


COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

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|  | Number: | 25-115 | Meeting: | March 24, 2025 |
| | Agenda Item: | 36 | Roll Call: | 25-0449 |
| | Submitted by: | Cody Christensen, Development Services Director | | |

AGENDA HEADING:

Amend the PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan to adopt revitalization plans for the Union Park and the North of Grand and Woodland Heights Special Investment Districts (SIDs) as elements.

SYNOPSIS:

The revitalization plans for the two (2) new SIDs were developed between June 2024 and February 2025 by czbLLC, City of Des Moines staff and Invest DSM, in partnership with a Steering Committee comprised of residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. The plans are intended to provide a framework for revitalization efforts over a 10-year planning horizon. Staff recommends that the PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan be amended to incorporate the neighborhood revitalization plans for the Union Park and North of Grand and Woodland Heights SIDs as elements of the Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$5,000,000 Fiscal Year Ending (FYE) 2025; \$5,000,000 FYE2026; \$5,000,000 FYE2027

Funding Source: Local Option Sales and Service Tax (LOSST)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- In April 2024, the City Council approved ratification of two (2) new SIDs for planning and implementation work: 1) Union Park, and 2) North of Grand and Woodland Heights. Each SID is a subset of a larger neighborhood – or neighborhoods – and was selected based on criteria that included neighborhood health and capacity, existing assets and momentum to build upon in middle neighborhoods. Invest DSM retained czbLLC to develop plans for the two (2) new SIDs, with support from City staff and Invest DSM.
- The plans were developed between June 2024 and February 2025 in partnership with steering committees assembled following an open call for volunteers from residents within the SID. These groups are comprised of neighborhood residents, business owners and other stakeholders. Additional information was drawn from a public survey, two (2) open houses and neighborhood conversations convened by the steering committee members. The plans are intended to provide a framework for revitalization efforts over a 10-year planning horizon within the SID.

- The input from Steering Committee and public engagement helped develop a vision for each SID, which forms the core of the plans. The vision expresses what each neighborhood desires to be in 10 years, built on the most cherished assets to preserve, strengthen and leverage, the issues that need to be prioritized and the outcomes that describe success. An action plan lays out a series of activities to implement over the plan's life, tying each activity to one (1) or more outcomes, base and target levels of identified metrics and identifying the partnerships for implementation. The following is a summary of the assets, challenges, neighborhood conditions & trends, and potential solutions that were discussed and incorporated into each of the plans.

- 1. Union Park SID:** The Union Park SID includes a portion of the wider Union Park neighborhood. The SID is bound by Arthur Avenue on the north, East Washington Avenue on the south, Pennsylvania Avenue and Saylor Road on the west, and East 14th Street on the east.



The Union Park assets called out as the area's top strengths as well as key to attracting and keeping young families include:

- A. Excellent Park and recreational attractions
- B. Homes with historic charm on tree-lined streets
- C. Family-friendly atmosphere and sense of community
- D. Affordable options for first-time homebuyers
- E. Close to downtown and other major Des Moines assets

The biggest issues identified through market analysis and observations from residents and stakeholders include:

- A. Poorly maintained and vacant properties on many blocks.
- B. Few neighborhood-oriented businesses or services.

- C. Many streets, alleys and sidewalks are in poor condition.
- D. Disorderly behavior and speeding or noisy traffic make some areas feel unsafe.

An analysis of the housing market and conditions identified that:

- A. Almost one-third of Union Park's homes show visible signs of deferred maintenance, and relatively few are in good condition.
- B. Union Park's housing inventory is dominated by single-family homes, and most of them are smaller, low-priced properties.
- C. Housing costs have risen in recent years but remain affordable to the typical household.
- D. Union Park housing stock contributed to a higher concentration of family households.

