



The Land Use Bulletin

Published Bi-Monthly by 1000 Friends of Iowa

A PARTY YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS!

We call it our annual meeting, but we prefer to think of it as one big celebration. All of you can all claim some credit for the progress we've made over the past year. Our annual meeting is an excellent opportunity for members from across the state to get to know each other, share success stories, and showcase current programs and projects. We've got seating capacity for 100 people, with 45 confirmed attendees already. So, sign up today!

The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 30, from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. in the Wedgewood Room of the Hotel Fort Des Moines in Des Moines. Registration is \$10 (see the enclosed flier with registration form).

Lunch will feature an Iowa-grown meal. We will have reports from across the state, speakers, music, and a presentation by Pat Cancilla. We will vote for new officers and review the organization's budget and program goals for next year. Finally, you'll get a chance to visit our new office in Highland Park's historic commercial district.

We share a common bond in that we all care about preserving our natural lands, protecting our farmland, and revitalizing our cities and towns. Join us. Celebrate our shared accomplishments, and help us plan for another year of success and growth. ♦

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Fall, 2000 / Issue #42

FARMA-SAVE SIGNS: LOOKING FOR NEW FIELDS OF OPPORTUNITY

When 1000 Friends created the first Farma-Save signs last year, they captured national media attention. After a stint in Polk County, the signs found temporary homes in Johnson and Jefferson counties. They were so successful at getting out our message that we decided to create six more sets of signs. These received their public debut in July on RAGBRAI. Signs were placed across

Iowa citing themes ranging from historic preservation to public subsidies for Wal-Mart to protecting the Loess Hills.

The signs are now looking for new homes. We'll soon have drawings available showing what each set of signs looks like. If you own or know of a spread of land at least 150 yards in length along a well-traveled highway, please give Phil a call at (515) 288-5364. Or, if you'd like to see the drawings first so you can shop for the perfect fit for your local area and issues, let us know and we'll send it your way. ♦

With Much Gratitude ...

Thanks to the many, many people who have volunteered with us this summer. The list is too long to mention all of you by name. Over 50 people helped just with the sign campaign. Several people pitched in to pull together the new office and about a dozen of you lent a hand to assemble mailings. Where would we be without you? Thanks!! ♦

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.

1000 Friends of Iowa

3524 Sixth Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50313
515-288-5364
web site: www.kfoi.org
e-mail: kfoi@kfoi.org

MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS!

L.T. BHRAMDAT, Des Moines

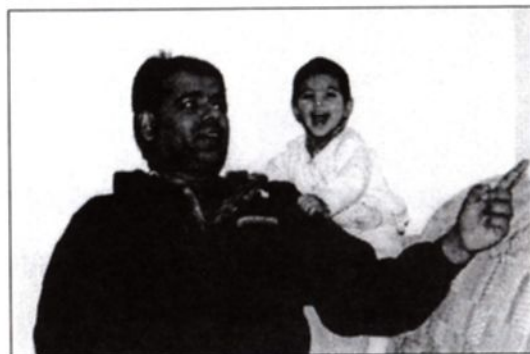
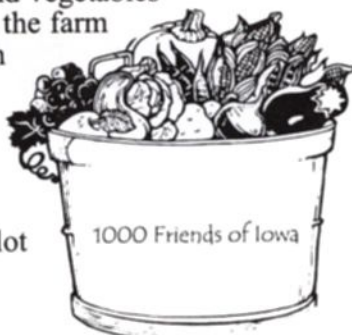
I graduated from Indian Trust College and University of Guyana with Double Majors in Biology and Chemistry and a minor in Mathematics. I continued my studies in Chicago where I was trained in some of the most prestigious university medical centers. From 1986 to 1999, I managed patients through the entire health care spectrum from the neonatal, pediatric and adult intensive care units

to heart-lung transplant units from emergency care to chronic care, from home care to skilled care. I have participated in a number of clinical studies and done extensive research on health maintenance, prevention, nutrition and food cultures of the world.

"The best and oldest alternative to medicine is locally grown, vine-ripened, freshly harvested fruits and vegetables — the shortest time from the farm to the kitchen table." — L.T. Bhramdat

In January 1999, I dignified my ability to positively impact the health of my community by becoming a full time organic farmer. The best and oldest alternative to medicine is locally grown, vine-ripened, freshly harvested fruits and vegetables — the shortest time from the farm to the kitchen table. With the support and help of my adorable wife, Ahilia, who is a registered nurse, we manage Leisure Time Gardens, Inc, a 63 acre plot near West Des Moines.

