

Gray's Lake



Neighborhood Plan 2013



Acknowledgements

Plan Development and Oversight

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association

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Planning Process

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association
Kickoff Meeting
March 13, 2012

Neighborhood Input Meeting
April 5, 2012

Monthly Meetings
May 2012 - May 2013

Final Neighborhood Input Meeting
May 7, 2013



Gray's Lake Neighborhood

Map 1

Des Moines Neighborhoods

Source
City of Des Moines

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Plan Presentation and Approval

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association
May 21, 2013

Neighborhood Revitalization Board
June 5, 2013

Plan and Zoning Commission
June 6, 2013

Des Moines City Council
June 24, 2013

Polk County Board of Supervisors
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and Kris Gaspari Photography.

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Introduction

The City of Des Moines and the Polk County Board of Supervisors established the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in the early 1990's to help stabilize and improve Des Moines' neighborhoods. To coordinate this program, the City's Community Development Department formed the Neighborhood Development Division.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Program uses a strategy that calls for neighborhood residents, the City of Des Moines, Polk County, and local business leaders to develop a public/private partnership that addresses revitalization issues within the city. To participate, recognized neighborhoods must submit an application and make a presentation to the Neighborhood Revitalization Board. At the November 19, 2011 Council meeting, by Roll Call No. 11-1964, the Gray's Lake Neighborhood was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

The staff of the Neighborhood Development Division provides technical assistance and planning coordination. Neighborhood planning staff works with the neighborhood group to develop and implement appropriate goals and a feasible action plan. The neighborhood plan provides a list of activities and identifies parties responsible for implementation. The success of the revitalization effort depends on continued collaboration between the neighborhood organization, the City, the County, and other public and private organizations.

This plan was prepared through a joint effort of the City of Des Moines Community Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division and the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association. The approved plan becomes an amendment to the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan and an ongoing guide directing future policy decisions for the neighborhood. Once a majority of the action items in the plan are completed, the neighborhood will be moved to Charter status.

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association is charged with leading the day-to-day implementation of the plan, with technical assistance from the City of Des Moines and Polk County.

Neighborhood Participation

The planning process kicked off with a neighborhood meeting on April 5, 2012. A flyer was mailed to all residents living in the neighborhood inviting them to participate in the process. In addition, a website, www.revitalizedesmoines.com, was established to facilitate input from neighborhood residents. The meeting had 77 neighborhood residents in attendance. The meeting explained the neighborhood planning process and what to expect from a neighborhood plan, as well as helped determine issues the plan should address.

Attendees responded to a survey ranking their favorite thing about the neighborhood and indicating opportunities for improvement. Residents stated the neighborhood's location in the city, friendly neighbors, and parks and trails as the best amenities. Poorly maintained residential property and the appearance of commercial property were listed as improvements they would like to see.

After the survey, meeting participants were broken into groups of 8 and were given three discussion questions. The first question asked about strengths of the neighborhood, the second asked about weaknesses, and the final question asked each group to discuss what could be done to improve the neighborhood today. The following list states the key results from the three questions.

Neighborhood strengths

- Gray's Lake Park
- Diverse housing stock
- Location within Des Moines
- Friendly neighbors
- Well-kept properties
- Mature tree canopy

Neighborhood weaknesses

- Lack of sidewalk/ pedestrian connections
- Poorly maintained homes
- Speeding motor traffic
- Vacant homes

How to improve the neighborhood today

- Beautify neighborhood
- Build relationship with SW 9th Merchants Association
- SCRUB Day
- Help neighbors maintain homes
- Traffic calming near Lincoln High School

Based on the input from the neighborhood meeting, the planning committee drafted the vision statement below.

All of the goals and objectives in the plan are intended to implement this vision statement.

VISION

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood strives to be a walkable, energetic, family-oriented neighborhood that features a diverse housing stock, world-class schools, destination parks and trails, and vibrant commercial corridors.



Demographics

Understanding the demographic composition of a neighborhood may help identify issues or explain the reason why certain patterns are occurring. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood has a population of 3,110 according to the 2010 Census. As shown in Table 1, the Gray's Lake Neighborhood is less diverse than the City as a whole with 91% of the population being Caucasian compared to 77% for Des Moines. In addition, the neighborhood has fewer children and a slightly older population than the City, particularly when looking at residents over the age of 45. 42% of Gray's Lake residents are over age 45 compared to 35% citywide.



Table 2 illustrates the household characteristics for the neighborhood. Gray's Lake has a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than the City as a whole. 82% of the houses in the neighborhood are owner-occupied compared to 66% citywide. The median household income in Gray's Lake is higher than the City of Des Moines at \$53,062 compared to \$47,096. Along with this, Table 3 shows that residents of the neighborhood have a higher level of educational attainment than the rest of Des Moines. 35% of Gray's Lake residents have college degrees, compared to 30% of Des Moines residents having attained a college degree.

Some key observations can be taken from the demographics and neighborhood profile. First, the neighborhood is predominantly made up of family households that reside in owner-occupied housing. Second, the neighborhood has an aging population with many residents approaching retirement age. The recommendations in this plan aim to meet the broad range of needs of the residents of Gray's Lake.



	Gray's Lake	Des Moines
Total Population	3,110	209,665
Race and Ethnicity		
White	90.6%	76.9%
African American	2.9%	10.2%
Asian	1.0%	4.4%
Other	5.5%	8.5%
Hispanic	7.0%	12.0%
Sex		
Male	48.0%	48.9%
Female	52.0%	51.1%
Age Distribution		
Under 18	21.5%	24.7%
Between 18 - 24	7.3%	10.8%
Between 25 - 44	28.3%	29.1%
Between 45 - 64	28.1%	24.2%
Over 65	14.9%	11.1%

Table 1
Population Profile

Source
2010 U.S. Census:
Block-Level Data

	Gray's Lake	Des Moines
Median Household Income	\$53,062	\$47,096
Housing Tenure		
Owner-Occupied	82.3%	66.0%
Renter-Occupied	17.7%	34.0%
Households		
Total	1,433	89,477
Family	57.9%	58.9%
Non-family	42.1%	41.1%
Educational Attainment (18 & older)		
Less than high school graduate	6.6%	14.1%
High School Graduate or Some College	58.1%	55.9%
Associate Degree	8.7%	7.5%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	26.6%	22.4%
Language Spoken at Home		
English	91.0%	86.6%
Spanish	5.2%	7.9%
Other European	3.8%	2.5%
Asian	0.0%	2.3%
Other	0.0%	0.7%

Table 2
Household
Characteristics

Source
2009 American
Community Survey:
Tract-Level Data

Infrastructure

As a part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, designated neighborhoods are allowed to participate in the Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP). NIRP funds are allocated to make improvements to existing sidewalks, streets, and curbs. In 2012, approximately \$665,000 was allocated to the Gray's Lake Neighborhood. To appropriate these funds, the Public Works Department completed an inventory of streets, curbs, and sidewalks throughout the neighborhood and identified \$1.7 million in necessary maintenance.

