



Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the

Oak Park / Highland Park

Special Investment District

ADOPTED
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Prepared for the City of Des Moines by czbLLC

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Introduction

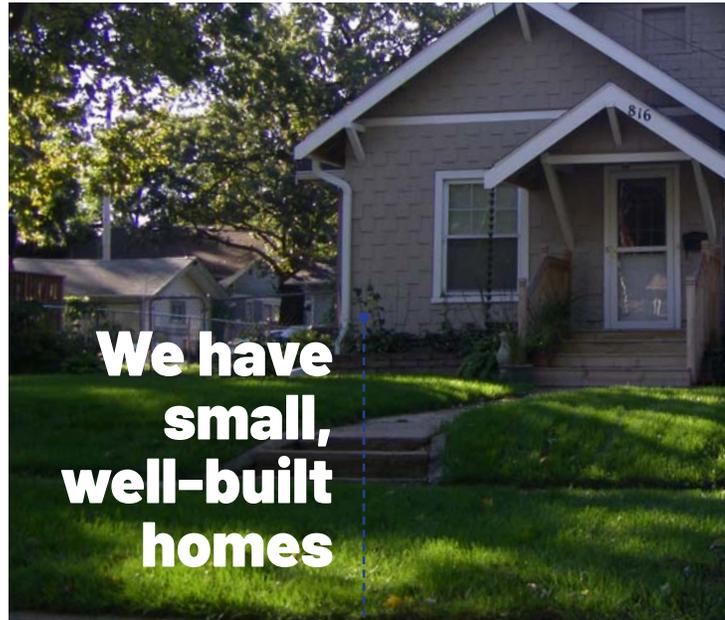
The historic business district at Euclid and Sixth Avenues, three miles from downtown, has been a focal point for life on the North Side of Des Moines for a century.

Surrounded by Oak Park to the west and Highland Park to the east, the district emerged between 1915 and 1925 as the Main Street for a “streetcar suburb” whose residents had an enviable lifestyle. They could own an affordable new house with a generous yard and clean air, jump on the streetcar for a quick ride downtown, stop by shops on Sixth Avenue for daily essentials, send the kids off to good schools, and walk to Riverview Park for fun on a summer evening.

Today, a series of neighborhood-based collaborations are working to highlight and build on this inheritance. The ‘Celebrate the Parks’ event, plans for Riverview Park, promotion of walking and biking, and a number of other efforts all tap in to the area’s roots as a place where living well is well within reach.

Of course, much has changed since the early 1920s. Everything that was new then is 100 years old now. And time has not been kind to many of the area’s homes or to the business district. Decades of soft demand—as interest shifted to other parts of the region—have left a mark in the form of buildings and infrastructure with long repair lists.

Addressing those needs and adapting the business district to life in the 2020s and beyond will not be easy, inexpensive, or quick work—nor is it possible without a willingness by current and future residents to lead the way. But the energy surrounding the neighborhood today makes it clear that there is a will because all that made this place special in the last century makes it worth fighting to revitalize in this one. **This plan provides a focused framework for accelerating this revitalization.**



**We have
small,
well-built
homes**

**How do we
make them
durable and
appealing for
the next 50
years?**

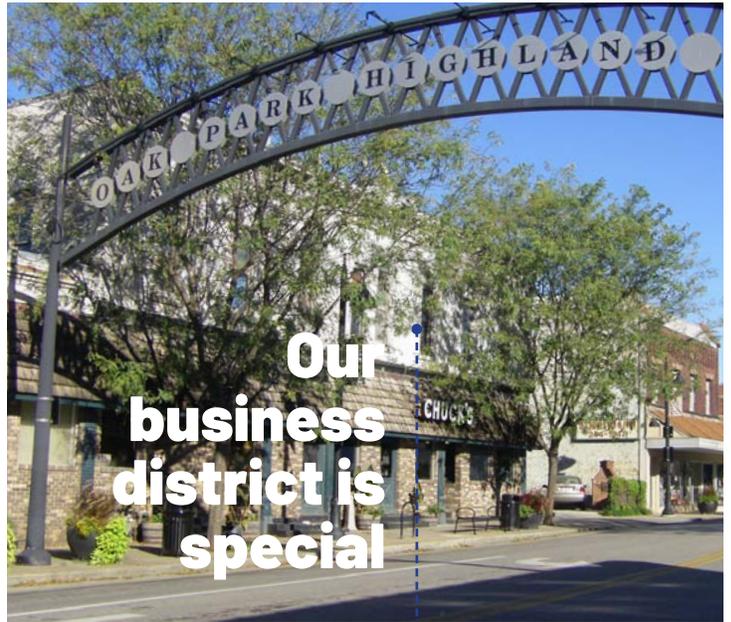
**How can
we instill
a stronger
sense of
confidence
and pride on
our blocks?**



This is a walkable place with great parks

How can we make it an even more pleasant and safe place to live an active life?

What role does the city play? What roles do property owners and residents play?



Our business district is special

What does it mean for the district to be 'vibrant' in today's economy?

What actions will move us in that direction?

Planning Process Overview

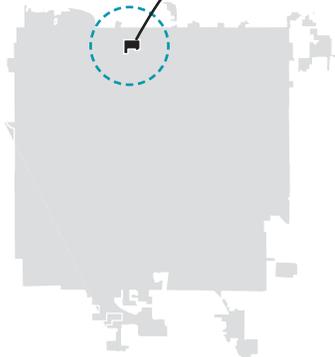
In 2017, the City of Des Moines undertook an evaluation of its Neighborhood Revitalization Program—the third evaluation of the program and its performance since its inception in 1990. The evaluation included a comprehensive look at housing conditions and market dynamics throughout Des Moines in order to understand the impact of previous revitalization work and needs going forward.



The evaluation found that neighborhood engagement and the cultivation of active neighborhood associations has been a key accomplishment of the last three decades, among other successes. It also found, however, that a relatively small number of neighborhoods in Des Moines are genuinely strong—and that most neighborhoods are somewhere between strong and distressed. This large and vulnerable “middle” was identified as a priority for future revitalization work due to the fiscal threat that their decline would pose to the City (resulting in less capacity to invest in all neighborhoods) and the cost efficiency of working in areas that are still stable enough to respond well to revitalization efforts.

Given the sheer size of Des Moines’s middle neighborhoods—which contain nearly 70% of the city’s residential properties—it was necessary to begin this next generation of neighborhood revitalization by focusing attention and resources in a handful of areas to test ideas and develop an effective toolkit of resources to deploy more widely over time.

Four **Special Investment Districts** in middle neighborhoods were selected for this pilot round, including the area in Oak Park / Highland Park extending west from 6th Avenue to 12th Street, and from McHenry Park to Seneca Avenue.





This plan for the **Oak Park / Highland Park Special Investment District**

was developed between November 2018 and May 2019 by the City of Des Moines in partnership with a steering committee comprised of local residents and business owners, with additional information from a public survey and stakeholder interviews. It provides a framework for revitalization efforts over a **10-year planning horizon** in this Special Investment District. And, together with three similar plans produced simultaneously in Drake, Columbus Park, and the Franklin Area, it provides a model to replicate—with modifications as necessary—in other middle neighborhoods of Des Moines.

A Brand and a Vision

At the core of this plan is a statement that expresses the Oak Park / Highland Park area's most important attributes today and the promise it is making to those who choose to live here. It identifies what residents currently see as chief selling points, but it is also aspirational and describes assets that require attention for the neighborhood to achieve its full potential.

This brand statement for Oak Park / Highland Park serves as a guiding vision around which the outcomes and actions in this plan are arranged.



For people seeking a home in a walkable, urban neighborhood, Oak Park and Highland Park are minutes from downtown amenities and employment by bike, foot, car, or bus. They are a fantastic value with well-built homes, mature trees and a historic neighborhood business district. Our friendly neighbors and beautiful McHenry Park make it a delight to walk your dog, ride your bike, or meet up for a pint."



Oak Park / Highland Park

How To Use This Plan

This plan is divided into four parts:



PART 1

Neighborhood Planning and Revitalization in Des Moines

provides background on related planning efforts and the recent history of neighborhood revitalization in Des Moines. It also identifies key principles of revitalization planning and defines the characteristics of a 'healthy' neighborhood.

PART 2

Assets, Trends, and Key Issues

provides context for planning in the Oak Park / Highland Park area by identifying what is working and not working and why it matters. The data and analysis in this section point to the major issues to develop strategies around.

PART 3

Goals and Outcomes

distills the neighborhood's vision from core brand attributes—the characteristics that best describe what makes the neighborhood desirable to current residents and marketable to homebuyers. Part 3 also identifies the outcomes that will be used to assess progress toward revitalization and fulfillment of the vision.

PART 4

Action Plan

presents a series of activities to implement over the plan's 10-year planning horizon. It includes action to take solely within the Special Investment District boundaries as well as broader actions at the city and neighborhood levels. It ties each activity to one or more outcomes and identifies the partnerships needed for successful implementation.

Neighborhood Planning and Revitalization in Des Moines

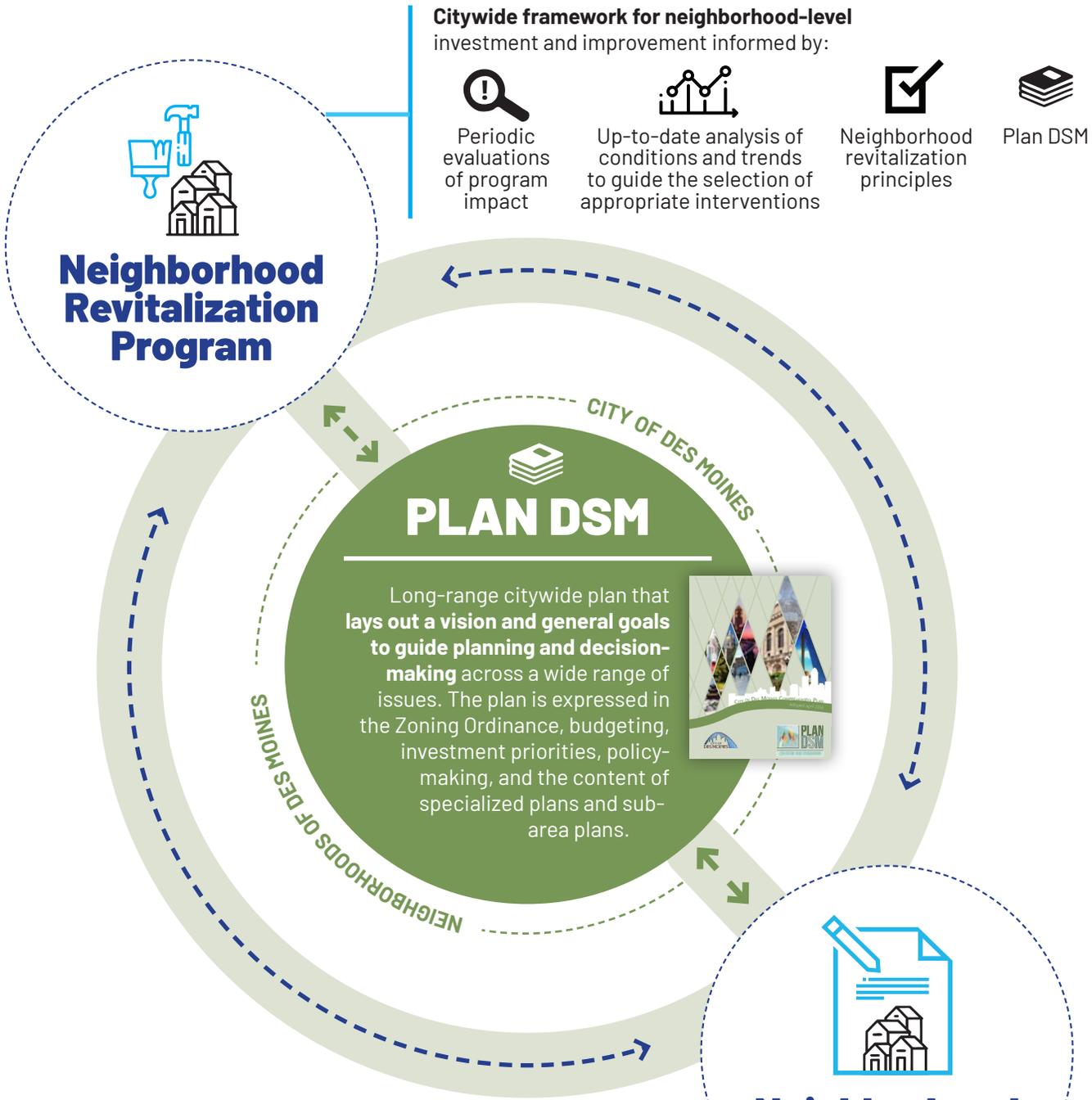
Des Moines has **over 50 neighborhoods**, each with specific challenges to confront and opportunities to realize within their boundaries. In a city with as much neighborhood diversity as Des Moines, a one-size-fits-all approach to planning for neighborhood improvement is very likely to be ineffective.

