



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

12

Date May 4, 2015

**APPROVAL OF THE RIVER BEND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN UPDATE AND ADOPTING THE PLAN AS AN ELEMENT OF THE DES MOINES' 2020 COMMUNITY CHARACTER PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, on August 7, 2000, by Roll Call No. 00-3381, the City Council adopted the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 21, 2011, by Roll Call No. 11-1965, the City Council selected the River Bend Neighborhood Association to go through a planning process to update and amend the River Bend neighborhood plan to replace the previously approved plan from 1992; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2014, the River Bend neighborhood, as a charter neighborhood with an existing plan over ten (10) years old, participated in the pilot program between the City and Iowa State University for updating neighborhood plans; and

**WHEREAS**, on February 9, 2015, the updated River Bend Neighborhood Plan was approved by the River Bend Association Board of Directors; and

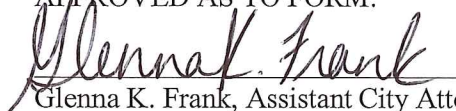
**WHEREAS**, on April 1, 2015, the updated River Bend Neighborhood Plan was reviewed by the Neighborhood Revitalization Board, and the Board voted to recommend approval of the updated plan; and

**WHEREAS**, on April 16, 2015, the City Plan and Zoning Commission held a hearing on the updated River Bend Neighborhood Plan and voted 12-0 to recommend approval of the updated plan as an element of the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan, as stated in the attached communication from the Commission.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, that the attached communication from the Plan and Zoning Commission is hereby received and filed, and that the updated River Bend Neighborhood Plan is hereby approved and adopted as an element of the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan.

(Council Communication No. 15-222)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Glenna K. Frank, Assistant City Attorney

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to approve.

(21-2015-4.07)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MOORE				
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

Date May 4, 2015

Agenda Item 12

Roll Call # 1

CITY OF **DES MOINES**  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

April 27, 2015

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their meeting held April 16, 2015, the following action was taken regarding a request to adopt the River Bend Neighborhood Plan Update as an element of the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan:

**COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

After public hearing, the members voted 12-0 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Dory Briles	X			
JoAnne Corigliano	X			
Jacqueline Easley	X			
Tim Fitzgerald	X			
Jann Freed	X			
John "Jack" Hilmes	X			
Greg Jones	X			
Sasha Kamper	X			
William Page				X
Jonathan Rosenbloom	X			
Mike Simonson				X
CJ Stephens	X			
Vicki Stogdill	X			
Greg Wattier	X			

**APPROVAL** of a request to amend the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan to adopt the River Bend Neighborhood Plan update as an element. (21-2015-4.06)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION**

Staff recommends that the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan be amended to incorporate the River Bend Neighborhood Plan Update as an element. There are no future land use map or zoning changes proposed by the Plan update at this time.



## STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

### I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In November 2011, the City of Des Moines selected eight neighborhoods to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. For the first time, Charter Neighborhoods with an existing plan that is more than 10 years old were allowed to apply for a pilot program to update their plan. The pilot program was conducted in partnership with graduate students in Community and Regional Planning at Iowa State University (ISU). This is a two-year pilot program with Beaverdale and Woodland Heights already participating in 2012; and Capitol East and Capitol Park participating in 2013. The City Council elected to continue the partnership, and ISU updated the plan for River Bend during their Fall semester of 2014.

### II. GENERAL PLAN SUMMARY

The public input process began with ISU students administering a survey in River Bend, which was collected from face-to-face interviews and through paper mailings. The surveys were made available in both English and Spanish, and asked about opinions and perceptions of River Bend's current strengths and weaknesses, as well as priorities for the neighborhood. Additionally, the ISU planning team spent several hours per week over a period of 12 weeks engaging directly with neighborhood residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. In total, over 720 individuals contributed input to the planning process, including representatives from 18 businesses and 42 community organizations.

In the Fall of 2014, the ISU students facilitated a series of four Steering Committee meetings using the information gathered throughout the neighborhood engagement process. Steering Committee members consisted of a variety of stakeholders, including neighborhood residents, community organizations, social service organizations, non-profit organizations, businesses, schools, and City departments. The meetings identified priorities, strategies, action steps, and implementation partners using information gathered from the neighborhood outreach process.

Based on the results of the neighborhood survey and the input received through the various neighborhood engagement efforts, River Bend's residents identified priority goals for the neighborhood to address over the next five to ten years. The following priority areas were identified:

- 1) **Housing:** River Bend is best known for its historic homes, but the neighborhood contains a full range of housing types and tenures. Residents are concerned with high vacancy rates and issues with home maintenance. The Neighborhood Plan is focused on strategies to rehabilitate historic housing, maintain affordable housing, and reduce the number of abandoned properties.
- 2) **Economic Development:** There is a high percentage of low-income households and a high rate of unemployment in River Bend. Both the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue corridors provide opportunities for business development and redevelopment that could act as a catalyst for other neighborhood improvements. River Bend would like to create a neighborhood niche related to food and culture, foster small business development, and expand opportunities for job training and education.
- 3) **Community Building:** Residents identified friendly neighbors and population diversity as two strengths of River Bend that they wanted to build upon. This priority area identifies strategies to celebrate the diverse cultures present, create opportunities for community interaction, and incorporate place-making and identity in various neighborhood projects.

- 4) **Infrastructure:** Improving neighborhood infrastructure in order to provide a safe, clean and attractive environment in River Bend can help create a sense of pride and build confidence in the future of the neighborhood. Residents would like to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, improve the sense of safety through lighting and traffic assessments, and improve the physical conditions of infrastructure.
- 5) **Neighborhood Image:** Despite many positive changes in recent years, River Bend still gets associated with negative stereotypes and urban decay for many who have not been to the neighborhood. By promoting a positive image of the neighborhood, perceptions may change, inviting newcomers to the area. Residents would like to improve public relations, increase community outreach, and increase diversity and leadership.
- 6) **Strengthening the River Bend Association (RBA):** River Bend has a strong neighborhood association that plays an active role in promoting positive change for the area. The RBA would like to expand its capacity to help foster new leadership and build sustainability and resilience within the organization. Strategies include: increasing outreach, identifying and developing community leaders, and improving neighborhood business membership.

## SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION


Greg Jones asked if anyone was present to speak on this item. None were present or requested to speak.