Drawn from these assets, challenges and key trends, the following vision expresses intention for Union Park's future besides functioning as a 'brand statement' for the SID:

- *"Union Park neighbors are active people who have outdoor fun and relaxation at our doorsteps, whether it's a stroll down a tree-lined street, walking the dog through Union Park, taking the kids to the carousel and rocket slide, cycling along the river, or hanging out with friends at the marina. We even use our doorsteps to have a good time – listening to music with neighbors during PorchFest or sitting with family and enjoying the fresh air."*
- *Families are welcome and plentiful in Union Park, taking advantage of quiet streets, yards, and parks to let kids be kids. And they find our housing both charming and accessible – with starter homes and move-up homes alike featuring historic touches and durability that make setting down roots here affordable and a good bargain."*

Four (4) outcomes are identified as conditions that will help mark the progress towards or maintenance of the vision:

1. Parks and amenities are true destinations.
2. Streets and alleys are safe and clean; they show that people care.
3. Families find great opportunities to plant roots alongside other families.
4. Homes have an appealing combination of character and modern amenities.

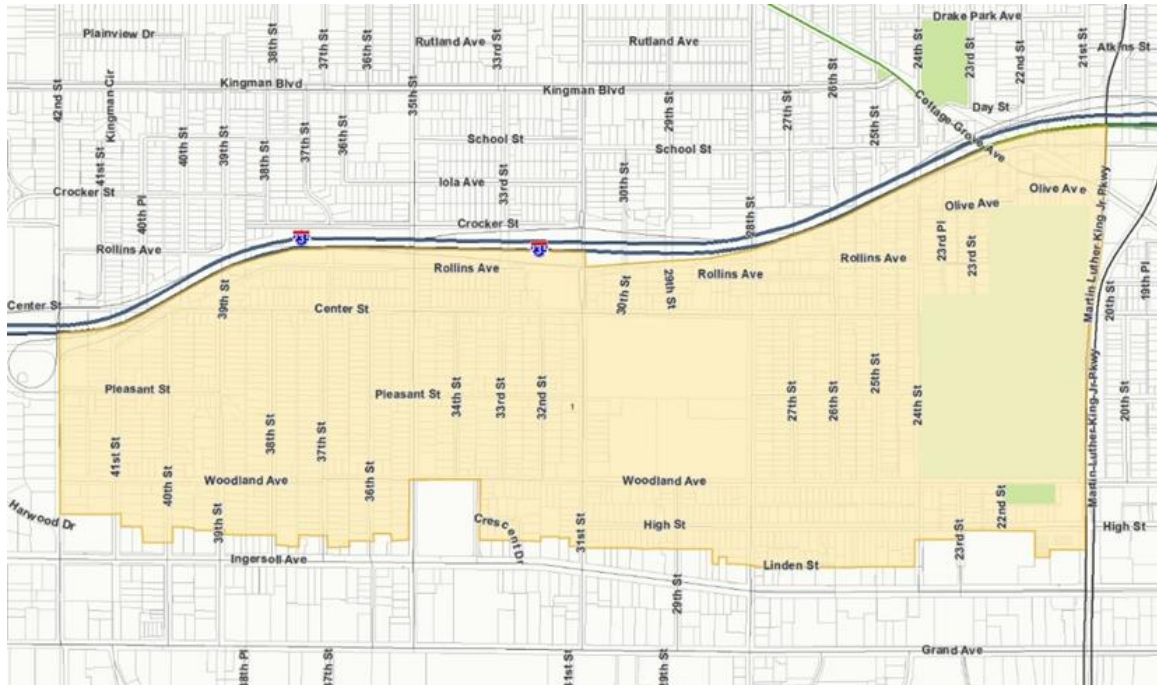
The action plan includes a set of tools and activities that can be divided into two (2) general categories as:

1. Advancing Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity
 - a. Promote block challenge participation
 - b. Promote homeowner renovation and single-family developer programs
 - c. Begin proactive focus on small house reinvestment
 - d. Create contractor's network for sensitive rehab

2. Influencing Neighborhood Improvement

- a. Boost neighborhood activities and clean ups
- b. Improve Park features to enhance destination status
- c. Consider additional neighborhood services at Birdland Park
- d. Activate small neighborhood commercial opportunities
- e. Accelerate alley and sidewalk improvements
- f. Strengthen and maintain tree canopy
- g. Make E.14th Street a more safe and attractive gateway

2. North of Grand and Woodland Heights SID: The North of Grand & Woodland Heights SID covers portions of both neighborhoods. The SID is bound by I-235 on the north, Ingersoll Avenue on the south, 42nd Street on the west, and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway on the east.



