



Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the

North of Grand & Woodland Heights

Special Investment District

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Prepared for the
City of Des Moines
by czbLLC

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Introduction

Westward from downtown has long been the favored direction for development in Des Moines. Less prone to flooding and upwind from industrial activities, this preferred direction for residential settlement gave rise to Sherman Hill in the late 19th century. Then, with streetcar lines along Ingersoll and University and the rise of car ownership, this pattern produced many of what remain Des Moines' strongest and most sought-after neighborhoods.

Among them, North of Grand and Woodland Heights emerged in the first few decades of the 20th century as choice locations for new homes and apartments located steps away from services and transportation on Ingersoll, and with easy access to Greenwood and Waveland—two of Des Moines' original parks. With homes that were solidly-built yet generally more modest than other parts of western Des Moines, these neighborhoods were accessible to the burgeoning middle class during the city's most rapid period of growth.

The same forces that worked in favor of North of Grand and Woodland Heights in the early 20th century began working against them by the 1960s, when their northern ends were carved out for I-235 to both serve and stimulate explosive growth in the western suburbs. While remaining stronger than many other Des Moines neighborhoods during this period of upheaval and the decades that followed, gradual disinvestment became a trend.



Revived interest in city neighborhoods in recent years—and the continued revitalization of downtown—has renewed demand for what North of Grand and Woodland Heights have to offer: charming homes in tight-knit traditional neighborhoods with first-rate access to great urban amenities. While still challenged by accumulated disinvestment from harder years, the neighborhoods stand to benefit, once again, from Des Moines' westward leanings.

This plan provides a focused framework for guiding ongoing reinvestment and improvement in the North of Grand and Woodland Heights neighborhoods in the service of achieving community goals.

Vision Overview

The vision for the North of Grand and Woodland Heights neighborhoods at the heart of this plan expresses the assets that residents cherish the most, the issues that need to be prioritized, and the outcomes that describe success.

Neighborhood residents, city officials, and everyone involved with plan implementation will know that progress is being made if the components of this vision ring truer with each passing year.

In 2035, North of Grand & Woodland Heights are places where...

We have preserved, strengthened, and leveraged our assets



Walkable access to Ingersoll Avenue



Residential blocks with charm and character



Great trees and gardens



Neighboring people



Close to everything



Diverse and affordable housing options



We have made progress addressing our challenging issues and have built strong collaborations in doing so



Distressed older housing that needs expensive upgrades



Speeding and noisy traffic



Not enough parks or greenspace



Inconsistent pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure



By building on our assets and doing so in a way that helps to mitigate our challenges, we have achieved outcomes that are important to us



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces



And we have made our neighborhood a true reflection of our vision.



North of Grand & Woodland Heights neighbors enjoy an active yet laid-back lifestyle in the heart of Des Moines. Within walking distance to the beloved business district on Ingersoll Avenue, a short commute to major employers and attractions downtown, and with easy access to the region's best trails and parks, we appreciate living in the city and being part of a diverse community.

People of different ages and life stages are attracted to our neighborhoods because of the opportunity to be close to the action while living in charming homes on quiet, tree-lined streets. Our yards, porches, cafes, and restaurants all make it easy to slow down, relax, and connect with neighbors.



North of Grand & Woodland Heights

Planning Process Overview

This **Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the North of Grand & Woodland Heights Special Investment District**

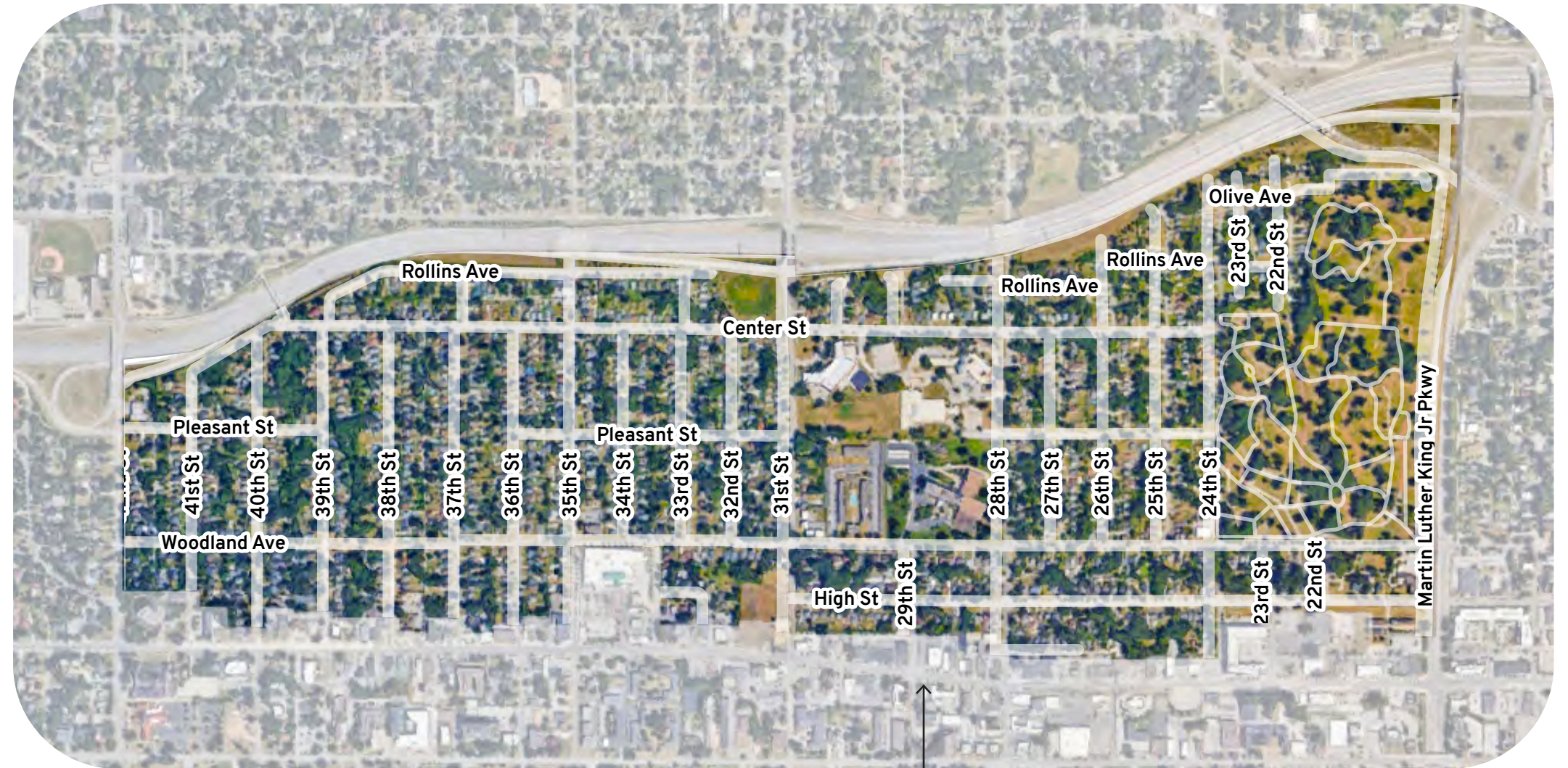
is part of a planning process that began in 2017, when the City of Des Moines undertook an evaluation of its Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The evaluation included a comprehensive look at housing conditions and market dynamics throughout Des Moines in order to understand the impact of previous revitalization work and emerging needs.

The evaluation found that neighborhood engagement and the cultivation of active neighborhood associations had been a key and noteworthy accomplishment. It also found, however, that only a small number of neighborhoods in Des Moines were genuinely strong and that most neighborhoods were somewhere between strong and distressed. This large and vulnerable “middle” was identified as needing special attention from future revitalization work.

To jumpstart this work, the City of Des Moines identified four **Special Investment Districts (SIDs)** to serve as pilot areas for policies and resources specifically designed for middle neighborhoods: Oak Park/Highland Park, Columbus Park, Drake, and the Franklin Area. Plans for these four original SIDs were adopted in 2019 and influenced the creation of **Invest DSM** in 2020—a non-profit funded by joint commitments from the City of Des Moines and Polk County to implement key aspects of the SID plans.



In 2024, the City of Des Moines decided to expand this work by adding SIDs to Union Park and the North of Grand & Woodland Heights neighborhoods. Areas within the SID boundaries are eligible to participate in programs offered by Invest DSM and may also receive prioritized attention for activities and investments overseen by the City of Des Moines and other implementation partners.



This plan was developed between June 2024 and February 2025 by the City of Des Moines and Invest DSM in partnership with a steering committee of neighborhood residents, with additional information drawn from a public survey, two open house events, and conversations convened by steering committee members. It provides guidance for a **10-year planning horizon within the SID.**



The initial boundaries of this Special Investment District cover portions of the North of Grand and Woodland Heights neighborhoods. As in other SIDs, the potential for boundary changes will be considered on a yearly basis.

Des Moines Planning Context

Planning for Des Moines' Special Investment Districts is part of a much broader set of planning efforts that aim to advance goals and policy direction set by the Des Moines City Council.

The general umbrella for planning in Des Moines is the comprehensive plan—**PlanDSM**—which was adopted in 2016. *PlanDSM* provides overarching guidance for development regulations in the city, sub-area plans for neighborhoods and corridors, infrastructure master plans, long-range capital improvement plans, and strategic planning.

Two elements of PlanDSM with the most direct relevance to neighborhood planning are "Community Character and Neighborhoods" and "Housing," which informed changes to Des Moines Neighborhood Revitalization Program in 2018/2019 and the subsequent development of Special Investment District Plans (including this one).

While the **enhanced focus on "middle neighborhoods"** represented by the Special Investment District planning and investment efforts has been an important pivot to the city's approach to neighborhood revitalization over the past decade, it is **by no means the only work being done to improve conditions in Des Moines neighborhoods**. Every year the City of Des Moines allocates millions of federal housing and community development dollars in high-poverty Census Tracts according to a regularly updated Consolidated Plan.

The City of Des Moines has also committed local resources in recent years to assist housing improvements throughout the city, including the ION (Improving Our Neighborhood) program to assist income-eligible homeowners with emergency repairs and a Block Challenge program to assist groups of collaborating property owners with exterior improvements.



PlanDSM

A long-range citywide plan that guides planning and decision-making in Des Moines. It has numerous elements, including "Community Character and Neighborhoods" and "Housing."

More detailed plans and policies, guided by PlanDSM, have been put in place or modified since 2016.

Notable among these are:



INTRODUCTION

Des Moines Planning Context

Since the adoption of Des Moines' first Special Investment District plans in 2019, and the creation of Invest DSM to help implement those plans in 2020, a wide-ranging work has been undertaken in the four original SIDs to support middle neighborhood reinvestment. Indeed, Des Moines has few if any counterparts in the United States that have pursued this type of work at a similar scale.

For example:



Over 1,300 individual projects have been completed, with 93% of them involving existing homeowners



\$14.3 million granted by Invest DSM has resulted in \$76.8 million in total investment; in other words, \$4.37 of private investment has been leveraged for every \$1 committed by Invest DSM



2024 represented a 37% rise in investment compared to 2023, reflecting a rapid increase in participation

These promising signs from the first five years of Des Moines' new approach to neighborhood revitalization will continue to the extent that the City of Des Moines and Polk County remain committed to the strategy. As the Status Report on Neighborhood Revitalization Efforts, 2018-2023 found, these investments appear to be having their intended effects, especially in the Drake and Franklin Area SIDs. But patience is required to continue the process of making Des Moines' more competitive in the Greater DSM housing market relative to suburbs that have long attracted an outsized share of regional housing investments.



