



THE LAND USE BULLETIN

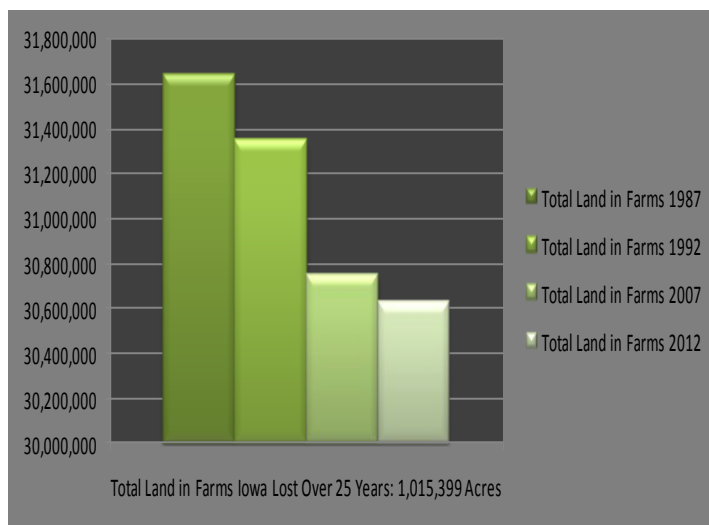
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Losing Ground

By John Morrissey, Board President

The World Food Prize reminds us annually the world's capacity to feed an ever-growing global population remains uncertain. As the World Food Prize laureates gather for the annual prize, they might be surprised to learn a dirty little secret. **Iowa has lost more than 1,500 square miles – 1,015,399 acres – of land in farms over the past 25 years.**



Consider this—the 1,015,399 acres would have provided opportunities for more than 3,000 families to farm, based on Iowa's 2012 average farm size of 345 acres. And that land would have produced 168 million bushels of corn, or 49 million bushels of soybeans, every year based on 10-year statewide average yields.

Detailed results of the 2012 Census of Agriculture shows the number of farms has declined from 105,000 farms counted in 1987 to 86,635 in 2012. The results also show that between 2007 and 2012,

Iowa recorded a net loss of 175,119 acres in farms. This masks a worrisome underlying trend – 51 counties lost a total of 957,364 acres while the remaining 48 counties gained 832,545 acres.

So, how did farms gain acreage in counties that have not changed in size? The Census of Agriculture does not indicate how these changes occurred or the disposition of acres no longer counted as land in farms. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship does not report or republish these land use statistics. When questioned, the user is referred to the USDA regional office. Shouldn't a state office with the words "land stewardship" in its name keep track of such things? *continued next page*

These statistics are found in the "Farms and Land In Farms 2013 Summary (May 2013)" published by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Losing Ground	Pages 1-3
The Combination of Possibilities	Page 4
2014 Annual Meeting	Page 5
BDA Nominations	Page 5
News From Around the State	Page 6
Farma-Save Set Finds Home!	Page 7
Dubuque County Changes	Page 7
Save the Date!	Page 8

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1000 Friends of Iowa is a statewide non-profit organization founded in 1998 based in Des Moines, Iowa.

