



Council Communication No. 97-354

SYNOPSIS —

The Housing Improvement and Neighborhood Revitalization Program proposed by the consulting firm of Stockard and Engler, Inc., was approved in February, 1990, by the City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors. Since 1990, 14 neighborhoods have been chosen for inclusion in the intensive neighborhood planning and implementation process. On July 22, 1996, by Roll Call No. 96-2650, the City Council voted to reclassify Woodland Heights and Union Park as charter neighborhoods. Following the neighborhood selection process that was approved by City Council, by Roll Call No. 97-1044, on March 24, 1997, a

pplications were sent to all recognized neighborhoods. Eight neighborhoods submitted applications for designation. Staff presented their recommendation to the NAB on June 18, 1997, and the NAB recommended the North of Grand Neighborhood Association be designated by the Neighborhood Advisory Board. The NAB is forwarding their recommendation to the City Council for approval.

FISCAL IMPACT —

N/A

RECOMMENDATION —

Approval.

BACKGROUND —

As recommended in the Housing Improvement and Neighborhood Revitalization Program, the County and the City have combined with Des Moines business leaders to form a public/private partnership that addresses critical housing issues within the metropolitan area. Since 1990, 12 neighborhoods have been chosen for inclusion in the intensive neighborhood planning and implementation process. The program has provided for residential rehabilitation, commercial revitalization, and public infrastructure improvements which are funded through the Neighborhood Finance Corporation, the City's Capital Improvement Program, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program.

The neighborhood planning process relies on resident groups to identify the critical neighborhood issues in their area. Technical assistance and planning coordination is provided by a planning team headed by staff from the City's Community Development Department. The planning team works in conjunction with the neighborhood group to develop appropriate goals and a feasible action plan. The neighborhood action plan becomes the basic component activating the implementation of the revitalization program.

The Community Development Department recommended that two neighborhoods be phased out of the Revitalization Program. These neighborhoods—Woodland Heights and Union Park—have experienced success in revitalization and are no longer in need of a major commitment of public and private resources. This recommendation was approved by the NAB on July 3, 1996, and by City Council on July 22, 1996, by Roll Call No. 96-2650.

In accordance with the neighborhood selection process that was approved by the NAB at their March 5, 1997 meeting, and by the City Council on March 24, 1997, by Roll Call No. 97-1044, City staff contacted all recognized neighborhoods. The application process required each neighborhood submit a packet of information by May 15, 1997. The following eight neighborhoods responded: Fairground Neighborhoods for Community Improvement, Gray' s Woods Neighborhood Association, King-Irving Park Neighborhood Association, Laurel Hill Neighborhood Association, Martin Luther King Jr. Park Neighborhood Association, New Vision in Focus Neighborhood Family Estates, North of Grand Neighborhood Association, and Sherman Hill Association. On June 11, the eight neighborhoods applying for designation made 30-minute presentations to the NAB (consisting of a 15-minute presentation by the neighborhood and 10+ minutes to answer questions from NAB members).

After a period of evaluation, which included neighborhood surveys and data analysis, City staff made recommendations on which neighborhoods should be included in the neighborhood revitalization program. As a first step in the evaluation process, neighborhoods received scores based on the following criteria: housing conditions, percent of owner occupancy, median assessed property value, population, median income, zoning code violations, infrastructure needs, and crime rate. These scores were used to classify the eight neighborhoods as stable, transitional, or distressed. Fairgrounds, Gray' s Woods, M.L. King Park, North of Grand, and Sherman Hill were classified as transitional positive. King-Irving, Laurel Hill, and New Vision were classified as transitional negative.

Staff recommendations were presented to the NAB on June 18, 1997. This recommendation supports NAB policy of using a balanced approach that recognizes the existence of limited public resources and the need to assist all types of neighborhoods. The three neighborhoods that were classified as transitional negative have demonstrated their concern for their neighborhoods and a desire for improvement, but a successful revitalization effort requires greater financial resources and staff support than are available at this time. Laurel Hill, New Vision in Focus Neighborhood Family Estates, and King-Irving Park Neighborhood Association are encouraged to resubmit their application for the next round of selection. At that time, the Revitalization Program will be ready to select one new transitional negative neighborhood.

All of the neighborhoods classified as transitional positive have potential and show what can be

accomplished with strong neighborhood organizations. All of the five transitional positive neighborhoods have unique characteristics and represent different challenges for the Revitalization Program. In making a recommendation, staff considers the needs of the neighborhood and the available resources (such as NFC program, the CIP budget, staff resources, and the availability of other funding sources). Another phase of the staff review includes other factors that can affect revitalization efforts such as:

- Visibility of the neighborhood;
- Major public and private investments made over the last 5-10 years;
- Potential spin off development that may occur if a Revitalization Program was undertaken;
- Strength, longevity and viability of the neighborhood organization; and
- Geographic dispersal.

After considering all of the information, staff recommends that North of Grand Neighborhood Association should be the newest participant in the Designated Neighborhood Program. The North of Grand Neighborhood had the lowest score of the eight applicants and was only two points short of being classified as a stable neighborhood. The neighborhood has a range of housing opportunities from apartments to quality starter homes to larger homes. The overall housing is characterized by variations on the bungalow or foursquare style, and sections of this neighborhood were identified as potential historic districts in the Bungalow/Foursquare Study. There was a low percentage of owner-occupied units, but this figure is slightly misleading because of the large apartment buildings along Grand and Ingersoll. The housing conditions were better than the City average, and the median income was very close to City median. This area appeals to many middle to upper middle class residents who could move to developing suburban areas, but have chosen to stay in a more traditional neighborhood. Most of these homes need some updating to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the residents and retain their marketability.

The neighborhood is highly visible to traffic along Grand, Ingersoll, 31st Street, 35th Street, and 42nd Street. This neighborhood continues to have new development and private investment with projects such as the townhomes at 41st and Ingersoll, proposed condominiums along Grand, and several commercial projects along Ingersoll. The Ingersoll Corridor is one of a few successful neighborhood business areas in the City and continues to draw people who enjoy shopping along a tree-lined, pedestrian district.

The North of Grand Neighborhood Association is also a relatively new neighborhood organization that has been very active. They played a strong role in the development and approval of the new Neighborhood Pedestrian Corridor zoning that has been approved for Ingersoll Avenue. Their efforts have shown a strong commitment to supporting existing businesses while protecting the adjacent residential areas. Selecting North of Grand will support revitalization efforts in Woodland Heights, and will provide a balance of a west-side neighborhood with an east-side neighborhood. This neighborhood will benefit from some planning assistance and a short-term implementation period to work on a few selected problems. NFC programs should be structured in such a way that they can meet the needs of updating certain properties, but do not duplicate financing programs already available from traditional private lenders.

On June 18, 1997, the NAB voted to follow the staff recommendations and select the North of Grand Neighborhood Association for inclusion in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. This recommendation is being forwarded to the City Council for approval.

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