

DRAFT

**Waterbury Neighborhood
Strategic Plan**

June 22, 2007

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WATERBURY PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Steve Balderson	Bill Green	Jackie Romp
Dave Caris	Mary Jo Healey-Meeks	Greg Schwager
Cheung Chan	Dick Kirsner	Bryan Shiffler
Ann Conover	Maggie LaMarche	CJ Stephens
Andrea Corcoran	Marcia Martin	Keith Thornton

CITY OF DES MOINES NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION BOARD

CITY OF DES MOINES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

CITY OF DES MOINES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF:

Larry Hulse, AICP, Director

Kathy Kahoun, Neighborhood Development Administrator
Overall Plan Development

Kyle Larson, Assistant City Planner
Project Lead and Plan Development

Dave Dunn, Assistant City Planner
Project Assistance

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I. 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. The neighborhood planning process relies on active resident groups to identify critical neighborhood issues in their area. The staff of the Neighborhood Development Division provides technical assistance and planning coordination. Neighborhood planning staff work with the neighborhood group to develop and implement appropriate goals and a feasible action plan. These neighborhood plans provide a list of activities and identify parties responsible for implementation. The success of the revitalization effort depends on a continued coordination of efforts among 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 Waterbury Neighborhood Association. The approved plan becomes an amendment to the City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan and an ongoing guide affecting future policy decisions for the neighborhood.

II. HISTORY OF WATERBURY

The Waterbury neighborhood began in the early 1890's when the Des Moines Railway extended the trolley car line from downtown along Ingersoll Avenue to Polk Boulevard. This provided residents access to the Ingersoll Amusement Park and Greenwood Park. The amusement park was established in 1890 by streetcar mogul Jefferson S. Polk. The park featured exotic animals, a bandstand and a wooden roller coaster located along Polk Boulevard.

In 1897, the first Golf and Country Club of Des Moines was organized on 40 acres of land just west of Polk and north of Waterbury Road. The club became quite popular and was expanded to 60 acres by the early 1900's. A large state-of-the-art clubhouse was built on the corner of 49th Street and Harwood Drive. The Club thrived until 1924, when the property was sold for residential development, and the area became one of the first neighborhoods accessible by the use of motor cars.

In 1917, the F.C. Waterbury family acquired the land occupying the former amusement park, which they developed over the next decade. The Waterbury area was one of the first neighborhoods designed to follow the topography of the land, which allowed the continued growth of the towering oaks that now form an umbrella over the Waterbury neighborhood.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION & DEMOGRAPHICS

This Waterbury Neighborhood entered the Designated Neighborhood Program as a stable neighborhood based on housing conditions, property values, proportion of homeowners to renters, home sales information. Waterbury is located on Des Moines' west side and is bound by Interstate 235 on the north, Polk Boulevard on the east, Grand Avenue on the south, 63rd Street on the west, and includes the portion of Des Moines west of 63rd Street to Walnut Creek.

Waterbury is a residential area with approximately 1,100 households located between Waveland Park on the north and Greenwood/Ashworth Park on the south. The neighborhood developed during the first half of the 20th century. The neighborhood is filled with a mix of architectural styles including Tudor, Colonial Revival, Prairie, Modern, and Craftsman Bungalows.

Waterbury landmarks include the Temple B'Nai Jeshurun, Merrill Middle School, and the Waterbury Gardens located at the intersection of Polk Boulevard and Ingersoll Avenue. These amenities along with the peaceful natural landscape make Waterbury one of the most desirable neighborhoods within Des Moines.

