

ITEM # 6  
DATE 08/19/09

## COMMISSION ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED ACTION STEPS FOR THE AMES COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN**

### **BACKGROUND:**

On March 4, 2009, the Planning and Zoning Commission conducted a joint meeting with the Historic Preservation Commission to review and receive public input on the draft of proposed goals and objectives for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

At the meeting, suggestions were made for changes to the draft, which were then given to the Steering Committee for their consideration. The Steering Committee met on March 9 and discussed the comments received from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the citizens that spoke at the joint meeting. Additions and deletions were made by the Steering Committee in response to the comments received from both Commissions and from citizens at the joint meeting.

On April 13, 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the City Council accept the proposed goals and objectives for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as prepared by the Steering Committee.

On May 12, 2009, the City Council accepted the goals and objectives for the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as prepared by the Steering Committee, and as recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Following acceptance of the goals and objectives by the City Council, the Steering Committee has been working with William Page (consultant hired by the City to prepare the Plan), and City staff to prepare "Action Steps". The "Action Steps" are statements that further refine actions that are needed to implement the goals and objectives of the Historic Preservation Plan. "Action Steps" are listed for the objectives of each goal.

The Action Steps proposed by the Steering Committee are attached to this report for your review.

At this time, the Historic Preservation Commission is being asked to review the proposed "Action Steps", receive public input, and recommend to the City Council that the "Action Steps" be included in the proposed Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

## **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council accept the “Action Steps” proposed by the Steering Committee to be included in the proposed Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.
2. The Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council accept the proposed “Action Steps” to be included in the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, as revised by the Commission.
3. The Planning and Zoning Commission can refer this item back to City staff, the Consultant, and the Steering Committee for additional information and/or changes.

## **DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:**

The Steering Committee has prepared “Action Steps” that identify specific actions to be taken as a means of implementing the goals and policies of the Historic Preservation Plan. Participation and cooperation by the citizens of Ames, the City Council, Historic Preservation Commission, City staff, other boards and commissions, and various community organizations will be needed to carry out the Action Steps. If these actions are taken, great strides will be made to educate the citizens of Ames about the value of preservation, and to identify, preserve, and protect our local historic resources.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Department of Planning and Housing that the Commission act in accordance with Alternative #1. This would recommend that the City Council accept the “Action Steps” proposed by the Steering Committee to be included in the proposed Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

# Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan Goals, Objectives & Action Steps

(As recommended by the Steering Committee for approval by the City Council.)

August 10, 2009

Additions to the “Objectives”, as approved by the City Council on May 12, 2009, are shown in “**Bold**” type and “Underlined.”

Deletions to the “Objectives” as approved by the City Council on May 12, 2009, are shown with a “~~Strikethrough~~.”

## **GOAL #1. Acknowledge the role of historic preservation in encouraging civic pride, neighborhood identity, economic vitality, and community sustainability.**

### **Objective A:**

Adopt strategies to conserve historic neighborhoods, which reflect their organic development, historical roles and traditions, modern needs, and economic health and stability.

*Action Step:* Form an umbrella organization of neighborhood associations to work toward goals of mutual benefit.

*Action Step:* Encourage the study and appreciation of Ames history in all its wards and eras, including the mid-20th century.

*Action Step:* Develop design guidelines for the installation and use of historic streetlights in national or local historic districts.

### **Objective B:**

Facilitate the preservation efforts of neighborhood associations.

*Action Step:* Share historic preservation survey documentation with neighborhood associations.

*Action Step:* Sponsor an annual summit of neighborhood associations where residents can learn about historic preservation as a tool for community improvement, share accomplishments, discuss problems, and network.

### **Objective C:**

Strengthen the role of historic preservation in promoting Ames tourism.

*Action Step:* Inform the Convention & Visitors Bureau, University, and Chamber of Commerce about historic preservation as an essential component to market Ames tourism.

**Objective D:**

Inform the public about the role of historic preservation in stabilizing and increasing property values and the community's tax base.

