

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY FOR
THE AMES MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

BACKGROUND:

The City has received a request for a recommendation of National Register eligibility for the proposed Ames Main Street Historic District, including all properties located between the boundaries of 5th Street on the north, Duff Avenue on the east, Clark Avenue to the west, and the south property lines of lots abutting the south side of Main Street as the southern boundary (*See Attachment A – Location Map*). The Ames Main Street Cultural District prepared the application, with support from the City, and submitted it to the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). A copy of the National Register Nomination for the Ames Main Street Historic District is available at the Ames Public Library and on the City of Ames website.

The proposed Ames Main Street Historic District includes a total of 83 buildings. Of these buildings, 68 (sixty-eight) have been classified in the National Register application as “Contributing.” There are 14 (fourteen) “Non-Contributing” buildings, and 2 (two) buildings which are already individually listed on the National Register, which include the Youth & Shelter Services, Inc. offices at 420 Kellogg Avenue, and the former Masonic Temple at 413, 417, 427 and 429 Douglas Avenue (*See Attachment B – Classification of Structures*).

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), one of the City’s responsibilities is to review National Register nominations for any properties that lie within the jurisdiction of our local Historic Preservation Commission. Nominations are first submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office, and a copy of the nomination is then sent to the CLG for review and comment. **After allowing for public comment, the question to be answered by the Historic Preservation Commission, as well as by the Mayor and City Council, is whether the nominated historic district meets the National Register of Historic Places Significance Criterion A and C and is supported by the City.**

The applicant has selected ***National Register Criterion A and C*** as being applicable to this application. ***Criterion A and C*** are described as follows:

- ***Criterion A*** are those properties that are associated with events that have made significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- ***Criterion C*** are those properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The completed nomination forms include a summary of the significance of the Ames Main Street Historic District (*see Attachment C – Summary of Significance*).

The State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC) plans to consider the nomination of the Ames Main Street Historic District at their meeting on October 13, 2017, in the State of Iowa Historical Building at 600 E. Locust Street, Des Moines, Iowa.

Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation. At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on September 11, 2017, the Commission voted 4-0, with two abstentions, to find that the nomination of the Ames Main Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C, and recommended National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.

ALTERNATIVES:

