

ITEM #: 19a-c
DATE: 01-25-11

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

REQUEST: LAND USE POLICY PLAN (LUPP) FUTURE LAND USE MAP AMENDMENT TO CHANGE THE LAND USE DESIGNATION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTIES FROM HIGHWAY-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL (HOC) TO DOWNTOWN SERVICES

BACKGROUND:

On December 14, 2010, City Council initiated an amendment to the LUPP Future Land Use Map to change the land use designation of the properties along both sides of Kellogg Avenue between the Union Pacific Railroad and Lincoln Way from Highway-Oriented Commercial to Downtown Services Center (see Figure 1: Current Designation on Future Land Use Map and Figure 2: Proposed Designation on Future Land Use Map). This area is 3.25 acres in size.

The purpose of this change is to encourage investments that promote the economic vitality of the Downtown and the Kellogg corridor, and strengthen visual connections between Lincoln Way and Main Street. The City Council is also considering expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Façade Improvement Program along the Kellogg corridor south of the Union Pacific Railroad. This program provides grants and partial property tax abatement for improvements to front building facades whose design follows certain design guidelines. These guidelines are consistent with the Downtown Services Center land use designation and zoning, which allow building at the property lines, require buildings to be at least two stories in height, and prohibit parking in front of the building. In contrast, the current Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC) land use designation and zoning of the subject area require buildings to be set away from the property lines, require on-site parking, and allow that parking to be in front of the building. Therefore, if the Downtown Façade Improvement Program, with its historic downtown design guidelines, is to be extended south of the Union Pacific Railroad, the Land Use Policy Plan Map and the zoning should first be changed to Downtown Services Center.

For the entire area between the Union Pacific Railroad, Grand Avenue, Lincoln Way, and Duff Avenue staff analyzed the development history, previous planning studies, previous and existing zoning, physical characteristics, uses of property, parking demand and supply and pedestrian facilities. Staff also prepared and analyzed digital models of different redevelopment scenarios based on the different potential land use and zoning designations. This analysis and modeling was presented to the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and interested public. (The detailed information and analysis is available at the City's website under What's New at the Planning Division page.) From this analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The Kellogg corridor is an important pedestrian and vehicular linkage among the areas that make up the urban core of Ames.
- Placements of existing buildings in the subject area are similar to a traditional Downtown – at the sidewalk without spaces between, as on Main Street.
- The significant differences between the Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC) and the Downtown Services Center land use designations are not the uses allowed, but rather pertain to the physical development characteristics, such as setbacks and parking standards.
- The physical development in the subject area is more compact than the commercial corridor development to the east and west and is similar to the downtown development and the proposed Downtown Services Center land use designation.
- More than half of the subject area has conditions that make it more difficult to redevelop under the current land use and zoning designation, including insufficient space for required parking, narrow lot width, and small lot size.

Two public input meetings were held for this study and staff has discussed the proposed changes with seven of 11 property owners in the subject area. Conclusions from this public input include the following:

- Public investment in the street and streetscape and private investment in five buildings have had a positive effect on the appearance of the area.
- Parking and setback requirements of Highway-Oriented Commercial zoning are a barrier to redevelopment in the Kellogg corridor.
- Change will continue to be incremental, because it is difficult to assemble a site suitable for a new building under the current standards.
- Although several property owners have no problem with the existing land use and zoning designations, no one opposes or anticipates problems with the proposed changes. Several property owners see the changes as protecting their current investment and making it more possible to redevelop their properties.

Recommendation of the Planning & Zoning Commission. At its meeting of January 5, 2011, with a vote of 5-0, the Planning & Zoning Commission recommended approval of the amendment to the LUPP Future Land Use Map to change the land use designation of the properties along both sides of Kellogg Avenue between the Union Pacific Railroad and Lincoln Way from Highway-Oriented Commercial to Downtown Services Center. While members of the public attended the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, no one provided input on this issue.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve the amendment to the LUPP Future Land Use Map to change the land use designation of the properties along both sides of Kellogg Avenue between the Union Pacific Railroad and Lincoln Way from Highway-Oriented Commercial to Downtown Services Center.
2. The Council can leave the LUPP Future Land Use Map unchanged, with the land use designation of the properties along both sides of Kellogg Avenue between the Union Pacific Railroad and Lincoln Way remaining Highway-Oriented Commercial.
3. The City Council can refer this request back to staff for more information.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The properties along Kellogg Avenue are less suited for vehicle-oriented commercial development due to lack of exposure to Lincoln Way and lower traffic counts. This is likely why these properties have not already been purchased, consolidated, and redeveloped. The existing pattern of buildings is already similar to the Main Street streetscape, and Kellogg Avenue serves as a vehicle and pedestrian entrance to the Downtown area from the major arterial street in Ames. The Downtown Services Center zoning will help preserve these characteristics and, with the Downtown Façade Improvement Program, provide an incentive for redevelopment that improves Kellogg Avenue as a traditional retail block and as an entrance to the Downtown.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council act in accordance with Alternative #1, which is to approve the amendment to the LUPP Future Land Use Map to change the land use designation of the properties along both sides of Kellogg Avenue between the Union Pacific Railroad and Lincoln Way from Highway-Oriented Commercial to Downtown Services Center.

