



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

32

Date February 24, 2020

**APPROVAL OF THE DOUGLAS AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN
AS AN ELEMENT OF THE PLANDSM: CREATING OUR TOMORROW PLAN**

WHEREAS, on April 25, 2016, by Roll Call No. 16-0717, the City Council adopted Plan DSM: Creating Our Tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Beaver, Prospect Park, Beaverville, and Merle Hay Neighborhood Associations have formed the Douglas Avenue Coalition to support vibrant, viable businesses and revitalize the Douglas Avenue Corridor from Merle Hay Road to the Des Moines River; and

WHEREAS, in October 2017, the City's consultant team of RDG Planning & Design and HDR commenced a planning project for the Douglas Avenue Corridor, in conjunction with a steering committee consisting of the Douglas Avenue Coalition, neighborhood representatives, elected officials, business owners, stakeholders, and City employees guiding the planning efforts, and a technical committee with representatives from the City's Engineering Department, DART, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Iowa Department of Transportation also advising the project; and

WHEREAS, on February 6, 2020, the City Plan and Zoning Commission held a hearing on the proposed Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan and voted 11-0 to recommend **APPROVAL** of the plan as an element of the existing PlanDSM: Creating Our Tomorrow 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 Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan is hereby approved and adopted as an element of the existing PlanDSM: Creating Our Tomorrow Plan.

(Council Communication No 20-015)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

MOVED BY _____ TO APPROVE.



Glenna K. Frank, Assistant City Attorney

(21-2020-4.03)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
MANDELBAUM				
VOSS				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

Mayor

CERTIFICATE

I, P. KAY CMELIK, 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



February 18, 2020

Date 2/24/20
Agenda Item 3a
Roll Call # _____

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their February 6, 2020 meeting, the following action was taken regarding a City initiated request to amend PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow Plan to incorporate the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan as an element.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

After public hearing, the members voted 11-0 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Francis Boggus				X
Dory Briles	X			
Abby Chungath	X			
Jacqueline Easley	X			
Jann Freed	X			
John "Jack" Hilmes	X			
Lisa Howard	X			
Carolyn Jenison				X
Greg Jones	X			
William Page	X			
Rocky Sposato	X			
Steve Wallace	X			
Greg Wattier				X
Emily Webb	X			

APPROVAL of Plan DSM Creating Our Tomorrow be amended to incorporate the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan as an element.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION

Staff recommends that Plan DSM Creating Our Tomorrow be amended to incorporate the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan as an element.

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2015, a group of dedicated residents from the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association (LBNA), concerned about deteriorating conditions in the neighborhood's commercial district, re-convened LBNA's Business Relations Committee. The committee was tasked with implementing commercial corridor priorities laid out in the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Plan, which was adopted in 2013. The plan included strategies for supporting neighborhood businesses, encouraging property owner investment, enhancing corridor aesthetics, improving walkability, and encouraging future growth of neighborhood commercial areas.

The Prospect Park, Beaverdale, and Merle Hay Neighborhood Associations, sharing similar concerns about the trajectory of Douglas Avenue, added their support and the Douglas Avenue Coalition (DAC) was formed. The mission of the DAC is to support vibrant, viable businesses and revitalize the Douglas Avenue Corridor in the 2.4 mile stretch from Merle Hay Road to the Des Moines River.

The DAC made a formal request to the City and Polk County for additional planning work to address the ongoing challenges along Douglas Avenue. After funding was secured, the consultant team of RDG Planning & Design and HDR was selected through an RFP process. The project kicked off in October 2017.

A steering committee consisting of DAC and neighborhood representatives, elected officials, business owners, stakeholders, and City staff guided the planning efforts. A technical committee also advised the project, with representatives from the City's Engineering Department, DART, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Iowa Department of Transportation. (Douglas Avenue is also U.S. Highway 6 and under the jurisdiction of IDOT.)

II. GENERAL PLAN SUMMARY

Douglas Avenue is a primary east-west corridor across northwest Des Moines. The planning area, which stretches from Merle Hay Road to the Des Moines River, includes many locally-owned businesses that represent the growing diversity within the city. Stretches of commercial land uses intertwine with single-family homes, multi-family residential properties and institutional land uses including Moore Elementary and the Veterans Affairs hospital.

The corridor developed significantly thorough the 1950's and 1960's and reflects the automobile-oriented characteristics of the area. Today, Douglas Avenue struggles with growing commercial vacancies, business turnover, and property disinvestment. Many commercial buildings are tired and some even obsolete for today's business needs. Landscaping throughout the corridor is minimal and overhead signage and utilities are visually dominant – a reflection of 1950's development patterns. Surrounding

neighborhoods desire for better, safer physical connections to businesses so they can have the option to bike and walk.

The planning committee conducted an intensive public input process that included a kick-off event, a three-day public design charrette, focus groups with business owners and developers, stakeholder meetings, and an online survey that collected more than 280 responses. The message in each of these outreach efforts was consistent: Be BOLD.

Plan recommendations for public realm improvements include:

- Implementation of a four-lane to three-lane road diet west of Lower Beaver Road. An extensive traffic study, completed by HDR, found that traffic volumes to the west of Lower Beaver Road are just slightly higher than those of Ingersoll Avenue. By reducing the roadway, public space can be re-allocated to allow for wider sidewalks, expanded parkway, and the addition of street trees. A three-lane cross-section would also calm traffic and likely reduce crashes. A pilot project is proposed to test the conversion for a one-year time period. Data will be collected to measure the impact of the project and evaluate the road diet as a long-term solution.
- Narrow the existing five travel lanes from 13' wide to a comfortable 11' width east of Lower Beaver Road. This provides for wider sidewalks, expanded parkway and landscape improvements in the public right-of-way.
- Increase pedestrian safety with enhanced crosswalks throughout the corridor.
- Improve aesthetics by reducing visual clutter, bury overhead utilities if feasible.

The plan also highlights strategies for private realm improvements, outlining candidate sites for redevelopment and/or new development. Conceptual redevelopment strategies are provided at four nodes including:

1. The commercial district between 54th to 59th near Merle Hay Road.
2. The Beaverdale Hy-Vee site (the plan proposes potential layouts of how Hy-Vee may situate its proposed building and parking lot once they move forward with the project).
3. The commercial node 38th & Douglas.
4. The intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway & Douglas Avenue, including Harding Hills Plaza & River Plaza.

Over the course of the planning process, the design team was required to pivot and respond to multiple changing conditions. This included the flooding of the Harding Hills Hy-Vee, new ownership and changes in development interest of several commercial buildings, and re-mapping of the 100-year and 500-year floodplain along the river. Most notably, Plaza Lanes – an anchor of the corridor and local destination – burned in December of 2017. The redevelopment of the River Plaza shopping center as parkland, with access to the river for fishing and kayaking, emerged as a new recreational destination for the corridor.

The design consultants wrapped up the planning process with an Open House in late October 2019. Attendees were asked to record their opinions of the proposed strategies via the “dot method” directly on the display boards. These results are documented in the plan appendix.

At this time, funding has not been allocated for any public improvements. The pilot project, once implemented, will serve as a critical first-step in evaluating a potential road diet and further public improvements. Partnerships with the Douglas Avenue Coalition, the Iowa Department of Transportation, neighborhood associations, the development community, city departments and others will also be necessary to ensuring the long-term success of the plan.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Jason Van Essen noted that staff and the consultant provided a detailed presentation of the plan during the 5:30 work session. Staff recommends approval of the plan as an element of PlanDSM. Staff and the consultant are available to provide additional information and answer questions that may arise based upon public comment.

CHAIRPERSON OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING

Brian O'Leary, 2846 Merced Drive stated the plan is near and dear to his heart but he knows there are some people who don't agree with the plan. They did have overwhelming support during the Neighborhood input meetings.

Jacqueline Easley asked which neighborhoods have given input on this plan?

Brian O'Leary stated Prospect Park, Merle Hay, Beaverdale and Lower Beaver.

Elaine Miller, Coldwell Banker Realtor, 9119 Northpark Drive, Johnston stated she has concerns that City Staff hasn't done their due diligence as she has not found one business owner that's had an in-depth conversation about how this plan would affect future business. She has requested City Staff to furnish the names they have had conversation with. This would also increase travel time and she requests to have a DOT traffic study done as there hasn't been one since 1995.

Dan Jespersen, 3614 36th Street stated his concern is traffic flow as this plan takes Douglas down to 2 lanes. One of the studies he would like to see is the affect it will have on the 300 cars going in and out of the VA Hospital daily. He doesn't see this traffic plan feasible as this road stretches 15 miles across Des Moines into Clive.

Doug Selzer, 3025 Douglas Ave., Owner of Selzer Auto Repair stated reducing Douglas down to 2 lanes is not a good idea. You must force your way out onto Douglas in evening rush hour. He believes the rest of the plan is wonderful and has reached out to Bill Gray about what he could do to contribute.

CHAIRPERSON CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING

Laura Peters, Neighborhood Planner stated she wanted to address the concerns about City Staff's due diligence. She walked the corridor with over 90 flyers in hand and visited business along Douglas Avenue. They have had neighborhood focus meetings and really did their best to get the word out to everyone along Douglas Avenue.

Joe Spradling, HDR Engineering stated the roundabout option at the intersection of Lower Beaver Avenue and Douglas Avenue is an option that will be need further analysis. He

noted that the crash rate at the intersection was higher than the State wide average. He presented images of their ideas around safety improvement, the roundabout and 3 lane configurations via the overhead projector.

Will Page asked if the roundabout would be a 3 of 4 lane configuration.

Joe Spradling stated it would be 2 lanes within the roundabout, then transitioning back into a 3-lane street cross-section.

Abby Chungath asked if there have been studies around traffic benefiting from these similar lane configurations on Ingersoll Avenue and other corridors.

Joe Spradling stated the traffic volume is very similar to Ingersoll between Merle Hay and Lower Beaver Avenue. You can see the improvements from Ingersoll have helped with slowing traffic, safety for pedestrians and some economic development that has comes from that.

Emily Webb stated they have done a good job addressing the traffic issues as this was the main point of concerns so she would be inclined to move the staff recommendation.

Abby Chungath stated this plan makes sense as we move into the future with pedestrian and bicycle access. Allowing traffic to slow down will increase the safety and shouldn't feel as if you are inching along. Noted this is only a plan. Funding and detailed plans are still necessary and there will be additional opportunities for public input.

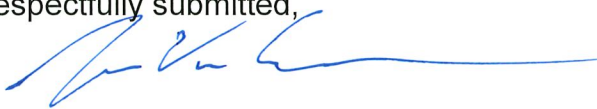
Jann Freed stated she wanted to reiterate the reconfiguration of lanes on Douglas Avenue is proposed as a pilot study and the results of the study will influence the final / permanent lane configurations.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Emily Webb made a motion to recommend that Plan DSM Creating Our Tomorrow be amended to incorporate the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan as an element.

Motion passed: 11-0

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Van Essen, AICP
Senior City Planner

JVE:tjh



DRAFT

JANUARY 7, 2020

CORRIDOR PLAN
DOUGLAS
AVENUE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY OF DES MOINES

Mayor and City Council

Franklin Cownie, Mayor
Bill Gray, Ward I
Connie Boesen, Ward II
Josh Mandelbaum, Ward III
Joe Gatto, Ward IV
Christopher Coleman, At-large
Linda Westergaard, At-large

DOUGLAS AVENUE COALITION

www.DOUGLASAVE.org

Brian O'Leary, President
Charles Hill, Vice President
Jeremy Geerdes, Secretary
Mitch Coluzzi, Treasurer
Luke Lynch

STEERING COMMITTEE

Elected Officials

Angela Connolly, Polk County Supervisor
Bill Gray, Councilman, Ward I

City of Des Moines

Laura Peters, Project Manager
Richard Brown, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director
Naomi Hamlett, Economic Development Coordinator
Kyle Larson, Senior Planner
Jason Van Essen, Senior Planner
Jeff Wiggins, Transportation Planner

Partners

Marcus Coenen, Beaverdale Neighborhood
Mitch Coluzzi, Douglas Avenue Coalition
Abbey Gilroy, Neighborhood Development Corporation
Heidi Hamand, Prospect Park Neighborhood
Charles Hill, Douglas Avenue Coalition
Brian O'Leary, Douglas Avenue Coalition/
Lower Beaver Neighborhood
Adam Plagge, Beaverdale Neighborhood
Jason Pulliam, Merle Hay Neighborhood
Darrell Sarmento, Des Moines West Side Chamber
Randy Thompson, Plaza Lanes

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

City of Des Moines

Steve Naber, City Engineer
Corey Bogenreif, Principal Traffic Engineer
Laura Peters
Jeff Wiggins

Partners

Luis Montoya, DART
Carl Saxon, DART
John Narigon, Iowa DOT

CONSULTANT TEAM

RDG Planning & Design

www.RDGUSA.com

HDR, Inc.

www.HDRINC.com



WELCOME INTRODUCTION

FROM THE DOUGLAS AVENUE COALITION

The Douglas Avenue Coalition is thrilled to present this corridor plan that has been two years in the making! As a non-profit organization setup for the purpose of reviving Douglas Avenue on the north side of Des Moines, we have committed ourselves to this project since the creation of our organization in 2015. We are delighted with the outcome of this plan and we invite you to share in the exciting vision for what Douglas Avenue can be. Join us as we celebrate the great history and unique diversity along our corridor and seek to create destinations that area residents will enjoy while also attracting new visitors.

We wouldn't be where we are today without many interested parties jumping on board and sharing in our vision. The Douglas Avenue Coalition would like to specifically thank Des Moines Ward 1 City Councilman Bill Gray and Polk County Supervisor Angela Connolly for championing this effort from the very beginning. Thank you to City of Des Moines planners, RDG Planning and Design, and HDR for guiding us through this process and bringing our vision to life. Thank you to the Des Moines neighborhood associations adjacent to the corridor for your participation in the process: Merle Hay, Beaverdale, Lower Beaver, and Prospect Park. There are also many other organizations responsible for the success of this plan including the Iowa DOT, DART, Des Moines West Side Chamber of Commerce, the Neighborhood Development Corporation, and many individuals who volunteered their time to see this succeed. This was truly a group effort and our coalition is now ready to take the next step and begin implementing the plan. Let's go!

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

1

INTRODUCTION

PAGE 7

2

PLANNING PROCESS

PAGE 19

3

TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

PAGE 29

4

CORRIDOR CONCEPTS

PAGE 45

5

IMPLEMENTATION

PAGE 93

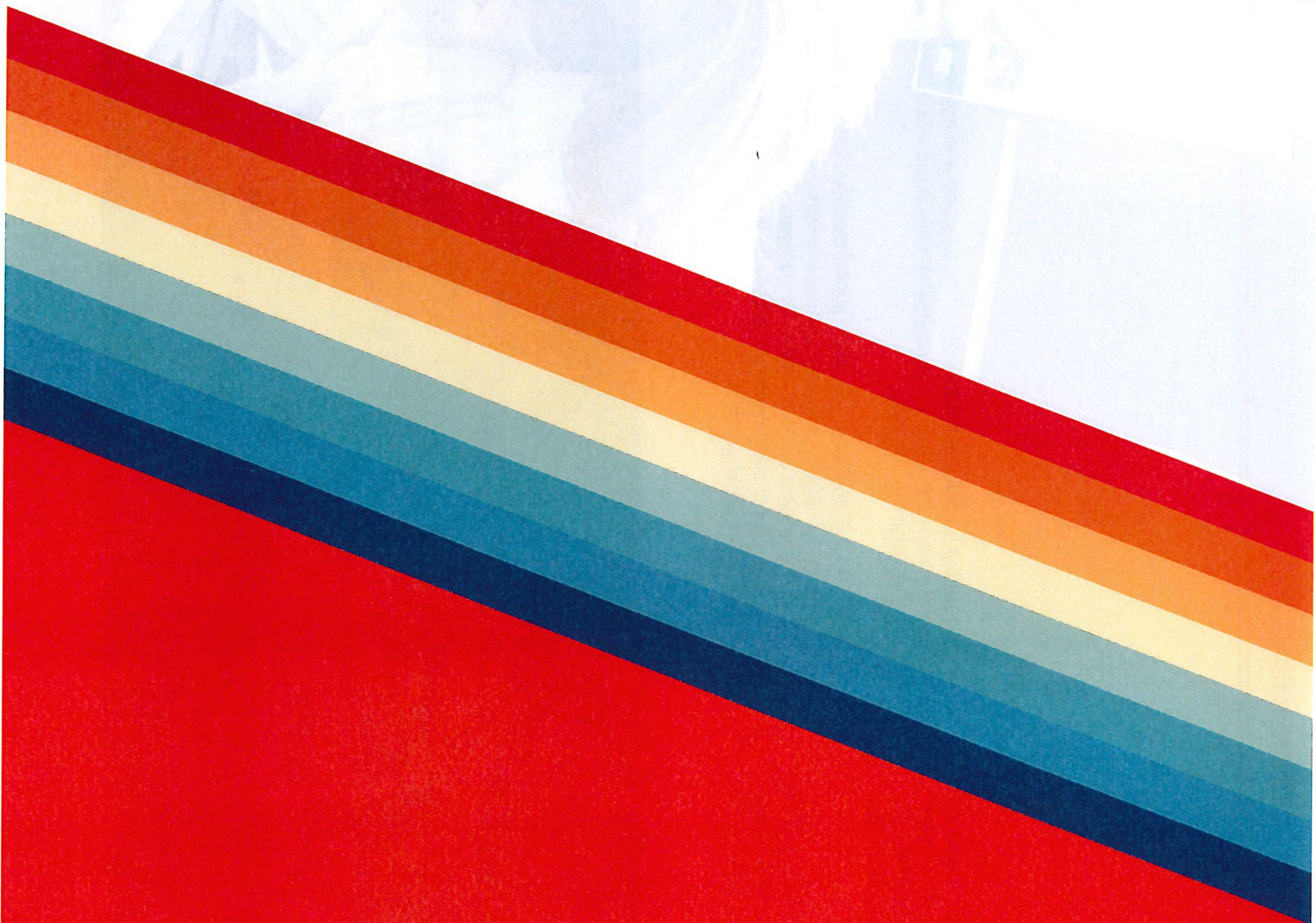
A

APPENDIX

PAGE 99

1

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The study area for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan covers a 2.4-mile area bounded by Merle Hay Road to the west and the Des Moines River to the east. Included are the properties with direct frontage along both sides of Douglas Avenue and an additional one block north/south on Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.

The area includes many locally-owned businesses that represent the growing diversity within the City. Stretches of commercial land uses intertwine with single-family homes, multi-family residential properties, and institutional land

uses to create a mixed-use framework. The function and appearance of the corridor influences thousands of people on a daily basis who drive, walk, bike, shop, and live near the corridor.

Douglas Avenue integrates multiple neighborhoods, cultures, and community destinations that, together, create a unique environment relative to other corridors in Des Moines. The corridor is a gateway to four of Des Moines' neighborhoods where people share memories and history that are relived every time they visit the corridor.

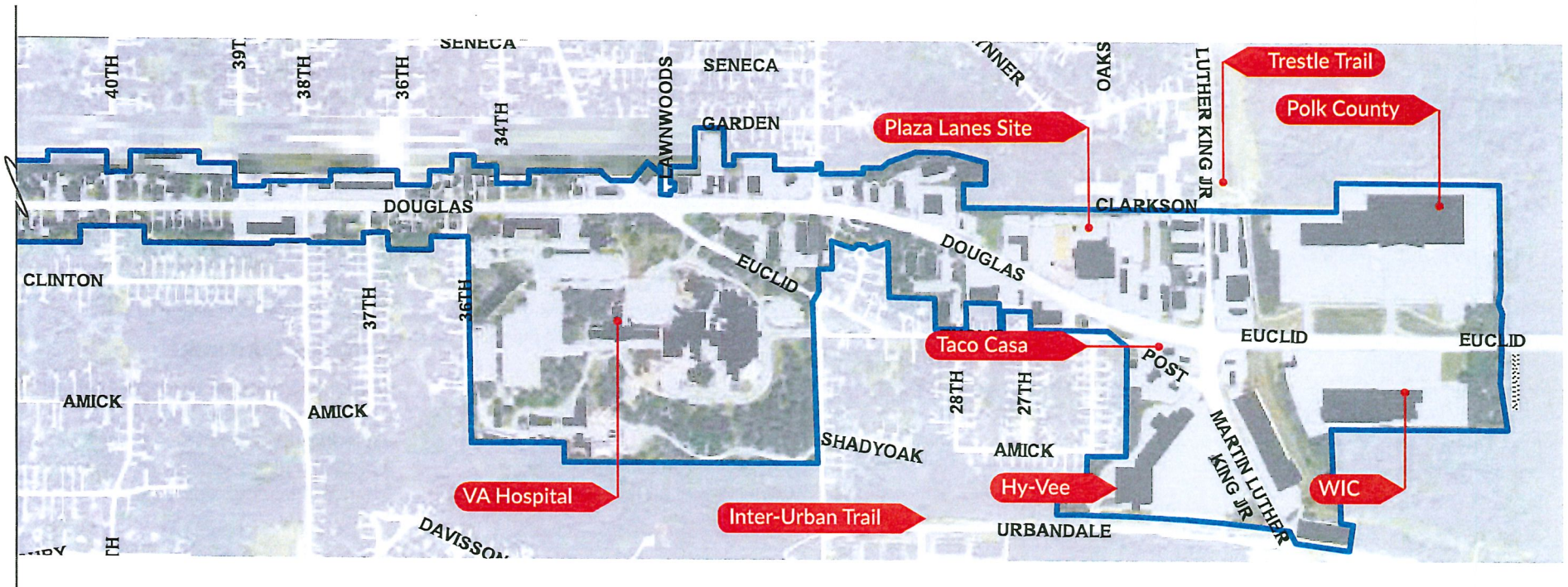


INTRODUCTION

Douglas Avenue also functions as a business corridor sustaining long-standing community establishments and nurturing new entrepreneurs. More importantly, the corridor supplies a variety of daily necessities to nearby residents such as groceries, education, personal services, and even medical care. Patrons rely on these establishments by walking, biking, taking the bus, or driving Douglas Avenue.

Beyond the study area, Douglas Avenue is a primary east-west corridor stretching across the northwest area of Des Moines. The corridor developed

significantly throughout the 1950's and 1960's and reflects the automobile-oriented characteristics of the era. Douglas Avenue extends to the west with its terminus at Northeast Alice's Road in Waukee, where it is known as Douglas Parkway. Douglas Avenue is also designated as U.S. Highway 6. To the west, Highway 6 transitions to Merle Hay Road/Hickman Road. To the east, Highway 6 continues as Euclid Avenue with access to Interstate 235, Interstate 80, and northeast to Highway 65.



WHY PLAN?

Douglas Avenue is in the midst of a change in the Des Moines market for all types of development, coupled with historic regional population growth and housing demand. These conditions make planning for the future of the corridor even more important to capture opportunities and create unity between old and new developments.

More importantly, a plan directly charges organizations and stakeholders to take action on opportunities. Without champions like the Douglas Avenue Coalition to take ownership, the plan will become obsolete.

The Douglas Avenue Coalition (DAC) formed in 2015 as a partnership between local businesses, neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, and residents committed to the improvement of Douglas Avenue to become a more vibrant, viable businesses district.

Changing development patterns and an evolving transportation system continue to influence the character of Douglas Avenue. While the Merle Hay corridor has benefited from some renewed interest by commercial developers, Douglas Avenue struggles with vacancy rates, business turnover, and property disinvestment. Commercial buildings are tired and many are obsolete for today's business needs. Landscaping throughout the corridor is minimal — a reflection of 1950's development patterns. Surrounding neighborhoods desire for better, safer physical connections to businesses so they can have the option to bike and walk.

In response to the grassroots effort, a partnership emerged between the DAC, City of Des Moines, and Polk County to initiate a plan for the Douglas Avenue Corridor in the City of Des Moines.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES

GUIDE DECISION-MAKERS

Evaluate the district and establish a vision to guide developers and property owners toward successful efforts that respect the character and dynamics of the community.

BUILD ON STRENGTHS

Identify development opportunities and improvements throughout the corridor that build on supportable business niches and integrate the residential and commercial environments.

OVERCOME CHALLENGES

Douglas Avenue faces challenges that include traffic, safety, and commercial occupancy. Develop feasible solutions to these challenges by coordinating strategic implementation steps and action policies.

IMPROVE SAFETY FOR ALL

Let Douglas Avenue offer a safe and comfortable public environment that accommodates all

modes of transportation – vehicle, public transit, bicycle, and walking.

STIMULATE INVESTMENT

Identify tangible functional improvements, streetscape amenities, activities, and events on Douglas Avenue. These actions will collectively stimulate interest and pride in the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods, with organizational support from the city and other entities.

ENGAGE NEIGHBORHOODS

Encourage neighborhood associations and residents to engage with Douglas Avenue destinations and experiences to embrace the collective identity.

ADAPT OVER TIME

Ensure the plan for Douglas Avenue is a living document that will be used and updated over time by decision-makers, property owners, businesses, and residents.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN DO?

The plan lays out a vision for the future of the Douglas Avenue corridor that focuses on priorities for city policies and public investments. It is not a firm, inflexible commitment to carry out specific projects, but a guiding vision through a changing future. The plan does (and doesn't) do several things related to the use of public and private land:

PUBLIC LAND

Public land includes the area in the public right-of-way, trails, parks, and other land owned by the City, County, and State.

Plan does:

- Initiate additional study for streetscape improvements and/or reconstruction.
- Direct future shared-use path improvements.
- Guide use of city-owned properties.

Plan doesn't:

- Neglect the impact of public improvements on adjacent properties.
- Necessitate a single design concept for street improvements.
- Guarantee specific public space improvements will be implemented exactly as represented.

PRIVATE LAND

Private land includes all land owned by private businesses, residents, or organizations other than the City of Des Moines, Polk County, State of Iowa, or Federal Government.

Plan does:

- Guide decision makers when development proposals come forward.
- Provide recommendations based on economic trends and market preference for property owners to consider and use in business decisions.
- Detail how public improvements will impact private properties.
- Provide education on the public vision and business development resources.

Plan doesn't:

- Mandate development.
- Dictate the use of private property.

HISTORY OF THE CORRIDOR

The history of Douglas Avenue is special to many people. The plan seeks to integrate and leverage the historic elements of the corridor with revitalization strategies and destination enhancements.

Douglas Avenue represented the fringe of Des Moines when it was initially built. The trolley route of the early 1900's, now the Inter-Urban Trail, provided access to the area and stimulated the nearby demand for housing and commercial uses.

When growth eventually expanded to the north in the 1950's, land around Douglas Avenue began to change, experiencing more highway-oriented development. Drive-through restaurants and Plaza Lanes gave people a place to gather and socialize. In the last 40 years, the viability of the commercial clusters have changed as customer spending patterns have changed. Even the viability of Merle Hay Mall is subject to these pressures of customer spending habits.

The flooding of the Des Moines River and the expanding floodplain designation continues to place pressure to rethink areas for the future for resiliency and leverage the river itself as an amenity for the area.