We cultivate an extensive variety of vegetables, raise poultry and goats, host cooking classes, provide nutritional information and manage a Community Supported Agriculture with the help of our four children. As a **1000 Friends of Iowa** board member, I am very involved in efforts to build a community-based grocery store featuring Iowa grown food. ♦



L.T. Bhramdat

KIRK GRAU, Sibley

With over 25 years of community and economic development experience, I am currently the Executive Director of the Osceola County Economic Development Commission and represent Northwest Iowa on the **1000 Friends of Iowa** board.



After working in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Illinois, South Dakota and Texas, I find my current position to be the most challenging of my entire career. While this predominantly agricultural region experiences a profound metamorphosis, the level of resources to help make this transition is nonexistent:

- State policies are do not address the problems that rural communities face.
- Our area's larger business centers are located in neighboring states.
- The farming industry — the base of our local economy — is seeing fewer, but larger farms.
- Rural areas need the most talented and the most skilled workers, yet the resources aren't available to bring them to us.

I am excited to work with **1000 Friends of Iowa** to bring creative solutions to the challenges of a changing rural landscape. ♦



MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS!

RACHEL ENGWALL, Fairfield

Our vanishing Iowa landscape of open spaces concerns me greatly. As a partner involved within a family-owned farm, I have grown up participating in a lifelong "take your daughter to work day." My father now assumes the silent partner role, with my two sons spending free time in the same manner I did thirty years ago. Farming and family are where my time and efforts are channeled; this in turn leads into my



Rachel Engwall

strong feelings toward the protection of farmland and open spaces. The Iowa farmer who is connected to the land by conservation has an obligation to preserve the land, just as you would with a family pet. The more you put into that relationship the better the return. If broken, that connection becomes a void that compares with the death of the soul of that

farmer. It is ironic that society chooses to destroy its natural resource by any form of development.

My connection with **1000 Friends of Iowa** is important to erase my ignorance of the city and lack of exposure to my urban friends' problems. As a Soil and Water Conservation Commissioner in Jefferson County, I spend time collecting research in conservation protection for the future. I am a rural resident of a 100-year-old farmhouse which I have spent 20 years restoring. Our home is adjacent to our business in which we produce wheat, corn, soybeans, hay, cattle, trees, wildlife and prairie grass. Most importantly, caring for the earth keeps me thinking beyond myself.

"The conservation of our resources may be our best connection to the survival of man." — Rachel Engwall

I hope Iowa can assume the role of leadership in conserving our soil, water and air. We populate one of the most fertile locations in the world. The conservation of our resources may be our best connection to the survival of man. ♦

WENDE ELLIOTT, Ames

I am extremely concerned about smart preservation, development and quality of life issues. My perspective is deepened by a wide exposure to different land use philosophies and ramifications by my current experience on an organic farm in Story County, Iowa, and previously living in New York City, San Francisco, suburban New Jersey, Michigan and rural India.

I see a correct answer in balancing a concern for the protection of Iowa's environmental

and human resources with popular economic growth models and desire for revitalization of Iowa's small town Main Streets and inner cities. I work as a business consultant, farmwife and mother. My husband, a native Iowan, and I re-

turned to Iowa after more than a decade out of state when we decided Iowa was the best place in the country to live. My pride and enthusiasm for the land and people of the state motivate me to action.

After seeing what went wrong with unfettered growth in so many other states and foreign countries, and how it affected the local culture and quality of life, I believe that **1000 Friends of Iowa**

has a broad and well-grounded perspective to see the causal relationships between rural and urban communities, between agricultural producers and

consumers, between local control populism and government/corporate interests.

I have been active in promoting e-commerce strategies and niche marketing as mechanisms for

small town employment and increased farm profit. I successfully initiated the passage in Story County of property tax relief for



Wende Elliott

historical property renovation projects. I am a principal consultant at Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, and I formerly worked in international project management and studied cultural anthropology at Princeton University. I am an active participant in Practical Farmers of Iowa, Ames Waldorf Association, my church, and the Iowa Barn Foundation. ♦

"...balancing ... protection of Iowa's environmental and human resources with popular economic growth models ..." — Wende Elliott

GROUP ORGANIZES TO OPPOSE MEGA MALL

The City of West Des Moines takes pride in itself as "Iowa's Fastest Growing Community". While growth is good, too-rapid growth comes at a high cost. Repeated studies and analysis show that the costs of supporting new development are often unfairly assessed against taxpayers who do not receive the benefits.

