



**City Council  
Development Committee  
Meeting Agenda Packet  
October 15, 2014  
4:00 p.m.**



City of Five Seasons®

City of Cedar Rapids

**Development Committee Meeting Agenda**

City Hall Training Room

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Purpose of Development Committee:**

To enable the City Council to discuss and evaluate in greater detail these specific issues that directly impact the physical, social, and economic vibrancy of the City of Cedar Rapids.

**City Council Committee Members:**

Council member Monica Vernon, Chair

Council member Pat Shey

Council member Susie Weinacht

- Mayor Ron Corbett is an ex-officio member of all Council Committees per City Charter Section 2.06.

**Agenda:**

- Approval of Minutes – September 24, 2014

- Presentations:

1. Greene Square Renovations	Daniel Gibbins <i>Parks and Recreation</i>	20 Minutes
	Bradd Brown <i>OPN Architects</i>	
	Heather Lynxwiler <i>OPN Architects</i>	

- Recommendation Items:

1. Interim Zoning Amendments	Jeff Hintz <i>Community Development</i>	20 Minutes
	Seth Gunnerson <i>Community Development</i>	

- Informational Items:

1. Review of LIHTC Project	Paula Mitchell <i>Community Development</i>	10 Minutes
2. Indian Creek Nature Center	Caleb Mason <i>Community Development</i>	5 Minutes

- Public Comment

Any discussion, feedback or recommendation by Committee member(s) should not be construed or understood to be an action or decision by or for the Cedar Rapids City Council. Further, any recommendation(s) the Committee may make to the City Council is based on information possessed by the Committee at that point in time.

**Community Development and Planning**

101 First Street SE • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401 • 319-286-5041



**City of Cedar Rapids  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES  
City Hall Training Room  
Wednesday, September 24, 2014  
4:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair) Weinacht and Shey. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Interim Community Development Director; Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager; Anne Russett, Community Development Planner; Steve Hershner, Utilities Director; Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathey, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Shey called for a motion to approve the minutes from August 20, 2014. Council member Weinacht made a motion to approve the minutes from August 20, 2014. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

**Presentations:**

**1. Cedar Lake**

Felicia Wyrick, Friends of Cedar Lake, stated Friends of Cedar Lake meets on a monthly basis with approximately 25 to 30 individuals who attend the meetings. Ms. Wyrick stated Friends of Cedar Lake had a presence at EcoFest, Irish District Fest and the Downtown Farmers Market. Ms. Wyrick identified past presentations Friends of Cedar Lake has provided.

Monica Vernon arrived at 4:02 p.m.

Ryan Anderson, Confluence, stated Cedar Lake has been identified as a brownfield due to chlordane found in the sediment. A brownfield is an area that has hazards to development. Cedar Lake is an 82 acre lake and is surrounded by a 1.6 mile Cedar Lake Loop Trail. The lake is a visible landmark from I-380 and Cedar Valley Nature Trail. The lake does overflow from the Cedar River during flood stage and there are various freshwater fish species in the lake. Iowa DNR categorized the lake as a category 5a water body. Mr. Anderson stated water quality issues include watershed, common water quality challenges and urban water quality improvement strategies. Mr. Anderson identified examples of remediation projects and potential grants.

Council member Vernon asked what scale category 5a is on. Mr. Anderson stated the scale is from one to ten and 5a shows contaminants were found but is not a high priority issue.

Dale Todd, Friends of Cedar Lake, stated the issue was chlordane contamination in the fish but the DNR has indicated the lake can possibly be taken off the impaired lake list.

## **Recommendation Items:**

### **1. Annual CDBG Prioritization**

Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager, stated this is the third year that City Council has undertaken a process to try to prioritize the use of CDBG and HOME funds. There has been a steady decline in the amount of funds the City receives through CDBG and HOME programs each year. The HOME entitlement funds have an additional requirement for the City to set aside 15% of funding for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs). In the past five years there has been a 25% decrease in CDBG funds and a 36% decrease in HOME funds. Ms. Mitchell stated staff recommendations are based off of FY14 final allocation amounts as FY15 numbers will not be available until spring of 2015. Staff recommends \$150,000 of the budgeted \$331,071 in HOME funds be used for eligible CHDO activities.

