

Ames City Assessor’s Budget Proposal for the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year
For the Conference Board meeting at 5:00 p.m. on February 24, 2026

The following report outlines the structure, programs, duties, and activities of the Ames City Assessor’s Office.

CONFERENCE BOARD

Iowa assessment laws can be found in Chapter 441 of the *Iowa Code*. Other chapters affect the process, and there are numerous administrative rules. The *Code* creates a Conference Board for each county. City Assessors are optional for cities with populations over 10,000. City Assessors are created by ordinance and a City Conference Board is automatically created.

The Ames City Conference Board includes 3 voting units made up of the Ames City Council (1), School Boards of Directors (2) of the Ames, Gilbert, Nevada and United school districts, and the Story County Board of Supervisors (3). The mayor is chairperson. Each unit’s vote is determined by the vote of the majority of the members present for that unit. At least two members of a voting unit must be present to be eligible to vote. A quorum is reached when at least two members of the unit are present and 2 of the 3 units are present.

The Conference Board must meet annually to approve a proposed budget for publication. The Board must meet again to hold a public budget hearing and adopt the budget.

The Conference Board appoints the Assessor, Examining Board, and Board of Review. The Examining Board is activated when the Assessor position is vacant, or in the event an Assessor or Deputy Assessor appeals a termination or disciplinary action.

BOARD OF REVIEW

The Ames Board of Review has five members. Members are appointed by the Conference Board for staggered six-year terms. The *Code* requires members to have different occupations, and when possible, their occupations should be experience in real estate, construction, architecture, appraisal or similar fields. The Board of Review meets annually in May to hear appeals on assessments, classification and exemptions as determined by the Assessor.

There is 1 vacant seat needing to be filled. The expiration date for each current board member is as follows:

Gail Johnston	12/31/2030	Sally Elbert	12/31/2028
Martin Edelson	12/31/2026	Laurel Scott	12/31/2029
Vacancy	12/31/2031		

ASSESSOR

The Conference Board appoints, or reappoints, an assessor for a six-year term. Iowa assessors are required to pass state-approved tested courses and a comprehensive examination before being eligible to be appointed. In order to be reappointed, as minimum of 150 hours of state-approved continuing education, of which at least 90 hours must be tested courses, are required during the six-year term.

The main duties of the Assessor are to classify and value all property in the assessment jurisdiction according to the Code of Iowa. Iowa law requires reassessment in odd-numbered years of all property or equalization years. In even-numbered year changes are typically new construction or

renovation of existing structures. A notice of assessment must be sent when valuation, classification, or taxable status changes for any reason.

In addition, the Assessor accepts and recommends allowance or disallowance for multiple credit and exemption programs. The most common are the homestead credit, homestead 65+ exemption and military service exemption. Less common, but more problematic, are exemption claims for religious and charitable organizations and disabled veteran's homestead credit.

In the course of classifying and valuing property in Ames, extensive property-related information is acquired through a variety of sources. Public information laws require, and common-sense dictates, that most of this information be readily available for review. This often involves considerable time and effort, but it is an essential part of the operation.

The most visible function of the office tends to be providing information to the public via the Internet or through requests in the office. However, the first priority and the primary effort of the office is discovering changes in real property, such as new construction, and maintaining the classification and equitable assessments as part of the tax base of Ames.

In summary, the Assessor has a variety of duties and functions and is an integral and essential component of local government operations. Assessors have a mission to provide fair and equitable assessments as the basis for funding local governments and services. This is obtained by creating a high standard of professionalism in our association's membership through collaboration, mentoring and education.

