

An aerial photograph of Des Moines, Iowa, showing the Raccoon River winding through the city. Chautauqua Park is outlined in black in the lower center. The text is overlaid on the image.

A
DES MOINES
NEIGHBORHOOD
CHAUTAUQUA
PARK

PREPARED BY
CITY OF DES MOINES
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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Recently listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Chautauqua Park is a fine example of a neighborhood that developed as the automobile became important in the American lifestyle. Its important defining elements such as brick and stone homes, curvilinear street layout, tree canopy and entry posts create a sense of community for its residents. The neighborhood's distinctive landscape design and the architectural unity of the homes provide a "sense of place" that is uniquely associated with Chautauqua Park.

Many thanks to the residents of Chautauqua who opened their homes and spent many hours working on the goals and strategies for their neighborhood included in this plan.

This plan received grant support under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, from the U.S. Department of the Interior and the State Historical Society of Iowa, Bureau of Historic Preservation.

The History included in this brochure is taken from work by Architectural Historian, Author, and Eastsider Barbara Beving Long.

A DES MOINES NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN CHAUTAUQUA PARK

Chautauqua Park is a unique neighborhood of one and two family homes constructed in the 1920's & 1930's. It is a goal of the City, and the neighborhood, to preserve the neighborhood's architectural and historic character. To achieve this and protect the historic character, the Planning Department and neighborhood have been working together to develop a preservation plan. Strategies to accomplish this are discussed in the plan, one of which was to list the neighborhood in the National Register of Historic Places.

The following preservation/neighborhood plan represents what neighborhood residents and city officials want for the future of Chautauqua Park. The goals and strategies attached are a starting point, however, the plan should not be considered a static document. The goals and strategies may be changed as new ideas are added and the neighborhood evolves. The purpose of neighborhood planning is to bring together those that know the neighborhood best, the residents, to work with local officials to define problems and solutions that will guide the preservation and rebirth of a neighborhood. We believe planning at the neighborhood level, in the context of the whole city, will result in a better quality of life and financial investment for all residents of Des Moines.

The plan is endorsed by the neighborhood as well as the Plan and Zoning Commission, Historic District Commission, Parks and Recreation Board and City Council. Endorsement by City Council does not ensure funding for any of the implementation strategies, but does ensure that the City Council is aware of the neighborhood's priorities and will attempt to work with the neighborhood to have those priorities become a reality.

THE PLAN



NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS

- Preserve single-family character
- Preserve area as primarily owner-occupied
- Preserve existing homes
- Preserve architectural and historical character
- Protect area as identifiable neighborhood
- Strengthen neighborhood organization

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Construction of new identifiable feature

Period lighting would enhance the architectural character of Chautauqua Park homes. Street lights, either typical of those in the 1920's or those actually installed when Chautauqua Park was being developed, could be installed. The City has developed a policy on installing period street lights with which Chautauqua Park would need to comply.

Curbing, repair and replacement

Curbs within the Chautauqua Park neighborhood have eroded due to water damage and road repair. This has created water problems for several homeowners' yards, the entry from 13th Street, and Douglas Park. The City's Engineering Department gave a very preliminary estimate that it would cost \$80,000 to repair/replace the curbs in Chautauqua Park.

LONG-RANGE STRATEGIES

Local Historic District Designation

Property owners in Chautauqua Park are working on being designated a local historic district. This designation is separate and distinct from listing in the National Register. Where the National Register nomination is primarily honorary, the local listing is regulatory. The City of Des Moines has a Historic District Commission which reviews and approves all exterior changes within a local historic district. This ensures that changes do not adversely affect the historic character of the neighborhood. To become a local district, 51 % of the property owners need to sign a petition saying they are in favor of such a designation. Three residents of Chautauqua Park would be appointed by the Mayor to the Commission to represent the neighborhood if the area becomes a local district.

Improve Alley between Chautauqua Parkway and Jefferson Avenue

The purpose of this strategy would be to increase security for the neighborhood and enhance the neighborhood's sense of place. Improvements might include lighting and uniform fencing with gates on to the alley.

Improvement of Garden Area between Chautauqua Parkway and Burlington Terrace

This spot would provide a good gathering place or focal point for neighborhood residents if some furniture, light posts or other landscape elements could be installed and a retaining wall constructed. The Association would need to agree to maintain the flowers or other landscaping at the site.

Enhancement of Entrances

The 13th Street entrance into Chautauqua Park could be restored to its original look with hedges, new curbs and repair of the brick columns. The ravine would also need some work to deal with the erosion. The unbuildable vacant lots along Hickman will remain to provide a buffer from the traffic.

