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This year marks the 8th edition of the Coon Rapids Community Development Department annual report. The document highlights the significant projects, programs and related work carried out in the last year. As many know, 2021 was filled with both challenges and opportunities. While the pandemic continued to disrupt supply chains and affect the cost of development and delayed construction timelines, it didn't seem to dampen enthusiasm for new projects. In fact, the City saw over $93M in new construction activity – a sixth consecutive year with values exceeding $90M. Moreover, a number of other projects were approved for construction in 2022 and beyond. And many other businesses of all sizes chose to expand their operations providing critical jobs and tax base.

Among the more notable projects, was the approval and groundbreaking of the next phase of the Riverdale TOD project adjacent to the Northstar commuter rail station. Minneapolis-based Sherman Associates will construct 270 units of market rate and senior apartments with anticipated completion in next couple of years. Even more encouraging has been the rebound in the commercial sector - hard hit in recent years - with the redevelopment of the former Sears, JC Penney and Famous Dave’s sites. The Riverdale area continues to adapt as retail trends change.

In 2021, the department also embarked on a new initiative, hiring a full-time planner to work on various sustainability policies and projects. This work included revisions to the City Code to allow for expanded use of solar energy systems; attainment of Step 3 in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program; and recognition as a SolSmart (Silver Level) community. Coon Rapids is one of several cities around the state and first in Anoka County to receive this designation.

Readers of this report will also find information about other important topics from housing programs and rental licensing activities to property maintenance trends and building permit data. Much of this work is often overlooked, but is critical in maintaining a strong and vibrant community. And none of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff. I am proud of the work that was accomplished and grateful to serve alongside this group of professionals. We hope you find this report informative and encouraging that Coon Rapids is well-positioned for the future.

Sincerely,

Grant Fernelius

Grant Fernelius
Community Development Director
Business Development

Work began on a new medical office building at Springbrook Dr. and Holly St. for Fresenius Kidney Dialysis Center.

Approvals were granted for a new Walser Hyundai dealership on vacant land along Highway 10 west of the existing Rapids Honda dealership.

Building permit applications were issued for Schneiderman’s Furniture, which will occupy the former Sears space in the Riverdale Village shopping center.

A liquor license has been issued for Total Wine and More in the Riverdale Commons shopping center.

Omnetics Connector Corporation is remodeling space at 8840 Evergreen Blvd. next to the Allina Customer Experience Center.

Work continues on reconfiguration of the former JC Penney space in the Riverdale Village Shopping Center into multiple tenant spaces.

Construction began on a car wash at the corner of Hanson and Northdale Boulevards. The site used to house a vacant gas station.

Famous Dave’s redeveloped its site at Main Street and Northdale Boulevard with a new small-format Famous Dave’s Quick Que, along with a Bank of America branch and Banfield veterinary clinic.

Housing Development and Redevelopment

Work began in December on the third phase of the Riverdale Station Apartments. A site plan was approved in summer 2021 for both phases three and four of the project, which calls for a 192 unit market-rate building on the east side of the site and an 81 unit building for seniors on the west side. Phase one and two in this area included Lyra, a luxury market-rate apartment building and Nova a mixed-income building.

Coon Rapids-based Centra Homes continued construction on 136 one-level and two-level detached townhomes as part of the Port Riverwalk redevelopment. The City’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority sold the site to Centra Homes in February 2020 and the City led construction of new public infrastructure throughout the construction season. The City and Anoka County made several infrastructure improvements along Coon Rapids Boulevard in the area. The work included utilities, sidewalks and trails, lighting, new lane configurations, asphalt replacement, and curbs and gutters.

St. Paul-based Real Estate Equities completed construction of the Spring House Apartments near 94th Avenue and Springbrook Drive. The 168-unit complex features several amenities including an outdoor patio with fire pit, bocce ball court, fitness center, tot lot, dog run, underground parking, solid surface countertops, stainless steel appliances and in-unit laundry.

