

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Date: April 6, 2016	Debra Lee, Chairperson	2018
	Rob Bowers, Vice Chairperson	2018
Call to Order: 7:00 PM	Yvonne Wannemuehler	2018
	Julie Gould	2019
Place: Ames City Hall Council Chambers	Carlton Basmajian	2017
	Matt Converse	2017
Adjournment: 9:50 PM	Doug Ragaller	2019

CALL TO ORDER: Debra Lee, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Wannemuehler/Bowers) to approve the agenda for the meeting of April 6, 2016

MOTION PASSED: (6-0)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF March 16, 2016:

Yvonne Wannemuehler noted an error on page 8 of the March 16, 2016 minutes—the second motion was *opposed* by Ms. Wannemuehler.

MOTION: (Converse/Basmajian) to approve the corrected minutes of the meeting of March 16, 2016

MOTION PASSED: (6-0)

Julie Gould arrived at 7:02 PM.

PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

MOTION: (Wannemuehler/Gould) to nominate Debra Lee as Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION PASSED: (6-0); Abstain: Lee

MOTION: (Bowers/Gould) to nominate Matt Converse as Vice Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION PASSED: (6-0); Abstain: Converse

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PRELIMINARY PLAT FOR DOTSON DRIVE SUBDIVISION
(601 AND 705 DOTSON DRIVE AND 4112 COCHRANE PARKWAY)**

Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director, reported that in October 2015 the subject property was approved for rezoning to Suburban Residential Low Density (FS-RL) with a Master Plan proposing 15 lots for single-family homes and three outlots for open space, including a large conservation easement along College Creek. Many public improvements are already in place from the final plat for the Ames Middle School. The developer, Hunziker Christy Shirk Builders, Inc., will need to create a looped street. Usable open space areas and a shared use path system connection were identified on the displayed plat. Staff found the proposed project to conform to development requirements and recommended approval of the preliminary plat.

There were no public comments.

Carlton Basmajian asked if Dotson Drive is a dead end street. Mr. Diekmann indicated Dotson Drive connections were completed in 2015 and it is now a through street.

MOTION: (Bowers/Wannemuehler) to accept Alternative #1, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the preliminary plat for Dotson Drive Subdivision.

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

Mr. Diekmann stated the item would appear on the April 26, 2016 City Council meeting agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE ANNEXATION OF 5871 ONTARIO STREET

Case Planner Justin Moore reported the applicant, D&R Furman LLC, seeks a 100 percent consenting annexation of 34.25 acres in order to develop the property as single-family homes. The site was reviewed on a location map as well as the Land Use Policy Plan and Ames Urban Fringe map and the Allowable Growth Areas map. The developer intends to seek Suburban Residential Low Density (FS-RL) zoning upon annexation. Staff did not receive any objections to the proposal during the public outreach process. Staff found the proposed annexation to be consistent with the LUPP and the Urban Fringe Plan and recommended approval of the request.

Public comment opened at 7:13 PM.

Stephen Poplin, 5426 Tennessee Street, asked if the subject area could be developed with a mix of options, perhaps akin to the Somerset development. He would prefer that sort of mixed use development to exclusively single-family dwellings. Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director, explained the subject area is designated by the LUPP for only residential development. The developer intends to match the pattern of neighboring residential development. Future uses other than low- or medium-density residential development would require justification and support for an LUPP amendment.

Judy Keeling, 5923 Ontario Street, expressed concerns about the impact of development on mature trees on the subject property. She also suggested the developer consider a buffer zone separating new residential development from her hobby farm. In response to her inquiry, Mr. Diekmann said there is no timeframe for development. He outlined the public noticing process for future development once the property is annexed to the City. Ms. Keeling will ask additional questions at future meetings.

Public comment closed at 7:19 PM.

MOTION: (Ragaller/Gould) to accept Alternative #1, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the request to annex the 34.25 gross acres, all in Section 31 of Franklin Township, Story County, by finding that the proposed annexation is consistent with the Land Use Policy Plan and Urban Fringe Plan.

Carlton Basmajian noted the staff report referenced a possible traffic study and asked what would trigger it. The need for a traffic study would likely be determined by whether medium- or low-density development were proposed, according to Mr. Diekmann. Rezoning would include a Master Plan with a description of the uses. Staff would be able to evaluate if infrastructure studies to support the rezoning were necessary at that time.

