

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

AMES, IOWA

APRIL 19, 2016

The Ames City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission met in joint session at 6:00 p.m. on the 19th day of April 2016, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue, pursuant to law with Mayor Ann Campbell presiding and the following Council members present: Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, and Chris Nelson. Council Member Peter Orazem and *Ex officio* Member Sam Schulte were absent.

Also in attendance were Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann, City Planner Karen Marren, and Planning and Zoning Commission members Carlton Basmajian, Rob Bowers, and Doug Ragaller. Additional representatives present were Senior Associate Doug Hammel and Principal Dan Gardner from Houseal Lavigne Associates and Planning Consultant Craig Erickson of Shive-Hattery.

Doug Hammel provided an update on current conditions, issues, and opportunities of the Lincoln Way Corridor Plan. So far, several workshops, interviews, and questionnaires have provided feedback from over 500 participants. According to the data collected, recurring themes have included concerns for complete streets, vehicular traffic efficiency and safety, and having consistent character throughout the Corridor. Past plans and studies that are influencing the Corridor Plan include the Land Use Policy Plan, Ames Mobility 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, Lincoln Way “Road Diet” Analysis and the Ames Area MPO 2015-2019 Passenger Transportation Plan.

Dan Gardner discussed several key issues that would answer the vast majority of concerns. Enhancing housing opportunities would help with the projected population growth—the most significant growth being in college, post-college and senior cohorts. According to studies, 940 additional students will seek off-campus housing in 2020, assuming the University provides the same percent of housing each year. It was mentioned that the quality of units is just as important as the type.

Aligning commerce and consumers was another key issue. The daytime population increase—about 18,380—is an opportunity to capture specific commercial uses. It was mentioned that the eastern portion of the Corridor is less dense and will require repositioning of existing and obsolete commercial uses while the western portion of the Corridor shows potential for the addition of new commercial uses.

Council Member Betcher stated that there seemed to be more emphasis on the development of commercial growth rather than housing growth. It was said that enhancing the development sites will add to the housing growth either with new development or redevelopment.

Craig Erickson discussed the next issue—moving people along Lincoln Way. Of the top 100 safety improvement candidates statewide by the IDOT, five occur in Ames and along Lincoln Way. Different plans would address the desire for safer pedestrian crossings, safer bike routes, and Complete Streets. Also, there has been a 54% increase in CyRide ridership from 2005 which leads to the need for not only more stops, but safer stops. It was said that the IDOT will play a part in the portion from Grand to Duff, but only as needed. Staff will have to approach them with a proposal in hand rather than just engaging in conversation.

Council Member Gartin asked if the consultants are working with City staff to look at trends. He stated that given our population, the number of cars is not going to decrease, and those commuting into Ames are bringing in even more cars. They will have to park somewhere; and this needs to be taken into consideration. Diekmann stated that a better understanding is available by looking at the 2040 projected numbers from the Long Range Transportation Plan and adjustments are always occurring.

Overcoming development constraints and creating an attractive corridor were the last issues discussed. Development regulations and parcel ownership patterns were briefed and it was mentioned that there are a lot of small parcels with a lot of different ownership making it difficult to bring in developers. It is very expensive to develop since the cost per acre is high. Recognizing the individual places and unifying the character along the Corridor will be a product of public and private investments that will help develop a more attractive corridor.

The next step in the process was said to hold a workshop to discuss focus areas of the Corridor. All areas would receive recommendations, but the focus areas would address areas with short-term potential for investment and provide policy direction that could be applied elsewhere along Lincoln Way. So far, five focus areas have been considered options:

1. Downtown Gateway
2. Lincoln and Grand
3. Oak-Riverside
4. Campustown Transition
5. West Hy-Vee Retail Area

Council Member Nelson asked why the Downtown Gateway area went to Kellogg Avenue and was not extended to Clark Avenue. It was said that it was determined based on available resources, but the extension of the area is a discussion planners are willing to have. It would be a different level of detail to manage.

Commission Member Bowers questioned the idea of “road dieting” in the area around Jack Trice Stadium. He feels that in a way, it makes sense, but for those few times a year, a “road diet” wouldn’t be the best option. It was stated that City staff and the University are working together to make sure the unintended consequences of traffic design are on the radar when thinking of realistic impacts.

Commission Member Ragaller asked if the focus areas were prioritized. Currently, there is no prioritization of areas, but consultants are working with planners and recommendations to determine what areas will be the most impactful.

Council Member Corrieri questioned if the Downtown Gateway was intended to be a transitional area to downtown or a natural extension of the downtown area. It was said that the intent was to make it a connection to downtown and not necessarily an extension of downtown. However, as consultants and planners continue to work with the community and assess the realistic market opportunities, the area could be a similar or complementary land use which would make it feel as a natural extension.

Council Member Betcher wanted to clarify why the focus area Oak-Riverside kept being labeled as “neighborhoods” when it has a single neighborhood identity. It was said that the area is not as thriving as it could be in the terms of the availability of single family homes. The intent would be to respect the neighborhood as a whole, but take into consideration what existing residents are looking for and what can be added.

A.M. Fink, 222 S. Russell, Ames, simply stated if the intention is to preserve low cost housing, neighborhoods like his with a mixture of small and medium houses should be cherished.

Matthew Youngs, 112 E. 2nd Street, # 202, Ames, expressed his concern for bicycle use, but also the rise of vehicle use into and around neighborhoods. He also mentioned that the area from Duff Avenue to Grand Avenue deserves higher use of resources since it is a priority.

Debra Fink, 222 S. Russell, Ames, suggested the idea of a free shuttle along Lincoln Way that would allow pedestrians and cyclists to commute safely. She believes this would assist with parking issues and the amount of resources spent towards vehicles.

Tam Lorenz, 311 S. Maple, Ames, disagreed when it was said that the focus area Oak-Riverside was “not thriving.” She believes that it is and the area is great for college grads and families. Lorenz stated that the opening of Stadiumview will bring in an additional 500 residents to that area and also a major increase in traffic. According to her, this type of growth will be new to this neighborhood, and planners need to consider this before other decisions with the Corridor are made.

Jared Morford, 2324 Burnett, Ames, asked how existing and future plans in Campustown will work together with the Lincoln Way Corridor Plan. Hammel stated they are working with ISU throughout the process and have already discussed many topics including student housing, Cyride, and types of services and goods to provide in the area.

James Diamond, 114 S. Russell, Ames, questioned if the property on Hazel Avenue and Lincoln Way is up for rezoning since it is part of a focus area. He suggested postponing this until planners officially know what will get built there. Diekmann stated that because the property is

County owned, a Land Use Policy Map amendment would be needed. The type of zoning will have to be appropriate to what is ultimately built there.

Council Member Gartin agreed with the idea to extend the Downtown Gateway focus area a few blocks west to Clark Avenue, and asked if there was a downside to that idea. Diekmann stated that the amount of resources has to be considered, but the east side of Duff might not need to be included in this focus area. One idea would be to shift the entire focus area west a few blocks to include Clark and not include the east side of Duff.

Because the West Hy-Vee Retail Area is the largest focus area, it was discussed as having potential to be shorted which would allow for resources to be shifted elsewhere.

Moved by Gartin, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to accept the consultants' recommendations on all five of the target areas with the exception that the Downtown Gateway will now be from Duff Avenue to Clark Avenue.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Gartin to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

Heidi Petersen, Recording Secretary