

WELCOME TO HERE COMES TOMORROW

Thank you for joining us at **The Tomorrow Plan** open house. We invite you to learn about the nearly-complete plan, review its recommendations, and provide your suggestions.

Wrapping up the plan is just the start of **Partnering for a Greener Greater Des Moines**. Find out what you can do to contribute to a more resilient future for yourself, your neighborhood, and your region.

Invite your family and friends to join us at another meeting from 5-7pm at the following locations:

Tuesday, January 29
ALTOONA FIRE STATION
950 Venbury Drive SW, Altoona

Wednesday, January 30
CENTRAL LIBRARY
1000 Grand Avenue, Des Moines

Thursday, January 31
ANKENY PUBLIC SERVICES BUILDING
220 West 1st Street, Ankeny

Monday, February 4
NORWALK CITY HALL
705 North Avenue, Norwalk

Tuesday, February 5
RACCOON RIVER PARK NATURE LODGE
2500 Grand Avenue, West Des Moines

Wednesday, February 6
JOHNSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
6700 Merle Hay Road, Johnston

Goals & Strategies

The goals outlined below, along with the supporting strategies, work as a system to lead Greater Des Moines toward a vibrant future of lasting value.

The supporting strategies help initiate change that impacts multiple goals.

After reviewing this overview of the goals and strategies, you can find additional information about the strategies in the draft plan. The Regional Initiatives that follow demonstrate how the goals and strategies work together towards a more sustainable future.

GOAL 1 *Create a resilient regional economy*

GOAL 2 *Improve the region's environmental health and access to the outdoors*

GOAL 3 *Further the health and well-being of all residents in the region*

GOAL 4 *Increase regional cooperation and efficiency at all levels*

Planning for change

The Tomorrow Plan is a strategic direction for Greater Des Moines enriched with high-level but achievable approaches and steps for implementation.

It provides a range of choices for moving together towards a more sustainable regional future.

The draft plan lays out a three-part framework for sustainable development:

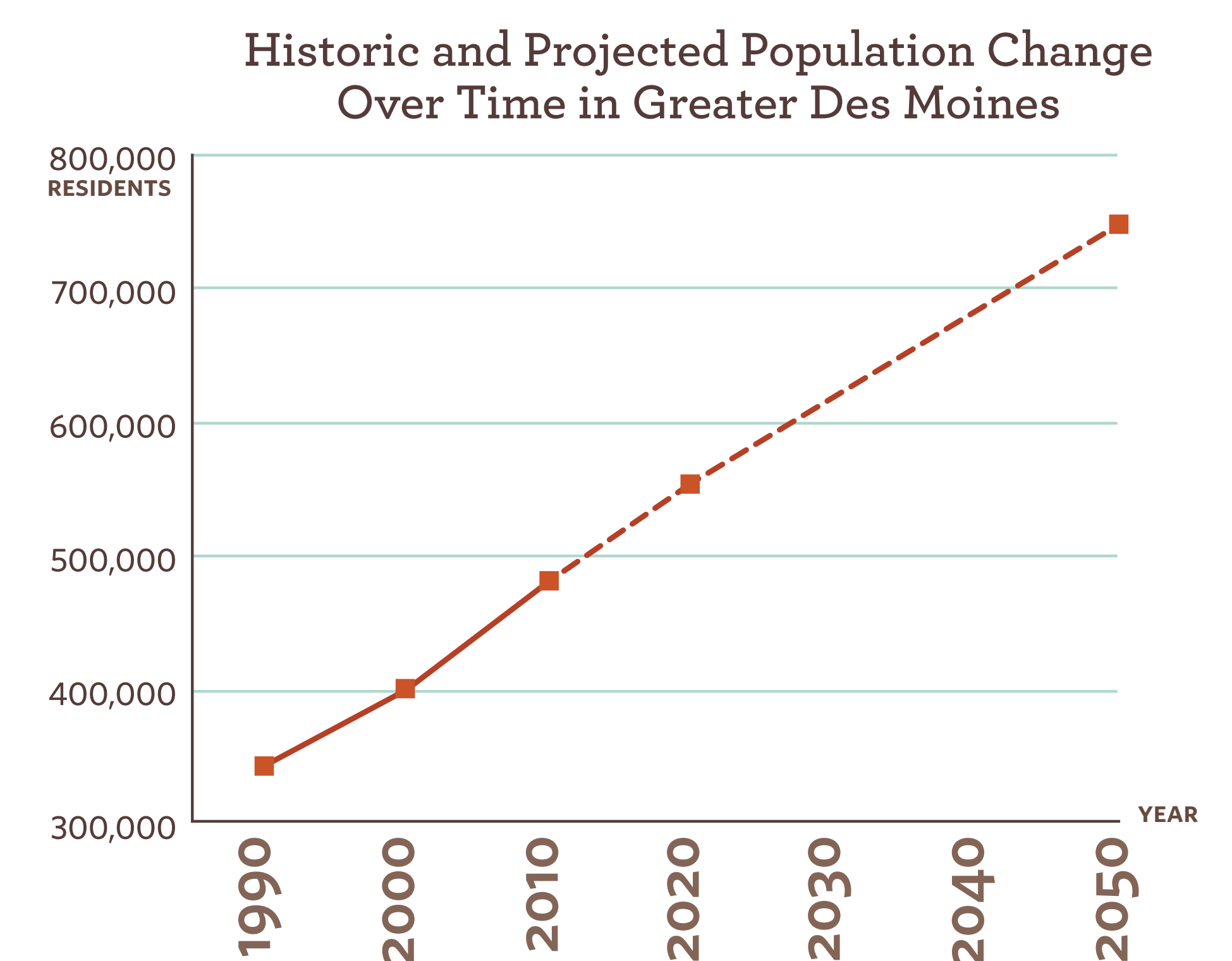
- **Goals**
Broad aspirations for the region.
- **Strategies**
Approaches for accomplishing the goals.
- **Regional Initiatives**
Cross-cutting, collaborative ideas for implementing the plan's top priorities.

