

Opportunities and challenges of redeveloping on-grade state highways: reflections on the role of
service-learning in the SE 14th Street Corridor Project in Des Moines, IA

by

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Abstract

Through the *Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956*, the United States Government routed highways directly and often intentionally through historically minoritized communities. Today, there are over 164,000 miles of highway in the United States, with many cities left dealing with the impacts of a large road cutting through the heart of their communities. One such highway is SE 14th Street in Des Moines, Iowa. This on-grade state highway serves as a stretch of US Route 69 and cuts through diverse communities on the SE side of Des Moines. In this report, I evaluate the opportunities and challenges of redeveloping on-grade state highways in cities. In addition, I also examine the impact of service-learning on the redevelopment of such corridors. I undertook this work through a focus on a semester-long service-learning project that focused on brownfield revisioning and redevelopment of the SE 14th Street Corridor in Des Moines, Iowa. Through a case study approach and ten semi-structured interviews with planners, economic developers, and other stakeholders in Des Moines, I provide recommendations on how to better plan for these communities through the use of critical service-learning. These recommendations include utilizing the high-traffic visibility of the corridor, investing in parks and trails, diversifying housing options, improving the uses and facades of the development along the corridor, and finding sparks for increased investment. I also present recommendations on how a critical service-learning approach to such projects may help prioritize the needs of historically marginalized communities and bring about social change.

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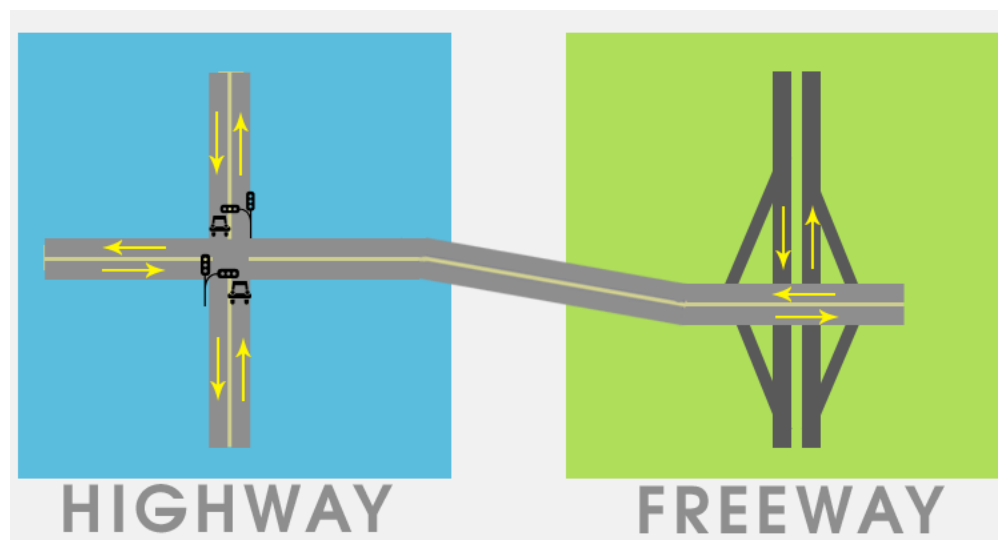
To my family, Mom, Dad, Carter, and Grandma you are the greatest support system anyone could ask for. I cannot put into words how much you mean to me. Thank you for the supportive messages, phone calls, hugs, and everything else you do for me. I love you!

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the Biden administration's most ambitious programs is the investment of 2 trillion dollars to improve American infrastructure with a promise to address the historically entrenched racism that marks transportation and planning (King, 2021). The current interstate and state highway system was built under the Eisenhower administration through the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 (Karas, 2015). This time in American history was marked by the movement of affluent and middle-class white residents to newly created suburbs in a phenomenon called “white flight”, which left behind communities of color in inner city areas and led to de-facto segregation of American cities. The highway program was carried out in conjunction with “urban renewal” projects and was directed at communities of color for demolition in favor of freeways to make the commute easy for white residents of newly created suburbs (Karas, 2015). While these projects were often met with resistance from communities, black and brown communities were largely unsuccessful in thwarting the construction plans and in many cases, the government acquired homes using eminent domain (King, 2021). Robert Bullard (2004) has termed this blatant use of the Interstate Highway System to target communities of color as “transportation racism”. Bullard (2004) and other scholars (Karas, 2015) attribute a range of inequities to this confluence of interstate system development and urban renewal including the forced isolation of communities of color, and their exposure to environmental hazards. Research (ClimateNexus, n.d.) has also shown that proximity to state and interstate highways leads to a decrease in property values and neighborhoods abutting highways are also more likely to be areas where polluting industrial and other harmful (to human health) facilities are located. Recent highway removal efforts have been shown to help revitalize neighborhoods and improve public health, however, such efforts tend to focus on the removal of above-grade interstates. In this report, I focus on one such highway in Des Moines, Iowa. This highway is however different from others that have been the focus of both interventions and research as it is an on-grade state highway. On-grade state highways represent highways in which there is no exit or entrance ramp. These highways also have cross-traffic, traffic signals, and sometimes pedestrian crossings (ADOT, 2016). **Figure 1.1** helps clarify the difference between the highway and the freeway. While most of these highways are concentrated in rural areas, cities are home to these highway corridors as

well, bringing people into the community from surrounding regions. These corridors, similar to interstates, are home to communities of people who have been neglected and ignored for the sake of investing in more car-centric infrastructure. These highways, which often begin as two-lane rural roads, expand in both size and number of vehicles per day as the demand grows. This leads to a corridor in which the pedestrian is not the focus, a lack of green space, a lack of sidewalks, and an inability to cross the street, all lead to a poor living experience for the residents. One such example of this is SE 14th Street in Des Moines, Iowa, this road that experiences over 30,000 cars a day doubles as State Highway 69(Iowa DOT, 2021). While cities are investing in the removal of highways it is important to recognize the need to understand the needs of highway-adjacent communities, particularly when the high is on-grade and therefore the chances that it will be removed are low. So, how can we learn about highway-adjacent community's needs and address them?

Figure 1.1: Highway Vs. Freeway



Note. Highways do not have a controlled entrance and exit, while freeways are fully controlled with entrance and exit ramps and often move at faster speeds. (Ponder Weasel, n.d.)

Service-learning can be an effective tool to help address the challenges these communities face. In the Fall of 2021, I along with 40 other students, from Kansas State University worked in collaboration with leaders from the City of Des Moines, K-State Technical Assistance for Brownfields [KSU TAB], Iowa Department of Natural Resources [Iowa DNR], and the College of Architecture, Planning and Design Landscape Architecture and Regional and Community Planning Department, on a semester-long service-learning project led by Professors Dr. Susmita

Rishi and Blake Belanger. The goal of the project was to create visions for the redevelopment of the SE 14th Street corridor. Through a community input survey, a tour of the study area along the corridor, discussions with a community advisory panel, and a SWOT analysis, we were able to gain the necessary information to make recommendations in the form of urban design and site-specific visions for this community. The semester was spent working in interdisciplinary teams to provide Des Moines stakeholders with the most wide-ranging redevelopment concepts possible that would address ways to reinvest in the corridor. Following the conclusion of the semester-long project, the City of Des Moines worked to establish an Urban Renewal Plan [URP], to assist with the redevelopment of the corridor. The URP was passed by the City Council of Des Moines on November 7th, 2022(URP,2022). The service-learning project was a catalyst for this plan and helped motivate decision-makers to address the impacts of SE 14th Street on the surrounding community. While this work has impacted the City of Des Moines, it has also impacted my experience as a planning student. The SE 14th Street Corridor project was my first real-world planning experience, I was able to engage with professional stakeholders from the City of Des Moines, while also collaborating with peers in different majors including architecture, landscape architecture, business, and engineering. This service-learning opportunity allowed us to take the content we were learning in the classroom and actively apply these skills to help those living along SE 14th Street. Service-learning is an effective tool that can be utilized by communities that would otherwise be forgotten in the fight for time and resources.

This research examines the SE 14th Street corridor project in Des Moines as a case study for the redevelopment of on-grade highway corridors, while also looking at the impacts of service-learning on such redevelopment processes. The questions that have guided this research are:

1. What can we learn from the SE 14th Street Corridor Project about the challenges and opportunities for redeveloping neighborhoods around on-grade state highways?
2. What role did service-learning play in the outcome/impact of the SE14th Street Corridor Project?

Over the course of this research, I interviewed 10 individuals involved in the project to gain the perspective of as many people as possible involved with the redevelopment process in Des Moines. I reached out to a list of identified individuals from my initial project experience in Des Moines. These individuals consist of planners, developers, business owners, and those directly influencing what happens along the corridor. Through these interviews one begins to understand

all the work that is required to revitalize highway corridors, and why it is so important to make space to hear varied voices throughout the process. I encapsulate these findings in this report, beginning with an understanding of everyone's role and why we should look closer at corridors such as the SE 14th street project. The next four chapters contain a further look into the methods of my research, followed by an in-depth literature review detailing the history and impact of highways followed by a look at Des Moines, SE14th Street, and lastly service-learning. Finally, I provide an analysis of my interview findings, and then conclude with recommendations and concluding remarks about the importance of redeveloping these corridors.

Chapter 2: Methods

The goal of this research is to better understand the challenges and opportunities of redeveloping neighborhoods along on-grade state highways in cities, while also specifically looking at the influence of service-learning on this work. To achieve this goal, this project focuses on the SE 14th Street Corridor, a 3-mile stretch of State Highway 69 that cuts through a portion of Des Moines, Iowa. After participating in a service-learning project along the corridor in the Fall of 2021, I was drawn to understanding how we can do more effectively for the communities impacted by these highways. After establishing SE 14th Street as my area of study, I utilized semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. The questions that have guided this research are:

1. What can we learn from the SE 14th Street Corridor Project about the challenges and opportunities for redeveloping neighborhoods around on-grade state highways?
2. What role did service-learning play in the outcome/impact of the SE 14th Street Corridor Project?

APPROACH

To answer the research questions, I focused on collecting qualitative data, and understanding what had taken place, before, during, and after the duration of the semester-long service-learning project. Having an understanding of different perspectives and professions within the decision-making process can help better understand the impact of the work being done. The first step in my research was selecting a community of focus, or a case study. Case studies allow for an “in-depth, multi-faceted exploration of a complex issue in a real-life setting” (Crowe et al., 2011). Furthermore, case studies provide the opportunity to unpack complex experiences and situations that may not have one singular outcome (Lucas et al., 2018). For these reasons I selected the community of Des Moines, Iowa, and more specifically the SE 14th Street Corridor, due to my experience with the service-learning project. Beyond my work on the project, SE 14th street is epitomizes of the challenges and opportunities that highway-adjacent communities all over the country are facing. As we have continued to rely on and invest in automobile infrastructure, the communities surrounding these roads are some of the most impacted. While this research is specifically guided toward understanding the challenges and opportunities of redeveloping SE

14th street, the hope is this research can be utilized to understand other on-grade state highways and their impacts.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The main form of data collection used was semi-structured interviews. Over the course of this project, I conducted and recorded 10 individual interviews through Zoom with members of the Community Advisory Panel, a group of individuals who worked on the corridor project in the Fall of 2021 in an advisory capacity. Many of these individuals are still involved in the decision-making taking place along SE 14th street, and the community of Des Moines at large. Each interview lasted between 30-60 minutes with a set of questions to guide the conversation. I utilized semi-structured interviews to guide and standardize my interviews to ensure internal and external validity in data collection. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to prepare questions to frame my research while allowing conversations to take place between the interviewee and the interviewer (me). This allows for more context and a deeper understanding of the answers provided (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). Each interview provided a unique perspective and showed the importance of having groups of people with varied backgrounds, expertise, and interests come together to address areas like SE 14th Street. Semi-structured interviews allow a narrative to form as interviewees answer questions, each question works to better understand the perspective of the participant while still adhering to the overall goal of the interview (Galletta, 2013 pg. 71). While progressing through each interview I made note of areas of interest or expertise to identify what questions were most appropriate. The conversational nature of the interviews also allowed for more expressive and emotionally rich qualitative data.

The interviews included Andrea, who has service-learning experience, as well as important perspectives on neighborhood revitalization, as well as Melissa who has experience with brownfield redevelopment as well as in facilitating service-learning between student groups and communities. These interviews helped frame the service-learning aspect of the work, understanding the process, the impact on the students as well as the community, and what takes place after the initial service-learning work ends. Martin, who has experience on brownfields as well as Des Moines, helped frame why communities participate in service-learning work, and the impacts these projects can have on communities.

I also interviewed Chris, Wendy, Cindy, who all work for the City of Des Moines, and have experience in economic development. These interviews helped frame the economic impacts of

this work, while also looking at development patterns and the expected impacts of the Urban Renewal Plan put in place after the project. John, who operates a business located along SE 14th Street was also about to speak about the impacts of the work that had been done and how he sees the corridor changing, and what challenges may arise through continued work.

The last group of people I interviewed helped provide a planning perspective, understanding what has occurred historically along the corridor, and how planning can be a tool to address some of the opportunities and challenges that have been identified. These individuals included Barry, a planner, Drew, a park planner, and Jerry, a planner. Each of these interviewees provided invaluable qualitative data that helped craft the findings and recommendations of this report.

DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

After concluding my interviews, I listened to each interview and utilized the online software, Otter.Ai to transcribe the interviews. During the interview process, I took minimal notes, allowing myself to be engaged with each interviewee. I downloaded the transcripts of each interview from Otter.Ai and then listened to each again while editing the transcriptions. This in-depth transcribing process allowed me to engage with the qualitative data and helped me to start observing the key points from each interview more thoroughly. After transcribing was finished, I utilized Dedoose, a software that allows you to upload transcriptions, and create a series of code families to help identify the themes and takeaways from the interviews. In total, I identified 52 codes, with 276 excerpts from the interviews. The codes families were established based on my research questions, thus looking at the challenges and opportunities of redevelopment as well as the benefits and impacts of service learning. A screenshot of my code families as well as an example of an interview that has been coded are shown in **Figure 2.1** and **Figure 2.2**

Figure 2.1 Code Families



Screen Grab from Author's Data (2024)

Figure 2.2 Example of Transcribed Interview

Gage Roberts 14:01

So you've mentioned that you drive up and down the corridor. Can you talk about how the corridor has changed over time, and that can be before the project, but just for context.

14:16

Yeah. So and again, I don't want to back up too far, but something that I think fundamental we had discussed, you know, that was basically a federal highway, the major North South State Highway in central Iowa, and a good majority of that state highway. The development occurred when a lot of it was not even inside the city limits of Des Moines. So you know, if you got down by where Indianola road cross, if you remember that it was an angled intersection, very busy, I don't think it was one of our central nodes that you guys looked at. But that was Des Moines civic boundary in the late to mid 50s. So there was a lot of mishmash helter skelter development on that corridor over the years. Nobody thought had they just fell in narrow lots right on the frontage of highway was a two lane highway when I was a kid, I remember it is a two lane highway yet. So it was a hodgepodge of development. You know, when cities bump out with a beltway or something like that, or they've got a bypass, if you want to call it that with highways, when they develop an exit, they have access roads, or they have frontage roads from square one. And they're going to have larger lots developed and what I would call probably related development, like you're gonna have a, maybe a gas station on the frontage parcel with there's an access road. And then here's the name, brand, hotel, and restaurant behind that they all work together. Now SE 14th never had that. So you have lots that sometimes were maybe 100 150 foot deep. And that's it. So what happened was it was kind of a hodgepodge of development. them as things changed in Des Moines, I would say probably by the 1980s, a lot of our growth and development went west and east, it didn't go south, you started to have older businesses changeover. So lots of used car lots 20 years ago, lots of old small buildings. And I can remember a lot of them. But by the kind of mid 90s, it was time to take a better look at this. And again, not necessarily by design, but by default, some properties got redeveloped individually. Menards is an upper mid chain like a lumberyard store, like Home Depot. They like you know, build on located on one side of the street and took out some crappy stuff. Then they got big enough, they went to the other side of the street and built in an abandoned drive in movie theater, which is now long gone. So that's how Menards got to where it's at on se 14th. But the conundrum we've had in the last 10 to 15 years is here in the 21st century. Now, the corridor was not reflecting on demand the way it should for the amount of traffic it carry. Yeah, it was converted to a four lane divided highway with you know, islands and turn lanes and modern signals back in the mid 1980s. And since that time, there really hadn't been any strategy for redeveloping the commercial stuff there. so that's a little bit of when we all got together here, you could kind of see you'd have some new stuff. And you have some little old crappy stuff, and then something new. And then oh, here's maybe something abandoned right in the middle of it. Or here's a single family bungalow house just sitting there for rent. Why? So, so that was some of the I guess you could say legacy of the corridor or some of the things I've seen. And again, in the last couple years, there's an even since you guys got involved, there have been some changes in the corridor. And depending on what were able to highlight for you, the East End of South Ridge Mall, this Genesis Sports Complex is supposed to be happening. They're even talking about having a bar Sports Bar involved. When you have that you'll be successful. So you know if there's a tavern, it's successful. So So I actually think that is going to happen. There was I think, I don't know if it came out in your discussion, but you know, having more destination restaurants and I hate to say but almost throwback to at some name-brand chain restaurants. There's a brand new Olive Garden that got built in an empty parking lot, just about two blocks north of Southridge Mall. So everybody's excited about because that makes the corridor look more competitive. Some of the commercial corridors in our suburbs, they have the big name brand chains. There's pros and cons with that, but so that was a positive one. And then here in central Iowa, they have this Iowa Confluence Water Trail program. It's called the icon that talks about that at all.