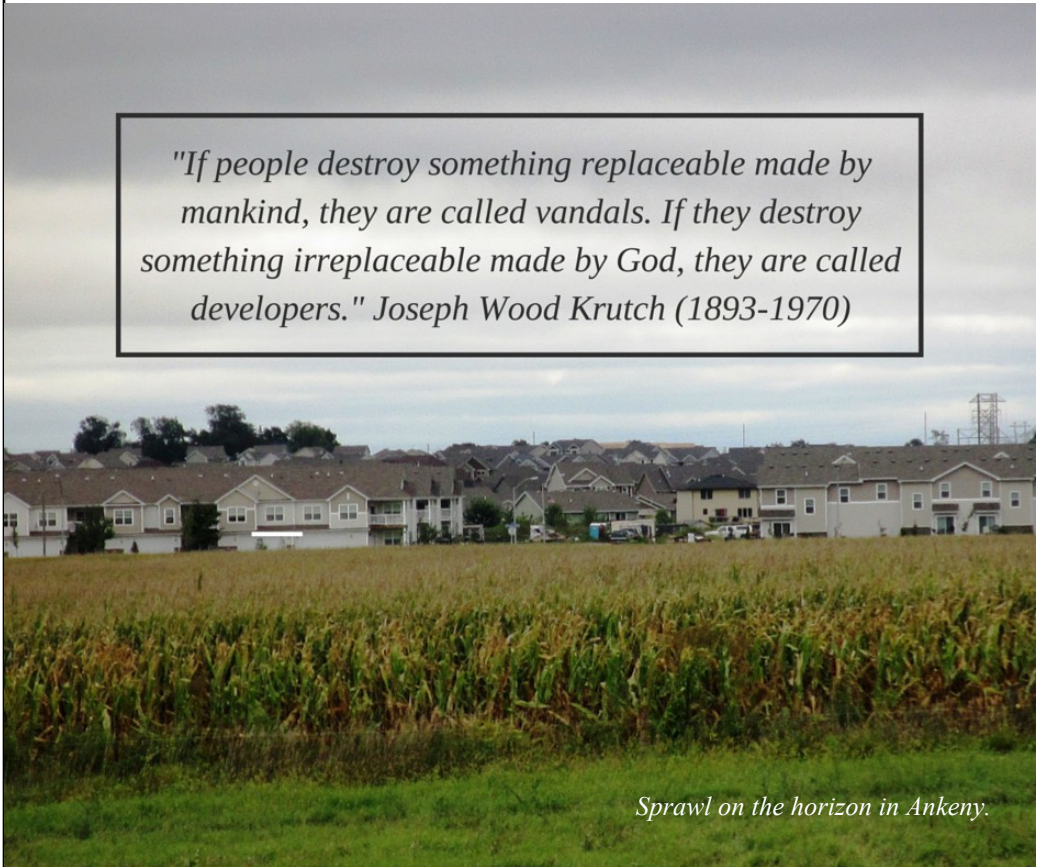
1000 Friends of Iowa promotes responsible development that

- Conserves and protects our agricultural and natural resources
- Revitalizes our neighborhoods, towns and cities, and
- Improves the quality of life for future generations

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Our rural landscape is changing. Several trends have accelerated that change.

In addition to lost land in farms, farmland uses have continued to change. Farm acres near population centers are lost every year to sprawl. Rural subdivisions contribute to conflicts between farmers trying to make a living and residents who believe their warranty deeds entitle them to reside in a natural park.



"If people destroy something replaceable made by mankind, they are called vandals. If they destroy something irreplaceable made by God, they are called developers." Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970)

Sprawl on the horizon in Ankeny.

The USDA's census shows there were 4 million more acres harvested in 2012 than in 1987. How can that be when we've lost land in farms? At the expense of the 4 million acres of idle crop land, woodland, wetlands and pasture converted to harvested acres. Lands formerly in the Conservation Reserve Program, which removes environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production, were not re-enrolled.

The state's economic development policies are also a contributing factor. The Iowa Economic Development Authority is now designating "certified" development parcels containing up to 1,000 acres. Four such parcels have already been designated and more are in the wings. News reports bubble with breathless adjectives about the latest quarter- or half-section of land to be paved over for data centers, big box stores, townhomes or strip malls.

