

★ Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

396

Date March 26, 2007

Report from Beaverdale residents-Land Use Principles as applied to Development of Rice School.

Moved by _____ to receive and file.

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
HENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VCLASSIS				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

CERTIFICATE

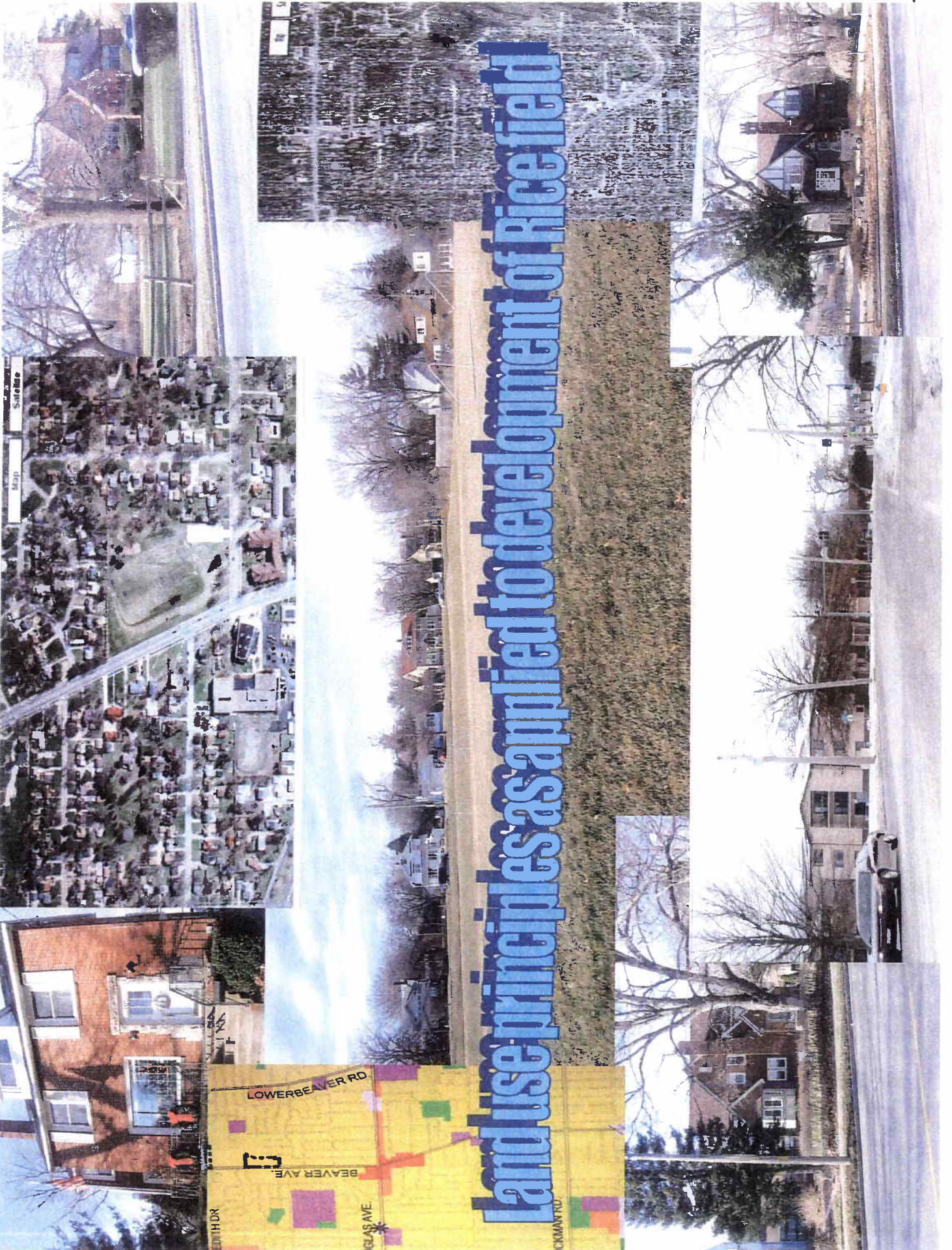
I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

Mayor

City Clerk

Land use principles as applied to development of Rice field





INTRODUCTION: By Bruce L. Butler.

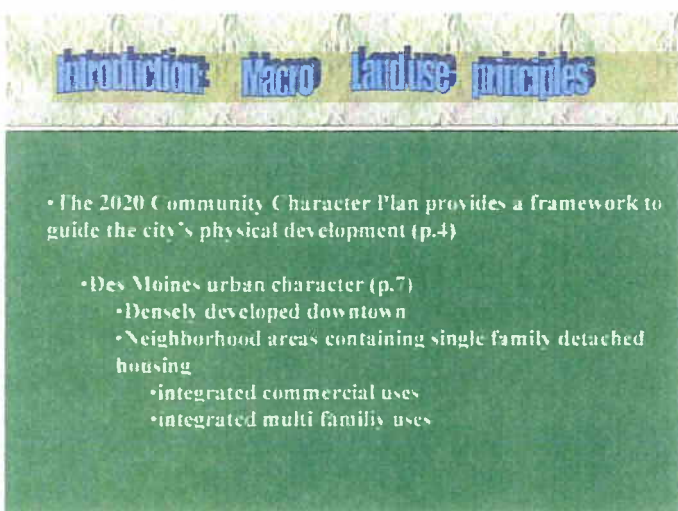
I, and the group of Beaverdale residents I am appearing with tonight, have come to speak in opposition of rezoning the old Rice School site. Our comments will be supplemented by a power point presentation, which I will attempt to synchronize with the speakers.

We believe that the development is so out of character with the neighborhood, that it violates the City's land use planning guidance. It is important to remember that the developer is asking for a land use change as well as a zoning change. It is also important to note from the outset, that "neighborhood character" is a policy consideration, which you are called upon to judge and advise the City Council. It is not a rule of law subject to the authority of City lawyers, nor is it a specification capable of calculation by city engineers. It is up to you, not the staff, to decide whether this PUD is consistent with land use principles. All we are asking from you is sound the judgment, which our land use principles compel.

Lets start by defining our terms. Webster's dictionary instructs us that the term "character" means a **distinctive or typical trait**.

"Character" is the central theme of the City of Des Moines' land use plan, entitled DES MOINES 2020 COMMUNITY CHARACTER PLAN.

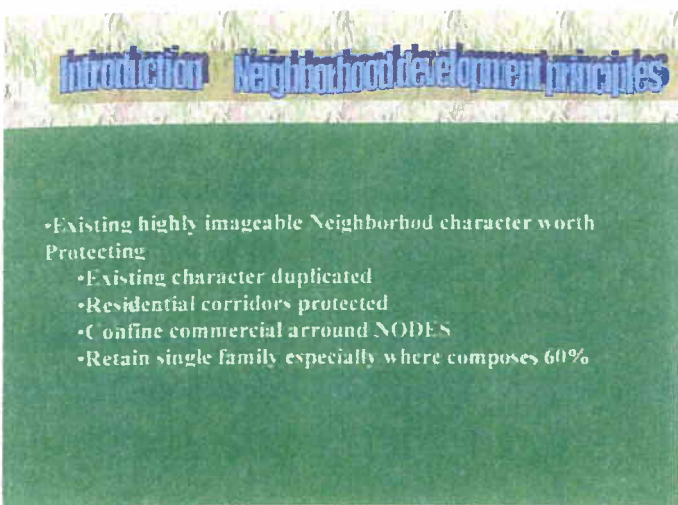
We concede that a City of Des Moines size is capable of supporting quite a few characters. And, we caution anyone from using land use principles out of context. When we met with the developer and questioned the conformity of his plan to the Des Moines 2020 Character principles he, the architects and lawyer were left nonplussed. I now notice that the only change to the developer's application since the meeting, is the inclusion of 2020 land use phrases. I have studied the entire document, and I think our arguments against the development are





well supported, and the developer has taken principles out of context.

So, let's start with an overview of the Planning guidance: Some of the general principles which support the developer's plan include:



BUT: A large portion of this document is devoted to protecting the existing character of our neighborhoods. The discussion about neighborhoods starts with a history of the architectural development, fully explores the reasons for decline in residential areas, and formulates a plan for protecting neighborhoods.

In this document we are told that Des Moines traditional neighborhoods have an existing character worthy of **PROTECTING**.

Beaverdale is identified by the City as a specific **DISTRICT**, which according to this document is a "**HIGHLY IMAGEABLE** neighborhood" that upon entry, you know that you are there.