A small-format Caribou Coffee store that includes a drive-through and outdoor seating area opened on the southwest corner of Coon Rapids Boulevard and Egret Boulevard in the Port Riverwalk area. The City’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority sold the site to Caribou’s developer in September 2020.
Marketing and Outreach

The City continued a partnership with the Metro North Chamber of Commerce to host its Coon Rapids Business Council meetings, which help build relationships between the City and business community. Presenters included: Connexus Energy, the St. Paul Area Association of REALTORS, CentreCorp (the new manager of the Riverdale Village shopping center), the Anoka-Hennepin School District, Anoka-Hennepin Foundation and Central Minnesota Development Company.

City Staff and the Mayor participated in the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce’s annual State of the Cities lunch in February.

In collaboration with the St. Paul Area Association of REALTORS, the City hosted its annual REALTOR Forum in April, which was attended by over several dozen local real estate agents. The event provides agents with information on City projects and initiatives.

In collaboration with Anoka County Regional Economic Development, the City of Coon Rapids participated in the Minnesota Real Estate Journal’s North Metro Real Estate Summit in September, which featured panelists from CentreCorp, Sherman Associates, and Alatus who highlighted recent projects in Coon Rapids and Anoka County before a regional audience.

City Economic Development Coordinator Matt Brown provided a presentation on suburban economic development at the International Economic Development Council’s Upper Midwest Basic Economic Development Course and Minnesota Economic Development Academy in October.

The City participated in the Anoka County Regional Economic Development Initiative, which provides economic development marketing and branding on a regional basis and hosted the sixth annual Upriver Commercial Real Estate Summit promoting Anoka County.

City Staff worked with an engineering /environmental consultant submit an award application for the Port Riverwalk redevelopment project for consideration in the 2022 Minnesota Brownfields ReScape Awards.
Despite being in the wake of Covid-19 shutdowns, material/labor shortages, and skyrocketing material costs, the City did not see much of a decrease in construction activity. In fact, Coon Rapids Boulevard saw 55 new residential homes built in the Port Riverwalk Development (Centra Homes), equaling 91% of the 61 new single-family homes built this year.

Also along Coon Rapids Boulevard, The Rose Garden Restaurant and Event Center opened its new location at 1925 Coon Rapids Boulevard. On the southeastern side of the City, 9210 Springbrook Dr. will be the new home to Fresenius Kidney clinic, currently under construction and is taking shape very quickly. At the other end of the City, Riverdale Village is experiencing some changes with Schneiderman’s Furniture remodeling the building that used to be home to Sears. The building that once housed JC Penny’s, is receiving extensive structural changes and interior changes for multi-tenant use.

Solar energy showed a steady pace in 2021, with 20 permits issued, 4 of which were large, commercial rooftop arrays located at RMS, Metro Storage, Springhouse Apartments, and the Auto Mall.

2021 ended strong with three larger projects breaking ground. Paladin Career Center 10220 Goldenrod Street, Walser Hyundai 2075 Gateway Drive, and Phase 3 of Riverdale Station Apartments 3200 Northdale Boulevard.

### Top 10 Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARCC - Nursing &amp; Business Office Renovation</td>
<td>$5,018,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDC Spring</td>
<td>$3,860,076.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverdale Station Apts Phase 3 - Foundation/Footing</td>
<td>$3,678,820.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schneiderman’s Furniture Store</td>
<td>$3,465,148.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paladin Career and Technical School</td>
<td>$3,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omnetics Connector Corporation</td>
<td>$2,500,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coon Rapids Middle School Addition</td>
<td>$2,100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JcPenney Shell Renovation</td>
<td>$2,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shine Car Wash</td>
<td>$1,600,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresenius Kidney Care Shell Only</td>
<td>$1,510,700.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of Permits Issued from 2017 - 2021

![Graph showing number of permits issued from 2017 to 2021]
Inspection data for 2017 and 2018 reflects a major hail storm that occurred in 2017. While some of the repair work was completed that same year, a significant portion was delayed until 2018 due to contractor and materials availability.
Property Maintenance

The Property Maintenance Division is tasked with enforcing the zoning and nuisance ordinances on residential and commercial properties, conducting long grass and weed inspections, monitoring and securing vacant properties, maintaining the water waiver program and chicken licensing. Code enforcement concerns are addressed through City Code 2-1100 – Administrative Procedures and Penalties.

