

River Road Utility Improvement Project and Palisade Housing Development

Resident Perspectives

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Message to the City Council

I appreciate that the City Council is taking its time with these two important decisions.

The Times-Citizen indicated the Council would like public input into these issues.

Tonight, I ask that you consider public data related to both topics as well as survey feedback from River Road residents.

River Road Improvement Project

Sources from the Times
Citizen

Option 1 - \$2.7 million for:

- First six properties on River Road from the Elk Run Water Treatment Station, from 1600 River Road (Westwood Estate) to 2324 River Road (Scadden's)
 - Installing sanitary sewer
 - Installing water
 - Resurfacing the road
- Paid for in revenue bonds
 - Which in turn will be repaid with revenue from residents' utility bills.

River Road Improvement Project – City Code

- **City Code 90.03** - If city services are brought to our road, connection will be mandatory.
- **City Code 90.04** - Once connection is complete, capping of all private wells is required.
- **City Code 90.12** - Residents are expected to pay for the cost of connection from the road, or have it taken out of their property taxes.

River Road Improvement Project – Cost

Anderson - “(This is) financially feasible... without putting a burden on the current residents².”

- Currently, residents are already paying significantly more in utilities than comparable towns in Iowa.
 - On a 100 point scale where 100 is average for the nation, Iowa Falls is 100.9, which means we are more expensive than national average¹.
- Main concerns from residents are about being able to afford leaving their current systems, paying for connection, and then paying for expensive monthly utility bills.

River Road Improvement Project – Feedback

- General feeling is that residents should have a choice on whether or not to hookup.
 - Concerns about losing private well access
 - Concerns about new septic and well systems becoming useless
- Kept hearing about a similar project where something like 125 homes on Ellis Avenue received free utility connection.

How was this achieved?

River Road Improvement Project – WWTP

How has the waste water treatment plant prepared to handle the extra load from this project and Palisade development?

Snowballing

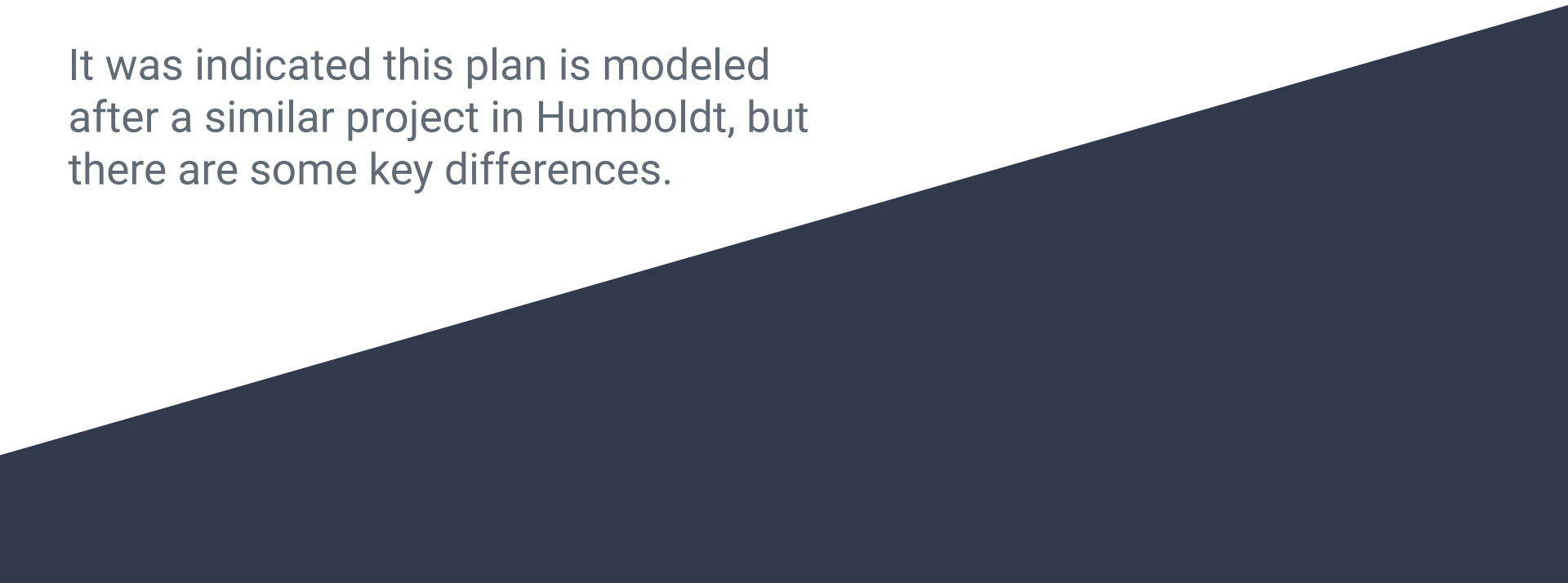
- Another common theme was that the project started out as a way to “update those within city limits”² has snowballed into a way to support new property developments without regard for current residents’ wants or needs.
- Most feedback was intertwined with the Palisade Property Development and seeing them inextricably linked.