At the same time, each neighborhood contributes to the life and functioning of the wider community, is influenced by and has traits similar to other neighborhoods, and relies on the City for critical services and infrastructure. An approach to neighborhood planning that ignores these relationships or the competition for scarce resources is also bound to fall short.

Instead, a balance is needed that addresses the parts and the whole by identifying the type of work that needs to be done at the neighborhood level and relating that to the “Big Picture” – what the entire community is aiming to solve or

achieve, what resources it is able or willing to commit, and how the work gets done.

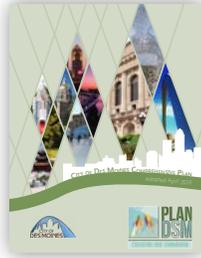
In Des Moines, the “Big Picture” in this balancing act is provided by the City’s comprehensive plan—Plan DSM—as well as the citywide Neighborhood Revitalization Program. Both provide a wide-lens framework for making decisions about neighborhood-level investments. But they are also designed to evolve: to reflect changing conditions, lessons learned from recent undertakings, and needs expressed by individual neighborhood plans.



Guides for strengthening neighborhoods and other small areas, serving as amendments to Plan DSM. Neighborhood planning is informed by:

- Neighborhood Associations and other stakeholders
- City departments and partner agencies
- Neighborhood Revitalization Program
- Conditions, trends, and key issues
- Plan DSM

Plan DSM



Des Moines’ current comprehensive plan—Plan DSM—was adopted in 2016 and provides general guidance for long-term planning and decision-making throughout the city. The plan is organized around nine topical elements—including Land Use, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation—and identifies general goals to achieve around each element.

Since its adoption, Plan DSM has been supplemented by more detailed subject-specific plans such as Move DSM (a citywide transportation plan) and has shaped the development of an updated zoning, planning, and design code.

The two elements of Plan DSM with the most direct relevance to neighborhood planning are “Community Character and Neighborhoods” and “Housing.”

The process behind this plan for the Oak Park / Highland Park Special Investment District is an extension of Plan DSM and will become an amendment to the comprehensive plan upon adoption.



Community Character and Neighborhoods

PLAN DSM GOALS

- #1** Embrace the distinct character offered in each of Des Moines’ neighborhoods.
- #2** Further Des Moines’ revitalization efforts to improve the strength, stability, and vitality of all neighborhoods.
- #3** Promote the redevelopment and revitalization of neighborhood nodes and corridors.
- #4** Protect Des Moines’ historic and cultural assets that contribute to neighborhood and community identity.
- #5** Expand opportunities for healthy and active living for all residents.
- #6** Strengthen the walkability and connectivity within and between neighborhoods.



Housing

PLAN DSM GOALS

- #1** Provide a diversity of housing options to accommodate residents of all ages, income levels, household sizes, and cultural backgrounds.
- #2** Preserve, maintain, and improve the existing inventory of single-family and multi-family housing.
- #3** Promote sustainable housing development that utilizes existing resources and supports compact, walkable, and bikeable neighborhoods.
- #4** Support development of and access to quality housing affordable to all income level households.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Des Moines started a citywide Neighborhood Revitalization Program in 1990 out of recognition that special attention and resources were needed to stabilize and strengthen neighborhoods. The program has continued uninterrupted since then, undergoing periodic evaluations (in 2005 and 2017-18) to assess its impact and recommend modifications to strategies, tools, and resource allocation.

The latest evaluation identified a series of accomplishments that have produced tangible progress. It also identified a series of challenges that remain or have intensified over time, threatening both the strength of individual neighborhoods and the City's fiscal capacity to invest in needed programs, services, and infrastructure.

Progress Made

- **Neighborhood associations** have been established across much of the city and provide a proven model for engaging residents in identifying and addressing key issues.
- **Strong relationships between the City and housing providers** have been cultivated, resulting in coordination of efforts to invest in community development and affordable housing.
- **Strong planning capacity** has been developed within City Hall to guide the development and implementation of neighborhood and small area plans.
- **Successful rehabilitation and redevelopment projects** have been completed on properties across Des Moines, showing real capacity to finance and complete complicated work.
- **Many neighborhoods have built identities** and have become strong and proactive advocates for their interests – a key characteristic of healthy neighborhoods.
- **The neighborhood revitalization planning process** has provided a rational system for making decisions and allocating scarce resources.

Challenges That Persist

- **Suburban competition** remains fierce in the Des Moines market. With the exception of downtown, population growth has been stagnant in most of the city despite healthy levels of regional growth.
- **Demand in core neighborhoods** has not improved and has become even weaker in some areas.
- **Limited appreciation of real estate values** has been experienced by most neighborhoods in Des Moines over the past 15 years. This lack of growth in the taxable property base is a fiscal threat to the City because the cost of providing key services is not going down.
- **Property conditions are far below acceptable standards in many neighborhoods** reflecting soft levels of demand that have made disinvestment behaviors (such as putting off routine maintenance) the norm.

Housing Market Context

The 2017-2018 evaluation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program involved a detailed look at housing condition and markets across the city. A result of this was the identification of six market types ranging from very healthy markets—where most homes are very well maintained and prices and demand is relatively strong—to very unhealthy markets.

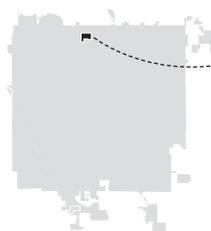
A central finding of this market analysis was the extensive size of the “middle” market types—types 3 and 4 in the adjacent chart. These markets are dominated by homes that are in average condition—showing signs of neither distress nor evident pride of ownership.

The considerable number of homes that could tip in either direction over the next decade—becoming healthier or more distressed—makes these middle markets points of real vulnerability to Des Moines’ ability to compete in the regional housing market and invest in neighborhood improvement. For that reason, those markets were signaled out as the primary targets for future revitalization work.

Average Field Survey Scoring



Type	1	2	3	4	5	6
# of Neighborhoods	4	5	15	12	9	3
Avg Sale Price	\$271,007	\$205,937	\$127,351	\$82,839	\$62,452	\$51,442
Total Properties	2,798	3,750	22,248	19,328	9,611	2,053
% Homes in Excellent or Good Condition	77%	74%	33%	17%	7%	3%
% Homes in Average Condition	20%	18%	54%	55%	36%	25%
% Deteriorated Homes	3%	4%	13%	28%	57%	72%
Potentially Valuable Intervention	Inclusion	Inclusion	Revitalization + Inclusion	Stabilization + Revitalization	Stabilization	Stabilization + Landbanking



The Oak Park/Highland Park Neighborhood is part of Des Moines’ broad ‘middle’ submarket, where a large share of homes are vulnerable to disinvestment. Revitalization strategies will accomplish the most in these areas.



Neighborhood Revitalization Principles

In addition to identifying the markets and neighborhoods where revitalization is the most valuable intervention, the 2017-2018 evaluation also identified a set of principles to guide decision-making around neighborhood revitalization activities and resources.

Principles

Strength and assets

Focusing investments around vital assets and building on the genuine strengths of a neighborhood generates progress and returns at a higher rate – and at a faster pace – than dwelling on problems and liabilities.

Targeted

Spreading scarce resources across a wide area will severely limit their impact. Focusing resources inside a small number of well-defined areas achieves several important aims:

- (1) it differentiates blocks where investment is occurring, thus enabling the market to take note of cues about positive future change,
- (2) it communicates boundaries which the market interprets as a signal of predictability, and
- (3) it concentrates resources for heightened impact.

Patience

Neighborhood change can sometimes seem like something that happens quickly and in one direction, but that is rarely the case. It takes time for resources to be marshalled, for the investments of dozens or hundreds of homeowners to be collectively transformative, and for resident leadership capacity to be cultivated. This is especially true in a market that has been stagnant for decades.

Outcomes and measurement

There will always be an impulse to measure progress by outputs, such as the number of homes that have been fixed up, or even the amount of money spent. The key is to identify and track outcomes that will reflect true changes in how the market is behaving and the choices that individual property owners are making. These include the prices people are willing to pay for homes, or the share of homes in a neighborhood that express real pride.

Defining a Healthy Neighborhood

Revitalization is a process that leads to something: a neighborhood that is vital and healthy. But what is a healthy neighborhood?

The **2017-2018 evaluation of Des Moines' Neighborhood Revitalization Program** describes a healthy neighborhood in terms of a four-factor investment cycle, with each factor supporting the others.



A healthy neighborhood is a place where it make sense for residents and owners to invest their time, energy and money.

The four factors that move together in a self-reinforcing cycle to determine neighborhood health are the MARKET (or who is there), its CAPACITY (or its willingness and ability to manage the neighborhood), the CONDITIONS (or the resulting visible level of care and investment), and the IMAGE (or the perception of the neighborhood held by the broader market). When demand for living in a neighborhood exceeds the supply, the cycle spins in a positive direction, keeping the neighborhood strong. But it can also move in a negative direction, further eroding an already weakened neighborhood.”

The **MARKET** must be strong.
Demand must exceed supply and
prices must be rising.

MARKET

Who is living in the
neighborhood



Resident **CAPACITY** must be high.
Residents must demonstrate they are
managing the neighborhood.

CAPACITY

Ability and willingness
to manage home and
neighborhood



**Healthy
Neighborhoods**

IMAGE
Perception of the neighborhood
by broader market



Neighborhood **IMAGE** must
be positive.
Signals sent by conditions have
to communicate pride and instill
confidence.

CONDITIONS

Resulting level of care and
investment



Housing and neighborhood
physical **CONDITIONS** must
be good.
Residential blocks appeal to the
regional market.

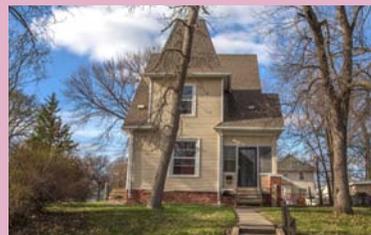
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Assets, Trends, and Issues

The four self-reinforcing factors that define a healthy neighborhood – a strong **market**, high **capacity** to manage change, good physical **conditions**, and positive **image** – provide a useful way to gauge and understand where the Oak Park / Highland Park area and the Special Investment District stand today and the type of work that is most likely to make them healthier.

To assess these four factors, observations from residents and stakeholders were blended with analysis of market and demographic data. This work revealed a list of assets and strengths that contribute to market, capacity, conditions, and image in the Oak Park area, and that serve as useful building blocks around which to develop strategies. This work also revealed several key issues that need to be addressed in order to preserve the neighborhood’s assets, play to its strengths, and move closer to overall health.

The following is a summary of assets, trends, and key issues that shape the health of Oak Park/ Highland Park today and provide guidance on where and how to intervene.



Assets and Strengths



Historic Business District

A compact collection of buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with a complementary streetscape and favorite local businesses.



Proximity to Downtown

Des Moines' strong downtown core—and its 75,000+ jobs—is only a few minutes away by car, bus, or bike.



Oak Park Elementary School

Innovative curriculum and programming, including participation in the Kennedy Center's Turnaround Arts initiative.

Affordability

More than 80% of Polk County households can afford to buy a house in the neighborhood's typical price range.



Parks and Trails

McHenry Park's well-maintained features and commanding views of the river and downtown, along with access to trails and Riverview Park's re-emergence as a destination for live entertainment.

Homes with Character

The housing stock is dominated by modest but well-built homes dating from the 1910s and 1920s, including many small American Craftsman-style homes.

North Side Library

Full service library branch with extensive Heritage Collection of local images and memorabilia.



Pride

A growing sense of neighborhood pride, exemplified by active neighborhood associations, the Parks Area Foundation, and the "Celebrate the Parks" event.