Gage Roberts 19:38

They both they both mentioned it

19:40

Good and they are working on making improvements to the levee and the trail and the boat ramp that's right there at the se 14 River bridge crossing the Des Moines River. And I know in your concepts you guys really talked about that. And I think I pushed it to just as a resident that we drive over that river every day. And we don't feel like we're engaged, like we're seeing something cool or we've arrived. I am hopeful that this will tie some of the recreation together there. Where that river crossing is make it look more attractive. Add to the character there. But there are still a number of abandoned buildings on the corridor. The city also built a new animal shelter, which they built it right on the north side of the Des Moines River there at the river bridge on what I call the northeast corner of the bridgehead. And you know, it's like 25 \$30 million deal. And right next to it are two abandoned buildings. And I said to the city, why didn't you use eminent domain or our abandonment clause in Iowa law and snatch those up? Because now you have like this beautiful brand new thing, sitting next to one of the ugliest eyesores in the corridor, and I'll just close with I think that's the dichotomy yet of se 14th. It hasn't molted or evolved its skin completely here. And nothing is going to within two years of a study at all, it's just not some of the things that you guys had in there could be 5-10. And, frankly, a 20 year thing, which I've seen with urban planning, sometimes it's close to generational before bypass away actually gets built when transportation planners even envision the idea and some, you know, long range strategy. So there's a lot to come yet with this. So yeah, so that's probably a lot of stuff. I'm thrown at you. But oh, then the right track for

Screen Grab from Author's Data (2024)

Chapter 3: Des Moines, Highway Infrastructure and Service-Learning: A Background

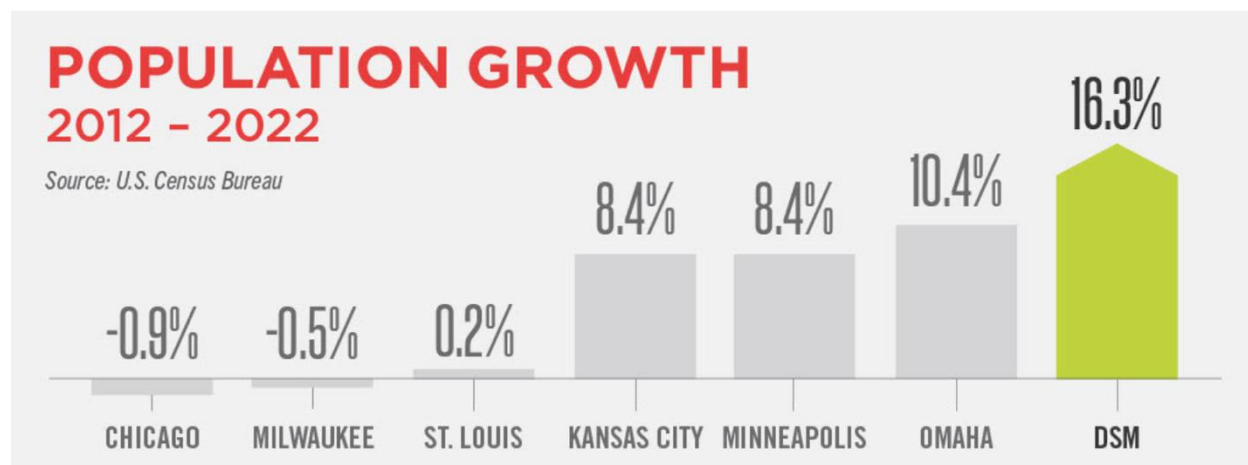
There are three specific areas of focus for this project that are important to understand when discussing the redevelopment of SE 14th Street. These areas of focus are Des Moines the city, the legacy of highways, and Service-Learning. To understand what has taken place and the impacts of the work that has been done, we must learn more about where this highway is located, what has occurred in a historical context with highways, and how service-learning can be used as a tool for redevelopment. I start by looking at the city of Des Moines, its history, and demographics, with an emphasis on the SE 14th Street corridor. Next, I present the existing literature on highways, to understand the historical context of highway development and its consequences on communities and cities. Lastly, I concentrate on service-learning, defining “Critical” service-learning, and how the process of the service-learning project in SE 14th Street. This chapter sets the framework for understanding how service-learning can lead to an even more successful (in terms of addressing community needs and economic gain) outcome in the future.

DES MOINES

Fort Des Moines was established in 1853 at the confluence of the Des Moines River and Raccoon River. This Fort was intended to protect the rights of the Sauk and Fox peoples who were the indigenous people that inhabited the land during that time. Settlers moved to the area in 1845 and the community grew to become a city in 1857, dropping “Fort” from its name and becoming just Des Moines. The state capital was also moved from Iowa City that same year to Des Moines. Coal deposits in the area around Des Moines led to expansion and growth in the early 20th century. Des Moines is still an important community within the state of Iowa and the region and serves as a hub for agricultural innovation, advanced manufacturing, and insurance and financial services. Des Moines is relatively centrally located to other metropolitan areas including Omaha, NE, Kansas City, MO, Minneapolis, MN, Chicago, IL, and St. Louis, MO and this connectivity makes Des Moines a great location for regional distribution (Greater DSM Partnership, 2024).

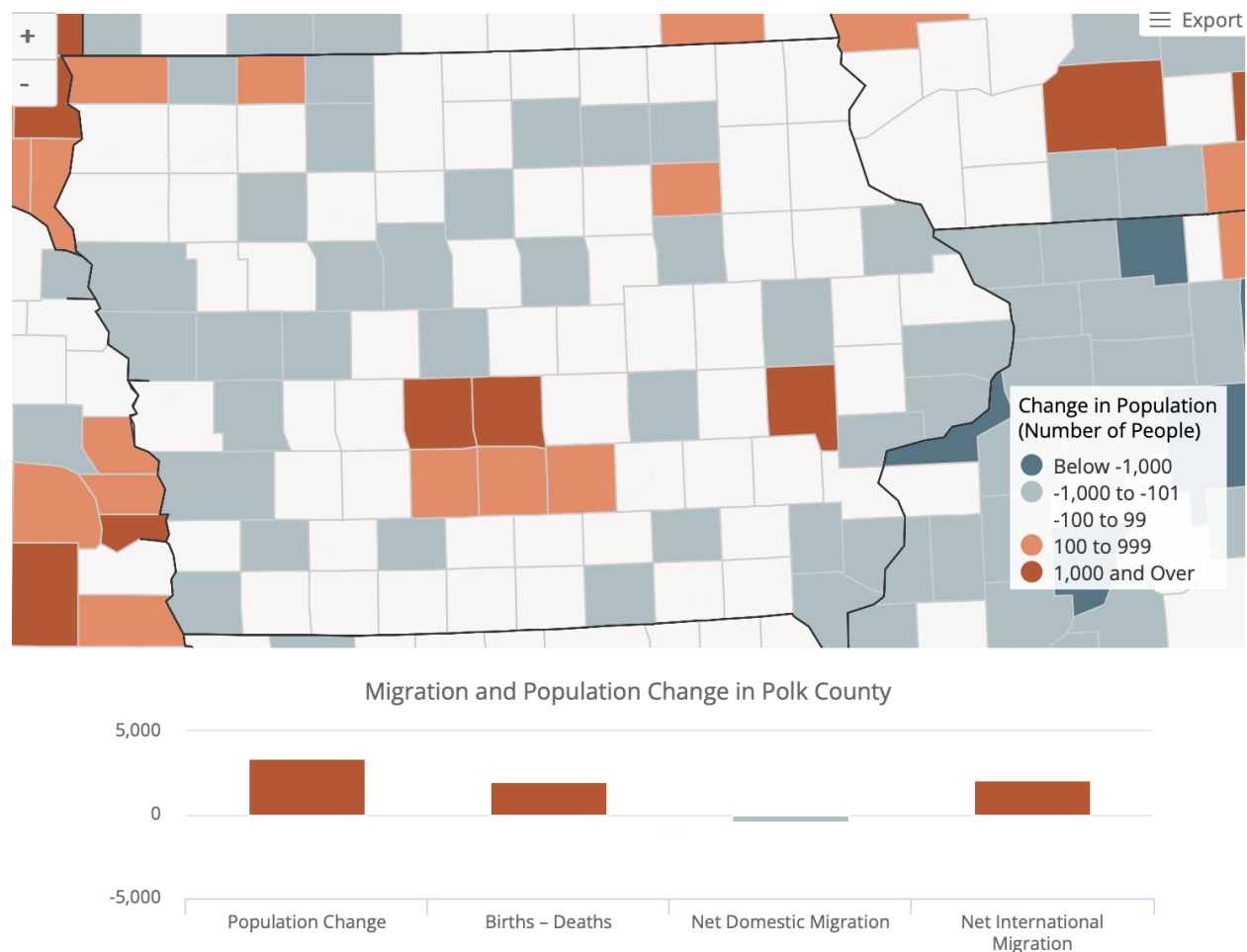
According to the 2020 population census, there are 214,133 people in the City of Des Moines, with 850,481 residents in the total metro area thus making it the most populated city and metro area in Iowa. The Des Moines metropolitan area is a six-county region including Polk, Dallas, Warren, Jasper, Madison, and Guthrie counties. This includes Des Moines, West Des Moines, and Ankeny which as of the 2020 Census all had over 60,000 inhabitants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Des Moines is one of the fastest-growing cities in the region with a population growth of 16.3% between 2012-2022 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 ACS). **Figure 3.1** compares this growth rate to other metropolitan areas within the Midwest. **Figure 3.2** looks at JCHS data from Harvard University and shows the significant population growth in the Des Moines Metro Area. This growth rate was also the highest in the state of Iowa. The population of Des Moines is 63% White, 11% Black or African American, 7% Asian, and 14% Hispanic or Latino according to the 2022 ACS 5-Year (Census Reporter, 2024).

Figure 3.1 Population Growth of Midwest Metropolitan Areas



Note. According to the 2022 U.S. Census Estimate Des Moines had a population growth over a 10 year period nearly 6% higher than the next highest Midwest metro area (Greater DSM Partnership, 2024).

Figure 3.2 Change in Population for the State of Iowa



Note. According to JCHS data Polk County has seen a population increase of 3,414 people, this is a large increase and shows how the Des Moines Metro is growing (JCHS 2023).

Des Moines is a city with a thriving art scene, including the *Pappajohn Sculpture Park* as well as other unique art installations throughout the city. This investment in culture and community creates a sense of pride throughout the city where people live and the neighborhoods they call home. Home to the Iowa State Fair each year, Des Moines embraces its role as a culturally rich and significant community in Iowa.

In recent years, however, investment has shifted from Des Moines proper and into the suburbs of Waukee, Windsor Heights, Urbandale, etc. This has led city decision-makers to work to bring investment into Des Moines as well as reinvest in certain areas of the city. Projects like the *Iowa Confluence Waters Trails (ICON, 2024)* project that is working to make the Des Moines River a place of recreation, or *Bravo* an arts and culture nonprofit, that utilizes tax dollars to invite

musicians or artists to come to Des Moines, are great examples of ways the city is trying to invest in Des Moines and capitalize on what it offers.

SE 14TH STREET

The SE 14th Street corridor is a major thoroughfare through SE Des Moines that connects the greater region, and more specifically those traveling from South of Des Moines to the capitol building and downtown, and doubles as Highway Route 69 an interstate bringing people into the city. **Figure 3.3** shows a map of the corridor in relation to the rest of Des Moines. US 69 in Des Moines was constructed in the 1930s and was built to be part of the cross-country route from Texas to Minnesota (IowaDOT 2019). **Figure 3.4** shows a map of this cross-country route, that travels through six states, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota. When constructed this portion of Des Moines was unincorporated land in Polk County and was not annexed into the city limits until the earliest 1957 with the east side of the street not being annexed until the late 1980s according to the Urban Renewal Plan. In fact, the highway did not expand until the 1960s and 1970s when “there was a shift in the way transportation departments thought about roads; the intent was to move high volumes of traffic quickly. Roads were built wider, with no opportunity for on-street parking. The theory was that more traffic would bring more business and patrons to the corridor.” (URP 2022). This negatively impacted the corridor, as yes traffic did increase and the road was easier to navigate, but the expansion of the road impacted the existing lot sizes, creating shallow lots, and negatively impacted development along the corridor. Highways and their impact on the communities surrounding them is important and shows why the work being done along the SE 14th Street corridor is so important.

Figure 3.3 Map of SE 14th Street



Note. SE 14th Street travels North/South through Des Moines, bringing traffic from outside the city in to the downtown and capitol area (Iowa DOT, 2021).

Figure 3.4 Map of U.S Route 69



Note. U.S Route 69 begins in Port Arthur, Texas to the South, and terminates in Albert Lea, Minnesota at its Northern most point (OpenStreetMap, 2024).

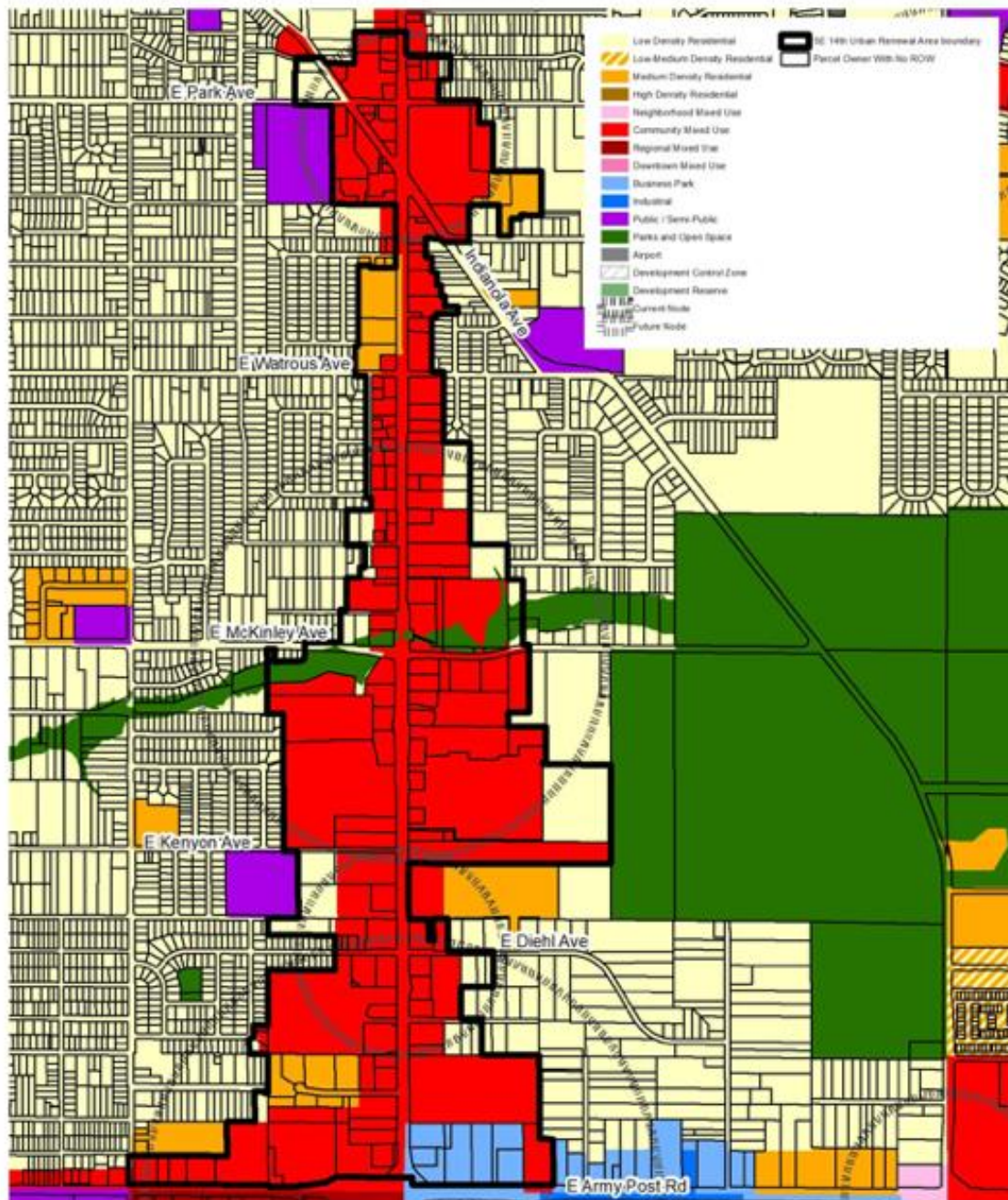
Another example of Des Moines investing in specific neighborhoods is through an *Urban Renewal Plan* that focusses on the SE 14th Street Corridor. The purpose of this *Urban Renewal Plan* as described in the official document passed by the Des Moines City Council on November 7th, 2022, is:

“...to encourage and assist with the redevelopment and/or removal of blighted, obsolete, and underutilized properties within the urban renewal area, to facilitate the development and re-development of commercial, mixed-use and residential uses, to create and retain jobs in the City of Des Moines, to provide a diversity of housing options, and increase the overall tax base. This Plan is intended to guide the development of the Urban Renewal Area and to activate new economic investment leading to increased taxable valuation. There are prime opportunities for quality re-development that can be coordinated in a planned and unified manner. Strategic and targeted use of resources that will be realized through the creation of this Plan are critical to establishing necessary public infrastructure and private economic investment in the form of commercial, mixed use and residential rehabilitation development.” (URP, 2021 pg. 1)

This Urban Renewal Plan helps guide the redevelopment of what is a heavily trafficked commercial corridor in Des Moines. The use of Tax Increment Financing ¹allows for development to “snowball”, leading to increased development over the duration of the URP, and those who choose to invest along the corridor are financially incentivized to do so. While the corridor is predominantly geared towards auto-centric uses, this plan shows initiative to invest in residential, commercial, and other mixed-use development. While it is significant that this plan was put in place to address the “blighted, obsolete, and underutilized properties within the urban renewal area”, it is important to understand the origins of the corridor, and how the location of state highway 69 has impacted the area.

¹ Tax Increment Financing is a value capture revenue tool that uses taxes on future gains in real estate values to pay for new infrastructure improvements. These gains can help communities improve dilapidated corridors over time (FHWA, 2024).

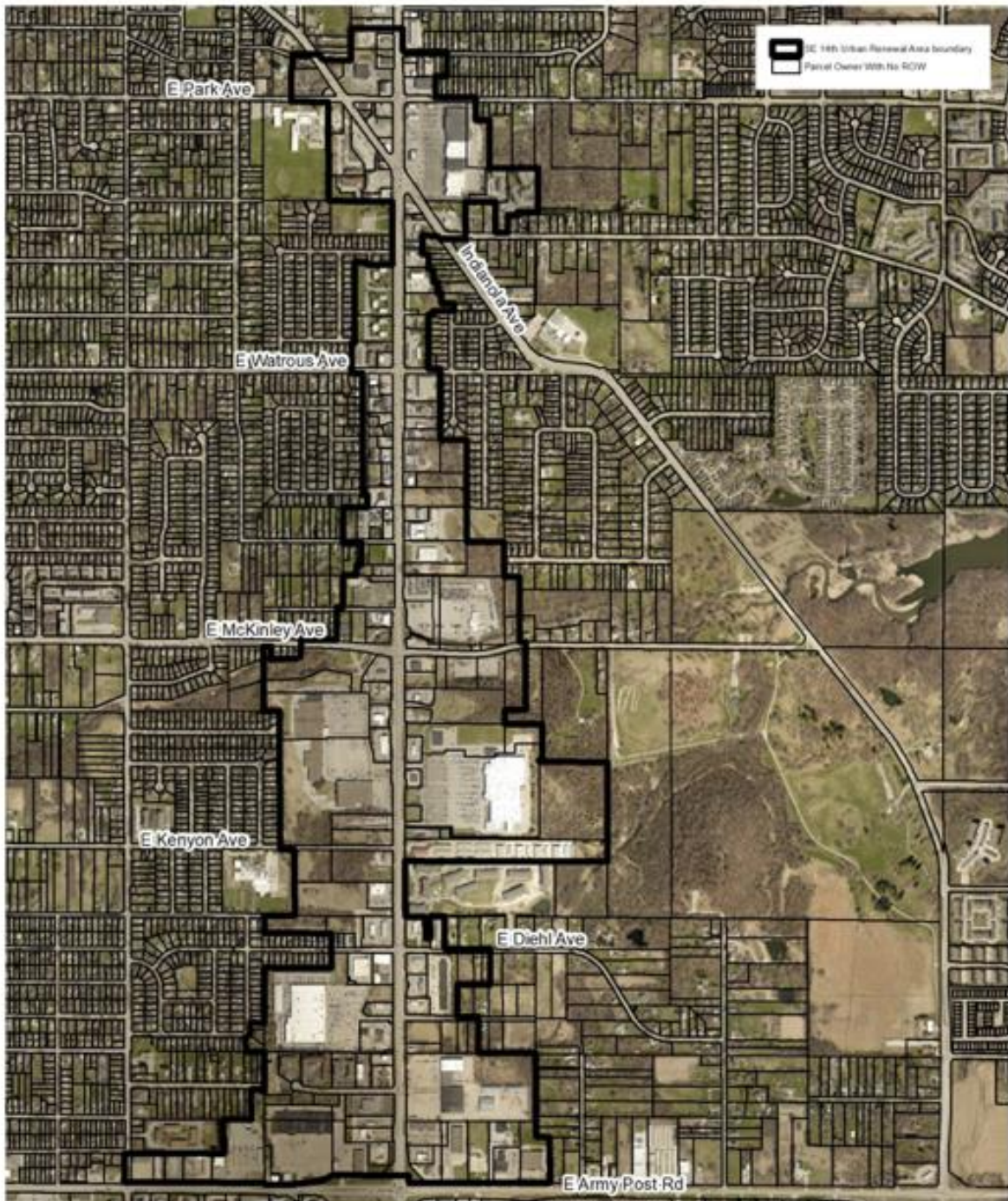
Figure 3.5 SE 14th Street Urban Renewal Plan Maps



**Map 3 -
PlanDSM Future Land Use**

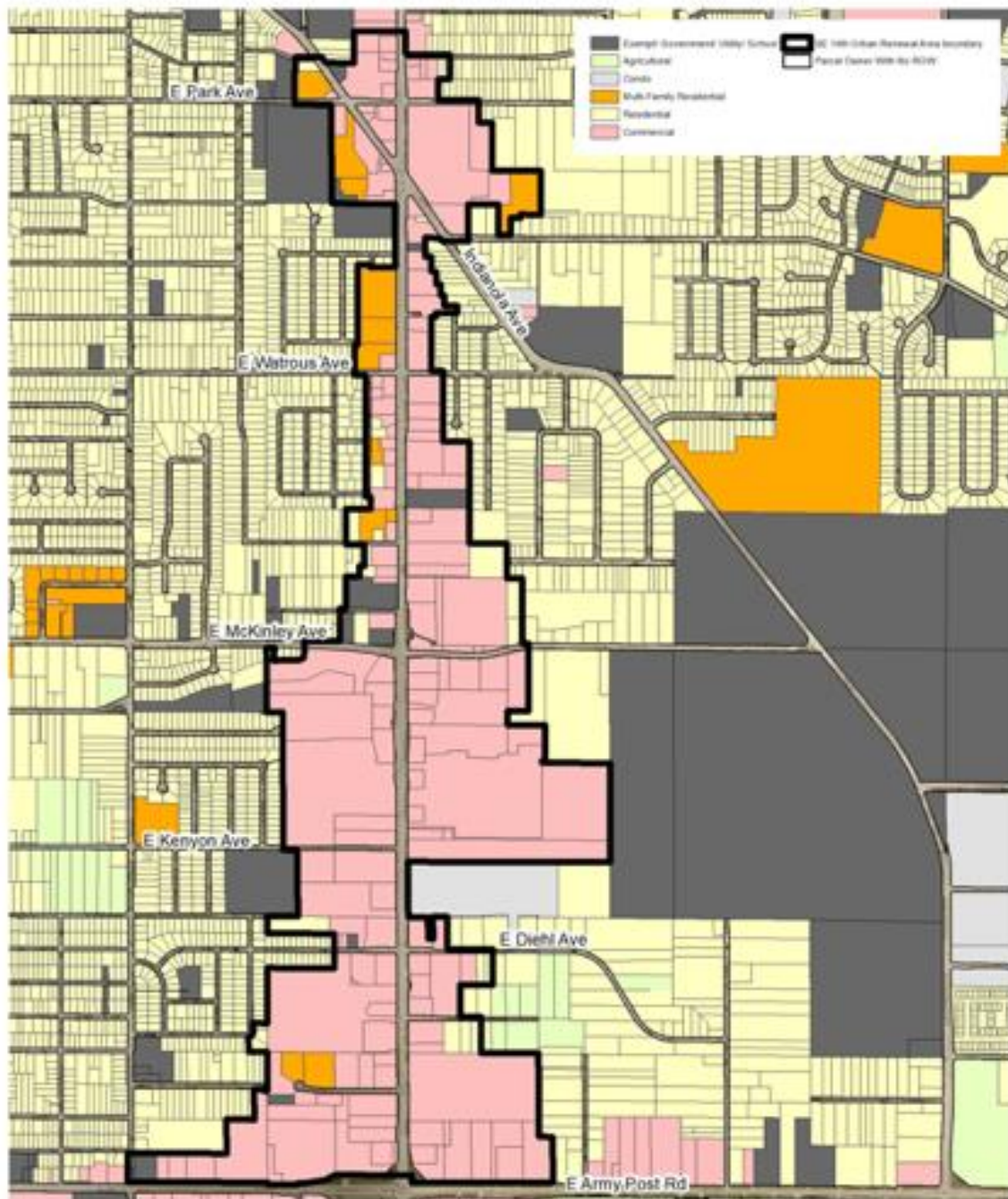
Date: 8/24/2022





Map 1 -
Boundary of Urban Renewal Area and TIF District(s)*
 *No TIF Districts have been proposed as of the date of this Plan adoption
 Date: 8/24/2022





**Map 2 -
Existing Land Use**

Date: 8/24/2022



Note. The Urban Renewal Plan that was passed in 2022, provides three maps: A map of the urban renewal boundary, an existing land use map, and a future land use map as identified in the PlanDSM comprehensive plan (URP, 2022 pg. 22-24).

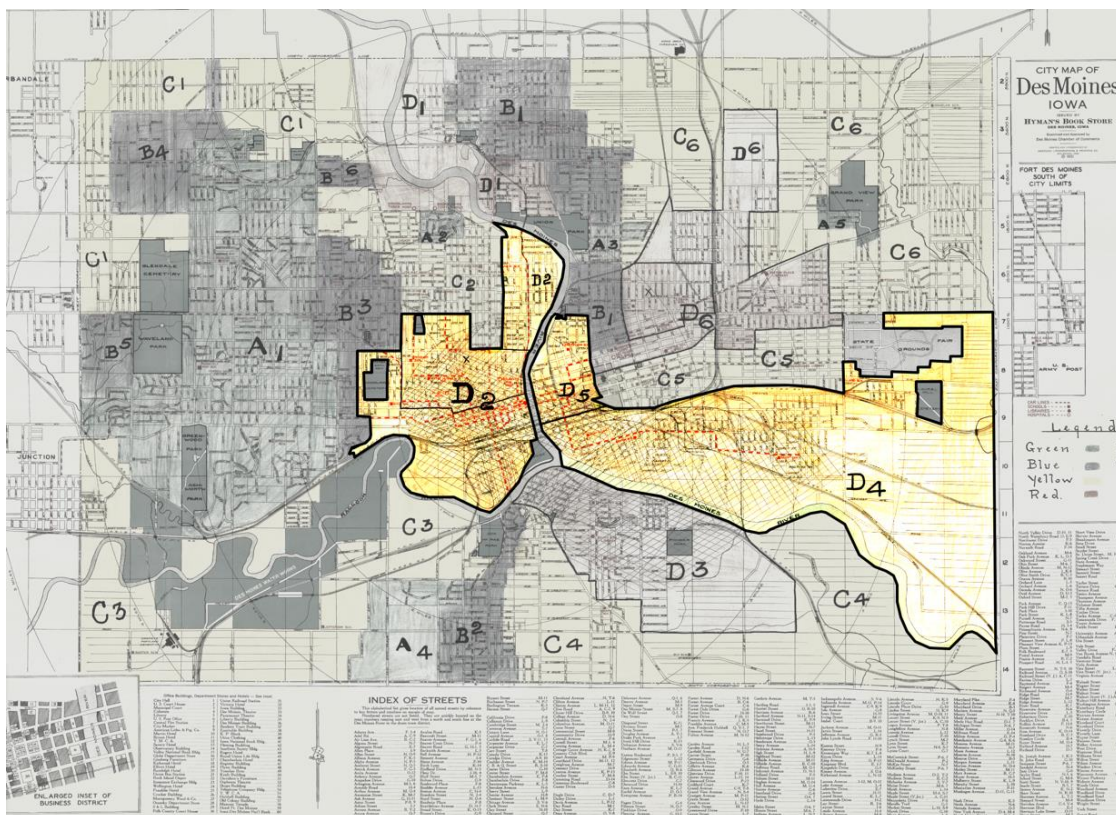
REDLINING

The term “redlining” is presently used more broadly to describe different types of race-based exclusionary tactics in real estate, however the origins of redlining stem from early programs through the 1930s “New Deal” (Jackson, 2021). The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) a federal agency created “Residential Security” maps of major American cities. The HOLC was established in 1933, as part of the “New Deal”, and was intended to assist homeowners who defaulted on their mortgages. Examiners systematically graded neighborhoods based on, “age and condition of housing, transportation access, closeness to amenities such as parks or disamenities like polluting industries, the economic class and employment status of residents, and their ethnic and racial composition. Neighborhoods were color-coded on maps: green for the ‘Best,’ blue for ‘Still Desirable,’ yellow for ‘Definitely Declining,’ and red for ‘Hazardous,’ (Mitchell 2018). Though these maps were not made available to the public at the time, the ramifications of these maps were clear to Black homeowners, as private lenders began using the maps to bar Black home buyers from being able to secure mortgages. The justification for this action was that if African Americans were buying homes in or around the newer all-white suburbs the property values of these areas would decline, therefore putting the loans given out at risk. However, the rationale for this claim was unfounded as in areas where Black homebuyers were able to try and buy homes the property values rose due to the restricted housing stock that existed (Gross, 2017). Black families were prohibited from buying homes in the suburbs during the 1940s, ‘50s, and in to the ‘60s, although they were equally able to afford the homes as compared to their white counterparts, these homes were thus purchased by white home buyers and allowed the start of generational wealth building through the owning of property (Gross, 2017). By the time Black homebuyers were legally allowed to purchase these homes they were worth much more, pricing many families out of the ability to live in these suburban neighborhoods. The impact this process had on wealth-building for Black families is still being felt to this day.

Over eight decades after the redlining maps were drawn, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition found in a 2018 study, that 74% of the neighborhoods graded “Hazardous” by the HOLC are low-to-moderate income today, and nearly 64% of the neighborhoods graded hazardous are minority neighborhoods today (Mitchell, 2018, pg. 4) While racial and ethnic make-up of these neighborhoods was a large determining factor for “grade” of these

communities in the 1930s, the same communities of people are still disproportionately impacted today. These decisions and policies reflect a dark time in our country's history and something we are still trying to address today through intentional investment in the impacted communities. Des Moines is one of the communities that the HOLC graded, and much of the SE portion of the city, including the study area of SE 14th Street were identified as “Fair” or “Bad” in part due to being one of the main districts for African Americans in the 1920s. The closing of the mines in Buxton, Iowa, a predominately Black mining town in 1900, along with the establishment of an all-Black officer training corps at Fort Des Moines led to the acceleration of Black migration into Des Moines (Hayter, 2023). This increase in black population led to real estate agents and city officials confining these population groups to four districts in Des Moines, the Walker Street District, the Center Street area, the Cherry Street area, and finally, the SE Bottoms, located along SE 14th Street near the study area of this research. **Figure 3.6** highlights these districts on the HOLC redlining map. The impacts of this map are still drastically felt today as the neighborhood still reflects a population that is low-to-moderate income.

