

DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING MEETING
COMMERCIAL AREAS SUB-COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 18, 2010 6:30-8:30pm
Woody's Smoke Shack, 2511 Cottage Grove Ave

I. Welcome and Introductions (10-15 minutes)

Amber Lynch, Neighborhood Planner, City of Des Moines Community Development

- a) Brief overview of the Drake Neighborhood Plan
- b) Introductions – name, affiliation, how do you utilize the Dogtown area?

II. Drake Streetscape Discussion (45-50 min)

- a) Brief Overview of the Streetscape Plan
- b) Identify Phase I Project Area
- c) Discuss Fundraising Strategies

III. Discuss Commercial Areas adjacent to Drake University (45 min)

- a) What is the vision for the commercial districts in this area? (*Think about other commercial districts that you like...*)
- b) What are the issues/concerns? What are the current strengths?
- c) Who is the target market?
- d) What role can the University play?

IV. Conclusion

Meeting Notes:

Amber Lynch, City Planner, gave a brief overview of the planning process for the Drake Neighborhood Plan, which began in January 2009. There have been several subcommittees, each focusing on a particular topic. This subcommittee is working on commercial areas in the neighborhood.

Attendees introduced themselves and stated how they each utilize the Dogtown / Drake commercial areas. The majority said they went to Dogtown for the dining or entertainment. Others use the various business services or walk in the area.

Drake Streetscape Discussion

The Drake Streetscape Plan was completed in 2007 by Genus landscape architects. Three members of the original committee (Jennifer Sayers, Dolph Pulliam, and Larry James, Jr.) gave background information on the plan and why they feel the project is important. Jen mentioned that the project began with ideas for beautifying the Drake area and evolved into the streetscape plan. Dolph noted that Drake University has taken steps towards integrating the campus with the neighborhood by taking down the hedges that used to line the edges of campus. In addition, Campus Cleaners will move to its new location at 34th & University soon and that building will be torn down. Larry stated that the

streetscape project is important because of the impact it will have on private investment in the area. Dogtown is in need of a makeover and the appearance of the street is visitors' first impression of the area. Foot traffic has been increasing and that in turn improves safety. Dolph noted that the Drake / Dogtown area is becoming a "destination", and that word of mouth is one of the main ways visitors have communicated about the improvements that have already occurred.

Heidi Wessels, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Development Corporation, asked if the Forest Ave streetscape improvements called for in the plan could occur along with redevelopment in that corridor. For example, the City owns the block between 22nd & 23rd on the north side of Forest. NDC also owns property along the corridor. Amber Lynch stated, yes, streetscape improvements could be incorporated into redevelopment plans.

The group discussed which block(s) would be most appropriate for Phase I of the streetscape. It was decided that Phase I will include one block of University Ave, between 25th & 24th, along with parking improvements along 24th Street and 25th Street (both north and south of University Ave). Amber Lynch noted that an official parking study was not done at the time of the streetscape plan, so that will need to occur at this time. Dolph indicated that the University has installed period lighting and so some of the wiring has been undergrounded already.

Amber Lynch advised the group of the next steps in the streetscape process. They need to form a stakeholder committee, with representatives from DABA, DNA, and DU. The neighborhood will be responsible for raising 50% of the funds needed for design/construction documents. It is estimated that the neighborhood contribution will be \$100,000-\$150,000. However any additional funds raised can go towards the construction phase. So far the City has secured two rounds of STE-TP funding for construction, totaling \$280,000. The neighborhood will also need to raise funds for construction. Amber will work with Kyle Larson to estimate costs for Phase I.

It was suggested that the stakeholder committee contact Restoration Ingersoll to understand their model for fundraising and project development. For more information on Restoration Ingersoll, visit: http://www.ingersollave.com/restoration_ingersoll/restoration_ingersoll.php. Dolph suggested working with the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, and using them as the bank during fundraising.

It was noted that upon implementation of the streetscape, the businesses will need to form a SSMID (self-supporting municipal improvement district) in order to pay for continued maintenance of plantings, lighting, etc. Larry James Jr. mentioned that he got involved with the Drake project because he was very impressed by how streetscape improvements had impacted a business area in Milwaukee. He commented that he was happy to participate in the SSMID because he felt the investment in the street would pay off for his business.

Discuss Commercial Areas adjacent to Drake University

The group discussed their vision for the commercial areas adjacent to Drake University. Suggestions included filling vacant buildings, particularly those scattered throughout the neighborhood; creating space for artists and pursuing designation of Dogtown as a Cultural & Entertainment District; opening

another late-night restaurant; concentrating higher density along the University, Forest, and 31st/30th corridors with additional 3-4 story mixed-use buildings; redeveloping the blocks of University east of 23rd Street and rezoning that stretch from C-2 to NPC; and increasing rental options that are both affordable and built-as multi-family. The group also discussed redeveloping the 2200 block of University, potentially with more student housing to draw students further east. In addition, it was stated that there is a need for quality commercial space in Drake/Dogtown. Many of the older buildings have not been updated and deter new businesses from moving in.

When asked what the target market for the Dogtown area is, attendees stated that it is not just students and Drake faculty, but the entire City. The goal is for Dogtown to be a destination.

The group again noted the need to get all business owners in the Drake area together, perhaps on a quarterly basis, to share information and identify common goals.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 15th at 6:30 pm. Location TBD.