

Staff Report

REQUEST TO INITIATE LAND USE POLICY PLAN MAP AMENDMENT, REZONING AND URBAN REVITALIZATION AREA FOR REUSE AND REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER CRAWFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT 415 STANTON AVENUE.

October 10, 2017

BACKGROUND:

On September 26, 2017, the City Council referred to staff the letter from Luke Jensen, representing the developer, RES Development and R. Friedrich and Sons, asking to initiate a Minor Amendment to the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) Amendment for 415 Stanton Avenue to High Density Residential (RH) for the redevelopment of the property into an Independent Senior Living Facility. The developer describes an interest in a contract rezoning restriction on use of the site for Independent Senior Living with the desired RH zoning. The developer also requests the City create an Urban Revitalization Area to provide for property tax abatement in support of the project. The developer proposes to keep the existing building and construct an additional building attached to it with an atrium. The site is made up of six platted lots and other parts of properties for a total of approximately 1.6 acres. *(See Attachment A – Location Map)*. The property is the site of a former elementary school, most recently used as the Ames Community School District Offices.

During preliminary meetings with staff, the developer described an interest in creating a senior living facility of approximately 40-50 apartment units constructed through the remodeling of the existing school building and an addition. The City's Zoning Ordinance defines "Independent Senior Living Facility" as a residential use limited to residents of the age of 55 or greater. To allow for the described density the site requires RH zoning. RM zoning would permit a maximum of 35 units on the site configured within smaller buildings compared to the higher density and larger buildings permitted by RH.

City Council is asked to provide direction on key issues for the developer to proceed. The City Council must allow for the initiation of the LUPP Amendment in addition to providing direction on related issues requested by the applicant. **The main questions needing to be addressed at this time to initiate the project are the following:**

- 1) Does the City Council support the initiation of the LUPP amendment process, and, if so, should it be as a Major or Minor Amendment?;**
- 2) Does the City Council support pursuing a contract rezoning agreement for RH zoning with the developer concurrently with the LUPP Amendment?; and**

3) Is City Council willing to consider providing a tax abatement incentive under a site specific URA and enter into a development agreement for the project?

ISSUE #1: LAND USE POLICY PLAN AMENDMENT:

There is no current use of the property since the Ames Community School District relocated its administrative offices in 2016. The site is zoned S-GA reflecting the former government use of the property. The underlying LUPP land use designation is Low Density Residential (Attachment B). The Low Density Residential designation allows for the site to be rezoned to Low Density Residential (RL) and developed with only single-family residential uses to a maximum density of 7.26 dwellings units per net acre. Approximately six homes could be built on the site with RL zoning. If no LUPP Amendment is initiated, development consistent with low density would be required.

Low Density Residential is the LUPP designation for the surrounding area to the east and south of the site. The site abuts High Density Residential to the west and north. **The developer requests initiation of a LUPP Minor Amendment to High Density Residential to allow for the density of units proposed for the senior living facility.**

The developer requests that City Council consider the request a Minor Amendment, despite the “two-step” change in land use designation from Low to High Density. The developer requests a Minor Amendment based upon the location of the site abutting other High Density to the west, the restriction of use to a senior living facility, and the developer’s previous neighborhood outreach efforts prior to purchasing the site. The developer has indicated they are willing to hold an additional neighborhood meeting prior to a public hearing on their proposed change.

A Minor Amendment proceeds directly to noticed public hearings with the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council without a specified public engagement process. The Major Amendment process includes evaluating alternatives for a site and a specific public engagement process prior to public hearings on the request.

A request for a change to High Density could be a Major Amendment process as described in the Appendix C of the LUPP (See Attachment E), but the limited options for reuse of the site and narrow choice of a senior living facility use support a Minor Amendment. Additionally, the developer is trying to maintain and preserve an existing building and its connection to the community. The developer has met with the surrounding neighborhood association leaders on more than one occasion. The developer is willing to meeting and continue communication with the neighborhood prior to any action by the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council, even though such meetings are not required as part of the Minor Amendment process. Therefore, **Staff supports the request for a Minor Amendment process due to the proposed use as senior living, keeping the existing building, and the stipulation of holding a public meeting for neighborhood input prior to the public hearings with the Planning and Zoning Commission.**

ISSUE #2: REZONING:

The current zoning of the property is Government/Airport District (S-GA) (See *Attachment B and C –Existing LUPP and Zoning Map*). Any type of redevelopment or re-use of this site that is a non-governmental use will require the property to be rezoned. **With the proposed LUPP amendment the corresponding zoning district would be RH. If there is no LUPP Amendment, the corresponding zoning for the site would be RL.**

The proposed RH zoning allows multiple-family residential development for residential with a density more than 11.20 dwelling units per net acre up to 38.56 dwellings units per net acre. Based on the letter submitted by developer, they are proposing between 40-50 units, which is a density range between 25 – 31 units per acre. Within RH zoning, all site development plan reviews are at the administrative staff level and do not require City Council review.

The developer desires to enter into a contract rezoning to support the change to High Density and limit the use to senior living and to keep the existing building. The developer has made a unique request of the City Council to consider the rezoning concurrently with the Minor LUPP Amendment to ensure the use is restricted to senior living.

Typically, the City would only review a rezoning request once a decision is made on the Land Use Policy Plan Amendment request to ensure consistency in land use policy before reviewing project related details. In this case, the developer seeks to commit to a specific use as justification for the change and to maintain the existing building on the site. This is a similar to the approach used for the former Roosevelt School where a number of processes were reviewed concurrently for the unique proposal of creating condominiums within the existing school building. **Staff supports reviewing a contract rezoning concurrently with the Minor Land Use Policy Plan Amendment with the commitment to keep the existing building and restrict the use of the site to senior living.** City Council could identify other interest for a contract rezoning as well.

ISSUE #3: URBAN REVITALIZATION AREA:

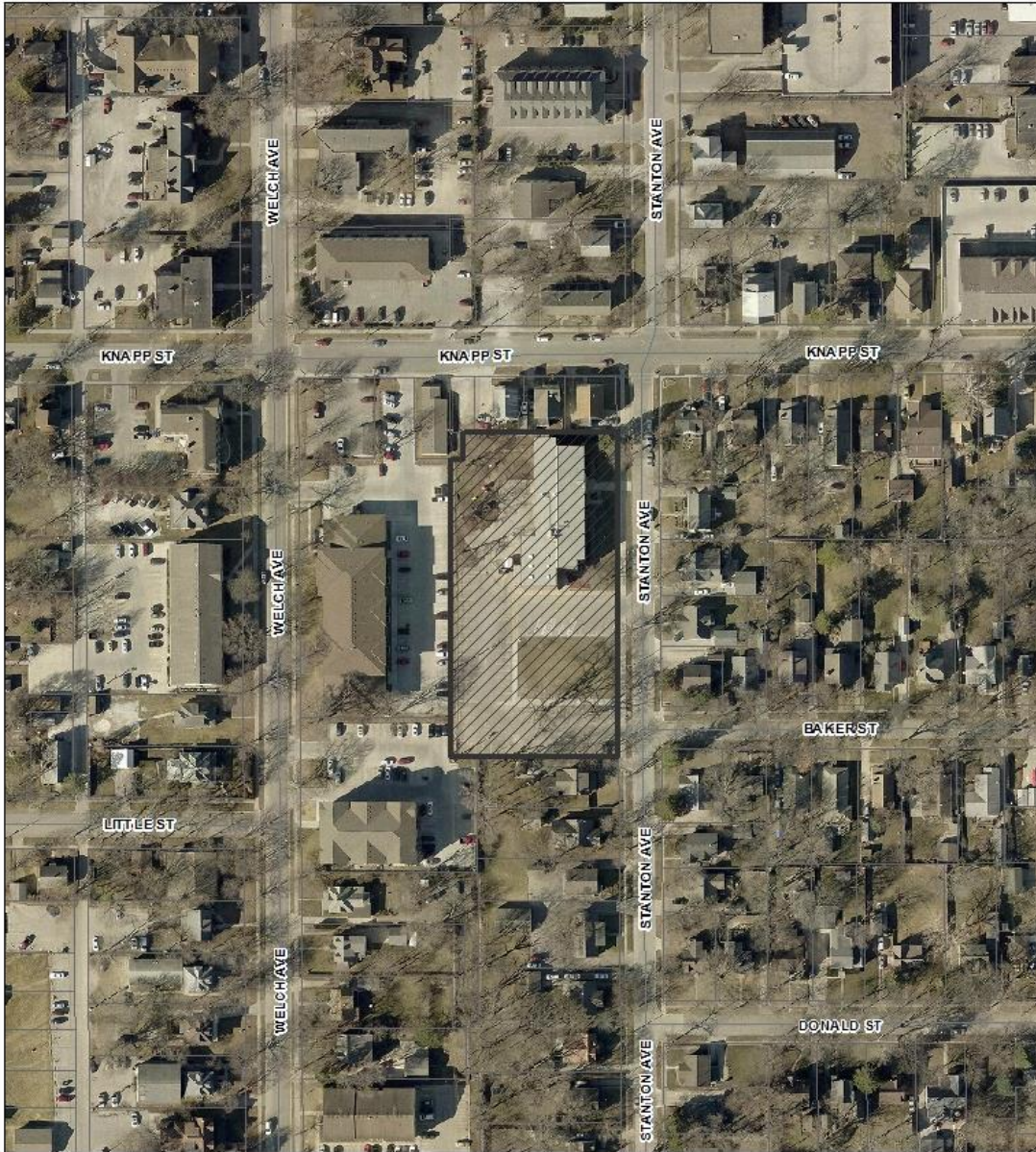
Urban Revitalization Areas (URA) are a state authorized tool to encourage development in specific areas and to allow for partial property tax abatement. Ames has selectively used this tool to incentivize specific activities or for development features to exceed base zone requirements. City Council has no specific policy in place to consider requests for URAs in residential areas and would therefore consider the need for tax abatement incentives and related criteria on a case-by-case basis.