The planning committee prioritized improvements along SW 14th Street, Bell Avenue (near Lincoln High School), and SW 12th Street. Curb and overlay improvements were prioritized by the committee since they are the least likely to be funded in the City's Capital Improvement Program. The planning committee discussed using NIRP funds to improve sidewalks in the neighborhood. However, they determined sidewalk improvements can be made by private property owners without City assistance. For low-income homeowners, the City has a Special Assessment Subsidy program that will cover the costs of the improvements for qualifying homeowners.

A list of the NIRP improvements is included on this page. All NIRP improvements were completed during the 2012 construction season.

HMA Overlay

Casady Drive
Henry Avenue
Keyes Drive

Interim Paving

Davis Avenue
Glover Avenue
Pleasant View Drive
Virginia Avenue

CPR

Casady Drive
SW 14th Street
SW 14th Street
Thorton Ave. cul-de-sac

PCC Curb

Bell Avenue
Casady Drive
Creston Avenue
SW 12th Street

SW 13th Street

From	To
1435 Casady Dr. Park Ave. Jarvis St.	Creston Ave. Caulder Ave. Thorton Ave.

From	To
SW 12th St. Creston Ave. SW 12th St. SW 12th St.	D.E. West Loomis Ave. SW 14th St. D.E. West

From	To
Bell Ave. Park Ave. Watrous Ave.	Druid Hill Dr. Creston Ave. Park Ave.
E. of SW 14th St.	

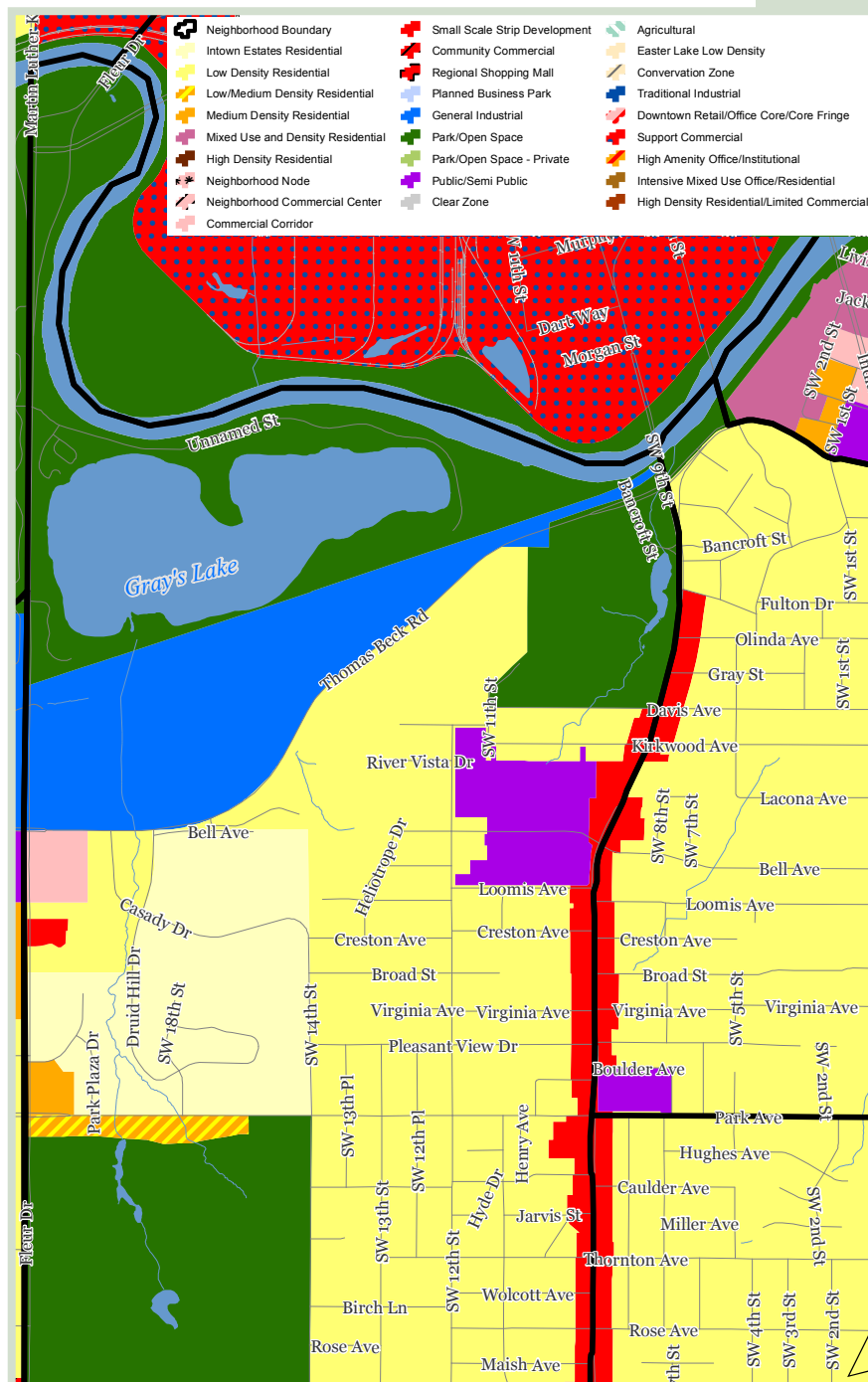
From	To
SW 9th St. 1435 Casady Dr. SW 14th St. Thorton Ave. Wolcott Ave. Rose Ave. Maish Ave. Pleasant View Dr. Virginia Ave. Loomis Ave. River Vista Dr. Watrous Ave. Rose Ave. Birch Ln.	SW 12th St. Creston Ave. Heliotrope Dr. Wolcott Ave. Rose Ave. Maish Ave. Watrous Ave. Virginia Ave. Broad St. Broad St. Davis Ave. Rose Ave. Birch Ln. Thorton Ave.

Table 3
Infrastructure Improvements

Source
City of Des Moines



Land Use and Zoning



Map 2
2020 Community
Character Plan

Source
City of Des Moines

Existing Conditions and Land Use

The Des Moines 2020 Community Character Plan is the Council-approved land use plan for the City of Des Moines. When adopted, the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Action Plan will become an amendment to the 2020 Community Character Plan. Land use is not parcel specific or legally binding, and is intended to provide a vision for development of an area.

