

Staff Report

AMES PLAN 2040 DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES- WORKSHOP #5

September 24, 2019

BACKGROUND:

City Council last discussed Ames Plan 2040 at their July workshop when it reviewed preliminary information on four directional growth scenarios. The consultant team continues to work with City staff on refining information about the expansion options for the city as well as planning options for infill redevelopment areas. An open house was held on August 22nd for the scenario work that is underway by RDG, along with an online public survey and comment tool at <http://www.cityofames.org/amesplan2040>. Updates on the scenario tasks are planned for late October and November.

As was outlined to City Council in July, there is a need to move forward in a parallel manner to the scenarios work with a discussion of goals and priorities that support preparing a draft comprehensive plan. **The intent for this meeting is for City Council to discuss the intended structure of the Plan overall and to confirm the general approach to preparing the draft Plan.** Follow up to this meeting will then be a decision on evaluating scenarios for growth and infill options, Council direction on selecting a preferred land use plan, and discussion on policies and issues for individual elements of Plan 2040. This is described in more detail later in this report.

City Council originally directed in 2018 (with approval of the RFP) to move ahead with a comprehensive plan, to help define the overall vision of the community. The direction included not only a future land use plan, but also priorities for integrating related policy issues such as transportation, open space, housing, economic development, and the environment. City Council also believed it would be beneficial for the Plan to be more traditional in its format with topical chapters or elements, rather than using themes to guide the goals and policies for the City. **To move ahead in preparing the Plan, RDG and staff desire to review these prior decisions and add more specificity on how to proceed with organization of Plan 2040.**

RDG believes that in terms of vision, it is important to have a common understanding for the direction the Plan. Although a singular vision statement may be defined through the development of the Plan, it is not essential that a singular statement be prepared before completing the evaluation of individual issues, as the details of these discussions may add clarity to the overall vision for the community. **However, to help provide a backdrop for City Council review of information over the next few months, staff believes the general intent for Plan 2040 gleaned from public input and City Council discussion can be summarized as follows:**

To consider Ames as an evolving city that will not only grow outwardly, but also invest in existing areas and support change within the community that ensures Ames is a thriving

and vital community with a diverse economy and a high quality of living that meets the needs of both current and future residents.

With this type of understanding of planning and supporting the growth of the community, RDG and staff may begin to consider how to address policy issues for change and development, not only on the periphery of the city, but also within the city. This includes details on important issues of transportation, housing, economic development, community character, environment, efficient service delivery and infrastructure, and parks and open spaces as they relate to the community overall. **Should the City Council not agree with the Staff's above summary statement for the intent of Ames Plan 2040, then it should redirect staff to develop alternative language.**

To move beyond generalities and to begin to define the structure of the plan and priorities, staff is asking for guidance on three items.

1. Comprehensive Plan Format
2. Flexibility and Plan Use
3. Priority Topics for City Council Review

1. Comprehensive Plan Format

At the outset of the process there was discussion on the format and desired length and content of the Plan. Staff originally reviewed Comprehensive Plan options with a presentation by Barry Miller to the City Council on August 15, 2017, that helped guide the creation of the RFP for the Comprehensive Plan. City Council also had a short discussion of the goals for the Plan at the initial kick-off meeting on December 18, 2018. To help City Council focus on relevant options, RDG has prepared a short assessment of Plans in a similar manner to the 2017 presentation to City Council. (Attachment A) **The intent for this item is for Council to receive information on comparisons of plans and confirm a preferred approach to RDG for preparing the Plan itself.**

RDG believes that a format similar to the Champaign, Illinois 2011 Comprehensive Plan would seem to fit the mix of interests and needs for the City that have been identified to date. This is a short to moderately long plan that follows a traditional structure, that allows for priorities regarding specific issues to be clear and understood at an individual level, as well as at a community level. This approach provides fairly high levels of clarity for the use of the Plan and the goals for the future of Champaign.