## COMMISSION ACTION:

Dory Briles moved staff recommendation that the Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan be amended to incorporate the River Bend Neighborhood Plan Update as an element. There are no future land use map or zoning changes proposed by the Plan update at this time.

Motion passed 12-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Ludwig, AICP  
Planning Administrator

MGL:clw

Attachment





# RIVER BEND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

River Bend's revised neighborhood plan was produced in partnership with the City of Des Moines, the River Bend Neighborhood Association, and Iowa State University's Department of Community and Regional Planning. Under the guidance of Assistant Professor Jane Rongerude, a group of 15 graduate students designed and managed all activities related to the planning process including: outreach, holding focus groups, conducting stakeholder meetings, identifying resources, and plan writing. The Iowa State University planning team included Gertrude Addei, Ahmad Al-Saygh, Elisa Cardenas, Meghna Chakraborty, Kristen Greteman, Mohammad Hossain, Devanshi Mehta, Jackie Nester, Arindam Roy, Jingjing Ruan, Yuxuan Tian, Andrea Vaage, Kun Wu, Xiaomeng Xu, and Changsong Zhao.



## INTRODUCTION

In 1989, the City of Des Moines and Polk County established the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. This program focuses on building neighborhood strength and capacity while proactively preventing disinvestment. The purpose of the revitalization program is to bring stabilization and high quality of life to all of the city's 54 neighborhoods. It is coordinated by the Neighborhood Development Division, which is housed in the Community Development Department of the City of Des Moines.

The City of Des Moines and the RBNA collaborated to create the first *River Bend Neighborhood Action Plan* in 1992. The plan focused on residential, public, and commercial issues within River Bend. Proposed action items included rehabilitating owner-occupied single-family dwellings, identifying and preserving architecturally and historically significant properties, repairing/replacing deteriorating infrastructure, and improving neighborhood parks.

Over twenty years have passed since the first River Bend neighborhood plan was created. Many characteristics of the neighborhood have changed. Today the neighborhood is more diverse and younger as a growing number of immigrant families have decided to call the neighborhood home. Much of it has been downzoned to promote single family dwellings and residents report feeling safer. Today's River Bend is stronger than ever, but work remains. This new plan reflects the neighborhood's changing demographics as well as its core strengths. It presents a new set of goals, objectives, and strategies for neighborhood improvement. The approved plan will supersede the original neighborhood plan and will serve as a guide for future decision making in the River Bend Neighborhood.



Figure 1 : Moulton Extended Learning Center Playground



Figure 2 : ISU Team conducting community outreach within River Bend



## PLANNING PROCESS

Beginning in August 2014, the City of Des Moines, the RBNA, and graduate students from the Iowa State University Department of Community and Regional Planning began the planning process. The RBNA held a kickoff event on August 23, 2014. This orientation brought all three parties together and introduced the ISU team to the neighborhood.

Over the next three months, the ISU team spent 190 hours in the River Bend Neighborhood engaging residents and gathering information. During this process, they spoke to 720 individuals, including representatives from 18 neighborhood businesses and 42 organizations. These interactions were both formal and informal. They included a door-to-door survey, stakeholder meetings, outreach to service providers, and countless conversations with neighborhood residents.

The door-to-door surveys were available in both Spanish and English. The ISU team received 162 completed surveys. Most were completed in person at a respondent's home. The results from the surveys set the groundwork for the rest of the planning process. The neighborhood's top strengths identified in the survey include the neighborhood's diversity, location, history, and friendly neighbors. The challenges included crime and safety issues, infrastructure, condition of houses, and lack of programming for youth.

### NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

The primary objective of the neighborhood engagement was to understand the current strengths and issues in River Bend from the perspective of residents and businesses. It was critical that this feedback was comprehensive and diverse. These opinions were captured in a variety of ways. The primary feedback was in the form of surveys, and later, through visual preference surveys (Figure 4).

Rather than relying on set public meetings, the outreach process for this plan brought the meeting to the public. Using an asset-based survey questionnaire, input from a



Figure 3 : Royal Park



Figure 4 : ISU Team conducting a visual preference survey in River Bend



total of 236 individuals was collected. Later in the process, visual preference surveys were used to collect input from an additional 201 individuals. To conduct the surveys, the neighborhood engagement team went to a variety of events and locations. These included a North High School football game, a free medical screening event, Children and Family Urban Movement meals, Trinity United Methodist Church programs, interviews with businesses and individuals while canvassing the neighborhood, Neighborhood Association meetings, and street corner sessions at key locations in the neighborhood. Outreach totaled 488 individuals, and included 98 hours spent within River Bend.

Throughout the process, the RBNA played a central role. Association members met monthly with the ISU planning team to provide feedback on what the team was learning about the neighborhood as well as the issues that emerged. Many of the ideas for the action items presented in this plan stemmed from activities that took place during neighborhood association meetings, as well as engagement with River Bend residents and businesses.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee was formed as part of the planning process. This group consisted of city staff, neighborhood residents, members of the neighborhood association, and community stakeholders. Four formal meetings hosted by the steering committee were held from September through late October. The meetings brought together neighborhood stakeholders to discuss issues, create priorities, and talk about available resources.

The steering committee met four times. During the first meeting, participants identified and voted upon priority areas for the plan. These included housing, community building, and economic development. These priority areas formed the basis of the next three meetings. In each of the subsequent meetings, participants formulated action items and linked them to participating organizations with available resources. In a later conversation, it was decided that a fourth priority area, infrastructure, was to be added



*Figure 5 : Member of the Steering Committee discussing priorities for the neighborhood*



as an additional issue area to cover safety of bicyclists and walkers, creating safe places in the neighborhood and upkeep of physical conditions such as tree maintenance and trash clean up.

These meetings began with a presentation from the ISU planning team that illustrated the current conditions of the neighborhood based on the issue areas under discussion. After the presentation, the participants moved into identifying action items and prioritizing sub-issues. The participants within the four steering committee meetings involved 61 individuals from 42 different organizations. Many participants attended more than one meeting or all four meetings throughout the process.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The River Bend neighborhood is located just north of downtown Des Moines and is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. The boundaries of the neighborhood include University Avenue to the south, 2nd Avenue to the east, Des Moines River to the north, and the alley between 9th and 10th streets on the west. The neighborhood's proximity to downtown, its diversity, and its historic homes continue to attract new residents to reside in River Bend.