Matt Converse asked if the subject site is located within the Ames Community School District. Mr. Diekmann confirmed it is within the Ames School District boundaries.

Debra Lee stated the annexation fits the LUPP and is in the growth area the City Council is encouraging. She also voiced concern about the amount of residential growth distant from commercial services, a question she would raise again at an appropriate time.

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

Mr. Diekmann stated the item would appear on the April 26, 2016 City Council meeting agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE MAJOR SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 205 SOUTH WILMOTH AVENUE (ASPEN HEIGHTS)

Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director, provided an overview of the proposed plan for development of 122 apartment units/422 bedrooms as well as 15,000 square feet of ground-level commercial space in a mixed use building. The 8.91-acre site was displayed on a location map, and various details of the proposed site plan, landscape plan, and architectural renderings were displayed and reviewed. The neighboring properties and their zoning designations were noted. The developer, Breckenridge Group Ames, IA LLC, is required to comply with obligations and limitations outlined by a contract rezoning agreement, with parameters for minimum commercial space and maximums for number of bedrooms and building height—these requirements were achieved. Partial property tax abatement is available to this project if it meets Urban Revitalization criteria. The site will be accessible from driveways on South Wilmoth Avenue and Lincoln Way. The developer has agreed to pay traffic improvement costs at the Lincoln Way driveway. The improvement for a turn lane will be coordinated with the City's Franklin Street intersection project in 2017. The project meets stormwater quality/quantity requirements and was approved by the Public Works Department. Most of the stormwater will be directed to a detention pond located on the southern portion of the site and the remainder to the north part of the site. The applicant has continued to refine project architecture based on feedback from staff and others. The latest architectural renderings were displayed and reviewed. Staff supports the direction the design is taking on the commercial building. Mr. Diekmann thought the mixed use building has a better appearance than originally proposed. The applicant sought Commission feedback and offered to redraw architectural elevations prior to City Council review if the Commission supported the latest renderings. Updated elevations for the South Wilmoth Avenue residential buildings do not yet fit Urban Revitalization criteria requirements, in staff's view. The developer has agreed to provide a 20-foot easement on the southern property boundary to accommodate construction of a bicycle facility as part of its Long Range Transportation Plan. The project site is within a large City area undergoing sanitary

sewer capacity evaluation and verification of capacity prior to approval. Staff regards the parking layout as functional, with separation of commercial and residential. The proposed fencing of the site is not prohibited; however, the City does not generally have fenced apartment complexes, and staff recommends against it due to appearance and neighborhood integration considerations. The applicant believes fencing/security is an important marketing component. Mr. Diekmann pointed out that staff's combination of conditions and allowances for project recommendation and approval provides some flexibility, as Major Site Development approval requires public hearings for even minor adjustments following project approval.

Carlton Basmajian asked if traffic improvements were planned for the South Wilmoth Avenue intersection. Mr. Diekmann indicated the study does not justify adding signals, extending turn lanes, or otherwise changing that intersection—no operational deficiencies were identified. The study examined traffic safety for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians as well as vehicle operational aspects. Debra Lee asked how far east the turn lane extends along Lincoln Way. Mr. Diekmann indicated it would extend and taper roughly 100-150 feet east of the driveway. It is meant to serve westbound vehicles turning into the site. Mr. Basmajian inquired about site access to Franklin Street. No access was planned, Mr. Diekmann replied.

Mr. Basmajian requested information about pedestrian access points from the south portion of the site to the north portion. Mr. Diekmann reviewed the proposed locations of sidewalks and gates. All project access points, whether pedestrian or vehicle, would have a gate, he said.

Ms. Lee asked if the Police Department reviewed the plan and were comfortable with its layout. Mr. Diekmann said the project plan was reviewed by the full Development Review Committee and by both Fire and Police. No objections to the design or its functionality were made.

Julie Gould wondered if developers are made aware of potential sewer capacity issues in west Ames immediately, or if it depended on each project's requirements. Mr. Diekmann indicated staff has tried to highlight the ongoing evaluation of capacity to avoid surprising anyone.

