

The Land Use Bulletin

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

It was July 18th, 1996 when I hosted a diverse group of individuals in my living room. The meeting was born out of frustration about the urban encroachment bearing down on our five generation farm. During that meeting, the seed for **1000 Friends of Iowa** was planted, and we incorporated on May 14th, 1998.

This month we move into a "new" office in Highland Park on the north side of Des Moines. The office is in a 100 year old brick building anchoring an historic commercial district. It provides excellent visibility, and I hope you'll drop by and visit. If you have any second hand furnishings to offer, I'm eager to talk!



The success of our Farma-Save signs has me designing six new sets—one for each day of RAGBRAI. If you can hold a paint brush, ***I need you!!*** To be ready for the biking horde, we have to produce 30 signs in as many days! Please call me at (515) 964-0876 if you'd like to help. See pages 4 and 5 for a sneak preview of the signs.

1000 Friends keeps me plenty busy, and with more than just painting signs and furnishing a new office. After years of criticizing developers, I decided to become one myself. I am working with a growing committee of supporters to build a grocery store featuring Iowa grown food at 6th and University in Des Moines. With only two independently owned, full-service grocery stores left in Polk County, I am adamant that a Walgreens not locate on that corner. See pages 2 and 3 for an update on our progress.

Finally, I'd like to tell you about the positive meeting Ed Fallon and I had with Governor Vilsack and Lieutenant Governor Sally Pederson recently. We were invited to share our land use presentation, complete with video and slide show. The Governor liked what we had to say, and expressed his support for policy changes. But he told us that nothing would happen legislatively until the people of Iowa made the issue a higher priority and demanded change from their elected officials. He asked how we intended to facilitate that ground swell of support?

I smiled as I thought back to four years ago, when with great trepidation, I called 24 people to meet at my house. Today, that little gathering has grown to an organization with a statewide presence and 620 members in 65 counties. The ball is rolling, and change is just a matter of time.

Thanks for being a part of it!

LaVon Griffieon
President of the Board of Directors

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 cities and towns.

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Conceptual view of the store from 6th and University.

DEVELOPERS ARE US: AN IOWA-GROWN GROCERY STORE

Central to the agenda of 1000 Friends of Iowa is the protection of farmland and natural areas on the one hand, and the revitalization of our cities and towns on the other. What better way to combine these two goals than to take a blighted lot in the heart of Des Moines and build a grocery store committed to marketing foods produced by local farmers? If successful, this could give area farmers a viable option to selling their land to developers, while revitalizing a decayed urban neighborhood.

With a \$25,000 grant from the Wallace Genetic Foundation, we have made encouraging progress on this vision. 1000 Friends' board members Wende Elliott, LT Bhramdat, Larry James, and LaVon Griffieon have put in long hours with executive director, Ed Fallon, to move this project forward. Linda Jansen provided the renderings that accompany this article. Paid consultants have put together different components of a business plan. The next step is to attract someone with experience in the retail grocery business, and then to find a developer to actually build the store. While these are admittedly big steps, the breadth of community enthusiasm for this project gives us great hope for success.

We continue to attract favorable support not only among neighborhood residents, but among agricultural producers, metropolitan consumers, business and community leaders, and state officials who seek to showcase Iowa as the "Food Capital of the World." Goals for the project include:

- n Provide residents with an independently owned, full-service grocery store;
- n Bring new employment to neighborhood residents;
- n Revitalize a key corner in Des Moines' central city, thus anchoring further revitalization north on Sixth Avenue and west on University Avenue;
- n Provide a market for locally-grown food for local farmers;
- n Design a store that fits the historic and architectural integrity of the neighborhood; and
- n Establish a commercial kitchen to process excess produce, which would be sold at the store and elsewhere.

The building's interior will contain an educational component to help shoppers understand where food comes from and how it is grown. While produce will be available year round, the educated shopper will soon learn that the best time to cash in on enhanced flavor and good prices is when the local season is at its height.

The store will offer a variety of ethnic foods that aren't readily available in Des Moines. It also will feature a small demonstration kitchen where customers can see how to prepare and cook locally-grown foods.

Many shoppers today have never prepared fresh

produce. They have been raised on frozen or canned vegetables. Cooking classes will also be offered to learn how to can and preserve.

The food offered in the grocery store will be competitively priced. More expensive organic produce will be available and used to create a niche market to attract residents beyond the immediate neighborhood. But great care will be given to ensure that competitively priced produce and grocery items are available year round.