Many icons have been lost over the decades, most recently Plaza Lanes which was destroyed by a fire during this planning process. Several businesses remain strong and stand as local iconic features, like Taco Casa. In recent years, the area has experienced an influx of cultural resources and ethnic-oriented food establishments, both grocery and restaurants.

Des Moines' neighborhoods continued to evolve and develop. Douglas Avenue connects four Des Moines neighborhoods – Merle Hay, Beaver,

Lower Beaver, and Prospect Park. These neighborhoods have their own unique characteristics that have influenced the development and business mix along Douglas Avenue overtime. A snapshot of each neighborhood's demographics is provided in these pages.



Wakonsa Bridge was built in 1905 for trolley access.



Plaza Lanes site after the 2017 fire.

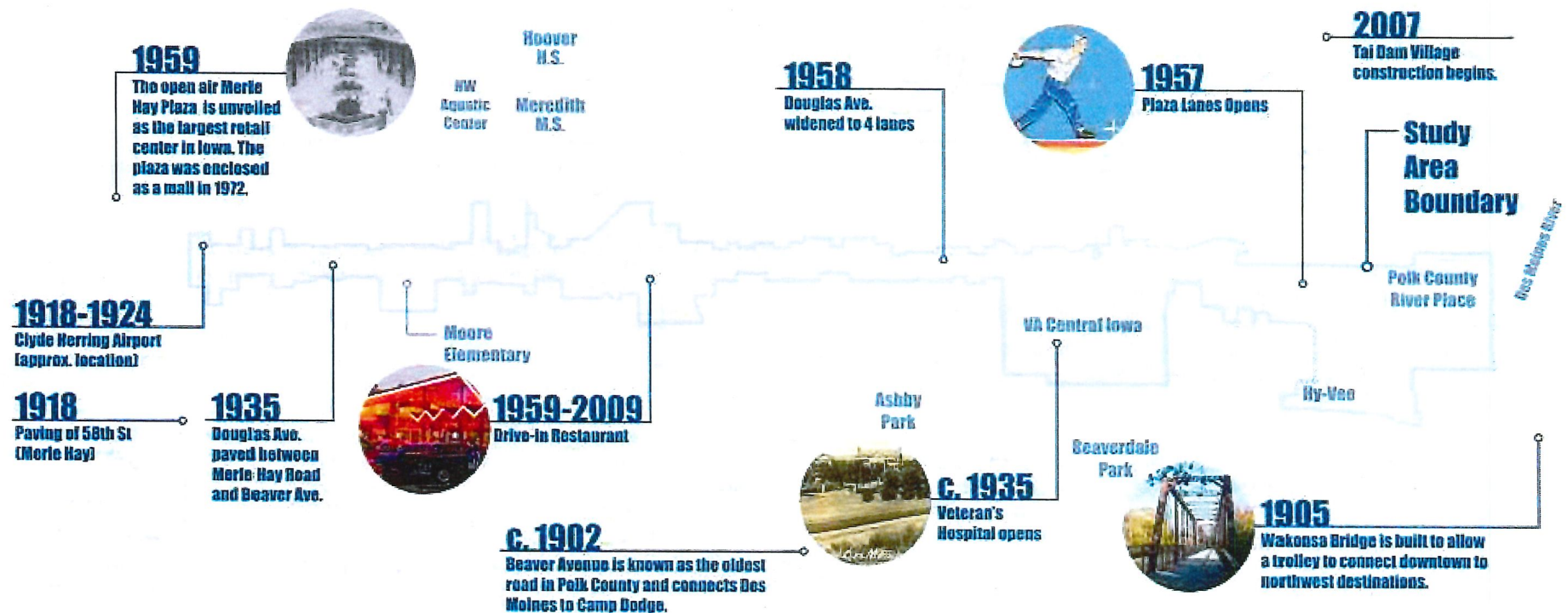


Veterans Hospital, circa 1935.



Former restaurant near the intersection of Beaver Avenue and Douglas Avenue.

HISTORY OF THE CORRIDOR



KEY DATES IN CENTRAL IOWA

- 1905 - 1949: Urbandale streetcar/trolley connects area to Downtown Des Moines and opens the area to residential development.
- 1954: The new I-80/I-35 interstate 1.5 miles north of Douglas Avenue is proposed. The Merle Hay Road interchange opens in 1959.
- 1961: First section of Interstate 235 opens.
- 1976: Valley West Mall opens.

BUILD ON PREVIOUS EFFORTS

The City of Des Moines and its metropolitan area is experiencing remarkable population growth and subsequent change in development pressures, commercial demand, and quality of life amenities. The Douglas Avenue Corridor will continue to undergo similar changes as patterns in travel and traditional commercial development evolve.

The City of Des Moines has completed, and continues to advance, planning efforts to think about the future. Initiatives relevant to Douglas Avenue include:

MoveDSM (2018)

MoveDSM is the Transportation Master Plan and is the City's road map for future mobility improvements. City staff provided input throughout the planning process to ensure recommendations for Douglas Avenue align with the policies of MoveDSM. Specific to Douglas Avenue, MoveDSM notes the following items:

- Identifies Douglas Avenue as one of City's more dangerous streets.
- Recommends further study of street conversion feasibility from 4-lanes to 3-lanes.

Plan DSM (2016)

Plan DSM is the Comprehensive Plan for Des Moines that lays out the vision for future land uses and has relevant aspirations for Douglas Avenue:

- Creation of a general vision for the city that includes "vibrant, healthy, and walkable neighborhoods; housing that offers a diversity of choices; a complete transportation system; protected natural resources; support for global residents from all heritages; and a vibrant and creative cultural and recreational environment."

- Identification of neighborhood, community, and regional nodes along Douglas Avenue:
 - Community nodes at the intersection of Beaver Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
 - Regional node at Merle Hay Road.
 - Neighborhood Mixed Use at 38th Street.
- Provision of future land uses that are a mix of low/medium density residential, mixed use and public/semi-public uses.

PlanDSM identifies goals related to nine topical elements such as Land Use and Transportation. These goals relate to this plan, including:

- Land Use Goal 2: Direct new growth and redevelopment to areas with existing infrastructure and nodes and corridors based on proximity to transit, shopping, services, and public amenities.
- Land Use Goal 3: Prepare corridor plans for significant North-South and East-West transit routes to identify development and redevelopment opportunities aligning with the goals and policies of PlanDSM.
 - LU18: Survey existing commercial areas along corridors to identify those properties that are locationally and functionally in decline or obsolete.
 - LU19: Identify alternative land uses and adaptive reuses for commercial properties that are both functionally and locationally obsolete as part of a corridor plan.
 - LU21 Consider the potential for converting travel lanes to bike lanes and wider sidewalks while maintaining the ability to move traffic as intended.
 - LU22: Identify landscape enhancements, including green infrastructure, to beautify corridors and encourage private investment.

REDESIGNING THE MOST DANGEROUS STREETS

WHY ARE UNDIVIDED FOUR-LANE STREETS DANGEROUS?

Only 4% of Des Moines' streets are four-lane undivided roads, but nearly half (42%) of all traffic fatalities between 2012-2016 occurred on these streets. Four-lane undivided streets have inherent design flaws that make traffic crashes more likely. These streets force through traffic and left turning traffic to share the lane and have no method of separation between traffic traveling in opposite directions, both of which create numerous conflict points that can lead to crashes. Additionally, vehicle speeds can vary significantly in different lanes and drivers frequently change lanes to avoid slow or stopped vehicles. These streets are also dangerous for people biking and walking because they lack safe, comfortable places for people to bike and force people walking to cross long distances without any refuge. The presence of multiple travel lanes in one direction of travel can also inhibit visibility of people walking.

HOW CAN WE MAKE THESE STREETS SAFER?

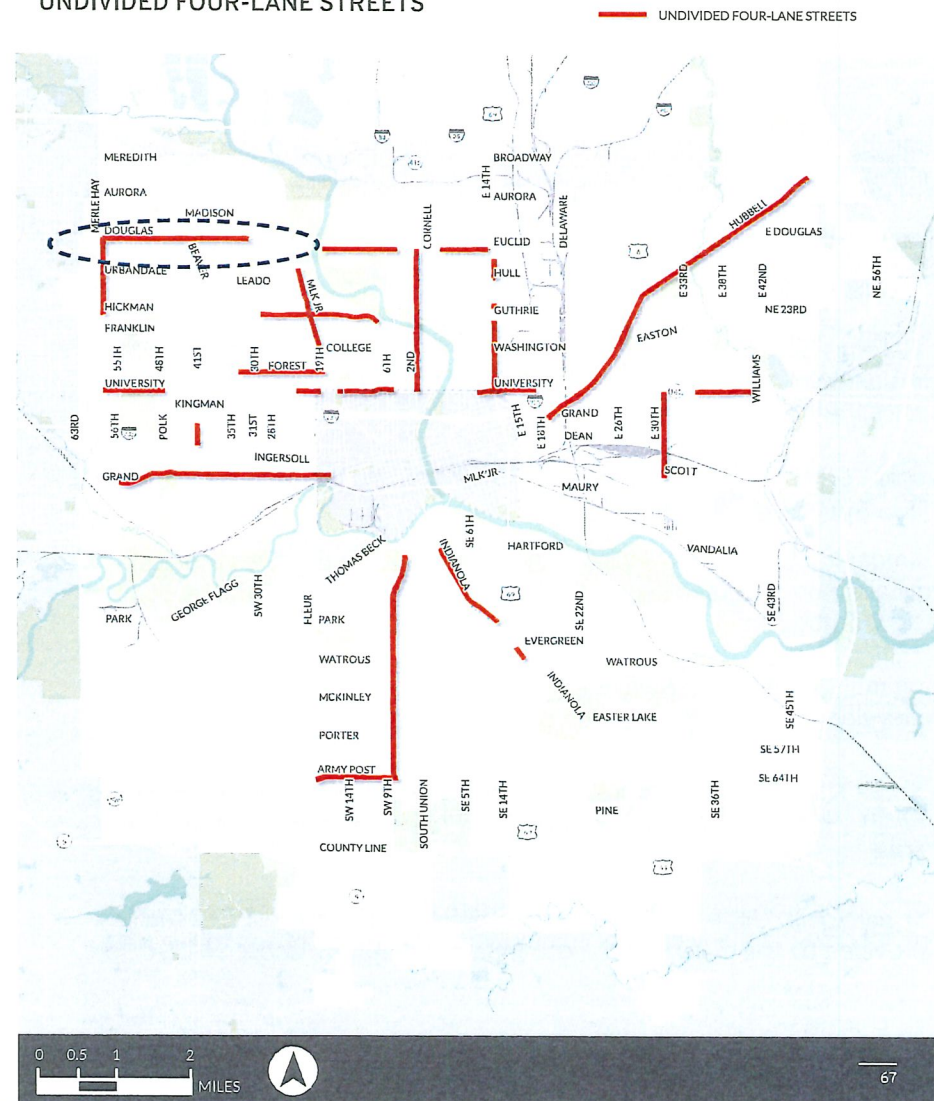
The most common and successful way to retrofit four-lane undivided streets is to reduce the number of travel lanes from four to two and install a two-way left turn lane (known as a road diet or 4:3 conversion). Introducing a turn lane reduces the speed differential between cars and eliminates conflict points that cause most crashes. Any additional space can be reallocated for on-street parking, wider sidewalks and parkways, or facilities for people biking. In Iowa, the addition of a two-way left turn lane has been shown to reduce crashes by as much as 70%.¹⁷

While road diets reduce the number of travel lanes, they do not adversely affect travel times and actually increase lane capacity at certain volume thresholds. The Des Moines Area MPO suggests that road diets can be considered on all streets with less than 20,000 vehicles per day and other studies have found that road diets can work on streets that carry as many as 23,000 vehicles¹⁸. While the decision to implement a road diet requires careful study, in general streets with less than 15,000 vehicles per day are good candidates for road diets, streets between 15-20,000 vehicles will likely work depending on certain factors (e.g., signal spacing and timing), and streets with more than 20,000 can work for a road diet but require detailed study and design.¹⁹

STREET	PROJECTED AADT	
	2020	2040
FOREST AVE.	9,050	9,274
E 30TH. ST.	10,814	12,312
HICKMAN RD.	13,002	14,623
GRAND AVE.	13,166	14,145
HUBBELL AVE.	14,053	16,587
UNIVERSITY AVE.	15,477	17,106
42ND ST.	16,013	16,869
DOUGLAS AVE.	18,508	19,909
ARMY POST RD.	19,161	19,839
2ND AVE.	16,729	20,053
SW 9TH ST.	19,861	20,261
E 14TH. ST.	18,972	20,753
EUCLID AVE.	18,087	20,167
INDIANOLA AVE.	19,966	21,184
MERLE HAY RD.	22,842	24,423
MLK JR. PKWY.	23,215	26,085

Green = < 15,000 vehicles per day
 Yellow = 15-20,000 vehicles per day
 Red = > 20,000 vehicles per day

UNDIVIDED FOUR-LANE STREETS



MoveDSM EXCERPT

The above pages from the MoveDSM plan illustrate the identification of Douglas Avenue as one of Des Moines' "Most Dangerous Streets" and discusses opportunities to improve the safety of these streets.

- Transportation Goal 1: Develop a complete multi-modal transportation network for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and automobiles.
- Transportation Goal 3: Provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles through walking as a primary mode of transportation.
- Housing Goal 1: Provide a diversity of housing options to accommodate residents of all ages, income levels, household sizes, and cultural backgrounds.
- Parks & Recreation Goal 5: Preserve, restore, and enhance access to the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers.
- Community Character & Neighborhoods Goal 2: Further Des Moines' revitalization efforts to improve the strength, stability, and vitality of all neighborhoods.
- Community Character & Neighborhoods Goal 3: Promote the redevelopment and revitalization of neighborhood nodes and corridors.
- Social Equity Goal 2: Ensure that all residents have convenient access to healthy food, health care, safe environments, and choices for an active lifestyle.
- Social Equity Goal 4: Continue to celebrate the diversity of Des Moines provided by the many cultural communities that have chosen to live here.

LiveDSM

LiveDSM is the Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan for Des Moines completed in 2019 and is the City's plan for long-range park improvements. The plan is driven by five goals, all of which relate to the ultimate plan for the Douglas Avenue Corridor:

- Goal 1: Deliver Equitable Facilities and Programs
- Goal 2: Support Year-Round Programming that Attracts People to Parks
- Goal 3: Make Parks and Trails the Heart of the Community
- Goal 4: Improve Natural Systems
- Goal 5: Launch New Approaches to Parks and Recreation

Neighborhood Indicators Report

The 2015 report provides data on Des Moines' neighborhoods, including commercial indicators for land and building inventory, property values, building conditions, and retail supply and demand.

The neighborhoods associated with Douglas Avenue (Merle Hay, Lower Beaver, Beaverdale, and Prospect Park) were aggregated as one study area; this aggregated study area had the highest non-auto retail supply surplus of all the Des Moines study areas. The surplus was estimated to be 1,515,194 square feet.

Neighborhood Plans

Transportation and development on the corridor influence the surrounding neighborhoods. Their residents also use the corridor for shopping, eating, commercial services, recreation, and employment. The Lower Beaver (2013), Beavertown (2011), and Merle Hay (2008) neighborhoods have plans that identify issues and future goals. The Prospect Park neighborhood, while represented in the study area, does not have a formal neighborhood plan. Relevant highlights from the neighborhood plans are as follows:

- Lower Beaver Neighborhood Plan
 - The neighborhood identified housing, infrastructure, parks & trails, and the commercial corridor as priorities.
 - The plan expressed a concern about commercial building turnover on Douglas Avenue and Euclid Avenue as well as a desire to enhance the viability of neighborhood commercial areas.
- Beavertown Neighborhood Plan
 - The neighborhood identified the need to ensure upcoming development projects fit the character of the neighborhood.
 - Online survey respondents had four top priorities: housing, overall school quality, elementary school choices, and streets/sidewalks.
- Merle Hay Neighborhood Plan
 - The neighborhood identified five priority areas: Neighborhood Identity, Commercial Development, Infrastructure, Parks & Recreation, and Housing.
 - The plan expressed a concern about lack of diverse housing options especially townhouses, condos, and senior housing options.
 - The plan also identified a goal to improve pedestrian access throughout the neighborhood.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2011)

The plan strives to improve active transportation throughout the City, recommending improvements for better bikeability and walkability to accommodate transportation needs for residents in different stages of life. Douglas Avenue is not identified as a key bicycle route in this plan. Instead, the plan notes two east-west bicycle routes parallel to Douglas Avenue:

- Madison Avenue is an existing bike-friendly route one block north of Douglas Avenue
- Urbandale Avenue/the Inter-Urban Trail provides a parallel bicycle route south of Douglas Avenue.





2

PLANNING PROCESS

Chapter 2 provides information on the public input received during the planning process, the stakeholders involved, and the timeline of events.

PLANNING PROCESS

This plan is a result of a public input process that involved stakeholders along the corridor, from the neighborhoods, business owners, developers, city/county/state representatives, and people with a vested interest in seeing Douglas Avenue succeed in the future.

Throughout the process, the project team had to pivot several times to respond to changing conditions. The team responded to the following changes to ensure the completed plan is a credible vision.

- Traffic Study to warrant circulation changes.
- Negotiations related to roadway changes.
- Hy-Vee properties
- New ownership and changes in development interest.
- Fire at Plaza Lanes, once an anchor to the corridor.
- Re-mapping of floodplain.

The methods used to achieve the vision of this plan include:

Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee included area residents, business owners, developers, and City staff who met at key milestones to review the progress of the plan and offer course corrections to the concepts.

Plan Technical Committee. The Technical Committee composed of city staff who managed the engineering and planning process and coordinated discussions with key stakeholders at Polk County, DART, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and the M.P.O. Consultation with the Technical Committee occurred regularly throughout the planning process.

Focus Groups. Focus groups in Fall 2017 included open discussions with business owners, neighbors, developers, and other stakeholders. The discussions identified issues, challenges, and opportunities for the future of Douglas Avenue.

Kick-off Event. The public kick-off event occurred in Winter 2017 for people to share concerns and ideas. Results helped establish the program for future improvements.

Online Questionnaire. A community questionnaire was launched in Winter 2017. Respondents shared their perceptions and desires for Douglas Avenue including business mix, image, and transportation. Themes emerging from the survey aligned with person-to-person engagement.

Stakeholder Meetings. Individual interviews were held throughout the planning process. Many of the discussions were topic specific to unique properties, such as the Veterans Affairs Hospital and Moore Elementary School.

Design Studio. A three-day design studio engaged residents, business owners, and other stakeholders directly in designing improvements including street

design, neighborhood character, and redevelopment possibilities. Participants provided suggestions for designers to explore and test.

Design Studio Encore. The project team met several times throughout 2018 and 2019 to prepare additional concepts in response to changing conditions and new information. Changed conditions included the revised floodplain maps along the Des Moines River, the fire at Plaza Lanes, and the closing of businesses along the corridor.

Open House. A public open house in Fall 2019 concluded nearly two years of planning effort for the public to provide additional feedback. Results were reviewed by over 100 participants.

PLANNING PROCESS



**“EXCITED TO HAVE A
VIBRANT DOUGLAS
AVENUE CORRIDOR”**

**“THIS IS A GREAT
OPPORTUNITY
TO IMPROVE THE
DOUGLAS AREA TO
KEEP THIS AREA
RELEVANT”**

**“BE BOLD. MAKE BIG
PLANS”**



- Planning Participants

Residents, business owners, and other stakeholders provided input throughout the process through open houses, focus group meetings, an online survey, and design studios.

SURVEY SUMMARY

The results of the survey unveiled several opportunities for Douglas Avenue and several challenges to address. Over 280 people responded to the survey, representing a wide range of age groups and neighborhoods.

Notable highlights include:

- People generally visit Douglas Avenue on daily and weekly basis, primarily by vehicle. More than 1/4 of respondents walk to destinations almost daily, weekly, or monthly.
- The top reason people visit Douglas Avenue is for routine shopping. About a third of respondents visit restaurants and bars on a weekly basis.
- Overall, most respondents would be likely to visit Douglas Avenue if the product and services they want are present.
- People feel there are improvements needed in transportation and community character features:
 - Approximately 90% of respondents rated pedestrian facilities, pedestrian crossings, more parks/recreation amenities, and the restoration of facades as important, very important, or extremely important to the future of the district.
 - More than 90% of respondents rated improved streetscapes as as important, very important, or extremely important to the future of the district.
- People feel more strongly about certain actions to improve Douglas Avenue over others. The top three improvements suggested for the corridor include:
 - Demolishing obsolete buildings.
 - More infill and reuse of existing buildings.
- More incentives for private investment.
- Most respondents felt that improving the safety of pedestrians and cyclists is a top action to complete in the next five years, including calming traffic, creating a buffer between street and sidewalk, making crossings safer, upgrading walking and biking paths, redesigning roadways, and improving access and connectivity. Some respondents were concerned that a potential road diet would increase traffic congestion.
- In open-ended responses, the majority of respondents showed a desire to enhance the appearance of the corridor by improving the streetscape, repurposing or demolishing blighted properties, and improving the condition of buildings, lighting, and signage.

“TRAFFIC EXCEEDS SPEED LIMITS ON A REGULAR BASIS”

“FOR ANY BUSINESS OR AREA TO THRIVE, YOU NEED EASY ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WALKING AND DRIVING”

“WITH THE SURROUNDING STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS, THIS COULD BE A FANTASTIC LOCATION FOR BUSINESSES. ”

-Survey respondents

**WHAT ARE THE
TWO MOST
IMPORTANT
ACTIONS,
PROJECTS,
OR USES TO
COMPLETE?
(SURVEY
RESPONSES)**

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ "Improve streets and sidewalks" | ✓ "Streetscape beautification" |
| ✓ "Make sure sidewalks are available" | ✓ "Water destination capabilities on the river" |
| ✓ "Better pedestrian/bicycle access" | ✓ "Pedestrian amenities and safety" |
| ✓ "Cleaning up or tearing down vacant buildings" | ✓ "Business signage" |
| ✓ "Community gathering space" | ✓ "More high quality housing along Douglas" |
| ✓ "More local businesses, walking to them safety" | ✓ "Clean up the urban blight and revitalize" |
| ✓ "Slow down traffic" | ✓ "Festival or cultural activities" |
| ✓ "Maintain the character of the surrounding area" | ✓ "Greenspace/park area" |

VISION - THEMES

Six themes emerged from the public input process to structure the overall program for future improvements. The themes articulate the priorities and general directions from the hundreds of hours of discussions and designing. The themes are the basis for guiding the future policies and actions.

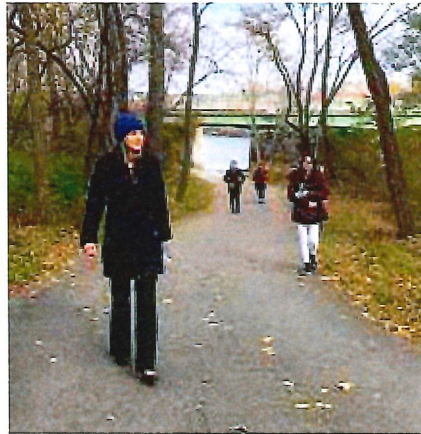


- I. STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS
- II. CREATE AN IDENTITY
- III. CELEBRATE BUSINESS DIVERSITY
- IV. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS
- V. IMPROVE SAFETY
- VI. WELCOME PEOPLE

I. STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS

Strengthening connections is about improving relationships between Douglas Avenue, its neighbors, Des Moines River, recreation, and business-to-business.

Today, the corridor primarily serves as a connecting commuter route for those passing through the space. Opportunities to connect people and destinations within and across the corridor are challenged by speeding traffic, wide roadways, and disjointed access to businesses.



GOALS:

- Emphasize walkability as important as automobile travel.
- Fill gaps in pedestrian pathways.
- Minimize land use conflicts.
- Eliminate barriers for crossing street.
- Improve accessibility to businesses.
- Create relationships with Merle Hay Mall and the Des Moines River.
- Connect people through indoor and outdoor gathering spaces.

Participants in the kick-off meeting and design studios identified a clear desire to rethink Douglas Avenue as a corridor that brought people together and helped them better connect to businesses and recreational uses.

In focus group conversations, business owners and developers further emphasized the need to improve the public realm connections in order to encourage private investment along the corridor.

II. CREATE AN IDENTITY

Residents near the corridor can name a place on Douglas Avenue, but do not identify Douglas Avenue itself as a place. Places like the East Village, Beaverdale, and Ingersoll were once locations that needed to establish their identity and build their brand over decades. Similarly, the story of Douglas Avenue should be celebrated with the help of organizations like the Douglas Avenue Coalition and public and private development improvements to build a name that resonates with customers - people who work, live, and shop.



GOALS:

- Improve the visual appearance and identity of the corridor.
- Uncover the story of Douglas Avenue and celebrate its history.

III. CELEBRATE BUSINESS DIVERSITY

The corridor hosts a diverse mix of restaurants and grocery stores that are locally owned and appeal to local and international markets.

Some unique restaurants to dine at include Taco Casa, TNT Vietnamese, Africana Halal, Patience's African Cuisine, Taste of China, Maria's Mexican Food, Wasabi Chi, India Star, and Abelardo's.

Customers can shop in a variety of grocery stores, collecting everyday items at Hy-Vee or shopping for international groceries at African Express, Myanmar, Douglas Halal Meats and Grocery, Golden Land Food Market, and BDS Star Asian Grocery.

Douglas Avenue hosts a tremendous diverse collection of food offerings that appeals to a broad market. This somewhat undiscovered characteristic should be celebrated.



GOALS:

- Celebrate the unique ethnic businesses of the corridor.
- Continue to serve daily needs of residents and businesses.
- Promote the role of businesses to act as gathering and community spaces.

IV. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are the foundation for revitalizing the corridor. No single person or organization can sustain the momentum needed to realize the full potential of Douglas Avenue as a vital corridor in Des Moines.

The Douglas Avenue Coalition (DAC) is the pioneering group of local residents and business leaders who helped launch this plan and bring together a number of partners to help realize the possibilities for the corridor and neighborhoods. Initial partnerships that are generating momentum for change include the DAC, Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC), neighborhood associations, Iowa Department of Transportation, Veterans Affairs, the City of Des Moines, DART, the Des Moines West Side Chamber, and Polk County.



GOALS:

- Build existing and new partnerships.
- Coordinate and seek funding opportunities.
- Cultivate champions for area improvements.

V. IMPROVE SAFETY

The right-of-way, which includes the street and sidewalks, is the principal public space of the Douglas Avenue Corridor.

The roadway's design and traffic speed discourage pedestrians and cyclists from traveling along the street and nearly prohibits crossing it. Douglas Avenue splinters neighborhoods and forces people to experience unsafe conditions by walking along the curb or crossing at illogical locations.



GOALS:

- Improve safety for all modes of transportation.
- Improve the perception, and sometimes reality, of crime through better design.

Douglas Avenue can be a place where people on foot and bikes, in cars or buses, are welcome and can enjoy a safe and comfortable experience.

