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PKTS. 7/30/21

TO: Mayor and Ames City Council

FROM: Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director

DATE: July 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Request to Initiate a Land Use Policy Plan Amendment for Property Located at 1621 Wilson Avenue (Former ACSD Maintenance Shop)

Background:

At the June 22nd City Council meeting Council referred to staff a request submitted by Natalie Carran with SB&A Architects seeking to change the land use of the property at 1621 Wilson Avenue from Government/Airport to Medium-Density Residential. The property is approximately 1.20 acres. The site was the maintenance facility for the Ames Community School District and was used as such until sold to the current property owner in 2017.

The Land Use Policy Plan map has this particular site as Low-Density Residential along with the immediately surrounding area. The property is currently zoned Government/Airport District which is reserved for structures and uses related to or owned by federal, state, county, school districts, or municipal government authorities. The property owner, represented by SB&A Architects wishes to change the underlying land use to Medium-Density Residential to accommodate a rezoning and reuse of the property and allow rehabilitation of the existing building into a multifamily project.

The neighborhood is a single-family neighborhood that developed around the school property after 1950. The nearest multi-family property is located approximately three blocks to the northeast. The current Low-Density designation reflects the existing pattern of use in the area.

Options:

A. Initial Developer Outreach Meeting

Given the proposed vision for the property by the applicant and the current fabric of the neighborhood, staff feels strongly that a meeting should be held with surrounding neighbors in order to get feedback about the property and on the project concept before being allowed to move forward with an LUPP amendment application. This is unique site and request and it should be part of a neighborhood discussion before City Council considers its land use policy consistency.

B. Initiate an LUPP Amendment to Medium Density Residential as requested.

Place this item on agenda to discuss initiating a LUPP amendment. If City Council then agrees that this is a viable site for reuse or redevelopment for medium density residential, the applicant would be allowed to move forward with an application to amend that Land Use Policy Plan.

If City Council allows an application for a Land Use Policy Plan map amendment, proceeding with a Major Amendment process could be required despite the small size of the site. Due to the change in use and possible increase in density, a Major Amendment process would be appropriate. The Major Amendment process requires an applicant to hold an outreach meeting and review alternatives for use of a site and report to Council before proceeding through public hearings. Under this option the access to the site, surrounding land uses and types of residential zoning for the site would be evaluated in greater detail before making a formal recommendation.

C. Decline the Request and maintain the existing LUPP designation of Low Density Residential

The City Council can choose to retain the existing LUPP designation of Low-density Residential. By retaining the Low Density designation, it is likely that the site could be marketed for three – four new single-family homes. This would require rezoning to property to Low-Density Residential, RL zoning. The City's recent PUD zoning overlay would not apply to the site as it has a minimum two-acre site size requirement.

STAFF COMMENTS:

This project proposes an infill project that would rehabilitate an existing building and included site improvements, but with a slight increase in density that does not exist in the immediate neighborhood. Changing the land use on the site to a Medium-Density land use designation would cause for an island of potentially contrasting land use to its surroundings, even if it reuses the existing buildings. Typically, the City has not taken on small area changes of this type with an LUPP amendment.

City Council has had introductory conversations about additional City infill options with Ames Plan 2040. However, no direct land use or housing policies have been written for this property nor has this property been included with any future land use map change associated with Plan 2040 that would be indicative of planned future use of the site that is different than low density residential. **Staff believes Option A is the best the next step as it requires the applicant to introduce their concept to the neighborhood with minimal City involvement until there is more neighborhood awareness.**

Additionally, since the property is no longer owned or used by a public or government entity, the property should be rezoned. With its current zoning it could still be used/rented by the School District or another government entity. Changing to RL zoning would make the site nonconforming and limit its ability to be used for alternative uses. The rezoning is something the property owner or City Council should pursue pending the Council's decision of allowing an LUPP amendment application to move forward.

SB&A ARCHITECTS, LLC
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June 9, 2021
Ames City Council and Mayor
515 Clark Avenue, Ames Iowa
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Re: LUPP Amendment Application Request

Honorable Mayor and Ames City Council,

We have been contacted by the new Owner of the property located at 1621 Wilson Avenue to assist in the design and development of a new residential project for our city. As a long time resident of Ames and a previous professional service provider to the Ames Community School District this site is a familiar one to me. It may also be familiar to you, or known to you, as the Ames Community School District's old site for the Facilities Management and Planning building(s).

This site was used by the district to house their maintenance staff and service vehicles prior to relocating their operations to a more suitable location on Bell Avenue. It is an existing clay masonry building designed for an industrial use with offices, garages, and attached and detached metal buildings that house additional workshop spaces and garages.

This type of building is not what you expect or typically see when you drive the streets of our residential neighborhoods in Ames. The site is in an established single family neighborhood. With that we are keenly aware that any new or proposed use for this site needs to be sensitive and needs to respond to this environment.

Currently the primary site class is commercial and the primary zoning is shown as SGA – Government/Airport District. The existing Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) future designation for this site would be RL (Residential Low Density).