2024
Impact

2020-24
Impact to Date



Total investments made through Invest DSM supported projects

\$29.9
MILLION

\$76.8
MILLION



Share of total investment granted by Invest DSM

\$5.2
MILLION

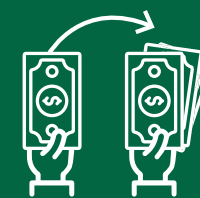
\$14.3
MILLION



Share of total investment made by private property owners

\$24.7
MILLION

\$62.5
MILLION



Amount leveraged from other sources for every dollar granted by Invest DSM

\$7.53

\$4.37



Projects completed

297+

1,334+



% of completed projects that involved existing homeowners

93%

Des Moines Planning Context

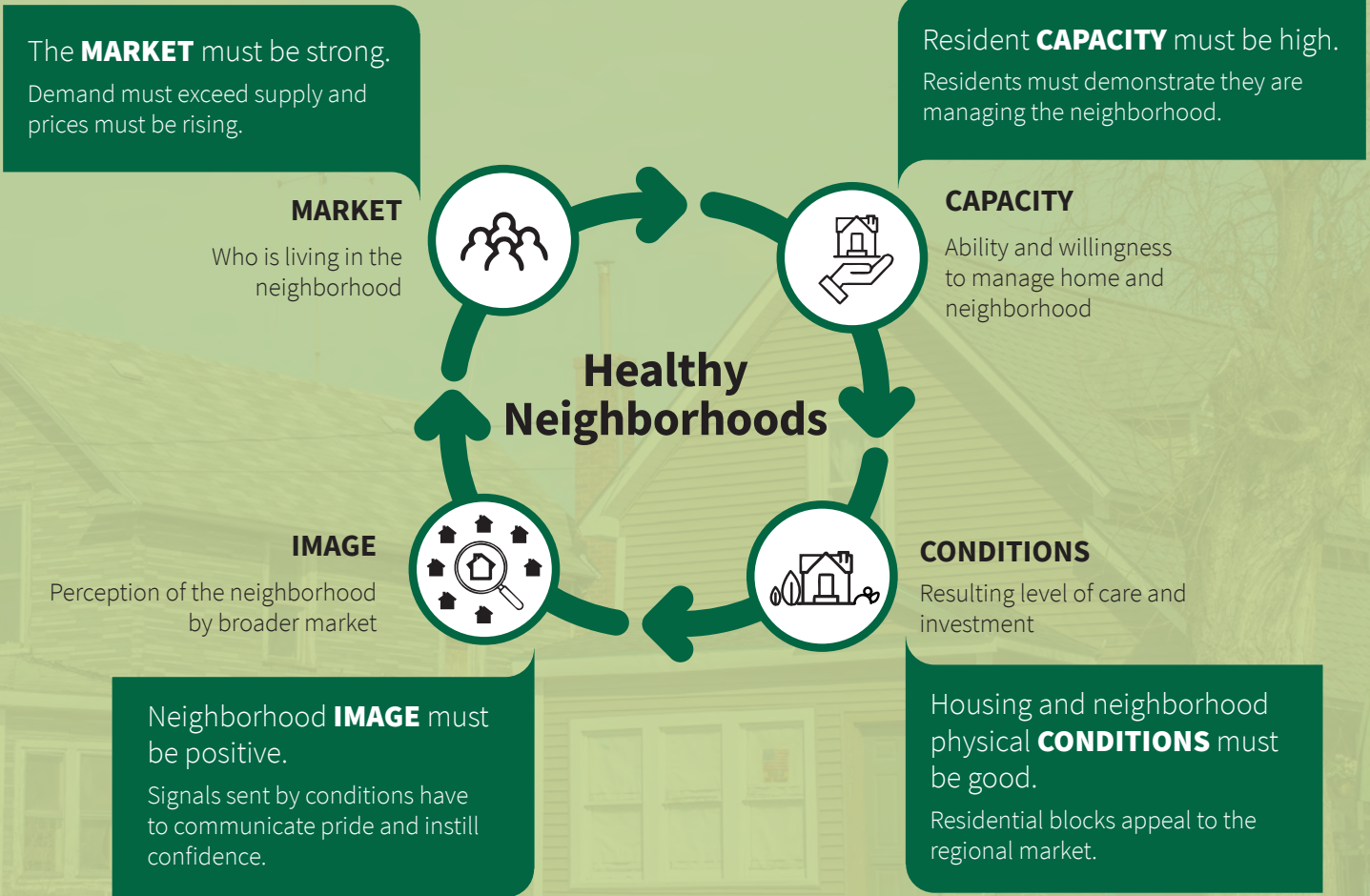
Revitalization is a process that leads to something: a neighborhood that is vital and healthy. But what is a healthy neighborhood?

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.”



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How to Use This Plan

The purpose of this plan for the North of Grand and Woodland Heights Special Investment District is to provide general guidance to the City of Des Moines, Invest DSM, neighborhood residents, and other partners as they work on neighborhood revitalization and improvement activities within the SID boundaries. This guidance is divided into three parts, culminating in a set of activities that are responsive to existing conditions and the neighborhood’s vision for the future.

PART 1

Assets, Issues, and Trends

Part 1 provides context for planning in North of Grand and Woodland Heights 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 and tie those issues to the four central components of healthy neighborhoods.

PART 2

Vision and Outcomes

Part 2 distills the vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights from the core attributes and desired outcomes expressed by residents. It also identifies measurements to track to ensure progress toward those outcomes, and describes target markets that are a good match for the neighborhood’s vision and its present housing supply.

PART 3

Action Plan

Part 3 presents a series of activities to implement over the plan’s 10- year planning horizon. It begins with foundational actions to take citywide, followed by specific steps to take within the SID. It ties each activity to one or more outcomes and identifies the partnerships needed for successful implementation.

All three parts of this plan, ultimately, aim to help address a handful of critical questions that were raised during the planning process and that relate directly to the outcomes and vision described by the plan.

While this plan answers these questions in the form of activities and tools to put into action, these questions should remain at the heart of the implementation process. Coming back to these questions on a regular basis will help to ensure that actions remain tightly focused on what matters most to the future of North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

We have easy access to Ingersoll Avenue and Des Moines’ top assets...

How can we make it easier and safer to walk around our neighborhoods and to businesses along Ingersoll?

How can we make it easier and safer to get to downtown, Gray’s Lake, and other nearby destinations?

We are a verdant and quiet neighborhood...

How can we sustain and improve the bucolic appeal of our streets?

What can we do to make traffic on our streets calmer and quieter?

Our housing is diverse and charming...

How can we preserve the diversity and accessibility of our housing supply—to meet the needs of all types of households?

What can be done to ensure that our housing retains its historic character?

PART

01 Assets, Issues and Trends

What's working in North of Grand & Woodland Heights today? And what's not working?

These were starting points for defining the recognizable assets and strengths in these neighborhoods—important building blocks for any revitalization plan—and for exploring the issues that threaten the neighborhoods or hold them back. Community input on both questions informed further analysis of relevant trends and are components of this plan's vision.

Part 1 summarizes these assets, issues, and trends. It also relates them back to the four self-reinforcing factors that define healthy neighborhoods—a strong **market**, high **capacity** to manage change, good physical **conditions**, and positive **image**—to gauge North of Grand & Woodland Heights current stand on each factor.



PG 20	Assets
PG 22	Issues
PG 24	Key Findings

Assets

According to residents, what are the greatest assets and strengths in North of Grand and Woodland Heights?



In one form or another, “location” was the asset most commonly cited during the planning process as a top selling point for the North of Grand and Woodland Heights neighborhoods. Being able to walk to businesses on Ingersoll Avenue, jumping onto I-235 to get anywhere in the region, and closeness to downtown and other major destinations were all referenced repeatedly as locational strengths that bolster quality of life.

That these advantages are paired with other key assets—charming homes, leafy streets, good connections to neighbors, and a relatively diverse and affordable set of housing options—makes the locational advantages even greater.



Walkable access to Ingersoll Avenue

The area’s traditional street grid and urban design make it a place that is easy and comfortable to get around on foot. These advantages are bolstered by the presence of Ingersoll Avenue and the businesses and services that are convenient destinations and amenities for area residents.

And proximity to Ingersoll is just one of many locational advantages that the neighborhoods have within Greater Des Moines.

Residential blocks with charm and character

Many of the area’s homes were built between 1900 and 1930 and reflect the quaint architectural styles of that period. These remain attractive and desirable homes today, and many of them have retained their original character through careful stewardship by generations of owners.

Great trees, gardens, and art

Streetscapes in the neighborhoods are notable for their great tree canopies—strengthened in recent years with additional plantings—and gardens that complement the area’s residential architecture.

Art, too, makes a clear imprint on local streets, with highly visible works on both public and private property. All of this makes the area visually interesting, contributes to a clear sense of place, and conveys an impression that the neighborhoods value greenery and creativity.

Active and neighborly residents

The North of Grand Neighborhood Association and Woodland Heights Neighborhood Association have been active for years and have demonstrated their ability to coordinate neighbors on important issues and projects. Outgrowths of this are the visible efforts to create a sense of community, from flowers at intersections to activities at The Woodland Realm.

Diverse and affordable housing options

Small homes, larger homes, duplexes, small apartment buildings, larger apartment complexes. All of these housing types are found in these neighborhoods and at a range of price points that make them affordable to households with very different incomes.

Young people, older people, and families with kids have appealing options here.

Issues

What do people think are the biggest issues and challenges facing North of Grand and Woodland Heights?



Some of the same things that contribute to the neighborhoods' locational advantages also contribute to commonly cited problems. The convenience of I-235, for example, also means a steady drone of highway noise and speeding on streets that carry traffic to and from the highway. And proximity to Ingersoll means congestion and noise for residents on blocks closest to that street.

To the extent that I-235's presence has contributed—over the course of five decades—to disinvestment and competitive disadvantages with housing in western suburbs, then it also plays a role with another commonly cited issue: the number homes that show signs of physical distress and/or are in need of expensive upgrades.



Distressed older housing that needs expensive upgrades

In addition to dormant-looking properties, the neighborhoods also have many homes that have experienced decades of deferred maintenance both inside and out. While these properties represent lower cost “fixer-upper” opportunities for some future buyers, they reflect a number of current challenges—including the inability of some homeowners to afford routine maintenance and the unwillingness of some owners to make needed improvements.

Inconsistent pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure

Recent street and sewer upgrades have helped to move infrastructure quality in the right direction, but there are still several streets in need of repair. And sidewalk conditions, which are a private responsibility, are poor or very inconsistent on several blocks, which detracts from the overall walkability of North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

Speeding and noisy traffic

Along with poor sidewalk quality in some areas, speeding vehicles are another problem that makes the neighborhoods less walkable than they should be. This is particularly an issue on hilly streets.

Not enough parks or greenspace

North of Grand and Woodland Heights are close to some great parks and trails, but there is very little park acreage within the neighborhoods themselves. And while connections between these neighborhoods and nearby recreational assets have been getting better, there is room for improvement.

