



AGENDA
DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
City Council Chambers
21630 11th Avenue S, Suite C
Des Moines, Washington
Thursday, May 7, 2026 - 5:00 PM

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

5:00 p.m. - 5:50 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ITEMS

- Item 1. **Consideration of Letter of Support for the Boeing Access Road Infill Station - 10 Minutes**
Motion: “I move to authorize the Deputy Mayor to sign a letter of support to the Sound Transit Board regarding the Boeing Access Road Infill Station, consistent with the draft presented.”
- Item 2. **Discussion of Tree Regulations - 40 Minutes**
Staff Presentation: Community Development Director Rebecca Deming
- Action:** Provide direction to City Staff for development of tree retention regulations, including specific permitting requirements, tree removal thresholds, incentives for tree protection, and/or canopy requirements.

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Comments from the public must be limited to the items of business on the Study Session Agenda. Please sign in prior to the meeting and limit your comments to three (3) minutes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- Item 1. **Presentation of the City of Des Moines' Draft Strategic Plan - Charting Our Course**
Presentation: Nancy Hetrick of Raftelis

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NEXT MEETING DATE

May 14, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

Members of the public who wish to provide comment during the meeting via Zoom must register in advance. To register, please email cityclerk@desmoineswa.gov by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Wednesday before the meeting.

City Council meeting can be viewed live on the City's website, Comcast Channel 21/321, on the City's [YouTube](#) channel or via [Zoom](#).

**City Council
AGENDA ITEM**

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Consideration of Letter of Support for the Boeing Access Road Infill Station

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SCATBd Letter

FOR AGENDA OF:

May 7, 2026

DEPT OF ORIGIN:

Administration

DATE SUBMITTED:

April 27, 2026

CLEARANCES:

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this item is to ask the Council to consider sending a letter of support for Sound Transit to maintain its commitment to complete South King County projects, including the Boeing Access Road infill station in Tukwila.

Suggested Motion:

Motion: "I move to authorize the Deputy Mayor to sign a letter of support to the Sound Transit Board regarding the Boeing Access Road Infill Station, consistent with the draft presented."

Background

At the April 23, 2026 Council meeting, a Councilmember raised interest in regional efforts to advance the Boeing Access Road Infill Station project. Since that time, the City has been invited to join a coalition of South King County jurisdictions in submitting a letter to the Sound Transit Board encouraging the agency to advance previously voter-approved projects, including the Boeing Access Road (BAR) Infill Station.

The proposed letter from SCATBd emphasizes the importance of completing commitments made through prior ballot measures (Sound Move and ST3), particularly for South King County communities. It highlights the role of the BAR Station in improving transit access to a major employment and industrial area, as well as broader regional mobility and equity considerations.

Discussion

The City of Des Moines is not directly impacted by the station location but is part of the broader South King County subarea that relies on regional transit connectivity.

Participation in the letter would signal general support for:

- Completion of voter-approved Sound Transit projects
- Continued investment in South King County transit infrastructure
- Regional collaboration among neighboring jurisdictions

Alternatively, Council may determine that no action is needed or that the City should not participate.



**South County Area
Transportation Board**

City of Tukwila Councilmember Dennis Martinez, Chair
City of Kent Councilmember Toni Troutner, Vice Chair

May 19, 2026

Sound Transit Board
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chair Somers and Sound Transit Board:

We are a coalition of fourteen cities working together to solve transportation issues in South King and North Pierce counties, and we write today to urge the Sound Transit Board to honor its South King light rail commitments in the current capital plan. This should not have to be voted on a third time, please do not balance your budget at our expense.

South King County projects cannot be allowed to drift indefinitely, including the Boeing Access Road (BAR) infill station in Tukwila, which was included in both the Sound Move and ST3 voter approved measures, and was designed to bridge the 5.5 mile gap between the Tukwila and Othello stations; the long-delayed parking infrastructure in the City of Federal Way; and the extension to Pierce County. As the South King County economy continues to grow, it is essential that thousands of new employees have viable access to reliable light rail.

