

ITEM #: 49
DATE: 03-10-26
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REZONING OF 1323 NORTHWESTERN AVENUE (AMES CENTER) FROM RESIDENTIAL LOW DENSITY (RL) TO GOVERNMENT/AIRPORT DISTRICT (S-GA) WITH A MASTER PLAN

BACKGROUND:

Ames Community School District (ACSD) is requesting to rezone a 10.10-acre property located at 1323 Northwestern Avenue from “RL” (Residential Low Density) to “S-GA” (Government/Airport District) Zone with a Master Plan (See Location Map). The ACSD purchased the property in 2023 with the primary purpose of enhancing education and community resources within the district. The site was previously owned by Lutheran Services of Iowa and operated as a school and administrative services.

The rezoning from RL to S-GA is intended to provide the ACSD with flexibility regarding uses that are allowed onsite. The current RL zoning permits Institutional Uses, including a school, with approval of a Special Use Permit by the Zoning Board of Adjustment, whereas the S-GA will permit a somewhat broader range of use through administrative approval.

The rezoning request includes additional administrative uses that are described in more detail below. Although S-GA is more flexible, the proposed Master Plan helps define allowed uses, general building sizes, screening, and traffic flow anticipated for the site.

The subject property currently contains three buildings. Two former buildings have been demolished since 2023. The ACSD is looking to renovate the existing buildings for educational purposes, offices, rental space, and a food pantry, as well as to add additional buildings.

The ACSD also plans to construct two new buildings intended for IT space, storage, and an addition to the gym building that may contain additional classrooms or offices in the future (See Master Plan). The new IT and storage building is approximately 2,700 square feet, and the gymnasium addition is approximately 3,900 square feet. Additionally, the Master Plan shows playground space, an outdoor classroom, a community garden, and a traffic garden (a small-scale street network where children can learn traffic rules). Though the general sizes and future uses may vary, the Master Plan provides an appropriate site layout and is consistent with the S-GA rezoning.

The ACSD also plans to improve traffic through the site by extending the north-south driveway through the site, adding site access on the northeast corner of the site, improve parking, and add a trail network through the site. An existing southern driveway along Northwestern would be removed with the reconfiguration of the site parking.

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the proposal on February 18. The Commission received one comment from a property owner northwest of the site that was concerned about drainage issues to the west of the railroad.

The Commission reviewed staff's recommendation about eliminating the south driveway along

Northwestern, which was agreed to by ACSD representatives. The Commission voted 5-0 to recommend approval with an updated Master Plan reflecting no south access to Northwestern. The Master Plan has since been updated as presented with this report.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve on first reading the ordinance to rezone approximately 10.10 acres located at 1323 Northwestern Avenue from Residential Low Density to Government/Airport District with a Master Plan. A Zoning Agreement for the Master Plan must be approved prior to third reading of the rezoning ordinance.
2. Direct the applicant to modify the Master Plan and continue the item to a future meeting.
3. Deny the request to rezone the property and retain the RL zoning and Special Use Permit.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposal to rezone the property located at 1323 Northwestern Avenue provides greater flexibility compared to residential zoning. The rezoning includes a Master Plan, which is intended to help govern future site improvements. The Master Plan does not dictate phasing. Future improvements will be consistent with the general layout of the site. Individual Site Development Plans and building permits will be required prior to any construction of new improvements. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Master Plan Exhibit](#)
[Location Map](#)
[Zoning Map.pdf](#)
[Rezoning Exhibit](#)
[Draft Ordinance.docx](#)
[Report Addendum](#)
[Applicant Narrative](#)