



Memo

Department of Planning & Housing

TO: Planning & Zoning Commission

FROM: Steve Osguthorpe, Director

DATE: December 11, 2009

SUBJECT: Discussion of Planning & Zoning Commission Priorities

At the December 16 P&Z meeting, we will be discussing your priorities for the coming year. You should have received from Cindy Hollar a copy of your priorities from last year. You will want to review these and determine if there are any items from last year that you would yet like to recommend to the City Council. You may recall that most of the discussion during last year's joint meeting with the Council focused on (1) creating a vision statement for the City, and (2) updating the data for the LUPP.

I assume that the LUPP data update will be something you'll want to further pursue, particularly in light of the information Charlie Kuester recently shared with you. As I mentioned during Charlie's presentation of his report, staff will review the entire LUPP and determine which sections may be affected by the findings in the report. We will not have that review complete by this next P&Z meeting, but anticipate having the information to you by the following meeting of January 6. Unfortunately, that is only a few days before the Council's goal setting retreat, which is scheduled for January 8 – 9. You may nonetheless wish to recommend a review of those sections of the LUPP that you later determine relate to the findings in the data report.

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NEW PLANNING INITIATIVES FOR FY 2009-2010
Suggestions from Planning and Zoning Commission Members
(12/03/08)

The Planning and Zoning Commission wants to evaluate the assumptions and projections, which the current LUPP and Zoning ordinance were based upon, and compare them to current planning data as they regard the City of Ames. In doing so, we will review the accuracy and validity of prior assumptions with the existing facts, future projections, and the City's current goals. Based on this review, the Planning and Zoning Commission may make recommendations for revisions to the LUPP and Zoning Ordinance, such as:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation
- Planning Base
- Industrial Land
- Planning for a Specific District
- Transportation & Traffic
- Growth Priorities & Direction
- Village
- Tax Base
- Annexation

See the attached Appendix to give additional insight into the bullets listed above.

APPENDIX

LUPP & ZONING EVALUATION

1. Review the LUPP and Zoning Ordinance in order to:
 - reflect current and future city values and goals,
 - understand where issues are arising (language/definitions, geography, code requirements, graphic interpretation, etc.),
 - reflect the desired direction of growth of Ames,
 - improve ease of use of the Plan and Code,
 - be proactive about making corrections, and
 - develop a simple framework/decision making process for revision (as necessary).

The technical aspects of this review should include:

- determining that its projections and intentions are accurate and up to date,
- evaluating whether the amount of growth and the mix of buildings, uses and open areas that the Plan includes are consistent with projections and intentions, and
- noting strengths and weaknesses.

PLANNING BASE

1. Examine the baseline data for land use policy and update as warranted, including:
 - population target and timeline out to 2030 for each major region of the city (Northwest, North, Northeast, Southwest, etc.),
 - current mix of apartments and single-family housing, and
 - current supply of commercial, industrial and open space land.

Based on this and other data compiled determine:

- mix of housing needed out to 2030 in each region, based on unit type (single family detached, single family attached, apartment, etc.) density (low, medium, high), development style (village, suburban) and price range,
 - retail and Industrial growth out to 2030 in each region, and
 - green space, parks, bike trails, etc. out to 2030 in each region
2. Research other ways to meet infill and density than the minimum density of 3.75 units per acre as stated in the Zoning Ordinance for new Suburban Low Density Residential areas.

INDUSTRIAL LAND

1. Determine how much industrial land will be needed in the future and make recommendations on proactive policies to make such land available, such as annexation and providing needed infrastructure.