Key Trends and Issues

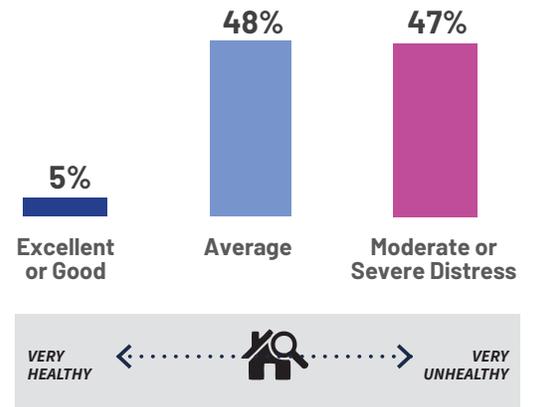
#1 High levels of deferred maintenance and lagging property values are a sign that the housing market has been soft for decades.

Nearly half of all homes show signs of physical distress, and only a fraction exhibit clear pride of ownership.

A fall 2018 survey of exterior conditions in the Special Investment District found that 42% of homes showed moderate signs of disinvestment (several indicators of physical deterioration) and 5% showed overwhelming signs of distress.

Conversely, only 5% of homes were deemed to be in excellent or good condition—showing high standards of upkeep and evident pride. Fully 48% of homes were somewhere in the middle and are vulnerable to decline in the coming decade.

Exterior Condition Survey of Homes in the Special Investment District, 2018



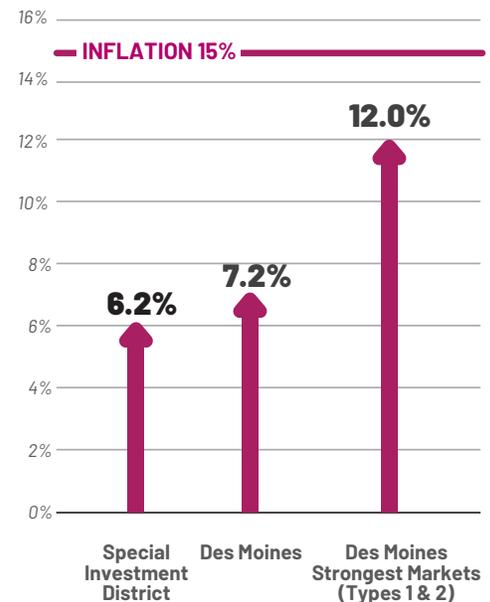
Source: 2018 exterior condition field survey by City of Des Moines and czbLLC

Market values have been rising but lagging.

In current dollars (not adjusted for inflation), the average assessed value of single-family homes and duplexes in the Special Investment District rose by 6.2% between 2010 and 2018, from \$90,196 to \$95,748. This rate of growth was slightly lower than citywide value growth of 7.2% over the same period, and substantially lower than the 12.0% growth experienced in Des Moines' strongest markets (Types 1 and 2 from page X).

Inflation—which was 15% between 2010 and 2018—outpaced even Des Moines' strongest market categories, reflecting the city's wider struggle to compete in the Polk County housing market and threatening the City's ability to keep up with the rising costs of service delivery.

Percent Growth in Assessed Value of Residential Properties, 2010-2018



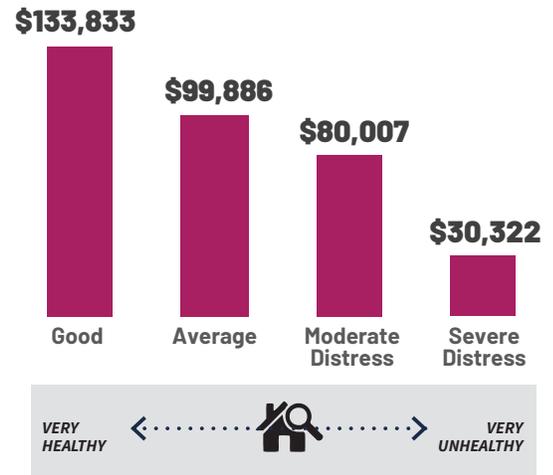
Source: czbLLC analysis of Polk County assessment database

#2 Although the market is soft, it is strong enough to reward homeowners who improve their properties with greater equity and wealth-building potential. But many homes will cost more to fix than they will be worth when fully renovated—a gap that needs to be addressed for widespread reinvestment to occur.

Buyers are paying a premium for the neighborhood’s best homes.

Property conditions have a strong influence on sales prices in the Special Investment District—this is a good sign and an indication that the market, while soft, is not weak. Properties whose exteriors were rated as being in good condition in 2018 sold for an average of \$134,000 during the period 2016–2018, which was 34% more than properties in average condition and 67% more than properties with moderate levels of distress.

Average Sale Price by Exterior Condition Survey Score, 2016–2018

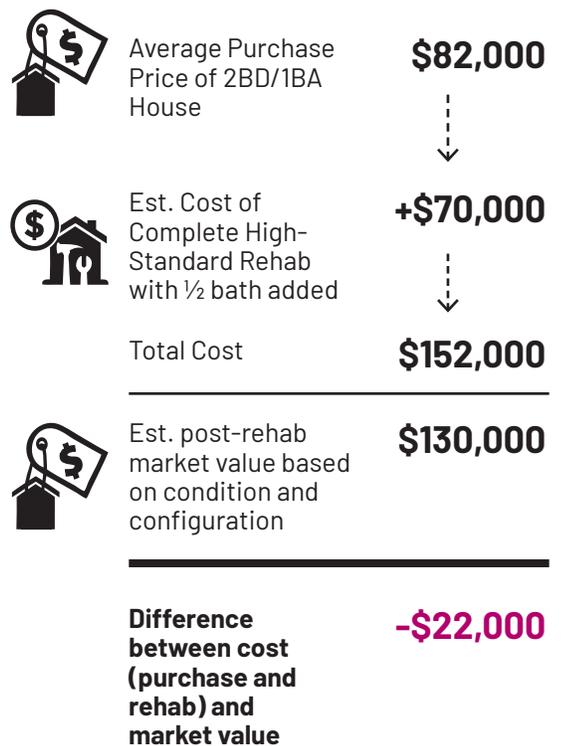


Source: czbLLC analysis of MLS sales data and 2018 exterior condition field survey

The neighborhood’s small homes are an opportunity to build value, but also demonstrate the appraisal gap that limits needed investment.

Homes with two bedrooms and one bathroom represent 41% of all homes in the Special Investment District. The combination of their size and condition put their average assessed value at just \$82,000 in 2018.

If rehabilitated to a high standard, with features such as a half-bath or garage added to boost marketability, these homes have the potential to attract far more interest. Under current market conditions, though, the cost of making these properties appealing and marketable for the next several decades—a cost that will, in some cases, match or exceed the pre-rehab purchase price—is prohibitive.



Source: czbLLC analysis of MLS sales data

#3

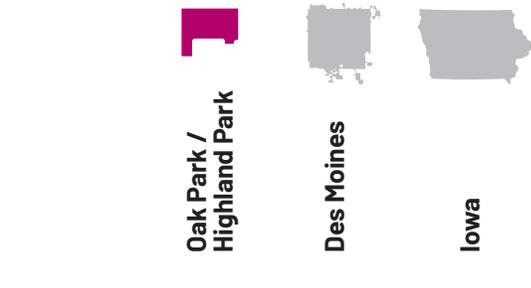
The neighborhood is relatively young and shows signs of socioeconomic stability and improvement, which bodes well for boosting levels of engagement and cultivating resident leadership capacity.

Young adults and children form a higher share of the population in the neighborhood than they do citywide or statewide.

While other parts of Des Moines have a pronounced share of older homeowners and must navigate a period of transition in coming decades—and all that that might mean for the housing stock and institutional knowledge—it appears that the Oak Park / Highland Park area may already be on the other side of such a transition.

The relatively large share of younger adults and children—which is increasingly reflected in the ranks of resident leadership—signals interest in the neighborhood by young families and represents an opportunity to promote the neighborhood more widely to the region’s younger demographic. It also presents the challenge of retaining young families (with or without children).

Age Distribution, 2017

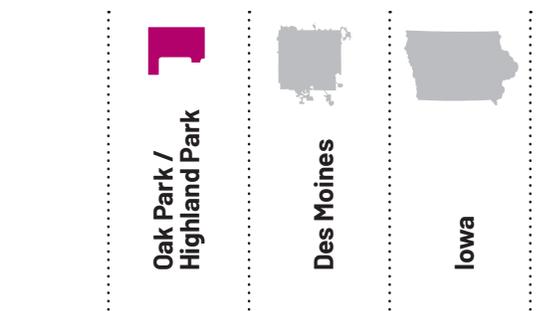


	Oak Park / Highland Park	Des Moines	Iowa
Under 18	31%	24%	23%
18-34	28%	27%	23%
Younger than 35	59%	51%	46%
35-64	32%	37%	38%
65+	9%	12%	16%

Source: Census Bureau ACS, 2017 5-Year Estimates

Incomes have risen more sharply in the neighborhood than they have citywide, boosting household financial capacity (poverty rate???)

In what may be a reflection of a transition from an older, retired population with very restricted incomes to a younger wage-earning population, the neighborhood has experienced significant gains on income and reductions in poverty during this decade. Although incomes are still lower and poverty is higher in the neighborhood than the rest of Des Moines and Polk County, the gap between the neighborhood and the city has closed substantially.



	Oak Park / Highland Park	Des Moines	Iowa
Median Household Income			
2013	\$40,741	\$45,836	\$59,018
2017	\$48,854	\$49,999	\$63,530
Poverty Rate			
2013	22.4%	18.5%	11.8%
2017	18.9%	18.1%	11.7%

Source: Census Bureau ACS, 2013 and 2017 5-Year Estimates

#4

The neighborhood is well-suited for active lifestyles around walking and biking, but this is diminished by notable shortcomings to pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Euclid Avenue is a challenge for pedestrians and bicycles

Euclid Avenue (U.S. Route 6) is an important traffic artery and bus route with 14,000 to 18,000 vehicles per day traveling on Euclid west of 6th Avenue. It's current configuration lends itself to speeding and lane changing, making it feel unsafe to pedestrians and bicycles and forming both a physical and psychological barrier between residential blocks north of Euclid and the parks and trails to the south.



Sidewalk conditions and gaps make for an uneven pedestrian experience.

There are small gaps in the sidewalk network in the Special Investment District and the wider neighborhood, creating an uneven and sometimes unsafe environment for pedestrians. Sidewalk maintenance, a responsibility of property owners, is also an issue on some blocks.



Some alleys are poorly maintained.

Although alleys are not commonly used as pedestrian pathways in the neighborhood, poorly maintained alleys can give off signals of disorder that make some pedestrians uncomfortable.



#5

The business district has historic charm but is underperforming. A more vibrant district is likely to be one with less retail than has historically been the case.

Low demand for space driving poor conditions

The district contains roughly 90,000 square feet of ground floor space spread across 51 shop or office fronts in more than 20 buildings. While the district has some iconic anchor businesses—such as Chuck’s and Hiland Park Hardware—as many as 35% of the commercial frontages appear to be vacant, in transition, or have ambiguous uses that are unclear to passersby. This is both an indication that demand for space—especially retail—is low. Part of that is driven by space that is outdated and unappealing to commercial tenants (a byproduct of years of rents being insufficient to finance improvements) and part of that is a reflection of the modern retail economy.



Retail likely to play a small role going forward

Low demand in the district is also a consequence of competition for local retail and service tenants from Park Fair and retail nodes further east at Euclid and 14th Avenue. It is difficult for the district to compete with these more modern commercial areas for tenants who rely on volume sales and convenient access.

This means that a successful tenant lineup in the district is unlikely to be heavy on retail (contrary to the district’s history) and more likely to involve a diverse combination of food & beverage, offices, specialty retail (supplemented by online sales), and more non-traditional uses.



Need for a clear “third place”

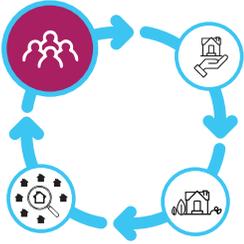
Most successful business districts have at least one “third place”—a term used to describe a business or a public space that serves as a living room for the neighborhood, where people feel comfortable hanging out and socializing throughout the day. If such a place exists (as a coffee shop, restaurant, park, etc.), its status as the “third place” is clear to locals. But it should also be immediately clear to visitors, who will see it as a welcoming entry point and gathering spot. Currently, there is no space in the business district that reads to an outsider as serving this function.



Where are we now?

What will it take to make progress toward a strong market?

