

Date June 24, 2013

WHEREAS, on August 7, 2000, by Roll Call No. 00-3381 the City Council adopted the Des Moines 2020 Community Character Land Use Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Plan and Zoning Commission has advised in the attached letter that at a public hearing held June 6, 2013, the members voted 12-0 to recommend **APPROVAL** of a request from the Neighborhood Revitalization Board to amend the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan to incorporate the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan as an element.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, that the proposed amendment to the Des Moines 2020 Community Character Land Use Plan described above, is hereby approved.

MOVED by _____ to approve the proposed amendment.

FORM APPROVED:


 Michael F. Kelley
 Assistant City Attorney

(21-2013-4.14)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GRIESS				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
MOORE				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	
_____ Mayor				

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ City Clerk

June 12, 2013

Date _____

Agenda Item 15B

Roll Call # _____

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their meeting held June 6, 2013, the following action was taken regarding a request from the Neighborhood Revitalization Board to amend the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

After public hearing, the members voted 12-0 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Dory Briles	X			
JoAnne Corigliano	X			
Shirley Daniels	X			
Jacqueline Easley	X			
Tim Fitzgerald				X
Dann Flaherty	X			
John "Jack" Hilmes	X			
Ted Irvine	X			
Greg Jones	X			
William Page	X			
Christine Pardee	X			
Mike Simonson				X
CJ Stephens				X
Vicki Stogdill	X			
Greg Wattier	X			

APPROVAL of a request to amend the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan to incorporate the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan as an element. (21-2013-4.14)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION

Staff recommends that the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan be amended to incorporate the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan as an element.

STAFF REPORT

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association (GLNA) was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in November 2011 as a "Transitional Neighborhood". In March 2012, City staff met with the GLNA Planning Committee for the first time. On April 5, 2012, the planning



CITY PLAN AND ZONING COMMISSION
ARMORY BUILDING
602 ROBERT D. RAY DRIVE
DES MOINES, IOWA 50309 --1881
(515) 283-4182

ALL-AMERICA CITY
1949, 1976, 1981
2003

committee and staff held a neighborhood-wide input meeting at the First Unitarian Church. Input from this meeting helped the Planning Committee establish and prioritize issues to address during the planning process. A second neighborhood-wide meeting was held on May 7, 2013 to present the goals and strategies of the plan to neighborhood residents.

II. GENERAL PLAN SUMMARY

At the neighborhood plan kick-off meeting, residents prioritized areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in the neighborhood. Based on this input, the planning committee prioritized the following issues for discussion: infrastructure, housing, parks and trails, sidewalks, land use along the SW 9th Street Corridor, traffic and schools.

Housing

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood has the most diverse housing stock in the City. Unlike most neighborhoods, there is no dominant housing style or time period of neighborhood development. After an initial examination of the neighborhood, it was determined there was a significant difference in the home characteristics east and west of SW 14th Street. The housing stock west of SW 14th Street is significantly larger, newer, and has significantly higher values than homes east of SW 14th Street. The average home west of SW 14th Street is assessed at \$316,000, while the average home east of SW 14th Street is assessed at \$87,000.

The housing improvement/enhancement strategies differ for the different parts of the neighborhood. One strategy for promoting the west side of the neighborhood is to market the area to perspective homebuyers and other stakeholders. This area is competing with the suburbs for homebuyers and it is an area that many people are unaware of. By working with Realtors and potential homebuyers the goal is to make the neighborhood a place where people continue to want to live.

Homes on the east side of the neighborhood are more modest in size and amenities. This area has not fared as well during the economic downturn. Home sale prices have fallen by almost 30% since 2007. This compares to approximately 20% Citywide. The plan outlines several strategies to address this concern. The first strategy is utilization of the Neighborhood Finance Corporation. Gray's Lake has been included in the NFC lending area since July 2012, and thus far there have been 12 loans closed in the neighborhood. Improving these numbers will help to enhance the housing stock. The GLNA is also going to work with realtors to promote the many benefits of living in the neighborhood and the availability of NFC lending in the area.

Ensuring that all properties meet the City's Junk and Debris Ordinance is another priority. The GLNA has identified a volunteer to build a relationship with the City's Code Enforcement Inspector to help streamline junk and debris complaints in the neighborhood.

Infrastructure

In 2012, approximately \$665,000 in Neighborhood Infrastructure Reinvestment Program funds were allocated to the Gray's Lake Neighborhood. To allocate these funds, the Public Works Department completed an analysis of the streets, curbs, and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. Based on the analysis, approximately \$1.7

million of needs were identified. The planning committee prioritized improvements along SW 14th Street, Bell Avenue (near Lincoln High School), and SW 12th Street. Curb and overlay improvements were prioritized by the committee since they are the least likely to be funded in the City's Capital Improvement Program. The planning committee decided against using NIRP funds to improve sidewalks in the neighborhood, as they believed that private property owners should be responsible for sidewalk maintenance.

Parks and Trails

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood features two parks: Gray's Lake Park and Mac Rae Park along with the Meredith Trail, a major regional trail. Gray's Lake Park is considered one of the premier parks in the country. The GLNA hopes to work with the City and other park stakeholders to ensure the park continues to be one of the best in the nation.

While Mac Rae Park has several amenities, the planning committee believes there are opportunities to improve the park. The Planning Committee along with the SW 9th Merchants Association are forming a committee to examine improvements to the park. The group kicked off the initiative with a park clean-up day in April. The Parks and Recreation Department has committed to providing cost estimates for park improvements which will allow the neighborhood to fundraise park enhancements.

