INTRODUCING LOXI HOPKINS
1000 FRIENDS BOARD MEMBER FROM DAVENPORT

I am the mother of five and the grandmother of seven (soon to be nine!), and I live with my husband, Tom, in Davenport. I became interested in urban sprawl when the neighborhood surrounding my church deteriorated to the point of boarded-up houses that became a haven for drug dealers and street gangs.

It became clear to me that as the city developed in leapfrog fashion, once vibrant neighborhoods lost their "mom and pop" corner stores and their sense of community. Our small neighborhood bookstore closed as a chain store opened on the far northeast part of the city. The corner grocery store where the clerks greeted customers by name failed as the chain grocery stores sprouted up. And as the city committed more and more of its resources to new neighborhoods in the northeast part of the city, we have noticed streets and infrastructure beginning to crumble in the heart of the city.

As a board member of 1000 Friends of Iowa and Quad Cities Interfaith, I have organized forums to educate citizens on the causes of urban sprawl. I also have worked actively to promote housing rehabilitation in the central city. Presently, the organizations I work with have formed a coalition with 14 others to hold a "Smart Growth" conference on Saturday, October 2nd at Central High School in Davenport. 1000 Friends' board members LaVon Griffieon, Pat Cancilla, and Ed Fallon are among the many presenting workshops. A wide range of issues will be addressed, including legislation, farm problems, transportation, flooding, tax increment financing, economic development, and the theology of land use. The conference runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with registration beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Whether you're from southeast or northwest Iowa, or somewhere in between, you're welcome to join us for this educational, coalition-building event. Registration is through Quad-Cities Interfaith, 519 Tremont Avenue, Davenport, IA 52803. A donation of $5.00 to offset costs is requested, and lunch will be provided. If you have any questions or would like more information, please call 319-322-4910. Thanks!

SMART GROWTH
CONFERENCE
Saturday, October 2
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Central High School, Davenport

For more information,
please call 319-322-4910.

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
104 Southwest 4th St.
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-288-5364
FAX 515-280-3359
kfoi@kfoi.org
NEW 1000 FRIENDS VIDEO COMING TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU!

When we hear about the loss of farmland to encroaching development, or a farm family forced from the land by an expanding four-lane highway, it's easy to understand the need to address urban sprawl. It's harder, it seems, for people to see the connection between the loss of farms and farmland and the decay eating away at our urban centers and small town squares.

With that problem in mind, 1000 Friends set out a year ago to seek funding for a video to help people recognize what factors contribute to the decay of central cities and small town main streets across Iowa.

Thanks to a $15,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, our 10-minute video is now ready to educate and enlighten huge audiences—or even small, intimate gatherings. We strongly encourage 1000 Friends' members to obtain a copy of this video and show it in as many venues as possible. Some ideas: schools, public meetings, public access TV, Sunday school classes, 4-H groups, boy and girl scout troops, a gathering with friends or family, or maybe as the pre-game show at a Super Bowl party next January. The video costs $5. Call us at 515-288-5364 and we'll get one to you right away.

FLOOD PLAIN DEVELOPMENT IS COSTLY AND MISGUIDED

by Danielle Wirth, Ph.D.

In 1994, my environmental studies students at Iowa State University asked if I’d speak at an engineering symposium slated to be a retrospective on the Great Flood of 1993. What I told them then I believe even more strongly now: the monumental floods we experience more and more frequently are not “natural disasters.” Rather, they are a direct result of human activity.

Global climate change certainly has an impact. Over the past 15 years, rainfall in Iowa has increased 10%, and the natural systems that help mitigate flood damage—flood plains, wetlands, forests, and our soil—are under attack.

- Flood plains are called “flood plains” for a reason: they FLOOD on a periodic basis. Development on flood plains reduces the river system’s ability to regulate water levels, thus increasing the incidence of flooding downstream.