Figure 3.6 Des Moines Historically Black District – Redlining Map



Note. This map showcases the four districts where most of the Black population migrating to Des Moines in the mid-1900s lived. Each of these districts was given a rating of Bad by the HOLC (Hayter, 2023).

After redlining was made illegal by the 1968 Fair Housing Act, highways were utilized as a tool to segregate minority communities. These highways were often purposefully built through “low-income” or “blighted” parts of cities that were made up of minoritized communities that had been impacted by the racial segregation of redlining. The Historic Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma also coined “Black Wall Street” is an example of a community that had a highway constructed through it to purposefully destroy the community. The impacts of this decision are still being felt, as planners and developers work to reintegrate Greenwood into the community, even with the highway.

HIGHWAYS

To further incentivize the use of the automobile and to make traveling in and out of the city even easier, the 1960s were spent building highways and expressways through many minoritized often low-income communities. We became auto centric in our planning practices at the expense of the people living in our urban cities. When evaluating the impact of highways, it is important to gain an understanding of the historical context of highway expansion and development, and then analyze what steps have been taken to address this, or possibly find gaps in literature where neighborhood revitalization around highway corridors can be addressed.

The best place to start when trying to gain an overall understanding of highways and the surrounding neighborhoods is to look back and get a historical context of the initial development of the highway system. A lot of the literature specifically focuses on the impact that interstates had on Black families and communities in the United States, however in a more modern context far more communities of color are faced with challenges. Archer (2020, pg.6), shared “The passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, popularly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act or the Interstate Highway Act, buoyed both highway construction and the destruction of Black communities.” Archer (2020) goes on to talk about how governments encouraged the development of these highways by promoting “slum removal” and that many of these highways cut right down the middle of these neighborhoods, oftentimes displacing homes, schools, and churches. This immediately cut communities that were once thriving separated. The highway acting as this impermeable wall disconnects what was once a joined community. Kuswa (2001, pg.3) continues this argument by stressing how the development of the highway and

interstate system allowed for a “more connected” Country, allowing for racism to take over and enact the opposite in most cases. Research like this helps us understand that the spread of highways was poorly intentioned in the first place with purposeful planning through minority communities. Many of which are still struggling today. Elihu (2006, pg.7) discussed one of these communities when talking about the Massachusetts Turnpike and its cutting through Boston Neighborhoods as it was never intended to benefit those neighborhoods but rather those commuting in and out of downtown, therefore showing that at the heart of it those roads served only as a thoroughfare.

The urban renewal schemes of the 50s and 60s purposely used highways to clear “blight” and in exchange eliminate once thriving communities. Schindler (2015, para.44) discusses Black Bottom and the building of the I-375 highway in the City of Detroit. This case of urban renewal saw an estimated 140,000 black people living in the neighborhood to either be relocated to public housing in other neighborhoods or lose their homes and be forced to relocate on their own. In 2015, nearly 70 years after the building of this highway the city was looking at tearing down the barrier and instead constructing a pedestrian-friendly parkway, yet the damage to the community had already been done. In a continued look at physical construction and the implications it can have on communities,” Gotham (Oceio, 2019, pg. 101) notes that, through these spatial boundaries, “identities and meanings are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction, social conflict and struggles between different groups.” When any highway cuts through a neighborhood there is an understanding of its purpose, who it aims to benefit, and who it hopes to harm, this is made abundantly clear until we work to tear down those barriers instead of letting them define certain communities.

In a series of three papers, Raymond A. Mohl (2001,2004,2014), looked specifically at the revolt against the highway system. The first of which looked specifically at highway revolts in Memphis, Tennessee. Mohl found that there are many different players at play, there are the road engineers, city officials, city planners, and often overlooked but crucial the citizens that are impacted. Mohl (2014, pg. 887) stated, “In the final analysis, the organization, commitment, ingenuity, energy, and action of people in revolt against freeways was always key to a favorable outcome”. I believe this still rings true today as we consider the importance of those living in these communities, but also those in positions of power to help advocate for the redevelopment and revitalization of these neighborhoods. This however has become tricky as those in positions

of power have never truly advocated for the communities impacted by these interstates and highways. Mohl continued his exploration of this issue by sharing, “The Eisenhower administration and Republican allies in the Senate rejected financial compensation for relocation because of anticipated excessive costs” (Mohl, 2002, pg. 12). This shows that the people impacted were never the consideration, at the opportunity to cut costs and save money on a quite expansive system and increase in infrastructure there was a systematic avoidance of helping these minority communities, leaving them to figure it out themselves as eminent domain took over their homes and livelihoods. However, the “freeway fighters” as they were commonly referred to in this time were not always successful in fact many of the communities, they fought for in one way or another found a freeway or highway still traversing through their neighborhood. “They were successful only to the extent that they used the tools provided by new legislative mandates and guidelines to challenge, confront, and litigate against the road builders” (Mohl, 2002, pg. 66). Mohl (2004) ends with a question that forms the crux of my work as well: now that these roads are built and there is no longer the ability to fight for their construction, what power do communities have to fight for the reinvestment into them?

In more present times, as we consider the impact an investment on infrastructure can have and who it can displace there is rather positive news as the Department of Transportation is providing over 185 million dollars in grants to various communities to help redress what the highways and other transportation projects took from these communities. Keith Baker [in (Laris, 2023)], the director of a nonprofit in St Paul, Minnesota, a recipient of some of these funds shared, “What we’re doing is rebuilding a space and ensuring a connective tissue to the neighborhood for greater prosperity overall”. Residents were excluded or marginalized from planning for a freeway that devastated their community 60 years ago, he said, adding “What we want to really do is demonstrate that communities can lead. This is a positive step although the Biden administration and cities around the country are quickly realizing the overall costs of these endeavors. Secretary Pete Buttigieg [In (Reft,2023, pg.4)] stated an important message in a November 2021 White House press briefing, sharing when asked about the need to confront the racist history of the Interstate Highway System, “I don’t think we have anything to lose by confronting that simple reality. And I think we have everything to gain by acknowledging it and then dealing with it.” There is a definite shift in the opinion of the highway system and the damage it has caused to some communities, yet what do people covet more, the value of the

space currently being occupied by these highways, or helping the communities that are impacted by these highways?

The Value of Space Vs. The Communities That Occupy It

In this section, I evaluate how planners and city officials have valued the city thus far and where the responsibility lies to reinvest in these communities. While city planners and public officials work in the “public good”, not all reinvestment is intended to benefit the public at large. Weber (2002, Pg.537) explains in “Extracting Value from the City” that reinvestment into a community is not necessarily geared toward the communities living there, but rather as to what can make the most amount of money, so an investment in the private real estate side, which often can lead to gentrification of the neighborhood or other such issues that may lead to displacement and disruption of communities that have also been historically marginalized already. Mejias and Dreakin (2006, pg. 34), continued building on this idea of modern redevelopment and reinvestment specifically looking at early 2000s San Pablo Avenue in California, defined as an “Urban Arterial”. They take an all-encompassing on the redevelopment that took place around this arterial and break down the issues that many of these roads face overall such as “poor streetscapes, street crime, high speeds, and excessive parking requirements” and deduct that these issues eventually may be the reasons that development in such areas is slower and sometimes almost absent, even when the city is booming. This leads to uneven development and continued marginalization of historically disenfranchised communities of color that live adjacent to these roadways.

Jacobs, et.al. (2011) concentrated on development along arterials throughout California and specifically focused on criteria such as Location, Historical Notes, Nature of the Street, Traffic, Current context, and possibilities, evaluating each different site and what it offered or could be done. While this research made significant contributions in terms of appropriately envisioning what could properly be done infrastructure-wise, it was limited by a lack of attention to the social impacts of these projects and specifically a complete lack of attention to their impact on current residents. Further consideration to the relationship between the physical design of development around arterials and its social impacts could have a huge impact on these communities. In his 2015 paper, David Karas (2015, pg.18) writes “Cities are presented with a wide range of options in terms of what could take the place of highways once they are torn down, but with this opportunity comes a great deal of responsibility. This duty centers not only on creating

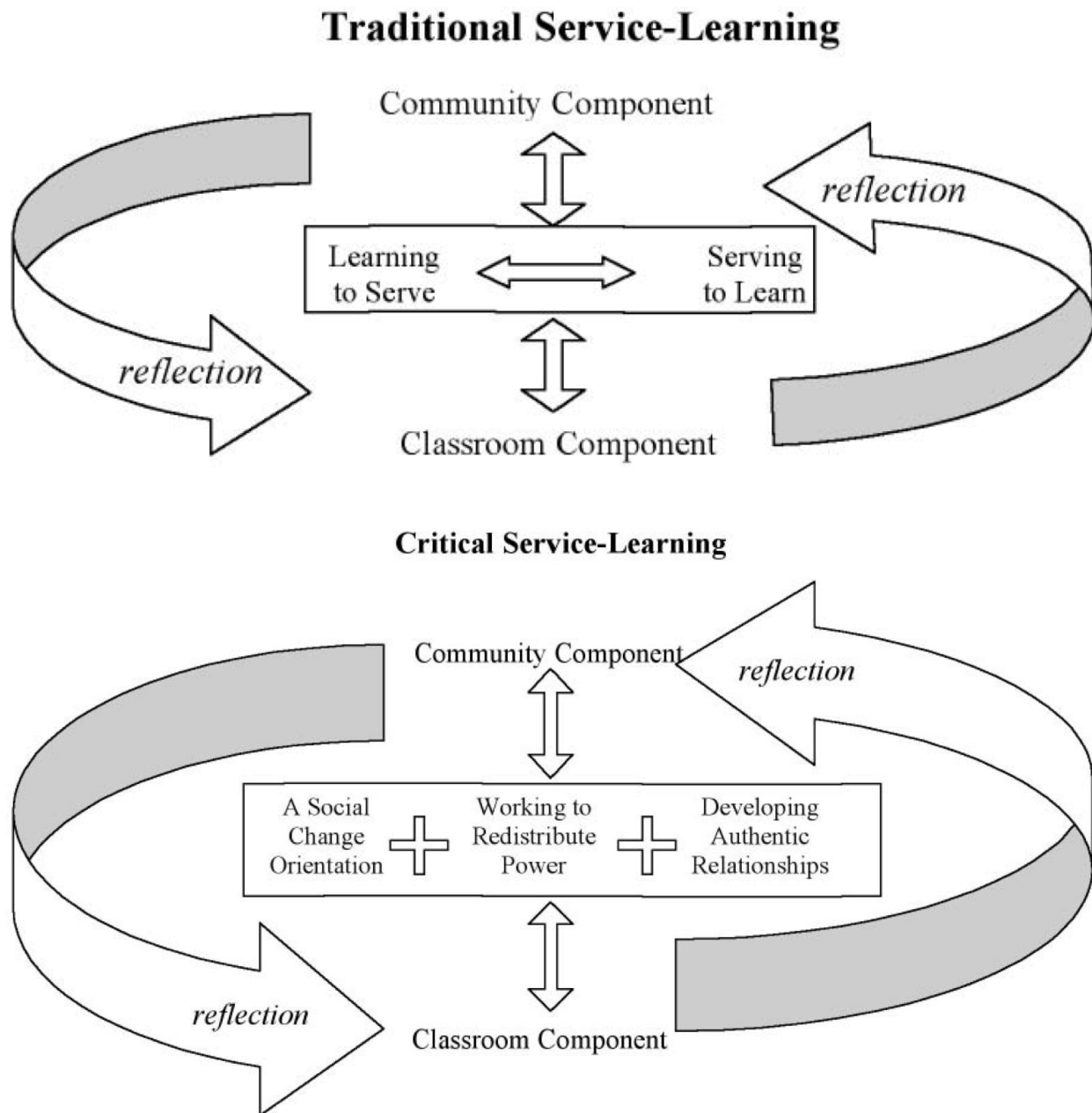
something that will suit its host community and is attractive to residents and visitors but also something that could potentially restore what was destroyed by the highway when it was first constructed”. The historical context that was covered earlier is important, if we are only redeveloping in hopes of creating a better quality, new development, we are again losing sight of the communities that have been impacted.

SERVICE-LEARNING

An important aspect of this research is the impact of the service-learning project conducted along SE 14th Street. To truly understand the project and its impacts, we must first understand what is service-learning. James and Pamala Toole (1994, Pg. 4) of the Compass Institute in St. Paul Minnesota described service-learning as, “a form of experiential learning where students apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address genuine community needs”. Service-learning provides an opportunity for students to help address issues in communities while practicing and developing skills that are learned in the classroom. These projects can give students opportunities to design or work and have real tangible experiences.

Tania D. Mitchell (2008) of Stanford University takes the service-learning model further by differentiating between the traditional service-learning model and the critical service-learning model. In the models below, it is shown that the core goals of traditional service-learning are learning to serve and serving to learn. Whereas the critical service-learning model adds a social change element, a redistribution of power, and the developing of authentic relationships. This distinction is important when evaluating the impact of a particular service-learning project. The SE 14th Street Corridor is home to diverse communities of people, who have been impacted by the highway running through. This critical service-learning project presents an opportunity for those involved, including students, community members, planners, and developers to focus on and address some of the challenges facing this corridor.

Figure 3.7 Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning Models



(Mitchell, 2008).

HOW PROJECTS START

The Technical Assistance to Brownfields (KSU TAB) program at Kansas State University and Professors Dr. Susmita Rishi and Professor Blake Belanger have collaborated on annual service-

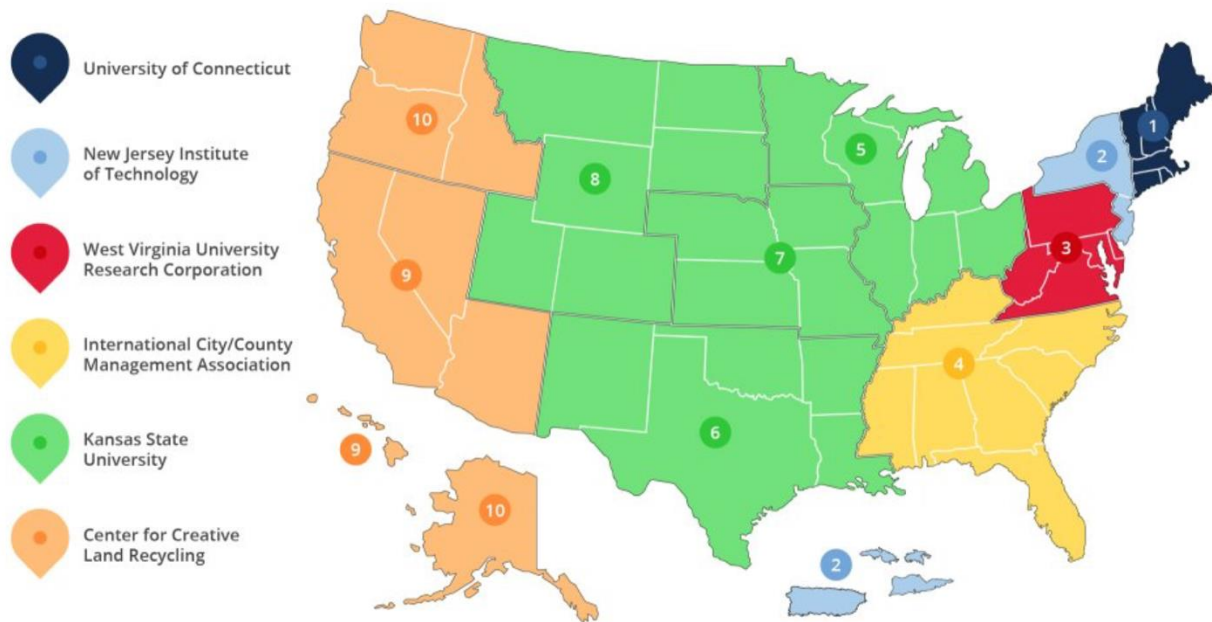
learning projects for the past six years. These collaborations involve a pair of semester-long classes in which landscape architecture students led by Prof. Belanger work to create design visions for one or more brownfield demonstration sites, and a multi-disciplinary group of students led by Dr. Rishi, work to create urban design visions for a corridor or neighborhood within a community. The main aim of these visioning projects is to demonstrate various ways in which these sites and corridors or neighborhoods may be redeveloped through reinvestment over time.

