



# THE LAND USE BULLETIN

Summer, 2005 / Issue 61

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## Taking Steps toward Responsible Land Use

**F**or four days in June, several communities in Iowa took big steps toward becoming more walkable.

Ankeny, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, and Waterloo hosted visits from Dan Burden of Walkable Communities, Inc. In each community, Burden walked a neighborhood or street that had been selected by the community, took pictures, and made recommendations about how to make it more walkable.

The visits were sponsored and coordinated by 1000 Friends of Iowa as part of our initiative to **promote a balanced transportation system that gives people choices about how to get where they need to go.** 1000 Friends has chosen to focus on transportation because “development follows the pipe” — whether that’s sewer, water mains, or a road. The kinds of roads we build determine how the land is used — divided freeways use acres of farm ground and create car-

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and higher densities  
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and greater vitality.*

dependent, low-density strip development. On the other hand, communities that have focused on human-scale neighborhood streets with a mix of residential and commercial uses and higher densities experience less sprawl and greater vitality.

During his visit, Dan pointed out that “Healthy neighborhood streets give people a chance to walk, bike, drive, and interact. Such streets pump life into neighborhoods, making them more pleasant places to live. Slowing traffic on neighborhood streets can often raise

— Dan Burden

property values 10–15%. Many solutions are quite simple and highly affordable. For instance, using paint to narrow lanes, adding bike lanes, and planting trees are simple strategies that can often create big benefits.”

**Bob Miklo**, Senior Planner with the City of Iowa City, said, “The walk itself was beneficial as a way to get the property owners involved in thinking about

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(Left to right) Dan admires David Deeds’ neo-traditional residential development in downtown Waterloo as Ed Ottesen, an architect from Struxture Architects and the Main Street Waterloo Design Council Chair, and Terry Poe Buschkamp, executive director of Main Street Waterloo, look on.



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*The mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa  
is to promote  
responsible development that:*

•  
*conserves and protects our  
agricultural and natural resources*

•  
*revitalizes our  
neighborhoods, towns and cities*

•  
*improves the quality of life  
for future generations*

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# GROWIN' TIMES Changes

by Laura Belin

I am excited to be part of the changes at **1000 Friends of Iowa**, and I want to tell you about what brought me to this organization and what keeps me committed to its work.



Growing up in the Des Moines suburbs, I thought little about land use or planning policies. My awareness grew during the 15 years that I lived, studied and worked outside Iowa. Each time I returned to visit family and friends, I was dismayed to see more and more farmland outside Des Moines disappearing, even as residential and commercial properties in once-thriving neighborhoods were vacant. Many times I looked forward to visiting a favorite locally-owned restaurant or shop, only to find that since my last trip home it had been displaced by large chains.

I first heard about **1000 Friends of Iowa** in connection with its Buy Local campaign almost five years ago. When my husband and I moved back to Iowa to start a family in 2002, I jumped at the chance to become more involved. The three years I have spent on our Board have deepened my commitment to our mission.

At a time when urban and rural interests are often pitted against each other, I hope that a central message of **1000 Friends** will reach more Iowans: policies that promote vibrant cities and towns go hand-in-hand with policies that preserve working farms. Both help create the kind of communities that Iowans of all ages will want to stay in, or come home to.

Finally, I want to say a few words of thanks to our legendary outgoing president, LaVon Griffieon, who will be one tough act to follow. As I like to say, LaVon has forgotten more about land-use issues than I will ever know! Fortunately, **1000 Friends** will still be able to tap her wisdom and expertise. Her energy and creative thinking will inspire me to learn more and to do more.

Meanwhile, I look forward to hearing from our members across the state, not only about land-use concerns in your communities, but also about your hopes for **1000 Friends** during this time of growth.



continued from page 1

possibilities for development and pedestrian improvements along Riverside Drive.”

Several members appreciated Dan’s perspectives and are already using them to improve their communities. Ames Smart Growth reports that **Jim Murdock** has been trying to explain some of Dan’s walkable community concepts to the City Council.

**Vern Jackson** wrote, “Congratulations on selecting the right person to present the right information to the right audience at a very good time. I feel that the information and communications that

***If a city  
isn’t walkable,  
it’s not drivable either.  
When a city is  
walkable and drivable,  
we can start having fun  
in our cars again – and  
you can take that  
any way you want to.***

— Dan Burden

took place in Cedar Rapids during the week of June 5th will have a greater impact on improved community transportation planning than anything that has taken place before.”

