


## COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

	Number:	<b>22-139</b>	Meeting:	<b>March 21, 2022</b>
	Agenda Item:	<b>65</b>	Roll Call:	<b>22-463</b>
	Submitted by:	<b>Erin Olson-Douglas, Development Services Department Director</b>		

### AGENDA HEADING:

Approving an amendment to PlanDSM Creating our Tomorrow Plan, to approve the South of Gray's Lake Master Plan as an element of the comprehensive plan.

### SYNOPSIS:

On May 18, 2020, by Roll Call Number 20-0811, the City Council approved a contract agreement with Felsburg Holt and Ullevig, Inc. (FHU), to review the existing infrastructure conditions and propose future infrastructure needs, land uses, and projected traffic patterns for a large study area in the southwest quadrant of the city, generally bounded by Iowa Highway 28 on the west, Park Avenue/George Flagg Parkway on the north, The Des Moines International Airport on the east, and Willow Creek Avenue on the south.

Due to continued developer interest in an area immediately south of Gray's Lake Park located between Fleur Drive on the west and SW 7th Street on the east, a detailed master plan was deemed as a necessary subcomponent of the larger infrastructure study, to help set appropriate land use parameters, advise the City on infrastructure investments needed to support redevelopment of the area, achieve urban design-related goals, and manage future redevelopment concepts desired by the City. Confluence Landscape Architecture + Planning is the design firm that was subcontracted to complete the master plan.

Staff recommends approval of the South of Gray's Lake Master Plan as a component of the PlanDSM Creating our Tomorrow comprehensive plan.

The entirety of the draft master plan can be found at the link [here](#).

**FISCAL IMPACT: NONE**

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The City realizes the future potential of an area that is both proximate to downtown and is adjacent to Gray's Lake Park that could transition over the longer term from the currently largely light industrial uses to a more vibrant mixed-use neighborhood. The South of Gray's Lake study area is in a high-profile location for the Des Moines community. It is close to Downtown Des Moines and is located south of the of West Gateway/Riverfront redevelopment

district. Its location adjacent to Fleur Drive ensures it is associated with the first views into Downtown Des Moines for visitors arriving from the Des Moines International Airport. Collectively, these factors make the future of the South of Gray's Lake study area important for the City of Des Moines.

- PlanDSM - Creating our Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council April 25, 2016, by Roll Call Number 16-0717. PlanDSM recognized the redevelopment potential of the area and designates it as Downtown Mixed Use, which is defined as:
  - “Allows mixed-use, high density residential uses, and compact combinations of pedestrian-oriented retail, office, residential, and parking in downtown. Should include active uses (e.g. retail) on ground floor, particularly at key intersections.”
- Specifically, the intent of the plan includes the following:
  - Review existing infrastructure conditions and developer framework diagrams for the area south of Gray's Lake Park.
  - Review currently proposed land uses and projected traffic patterns to identify future Capital Improvements Plan infrastructure needs, including multimodal transportation improvements.
  - Public information and planning processes held to engage stakeholders, residents, and nearby property owners.
  - Prepare a detailed master plan and land use review indicating the types of uses and level of density desired, which can help guide future planning decisions and infrastructure improvements necessary to support the redevelopment of the area.
  - Prepare a drainage analysis for the proposed Gray's Lake Park wetland area and show concepts for how this can be accomplished to provide a stormwater runoff cleansing and treatment area for the lake, as well as be an asset for the surrounding area.
- General land use and planning themes found within the master plan include:
  - Unique within the metro - It is important that the environment created in the master plan scenarios offer something that is unique within the Des Moines metro. The intent of the master plan is not to recreate Downtown Des Moines or the East Village, but rather to create a new experience based on the location and opportunities of the study area.
  - Mid-Intensity Mixed-Use - The desire to see mixed-use development was the most dominant preferred land use and development style. Within the mixed-use development style, a mid-intensity level of mixed-use was also preferred and makes sense for the site based on its location and nearby uses. Two (2) to four (4)-story mixed-use development that is walkable and of a human-scale is shown throughout the scenarios developed for the master plan.
  - Integrate Open Space/Parks - Many in the public requested that the master plan include strong connections to the nearby natural environment and to integrate parks/green space into the scenarios.
  - Need Residential to Support Other Uses - To support the mixed-use environment that many envisioned on the site, new residential in the area will be needed to attract reinvestment and redevelopment. Given the location and zoning, multi-household residential is the most suitable residential type. Based on feedback from the public, the most preferred multi-family type is medium density (townhomes/rowhouses) or lower-intensity high-density residential (two {2} to four {4}-story apartment/condo buildings). These new dwellings could be standalone or part of a mixed-use environment.
  - Walkable Development -It was essentially unanimous that the master plan promotes a walkable environment that is friendly to both pedestrians and bicycles. Cars would not be the main motivator for the connectivity of the site or design.

- The consultant team has met with numerous identified stakeholders over the past year and a half and conducted a series of public open houses and citizen engagement opportunities where feedback was given. Based on the input provided by the citizens, neighborhood leaders, and stakeholders, the consultant presented the planning framework and direction of the plan to the City Council at a workshop held on September 13, 2021.
- A project website was established to keep the public up to date on the latest news and events with the plan ([https://confluence.mysocialpinpoint.com/south-of-grays-lake-master-plan?\\_ga=2.156039229.721325312.1647015790-449270685.1647015790](https://confluence.mysocialpinpoint.com/south-of-grays-lake-master-plan?_ga=2.156039229.721325312.1647015790-449270685.1647015790)) and to capture feedback from those unable to make the scheduled workshops and webconferences about the planning process.
- While the master plan area does not include Gray's Lake Park within its study boundary, careful attention was given on how best to facilitate redevelopment near this park asset. The plan identifies a strategy for efforts to improve the lake's water quality by looking to utilize the former railyard to the south as an extension of the park, by serving as a proposed wetland areas that can help cleanse stormwater runoff into the lake.

Gray's Lake Master Plan Study Boundary Area

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):**

Date: May 18, 2020

Roll Call Number: [20-0811](#)

Action: [Approving](#) Professional Services Agreement with Felsburg Holt & Ullevig, Inc. for Southwest Infrastructure and Planning Study, not to exceed \$322,811. (Continued from the May 4, 2020 Council meeting) ([Council Communication No. 20-225](#)) Moved by Gatto to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

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

Board: Plan and Zoning Commission

Date: December 16, 2021

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: Plan and Zoning Commission voted 9-0 in support of a motion recommending approval of the proposed amendment to PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Plan adopting the South of Gray's Lake Master Plan as an element.

Board: Urban Design Review Board

Date: November 16, 2021

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: The plan was presented as an informational item only to gather board input and feedback. No formal action was taken on the part of the Board.

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

- Future City Council approval for Capital Improvement Projects related to enhancing infrastructure that would allow for the ongoing redevelopment of the area.

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