



# **Block Makeovers as Catalysts for Change in Middle Neighborhoods**

Moderator: Marcia Nedland

Organizer, Middle Neighborhoods Community of Practice





Tell us  
about you!

- Nonprofit
- Gov't local
- Gov't state
- Gov't federal
- Intermediary
- Consultant
- Realtor
- Financial institution
- Academic institution

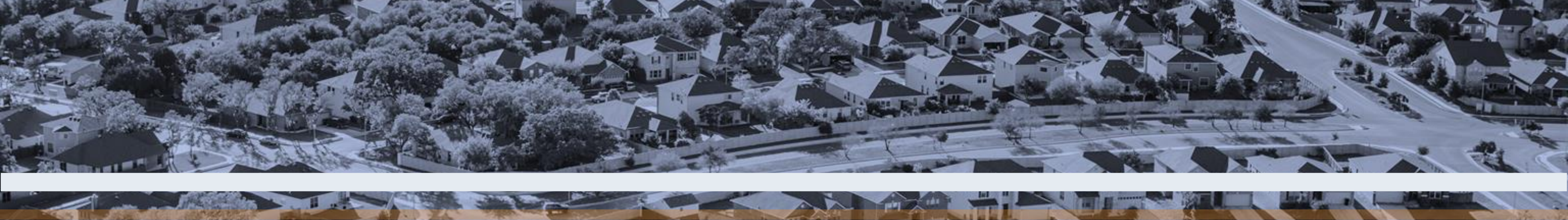


# Middle Neighborhoods Initiative

A National Initiative focused on mobilizing attention to reverse the disappearance of middle neighborhoods through decline or gentrification. The initiative does this through:

- Community of Practice: practitioners, policy, researchers
- Research: topics relevant to middle neighborhoods
- Policy Analysis and Advocacy: housing, lending, community dev
- Communications strategies: advancing awareness

Coordinated by National Community Stabilization Trust and NeighborWorks America and advised by a Steering Committee of 20 prominent researchers, practitioners and policy makers



# Characteristics of Middle Neighborhoods

- Mostly single-family homes built for families with children.
- Still well more than 50% owner-occupied, but slowly eroding.
- Housing stock is aging, still in generally acceptable condition, but often lacks features and updates to compete well for today's homebuyers.
- More racially, ethnically and economically diverse.



[stabilizationtrust.org](http://stabilizationtrust.org)



Click [here](#) to learn more about defining Middle Neighborhoods

Refresh Your Map | Zoom ▾ | Questions or feedback?

**Your Map**

Map Satellite

**Choose a 2014-2018 layer to display**

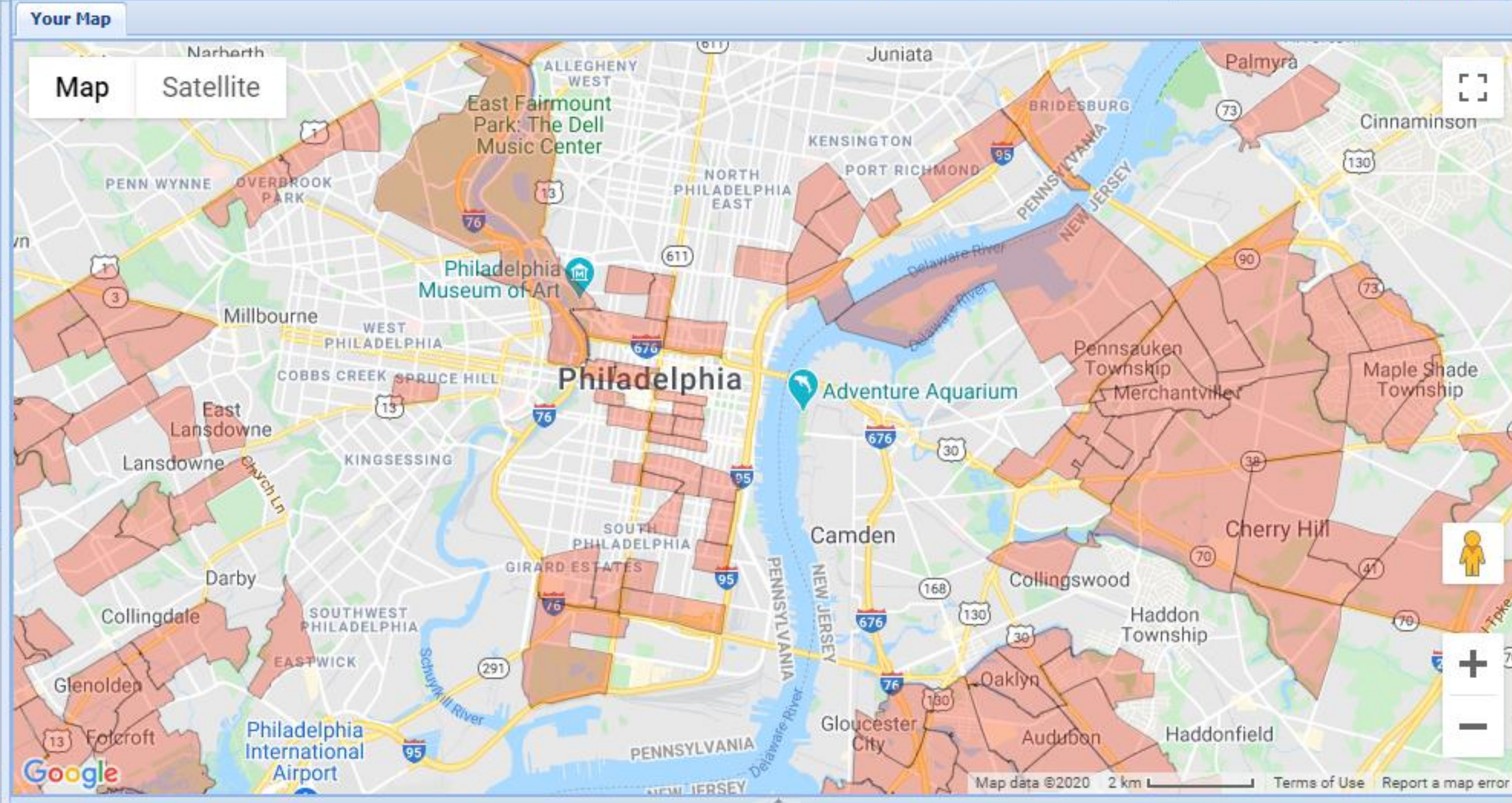
- 2018 City Test 1: 60-100% CMI
- 2018 City Test 2: 80-120% CMI
- 2018 National Test 1: 60-100% NMI
- 2018 National Test 2: 80-120% NMI
- 2018 Regional Test 1: 60-100% AMI
- 2018 Regional Test 2: 80-120% AMI
- 2018 Regional Test 3: 100-160% AMI