A group of concerned residents in Cedar Rapids, led by **Richard and Diane Luther**, **George and Janelle McClain**, and others, has submitted a proposal to the Iowa Great Places initiative to make First Avenue the centerpiece of Cedar Rapids as a Great Place. Their proposal incorporates some of Dan’s ideas and requests funds to bring him back for a design charette.

We hope the learning will continue!



Above left: In a very rainy beginning to his Iowa journey, Burden recommends that Ankeny require on-street parking in subdivisions to slow traffic and alleviate the need for 3 car garages. A four-lane divided highway with an interstate-style intersection separates this residential neighborhood from the rest of town and is not appropriate for children to cross, so IDOT’s cooperation would be required to change the design specifications and speed limit. Burden also recommended adding crosswalks throughout town.

Below left: John Peterson, Director of Community Development, demonstrates back-in angle parking in Ankeny. On-street parking improves traffic flow and requires 30% less space per car than parking lots. Back-in angle parking is safer for drivers and pedestrians (the trunk and car doors open towards the sidewalk, providing easier and safer access for passengers).



Center: Dan Burden explains a recommendation to Cedar Rapids Streets Commissioner Don Thomas and a KCRG reporter. Dave Elgin, City Engineer, is in the background.

Above right (left to right): **Bob Miklo**, 1000 Friends board member **Jim Throgmorton**, and **Jeff Davidson**, transportation planner, listen as Dan explains how Riverside Drive could be made more walkable through mixed-use development that capitalizes on the area’s proximity to the river and recreational trails.

Below right: Dan Burden presents his suggestions for Cedar Rapids’ First Avenue to a packed audience, including Founding Friends **Richard and Diane Luther** (2nd row, 2nd and 3rd from right) at St. Matthew’s Catholic Church. Dan recommended a median, turning pockets, and intersection improvements to make First Avenue safer and more functional. It should not be widened for a long time — if ever. The Regional Planning Commission recently approved a concept for widening First Avenue to 7 lanes.



# Meet More Friends of Iowa

COMMITTED TO SOLVING LAND-USE ISSUES IN OUR STATE

**O**ur members  
make our  
work possible!

**YOU** make  
1000 Friends of Iowa  
what it is, so in this  
issue we've started  
highlighting member  
names in our reports —  
if we miss yours,  
please let us know  
so we can correct it!

## Leighty Challenge Met

Thanks to these new  
Founding Friends,  
we met a challenge from the  
Leighty Foundation,  
which matched  
the first ten new contributors  
at the \$100 level  
with an additional \$200.

Thanks  
to the Leighty Foundation  
and our new  
Founding Friends!

Flavia G. Bachel Living Trust/Susan G. Roupe  
Diane Goodson  
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**Contributors to 1000 Friends of Iowa,  
March 15–July 1, 2005**

*Thanks to these supporters who make our work possible.*

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**(\$5,000 +)**

Iowa Foundation for Education  
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### **Sustaining Friend**

**(\$1,000–\$4,999)**

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**(\$250–\$499)**

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Florence & William Boos

Our thanks to Koch Brothers and Susan  
Koch Bridgford for generously donating  
the design of the Land Use Bulletin

**\*\* Additional contributors are  
listed under "Annual Meeting  
Sponsors"**



# 1000 Friends of Iowa ANNUAL MEETING A GREAT SUCCESS

Nearly 60 people attended 1000 Friends of Iowa's annual meeting — so many that we began to worry whether we would have enough Iowa-grown lunches for everyone. No one went hungry, however, and everyone seemed to enjoy the speakers, the awards, the music of the Barn Owl Band, and the walking tour of Somerset Village.

Many thanks to Erv Klaas for the many hours he spent to make the annual meeting such a success!

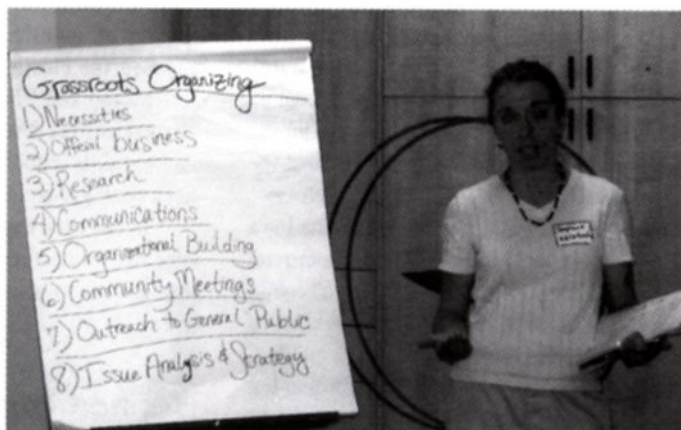
Sponsors of Dan Burden's visit and the annual meeting include:

## **Individuals**

Laura Belin  
Dale R. Edwards  
Fritz & Susan Franzen  
Richard & Diane Luther  
Tricia Lyman  
George & Janelle McClain  
John Morrissey  
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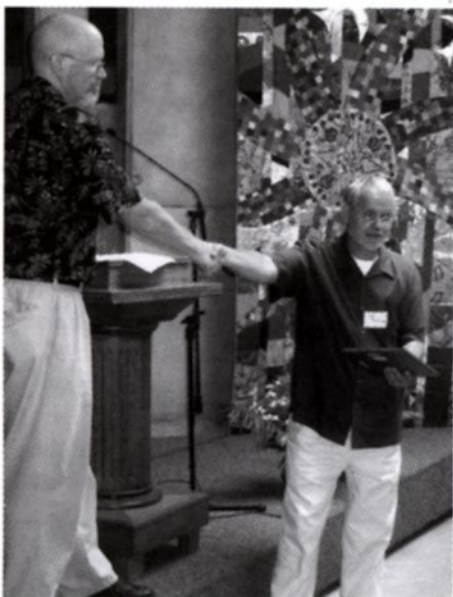
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(Left) 1000 Friends Consultant Stephanie Weisenbach explains the principles of grassroots organizing to a breakout session.

(Below left) LaVon joins in the discussion of "Land Use 101."

(Below) Dan Burden talks with Joe Van Ginkel at the reception.

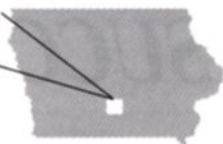


(Far left) Board member Jim Throgmorton presents a Best Development Award to incoming board member Dale McKinney in the Renovated Residential category for converting a historic department store into the Van Allen Place apartments in Clinton.

(Left) Members of the Barn Owl Band (as heard on Prairie Home Companion) provided toe-tappin' entertainment at the after-meeting reception at the Somerset Village Clubhouse.



Polk County



## SE Polk: RURAL WATER

Rural landowners in eastern Polk County are being asked by county officials to agree to become an Urban Renewal Area. Once that happens, county officials can leverage bonding capacity to use property tax funds to join with Des Moines Water Works in buying SE Polk Rural Water. Rural residents are being promised a 50% reduction in water rates and no increase in taxes while residents countywide are being asked to pay for the bond extension for 20 more years. Skeptical residents have noticed the designated area is also home to the proposed NE Polk County Beltway.

An Urban Renewal Area is defined in Chapter 403.2 of the Iowa Code as necessary to assist and retain local industries and commercial enterprises to strengthen and revitalize the economy. This doesn't sound like a plan for preserving the rural heritage the residents sought when moving there. Once the property has been designated part of an Urban Renewal Area, it is one step closer to becoming a TIF district and the Board of Supervisors can amend its urban renewal plan at any time to reflect a new vision.

This proposal appears to be laying the groundwork for public subsidies to promote growth along an unneeded road that is in the study stage—it appears to have very little to do with cheaper water rates for rural customers.

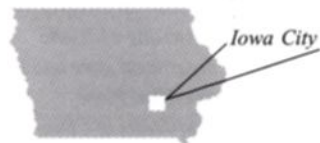
## Newton: SPEEDWAY QUESTIONS

*Submitted by Marvin Woods*

Despite the fact that building plans have not been submitted and building permits have not been issued, the US Motorsport Corporation began breaking ground to build a 7/8ths mile long speedway adjacent to the Newton airport on what was once 225 acres of agricultural land.

The speedway's questionable financing was brought to light during the legislative debate, but seemed to carry no weight with either state or city decision makers and a bill was still passed to give the speedway a \$12.5 state sales tax rebate.

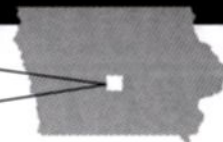
However, the Newton City Council recently requested that proof of the speedway's loan closure must be forthcoming before July 11th in order for the city to continue to finance the traffic study and road engineering work. In late breaking news, NASCAR officials have clarified that they have no affiliation with the track other than the fact that one of their drivers is designing it.



