

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**February 2, 2022**  
**After the City Council Meeting that takes place at 7pm**  
**Robbinsdale City Hall**  
**4100 Lakeview Avenue North**

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**AGENDA**

1. CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER BY MAYOR PRO TEM
2. ROLL CALL: Kline, Webb, Selman, Backen, Mayor Blonigan
3. Review 2022 legislative priorities document
4. Discuss plans for 2022 goal session
5. ADJOURNMENT



## Robbinsdale 2022 Legislative Initiatives

### Priority #1 Support Continuation of the Metro Area Tax-base Sharing Program (Fiscal Disparities) "AS IS"

Within the seven-county metro area, the fiscal benefits of commercial growth are shared no matter where that property exists. It helps to reduce the large differences in property tax wealth between those communities with a lot of commercial tax base and those with a little.

Robbinsdale is fully developed mostly with homes on relatively small lots compared to neighboring suburbs. Over 80% of our homes are affordable as estimated by Met Council staff following HUD and FHFA guidelines. North Memorial Health Care, a regional trauma center that provides nearby medical care as well as jobs for many in the surrounding area, is not subject to property taxation. The majority of the city's commercial properties are very small making up 6.15% of the city's taxable market value and 10.92% of tax capacity. Note that this is a reduction from 7.5% of taxable market and 13.3% of tax capacity reported in 2021. All major redevelopment in the last 20 years has required tax increment gap financing related to the cost of acquisition and clearance. The tax capacity growth will not be realized for 15-25 years after development occurs.

### Priority #2 Mitigate Impact of Any Local Government Aid Formula Changes

Robbinsdale receives a significant allocation of Local Government Aid (LGA) annually to help defray the cost of basic services. Due to the age of our city's development, much of the city's sewer and water mains are nearing 100 years old. Approximately 50% (over 20 miles each) of the water and sanitary sewer mains in the City were installed prior to 1940 (80 years ago.) Robbinsdale allocates money yearly to replace aging infrastructure ahead of failure. Since 2000, Robbinsdale has reconstructed 18 miles of the approximate 50 miles of residential streets, in addition to City cost participation in the reconstruction of TH 100, CR 81, and most of CR 9 all without additional funding assistance. A reduction in local government aid for Robbinsdale would result in an increase tax burden on our residents or a review of basic services provided.



## Legislative Issue #1 - Ability to Invest

Minnesota law currently allows cities with population over 100,000 or those with AAA to invest funds with the Minnesota State Board of Investment. While there is risk of loss in this option, on balance, the greater earning potential is worth pursuing.

Recommendation – Legislation to allow smaller cities or those with less than “the highest” GO bond rating category to invest up to 15% of the sum of unassigned cash, cash equivalents, deposits and investments with the Minnesota State Board of Investment.

### What Minnesota Statute 118A.09 says:

Defines qualifying government subdivision as:

1. A County or statutory or home rule charter city with a population of more than 100,000; *or*
2. A County or statutory or home rule charter city which had its most recently issued general obligation bonds rated in the highest category by a national bond rating agency;

Indicates Qualifying governments may invest up to 15% of the sum of unassigned cash, cash equivalents, deposits and investments in:

- (1) In index mutual Funds based in the United States and indexed to a board market United States equity index; *or*
- (2) With the Minnesota State Board of Investment subject to such terms and minimum amounts as may be adopted by the board Index mutual fund investments must be made directly with the main sales office of the fund.

### What this earning option could mean for Robbinsdale- currently AA+ :

Our book yield as of 10/31/2021 is 1.091% vs 7% if MN statute 118A.09 apply to cities with population over 14,000.

Looking at 15% of cash as described above - \$5,600,112

Current yield =  $\$5,600,112 \times 1.091\% = \$61,097$

MN State Board =  $\$5,600,112 \times 7\% = \$392,008$

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**Difference of \$330,911**



## Legislative Issue #2 - State Bonding for Upcoming Infrastructure Projects

### **Major East-West Connections:**

- **Shoreline Drive Reconstruction – currently projected for 2025 reconstruction**  
Shoreline Drive is an important East-West connection between Dowling Avenue and County Road 81. It includes one of our trunk sanitary sewer mains that collects a major portion of the central part of the City prior to discharge to the Met Council meter station and interceptor. Work on adjacent streets will also be necessary to connect the numerous elements of infrastructure together.

