

August 10, 2009

Date

**RESOLUTION APPROVING GENERAL STREETScape GUIDELINES  
FOR CITY-ASSISTED STREETScape PROJECTS**

WHEREAS, the City of Des Moines is committed to enhancing neighborhood commercial districts; and

WHEREAS, streetscape improvements support two of the twelve City Goal Statements that have been adopted by the City Council. Those goal statements are "enhancement of neighborhood retail and commercial districts" and "pride in community assets"; and

WHEREAS, streetscape projects serve to improve the image of a commercial district by unifying streetscape elements such as sidewalks lighting, plantings, street furniture, etc; and

WHEREAS, formal adoption of the general streetscape guidelines for City-assisted streetscape projects will provide a clear process for the City and community stakeholder groups on streetscape projects that involve public funding; and

WHEREAS, the guidelines, a copy of which is on file in the Office of the City Clerk, are intended to provide a road map for the successful planning and implementation of streetscape projects; and

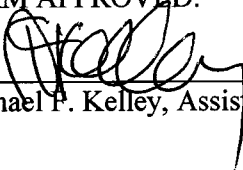
WHEREAS, staff from various City Departments, including Community Development, Economic Development, Engineering, Finance, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works collaborated on the creation of these streetscape guidelines; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa that the general streetscape guidelines for City assisted streetscape projects are hereby approved, and the City Manager and his designees are authorized and directed to apply the guidelines when the City of Des Moines has been requested to provide funding for streetscape improvements.

(Council Communication Number 09 - ) 558

FORM APPROVED:

MOVED by \_\_\_\_\_ to adopt.



Michael P. Kelley, Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
HENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

.....  
Mayor

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**City of Des Moines  
General Guidelines for  
City Assisted Streetscape Projects  
Adopted \_\_\_\_\_ 2009**

**Background**

Streetscape projects serve to improve the image of a commercial district by unifying streetscape elements such as; sidewalk, lighting, plantings, and street furniture. A unified streetscape design provides a distinct environment that sets one neighborhood commercial district apart from others. Streetscape improvements have been implemented in several neighborhood commercial areas throughout Des Moines in recent years. The success of these projects has resulted in an increasing number of stakeholder groups requesting that the City of Des Moines invest in similar improvements in their neighborhood.

The City would like to encourage these neighborhood commercial streetscape projects to continue. In fact, these streetscape improvements support two of the twelve City Goal Statements that have been adopted by City Council. Those goal statements are, “enhancement of neighborhood retail and commercial districts” and “pride in community assets.” As a result the City Council has committed Capital Improvement Program funds for the planning and construction of approved streetscape improvements in neighborhood commercial districts.

**Purpose**

The purpose of these general streetscape guidelines is to clearly define a process for neighborhood commercial streetscape projects that involve public funds. These guidelines should be applied to streetscape projects in neighborhood commercial districts, not highway commercial districts or residential areas. In addition to providing a “road map” for successful planning and implementation, the guidelines also define the expectations of the City, as well as the expectations of the stakeholder group making the request.

**Private Streetscape Improvements**

Private streetscape improvements, such as those required for new and re-use development projects, typically are not applicable to this process. Instead those improvements should follow the established requirements outlined in the *City’s Site Plan Ordinance and Landscape Policies*. Construction and maintenance of these private streetscape improvements is the responsibility of the developer and/or property owner.

**Process & Funding**

The development of a streetscape project has several steps that should be completed in sequence. Several of the phases require contracts to be established with outside entities for services such as planning, design, and construction. The City will be responsible for the administration of these contracts throughout the process. City Council approval will be required for each step that involves public funds. The following is a list of steps to a typical streetscape project:

- ✓ Submitting a Request
- ✓ Concept Plan
- ✓ Community Fundraising
- ✓ Final Design & Construction Documents

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- ✓ Bidding Process
- ✓ Construction
- ✓ Maintenance

Streetscape projects require a significant capital improvement expense for the initial construction and also have a long term impact on the City's operating budget. Because of this and the fact that City funds are limited, **the City requires that project planning, construction, and maintenance costs be shared between the City and stakeholder group.**

### Submitting a Request

The stakeholder group submits a request to the City's Community Development Department to pursue a streetscape project. This request should include the following elements:

- ✓ Details on the proposed project location and boundaries, including existing conditions.
- ✓ Demonstrate their organizational capacity and their ability to partner with appropriate neighborhood stakeholder groups.
- ✓ Ability to match public funds with private funds for planning, construction, and maintenance.
- ✓ Provide a minimum of 3-5 neighborhood stakeholders to serve on a "Stakeholder Committee" that will be the official recognized entity by the City to represent the neighborhood/business interests and work with City staff throughout the duration of the process. The names of these individuals shall be provided in the request.
- ✓ A petition of adjoining property owners in favor of a streetscape project.