Throughout the plan you also will see references to technical documents and other resources.

Thank you for all of your ideas, recommendations, and constructive feedback over the past eighteen months. This draft of The Tomorrow Plan is a true product of your input.

In the future...

- Greater Des Moines will need an additional 112,000 housing units over the next 40 years.
- Demographics will change. By 2050, 20% of Greater Des Moines will be over age 65, compared to roughly 11% in 2010.
- The average household sizes in the region will be smaller.



GOAL 1

Create a resilient regional economy

A healthy economy is the foundation upon which a more sustainable future can be built. Economic analysis raises concerns that the existing regional economy is overly dependent on a limited number of economic sectors, making it more vulnerable in the long term. Also, an important determinant of a region's economic development and growth is the educational attainment of its population and work force. Everyone who wants to live in Greater Des Moines should be able to find and access a good job, live affordably, and enjoy a high quality of life.

Strategies

- A. Encourage economic development in nodes and connect people to these areas with priority access corridors
- B. Provide multimodal access throughout the region
- C. Create an innovation core in the heart of Iowa at the crossroads of advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, and information technology
- D. Enhance the digital infrastructure of Greater Des Moines
- E. Encourage the growth and retention of existing companies
- F. Prepare the future workforce by strengthening local schools and providing more extensive worker training, particularly in the high-impact STEAM fields (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math)
- G. Generate revenue and support local businesses by diverting waste from landfills and by recovering and repurposing valuable and/or toxic materials

GOAL 2

Improve the region's environmental health and access to the outdoors

Creating and maintaining natural resource corridors, natural stormwater utilities, and parks embodies the concept of land stewardship. Land stewardship ensures long-term environmental and economic health, and, more importantly, perhaps improves the mental and physical well-being of people. It gives people close access to nature, recreation, and tranquil vistas. It mitigates many natural disasters and prevents damages. Ultimately, it creates a resilient region and communities, attracting people who want to live here and employers that want to locate here.