Traffic Requests

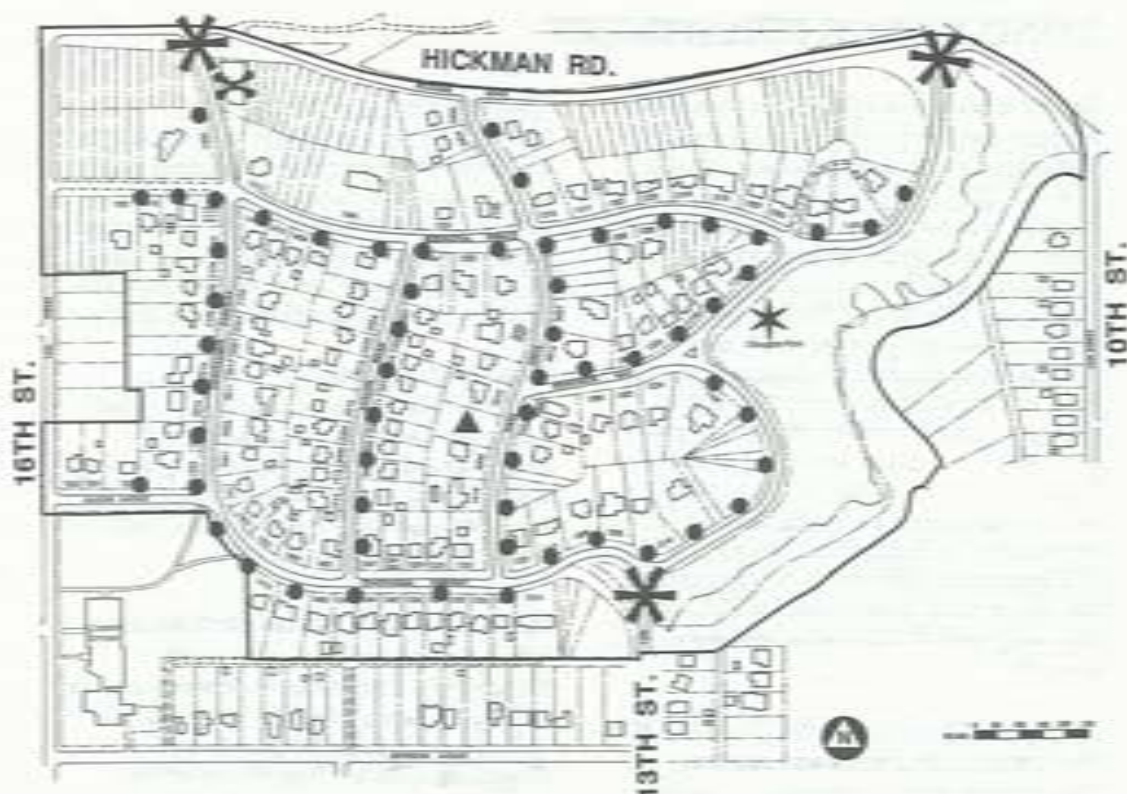
To ensure the entrance and neighborhood was preserved as much as possible, the neighborhood could request a study to determine what alternate transportation routes could be proposed to keep through traffic off Chautauqua Parkway.

Rehabilitation Loans for Owner-occupants

Homeowners and residents should work with the City to develop housing programs that will encourage individuals to live in Chautauqua Park. Programs might be created to provide below market interest rates to owner-occupants for repairs to homes. Examples include loans that could be used for structural improvements, plumbing, electrical work, additions and a variety of additional exterior improvements.

Continued Maintenance for Douglas Park

Maintenance would include keeping illegal dumping from the area and caring for the brush and trees as well as some repair and fill around the 13th Street entrance. Residents may consider developing some paths or walking paths through the park.



CHAUTAUQUA PARK PRESERVATION PLAN

- NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY
- NEW STREET LIGHTS
- ▲ POSSIBLE NEW CONSTRUCTION
- ✕ DEMOLITION
- ★ GARDEN AREA TO BE IMPROVED
- ✱ NEIGHBORHOOD ENTRANCE TO BE ENHANCED

PREPARED BY: CITY OF DES MOINES PLANNING DEPARTMENT - SEPTEMBER, 1989

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places

Chautauqua Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in March 1990. A listing in the National Register is primarily honorary and does not restrict what an individual could do to his/her home with private dollars. Residents of Chautauqua Park were notified of the nomination and residents supported the designation.

Erection of Signs Identifying Area

To promote its unique identity and further enhance entrances, signs could be designed that identify the Chautauqua Park Historic Neighborhood. Street signs could also be changed so that they more closely resemble period street signs. All signs must be in conformance with the current manual on signs. The City has not committed to paying for the signs as of this printing.

Neighborhood Events

Chautauqua Park has had a strong neighborhood association throughout its history. Most events such as an Old Fashioned Chautauqua, house tour or other activities should be sponsored by the Chautauqua Park Association to promote the unique history and architecture of the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Association should continue its sponsorship of activities such as Christmas lights.