We also envision an outdoor cafe and a small eating area inside the store. Both can enhance the store's attractiveness and viability. And with the store's location kitty-corner from Mercy Hospital and near several other large employers, the potential for attracting the lunch-time crowd seems excellent. Mercy Hospital presently has no place within walking distance where visitors who are at the hospital for extended periods can go for a break. Along with our sidewalk cafe, featuring Iowa-grown lunches, our commercial kitchen would cater Iowa-grown meals to convention banquets, meetings, and downtown workers.

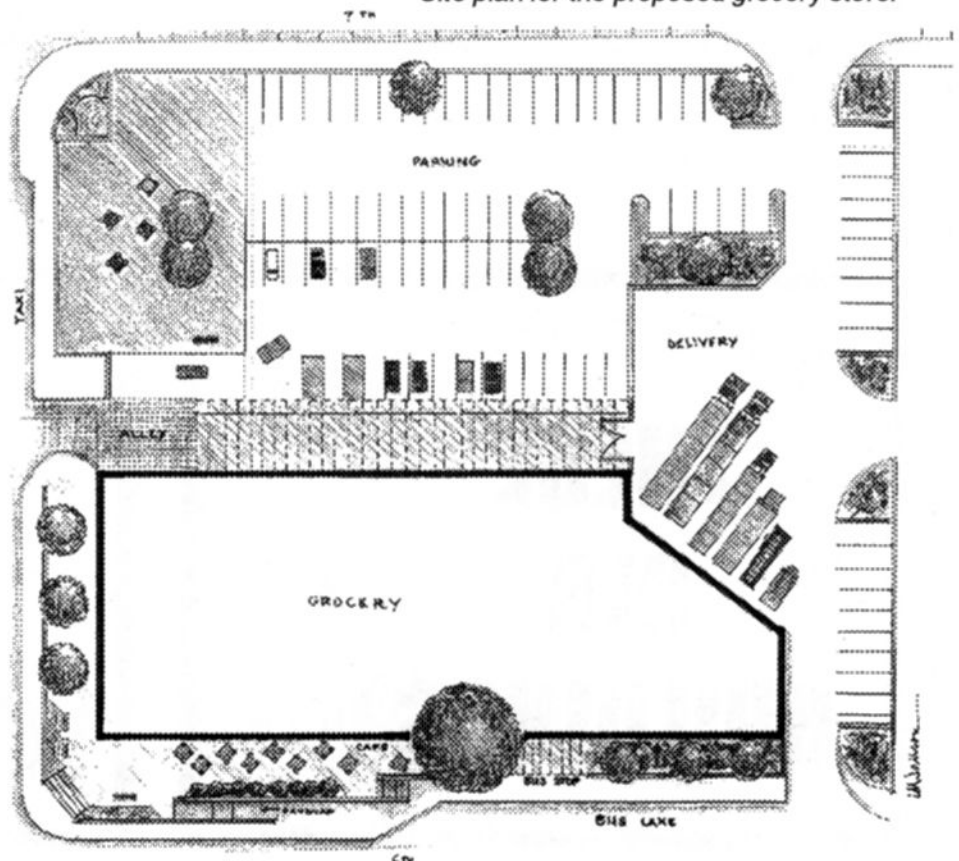
There is little doubt that a full-service grocery store is feasible at this site. Studies by SuperValu have confirmed this. Four key factors of the 1000 Friends proposal further enhance the prospects of success:

1. The unique focus on locally-grown food (witness the success of local farmers' markets);
2. The attractive, historically appealing design (witness the success of Court Avenue);
3. The involvement of a non-profit, which will not only attract philanthropic dollars but provide the store a high level of visibility, both in the Des Moines area and quite possibly across the state and nation; and
4. The teaming of this store with a commercial kitchen.

WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL KITCHEN?

An important addition to this project is a commercial kitchen. This would be a federally-inspected kitchen that allows producers and others to convert raw products into a value-added product. That product would then be sold in the store, or elsewhere for that matter. This would increase the quantity of locally-grown food in some of the "off" months, and would provide additional employment to area residents. Farmers could rent the commercial kitchen by the hour to process batches of pesto, salsa, or apples, for example. Non-farmers wanting to use the kitchen to bake pies or breads could rent the facility as well. Kitchens such as this are proving to be very successful throughout the United States. They often serve as a resource for budding entrepreneurs who want a chance to try out their business idea without having to make a huge capital investment in kitchen equipment and overhead. If the product works and the lifestyle suits them, they can move on to the next level of investment.

Site plan for the proposed grocery store.