Strategies

- A. Promote the reduction of energy consumption, especially from non-renewable energy sources, and their resulting emissions
- B. Build a region-wide connected system of natural resource areas and corridors
- C. Develop a regional stormwater approach emphasizing the use of natural processes to carry out the functions of built systems
- D. Expand regional park capacity in terms of acreage, facilities, programs and services, and connections

GOAL 3

Further the health and well-being of all residents in the region

One of Greater Des Moines' key competitive advantages is its high quality of life. The region is consistently recognized for its affordability, access to the outdoors, and family-friendly atmosphere. However, this way of life is challenged by impediments to fair housing, a car-centered transportation system, decreasing levels of physical activity, and more. For residents to truly enjoy the high quality of life for which Greater Des Moines is known, health and well-being in all senses need to be actively promoted throughout the region.

Strategies

- A. Ensure diverse housing choices throughout the region
- B. Create a region where walking, biking, and utilizing public transportation are as viable as driving
- C. Make the first choice the healthy choice
- D. Support housing, community, and health services for residents of all ages
- E. Provide access to healthy food using a regional food system approach
- F. Encourage local gathering spaces and events that support arts, culture, and natural heritage and build a sense of community

GOAL 4

Increase regional cooperation and efficiency at all levels

Discussions with the Steering Committee and the public point to the need to continue building from an already productive regional framework. Organizations like the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Metro Waste Authority, and the Wastewater Reclamation Authority continue to be cited as some of the region's best examples of cooperative progress. They point to a mix of efficiencies, expanded service, and resilience stemming from these broad-based, thoughtful efforts to cross the boundaries of seventeen communities and four counties to embrace a regional view.

Strategies

- A. Leverage the ongoing work of the MPO to serve as the entity to address monitoring and implementation of The Tomorrow Plan
- B. Develop a Regional Infrastructure Coordinating Committee
- C. Maintain ongoing educational efforts for the development and maintenance of healthy communities
- D. Leverage The Tomorrow Plan to secure and award funding for regional benefit

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

These five regional initiatives have the potential to deliver directly on the compelling vision of a dynamic, vibrant region of lasting value. The initiatives achieve integration of the many drivers for this plan – health, culture, economics, jobs creation, natural resources, energy, housing, transportation, and more.

They work across jurisdictional boundaries. They address multiple goals. And they are achievable – not overnight, but over time. Many involve already existing resources and/or build on current success. They speak to individual as well as collective action. Perhaps most compelling, they involve many partners poised to work collaboratively.

Achieving these initiatives means building upon our many existing successes to make a better place for ourselves and our future generations to live, learn, work, and play.

