



# Panel focuses on environment, growth



Written by

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Ankeny will take part in a project to set development guidelines for the metro area that will include a focus on environmentally responsible growth.

Representatives from several cities and other groups are serving on the panel, which is organized by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. The MPO received a \$2 million grant from Housing and Urban Development to create a regional plan focusing on housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation and other issues.

Local officials will also donate several hours' worth of work on the plan. Along with creating templates for growth, helping with the document will allow participating cities a better chance at future grants for related projects.

Community Development Director John Peterson is Ankeny's representative on the committee. Peterson said the project, which will be called the Regional Plan for

Sustainable Development, is expected to take 2 1/2 years to complete.

"It's really like a regional comprehensive plan," he said. "It's really broad in terms of what we're trying to accomplish."

The document will suggest development guidelines for the Des Moines area looking out as far as 2050, Peterson said.

The Ankeny City Council recently approved a resolution endorsing the project and naming Peterson as the city's member of the committee.

Documents provided to the council note Ankeny's Community Development Department will contribute at least 312 hours of staff time over the next 36 months; other metro cities have made similar commitments to the plan.

Ankeny Mayor Steve Van Oort said the city's role in the regional project is consistent with the environmental stewardship principles set by the City Council. It also

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aligns with goals in the city's comprehensive plan, which was updated in 2010.

"Regional planning allows us to sharpen our focus and leverage resources to improve the quality of living in Ankeny and throughout the region," Van Oort said.

With the help of consultants, Peterson said, committee members will gather data and review where cities are today in their development goals. A significant amount of feedback from the public is expected as officials create a vision for the metro area, he said.

"What's the future look like, and what decisions would be the smarter decisions now to make the future what we want it to be?" he said. "That's where we really start to put the framework together."

Plans call for the final report to be complete near the end of 2013. Beyond that, Peterson said, local cities will begin implementing the ideas. "It's really an ambitious plan," he said.

## Regional project

Find out more about the plan at [www.dmampo.org/sustainability.html](http://www.dmampo.org/sustainability.html).

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