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# Memo

Department of Planning & Housing

**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
 Planning & Zoning Commission

**FROM:** Department of Planning and Housing

**DATE:** February 13, 2009

**SUBJECT:** City Council/Planning & Zoning Commission Joint Work Session on February 17, 2009

The City Council work session scheduled for February 17, 2009, will include a session with the Planning & Zoning Commission. The following item will be discussed during this portion of the work session:

**Commission's recommended areas of study.** On December 3, 2008, the Commission formulated the attached list of planning initiatives that they would like to recommend be undertaken during this next year. The Commission will be meeting jointly with the City Council on February 17<sup>th</sup> to go over their proposed priorities and discuss how these may be incorporated into the Council's work program for the year. To facilitate this discussion, staff is also attaching the City Council's current list of Planning Related Projects & City Council Priorities, as well as an updated list of Council referrals.

The Planning & Zoning Commission members will discuss these issues more fully with the Council and explain their reasoning in the suggested prioritization. Any projects identified for action will have to be prioritized. This may require a follow-up meeting with the City Council.

SO\clh  
 Attachments

**NEW PLANNING INITIATIVES FOR FY 2009-2010**  
**Suggestions from Planning and Zoning Commission Members**  
**(12/03/08)**

The Planning and Zoning Commission wants to evaluate the assumptions and projections, which the current LUPP and Zoning ordinance were based upon, and compare them to current planning data as they regard the City of Ames. In doing so, we will review the accuracy and validity of prior assumptions with the existing facts, future projections, and the City's current goals. Based on this review, the Planning and Zoning Commission may make recommendations for revisions to the LUPP and Zoning Ordinance, such as:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation
- Planning Base
- Industrial Land
- Planning for a Specific District
- Transportation & Traffic
- Growth Priorities & Direction
- Village
- Tax Base
- Annexation

See the attached Appendix to give additional insight into the bullets listed above.

# APPENDIX

## LUPP & ZONING EVALUATION

1. Review the LUPP and Zoning Ordinance in order to:
  - reflect current and future city values and goals,
  - understand where issues are arising (language/definitions, geography, code requirements, graphic interpretation, etc.),
  - reflect the desired direction of growth of Ames,
  - improve ease of use of the Plan and Code,
  - be proactive about making corrections, and
  - develop a simple framework/decision making process for revision (as necessary).

The technical aspects of this review should include:

- determining that its projections and intentions are accurate and up to date,
- evaluating whether the amount of growth and the mix of buildings, uses and open areas that the Plan includes are consistent with projections and intentions, and
- noting strengths and weaknesses.

## PLANNING BASE

1. Examine the baseline data for land use policy and update as warranted, including:
  - population target and timeline out to 2030 for each major region of the city (Northwest, North, Northeast, Southwest, etc.),
  - current mix of apartments and single-family housing, and
  - current supply of commercial, industrial and open space land.

Based on this and other data compiled determine:

- mix of housing needed out to 2030 in each region, based on unit type (single family detached, single family attached, apartment, etc.) density (low, medium, high), development style (village, suburban) and price range,
- retail and Industrial growth out to 2030 in each region, and
- green space, parks, bike trails, etc. out to 2030 in each region

2. Research other ways to meet infill and density than the minimum density of 3.75 units per acre as stated in the Zoning Ordinance for new Suburban Low Density Residential areas.

## **INDUSTRIAL LAND**

1. Determine how much industrial land will be needed in the future and make recommendations on proactive policies to make such land available, such as annexation and providing needed infrastructure.

## **PLANNING FOR A SPECIFIC DISTRICT**

1. Campustown improvement plan; ISU is a class one research and teaching university. Campustown is the visitor's first impression of the university. It does not reflect a class-one university. People talk about the need to improve but so far we have not had much in the way of suggestions and getting the city and university to come together to develop and implement a plan to improve. We should do all that we can to assist the university in growing its student base. This results in significant economic growth. What is the long-term goal for Campustown? How do we achieve? What are the milestones and markers of success in this area?
2. Establish key districts in the community (Art and Culture, Campus Life, Trends' District, Recreation District, Night Life, etc.).
3. Northeast Ames Urban Fringe: Begin to discuss and understand the implications of the Urban Fringe Plan and the Story County zoning plans for the area north of Ames and East of I-35 so that we can make the case for Ames.
4. Main Street Business District: Is it making progress? Do the merchants need assistance in what? Why do we use parking meters downtown if all that we are doing is generating a breakeven deal for the city? (Refer to the Tribunes editorial on parking meters.) If there was a niche-marketing seminar put on by some niche-marketing retail expert (maybe this has been done) would it be of benefit?

