

Farmland ownership: What are the implications for conservation, the next generation?

By Michael Duffy, Iowa State University Extension Economist

(This article first appeared in the Leopold Letter, Vol. 22 No. 2 Summer 2010. The Leopold Letter is a quarterly newsletter of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Reprinted with permission)

There continues to be keen interest in just who owns Iowa’s productive farmland and what changes are ahead in the next few years. My ongoing study examining farmland ownership here and around the country has produced three key observations about ownership trends, the implications of these ownership patterns and possible future directions.

The first observation is that the age of the farmland owner is increasing at a rapid rate. In Iowa, the percent of land owned by people over the age of 75 has risen from 12 percent in 1982 to 27 percent in 2007. The percent of land owned by people between 65 and 74 has increased from 17 percent to 27 percent. This means that more than half the farmland in Iowa is owned by someone over the age of 65.

Figure 1 combines data sets to give a rough idea of what has happened to the age of landowners over time. These data come from three different sources, university and private. (Please contact me for more specific information on the data and the sources.) This figure shows that approximately 15 percent of the land in Iowa was owned by people over 65 from 1900 through 1930. Then we see a rather steady increase in age of landowners through 1976. There is a drop between 1976 and 1982, but I think this was due to a change in defini-

tion from percent of owners to percent of land owned. Since 1982 there has been a steady increase in the percent of land owned by people over 65 years of age.

The increasing age of Iowa’s landowners reflects two phenomena. One is that people, including landowners, are living longer in general. A second occurrence has been the impact of technology in agriculture. Advances in technology have allowed people to farm longer and as a result they need to farm more acres to generate an adequate income from the farm. *(continued on page 6)*

- Farmland Ownership Pages 1, 6**
- Letter From the President..... Page 2**
- Linda’s Line..... Page 3**
- Effigy Mounds National Monument Disgrace... Page 4**
- Sustainable Planning Workshop Recap..... Page 5**
- Renovation of Historical School Proposed..... Page 6**
- Dubuque: Sustainable Development Code..... Page 7**
- Save the Date!..... Page 8**
- 2010 BDA Call for Nominations! Page 8**

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1000 Friends of Iowa is a state-wide non-profit organization founded in 1998 based in Des Moines, Iowa.

1000 Friends of Iowa promotes responsible development that

- Conserves and protects our agricultural and natural resources
- Revitalizes our neighborhoods, towns and cities, and
- Improves the quality of life for future generations

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Letter From the President

by Mary Ellen Miller



"With the current economic downturn we can expect to see as many as 11 central Iowa community non-profits facing downsizing, merger or closing operations in the coming year."

Those were the opening words from BoardSource consultant David Styers who lead a day long board member seminar, "Leading in Turbulent Financial Times," sponsored by the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines this past spring. Attending as your new board president, I was fully aware of the stresses facing donor-supported non-profits as the worsening economy slowed our revenues and affected our balance sheet. First on Styers list of "8 Smart Things Your Board Can Do Now" was "Be a mission guardian."

Despite the economic challenges of these times, our board and staff have been most prudent and have worked hard to communicate our mission and values using our website and electronic communications in place of costly postal bulk mailings. Our 2009 Best Development Awards gave us good press coverage around the state. Over the winter months, we sponsored a central Iowa radio call-in program that focused on community issues which included coverage of the Comprehensive Land-Use legislation which passed into law this spring. Our June "Sustainable Planning" workshop hosted nearly 65 people who visited current Des Moines projects and took a walking tour with Dan Burden. Even with our financial belt tightening we have been able to continue the work of 1000 Friends mission and to be good guardians.

Recognizing these challenging times, we have decided to postpone expanding our annual meeting into a two-day seminar; and, to keep it affordable, we will hold the meeting at the Griffieon farm near Ankeny, which has hosted previous 1000 Friends events. Look for details in this newsletter and plan to join us!

Lastly, my thanks to all of you who responded so generously to our calls for extra donations, especially those who accepted our challenge to buy a friend a membership. It is not too late to be part of that campaign. Think of potential guardians in your neighborhood, church, exercise class, book group, investment club, etc. give them the gift of a 1000 Friends of Iowa membership today. We've enclosed membership cards and a return envelope in this issue of the *Land Use Bulletin* for your convenience.