PEDDLING LAND U

Due to the popularity of our roadside cow signs (over 55 stories in local, national, and international media), 1000 Friends of Iowa is preparing to place a set of Burma-Shave style "Farma-Save" signs along each day of RAGBRAI. Each set of signs features a different theme relevant to a local land use concern.

Work on the signs has begun in earnest, and your help is needed. Don't feel that you need artistic talent. (We even trained Ed Fallon to hand letter last year — but we never left him unsupervised!) All you need is a passion for the issue. Painting locations have been established in two areas of the state: Ankeny and Iowa City. Volunteers are needed to:

- Trace the designs
- Cut out the designs
- Scavenge donations of ½ inch plywood
- Scavenge donations of paint or white primer
- Base coat and prime the wood
- Paint the signs
- Locate areas along the route for the signs to be put up
- Set-up and take down the signs
- Operate booths to serve cold drinks, hand out literature, and sell T-shirts

Our work is definitely cut out for us. Many of these slogans originated from the brain storming session at last year's annual meeting. Thanks to all those who have helped to date. This is a fun, catchy way to promote responsible land use in Iowa. Please join us, if just for a few hours.

WE'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS. WE REALLY NEED A LOT OF HELP TO PULL IT OFF!! If you'd like to help, please call LaVon Griffieon at (515) 964-0876 in central Iowa or Alisa Meggitt in eastern Iowa at (319) 354-1850. Here are the slogans, and we've included one set of drawings, done by LaVon Griffieon.

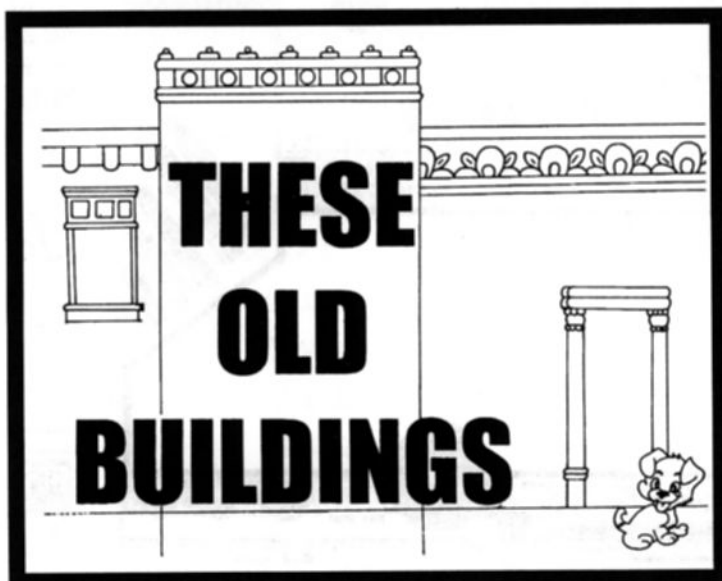
DAY 1: Council Bluffs to Harlan

"These Lovely Hills

Are Unique Beyond Measure

Time is a Tickin'

To Save Such A Treasure"



SE ACROSS IOWA

DAY 2: Harlan to Greenfield

*"Keep Your Mainstreet
Strong and Wealthy
When You Buy Local
Your Town Stays Healthy"*

DAY 3: Greenfield to Ankeny

*"Urban Growth
On Rural Ground
How 'Bout Raising
Hogs Downtown"*

DAY 4: Ankeny to Knoxville

*"New Roads and Malls
Sprout Up Like Weeds
And Our Tax Dollars
Are The Seeds"*

DAY 5: Knoxville to Ottumwa

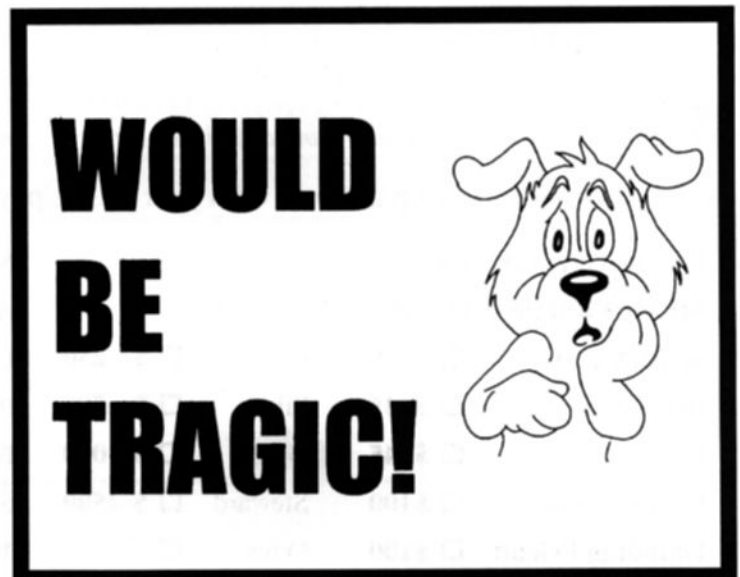
*"Urban Sprawl
Ain't Too Pretty
Save Our Farms
Build in the City"*