RDG also describes plans from other cities that take different approaches in both their length and level of specificity about goals and policies. City Council is encouraged to review Attachment B to help guide RDG on a preferred format of Plan 2040. The goal is to prepare a plan in the preferred style of the City Council to allow for Council to focus on the specific issues and language of the Plan once it is drafted. **Gaining a common understanding of the desired format and affirming the prior direction, or any adjustments, will allow the team to move ahead with addressing specific issues.**

2. Flexibility and Plan Use

Staff believes that discussing the issue of flexibility is important at the start of preparing the plan as it will shape the structure of the Plan and the approach to establishing goals and policies. The term flexible has been brought up in prior discussions, along with the opposite term certainty, in the context of outcomes for the Plan overall- in that a plan should not need to be modified soon after its adoption. To staff, there is a very wide range to interpreting the meaning of saying a Plan is flexible. **This is an important question because the degree of flexibility will in some ways limit the predictability of the Plan and the certainty of expectations.**

For example, does stating an intent for the Plan to be flexible relate to style of the plan by addressing goals and vision with minimal policy direction, does it mean specifically that land use patterns or other technical issues are not set out in the plan and determined at a later time, or does it mean a document that identifies overall principles and guidance for policy makers and citizens, but is designed to adapt through amendments to changing conditions while remaining relevant. Any of these three examples, and other versions of being flexible, could be the basis of a Plan. **RDG and Staff view flexibility as valuable to ensure that the Plan remains relevant for a longer period of time, but a good comprehensive plan should also be predictable to allow for the goals of the community to be reached.** Ultimately, there is always a time where a Plan must be redone regardless of built-in flexibility, as has been the case for the 1997 LUPP, to reset the baseline of community expectations.

Staff believes the intent for Plan 2040 is to be relevant in its use on regular basis to guide development decisions and policy development for the community, not only as a goal oriented or aspirational document. Staff and RDG believe from the discussion to date, that the community would benefit from an intentional approach that defines our desired goals for the community, where to grow, and needs or issues to be addressed with growth and change to create predictability within the community. Flexibility can be accommodated in timing of changes, options for how to develop, and a structure to consider changing demands when amendments may be needed to address a new proposal or unique issue.

Based upon the scenario work that was presented in July, staff believes the intent is for more definition about uses and infrastructure than was included in the 1997 LUPP. This approach would help guide development with some level of specificity on expectations, such as major roadways or desired nodes, but also allow for a mix of uses and patterns of development that meet the overall objectives of the City in a variety of styles of development. This is different than the 1997 LUPP which defined areas for growth, but relied more upon style of development with “Village” and “Suburban” design principles to guide decisions about what would be appropriate development. The 1997 Plan was flexible in that a developer could propose multiple styles of development, but it did not address long term needs for overall planning in some instances because of the vast differences in the two styles.

Defining patterns for land use with some degree of specificity is a fairly common approach to a Comprehensive Plan that is used by many cities, including communities such as Ankeny and Waukee, where predictability is needed to help define

infrastructure planning, design features, and the desired mix of uses to support a place or neighborhood. This method allows for City Council to have flexibility on controlling the timing or phasing of development, while also allowing a developer options of how to proceed within a band of acceptable development ranges without asking to amend a Land Use Plan. However, in established areas of the City it is more likely that certainty in land use designation would be appreciated and developers would need to seek policy changes in an area not anticipated for change within the Comprehensive Plan.

Tonight staff is asking for a general understanding of the range of what flexibility and certainty is generally anticipated to be. As City Council gets to specific policies and issues later this Fall, there will be time to assess the specific language for individual issues and how it would fit the framework described at this time. If City Council concurs with staff’s suggestion of defining expectations for areas of growth and a structure to consider future needs while allowing for some flexibility to consider evolving or changing needs, staff can begin to move forward with the structure of the Plan. If City Council has a different view of inherent flexibility for the Plan itself or its intended use, it is important to discuss these ideas and provide direction to the consultant and staff in order for the team to move forward effectively on the project.