The Community Development Department will coordinate a "City Staff Committee" comprised of staff members from Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Engineering, Economic Development, Community Development, and Finance to review and comment on all neighborhood commercial streetscape requests. The "City Staff Committee" will review the neighborhood's request for the following:

- ✓ Potential for expanding and enhancing the commercial/retail district (City Goal).
- ✓ Availability of funds in current and future Capital Improvement Program budgets.
- ✓ Status of and relationship to other streetscape or capital improvement projects.
- ✓ Capacity of the stakeholder group to assist in the planning and participate in the implementation of the project.
- ✓ Capacity of the City to plan and implement the project.
- ✓ Determine if the necessary neighborhood stakeholders have been engaged.

After review of the request by the "City Staff Committee," the Community Development Department will provide a summary of the request and staff comments, including availability of funds, to the City Manager. The City Manager will then inform the City Council of the request. If the City Council decides to proceed, a resolution will be approved directing staff to initiate the concept planning phase.

### Concept Plan

A concept plan is required to define the scope of the project, graphically illustrate the potential, and estimate the costs of construction and ongoing maintenance. A concept plan can also be a

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valuable tool in the fund raising effort to promote the project and generate interest from the community and potential funding sources.

The City will prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) to select a designer to develop a concept plan and cost estimates for the streetscape project. A design professional will be chosen through a selection process involving the “Stakeholder Committee” and appropriate City staff. The chosen designer will be required to sign a contract with the City that specifies the services to be provided. The concept plan should include details on the existing conditions, conceptual drawings and plans, project phasing, a preliminary maintenance strategy for the streetscape improvements, and cost estimates for each element of the project.

Once a contract has been finalized and approved by City Council, the designer prepares the concept plan and cost estimates, with close direction and input of the “Stakeholder Committee” and City staff. It is recommended that public meetings are held at the beginning and the end of the concept planning phase to gain community input on the project.

During this phase, the designer and stakeholders should consider established City design and maintenance guidelines for streetscapes. It is recommended that streetscape plans should take into account recommendations in the *Site Plan Ordinance and Landscape Policies*. Also, Municipal Code Chapter 122 – Vegetation, should be referenced when selecting street trees and other plantings in the right-of-way.

Appropriate City Departments will review the concept plan, cost estimates, and maintenance strategy prior to completion. Upon completion of a concept plan, the “Stakeholder Committee” and City staff use the plan to identify what level of streetscape improvements should be recommended to the City Council based on the concept plan, construction cost estimates, projected operation and maintenance costs, and funding availability (public and private). City Council shall approve the concept plan, cost estimates, and preliminary maintenance costs and strategies.

Cost: The cost of the concept plan is shared by the City and stakeholder group. The City typically provides up to 75% of the cost of the concept plan. The stakeholder groups’ matching funds need to be in place when the consultant contract is approved, unless authorized by City Council.

### **Community Fundraising**

The stakeholder group will be responsible for pursuing private fundraising to match the City commitment for base improvements, as well as any additional streetscape improvements. Stakeholder groups are encouraged to partner with local non-profits when seeking available grants and other funding sources.

The City may provide assistance in obtaining State, Federal or other funds that can be used to provide some of the stakeholder match for the base improvement or for additional enhancements. A City Council Resolution is necessary to direct staff to pursue any and all fund raising efforts. Under certain circumstances, the Community Development Department may provide additional

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assistance to low income stakeholder groups who need help planning and implementing a streetscape project.

### **Final Design & Construction Documents**

Upon approval of the conceptual plan for the proposed streetscape project by the City Council, the City will retain the services of a design professional for development of final design and construction documents. The selected consultant will work with the “Stakeholder Committee” and appropriate City staff to develop the final design that is appropriate for the capital and operating funds that are available. The final design shall meet appropriate City standards and be consistent with Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS), as well as Iowa Department of Transportation design standards and specifications, where required.

City Engineering Department staff will review and approve all construction documents prior to the completion of this step. Final design will also need to be reviewed by applicable boards, such as the Access Advisory Board and the Urban Design Review Board before recommendation to the City Council. The final decision to approve the design and construction of the streetscape project will be made by the City Council.

Cost: The cost of final design and preparation of construction documents is shared by the City and stakeholder group. The cost of final design and construction documents will vary depending on the size and scope of the project. The City typically provides up to 50% of the cost of final design and construction documents. The stakeholder group’s matching funds need to be in place when the consultant contract is approved, unless authorized by City Council.

### **Maintenance & SSMID**

Maintenance is one of the most important aspects of a streetscape project. It takes a lot of hard work and financial commitment to keep the streetscape looking its best year after year. A Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) is required for every streetscape project for ongoing maintenance unless a long-term, private funding source is secured. The SSMID should be in place and approved prior to the final bidding and construction process.

A SSMID is an additional tax levy imposed on property within the SSMID district. The revenues collected from this levy may be utilized for ongoing maintenance, insurance, and other operating expenses generated by the streetscape project. The stakeholder group will be responsible for petitioning and gaining approval from affected property owners within the SSMID boundaries. Chapter 386 of the Iowa Code regulates the establishment of a SSMID.