**Choose a 2006-2010 layer to display**

- 2010 City Test 1: 60-100% CMI
- 2010 City Test 2: 80-120% CMI
- 2010 National Test 1: 60-100% NMI
- 2010 National Test 2: 80-120% NMI
- 2010 Regional Test 1: 60-100% AMI
- 2010 Regional Test 2: 80-120% AMI
- 2010 Regional Test 3: 100-160% AMI

**MSAs**

- Panama City, FL Metro Area
- Parkersburg-Vienna, WV Metro Area
- Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL Metro Area
- Peoria, IL Metro Area
- Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area
- Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ Metro Area
- Pine Bluff, AR Metro Area
- Pittsburgh, PA Metro Area
- Pittsfield, MA Metro Area



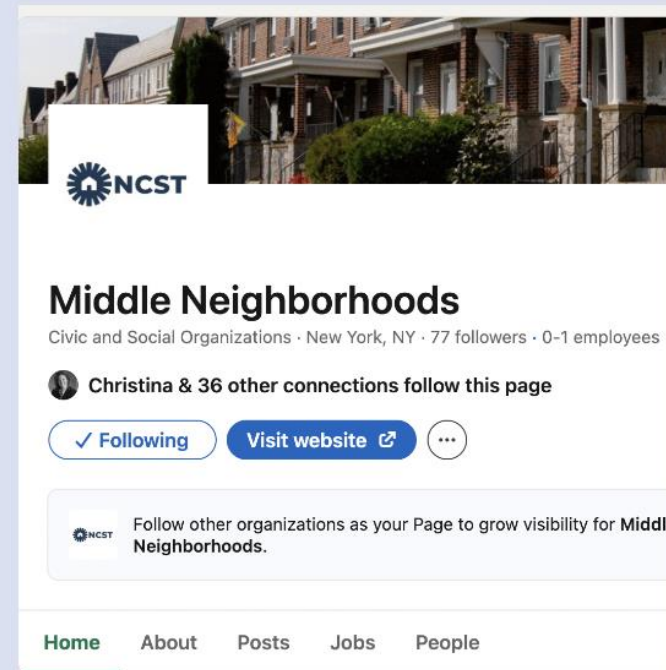
Displaying census tracts with median household incomes between 80 and 120 percent of regional/MSA median (\$69,465), or \$55,572 - \$83,358

## Follow Us at LinkedIn

We are revving up the Middle Neighborhoods LinkedIn account by recruiting followers and posting webinars, best practices, engagement chats and everything anyone should know about middle neighborhoods.

If you have a LinkedIn account, please take a moment to follow us by [going to our page](#) and clicking the Follow button.

If you don't have a LinkedIn account, please consider it by [signing up here](#). LinkedIn is social media for business networks and you'll likely see many of your colleagues there, as well as referral networks, events and more.

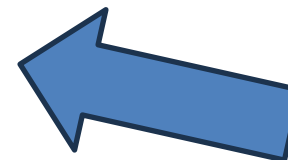


And when you are a LinkedIn account holder, please like and comment on the posts by Middle Neighborhoods. Greater name recognition and awareness of middle neighborhood issues and successes put all practitioners in a better position to garner support. Thank you!

## Follow us on LinkedIn

## And share our news and stories!

<https://bit.ly/middleneighborhoodsLINKEDIN>



# Our Panelists

## **Amber Jones**

- Community Engagement Specialist
- Community Action Partnership of North Alabama

## **Justin Tirsun**

- VP of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement
- Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, Inc.