INITIATIVE 1

Nodes & Corridors

INITIATIVE 2

Greenways

INITIATIVE 3

Regional Cooperation

INITIATIVE 4

Resilient Neighborhoods

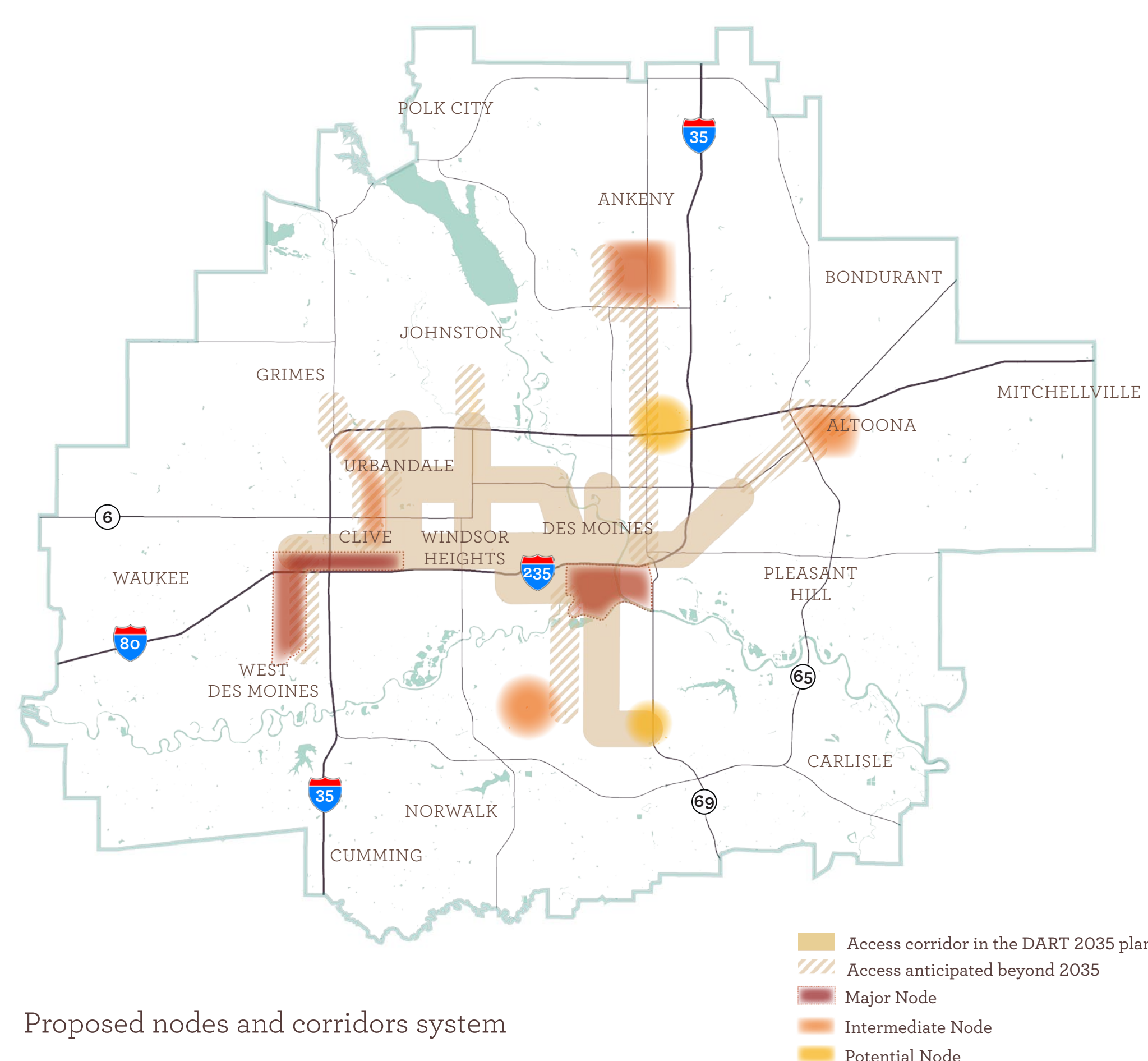
INITIATIVE 5

Everyday Stewards

NODES & CORRIDORS

Encourage economic development in areas of maximum impact and connect these areas to one another with priority access corridors.

Nodes are the economic and cultural focal points of a region, and corridors provide a network for movement through and between them. Even the most rural communities are beneficiaries of the region's nodes and corridors, which provide many of the region's jobs, cultural attractions, major transportation infrastructure, and institutions, like government, hospitals, and universities.



Nodes and corridors create a self-reinforcing ecosystem that produces more than the sum of its parts, leveraging investments for many benefits. For example, higher densities and concentrations of investments can bring higher transit service.

Any sizable region will naturally develop a basic network of nodes and corridors, but this network can be strengthened and expanded through strategic planning, coordinated investment, and smart land use policy. Taking a long-term view and investing in regional nodes and corridors is an essential initiative in order for Greater Des Moines to continue attracting skilled workers and businesses, to develop its human capital, and to maintain its economic competitiveness.

ACTION STEPS

Strengthening Greater Des Moines' nodes and corridors system requires a multi-directional approach. Here are some key ways to encourage development that will benefit the region as a whole:

- **Infrastructure:** Enhance existing infrastructure and introduce quality public transportation to improve access to a node. Use amenities like sidewalks, complete streets, street trees, bicycle facilities, and mixed used development to enhance mobility within nodes.
- **Land Use Policy:** Use zoning and special districts to help nodes develop in a pedestrian-friendly, compact manner. Allow flexibility in use to respond to market demand. Create model zoning for the region.
- **Quality Design and Placemaking:** Target funding to provide the urban amenities, landmarks, and high-quality urban design that makes nodes attractive and strengthens the individual character of the places that comprise the region.
- **Supply and Demand:** Incentivize development of vacant and underutilized space and reduce minimum parking requirements to lower the cost of development in designated nodes.
- **Tax Policy:** Work at the state level to target development of identified nodes.