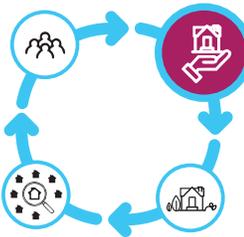
MARKET



The market is getting stronger and not weaker, which is important. But it remains an underperforming market in Des Moines and Polk County with relatively soft demand and a large backlog of deferred maintenance to overcome—something unlikely to happen at a desired pace under current market conditions.

Intervention will be needed to remove blighted nuisance properties that drag down confidence and to cover the gap between the cost of fully upgrading a home and its projected market value.

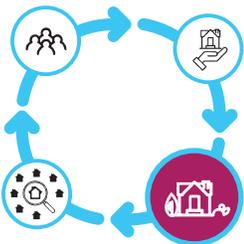
CAPACITY



The alliance between the Oak Park and Highland Park Neighborhood Associations and the youthfulness of resident leadership are signs that resident leadership and management capacity are growing, though volunteer capacity remains an important limiting factor on neighborhood activities.

Expanding City support for leadership development and training around volunteer recruitment and retention can help grow the base of engaged residents and the skillsets they bring to neighborhood activities.

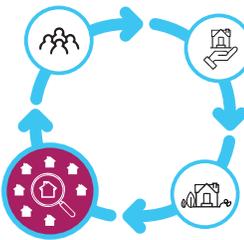
CONDITIONS



Current conditions reflect the soft market but also express low standards that seem to be at odds with otherwise notable levels of neighborhood pride.

Improving the market will contribute to better conditions, but translating neighborhood pride into higher standards of upkeep and closer attention to detail is a must. This can take the form of celebrating homes that display pride of ownership and communicating why this matters to the neighborhood.

IMAGE



The image is mixed, especially to a prospective homeowner. Signs of momentum and improvement, which are real, can easily be overwhelmed by signals that the neighborhood is a risky bet and that not enough people care.

A well-honed and well-delivered message based on core brand attributes (see Part 3), along with progress on the market, capacity, and condition factors, will all have a positive impact on image.

Vision, Priorities, and Outcomes

Planning around assets and strengths is a key principle of neighborhood revitalization planning. But translating an understanding of the assets, strengths, and key issues from Part 2 into a set of revitalization strategies requires a few additional steps.

One step is to think about how outsiders—especially potential homebuyers—see the neighborhood and what it has to offer. What does the neighborhood want to convey to them about the essential characteristics that make the neighborhood a place to choose?

This process of thinking about the neighborhood's identity in the wider marketplace led to the selection and refinement of four core brand attributes that distill the area's assets and strengths into priority features. These attributes were then combined into a brand statement that speaks to potential homeowners while also conveying what current residents see as the vision they can realistically achieve and maintain.

Another step is to translate the assets, strengths, and key issues into a clear set of outcomes that progress can be measured against. While the core brand attributes and brand/vision statement express general qualities, the outcomes—which are defined in this part of the plan—represent specific conditions that can be tracked to see if strategies are having the desired effect.

Core Brand Attributes

These are the characteristics that residents value the most, that form the core of the Oak Park / Highland Park identity, and that serve as the chief selling points to the neighborhood's target markets.

They are also a means of prioritizing scarce resources. Whenever possible, actions taken by neighborhood stakeholders, the City, and other partners should highlight and strengthen these characteristics.

Brand and Vision Statement

Drawn from the core brand attributes, the brand statement expresses a vision, rooted in real assets and strengths, that the neighborhood is striving to live up to. It is a promise to those who choose to invest their time, energy, and resources here.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the conditions that, if achieved, will mark progress toward (or maintenance of) the vision as well as the strengthening of core brand attributes.



Historic business district surrounded by well-built homes and a mature tree canopy

Close to downtown employment opportunities

Friendly neighbors

Walkable community with great parks and recreational opportunities

For people seeking a home in a walkable, urban neighborhood, Oak Park and Highland Park are minutes from downtown amenities and employment by bike, foot, car, or bus. They are a fantastic value with well-built homes, mature trees and a historic neighborhood business district. Our friendly neighbors and beautiful McHenry Park make it a delight to walk your dog, ride your bike, or meet up for a pint.



Healthy business district



Strong connections and collaborations



Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride



Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment



Strong positive identity



Pedestrian and bike friendly

Homebuyer Target Markets



For a market to be functional and healthy, there needs to be a steady stream of buyers. National statistics show that in recent years, the average home seller has been staying in their home for 10 years before selling. This means that, on average, 10% of a neighborhood's single-family stock can be expected to hit the market—and be in need of a buyer—in any given year.



When there is a predictable stream of buyers, homeowners will have greater confidence that their investment in interior and exterior upgrades will have a positive impact on their equity and make it easier to sell at a fair price when the time comes. If a homeowner questions whether a good buyer will materialize when it's time to sell, they might hesitate to make even modest improvements, which, when repeated throughout a neighborhood, affects condition and image in ways that reinforce a soft market cycle.



Planning to revitalize a neighborhood, therefore, requires proactive attention to the stream of buyers. Based on the neighborhood's core attributes and selling points, what markets is the neighborhood in a good position to appeal to now and in coming years? And how can the neighborhood speak to those markets in ways that improve the likelihood of a good stream of buyers?

This planning process identified a target market of small households that value the housing stock and amenities that Oak Park and Highland Park have to offer today, and who will find the neighborhood increasingly appealing as the housing stock and amenities are improved.



Identifying this target market does not exclude other markets from the neighborhood—rather, it's a tool for focusing limited branding and marketing resources in ways that speak directly to the highest probability buyers.



Target Market

Single or Couple Household with a Dog or Young Child

Probably first time buyers.
Probably aged 20s to 30s.

Home needs

2+ bedrooms
1.5+ bathrooms

Characteristics and Needs of the Target Market

80% Want Move-In Ready

- May work downtown.
- Want a yard for their dog.
- Value a home with character.
- Appreciate a walkable community.
- Like downtown but need something more affordable.
- “Deluxe Mini-Home”

20% Rehabbers, DIYers

- All of the above, **plus:**
 - Understand and appreciate Oak Park homes and neighborhood.
 - Have capacity and desire to upgrade homes.
 - Want a manageable home they can make their own.
 - May be employed in the trades.
-



Healthy business district



Strong connections and collaborations



Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride

WHAT WE MEAN BY THESE OUTCOMES

- **Active and profitable Business District**
- **Business district is fully occupied and vibrant**

- **Neighborhood organizations collaborate**
- **People interact in public areas more often**
- **Social events get neighbors together**
- **Greater involvement in activities**
- **Murals and other arts initiatives prompt social interaction**

- **Standards of pride/ownership rise**
- **Home exteriors and yards demonstrate pride**
- **Properties look valued by their owners**

The outcomes that Oak Park and Highland Park will be seeking and tracking all speak to one or more of the factors that contribute to healthy neighborhoods: **market, capacity, condition, and image.**

Tracking progress on these outcomes will require, in some cases, a quantitative indicator that can be routinely collected and reflects what the neighborhood is trying to achieve. For conditions that are not easily measured with a statistic, a more qualitative indicator may be needed to convey an overall impression of whether people think that progress is being made.

The following is a proposed set of **quantitative** and **qualitative** indicators to track, including current or baseline conditions and target measurements to move towards.

Quantitative indicators

Qualitative indicators

Baseline Measurements and Targets for Progress

% of storefronts that are vacant, transitional, or ambiguous:

Baseline: 35% (2019, Special Investment District)
Target: Stabilize around 20% by 2029

Assessed value per square foot of commercial space:

Baseline: \$34.41 (2018)
Target: Above \$45 by 2025; above \$60 by 2029

Presence of a 'third place':

Baseline: No identifiable third place
Target: Identifiable third place exists by 2021/2022

% of homes in excellent or good condition:

Baseline: 5%
Target: 40% by 2029

Measurements to Begin Collecting and Tracking in 2020

Number of active neighborhood association volunteers

Participation/attendance at major activities

Presence of a pipeline of emerging leaders



Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment



Strong positive identity



Pedestrian and bike friendly

- Property values rise
- Demand from families with children is maintained
- The neighborhood competes within the metro housing market
- Good landlords are attracted to neighborhood
- Higher ownership levels
- Investment by homeowners is rewarded at sale

- Realtors have and communicate a positive impression
- Neighborhood is sought after by younger families

- Safe and walkable – connected
- Sidewalks are uniform and usable
- Safe area for families

Average assessed value:

Baseline: \$95,478 (2018)
Target: Growth at rate exceeding inflation through 2029 to reflect substantial improvements to housing stock quality.

Mobility rate at Oak Park Elementary:

Baseline: 39% of students who began the 2017-18 school year at OPE did not finish the year at OPE
Target: See the mobility rate decline to under 33% by the 2025-26 school year

Gaps in sidewalk network (in feet):

Baseline: 5,100 ft. (2019)
Target: Reduce to 2,550 ft. or less by 2029

Owner-occupancy rate:

Baseline: 72%
Target: Rise to 75-80% by 2029

% of households that are families with children:

Baseline: 30% (2017)
Target: Maintain in the 25% to 33% range

Building permits issued per 100 properties:

Baseline: 5.3 (2017-2018)
Target: Sustain a biannual rate of 8.5 between 2020 and 2029

Share of media stories over past year that were positive

Does the neighborhood feel safe to pedestrians and cyclists

Use Project Evaluation Indicators established by Engineering for the Euclid Avenue Pilot

Action Plan

The strategies and activities identified in this action plan have been chosen in response to a series of factors:



The outcomes being sought by the neighborhood, which themselves reflect the overall vision and key issues that need to be addressed.



The existing or potential capacity of stakeholders to perform the work and supply the necessary resources.



The wider aims of Plan DSM and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, including the need to establish a strong model for revitalizing Des Moines' middle market neighborhoods.



With outcomes, capacity, and awareness of changing conditions a key part of this overall planning effort, it is critical to recognize that this action plan is designed to be monitored regularly and updated as often as necessary to ensure that progress toward the outcomes is being made. It is also critical to recognize, though, that patience is an important principle of neighborhood revitalization, which is why this plan is based on a **10-year horizon**. A significant commitment of effort over a decade will be needed for many outcomes to be realized and sustainable.

All of the actions identified in this plan are relevant to the needs of the Special Investment District. Several, however, are also relevant to the surrounding Oak Park and Highland Park area and to the rest of the city. The plan, therefore, is divided geographically into three sections:



CITYWIDE

Strategies that are recommended for citywide application.



NEIGHBORHOOD

Strategies that can and should extend beyond the Special Investment District to surrounding parts of Oak Park and Highland Park.



SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Strategies that should be confined to the Special Investment District in order to focus resources and maximize their impact.

ACTIONS	Healthy business district	Strong connections and collaborations	Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride	Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment	Strong positive identity	Pedestrian and bike friendly
Begin enforcement of the Property Improvement Code (expanding PIC beyond rental properties)			✓		✓	
Establish a dedicated, in-house junk and debris crew			✓		✓	
Improve and expand training/support for neighborhood leaders and leadership development		✓				
Calm Euclid Avenue for multi-modal safety and corridor enhancement						✓
Improve alley maintenance and use as a platform for resident engagement and collaboration		✓	✓		✓	✓
Removal of deteriorated fencing from private properties			✓		✓	✓
Align branding and marketing with core brand attributes					✓	
Tie existing or new neighborhood pride activities to core brand attributes		✓			✓	
Create new financing tools to stimulate housing improvements that enhance marketability and property values			✓	✓		
Create new financing tools to support commercial space improvements and business development in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district	✓					
Establish a Neighborhood Business District Resource Team	✓					
Support the emergence of a "third place" in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district	✓					
Make blighted nuisance properties a priority for Blitz on Blight resources			✓	✓		
Perform strategic code enforcement activities			✓	✓		
Improve sidewalk network for walkability and pedestrian safety		✓				✓
Organize a one-time "Mini-SCRUB" pilot event					✓	

Implementing the actions listed above and described in this action plan will require multiple partners and a wide range of resource commitments.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

A wide range of public, private, and not-for-profit entities are identified in the action plan as having necessary roles in implementing specific activities and strategies. But creativity and flexibility will be critical, and the list of partners involved in any part of this plan should adapt as needed to reflect the resources, skills, and coalitions needed for successful outcomes.

RESOURCES

This action plan identifies estimated resource requirements for each activity, several of which benefit neighborhoods across the city as well as this Special Investment District. In some cases, committing resources will take the form of refocusing existing funding and human capacity. In others, it will require new funding or the creation of new capacity to coordinate partners and programs.