It is also important for the Conference Board members to fully understand what the Assessor DOES NOT DO:

- Does not calculate or collect taxes.
- Does not determine tax rates or consolidated levy rates.
- Does not set market value – the Assessor measures the level of value, as indicated by sales of real property in Ames.
- Does not make the laws and rules regarding assessments including Board of Review.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

While there is currently one vacancy, the following is a list of the full-time employees of the City Assessor's Office and their starting dates:

▪ Shari Plagge, City Assessor	April	2022
▪ Kenneth Baker, Deputy Assessor	November	2023
▪ Ranie Seversike, Appraisal Clerk	March	2023
▪ Daniel A. Boberg, Appraisal Technician	August	2017
▪ Kirk Nessel, Residential Appraiser	April	2022
▪ Colton Phelps, Residential Appraiser	August	2025
▪ Cade Wilson, Residential Appraiser	September	2025
▪ New Staff, Assistant to the Assessor	March	2026

The Assessor's Office continues to update and make changes in policy and procedures as we work through a complete in-house revaluation and software conversion. This process will be completed for the January 1, 2027 assessment year. A physical review of each property will be conducted to verify the physical characteristics of both the land and any buildings or structures. Land sales are analyzed to determine a unit price as if vacant and as if improved and to determine any obsolescence factors that may be affecting the sale. Using the buildings physical characteristics and the Iowa Real Property Appraisal Manual, a replacement cost new is determined for each structure. Sale data is studied to determine depreciation, obsolescence or other market influences affecting market value.

In addition to the market analysis, a study of both horizontal and vertical equity will be conducted to achieve uniformity in assessments. Land values and improvement values, after all market adjustments or any factors that may influence the market sale price have been made, are added together to determine the property's total 100% assessment.

The following are highlights of some key activities:

- 453 condo units were combined into 3 new parcels after the horizontal property regimes (condo complexes) were dissolved this year. Eleven new subdivisions were created adding 102 new parcels.
- Working with Communications and produced 4 videos about our office. We will continue to keep the community updated whenever there is a need for public outreach.
 - Appraisals Explained <https://youtu.be/sL2LeFuLPnU>
 - Property Owners Legal Responsibilities
 - 2027 Reappraisal project <https://youtu.be/WC9HUdGs1Kg>
 - 2027 Reappraisal project where appraisers are collecting data <https://youtu.be/18itFqRIxiQ>
- Speaking engagements to educate and answer questions on our conversion process, assessments and appeal process have been given to realtor groups and other organizations.
- A mass appraisal report was produced and published to the website for 2025. This report is a summary to show how values were determined and the sales studies conducted.
- Full staff as of March 2026

ASSESSED AND TAXABLE VALUES

ASSESSED AND TAXABLE VALUES FOR BUDGETING PURPOSES IN THE AMES CITY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

The changes in tax base for assessed and taxable values from 2024 and 2025 are shown in the following tables:

Table 1. Assessed Values by Class

Source: Iowa Department of Management Reports for Story County as of January 1, 2025

Ames Valuation by Class : 100% Valuation from Department of Management				
Class	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	Difference	% Change
Ag Land & Ag Bldgs	\$ 5,448,100	\$ 7,456,200	\$ 2,008,100	36.86%
Residential**	\$ 5,188,992,500	\$ 5,655,567,600	\$ 466,575,100	8.99%
Commercial	\$ 1,206,442,900	\$ 1,352,631,300	\$ 146,188,400	12.12%
Industrial	\$ 181,839,700	\$ 246,474,300	\$ 64,634,600	35.54%
Railroads & Utilities less Gas & Electric	\$ 13,985,767	\$ 17,683,315	\$ 3,697,548	26.44%
Total	\$ 6,596,708,967	\$ 7,279,812,715	\$ 683,103,748	10.36%
Exemptions	\$ 21,280,020	\$ 21,565,020	\$ 285,000	1.34%
100% Values Total Except Gas & Electric	\$ 6,575,428,947	\$ 7,258,247,997	\$ 682,818,748	10.38%
Gas & Electric Valuation	\$ 37,401,784	\$ 37,842,396	\$ 440,612	1.18%
100% Values Total	\$ 6,612,830,731	\$ 7,296,090,393	\$ 683,259,360	10.33%

Table 2. Taxable Values by Class

Source: Iowa Department of Management Reports for Story County as of January 1, 2025

