A HIGHWAY THROUGH DES MOINES
by Thomas Mathews

As I remember it, the map of the city of Des Moines and its suburbs covered just two pages in the Northwestern Bell directory back then. The year was 1965, and I was a student at Roosevelt High School. It was probably an evening in late winter. As I studied the map I noticed the parallel dotted lines running like a railroad track across the directory's map of Des Moines, curving off to the north on the right-hand page, the east side of town. I had seen those lines before, and had noticed the words by them: proposed freeway. But not until this particular evening did the meaning of those lines and those words strike me.

We already had a short east-west section of freeway, about a mile long, in Des Moines. Construction on it had started in the late 1950s, and it had been open to traffic for several years. It ran north of downtown, from about 24th and Kingman to Keosauqua Way. As Des Moines Register columnist James Flansburg observed in later years, that old freeway section really didn't go much of anywhere, it just gave drivers the chance to experience driving 60 miles an hour in town.

Now, I suddenly realized, that freeway was about to be continued on through the rest of Des Moines, through neighborhoods that I loved. By looking at the section already completed, anyone could tell that the rest of the freeway would be a huge construction project, gouging a massive scar across the town. It would go right past Roosevelt. It would take a portion of Waveland Golf Course, some of the most beautiful public land in Des Moines. Houses on a portion of the paper route I had in eighth grade would be bulldozed to make way for the freeway.

My feelings on realizing all this were shock and disbelief. I could not believe that the adults who ran the town could be making such a big mistake in the name of progress. I was aware then, because it was so obvious, that the freeway would destroy beauty and destroy neighborhoods. I did not realize then that the freeway would facilitate the massive, automobile-dependent, suburban development that we call urban sprawl. Now I know. Now we all know.

The freeway makes it convenient for people to live far from their work. It encourages automobile dependence, while discouraging walking and use of public transportation.

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
**THE SKINNY ON TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)**

**How it works**  
*by Ed Fallon*

When it was first established in Iowa about 30 years ago, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) was a great tool for cities to fix up "slum and blighted" neighborhoods and downtowns. But over the past decade, small legislative changes here and there have corrupted the program to the point where it's original purpose is unrecognizable. Its mission enlarged to include "economic development" purposes, which is so broad as to be practically all-encompassing. Lawmakers expanded TIF to include housing, and extended the period of time that districts were allowed to exist.

TIF allows a special district to be set up whereby a big chunk of the tax revenue from new development in that district stays right there to support further development. It's an excellent way to concentrate resources on a depressed area that really needs a boost.

But the flip side of the coin is that there is less money to cover expenses elsewhere in the city's budget. Even more critically, counties and school districts are denied a portion of the revenue that they normally would have received from that new development.

The proliferation of TIF districts has grown tremendously in recent years. The matter is presently under study, but early indications are that the number of districts has grown to over 1,700, from 1,400 just two years ago. The valuation of property in those districts is possibly as much as $3.5 BILLION, up from about $2.4 billion just two years.

Again, if TIF were being used strictly to enhance a town's struggling Main Street or to redevelop a blighted inner city neighborhood, there would be no complaints. But in recent years, TIF has become an engine for sprawl. It's been used for upscale housing developments, airports, industrial parks on farmland, superstores—and the list goes on and on. Clearly, it's time to restore some sanity to a good program run amok.

**Davenport elections and TIF**  
*by Loxi Hopkins*

Sprawl was the primary issue in the recent city council election in Davenport. Nine out of ten aldermen elected on November 2 were opposed to the use of TIF to expand city growth northward along 53rd Street and Eastern Avenue.

The City of Davenport has obligated itself to pay about $7 million in expenses for this TIF district. Much of the money would go toward the extension of new roads through land owned mostly by private developers. Many feel tying up so much money in one new development could jeopardize the City's capacity to repair streets and do other capital improvement projects.

But there's more to this controversy than TIF subsidies. In 1997, the City purchased 167 acres in the targeted area for $18,353 per acre from Dakota Dunes Development Company, and another 50 acres at $16,121 per acre from Eastern Avenue Commercial Developers Phase II (EACD). The purchase agreement included a commitment by the City to pay for road improvements, even though EACD originally said it would pay for the road.

So, in addition to a sweet purchase price, the developers have had some sweet subsidies thrown in. Furthermore, once the road is complete, additional land owned by EACD adjacent to the site is predicted to double in value to as much as $30,000 an acre.

