

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ACTION STEPS

BACKGROUND:

On May 12, 2009, the City Council accepted the goals and objectives for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as prepared by the Steering Committee and as recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Following Council acceptance of the goals and objectives, the Steering Committee has been working with consultant William Page and City staff to prepare the "Action Steps". **"Action Steps" are statements that further refine actions needed to implement the goals and objectives of the Historic Preservation Plan. "Action Steps" are listed below the objectives of each goal.**

It should be noted that the Steering Committee is proposing changes to some of the "Objectives" previously approved by the City Council on May 12, as well as proposing that the City Council accept the "Action Steps" reflected in this report. On August 10, 2009, the Steering Committee finalized their recommendations to the Commission and the City Council.

On August 17, 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council accept the proposed "Action Steps" and proposed changes to the "Objectives" to be included in the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, with one revision to the Action Steps prepared by the Steering Committee. The revision is to add an Action Step to Goal #4, Objective D, to read as follows:

Action Step: Identify and designate appropriate public access site or sites for preservation information.

On August 19, 2009, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council accept the "Action Steps" proposed by the Steering Committee to be included in the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

The Planning and Zoning Commission was also interested in knowing the other components that would be included in the draft of the Historic Preservation Plan. The Table of Contents and Appendices for the Historic Preservation Plan have been included with this report as "Attachment B." This shows the supporting narrative materials and background information that will complete the Plan, which will also include an Executive Summary.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can direct that the proposed “Action Steps” and changes to “Objectives” for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as recommended for acceptance by the Steering Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, be included in the final draft of the Plan.
2. The City Council can direct that the proposed “Action Steps” and changes to “Objectives” for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as recommended for acceptance by the Steering Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as suggested changes by staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa, be included in the final draft of the Plan.
3. The City Council can direct that the proposed “Action Steps” and changes to “Objectives” for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as recommended for acceptance by the Steering Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, be included in the final draft of the Plan with revisions as determined by the City Council.
4. The City Council can refer this item back to City staff, the Consultant, the Steering Committee and/or the Historic Preservation Commission for additional information and/or changes.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It should be acknowledged that the Steering Committee and Consultant worked closely with the City staff while developing the proposed action steps. Overall, the staff is in support of the recommendations from the Steering Committee and Historic Preservation Committee. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1, thereby accepting the proposed “Action Steps” for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan and changes to “Objectives”, as recommended for acceptance by the Steering Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

However, prior to making a final decision regarding the action steps, the Council should be aware that the proposed action steps are quite ambitious and could require a substantial commitment on the part of the City in terms of finances and staff time to accomplish. Particular attention should be given to the action steps that require:

- the requirement for historic street lights unique to national or local districts (page 3),
- the funding of one full-time staff position at the Ames Historical Society (page 4),
- the offering of tax abatement for residential improvements to contributing resources within historic districts and landmarks (page 4), and
- the support for a minimum maintenance code for rental and owner-occupied property (page 6).

Goals, Objectives & Action Steps of the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan

September 18, 2009

Additions to “Objectives” that have not yet been approved by the City Council are shown in “**Bold**” type and “Underlined.”

Deletions to “Objectives” that have not yet been approved by the City Council are shown with a “~~Strikethrough~~.”

GOAL #1. Acknowledge the role of historic preservation in encouraging civic pride, neighborhood identity, economic vitality, and community sustainability.

Objective A:

Adopt strategies to conserve historic neighborhoods, which reflect their organic development, historical roles and traditions, modern needs, and economic health and stability.

Action Step: Form an umbrella organization of neighborhood associations to work toward goals of mutual benefit.

Action Step: Encourage the study and appreciation of Ames history in all its wards and eras, including the mid-20th century.

Action Step: Develop design guidelines for the installation and use of historic streetlights in national or local historic districts.

Objective B:

Facilitate the preservation efforts of neighborhood associations.

Action Step: Share historic preservation survey documentation with neighborhood associations.

Action Step: Sponsor an annual summit of neighborhood associations where residents can learn about historic preservation as a tool for community improvement, share accomplishments, discuss problems, and network.

Objective C:

Strengthen the role of historic preservation in promoting Ames tourism.

Action Step: Inform the Convention & Visitors Bureau, University, and Chamber of Commerce about historic preservation as an essential component to market Ames tourism.

Objective D:

Inform the public about the role of historic preservation in stabilizing and increasing property values and the community's tax base.

Action Step: Analyze property assessment records to test the hypothesis that values have risen in Old Town since the implementation of municipal design review in 1989.

Action Step: Encourage the Convention & Visitor Bureau, University, and Chamber of Commerce to disseminate this information in their activities.