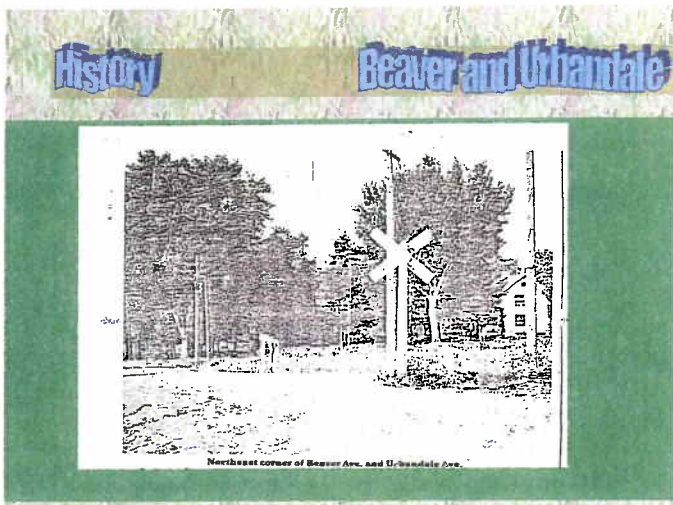
According to our land use plan, efforts to protect community character like that found in Beaverdale is central to the City "remaining a viable community."

We are told that physical elements combine to give Beaverdale, and the rest of the city, its character. Desirable qualities of neighborhoods should be RETAINED.

The planners warn us that residential corridors should not lose their character due to traffic patterns and commercial opportunity.

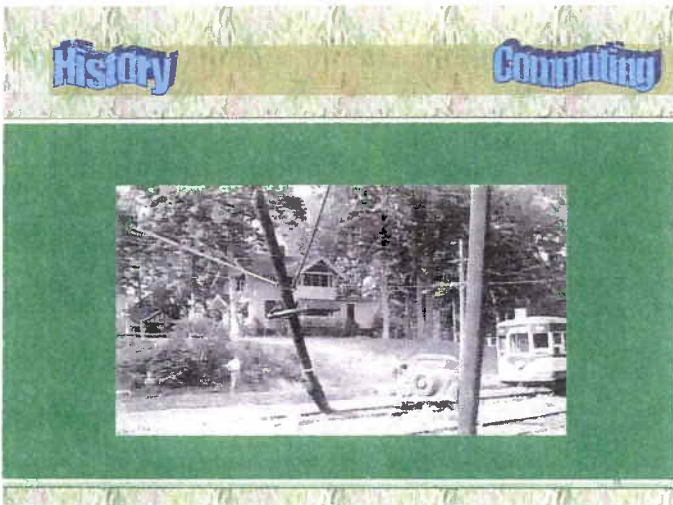
I, and the ten people who follow me – all of whom are residents or business owners in Beaverdale – believe that the proposed PUD has its own character, and while interesting -- with some individual aspects even pleasant -- it is, as a whole, obtuse to the character of Beaverdale. It is a **micro** mix of commercial and residential which is combined into one dense multi-use spot.

Furthermore, we believe that rather than protecting the residential corridor existing on Beaver Avenue, it is a step toward combining the north and south business districts, leading to a commercial corridor.



HISTORY: By Jack Holveck. In order to understand the character of Beaverville, we need to review the history of its establishment and development.

By the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, housing development had begun in the northwest area of the city, and beyond. By and large, the new residents neither farmed nor developed independent commercial activities. Their livelihoods were connected to city by a commuter rail/trolley, known as the Urbandale Line, which was completed in 1906. The residents took the name 'Urbandale' to describe their neighborhood and way of life. A brand new way for middle class workers to live – by commuting – was instituted. So the character of Beaverville arose as an original, progressive comfortable, new way of middle class living.



Prior to 1907, Des Moines did not have one school district. There were many small districts created by the neighborhoods they served. During 1917, the Iowa Legislature provided grants to any community, which incorporated an independent school district. The legislation prompted more school districts to be established. Northwest residents outside the city limits incorporated a school district and named it "Urbandale". Those residents within the city, living about the Urbandale train line, met at Rice School and adopted the name

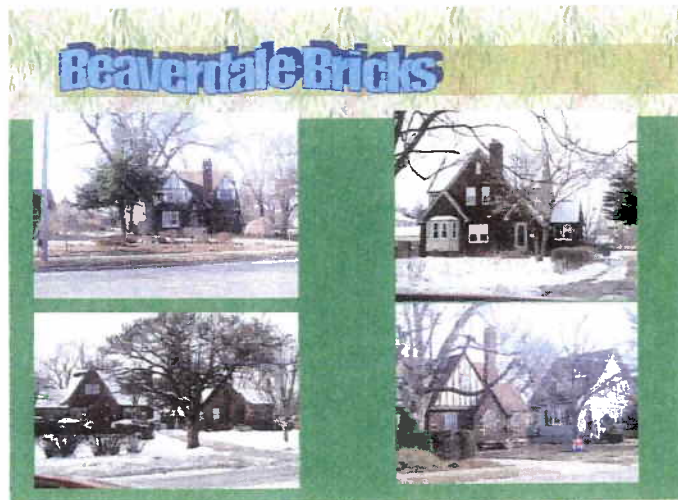


“Beaverdale” for their community.

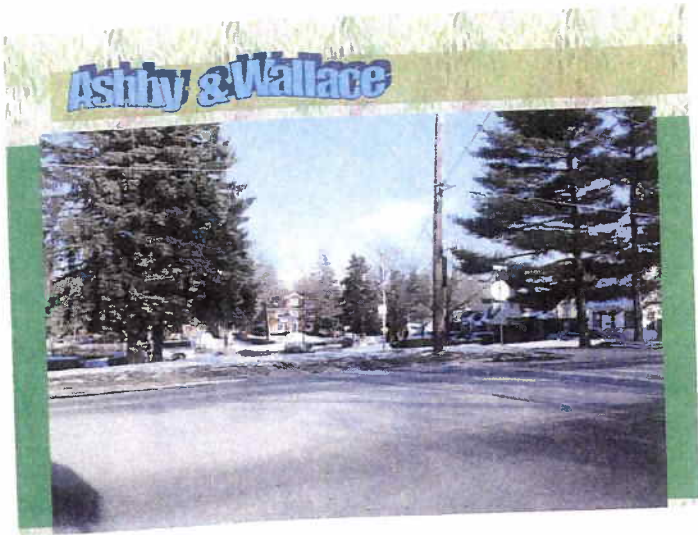
One or two wooden school buildings had previously served the community as a school, but upon consolidation of the Des Moines Independent Community School District, the parcel at issue was immediately purchased, and in 1909, the brick building we all remember as Rice School was erected. The first classes were held in 1910.



The neighborhood flourished around this school and its playing field.



What are now described as “Beaverdale brick” housing and other substantial housing stock sprung up in pure detached single-family housing developments.



As the automobile became more widely used, new homes were accompanied by freestanding garages. This again became a new, progressive and desirable way of life. The Historical district designation of the Ashby Wallace circle adjacent to the Rice site is based upon it being one of the first automobile commuting communities in the United States, characterized by single-family houses with detached garages

Why isn't all of Beaverdale historically designated? Because, the 1930's brought what we might term as depression housing. Small inexpensive wood framed houses with little amenities were all that could be marketed. WWI barracks were sliced up and with ends wall slapped on, became houses around the northwest. Some of these structures still exist with small additions in Beaverdale, although most were placed by a developer in Urbandale near Merle Hay Road.

Subsequent to WWII, the high standards of the "Beaverdale Brick" were not resurrected. Ranch houses and Levitt town type of structures fulfilled the need for new housing. Still, Beaverdale was well enough established to be able to maintain its character as the authentic American dream – substantial detached single-family housing. It was, and still is, a neighborhood to which many aspire to join, and it is an obtainable dream

The housing proposed by this developer in this PUD is as out of character with Beaverdale. Row housing or new-fashioned cluster housing is Not Beaverdale single-family living. Its scale, micro mixed density and mixed use is another assault on the character of the neighborhood. It take only minimum powers of observation to notice that Beaverdale is not a neighborhood with a substantial amount of apartment buildings or condominiums with shared walls, garages and no frontages. We need to develop in conformity with the typical, not anomalies.

History

Ice cream at Beaver & Fagen



History

Complimentary to residential



Village

Complimentary to residential



COMMERCIAL DISTRICT:

INTRODUCTION: By Sharon Hummel.

It is no mystery how, at the intersection of Beaver Avenue and the Urbandale Line, a commercial district supporting the residential commuters arose. The commercial district exists today much as it has always existed. It is composed of small-scale hardware, restaurants, banking, clothing, lawyer, doctor, dentist, pharmacy, barber shop, beauty salons, and other residential supportive services.

The south business district has never been an overpowering feature of Beaverdale. It has always supplemented and supported the quality of life in Beaverdale. Institutional activities such as churches and schools have had far more cohesive influence on the neighborhood than commercial activities. Nonetheless, the business center has always been a distinct component of Beaverdale. It has given the community the ambiance, if not reality, of a distinct village. The cohesive residential housing stock around the business district act as a boundary, and creates the town center like character.

