

Staff Report

**PLANNING AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT
WORK PLAN PRIORITIES**

November 15, 2016

BACKGROUND:

The Planning and Housing Department has provided an updated status of projects within its Work Plan and is now requesting direction on the City Council's next set of priorities. The past 11 months have included work on a number of development driven requests and continued work on City Council's priorities from September 2015. Staff most recently provided an update on the Work Plan in June of 2016 to receive direction on immediate requests for Council's review this past summer. It has been 13 months since City Council prioritized additional projects for the Planning Department and it is appropriate to plan now for new projects in 2017.

COMMITTED PROJECTS AND STATUS

- 1) East Industrial Annexation and Master Plan (Master Planning & Zoning steps Summer 2017)
- 2) Lincoln Way Corridor Plan (Council adoption March 2017, zoning and design implementation to follow)
- 3) Landscape and Parking Sustainability Update Ordinance (Adopt in March 2017)
- 4) 321 State Avenue Affordable Housing Development (Old Middle School) (Review RFP Winter 2016-17)
- 5) Housing Background Report (combination of prior Council goals and referrals, on hold)
- 6) Wireless Ordinance Update (state and federal law changes 2015, on hold)
- 7) North Growth Gap Area Sewer Extension Analysis (Public Works Consultant Draft Findings December, Council to provide further direction)
- 8) 2700 Block Lincoln Way Project (Complete in November 2016)
- 9) Transitional Housing Text Amendment (Complete in December 2016)
- 10) Trinitas Student Housing West Ames (Fringe Plan Amendment Hearing November 22nd, annexation initiation January 2017, PRD process March 2017)

PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED, NOT YET STARTED:

- 11) SW Growth Master Plan (Prepare RFP, described below)
- 12) New Comprehensive Plan (1st Step Prepare Council background summer 2017, RFP Winter 2017)

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS:

In addition to the 12 projects listed above, City Council through its establishment of Council Goals, referrals, and prior work plan priorities have a list of 25 other projects to consider in prioritizing the Planning Division work plan. **Attachment A is complete**

Work Plan chart that indicates the current status of committed projects and the list of projects that have not yet been prioritized. Although not all of the project scopes are well defined, staff has added a column to the work plan with estimates the range of hours needed for each project. This estimate is intended to help Council have an understanding of the order of magnitude of Planning Division resources needed for a project. City Council should note that often there are additional city staff resources needed to complete the project e.g. City Attorney's Office and the Public Works Department that are not reflected on this chart.

PENDING REFERRAL REQUESTS

Staff is aware of two text amendment referral requests that have been transmitted to the City Council as non-agenda packet items in the past three weeks. City Council has not indicated whether these items will be referred or not. Council could choose to add these requests to the work plan and prioritize them for review or choose to not consider the requests at this time.

- Kum & Go has requested a text amendment to allow for vehicle service stations with a special use permit in Campustown for a site along the 200 Block of Welch Avenue.
- Iowa State Ready-Mix has requested the City revise its solar energy system requirements to allow for taller ground mounted systems than currently allowed.

2016-2017 COUNCIL GOALS

City Council established as part of its biannual goal setting process two additional topics that are not already part of the committed projects. Below is an outline recently related activities to each of these goals and staff suggested tasks for each issue.

STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN & CAMPUSTOWN

- Explore public/private improvements (e.g., entertainment, parking, housing, amenities) for public/private space in Campustown and Downtown)
 - Downtown Housing Options (MSCD interest to inventory buildings for 2nd floor housing options, task by MSCD)
 - Downtown housing development site 5th Street (Sub-committee reviewed options, site is not available, task completed)
 - Campustown parking Lot X easement for access granted to 122 Hayward in June 2016.
- Staff Suggested Related Tasks for Campustown Objective
 - Identify priorities for partnering on redevelopment projects along public property.
 - Suspend the URA for new projects until review of public lands priorities are accepted (This is potentially a significant issue for the 100 and 200 Blocks of Welch and 2500 Block of Lincoln Way)

- Comprehensive reassessment of the CSC Zoning standards and property tax abatement incentives criteria of the URA.
 - Focus on revised standards for commercial layout and design, street and sidewalk design and width, parking standards that support commercial businesses.
 - Coordinate the reconfiguration of Welch Avenue street improvements with zoning standards intended to support a walkable commercial district.
- Staff Suggested Related Tasks For Downtown Objective
 - Provide background report on public land ownership and current use.
 - Hold public forum workshop with the City Council to discuss needs and opportunities for public lands.

PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Analyze current planning and building code approval processes to help decision making be more predictable, more strategic and more timely
 - Attached to this report is an outline of the most common permits and their approval authority as a reference for Planning approval processes.
- Staff Suggested Task For This Objective
 - Staff proposes to bring staff reports on a semi-monthly basis to allow Council to assess current practices and provide direction for any changes that may be desired. Council could pick a set of process from the attached list or review all.

STAFF SUGGESTED NEW PROJECTS

Staff has also identified priorities for changes to the Zoning Ordinance that would provide better service to our customers and to clarify the City's policies and procedures.

1. Add definition to the meaning of Two-Family Dwelling, Permitted, "Y, if pre-existing" and how to address previous single-family conversion homes that are non-conforming.

The Planning and Rental Inspection staff are frequently asked questions about single-family rental property that may have once been a two-family dwelling and if it could be converted or reestablished as a two-family dwelling. Mostly commonly this is a question at the time of purchase of a home by a potential investor or at the time of listing of the home by a realtor. Often the records for these properties are scarce which makes it difficult to provide consistent interpretations.

Interpreting current Zoning Ordinance language that relies upon the phrase "Y, if pre-existing" for two-family homes is confusing as we are now 16 years past when the ordinance was adopted and how the intent for the wording of "pre-existing" was meant

to be applied. **Staff believes we should clarify that the intent as a more traditional non-conforming use that is only permitted if it has been continuously used as a two-family home and that if the use has ceased it is not eligible to be reestablished despite what was its condition in 2000.** Under current language a two-family home, if determined to be pre-existing physically in 2000, may stop being rented for any length of time and could be reestablished as two rental units. Staff believes that in most neighborhoods reestablishing a duplex would be a surprise to a neighborhood and it affects the availability of homes that could provide for homeownership versus rental investment potential. Staff would also clarify that previous “conversion permits” are not two-family homes as they were a separate type of dwelling prior to 2000 that was no longer an allowed use in 2000 when the current zoning standards were established.

2. Revise permitting standards for home daycare to allow for staff approval and to match limits on children to state licensing definitions.

Home daycare often triggers a special home occupation permit reviewed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment because of the mix of children in their care and the number of children exceeds six. State licensing would typically allow for up to 8 before triggering a different category for the proposed use. Staff is interested in adjusting the permitting process to make home daycare that is less than 8 children and consistent with state licensing requirements a permitted home occupation reviewed by staff. This is very straight forward adjustment that would be beneficial to customer interests and staff resources with little or no effect on neighborhoods.

3. Revisit the CSC zoning standards and the Campustown Urban Revitalization Plan Criteria to meet the City’s goals for commercial development and independent/eclectic character of Campustown. (See also Campustown Council Goal Tasks listed above)

As redevelopment has progressed in Campustown to large student housing redevelopments, it appears we are potentially losing the independent feel and character of Campustown. The recently created Façade Program promotes a different set of values and character than the more economically valuable Urban Revitalization Area program incentive for complete redevelopment of a property. Additionally, our current zoning standards and URA criteria do not articulate priorities for desirable public spaces along streets or for well designed and usable commercial spaces. **The 100 Block of Welch and the 2500 Block of Lincoln Way are the only remaining blocks with a substantial amount of small businesses and an eclectic character making it appropriate to address these issues before a redevelopment project could erode the character of the area.** Tasks are part of the Campustown Council Goal listed above.

STAFF COMMENTS:

With the recent development approvals for multi-family and single-family housing that provide available land for 3-10 years of growth, the City has the opportunity to initiate tasks that relate to creating new opportunities for specialized needs or interests of the City and refinements to the Zoning Ordinance to address the next round of development applications. **Staff recommends completing the already committed projects**

identified reflected above over the next few months and to identify the next set of priorities for 2017.

The most important new project in the Work Plan is the start of the process in 2017 for updating the Comprehensive Plan. The budget for 2017-18 will include request for \$250,000 for this project. Staff will plan a workshop to review the style of comprehensive plans and contemporary topics and issues that are commonly addressed in Comprehensive Plans. The City Council will be asked to provide feedback on an approach or style for the Plan before initiating the update process and preparing a RFP to hire a consultant for the project.