KSU TAB is a national program funded by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency, this program intends to help cities, towns, nonprofits, and Tribal organizations address the Brownfield redevelopment process free of charge (KSU TAB, 2023). TAB works with communities across the country, with 10 different EPA regions all receiving support. KSU TAB specifically assists communities in EPA regions 5,6,7 and 8 this is shown in **Figure 3.8**.

Typically, assistance is provided through some sort of deliverable or plan, that can help a community address the area of need. TAB also focuses on education, helping communities identify brownfields and understand what steps are necessary for redevelopment. In the case of the service-learning projects, TAB provides funding for students to work in the community with the intent of providing a final deliverable of design alternatives and interventions that are contained in a Story Map online. In recent years these projects have taken place in Beatrice, Nebraska, Wichita, Kansas, and Des Moines, Iowa.

The semester-long classes involve a visit to the site, which involves conducting a S.W.O.T analysis shown in **Figure 3.9** to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of revitalizing the SE 14th Street corridor. We then met with decision makers such as planners, developers, business owners, and other people affiliated with the area. This group of professionals is identified as the Community Advisory Panel (CAP), for the Des Moines project this consisted of over a dozen people selected for their expertise and knowledge surrounding the corridor, and planning and development in Des Moines, who provided students with data, feedback, context, and helped answer questions to better guide students work. Next, students come up with interventions that help address the issues identified along the site. These are presented in an open house at the end of the semester, and the communities are then able to utilize the findings to help address areas of need.

Figure 3.8 TAB Regions Map



Note Kansas State assists communities in all of the Midwest Region, with a total of 23 states within the four EPA regions (EPA, 2024).

Figure 3.9 S.W.O.T Analysis



(KSU,2021)

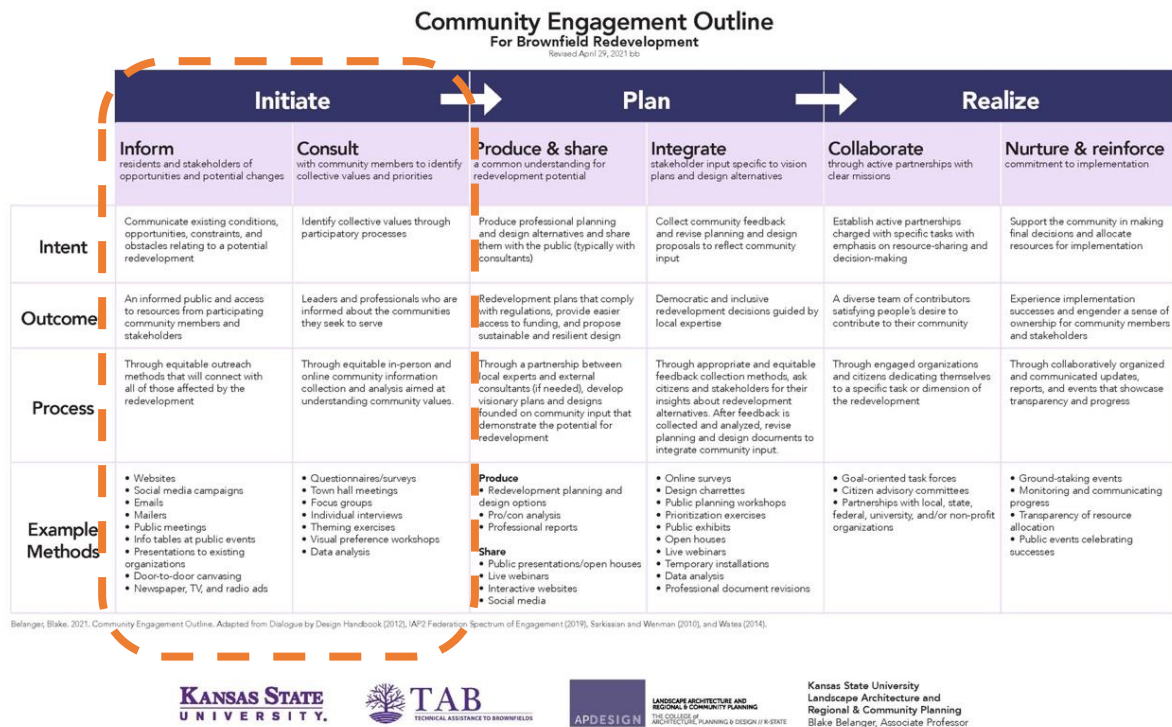
The work being done in these communities begins long before the semester-long classes start, and the work continues after the semester ends, allowing communities to truly invest in these areas. In the “Community Engagement Outline for Brownfield Redevelopment” adapted by Blake Belanger the community engagement process is broken into three phases, Initiate, Plan, and Realize (Belanger, 2021). The outline can be found in **Figure 3.10, Figure 3.11, and Figure 3.14** which specifically highlight each phase of community engagement (Belanger, 2021).

INITIATE PHASE

In the Initiate phase, KSU TAB reaches out to communities to inform them of the opportunities that exist for collaboration. These opportunities include assistance in economic revitalization, or economic redevelopment generally of identified brownfield properties. KSU TAB can help fill in gaps in terms of funding for these redevelopment or revitalization projects. Typically, these first interactions between KSU TAB and a community can take place through email correspondence, conferences, public meetings, etc. Communities are invited to share where they see opportunities and redevelopment needs. In the case of the Des Moines Project, Mel Pins, a resident of Des Moines who had previous experience with the TAB KSU service-learning experience through his work managing the brownfield redevelopment program at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources reached out to Des Moines city staff as well as Professors Rishi and Belanger to present SE 14th Street as a possible project area. Cindy, an economic development coordinator for the City of Des Moines spoke about this:

“And for years, we have had a gentleman in the community named Mel Pins, ... he works for the state, but he also serves on the city's board of adjustment so... he lives in the community and is a fellow government employee. He was the one who actually connected us with your professors in the program and was advocating. He lives on the south side of Des Moines, close to the corridor. And said this would be just a great opportunity to partner with KSU and have some students look at the area and try to connect with the community and come up with fresh ideas. And, so he had reached out to me and, you know, their biggest concern was, will city staff dedicate resources and time and people to help with tours and meeting with the students and answering questions and getting community members to participate? And we just immediately were like, absolutely, yes, this sounds awesome.” – Cindy

Figure 3.10 Community Engagement Outline – Initiate Phase



Mel Pins is the perfect example of someone who took their role as a community advocate and stakeholder seriously, he engaged with the right people and utilized his positionality to make something happen. He drove past the corridor every day and understood the importance of having someone look at SE 14th St. as well as having someone invest the time and resources into it. The need for a community champion- such as Mel Pins- who advocates for and works with stakeholders is something I heard in many of the interviews and the lack of such a champion was identified as a key reason as to why these corridors can sometimes go overlooked or under-invested in. Champions can play the role of “knowledge broker” between those working to revitalize the community and those living in the community (Lindsay, et. al., 2019, pg. 1). More important when a community champion is highly engaged both at the professional level and the community level, can help build trust and ensure that the community is being advocated for in discussions taking place. A community champion is also able to encourage people to participate, helping show the importance through their own actions. Oftentimes, when a team of planners is identifying where to invest time and resources they are spoilt for choice and a champion that

advocates for their area can make the difference between whether a particular area gets investment and attention or not.

“We only have six people on our team for the entire city. At that time, we were still kind of early in the pandemic, and we were still getting so much development that our team really only had time to respond to development that was naturally occurring where the market was taking it. So we really didn't have time to go into these areas where we know needs some planning work and need some visioning work to inspire investment in those areas. So it was something we had wanted to be getting to but we just didn't have enough staff and resources to get to it. So this was a great opportunity to get some help, and help us proactively get to that a lot faster than we otherwise would have been able to. So we were thrilled.” - Cindy

As is the case with most cities, the city of Des Moines has access to limited resources, including personnel. A service-learning project such as the one under discussion provides a unique opportunity then to supplement these limited resources. This is one of the major benefits of this kind of collaborative service-learning project, it not only allows cities to explore redevelopment or revitalization in places they possibly haven't had the time, but it allows for a fresh perspective from students who are actively learning and engaging with this sort of work constantly. Oftentimes one of the biggest hurdles to accomplishing the work in a timely and cost-effective manner is a lack of overall manpower. Communities are often faced with this challenge. In the case of this project, we more than quadrupled the number of personnel working on SE 14th Street in Des Moines and were able to allocate much of our time, through the semester-long class, to focus solely on this three-mile stretch of corridor.

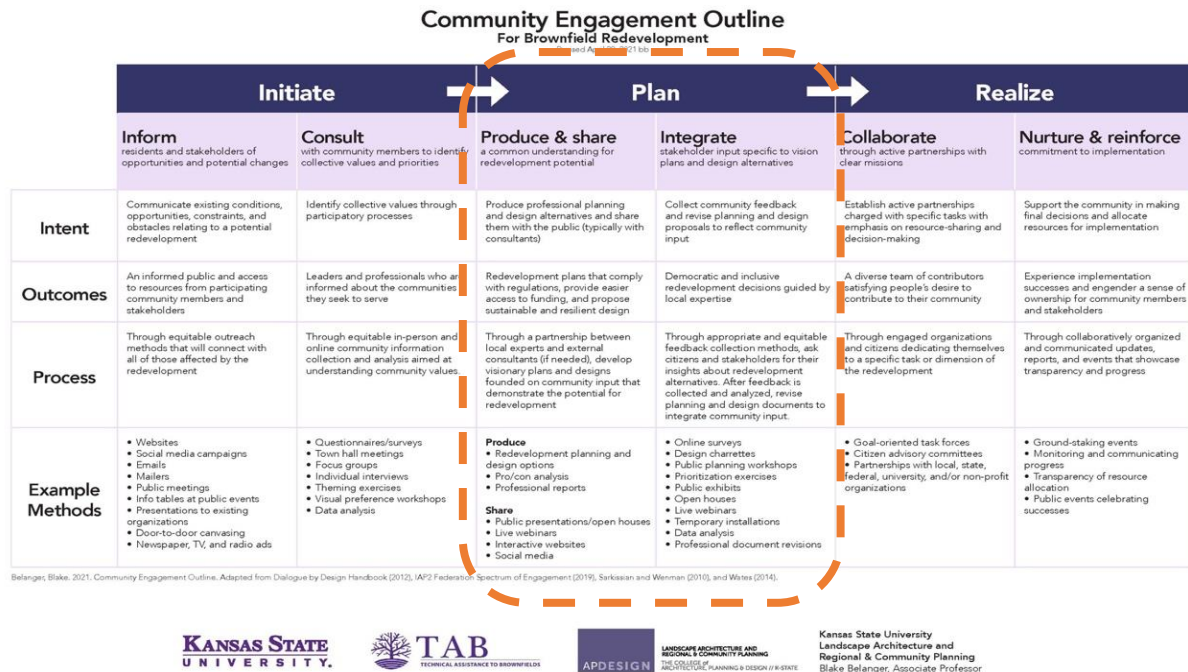
“I don't even know to this day that we still would have gotten to the point we're at if it hadn't been for that partnership with the students. Since you guys came and did all the studying and visioning, we put in an Urban Renewal Plan for the area, which is an incentive tool that we can use to incent new investment into the area. And it takes a lot of work and time to prioritize which areas were going to create plan plans for and draft plans more and go through the whole legislative process of getting them approved. So having that partnership with the schools to help us do a lot of the research. Whenever we do those plans, we want our council to feel confident that we know what the community does want to see and what they don't want to see, and that we're drafting that plan in a way that aligns with what our community wants. There was a lot of survey work that was done that we used that you did for us that we were able to incorporate into

the plan of what we would want to see or what we'd be willing to incentivize. So just the amount of time and resources it takes to do that, it would still be on our list of things to do if we didn't have that partnership with the school.” - *Cindy*

The second part of the Initiate phase involves consulting community members, and residents, and gathering information, that can better help professors and students engage with the community. In the case of the SE 14th Street Corridor project, KSU TAB and the faculty put together a survey aimed at understanding broadly the hopes and desires that the community had for the corridor as well as the barriers and hurdles that the community saw to achieving those. This survey allowed community input on what they would like to see happen along the corridor, what places along the corridor are important to them, and what concerns they may have about the work being done. The survey was distributed by the City of Des Moines on social media, as well as posters being placed in key locations around the area, such as libraries, restaurants, coffee shops, etc. Once the survey results were received, they were analyzed and synthesized by KSU TAB. All of this work was done in the summer before the semester classes began and allowed students to receive and engage with this data at the beginning of the semester. This better informed student work and made sure to keep the project community focused.

PLAN PHASE

Figure 3.11 Community Engagement Outline - Plan Phase

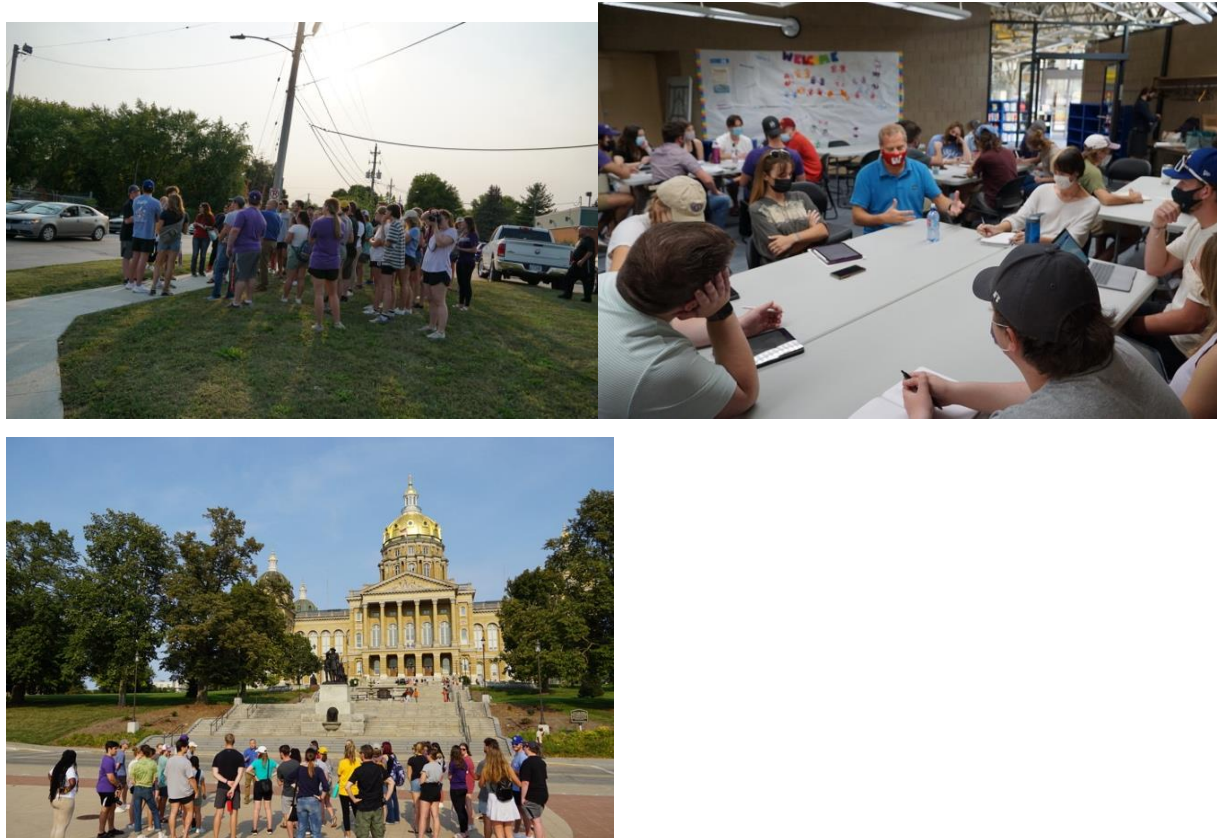


(Belanger, 2021).

