

From: [Ann Rezarch](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Proposed home maintenance ordinance
Date: Thursday, June 29, 2023 1:38:25 PM

[External Email]

Good afternoon. I'm not one to talk behind people's backs, so I want to share with you a comment I made on a FB post today in the Ames People group. I have been out of state and didn't realize this ordinance was being proposed, or I would have spoken up earlier. Or perhaps it was good that I have been gone, as it helped me see how nice our city already is.

Please let me know how citizens can still get involved to stop this if possible. I shouldn't say stop it. Perhaps some vital issues need to be addressed in some condensed version of what is on the table.

FB comment - I have lived in Ames for a long time, but spent over a year in western NY. That town was fairly run down in many areas.

I returned home in April and was able to really notice how nice Ames looks. It's a tidy looking town. There are exceptions, but I don't think it's anywhere near the point that a heavy handed city ordinance is needed to regulate people's lives and property.

In general, I support reasonable regulation. This seems excessive and aimed at control for the sake of control.

Additionally, if this is enacted, I would like to see a companion proposal outlining how the city will assist homeowners who can't comply due to financial or health reasons.

Ames leaders aren't just being elitist, are they? Are they?

Ann Rezarch
1414 Kellogg Ave
515-708-8863

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ann Rezarch](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Updated thoughts - Residential property maintenance ordinance
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 8:44:43 AM

[External Email]

Good morning. A lot has happened since I wrote you just last week. I had a very good talk with Amber Corrieri, I met with some very concerned (and rational) citizens at the library, I read the ordinance several times and watched at least a fair amount of the recorded council meetings. I read a proposed edited version of the proposal. I've also had brief conversations around town.

I mostly don't have a huge problem with a lot of the ordinance. Others do and I'm not saying what they think isn't valid. We all simply have varied opinions. I do think the safety issues and aesthetics need to be separated. Wording such as "use of standard roofing materials" should suffice. Let those who embrace a carefully controlled environment live in a HOA.

But here is where I'm still (very) concerned:

- there needs to be a path/program by which people get help - whether due to income, health, age etc. The details don't need to be in the ordinance but the fact that this exists and how to engage with it does need to be there. Make people feel supported. A very simple example is an old man might not be able to move his garbage up and down from the street. Someone in town might be able to help. I'm also talking about bigger things too, of course.

note- my sick husband once announced to me how relieved he was that the trash guy told him he could just leave his trash can by the street. He simply couldn't manage the task.

- I understand the desire to not make the public feel the city is "big brother" by making this complaint driven. But instead it means your neighbor is treating you like an enemy. This is not how healthy community is built and sustained.

Misc - I think a \$500 first offense fine is shockingly high. It's almost an embarrassment. Starting point (if even appropriate at all - \$20). A dangerous situation needs rigorous enforcement. A car with expired tags has yet to cause anyone harm. Ever.

- comment was made that staff won't go along with chronic complainers. I'm sure they try. But the 1st and 2nd time a vindictive busy body neighbor complains it's very hard to know they are just out to make everyone miserable. What training/methods are used to determine this? How do you know you are being successful?

Example - a neighbor turned me in for having an inoperable car in my driveway. He also turned in every neighbor he could for something. The city finally stopped taking him seriously. He has now passed away. I am still working on dealing with my car issue (trying to resolve it) and my neighbor has 2 cars parked on her lawn in a rental. It's so dysfunctional that it's almost laughable. This ordinance won't change that.

- expanding the "offenses" should turn into expanded enforcement. That may be good or bad. But what confuses me is I'm told there is a very robust rental property ordinance and yet many neglected rental properties. What gets in the way of enforcement?

Communication - I realize you tried to get the word out to people when this process started. It only partially worked. Many people had no clue. A direct mailing/ handing out flyers at Fareway and convenience stores/ the library - would reach people. I suggested Mark Lambert do a tik tok

I have heard from the city - concern for public safety (very valid) / concern for the complainer (very valid) / concern for "Ames housing stock" very disturbing terminology. The city of Ames does not own my house and simply lease

it to me. This is my home/ but what is barely mentioned at all is concern for the homeowner. You seem to care about the house, but maybe little about the human who lives there.

So what am I asking for? Please slow down. Stop for now and get new discussions going. Mostly Ames is a beautiful town. It isn't going to fall down if this takes another year. Home values are sky high. No one is going to miss out on selling their home because the car next door is unregistered. Get this done right.

Thank you
Ann Rezarch

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ann Rezarch](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: So many comments
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 8:59:14 AM

[External Email]

From the incredible number of comments on FB about this property ordinance, it's clear that a huge number of people would be out of compliance with some part or another. There is no way the city staff could keep up with all the violations. So it will be what - arbitrary enforcement pitting neighbor against neighbor? Is that truly a good design?

Please stop this train wreck while you can. I'm a professional mediator and would be happy to assist in any way possible free of charge.

Ann Rezarch
1414 Kellogg Ave
515-798-8863

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ann Rezarch](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Updated thoughts - Residential property maintenance ordinance
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 8:44:43 AM

[External Email]

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Thank you
Ann Rezarch

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ann Rezarch](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Last email from me today
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 4:31:37 PM

[External Email]

I have heard from several council members and appreciate your reaching out. This may sound ridiculous to you at this point - but I'm hoping you slow this task down.

For years part of my job was to ensure that the public actually knew about important issues that government was trying to tell them about. The question wasn't - did we try to tell them? The question was - did they know? Very different perspectives. I'm not saying you didn't try - but hundreds of residents have said they had no idea what was happening. I know dry reading of proposed ordinances just doesn't appeal to some people and can be difficult to understand. They don't check city websites.

I have "heard" you say residents are frustrated that they can't get a "problem neighbor" to clean up or fix their house. Ok - so an HOA type document has been written to address that - but it's intended for an entire city, not a development or condo. On the flip side, where have you written in protection for the home owner who is being harassed by their unreasonable complaining neighbor? I don't see that type of verbiage anywhere. Both residents deserve to be protected by a citywide ordinance.

I have said it before. Instead of encouraging community and support for one another - this pits neighbor against neighbor. The city could never enforce the expanse of this ordinance. It will come down to who complains to the city about their neighbor. We have enough divisiveness in our country, state and towns. Let's don't support it by also poisoning our neighborhoods. Please slow way down. Let's see if the majority supports this proposal. Do you believe you already know the public supports it? How do you know?

Thanks
Ann Rezarch

Sent from my iPhone

From: anneclark@netins.net
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: city code workshop
Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 7:14:57 PM

[External Email]

Mayor Haila and council,

I was concerned when I read the proposals for rules governing living on a property in Ames. First, I'm troubled about the rules for planting height and location on the right of way. The city will be breaking its own rules with the prairie rain gardens it has installed- +12". Plantings are a form of free speech/artistic vision which has been upheld in courts.

I realize some of the rules may be necessary but, many of the ones proposed in the plan are obscenely picky. Like no chipping paint, holes in siding, trash containers inside or not in front of house unless you build an enclosure for them, & etc....so many little rules. It honestly felt like I was reading a restrictive covenant for a gated community, who made this stuff up?

