

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date:	August 11, 2014
	Agenda Item No.	25
	Roll Call No.	<u>14-1224</u>
	Communication No.	<u>14-378</u>
	Submitted by:	Phillip Delafield, Community Development Director

AGENDA HEADING:

Resolution approving the Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Park Neighborhood Plan and adopting the Plan as an element of the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan.

SYNOPSIS:

Approval of the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, and adoption as an element of, and amendment to, the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT: NONE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The MLK Jr. Park neighborhood was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in November 2011. During 2012, City staff began working with the neighborhood and attending neighborhood association meetings. In early 2013, the planning process began with a neighborhood-wide event, where residents were invited to give feedback on topics such as what they would like to see change in their neighborhood, and what is important to improving the quality of life in the neighborhood. Following this event, the input was used to determine seven (7) neighborhood priority areas. A planning committee met monthly to discuss the issues related to each priority area and establish goals, strategies, and action steps.

In addition to monthly planning committee meetings, residents stayed informed and provided feedback through several large neighborhood-wide events, as well as mailings and newsletters. Smaller subcommittees and work teams were formed for some priority areas, as well as focus groups and outreach to specific populations within the neighborhood.

The planning process for MLK Jr. Park was unique from other plans in that implementation of the plan began during the planning phase. A MLK Partners Coalition was formed, where partner organizations met regularly to stay informed, share information, and coordinate activities. As a result, some of the strategies and action steps identified by residents have already been completed or are currently in progress.

Summary of the Plan

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

- 1) Youth – MLK Jr. Park has a high population of youth under the age of 18, and in the neighborhood engagement process, youth was far and away the most important priority for the neighborhood. Feedback from the neighborhood indicated that there is a lack of activities available to youth in the area. MLK Jr. Park would like to have more programs and activities for youth that build character, are educational, and teach life skills, as well as build a culture of pride, respect, and responsibility. The neighborhood would also like to ensure that residents are aware of existing programs.
- 2) Parks and Open Spaces – MLK Jr. Park has three (3) parks within the neighborhood – ML King Jr. Park, Crowley Park, and a Pocket Park. MLK Jr. Park is the largest, with amenities such as a basketball court, wading pool, baseball backstop, and an enclosed shelter. This park was the highest priority for residents during the planning process, with a goal of making the park a safe and inclusive gathering space for all residents, as well as a center for neighborhood information. In addition to MLK Jr. Park, the neighborhood would like to see improved functionality and amenities at the Pocket Park, which is located on the northeast side of the neighborhood.
- 3) Community Life – Community Life was established as a priority to encompass the areas of health and wellness, adult education, and community events. Residents felt it was important to have access to healthy lifestyle choices, expand community education opportunities in the neighborhood, and bring neighbors and families together through community events.
- 4) Infrastructure – Through the Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP), approximately \$687,000 of funding was allocated to the neighborhood for infrastructure repairs in 2013. With this funding, the neighborhood placed a priority on repaving streets, as well as replacing curbs and sidewalks. In addition to general infrastructure improvements, residents would also like to see improved walkability and connectivity in MLK Jr. Park, and have identified strategies for completing the sidewalk network, improving lighting, and addressing traffic safety issues in the neighborhood.
- 5) Housing – Housing was identified early in the planning process as a priority for the neighborhood. The majority of the homes in MLK Jr. Park are single-family residences, along with some duplexes and townhomes as well as two (2) multi-family housing complexes. Issues related to housing include the condition and maintenance of existing houses, awareness of resources to help homeowners, the prevalence of vacant properties, and the appearance of vacant lots. In 2012, Habitat for Humanity began a special emphasis on improving housing conditions in the MLK Jr. Park neighborhood, and have since completed over 70 Rock the Block projects, as well as nearly 20 single-family new construction homes. To ensure that MLK Jr. Park has affordable, quality housing into the future, the neighborhood would like to see an emphasis placed on improving the condition of the existing housing stock through connecting residents to resources for home improvement projects. The plan also includes strategies for providing more housing choices in the neighborhood with infill development, and improving the overall appearance of the neighborhood through addressing issues with vacant properties.
- 6) Neighborhood Edges, Land Use & Zoning – The neighborhood edges priority area was created out of a desire to improve and enhance the streets that make up the boundaries of the MLK Jr. Park neighborhood. It was felt that these areas, though an asset to the neighborhood by providing easy accessibility while insulating the residential core of MLK Jr. Park, do a disservice to the

neighborhood in their current state. Through the planning process, the neighborhood felt that the main goals of this priority area are to improve the aesthetics around the edges of the neighborhood, promote a more appropriate mix of commercial and residential development along E. 14th Street and E. University Avenue, and to improve the buffer between the neighborhood and the railroad tracks along Wayne Street. Additional work with the neighborhood will take place after plan approval to reach consensus on future land use designations for the area south of E. University Avenue between E. 16th Street and I-235, and the area north of E. University Avenue and east of DeWolf Street.

