

Staff Report

LINCOLN WAY CORRIDOR IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

September 26, 2017

BACKGROUND:

City Council last reviewed the draft Lincoln Way Corridor Plan at its April 11th City Council meeting and provided direction to Houseal and Lavigne (H&L) on edits to the plan to finalize the document. City Council gave direction on three issues at the prior meeting. City Council wanted to proceed with finalizing the Plan with edits and corrections, including specifically removing alley improvements from the south side of Lincoln Way in the Oak Riverside area, direction to accept the final plan as advisory, and for staff to provide an implementation plan for priority areas in the Plan.

The final draft of the Plan is available online through the Planning Division's website under ["What's New."](#) Background materials from the past 17 months are also available at the same link. This report addresses implementation priorities and does not review the final Plan in detail as the concepts are consistent with the prior draft from April.

OVERVIEW OF CORRIDOR PLAN:

The objectives for the Lincoln Way Corridor Plan are to create identity along Lincoln Way as a place and not just a thoroughfare, to support enhancements for multi-modal transportation, and to identify opportunities to revitalize properties with land uses that are contextual and support Corridor identity and placemaking. To meet these objectives, the consultants have prepared a final plan that looks at the corridor in two ways – as the entire corridor through the Framework Plan, and as more detailed Focus Areas.

The **Framework Plan** identifies the overall principles for the Corridor by looking at the various "districts" within the Corridor for land use, mobility, and community character. The Plan identifies six districts for the overall Corridor (Attachment A). The Framework Plan looks at development potential with redevelopment areas; bike, pedestrian, and vehicular improvements; and opportunities for streetscape improvements to increase the overall aesthetics and character of the Corridor. The Framework Plan is intended to guide overall strategies that improve the Corridor and connect it together.

The **Focus Areas** address five different local areas along the Corridor. The Focus Areas allow for more in-depth review of contextual redevelopment options, rather than broad and general interests in redevelopment and intensification along the Corridor. The Focus Area concepts also could be applied to other areas along the Corridor that are of a similar

nature. The five Focus Areas identified in the Plan area as follows:

1. Downtown Gateway (Clark Avenue to Duff Avenue)
2. Lincoln Way and Grand Avenue (Oak Avenue to Grand Avenue)
3. Oak to Riverside Neighborhood
4. Campustown Transition (Sheldon Avenue to Campus Drive)
5. Westside Mixed Use (West Hy-Vee Area, Beedle Drive to Colorado Avenue)

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

Staff recommends that City Council prioritize Focus Area #1 (the Downtown Gateway Area) and to direct staff to create a streetscape plan for the entire Corridor. Staff believes Focus Area 1 is the highest priority due to immediate interest and apparent support for redevelopment adjacent to Downtown. Additionally, staff recommends the streetscape plan as means of addressing improvements through the entire corridor related to gateways, landscaping, and other aesthetic elements. The streetscape plan will help to inform City initiated projects and potentially improvements needed with future private redevelopment.

With City Council's recent direction to restrict student rental occupancy in low density areas and to restrict the total concentration of rental properties in certain neighborhoods, it appears these decisions could substantially affect the areas shown with single-family housing types in Focus Areas #3, #4, #5. All three of these focus areas include some proposed changes to low density zoned properties with redevelopment options that would likely become additional rental housing options. **Therefore, these three focus areas should be deferred until the City resolves the recent direction on rental occupancy controls.** Once the City Council has resolved its approach to managing rental concentration, staff could address redevelopment priorities for these areas. This would likely result in the Council reconsidering priorities for these other focus areas in 2018.