Snakes and bats are not vermin, they help control vermin and mosquitoes. It's nature, it supports our life, and it is not tidy and clean. When they found out there were coyotes in the area, some of my neighbors wanted to have them removed! Do we really want to remove every bit of wildness here? My garden supports birds, toads, frogs, snakes, and thousands of insects, many of them pollinators. It's alive, as opposed to turf grass which is not habitat and only supports lawn care companies. Is the goal of the council to have a clean little city where everything looks the same and no one gets out of line?

Many of these proposed rules will be used to "get back" at your neighbors. It really seems as if homogenization is the goal of quite a few of these proposals. Surely you can re-think some of them. Ya can't control everything, and if you try you will be removing a lot of what makes living here bearable. I thought we were supposed to celebrate diversity. Picky, picky, picky.....

Thank you,
Anne Clark
3122 Kingman Rd
Ames 50014

From: [Alexander Krumm](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance Ordinance Concerns
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 10:14:43 AM

[External Email]

Hello,
Ames resident, 1015 Grand Ave., Ward 2

I'm concerned about overreach in the proposed property maintenance ordinance. While I do believe clear guidelines and a reporting system for safety concerns caused by mismanagement of private property is a valid conversation, I am deeply concerned about the city regulating aesthetic choices made on private property.

A few examples -

I have three types of fence on my property because they were put in at different times by different agreements with neighbors. I don't have the money to replace an entire fence, covering four property lines.

Several families in our neighborhood affected by the derecho had to replace a handful of shingles and a matching shingle wasn't available. In addition to the financial implications of replacing the whole roof when insurance only covers the patch, it is also unnecessary and environmentally unsound to throw all those building materials in the dump just because of a few mismatched shingles.

My biggest concerns when considering this new ordinance are:
Environmental impact - unnecessarily disposing of functional building supplies for aesthetic reasons. This is irresponsible.

Governmental overreach - this feels like a step to far into the individual freedoms of how and where to spend my money on my private property.

Neighbor Relations - creating a system where neighbors can file complaints with one another over petty disagreements over aesthetics only further serves to damage already strained relationships in the very divided and tense culture we currently live in.

Disproportionate economic impact - the reality of this is that it will likely have the largest and most negative impact on people in the lowest income brackets. It will add another barrier to property ownership and further serve to stifle upward mobility.

Aesthetic Diversity - we are a town that seems to be proud of arts and culture. We have public art, painted utility boxes, gardens, murals, festivals, and more. This only serves to stifle artistic expression and turn the city into the art police. I don't care for every painted utility box or every piece of public art on Main Street. I actually think a number of them are quite unappealing, but I swallow my preferences because I know they are meaningful to someone

else and they are not harming me. I suggest the city do the same when it comes to the aesthetic choices of its private property owners.

If I have a tree covering a sidewalk, you can come fine me. If I have mismatched shingles and a few replaced fence boards then get over it. I can barely afford to keep this place afloat as is.

This proposed ordinance is not wholly out of line but I am deeply concerned with the direction it could go and in fact, seems to be headed.

I leave you with the nearly prophetic song by Pete Seeger, "Little Boxes."

https://youtu.be/XUwUp-D_VV0

This is not the community or reality I want to live in. If I wanted that, I wouldn't be in Ames. I live in Ames because I appreciate arts, culture, history, diversity, and community.

Alex Krumm

From: [Chase Win](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: HOA
Date: Thursday, July 6, 2023 7:30:20 PM

[External Email]

Ames' old town district keeps its unique charm with its diverse choice of decorations for our lawns and houses. Restricting this will eliminate the appeal of the neighborhood. Save the HOAs for ankeny.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Debra Hendrickson](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: New city code
Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2023 3:25:08 PM

[External Email]

I am notifying you to let you all know I am completely **against** your new city code. I don't want any of it. Please drop the whole thing. It is hugely invasive to property owners. Let people live their own lives without constant government intervention.

Respectfully,
Debra Hendrickson

From: [David Martin](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance Code - please make changes
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 12:38:42 PM
Attachments: [David Martin comments on Proposed Property Maintenance Code.docx](#)

[External Email]

Dear Mayor & Council,

I have a couple of concerns about the property maintenance code ordinance set for first reading on July 18.

First, I think the ordinance needs some more work. The main issue is that I think it goes too far in imposing new aesthetic requirements and that's why I don't support it as currently written. I know some of the aesthetic requirements are aiming for consistency with current rental requirements, but I think you can be flexible on that. Given your votes so far you may not agree with me. Even if you disagree about my concern with the aesthetic requirements, there are other kinds of problems I've identified in the draft that are more easily fixed. So **please take a look at my edits/comments in the attached marked-up draft and consider whether you would adopt any of the proposed changes.**

Second, as you know, I participated in the 2021 discussions and workshop. That was two years ago. I know staff has fully considered the comments they received and have adjusted the proposal accordingly. Sara and Rich have been really responsive on that. But you only had one member of the public talk to you about this during your June 20 workshop and zero on June 27. There were almost 20 speakers back in 2021. To me, this says that in spite of the solid efforts to publicize this ordinance, people still aren't sufficiently aware of it and there's a risk of outsized backlash if you simply begin passing it. Unless you alter course, I think you should plan for a lot of vocal opposition on July 18. (Though I still live primarily in North Dakota and won't be in attendance :-)

Best,
David

From: [Douglas Pepe](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: RE:Property Maintenance Code
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 4:22:07 PM

[External Email]

Greetings Mayor & Council,

I'm contacting you in support of the current property maintenance code to be under the public comment period and first reading on the 7/18 meeting. With consideration of city staff's recommendations and comments from other Ames citizens noted in today's Ames Tribune, it seems to me that the code is equitable for those living in rental & owner-occupied housing, as well as being satisfactorily not too heavy-handed in enforcement.

Best regards,
Doug Pepe
3539 Tripp St
50014

From: [Kelly Welsh-Wingate](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance Code
Date: Thursday, July 6, 2023 8:15:47 PM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor and Council members,

I would like to address a couple of items related to the proposed property maintenance code.

First, I understand that there is currently a code for rental properties but not for owner occupied properties. This has been brought up as “not fair”. This is not a good basis to move forward with a code on owner occupied properties in itself. Rental properties are a business for the purpose of generating a profit for the landlord. Similar to the difference between commercial and housing, there is a great difference between owner occupied and rental property. The code should naturally be more strict on a profit making business.

Second, a code for owner occupied property makes sense but should be as minimal as possible. Much of the proposed code seems reasonable but the following sections are not.

Sec 30.5 (3) Yard waste can only remain in your yard for 7 days.

I honestly see no reason for at all if it is stored in the back yard.

Sec 30.5 (8) No tall vegetation in city right of way.

This should only apply to noxious weeds or where it causes a safety hazard to traffic. I have a very nice and tall flower bed in the right of way. People complement me on it frequently, why should this be illegal?

Sec 30.5 (17) (I) fence must be the same on the entire property

Why? A fence that faces the street might be wooden with chain link around the back. Why would that be a problem? Seems like a rule looking for a problem

Sec 30.6 Abate without delay

I am not sure how soon “without delay” is but contractors can be difficult to schedule and some repairs can be prohibitively expensive. Instead, should the city look into ways to assist people who have issues affording repairs? The enforcement of the code could cause people to have to sell their property. Ames is better than this.