Applicant, T.C. Selman, Vice President, Aspen Heights Partners, 1301 South Capital of Texas Highway, Austin, Texas, described Aspen Heights as a fully-integrated company that develops, builds, leases, and operates its project, with involvement from project inception throughout the life of the project. Company staff handle maintenance, security, and enforcement. The two main requests the company fields from its customers pertain to high-speed Internet (students) and security (parents). Security measures (fencing, vehicle hang tags, card access) and their rationale were described in detail. The developer reported months of work with City staff on different renditions of the project and expressed commitment to rapidly meeting all conditions and allowances required for approval (and as outlined in the staff report). The developer would plan to complete the project in July 2017, with apartment and retail leasing to follow.

Mr. Basmajian asked how the developer would address pedestrian safety, especially westbound return pedestrians who would need to cross Lincoln Way to go home, given the City's busiest bus line runs down Lincoln Way. Mr. Selman said documents on pedestrian safety would be supplied as part of the operational plan, and residents would be encouraged to cross at the controlled Franklin Street intersection. Mr. Basmajian asked if the developer would consider a Franklin Street pedestrian entrance. Mr. Selman said it would be easy to do an additional pedestrian entrance. The current expectation is that pedestrians would use the sidewalk in front of the commercial space to gain entry to the development.

Ms. Gould asked if the developer attempted to acquire the parcel located at 3316 Lincoln Way that the site wraps around. Mr. Selman reported numerous unsuccessful acquisition attempts.

The merits of carport parking were questioned by Ms. Gould. Mr. Selman replied that covered parking would be an added feature attractive to a portion of residents who would pay extra to lease those spaces. There would be a maximum of 50 covered spaces, he said. The developer would work to address any concerns about carport design and appearance.

The clubhouse, in Mr. Basmajian's view, occupies the most prominent portion of the parcel. He asked if the developer had considered including it as part of the mixed use building. Mr. Selman indicated the clubhouse was prohibited as a part of the retail space. Mr. Diekmann clarified the clubhouse could not be counted toward the minimum commercial square footage requirement. Mr. Selman explained that options were limited by being unable to acquire the neighboring parcel. Given the desire for a ground level, visibly prominent clubhouse, it was located in the corner primarily because there was no other practical use for that narrow portion of the property.

Ms. Lee asked about gate functionality with multiple cars entering or exiting simultaneously. Mr. Selman indicated the gates would roll open for about 30 seconds unless another vehicle with an Aspen Heights tag arrives. Further security to deter unauthorized vehicle entry would come from on-site monitoring by Aspen Heights maintenance staff.

Public comment opened at 8:12 PM.

Sarah Cady, 2812 Arbor Street, thought the proposed fencing would separate the development from the neighborhood and is unnecessary except to shield single-family housing to the south and west. She did not see a need for restricted pedestrian or vehicle entrances to the property. In light of the large volume of foot traffic in the neighborhood, she encouraged the developer to have storefront entrances along Lincoln Way. The arrangements for bicycle parking were not clear to her. She encouraged requiring a landscaped corner near the commercial building, as it would be a welcome amenity to allow additional outdoor space for neighborhood gatherings. She supported adding a pedestrian walkway along the western property border and also spoke about providing raised or protected walkways and additional lighting to facilitate safe pedestrian movement between the commercial and residential portions of the development. Ms. Cady is concerned by high-speed, cut-through traffic on streets parallel to Lincoln Way. She expects this problem to be compounded by additional traffic from further development in the area. Her neighborhood association requested a traffic calming study in August 2015.

Marilyn Clem, 3306 Morningside Street, displayed several pictures of two-way traffic negotiating around parked cars on South Wilmoth Avenue and Franklin Street. She noted additional winter driving difficulties due to parked cars preventing thorough snow plowing of the street. She encouraged requiring the developer to share a greater portion of costs for traffic improvements at the Franklin Street intersection. Ms. Clem shared her concerns about increased traffic and the number of Aspen Heights residents who will get on and off CyRide at certain times of day.

Sharon Guber, 2931 Northwestern Avenue, asked if the new turn lane extending east on Lincoln Way would affect access to the owner-occupied property at 3316 Lincoln Way. She questioned the orientation of building entrances and exits as well as their sufficiency for rapid emergency evacuations. Other questions/concerns noted were: uncertainty about who could access the clubhouse, potential problems from fire pits, screening/landscaping for the pool/spa, stormwater detention fencing, how 24/7 staffing would work, and trash container locations/capacity.