VI. WELCOME PEOPLE

The vision for Douglas Avenue includes the creation of a welcoming, vibrant atmosphere. People of all ages, abilities, and cultures should feel welcome to enjoy existing and future amenities along Douglas Avenue. Positive interactions create memories and will attract people to Douglas Avenue to live, shop, and play.



GOALS:

- Improve the appearance of the corridor.
- Strengthen business opportunities.
- Celebrate diversity.
- Create destinations that attract area residents and new visitors.



3

TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter 3 reviews the current conditions and opportunities of Douglas Avenue (2017-2019) including demographics, businesses, transportation features, and development patterns.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief review of the area's trends and opportunities facing the businesses and residents. It establishes the framework to guide concepts in future chapters.

NEIGHBORHOODS + PEOPLE

Douglas Avenue connects to four of Des Moines' neighborhoods. While the central and west areas are relatively comparable, the area to the east tends to make less money, be younger, and more racially diverse. Profiles for each neighborhood are summarized in the following pages.

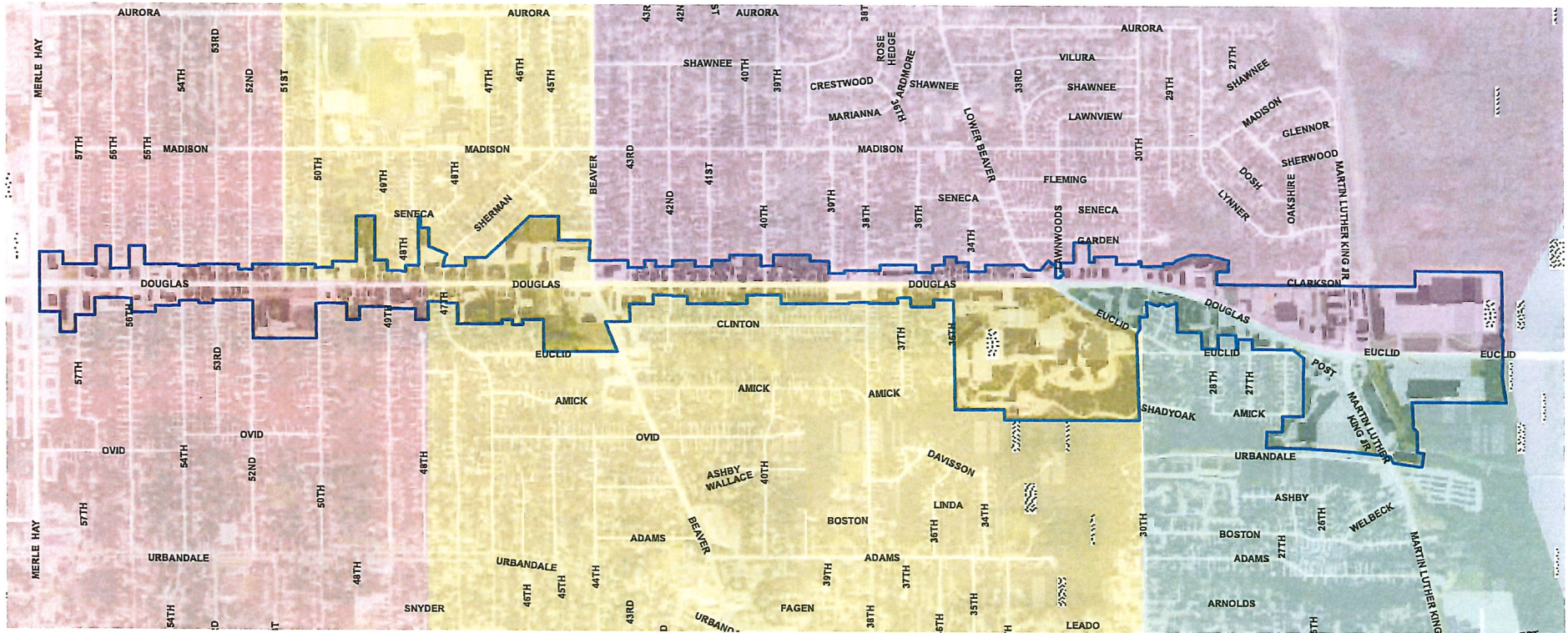
ASSETS + CHARACTER

In addition to formal neighborhoods, Douglas Avenue has several distinct areas that exhibit different characteristics and contain unique assets over its two miles. The corridor can be defined by six character zones. These zones form the current experience of people visiting, traveling through, living in, or working in the corridor. These zones include transitions between commercial clusters, residential and civic uses.

CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

Douglas Avenue experiences its challenges, both functional and aesthetic. Some are site specific challenges that present opportunities in themselves. Often challenges relate to access, building conditions and use.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND PEOPLE



	Diversity Index	Owner/ Renter	Vacancy	Median House Income
DSM COMPARISON:	60.2	55%/37%	8%	\$52,400
DSM METRO COMPARISON:	43.1	63%/31%	6%	\$70,200

Source: ESRI, 2019

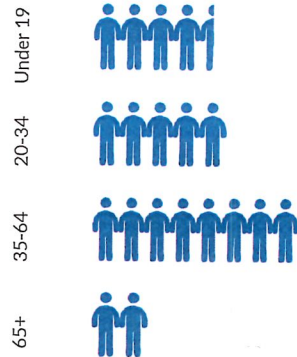
Merle Hay	Beaverdale
Lower Beaver	Prospect Park

MERLE HAY NEIGHBORHOOD / ~9,500 PEOPLE

The Merle Hay Neighborhood envelops Douglas Avenue between Merle Hay Road and 51st Street. Commercial uses are the primary features along Douglas Avenue along with Moore Elementary School on the east. Most homes surrounding the commercial uses were built in the mid-20th Century and feature small single-family dwellings.

The stability of commercial areas on Douglas Avenue near Merle Hay Road influences the quality of the surrounding single-family housing.

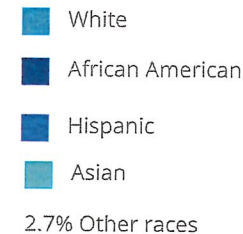
AGE



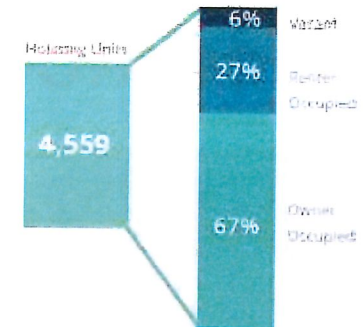
RACE/ETHNICITY



Diversity Index: 38.5



HOUSING



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$57,400
PER CAPITA INCOME: \$32,400

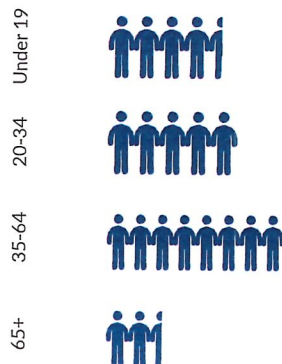
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$134,500

BEAVERDALE NEIGHBORHOOD / ~12,000 PEOPLE

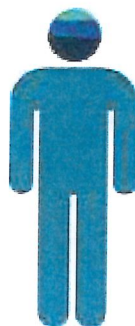
The intersection of Douglas Avenue and Beaver Avenue is the gateway into the Beaverdale Neighborhood. Residential uses are mostly single-family with few multi-family pockets adjacent to commercial nodes.

Incomes and home values are relatively higher. Therefore, the character and relationship of uses along Douglas Avenue will continue to be important to the adjacent areas of Beaverdale.

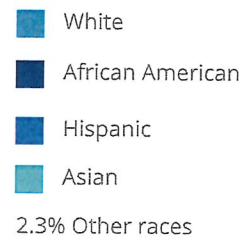
AGE



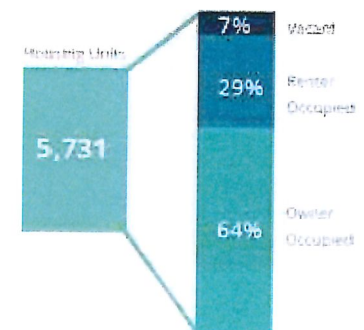
RACE/ETHNICITY



Diversity Index: 40.4



HOUSING



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$67,600
PER CAPITA INCOME: \$36,600

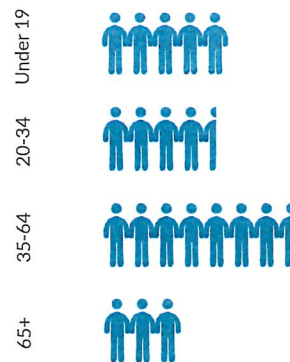
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$167,800

LOWER BEAVER NEIGHBORHOOD / ~6,200 PEOPLE

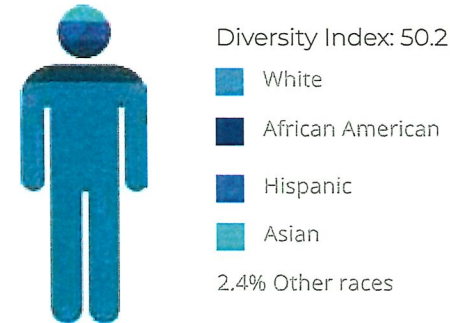
Many commercial uses line the southern border of the neighborhood along Douglas Avenue, and acts as the southern gateway into residential areas. The uses along Douglas Avenue include a variety of housing styles, many are reaching 50-years old and owner-occupied.

Like the Beavertale neighborhood, the character of Douglas Avenue is a high priority. Future projects on Douglas Avenue need to better manage transitions between uses through site design.

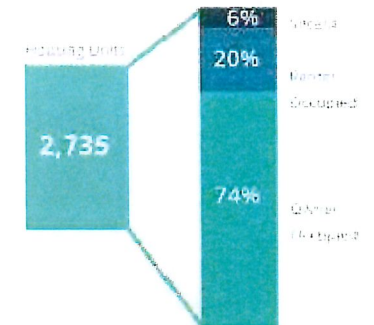
AGE



RACE/ETHNICITY



HOUSING



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$61,600
PER CAPITA INCOME: \$31,300

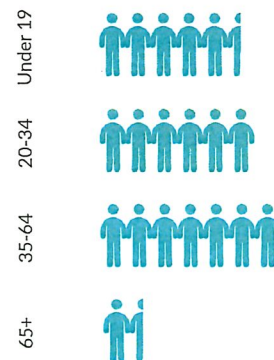
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$160,000

PROSPECT PARK NEIGHBORHOOD / ~3,200 PEOPLE

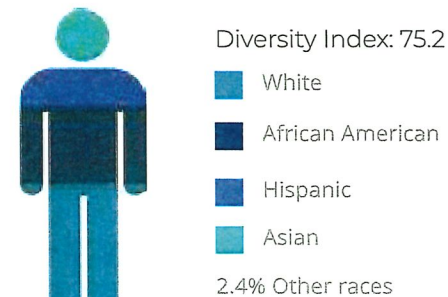
Prospect Park is more racially diverse and has lower incomes than other corridor neighborhoods and the region. The area of the neighborhood along Douglas Avenue consists of mostly commercial and multi-family uses.

The diversity of households supports a wide variety of businesses on the corridor. Essential businesses need to remain accessible to residents in Prospect Park, particularly for residents who rely on walking and transit for transportation.

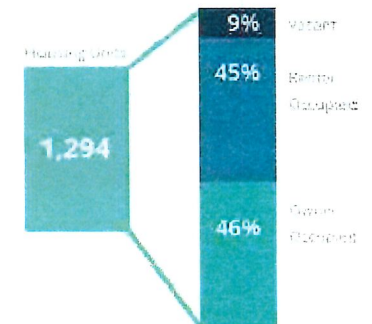
AGE



RACE/ETHNICITY



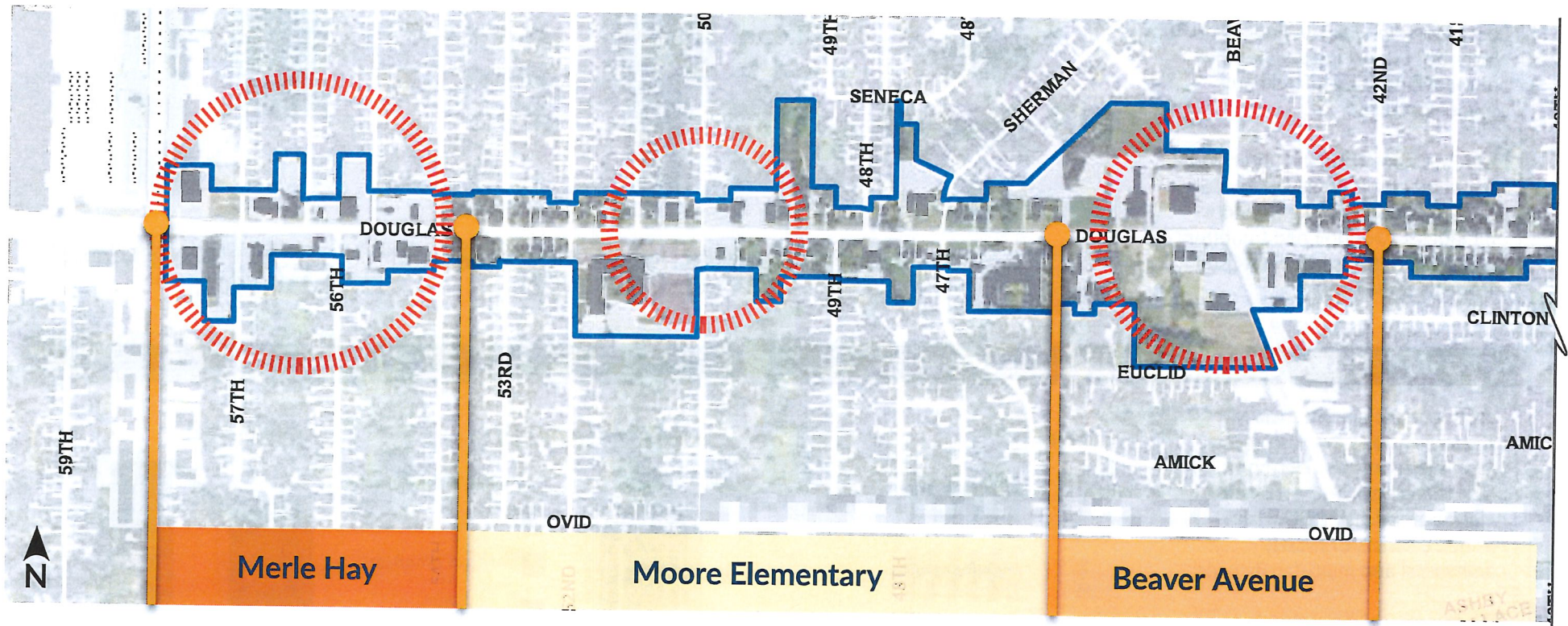
HOUSING



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$51,150
PER CAPITA INCOME: \$20,830

MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$114,000

CORRIDOR CHARACTER & ASSETS



ACTIVITY NODE

MERLE HAY ZONE

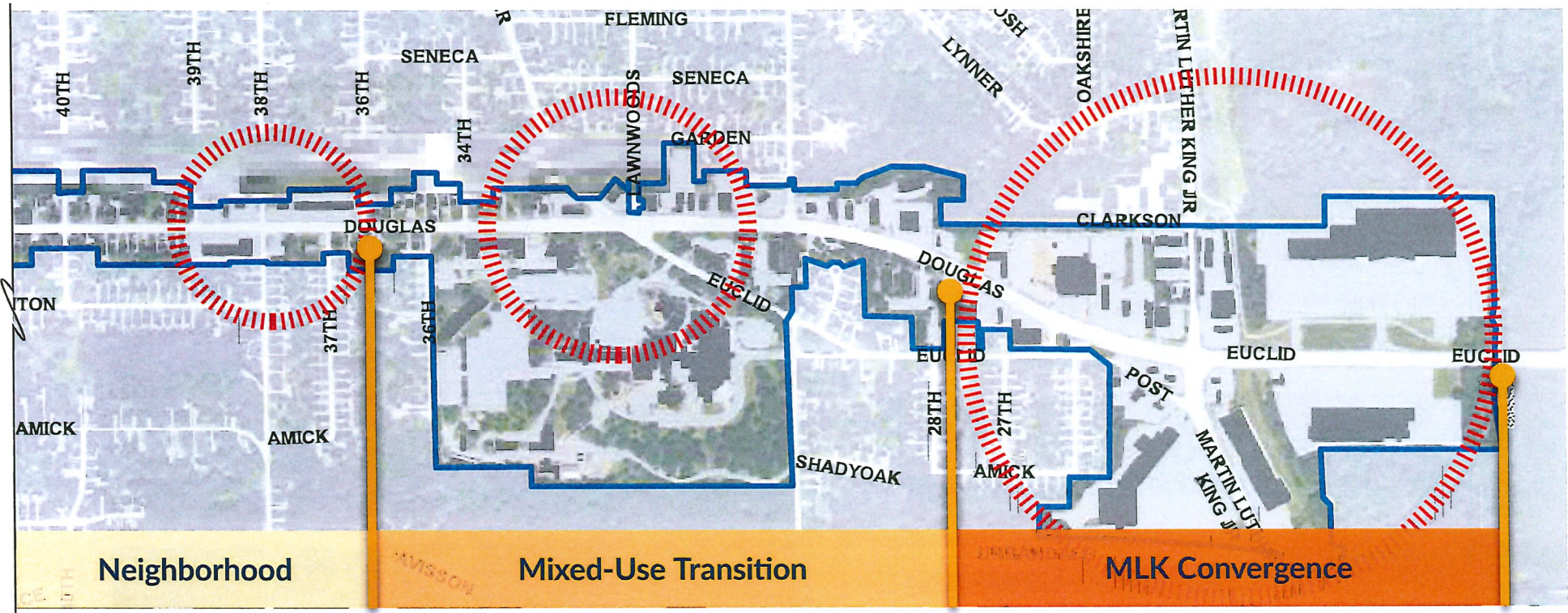
This zone is characterized by new strip development along Merle Hay Road and older established businesses east of 57th Street.

MOORE ELEMENTARY ZONE

Single-family residential uses with a small activity node at 50th Street, including Moore Elementary and two restaurants that complement the surrounding neighborhood without significant land use conflicts.

BEAVER AVENUE ZONE

A community commercial node at the Beaver and Douglas Avenue intersection contains a variety of uses.

**NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE**

Residential uses characterize the portion of Douglas Avenue between 42nd Street and 36th Street that transitions to a small mixed-use cluster around the 38th Street intersection.

LOWER BEAVER TRANSITION ZONE

The span of Douglas Avenue between 36th Street and 28th Street marks the transition from primarily residential uses to the commercial node at MLK Parkway. The zone contains a variety of uses.

MLK CONVERGENCE

The intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Parkway and Douglas Avenue marks a large Community Node with a variety of land uses.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

MERLE HAY ZONE

Commercial development surrounding the Merle Hay Mall expands east along Douglas Avenue until 54th Street. The zone is characterized by new strip development along Merle Hay Road and older established businesses east of 57th Street.

Challenges to Overcome

- Properties have multiple access points along Douglas Avenue with parking surrounding most commercial buildings.
- Areas east of 57th experience periodic vacancy.
- The community engagement process indicates a potential prevalence of crime around the hotel.
- Pole signs and overhead utility lines are the prominent image for travelers.
- Older commercial properties have largely been built with little to no landscaping. The high amount of paving has contributed to occasional stormwater problems in the area during large storm events.
- Small lots pose a challenge for redevelopment; property assembly may be required.

Opportunities to Leverage

- Close proximity to the Merle Hay Mall commercial center with a large regional customer pull.
- Vacant land near the intersection of Merle Hay Road ready for development.
- Two vacant parking lots north of Douglas Avenue between 57th and 55th Street are strong opportunities for residential infill.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



MOORE ELEMENTARY ZONE

The Merle Hay zone quickly transitions to single-family residential uses at 54th Street and continues to 47th Street. Moore Elementary School and a small commercial node complement the surrounding neighborhood without significant land use conflicts. Commercial buildings at the 50th Street intersection face Douglas Avenue while commercial buildings to the west and east are perpendicular to Douglas Avenue with side-facing entrances and parking lots. The eastern edge of the zone is characterized by a fire station and church.

Challenges to Overcome

- Douglas Avenue as a barrier to access Moore Elementary and adjoining neighborhoods.
- Access to commercial businesses near the 50th Street intersection, especially during school start and end times.

Opportunities to Leverage

- Appealing and well-kept residential homes.
- Vacant land between 50th Street and 48th Place for infill development.
- Well-maintained commercial buildings.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BEAVER AVENUE ZONE

A senior living complex and church form the western edge of this zone near 47th Street. The zone then transitions into several neighborhood commercial uses around the Beaver Avenue intersection. Buildings are set back from Douglas Avenue with parking along Douglas Avenue. Properties are well-landscaped and in good condition, excluding a vacant building on the southwest corner of the Beaver intersection.

Challenges to Overcome

- The vacant gas station at the southwest corner of the intersection sits on a small lot for reuse.
- A billboard at the southwest corner of the Beaver Avenue intersection provides an unsightly view of the intersection
- A desire to maintain and improve bicyclist safety along the Beaver Avenue bicycle route.

Opportunities to Leverage

- Highly visible intersection for business viability.
- A large vacant lot on southwest quadrant is ready for development since the removal of a cellular tower.
- Attractive landscaping and buffers between Douglas Avenue and adjacent residential on most properties.
- Evidence of property investment and development.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE

East of Beaver Avenue, Douglas Avenue transitions to primarily single family residences. Between 39th Street and 36th Street, two strip commercial buildings supply a significant portion of the commercial space for the area. A small hotel and apartment occupy the southeast corner. Buildings are set back from Douglas Avenue with parking in the front and rear.

Challenges to Overcome

- Some of the commercial buildings are deteriorating with minimal upkeep.
- Reoccurring vacancy with frequent turnover of businesses.
- Perceived and verified instances of crime activity around some properties.
- Lack of buffering for pedestrians and adjacent residential from traffic and parking areas.

Opportunities to Leverage

- Larger lot sizes on the two strip centers offer room for redevelopment or renovation options.
- Desire for a better transition into residential neighborhoods, including mixed-use, greenspace, and residential density.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

MIXED-USE TRANSITION ZONE (LOWER BEAVER)

The zone contains a variety of uses. Commercial and service uses are located on the north side of Douglas Avenue while civic and multi-family uses line the south side of Douglas Avenue. The Veterans Affairs Hospital complex is the dominant use at the Lower Beaver intersection, with a scale and character not seen elsewhere along Douglas Avenue. Commercial properties are located closer to the street than other portions of Douglas Avenue. The two apartment complexes east of Lower Beaver Avenue have internal parking lots and are well buffered from Douglas Avenue by landscaping and tree cover.

Challenges to Overcome

- Many access driveways to commercial uses makes circulation difficult.
- The unique geometry of the Lower Beaver intersection diminish the impact of entryway features and active transportation safety.
- Lack of buffering between Douglas Avenue and walkways/businesses.
- Some buildings are starting to show deterioration.

Opportunities to Leverage

- The VA is a historic entryway feature on the Lower Beaver intersection that will continue to make improvements and be well-maintained.
- Good residential density and traffic volumes to support businesses.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. PARKWAY CONVERGENCE ZONE

The zone spans from the Des Moines River to 28th Street east to west, including the Harding Hills strip mall on MLK Parkway to the south. The zone contains the largest commercial area and variety of uses in the corridor. Popular destinations near the intersection include the Polk County offices, the Harding Hills Hy-Vee, the former Plaza Lanes site, the Trestle and InterUrban Trail, and community landmarks like Taco Casa. The node is characterized by commercial, medium density residential, and civic/public uses.

Commercial Character. Commercial uses range from large scale strip malls and small local service, restaurant, and grocery uses. The Harding Hills and River Plaza strip centers are each over 70,000 square feet and supply the most commercial space in the node. Automotive service uses are located on three of the four corners of the MLK intersection. Buildings are set back from Douglas Avenue to accommodate parking lots in front. Many buildings retain the original form and style with some remnants of 1950's and 1960's architecture. However, most buildings lack significant architectural features. Access driveways are abundant and most properties have multiple access points onto Douglas Avenue. The node caters to motorists and is not comfortable for pedestrians or bicyclists, excluding the trail access.

Residential Character. West of MLK, medium density residential apartment buildings are located near commercial properties, and single-family homes are located behind commercial properties. Apartment uses along Douglas Avenue and north on MLK are well screened with mature trees and elevation changes and include internal parking lots and garages.



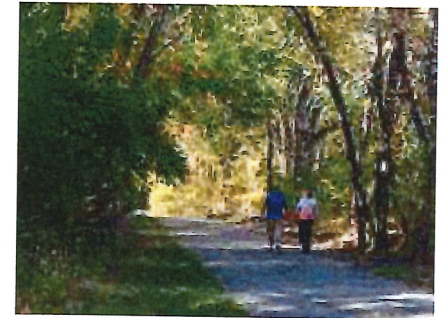
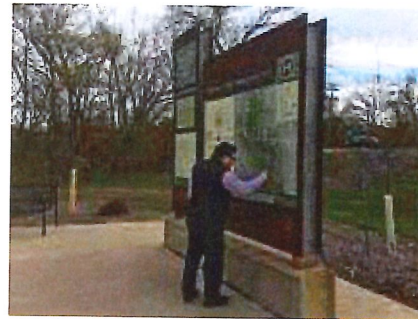
Civic/Public Use Character. The area east of MLK Parkway includes two large strip developments. On the south is the River Plaza strip center set back from the street with a sizeable un-landscaped parking lot adjacent to the street. The north strip center houses administrative offices for Polk County and the Iowa Driver License Center. The building is also set back from the street. However, a greenspace buffers the parking lot and trail from the street. A greenway adjacent to the Des Moines River includes regional trail connections along the Trestle, Inter-Urban, and Sycamore Trails.

Challenges to Overcome

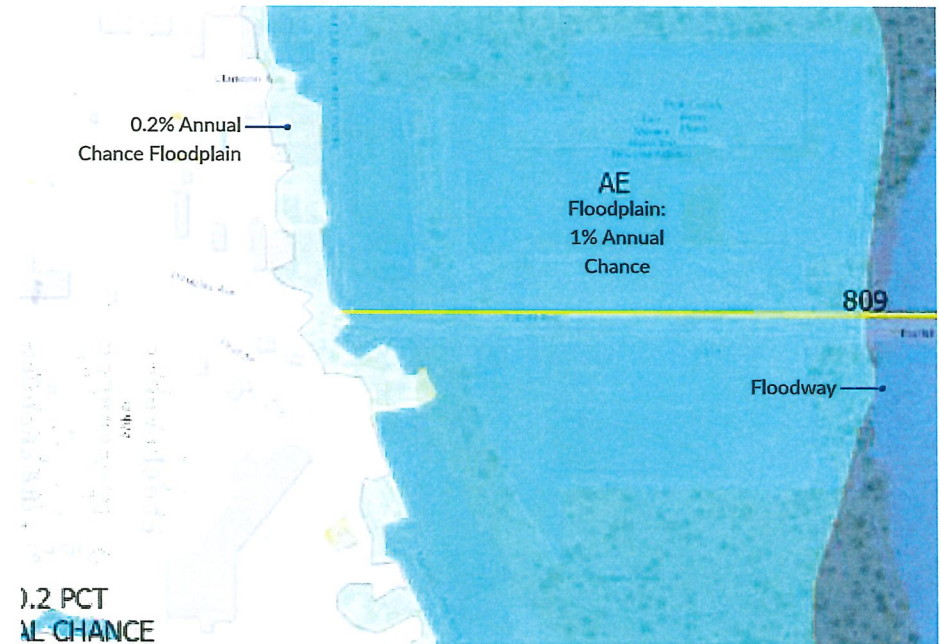
- Several blighted strip centers, businesses turnover and periodic vacancy.
- Incomplete sidewalk system to businesses and along the corridor.
- Unsafe pedestrian crossings through multiple lanes of oncoming and turning traffic.