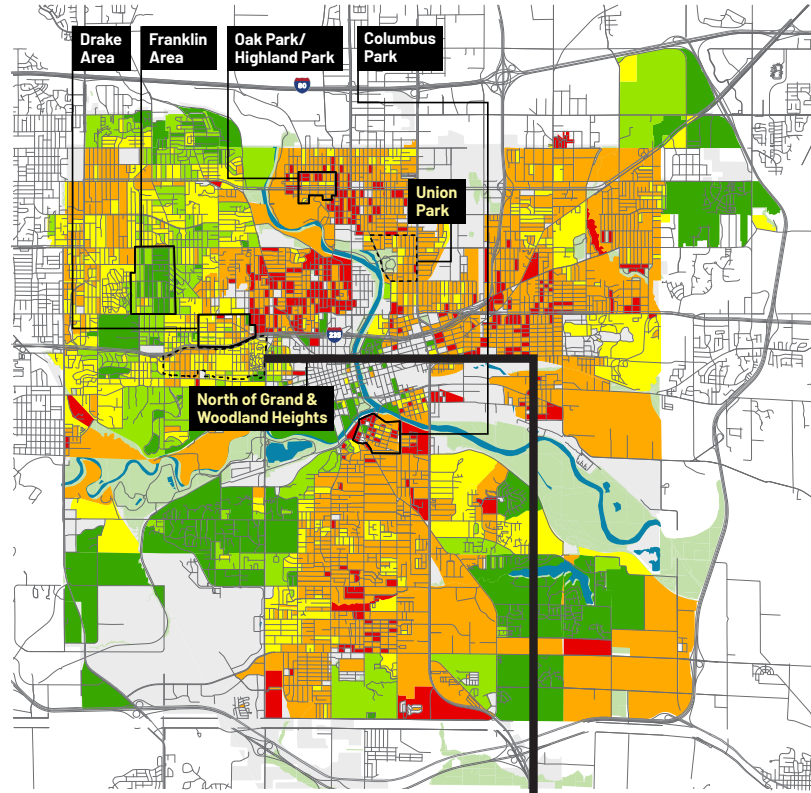
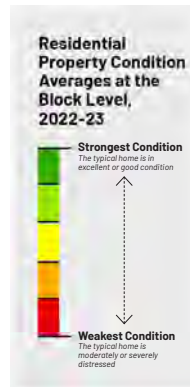
Key Findings

What do we know about conditions and trends in North of Grand and Woodland Heights?

Residential property conditions vary throughout North of Grand and Woodland Heights, and most properties are at a critical tipping point

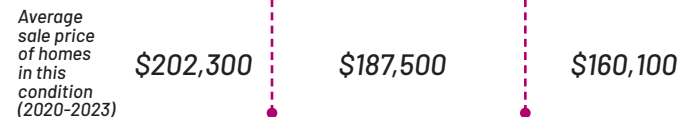
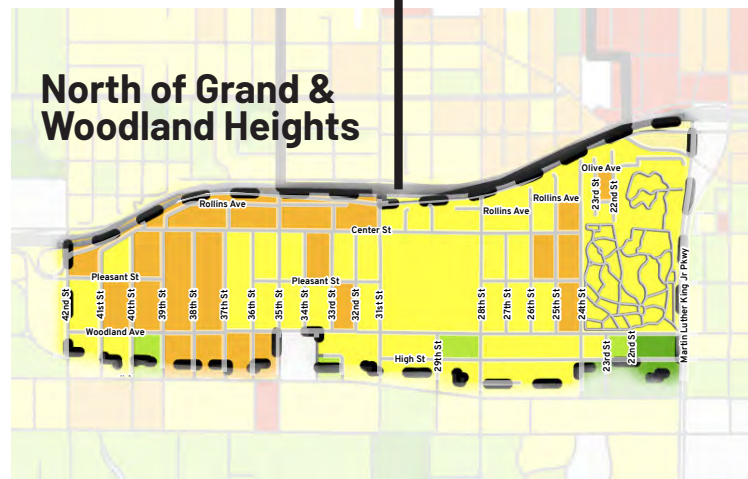
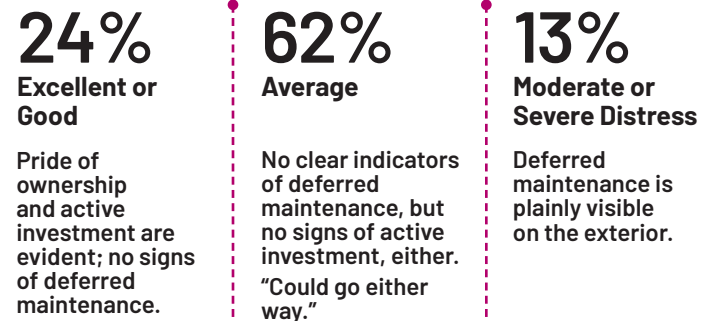
Addressing decades of disinvestment in Des Moines' housing is part of the work of making the city's neighborhoods better for current and future residents. And an updated survey of housing conditions across the city in 2022-23 showed how much conditions differ from place to place.

In North of Grand & Woodland Heights, as in other "middle neighborhoods" that are now designated as Special Investment Districts, conditions are not the strongest nor the weakest in the city. But there are vulnerabilities that could impact overall conditions in the coming decade. While the number of properties in excellent or good condition outnumber distressed properties by a margin of 2-to-1, the majority of properties are somewhere in the middle and could tip in either direction depending on the ability and willingness of homeowners to actively invest in their properties.



Source: czbLLC windshield survey of conditions for all properties with residential uses

% of residential properties in North of Grand & Woodland Heights that are...



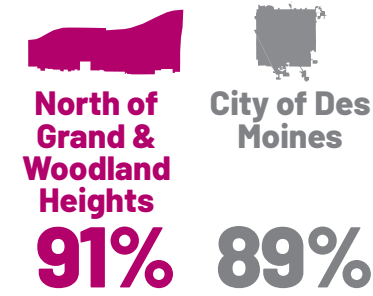
Small single-family homes dominate the area's housing inventory and are more susceptible to absentee ownership and disinvestment

As in the rest of Des Moines, single-family homes in North of Grand & Woodland Heights account for nine out of 10 residential properties (duplexes and homes converted to apartments account for another 7%). And of these single-family homes, 72% are smaller homes (2-3 bedrooms, 1 bathroom) built between 1910 and 1930.

A challenge with this large inventory of smaller homes is that they have been less marketable than larger homes in recent decades (especially those with multiple bathrooms). As a result, they have incurred higher levels of deferred maintenance, are priced lower than other types of properties, and are increasingly prone to absentee-ownership.

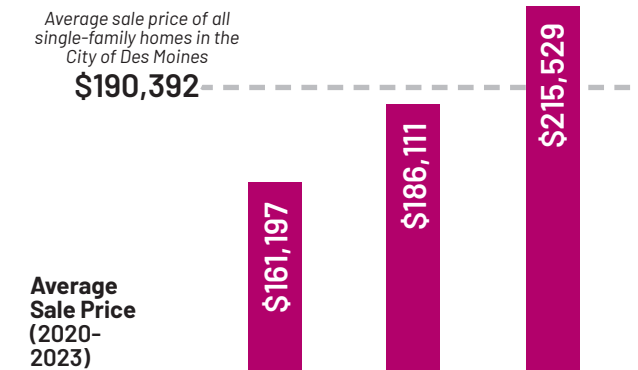
So, while these smaller homes are relatively affordable to first-time buyers, they come with a long list of issues to resolve and improvements to make that, in some cases, exceed the value of the property.

Share of residential properties that are single-family homes



Characteristics of Most Common Single-Family Home Configurations in North of Grand & Woodland Heights

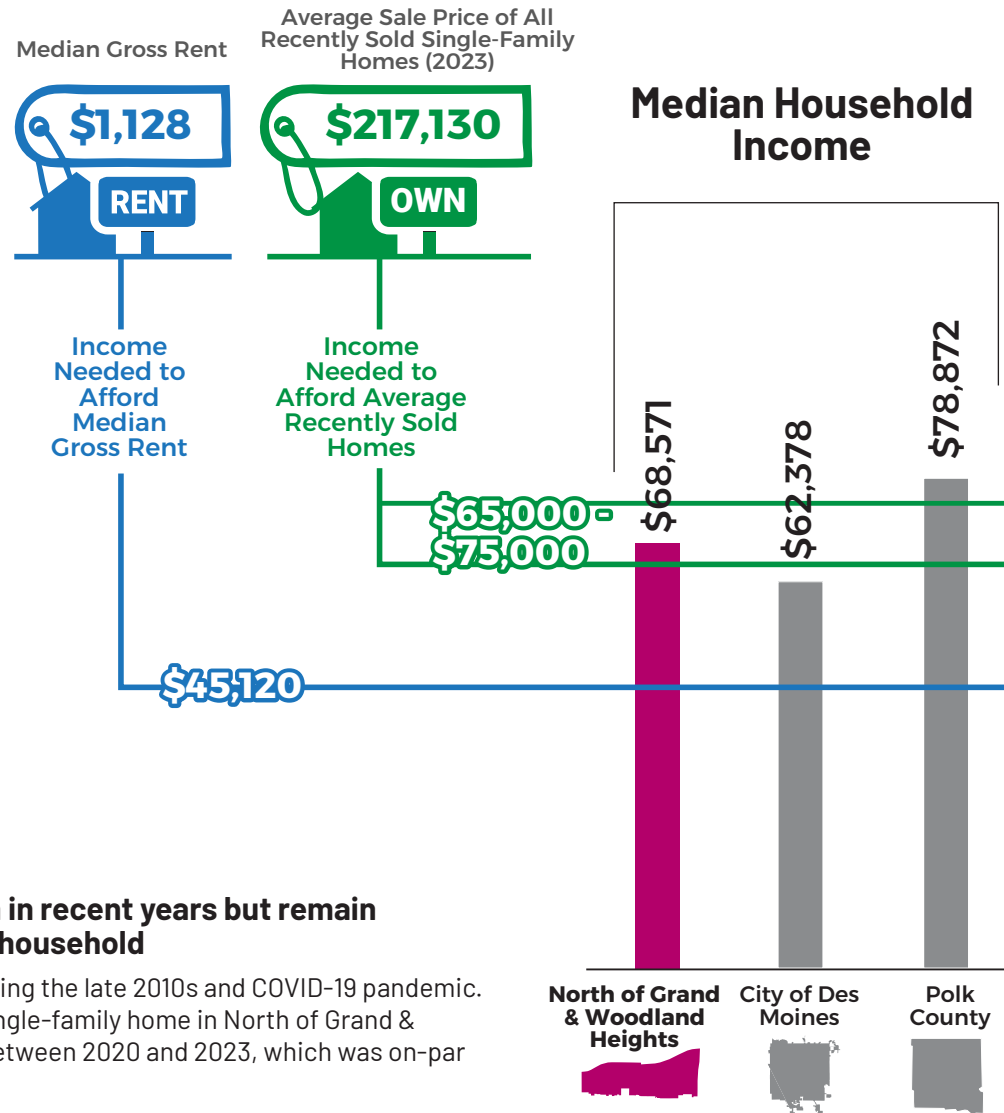
Bedrooms	2	3	3
Bathrooms	1	1	2
Share of single-family homes in North of Grand & Woodland Heights	37%	35%	9%
% Showing Signs of Moderate or Severe Distress	15%	14%	10%
% Owner Occupied	78%	90%	92%



Source: czbLLC analysis of City of Des Moines assessment rolls, MLS sales records, and property condition survey

Key Findings | Conditions and Trends

Housing Costs in North of Grand & Woodland Heights



Housing costs have risen in recent years but remain affordable to the typical household

Housing costs accelerated during the late 2010s and COVID-19 pandemic. The average price paid for a single-family home in North of Grand & Woodland Heights rose 25% between 2020 and 2023, which was on-par with the increase citywide.

Despite recent increases, however, current home prices and rents remain largely affordable to typical households in Des Moines and Polk County — especially the neighborhood’s smaller homes and fixer-uppers. As is the case throughout the region, however, households making less than \$40,000 will struggle to find good housing there.

