Existing condition.

The Ingersoll Avenue Improvement Plan
Des Moines, Iowa

Ingersoll Avenue with proposed pedestrian activated crossings, bulb-outs, public art, and overstory trees on the north side.
Billboards on the roof of commercial buildings are a distinguished feature and could, themselves, be a giant canvas for environmental paintings.
Ingersoll Avenue Improvement Plan

MAP 7: Existing and Proposed Tree Canopy

- Dark gray: Existing Overstory Trees
- Light gray: Proposed Overstory Trees and Priority
are either permanent or for sale. This theme could also be incorporated into street signs and bus shelters along the corridor. The Concept Plan indicates the specific locations suitable for public art.

**REDEVELOPMENT OF VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED SITES**

The Concept Plan proposes some redevelopment—the ultimate replacement of vacant sites or obsolete land use patterns with new uses. Areas that require redevelopment are proposed to be developed in ways designed to enhance existing commercial and residential investments. Major redevelopment opportunities addressed in the Plan include:

- Developing the Meadow Gold Dairy site on the south side of Ingersoll Avenue between 17th and 18th Streets with residential, retail, and office uses.

- Developing residential, retail, and office uses on the Thompson Trust site on the northeast corner of Ingersoll Avenue and M.L. King Jr. Parkway.

- Developing residential, retail, and office uses on the former Stew Hansen auto sales site and the existing Stew Hansen used car lot on the north side of Ingersoll Avenue west of M.L. King Jr. Parkway.

- Constructing a new Dahl’s grocery store on the same site as the existing store on the northeast corner of 35th Street and Ingersoll Avenue. The new store would lie immediately north of the existing store and include pedestrian connections to Ingersoll.

**REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION OF IMPORTANT BUILDINGS**

Contextual buildings are one of Ingersoll Avenue’s most important resources. Thus, their preservation and rehabilitation is a key element of an overall improvement strategy for the corridor. Additional financial incentives may be needed to rehabilitate several older apartment buildings and commercial structures along the corridor. Increased publicity of the City of Des Moines’ current incentive of tax abatement on the value of improvements may further stimulate rehabilitation efforts.

**REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

New development along Ingersoll Avenue should follow the street’s historical “streetcar strip” development pattern. With higher-density commercial development focused around key intersections and residential and lower-density commercial development toward the middle of blocks. Similar mixed-use former streetcar corridors in Des Moines, include Sixth, University, and East Grand Avenues. Because these corridors provide vital services to surrounding neighborhoods, the City’s zoning ordinance includes an NPC Neighborhood Pedestrian Commercial district to preserve the pedestrian-oriented mixed-use character of these streets and encourage the continuation of their neighborhood function. At present, NPC
zoning is applied to all areas of Ingersoll Avenue west of the 2100 block. Guidelines for development in the NPC district include the following:

- **Building Location**: Buildings should frame the street and maintain minimal setback from the street.
- **Façade Windows**: Building facades should contain at least 40% of the surface as windows on the first floor of the street façade.
- **Location of Entrance**: The entrance should be oriented toward the street.
- **Building Materials**: Brick, stone, tile, stucco, or horizontal clapboard should be used. Two-story buildings are encouraged.
- **Façade Articulation**: Buildings over 50 feet long should be broken into bays.
- **Building Frontage**: At least 50% of the primary building length should front along the street.

While these guidelines strive to recognize the corridor’s mixed-use character and minimize visual conflicts generated by new development, they sometimes result in new development that does not fit development patterns along Ingersoll. Thus, guidelines should be customized to reflect the character of Ingersoll and other similar streets, including:

- **Encouraging a front yard setback in certain areas**: Aside from commercial buildings in Ingersoll’s “Main Street” character areas discussed earlier, much of the corridor’s development has shallow front yards. These areas retain a pedestrian feel because, unlike suburban strip centers, these setbacks are small and not used for parking. In some instances, NPC guidelines have caused the location of new development to be closer to the sidewalk than surrounding development. Thus, encouraging the setback of new development to match that of existing older developments may reduce visual conflicts and result in a more comfortable development pattern.

- **Encouraging side yard setbacks on corner lots**: Similarly, certain new developments on corner lots abut the sidewalk, while surrounding older developments are set back. The Walgreen building’s 35th Street frontage is an example of a situation where a small building setback would improve the pedestrian environment.

- **Refining permitted uses**: Certain automobile-oriented uses, such as drive-through restaurants, can detract from the neighborhood environment in some areas. The types of uses permitted along the corridor should be revisited in order to better preserve its mixed-use pedestrian-oriented character.

**THE INGERSOLL AVENUE CONCEPT PLAN**

This section includes a more fine-grained overview of the specific recommendations regarding a comprehensive improvement strategy for the Ingersoll Avenue corridor. It applies the Development Principles discussed in the previous section to the specific incremental improvements to the corridor’s public and private environments. The following illustrations present the Concept Plan’s recommendations.