

Voss, Diane

PKts. 1-22-21

From: Keith Arneson <keithdarneson@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 6:33 AM
To: City Council and Mayor
Cc: Diekmann, Kelly; Schainker, Steve; Luke Jensen; dan@ameschamber.com
Subject: Thoughts

[External Email]

Mayor and Council,

My name is Keith Arneson and I have been a resident of Ames since 1978. I own two businesses in town, and was previously employed by the city hospital for 31 years.

I have a building on Chamberlain and have adopted Campustown as my new home. As such, I have tried to be more active in the area and what I consider to be it's main challenges.

After reading David's Council Preview I feel compelled to send this email. I know you will be soliciting input later today on the downtown plaza proposal. I must say that this seems like a wonderful improvement to the area. That however, is not the reason for this email.

We all know improvements to the city compete for limited resources. So, to me, the decision is not whether the downtown plaza is desirable, it is more about what are competing priorities for limited dollars to get the best long term value for the community. I know our city manager and council feel the same way.

For years the Council kept it's list of annual goals on a large board posted behind the mayor in council chambers. I remember that Campustown was often near the top of the list. I know that efforts have been made with tax abatement for properties along Lincoln Way. I know that facade grants have helped in a small way (full disclosure: I was the recipient of such a grant and thank you).

So, time to get to my point...

The city has just finished the Welch Ave infrastructure improvement. It looks great. A Campustown Plaza has been talked about for some time. It seems that it perhaps has stalled out because the latest proposal involves abandoning part of Chamberlain and perhaps even moving the fire station off Welch. Hopefully we all agree that Welch is the heart of Campustown.

What if a 1.12 acre parcel of land was about to hit the open market in the second block of Welch Avenue. What if this parcel will undoubtedly bring strong interest by a developer wanting to build more apartments in this CSC zoned land? What if this presented a very unique opportunity for the city to create a Plaza with a clean sheet design for our community as a whole? What if that plaza became the stimulus that created new/existing businesses to reinvest in the area?

According to Wikipedia, in 2019 Ames had a total population of 66,258 with 33,391 being students. I know these numbers have changed but it is hard to deny that the student population is 50% of our community. I suspect that all of us reading this live in Ames partially because of what ISU brings to our life.

So, what say we look at the City as a whole and imagine welcoming our "top half of class" young people into the heart of Campustown by making something special for us all.

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Respectfully,

Keith