

## COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT:      ACCEPTANCE OF "DOWNTOWN AMES: A GUIDING VISION FOR THE FUTURE" DOCUMENT**

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 2023, Ames Main Street began formally pursuing the creation of what is now known as "Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision for the Future". Following an evaluation process, Ames Main Street retained Bolton & Menk to conduct public outreach, examine and analyze the existing conditions of Downtown, gather and synthesize ideas, and create a series of ideas and focus areas to guide the future of downtown development. A draft report was presented to the City Council at its February 18, 2025 meeting.

**It should be emphasized that the Vision is not expected to be adopted as a formal policy document or plan. Instead, it offers an idea for the future state of downtown and suggested actions which, if taken, will support that vision.**

**The proposed actions are a combination of initiatives involving downtown businesses, property owners, Downtown Ames business association, the City of Ames, and potentially other interested parties. It will be up to the current and/or future City Councils to decide whether to adopt any of the individual implementation steps suggested by the vision.**

The process to finalize the Downtown Vision included: 1) nine separate community/focus group meetings, 2) five steering committee meetings, 3) a community survey advertised via email lists, social media posts, the CitySide utility newsletter, and on websites, and 4) open house opportunities hosted by Ames Main Street.

### **VISION CONTENTS:**

The vision document contains four key geographic focus areas:

1. Main Street Activation
2. Schainker Plaza to the Linc Development
3. East Edge and Duff Avenue
4. City Hall and Grand Avenue.

For each of these areas, the consultants have identified four broad ideas to explore (16 total). Additionally, a total of 63 specific actions are identified among the four areas for further exploration. **The goals of these actions are to: transition Downtown a full mixed-use neighborhood that includes additional housing opportunities, enhances access to Downtown and the pedestrian experience within it, enhance the edges of Downtown, and expand the public space to support increased activity and connections to other areas.**

Within these geographic areas, there are evaluations of potential redevelopment sites, the connections between landmarks and open spaces, and the balancing of transportation networks between vehicles and pedestrians.

The document also contains suggested short-term actions, incremental changes, and other potential activities that could be led by either the City or Ames Main Street/the Ames Regional Economic Alliance to support the vision.

There is a suggestion for incremental changes as opportunities arise through infrastructure and redevelopment projects, and a preliminary budget table describing anticipated costs of these projects. Staff has attached to this report a list of planned and previously completed projects related to the Downtown that directly or indirectly relate to the Downtown Vision.

**If accepted by the City Council, the next step would be to develop an Implementation Task Force. The Implementation chapter outlines some short-term next steps within the influence of Ames Main Street and other initiatives more strongly correlated to the City. (See Attached Vision, page 48)**

**This group would begin exploring the short-term actions suggested by the Vision, develop suggested priorities, schedules, and next steps. The Task Force would then present the suggestions to the City and Ames Main Street/Alliance Board for their consideration and further action.**

**In addition to the Task Force, staff will also research grant opportunities related to planning and feasibility studies that could advance the Vision of Downtown and, at the direction of the City Manager, apply for such grants, subject to Council approval and acceptance of any grant award.**

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Accept the "Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision for the Future" document and authorize the Mayor to convene an Implementation Task Force in connection with Ames Main Street to jointly review and prioritize the suggested short-term tasks.
2. Accept the "Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision for the Future" document and ask the City staff to work with the City Council to evaluate the short-term actions that are the responsibility of the City for incorporation into the CIP and department workplans, and request that Ames Main Street separately prioritize and implement its tasks.
3. Refer this document to Ames Main Street or City staff for further information.
4. Take no action.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The vision document presented is the culmination of a collaboration between the City, Ames Main Street, the consultants, and a variety of downtown stakeholders. It is intended as a guide for what Downtown has the potential to become, rather than a rigid blueprint dictating what Downtown must be. **It will be up to the stakeholders, including the current and/or future City Councils, to take the individual action steps that they agree with to bring forth any of the ideas documented in the Vision.**

**If accepted, the next step would be to convene an Implementation Task Force or Forces. This action could be accomplished jointly between the City and Ames Main Street as described in Alternative #1, or independently as described in Alternative #2.**

Assuming the City Council wishes to continue a joint effort between the City and Ames Main Street, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

[Ames DT Vision.pdf](#)

[AMS Preface Letter and Public Engagement Efforts Listing FINAL.pdf](#)

[City\\_Infrastructure\\_Planning.docx](#)