DAY 6: Ottumwa to Washington

*"These Old Buildings
Still Got Magic
Their Destruction
Would Be Tragic"*

DAY 7: Washington to Burlington

*"To The Earth
Make Amends
Park Your Car
Bike With Friends"*



LEGISLATIVE SESSION SEES SMALL VICTORIES

One legislative victory for better land use planning that has largely gone unnoticed and unreported in the press was the inclusion of **Smart Growth Principles** in the Vision Iowa Fund, which earmarks \$300 million for community projects across the state. The most notable of these projects are the proposed arena/convention center in Des Moines and the rain forest/education center in Cedar Rapids.

Taking language from a bill proposed by Governor Vilsack, the Legislature accepted an amendment listing five Smart Growth Principles that communities proposing a project must consider. The five principles are:

1. Efficient and effective use of land resources and existing infrastructure by encouraging development in areas with existing infrastructure or capacity to avoid costly duplication of services and costly use of land.
2. Provision for a variety of transportation choices, including pedestrian traffic.
3. Maintenance of a unique sense of place by respecting local cultural, natural, and environmental features.
4. Conservation of open space and farmland and preservation of critical environmental areas.
5. Promotion of the safety, livability, and revitalization of existing urban and rural communities.

A **State Historic Tax Credits** program was established in HF 2560 (formerly HF 482). This bill is important,

not only to preserve beautiful buildings but for urban revitalization in general. Fixing up our town squares, central cities, and urban neighborhoods is not just good for cities, it takes pressure off farmland and sensitive natural areas as well. Specifically, HF 2560 establishes a state income tax credit for 25% of the rehabilitation costs to targeted historic commercial buildings, individual homes, barns and one-room school houses. A cap of \$2.4 million is placed on the fund, which will only begin to address the need across the state.

The legislature also appropriated \$3 million for Iowa's **Brownfields** program, which provides funding to clean up contaminated industrial and commercial sites so they can be redeveloped. A Brownfields program not only gets urban land back into circulation and on the tax rolls, but takes pressure off developing farmland as well. While \$3 million is a good start, it will only scratch the surface of what's needed.

Unfortunately, the most important piece of legislation – a bill to require **cooperative, comprehensive planning between cities and counties** – never came up for a vote. Though the bill received strong support in three different committees in the Senate, it was never deemed a high enough priority to receive a full debate in either chamber. As interest in land use continues to build across the state, the 2001 legislative session will see progress on this front and on narrowing our **Tax Increment Financing** law, which has mushroomed out of control.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE: 1000 IN 2000

Our membership drive is gearing up to make our name a reality. We have 620 members right now in 65 Iowa counties. By the end of the year, we hope to have 1000 \$100 Founding Friends. An operating budget of \$100,000 will give us a solid position to move forward in our work.

*If you would like to be a Founding Friend, but can't afford a lump sum contribution of \$100, we have developed a monthly pledge program for \$8.75 a month. Of course we gratefully accept annual memberships at \$20 and up as well. Contact us for details at **515-288-5364**.*

Clip and mail with your check, payable to **1000 Friends of Iowa**

Enclosed is my check for \$_____

Name _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Address _____

Student/Senior ☐ \$ 20 Patron ☐ \$ 250

City / State / Zip _____

Individual ☐ \$ 35 Silver ☐ \$ 500

Phone _____

Family ☐ \$ 45 Gold ☐ \$ 1000

FAX _____

Organization ☐ \$100 Steward ☐ \$ 2500

e-mail _____

Founding Friend ☐ \$100 Other ☐

1000 Friends of Iowa / 3524 Sixth Ave. / Des Moines, IA 50313

OUT OF AFRICA AND INTO DES MOINES

1000 Friends of Iowa is welcoming a new addition to their staff this summer: Allison Brummel.

Allison is a senior-to-be at Grinnell College. She will be serving as a full-time intern in the Des Moines office for the next two months, answering the every beck and call of Ed, LaVon and the rest of the Des Moines crew.