3. Priority Topics



At the beginning of the process the petal diagram was created to visualize the multiple issues that affect the development of a Comprehensive Plan. In addition to these topics, themes have emerged from the public input process and from discussion of the plan on ideas that may be relevant to the formulating the Plan. To this point, staff believes the priority topics for the Plan include issues such as:

- Expansion opportunities
- Efficient extension of Infrastructure
- Strategic infill redevelopment options
- Diverse housing opportunities, with a need to support lower cost homeownership and multifamily housing options
- Transportation planning with complete streets principles
- Community character and placemaking
- Economic expansion for jobs and commercial uses
- Regional significance related to Story and Boone County, as well as Des Moines Metro area within the Cultivation Corridor
- Environmental sustainability
- Inclusive interests and equity for a diverse community
- Subarea or neighborhood plans for unique conditions
- Parks, open space, healthy lifestyles

Emerging Principles:

- › A City with Variety
- › Transportation Equality
- › Vibrant and Balanced Market
- › Embrace the Environment
- › Be Bold and Unique
- › Character at All Scales

RDG proposes that in the coordination with Items #1 and #2 discussed above, that the process utilizes the following categories and schedule to address details on goals and policies for addressing priority issues in relation to preparing a draft plan.

October

- Review with Council criteria for selecting a preferred land use plan
- Receive infill development information and updates on scenario evaluation

November

- Direction on a preferred land use concept to be used to formulate a draft plan
- Define Goals, Policies, Measurements of Success for land use and transportation
 - Note that transportation is assumed to rely upon the recently adopted Complete Streets Plan and apply these policies and principles to planning for 2040.

December

- Review policies for subareas and/or neighborhood planning
- Refine housing options

January

- Refine issues related to community character
- Review cultural interests and healthy lifestyle support
- Address equity provisions within the plan, balance of interests

February

- Define goals and principles for parks and open space needs
 - Note this is not a Parks Master Plan for detailed programming
- Review final environmental issues that remain, if any.

With this outline of topics, staff believes the necessary issues can be addressed in adequate detail with Council to complete a draft plan for public comment in the Spring. City Council is encouraged to identify any specific issues that are of interest that have not been discussed to ensure that RDG and staff are aware of any questions or issues that are foreseeable for the project. City Council could choose to reprioritize the order of the topics listed above or provide direction on adding or deleting specific topics.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The three items described in this report are important to effectively move forward on Plan 2040. The land use planning efforts with the scenarios are very important to understanding the future growth and patterns of the City and are still the priority work task for the next two months. Additionally, the team will start to address other issues in detail to prepare a complete draft plan.

Providing direction to staff on the style and format of the Plan described in Item #1 will set the tone for preparing the plan. Item #2 is also critical in understanding the role of the Comprehensive Plan and how it will be used by the City, especially in how to balance predictability vs. flexibility. Item #3 is confirmation that the approach and schedule for the next six months fits the City Councils interests for drafting the Plan. With the completion of the tasks described in this report, a draft Plan can be completed in the Spring of 2020 for public review and comment.

Champaign, Illinois



PLAN ORGANIZATION

- Introduction
- Vision and Guiding Principles
- Future Land Use

- Plan assumes continued enrollment growth at U of I.
- Overall Plan focus is on building a “complete community”
- **Fundamentally this is a land use plan**, with guiding principles addressing growth, sustainability, complete neighborhoods, community identity, health, and public facilities
- Cross-references other plans guiding other systems (transportation, etc.)
- Silent on campus planning, but calls for good working relationship with U of I.
- Land Use categories include “University Neighborhoods”

Structure:

Guiding principles addressing growth, sustainability, complete neighborhoods, community identity, health, and public facilities

Land Use:

Designates growth areas and tiers sequence.