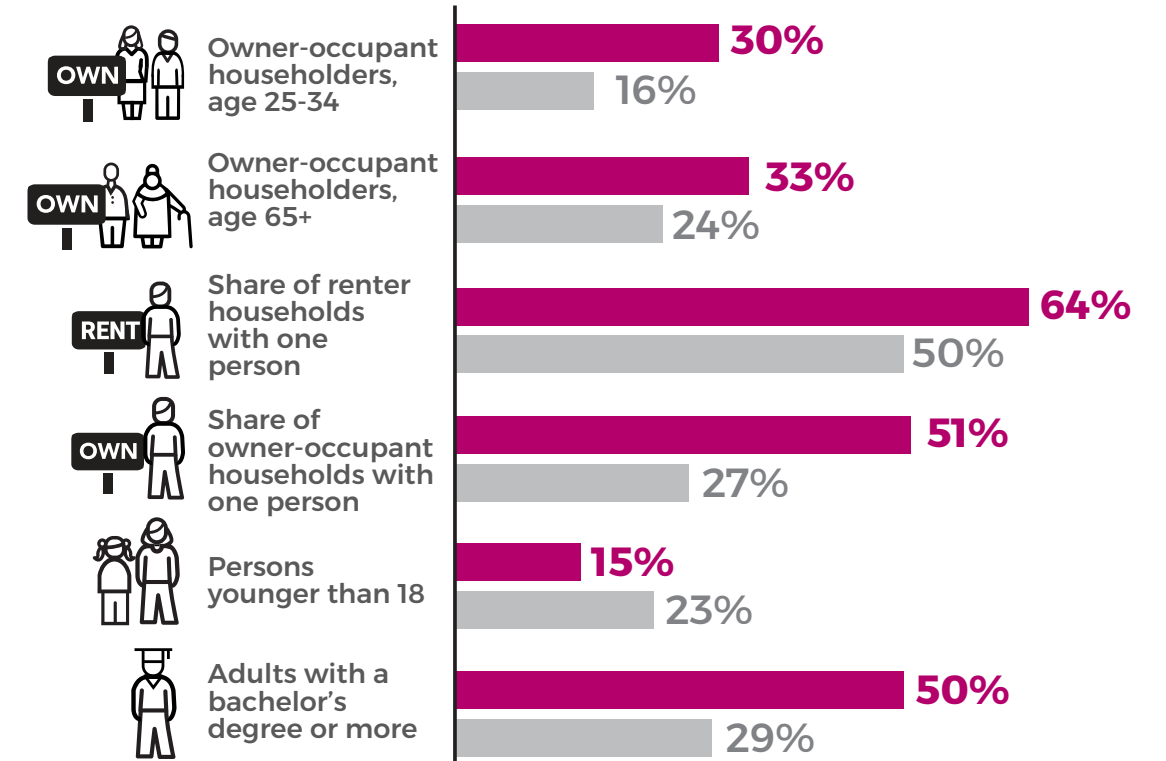
Source: czbLLC analysis of American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2022 (rent and income) and MLS sales data; "income needed to afford" is based on 30% of income

% increase in average single-family sales prices from 2020 through 2023



Select Demographic Characteristics

North of Grand & Woodland Heights City of Des Moines



Source: czbLLC analysis of American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2022

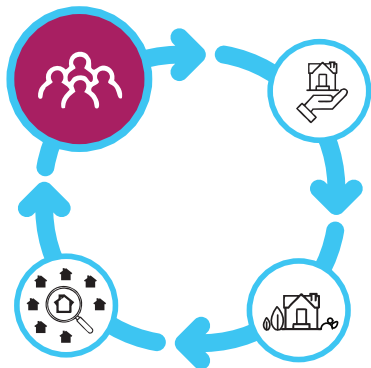
North of Grand and Woodland Heights are in the midst of a generational transition

More than most neighborhoods in Des Moines, North of Grand & Woodland Heights are experiencing a significant transition right now from older to younger homeowners. The share of older homeowners (age 65+) is high, and their gradual departure has been giving way to a very high share of younger owners (age 25-34).

Regardless of age or whether people own or rent, living alone is much more common in these neighborhoods than the rest of Des Moines and there are currently far fewer kids, suggesting that many young homeowners have not started families yet. Living alone is enabled, in part, by higher incomes earned by the area’s high concentration of college grads.

What do the assets, issues, and trends identified during the planning process suggest about neighborhood health in North of Grand & Woodland Heights? How does it fare on each of the four factors that contribute to health?

MARKET



Where are we now?

The real estate market in these neighborhoods is above average in the context of the City of Des Moines, with home prices that are slightly above the city average and have risen at a rate on par with the rest of the city.

The city market, however, continues to lag behind the suburbs. And the fact that only 24% of homes are in excellent or good condition suggests that market strength in these neighborhoods is not sufficient to address backlogs of deferred maintenance or to prompt major home improvements.

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

There is still a gap between what it costs to make significant improvements to homes and the market value of those improvements, especially for the broad swath of homes in marginal condition. Helping homeowners and buyers overcome that gap with financial assistance is an important step toward major home improvements making financial sense. As the overall quality of the housing supply rises, the gap will shrink.

CAPACITY



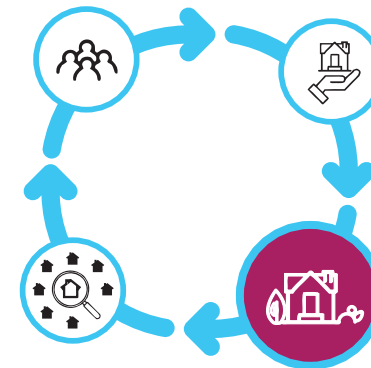
Where are we now?

A history of high-functioning neighborhood associations is representative of strong resident leadership capacity at the neighborhood level. This is augmented by collaboration with The Avenues and its proactive vision for the Ingersoll/Grand corridor.

What will it take to make progress toward a stronger capacity?

To keep neighborhood associations strong and high-functioning over time, new members need to be brought into the fold on a regular basis to make up for attrition and contribute fresh ideas. Sustained outreach to new residents and more diverse populations, through events and other gatherings, is key to making capacity even stronger.

CONDITIONS



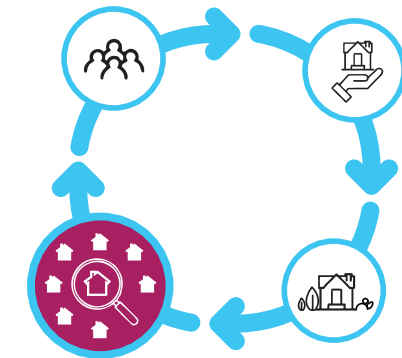
Where are we now?

There are twice as many residential properties in excellent or good condition as there are properties showing clear signs of deferred maintenance. This is good. But having more than 60% of homes in average condition is a vulnerability and contributes to a sense that the neighborhood is “tired” and potentially risky.

What will it take to make progress toward stronger conditions?

Over time, a stronger market will help improve conditions. But so will explicit promotion of higher standards such as celebrating homes that are models for high-quality renovation or blocks that exemplify pride of place.

IMAGE



Where are we now?

The neighborhoods have a relatively strong image compared to other middle neighborhoods in Des Moines thanks to its schools, the revitalization of Ingersoll Avenue, and strong neighborhood associations. This image is tempered, though, by the visibility of vacant and tired-looking properties.

What will it take to make progress toward a stronger image?

A well-honed and well-delivered message based on core attributes (see Part 2), along with progress on the market, capacity, and condition factors of neighborhood health, will all have a positive impact on image. So will continued attention to public art, greenery, and other features that already burnish the neighborhoods’ image.

PART 02 Vision and Outcomes



What do we intend our neighborhood to be in 10 years? What will progress look like?

Exploration of the assets, challenges, and key trends in North of Grand and Woodland Heights helped to clarify thinking about the type of place residents want the neighborhoods to be in a decade and the types of outcomes that would describe progress. Those outcomes, combined with a prioritization of the neighborhoods' assets, pointed the planning process toward an ambitious yet realistic vision for the future of North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

Part 2 summarizes this vision, provides ways to track progress on neighborhood outcomes, and offers guidance on how to relate the vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights to the needs of their target markets.

PG 32	Vision Framework
PG 34	Outcomes and Progress Measurements
PG 36	Target Markets

Vision Framework



The vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights provides the “why” behind the activities proposed in this plan. In so doing, it represents a basis against which to shape and test decisions about policies, programs, and strategies.

How will a proposed action contribute to the realization of the vision? Answering this question convincingly—and doing so as part of a dialogue that also connects to the four characteristics of healthy neighborhoods—will be an important and ongoing process during implementation of this plan. The primary components of the vision—core attributes and outcomes—provide approachable steps to this process. If an activity relates directly to multiple core attributes and outcomes, it is likely to be well-aligned with the neighborhoods’ vision.

Besides providing overall direction for efforts that aim to improve the neighborhoods, the vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights also represents a brand to live up to. Everything that happens in the neighborhoods will send subtle and not-so-subtle signals to existing residents and potential future residents about the type of place they can expect the neighborhoods to be in coming years. Every improvement project should help to demonstrate this vision—or reinforce the brand—in some way. And every form of communication about the neighborhood should help to underscore its brand—especially in the minds of households that are good fits for what the neighborhoods have and are striving to become.

Core Attributes

These are the assets and characteristics that residents value the most, that form the core of the identity of North of Grand and Woodland Heights, and that serve as chief selling points to future residents.

They are also a means of prioritizing scarce resources. Whenever possible, actions and investments should highlight and strengthen these attributes.



Easy access to Ingersoll and DSM’s top assets

We can walk to amenities and services on Ingersoll Avenue and can easily get to other great city destinations in less than 10 minutes. We’re a traditional neighborhood of detached homes, but we’re at the heart of urban living in Des Moines.



Green and quiet

We’re at the heart of everything, but our streets are leafy and laid-back. The tree canopy, gardens, yards, public art, and connections to great parks make it easy to spend time outside with family, neighbors, and pets.



Diverse housing opportunities with historic charm

From small houses and fixer-uppers to larger homes and move-in ready rehabs, our streets have homeownership options to fit a range of lifestyles and life stages. And nearly all of them come with early 20th century charm.

Vision

Drawn from the core attributes and outcomes, the vision expresses an intention for the future of North of Grand and Woodland Heights that the neighborhoods are striving to live up to.

The vision also functions as a “brand statement” for the neighborhoods—a promise to those who choose to invest their time, energy, and resources there.

North of Grand & Woodland Heights neighbors enjoy an active yet laid-back lifestyle in the heart of Des Moines. Within walking distance to the beloved business district on Ingersoll Avenue, a short commute to major employers and attractions downtown, and with easy access to the region’s best trails and parks, we appreciate living in the city and being part of a diverse community.

People of different ages and life stages are attracted to our neighborhoods because of the opportunity to be close to the action while living in charming homes on quiet, tree-lined streets. Our yards, porches, cafes, and restaurants all make it easy to slow down, relax, and connect with neighbors.



Outcomes



Outcomes are the conditions that will help to mark progress toward, or maintenance of, the vision.



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces

Outcomes and Progress Measurements

The general outcomes that contribute to the overall vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights, and which will signal movement in the right direction, all speak to one or more of the factors that contribute to healthy neighborhoods: **market, capacity, condition, and image.** Advancing these outcomes, therefore, is about realizing the neighborhoods' vision and becoming firmly planted within the cycle of neighborhood health.

Tracking progress on these outcomes requires more specificity about what each outcome really means. And it requires, 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 table provides additional detail on the meaning of each general outcome based on public input during the planning process. It also proposes a set of **quantitative** and **qualitative** indicators to track, including current or baseline conditions and target measurements to move towards.