Zoning is the parcel-specific AND legally binding regulation on the use of land. Zoning classifications are based on the land use designation from the 2020 Community Character Plan. Zoning changes require an ordinance and are not approved as a part of the neighborhood planning process.

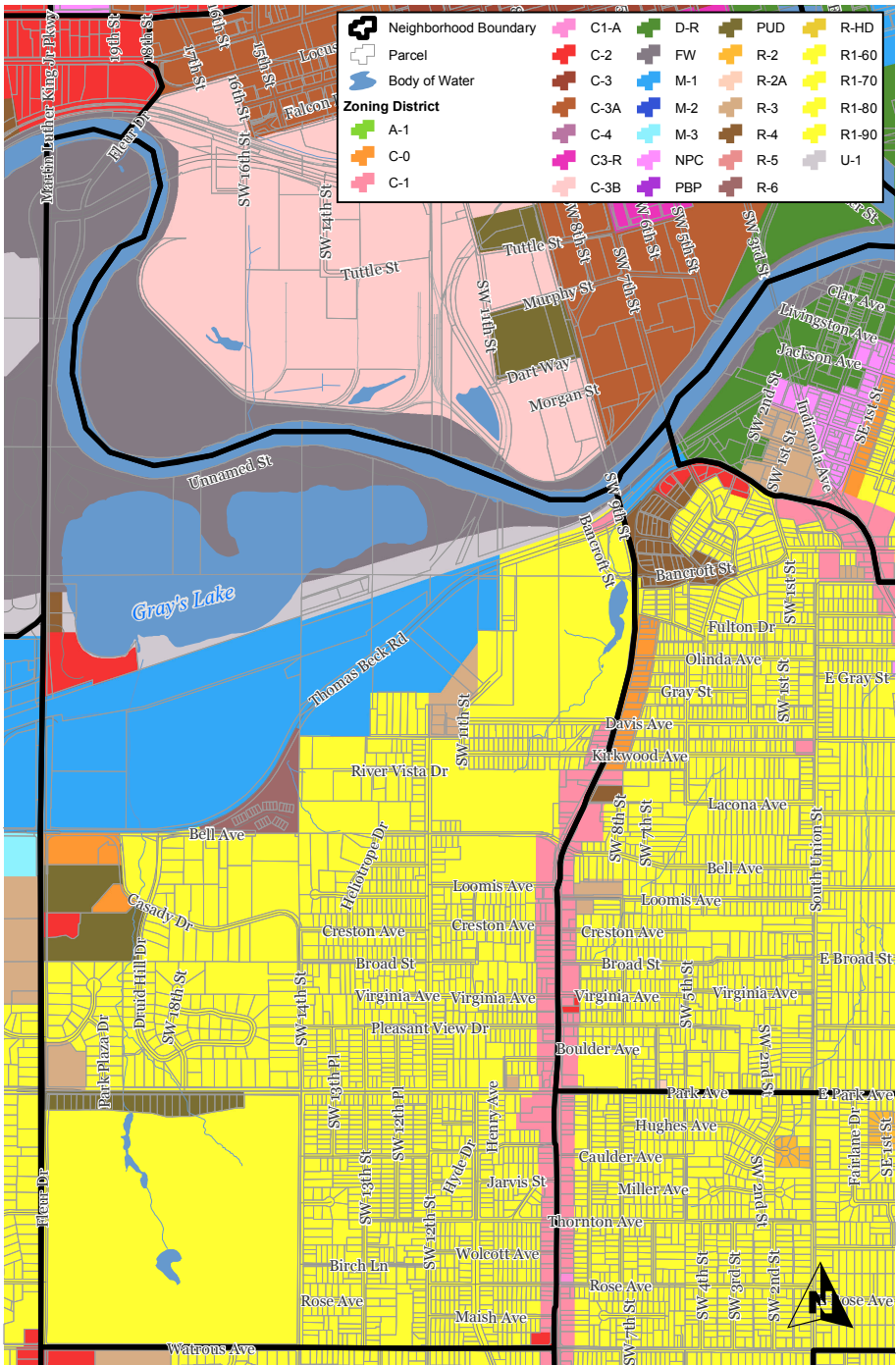
The current land use map for Des Moines' neighborhoods shows the majority of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood is residential in nature and character. Defined on the west by Fleur Drive and on the east by SW 9th Street, many of the residences in Gray's Lake can be found on either side of SW 14th Street. East of SW 14th Street, the residential portion of the neighborhood has a land use designation of Low-Density Residential. Most of the residential portion of the neighborhood west of SW 14th Street has a land use designation of Intown Estate Residential. A commercial corridor is located along SW 9th Street, and Wakonda Country Club, Gray's Lake Park, and MacRae Park have land use designations of Park/Open Space. General Industrial land use can be found along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road. Current land use and zoning maps are attached to this plan.

Most of the area is zoned R1-60 Low Density Single-Family Residential. This includes all of the residential parts of the neighborhood east of SW 14th Street, Wakonda Country Club, Gray's Lake Park, MacRae Park, and Lincoln High School. The area west of SW 14th Street is zoned R1-80 One Family Residential. The most significant difference between the two is that R1-60 has a minimum of 60 foot lot frontage, while the R1-80 zone requires 80 feet of frontage, as well as larger lot sizes.

The majority of SW 9th Street is zoned C-1 Neighborhood Retail Commercial. This classification allows low-intensity businesses and professional offices, such as book stores, florist shops, hardware stores, and restaurants, to serve the surrounding residential property. This zone does not allow bars and taverns or retail establishments larger than 30,000 square feet. Many of the parcels along SW 9th Street are split zoned, with portions zoned for both commercial and residential uses. The area south of Gray's Lake along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road is zoned M-1 Light Industrial.

