

Staff Report

**REQUEST TO INITIATE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION CHANGE
AND REZONING TO RESIDENTIAL FOR PROPERTIES IN THE IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARK ON UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD**

February 27, 2024

BACKGROUND:

The Iowa State Research Park (ISURP) has sent a letter to Council requesting that the land use designation and subsequent rezoning for two parcels in the Research Park be amended to allow for residential uses. City Council at their February 13th meeting referred this request to a future meeting for discussion.

The properties are addressed as 3200 and 3300 University Boulevard, location map attached. The 3200 University site is a wooded flag lot that extends west towards the Story County Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor. The 3300 University sites has extensive frontage along University and borders the Tedesco facility along its eastern edge.(See attached map)

The current zoning for the Research Park is the industrial base zone of Research Park Innovation Zoning District (RI), which does not allow for residential uses of apartments for household living. The RI zoning district was established in 2014 to support expansion of Research Park distinguished from typical industrial zoning districts by focusing on R&D, Office, supportive commercial uses, and a setting and design elements creating a people centered collaborative environment, accentuated by a Hub area and the central natural area of the Tedesco Corridor. The Master Plan for the area was prepared by and proposed by ISURP and adopted with the RI rezoning (see attached). The City partnered in the construction of infrastructure to serve the southern expansion with the new RI zoning.

With the adoption of Ames Plan 2040, the land use designation for this site became Employment, with the following goals:

- Provide attractive and well-functioning settings for a range of industrial enterprises.
- Building on Ames' natural and historic strength in research.
- Minimize impact and external effect on City neighborhoods.
- Discourage industrial uses that are large resource users for water and sewer services with system capacity impacts.

The Employment land use designation Development Guidelines specifically state: "Residential uses should not be permitted in these areas. Site design should provide separation and buffering between

intense industrial and adjacent residential use.”

As a result of the land use designations descriptions, staff indicated to the property owner that adding standalone residential uses would require Ames Plan 2040 land use amendment to a residential designation. Thus, the request by the applicant for the changes. They believe the sites can accommodate residential use without impacting the overall ISURP purpose of supporting additional employment opportunities in the community.

Staff has reviewed two concepts of standalone residential for the 3300 University Site with a range of 24 to 30 units, essentially a medium density design for the site. The applicant desires to building townhomes for rent and possibly apartments. The site is vacant with no significant natural resources, but it does abut the bike trail and park to the east. Access, design, relationship of the site to the park were the primary concerns.

However, staff has not reviewed a specific concept of development for 3200 University, which is situated quite differently as a wooded flag lot. Issues of utilities, access, natural resources, and park interface are all important for this site. Development of the site with townhomes or apartments is unknown at this time. Both parcels would need to be accessed from a new shared drive from the Cottonwood/University traffic circle intersection.

If the requested land use change from Employment to Residential Neighborhood 3 (RN-3) is approved, the zoning for the site could be either FS-RL (3.75 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) to 10.0 du/ac) or a medium density zoning district with a minimum of 10 du/ac to 22.31 du/ac) The PUD Overlay would defined design standards and building types, the base zone would control density. The appropriate zoning district would be part of the review process based upon housing type in this case rather than prioritization density.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: Initiate a Land Use Amendment for either 3300, 3200, or both properties to RN-3 as a minor amendment without concurrent review of a PUD rezoning request.

This option would be the typical two-step process of considering land use needs generally then considering site-specific attributes with rezoning. With the prior 1997 LUPP, this was the prescribed method of changing land use and zoning. The two-step process allows an applicant to get general approval of a use while working on design details and not investing in up front design requirements while awaiting a final decision no land use. However, the rezoning approval and design review is an independent decision step in the process that occurs after the land use change being approved and takes some additional time. The timing of rezoning application would be at the applicant's discretion.

Option 2: Initiate a Land Use Amendment for either 3300, 3200, or both properties to RN-3 as a minor amendment and require a concurrent review of a rezoning to FS-RL or FS-RM with a PUD Overlay request for consideration of more detail site design and compatibility requirements.

This option would be a consolidated process that is most appropriate for smaller areas and when

specific design decisions may influence the final outcome of the decision-making process. This option requires more work up front to design a conceptual plan and PUD rezoning application with the land use amendment review. The upfront investment in design can ultimately shorten the overall approval timeline. (Applicant supports this option)

Option 3: Decline to initiate a Land Use Amendment for both properties at this time and maintain the Employment Land Use Designation.

City Council would choose this option if there is no interest in consideration of residential uses in this area.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The City Council is asked to consider a Comprehensive Plan Land Use Amendment for two properties. City Council could elect to initiate the process for one or both of the properties to consider an RN-3 designation to allow for standalone residential.

In light of the current housing needs of the community, staff believes the request for 3300 University site located along University has the most merit as candidate for adding apartment or town home housing to the area. Site constraints of 3200 University and its proximity to other uses and sites has not been vetted in as much detail and would need to be considered with any land use amendment process.

Due to the unique setting of this site(s) and the need for its development to be cohesive with the intent and general design of the ISURP and the relationship to the abutting park, staff believes ultimately a PUD rezoning will be needed with any change to allow for residential development. This would be consistent with Option 2.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment A.pdf](#)

[Attachment B.pdf](#)