Council member Shey made a motion to move the Annual CDBG Prioritization recommendation forward to the full City Council. Council member Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

## **Informational Items**

### **1. Sustainability Update**

Anne Russett, Community Development Planner, stated the City Council adopted guiding principles for sustainability in January 2012. The principles included community, growth, environmental stewardship, affordability and innovation. Shortly after City Council adopted the guiding principles, iGreenCR was launched in March 2012. iGreenCR is a coordinated effort between multiple City departments and identifies nine categories for goal setting. Some recent accomplishments of iGreenCR include Cedar Rapids becoming the first city in Iowa to install green bike lanes, participation in the Indian Creek Watershed Authority, adoption of the Complete Streets policy and an \$850,000 investment to install sub-meters to efficiently manage electrical usage. Recent outreach efforts include an Elite Recyclers Class, a booth at "Go Green Day," a DIY Rain Barrel Class and League of Women Voters Clean Streams and Waterways.

Ms. Russett stated the City is currently working on sustainability related initiatives including EnvisionCR. EnvisionCR is the guiding document for policy direction within the City. The structure of EnvisionCR includes guiding principles, six elements and themes. The elements cover the general topic areas of the Comprehensive Plan. Themes underpin the entire plan and sustainability is one of the themes. A symbol of sustainability will be used throughout the Comprehensive Plan document to show which goals relate back to the goal of sustainability.

Ms. Russett stated another initiative is the zoning code update that will commence after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. This initiative is long term and will ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The last initiative is Blue Zones which is a community wide effort that helps to create an environment that supports health and wellness. Recent initiatives of Blue Zones include Meet Me at the Market, Walk into Fall and the Skywalk Walking Program.

Councilmember Vernon stated the City needs to continue to move forward on policies. Councilmember Shey expressed interest in a transportation policy. Councilmember Weinacht expressed interest in a watershed policy.

## **2. Non-Conforming Lots**

Ms. Mitchell stated a couple months ago staff brought forward a list of non-conforming lots and City Council asked staff to do some research to see if the lots are viable for development. The lots don't meet the minimum requirements for the R-TN zoning designation and are not adjacent to any other City-owned properties so the lots are unable to be combined with other lots. The primary issues of the lots are square footage, lot lines, and infrastructure. Some of the non-conforming lots have issues with access for water and sewer. Staff brought together a group of builders that have been participating in ROOTs and asked them if the lots are viable for development. Fewer than 10 lots were identified as buildable with some adjustments. The group of builders indicated the issues with the lots make them unmarketable to a buyer as they would only be one or two bedroom homes and would lack off street parking. Staff recommends disposing of the properties, through the sealed bid process, to adjacent property owners.

## **3. Cell Towers**

Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner, stated an industry and citizen meeting was held on August 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss some of the issues with recent cases of cell towers. A citizen representatives meeting took place on September 10<sup>th</sup> and staff shared research with the citizens. Meeting outcomes from the citizen meeting include potentially easing co-location requirements, enhanced design criteria, require neighborhood meetings, revised criteria for evaluating proposals and tiered strategy. Mr. Hintz stated additional stakeholder meetings will be held in October and a recommendation will be presented to Development Committee in November.

## **4. Interim Zoning Amendments**

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated EnvisionCR will soon be completed and staff is hoping to adopt the plan in November. The plan will include a new Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and a new approach to the FLUM. As a result of the EnvisionCR process there will be a recommendation for a comprehensive zoning code update. In the meantime of the comprehensive update staff has been looking at code updates that can happen now.

Mr. Hintz stated interim zoning amendments include expansion of core parking requirements, removal of mandatory 25 foot setback in commercial zoning and requiring building rendering with preliminary site plan application. Other amendments include building placement in key corridors and clarification items for consistency.

## **5. Med Q**

Mr. Gunnerson stated part of the Medical Quarter's Action Plan is establishing an overlay district. The Medical Quarter has identified various zones within the district. Staff is working with the Medical Quarter to establish ordinance language and adopt an overlay district.

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II  
Community Development



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City Hall  
101 First Street SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401  
Telephone: (319) 286-5041

**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Seth Gunnerson through Jennifer Pratt, Interim Director of Community Development & Planning  
**Subject:** Interim Zoning Code Amendment  
**Date:** October 15, 2014

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As part of the adoption of EnvisionCR, the City anticipates starting a process to re-write the zoning ordinance in 2015. The City is looking to complete an interim update which will bring the existing zoning ordinance more into alignment with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. At the September Development Committee meeting staff was directed to conduct outreach and develop an ordinance that would:

- Eliminate front yard setbacks in commercial districts
- Expand core area parking standards
- Set site design expectations to guide development prior to a full update of the zoning code

The City has reached out to members of the development community to review the proposals listed below for concerns. Outreach to the development community will continue prior to a public hearing in November.