Map 3
Neighborhood
Zoning

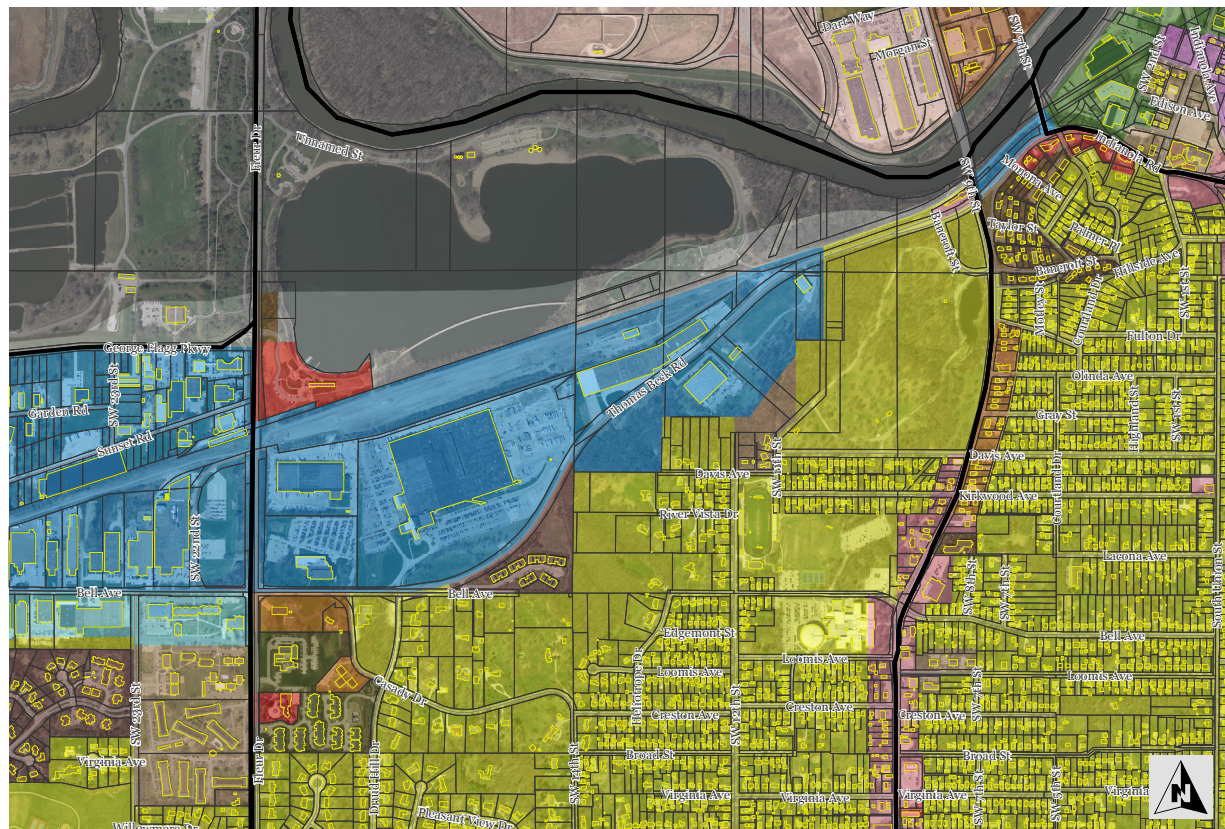
Source
City of Des Moines



Future Land Use Considerations

There was significant discussion about the future use of the industrial land near Gray's Lake Park along Bell Avenue/Thomas Beck Road. Historically, this area was completely industrial with a rail yard bordering Gray's Lake. However, in recent years, with the development of Gray's Lake Park and the elimination of the rail yard, there is some question as to the future use of this area. The Southwest Connector is a proposed road that will run from downtown Des Moines out to West Des Moines. The current route would utilize the old railroad right of way for a future boulevard. All of these changes will have a significant impact on the future land use in the area.

The area has a diverse mix of current and proposed land uses. There are two large outdoor industrial storage facilities that require M-1 Light Industrial Zoning. East of the Pomerantz Trail Connection, some changes have occurred. The Confluence Brewing Company opened in 2012 and there is discussion about an art gallery and additional commercial uses in this area. These changes have led to some uncertainty about future land uses in this area.



Map 4
Zoning analysis

Source
City of Des Moines

As a part of the neighborhood plan implementation, City staff will work with the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association (GLNA), business, and property owners to examine the future land use plan in this area. In the interim, staff will discourage new uses that expand outdoor storage and other industrial uses and will encourage any new development to protect Gray's Lake Park as a key community asset. Any development that occurs in this area will be encouraged to exceed tax abatement design and material standards, ensuring that Gray's Lake Park retains its natural environment.

There are two areas of Gray's Lake Park that are not zoned FW Flood plain or U-1 Floodway. One area is zone C-2 Highway Commercial and is the site of the former Holiday Inn. This area is now used for Parks Department concession area. The other spot is adjacent and zoned R-4 High Density Residential. This parcel is not suitable for future development and is part of the multi-use trail around the park. The land use designation for this area is Parks/Open Space which matches the current use. The City has no intention of disposing of the park and therefore rezoning these parcels is not a priority. The current zoning in this area allows the Parks and Recreation Department some flexibility in making enhancements to the concessions area.

SW 9th Street Corridor

SW 9th Street is a major corridor that stretches along a 5 mile area from the Highway 5 bypass to downtown Des Moines. The corridor is designated as a major arterial whose purpose is to move traffic effectively through the south side. However, development along the corridor is more neighborhood commercial in scale and nature. This mismatch has made it difficult to find the right mix of land uses and transportation enhancements.

Most of the commercial lots along the corridor were platted either for residential or neighborhood scale commercial use. Many of these lot sizes are not desirable for commercial uses today due to the small building sizes and lack of parking. These factors have contributed to the decline of many properties along the corridor. Finding a viable use for these sites may require the extension of commercial uses into residential areas near the corridor. While this is not a perfect scenario, the planning committee believes, in the right circumstances, this may be the preferred alternative to another dilapidated commercial structure.

Land Use and Zoning

Goal/Outcome	Strategy
Enhance the area near Gray's Lake Park to create a destination attraction for the region.	Work with property owners and the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association to explore redevelopment potential for the area south of Gray's Lake along Bell Avenue and Thomas Beck Road.
Enhance the SW 9th Street Corridor	Work with property owners, neighborhood residents, and other stakeholder organization to develop a plan for the SW 9th Street Corridor. Consider approving expansion of commercial uses/zoning into residential areas so long as there is sufficient buffering to minimize the impact to adjacent property owners. Consider supporting high quality projects that increase density along the SW 9th Street Corridor, so long as they are done in a way to minimize the impact on the adjacent properties.
Change the zoning to meet the current land use	Rezone residentially built parcels at SW 11th Street and Davis Street from R-3 Multiple Family Low Density Residential to R1-60 Low-Density Single Family Residential

In order to support the commercial uses along the corridor, increased density is necessary. Currently there is an abundance of run-down single family residential structures along SW 9th Street. Redeveloping these structures with high-quality, well designed multi-family housing will enhance the overall neighborhood and support the commercial businesses. One example of this transformation is the Christ the King development south of the neighborhood along SW 9th Street.