Enhancing trail connectivity is a priority for the neighborhood. One pending improvement is the Quiet Street initiative, which connects Gray's Lake Park and the Blank Park Zoo along Casady Drive to SW 14th Street and south along SW 14th Street to West Street. The GLNA strongly supports the completion of this project, which is scheduled for Spring 2014. A trail connection connecting the Meredith Trail to Mac Rae Park is scheduled to be completed in 2015.

Sidewalks

The lack of pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood was one of the key concerns voiced at the neighborhood kickoff meeting. Specifically the planning committee felt that SW 12th Street, SW 14th Street, and Casady Drive should be prioritized for new sidewalk installation. Currently, the GLNA is working with property owners to gauge interest in pursuing this project. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association will be responsible for obtaining neighborhood and political support for any new sidewalks in the neighborhood.

Land use and Zoning/ SW 9th Street Corridor

The current land use map for the neighborhood shows the majority of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood is residential in nature and character. However, there were two areas where the planning committee believed a more in depth examination of the land use and zoning were necessary: the industrial area along Bell Avenue/Thomas Beck Road, and the SW 9th Street Commercial Corridor.

There was significant discussion about the future land use of the industrial land near Gray's Lake Park along Bell Avenue/Thomas Beck Road. At one time this area was completely industrial in nature with a rail yard running along Gray's Lake. However, in recent years, with elimination of the rail yard, there is some question as to the future

land use of this area. As a part of the neighborhood plan implementation, City staff will work with the GLNA, business, and property owners to examine the future land use plan in this area as part of the next Citywide update to the future land use map.

SW 9th Street is a major corridor that stretches along a 5-mile area from the Highway 5 bypass to the downtown Des Moines. Small lot sizes and an overall excess supply of commercial land use has lead many of the properties decline in appearance in recent years. Because this corridor impacts many neighborhoods and is a major arterial connecting the south side to downtown, the neighborhood plan recommends a more comprehensive study be completed along the SW 9th Corridor to determine how to enhance and redevelop the area.

Traffic and Transportation

There are two significant future transportation enhancements that will impact the neighborhood. The first is the Southwest Connector. The City's priority is the completion of the Southeast Connector. The current route runs along the south side of Gray's Lake on the old abandoned railroad right-of-way through the neighborhood. However, the City's first priority is the completion of the Southeast Connector. The second enhancement is the possible widening to SW 9th Street. The neighborhood will work with city staff and other stakeholders to ensure these future improvements enhance the neighborhood.

Speeding was a concern of neighborhood residents. Specifically residents were concerned with speeding along SW 14th Street and SW 12th Street. The proposed Quiet Street along SW 14th Street should alleviate some of the excess thru traffic in this area and the enhancements are designed to slow down traffic along this corridor. The planning committee specifically asked City staff to reduce the speed limit along Park Avenue between Fleur Drive and SW 14th Street from 35 mph to 30 mph. Other speeding complaints will be addressed to the Police Department's Traffic Unit.

Schools

The planning committee felt it was important to include the information on the world-class educational opportunities in the neighborhood. Neighborhood children attend Park Avenue Elementary, Brody Middle, and Lincoln High School. Both Park Avenue Elementary and Brody Middle School feature the world class International Baccalaureate Programme. Park Avenue Elementary is currently undergoing a \$2.4 million renovation. Lincoln High School is a neighborhood institution. While there are no major changes currently planned for Lincoln High School, the school will seek the input of the GLNA when future changes to the campus are proposed.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

There was no discussion

CHAIRPERSON OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING

There was no one to speak in favor or in oppositions of the applicant's request.

CHAIRPERSON CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING

COMMISSION ACTION:

JoAnne Corigliano moved staff recommendation that the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan be amended to incorporate the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan as an element.

Motion passed 12-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Ludwig, AICP
Planning Administrator

MGL:clw

Attachment

CITY OF DES MOINES

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan

May 22, 2013
Final Draft

2013

[TYPE THE COMPANY ADDRESS]

Introduction

The City of Des Moines and the Polk County Board of Supervisors established the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in the early 1990's to help stabilize and improve Des Moines' neighborhoods. To coordinate this program, the City's Community Development Department formed the Neighborhood Development Division.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program uses a strategy that calls for neighborhood residents, the City of Des Moines, Polk County, and local business leaders to develop a public/private partnership that addresses revitalization issues within the city. To participate, Recognized neighborhoods must submit an application and make a presentation to the Neighborhood Revitalization Board. At the November 19, 2011 Council meeting, by Roll Call No. 11-1964, the Gray's Lake Neighborhood was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

The staff of the Neighborhood Development Division provides technical assistance and planning coordination. Neighborhood planning staff works with the neighborhood group to develop and implement appropriate goals and a feasible action plan. The neighborhood plans provide a list of activities and identifies parties responsible for implementation. The success of the revitalization effort depends on a continued coordination of efforts among the neighborhood organization, the City, the County, and other public and private organizations.

This plan was prepared through a joint effort of the City of Des Moines Community Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division and the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association. The approved plan becomes an amendment to the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan and an ongoing guide directing future policy decisions for the neighborhood. Once a majority of the action items in the plan are completed, the neighborhood will be moved to Charter status.

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association is charged with leading the day-to-day implementation of the plan, with technical assistance from the City of Des Moines and Polk County.