Joanne Pfeiffer, 3318 Morningside Street, agreed with others' traffic concerns and said she was fearful about the impact of 500 more residents. She would prefer more green space in the development and hoped the building plans would focus on conservation and energy efficiency.

Robert Dotson, 101 North Hall Street, Algona, Iowa, owns four contiguous properties north of the subject site. He perceived a traffic hazard east of the development related to limited sight distance from the significant grade on that portion of Lincoln Way. He spoke about the safety issues from westbound traffic coming over the hill and encountering traffic waiting to make left turns (across two traffic lanes) into the primary access point to the property. He expressed admiration for the developer's plan but wondered what the City will do to ensure safe and adequate access to the area, since South Wilmoth Avenue is not a controlled intersection. Mr. Diekmann reiterated there are no planned improvements for that intersection.

Mr. Selman responded to questions from the previous speakers. The developer would provide: bicycle racks for each building, including the commercial building; code-compliant, appropriate fencing (the developer would consider a 4-foot fence along South Wilmoth Avenue); design incorporating staff recommendations for meeting traffic requirements; adequate building exiting; appropriate placement of gas fire pits in the apartment courtyards; a screened pool/spa area surrounded by landscaping and fencing; on-site, on-call staff available within 15 minutes; low-flow plumbing fixtures, and high-efficiency water heaters and air conditioners; valet trash service to take trash to six dumpsters provided for residents; additional trash pickup to address peaks such as move in/move out; and adequate landscaping/fencing to screen trash areas.

Ms. Lee asked how two bedroom units would be distributed throughout the project. Mr. Selman indicated each building would have a mix of unit sizes, with like units 'stacked' on each floor.

Procedures for monitoring and addressing misuse of the fire pits were outlined by Mr. Selman, following questions from Ms. Lee. He described timed shut-offs, designated hours of operation for the fire pits, and posted signs outlining rules and guidelines for every area, including the fire pit, hot tub/spa, and clubhouse. He also spoke about the company's disciplinary process for residents who do not comply with rules. While he could not make guarantees, he promised adequate provisions for signage and automatic shutoffs for the fire pits.

Sharon Guber asked if every unit would have individually metered utilities, something she cited as a problem in other Aspen Heights projects. Mr. Diekmann said the developer planned for individual meters and that most city codes require that.

Public comment closed at 8:59 PM.

Mr. Diekmann answered several other questions from Ms. Guber. Staff would not recommend an 8-foot fence because of the required setbacks and the configuration of the site. There are no zoning requirements to fence a detention pond. The developer's stormwater management plan was accepted by the City and complies with code. The City does not have visitor parking requirements, only a one-space-per-bedroom parking requirement. Site development review examines traffic operational issues, not traffic calming. Mr. Diekmann also addressed a comment about sight lines at the South Wilmoth Avenue intersection. He reviewed grading and noted the project would generate an improved sight vision triangle. The grade to the east noted by Mr. Dotson is an existing condition that is not affected by the project.

The Commission discussed potential benefits of a pedestrian path along the western side of the commercial building. Mr. Diekmann indicated staff would need to consult with Police to assess feasibility and safety. Mr. Basmajian stressed the importance of identifying improved pedestrian flow. He said channeling pedestrians to South Wilmoth Avenue, without signalization, is not good policy, and that the community, which just had a disaster, cannot continue to pretend that Lincoln Way is an easy crossing. Mr. Diekmann repeated that South Wilmoth Avenue is not, and

will not, be signalized. Mr. Basmajian thought there could be pedestrian access in a more centralized portion of the site and along the western edge of the site.

Mr. Basmajian said it hurt his heart to see a gated community—it seemed excessive and unlike most student developments in Ames, although he understood the interest in marketing security. Ms. Lee agreed and characterized the security gating as overkill, unnecessary, and seemingly a carryover from a model the developer used in other communities.

The neighborhood concerns about traffic and parking prompted Ms. Lee to speak about her perception of Ames reacting to traffic problems after they develop, rather than being proactive. She promised to advocate for traffic improvements. Ms. Wannemuehler cited traffic problems as a consequence of retrofitting developments into established areas. Mr. Diekmann commented on perpetual tension and friction in debates about wide streets versus safe streets that occur with all types of projects.