BEVERDALE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL NODE



BEVERDALE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL NODE



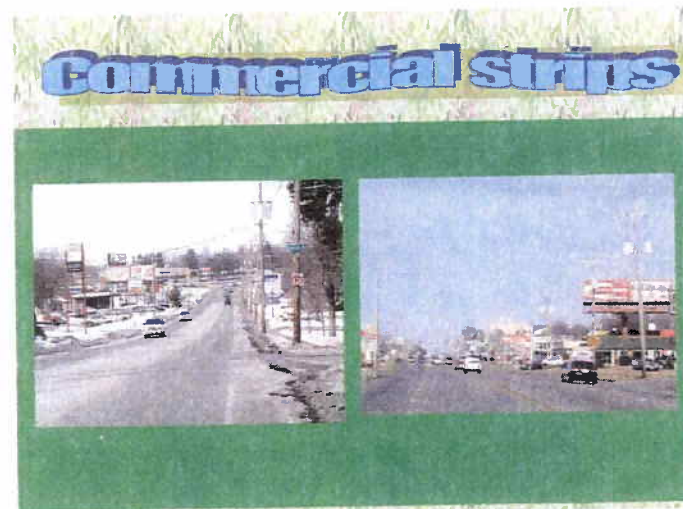
Northern commercial Node



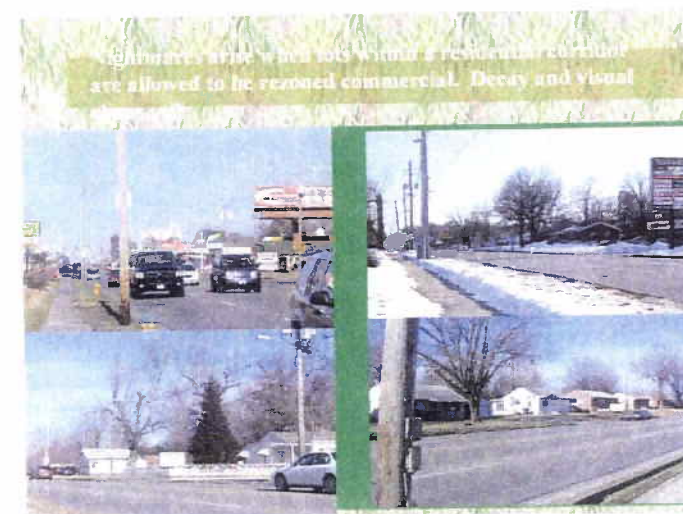
For reasons, which are particularly germane to the present issue, the northern commercial district developed far more intensively than the southern shopping area.



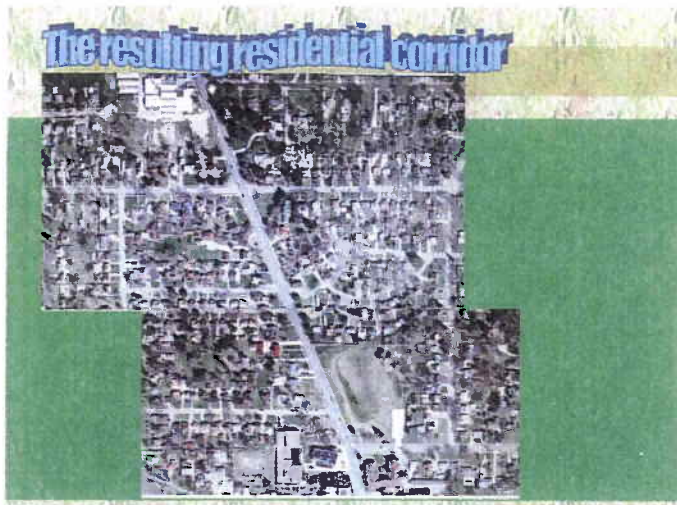
At one time, the northern commercial area was made up of small shops along a long brick building, which might be thought of a precursor to today's shopping strips. A grocery store developed across the corner to the shops, and small individual buildings and businesses sat opposite. A developer allowed the multi shops building to decay, and purchased adjacent single family housing stock to the east on Douglas. A change of land use and zoning was requested and granted, and a small modern strip mall was erected and a huge gas station/convenience store.



Much of the NODE of that district is now not readily distinguishable from Merle Hay Road, south of Merle Hay Mall. The nature of these businesses offers more than local residential supportive services. Commuters, east west along Douglas, and north to Johnston, as well as outlying customers are attracted to these businesses. It is a very high traffic area and not pedestrian friendly. Developers are signing contracts with landowners, contingent upon further commercial zoning to the west and south.



The City's land use plan warns of just this type of encroachment of commercial uses upon residential corridors. We are cautioned that residential lots lost to commercial zoning often effects residential corridors adversely. Speculators awaiting commercial rezoning allow residential holdings to deteriorate, tending to give the housing corridor a look of depression. Also traffic calming is important to protect residential corridors.



The two commercial districts in Beaverdale are centered around commercial nodes. Commercial development outside of these nodes into a residential corridor is discouraged by the 2020 Land Use plan and should not be allowed.





Land use principles

Residential corridors require special protection

- A change in zoning of one lot often results in purchasing of residences for speculation, awaiting additional commercial zoning
- Decay and a look of depression of housing stock often results
- Therefore: Commercial uses should be confined to NODL



VILLAGE CONCEPT: By George Davis. My family and I moved to Beaverdale because of the small town atmosphere existing in the heart of Des Moines. There is nothing like it in Des Moines, or elsewhere for that matter. This small town appeal was, and still is, why people move to Beaverdale. The Rice site is a piece of our heritage. It our town common. The 2020 Land Use plan states that the City policy is to keep commercial use at NODES, so as to protect residential corridors.

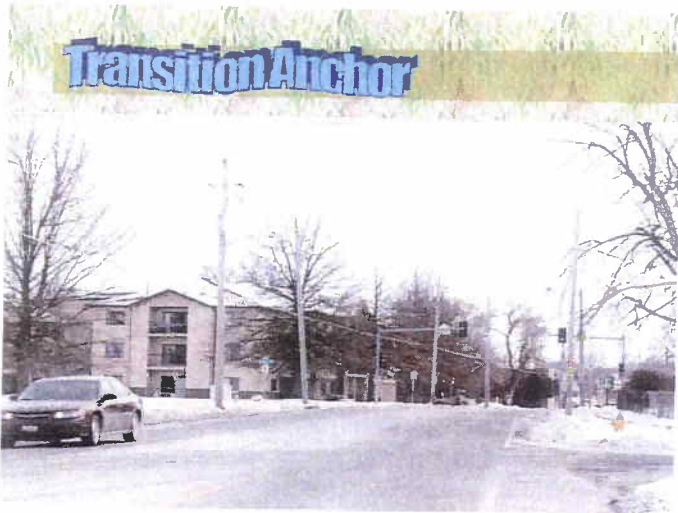


The residential corridor and Rice field preserves the village, or town center, nature of the southern business center. The residential corridor blocks further commercial activity and prevents the town center from being diffused.

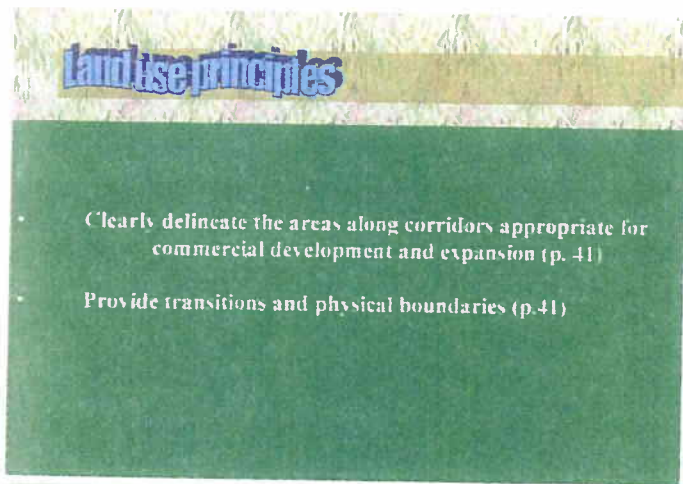


Project Main Street initiative to revitalize the core business district delineated the boundaries of the core district. It quite explicitly, and correctly stated that the core business district in Beaverdale ended at Bonds. This developer's commercial plan is an add-on.

The same can be said of the residential corridor south of the center as Beaver leads to Dahls Grocery.



The apartment building on the north end of the Village, adjacent to Rice field serves as a transition from commercial to residential. As a physical boundary, it serves a clear indicator that things are different. As you drive past the apartment building to the south, you enter downtown Beaverdale. You slow to 25 mph. You encounter shops and pedestrians.



The 2020 planning guidance explicitly adopts the concept of a clearly delineated business district, and warns us from diffusing and spreading development into residential parts of our neighborhoods.

The tool of choice is to develop transitions and physical boundaries. This is clearly the function of the apartment building adjacent to Rice field, and the developers commercial use will destroy the integrity of the node, and spread the commercial and residential density.