Pages: <100 pages

Leading example for content!



Champaign, Illinois



Growth Area C - Area D (Champaign) 77

Growth Area D West Kirby Avenue

Opportunities and Challenges
This large site offers a unique opportunity to create a new neighborhood with a mix of residential, commercial, and employment uses. The site is located in a prime location, adjacent to the University of Illinois and the Champaign River. The site is currently undeveloped, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

The development of the site will create the green community in Champaign, Illinois. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Infrastructure and Public Services
The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Land Use
The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Transportation
The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Utilities
The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

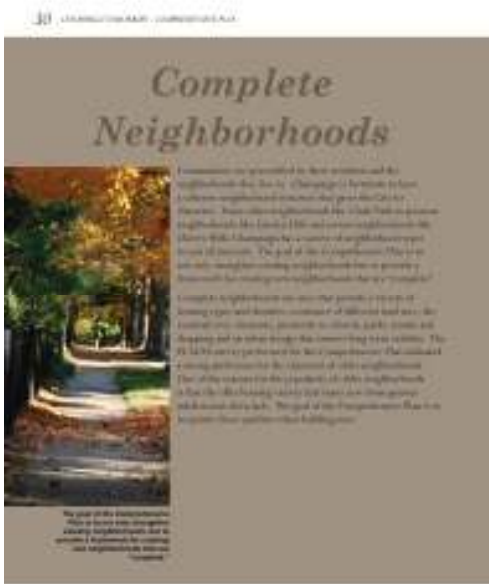
Other
The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential. The site is a prime location for a new neighborhood, and the surrounding area is primarily residential.

Growth Area D - Area E (Champaign)



Champaign, Illinois

Background



Issues

Issues Considered:

- Newer residential subdivisions developed in Champaign have a limited range of housing types and prices. Each subdivision targets a specific segment of the market but few attempt to attract a range of market interests. The lack of diversity in housing choices within developments often contributes to a lack of diversity in that development's residents.
- Complete neighborhoods must be designed to promote connectivity. This includes streets that connect to adjacent neighborhoods and can safely accommodate cars, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Neighborhood parks are an essential part of a complete neighborhood. However, the amount of open space being provided is often less than desirable for existing residential densities. When a neighborhood is newly developed, more attention should be given to providing a robust network of parks.
- The current shift in the economy and dramatic changes in the housing market call for a re-evaluation of housing development patterns. There are numerous factors that market demand for big houses can be high but that city revenues will decline in favor of more densely populated areas.
- Older neighborhoods have many great amenities such as close proximity to parks, schools and a design that is very walkable. However, many lack the close proximity to daily shopping needs. Similar to the issue with new neighborhoods, promoting new neighborhood commercial uses will require careful urban design.
- The term "density" often raises concern for many people. However, higher densities create a more successful climate for business, can reduce per capita infrastructure and service costs, better support transit and promote sustainable growth by limiting sprawl. Careful planning and proper design can successfully blend residential densities to the core of communities.



Vision Guiding Principles Measuring Success

Vision:

Champaign's neighborhoods are structured to ensure residents can attend school, shop, live and play within a short distance of their homes. The majority of "everyday needs," like convenience services and recreation can be found within neighborhood boundaries or in close proximity.

Guiding Principles:

Well-Planned Mix of Uses – Land uses are mixed in a way that provides for the needs of the neighborhood, with access to shops, services and employment within a short distance. Activity is concentrated at key centers, known as "Activity Centers."

Well-Designed Density – Residential density supports neighborhood commercial uses and fosters a more vibrant community.

Range of Housing Types – Neighborhoods offer a range of housing types, styles and price points to accommodate residents through many stages of life.

Connectivity – Neighborhood elements are integrated with other destinations through transit, trails, sidewalks, as well as through a grid street system.

Presence of Neighborhood Elements – Public parks, schools, convenience commercial areas and other elements are integrated into neighborhoods and can be accessed safely by walking or biking.