- Wetlands act as huge sponges, breathing in excess water during flood events and sighing water back into the river basin during droughts. They also reduce and convert human waste products into benign compounds. In short, wetlands have economic value above and beyond the human tendency to put ugly, square, inappropriate structures on them.

- Forests in full leaf are able to intercept about 50% of the rainfall on a river basin. The intercepted rain can evaporate from the tree crowns or gently percolate into the soil after traveling down twigs, branches, and trunks.

- Soil erosion also adds to the problem. Excessive tilling has increased erosion. Eroded soil ends up in rivers, reducing flood storage capacity in reservoirs and in river channels themselves.

Since 1984, the Des Moines/Raccoon River flood corridors have had at least five 100-year flood events. Given global climate change and the loss of our natural flood mitigation systems, we should expect this trend to continue. It might be time to assess how much we are willing to spend to literally “bail out” individuals, businesses and government entities that insist on developing in sensitive natural areas. Maybe a good place to start would be to NOT use public funds to subsidize development in these areas or to restore flooded properties. Let flood plains and wetlands provide the natural services they specialize in for the next 10 millennia.

Danielle Wirth, Ph. D., is a consultant with Environmental Horizons and a member of 1000 Friends of Iowa. 1000 Friends welcomes guest columns such as this.
AREA RESIDENTS OPPOSE ANKENY ANNEXATION PLAN

The City of Ankeny wants to amend its land use plan to expand northward, spurring development on some of Polk County's best farmland and an attractive natural area. The plan calls for primarily residential development in this area, including both single-family homes and multi-family units. Recently, area residents have packed the city council chambers expressing their opposition to the proposal.

*When a city sprawls into the countryside, new residents expect infrastructure...even though existing residents must help pick up the tab.*

One of their concerns is the likelihood that taxes will be raised. Opponents note the 58 Costs of Community Services studies that have been conducted in 18 states around the country. The studies (from American Farmland Trust) repeatedly show that residential development loses tax dollars.

In a local study, Altoona, Waukee, and Indianola were found to spend an average of $1.12 for every $1.00 raised in taxes from residential growth. In an August 4th *Des Moines Register* article, one suburban official said people "want to keep taxes down, but growth costs money." In the same article, the Mayor of Urbandale noted, "We have growing pains. There's a lot of things that you have to do to provide more services."

The bottom line is this: when a city chooses to sprawl into the countryside, new residents expect infrastructure such as sidewalks, sewer lines, water lines, roads, street maintenance, police protection, fire protection, libraries and new schools. New residents benefit from these services, even though existing residents must help pick up the tab.

There is also concern about the impact on Ankeny's quality of life. While Ankeny has grown significantly over the past several years, it remains a mid-sized, friendly city with low crime and few traffic problems. With the proposed annexation, Ankeny will sprawl northward, causing the loss of some beautiful, rolling countryside and adding traffic and congestion to its roads. The farmland targeted for development is some of the best in Polk County, with an average Corn Suitability Rating of over 80 (anything over 50 is considered top notch).

Opponents insist that they are not against growth, but they would like to see an alternative. They note there are 3,404 new homes or lots already inside the city limits waiting for buyers or builders. At Ankeny's current pace of growth—470 new homes a year—this would provide ample land for continued expansion for many years without sprawling onto good farmland.

Please clip and mail with your check, payable to 1000 Friends of Iowa. Help us reach our goal of enrolling 1000 Founding Friends by the end of 2000. 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 __________

Name ____________________________

Address __________________________

City/State/Zip _____________________

Phone ____________________________

FAX ____________________________

E-mail ____________________________

1000 Friends of Iowa
104 Southwest 4th Street, Des Moines, IA 50309
AND THEY WILL LOVE IT TO DEATH

As members of 1000 Friends' Speakers Bureau, LaVon Griffen and Ed Fallon continue to offer their presentation to diverse audiences across the state. They recently met with citizens in Van Buren County, one of Iowa's most scenic areas. They saw—

◊ No stop lights
◊ No franchises
◊ Beautiful, rolling countryside
◊ Lots of trees and the Des Moines River, with quaint villages nestled in between, but
◊ Unfortunately, no county zoning.