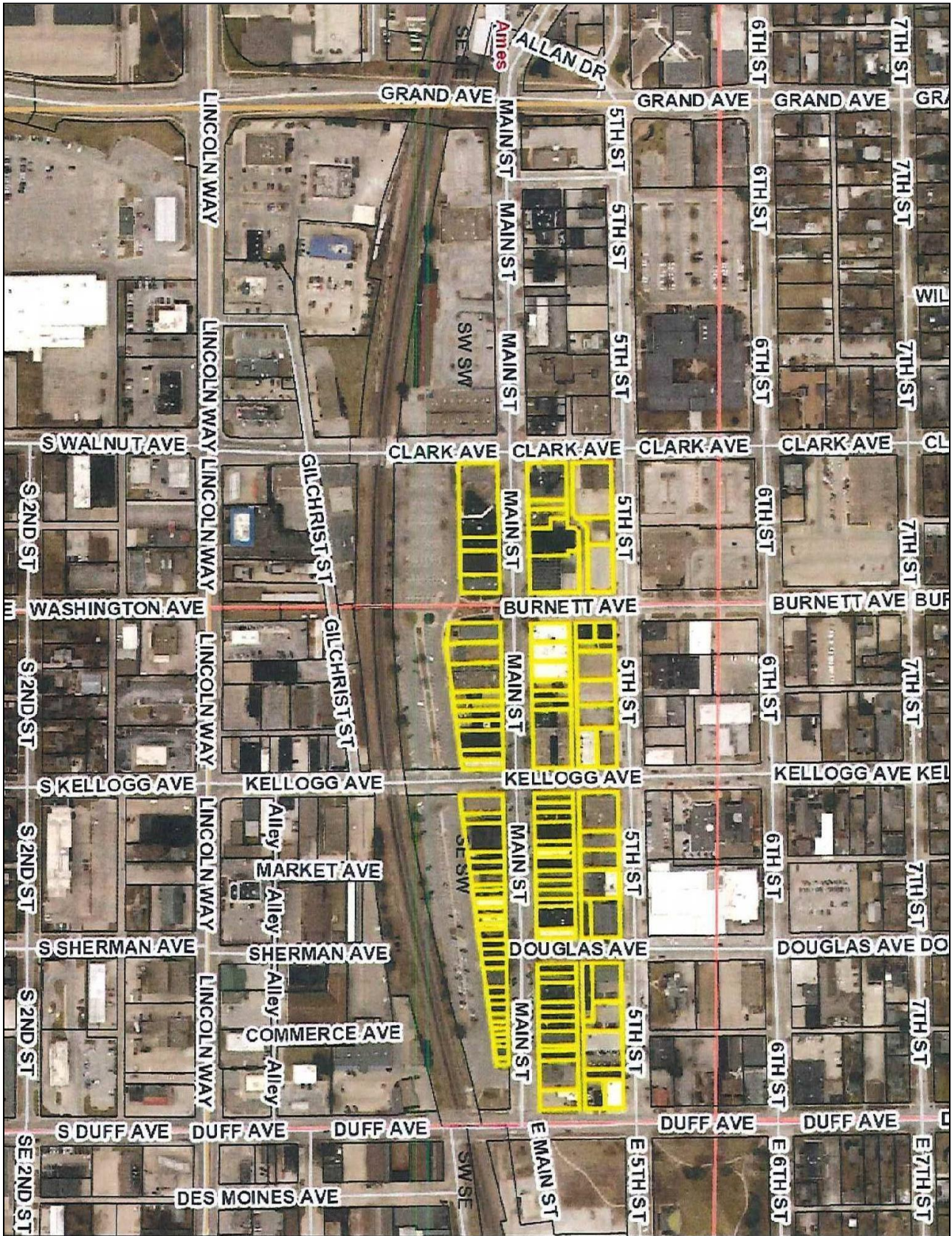
1. The City Council finds that the nomination of the Ames Main Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C and recommends National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.
2. The City Council finds that the nomination of the Ames Main Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places does not meet the National Register Significance Criterion and recommends National Register ineligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.
3. The City Council can postpone this request for additional information from the applicant or City staff.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

City staff believes that the information provided in the application provides a solid basis for a determination of significance under Criterion A and C and can be supported for listing on the National Register. If the nomination is ultimately approved and listed on the National Register, it does not create historic review requirements for the City. The City Council would need to establish by local ordinance a historic district for it to be subject to historic review.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative #1, thereby finding that the nomination of the Ames Main Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C, and recommends National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.

Attachment A – Location Map
Proposed Ames Main Street Historic District



Attachment B – Classification of Structures

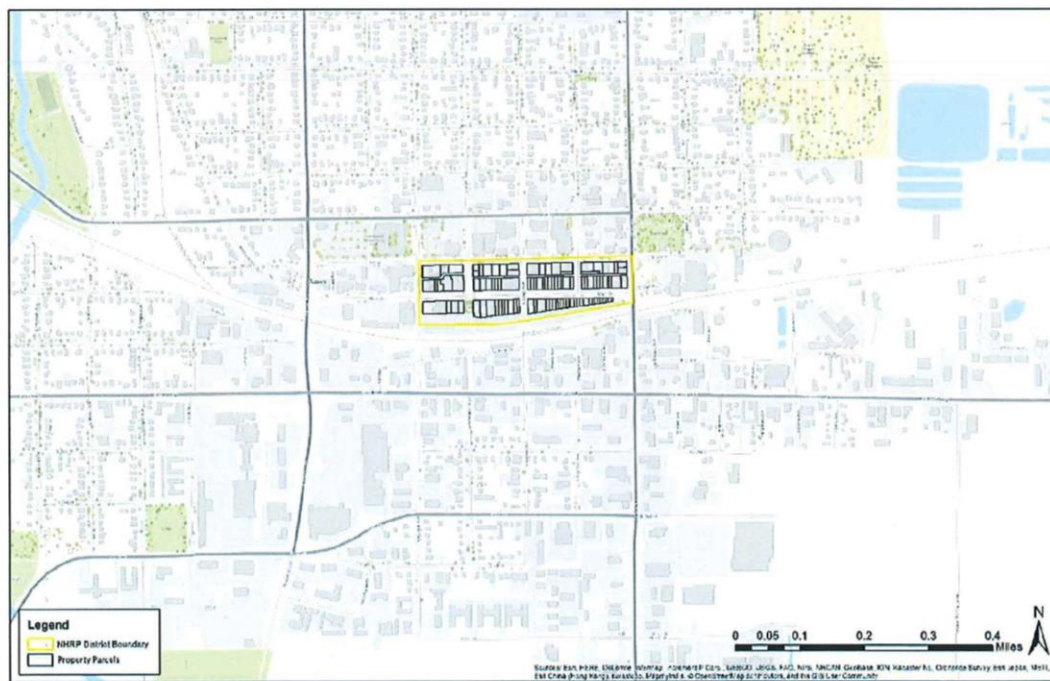
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Ames Main Street Historic District
 Name of Property