The North of Grand & Woodland Heights assets called out as the area's top strengths include:

- A. Walkable access to Ingersoll Avenue
- B. Residential blocks with charm and character
- C. Great trees, gardens and art
- D. Active and neighborly residents
- E. Diverse and affordable housing options

The biggest issues identified through market analysis and observations from residents and stakeholders include:

- A. Distressed older housing that needs expensive upgrades.
- B. Inconsistent pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure.
- C. Speeding and noisy traffic.
- D. Not enough parks or green space.

An analysis of the housing market and conditions identified that:

- A. Residential property conditions vary throughout North of Grand and Woodland Heights, and most properties are at a critical tipping point.
- B. Small single-family homes dominate the area's housing inventory and are more susceptible to absentee ownership and disinvestment.
- C. Housing costs have risen in recent years but remain affordable to the typical household.
- D. North of Grand and Woodland Heights are in the midst of a generational transition.

Drawn from these assets, challenges and key trends, the following vision expresses intention for North of Grand and Woodland Heights' future besides functioning as a 'brand statement' for the SID:

- *"North of Grand and 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."*

Five (5) outcomes are identified as conditions that will help mark the progress towards or maintenance of the vision:

1. Neighbors of all backgrounds have many opportunities to connect.
2. Housing exhibits charm and proactive investment.
3. Residential options are increasingly high in quality, diverse, and accessible.
4. People walk and bike with confidence on safe streets.
5. Residents are well-connected to green spaces.

The action plan includes a set of tools and activities that can be divided into two (2) general categories as:

1. Advancing Housing Reinvestment and Opportunity

- a. Promote block challenge participation
- b. Promote homeowner renovation and single-family developer programs
- c. Begin proactive focus on small house reinvestment
- d. Use rental rehab program to improve conditions and preserve affordability
- e. Initiate affordable homeownership and rehab partnership

2. Influencing Neighborhood Improvement

- a. Implement traffic calming interventions for safety and walkability
- b. Accelerate alley and sidewalk improvements
- c. Strengthen and maintain the tree canopy
- d. Expand and promote recreational assets within the neighborhood
- e. Support catalytic investments on Ingersoll
- f. Bolster neighborhood events and grow participation

- The plans were approved for implementation by Invest DSM Board at its February 27, 2025, meeting. A letter from Invest DSM recommending the approval of plans is provided in the Council's packet.
- The Plan and Zoning Commission (P&Z) recommended adoption of the SID Plans as elements of the PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Plan at its March 6, 2025, meeting. The P&Z also recommended guiding concepts for the Council to consider for future planning efforts, these are detailed in the P&Z meeting minutes provided in the Council's packet.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: April 1, 2024

Roll Call Number: [24-0500](#)

Action: [Invest](#) DSM's designation of two (2) new SIDs for planning and revitalization work in Union Park and North of Grand/Woodland Heights. ([Council Communication No. 24-139](#)). Moved by Coleman to adopt. Second by Gatto. Motion Carried 7-0

Date: February 21, 2022

Roll Call Number: [22-0244](#)

Action: [28E](#) Agreement between the City, Polk County and Invest DSM, Inc. ([Council Communication No. 22-067](#)) Moved by Gatto to adopt. Second by Boesen. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Board: Plan and Zoning Commission

Date: March 6, 2025

Resolution Number: COMP-2024-000018

Action: Recommend approval of the request to amend PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Plan to incorporate the neighborhood revitalization plans for the Union Park SID, and North of Grand and Woodland Heights SID as elements of the Plan. Moved by Webb. Motion carried 11-1.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

- The City is responsible for implementing action items listed in the Plan documents.

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.