

1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan Report* (the document in hand and hereinafter referred to as the “*Report*”) augments the *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* by supplementing it with the consultant’s review of historic preservation in the community and a series of recommendations for future action by the City of Ames. The *Report* does not repeat the Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps of the Plan (although they are included as Appendix 1) but rather augments the Plan with background information and specific recommendations.

This introductory chapter is divided into the following sections:

Definition of Ames Historic Character
Legal Basis of Historic Preservation in Ames
Goal No. 10 *Ames Land Use Policy Plan*
Historic Preservation in Ames: A Sketch

DEFINITION OF AMES HISTORIC CHARACTER

“Story of City’s Growth One of Public Service.” This banner headline from the *Ames Daily Tribune* of November 17, 1921, encapsulates the story. Characterized by a huge number of transient students, Ames successfully has provided basic services and amenities to them and its permanent and semi-permanent residents, in part because of enlightened local leadership and the willingness of residents to engage in the political process.

The presence of Iowa State University drives much of the community’s history. Here again, that institution’s commitment to “Science and Technology with Practice” defines much of Ames character. The scientific method and its quest for truth encourage robust public debate about issues of every stripe. Given the fact that many Ames residents and university students come from rural backgrounds, where tolerance is seen as an essential quality, fraction is often avoided and compromise achieved as a result.

As to the historic resources in Ames, the community possesses many properties dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The G.I. Bill following World War II propelled Iowa State and Ames into boomtown. Many properties dating from the late 1940s and 1950s are now National Register eligible because they call attention to this seminal period in the community’s history—unusual in Iowa when so many communities reverted to their prewar habits and practices.

LEGAL BASIS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN AMES

The State of Iowa authorizes municipalities to provide for the maintenance of public health and safety and, in the state's tradition of home rule, to administer any discretionary duties responding to needs as they arise, except as reserved for higher jurisdictions.

Several provisions in state law are more specific as they relate to municipal zoning and land use. The City Zoning section of the *Code of Iowa* outlines the enabling legislation, which grants certain powers to Iowa communities:

For the purpose of promoting the health, safety, morals, or the general welfare of the community or for the purpose of preserving historically significant areas of the community, any city is hereby empowered to regulate and restrict the height, number of stories, and size of buildings and other structures, the percentage of lot, that may be occupied, the size of yards, courts, and other open spaces, the density or population, and the location and use of buildings, structures, and land for trade, industry, residence, or other purposes. (*Code of Iowa*, 2009, Section 414.1, City Zoning)

For any or all of said purposes the local legislative body, hereinafter referred to as the council, may divide the city into districts, including historical preservation districts but only as provided in section 303.34, of such number, shape, and area as may be deemed best suited to carry out the purposes of this chapter, and within such districts it may regulate and restrict the erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration, repair or use of buildings, structures, or land. All such regulations and restrictions shall be uniform for each class or kin of buildings throughout each district, but the regulations in one district may differ from those in other districts. (*Ibid.*, Section 414.2, Districts)

The statutes to administer such local historic preservation districts are contained in Chapter 303 of the *Code of Iowa*. These statutes stipulate the creation of design guidelines and the establishment of an historic preservation commission to administer a Certificate of Appropriateness process to protect resources within such a district. (*Ibid.* Chapter 303, Sections 303.20 through 303.33) In 1988, the City of Ames established such a program with ordinances contained in Chapter 31 of the *Ames Municipal Code* in keeping with the authority granted to the City by the State of Iowa by this legislation.

Then, in 1995, the City of Ames became a Certified Local Government (CLG) through an agreement with the State Historical Society of Iowa. (Appendix 4) In this agreement, the City committed the Ames Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to review proposed National Register nominations within the community, promote historic survey and registration projects, educate the general public about historic preservation, and prepare an annual report of the commission's work. By this commitment, the City became eligible to apply for federal funds through the State Historical Society of Iowa to promote historic preservation.

Recently, the City of Ames' Local Landmark Ordinance has been challenged. In 2008, the case of *Ely v. City of Ames* came before the Iowa District Court for Story County. This case involved the local landmark designation of the Martin House at 218 Lincoln Way in Ames and challenged the legality of several points in the City's ordinance. Such test cases for historic preservation are rare in Iowa. One such occurred in 2009 and concerned a property proposed for demolition in the Amana Land Use District. It was settled out of court.