The largest commitment of new resources centers around the establishment of a new entity, Invest DSM, to promote and support high-quality investments in housing and commercial stock by property owners.

CITYWIDE

Begin enforcement of the Property Improvement Code (expanding PIC beyond rental properties)

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Strong positive identity 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Enforcement of the property improvement code in Des Moines has been limited to rental housing. Including homeowners, with a commitment to assisting low-income or disabled owners with code compliance, is an important step toward improving standards of maintenance and preserving the housing stock.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Passive enforcement activities, including responding to code complaints; engagement work to educate property owners and neighborhoods about the code, its purpose, and compliance requirements; connecting eligible homeowners with programs to assist compliance; active enforcement in prioritized areas, including code sweeps.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Approximately \$1.93 million increase in code enforcement budget to support added workload and ensure staff capacity to build productive relationships with neighborhoods and property owners.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division; begin in 2020.

CITYWIDE

Establish a dedicated, in-house junk and debris crew

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Strong positive identity 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Junk and debris are the most frequent complaints to code inspectors and detract from neighborhood image. Junk and litter in alleys and other spaces convey unacceptably low standards of maintenance.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Dedicate a well-trained in-house team that abates junk and debris issues at nuisance properties and undertakes proactive cleanups; work in concert with City and neighborhood partners to identify and solve problems related to junk, debris, and litter.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Approximately \$500,000 for private property and right-of-way cleanup staff team and equipment needs.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Department of Public Works; begin in 2019-2020.

Improve and expand training/support for neighborhood leaders and leadership development

Neighborhood outcomes advanced



Strong connections and collaborations



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Des Moines' network of neighborhood associations is a major asset. But leadership turnover and varying levels of volunteer capacity make for inconsistent effectiveness.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Increase the City's capacity to lend support and technical expertise to neighborhood associations through routine training and networking activities for current and emerging neighborhood leaders. Include special training on volunteer recruitment and retention, diversity, marketing and managements skills, and areas of interest to neighborhood associations.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Resources to hire two dedicated neighborhood coordinators (approximately \$200,000); training budget for neighborhood association leaders.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division; begin in 2019-2020.

Potential Trainings and Events

Track 1: Cultivating Vibrant and Effective Neighborhood Associations	Track 2: Influencing the Neighborhood Real Estate Market	Track 3: Improving Neighborhood Business Districts	Track 4: Making the Most of City Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of Effective Neighborhood Associations • Recruiting and Sustaining Volunteers • Engaging Diverse Groups of Neighbors in Decision-Making • How to Run a Great Meeting • Event and Project Planning • Building Social Connections Among Neighbors • Building Your Leadership Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Branding and Marketing • How Neighborhood Real Estate Markets Work • Attracting Homebuyers to Your Neighborhood • Upgrading Your Neighborhood's Housing Stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Successful Business Districts Work in Today's Economy • Developing and Sustaining Successful Merchants' Associations • Highlights: Researching the Market, Identifying Your District's Niche, Recruiting Businesses • Creating a "Third Place" in Your District • Dealing with Problem Commercial Properties • Financing, Incentives and Technical Assistance for Commercial Property Improvement, Small Business Expansion, and New Business Startups • Marketing and Promoting Business Districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code Enforcement 101 • Partnering with the Police Department for a Safer Neighborhood • Understanding City Plans and Where Your Neighborhood Fits In • Who Does What? (Understanding the Roles of City Departments and How to Partner Effectively) • Meet Your City Manager

NEIGHBORHOOD

Calm Euclid Avenue for multi-modal safety and corridor enhancement

Neighborhood outcomes advanced



Pedestrian and bike friendly



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

In its current design with sidewalk immediately behind the curb, Euclid Avenue limits the neighborhood’s potential as a safe and enjoyable place to walk and bike. It represents a barrier to safely accessing McHenry Park and contributes to disinvestment and weak demand along the corridor.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

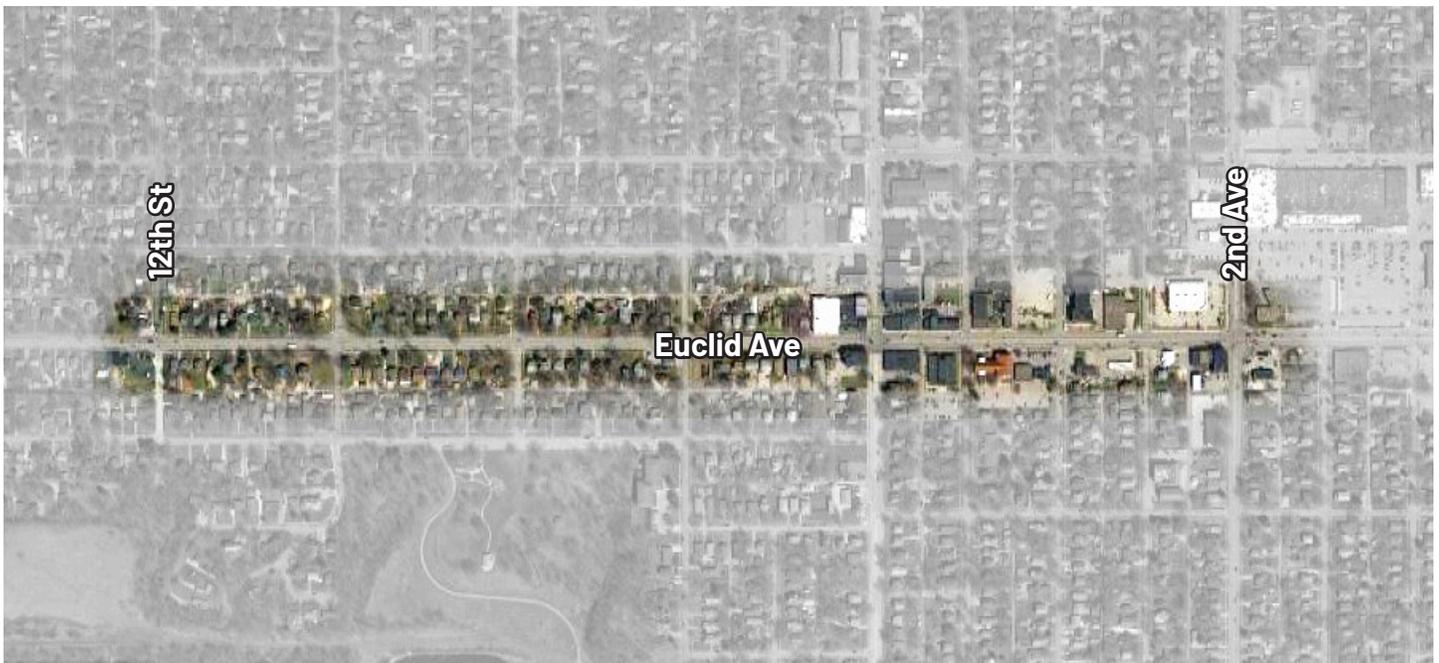
The City is currently exploring interventions to calm traffic on Euclid (including lane reduction and other design modifications) from 12th to 2nd Avenue. If recommended by the City and accepted by IDOT, the work could entail a “pilot” installation with a combination of cosmetic work (re-stripping). If successful, construction of permanent improvements (safer crosswalks, bulb-outs, etc.) could follow.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

TBD based on scale of approved work.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Engineering Department; IDOT; finalize planning in 2019, with implementation in 2020.



Improve alley maintenance and use as a platform for resident engagement and collaboration

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Strong positive identity 

Pedestrian and bike friendly 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Alleys are the responsibility of City Public Works to maintain, however are a lower priority than streets. The alley fenceline is the responsibility of the adjacent property owners. Alley maintenance is poorly understood by residents and under resourced by the City, leading to dumping, overgrowth, and a general sense that the spaces are not managed. What could be an asset to the neighborhood is instead perceived as unsightly and dangerous.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

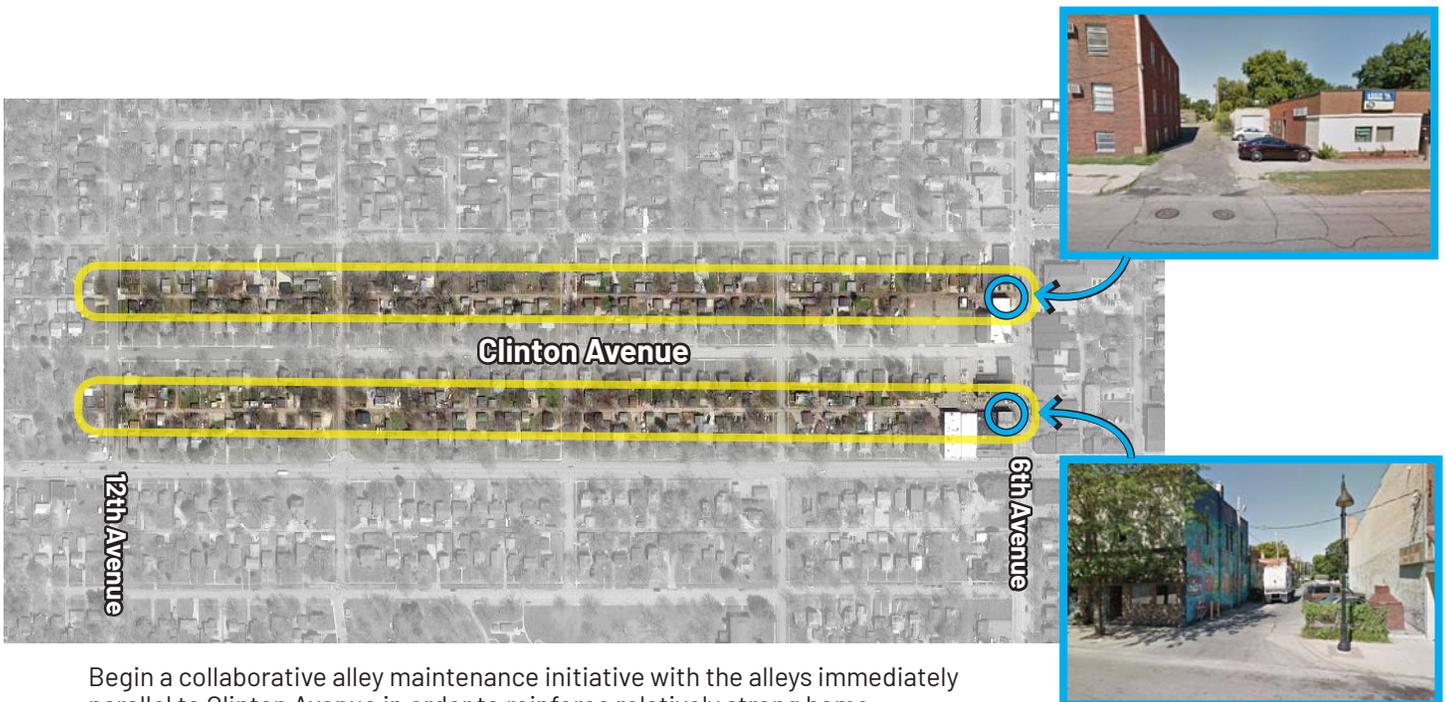
Clean up alleys through a neighborhood led partnership that (1) educates property owners about their maintenance responsibilities, and (2) organizes alley improvement days in partnership with City departments. Public Works can assist with grading deteriorated surfaces, junk removal, and trimming overgrowth. Begin a collaborative alley maintenance initiative with the alleys immediately parallel to Clinton Avenue (see diagram below), followed by the alley between Euclid Avenue and Oak Park Avenue.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Coordination effort by Neighborhood Associations and relevant city departments; use of personal or donated supplies and equipment by property owners; effort by neighborhood association to communicate activities as an example of pride and improvement.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Neighborhood Associations, property owners, and residents; Neighborhood Development Division; Department of Public Works; begin summer 2019.