## **TRANSPORTATION & TRAFFIC**

1. Review city traffic patterns and four lane corridors within the city in an attempt to reduce congestion and better facilitate both NS and EW flow.  
*If the NW is the next area of growth, there will be no easy way to get to the preferred shopping areas of downtown and South Duff. Consider extension of Bloomington to Dayton and University Boulevard to Bloomington. Start planning for traffic flow in the urban fringe area.*
2. As part of the above goals and planning determine and set long term traffic flow and state the desired mode of transportation to be most heavily supported. Will preference continue to be personal vehicles and parking space for same or will mass transit connector routes be encouraged or will walking biking accessible service nodes be a highest priority or only an after thought?

3. Transportation – make the flow of traffic through town easier. Look at the planned extension of Grand and its impacts, as well as other solutions. Include routes that avoid railway crossings in the study. Also need to consider expanding the system of bike paths.

## **GROWTH PRIORITIES & DIRECTION**

1. Growth Priorities: Ames needs to know where to grow and why. Without adequate development (land) for housing it will stifle economic development growth. For jobs we must have adequate housing. This we believe is true in the public sector, as well as the private sector development. This gets into such zoning codes as Density (3.75 units per acre.) We realize that this is not the place to preach, but why is Ames the only community in the state of Iowa that feels that it needs to manage housing developments through the use of density codes? Maybe we have incorrect data on this but would like to know.
2. Revisit the issue of preferred growth areas.  
*The vote to deny the recommendation of the P&Z staff and the Commission was a 3-3 vote. Before Ames builds an overpass at North Dakota, we would like to have the Council revisit their decision.*
3. Growth Priorities: Review/Update City's priorities/desires for growth (where to, when, how, and why).

## **VILLAGE**

1. Review the "village concept" with regard to present day appropriateness and applicable zoning restrictions.
2. Village and PUD Zoning: What have been the issues over the last 10 years? Why do they arise (code driven, developer driven, etc.)? Develop a framework (community values and goals) for decision making when altering or varying the plans in place. Understand what success is for these projects (residential and commercial absorption timing, aesthetic quality, ease of use, health, safety and wellness, maintenance aspects, etc.) and how we measure success (if we [the community] cannot measure it we [the community] cannot manage it).

## **TAX BASE**

1. Diversifying our tax base and attracting more singles and young families.
2. Serious look at tax revenue streams and implications regarding zoning.

## **ANNEXATION**

1. Proactive annexation -- for both residential and industrial uses.
2. This is an item the Commission should be proactive on.
3. Any examination of the LUPP will raise questions regarding annexation. Embedded in the examination are the assumptions of growth both in numbers and in space, including zoning and type. Projecting 5, 10, 15 years down the road, what assumptions still are valid and what might be changed. What kind of flexibility in the LUPP is necessary to maintain integrity but still be nimble. The Commission and the Council have differed on the specifics of annexation making this issue one which needs discussion among the Commission and Council members. The Commission notes the points below are some of the items that would be examined.
  - a. Look at the issue of annexation for both industrial lands and residential opportunities.
    - i. consider tax base and revenue for city
    - ii. consider environmental issues and maintaining a green image
    - iii. consider infrastructure needs and costs
  - b. Examine whether proactive annexation opens up opportunities for growth and/or management
  - c. Examine the status of the directions in which city growth is currently ranked and see if there is a need to adjust the measures
  - d. How can LUPP help with zoning decisions?

**2007/2008 PLANNING-RELATED  
PROJECTS & CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES  
(Status as of 2-13-09)**

