

**Arden Hills  
Healthy City Planning Workshop  
April 16, 2010**

# Summary Report

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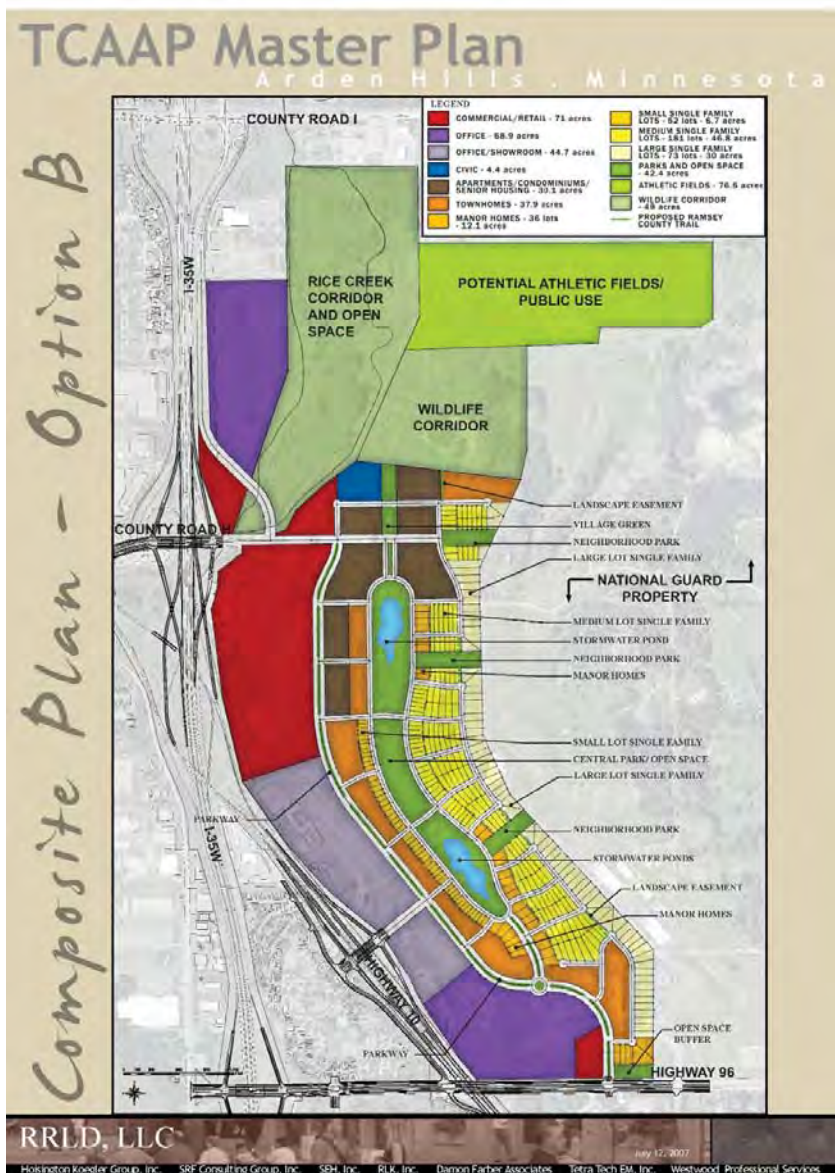
## What We Investigated and What We Found

Focused on the proposed redevelopment of the TCAAP (Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant) site in Arden Hills, Minnesota, this report summarizes a Healthy City Planning Workshop held in Arden Hills City Hall on April 16, 2010. Following a Rapid Assessment approach, the purpose of the workshop was to examine potential impacts associated with redeveloping the site and explore options for advancing human health. The agenda for the workshop is provided in Appendix A and a list of participants can be found in Appendix B.

As detailed further in Appendix E, the original TCAAP site is located on approximately 2,370 acres (3.7 square miles) in the City of Arden Hills, 10 miles northeast of Minneapolis in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Formerly private farmland, the TCAAP project was built in 1941 to manufacture and test munitions for the United States Armed Forces during World War II. At its peak, TCAAP employed over 25,000 individuals. Much of the facility was decommissioned during the 1970s and 1980s but private defense corporations used some of the buildings through the early 2000s. More than half of the site is currently leased by the Minnesota Army National Guard for a training facility and a small portion is used for other local and state facilities. The remaining 585 acres (about 25% of the site) is set to be auctioned by the U.S. Army in summer 2010.

In anticipation of future private development on the site, the City of Arden Hills has engaged in ongoing planning activities for the site. Among previous master planning efforts are two redevelopment alternatives that were considered for purposes of the Rapid Assessment workshop (described further in Appendix E):

- **No-build:** A no-build alternative which would continue to leave the property unused.
- **Composite plan:** A mixed-use development plan consisting of residential, commercial, office, and open space. For evaluation purposes, the proposed composite plan that was printed on July 17, 2008, was used (see next page). While this proposed composite plan has not been approved by the City, it represents a reasonable implementation of the vision in the City's 2030 Comprehensive Plan.