Considerations

- Financial feasibility for current residents regarding city utility services
 - Connection costs
 - Use of current wells
 - Option of whether to hookup
 - Overall cost through monthly bills
- Bond Issue
 - General obligation bond is lower risk, needs a vote
 - Revenue bond is higher risk, does not need a vote

The Palisade Development Project

It was indicated this plan is modeled after a similar project in Humboldt, but there are some key differences.

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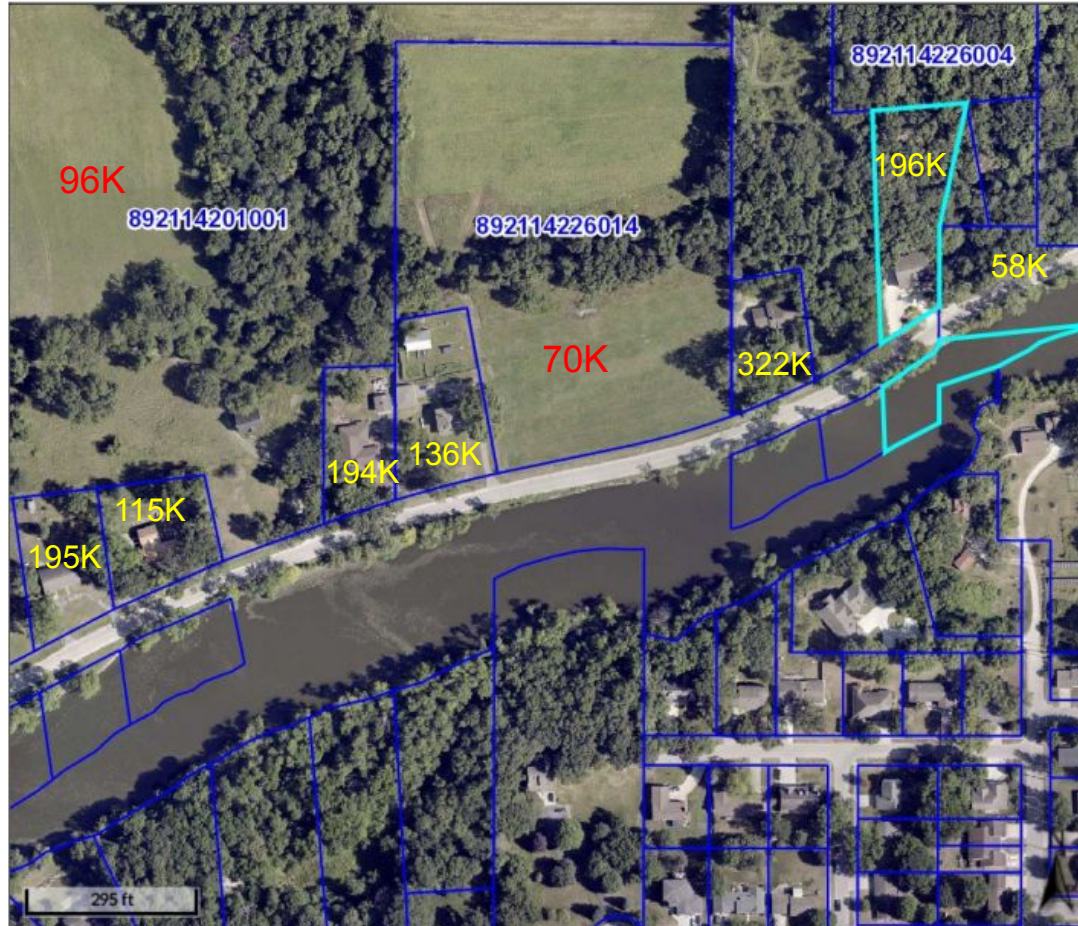
Iowa Falls v. Humboldt