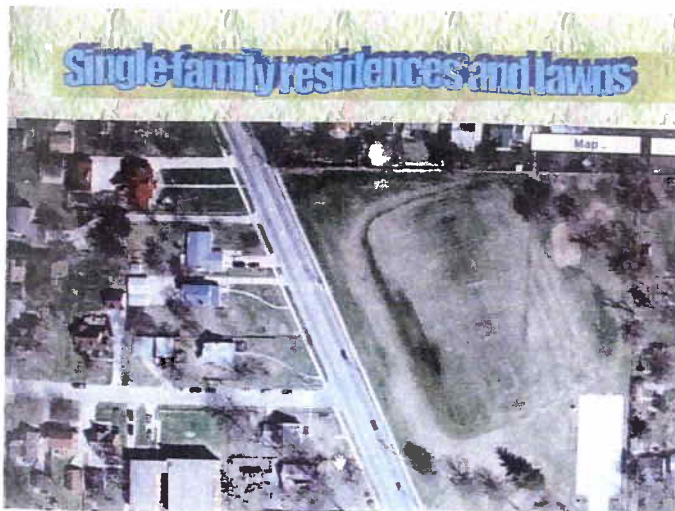


As a business owner in Beaverdale, the prospect of any commercial development on the Rice field worries me. I, like many business owners, as well as residents, have been concerned about the vitality of the business in the southern center, for a number of years. It has been a struggle to maintain thriving supportive service businesses. There are still vacancies to be filled. Additional shops and office space on Rice field will diminish the lure of the core district to new business and customers.

I have experienced first hand the difficulty of motivating land owners to upgrade the commercial structures to help revitalized the core business district. One can imagine the easy fit the developers plan for office and retail space below apartments would be in the present commercial district. But, since the current property owners were not motivated to make the changes and additions, does not justify placing the concept down the street. The core district already consists of buildings with short set backs on Beaver Avenue.



As an active participant in area business organizations, I am aware that some developers and business owners have a new concept for Beaverdale. A concept more urban in character than the single-family residential character now existing on Beaver Avenue. We can get a glimpse of the concept by looking at Drake and the East Village revitalization.



But this is the wrong place to erect this concept. By the time you find yourself at Rice field, commercial activity, both north and south have ended, and you are well inside a residential corridor.

The properties facing the Rice site has large front lawns. The short setback and multi use is out of place on the Rice site.



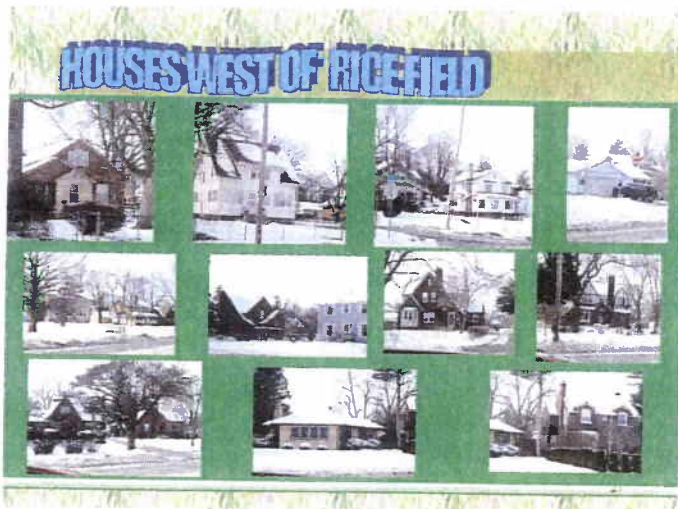
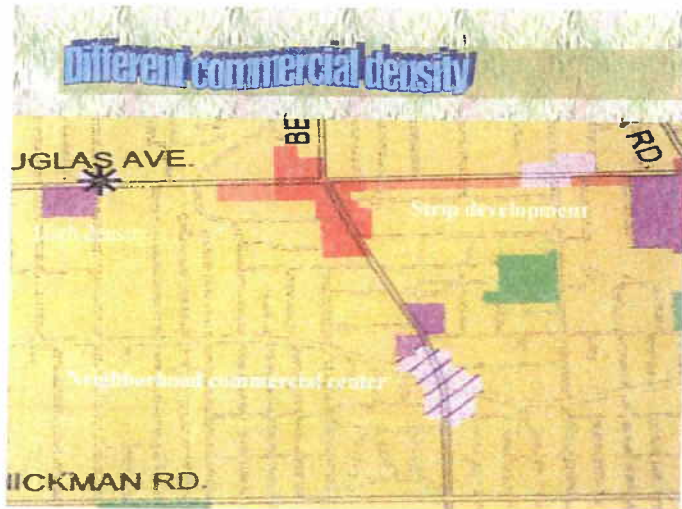
RESIDENTIAL CORRIDOR:

A. CONTINUITY: By Jerry Szumski

The two business areas separated by three blocks of desirable single family dwellings and Rice field. The housing serves to introduce the single-family nature of the residential district to those entering Beaverdale from the north. The housing protects neighborhood integrity by calming traffic and preserving continuity between the residences east and west of Beaver Avenue. It is the stated policy of Des Moines in the 2020 plan to preserve this integrity, not to interrupt it

This satellite image of Beaverdale clearly shows the contained business districts, and the continuity between the areas east and west of Beaver Avenue.

The Land use plan depicts the area as this:



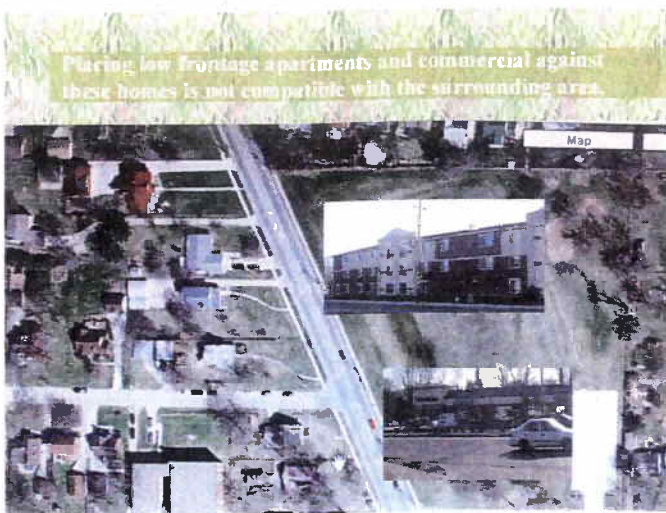
Every building across Beaver from the Rice site is a substantial residential structure with large setback and front lawns.

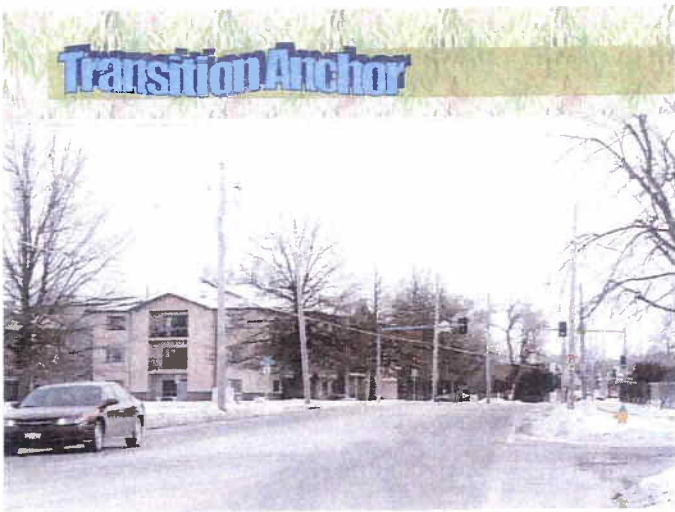


The houses on the east side of Beaver Avenue are of a similar character



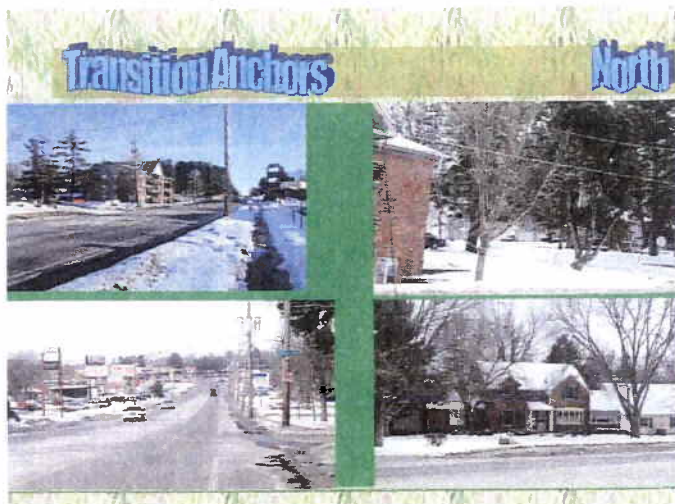
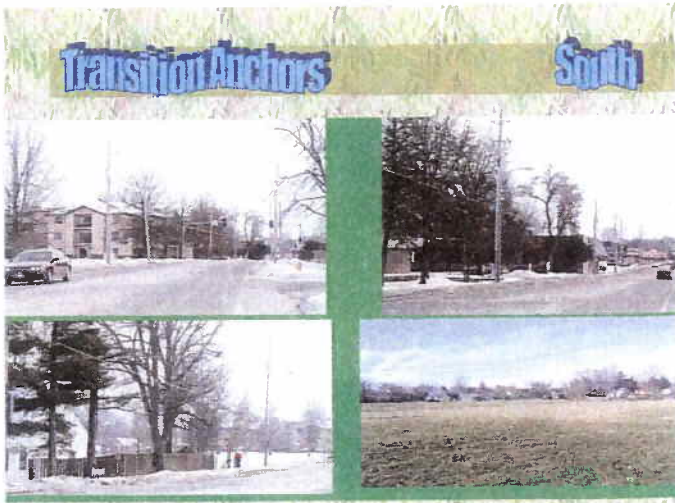
The addition of multi use structures bounded on three sides by single-family residences creates visual chaos. Our land use plan requires us to consider those existing structures. The common identifying character of the buildings and set backs is single-family residential.





