



Memo

Department of Planning & Housing

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Charlie Kuester, Planner
DATE: January 15, 2010
SUBJECT: LUPP Update Follow-up

The Planning and Housing staff prepared a report for the Planning and Zoning Commission detailing changes in certain metrics identified in the 1997 Land Use Policy Plan. Staff evaluated the best available data and obtained estimates of the current population of Ames, current housing stock, and current employment. The report also compared these metrics of where the City is now to where it was in 1997, and where the LUPP projects it to be in 2030.

Assuming that the 1997 projections of growth in 2030 projects were linear, the population of Ames is growing at twice the pace that was expected. From 1997 to 2008, population in Ames grew 17.2 percent (from 48,238 to 56,510 as estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau). This represents an annualized growth rate of 1.60 percent. If this rate were sustained, the target population of 59,600 for Ames will be reached in 2012.

Housing grew at a slightly faster pace than population, resulting in a greater housing vacancy rate. From 2000 to 2008, the number of housing units grew 18.2 percent. Most significant is the increase in structures having 10-19 units, which rose 72.6 percent; and structures with 20 or more units, which rose 40.7 percent.

Job growth is on target with the rate predicated in the LUPP. However, the Land Use Policy Plan anticipated that job growth and population would rise at the same rate. Data show that, in fact, population has risen at a rate almost double that of job creation. Total employment for the county has risen from 44,870 in 1998 to 47,500 in 2007 (5.9 percent total growth). Also, what Census Bureau data show is that the mix of jobs by industry is diverging from what was predicted in 1997. For instance, while the LUPP predicted growth in retail and government jobs, those sectors have actually declined.

While the purpose of that staff report was to take a “snapshot” of Ames—where is the city in regards to those metrics—the report raises questions as to whether certain aspects of the Land Use Policy Plan need to be examined in light of the unexpected growth in population. This memo identifies those areas of the LUPP for which these new measures of growth have an impact. While much of the LUPP focuses on “how” the city will look, there are several sections that address the “size” of the community. The following sections identify those chapters and pages of the Land Use Policy Plan that should be re-examined based on the recent analysis.

CHAPTER ONE: PLANNING BASE

The population projection for the LUPP is the basis on which many other policies are built. Housing, employment, and land use needs are all based on how to accommodate the projected population.

The population projection for 2030 in Chapter One for Ames and its planning area is between 65,000 and 67,000—for Story County it's between 94,000 and 96,000 (p.7). The appendix (p. 129) includes a projection of 59,600 for Ames in 2030. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2008 population of Ames as 56,510. If this rate of growth were to be sustained, the 2030 population projection for Ames would be met in 2012.

The projections for employment (p. 8-9) in the LUPP should be re-examined in light of the recent data. While the numbers of jobs in 2007 seem to be on-pace with the 2030 projections (assuming a straight line growth rate), the mix of jobs is diverging from expectations. In 2007, government jobs declined 2.0 percent from 1998 rather than moving towards the LUPP projection of 7.6 percent growth in 2030. Likewise, retail jobs also experienced a decline (minus 5.3 percent) rather than the double digit growth that was projected. The most recent data available are from 2007 and, therefore, don't reflect the recent national and regional changes in economic conditions.

The projections for housing (p. 10) reflect a growth rate slightly higher than that of population. This was anticipated in 1997 with the adoption of the LUPP and was expected to increase elasticity in the housing supply. In fact this has occurred, resulting in an increase in the vacancy rate of housing units in the city.

The LUPP projected a need for the development of 3,000 to 3,500 acres to meet the growth needs of the city (p. 11). These acres lie within the City or within the Planning Area—the two-mile fringe outside the city boundaries. The recently completed staff report did not measure land development acreage from 1997 to 2008 so it would be useful to evaluate land usage since the adoption of the Land Use Policy Plan. Following that analysis, the necessary land areas (by use type) needed to accommodate a new projected population can be done.

Objective 1.C of Goals For a New Vision (p. 14) should be updated if a new population projections were developed.

Objective 2.A of Goals For a New Vision (p. 15) should be updated if new land use projections are prepared.

CHAPTER TWO: LAND USE

Future land use allocation (p. 29) should be evaluated, not only to reflect the faster growth experienced by Ames, but also to see if they are consistent with the expectations of the scale of development. For instance, the LUPP anticipates an additional 125-150 acres for convenience/neighborhood-scale activities. These include commercial development within villages, as well as Convenience Commercial nodes (CVCN). With a size limit of “between two (2) and five (5) acres, but not greater than ten (10) acres, (p. 57)” there would need to be between 15 and 62 nodes identified on the land use map. Besides the commercial core in Somerset, there are just four. There should be a re-evaluation of what should be the projections of acreage for all land use types—residential, commercial, industrial and public.

CHAPTER FOUR: ENVIRONMENTAL

This chapter has two items that should be re-examined based on the recent growth estimates. One is the projection for water usage (p. 87); the second is projection for wastewater flow (p. 90). The Water and Pollution Control Department recently completed an analysis of their future needs for water treatment

capacity. The analysis anticipates a population of 62,800 by 2033. Downstream, the Public Works Department is seeking funding for a capacity analysis of the wastewater collection system.

CHAPTER FIVE: PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

This chapter (p. 97) describes provisions for parks and open space. One factor in determining parkland level of service is population. The Parks and Recreation Department relies on population projections, to some degree, for park planning. However, of greater interest is the direction of growth so that the Department can be pro-active in obtaining appropriate land suitable for community and neighborhood parks.

SUMMARY:

Because the recent U.S. Census Bureau estimate of the population of Ames indicates that the population is growing faster than anticipated by the land Use Policy Plan, the city should consider producing and adopting a new population projection for the plan horizon year of 2030. With that new projection, the following pages of the LUPP should be re-examined and, if appropriate, updated:

- Page 7 and 129: Population projections.
- Pages 8-9: Employment projections.
- Page 10: Housing projections.
- Page 11: Land use projections.
- Page 14: Objective 1.C
- Page 15: Objective 2.A
- Page 29: Land use allocations.
- Page 57: Commercial land use needs.
- Page 87: Water usage projections.
- Page 90: Waste water projections.
- Page 97: Park land needs.

Some of the recommended examination of the data, such as population projections and housing needs, can be accomplished by staff. However, other projections of the future, such as housing types, employment, jobs mix, and land use allocations, will need to be driven, to some degree, by policy choices that the city needs to make. The Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council will need to have those discussions on policy.

A FOLLOW-UP ON THE DATA

A question arose at the Planning and Zoning Commission as well as at the City Council concerning the employment data. The employment numbers from both the U.S. Census Bureau (County Business Patterns) and Iowa Workforce Development (Current Employment Situation) are a measure of the numbers of jobs. A person who is working two jobs is reported twice. In addition, both sources make no differentiation between part-time and full-time employment.

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