The second significant long range planning related project is a Master Plan for Southwest Allowable Growth Area that is south of Highway 30. The horizon for implementation of a SW Plan would be within the next three to five years. To meet a 3-5 year horizon the planning would start in 2017. Staff believes that investing in this plan now is a priority as the area appears ripe for development as a planned residential neighborhood with a commercial core, natural features with trails and parks, and a focus on new housing choices for smaller homes in concentrated nodes and corridors with a blend of larger lots and homes in the more sensitive natural and fringe areas of the plan.

The Southwest Master Plan would review the prior analysis of infrastructure needs and costs to serve different areas of the Southwest, establish a financial strategy prioritizing improvements and how to distribute developer and city costs, and establish an expectation for the housing variety and character of development. Working with the University and their land interests for this area is also critical to realizing any goals for development. With a cohesive plan for the Southwest, it would become an identifiable and marketable district of the City that could spur investment and support continued growth of the City in the south with the best access to our planned job bases.

Due to the extensive amount of previous preliminary engineering work, using a focused charrette process with local property owners and the public may be the most effective means of creating options for a land use plan. Staff will provide a detailed RFP, if this item is prioritized, that highlights what activities can be completed by staff and what potential costs for a consultant may be. Alternatively, the City Council could decide that reviewing the priority of expanding to the southwest is an issue best resolved as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process where it could be evaluated with other ideas and interests for growth and where to make the next commitment as a City to support infrastructure investments.

PRIORITIES FOR 2017

Staff recommends that the City Council take this opportunity to edit or delete any of the referrals that are on the current Work Plan list. Staff believes that a minimum five items can be deleted due to lack of need at this time or overlap with other projects. This includes deleting:

Table 1: Recommended to Delete

Rental concentration standard in low density residential zones (reported 2-2015)	Council tabled the item in February 2015
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Reevaluate building and zoning codes to determine if changes should be made to improve the existing housing stock at a lower cost	Former 2014 Council Goal.
National Register Nomination for Downtown Main Street	Project has been transferred to MSCD.
Expand airport protection area for land uses outside of the city	Reconsider with Public Works at time of next Airport Master Plan update.
Hotel Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Text Amendment to Increase Allowance (report provided 2014)	Requested by developer, City Council declined to initiate at that time. No known need at this time.

Staff proposes the following list of projects for 2017 based on its understanding of tasks and interests either described in this report or as represented on the Work Plan. The prioritized Table 2 identifies the most likely accomplishments for the next six months with our current devotion of hours to current planning, customer service, and neighborhood association support. Staff estimates that there are up to 1,000 hours available in the next six month period for policy planning related activities.

Table 2: January through June 2017

Project Description	Status	Est. Hours
East Industrial Park opportunity (Fringe Plan, Annex, Zoning and Master Plan)	Coordinate utility study findings with PW, review zoning options with PZ & CC	90
Lincoln Way Corridor Plan	Complete the Plan in March	140
Landscaping Standards and Parking Lot Sustainability	Adopt ordinance in March	120
Housing Background Information	Staff Report in January	25
321 State Affordable Housing Development	Issue RFP, review proposals for developer or City subdivision	120
Southwest Growth Master Plan	Issue RFP select consultant	180
Text Amendment for two-family homes pre-existing	Adopt ordinance in April	30
Text Amendment home daycare permitted home occupation	Adopt ordinance in February	10
Analyze current planning and building code approval processes to help decision making be more predictable, more strategic and more timely	Plan for three meetings to present overview of processes, Council to provide further direction	80
Review North Growth Gap Area sanitary sewer extension modeling results in conjunction with the Public Works Department	Provide staff report February, Council to provide further direction	15
Campustown priorities for partnering and review of standards	Workshop on Interests March 2017, Suspend URA for new projects April 2017	80
Wireless Ordinance Revisions	Adopt ordinance in May	30
TOTAL HOURS ALLOCATED		960

A number of the above items also will carry over into the 2nd half of 2017. Additionally, some of the items listed above will likely have supplementary tasks as a result of completing the current task. For example, the outcome of adopting the Lincoln Corridor Plan will result in City Council direction on further planning efforts with zoning standards

or streetscape and transportation improvements.