At the same time, there is continued demand from business owners to locate along the corridor. This may be due to the low rents on the corridor and the continued desirability of the location. Many parcels along SW 9th Street have portions zoned for commercial and residential use. This split zoning of a parcel increases the complexity for property owners and developers who wish to reuse their property.

The concerns outlined above regarding the SW 9th Street Corridor require a more comprehensive planning effort that must include property owners, businesses, south-side residents, and all neighborhoods along the corridor.



Responsible party

City, GLNA

City, GLNA,
SW 9th Street Merchants Association,
and other groups

GLNA

GLNA

GLNA, City of Des Moines

Parks, Trails, and Sidewalks

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood features two parks: Gray's Lake Park and MacRae Park along with the Meredith Trail, a major regional trail. Gray's Lake Park was named one of America's Great Places in 2011 by the American Planning Association and is considered one of the premier parks in the country. Gray's Lake Park features a playground, beach, concession area, bicycle and watercraft rentals, a 2-mile recreational trail, and other environmental and recreational programming. Along with the City's Park Board, a citizen advisory committee helps to guide decisions for Gray's Lake Park. The Parks and Recreation Department is committed to keeping the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association informed and gather their input on future improvements to Gray's Lake Park.

MacRae Park

MacRae Park is another large regional park within the neighborhood, and is one of the City's oldest parks, with its first parcels being purchased in the 1890's. It is also important because of its natural beauty. The park contains interpretative signage along the nature trail in the oak savanna, one of the rarest ecosystems in the world. Along with this, MacRae Park features tennis courts and a playground. The views of downtown from MacRae Park are some of the best in the City.

While MacRae Park boasts many amenities, the planning committee believes several opportunities exist to increase park programming, as well as to develop a stronger park identity. With a location near Gray's Lake Park, Lincoln High School, and adjacent to the Meredith Trail, there is an opportunity to enhance the park to serve as a city gateway to the greater southside of Des Moines.

MacRae Park has potential for future improvements which could include a natural playscape, upgrading of the upper shelter, installation of an adult fitness playground, or enhancing the scenic overlook area. While funding for improvements has not been identified in the City's Capital Improvement Program, the Park and Recreation Department is willing to assist the Gray's Lake Neighborhood to improve the park. The Parks and Recreation Department has committed to providing cost estimates for park improvements which would allow the neighborhood to fundraise for projects.





Trails and Increased Pedestrian Activity

One of the earliest concerns identified at the neighborhood kickoff meeting was the lack of pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood, with the planning committee highlighting SW 12th Street, SW 14th Street, and Casady Drive. Enhancing connectivity between trails is also a priority for the neighborhood. One pending improvement is the Quiet Street, which connects Gray's Lake Park and Blank Park Zoo. The route will run along SW 14th Street and Casady Drive/Druid Hill Drive. The recently completed trail segment connected Casady Drive to Gray's Lake Park. This trail connection was accomplished in 2012 with fundraising assistance from the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association.

The Quiet Street will run from Druid Hill Drive to Casady Drive and move south along SW 14th Street. The goal of the project is to slow traffic along the route and provide a pedestrian/ bicycle friendly transportation option. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association strongly supports the creation of the Quiet Street. Project pre-construction work will be completed in 2013 with construction of the project commencing in early 2014. In addition to the original plan, the neighborhood association also supports additional trail connections through the neighborhood along SW 12th Street that would connect to MacRae Park and downtown Des Moines.

Trail connections will be further enhanced with a connection of the Meredith Trail to MacRae Park. This improvement is scheduled in the Parks Capital Improvement Program and the project is anticipated for completion during the 2015 construction season.

The lack of pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood was one of the key concerns voiced at the neighborhood kickoff meeting. The planning committee specifically felt that SW 12th Street, SW 14th Street, and Casady Drive should be prioritized for new sidewalk installation. The city policy on new sidewalks states that neighbors initiate a petition with the impacted property owners. Once a petition for new sidewalks is submitted, City staff will analyze the project costs.

If the City Council agrees that new sidewalks are necessary, they will approve a resolution to place the sidewalks on the schedule of future improvements. City policy assesses 50% of the construction costs and 10% of the engineering costs to the adjacent property owner. The city pays for the remaining costs associated with the construction of the sidewalk. The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association will be solely responsible for obtaining neighborhood and political support for any new sidewalks in the neighborhood.

Parks,
Trails,
and
Side
walks

Goal/Outcome	Strategy
Promote completion of trail connections in the neighborhood.	Support the completion of the Quiet Street Trail.
	Connect the Meredith Trail with MacRae Park.
Expand recreation opportunities in the neighborhood.	Improve MacRae Park.
	Maintain Gray's Lake Park as a premier attraction in the Metro area.
	Enhance pedestrian connections throughout the neighborhood.



Implementation

The GLNA will work with the adjacent neighborhoods and the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department to assist in the implementation of the Quiet Street.

Create a trail connection from Meredith Trail to MacRae Park.

The GLNA will work local stakeholder groups to develop a committee to examine improvements to MacRae Park.

Complete a preliminary site plan and cost estimates to make enhancements to MacRae Park. The stakeholder committee will spearhead fundraising to implement the park improvements.

The City will consult with the GLNA along with other stakeholder groups when making improvements to Gray's Lake Park.

The GLNA will investigate neighborhood support to install sidewalks along Casady Drive, SW 14th Street, and SW 12th Street where sidewalks currently do not exist.

Responsible party

GLNA,
City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation

City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation

City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation,
GLNA

City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation,
GLNA

City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation

GLNA, City of Des Moines City Engineering,
City Council

Traffic and Transportation

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood is bordered by Fleur Drive and SW 9th Street, both major arterial streets on the west and the east; by Watrous Avenue on the south, and by a portion of Park Avenue. Ensuring that these transportation corridors and enhancements continue to benefit the neighborhood is a priority for the residents. The future Southwest Connector, speeding, and traffic enhancements along SW 9th Street were traffic and transportation concerns discussed with the planning committee.

Southwest Connector

The future Southwest Connector is a major arterial in the MPO's long range transportation plan. Initial work in developing the route was completed in the late 1990's. The route runs from the old railroad right of way adjacent to Gray's Lake Park along Thomas Beck Road and under SW 9th Street. The neighborhood would like to see the development of this road completed in a way that enhances the area and helps to make the neighborhood a destination location. With construction of the corridor at least a decade away, there will be opportunities for neighborhood residents to provide input on the planning and eventual construction of the road.