Begin a collaborative alley maintenance initiative with the alleys immediately parallel to Clinton Avenue in order to reinforce relatively strong home conditions on Clinton and strengthen the alley interface at 6th Avenue.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Removal of deteriorated fencing from private properties

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Strong positive identity 

Pedestrian and bike friendly 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Deteriorated fencing is present in many front yards and alleys, contributing to poor neighborhood image. Partnering with property owners to accelerate the removal of this fencing will reinforce other efforts to bolster curb appeal and pride.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Commitment from the Department of Public Works to haul away dismantled fencing; effort by Neighborhood Association to encourage removal of old fencing and identify property owners who may need help with labor/logistics.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

DPW's cost to provide free hauling as an incentive for fence removal; coordination/communications effort by Neighborhood Associations.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Property owners; Department of Public Works; Neighborhood Associations; Neighborhood Development Division.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Align branding and marketing with core brand attributes

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Strong positive identity 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

'Celebrate the Parks' and other activities are a sign that the neighborhood is making major efforts to cultivate a strong image. The core brand elements and brand statements in this plan offer an opportunity to further refine this messaging.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Update or establish mission or vision statements to reflect core brand attributes. Find ways to connect all marketing activities to core brand attributes so that a consistent message is reinforced and repeated.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Strategic coordination by the Neighborhood Associations and NDD; potential need for graphics services to update or enhance marketing collateral.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Neighborhood Associations; Neighborhood Development Division; begin 2019.

NEIGHBORHOOD

Tie existing or new neighborhood pride activities to core brand attributes



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Ensuring that all neighborhood activities are being used to deliver a coherent message about the neighborhood goes a long way towards reinforcing the brand in the minds of residents and outsiders.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Annually assess how events/activities are planned and marketed and identify opportunities to reinforce the neighborhood's core brand attributes.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Development and coordination by Neighborhood Associations with help from NDD and partners relevant to each activity.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Neighborhood Associations; Neighborhood Development Division; begin 2019.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Create new financing tools to stimulate housing improvements that enhance marketability and property values

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Nearly half of residential properties in the Special Investment District show moderate-to-severe signs of distress, and less than 10% of properties are in excellent or good condition. Overcoming decades of deferred maintenance – and boosting confidence in the neighborhood market – requires a concentrated and substantial effort to spur investment.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Provide access to financial packages (in the form of low-cost loans and grants) to support substantial and high-quality home renovations as well as smaller-scale exterior improvements. Sustain the effort over a 10-year period with goal of supporting substantial rehabs to 60 homes and exterior improvements to 100 homes.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Allocate capital over a 10-year period to support improvements to 160 homes, with funding drawn from a combination of City, County, and private-sector resources.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Establish a new not-for-profit entity (Invest DSM) to market and administer the financial tools and to promote investment in the Special Investment District; launch in 2019-2020 and continue through 2029.



Target Activities

Single-family Rehab by Homeowner
Encourage and support homeowners in making substantial, market-leading upgrades to their properties, regardless of household income. Specs must be co-developed with Invest DSM to ensure high-quality and must include some form of curb appeal enhancement.

Single-family Rehab by Developer
Encourage reputable developers to take on the risks involved in performing a market-leading renovation to a single-family home. Specs must be co-developed with Invest DSM to ensure high-quality, and must include some form of curb appeal enhancement.

Small Beautification Projects
Encourage and support residential property owners in making exterior upgrades that enhance home and neighborhood marketability. Specs must be co-developed with Invest DSM to ensure high-quality.

Minimum number of properties to impact over 10 years

40 20 100→

TOTAL
160

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Create new financing tools to support commercial space improvements and business development in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

The district has roughly 20 buildings with a combined 90,000 square feet of ground-floor space. The supply of space is generally outdated, reinforcing a weak demand for space that also stems from below-average neighborhood income and long-term changes in the retail sector. Rents are too low to underwrite the cost of substantial interior and exterior upgrades, preventing major investments from taking place.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Allocate new funding dedicated to (1) financial packages (loans and grants) that address the gap between what it costs to improve or build commercial space and current market rents in the district, and (2) improvements to the public realm that enhance identity and place-making. Continue existing programs and activities related to stimulating commercial investment, but use more flexible funding sources where possible to bolster program utilization.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Allocate a new stream of capital over a 10- year period to support commercial district improvements, with funding drawn from a combination of City, County, and private-sector resources. Find more flexible funding sources for existing programs.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Establish a new not-for-profit entity (Invest DSM) to supply the capital and work in coordination with the Neighborhood Business District Resource Team, NDC, Neighborhood Associations, and the SSMID; launch in 2019-2020 and continue through 2029.

Target Activities



Equity Gap
Capital to assist a building owner or developer in financing renovations, new construction, or site improvements that cannot currently be justified by projected rent income or appraisal.



Lease Subsidy
(1) Capital to assist a building owner with financing commercial space improvements (to secure a tenant) that cannot be justified by current market rents. (2) Direct assistance to a recruited tenant to finance leasehold improvements and/or offset rent costs.



Land / Property Banking
Funding to support acquisition of land or buildings by a public or non-profit entity to facilitate redevelopment.



Demolition Subsidy
Funding to assist with demolition or land preparation costs related to redevelopment.



Place-making
Funding to support improvements to the public realm that boost commercial district identity, such as streetscape elements and investments in branding and marketing.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Establish a Neighborhood Business District Resource Team



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Programs that are potentially useful to business and property owners are scattered across several entities. Someone who might benefit from these programs and services may have difficulty understanding or navigating the forms of technical or financial assistance that are available.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Form an interagency resource team dedicated to the City’s four Special Investment Districts. The team would be involved in proactive outreach with property and business owners, helping businesses navigate useful programs and resources, and assisting with implementation of special projects.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Use the collective existing capacities of Resource Team members to initiate; realign staff assignments within the Office of Economic Development, as necessary, to perform coordination functions.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Convened by the Office of Economic Development in partnership with Invest DSM, NDC, FuseDSM, West Side Chamber, SBDC, and the Des Moines Partnership.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Support the emergence of a “third place” in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Most successful business districts have at least one “third place”—a term used to describe a business or a public space that serves as a living room for the neighborhood, where people feel comfortable hanging out and socializing. Currently, there is no space in the business district that reads to an outsider as serving this function.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Collaboration between the Neighborhood Business District Resource Team, NDC, the Neighborhood Association, and the SSMID to options for a “third place”, be it improvements to an existing business or recruitment of a proven operator to an improved storefront.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Costs TBD; potential for financial assistance through Invest DSM and other entities.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Establish a new not-for-profit entity (Invest DSM) to supply the capital and work in coordination with the Neighborhood Business District Resource Team, NDC, Neighborhood Associations, and the SSMID.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Make blighted nuisance properties a priority for Blitz on Blight resources

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Two dozen properties in the Special Investment District were categorized as severely distressed in a fall 2018 survey, and 9 properties had board-up notices from the City. These properties hurt the area’s image, dampen the confidence of nearby property owners, and represent real or potential safety hazards.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Set aside resources to take swift action, as needed, to demolish blighted nuisance properties.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Reserve \$50,000 per year to support 2 or 3 nuisance property demolitions in the Special Investment District; funding drawn from City anti-blight resources.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division; begin in 2019-2020.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Perform strategic code enforcement activities

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Homes and shared spaces exhibit pride 

Property values support neighborhood-friendly investment 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Strategic code enforcement, combined with broadening the property improvement code to cover owner-occupied homes, has the potential to set basic standards for property maintenance while constructively engaging property owners in neighborhood improvement.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Perform comprehensive code enforcement sweeps of the Special Investment District in addition to ongoing rental inspections. Proactively engage property owners to educate them about the property maintenance code, find workable solutions to code compliance problems, and connect low-income or disabled property owners with assistance.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Use code enforcement budget increase described under the first action to provide necessary staff and administrative capacity.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division; begin in 2020.

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Improve sidewalk network for walkability and pedestrian safety

↓

Neighborhood outcomes advanced 

Pedestrian and bike friendly 

Strong connections and collaborations 

What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

Sidewalk conditions throughout the Special Investment District are inconsistent and often poor. Improving sidewalks has the potential to boost neighborhood image, improve the curb appeal of properties, and support a culture of walking that bolsters use of the business district and McHenry Park.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

(1) Reduce gaps in existing sidewalk network as identified in City’s Sidewalk Inventory, with priority segments filled by Engineering Department. (2) Educate property owners about sidewalk maintenance and replacement responsibilities. (3) Coordinate volume bidding on sidewalk and driveway work by interested property owners.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Draw from \$60 million citywide commitment to gap reduction; commitment of Neighborhood Association time and effort to property owner education and volume bidding coordination.

Who does it? When does it happen?

Gap reduction work by Engineering Department (2019-2020); Neighborhood Association coordination of property owner education (begin 2020).

SPECIAL INVESTMENT DISTRICT

Organize a one-time “Mini-SCRUB” pilot event

Neighborhood outcomes advanced



Strong positive identity



What problem or opportunity does this respond to?

The City of Des Moines has gone away from neighborhood-scale SCRUB events, in favor of Mega SCRUB events that serve multiple neighborhoods across the City. While these events are well utilized by many Des Moines residents, they can be difficult for residents with lesser means and resources to take advantage of. This may lead to junk and debris complaints.

What work will this entail? What are the outputs?

Coordinate a pilot “Mini-SCRUB” event by providing direct removal of junk and debris for residents living in the target area. Could be a complimentary strategy to the increased code enforcement work within the SID.

What resources are required? Where do they come from?

Private refuse collection contract, logistical details TBD.

Who does it? When does it happen?

City Public Works and Neighborhood Development with volunteer support from Neighborhood Association.

Implementation Summary

To successfully implement this plan over the next 10 years, the “how” matters as much as the “what.” Each activity or strategy will require some level of technical ability from the partners involved, but they will also require a willingness to do things differently, to learn from experience, to adapt when necessary, to tolerate risk, and to collaborate whenever possible to take advantage of the community’s collective wisdom and skills.

Getting the “how” right also means avoiding the impulse to treat each activity as a discrete task and losing sight of how everything fits together to achieve long-term neighborhood revitalization outcomes. For example, building resident leadership capacity and issuing housing rehab loans are very different activities but they are both critical to realizing a healthier neighborhood and should never be seen as unrelated undertakings.

Coalition Framework

An implementation coalition is a useful framework for ensuring that diverse tasks remain connected and self-reinforcing, and to keep all members of the coalition—regardless of which activities they are directly involved with—mindful of the big picture and of a shared commitment to problem-solving. Because this action plan identifies roles for a wide range of public, private, and non-profit entities that may not typically interact (including residents and property owners), coordination from the newly formed Invest DSM will be needed to bring coalition partners together on a routine basis and to encourage informal interaction between them.



Convene quarterly to...

- Review progress on components of the action plan
- Modify actions as needed to reflect new information
- Track outcome indicators
- Track changes in the housing market to identify challenges to affordability and plan appropriate interventions to preserve affordable options for vulnerable households
- Respond to new challenges and opportunities in ways that align with the neighborhood’s vision and core brand attributes, as well as Des Moines’ neighborhood revitalization principles

Principles in Practice

The action plan is designed in response to the issues and conditions that emerged during the planning process and during the 2017–2018 evaluation of Des Moines’ Neighborhood Revitalization Program. It lays out activities to respond to what is known.

However, it is likely that unforeseen things will happen over the next 10 years, as will the need to make decisions that are not and cannot be articulated by this plan. For that reason, the revitalization principles identified in Part 1 will be a crucial part of the implementation process—providing a consistent basis for deliberating about tradeoffs and making decisions large and small. The following table demonstrates how the principles can be used as a lens to critically examine and think about circumstances that arise.



Multiple projects are competing for limited resources.



A new opportunity or challenge emerges.



Frustration arises with the pace of progress.

Strengths and Assets	Which project does more to protect or strengthen key assets or core brand attributes?	Is a response needed to protect or strengthen key assets or core brand attributes? If not, why is it worth our time?	Where are we having the most success? What can we learn from that and apply elsewhere?
Targeted	Which project contributes the most to a clustering of visible improvement?	If this is worth a response, how do we do so in a way that doesn't scatter our limited attention and resources too widely?	Is it possible to focus our efforts and resources even more tightly to transform market behaviors?
Patience	Which project is the best long-term bet? Are we avoiding a decision based on short-term expediency?	In responding to something new, are we dropping something else too soon? What are the opportunity costs now and five years from now?	Revitalization doesn't happen overnight—are we giving this enough time?
Outcomes and Measurements	Which project is likely to do the most to advance one or more outcomes?	Which outcomes are we advancing by responding to this opportunity or challenge?	Do our data and experience point to necessary adjustments in what we are doing or how we are doing it?

RESOURCES

Implementation of the action plan will require funding from a range of public sector partners to support the emergence of a healthier neighborhood where the market is strong, capacity is high, conditions are appealing, and the image is positive. In other words, the public investment is about building peoples’ confidence to invest their own time, energy, and money into the neighborhood, resulting in a more competitive and financially sustainable community over time.