- **36<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Robbinsdale-Crystal Partnership (including Roundabout at Regent Avenue) currently projected for 2025 reconstruction**  
36<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a primary east-west route in the City linking CR81 and Highway 100 that carries approximately 12,000 vehicles per day. From June Avenue to Highway 100, the road acts as the southern border between Robbinsdale and Crystal. In addition to replacing the aged underground infrastructure along this route, a review of traffic management along the route including improved traffic control at Regent Avenue will be part of the project.

Traffic to and from Robbinsdale Middle School travels through the Regent Avenue intersection. Signalization to the commercial entrance for Cub Foods a short distance to the west prohibits signal assistance at this location. A roundabout to help the flow of traffic and school busses through this area has been explored and found to be feasible.

### **Completion of major water projects**

- **Replacing 2<sup>nd</sup> water tower currently projected for 2023-24.**  
With completion of the new centralized water treatment plant late this year and expected construction of a new larger/taller water tower just north of the downtown area, it is prudent to replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> water tower located in the North Memorial complex. The 2<sup>nd</sup> water tower would be 30 feet taller than the current structure to bring the maximum water level into alignment with the new Tower #1 and improve the minimum water pressure in the south (higher) part of the city. Higher minimum water pressure is important for fire-fighting. Funds from ARPA would fund some/not all of the project. Tower #2 was not included in the PFA loan authorization for the major works. With the advent of ~\$1M in ARPA funds (eligible for use for water infrastructure) the opportunity to move forward with the 2<sup>nd</sup> water tower replacement is possible; Either an addition to the current PFA authorization or new authorization for the one project is requested.

### **Long-Term infrastructure-Minneapolis/Robbinsdale storm water discharge to Crystal Lake**

Solution needed to remove debris, and add infiltration opportunities before water reaches Crystal Lake. Storm sewers from Minneapolis reach the lake with minimal upstream collection of street debris and limits pumping from the lake due to down-stream storm sewer capacity. Robbinsdale has installed multiple facilities including infiltration vaults, raingardens, sump manholes and vortex separators to assist in reducing pollutant loads and peak flows into the lake.

### **Plan for replacement of 20+ year old wood sound walls next to Highway 100** – Golden Valley, Crystal, Robbinsdale



## Legislative Issue #3 - Local Control

Representative Elkins has proposed a wide reaching “Comprehensive housing affordability act.” According to Metro Cities, Rep. Elkin’s proposal includes a number of provisions opposed by cities, including mandatory up-zoning, restrictions on planned unit development agreements, limitations on building materials, limits on park dedication fees and mandated street width, eliminating the opt-out provisions for Temporary Family Health Care Dwellings, requiring building permit fees be based on a cost per square foot rather than valuation, restrictions to the state building code update process, and requiring a 30-year energy code payback timeframe.

### **Article 4 – limiting regulation on residential development. Section 1 – Duplex as a permitted use.**

Cities know where additional density can be accommodated. Taking local land use control away from cities will create chaos and congestion. The approach to encouraging higher densities should be based on incentives and concentrating higher densities in areas supported by mass transit to the extent of being able to eliminate the number of or need for automobiles per household.

**R-1 zoning density and lot sizes vary greatly.** In Robbinsdale, we have small urban lots – the average is 50 feet wide, many are 40 feet wide. There are 300 duplexes that were built on 40 foot lots in the late 1940s and they have not aged gracefully.

**Robbinsdale R-1 zoning is already 5-dwelling units per acre.** Requiring all R-1 lots to become duplexes would double the density to 10 units an acre; typical of a townhouse. However, townhouses are designed to accommodate higher density.

**An R-1 lot in Eden Prairie or Minnetonka is vastly different from an R-1 lot in Robbinsdale.**

Allowing duplexes on an Eden Prairie Lot or Minnetonka lot would bring the density of development to what already exists in Robbinsdale.

**Experience with duplexes capacity for parking and solid waste.** Residents in duplexes have the same number of cars and solid waste carts as single-family homes, but on half the lot size. When off-street parking is inadequate, there is congestion in the streets.

**Duplexes less likely to be professionally-managed.** Unlike apartment buildings, persons with no experience in property management often view duplexes as an investment opportunity. To address this Robbinsdale added a training component to rental license requirements to acquaint new owners with the basics of leasing, nuisance ordinances and active property management. We found that we needed to provide resources and tools to new rental property owners to protect their investments and minimize community impact.

