

Staff Report

SETTING NEW WARDS AND PRECINCTS FOR THE CITY OF AMES

December 14, 2021

BACKGROUND:

Governor Kim Reynolds signed the new state legislative and Congressional districts into law on November 4, 2021. Iowa law states that cities have 60 days (until January 3, 2022) after the Governor signs the new state districts into law to create new wards and precincts, which is called “reprecincting” in the Iowa Code. However, because this entire process, which usually happens in the spring/summer every 10 years, now is happening in the late fall and early winter, speed has become a necessity. The County must pass an ordinance concerning precincts and wards (as applicable) for the entire County, inclusive of the cities. Therefore, the County must wait until the cities of Ames and Nevada have adopted their ordinances before the County can adopt its ordinance. The Iowa Code specifies that the County ordinances must be finished before January 15, 2022, as that is when the new wards and precincts become effective.

At the October 12, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council decided to wait until the Council saw the map produced by the Story County Auditor, and then decide whether to adopt that map or request City staff to develop an alternative map. At that time, we were anticipating receiving the County map earlier than we did; the map from the County arrived on December 6, 2021.

Story County Auditor’s office has drafted proposed new wards and precincts for the City of Ames (as well as the rest of Story County). Because of the limited time frame between now and the January 3, 2022 deadline, City staff has prepared two alternatives of City-drawn maps, in case the Council wants to consider them as well.

Since the Council direction was to consider the County map, a motion would have to be approved by the Council in order to consider the City-drawn map(s).

The Iowa Code sets out specific requirements for cities creating new wards and precincts:

- The population in a precinct cannot exceed 3,500 people.
- Precincts must be contiguous.
- A precinct must lie within one state legislative district.

- Precincts must follow “census blocks boundaries.” (For more information about Census blocks, see: https://transition.fcc.gov/form477/Geo/more_about_census_blocks.pdf)
- Precinct boundaries must be drawn to best serve the convenience of voters while promoting electoral efficiency. “Convenience of voters” means the precinct boundaries are easy to describe and identify and provide voters with relatively direct routes of travel to polling places. “Electoral efficiency” means reducing election costs by only creating as many precincts as necessary.
- Annexed territory must be included.
- Precinct boundaries must be defined by ordinance.
- Wards shall follow precinct boundaries.
- In determining wards, consideration shall not be given to the addresses of incumbent officeholders, political affiliations of registered voters, previous election results, or demographic information other than population head counts, except as required by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.
- Wards shall be composed of contiguous territory as compact as practicable.
- Wards shall be as nearly equal as practicable to the ideal population determined by dividing the number of wards to be established into the population of the city. The maximum allowable variation in size between wards is ten percent.

Staff believes both the County and the City maps meet these requirements. Because wards are the districts that some Council members represent, they have to be as equal as possible, less than 10% deviation. Precincts can vary widely in size, as precincts are establishing areas that people vote (and eventually polling places), so precincts are not required to be roughly the same size like wards are. There cannot be more than 3,500 people in a precinct. Because of population growth, the City of Ames will have 24 precincts this time (6 per ward), instead of the 20 precincts in place currently.

The following items cannot be taken into consideration when drawing ward boundaries:

- **Addresses of incumbents.**
- **Political affiliations of registered voters.**
- **Past election results.**
- **Other demographic information beyond census head counts.**

[All of these requirements are in Iowa Code §42.4(5) and restated in Iowa Code §49.3(2)(d) and §372.13(7)(d)]”

Any reasons not specifically prohibited can be considered.

State law states that the County Auditor has 7-10 days to review a City’s proposed ordinance before it is adopted. This is to ensure that the Auditor has time to review the ordinance. In the present situation, the County Auditor has indicated that if the City gets the draft ordinance to her within a couple days after the Council makes the decision on which map, they will review it before the Council meeting on the 21st.

OPTIONS:

Option 1. Choose the County map and direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance based upon that map.

Option 2. Choose City map #1 and direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance based upon that map.

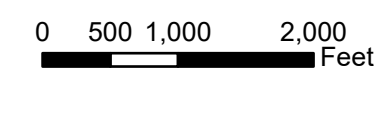
Option 3. Choose City map #2 and direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance based upon that map.