Neighborhood Input and Vision Statement

The planning process kicked off with a neighborhood meeting on April 5, 2012. A flyer was mailed to all residents living in the neighborhood inviting them to participate in the process. In addition, a website, www.revitalizedesmoines.com, was established to allow for neighborhood residents to provide input. The meeting had 77 neighborhood residents in attendance. The meeting highlighted the neighborhood planning process, what to expect from a neighborhood plan, and helped determine issues the plan should address.

Attendees were given a survey to rank their favorite thing about the neighborhood and where there were opportunities for improvement. Neighbors listed the location, friendly neighbors, and parks/trails as the best amenities in the neighborhood. Residents ranked poorly maintained residential property and the appearance of commercial property as improvements they would like to see.

After the survey, meeting participants were broken into groups of 8 and were given three discussion questions. The first question asked about strengths of the neighborhood, the second asked about weaknesses, and the final question asked each group to discuss what could be done to improve the neighborhood today. The key results from the three questions are listed below:

Strengths of the Neighborhood

- Gray's Lake Park
- Diverse Housing Stock
- Location
- Friendly Neighbors
- Well kept properties
- Mature Tree Canopy

Weaknesses of the neighborhood

- Lack of sidewalk/pedestrian connections
- Poor home maintenance
- Speeding
- Vacant homes

How to improve the neighborhood today

- Beautify neighborhood
- Build relationship with SW 9th Merchants Association
- SCRUB Day
- Help Neighbors maintain homes
- Traffic calming near Lincoln HS

Based on the input from the neighborhood meeting, the planning committee drafted the following vision statement:

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood strives to be a walkable, energetic, family-oriented neighborhood that features a diverse housing stock, world-class schools, destination parks and trails, and vibrant commercial corridors.

All of the goals and objectives in the plan are intended to implement this vision statement.

Infrastructure

As a part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Designated Neighborhoods are allowed to participate in the Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP). NIRP funds are allocated to make improvements to existing sidewalks, streets, and curbs. In 2012, approximately \$665,000 was allocated to the Gray's Lake Neighborhood. To allocate these funds, the Public Works Department completed an analysis of the streets, curbs, and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. Based on the analysis, approximately \$1.7 million of needs were identified.

The planning committee prioritized improvements along SW 14th Street, Bell Avenue (near Lincoln High School), and SW 12th Street. Curb and overlay improvements were prioritized by the committee since they are the least likely to be funded in the City's Capital Improvement Program. The planning committee discussed using NIRP funds to improve sidewalks in the neighborhood. However, they determined sidewalk improvements can be made by private property owners without City assistance. For low-income homeowners, the City has a Special Assessment Subsidy program that will cover the costs of the improvements for qualifying homeowners.

A list of the NIRP improvements is listed below. All NIRP improvements was completed during the 2012 construction season.

	Street	From	To
HMA Overlay			
	Casady Drive	1435 Casady Dr.	Creston Ave.
	Henry Avenue	Park Ave.	Caulder Ave.
	Keyes Drive	Jarvis St.	Thorton Ave.
Interim Paving		From	To
	Davis Avenue	SW 12th St.	D.E. West
	Glover Avenue	Creston Ave.	Loomis Ave.
	Pleasant View Drive	SW 12th St.	SW 14th St.
	Virginia Avenue	SW 12th St.	D.E. West
CPR		From	To
	Casady Drive	Bell Ave.	Druid Hill Dr.
	SW 14th Street	Park Ave.	Creston Ave.
	SW 14th Street	Watrous Ave.	Park Ave.
	Thornton Ave cul-de-sac	E. of SW 14th St.	
PCC Curb		From	To
	Bell Avenue	SW 9th St.	SW 12th St.
	Casady Drive	1435 Casady Dr.	Creston Ave.
	Creston Avenue	SW 14th St.	Heliotrope Dr.
	SW 12th Street	Thorton Ave.	Wolcott Ave.
	SW 12th Street	Wolcott Ave.	Rose Ave.
	SW 12th Street	Rose Ave.	Maish Ave.
	SW 12th Street	Maish Ave.	Watrous Ave.
	SW 12th Street	Pleasant View Dr.	Virginia Ave.
	SW 12th Street	Virginia Ave.	Broad St.
	SW 12th Street	Loomis Ave.	Broad St.
	SW 12th Street	River Vista Dr.	Davis Ave.
	SW 13th Street	Watrous Ave.	Rose Ave.
	SW 13th Street	Rose Ave.	Birch Ln.
	SW 13th Street	Birch Ln.	Thorton Ave.

Land Use and Zoning

The Des Moines 2020 Community Character Plan is the Council-approved land use plan for the City of Des Moines. When adopted, the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Action Plan will become an amendment to the 2020 Community Character Plan. Land use is not parcel specific or legally binding, and is intended to provide a vision for development of an area.

Zoning is the parcel-specific AND legally binding regulation on the use of land. Zoning classifications are based on the land use designation from the 2020 Community Character Plan. Zoning changes require an ordinance and are not approved as a part of the neighborhood planning process.

The current land use map for the neighborhoods shows the majority of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood is residential in nature and character. The majority of the residential portion of the neighborhood west of SW 14th Street has a land use designation of Intown Estate Residential. The residential portion of the neighborhood east of SW 14th Street has a land use designation of Low-Density Residential. There is a commercial corridor along SW 9th Street while Wakonda County Club, Gray's Lake Park, and MacRae Park, have a land use designation of Park/Open Space. The land use designation along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road is General Industrial. A current land use and zoning maps are attached to this plan.

