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Two ideas to make Ames cool

By Peter Orazem

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I would like to propose two ideas that I think could improve life in Ames. The first involves a proposed parking garage currently being evaluated for the Main Street Cultural District.

Improved parking certainly could increase traffic and customer support of Main Street businesses, but Main Street still faces the disadvantage of traffic bottlenecks on Duff Avenue at the railroad crossing.

This was a problem when I was born in 1955, and it remains a problem 53 years later.

Fixing that bottleneck would improve customer access to Main Street. Would it be possible to combine the parking garage with an overpass at Duff Avenue? The overpass could allow entrance to the parking ramp from its second story. The parking ramp could be built on both the east and west sides of the overpass.

A parking ramp at that site would greatly improve parking at the Bandshell Park as well as for Main Street, and a nicely designed façade on the ramp would provide a much improved view at the east side of Main Street relative to the current view of the power plant.

Depending on where the proposed library would be sited, it even could help mitigate the parking problems for that facility.

The main point is that some day, we will fix that intersection, and we might as well fix it in a way that looks good, benefits the merchants and has multiple uses.

The second idea is this: Open up access along our creeks to unite Ames with a series of biking trails.

We have long stretches of College Creek, Clear Creek, Worle Creek and Squaw Creek that would allow bikers to traverse Ames without having to cross many streets. These trails eventually could connect to the Heart of Iowa Trail, one of many intercommunity trails scheduled for improvement and expansion.

Many Ames residents make use of the trails around Ada Hayden, but we drive there. The creek trails would bring those types of nature trails to all corners of the community. Such trails would be handicap accessible, providing long stretches of nature walks for all Ames residents.

The trails would connect all our major parks. In the winter, these trails would provide opportunities for cross country skiing.

And most important, these trails would greatly improve the option of commuting by bike to work. I think these are two ideas that would help make Ames cool.

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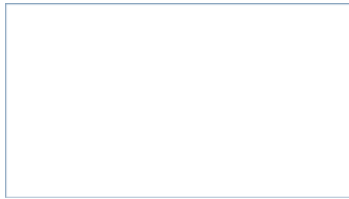


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