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EVERYDAY STEWARDS

BREATHING LIFE INTO THE PLAN

The Tomorrow Plan is a plan for the whole region, and a myriad of ways exist for multiple actors to get involved. Whether as a resident steward, an activist, a champion, a teacher, a mediator, a community leader, or a neighborhood group, The Tomorrow Plan – and our region’s future – depends on the actions of people in Greater Des Moines.

The document is a written explanation of the ideas that emerged during the planning process and their technical underpinnings. It is up to residents, along with regional leaders, to breathe life into these words. Many of the recommendations address regional-scale policies, but this discussion of large-scale ideas and administrative logistics in the public realm is not enough to ensure a sustainable future for Greater Des Moines. Individuals, households, and local communities should embody and interpret the vision and goals of the plan in their lives.

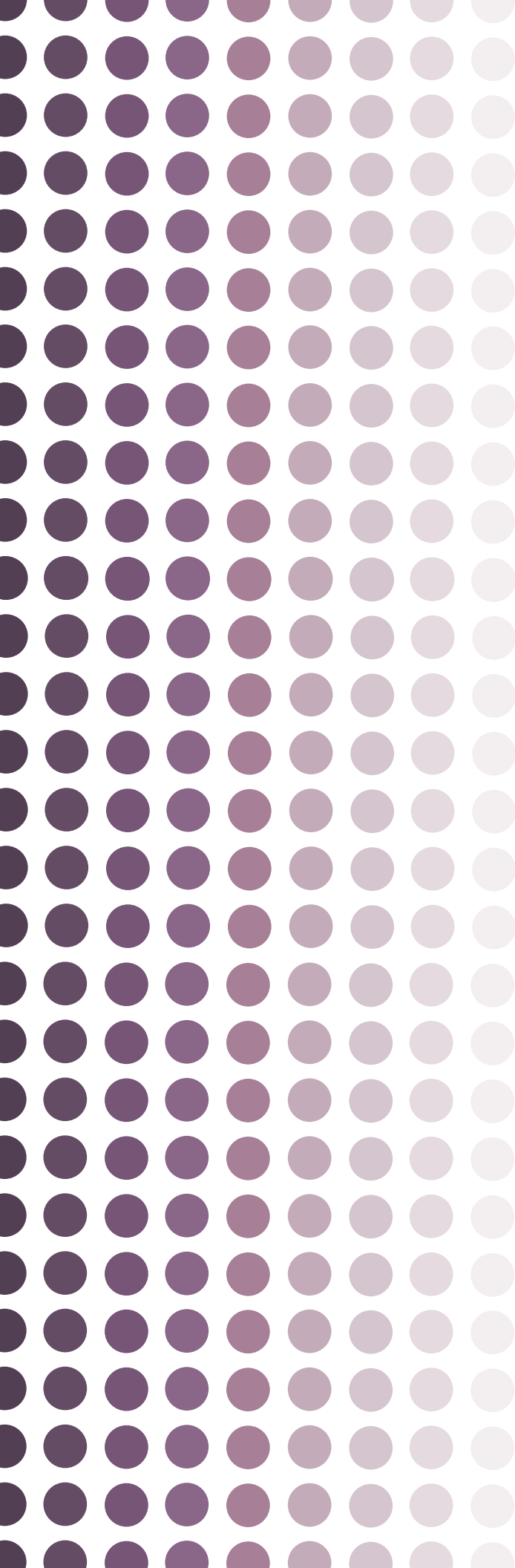
Local communities and individuals hold the power to modify local practices and make personal choices. Together, individuals can create significant economic, social, and environmental outcomes across the region. This section introduces actions and ideas for all residents to become everyday stewards of the plan and of a greener Greater Des Moines. The Tomorrow Team hopes everyone will join in the effort to bring The Tomorrow Plan to life across Greater Des Moines.

Successful implementation of The Tomorrow Plan will require a considerable amount of local expertise and individual engagement. The strategies identified in the plan will inevitably be more complex than the simple principles suggest and will require an infinite and diverse number of individual champions, improvisations, and local interpretations that guide the best ideas forward with pragmatism, cleverness, and maximum impact.

