

ITEM #: 41
DATE: 06-27-23
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: COMMENT LETTER TO STORY COUNTY FOR PROPOSED URBAN EXPANSION AREA DESIGNATION AMENDMENT WITHIN STORY COUNTY C2C COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BACKGROUND:

Story County, Ames, and Gilbert have jointly agreed to manage land use within the 2-mile fringe area of Ames since 2011. During the spring of 2022, the three entities embarked on an effort to update the Fringe Plan using Ames Plan 2040 as a base concept and prepared a draft plan for public comment. Throughout the fall and winter of 2022-23, changes and edits were proposed and reviewed related to the draft plan. However, an updated plan and corresponding 28-E agreement have not been completed. City Council last reviewed Story County and Gilbert proposed revisions at its April 23 meeting and determined that an extension of the current 28E agreement was not desirable.

As a result, the joint management of Ames Urban Fringe Plan with a 28-E agreement between Story County, Gilbert, and Ames expired on May 1, 2023. Each entity now administers their own requirements to subdivisions rather than through a cooperative arrangement. Effectively the 2011 Fringe Plan is no longer in place. The City of Ames updated Plan 2040 in May 9, 2023, to reflect the planning policies and language for the Fringe Area. Story County discussed amendments to its comprehensive plan, C2C Plan, at its May 23rd meeting. **Story County determined that without the Fringe Plan and 28E agreement their Comprehensive Plan needed to be updated.**

The Board of Supervisors directed County staff to prepare an amendment to the C2C Plan for review in July 2023. The amendment generally includes rural residential and natural areas as depicted in the City's Ames Plan 2040 land use map. **The County is considering different boundaries for Urban Reserve Overlays and Urban Growth Areas than described by the City. Upon review of the Board of Supervisors decision in May, City staff is concerned about the representation of Ames growth within the County's C2C Plan.**

As staff understands County policies, if the broad areas of Urban Growth and Urban Reserve Overlay are represented as Urban Expansion within their plan, it would allow for consideration of rural rezonings and development. **The County's policies would not directly result in approval of residential subdivisions, it would most likely relate to commercial and industrial uses adjacent to the City.**

Staff believes this is counter to principles repeatedly articulated by Story County during the update process that focused on growth within Cities and controlling rural development, including preferences that the City show less area for future growth. Staff believes the meaning of Urban Reserve and Growth Areas has been misconstrued and the City of Ames should provide comments and clarifications to the Board for their consideration during the amendment process. To this end, a letter has been drafted and attached to this report to be approved by the City Council and signed by the Mayor.

As staff considered the County's position from May 2023 and the efforts over the past year to update the Fringe Plan, staff believes that a simplified Fringe Plan and 28E agreement could be desirable to Story County and Ames to resolve questions about intent and land use planning in this area. **Staff believes the greatest tension revolved around Urban Reserve Overlay where the City was interested in broad land use compatibility support for long term future growth and the County appeared to be concerned about premature and uncontrolled growth of the City and desired less area represented as Urban Reserve Overlay. The irony to staff is that the proposed C2C Plan amendment could lead to rural development rather than development within the City. The proposed letter offers an option for the County to take up the issue of a 28-E Agreement that focuses solely on subdivision jurisdiction and zoning compatibility adjacent to Ames.**

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize the Mayor to sign the letter attached to this report describing the City's interest for Urban Growth and Urban Reserve Overlay policies for the County's proposed CSC amendment to create Urban Expansion Areas and to indicate an interest in a simplified 28-E agreement for subdivision and zoning management of the Fringe.
2. Modify or edit the attached letter and authorize the Mayor to sign and transmit the letter.
3. Take no action of submitting a letter to County at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Although the County's C2C Plan does not directly affect the action of the City of Ames related to development and annexation, it would be in our interest to state our intent and interpretation of our own growth plans to the County. The attached letter described the City's plans for this area and offers an option to take up a simplified 28-E process for Fringe Area management with Story County. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as noted above.



