



THE LAND USE BULLETIN

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7th Street Green Space Update

Exciting things are afoot on the 1300 block of 7th Street in Des Moines. Thanks to a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1000 Friends of Iowa has been able to play a key role in a project that promises to be a model for communities across the state.

This block has long been a prime example of urban blight, with abandoned homes, vacant lots, a prostitution problem and a general sense of decay and hopelessness. But over the last 18 months, all this has begun to change. Five older homes were moved onto vacant lots this winter and are now being renovated. Two brick apartment buildings are being remodeled as duplexes. A new church has been built on the corner, and construction of a grocery store is well under way one block over.

But a born-again neighborhood is more than just the built environment. That is why, over the past six months, 1000 Friends has shifted its focus to the green spaces connecting the new and renovated structures. In partnership with numerous other local and state organizations, several greening initiatives will be coming to fruition this spring, summer and fall.

- With the cooperation of the Bethel Mission, a large community garden is about to get bigger. HOME, Inc is going to build an attractive picket fence around the perimeter, which will also include a grape arbor on one side and a hedge of berry bushes on the other. A small orchard will grace the northern edge of the site, and will include a staging area for men waiting to visit the Mission for supper and services.
- The Salvation Army is expanding its playground and investing in new equipment. With nine new families moving to the block, this is a wonderful community-building gesture for the entire neighborhood.
- We have been able to connect the home renova-

tor, Community Housing Development Corporation, with Safe Earth Lawn Care, a local company that will put in chemical-free lawns at the five renovated houses.

- With a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 1000 Friends is coordinating a backyard conservation project that will supply 20 homes on the block with flowers, shrubs, bird-baths, birdhouses and other amenities.
- With a grant from MidAmerican Energy, 1000 Friends will be able to buy trees for the parking strip along 7th Street.
- A team including NRCS, Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District, Polk County Extension, and the Polk County Conservation Board has joined forces to address construction site erosion and water quality issues. Over 5,000 cubic yards of compost have been donated by Des Moines Metro Solid Waste to get the lawns in condition for planting. Additional funding is being sought to do green construction along the alley.

Thanks to a great group of partners, the transformation of this one city block is inspiring other improvements throughout the neighborhood. We look forward to giving our members a pictorial view of the project later this year.

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Growin' Times

Pass the hats, please



Ed Fallon

In this fast-paced world, most of us wear a variety of hats. Personally, I like hats. And the challenge of simultaneously sticking a whole bunch on my noggin doesn't usually rile me. But there are days when trying to balance the ten-gallon State Rep hat with the ten-gallon 1000 Friends Executive Director hat is more than this five-gallon head can manage.

Like never before, I'm looking forward to the busy though more balanced life that the months of May through December bring. The legislative session that just ended was, without a doubt, the most grueling I've ever experienced. I attribute this to:

- Redistricting;
- The dismal condition of the state budget;
- A new governor up for his first reelection; and
- An increasingly partisan political process fueled by ever-larger amounts of special-interest money.

All this is in addition to the standard "attractions" of the legislative workplace. No office. Extremely limited storage space. Trying to concentrate in a huge room filled with about 250 other people, about 30% of them chattering at any given time. The ongoing frustration of having a good idea shot down by one person who just happens to be elected by other legislators to something called "leadership".

In my more cogent moments, I wonder why anyone in his right mind would want such a job. But I still believe that, despite all its sloppiness and shortcomings, the legislative process can produce good things. And there is no shortage of good things needing to happen.

From the perspective under my 1000 Friends' ten-gallon hat, Iowa desperately needs a new approach to planning that would rein in urban sprawl and encourage a more responsible development pattern. While this year saw some progress (HF 2567 passed out of the House Local Government Committee 13-7), citizens concerned about sprawl need to become more vocal in their own communities.

Iowa would also benefit from greater state support for redevelopment programs like the State Historic Tax Credits program and the Brownfields fund. Abuses of tax increment financing (TIF) and tax abatement need to be addressed. And the legislature is long overdue for a discussion on how to deal with rural water's growing tendency to enable urban sprawl.