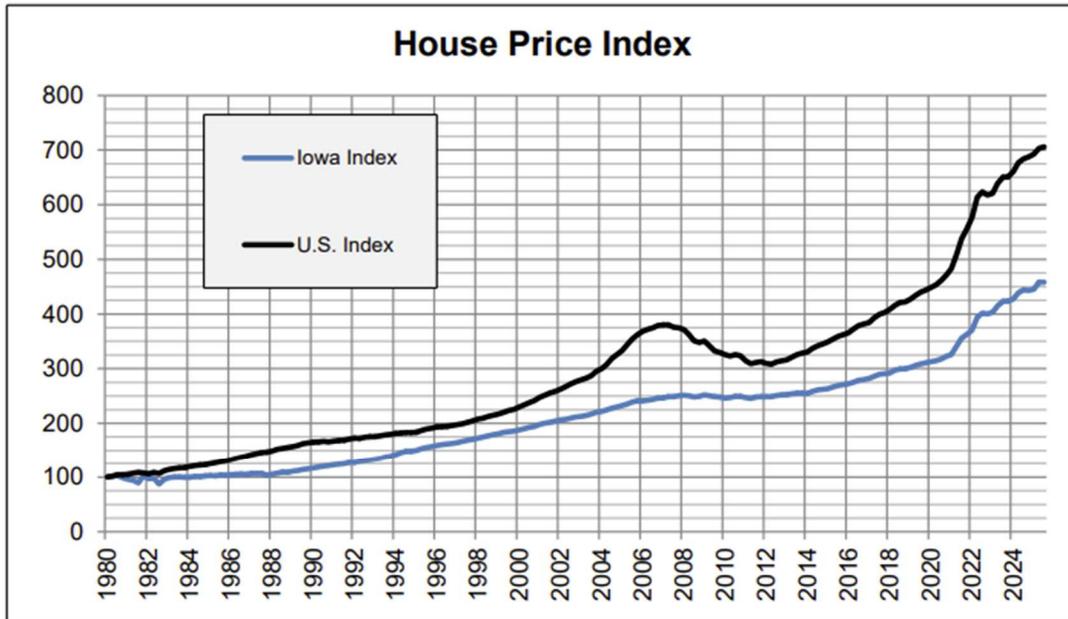
Ames Taxable Valuation by Class: (after assessment limitations applied)				
Class	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	Difference	% Change
Ag Land & Ag Bldgs	\$ 4,023,828	\$ 4,431,974	\$ 408,146	10.14%
Residential**	\$ 2,461,222,098	\$ 2,518,678,527	\$ 57,456,429	2.33%
Commercial	\$ 1,035,801,105	\$ 1,145,130,194	\$ 109,329,089	10.56%
Industrial	\$ 160,211,162	\$ 203,400,352	\$ 43,189,190	26.96%
Railroads & Utilities less Gas & Electric	\$ 12,622,092	\$ 16,260,323	\$ 3,638,231	28.82%
Total	\$ 3,673,880,285	\$ 3,866,336,350	\$ 214,021,085	5.24%
Exemptions	\$ 21,280,020	\$ 21,565,020	\$ 285,000	1.34%
Taxable Total Except Gas & Electric	\$ 3,652,600,265	\$ 3,866,336,350	\$ 213,736,085	5.85%
Gas & Electric Valuation	\$ 8,093,207	\$ 8,965,250	\$ 872,043	10.77%
Taxable Values Total	\$ 3,660,693,472	\$ 3,875,301,600	\$ 214,608,128	5.86%

**Residential includes properties such as single family homes, multi-family homes, apartments, condos, townhouses and other living facilities.

Housing price trends for November 2025

Historical Trend. Nationally, prior to the December 2007 recession, house prices peaked during the first quarter of 2007. The Iowa Index peaked during the first quarter of 2009. The December 2007 recession significantly impacted national house values, and prices declined through the second quarter of 2012. Iowa house values remained relatively flat during that time. From 2012 through the end of 2020, house prices steadily increased. Despite COVID-19 and the brief recession from February 2020 to April 2020 having a negative impact on the economy and jobs, house prices continued to increase due to limited supply, an increase in demand, and rising costs for labor and construction materials.

Current Status. The current Iowa Index value of 458.33 represents an increase of 3.2% over the most recent four quarters and an increase of 46.5% from the price level at the beginning of the 2020 recession. The current national Index value of 706.04 represents an increase of 3.2% over the most recent four quarters and an increase of 57.3% from the price level at the beginning of the 2020 recession. The annual price increase for the West-North-Central region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) was 4.0%.