The apartment building at the corner of Adams and Beaver provides a good barrier to commercial development south of the Rice site. It softens the convergence between the village and the residential area. It is what land use planners would describe as a positive break in the commercial continuity, because it protects the residential corridor.

Additional apartments or row houses eliminate the boundary and creates a new dense residential zone. A zone of apartment buildings is out of character of the neighborhood.



Single family residences and lawns



Infill housing should consider current land use, current driveway widths, garage type, depth and width of front and back yards, scale of existing residential units, building materials and current architectural styles. The single-family nature of Beaverdale suggests a level of design integrity which creates a highly imaginable neighborhood which is worthy of protection. Individual interventions such as this development removes and interrupts Beaverdale's individual design and building elements, and will result in loss of integrity which holds the neighborhood together as an identifiable district.

Single-family option

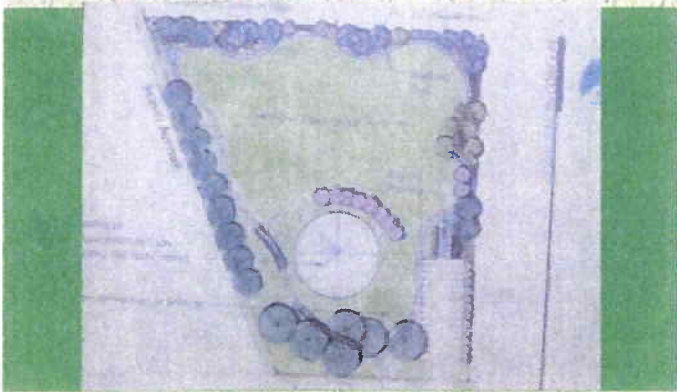


Development no more dense than single-family housing should be considered for this site. Such a development would be in character with the neighborhood and is consistent with current zoning.

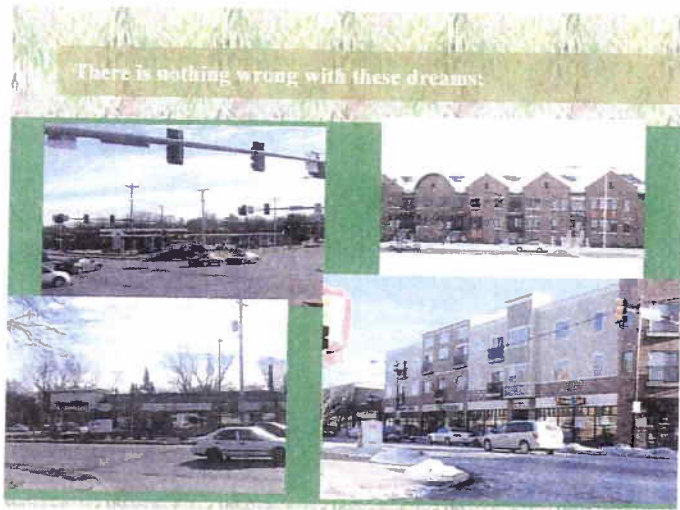
(This slide depicts single-family residences on the Rice site by superimposing a photograph of residences on the Rice field).

We specifically suggested this alternative to the developer at his meeting, but it was rejected.

Alternative land use



Auxiliary uses consistent with R-1 60 zoning should also be considered as alternatives before destroying the residential corridor with commercial and high-density housing.

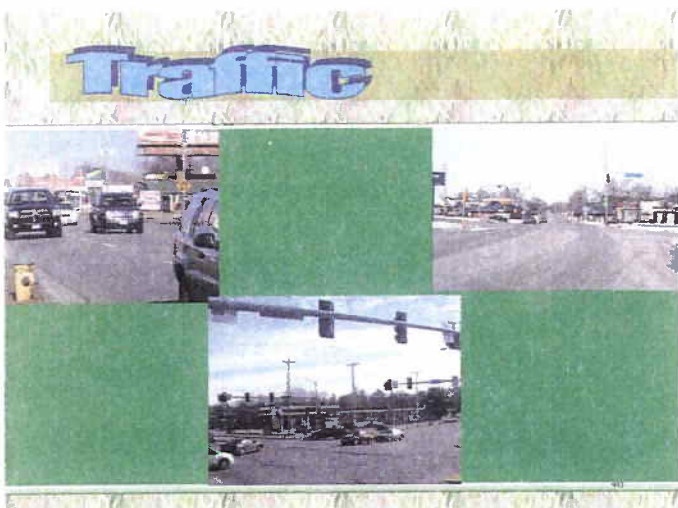


According to the 2020 plan, if strong residential protection policies are not implemented, uncertainty about future uses encourages speculative purchase and disinvestments. Change of lots to commercial often effect residential corridors adversely. Residences are allowed to deteriorate, and result in look of depression to the corridor. Housing declines in anticipation of commercial. So, the policy of Des Moines is to keep commercial use at nodes and protect residential corridors.

There is nothing wrong with these urban development concepts:



But, they are misplaced in this single-family residential corridor.



TRAFFIC: By Joan Thorup

If one drives north along Beaver Avenue, one notices that the traffic leads out of the residential district into one of the most dangerous and pedestrian hostile intersection in Des Moines. -- Beaver and Douglas -- Moreover, the speed limit is almost uniformly ignored. The speeds can be observed well over 35mph.

In the area of the Rice field, bicycle lanes, pedestrian signals, school, and residences have a calming effect on the traffic. This calming effect is fragile, and often violated. Adding retail activities in this area gives the impression of a commercial corridor, with its attendant traffic use, instead of a residential corridor.

The 20/20 Land Use Plan specifically alerts us to the importance of traffic planning to protect residential corridors.

In the vocabulary of the 20/20 land use plan, Beaver Avenue is a PATH, not a major commercial corridor. It is not supposed to be a high-speed route from Johnston, through Hickman and MLK leading to downtown.

The Rice field area on Beaver Avenue has a strong positive image of residential living. Single-family dwellings humanize this PATH. It serves a gateway to the residential areas east and west of Beaver. According to the 20/20 plan, such PATHS require extra protection. A multi-use PUD works to degrade this path into a high-speed ingress and egress.

The most flagrant violation of our land use plan is the commercial development proposed to front on Adams Avenue. It encroaches on this peaceful residential street in direct violation of this land use principal designed to the residential side street. If there is anything in the 20/20 Community Character Plan which can be taken as an absolute rule, even a prohibition, it is the statement that commercial uses should not be allowed to be developed on side streets.





The developer is arguing that a 7% increase in traffic is immaterial. He bases his argument on a study which states that Beaver Avenue can support up to 18,000 trips per day.

However, the developer's premise is flawed. The capacity of existing infrastructure is a NECESSARY but INSUFFICIENT criterion to consider when deciding whether to rezone Rice field. It is the capacity of the residents to tolerate the increased traffic which should be the standard. I and my neighbors who join me tonight are here to tell you that we don't want a 7% increase in traffic. We don't want traffic density attendant to a commercial corridor. We want traffic calmed, not intensified.

Furthermore, 7% is not the end of the expected traffic increase. Four major projects are being planned for development in the vicinity of the northern commercial node. How will the traffic be encouraged to flow in the area of the Rice field? If it is encouraged to flow like Merle Hay Road, then the housing stock can be expected to follow that course as well.

Traffic calming is as important as anything to preserving a residential corridor. The 20/20 plan requires protection of homes on Beaver Avenue, not indifference.