### HISTORY

River Bend began as one of the many commuter suburbs adjacent to Des Moines. In the 1880s, the area was first developed as a town named North Des Moines. Due to its desirable location and accessibility by way of the West Ninth Streetcar, the city annexed the neighborhood in 1890.

In 1926, the City of Des Moines adopted a zoning code that allowed for multi-family housing. Soon intensive development of apartment dwellings and conversions of single family homes to multiple unit buildings was taking place across the city. These changes altered the feel of and density of many neighborhoods, including River Bend.

The city downzoned the residential areas in River Bend as well as 6th Avenue in 2012. Residential areas were rezoned from R-3, a multi-family designation, to R1-60, which is a single-family designation. See Figure 9. Sixth Avenue was downzoned from C-2, general retail, to C-1, which is a neighborhood retail commercial district. These changes were initiated by the RBNA in an effort to increase opportunities for homeownership in the neighborhood.

Today, River Bend is still known for its diversity of unique architecture and variety of homes as a result of the rich history of the neighborhood. Architecture styles include a combination of single family Victorian homes on large lots, and craftsman, foursquare and colonial revival styles on smaller lots. Many homes in the neighborhood were designed by local architects and display a variety of architectural ornamentation.

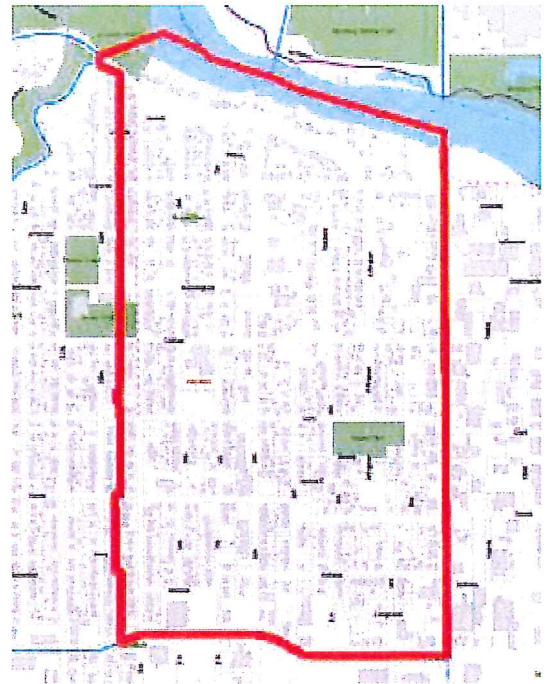


Figure 6 : River Bend, Outlined in Red  
Source City of Des Moines



## DEMOGRAPHICS

The residents of River Bend recognize that one of the neighborhood's greatest assets is its diversity. By better understanding the general characteristics of River Bend, one can gain insight into the strengths and challenges present in the neighborhood. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic data presented in this document were calculated using the 2010 Census.

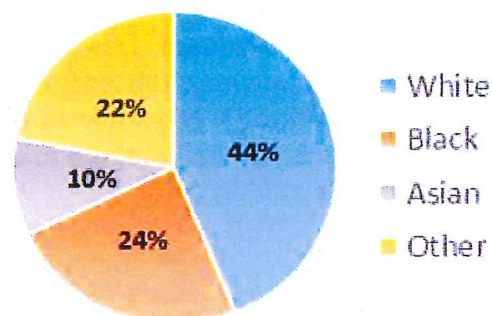
River Bend is a compact neighborhood with a population of 3,809 people. From 2000 to 2010, the City of Des Moines and River Bend have seen dissimilar trends. While the City grew at a rate of approximately 2.39% from 2000 to 2010, the River Bend population shrank by 2.86%.

In terms of diversity, 30% of the population in River Bend is Latino, 24% is African American, 10% Asian, and 14% Caucasian. This is quite diverse as compared to the city as a whole (Figures 7 & 8).

The median age of River Bend is also relatively young. About half of the population is under the age of 30, and approximately one third of the population is under the age of 19. The median age of residents in River Bend is about 25 years, whereas the median age in Des Moines is about 34 years. This number suggests that River Bend is home to many young families. The median household size in River Bend is also slightly larger than the city overall, and River Bend has a higher percentage of renters, a total of 51%, compared to the city, which has 37% renter-occupants.

The River Bend neighborhood has a larger population of lower income households compared to Des Moines as a whole. The median household income is \$32,479 in River Bend compared to \$44,178 for the city of Des Moines.

### River Bend



### Des Moines

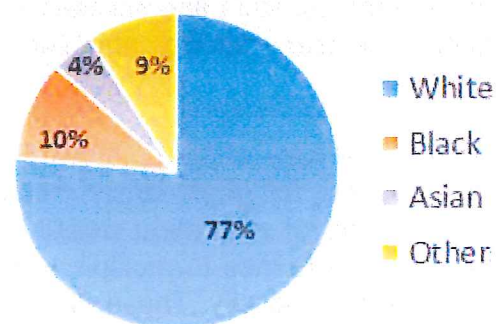


Figure 7 : Racial Demographics for River Bend (top) and the city of Des Moines (bottom) in 2010  
(Source US Census, American Community Survey)

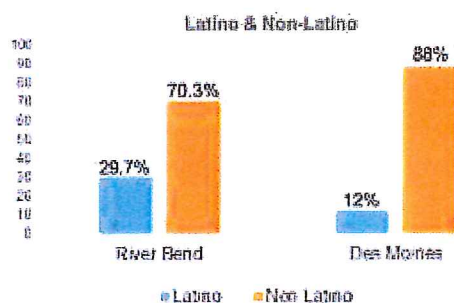


Figure 8 : Ethnic Demographics for River Bend and the city of Des Moines in 2010  
(Source US Census, American Community Survey)



Moines. The River Bend neighborhood also has an 18.5% unemployment rate and a 35.3% poverty rate; this is drastically different compared to 8% and 18% for the city, respectively.

## LAND USE & ZONING

The city uses land use and zoning tools to regulate development. The land use in River Bend is predominately residential, with commercial zoning along 6th Avenue, industrial zoning along 2nd Avenue, and a commercial Planned Unit Development along University Avenue (Figure 9).

