



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Jeramy Neefus, Principal Clerk, City Manager's Office
Date: September 19, 2025
Subject: Packet of Communications to Council

Listed below are the communications to the City Council known to staff as of September 19, 2025:

1. Kevin Bourke, Discover Ames President and CEO – September 3, 2025
RE: Ames Event Center within The LINC Development
2. Terry Carlson, Denny Elwell Company – September 16, 2025
RE: Request for Removal of 13th Street Legacy Development Agreement
3. Kevin Bourke, Discover Ames President and CEO – September 17, 2025
RE: 2028 International Town and Gown Association Contribution
4. Brad Trinkle, Ames Resident – September 18, 2025
RE: Oakland Street Concerns
5. Pa Vang Goldbeck, Assistant City Manager – September 19, 2025
RE: Change Order for Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC
6. Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director – September 19, 2025
RE: Request for Zoning Text Amendment to Allow Rock Mulch within Required Landscaping



Memorandum

Date: September 3, 2025

To: Mayor John Haila and Ames City Council

From: Kevin Bourke, President & CEO, Discover Ames
Chuck Winkleblack, Away Team
Dan Culhane, Ames Regional Economic Alliance

Re: Ames Event Center within The LINC Development

Discover Ames, the Away Team, and the Ames Regional Economic Alliance have been collaborating to reimagine The LINC development to include an event center as an anchor to the project. It is well documented that Ames is at a disadvantage by not having adequate conference and meeting space. The opportunity to create a world class meeting and event space at The LINC will be a major attraction for visitors and the Ames community.

Discover Ames and the Ames Regional Economic Alliance commissioned CBRE to conduct a feasibility study for the viability of an event center with an adjoining hotel at The LINC. The feasibility study showed a definite need for a minimum of a 35,000 square foot event center to accommodate up to 1,000 attendees (banquet setting), with additional dividable breakout rooms and reception/social lobby. The feasibility study demonstrated the need for a supporting 200 key upscale hotel adjoining the event center. The LINC site, with its walkability connection to downtown, as well as proximity to Iowa State University, makes the event center and Ames extremely desirable to meeting planners and event attendees.

The feasibility study estimated between 12,000-19,000 induced room nights would be generated for area hotels beyond the hotel within The LINC. This shows that all Ames hotels will directly benefit from the construction and operation of the event center before accounting for the overall activity that will benefit the Ames economy.

Recently, a request for proposal has been issued for a site analysis and site plan to determine the precise location of the event center, adjoining hotel, and the remaining amenities at The LINC. All of which are essential to the visitor's experience. The site analysis and plan will include the event center, hotel, residential apartments, retail, restaurant(s), and parking.

Although Discover Ames has assumed the lead on the development of the event center, we have and will continue to advocate for this to be a community project that will improve the quality of life for residents and generate a significant economic impact for the benefit of the Ames area.

We will continue to be transparent about the progress of the Ames Event Center at The LINC with regular updates and keep you informed as this transformational project develops.

Hall, Renee

From: Terry Carlson <tcarlson@dennyelwellcompany.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 10:18 AM
To: City Council and Mayor
Cc: Chris Murray
Subject: 13th Street Legacy Agreement removal
Attachments: Ames Legacy Agreement Removal Request.pdf

[External Email]

Deay Mayor & Council Members

Please see the attached letter respectfully requesting to have the Legacy Agreement that follows the property located on 13th Street, east of Interstate 35 that we own, that it be removed. The old agreement is outdated and no longer reflect the current circumstances.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions you may have on this request, Chris Murray, Denny Elwell Company 515-964-1587.

Thank you,
Terry Carlson
Executive Assistant to Chris Murray, President & CEO
Denny Elwell Company
2401 SE Tones Drive, Ste 17
Ankeny, IA 50021

DENNY ELWELL COMPANY

Commercial Real Estate & Development

September 16, 2025

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

Dear Mayor Haila and Council Members,

On behalf of Denny Elwell Company, I am writing regarding property located on 13th Street, east of Interstate 35. This site has long been recognized as a strategic location for future growth in Ames. However, a development agreement dating back roughly twenty years to a previous, long-defunct project continues to apply to the property. This legacy agreement no longer reflects current circumstances and has become a barrier to attracting investment and moving development forward.

We respectfully request that the City consider removing this outdated agreement so that the property can be positioned for new opportunities. While we do not have a specific project proposal at this time, we anticipate that future development will align with the City's vision for the future of this area.

Clearing this agreement will provide needed flexibility to respond to market opportunities, enhance our ability to attract potential businesses, and ensure the site can contribute to Ames' ongoing economic vitality. We look forward to working collaboratively with the City to unlock the potential of this important property.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Chris Murray, President & CEO
Denny Elwell Company
2401 SE Tones Drive, Ste 17
Ankeny, IA 50021



Memorandum

Date: September 17, 2025

To: Mayor John Haila and Ames City Council

From: Kevin Bourke, President & CEO, Discover Ames

Re: 2028 International Town and Gown Association Contribution

Discover Ames and Iowa State University Student Affairs Division are collaborating to bring the annual conference of the International Town and Gown Association (ITGA) to Ames in May 2028. Ames and Iowa State University hosted this event in 2010.

