



Village of River Hills
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River Hills, WI 53217

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July 30, 2021

Dear River Hills Residents,

As President of River Hills, I am writing to provide you with an update on the 53.4 acres on Brown Deer Road that is owned by the Village.

First, I would like to thank residents who sent in their opinions and concerns following my previous letter. Your comments are greatly appreciated.

On July 7th the River Hills Plan Commission considered three concepts for developing the Brown Deer property owned by the Village. I urge everyone to view the recorded video of the meeting on the village website, riverhillswi.com, under "Project Plan".

The first proposal, the "hybrid" concept plan, would use the 53.4 acres to establish a conservancy and a development area with up to 60 single-family homes valued at an average price of about \$600,000. They would offer a variety of sizes, floor plans, and other important options. Their total assessed value would be approximately \$36,000,000 when completed in about 6 years. These homes would generate about \$915,000 in annual taxes to repay the TID bonds in an estimated 12 years.

The MMSD Fresh Coast Partnership Program (FCPP) will convert 28.4 acres into a rainwater containment area with wetlands and ponds that will attract wildlife common in the Village. It will be designed, constructed, and paid for by FCPP. Walking paths and other amenities may be added which will be convenient to neighbors and available to all village residents.

The single-family homes built on the remaining 25 acres will not have all the responsibilities, such as mowing and plowing, that usually goes with owning a home, a feature sought by many residents. The homes will be closer than others in the Village; however, there are examples of this density in Wisconsin and throughout the country. Residents will share ownership of 25 acres within the neighborhood and have convenient access to the conservancy area. The homes would be one-story high and screened with berms and trees from surrounding neighbors.

The second proposal is to convert the entire property into a Laurentian Forest as it was prior to being settled centuries ago. It assumes that the costs to convert and maintain the 53.4 acres, and perhaps buy the land from the Village, would come from donations. However, I have not been told if any funding commitments have been received since the proposal was introduced last fall. Without any commitment, there would be no funds produced to repay the TID bonds.

The third proposal includes the sale of 30 acres as 6 five-acre lots – (4 on Green Brook Road and 2 on Brown Deer Road). The remaining 24 acres will become a green space similar to those in the second proposal. This proposal estimates that the sale of the lots at \$385,000 will provide \$2,310,000 toward repaying the bonds and enhancing the remaining 24 acres. Frankly, no information is presented to support the estimated sale prices. Based upon the only information the Village has, a five-acre lot on Brown Deer Road is for sale for \$289,900.

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At the July 7th Plan Commission meeting to consider the three proposals, the Plan Commission voted to recommend to the Board of Trustees that they move forward with the hybrid concept plan.

At the July 21st Village Board meeting (also available to view on the village website) the Trustees considered all three proposals and the Plan Commission recommendation. Although comments were made against the first proposal, the Trustees voted unanimously to move forward with the hybrid concept. This was not a final decision to approve the hybrid plan but to direct staff to continue gathering information and begin steps to implement the concept plan.

I strongly support moving forward with the hybrid plan:

1. The hybrid plan is designed to generate an incremental tax on the new homes to repay the TID bonds without increasing taxes on all other properties. There is much information to gather about the plan; however, the other two proposals are unclear as to how the Village will meet its \$3 million TID commitment.
2. The hybrid plan has been approved by the MMSD partner FCPP to design, construct, and pay for a rainwater collection system on 28 acres that will keep a projected 2 million gallons of water on the property each year. The conservancy will provide space for all residents to enjoy local nature.
3. The Trustees are moving forward to determine what is in the best interest of the entire village. This process will refine the plan so the Trustees will have more information to make their decision whether or not the hybrid plan is the best long-term decision for the Village. Staff interviews with a few selected developers with successful developments that are similar to the hybrid concept will be a valuable source of information. These discussions will increase our understanding of the local market, its needs and preferences, and will refine assumptions made previously.
4. The hybrid plan offers the opportunity for residents and others to move to a life style where the inconvenience of large homes and acreage become a burden that interrupts other activities and passions. They will remain, or come to this area, and be loyal customers that support local businesses and cultural programs.

To summarize, I know there are well intended residents who strongly oppose the hybrid plan. That is to be expected since we all are often against change, particularly when it is close by. However, I strongly believe the hybrid plan is in the best long-term interest for the residents of River Hills. It is financially responsible. It will demonstrate that our tiny village can combine what's "right" for the environment with desirable single-family homes.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this lengthy update. Please email your comments to me at project@vil.river-hills.wi.us, or drop me a note at Village Hall.

Best regards,



Steve Anderson, Village President