Opportunities to Leverage

- Large areas of underused land such as parking lots that offer space for redevelopment.
- Proximity to the river and regional trail system could be complemented by potential new public spaces and residential uses.
- Higher relative traffic volumes to continue to support commercial uses.
- Several staple businesses cherished for their history in the community.

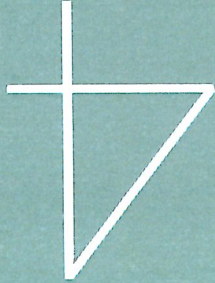


Floodplain Challenge. In February 2019, FEMA issued new floodplain maps for the east end of the Douglas Avenue Corridor. Much of the land that FEMA previously classified as being in the 0.2% Annual Chance floodplain (i.e., the 500-year floodplain) is now in the 1% Annual Chance floodplain (i.e., the 100-year floodplain).



Chapter 4 provides concepts and initiatives to achieve the desired vision for Douglas Avenue.

CORRIDOR CONCEPTS



THE PROGRAM

The program for the corridor was developed through input from the community, analysis of existing conditions, and trends and opportunities. Each part of the program contributes to achieving the themes for the Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan. The program for future improvements is organized three sets of strategies: Public Realm Enhancements, Visual Identity Enhancements, and Private Realm Enhancements.

THEMES FOR DOUGLAS AVENUE

- 
- I. **STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS**
 - II. **CREATE AN IDENTITY**
 - III. **CELEBRATE BUSINESS DIVERSITY**
 - IV. **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS**
 - V. **IMPROVE SAFETY**
 - VI. **WELCOME PEOPLE**

PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

The public realm enhancements aim to improve circulation, safety, and the perception of the area for businesses, customers, and residents.

- **Improve walkability.** Sidewalks should be continuous and free of obstructions. Sidewalks should be separated from the street to provide pedestrians comfort while walking the corridor.
- **Better pedestrian crossings.** Crossing Douglas Avenue or its side streets should be manageable and safe for people to feel like they belong. Pedestrian crossings should be located at logical points of pedestrian trip origins and destinations. Bus stop locations should be optimized to take advantage of designated crossing locations.
- **Improve customer convenience.** Customers have difficulty getting in and out businesses. In particular, left-turning traffic movements conflict with traffic flow and pedestrians often do not have a direct path from the sidewalks to the entrances of businesses. Dedicated left turn lanes will reduce or eliminate conflict.
- **Manage traffic speed and encourage private investment.** Douglas Avenue is a four-lane street, which subtly encourages traffic to move faster than its speed limit. Faster moving vehicles limit the visibility for businesses, deter investment in existing commercial/residential properties, and can be somewhat of a hostile environment for walking and bicycling. Traffic calming measures can help to slow speeds and improve safety of all users.

VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

The visual identity of the corridor spans the public and private realm to create an overall perception of the area. Enhancements to the visual environment have the opportunity to create a positive identity for all who do business, live, or shop along the corridor.

- **Improve visual identity.** Business owners, developers, and area residents expressed concern that the existing visual experience of the corridor is not welcoming people nor is it encouraging investment/maintenance of existing properties. Beautification efforts through features such as banners, monuments, landscape, billboard relocation/removal, and murals create a positive identity for the area and encourage further private investment.
- **Enhance existing buildings.** Many buildings along the corridor continue to be viable, yet could be improved with enhanced facades and murals to create a more inviting appearance to the business.
- **Connect to the river.** Douglas Avenue should provide an extension of the river greenway and tree covered neighborhoods. Greenspace in the form of street trees, parking lot landscaping, plazas, and other gathering places increases safety for pedestrians and creates an enjoyable place for all users.
- **Reduce utility conflicts.** Utility poles and boxes should be removed from sidewalks and placed adjacent to sidewalks or underground to progress to full Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

PRIVATE REALM ENHANCEMENTS

Private realm enhancements suggest improvements for existing development and explore possibilities for future business, residential, and cultural uses.

- **Stimulate private investment.** Investment by the public sector can help developers and property owners see where they fit in the bigger picture of Des Moines. This plan presents ideas for what Douglas Avenue can become. Tactful public investments maybe a critical first step to stimulate interest in private investment.
- **Reimagine vacant sites.** Vacant spaces, whether whole properties or underused areas, are an asset. These sites should be redeveloped to create opportunities to live, work, and interact in the corridor.
- **Attract tenants.** Vacancies in existing buildings create negative perceptions of the corridor, particularly for spaces that experience a high turnover rate. Vacancies are an opportunity for entrepreneurs, new businesses, and business expansion to take advantage of potentially lower leases and reduced fees. This incubates a wide range of entrepreneurs while providing uses not readily found in standard shopping areas. These incubators could graduate to higher profile spaces along the corridor.
- **Maintain affordable housing options.** Redevelopment at strategic locations for new housing along the corridor will create a desirable image and attract more customers for businesses. Attracting housing requires an expectation that the corridor is evolving. New investments need to encourage housing variety and choice to maintain options for all types of households.

PUBLIC REALM: CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES

The public right-of-way in the corridor was originally improved to move relatively high volumes of traffic in short periods of time. Minimal space was allocated to build sidewalks to move pedestrians and bicyclists safely and even less space was allocated to improve the public landscape and streetscape. These original improvements are evidenced with 4 to 5 lanes of vehicular travel, minimal sidewalk widths with several segments missing, and minimal to no landscaping along the corridor. These characteristics have created an environment where drivers feel comfortable traveling at speeds that well exceed the posted speed limit. These conditions further reduce the comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists along the corridor.

Additionally, much of the corridor lacks dedicated left-turn lanes because the left lanes in each direction are used for both through



and left turning-traffic. This creates unsafe conditions for left-turning vehicles slowing and stopping in a perceived through travel lane. The corridor is also challenged with numerous closely spaced driveways and side roads.

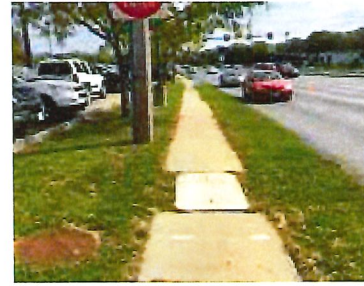


These existing conditions have resulted in vehicle crash rates that exceed the Iowa statewide averages. Roughly 40% of those crashes are rear-end in type, which could be attributed, in part, to higher speeds, lack of dedicated turn lanes, and multiple, closely spaced driveways.



Existing conditions along Douglas Avenue that include minimal to no pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations and closely spaced driveways.

These existing conditions and larger public spaces provide ample opportunities to improve mobility for all users and create improved public spaces for all.



Additional existing conditions along Douglas Avenue that document the challenges to mobility along and across the corridor.

PUBLIC REALM: MOBILITY IMPROVEMENT NEEDS

To overcome these challenges and improve overall safety, accommodation, and access, the following opportunities should be considered. These opportunities are not prioritized in this listing; however, many of these improvements are included in the following *Public Realm: Functional Mobility Enhancements* section, which includes lower and higher cost improvement options.



PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

- Fill in sidewalk gaps.
- Meet ADA sidewalk standards.
- Improve crosswalk striping and signage.
- Shorten street crossing distances.
- Provide greater separation between pedestrians and vehicles.
- Designate mid-block street crossings.
- Calm traffic speeds.
- Connect to adjacent sidewalks and trails.



BICYCLIST IMPROVEMENTS

- Create space for bicyclists.
- Provide greater separation between bicyclists and vehicles.
- Connect to bike routes and trails.
- Calm traffic speeds.



TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

- Locate bus stops at key locations & spacings.
- Designate mid-block street crossings.
- Provide shelters at key locations.
- Locate bus stops on downstream side of major intersections.
- Provide bus stop lanes at major intersections.



MOTORIST IMPROVEMENTS

- Calm traffic speeds
- Create dedicated left-turn lanes for access.
- Consolidate redundant driveways and improve geometry for turning vehicles.
- Improve traffic signal timing and phasing.
- Improve intersection geometry.

PUBLIC REALM: FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS

MODIFYING THE STREET

The key strategy to leverage mobility opportunities in the public right-of-way (ROW) is to re-assign space, originally designated for vehicles, to other mobility options. Space re-assignment can be realized by reducing 4-lane segments of Douglas Avenue to 3-lanes and narrowing 5-lane segments, thereby creating wider sidewalks and green space parkways.

The two diagrams compare existing street sections with proposed changes.

- **Four- to Three-Lane.** The existing 4-lane street section to the 3-lane street section with wider sidewalks and green space. The proposed ultimate street section requires additional property rights beyond the existing right-of-way. This additional space would be needed to accommodate wider sidewalks and parkway buffers between traffic and pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Narrowed 5-Lane.** The existing 5-lane street section to the narrowed street section with wider sidewalks and green space.

BENEFITS FOR MODIFYING THE STREET

The proposed modifications increase safety for all users by slowing traffic, providing additional separation between vehicles and pedestrians, and shortening street crossing distances for both vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. The other benefits include providing a continuous left turn lane for the numerous driveways and side roads and additional space for landscaping enhancements. Provision of a dedicated left-turn lane removes vehicles

stopping in a perceived through lane, reducing the potential for rear-end crashes.

The following are predicted safety improvements by converting from a 4-lane to 3-lane street:

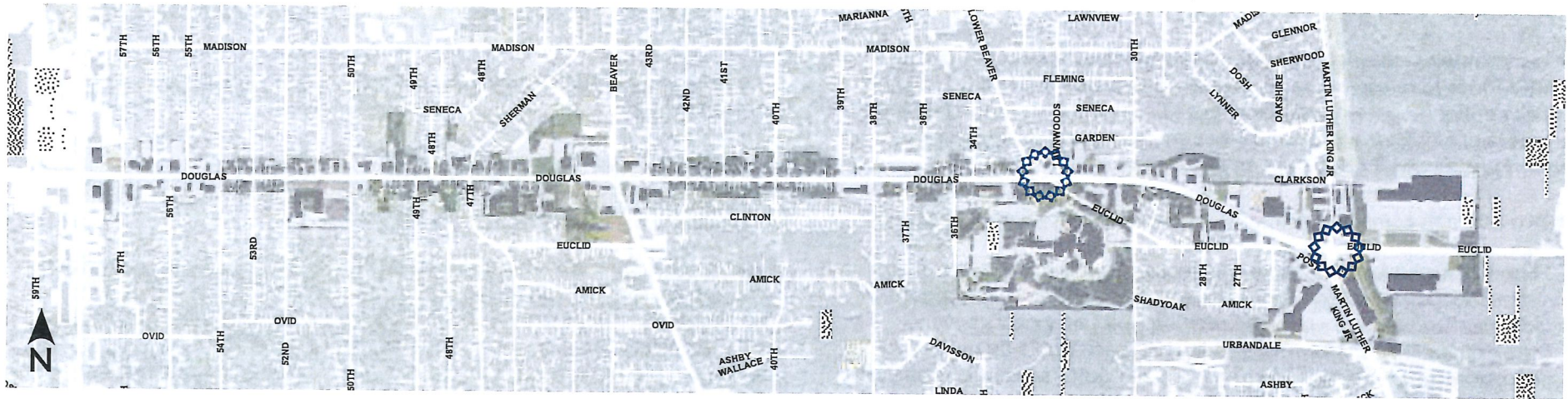
- Reduce all crash types by 25% - 47%.
- Reduce rear-end crashes by 45% with the addition of left turn lanes.
- Decline in pedestrian-related crashes.

There are a couple potential trade-offs to 4-lane to 3-lane street conversion. One anticipated trade-off to these benefits of street conversion is the likely increase in travel time through the corridor between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road, which is estimated around one minute. The other potential trade-off is possible increase in traffic on adjacent side roads, in particular Madison Avenue.

Both benefits and trade-offs can be largely confirmed through a pilot project that can test the street conversion through a relatively low cost project. This idea is explored further in Chapter 4, Implementation.

The key mobility improvement concepts are categorized into two scenarios: lower cost and higher cost investment options. Benefits and trade-offs of each option are detailed in the following pages. These concepts incorporate a range of mobility improvements for all modes and can provide a road map to street improvements for the next 20 years and beyond.

PUBLIC REALM: FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS



4 TO 3-LANES

RESTRIPE & NARROW 5-LANES

MERLE HAY ROAD

BEAVER AVENUE

MLK

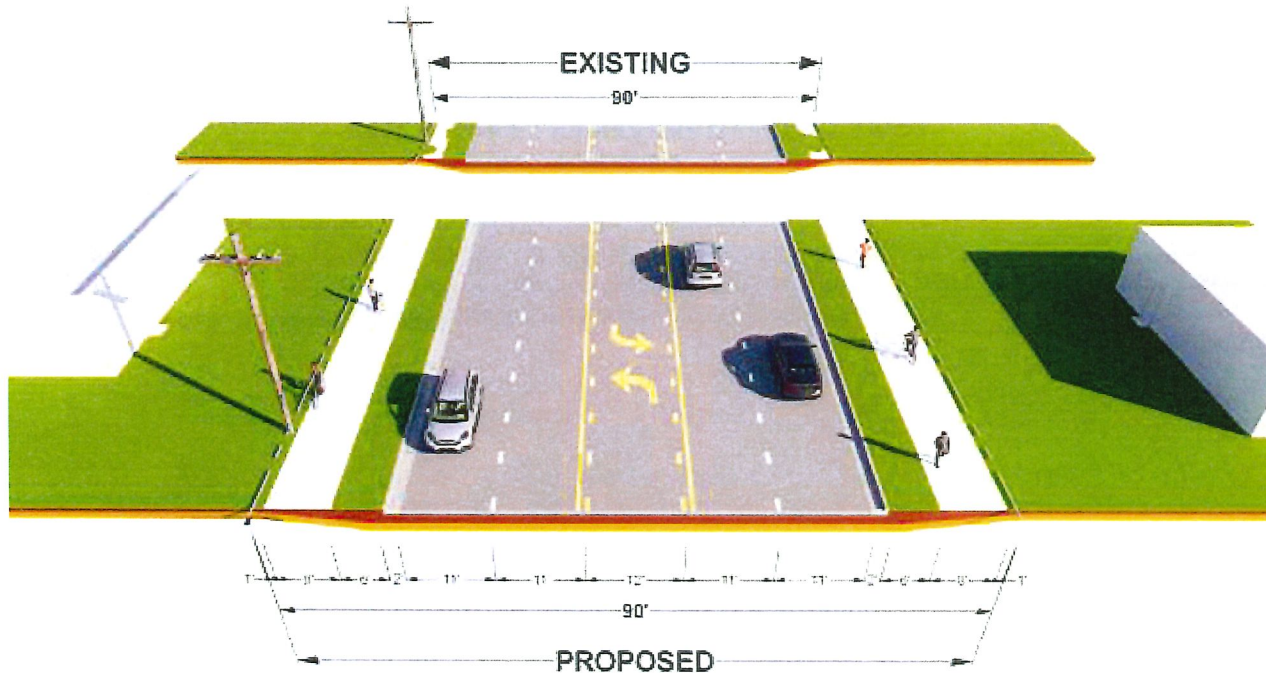
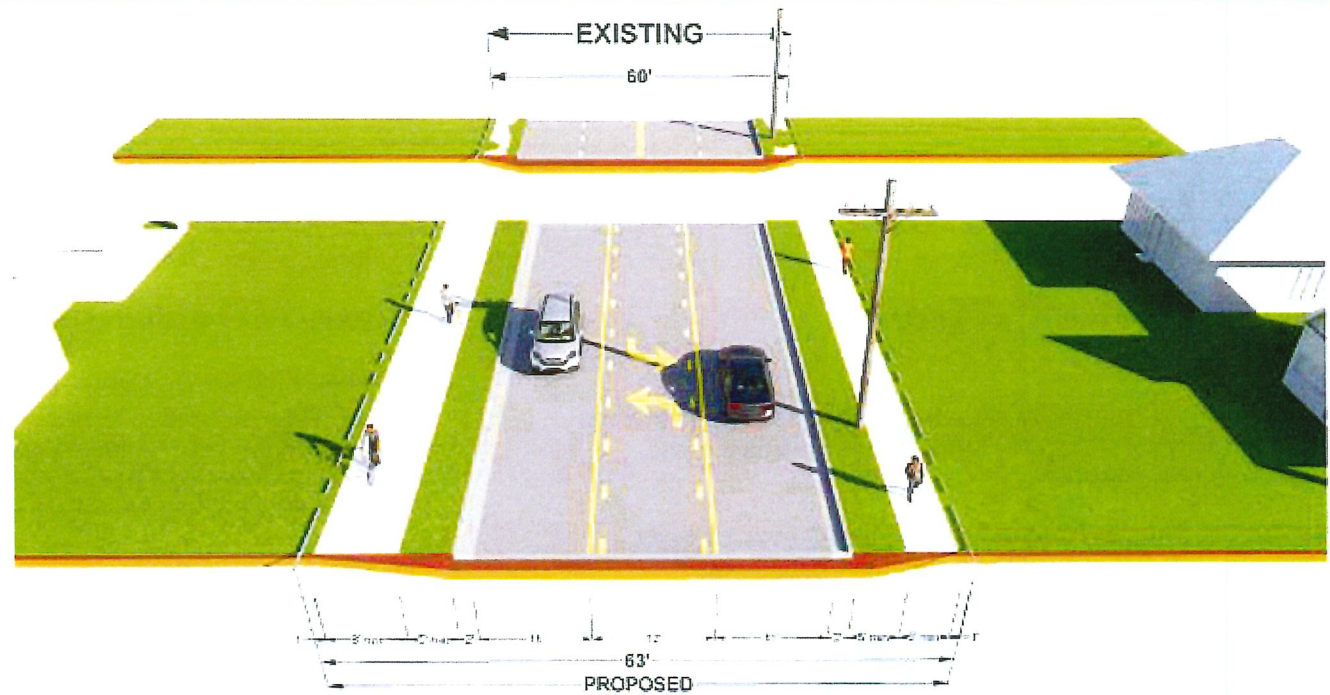
WEST AREA / MOBILITY CHARACTERISTICS

- Four-lane roadway makes business access difficult and creates a high number of rear-end crashes.
- Wide travel lanes encourage people to drive faster than the speed limit.
- Pedestrian zone has narrow sidewalks, sidewalk gaps, and small/non-existent buffers between the roadway and sidewalk.
- The right-of-way lacks identity, human comfort, and traffic-calming features such as street trees.

EAST AREA / MOBILITY CHARACTERISTICS

- Higher traffic volume occurs east of Lower Beaver Avenue.
- Wide travel lanes encourage people to drive faster than the speed limit and makes it more challenging to access businesses.
- Pedestrian zone has narrow sidewalks, sidewalk gaps, and small/non-existent buffers between the roadway and sidewalk.
- The right-of-way lacks identity, human comfort, and traffic-calming features such as street trees.

**DOUGLAS AVENUE:
TYPICAL FOUR-LANE TO
THREE-LANE PROPOSAL**



**DOUGLAS AVENUE:
TYPICAL NARROWED
FIVE-LANE PROPOSAL**

PUBLIC REALM: FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS

LOWER COST IMPROVEMENT SCENARIO

- 1 Conversion of Douglas Avenue from 4-lane to 3-lane between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road with pavement striping and signing only.
- 2 Narrow the Douglas Avenue 5-lane between Lower Beaver Road and MLK Parkway with pavement striping only.
- 3 Maintain Douglas Avenue intersection geometry at Merle Hay Road, Beaver Avenue, and Lower Beaver Road with transitions to add/drop lanes upstream and downstream of intersections on Douglas Avenue.
- 4 Re-stripe crosswalks at 38th Street and 50th Street signalized intersections to define shorter pedestrian crossing distances.
- 5 Add mid-block pedestrian crossing and signal on Douglas Avenue, east of 30th Street.
- 6 Add crosswalk striping at the Douglas Avenue / Merle Hay Road and Douglas Avenue / MLK Parkway intersections.
- 7 Add sidewalk to the south side of Douglas Avenue between 39th Street and 42nd Street

LOWER COST IMPROVEMENT BENEFITS

Improves Pedestrian Safety & Walkability

- Greater separation between sidewalk and traffic
- Eliminates gaps in sidewalk segments
- Creates new pedestrian crossings
- Enhances existing pedestrian crossings

Improves Vehicle Safety

- Dedicated left turn lane
- Fewer points of conflict for crashes

Produces Traffic Calming

- Reduces traveling speeds
- Improves visibility for retail businesses
- Increases sense of neighborhood street

LOWER COST IMPROVEMENT TRADE-OFFS

- Increases vehicular travel time along Douglas Avenue - estimated at 1 minute between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road.
- Potential increased difficulty for vehicles entering or crossing Douglas Avenue due to potentially smaller gaps in traffic.
- Potentially increase traffic on local streets adjacent to Douglas Avenue.



PUBLIC REALM: FUNCTIONAL MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS

HIGHER COST IMPROVEMENT SCENARIO

- 1 Conversion of Douglas Avenue from 4-lane to 3-lane between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road by moving curb lines.
- 2 Narrow the Douglas Avenue 5-lane between Lower Beaver Road and MLK Parkway by moving curb lines and add raised median with dedicated left turn lanes
- 3 Widen sidewalks and parkway areas by moving curb lines. Minimum 5-foot wide sidewalk on one side and minimum 8-foot sidewalk on opposite side of Douglas Avenue
- 4 Remove free-flow northbound right turn lane at Douglas Avenue / MLK Parkway intersection in favor of traditional right turn lane.
- 5 Widen sidewalks and parkway areas by moving curb lines. Minimum 8-foot wide sidewalk on both sides of Douglas Avenue.

POTENTIAL LONGER-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- 6 Construct two-lane roundabout at Douglas Avenue / Beaver Avenue intersection. *
- 7 Re-align Lower Beaver Road approaches to Douglas Avenue and add second southbound left turn lane. *

* The possible longer-term improvements will need further consideration and study based on future safety and operational performance at these intersections. This study concludes the improvements are feasible from an engineering perspective only.

HIGHER COST IMPROVEMENT BENEFITS

Improves Pedestrian Safety & Walkability

- Greater separation between sidewalk and traffic
- Shorter pedestrian crossing distances
- Creates new pedestrian crossings

Improves Vehicle Safety

- Dedicated left turn lanes
- Fewer points of conflict for crashes
- Provides safer turning movements to/from driveways

Produces Traffic Calming

- Reduces traveling speeds
- Improves visibility for retail businesses

Increases Sense of Neighborhood Street

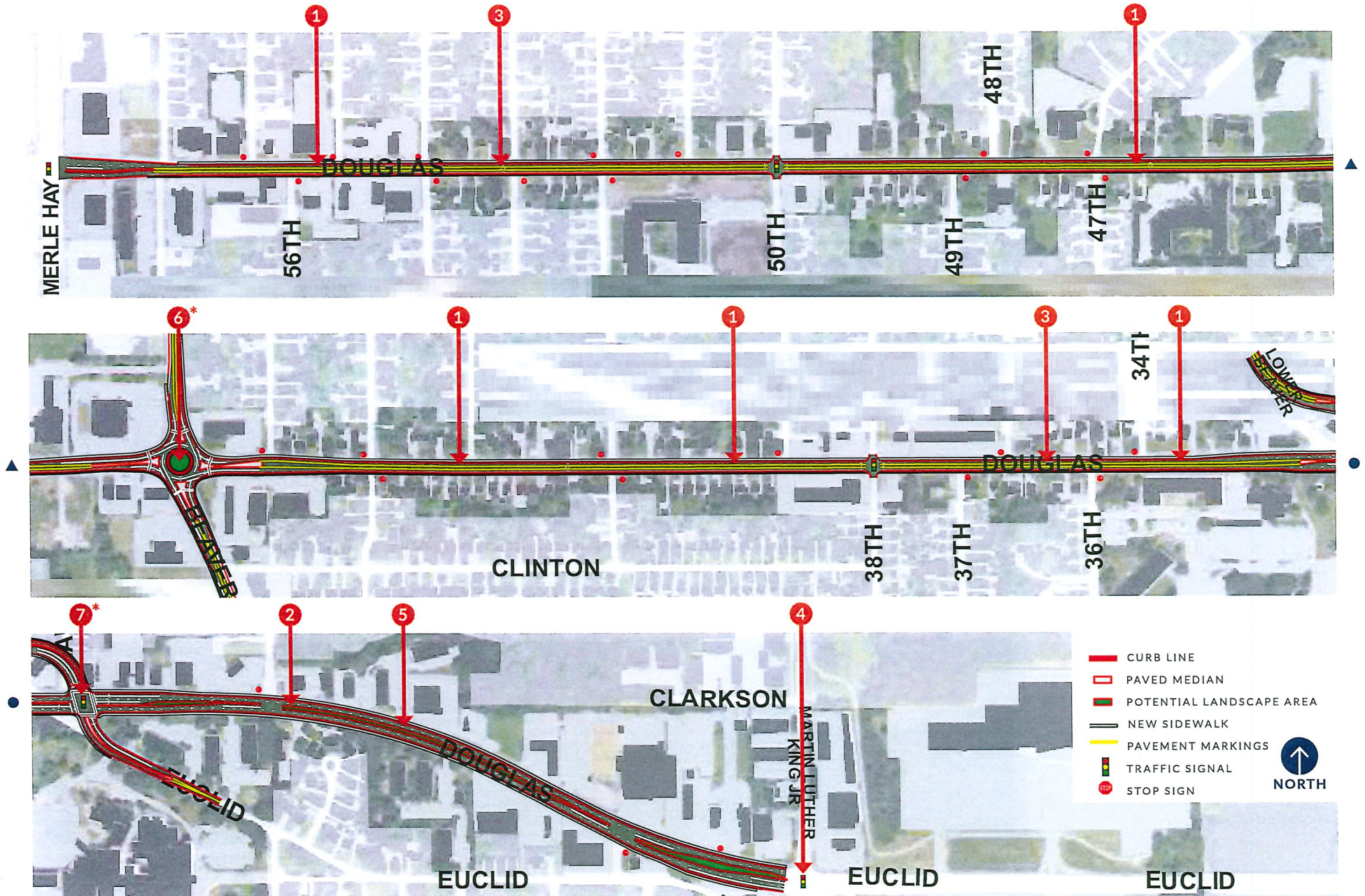
- Increased landscaping along corridor
- Reduces street footprint in corridor

Improves Infrastructure

- New curb and storm water inlets

HIGHER COST IMPROVEMENT TRADE-OFFS

- Increases vehicular travel time along Douglas Avenue - estimated at 1 minute between Merle Hay Road and Lower Beaver Road.
- Potential increased difficulty for vehicles entering or crossing Douglas Avenue due to potentially smaller gaps in traffic.
- Potentially increase traffic on local streets adjacent to Douglas Avenue.