Key Measurements to Monitor

BASELINE

GOALS



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect

Events are well-attended and foster a sense of identity & connection

Residents know and look after their neighbors

Demographics are a closer racial/ethnic reflection of the City of Des Moines, and minority households feel welcome and included

Older residents have healthy support networks

Ingersoll has many appealing 'third' spaces

Potential Measurements:

Event and Program Participation

Identify specific event and program participation measurements that would be feasible to track and would help to indicate meaningful levels of neighborhood engagement.

Potential Measurements:

Community Survey

Select a method to routinely collect qualitative information about quality of life, neighborhood connections, and other topics that may be useful to gauge progress or inform strategies.



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment

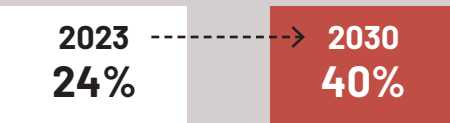
Historic character is respected and celebrated

More homeowners are adopting high standards for curb appeal and home improvements

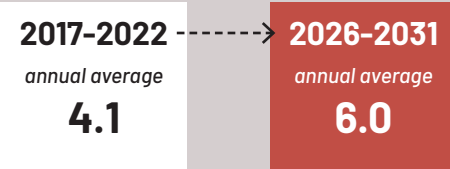
Rental properties are well-managed and maintained

Owners feel confident about investing on their block

Share of residential properties in excellent or good condition



Building permits issued per 100 residential properties



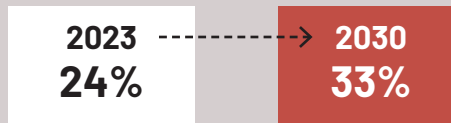
Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible

The typical single-family home is in good condition and has been updated with marketable modern amenities

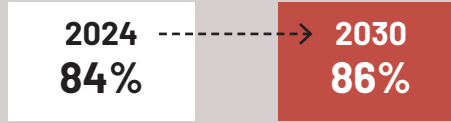
The condition of rental properties has improved; rental options are more diverse and serve a wider range of household types

Income-restricted units have been consciously preserved and developed for wider access to good housing

Share of rental properties that are in excellent or good condition



Owner-occupancy rate of single-family homes



Share of renting households that are cost-burdened



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets

Traffic feels calm and safe on all streets

Walking across the neighborhood or down to Ingersoll is enjoyable and safe for kids, families, and older residents

Using a bike in the neighborhood does not feel risky

Bus stops are accessible and safe to get to/from

Potential Measurements:

Sidewalk Gap Priority List

Use City of Des Moines mapping of missing sidewalks to identify and refine a prioritized list of gaps to address. Review status of list and progress annually as part of SID implementation process.



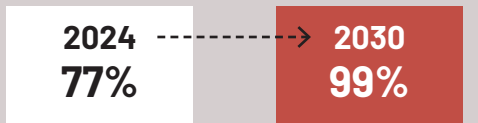
Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces

A great tree canopy makes every street a kind of public greenspace

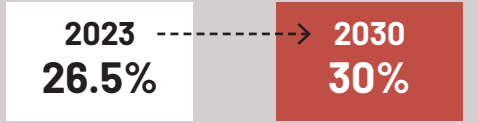
Publicly-controlled parks and lawns in the neighborhood (including schools) are improved and well-used

Connections to nearby parks and trails are safe and easy to navigate.

Share of tree planting spaces in public right-of-way that are occupied



Share of acreage covered by tree canopy



Target Markets

Homebuyer Target Markets



The vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights, and the outcomes that describe it, are reflections of what existing residents value about the neighborhood and how they define progress. And, indeed, existing residents will have significant roles to play in achieving their vision.



Currently, around 13% of households in the U.S. move in any given year. This means that one out of eight households on an average block can be expected to move this year because of a job, a change in life stage, changing needs, finding better housing options elsewhere, or some other reason.

For a market to be considered healthy, those who move out need to be replaced in short order. If not, vacancy rates rise—and so does the probability that property values stagnate and conditions falter. In the case of single-family homes being vacated by an owner-occupant, a healthy market is one where the home is quickly sold and the new owner has the willingness and capacity to take good care of the property.

When a predictable stream of good buyers exists, 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 core attributes and selling points of North of Grand and Woodland Heights, 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 three general target markets that are likely to value the housing stock and amenities that North of Grand and Woodland Heights have to offer today, and who will find the neighborhoods increasingly appealing as the housing stock and amenities are improved.

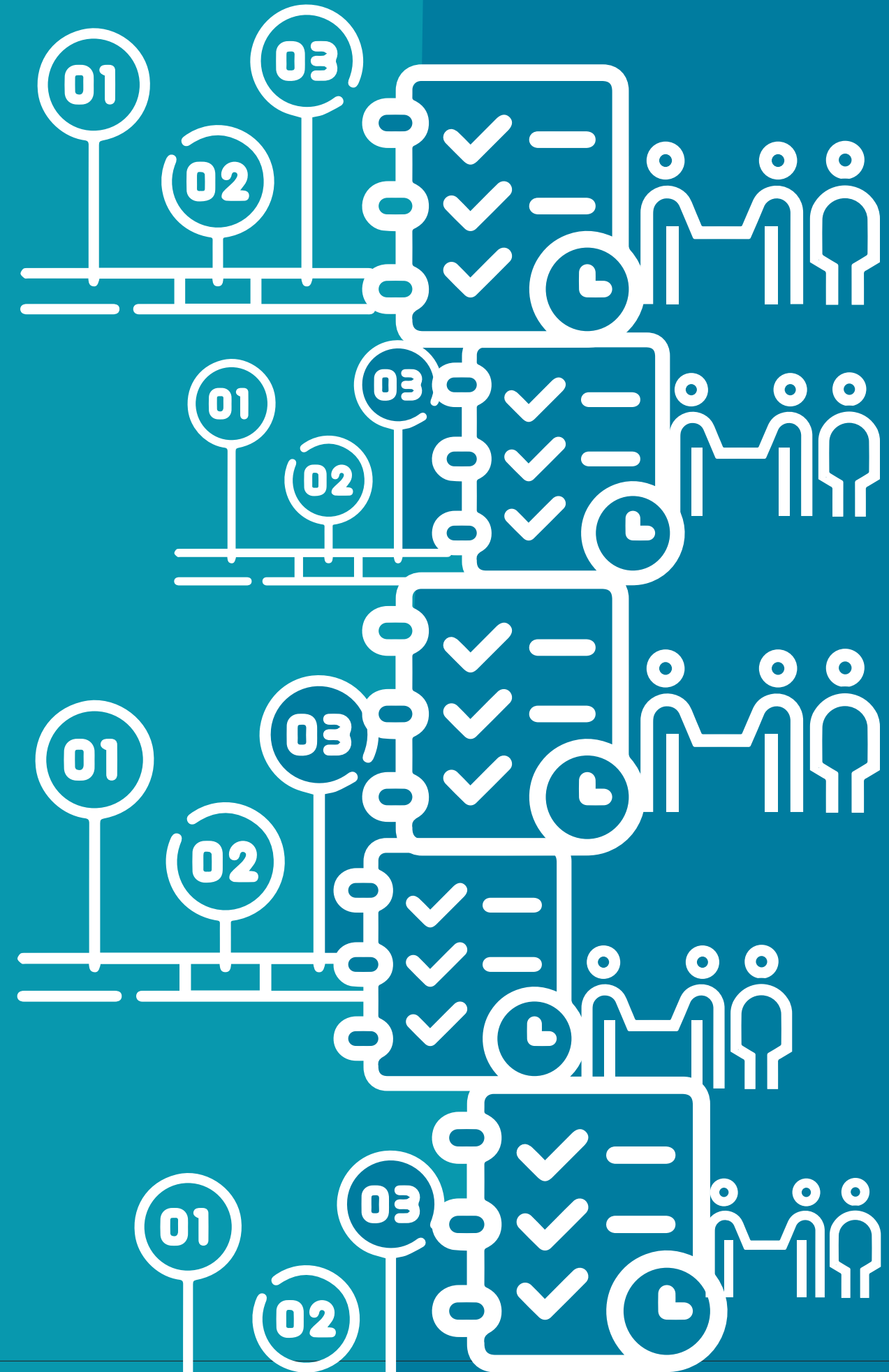


Identifying these target markets does not exclude other markets from the neighborhoods—rather, it's a tool for focusing limited branding and marketing resources in ways that speak directly to the highest probability buyers.



Target Market	Young Urban Singles	New Couples	Downsizers
General Profile	20s and early-to-mid 30s Non-traditional workers: creatives, gig economy, self-employed Earning \$50k-\$75k, plus help from housemate income	Buying first home together; 20s and 30s Just starting a family, or already have young kids Dual income (\$75k-\$125k)	Singles or couples in their 50s or 60s Looking to maintain or transition towards an urban lifestyle in retirement \$250k-\$350k available for purchase plus improvements
Home needs	3+ bedrooms 2+ bathrooms Tired of renting and willing to take on homeownership with some sweat equity Used to having roommates and willing to take on a housemate to help cover costs of maintenance and improvements	2-3 bedrooms 2+ bathrooms May be looking for flexibility to host/house family for short or long stays Able to maintain and improve a home; might move up and out if family expands, leaving an improved home for newcomers	2-3 bedrooms 1.5+ bathrooms Kids are gone, but buyer is looking for rooms/baths for short- or long-term family guests Able to leverage equity from sale of a larger home to purchase and improve/customize a smaller home
Neighborhood Fit	Attracted by city living with a laid-back atmosphere Appreciate being part of a creative community	Looking for a traditional neighborhood that works for families and maintains their access to urban amenities See Roosevelt High School and its feeder schools as major assets	Will take full advantage of Ingersoll amenities and cultural assets Have disposable income to help sustain and grow local businesses

PART
03 Action Plan



What steps should we take to advance the vision for North of Grand and Woodland Heights?

Who does what?

And how will everything fit together?

A realistic neighborhood vision tied to specific outcomes can be translated into meaningful actions—a house renovated, a tree planted, an alley cleaned-up, a community event reimaged. But each action requires money, time, energy, and skill—and they need to be carefully coordinated so that their overall impact is greater than the sum of individual projects.

Part 3 is an action plan that outlines a limited but specific set of projects and activities, describes how to approach their implementation, and relates them to each other, the outcomes that underpin the neighborhoods’ vision, and the factors that influence neighborhood health.

PG 40	Action Plan Overview
PG 42	Translating Outcomes into Actions
PG 43	Tools & Activities
PG 44	Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity
PG 52	Neighborhood Improvement
PG 58	Implementation Summary

Action Plan Overview

This action plan for the North of Grand and Woodland Heights Special Investment District includes specific work to accomplish within the SID. As with previous work in Des Moines' SIDs, however, implementation will require acknowledgment of uncertainty and the need to balance competing demands for the same resources—it is an active process that requires discretion, decision-making, and trial-and-error. It also requires that certain actions be taken at the citywide-level to support SID-specific actions.

Implementation Principles for Neighborhood Revitalization in Des Moines

This plan is a reflection of conditions and opportunities that currently exist in the City of Des Moines and in the North of Grand and Woodland Heights SID—it responds to what is known. It is likely, however, 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.

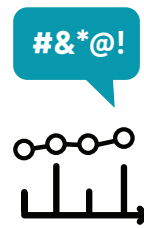
For that reason, an established set of neighborhood revitalization principles identified during the planning of Des Moines' original Special Investment Districts will be a crucial part of the implementation process—providing a consistent basis for making choices that need to be made that are not predicted by this plan. The following table demonstrates how the principles can be used 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 attributes?	Is a response needed to protect or strengthen key assets or core 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?