### RESIDENTIAL

There are 657 residential properties in the River Bend neighborhood. Of this, 497, or 75%, are single-family housing. The other 25% includes multi-family housing, scattered throughout the neighborhood. Since the 1992 River Bend plan, the conditions of the neighborhood's housing stock have improved significantly. As of 2014, roughly 28% of the housing is now in excellent condition (Polk County Assessor), compared to only 10% in 1992.

### COMMERCIAL

The zoning for 6th Avenue is commercial, or C-1. Within the commercial area on 6th Avenue, there are 35 businesses, including fifteen retail establishments, nine professional and social service providers, a restaurant and an auto shop. Currently there are many vacant properties on 6th Avenue as well as vacant lots.

Sixth Avenue was downzoned to C-1 for the 1992 neighborhood plan. Previously, 6th Avenue was zoned as C-2, which created concerns with nearby residents affected by the activity on 6th Avenue. Consequently, 6th Avenue was downzoned to C-1, which is the zoning designation for neighborhood retail commercial district.

6th Avenue is also vital as a connector between the northern neighborhoods in Des Moines and downtown.

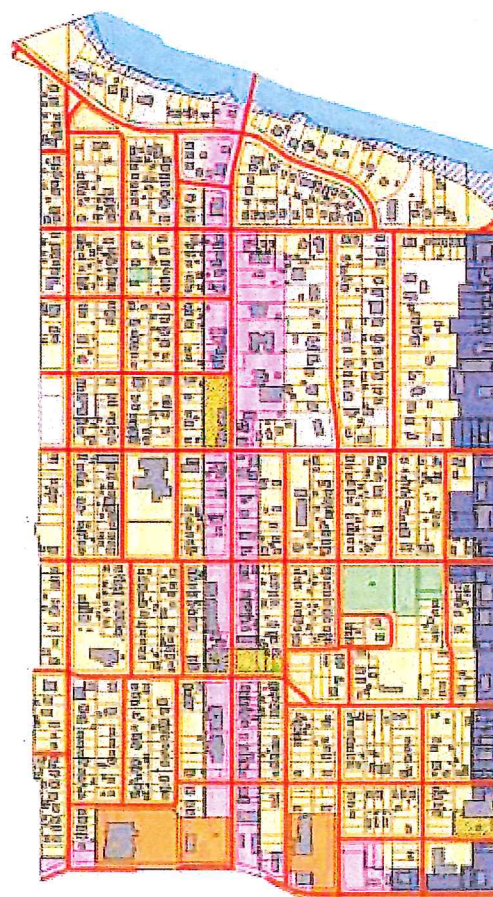


Figure 9 : River Bend Zoning  
(Source City of Des Moines)

ZoneType	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:pink; border:1px solid black;"></span>	C-0, C-1, C-2
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border:1px solid black;"></span>	FW
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span>	M-1
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span>	NPC
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span>	PUB
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span>	R-3
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span>	R1-S0



The upcoming 6th Avenue streetscape project will reduce the number of lanes of automobile traffic on 6th Avenue to slow traffic, changing the street from five lanes to three. This change will accommodate current and anticipated traffic volumes.

## INDUSTRIAL

2nd Avenue is zoned as light industrial, or M-1. An important feature of 2nd Avenue is that it is a connector from the downtown area to Interstate 80/35, so it typically accommodates high traffic. As the eastern edge of River Bend, 2nd Avenue is an important gateway into the neighborhood and provides many commuters with their only impression of the community. This corridor contains eight retail locations, four auto service locations, two restaurants, and four businesses offering professional services.

## HISTORIC DISTRICTS

River Bend is well-known for having both local and national historic district designations. While some compare River Bend to another nearby urban neighborhood, Sherman Hill, there are a few distinct differences that make River Bend unique. These differences call for a context-based approach to improving the River Bend neighborhood. These characteristics—such as neighborhood diversity and current neighborhood land values—provide both opportunities and challenges. They set River Bend apart from other historic neighborhoods in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area.

River Bend has six districts with either local or national historic designations (Figure 10). River Bend received its local historic district designation in 2012 when the market value of the land was much lower than that of the city. The challenge facing River Bend is how to improve its housing stock, preserve its historic character, and maintain the diversity and affordability of the neighborhood.

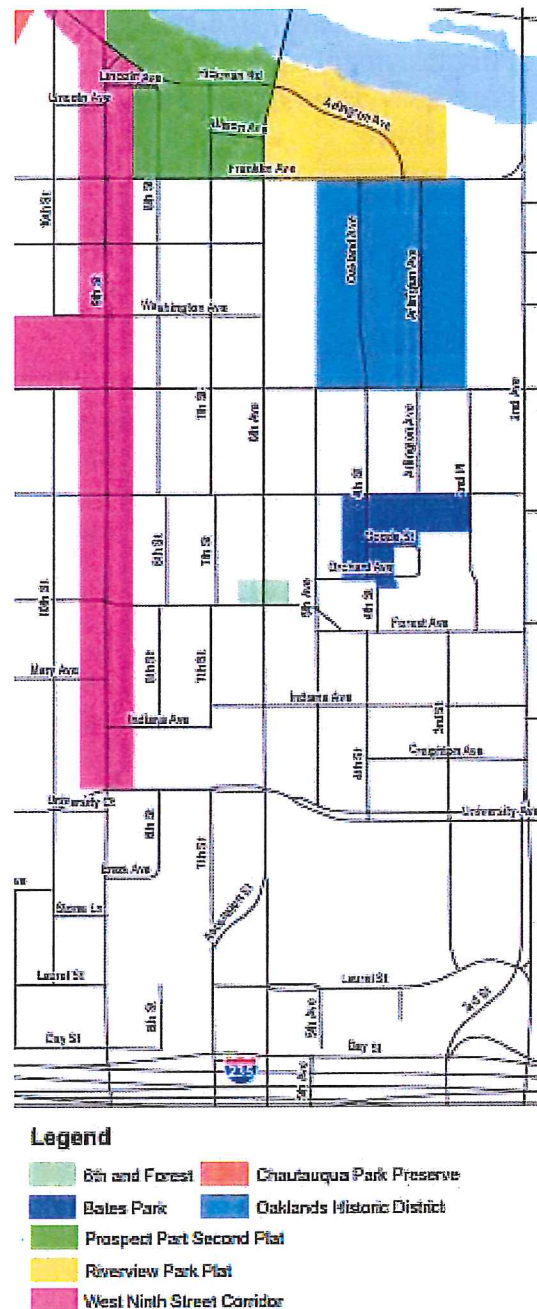


Figure 10 : River Bend National & Local Historic Districts  
(Source City of Des Moines)

## NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITY AREAS

Throughout the planning process, six priority areas were identified and action items were crafted to help guide progress in River Bend. The action items and corresponding resources seek to enhance existing opportunities and address challenges in the neighborhood. These challenges and opportunities were identified through both research, survey results, and outreach.

