

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

REQUEST: **PRELIMINARY PLAT FOR A 121-ACRE, 150-LOT RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISION KNOWN AS SCENIC VALLEY SUBDIVISION**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Hunziker Development Co., LLC, owns 121 acres at 3699 George Washington Carver Avenue. The City annexed this land in December, 2013 and recently approved rezoning to FS-RL (Suburban Residential Low-Density) with a Master Plan. A zoning/location map is included as Attachment A.

The proposed Scenic Valley Subdivision comprises 116 lots for single-family detached homes and 34 homes for single-family attached homes. The subdivision has a net density of 3.84 units per net acre. The lot layout allows for attached units to be a mix of two- and three-unit attached homes. Lot sizes for detached single-family homes range from 9,000 square feet to a handful of lots exceeding 1 acre in size. The larger average lot sizes throughout the development are mostly the result of extra lot depth, rather than extra street and frontage width. There are also 7 outlots proposed for various purposes, including storm water management, subdivision signage, and public walkways. The project includes two points of access to GW Carver and stubs two street connections to undeveloped land outside of the City to the north and west. The lot layout is included as Attachment B.

The numbers of dwelling units and their locations are consistent with the Master Plan, which identifies a range of 85-145 detached units and 25-45 attached units. The proposed preliminary plat includes a condition for restrictions on tree removal and slope protection within the area of LUPP Environmentally Sensitive Overlay designation that are consistent with the Master Plan (Attachment C). A second condition requires coordination of street improvements and driveway access to the attached single-family homes to ensure there is on-street parking along Aldrin Avenue. The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the preliminary plat and recommended approval 5-0 on June 4, 2014.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve the preliminary plat for Scenic Valley Subdivision at 3699 George Washington Carver Avenue with two conditions:
 - A. Prior to final plat approval, the street light and street planting plan for the attached single-family home portion of Aldrin Avenue south of Weston Drive will be prepared and presented to the Planning and Housing Department for review and approval to ensure appropriate space is reserved for off-street parking coordinated with driveway placement.

- B. Prior to final plat approval, an easement document or similar restriction will be prepared for City staff review and approval that contains specific language regarding the protection of trees and slopes as described in the master plan.

This recommendation for approval is based upon staff's findings and conclusions as found in the addendum. Details of these conditions are also found in the Addendum.

2. The City Council can deny the preliminary plat for Scenic Valley Subdivision at 3699 George Washington Carver Avenue, by finding that the preliminary plat does not meet the requirements of Section 23.302(3)(b) of the Ames Municipal Code and by setting forth its reasons to disprove or modify the proposed preliminary plat as required by Section 23.302(6) of the Ames Municipal Code. Relevant code sections are found in Attachment E.
3. The City Council can defer action on this request and refer it back to City staff and/or the applicant for additional information.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The subject site has a number of limitations and natural constraints to its efficient development. Buildable lots comprise only 1/3 of the total site area compared to a more typical 2/3 or more of a site. The street circulation plan includes four cul-de-sacs and a number of individual block lengths greater than 600 feet, which are generally undesirable and discouraged within the Zoning and Subdivision Codes. The applicant explored an alternative design that had shorter blocks, but more cul-de-sacs and limited connectivity before submitting the current plan. With the given constraints of the site, primarily the gas pipeline, additional internal connectivity would be hard to achieve without a reduction in lots and potentially affecting minimum density.

The project accommodates the desired natural area protection for the volunteer tree woods, steep slopes, and flood plain located in the southwest section of the site. The mix of housing types and lot sizes meets the interest of the FS zone for minimum density and choices in single-family home types.

With these features in mind and the determination that the requirements of the City's Subdivision and Zoning regulations are met by the proposed development, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative #1, thereby approving the preliminary plat for Scenic Valley Subdivision at 3699 George Washington Carver Avenue with the two conditions noted above.

ADDENDUM

Project Description. Scenic Valley Subdivision proposes 150 total lots in a 121-acre tract located between George Washington Carver Avenue to the east and Squaw Creek to the west. The lot pattern is very linear with a north/south orientation. This is due to the relative narrowness of the buildable area (the western 40 acres is in the flood hazard zone) and the presence of a natural gas pipeline bisecting the property. The preliminary plat is included as Attachment D.