#### **Commercial Setbacks:**

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Staff was asked to evaluate eliminating the front yard setback requirements for commercial zone districts in order to encourage contextual setback and encourage more pedestrian friendly site design.

Staff recommends eliminating the 25' front yard building setback requirement in all Commercial Districts, along with the O-S (Office/Service) Zone District. Staff also recommends allowing buildings which provide a public entrance to the sidewalk to encroach into required front yard landscaping.

Developers that have provided feedback have weighed in positively on the proposed change, as it will reduce the need to obtain variances for certain developments. Developers also raised questions residential setbacks. Currently residential development allows for contextual setbacks for new homes if existing homes have a reduced setback. Staff will continue to research opportunities to allow greater flexibility for new residential development while maintaining the character of existing residential streets.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Eliminate Front Yard and Corner Side Yard Setback Requirement in Commercial and Office zone districts (C-1, C-MU, C-2, C-3, C-4 and O-S)
- Allow buildings which provide a public entrance to the sidewalk to encroach into required front yard landscaping
- Staff will continue to review options for reducing setbacks for residential

development without affecting the character of existing neighborhoods.

### **Expand Core Area Parking Standards:**

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In 2012 the City adopted parking standards for the core area of the community which established parking maximums and allowed for reduction of minimum parking requirements based on providing alternatives to parking.

In September the Development Committee instructed staff to research expanding the existing core-area regulations communitywide.

Feedback from developers on the proposed changes has been positive. The belief is that the regulations will allow more developers to avoid needing a variance for reduced parking requirements.

Staff recommends approval of an ordinance which would extend the provisions of the Core Area Parking ordinance citywide.

#### ***Recommendations:***

- Expand Establishing parking maximums
  - 110-150% of minimum, based on required parking lot size
  - Additional spaces over the maximum must be pervious pavement
  - Master planned sites may be separately considered as a PUD
- Allowing reductions in minimum parking requirements based on:
  - Available on-street parking
  - Providing bicycle parking
  - Providing motorcycle parking
  - Location near bus route
  - Location near pedestrian trail
  - Shared parking agreement
- Allow approval of tandem parking for existing one and two-family homes

### **Site Design Expectations**

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Staff is also recommending adoption language which would emphasize the desire of the community for new development to be oriented towards the street with pedestrian access and which minimizes the visual appearance of parking. This language will be placed in Section 32.05 – Dimensional, Parking and Development Standards to provide a guide for the development of site plans

While the recommended language will not list specific site design standards, it will list expectations that new development will be expected to follow. This will be a priority in commercial corridors identified within EnvisionCR.

Feedback from the Development Community has been positive, with support for allowing flexibility in how individual sites may meet expectations of the ordinance.

***Recommendations:***

The following section will be added to the code setting expectations for site design:

- Building orientation which addresses the street through a combination of:
  - Main façade which faces the street
  - Windows and entrances visible from the street
  - Buildings should not exceed the historic contextual setback
  - Building placement near the corner of major intersections is heavily encouraged.
  - Large Commercial development should, at a minimum, plan for future outlot development along the street.
- Site design should interface with pedestrian transportation networks
  - The required pedestrian circulation provision shall be provided by a clearly identified path from the public sidewalk to any public entrances on the site. It is preferred that this path is a separated pedestrian sidewalk.
  - To the extent feasible the main entrance should be located close to the sidewalk
  - Bicycle parking is encouraged for all new development
  - Connection to existing or planned trail networks should be considered.
  - For master planned sites, pedestrian connectivity throughout the site should be provided.
- Site design should limit parking between the primary façade and the street.
  - Parking is encouraged to be located behind buildings to the extent feasible.
  - Parking located to the side of the building is a preferred alternative
  - Sites which do provide a majority of the parking between the primary façade and the street should provide enhanced pedestrian amenities, such as:
    - Separated and protected pedestrian path to the sidewalk
    - Lighting
    - Outdoor amenities such as seating, landscaping and decorative paving.