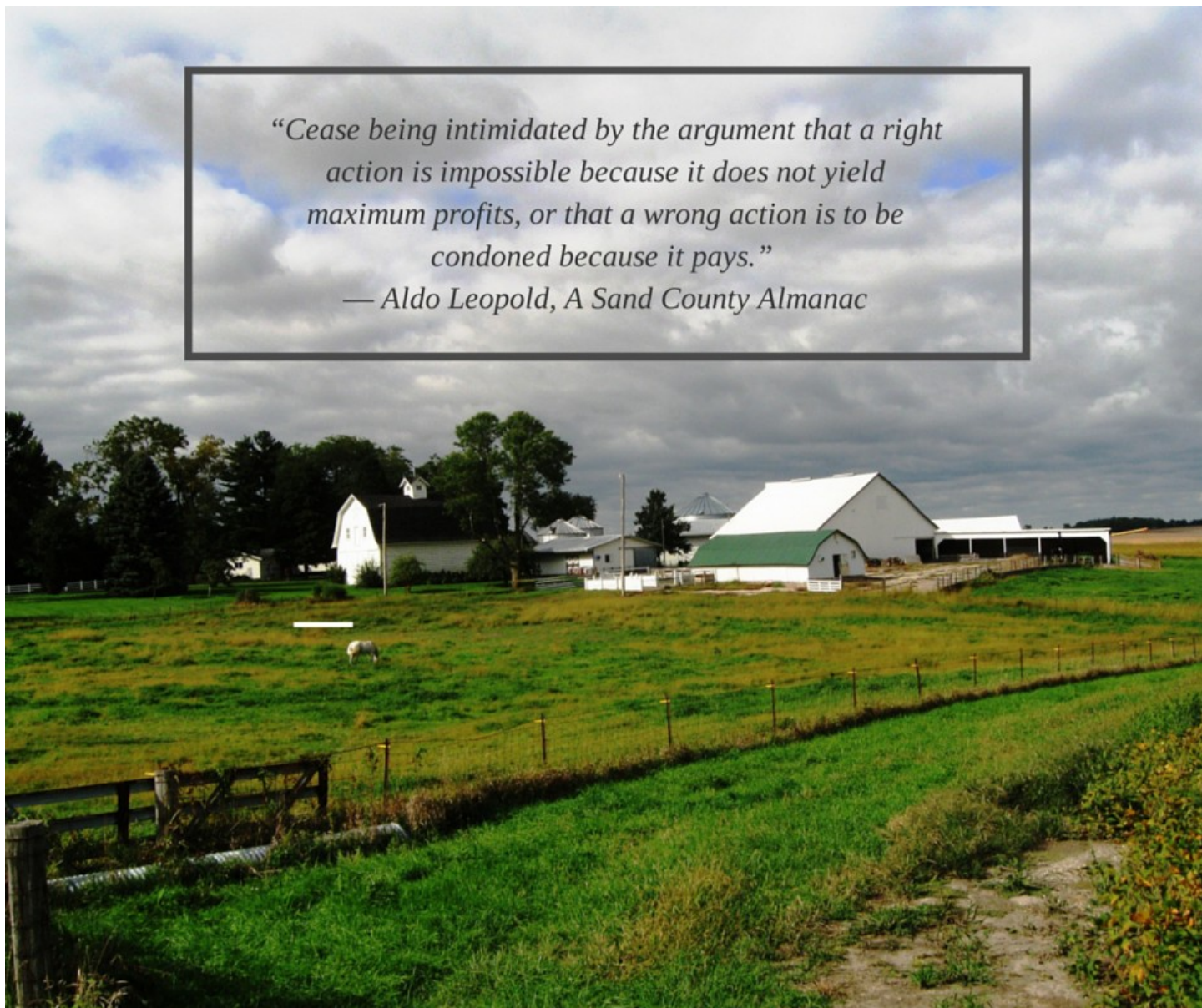
The argument for farm land conversion is founded on the belief that population growth justifies these losses.

The supposed economic benefit of urban, suburban and even exurban land uses outweighs the economic losses when farms cease operation.

So, what is the impact of new residents on land use? The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Iowa gained 297,000 residents between 1987 and 2011. For every net new Iowa resident gained during the past quarter century, the state lost three acres of farm land. If that population growth were divided equally between our 948 cities, each town would have gained 13 people per year. Iowa isn't growing sustainably; we're simply moving the furniture at a tremendous cost to taxpayers.