Despite extensive citizen opposition, West Des Moines proposes using public subsidies to enable the development of a three million square foot shopping mall on 200 acres of farmland in Dallas County. **Citizens Against the Mall (CAM)** has been organized by local residents and businesses to stop the proposed Jordan Creek mega-mall.

Drawing from the experiences of past groups with similar goals, CAM is uniting citizens around the community against a pro-

posed tax giveaway of over \$50 million to benefit the developers of Jordan Creek Mall.

CAM's goals are to inform area residents about the negative impacts of a project of this magnitude and to encourage appropriate citizen involvement

at public forums, at city council meetings, and through community outreach.

CAM's goals include:

- Publicizing the facts about the proposed Jordan Creek Mega-mall;
- Demanding responsible government use of tax dollars;
- Preserving the quality of life area residents now enjoy;
- Maintaining effective police and fire protection without stretching personnel too thin;

"... CAM is uniting citizens around the community against a proposed tax giveaway of over \$50 million to benefit the developers ..."

- Protecting the environment for future generations.

For further information about this issue, contact:

Citizens Against the Mall
PO Box 65217
West Des Moines, IA 50265
(515) 282-1258 ♦

Come See Our New Office!

We're having an Open House on Tuesday, September 19, from 4:00 - 7:00 P.M. Our new office is at 3524 Sixth Avenue in Des Moines, at the corner of Sixth and Euclid. If you can't make it, we will also give interested members a tour of the office and neighborhood at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 30th, after the annual meeting. Many thanks to those who donated time or equipment to get the office furnished. ♦



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE: 1000 IN 2000

Our membership drive is gearing up to make our name a reality. We now have 650 members in 65 Iowa counties. By the end of the year, we hope to have 1,000 \$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

INSPIRED BY FRENCH LAND USE PRACTICES by Phil James

This summer, **1000 Friends of Iowa** welcomed me to its staff. I am a recent graduate of the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, majoring in History and French. I will be working as the full time administrative assistant in the new office, assisting Ed, LaVon, and others in their crusade to strike down the forces of poor land use.



Phil James

While a student at UNI, I studied for a semester in Angers, France where I had a first hand look at proper land use, historic preservation and responsible city planning. Located in the heart of

"It was through my experience in France that I realized there must be a better way to plan than the auto-dependent cities of Iowa." — Phil James

wine country, Angers is roughly the same population as Des Moines and the economy is equally ag-dominated. Yet, the city comprises one-third the land area of Des Moines. It was through my experience in France that I realized there must be a better way to plan than the auto-dependent cities of Iowa.

While at UNI, I got involved in the Iowa caucuses — organizing events, phone banking, door-knocking and energizing students. I was also very active in the UNI Student Environmental Action Coalition. I am happy to be on board with the **1000 Friends of Iowa** team, and I look forward to meeting many of you at the annual meeting. ♦

pro-sprawl advocate who wanted to pick a fight. I usually rose to the occasion — during my two months at **1000 Friends**, I have absorbed enough useful anti-sprawl arguments and tactics to give my antagonists a run for their money. Besides, these heated discussions spiced up the day and made my job more challenging.

By the time RAGBRAI reached the eastern shore of Iowa, I was exhausted, yet satisfied that I had helped get the word out about land use issues in Iowa. And, I had a real good time in the process.

[Allison Brummel is from McGregor, Iowa and will complete her senior year at Grinnell College next spring, majoring in Anthropology and Global Development. For two months this summer, she worked as a full-time volunteer with 1000 Friends of Iowa.] ♦

RIDING A DIFFERENT ROUTE ON RAGBRAI

by Allison Brummel

The last week in July, I participated in the Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa, along with some 15,000 other folks from around the country. By night, I was indistinguishable from the other participants — I loitered in beer gardens and camped in backyards with the best of them. But by day, my purpose and perspective differed significantly from most. While cyclists huffed and puffed their way up and down the green hills of Iowa, I sat at a table along the route encouraging them to think about the importance of how we choose to use this fertile land.