GOAL #2. Promote the preservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant resources in the community.

Objective A:

Provide financial support for the Ames Historical Society to assist in achieving the goals of the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

Action Step: Identify a strategy to fund one, full-time, equivalent professional staff employee and supporting costs for the Ames Historical Society.

Objective B:

Promote economic incentive opportunities to encourage the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods.

Action Step: Provide property tax abatement for residential improvements to contributing resources within designated historic districts and landmarks.

Objective C:

Provide guidance for preserving and improving historic properties to developers, property owners, and others interested in historic preservation.

Action Step: Encourage the owners of public, commercial, and residential property to seek non-binding advice about proposed rehabilitation projects from the Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

Action Step: Encourage the retention of outbuildings on historic properties, particularly automobile garages.

Action Step: Preserve natural resources with individual significance or that are significant as contributing to a landscape within which other historic buildings or structures are situated.

Objective D:

Encourage private support and commitment for preservation undertakings.

Action Step: Encourage property owners to pursue National Register nominations as personal undertakings.

Objective E:

Increase awareness of the potential for archaeological sites within the city and legal protection for them.

Action Step: In all historic survey projects, consider a property’s potential for National Register Criterion D significance (archaeology), including sites where historic archaeology (previous buildings, foundations, and/or other habitation materials on a site) might apply.

GOAL #3. Enhance municipal policies to protect historic resources and implement policies through identification, effective legislation, and efficient regulatory measures.

Objective A:

Revise *Chapter 31* in the Ames Municipal Code and related ordinances to broaden applicability, improve clarity, and/or make consistent with National Register standards.

Objective B:

~~Identify historic resources significant to the city’s past.~~ **Continue to improve Ames inventories of historic properties through reconnaissance and intensive historical, architectural, and archaeological surveys.**

Action Step: Identify and prioritize, by the Ames Historic Preservation Commission, potential reconnaissance and intensive historic survey projects and strategize, by the Commission, funding mechanisms to achieve them.

Action Step: Publicize results of previous surveys to promote preservation among property owners.

Objective C:

Revise local historic district and landmark design guidelines to clarify their intent and to reflect new materials, technologies, and “green issues.”

Action Step: Remove internal inconsistencies and update design guidelines to reflect new materials, technologies, and “green issues.”

Objective D:

Continue to designate local historic districts, local landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places properties.

Action Step: Identify and prioritize, by the Ames Historic Preservation Commission, potential National Register historic districts and strategize, by the Commission, funding mechanisms, if necessary, to list them.

Action Step: Identify and designate properties eligible for listing as local landmarks and local historic districts.

Action Step: Explore the possibility of designating a property in Ames as a National Historic Landmark.

Action Step: Explore the potential to register the Lincoln Highway in Ames as a National Register of Historic Places historic district.

Objective E:

Ensure that design guidelines for city re/development incentive programs respect the historic character of the properties and surrounding areas to which they are applied.

Action Step: Utilize the expertise of Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

Objective F:

Ensure that expansion or development of city property follows good preservation practices.

Action Step: Utilize the expertise of Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

Objective G:

Protect the value of properties and neighborhoods by working to prevent the deterioration of structures.

Action Step: Support the minimum maintenance code for rental and owner occupied property.

GOAL #4. Educate the public concerning the value and benefit of historic preservation.

Objective A:

Increase public awareness of and support for historic preservation archival materials.

Action Step: Create and publish a list of historic preservation archival materials and their locations.

Objective B:

Promote and offer walking tours, lectures, workshops, and other educational opportunities focused on historic preservation.

Action Step: Gather public input detailing stories of Ames history, people, and properties using a city-provided on-line access and other methods.

Action Step: Develop and disseminate tour brochures, which identify the homes and worksites of notable Ames residents.

Action Step: Sponsor workshops targeted to multiple audiences with emphasis on commercial and residential architecture property, incentives, and hands-on brick and mortar issues.

Objective C:

Utilize website/on-line presence.

Action Step: Maintain a computerized list of survey materials for city staff and others to consult in planning projects.

Action Step: Develop and maintain an online instructional sheet to explain correct methods to record information concerning historic properties and an online form for that information.

Action Step: Provide information concerning grants-in-aid and other funding sources for historic preservation.

Action Step: Include applications for Ames local historic districts, local landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places properties on the city's website.

Objective D:

Facilitate the dissemination of historic preservation information.

Action Step: Identify and designate appropriate public access site or sites for preservation information.

Action Step: Gather historic preservation information and resource materials and provide public access for their use.