More Data. Additional information can be found on the Legislative Services Agency's [Economic Trends webpage](#), which includes links to source sites and the underlying data for each Economic Trends indicator.

Source: Iowa Legislative Service Agency and Federal Housing Finance Agency.

ASSESSMENT ROLLS FOR 2025

We mailed out assessment rolls to all properties for January 1, 2025. The following table breaks them down by property class for 2025 under the column current parcel count.

Total parcel count - January 1, 2025	
Class	Parcel count
Ag land & buildings	137
Residential	11,832
Residential Condos & Townhomes	3,635
Residential Duplexes & Conversions	831
Res 3+ (Apts & Frats)	385
Residential COOPs	122
Commercial	1,067
Section 42	209
Industrial	30
100% Exempt	550
Total parcel count	18,798

ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Informal Hearings:

In 2017, the Iowa Code was amended, accommodating for an informal hearing with the property owner, and allowing the Assessor to change a value or classification until April 25, provided there's a signed agreement with the property owner.

2025 Informal Hearings: Report to the Department of Revenue

Summary

Total City Additions :	43,600.00
Total City Deletions :	27,710,410.00
City Net Change :	(27,666,810)
Protested Total City : Additions	3
Protested Total City : Deletions	264
Protested Total : Change in City Additions	3
Protested Total : Change in City Deletions	137

Incorporated Cities - Additions to Value

	Aggregate Change in Value
Agriculture	0.00
Residential Dwellings on Agricultural Land	0.00
Residential	43,600.00
Commercial	0.00
Industrial	0.00
Residential 3+	0.00
Omitted Property	0.00
Total Additions	43,600.00

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Incorporated Cities - Deletions From Value

	Aggregate Change in Value
Agriculture	0.00
Residential Dwellings on Agricultural Land	0.00
Residential	4,487,000.00
Commercial	11,230,610.00
Industrial	0.00
Residential 3+	11,992,800.00
Exempt	0.00
Total Deletions	27,710,410.00

Board of Review: The Board of Review met 11 days during the 2025 session, Below are the number of protests filed with the 2025 Board of Review and the results of the appeals. Cases where the appeal was changed means that the property owner’s petition was granted or partially granted.

2025 Board of Review Hearings: Report to the Department of Revenue

Incorporated Cities - Deletions From Value

	Aggregate Change in Value	Number of Protests	Number of Protests Changed
Agriculture	0.00	0	0
Residential Dwellings on Agricultural Land	0.00	0	0
Residential	3,085,200.00	863	78
Commercial	20,086,700.00	312	19
Industrial	739,700.00	4	1
Residential 3+	10,252,100.00	89	39
Exempt	0.00	0	0
Total Deletions	34,163,700.00	1,268	137

PAAB and District Court: Attachment “E” lists the 33 appeal cases with the Property Assessment Appeal Board and District Court that have appealed beyond the 2025 Board of Review session. As of January 1, 2026, we have 22 active cases yet to be heard and 3 from the 2023 assessment year that our values were affirmed in District Court and have appealed to the Supreme Court. For 2025, 2 were withdrawn by the taxpayer; 2 have been heard and the assessments upheld; 1 heard and the assessment modified and 6 were settled. If the appeal is won and the value is changed, the value is for both the 2025 and 2026 assessment years unless the 2026 value was updated.

Attachment “E” shows the possible tax dollars lost if the appellant were to win the appeal per year. This does not include any fees for outside counsel or fee appraisals.

ABSTRACT AND EQUALIZATION

The Abstract of assessment was submitted in late June 2025. The overall value increased just over 10% from 2024 to 2025. Agricultural land and buildings are on a 5-year productivity formula and for 2025, values were calculated using information from 2019-2024. Residential and commercial properties were valued using sales information included in the 2025 Mass Appraisal report. Industrial properties were updated using trends associated with commercial sales and updated building replacement costs.