Foundational Citywide Actions

This action plan assumes that certain policies of the City of Des Moines will be continued or modified in order to provide the resource or policy support necessary to achieve the vision and outcomes set for North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

Three policy areas, in particular, are considered foundational to the implementation of this plan.

Continue investments in neighborhood capacity and leadership

A key finding of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program Review completed in 2018 for the City of Des Moines was the success and importance of work over nearly three decades to build resident leadership capacity and cultivate a network of high-functioning neighborhood associations.

This work remains no less important now. And it is likely a central factor behind Invest DSM's impact in Special Investment Districts to date. Without an infrastructure of neighborhood leadership in place to communicate with residents and generate enthusiasm around reinvestment, it would take longer to achieve such results.

Support for neighborhood associations and resident leadership development—citywide—is a critical investment that pays dividends and should continue.

Continue commitments to middle neighborhood revitalization as a necessary complement to affordable housing investments

The importance of investing in vulnerable middle neighborhoods—another key finding of the 2018 program review—is also no less important today. As the Status Report on Neighborhood Revitalization Efforts, 2018-2023 found, perceptible progress in Des Moines since 2018 did not change Des Moines' competitive position relative to its regional neighbors. Making sure that more neighborhoods in the city become viable options for households in Greater Des Moines is fundamental to the city's long-term fiscal health, its ability to pay for critical services, and quality of life within neighborhoods.

And as the City of Des Moines' 2025 Housing Strategy demonstrates, the city's 40,000+ small homes—most of which are in middle neighborhoods—will require reinvestment solutions ensure a high quality and accessible housing supply in the decades ahead.

Joint financial support for Invest DSM by the City of Des Moines and Polk County should be continued as part of a wider effort to achieve citywide and regional housing goals—and should be viewed as an important complement to affordable housing investments.

Widen enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code to include owner-occupied homes supplemented by compliance assistance

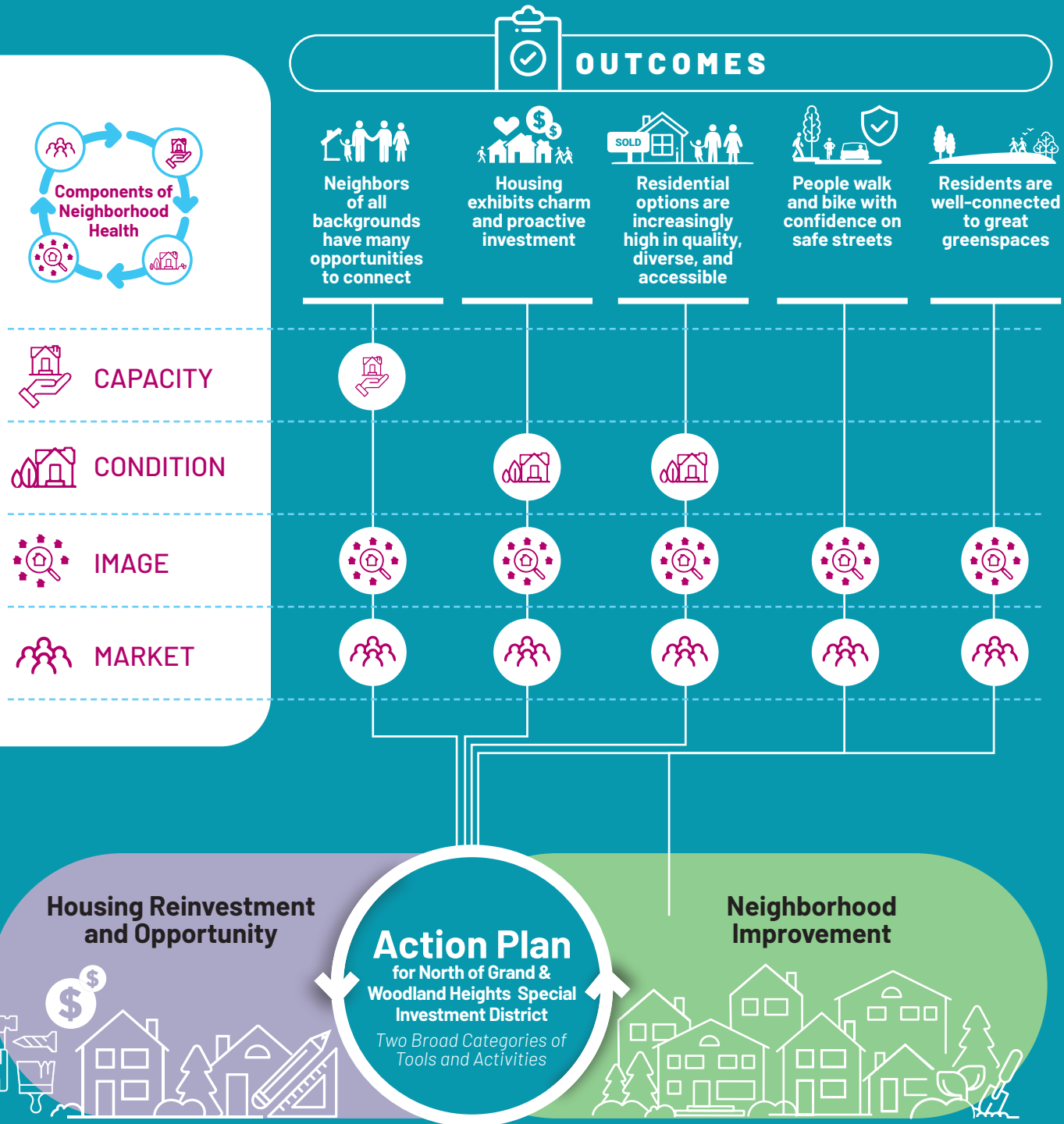
Enforcement of the property maintenance code in Des Moines has been limited to rental housing. Amending the city's ordinances to widen enforcement to single-family dwellings occupied by the owner is an important step toward improving standards of maintenance and preserving the housing stock. This is especially the case in middle neighborhoods where single-family homes are by far the dominant type of residential property.

This should be paired, however, with a continued—if not expanded—commitment to assisting low-income or disabled owners with code compliance. The ION (Improving Our Neighborhoods) program has become an important tool for helping eligible households in Des Moines with emergency repairs and has a vital role to play as part of a comprehensive set of housing programs.

Translating Outcomes into Actions

Desired outcomes for North of Grand and Woodland Heights, as defined in Part 2, are components of the vision that describe the type of place residents want the neighborhoods to be in 2035. Each outcome also relates to three or four of the basic components of neighborhood health.

Based on these outcomes and their connections to neighborhood health, a set of responsive tools and activities is proposed in this action plan that can be divided into two general categories: those that advance **Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity** and those that would influence **Neighborhood Improvement** more broadly.



While some of the proposed tools and activities can be clearly tied to a single outcome, most have the potential to advance two or more outcomes. As this Action Plan evolves with time and experience, opportunities to add, expand, or replace individual activities will arise. When this happens, activities that connect to multiple outcomes—and that apply Des Moines’ Principles for Neighborhood Revitalization—are strongly encouraged.

Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

- Promote Block Challenge Participation
- Promote Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs
- Begin Proactive Focus on Small House Reinvestment
- Use Rental Rehab Program to Improve Conditions and Preserve Affordability
- Initiate Affordable Homeownership and Rehab Partnership

Neighborhood Improvement

- Implement Traffic Calming Interventions for Safety and Walkability
- Accelerate Alley and Sidewalk Improvements
- Strengthen and Maintain the Tree Canopy
- Expand and Promote Recreational Assets within the Neighborhood
- Support Catalytic Investments on Ingersoll
- Bolster Neighborhood Events and Grow Participation

	OUTCOMES				
	Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect	Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment	Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible	People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets	Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces
Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity					
Promote Block Challenge Participation	✓	✓	✓		
Promote Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs		✓	✓		
Begin Proactive Focus on Small House Reinvestment		✓	✓		
Use Rental Rehab Program to Improve Conditions and Preserve Affordability	✓	✓	✓		
Initiate Affordable Homeownership and Rehab Partnership	✓	✓	✓		
Neighborhood Improvement					
Implement Traffic Calming Interventions for Safety and Walkability				✓	✓
Accelerate Alley and Sidewalk Improvements	✓			✓	
Strengthen and Maintain the Tree Canopy	✓	✓		✓	✓
Expand and Promote Recreational Assets within the Neighborhood	✓			✓	✓
Support Catalytic Investments on Ingersoll	✓				
Bolster Neighborhood Events and Grow Participation	✓			✓	

Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

Promote Block Challenge Grant Program

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment

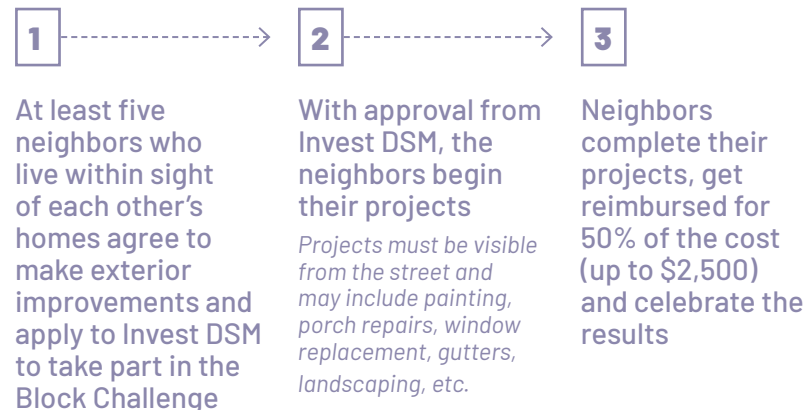


Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



Block Challenge Grant Program

How does it work?



What Encourage widespread participation in Invest DSM's Block Challenge to build on existing levels of neighbor interaction and produce rapid visual improvements on numerous blocks.
Invest DSM's Block Challenge Grant Program offers matching grants (up to \$2,500) for exterior home improvements to each participant in self-organized groups with five or more neighbors.
No income restrictions apply to participants.

Why Based on existing levels of property owner pride and investment in North of Grand & Woodland Heights and previous performance of the Block Challenge program in similar SIDs (Franklin Area and Drake), high levels of participation can be expected with the right promotion and encouragement.
This type of program is a precursor to more advanced reinvestment activities. Getting blocks to self-organize and be enthusiastic about home improvements in the first few years of SID activity will lay the groundwork for greater levels of participation and investment in the future.

How Invest DSM, the neighborhood associations, and other partners should work together to communicate program details to neighbors and generate interest in small, block-level efforts to boost property conditions and display pride of ownership.
Highlighting the work of Block Challenge recipients in 2025 and 2026 will be critical to making participation in the program contagious.

Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

Promote Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs

OUTCOMES



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



What Generate awareness about and interest in Invest DSM's Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs.
Through grants, both programs support major exterior and interior renovations in order to improve the condition and marketability of the single-family housing supply.
No income restrictions apply to participants of either program.

Why While 24% of homes in the neighborhoods are in excellent or good condition, that means that 76% do not show signs of active investment. As in all middle neighborhoods, this is due, in part, to large gaps between what it costs to complete major home upgrades and the likely return on investment when an owner sells. These "appraisal gaps" have long inhibited major home improvements.

How Invest DSM, the neighborhood associations, and other partners will need to communicate program details to generate understanding and interest.
Early activity is likeliest on blocks where homes are already in better condition and owner-occupancy rates are highest—which equates to higher initial levels of confidence to make major home improvements.