My husband and I grew up in small villages. Like many young couples choosing to live in Beaverdale, we came for the neighborhood school and the small village nearby. Sometimes I think our

most sentimental and enjoyable years were when we had children of school age. But, every day I watch Holy Trinity School children walk to and from school, I realize that our role of protectors never ends. So, it is with some emotion that I point out to you that this development, far from being pedestrian friendly, poses a danger to pedestrians. Every day parents drop-off and pick-up their children on Beaver Avenue, out in front of Holy Trinity School. You can see the cars lining up on Beaver, right across from where the commercial part of this development is intended to be built. The cars also congregate on Adams. The same conditions occur when church services and other church activities are held.

The PUD developers tell us that they intend 232 additional personal use vehicles entering and leaving their PUD. In addition there will be commercial vehicles entering and leaving the PUD. The character I foresee is traffic chaos, and its attendant dangers.

Please, do not allow this PUD to be developed in this peaceful part of Beaverville.

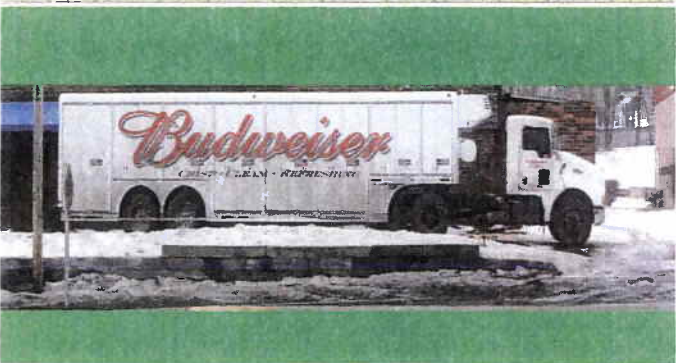
Adams houses adjacent to PUD



Exit through side street



New Traffic type for Adams



ADAMS AVENUE: By Karl Dow

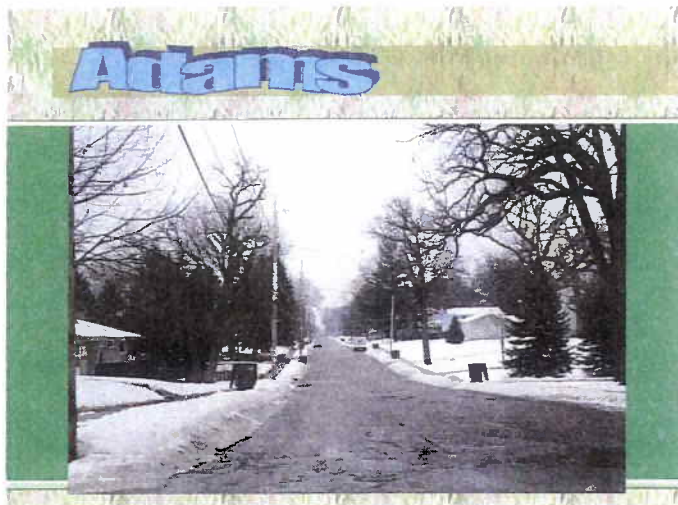
With all the attention on Beaver Avenue, we have a tendency to overlook the adverse effect this Development will have on Adams Avenue.

Next to Ashby & Wallace, Adams Avenue is one of the most recognized streets in Beaverdale. It is primarily composed of delightful single-family residences. Perhaps due the Rice School, it has always been prime housing stock, traditionally occupied by young families with children. It remains an attractive street to move into and grow a family.

The developer's plan places the entrance to his PUD on Adams Avenue. This creates a substantial change in the traffic on this street. While it does not necessarily create a corridor to 38th on to Urbandale, that path does become a convenient way to re enter Beaver Avenue.

I quote from the 20/20 Land use Plan: New commercial development and expansion of existing commercial along major corridors should front upon and have primary access along the major corridor and not from an adjacent residential side street. It is inappropriate to introduce commercial traffic into or through a residential area. The impact of such commercial expansion upon the adjacent residential neighborhoods outlined in this section should be a primary consideration in determining the appropriateness of the development request.

More importantly, Traffic around the entrance significantly degrades the quiet enjoyment of the adjoining property homes. The cute bungalow adjoining the Rice site and Adams looks like a sitting duck to become an adjunct to the development, whether by building or a parking lot. This little bungalow should not bear the burden of serving as the barrier to protect the rest of the residential street from this multi use development. It is too fragile. It is too important to preserve another delightful place to begin a family or retire to.



An entrance to a busy development with its combined uses, actually poses a dangerous threat to both pedestrian and vehicle traffic coming to and from the senior housing facing that proposed entrance. The residents of the single family houses and the senior apartments should not have to prepare themselves to confront, beer trucks, bread trucks, courier vans, delivery trucks, and convenience customers. Nor should the children of Holy Trinity School.

This PUD is an affront to the peaceful residential side street, and should be denied.

ENVIRONMENTAL: By Rob Shaffner

The Rice site is an environmentally neutral space. As green area, it creates no pollution, and it absorbs Co2 emissions. As much as it is able, its retention capabilities protect Wallace Lane homeowners from flooding.

Water run-off is an important consideration for this particular site. When Rice school was standing, it had substantial flooding problems, even though it sat on the highest spot and had an entire playing field for run-off. The basin in the field often filled and flooded. Wallace Lane has no storm water sewer, so the residences on Wallace lane have considerable problems with accumulating storm water on the street and yards.

The developer proposes to place a dense assembly of buildings, with open space consisting of mainly streets and parking. Our engineering consultant advises us that the design will create substantial change in the drainage pattern, which will cause increased shedding of water. Our engineering consultant also said that the version of the plan he reviewed violates water retention standards.

We are advised that the provision of a 10 inch pipe is an expedient, which he is skeptical will solve the problem. First, there is no storm water sewer on Wallace, and thus no access to the down stream utility. Second, if a eight-inch pipe is extended to Ashby Creek, it is simply an ineffective and inappropriate makeshift for a storm sewer. If the water which is not accommodated by a 10 inch pipe causes flooding, as anticipated, the City will have no choice, other than to build a proper storm sewer under Wallace Lane. This shifts the substantial cost of a problem created by the developer to the taxpayers. The developer should not be allowed to shift the cost to the taxpayers in this way.

For almost a hundred years, engineers could not solve the problem of flooding in Rice school. You should be skeptical of any expedient proposed by the developer.



Once the PUD is constructed, the developer risks nothing. We deserve your protection, by resolving reasonable skepticism by recommending denial of the PUD. Your first duty is to protect us, not rubber stamp the risk the developer is willing to place upon us.

Some recent developments in the suburbs serve as examples of the damage wrought from expedients over optimal construction standards. "Good enough" engineering calculations have not proved reliable. I am aware of housing developments where the houses around the drainage basin have flooding yards. Some have flooding basements. One condominium development near Jordan Creek was ruined by flooding and resulting mold damage.

Ken Black, the late Beavertown resident and historian, once cited an instance of engineers ignoring what the residents knew by intuition: two houses were built over an old coal mine in Beavertown, and the neighbors watched the coal mine engulfed them.

I'm not an engineer. But I have watched Wallace Lane flood for years. I have heard the stories of Rice school flooding. This dense conglomeration of pavement, sidewalks, and rooftops, cannot improve the drainage.

I have learned from neighbors, that not even a proper storm sewer under Wallace Lane may prevent damage from water run-off from the Rice site. Such a storm sewer would empty into Ashby Creek. Homeowners on Amick report that during heavy rains, Ashby Creek occasionally rises and has caused raw sewage to back up into basements. Our engineering consultant advises us that this is an indication that the capacity of the down stream utility is insufficient to accommodate more run off. This why the retention standards are so important.

This development is a poor replacement of the green space, and should not be allowed.

Much environmental damage cannot be measured as precisely as engineering issues. Nor can a dollar value be easily assessed. How do you value the loss of views of sunrises, and sunsets? What is it worth not to live in the shadow of an apartment complex? What is the measure of damages of a garden withered by lack of sunlight? Many of the homeowners on Wallace Lane will lose their views and their light to two-story townhouses a mere 25 feet away, and three story townhouses south and west of the Lane.

We pleaded with the developer to modify his plans to permit sunlight to the Wallace neighbors' back yards, but he chose not to do so.

I don't know the exact price to place on these amenities. I do know that potential residents, whom Beaverville competes with the suburbs to attract, can afford to pass-up Beaverville if the life-style expected from single-family housing is taken away. Perhaps we will be able to calculate the dollars lost when home ownership is replaced by rental housing and prices begin to reflect the loss of the quality of living provided by single-family homes.

Speaking of valuation, appraisers have statistics which show that inserting a modern development adjacent to older styled homes, actually depresses the value of the existing homes. All around, this is a bad deal for my fellow residents on Wallace Lane.

SCALE



SCALE: By Nancy Jewett. Everything we encounter in our daily lives revolves around SCALE. If you were to get a new desk where you are sitting and it was 2 feet higher it would be out of scale and uncomfortable for you. You would be constantly trying to compensate for what was not right. It would not be a good fit.