*Action Step:* Analyze property assessment records to test the hypothesis that values have risen in Old Town since the implementation of municipal design review in 1989.

*Action Step:* Encourage the Convention & Visitor Bureau, University, and Chamber of Commerce to disseminate this information in their activities.

**GOAL #2. Promote the preservation of historically, architecturally, and archaeologically significant resources in the community.**

**Objective A:**

Provide financial support for the Ames Historical Society to assist in achieving the goals of the Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan.

*Action Step:* Identify a strategy to fund one, full-time, equivalent professional staff employee and supporting costs for the Ames Historical Society.

**Objective B:**

Promote economic incentive opportunities to encourage the preservation of historic buildings and neighborhoods.

*Action Step:* Provide property tax abatement for residential improvements to contributing resources within designated historic districts and landmarks.

**Objective C:**

Provide guidance for preserving and improving historic properties to developers, property owners, and others interested in historic preservation.

*Action Step:* Encourage the owners of public, commercial, and residential property to seek non-binding advice about proposed rehabilitation projects from the Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

*Action Step:* Encourage the retention of outbuildings on historic properties, particularly automobile garages.

*Action Step:* Preserve natural resources with individual significance or that are significant as contributing to a landscape within which other historic buildings or structures are situated.

**Objective D:**

Encourage private support and commitment for preservation undertakings.

*Action Step:* Encourage property owners to pursue National Register nominations as personal undertakings.

**Objective E:**

Increase awareness of the potential for archaeological sites within the city and legal protection for them.

*Action Step:* In all historic survey projects, consider a property's potential for National Register Criterion D significance (archaeology), including sites where historic archaeology (previous buildings, foundations, and/or other habitation materials on a site) might apply.

**Goal #3. Enhance municipal policies to protect historic resources and implement policies through identification, effective legislation, and efficient regulatory measures.**

**Objective A:**

Revise *Chapter 31* in the Ames Municipal Code and related ordinances to broaden applicability, improve clarity, and/or make consistent with National Register standards.

**Objective B:**

~~Identify historic resources significant to the city's past.~~ **Continue to improve Ames inventories of historic properties through reconnaissance and intensive historical, architectural, and archaeological surveys.**

*Action Step:* Identify and prioritize, by the Ames Historic Preservation Commission, potential reconnaissance and intensive historic survey projects and strategize, by the Commission, funding mechanisms to achieve them.

*Action Step:* Publicize results of previous surveys to promote preservation among property owners.

**Objective C:**

Revise local historic district and landmark design guidelines to clarify their intent and to reflect new materials, technologies, and "green issues."

*Action Step:* Remove internal inconsistencies and update design guidelines to reflect new materials, technologies, and "green issues."

**Objective D:**

**Continue to designate local historic districts, local landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places properties.**

*Action Step:* Identify and prioritize, by the Ames Historic Preservation Commission, potential National Register historic districts and strategize, by the Commission, funding mechanisms, if necessary, to list them.

*Action Step:* Identify and designate properties eligible for listing as local landmarks and local historic districts.

*Action Step:* Explore the possibility of designating a property in Ames as a National Historic Landmark.

*Action Step:* Explore the potential to register the Lincoln Highway in Ames as a National Register of Historic Places historic district.

**Objective E:**

Ensure that design guidelines for city re/development incentive programs respect the historic character of the properties and surrounding areas to which they are applied.

*Action Step:* Utilize the expertise of Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

**Objective F:**

**Ensure that expansion or development of city property follows good preservation practices.**

*Action Step:* Utilize the expertise of Ames Historic Preservation Commission.

**Objective G:**

**Protect the value of properties and neighborhoods by working to prevent the deterioration of structures.**

*Action Step:* Support the minimum maintenance code for rental and owner occupied property.

**GOAL #4. Educate the public concerning the value and benefit of historic preservation.**

**Objective A:**

Increase public awareness of and support for historic preservation archival materials.

*Action Step:* Create and publish a list of historic preservation archival materials and their locations.