I ask you to please review and revise the above sections of the code prior to enacting it into law.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kelly Welsh-Wingate
1117 Wilson Ave
Ames, IA 50010

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Kathryn Corones](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Updated Property Ordinance
Date: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 1:30:06 PM

[External Email]



Hello,

Before passage, I would urge all to send a mailing to all citizens about the code with all details.

Out today I photographed several homes in Old Town that would not be compliant about chipped paint.



From: [user](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Reaction to proposed Property Maintenance Code
Date: Tuesday, July 4, 2023 6:39:21 PM

[External Email]

Hello and Happy Independence Day:

I just read through the most recent iteration of the proposed Property Maintenance Code, and I would like to submit my reactions for your consideration. As a long-time Ames resident and property owner, I feel that many of the proposed ordinances reflect an exceedingly narrow vision of "what a town should look like," more along the line of how realtors want their listed properties to appear, rather than how people actually live. Overall, the changes appear congruent with an upper-middle class aesthetic which denounces variety and demands subjugation to WASPish rules of propriety and "tidiness." Similar to the restrictive covenants of Home Owners' Associations (HOAs), the purpose of many of the proposed ordinances appears to be enhancement of property values-at the expense of the rights of property owners.

Below, I have copied (in italics) several of the proposed standards (<https://www.cityofames.org/government/departments-divisions-i-z/inspections/property-maintenance-areas-of-concern?fbclid=IwAR1z5HWmm2TUtuZU8MJbFx7U7GCMgT8IN7lUhv9Ht3PUb1hEu9BF1WD-LZw>), followed by my reactions.

*Possible Alternative based on Feedback from June 15, 2021 Workshop:
Vegetation located on private property that hangs over or into public streets with less than 16 feet of clearance above the public street or vegetation located on private property that hangs over or into public sidewalks with less than 10 feet of clearance above the sidewalk is prohibited.*

Apparently, multiple commentors thought the minimum height over a sidewalk should be reduced to eight feet. The Department of Transportation (DOT) requires a minimum of 10 feet above the sidewalk for any project receiving federal funding. If the DOT would be kind enough to utilize federal funding to pay for any sidewalk replacement, I'm sure that folks would agree with this standard. Otherwise, it seems silly inasmuch as it is highly unlikely that anyone would be so tall as to need to duck to get under an 8-foot tall overhanging branch.

*Possible Alternative based on Feedback from June 15, 2021 Workshop:
No owner shall, for a period of ten (10) daylight hours after the cessation of the storm or cause of accumulation, permit snow, ice, mud, gravel, grass clippings, leaves or other accumulations to remain on the adjoining and abutting sidewalks. (this is the current standard in Sec. 22.2(2) of the Municipal Code – with the addition of mud, gravel, grass clippings, and leaves)*

A salient question is “how much?” The proposed ordinance does not address the amount of snow, grass, etc. required to constitute a violation. Taken literally, this ordinance would force property owners to sweep their sidewalks if even a few leaves or a light dusting of snow accumulated.

Possible Alternative based on Feedback from June 15, 2021 Workshop:

a) Garbage or refuse set outdoors in any bag or container other than a trash disposal container is prohibited. Trash disposal containers must be constructed of a hard water-tight material. Containers cannot be left at the curb for more than 48 hours and must be placed behind the front yard or indoors when not set out for pick-up, unless located in an enclosure shown on an approved site plan.

This is certainly governmental overreach in several areas. First, any refuse that is too large to fit in a garbage can (e.g., a broken chair) would be illegal to set out for the trash collecting service. Second, the requirement that containers be hidden from view when not at the curb is legislating a conservative aesthetic that reflects “tidiness” as a civic duty. Third, are you really saying that people need to have a “site plan” approved by the city to build a small screen to hide their garbage can?

Initial Proposed Language from May 25, 2021 City Council Meeting:

All structures, including detached accessory structures, on any commercial, residential, agricultural or industrial property shall be free from significant structural defects. The term "free from significant structural defect" means:

(a) The roof and roofing material are of such a nature and condition that they do not permit water, snow or ice to penetrate the structure. Roofing materials shall be in good condition and made up of consistent materials and consistent coloration throughout the roof area.

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(b) Drainage gutters and downspouts, if present, are securely attached to the structure and in proper functioning order.

(c) All exterior trim and exterior exposed surfaces, including siding materials, must be sound, in good condition and securely attached to the structure.

(d) Exterior walls must be free of holes and made of a consistent material, such that patches or repairs consisting of dissimilar materials or colors compared to the prevailing surface material of the exterior walls are not present.

(e) The foundation of the structure is sound, capable of supporting the structure and not deteriorated to the point that failure is judged to be inevitable, but not necessarily imminent. The foundation shall be plumb and free from cracks, breaks and holes to prevent the entry of animals.

(f) Windows and doors, including outer screen or storm windows and doors, must be intact, containing no holes, squarely hung with properly operating latches or locks to be securely closed, and where the windows have intact glass or normal window material that allows the entry of light with no holes in said window surface areas. No plastic wrap material or tarps shall be used to substitute for doorways or windows.

(g) All exterior components serving doors and windows, including, but not limited to, steps, porches, ramps, landings, handrails, and guardrails must be of a secure and safe design, be made of standard building materials and be intact, with no protruding or loose boards or surface materials causing a hazard.

*(h) Exterior wall surfaces are properly painted and/or maintained with appropriate exterior wall materials, including wood, vinyl, steel or metal siding materials, stucco or exterior insulation finish system (EIFS) materials, brick or similar masonry materials, that are in all cases intact, not in a condition of deterioration, are of **uniform coloration** and are not patched with dissimilar materials. Plastic wrap material shall not be considered an acceptable siding material. **No flaking or chipped paint or outer loose material dominates or detracts from the exterior appearance of the structure.***

*(i) All fencing, including gates, shall be maintained in good condition, free from damage, breaks, holes or missing structural members. **All fencing shall be of consistent materials and coloration.***

(j) All exterior wires which are hanging or unsecured on the exterior of the structure must be fastened to the structure in order to avoid life safety issues.

The requirement for shingles and fences to have “uniform coloration” once again appears to reflect a particular, and rather limited, aesthetic concept. Under this ordinance, patterned roofs would be outlawed, as would fences of varying designs. The prohibition of “flaking or chipped paint” would likely constitute a boon for house painters, but once again forces home owners to adhere to an upper-middle class concept of aesthetic acceptability.

*Possible Alternative based on Feedback from June 15, 2021 Workshop:
All real property defaced by graffiti vandalism, which is visible to the public view and has not been removed within 7 days of notification by the enforcement officer is prohibited.*

Does this mean that the homeowner may retroactively approve of the graffiti, rendering the violation moot?

*Possible Alternative based on Feedback from June 15, 2021 Workshop:
Travel trailers, recreational vehicles, boats, and boat trailers parked in the front yard are prohibited. Parking of travel trailers, recreational vehicles, boats, and boat trailers are permitted behind the front yard so long as they are not being used for habitation or business purposes and they are parked on an approved parking surface.*

Many, if not most, homes do not have parking surfaces behind the front of the house. This ordinance would require owners of recreational vehicles to seek out commercial parking or storage facilities, which can cost up to (and over) \$100/month. Currently, our small neighborhood has two travel trailers and one motor home parked in driveways or on the street. No one seems to mind. This ordinance addresses neither public safety or public order. Instead,

it again reflects an extremely limited view of “how things should look.”

