



**Ames Comprehensive Plan**

## **Workshop #1 Kick-Off Recap**

December 18, 2018

# Agenda

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- 1. Role of the Comprehensive Plan**
- 2. Schedule**
- 3. Defining a Successful Process**
- 4. Identifying Strengths and Challenges for Targeted Topic Areas**
- 5. Big Picture Outcomes**

**Thank you!**

**Here to listen.**

**Participatory workshop for the City Council.**

**No right or wrong answers, this is about gaining understanding.**

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**Intended outcomes from this meeting are:**

- Understanding of the process' goals, concerns, challenges, and opportunities.**
- Understanding of the strengths and challenges related to issues influencing the community.**







# A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS:

- **Long Range**
  - ✓ Typical horizon is 15-25 years (*LUPP Adopted 1997 with 2030 Horizon*)
- **Aspirational**
  - ✓ Written to inspire and describe goals—not an ordinance or code
- **General**
  - ✓ Policies provide broad guidance
  - ✓ Framework for more detailed plans
- **Comprehensive**
  - ✓ Geographically and topically
- **Internally Consistent**
  - ✓ All policies and maps should support each other
- **Not the same as zoning**
  - ✓ A Plan is flexible, long range, and general
  - ✓ Zoning is prescriptive, immediate, and parcel specific

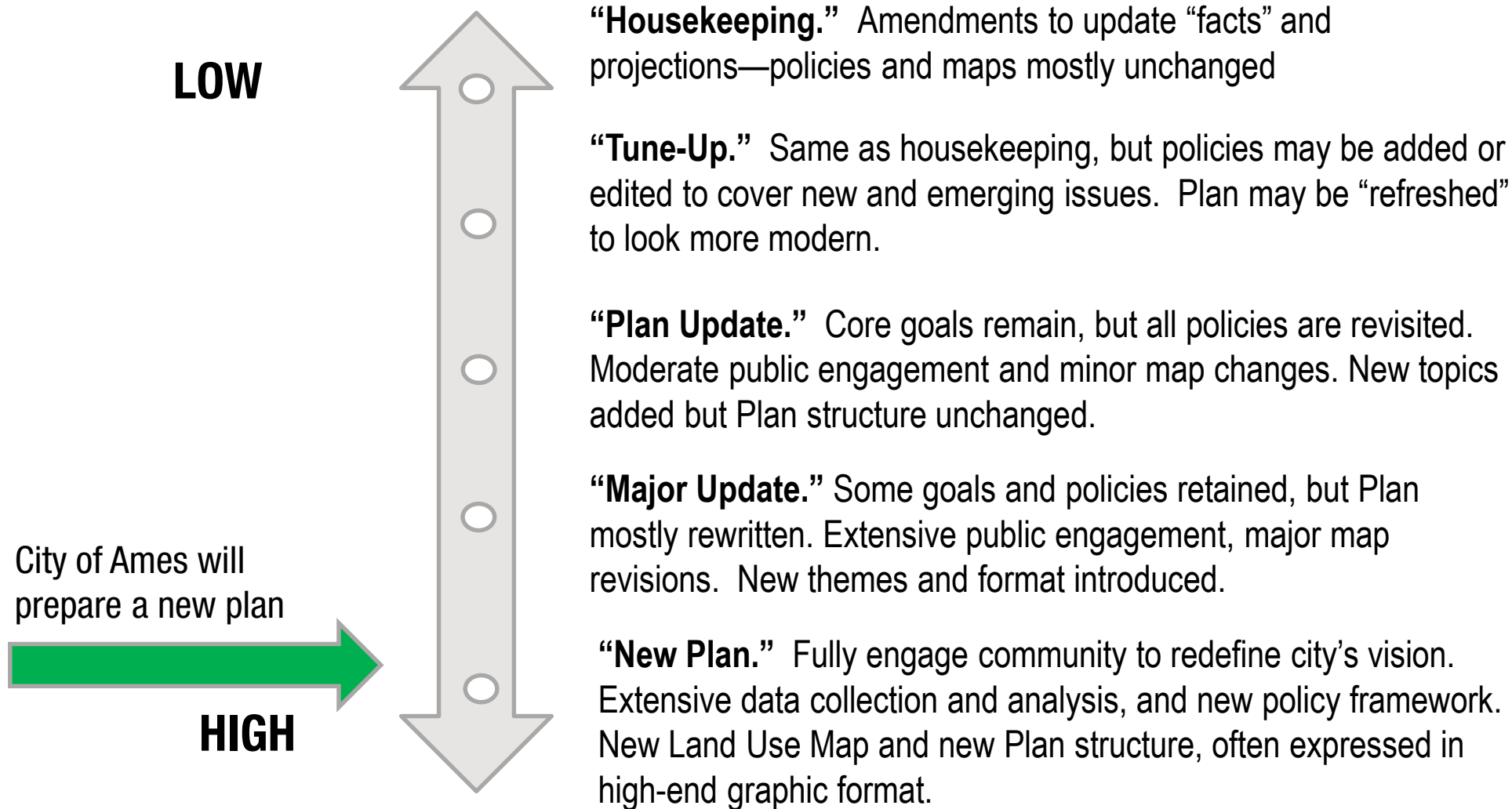


# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PURPOSE

<p>Provide data to inform local decision making and educate the public about their community</p>	<p>Provide legal basis for land use regulations (zoning)</p>		<p>Plan for orderly, efficient growth that protects property values and the quality of life</p>
	<p>Protect and improve the natural environment and grow more sustainably</p>	<p>Position the community to capture future economic opportunities and increase prosperity</p>	
<p>Provide opportunity for civic engagement and creating a shared sense of purpose</p>		<p>Provide a coordinated framework to plan for transportation, parks, utilities, schools, public services</p>	<p>Guide land use decisions to create / maintain healthy, attractive neighborhoods</p>



# PLAN UPDATE SPECTRUM





# WHAT'S DRIVING TODAY'S PLANS?

Quality of Life

Placemaking,  
New Urbanism, and  
"Complete"  
Communities

Resilience,  
Adaptation, and  
Hazard Mitigation



Fiscal Efficiency

Concurrency and  
Growth Management

Economic  
Competitiveness and  
Jobs



Health and Wellness

Equity and Inclusion

Sustainability



# Themes and Informational Topics Outlined in RFP

## THEMES

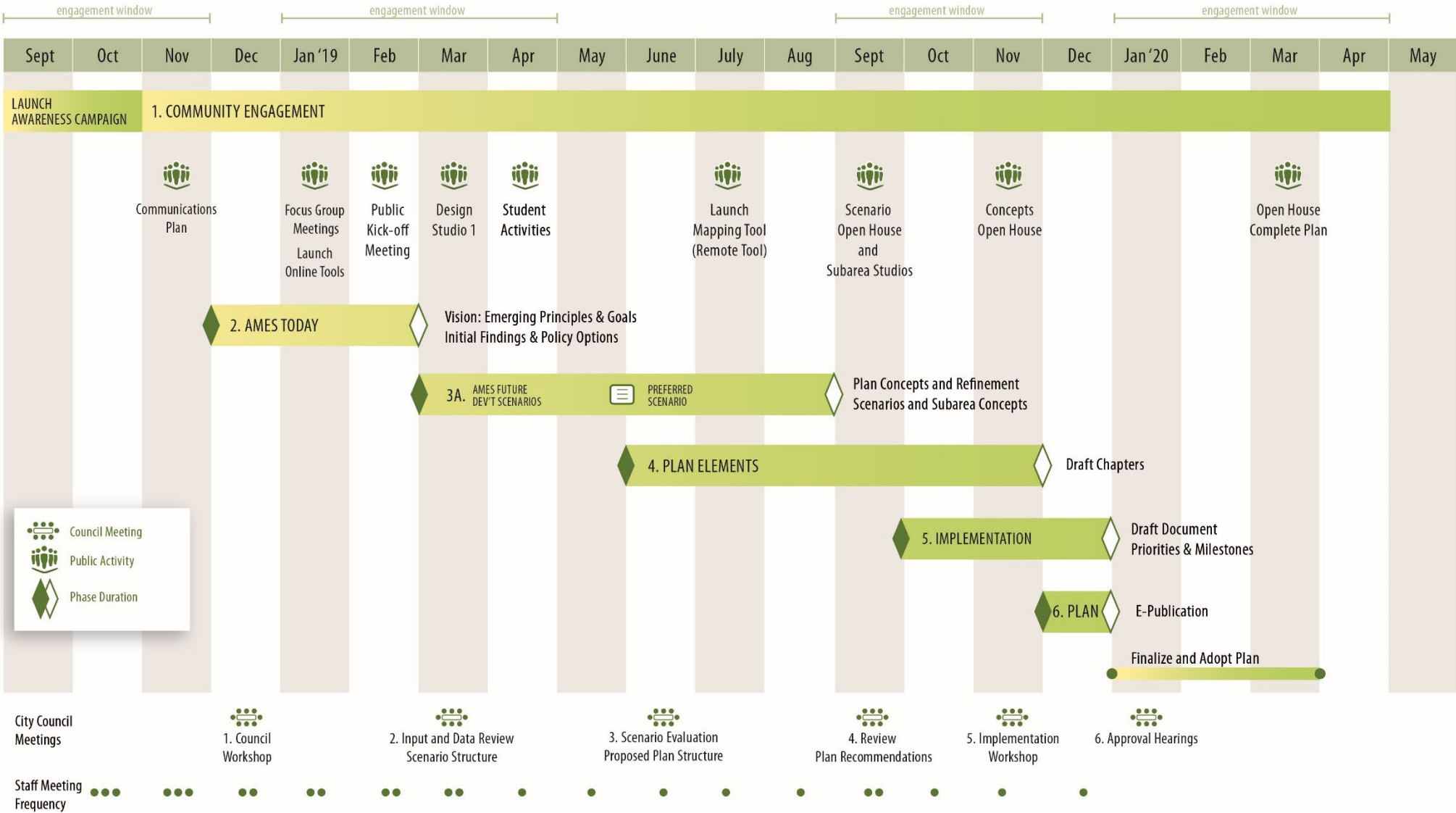
- Expansion of the City
- Opportunities for infill development
- Future demand for housing and commercial use
- Sustaining neighborhoods
- Support of social and cultural connections
- Transportation choices
- Sustainability
- Well being and healthy living
- Subarea planning, and
- Urban fringe management

## TECHNICAL TOPICS

- Demographics
- Natural Resources/Flooding/Stormwater
- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development and Business
- Multi-modal Transportation
- Parks and Recreation/Open Space
- City Services/Utilities, and Infrastructure
- Implementation



# Schedule



Initial  
Community  
Engagement:  
**Online Tool**  
**Focus Group  
Invitations**  
**Public Kick-  
off Meeting**





# Defining a Successful Facilitation

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## ***Vision for a Successful Comprehensive Plan:***

1. How will we know that the process of planning for Ames' future was successful? What will be the indicators?
2. What is the number one priority you would like to see this process accomplish?
3. What concerns do you have about the planning process?



# 1. How will we know that the process was successful? Indicators?

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- The process happens in a timely fashion
- Demonstrated input from a broad base of community organizations
- Tailored to Ames, we're not Minneapolis
- Needs to be realistic
- Can't please everyone, generally community embraces it, not driven by or the reflection of a specific group
- Reflects the community at-large
- Reflects our values
- Incorporates under-represented populations
- Students and all other understand each stage of the process, its transparent, they can follow along and know when their input is needed
- Most of the people in Ames know that it is happening and can be a part of the decision making
- A response for those who say "we weren't notified or involved"
- The document that results does not need multiple changes immediately
- The process results in a document that is flexible – not a burden, but a blessing
- Poll – ½ way through the process – has the community heard of it?



# 1. How will we know that the process was successful? Indicators?

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How many neighborhoods do we reach out to and would like to have more than one contact or meeting available with them

Outreach to high school and youth – must be a part of this

Focus groups – People who work, but don't live in Ames – we need to talk with them too

Need to capture input



## 2. What is the number one priority you would like to see this process accomplish?

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We aren't doing this just to have fun, a document that gives certainty for future community leaders and representatives – actually helpful for the future

One mindedness around a common vision for the community – consensus, agreement

Will help future councils move Ames forward

Not just about saying Yes. Document can also allow us to say No.

Internal consistency. Chapters all build and contribute to the same vision.

A document that creates a vision and strategy that keeps Ames - Ames.

Don't want people to be intimidated by the process. Want them to feel they can approach and give their input and have an impact.

People to feel free to speak for themselves.

Resulting document needs to be interpretable and accessible.

Actionable.

Legal basis we need to have to carry out ordinances.

Do not want LUPP type document – needing modifications immediately.

Casual disregard is an issue with a future document is a problem. Changes might be okay when for the right reasons.



## 2. What is the number one priority you would like to see this process accomplish?

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Efficient development of the plan – timeline.

Completing plan in under 2 years.

Priority might be establishing priorities?



### **3. What concerns do you have about the planning process?**

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Time: Council, Staff, Community Engagement may fall as it gets drawn out

Micro managing of the process.

Council may slow process – hold us accountable.

Make sure we get all of the input that wants to be given. People should be heard.

Do not want to go too far down a path only to realize it is the wrong one. Process should not have this happen.

Community members might not understand the difference between what we currently have and what we are trying to create.

One particular group, or more, having an outsized influence on the process.

Value RDG Team experience, but don't want bias. Let Ames be Ames. Help us flourish as a community in total instead of areas.

Don't want, "You should look like this."





# Exercise > Identifying Strengths and Challenges for Topic Areas

Topics from City's RFP for a Comprehensive Plan

1. Expansion of the City
2. Opportunities for infill development
3. Future demand for housing and commercial use
4. Sustaining neighborhoods
5. Support of social and cultural connections
6. Transportation choices
7. Sustainability
8. Well-being and healthy living
9. Subarea planning
10. Urban fringe management



15 Minutes  
On Your Own



Place Your Post-It



Discuss comments  
And Summarize



# Exercise > Outcomes

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## 1. Expansion of the City

### STRENGTHS:

#### Available Land

- Land owners willing to annex (esp. in SW recently)
- Have locations to consider
- Lots of momentum for growth
- New East connection development
- An economy that supports expansion

#### Other

- Continued anticipated growth in jobs and employers

### CHALLENGES:

#### Growth Limitations

- Impediments to growth in certain directions (geographically (valleys, rivers, etc.), land ownership, railroad tracks, etc.)
- Topographic & other growth limits (ISU property, etc.)
- ISU owns a lot of potential growth land
- Limited amount of land available to grow
- Heavily weighted to the north

#### Infrastructure

- Challenge of providing infrastructure
- All development costs shifted to developer/future owners
- Cost of extending infrastructure

#### Other

- Artificial development boundaries
- More commercial needed
- No affordable housing being built
- Loss of residents to other communities
- Public disagreement



## 2. Opportunities for Infill Development

### STRENGTHS:

#### Developer Enthusiasm

- Developers do want to come to Ames to develop infill projects
- Developers interested in doing infill development

#### Infill Opportunities

- Do have some underutilized areas
- Dilapidated Properties

#### Other

- Opportunities to take advantage of CyRide
- The East Lincoln Way and Library Corridor
- New Zoning encourages infill (Downtown gateway, for example)

### CHALLENGES

#### Land Availability

- Limited land and much land owned by ISU & other government agencies
- Limited large pieces of land
- Limited opportunities for infill

#### Tension

- Pushback from neighborhoods
- Tension between new infill and existing building stock (potential to encourage demolition)

#### Other

- Expensive
- Few candidates that don't reduce affordable housing



## 3. Future Demand for Housing and Commercial Uses

### STRENGTHS

#### Population and Job Growth

- Population growth continues, is stable
- Currently have robust private sector job growth should translate to growth in both areas
- High demand

#### Housing Options

- Thriving market for rentals
- There is demand for variety of housing. People want to live in Ames.

#### Other

- Building tax base

### CHALLENGES

#### Housing

- Housing that will accommodate those who can afford only to rent at or below market rate, houses in low to mid \$100,000
- Affordable housing including in the \$150,000 range and \$200-\$250,000 range, rental for those who are in 30-50%
- Challenge to accommodate the right mix of housing and/or commercial at an affordable price
- How to address increasing rent? Especially for ISU students and faculty
- Need to incentivize conversion of rental housing to owner-occupied

#### Other

- Few local builders – is there capacity?
- Declining enrollment (unstable)
- More commercial needed



## 4. Sustaining Neighborhoods

### STRENGTHS

- Involved citizens
- Robust neighborhood groups
- Good neighborhood associations
- Many strong neighborhood organizations
- Strong neighborhood associations
- Have a number of good neighborhood associations. Build upon that for community conservation

### CHALLENGES

#### Rental vs. Owner-Occupied Housing

- Balancing student housing (rentals) in near campus neighborhoods – reclassifying or clarifying student vs. “family” neighborhoods
- Growth in rentals, Airbnb/Short term rentals displace owner occupied housing

#### Neighborhood Locations

- Recognizing that near-campus neighborhoods face very different challenges from outliers
- Automobile oriented outlying neighborhoods

#### Other

- Do we really have a vision for what healthy neighborhoods look like, and their functions and features
- How to balance permanent residents needs with the large population that is more temporary
- Requires constant outreach & education for new residents
- Risk of gentrification



## 5. Support of Social and Cultural Connections

### STRENGTHS

- Diverse (for Iowa)
- Strong human service network
- Strong community groups
- Reasonable support for the arts and culture

### CHALLENGES

#### Communication

- How to communicate with citizens in the modern age
- Social media and shift in culture
- Need to improve communications, acceptance and relationships with all Ames residents
- Understanding what “connections” means for Ames

#### Other

- High turnover in residents
- Help integrate students into community





## 6. Transportation Choices

### STRENGTHS

#### Alternative Modes of Transportation

- New Complete Streets plan
- Have options (Transit, expanding trail & bike route network)
- Build more bike infrastructure
- Developed systems for transit infrastructure that are well-utilized

#### Other

- Ames Electric Utility

### CHALLENGES

#### Multimodal Options

- Weather makes year-round walking/biking difficult
- Limited capacity for CyRide expansion
- Gaps in network (missing sidewalks, bus coverage, etc.)
- Shifting from automobile orientation to complete streets way of thinking/operating

#### Other

- Creeks & railroad
- Mitigating our lack of direct routes through town
- Cost



## 7. Sustainability

### STRENGTHS

#### Citizen Awareness

- Passionate/knowledgeable citizens & resources nearby (ISU, etc.)
- Engaged community
- Community groups who are concerned and active

#### Other

- Ames water, sewer, and electric utilities

### CHALLENGES

#### Pollution

- RDF issues increasing with conversion to Natural Gas
- Reduce carbon footprint
- CO<sub>2</sub>

#### Other

- Mitigating need for parking in downtown with facing environmental challenges, like need for less cars
- Money
- Need to take a wholistic view of our policies so they don't contradict each other
- Need to see historic preservation as part of sustainability



## 8. Well-being and Healthy Living

### STRENGTHS

#### Community Interest

- Broad interest in wellness
- Community interest in improvement

#### Other

- Many recreational opportunities

### CHALLENGES

- Limited facilities for program expansion
- Prioritization and attention given demands at modern life



## 9. Subarea Planning

### STRENGTHS

- Recognized Subareas
- Easily defined subareas, strong identities
- Have subarea plans for a few targeted areas
- We recognize that subareas exist and know what they are

### CHALLENGES

- Lack defined vision
- We don't plan with a vision – we react and lose sight of the larger picture



## 10. Urban Fringe Management

### STRENGTHS

- Maintains city standards for future growth
- Good relationships with a number of nearby jurisdictions
- Existing 28E

### CHALLENGES

#### 28E

- Requires 28E compliance
- 28E agreement has challenges and cooperation

#### City Limits

- Bumping up against 1 or 2 towns in the timeframe of this plan
- Artificial limits
- Bumping into each other



## What effect could or should this plan have for the people of Ames?

### Council Responses:

- Ownership
- Inclusivity
- Predictability
- Equity
- Inspiration
- Positive Impact on Quality of Life
- Direction for growth





# What do we want the effect of this plan to be on the community of Ames?

## Council Responses:

- Direction for growth
- Strengthening our image
- Most people don't know we have this...Be realistic
- An increase in participation for this type of effort
- Be involved...
- Maintain their passion for Ames
- Channel their passion for Ames –Vision makes it clear what they can do with it





*RDG Planning & Design  
in association with  
Gruen Gruen + Associates and HDR, Inc.*



CITY OF  
**Ames**™

## **Ames Comprehensive Plan**