## **Amber Lynch**

- AICP, Executive Director
- Invest DSM





**BEFORE**



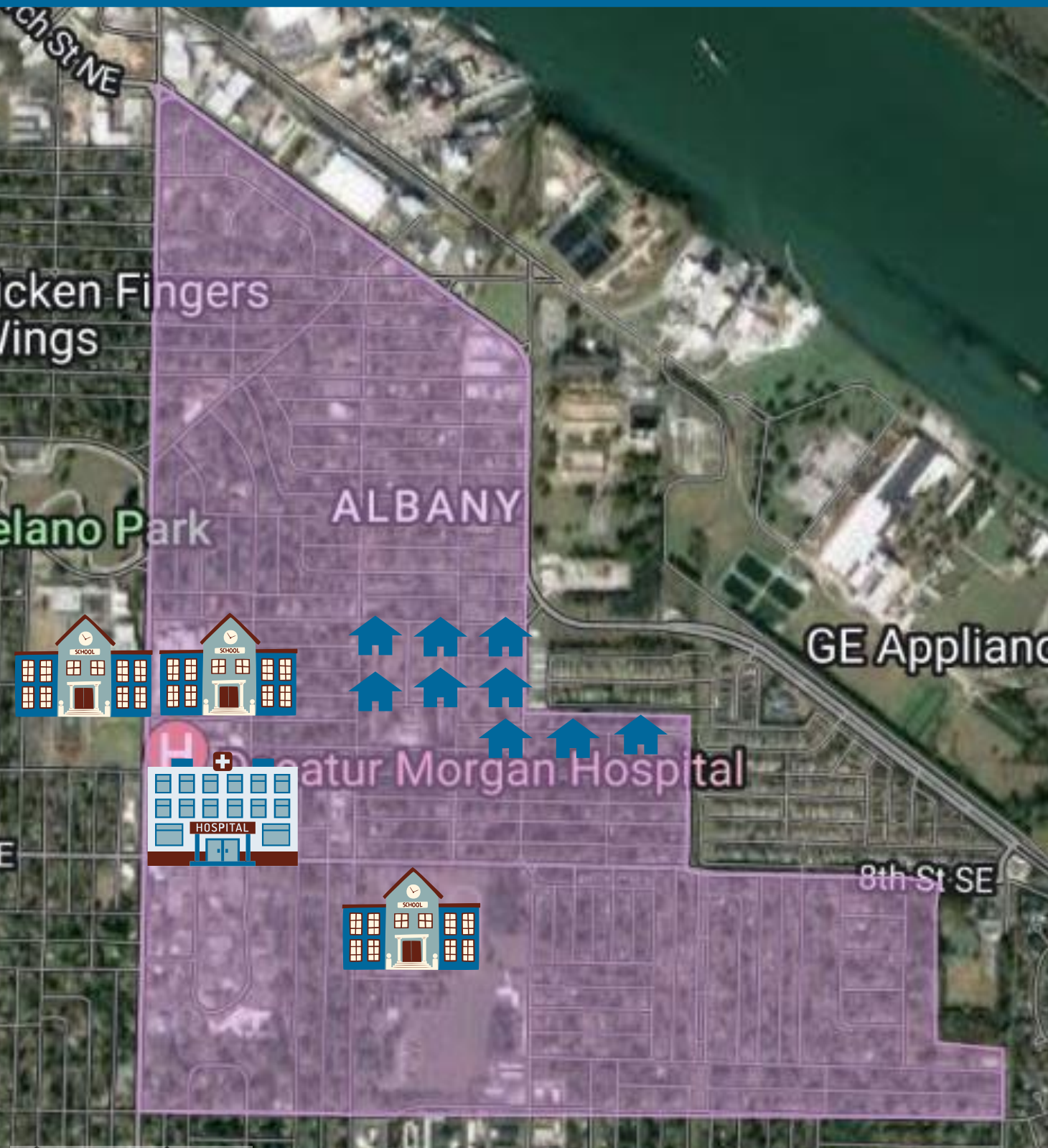
**AFTER**

# Annual Block Makeovers

Create Positive Community Change  
in Decatur, AL



# Target Area



## SE Decatur



Schools - DHS, DMS & Oak Park



Decatur-Morgan Hospital/Medical District



Decatur Housing Authority

## Factors



2015-2024

# Annual Block Makeover



BEFORE

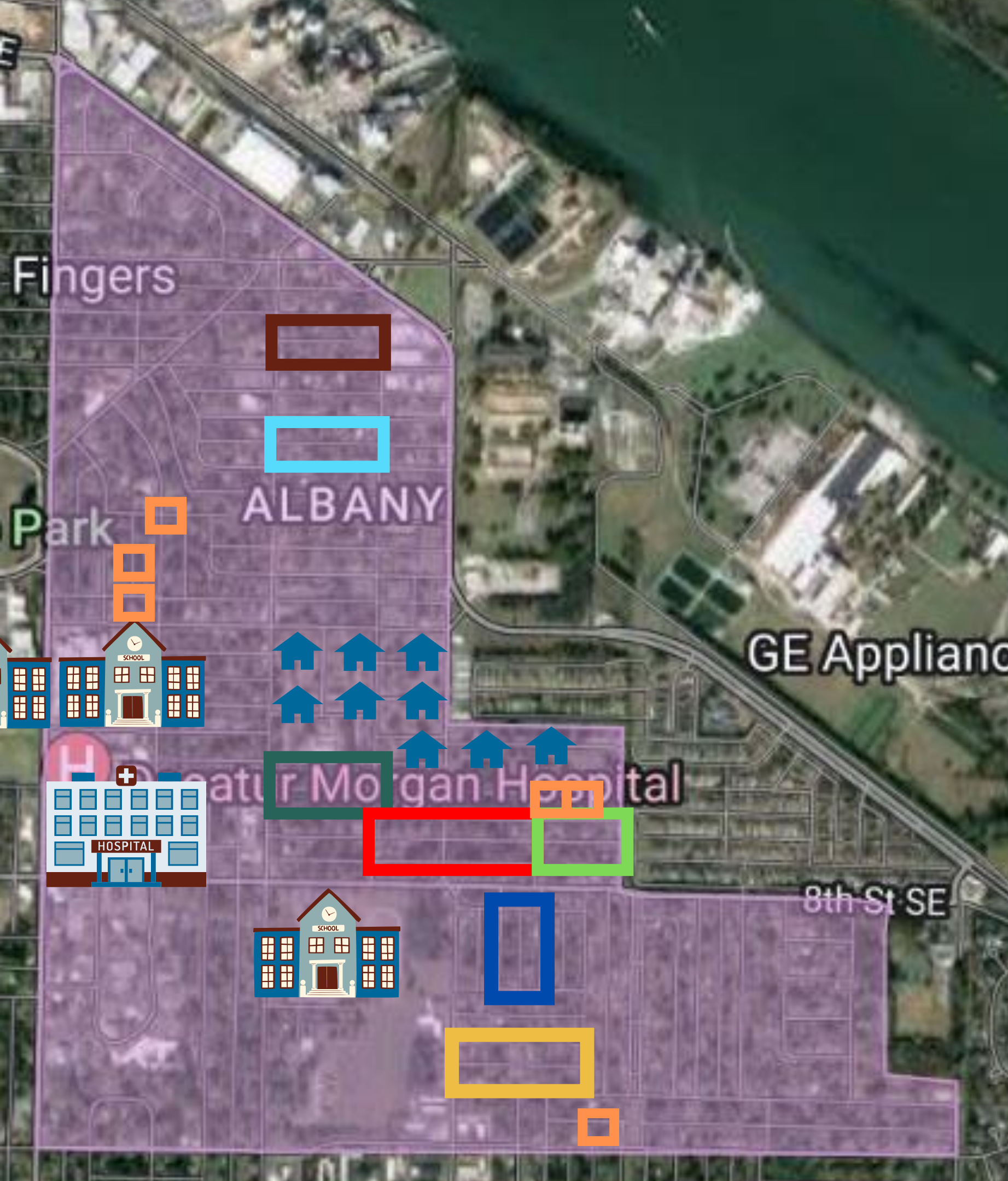


AFTER

# NeighborWorks Week

1st week of June  
**2015-2024**  
NeighborWorks Week

# Block Makeovers



2015	1400-1600 7th St (12 Houses)
2016	1600 Olive St (10 Houses)
2017	1800-1900 Enolam Blvd (9 Houses)
2018	2000 10th St (18 Houses)
2019	2000 Enolam Blvd (6 Houses)
2021	Distributed (6 Houses)
2022	2000 Broadus Ave (8 Houses)
2023	1600 Sherman St (2 Houses)
2024	1600 Sherman St (8 Houses)

# Plan the Work

- Identify Funds & Resources
- Partner & Volunteer Outreach
- Marketing & Media
- Event Food & T-shirts
- Photos & Footage
- Waivers
- Canvass Target Area
- Owner-occupied vs. Rental
- Determine Scope of Work
- Discuss Needs & Preferences
- Identify Staging/Parking Areas
- Tools & Supplies/ Trucks & Trailers
- Waste Removal



# Typical Maintenance & Repairs

- Porch & Handrails
- Fence repairs
- Mailboxes & Driveways

- General clean-up
- Pressure washing
- Siding Repair
- Crawlspace Covers
- Roof & Fascia Repair
- Painting
  - House
  - Foundation
  - Porch
  - Trim
  - Outdoor Furniture
- Special Projects

- Mowing & Weed-eating
- Landscaping
- Tree trimming



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

# Potential Partners

- City Community Development
- Waste Department
- Utility Company
- Police & Fire Departments
- Churches & Civic Groups
- Weatherization & Repair Orgs
- Corporate Sponsors
  - Big Box/Hardware Stores
  - Grocery/Restaurant Chains
  - Pepsi Cart
  - Banks
- Local Sponsors



# Challenges & Successes

- Convincing Candidates
- Repair Needs > Resources
- Expectations & Participation
- Quantity vs. Quality
- Variability Across Time/Events
- Increase Curb Appeal
- Create Positive Momentum
- Support Neighborly Relations
- Build Community Trust
- Develop Collab/Partner Opportunities
- Community Outreach & Skill Building



# Questions?



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

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# CNE