* The possible longer-term improvements will need further consideration and study based on future safety and operational performance at these intersections. This study concludes the improvements are feasible from an engineering perspective only.

VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

Visually, the Douglas Avenue Corridor has significant challenges as identified by various planning process participants. Two significant observations emerge, including:

Visual Clutter and Deficiencies:

The majority of the corridor's visual character is dominated by the presence of cluttered overhead utilities along with the lack of any substantive overstory, understory, or groundplane vegetation.

Lost Visual Identity:

Over the last few decades, most if not all of the corridor's historic and iconic visual features have been lost. For generations, these unique neon signs and associated elements helped define Douglas Avenue's visual identity.

Impact

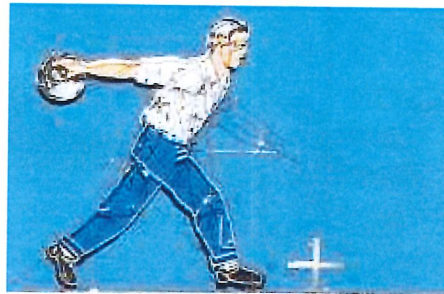
According to planning process participants (including residents and developers) these visual identity challenges have resulted in a direct lack of investment toward private sector investments.



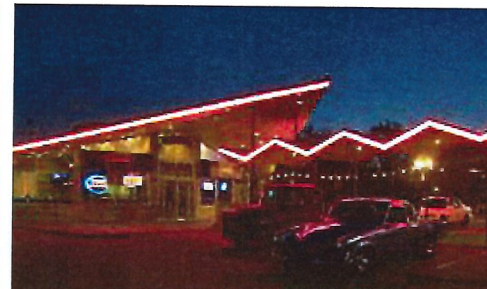
EXISTING CORRIDOR



OVERHEAD UTILITIES



PLAZA LANES "BOWLING MAN"



FORMER RESTAURANT



FORMER SIGN

VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

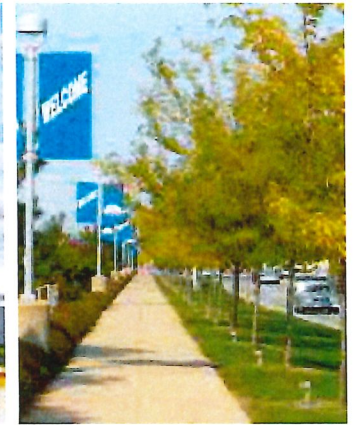
In response to the corridor's visual challenges, the planning team has crafted strategies related to the following broad overarching opportunity areas:

Enhancements and Beautification:

The corridor desperately needs investment of streetscape enhancements ranging from safety/security lighting upgrades to traffic calming and welcoming roadside landscape improvements.

Re-Imagined Visual Identity:

Embracing and investing in mid-century modern, or the re-imagining of those iconic 1950 and 1960 corridor design features, should guide the integration of vertical architectural signage and features along Douglas Avenue.

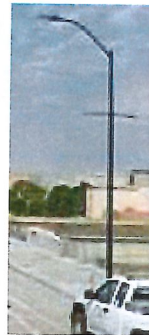
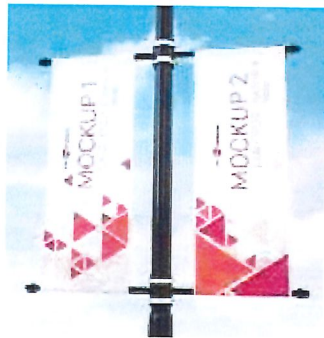


VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

Strategy #1: Lighting & Associated Branded Banners



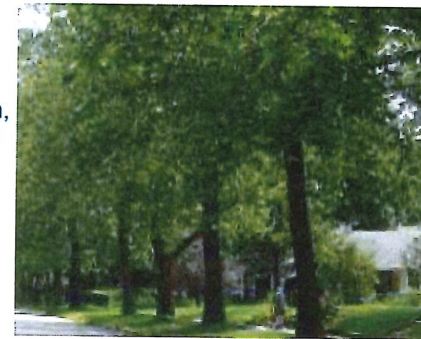
Proposed City of Des Moines poles, arms, LED fixtures, and banners help address lighting deficiencies along with reinforcing the corridor's identity.



Strategy #2: Street Trees & Associated Landscape

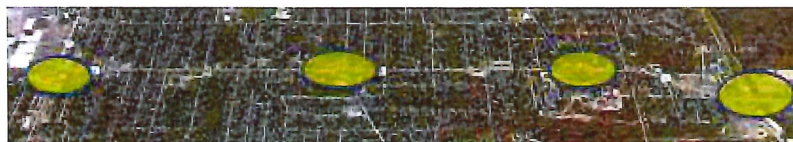


Proposed overstory and understory trees can soften the existing harsh, overhead utility focused visual environment.



VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

Strategy #3: Right-of-Way Underground Utilities



Priority should be given to securing funding and ultimately shifting overhead utilities to underground at key intersections.

Strategy #4: Private Property Murals, Facade, and Landscape



Curated murals on key building facades have been successful throughout Des Moines and should be considered for this corridor, along with front yard landscape improvements.

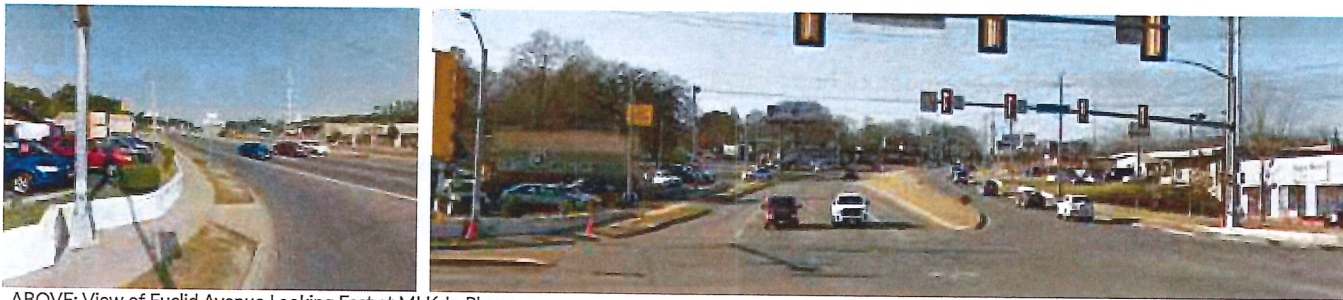
The condition of homes and businesses along the corridor influence the overall perception of the corridor and surrounding neighborhood. Incentives for repairs and upgrades should be extended to these property owners.



VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS



ABOVE: Proposed view of Euclid Avenue Looking East at MLK Jr. Pkwy



ABOVE: View of Euclid Avenue Looking East at MLK Jr. Pkwy

Long-Term Enhancements

- Corridor Features & Signage
- Trees & Shrubs
- Lighting & Banners

VISUAL IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS



Long Term-Enhancements

Vision for the long-term enhancements for Douglas Avenue/Euclid Avenue as seen at a prototypical area west of Intersection of Euclid and Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.

PRIVATE REALM ENHANCEMENTS

SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Candidate sites for redevelopment, new development, and enhancements possess similar challenges and opportunities. Each candidate site was determined using the following criteria.

- Input and feedback from neighbors and business community, indicating their desire for resolving challenges at specific properties.
- Input from property owners and developers.
- Availability of funding sources that can be leveraged between local, state, and federal resources, including grants, economic development incentives, and general funds.
- Market supply and demand of residential and commercial space, including both over/under supply of space and

desired type of space for mixed-use, higher density residential, and neighborhood commercial uses.

- Field reconnaissance and site observations, both current and historical, for each site.
- Probability of the site's redevelopment potential for influencing the perception of corridor's image.
- Probability of the site's redevelopment to positively influence the quality and safety of surrounding areas.

The recommendations proposed in the development concept are sensitive to the surrounding neighborhoods, transportation patterns, and customer experiences. The development strategies must integrate the surrounding neighborhoods, recent investments, market demands, and the mobility improvements and connections.

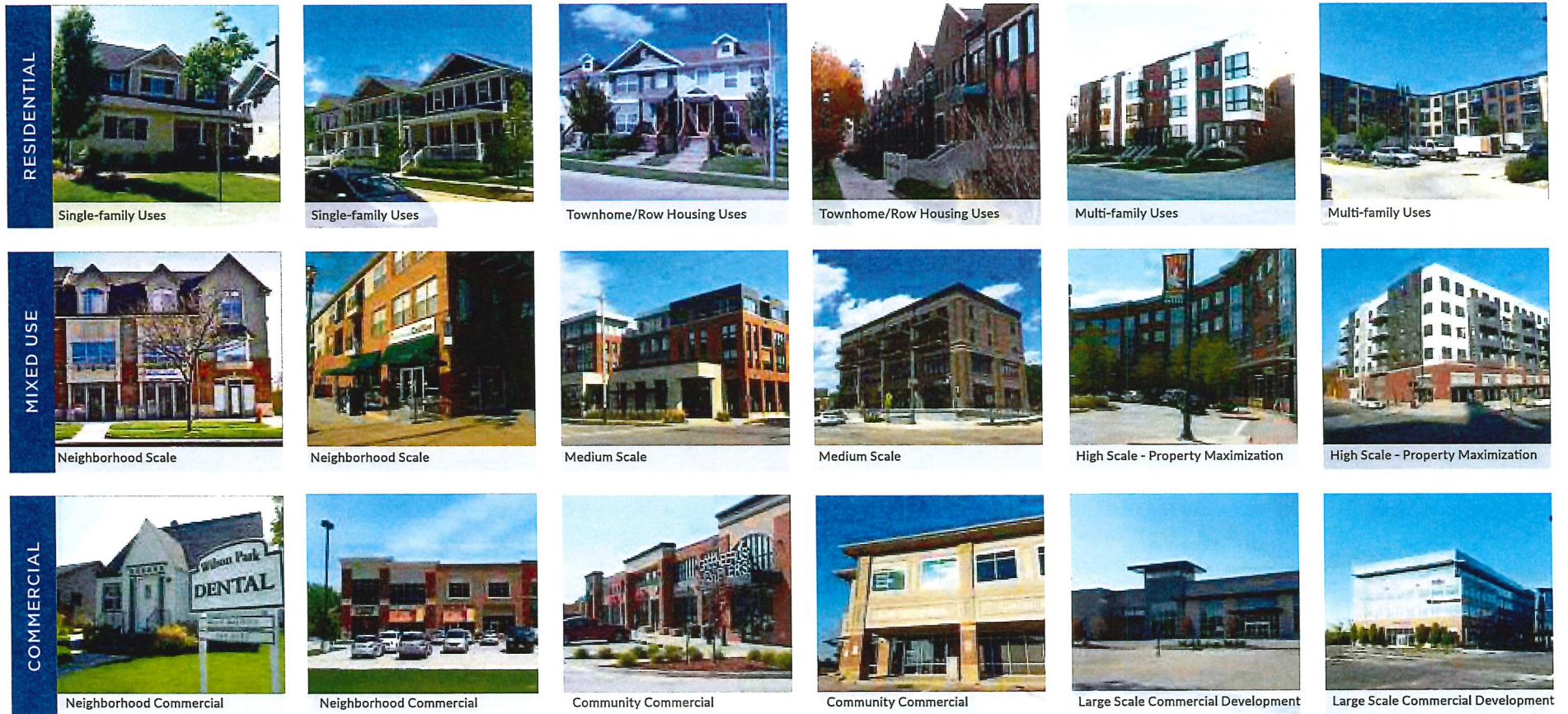
Development sites fall into six neighborhood nodes, including:

- Merle Hay: 54th to 59th Street
- Moore Elementary: 47th Street to 54th Street
- Beaver Avenue: 42nd Street to 47th Street
- 38th Street: 36th Street to 42nd Street
- Lower Beaver: 36th Street to 28th Street
- MLK: 28th Street to River

The development agenda is presented by node. Some nodes have multiple scenarios for development. The scenarios can be intermixed and do not dictate the exact development footprint. Instead, the scenarios exhibit the development intent and design character that will most positively influence the experience of the corridor for all users, businesses, and residents. Exhibits for prototypical development forms provide additional intent.

**THE SCENARIOS
EXHIBIT THE
DEVELOPMENT
INTENT AND DESIGN
CHARACTER THAT
WILL MOST POSITIVELY
INFLUENCE THE
EXPERIENCE OF THE
CORRIDOR FOR ALL
USERS, BUSINESSES,
AND RESIDENTS.**

PRIVATE REALM - PROTOTYPICAL DEVELOPMENT FORMS

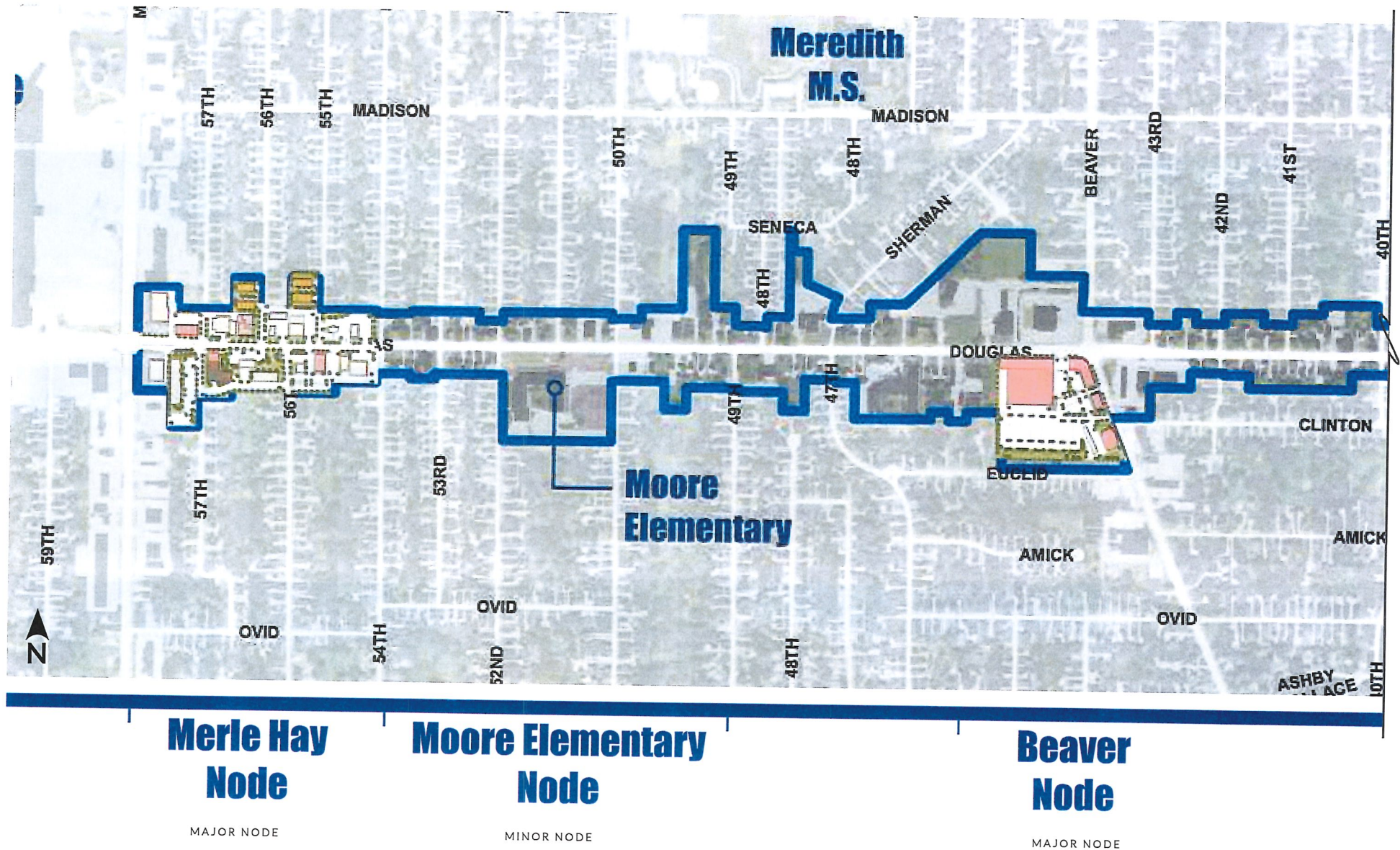


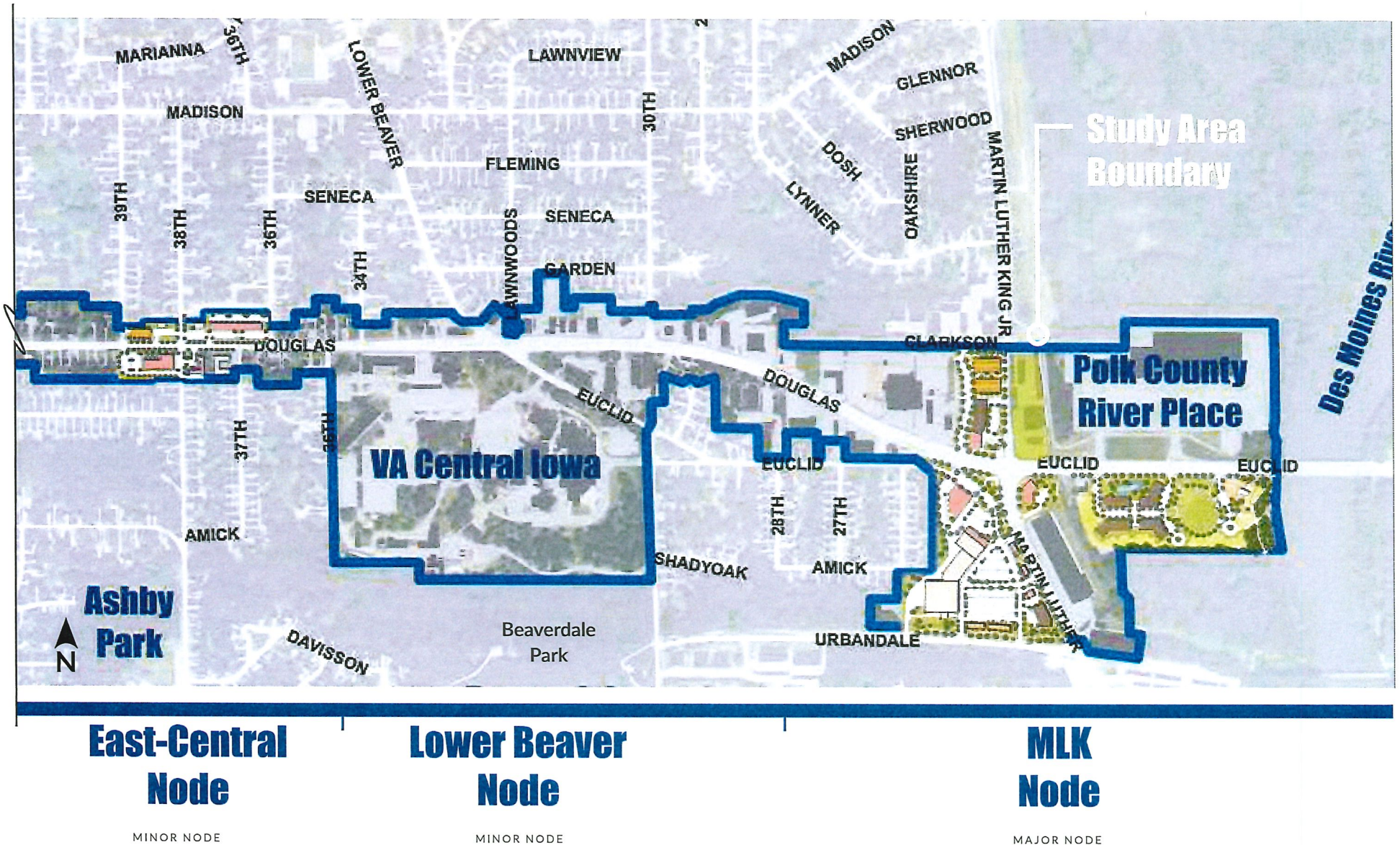
Increasing Intensity of Use

Increasing Intensity of Use

Increasing Intensity of Use

PRIVATE REALM ENHANCEMENTS NODES





MERLE HAY NODE



VISION

The Merle Hay Node offers momentum for infill and redevelopment, becoming a catalyst for continued investment along the entire Douglas Avenue Corridor.

The city and development community should continue supporting redevelopment efforts at the Merle Hay Node as it already has momentum. Some initiatives, like the rear access drive, may require coordination by the DAC to assemble a partnership with property owners.

MOBILITY

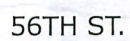
- **Access Management.** Define access points from sidewalks and parking areas to the front door of buildings.
- **Establish Rear Access Parking Drive.** The individual parking lots behind the south side of businesses can be assembled to provide better connectivity and circulation options.
- **Redesign Parking.** Existing parking can be redesigned to optimize circulation and yield. Some parking areas could be shared among businesses to support various peak demands. This includes the area near Dairy Queen and Maria's Mexican Food.

DEVELOPMENT

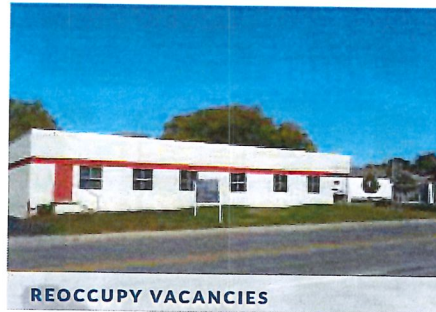
- **Redevelopment.** Replace buildings that are chronically vacant, including 5500 Douglas. The American Inn & Suites is an obsolete hotel and is subject to redevelopment, as well.
- **Infill.** The vacant lot that is east of Burger King is a key infill site that can provide continuity from Merle Hay Road corridor to Douglas Avenue.
- **Redevelop Parking Lots.** The deep parking lots along 56th and 55th Streets can be redeveloped for townhouses with integrated parking. This use reunites the neighborhood with the corridor and provides a transitional use between commercial properties and single-family residential.

COMMUNITY

- **Improve property maintenance.** Clean up deteriorated buildings with improved landscaping and curb appeal.
- **Buffers.** The space between the residents and businesses should have a buffer. This can be in the form of improved landscaping and lower-intensity uses.
- **Neighborhood Green.** The southwest corner of Douglas Avenue and 56th Street is an opportunity for a new greenspace or commercial redevelopment.



MERLE HAY NODE



REOCCUPY VACANCIES



ACCESS MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY



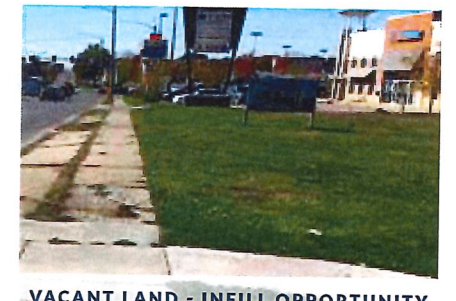
REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



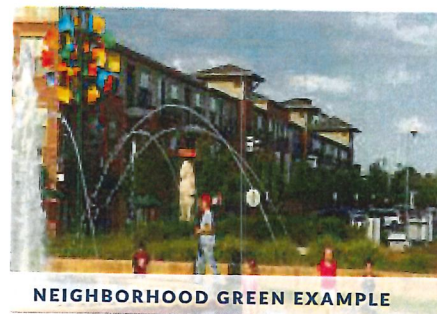
LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITY



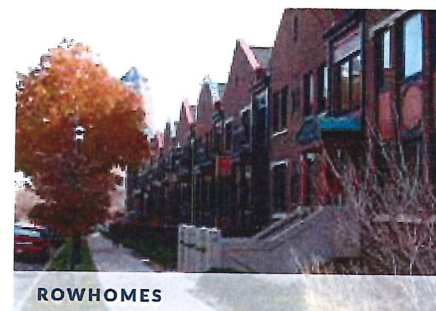
REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



VACANT LAND - INFILL OPPORTUNITY



NEIGHBORHOOD GREEN EXAMPLE



ROWHOMES



COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL



ABOVE: Illustration of Merle Hay node looking southwest from 56th Street to Merle Hay Road.

BEAVER AVENUE NODE



VISION

The concepts for the Beaver Avenue Node focus on the southwest corner of the intersection, which is the gateway into the Beaverdale Neighborhood and a highly visible lot with open space and marginally used buildings.

A fundamental principle for developing this area is improving the relationship of the intersection with the surrounding properties.

The vacant lot surrounding the corner node offers one of the few spots along the corridor for infill development. The traffic volumes at the intersection make commercial uses a viable and preferred option.

MOBILITY STRATEGIES

- **Access drives.** The alignment of entrances to the southwest site should consider access points to Clinton Avenue and Walgreens. Entrances should be setback an adequate distance from intersections to prevent conflicts with visibility and stacking of vehicles.
- **Shared drive.** Access to business along Beaver Avenue should come from a shared drive, limiting the number of drives off of Beaver Avenue.
- **Walkable.** Individual development projects should be walkable, creating logical pathways for pedestrians to access entrances.
- **Parking.** The corner of Beaver Avenue and Douglas Avenue should not be parking. This space should be declarative by housing a building, greenspace, or gateway feature.

