


COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

 CITY OF DES MOINES OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER	Number:	25-106	Meeting:	March 24, 2025
	Agenda Item:	18	Roll Call:	25-0428
	Submitted by:	Steven L. Naber, P.E., City Engineer		

AGENDA HEADING:

Authorization to proceed with acquisition of the necessary property interests for the Douglas Avenue Improvements from Merle Hay Road to Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Parkway project by gift, negotiation, or eminent domain.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval of authorization to proceed with acquisition of the necessary property interests for the Douglas Avenue Improvements from Merle Hay Road to MLK Parkway project by gift, negotiation, or eminent domain. This action is required by Iowa law before the City can initiate the property acquisition process under eminent domain. The project will include new pavement, curbs and gutters, conversion to a three (3)-lane roadway, sidewalk improvements, and a High Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) beacon for pedestrians crossing Douglas Avenue east of 30th Street. There will be some business sign relocation required for this project.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: To be determined after design is completed and right-of-way needs have been identified.

Funding Source: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Page 124, Douglas Avenue – Merle Hay to MLK, ST289, G.O. Bonds

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- In 2015, a group of dedicated residents from the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association (LBNA), concerned about deteriorating conditions in the neighborhood's commercial district, re-convened LBNA's Business Relations Committee. The committee was tasked with implementing commercial corridor priorities laid out in the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Plan, which was adopted in 2013. The plan included strategies for supporting neighborhood businesses, encouraging property owner investment, enhancing corridor aesthetics, improving walkability, and encouraging future growth of neighborhood commercial areas.
- The Prospect Park, Beaverdale, and Merle Hay Neighborhood Associations, sharing similar concerns about the trajectory of Douglas Avenue, added their support and the Douglas Avenue Coalition (DAC) was formed. The mission of the DAC is to support vibrant, viable businesses and revitalize the Douglas Avenue Corridor in the 2.4-mile stretch from Merle Hay Road to the Des Moines River.

- The DAC made a formal request to the City and Polk County for additional planning work to address the ongoing challenges along Douglas Avenue. After funding was secured, the consultant team of RDG Planning & Design and HDR was selected through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process and the project kicked off in October 2017.
- A steering committee consisting of DAC and neighborhood representatives, elected officials, business owners, stakeholders, and City staff guided the planning efforts. A technical committee also advised the project, with representatives from the City's Engineering Department, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART), the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT). Douglas Avenue is also U.S. Highway 6 and under the jurisdiction of IDOT.
- The traffic study completed as part of the corridor planning identified that the Douglas Avenue Corridor had a crash rate (2013 through 2017) that was more than double the statewide average for similar roadways, with the primary crash types being rear-end, broadside, and sideswipe crashes, which can be common on four (4)-lane undivided roadways.
- The Douglas Avenue Corridor also has sidewalk gaps and sections of sidewalks that are less than four (4)-feet in width, often with little to no parkway buffer between the roadway and sidewalk.
- The Douglas Avenue Coalition completed a corridor plan in February 2020. The goal of the corridor plan was to create a vision for the Douglas Avenue corridor from Merle Hay Road to MLK Parkway. The corridor plan proposes Douglas Avenue from Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road be converted to a three (3)-lane cross-section with the goals of improving vehicle and pedestrian safety by calming traffic and generating additional economic development along the corridor.
- On February 24, 2020, by Roll Call No. 20-0349, City Council amended PlanDSM Creating our Tomorrow Plan to incorporate the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan as an element.
- On April 20, 2020, by Roll Call No. 20-0610, City Council directed staff to submit a proposal to IDOT for the Douglas Avenue (U.S. Highway 6) Lane Reduction Pilot Project, converting Douglas Avenue from Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road from a four (4)-lane cross section to a three (3)-lane cross section.
- On February 8, 2021, by Roll Call No. 21-0175, City Council approved IDOT Agreement No. 2021-6-069 for Douglas Avenue (U.S. Highway 6) from Merle Hay Road to the Des Moines River.
- In 2021, in accordance with the IDOT Agreement and at the request of the City, IDOT constructed the Douglas Avenue (U.S. Highway 6) Lane Reduction Pilot Project, converting Douglas Avenue from Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road from a four (4)-lane cross section to a three (3)-lane cross section. The pilot project included striping, signing and signal modifications to accommodate the conversion of Douglas Avenue to three (3) lanes between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road. IDOT resurfaced Douglas Avenue in 2021 which provided an opportunity to implement the pilot project.