# Curb-Appeal

# Projects

Block Makeover Presentation



CHATTANOOGA  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ENTERPRISE

# Who is CNE

## MISSION

**To create economically diverse neighborhoods filled with financially empowered citizens and housing for all.**

## VISION

**All Chattanoogaans can afford a safe place in a strong neighborhood to call home.**

## OUR HISTORY

**Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise was founded in 1986 as a nonprofit to help families navigate the home-buying process and become successful, lifelong homeowners. For over 30 years, we've used our ingenuity and innovative spirit to help over 13,000 clients, including families, individuals, and small businesses, to secure loans, purchase homes and keep the homes they love. Additionally, through our revitalization and development work, we've been able to provide over 5,000 stable homes in diverse, urban neighborhoods with potential to thrive.**



CHATTANOOGA  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ENTERPRISE

# What is a curb-appeal project

01

Enhance Neighborhood Aesthetics: Maintain and improve the visual appeal of the community, creating a pleasant and inviting environment.

02

Foster Community Pride: Encourage residents to take pride in their neighborhood, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

03

Builds Leadership and Maintenance Capacity: Trains neighbors to become leaders and teaches neighbors the tools to keep up their homes.



CHATTANOOGA  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ENTERPRISE



# “Can I Get Your Number?”



# “Mission Mulch”



# “Rock Your Porch”



CHATTANOOGA  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ENTERPRISE



# Impacts

15-20 neighbors at a curb-event  
5-200 homes per curb appeal project  
6-10 curb appeal events a year  
60+ homes improved a year

100+ neighbors trained to make improvements to their homes.



# Bonus Impacts

Opportunities to let neighbors become leaders.

Opportunities for neighborhood businesses to support and extend their business relationships.

Increased value of community and good will from the City







# Lessons Learned

Small Grants lead to big opportunities.

Know your audience. Summer is hot, winter is cold, weekends are for family, free food makes everything better.

Back up plans are worth their weight in gold.