*Initial Proposed Language from May 25, 2021 City Council Meeting:
Allowing turf grasses to exceed 12 inches in height is prohibited.*

No rationale is given for this limitation on the height of turf grasses. Additionally, no definition of “turf grass” is given. The discussion indicates that native grasses, flowers, bushes, gardens, etc. would not be thus limited, but there is no explanation for why tall “turf grass” is onerous while tall “other growth” is not.

In summary, most of the egregious elements of these proposed ordinances appear to promote a narrow concept of “proper aesthetics,” possibly reflecting a desire for Ames to appear as a “proper upper middle class suburb.” While the Council often champions the concept of Diversity and Inclusion, I suggest that these proposed ordinances actually limit diversity, perhaps for the purpose of maximizing real estate values.

Thank you for consideration of my feedback regarding these potential ordinance changes. If you have any questions, or if you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at your convenience,

Respectfully,

Kenneth Mills
1415 Arthur Drive
Ames, IA 50010

From: [Katy Patterson](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: odious property maintenance code
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 10:07:41 AM

[External Email]

To the mayor and the council,
I thought this was dead. Why in the hell is this back?
We had a lot of excellent public input both via written comment and in person about why this was an absolutely terrible idea.
You all should go back and watch the recorded comments from people the last time you all tried this. They cover all the very salient objections very thoroughly.
There are major equity issues in these proposals, and for a town proclaiming to be conscious of equity this would be a very back look. It all reeks of privilege and honestly of a WASPy view on what is "acceptable" or "pleasing".
This is all also very much HOA level intrusion. If I wanted to live under the tyranny of a stupid HOA, I would. I don't.

-Sometimes we forget our garbage cans.

-Sometimes as we're cleaning up an area, we pile things at the curb to offer to others to recycle, upcycle, repurpose, etc which I would think Ames would see as a positive, since it keeps these materials out of the waste stream (something again you all claim to support).

-Sometimes we capitalize on what others are getting rid of, to repurpose ourselves, and it may take us a bit to get there. Who are you to determine one, what is junk, and two how long it will take us to get those items remade?

-Sometimes we are working on repainting (or otherwise mending) our homes ourselves because paying someone to do it is prohibitively expensive, and it takes time to DIY.

-Some of us think a manicured swath of a non native and I'd say invasive set of species (turf grasses) is ugly, unsightly, disgusting, and unsafe due to how much fertilizer, pesticide, herbicide, and excessive water usage it takes to maintain that aesthetic. In a time when we all should be more conscious of how our choices affect the greater environment around us, the absolute LAST thing we should be promoting is the traditional turf lawn. But here we are, effectively mandating people plant that trash and mow it. No. I will grow things that either feed myself and my kids, feed the native creatures and pollinators, or both. with as little mowing as possible, and no chemicals. period.

-Some people find their joy in fixing/restoring old vehicles. With the restrictions we already have on accessory buildings/garages and on how many we can have and where they can be, some people have no choice but to work on their vehicles in their driveways. Want to regulate a "junk" vehicle on the street? ok. but not in someone's driveway. leave off.

I could keep going on the list of proposed restrictions but I won't.

We all know a completely dilapidated and hazardous dwelling when we see one. Focus on those. And when it comes to a space where it seems like perhaps a homeowner is elderly or disabled and could use some help keeping their place from becoming dilapidated, we should as a community be offering help. Have we ever thought to form a volunteer community group of people with skills and tools who might be willing to be paired with homeowners who WANT help, to provide aid for free? Why not explore that rather than these overly restrictive and intrusive regulations?

I urge you to drop this mess like a hot stone, and focus your time and effort on things that would really benefit our community, things like trying to help the school district with funding, perhaps? So that our kids aren't having their educations curtailed?

Thank you for your time.

-Katy Patterson Phelps,
Ames homeowner.

From: [lora larrance](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance Code Discussion
Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 9:37:27 AM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

Thank you for taking on this difficult subject. I ask that you consider how to address homeowners who have issues with hoarding that have random junk accumulating OUTSIDE of their homes.

There is an example on 28th Street where numerous problems have been reported by the neighbors. And the neighbors are dealing with vermin due to the situation.

In theory the current regulations should cover this problem. Thus, I request you review how the city can increase the enforcement of current (and major) maintenance issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Lora Larrance

From: [Mary Warren](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Owner maintenance code
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 11:43:37 AM

[External Email]

Hello,

I am going to send you a series of photos that hopefully show you exactly why I am strongly in favor of passage of an owner occupied property maintenance code.

My husband and myself live at 3121 Maplewood Road. These photos are from the property beside us that is not maintained. The first photo is volunteer trees and thistles. The next are the weeds and thistles. Their mowing habits are to mow about every 6 weeks, and in the 5 years they have lived there, the mowing has ceased in August.

Unfortunately, their weeds and thistles and volunteer trees don't obey property boundaries.

The backyard contains goldenrod and ragweed, along with fireweed, thistles and run of the mill weeds. Those reach their maximum height and bloom later this month.

I used to sit out on our patio and read in the summer. Now, because I am an asthmatic, I am unable to do that because of the allergic nature of thistles, ragweed and goldenrod.

I have contacted the city staff and have been told without an owner occupied ordinance their hands are tied.

There are more photos coming. I took these photos from our property and I'm not a professional photographer.

We have an HOA. Our HOA President has said the City needs an ordinance in order to give our covenants a leg to stand on. My husband and I have talked to the neighbors and tried to gently give them pointers on lawn care, mowing etc.

They have lived there 5 years. I don't remember them ever making an effort to rake or handle leaves.

There is housing for people that don't wish to do lawn maintenance, it's called a townhome.

