



THE LAND USE BULLETIN

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Getting Around

Our transportation infrastructure has a huge effect on how growth occurs, and how people relate to each other and their community. We could write volumes on the subject, but here are just a few thoughts that might help you find your way to additional information.

A Runway to Sprawl. In a new piece from the Elm Street Writers Group, Jane Holtz Kay reports that "a nation of nervous travelers has yet to contemplate the knee-quaking environmental and urban consequences of our fly-drive society, including growing sprawl around airports." Kay asserts that runaway airport expansion has resulted in "airport city phenomena."

Airport sprawl isn't just the clutter of huge terminals. It's also the roads and parking lots for flyers and workers, the clogged eight and ten-lane freeways, the airport-convenient conference halls and hotels that suck business from downtown. Airports far from city centers deaden the urban communities they draw from as they expand outward at mega-scale.

A Reawakening for Rail. In an earlier piece, Kay wrote about the reawakening for rail. With airlines in the red and road warriors stuck on jammed highways, many are "sounding the anthem for a renaissance in rail," she wrote. Amtrak ridership rose four percent in January, while domestic airlines went down 14 percent. Light rail lines are getting longer. And both light and heavy rail lines grow from coast to coast. New transit-oriented develop-

ments in Sacramento, Portland, and other cities are centering around trolley lines that run through the heart of shopping, office, and residential districts.

*This entire essay is at
[www.mlui.org/projects/
growthmanagement/
elmstreet/holtzrail.asp](http://www.mlui.org/projects/growthmanagement/elmstreet/holtzrail.asp)*

Kay calls rail the "environmental panacea that sustains our lives and landscapes and promotes walkability, stopping the spread that destroys 1.2 million acres of farmland and 60,000 acres of wetland per year."

Biking to Work. In Iowa, there are hundreds of miles of recreational trails, but few safe ways to get to and from work on a bicycle. Bike lanes and city trails generally don't run on the busier roads where they're most needed. And once a bicyclist gets to work, there are often no accommodations to clean up after the ride.

The general public is becoming more vocal on this issue, and on the need for safer sidewalks for pedestrian traffic. But as is often the case, policy makers and other leaders are slow to adjust. If you know of any success stories in your own city, we'd like to hear about it.

To jump-start your thinking on the connection between transportation and sprawl, look at the Michigan Land Use Institute (MLUI) website to see what's happening in Michigan. www.mlui.org/html/keyissues/transportation.html

*See Kay's essay at
[www.mlui.org/projects/
growthmanagement/elmstreet/
holtzairport.asp](http://www.mlui.org/projects/growthmanagement/elmstreet/holtzairport.asp)*

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The Big Picture

Stop Treating that Soil Like Dirt

When I filled in this month to coordinate the work at the Community Baptist Church, a part of the Seventh Street Revitalization Project, I never imagined that I'd end up being the dump truck driver. But I did. As this project started, I grabbed the opportunity to incorporate everything I had ever learned about urban conservation, water quality and construction site erosion. The first step was to assemble a team of professionals that were willing to lend us their expertise. The only payment we could offer was for this project to serve as a statewide model. That seemed to work.

The Community Baptist Church is the first of eight construction sites on the block that 1000 Friends will coordinate landscaping using urban conservation efforts and many native plantings.

While planting 171 native prairie plants, I remembered my grandma telling about traveling across Iowa from Black Hawk County to Pocahontas in a covered wagon through a sea of grass. What would Grandma, who was born in 1879, have to say about me planting 17 different species of native prairie plants in mulched beds with landscaping fabric? The prairie plants, with their deep root system, will help rain water penetrate the compacted soils--a small dent in downstream flood management.

It may seem like a small dent, but those little rain drops add up. An inch of rain falling on a acre of land produces 27,154 gallons of water. If you received 32 inches of rainfall a year and captured it all in 50 gallon rain barrels, you'd have six and one half miles of rain barrels. Today's trend of asphaltting parking lots, roads, driveways and playgrounds sends all the water that would have soaked into the soil down a storm sewer and into the closest body of water. As a response to that, our project tries to allow the soils left to infiltrate as much water as possible.