A number of land use amendments are recommended as part of the plan, and will be completed as part of plan approval and adoption as an amendment to the 2020 Community Character Plan per the Plan & Zoning Commission's recommendation on July 17, 2014. The amendments are as follows:

- (A) Amend from Low/Medium Density Residential to High Density Residential for property located at 1731 Cleveland Avenue (Logan Park Apartments).
 - (B) Amend from Low/Medium Density Residential to Public/Semi-Public for property located at 1740 East 17th Court (Joshua Christian Academy).
 - (C) Amend from Low/Medium Density Residential to Park/Open Space for Crowley Park property fronting Garfield Avenue between East 17th Court and Stewart Street.
 - (D) Amend from Commercial: Auto-Oriented Small-Scale Strip Development to Public/Semi-Public for property located on the south side of Walker Street between East 14th Street and Johnson Court.
 - (E) Amend Public/Semi-Public to Commercial: Auto-Oriented Small-Scale Strip Development for property located on the north and south sides of Buchanan Street from East 14th Street to Johnson Court.
 - (F) Amend future land use designation on the north side of East University Avenue from East 15th Street to Easton Boulevard from Low/Medium Density Residential and Commercial: Auto-Oriented Small-Scale Strip Development to Mixed Use and Density Residential.
- 7) Safety – During the neighborhood engagement process, safety was identified not as a standalone priority area, but one that goes across all priority areas – meaning, that safety should be a consideration throughout the neighborhood plan. As a result, safety-related strategies were identified during the course of the planning process and are highlighted in the plan.

Potential City Projects and Initiatives

- Work with Police Department and Traffic & Transportation to determine appropriate lighting and other measures for increasing safety in ML King Jr. Park.
- Place a community bulletin board at the ML King Jr. Park shelter.
- Upgrade amenities to make the Pocket Park more user-friendly.
- Promote resources available to assist residents with sidewalk repair or installation.
- Review the need for traffic-calming measures along Cleveland Avenue, University Avenue, E. 14th Street and at other problem spots.
- Encourage any new, larger multi-family development to occur around the edges of the neighborhood.

- Address code enforcement issues.
- Work with individual commercial properties on façade improvements.
- Clean up City-owned properties along Washington Avenue and install trees or other landscaping around drainage areas at eastern end near the corner of E. Washington Avenue and Wayne Street.
- Ensure that the 2020 Community Character Land Use Plan designations are consistent with the existing land uses.
- Promote a more appropriate mix of commercial and residential development along E. 14th Street and E. University Avenue.
- Conduct a separate series of meetings to discuss potential land use changes in the southern and eastern edges of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Led Projects and Initiatives

- Develop youth leadership council as a sub-group of the neighborhood association.
- Involve youth in planning events, creating newsletters, updating the neighborhood's website, and creating a social media presence.
- Have at least 3-4 consistent neighborhood events every year, and focus on events that attract the whole family and all ages.
- Organize volunteers to clean up the parks regularly, plant and care for flowers, etc.
- Have residents volunteer to be a neighborhood ambassador and establish a point-of-contact system.
- Ensure residents are aware of who to call to report infrastructure and other problems.
- Maintain a list of residents who need help with small home repair projects, then connect with resources.
- Organize a program to assist neighbors with yard maintenance.
- Install a neighborhood gateway area (i.e., monument sign, landscaping) at selected point(s) along the neighborhood boundaries.

Implementation

The Neighborhood Plan sets the stage for the future of MLK Jr. Park, however, the real changes in the neighborhood occur with plan implementation. In order to be successful, it is essential that the present partnership between the City of Des Moines, the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Association and the coalition of partner organizations continues to grow. MLK Jr. Park is fortunate in that many partners have been engaged throughout the planning process and are excited to support the residents during plan implementation.

The Neighborhood Development Division will continue to have an active role in the plan implementation for at least the first few years. For those action steps that are City led projects and initiatives, there has been a commitment made by the City departments that will be responsible for implementation to carry out the action steps in a reasonable time frame. Such projects may come to Council for subsequent individual approval, or as an annual work plan.

Once the work plans have been substantially completed, Neighborhood Planning staff will recommend that the program be ended and that the MLK Jr. Park neighborhood graduated to Charter status and phased out of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Plan and adopt it as an element of, and amendment to, the 2020 Community Character Plan.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: November 21, 2011

Roll Call Number: [11-1964](#)

Action: [Approving](#) designating three new neighborhoods to be included in the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program: Grays Lake, Lower Beaver, and MLK Jr. Park. ([Council Communication No. 11-700](#)) Moved by Hensley to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Board: Plan & Zoning Commission

Date: July 17, 2014

Resolution Number: 21-2014-4.06

Action: Recommend amending the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan to incorporate the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Plan as an element, including revisions to the land use map.

Board: Neighborhood Revitalization Board

Date: July 2, 2014

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: Recommend approval of the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Plan.

Board: Neighborhood Revitalization Board

Date: November 2, 2011

Resolution Number: N/A

Action: Recommend selecting the MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood for inclusion as a Designated neighborhood in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

Individual projects requiring Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), or other funds will come before Council for approval.

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