



The Land Use Bulletin

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1000 FRIENDS HOSTS SUCCESSFUL FORUM

On May 27th, 1000 Friends of Iowa and the Des Moines Downtown Partnership sponsored an all-day forum on the relationship between a strong downtown and a strong region. About 200 people attended. The keynote speaker over the noon hour was John Norquist, mayor of Milwaukee and Chair of the Congress on New Urbanism. Norquist discussed Milwaukee's successful downtown revitalization, which has fueled people's interest in not merely working downtown, but living there as well. The Mayor pointed out several "tests" to determine whether development was likely to contribute to true, sustainable revitalization:

- The postcard test. Is this building something you'd see on a postcard trumpeting the unique qualities of your city? Norquist did several companion slides comparing old historic buildings in the city's center (such as the library) with their new, uninspired counterparts in the suburbs. Lacing his talk with ample humor, Norquist labeled one particularly ugly new structure "a monument to totalitarianism."
- The parade test. Is your street design and the buildings that frame the street a place you could imagine the public congregating for a parade or similar public festival?
- The century test. Is the building designed to last? Will it be around 100 years from now? Is it attractive enough that you'd even want it around 100 years from now?

Another speaker was Dr. Jim Throgmorton, a professor of Planning at the University of Iowa, and a Founding Friend of 1000 Friends of Iowa. Throgmorton shared a slide presentation of different European cities, describing how those cities cope with issues like traffic and density. Iowans could learn quite a bit from studying European models of city planning.

While some of the material presented throughout the day was controversial and provocative—on both sides of the issue—the forum was very well received. Organizers said it is likely that similar events will be held in the future.

HELP US GET THE WORD OUT!

If you are going to be involved in an activity involving access to large numbers of people, let us know! We're looking for every possible opportunity to get out the name and mission of 1000 Friends. A handful of brochures and materials on a display table could interest those in attendance. We'll be happy to supply you with whatever you need. (And a big "THANK YOU" to Leland Ayrs for donating the \$18 to pay for our booth at the recent Iowa United Methodist Annual Conference in Ames! Thanks, Leland.)

The mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa is to educate the citizens of our state about the long-term benefits of halting urban sprawl, conserving and protecting our agricultural and natural resources, and revitalizing our urban neighborhoods.

1000 Friends of Iowa

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LIGHTS! CAMERA!! ACTION!!!

Filming is about finished on a video depicting the effects of urban sprawl on Iowa's cities. With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1000 Friends of Iowa has contracted with Boddy Media Group, a local production company known for its quality productions. As we go to press, Boddy's camera crews already have shot footage in Waterloo, Boone and Des Moines.

It's a real challenge to capture the story of how urban sprawl affects all of Iowa's cities (no matter their size) in a video that will last less than five minutes. The company's expertise in communications is helping pull the whole story together.

The video is slated for completion by the end of August. Groups interested in viewing it, either as part of a 1000 Friends' presentation or through some other arrangement, should call our office at (515) 288-5364.

WELLSTONE HEARS LAND USE MESSAGE

As presenters with 1000 Friends of Iowa's Speakers' Bureau, board members LaVon Griffieon and Ed Fallon are accustomed to speaking to audiences of up to 550 people. Last month, they presented to an audience of one, Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota). "It felt like we had the ear of the entire state of Minnesota," quipped Fallon.

Wellstone was in Iowa stumping for presidential hopeful Bill Bradley. At a meeting with Wellstone earlier that day, Fallon and Griffieon brought up the subject of sustainable development. When Wellstone expressed keen interest in the topic, Fallon suggested that as a substitute for the 10 o'clock news, he and Griffieon share with him the presentation they've offered to groups across the state. Wellstone accepted, was spared having to watch the 10 o'clock news, and made some excellent comments on the presentation. "We're now waiting to see if he becomes the first US Senator to join 1000 Friends," said Griffieon.

CITIZENS ORGANIZE AGAINST JOHNSON COUNTY HIGHWAY PROJECT

by Alisa Stone

A group of Johnson County residents are organizing against a highway expansion project on Prairie du Chien Road—a beautiful hilly and windy rural road north of Iowa City, lined with a tree canopy and many 100+ year old trees.

On Saturday, July 3rd, 75 citizens expressed their concerns about the project. Questions were raised about the county's community participation process, the safety of a faster, wider highway, the need for this \$1.3 million project, and the immediate and long-term environmental impacts. Only two of the 75 residents present felt they had been adequately informed about the expansion, and only one was satisfied with their level of participation in the decision-making process.

Some objected to deceptive practices employed by the county to conceal the project, including marking trees designated for destruction on the back with paint, in lieu of a ribbon visible from the front.

Ironically, Johnson County and these concerned citizens share a rationale for both promoting and protesting the project—safety. The county maintains that the curves in the road are dangerous. However, according to Iowa Department of Transportation data, only one major injury has occurred on Prairie du

Chien Road in the past ten years. The data also reveals that the overwhelming majority of accidents on the road are animal-related. Residents argue that the curves and width of the existing road serve as a natural speed barrier that protects them from fatal accidents, and that increased speeds on a straighter and wider highway will increase the risk of accident.