Demographics/Census Data (2000)

Population		Age Breakdown		Household Size	
Waterbury	2,629	Under 18	26%	Waterbury	2.3
Des Moines	198,682	18-65	63%	Des Moines	2.4
		Over 65	11%		

Household Income		Household Composition		Educational Attainment	
Waterbury	\$77,385	<i>Insert Table</i>		<i>Insert Table</i>	
Des Moines	\$39,104				

Housing Data

Housing Conditions	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Excellent	71	7.57%
Very Good	201	21.43%
Above Normal	305	32.52%
Normal	336	35.82%
Below Normal	22	2.35%
Poor	3	0.32%
Very Poor	0	0.00%
No Condition Listed	1	0.11%

Home Values

Avg. Property Value	Avg. Living Area in sq. ft.	Avg. Property Value per sq. ft. of Living Area
\$216,800	2,070 sq. ft.	\$104.73

Home Sales

Avg. Sale Price	# of Sales in '04-'05	% Sold in '04-'05
\$244,276	132	14.06%

IV. NEIGHBORHOOD PRIORITIES

During the neighborhood input meeting that kicked off the neighborhood planning process, Waterbury residents took part in a group exercise that asked them to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within their neighborhood. This exercise helped the planning committee and staff identify the priority areas for the neighborhood. Based on this valuable neighborhood input, the planning committee was able to narrow its focus to identify goals and strategies for these priority areas. The priority areas for Waterbury include the following:

- Infrastructure
- Trees
- Housing
- Quality of Life
- Community Enhancement

Vision Statement

The planning committee and staff used the neighborhood input to establish a vision statement for the planning process. A vision statement provides overall direction for the neighborhood planning process and is the basis for the neighborhood plan.

The vision of the Waterbury neighborhood plan is to develop strategies for the Waterbury Neighborhood to be a neighborhood of choice in the Des Moines area by updating infrastructure, protecting and replacing trees, maintaining our quality housing stock, and building upon the recreational opportunities in the neighborhood.

The vision statement of the Waterbury Neighborhood Association is to enhance the quality of life in, maintain the aesthetic appearance of, and promote the historical nature and significance of the Waterbury community.

V. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & HOUSING

Much of the Waterbury neighborhood was developed according to the natural terrain in order to not disturb the natural landscape. This resulted in curvilinear streets throughout the heart of the neighborhood with grid patterned development on the fringes. Waterbury sits under a canopy of mature trees that provides a beautiful, natural setting for its residents. This natural setting adds to Waterbury’s neighborhood character and sets it apart from suburban developments.

Waterbury is further defined by its single-family residential nature. However, Waterbury does have some multi-family housing structures, which are primarily located along or near Ingersoll Avenue. These multi-family structures were developed in large part due to the streetcar line that once traversed that corridor. This mix of single-family and multi-family housing is characteristic of traditional, older neighborhoods in Des Moines.

Waterbury is known for its large homes on large lots, which are predominate in the central part of the neighborhood. The remainder of the neighborhood is compromised of average sized homes. Even though Waterbury’s housing stock is diverse in terms of home size and value, the homes throughout the neighborhood are well maintained. This high standard of maintenance is evident in the housing condition data with 97% of Waterbury homes being in normal condition or better according to the Polk County Assessor. Preservation of this solid housing stock is one of the key priorities for Waterbury.

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
Maintain the character of the Waterbury neighborhood	Ensure that any future development of the excess I-235 right-of-way at 56 th and Pleasant matches the character and density of the neighborhood.	WNA will work with the City and IDOT regarding the future use of the excess I-235 right-of-way at 56 th and Pleasant to ensure any development would match the single-family, owner-occupied character of the Waterbury neighborhood.	WNA	1 to 2 years
Preserve Waterbury’s diverse housing stock and single-family owner-occupied character	Income eligible residents can borrow money from the Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) for deferred maintenance home repairs.	WNA will promote the NFC through distribution of information in the newsletter, website, and other available methods.	WNA/ NFC	1 to 2 years
	Discourage rezoning or other actions that would allow single-family homes to be converted or removed for multi-family dwellings.	WNA will review agendas and provide recommendations to City staff, the Plan & Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment and the City Council on land use and development issues that impact the neighborhood.	WNA	Ongoing

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
Differentiate Waterbury from suburban neighborhoods.	Promote Waterbury's unique history and architecture by identifying and listing appropriate historic districts/properties.	WNA may explore hiring a consultant to study the neighborhood and nominate districts to the National Register of Historic Places. WNA also encourages residents to pursue this individually.	WNA	5 to 10 years

VI. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

A key component of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program is the Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP). This program targets infrastructure improvements in Designated neighborhoods and provides improvements above and beyond the City's annual repair program. The NIRP improvements planned for the Waterbury neighborhood will be funded by the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

The Waterbury Neighborhood was allocated \$682,500 in NIRP funds to make repairs to streets, sidewalks, and curbs. At the neighborhood input meeting, residents were given an opportunity to discuss specific infrastructure concerns. The Des Moines Public Works Department then surveyed the streets, sidewalks, and curbs in Waterbury to determine the areas of greatest need for repairs. Public Works staff then presented their recommendations to the planning committee for their input. The Planning Committee determined that the top priority should be to repair all 21,500 lineal feet of defective sidewalk in the neighborhood at a cost of \$387,000. The committee decided that the remainder of the funds should be divided between street resurfacing and curb reconstruction at a cost of \$70,400 and \$225,100 respectively.

The Waterbury neighborhood also identified other infrastructure issues that are negatively impacting the neighborhood. The Pleasant Drive bridge railings are rusty, but pose no structural or safety issues. The bridge is scheduled for replacement in the next 2-3 years in the City's Bridge Replacement Program. However, the City will paint the rusty bridge railings in the meantime to improve neighborhood aesthetics.

Another concern that was brought up by Waterbury residents is the increased storm water drainage during significant rain events in the area of North Waterbury Road and Waterbury Circle. The City will assess the drainage issue in this area by visiting the site during a rain event and working with affected property owners to formulate the most appropriate corrective action. Public Works will maintain the existing storm water system by cleaning out intakes and culverts as needed.

*** **NIRP Improvements** ***

<p>Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) Street Resurfacing</p> <p>\$70,400 from FY2007 CIP NIRP</p>	<p>53rd Street – Ingersoll Avenue to Shriver Avenue</p> <p>57th Street – Ingersoll Avenue to Waterbury Road</p> <p>Country Club Blvd – Ingersoll Avenue to Waterbury Road</p> <p>Country Club Blvd – Waterbury Road to Woodland Avenue</p> <p>Harwood Drive – 61st Street to 62nd Street</p>
<p>Curb Replacement & Repair</p> <p>\$225,100 from FY2007 CIP NIRP</p>	<p>59th Street – Grand Avenue to Walnut Hill Avenue</p> <p>59th Street – Harwood Drive to N. Waterbury Road</p> <p>Harwood Drive – 54th Street to 55th Street</p> <p>Harwood Drive – 55th Street to Woodland Avenue</p> <p>Harwood Drive – Polk Boulevard to 48th Street (south side)</p> <p>Ingersoll Avenue – 57th Street to 59th Street</p> <p>Ingersoll Avenue – 56th Street to 57th Street (south side of street)</p> <p>Rollins Avenue – Cummins Parkway to 62nd Street</p> <p>Walnut Hill Avenue – 56th Street to 59th Street</p>
<p>Sidewalk Replacement & Repair</p> <p>\$387,000 from FY2007 CIP NIRP</p>	<p>Approximately, 21,500 lineal feet of defective sidewalk will be replaced by the Public Works Department throughout the neighborhood.</p>

VII. TREES & NATURAL FEATURES

Waterbury is an established neighborhood that benefits from a mature tree canopy overhead. The tree canopy along with the rolling hills and curvilinear development pattern provide a picturesque setting that sets Waterbury apart from suburban neighborhoods. In fact many Waterbury residents cited the trees and natural landscape as their primary reason for locating in the Waterbury neighborhood.

The Waterbury Neighborhood Association has taken an active role in helping to preserve Waterbury's tree canopy. The WNA has established relationships with various tree preservation organizations throughout central Iowa including the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa State University Forestry Extension, Trees Forever, Polk County Conservation and the City of Des Moines Forestry Division. These organizations have teamed up to provide consultation and training for Waterbury residents to preserve their trees.

Because these organizations have already made significant investments in this area there were no additional activities identified, rather a continuation of ongoing efforts. Therefore, many of the following goals have already been initiated, such as the tree inventory and tree plantings.

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
Preserve Waterbury's tree population	Encourage property owners to preserve existing trees through appropriate maintenance routines.	WNA will continue to locate and distribute information and resources to homeowners from sources such as the IDNR, ISU, Polk County, City of Des Moines, and others.	WNA	Ongoing
	Explore ways to prevent tree diseases from invading and spreading in the neighborhood.	WNA will work with IDNR/ISU officials to create innovative ways to prevent/treat/minimize the risk of tree loss due to disease.	WNA	Ongoing
	Increase diversity of trees in the Waterbury Neighborhood to help minimize impact of disease.	WNA Tree Stewards will utilize the recently completed Tree Survey/Inventory to assist residents in choosing appropriate tree species to increase diversity of the tree population.	WNA	Ongoing

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
	Maintain an active relationship with the City's Forestry Division.	The Public Works Department will maintain trees on City-owned property throughout Waterbury.	Public Works Forestry Division	Ongoing
Expand Waterbury's tree population through reforestation.	Add new trees in appropriate locations, on both public and private property, to assure the long-term health of the neighborhood tree population.	WNA Tree Stewards will utilize the recently completed Waterbury Tree Survey/Inventory to assist residents in choosing appropriate tree species to ensure long-term health of the tree population.	WNA	Ongoing
	Explore ways to reduce the cost of trees for neighborhood residents.	WNA will pursue resources including grants, tree wholesalers, and other funding sources to provide high quality/low cost trees for interested Waterbury residents.	WNA	Ongoing
Educate Waterbury residents on the issues affecting the tree population	Increase awareness of declining tree population in the Waterbury Neighborhood.	WNA will continue to locate and distribute information and resources to homeowners from sources such as the IDNR, ISU, Polk County, City of Des Moines, and others.	WNA	Ongoing
	Educate homeowners on where to plant trees.	WNA will continue to locate and distribute information and resources that assist homeowners in finding the most appropriate location(s) on their property or adjoining right-of-way to plant trees.	WNA	Ongoing
	Increase awareness, particularly of new homeowners, of the	WNA will obtain home sales data from Polk	WNA	Ongoing

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
	importance of trees to the neighborhood.	County Assessor or Des Moines Register to create a list of new home owners to distribute information to.		
Maintain/increase volunteers for tree activities.	Continue to recruit and educate WNA Tree Stewards.	WNA Tree Stewards will coordinate tree related activities including: grant writing, tree surveys, planting trees, and providing advice to residents on trees.	WNA	Ongoing

VIII. RECREATION

Recreation is an important factor regarding the health and prosperity of Des Moines neighborhoods. Waterbury was platted and developed almost entirely with residential homes, therefore does not include a designated park within its boundaries. Waterbury does benefit from green space at Merrill Middle School, as well as the amenities of the Art Center Greenwood/Ashworth Park immediately south of the Waterbury neighborhood. Greenwood/Ashworth Park is frequented by Waterbury residents. However, crossing Grand Avenue has been cited by residents as an obstacle for accessing the park. The City of Des Moines realizes this concern and has pledged to address the issue with appropriate traffic safety measures.

Being centrally located within the Des Moines metropolitan area, Waterbury benefits from the significant investments being made to the Central Iowa Trail System. In 2006, the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department completed the Walnut Creek Trail. This trail connects Waterbury to the regional trail system along the Walnut Creek basin. Additionally, the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department has proposed an additional trail connection through the heart of Waterbury. This proposed trail would link the Walnut Creek trail to Waveland Park and other trail spurs to the north.

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
Encourage walking, running, and bicycling in the Waterbury Neighborhood	Enhance the City trail network by increasing trail connections to other trails in other parts of Des Moines, as well as the regional trail system.	Des Moines Parks and Recreation will work with WNA on the proposed Waveland Trail connection. This trail would connect the Walnut Creek Trail to the Waveland Park area through the Waterbury neighborhood.	City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation with assistance from WNA	1 to 2 years
	Develop a walking course through the neighborhood.	WNA may work with Des Moines Parks and Recreation to create a walking course that allows neighborhood walkers to keep track of the distance with a route map.	WNA with the assistance of the Parks & Recreation Department	2 to 5 years
Improve pedestrian connection between the Waterbury Neighborhood and Greenwood Park/Art Center	Enhance pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Polk Boulevard to ensure safe crossing for everyone.	City of Des Moines Traffic and Transportation Division will install an enhanced crosswalk with improved signage and high intensity flashing LED lights to warn motorists of pedestrian crossing. Following installation, the enhanced crosswalk may be evaluated by the City to determine its effectiveness. Additional safety measures may be taken if necessary.	City/IDOT (To be constructed late 2007 or early 2008)	1 to 2 years
	Study possible safety	WNA may commission a study	WNA	2 to 5 years

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
	enhancements and beautification improvements for the Grand Avenue and Polk Boulevard intersection.	of the Polk and Grand intersection. The study and any subsequent improvements would need to be approved by the City of Des Moines and funded by the WNA.		
Increase recreational opportunities	Explore additional recreational opportunities within Waterbury.	WNA may work with the City to investigate appropriate locations for playground equipment and other recreation enhancements within the Waterbury neighborhood.	WNA/City of Des Moines	2 to 5 years

IX. COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

Community enhancement projects have become increasingly popular with many neighborhoods. These projects allow neighborhoods to establish their own identity and set themselves apart from other areas. These projects can vary greatly in size and complexity depending on the capacity of the neighborhood, but when implemented can become the focal point of a neighborhood.

The Waterbury neighborhood has recently completed an enhancement project of its own at the intersection of Polk Boulevard and Ingersoll Avenue. This community garden space includes a historically themed, brick and stone marker that is a tribute to the historic character of the neighborhood. The community gardens provide a gathering place for neighborhood residents to meet and share their gardening knowledge and ideas. Since its completion in 2005, the Waterbury Gardens have become a landmark on the west side of Des Moines.

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
Maintain the Waterbury Gardens	Fund and expand the endowment for ongoing maintenance of the Waterbury Gardens.	Continue to explore private donors to provide an endowment to ensure that the Waterbury Gardens remain attractive neighborhood amenities for years to come.	WNA	1 to 2 years
	Resident volunteers shall assist in the maintenance of the Waterbury Gardens.	Waterbury Gardens Chairperson will continue to provide direction to volunteers to ensure that the Gardens are maintained.	WNA	Ongoing
Support Merrill Middle School	Support Des Moines Public Schools in making interior and exterior improvements to Merrill Middle School.	WNA will work with and support Des Moines Public Schools efforts to enhance Merrill Middle School to ensure that it remains a neighborhood asset for years to come.	WNA/Des Moines Public Schools	Ongoing
Neighborhood enhancement	Pursue neighborhood enhancement projects as opportunities arise.	WNA will explore improvement projects that promote or enhance the Waterbury neighborhood. These projects may include entry features, vintage street signs, or other enhancements.	WNA/City of Des Moines	5 to 10 years
Support neighborhood commercial areas	Support and enhance neighboring commercial/retail opportunities in Waveland Park, the Ingersoll area, Grand Avenue corridor, and the	WNA will work with other neighborhood and business associations to assure that local neighborhood commercial areas continue to thrive.	WNA	Ongoing

GOAL	STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	IMPLEMENTATION TIMEFRAME
	Roosevelt Cultural District.			
Neighborhood promotion & outreach	Maintain active relationship with the City of Des Moines.	WNA will continue to represent the Waterbury residents and provide direction to the City on issues affecting the neighborhood.	WNA	Ongoing
	Maintain/increase communication among residents of the neighborhood.	WNA will continue to maintain neighborhood website and regular newsletter circulation.	WNA	Ongoing
Maintain a clean neighborhood	Encourage residents to utilize the City's SCRUB program.	WNA will provide the volunteers necessary to participate in the City's SCRUB program.	City's SCRUB Program through Public Works	Ongoing

X. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the plan is the hardest part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. To be successful it is imperative that the Waterbury 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.

The Waterbury Neighborhood Association will be responsible for the overall implementation of the plan. The Neighborhood Development Division and other City staff will provide technical assistance to the neighborhood association 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.