Ames Valuation by Class: 100% assessed values on IDOR Abstract as of July 1				
Class	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	Difference	% Change
Ag Land & Ag Bldgs	\$ 5,470,400	\$ 7,670,800	\$ 2,200,400	40.22%
Residential**	\$ 5,233,449,745	\$ 5,696,912,261	\$463,462,516	8.86%
Commercial	\$ 1,221,143,954	\$ 1,383,755,163	\$162,611,209	13.32%
Industrial	\$ 206,033,100	\$ 251,830,600	\$ 45,797,500	22.23%
Section 42	\$ 10,185,500	\$ 10,283,200	\$ 97,700	0.96%
100% Assessed Values Total	\$ 6,676,282,699	\$ 7,350,452,024	\$674,169,325	10.10%
Partial Exemption	\$ 53,608,300	\$ 77,828,700	\$ 24,220,400	45.18%
100% Exempt	\$ 220,140,300	\$ 268,528,600	\$ 48,388,300	21.98%

PERMITS UNDER REVIEW

For 2025, new land valuations were established using sales data. It was also a revaluation and equalization year so all properties received a new assessment.

For 2026, only parcels were reviewed due to active permits received from Planning and Housing, requests by owners and properties that were flagged for review during the conversion process or information obtained through the sales verifications. Notices for 2026 will be mailed no later than April 1, 2026.

SALES DATA FOR 2025 VALUATIONS

The table below lists the number of arms-length sales for the 2025 assessments. 1,619 transactions were evaluated to determine if they were good for analysis and used to set values for all properties in the future.

Verified sales for 2025 valuations - Sales between 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024					
Class	# of verified sales	Median Sales Ratio Percentage	Current parcel count	% of parcels sold	Projected % increase due to market sales
Commercial*	14	79.35	1,067	1.31%	26.02%
*Commercial with IDOR appraisals	22	91.38			9.43%
Residential	478	93.49	11,976	3.99%	6.96%
Res 3+ (Apts)	7	73.99	350	2.00%	35.15%
Res 3+ (3+ Conversions & Frats)	5	119.96	99	5.05%	-16.64%
Residential Condos & Townhome Condos	40	87.63	3,635	1.10%	14.12%
Residential Duplexes & Conversions	21	96.24	767	2.74%	3.91%
Residential COOPs	1	78.83	122	0.82%	26.86%
Section 42	0	0.00	65	0.00%	
Ag land & buildings	0	0.00	137	0.00%	
Industrial	1	100.09	30	3.33%	-0.09%
100% Exempt	0	0.00	550	0.00%	
Totals	589		18,798	3.13%	
Total transactions for 2025 reviewed - 1,619					

BUDGET PROPOSAL

Attachment “B” is the 2026-2027 budget expense proposal and the 2025-2026 re-estimated budget. Attachment B is a separate file from this report.

Explanations for various line-item expenses follow:

Attachment “C” shows a breakdown of salary and benefits.

Salaries: City payroll calculated projections for salaries and benefits. Salaries are calculated with a 3.5% cost of living increase.

Board of Review salaries are at the hourly rate of \$35. There is also a clerk to take the minutes. For budgeting purposes, we estimate that the clerk will need to put in 1.5 times the hours of the Board. The clerk is paid at a rate of \$15.00 per hour.

With the 2027 reappraisal project completion, the 2 temporary data collector staff will have completed their term by January 1, 2027.

Taxable Fringe Benefits: Monthly cell phone allowance for the appraisers and 2 temporary staff that have regular duties outside the office. Additionally, it includes a \$100 stipend to reimburse Board of Review members for the use of their laptops during sessions.

Health Insurance: The amount budgeted is based on our current and projected staffing and use levels and an 8% increase in costs determined by the city finance department.

Life and Disability Insurance: This line represents life and disability insurance for all benefited employees.

Attachment “D” shows a breakdown of expenses with more than one vendor or payee.

Board of Review Expenses: This line represents payment of the Board’s mileage as well as board-related postage and supplies.

Supplies, Telephone, Etc.: Breakdowns for City services under the MOU, GIS/Mapping and Software are on Attachment E

Mileage: This line represents reimbursement to employees who use their personal auto for work purposes. It’s paid at the current IRS rate.

Appeals: With the cost of litigation and appraisals, an increase in the amount for appeals is necessary. Appeal costs were reviewed earlier and can be found on attachment E.

Special Projects: No special projects are planned for next year. The re-estimated budget shows adjustable desks for front office staff.