The developer has asked for the City to initiate Urban Revitalization for the project site in order to obtain partial property tax abatement. The developer does not expressly describe the rationale and need for the URA in their letter other than to support a “specialized housing solution for the neighborhood and broader Ames community”.

Establishing a URA is an independent process from the land use and zoning applications discussed above. City Council could choose to initiate a URA at any time prior to completing work for improvements to the site.

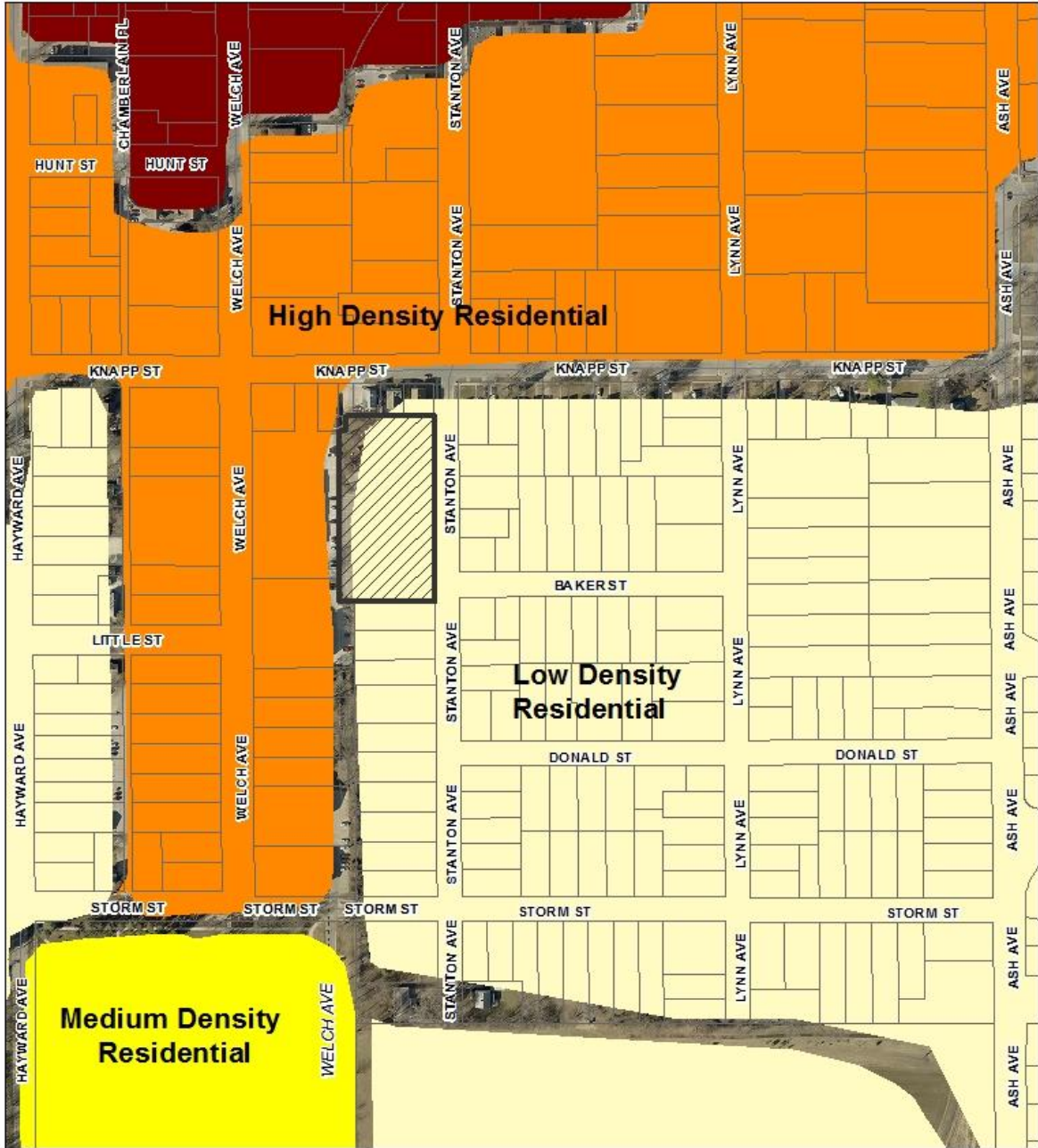
The developer would like to have a URA with no specific criteria for approval, but to include a conceptual development plan as the basis for tax abatement. **If Council indicates a willingness to consider creating a URA, a follow up meeting on project details and criteria would occur prior to the URA Plan approval. Council would need to provide direction to staff on any specific issues for uses or design elements as the developer formulates plans for the project.**

