

Repealing Smart Planning Language from Iowa Law Is NOT Economically Responsible

By LaVon Griffieon

“Diligence is the mother of good luck.”
Benjamin Franklin

The legislature has been busy since its start on January 10th. Republicans released the promised budget cuts a majority of Iowans asked for last November. The Iowa Taxpayers First Act (HF45) has already been through committee, had a public hearing and been voted on in the House. There’s been plenty in the news about this big bill that lumps so much into one vote. What I haven’t heard or read about is the fact that hidden in Division VIII, beginning on page 27 of our 59 page budget bill, the smart planning language and the comprehensive planning principles are removed from the Iowa Code.

The full text and additional information about HF45 can be found at <http://www.legis.iowa.gov>

We spent much energy (and taxpayer dollars) during the 2010 legislative session finally succeeding in getting smart planning language and comprehensive planning principles into the code. The bill strikes Section 18b (smart planning language) from the Iowa Code. Section 18b simply states that cities “may consider” the ten principles of smart planning when planning for growth and gives 13 principles to guide comprehensive planning for municipalities.

Smart planning is the fiscally responsible alternative to sprawl. It emphasizes maximizing the use of existing and, to the extent necessary, new infrastructure, and is therefore less costly to build, maintain, and operate per capita than conventional suburban development. Smart growth principles also empha-

size repairing and maintaining existing infrastructure, saving on costs of deferred maintenance and supporting the economic health of existing communities. Ultimately, using these principles to guide growth keeps taxes down and provides a higher return on public investment, all of which translate into personal savings. So if smart planning saves money for taxpayers, why did the Iowa House vote to remove language from the Code that is costing the state, cities, counties or taxpayers **NOTHING**? How did the idea get into a bill promoting fiscal responsibility? I have a few thoughts on that. *Continued page 6.*

Repealing Smart Planning Language from Iowa Law is NOT Economically Responsible.....Pages 1, 6, 7
Letter From the President Page 2, 6
Linda’s Line Page 3
National Smart Growth Conference Page 3
2010 Best Development Award Winners Pages 4, 5
Beginning Farmer Center Page 7
Citizen’s Guide /Send Us YOUR Stories! 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



Another Challenging Legislative Session is Upon Us

I mentioned in my annual Holiday letter to friends and family this winter that the political climate for 1000 Friends of Iowa was greatly changed by the November elections. That was putting it politely! Have no doubt, this is going to be a tough legislative session for our land use initiatives: smart planning principles, sustainable development, farmland protection, and greener transportation options will all see fierce scrutiny as our representatives and senators look at ways to balance the state budget.

1000 Friends of Iowa dedicated nearly a decade to getting Smart Planning principles placed in the Iowa Code (2010). Many organizations, communities, economic development groups and others have spent years advocating for stronger passenger rail service from Chicago to Iowa. Their efforts succeeded last year in getting federal support dedicated to Illinois and Iowa rail track improvements. The current Republican House budget plan calls for eliminating all state funding for this project. [Governor Branstad has not yet declared his support for this passenger rail initiative.] That same Republican House plan also calls for eliminating all funding for sustainable communities.*

Now, more than ever, we need our members talking to their legislators about the value of *mindful* land use planning and the long term economic benefits to be achieved with forward thinking. This is not the time to throw out the proverbial “baby with the bath water.”

Here’s what you can do: study the background materials on our website and watch for our email Legislative Updates and Action Alerts. Also, join us at the Capitol Thursday, February 3, for Environmental Lobby Day activities. We will have a booth at this event; let us know if you can help by attending it for part of the day.

Your contact has an impact! Many years ago, a senior state senator told me that if he received ten comments about an issue, it then became an issue for his attention. Don’t just assume others are making our case; make the call, send an email, attend a public forum and speak personally. Pro and con contacts are tracked by legislative staff. Make sure the count for our side is the highest. *continued page 7*

Linda's Line

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new year, I want to thank you for your support of 1000 Friends of Iowa! We appreciate your membership renewals as well as the **extra donations** many of you gave in 2010!



As an organization, we continue to focus on the many factors that affect land use decisions including transportation, sustainable planning, and agriculture. In addition, we address issues that result from land use decisions including impacts on our water, air, and land.

Education is one of the benefits of membership in 1000 Friends of Iowa! Our immediate educational focus includes working with the Iowa legislature on retaining smart planning across Iowa. LaVon Griffieon, co-founder of 1000 Friends of Iowa addresses the challenges we are facing this legislative session in her article on page 6.

Our other educational focus will be on water conservation through the use of **rain barrels**. We launched a fundraising campaign the week of January 10th in cooperation with the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to offer rain barrels for sale to members and non-members of 1000 Friends of Iowa. Money raised from this campaign will support education through new materials and an exhibit on water re-use and retention for use around the state. By purchasing one of these rain barrels, you'll help our environment and support 1000 Friends of Iowa's outreach efforts! Please place your order, and share the opportunity with family members and friends!

Thank you for your continued support!

Linda Gobberdiel

Iowa City Project Will Be Discussed At National Smart Growth Conference

If you are looking for an opportunity to learn more about the substance and science behind such buzz terms as "smart growth," "transit-oriented development," "triple bottom line," "green infrastructure," "local food," and "sustainable development," consider attending the **10th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference**, which will be held February 3-5, 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina. This is a multi-disciplinary conference that brings together people from many different professions and walks of life with one common goal in mind - to explore ways to build safer, healthier, and more livable communities. Visit the conference website <http://www.newpartners.org/> for complete details.

One of those participants will be Karen Howard, a city planner for Iowa City and 1000 Friends board member. Ms. Howard will participate in a panel discussion about the Partnership for Sustainable Communities Brownfields Pilot Program. Iowa City is one of five communities across the nation that received a planning grant through this federal program. In Iowa City a consultant team hired by the Partnership is helping the local community create a plan for redevelopment of the **Riverfront Crossings District**, which is an area near downtown Iowa City and the University of Iowa. The goal of the project is to both protect the area from future flooding and also to promote new higher density housing.

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities has taken a significant interest in helping Iowa City maximize the economic development potential of the area with the goal of showcasing the Riverfront Crossings District as a model of sustainable redevelopment for other communities across the nation. For more information about the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference or the Riverfront Crossings District, contact Karen Howard at Karen-howard@iowa-city.org or 319-356-5251.

Join us in Recognizing Recipients of the 2010 Best Development Awards

1000 Friends of Iowa was pleased to honor recipients of the 2010 Best Development Awards at our 2010 Annual Meeting. The Best Development Awards program recognizes quality development and redevelopment projects in Iowa and leadership that uphold our mission. Best Development Awards are given in six categories:

- **New Residential**
- **Renovated Residential**
- **Renovated Commercial/Civic**
- **New Commercial/Civic**
- **Mixed Use**
- **Leadership**

Recipients of our Best Development Awards are models of how responsible development practices provide benefits to the community, the environment, and quality of life for future generations. By category, the 2010 winners are:

New Residential: The Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, Des Moines

The Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity was selected to receive the award for Best New Residential due to their demonstration of increased energy efficiency and use of environmentally sustainable building products in the construction of affordable homes, one of which achieved a LEED Silver certification. In addition to showing it is possible to build both affordably and sustainably, they strive to build attractive homes that complement the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Visit <http://www.gdmhabitat.org/> to learn more about the Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity.



Above: Affordable home from the Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity



Above: Dining room of the Ladora Bank Bistro

Renovated Commercial/Civic: The Ladora Bank Bistro in Ladora and The Hotel Julien in Dubuque

The Ladora Bank Bistro was selected to receive the award for Best Renovated Commercial/Civic in a small community because the project is an excellent example of contributing to small town revitalization, historic re-use, and sustainable community development.

Visit <http://ladorabank.com> to learn more about The Ladora Bank Bistro.

The Hotel Julien Dubuque was selected to receive the award for Best Renovated Commercial/Civic in a large community because the beauty and authenticity of this historic rehabilitation project showcases how such rehabilitation can revitalize and sustain a downtown area. Visit <http://hoteljuliendubuque.com> to learn more about The Hotel Julien Dubuque.



Above: Front view of The Hotel Julien Dubuque



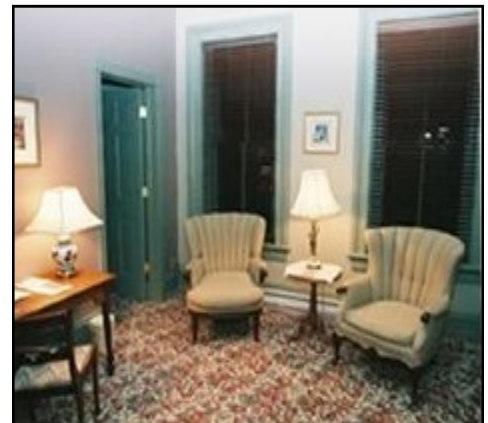
Renovated Residential: UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership's Affordable Homeownership Program, Iowa City

The UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership's Affordable Homeownership Program was selected to receive the award for Best Renovated Residential because the project is innovative and meets almost all of the smart growth criteria. The project is an excellent example of revitalizing existing neighborhoods and providing affordable homeownership in locations close to employment. Visit <http://www.icgov.org/default/fs/?id=1995> to learn more about the UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership's Affordable Homeownership Program.

Above: One of the many homes available through the UniverCity Program

Mixed Use: The Hotel Blackhawk, Davenport

The Hotel Blackhawk redevelopment was selected to receive the award for Best Mixed Use due to their success at transforming a National Historic Landmark into a vibrant mixed-use facility that has enhanced the quality of life in Davenport. Visit <http://www.blackhawk-hotel.com/> to learn more about The Hotel Blackhawk.



Above: Interior view of available suite at The Hotel Blackhawk

Leadership: City of Dubuque, Dubuque and Lakes Community Land Trust, Spirit Lake

The City of Dubuque was selected to receive the award for Leadership in a large community because of the recently adopted Unified Development Code which promotes best practices in sustainable development and will serve as a model for other cities in Iowa. For additional details and visit <http://www.cityofdubuque.org/index.aspx?NID=1209> to learn more about the Unified Development Code.

The Lakes Community Land Trust was selected to receive the award for Leadership in a small community because of the broad spectrum of programs and projects it promotes in the community in its effort to achieve social equality, affordable housing, local food production and revitalization of existing towns and neighborhoods. Visit <http://www.lakesclt.org/> to learn more about The Lakes Community Trust.

Please join us in congratulating this year's recipients!

Letter from the President

continued from page 2

Here are a few thoughts on lobbying:

- Pick the issue you are most passionate about, study it and become clear on what it is you want to see happen that the legislature can influence. *Check out our website for talking points and background materials.*
- If you cannot get to Des Moines, catch your legislator at one of his/her public meetings back in their districts. *If you are uncomfortable speaking during a public meeting, ask to talk with legislator afterwards.*
- Provide supporting material. *They often have time to read in the car between events plus it strengthens your case. Again, check our website or call our office for help with this.*
- Personalize the issue. *Tell how the issue relates to you and why it is important to you. Legislators remember these details more easily than background facts and figures.*
- Get on your legislator's email list. *Send a follow-up "thank you for your time" email with a short repeat of your salient points.*

In your Service,
Mary Ellen Miller, Board President

Don't believe the charge that state funds were targeted for "heated sidewalks." It is not true. Here is the back story: the Iowa Department of Economic Development selected West Union as a "green pilot community." During a visioning session various sustainability measures were discussed. Local concern was expressed about deicing chemical runoff into nearby creeks. The possibility of using geo-thermal heating (already in place) to keep snow and ice off new streetscape sidewalks was suggested. In the end, it was decided it would be most economical to use permeable pavers (instead of geo-thermal) to contain the salty runoff. And that, as they say, is the rest of the story!

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Continued from page 1

When in 2010 the Rebuild Iowa Committees in the House and Senate ran companion bills for smart planning. The House sub-committee, led by Erik Helland (R) gutted the House version of the smart planning bill. The Senate Rebuild Iowa sub-committee, led by Bill Heckroth (D), left smart planning intact, added air quality language and passed the bill out of committee. Sensing the bill would be doomed in the House RIO Committee, Democrats reassigned the bill to the House Local Government Committee. Donovan Olson (D), who has a background in planning, successfully led efforts and got the bill out of committee. The bill didn't pass on its own merit on the floor as the session drew to a close. The Senate version was incorporated into the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund Appropriations Bill which passed both chambers. **Much of this was accomplished because citizens were telling their legislators that land use needed to be addressed in the Code.** However, this political jockeying made the Republicans unhappy. This session they have chosen to remove the language by slipping it into another large bill. The problem with this type of political maneuvering is that horse-trading can be accomplished behind the scenes.

No one has time to defend such a small detail in a bill that is dealing with huge budget issues such as education cuts. So it is up to the citizens to keep our legislators honest.

Let both your senator and representative at the Capitol know you are aware the smart planning language is on the chopping block, and you want all language repealing or jeopardizing Section 18b banished from the budget bill. Remind them smart planning isn't costing Iowans a penny and you are growing weary of this partisan political posturing. Tell them Smart planning needs to be a part of Iowa Code to protect farmland, help cities grow in a more economically responsible fashion, and protect the quality of life for future generations. And ask legislators why we're refusing over \$80 million of federal funding for rail connections from Chicago to Iowa City in order to save the state \$10 million. *continued next page*

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Finally, ask your legislator why the Taxpayers First legislation (HF45) has no mention of TIF reform. TIF funding has been a continuous and rapidly growing hole in the General Fund since the original intent was changed in 1985 when economic development areas were added to the Code as a use and signed into law by then Governor Branstad. TIF districts' exclusion of taxable property value cost the Iowa General Fund an estimated \$43 million dollars in 2009 (up from \$13 million in 1997). Now THAT seems like a real economic issue to address...but it hasn't been mentioned yet.

Please see what you can do to set your elected officials straight!

From the Smart Growth Network:

"Growth is "smart" when it gives us great communities, with more choices and personal freedom, good return on public investment, greater opportunity across the community, a thriving natural environment, and a legacy we can be proud to leave our children and grandchildren."

<http://www.smartgrowth.org/why.php>

According to the USDA Natural Resources Inventory, <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>, in the past FIVE years Iowa has developed 2.5 acres of land for each person it has added to it's population.

Beginning Farmer Center Provides Education and Preparation to Next Generation of Farmers

by David Baker, Farm Transition Specialist

Many people in rural Iowa complain young people are being lost to the big city. Admittedly, our beautiful cities have much to offer and do attract many new residents every year. One needs only review growth rates of school districts around Des Moines as evidence. But there is a resurgence of young families hoping to raise their children in small rural communities where the pace of life is slower and people value families. Rural areas need to promote themselves as not a stepping stone to loftier goals but as a location where all kinds of goals can be achieved by the next generation.

The Beginning Farmer Center, established in 1994 by the Iowa State Legislature, is an organization that works hard to prepare young families for exciting lives in the rural areas of Iowa. The BFC is a valuable resource to help our next generation of farmers. The Center conducts programs for farmers who want to transition their farm business to the next generation or individuals who want to get into farming.

One of the many activities of the Beginning Farmer Center is the Farm On program. The Farm On program is a computerized matching program that provides facilitation of business transitions to new owners. The Center works with families who have children coming back to the farm, and for farmers without heirs to take over their farms.

The BFC's objectives are:

- Coordinate education programs and services for beginning farmer efforts statewide
- Assess needs of beginning farmers and retiring farmers
- Develop, coordinate, and deliver targeted education to beginning and retiring farm families
- Provide programs and services that develop skills and knowledge in financial management and planning, legal issues, tax laws, technical production and management, leadership, sustainable agriculture, human health, and the environment.

To learn more about the Beginning Farmer Center, visit their website at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/about.html>.

1000 Friends of Iowa Citizen Guide

Thanks to our returning intern, Madella Smith, 1000 Friends is pleased to announce the availability of a citizen's guide to navigating land use issues.

Visit http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org/images/stories/citizen_guide.pdf to download the citizen's guide.

Please send any comments or suggestions you may have to crystal_letto@yahoo.com.

This is a work in progress, and we welcome your feedback!

Share Events, Successes, and Other News From Your Community!

Do you have an idea for a story? Do you have an event in your area pertaining to land use that you would to publicize for free? Is there an issue in your area you think deserves attention? We want to hear from you!

The Land Use Bulletin is available for any of our members to submit articles, announcements and/or photos. Email crystal_letto@yahoo.com for consideration in future issues of The Land Use Bulletin!