One last idea: More good people need to run for public office. It's amazing how many clueless people get elected to the Iowa Legislature. I should know. I was once one. More important than having a clue is having a heart and a spine. Unfortunately, there are some in the Legislature who worry more about reelection and the favors they owe special interest groups than the well-being of the people of Iowa. So, if you've got a spine, a heart, a strong stomach and a passion to make Iowa a better place to live, give it some thought. I could use a little more company.

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CLAYTON COUNTY SMART GROWTH WORKSHOP discusses land use, water quality and agriculture

Economic development can be compatible with environmental protection, according to Wayne Petersen, an urban conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Protecting the quality of life IS economic development," he said. "If we don't protect the environment, development is not sustainable."

A key to "green" development is to work with the natural resources, rather than try to re-make them, he said. "Design the development to fit the landscape."

Managing the water should be the top priority of that design. "We're all residents of a watershed, and we've all got to take care of our business," he said. When people build on the land and destroy the natural landscape, they normally try to rush the water away, compounding flooding and erosion problems.

"We need to help the run-off *walk* off," he declared. Petersen urged urban residents to strive for keeping 30 per cent of their land in native vegetation. That would go a long way toward capturing the 27,152 gallons of water that falls on every acre during a one-inch rain, he said.

Jay Womack, a landscape architect with the Conservation Design Forum of Elmhurst, Ill., described "bioswales" that allow water to seep into the ground as it flows gradually away from parking lots, porous pavements for parking lots, and perforated diffuser pipes to capture and slowly dissipate water.

Techniques are available to manage water better, Womack said, but people need to be educated about the concept. "Water management is the key to everything," he said. "When it falls on the ground, you've got to be accountable for it."

Stuart Huntington, a community development specialist at Iowa State University, said Iowa loses about 26,000 acres of farmland per year. Most of that is taken up by rural housing, or by highways or other public purposes, such as parks.

One concern in parts of Iowa is the growing number of rural residents who are not farmers. Farmers fear conflicts with neighbors who don't understand or appreciate the dust, odors and noise that may be associated with normal farming operations.

Huntington noted the disturbing trend to develop more housing on rural land away from cities, when there is still plenty of land within city limits that could be developed first. The new developments, which need new utilities and other services, cost more than if they were near existing developments,

he pointed out, and they increase the potential for conflicts with different land users.

Jim Artes, northeast regional representative for the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, said "preserving agriculture as we've known it" should be one of the top priorities for counties in northeast Iowa. That goal is compatible with environmental protection, if farmers, developers and conservationists work together. Farmers need uniform guidelines to be able to com-

pete and plan their business operations.

Artes said he has been assured by the Clayton County Board of Supervisors that Farm Bureau attorneys will be able to examine the county's new comprehensive plan to be certain that it guards agricultural interests. The plan up-date was mandated by the Vision Iowa Board last year, when it awarded a \$5 million grant to the county.

The Smart Growth Workshop was designed to aid in that comprehensive plan revision, and to offer innovative ideas for northeast Iowa developers and governmental agencies. The meeting was sponsored by the Driftless Area Stewardship Council, the Clayton County Farm Bureau, the Clayton County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

- * **Plan development to fit the landscape.**
- * **Manage the water by managing soil health and quality.**
- * **Respect the rights of the community, as well as the rights of the property owner.**
- * **Set goals for future land use, and plan regulations to reach those goals.**
- * **Work with others in the community to protect shared resources.**

That, in short, is "smart growth," according to experts who discussed the concept at a workshop April 8 at Elkader. About 50 community leaders from northeast Iowa participated.

Urban Sprawl May Be Bad for Your Health

Back when neighborhood design encouraged exercise, you walked to the neighborhood store, to school, to the bus stop. Now, sprawling suburbs make walking and bike riding difficult and increase the time you spend in the car. According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this can lead to low exercise rates, obesity and health problems.

Obesity in adults has increased by nearly 60 percent over the last 10 years. CDC reports that one in five American adults is obese, and obesity increases the risk of many illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease. While fast food and soft drinks play a role in increased weights, suburban living also plays a part. People walk less because of designs relying heavily on the automobile. Older neighborhoods are designed to allow a mix of work, entertainment and shopping—all within walking distance. The suburban model of curvy, dead-end streets feeding into high-volume roads segregates schools, homes and shopping malls.