The citizens also question the short- and long-term environmental implications of the project. Immediate impacts include the destruction of 150 trees along the road (including the entire tree canopy). The long-term consequences will also serve to encourage urban sprawl's march northward from Iowa City.

Residents are calling on the Johnson County Board of Supervisors to reconsider the expansion of Prairie du Chien Road. They hope to spare hundreds of beautiful trees from unnecessary destruction, promote community participation in decision-making, spend tax dollars more responsibly, and preserve the rural integrity of Johnson County. Anyone wishing to support this effort should contact Alisa Stone at (319) 354-1850.

SUCCESSFUL FARMING MAGAZINE & RADIO TO PROFILE IOWA FARM FAMILY

1000 Friends of Iowa received good coverage in an article in the 1999 special issue of *Successful Farming* magazine. Entitled "Bountiful Hope," the special issue featured ten articles offering encouragement to people involved in production agriculture during these trying times. One article, "Engage Your Passion," tells the story of LaVon and Craig Griffieon and their family's daily effort to deal with the trials of farming on the edge of urban sprawl.

The article talked about how 1000 Friends of Iowa grew out of a meeting held in the Griffieon's living room in 1996. In response to the article, our office has received dozens of letters and phone calls, not only from Iowans, but from residents in over ten other states. LaVon also was interviewed by *Successful Farming Radio Magazine*, which airs on more than 115 stations in 18 states. *Successful Farming* magazine is published by Meredith Corporation and has a monthly circulation of 475,000.



DEVELOPMENT IN FLOOD PLAIN OPPOSED

When they moved to their new home overlooking the Raccoon River Valley in eastern Dallas County 24 years ago, Lou Ann and Richard Mikes never thought an unsightly industrial park would replace their scenic, rural vista. It hasn't, yet. But if West Des Moines officials get their way, 800 acres of flood plain directly below Pheasant Ridge—where the Mikes and about 80 other families live—will become the West Grand Business Park.

"When you look at things from a global perspective," says Mr. Mikes, "there's not a lot of prime agricultural land in the world. That whole Raccoon River Valley is a mixture of agricultural and natural scenic areas. It's a beautiful western gateway into Des Moines. If there's any place you shouldn't be developing and taking farmland, it's in a flood plain."

Proposed to anchor the park is a 23-acre Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) technology campus. Currently, DMACC has several campuses in central Iowa, including one in the center city of Des Moines. Showing the common threads that often bind urban and rural residents, many political and neighborhood leaders in Des Moines are dismayed that DMACC would bypass an expansion of one of its existing campuses to build in a flood plain.

As we go to print, it remains to be seen what final direction the proposed development will take.

Clip and mail with your check, payable to 1000 Friends of Iowa. Please help us reach our goal of enrolling 1000 Founding Friends by the end of 1999. A donation of \$100 or more designates a Founding Friend, but any donation is welcome! Your contribution is tax-deductible.

1000 Friends of Iowa

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Student/Senior	___ \$20	Patron	___ \$250
Individual	___ \$35	Silver	___ \$500
Family	___ \$45	Gold	___ \$1000
Organization	___ \$100	Steward	___ \$2500
Founding Friend	___ \$100	Other	___

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1000 Friends of Iowa

104 Southwest 4th Street, Des Moines, IA 50309

CHECK OUT OUR TWO ENCLOSURES!

One of our enclosures is an advertisement for a full-time executive director. We've been building to arrive at this point for some time, and it's satisfying to be on the verge of hiring someone. If you know of a place to post this ad, please do so. We've already received several applications, but hope to attract a wide pool of qualified candidates.

Our other enclosure is the first of a series entitled "Vanishing America," which appeared in *USA Today* on July 2. The series continues throughout the month of July, and will also feature the Griffieon family farm, north of Ankeny. In a somewhat bittersweet role, the Griffieons will represent the Vanishing Farmer.

LaVon advises, "Since the photographer isn't showing up until July 18, don't look for the article about our farm until early August."

In the enclosed piece, reporter Craig Wilson discusses the preliminary research that went into the series. He laments, "And we have yet to find a surviving soda fountain at a 5 and 10 store." Ed Fallon, a strong believer in leaving no stone unturned, called Craig, told him about Bauder's Pharmacy in Des Moines, and suggested they meet for lunch.

"After the fun of some locally-produced heat and humidity, I think he'll really appreciate a locally-produced sandwich and ice cream soda," said Fallon. "Maybe two local landmarks - the Griffieon farm and Bauder's Pharmacy - will be featured in the series."

QUOTE THIS

“ “

"The bill must be a catalyst to a broader discussion on land use planning. We have an opportunity to develop a plan for Iowa that can be responsible to the needs of urban, suburban, and rural areas. It is vital to our economic future that we work together to craft a balanced solution for using Iowa's greatest natural resource—its land."

— *Governor Tom Vilsack,*

May 24, 1999, in concluding the statement which accompanied his signature on HF 476, commonly known as "the condemnation bill."

**Now would be a wonderful time
to join 1000 Friends of Iowa!**

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