The majority of the neighborhood is residentially zoned. Most of the area is zoned "R1-60", Low Density Single-Family Residential. This includes all of the residential parts of the neighborhood west of SW 14th Street, Wakonda Country Club, Gray's Lake Park, MacRae Park, and Lincoln High School. The area west of SW 14th Street is zoned "R1-80" One Family Residential. The most significant difference between the two is that "R1-60" has a minimum of 60 foot lot frontage, while the "R1-80" zone requires 80 feet of frontage. The "R1-80" zoning district also requires larger lot sizes.

The majority of SW 9th Street is zoned,"C-1", Neighborhood Retail Commercial. This classification allows low-intensity businesses and professional offices intended to serve the surrounding residential property, such as book stores, florist shops, hardware stores, and restaurants. This zone does not allow bars and taverns or retail establishments larger than 30,000 square feet. Many of the parcels along SW 9th Street are split zoned, with portions zoned for both commercial and residential uses. The area south of Gray's Lake along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road is zoned "M-1" Light Industrial.

There was significant discussion about the future use of the industrial land near Gray's Lake Park along Bell Avenue/Thomas Beck Road. At one time this area was completely industrial in nature with a rail yard running along Gray's Lake. However, in recent years, with the development of Gray's Lake Park and the elimination of the rail yard, there is some question as to the future use of this area. The Southwest Connector is a proposed road that will run from downtown Des Moines out to West Des Moines. The current route would utilize the old railroad right of way for a future boulevard. All of these changes will have a significant impact on the future land use in the area.

The area has a diverse mix of current and proposed land uses. There are two large outdoor industrial storage facilities that require "M-1" Light Industrial Zoning. East of the Pomerantz Trail Connection, some changes have occurred. The Confluence brewery opened in 2012 and there is discussion about an art gallery and additional commercial uses in this area. These changes have lead to some uncertainty about future land uses in this area.

As a part of the neighborhood plan implementation, City staff will work with the GLNA, business, and property owners to examine the future land use plan in this area. In the interim, staff will encourage any new development to protect Gray's Lake Park as a key community asset and will discourage new uses that expand outdoor storage and other uses industrial in nature. Any development that occurs in this area will be encouraged to exceed tax abatement design and material standards.

There are two areas of Gray's Lake Park that are not zoned "FW" Flood plain or "U-1" Floodway. One area is zone "C-2" Highway Commercial and is the site of the former Holiday Inn. This area is now used for Parks Department concession area. The other spot is adjacent and zoned "R-4" High Density Residential. This parcel is not suitable for future development and is part of the multi-use trail around the park.

The land use designation for this area is Parks/Open Space which matches the current use. The City has no intention of disposing of the park, and therefore rezoning these parcels is not a priority. The current zoning in this area allows the Parks and Recreation Department some flexibility in making enhancements to the concessions area.

SW 9th Street is a major corridor that stretches along a 5 mile area from the Highway 5 bypass to the downtown Des Moines. The corridor is designated as a major arterial whose purpose is to move traffic effectively through the south side. However, development along the corridor is more neighborhood commercial in scale and nature. This mismatch has made it difficult to find the right mix of land uses and transportation enhancements.

Most of the commercial lots along the corridor were platted either for residential or neighborhood scale commercial use. Many of these lot sizes are not desirable for commercial uses today due to the small building sizes and lack of parking. These factors have contributed to the decline of many properties along the corridor. Finding a viable use for these sites may require the extension of commercial uses into residential areas near the corridor. While this is not a perfect scenario, the planning committee believes in the right circumstances this may be the preferred alternative to another dilapidated commercial structure.

In order to support the commercial uses along the corridor, increased density is necessary. Currently there is an abundance of run-down single family residential structures along SW 9th Street. Redeveloping these structures with high-quality, well designed multi-family housing will enhance the overall neighborhood and support the commercial businesses. One example of this transformation is the Christ the King development south of the neighborhood along SW 9th Street.

At the same time, there is continued demand from business owners to locate along the corridor. This may be due to the low rents in corridor and the continued desirability of the location. Many parcels along SW 9th Street have portions zoned for commercial and residential use. This split zoning of a parcel increases the complexity for property owners and developers who wish to reuse their property.

The concerns outlined above regarding SW 9th Street Corridor require a more comprehensive planning effort that must include property owners, businesses, south-side residents, and all neighborhoods along the corridor.

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan Goals—Land Use and Zoning			
Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Responsible Party	Priority; Timeline
Enhance the area near Gray's Lake Park to create a destination attraction for the region.	Work with property owners and the Gray's Lake Neighborhood to explore redevelopment potential for the area south of Gray's Lake along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road.	City, GLNA	6 Green 2 Yellow 1 Red
Enhance the SW 9 th Street Corridor	Work with property owners, neighborhoods, and other stakeholder organization to develop a plan for the SW 9 th Street Corridor.	City, GLNA, SW 9 th Street Merchants Association, and other groups	3 Green 2 Yellow

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan Goals—Land Use and Zoning			
Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Responsible Party	Priority; Timeline
	Consider approving expansion of commercial uses/zoning into residential areas so long as there is sufficient buffering to minimize the impact to adjacent property owners.	GLNA	1 Green 1 Yellow 2 Red
	Consider supporting high quality projects that increase density along the SW 9 th Street Corridor, so long as they are done in a way to minimize the impact on the adjacent properties.	GLNA	2 Green 2 Red
Change the zoning to meet the current land use	Rezone residentially built parcels at SW 11 th Street and Davis Street from "R-3" Multiple Family Low Density Residential to "R1-60" Low-Density Single Family Residential		3 Green 1 Red

Parks, Trails, and Sidewalks

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood features two parks: Gray's Lake Park and MacRae Park along with the Meredith Trail, a major regional trail. Gray's Lake Park was named one of America's Great Places in 2011 by the American Planning Association and is considered one of the premier parks in the country. Gray's Lake Park features a playground, beach, concession area, bicycle and watercraft rentals, a 2-mile recreational trail and other environmental and recreational programming. Along with the City's Park Board, a citizen advisory committee helps to guide decisions for Gray's Lake Park. The Parks and Recreation Department is committed to keeping the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association informed and gather their input on future improvements to Gray's Lake Park.