GOAL #5. Facilitate and strengthen preservation partnerships among municipal, county, state and federal government agencies, including Iowa State University, Ames Historical Society, and local school districts.

Objective A:

Open communication channels among all interested parties to identify common interests and concerns, to explore areas of mutual benefit, and to share historical data and research.

Action Step: Collaborate with other historic preservation commissions, historical societies, and related groups to promote common interests.

Action Step: Establish an annual joint session between the Ames Planning & Zoning Commission and Ames Historic Preservation Commission to review authorities, responsibilities, and procedures.

Action Step: Encourage county, state, and federal agencies to partner with municipal agencies in preservation efforts to increase public awareness of the history of Ames.

Action Step: Utilize resources available through Iowa Main Street program.

Action Step: Collaborate with other Iowa communities and other interested parties to establish a Lincoln Highway historic conservation corridor across the State of

Iowa.

Action Step: Partner with Iowa State University to maintain the historic character of Campustown, while encouraging its development as a commercial and cultural center.

Objective B:

Develop timely notification and review/comment process for proposed re-use, rehabilitation, or demolition of historic resources.

GOAL #6: Promote the economic development and vitality of the city through historic preservation.

Objective A:

Assess the impacts of new development on the historic character of existing neighborhoods, commercial districts, and archaeological resources.

Action Step: Develop criteria to determine which type of new development projects should be assessed.

Action Step: Develop assessment process.

Objective B:

~~Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings.~~ **Encourage the use and adaptive reuse of existing public and private buildings.**

Action Step: Work with Main Street Iowa and Main Street Cultural and Entertainment District programs to maintain the historic character of Downtown Ames, while encouraging its development as a commercial and cultural center.

Action Step: Develop design pattern books to illustrate how adopted design guidelines can be applied.

Action Step: Showcase notable adaptive reuse projects through the media.

Action Step: Consider Campustown as a potential candidate for the Urban Neighborhood Main Street District (UNMSD) program of Main Street Iowa.

Objective C:

Explore local incentive opportunities for historic preservation.
[e.g. TIF, façade improvement program]

Action Step: Continue the grant and tax abatement programs for urban revitalization.

Objective D:

Provide current information concerning preservation grants and financial incentives.

Action Step: Include pertinent data and links for additional information on the city website,

alongside local model projects if available.

Objective E:

Recognize the importance of preservation tourism for Ames and support efforts to promote it.

Action Step: Encourage interested parties to develop a coordinated tourism strategy for Ames with a role for historic preservation in that effort.

Objective F:

Partner with businesses in Downtown Ames, Campustown, and other business communities and tourism efforts beyond Ames to explore branding, promotion, products, marketing, and other economic advantages associated with the Lincoln Highway as an historic corridor across Iowa and its attraction to the touring public.

Action Step: Encourage sensitive use of the Lincoln Highway logo as a branding tool.

Attachment A

Included below are suggested changes and additions to Objectives and Action Steps by the staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa. These comments were received following consideration of the Goals, Objectives and Actions Steps by the Steering Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Suggested changes include:

- Provide a dedicated budget line for the Ames Historic Preservation Commission to assist in achieving the goals of the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. (Objective to add to Goal #2)
- Revise Chapter 31 “Historic Preservation Districts” in the Ames Municipal Code, including chapter title, design guidelines and related ordinances to broaden applicability, improve clarity (including ADA issues and ordinance enforceability), and/or make consistent with National Register standards. (Changes to Objective A under Goal #3)
- Identify ways and means including funding sources to revise Chapter 31. (Action Step to add to Objective A under Goal #3)
- Ensure that Chapter 31 is consistent with the International Existing Building Code (IEBC), as adopted by the City of Ames in 2007. (Action Step to add to Objective A under Goal #3)
- Develop and adopt an historic preservation policy for municipal property. (Action Step to add to Objective F under Goal #3)
- Partner with Iowa State University to preserve historic resources throughout the community and to maintain the historic character of Campustown, while encouraging its development as a commercial and cultural center. (Action Step to add to Objective A under Goal #5)

Attachment B

Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan

Executive Summary

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- Chapter 6 Advancing the Future with the Past
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Appendices

- Appendix 1 Chapter 31, Historic Preservation Districts, *Municipal Code of the City of Ames*
- Appendix 2 Current Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) and Historic Preservation
- Appendix 3 Certified Local Government Agreement between City of Ames and State Historical Society of Iowa
- Appendix 4 National Register Listed and Landmark Designated Properties in Ames
- Appendix 5 Selection Criteria for Ames Historic Preservation Commission to Prioritize Survey and Registration Projects
- Appendix 6 Community Focus Groups