Focus Area #2 is a unique area compared to the other focus areas in that it was envisioned to substantially change in both use and appearance. Focus Area# 2 also relies upon DOT controlled property north of Lincoln Way as an anchor site for redevelopment within this area. Staff does not propose to proceed with implementation plans for this area as a priority for implementation at this time because the DOT property is not available for redevelopment and the general vision for flex space uses is a long term option. If the DOT property on the north side of Lincoln Way were to become available for redevelopment, City Council would then consider this a priority area for planning.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES OF FOCUS AREA #1 AND CORRIDOR STREETSCAPE PLAN:

LUPP Amendment

City Council previously directed that the Lincoln Way Corridor Plan be used as an advisory tool. Therefore, Staff proposes to add a section to Chapter 2 of the Land Use Policy Plan acknowledging the Lincoln Corridor Plan and the related objectives for the Corridor. The new LUPP language would identify the Corridor Plan as advisory to future

Land Use Policy Plan and zoning decisions. The description would support use of the Minor Amendment process for changes initiated by the City Council that correspond to the objectives of the Corridor Plan.

Additionally, the Corridor Plan description would identify Focus Area #1 as a priority for zoning changes to implement the Corridor Plan and describe the use interests within this Area. Use priorities includes maintaining a strong commercial presence in the Focus Area, creating allowances for mixed use, identifying Kellogg as a gateway to downtown, incorporating entertainment and activity uses into developments, and supporting a boutique hotel. Design features for high quality materials, varying architectural features, and supporting a walkable environment are also highlights for the area. Staff would proceed with preparing a Minor LUPP amendment for review in October by the Planning and Zoning Commission and for City Council adoption in November.

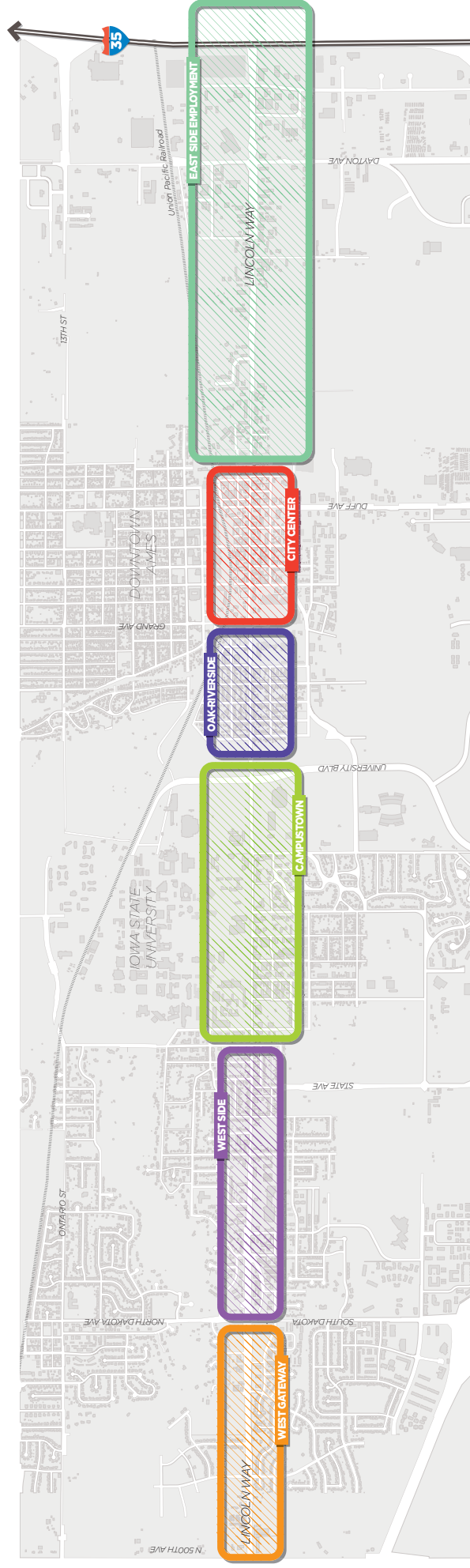
Zoning Amendments

No zoning changes are proposed for areas outside of the Downtown Gateway Focus Area #1. The Downtown Gateway Focus Area includes the area generally bounded by Clark Avenue to Duff Avenue on both sides of the street. The most intense redevelopment options are planned for the north side of Lincoln Way. Current zoning is a mix of Highway Oriented Commercial and Downtown Service Center. Neither of these zoning districts quite match the desired vision and flexibility of use outlined in the Corridor Plan.