INITIATIVE 2

GREENWAYS

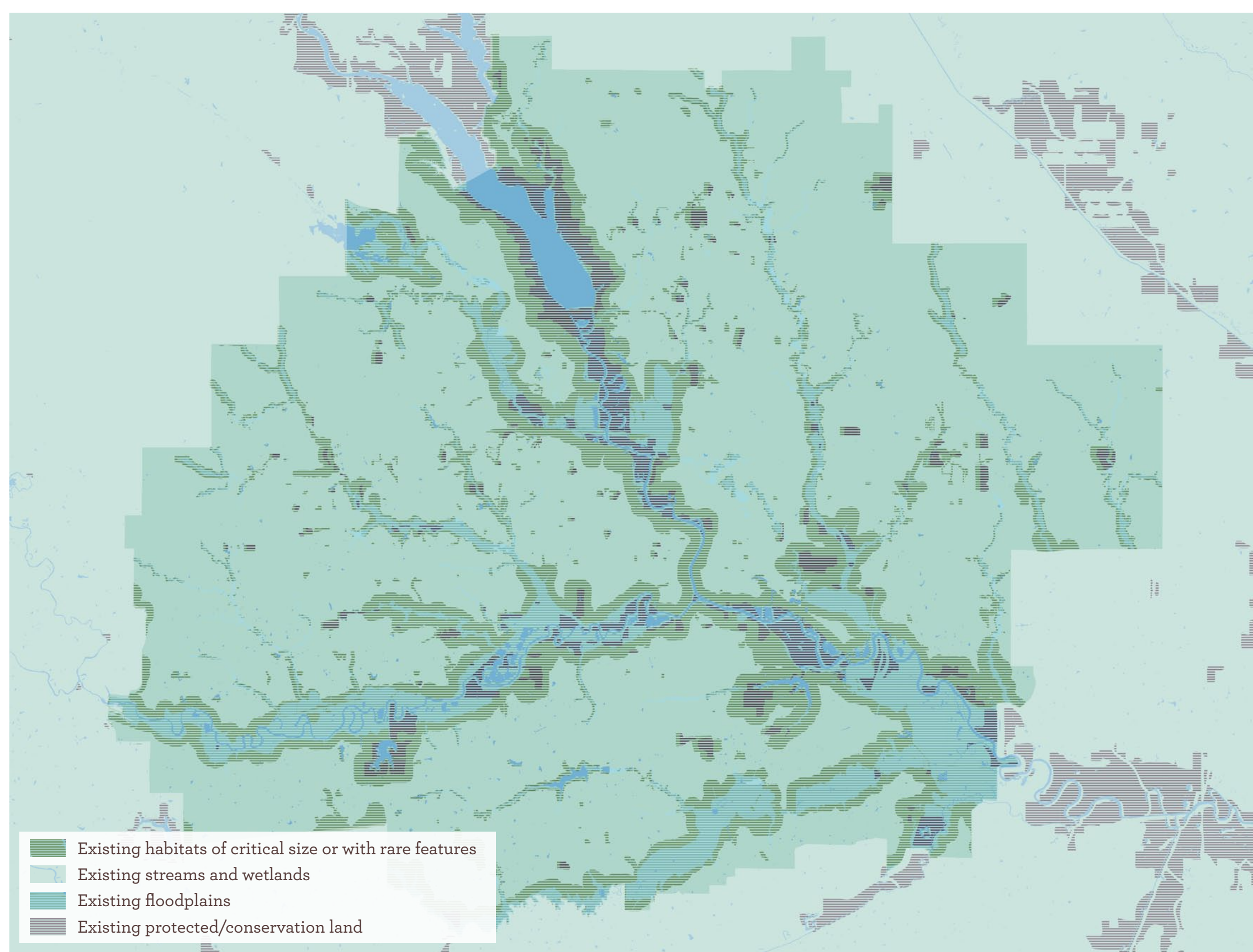
Build a fully-connected system of natural resource areas by selectively expanding the existing network of parks, conservation areas, open space, and trails.

The Tomorrow Plan envisions a region with a functional network of green space that provides habitat, protects waterways, supports regional stormwater infrastructure, expands recreational opportunities, and contributes to the region's identity.