The second phase of the Community Engagement Outline for Brownfield Redevelopment is the Plan phase. This is when students are engaging with the community, producing planning and design alternatives. The first sub-phase “Produce and Share” formed the core of the semester. The first step in this process was a site visit to the study area. Early in the semester, students and faculty traveled to Des Moines, to tour both the corridor and city, while visiting with stakeholders and gathering data such as photos, sketches, conversation, etc. For students, this is generally their only physical visit to the community, so it is important to maximize the time spent and ensure that students have a proficient background when they begin providing planning interventions for the community. While an outside perspective can be beneficial to the service-learning model, it is important to ensure that the students have a perspective of the community and its significant areas of interest. **Figure 3.12** provides some images of the site visit to Des Moines and SE 14th Street. Through the site visit, creating of the design alternatives, and presentation of the ideas, this is the main work of the students. Students were encouraged to look at the big picture, addressing the systemic issues a community may be facing while suggesting

ideas that may be “out of reach” or there is a lack of resources now. This is a dream phase, that works to revitalize and redevelop communities in need. This work allowed students to practice skills they are learning in the classroom such as the Adobe Creative Suite, presentation skills and the implementation of planning and design concepts. This work was compiled in an ArcGIS StoryMap and is presented to the community. The intent of the StoryMap is to be a public exhibition of student research, analysis, findings, and design concepts, that is collected for posterity and allows the community and its stakeholders to continue to engage with the work that was done, even after the semester is over. **Figure 3.13** provides an example of student work, as well as the QR Code for the Story Map of SE 14th Street.

Figure 3.12 Site Visit



(Rishi, 2021).

Figure 3.13 Story Map



Note. The Story Map allows student work and design concepts like the example shown above to be publicly displayed, while also allowing communities to have a resource they can go back to as the redevelopment work continues (KSU,2021).

After the semester ends, and the work has been created and left with the community the responsibility shifts. The integrated portion of the outline is where community contacts and community decision-makers can implement these design alternatives. Through public meetings, continued community outreach, open houses, and other methods. The community can assess the results and provide feedback on the work. The integration phase is also where plans like the Urban Renewal Plan for SE 14th Street can be implemented. The service-learning project allows communities to present possible solutions or plans to the city council or other boards and furthers the work that has been done. In November of 2022, the City of Des Moines passed and

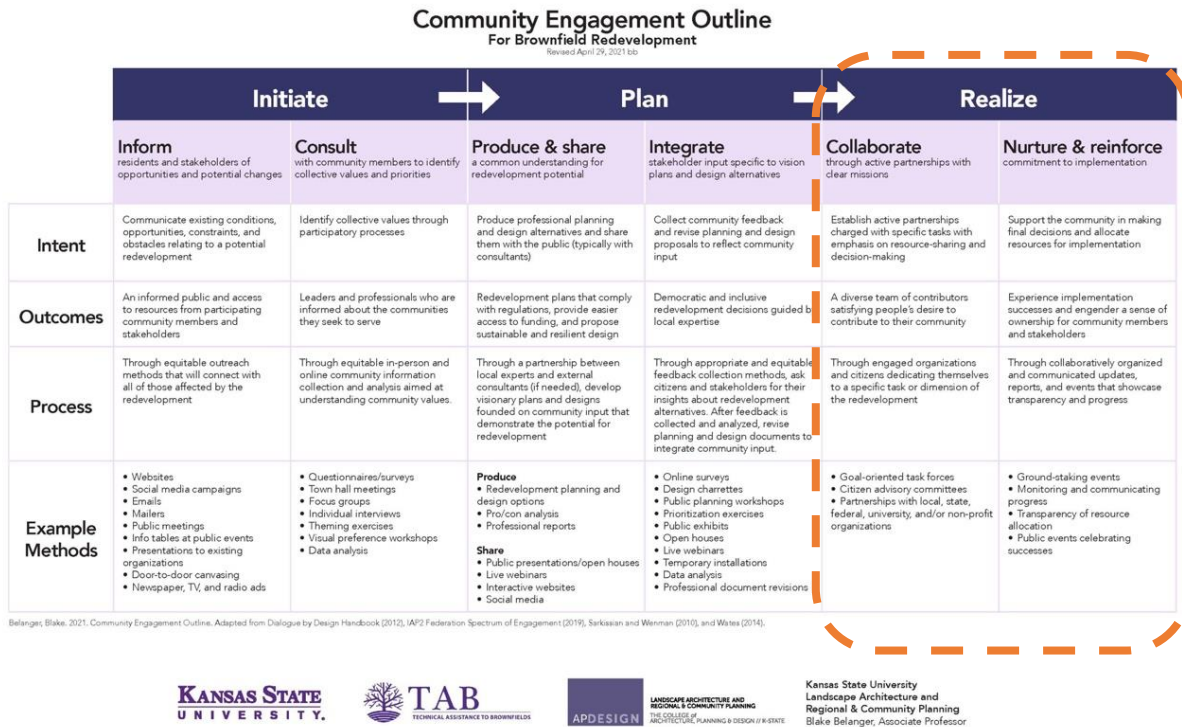
implemented an Urban Renewal Plan for SE 14th Street to allocate resources to the redevelopment of this corridor.

REALIZE PHASE

The final phase of the Community Engagement Outline is the realize phase. This is where partnerships that were created during the service-learning project can come together and continue to invest and implement solutions in these communities. This is the longest phase of the process, as this work can take years and sometimes even decades to truly come to fruition. In the collaborate sub-phase, active partnerships are encouraged to divide the responsibilities of the redevelopment process and engage in areas of expertise. Throughout the SE 14th Street Corridor project, we engaged with planners, economic developers, business owners, parks and recreation planners, and many others. Each of these entities is able and encouraged to take the findings from the plan phase and address the needs of the community. This phase also provides an opportunity for entities that were previously uninvolved in the project, to collaborate and start to work alongside community partners. Examples of this in Des Moines would include engaging community groups, neighborhood associations, or the Iowa Department of Transportation, who have jurisdiction over SE 14th. The more entities that are brought together and can pool their resources, may lead to better results.

The nurture and reinforce phase of this work is the final phase, but one of the most important. As work is being completed and change is happening, cities must celebrate what has been accomplished. Communities must see progress being made, reports, public events, and transparency of resource allocation are all ways in which citizens can stay informed and progress can continue to be made. This should consistently be taking place, and is the responsibility of city officials, and decision-makers to follow through with.

Figure 3.14 Community Engagement Outline – Realize Phase



(Belanger, 2021)

The Community Engagement Outline is an effective tool that communities can use to effectively implement service-learning. Each of these phases provides an opportunity for cities to address areas of need, while keeping community stakeholders involved and engaged.

Chapter 4: Service-Learning and Redeveloping Highway Adjacent Neighborhoods: A Discussion

In this chapter, I present the findings of the analysis of the ten semi-structured interviews I conducted with members of the community advisory panel (CAP). These findings are framed as a response to the research questions that have guided this research:

- What can we learn from the SE 14th Street Corridor Project about the challenges and opportunities for redeveloping neighborhoods around on-grade state highways?
- What role did service-learning play in the outcome/impact of the SE 14th Street Corridor Project?

This chapter is presented in three sections. In the first two sections, I examine the opportunities and challenges that were identified for redeveloping neighborhoods adjacent to on-grade state highways. Finally, in the third section, I present the outcome and impacts of service-learning in the success of the SE 14th Street Corridor Project.

OPPORTUNITIES

During each of the semi-structured interviews, I specifically asked each interviewee to identify opportunities that existed for redeveloping the SE 14th Street Corridor. When engaging in redevelopment it is important to identify opportunities that already exist as these can help stimulate development and allow communities to find starting points or areas that can be more easily addressed. Typically, the redevelopment process can be a discussion of the negative areas or the areas of need, finding the opportunities can be an overall positive, and can help a community feel more confident. In these discussions, five specific opportunities for redeveloping the SE 14th Street corridor were identified.

High-Traffic Volume = High Visibility

One of the biggest opportunities identified for development along a state highway is the sheer volume of people who travel through the corridor daily. According to a traffic study (2021) conducted by the Iowa Department of Transportation in 2021, SE 14th Street had an annual average daily traffic (AADT) count of over 31,000 vehicles per day. This is a staggering amount of people traveling each day past businesses, parks, and other commercial and retail facilities. Many of the interviewees identified the sheer volume of traffic as an asset.

“The south side of Des Moines brings a lot, a lot of people are there every day, whether they're commuting in from the southern parts of Iowa, like, personally, that's where that's my route in. So, it's just a highly trafficked highly visible area. So, we don't really have the challenge of needing to drive people there. We just need to reshape what's there to make it more attractive. So those people who are already coming through there have more reason to stop. And, you know, patronize the businesses spend time at the parks. And or make it their home.” – Wendy

As Wendy elaborates here, the volume of traffic takes away the need to figure out how to get people to the corridor, however, businesses will need to figure out how to slow down the traffic and have people stop. As development takes place and continues to shape the corridor the volume of traffic is an asset as businesses work to get cars to stop and shop along the corridor. Several student proposals from the SE 14th street Project proposed traffic calming measures which the city may consider once more development is taking place. Examples like the ones shown in **Figure 4.1** highlight proposals for median, sidewalk, bike lane, and crosswalk improvements to help make the corridor more inviting.

Figure 4.1 Street Improvement Proposals



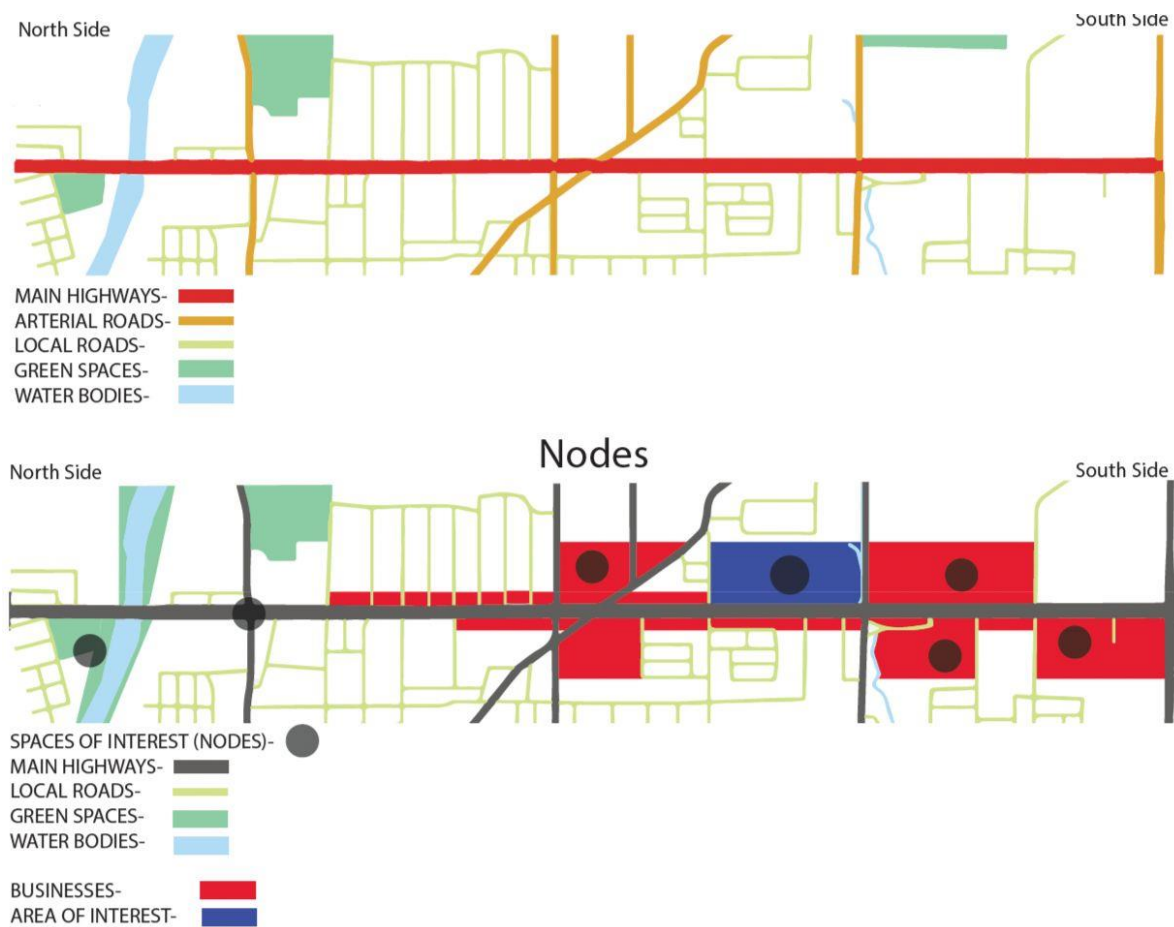
Note These proposals invite the pedestrian closer to the street, through better sidewalk infrastructure, while also allowing pedestrians to cross at dedicated crosswalks (KSU, 2021).

Parks and Trails

Another opportunity identified along the corridor was the ability to capitalize on existing parks and trails in proximity to SE 14th Street. Ewing Park, Pioneer Park, and Pete Crivaro Park are all located along the corridor. **Figure 4.2** highlights the park space, as well as showcasing the Des Moines River that bisects the North end of the corridor. Adding new amenities to parks is an easy way to increase their use and encourage more recreation. Several student projects, particularly those by the Landscape Architecture Studio proposed new recreational opportunities along the corridor. One such example by a landscape architecture student shown in **Figure 4.3** involved integrating an event space, playground, trail system, and boat drop off along the Des Moines River. A comprehensive look at how to integrate the natural features of the corridor, can

help create more cohesive development. Better integration with the river allows the corridor to capitalize on its unique natural features.

Figure 4.2 Park Space



Note. The Corridor features greenspace throughout providing an opportunity for recreation-based redevelopment (KSU,2021).

Figure 4.3 Student Proposal of Recreation Along Des Moines River



Note. This student proposal expands on the current site of the animal control building, in hopes of better engaging the natural landscape surrounding it (KSU, 2021).

Drew the planning administrator for Des Moines Parks and Recreation spoke at length about the implementation of a new amenity at Pete Crivaro Park. This is a great example of providing an amenity that can attract different groups of people and encourage the use of the neighborhood park space.

“...at Pete Crivaro Park ... We knew we had to relocate some of the disc golf course holes that were near the levee, because the levee offset and just the size of the levee, required that we move some of those holes. So we worked with the disc golf group to kind of identify what could that new alignment look like? And then we also identified Hey, why don't we add a new amenity here where we could have disc golf. And then down below, you have foot golf, which is kind of like a little home and set up for a soccer ball. – Drew

The Des Moines River also bisects SE 14th Street on the North end of the corridor presenting opportunities for boat entry points and more integration with the river. The ICON River project (2015) establishes 80+ spots on rivers in Central Des Moines, that help reconnect people to the water. Efforts began in 2015 with a masterplan by the Des Moines Area MPO with the hope of expanding to further encourage recreation along the rivers in Central Iowa. Through public and

private fundraising, the ICON project is hoping to raise \$125 Million dollars for these efforts (ICON, 2024). This project is a great opportunity for Des Moines and more specifically SE 14th Street to connect recreational opportunities to existing amenities. Natural features should be looked at as an asset, not only do they help attract people to stop and spend time within the area, but they also provide a great opportunity for those living in the community to recreate. Newer recreational facilities, as well as the upgradation of existing facilities also provide additional recreational facilities for the communities that live adjacent to the corridor in addition to attracting new users to the area and thus bringing in investment.

Diversity in Housing Types

Another opportunity for SE 14th Street is to diversify the housing options available. At present, the neighborhoods along the corridor are predominantly single-family residential. An increase in multi-family units could provide different housing options allowing for more people to consider calling the corridor home. Many of the individuals I interviewed spoke about the importance of “increasing rooftops” along the corridor, to successfully support commercial businesses, increasing dwelling units is important.

“In order for it to be truly successful. I think we need to get more of the mixed-use developments that have the residential and maybe some commercial components. Like I said before, I think we really need to get more rooftops and more dwelling units along the corridor to support the commercial businesses.” – Barry

Furthermore, mixed-use developments with diverse housing types and commercial retail spaces can create inviting districts along the corridor. To start this process a developer acquired a mobile home park along SE 14th Street, that was in poor condition, with the proposed intention of redeveloping the lot into affordable apartments. This project utilizes the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds received from the City. **Figure 4.4** highlights some of the student proposals, in which mixed-use residential has been proposed.

Figure 4.4 Mixed-Use Residential Student Proposal



Note. Mixed-Use districts like the one proposed, present an opportunity for diverse housing types, while also creating a more urban living district (KSU, 2021).