As to the Martin case, in 2009 the Iowa District Court concluded:

the provisions of the Ames Municipal Code relating to historic landmarks and preservation districts do not, on their face, violate the due process guarantees of the United States and Iowa Constitutions. (Findings & Conclusions, Case No. EQCV044109: 8)

The court denied the plaintiffs' petition for relief and sustained the legality of the City's landmark ordinance and its application to the Martin House. The court's findings made no reference to Iowa case law, suggesting it lacks precedent. The plaintiffs subsequently appealed the court's ruling to the Iowa Supreme Court, where it remains pending.

AMES LAND USE POLICY PLAN

The Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) of the City of Ames provides the chief planning tool for community growth and development. On August 29, 1997, the Ames City Council adopted this plan as its policy.

Under the heading "Cultural Heritage Preservation," Goal No. 10 of this plan, along with three objectives to achieve it, addresses historic preservation, stating:

It is the goal of Ames to maintain and enhance its cultural heritage.

- 10.1. Ames seeks to provide a record of its earlier development through conservation, preservation and restoration of historically/architecturally significant structures and areas where economically feasible.
- 10.B. Ames seeks to integrate historically/architecturally significant structures and areas with new development in a compatible and unifying manner.
- 10.C. Ames seeks to protect its archaeologically significant resources. Where such resources are endangered, the community should seek buffering and relocation measures.

Source: *Ames Land Use Policy Plan*: 23.

In 2009, the Ames City Council approved the *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan*. This updated policy plan contains six additional goals and many objectives and action steps to achieve these goals. (See Appendix 1.)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN AMES: A SKETCH

The impulse to preserve historic resources is of long standing in Ames. Early in the 20th century, the Adams Funeral Home purchased the Colonel Wallace and Mary Greeley House at 502 Douglas Avenue and converted it from a single-family dwelling into a successful business. This example of adaptive reuse preserved one of Ames' showplace residences. The efforts to preserve the Farmhouse on the main campus of Iowa State University provide another early example of a preservation impulse.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665) authorized the establishment of the National Register of Historic Places and thereby expanded the federal government's recognition of historic properties across the nation and offered some protection for them. Administered by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Register is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of the nation.

The nomination of buildings to the National Register on the Iowa State campus responded to this new program, beginning with the Knapp-Wilson House, listed on October 15, 1966. Over the next three decades, the additional properties were listed, including Alumni Hall (November 16, 1978, now known as Enrollment Services Building), Marston Water Tower (May 27, 1982), Engineering Hall (January 10, 1983), Agriculture Hall (November 15, 1978, now known as Catt Hall), Christian Petersen Courtyard Sculptures and Dairy Industry Building (April 7, 1987), and Morrill Hall (June 28, 1996). Many more properties at Iowa State are National Register eligible, including the main campus as an historic district. (Page 1992)

Old Town

In the 1980s, property owners and neighbors in Old Town organized together and formed the Old Town Neighborhood Association. This group has made a major contribution to stabilize and revitalize the neighborhood. The association is dedicated to community improvements. Its agenda includes the promotion of neighborliness, homeownership, historic preservation, and long-range city planning. Sharon Wirth, an Old Town resident who was elected to the Ames City Council in 1989 as its First Ward representative and served on it until December 31, 2005, has nurtured historic preservation and neighborhood improvement throughout Ames.

In an effort to encourage the preservation of the Old Town's historic fabric, the Old Town Neighborhood Association undertook to nominate the neighborhood as an historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. The State Historical Society of Iowa determined this district National Register eligible in 1985. This process did not proceed, however, and, in its place, the neighborhood association concentrated its efforts on the creation of a local historic district. To that end, the association completed a survey of its resources in 1988 (Wirth). That same year, the City of Ames adopted an historic preservation ordinance, created the Ames Historic Preservation Commission to administer a design review process, and designated Old Town as a local historic district, protecting its historic resources from inappropriate change.