Staff has included the carryover items from Table 2 to Table 3 to help identify available resources for prioritizing the remain items.

Table 3: July through December 2017

Project Description	Status	Est. Hours
East Industrial Park opportunity (Fringe Plan, Annex, Zoning and Master Plan)	Finalize planning and zoning strategy for the area.	80
321 State Affordable Housing Development	Approval of zoning and subdivision plans	100
Southwest Growth Master Plan	Complete Infrastructure Strategy and Design Plan	250
Comprehensive Plan Update Process	Background on Comprehensive Plans, Prepare RFP	150
Campustown priorities for partnering and review of standards (Placeholder)	Continued work on identified interests.	40-200
Analyze current planning and building code approval processes to help decision making be more predictable, more strategic and more timely	Follow up from prior meetings	?
Review findings of the Downtown Housing Inventory	Meet with MSCD to review their findings, discuss their goals for housing. Provide a staff report to Council.	60
Lincoln Corridor Implementation(Placeholder)	Follow up on desired implementation measures	50-200
TOTAL HOURS ALLOCATED		650 - 1000

The following is a list of the remaining items that are not listed above or recommended to be deleted, but could be prioritized sooner if the Council so desires.

Table 4: Remaining Items

Project Description	Comments	Est. Hours
LUPP Policy for RH Land Use	Review effectiveness of RH Checklist, add policies for High Density development preferences	120
RH Zoning Standards and Design Guidelines		75-200
Sign Code for Digital Signs and Billboards	Update Digital Messaging sign standards	150-250
Review demolition criteria in the E-IOU in general, including hardship elements		80-150
Review demolition criteria in the E-IOU to add criteria for historic preservation and to evaluate sustainability (life cycle evaluation) of demolition vs. rehabilitation.		80-150

Update the Planned Residential Development Zoning District		90-180
Ames Urban Fringe Plan Review with Story County and Gilbert on potential update land use classifications and future growth areas	Story County request to review classifications and policies	?
Revise Group Living and Front Yard Parking Terms	Follow up from prior meetings	10
North Growth Fringe Plan and LUPP Amendment Evaluation	Potential follow up from sewer extension study	80-180
Review Downtown Façade Program Requirements and consider "Development Grants"		50-200
Transportation Chapter Update	Planned to be coordinated with Complete Streets Policy and Public Works	120
Other Referrals		?
TOTAL HOURS ALLOCATED		850-1500

Due to the high number of items that on the referral list the City Council can choose to prioritize its immediate interests and decide to keep the remaining items on the list for future consideration. It is not necessary to attempt to prioritize the whole list of issues for those items that are not likely to be addressed in 2017.

The hours estimates are built upon what staff believes is the amount of time needed to prepare information and reports for the City Council and for larger projects to include efforts for outreach. If City Council believes a certain level of outreach is required for any of the items that are on the Work Plan it would be helpful to review this as part of the hours estimate for each project. If City Council is satisfied with Table 2 as its priorities for the first half of 2017 no further prioritization is necessary. Alternatively, City Council can provide direction on a modified list of priorities for Table 2 and or Table 3 for those issues that are clearly priorities to the City Council at this time.

**Attachment:
Common Planning and Zoning Related Approvals:**

Staff Approvals-

- Zoning/Building Permits
- Minor Site Development Plans
- Flood Plain Development Permits
- Historic Review-Certificates of Compliance
- Home Occupations

Historic Preservation Commission-

- Historic Review-Certificates of Compliance

Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)-

- Variances
- Special Use Permits
- Flood Plain Conditional Uses
- Special Home Occupations
- Exceptions
- Appeals of Zoning Enforcement Officer determinations

City Council- Recommendations by Planning and Zoning Commission

- Annexation-Public Hearing
- Text Amendments- Public Hearing
- Land Use Policy Plan Major and Minor Amendments
- Rezoning and Rezoning with Master Plan- Public Hearing
- Major Site Development Plans- Public Hearing
- Major Subdivisions Preliminary Plat
- Planned Residential Development (PRD)-includes rezoning, site plan, and preliminary plats- Public Hearing
- Adaptive Reuse Plans-Public Hearing

City Council- Only

- Plats of Survey
- Final Plats
- Minor Subdivisions Final Plat
- Urban Revitalization Areas- Public Hearing
- Rural Subdivision Waivers
- Joint and Remote Parking