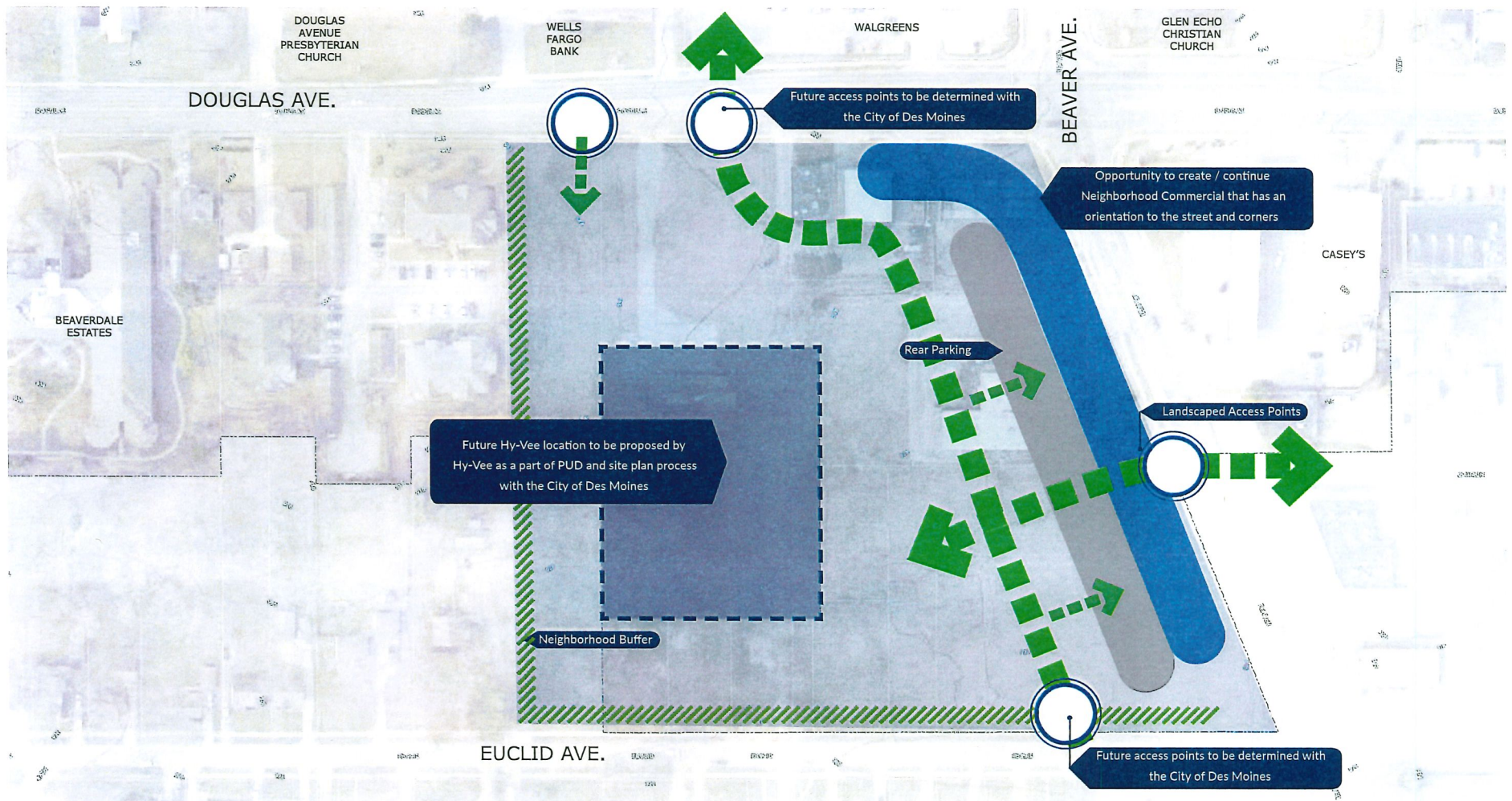
DEVELOPMENT

- **New Grocery Store.** The balance of the site is reserved for a grocery store and its parking.
- **Character.** Any development scenario should build to the sidewalk at the corner to create a focal point at the intersection. The focal point will increase interest for pedestrians, slows traffic, and acts as a screen for internal site activities such as parking and loading. Buildings along the street should feature pedestrian and neighborhood scale features such as transparent window, awnings, articulation, and landscaping. Similar design features should be shared among the entire development.
- **Corner Site Project.** Redeveloping the corner could feature a multi-story use that hosts commercial, office, or even residential.

COMMUNITY

- **Gateway.** The corner of Beaver Avenue and Douglas Avenue represents the gateway into Beaverdale. The appearance of the corridor will have significant influence on the perception of the area and will be a catalyst for future investments in the area.
- **Gathering Spaces.** The amount of developable land presents an opportunity to incorporate shared gathering spaces such as plazas, outdoor dining/seating areas, or a greenspace square. The space could complement the building uses to create an internal neighborhood square for customers, residents, and employees to enjoy.
- **Buffer.** The site's relationship to the neighborhood should be buffered with trees and landscaping.

BEAVER AVENUE NODE



ABOVE: Hy-Vee owns much of the property southwest of the intersection at Douglas Avenue and Beaver Avenue. Hy-Vee has not submitted an updated site plan or PUD to the City of Des Moines at this time, but the planning team has shared general planning principles and sketch concepts with Hy-Vee to show opportunities to support overall neighborhood goals.

BEAVER AVENUE NODE



REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



HY-VEE PROPERTY



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE MIXED USE



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE MIXED USE



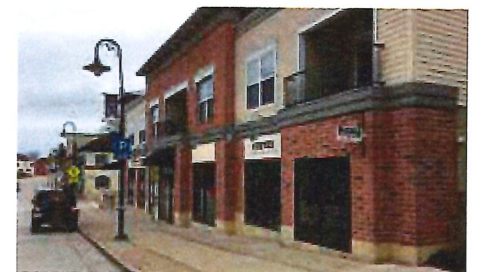
WALKABLE / LANDSCAPED PARKING



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE MIXED USE



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE MIXED USE



NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE MIXED USE

BEAVER AVENUE NODE



TEST FIT CONCEPT A

- New grocery store
- Commercial bays fronting Douglas Avenue.
- New development fronting Beaver Avenue with parking behind.
- Articulated pedestrian paths.
- Open space with stormwater management features.
- Possible c-store or mixed use building.



TEST FIT CONCEPT B

- New grocery store setback to allow fringe development.
- Possible gas station
- New mixed use corner development.
- Articulated pedestrian paths.



TEST FIT CONCEPT C

- Reuse of existing buildings.
- New grocery store
- Front commercial bays
- Parking oriented to major streets.
- Articulated pedestrian paths.
- Open space with stormwater management features.

38TH STREET NODE

VISION

The concepts for the East-Central Node focuses on the development near the crossroads of 38th Street and Douglas Avenue.

The vision for this area is to update aging buildings that experience frequent tenant vacancy and turnover, replace obsolete structures to improve transition to neighborhoods, and create momentum around reinvestment that can spread to surrounding residential areas.

MOBILITY AGENDA

- **Consolidate Access for Water World and Douglas Laundry.** Combining the parking areas for the two business centers will increase the number of available parking stalls for all, encourage customers to walk between storefronts, and eliminate vehicle conflict points along Douglas Avenue.
- **Improve Parking for Douglas Avenue Plaza.** Currently, the site maximizes parking on the site and prevents landscaping or outdoor accommodations for residents and patrons. Also, the site presents numerous conflict points for patrons entering and exiting. By consolidating access and establishing a parking lot to the west, customers will have safer access to more parking.

DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

- **Royal Motel Reuse or Redevelopment.** Motels are a development form that are generally obsolete, particularly for Douglas Avenue. Some motels around the country have been retrofitted into housing and have removed their pole signs. The concept in this plan envisions a similar retrofit. Alternatively, the site can be redeveloped altogether to be more harmonious with its neighboring properties.
- **Water World Renovation.** The Water World building hosts numerous tenant spaces on two stories. As with many projects throughout the metro area, renovating the building and space will improve market demand for tenancy.
- **Townhouses.** Redeveloping the half-block east of 39th Street

for townhouses will restore the area's neighborhood quality. The concept shows lower level parking accessed from 39th Street with frontages along Douglas Avenue.

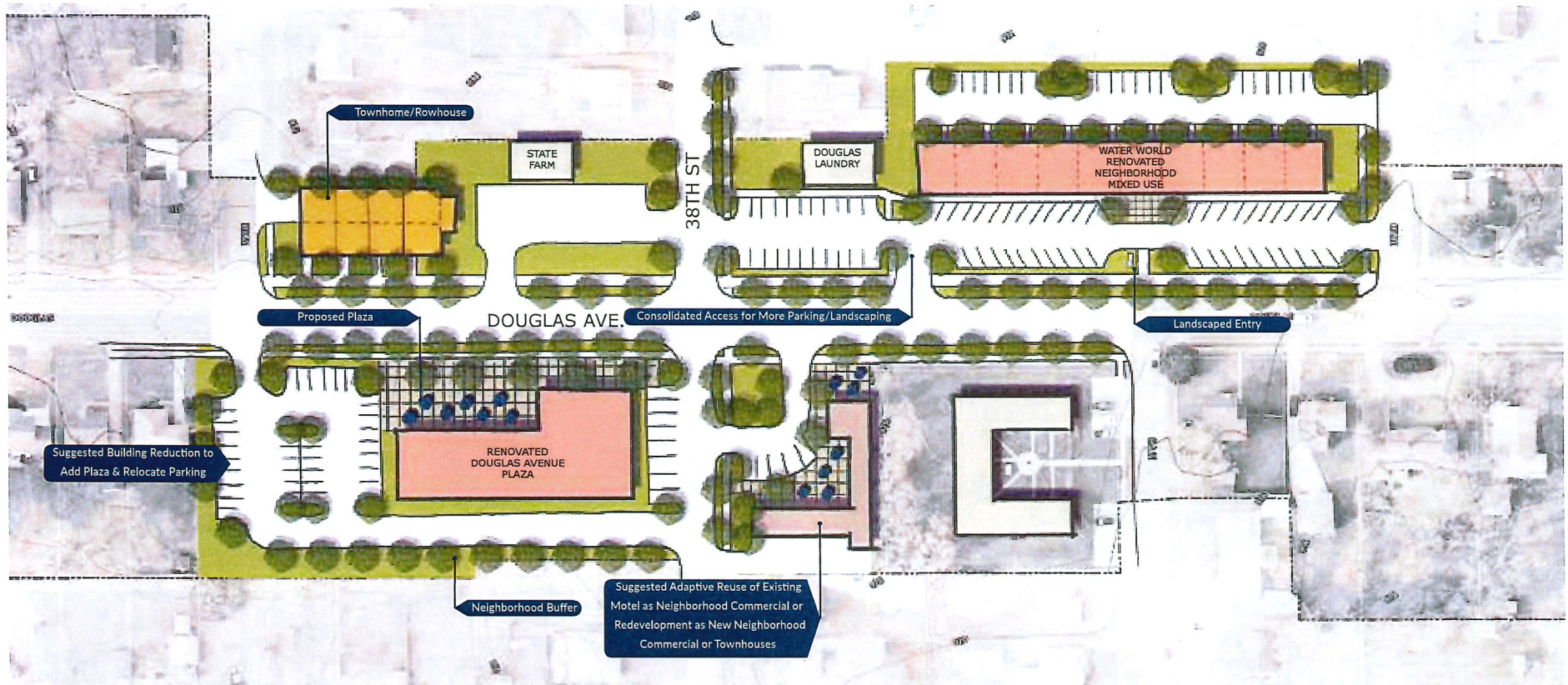
- **Douglas Avenue Plaza Project.** The concept shows the Douglas Avenue Plaza with a new outdoor plaza tucked into the site and reduced building footprint to improve parking for all tenants.

COMMUNITY AGENDA

- **Sense of Reinvestment.** This area represents a gateway into Beaverdale. The appearance of the corridor has significant influence on the perception of the area and may become a catalyst for future investments in the area.



38TH STREET NODE



ABOVE: Land use vision for the intersection of 38th Street and Douglas Avenue.

38TH STREET NODE



FACADE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTNITY



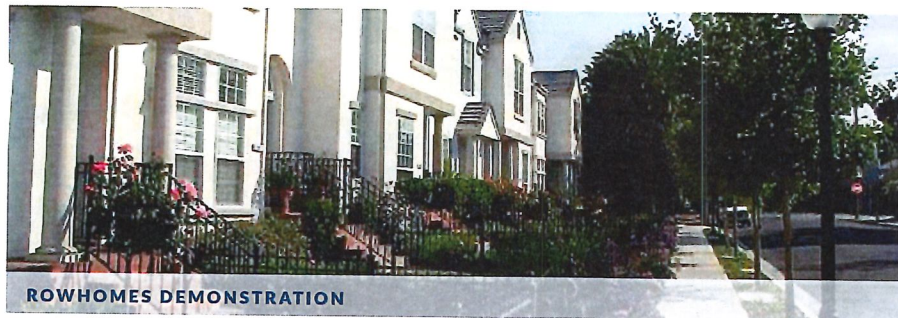
LANDSCAPING OPPORTUNITY



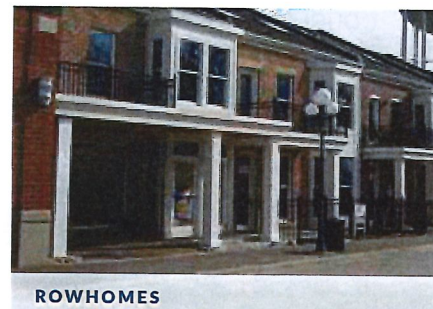
EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING



REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY



ROWHOMES DEMONSTRATION



ROWHOMES



REAR/SIDE PARKING



LANDSCAPING



PLAZA / OUTDOOR DINING



PLAZA DEMONSTRATION

38TH STREET NODE



ABOVE: Land use vision for the intersection of 38th Street and Douglas Avenue.

MLK NODE

VISION

The concept presents possibilities for reprogramming various areas to improve circulation, increase development yield, and offer new space to tenants.

Many of the projects are private initiatives and present possibilities that will be mutually beneficial to all — businesses, developers, community, and environment. Development projects are intended to support existing business, perhaps creating situations for upgrading their space and positioning them for growth.

The concept anticipates that the regional attraction - the Des Moines River - will have a larger role in the metro and its role near the MLK node will become a catalyst for community investment.

MOBILITY

Abandon Post Street. Post Street constrains the adjacent development and limits the growth of existing businesses. Its intersection at MLK creates awkward turning movements and occupies a lot of area for its function. The concept converts Post Street into the development project as a private drive that connects parking lots to Urbandale Avenue.

Access Management. Access points should be consolidated to manage conflict points along the corridor. In particular, the area around River Plaza (south of Euclid) has several access points that should be aligned with River Place (north of Euclid).

Reconfigure Harding Hills Parking. The concept shows restriping the Harding Hills Parking Lot and adding trees and landscaping to reinforce pathways.

DEVELOPMENT

Harding Hills Development. The concept anticipates that Hy-Vee Grocery will remain as an anchor tenant, and that the site evolves to accommodate new market demands for residential/commercial uses. Medium scale commercial uses line MLK, with mixed-use projects closer to Douglas Avenue.

North MLK Redevelopment. The concept brings commercial uses to the street along MLK with a mix of multi-family, townhomes, and multiplexes transitioning into the existing single-family neighborhood.

River Plaza Redevelopment. The Des Moines River and accompanying trail provides an amenity to emphasize through trail expansions that connect to new commercial and residential uses along MLK.

COMMUNITY

Connect to the River. The Des Moines River is a major asset for the neighborhoods, yet is obscured from view. By initiating improvements to the riverfront zone, this area could become a catalyst for additional development in the area.

Dedicate green space at corners. Parking lots near the corners obstructs customer's view of the store. Relocating parking to the side or rear will allow businesses to enhance their image and may increase convenience for pedestrian customers.

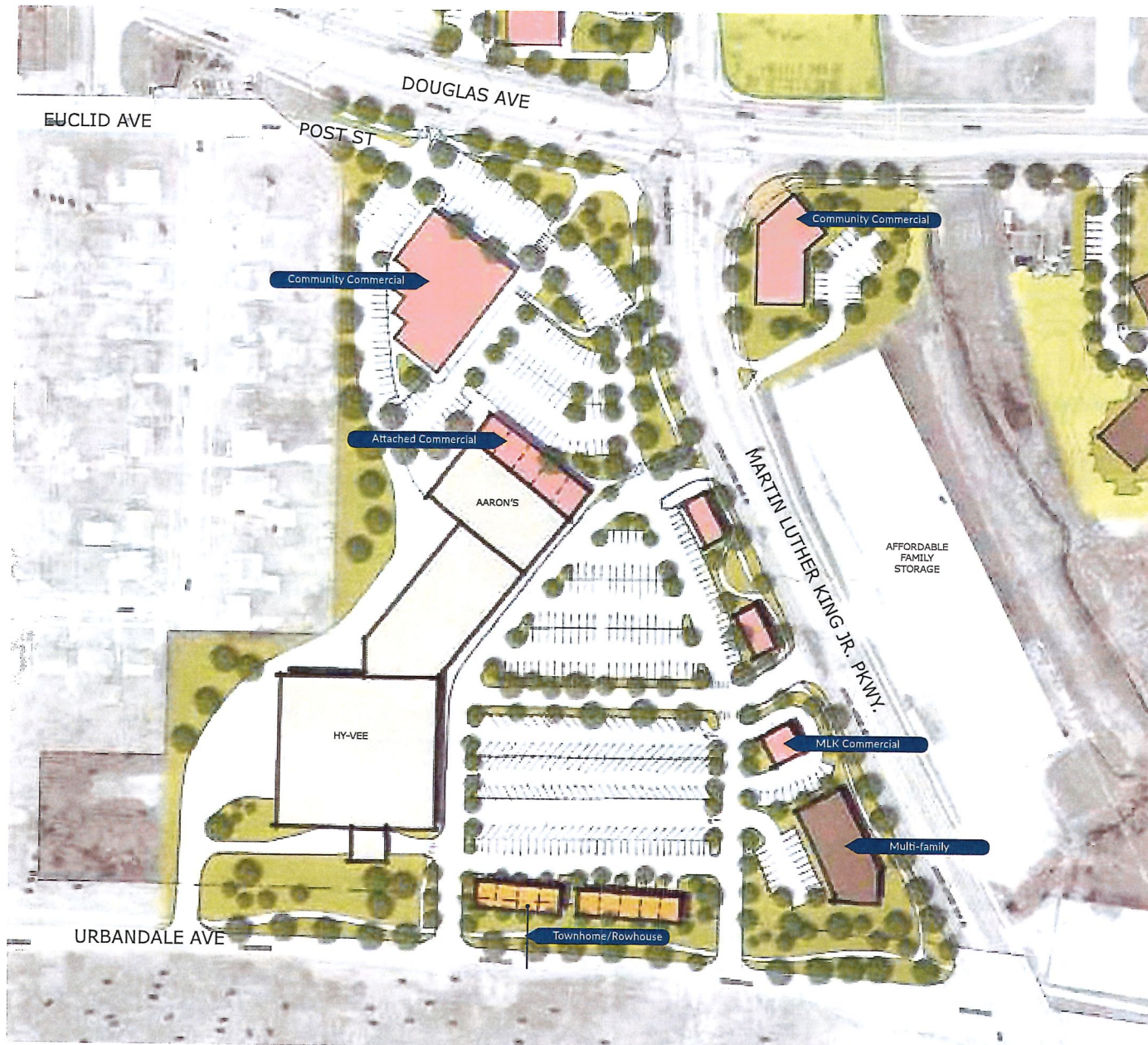
Quality Projects. Landscaping and building design create a memorable experience when entering the corridor from the south on MLK and east on Euclid Avenue. The neighborhoods should advocate for quality design that stimulates further interest for investing in the area.

MLK NODE



ABOVE: Land use vision Option A for the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway and Euclid Avenue.

MLK NODE: SOUTHWEST HARDING HILLS



Abandon Post Street. Post Street constrains the adjacent development and limits the growth of existing businesses. Its intersection at MLK creates awkward turning movements and occupies a lot of area for its function. The concept converts Post Street into drive aisle that connects into the grocery parking lot. The corner at MLK becomes a gateway plaza.

New Community Commercial. The new community commercial could be used as an office, clinic, or other commercial use.

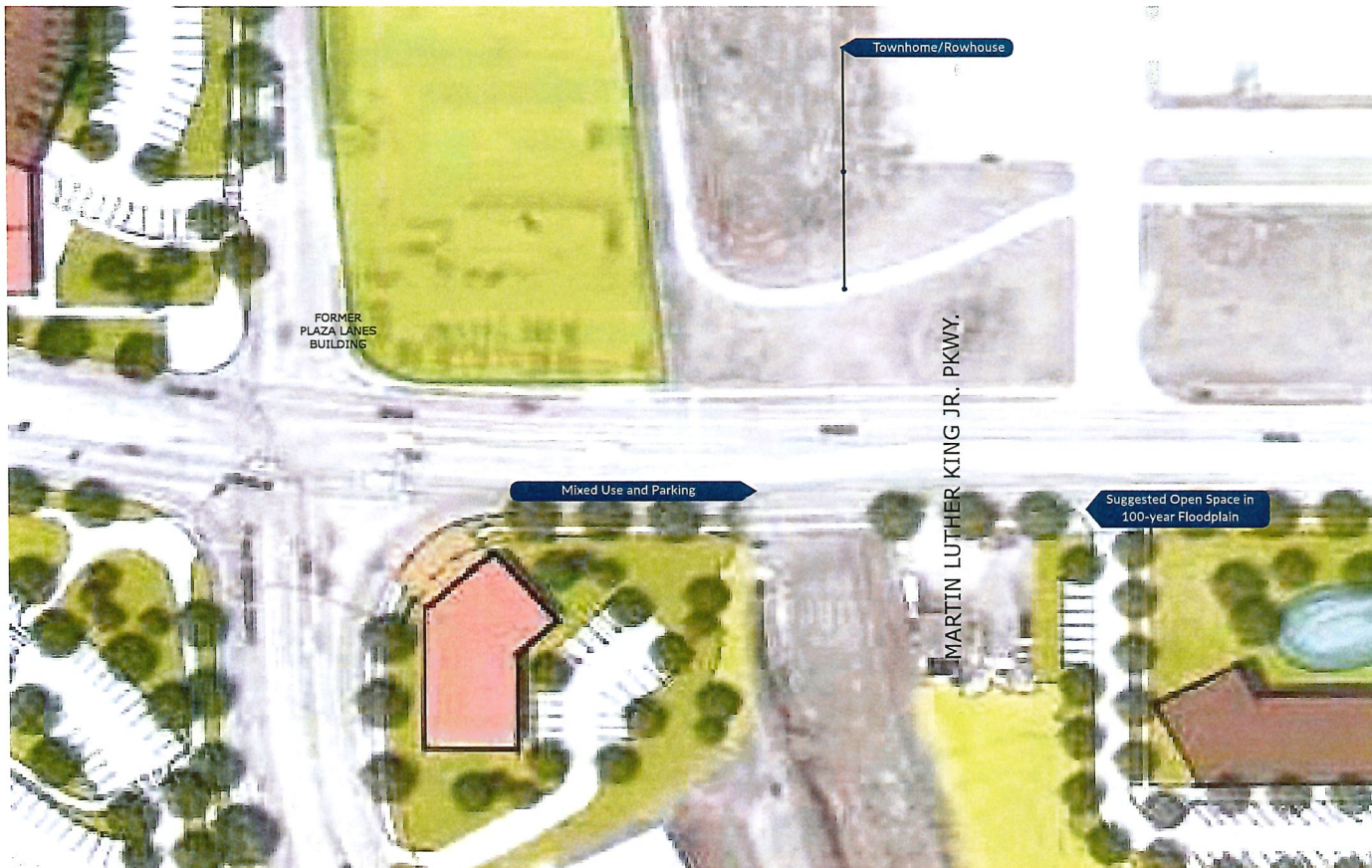
New Attached Commercial. Commercial bays for smaller tenants.

New MLK Commercial. The fringe of the site could host new outlot commercial, and presents opportunities for relocating businesses like Taco Casa and TNT Vietnamese to a more accessible site for customers.

Parking Enhancements. Updating the parking layout will improve the legibility of parking lanes and provide opportunities for trees and stormwater management.

Residential Uses. The southeast corner of Harding Hills could be redeveloped with multi-family housing and townhomes. The area provides excellent proximity to the Inter-Urban Trail, transit stops, and nearby community services.

MLK NODE: NORTH



Demonstration of townhomes

Townhomes/Rowhouses. The existing apartments at 3700 MLK have experienced several public safety concerns, including a fire in 2019. Redeveloping the site with a series of townhouses or rowhouses would transform the image of the area and may stimulate additional reinvestment to the north.

The concept shows a layout of buildings with the living area above a level of parking. The north/south road to the west is a parking street that can supplement the parking.

Mixed Use and Parking. The Mixed Use project leverages the slope of the site, having lower-level parking from MLK and up to three-stories of residential and commercial. The second story has walkout access to the parking street on the west.

Open Space. All of the development at the northeast corner of MLK and Douglas Avenue is within the 100-year floodplain. This area is subject to future flooding. Over time, this area is suggested to be open space.

MLK NODE: RIVER CONNECTION - OPTION A



The River Connection concept recognizes that the area is prone to flooding. The concept includes possibilities that leverage its connection to the river and trail, while reducing the amount of existing impervious surface area.

Principles for the sites redevelopment must consider:

- Establishing a connection to the Des Moines River.
- Providing portage for users of the water trail and access to the Trestle Trail.
- Protecting property from catastrophic flooding.
- Restoring flood prone areas.
- Providing a development framework for private reinvestment.

MLK NODE: RIVER CONNECTION - PHASED



Implementing the project could be completed in phases. The enhancements related to the river could be advanced as a Phase 1. River Plaza may experience renewed interest for tenancy and may even result in the demand for redeveloping the site altogether - Phase 2.

Multi-family Project. The multi-family project is a four-story building with ground-level parking below three-stories of residential. All habitable space is out of the 100-year floodplain. The orientation of buildings leverages sight lines to greenspaces and forested areas.

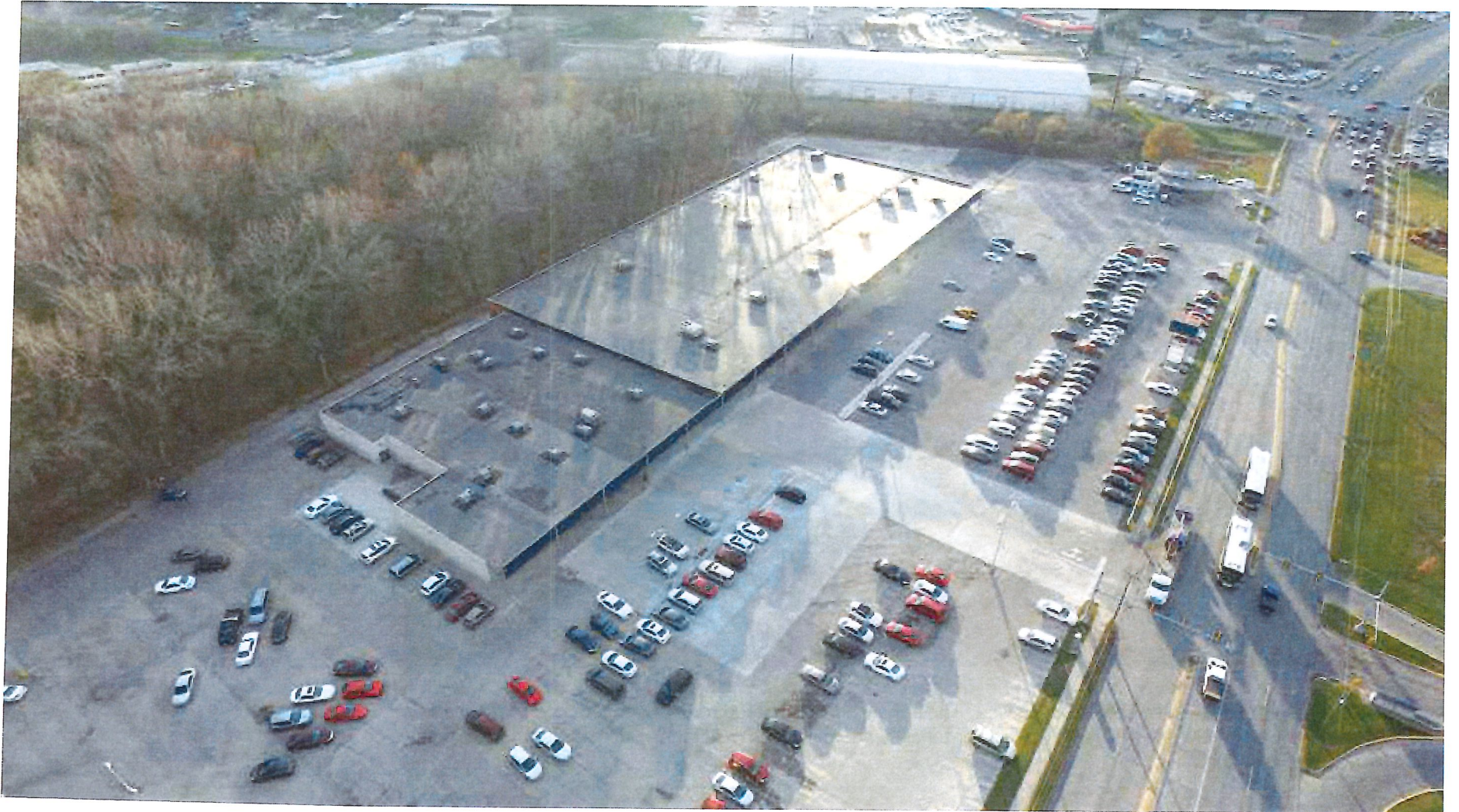
Flexible Lawn. The lawn can be used for organized or impromptu play. The space should manage stormwater runoff and or support open field sports.