In the same way that “how” matters to the implementation of individual activities and strategies, the nature and diversity of resources matters, too. The commitment of local funding to this effort is a statement about priorities and values—about not waiting for someone else to solve a problem. The vast majority of the resources identified by this action plan are local in nature and reflect the breadth of implementation partnerships.

A potentially important supplement to implementation resources identified in the action plan are resources made available through urban renewal area designation. This plan recommends the creation, as appropriate, of an urban renewal plan for Oak Park / Highland Park to 1) increase access to additional tools and financing, particularly in the 6th Avenue commercial district, 2) support the removal of slum and blight, and 3) potentially utilize the increment generated for investments in public infrastructure.

ACTIONS

	RESOURCES					
	City of Des Moines: Staff Resources, General Fund, CIP, LOSST, etc.	Invest DSM	State and Federal Resources	Urban Renewal Area Financial Tools	Private: Homeowners, Investors, Businesses, Institutions	Time and Energy of Residents & Other Stakeholders
Begin enforcement of the Property Improvement Code (expanding PIC beyond rental properties)						
Establish a dedicated, in-house junk and debris crew						
Improve and expand training/support for neighborhood leaders and leadership development						
Calm Euclid Avenue for multi-modal safety and corridor enhancement						
Improve alley maintenance and use as a platform for resident engagement and collaboration						
Removal of deteriorated fencing from private properties						
Align branding and marketing with core brand attributes						
Tie existing or new neighborhood pride activities to core brand attributes						
Create new financing tools to stimulate housing improvements that enhance marketability and property values						
Create new financing tools to support commercial space improvements and business development in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district						
Establish a Neighborhood Business District Resource Team						
Support the emergence of a "third place" in the Euclid/6th Avenue business district						
Make blighted nuisance properties a priority for Blitz on Blight resources						
Perform strategic code enforcement activities						
Improve sidewalk network for walkability and pedestrian safety						
Organize a one-time "Mini-SCRUB" pilot event						

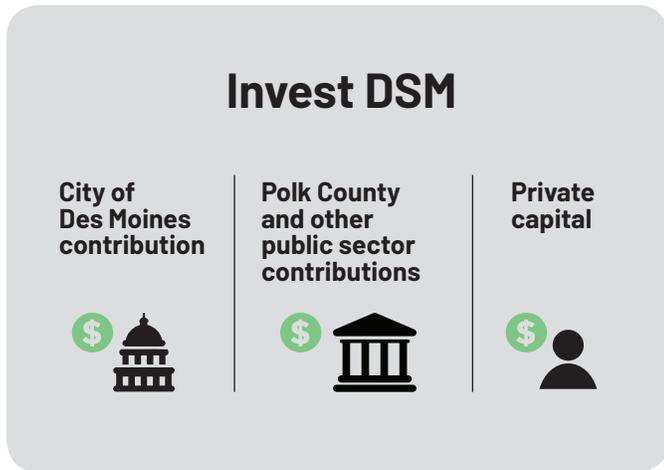
Note on the use of federal and state resources for affordable housing:

The City of Des Moines and its partners should continue the use of federal CDBG and HOME funds to support income eligible rehabs and emergency repairs in the Special Investment District. Use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) in this area is not recommended and should be targeted to areas with stronger markets and lower poverty rates.

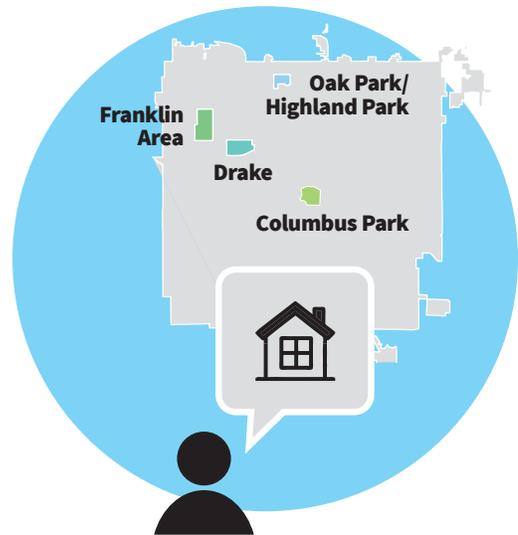
INVEST DSM

The residential and commercial financial tools identified in this action plan are not an expansion of (or replacement for) existing programs. Instead they reflect Des Moines' updated approach to neighborhood revitalization, which requires the following:

- A focus on raising standards and leading markets to higher ground
- A commitment to intervening with assets that are vulnerable
- An ability to work in middle markets on a combination of market, capacity, condition, and image activities
- A partnership that brings together multiple public and private entities



To accommodate this new approach and its requirements, this planning process has resulted in the creation of Invest DSM, a not-for-profit that will be dedicated to supporting high-quality investment and revitalization in Des Moines' Special Investment Districts (SIDs). The first four SIDs, including this one, will require a collective commitment of \$50 million over 10 years to support residential and commercial investment, along with other neighborhood strengthening activities. The City has committed to funding Invest DSM annually, with partnership from Polk County, and is seeking other funding partners from the private sector.



The targeted number of residential properties for Invest DSM to impact over the next 10 years, as described in this action plan, is 160. This number is based on the estimated need to directly improve the marketability of approximately 20% of the residential stock in order to reach a market tipping point beyond which perceptions of risk will be low enough to support sustainably healthy levels of private investment.

Participation by residential property owners in Invest DSM programs will have no income restrictions. Maximum amounts to be borrowed or granted will be determined based on the average value of homes in the Special Investment District—a figure that should be updated every two years to reflect changes in the market.



Appendix

Field Survey Overview

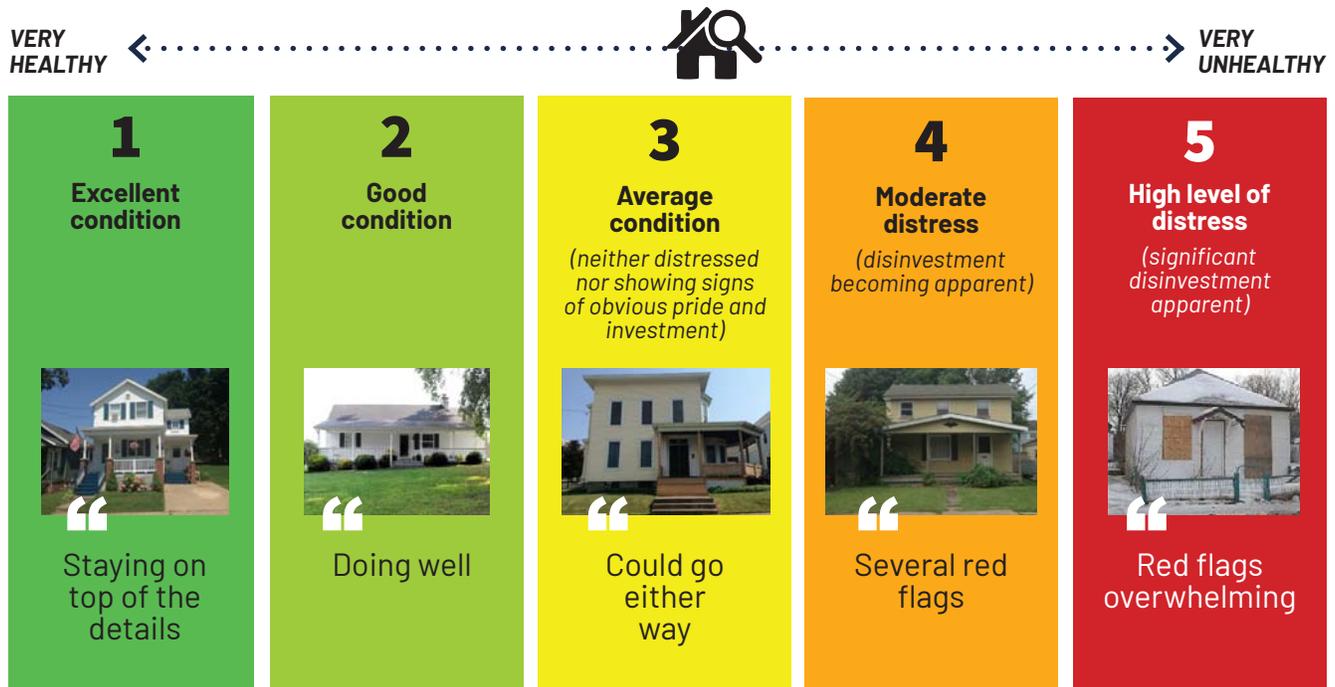
A “field survey of exterior conditions” is referenced in several parts of this plan and was a key data component to the development of this plan and to the Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review completed by czbLLC for the City of Des Moines in 2018. This field survey is a method of gauging the overall health of a residential property by looking for exterior visual cues for investment, disinvestment, and pride.

Properties that were given a score of “1” (Excellent) or “2” (Good) give signals that they are being well maintained by their owners and communicate clear pride to other owners/residents in the neighborhood as well as visitors. Properties that were given a score of “4” (Moderate distress) or “5” (Severe or high level of distress) give multiple indications that maintenance

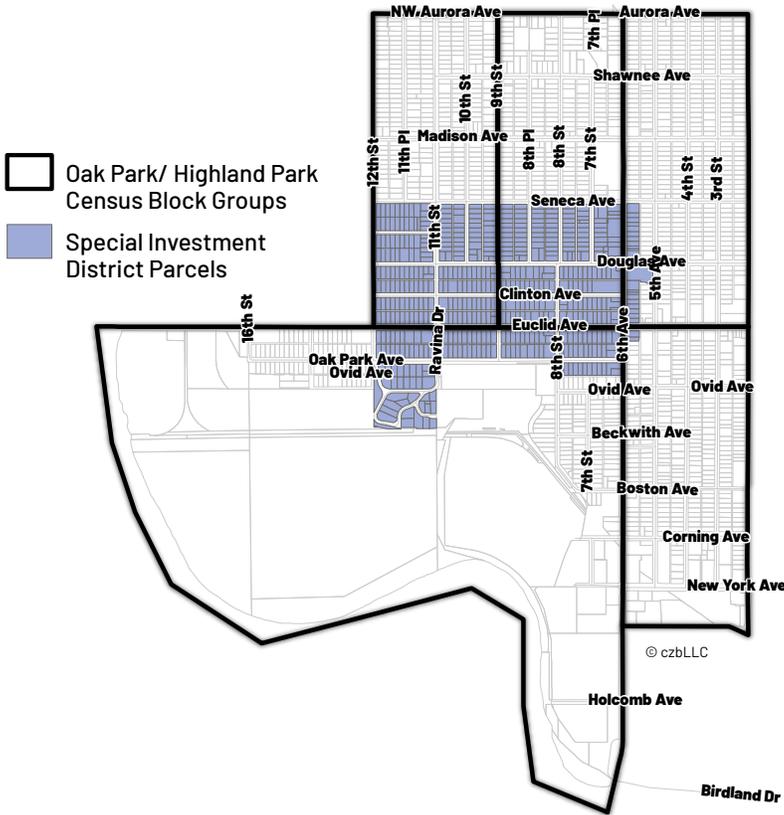
has been deferred and conditions are declining due to disinvestment. Properties that were given a score of “3” (Average condition) represent the average house in Des Moines—showing signs of neither active pride nor distress.

Results presented in Part 2 of this plan are based on a field survey performed by staff of the Neighborhood Development Division in the fall of 2018. For the purposes of tracking progress in neighborhood conditions and linking the results with other updated datasets (such as sales prices, assessments, building permits, etc.), it is recommended that the City perform a field survey every fall in the Special Investment District.

Field Survey Scoring



The Oak Park / Highland Park Special Investment Districts: average field survey score in 2018: 3.5



Census Profile

Source: 2017 5-Year Estimates from the American Community Survey for the following Census geographies which overlap with the boundaries of the Special Investment District but cover a slightly larger area: Census Tract 6 (Block Groups 1, 2, and 3), Census Tract 5 (Block Group 5), and Census Tract 4 (Block Group 3).