South King County is one of the most diverse regions in Washington State, with a high proportion of low-income households and communities that rely on transit. Approximately 67% of our residents are people of color, 40% are foreign-born, more than 47% speak a language other than English at home, 23% have limited English proficiency, and 28% of households are low-income. The area also ranks 10 out of 10 in environmental health disparities according to the Washington State Department of Health. Expanding access to reliable transit here is both an equity and environmental imperative. When constructed, the BAR Station will serve both the Tukwila and Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MICs); together encompassing nearly 6,000 acres, 72,000 jobs, and nearly 2,000 businesses. King County International Airport alone directly and indirectly employs 21,000 people who would benefit from a BAR station.

We simply ask Sound Transit to honor the commitments made to the cities and residents of South King and North Pierce counties: completing the voter-approved system that taxpayers have been funding, and demonstrating responsible stewardship of public dollars through clear planning for fare enforcement and recovery. We recognize the challenges of the funding gap and appreciate Sound Transit’s efforts to identify savings and efficiencies. Our region has consistently shown strong, dependable use of the Sound Transit system, our ridership remained steady even through the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily because of our disproportionate population of healthcare and essential workers, underscoring how much our communities rely on it. We believe these savings should not disproportionately impact the South Sound area.

Sincerely,

Chair Dennis Martinez
City of Tukwila

Vice Chair Toni Troutner
City of Kent

Mayor Troy Linnell
City of Algona

Council President Armen Papyan
City of Tukwila

Algona | Auburn | Black Diamond | Burien | Covington | Des Moines | Enumclaw | Kent | Maple Valley | Milton | Normandy Park | Pacific | SeaTac | Tukwila | King County

Mayor Nancy Backus
City of Auburn

Councilmember Linda Akey
City of Burien

Councilmember Debra Hartsock
City of Covington

Deputy Mayor Gene Achziger
City of Des Moines

Mayor Bruce White
City of Milton

Councilmember Tamie Deady
City of Black Diamond

City Engineer Tommy Owen
City of Des Moines

City Manager Amy Arrington
City of Normandy Park

Councilmember Didem Pierson
City of Maple Valley

Councilmember Jack Lamanna
City of Normandy Park

Mayor Vic Kave
City of Pacific

Councilmember Peter Kwon
City of SeaTac

Council President Susan Honda
City of Federal Way

Public Works Director Maiya Andrews
City of Burien

Councilmember Les Burberry
City of Maple Valley

Councilmember LeAnne Guier
City of Pacific

**City Council
AGENDA ITEM**

**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA**

SUBJECT: Discussion of Tree Regulations

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Tree Policy Memo
2. Tree Retention Policies PowerPoint

FOR AGENDA OF:

May 7, 2026

DEPT OF ORIGIN:

Community Development

DATE SUBMITTED:

April 24, 2026

CLEARANCES:

Community Development
Public Works

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Council to provide direction on tree regulations based on review of the Des Moines Tree Policy Technical Memo (Memo) prepared by the Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative.

Suggested Action:

Provide direction to City Staff for development of tree retention regulations, including specific permitting requirements, tree removal thresholds, incentives for tree protection, and/or canopy requirements.

Background

Tree canopy is an important way to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures due to climate change. Shaded pavement can experience temperature reductions of up to 6°C compared to unshaded surfaces, while large green spaces can create cooling effects that extends 50 to 500 meters into surrounding areas. Currently, the City of Des Moines has limited regulations related to tree protection. There are few restrictions on tree removal on private property, outside of designated critical areas. Trees on public property are managed separately by the Public Works Department, primarily in connection with stormwater infrastructure and maintenance.

Discussion

The attached memo provides an overview of tree canopy policies relevant to Des Moines, including case studies from jurisdictions across Washington and the Pacific Northwest. Council direction is requested on which policy approaches should be incorporated into the City's tree regulations.

The Memo is broken into three categories:

- General Permit Requirements
- Tree Removal Thresholds (during property development)
- Landmark or Heritage Tree Programs
- Fee-in-Lieu Option
- Tree Removal/Replacement Rule — Non-Development Scenarios

There are multiple options Des Moines could implement to begin preserving tree canopy on private properties, including starting a Landmark Tree Program, putting tree retention policies in place for development scenarios, or even instating restrictions in non-development scenarios.