It's high time that policy makers in Iowa address these changing land uses and devise ways to mitigate the impacts on our agricultural economy and way of life. Otherwise, we should be stricken with embarrassment when the giants of food research come to our state and learn how little we value the fabulous legacy we've inherited.

John Morrissey, 1000 Friends of Iowa Board President, can be reached at president@1000friendsofiowa.org.



Editor's note: All statistics used in this article can be found in the recently released report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Farms and Land In Farms 2013 Summary (May 2013)" published by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years.

Visit <http://www.nass.usda.gov> for complete reports from the NASS, or <http://www.usda.gov/nass/PUBS/TODAYRPT/fnlo0514.pdf> to download the summary.

The Combination of Possibilities

How's THAT a Land Use Issue??

By LaVon Griffieon

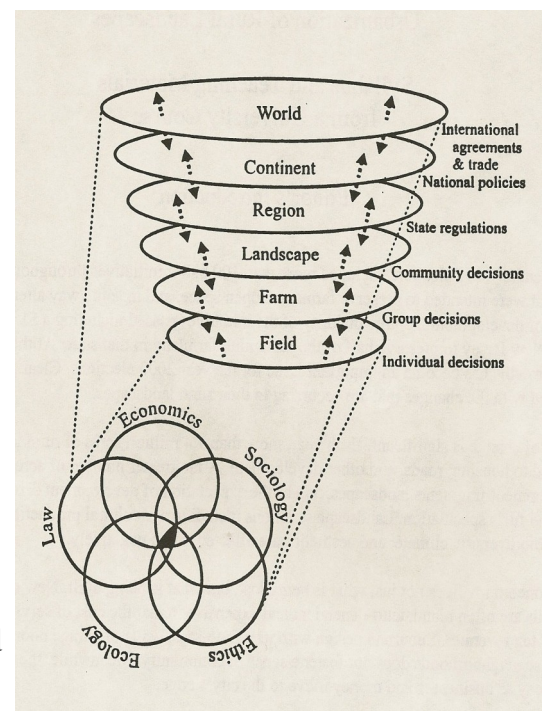
My daughter once stood in front of the Ankeny City Council and stated, “I’m the sixth generation of my family to live north of Ankeny. I often wonder what my life would have been like if Great-Great-Great-Grandpa would have just driven his wagon another hour north or east.” She was mostly referring to the City’s unrestrained growth onto prime farmland. But she was also vaguely referring to the amount of time her mother has spent away from home addressing land-use battles across Iowa.

Those battles have forced me to learn about many issues I wouldn’t have been aware of, had I not been involved on the front line. I must admit in the past decade I’ve learned about NASCAR, grocery stores, airport expansions, rain gardens, easements, man-made lakes, Environmental Impact Statements, CAFOs, casinos, TIF, regional retail centers, comprehensive plans, property rights, and radio towers...to name just a few. So many issues in fact, that many folks worry we don’t have a focus at 1000 Friends of Iowa. But rest assured, we do have a focus. We make it our business to know what factors are influencing land use issues and decisions.

I discovered the big five factors that influence how a piece of land is used are economics, sociology, ethics, ecology and law. Often when the economics add incentive, the people and environment are infringed upon. Sometimes, the law can’t compensate for individual land owners’ ethics. Or in another scenario, ethics influence laws that provide economic incentives so people and the environment do win the day. The combination of those five factors can result in an infinite number of possibilities.

When those possibilities are applied at different scales from field to farm to the landscape of a rural or urban community, then a region, an entire continent and then to the world—any number of scenarios can result. I found this great chart from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that visually helps me process all the outlying factors in a land use decision. In turn the land use decisions made at each level affect these factors. All those scenarios are often what lead to our Action Alerts and Public Policy Updates. In turn, if we see trends developing across the state we have legislative priorities or educational programs to address the issues.

So when 1000 Friends is accused of being all over the map, I smile proudly. I long for the day when we have more voices calling into the office from across Iowa, and more encouragement and support through donations of time, money and talent so 1000 Friends can develop and implement the programs we need to be even more involved with issues across the state. It is only through facing issues head on and learning about the combination of factors responsible, that we can determine a path to a solution that can benefit the common good. No one entity can do it all, but a broad base of knowledge never hinders us in our work to successfully address land use issues.