There are two especially valuable arenas for residents to direct their energy and knowledge. The first is more private and focuses on small steps. It highlights the importance of doing even just one thing. The Do One Thing (DOT) approach encourages individuals to look inward and to consider what household investment or change in personal practice might have a positive impact, whether it concerns environmental, economic, cultural, or social issues. The second is about connecting the DOTs. Individuals engaging with local groups to rally around issues can have a positive impact for the entire region. The following sections describe these two action areas — DOTs and Connecting the DOTs — in more detail.







Do One Thing

Individuals can have a significant impact within their own households and companies by starting small and doing just one thing. Taken as a whole, those individual changes can have a big impact. If everyone in the region were to improve their stewardship practices, the collective impact would signal a significant move toward regional sustainability. Examples of small changes that can be adopted by individuals can be found in Stanford University's pocket guide.¹

To further the idea of taking small steps, The Tomorrow Plan is launching the Do One Thing (DOT) campaign. A DOT is a pledge to do one thing to help our region realize the goals of The Tomorrow Plan. With every seemingly small DOT activity, we build the foundation for big shifts and help make our region a better place. We hope that you, as a reader, will take the DOT pledge by visiting The Tomorrow Plan website. Our goal is to have 15,000 DOTs.

To help get started, following are suggestions for actions that help achieve DOTs. Pick something that's not already part of a personal routine so that a new benefit results. Like other areas of this plan, these actions are not limited to the section in which they appear.

Environmental

Food

- Buy locally produced food whenever possible
- Buy a community supported agriculture (CSA) share. A CSA is a food system in which local farmers provide fresh food directly to consumers in their area on a subscription basis.
- Read labels and search out locally-produced foods. Try the “Buy Fresh Buy Local” directory as a starting point.
- Cook with a new seasonal produce item once a month
- Turn one’s yard into an organic fruit, vegetable, or herb garden
- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Limit meat consumption. Livestock production absorbs 16 pounds of grain and soy feed for every pound of meat that actually gets to the plate, and each calorie of animal protein requires 78 calories of fossil fuels to produce. Further, irrigation directly associated with livestock production, including feeds, amounts to about half of all the water consumed in the United States.²
- Eat lower on the food chain by eating one vegetarian meal per week. The Sustainable Table website offers lots of information on healthy eating, including various recipes. The food section offers thousands of vegetarian recipes to select.³
- Drink tap water whenever possible
- Plan meals a week ahead and use a shopping list
- Share excess food with community groups in need
- Compost
- Carry reusable bags to the store
- Use reusable tableware
- Take a reusable container out to eat
- Carry a reusable mug or water bottle. In roughly two weeks of daily use, a mug is more energy and material efficient than paper or plastic.

Moving

- Live near work
- Drive less by committing to carpool, taking public transportation, walk, or riding a bike at least two times per week
- Have child participate in a walking school bus or bicycle train, and invite families who live nearby to participate
- Consolidate vehicle trips
- Drive the speed limit
- Select vehicles with gas mileage in mind
- Avoid accessories that create drag or add significant weight as well as four-wheel drive vehicles, if possible
- Keep vehicle tires inflated to the correct pressure
- Vacation close to home
- Fly less
- Make an improvement to one’s home or business to make it more accessible for all
- Use the stairs

At Home

- Weatherize homes with insulation and double-paned windows
- Purchase a higher efficiency furnace and hot water heater
- Find and stop leaks
- Install low-flow devices for toilets, showers, and faucets
- Explore no-VOC paint, recycled-content carpeting, and other sustainable renovation materials
- Use blinds, fans, and windows to control room temperature and natural light
- Schedule an energy audit and implement three of the recommendations.
- Purchase renewable solar, wind, geothermal, and tidal energy where available
- Turn off gadgets and appliances, such as computers and televisions, when not in use
- Turn the lights off when no one’s in a room
- Use LEDs (or CFLs, which are second best) instead of incandescent light bulbs
- Wash clothes in cold or warm water, wash only full loads, and use a minimum amount of detergent
- Air dry clothing when possible
- Run full loads in the dishwasher

- Lower thermostats in the winter and raise them in the summer
- Set the refrigerator between 38°F and 42°F and the freezer between 0°F and 5°F
- Take shorter showers, shut off water during brushing, and add a brick to the toilet tank
- Purchase or make safer, non-toxic cleaning products
- Share tools with neighbors