# Thanks!

# Questions?

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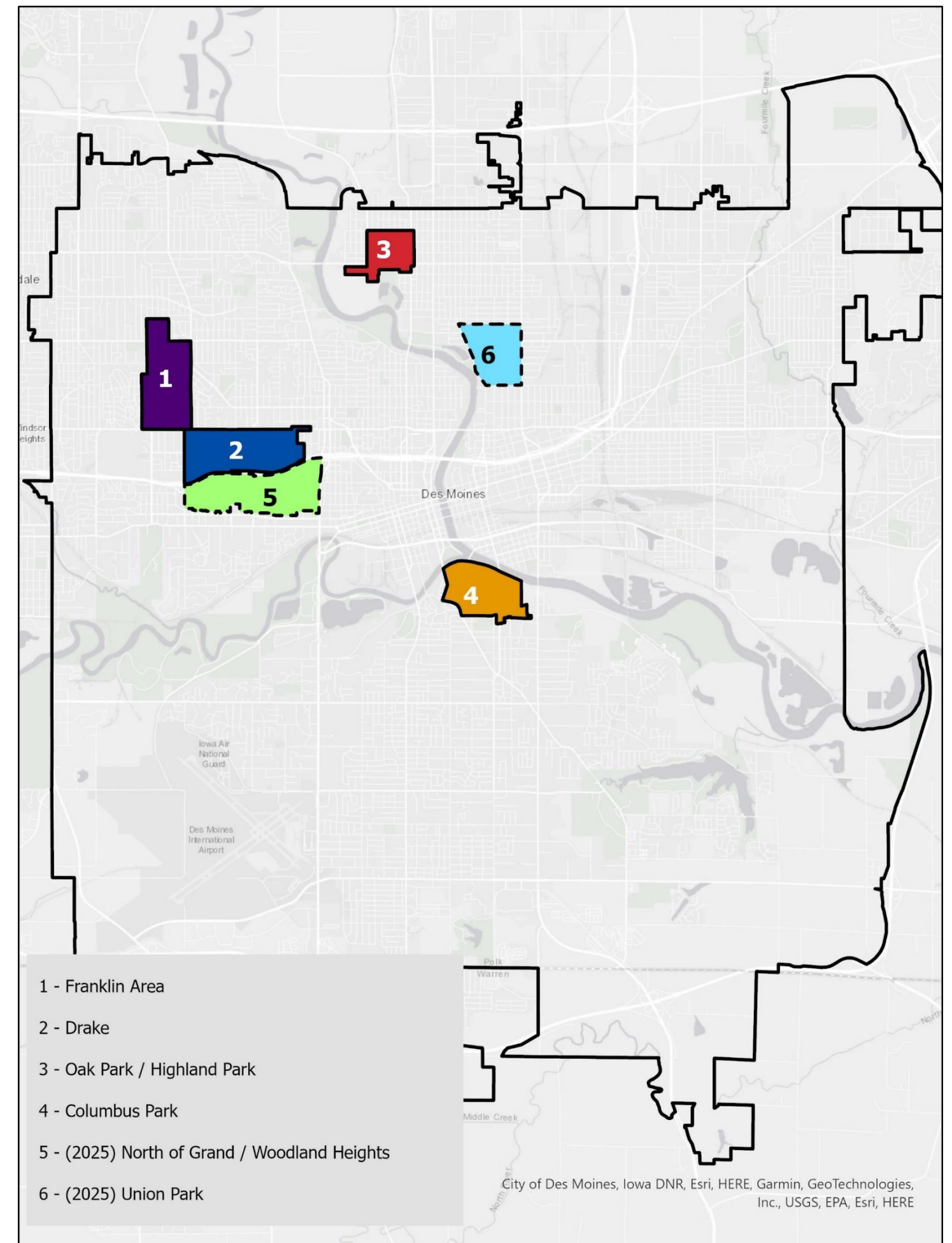
Des Moines, Iowa  
Est. 2019

# Local Context

- 213,545
  - Des Moines 2023 Population Est.
- 737,164
  - Metro 2023 Population
  - One of fastest growing in Midwest
- Approx. 62,000 residential parcels;
- Avg. Year Built is 1949; 83% built before 1980
- Local govts are property-tax reliant

## Invest DSM

- Currently serves 4 neighborhoods
  - Expanding to 6 in 2025
- Middle-market neighborhoods
- Areas where housing stock is oldest





## Mission

Invest DSM is a collaborative non-profit organization that leverages innovative and comprehensive solutions to strengthen neighborhoods.

## Vision

Vibrant, healthy, thriving neighborhoods.

**Invest DSM** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization created in July 2019 by a unique collaboration between the City of Des Moines and Polk County. Our focus is to impact middle-market neighborhoods and fill previously unmet needs such as:

- Promote and **finance home renovation projects** to make the housing stock more competitive and marketable.
- Provide financing to support **investments in neighborhood commercial districts** within specific areas.
- **Market & promote** specific areas to ensure a steady stream of homebuyers.
- Support efforts to **grow the leadership capacity** of neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

*"Invest DSM was created as a confidence-creation mechanism."*

~CZB 2023 Status Report

# Block Challenge Grant – Overview

- 5<sup>th</sup> year of the program

## Goals:

- Improve curb appeal through “quick win” projects
- Increase social capital by connecting neighbors
- Provide a stepping stone to larger projects