MacRae Park is another large regional park within the neighborhood, and is one of the City's oldest parks, with its first parcels being purchased in the 1890's. It is also important because of its natural beauty. The park contains interpretative signage along the nature trail in the oak savanna, one of the rarest ecosystems in the world. Along with this, MacRae Park features tennis courts and a playground. The views of downtown from MacRae Park are some of the best in the City.

While MacRae Park has several amenities, the planning committee believes there are ample opportunities to improve the park. The planning committee believes the park lacks an identity. With a location near Gray's Lake Park, Lincoln High School and adjacent to the Meredith Trail, there is an opportunity to enhance the park to serve as a gateway to the greater south-side of Des Moines.

MacRae Park has potential for future improvements which could include a natural playscape, upgrading of the upper shelter, installation of a adult fitness playground, or enhancing the scenic overlook area. While funding for improvements has not been identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program, the Park and Recreation Department is willing to assist the Gray's Lake Neighborhood to improve the park. The Parks and Recreation Department has committed to providing cost estimates for park improvements which would allow the neighborhood to fundraise for projects.

Enhancing trail connectivity is a priority for the neighborhood. One pending improvement is the Quiet Street, which connects Gray's Lake Park and the Blank Park Zoo. The route will run along SW 14th Street and Casady Drive/Druid Hill Drive. The recently completed trail segment connected Casady Drive to

Gray's Lake Park. This trail connection was completed in 2012 with fundraising assistance from the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association.

The Quiet Street will run from Druid Hill Drive to Casady Drive and move south along SW 14th Street. The goal of the project is to slow traffic along the route and provide a pedestrian/bicycle friendly transportation option. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association strongly supports the creation of the Quiet Street. Project pre-construction work will be completed in 2013 with construction of the project commencing in early 2014. In addition to the original plan, the neighborhood association also supports additional trail connections through the neighborhood along SW 12th Street that would connect to MacRae Park and downtown Des Moines.

Trail connections will be enhanced through a connection of the Meredith Trail to MacRae Park. This improvement is scheduled in the Parks CIP and is scheduled for completion during the 2015 construction season.

The lack of pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood was one of the key concerns voiced at the neighborhood kickoff meeting. Specifically the planning committee felt that SW 12th Street, SW 14th Street, and Casady Drive should be prioritized for new sidewalk installation. The city policy on new sidewalks states that neighbors initiate a petition with the impacted property owners. Once a petition for new sidewalks is submitted, staff analyzes the project costs.

If the City Council agrees that new sidewalks are necessary, they will approve a resolution to place the sidewalk on the schedule of future improvements. City policy assesses 50% of the construction costs and 10% of the engineering costs to the adjacent property owner. The city pays for the remaining costs associated with the construction of the sidewalk. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association will be solely responsible for obtaining neighborhood and political support for any new sidewalks in the neighborhood.

Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
Promote completion of trail connections in the neighborhood.	Support the completion of the Quiet Street Trail.	The GLNA will work with the adjacent neighborhoods and the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department to assist in the implementation of the "Quiet Street".	GLNA, City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department	6 Green 2 Yellow 1 Red
	Connect the Meredith Trail with MacRae Park	Create a trail connection from Meredith Trail to MacRae Park.	City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department	4 Green
Expand recreation opportunities in the neighborhood.	Improve MacRae Park	The GLNA will work local stakeholder groups to develop a committee to examine improvements to MacRae Park	City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation, GLNA	6 Green

Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
		Complete a preliminary site plan and cost estimates to make enhancements to MacRae Park. The stakeholder committee will spearhead fundraising to implement the park improvements	City of Des Moines Parks, GLNA	2 Green
	Maintain Gray's Lake Park as a premier attraction in the Metro area	The City will consult with the GLNA along with other stakeholder groups when making improvements to Gray's Lake Park.	City of Des Moines Parks	5 Green
	Enhance pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood.	The GLNA will investigate neighborhood support to install sidewalks along Casady Drive, SW 14 th Street, and SW 12 th Street where no sidewalk currently exists.	GLNA, City Engineering, City Council	9 Green 1 Yellow

Traffic and Transportation

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood is bordered by two major arterial streets, Fleur Drive and SW 9th Street. In addition to these corridors the neighborhood includes Watrous Avenue and Park Avenue. Ensuring these transportation corridors and enhancements continue to benefit the neighborhood is a priority for the residents. The future Southwest Connector, speeding and traffic enhancements along SW 9th Street were traffic and transportation concerns discussed with the planning committee.

The future Southwest Connector is a major arterial in the MPO's long range transportation plan. Initial work in developing the route was completed in the late 1990's. The route runs from the old railroad right of way adjacent to Gray's Lake Park along Thomas Beck Road and under SW 9th Street. The neighborhood would like to see the development of this road completed in a way that enhances the area and helps to make the neighborhood a destination location. With construction of the corridor at least a decade away, there will be opportunities for neighborhood residents to provide input on the planning and eventual construction of the road.