While there is not yet enough evidence to draw hard conclusions, the CDC maintains the data suggests that poor urban design can hurt our health.

excerpted from *State Legislatures*, April 2002.

If you are interested in pursuing the link between sprawl and health, you can find useful sources at <http://www.publichealthgrandrounds.unc.edu/urban/usresources.htm>. In particular, look at the complete report from the CDC: "Creating a Healthy Environment: The Impact of the Built Environment on Public Health," from which this report is taken.

... in the Classroom

Sue Green, a 1000 Friends member and 7-8th grade math teacher in Cedar Falls, found an unusual use for a story in our Fall newsletter. She saw the article on transportation options as an opportunity for her students to apply statistics to real life and a chance for them to think about transportation.

Using the facts we quoted from *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*, Sue designed a worksheet that tested students' understanding of the numbers by asking them to think about how they got to school and whether walking or biking would be an option for them now and when they are older.

Americans devote more than 20 percent of our spending to transportation. Just to cover that, the average American family works from New Year's Day to March 14. No society in history has worked so much just to be able to get around.

www.nytimes.com, 9/3/01,
New York Times, Jerome Segal

"Often people think going by car is the only way to travel," Sue says, "but you can change your mind.

You can set a goal such as biking or walking one day per week or walking every day. In that way, you're better off physically and you help the environment." She designed this lesson to expose her students to the idea that there's another life out there besides always jumping in the car.

Sue and her husband live in the country. Sue's own goal is to run her errands by bicycle one day per week. Her husband bikes the 32-mile round trip to work one day each week. She says, "We both get a lot of satisfaction out of using alternate transportation."

Sue would be happy to share her worksheet with you. Just contact us at kfoi@kfoi.org, and we'll send you a copy. For other environmentally-friendly teaching ideas, check out these websites:

www.cubekc.org The Center for Understanding the Built Environment offers lessons, materials, and workbooks for students K-12 to understand towns and architecture.

www.planning.org/educ/k12gener.htm The American Planning Association provides assistance to those teaching students in grades K-12 about city and regional planning.

NEWS FROM FRIENDS ACROSS IOWA

Great American Main Street Award goes to Cedar Falls



The persistence of a small group of Cedar Falls die-hards was rewarded recently when Cedar Falls was one of five cities recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation with a Great American Main Street Award.

Cedar Falls was hit especially hard in the 1980s when thousands of manufacturing and meat-packing jobs disappeared and the city lost 2,000 residents. From boarded-up shops and vacant streets, downtown Cedar Falls has become such a vibrant center of retail and entertainment activity that finding a parking space is a challenge.

Restored downtown buildings include shops and restaurants and a nearly century-old theater. The city of Cedar Falls has invested in the downtown district with flood-protection and park-improvement projects. Soon construction begins on a new \$7 million downtown library and community center.

The goal of Main Street Iowa is to build attractive and vibrant communities with generous investments of local creativity, capital and commitment. Cedar Falls now takes its place among five other Iowa communities that have received this award: Elkader, Keokuk, Corning, Bonaparte, and Dubuque.

Riverwalk Planned for Des Moines



On March 19, Principal Financial Group unveiled its plan for a loop park along the banks of the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines. Connecting the Botanical Center, Court Avenue district, the new Science Center, and the proposed Iowa Events Center, the plan includes more than a mile of lighted paths, a climbing wall, bridges, landscaping, and a launch site for kayaks and canoes. "I believe this project has the potential to ultimately change the face of Des Moines," said Barry Griswell, Principal's chief executive officer. "Very importantly," he continued, "it will begin the process of connecting east and west and will help us capitalize on one of our great natural resources."

Most of the proposed park sits on city-owned land. The cost is projected to be \$15-\$20 million. Principal plans to chip in \$5-\$10 million and hopes the rest of the project will be paid for with federal and state grants, and perhaps money from the National Park Service.

Construction could begin this year, with the unveiling in 2004 to celebrate Principal's 125th birthday.

Locally Owned Businesses Featured



It's not true that the Mom & Pop business is dead, but a small, local business has a hard time telling its story. Limited resources mean the usual message just gives the essentials: hours, products and prices. Advertising doesn't show the real people involved, how much pride they take in their business, how much commitment they have to the community.