PLANNING FOR A SPECIFIC DISTRICT

1. Campustown improvement plan; ISU is a class one research and teaching university. Campustown is the visitor's first impression of the university. It does not reflect a class-one university. People talk about the need to improve but so far we have not had much in the way of suggestions and getting the city and university to come together to develop and implement a plan to improve. We should do all that we can to assist the university in growing its student base. This results in significant economic growth. What is the long-term goal for Campustown? How do we achieve? What are the milestones and markers of success in this area?
2. Establish key districts in the community (Art and Culture, Campus Life, Trends' District, Recreation District, Night Life, etc.).
3. Northeast Ames Urban Fringe: Begin to discuss and understand the implications of the Urban Fringe Plan and the Story County zoning plans for the area north of Ames and East of I-35 so that we can make the case for Ames.
4. Main Street Business District: Is it making progress? Do the merchants need assistance in what? Why do we use parking meters downtown if all that we are doing is generating a breakeven deal for the city? (Refer to the Tribunes editorial on parking meters.) If there was a niche-marketing seminar put on by some niche-marketing retail expert (maybe this has been done) would it be of benefit?

TRANSPORTATION & TRAFFIC

1. Review city traffic patterns and four lane corridors within the city in an attempt to reduce congestion and better facilitate both NS and EW flow.
If the NW is the next area of growth, there will be no easy way to get to the preferred shopping areas of downtown and South Duff. Consider extension of Bloomington to Dayton and University Boulevard to Bloomington. Start planning for traffic flow in the urban fringe area.
2. As part of the above goals and planning determine and set long term traffic flow and state the desired mode of transportation to be most heavily supported. Will preference continue to be personal vehicles and parking space for same or will mass transit connector routes be encouraged or will walking biking accessible service nodes be a highest priority or only an after thought?

3. Transportation – make the flow of traffic through town easier. Look at the planned extension of Grand and its impacts, as well as other solutions. Include routes that avoid railway crossings in the study. Also need to consider expanding the system of bike paths.

GROWTH PRIORITIES & DIRECTION

1. Growth Priorities: Ames needs to know where to grow and why. Without adequate development (land) for housing it will stifle economic development growth. For jobs we must have adequate housing. This we believe is true in the public sector, as well as the private sector development. This gets into such zoning codes as Density (3.75 units per acre.) We realize that this is not the place to preach, but why is Ames the only community in the state of Iowa that feels that it needs to manage housing developments through the use of density codes? Maybe we have incorrect data on this but would like to know.
2. Revisit the issue of preferred growth areas.
The vote to deny the recommendation of the P&Z staff and the Commission was a 3-3 vote. Before Ames builds an overpass at North Dakota, we would like to have the Council revisit their decision.
3. Growth Priorities: Review/Update City's priorities/desires for growth (where to, when, how, and why).

VILLAGE

1. Review the “village concept” with regard to present day appropriateness and applicable zoning restrictions.
2. Village and PUD Zoning: What have been the issues over the last 10 years? Why do they arise (code driven, developer driven, etc.)? Develop a framework (community values and goals) for decision making when altering or varying the plans in place. Understand what success is for these projects (residential and commercial absorption timing, aesthetic quality, ease of use, health, safety and wellness, maintenance aspects, etc.) and how we measure success (if we [the community] cannot measure it we [the community] cannot manage it).

TAX BASE

1. Diversifying our tax base and attracting more singles and young families.
2. Serious look at tax revenue streams and implications regarding zoning.

ANNEXATION

1. Proactive annexation -- for both residential and industrial uses.
2. This is an item the Commission should be proactive on.
3. Any examination of the LUPP will raise questions regarding annexation. Embedded in the examination are the assumptions of growth both in numbers and in space, including zoning and type. Projecting 5, 10, 15 years down the road, what assumptions still are valid and what might be changed. What kind of flexibility in the LUPP is necessary to maintain integrity but still be nimble. The Commission and the Council have differed on the specifics of annexation making this issue one which needs discussion among the Commission and Council members. The Commission notes the points below are some of the items that would be examined.
 - a. Look at the issue of annexation for both industrial lands and residential opportunities.
 - i. consider tax base and revenue for city
 - ii. consider environmental issues and maintaining a green image
 - iii. consider infrastructure needs and costs
 - b. Examine whether proactive annexation opens up opportunities for growth and/or management
 - c. Examine the status of the directions in which city growth is currently ranked and see if there is a need to adjust the measures
 - d. How can LUPP help with zoning decisions?