Attachment A Location Map



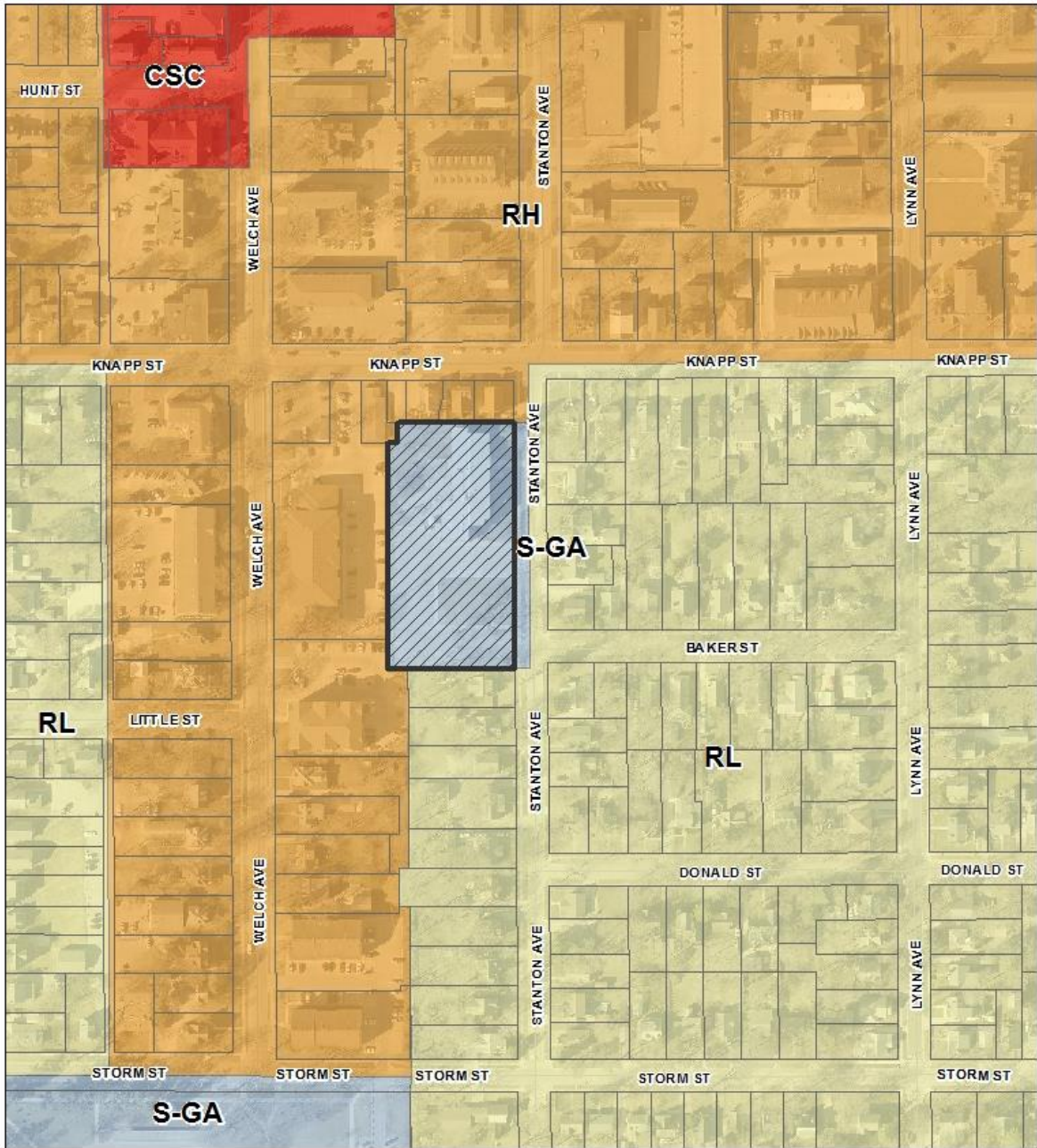
**Location Map
415 Stanton Avenue**

**Attachment B
Existing LUPP Map**



**Existing LUPP Map
415 Stanton Avenue**

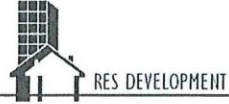
**Attachment C
Existing Zoning Map**



**Zoning Map
415 Stanton Avenue**

Attachment D Applicant's Letter

RES DEVELOPMENT, INC.



September 19, 2017

City Hall
515 Clark Ave.
Ames, IA 50010

RE: Crawford School

Honorable Mayor and City Council,

As you may know, my development team (RES Development and R. Friedrich and Sons) has purchased the old Crawford School at 415 Stanton Ave. from the Ames Community School District. Over the past few months we have met with key stakeholders including the South Campus Neighborhood Association to carefully review possibilities. Working together, we have identified an exciting and agreeable use for the old building site: a senior independent living facility. This is a strategic and specialized housing solution for the neighborhood and the broader Ames community. Through our diligent evaluation, we see great opportunity to provide safe, updated housing for our age 55 and over population. We plan to adaptively reuse the existing structure, while constructing a new wing and atrium connecting the two. In sum, we anticipate constructing 40-50 one and two bedroom rental units, generous common area amenity space, on-site storage, heated parking and more. We have met with staff and understand the process to move forward.

Below are our requests to help achieve our goals:

1. LUPP Amendment from S-GA to (Minor)
2. Rezone to RH conditioned up on Independent Senior Living Facility
