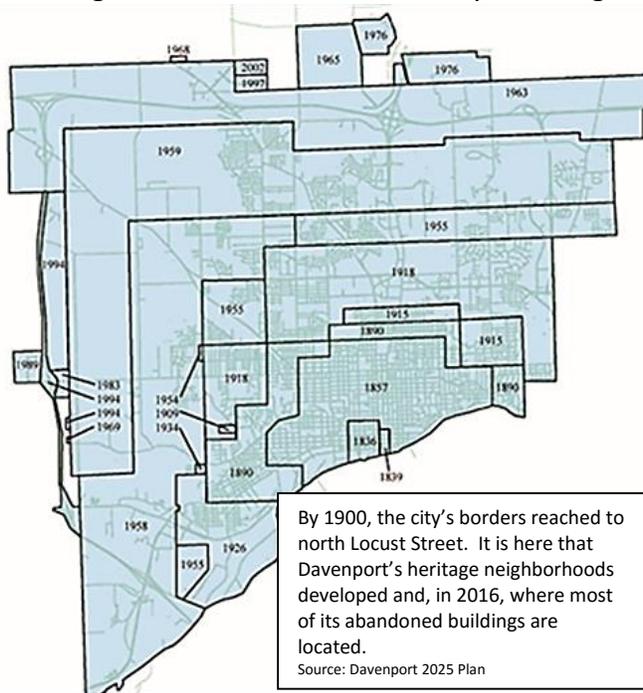


Going...Going...GONE! Preventing Demolition in Davenport's Heritage Neighborhoods

Executive Summary

Thanks to the actions of innovative city planners in 1979, one of the largest collection of National Register properties in the state of Iowa is in Davenport. The city hired the first full time municipal architectural historian in the state who, over the course of the next six years, listed more than 1650 buildings in the Register.

Unfortunately, soon after the process for listing buildings was completed, the city began losing newly listed properties.¹ In the years that followed, more historic properties were lost through demolition, most in the city's heritage neighborhoods.



As is true for many cities, Davenport's oldest neighborhoods are those closest to her old downtown. Much of this area, about five square miles, has been marginalized by long term development patterns as well as local attitudes. The area suffers from an ongoing issue with vacant and abandoned properties.

These are Davenport's heritage neighborhoods and include her National Register districts as well as unlisted adjacent areas. Taken as a group, they are a record of the city's architectural history, a landscape of diverse, affordable housing stock. Within these heritage areas, the loss of infrastructure is harmful to "big H" historic neighborhoods—those listed in the National Register—as well as the "little h" historic

neighborhoods—those surrounding them.

Buildings in these neighborhoods are those most often targeted for demolition. This report will examine Davenport's use of demolition to deal with abandoned properties, look at how other cities are coping with the issue and offer action steps to more effectively address the threat to heritage neighborhoods.

Davenport's 2016 Demolition Plans

Demolition is a city initiative that tends to be cyclical; in 2015, Davenport entered another such phase when city council approved a plan to remove thirty-three properties that

were vacant or abandoned. Twelve were properties listed in the National Register and all thirty-three were in heritage neighborhoods. After residents expressed concerns, city staff removed most of the National Register properties from the active demolition list. In January 2016, city council approved a \$273,140 contract to demolish twenty-one homes.²

Traditionally, the city's demolition program appears to function like reverse triage. In any given year, it is an impossible task to deal with all the abandoned buildings. So the worst cases, or those that receive the most complaints, are addressed first. With funds and staff time exhausted, less challenged buildings are left for another day. There are two problems with this approach. First, for the properties demoed, there is no comprehensive plan for the empty neighborhood parcels left behind and very little new construction in the offing.

The exception is a recent effort on East 6th Street where properties have been demolished to make way for three new income-restricted, city-built homes; the city owns other nearby parcels and is seeking developers interested in building more.³ While this attempt is laudable, it is limited to a few houses in a small area.

The second problem with the city's approach is that less troubled properties are left to continue to deteriorate until they too are in such poor condition that demolition seems the only alternative.

It should be noted that, while this report deals mainly with city activity, demolition within heritage neighborhoods is also carried out by a number of co-located institutions who are attempting to address blight or meet their expansion needs. Their actions complicate development of comprehensive solutions to the issue.

Failure to act proactively and lax code enforcement coupled with an unwillingness to use all available legal tools to tackle the issue are frequent charges by critics of city demolition policies. Budget restraints that have reduced available staff time along with a perceived lack of political will to act more aggressively are often offered as reasons for the current state. A number of strategies to address abandoned properties have been implemented, but a satisfactory resolution has not been found for a challenge that impacts so many neighborhoods.

Earlier Attempts to Address Abandoned Properties

Attorney Charlie Brooke announced his 2001 campaign for Davenport mayor standing in front of two derelict west side buildings. Brooke grew up in a turn-of-the-century

So How Did We Get Here?

How did so many buildings in Davenport's heritage neighborhoods come to be in poor condition? In 1870, Davenport was Iowa's largest city. The original town that developed along streets running east and west along the riverfront gave way to newer neighborhoods close to the downtown and designed in a grid pattern. By 1900, maintaining a position as one of the state's three largest communities, Davenport had developed a solid matrix from the river to today's Vander Veer Park of a dense and lively central business district bordered by industry at its east and west edges and along its riverfront. To the north, residential neighborhoods were interspersed with small commercial districts. All was connected by street car lines running throughout the city and to nearby communities.

The arrival of the automobile encouraged expansion of the city beyond its turn-of-the-century boundaries. Pent up demand for housing after World War II continued to spur growth. Between 1916 and 1960, Davenport's footprint grew from 8.79 miles to 47.62 miles; in 2016, the city limits encompasses 62.8 square miles.

As happened in many cities, gridded neighborhoods gave way to developments with curvilinear streets and large lots. Older sections were rezoned to accommodate higher density. Their large family homes were became subdivided rentals. Disinvestment by single family owners gave way to more and more absentee landlords and rental housing in buildings not constructed for that purpose. The city's heritage neighborhoods began losing ground as desirable places to live.

neighborhood. As the city's old urban core neighborhoods continued to decline, he became concerned that young Davenport families would not have the same options to enjoy the city as he had.⁴ Brooke won his race, and, under his administration, appointed an Abandoned Housing Task Force to deal with vacant and abandoned housing and later launched the HAPPEN program that incentivized private rehab of such buildings.⁵

But Brooke wasn't the only mayor to tussle with the issue. Fifteen years before, native son Thom Hart, elected in the middle of the farm crisis, took office at a time when the city supported demolition "at a fever pitch."⁶ Believing that "demolition is a total failure for everyone,"⁷ he also made addressing abandoned properties a central focus, appointing a task force and demolition review board to make hard decisions about what should go and what should be saved and working with banks to establish a Central City lending program to prospective homebuyers.⁸

The problem stretched even further back than Hart or Brooke. In 1935, a state planning board surveyed housing conditions in Davenport. It found much of the housing in the city's core area to be 40% or more rental.⁹

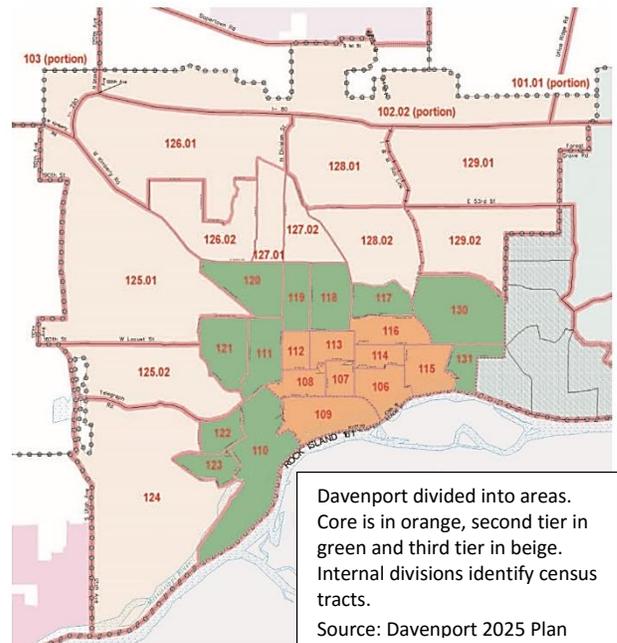
Scope of the Problem

In 2005, the city issued its "Davenport 2025" comprehensive plan. That plan divided the city into three areas: Core, second tier, and third tier based on annexation dates. Davenport's heritage neighborhoods fall into the core area. The plan noted that, in addition to containing much of the city's rich architectural heritage, the core was also defined by higher-than-average vacancy rates as well as greater numbers of abandoned and deteriorated buildings.¹⁰

Vacant or abandoned properties can be a threat to the stability of neighborhoods and are often found in and around designated historic districts,¹¹ but haphazard demolition can bring its own set of issues. In neighborhoods where redevelopment is slow, vacant lots are like missing teeth in the streetscape. Developers assert that they cannot afford to build just a few houses at a time. Empty spaces begin to impact overall neighborhood wellbeing and issues like safety and walkability. Existing homeowners may opt to go elsewhere, unsure of their city's intentions for other at-risk properties.

The growth away from old neighborhoods creates urban sprawl that stresses a city's resources.¹² Demolishing rather than rehabbing infrastructure does not support sustainability. Sustainability is a critical factor for a city with slow population growth since municipal funding is driven by property tax revenues.

Between 1970 and 2000, 3,750 Davenport housing units were demolished, almost all within the core.¹³ Some were lost to fire or planned flood control measures, but many were



simply pulled down after years of neglect. The core area lost one quarter—25%-- of its housing units and more than 3,600 residents.¹⁴

During this same period Davenport added 11,656 housing units, most built in the third tier; that tier also saw dramatic population growth.¹⁵ Subtracting housing units lost, net units increased by 7,906.

Why was the core area so dramatically impacted? Part of the answer may be found in population fluctuations between 1970 and 2000. Davenport grew steadily during the first eight decades of the 20th century at a rate faster than the state overall; in 1980, the city’s population topped 103,000. But, hit

by the impact of the farm crisis, the city lost more than 8,000 residents between 1980 and 1990. It would take forty years for it to pass the 100,000 mark

Area	1980 Pop	1990 Pop	Change	% Change	1980/1990 Vacancy Rate
Core	31,580	25,287	-6,293	-20%	8.93/14.76
Tier 2	38,298	34,492	-3,806	-10%	3.20/4.68
Tier 3	33,701	35,921	2,220	7%	3.71/5.22

Source: Author table using figures from Davenport 2025 Plan.

again.¹⁶ During this decade of severe economic challenge, the core area suffered most, losing 20% of its population and reaching double digit vacancy rates.

The “2025” plan published in 2005, noted the number of vacant or abandoned properties at 150.¹⁷ In December, 2015, the city developed a similar list. Unfortunately, it included 233 buildings over and above the thirty-three structures that staff was already asking permission to demolish. Of the 233 buildings, 201 were in heritage neighborhoods. Of that group, thirty-one were National Register properties.¹⁸ It is clear that identified historic properties continue to be at risk.

What’s the Long Term Impact on Davenport’s Heritage Neighborhoods?

The impact is graphically illustrated by what has happened in Davenport’s Hamburg Historic District. This neighborhood began its resurgence after its listing in the National Register; urban pioneers began reclaiming streets where whole blocks had been abandoned. Today, it is the most active historic district in the city, with an energetic neighborhood association, a strong voice at city hall, and events designed to draw visitors. Private owner investment has driven its resurgence. Despite this, it has lost ninety-two houses and forty outbuildings of its original 360 structures.¹⁹ The October 2016 demolition list included six houses in the Hamburg District.

The city’s demotion plans put at risk private investment by individuals living in heritage neighborhoods. These are the very residents a city needs; they tend to be stabilizing forces. Without Davenport’s support for another alternative to demolition, individuals able to invest might rethink their options since haphazard demolition does not align with neighborhood stability.

Dick Stone and his wife Linda live in nearby Muscatine. In 2015, they began restoring the iconic 1857 Lambrite-Iles-Petersen House in the Hamburg Historic District, a project that will

cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete. Recently Stone spoke before the Historic Preservation Commission to share his concerns about the city's approach to demolition:

"We didn't want to invest a lot of money only to find out that [the property] would succumb to urban blight...With the house being part of the Hamburg Historic District and the City's stated desire to find a way to address and help save homes in this significant area, we felt fairly confident that this was going in the right direction and our efforts in restoring could serve as an example for others to do the same.

"What has happened since? In less than a year there is now a new list of six homes within the Hamburg Historic District, among...others...that are slated for demolition. Was the city's stated desire to find a way to address [the Lambrite-Iles-Petersen House]...just a feeble, one-shot attempt to appease the preservationists? We now sit with a property in the midst of restoration with a view of a historic Mueller home slated to be demolished. If things continue down the same path I could see another half dozen houses disappearing within the next five to ten years. Eventually the neighborhood would cease to exist."²⁰

How the City Deals with Abandoned Buildings

Lacking programs like HAPPEN or Hart's Central City Lending program, the city's fallback position is demolition. A building that is simply "vacant" one year, defined in the city code as able to be secured by conventional means, can move to the "abandoned" category-- unoccupied and deemed hazardous because entry is unsecured²¹-- the next. Public Works can order boarding or securing of a building through notices to the owner; if the department is forced to take this action, the owner is assessed for the cost. As the building deteriorates, orders progress to the point of "Repair/Tear Down" notices. This process can take many years or just a few. Properties that have received a Repair/Tear Down notice can be moved to a demolition list; individual properties chosen for demolition are based on certain criteria.²² If the city decides to demolish, it invokes the city's police powers and references city code dealing with "dangerous buildings." The city then issues a contract to private demolition companies who proceed with the action. The city assesses the now empty lot for the cost of the work.²³

Demolition is expensive; the most recent contract listed costs of \$9,000 to \$16,500 per building.²⁴ Using its current demolition procedure, the city never owns the building being taken down. In meetings with city staff and council members on a number of rehabilitation projects, the statement that "the city has no interest in owning abandoned properties" is a common part of the conversation.²⁵ What that also means is that, when the work is done, the city doesn't own the empty lot and so has no control over its future use. Since the owners of most of these buildings have walked away long ago, their most likely next action is to do nothing. Typically, the now vacant lots become derelict, city crews have to perform maintenance and snow removal, and more city assessments are charged against the property.²⁶ Eventually, these lots end up with other abandoned parcels and buildings as part of a public auction conducted by the county. In order to ready the properties for sale, the county wipes the slate clean of liens or assessments.²⁷ Often, the auctioneer's hammer falls for less than one hundred dollars per lot.

During the latest round of demolition proposals, city staff, by its own admission, did not enter buildings to inspect them before placing them on the demolition list despite the fact that

existing city code permits entry for inspection.²⁸ Those opposing wholesale demolition are left wondering if the city really has a good handle on what it is tearing down.

Addressing the Issue

Davenport isn't the only city in America or in Iowa dealing with abandoned buildings. Slow growth areas all over the country are looking for solutions since older housing stock often goes hand in hand with abandoned properties. Davenport's housing stock is older than the state average and that of the nation. The same is true for its nearby neighbors Burlington and Dubuque.²⁹ Both cities are working aggressively to address abandoned property concerns. It is time for Davenport to seek new solutions.

- **Get proactive.** Davenport must become involved in addressing abandoned properties prior to their becoming so derelict that demolition becomes the only option. Properties in distress have obvious issues. A vacant structure that evolves to one that requires repeated calls for weed and brush clearance, generates neighborhood complaints of vandalism, or has unpaid utility and sewer bills are early warning signs of trouble. A look back at the history of the thirty-three houses on the city's October demolition list shows a clear pattern of city assessments for work it had to perform.³⁰ The Public Works department does an excellent job of keeping track of such buildings making earlier intervention possible.
- **Establish an "Abandoned Property" commission or board.** Prior attempts have focused on task forces which are temporary in nature. A commission with legal standing and specific ordinances guiding it would have the power to make recommendations to city council. Such a commission should include core area residents. The commission could be charged with developing a comprehensive plan and making an annual report to city council on its progress.
- **Adopt a "demolition by neglect" ordinance.** These locally drafted pieces of legislation prohibit neglect of protected classes of properties; scope can vary from city to city. Davenport should look north to Dubuque, a city that has implemented such a code; their language protects local landmarks and landmark sites, structures in historic districts and conservation districts.³¹
- **Implement better management tools for vacant properties.** The city should rethink how it defines and manages vacant or abandoned buildings to permit earlier intervention. Once again, Dubuque offers how this might be accomplished; it has taken steps that allow it additional oversight of potential problem properties earlier in the cycle. In its city code, "Vacant" is defined by at least one of eight different characteristics that range from unable to be secured in a conventional fashion to being without utilities. Buildings so identified must be annually registered with the city and an annual fee must be paid. This registration gives Dubuque the right to enter the structures for inspection every year.³² Dubuque also does not permit long term boarding

of buildings. Improper boarding that does not address moisture retention can be extremely unhealthy for heritage buildings.

- **Name it and claim it.** Davenport’s city code does not include a definition for an abandoned property. Since derelict properties are an endemic issue, closer attention to defining what the city means by the term “abandoned” might give everyone—city staff, council, and property owners—a common understanding. Iowa Code solves this problem; Section 657A.10A lists nine different characteristics by which a property may legally be deemed abandoned; not all characteristics are required to define a property as such.³³
- **Take a lesson from neighboring cities and expand enforcement options using all legal means.** To date, Davenport has been unwilling to use the powerful state enabling code found in section 657A.10A. The language is unique among all states,³⁴ and allows Iowa municipalities to petition district court for title to properties deemed abandoned. In the most expedient cases, the entire petition and final hearing process can take as little as ninety days. The code allows cities to act before abandoned buildings become so derelict that rehab is financially unfeasible. Davenport can look to Burlington for examples of how effective this tool can be. Since 2007, the city has petitioned for ownership of over one hundred properties. Of those, thirty were demolished, but seventy were auctioned to new owners under firm rehabilitation timetables. All but two of the vacated lots were sold or donated. By 2015, most of the properties coming to Burlington through 657A.10A were in much better condition than was the case when the program began; the city is now intervening before buildings become severely deteriorated. By October 2015, the city had generated more than \$275,000 in auction sales.³⁵ Since 2014, 657A.10A is one of the tools Dubuque uses to deal with abandoned properties. Trying to determine the desired outcome before making the decision to use 657A.10A is part of the city’s strategy.³⁶
Davenport staff and aldermen have stated that there is no political will to use 657A.10A and that the city does not want to become the owner of abandoned properties. Like Dubuque, Burlington ascertains community interest prior to beginning 657A.10A procedures. The city’s attorney reports almost no property rights protests to the city’s petitions or the court’s rulings. City residents have generally been very happy that the city is addressing its abandoned building issue.³⁷
Even if the outcome of the 657A.10A process is possession with intent to demolish, the process would permit Davenport to land bank parcels and managing future development.
- **Consider a more comprehensive demolition review process.** Demolition review is limited to that done by the Historic Preservation Commission on behalf of the approximately 1600 National Register properties still standing in Davenport. Generally, eligibility for listing in the National Register cannot be considered until a structure is at least fifty years old. New properties age into that eligibility each year while the rate of National Register survey work tends to lag behind. Some Iowa cities have implemented

demolition review of buildings based on age. Des Moines now does demolition review for any residential property eighty years or older and commercial properties fifty years or older. Cedar Rapids initiates demolition review for any building fifty years or older. Each community establishes its own criteria.³⁸

- **Mothball rather than demolish buildings, regardless of condition, that have economic development options.** Iowa is one of thirty-five states offering historic tax credits. Those credits extend to residential/non-income producing historic structures.³⁹ Demolishing National Register properties that are likely eligible for these credits does not make good economic development sense. It's a lesson the city should have learned during the rehabilitation of many downtown buildings using state and federal tax credits. The projects have poured millions of dollars into the area and brought new residents into refurbished buildings. All twelve of the National Register properties the city put on its October demolition list are most likely eligible for the 25% state historic tax credit against rehabilitation expenses. Since the state incentive is paid as a credit or as a cash rebate once the work is done, the program could help cash-strapped owners offset rehabilitation costs. In the Hamburg Historic District, twenty-one residential projects resulted in approved tax credits of more than \$513,000.⁴⁰ Given tight economic times, it doesn't behoove anyone to leave any money on the table.
- **Enforce existing city maintenance codes for all properties.** While most conversations addressing code enforcement center on rental properties, the city's maintenance code applies to all buildings. The perception persists that owner-occupied homes appear to be given a pass in terms of addressing property issues.⁴¹ Yet the city code clearly allows inspectors to address both.⁴² City staff may argue that it does not have enough inspectors to cover every non-compliant building. City council should ask itself if Davenport can really afford the long term civic cost burden and property tax revenue loss that accompany derelict neighborhoods.
- **When residents tackle rehab of abandoned properties, be flexible in enforcing city codes.** Rehab of vacant buildings sometimes carries with it stricter code enforcement since the expectation is that all elements will be brought up to current guidelines. This can make the work more difficult than it already is; some codes may be incompatible with heritage building construction.⁴³ At times, rehabbers have encountered issues in getting permits from the city when they are needed before utility companies will begin work.

Two recent examples encountered during historic rehabs illustrate the challenge. In the first case, the owner of a home purchased at a foreclosure sale needed a permit to turn on natural gas so that he could then fill and heat the home's boiler to test it. The sale took place in midwinter. The city's policy is not to issue gas permits in a house with an untested heating system. However, filling a cold boiler during severely cold winter is courting disaster. City staff would not alter its position; the homeowner had to wait until spring to test the boiler.

In another case, an owner of an historic residence purchased from the city was refused a permit to run a temporary electrical line from his already installed construction power pole to turn on a newly installed furnace as winter approached. The city purchase agreement required that permanent power lines be buried. The owner was requesting a temporary hook up so work could continue through the cold months ahead. Permit denial meant no heat and so no work during the entire winter and another rehab put on hold. Homeowners are often hesitant to argue with inspectors since they know they will be coming back for other approvals later.⁴⁴

Both problems could have been addressed by issuing temporary use permits to the homeowners that would have allowed them to continue to work while giving the city the right to re-inspect.

- **Require that institutions doing business in core areas maintain published, long term development plans.** Two colleges, one medical center and numerous religious organizations are sited within the city's heritage neighborhoods and engage in demolition. The city as well as private property owners—the major investors in heritage neighborhoods—should have access to their development plans since they can have a dramatic impact on neighborhood landscapes, transportation routes and quality of life. For example, the conflict surrounding a proposed St. Ambrose Planned Institutional District (PID) plan brought it and surrounding neighborhoods into conflict.⁴⁵ Not knowing what the future brings can be a destabilizing force for already fragile neighborhoods.
- **Take a long, hard look at “rightsizing.”** Rightsizing is a strategy being used by many cities to address issues of abandoned properties. It seeks a balanced approach to planning, weighing long term housing needs and population trends against existing infrastructure and resources. It brings together planners, code enforcement specialists and preservationists. It attempts to think strategically and to avoid hit-or-miss approaches to problem solving.⁴⁶ Davenport's upward population trajectory is an advantage that many cities using the rightsizing approach don't enjoy. Still, its challenge of abandoned properties remains enough of an issue to warrant a more proactive approach.

Conclusion

Since the 2005 publication of “Davenport 2025,” residents can feel good about many improvements to their city. The resurgence of downtown as an exciting place to live and the emergence of Hilltop Campus Village along major transportation corridors are examples of promising revitalization within the city's core area.

Less bright and less certain is the future of the city's heritage neighborhoods. Programs without income restrictions like “HAPPEN” and “100 Homes” that focused on retaining rather than removing buildings have given way, once again, to demolition.

From the standpoint of overall population in the city’s heritage neighborhoods, removing what are considered problem properties doesn’t appear to be encouraging residents to move back in. 2014 population levels in the core area were even lower than in 1990.

Area	1980 Pop	1990 Pop	Change 1980-1990	% Change 1980-1990	2014 Pop	Change 1990-2014	% Change 1990-2014
Core	31,580	25,287	-6,293	-20%	24,484	(803)	-3.2%
Tier 2	38,298	34,492	-3,806	-10%	31,610	(2,882)	-8.4%
Tier 3	33,701	35,921	2,220	7%	45,329	9,408	26.2%

Source: Author table using 1980 and 1990 figures from Davenport 2025 Plan and 2014 figures from U.S. Census American FactFinder site.

Davenport—its residents, council and staff-- can and should do better by this five-square-mile heart of the city. It must begin to rethink its approach to all of its heritage neighborhoods, not just its historic districts. The city’s history does not stop at the border of one historic district, skip the streets in between, and pick up again at the boundary of the next designated neighborhood.

These are neighborhoods still packed with sturdy homes that celebrate the rich architectural legacy of the city. They offer affordable options for new homebuyers priced out of new construction. With demolition and construction debris taking up an estimated one-third of space in landfills,⁴⁷ saving these homes is the ultimate in living sustainably.

In 1836, one hundred and eighty years ago, bold men established this city. The challenges before them were daunting and the road before them was uncertain. They did not succeed by being timid or conventional. In 2016, Davenport should take inspiration from their achievements and develop a new vision for its heritage neighborhoods.

Endnotes

¹ The largest immediate losses were in downtown Davenport. Rejuvenate Davenport began in February, 1987. Its goal was to stimulate economic development in a struggling area. In order to attract future development, it employed a strategy of building clearance. More than fifty buildings were taken down over the next few years by the group. Don Decker, in discussion with author, October 14, 2014. Decker founded Rejuvenate.

² “City of Davenport, Iowa Tabulation of Bids,” Davenport City Council agenda packet, February 3, 2016, accessed February 4, 2016, at <http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/departments/division.php?structureid=69>.

³ Alma Gaul, “Jump-Starting a Down-And-Out East Davenport Neighborhood,” *The Quad City Times*, November 9, 2015, accessed April 20, 2016, at http://qctimes.com/lifestyles/jump-starting-a-down-and-out-east-davenport-neighborhood/article_bc5f0529-523e-5314-a7a6-5081c16d8cd5.html.

⁴ Duncan Brooke, in discussion with author, November 11, 2015. Charlie Brooke died in 2007. Duncan Brooke, his brother, who had helped Brooke restore a property in the Village of East Davenport, provided insight into the source of his brother’s motivation surrounding the city’s abandoned housing issue. Also, Tom Saul, “Davenport Targets Properties in the Inner City,” *Quad City Times*, May 22, 2004.

⁵ Thirty-nine homes were rehabilitated under the HAPPEN program. A shorter lived “100 Homes” program helped fund purchase of fifteen residential buildings. Both ended in 2011. Bruce Berger, email with author, December 14, 2015.

⁶ Thom Hart, in discussion with author, December 4, 2015.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Iowa State Planning Board*, “Committee on Health and Housing Davenport Iowa,” May, 1935, Plate XXX.

¹⁰ “Davenport 2025: Comprehensive Plan for the City,” September 7, 2005, accessed January 12, 2016, at <http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/egov/documents/13181153457656.pdf>. 2025, 90.

¹¹ Sarah Galvan, “Rehabilitation Rehab through State Building Codes,” *Yale Law Review*, p. 1756. Galvan sources a 2002 speech by Richard Moe, President of The National Trust, to the U. S. Congress of Mayors, who stated that 60% of buildings within historic districts were in census tracts with a poverty level of 20% or more.

Also see Jeffery Fraser, “The Cost of Blight,” *Pittsburgh Quarterly*, Fall, 2011, accessed at <http://www.pittsburghquarterly.com/index.php/Region/the-cost-of-blight/All-Pages.html>. Fraser’s article covers issues in Pennsylvania cities, extreme examples of the blight created by abandoned properties that include eroding a city’s tax base and the values for nearby homes as well as stymying neighborhood revitalization efforts.

¹² “Davenport 2025,” 115.

¹³ Ibid, 90-91.

¹⁴ Ibid, 90.

¹⁵ Ibid, 90.

¹⁶ “Population History for Iowa’s 25 Largest Cities 1850-2010,” accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://urbandale.org/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1008> and “Davenport 2025,” 94-95.

¹⁷ “Davenport 2025,” 90.

¹⁸ Davenport Public Works Department “Suspected Vacant” spreadsheet. Received by author December 1, 2015. Author reviewed each address for location or presence on Iowa SHPO “Davenport Iowa Site Inventory.”

¹⁹ Rebecca McCarley, Email with author. April 12, 2016. McCarley is an architectural historian currently re-surveying the Hamburg Historic District.

²⁰ Dick Stone, speaking before Davenport’s Historic Preservation Commission, March 8, 2016. The quote is from Stone’s notes he prepared for the meeting.

²¹ “Chapter 8.16 Securing of Abandoned Buildings,” accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://clerkshq.com/default.aspx?clientsite=davenport-ia>.

²² These criteria are not defined on the city’s website nor were they revealed in discussions with city staff in December 2015. Staff spoke of a “matrix” that had been used to determine how houses on the current selection list had been chosen, but did not respond when asked to elaborate.

²³ “Vacant/Abandoned Structures,” accessed April 19, 2016, at <http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/eGov/apps/services/index.egov?view=detail;id=597>.

²⁴ “Addresses Intended for Demolition,” sheet included in Davenport city council packet for its meeting January 27, 2016, accessed February 4, 2016, at <http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/department/division.php?structureid=69>.

²⁵ This comment has been repeated in many conversations with city staff and council members.

²⁶ Chris Western, in discussion with author, October 9, 2015. Western is a Key Planner/Brownfield Coordinator for the city of Waterloo. Western discussed the legal means used to demolish buildings in Waterloo prior to the city using 657A.10A, enabling state legislation that expedites the process. Davenport still uses the old method.

²⁷ Tim Huey, in discussion with author, November 17, 2015. Huey is the Scott County Planning and Development Director. In this capacity, he also deals with properties purchased at tax certificate sales.

²⁸ This question was asked in two meetings where the author was present. The first was a Historic Preservation Commission work session with commissioners and Public Works staff on November 10, 2015 and the second was a meeting on December 18, 2015, between city staff and members of the Gold Coast-Hamburg Historic District Association.

²⁹ “The Implications of Older Housing Stock for Cities,” accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-cities-old-housing-stock.html>, and “\$60 Million and Counting: The Cost of Vacant and Abandoned Properties to Eight Ohio Cities,” accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://www.greaterohio.org/files/policy-research/execsummary.pdf>.
When it comes to older housing stock, the state of Iowa faces a greater challenge; for eastern Iowa cities, among the oldest in the state, that challenge is magnified. The percentage of Iowa’s housing stock built before 1970 is 54.2%; the US average is 40.5%. Among three eastern Iowa cities, a whopping 74.9% of Burlington’s housing stock was built prior to 1970; Davenport at 64% and Dubuque at 63.9% are comparatively better, but still below the state average. Both Burlington and Dubuque are coming up with proactive approaches to demolition that permit more positive and cost effective outcomes. Source: “American Fact Finder,” related community pages, http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

³⁰ The Scott County assessor website lists property assessments for each parcel. The author used that resource to research the history of all thirty-three parcels.

³¹ “Demolition of Landmarks, Landmark Sites, and Structures in Historic Districts and Conservation Districts,” accessed April 20, 2016, at http://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/m_index.php?book_id=803.

³² “Buildings,” accessed April 21, 2016, at http://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/m_index.php?book_id=803. Dubuque’s definition for “Vacant” is one or more of the following characteristics: Unsecured; secured by means other than those used in the design of the building; declared a “dangerous building” as defined in other parts of the code; unfit for occupancy as determined by the city manager; noncompliant with the international property maintenance code; having housing, building, fire, health or zoning code violations; open to vagrants, vandals, children or the unwary; not receiving service by public utilities. And Crenna Brumwell, in discussion with author, November 11, 2015 and April 26, 2016. Brumwell is Assistant City Attorney for Dubuque.

³³ Iowa Code, “Chapter 657A Abandoned or Unsafe Buildings-Abatement by Rehabilitation,” accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://coolice.legis.iowa.gov/cool-ice/default.asp?category=billinfo&service=iowacode&input=657A>. 657A.10A lists nine elements that can define the term “Abandoned.” They include any of the following: Presence of unpaid special assessments; lack of utilities; occupancy status; code issues; exposure leading to deterioration; boarding; presence of vermin or debris; amount of communication city has had with owner; compliance history of owner.

³⁴ The author has extensively surveyed this topic and can find no other example of this law in any state code. While other states permit receivership and some allow cities to require purchasers to sell tax certificates to them (Iowa's code permits both), to date, no other state has passed a law like 657A.10A. Lawyer Will Cook with the National Trust agrees that this is the case.

³⁵ Eric Tysland, in discussion with author, October 9, 2015. Tysland wears two city hats in Burlington as both its Parks and Community Development Director.

³⁶ Brumwell interview, April 26, 2016.

³⁷ Scott Power, in discussion with author, October 5, 2015. Attorney Power is in private practice but has worked with the city of Burlington's city attorney for 30 years and handles the legal aspects of the city's 657A.10A filings, and Eric Tysland.

³⁸ Julia H. Miller, "Protecting Potential Landmarks through Demolition Review," *The National Trust*, 2006. Accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1072/files/09%20Protecting%20Landmarks%20Demo%20Review.pdf>.

³⁹ "State Tax Credit," accessed April 20, 2016, at <https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives/state-tax-credit>.

⁴⁰ Author's calculations based on financial information from homeowners and tax credit applications she has worked on. The \$513,000 figure represents the approved Part 2 tax credits set aside by the Iowa SHPO for twenty-one projects for eighteen different properties; fifteen were single family homes and three were multi-unit rentals.

⁴¹ On March 8 and March 13, 2016, the author facilitated two meetings regarding opportunities and issues surrounding historic preservation in Davenport. The city's failure to enforce housing codes emerged as a weakness in both meetings. And Galvan, "Rehabilitating Rehab."

⁴² "8.16.050 Rights of Access of Premises," accessed April 20, 2016, at <http://clerkshq.com/default.aspx?clientsite=davenport-ia>. The municipal code does not limit the right of inspectors to enter unoccupied buildings to rental properties.

⁴³ Ironically, some of the city's methods for dealing with substandard buildings might have accelerated their decline. In recent years, the city has attempted to address issues with deteriorated rental properties by stricter code enforcement. City nuisance abatement procedures can require that landlords to vacate properties. The impact of this well-meaning approach, sometimes for buildings already operating on narrow economic margins, is that they do not reopen and may sit empty or boarded for several months or years. Rehabilitation of any property that has not operated for some time typically brings with it the requirement that all elements be brought to current code, creating rehabilitation issues too great to overcome.

⁴⁴ The author owns the house in the first example; the second example is the experience of another anonymous owner.

⁴⁵ Tom Geyer, "Neighbors Voice Their Concerns about St. Ambrose's Expansion," *The Quad City Times*, February 12, 2012, accessed April 19, 2016, at http://qctimes.com/news/local/neighbors-voice-their-concerns-about-st-ambrose-s-expansion/article_0664e0ce-5d0a-11e1-9dc0-001871e3ce6c.html.

⁴⁶ Cara Bertron and Donovan Rypkema, "Historic Preservation and Rightsizing. Current Practices and Resources Survey," May, 2012, accessed April 25, 2016, at <http://www.achp.gov/achp-rightsizing-report.pdf>.

⁴⁷ “Home Deconstruction: Can An Entire House Be Recycled?” accessed April 15, 2016, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2011/0525/Home-deconstruction-Can-an-entire-house-be-recycled>.

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