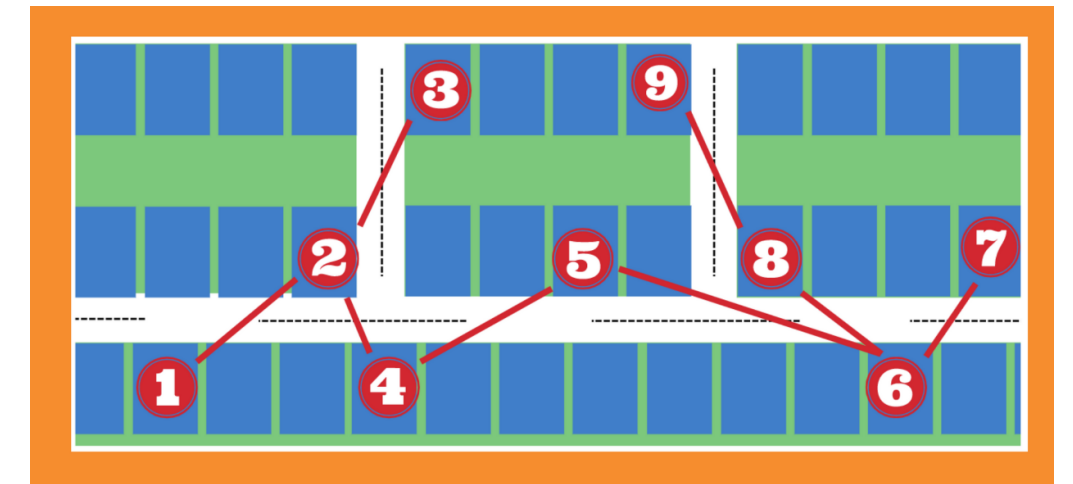
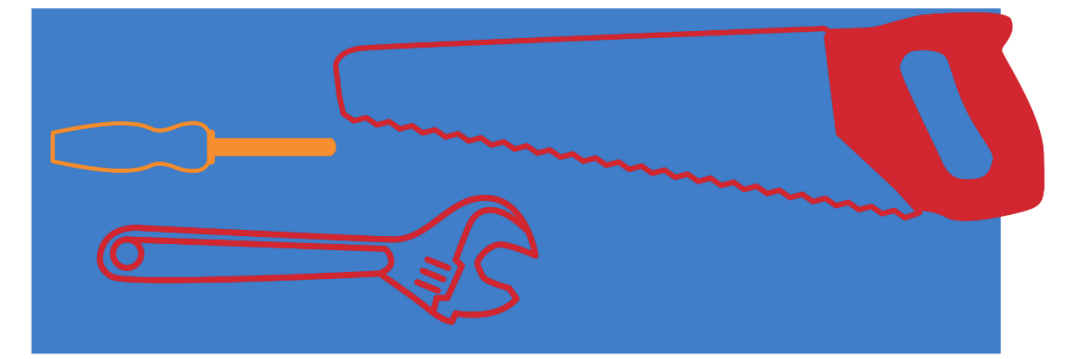
## Results (2020-2023):

- 574 completed projects
- \$2.54 million in total investment
- For every \$1 from IDSM, property owners invest \$1.49
- 2024 so far: 7 teams, 85+ participants

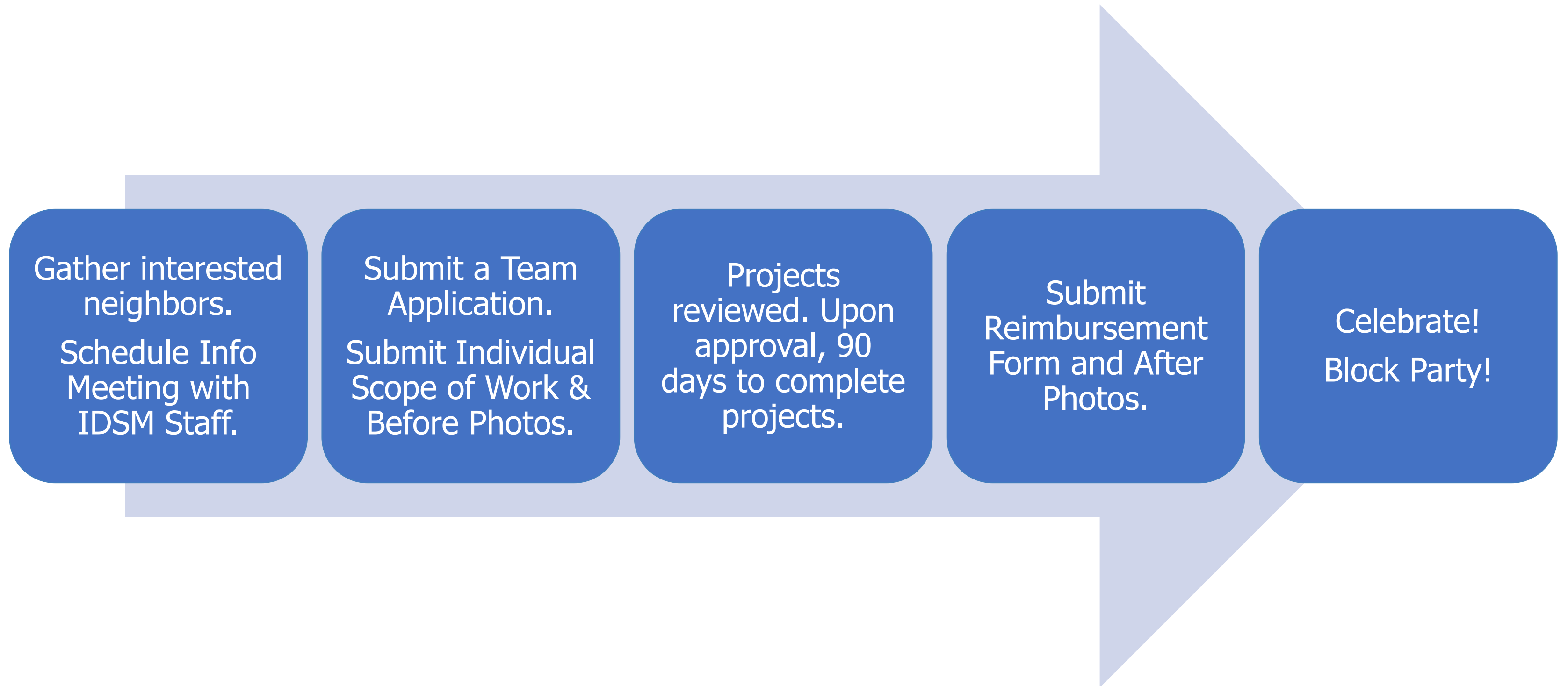


# Block Challenge Grant – Program Mechanics

- Seasonal: Applications accepted April – August
  - 90 days to complete project
- Exterior only; must have a street-facing component
- \$1:\$1 Matching Grant, up to a maximum amount
- Must apply as a team of neighbors
  - More neighbors = higher maximum (\$2,500)
  - Each participant must be visible from another's front door
- Each participant completes own scope of work
- Exit survey at end of each program year



