

Staff Report

PLANNING PROJECT PRIORITIES

August 16, 2010

(Updated from June 22 report)

As follow-up to the May 18, 2010 joint workshop with the Planning & Zoning Commission and with the Historic Preservation Commission, and also in response to comments regarding possible code changes received at the Council's April 20, 2010 workshop with developers, staff has prepared the following list of priorities suggested by these groups. This report also includes outstanding priorities and referrals from the City Council, and identifies other suggested amendments from staff.

Most of the outstanding items are recent referrals from Council, but there are five priorities that go back as far as 2007, when the Council adopted a list of high, medium, and low priorities. The recent referrals have never been included in any list of priorities. Staff has been responding to these referrals while also working on identified priorities, and in roughly the same order they were received.

The attached priority list includes rough estimates on the cumulative amount of time that would need to be devoted to a project. The times identified are estimates of cumulative hours a planner would devote to a project (excluding time at after-hour meetings with P&Z, Council and the public). With four full-time planners, there are approximately 8,000 working hours available in a given year. Each planner is also assigned to process current planning applications and other day-to-day tasks, which requires that approximately 3/4 of their time be spent on current planning and other administrative activities and programs. On average, this leaves about 1/4 of their time for work on long-range planning projects, including zoning & LUPP text and map amendments, and on other Council referrals. **Accordingly, approximately 2,000 hours are available for long-range planning projects each year** which equates to 25% of total working hours of the planning staff.

Council should note that the cumulative time for all projects on the list amounts to about 2,000 planner hours, which would take approximately 2 years to complete (assuming no other priorities or referrals are added to the list). Hopefully these time estimates will help Council decide which of the listed projects are the highest priorities and should be completed during the fiscal year beginning on July 1.

I. PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION PRIORITIES**LUPP Evaluation**

Review Planning Base information. Review population and employment projections and update associated applications throughout LUPP.

Planner Hours: 180

Growth Priorities Analysis. Review policies in LUPP addressing targeted growth.

Planner Hours: 20

Industrial Land Evaluation. An Industrial Study was completed in 2002. It is not clear what additional studies or evaluations are needed.

Planner Hours: ?

Vision for Ames

This item was also identified by the Council as one of your annual goals, and will be addressed separately by the City Manager.

II. HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION PRIORITIES

Begin National Register Nomination for Downtown.

As follow-up to the Intensive Survey done in 1992, this may involve review of additional properties based upon changed boundaries or conditions. There may be grant monies available, but deadlines for these would be next August and then next spring.

Planner Hours: 225

Consultant Cost: \$18,500

Revise Chapter 31 (“Historic Preservation”) of the *Municipal Code*

This proposal includes revisions to design guidelines to clarify intent and reflect new materials, technologies and green issues.

Planner Hours: 400

Consultant Cost: (To be determined)

Prepare Intensive Survey of Campustown.

This would entail a survey of approximately 50 buildings that may be eligible for listing on the National Register.

Planner Hours: 225

Consultant Cost: \$13,500

III. OUTSTANDING COUNCIL PRIORITIES & REFERRALS

Tax abatement to revert multi-plex buildings back to single-family dwellings

This would provide a tax incentive for conversions in an effort to strengthen existing neighborhoods

Planner Hours: 160

Expand façade grant program into Campustown

This project would explore the feasibility of expanding the existing façade grant program into Campustown. It would require an analysis as the applicability of design standards in Downtown to the Campustown area.

Planner Hours: 240

New site sheets for Old Town Historic District

New site sheets for Old Town were developed in 2003, including garages in addition to residences. These were updated as part of the National Register nomination for the Old Town District, and it was expected that they would replace the site sheets adopted when Old Town was originally designated as an historic district. Adoption of these site sheets would require changes to Chapter 31 to reflect the new site sheets' method of structure categorization (I.e., contributing or non-contributing).

Planner Hours: 40

Review allowable materials in Historic Districts

This is now encompassed in the HPC's proposed priority to revise Chapter 31 of the *Municipal Code* (see above).

Request from Dave Norris to amend Fringe Plan for property south of Ames (5-11-10)

Mr. Norris desires to develop as residential his land currently designated as Agricultural.

Planner Hours: 40

Request from Matt Randall to amend LUPP Map for property located at 712 South 16th Street. (6-8-10)

This proposal is to change the land use designation abutting US Highway 30 near Fountain View Drive from HOC to RH.

Planner Hours: 40

Implementation of Ames Urban Fringe Plan – Complete work on 28E Agreement with Story County.

A 28E agreement is necessary to fully implement the Ames Urban Fringe Plan.

Planner Hours: 100

In addition, the following tasks were assigned to staff by Council several years ago. These projects were never completed, since new priority projects kept pushing these tasks farther down the priority list. **It is now recommended that these items be dropped from the priority list:**

Village residential development

The intent of this referral was to examine whether or not the Village should continue to be the preferred form of residential development in Ames.

Land use designations of property adjacent to West Lincoln Way

This project was to address concerns over continued commercialization of far west Lincoln Way.