Homeowner Renovation Program

Program covers larger internal and external projects, including bathroom additions, kitchen remodels, and new mechanical systems.
Program users must be owner-occupants and projects must follow design and construction standards to ensure long-term quality.

Level of Assistance

Program guidelines vary by SID and are updated annually by Invest DSM. In the past, program grants have shared the cost of qualifying projects, with more generous grants available for larger projects.



Single-Family Developer Program

Program covers major rehab or new construction of single-family homes.
Program users may be rehabbers or developers who agree to sell the finished home to an owner-occupant. Projects must follow design and construction standards to ensure long-term quality.

Level of Assistance

The amount contributed by Invest DSM toward a qualifying project is equal to the gap between the project's cost and the price ultimately paid by a new owner-occupant.



Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

Begin Proactive Focus on Small House Reinvestment

OUTCOMES



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

Use Rental Rehab Program to Improve Conditions and Preserve Affordability

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



What Use existing programs and capacity of Invest DSM and other agencies to explicitly promote and undertake improvements to small, single-bathroom homes.

This work should pursue a range of outcomes, including:

Modest Owner Upgrades: Repairs and upgrades that result in an improved owner-occupied small house

Modest Rental Upgrades: Repairs and upgrades to a small rented house that preserves affordable renter-occupancy

Major Upgrades: Renovations that add space and amenities (including bathrooms) to transform a home's marketability

Why Small, single-bathroom homes make up a large share of homes in North of Grand & Woodland Heights and tend to have the poorest conditions and lowest prices and property values. Where these homes are clustered on the same blocks, major reinvestment and improved conditions are unlikely without focused support.

Over time, owner-occupancy rates for these properties fall and poorly maintained rentals become the norm.

How **Invest DSM:** Promote and encourage the use of the Homeowner Renovation Program and Single-Family Developer Program on small houses. Use Invest DSM's capacity as a rehabber to acquire and renovate small houses on a strategic basis to demonstrate opportunities to others.

Other Agencies: Assist income-eligible owners with upgrades; assist income-eligible buyers with purchase + rehab.

Assist landlords in good standing with upgrades to small single-family rentals.

What Assist with the improvement of existing rental units and common spaces through Invest DSM's Rental Rehab Program. Use the maintenance of stabilized rents as a condition for program participation and receiving the maximum benefit.

In addition to assisting owners of small multi-family properties and complexes (10 or fewer units) as the program has since its inception, Invest DSM should consider widening participation to include owners in good standing of single-family homes that are already rentals—especially when doing so advances this plan's focus on small house reinvestment.

Why Rental properties are an important part of the diversified housing supply in this SID, where there are 67 properties with two or three units, and 21 properties with four or more units. Additionally, 184 single-family homes (16% of such homes) are estimated to be renter-occupied.

Units in older properties and complexes provide a ready supply of lower-cost rentals; maintaining them as both appealing AND accessible options requires investment conditioned upon stable rents.

How Invest DSM should continue partnerships with landlords in good standing by providing per-unit renovation grants that are fully forgiven if affordable rents are maintained and stabilized.

Consideration should be given to two tiers of assistance: 50% of qualifying costs for major unit overhauls and 25% for more modest upgrades.

To help ensure that assisted properties are on a positive long-term course, make participation contingent upon an owner sharing proposed spending on management, maintenance, and replacement reserves.

Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment
and OpportunityInitiate Affordable
Homeownership
and Rehab
Partnership

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible



What Create affordable homeownership and rehab opportunities for income-qualified households through:

- Acquisition and rehab of existing homes to sell to income-qualified owner-occupants
- Support income-qualified purchasers with acquisition and rehab
- Support home rehab by income-qualified existing homeowners

Why As a middle neighborhood where prices are robust but still accessible to households earning Des Moines' median income, the neighborhood should be a prime target for existing or new programs to assist income-eligible households with purchase/rehab.

There is a clear correlation between price and property conditions in the SID, with homes showing signs of deferred maintenance selling for 21% less than homes in excellent or good condition. This discount makes them affordable, but the high cost of improvements means that assistance with rehab is a critical part of achieving good outcomes for homeowners and the block.

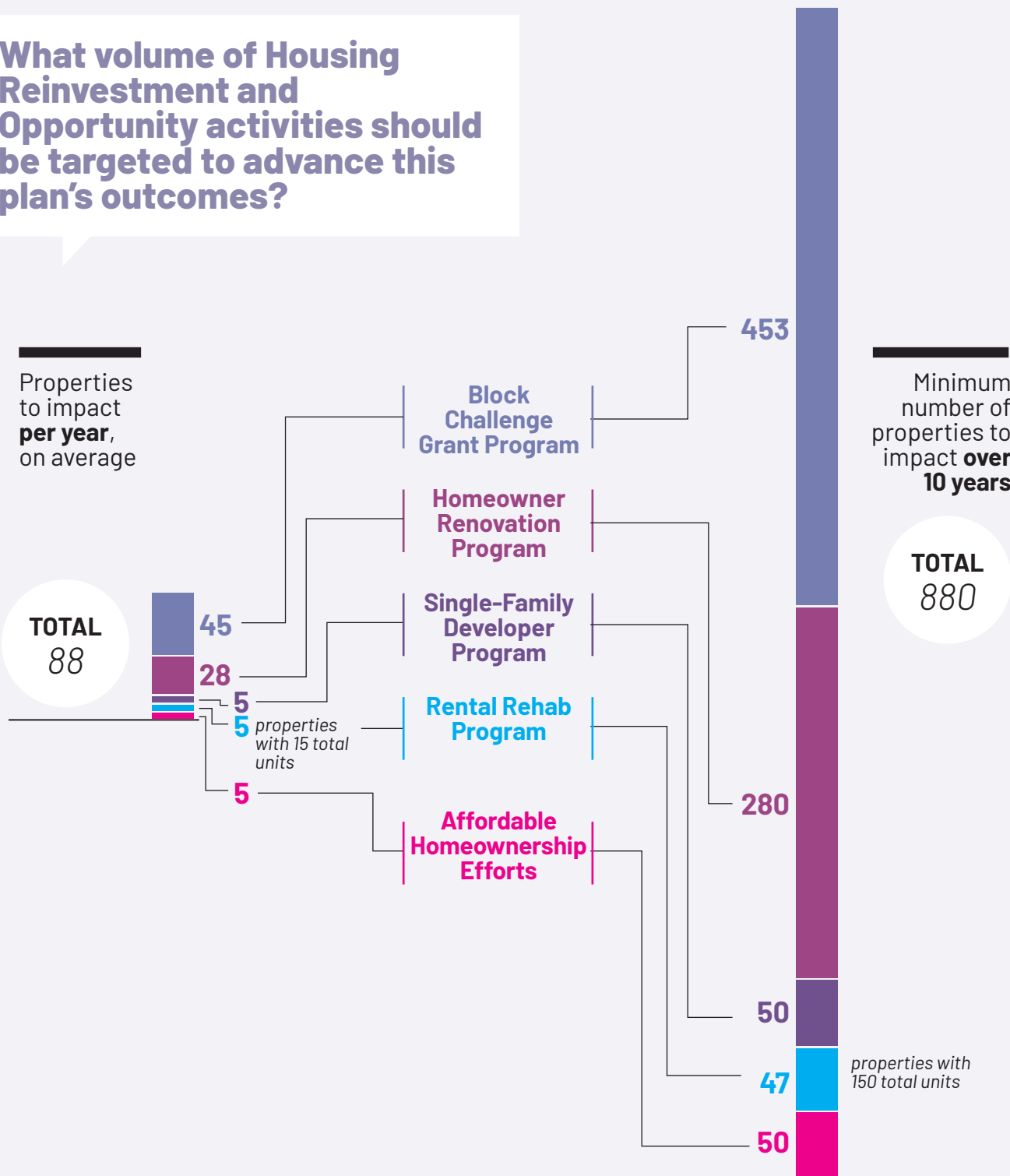
How A consortium of affordable housing entities—such as HOME Inc., NFC, Habitat—should make North of Grand & Woodland Heights a priority for affordable homeownership and rehab initiatives.

Focus program promotion to eligible existing homeowners in the SID and consider the SID a target for acquisition and rehab.

Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

What volume of Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity activities should be targeted to advance this plan's outcomes?



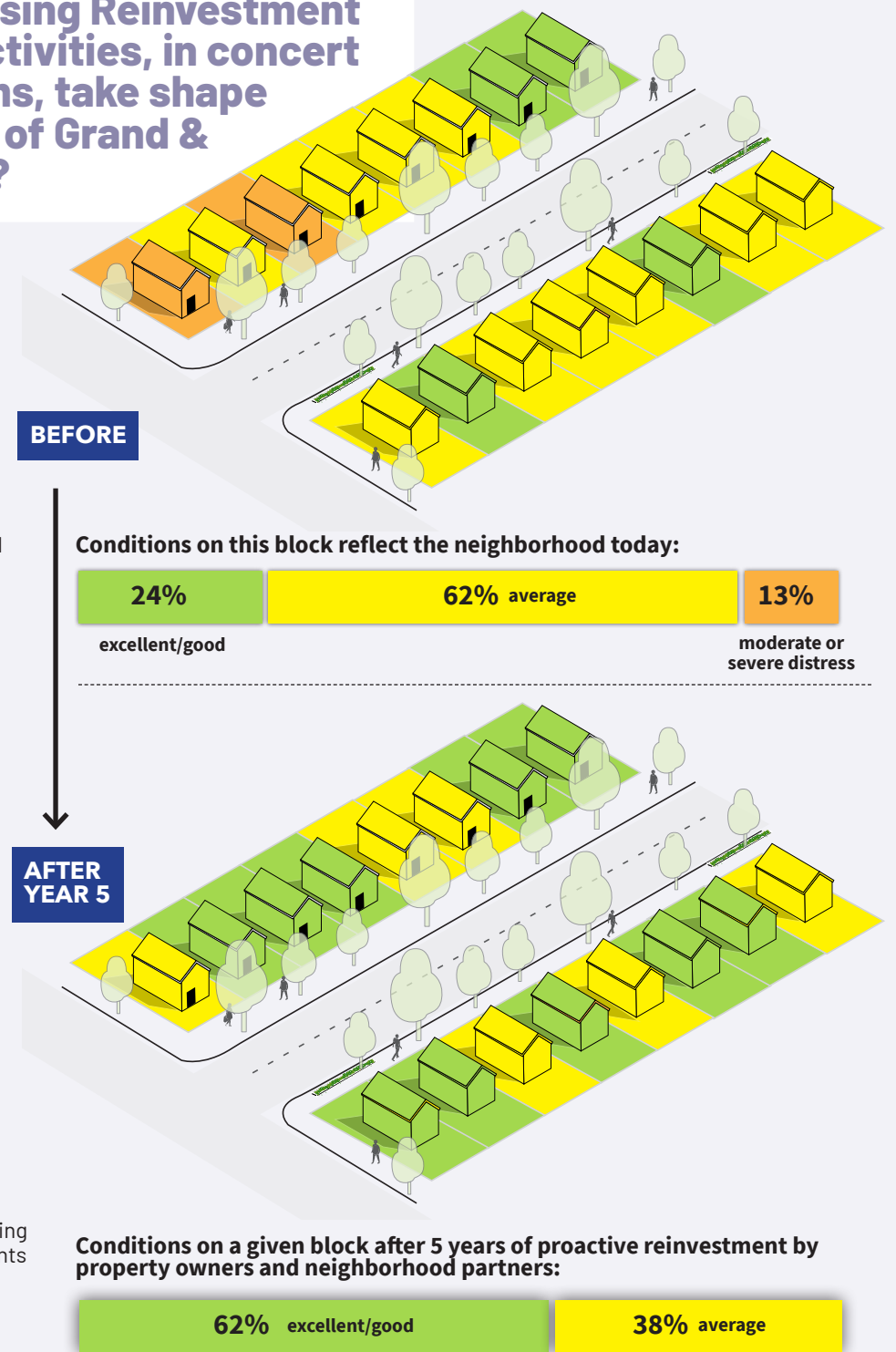
Tools & Activities

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

How might the Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity activities, in concert with other programs, take shape on a block in North of Grand & Woodland Heights?

