

Staff Report

**DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS FOR URBAN REVITALIZATION AREA AND
QUALIFYING CRITERIA FOR BRECKENRIDGE NORTH PARCEL AT 205 S.
WILMOTH**

August 11, 2015

BACKGROUND:

On July 28, 2015 City Council approved the Settlement Agreement between the City of Ames and Breckenridge Group concerning the three parcels currently owned by the Breckenridge Group located at 205 S. Wilmoth, 321 State and 601 State Avenue. Also included within agreement are the potential for three single-family lots that Breckenridge has an option to purchase (101, 105, and 107 S. Wilmoth Avenue) to be included in the development of 205 S. Wilmoth, this is known as the Enlarged North Parcel. Development of the Enlarged North Parcel is to be a mixed-use and residential apartment development with a maximum of 422 beds and between 15,000 to 40,000 square feet of commercial space. The agreement identifies an obligation for the City to create an Urban Revitalization Area for 205 S. Wilmoth and potentially the three additional properties along S. Wilmoth. See attached location map.

The action to be taken by City Council at this time is to provide direction to staff on initiating the process for designating an Urban Revitalization Area and if any qualifying criteria are needed for a project to receive partial property tax abatement.

Urban Revitalization Area Boundary

In determining to proceed with designating an area, the City Council must provide direction on which properties to be included in the Urban Revitalization Area (URA). In choosing the extent of the area, the Code of Iowa requires that a finding of removal of blight, protection of health, safety, and general welfare, restoration of productive reuse of historic buildings, promotion of economic development, or that an area is appropriate for public facilities supporting residential development or construction of housing. Development of vacant land is one of means of making an eligibility finding under the statutory requirements.

In regards to the Settlement Agreement, at a minimum the Enlarged North Parcel option must be included in the initial description of the URA. The majority of this land is vacant in the Enlarged North Parcel area. Council could provide direction to staff to include additional properties for revitalization, including 3316 Lincoln Way that is surrounded by the Enlarged North Parcel. The only other vacant land near the subject site is the

Middle Parcel to the south of the site and an approximate two-acre site to the west along Lincoln Way that is also planned for mixed use. All the other properties in the area are developed with buildings and uses that are consistent with the underlying zoning. **Creating a URA for just the Enlarged North Parcel area would allow for the quickest adoption of the URA and a Plan with standards tailored to the site versus considering other potential development options in the area.**

Qualifying Criteria

Within the Code of Iowa language for a URA, all similar uses and properties must be treated equally in regards to their inclusion in a URA. However, a local government may establish qualifying criteria for a project to be eligible to receive property tax abatement.

Typically, the City has required certain site development standards, building elements, and restrictions on uses for eligibility. The use of criteria varies among the different URAs. For example, the City has required flood plain improvements for some commercial developments or to require brick materials on the exterior of buildings. In some cases, the Council has adopted a site plan and architectural elevations as the eligibility criteria that are then specific to a site rather than general criteria. Developing a site specific plan would necessitate the property owner providing a concept plan to for City review and acceptance prior to creating the URA.

Staff has reviewed the current URAs and the former Commercial and former Multiple Family Development URAs to generate a list of potential qualifying criteria that could be relevant to a mixed use and residential apartment development.

- Use of brick materials on street facing facades and side facades
- Include architectural elements reinforcing residential building entrances for facades facing a public street
- Additional landscaping that exceeds the underlying zoning standards
- Structured parking
- Commercial design with retail storefronts and windows along the street
- Commercial use with direct access to the street
- Signage style
- Limits on types of commercial uses
- Public safety enhancements in Campustown

In addition to considering past criteria, staff recommends incorporating commercial specific standards for mixed use that are based upon the design principles and standards from the Lincoln Way Mixed Use Overlay District. This would include:

- Ground floor commercial uses of mixed use buildings must be permitted use of the HOC base zone for Office Uses; Retail Sales and Services Uses; Entertainment, Restaurant, and Recreation; and miscellaneous use of childcare.
- A clubhouse, as defined in the Zoning Ordinance, shall not be permitted on the ground floor of a commercial mixed use building.
- Typical commercial tenant foot print shall have a minimum depth of 40 feet.
- Commercial area shall have a floor to ceiling height of a minimum of 12 feet.
- Commercial parking that exceeds the minimum 3.3 parking spaces per 1,000

square feet of retail/office commercial square footage. This allows for more flexibility in future tenanting, including restaurants.

If the City Council chooses to proceed, the following steps are needed to establish the Urban Revitalization Area and Plan:

- City Council adoption of a resolution finding that economic development or development of housing within the area is necessary.
- City preparation of a “Plan,” specifying standards and qualifying criteria.
- City Council setting date of public hearing, with mailed notice of the Public Hearing to owners within the area.
- City Council enactment of an ordinance designating the area and resolution to approve the Plan.

Staff will provide a draft plan with any specified qualifying criteria for Council review before noticing a public hearing for adoption of the URA and Plan.

STAFF COMMENTS:

URA Boundaries

In regards to establishing a boundary for the URA, it appears that working with the Enlarged North Parcel is the most suitable choice due to the timing of this effort. It is not known if additional properties would meet any eligibility requirements established by the Council and benefit from the being within the URA.

URA Qualifying Criteria

For establishing Qualifying Criteria, without an applicant design project example, staff believes incorporating some of the design enhancements and use limitations that have been customary in Ames are appropriate. Staff believes the most important elements relevant to the types of uses and location of the Enlarged North Parcel are the following:

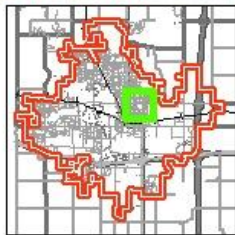
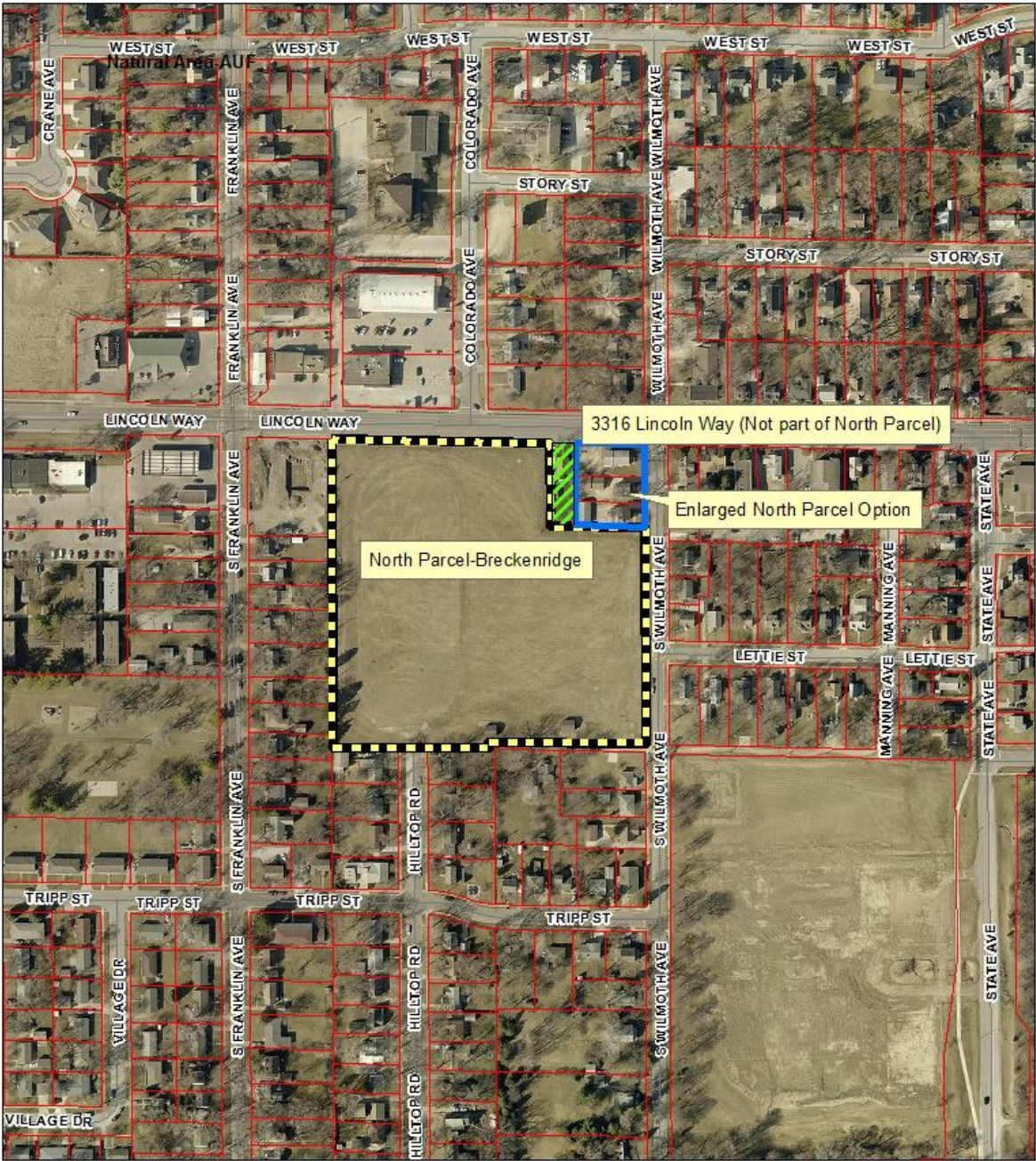
1. Use of clay brick as the principally building material for 80% of the front facades, excluding openings. The remaining facades shall incorporate clay brick or cut stone into 50% of the façade materials.
2. Residential apartment buildings shall utilize hipped or gabled roofs.
3. Provide additional commercial parking in excess of the retail/office parking rate of 3.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross commercial floor area. A minimum of 20% of the commercial floor area be parked at a rate of 9 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross commercial floor area for the first 30,000 square feet of gross floor area.