MOTION: (Bowers/Wannemuehler) to accept Alternative #1, *as amended*, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the Major Site Development plan for 205 South Wilmoth Avenue, subject to conditions and allowances (A) through (L), as outlined in the staff report, *with the following additional conditions: (M) Proceed with revised elevations for the commercial building, Building A, as presented and discussed during the April 6, 2016 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, and (N) Explore the viability of one or more additional north/south pedestrian connections to improve access and travel throughout the site.*

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

Mr. Diekmann stated the item would appear on the April 26, 2016 City Council meeting agenda.

APARTMENT DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

In response to a Commission request, staff prepared a memo showing estimated apartment units/bedrooms that would be added to the City if all known/anticipated projects were approved and developed. Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director, reviewed the impetus and purpose of the RH Apartment Matrix tool, which he characterized as an interim element to help ensure alignment with Land Use Policy Plan goals as high-density projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. At this time, staff anticipates development of an additional 1,200-1,700 apartment units from 2017-2019. Mr. Diekmann pointed out that staff has advocated for apartment projects with fewer bedrooms per unit to create more versatile housing products. Projects with smaller units could therefore affect projections for number of units but not the overall development yield of beds. Mr. Diekmann said he expects demand for student housing and housing in the City's core to continue. Campustown is the focus for intensification. The memo on apartment development does not capture what could come from the Lincoln Way Corridor study—there may be different assessments of infill housing choices in the future.

Debra Lee pointed out that the figures in the staff memo do not include projects scheduled to be completed in 2016. Mr. Diekmann said the data focused on upcoming development and could vary depending on demands from ISU enrollment. He cited an 18-month lag, on average, between significant enrollment increases and additional apartment capacity in the system.

Ms. Lee noticed the expected projects are not all located in the campus area, perhaps creating potential for new rental units attractive to non-student occupants. Yvonne Wannemuehler noted several listed projects will be built in the campus area, including Aspen Heights. She expressed

concern about growing traffic problems in the area. Ms. Lee clarified she was speaking more to the potential diversity of apartment offerings.

Lincoln Way will be, and should be, an attractive host of infill growth because it is a transit route with services and access, Mr. Diekmann stated, and the Lincoln Way Corridor Plan will direct selective infill opportunities. Ms. Wannemuehler asked how the City can deal with placement of high-density housing in the middle of single-family areas. Mr. Diekmann thought it would be important to be strategic about efficient use of Lincoln Way as a resource and important to be sensitive to the surroundings when looking at infill housing opportunities. There are other ways to build multi-family housing besides five-story apartment buildings over commercial, he added.

Carlton Basmajian asked if the City conducts apartment vacancy surveys. Mr. Diekmann replied that the first vacancy survey in 12 years was conducted in October 2015. The sample of approximately 5,800 units (roughly 40 percent of the City's apartments) included participation from mainly medium or large apartment properties. The survey result of 99.5 percent occupancy points to an economically unhealthy and unacceptable lack of housing choice.

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Carlton Basmajian asked for a Lincoln Way Corridor study update. Kelly Diekmann reminded the commissioners of a joint workshop for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council scheduled for April 19, 2016. At this meeting the project consultant is expected to review findings and present an assessment. Debra Lee welcomed Doug Ragaller as a new member of the Commission. Julie Gould asked about the age of aerials used in staff reports. Mr. Diekmann reported some are from 2015 and others from 2013.

STAFF COMMENTS: Kelly Diekmann reported that the East Industrial expansion area was approved by both the City Council and the Story County Board of Supervisors. The Urban Fringe Plan will be amended to include expanded Planned Industrial and Industrial Reserve areas. Staff will initiate an annexation outreach meeting to determine property owners interested in pursuing annexation. Mr. Diekmann provided an update on floodway amendments the Commission considered recently. The City Council directed staff to prepare final ordinances for review. Staff's participation in a national planning conference in Phoenix, AZ was noted. Mr. Diekmann offered to present a summary of conference highlights at a future meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Wannemuehler/Gould) to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM.


Debra Lee, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission


Joseph C. Newman, Recording Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing