

Staff Report

**REPORT ON SOUTH CAMPUS REDIRECTION AREAS**

April 28, 2026

**BACKGROUND:**

The City's comprehensive plan, *Ames Plan 2040*, was adopted at the end of 2021. The plan identifies several parts of Ames with the designation of Redirection Areas, which are defined as:

"Areas where changes in use or development patterns are anticipated over the next 20 years, based upon city policies or current conditions. These areas are focuses for city consideration of redevelopment plans and policies over the next 20 years. In some cases, specific plans or zoning may be applied to provide direction for specific types of changes and to address issues of compatibility and transition. The Redirection Area designation does not specify a time period or type of change. It acknowledges a potential for change and a public interest in guiding it over the next 20 years."

In May 2024, staff presented a list of three Areas deemed most likely to redevelop in the near future. From that list, Council directed staff to begin work on the Redirection Area along Hunt and Knapp Streets south of the Iowa State University Campus to gain feedback on interests for this area and to determine if any changes to zoning would be appropriate (See maps in Attachments A & B).

The South Campus Redirection Area is north of Knapp Street, between S. Sheldon and Lynn Avenues. The area contains 56 properties, including two properties not originally included within the boundaries. The Hunt-Knapp Area has a mixture of single-family homes and multifamily buildings. Many of these buildings, particularly the single-family homes, are rentals and are in poor condition and will likely need to be replaced in the near future. An attachment identifying single-family home statistics as a proxy of redevelopment possibilities is included (Attachment C).

The area primarily has RH (Residential High Density) zoning with either the West University or East University Impact Overlay zoning. The Overlays were created in 2006 to address building design compatibility with older structures in the area and to increase the minimum required parking in response to concerns about overcrowding of rental dwellings and street parking issues. The O-UIE has demolition criteria and more defined design standards than the O-UIW due to the higher concentration of fraternity and sorority buildings. Generally, the divide of the two zones is between Welch and Stanton Avenue. A summary of the existing zoning (the base districts and the overlays) for the Redirection Area can be found in Attachment D.

In 2025, staff reached out to the owners of the properties in the Redirection Area. In the course of those discussions, a handful of owners responded to staff and expressed a wide

range of opinions about the neighborhood.

- Minimum parking is excessive
- Old brick buildings should be preserved
- This area should be an extension of Campustown (i.e. meaning allowing for more intense development)
- Bars should be kept out of the neighborhood
- The neighborhood should be multifamily, with space for non-students
- Incentives might be needed for redevelopment

Staff also met with representatives from Iowa State University for their impression on student life in the area, although no specific ISU property is within the study area. These included campus planners, the University Chief of Police, the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs, and the Assistant Vice President for Real Estate and Capital Planning. The ISU representatives had a wide range of ideas:

- Insufficient parking is a problem
- Students in the single-family housing at the west end of the Redirection area throw rowdy parties
- Apartment buildings cut down on rowdy behavior
- Students will drive to South Campus and park to be as close to campus as possible
- Would like to see the area attract non-students

Since the start of the Redirection Area outreach, Council has already made tweaks to parts of the Zoning Ordinance that are also relevant to this area. One specific change regarding townhome design would apply to small infill sites in this area. In April 2025, Council adopted changes to townhome regulations to incentivize higher quality townhome designs with garages and building features to support context sensitive infill citywide. (Attachment C). The primary benefit is a reduction in parking for a townhome style apartment unit with a garage for 3-bedroom or less units of only 2 parking spaces. This parking reduction also applies within the O-UIE and O-UIW.

## **OPTIONS:**

Based upon the initial input and staff's assessment of the conditions in this area, staff believes that some change in standards would support desired redevelopment. These options do not suggest changes to any of the substantive design and building requirements related to brick materials, fenestration, roof form, etc., but are instead focused primarily on issues related to the intensity of development.

### **Option 1: Minor Changes for All Areas with New Development**

If the Council elects to go with only minor changes to the South Campus Redirection Area, the most significant would likely be to adjust parking rates.

- A reduction in the additional parking requirement to match the rest of the City for Apartment Dwelling parking rates (i.e., remove the extra 25% requirement)

### **Option 2: Medium Changes for All Areas with New Development**

In addition to the changes in Option 1, medium changes could include:

- Allow for front yard setbacks reductions for all properties similar to the the allowances along Knapp Street within the O-EIU when providing for front entrances to units.
- Allow for density adjustments for apartments with fewer bedrooms per unit similar to the recently adopted O-WUPED Overlay that calculates a bedroom density rather than unit density
- Incorporate a step back to fourth stories with reduced setbacks

### **Option 3: Large Changes for All Areas with New Development**

In addition to the changes in Options 1 and 2, large changes could include:

- A large reduction of setbacks, particularly front and side setbacks to allow for larger buildings and increase development intensity
- Eliminate the 4-story height limit and allow the full height of RH (100 feet or 9 stories, whichever is lower) - this could be structured to maintain a reduced height along Knapp Street that borders single-family zoning.
- A reduction or elimination of minimum parking rates beyond what is required elsewhere in Ames for Apartments Dwellings within RH Zoning.

### **Option 4: Direct Changes to Specific or Limited Areas of the Redirection Area with New Development**

The Redirection Area includes portions of both the West University Impact Overlay and the East University Impact Overlay, with the boundary of the two areas located mid-block between Welch and Stanton Avenue.

- Any of the changes listed above could be targeted to specific areas or streets/blocks of the Redirection Area rather than allowed within all the areas.

### **Option 5: No Changes at This Time**

City Council could maintain the current zoning as is and revisit the issue if there is a development project in the future. The Reinvestment District designation would be maintained as the land use designation.

### **STAFF COMMENTS:**

The general options presented above represent a range of choices, depending on how much of a change the Council wants to pursue for this area. In discussions with property owners, staff found a wide range of opinions about how the neighborhood should evolve. Responses ranged from little change to a desire to see a development intensity akin to CSC.

The above policy choices do not represent a method for achieving the goals. After Council has given direction, staff will work to craft revised zoning that meets the stated objectives. These changes most likely would include:

- Changes to the overlay districts, or
- Creating new zoning district or overlay districts

At this time staff believes the best approach is to apply new standards to new development projects, especially if development is incentivized with bonuses or other deviations related to design, affordability, etc. This helps to encourage projects that would more fully realize the goals for redevelopment investment compared to partial changes or adjustments to existing sites that do not otherwise create substantial improvements. However, depending on the scope of change it could be applied uniformly to all sites regardless of full redevelopment or incremental changes. The changes could also be structured in a way to incentivize certain development with a density bonus. This would involve allowing for greater development rights in exchange for improved design, affordable units, etc.

If City Council elects to proceed with substantive changes to the Zoning standard, additional outreach will likely be desirable. Staff has met with some property owners in the area, but there has been no outreach in relation to adjacent neighborhoods. Once the scope of zoning changes is known, staff would then be able to engage further with owners in the area and invite comments from the South Campus Area Neighborhood.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

[Attachment A - Maps.pdf](#)

[Attachment B - Redirection Areas Presentation - Excerpts.pdf](#)

[Attachment C - Classification & Statistics.pdf](#)

[Attachment D - Zoning Descriptions.pdf](#)

[Attachment E - Text Amendment to create Townhome Building Type Standards.pdf](#)