4. A clubhouse, as defined in the Zoning Ordinance, shall not be permitted on the ground floor of a commercial mixed use building.
5. Ground floor commercial uses of mixed use buildings must be a permitted use of

the HOC base zone for Office Uses; Retail Sales and Services Uses; Entertainment, Restaurant, and Recreation; and miscellaneous use of childcare.

6. Typical commercial tenant footprint shall have a minimum depth of 40 feet.
7. Commercial areas shall have a floor to ceiling height of a minimum of 12 feet.
8. Primary entrances to residential buildings shall include covered entries with architectural enhancements.
9. Receive and maintain certification for the Iowa Crime Free Multi-Housing Program administered by the Ames Police Department.
10. Utilize a sign program for commercial tenants that provide a cohesive design and lighting style to the site. Sign Program will allow for wall signage per the Sign Code. If a commercial ground sign is constructed, it is restricted to a single monument sign along Lincoln Way and shall include a decorative base compatible with the commercial buildings finishes and have an opaque sign face background. The Sign Program must be approved by the Planning Director.
11. Provide landscape buffering with the L3 and F2 standards in a minimum of a 10-foot-wide planter along the perimeter property lines of the site.
12. Provide street trees, per City specifications, along Wilmoth Avenue.

NEXT STEPS:

Utilizing the direction provided by the City Council at the August 11th meeting, the staff will prepare a draft plan that will be brought back to the Council for final approval. Assuming confirmation is given, then a date for public hearing will be established and the other statutory steps can be accomplished.



Urban Renewal Area Properties
Location Map