The conference provides an opportunity for city and university leaders to learn from each other, share information and lessons learned, network, and build relationships with professionals who work in the unique field of town and gown relations. Both Iowa State University and the City of Ames are members of ITGA and traditionally attend the conference.

The bid fee for hosting the ITGA conference is \$30,000. Discover Ames and Iowa State University are committed to contributing \$10,000 each toward this fee. I request the city commit to contribute the remaining \$10,000. If selected, the bid fee is not payable until February 2027.

It is my hope we can highlight a true *town & gown relationship* with the support and collaboration of the City of Ames, Iowa State University and Discover Ames at the ITGA conference in 2028.

Hall, Renee

From: Brad Trinkle <brad.trinkle@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 18, 2025 5:30 PM
To: City Council and Mayor

[External Email]

Council,

I live at 3421 Oakland Street in Ames and am a homeowner. I am requesting two things that are safety concerns on Oakland Street

1. I request that the no parking yellow stripe that is on the South side of the street across from my driveway be extended all the way across from my driveway to the light pole. Cars often park across from my driveway and with the road being so narrow, it is a safety hazard trying to get out of our driveway. When a car is parked there, we often have to pull forward and backward a couple of times in order to exit our driveway, which is dangerous with the speeding traffic and there has already been an accident.
2. The most serious safety issue is the speeding on Oakland Street. There are many small children that live on this street and in this neighborhood and the speeding traffic is very dangerous. They don't even slow down when they could easily see the children. My request and that of many of my neighbors is that two speed humps be put on Oakland Street. This would be easily done now, as the road is in the process of being paved.

Thank you,
Brad Trinkle
515-509-1947



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Pa Vang Goldbeck, Assistant City Manager
Date: September 23, 2025
Subject: Change Order for Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC

In the summer of 2024, the City retained the assistance of the outside legal firm, Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC, to assist City staff with the unacceptable ice-ribbon concrete pour by the contractor on the Steven L. Schainker Plaza. The firm then obtained the services of a concrete expert, Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH), to evaluate and provide information regarding possible solutions. The concrete experts' services are paid by the outside legal firm, which then are costs passed through to the City along with the costs for the legal services used.

In January 2025, City staff sought Council's approval on a change order that brought the total amount of billing above \$50,000. At that time, staff recommended that given the unknown amount of additional legal and concrete expert services that will be needed, the City Council approve a change order bringing the total allowable expenditure amount to \$99,900. This would only be used if services are provided.

As of the beginning of this month, September 2025, the remaining amount on the authorized \$99,900 was \$10,024. An invoice has recently been submitted for \$11,327.50, requiring additional authorization. The Assistant City Manager or City Manager may authorize an additional amount that does not exceed \$50,000.

To be able to process the invoice in a timely manner, and since legal and concrete expert services are still needed in the near future, a change order allowing an additional \$49,100 to be added, bringing the total allowable amount to \$149,000, was approved administratively by Assistant City Manager Goldbeck. The funding source for this contract is hotel/motel tax. As was the case previously, the amount will only be drawn down as services are used.

As of September 17, 2025, a total of \$101,202.58 has been expended. Below is the breakdown of the expenses:

- Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC – \$56,480.57
- Simpson Gumpertz & Heger – \$44,722.01*

*The City anticipates being reimbursed by the contractor for this expense.

Given the plaza's status of continuing to remain incomplete, staff wanted to keep Council and the public updated on this administrative action.

MEMO



Caring People ♦ Quality Programs ♦ Exceptional Service

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Kelly Diekmann, Planning & Housing Director

Date: September 19, 2025

Subject: Request for a Zoning Text Amendment to Allow Rock Mulch within Required Landscaping

Background:

Representatives of the ISURP recently contacted City Council with a request to consider a text amendment to allow for use of rock mulch where the City standards require organic mulch material. **The request is in response to a site condition where rock was inappropriately used for some of the front yard landscaping areas.** Other areas of the site, such as the parking lot, are in compliance with the City' landscaping requirements for use of organic mulch.

During the final inspection for the site in fall of 2024, staff alerted the property owner that the rock must be replaced with mulch to comply with City standards in order to get a final site approval and was given until July to make the change. Alternatively, the owner could request the Council change the city-wide standard in order to keep the rock in place, which was the reason for the request earlier this summer.

The City's landscape standards were comprehensively rewritten and approved by the City Council in 2017. The City's landscape standards focus on use of vegetation as ground cover with specific minimum plantings for front yard landscaping and parking lot landscaping. **With adoption of the new standards, one of the questions discussed at that time was whether to continue with the living ground cover and use of organic mulch in required planters compared to a development community request to have an option to utilize rock.** At that time, staff described the benefits for plant health with organic material compared to rock and contrasted the maintenance differences for the owner. Generally, rock is more expensive than organic mulch, but has less annual maintenance.