The big lesson learned here is that for over a century we've been treating our urban soils like dirt. The topsoil is stripped off, the clay is compacted until it is like cement, and then we finish up by applying a roll of bluegrass sod that has no root structure and has to be watered continually to remain green. Watering lawns wastes time, money and resources. Directing rainfall straight to the storm sewer instead of allowing it to infiltrate into the soil and be stored in an aquifer is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars and environmentally damaging. We've been very successful with conservation efforts on agriculture land in the past 50 years. Hopefully, demonstration sites such as Seventh Street will call attention to the fact that we should be giving urban soils the same attention, holding folks accountable and gleaning the monetary and environmental benefits.



LaVon Griffieon

Welcome, Michelle

The Life in Iowa intern working at 1000 Friends this summer is an Iowa native. Originally from Ankeny, Michelle Arney now lives in Ames, where she will start her third year at Iowa State University this fall.



Michelle is majoring in Public Service & Administration, but is considering a change to Journalism & Mass Communication with an emphasis on public relations. Her goal is to help other people better themselves.

When she is not making baked goods, working in food service at the Green Hills Retirement Community, or roller blading around Ames, Michelle enjoys talking with her twin sister.

At 1000 Friends this summer, Michelle will be helping with the Buy Local Directory and Farma-Save signs.

Life in Iowa Program: The Experience of Place

The Life in Iowa program contains two components: classroom and community. The objective is to nurture the art of living well in place and to contribute to a sustainable quality of life in communities throughout Iowa. The program involves on-campus coursework and a community-immersion experience with a summer internship and a community service practicum.

Before beginning their internship, students complete a one-semester course in which they examine life in Iowa in depth. As one Life in Iowa student wrote recently, "I have learned more about Iowa in this program than I have throughout my entire life.... There are so many more opportunities here in Iowa than I ever thought existed."

One desire of the program is that students will be encouraged to remain in Iowa after graduation. Wherever they eventually live, however, they will be more effective, empathetic and responsible citizens because of their Life in Iowa experience.

For information about including your community in the *Life in Iowa* program, contact Nancy Bevin at (515) 294-1322 or nbevin@iastate.edu.

Debunking the Wal-Mart Mythology

At \$220 billion a year, Wal-Mart is now the world's largest corporation.

The "Wal-Mart family" has a turnover rate ranging from 50-300%. Many stores replace 100% of their employees each year.

They buy American—Wal-Mart buys \$10 billions of Chinese-made products, more than any other corporation. Wal-Mart does not release the names or locations of its Chinese factories, so no one can see its "code of conduct" in practice. By shifting their orders to the factories with the lowest wages, longest hours and no health enforcement, Wal-Mart continues to lower living standards in China.

They create jobs in the communities in which they locate—When considering the local businesses that shut down due to the impossible competition, communities lose 3 jobs for every 2 that Wal-Mart creates.

70% of Wal-Mart "associates" work full time—"Full time" is 28 hours a week, meaning an average employee grosses \$15,000 a year.

... But they provide health care benefits—only

for employees who have worked there at least 2 years. Then the premiums are so high that few can afford health care insurance. Only 38% of employees are covered.

Well at least they are an Equal Employment Opportunity company—The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission states that it has filed more suits against Wal-Mart for disability discrimination than any other corporation. They are also a repeat offender of workers' compensation laws, child labor laws (1,400 in Maine alone) and employee surveillance.

Wal-Mart is also notoriously anti-union. In 2000, meat-cutters working for the Jacksonville, Texas, store signed union cards and voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers. Eleven days later, Wal-Mart announced it was closing all its meat cutting departments and would purchase prepackaged meat.

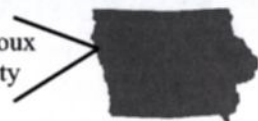
How much are we willing to pay for Wal-Mart's "low-price" model?

"How Wal-Mart is remaking our world",
The Hightower Lowdown, Vol. 4, No. 4, April 2002

NEWS FROM FRIENDS ACROSS IOWA

Civic Partners Project in Sioux City

Sioux
City



In a move that encourages infill rather than sprawl, Sioux City has contracted with the Civic Partners company to develop a hotel/theater complex in a 2 square block area next to the city's historic district, just off downtown.

