

# Valley Junction Residential Association & Friends of Valley Junction

Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Why did you move to or stay in HWDM?

Themes:

- Family Connection/Legacy
- Community Feel
- Small Town Feel in a Big City
- Affordability
- Older Homes
- Character & Charm

Notes:

- Born & raised, family legacy, family church, family
- Found a community in Valley Junction, got involved in the residents group, owned several properties here, neighbors/people are great
- People power - resident groups are making things happen
- Love the area, a lot of improvements being made to old housing stock, parks, 5<sup>th</sup> street shopping/dining district, great people
- Small town within a big city
- Special place to grow up, City. has grown over the years but 5<sup>th</sup> street and Valley Junction stays the same, neighborhood is worth preserving
- Moved here for the affordability, the older housing stock, the dense neighborhood feel, and the potential
- Moved here for the walkability, an active community (lots of biking and walking), wanted a house and neighborhood with character instead of a development/"McMansion"
- Pedestrian and bicycle access, sidewalks, grid system, compact city, old housing
- Valley Junction has charm and character, it's very walkable and save, close to a big city, unlike any other neighborhood in the metro area

## What do you see is the biggest challenge?

Notes:

- **Property Maintenance**
  - **Orangeburg Pipe/Sewer Systems** – deteriorating pipes/sewers, which is on the residents to fix and its very costly (\$15K-\$25K) and can condemn a house
  - **Foundations** – flooding and soft soil are ruining foundations in the older homes, very costly for residents who are also trying to maintain and improve their homes in other ways

- **City Assistance/Resident Support** – income generated or credit based support makes it difficult, financial support would allow residents to fix up existing housing stock
- **NIMBY-ism**
- **Competition with investment property owners**
- **Utility Lines** – not buried; aesthetic and functional problem

## What is not here but should be?

Notes:

- **Bike Infrastructure**
  - Need bike access TO valley junction
    - Cross buttons are in bad places for people on bikes
    - Railroad, 63<sup>rd</sup> and Grand make VJ an island
  - Make 5<sup>th</sup> street a ped walk
  - More bike parking throughout commercial area (5<sup>th</sup> street)
  - Better/safe bike lanes
  - Better driver education
- **Walkability**
  - Would like to improve on existing walkability
- **Paved alleys**
  - Either dust or water/flooding issues due to gravel
  - Traffic for homes that back up to businesses
  - Money from alley improvements got reallocated to 5<sup>th</sup> street for “knee bumpers” around trees for “pedestrian safety”
- **Holiday Park** – safety/security issues
- **Zoning Enforcement**
  - Legal non-conforming uses have been expanded but yet not enforced
  - Lack of enforcement is creating health issues
  - Property values are hurting
- **Neighborhood safety**
  - Need more lighting for safety – both on streets and in parks
  - Need traffic control on residential roads
  - 11<sup>th</sup> & Maple – run stop sign going into park
- **Railroad Ave**
  - Overbuilt
  - Dangerous for pedestrians/bikes
  - Protected Bike lane would be great - connected to existing lane and Holiday Park
  - Protected sidewalk would be great
  - Pedestrian by-pass would be great, but too expensive – what’s the alternative? Crossing/Light at 11<sup>th</sup> ?
  - Railroad is a highway – no lead time to stop for pedestrians when turning onto residential streets or 5<sup>th</sup> street
- **Pharmacy, Bodega, or Market** on 5<sup>th</sup> Street

- **Splash Pad at Holiday Park**
- **“Cultural Area”**
  - Some sort of recognition of the history about how Blacks and Hispanics have helped build this city
  - Better representation of Valley Junction
  - Add to maple street signage – “John & Barbara Long”
  - Culture, diversity, representation, history
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Cultural District of West Des Moines?
- **Aren’t enough families**
  - What can we do for families?
  - Some of larger homes have been divided into two or multiple family homes
- **Housing and education**
- **Owner-occupied single-family homes**
  - More single family homes
  - Landlord owned properties are poorly maintained
  - Out of state, out of mind landlords – don’t maintain or fix-up homes & rent units for too much
  - How do we grow and improve Valley Junction without displacing people who are here and have been here
  - Also need to maintain a variety of housing
- **Fund community organizations and centers**
  - City could help with this or help find funding
  - ChangeX.org – work with large investors who provide grants to locals who can start community based programs
  - Community “workshop” and tool library would help homeowners

## How are City Services in WDM?

Notes:

- Parks and Rec is great
- Snow removal is good
- Neighborhood is clean
- Does a good job with what they have to work with
- Trash can be an issue – especially if you are walking around neighborhood
  - More trash receptacles?

## Transition Between Uses

Notes:

- Parking is a big complaint – need more bike parking!
- Accidents at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Vine
- 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, Vine are local collectors
- Need better traffic control along 5<sup>th</sup> both for safety and for the transition
- People fly down Vine and 5<sup>th</sup> – not safe for pedestrians

- In the best interest of businesses to work with residents
- Valley Junction foundation has a good handle on 5<sup>th</sup> street
- Cohesion between neighborhood groups
- If you lose the historic style downtown, you lose the community – Because of the draw and because of taxes
- Focus on the residential part of HWDM and its residents is as important as business