Access to the development by vehicle will occur at two points from George Washington Carver Avenue—across from Weston Drive in Northridge Heights and a new Barcelos Street which would align with access to a future development north of Northridge Heights. The development also stubs two street connections to the north and northwest to interconnect with future development of those areas. Areas to the north and northwest are designated in the City's Land Use Policy Plan and Urban Fringe Plan for future development at minimum urban densities of 3.75 units per net acre.

Applicable Law. Laws pertinent to the proposal are described on Attachment E. Pertinent for the City Council are Sections 23.302(5) and 23.302(6).

Density and Open Space Information. The gross area of the Scenic Valley is 121.01 acres. The zoning designation of FS-RL requires a density of 3.75 dwelling units per net acre. By subtracting allowable exemptions (as defined in Table 29.1202(6) of the zoning ordinance), a net density of 3.84 dwelling units is achieved. The Code also requires 10 percent of the total area of the subdivision to be common open space. By utilizing specified areas of the outlots, this standard has been met with the addition of sidewalks and public access to the common space to be enjoyed by the owners within the subdivision.

It should be noted that Outlot G (proximate to Squaw Creek) is not a part of the common open space calculation due to it not being accessible to the public. There are no plans to make it a development asset or be usable to the public. This is due to the steep slopes to access the site making it unreachable by ADA-acceptable means.

Block and Lot Configuration. The project design has multiple block lengths that exceed the primary goals of 600 feet in length, but do not exceed the ultimate limit of 1,320 feet of Chapter 23. The principal reason for this is the site constraint of the natural gas pipeline running north and south through the middle of the site that limits the number of road crossings.

Four cul-de-sacs are proposed with this preliminary plat. Staff has worked with the developer to seek to reduce this number (cul-de-sacs are not prohibited but should be "minimized" per the Subdivision Code). However, due to the constraints of the natural gas pipeline easement and of being allowed only two road crossings of that easement, road configurations would have either a greater number of cul-de-sacs or excessive block lengths.

To address limitations on mobility related to the street layout, mid-block pedestrian crossings and walkway connections at the end of cul-de-sacs are present to improve

pedestrian accessibility throughout the neighborhood. They also act as traffic calming features. The three mid-block pedestrian crossings feature a bulb bump out, reducing street pavement widths from 26 feet to 20 feet by mimicking the dimensions of a parked car. These bump outs improve pedestrian safety by reducing the time needed to cross the street. Furthermore, each cul-de-sac has a walkway connection leading to a different street to allow an interconnected neighborhood.

All lots meet minimum size requirements for the zoning district with a size between 9,000 square feet and 2 acres. The lots interfacing with the tree grove have been laid out specifically to meet the intended building envelope needs of the builder with minimum disturbance of the volunteer tree grove. In addition, corner lots throughout the site are appropriately sized to accommodate two front setbacks (25 feet) and two side setbacks as required in the code. The lots along Aldrin Avenue south of Weston Drive are configured to allow two- and three-unit attached homes. Aldrin Avenue is also the longest cul-de-sac in the design at approximately 900 linear feet. Attached single-family homes require a minor site plan review by staff prior to their individual construction.

As noted above, two dead-end streets are proposed for future extensions into developable land to the north and northwest. At the time of final plat approval, there will need to be an easement to accommodate temporary turnarounds acceptable to the fire department.

Street widths meet the standards for local streets, that is, a 26-foot pavement width as measured from the back of the curb within a 55-foot right-of-way. This width allows for parking on one side of a street. Parking may be quite limited along the Aldrin Avenue cul-de-sac depending upon the design of driveway curb cuts for the attached homes.

Utilities. Public utilities (sanitary sewer, water) are proposed to serve the subdivision and will be available to all lots. The developer may construct all of the required public improvements, including streets, prior to final plat submittal, or may post an acceptable financial instrument.

At the time of final plat approval, the developer will need to provide cash payment to cover the expected sanitary sewer improvements needed downstream to increase the capacity to serve this development. The estimated cash needed as of December 30, 2013 is \$197,000 but will be reviewed at the time of final plat approval and revised to reflect estimated costs at that time.

Sidewalks and Street Trees. Sidewalks are planned for construction on both sides of all streets. In addition, a sidewalk will be constructed on the west side of George Washington Carver Avenue. (A shared-use path is already constructed on the east side.) As noted above, additional sidewalks are to be constructed that connect the ends of the four cul-de-sacs to adjoining streets.