Speeding was a concern of neighborhood residents. Specifically residents were concerned with speeding along SW 14th Street and SW 12th Street. The proposed Quiet Street along SW 14th Street should alleviate some of the excess thru this area and the enhancements are designed to slow down traffic along this corridor. While no design changes are planned along SW 12th Street, the City will continue to work with the neighborhood to respond to speeding complaints and will examine if future transportation changes are necessary to deal with excessive speed on this street.

The planning committee specifically asked City staff to reduce the speed limit along Park Avenue between Fleur Drive and SW 14th Street from 35 mph to 30 mph. The speed limit east and west of this area has previously been reduced to 30 mph. The City's Traffic Safety Committee will study this issue in the summer of 2013 with a final recommendation moving forward.

Another planned improvement that will impact the neighborhood is the widening of SW 9th Street from 4 to 5 lanes. The project is also in the city’s long range transportation plan and is being completed in phases over the next 10-15 years. The belief is as more development occurs south of the neighborhood; the traffic counts on SW 9th Street will continue to climb justifying the need for additional traffic capacity. Ensuring this project enhances the neighborhood is a long term goal of the neighborhood.

Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
Ensure transportation enhancements benefit the neighborhood	Develop the Southwest Connector route	Ensure the development of the Southwest Connector is done in a way that enhances the neighborhood.	City of Des Moines, Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association	1 Yellow
		Ensure any future expansion of SW 9 th Street is done in a way that enhances the corridor.	City of Des Moines	1 Green 1 Yellow
Improve traffic safety in the neighborhood	Decrease speeding in the neighborhood	Lower the speed limit on Park Avenue between Fleur Drive and SW 14 th Street to 30 mph.	City of Des Moines, GLNA	1 Green 1 Yellow
		Install speed limit signs on Casady Drive.	City of Des Moines	2 Green 1 Yellow
		Complete the Quiet Street Trail project along SW 14 th Street.	City, GLNA,	4 Green
		Consult with the Police Department's Traffic Unit to obtain enhanced speeding enforcement in the neighborhood.	Police Department, GLNA	4 Green 1 Yellow

Housing

The Gray’s Lake Neighborhood has the most diverse housing stock in the City. Unlike most neighborhoods, there is no dominant style or age of the housing stock. Whether you desire a Beavertdale Brick, a 1920’s foursquare, a townhouse or a high-rise condo, the neighborhood has housing that meets these criteria. The two tables below examine year built and housing style.

Looking at year built, the most homes in the neighborhood were built in the 1920’s. However, this only accounts for 17% of neighborhood homes. Interestingly, almost an identical number of homes were

built in the neighborhood in the 1940's, and 1950's. This demonstrates the diversity of the housing stock.

The highest category of housing type is conventional, which is a catch all category used by the Assessor. Ranch/Bungalow homes account for approximately 45% of homes, however, there is a significant number of two story and other home styles in the neighborhood.

Year Built			Housing Styles		
Before 1900	19	1%			
1900's	72	5%	Split Level	16	1%
1910's	173	13%	Ranch	343	26%
1920's	223	17%	Townhouse	58	4%
1930's	125	10%	Bungalow	281	21%
1940's	211	16%	None Listed	7	1%
1950's	207	16%	Contemporary	19	1%
1960's	94	7%	Conventional	482	37%
1970's	78	6%	Early 20's	71	5%
1980's	26	2%	Split Foyer	22	2%
1990's	57	4%	Colonial	10	1%
After 2000	29	2%	Cape Cod	5	0%
	1,314	100%		1314	100%

Two other categories demonstrate the diversity of the neighborhood housing stock: square footage and home sale values. Thirty-five percent of neighborhood homes are smaller than 1,000 square feet. Ensuring these homes have the amenities needed to remain homeownership options is a priority. On the other end of the spectrum, over 30% of neighborhood homes exceed 1,500 square feet, with a significant number larger than 2,000 sq. ft. These homes have the necessary amenities, but many prospective homebuyers are unaware of the neighborhood housing opportunities.

Home sale values have fallen considerably since 2005. Looking at median home sale values, this trend is concerning. Home sale prices topped out at \$115,000 in 2007. Since that time, home values have dropped to a low of \$86,000 in 2011.

Square Footage			Home Sale Values			
			Year	Homes Sold	Median Sale Value	Sale Value/Sq. Ft.
Less than 749	105	8%	2004	55	\$97,500	\$88.84
750-999	349	27%	2005	76	\$109,900	\$108.16
1,000-1,224	271	21%	2006	67	\$106,900	\$97.23
1,250-1,449	190	14%	2007	62	\$115,250	\$107.51
1,500-1,749	140	11%	2008	59	\$100,000	\$93.25
1,750-1,999	92	7%	2009	58	\$104,500	\$90.42
2,000-2,499	76	6%	2010	54	\$110,215	\$89.07
2,500-2,999	56	4%	2011	49	\$86,000	\$87.65
Over 3,000	35	3%	2012	53	\$89,500	\$81.66
	1,314		Total	533	\$104,500	\$90.42

After conducting this initial analysis, it was clear there are two distinct housing markets in the neighborhood. The housing stock west of SW 14th Street is significantly larger, newer, and has higher values than homes east of SW 14th Street. In order to address these differences, the planning committee examined the areas east and west of SW 14th Street independently. The difference between the two areas is staggering.