Innovative & attractive development

This was intended to explore ways to enhance aesthetic qualities of development in Ames.

IV. DEVELOPER-SUGGESTED PRIORITIES

The following suggestions came from developers and other members of the public at the City Council's April 20 Workshop regarding **potential code impediments to development within the community**.

Reduce the number of zoning classifications in the City. (Chuck Winkleblack) – As was noted by staff during the recent overview with Council of the Land Use Policy Plan and Zoning Code, there are currently a total of 33 zoning classes and overlays in the City, which adds significant complexity to developers' and planners' efforts to ensure compliance.

Planner Hours: 240 – 640 (Depending on scope)

Require that a master plan be reviewed by the City Council prior to submittal of a preliminary plat. (Bob Gibson) – This change was requested to help developers avoid going through a long and expensive platting process, only to find that approval is not possible under current policies. It was suggested that having the opportunity to talk with Council up front would allow developers to be aware of possible political constraints prior to deciding whether or not to spend more money on engineering, etc.

Planner Hours: 40

Revise LUPP so that it serves as a guide and is more easily changed. (Frank Feilmeyer) – This change was requested to remove impediments caused by the time and expense needed to amend the City's LUPP. It was suggested that the LUPP serve more as a guide, rather than with its current level of detail that makes it more akin to the zoning ordinance. This issue was reported to be especially difficult in the City's 2-mile fringe.

Planner Hours: 640

Review plat of survey provisions to reduce the types of land divisions that necessitate a minor subdivision plat. (Frank Feilmeyer) – The speaker felt that our current process is overly burdensome and requires time and expense for a minor subdivision plat in cases where a simplified plat of survey process would suffice.

Planner Hours: 40

Eliminate mandated densities. (A.J. Spiker, Kurt Friedrich, Reiny Friedrich, Chuck Winkleblack) – Several speakers questioned the effectiveness of the City's residential density requirements, including the 3.75 units/acre minimum density level. Speakers felt that this requirement does not permit the variety of housing units that the market desires, that it is a detriment to development, that it doesn't give adequate flexibility in lot size, and that the requirement should be dropped.

Planner Hours: 320

Simplify process for amending Land Use Policy Plan. (Roger Kluesner) – Our code currently provides some direction on amendments to the LUPP in Section 20.11. However, this section primarily addresses requirements for public hearings and notices, and does not provide criteria for the amendment or guidance on how and when the LUPP

can be amended. It was requested that a clear-cut procedure and specified level of required detail be spelled out up front.

Planner Hours: 80

Periodic review of Land use Policy Plan. (Reiny Friedrich) – The Council was urged to periodically review the LUPP every few years.

Planner Hours: 160

NOTE: During the April 20 roundtable a number of concerns were expressed regarding how staff interprets and uses its judgment in addition to adopted codes. A separate staff report is being prepared to address those concerns. A request was also made at the roundtable for Council to consider code changes that allow more ready conversion of downtown buildings' second stories to residential uses. That concern will be addressed when Council considers updates to the International Building Codes later this summer.

V. STAFF-SUGGESTED PRIORITIES

In addition to the issues identified by Council and the public, staff would also suggest that the following projects be considered for possible prioritization:

Code Clean-up (Zoning, Subdivision, Flood Plain, Historic Preservation)

The Planning staff keeps a list of code sections that have been found to be problematic to customers, problematic to administer, or which otherwise need to be amended to address inconsistencies or vagueness.

Planner Hours: 160

Develop standards for an airport overlay

This would create an overlay district for the area encompassing the Airport approach zones, as reflected on FAA's Part 77 maps. It would include development standards for structures (height), and restrictions on uses that would be high risk in this area (residential uses and assembly-type uses such as auditoriums, schools, etc.).

Planner Hours: 320

Develop a planning strategy for Ames Urban Fringe in Boone County.

Boone County Supervisors have expressed interest in coordinating with the City on an agreement for development in the Boone County portion of the Ames Urban Fringe. Staff has begun meeting with Boone County staff to develop a potential strategy and approach to this issue.

Planner Hours: 40

In addition to the planning staff time needed to complete the Council's chosen planning priorities, it should be noted that staff time will also be required from Legal, Public Works and other staff.

Suggested Priorities for FY 2010/11 (Updated 8-16-10)

The staff provided in a separate report a list of suggested priorities for discussion at the June 22, 2010 Council meeting. To facilitate discussion of those priorities, staff selected nine of them as potential priorities for FY 2010-11, and, in this update, included work on fringe planning issues, for a total of 10 priority items.. These ten items were selected based upon the length of time they have been outstanding, the relative ease at which some items could be completed, and the degree of interest expressed in some items during the past year or so. The suggestions are also based upon how the items will be divided amongst staff and how many items an individual planner is able to accomplish in a given year. The selection reflects which planner will likely be assigned to an item (based upon past experience, expertise or particular knowledge on an issue), and reflects an attempt to avoid having the bulk of the year's work load fall to just one or two planners.