The drawing above shows how land use is influenced by decisions and conditions at different scales. Used with permission from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Editor's note: This article was originally published in our Spring 2009 issue of The Land Use Bulletin. Because the article answers the question of 1000 Friends of Iowa's focus, and it explains how the issues are connected, complimenting the data in the Land in Farms report, we decided to reprint it in this issue.

SAVE THE DATE: November 7, 2014

Annual Meeting, Locally Grown Meal & Discussion!

Save the date and join us Friday, November 7th, from 5-7 p.m. at the Griffieon Family Farm, 11655 NE 6th St, Ankeny, IA 50023, for our Annual Meeting, a locally grown meal, and great discussion!

Co-founder LaVon Griffieon will dust off a presentation used in the early years of the organization to kick off the meeting. We sometimes assume everyone is familiar with it, but after asking board members if they'd seen the presentation, most of them had not. LaVon is going to fix that!

Following the presentation, Board President John Morrissey will lead the business portion of the annual meeting, including discussion of 1000 Friends of Iowa programs inviting attendee feedback. What's happening in your community? What changes do you think are necessary if Iowa is to grow sustainably? Do you have examples of successes from your area? Please come prepared to discuss your ideas, suggestions, and be a part of 1000 Friends of Iowa programming.

Discussion will continue over a locally grown meal, provided by the Griffieon Family Farm.

There is no registration fee for the meeting, but a free-will donation the evening of the gathering is encouraged to help offset the cost of the meal. RSVPs are required to ensure we have enough food for everyone.

Email your RSVP to Crystal Leto at crystal.r.let@gmail.com or kfoi@1000friendsofiowa.org.

Deadline for BDA Nominations: November 30th

What Deserves Recognition in *Your* Community? Tell Us!

The Best Development Awards do more than just honor the hard work of individuals. The awards educate and inspire others by demonstrating alternatives to sprawl and successfully implemented smart planning solutions.

Help us continue to educate Iowans by nominating projects in your area!

What examples of preservation, restoration, revitalization, sustainability & leadership do you see in your town? Are the smart growth efforts of your community leaders so successful Iowans could benefit from seeing what they've done? Are there developers who've worked to preserve your community by restoring rather than tearing down?

What about a new development where planners included elements such as complete streets, integration with the existing community, and energy efficiency? Tell us about them!

Acknowledge, recognize & help showcase the hard work of those in your community by nominating people, projects, companies for none of the 2014 Best Development Awards.

Awards are given in the following seven categories:

- New Residential
- Renovated Residential
- Renovated Commercial/Civic
- New Commercial/Civic
- Mixed Use
- Leadership
- Storm Water Management

Visit www.1000friendsofiowa.org to learn more about the simple nomination process and browse previous recipients.

Contact Crystal Leto at crystal.r.let@gmail.com with any questions, and to submit your nomination!

NEWS from Around the State

Celebrate 2014 Food Sovereignty Prize Honorees

Two events are scheduled for October 15, 2014, to celebrate the honorees of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance's 2014 Food Sovereignty Prize, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) of Palestine and Community to Community Development of Bellingham, Washington, and to bring attention to those championing solutions to localized food systems.

11:30 a.m.—Luncheon & Panel Discussion, Unitarian Church, 1800 Bell Ave, Des Moines, IA 50315—The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom will host a luncheon to recognize the winners of the 2014 Food Sovereignty Prize on October 15, 2014. A panel discussion on the purpose of the Food Sovereignty Prize will feature the 2014 winners as well as other members of the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance.

7:00 p.m.—2014 Food Sovereignty Prize Award Ceremony, Historical Building, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319—The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance will hold a presentation ceremony to recognize the 2014 Food Sovereignty Prize honorees. The event is free and open to the public.