Speeding

Residents were also worried by issues of speeding in the neighborhood, specifically along SW 14th Street and SW 12th Street. The proposed Quiet Street along SW 14th Street should alleviate some of the excess speed through this area as the enhancements are designed to slow down traffic. While no design changes are planned along SW 12th Street, the City will continue to work with the neighborhood to respond to speeding complaints. It will also examine if future transportation changes are necessary to deal with excessive speed on this street.

The planning committee specifically asked City staff to reduce the speed limit along Park Avenue between Fleur Drive and SW 14th Street from 35 mph to 30 mph. The speed limit east and west of this area was previously 30 mph before being raised to 35 mph. The City's Traffic Safety Committee will study this issue in the summer of 2013 with a final recommendation moving forward.

Goal/Outcome	Strategy
Ensure transportation enhancements benefit the neighborhood.	Develop the Southwest Connector route.
Improve traffic safety in the neighborhood.	Decrease speeding in the neighborhood.



Implementation

Ensure the development of the Southwest Connector is done in a way that enhances the neighborhood.

Ensure any future expansion of SW 9th Street is done in a way that enhances the corridor.

Lower the speed limit on Park Avenue between Fleur Drive and SW 14th Street to 30 mph.

Install speed limit signs on Casady Drive.

Complete the Quiet Street Trail project along SW 14th Street.

Consult with the Police Department's Traffic Unit to obtain enhanced speeding enforcement in the neighborhood.

Responsible party

City of Des Moines, Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association

City of Des Moines

City of Des Moines, GLNA

City of Des Moines

City, GLNA

Des Moines Police Department, GLNA

Housing

Types and Ages

The Gray's Lake Neighborhood has the most diverse housing stock in the City. Unlike most neighborhoods, there is no dominant style or age of the housing stock. Whether you desire a Beaverdale Brick, a 1920's foursquare, a townhouse or a high-rise condo, the neighborhood has housing that meets these criteria. The two included tables examine year built and housing style.

Looking at year built, most homes in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1920's. However, this only accounts for 17% of neighborhood homes. Interestingly, an almost identical number of homes were built in the neighborhood in the 1940's and 1950's. This demonstrates the diversity of the housing stock.

The highest category of housing type is conventional, which is a catch-all category used by the Assessor. Though the Ranch/Bungalow style accounts for approximately 45% of homes, there is a significant number of two story and other styles in the neighborhood.

Sizes and Values

Two other categories demonstrate the diversity of the neighborhood housing stock: square footage and home sale values. Thirty-five percent of neighborhood homes are smaller than 1,000 square feet. Ensuring these homes have the amenities needed to remain as homeownership options is a priority. On the other end of the spectrum, over 30% of neighborhood homes exceed 1,500 square feet, with a significant number larger than 2,000 sq. ft. These homes have the necessary amenities, but many prospective homebuyers are unaware of the neighborhood housing opportunities.

Home sale values have fallen considerably since 2005. Looking at median home sale values, this trend is concerning. Home sale prices topped out at \$115,000 in 2007. Since that time, median home values have dropped to a low of \$86,000 in 2011.

Year Built
1314 total houses

Before 1900	19	1%
1900's	72	5%
1910's	173	13%
1920's	223	17%
1930's	125	10%
1940's	211	16%
1950's	207	16%
1960's	94	7%
1970's	78	6%
1980's	26	2%
1990's	57	4%
After 2000	29	2%

Housing Styles
1314 total houses

Split Level	16	1%
Ranch	343	26%
Townhouse	58	4%
Bungalow	281	21%
Unclassified	7	1%
Contemporary	19	1%
Conventional	482	37%
Early 20's	71	5%
Split Foyer	22	2%
Colonial	10	1%
Cape Cod	5	0%

Home Sizes

Square Footage	Number of homes	Percentage of total homes
Less than 749	105	8%
750-999	349	27%
1,000-1,224	271	21%
1,250-1,449	190	14%
1,500-1,749	140	11%
1,750-1,999	92	7%
2,000-2,499	76	6%
2,500-2,999	56	4%
Over 3,000	35	3%
Total	1,314	



Home Sale Values

Year	Homes Sold	Median Sale Value	Sale Value /Sq. Ft.
2004	55	\$97,500	\$88.84
2005	76	\$109,900	\$108.16
2006	67	\$106,900	\$97.23
2007	62	\$115,250	\$107.51
2008	59	\$100,000	\$93.25
2009	58	\$104,500	\$90.42
2010	54	\$110,215	\$89.07
2011	49	\$86,000	\$87.65
2012	53	\$89,500	\$81.66
Total	533	\$104,500	\$90.42

Tables 4, 5, 6, 7
Housing
Characteristics

Source
Polk County Assessor

Home Amenities: East and West of SW 14th Street

After conducting this initial analysis, it was clear there are two distinct housing markets in the neighborhood. The housing stock west of SW 14th Street is significantly larger, newer, and has higher values than homes east of SW 14th Street. In order to address these differences, the planning committee examined the areas east and west of SW 14th Street independently. The difference between the two areas is staggering.

The area west of SW 14th Street features some of the highest home values on the southside. The 195 homes in area feature over 2,400 square feet of living space and have a median sale value of \$225,000. However, it is tricky to gauge the west half of the neighborhood using only home values. Because the area is small, and a significant number of new townhouses have been built in the past 10 years, the numbers can be misleading. To try to mitigate this factor, we used 2009 as a base year to analyze this part of the neighborhood. Looking at the sale figures since then, the area has held its own in a weak housing market.

While strategies to enhance the west side of the neighborhood are not necessary, promoting this area to prospective homebuyers and other stakeholders is an important tool to ensure Gray's Lake remains a vibrant neighborhood. One strategy to enhance this area is to market the neighborhood to suburban realtors who are unaware of the wonderful homes and quality of life in this area.

The east side of the neighborhood is more homogenous. The area features modest sized homes with basic amenities that are in line with the rest of the City. The homes average 1,100 square feet, 1 bathroom, and 3 bedrooms.



Since 2007 -- the height of the housing market, home sale values have dropped 30% in the east part of the neighborhood. For a comparison, home sales throughout Des Moines have fallen approximately 20% since 2007. Therefore, some of this decrease can be explained by the overall weak housing market. In 2011, the median home sale price was \$76,000. Home sales did rebound slightly in 2012, and it is anticipated that home values will continue to rise as the economy improves. Developing strategies to enhance this area and make it more attractive to homebuyers is of the utmost importance.

The Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) began serving the Gray's Lake Neighborhood in July 2012. The NFC matches home mortgages and home equity loans with forgivable funds to assist with home improvements in Designated Neighborhoods. The effectiveness of the NFC in large part is due to the promotional expertise of the neighborhood association. Neighborhoods that have utilized traditional media, social media, and word of mouth to promote NFC lending have had the most success with the program. To date, 12 loans have been closed in the neighborhood totaling over \$700,000 of neighborhood investment.

Gray's Lake Home Sales Information

West of SW 14th St.				East of SW 14th St.		
Year	Number	Median Sale Value	Change since 2009	Number	Median Sale Value	Change since 2007
2007	--	--	--	50	\$108,250	--
2008	--	--	--	53	\$95,000	-12%
2009	9	\$352,205	--	48	\$99,750	-8%
2010	14	\$350,000	-1%	40	\$81,450	-25%
2011	9	\$325,000	-8%	38	\$76,000	-30%
2012	12	\$357,500	2%	41	\$78,000	-28%

Table 8
House Sales

Source
Polk County
Assessor

Comparing home values

West and East of SW 14th St.

	West		SW 14th St	East	
	Median	Average		Median	Average
Houses	195	195		1119	1119
Land, full value	\$48,000	\$52,532		\$19,900	\$20,759
Building, full value	\$229,500	\$264,172		\$79,900	\$86,980
Total full value	\$274,150	\$316,704		\$100,100	\$107,738
Land area (SF)	15,620	22,291		7,700	10,462
Year Built	1979	1979		1938	1936
House area (SF)	2,329	2,454		1,100	1,171
Total baths	3.0	3.2		1.0	1.4
Total bedrooms	3.0	3.3		3.0	2.6
Sale price	\$225,500	\$326,185		\$84,500	\$86,369

Table 9
House Values

Source
Polk County Assessor

Appearance

Building a brand for the neighborhood is another important way to help promote the positive aspects of living in the neighborhood. The planning committee hopes the completion of the neighborhood plan is one opportunity to promote the benefits of the neighborhood. The GLNA will work with local media and real estate professionals to raise awareness of the neighborhood's many benefits.

In order to improve the appearance of the neighborhood, the planning committee and the GLNA have created a liaison with the City's Neighborhood Inspection Division to streamline junk, debris and rental housing complaints. The goal of this is not to circumvent the current ability of residents to call in complaints, but to enhance the relationship between the City's Code Enforcement and the GLNA.

Along with increased enforcement of junk, debris, and rental housing code, the GLNA wants to create a neighbors-helping-neighbors program. The goal of this program is to assist homeowners who are unable to improve or maintain their properties. While there is a high standard of home maintenance in the neighborhood, many homeowners face difficulties in continuing to maintain their property. The planning committee believes that utilizing the skills and assets of neighborhood residents to assist these homeowners can create a situation that benefits everyone.

Housing

Goal/Outcome	Strategy
Maintain and enhance the neighborhood housing stock.	Promote the Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) home purchase, home repair, and refinance programs. Minimize the number of foreclosed and abandoned homes in the neighborhood.
Improve the overall appearance of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood.	Ensure that all properties meet the City's junk and debris ordinance. Assist residents who are unable to maintain their property themselves. Encourage maintenance of rental properties in a way that is consistent with the neighborhood. Encourage residents to participate in the City's SCRUB program.
Make the neighborhood more marketable to perspective homebuyers.	Increase awareness of the benefits of living in the neighborhood.



Implementation

Responsible party

GLNA and the NFC will work together to education residents and promote the NFC efforts in the Gray's Lake Neighborhood.

NFC, GLNA

The NFC will attend at least one GLNA general member meeting per year to promote their programs and answer questions.

NFC, GLNA

NFC will help sponsor neighborhood events to increase awareness of NFC programs and products.

NFC, GLNA

NFC and GLNA will work together to develop marketing materials explaining NFC's lending programs and neighborhood eligibility.

NFC, GLNA

The GLNA will promote the Iowa Mortgage Helpline in their newsletter and at neighborhood events.

GLNA,
Iowa Mortgage Helpline

The GLNA will inventory vacant and abandoned homes in the neighborhood and submit them to the City to create a strategy to deal with vacant/abandoned homes individually.

GLNA, City of Des Moines
Neighborhood Development
Division

The GLNA will create a liaison with their City's Neighborhood Inspection Division to report problem properties.

GLNA, City Neighborhood
Inspection Division

GLNA will organize "neighbors helping neighbors" events to assist neighbors with projects they are unable to do themselves.

GLNA

GLNA will send letters notifying rental property owners of issues with their property and encouraging them to mitigate the problem.

GLNA

GLNA will work with the Public Works Department to announce scheduled SCRUB days, locations and times.

GLNA,
City of Des Moines Public
Works

The GLNA will create a presentation for realtors and other perspective homebuyers to highlight the positive aspects of the neighborhood.

GLNA,
City of Des Moines

The GLNA will create a neighborhood identity that highlights the advantages of the neighborhood.

GLNA

Schools

Residents of the Gray's Lake Neighborhood have access to a high quality education system that features some of the best schools in the Metro area. Neighborhood children attend classes at Park Avenue Elementary School, Brody Middle School, and Lincoln High School. In addition to these public schools, there are several private schools near the neighborhood including: Christ the King, St. Anthony's, and Lincoln Heights Lutheran School.

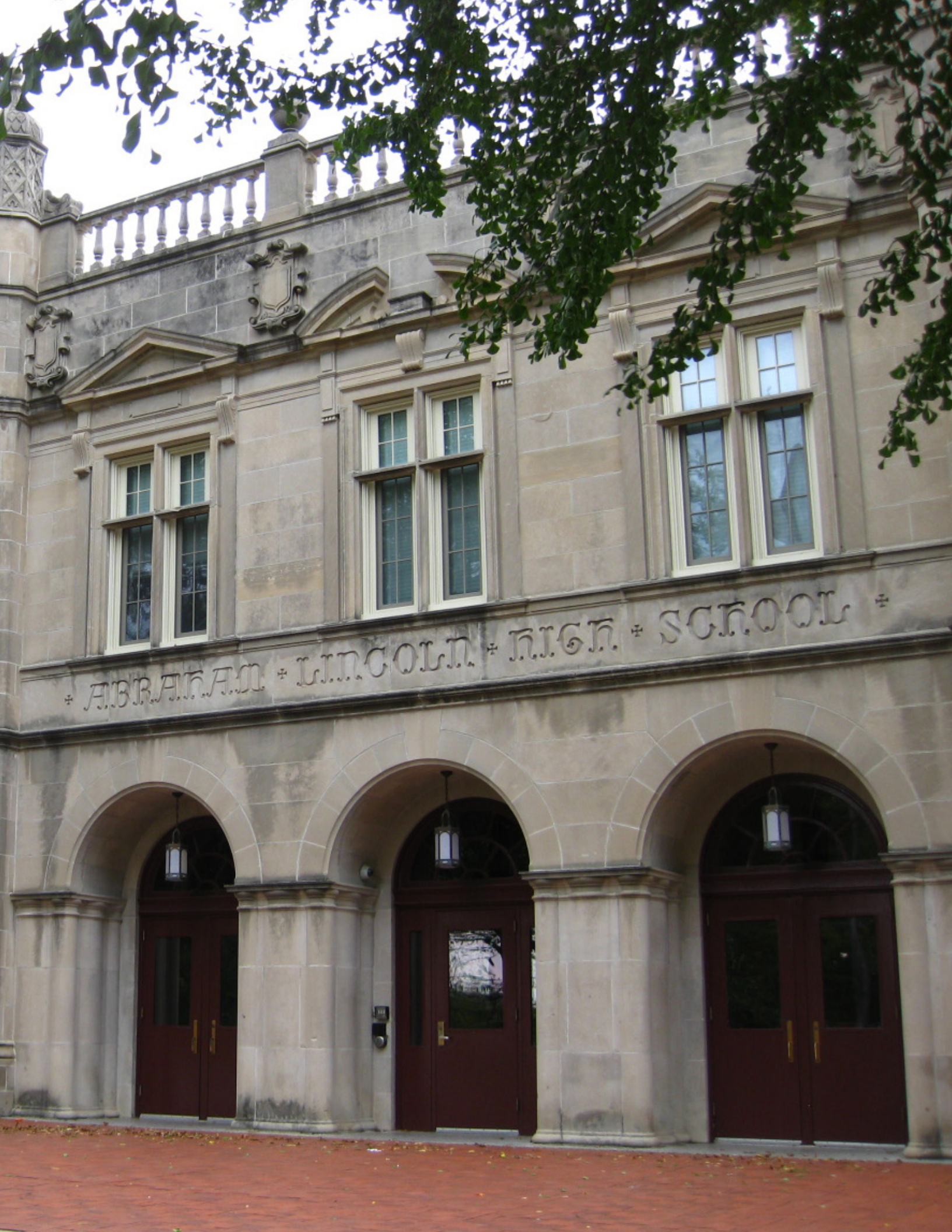
Lincoln High School and Rail Academy

Lincoln High School located at 2600 SW 9th Street is a southside institution. With 2,144 students, Lincoln is one of the largest high schools in Iowa. In addition to the main campus on SW 9th, students in the 9th grade attend class at the Rail Academy on 1000 Porter Avenue. This 9th Grade center is the only school in Des Moines dedicated to the education of 9th graders.

In 2006, a \$20 million update of Lincoln High School was completed. Because of this recent renovation, major renovations are not currently planned. The Lincoln Boosters are fundraising to replace the grass at the stadium with synthetic turf. In addition, there is ongoing fundraising for expansion and improvement of the wrestling room. There is a need for additional parking at Lincoln, but currently there are not plans to mitigate the situation. The school district will keep the neighborhood informed when future projects are being discussed.

Enhancing the relationship between the neighborhood and the schools is a top priority of the neighborhood. The GLNA is committed to working with all of the schools in the area to build a positive and productive relationship that can benefit everyone.





ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Brody Middle School

Brody Middle School serves much of the south side including the Gray's Lake Neighborhood. The school of 702 students, located at 2501 Park Avenue, is a candidate for the International Baccalaureate Programme, making it one of four schools in Iowa to offer this world class academic program.

Park Avenue Elementary

Park Avenue Elementary was one of the first schools on the Southside. Educating children since 1885, Park Avenue Elementary School is located on the corner of SW 9th Street and Park Avenue and serves Kindergarten-5th grade. For the 2012-2013 school year, 472 students were educated at Park Avenue Elementary. It is one of only four elementary schools in Iowa to offer the world-renowned International Baccalaureate Programme. Park Avenue also has an active PTA that supports the activities of the student body.

Work recently commenced on a \$2.4 million building renovation to Park Avenue Elementary. The renovation will involve moving the administrative office closer to the main building entrance, refitting the open style classrooms with walls, library/technology upgrades, and improving the HVAC system. The project should be completed by August 2013, in time for the 2013-2014 school year. The GLNA would like to work with Park Avenue to hold a joint open house to showcase the newly renovated school.



Plan Implementation and Goal Prioritization

On May 7, 2013, a second neighborhood meeting was held. At that meeting, a draft of the neighborhood plan was presented and the 40 participants were given an opportunity to provide input on the plan and prioritize implementation objectives. Residents were given a list of eight plan implementation activities. Participants were asked to rank them in order from most important to least important.

Based on this exercise, these are the top priorities for plan implementation.

- Improve the appearance of residential property.
- Enhance the SW 9th Street Corridor.
- Install new sidewalks.

It should be noted that installing new sidewalks is an issue that divides neighbors. While many neighbors wanted new sidewalks to be the top plan implementation priority, a significant number of residents felt strongly that sidewalks should be the lowest priority. Working specifically with the most directly impacted homeowners to minimize inconvenience to them may improve the success rate of this implementation strategy.

Implementation of the plan is the hardest part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. To be successful, it is imperative that the Gray's Lake Neighborhood continue to provide strong, active leadership for the neighborhood. It will also require the continued commitment and support from the Des Moines City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors.

As the organization responsible for implementing the Neighborhood Plan, it is crucial the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association has the organizational capacity to carry out this task. Continuing to build leadership and the volunteer base will be critically important to successfully carry out the implementation phase of the plan. Along with the neighborhood association, the Neighborhood Development Division and other City staff will provide technical assistance to the GLNA during the implementation as defined in the plan.



The Neighborhood Development Division will conduct periodic assessments of the progress of a particular plan and will recommend that the program be ended once significant progress has been made. It is possible that certain activities may be investigated and found not to be feasible or require an unreasonable demand of resources. Once a plan has been found to be complete, a report is prepared with input from the neighborhood association and forwarded to the Neighborhood Revitalization Board for a recommendation. Their recommendation will then be forwarded to the Des Moines City Council and the Polk County Board of Supervisors for final approval. At this point the neighborhood becomes a Charter Neighborhood and is phased out of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.



Plan Presentation and Approval

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association
May 21, 2013

Neighborhood Revitalization Board
June 5, 2013

Plan and Zoning Commission
June 6, 2013

Des Moines City Council
June 24, 2013

Polk County Board of Supervisors
July 16, 2013