The appropriate City Departments, such as Parks and Recreation, Traffic and Transportation, and Public Works will be consulted throughout the process to provide comment on all the components of the streetscape project, as well as the ongoing maintenance. These departments must also approve the final maintenance plan. Preparation of a detailed maintenance plan is required and should be prepared by a qualified landscape professional. The maintenance plan should identify the necessary maintenance schedule based on plant material, building material and equipment, estimated cost of maintenance, and the responsible party(s) providing the maintenance. Routine maintenance such as snow removal and sweeping will continue to be the responsibility of the adjoining property owner.

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Plant material is not the only aspect that will require maintenance over the life of the streetscape. Vertical elements such as street lights, bike racks, trash receptacles, benches, decorative planters, and other elements need to be considered as well. It may be necessary to establish an insurance policy to cover any damage to the vertical elements of the streetscape. In the event an insurance policy is required, the City of Des Moines would be the policy holder and will obtain the insurance policy according to standard purchasing policies. It may be necessary to prepare legal documents to outline the various responsibilities for ongoing maintenance.

Another maintenance related issue that is likely to occur at some point is that of construction activities to adjacent private property. In this instance it may be necessary to temporarily remove some elements of the streetscape to avoid potential damage. This will be the responsibility of the private contractor to safely remove and store the streetscape elements during the construction. The contractor will also be responsible for promptly replacing these elements once construction is completed. In the event that any of the streetscape elements are damaged, it will be the responsibility of the contractor to repair or replace the damaged items.

### **Bidding Process & Construction**

The City or the Iowa Department of Transportation, if federal funding is obtained for the project, will solicit bids for construction of the streetscape project based on the approved final design. A contract will be awarded based on the lowest competitive bid. The City Engineering Department staff will oversee construction of streetscape improvements through to project completion.

The City will typically match up to 50% with the stakeholder group in the cost of the following base improvements constructed in the right-of-way, subject to funding availability and priorities:

- ✓ Purchase and installation of Mid American Energy approved aesthetic street lighting
- ✓ Planting of street trees of appropriate size, type, and species
- ✓ Sod installation, if necessary (adjoining property owner to maintain)
- ✓ Plant material

The City will typically pay 100% of the following base improvements constructed in the right-of-way, subject to funding and priorities:

- ✓ Sidewalk and curb reconstruction(PCC), if necessary
- ✓ Traffic signal improvements, if necessary
- ✓ Storm or sanitary sewer modifications, if necessary

The stakeholder group will be responsible for privately funding 100% of the cost of items beyond these base improvements, such as but not limited to:

- ✓ Undergrounding or relocation of utilities, including private service
- ✓ "Bump outs" including storm drainage reconfiguration
- ✓ Benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles
- ✓ Custom light fixtures
- ✓ Pedestrian light fixtures
- ✓ Tree lighting outlets
- ✓ Neighborhood signage
- ✓ Irrigation, including water meter pit

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- ✓ Planters
- ✓ Ornamental railings
- ✓ Public art
- ✓ Other material upgrades

**Cost:** The cost of final construction is shared by the City and stakeholder group based on the breakdown described above. Construction costs will vary greatly depending on the scope of the project. The stakeholder groups' matching funds need to be in place prior to bid letting, unless authorized by City Council.

### **Expansion of Streetscape Improvements**

Streetscape improvements have been constructed in several neighborhood commercial areas throughout Des Moines. Each project has been successful in rejuvenating these aging commercial districts. The success of these projects has not only resulted in more and more requests for the City of Des Moines to continue these improvements in other neighborhood commercial areas, but also to expand these projects along the same corridor.

When looking to expand a streetscape project, the stakeholder group must go through the same process described in this document beginning with submitting the request. City Council approval will again be required for each step that involves public funds. Requests to expand streetscape improvements along a corridor will also have the same expectations in terms of stakeholder participation and cost sharing as before. Private funding will be required to meet the levels previously described for each step of the process.

Because the streetscape design will have already been established in the first phase of the project, much of that work should not have to be done in later phases. This will save both time and money for the City and the stakeholder group. Depending on how much time has passed, the cost estimates for construction and maintenance may need to be revised to reflect the current market. This is also an opportunity to analyze the success of the maintenance plan of the first phase of the project and make any necessary adjustments.

### **Lessons Learned**

The City of Des Moines is committed to enhancing neighborhood retail and commercial districts. The success of past projects has shown the benefits that streetscape improvements can make. At the same time many lessons have been learned along the way on what to do and what not to do. Having this document serve as a "road map" for successfully navigating the process will benefit the City and stakeholder groups when partnering in these important community revitalization efforts.

### **References**

- 1) Site Plan Ordinance and Landscape Policies
- 2) Municipal Code – Chapter 122: Vegetation
- 3) Sample Maintenance Plan
- 4) Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS)
- 5) Chapter 386 of the Iowa Code – Establishment of a SSMID District