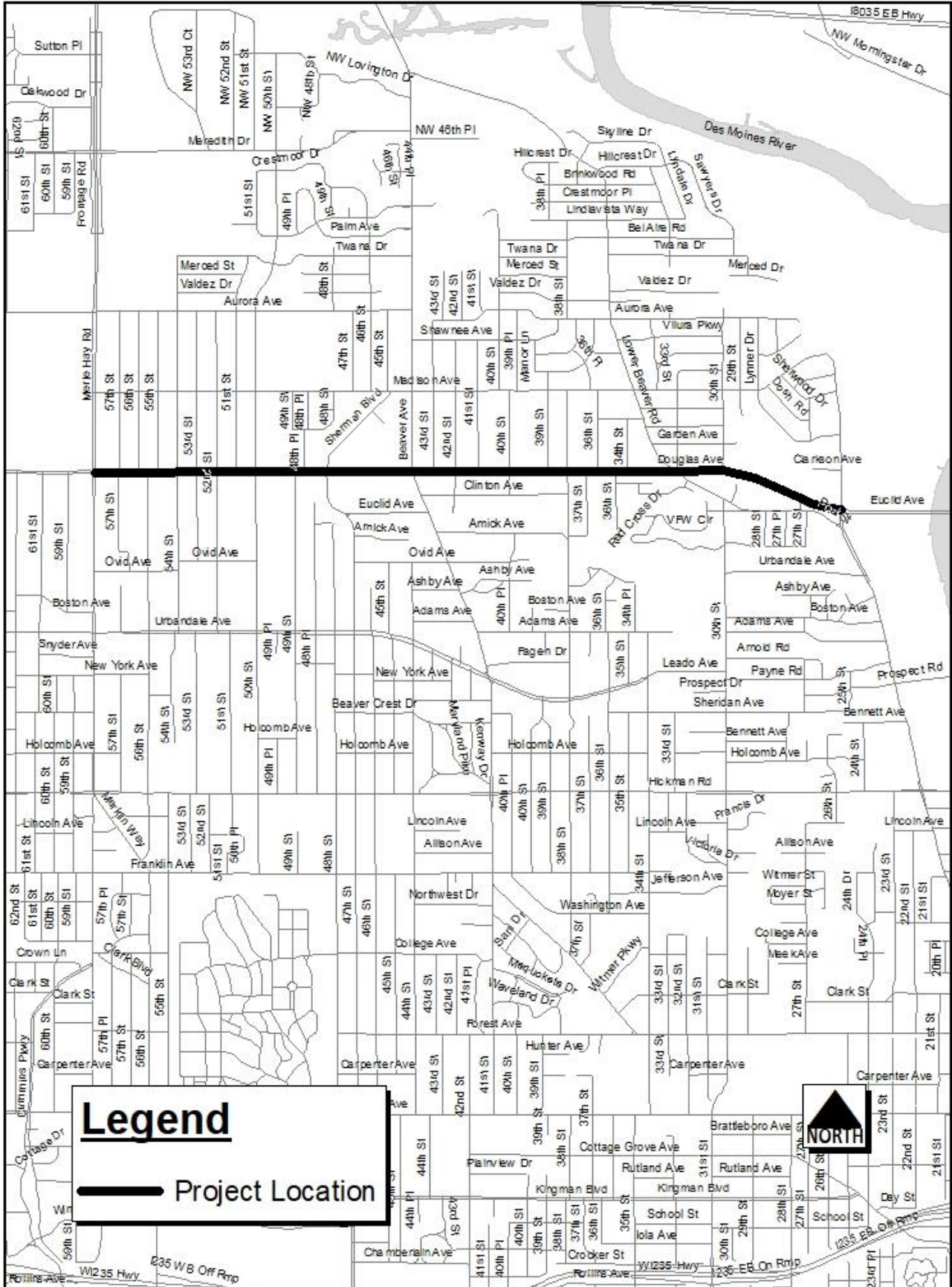


Above Google Streetview Image: Douglas Avenue at 39th Street looking west taken before 2021 Pilot Project Installation



Above Photo: Douglas Avenue at 39th Street looking east taken after 2021 Pilot Project Installation

- On December 6, 2021, by Roll Call No. 21-1792, City Council authorized the submittal of Federal STBG and Transportation Alternative Program (TAP), also known as Surface Transportation Block Grant Set-Aside Program, FY2026 applications to the MPO, which included requesting \$4,000,000 in Federal STBG Funds for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Improvements - Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road. The City received \$2,250,000 in Federal STBG Funds for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Improvements.
- On December 12, 2022, by Roll Call No. 22-1859, City Council authorized the submittal of Federal STBG FY2027 applications to the MPO, which included requesting \$1,750,000 in Federal STBG Funds for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Improvements - Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road. The City received \$1,750,000 in Federal STBG Funds, as well as an additional \$500,000 in excess Federal STBG Funds from the MPO, which results in a total of \$4,500,000 in Federal STBG Funds awarded for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Improvements.
- The Douglas Avenue Corridor Improvements include:
 - Douglas Avenue will be a three (3)-lane roadway between Merle Hay Road and MLK Parkway.
 - Moving both curbs and gutters along the entire project to align nearer to the outside edges of the three (3)-lane roadway section.
 - Reconstructing the sidewalk along the south side of the roadway.
 - Construction of an eight (8)-foot-wide trail along the north side of the roadway.
 - Installation of a HAWK beacon for pedestrians crossing Douglas Avenue east of 30th Street.
- On April 15, 2024, by Roll Call No. 24-0558, City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with Kirkham Michael & Associates, Inc. for design phase services for Douglas Avenue Improvements – Merle Hay Road to MLK Parkway, not to exceed \$606,860.
- Construction of the project is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2027.
- The acquisition of several partial and temporary property interests will be needed for the implementation of this project, the extent of which will be determined after design has been completed. Some sign relocation will be required for this project.



PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: April 15, 2024

Roll Call Number: [24-0558](#)

Action: [PSA](#) with Kirkham Michael & Associates, Inc. for professional services for Douglas Avenue Improvements – Merle Hay Road to MLK Parkway, not to exceed \$606,860. ([Council Communication No. 24-162](#)) Moved by Coleman to adopt. Second by Gatto. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

For more information on this and other agenda items, please call the City Clerk's Office at 515-283-4209 or visit the Clerk's Office on the first floor of City Hall, 400 Robert D Ray Drive. Council agendas are available to the public at the City Clerk's Office on Thursday afternoon preceding Monday's Council meeting. Citizens can also request to receive meeting notices and agendas by email by calling the Clerk's Office or sending their request via email to cityclerk@dmgov.org.