	Oak Park / Highland Park	City of Des Moines
Total housing units	2,253	91,420
Occupied housing units	2,116	83,916
Vacant housing units	137	7,504
Vacant, Other housing units	53	3,587
% Vacant	6%	8%
% Vacant, Other	2.4%	3.9%
Owner-occupied	1,408	50,362
Renter-occupied	708	33,554
Homeownership Rate	67%	60%

	Oak Park / Highland Park		City of Des Moines	
	#	%	#	%
1-Person Household, Owner	454	32%	13,741	27%
2-Person Household, Owner	352	25%	17,836	35%
3-Person Household, Owner	263	19%	8,009	16%
4-Person Household, Owner	155	11%	6,074	12%
5-Person Household, Owner	127	9%	2,785	6%
6-Person Household, Owner	46	3%	1,083	2%
7+-Person Household, Owner	11	1%	834	2%
1-Person Household, Renter	232	33%	14,003	42%
2-Person Household, Renter	123	17%	7,912	24%
3-Person Household, Renter	116	16%	4,811	14%
4-Person Household, Renter	75	11%	3,328	10%
5-Person Household, Renter	102	14%	2,060	6%
6-Person Household, Renter	32	5%	943	3%
7+-Person Household, Renter	28	4%	497	1%

	Oak Park / Highland Park		City of Des Moines	
	#	%	#	%
Moved into Unit 2015+, Owner	103	7%	3,069	6%
Moved into Unit 2010-2014, Owner	225	16%	10,921	22%
Moved into Unit 2000s, Owner	385	27%	16,416	33%
Moved into Unit 1990s, Owner	336	24%	9,451	19%
Moved into Unit 1980s, Owner	171	12%	4,345	9%
Moved into Unit Pre-1980, Owner	188	13%	6,160	12%
% Moved into Unit 2000+		51%		60%
% Moved into Unit Pre-1990		25%		21%

	Oak Park / Highland Park	City of Des Moines
Median Contract Rent	\$670	\$692
Median Gross Rent	\$941	\$797

	Oak Park / Highland Park	City of Des Moines
Affordability Computed (Renters)	689	31,746
Unaffordable Rent (>30% of Income)	211	15,515
Very Unaffordable Rent (>50% of Income)	100	12,792
% Unaffordable	31%	49%
% Very Unaffordable	15%	40%
Median Value	\$92,100	\$123,3000

	Oak Park / Highland Park		City of Des Moines	
	#	%	#	%
Population	6,038		214,778	
Under 18 years	1,856	31%	52,490	24%
18-34	1,682	28%	58,186	27%
35-64	1,931	32%	79,060	37%
65+	569	9%	25,042	12%
% Under 18		31%		24%
% 65+		9%		12%
Non-Hispanic White	4,368	72%	142,831	67%
Non-Hispanic Black	558	9%	22,948	11%
Non-Hispanic Asian	176	3%	12,717	6%
Hispanic	781	13%	28,085	13%

	Oak Park / Highland Park		City of Des Moines	
	#	%	#	%
Households	2,116		83,916	
Families	1,214	57%	48,573	58%
Married-Couple Families	728	34%	31,776	38%
Married-Couple Families with Children	309	15%	13,754	16%
Single-Parent Families	486	23%	16,797	20%
Single-Parent Families with Children	312	15%	10,263	12%
Non-Family Households	902	43%	35,343	42%
Living Alone	686	32%	27,744	33%
Not Living Alone	216	10%	7,599	9%
Population 25+	3,770		139,577	
Less than High School	502	13%	19,046	14%
High School Graduate	1,456	39%	42,540	30%
Some College	1,270	34%	42,768	31%
Bachelor's Degree or More	542	14%	35,223	25%

	Oak Park / Highland Park	City of Des Moines
Poverty Rate (Individuals)	18.9%	18.1%
Poverty Rate (Families)	11.8%	13.6%
Median Household Income (2013)	\$40,741	\$45,836
Median Household Income (2017)	\$48,854	\$49,999
% Change (2013-2017)	19.9%	9.1%

	Oak Park / Highland Park		City of Des Moines	
	#	%	#	%
Households (Income Determined)	2,116		83,916	
with Wage Income	1,771	83.7%	67,113	80.0%
with Social Security Income	485	22.9%	21,188	25.2%
with SSI	224	10.6%	5,265	6.3%
with SNAP	599	28.3%	17,928	21.4%
with Public Assistance	126	6.0%	2,994	3.6%

	Oak Park / Highland Park	City of Des Moines
	#	#
Population 16+	4,314	167,529
In Civilian Labor Force	3,088	118,301
Unemployed	406	7,727
Not in Labor Force	1,226	49,118
Unemployment Rate	13.1%	6.5%
% Not in Labor Force	28.4%	29.3%

Resident Survey

During January and February 2019, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the Special Investment District were surveyed about key issues relating to neighborhood conditions and investment using an online survey instrument. The survey was advertised through bilingual postcards sent to all residential addresses (owner and rental) in the Special Investment District and through promotion by the area’s Neighborhood Associations.

A total of 28 completed responses were received, 89% of which were from homeowners. Survey participants included a combination of recent arrivals (42% have lived in the neighborhood for less than five years) and long-time residents (36% have lived in the neighborhood for 20 or more years). The most common responses to questions about key issues and neighborhood marketability are summarized below.

Top Selling Points

Q3: Identify three characteristics about the neighborhood and/or its housing stock that you see as the top selling points for potential homeowners.	# of responses
Close proximity to downtown / Location	26
Affordable Homes	13
Amenities (Library, Trail, Park, etc.)	10
Well kept, quiet neighborhood	7
Close to shopping / retail / services	6
Architecture within the neighborhood	5
Family Owned Businesses	4
Schools	3

Homebuyer Deterrents

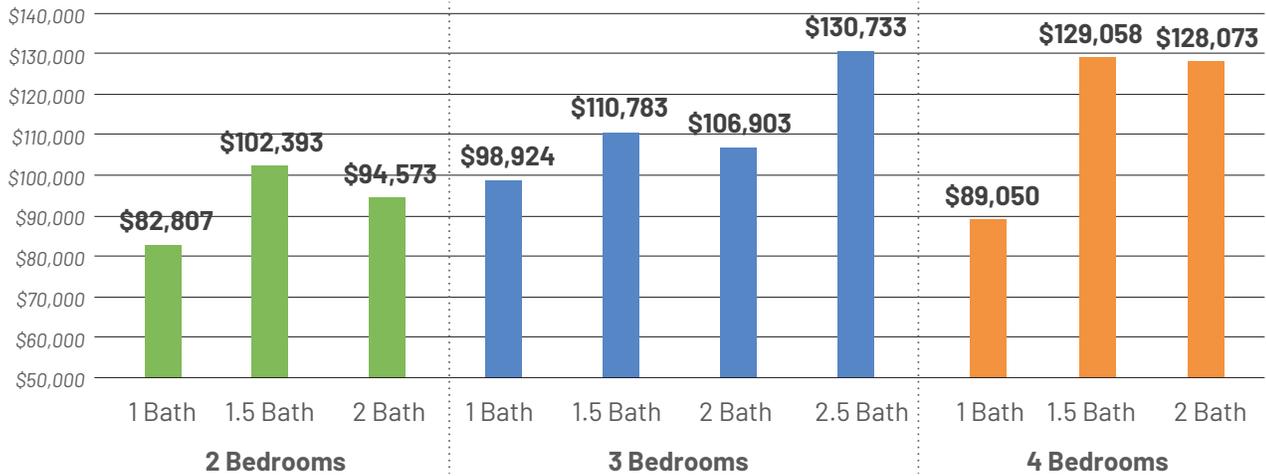
Q4: Identify three characteristics about the neighborhood or housing stock that you see as the top turn-offs for potential homebuyers.	# of responses
Run-down, distressed, and vacant houses	19
Crime is on the rise	13
Condition and appearance of rental properties	10
Lack of restaurants, retail, other businesses	5
Junk & litter	4
Empty Commercial Buildings	3
Poor Neighborhood Perception	3
Yards in poor condition	3
Homelessness	3
Alleys are not kept up	3

Issue to Solve	
Q5: If you were in charge of making the neighborhood better, what issue would you devote the most resources to solving?	# of responses
Home Improvement Resources	8
Business District Improvements	8
Code Enforcement for Rentals & Blighted Property	7
Replace Sidewalks	3
Reduce Crime	3

Home Improvement	
Q5: If financial or technical assistance was available to make one improvement that would boost your home's livability or curb appeal, what improvement would you make?	# of responses
Siding & Paint	7
Roof	4
Basement foundation and/or waterproofing	4
Pave or Repave Driveway	3
New garage	3

Housing Stock Profile

Average Assessed Values, 2018



Bedrooms	Baths	Number of Homes	Share of Homes	Ave. Square Ft.	Ave. Assessed Value	% exhibiting distress	Average home age	% owner-occupied
2	1	182	41%	965	\$82,807	48%	101	77%
3	1	103	23%	1,262	\$98,924	49%	99	72%
3	1.5	30	7%	1,476	\$110,783	43%	102	77%
3	2	29	7%	1,483	\$106,903	38%	104	83%
2	2	15	3%	1,206	\$94,473	40%	94	67%
2	1.5	14	3%	1,099	\$102,393	29%	101	93%

Source: czbLLC analysis of data from Polk County Assessor and field survey of exterior conditions

Brand Concepts

Brand Goal Oak Park / Highland Park Has a Strong Positive Identity That Attracts Visitors, Homebuyers, Renters, Businesses

Homebuyer/ Renter Target Market

Single or Couple Household with Dog or Young Child
-Probably first time buyers.
-Probably aged 20s to 30s.

2+ bedrooms
1.5+ bathrooms

A. 80% Want Move-In Ready

-May work downtown.
-Want a yard for their dog.
-Value a home with character.
-Appreciate a walkable community.
-Like downtown but need something more affordable.
-"Deluxe Mini-Home"

B. 20% Rehabbers, DIYers

All of above, plus:
-Understand and appreciate the neighborhood and its homes.
-Have capacity and desire to upgrade homes.
-Want a manageable home they can make their own.
-May be employed in the trades.

Core Brand Attributes

1. Historic business district surrounded by well-built homes and a mature tree canopy.
2. Close to downtown employment and amenities.
3. Friendly neighbors.
4. Walkable community with great parks and recreational opportunities.

Brochure Short

Historic neighborhood business district surrounded by well-built homes plus beautiful McHenry park overlooking the river – a great value close to downtown employment and amenities.

Draft Brand Statement

For people seeking their first home in a walkable, urban neighborhood, Oak Park and Highland Park are minutes from downtown amenities and employment, by bike, foot, or car. They are a fantastic value with well-built homes, mature trees and a historic neighborhood business district. Our friendly neighbors and beautiful McHenry Park make it a delight to walk your dog, ride your bike or meet up for a pint. The area is home to one of the first Invest DSM Special Investment Districts so act now and be our neighbor!

Logo

Oak Park and Highland Park share the business district. Each has a logo, and together they use a third logo for both neighborhoods:



Key Brand Activities Ideas

1. To reinforce “Historic business district, well-built homes, mature tree canopy”.

- Celebrate the Parks event*
- City Ride (cycling thru neighborhood) *
- Free Flix*
- Historic home tour
- Block parties (city get block party trailer to support)
- Yard of the month
- Bike path entrance in Oak Park

*already in place

2. To reinforce “Close to downtown employment and amenities”.

- “Meet Your Neighbor” profiles of neighbors who work downtown posted twice monthly on social media and in newsletter “I work downtown and Oak Park works for me.”
- Organize OP monthly or quarterly outings to downtown places and events.
- Produce an OP promotional video that includes a high-speed commutes to downtown via bicycle, car and bus.
- Track commute time to downtown vs. suburbs; promote “in the time you save by living in OP, what could you be doing?” Photo person with dog on leash.

3. To reinforce “Friendly neighbors”.

- Expand Celebrate the Parks event to be more frequent and more inclusive
- ROR
- Meet and Greet for business owners with Chamber of Commerce technical support

4. To reinforce “Walkable community, great parks and rec”.

- Movie in the park*
- Rendezvous on Riverview*
- Easter Egg Hunt*
- Walk with the Doc
- Walking School Bus
- Walk the Park – McHenry Park–Riverview–Captain Roy’s
- Progressive Dinner –Businesses and Neighbors
- Crowdsource tree species identification and promote tree care information
- Edible garden tour and bike ride
- Tree planting drives with Trees Forever
- Game Day/Night: card and board games, scavenger hunt
- Community giving: winter coat drive, food rescue, summer student lunch program
- Yoga in the park



Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the

Oak Park / Highland Park
Special Investment District

ADOPTED JULY 2019