The object is to bring people into the area and liven up the streetscape. The project includes a 16-screen theater and lots of retail. While most of the project is new construction in vacant areas or parking lots, one warehouse will be rehabilitated into apartments.

For more information, contact Patty Heagel, the city's economic development director, at (712) 279-6345.

An item in the Land Use Bulletin shares news from your area with all the members of 1000 Friends of Iowa.

Cooperation Works in Loess Hills

Glenwood



The "smart design" practices being proposed for a new subdivision north of Glenwood will benefit both developers and preservationists. Preservationists have learned there is a difference between good and bad development. Developers have learned they can do things a bit differently and still make a profit. Both have learned that cooperation benefits everyone and is more effective than warfare.

The hills of fragile loess soil run along the western Iowa border from Sioux City to Missouri. For years, business and preservation interests have tried to find a balance there. Neither developers nor environmentalists can afford bad press and ill will.

"Smart design" practices come out of a positive approach, in which people with different perspectives on development and environment work together. This differs from the combative approach that is the stereotype.

Dickinson County Water Quality Commission First in the State

Dickinson
County



It's less than one year old and the first one in the state, but already other counties are interested in the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission. "Water is so important in this state," one resident explained, "in Dickinson County, home of the Iowa Great Lakes, but also in the rest of the state because we have so much farmland with chemicals that affect the aquifers." And the Commission is crucial because it can make decisions based on watershed boundaries, not political boundaries.

The commission has allocated \$100,000 its first year to use for projects having to do with water. The money will be collected from members according to their property values. The largest portion comes from the county. Okoboji and Spirit Lake, the county's largest cities, will ante up a large portion, and small municipalities will pay proportionately smaller portions. How they get the money is up to each municipality, with a hotel/motel tax, for example, or an assessment on water bills. Anyone interested in using some of the money submits a proposal for funding. Watershed assessment and mapping projects are examples of projects funded this year. During the rest of the 7 year agreement, the Commission will have \$200,000 per year to fund water projects.

Establishing the commission (through a 28E agreement with the state) required the unanimous support of the county and all municipalities in the county. A city can pull out of the commission at any time, only needing to fulfill obligations already in place (multi-year projects, for example).

For more information, contact Steve Anderson, coordinator of the Clean Water Alliance, at (712) 336-3782, ext. 3, or Steven.Anderson@ia.usda.gov.

NEWS FROM FRIENDS ACROSS IOWA



Cedar Rapids/
Linn County

Landfill Proposed Near Linn County's First Settlement

The Cedar Rapids and Linn County waste management agency, Bluestem, proposes to create a new landfill on 500 acres 25 miles from the metro Cedar Rapids area and less than a mile away from the Village of Viola, the first settlement in Linn County. This area is recognizable as the inspiration for the artist Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing."

Linn County's largest contiguous county-owned park, Matsell Bridge Natural Area, and the Wapsipinicon River are just over one-half mile away. The park provides habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species, and the Wapsi has become one of Iowa's cleanest rivers. Some feel that building a landfill in this site would allow a living piece of Iowa history and culture to be erased from the landscape. Furthermore, since landfill liners are not guaranteed for the duration of the landfill life, and because there are creeks and watersheds flowing through the property into the Wapsipinicon River, leachate escaping from the landfill could pollute not only the private wells of the surrounding residents, but also the Wapsipinicon River and downstream communities.

The proposed site has ranked best in Bluestem's engineering analysis. While Linn County does need a waste management program that is safe, cost effective and environmentally responsible, opponents say this proposed project is none of those things.

You can contact Matsell Area Preservation and Protection, Incorporated (MAPP), a non-profit organization, via e-mail to kevburke@netins.net, to learn more about this new landfill. To contact Bluestem, call (319) 398-5160.

Land is our most precious heritage.