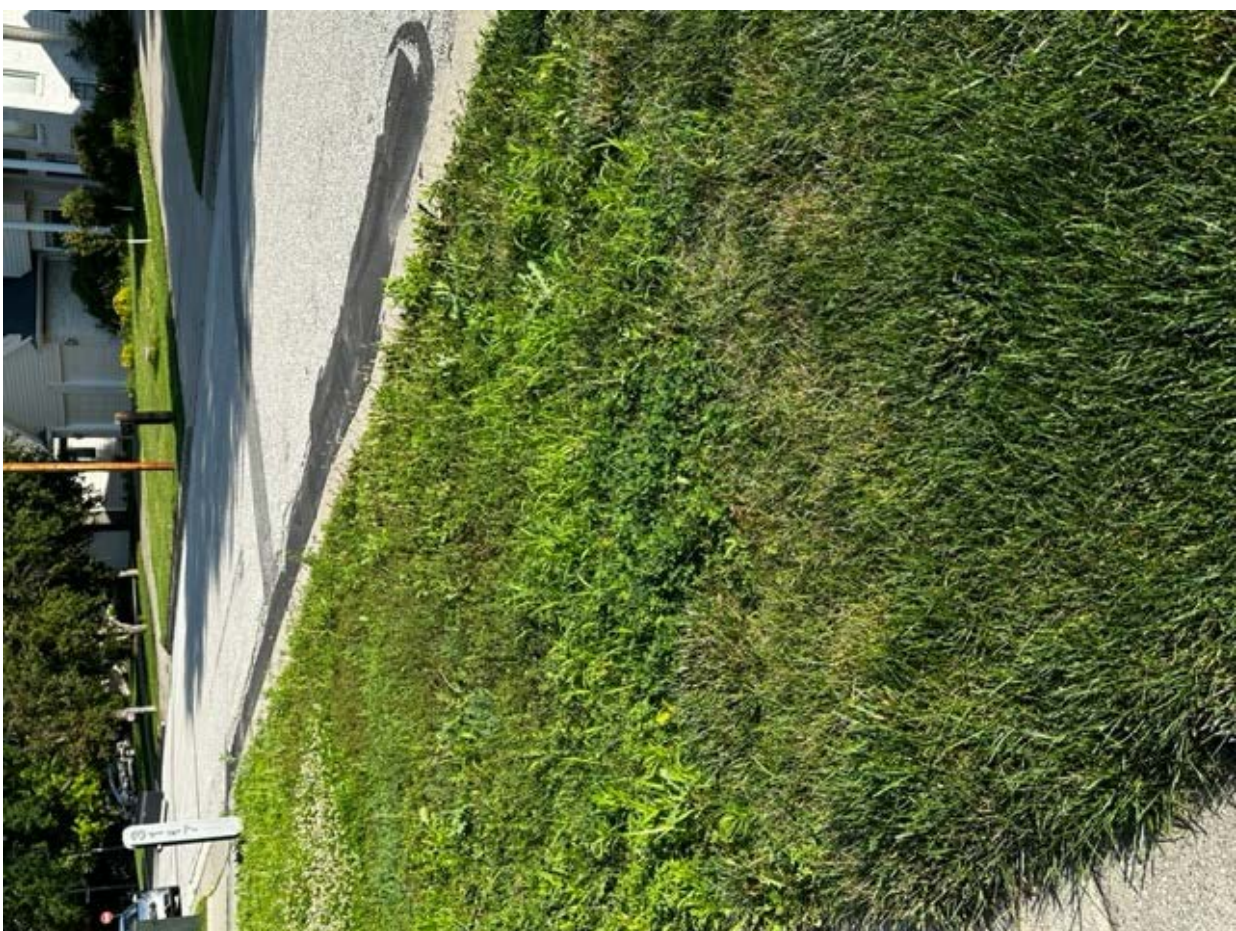
The people who live there have children, their younger child talks to us frequently and asks if she can play in our yard because her yard is too prickly. She does cartwheels in our yard, because she doesn't want her hands landing on thistles.

You are welcome to drive by.

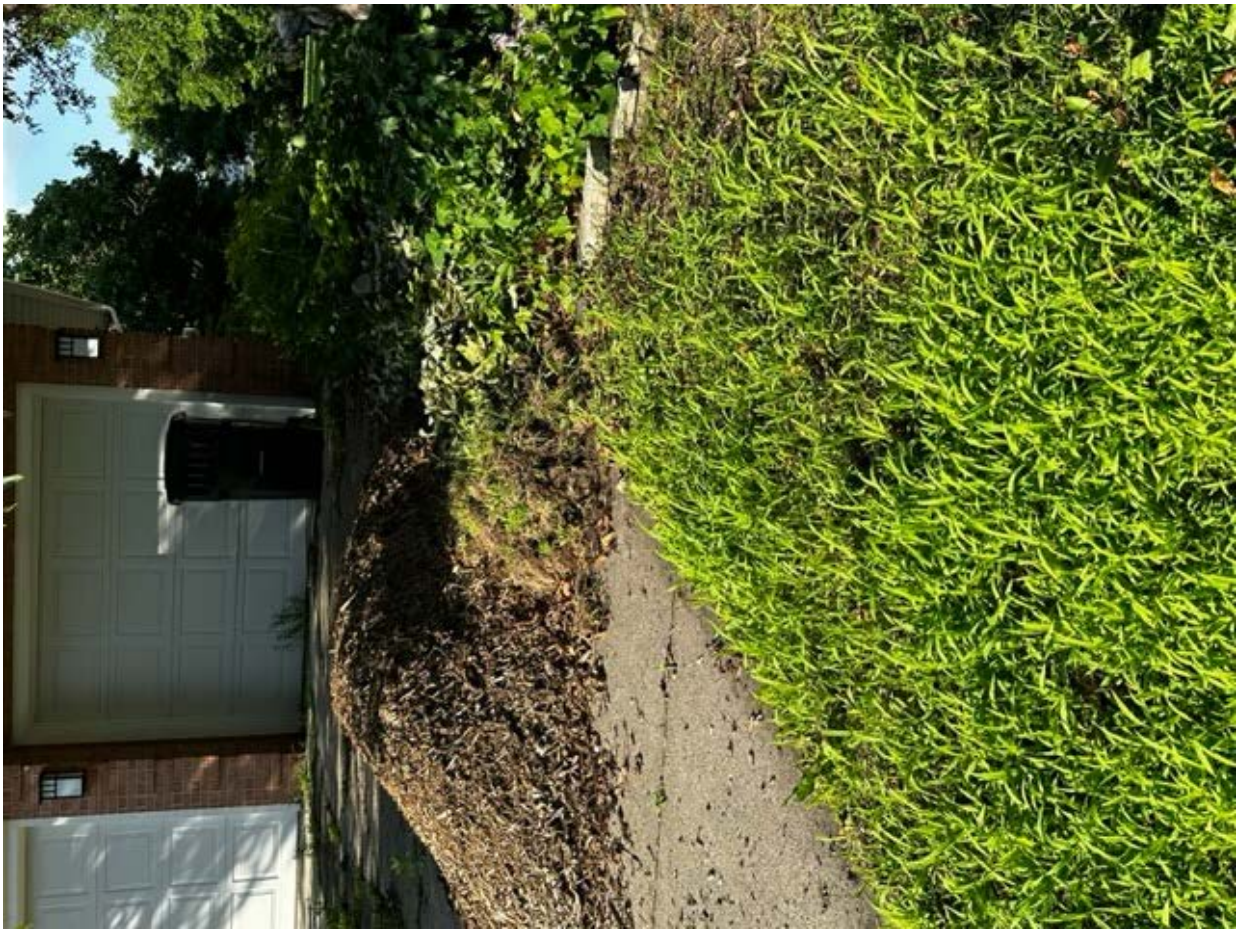
More photos coming.

Thank you,
Mary Warren
3121 Maplewood Road









Sent from my iPhone

From: [Mary Warren](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Owner Occupied part 2
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 11:51:00 AM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor & Council,

Please pass the owner occupied code.

This mulch pile has a ton of flies around it. It has been in the driveway since March. Something should be addressed with grass-weeds in spaces in sidewalks. They are a tripping hazard, which is a health & safety concern. Left to grow, they then push the sidewalk up, and it becomes uneven, as shown in the photos. The mulch pile is directly beside our house. I live at 3121 Maplewood Road.