While many residents understandably want more economic development, some fear that potential investments of "venture capital" threaten to thoroughly alter the face of the county. Ten- to 80-acre parcels of land are being sold to wealthy investors from outside of Iowa.

County zoning may offer residents their best hope for directing these changes in a manner that enhances the area without destroying it.

One Chicago businessman even said he hopes to build a spacious home in the woods, complete with an air strip so he can fly his private plane to and from his office in Chicago—a mere 45-minute commute by air. (And you thought Sammy Sosa was the only heavy hitter in the Windy City!)

Van Buren County is poised for some potentially dramatic land use changes. County zoning may offer residents their best hope for directing these changes in a manner that enhances the area without destroying it. While many county residents have long resisted zoning, the sentiment is building to again bring the matter up for serious consideration. Perspectives such as those of 1000 Friends can help shape the debate.

A TALE OF TWO COUNTIES

One of our Speakers Bureau's newest presenters is Pat Cancilla from Solon, Iowa. Pat offers a slide show entitled "Tale of Two Counties." He purchased the slides from the Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club and has modified the show for Iowa audiences. The slides contrast Clark County, which chose to save its farmland and rural character, with Stafford County, which opted to aggressively pursue economic development at any price.

Giving up the county's rural ambiance in exchange for low-density suburban development has altered the landscape's character in many regrettable ways.

The presentation shows how Stafford County, despite increasing its overall budget, incurred significant costs to service all the new development. Additionally, giving up the county's rural ambiance in exchange for low-density suburban development has altered the landscape's character in ways that many long-term residents regret.

If you would like someone from our Speakers Bureau to present at an event in your area, please call our office at 515-288-5364.

MANY THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

⇒ Lowell Monke, for helping with data entry and trouble-shooting some computer snags
⇒ Barb Ettelson, for helping with our Executive Director search committee
⇒ Alisa Stone, for research on a variety of projects
⇒ Chris Breitbach, for assembling this mailing
“TOUR DE SPRAWL” ROLLS THROUGH DES MOINES

1000 Friends’ board members LaVon Griffieon and Ed Fallon were asked to participate in this fall’s annual meeting of the Conservation Districts of Iowa. It’s always dangerous to give these two much leeway to design their own program, and what came of it was a four-hour bus tour featuring good, bad, and ugly development in the greater Des Moines area.

“We showed them small towns with great potential for truly sustainable development,” Ed said. “We showed them cookie-cutter homes built on prime farmland. And we gave them a cool drink and a brief walking tour of Des Moines’ inner city.”

“This was the best way I’ve seen yet to explain this problem to folks; you can’t beat looking at it first-hand,” LaVon said. “Construction site erosion and urban water quality were topics that really struck home with this group. The tour certainly didn’t seem four hours long and the wonderful ratings we received at the end of the conference proved that wasn’t just my opinion.”

Another Des Moines tour is presently in the planning stages. If you know of a convention coming to the Des Moines area that would benefit from a “Tour de Sprawl,” please contact the 1000 Friends office to make arrangements. Ideally, this educational (and fun!) experience could begin to happen elsewhere across Iowa, as well.

JEFFERSON COUNTY FARMERS DEFEAT LAKE PROJECT

We have often heard that in unity there is strength. Recently, farmers along Brush Creek near Lockridge in Jefferson County demonstrated the truth of this maxim. A formidable coalition of civic and business organizations proposed an 800-acre lake that would have flooded prime river bottom farmland owned by 35 different farm families.

Some of those pushing for the project were the Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce, the Fairfield Water Board, the Fairfield Economic Development Association, the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, the City of Lockridge, Jefferson County Pheasants Forever, and the Cedar Creek Chapter of Ducks Unlimited.