	Iowa Falls	Humboldt	Consideration
Distance from Major City	50 min.	15 min.	Unlike Iowa Falls, Humboldt is a bedroom community to a major city.
2020 Population Growth ³	-1.02%	0.93%	We are losing residents and professionals. This disturbing trend is also affecting the school district.
Population Since 2010 ³	-5.08%	-0.32%	
Job Market ¹	-1.57%	0.10%	

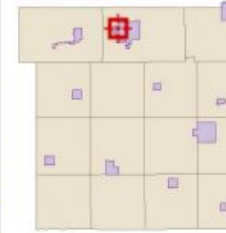
Housing Needs

	Iowa Falls	Humboldt	Consideration
Median House Value ^{1,4}	\$84-91K	\$121K	While these are similar, you will find that the homes in the River Road neighborhood are less affordable.
Homes Owned ¹	61.7%	58.7%	What are our actual housing needs if 12.5% of our homes are vacant?
Homes Rented ¹	25.8%	32.6%	
Homes Vacant ¹	12.5%	8.6%	

*Westwood Estate is valued at 329K



Overview



Legend

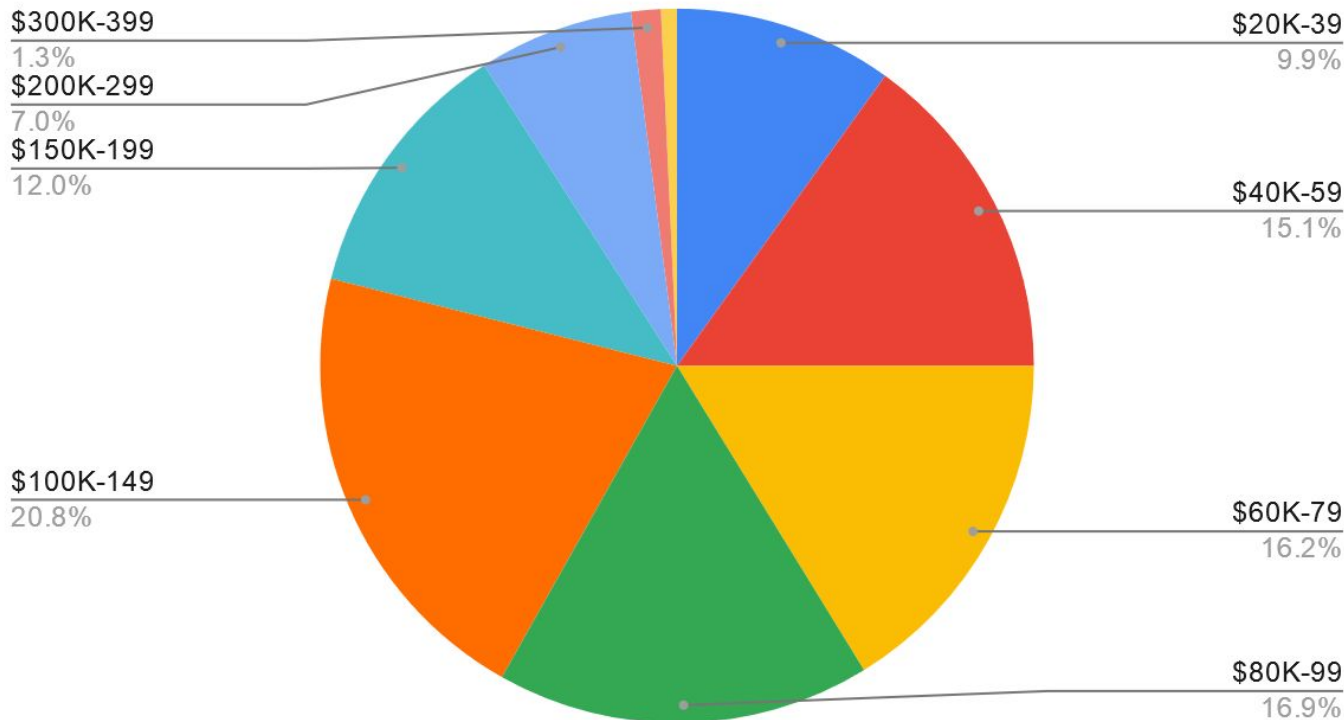
-  Corporate Limits
-  Political Township
-  Parcels