The sidewalks are in my neighborhood.

When you are walking, pushing a stroller, or with elderly, the grass in the sidewalk becomes a problem for tripping.

Thank you for your passage of an owner occupied property maintenance code.

Mary Warren
3121 Maplewood Road







Sent from my iPhone

From: [Mary Warren](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Owner Code #3
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 12:00:28 PM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor & Council,

A photo is worth a thousand words-right?

These are taken of an owner occupied property showing how the thistles and weeds are taller than I am. I am standing in the backyard of a rental that my husband and I own.

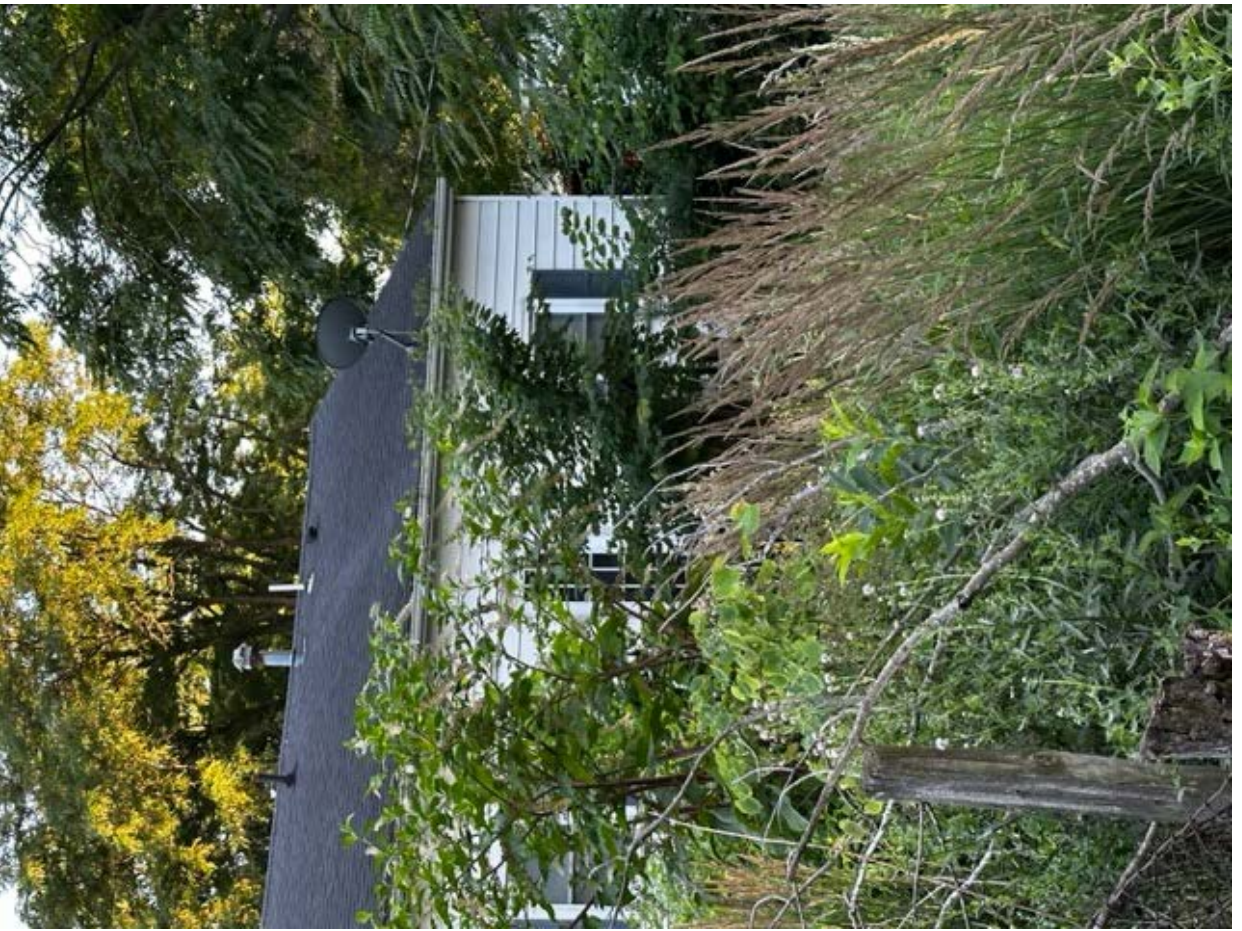
The trees behind me are dead on their property. Please address dead trees in the ordinance. My husband has talked to the owner, talked to the City, and without a code-ordinance, there is nothing we can do.

We are constantly spraying our property as the thistles and weeds don't obey the property lines.

Mary Warren
3121 Maplewood Road









Sent from my iPhone

From: [Mary Warren](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Owner code #4
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 12:06:45 PM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor and Council,

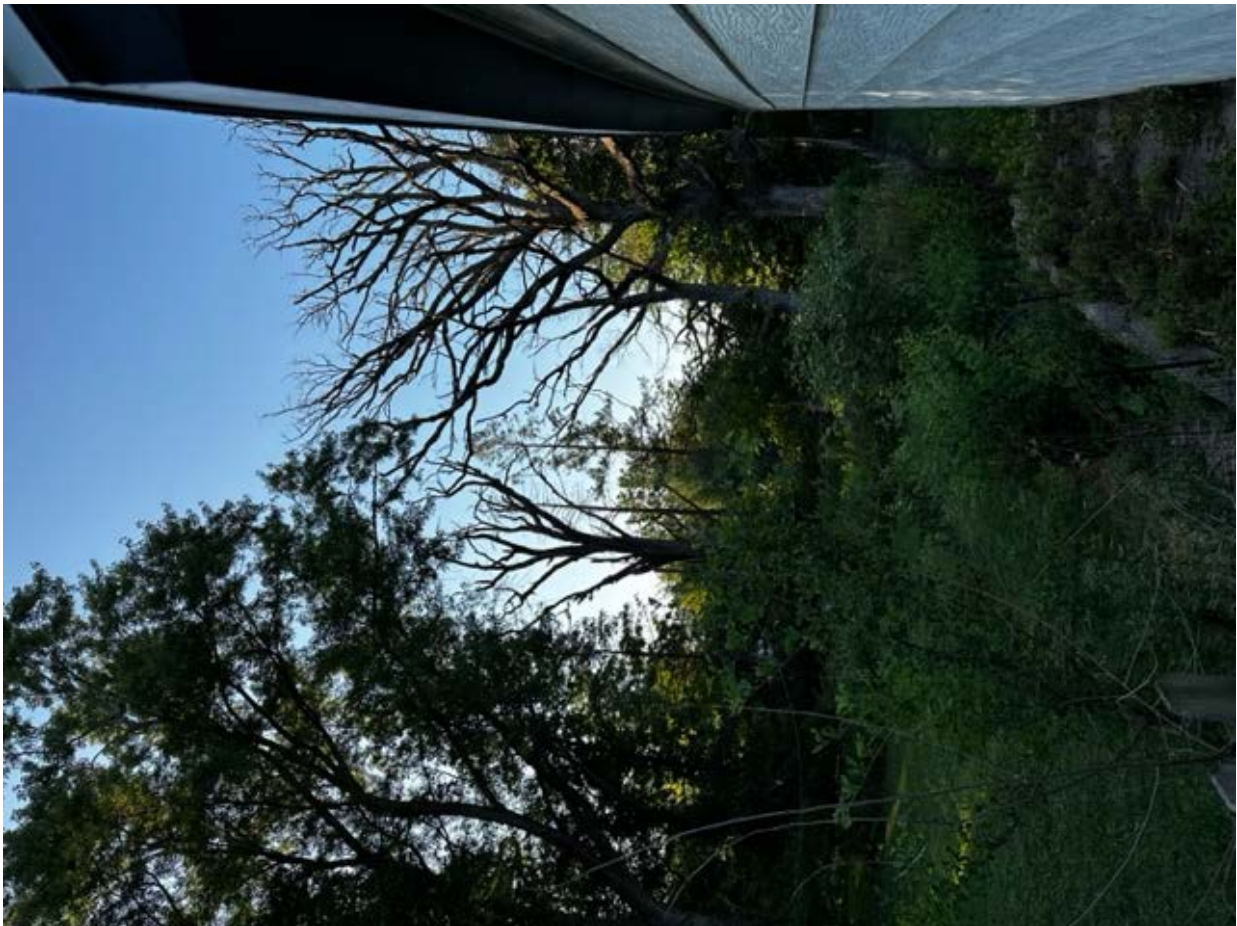
These are photos I took last night of huge dead trees that pose a hazard to a property my husband and I own. They are located on an owner occupied property next to a rental property we own on Story Street.