Story, IA
 County and State



Figure 15. Aerial view with sites labeled and contributing resources identified



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Figure 16. Aerial view of district



Figure 17. Simplified Aerial view with contributing resources marked.

Attachment C – Summary of Significance

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Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Cowgill, Clinton H.
Kimball, Allen H.
Cole, Ben
Bailie, Robert

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Ames Main Street Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because it calls attention to the development of commerce in Ames as a response to the nearby railroad and the economic opportunities provided by Iowa State College (later Iowa State University).

The Ames Main Street Historic District is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. It is an outstanding example in Iowa of the widespread influence, sustained over a long period of time and with contributions by both professional architects and local contractor-builders, of the commercial style of architecture. The commercial influence is further reflected in the numerous renovations and modernizations which allowed Ames to retain prosperity and accommodate growth throughout the 20th century. Because of these themes, the period of significance has been set between 1891-1967.

The significant dates previously mentioned in this nomination are 1891, 1937 and 1966. 1891 relates to first construction boom of brick buildings in downtown. 1937 marks a year of large concentration of building renovations as response to infrastructure growth. 1966 signifies the year for movement of railroad tracks, development of the main parking lot. These dates were chosen to reflect the major trends which formed were most influential in shaping the appearance of Ames today.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Attachment D – Statement of Integrity

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STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Overall, the Ames Main Street Historic District retains a high level of integrity based on the seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

As it relates to **location**, the Ames Main Street Historic District retains a high level of integrity. No contributing buildings have been moved or relocated since their erection. Because of this, the historic Victorian core of Ames remains as it would have stood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Later into the 20th century, Ames expanded west due to expanding population prompted by rising admissions at Iowa State College. These 20th century buildings retain their original locations.

The Ames Main Street Historic District holds a high level of integrity as it relates to **design**. As Ames' primary commercial district, Main Street developed a distinct commercial design in the 20th century that reflected business trends and transportation developments. These trends and developments emerged as the city's population grew, spurred by increased enrollment at Iowa State College. This established rail conduit between town and campus, along with the opening of the Sheldon-Munn Hotel in 1916 and the subsequent stream of hotel guests and conference-goers, ensured Ames business owners that their downtown location would continue to attract custom. The local rail line that brought the customers, however, also brought the need to repair cracked and grimy building façades after the *Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern* moved its Interurban Service track to Main Street. This necessity for repair presented an opportunity for building owners to upgrade the design of storefronts. While the brick buildings of the late 1800s still stood, few Victorian-era façades were left as businesses strove to stabilize façades and stay relevant in the 20th century. At the time of the second wave of storefront repairs and updates in the 1930s, after the Interurban track had been removed in 1929, the local newspaper coined the term "Facelifts on Main" to characterize all the façade work being done, which was putting a new face on familiar buildings downtown. Such a transformation is seldom seen elsewhere in Iowa, where Victorian façades still line many communities' downtown streets. Ames is one of a few cities in the state where such a decisive commercial style emerged. Many of these buildings on Main Street pay homage to Ames' Victorian origins by retaining elements of late 19th- and early 20th-century designs in façade structure. Yet, the many renovated façades also reflect the aesthetic taste of a later, more modern, era. In this case, the changes made to Ames buildings enabled the continuing vibrancy of the historic commercial function of the downtown while allowing facelifted buildings on Main Street to acquire significance in their own right. These changes enhance the integrity of design, rather than subtract from it, because they were an authentic reaction to local economic, demographic, and transportation trends through the 20th century.