In your service,

Mary Ellen Miller
Board President

Linda's Line

Dear Friends,

A report issued July 28, 2010 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (www.noaa.gov) reports scientific evidence from research in 48 countries supporting the world is getting warmer.



The research cited 10 main indicators showing the past decade as the warmest on record and the past 50 years getting hotter. The warming effect has led to shrinking glaciers, more heat waves and heavier rainfall as the moisture level in the atmosphere continues to increase. The data came from over 7000 weather stations, and more than 300 authors contributed to the report. Some skeptics have said an accurate picture of the Earth's warming cannot be measured; this new report shows many indicators backing up rising temperature measurements.

With such reports it's easy to become discouraged about the state of our planet and what we can do on a personal level to help. There are many choices we make daily, and throughout our lives, that do impact the health of our world as well as our own health. One example is choosing to live closer to where we work so we drive less and by choosing to walk or bike to work, we are more physically active.

A July 8, 2010 article from E & E News (www.eenews.net) reports that cutting transportation emissions could save billions of dollars and reduce hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Preliminary results of a study are showing if people choose to walk rather than drive distances less than 5 miles, it could reduce fossil fuel consumption and improve air quality.

According to Jonathan Patz, director of global environmental health at the University of Wisconsin,

Madison, about 1 million people die from air pollution. Cutting emissions could also help reduce particulate matter and ozone, both which have been tied to respiratory problems. The other huge benefit of not driving is the added exercise of walking or bicycling on health and related healthcare costs. In *The Lancet* in 2009 (Volume 374, Issue 9705, pp1930-1943), a series of reports showed active travel reducing the incidence of heart disease and stroke, diabetes, breast cancer, dementia and depression.

So, the studies continue and we are faced with choices to make. Personally, I try and make the most healthful choices each day and I work to make gradual changes that will help both the health of the environment and my own. This is my personal contribution to our changing climate and world.

Thank you for your continued support of 1000 Friends of Iowa!

Linda Gobberdiel
Executive Director

Donate to 1000 Friends of Iowa Silent Auction!

1000 Friends of Iowa will be holding a silent auction on October 30, 2010 at our Annual Meeting. Please consider donating an item, product or service to the silent auction.

Possible donations include:

Basket of goods
Certificate for a product or service
Artwork
Baked goods

All proceeds of the silent auction will go to support the mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa.

Visit our website or contact Crystal Leto at crystal_leto@yahoo.com for more information!

Effigy Mounds National Monument Disgrace

By Tim Mason

In October of 1949, President Harry S. Truman established the Effigy Mounds National Monument. The mission was to protect significant prehistoric earth mounds found in northeast Iowa. Subsequent legislation expanded the purpose and significance by specifying the wildlife, scenic, and other natural values of the area. In the years since, hundreds of employees, scholars & volunteers have worked diligently to protect and care for the park and its resources both cultural and natural.

The Effigy Mounds National Monument is a 2,500 acre unit of the National Park Service located near Marquette, Iowa in the extreme northeast corner of our state. The rugged landform is a mosaic of deep wooded valleys caused by eons of erosion forces and the fact the area escaped the earlier ice advances during the Pleistocene period. With cold water springs, rivers, wetlands and diverse plants and animals associated with these environments, the landform was very rich ecologically and appealed to the hunting and gathering economies and lifestyles of the pre-historic Woodland Indian.

Evidence of the strong spiritual connection and bond with the earth survives in the rock carvings and paintings. The early woodland Indian left other tangible evidence: artifacts represented by pottery and stone, bone and antlers for their tool kit, and, most distinctive, the large conical shaped earthworks. These dome shaped mounds were found by the thousands all through the eastern hardwood forest. Typically used as burial sites, the dead were buried with caches of tools they would need in the afterlife.

On March 31st, 2010 the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service located in Omaha made an unprecedented public announcement. A press release signed by the NPS Regional Director, Ernest Quintana, stated that an elaborate boardwalk trail system and maintenance structure had been constructed illegally. The NPS goes on to state that the regional office had discovered this malfeasance a

year earlier and had demanded it halted in April of 2009.