Community-based, grassroots newspapers have a special affinity for this type of business. Their modest advertising prices lead to regular interaction with businesses having small advertising budgets.

Des Moines Press Citizen Shopper publisher, Henry Phillips, said he decided to produce a special

insert featuring locally owned businesses to remind readers of the small businesses in their area. There are hundreds of success stories, lots of pride and personal attention to be had, even in an urban area. Phillips wanted to find a way for local business people to be able to tell their story and how they felt about their business.

The 44-page tabloid inserted into East Side editions of the Des Moines paper goes beyond the usual advertisements. In addition to an ad, each business tells its story in a few paragraphs, and many stories include a photograph or two. "As people come to the cities from rural areas," Phillips said, "they look for a hometown feel." The locally owned business provides a needed familiarity and contact with other people.

Legislative Update

The 2002 legislative session ended April 12th with relatively little progress on land use. **HF 2567** would have set up a planning framework to help cities, counties and average citizens better manage growth, with an eye toward urban revitalization and controlling urban sprawl. The bill passed the House Local Government Committee 13- 7 but was never allowed to come up for a vote by the full House.

The City of Ankeny proposed **SF 2316**, which requires Iowa State University to sell a 1,100-acre research farm inside the city limits. Ankeny argued rightfully that freeing up this land for residential and commercial growth would limit the pressure to

"It's a land ethic thing"

1000 Friends of Iowa welcomes Loren Lown to the Board of Directors

Loren is the Natural Resources Specialist for the Polk County Conservation Board where he works with the restoration of prairie, wetland, and woodland in 10,000 acres of park land in Polk County. He also deals with a great many urban issues, such as soil erosion, water quality, urban wildlife, solid waste, loss of green space, transportation issues.



Loren Lown

Loren attended the University of Iowa, was a construction contractor, then worked for the NRCS prior to coming to Polk County. His commitment to a "land ethic thing" is reflected in memberships in Pheasants Forever, Natural Areas Association, Society for Ecological Restoration, Iowa Archeological Society, Soil and Water Conservation Society, Iowa Native Plant Society, and the Iowa Prairie Network.

Why add 1000 Friends to his many involvements? He's interested in controlling sprawl because, among other things, it ignores watersheds. He sees public values being lost, values such as clean water, clean air, and quiet.

develop farmland outside the city. ISU supported the bill, which is now law.

SF 2207 allows a conservation easement to be used for archaeological or historic purposes. The bill was offered as a way to protect Indian burial grounds at the site of a proposed golf course in Polk City. It also became law.

Under current law, once a parcel of farmland has been platted for development, it can only be taxed at the agricultural value for three years or until it is "improved". Then it is taxed at the residential or commercial rate, which means developers begin to pay more. **HSB 710** proposed to remove the three-year limit. This would have meant a huge windfall for developers and a tax shift to other property owners. A coalition of groups worked with concerned lawmakers to defeat this proposal.

It's important to note that, according to Iowa law, "improved" does not include putting in streets, water lines and sewer lines. In other words, a piece of farmland can "grow" concrete and pipes and still be taxed at the agricultural level! **HSB 710** would have allowed this arrangement to continue indefinitely.

Various proposals to rein in the abuse of **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** failed to move forward. Some pro-growth-at-all-costs interest groups are happy with the subsidy just the way it is, and continue to fight any and all changes.

No summary of land-use legislation would be complete without mention of **SF 2293**, the bill regulating livestock confinement operations. The 69-page bill that became law is very complicated and an attempt to appease both sides of the issue. Details can be found on the web at www.iowahouse.org. Since the bill is phased in over five years, it may be some time before we know whether or not it achieves any positive re-

*Responsible land use
today
means greater food security
tomorrow.*

TOWNS VERSUS SPRAWL

Traditional towns

For more than 6,000 years of recorded history, up to the 1950s in America, most people either lived on the farm or in cities, villages, and towns. From the smallest hamlet to the largest city, towns shared five characteristics:

- ✓ **They were compact:** In 1819, the year Queen Victoria was born, London was the largest city in the world with 800,000 residents. Yet people on the city's fringes were only five miles from the center of the city. That's little more than an hour's walk.
- ✓ **There was a clear distinction between city and country:** At the edge of a city or town was a clear boundary where the countryside began. There were no houses or restaurants stretched along the highways between villages, and no isolated developments scattered among farms and forests.
- ✓ **There was a mixture of functions:** Houses, stores, public buildings, workplaces, taverns, schools and parks were interspersed. There were no zones given over exclusively to one function.
- ✓ **Most people lived within walking distance of work:** In even the largest cities, most people lived less than a mile — a 15-minute walk — from where they worked. Many artisans and professionals such

as doctors and lawyers lived in the same house where they worked.

