



**STORY COUNTY  
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September 20, 2022

Mayor John Haila and Members of the Ames City Council  
City of Ames  
515 Clark Avenue  
Ames, IA 50010

Mayor Jon Popp and Members of the Gilbert City Council  
City of Gilbert  
105 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Gilbert, IA 50105

**RE: Changes to the Draft Ames Urban Fringe Plan Based on Public Input**

Dear Mayor Haila, Mayor Popp, and City Council Members,

As you are aware, a draft of the Ames Urban Fringe Plan was made available for public review and comment on May 17, 2022. The public comment period occurred through June 14, 2022. A general comment form, as well as an interactive map where comments could be made, were available on the Story County Planning and Development Department's website. Three public meetings were also held. A public presentation of the Plan was given on May 23, 2022, at the Ames Public Library and comments were received in a public hearing format at that meeting. Two open house meetings were also held where staff were available to answer questions. The open house meetings were held at Gilbert City Hall and Oakwood Church on May 26, 2022, and June 7, 2022, respectively. Over 150 participants attended the meetings. Almost 100 map comments and 25 form submissions during the month-long comment period were received along with phone calls and emails. All comments and a transcript of the May 23, 2022, meeting have been provided to city staff.

Story County greatly appreciates everyone who provided comments and has been engaged in this process. The Plan covers many complex issues that residents of the planning area passionately care about. The County has considered all comments received and looks forward to the cooperators doing the same. We also ask for your consideration of several changes to key areas of the Plan in response to public input. By taking these comments into account, the County believes the Ames Urban Fringe Plan will be mutually beneficial to the City of Gilbert, City of Ames, Story County, and the residents we serve.

The main issue areas identified by the County in review of the comments received include:

- Opposition to the annexation of existing rural residential developments and their inclusion in the Urban Growth designation. Most comments were specific to the Meadow Glen area, a residential development along Meadow Glen Road (east of State Avenue), south of Ames.
- Opposition to the annexation of certain Environmentally Sensitive Areas and their inclusion in Urban Growth areas. Specifically, a property commonly known as the Champlin Farms property, an approximately 137-acre property to the southwest of Meadow Glen along Dartmoor and Zumwalt Station Road, which contains a portion of Worle Creek and a tributary.
- Opposition to the Urban Reserve Overlay. Most comments identified that too large of an area was identified as Urban Reserve. They also identified that it is an area in which Ames does not have plans to grow during the life of the Plan but places additional land use restrictions on property owners. Specifically, concerns were raised about the Urban Reserve Overlay applied to the area between Ames and Gilbert and southwest of Ames, including Iowa State University-owned land. Comments identified that these areas should be preserved and were not areas where city growth should occur.
- Opposition to proposed limitations on conditional uses in the Urban Reserve Overlay and Urban Growth areas.
- Opposition to the limitations on the division of land to create new, buildable lots for dwellings in the Urban Reserve Overlay and Agriculture and Farm Service designation.
- Opposition to restrictions on new rural residential development.

Based on these issues, the County proposes the following changes:

- Remove the strategy to limit certain conditional uses through an amendment to the County's Land Development Regulations.
- Supplant the Urban Reserve Overlay's annexation policies with a policy that annexation of areas in the Urban Reserve Overlay is not permitted during the life of the Ames Urban Fringe Plan. Additionally, further discuss reducing the area mapped with the Urban Reserve Overlay.

*This policy change is requested in response to the comments regarding the area between Ames and Gilbert and southwest of Ames, including Iowa State University-owned land. However, generally regarding the Urban Reserve Overlay, the County has concerns that growth in these areas during the life of the Plan may detract from the viability of infill opportunities or the cooperators' Urban Growth areas. The County appreciates Ames Plan 2040's attention to infill development and focus on priority growth areas. We also appreciate Ames' work on its Climate Action Plan and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Towards sustainability goals, we want to ensure that growth occurs in areas that are near city boundaries to reduce vehicle miles traveled and increase access to alternative transportation. We also want to ensure growth occurs in areas that have planned land use scenarios with a mix of uses and densities, such as the Urban Growth areas.*

- Consider adding a policy that the County is not agreeing to support the annexation of Urban Growth or Urban Reserve Overlay areas through the adoption of the Plan and shall review all annexation requests at the time of a request to determine whether to support, or not support, an annexation. The County's review may also include recommendations on protections for environmentally sensitive areas.

*While annexation in accordance with the Plan and the Land Use Framework Map is required, by adopting the Plan and its policies that annexation is compatible with a given land use designation, the County is not agreeing to support any specific annexation request in these areas. The other cooperators may also wish to clarify that they are not committing to approve all annexation requests conforming to the Plan by adopting the Plan and its policies. This policy would also create a clear review procedure for annexation requests.*

- Consider adding a policy that the annexation of properties in the Urban Reserve Overlay (if permitted) should be weighed against the Urban Growth areas' development, planned infrastructure investments in the areas, and their viability. This would be in addition to the policy that "annexation is coordinated with the timely and efficient provision of adequate public facilities and services. Annexation shall be permitted when city infrastructure is available or planned to be available to serve the development. Infrastructure includes for streets, wastewater treatment, and potable water distribution of sufficient size to support emergency services. Infrastructure extensions should be logical and beneficial to overall goals for the growth of an area and not just for the convenience of one development project."
- Consider mapping the Champlin Farms property as Agriculture and Farm Service with the Urban Reserve Overlay, but not as annexable, and the areas to the east along State Avenue and Meadow Glen Road as Rural Residential – Existing.

*The County is requesting the area's designation be changed from Urban Growth to reduce its priority for annexation. This is in response to public input and to ensure the area does not detract from Urban Growth areas that are the city's priority for growth. Annexation during the life of the Plan may be premature given the city's lower priority for growth to the southwest versus other areas designated as Urban Growth.*

- Extend the Urban Growth area adjacent to Gilbert one-half mile north of 170<sup>th</sup> to match their Comprehensive Plan.

*This would create uniform policies to follow when reviewing development requests in Gilbert's growth area.*

- Simplify the policy for reducing lot sizes for dwellings in the Agriculture and Farm Service designation and adopting the same policy in the Urban Reserve Overlay as follows:

*Divisions for the creation of new development lots are not permitted. Parcels with existing dwellings or parcels on which a dwelling may be constructed ~~35 net acres or greater in size~~ may be divided once for the purpose of reducing their size ~~constructing a dwelling on a parcel between~~ to a minimum of one and a maximum five net acres, if permitted by County zoning requirements (e.g., through farmstead, LESA, or residential parcel subdivision exceptions). The remaining land shall not be considered buildable for a dwelling and be preserved as an outlot, through a deed, or by other restriction.*

- Add an implementation strategy for the County to consider allowing Accessory Dwelling Units, or second dwellings.

*The County will be considering this change to its code in the next year and wanted to make the other cooperators aware. This strategy may also address the public comments concerned with the restriction on the creation of new lots for single-family dwellings in the Agriculture and Farm Service and Urban Reserve Overlay designations.*

- Remove the limitation on the amount of land (40 acres) that can be requested to be amended to Rural Residential – Expansion through an individual Land Use Framework Map Amendment request.

*With the target of no more than 60 new rural subdivision lots, allowing a larger area to be requested to be amended could result in better site design and more open space preserved while not resulting in an oversupply of rural subdivision lots.*

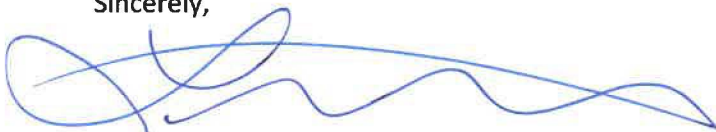
- Removing the restriction on the number of times per year the cooperators hear Land Use Framework Map amendment requests and clarify the process to request an amendment to the Rural Residential—Expansion designation for properties in the Urban Reserve Overlay.

*This restriction may make it prohibitive for a buyer to enter into an agreement to purchase land on the condition that it is first amended to a designation that allows a certain development prior to purchase. Additionally, the draft Plan does not make an amendment request to the Rural Residential—Expansion designation for properties in the Urban Reserve Overlay possible without first amending the text of the Plan. This process should be clarified in the Plan.*

- Remove parcels inadvertently included in the planning area that are outside of Ames’ two-mile review area.
- Consider allowing the reconfiguration or division of land in the Agriculture and Farm Service Designation and Urban Reserve Overlay for commercial or conditional uses, similar to the allowance to reduce the lot size for single-family dwellings. No new development lots could be created for additional commercial or conditional uses. The County may consider a policy to route these plats to the other cooperators for comment related to their subdivision standards.

The County would request the cooperators consider these issues and others raised by the public comments. County Planning and Development staff is available to work through these issue areas and changes with the cooperators and their staff. However, if an agreement between the cooperators cannot be reached on these issues, the County would propose a work session to seek mutually agreed upon solutions. The County understands that while the cooperators may have different goals, having a plan and policies for the fringe area is necessary to facilitate orderly, efficient growth in the interest of all those involved. Thank you and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this Plan.

Sincerely,



Latifah Faisal, Chair  
Story County Board of Supervisors