According to a November 22 article in The Quad City Times, "Opponents of the 53rd and Eastern project question why city negotiators agreed to build a road that increases the value of land the city does not own when EACD had already promised in 1995 to pay for infrastructure on its acreage."

It will be interesting to see what direction the new City Council takes on this project. They're not in an enviable position. But the right decisions could mean the difference between a more livable community and sprawl as usual.
QUAD CITIES CONFERENCE EXAMINES SMART GROWTH
by Tom Boswell

A broad spectrum of grassroots groups came together in Davenport on October 2 to host a conference examining urban sprawl and land use. The conference featured 18 concurrent workshops, a plenary panel and over 20 speakers.

About 100 people from the Quad Cities region attended, including four city planners and several elected officials. The conference was sponsored by 1000 Friends and a dozen other organizations representing farmers, neighborhoods, historic preservationists, and downtown revitalization. Principal sponsors included the Sierra Club and Quad Cities Interfaith, which does congregation-based organizing in the Quad Cities.

Workshops examined the economic and environmental costs of sprawl, zoning tools to encourage smart growth, the impact of transportation policy on land use, flooding and water quality, and the theological principles of land stewardship. The conference attracted local media attention, including a cover story on smart growth in a Davenport weekly newspaper and a half-hour program on public TV.

Conference organizers hope to sustain the momentum by working on comprehensive land use legislation and identifying local issues of concern that relate to smart growth and urban sprawl.

HEAD 'EM UP! MOVE 'EM OUT!
By John Wayne (a.k.a. LaVon Griffieon)

The Farma-Save cow signs have been rounded up from their pasture north of Ankeny on Highway 69 and are wintering in Johnson County. Having been on grass since mid-July, the herd has now been relocated in a field near Iowa City. On November 19th, the Johnson County group SOARR (Save Our Attractive Rural Resources) held a press conference on a cold, blustery afternoon. Despite the weather, about 20 citizens bundled for the event were greeted by three TV stations and two newspapers.

If a farm near you (ideally along a major highway) is being encroached upon, consider pasturing the beefy bovines for a couple of months. Once the ground thaws in Johnson County, we'll be eager to head 'em up and move 'em out again.

Highway, cont. from page 1

transportation. The freeway was built with government money, using government power to acquire land by eminent domain. Building the freeway and the other parts of the Interstate Highway System nationwide was, therefore, a massive subsidy of the automobile mode of transportation, at the expense of competing modes such as inter-city rail and public transit.

If we are to stop urban sprawl, we must end the subsidy of the automobile. That means drastically reducing our now seemingly never-ending national highway building program. Moneys now used for highways should be used to rebuild environmentally sound transportation modes such as urban light rail and inter-city rail. To start, we could bring passenger rail service back to Des Moines!

And by the way, the phone book map of Des Moines and its suburbs has grown since 1965. The map is now a fold-out, covering the equivalent of 11 pages, including Ankeny and Johnston. That's thanks to urban sprawl.

(Tom Mathews is Vice President of our Board of Directors and lives in Des Moines.)

CHECK OUT OUR ENCLOSURE

The article enclosed with this edition of The Land Use Bulletin is simply called "Sprawl." It's by Charles Lockwood, a Los Angeles-based writer who likes to cut to the chase. The article begins with the story of a 28-year-old farmer, Ray Dettmering, who was recently arrested for plowing his fields late at night 30 miles southwest of Chicago. Curious? Read on!
WATERLOO:

SOME TROUBLING FACTS...

- The city's population declined by 12% from 1970 to 1990.
- Even though it is the fifth largest city in the state in terms of population, it is Iowa's third largest city in terms of land area.
- The city recently brought in the National Guard to tear down 22 older homes.
- The school board recently suggested closing all 18 schools and rebuilding them on the edge of town. This proposal was defeated.
- Waterloo has more road surface per capita than any other city in Iowa.

AND SOME QUOTES:

Urban sprawl in Waterloo isn't about quality of life or saving farmland...The land isn't going anywhere, and it can always be plowed under again if that makes more economic sense. Urban sprawl in Waterloo is nonsense being fed by those who have been at the table a long time to those who are hungry for their chance.
- from an editorial published by KWWL TV, Waterloo

Every building that is built and every building that is torn down is paint on the canvas of Waterloo. Our city can create a pleasing masterpiece or a haphazard, unpleasant place to avoid.
- George Warren, downtown businessman, in a letter responding to Waterloo Courier editor Saul Shapiro, who once stated that Waterloo could use some urban sprawl.