**Timeline**

Based on Development Committee's recommendation, staff will prepare an ordinance for review by the City Planning Commission prior to coming before the full City Council. The proposed timeline for adoption of an ordinance is below:

- October 15 – Development Committee Review
- November 4 – Motion Setting a Public Hearing at City Council
- November 13 – Review and Recommendation by the City Planning Commission
- November 18 – Public Hearing and First Reading of proposed ordinance
- December 2 – Second and possible Third Readings of the ordinance



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Paula Mitchell through Jennifer Pratt, Interim Director of Community Development & Planning  
**Subject:** Requests for City Support – Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Project  
**Date:** October 15, 2014

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**Background:**

On July 22, 2014, City Council adopted a policy for City evaluation of projects requesting local government support of a Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project application. The policy requires a developer to submit their request to the City, along with information about their proposal, a minimum of 90 days prior to the Iowa Finance Authority’s application deadline, in order for the City to evaluate proposals, identify funding sources for any requests for financial participation, and seek input from the City Council.

As of the September 9, 2014 deadline for submittals, the City received three requests for financial assistance from the City. However, two of those requests were subsequently withdrawn, one for reasons of financial feasibility based on feedback from an investor, and the second because the Developer failed to come to terms with a seller to secure site control. Staff will be evaluating the remaining financial request and making recommendations at the November 19, 2014 meeting of the Development Committee. A summary of the proposed project follows:

- **High Development** – Requesting a resolution of support and City financial participation for “Sonoma Square Senior Living” located on land owned by the City at Ellis Boulevard and J Avenue NW. The project proposes new construction of a 50-unit senior housing development in the Ellis Boulevard Viable Business Corridor. Units will be primarily one and two-bedroom, with a small number of four-bedroom units. Rents range from \$520 to \$925 for affordable units. The developer is seeking City-owned land and financial participation of \$453,500. This is a project which did receive City support in the previous year’s LIHTC round, but was not allocated tax credits by the Iowa Finance Authority.

Staff will continue to evaluate the financial elements of this proposal and return to the Development Committee in November with recommendations. Potential sources of funding that may be available include City land, Workforce Housing Credits, Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption, Tax Increment Financing, and low interest loans.

**Timeline and Next Steps:**

- October 15, 2014 – Request previewed at Development Committee.
- November 19, 2014 – Development Committee consideration of financial request.
- December 2, 2014 – City Council consideration of financial request.
- December 9, 2014 – Applications due to Iowa Finance Authority.



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Caleb Mason through Jennifer Pratt, Interim Director of Community Development & Planning  
**Subject:** Indian Creek Nature Center Request  
**Date:** October 15, 2014

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**Background:**

The City has received a request from the Indian Creek Nature Center (ICNC) to purchase approximately 78 acres of City property located north of Otis Rd SE and west of Bertram Rd SE. The requested property is adjacent to land owned by ICNC. The City acquired the property in May 1968 for \$52,000. The Nature Center has managed the property since their establishment in 1973. In 2001 the City and Nature Center renewed a lease agreement for an additional 50 year term which ends June 30, 2051.

In addition to the 50-year term, the lease provides for the following terms:

- \$1.00 per year rent;
- The lease can be terminated under the following circumstances:
  - Cause – material breach of the terms of the lease or
  - Convenience – intention to terminate four (4) years after written notice;
- The Nature Center can only use the property for:
  - environmental education;
  - non obtrusive recreation;
  - preservation, restoration, protection and enhancement of the land in its natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, and/or open space condition;
  - habitat manipulation – prescribed burns, managing walking/hiking trails; and
  - energy and resource conservation demonstrations.
- The Nature Center is to maintain the property;
- The City is to approve any plans for the construction of any facilities on the site;

**Amazing Space Project:**

Staff began discussion with the Nature Center beginning in summer 2014 regarding plans to expand operations through the construction of facilities and improvements through a project known as “Amazing Space”. The \$5.9 million project involves the construction of a 12,000 square foot facility. To-date ICNC has raised in excess of \$5 million of the project through a capital campaign and intends to break ground on the project in the spring of 2015.

**Next Steps:**

Staff is researching the background of the properties and will bring forward options and recommendation for the Development Committees review and consideration at the November meeting.



October 6, 2014

Sven Leff, Director  
City of Cedar Rapids Parks & Recreation Department  
500 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

Mr. Leff:

Indian Creek Nature Center requests an acquisition of two city-owned parcels identified with the following GPN's and shown on the attached map:

1-5301-51004-00000

1-5304-51001-00000

These parcels are currently part of the lease agreement between Indian Creek Nature Center and the City of Cedar Rapids dated July 25, 2001 and amended on April 8, 2009. Further they have been under the management of Indian Creek Nature Center since our inception in 1973.