—Robert West Howard
The Vanishing Land

Downtown Perry Revitalized



Perry

A redevelopment plan being finalized in Perry focuses on the city's history and on being pedestrian-friendly. The \$25,000 plan was created by Martin Shukert, a city planner and landscape designer with Renaissance Design Group of Omaha. He sees tremendous potential and opportunity in the growing community.

The redesign attempts to draw shoppers and visitors to downtown by highlighting Perry's history as a railroad hub and improving traffic flow.

Jordan Creek Mall Lawsuit



West Des
Moines

Earlier this year, 1000 Friends agreed to be a plaintiff on a lawsuit seeking an injunction against construction of interchanges that would create access to the proposed Jordan Creek Mall. Mall proponents have indicated the mall would not be built without the \$9 million subsidy needed for the interchanges.

West Des Moines estimates that the proposed mall and its surrounding stores will absorb 60% of the regional retail capacity over the next 20 years for 15 central-Iowa counties. The location's remoteness and the inability of low-income people to access the mall will harm the urban core of Des Moines long after those first 20 years are over.

The lawsuit focuses on a document called an Environmental Assessment (EA), which by law must examine not only a project's effect on the natural environment but on the social environment as well. Rather than address the project's impact on the entire region, the EA limited its analysis to a few affluent areas immediately adjacent to the interchanges.

Plaintiffs contend that before proceeding further on these projects, federal authorities should conduct a comprehensive, region-wide analysis of the proposed interchange projects and resultant commercial development. The lawsuit should be resolved this summer.

The hidden potential in the 1300 block of 7th Street in Des Moines ...



This house had been empty for many years, but...



...this was the scene in June. The family moving in was "so excited" to be able to buy a home in the neighborhood.



Metro Waste Authority donated 15 truck loads of compost. LaVon and Craig Griffieon hauled and unloaded it at the Community Baptist Church.



Wayne Peterson, Urban Conservationist with NRCS, Harold Downs, Construction Manager for Community Housing Development Corp., and LaVon Griffieon examine prairie plants.

This soil is ready to plant!



Evaluating the soil at the church are Jennifer Welch, Urban Environmental Conservationist at URBAN (Urban Resources & Borderland Alliance Network), Harold Downs (bending), and Wayne Peterson. Warren Jensen, of Safe Earth Lawn & Garden Care, got to work immediately.

...comes to life through many dynamic partnerships.



Next door sits one of the houses moved into the neighborhood. What was a vacant lot, filled with parked cars and junk, is now this home's yard.

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 to redevelop the hidden potential within communities across the state.

Developing our urban and small-town neighborhoods is key to preventing urban sprawl. For redevelopment projects to be sustainable, all elements of community life need to be addressed, including housing, green space, transportation, and commercial and retail opportunities. We're finding that a strong group of partners is the key to success.



Ed Fallon, LaVon Griffieon and Guy Brace of Lutheran Brotherhood plant oak and redbud trees at the Community Baptist Church...

...and eight flats of annuals and perennials wait their turn for planting by the entrance to the church.



To recognize National Homeownership Month and share the exciting things happening on 7th Street, the Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDC) held an open house on June 11. CHDC moved five houses onto 7th Street to make way for a new grocery store in the neighborhood.

Pictured is Carol Bower (of CHDC) receiving an award from HUD for her work in promoting home ownership in Des Moines. Next to Carol is Bill McNarney of the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), presenting the award, and Chris Hensley, Des Moines City Council.



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*Finding the hidden potential
of a neglected neighborhood.
...details inside*

Distribution of Local Business Directory Begins

Uncle Sam himself will accompany volunteers door-to-door on Des Moines' north side, delivering the Parks Area Local Business Directory to residents and telling them why shopping locally is so important.

The directory is 14 pages long and lists over 50 local businesses. It features descriptions of Parks Area attractions and information on why we should support independent business. The directory also provides information on how to find local businesses in your community, why buying locally grown food is good for us and our communities, and the problems caused by big-box stores.

With the help of volunteers, the Parks Area directory will be delivered to every household in the Highland, Oak and Union Park neighborhoods in Des Moines. That's 6,500 directories! So, if you'd like to help, we could sure use you. And if you'd like a copy of the directory, stop by our office or contact us by phone or mail and we'll send one out to you right away.