Ames Main Street Historic District has a high level of integrity in relation to **setting**. Ames also holds high setting integrity in regard to its placement and relation to transportation infrastructure in the area; Ames continues to exist just north of the railroad which is still highly active with freight as it was in Ames' youth. Furthermore, crucial surrounding streets such as Duff Avenue, Lincoln Way, and Grand Avenue (including the Grand Avenue Underpass) continue to serve Ames Downtown as ways into the Main Street District. Moreover, the Ames Old Town

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Historic District, which is already listed on the National Register, is located just north of Main Street: between 7th and 9th streets; Duff and Clark avenues.

A high level of **material** integrity also exists in the Ames Main Street Historic District. However, some recent façade renovations, while often sympathetic to original design materials, have altered parts of Main Street District buildings. Most notably, window replacements have become common in the 21st century. However, the majority of buildings in Ames Main Street Historic District retain high integrity with original materials. Most contributing buildings contain original brickwork from their respective dates of significance. Many buildings feature appropriate wood bulkheads or window frames that retain high levels of integrity. Moreover, original windows appear on numerous buildings in the district.

The Ames Main Street Historic District retains a high level of **workmanship** integrity. Much of the brickwork and design detail on Main Street buildings may be attributed to the skilled workmanship of local contractor-builders Ben and John Cole and James Thompson and Sons, who executed the designs of prominent Ames architects, like Clinton Cowgill, Allen Kimball, Robert Bailie, and Barney Slater.

The Ames Main Street Historic District retains integrity in **feeling** via an atmosphere that is reminiscent of an earlier era. For example, the Ames Main Street Historic District continues to be a hub of local business and employment in the city. In conjunction to its retained proximity to a very active railway, the feeling of historic integrity is experienced through the active sights and sounds of commercial activity in a “railroad town” historic area.

As for overall levels of integrity through combination, Ames retains very high levels of **association** integrity. Perhaps the most striking aspects of the Ames Main Street Historic District are threefold: 1.) the commercial design trend of Facelifts on Main; 2.) the correlation between the changes and formation of Main Street buildings and trends in transportation as a response to population growth in the city caused by Iowa State College; 3.) the continuation of commerce in downtown Ames.

The history of the Ames Main Street Historic District is one of association. It is one which used location and setting to its advantage in order to craft a commercial district utilizing local architects, builders and styles to create the heart of the city which remains to this day.

FUTURE PLANS

The future of the Ames Main Street Historic District is focused on creating and maintaining a place where people want to live, work and play, ensuring the integrity of the district for generations to come. This includes promoting historic preservation and development of buildings and infrastructure through adaptive-use projects, upper story rehabilitation, façade improvement, residential development, and sensitive infill construction. As a nationally-accredited Main Street community Ames has resources to accomplish these goals. This includes a city-funded façade grant that makes \$50,000 available every year for the district property owners to make improvements to the façades of their buildings. Those improvements must meet

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standards of historic preservation regulation set by city code. As residents of a Main Street community, Ames' property owners are also eligible to apply for a \$75,000 state Challenge Grant to make improvements to their buildings. In the past five years, four Ames Main Street Historic District property owners have received this grant to preserve their buildings.

Several owners of property within the Ames Main Street Historic District have expressed interest in the Federal and State historic tax credit as a means of helping offset the costs of rehabilitation work that complies with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The local Main Street manager, City of Ames Historic Preservation Commission, and partners at Iowa State University will work with owners to avail themselves of these financial incentives and further strengthen the downtown both in terms of its retail capacity and as a location for additional residential units. The latter, in particular, will help Ames become a more walkable and sustainable small city.

As a Main Street Iowa and Main Street American community, the district will continue to showcase the vitality of arts and cultural venues, unique businesses, and the heritage of downtown Ames, which will add to the quality of life for residents and visitors while promoting a culturally-diverse and inclusive environment and atmosphere where everyone is welcome. In order to maintain the relevance of our historic buildings, Ames will work to retain current and recruit new businesses to create a healthy balance and variety of retail, professional, and service entities.