- *Research on Single Family Lot Size/Zoning comparison included as appendix.*

Also in Elkins bill:

- conflicts between comprehensive plans (which are projecting the future) and zoning (applying to the present). Example a development application at projected use/density in the comprehensive plan would require amendment of current local controls would require their amendment to allow the use within 60 days of an application.
- Prohibits requiring Planned Unit Developments (PUD) conditions that exceed state building code requirements (if project is allowed by existing zoning including conditional use). One more section limits a conditional approval of a PUD to require specific materials, design, amenities or other aesthetics required by State Building Code.
- Retroactively prohibiting opt-out of the “temporary family health care dwelling requirements.” Retroactive to 2016. Robbinsdale opted out due to lot coverage issues.

Not found in the Elkins bill, there has also been Legislation related to expansion of 4D (reduce tax rates for multi-family including certified low income units). Concern that lowering taxes for some 1) no guarantee that the savings go to the residents and 2) raises taxes (share of the levy for city operations) to other affordable housing.



## Support Development of Creative and New Programs to Take Care of the Environment

Robbinsdale takes Environmental Stewardship as a key component of our operations. Our actions range from the provision of rain gardens and native plantings, care of our urban forest, more efficient use of salt on roadways to reducing energy consumption in our municipal buildings and becoming a Greenstep City.

We are participating in the Water Efficiency Rebate program in partnership with Met Council to encourage resident reduction of precious water resources. In 2020, applications totaling water savings of 172,000 gallons per year were approved.

Robbinsdale recently proclaimed a Climate Emergency and committed to working for a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort. We are:

- Gathering a team of residents and business owners to Create/Implement a Climate Action Plan.
- Creating a Sustainability and Resiliency Committee that will propose, implement responses and address solutions to climate impacts
- Positioning the city with shovel-ready (or identified) projects to take advantage of state and federal climate action funding opportunities.

## Provide State Resources for Mental Health

We are concerned for both the children returning to schools after social isolation and civil unrest and others going through isolation and financial hardship as a re-sult of necessary actions to control the spread of COVID19. We encourage the legislature to fund resources.

**Single family Lot size/zoning comparison**

Suburban cities have a variety of lot standards for single family lots. Post-war residential development created a demand for single family homes and resulted in the patterns of development which have become commonplace today. The automobile contributed to the development pattern with the need for off-street parking. Most cities in Minnesota have lots platted before their current zoning standards were adopted and if those lots are smaller than the current standard they are protected by legal non-conforming status (Minnesota State Law). That means a house on a lot of record can be rebuilt even if it is destroyed by some calamity.

It should be clear from the variety of standards below, that cities lot standards often reflect the local character and values of the cities and while there are parallels, there is little uniformity. First tier suburbs have R-1 lot standards that evolved from the grid street pattern. Communities that grew beyond the urban core often had street patterns that reflected topographical features such as lakes and hills. Many cities started out with rural residential patterns which came from agricultural uses. A lack of city sewer and water services results in large lots of several acres needed for on-site individual sewer treatment systems and wells.

Typical R-1 Lot standards comparison

| City              | Lot width                         | Lot depth    | Lot area       | comments                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Robbinsdale       | 50 ft. min.                       | N/A          | 6,000 sq. ft.  | Many 40 ft. wide "lots of record"                                                                                                          |
| Crystal           | 50 ft. min.                       | 100 ft. min. | 6,000 sq. ft.  |                                                                                                                                            |
| Edina             | 75 ft. min.                       | 120 ft. min. | 9,000 sq. ft.  | Minimums increase with the median of lots that exceed the minimums in neighborhoods                                                        |
| Golden Valley     | 65-100 ft.                        | N/A          | N/A            | Setbacks increase with Lot width.                                                                                                          |
| Hopkins           | 50 ft. min.                       | N/A          | 6,000 sq. ft.  | For R-1A.<br>Also: R-1B, R-1C, R-1D and R-1E.                                                                                              |
| Maple Grove (R-2) | 80 ft. min.<br>85 ft. avg.        | N/A          | 10,000 sq. ft. | R-1 (100 ft. wide, 20,000 sq. ft. min.) was the basic SF lot until the Met Council mandated a smaller lot to increase residential density. |
| Minnetonka (R-1A) | 55 ft. at ROW / 75 ft. at setback | 125 ft.      | 15,000 sq. ft. | Smaller than R-1 which is 80 ft. wide @ROW / 110 wide at setback / 22,000 sq. ft. area                                                     |
| Richfield         | 75 ft.                            | 100 ft.      | 10,000 sq. ft. |                                                                                                                                            |
| St. Louis Park    | 75 ft.                            |              | 9,000 sq. ft.  | R-2 is for smaller lots 60 ft. wide, 7,500 sq. ft.                                                                                         |
|                   |                                   |              |                |                                                                                                                                            |

### **Robbinsdale's single family lot sizes**

Robbinsdale developed in a very urban pattern with sewer and water and primarily a grid street pattern with alley. The result is a compact development pattern with a density of approximately 5 dwelling units per acre.