Staff proposes creating a new commercial zoning and overlay for the Focus Area #1 to facilitate redevelopment options identified within the Plan. Due to the wide range of development choices in this area, staff believes a Planned Commercial zoning overlay is appropriate to allow for case-by-case review. The Planned Commercial zoning method would be more expedient on allowing for development plan application compared to writing a new zoning district with standards that can address multiple variations in sites. Long term, it may be appropriate to write corridor commercial zoning standards that apply to more areas of Lincoln Way. Staff would proceed with rezoning map amendments and text amendment in October with Council review before the end of 2017.

Streetscape Plan

The streetscape plan would be a coordinated effort with Planning and Housing, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation Departments to develop streetscape treatments and gateway features that can be added to the corridor. Staff recommends hiring a landscape architectural firm with experience creating gateways and streetscape features as part of this process. The Planning and Housing Departments has funding included in its current budget to support hiring a consultant. The staff team would formulate options for streetscapes and gateways and present them to Council for acceptance. Staff estimates approximately a six month process to create, review, and adopt streetscape plan concepts.



DISTRICT FRAMEWORK

Lincoln Way is a 6.6-mile corridor that is made up of distinct "places" defined by local land use, character, and priority in terms of types of mobility. This section establishes a series of districts that reflect these distinctions and are used in subsequent sections to present plan recommendations. Some recommendations aim to "stitch together" these districts to create a cohesive character across the entire Ames community, while others address specific local opportunities or challenges shaped by the context and conditions within a given district. The districts and their key characteristics are as follows.

WEST GATEWAY DISTRICT

- Mixed residential densities that expand home ownership choice
- Local commercial uses at key intersection
- Larger planned development possible due to available sites
- Bike path infill to create a continuous network
- Enhanced pedestrian crossings where uses back up to Lincoln Way
- Community gateway announcing entry into Ames

WEST SIDE DISTRICT

- Mix of neighborhood commercial uses, corridor commercial uses, mixed-use, and mixed residential densities
- Awkward block sizes accommodate unique housing formats
- Reduction in the number of parking access points
- New bike trail paralleling Lincoln Way south of shopping center
- Commercial corridor streetscape improvements in wide pathways
- Screening of large parking areas

CAMPUSTOWN DISTRICT

- University facilities and educational buildings
- Student housing (dorms, fraternities/sororities, etc.)
- Citizen-oriented institutions (i.e. churches) and commercial/mixed-use
- Emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle mobility
- Balance of non-motorized access and vehicular parking
- Build upon investment in medians and streetscaping
- Transition in scale and intensity to the west

OAK-RIVERSIDE DISTRICT

- Transition from single-family residential to more intensive townhouse development
- Appropriate land use buffers against neighborhoods to the north and south
- Replanning/redevelopment of excessively small residential lots
- Maximize the use of existing and future alleys to alleviate access to Lincoln Way
- Road diet along Lincoln Way to allow for bike paths
- Decorative residential streetscape
- Attractive townhouse design that reinforces residential character

CITY CENTER DISTRICT

- Transition to traditional commercial or mixed-use
- Retail/restaurant on primary frontages, with office or service mid-block and off of Lincoln Way
- Strategic land assembly to allow for larger project sites
- Road diet along Lincoln Way to allow for bike path
- Internal block circulators to alleviate access points from Lincoln Way
- Enhanced pedestrian crossings along Lincoln Way
- "Character" corridors to connect Lincoln Way to Downtown Ames
- Intersections and building design that give hint of nearby Downtown
- Decorative commercial streetscape treatments

EAST SIDE EMPLOYMENT DISTRICT

- Primarily light industrial or industrial/office
- Low priority in terms of character and design
- Set the stage for eastern multi-modal access across I-35
- "Clean up" access along Lincoln Way for industrial users
- Connecting the existing bike path segments is a priority over a comprehensive pedestrian network
- Community gateway from the east
- Enhanced landscaping in right-of-way to screen industrial development