A street tree planting plan has been submitted that meets the standards of the subdivision standard. **However, because of the density of attached homes on the south portion of Aldrin Avenue, it is anticipated that there will be conflicts between street trees, street lights, driveways, and on-street parking. Staff recommends as a condition of approval of this preliminary plat that, prior to final**

plat approval, the street light and street planting plan for that portion of Aldrin Avenue will need coordination with the Planning and Housing Department to ensure that there is space for placement of street trees and to allow for on street parking.

Natural Area and Steep Slopes. A portion of this land lies within the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Area of the Land Use Policy Plan. This includes land within the flood hazard zone of Squaw Creek, the steep slopes that rise approximately 40 feet from those bottomlands, and a thinly wooded area on the slopes and the edge of the uplands. The Master Plan contains language stating the intent of the developer to allow some limited activity within the area and describing prohibited activities. These are expressed in general terms and are quoted below.

“The general boundary shown in orange shall be the limits of any habitable structures. Overgrowth and scrub trees may be removed within this area to allow for structures. Dead trees may be removed from this area. Emphasis should be placed on preserving existing healthy trees. Ash trees may be removed at any time.

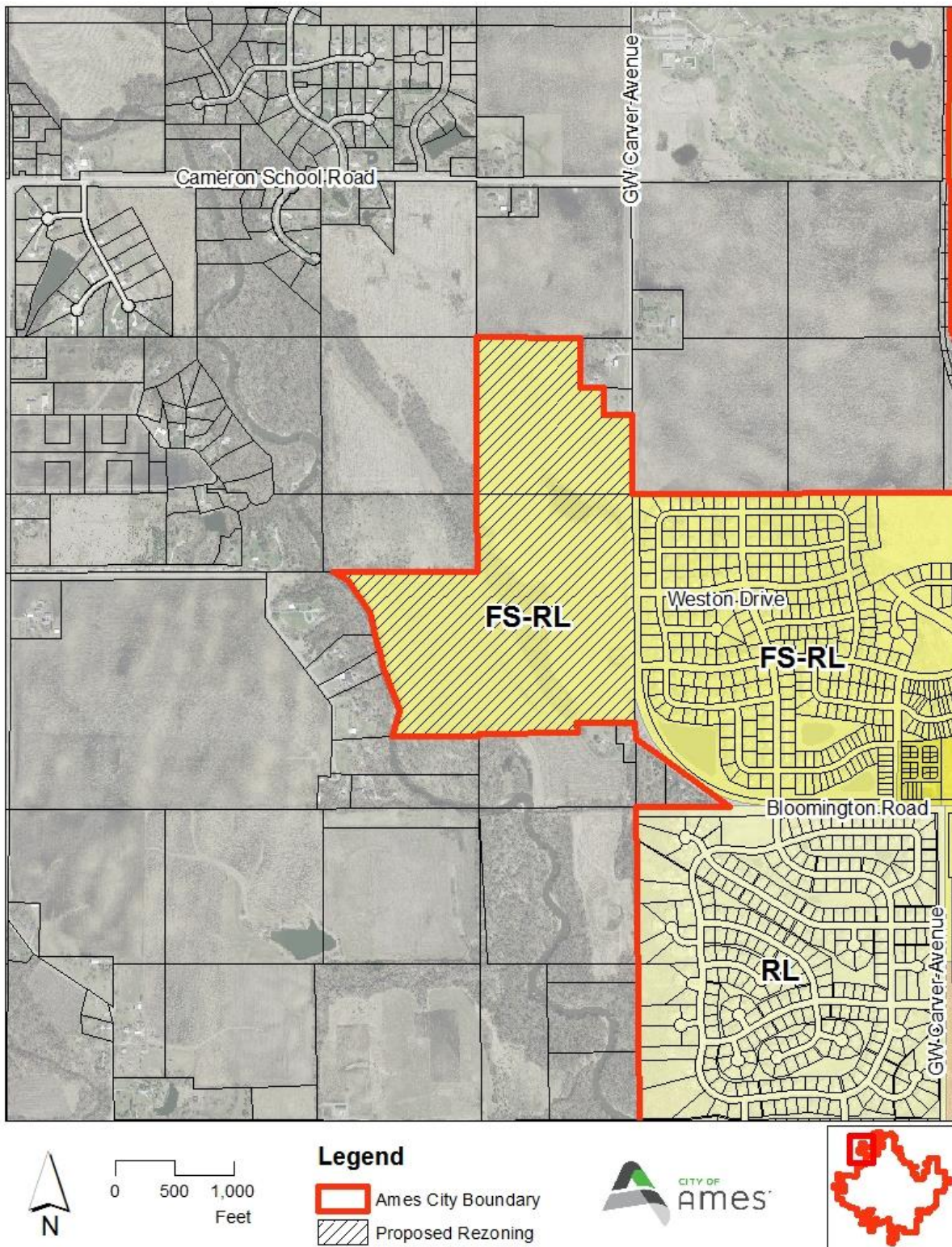
“The general boundary shown in green shall be prohibited from building habitable structures. Dead, dangerous, and diseased trees may be removed from this area. Other trees may selectively be removed to improve the overall quality and health of the existing trees. Emphasis should be placed on preserving as many healthy trees as possible in this area. Ash trees may be removed at any time. Gazebos, non-habitable structures, and walking paths are permitted in this area. Gazebos, structures, excavation, and removal of cover on the steep slopes should be avoided whenever possible.”

Staff recommends as a condition of approval that an easement containing specific language regarding the protection of trees and slopes within the orange and green areas as shown on the master plan will be needed with final plat approval.

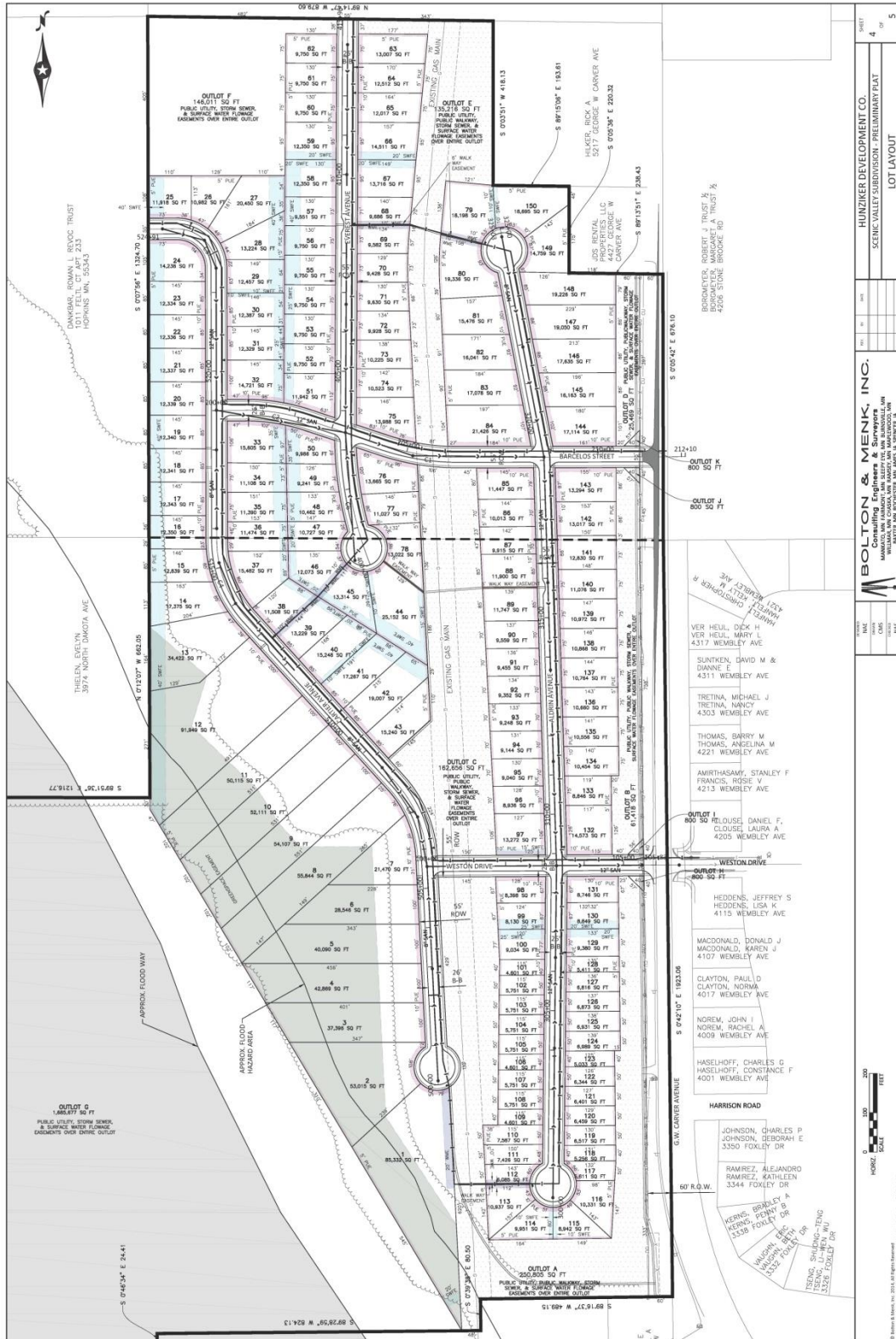
Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation. The Planning and Zoning Commission met on June 4 and recommended approval (5-0) of the proposed preliminary plat with the conditions noted in this report. Commission discussion focused on the lot arrangement along the wooded areas, storm drainage, and street layout. One neighbor suggested that natural grasses should be planted in the storm water holding areas rather than standard turf grasses for improved storm water infiltration. One other person spoke and recommended several types of grasses that would work, including maintenance techniques for them.

Conclusions. Based on this analysis, staff finds that the proposed Scenic Valley Subdivision complies with all relevant and applicable design and improvement standards of the Subdivision Regulations, to other standards and ordinances of the City including the zoning ordinance, to the Land Use Policy Plan, and to the approved Master Plan and, therefore, concludes that Ames Municipal Code Section 23.302(6)(a) has been satisfied.

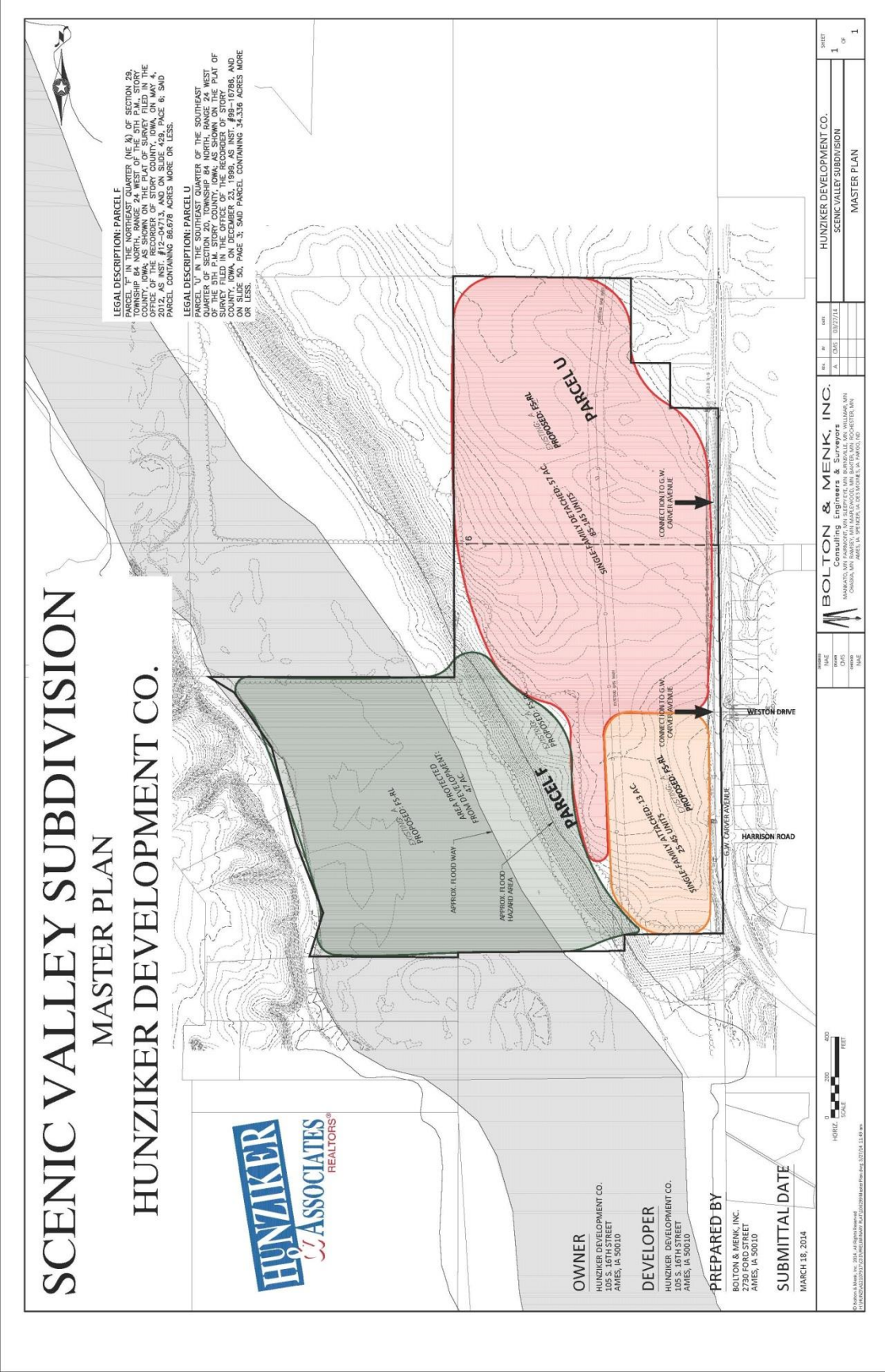