Together, these green spaces establish a logical system of multi-functional greenways.

In Greater Des Moines, about 55,000 acres are already in greenways. Half of this land is in public ownership, in conservation easements, or regulated as floodplains and wetlands. If these areas can survive and be expanded in the future, greenways will benefit people by managing stormwater runoff, stabilizing streams, controlling erosion, improving water quality, supporting a variety of wildlife, and becoming high quality natural areas for people to live near and use. For the most part, greenways follow the region's rivers, streams, wetlands, and steeply sloping lands.

Implementing a regional system of greenways requires a coordinated effort among stakeholders and political entities over at least 30–40 years. While some of this work will be that of future generations, preliminary steps such as establishing Watershed Management Authorities and completing a Natural Areas Inventory are key first steps to benefit the region.



Components of the Proposed Greenway Network

ACTION STEPS

Strengthening Greater Des Moines' greenways system requires a multi-directional approach:

- Develop collaborations and champions including Watershed Management Authorities (WMAs) and a regional parks collaborative.
- Complete a Natural Areas Inventory.
- Develop Water Works Park and links to Gray's Lake, Principal Riverwalk, and upstream public lands.
- Prioritize areas for a natural stormwater utility.
- Leverage the existing trails network and isolated parks to finish the trail system.
- Identify funding mechanisms to complete and maintain the regional network of natural lands and corridors.
- Build perpetual lifecycle costs into project costs.
- Develop ecological buffers.
- Develop tools to establish greenways.
- Develop a natural resource overlay district.
- Assess and plan the need for parks and open space.
- Ensure adequate parks level-of-service as the region grows.
- Enhance the regional treescape.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Implement a region-wide approach to managing systems, including utilities and infrastructure, that reach across jurisdictional boundaries.

Greater Des Moines is made of individual communities that each provides a different bundle of services to its residents—schools, emergency response, water, sewer, energy, community programming, parks, and more. These services come with a price, both financial and environmental. Regional cooperation can reduce the costs of these services and many others by relying on the efficiencies of scale, the lessons learned from the others' experience, and the benefits of coordinating investments to maximize their value and impact.

Some infrastructure has been provided regionally to areas of greater Des Moines for decades.; this regional initiative recommends building upon such efforts. Examples of existing infrastructure coordination include the Wastewater Reclamation Authority (WRA), which was created in 1979; Des Moines Water Works, an independently owned and operated regional public utility; and the MPO, which provides planning and coordination for regional transportation infrastructure. Examples of regional coordination for service provision include DART and the Metro Waste Authority (MWA).

Existing infrastructure coordination efforts in Greater Des Moines are focused on a single infrastructure or service. This initiative recommends the creation of Watershed Management Authorities—another single service—and also challenges the region to begin the process of proactively coordinating across a range of services by establishing a Regional Infrastructure Coordinating Committee (RICC).

ACTION STEPS

ENCOURAGE REGIONAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

A recently enacted state law, Iowa Code 466B.22, established watershed management authorities (WMAs) as a first step towards regional stormwater management. They allow cooperating municipalities to assess conditions, diagnose problems, and propose solutions upstream and downstream of their own boundaries.

1. Establish Watershed Management Authorities.
2. Develop comprehensive watershed management plans.
3. Create natural stormwater utilities throughout the region.
4. Promote ordinances for best stormwater practices.

ESTABLISH A RICC (REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATING COMMITTEE)

To increase coordination amongst communities and integrate infrastructure coordination into land use planning, the RICC should:

1. Disseminate information about planned infrastructure changes and improvements.
2. Involve regional utility companies, other infrastructure or service providers, and public works directors and/or city engineers, city administrators, and local planners.
3. Encourage communities to incorporate The Tomorrow Plan goals, strategies, and initiatives in local comprehensive plans.
4. Create a model code incorporating The Tomorrow Plan principles that communities can use as a reference to update their zoning codes and development ordinances.

RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Support the continued presence of strong, unique neighborhoods that provide a range of housing and transportation choices.

In the context of planning for a region, resilience means the capacity to successfully respond to adversity and adapt to an ever-changing context. For the neighborhoods of Greater Des Moines, this means celebrating the strong neighborhood character that exists today with planning for the changing demographics, economic uncertainty, and fluid real estate market of tomorrow.