We have had city staff advise us, and without an owner occupied code, there is nothing we can do. These trees can fall on our property and we will be liable for damages.

Please include dead trees in the owner occupied code. Dead trees are a health and safety issue. A dead tree falling can easily kill somebody.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Mary Warren
3121 Maplewood Road











Sent from my iPhone

From: [Olena Watanabe](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: proposed Property Management Code feedback
Date: Sunday, July 9, 2023 9:01:12 PM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor Halia and members of the City Council:

I am writing to you with my feedback on the proposed Property management Code.

What deeply concerns me is that there are provisions in the Code that are clearly written to maintain and increase property values in the City without regard to the citizens who value functionality, sustainability, ecology, and/or biodiversity and habitat preservation over property values. In addition, the proposed Code is outright punitive to individuals with limited mobility, and individuals with disabilities, and those of limited financial means, because, as the Code is written, nearly every third property in town would be out of compliance.

For instance, **yard waste cannot remain on the property longer than 7 days unless composting.** Drying branches or bush clippings do not do any harm; they do not smell or cause a nuisance. However, anyone who misses their yard waste day, would be breaking a code simply by waiting an extra week.

Snow... grass clippings, leaves.... remaining on the sidewalks must be removed within 10 daylight hours. And if a warming temperature is projected that would melt all snow the following day, is a person to be breaking the Code? This reminds me of an old joke from the USSR Army. The novice recruits were instructed to “go and clean all the snow...before it melts.”

Furthermore, the grass clippings or leaves are removed by noisy and mostly gas-run leaf blowers. Why wouldn't the City Council consider **how much of a nuisance the maintaining of properties and sidewalks in pristine condition is created when all the noisy and gas-operated landscaping equipment is used?** Yet, the nuisance of the gas smell or the noise is never considered because such nuisance preserves property values, and therefore is allowed by the City without reservations. Why not require that leaves be removed only by raking and clippings by sweeping? Surely quieter neighborhoods would be even more value-preserving?

Vegetation located in the right-of-way and exceeding 12 inches in height. I checked on the daisies by my mailbox (located in the City's right of way). I regret to note that they are higher than 12 inches in height. They would be out of compliance, despite providing food for pollinators and not impeding driving visibility. Similarly, many of my neighbors have tall perennials by their mailboxes and trellises (also prohibited) for vining flowers such as the passiflora or morning glory. In fact, our City is full of properties that have pollinating gardens with tall perennials in the right of way! Why does the Council believe that creating habitats that protect pollinating insects is somehow a nuisance or an undesirable action?!

You prohibit upholstered or finished furniture outside. This section is targeting primarily students, who are not allowed to use whatever means they have to make themselves comfortable outside simply because indoor furniture outdoors is unsightly. This rule also promotes overconsumption and prohibits reusing and upcycling existing furnishings. Some gardeners use frames of old appliances or old wood drawers as flower or vegetable beds, which is a reasonable and creative reuse of those materials. The Code disallows this reuse.

You **require consistent material and coloration in roofs, sidings, and fences.** Again, the code places aesthetics (to preserve property values) over functionality, and the owners' ability to fix and reuse materials, instead of buying new things. Do you recall that when old greyed wooden fences are patched up with new wood, there will be discoloration until such new wood is also withered and greyed with time? There is nothing unsafe in a discolored piece of siding or a patched-up roof. With this rule, the City is overstepping its reach into a homeowner's right to maintain their house in a safe condition by performing repairs with materials on hand, even if they do not match the rest of the property.

Overall, the Code reads as if it is turning the entire City into a giant, overbearing HOA. And I live in an HOA area, but gladly ours is reasonable.

The proposed Code favors wealthy property owners, who ascribe to the perfect and manicured property aesthetics and have the means to outsource repairs and maintenance. This Code will punish homeowners who believe that ecology and sustainability are more important than the appearance of properties. The Code will punish homeowners of limited means and those with disabilities. This Code will also incentivize some residents to complain constantly about their neighbors being out of compliance. Is the City prepared, resource-wise, to handle all of these complaints?

There are, of course, good regulations written in. It is good that the City cares about the safety of its citizens, and I am grateful for those efforts. For instance, the City is full of dead or dying ash trees that should be removed before they fall and potentially cause damage or injuries. However, I urge the Council to eliminate provisions with no functional or safety features which focus only on aesthetics. I ask the Council to allow property owners the freedom to use their properties to build and develop **their homes and gardens** for their families instead of being forced into someone's vision of a suburban landscape. I ask the Council to vote on a reasonable property maintenance Code, not a Set of HOA bylaws.

Sincerely yours,
Olena Watanabe
(Ames citizen since 2012)

From: [Paul Attema](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Proposed Changes: Chapter 30
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 1:56:54 PM

[External Email]

Hello Mayor and City Council,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I strongly believe that maintenance requirements should not be imposed from the city for aesthetic purposes on residential properties.

I have owned my house for 5 years. Over this time, I have ripped off and replaced a 30 year old roof, repainted most of the exterior, and replaced corroded galvanized plumbing. This accounts for a lot of personal time and money.

The citizens of Ames are intrinsically motivated to maintain their properties. Ames remains a beautiful city because we have a strong community and are economically prosperous.

I do not think that outside pressure from the city in this area will be effective.

Thank you again for your time,

Paul Attema
229 S Russell Ave
Ames, Iowa

From: [Renate Dellmann](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance
Date: Tuesday, June 27, 2023 9:39:51 AM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor Haila and City Council Members,
please tread gently on what we do with our front yards. Turf grass is lovely to look at but environmentally dead and harmful (herbicides, lawn mowing). It is possible, and so many yards in the city are now a great example, especially in the area around Ridgewood, to let things grow or plant them, invite insects and pollinators in, capture and retain rain water (by the way, I love what the City has done along the parking lot) and have it look beautiful.. Garbage, old cars, junk - yes, that should be curtailed and eliminated, overhanging branches should already have been removed by an attentive homeowner, but restricting us to 12 inch turf grass - please, no!