June 28, 2023

Story County Board of Supervisors
900 Sixth Street
Nevada Iowa 50201

Re: Story County C2C Plan Amendment for Urban Expansion Designation

The City of Ames offers the following comments regarding the Board of Supervisors direction for amending the C2C plan for the area around Ames. County staff highlighted the growth pressures for this area in your report in May and identified how other cities include urban expansion areas within the County. The City of Ames recently updated our own Comprehensive Plan to reflect that a 23 E agreement is no longer in affect, and we relied upon the existing designations within our Plan2040 for issues related to the 2-mile Fringe.

While the City supports updating the Fringe Area mapping within the C2C Plan to clarify growth planning, existing uses, and natural resources, we are concerned about the implications of designating areas as “Urban Expansion”. It appears this designation is used by the County already within the C2C Plan as it relates to other cities in the County. As we understand the discussion by the Board of Supervisors on May 23, 2023 and the Policies on Page 5-19 of the C2C Plan, that by establishing areas as Urban Expansion it allows for rezonings to facilitate rural development, , without changes to the C2C Plan. This appears to be counter to the planned growth of the City of Ames and appears to be inconsistent with the repeated messages from the Board during the Fringe Plan Update process about protecting farmland, focusing growth within a City, and reducing sprawl, which were frequent critiques of the Fringe Plan Update.

It seems that if the County applies the Urban Expansion designation and allows for rezoning options it inconsistent with the County’s described goals for the Fringe Area and certainly is not likely to meet the City of Ames interests for planning. The City did not aspire to, nor desire to encourage, sprawl and rural development within any of the areas shown as Growth Areas or the

Urban Reserve Overlay. One of the fundamental goals of the City as part of the Fringe Plan update process and as described within our own policies for the Fringe Area is to promote compatible uses within these areas and support development within the City at the appropriate time that services could be planned for or provided.

Mapping of Urban Expansion to match our planned growth areas makes mapping sense as disclosure of intent of the City, but if the mapping of it creates rezoning opportunities that conflict with orderly development plans, we request a new policy be added to support annexation for development in these areas and not rural development. The City of Ames would suggest that any designation showing Urban Expansion should not have policies that support rural development.

The City would instead prefer the designation describe the compatibility interests for this area with planned future expansion. Alternatively, mapping all of the area as Ag and Farm Services to have it more closely match the County's land use designation system and preserve areas as Ag and Farm service until such time as annexation and development is appropriate and not seen as premature development would be better than allowing for rural development abutting the City.

It is clear from the Supervisors' discussion of the Fringe Area how the Urban Reserve Overlay was flawed in the Fringe Plan Update process with its duality of forecasting City growth boundaries and management of County uses in the interim. The City's goal of having broad Urban Reserve areas was primarily to support land use compatibility goals, not sprawling growth. The County wanted to limit sprawling growth as well, but requested reductions in the Urban Reserve to address this concern, which unfortunately undermined the City goal of broad areas of compatibility and created inherent conflicts in the Plan. Switching to an Urban Expansion designation with the C2C plan amendment does not seem to address either parties interest from the Fringe Plan Update process that occurred over the past year.

Based upon recent events, it may be beneficial to reconsider a 28E Agreement that focuses on development compatibility and steps away from annexation policies. For example, a map describing subdivision responsibilities by land use designation, agreement to limits on the City's two mile subdivision jurisdictional expansion, and a separate policy about land use compatibility

principles and rezoning may meet the basic interest of the City and the County without the comprehensive approach defined with the Update process.

The City of Ames is hopeful that Story County values the City's comments and our perspective of continued support of the City as the primary engine of growth in both housing and job creation for the County. Planning together is likely to yield superior outcomes in efficient and effective governance, resource protection, and sustainable growth strategies for current and future residents of the County, whether that is through adapting the C2C Plan amendments as requested or considering a more focused Fringe Plan Update 28 E agreement.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mr. Mayor John H Haila.

Cc: Ames City Council

Steve Schainker, City Manager

Mark Lambert, City Attorney

Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director

Amelia Schoeneman, Director Planning and Development, Story County