The purpose of this acquisition will be to provide permanent land to construct several features of our new *Amazing Space* capital project, including the parking lot, driveway, maple sugar house, and several others. The educational and ecological use of the land will be in line with the mission of Indian Creek Nature Center.

As part of this acquisition we are willing to place a deed restriction on the land which details first right of refusal and disposition at time of dissolution of Indian Creek Nature Center.

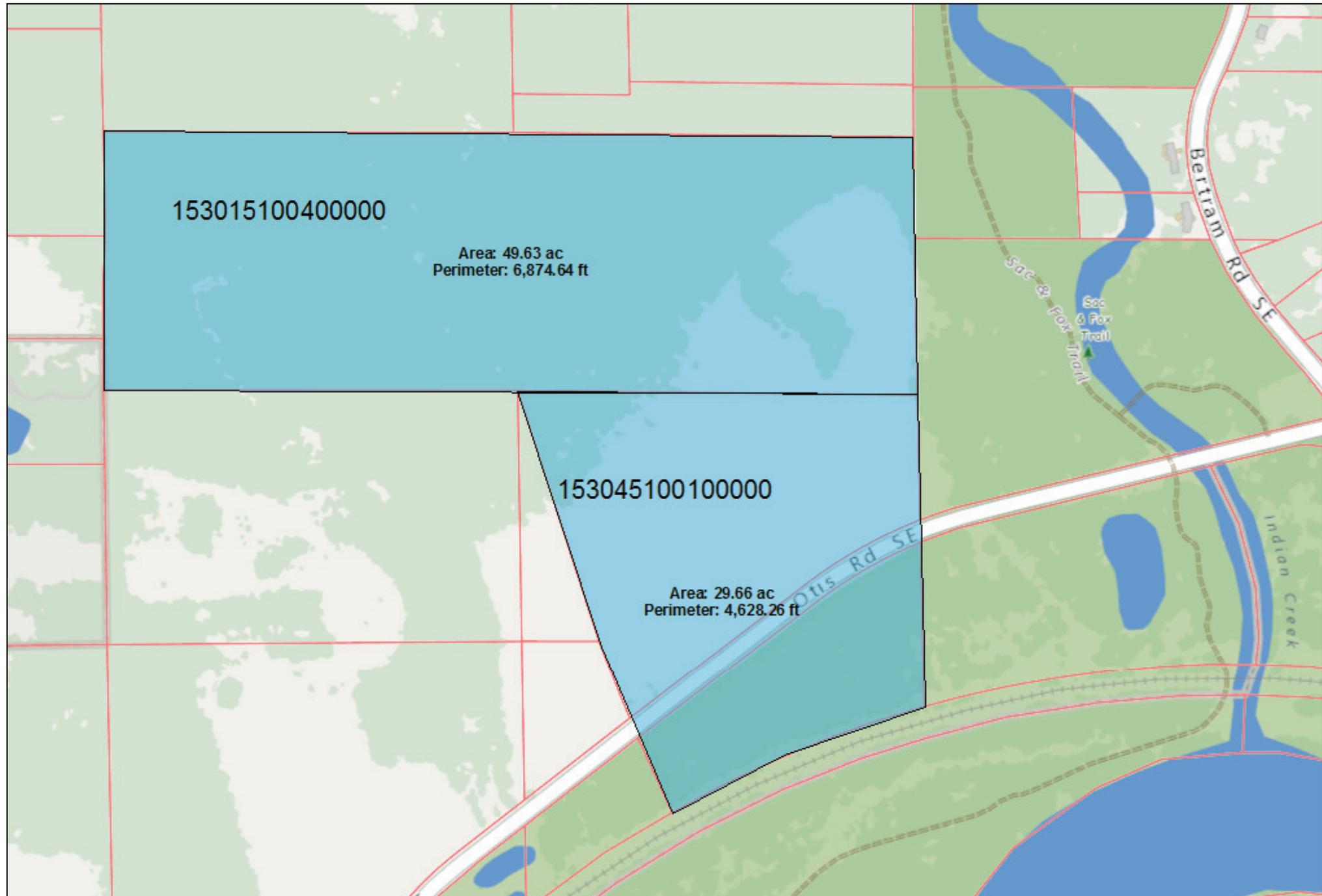
Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if there are any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Myers", is written over a horizontal line.

John Myers  
Executive Director

*Please consider including the Indian Creek Nature Center in your charitable and estate plans.*



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Linn County, Iowa	
9/25/2014	