## Iowa City: SMART ZONING

The Planning and Zoning Commission held another hearing to receive public comments about the proposed new zoning ordinance on June 27. The new code would promote infill and higher density development. Several members of 1000 Friends of Iowa spoke in support of the new code, while many members of the development community opposed it. Iowa City members are encouraged to watch for details about the next hearing, which should take place in mid-August, and speak up for good development.

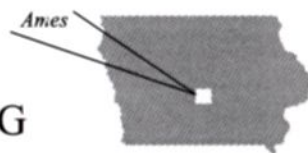
Ames



## Ames: WHY JOHNNY CAN'T WALK TO SCHOOL

Ames Smart Growth reports that the city is currently waiting on a response from the developer regarding comments the city made on a proposed contract. However, that response has been delayed for a number of months. Ames Smart Growth members unsuccessfully opposed the closing of two neighborhood elementary schools — Northwood and Roosevelt. Another school may be closed next year. There is a direct development connection to the closings, as Ames built a new middle school on the south edge of town and moved all of the city's sixth graders to the new location.

To see the report, *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School*, for more information on the impact of poor community planning on school children, go to [www.nationaltrust.org/issues/schoolsrpt.pdf](http://www.nationaltrust.org/issues/schoolsrpt.pdf).



## Boone County: TEST OF ZONING ORDINANCE

Boone County citizens concerned about a proposed gravel pit outside the residential community of Moingona presented at a Board of Adjustment meeting on July 14. **Terry and Jill Friend** worked with residents who believe that the project does not meet the criteria for a conditional use permit due to concerns about traffic, safety, and the integrity of archaeological sites. This is the first test of Boone County's 1999 zoning ordinance, and residents want to protect its integrity.

In other Boone County news, **Kim Houlding** has been selected to participate in the committee that will revise the comprehensive plan. Earlier this year, Kim organized her neighbors to prevent a rural subdivision from being built miles from town.



## McGregor: POOR PLANNING

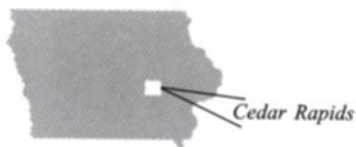
*Submitted by Tim Mason*

Residents of Clayton County have been active for four years to halt a poorly planned development by River Bluff Resort, LLC. The developers have publicly stated that construction will begin in July of this year on River Bluff Resort, which is planned to include a hotel, water park, restaurant, golf course and a private gated housing community. Located three miles west of McGregor and Marquette, utility service will need to be run from these towns.

The entire project will be funded leveraging the borrowing power of a \$20 million TIF bond, issued (without legal opinion) to the California developer last November by Clayton County. After an infusion of new money from California investors, four Iowa farmers have been paid for their real estate as development begins.

Two legal actions are pending: the developer filed a SLAPP lawsuit against members of Concerned Citizens of Clayton County, which in turn counter-sued.



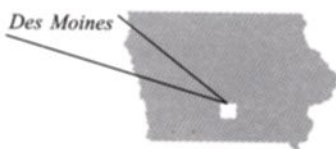


## Cedar Rapids: WIDENING FIRST AVENUE

Galvanized by the Regional Planning Commission's approval of a concept to widen First Avenue from five to seven lanes, residents and business owners along the street have stepped forward to push for better transportation and design options.

Richard and Diane Luther, Brian Fagan of Moyer and Bergman, George and Janelle McClain of Cornerhouse Gallery and frame, Joy Ochs, Marian Ahrens, 1000 Friends of Iowa, and others have participated in public meetings or submitted comments on the Long Range Transportation Plan.

In addition, residents have submitted a proposal that First Avenue be designated an Iowa Great Place.



## Des Moines: TEMPLE SITE RAISES ISSUES

Some residents of the Lower Beaver neighborhood are concerned about a proposal to annex green space located on a bend in the river behind their homes. Tai Dam immigrants purchased the property a number of years ago to build a temple, sacred water and forest, and housing. Now fundraising concerns are causing the Tai Dam to consider selling part of the property for residential development in order to finance their own construction project. Neighbors have concerns about additional traffic, the destruction of green space, and making sure the development is appropriate to an infill project.