<b>I.     <u>HIGH PRIORITY</u></b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Goal Finish Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
FAR general requirements (PRC District)	June 07	Dec. 07	Done
FAR's in Industrial lands (GI District)	Aug 07	Dec. 07	Done
Report on Industrial lands	Mar. 07	May 07	Done
Government/Environmental lands study	Mar 07	July 07	Done
Initiate meeting with Ames School Dist.to review land use plan	Mar. 07	July 07	Done –
Low impact development subdivisions	Mar. 07	June 07	Done
Rental housing survey (Addressed in 08-09 budget Highlights)	Mar. 07	Dec. 07	Done
Provide P & Z with info. on religious buildings	May 07	May 07	Done
Prepare preservation plan for City.	Apr. 07	Oct. 09	On Target
College Heights historic survey	Jan. 08	June 09	On Target
Innovative & attractive development (Note: Reassigned - new planning staff)	Aug 07	Nov. 07	See Note
Adams Street Historic Landmark (Note: Waiting for completion of property transfer)	May 07	Sept. 07	See Note
<b>II.     <u>MEDIUM PRIORITY</u></b>			
Review downtown façade program to increase visual impact	Feb. 08	Sept. 08	Done
Amend code to authorize additional uses for large structures in residential areas (e.g., in Greek Houses)	Jan. 08	Oct. 08	Done
Tax abatement to revert duplexes back to single-family unit	Jan. 08	Apr. 08	Late
Village residential development	Jan. 08	July 08	Late

<p><b>III. <u>LOW PRIORITY</u></b></p> <p>Provide explanation of tax abatement in Somerset (Note: Need to review for current relevancy)</p> <p>Land use designations of property adjacent to W. Lincoln Way (Note: Reassigned – new Planning Staff)</p> <p>Expand façade program into Campustown March 08      April 08</p> <p>Update site-inventory sheets for Old town Historic District Dec. 07      March 08</p> <p>Review allowable materials in Historic Districts Mar. 08      May 08</p>	<p>Dec. 07</p> <p>May 08</p> <p>Mar. 08</p> <p>Dec. 07</p> <p>Mar. 08</p>	<p>Jan. 08</p> <p>Sept. 08</p> <p>Apr. 08</p> <p>Mar. 08</p> <p>May 08</p>	<p>Late</p> <p>Late</p> <p>Late</p> <p>Late</p> <p>Late</p>
<p><b>IV. <u>ON-GOING PROJECTS</u></b></p> <p>Ames Urban Fringe Plan Implementation – Work with City staff and County to develop more definitive implementation schedule for various components of plan. (This was temporarily on hold pending outcome of November 08 County elections, but County and City staffs have now recommenced discussions).</p>			



**2008/09 CITY COUNCIL REFERRALS**  
**(In addition to Council's established priorities)**

Council referrals for code or plan amendments:

<b>2008 Referrals</b>	<b>Status</b>
1. Text amendment to change residential land use allocation for row houses in Village Residential Floating zone.	Done
2. Amend code to redefine parking in front yards.	Done
3. Report on possibility of including area to the north of Ames as a priority growth area.	Done
4. Amend code to clarify CVCN Ordinance regarding car washes.	Done
5. Amend code to allow sale of motorized bicycles/scooters in downtown.	Done
6. Review parking and landscaping standards for CVCN.	Done
7. Establishment of a CVCN zone at intersection of Stange and Bloomington.	Done
8. Expansion of grant program in the downtown and development of associated design standards.	Done
9. Provide report on industrial lands to City Council.	Done
10. Reconfigure a conventional subdivision to a conservation subdivision to ascertain what difference, if any, there would be in density.	Done
11. Report to Council (per Historic Preservation Commission's request) regarding allowance fence materials in historic district.	Done
12. Review code to consider amendment pertaining to remote parking requirements relative to the North Grand Mall.	Done
13. Review parking and landscaping standards for City at large (part of dual-track referral – see #6 above)	Active

14. Review code provisions pertaining to installation of solar panels and wind turbines in Ames.	Active
15. Consider expansion of Downtown Service Center zoning designation to Lincoln Way.	Active
16. Develop design regulations for the downtown that would apply to all development. (This was referred when the Council approved the expanded façade program).	Active
17. Develop other options that would protect industrial land from inefficient development patterns, e.g., shadow platting. (This was referred when the Council removed the FAR standards in the GI district).	Active
18. Amend Developer's Agreement with the Uthe Development Co. LLC as it relates to occupancy permits for Northridge Heights, 12 <sup>th</sup> Addition.	Active
19. Request for revision to Urban Fringe Plan map – Dave Norris	Active
<b>2009 Referrals</b>	
20. Draft ordinances amending the Zoning and Subdivision codes pertaining to bedrooms, garages, and plats of surveys	Pending*
21. Request to rezone land on SE 16 <sup>th</sup> Street to HOC, and report on associated overlay areas	Active
22. Request for waiver of sidewalk requirements along Lots 17 and 20 in Timberland Heights Subdivision.	Active
	Active
*Pending development of process to amendment Fringe Plan	