In 2017 staff compared landscape regulations to many other communities and asked our landscape architect consultant to provide an opinion about the use of mulch compared to rocks. Use of rock vs. mulch varied by community and in their professional opinion that mulch is better, but that rock does not necessarily impede plant vitality. It was emphasized that it is very important to have soil with high organic content and for general upkeep to ensure health more so than mulch type.

Ultimately, City Council approved living ground cover or organic mulch as a requirement for all parking lot planters and required front yard landscaping, with an exception that rock can be used for foundation planting areas. Incidental or decorative landscaping with rock elements can also be allowed within larger landscaped areas.

Since 2017, there have been 1-2 incidents a year where staff inspects a site for a final building permit and finds that rock has inappropriately been placed on the site. When this occurs they are required to remove the rock and put in mulch, which is a situation of the ISURP.

Options:

The issue of rock for landscaping cover is a city-wide issue that is not unique to the Research Park. Required landscaping is a component of all multi-family apartment development and for commercial/industrial development. Residential and non-residential uses have similar requirements for planting, with more sensitivity for residential areas compared to commercial areas. **Attached to this memo are some examples of landscape planters from outside of Ames that illustrate the issue of rock mulch.**

The organic mulch standard itself is designed to enhance landscape vitality with higher moisture retention and lower heat gain compared to rock. Secondly, it does have an aesthetic component where large expanses of rock may not meet the intent of landscaping for “softening” of the urban environment and for visual interest. With this intent in mind for the landscaping requirement, if Council were to consider changing the requirement staff has identified four options.

Option 1: Initiate a Text Amendment by the Applicant to eliminate the prohibition on rock mulch within required front yard planters

This option fits the ISURP request. The rock at question is within a planting bed of front yard landscaping. If this was approved rock would still be limited to areas with planting just as mulch is now. It would not replace the requirement for use of grass and other ground cover as the means of meeting overall site landscaping requirements. All other planting and organic soil requirements would remain. This option works best when there is other landscape materials in the front yard to address aesthetics and the front yard is not solely rock beds with limited landscape plantings.

Option 2: Initiate a Text Amendment by the Applicant to eliminate the prohibition on rock mulch within required front yard planters and within parking lots.

This option fits the ISURP request, but goes beyond the ISURP issue and addresses mulch for required planters within parking lots. There is an argument of consistency to treat all landscape planters the same even though parking lots have much more hardscaped and paved areas than front yards. With this option the typical tree plantings in parking lots would still occur and there would likely need to be some more emphasis on some living ground cover or ornamental planting to fill in the planter area with the rock mulch.

Option 3: Initiate a Text Amendment by the Applicant to Include Rock Elements Expressly within the Alternative Design Compliance Process

The current alternative design processes are focused on planting flexibility and does not address other basic design elements for landscaping. This option would allow for approval of an alternative design when the rock is an accent material and enhance the aesthetics of the landscape plan. Due to the overall landscape plan of the Innovation Center site, staff believes that if this option existed it could be approved for the current landscaping. This option maintains the mulch requirement for sites unless an alternative and enhanced plan is approved. This could be either through an administrative alternative or through the current Alternative Landscape Plan process that is approved by the City Council.

Option 4: Allow Rock as Replacement Material After Initial Installation

It is not uncommon for property owners over time to switch out much material from compliant materials to rock. This option would focus on use of mulch at the time of initial installation of planting to help support their initial vitality, but allow for owners to change out materials in the future. For this option to meet the interests of the ISURP for their current situation, some type of date exception would need to be included with approval of this change to maintaining your landscaping.

Staff Comments:

The request for relief from the rock mulch requirement was part of site inspection process. Since the initial inspection there has been temporary occupancy allowances and extensions for compliance to allow for the ISURP to inhabit the building. Recent correspondence from the ISURP expressed concerns about upcoming deadlines on October 7th to receive a final approval or be subject to \$40,000 building permit extension fee.

Planning and Inspection staff have discussed the status of the permits extensively and there is no situation where the \$40,000 fee will be charged to the project. Once City Council makes a decision of whether to initiate a zoning text amendment process or not, the Inspection Division and Planning will approve a “Final” and planning will work with the owner as needed on updates to landscaping conditions, if needed.

The City has enforced organic mulch and ground cover requirements for the past 25 years. **Mulch is generally consider a better option for reducing heat and moisture retention, but at the same time rock is a stable material and has maintenance benefits that some owner prefer even if the planting area is somewhat degraded. Staff’s primary concern about changing the standards regarding use of rock is to ensure it does not become a primary landscaping material in lieu of the plantings. Staff believes that issue can be addressed if Council elects to move forward with any of the options described above.**

Landscaping Examples (outside of Ames)