In order to continue with steps to make commercial uses more viable in the Kellogg corridor and facilitate continued incremental reinvestment, at this time the City Council can also direct staff to initiate rezoning the subject area to Downtown Services Center and add the subject area to the Downtown Façade Program of grants and tax abatement.

Figure 1: Current designation on Future Land Use Map

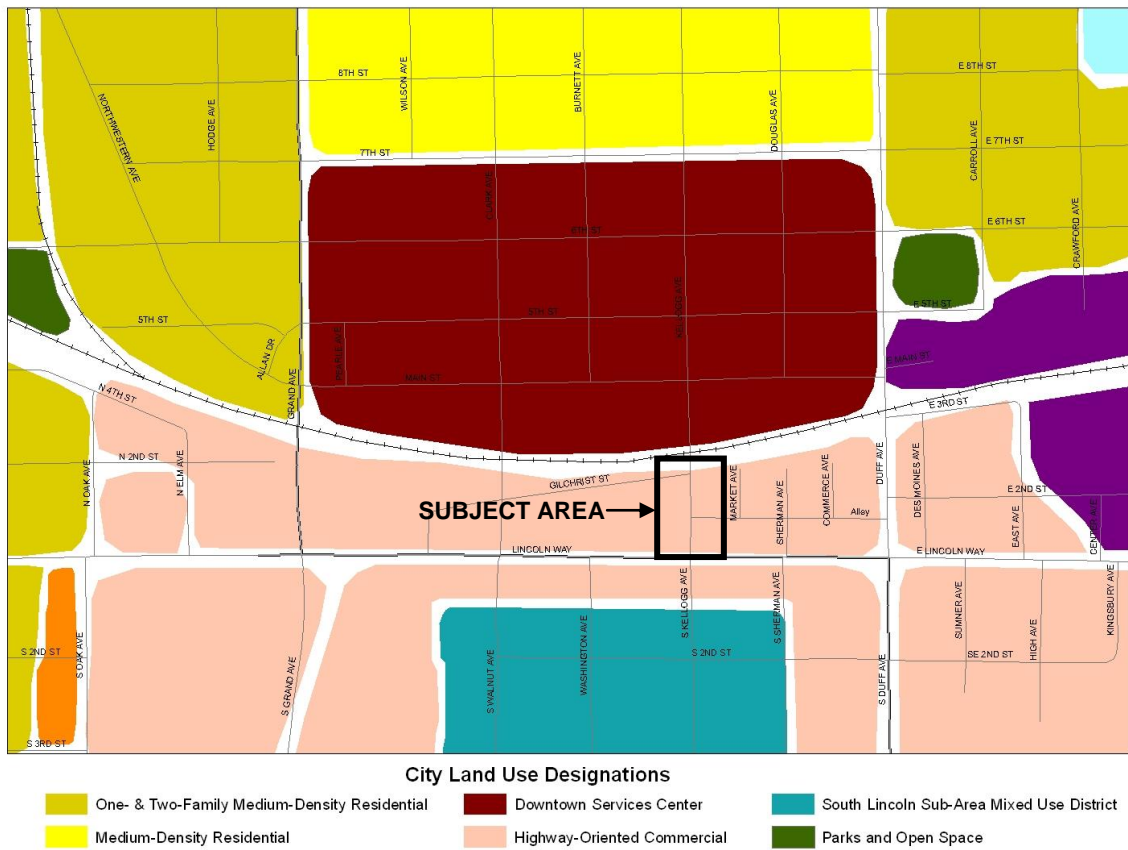


Figure 2: Proposed designation on Future Land Use Map