In 2001, the effort to nominate Old Town to the National Register was reactivated in conjunction with sponsorship of the Ames Historic Preservation Commission and funding through the Ames City Council. Three reports laid the groundwork for this—an intensive survey of the neighborhood, a multiple property documentation form providing historic context for it, and a National Register nomination of the Old Town Historic District. (Page 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) The National Park Service reviewed this documentation and listed the property on the National Register on January 2, 2004. This is a large historic district and possesses about 250 resources.

Hospital Expansion

In the late 1980s, the need for Mary Greeley Hospital to expand its campus and facilities in Ames resulted in a zoning dispute focused on the Harry F. Brown House. Located at 1004 Kellogg Avenue, this house was located on property included in the hospital's planned expansion. The house was designed by the Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot and Bird and was built by Mr. Dunn. Kay E. Wall, the owner of the house, objected to the property's rezoning. On December 14, 1990, she applied to the City of Ames for the house to be designated a local landmark. This was the first such application to come before the City of Ames. Wall also requested that the State Historical Society of Iowa evaluate the National Register eligibility of the building. The preservation commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission subsequently recommended that the property be designated a local landmark. The Society found the building National Register eligible on June 17, 1991. On August 13, 1991, the Ames City Council recommended the designation of the Brown House as a local landmark and referred the matter to the State Historical Society of Iowa, which has the authority to review landmark designations, requesting that the Society consider the possibility of the house's relocation. In the meantime, the hospital revised its plan for expansion and excluded the Brown House and other properties in the vicinity from the project area. The National Register nomination of the Brown House and its designation as a local landmark were not pursued and remain dormant to the present day. This issue demonstrated, however, how historic preservation law could protect a historically significant property, and how due process successfully worked in Ames.

Ames High School

The purchase of the former Ames High School (later used as a junior high) by the City of Ames in the late 1980s brought new luster to historic preservation in the community. Following the construction of a new junior high school, the former building became redundant. Purchased by the City with the help of a bond issue, the building underwent extensive rehabilitation to complete its new use. The project was completed in 1990. The result would have gratified Mayors Parley Sheldon and Capt. Wallace Greeley and their Progressive Era contemporaries. The "new" city hall brought many City Departments together under one roof, an efficiency earlier city leaders and the community had achieved in 1912, when the Municipal Building at 420 Kellogg Avenue (NRHP) was completed. The adaptive reuse of the former Ames High School reinforced the site's historical continuity, continues its role as an anchor to the Ames Civic Center (a potential National Register historic district), and engenders affection among its former pupils. The building was listed on the National Register through a Multiple Property Documentation of school-related buildings in Iowa on October 24, 2002.

Certified Local Government

In 1995, the City of Ames became a Certified Local Government (CLG) through an agreement with the State Historical Society of Iowa. (See Appendix 4.) This agreement committed the City to a series of actions, including added duties for the Ames Historic Preservation Commission, and qualified the City as eligible to receive a share of the State Historical Society of Iowa's 10% pass-through funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The duties added to the commission because of its CLG status included commission review of proposed National Register nominations, a commitment to ongoing survey of Ames historic resources, the training of HPC members, and the preparation of an annual report, among others. These duties added relatively little time-commitment to the workload of the commission or its staff but qualified the City for funding through the State Historical Society of Iowa, a status that subsequently proved to be of marked benefit.

Bandshell Park Historic District

In 1999, the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Ames sponsored the nomination of Bandshell Park Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. (Page 1999) The property was listed as such on October 7, 1999. The west boundary line of this historic district (Duff Avenue from 5th Street to 6th Street) excluded the west twenty feet of the Bandshell Park. This exclusion was made in anticipation of the possible future widening of Duff Avenue in the area. The intent of this nomination was to qualify the property as eligible for historic preservation grant opportunities to refurbish Bandshell Park and the renovation of the Bandshell itself. The property was subsequently rehabilitated using other sources of funding.