West of SW 14th Street										
<i>West</i>	<i>Homes</i>	<i>LandFull</i>	<i>BldgFull</i>	<i>TotalFull</i>	<i>LndSF</i>	<i>Yr Built</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Total bath</i>	<i>Total Bed</i>	<i>Sale Price</i>
Median	195	\$ 48,000	\$229,500	\$274,150	15,620	1979	2,329	3.0	3.0	\$ 225,500
Average	195	\$52,532	\$264,172	\$316,704	22,291	1979	2,454	3.2	3.3	\$ 326,185
East of SW 14th Street										
<i>East</i>	<i>Homes</i>	<i>LandFull</i>	<i>BldgFull</i>	<i>TotalFull</i>	<i>LndSF</i>	<i>Yr Built</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Total bath</i>	<i>Total Bed</i>	<i>Sale Price</i>
Median	1119	\$19,900	\$79,900	\$100,100	7,700	1938	1,100	1.0	3.0	\$84,500
Average	1119	\$20,759	\$86,980	\$107,738	10,462	1936	1,171	1.4	2.6	\$86,369

The area west of SW 14th Street features some of the highest home values on the south-side. The 195 homes in area feature over 2,400 square feet of living space and have a median sale value of \$225,000. The west half of the neighborhood is tricky to gage using home values. Because the area is small, and a significant number of new townhouses have been built in a the past 10 years, the numbers can be misleading. To try to mitigate this factor, we used 2009 as a base year to analyze this part of the neighborhood. Looking at the sale figures since them, the area has held its own in a weak housing market.

While strategies to enhance the west side of the neighborhood are not necessary, promoting this area to perspective homebuyers and other stakeholders is an important tool to keep this a vibrant neighborhood. One strategy to enhance this area is to market the neighborhood to suburban realtors who are unaware of the wonderful homes and quality of life in this area.

The east side of the neighborhood is more homogenous. The area features modest sized homes with basic amenities that are in line with the rest of the City. The homes average 1,100 square feet, 1 bathroom, and 3 bedrooms.

Since 2007, the height of the housing market, home sale values has dropped 30% in the east part of the neighborhood. For a comparison, home sales throughout Des Moines have fallen approximately 20% since 2007. Therefore, some of this decrease can be explained by the overall weak housing market. In 2011, the median home sale price was \$76,000. Home sales did rebound slightly in 2012, and it is anticipated that home values will continue to rise as the economy improves. Developing strategies to enhance this area and make it more attractive to homebuyers is of the utmost importance.

Gray's Lake Home Sales Information

East of SW 14th Street				West of SW 14th Street			
Year	Number	Median Sale Value	Change since 2007	Year	Number	Median Sale Value	Change since 2009
2007	50	\$108,250	0%	2007	12	\$465,000	32%
2008	53	\$ 95,000	-12%	2008	6	\$237,000	-33%
2009	48	\$ 99,750	-8%	2009	9	\$352,205	0%
2010	40	\$ 81,450	-25%	2010	14	\$350,000	-1%
2011	38	\$ 76,000	-30%	2011	9	\$325,000	-8%
2012	41	\$ 78,000	-28%	2012	12	\$357,500	2%

The Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) began serving the Gray's Lake Neighborhood in July 2012. The NFC matches home mortgages and home equity loans with forgivable funds to assist with home improvements in Designated Neighborhoods. The effectiveness of the NFC in large part is due to the promotional expertise of the neighborhood association. Neighborhoods that have utilized traditional media, social media, and word of mouth to promote NFC lending have had the most success with the program. To date, 12 loans have been closed in the neighborhood totaling over \$700,000 of neighborhood investment.

Building a brand for the neighborhood is another important way to help promote the positive aspects of living in the neighborhood. The planning committee hopes the completion of the neighborhood plan is one opportunity to promote the benefits of the neighborhood. The GLNA will work with local media and real estate professionals to raise awareness of the neighborhood's many benefits.

In order to improve the appearance of the neighborhood, the planning committee and the GLNA have created a liaison with the City's Neighborhood Inspection Division to streamline junk, debris and rental housing complaints. The goal of this is not to circumvent the current ability of residents to call in complaints, but to enhance the relationship between the City's Code Enforcement and the GLNA.

Along with increased enforcement of junk, debris, and rental housing code, the GLNA wants to assist property owners goal of the planning committee is to create neighbors helping neighbors program. The goal of this program is to assist homeowners who are unable to improve/maintain their properties. While there is a high standard of home maintenance in the neighborhood, many homeowners face difficulties in maintaining their property. The planning committee believes that utilizing the skills and assets of neighborhood residents to assist these homeowners can create a situation that benefits everyone.

Gray's Lake Housing Goals				
Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
Maintain and enhance the neighborhood housing stock.	Promote the Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) home purchase, home repair, and refinance programs.	GLNA and the NFC will work together to education residents and promote the NFC efforts in the Gray's Lake Neighborhood.	NFC, GLNA,	5 Green