# Block Challenge Grant – Process Overview



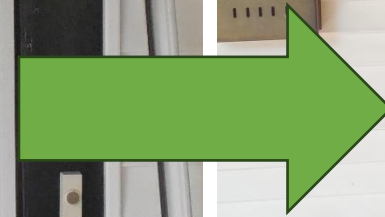


# Block Challenge Grant – Program Mechanics

- Higher Capacity Neighborhoods
  - 5-9 neighbors – match up to \$1,000 per participant
  - 10-19 neighbors – match up to \$2,500 per participant
- Lower Capacity Neighborhoods
  - 3-6 neighbors – match up to \$1,500 per participant
  - 7+ neighbors – match up to \$2,500 per participant
  - Just started offering an individual household option
- DIY projects allowed
  - Labor not reimbursed, only materials/supplies
  - License required for trades, like electrical
- Repeat participation allowed (up to 3x in 5 years)













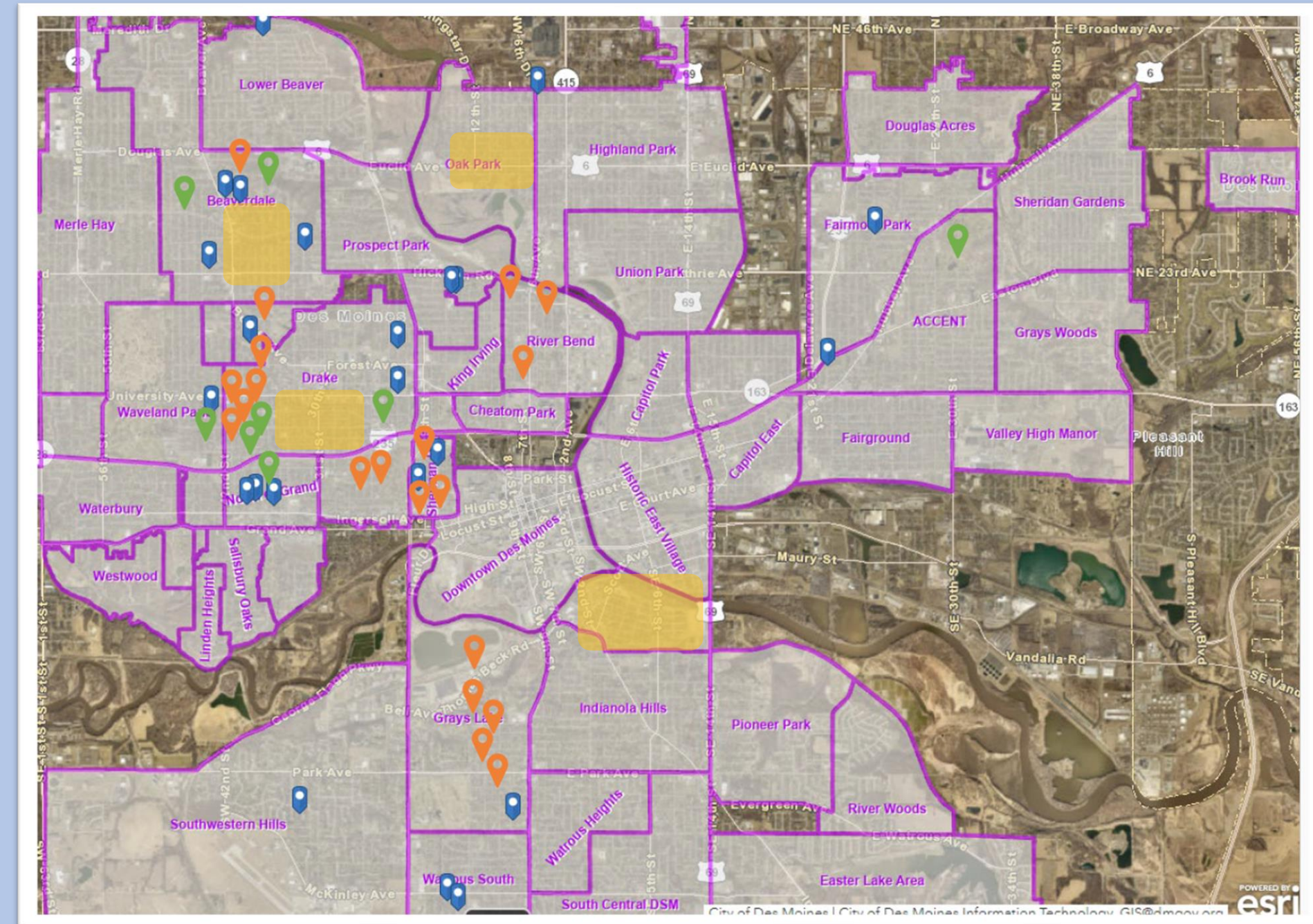
# Block Challenge Grant – Benefits

- Neighbor connection = Neighborhood connection
  - Block parties
  - Facebook groups
  - Holiday decorating competitions
- Greater pride / capacity
  - Team leaders > Neighborhood leaders
- Concentrated, visible improvements quickly
- Entry Level Program >> Confidence to invest
- Contractor referrals / incentives



# City of Des Moines Block Challenge

- Started in 2021; Made available citywide
- 3 staff support the program
- Budget:
  - 2021 - \$200,000 – 120 projects - \$686k total investment
  - 2023 - \$500,000 – 259 projects - \$1.7M total investment
- Applications open May 1
  - First come first serve until funds are exhausted
  - 50% of funds are reserved for low/mod NHs
- Offer 75% match to lower-income households
  - Verified with proof of other public assistance





# 2023 Program Results

28% Survey Response Rate

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What participants are saying...

“ This is a great program! While I knew my neighbors, it was on a more surface level. This program kick-started a lot of conversations in front yards and got more people to attend our neighborhood association meetings.”

“ I can't thank the City of Des Moines enough for this awesome opportunity for us and our neighborhood. I am so grateful for this program because without it we would not have been able to afford the project.”