Levy Rate: Overall levy rate will go from .30049 to .30062, a 0.04% increase.

Ending fund balance: Projected ending fund balance for 2026-2027 is \$444,707 which is less than 30% of the prior year budget. Actual ending fund balance will change depending on the cost of the appeals from 2025 that have not been heard yet.

Submitted for the February 24, 2026 Conference Board meeting by Shari Plagge ICA RES AAS, Ames City Assessor.

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ATTACHMENT C

Column1	Column2	FUND #	CITY PAYROLL RE- ESTIMATED FOR FYE JUNE 30, 2026	CITY PAYROLL PROPOSED FOR FYE JUNE 30, 2027
SALARIES & BENEFITS				
ASSESSOR	SHARI	100-71-4	157,073	162,571
DEPUTY ASSESSOR	KENNETH	100-71-6	105,619	130,056
ASSISTANT TO ASSESSOR	TBD	100-71-3	28,340	79,000
RESIDENTIAL APPRAISER II	KIRK	100-71-3	77,037	79,733
RESIDENTIAL APPRAISER	COLTON	100-71-3	65,000	67,275
RESIDENTIAL APPRAISER	CADE	100-71-3	65,000	67,275
ASSESSMENT TECH	DAN	100-71-3	63,857	66,092
ASSESSMENT CLERK	RANIE	100-71-3	56,650	58,633
DATA COLLECTOR TEMP	BRAYDEN	100-71-9	39,390	32,385
DATA COLLECTOR TEMP	TABASSUM	100-71-9	39,390	32,385
BOARD OF REVIEW MEMBERS & CLERK	5 5 MEMBERS & CLERK	100-71-10	15,000	15,000
	% OF TOTAL			
FICA 6.2%	SALARY	110-71	44,166	49,005
	% OF TOTAL			
IPERS 9.44%	SALARY	111-71	67,246	74,614
DENTAL INSURANCE		114-71	4,968	5,625
HEALTH INSURANCE		114-71	159,488	194,973
LIFE INSURANCE		117-71	1,720	1,901
	% OF TOTAL			
LONG TERM DISABILITY .092%	SALARY	117-71	5,691	6,538
	% OF TOTAL			
MEDICARE 1.45%	SALARY	117-71	10,329	11,461
UNEMPLOYMENT		116-71	1,000	1,000
WORKER COMP	PAYROLL ESTIMATE	117-71	3,528	3,598
TAXABLE FRINGE BENEFITS	LONGEVITY	106-71	420	148
PHONE ALLOWANCE	480/EMPLOYEE (6)	106-71	1,920	2,880
TOTAL SALARY & BENEFITS			1,012,833	1,142,148

ATTACHMENT D

Fund #	Description	Monthly amount	Yearly amount
495-71	Engagement	\$ 138	\$ 1,652
495-71	Human Resources	\$ 1,039	\$ 12,469
495-71	Messenger	\$ 258	\$ 3,096
495-71	Payroll Processing-Finance	\$ 292	\$ 3,499
495-71	Computer services (IT) & Phones	\$ 4,779	\$ 57,342
495-71	Story Co. fiber	\$ 300	\$ 3,600
495-71	City Attorney	\$ 1,250	\$ 15,000
495-71	Utilities/City Hall space	\$ 1,689	\$ 20,267
Management Services Total		\$ 8,055	\$ 96,658

222-71	Beacon (w/County)	\$ 817	\$ 9,800
222-71	ESRI GIS/Mapping (w/City)	\$ 338	\$ 4,055
222-71	Pictometry (w/City)	\$ 2,000	\$ 24,000
222-71	Story County GIS	\$ 721	\$ 8,650
GIS/Mapping/Aerials Total		\$ 3,875	\$ 46,505
421-71	Vanguard CAMA Software	\$ 7,083	\$ 85,000
421-71	Tyler/Energov (W/City)	\$ 232	\$ 2,779
421-71	OPG-3 Document management	\$ 473	\$ 5,670
Data Processing & Software Total		\$ 7,787	\$ 93,449

Current costs are rounded for the budget estimate and projected increases added.
 Communication/Phone included with IT charges