Option 4. Direct staff to develop a different map.

STAFF COMMENTS:

This is purely a Council decision, and staff makes no recommendation except that, given the time frame available, the Council should choose one of the three maps so that the Council can consider an ordinance on December 21, 2021.

Proposed New Precincts



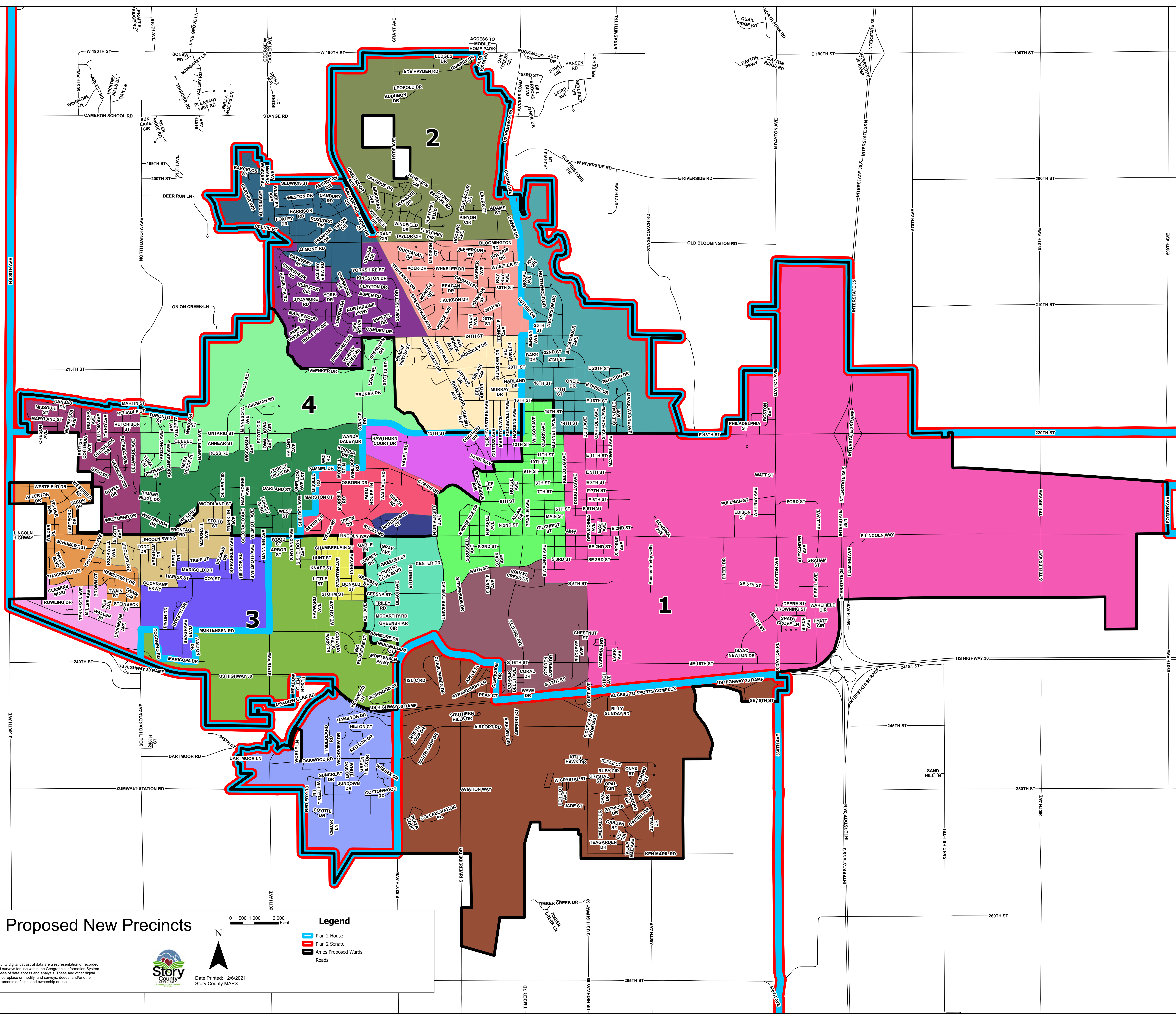
Legend

- Plan 2 House
- Plan 2 Senate