Riverfront Drive. Riverfront Drive provides access to the gathering spaces and the river. This drive could wrap around the flexible lawn for increased connectivity.

Plaza and Shelter. A new plaza and shelter becomes the nexus between Euclid Avenue and the Des Moines River. The space can be programmed for small events, food vendors, and small outdoor events.

Boat Launch. A new boat launch connects into the region's water trail system.

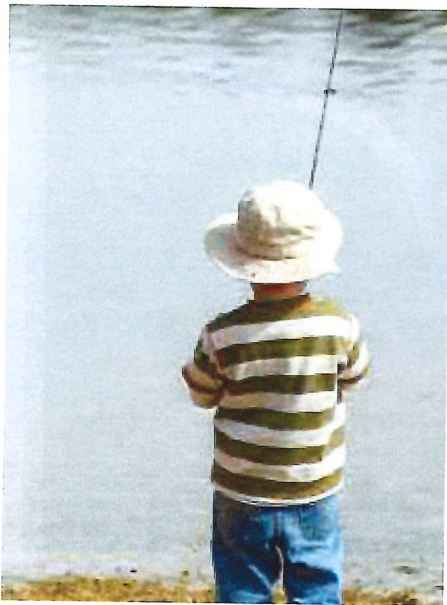
Playscape. A natural playscape provides family-oriented fun that can connect children with nature.



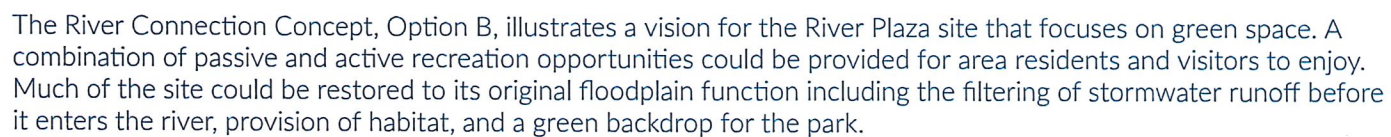
ABOVE: Existing conditions (2017) looking southwest across River Plaza building.



ABOVE: Illustration of MLK Node - River Connection Area looking southwest from above the Des Moines River.



ABOVE: Illustrations and character imagery for the MLK Node - River Connection Area (Option A).



MLK NODE: FORMER PLAZA LANES



VISION

The loss of Plaza Lanes during the planning process created a significant loss for the east end of the corridor. The facility that once hosted a popular entertainment destination and restaurant that attracted thousands of visitors is now gone. Near the end of the project, Plaza Lanes announced they would not be rebuilding at the site and would be putting the property up for sale.

The highly visible site is a viable location for a broad range of uses ranging from entertainment to housing.

MOBILITY

- **Must have internal circulation and shared parking.** The redevelopment of the Plaza Lanes site should include an internal circulation system that limits the number of ingress/egress points accessing Douglas Avenue. The system should consider connections to the east, tying into Clarkson Avenue and aligning access points to neighboring properties.

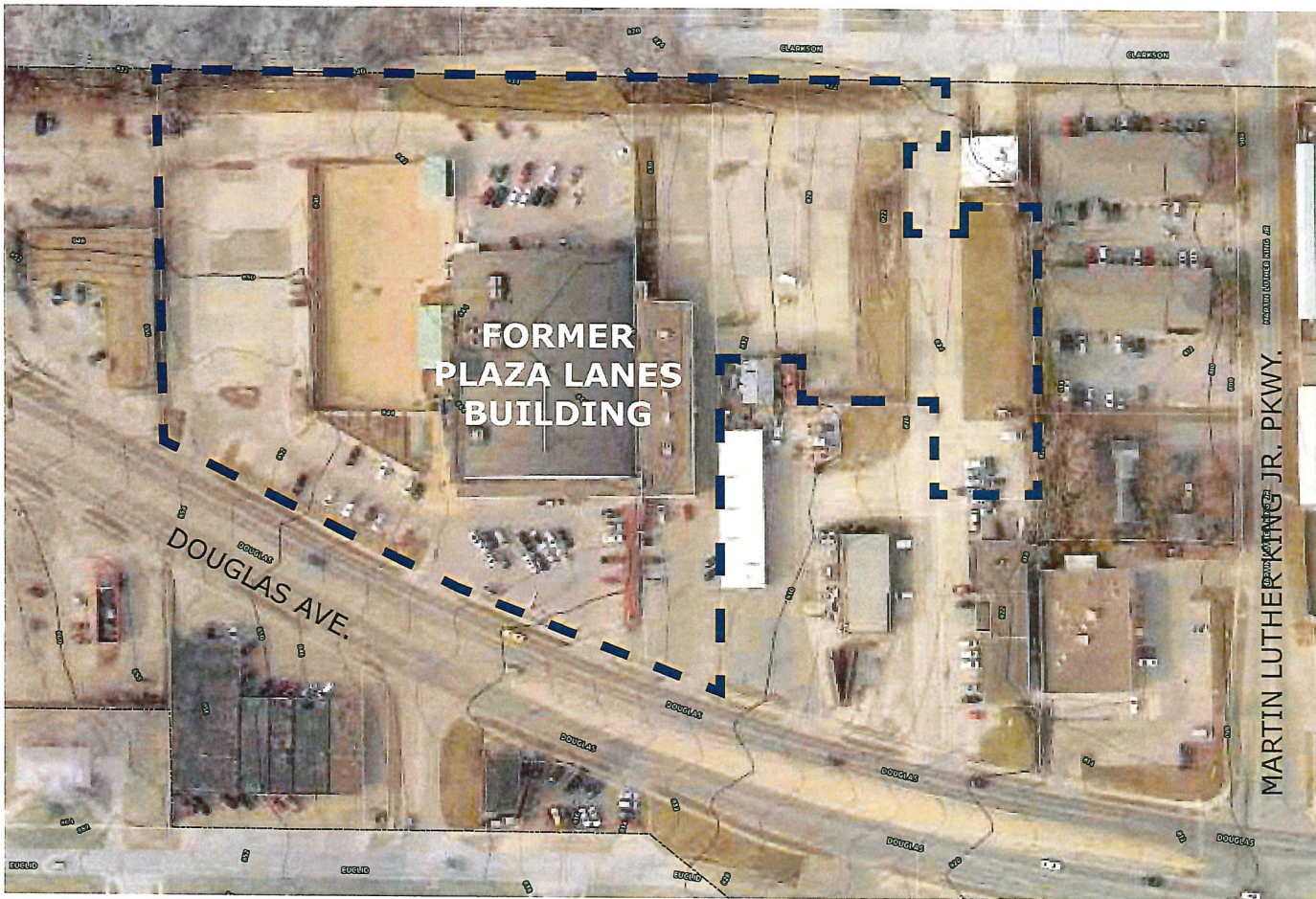
DEVELOPMENT

- **Major Project.** This site is situated to support a large development project that can support a large box venue or several mid-size buildings.
- **Redevelop aging and obsolete uses.** Some of the aging buildings could be assembled into a larger planned redevelopment.
- **Leverage the area's slope.** The slope of the area rises from MLK to the former Plaza Lanes site. While the slope presents some challenges to establish connections with adjacent areas, it can allow the site to develop in tiers, where each level is accessible at-grade.

COMMUNITY

- **Celebrate history.** The Douglas Avenue Corridor has hosted many iconic business that have since been lost, including Plaza Lanes, Porky's, and others. While few relics exist from these businesses, the memories remain and could be celebrated with the redevelopment of the site through art and naming of projects.
- **Celebrate culture and ethnicity.** The MLK area has a rich cluster of ethnic foods available at grocery stores and restaurants. This area is strategically positioned to market themselves as a cultural destination within the Des Moines metro. The area's proximity to Tai Village presents branding opportunities, as well.

MLK NODE: FORMER PLAZA LANES



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

At the October 29, 2019, Community Open House, attendees were asked what they envisioned for the Former Plaza Lanes site. Respondents noted a variety of ideas —many centering on uses that build community:

- Restaurants
- Outdoor recreation + food
- Beer garden
- Indoor recreation
- Open space / park
- Community / senior center
- Housing
- More stormwater management

5

IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 5 brings the goals and objectives of the plan together, creating a blueprint for the future and identifying a phasing plan to generate sustained momentum and plan support.

IMPLEMENTATION: LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION

PARTNERSHIPS

The success of implementing the recommendations and improving Douglas Avenue Corridor will require coordinated involvement by many organizations. Partnerships must collaborate, coordinate, and organize their efforts to reach a common goal. Key partnerships include:

- City of Des Moines
- Douglas Avenue Coalition
- Civic Partnerships
- Development Community
- Iowa DOT
- Neighborhood Associations

Each of these organizations have a role to play and the efforts of one organization alone will not provide the required support to strengthen the corridor. Successful development efforts require successful organizations and public/private partnerships.

City of Des Moines. The City of Des Moines Community Development, Economic Development, Engineering Department, and Parks Department have crucial responsibilities, working with other organizations, to implement the plan.

- Managing capital improvement projects and budgets including street modifications (with IDOT), public park areas, streetscaping, and trails.
- Managing and providing incentives where appropriate to implement the vision and intent of the Corridor Plan. Incentives may include a program to encourage private property enhancements, gap development financing, TIF, and other targeted programs.
- Reviewing, amending, and enforcing the Des Moines zoning ordinance to regulate development and property improvement in line with the

intent of the Corridor Plan.

- Communicating with neighborhood associations and the Douglas Avenue Coalition to address emerging needs, concerns, and developing continued support for the Corridor Plan vision.

Douglas Avenue Coalition.

The Douglas Avenue Coalition championed the effort to develop the Corridor Plan. The Coalition has several responsibilities in implementation:

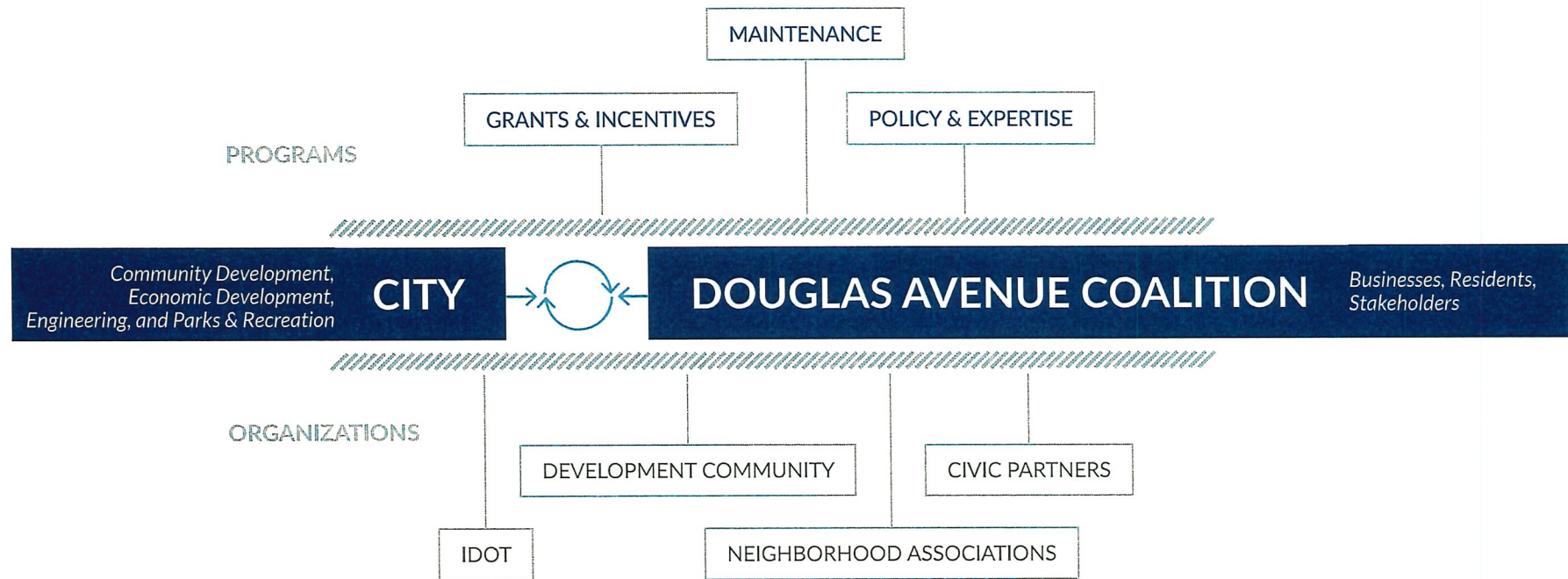
- Advocating and campaigning for projects and assisting in fundraising for appropriate projects.
- Representing businesses along the corridor, acting as their voice in public meetings, projects, and decisions by various entities on projects in the corridor.
- Maintaining dialog with business and property owners

to understand market changes, trends, and concerns.

- Marketing the corridor and its assets to the broader Des Moines metropolitan area.
- Communicating regularly with the neighborhood associations and City of Des Moines on Douglas Avenue conditions, events, projects, and other updates.

Civic Partnerships. Outside organizations can assist in organizing efforts, public education, further development design, project implementation, and project financing. Potential civic partners include the Des Moines Neighborhood Development Corporation, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, and Urban Land Institute of Iowa.

Development Community. Many of the plan's concepts require initiative from the development community. Some projects may



not happen without healthy partnerships.

Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT). The IDOT plays a major role in improving the environment of Douglas Avenue through its jurisdictional authority over U.S. Highway 6, acting as Douglas Avenue from MLK to Merle Hay Road. The City of Des Moines needs to maintain

ongoing communication with IDOT throughout project implementation to ensure improvements benefit all modes of transportation – motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users.

Neighborhood Associations. The residents of the adjacent neighborhoods provide a valuable customer base for businesses along Douglas Avenue Corridor. Additionally, a significant

percentage of properties along Douglas Avenue are residential uses. Douglas Avenue is the front yard to these neighborhoods and they all want Douglas Avenue to be an asset. Responsibilities of each neighborhood association include:

- Being actively involved with the Douglas Avenue Coalition.
- Including the goals and visions for Douglas Avenue into local

neighborhood plans.

- Continuing to provide input to the city and other partners on issues and opportunities for improvements in the corridor.
- Create opportunities for neighbors to interact in the corridor through events, gatherings, or meetings.

IMPLEMENTATION: PUBLIC REALM STRATEGIES

Numerous mobility concepts were designed and tested as part of this plan. Ultimately, two concepts rose to the top as viable options to initially consider for implementation. The details of these options are available in the appendix and summarized in this section. Both concepts evaluate traffic flow and safety, and both improve operation, safety, reliability for all modes of travel along the corridor, streetscape enhancements, and access to private properties.

Scenario A: Pilot Project. The lower cost improvement option should be implemented as a semi-permanent, or pilot, project to evaluate impacts to the Douglas Avenue corridor and surrounding transportation network. These impacts can be quantitatively measured through a series of performance measures with ranges of metrics. The data can be collected over an extended period of time in an effort to evaluate the overall performance of the project. One such example of a performance measure for the lower cost improvements would be the collection of before and after pilot project traffic speeds to help determine the project's effectiveness at calming traffic. Example performance measures are listed in the table at right.

Scenario B: Build-out. The higher cost improvement option would provide additional pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular accommodations and create additional public space for streetscape and other aesthetic improvements throughout the corridor. The higher cost improvement option would be the most disruptive to property owners along the corridor and users of the transportation network during construction. Therefore, improvements could be staged during construction in an effort to minimize disruption to property owners and the traveling public.

PHASING

Both improvement plans could be implemented through a phased approach as funding is secured for the capital improvement costs. This phasing could be as granular as block-by-block improvements or series of blocks at key nodes along the corridor.

Improvement opportunities listed in Chapter 2's Mobility Opportunities, but not included in either improvement option presented, such as driveway consolidation or bus stop improvements, should be considered independently and on a project-by-project basis. As the lower and higher cost improvement options are further considered, designed, and potentially implemented, consideration should be given to coordinating and integrating with these other improvement opportunities.

Performance Measures for Pilot Project

1. Traffic speeds
2. Traffic volumes
3. Crash rates
4. Travel times
5. Diversion of traffic to other routes
6. Property owner surveys
7. Business owner surveys

IMPLEMENTATION: PRIVATE REALM STRATEGIES

The plan presents possibilities for future development. Some projects may develop in response to market demand, while other projects may not develop at all if not but for public assistance or incentives. Participants in the planning process favor focusing efforts that build on the market-based momentum that can generally be found on the western half of the corridor and catalyzing development on the eastern portion of the corridor with potential public investment. Some projects could develop incrementally over time, and will need assistance from the city and its partners to navigate financial and development approval.

The west and east bookends of Douglas Avenue are priority areas for initial implementation as they are high-profile and have the potential to transform the image of the corridor. Also, they have the potential to attract both local residents and visitors, creating new reasons for people to visit the area, particularly if a cluster of new projects occur in a small area.

The west end of Douglas Avenue at Merle Hay Road is experiencing new investment. The momentum is primarily market-driven, requiring the least amount of public intervention to stimulate new investment. The city and its partners should continue to campaign for the success of this area as it will attract reinvestment into properties and buildings further along the corridor.

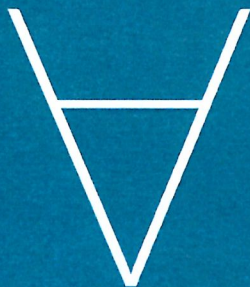
The east end of Douglas Avenue at Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway has been experiencing some new investment, and yet some turnover of businesses. Public intervention is likely necessary to stabilize this area and help build consumer confidence that future projects will be viable. Concepts for the area could support unmet needs for recreation, housing options, and capitalize on the existing diversity of businesses. Also, some of these projects could leverage outside funding sources, particularly for the riverfront area that could incorporate state grants, charitable contribution, and capital funds from multiple city departments.

In between the bookends of Douglas Avenue, there are many other high priority areas. To that

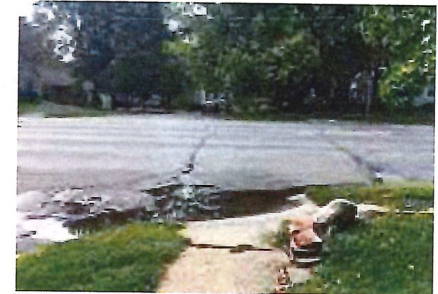
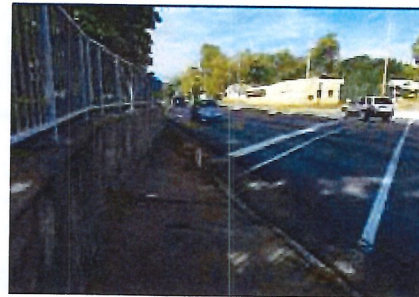
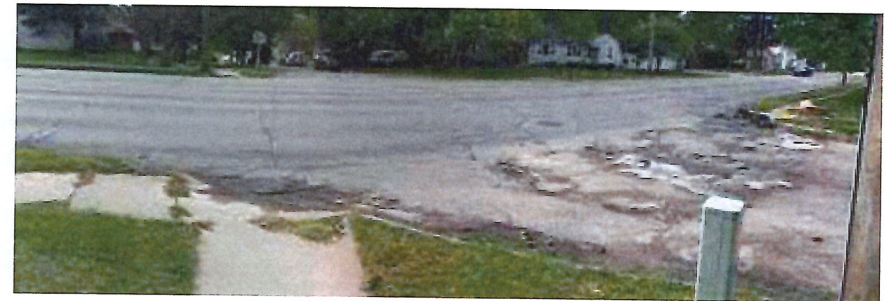
end, incentive programs should focus on areas where they can generate widespread, maximum private market response. The use of incentive programs, such as tax relief benefits, should be directed to areas where the greatest return on investment is available to the neighborhood and community.

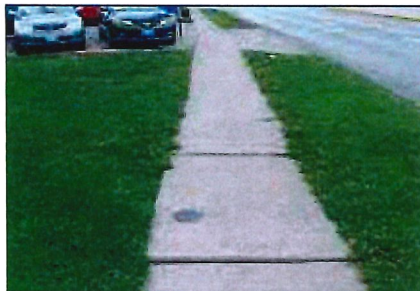
The prospect of a new Hy-Vee at Beaver Avenue has significant potential to become a catalyst for future investment for this important node.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX A: EXISTING CONDITIONS





APPENDIX B: TRAFFIC STUDY SUMMARY COMPARISON MATRIX

Douglas Avenue Segment - Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road

IMPROVEMENT CATEGORY	TRAFFIC OPERATIONS	SAFETY	MULTIMODAL	AESTHETIC
OPTION 1: KEEP 4-LANE CROSS-SECTION	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
OPTION 2: 3-LANE CROSS-SECTION WITHIN EXISTING ROW	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆
OPTION 3: 3-LANE EXPANDED CROSS-SECTION TO ACCOMMODATE 5-FOOT PARKWAY	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Douglas Avenue/Beaver Avenue Intersection

IMPROVEMENT CATEGORY	TRAFFIC OPERATIONS	SAFETY	MULTIMODAL	AESTHETIC
OPTION 1: EXISTING APPROACH GEOMETRY (5-LANE DOUGLAS/3-LANE BEAVER THROUGH INTERSECTION WITH NB, SB, AND RIGHT-TURN LANES)	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
OPTION 2: 2-LANE ROUNDABOUT WITH ADD/DROP LANES UPSTREAM/DOWNSTREAM OF INTERSECTION	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
OPTION 3: 3-LANE DOUGLAS AND BEAVER THROUGH THE INTERSECTION WITH RIGHT-TURN LANES	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Douglas Avenue/Lower Beaver Avenue Intersection

IMPROVEMENT CATEGORY	TRAFFIC OPERATIONS	SAFETY	MULTIMODAL	AESTHETIC
OPTION 1: EXISTING APPROACH GEOMETRY (5-LANE/3-LANE LOWER BEAVER THROUGH INTERSECTION WITH WB RIGHT-TURN LANE)	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆
OPTION 2: REALIGNED LOWER BEAVER TO REDUCE INTERSECTION SKEW AND ADDITION OF A SECOND SB LEFT-TURN LANE	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

TRAFFIC STUDY COMPARISON MATRIX

Project: Douglas Avenue Corridor Plan

Subject: Options Comparison Matrix

Douglas Avenue Segment – Merle Hay Road to Lower Beaver Road

Option	Traffic Operations	Safety	Multimodal Accommodations	Design Considerations	Project Impacts	Aesthetics	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
1. 4-Lane Cross-section within Existing ROW (Existing Cross-section)	<p>Maintains traffic capacity within existing ROW;</p> <p>Through traffic in the outside lane impacted at private driveways by turning traffic challenged by tight corner radii</p> <p>Through traffic in the inside lane impacted by left-turn traffic stopping in the lane while waiting for a gap in traffic to turn</p>	<p>Crash rate over double the statewide average from 2013-2017</p> <p>Primary crash types are rear-end (39% of all crashes), broadside (18%) and sideswipe (15%)</p>	<p>Sidewalk and curb ramps do not meet ADA for most of the study corridor</p> <p>Sidewalk gaps or width less than 4 feet in some locations</p> <p>Minimal to no parkway buffer between roadway and sidewalk in most locations</p> <p>No on-street or off-street bike facility</p>	N/A	N/A	Limited opportunity to enhance aesthetics along corridor	N/A
2. 3-Lane Cross-section within Existing ROW	<p>Adequate capacity; potential diversion of traffic to alternate roadways</p> <p>Reduced impact to traffic flow at private driveways because of wider parkway making it easier to turn in/out of driveways</p> <p>Dedicated left-turn lane reduces disruption of through traffic flow by left-turn vehicles</p>	<p>25%-47% fewer crashes predicted; 45% fewer rear-end crashes (left-turn traffic would not stop in a through lane as it does today)</p> <p>Potential for reduced traffic speeds</p> <p>Reduced crossing distance for pedestrians crossing Douglas Avenue</p>	<p>8-foot shared-use path on north side; 5-foot sidewalk on south side</p> <p>Parkway buffer between roadway and sidewalk/path increased to 4 feet</p> <p>Optimally space DART bus stops</p>	<p>Relocates curb lines and storm inlets on both sides of roadway</p> <p>Shared-use path on north side could be narrowed to 7-foot wide to avoid project constraints and/or property impacts</p> <p>Could be implemented as a semi-permanent project</p> <p>Possible bio-retention areas along corridor</p>	<p>No buffer between proposed sidewalk/path and Right-of-Way</p> <p>Requires modification to storm sewer system</p>	<p>Minimal opportunity to enhance landscaping in 4-foot parkways</p> <p>May not be possible to add street trees to 4-foot wide parkways</p>	\$2.8 Million
3. 3-Lane Expanded Cross-section to Accommodate 5-Foot Parkways	<p>Adequate capacity; potential diversion of traffic to alternate roadways</p> <p>Reduced impact to traffic flow at private driveways because of wider parkway making it easier to turn in/out of driveways</p> <p>Dedicated left-turn lane reduces disruption of through traffic flow by left-turn vehicles</p>	<p>25%-47% fewer crashes predicted; 45% fewer rear-end crashes (left-turn traffic would not stop in a through lane as it does today)</p> <p>Potential for reduced traffic speeds</p> <p>Reduced crossing distance for pedestrians crossing Douglas Avenue</p>	<p>8-foot shared-use path on north side; 5-foot sidewalk on south side</p> <p>Parkway buffer between roadway and sidewalk/path increased to 5 feet</p> <p>Optimally space DART bus stops</p>	<p>Relocates curb lines and storm inlets on both sides of roadway</p> <p>Shared-use path on north side could be narrowed to 7-foot wide to avoid project constraints and/or property impacts</p> <p>Utility poles primarily run along south side of roadway and would need to be avoided with proposed sidewalk.</p> <p>Possible bio-retention areas along corridor</p>	<p>Requires typical nominal 1-foot wide permanent easement on south side</p> <p>No buffer between proposed sidewalk/path and Right-of-Way</p> <p>Requires modification to storm sewer system</p>	<p>Additional opportunity to enhance landscaping in 5-foot parkways</p> <p>Possible 5-foot wide landscape planters and trees</p>	\$2.9 Million