**Objective B:**

Promote and offer walking tours, lectures, workshops, and other educational opportunities focused on historic preservation.

*Action Step:* Gather public input detailing stories of Ames history, people, and properties using a city-provided on-line access and other methods.

*Action Step:* Develop and disseminate tour brochures, which identify the homes and worksites of notable Ames residents.

*Action Step:* Sponsor workshops targeted to multiple audiences with emphasis on commercial and residential architecture property, incentives, and hands-on brick and mortar issues.

**Objective C:**

Utilize website/on-line presence.

*Action Step:* Maintain a computerized list of survey materials for city staff and others to consult in planning projects.

*Action Step:* Develop and maintain an online instructional sheet to explain correct methods to record information concerning historic properties and an online form for that information.

*Action Step:* Provide information concerning grants-in-aid and other funding sources for historic preservation.

*Action Step:* Include applications for Ames local historic districts, local landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places properties on the city's website.

**Objective D:**

Facilitate the dissemination of historic preservation information.

*Action Step:* Gather historic preservation information and resource materials and provide public access for their use.

**GOAL #5. Facilitate and strengthen preservation partnerships among municipal, county, state and federal government agencies, including Iowa State University, Ames Historical Society, and local school districts.**

**Objective A:**

Open communication channels among all interested parties to identify common interests and concerns, to explore areas of mutual benefit, and to share historical data and research.

*Action Step:* Collaborate with other historic preservation commissions, historical societies, and related groups to promote common interests.

*Action Step:* Establish an annual joint session between the Ames Planning & Zoning Commission and Ames Historic Preservation Commission to review authorities, responsibilities, and procedures.

*Action Step:* Encourage county, state, and federal agencies to partner with municipal agencies in preservation efforts to increase public awareness of the history of Ames.

*Action Step:* Utilize resources available through Iowa Main Street program.

*Action Step:* Collaborate with other Iowa communities and other interested parties to establish a Lincoln Highway historic conservation corridor across the State of Iowa.

*Action Step:* Partner with Iowa State University to maintain the historic character of Campustown, while encouraging its development as a commercial and cultural center.

**Objective B:**

Develop timely notification and review/comment process for proposed re-use, rehabilitation, or demolition of historic resources.

**GOAL #6: Promote the economic development and vitality of the city through historic preservation.**

**Objective A:**

Assess the impacts of new development on the historic character of existing neighborhoods, commercial districts, and archaeological resources.

*Action Step:* Develop criteria to determine which type of new development projects should be assessed.

*Action Step:* Develop assessment process.



**Objective B:**

~~Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings.~~ **Encourage the use and adaptive reuse of existing public and private buildings.**

*Action Step:* Work with Main Street Iowa and Main Street Cultural and Entertainment District programs to maintain the historic character of Downtown Ames, while encouraging its development as a commercial and cultural center.

*Action Step:* Develop design pattern books to illustrate how adopted design guidelines can be applied.

*Action Step:* Showcase notable adaptive reuse projects through the media.

*Action Step:* Consider Campustown as a potential candidate for the Urban Neighborhood Main Street District (UNMSD) program of Main Street Iowa.

**Objective C:**

Explore local incentive opportunities for historic preservation.  
[e.g. TIF, façade improvement program]

*Action Step:* Continue the grant and tax abatement programs for urban revitalization.

**Objective D:**

Provide current information concerning preservation grants and financial incentives.

*Action Step:* Include pertinent data and links for additional information on the city website, alongside local model projects if available.

**Objective E:**

Recognize the importance of preservation tourism for Ames and support efforts to promote it.

*Action Step:* Encourage interested parties to develop a coordinated tourism strategy for Ames with a role for historic preservation in that effort.

**Objective F:**

**Partner with businesses in Downtown Ames, Campustown, and other business communities and tourism efforts beyond Ames to explore branding, promotion, products, marketing, and other economic advantages associated with the Lincoln Highway as an historic corridor across Iowa and its attraction to the touring public.**

*Action Step:* Encourage sensitive use of the Lincoln Highway logo as a branding tool.