The selection amounts to an estimated 1760 hours, so there may be available staff hours to add one or two more items for the fiscal year. With that in mind, it should be noted that not all referred customer requests are included on the 2010-11 list - primarily because there are a number of items that have been in the works a long time ahead of these. The Council could potentially add some of these recent requests, but individual requests like these come in fairly regularly. If they are always placed at the top of the list as they come in, there will likely be progressive delays at completing tasks that have already been prioritized. A discussion of how the Council will want to prioritize new requests as they come in might be helpful.

A brief note following each item below, explaining why staff is suggesting inclusion of the items on the first year's priority list.

Request from Dave Norris to amend Fringe Plan – 40 hours

Mr. Norris has been patiently waiting for an answer on this for years.

LUPP Evaluation (Planning Base) – 180 hours

Important for keeping LUPP current

Begin National Register Nomination for Downtown – 180 hours

This would make the property owners eligible for Federal and State Income Tax credits, which would potentially provide funding to maintain downtown buildings.

New Site Sheets for Historic District - 40 hours

Easily accomplished. This has been on list for a long time.

Address Issues of Density – 40 – 160 Hours

A high profile issue. This will require an initial discussion of policy. If Council then wishes to amend plans to eliminate density, more work will be needed to ensure up to date and consistent goals and objectives in LUPP and other standards

Review Plat of Survey Provisions – 40 hours

Easily accomplished; needed follow-up to recently adopted standards for plats of survey.

Tax abatement to revert multi-plex buildings back to single-family dwellings – 160 hours

This has been on the list for some time. This could provide some additional incentives for revitalizing or stabilizing older neighborhoods.

Code Clean Up – 160 hours

This involves a list of amendments that are needed to improve clarity in our code and provide better customer service, but which never rise to the top due to other priorities. A summary of the list will be available at the meeting if requested.

Revise LUPP so that it serves as a guide and is more easily changed – 40 - 640 hours

A high profile issue. This will require an initial discussion of policy and approach (40 hours). If Council then wishes to amend LUPP to adopt a different approach, a significant investment of time will be needed (640 hours).

Simplify Process for Amending Land Use Policy Plan – 80 hours

A defined process for amending the LUPP would provide needed clarity and direction and facilitate future requests.

Continued work of Urban Fringe issues - Complete 28E Agreement with Story County and work with Boone County on Fringe Issues – 120 Hours

The status of this issue remains uncertain until elected officials from Gilbert, the City of Ames, and Story County resolve issues that have resulted in a stalemate over implementation. Boone County Supervisors have expressed interest in developing agreement for development in the Boone County portion of the Ames Urban Fringe. Staff has begun meeting with Boone County staff to develop a potential strategy and approach to this issue.

Contingency Reserve – 200 hours

The Council could add additional items on the proposed priority list as it deems appropriate, or retain a reserve for unanticipated items. A reserve might be useful for

individual requests that filter in during the year, and which might be easily addressed if sufficient planner hours are available. It would also provide a buffer for items that may require more planner hours than currently estimated.

Total Estimated Hours – 1,800 (plus 200 reserve hours)

Zoning Code Clean-up

(Items Identified by Planning Staff)

1. Review visibility triangle standards with Public Works to ensure that they reflect needs of each street type.
2. Develop definitions for front, rear and side yards, and provide clarification on how setbacks from these yards are determined.
3. Address definition of “structure” in terms of what is allowed within setback areas.
4. Address review/approval authority for development and redevelopment within Village Residential zone.
5. Differentiate between parking, commercial parking and vehicle storage in use tables.
6. Develop a criteria for day care operations that more realistically reflects how these uses operate and how they may differ from other types of home occupations
7. Provide a statement in the code addressing those uses that are not included or otherwise mentioned in the zoning code use tables.
8. Clarify fence standards
9. Include provisions in the parking standards addressing parallel parking dimensional standards, and associated driveway width standards.
10. Reestablish an expiration period for site plans (expiration period was inadvertently deleted in earlier code amendments).
11. Clarify methods for calculating minimum landscaping for site plans.
12. Review standards in subdivision code pertaining to the required submittals for sketch plans and subdivisions. Current standards do not reflect current processing needs. In some cases they do not require enough copies for processing an application; in other cases they require excessive copies.
13. Clarify definition and standards for accessory structures to ensure that the definition under the building code does not undermine the intent and standards of the zoning code.
14. Clarify the standards and review procedures for street trees and street lights.
15. Clarify the definition of “open porch” to ensure consistent interpretation of “screened porch”, and to ensure consistency in how setbacks for porches are determined.

16. Define where the caliper of required tree width is to be measured.
17. General housekeeping & cleanup, e.g., typos & grammatical errors.
18. Clarify language pertaining to “scrolling” signs in the CVCN district.
19. Clarify minimum quantity requirements for handicap parking stalls.
20. Relocate Neighborhood Commercial sign standards so that they can be more easily found. The current location in the code is not consistent with where these standards are found for other zoning districts.
21. Review signage standards as they pertain to electronic billboard signs. Current standards do not directly address this growing trend in billboard signs.
22. Provide a definition of “zoning permit”. This term is frequently used in the zoning code, but it is not clear what it pertains to.