“ I enjoyed getting together with neighbors I've never met, seeing the wonderful projects they are working on, and receiving assistance with paying for our own project.”

“ Just to say thanks as this has been the best, easiest to use, and most straight forward City program I have been a part of.”

“ This was the kick-start to several home improvement projects that were needed.”

“ I have had several delays that have been out of my control, but the staff have been extremely helpful and want what is best for you and in improving our neighborhoods.”

# Block Challenge Grant – Lessons & Recommendations

- Low Cost – High Reward
  - Ripple effects make program worthwhile
  - Curb appeal >> perception >> demand
- Aim for user-friendly
  - Simple process, flexibility
  - Make it fun; Give them a YARD SIGN!
- Who are you aiming to serve?
  - Keep strong NHs strong
  - Middle-market has more capacity
  - Low/mod needs a different program design
- Get residents \$\$ off the sidelines
  - Housing stock is infrastructure

## Overall Program Experience



4.8 Average Rating

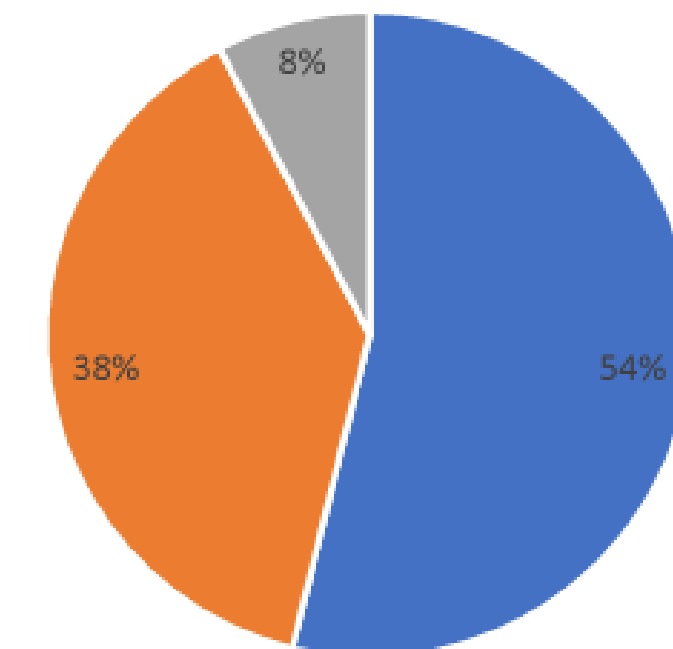
## Program's Impact on Neighborhood Appearance



4.8 Average Rating

How did funding impact your ability to complete project(s) this year?

- I would not have completed my project(s) this year.
- I may or may not have completed my project(s) this year.
- I would have completed my project(s) this year.





**[www.InvestDSM.org](http://www.InvestDSM.org)**

**Amber Lynch, AICP, Executive Director**

**[ALynch@InvestDSM.org](mailto:ALynch@InvestDSM.org)**

# Upcoming Events

## **AUG WEBINAR:**

*Interest Rate Buy-Downs to Assist Homebuyers and Owners in Middle Neighborhoods, Date TBD*

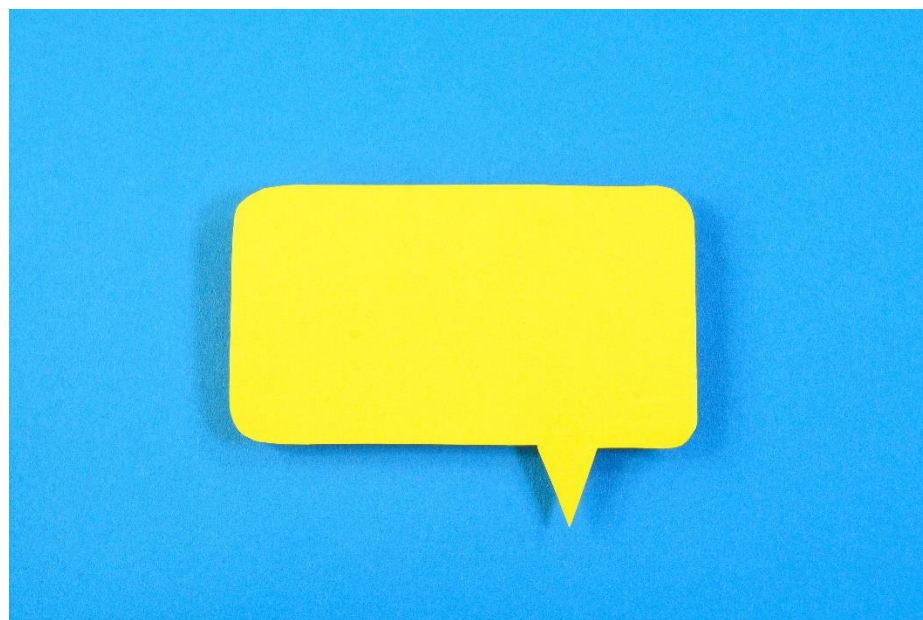
## **OCT 16: Engagement Chat (Noon, ET)**

❖ *Conflict management in neighborhoods OR group agreements (e.g. tree felling)*

Questions: [anndipetta@gmail.com](mailto:anndipetta@gmail.com)



# Thank you for joining us!



- Please email us – [marcia@middleneighborhoods.com](mailto:marcia@middleneighborhoods.com) - if you have ideas for webinar, case studies, news stories, etc.
- Check out the **Cornerstone Webinar Series:** Center for Community Progress
- **Tell us** about your experience today!



**JOIN US!**  
**The Middle Neighborhoods**  
**Community of Practice**  
**(CoP)**

The Middle Neighborhoods CoP is an informal, facilitated network of practitioners, researchers and policymakers engaged in revitalizing middle neighborhoods. CoP members share learnings through topical webinars, referrals, site visits, phone calls, and occasional larger group events.

Please join us!

<https://ncst.org/middle-neighborhoods/>