### STRENGTHS

- Diversity
- Location
- Friendly Neighbors
- Neighborhood History

### CHALLENGES

- Crime & Safety
- Infrastructure
- Housing Conditions
- Lack of Programming for Youth

The proposed priority areas and action steps expand upon community assets while offering different steps for the neighborhood to take to address certain challenges. For each priority area, there is a corresponding indicator. This is meant to illustrate some of the ways to evaluate whether or not the proposed strategy led to certain measurable changes.

### UNDERSTANDING THE ACTION ITEMS

The following pages contain the strategies, action items, and potential partners for each priority area. Each priority area has three strategies and multiple pages of action items. Each action item is paired with one or multiple potential partners.

The River Bend Neighborhood Association will be the project managers for the implementation of the action items. The City of Des Moines will contribute when funding and staff capacity are available.



## **PRIORITY AREA ONE HOUSING**

Sections of River Bend were registered as one local historic district in 2012. Overall, the neighborhood contains districts with either local or national historic designation. Historic districts are unique in many ways and help to preserve a distinct character and sense of place within a community. Although the neighborhood is best known for its historic homes, it contains a full range of housing types and tenures. This is a community where people can age in place from family homes to apartments to senior living.

The predominant characteristic of residential areas in River Bend is that of low-density, single family homes. In terms of housing tenure, 48% of the units in River Bend are owner-occupied as compared to 63% in the city as a whole. The comparatively high proportion of renters in River Bend provides opportunities for future homeownership. Neighbors who are renters today could become neighbors who are homeowners tomorrow.

However, neighborhood stability requires a stable and/or growing population. The neighborhood residents value stability and community. Approximately 13% of the units in River Bend are vacant compared to 5% in the city. The recent foreclosure crisis had an impact on the stability of River Bend as does the continued suburbanization of the region.

Maintenance is another area of concern in River Bend. As with any community that contains older housing stock, there are opportunities and challenges in maintaining the neighborhood's homes. One challenge to owning an historic home is that it may be more costly for maintenance and upkeep to meet the historic home regulations. The historic district contains 12 of the 27 distressed homes in the neighborhood, as well as a disproportionately high percentage of the vacancies in the district. The entire city of Des Moines benefits from the cultural and historic resources in River Bend, and the continued well-being of these resources is deserving of protection.

### **OBJECTIVE**

Create a stable, affordable, and historic neighborhood that contains well maintained housing stock and provides desirable homes for all families.

### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- The number of vacant lots in the neighborhood (per block)
- The number of new foreclosed properties
- The number of nuisance properties
- The number of renters' rights workshops
- The percentage of rental complaints resolved
- The percentage of affordable housing units in River Bend



## PRIORITY AREA ONE HOUSING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Rehabilitate Historic Properties in River Bend	Offer a workshop in conjunction with the Neighborhood Home Tour to help new homeowners with state historic tax credit application process	River Bend Neighborhood Association, State Historic Preservation Office	Short
	Offer a workshop in conjunction with the Neighborhood Home Tour to display historic renovation techniques	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Rehabbers Club of Des Moines	Short
	Add a rehabilitation resource directory to the River Bend Neighborhood Association website	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Promote the River Bend Design Guidelines (see appendix) in neighborhood areas outside of the Local Historic District to help maintain the historic architectural fabric of the neighborhood	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines, Rehabbers Club of Des Moines	Short
	Include the River Bend Design Guidelines and information about the local historic district in welcome packets provided to new residents	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Distribute the River Bend Design Guidelines to the Plan and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment	City of Des Moines Community Development	Short
	Add Local and National Historic District status to properties on the Polk County Assessor's website	Polk County Assessor	Short



## PRIORITY AREA ONE HOUSING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Rehabilitate Historic Properties in River Bend Continued	Provide signage for homes to put next to the for sale sign in the areas of the neighborhood that are in the historic district	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Explore the possibility of creating employer assisted housing programs with major employers located in or near the neighborhood	City of Des Moines, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, Greater Des Moines Partnership, Mercy Hospital	Medium
Maintain Affordable Housing	Create a mailing list of all apartment building addresses within the neighborhood to promote full notification and the timely exchange of information related to city activities within the neighborhood	City of Des Moines Community Development	Long
	Hold an annual weatherization event to help homeowners prepare for the winter season	Polk County Public Works, Rebuilding Together, Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, Green Iowa Americorps, MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy	Medium
	Creation of a Renters' Education Program offered as part of Evelyn K Davis Center's "Informational Series" to help renters become aware of their responsibilities and rights	Legal Aid, Community Lawyers of Iowa, Evelyn K. Davis Center, Home Inc	Short to Medium
	Continue building new construction affordable homes within the neighborhood, prioritizing infill on vacant lots	Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, Home Inc, Other Developers	Medium



## PRIORITY AREA ONE HOUSING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Maintain Affordable Housing Continued	Seek out ideal areas in the neighborhood for future mixed-use and mixed-income development	Anawim Housing, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, Neighborhood Development Corporation, City of Des Moines Community Development	Medium to Long
Reduce the Number of Abandoned Properties	Create a database of all vacant and abandoned properties within the neighborhood	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines Community Development	Short
	Expand distribution of an informational brochure to all neighborhood residents, offering lead remediation help and contact information	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Polk County Public Health	Medium
	Create block coalitions or a "Friends of River Bend" club to help address overgrown vacant lots and properties	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Polk County Weed Commissioner	Medium
	Have block coalitions or "Friends of River Bend" club partner with other groups to hold community improvement projects and events	North High School, 6th Avenue Corridor, Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity, City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division, Forest Avenue Outreach, Rebuilding Together	Medium to Long
	Research opportunities and policy to address liens and property taxes on vacant and abandoned homes to encourage resale	Polk County, City of Des Moines, Des Moines Water Works	Short



## PRIORITY AREA ONE HOUSING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Reduce the Amount of Abandoned Properties Continued	Hold an event with local developers to explore opportunities for infill and creative reuse of vacant housing	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor, City of Des Moines Community Development	Medium
	Work with neighborhood code inspectors to identify specific rental properties within the neighborhood in chronic need of maintenance	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division	Short



## **PRIORITY AREA TWO**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic development requires the sustained, concerted actions of policy makers, community stakeholders, and residents to improve the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. In the River Bend neighborhood, there is a high percentage of low income households and a high rate of unemployment. The unemployment rate for residents aged 20 - 24 years old is especially troubling. Their unemployment rate is 35%, which is three times the rate as compared to the City of Des Moines for this age group.