Archie and Nancy Martin House Legal Challenge

In 2007, Col. Grantland Shipp, the titleholder of the Archie and Nancy Martin House, requested that the City designate the property as a local landmark. Located at 218 Lincoln Way and built in 1920, the house is historically significant because it calls attention to the Martins' allowing African-American students to live there at a time when blacks were denied residence at Iowa State during the early 20th century. The City designated the property as a local landmark on December 18, 2007. Subsequently, the owners of the property immediately to the east of the Martin House, Laurel Ely, Jr., and Mildred Ely, his wife, felt aggrieved by this action and appealed the City's designation to district court. In August 2008, the court dismissed the charges against the City and sustained the legality of the Martin House's landmark designation. Then, late in 2009, the Elys appealed the court's decision to the Iowa Supreme Court, whose action is pending. The high court's decision will test the legality of city and the state local landmark law. Regardless of the outcome of this case, it will reinforce the status of Ames on the cutting edge of historic preservation in Iowa.

Recent Events

Within the last several years, Ames has witnessed a series of events that in their effects have broadened public recognition of historic preservation as a tool for infrastructure improvement and economic development.

In 2007, the City of Ames applied to the State Historical Society of Iowa for two separate grants. The Society subsequently awarded both of these matching grants to the City. The first, funded through the Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP), underwrote the preparation of the *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* and the *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan Report*, the latter being the document in hand. The second matching-grant, funded through the Certified Local Government program, underwrote an intensive historical and architectural survey of the College Heights neighborhood in West Ames.

The City of Ames continues to create zoning overlays to manage growth. In 2005, the City established two new overlays, wrapping around the south and west sides of the Iowa State University campus. The intent of the overlays is to manage increased density in the area while protecting essential elements of its historic character. (See < <http://www.cityofames.org/housingweb/Planningweb/UIA/UIAPlan.pdf>>)

In 2007, the City of Ames received a grant-in-aid from the Historic Sites Preservation Program (HSPG), a program of the State Historical Society of Iowa, for the replacement of exterior doors on the Ames City

Hall. The grant totaled \$100,000 and helped pay for the replacement of more than 30 deteriorated doors with doors and transoms appropriate in design and materials with the originals.

In 2008, the rehabilitation of the former Sigma Sigma-Delta Chi Fraternity House at 405 Hayward Avenue as the Iowa House bed and breakfast received federal historic preservation tax credits estimated by the developer at \$163,000, along with an additional \$204,000 in tax credits from the State of Iowa because of the building's historical significance (National Register of Historic Places listed 2008) and its rehabilitation according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. This event signaled to local site developers that historic preservation offered an important tool for economic development. The second event signaled to the City of Ames that preservation offered tangible financial incentives.

Campustown continues to pose challenges. Every quarter of the community recognizes the need for its rehabilitation, a need highlighted in 2004, when student riots in Campustown during the student-run VEISHEA celebration shocked Ames to the quick. The current challenge revolves around Campustown's historic character and how to update its function, buildings, and setting to preserve that character.

Recently, the Smart Growth Alliance, Inc., sponsored the process of nominating Roosevelt School at 921 9th Street to the National Register. (Price and Rogers) Owned by the Ames Community School District, the fate of this property was unclear following its closing by the district. As it happened, the district did not object to the nomination and the process is nearing completion in 2009. (Extensive research into the building's significance already had been completed as part of an application for the City of Ames to designate it as a local landmark. This application did not move forward because the City of Ames lacks that jurisdiction over school district property.)

In 2009, the State Historical Society of Iowa chose the Ames Historic Preservation Commission to partner with the Mount Vernon CLG to apply for CLG grant monies to sponsor a statewide seminar on masonry and masonry repair. By this action, the SHSI showed its trust in the Commission to undertake this important assignment, an assignment in keeping with Ames' role as a leader in technology and education. This was the second CLG grant in as many years awarded to the City of Ames by the SHSI.

Also, in June 2009, members of the Ames Historic Preservation Commission completed preliminary work on a National Register nomination for the Ames Public Library (APL) in order to obtain a Determination of "Eligibility (DOE) for the APL complex, including its 1904 and 1940 units. The SHSI determined that the APL complex is eligible for nomination and the question of whether or not to pursue National Register listing is now under consideration by the City Council.

All of this recent activity points to a preservation ethos alive and well among a diverse and growing constituency in Ames today.