



# Corridor

NOVEMBER 2021



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## MASON CITY SURVEYS NORTH IOWA'S HOUSING NEEDS

**THE CITY OF MASON CITY HAS ENGAGED IN A HOUSING STUDY** to determine North Iowa's needs. The Community Development team at McClure was selected by the City to work with the North Iowa Corridor EDC and other local leaders on identifying the housing needs of the community and implementing new strategies to meet those needs. Public input sessions were held June 21st at the North Iowa Regional Commerce Center where participants were able to provide feedback at a number of interactive stations. Focus groups and other interviews were held with builders, contractors, business leaders, and housing service providers to ask pointed questions about the challenges and opportunities for housing in Mason City. A survey was available to the public through September, and its results are currently being compiled for further analysis.

Major themes from these conversations are:

- Mason City is a great place to raise a family and has a lot of wonderful amenities to be proud of including good schools, recreational facilities and parks, and unique history/architecture

When it comes to challenges there are five major themes

o Affordability – while there are many affordable housing options, many of these properties are in disrepair and need updating to be marketable

o Blight – a number of neighborhoods have areas in great need of improvements but current resources are limited

o Social Services – homelessness is an invisible issue for both individuals and families; many services exist but more resources are needed to meet the need

o Workforce – local employers have noted issues with finding quality housing to place incoming employees

o Need for “missing middle housing” - many homes are available at both ends of the spectrum – very low cost (less than \$100,000) and upper-middle (\$300,000+)

- Focus Groups noted a “lack of financial resources to address home renovations” as one of the top issues to reduce blight and improve the available housing stock for low to moderate income households

In addition a public survey was made available to allow the general public to share their insights in the current housing situation. While the final survey results have not yet been released, we have been able to identify some key themes from the 200+ participants to date:

- Those respondents “dissatisfied” with their current housing stated “too small” and “outdated” as top issues

- Response to “Most needed housing type to be built” is single family homes less than \$150,000 – likely to be addressed with renovation of existing homes

- Top barrier to home ownership – (1) lack of preferred housing type, (2) lack of down payment, and (3) monthly payment too expensive/unaffordable

Housing availability is a key economic development concern and has become a primary objective of the Corridor. This study will help the City, the North Iowa Corridor, and local leaders identify and develop strategies and initiatives to address the issue and ensure we are able to provide the types of housing necessary to attract and retain people in our communities.

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