornamental trees must be at least 2 inches in diameter measured at DBH. Planting size shall be specified on the landscaping plan.
13. Park dedication shall be satisfied at the time of final plat.
 14. Applicant shall be responsible for all fees associated with these land use and subdivision applications. All fees and financial obligations shall be received by the City prior to the releasing of the approval documents related to this project for recording.
 15. Other conditions identified during the review process by Staff, the Planning Commission, or the City Council.

Findings of Fact – Conditional Use Permit

1. The proposed public road meets the environmental criteria for a CUP as established in Minnesota Rules 6105.0200.
2. The proposed public road has been designed to minimize the street's impact on the surrounding area, including avoiding steep slopes, existing vegetation, and soils with high erosion potential to the maximum extent possible.

Conditions – Conditional Use Permit

1. Approval of this request is subject to the concurrent approval of the related subdivision and land use requests pertaining to The Bluffs project.
2. Applicant shall adhere to all vegetative requirements listed in the City's Urban Rum River Management District and MN State Rules Chapter 6105.
3. Applicant shall adhere to the road construction methods listed in MN State Rules 6105.0200 subp. 4.
4. All fees and financial obligations shall be received by the City prior to the releasing of the approval document for recording.
5. Other conditions identified during the review process by Staff, the Planning Commission, or the City Council.

Attachments:

1. City Engineer's Memo dated July 8, 2025
2. Applicant Submittals
3. August 17, 2022 PZ Packet – The Bluffs of Rum River Preliminary Plat, CUP, and Rezoning