Measuring Success:

- Residents live within a mile of neighborhood commercial uses where they can satisfy most everyday needs.
- For residential development proposed on large tracts in the City's growth areas, analysis is provided demonstrating the proposed mix of housing types (single-family detached, townhomes, condominiums, apartments, etc.) and the overall density of the development.
- New residential subdivision developments achieve a gross density close to 4.0 dwelling units per acre or higher.
- New developments meet expectations for street connectivity and design. Walkers are granted only in extreme cases.
- Residential development is within a five to ten minute walk of a park and is safely accessible.

Actions



Actions:

- Identify "key centers" within each neighborhood and determine how to improve by applying "complete streets" standards to the built environment and transportation and recreation uses in existing streets.
- Collaborate with the Champaign Park District to explore ways to increase the number and quality of parks within each neighborhood. Explore the Park Link as a strategy to increase the number and quality of parks in the City's growth areas.
- Review the Champaign Housing Ordinance to better address the needs of diverse communities in the long-term residential use and to encourage beneficial housing uses in "brown" and "blue" areas.
- Create complete neighborhood areas that can be used to staff and deliver urban urban planning and development projects. The goal would be to create a mix of housing types in order to attract a mix of population and uses.
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- Enhance neighborhood connectivity for the purpose of walking, bicycling, and driving through urban urban planning and development projects.
- Enhance the flexibility of existing zoning codes to better address the needs of diverse communities in the long-term residential use and to encourage beneficial housing uses in "brown" and "blue" areas.



Des Moines, Iowa



- Adopted in April 2016
- 18-month update process
- **Relatively short** (85 pages)—nicely formatted and very readable and user-friendly
- Minimal narrative – Plan is supplemented by a background report
- Traditional structure with topical “elements” following IA Smart Growth guidelines
- Goal and Policy format
- Traditional Land Use Map and categories
- Anticipates 60,000 new residents between 2010 and 2040, mostly through infill
- Roll up of “action-oriented policies” in Implementation chapter and Appendix at end of document

PLAN ELEMENTS

- Vision Statement
- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Public Infrastructure and Utilities
- Parks and Recreation
- Community Character and Neighborhoods
- Community Facilities
- Social Equity
- Implementation

Structure:

High-level goals and supporting policy statements. Identifies initiatives (or action-oriented) policies for study.

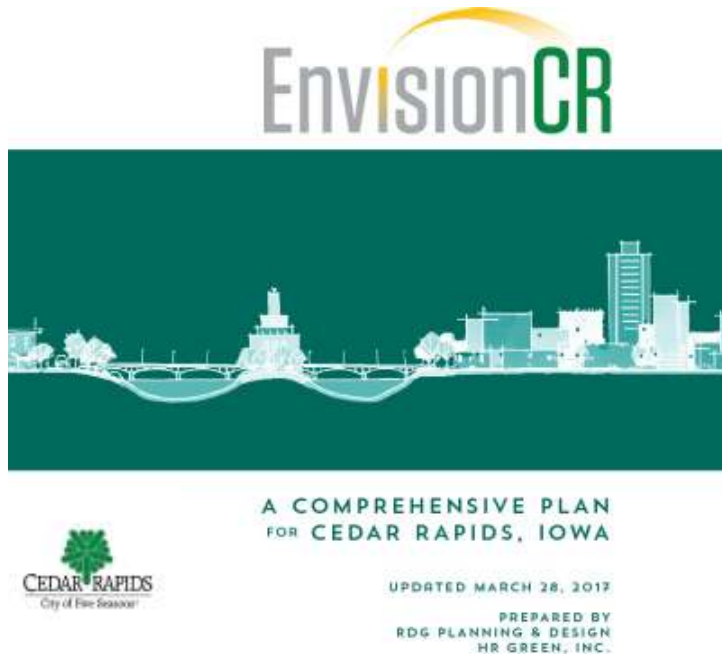
Land Use:

Designates areas and nodes, and precedence for new zoning code.

Pages: <100



Cedar Rapids, Iowa



- Moderate length (192 pages)—graphics rich!
- Four Themes: Health, Sustainability, Placemaking, and Efficiency
- Seven **Guiding Principles**
- Innovative structure, with six non-traditional elements
- Anticipates 14-33 K new residents (23 years)
- **Each Element includes several broad goals**, followed by specific “initiatives”—no policies
- Form-based Land Use Map uses “**typologies**” instead of traditional categories (e.g., “Urban Low Intensity” includes single family, schools, neighborhood commercial.)
- Implementation matrix includes schedule and lead agency for each initiative

Structure:

High-level goals and detailed actions.

Land Use:

Designates mixed use typologies and targeted yields. Lots of detail and new methodology for managing growth.

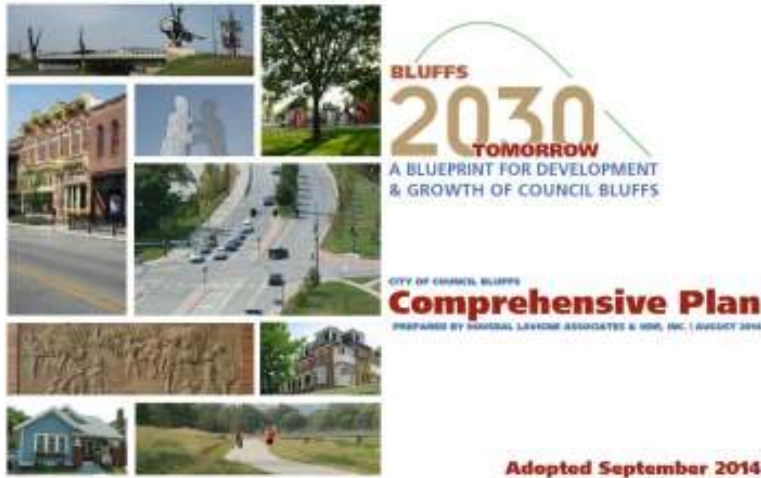
Pages: <200

PLAN ELEMENTS

- Strengthen
- Grow
- Connect
- Green
- Invest
- Protect



Council Bluffs, Iowa



PLAN ELEMENTS

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Hazard Mitigation and Sustainability
- Community Character
- Subarea Plans
- Implementation

- **Relatively short** (114 pages), 11 x 17 format, organized by traditional elements
- “Community Profile” summarizes existing conditions and trends
- “Vision” includes **goals and objectives on key topics** (growth, neighborhoods, industry, etc.)
- Traditional land use map, plus “character maps” describing urban form
- Each Element describes existing system and planned improvements, along with Map
- No policies and actions—some “recommendations”
- Includes diagrams for 4 change areas
- Implementation chapter provides a menu of programs and procedures

Structure:

High-level goals and non-specific policy statements.

Land Use:

More of an atlas of the city’s taxonomy character.

Pages: ~100



Bloomington, Indiana

City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan



PLAN ORGANIZATION

- Community Profile
- Community Services and Economics
- Culture and Identity
- Environment
- Downtown
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation
- Land Use

- **Relatively short** (less than 100 pages)
- Strong focus on non-land use issues (services, arts, governance, equity)
- Anticipates 20,000 new residents over 25 years. Land Use Plan focuses on infill **rather than “new lands”**
- Goal-Policy format, with menu of action programs for each goal
- Each **goal includes outcomes and indicators to measure** progress
- **Form-based land use categories** (“Mixed Urban Residential,” etc)
- Does not address enrollment forecasts—plan shifts focus away from University toward non-student population
- Appendix includes matrices listing all actions, timelines, and responsibilities

2018 Plan

Structure:

Vision statement, goals, policies, programs, objectives, and indicators.
Lots of narrative, little visual aids.

Land Use:

Identifies pattern and character. Subject to broad flexibility, does not commit Council to growth allows developer options, not necessarily predictable for community.

Note-Bloomington is a Strong Mayor Form of Govt. rather than City Manager

Pages: ~100 pages



Manhattan, Kansas



PLAN ORGANIZATION

- Growth Vision
- Coordinated Efficient Growth
- Preserve Natural Resources/ Resilience
- Efficient Public Facilities and Services
- Community Involvement/Regional Cooperation
- Multi-modal Transportation
- Healthy, Livable Neighborhoods
- Quality of Life/ Strong Sense of Place
- Diversified Economic Base
- Special Planning Area Policies

- Anticipates 20,000 pop increase (2013-35), including 5,000 at KSU
- Elements follow “guiding principles”— growth, resilience, sense of place, diverse economy, etc.
- Includes chapter for “special areas” where policy guidance is needed—including campus edge, downtown, key corridors, and growth areas
- Traditional Land Use Map, with second map showing “areas of stability” and “areas of change.”
- Elements have Principles, Goals, and Policies. Policies include narratives.
- Focus on land use, community character, and growth management
- Includes an “Action Plan” at end listing actions, lead agencies, priority ranking

Structure:

Goals, principals, and objectives.
Lots of narrative, little visual aids.

Land Use:

Character/form identified for use types.
Application to map is too broad (<1 to 19 units per acre for categories).

Pages: ~200 pages

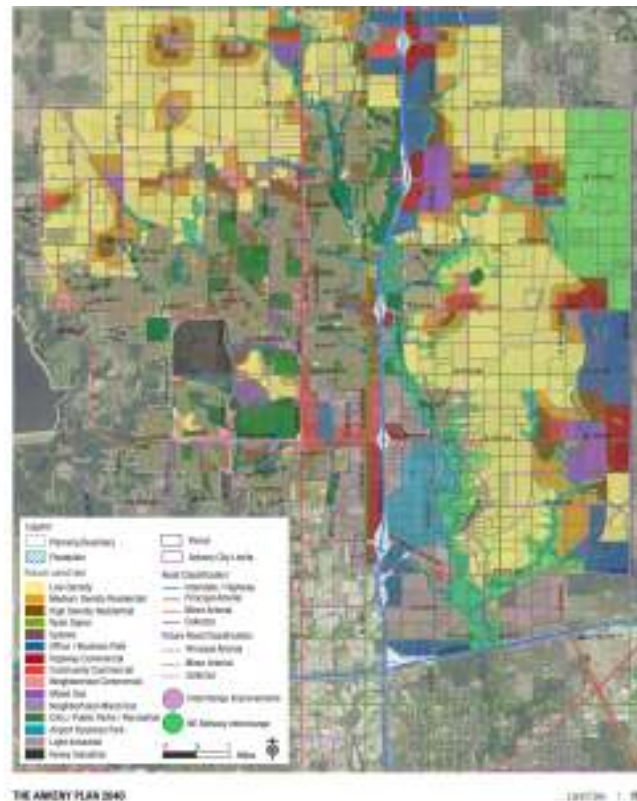
Not an ideal fit for Ames.



Ankeny, Iowa



- Anticipates significant growth rates and total population increase at a medium rate to 118,000 people.



2018 Plan Structure:
Based upon a vision statement and goals. Each chapter has goals & policies, actions. Many visuals and graphics.

Land Use:
Describes future demand and issues that need to be addressed with growth. Broad in planning for range of growth, uses building typologies. Map indicates planned densities of development.

Pages: ~300 pages, includes process and background info. ●●●

<u>PLAN Organization</u>	
Population/Growth	
Environment	Econ Dev.
Parks & Rec.	Hazards
Housing	Land Use
Community	Transportation
Facilities	Implementation
Infrastructure	