These blatant criminal actions violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, laws created to put in place a protocol of compliance checks. The compliance checks bring in other government agencies from multi disciplines, who study the construction plans in order to judge their impact on the resources. Mr.

Quintana, who is retiring soon, stated "this is the lowest point of my career".



Photo by Tim Mason

The waste, fraud and abuse of these projects to date are approaching a million dollars. The cost to have the damage assessed, studied, and the area restored is difficult to predict. However, the monetary loss pales in comparison to the desecration of these burial grounds and the gross violation of the public trust.

Hopefully congressmen will mandate that the Secretary of the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General will perform an exhaustive independent investigation of this travesty, do all humanly possible to restore this natural resource to as close to pristine condition as possible, and work to ensure similar destructive and inappropriate abuse of power does not occur again.

Tim Mason was born just a couple of miles from the park and was employed at Effigy Mounds National Monument seasonally for a total of 19 years. Holding a varied number of jobs including laborer, wild land firefighter & Park Ranger, until 1997. Now retired, he and his wife live in a rented farmhouse in nearby rural McGregor.

To learn more, or to get in touch with Mr. Mason, please email crystal_letto@yahoo.com. Crystal will forward all correspondence to Mr. Mason.

Sustainable Planning Workshop Recap

1000 Friends of Iowa, in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowans Fit for Life, hosted an educational workshop on June 29, 2010.

Dan Burden, Urban Designer and founder of Walkable Communities, Inc., discussed how to design a walkable community and the positive impact on health of residents as well as vibrancy in a community. In the afternoon, Dan led a walking tour of the 6th Avenue Corridor and offered suggestions for making the area more inviting and walkable.

Toward the end of the workshop participants divided into smaller discussion groups and provided feedback. Following are two of the questions and a few of the top responses:

Name five things you learned:

- The need to make walking and bicycling priorities in planning
- Efficient use of valuable space on our streets and in our neighborhoods impacts health and vitality of neighborhoods
- Property values increase with sustainable planning
- Value of local food to economic recovery
- Economic benefits of smart development
- Importance of considering rehab versus new in development planning

What changes are needed in Iowa?

- City code changes to support sustainable planning
- Creating partnerships with local and state
- Incentives to plan sustainably
- Involving agriculture community in planning to reduce flooding

Due to the interest in and success of the June 29th event, 1000 Friends plans to hold additional sustainable planning workshops in various cities throughout the state. 1000 Friends will update our website with event dates, locations, and additional details as they are finalized. Please check our website, www.1000friendsofiowa.org, and watch for email updates. We hope you can join us for at least one of these educational and informative workshops!

Renovation of Historical Ames School Proposed

By Erv Klaas

Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School in Ames was closed five years ago despite strong opposition from the neighborhood. The school board based their decision on declining enrollments, reduced funding and supposed safety concerns about the building's aging structure. This consolidation led to increased crowding in the remaining schools and increased busing of elementary students. Now, according to elementary school principals, the "Ames Community School District has a critical need for space to deal with unpredictable elementary student enrollment." Moreover, remaining elementary schools will need extensive renovation in the near future and there are no alternative classrooms to temporarily house these students during reconstruction.

Ames Smart Growth Alliance (ASGA) has begun a campaign to renovate and re-open Roosevelt School. With support from the City and the Ames Community School District, ASGA recently funded and facilitated a successful proposal to get the school added to the National Registry of Historic Places (*The Tribune*, p. A1, May 28, 2010).

In January of 2009, ASGA met with Michael Broshar, principle architect with the firm of INVISION in Waterloo, Iowa and commissioned him to assess the school building's potential for reuse under four options: (A) minimal renovation for an elementary school, (B) full renovation for reuse as a school, (C) preservation to reestablish the historic exterior to its original appearance, and (D) potential alternative uses for the building. ASGA selected INVISION because of the company's experience in rehabilitating the 90-year-old Kinglsey Elementary School in Waterloo.