- Ames Proposed Wards
- Roads

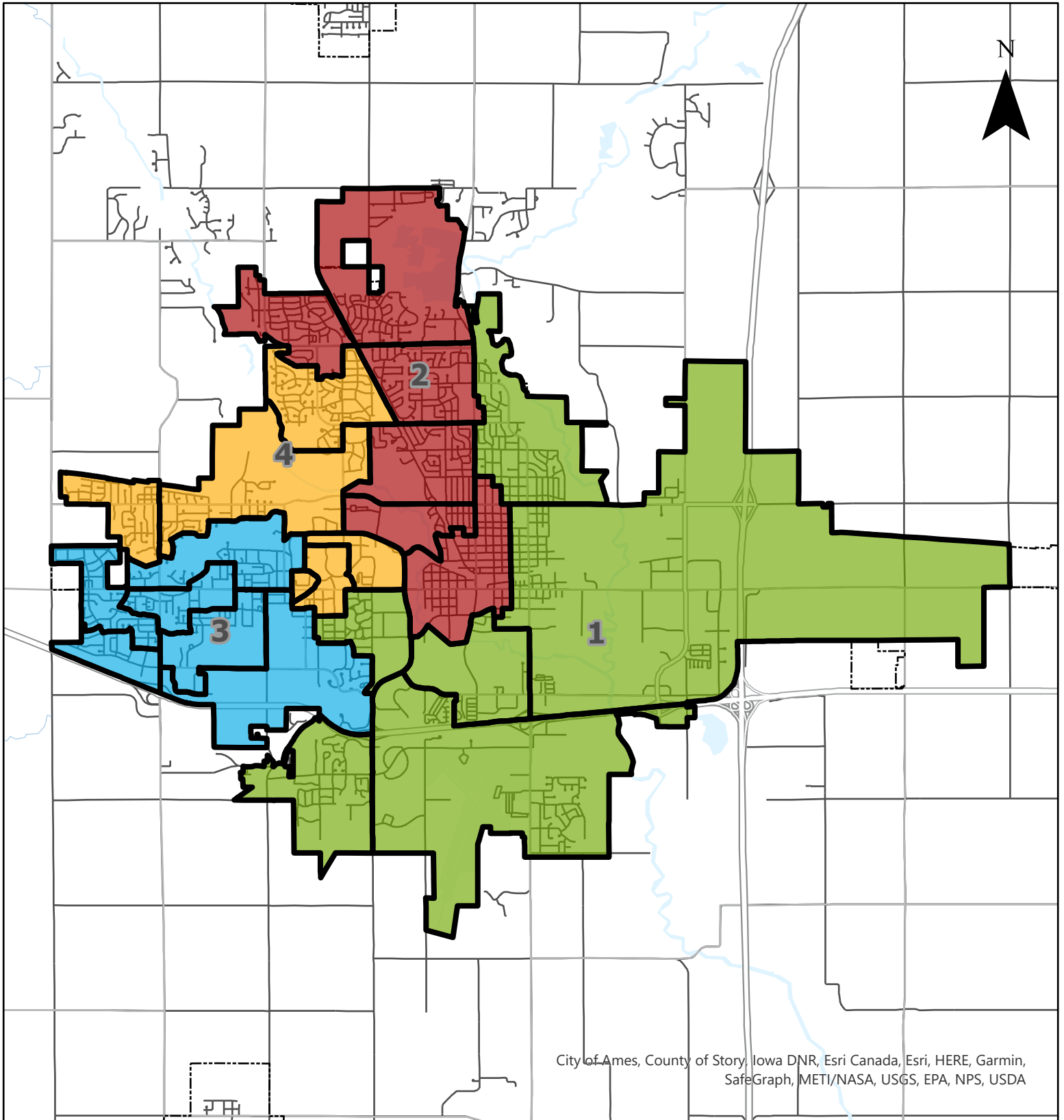
Story County digital cadastral data are a representation of recorded plats and surveys for use within the Geographic Information System for purposes of data access and analysis. These and other digital data do not replace or modify land surveys, deeds, and/or other legal instruments defining land ownership or use.