Gray's Lake Housing Goals				
Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
		The NFC will attend at least one GLNA general member meeting per year to promote their programs and answer questions.	NFC, GLNA	1 Green
		NFC will help sponsor neighborhood events to increase awareness of NFC programs and products.	NFC, GLNA,	1 Yellow
		NFC and GLNA will work together to develop marketing materials explaining NFC's lending programs and neighborhood eligibility.	NFC, GLNA	1 Yellow
	Minimize the number of foreclosed and abandoned homes in the neighborhood.	The GLNA will promote the Iowa Mortgage Helpline in their newsletter and at neighborhood events.	GLNA, Iowa Mortgage Helpline	4 Green 1 Yellow
		The GLNA will inventory vacant and abandoned homes in the neighborhood and submit them to the City to create a strategy to deal with vacant/abandoned homes individually.	GLNA, City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division	2 Green 1 Yellow
Improve the overall appearance of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood.	Ensure that all properties meet the City's junk and debris ordinance.	The GLNA will create a liaison with their City's Neighborhood Inspection Division to report problem properties.	GLNA, City's Neighborhood Inspection Division	9 Green
	Help residents who are unable to maintain their property themselves.	GLNA will organize "neighbors helping neighbors" events to assist neighbors with projects they are unable to do themselves.	GLNA	3 Green
	Encourage maintenance of rental properties in a way that is consistent with the neighborhood.	GLNA will send letters notifying rental property owners of issues with their property and encouraging them to mitigate the problem.	GLNA	6 Green
	Encourage residents to participate in the City's SCRUB program.	GLNA will work with the Public Works Department to announce scheduled SCRUB days, locations and times.	GLNA, City of Des Moines Public Works	4 Green

Gray's Lake Housing Goals				
Goal/Outcome	Strategy	Implementation	Responsible Party	Priority
Make the neighborhood more marketable to perspective homebuyers.	Increase awareness of the benefits of living in the neighborhood.	The GLNA will meet will create a presentation for realtors, and other perspective homebuyers to highlight the positive aspects of the neighborhood.	GLNA, City	5 Green 1 Yellow
		The GLNA will create a neighborhood identity that highlights the advantages of the neighborhood.	GLNA	1 Yellow

Schools

Residents of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood have access to a high quality education system that features some of the best schools in the Metro area. Neighborhood children attend classes at Park Avenue Elementary School, Brody Middle School, and Lincoln High School. In addition to these public schools, there are several private schools near the neighborhood including: Christ the King, St. Anthony's and Lincoln Heights Lutheran School.

Park Avenue Elementary was one of the first schools on the Southside. Educating children since 1885, Park Avenue Elementary School is located on the corner of SW 9th Street and Park Avenue serves grades K-5. For the 2012-2013 school year, 472 students were educated at Park Avenue Elementary. Park Avenue Elementary is one of only four elementary schools in Iowa to offer the world-renowned International Baccalaureate Programme. Along with this, Park Avenue has an active PTA that supports the activities of the student body.

Work recently commenced on a \$2.4 million building renovation. The renovation will include moving the office near the entrance, replacing the open classrooms with walls, library/technology upgrades, and improving the HVAC system. The project should be completed by August 2013, in time for the 2013-2014 school year. The GLNA would like to work with Park Avenue to hold a joint open house to showcase the newly renovated school.

Brody Middle School serves much of the south side including the Gray's Lake Neighborhood. The school of 702 located at 2501 Park Avenue, is a candidate for the International Baccalaureate Programme, making it one of four schools in Iowa to offer this world class academic program.

Lincoln High School located at 2600 SW 9th Street is a south-side institution. With 2,144 students, Lincoln is one of the largest high schools in Iowa. In addition to the main campus on SW 9th, 9th grade students attend class at the Rail Academy on 1000 Porter Avenue. This 9th Grade center is the only school in Des Moines dedicated to the education of 9th graders.

In 2006, a \$20 million update of Lincoln High School was completed. Because of this recent renovation, no major renovations were planned. The Lincoln Boosters are fundraising to replace the turn at the stadium with synthetic turf. In addition, there are fundraising ongoing for expansions of the wrestling room and weight room improvements. There is a need for additional parking at Lincoln, but no projects

are on the horizon to add parking spaces that this time. The school district will keep the neighborhood informed when future projects are being discussed.

Enhancing the relationship between the neighborhood and the schools is a top priority of the neighborhood. The GLNA is committed to working with all of the schools in the area to build a positive productive relationship that can benefit everyone.

Plan Implementation and Goal Prioritization

On May 7, 2013 a second neighborhood meeting was held. At that meeting, a draft of the neighborhood plan was presented and the 40 participants were given an opportunity to provide input on the plan and prioritize implementation objectives. Residents were given a list of eight plan implementation activities. Participants were asked to rank them in order from most important to least important. Based on this exercise, the top priorities for plan implementation are:

- Improve the appearance of residential property
- Enhance the SW 9th Street Corridor
- Install new sidewalks

It should be noted installing new sidewalks is an issue that divides neighbors. There were a significant number of neighbors who felt new sidewalks should be the top plan implementation priority. However, there were a significant number of residents who felt strongly that sidewalks should be the lowest priority. Working with residents who would be impacted by new sidewalks to minimize their personal impact may improve the success rate of this implementation strategy.

Implementation of the plan is the hardest part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. To be successful it is imperative that the Gray's Lake Neighborhood continue to provide strong, active leadership for the neighborhood. It will also require the continued commitment and support from the Des Moines City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors.

As the organization responsible for implementing the Neighborhood Plan, it is imperative the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association has the organizational capacity to carry out this task. Continuing to build leadership and the volunteer base will be critically important to successfully carry out the implementation phase of the plan. Along with the neighborhood association, the Neighborhood Development Division and other City staff will provide technical assistance to the neighborhood association during the implementation as defined in the plan.

The Neighborhood Development Division will conduct periodic assessments of the progress of a particular plan and will recommend that the program be ended once significant progress has been made. It is possible that certain activities may be investigated and found not to be feasible or require an unreasonable demand of resources. Once a plan has been found to be complete, a report is prepared with input from the neighborhood association and forwarded to the Neighborhood Revitalization Board for a recommendation. Their recommendation will then be forwarded to the Des Moines City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors for final approval. At this point the neighborhood becomes a Charter Neighborhood and is phased out of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program