- ✓ **The best homes were closest to the center:** The most fashionable people of any city or town lived closest to the center, where the palaces and churches and best stores were located. This is still often true in Europe, South America, and many other areas of the world.

Sprawl

Starting in the late 1940s, America embarked on a new development pattern that is generally known as sprawl. The widespread availability of the car and massive highway building projects made it possible to build any kind of building anywhere. Some of the major characteristics of sprawl are:

- ✓ **It is spread out:** Homes, stores, schools and offices are placed on large plots of land far away from each other. This requires people to use cars for every activity. Each home has an off-street parking area; other buildings, like offices or stores, have parking lots.
- ✓ **Buildings are grouped together by function in one area:** Separate areas are required for each kind of building. Houses are in one area; stores are grouped together in another area, usually in malls or strip commercial highways; manufacturing plants are located in another area; and office buildings are in yet another area.
- ✓ **Buildings are placed at random over the landscape:** There is no pattern to sprawl. Homes, stores, schools, and offices can be found anywhere, connected only by the nearest highway.
- ✓ **Separation of people by income:** The homes of wealthy people are usually in different areas from the homes of middle class people. The poor often live in towns, usually in older neighborhoods or public housing projects.

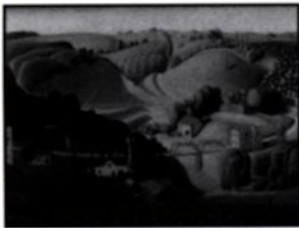
excerpted from *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*,
Bullfrog Films, Oley, Pa.

ANIMAL CONFINEMENTS SPUR LOCAL ACTION

Controlling the proliferation of Confinement Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOS) can be not so much a zoning issue as a matter of interest to the county Board of Health. Worth and Palo Alto Counties have enacted health-related ordinances. Adair County is one of seven Iowa counties which have enacted a moratorium on CAFOS while they consider the economical, environmental and social impact of CAFOS in the county.

Jay Howe, a Greenfield lawyer and 1000 Friends board member, was instrumental in producing Adair County's moratorium. He says the moratorium was "the result of neighborhood people organizing and leading out on issues of health and quality of life." He pointed out that "it was a classic case of property owners defending their rights; in this instance, to quiet and peaceable enjoyment of their homes and farms." He credits the coordinated efforts of individuals with encouraging the county to act.

Do you have an idea for a story? Is something happening in your area that other Friends would like to know about? Is there an event in your area pertaining to land use that you would like to publicize for free? The *Land Use Bulletin* is available for any of our members to suggest articles, announcements, or photos. Contact us at kfoi@kfoi.org or call 515-288-5364 by May 31 for the next issue.



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*urban sprawl may be bad for
your health.... details inside.*

If it's summer in Iowa, there must be a Farmers' Market around here somewhere

The longest running Farmers' Market in Iowa opens May 4 in Davenport. Located in the City Hall area, this 157 year old market operates 7 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

In Des Moines, the Drake Neighborhood Farmers' Market begins its sixth season Wednesday, June 5. The market features Iowa-grown produce, locally baked goods, on-site prepared foods, flowers, plants, and crafts. The Market is IFMNP/WIC certified, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition checks are accepted. The Market is a certified Food Stamp retailer, and any vendor at the Market can accept Food Stamps for qualified purchases. This non-profit, community project is sponsored by the Drake Neighborhood Association, Drake University, and First Christian Church.

To find the Farmers' Markets in your area, check out the Department of Agriculture web site at www.agriculture.state.ia.us. Click on "Directories" then "Farmers Market Directory" to see Farmers' Markets listed by county.