The Des Moines 20/20 Land Use Plan requires that NEW development should match the existing building scale. It is difficult to imagine the scale of a development of this magnitude by looking at plats and drawings. You probably cannot be acutely aware of the scale without waiting to stand in the middle of it. But, going to various developments in the City can give you a feel and the feel of this development is *not the feel of* Beaverdale. Not at all.

SCALE Cluster condos



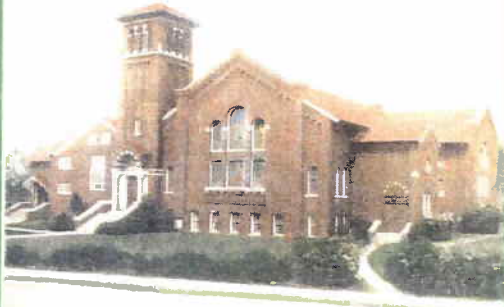
If you stand in the new cluster housing off Polk Blvd., near the freeway over pass, you get the feeling of being closed in. This feeling is not offensive but it is unlike *anything* now existing in Beaverdale. So from that prospective this development is imposing something brand new and not a good fit for Beaverdale.

SCALE Rowhouses



If you go stand by the row houses near Hoyt Sherman Place, you are impressed by the feel of renovation, and enhanced aesthetic appearance, among many large homes, and apartment buildings, the least of which is Hoyt Sherman itself. It is very large, but it faces a **huge** lawn with a **huge** building on it not to mention the scale of Iowa Methodist near by

First Federated Church



But if you stand by Rice Field and imagine a three story building there, you get the feeling of developing a whole new scale for the neighborhood. It would not be a good fit.

The senior housing to the South is an anomaly, but it serves as the positive purpose of a transition from commercial to residential

Had First Federated Church not been hit by lightning, the apartment building on which the developer's argument rests, would most likely not be there. This is a prime example of what starts the wrecking ball of a neighborhood swinging. First one change of zoning is accepted, then another, and another. The next thing you know, you have a multi-use high-density development being proposed.

These *newly* proposed apartments/condo's would create a new dominant scale, completely different from the surrounding homes on three sides.

You must bear in mind that nothing of this scale exists across Beaver, and the back yards to the North and East. The fact that the developer has been required to build a screen between the adjacent housing demonstrates that this development is out of character to the surrounding housing.

SCALE



There are 25 properties that either face or actually touch this proposed development land. Of the 25 properties 24 are single-family homes and 1 is an apartment complex. A ratio of 24 to 1 pretty well describes the scale of this area. It is single-family dwellings!

SCALE I looked up synonyms for the word scale one was "balance", I looked up balance and it gave me "stability" I looked up stability and it gave me "strength". If we allow development that is out of scale for Beaverdale we lose our balance, our stability and our strength as a neighborhood.

So, Scale is important, it's necessary, and it's vitally critical to the neighborhood of Beaverdale. The new

proposed development is NOT to the scale of Beaverdale. Beaverdale should not be put in a position to have to constantly try to compensate for a development built on a scale that is just not a good fit for Beaverdale.



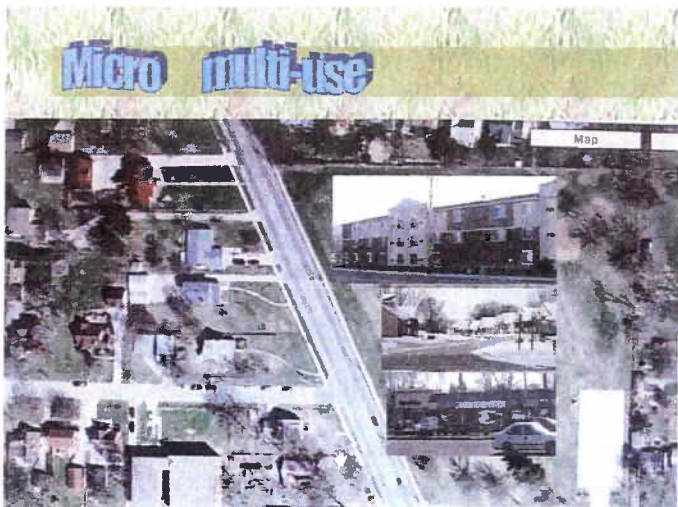
DEVELOPER'S FAILED ARGUMENT: By Jerry Skeers

The most interesting statement which I have come across since the introduction of this development is the argument “this mixed residential and commercial development is a good fit for Beaverville at this site, because Beaverville is composed of mixed residential and commercial uses.” My first impression was this was an artful equivocation on the phrase “mixed use”, by drawing attention to the macro character of the neighborhood, and applying it to the micro nature of this development. All cities, towns and villages have mixed uses. To say this, neither adds nor detracts from arguments concerning the development Rice field. The issue we confront about land use and re-zoning, tonight, is about the character of a locality surrounding Rice field, and how that locality merges into the overall character of Beaverville, and the City.

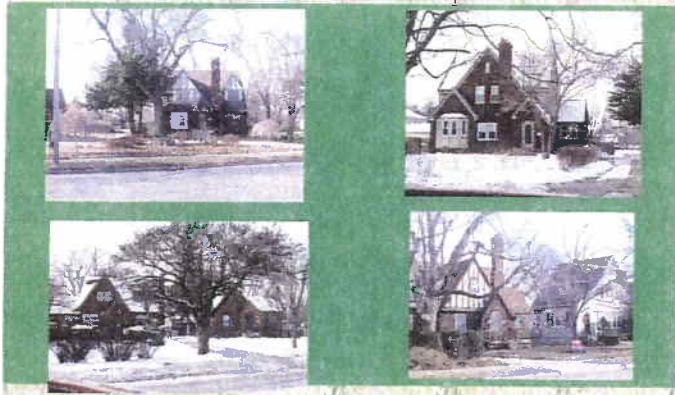
After reviewing the 20/20 Community Character, I understand why the developer has used the phrase “mixed use” like a drum-beat.

Apparently, if we were to start building Des Moines from scratch, the planners responsible for the 20/20 concept would design much of Des Moines with row houses and cluster housing mixed in with retail shops. **The 20/20 plan rejects the single use, and the separation of uses, employed by suburban planners.** The Des Moines planners focus on an urban mix of multi-family, single-family and complementary commercial. In short, it conceives of exactly what this developer has attempted to do, but on a much larger scale. We see this reflected downtown in the East Village, near the Civic Center, and west of the river. Some components are missing downtown, like basic sundry retail services, but you can see the plan taking shape, and it is certainly not objectionable.

The obvious problem in attempting to apply these concepts to all of Des Moines, -- A problem specifically recognized in the 2020 document itself -- is that Des Moines has a population density of 3.8



Neighborhood housing stock



person per acre, which is antithetical to the density of classic urban environments. Also, our existing neighborhoods are developed consistently with that density, by providing single-family housing with comparatively large setbacks.

The 2020 land use plan analyzes the mistakes we have made in the way we have brought multi-family housing and commercial uses into neighborhoods. We have destroyed residential corridors and allowed them to become high-speed corridors for suburban commuters. The 2020 plan attempts to remedy the resulting chaos by preserving what remains of residential corridors, and softening commercial corridors.

Merle Hay results of commercial interruption



The plan protects residential corridors by 1) curtailing commercial rezoning within them; 2) by confining commercial activities to existing commercial nodes, and 3) by calming traffic.

The 2020 plan provides for softening commercial corridors by bringing these urban designs I mentioned as well as residential supporting retail to over-built and high traffic areas.

Although the developer uses phrase from the 20/20 document, the developer's plan itself is completely at odds with what the 20/20 plan is trying to tell us. This developer's plan increases traffic in this residential area of Beaver Avenue. It introduces commercial traffic on Adams Avenue. It makes Adams Avenue into a corridor to 38th and Urbandale for those who wish to avoid the traffic on Beaver. It places commercial uses in an area surrounded by residential uses. It places dense housing bordering single-family housing.

Exit through side street



The developer's plan does not soften the Beaver Avenue corridor, it intensifies it. By itself, it may have good ideas, but it is in the wrong place.

We have been promised by city planners that the existing residential character of the Beaver Avenue corridor is worthy of protection.

The 20/20 planning guide tells us that neighborhood character is derived from building

styles, materials, setbacks, dimensions and streetscapes. All of which is derived from historical development. The overwhelming character of the uses put around the Rice site is single use. Single homes and single families.

The developer's entire case rests on the argument that the proximity of his development to the apartment building that replaced First Federate Church after the fire in early 80's justifies rezoning as a continuation of what already exists. The speakers preceding me have aptly shown that the developer's argument rests on taking a single land use out of context as well as taking a single principle of the land use plan out of context.

Beaver Avenue is essentially in sections, High traffic moderate commercial, pedestrian friendly commercial area, Residential corridor, with R-160 compatible auxiliary uses. So the issue is how this small section should be used.