WATERLOO YOUTH ORGANIZE FIRST VIDEO PREMIER

by LaVon Griffieon

1000 Friends of Iowa premiered their new video depicting the effects of urban sprawl on Iowa cities on October 15 in Waterloo. The students of St. Mary's Catholic School, who play an integral part in the video, organized the event at their school.

"Those kids have really been an inspiration. They've worked hard in their own neighborhood...."

After viewing the video, panelists responded to the video and to the issue. Panelists included Mayor John Rooff, Senator Pat Harper, Representative Bill Dotzler, and Mary Ellen Warren.

"It was a great way to kick things off," said Ed Fallon. "Those kids have really been an inspiration. They've worked hard in their own neighborhood, and they understand the issue better than many adults."

The youth group is tentatively planning to visit the State Capitol next year during the legislative session to remind lawmakers again of the need to control urban sprawl.

Is this Hollywood?
No, it's Iowa
"CORNERSTONES" VIDEO PREMIERS AROUND IOWA

Following the initial showing of our video in Waterloo, other cities have been scheduling their own premieres. Davenport held its event on November 30th.

Des Moines is scheduled for December 16th at 7:00 p.m. at the State Historical Building. 1000 Friends members and supporters in Dubuque, Burlington, and Council Bluffs are also considering events. If you'd like to premier this film in your town, give us a call!

The Des Moines premier of Cornerstones is scheduled for December 16th 7:00 p.m. State Historical Building.

VIDEOS FOR SALE

1000 Friends of Iowa now has two videos for sale. "A Letter from Iowa" (four minutes) looks at urban sprawl through the eyes of the Griffieon family, who are trying to maintain their century farm on the edge of rapidly growing Ankeny.

"Cornerstones" (nine minutes) views the effects of urban sprawl on Iowa's towns and cities. Both videos are available for $5.00 each from our office.

STUDENT GROUP FORMS IN DECORAH

by Ed Fallon

Decorah High School student Laura Matter has been concerned about the environment for some time. When she heard LaVon Griffieon and I speak at a meeting of Citizens for Responsible Development, she decided she wanted to form a student group to address urban sprawl and environmental concerns.

Laura talked with six of her friends, and the students decided to form their group. Their first action was to learn more about land use issues, and when they requested information from 1000 Friends, a healthy pile of reading material was sent their way.

"The kids were a great audience," said LaVon. "They asked good questions and showed enthusiasm for continuing to stay involved."

The next idea was to invite LaVon and Ed back to present to three assemblies of over 100 students. "The kids were a great audience," said LaVon. "They asked good questions and showed enthusiasm for continuing to stay involved." The Decorah students are the second group of youth in Iowa (that we know of) to initiate a project on urban sprawl. The first are the students at St. Mary's Catholic School in Waterloo.

1000 Friends Speakers Bureau is alive, well, and...well, waiting for your call!

Our speakers have traveled to every corner of the state, regaling audiences with their cutting wit, biting analysis, and unmatched sense of humility.

Seriously, please call our office to arrange a presentation for your group on urban sprawl. You'll be glad you did!
FACILITATING DIALOGUE IN VAN BUREN COUNTY

by Ed Fallon

1000 Friends of Iowa is currently raising funds for a special project in southeast Iowa. The project—"Identifying and Solving Land Use Challenges in Van Buren County"—will occur on-site in one of Iowa's most scenic counties. It begins with a series of individual meetings in January followed by several public meetings, culminating in a report describing the county's land use challenges and possible solutions.

"It is my hope and dream that in Van Buren County, we can avoid replicating the land use mistakes that have been made throughout our state and country,"
—Rep. Rebecca Reynolds

Earlier this fall, a diverse group of citizens invited LaVon Griffieon and I to Van Buren County to make our presentation. There was general agreement that county-wide, facilitated dialogue could prove helpful. Among those in attendance were County Assessor Penny Wilson and State Rep. Rebecca Reynolds.

"It is my hope and dream that in Van Buren County, we can avoid replicating the land use mistakes that have been made throughout our state and country," wrote Rep. Reynolds in a letter endorsing the project. Indeed, if Van Buren County residents can find a way to direct growth before it explodes, their little piece of heaven will remain one of Iowa's crown jewels.