**River Road Home
Values Surrounding
Developments**

**Average = 193K
Median = 195K**

Using Home Value as a Buyer Proxy

Home Value (bestplaces.com)



Target market for River Road is about 12% of buyers in Iowa Falls.

If higher value homes are built, the market gets even tighter with only 8.3% of buyers.

Resident Feedback: Housing Needs

“My drive thru Iowa Falls shows many homes for sale. Will it take time to sell my home? (the future)?”

“You can see there are a lot of nice neighborhoods already in town. I’m surprised they (the city) is thinking about making a new development.”

“I think it’s a good idea (the development), but can they pull it off?”

Plans for Lots/Property Value

“I see the need for this (the city investigating current housing needs) but hate the thought of that area being built up. It will increase traffic and take away from the privacy of existing homes. **Would lots in the Palisade Dairy area be available for current residents to buy to maintain privacy (w/out plans to build a house on the lot)? Would it (the development) affect our property value?**”

Because the lot was purchased in February, is it a done deal?

Environmental and Financial Costs

“A number of years ago, the City decided to use land they owned for a tower to be built on River Road. This tower has turned into a giant eye-sore and was an environmental disaster until quite recently. This giant tower sits on what is undoubtedly the most scenic road inside the city limits of Iowa Falls. Now the city has turned their eye to River Road once again, and purchased land for \$350,000 (using taxpayer money) they intend to develop. Their interest in becoming a developer began when the England brothers purchased land on River Road and requested city water/sewer to their project prior to development.”

Costs – cont.

“I envision the Palisade development to end up very similar to the tower project – another side of the hill environmental disaster with the homeowners below suffering the consequences. The primary exception being – the taxpayers of Iowa Falls will be out millions and millions of dollars for a project that is supposed to provide the city with additional revenue from property taxes and water/sewer bills. We have an aging and declining population, lack of industry, and pandemic, I don’t think a multi-million dollar project for a housing development is a financially sound business decision for our community. If we are desperate for revenue from property taxes perhaps the city should stop purchasing land, which removes it from the tax roll or annex in other neighborhoods. I think the city should consider – on average how many new homes are being built a year within the city limits of Iowa Falls and outside the city limits, but still within the I.F. school district? It seems the general consensus of city representatives is that people are building outside the city limits for bigger lots. Is it possible they prefer to live outside the city limits?”

Increased Traffic

Another consideration is the safety of River Road pedestrians (student athletics, walking, running, cycling) if traffic increases due to more homes.

Also, we have noticed semi's turning around when they reach the bridge... is the plan to update this to a two-lane?

Recreational Use of the Road

“Increased traffic on River Rd would be a big concern.”

“We would need a wider walking/biking trail. Does the city think of widening the road in the future?”

“Oh, sure, the semi’s will come thru here to miss the downtown.”

Considerations

- Current housing needs
 - If 12.5% of houses are vacant, what are our current housing needs?
 - Why are people choosing to build outside city limits?
- Property values
 - Will there be enough people who can afford to/want to build in the neighborhood?
 - Will a new development be detrimental to our property values?
- Currently the property is exempt, so not collecting property taxes.
- Environmental concerns
 - Would the hillside be too challenging to build on?
- Recreation use of road
 - How will we keep recreationalists safe if traffic increases?

Thank you for your time.

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Sources

1. https://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/city/iowa/iowa_falls
2. <http://www.timescitizen.com/>
3. Worldpopulationreview.com
4. <https://beacon.schneidercorp.com/>