*Composite Plan - Option B*

## Composite Plan

Source: City of Arden Hills

### 1. Key Health Issues in the Area

As described in the background report sent to participants prior to the workshop (Appendix E), some key health issues in the TCAAP area and surrounding community include:

- Based on Metropolitan Council projections, Arden Hills is expected to **increase in population over the next 20 years by approximately 15 percent**. Much of this growth is expected to occur on the proposed TCAAP site.
- Arden Hills Community Development staff members have provided information suggesting that any **existing pollution** (e.g., soil and groundwater contamination) on the TCAAP site **can be mitigated**. Groundwater remediation on the site and in those areas impacted nearby is currently underway and remains the responsibility of the U.S. Army.
- Ramsey County, in which Arden Hills is located, exhibits health indicators very similar to the state of Minnesota as a whole.
  - More than one-third of county residents are overweight and one-quarter obese.
  - More than one in 10 residents rates their own health as fair or poor.

- Almost one-quarter of county residents report limitations in their activity due to health or other impairment.
- Ramsey County performs better than Minnesota in terms of access to healthy foods.

## 2. How to Improve Health—Results from the Workshop

The bulk of the workshop involved small and large group discussions and facilitator-led tasks, which helped identify and prioritize potential positive and negative health impacts, as well as potential changes to the composite plan redevelopment alternative that will maximize positive health effects and minimize negative ones. An kick-off graffiti wall exercise allowed participants to explore their own definitions of what constitutes good health. The workshop format, described in greater detail in Appendix D, allowed for significant interaction and information sharing among participants. Participants engaging in the exercises are shown below, with additional photos included in Appendix D.

The participatory exercises were preceded by a brief introductory presentation by the workshop facilitators outlining the agenda and process and a presentation by the Arden Hills Community Development Director about history and existing conditions on the TCAAP site (see Appendix D for the presentation slides).

In the first exercise, participants were asked to vote on a number of statements about potential health effects in several categories such as access, air pollution, food, and safety. As summarized in Appendix C, participants agreed most about the following potential health effects:

- The TCAAP development will make activities, services, and destinations closer to one another, thereby improving opportunities for walking, cycling, and getting to health services (28 yes votes).
- The TCAAP development will provide increased connections with other trails around the area, thereby improving options for physical activity (27 yes votes).
- The TCAAP development will provide enhanced areas for physical activity (23 yes votes).

There was considerable uncertainty about the likelihood that redevelopment of the TCAAP site would increase availability of healthy food options and decrease the number of motor vehicle accidents.

In the second exercise, participants collaborated in small groups to identify and prioritize potential positive and negative impacts of the composite plan redevelopment proposal. Across the three groups, the top positive and negative impacts included:

<b>Positive impacts</b>	<b>Negative impacts</b>
Jobs	Traffic safety
Housing (meet demand)	Access to transit
Bike and pedestrian capacity	Traffic (air and noise pollution)
Physical activity	Food access
Accessibility	Outdoor air quality
Social capital	Soil and water pollution
Livability/mental health	How to minimize negative environmental effects of development

The full list of positive and negative impacts from each group is summarized in Appendix C.

Participants were then asked to identify and prioritize approaches to mitigate potential negative impacts and maximize potential positive impacts associated with the proposed composite plan. The highest priority changes to the proposal, listed by number of votes, include the following:

- Ensuring a mix of housing types/ prices to allow residents of broad socio-economic backgrounds to be able to afford to live in Arden Hills and particularly, the TCAAP site (19 votes).
- Providing adequate and attractive trails within the site and connecting to other regional systems (18 votes).
- Increasing the transit accessibility, frequency, and attractiveness for the site, possibly even a hub of sorts (16 votes).
- Using green building techniques for housing, buildings (16 votes).
- Constructing “Complete Streets” for all users and modes, primarily for roadways within the site (15 votes).

Other suggested strategies are listed under Task 4 in Appendix C.

### Workshop Participants



### 3. Next Steps

#### What Can Be Done Soon?

- Many of the proposed actions could be started now, before TCAAP is developed. These include, but are certainly not limited to:
  - Strengthening the existing trail system by considering important connections or intersections
  - More closely studying regional transportation patterns (e.g., destinations and flows) to better position the TCAAP site for increased transit and/or possibly serving as a transit hub.
- Other actions could be incorporated into TCAAP's rezoning, which is under way. Such actions, including green building techniques, providing a mix of housing types/prices, and complete streets, might also be extended to the rest of Arden Hills.
- Among the priorities identified above, it is possible to identify inexpensive ideas and low hanging fruit, as first steps toward implementation.
- Identify champions:
  - Arden Hills residents and elected officials who attended the workshop can act as champions. Several energetic and influential individuals suggested there is a core group with energy that can help mobilize certain actions.
  - The Planning Commission and Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee can also act.
  - There are other resources at the state level including Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) and the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program.
- Report on the workshop in local newspapers to increase awareness of the issue and help ensure widespread "buy-in" for the suggestions.