While many jurisdictions share similar goals, the primary differences lie in how tree retention is calculated and enforced. Options range from flexible tree credit systems to requiring a minimum percentage of trees to be retained during development. Some jurisdictions also include a fee-in-lieu option, allowing property owners who cannot meet retention or replacement requirements to contribute to a dedicated tree fund that supports urban forest maintenance.

One of the more straightforward approaches is to regulate tree removal in non-development scenarios. Currently, the City does not limit tree removal on private property outside of critical areas. Establishing reasonable limits—such as a cap on the number of trees that can be removed within a defined timeframe—could help slow canopy loss. These regulations are typically less complex than development standards and may serve as an effective initial step.

Next Steps: City staff will draft an ordinance amending the Des Moines Municipal Code based on Council direction and take it to the Planning Commission for further discussion and Public Hearing prior to returning to Council for adoption.

TECHNICAL MEMO: Des Moines Tree Policy

PUGET SOUND CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS COLLABORATIVE

Prepared by:
Adriana Apintiloaiei
n-aapintiloaiei@kingcounty.gov

Funded by the Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through the Inflation Reduction Act

version date: April 24, 2026



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
Background	4
Methodology	4
Tree Canopy Policies	5
General Permit Requirements	5
Tree Removal Thresholds	5
Landmark or Heritage Tree Ordinances	11
Fee-in-Lieu Option	12
Tree Replacement Rule- Non-Development Scenarios	13
Conclusion & Next Steps	14
References	15

Executive Summary

The Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative (Collaborative) is a network of local and county governments, Tribes, and organizations in the Puget Sound basin working together to advance climate preparedness. In 2024, the Collaborative was awarded a three-year federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to expand climate adaptation learning, collaboration, and technical support opportunities for Puget Sound jurisdictions and Tribes. As part of the grant, the Collaborative launched a Small Communities Cohort Program designed to provide shared staffing and consulting support for climate preparedness projects led by Tribes and smaller, less-resourced jurisdictions across the Puget Sound region.

The Small Communities Cohort Program will support the City of Des Moines in researching and identifying relevant tree retention policies for private property.

As a deliverable for Task 4 of the Des Moines scope of work, this technical memo reports key findings, relevant policies, and locally relevant case studies of tree canopy retention policies. Key takeaways include:

- Many cities are implementing Landmark and Heritage Tree programs to protect important trees.
- Tree retention mechanisms differ by city, including tree credit programs, tree canopy requirements, tree coverage areas, and more.
- Tree protection during non-development scenarios is an area with less defined rules for tree removal.

Identifying different policy options for tree canopy retention and management on private properties in the City of Des Moines will help the city maintain its tree canopy cover and reduce impacts of urban heat (Task 4). Information from this analysis will be used to analyze and provide recommendations for policy and code updates for Des Moines.

Introduction

The Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative (Collaborative) is a network of local and county governments, Tribes, and organizations in the Puget Sound basin working together to advance climate preparedness. In 2024, the Collaborative was awarded a three-year federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to expand climate adaptation learning, collaboration, and technical support opportunities for Puget Sound jurisdictions and Tribes. As part of the grant, the Collaborative launched a Small Communities Cohort Program (SCCP) designed to provide shared staffing and consulting support for climate preparedness projects led by Tribes and smaller, less-resourced jurisdictions across the Puget Sound region. The program will support Des Moines in completing tree canopy policy research. Knowing what other cities and jurisdictions across the Puget Sound are doing to maintain tree canopy on private property will allow Des Moines to have stronger tree retention and urban tree canopy cover.

Task 4 of the Des Moines SCCP project conducts an assessment of relevant policies and codes for tree retention. Information summarized in this review was drawn from existing data sources and reports, including information and policies from communities around the Pacific Northwest. The Project Team also consulted with Des Moines throughout the literature review process to ensure the appropriate information was covered to accomplish the goals outlined for Task 4.

The following review provides foundational information and regional examples to exemplify how Des Moines might address tree retention on private property.