Date Printed: 12/6/2021
Story County MAPS



Ames Redistricting 2020



12/10/2021

Legend

- Ward 1
- Ward 2
- Ward 3
- Ward 4

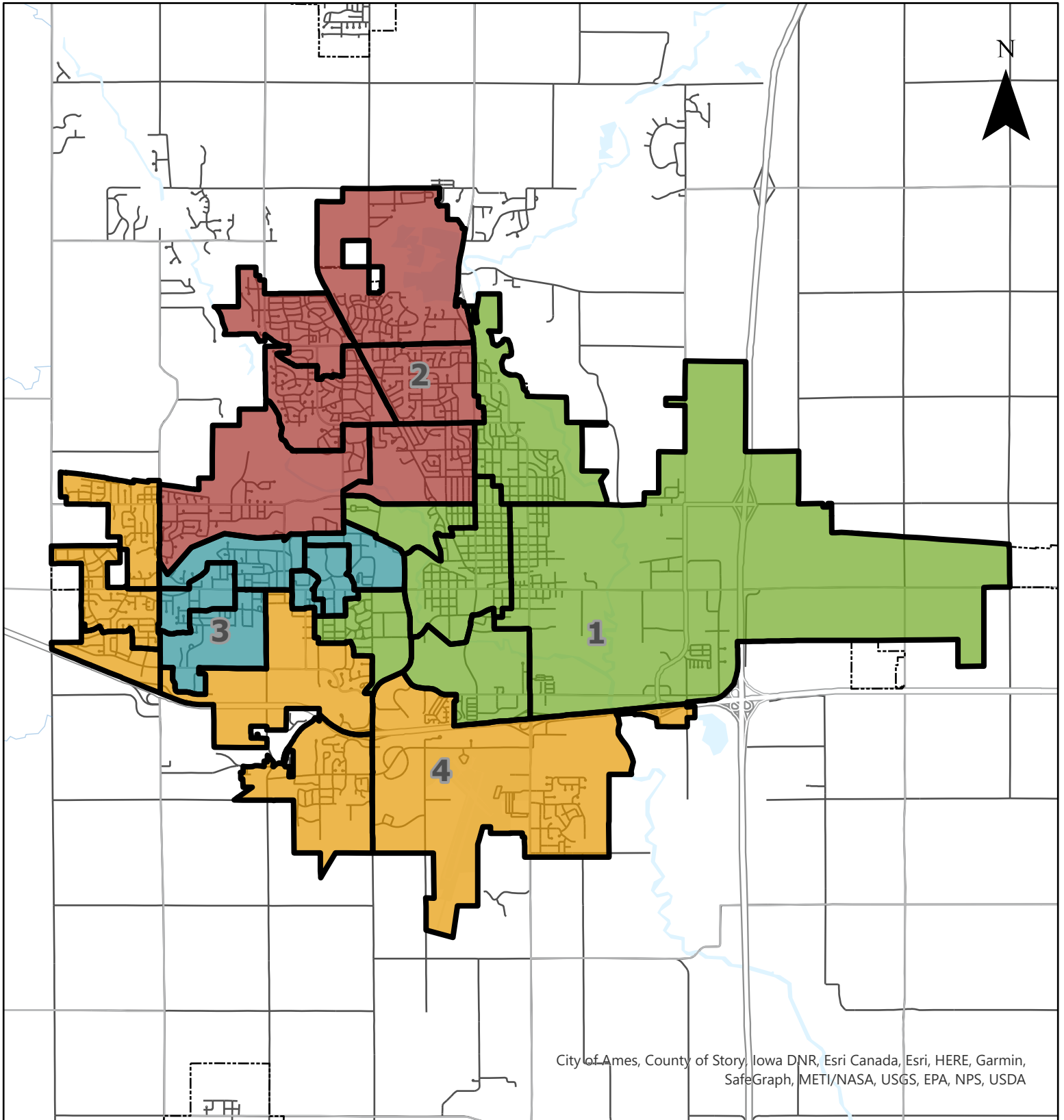
Precincts

*precinct labels show total population

Alternative 2



Ames Redistricting 2020



12/10/2021

Legend

- Ward 1
- Ward 2
- Ward 3
- Ward 4

Precincts

*precinct labels show total population

Alternative 3