Attachment A: Zoning and Location Map



Attachment B: Lot Layout (Close-up)



Attachment C: Master Plan



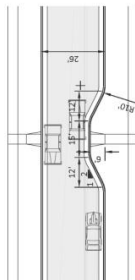
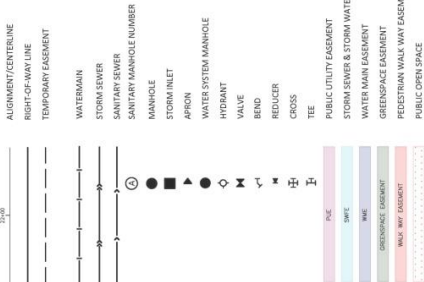
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revised 03/17/2019; D/C 03/18/2019; GRAHAM PLAT 1-106; MEARNS PLAT 1-106; 2nd ed. 3/8/21. 2-137 gov.



GENERAL NOTES

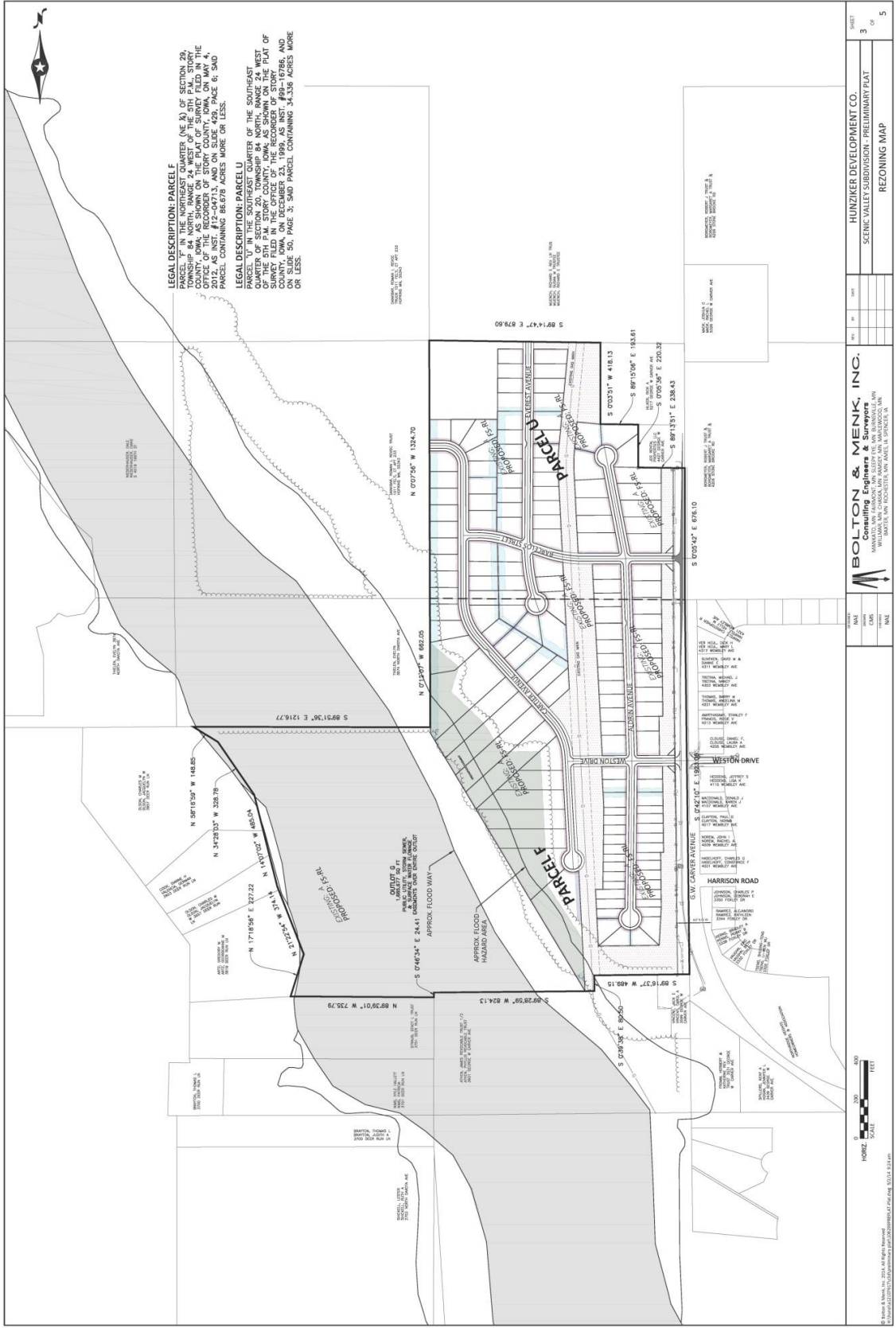
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LEGEND