Outside

- Learn about the plants and animals of one's local environment
- Take a hike to learn about the native species in one's neighborhood and community. Visit Iowa's Department of Natural Resources website to learn about Iowa's native wildlife.⁴
- Use native plants, shrubs, and trees to provide a habitat that support wildlife, and decrease the need for chemicals and watering. Visit the Plant Iowa Natives website for native plant information.⁵
- Plant trees
- Decrease pesticide and fertilizer use and, if fertilizer can't be avoided, make sure it is phosphorus free
- Pull weeds by hand, mulch, and reduce the use of chemicals to avoid polluting runoff
- Check with a local Master Gardener for safe pest and weed management
- Cut down on watering the lawn
- Compost plant material
- Use compost to fertilize
- Chip yard waste rather than burn it
- Use mulch in the garden to control weeds and retain moisture
- Install drip irrigation if watering is unavoidable
- Incorporate a rain garden, a rain barrel, or permeable pavers on one's property to reduce stormwater runoff
- Visit the Rainscaping Iowa website for ideas on managing stormwater⁶
- Maintain one's septic system
- Rake leaves for 15 minutes to avoid 15 minutes of using the leaf blower
- Pick up dog waste, bag it, and put in the garbage
- Keep cats indoors

Waste

- Reduce, reuse & recycle — in that order
- Reduce: Sell or give away used furniture, clothing, bicycles, and other unneeded items. Decline unneeded plastic bags and packaging
- Reuse: Sell or give away used furniture, clothing, bicycles, and other unneeded items rather than throwing them away. Compost food and yard waste for use in the garden
- Recycle: Recycle paper, cardboard, glass, metal, plastic, batteries, and fluorescent light bulbs
- Consider buying in bulk sizes and refillable containers
- Object to overpackaged items
- Take hazardous household waste to collection days or sites
- Bring a canvas bag to the grocery store
- Use washable utensils, plates, glasses, and cups
- Use cloth rather than paper napkins
- Do double-sided copying and printing
- Use scrap paper
- Stop junk mail; check out the PaperKarma app⁷
- Use electronic communication rather than hard copies
- Take household hazardous waste to collection days or sites
- Before purchasing a new item, ask yourself "Do I really *NEED* this?" - Use organizations like Freecycle⁸ and Earth911⁹ to recycle, buy used, or trade items. The EPA offers the *Individual Waste Reduction Model* tool¹⁰ to help estimate the energy benefits of recycling rather than landfilling a selection of products. The Responsible Purchasing Network has a webpage with links to a variety of calculators to figure estimate cost-benefit analysis of various purchasing options.

“Unless someone like
is going to get better.

Economic

- Donate money to charity
- Visit local museums and sporting and cultural events
- Commit to shopping at locally and independently owned businesses and restaurants
- Buy locally made products
- Look for products that are independently certified for low toxicity, low greenhouse gas emissions, and sweatshop free labor
- Support environmentally sustainable and socially responsible businesses and products
- Commit to purchasing your clothes from thrift and secondhand stores
- Use energy-efficient appliances
- Wear an extra layer of clothing instead of turning up the heat
- Before purchasing ask, "Do I really *need* this?"
- Borrow or rent instead of purchasing new
- Repair rather than replace
- Buy previously owned products
- Buy only what's needed
- Stay healthy: avoid toxic cleaners, paints, stains, and adhesives
- Remember that water is the universal solvent and is non-toxic
- Track purchases to get an idea of quantity

Cultural

- Attend an event at Des Moines Performing Arts or at one of the many other cultural centers in the region
- Commit to attend at least one cultural celebration throughout the year
- Engage in a conversation with someone holding a different viewpoint
- Speak up on sustainability's behalf
- Learn about a different culture
- Learn about Greater Des Moines communities

Social

- Volunteer one hour per week for a cause you're passionate about
- Reconnect with a friend or family member by calling them once per week
- Get to know your neighbors
- Discuss with others a vision for your community
- Participate in neighborhood associations
- Push for action in your community
- Talk to one's elected officials about supporting:
 - Renewable energy (solar, wind, hydro, etc.)
 - Raising the CAFE fuel standards on vehicles
 - Tax incentives for environmentally sensible practices
 - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
 - Reducing packaging
 - Cradle to cradle laws
 - Education for sustainability
- Assist local groups on sustainability issues
- Attend city and county council meetings
- Vote
- Run for local office
- Ask the purchasing department at work or school about their policies regarding sustainability
- Ask the local school district about efforts to infuse sustainability across the curriculum and throughout their practices

you cares a whole awful lot, nothing
It's not."

Dr. Seuss
from *The Lorax*

Connecting the DOTs

The Tomorrow Plan outlines a regional-level approach, identifying economic development and land use strategies, key focus areas, and priorities for public funding and support, all of which will require specific interpretation for local conditions. These ideas are the starting point for individuals to rally community groups, to form new teams to champion issues that matter to them, and to come up with creative solutions that influence local policy decisions and investments on the ground.

There are many opportunities for residents to have significant social and economic impacts through investment of resources or time. By working together as a community, the actions of individuals can result in monumental achievement for Greater Des Moines. Following is a sampling of groups that you can engage with or join.

1000 Friends of Iowa: 1000 Friends of Iowa promotes responsible development that conserves and protects agricultural and natural resources; revitalizes neighborhoods, towns, and cities; and, improves the quality of life for future generations. 1000 Friends offers volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

6th Avenue Corridor: The 6th Avenue Corridor group has a mission “to coordinate the commercial revitalization of 6th Avenue through the historic River Bend and Cheatom Park neighborhoods.” The group works to organize the business community, to provide education and consultation about historic preservation, and to build upon the rich cultural diversity of the area. Interested individuals can join a committee, volunteer for future events, donate money, or share their ideas.

Aging Resources of Central Iowa: Aging Resources seeks to allow older adults individual choices in their care process in order to remain safe and independent in their homes. Anyone can help by volunteering for indoor and outdoor work, friendly visits, meals on wheels, and more.

American Red Cross: The American Red Cross “prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.” Individuals can donate; fundraise; give blood or host a blood drive; take, teach, or host a class; volunteer; get involved with a group or program; help internationally; or be an advocate.

Anawim Housing: Anawim Housing develops stable homes and strengthens communities. In addition to monetary donations, Anawim offers volunteer opportunities for all ages and skill levels. These range from landscaping to photography to grant writing.

Area515: Area515 is a non-profit encouraging individuals from all communities to come together to create things that wouldn't have been possible within their respective communities alone. While still in the early stages of its life, Area515 provides the tools and space to work, an environment to learn, and, most importantly, an opportunity to collaborate with other makers, crafters, do-it-yourselfers, and other individuals looking to create and invent electronics, sculpture, wearables, metalworking, and vehicles to nearly everything you can imagine.

Beacon of Life: Beacon of Life is a nonprofit transitional center for women with a mission of creating an environment that empowers women in crisis to achieve positive long-term change. Residents can offer financial support, buy an urban card, or offer in-kind donations such as gently used clothing.

Big Brothers Big Sisters: Big Brothers Big Sisters “provides children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.” Residents can make monetary donations or can volunteer as a Big Brother or Big Sister.

Bravo Greater Des Moines: Bravo seeks to increase cultural awareness, advocacy, and funding, and it aims to foster collaboration among arts, cultural, and heritage organizations. Bravo can help you find the perfect volunteer match for your skills and desires.

Catholic Charities: Catholic Charities “serve[s] all people in need with compassion and competence, advocates for justice, and encourages all people of good will to join in these efforts.” Catholic Charities volunteers help refugee families set up homes; prepare meals at the St. Joseph Emergency Family Shelter; help at the St. Mary Family Center, food pantry, and clothing closet; and donate bus tokens. Further, the Social Justice Consortium provides multiple ways to get involved in Greater Des Moines.

Center on Sustainable Communities: The Center on Sustainable Communities (COSC) is “a trusted resource promoting ecologically sustainable practices by engaging and connecting individuals, businesses, and communities across Iowa.” COSC facilitates multiple committees and hosts events throughout the year, such as luncheons, COSC Connects, and workshops. COSC also offers an online Sustainable Resource Directory, which provides information on building and remodeling products and professionals. The COSC website offers information on green building, workshops, certification, and a calendar of upcoming local events related to green building and eco-friendly materials for construction, too.



VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZE VETERANS DURING MILITARY APPRECIATION DAY AT THE CENTRAL IOWA SHELTER & SERVICES.
 Source: Central Iowa Shelter & Services

Central Iowa Center for Independent Living: The Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (CICIL) is a community-based, non-profit, non-residential program that serves persons with disabilities. CICIL “empower[s] individuals with disabilities to control their lives” and offers numerous volunteer opportunities based on the talents of the volunteer.

Central Iowa Shelter & Services: Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) “provide[s] free shelter and meals to homeless adults regardless of physical or emotional conditions, and facilitate[s] their move toward self-sufficiency.” CISS offers several programs and ways to volunteer, such as donating money, assisting with daily guest registration and bed assignments, providing evening meals, rescuing food, and collecting items that CISS needs.

Central Iowa Trails: Central Iowa Trails is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to create and maintain single track trails (i.e., narrow mountain biking trails) in and around the region. Its central purpose is the “world-class design, construction, and maintenance of trails in partnership with city, county, state, and private landowners.” Central Iowa Trails hosts trail work and trail building days monthly.

Character Counts in Iowa: Character Counts in Iowa strives to “recognize, enhance, and sustain the positive qualities of Iowans in order to promote civility through character development.” Character Counts envisions an Iowa in which every resident “embrace[s] and practice[s] good character by demonstrating trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.” Residents can get involved with Character Counts by volunteering at one of their special events or helping start a character education program in one’s own community, company, or school.

Chrysalis Foundation: The Chrysalis Foundation is “dedicated to increasing resources and opportunities for girls and women in Greater Des Moines” and “envisions a world of independent, influential, confident, and contributing girls and women who are fully involved in civic, cultural, and economic life in their communities.” The foundation seeks volunteers for community partners and for its own after school programs, in addition to hosts for its events.

CULTUREALL: CULTUREALL strives “to create discovery-filled experiences that strengthen cultural understanding and appreciation in our daily lives.” Residents can share their

passion by serving as a Cultural Ambassador and presenting their experience, knowledge, and love of cultures.

Des Moines Area Interfaith Hospitality Network: The Des Moines Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) strives to create a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for homeless children and also supports the efforts of their parents to secure employment and housing. Residents can assist IHN by preparing breakfast or dinner, serving as evening or overnight hosts, doing laundry, or transporting guests.

Des Moines Area Religious Council: The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) is an interfaith organization with a core membership of about 140 congregations from four faith traditions. DMARC “provides a common means of responding to basic human needs and a context for interfaith dialogue.” DMARC manages the largest food pantry network in Iowa. Consequently, DMARC needs residents to assist with getting food to people who need it.

Des Moines Bicycle Collective: The Des Moines Bicycle Collective “promotes bicycling as a means of active transportation, wellness, and recreation in central Iowa.” The Collective recycles and refurbishes used bikes, conducts classes, organizes Central Iowa Bike Month, operates the B-cycle program, produces regional trail maps and guides, and promotes cycling as a viable, healthy transportation option, among other activities. The Collective offers numerous volunteer opportunities related to repairs, tune-ups, events, and valet services.

Des Moines Music Coalition: The Des Moines Music Coalition (DMMC) “aggressively advocate[s], sponsor[s], and develop[s] an independent, progressive live music community in Greater Des Moines for the purpose of urban revitalization, regional economic development, and the retention of our region’s youth and future.” DMMC volunteers help at events such as Gross Domestic Product, an all-Iowa music festival held every spring, and 80/35, an “annual two-day progressive indie and jam music festival over 4th of July weekend in downtown Des Moines.”

Des Moines Rehabbers Club: The Des Moines Rehabbers Club “promotes neighborhood revitalization and restoration of Des Moines’ unique building stock by informing, educating, inspiring, and supporting each other in all phases of home renovation and maintenance.” The group supports and encourages residents who are undertaking renovation projects and offers monthly meetings. The only thing an individual “need[s] is an interest in responsible stewardship of Des Moines’ unique buildings.”

Des Moines Social Club: The Des Moines Social Club (DMSC) is keeping the region cool by using “the arts as a catalyst to create unprecedented community engagement.” The DMSC offers many varied volunteer opportunities, from ushering theater shows to making hand water buckets to being a contestant in a motorized tricycle race.

Easter Seals Iowa: Easter Seals Iowa provides services to “ensure that all people with disabilities or special needs and their families have equal opportunities to live, learn, work, and play in their communities.” Easter Seals Iowa matches volunteers with activities based on their interests — anything from yard work to reading with children to painting.

Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families: The Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families helps families and individuals improve their financial position and connects them with their work and career goals. It is a “beacon for those looking for educational, job training, and career opportunities by delivering these workforce services.” Evelyn’s Ambassadors form a circle of volunteers who welcome visitors to the center.

Greater Des Moines Partnership: The Greater Des Moines Partnership (GDMP) “provides resources for moving or expanding a business to Greater Des Moines, employment opportunities, information about the area, and updates on the Partnership’s programs and events.” The GDMP seeks to



Source: Des Moines Social Club

connect interested residents with local chambers or affiliates, supports the Capital Crossroads initiative and its related committees, and aims to nurture a vibrant downtown core through development, events, environment, and promotion.

Habitat for Humanity: Habitat for Humanity “brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope.” Habitat offers several ways to get involved through donations, volunteering, and special events. Further, Habitat’s ReStore sells new and used home improvement materials, proceeds from which benefit Habitat for Humanity. The majority of materials, including doors, lumber, paint, tile, flooring, and windows, are donated by contractors, manufacturers, retailers, and homeowners, meaning thousands of tons of materials avoid ending up in a landfill each year.

Hawthorn Hill: Hawthorn Hill tries to “establish and operate housing programs for homeless families with children that help them obtain permanent housing, and to provide services to help families achieve economic self-sufficiency.” Residents can provide items for families in need; partake in the Art & More for Shelter annual event; or, volunteer by providing children’s activities, organizing a supply drive, or delivering milk and juice to the shelter, for example.

Hoyt Sherman Place: Hoyt Sherman Place is a community attraction that “provides and broadens opportunities for people of all ages to view, learn, and participate in the performing and visual arts.” It is “alive with concerts, art exhibits, tours, weddings, and business affairs.” Volunteer opportunities are available at both the Art Gallery & Mansion and at the Historic Hoyt Sherman Place Theater.

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement: Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) empowers and unites people of all ethnic backgrounds to take control of their communities. It involves them in identifying problems and needs and in taking action to address them. Additionally, it serves as a vehicle for social, economic, and environmental justice. CCI hosts various events and meetings and works with residents to host house parties that introduce people to particular issues, among other activities.

Iowa International Center: The Iowa International Center works to “build cultural respect at home and around the world one person at a time.” Besides monetary donations, residents can meet with or house international visitors, assist with educational programming for youth, or serve as interpreters.

Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation: The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) “envision[s] Iowans connected to our diverse landscape and to the value of healthy land, water, and wildlife to protect their environment, economy, and quality of life.” The INHF offers volunteer events, as well as group and individual volunteer opportunities, such as brush clearance, trails clean-up, fundraising, photography, advocacy, education, and pedaling the bike generator.

Iowa Outdoor Unlimited: Iowa Outdoor Unlimited is “an outdoor-enthusiast, adventure-seeking, and equipment-sharing club based in Des Moines.” It seeks to connect individuals of all ages, professions, interests, and abilities to get outside to play.

Iowa Parks Foundation: The mission of the Iowa Parks Foundation is “to strengthen the connection between Iowans and their parks by creating innovative partnerships and making strategic grants that transform Iowa’s parks while improving Iowans’ health and quality of life.” The Iowa Parks Foundation collaborates with existing organizations, such as friends of parks groups, local civic and business leaders, and park users, to help organize local and regional efforts that transform parks in every area of the state.



Iowa Prairie Network: The Iowa Prairie Network’s purpose is “to learn about, teach about, enjoy, and protect Iowa’s prairie heritage.” The grassroots, volunteer organization brings those who know about prairie together with those who want to learn more to “form a network of advocacy for Iowa’s natural heritage.”

Iowa Pride Network: The Iowa Pride Network (IPN) “works directly with LGBT youth to cultivate advocates and leaders who fight homophobia and transphobia and strive for social justice.” IPN offers internships and looks for volunteers to coordinate events, to donate talents, to serve on the Board of Directors, and to participate on committees.

Johnston Partnership: The Johnston Partnership seeks “to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing place to live, work, and grow by establishing strong community partnerships.” Volunteers are essential to the Partnership’s work at the Johnston Food Pantry and at JUMP, the Johnston Youth Mentoring Program.

Meals from the Heartland: Meals from the Heartland volunteers package meals for delivery to starving people around the world. The group presents an Annual Hunger Fight each year and offers Mobile Hunger Fights, which are opportunities for groups to get together and package meals on a smaller scale, throughout the year.

Metro Arts Alliance of Greater Des Moines: The Metro Arts Alliance “advances creativity and strengthens our community through arts opportunities and education.” Residents can get involved with the Metro Arts Alliance by serving on the Board of Directors or by assisting with Metro Arts Jazz in July, Metro Arts Expo, Education Outreach programs, and other events.

Metro Waste Authority: Metro Waste Authority (MWA) is “the leader in environmental stewardship and cost-effective waste management.” MWA offers Adopt A Stream and Adopt A Street programs for residents to help keep the environment clean and healthy.

One Iowa: One Iowa seeks “to support full equality of LGBT individuals living in Iowa through grassroots efforts and education.” One Iowa offers numerous means of taking action: hosting a house party, volunteering as part of the Blue Crew, talking to one’s legislator, starting a One Iowa On-Campus Group, and joining the Speakers Bureau.

Orchard Place: Orchard Place “develop[s] strong futures for children and youth with mental health and behavioral challenges.” Orchard Place offers volunteer opportunities for mentors, classroom assistants, tutors, and special interest volunteers.

Passageway: Passageway strives to “provide a safe, supportive environment where individuals with mental illness can find support and have the opportunity to gain or improve work and social skills to enrich their lives.” Greater Des Moines residents can volunteer with Passageway in several ways, ranging from teaching a class to answering phones to attending and assisting with a social event.

Rebuilding Together Greater Des Moines: Rebuilding Together “rehabilitates the homes of low income homeowners, particularly the elderly, disabled, and families with dependent children.” The organization offers several volunteer opportunities, including participating in National Rebuilding Day, serving as a House Captain, volunteering in the warehouse or the office, or working on a special project to improve a neighborhood or homeowner in need.

Sierra Club Iowa Chapter: The Sierra Club endeavors “to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and, to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.” The Iowa Chapter offers frequent volunteer opportunities as well as opportunities to get outdoors. There are also several committees to interact with.

StageWest Theater Company: StageWest seeks “to increase the understanding and enjoyment of life, society, and the world through the presentation of progressive, contemporary theater.” StageWest hosts talkbacks in which residents can discuss productions with guest experts, actors, and directors. StageWest also looks for volunteers to help with productions and for actors.

State Historical Society of Iowa: The State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) “has a dual mission of preservation and education. As a trustee of Iowa’s historical legacy, SHSI identifies, records, collects, preserves, manages, and provides access to Iowa’s historical resources. As an advocate of understanding Iowa’s past, SHSI educates Iowans of all ages, conducts and stimulates research, disseminates information, and encourages and supports historical preservation and education efforts of others throughout the state.” SHSI offers board positions in addition to volunteer opportunities, such as serving as a museum ambassador or tour docent.

Urban Ambassadors: Urban Ambassadors serves as the hub for sustainable living in Greater Des Moines. The organization helps residents personalize their paths to sustainability and connects them with a community that promotes sustainability. Urban Ambassadors annually develops seed projects that connect residents around topic areas, such as urban gardening or revitalization and the arts, and encourage residents to join these project teams to “plant the seeds of sustainability.”

Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa: Visiting Nurse Services (VNS) of Iowa “partners with our community to promote health, education, and well-being for a lifetime.” The group provides numerous supportive services to meet the health and social needs of the community. VNS of Iowa works with volunteers to host baby showers for mothers in need, to give gifts to families during the holidays, and to improve homes for elderly adults.

Wallace Centers of Iowa: The Wallace Centers of Iowa endeavors to “build community by engaging citizens in meaningful conversation and active learning... The two historic sites provide a variety of non-partisan, educational programs and community services focused on civility, local food systems, and sustainable agriculture.”

Young Professionals Connection: YPC’s mission is “to promote an environment that attracts and retains young professionals in Greater Des Moines.” Their efforts focus on “connecting young professionals to each other and to the community through social, civic, charitable, and professional development endeavors.” YPC offers several ways to get involved, including becoming a member, joining a committee, partaking in athletics, volunteering around the region, and attending events.

Young Women's Resource Center: The Young Women’s Resource Center (YWRC) provides a place for young women to “connect with friends, find support, and enhance their self-esteem so they can create a life full of possibilities and influence.” One can volunteer time at the YWRC, spread news about their work, or support the group financially.

In addition to the opportunities outlined above, there are multiple opportunities to get involved directly in your community. Residents can serve on a municipal board or commission, such as a Planning and Zoning Commission or Design Review Board. One also can get involved with your neighborhood association.



Source: Young Professionals Connection