Facing formidable odds, Lockridge farmers united against the project. “Being united as land owners was our first step,” said Rachel Engwall, whose family has farmed there for over 100 years.

In 1998, land owners joined together to have most of the land designated an agricultural area. Even though the designation does not carry a lot of legal protection, taking this action showed the public that land owners were committed to maintaining the river bottom as farmland.

“A lot of media attention helped get people on our side,” added Rachel. “We met with individuals, organizations and businesses one-on-one and made our case. In many instances, we were able to win them over and get them to understand our side of the conflict.”

Even though the farmers received outside help from the Iowa Farm Bureau, Congressman Boswell’s office, and 1000 Friends of Iowa, Engwall emphasizes that a united group of landowners provided the key to defeating the proposed lake. “At one point, engineers came in to survey the area and not a single landowner allowed them access,” Rachel said. “That really helped turn the tide in our favor.”
"FARMA SAVE" SIGNS PROVE TO BE...

In mid-July, the signs went up on the Griffleon farm along Highway 69 north of Ankeny. The media response was beyond even Dickens' greatest expectations.

"This campaign brought more attention to the subject of land use and 1000 Friends of Iowa than anything we previously attempted," Fallon said. "The initial press conference on July 20th was covered by all three local TV stations and the Des Moines Register, among others."

Subsequently, Associated Press articles and photos were reported popping up all over the state. Radio spots and interviews were on many stations, including the Paul Harvey News. USA Today ran a full-page story with five color photos, and the story also appeared in the Chicago Tribune and the London Independent (the latter sent a reporter to the Griffleon farm in a taxi—with the meter running!—for an interview).

FOR THOSE MEMBERS who attended the 1000 Friends annual meeting in March, you will remember a mixer where we had everyone working on Burma Shave-type slogans dealing with land use. That exercise was done in conjunction with plans to develop our own version of sign slogans, entitled "Farma Save."

In July, the Griffleon and Fallon kids helped cut four life-size cows from plywood and used recycled paint to bring them to life. The signs were designed and airbrushed by LaVon Griffleon, while Ed Fallon came up with the slogan and helped paint the parts that required no artistic talent.
...BIG HIT WITH NATIONAL MEDIA

"This kind of extensive media coverage is helpful because it gives us both name recognition and credibility beyond the borders of Iowa," Fallon said. "I'm hoping that a few foundations that might potentially fund our work took notice."

"Even though we're dealing with an important issue, we've got to think creatively to get people's attention," said Griffieon. "Besides, with all the developers around me putting up signs advertising urban sprawl, I figured we'd earned equal time."

For now, the signs continue to be displayed in the Griffieons' pasture, but in November they will move to the Iowa City area where Alisa Stone has plans for them. Several other people have asked to display the signs, and we foresee them moving to Jefferson County and Greene County early in 2000.

If you have a spot for these signs, or would like some assistance in designing your own, please give us a call. If creativity can make even shaving sound fun, think what it can do to fight urban sprawl!
FACTS & FIGURES

According to National Resources Conservation Service data, even though Iowa is only .098% of the world’s land mass, it contains 10% of the world’s prime farmland.

If Iowa’s land mass were comparable to its agricultural productivity, we would be larger than all of South America, which accounts for 8.9% of the earth’s land surface.

CHECK OUT OUR ENCLOSURE

The enclosed article from the August 1999 edition of *The Progressive Populist* looks at the impact superstores have on small towns and locally-owned businesses. The article was written by Stacy Mitchell, a researcher with the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

When considering the full impact of superstores on communities, it’s clear that land use decisions are not just a question of where to build, but how to build and by whom. Nationally, many citizens’ groups are trying to prevent Walmarts and similar big box stores from locating in or near their towns. In Iowa, such a conflict is brewing in Decorah, which we’ll talk more about in our next issue of *The Land Use Bulletin.*