

 <p><b>Council</b>  <b>Communication</b>  Office of the City Manager</p>	<b>Date:</b> May 4, 2015 <b>Agenda Item No.</b> 12 <b>Roll Call No.</b> <u>15-0736</u> <b>Communication No.</b> <u>15-222</u> <b>Submitted by:</b> Phillip Delafield, Community Development Director
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## **AGENDA HEADING:**

Adoption of the River Bend Neighborhood Plan Update.

## **SYNOPSIS:**

In November 2011, the City of Des Moines selected eight (8) neighborhoods to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. For the first time, Charter neighborhoods with an existing plan more than 10 years old were allowed to apply for a pilot program to update their plan. The pilot program was conducted in partnership with graduate students in Planning at Iowa State University (ISU). This is a two-year pilot program with Beaverdale and Woodland Heights participating in 2012 and Capitol East and Capitol Park participating in 2013. The City has elected to continue the partnership, and ISU updated the plan for River Bend during their fall semester of 2014.

## **FISCAL IMPACT: NONE**

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

The public input process began with ISU students administering a survey in River Bend, which was collected from face-to-face interviews and through paper mailings. The surveys were available in both English and Spanish, and asked about opinions and perceptions of River Bend's current strengths and weaknesses, as well as priorities for the neighborhood. Additionally, the ISU planning team spent several hours per week over a period of 12 weeks engaging directly with neighborhood residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. In total, over 720 individuals contributed to the planning process, including representatives from 18 businesses and 42 community organizations.

Utilizing the information gathered throughout the neighborhood engagement process, the ISU students facilitated a series of four (4) Steering Committee meetings in the Fall of 2014. Steering Committee members consisted of a variety of stakeholders, including neighborhood residents, community organizations, social service organizations, non-profits, businesses, schools, and City departments. The meetings focused on identifying priorities, strategies, action steps, and partners using information gathered from the neighborhood outreach process.

Based on the results of the neighborhood survey and the input received through the various neighborhood engagement efforts, River Bend's residents identified priority goals for the neighborhood to address over the next five (5) to 10 years. The following priority areas were identified:

### *1) Housing*

River Bend is best known for its historic homes, but the neighborhood contains a full range of housing types and tenures. Residents are concerned with high vacancy rates and issues with home maintenance. The neighborhood plan focuses on strategies to rehabilitate historic housing, maintain affordable housing, and reduce the number of abandoned properties.

### *2) Economic Development*

There is a high percentage of low-income households and a high rate of unemployment in River Bend. Both the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue provide opportunities for business development and redevelopment that can act as a catalyst for other neighborhood improvements. River Bend would like to create a neighborhood niche related to food and culture, foster small business development, and expand opportunities for job training and education.

### *3) Community Building*

Residents identified friendly neighbors and population diversity as two (2) strengths of River Bend that they wanted to build upon. This priority area identifies strategies to celebrate the diverse cultures present, create opportunities for community interaction, and incorporate placemaking and identity in various neighborhood projects.

### *4) Infrastructure*

Improving neighborhood infrastructure in order to provide a safe, clean and attractive environment in River Bend can help create a sense of pride and build confidence in the future of the neighborhood. Residents would like to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, improve the sense of safety through lighting and traffic assessments, and improve the physical conditions of infrastructure.

### *5) Neighborhood Image*

Despite many positive changes in recent years, River Bend is still associated with negative stereotypes and urban decay for many who have not been to the neighborhood. By promoting a positive image of the neighborhood, perceptions may change and invite newcomers to the area. Residents would like to improve public relations, increase community outreach, and increase diversity and leadership.

### *6) Strengthening the River Bend Neighborhood Association (RBNA)*

River Bend has a strong neighborhood association that plays an active role in promoting positive change for the area. The RBNA would like to expand its capacity to help foster new leadership and build sustainability and resilience within the organization. Strategies include: increasing outreach, identifying and developing community leaders, and improving neighborhood business membership.

## Potential City Projects and Initiatives

- Explore the possibility of creating a food truck court within River Bend.
- Evaluate park needs, and update Royal Park with new play equipment and signage.
- Evaluate improvements needed for safe pedestrian and bicycle use on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.
- Conduct a streetlight assessment and install additional lighting in Bates Park.

## Neighborhood Led Projects and Initiatives

- Offer educational workshops and resources related to historic home rehabilitation.
- Hold an event with local developers to explore opportunities for infill and creative reuse of vacant housing.

- Hold multicultural events throughout the year in partnership with neighborhood non-profits and other area groups.
- Add to the neighborhood's existing public artwork.
- Develop relationships with realtors.
- Create an outreach subcommittee of the RBNA to create block quadrant leaders, engage new residents, and act as a liaison between those residents and the RBNA.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):**

Date: November 21, 2011

Roll Call Number: [11-1965](#)

Action: [Approving](#) the selection of five Charter Neighborhoods into the Neighborhood Revitalization Program's Charter Pilot Project: Beaverdale, Woodland Heights, Capitol East, Capitol Park, and River Bend. ([Council Communication No. 11-702](#)) Moved by Hensley to adopt. Motion carried 7-0.

### **BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):**

Board: Neighborhood Revitalization Board

Date: November 2, 2011

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: Approved staff recommendation to select Beaverdale, Woodland Heights, Capitol East and Capitol Park for the Pilot Charter Neighborhood Program, as well as River Bend for a trial neighborhood-led planning effort.

Board: Neighborhood Revitalization Board

Date: April 1, 2015

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: Approved the Updated and Amended River Bend Neighborhood Plan and to forward a recommendation to City Council to approve this plan.

Board: Plan and Zoning Commission

Date: April 16, 2015

Resolution Number: 21-2015-4.07

Action: Amend the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan to incorporate the updated and amended River Bend Neighborhood Plan as an element.

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

Future City Council action to support implementation activities may be necessary.

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