We believe that three sides are strictly dedicated to single-family structures, and one side is a buffer from multi use. The Character is therefore R-160 and is worthy of protections. A multi family structure, cluster housing, retail and office space is not compatible with the surrounding character of the site.



CONCLUSION: by Richard Jewett. The history and character of Beavertdale has been clearly articulated by the preceding speakers. The 20/20 Community Character Plan speaks for itself, and we believe that a fair reading of that document eloquently, if not dramatically, describes what is wrong with this development.

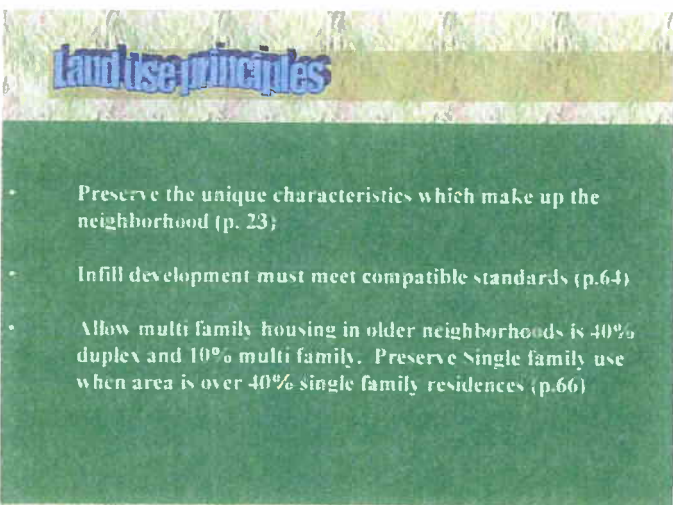
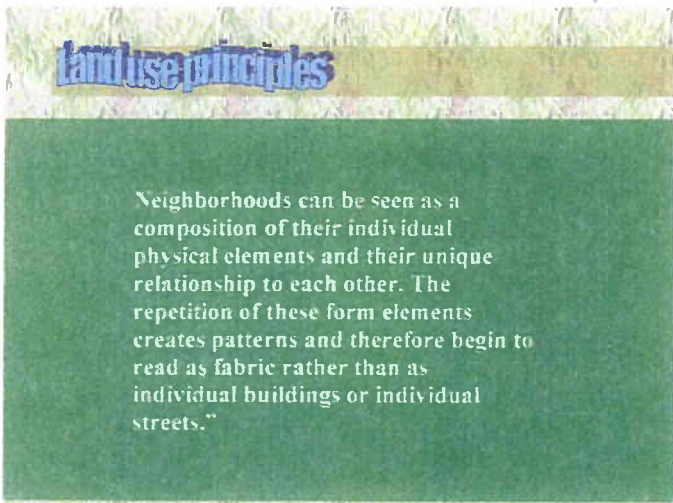
The developer would have us understand that the concept of "mixed-use" in the 20/20 plan justifies constructing a mini neighborhood ... a self contained multi-use mixture of housing and business --- of a completely unique design, ... and dropping it in the middle of Beavertdale.

In answer, I quote from the 20/20 community character plan "Neighborhoods can be seen as a composition of their individual physical elements and their unique relationship to each other. The repetition of these form elements creates patterns and therefore begin to read as fabric rather than as individual buildings or individual streets."

The proposed development violates the principle of protecting residential corridors, by

1. Imposing commercial uses on a residential corridor
2. By imposing commercial uses on a residential side street
3. By diffusing commercial uses outside of the existing commercial Node.
4. By violating the design integrity of the overwhelming character of buildings on within section of our neighborhood
5. By intensifying rather than calming traffic patterns in the area.
6. By altering the typical scale of the building on the corridor

Beavertdale is cited as an example in the 20/20 plan as a traditional and highly imageable neighborhood. Imageable: something you picture in your mind.



Beverdale Bricks



The document refers to the Beverdale Brick style of housing as an example of an image, which is widely recognized throughout Des Moines.

The imagery of our neighborhood symbol ----the Beverdale Brick --- goes beyond a single home on Adams or Beaver or Amick or 44th. Etc. The phrase has become shorthand for a life style. The housing composition of that lifestyle now transcends the exact building materials. What we imagine is a community of single-family homes, front and back yards, detached garages, neighborhood school, tricycles, bicycles, parks, comfortable and affordable dining and amenities.

The proposed development takes the green away. It omits yards. It isolates homes behind a fortress-like apartment building. Instead of public streets, the area is accessed by private driveways. A prominent design element is screening from the rest of the neighborhood. It is not intended to be part of Beverdale; it designed independent of the neighborhood.

For those of us who live and work in Beverdale, that fact that your planning staff came to the conclusion that this development does not violate the 20/20 Community Character Plan is inexplicable. The principles of land use violated by the proposed development are almost too numerous to cite in the time allowed. But here are some important quotes.

Page 23, quote: "The policy of Des Moines is to preserve the unique makeup of highly imageable neighborhoods by maintaining scale, form, and relationships."

Again, the policy of the 20/20 Plan is to maintain neighborhood integrity.

Page 8 quote: "Des Moines traditional neighborhoods have a character worthy of protecting..."

Quote: "Efforts to protect community character are central to remaining a viable community."

Land use principles

- Development of *NEW* neighborhoods:
 - walkable size
 - definable center
 - definable edge
 - mixed use
- (pp.50 - 51)

Land use principles

HOWEVER

Des Moines traditional neighborhoods have a *character* worth protecting and duplicating (p 8, 9)

if the placement that counts

- INFILL: development must meet compatible standards (p.64)
- INFILL: protect existing character of the neighborhoods
- INFILL: Duplicate (p.8, 9)

land use principles

- Preserve the unique characteristics which make up the neighborhood (p. 23)
- Infill development must meet compatible standards (p.64)
- Allow multi family housing in older neighborhoods is 40% duplex and 10% multi family. Preserve Single family use when area is over 40% single family residences (p.66)

if the placement that counts

- INFILL: development must meet compatible standards (p.64)
- INFILL: protect existing character of the neighborhoods
- INFILL: Duplicate (p.8, 9)

Quote: "Character of neighborhood is worthy of duplicating."

Quote: "Desirable qualities of traditional neighborhoods should be retained."

Page 11, quote: "High density will NOT be considered when it would compromise existing neighborhood character."

Page 16, quote: "Former focus on economic and functional issues has resulted in visual chaos--. Current planning should consider existing structures and landmarks---."

This does not mean matching anomalies, but matching the over all character.

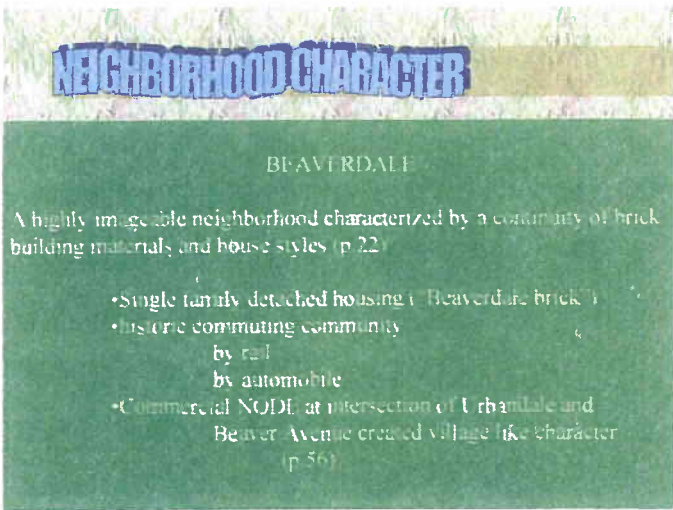
Page 40, quote: "If strong residential policies are NOT adopted uncertainty about future uses encourages speculative purchase and disinvestments. Change of lots to commercial often affects residential corridors adversely. Residences are allowed to deteriorate, and the result is a look of depression to the corridor. Housing declines in anticipation of commercial. So the policy of Des Moines is to keep commercial use at nodes and protect residential corridors."

Page 72, quote: "A mixed-use development that incorporates a small amount of commercial may be ideal for a neighborhood that currently has NO commercial center."

Beaverdale already has a vibrant commercial center, with a variety of goods and services.

As was stated earlier, the Developers argument rests on the proximity of one apartment building, and the prominence of the local business district.

The South Village type business district ENDS at the apartment house on the SE corner of Beaver and Adams. To use this apartment building to justify continuing the village district north is not rational thinking. It ignores what is already in place



from Adams Ave north to Amick St. these are solid well cared for single family homes with good setbacks, large yards, detached garages, and are of a Beaverdale type architecture.

What the developer proposes is much like putting a whale in a goldfish bowl. The scale and dynamics are not compatible so neither the whale nor the goldfish will thrive. Quite the opposite will happen, and, it will be a disaster.

The contributing planners who compiled this land use plan, spent much time and concerted effort in an attempt to warn us from interrupting residential corridors. Please keep this property zoned R1-60.