The 6th Avenue Corridor (6AC) organization has taken a leadership role in promoting business development in River Bend. Although their work has resulted in a promising streetscape plan, the future success of 6th Avenue cannot be taken for granted. This corridor continues to face challenges with vacant properties, deteriorated properties, and business turnover. Business owners on 2nd Avenue also expressed concerns about the physical conditions and infrastructure surrounding their establishments. The continued revitalization of the River Bend neighborhood is deeply connected with economic opportunities for its residents and the prosperity of community businesses.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Expand economic opportunity for all people living in River Bend and promote economic development on 6th and 2nd Avenue to serve as a catalyst for other neighborhood improvements.

#### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- The number of youth volunteer/internship programs offered in the neighborhood
- The number of leadership courses available to River Bend residents
- The enrollment of River Bend residents in Rebuilding Together
- The number of new business licenses
- The number of businesses that have been open for more than one year
- The number of business owners participating in 6th Avenue Corridor



## PRIORITY AREA TWO

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Create a Neighborhood Niche Related to Food & Culture	Attract a destination restaurant to River Bend that will draw people from across the region as well as visitors to Des Moines	City of Des Moines Economic Development, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Promote urban agriculture and other food-related business ventures within River Bend	City of Des Moines Economic Development, ISU Extension, Des Moines Small Business Development Program, 6th Avenue Corridor, Forest Avenue Outreach	Medium to Long
	Encourage food industry related entrepreneurialism by advertising the availability of the Trinity Methodist commercial kitchen	Trinity United Methodist Church, 6th Avenue Corridor, Solidarity Microfinance	Short
	Provide free cooking classes and professional food service instruction using the Trinity Methodist commercial kitchen	Trinity United Methodist Church, DMACC, Forest Avenue Outreach	Medium
	Investigate changing city codes to allow food trucks to exist and move within city neighborhoods	City of Des Moines	Short
	Create a food truck court within the neighborhood that promotes a range of ethnic and cultural cuisines (Based upon code changes)	City of Des Moines, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Highlight local food businesses on the home tour with a "tabling event"	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short



## PRIORITY AREA TWO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Foster Small Business Development	Convene a forum that includes small businesses within River Bend, city agencies, and non-profit partners to discuss the most appropriate organization for promoting and supporting businesses in River Bend	6th Avenue Corridor	Short
	Create an informational brochure, distributed in community spaces, to provide access to legal advice, mentoring services, and microfinancing options for small business development	6th Avenue Corridor, Community Lawyers of Iowa, Solidarity Microfinance, Evelyn K. Davis Center	Short
	Identify potential physical and design interventions to improve the visual quality of the 2nd Avenue Corridor	City of Des Moines, Iowa Department of Transportation	Long
	Create a Shop River Bend day to encourage local shopping along 6th and 2nd Avenue corridors	6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Identify opportunities in the neighborhood where "pop up" vendors could sell food, crafts, or other goods within existing venues. Prioritize goods produced by neighborhood residents	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor, Solidarity Microfinance	Medium
Expand Opportunities for Job Training & Education	Expand the number of locations within the neighborhood where residents can have access to a public computer	Des Moines Public Library, Trinity Methodist, Evelyn K. Davis Center	Short



## PRIORITY AREA TWO

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Expand Opportunities for Job Training & Education Continued	Create student scholarships for neighborhood residents and promote pathways to college	Mercy College, Mercy Hospital, ISU Pathways	Medium
	Expand curriculum-based afterschool programs and opportunities for youth apprenticeships in the neighborhood	Creative Visions, CFUM, ISU Pathways, ISU PWISE, Des Moines School District, United Way of Iowa	Short
	Create a neighborhood maintenance partnership that targets specific groups for volunteer opportunities in cleaning up the neighborhood	Bethel Mission, 6th Avenue Corridor, North High School	Short
	Expand job training opportunities for River Bend residents, with special emphasis on building pathways to skilled employment with firms and organizations located in or near the neighborhood	DMACC, 6th Avenue Corridor, Iowa Workforce Development, Mercy Hospital, Project Iowa	Short



## **PRIORITY AREA THREE**

### **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Neighborhood residents identified friendly neighbors and diversity as two strengths of the River Bend neighborhood. Community building provides an opportunity for the RBNA and other community partners to expand on these strengths; bringing people together and building recognition of a common future and a shared identity. Community building transforms strangers into neighbors.

A prime example of the neighborhood's diversity is Moulton Extended Learning Center located on the west side of the neighborhood at 8th and College Streets. Approximately 16 language interpreters are required at Moulton during teacher conferences with the students' guardians. While the diversity of River Bend is one of the neighborhood's strength, it also creates challenges. A lack of cooperation or divided interests of various groups can create misunderstandings and/or competition for resources. These potential negative impacts can be avoided by deliberately cultivating an appreciation for diversity and a sense of a common future among all neighborhood residents. The first step is recognizing that all groups have importance and value in the community.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Cultivate recognition of the diverse cultures present in River Bend and build a commitment to a common future that includes all groups in the neighborhood.

#### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- The number of language programs or language exchange events in the neighborhood
- The number of people enrolled in language learning program
- The number of recreational opportunities/events for youth in the neighborhood
- The number of youth participants in recreational activities
- The number of art projects and installations in neighborhood
- Whether residents know their neighbor
- Whether residents would feel comfortable in asking their neighbor for help
- The number of events offered in the neighborhood with translation services



## PRIORITY AREA THREE

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Celebrate Diversity in River Bend	Create an annual or semi-annual language exchange event to expand language learning and cultural awareness within the neighborhood	Des Moines Public Library, Trinity United Methodist Church, NISSA, Latino Forum	Medium
	Design a t-shirt that uses the multiple languages spoken within the neighborhood and is sold at neighborhood events	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Create a multicultural events committee to program and host quarterly events in partnership with neighborhood nonprofits and other area groups	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Identify a neighborhood business along the 6th Avenue Corridor to host an electronic message center to promote local events and community updates	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium to Long
	Develop a community space for group activities, available to all neighborhood residents, targeting seniors and youth	Mercy Hospital, Moulton Extended Learning Center, North High School	Short
	Hold an annual multicultural event corresponding with Jazz in July	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor	Short
	Translate all City of Des Moines materials, relating to River Bend, into Spanish		Short



## PRIORITY AREA THREE COMMUNITY BUILDING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Celebrate Diversity in River Bend Continued	Expand after-school youth programming within the neighborhood	ISU Pathways, Moulton Extended Learning Center, CFUM, ISU Extension, Creative Visions	Short to Medium
Opportunities for Community Interaction	Create a welcome packet to send to new neighborhood residents	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Evaluate park needs within the neighborhood	City of Des Moines Parks & Recreation	Short
	Update Royal Park with new play equipment and signage; Assist the City of Des Moines in determining a partner for this project	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines Parks & Recreation	Medium
	Create an annual neighborhood garage sale weekend	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Trinity United Methodist Church, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Promote opportunities available through the city's Garden Lease program for residents interested in creating gardens	City of Des Moines	Medium
Placemaking & Identity	Add to the neighborhood's existing public artwork within the neighborhood through permanent and temporary displays as well as a neighborhood mural project	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Iowa Arts Council, ASAP, Metro Arts Alliance, ISU Extension	Short



## PRIORITY AREA THREE

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Placemaking & Identity Continued	Include cultural design elements within the 6th Avenue Corridor streetscape plan	6th Avenue Corridor, City of Des Moines, Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Metro Arts Alliance, Iowa Arts Council	Short to Medium
	Create a neighborhood historic architecture walking tour. Post self-walking tour pamphlets on the RBNA website and distribute them at neighborhood businesses	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Iowa Architectural Foundation, 6th Avenue Corridor	Medium
	Promote opportunities to create temporary art projects on municipal vacant land within the neighborhood	City of Des Moines, Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation	Short



## **PRIORITY AREA FOUR**

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

One theme of this neighborhood plan is that building safe places and a safe community help to build social capital. Infrastructure provides connections and brings resources to a community. The action items below identify infrastructure improvements that can help to develop the urban fabric of River Bend and change how people feel about the neighborhood. Many of the action items are targeted towards improving non-automobile traffic infrastructure, which would foster a sense of place and safety by encouraging residents to spend more time outdoors and interacting in the neighborhood.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Improve neighborhood infrastructure to provide a safe, clean, and attractive environment in River Bend.

#### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- The canopy cover of lights
- Measurement of crime per capita by type of crime
- The number of RBNA meetings attended by an NBSD officer
- Whether someone feels comfortable contacting the neighborhood police officer in River Bend
- Whether someone feels comfortable walking in their neighborhood during the day
- Whether someone feels comfortable walking in their neighborhood at night
- If they have children, whether someone feels comfortable letting their children play in this neighborhood on their own
- The neighborhood connectivity to storm sewers
- The total Area of Green Space in River Bend



## PRIORITY AREA FOUR

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Improve Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety	Evaluate the neighborhood using the I-Walk program (safe routes to school program)	ISU Extension, Moulton Extended Learning Center, North High School	Short
	Study and improve bicycle infrastructure along 9th Street	City of Des Moines Traffic & Transportation	Medium
	Pave the gravel access along the Des Moines River levee, west of the 6th Avenue bridge	City of Des Moines Parks & Recreation	Medium
	Evaluate improvements needed for safe pedestrian and bicycle use along 6th Avenue and 2nd Avenue	City of Des Moines Traffic & Transportation, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	Medium
Improve the Sense of Safety	Conduct a speed study and traffic count on 9th Street	City of Des Moines Traffic & Transportation	Medium
	Conduct a streetlight assessment within the neighborhood	City of Des Moines Traffic & Transportation	Medium to Long
	Install additional lighting for safety within Bates Park and integrate cultural design elements into the new additions	City of Des Moines Parks & Recreation	Medium
	Expand opportunities for residents and business owners to communicate with police and city inspectors through the NBSD program	Des Moines Police Department, Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division	Short



## PRIORITY AREA FOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Improve Physical Conditions	Hold an annual SCRUB day to address issues of large trash and illegal dumping within the neighborhood	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Des Moines Public Works, City of Des Moines Neighborhood Inspection Division	Short
	Address trees and other visual barriers around neighborhood stop signs and streetlights	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines Public Works, Trees Forever	Short
	Investigate opportunities to improve stormwater and sewer infrastructure within the neighborhood	City of Des Moines Public Works and Engineering Department	Medium



## **PRIORITY AREA FIVE**

### **NEIGHBORHOOD IMAGE**

The River Bend neighborhood offers homeowners and other potential residents a vibrant, diverse community and beautiful historic buildings to call home. However, many people in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area are not aware of the positive attributes of this community. River Bend has gone through a period of change in the last few decades. Those who have not been to River Bend often associate the area with negative stereotypes or urban decay. By improving the image of the neighborhood, more people are likely to visit and take a new look at this exciting community. The positive characteristics of the neighborhood will spread by word of mouth and in the media.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Promote a positive image of River Bend, improve outside perceptions of the neighborhood, and attract new residents and businesses.

#### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- Whether residents consider River Bend to be their “home”
- The number of followers on social media platforms
- The number of postings on River Bend Facebook page



## PRIORITY AREA FIVE NEIGHBORHOOD IMAGE

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Improve Public Relations	Create a press release for the revised River Bend plan and send out to TV stations, newspapers, and partner organizations to include in their own newsletter	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Develop relationships with realtors selling homes in the neighborhood	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
Increase Community Outreach	Build an email listserve of representatives from organization in and outside of the River Bend neighborhood to expedite communication of events	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Hold an annual membership drive to reach all constituents within the neighborhood, including renters, non-profits, and businesses	River Bend Neighborhood Association, 6th Avenue Corridor	Short
	Solicit information from around the neighborhood to put in a new "what's happening in River Bend" column in the newsletter	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Print hard copies of the NA newsletter to post at local businesses	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Create membership scholarship fund to support potential new members who cannot afford the fees	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short to Medium



## PRIORITY AREA FIVE

### NEIGHBORHOOD IMAGE

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
Increase Diversity & Leadership	Nominate a volunteer from the neighborhood each year for the city's leadership award so that one individual from River Bend receives recognition from the City and the NA for outstanding service	River Bend Neighborhood Association, City of Des Moines	Short
	Promote the leadership role of different ethnic/multicultural groups in the neighborhood by focusing at least one of the multicultural events committee's annual events on the work of a multicultural community leader or organization	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short to Medium



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## **PRIORITY AREA SIX**

# **STRENGTHENING THE RIVER BEND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

River Bend is a healthy, vibrant, young, and diverse neighborhood. The neighborhood has experienced positive changes in the past two decades. Residents challenged disinvestment in the neighborhood and organizations such as Trinity United Methodist Church began providing services to residents in need. The creation of the RBNA in 1986 added another important voice in these efforts.

Today, the RBNA plays an active role in promoting positive and inclusive change in the neighborhood. Their priority areas include neighborhood safety, historic preservation, improving the quality of all housing in the neighborhood, taking action against nuisance landlords, developing the 6th Avenue Corridor, coordinating efforts with other neighborhood organizations, and hosting an annual home tour to raise awareness of historic homes in River Bend.

As the result of the work of the RBNA as well as other community organizations, the quality of housing in the neighborhood has improved and a growing number of historic homes have been preserved. They have also maintained strong relationships with the city and the Des Moines Police Department's Neighborhood-Based Service Delivery Program. However, by expanding their outreach, creating a more inclusive and diverse list of members, identifying community leaders, and improving neighborhood business membership, the RBNA could greatly increase its positive impact in the community.

The strategies listed below stem from community feedback about the current activities of the neighborhood association, feedback from stakeholders, and self-reflection by members of the neighborhood association.

### **OBJECTIVE**

Expand the capacity of the RBNA to help foster new leadership in the neighborhood and build sustainability and resilience within the organization.

### **PROPOSED INDICATORS**

- The number of blocks with representation in RBNA
- RBNA membership by minority residents
- Representation of minority residents on the RBNA Board
- The number of attendees at activities or meetings which are held in the neighborhood
- The number of RBNA events which are free to public
- Whether residents feel comfortable contacting the RBNA if they had a problem or a question about the neighborhood
- The number of business owners participating in RBNA



**PRIORITY AREA SIX**  
**STRENGTHENING THE RIVER BEND**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
<b>Increase Outreach</b>	Create an outreach subcommittee to create block quadrant leaders, engage new residents, and act as a liaison between those residents and the Neighborhood Association	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Hold an annual block party potluck led by the outreach subcommittee to promote awareness of the Neighborhood Association and to recruit new members	River Bend Neighborhood Association, National Night Out (Des Moines Police Department)	Medium
	Create a space on the website and Facebook page for local businesses to be highlighted, and to gain web traffic to the Neighborhood Association website	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Offer free childcare and meals at RBNA meetings and prioritize hiring local youth as childcare providers	River Bend Neighborhood Association, Children & Family Urban Movement	Medium
	Create a mentor-match program in River Bend with the North High School Alumni Association	River Bend Neighborhood Association, North High School	Medium
	Create a volunteer coordinator/ outreach coordinator position for the Neighborhood Association	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Update the neighborhood indicators report annually including distribution of a survey via mail, door-to-door, and email to ensure that all residents and businesses in RB are reached	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Long



## PRIORITY AREA SIX STRENGTHENING THE RIVER BEND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Strategy	Action Item	Potential Partners	Timeline
<b>Identify &amp; Develop Community Leaders</b>	Widely broadcast open leadership positions in the NA and recruit new community leaders to fill those positions	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Co-sponsor non-Neighborhood Association events in the neighborhood and send one person to the events to promote Neighborhood Association membership	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Create a position on the Neighborhood Association Board for representatives of other neighborhood organizations	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
<b>Improve Neighborhood Business Membership</b>	Create a Business Outreach Partner package to incentivize business sponsorship and participation in Neighborhood Association meetings	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Short
	Create a business liaison position on the Neighborhood Association board	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium
	Change bylaws to allow business members to vote on issues in the Neighborhood Association	River Bend Neighborhood Association	Medium



## ASSESSMENT

Indicators provide a way to evaluate progress over time. They are helpful in providing insight into the overall direction of a community: whether it is improving, declining, or staying the same. The indicators included in this plan capture the values of the neighborhood and provide a tool for measuring how the proposed action items are affecting the community. They provide information about where the neighborhood stands currently that can be used to evaluate how it is changing in the future.

Moving forward, these indicators will serve dual functions for the River Bend Neighborhood. First, they will assist planners and community leaders in making decisions by providing them with the measurements that are meaningful to the community. Second, because these grassroots indicators were created with resident involvement and incorporate resident perspectives, they embody the outcomes desired by residents. They provide the people of River Bend and their partners in community change with a tool that they can use to see how their neighborhood is progressing and a starting place for conversations about what is working and what needs to be changed in the future.

The baseline Indicators Report can be found in Appendix A. Future reports will be issued by the RBNA as the Association sees the need for evaluation and assessment.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this plan will require collaboration between the City of Des Moines, the Polk County, and the RBNA. It will also require participation from residents and other community stakeholders. In particular, it will require a continued relationship between the three core non-profit and faith-based anchors serving the neighborhood: the RBNA, 6th Avenue Corridor, and Trinity United Methodist Church.

For the plan to be effective, it will also require :

**Capacity building within the River Bend Neighborhood Association**

**Leadership development across all neighborhood subgroups**

**More opportunities for fostering community within a diverse urban neighborhood**

**Technical and financial support from departments within the City of Des Moines and Polk County**

**Support from neighborhood businesses and non-profits**

The progress of River Bend will require many partnerships between many actors, and the involvement of key leaders in the River Bend community will be essential to maintain accountability for priorities and corresponding action steps.



# APPENDIX A

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING