City: West Des Moines

Title of Project: Historic West Des Moines Master Plan

City's Population: 64,113

In a few sentences, give a summary of the project and why it was needed:

This Master Plan for Historic West Des Moines (HWDM) is the culmination of more than a year’s worth of analysis, research, and community dialogue. The Plan communicates a vision for the redevelopment of the area to ensure it remains a vital part of the City of West Des Moines.

Valley Junction, which is the core business district of HWDM, is the original name of the city that has become West Des Moines. Valley Junction was founded in 1893 as a junction between two railroads within the valley of the Raccoon River. It is now home to more than 120 retail stores and businesses in a 10-square block area. Current-day Valley Junction represents a significant piece of West Des Moines’ history.

The initiation of discussions about Historic West Des Moines and the creation of this Master Plan stemmed from the need to address the issues with underutilized upper-story spaces, homes and buildings, deferred maintenance situations, and the need to capitalize on the assets present in the Historic West Des Moines study area.

The participants in this project and the City are proud to say that a number of the goals within this plan have already been completed.

Explain the specific role of your city in this project:

The City, as well as representatives of the Des Moines Area MPO and the Historic Valley Junction Foundation, acted as staff to initiate and facilitate the discussions on the content of this Master Plan. City staff organized the meetings for this Plan and absorbed all costs of the project.

Working alongside Teska & Associates, the consultant for the preparation of the Plan, several events were held to solicit public input. All events were coordinated by City staff.

The Plan was presented to West Des Moines City Council, and accepted by Council on September 19, 2016.

In a few sentences, what future impact will this project have on your community?

This Plan is a guide for the future of the HWDM area. The Plan outlines several measurable goals for the City and community to execute. The following tasks have already been started or have already been completed (page 56 & 57 of the Plan):

- Attract Additional Restaurants – Develop and implement incentive system to address extraordinary costs related to restaurants
Applications opened for the Property Improvement Fund and Regulatory Compliance Fund in March 2017 (identified within the Plan). $1 million is allocated to those pilot programs for HWDM.

- Phenix Site Redevelopment – Complete financing for rehab and conversion of existing buildings to mixed-income apartments; Approve development agreement; Adopt site master plan
- Phenix site will be transferred to Community Housing Initiatives for redevelopment in April. There will be 17 new 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom dwelling units available for rent, several of these being affordable housing.
- Signs (particularly allowing blade signs) – Modify sign regulations to accommodate appropriate pedestrian scale signs as noted in section on regulations
- The updated sign code ordinance will go to City Council for approval in April.
- The CoSign project, which originated in Cincinnati, will be implemented by the Historic Valley Junction Foundation.
- Activating upper stories along 5th Street – Develop and fund local incentive system for building rehabilitation; Seek national register status for downtown, which will allow for additional tax credits and grants
- The incentive programs outlined in the HWDM Master Plan have been approved by City Council and applications are currently available for the programs.
- The Historic Valley Junction Foundation is currently in the process of submitting an application to be considered on the National Register of Historic Places list.
- Funding – Adopt a new Urban Renewal Area and TIF
- The Historic West Des Moines Urban Renewal Plan and TIF Ordinance are going before Council for final approval in April.

**Total cost of project:** $150,000

**List where funding came from.** (grants, donations, city funds, etc):
City General Fund

**Total time project took/projected to take for completion. Please include start date and end date.** (To qualify the project must be operating or completed between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016):
The process to generate the list of stakeholders and draft a schedule for the strategy implementation began in July 2015. The Plan was approved by City Council on September 19, 2016.

**Resources.** (Please list Web sites judges may reference if they seek additional information.):