We first conceived the idea of staffing RAGBRAI as a way to complement our catchy "Farma-Save" signs (**1000 Friends of Iowa** has constructed and erected seven sets of Burma-Shave style signs across the state, each set addressing a unique land use issue).

Later, we expanded my job to fund-raising: by the end of the week I had sold dozens of "Stone City" T-shirts and recruited a handful of new **1000 Friends** members. But my primary purpose on RAGBRAI was to be a follow-up for those cyclists and townspeople that had seen our signs and wanted to learn more.

Indeed, over the course of the week I conversed with countless folks who had noticed our catchy artwork and wanted to find out more about the land use issues facing Iowa. "Do we actually have urban sprawl?" and "What's so special about the Loess Hills?" are examples of some of the more common questions. Others shared horror stories about sprawl in their home states (Colorado, New Jersey and Florida were often cited). These out-of-state cyclists described their annual trek across Iowa as therapeutic. In comparison with their home states, Iowa offers some reassurance that all of the country is not yet covered in strip malls.

Many cyclists stopped at my little booth simply to thank me for working on this issue. These little comments were the encouragement I needed to keep me planted at my card table day after day, often with the hot July sun beating down on my freckled face. Of course, everyone was not enthusiastic about our cause. At least once a day I encountered a



Allison Brummel



TIPS ON TIF by Margaret Buckton

Tax increment financing (TIF) is an economic development tool used by cities, counties and community colleges. A TIF district begins with a resolution establishing an urban renewal or jobs training project. At that time, the property valuation in the TIF district is frozen and called the *base value*. The base value is taxed at the total combined tax rate by all taxing authorities (county, city, school and others).

For the duration of the TIF district, growth in the property valuation is called the "incremental value". It is taxed at the same rate as all other property, but the taxes go to the TIF project. The only exception is if any taxing authority has debt, the corresponding TIF district revenues go to the taxing entity (school district, county, etc). Generally, bonds are issued to finance the TIF project, and the property tax revenues from the incremental value in the TIF area are used to retire the bonds.

Once a TIF is established, there is a revenue shift. One of the following scenarios occurs (using school district taxes as an example):

- **THE STATE MAKES UP THE DIFFERENCE.** The \$5.40 school uniform levy is charged against the growth of TIF property. But since the money goes to the TIF district instead of the school, Iowa law requires that state taxes pick up the tab. It looks like the state is putting more money into education when in reality all it is doing is subsidizing local economic development. This year, the state paid an additional \$18 million in state aid to schools to cover the uniform levy that TIF districts didn't pay.
- **OTHER TAXPAYERS MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE.** Many school district levies are based on a specific amount of money. Since the taxes from those levies go to the TIF project, the tax rate of other taxpayers goes up to recover the difference.
- **REVENUES ARE LOST.** In the physical plant and equipment or public education and recreation levies, the levy amounts are limited. If the rate is set at \$1.34, the \$1.34 per \$1,000 of TIF incremental value is not recovered by the school district.

A FREE MARKET STRATEGY TO REDUCE SPRAWL

WHAT: Tax Shift 2000 — towards sustainable renewal of Iowa's cities, towns and farms
WHEN: September 22-23
WHERE: Four Points Sheraton North Hotel, 4800 Merle Hay Road, Johnston

Last year, there was about \$2.6 million in lost TIF revenue for schools from these kinds of levies.

In recent years, the number of TIFs has exploded. Schools are affected directly through residential TIFs because new homes bring new students. Since TIFs exist for ten or more years, the TIF district will not pay local property taxes for schools, mental health care, etc., for a long time.

One other issue is the type of housing that TIF districts were designed to encourage. The law requires that TIFs be used for low and moderate income housing. The half-a-million-dollar homes built in some TIF districts today do not meet that standard.

Lastly, it is often said that without TIF, development within a district would never have occurred. This statement is impossible to verify. Free market forces often prevail. If the growth would have occurred anyway, why should the state and other taxpayers be required to pay more to support lower costs for developers and corporations?

"The law requires that TIFs be used for low and moderate income housing. The half-a-million dollar homes built in some TIF districts today do not meet that standard."

[Margaret Buckton is the Government Relations Director for the Iowa Association of School Boards and can be reached at (515)288-1991 or (800)795-IASB.]

