



4646 Dakota St. SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

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A message from our Mayor:

## Preserving Nature and Facilitating Community Development

### Preserving Nature

In the most recent online poll on our City's website at [www.cityofpriorlake.com](http://www.cityofpriorlake.com), our respondents believe, by a large margin, that Natural Resources is the single most important Vision Element within our community's 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan. To quote the plan itself: "The City's lakes and numerous natural areas enrich the lives of its residents and attract visitors from around the area. These valued and unique amenities are key to preserving the quality of life in Prior Lake."

We are proud of our accomplishments and current efforts to preserve natural resources. We have consciously preserved natural features around our lakes. Examples include Mystic, Haas, Campbell, Rice, Crystal, Arctic and Spring Lake. In each case, we maintain green buffers and meander trails around trees. Best of all, the property is owned by the City ensuring Mother Nature will be preserved forever.

Similarly, the eight-acre Five Hawks property has been used by the school district for more than a decade as an outdoor learning center. During this time, City crews have dutifully removed diseased trees and installed trails and structures on behalf of the school district. This arrangement has been informal.

This month, I believe the Council will make this formal by approving the placement of a conservation easement over this property in favor of the school district, thanks to a generous offer by Paul Oberg and the Jeffers Foundation. I expect the City will continue to have maintenance responsibilities over this property.

Last year, the City Council earmarked \$500,000 for the purchase of a 35 +/- acre parcel on the shores of Pike Lake valued at \$1.8 million. The remaining funds are to be secured through state and federal grants which will include the placement of a conservation easement over this beautiful property. We envision trails in this area and non-motorized boats on the lake to assure that the public can enjoy the natural beauty.

The plat of Jeffers Waterfront includes a 24-acre piece between the ponds. This parcel was placed in conservatory by the Jeffers Foundation. For the last few years, City crews have been installing woodchip trails, and this year the City will construct and install two floating boardwalks and additional wood chip trails.

A nature center is planned at the 1.3-acre parcel donated to the City, adjacent to Jeffers Pond Elementary School and the 24-acre parcel. Five hundred thousand dollars toward this building was included with the plat. Jeffers Foundation will contribute \$200,000 as an incentive in exchange for the Five Hawks conservation easement. In addition, the Foundation has agreed to contribute \$420,000 if the City contributes \$280,000 and the school district assumes responsibility for the furniture, fixtures and equipment in the building, estimated to cost \$200,000.

In total, the city, school district and Jeffers Foundation will invest \$1.6 million to make the Jeffers Pond Interpretive Center building a reality. This life-cycle building will serve all age groups from students to seniors. The school board, City Council and Jeffers Foundation Board of Directors will be considering the necessary approvals in the near future.

### Facilitating Community Development

Preserving nature is not the only responsibility we have as a governing body. While engaged in these considerable preservation activities, the City Council and I are also working to facilitate significant commercial development in our City.

One of the two remaining prime commercial properties in Prior Lake lies at the northeast corner of County Rd. 18 and 42, now known as Summit Preserve. Like the Hwy. 13 and County Rd. 42 area, this

property is served by two major transportation corridors and therefore represents an outstanding commercial opportunity. At present, this 55-acre property is heavily treed and residential in nature.

Over the last several years, the City Council has reviewed the Summit Preserve Concept Plan three times. Our message to the developer has been consistent with the strategic plan: preserve trees (especially heritage trees) to the greatest extent possible, maintain green belts along County Rd. 42 and 18, provide for “green” construction techniques in the development and provide a signature development which will represent exciting shopping, office and restaurant opportunities for our community as well.

Cardinal Development, the developer of Summit Preserve, has responded with the following proposal:

- \* 92,340 square-feet of office/medical space in two- and three-story buildings.
- \* 14,750 square-feet of restaurant space in two-story buildings.
- \* 90,234 square-feet of retail and restaurant space in six single-story buildings.
- \* A dining and gathering plaza with native plants and rain gardens.
- \* 23,810 square-feet of office in three single-story buildings.
- \* 60 residential units in two 3-story, multi-family buildings.
- \* 22 twin homes and 43 town homes with tot lot and park area.
- \* Two 4-story, multi-family buildings, including 100 units.

The City Council and staff have worked with the developer for two years to preserve almost half of the heritage trees (between 24 to 27 inches in diameter at the base). Trails meander through the green belts which connect this intersection to Prior Lake and Shakopee. While a significant amount of the remaining trees will be removed, the developer will be responsible for providing for tree replacement which complements the subdivision. Park areas are to be preserved both for tot lot purposes and for passive recreation.

Prior Lake citizens have told us that creating business and commercial opportunities in our community is important and so is the preservation of natural resources. So we have been working to acquire and restore natural properties, plant trees on public and private property, update our tree preservation policy and facilitate development of key intersections with the types of development which will represent our city well today and tomorrow. Balancing the preservation of nature with community development is no easy task but rest assured your city council is making it a top priority.

Mayor Jack Haugen