Status of Abandoned Structure

The County owns the house located at 2221 Chautauqua Parkway. The county government has authority to tear down county-owned property within the city limits. The neighborhood has requested that this house be given priority for demolition. The neighborhood has also requested that the county determine if the lot is unbuildable because of topographic constraints. If it is unbuildable, the lot could be sold for private open space to improve the view into Chautauqua and further enhance the entrance. If it is buildable, the Association should work toward complementary infill construction.

Neighborhood Promotion

The Chautauqua Park Association has developed a video tape which highlights the unique history and architecture of Chautauqua Park. This is available to be shown to a wide variety of groups including city and county groups, realtors and financial institutions.

Public/Private Partnership

The years have been kind to Chautauqua. The homes have aged gracefully and homeowners have continued a commitment to their neighborhood. However, Chautauqua is an enclave of beautiful homes surrounded by urban blight. Aging site improvements further detract from the area. A partnership between the City and Chautauqua residents is needed to truly preserve Chautauqua Park. Funding for the implementation of this preservation plan is the next important step.

RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE



Archie Alexander House - 2200 Chautauqua Parkway (undated photo)

Archie Alexander achieved national success as a black engineer and major contractor in the largely white construction business. When Alexander purchased this home in 1943 the neighborhood association objected to the sale citing a clause in the abstract restricting sales to Negroes before 1943. Several families moved from the area when they were unable to stop the purchase.

2015 and 2027 Nash Drive (undated photo)

Federal programs to promote home ownership in the late 1930's apparently spurred construction in Chautauqua. Fifty one Chautauqua Park houses were built between 1938 and 1941 when this picture was taken.





2011 Chautauqua Parkway (1909)*

Chautauqua Park was built as an automobile suburb. This house and many others have attached garages. The integration of the automobile into the house design is a notable feature throughout Chautauqua.



2027 Nash Drive (undated photo)

This Streamline Moderne house by Kraetsch & Kraetsch is one of very few of this style in the neighborhood and in Des Moines. Built in 1938, the rounded balcony contrasts with the sharp lines of the rest of the house.

1150 Chautauqua Parkway (1909)*

The Tudor Revival stylistic influence dominates in Chautauqua Parkway. This is an example of what is locally known as a "Beaverdale Brick". It features a front-facing gable, brick w/stone, simulated half-timbering, a prominent chimney and multiple window panes.



* Photo by Barbara Beving Long

L. Earl Fogelson, a Des Moines landscape architect in the 1920's designed Chautauqua Park. Lots were laid out to be quite small, just 35' wide and buyers were required to combine at least two of these small lots. This arrangement allowed buyers to "fix the size of your homesite," according to the 1923 auction booklet. It was also a good merchandising technique, for buyers might buy three or more 35' lots rather than a single 50'.

The site was consciously designed to take full advantage of the distinctive setting. Whether entering from Hickman where steep Chautauqua Parkway perches precariously above Douglas Park or passing the 13th Street entry posts, it is clear that Chautauqua Park has its own distinct sense of place, of separation from adjacent areas.

Chautauqua Park has long been identified as a Des Moines neighborhood. In the late 1920's members of the Chautauqua Park Improvement League worked for creation of a park along a proposed riverfront boulevard. The group was still active in 1944 when it unsuccessfully worked to bar a black family from buying a house there.

By 1925, just two years after platting, three houses graced Chautauqua Park. Most early development occurred along meandering Chautauqua Parkway, the longest street in the neighborhood. By 1930 the street had 14 houses, a figure which grew to 24 in 1935 and 36 in 1940. Development along the other streets was steady after 1930. Although there were lots along Hickman Avenue, no houses had been built there by 1940. The presence of the contagious ward of county hospital across from Hickman at Chautauqua Park may have been a factor. A large undivided lot facing 16th Street also

lay undeveloped until much later and may be considered outside the boundaries of Chautauqua Park.

By 1940 nearly two-thirds of the present housing had been constructed in Chautauqua Park. Much of it is relatively unaltered. The neighborhood displays examples of the stylistic eclecticism that characterized residential design between the world wars. Similar siting and the presence of a high canopy of mature oaks further unify the area. Tudor Revival examples dominate, but there are also Cape Cod cottages, Colonial Revival designs and one Streamline Modern example. An important unifying feature is the attention lavished on entryways. Many feature stone, and other designs also call attention to the welcoming doorway.

Chautauqua Park retains important defining elements, including the curvilinear street lay-out and tree canopy. Brick, stone, and concrete entry posts at 13th Street contribute well to the sense of place. Chautauqua Park is a fine example of a neighborhood developed between the wars.

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