Background

Tree canopy is an important way to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures due to climate change. Shaded pavement can experience temperature reductions of up to 6°C compared to unshaded surfaces, while large green spaces can create cooling effects that extend 50 to 500 meters into surrounding areas (Alonzo et al., 2025).

Des Moines has limited tree regulations, ([Guide-to-Developing-Effective-Urban-Tree-Regulations-on-Private-Property](#)), with limited or no regulations for tree removal on private properties, aside from the removal of trees in critical areas. Trees located on public property are handled separately under the public works department, primarily within stormwater management. From the City of Des Moines Tree Code:

“Trees on private developed, partially developed, or undeveloped lots. No limitations other than a tree permit is required where the total area to be cleared is 2,000 square feet or greater.”

This code allows private property owners to clear trees that contribute to the canopy cover of Des Moines with little restrictions. The majority of tree canopy cover in King County is located on private properties (King County, 2024), meaning that limited regulation will allow for faster clearing of canopy cover.

Des Moines has done work to restore and maintain urban forests across the city through the Green Des Moines Partnership program. The city has been working with the Port of Seattle, community groups, schools, non-profits, and more to assess current tree canopy, create a 20-year plan, and implement projects in parks across Des Moines. While this program has created positive outcomes for tree canopy in Des Moines, its focus on public trees still leaves a gap to address in urban tree canopy work.

Methodology

Des Moines staff were consulted to determine what policy topics were of interest to the city. Key resources including King County’s “Guide to Developing Effective Urban Tree Regulations on Private Property” and the Municipal Research and Services Center’s Urban Forestry page were used to develop a list of jurisdictions to research. Jurisdictions assessed included:

Bellevue
Bellingham
Burien
Issaquah

Maple Valley
Mountlake Terrace
Portland
SeaTac
Tumwater
University Place
Vancouver (WA)

Tree policies and ordinances can be included as their own section called Tree Codes or included in an existing section of the Municipal Codes a city already has.

Tree Canopy Policies

This section provides an overview of tree canopy policies relevant to Des Moines, including relevant case studies from around Washington and the Pacific Northwest.

General Permit Requirements

Many jurisdictions require a basic process for acquiring a permit to remove trees on private property. This permit requirement is for development scenarios and typically does not apply to removing a tree when no development is occurring. King County's Guide to Developing Effective Urban Tree Regulations on Private Property lays out the typical requirements:

1. Permit Application
 - a. Either included in the development permit application or as a separate tree removal permit application.
2. Arborist Report
 - a. A certified professional will assess the site and report on things such as a tree inventory on the property.
3. Site Plan
 - a. Significant trees should be identified based on the arborist report. The plan should include the location of all the proposed and existing improvements within the main project area.
4. Tree Retention or Protection Plan
 - a. This plan will include proposed tree removals, location, size and species of replacement tree plantings, and mitigation measures or alternative methods proposed for the protection of existing trees

Tree Removal Thresholds

One of the main ways that jurisdictions limit the number of trees being removed during development of properties is to set tree removal thresholds.

Burien's Tree Credit System- The city of Burien has developed a system to measure the amount of tree credits associated with different land use types. Different types of trees are worth different amounts of tree credits. Larger trees are worth more tree credits and existing trees are worth more than trees that will be planted. This prioritizes more mature existing trees when creating the tree retention plan necessary to move forward with development.

Land Use Type	Required Minimum Tree Credits per 1,000 square feet of developable area
Single-family development (detached dwellings, ADUs and DADUs) and townhouses on individual lots.	1
Multi-family development (attached dwellings including townhouse apartments and cottage housing)	1
Commercial, industrial, or non-residential lots	0.15

Table 1. Required Minimum Tree Credits

In most cases, where applicable, 50% of the required tree credits from a property must be met through existing trees. In the cases that this isn't possible, replacement trees will be prioritized over the fee-in-lieu option of meeting tree credit

Portland's Title 11 Tree Code- Portland's tree code requires new development to meet on-site tree density requirements, including required tree area (Table 2) and required tree density (Table 3). Applicants may choose Option A or Option B for calculating required tree area except only Option A may be used to apply standards to a "Development Impact Area" (Table 2).

