

CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION 97-239
APRIL 28, 1997 AGENDA

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
FOREST AVENUE/ML KING URBAN RENEWAL AREA DESIGNATION	◆ RESOLUTION ORDINANCE RECEIVE/FILE	JAMES GRANT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SYNOPSIS —

Approve a resolution stating that the Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Area is a blighted area and to approve the Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Plan. The boundaries of the urban renewal plan are approximately 19th Street on the east, three lots north of Forest Avenue on the north, 21st Street on the west, and University Avenue on the south. The overall goal of the urban renewal plan is to facilitate commercial development, provide employment opportunities, and support efforts to improve residential quality in surrounding areas.

FISCAL IMPACT —

The urban renewal plan calls for the acquisition of several properties as shown on Map 5, Property Acquisition, which is included in the Plan and attached to the roll call. Funding for these future acquisitions must be identified and approved by Council before any acquisitions are undertaken.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in the amount of \$89,304 have been designated for use on this project. Tax Increment Financing is not being implemented at this time.

RECOMMENDATION —

Acceptance and approval of:

1. Resolution of Necessity to designate the Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Area as a blighted area; and
2. Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Plan.

BACKGROUND —

In July 1996, the City Council directed staff to prepare an urban renewal plan for the corner of Forest Avenue and ML King, Jr. Parkway. The plan is the result of years of discussions about the need to revitalize the area around the intersection of Forest Avenue and ML King, Jr. Parkway. Revitalizing this corner was also identified as a goal for the Carpenter/Drake Park Neighborhood Action Plan which was approved by the City Council on September 19, 1995, by Roll Call No. 95-3594. The goal of the Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Plan is to facilitate commercial development, increase employment opportunities, and support efforts to improve residential quality in the surrounding areas.

The area is currently zoned for commercial use and includes both commercial and residential structures (see maps 3 & 4). The plan does not recommend rezoning within the Forest Avenue/ML King Parkway Urban Renewal Area at this time. However, rezoning to "NPC" Neighborhood Pedestrian

Pedestrian Commercial District would be consistent with the objectives of this plan, and the City will support such rezoning where initiated by the owners of the affected property. Some residential parcels may need to be rezoned in the future, if necessary, to assemble a developable commercial site and provide adequate parking. Any residential properties proposed for acquisition are located within a commercially-zoned area (see maps 4 and 5). A significant number (63 percent) of the properties proposed for acquisition are either vacant structures or vacant lots.

In the early 1980s, the site was considered for urban renewal along with another located along University Avenue between 10th and 13th Streets. At that time, the community expressed a preference for the University Avenue site, and efforts were focused on developing that area. In 1994, the Carpenter/Drake Park Neighborhood was selected as one of the City's Designated Neighborhoods. Staff worked with the Carpenter/Drake Park Planning Committee to develop an Action Plan to revitalize the area. Included in this plan was the goal of promoting commercial revitalization at the corner of Forest Avenue and ML King, Jr. Parkway.

Staff worked with the Carpenter/Drake Park Implementation Committee to establish a forum for the discussion of issues related to drafting the urban renewal plan. The Implementation Committee expanded to include members from other neighborhood groups for the purpose of developing the plan. Additional members were representatives from the Enterprise Community, North Drake Neighbors, King-Irving, Forest Avenue Revitalization Committee, and area businesses.

Since August, the Implementation Committee has met on a monthly basis. Meetings were held on: September 24, October 29, November 26, January 28, February 25, and March 25. In addition, staff attended meetings with the King-Irving Park Neighborhood Association on November 4 and January 13, and the Enterprise Community (EC) Steering Committee and the EC Physical Environment Committee on November 5, December 3, and March 4. Staff have also interviewed representatives from area businesses and property owners such as Mustard's, Miller Hardware, St. John's, Christian Printing, Cardinal Cleaners, King Elementary School, Polk County, and Drake Business Association. There was a public meeting at King Elementary School on March 12, 1997, and notice of the meeting was sent to all property owners and businesses located within the boundaries of the urban renewal plan. The plan was reviewed by the Neighborhood Advisory Board on March 19 and approved at their meeting on April 2. The plan was presented to the Model Cities CSTF on March 13 and the DMAB on April 8. The Urban Renewal Board approved the plan on April 15, and the Plan and Zoning Commission found the plan to be in conformance with the Des Moines 2000 Comprehensive Plan on April 17. On April 7, the City Council set a public hearing date of April 28 for the final review and approval of this plan.

Many area residents and business owners support the plan because it is seen as a vehicle for revitalizing the area. A representative from the Drake Business Association stated that the deterioration of properties and businesses at the Forest Avenue/ML King intersection has started to have a negative effect on the businesses along University. The Drake Neighborhood Association and Drake University are concerned with the high crime rate and negative perceptions of the area. There is increasing recognition that this area will not fix itself and will continue to decline without major intervention.

In August 1997, staff were allocated \$89,304 in CDBG funds for the purpose of acquiring and demolishing properties located on the southeast corner of ML King and Forest Avenue. The creation and approval of the Forest Avenue/ML King Urban Renewal Plan is part of the project design for that funding. Polk County has also expressed interest in constructing a new senior center on that corner, and staff will contact Polk County before beginning any acquisition or marketing efforts.

This intersection is a significant commercial node that serves both the Enterprise Community and the Drake Neighborhood. The problems at this intersection are the result of many years of neglect and

deterioration. The condition of these properties has a negative effect on the surrounding residential areas. Many of the properties are no longer be feasible for rehabilitation, and other structures will require significant investment. Many businesses have left the area in the past two years, and there have been few attempts to fill the vacancies. This urban renewal plan presents an opportunity for a commercial revitalization that will benefit all of the surrounding areas.