

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Ames City Council

FROM: Historic Preservation Commission

SUBJECT: Chapter 31 Revision Project

DATE: October 9, 2023

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is requesting that revision of Municipal Code Section 31.10 be added to the City Planning Department's work plan for 2024. This section of the code covers Certificates of Appropriateness, which are required for some construction activities in a Locally Designated Historic District.

The specific tasks requested are:

- **Staff support in proposing revision of Section 31.10.** HPC members and Planning staff have been discussing potential edits to various sections of Chapter 31 during the last two years. Section 31.10 was identified by HPC during its October 3rd, 2023 meeting as a particularly important section to revise this year. Section 31.10 impacts homeowners, has relatively straightforward edits, and should reflect other text edits potentially being made to Chapter 31 for Accessory Dwelling Units.

Potential draft edits to Section 31.10 have been identified by HPC and discussed with staff but they need to be refined before presentation to Council. The requested support is for Planning staff to continue assisting HPC, as they have in the past, by reviewing and commenting as HPC refines draft wording.

- **Staff support in researching** other Iowa city historic preservation ordinances and information available from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions that pertain to Certificate of Appropriateness provisions. The requested support is for Planning staff to assist HPC in researching these resources. The NAPC membership is paid for in the current HPC budget.

Many of the draft edits discussed by HPC to-date are clarifications to terms used in Section 31.10, such as 'building', 'structure', 'alterations', etc., that define when a Certificate of Appropriateness is required. Clarifying these terms is straightforward and will help homeowners comply with the COA process. There are also two potentially substantive draft edits that Council should be aware of. These are still just under discussion and may or may not be in the final suggested edits:

- 31.10 (1) (multiple instances in this Section) draft edit replaces references to 'building' and 'structure' with 'historic resource'. This edit could help align Section 31.10 with nomenclature used in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Section 31.12), but it is also a broader term that includes more than structures. This could mean

regulating items that are not regulated by the current Design Guidelines. This is a substantive change, and not just a clarification.

- 31.10 (3) (c) draft edit: "A new principal structure shall be ~~representative of~~ compatible with one of the architectural styles approved in the district." This edit follows The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Section 31.12(9)) in requiring new construction to fit aesthetically into designated neighborhoods but avoid copying the existing buildings. Copying can be seen as undesirable because it creates a false sense of history. The existing text in this subsection is for new principal structures but it could be expanded to include new non-principal structures and ADUs. These draft edits would change how Design Guidelines are treated for new structures, which is a substantive change. It would not change Design Guidelines or requirements for existing structures.

This project will provide suggested text edits on Section 31.10 within a year to the City Council for consideration. We hope the outcome will lead to eventual adoption of the edits. We believe this endeavor to be well worth the support of the City Council because it will ultimately help make this code more user friendly and support addition of ADUs, which can be a significant benefit to our community.

The HPC desires to continue discussing other sections of Chapter 31 in its work plan, but these are outside the scope of this current request.