Increased Private Investment

“I mean... this is kind of where we're at is like Olive Garden comes in, you know what I mean? And people are excited. Olive Garden is a big brand people know, they come in, they, you know, sort of like, pick us, right? And build a new build here on the south side...So I think every time a big brand chooses to come in and put up a nice, beautiful building, and picks our corridor, I think that helps with the Southside pride a little bit.” – John

One of the hardest things to do when revitalizing a neighborhood is encouraging businesses to choose the corridor. Often development follows people, as people move to suburbs or other parts of the city new development also settles in these places. Often however, once an established retailer or restaurant opens and has success, it can be a beacon for other businesses to follow. Southside Des Moines has experienced an increase in large chain restaurants over the last couple of years. *Starbucks* opened a new location in late 2022 and *Olive Garden* opened in the spring of 2023 and *Raising Cane's* is anticipated to open in the next year. These established businesses

have chosen to move along this corridor, and when properly supported by customers this can be a great sign for future businesses looking to move along the corridor.

Uses and Improved Facades

Another opportunity along the corridor is the auto-oriented uses that seem to dominate the corridor. **Figure 4.5** highlights some examples of the auto-oriented uses presently along SE 14th Street. While the auto-oriented uses can be seen as an eyesore with an overabundance located along the corridor, there is an opportunity to turn this in to a positive.

“I think it's not a negative thing to have so many auto-oriented uses along the road, I just think if they can characterize it, and maybe showcase that a little better and a little cleaner, that would be nice...So buffering, landscaping design guidelines, stuff like that to kind of not, not forcefully, but kind of play a card to say, listen, you got to do this.” – Andrea

As Andrea stated above, with the right buffering, landscape design guidelines, and other zoning regulations the overall aesthetic of the corridor can be improved while the uses remain relatively the same. With a corridor that experiences a large volume of through traffic daily it is reasonable to have many auto-oriented uses like car washes, gas stations, auto part stores, etc. but as the corridor grows and redevelops the opportunity to improve the overall aesthetic is an important one.

Figure 4.5 Auto-Centric Uses

Jiffy Lube Quick Oil Change



Calidelfy Auto



Advanced Auto Parts



Kum & Go



Note. Provided are various examples of the auto-centric uses along the corridor. In the case of Jiffy Lube and Calidelfy Auto, a lack of landscaping and overcrowding of the front yard creates a visually unappealing aesthetic. Whereas the Advanced Auto Parts and Kum & Go Gas Station are examples of landscaping improving the overall aesthetic of the lot (Google Earth, 2023).

CHALLENGES

During the interviews, I asked interviewees to consider some of the challenges in terms of the redevelopment of the SE 14th Street Corridor. Challenges can also be understood as hurdles that need to be overcome in the development process or barriers to future progress. Each of the following challenges was identified as significant and are key obstacles that must be addressed as the redevelopment process continues along the corridor.

Iowa DOT

The Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU) has canvassed for the removal of highways since their 2018 report *Freeways Without Futures* (CNU, 2018). The CNU argues that the removal of highways has many benefits including helping knit back neighborhoods and communities; revitalizing areas; promoting active transportation; as well as the newly vacant land after removal can be used for redevelopment of new housing, new businesses, and open spaces. As with most other literature, the focus of CNU's work is also above-grade highways and does not address the challenges faced by communities living adjacent to on-grade state and federal highways. In particular, there is no focus on the challenges and barriers that the differential

jurisdictional control of the highways vis-à-vis the surrounding land present. The biggest challenge that was discussed the most in each of the interviews was the Iowa DOT and its jurisdiction over SE 14th Street. With the street doubling as State Highway 69, the state has jurisdiction to make decisions regarding any changes to the road within the right of way. The state has control of the speed, and distance between stoplights, landscaping, and sidewalks along the corridor. There is a clear lack of consideration of the pedestrian.

“They're planning for a different reason. it's just the line between point A and point B. And the destination is not that stretch of highway 69.” – Martin

“Oh gosh, I know I hate to repeat this, because I know we said it, and it's boring, but the city not having jurisdiction over that road is the largest, I would say that's the largest challenge because we have no ability to impact it. Right? So, working with the state is just a slow process. And I mean, we are, we essentially will have to beg them to collaborate. I mean, they wouldn't, it's their roads, so they really won't ever have to work with us. But that's, you know, that's a constant, a relationship we keep working on.” – Wendy

The most important step that can be taken is conversation and action between the city and the state, to better integrate the road to the surrounding community, while working to maintain the road's value as a highly used transit corridor.

Dying Anchor – Southridge Mall

One of the biggest challenges surrounding many corridors and communities across the country is dying malls. Shopping malls were seen as a great achievement throughout much of the 20th century. Accounting for most of the retail sales taking place, malls would have been looked at as a viable anchor for a corridor. The Southridge Mall served as this anchor for SE 14th Street. Constructed in 1975, at the intersection of SE 14th Street and Army Post Road, the Southridge Mall was a thriving regional retail center, inviting people from surrounding areas, to shop and spend money along the corridor. Like many malls, the Southridge Mall has experienced a sharp decline in shoppers in the last 20 years, leading to a large, dilapidated lot along the corridor. There are approximately 1,200 enclosed malls in the U.S. and about two-thirds of them are doing poorly (NPR,2014). A “dead mall” is one with a high vacancy rate, low foot traffic or one that is abandoned completely (IPX1031, 2023).

“The other challenge...is that we have that South Ridge Mall. So, you know, malls all over the country are struggling. So that's something else that is a little bit of an anchor, it has a little bit

of a depressant role on property values, as you know, a mall that's been abandoned for all purposes. We're trying to find some other uses to go in there, but nobody's really, you know, solved that problem particularly well how to use these big box store footprints.” – Wendy

With the rise in online shopping and an overall shift in how and where consumers prefer to shop, economic recession, poor management and the presence of competing shopping centers have meant that malls have become large predominately vacant landmasses that play a depressant role in surrounding property values. Communities like Des Moines, often look for creative solutions to this problem. One such solution is through investment by large retailers such as Dick’s Sporting Goods, Dillard’s, and Scheels, these stores can potentially anchor a mall and keep patrons coming. Another option is to invest in creative solutions such as gyms, recreational spaces, and other unique tenants that can help utilize the vacant space. The Southridge Mall marks a large hurdle that the city must overcome when looking at SE 14th Street.

Perception

One of the largest challenges is the overall perception of the SE 14th Street Corridor.

“So, I would say, honestly, it serves as a cut-off point for kind of the hip and now versus the working class of sorts. And so like, once you get East of the Capitol, there's a distinct shift in how the built environment looks. There's a distinct shift in how people move around the space. It's so night and day. It's a little intimidating sometimes. And so, it's like, you cross over and you're like, ‘oh, I don't know that I want to be here anymore.’ And especially on the SE 14th Street itself.” – Andrea

Through both the local perspective and the perspective of the Iowa Department of Transportation the corridor is looked at as a highway, specifically a corridor utilized to get people in and out of Des Moines. This is evident through the lack of pedestrian infrastructure, the overall abundance of auto-oriented uses, and the lack of interest or efforts to slow traffic down and make the corridor more pedestrian-friendly.

“it's used as a conduit, right to get me from one place to another, we don't have the engaging restaurant patios, you know, strip center, outdoor mall type thing. Parks, greenery, right. It's, you know, it's highway 69 and it's treated as such, like, get me the hell out of here is I think kind of the feel right. And you know, when you've got a quarter of the corridor, it's just these parking lots. That's kind of the challenge, right?” – John

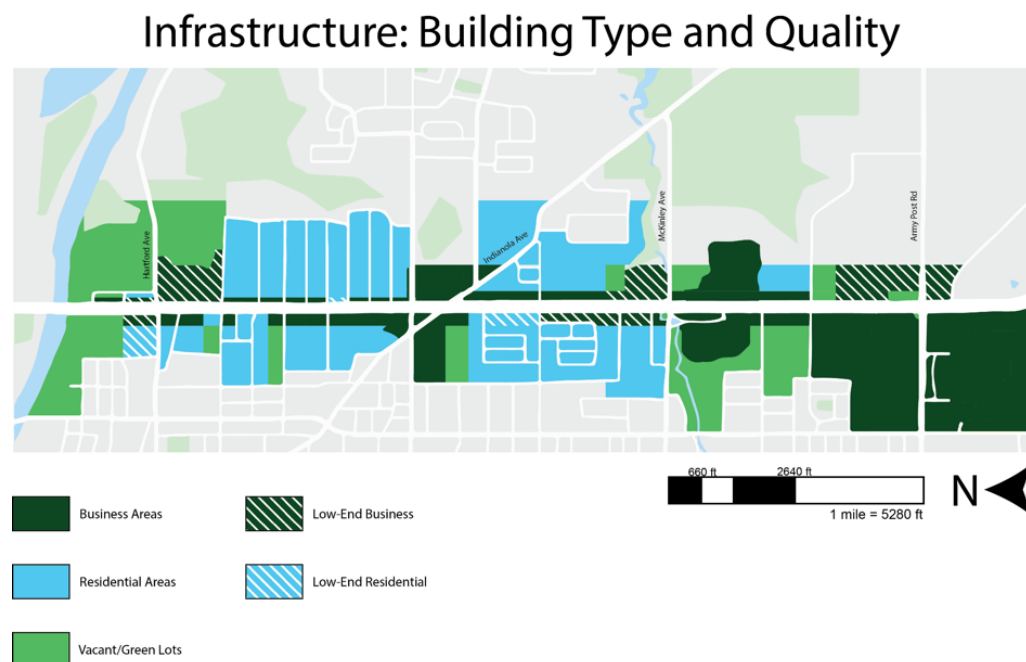
This perception can be very challenging, in the eyes of the Iowa DOT the corridor is working as intended and there isn't a need to change things. The negative perception can lead to a lack of interest and is one of the most important challenges to address when it comes to the corridor.

Underutilized Space

“There's just so many properties, to really get the corridor to where everybody would, you know, in a perfect world like it to be, it's going to take years and years and years because there's so many different property owners and so many properties. So, I think that, you know, the size of it, just from Geography, and then the large quantity of properties that don't meet current needs or are disinvested those are the big hurdles.” – Jerry

Another challenge for the corridor is the number of vacant buildings and lots along the corridor. In the map below the vacant lots are highlighted by the light green color. This along with the large number of expansive parking lots along the corridor, showcases a lack of properly utilized space.

Figure 4.6 Map of SE 14th Street Site Conditions



Note. (KSU,2021).

In order to better utilize the space along the corridor, the city can utilize the newly adopted form-based code to better integrate the uses along the corridor and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

IMPACTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Throughout my conversations with those involved in the redevelopment process and the SE 14th Street Corridor Project, it became apparent that they saw the impact of the service-learning project as profound. One of the largest opportunities identified was capitalizing off the momentum of the work done by students in the Fall of 2021. The four impacts listed below are examples of the value service-learning brings to both the participants and the community.

Student's Introduction to Real-World Work

Andrea is a graduate of the Masters of Regional & Community Planning program at Kansas State University. She was part of a similar service-learning project as a student and then practiced in Des Moines as a planner and participated as a CAP member in the SE 14th Street Corridor Project.

“Yeah, I think it's just nice because it's so relatable to the real world of how planning interacts with the design process in the design field. So, like having a mix of architects, landscapes, engineers, I don't even know who else is taking that class anymore. But it brings like the real estate people now even like it's bringing so many of the players you're going to involve with and their thought processes to the table that you don't really get in your other classes.” - Andrea

Service-learning projects are one of the opportunities for students to gain real-world experience through applied learning while practicing the skills they are learning within the classroom.

Service-Learning provides a structured program for students to connect theory and practice including work-integrated learning (Rosier et. al, 2016). The professional world is often full of opportunities to collaborate with professionals in other fields including planners, developers, architects, and engineers. The redevelopment process is collaborative in nature, and the interdisciplinary nature of the service-learning project gives first-hand experience to the students involved. Sandy and Holland (2006) further touched on this idea of “transformational learning”, by discussing how service-learning can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. Often in the classroom discussion revolves around planning and design theory, while real-world work is often based on reality and practice. Together practice and theory can invite new innovative interventions and can help both the student and community grow. Harkins (2020), further discussed the benefits of service-learning for students, adding that students grow significantly in

social skills, academic performance, and personal insight. Each of these skills is transferable to the work that students will be doing in their professional careers, and the service-learning model, provides an outlet to strengthen these things.

Fresh Outside Perspective

At the same time, service-learning projects such as the SE 14th Street Corridor project provide valuable assistance to communities with research, service, delivery, planning, and visioning. Students and faculty that are not part of the community bring a fresh set of eyes to the problem which is free from any preconceived prejudices and biases and infuse new energy and ideas in their proposals.

“Sure. Well, I can see the value two ways I think the value for I would say us at the more local level. Getting that outside in perspective is helpful. You know, we can see the same every see the same thing every day by living somewhere or commuting through it. And we either take it for granted for its good or we take it for granted for it's bad just things to drive past to get past or we drive past something and we take it as it is And that's it. So I think the value to us is an outside in approach one just from another person's perspective.” – Martin

Furthermore, service-learning projects allow TAB to present communities with a plethora of ideas, instead of the perspective of one planner or consultant. While communities can be hesitant about the value of this collaboration, they find that it quite valuable and beneficial.

“For us (KSU TAB) it provides more thought, more ideas given to the community versus maybe just one or two ideas...I think sometimes initially communities might be a little hesitant, ‘Oh gosh, is this going to be worth our time?’, but once we get going and get involved they love it.” – Melissa

Whenever areas of a community have undergone a period of decline, it can be rather hard to change the perspective of the community and shift towards a redevelopment and improvement mindset. Students can bring a fresh outside perspective with new ideas and outlooks and spark motivation to invest in the space. Students are also engaged with new planning concepts and ideas daily, that can be brought to service-learning projects and utilized as tools for reinvestment.

Allows Cities to Look at Neglected Areas

“I think it plays a big role. Because like I said, I don't even know to this day that we still would have gotten to the point we're at if it hadn't been for that partnership with the students. Since you

guys came and did all the studying and visioning, we put in an Urban Renewal Plan for the area, which is a incentive tool that we can use to incent new investment into the area. And it takes a lot of work and time to prioritize which areas were going to create plan plans for and draft plans more and go through the whole legislative process of getting them approved. So having that partnership with the schools to help us do a lot of the research. Whenever we do those plans, we want our council to feel confident that we know what the community does want to see and what they don't want to see, and that we're drafting that plan in a way that aligns with what our community wants.” – Cindy

When communities are looking at areas that need to be addressed there are often many factors that go into where funds and efforts are distributed. Lack of resources and often lack of the budget is a large factor, communities often have capital improvement budgets that have time frames and constraints as to when things can be addressed. Yip (1999), talked about this sharing that, neglected areas can often regain attention and increase overall social participation, by participating in service-learning. Political and social factors are also a large factor in where redevelopment takes place. Communities often place time, effort, and resources in places of historical significance, or areas that have an established value socially or economically to the community. Lastly, a lack of manpower is a large reason not all neighborhoods are invested in. Communities only have so many employees who are dividing time and resources amongst many different places. Service-learning allows cities to address each of these things. First, service-learning can allow communities to address an area that is otherwise ignored. With TAB looking specifically for brownfield locations, Kansas State students were able to look specifically at SE 14th Street. Next, service-learning projects can help improve the outlook toward a specific space or community. Seeing the fresh ideas students can bring, city officials can be swayed to allocate more time and money toward that area. The City Council approved the Urban Renewal Plan after seeing the ideas the students came up with during the service-learning project. Finally, students can add additional manpower that otherwise wouldn't exist, 30+ students worked and engaged with the SE 14th Street corridor project, which allowed more time and effort to be spent with each section of the corridor.

Help Build Connections

“I definitely think it was good for making the relationships and those personal connections between stakeholders along the corridor. I think that's an important component. I think, you know, building those relationships will start to build a synergy.” – Chris

Service-learning can be a great tool to bridge the gap between partners and community members and can start to build a synergy that can spark more collaboration and investment. In areas where redevelopment is needed, communities can often feel forgotten, neglected, or left out of plans for future development. Service-learning projects like this one mark a distinct shift in that mindset, as communities are showing they are prepared to help address some of the existing challenges in the community. The conversations that take place over the project can help foster future collaboration and interaction encouraging work long after it is completed.

Service-learning also helps a community reflect on its organizational practices. Through working with an academic institution, organizations are able to reflect on their goals and often find the work to be affirming, energizing, and enjoyable (Sandy&Holland, 2006).

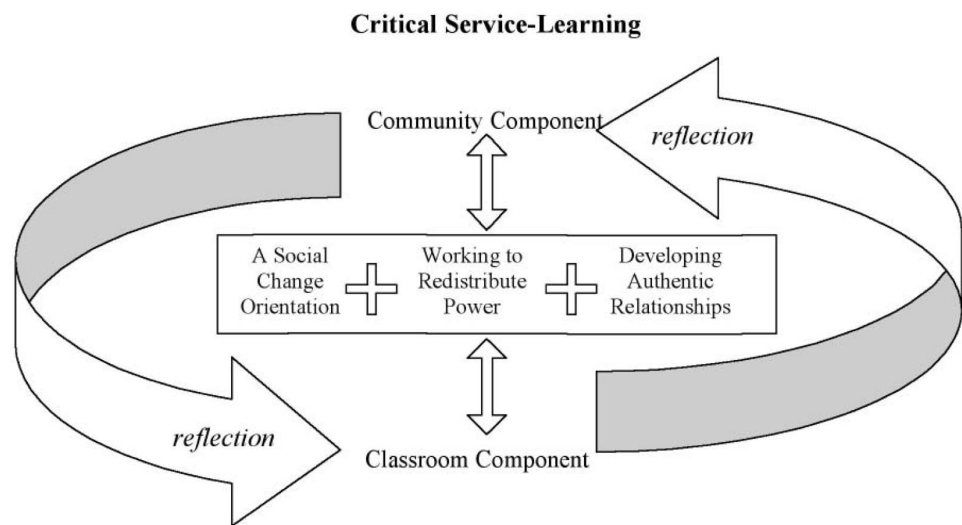
Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

In this chapter I will present the recommendations and conclusions from this research project utilizing the criteria outset by two specific frameworks, the “Critical Service-Learning Model” by Tania D. Mitchell (2008) shown in **Figure 5.1** and the “Community Engagement Outline” adapted by Blake Belanger (2021) shown in **Figure 5.2**. Over the course of this research, I have aimed to address two questions.

- What can we learn from the SE 14th Street Corridor Project about the challenges and opportunities for redeveloping neighborhoods around on-grade state highways?
- What role did service-learning play in the outcome/impact of the SE 14th Street Corridor Project?

The intention of overlaying these frameworks is to look at the research questions more critically and understand how service-learning and more specifically critical service-learning can be used as a tool for redeveloping the communities along on-grade state highway corridors such as SE 14th Street. The “Critical Service-Learning Model” (2008) looks at service-learning in three criteria, a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships. This chapter will be broken down in to four sections using the “Community Engagement Outline”. I start by looking at the “Initiate” phase, followed by the “Plan” phase and finally, the “Realize” phase, providing recommendations for how these phases can be acted upon more critically. In the last section, I reiterate the importance of this research and present some avenues for future research.

Figure 5.1 Critical Service-Learning Model



(Mitchell, 2008).

Figure 5.2 Community Engagement Outline

Community Engagement Outline For Brownfield Redevelopment Revised April 29, 2021 bb						
	Initiate		Plan		Realize	
	Inform residents and stakeholders of opportunities and potential changes	Consult with community members to identify collective values and priorities	Produce & share a common understanding for redevelopment potential	Integrate stakeholder input specific to vision plans and design alternatives	Collaborate through active partnerships with clear missions	Nurture & reinforce commitment to implementation
Intent	Communicate existing conditions, opportunities, constraints, and obstacles relating to a potential redevelopment	Identify collective values through participatory processes	Produce professional planning and design alternatives and share them with the public (typically with consultants)	Collect community feedback and revise planning and design proposals to reflect community input	Establish active partnerships charged with specific tasks with emphasis on resource-sharing and decision-making	Support the community in making final decisions and allocate resources for implementation
Outcomes	An informed public and access to resources from participating community members and stakeholders	Leaders and professionals who are informed about the communities they seek to serve	Redevelopment plans that comply with regulations, provide easier access to funding, and propose sustainable and resilient design	Democratic and inclusive redevelopment decisions guided by local expertise	A diverse team of contributors satisfying people's desire to contribute to their community	Experience implementation successes and engender a sense of ownership for community members and stakeholders
Process	Through equitable outreach methods that will connect with all of those affected by the redevelopment	Through equitable in-person and online community information collection and analysis aimed at understanding community values.	Through a partnership between local experts and external consultants (if needed), develop visionary plans and designs founded on community input that demonstrate the potential for redevelopment	Through appropriate and equitable feedback collection methods, ask citizens and stakeholders for their insights about redevelopment alternatives. After feedback is collected and analyzed, revise planning and design documents to integrate community input.	Through engaged organizations and citizens dedicating themselves to a specific task or dimension of the redevelopment	Through collaboratively organized and communicated updates, reports, and events that showcase transparency and progress
Example Methods	• Websites • Social media campaigns • Emails • Mailers • Public meetings • Info tables at public events • Presentations to existing organizations • Door-to-door canvassing • Newspaper, TV, and radio ads	• Questionnaires/surveys • Town hall meetings • Focus groups • Individual interviews • Theming exercises • Visual preference workshops • Data analysis	Produce • Redevelopment planning and design options • Pro/con analysis • Professional reports Share • Public presentations/open houses • Live webinars • Interactive websites • Social media	• Online surveys • Design charrettes • Public planning workshops • Prioritization exercises • Public exhibits • Open houses • Live webinars • Temporary installations • Data analysis • Professional document revisions	• Goal-oriented task forces • Citizen advisory committees • Partnerships with local, state, federal, university, and/or non-profit organizations	• Ground-staking events • Monitoring and communicating progress • Transparency of resource allocation • Public events celebrating successes

Belanger, Blake. 2021. Community Engagement Outline. Adapted from Dialogue by Design Handbook (2012), IAP2 Federation Spectrum of Engagement (2019), Sarkisian and Wrennan (2010), and Wates (2014).



(Belanger, 2021).

“Initiate” Phase

The Initiate phase is the beginning of the Community Engagement Outline (2021), it is broken down into two sub-phases “Inform” and “Consult”. This is where the work within a community begins, through meeting with communities and establishing a connection, followed by preliminary consultation, through surveying, focus groups, etc. For critical-service learning to take place throughout this phase communities must be intentional about who they are engaging with, and the reasons for collaboration. Mitchell (2008), spoke about preparation for a service-learning experience, stating that all participants must be informed and willing to engage in service relationships (pg. 60). We must have good communication and an authenticity between stakeholders that fosters change within a community. When looking at this phase through a critical service-learning lens, I make the following recommendations:

- Invest in historically minoritized neighborhoods.,
- Ensure diverse voices are heard through the “Consult” phase.

Broadly, these are crucial steps in any critical service-learning that is taking place and calls upon many different stakeholders to collaborate and execute in-order to have a more effective engagement.

Invest in Historically Marginalized Neighborhoods

The initiate sub-phase is an opportunity for communities to identify areas of need, specifically addressing areas that have been impacted by events like the construction of highways or been neglected over some time. Through Critical Service-Learning communities are asked to take a social change orientation to the work that is being done. One way this can take place is by prioritizing the needs of the communities that have been disproportionately marginalized or minoritized. Identifying these areas can help service-learning participants go in, learn about community needs directly from the community and address the root causes, thus working towards social change.

An example of such an approach is the work being done by KSU TAB’s including the service-learning projects they fund. KSU TAB engages and assists communities with economic and community revitalization. These projects sites are identified through conversations with communities and often address areas of need in a community or specific brownfield areas. One way TAB and the communities can more critically engage in this process is by identifying

historically minoritized neighborhoods and directing resources to these places. In Des Moines, SE 14th Street was recognized as a corridor of need, that had been impacted by the highway. However, SE 14th Street was also home to diverse communities of people who over decades had lived and worked along this corridor with little to no investment. The intentionality to address these communities can help increase the overall impact of the work being done and brings a social change orientation to this process.

Ensure Diverse Voices Are Heard

The “consult” sub-phase begins once an area has been selected for the service-learning project. The intent of this process is to “identify collective values through participatory practices” (Belanger, 2021). Before work can begin and plans are made it is important to gain as much perspective on the community as possible. Students are often unprepared for the service-learning experience, as they often have never been to the community, and do not have the background or understanding necessary to effectively design for the community (Mitchell, 2008). Through surveys, public meetings, interviews, etc. TAB with the help of community stakeholders can inform community members about the service-learning process and begin to understand what the community would like to see done, thus collecting data that can be provided to students to better inform their work. This allows community members to share more about their experiences, as well as their wants, needs, and fears when it comes to revitalization. When progressing through the “consult” sub-phase it is important to gain the perspective of all voices. When distributing surveys, holding public meetings, or conducting interviews unique voices and perspectives are crucial to having a well-rounded background to begin work. Trust can also be built through stakeholders and the community to ensure that those who are impacted by the work being done, feel included in the process of service-learning. Developing trust between communities and stakeholders allows for agendas to be shared and ultimately interventions created that address root causes, transform communities, and lead to sustainable change (Mitchell, 2008, pg. 61).

“Plan” Phase

The plan phase is the next step in the Community Engagement Outline (2021), it is broken down into two sub-phases “Produce & Share” and “Integrate”. This is where the student work takes place. Through design interventions, reports, S.W.O.T analyses, and other methods, students can provide design alternatives for communities to implement and to redevelop and revitalize a

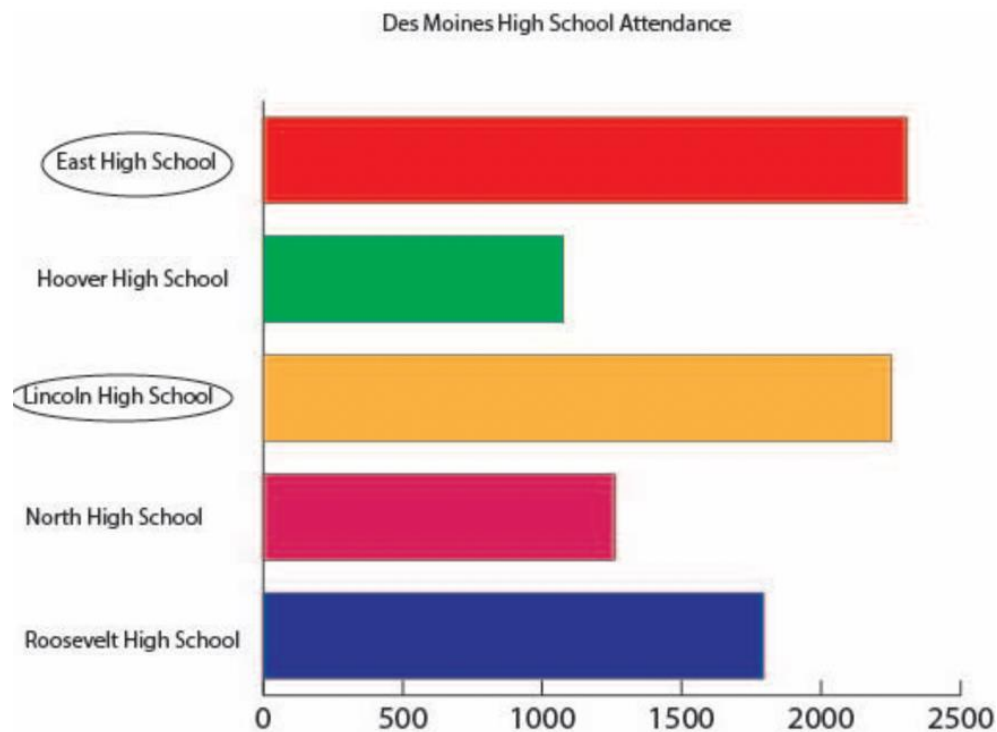
neighborhood or corridor. For critical service-learning to take place in this phase there must be an effort to address root causes, while working to redistribute the power or change the overall perception of the corridor. Mitchell (2008, pg. 52), spoke about the importance of emphasizing social change sharing that critical service learning requires a rethinking of the type of service work that students are involved in, as well as challenging students to understand and address root causes and the course of action necessary to stop the perpetuation of these issues. When looking at this phase through a critical service-learning lens, I make the following recommendations:

- Student work should aim to address root causes of social problems.
- Interventions should shift once work has been shared.

Addressing Root Causes

The Produce & Share sub-phase is the phase in which students are producing planning and design alternatives and share them with the public. Often this is the core of the service-learning process. As talked about in previous chapters, students spend the semester creating design alternatives that are then given to the community to implement. For critical service-learning to take place during this phase, the alternatives should aim to address the root causes of social issues rather than temporary fixes. One such example of this in the SE 14th Street Corridor Project was the suggested building of a new high school as well as a community garden to help address education and food security needs. The SE 14th Street Corridor is served by the two high schools with the largest number of students as shown in **Figure 5.3** and according to the United Way of Central Iowa (2024) children within the Greater Des Moines area have a food insecurity rate of 8.9%. Both issues ask for solutions that help address them both in the present as well as into the future. When service-learning interventions work to address root causes, transform communities, and lead to sustainable change then critical service-learning is at play.

Figure 5.3 Des Moines High School Attendance as of 2021



Note. As of 2021, East High School and Lincoln High School serve the population surrounding SE 14th Street. These schools are some of the oldest in Des Moines, and the most crowded.

Shift in Interventions

The integrated sub-phase is an opportunity for work to be presented to stakeholders and community members for feedback and collaboration. This is a continuation of the produce & share sub-phase by giving the work back to the community. Through public planning workshops, story maps, surveys, and other methods stakeholders can gather feedback and continue to mold the visions and design alternatives to fit the needs of the community. When discussing this phase in terms of critical service-learning continuing to gather the perspective of diverse populations can help make a stronger impact and can also continue to build trust which is crucial through each phase.

“Realize” Phase

The realize phase is the final phase of the Community Engagement Outline (2021), it is broken down in to two sub-phases “Collaborate” and “Nurture & Reinforce”. This phase takes place after the conclusion of the initial student work. It is typically the longest of the three phases as it can take years to implement and continue to develop the work being done in these service-

learning projects. For critical service-learning to take place in this phase communities must continue to evaluate the progress of the work being done, while working to tear down systemic barriers that impact a place's ability for social change. When looking at this phase through a critical service-learning lens, I make the following recommendations:

- Continue to nurture established relationships.
- Engage in more service-learning projects.

Nurturing Established Relationships

Through the collaborative sub-phase stakeholders can continue to foster the relationships they have built while continuing to build new ones. One of the key pillars of the Critical Service-Learning model (2008) is developing authentic relationships. Collins (2000, p. 459) talked about these relationships and their importance sharing "...most relationships across difference are squarely rooted in relations of domination and subordination, we have much less experience relating to people as different but equal". Instead, we must learn to see our differences as "categories of connection," places from which to analyze power, build coalitions, and develop empathy (Collins, 2000)." This idea of seeing our differences as categories of connection is something we must carry through the collaborate phase. Having different views and different perspectives yet treating them with the same value, can lead to ever better work being done.

Further Service-Learning Projects

The Nurture & Reinforce sub-phase is the last of the Community Engagement Outline (2021) and takes the longest to complete. Over the course of decades efforts to redevelop and reinvest in communities can begin to take shape. In Des Moines the Urban Renewal Plan (2021) for SE 14th Street has a life span of 20 years. This means development can continue to shift and change over that time. However, it is important for communities to continue to support the work being done, through monitoring and evaluation, celebration of successes, and transparency of resource allocation. Another opportunity in this phase is to engage and further service-learning projects. Utilizing the talents and skills of different student groups can help fully address the needs of a community. Education, mental health, food security, are all areas that can be addressed through further service-learning.

Final Remarks and Opportunities for Future Research

Through this research I have learned a lot about the challenges and opportunities surrounding highway corridor redevelopment. There are nuances, and many factors that must be considered through each step of the process. Critical service-learning can be a framework that helps communities intentionally invest in communities that have been impacted by the development of highways.

As I continue my work as a planner and begin my professional career, I am inspired by the work that can be accomplished through service-learning. Communities can undergo tremendous amounts of change and growth as simultaneously students are learning skills that will benefit them for the rest of their careers. I am motivated by the fact that this work is not just relevant to SE 14th Street but rather cities and towns across the United States. As a society we have become enamored with the use of the automobile and have cut many neighborhoods in half as an expense to developing more car-centric infrastructure. I believe it is important for the profession because we have planned at the expense of these neighborhoods and now must go back and plan for these neighborhoods.

There are also avenues for future research that I could not explore due to time. These opportunities include further interviews with residents, community members and stakeholders to better understand the impact of the service-learning process. The perspective of the residents living along the SE 14th Street corridor could provide a perspective that was not fully explored through this paper. Furthermore, a check-in of 10, 15, or 20 years could help provide insight on the changes to the corridor through the later phases of the service-learning model. Finally, communication and engagement with the Iowa D.O.T could provide a different perspective to highway corridors that could round out the overall impact of highways and the surrounding development.

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