Allison spent the last five months studying in Zimbabwe, where issues of land these days are even more explosive than in Iowa. The 20-year-old ruling government of Robert Mugabe has been (ab)using the issue of racial inequality in land distribution in order to gain support for his party, ZANU-PF, in the upcoming elections. For the past several months he has unleashed terror on the 4,000 white commercial farmers and other opposition party members in Zimbabwe, resulting in dozens of deaths.

But this summer Allison has put aside Zimbabwean land politics to give her all to the equally perplexing but less life-threatening issues of land in Iowa. She is excited to be working with 1000 Friends of Iowa and can't wait to contribute to the fight for intelligent land use planning in Iowa.

QUOTE THIS: For years, Atlanta, Georgia tried to ward off traffic problems by building more highways per capita than any other urban area in the United States, except Kansas City. For every 1,000 residents, they had constructed over 1 mile of highway. The result? The residents of Atlanta now drive an average of 35 miles a day – more than the residents of any other city in the country. (from USA Today, 11/04/97)

Using Study Circles to Address Land Use Issues

by Kent Newman

Land use, community planning, farmland preservation, natural resource protection, and growth management are priority issues in many Iowa communities. As we at the Wallace House Foundation recognized the growing concerns surrounding these issues, we decided to make them part of the Foundation's *Common Ground: The Future of Iowa* project. Through the Common Ground project, we work with community organizations and city and county governments to facilitate citizen dialogue about land use and growth management issues.

To accomplish these objectives, we use a study guide called *Smart Talk for Growing Communities: Meeting the Challenges of Growth & Development*. The study guide calls for five sessions of two hours each, and is designed to take diverse groups with varying levels of knowledge and experience from start to finish. Trained facilitators guide discussion using the following topic sequence:

1. How is growth changing our communities?
2. Why is our community experiencing these changes?
3. What are our options for addressing growth?
4. Building shared understanding and cooperation with public officials.
5. What can we do to address issues of growth in our communities?

We have completed successful pilot projects in Warren and Story counties, and are currently working to develop a similar project in Boone County, Missouri (home of Colum-

bia and the U. of Missouri). In addition to organizing and hosting central Iowa groups at the historic Wallace House, we offer consulting services based on a "training of trainers" model. We provide resources and training for local partner/sponsor organizations to staff projects at the city and county level.

Our program mission draws on the legacy of the Wallace family in promoting an educated citizenry motivated to participate in community issues and the democratic process. We are available to provide consulting services to citizens, organizations, and government about using study circles to address land use/growth management/planning and a number of other issues critical to communities throughout the state.

In short, we recognize that the need exists for increased civic participation and civil dialogue to address public issues. The study circles model is a natural fit with the objectives of 1000 Friends of Iowa. It is a wonderful opportunity to focus on the utility of dialogue in discussing priority issues, raising awareness, building consensus, and producing meaningful action.

For more information, please contact Kent Newman, Executive Director at (515) 243-7063.

Kent Newman is a 1000 Friends of Iowa member and requested that we share his organization's work with other members. The Wallace House Foundation's work often dovetails nicely with our group's interest in agriculture, community food systems, watershed management, and regional cooperation.

1000 Friends of Iowa

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CHECK OUT OUR ENCLOSURE:

With this issue of
The Land Use Bulletin,
we include an article from
Governing about an
innovative approach to
assuring an adequate supply
of affordable housing – and
to assuring that that supply is
geographically dispersed.

ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 30

1000 Friends of Iowa's second annual meeting will be held on September 30 from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. in the Wedgewood Room of the Hotel Fort Des Moines in Des Moines. We will serve an all-Iowa meal for lunch, and we've invited Governor Vilsack to keynote the event. All members will receive a formal notice and invitation soon, but please get it on your calendar now. It's a great opportunity to network with like-minded people from across the state, and gives every member a chance to help set the agenda for 2001.

MALL SPRAWL BRAWL

The City of West Des Moines has taken mall sprawl to new heights. In proposing \$60 million in public money to subsidize the new facility, they have incurred strong criticism from two nearby existing malls, who rightfully charge that the City of West Des Moines is undercutting the free-market system.

As 1000 Friend's board member, Jay Howe, of Greenfield wrote in *The Des Moines Register* recently, "As with other so-called development of its type, (this mall) breeds more auto-dependency, more ecological despoliation, and makes its way off the economic blood it sucks from urban neighborhoods and rural main streets."

The proposed mall is not yet a done deal. And while local

opposition runs high, there are no laws to prevent West Des Moines from doing whatever it wants, despite any adverse consequences their action may have on other businesses, neighboring cities, or outlying towns and counties.

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