



NORTH DES MOINES HALL | 1601 6TH AVENUE, DES MOINES

Urban Design Review Board Application

May 17, 2022

NARRATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will sensitively and comprehensively rehabilitate North Des Moines Hall within the 6th Avenue Corridor Main Street District. Built in 1888, currently vacant, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, North Des Moines Hall's rehabilitation will reactivate commercial space on the ground floor and in the large basement and offer four affordable residential units on the second floor. The structure served as the governmental meeting space for the once independent suburb of North Des Moines and is one of the oldest surviving commercial structures in the metro area. Goals center on creating a space that fosters diverse community connections and acting as a catalyst for continued revitalization of the district.

Constructed in 1888, 1601 6th Avenue, commonly known as North Des Moines Hall and formally known as Perry and Brainard Block, is a 2-story solid brick structure conceived within the traditions of vernacular Victorian commercial architecture, with a rectangular footprint, flat roof, and symmetrical façade. It features cast stone trim work, including window hood molds. According to neighborhood oral history, a more elaborate brick cornice toppled onto the sidewalk in the 1970s. The second floor was originally used as an opera house and meeting hall for municipal purposes and fraternal organizations.

North Des Moines Hall is located at the northeast corner of 6th Avenue and College Avenue, historically a key commercial node within the contemporarily designated 6th Avenue Corridor Urban Neighborhood Main Street District situated just north of downtown Des Moines. In the late 1800s, this area was the independently incorporated community of North Des Moines and 6th Avenue the vibrant mixed-use center of this largest Victorian-era suburb. In the late 1880s, North Des Moines Hall's second floor served as a public meeting space for the independent community and critical conversations and voting regarding annexation and school district consolidation took place within its walls. Upon the success of these referenda, residents of North Des Moines converged on North Des Moines Hall to celebrate victory. This event was spontaneous, colorful, and cut across class lines. "Hacks, fine carriages, farm wagons drawn by horses and wood carts drawn by mules" paraded before this building which can become a common meeting place for public celebration. This parade of vehicles also symbolized the variety of socio-economic backgrounds emerging among North Des Moines residents. North Des Moines was formally annexed by the City of Des Moines in 1890. North Des Moines Hall is the only known structural remnant of Des Moines' history of municipal expansion.



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The structure is also significant because it helped establish 6th & College as an important commercial node in North Des Moines. The first floor was used for private commerce, making the building among the oldest surviving commercial structures in the metropolitan area. The building has witnessed a variety of commercial uses – silent motion picture theater, grocery stores, mattress factory, auto body shop, restaurant, etc. From the 1950s - 2008, it functioned as a variety of taverns operated under different names and ownership. Paralleling an urban pattern that occurred in cities across the country, 6th Avenue declined in the mid-1900s and urban core disinvestment and lack of economic opportunity created a challenging environment for commercial vitality.

The 6th Avenue Corridor Main Street Program acquired the property via a Community Development Block Grant from the City of Des Moines which requires affordable residential units in the project at the 80% or lower area median income level. After acquisition, the 6th Avenue Corridor received a Main Street Challenge Grant for preliminary stabilization, interior demolition of non-historic materials and sensitive deconstruction of the storefront, revealing a period-of-significance cast iron storefront system with ornate cast iron columns. The storefront had been altered by the 1910s-1920s with square transoms added, the original cornice lintel removed, and cast-iron columns blocked in with wooden boards. The 1910s-1920s storefront appears to have then been completely covered in the 1970s with wood and plywood. All non-functioning and outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems were also removed. The organization then contracted with an experienced historian and tax credit consultant to further research the building's history and submit the Part I application for State and Federal Historic Tax Credits. Through significant local volunteer efforts, the 6th Avenue Corridor Main Street Program coordinated the removal of deteriorating and dangerous non-historic exterior structures (fire escapes, non-original stair and landings) and removed much of the junk left behind by the previous owner on the first floor.

SCHEDULE

Permitting and Fees | July 2022
Fencing / Protection | July 2022
Demolition / Site Preparations | August 2022
Structural / Building Stabilization | September 2022
Façade / Storefront Rehabilitation | September – November 2022
Exterior Masonry Rehabilitation | September – December 2022
Windows | December 2022
Roofing | December 2022
Exterior Painting | Spring 2023
Mechanical Winter 2023
Interior finishes Spring / Summer 2023
Site work Spring / Summer 2023





ESTIMATED COSTS

A preliminary budget prepared by Silent Rivers is attached to this submittal.

DEVELOPER/ARCHITECT TEAM

Indigo Dawn is the current owner and having received the original development agreement with 6th Avenue to oversee this project, has handled initial design and site preparations. Indigo Dawn owner Chaden Halfhill has teamed up with Kuuku Saah to establish Ntontan RE, to develop this property while also establishing an investment opportunity for a diverse population base, and they are setting up the final limited partnership called North Des Moines Hall, LP, to continue past successes and bring this effort to fruition. Design for this project blends the talents of Silent Rivers and Edward Shannon Architecture.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The 6th Avenue Corridor Main Street Program selected our team after a public Request for Qualifications. Throughout their ownership and after, 6th Avenue Corridor representatives have provided project updates and sought input at various community settings, including monthly neighborhood association meetings. They continue to act as advocates and a communication conduit for the project. We are committed to sustained public participation and engagement as the project moves forward, particularly as this building has historically served as a community gathering space. We intend to share information via a dedicated project website, social media, and tours during and after construction.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPONENTS

All components of the building will be rehabilitated or replaced, where necessary – exterior masonry; storefront system; windows; site/landscaping; foundation; circulation between levels; interior finishes; and a complete upgrade of the currently non-existent plumbing, electrical, sprinkler, HVAC and mechanical systems. All work will be completed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation and in ways which meet high-level energy efficiency and sustainability goals.

Rehabilitating North Des Moines Hall will serve as a prime example of sustainable revitalization. Utilizing an existing, historic building to provide new commercial and affordable residential spaces will divert materials that would certainly go to the landfill if the property were allowed to further deteriorate and be demolished. The building is situated along a major urban corridor with access to public transportation through one of the most used and dependable bus routes in the City. With streetscape improvements currently in construction, rehabilitation of North Des Moines Hall offers immediately accessible pedestrian and bicycle connections. The rehabilitation of this



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property will further catalyze the adaptive reuse or redevelopment of the parcels directly to the north, helping secure the overall viability and sustainability of this commercial node. Finally, the broader sustainability of the local community will be supported via the enhanced pride of place the project engenders. In an area where 31% of households live at household income levels below the federal poverty line, investments in this important structure will signal to residents and property owners that their community has value...that their lives and their environment are worthy of investment.