CAUCUS PROJECT WILL RAISE LAND USE ISSUES

by Kathy Beauchamp

Three hundred thousand is quite an audience. In fact, it's a captive audience, one that will assemble on January 24th in Democratic and Republican precinct caucuses all across the state. It's an event watched closely across America and around the world. It's an event that gives us a unique opportunity to get our message out in a constructive and educational manner.

Our Caucus Project is preparing to reach 50,000 caucus-goers at 500 precinct caucuses. We are in the process of recruiting 250 Republicans and 250 Democrats across the state to present resolutions on some aspect of land use at their caucuses. Resolutions will be read, discussed, and hopefully passed. After the precinct caucuses, we will push our resolutions in the county, district, and state platforms of both parties.

We are presently looking for people willing to introduce a resolution at a local precinct caucus. If you're interested, please call me at 515-288-5364.

PUBLIC MARKET GRANT RECEIVED!

It's always satisfying to be promised a grant. But the satisfaction isn't fully complete until the check is actually received and deposited. The Wallace Genetic Foundation recently delivered $25,000 to our coffers toward the development of a year-round public market in Des Moines.

Now the hard work begins. We plan to use the money to begin to flesh out details of the project, build further support, and raise additional funds. If you want to be a part of this pioneering venture, please call us at 515-288-5364.
ANKENY CONTINUES TO ADDRESS LAND USE CONCERNS
by LaVon Griffieon

Discussion continues on the proposal by the City of Ankeny to amend it's land use plan to expand the city limits northward, encompassing some of Polk County's finest and most fertile farmland. The plan calls for changing the farmland into primarily residential housing.

Ankeny residents have continued to pack the council chambers since August 17th. 1000 Friends of Iowa has lent support by educating citizens about the issue through door to door canvassing by volunteers.

1000 Friends has also sought interns to conduct a cost of community services study for the City of Ankeny. This study will determine exactly which types of development are needed to financially balance each other; such information is imperative to a growing community. Fifty-eight studies in 18 states have repeatedly shown that residential development loses tax dollars.

The city council has spent many hours in public hearings and study groups, where many excellent ideas and concepts have come to light. A 28E agreement could be signed between the City and Polk County to guarantee that any infrastructure placed in the county within two miles of the city matches or exceeds city standards.

The lack of local food security in our communities—while we continue to build on prime farmland—was brought to light. A plea to study public transportation was brought up as an option to building the city around the automobile. A new potential conflict has been discovered: some of the land in the target area has been sold to build a church next to the Izaak Walton League's shooting range, where live ammunition is being discharged.

The council is currently involved in formulating a new land use plan for the area. The results of that plan will be reopened for public comment before a decision is made.

LOESS HILLS PRESERVATION SOCIETY MAKES PROGRESS ON FILL DIRT ISSUE
by Terry Oswald

The Loess Hills Preservation Society has negotiated a working arrangement with the City of Omaha concerning the acquisition of fill dirt from the Loess Hills for city projects.

After Society board members met with Mayor Hal Daub, members of the Mayor's staff, and Omaha City planning officials over many months, the Mayor announced that he "agrees that the Loess Hills provide economic benefits as the scenic setting for our region and as a tourism attraction, as well as adding to the quality of life in the metropolitan area by serving as open space and a resource for recreation."

Mayor Daub pledged that the City will "suggest that contractors for City of Omaha projects be judicious in their site-mining selections, keeping in mind the sensitivity many have for using Loess Hills as a source of fill dirt."

The Mayor also pledged to work with the Loess Hills Preservation Society on a case-by-case basis to find alternate sources of fill dirt for upcoming projects, such as the Omaha stockyard construction project and the proposed City Auditorium & Convention Center development at the old Union Pacific railroad site along the Missouri river.

⇒ The Loess Hills Preservation Society is a grassroots citizen-action & education organization. For more information about the Society, please contact Janice Marcantonio at 712-366-2678.
Would you like to help? We'd love to have you. Our volunteer needs include:

- Assembling mailings
- Making phone calls
- Organizing events
- Fund-raising
- Serving on committees
- And probably a dozen other things

1000 IN 2000

Our membership drive is gearing up to make our name a reality. We're at about 400 members right now. By the end of next year, we want to have 1000 $100 Founding Friends. 1000 members and an operating budget of $100,000 will put us in a solid position to move forward on our work.

Enclosed is my check for $ __________

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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