Architects based their assessment of Roosevelt on a complete walk-through of the building and inspection of the building's original and current blueprints. INVISION presented the results of their study at a public meeting at Ames Public Library on May 23, 2009. *(continued on page 7)*

Dubuque Creates Sustainable Development Code

By Laura Carstens

In 2009, the City of Dubuque's new Unified Development Code (UDC) went into effect. The UDC updates and consolidates zoning, subdivision, site development, historic preservation, and sign regulations into a single city code. The Dubuque UDC incorporates text, photographs, drawings, charts and diagrams for ease of use in an online illustrated version.

The four-year process for developing the Dubuque UDC incorporated three citizen advisory committees and an interdisciplinary task force of City staff working with JEO Consulting. The last 12 months of the process were devoted to seeking and responding to input on the draft UDC from developers, engineers, architects, neighborhood and business associations, sign contractors, City Boards and Commissions, and the general public prior to City Council work sessions and public hearings.

The Dubuque UDC incorporates sustainable design while meeting smart growth objectives. *Sustainable design is the expectation.* While traditional development is still

For more information contact planning@cityofdubuque.org or check it out online at <http://www.cityofdubuque.org/index.aspx?nid=1209>.

allowed, it is now the exception. The UDC received strong support from

City officials and citizens alike. This acceptance of sustainable design has continued through implementation.

Subdivision and site development regulations were extensively revised to promote sustainable design, such as conservation design, solar access, and low-impact development measures. Access for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit as well as design guidelines for historic districts, the downtown, and older neighborhoods also are now part of the UDC.

The intent of the Dubuque UDC is to guide the physical, economic and social development, redevelopment and conservation of the community. The UDC protects and enhances the historic, cultural and aesthetic resources that make Dubuque a unique, identifiable and vital community. The City of Dubuque hopes the UDC will serve as a model for other sustainable land development codes in Iowa.

Renovation of Historical Ames School Proposed

(continued from Page 5)

The architect's presentation and report, complete with possible floor plans, can be viewed under "schools" on ASGA's website at:

www.amessmartgrowth.org

INVISION architects concluded that "Roosevelt School was well constructed, using a concrete column and slab floor and roof system with masonry load bearing exterior walls. The structure is sound. The character of the building matches the neighborhood character that grew up around it. The building is an excellent candidate for re-use."

INVISION's report provides an assessment of re-use under the four options cited above. Cost estimates for renovation and reuse as an elementary school varied from about \$5.5 million for minimal renovation to \$7.4 million for full renovation to a modern two-section school for 300 students with separate cafeteria and gymnasium. Also included would be a new elevator, new windows, and new heating and cooling equipment.

The architects estimated that building a new school of similar size would cost \$10.2 million. Their cost of restoring the exterior of the building to its original appearance was estimated at a little more than \$0.5 million.

If not restored as an elementary school, the architects identified housing or a community/arts building as possible alternative uses. Noting that restoring an older building is a "green" strategy, they suggested several other "green" strategies that could be employed such as a closed loop geothermal heating and cooling system.

Considering the city's excellent record in historic preservation (Ames City Hall, Youth and Shelter Services building, Old Town District, Main Street) and the school district's need for additional elementary space, now is the time to start planning for the renovation (preferably with historic preservation) and re-use of Roosevelt as a neighborhood school.

Save the Date!
1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting
October 30, 2010, Ankeny, IA

1000 Friends of Iowa will hold the 2010 Annual Meeting October 30, 2010 at the Griffieon Family Farm in Ankeny, IA. Registration is \$40 for members, \$75 for non-members (includes a one year membership), and \$100 & up for sponsors.

Confirmed Speakers:

Darrin Nordahl "The New Urban Agriculture: Public Produce"
Wayne Petersen "Managing Urban Run Off"
Tom Dunbar "Resilient Cities"

Other topics:

"Iowa's Water and Land Legacy", "Report on Smart Planning Task Force" and "Healthy Urban Food and Farming Work Group"

Please visit www.1000friendsofiowa.org often for additional details as they are finalized and registration information.

1000 Friends of Iowa Now
Accepting Nominations
for the 2010 Best
Development Awards!

Email or mail your nomination to:
crystal_letto@yahoo.com

or

1000 Friends of Iowa
c/o Crystal Leto
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Des Moines, IA 50310-1300

The deadline to submit nominations is
September 17, 2010.

Visit www.1000friendsofiowa.org to learn more about the Best Development Awards program, and to read about past BDA recipients!