Douglas Avenue / Beaver Avenue Intersection

Option	Traffic Operations	Safety	Multimodal Accommodations	Design Considerations	Project Impacts	Aesthetics	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
1. Existing approach geometry (5-Ln Douglas / 3-Ln Beaver through intersection with NB, SB and WB right-turn lanes)	2040 Build – Level of service (LOS) D (AM and PM peak hours); Queues may extend nearly 600 feet upstream of the intersection on some approaches (past some private driveways and roadways)	Installation of Flashing Yellow Arrow (FYA) signal heads to clarify right-of-way	Curb ramps not meeting ADA updated to meet ADA No bike lane or accommodation on Beaver Ave through intersection Opportunity for bus lane/pull-out with stop downstream of intersection	Requires lane drops on Douglas Ave, downstream of intersection (assumes 3-lane Douglas Ave cross-section) Reconstruct curb ramps to meet ADA standards	No private property impacts	Minimal opportunity to enhance aesthetics at intersection	\$0.4 Million
2. Two-lane roundabout with add/drop lanes upstream/ downstream of intersection	2040 Build – LOS C (AM and PM peak hours); Queues expected to be less than 200 feet upstream of the intersection on all approaches	20%-65% fewer crashes; 70% fatal/injury crashes (design eliminates broadside/angle conflicts, which tend to have a higher likelihood of injury) Slower speeds through the intersection Reduced crossing distance for pedestrians on all approaches by using splitter islands for refuge Reduced conflict of pedestrians with right-turn traffic by increased buffer between right-turn yield line and pedestrian crossing	Curb ramps not meeting ADA updated to meet ADA Pedestrian crossing distances shorter and crossing one direction of travel at a time with pedestrian refuge Bicyclists allowed to enter/exit sidewalk at intersection or travel on roundabout lane Bus stops would use outside through lane with stop downstream of intersection	Roundabout could be designed to function as single lane roundabout until second lane needed for capacity Retaining wall and parking lot in NW quadrant would require reconstruction Driveways in NW and SW quadrants may require closure Reconstruct curb ramps to meet ADA standards	Significant impacts to private properties in NW and NE quadrants of intersection Driveways immediately adjacent to intersection would be permanently closed or become right-in/right-out movements Significant overhead and underground utility impacts Improved truck turning movements	Maximum opportunity to enhance landscaping Opportunity to add public art, neighborhood gateway features and branding Opportunity to landscape central island and splitter islands	\$2.8 Million
3. 3-Ln Douglas and Beaver through the intersection with right-turn lanes	2040 Build – LOS D (AM and PM peak hours); Multiple turn movements may experience LOS E/F; Queues may extend nearly 800 feet upstream of the intersection on some approaches (past several private driveways and roadways)	Installation of FYA signal heads to clarify right-of-way Reduced crossing distance for pedestrians crossing Douglas Avenue	Curb ramps not meeting ADA updated to meet ADA Pedestrian crossing distances are shorter Buses would use single through lane with stop downstream of intersection	Relocate curb lines and storm inlets at intersection Reconstruct curb ramps to meet ADA standards	Smaller intersection footprint with possible Right-of-Way vacation	Additional space between roadway and Right-of-Way to enhance landscaping and add minor gateway features	\$0.8 Million

APPENDIX B

Douglas Avenue / Lower Beaver Intersection

Option	Traffic Operations	Safety	Multimodal Accommodations	Design Considerations	Project Impacts	Aesthetics	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
1. Existing approach geometry (5-Ln Douglas / 3-Ln Lower Beaver through intersection with WB right-turn lane)	2040 Build – LOS D (AM peak hour); LOS C (PM peak hour); Multiple movements may experience LOS E/F; Southbound left-turn and westbound through queues may extend over 800 feet during peak times	Installation of FYA signal heads to clarify right-of-way	Longer pedestrian crossing distances Pedestrians crossing free flow right turn lanes Curb ramps not meeting ADA updated to meet ADA Buses would use outside through lane with stop downstream of intersection	Intersection skew is well beyond the recommended maximum skew by multiple design standards. Truck and passenger vehicle turning movements are difficult	No private property impacts Continued poor geometrics, sight distances, and turning movements	Minimal opportunity to enhance landscaping	\$0.1 Million
2. Realigned Lower Beaver to reduce intersection skew and addition of a second SB left-turn lane	2040 Build – LOS C (AM and PM peak hours); Some movements may experience LOS E; Westbound through queue may extend over 800 feet during peak times	Installation of FYA signal heads to clarify right-of-way Intersection skew corrected to improve turning radii, sight distances and crossing distances (including reduced pedestrian crossing distances)	Better pedestrian accommodation: Shorter pedestrian crossing distances More direct pedestrian movements on SW quadrant with removal of sidewalk on top of retaining wall Curb ramps not meeting ADA updated to meet ADA Buses would use outside through lane with stop downstream of intersection	Proposed intersection skew of 70 degrees is recommended maximum skew per AASHTO. Possible removal of retaining wall in SW quadrant	Major private property impacts and relocations north and west of intersection – 6 or 7 full acquisitions and relocations Potential for redevelopment opportunity in NW and NE quadrants of intersection Improved truck and passenger vehicle turning movements Improved intersection sight distances Better meets driver expectation	Opportunity to add landscaping, public art, neighborhood gateway features, and branding along un-used existing Right-of-Way	\$3.8 Million

Note: The roundabout improvement option analyzed in the Traffic Study was not carried forward for comparison because the option was determined to not be operationally feasible.

APPENDIX C:

OPEN HOUSE BOARDS WITH PUBLIC FEEDBACK, 10/29/2019

4-Lane To 3-Lane Pilot Project



PURPOSE:

- Evaluate Performance
- Educate/Consensus Building
- Lower Cost
- Need for City Re-Investment



Recent 4-lane to 3-lane street conversion on University Avenue in Des Moines.





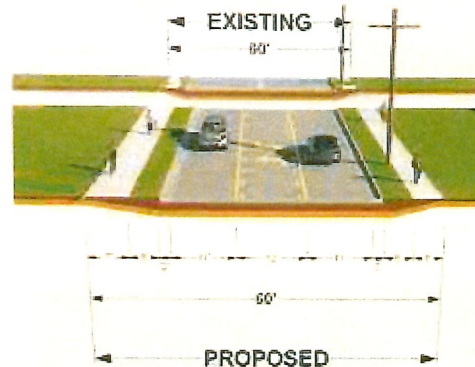
DOUGLAS AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN

City of Des Moines, Douglas Avenue, HDR, RDG...

Ultimate 4-Lane To 3-Lane Conversion

BENEFITS:

- Increased Safety
 - Pedestrians
 - Bicyclists
 - Vehicles
- Increased Enhancement Opportunities
- Better Access to/from Properties



**DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN**



Ultimate 5-Lane Narrowing



BENEFITS:

- Traffic calming
- Better Pedestrian Accommodation
- Improved Pedestrian & Bicyclist Safety
- Increased Enhancement Opportunities



New mid-block pedestrian crossing as part of the 4-lane to 3-lane street conversion on University Avenue in Des Moines.



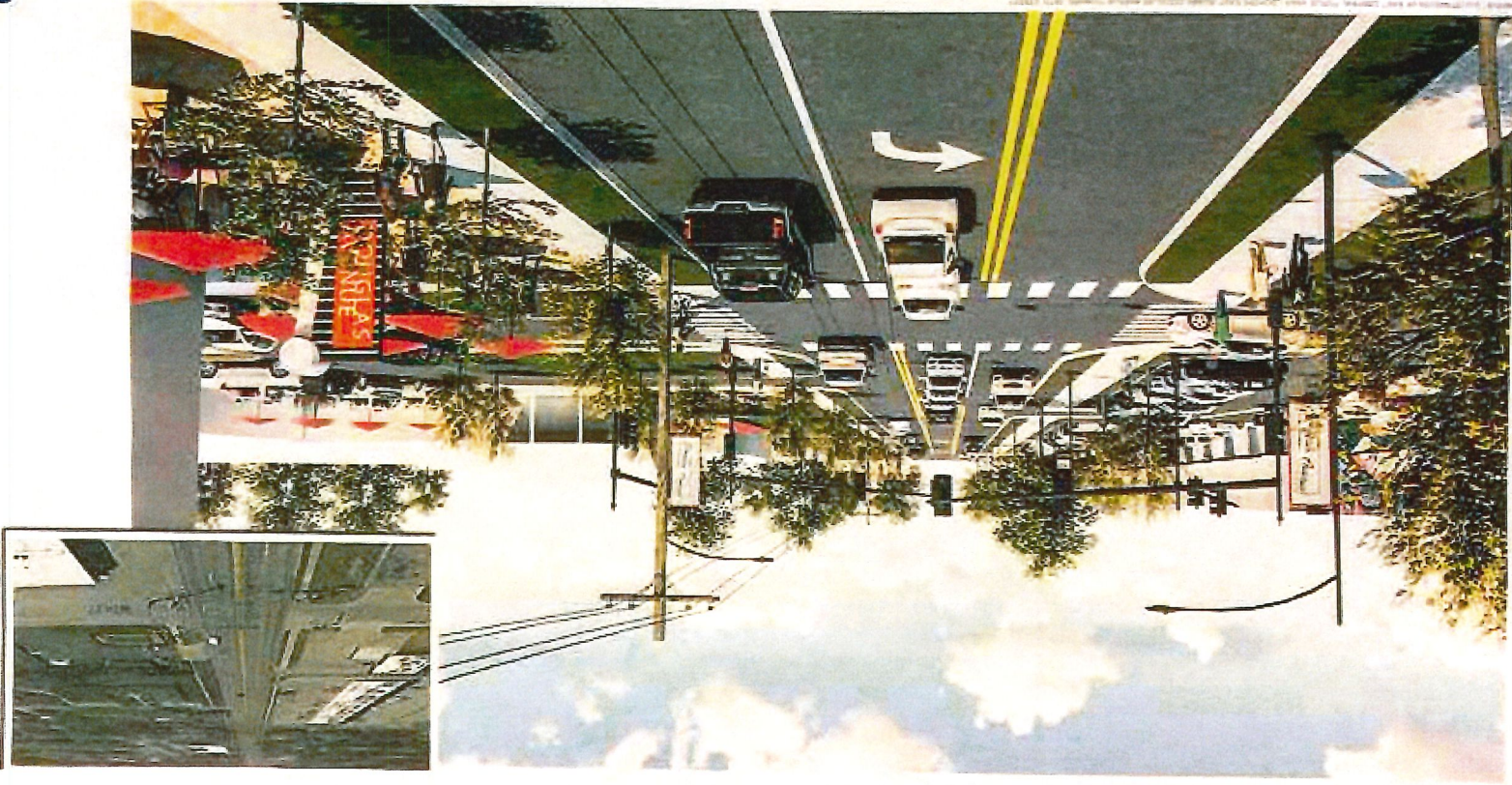
**DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN**

"No Thanks"

"Love It!"



Road Vision - West of Lower Beaver



DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN

"No Trucks"

"Love It!"

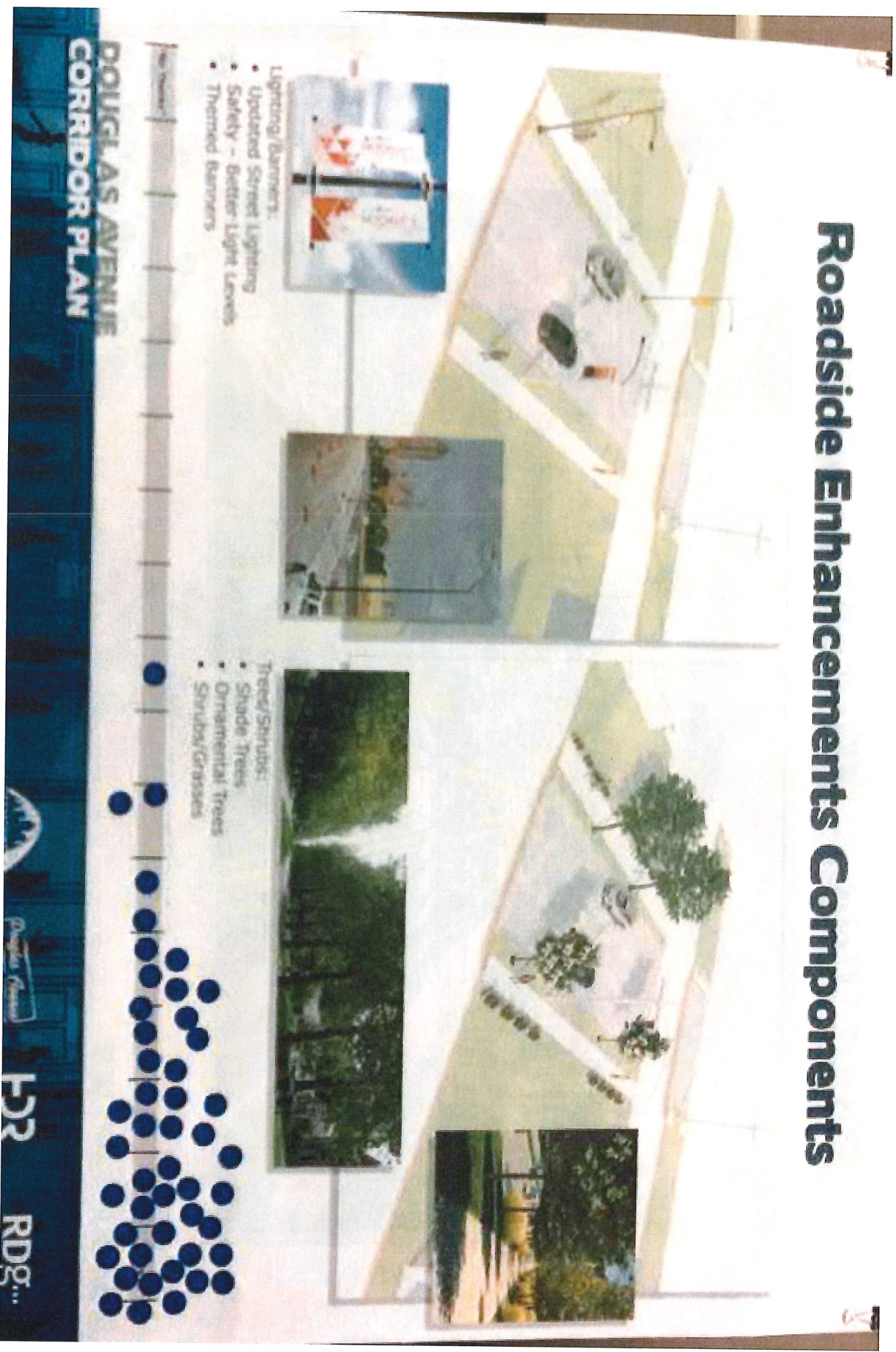
RDS...

H2

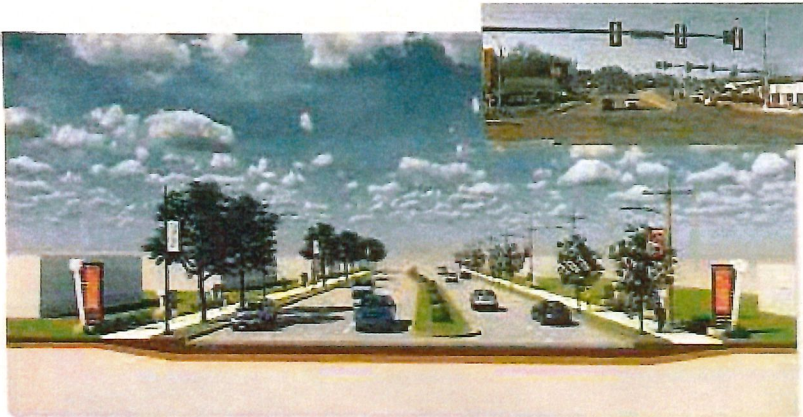
Douglas Avenue
Corridor Plan

ON THE DES MOINES

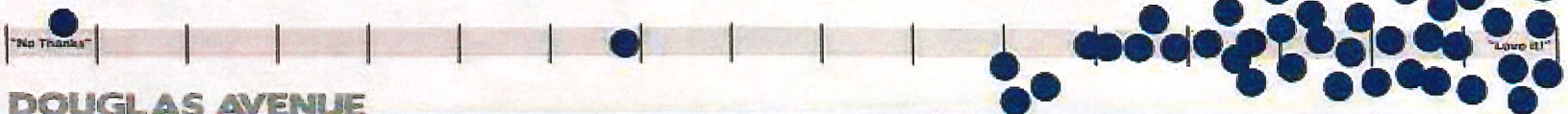
Roadside Enhancements Components



Long Term Enhanced Corridor



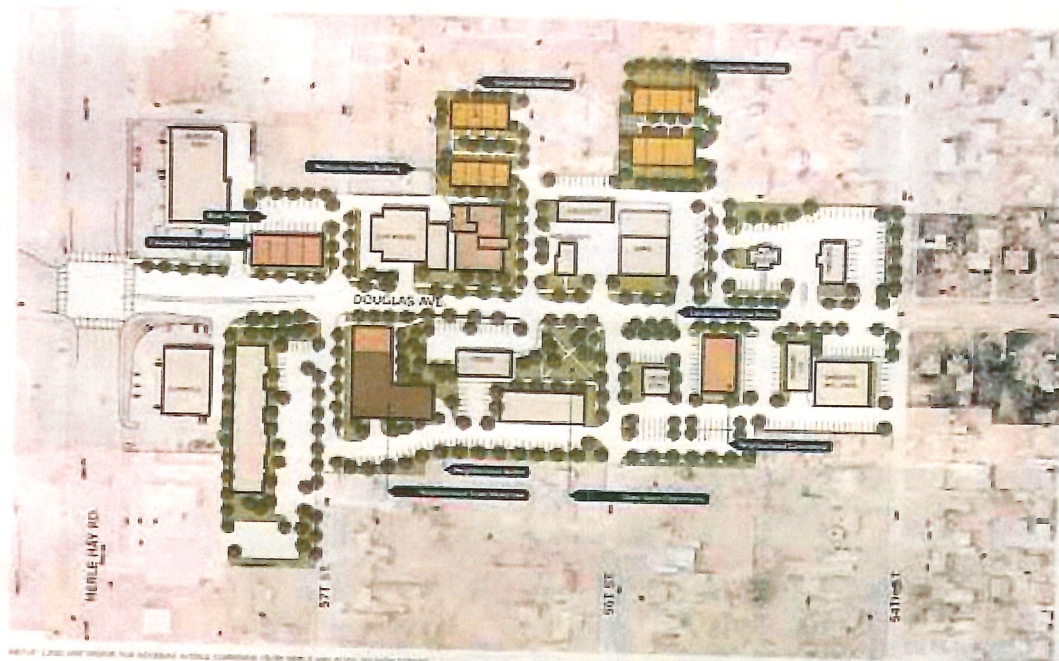
- Long Term Enhancements
- Corridor Features & Signage
 - Trees & Shrubs
 - Lighting & Banners



**DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN**



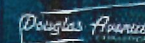
Focus Area 1: West



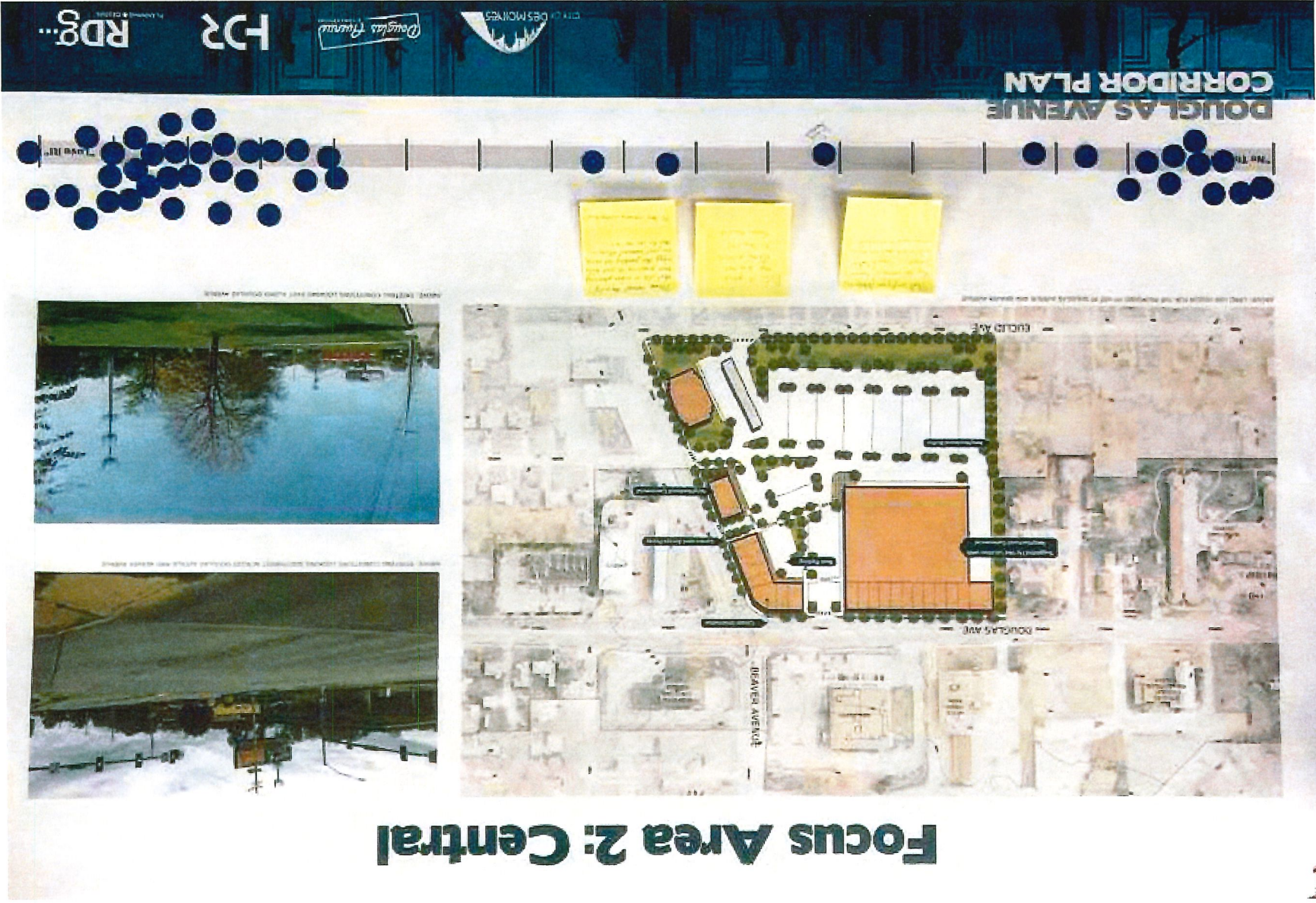
"Go Thru"

**DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN**

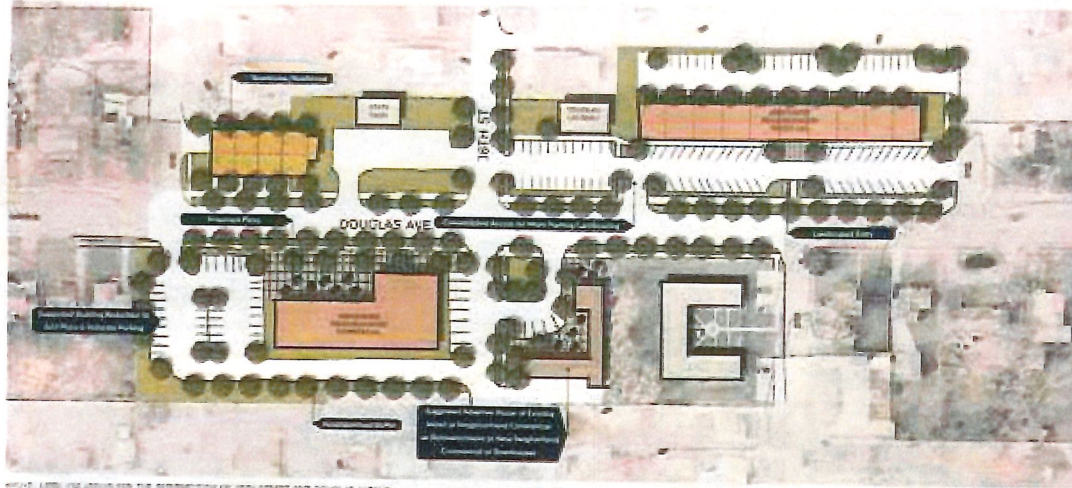
"Love It"



Focus Area 2: Central



Focus Area 3: East Central



ACTIVE: LAND USE DEVELOPMENT AND RESTRUCTURING OF 167th STREET AND DOUGLAS AVENUE



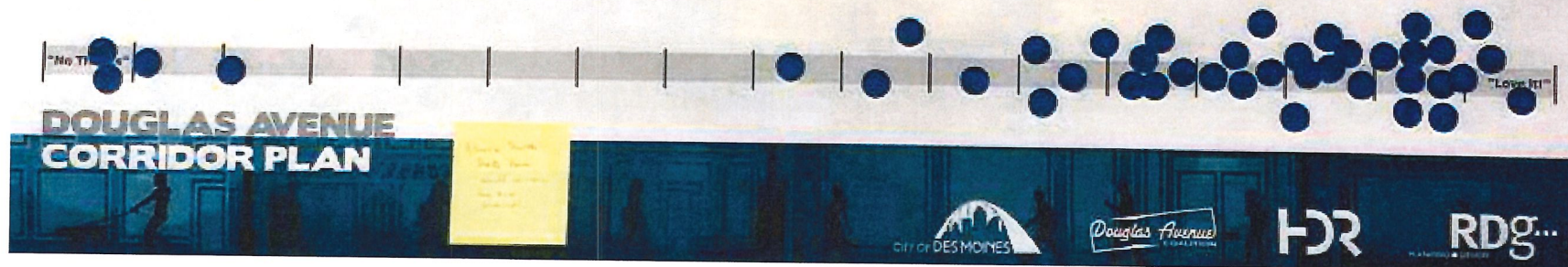
ACTIVE: EXISTING CONDITIONS (Source: Google Earth)



ACTIVE: ILLUSTRATION OF EAST CENTRAL FOCUS AREA LOOKING EAST ALONG DOUGLAS AVENUE TOWARDS 167th STREET



NATIVE: EXISTING CONDITIONS (2015) OF THIS SURROUNDING THE ENVIRONMENT OF DOUGLAS AVENUE AND 167th STREET



Focus Area 4: East Option A



Focus Area 4: Option A



"No Thanks"

"Love It!"

**DOUGLAS AVENUE
CORRIDOR PLAN**



Focus Area 4: East Option B



Corridor Possibilities - Land Use Forms



DOUGLAS AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN



SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS

The following supplemental documents are available at the City of Des Moines Community Development web page:

- Full results of online survey
- Douglas Avenue Corridor Traffic Study