Sincerely
Renate Dellmann
1026 Gaskill Drive

From: [Tiffany Antone](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: property maintenance ordinance
Date: Friday, June 30, 2023 10:13:42 AM

[External Email]

Dear Council Members -

I am writing with objections to the proposed property maintenance ordinance. It is clear that safety and aesthetics have been intermixed, creating what feels like a city-wide HOA policy. It is not the purview of public officials to create laws about whether or not roofing materials all match, or to issue notices to homeowners whose paint is peeling. These people may only be able to afford to patch their roofs, rather than replace the whole thing. They may not be able to afford fresh paint. By creating laws about not-safety related property looks, you are interfering with homeowners financial well-being and putting undue burden on the less privileged.

Additionally, this type of ordinance will foster grievances amongst neighbors - no one likes the HOA complainers. No one appreciates the feeling of neighbors watching to see how high their grass gets. This ordinance is the opposite of community building. I implore you to reconsider the language and applications of this ordinance - in particular those inclusions that would put undue burden on homeowners to tend to aesthetic repairs they may not be in a position to make on the city's timeline.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Antone
Ames resident

From: [Tam Lorenz](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Cc: deblee58@yahoo.com
Subject: Property maintenance code: Ames Municipal Code chapter 30
Date: Monday, June 26, 2023 10:23:55 PM

[External Email]

Dear Mayor and Council,

The following are my suggests for edits to the proposed property maintenance code.

Pushing Snow Into the Street (Section 30.5(7):

As Bronwyn predicted during the June 20th meeting, there is at least one citizen (me) whose response to the proposal is: I won't shovel or snow blow any snow into the street after the street is cleared IF City plows will stop pushing street snow up my driveway apron and cover my sidewalks after I've cleared them.

Ninety percent of the snow removal I do in the winter is with a shovel. However, I finally had to buy a big snow blower because I could no longer break through or drive over the wall of snow and ice City plows compact at the end of my driveway. I've had snow plow pillars of frozen snow as tall as a yard stick. More than once last winter, the plow driver drove down my street with such speed street snow was forcefully thrown to completely cover my driveway apron and sidewalk after I'd already shoveled all. And, my property has a wide parking strip between the street and the sidewalk! Slow Down the Plows!

Request: Please limit the ordinance's coverage to only COMMERCIAL snow removal equipment, whether on commercial or residential property.

Holes in the back yard (Section 30.5(14):

I really think a requirement to fence a back yard hole of 3.5 feet in depth is over-reach. It is the property owner's responsibility to limit their negligence liability created by such a hole, not the City's. The question was asked: How is a shallow (earthen) hole different from a swimming pool that requires fencing? I suggest the following as only one possible answer: If one falls into a shallow dirt hole, the probability of serious injury is drastically different from that of falling into a filled swimming pool, where one might drown, or an empty pool, where one might die from a long drop onto concrete.

If my dog enjoys hole digging in my fenced back yard, that is my look out, not the City's. I truly do not see how a 3.5 foot hole, that does not cut through any utility lines, in my backyard restricts or interferes with the "comfortable enjoyment of life or property by the public or community." Section 30.5, Nuisance definition introductory paragraph (my emphasis).

Request: Please abandon the shallow hole-fencing provision for residential backyards.

Curb Side Giveaways (Section 30.5(15):

I see many pickers in my neighborhood taking "freebies" that neighbors leave on the parking.

Give cash-strapped people a chance to directly recycle and re-purpose tables, desks, shelving, housewares and un-upholstered chairs.

Request: Please don't prevent the placement of other than large upholstered furniture on the parking. If you must put a limit on such items, restrict the amount of time (such as 48 hours) these un-upholstered items may remain on the parking.

As always, thank you for your work and taking the time to read this email.

Tam Lorenz
311 S. Maple Ave

Sent from my iPad

From: [Tim Rasmussen](#)
To: [City Council and Mayor](#)
Subject: Property Maintenance
Date: Friday, July 7, 2023 10:42:44 AM
Attachments: [ames.pdf](#)

[External Email]

All,

Thank you for your attention to property maintenance. I think there are aspects that need to be addressed. We all know a nuisance property when we see it. The few nuisance properties in Ames need some attention and the owners need some direction in correcting the issues. I'm glad you've brought this up, as it has gotten the attention of Ames residents.

That said, I think many aspects of the proposal overstep the need to take corrective action on nuisance properties. My thoughts are below. I've also attached my notated copy of the proposal, color coded with green for go, yellow of caution, and red for stop.

Many of the items are only items that decrease the value of the home for the owner. People make bad financial decisions all the time. No one is in a position to insist on perfect paint jobs. Some of the neatest fences I've ever seen were mismatched. I've owned houses where two sides of fencing were already done by neighbors and I only did the 3rd side of the backyard to have a complete fence. If people decrease their own value by making bad decisions, the market will correct this situation. Let the market do the job. The next owner will get the house at a reasonable price, and likely make the repairs.

We need more gardens. We need more pollinators. We need to be more creative in how we manage our greenspace. We need less chemicals. The days of the monthly chemical spray to ensure every yard is perfectly matching green are done. Yards are meant to be an expression of the homeowner. From a design aspect, outdoor space should flow directly into the interior of the home, creating continuity. Trying to limit garden space is the exact wrong direction we should take.

Per discussion, it sounds like the intention would be for the public to monitor these regulations. We're seeing some of this in Somerset currently. At least one resident is marking every last sidewalk crack for replacement. We now have the ugliest sidewalks in town as we have a cobblestone of mismatched concrete with individual squares getting replaced. I run these sidewalks all the time and most of the 'disrepair' was hardly a tripping hazard, but these homeowners have had to spend thousands to repair adequate sidewalks. Expecting the public to manage this code will be completely unmanageable. I don't think you are correctly projecting the number of claims your current proposal will draw. It will snowball out of control. One person will get a complaint registered against their fence, so they will begin to cite every mismatched shingle, cracked window, and lawn clipping pile that didn't get picked up quickly enough. You will be pitting neighbor against neighbor, as many of the items would only be noticed by someone living in close proximity.

The few of you that know me personally know that I am in the process of cleaning up a nuisance property. Thankfully for all of us, the property is outside of Ames city limits. I also

grew up on a nuisance property. My father was one of the worst of the worst when it came to household upkeep. He left debris everywhere. His junkyard would have been exempt from your proposal, but he let every home he ever owned become an extension of his junkyard. Ultimately, as noted above, it became just a bad financial decision. We're spending tens of thousands to clean up his properties so we can sell the bare lots. We shouldn't let residents get to that point, but the houses that are heading in that direction are very, very few.

Ultimately, your current proposal is just judgmental. Yes, we have a few nuisance properties. Please figure out how to correct those, without judging every last resident for their personal property preferences.

Thank you,
Tim Rasmussen
2808 Northridge Ln.