3. Urban Revitalization Designation
4. Site Plan Approval

In the past, my team has demonstrated the ability to complete complex projects in a way that respects the demands and wishes of neighbors. Please initiate our request and let's show other communities how the public/private sectors can work together for common good.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucas Jensen".

Luke Jensen

2519 CHAMBERLAIN ST, STE 101 AMES, IA 50014

Phone: (515) 268.5485 Fax: (515) 268.8181

Attachment E-“LUPP Appendix C”

II. AMENDMENT TYPES

Amendments of the LUPP are defined as major or minor, more specifically defined as follows:

1. **Major Amendments.** These include any amendment that is either a *change* to current goals and policies, or that is *inconsistent* with current goals and policies.
2. **Minor Amendments.** These include changes determined by the Council to be of minor consequence. Examples might include:
 - a. Shifting the boundary of a land use designation to account for existing site conditions and/or lot configurations.
 - b. Changing a land use designation to a related type of land use designation, as follows:
 - i. Residential to next level intensity residential.
 - ii. Non-neighborhood commercial to another type of commercial.
 - iii. Commercial node to another type of commercial node.
 - iv. Industrial to next level intensity industrial.
 - v. Any change which the Council determines necessary to address an immediate public need or to provide broad public benefit, and which is determined by the City Council to further the current vision, goals and objectives of the Land Use Policy Plan.