#### **R-1, Single family residential**

Min lot width: 50 feet

Min lot area: 6,000 sq. ft.

Legal non-conforming lots of record that are within 80% of the current lot standards.

Min. lot width: 40 feet

Min. lot area: 4,800 sq. ft.

### **Crystal**

R-1 6,000 sq. ft. 50 ft. lot width 100 ft. min. lot depth

### **Edina**

#### **Single Family Residential**

- Minimum lot area 9,000 sq. ft. However, if a neighborhood has lot with a median lot area exceeding 9,000 sq. ft, then the median lot area becomes the minimum lot area requirement.
- Min. lot width 75 feet. However, if a neighborhood has lots with a median lot width that exceeds 75 feet, then the median lot width becomes the minimum.
- Min. lot depth 120 feet. However, if a neighborhood has lots with a median lot depth that exceeds 120 feet, then the median lot depth becomes the minimum lot depth.

### **Golden Valley**

Golden Valley has a variety of lot sizes in their Single – Family Residential (R-1) zoning district. The size of the lot determines what the setbacks and height restrictions are:

- Lot width 100 feet or greater (15 feet side setback)
- Lot width greater than 65 feet & less than 100 feet (12.5 feet side setback).
- Lot width 65 feet or less (20% lot width up to 12.5 feet on South or East sides; 10% lot width up to 10 feet on North and West sides).

**Hopkins** has five levels of single family zoning ranging from very urban compact lots to large “estate” lots.

R-1A 6,000 sq. ft. 50 ft. lot width

R-1B 8,000 sq. ft. 60 ft. lot width

R-1C 12,000 sq. ft. 80 ft. lot width

R-1D 20,000 sq. ft. 100 ft. lot width

R-1E 40,000 sq. ft. 100 ft. lot width

### **Maple Grove**

#### **Single Family Residential Districts**

- R-A Single-family agricultural district: Allows for very low density residential development where sewer and water is not available in an agricultural context, or limiting public infrastructure to prevent rapid urbanization.



Lot area: 20 acres; Lot width 500 feet (interior lots); 505 feet corner lots; Abutting a major street: 520 feet.

- R-1 single family district:  
Lot area: 20,000 sq. ft. (20 acres where public sewer is not available);  
Lot width: 100 feet (interior lots); 105 feet (corner lots) 110 feet (corner lots abutting a major street).
- R-2 single family residential district:  
Lot area: 10,000 sq. ft. (20 acres where public sewer is not available);  
Average lot area: 11,000 sq. ft. (for preliminary plats filed after Oct. 28, 1987).  
Lot width: 80 feet min.; 85 feet average.
- R-2b single family residential district:  
Lot area: 10,000 sq. ft. min. (20 acres where public sewer is not available)  
Lot width: 80 feet min.; 90 feet average.

R-3 single and two-family residential: Intended for both single and two-family residential uses. Lot area standards are the same as R-2, single family residential.

### **Minnetonka**

#### **Single Family Residential**

- R-1 Lot Area: 22,000 sq. ft. Lot width: 110 ft. at front yard setback, 80 ft. at ROW;  
Lot depth: 125 feet; Buildable area: 3,500 sq. ft.
- R-1A Lot area: 15,000 sq. ft. Lot width: 75 feet at front yard setback, 55 feet at ROW;  
Lot depth: 125 feet; Buildable area: 2,400 sq. ft.

### **Richfield**

R Single family: 6,700 sq. ft. 50 ft. lot width, 100 ft. lot depth

R-1 Low Density single family 10,000 sq. ft., 75 ft. lot width 100 ft. lot depth

**St. Louis Park** has two districts intended for single family homes. R-3 allows for two-family homes.

R-1 9,000 sq. ft. 75 ft. lot width

R-2 7,500 sq. ft. 60 ft. lot width