Providing a variety of choices in housing, transportation, and other amenities is a strong step towards neighborhood resilience. The Livability Principles set forth by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities provide a bold vision for maximizing choice not only in neighborhoods but in communities as a whole.

This initiative applies to neighborhoods throughout Greater Des Moines—established and emerging; urban, suburban, and rural; within nodes and beyond—and acknowledges that every neighborhood will provide these choices differently. The action items offer a toolbox of strategies for neighborhoods around the region to get started.

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

- Provide more transportation choices.
- Promote equitable, affordable housing.
- Enhance economic competitiveness.
- Support existing communities.
- Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.
- Value communities and neighborhoods.

ACTION STEPS

Making all the neighborhoods in Greater Des Moines more resilient means celebrating their unique qualities while providing choice:

QUALITY DESIGN & PLACEMAKING

- Study the qualities that give successful neighborhoods their character—shopping districts, shade trees, landmarks, and other neighborhood patterns.
- Harness community energy to target specific neighborhood projects and motivate volunteers.
- Invest in quality of life projects (e.g., trails, parks, community centers, aquatic centers).
- Support each community in creating neighborhood asset maps and using them to target opportunities for improvement.

HOUSING

- Use incentives to encourage a diversity of housing choices, particularly in city and neighborhood centers, based on what the market can support.
- Set regional targets for distribution of housing types and support projects that contribute to these goals.
- Renovate existing and historic housing, and support reinvestment and new construction in existing neighborhoods.
- Increase the variety of housing types (e.g., senior living, duplexes, townhouses, condos, live/work spaces).
- Address vacant and/or foreclosed properties.
- Provide resources for private property maintenance.

COMMERCIAL LAND USE

- Review and amend regulations to support development of additional housing choice and mixed-use neighborhood centers.
- Upgrade streetscapes and infrastructure.
- Improve existing commercial buildings.
- Provide small business education and assistance.

TRANSPORTATION

- Identify key neighborhood locations for pilot projects that encourage alternative modes of transportation: pedestrian-friendly retrofits, complete streets, traffic calming, bicycle facilities, and/or mixed-use redevelopment near transit stops.

COORDINATION

- Use a new or an existing regional forum for identifying cross-boundary improvement projects that are mutually beneficial.
- Coordinate with local planning initiatives on cross-boundary projects.

INITIATIVE 5

EVERYDAY STEWARDS

Breathe life into the plan by translating the regional goals into modified local practices and personal choices for a Greener Greater Des Moines.

The Tomorrow Plan is a plan for the whole region—it is a written explanation of the ideas that emerged in the planning process and their technical underpinnings. However, it is up to regional leaders and residents like you to breathe life into those words. Whether as a citizen steward, an activist, a champion, a teacher, mediator, community leader, or neighborhood group, successfully implementing The Tomorrow Plan depends on you.

This section introduces some actions and ideas for what you can do to be a steward of the plan and a greener Greater Des Moines. There are two especially valuable arenas for citizens to direct their energy and knowledge. The first is more public, where individuals may reach out to local groups to rally around issues that can have a positive impact for the whole community. The second is more private: individuals may look inward and consider what household investment or change in personal practice might have a positive impact at home, such as on cost savings, family health, and personal environmental footprints. We hope you'll join the effort to make The Tomorrow Plan meaningful for you, your neighborhood, and your region.



ACTION STEPS

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Get involved!**
What local initiatives will you champion in your community? What household investment or change in personal practice might have a positive impact for your family?

WHAT CAN YOUR REGION DO?

- **Establish a web forum or wiki to serve as a clearinghouse for information sharing, social networking, and knowledge sharing.**
- **Empower new neighborhood/community groups** by establishing a grant program to provide seed money or small investments to promising start-up initiatives.
- **Create a forum** to crowdsource the question of raising funding, increase awareness, and generate excitement about good ideas.
- **Engage schools** to tackle local service projects, or, at the university level, service-oriented courses or independent, locally-focused projects.
- **Celebrate success stories and good ideas** to help to build momentum and a community support structure that has longevity and resilience.