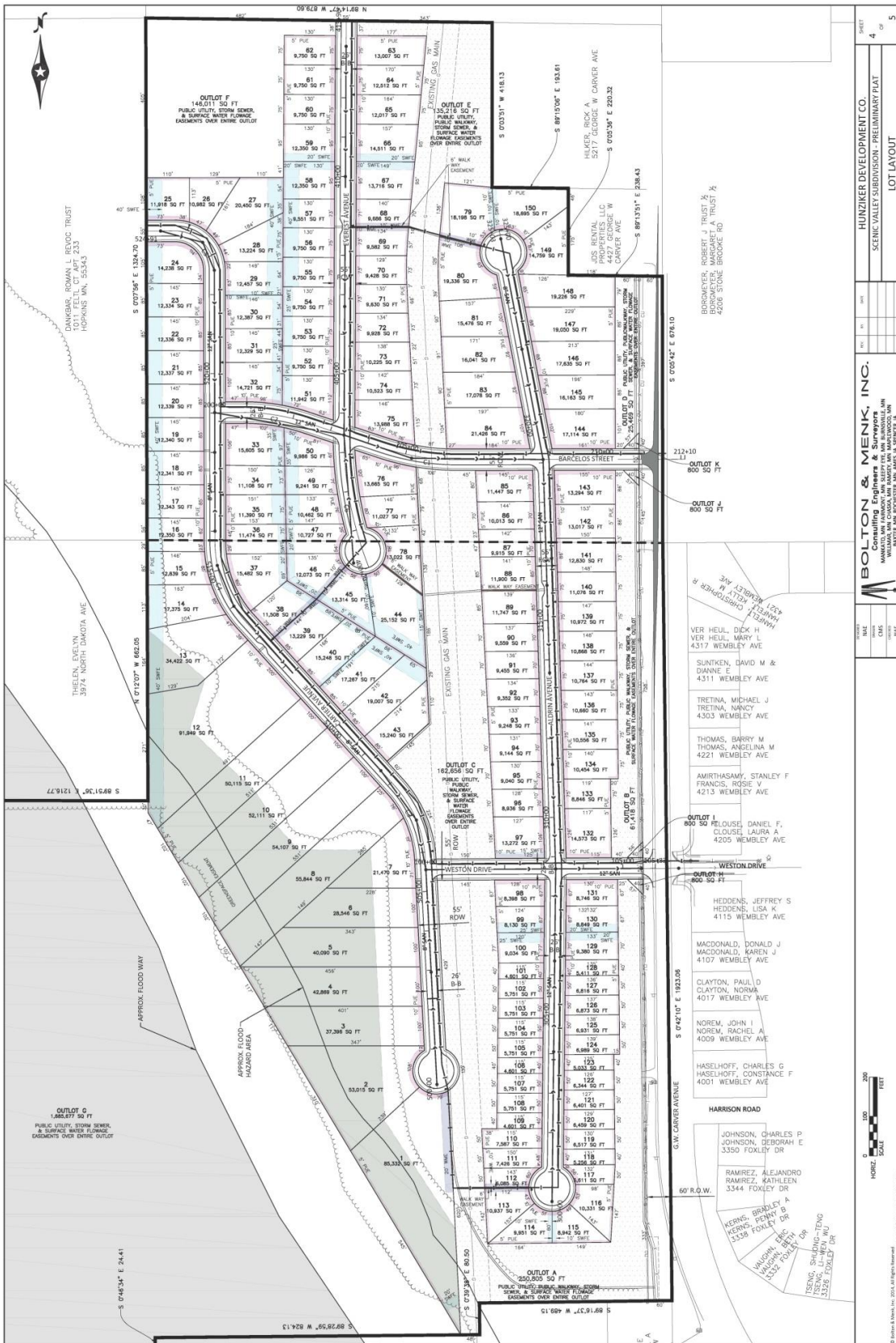


MID-BLOCK CROSSINGS DETAIL

SUBSIDIARY		PAGE		SHEET	
NAME	BOLTON & MENK, INC.	1	2	1	2
STATE	MASSACHUSETTS				
CLASS	COMMON STOCK, \$1.00 PER SHARE				
DATE	NOVEMBER 1, 1954				
FILE NO.	100-100000				
<p>BOLTON & MENK, INC. 100-100000 COMMON STOCK, \$1.00 PER SHARE NOVEMBER 1, 1954 MASSACHUSETTS 100-100000</p>					
<p>HUNZNER DEVELOPMENT CO. 100-100000 SPECIFIC VALLEY SUBDIVISION - PRELIMINARY PLAT OF GENERAL NOTES</p>					



BOLTON & MENK, INC. Consulting Engineers & Surveyors 1000 W. 10TH AVE., SUITE 100, DES MOINES, IOWA 50319 (515) 281-1111		HUNZIKER DEVELOPMENT CO. 1000 W. 10TH AVE., SUITE 100, DES MOINES, IOWA 50319 (515) 281-1111		NORTH		0 100 200 300 400 FEET SCALE		SCENIC VALLEY SUBDIVISION - PRELIMINARY PLAT REZONING MAP		SHEET 3 OF 5	



Attachment E: Applicable Subdivision Law

The laws applicable to this Preliminary Plat Subdivision include, but are not limited to, the following: (verbatim language is shown in *italics*, other references are paraphrased):

Code of Iowa Chapter 354, Section 8 requires that the governing body shall determine whether the subdivision conforms to its Land Use Policy Plan.

Ames Municipal Code Chapter 23, Subdivisions, Division I, outlines the general provisions for subdivisions within the City limits and within two miles of the City limits of Ames.

Ames Municipal Code Section 23.302(3):

Ames Municipal Code Section 23.302(5):

- (5) *City Council Review of Preliminary Plat: All proposed subdivision plats shall be submitted to the City Council for review and approval in accordance with these Regulations. The City Council shall examine the Preliminary Plat, any comments, recommendations or reports examined or made by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and such other information as it deems necessary and reasonable to consider.*

Ames Municipal Code Section 23.302(6):

- (6) *City Council Action on Preliminary Plat:*

- a. *Based upon such examination, the City Council shall determine whether the Preliminary Plat conforms to relevant and applicable design and improvement standards in these Regulations, to other City ordinances and standards, to the City's Land Use Policy Plan and to the City's other duly adopted plans. In particular, the City Council shall determine whether the subdivision conforms to minimum levels of service standards set forth in the Land Use Policy Plan for public infrastructure and shall give due consideration to the possible burden of the proposed subdivision on public improvements in determining whether to require the installation of additional public improvements as a condition for approval.*
- b. *Following such examination and within 30 days of the referral of the Preliminary Plat and report of recommendations to the City Council by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council shall approve, approve subject to conditions, or disapprove the Preliminary Plat. The City Council shall set forth its reasons for disapproving any Preliminary Plat or for conditioning its approval of any Preliminary Plat in its official records and shall provide a written copy of such reasons to the developer.*