- Year 1**
Seven occupants on the block apply to participate in the Block Challenge Grant Program. They use the matching grants on a variety of projects, including painting, landscaping, and other curb appeal enhancements.
- Year 2**
One of the homeowners uses the Homeowner Renovation Program to remodel their kitchen, convert a small bedroom into a bathroom, and rebuild their front porch. Two other owners start making small exterior improvements because they sense progress and feel more confident.
- Year 3**
Invest DSM acquires a small distressed home on the open market. It does a gut rehab that adds a bathroom and sells to a new owner-occupant at fair market value. The city's ION program assists an income-eligible homeowner with roof and gutter repairs.
- Year 4**
An income-eligible homeowner uses downpayment assistance and a 0% interest rehab loan to acquire and replace major systems on a house in average condition.
- Year 5**
11 occupants on the block apply to the Block Challenge Grant Program and use the matching grants to expand on the exterior improvements that, by now, are very noticeable.

And the work continues...



Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Implement Traffic Calming Interventions for Safety and Walkability

OUTCOMES



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces

What Pursue best practices to calm traffic along streets of special concern and at targeted intersections.

Conduct traffic calming studies to identify specific problems and feasible solutions for the contexts of prioritized blocks. Put solutions in line for funding and installation.

Why Speeding traffic is a particular safety and quality of life concern on particular streets and blocks, inhibiting their residential appeal.

This is especially the case on collector streets, where quality of life concerns can result in visibly diminished confidence and investment.

How Use petition process to initiate traffic calming studies of prioritized streets and blocks

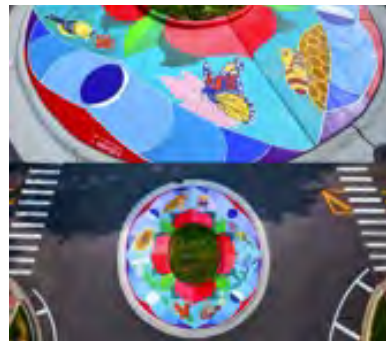
Studies through the city's Traffic Calming Program have already been undertaken in recent years and should continue as needed to identify solutions in problem areas. The neighborhood associations should work with residents to determine priority areas for new traffic calming studies and, to demonstrate awareness and support, organize petition drives to obtain signatures from 60% of residents or property owners on the prioritized streets (see City of Des Moines Traffic Calming Program process).

Strongly consider mini roundabouts at high-concern intersections

Through an initiated traffic calming study, or independently, Engineering should strongly consider use of mini roundabouts in North of Grand & Woodland Heights, where appropriate, to calm traffic and demonstrate their use as a beautification tool in conjunction with the neighborhood associations.



Seattle Department of Transportation



Ann Arbor Art Center

Mini roundabouts—one potential traffic calming tool to use—would also provide opportunities for ornamental plantings and public art, which are already part of the neighborhood character in North of Grand & Woodland Heights



Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Accelerate Alley and Sidewalk Improvements

OUTCOMES



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces

What Alleys

Alleys in the SID will be the focus of a proactive sweep by the Department of Public Works (grading the surface, trimming back overgrown vegetation, and other basic maintenance of the right-of-way) to bring them into a state of good repair.

Since alleys are the responsibility of private property owners, this first sweep should be conducted in coordination with neighbors to convey the importance of ongoing and collaborative maintenance among those who share responsibility for alleys.

Sidewalks

Sidewalk conditions are also the responsibility of property owners. But the city's Sidewalk Repair Subsidy Program is available to assist income-eligible owners with the cost of repair. This program should be promoted to maximize its use in North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

Why The condition of alleys and sidewalks contributes to the neighborhood's overall condition and image. And it is indicative of the capacity of neighbors to show pride of place and ownership.

Improving alleys and sidewalks will be an important part of elevating standards and making the most of the neighborhoods' inherent walkability.

How Department of Public Works and the neighborhood associations should coordinate on the first proactive sweep of alleys to raise awareness about property owner responsibilities and encourage ongoing collaborative maintenance.

The Department of Engineering, the neighborhood associations, and Invest DSM should coordinate on promotion of the Sidewalk Repair Subsidy Program. They should also annually review and discuss the city's inventory of sidewalk gaps, including prioritization of specific gaps and installation timelines.



Broken sidewalks, as well as alleys that have overgrown brush and dilapidated garages or fencing, send negative signals about neighborhood standards.

Broken and/or missing sidewalks also diminish walkability.



Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Strengthen and Maintain the Tree Canopy

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces



What Plant trees in any vacant tree spaces within the public right-of-way to achieve near-100% occupancy. Approximately 600 public tree spaces are currently vacant—or roughly 23% of available spaces.
Promote backyard tree planting and maintenance to bolster the tree canopy on private properties.

Why The existing tree canopy is viewed as an asset that makes the neighborhood especially charming and livable. Strengthening the canopy will maintain this asset while providing other proven benefits of trees (such as stronger property values, summer cooling efficiencies, and habitat for song birds)

How Forestry Division, Trees Forever, and Invest DSM to coordinate on resources and logistics for tree planting in the public right-of-way.
Those same partners, working with the neighborhood associations, should also promote the importance of backyard trees and provide seasonal access to mini trees that are ready to plant.

Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Expand and Promote Recreational Assets within the Neighborhoods

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



Residents are well-connected to great greenspaces



What While the neighborhoods are mostly built-out and lack space for any significant park expansion, they do have several underutilized assets and spaces that could be leveraged to create a set of neighborhood recreational opportunities that would be unique in Des Moines.
The Urban Recreation District Master Plan spearheaded by The Avenues, and informed by public input, identifies many of these opportunities.

Why Limited parkland and open space within the neighborhoods, and incomplete connections to nearby recreational spaces, was identified as a key issue by this planning process. Expanding recreational opportunities has the potential to reinforce the neighborhoods' brand and promote greater levels of active living and neighborhood engagement.

How A partnership comprised of the City of Des Moines, Invest DSM, the two neighborhood associations, and The Avenues should pursue the following opportunities:

Parklets, Trails, and Bike Lanes

Identify and fund (through CDM, Invest DSM, and other public and private partners) priority parklet and trail projects recommended by the Urban Recreation District Master Plan; implement bike lane recommendations to connect the SID with nearby assets.

Woodland Cemetery

Actively promote Woodland Cemetery as the passive recreational asset that it is, supplementing with additional events and seasonal programming.

Des Moines Public Schools Facilities

Through partnership with Des Moines Public Schools, designate parts of Callanan and Smouse grounds and facilities as public recreational assets.

Chamberlain Park

Undertake a re-programming of the park—sensitive to contemporary neighborhood needs—to guide new investments in equipment and furnishings.

Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Support Catalytic Investments on Ingersoll

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect

What On a case by case basis, use resources dedicated to the Special Investment District to support projects on Ingersoll Avenue that have the potential to significantly advance the residential quality of life and competitiveness of nearby residential blocks.

For example:

Place-making

Funding to support specific improvements to the public realm that boost Ingersoll's status as an amenity to nearby residents, such as passive recreational spaces or identity enhancements that call attention to Ingersoll's neighborhood function.

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. In such a case, SID resources should be the "last dollar in" to help push a catalytic project's financing over the finish line.

Why Ingersoll Avenue is just outside of the SID's boundaries, but the street is one of the foremost assets of the North of Grand and Woodland Heights neighborhood. When opportunities arise that have the potential to significantly enhance life on nearby residential blocks (that are in the SID), support for those projects should be strongly considered.

How Invest DSM may consider use of its Commercial Grants Program to assist preparation of space for a business or amenity that strengthens residential life in the neighborhood.



Tools & Activities

Neighborhood Improvement

Bolster Neighborhood Events and Grow Participation

OUTCOMES



Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect



People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets



What A wide range of events and activities are already important parts of living in North of Grand and Woodland Heights.

Build on the effectiveness of these efforts by expanding and/or revising current programming to widen participation and strongly reinforce the neighborhoods' brand.

Why Neighborliness is viewed as a key asset for the neighborhood, and well-designed events and activities can help build connections that strengthen social capacity.

How The neighborhood associations and The Avenues, working with other partners, can take a leadership role in curating existing activities to improve alignment with the neighborhood brand.

Existing events and activities in the North of Grand & Woodland Heights neighborhood include

- National Neighborhood Night Out
- Spring Garage Sale
- Art Stroll
- Oak Park Farmers Market
- Ingersoll Live
- The Peppermint Trail
- Woodland Realm activities and pop-ups
- Historic tours of landmark buildings
- Plant exchange

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 grants are very different activities but they are both critical to realizing a healthier neighborhood and should never be seen as unrelated undertakings.

Coalition Framework

Work in Des Moines’ Special Investment Districts since 2019 has followed a coalition model. In each SID, Invest DSM, the City of Des Moines, neighborhood associations, and an active steering committee of neighborhood stakeholders have convened on a regular basis to organize their work (using the SID plans as guides), prioritize activities, and fine-tune the implementation process over time. While the COVID pandemic posed challenges to this framework early on, it has succeeded at bringing a variety of perspectives, skillsets, and resources together to put the SID plans to work.

This same coalition framework should be pursued in the North of Grand & Woodland Heights SID, bringing in other partners as needed to make headway on specific tasks. **This coalition should 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



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, exemplified by the city and county dedications to Invest DSM, 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.

ACTIONS

Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity



Promote Block Challenge Grant Program

Promote Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs

Begin Proactive Focus on Small House Reinvestment

Use Rental Rehab Program to Improve Conditions and Preserve Affordability

Initiate Affordable Homeownership and Rehab Partnership

Neighborhood Improvement



Implement Traffic Calming Interventions for Safety and Walkability

Accelerate Alley and Sidewalk Improvements

Strengthen and Maintain the Tree Canopy

Expand and Promote Recreational Assets within the Neighborhood

Support Catalytic Investments on Ingersoll

Bolster Neighborhood Events and Grow Participation

	RESOURCES				
	City of Des Moines	Invest DSM	State and Federal Resources	Private: Homeowners, Investors, Businesses, Institutions	Time and Energy of Residents, including Neighborhood Association
Promote Block Challenge Grant Program		✓		✓	✓
Promote Homeowner Renovation and Single-Family Developer Programs		✓		✓	
Begin Proactive Focus on Small House Reinvestment	✓	✓		✓	
Use Rental Rehab Program to Improve Conditions and Preserve Affordability		✓		✓	✓
Initiate Affordable Homeownership and Rehab Partnership	✓		✓	✓	✓
Implement Traffic Calming Interventions for Safety and Walkability	✓		✓		✓
Accelerate Alley and Sidewalk Improvements	✓			✓	✓
Strengthen and Maintain the Tree Canopy	✓	✓		✓	✓
Expand and Promote Recreational Assets within the Neighborhood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support Catalytic Investments on Ingersoll	✓	✓		✓	
Bolster Neighborhood Events and Grow Participation	✓			✓	✓

DRAFT



Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the

North of Grand & Woodland Heights

Special Investment District

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by czbLLC