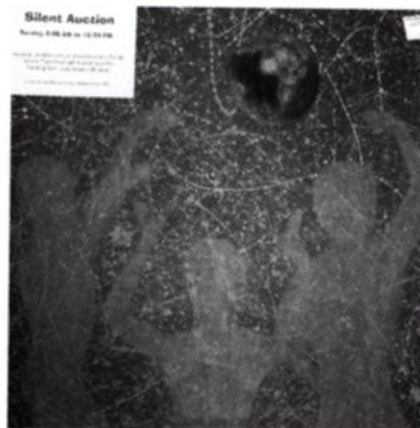
# 713 DOWN... 287 TO GO!

*Time is running out to become a Founding Friend!*

The Board of Directors of 1000 Friends of Iowa has made a commitment to reach 1000 Founding Friends by the end of 2005.

Founding Friends are those who support the organization's work with \$100 each year, and have done so at least once. So far this year, we have 30 new Founding Friends. If you're a past or present member who is not yet a Founding Friend, you should be receiving a letter and a phone call from a board member asking you to renew or become a Founding Friend. ***We hope you'll be able to help!***

All new Founding Friends through the end of 2005 will receive a free CD compilation of resources related to Smart Growth! Recruit a new supporter as a Founding Friend and we'll send you a 1000 Friends of Iowa t-shirt!



Artist Judy Sebern-Beachy donated a painting (left) and notecards to the silent auction at Westminster Presbyterian Church.



## Westminster Presbyterian Hosts Silent Auction to Benefit 1000 Friends of Iowa

After hosting a talk by LaVon Griffieon & Ed Fallon last year, Westminster Presbyterian in Des Moines wanted to do something to live out their commitment to care for creation by supporting 1000 Friends of Iowa. Judy Sebern-Beachy donated a painting for the silent auction, as well as note cards, which quickly sold out. The art show, sale, and silent auction attracted quite a crowd and raised nearly \$200 to support 1000 Friends' work.

Thank you, Westminster Presbyterian!

## Land use and Faith brochures available

If you'd like to help your faith community understand some of the moral and ethical issues related to caring for God's creation in regard to land use decisions, we have some material that may be of help — the brochure, *God's People in an Age of Urban Sprawl*, summarizes some of the moral and ethical issues related to land use. Call or write to us to request copies.

## New Book on Rural Life Available

*Sustaining Heart in the Heartland: Exploring Rural Spirituality*

Editor Miriam Brown, OP, works with The Churches' Center for Land and People, an ecumenical group with members in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The book honors rural life and illustrates what is at stake for rural people and our country in this corporate-induced farm crisis. It describes the contributions and deep

spirit of the people, the odds against which they work, and gives pastoral suggestions and resources for church and community leaders. Concerned urban readers will also find it useful. The book costs \$18.95 from the publisher, Paulist Press.

Go to [www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com) (new releases) or call 1-800-218-1903



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7405 University Avenue  
Suite 3  
Clive, Iowa 50325-1343

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

## 1000 Friends of Iowa says *HELLO & GOOD-BYE* to board members

The annual meeting gave members a chance to thank departing board members for their commitment and welcome the wonderful new additions to our board.

**Pat Cancilla, Rachel Engwall, Keith Forman, Loren Lown, Jo Lydon, Jane Reissen, and Carter Woodruff** ended their terms of service on the board. We appreciate their many contributions of time, talent, and treasure to the organization, and we look forward to continuing to work with them.

We are excited to welcome some new board members as well. **Shearon Elderkin** was president of the Linn County Conservation Board when a proposal was made to extend Highway 100 through the Rock Island State Preserve. She has continued to fight against that location, and gained much expertise in transportation and land use issues in the process.

**Elizabeth Holland, J.D.**, is the Chief Executive Officer of Abbell Credit Corporation,

whose properties include Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines. She is involved in smart growth efforts nationally, including serving as the International Council of Shopping Centers' representative to Chicago's Sensible Growth Steering Committee.

**Dale McKinney** is a principal of InVision Architecture and has been the lead architect on several projects that have won Best Development Awards from 1000 Friends, including this year's Renovated Residential category (*see photos from annual meeting*).

**Mary Ellen Warren** has long been a supporter, and her husband **George Warren** is an Advisory Council member. Mary Ellen has been active in downtown redevelopment efforts in Waterloo for many years.

Officers for 2005 include: **Laura Belin**, President; **Pete McNally**, Vice-President, **Mary Ellen Miller**, Treasurer; **Trish Lyman**, Secretary, and **Jim Throgmorton**, at-large executive committee member.

1000 Friends  
is looking for an  
***Office Manager***  
for our  
Des Moines  
office.

If you're interested,  
see details at  
**[www.kfoi.org](http://www.kfoi.org)**