Food sovereignty focuses on people and communities. The food sovereignty approach is based on the following principles: focuses on food for people; values food providers; localizes food systems; puts control locally; builds knowledge and skills; works with nature. Save the date and join others in celebration of sustainable and local agriculture! Learn more about the Food Sovereignty Prize by visiting <http://foodsovereigntyprize.org/>.

Videos Highlight Importance of Local Food

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture announced the release of four new videos designed to answer the question "Why Local, Why Now". The videos highlight the importance of local food to Iowans, our communities, the land, and our state. Laura Miller, Communications for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture said "Increasingly in Iowa and other regions across the United States, local food production is seen as a vehicle for rural economic development, creating jobs and other opportunities for young people interested in agriculture."

All four videos are available on the Leopold Center website <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>, and the Leopold Center YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/LeopoldCenter>.

Fred Kirschenmann Receives One World Award for Lifetime Achievement

Congratulations to Fred Kirschenmann, 1000 Friends of Iowa Advisory Council member! Fred has been presented with the One World Award (OWA) for Lifetime Achievement, the top honor given by a worldwide network of organic organizations. Fred is a North Dakota organic farmer and Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.

The award was presented September 19th in Legau, Germany, headquarters of the Rapunzel Naturkost organic food company whose founder initiated the OWA in 2008 to honor individuals, projects and innovative ideas that promote ecological, economic and social improvement.

To learn more about his achievements, and for more information about the One World Award visit <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/news>.

Farma-Save Set Finds Home in Iowa City!

Thanks to Board President John Morrissey, and the property owners who agreed to host them, a set of our popular Farma-Save signs were delivered and installed at their new home on Newport Road just west of Highway 1 in Iowa City.

Our Farma-Save Signs are a popular way to raise awareness of land use issues for Iowans and visitors to the state of Iowa. Designed after the Burma Shave signs that ran from 1927 to 1963, the signs are a creative and catchy way to get people thinking about one or more aspects of land use.

Be sure to keep an eye out for this set, and let us know if you're interested in hosting a set on your property!



Dubuque County: Changes Would Allow Non-Farm Homes on “Scrub” Parcels

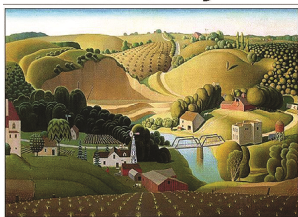
Dubuque County's latest draft of zoning ordinance changes would allow single-family houses to be built on agricultural land not considered to have a viable farm use. The county's zoning board has been working on changes to the ordinance for farm use of properties, including how to define a farm use for land, for months.

The latest draft, presented to supervisors mid-September, allows a special-use permit to build single-family, non-farm homes on “scrub parcels” of at least 1 acre that do not have viable farm use but are zoned agricultural. Requests for a one-time division of a parcel would have to be approved by the Dubuque County Zoning Board of Adjustment. Any further divisions would require Dubuque County Board of Supervisors approval.

This type of development defines low density residential development. Development on raw land, usually agricultural land, is called greenfield development. Greenfield development is a major sign of sprawl and often causes financial strains on local taxpayers as roads need to be plowed for the school bus to pass and heavier traffic means increased maintenance.

A “scrub parcel” of agricultural land is a subjective term. Often, those areas of the farm are timber, wetlands, pasture or smaller fields where large equipment can't be easily used. The key word isn't “scrub”. The key word is “agricultural land”.

The new ordinance requires the Dubuque County Supervisors to have final say over zoning decisions. So why open the door to more low density residential development in the county? Simply receive the re-zoning application and have the supervisors vote on a case by case basis. The supervisors should study our Smart Planning Checklist and leave agricultural land zoned as agriculture.



Stone City, Iowa 1930
Grant Wood, 1891-1942
Citizens United for Responsible Land Use

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Meeting

November 7, 2014

5 p.m.—7 p.m.

Griffieon Family Farm, Ankeny

Save the date and join us in Ankeny for the business meeting followed by dinner & discussion!
Additional details are included inside this issue.