In 2021, the Property Maintenance Division continued using Courtesy Notices along with educational materials as the first contact to notify residents of code violations. If there is not compliance with the Courtesy Notice an Administrative Citation is issued with educational and informational materials. Property Maintenance staff continue to use a mostly complaint-based approach to enforcement and complaints are typically responded to in 24-48 hours.

In 2021, Property Maintenance Inspectors issued 1,075 Courtesy Notices with an 88% compliance rate. There were also 543 Administrative Citations issued with an 86% compliance rate on initial citations. Junk (inoperable and/or unlicensed) vehicles remained the number one violation for 2021 followed by prohibited exterior storage and parking of vehicles off pavement. If a property remains in violation after the citation compliance date, and the violation can be abated, a contractor is used to abate the violation. There were 33 abatements in 2021, which is an increase from 14 in 2020, mostly prohibited exterior storage and junk (inoperable and/or unlicensed) vehicle violations.

Through the summer months, long grass and weed issues become the number one complaint received. Because of the number of long grass complaints, a dedicated long grass inspector works seasonally April through September. The long grass inspector inspected 288 (277 in 2020) properties finding 178 (133 in 2020) of them in violation. Like with all other violations, Courtesy Notices were used as the first contact with residents for long grass and weed concerns. Administrative Citations were issued for properties remaining in violation of the Courtesy Notice. In 2021, there was a 79% compliance rate on the Courtesy Notices. With the significant compliance rate using the long grass Courtesy Notices, the number of long grass abatements has decreased, there were only 4 in 2021 (5 in 2020).
Board of Adjustment and Appeals

The Property Maintenance Coordinator is the staff liaison to the Board of Adjustment and Appeals. The role of the Board is to conduct hearings to consider variances of the building or zoning ordinances, consider appeals for special assessment objections and to consider appeals of the decisions made by the Building Official or Zoning Administrator.

The Board meets the first Thursday of each month if there is business to conduct. In 2021 the Board of Adjustment and Appeals met seven times. The Board heard one appeal of the Hearing Examiners decision, five variance requests and eleven special assessment objections. The Board is fully staffed and made up of five volunteer residents of the city that are appointed by City Council.

Vacant Properties

The number of vacant properties in Coon Rapids continues to decrease annually. The number of known vacant properties has decreased from 85 in 2020 to 74 in 2021. All vacant properties are inspected in the spring and fall of each year to verify they are still vacant and to make sure there are no exterior health or safety concerns. Water services are typically disconnected to vacant properties to protect the City water supply as well as the property itself. A water waiver can be applied for to keep water service on and currently there are 12 vacant properties with a water waiver on file. From time to time vacant properties are found unsecured, either by law enforcement or by inspectors conducting routine inspections. In 2021 there were 8 incidences where a vacant property needed to be secured. Property secure services are provided by a contractor.

Chickens

Since 2016, residents in Coon Rapids have been able to keep chickens on residential properties. There are currently 57 residents in Coon Rapids that have been approved or are in the process of approval for a permit to keep chickens, including 9 new applications in 2021. Since the chicken ordinance was passed, staff receive an average of 6 chicken related complaints each year. In 2021 there were 6 complaints related to the keeping of chickens and 2 of them resulted in enforcement action.
Rental Licensing
The City’s Rental Licensing Ordinance (City Code Chapter 12-900) continues to encourage and ensure safe and viable rental housing options in Coon Rapids. In 2021, there were 79 new rental licenses issued. Of the 79 new rental licenses, 47 of them were properties that had been converted from owner-occupied to rental. There are now a total of 5,893 licensed rental units in the city which is up over recent years because of the new apartment buildings in town (Lyra at Riverdale Station and Spring House at 610 & 47).

The housing inspectors and support staff have done a remarkable job evolving to the ever-changing circumstances surrounding inspecting the City’s rental properties. In-person and virtual visits have been offered throughout 2021, with a majority of property owners having preference for the in-person visits, probably so they too can witness the current condition of their units.

Growth in Rental Housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Change in Units</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>3936</td>
<td>4171</td>
<td>Increased 235</td>
<td>+ 5.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>Decreased 29</td>
<td>- 4.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhomes</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>Decreased 18</td>
<td>- 1.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Homes</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>Increased 5</td>
<td>+ 2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td>5700</td>
<td>5893</td>
<td>Increased 193</td>
<td>+ 3.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summer in the City
The Summer in the City events were back in 2021! The City hosted four events – in Lions Coon Creek Park, Parkside Park, Peppermint Stick Park and Prospect Park in June and July of 2021. The City made efforts to make the events as COVID-friendly as possible, spacing the tables further apart from one another, encouraging masks to be worn, and limiting interactive activities. The events were all very well attended.

North Suburban Home Show
The cities of Andover, Anoka and Coon Rapids typically host the Annual North Suburban Home Improvement Show in March each year, but the event was again canceled for a 2nd year due to COVID.

Home Remodeling Tour
The Home Remodeling Tour typically takes place each May, but was also canceled for a 2nd year due to COVID.
In Minnesota, and nationwide, states put into place eviction moratoriums during COVID so tenants would not lose their housing. In Minnesota, the eviction moratorium, which suspended all evictions in the state, ran from March 2020 until June 30, 2021. After this date, tenants were not allowed to be evicted if they had a pending application for rent assistance. Evictions for any reason were allowed again starting October 12, 2021.

COVID-related rent assistance programs were offered starting in the fall of 2020. Lessons were learned, the program was re-designed and it was re-introduced as RentHelpMN in early 2021. This funding provided eligible renters with up to 15 months of rent and utility bill assistance. Minnesota Housing records for Anoka County indicate there were 6,623 applicants from this area totaling $41,268,700 worth of requests.

Home Improvements

Despite COVID-19, homeowners were very busy with home improvements in 2021:

**Home for Generations II Program.** This program offers various incentives (grants, building permit rebates, architectural consultations, and low-interest loans) to homeowners planning to make large, value-added improvements to the interior of their home.

Throughout the life of this program (2013-2021), there have been 502 applications submitted and 190 projects subsidized, leveraging just over $14.5 million worth of home improvements. In 2021 alone, there were 53 applications, 39 architectural consultations, 24 recipients of the grants/rebates portion of this program totaling $2.6 million worth of investment.

**Front Door Grant Program.** Focused on increasing curb appeal to the homes in Coon Rapids, nearly 300 Front Door Grant applicants were considered in the March lottery. A total of 80 applicants were selected to continue in the process and 25 additional applicants were selected to be on a wait list should anyone withdraw from the program. Several applicants did withdraw, and 24 of the 25 applicants on the wait list were activated. In all, 79 residents received a grant through this program to make exterior improvements to their home totaling $1.4 million worth of increased curb appeal!

**Other City Loans Originated.** In addition to all of the activity originated from the Home for Generations II program and the Front Door Grant Program, the City originated many other loans to homeowners in 2021:

- 9 Down Payment Assistance Deferred Loans = $45,000
- 6 Low-Interest Loans = $112,903.84
- 7 Deferred Loans = $83,696
- 2 Emergency Deferred Loans = $12,715

**Remodeling Advisor Visits.** Coon Rapids contracts with the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) to provide Remodeling Advisor Visits for its homeowners. This service assists homeowners in identifying and prioritizing improvements and is also a good source of objective remodeling advice. The service is free to all Coon Rapids homeowners. In 2021, Remodeling Advisor Visits were performed for 39 Coon Rapids homeowners by CEE’s team of experienced construction professionals.
The role of the Planning Commission is to review land use applications, then make decisions or recommendations to the City Council, regarding those applications. The Commission meets the third Thursday of every month; this year there were 12 regular meetings and two workshops. The Commission is appointed by the City Council and is made up of seven volunteer city residents.

In 2021 the Commission considered 55 planning cases during 12 regularly scheduled meetings. The Commission’s review included 15 site plans, 9 conditional use permits, 14 preliminary plats, five zone changes and four land use amendments. There were also three ordinance amendments.

The project reviews included:

- Site plan for the redevelopment of the JC Penney building.
- Site plan and preliminary plat for a car wash and retail building Northdale and Hanson.
- Site plan for a 152-unit apartment building at 102nd and Goldenrod St.
- Site plan and preliminary plat for Phases 3 and 4 of the NorthStar Riverdale Station apartments.
- A preliminary plat and site plan for a 14-unit townhome development at 114xx Robinson Dr.
- Site Plan and preliminary plat for a 12,300 sq. ft. office building at Springbrook Dr. and Holly St.
- A preliminary plat and site plan for an 11-unit townhome development at 12691 Hanson Blvd.
- Site plan, CUP and preliminary plat for Fire Station #3 at Mississippi Blvd. and 111th Ave.
- Site plan, PUD amendment and preliminary plat for new car dealership on Gateway Dr.
- Site plan and preliminary plat for Dollar General retail store Hanson Blvd. and Coon Rapids Blvd.
- Ordinance amendment for medical marijuana dispensary.
- Ordinance amendment for solar energy.

In March and July, the Commission held workshops to discuss the proposed solar amendment. In September, the Commission also held a refresher training workshop on planning commission roles and responsibilities.
Olivia Dorow Hovland joined the city in January 2021, as the new Sustainability Planner, housed in the Community Development Department. She took over the staff liaison role for the Sustainability Commission and managed a variety of projects aimed at improving the City's sustainability and resilience as a whole.

Performance Measurement and Recognition

In June, Coon Rapids moved from Step 2 to Step 3 in the MPCA’s GreenStep Cities program, after six years at Step 2. This achievement is the result of a variety of new sustainability actions across various departments, including:

- Updating all city-owned building energy consumption data in the MN B3 Benchmarking database
- Adopting sustainable purchasing guidelines in the City’s new Purchasing Policy
- Purchasing and installing LEDs for street lights and traffic signals
- Identifying and remedying trail and sidewalk gaps throughout the city
- Hosting an annual “Fix-It Clinic” with Anoka County

In November, Coon Rapids was awarded Silver-level recognition in the Department of Energy’s SolSmart program for solar-ready cities. The award acknowledges the city’s work in standardizing permitting processes related to solar, updating the solar energy ordinance, and promoting solar energy throughout the city. Coon Rapids businesses and residents have installed over 40 solar energy systems throughout the city.

Projects

- All site plan applications are now evaluated through a sustainability lens, and applicants receive sustainability recommendations for their projects.
- There is now a monthly sustainability e-newsletter to publicize sustainability accomplishments and best practices to residents.

There are 1.952 Megawatts of privately-owned solar panel capacity in the City of Coon Rapids. These panels produce enough renewable energy to offset greenhouse gas emissions from...

- 110 passenger vehicles each year OR
- 60 homes’ energy use for one year

Sustainability Commission

- The Commission created educational handouts on solar energy and pollinators to distribute to residents at Summer in the City events.
- The Commission provided feedback on the update of the solar ordinance.
- The Commission helped create a new sustainability-specific webpage on the city’s website, brainstorming content and resources.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF MEMBERS

Grant Fernelius
Community Development Director

Rod Spiering
Chief Building Official

Matt Brown
Planning and Development Manager

Olivia Dorow-Hovland
Sustainability Planner

Kristin DeGrande
Housing Programs Coordinator

Rebecca Jarombek
Admin Support Supervisor

Trevor White
Property Maintenance Coordinator

Leya Drabczak
Housing Inspector

Kyle Kattermann
Housing Inspector

Joy Lang
Permit Technician

Sia Vu
Permit Technician

Tracy Smestad
PT Admin Assistant

Mike Gazelka
Seasonal Long Grass Inspector

Laura LeVasseur
Property Maintenance Inspector

Heather Rodgers
Property Maintenance Inspector

Nick Jackson
Electrical Inspector

Brian Koopman
Plumbing Inspector

Josh Stewart
Mechanical Inspector

Adam Mitlyng
Building Inspector/Plans Examiner

OPEN
Building Inspector/Plans Examiner

Matt Brown
Planning and Development Manager

Olivia Dorow-Hovland
Sustainability Planner