For the Presidential candidate's views on sprawl go to: <http://www.plannersweb.com/candidates2000.html>



TWO IOWA TOWNS VS SUPER WAL-MART

Residents of two northern Iowa cities are resisting efforts to bring **Super Wal-Marts** to their towns. On May 16th, the Mason City City Council denied a developer's appeal to reject zoning changes that would have accommodated the building of a Super Wal-Mart in an industrial park on the city's west side.

Super Wal-mart encountered intense opposition from area businesses and farmers worried about the store's impact on farmland and existing businesses. **1000 Friends'** board member Mary Ellen Miller is one of the local leaders of this effort. "It is a win for Smart Growth," she said. "But it may be temporary. I am sure they will be back with a revised proposal."

[As we go to press with this issue of The Land Use Bulletin, Mary Ellen's quote seems prophetic. Wal-

Mart is back, and the pressure on local officials to capitulate is intense.]

Meanwhile, citizens of Decorah continue to fight plans for a Super Wal-Mart in a flood

Besides **Wal-Mart's** threat to local businesses and propensity to locate on farmland and in flood plains, crime may be an issue. At their new **Super Wal-Mart** store, Ankeny reports a 74% increase over the level of crime at the smaller Wal-Mart that the superstore recently replaced. The problem is so bad that the Ankeny police chief proposes opening a satellite office near the superstore. ♦

plain on the edge of town. They have found a unique ally in a little boat shop. **Upper Iowa Marine Boat Shop** was purchased to make way for a Super Wal-Mart. In April, a local group, Citizens for Responsible Development (CRD) convinced the Board of Adjustments to deny the Upper Iowa Marine Boat Shop a variance to relocate in the flood plain.

CDR continues to fight an uphill battle. Now, the city council is blatantly stacking the membership of the Board of Adjustment in favor of Wal-Mart. They are proposing to replace their current flood plain ordinance with one that would allow Wal-Mart to completely sidestep the Board.

According to CRD member Mark Webber, Decorah is far from saying no to Super Wal-Mart. "Decorah is racing down a slippery slope," he said. "And CRD is swimming up hill all the way." ♦



OUR IOWA CAUCUS PROJECT — A FOOTNOTE

While not nearly as specific as we would prefer, both the Iowa Republican and Democratic party platforms acknowledge the importance of land use issues.

The Iowa Democratic Party platform states: "We support preventing uncontrolled urban sprawl and providing local governments with planning resources."

The Iowa Republican Party platform states: "We believe that no prime agricultural land should be condemned or taken out of production, to be used or acquired for

roads, highways, bridges, nonagricultural businesses, or buildings without the owner's consent."

The Republican platform further states: "We call for changes in the current state law to permit involuntary annexations only when the residents in each of the two areas involved approve the annexation by a dual referendum vote."

Many thanks to all who helped with this project, both in the caucuses and through the party convention process. ♦

1000 Friends of Iowa

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Des Moines, Iowa 50313

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QUOTE THIS: *"Americans are now as concerned about sprawl as they are about crime, according to a new national survey released ...by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism. Eighteen percent of respondents across the country, including 26 percent of those from urban and suburban areas, cited sprawl and traffic as the most serious community problem, over such concerns as crime, education and the economy." (from Grist Magazine, February 2000).*

"The era of a highways-only transportation policy is over."
— Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura referring to the "Moving Minnesota" transportation proposal, which would create a \$245 million multi-modal transportation fund. ♦

NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN DES MOINES

Rapidly rising fuel prices, loss of economic opportunities for workers and farmers, lack of affordable housing for families, and pollution of streams and lakes are some of the challenges facing citizens of Iowa in the new millennium. Tax policy is a powerful tool that, if correctly used, can alleviate these and other social and environmental problems.

Tax Shift 2000 brings together researchers, educators, elected officials and activists from throughout North America who are working for a fundamental restructuring of our system of taxation. This emerging tax reform movement works to shift taxes off labor, housing and business activities and onto the rental value of land. To put it simply, "pay for what you take, not for what you make."

The free market strategy to reduce sprawl includes:

- Ending public subsidies for land speculation and development
- Creating a strategy for urban renewal
- Utilizing land within cities efficiently
- Reducing taxes on production and commerce

If you would like to take part in this year's **Tax Shift 2000** conference, please contact Sue Walton toll free at (888) 262-9015. ♦