Development Type	Option A	Option B
One to Four Family Residential	40% of site or development impact area	Site area minus building coverage of existing and proposed development
Multi Dwelling Residential	20% of site or development impact area	
Commercial/Office/Retail/Mixed Use	15% of site or development impact area	
Industrial	10% of site or development impact area	
Institutional	25% of site or development impact area	
Other	20% of site or development impact area	

Table 2. Determining Required Tree Area

Once the tree area is calculated, the required tree area must be planted with some combination of small, medium, and large canopy trees. The calculation of specific canopy sizes is listed in Portland's code under Chapter 11.60, technical specifications.

Canopy Size Category	Number of Trees required per size of tree area	Minimum required planting area per tree (min. Dimension)
Large	1 per 1,000 s.f.	150 s.f. (10' x 10')
Medium	1 per 500 s.f.	75 s.f. (5' x 5')

Small	1 per 300 s.f.	50 s.f. (3' x 3')
-------	----------------	-------------------

Table 3. Number of required trees and tree planting area

Mountlake Terrace's Tree Removal Protections- Mountlake Terrace updated their tree retention policies to further protect trees on private property. From their municipal code update:

“For any site proposed to be developed or cleared containing significant trees, at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the viable significant trees must be retained. If this tree retention requirements is met, no further action is required. When 25% tree retention cannot be met, a combination of (1) tree retention, (2) tree replacement above and beyond City landscaping requirements for site development, and/or (3) tree fee-in- lieu must be used to mitigate the impacts of all significant viable trees removed from the site.”

The city defines a significant tree as any tree that meets or exceeds 6 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) for deciduous tree or 7 feet tall for coniferous trees. If viable significant trees need to be removed, they must be replaced. The replacement rate is dependent upon the maturity and size of the significant tree removed.

- For each significant tree between 6 inches and 12 inches DBH removed, 3 replacement trees are required.
- For each significant tree between 12 inches and 24 inches DBH removed, 5 replacement trees are required.
- For each significant tree between 24 inches and 48 inches DBH removed, 7 replacement trees are required.
- For each significant tree greater than 48 inches DBH removed, 10 replacement trees are required.

Additionally, the City has instituted incentives to go above and beyond the tree retention requirements listed previously.

“The CED Department may grant reductions or adjustments to other site development standards if the protection levels previously identified in this subsection are exceeded. On a case-by-case review, the CED Department shall determine the balance between tree protection that exceeds the established minimum percentage and variations to site development requirements. If adjustments or reductions to site development standards are granted under this provision, then tree protection requirements shall be recorded on the face of the plat, as a notice to title, or on some other legal document that runs with the property.”

Incentives may include:

- Reduction of a rear yard and/or side yard building setback to compensate for significant or heritage tree preservation provided that the setback is not reduced more than five (5) feet, and is the minimum reduction required for tree preservation, and complies with other applicable codes; or
- Increase in the amount of allowable impervious surface by 5%; or
- Reductions or variations of the area, width, or composition of required open space and/or landscaping; or
- Variations in parking lot design and/or any access driveway requirements; or
- Variations of grading and stormwater requirements; or

- Variations in frontage improvements; or
- Reduction in stormwater capital facilities fees.

Bellevue’s Tree Removal Guidelines- Bellevue has placed restrictions on tree removal on private property during development. They have an additional chapter of the municipal code (Chapter 23.46 BCC, Clearing, and Grading Code) for the removal of trees in non-development scenarios. Removal of any trees that meet the following conditions will require a permit for tree removal:

- Removal of any landmark tree. A landmark tree is generally considered at least 24 inches in diameter (75 inches in circumference) or greater, measured four feet above the existing grade.
- The new regulations also include a landmark tree table with alternate, lower diameter thresholds that apply to several slower growing, but high-quality native tree species.
- Removal of any significant trees. A significant tree is at least six inches in diameter (19 inches in circumference) or greater, measured four feet above the existing grade.
- The tree is located in a designated critical area, buffer or structure setback required in Land Use Code 20.25H.
- The tree is located within 50 feet of a shoreline, in the Vegetation Conservation Area required in Land Use Code 20.25E.
- The property is a commercial or multifamily zoned property
- The tree is in a native growth protection area or a retained vegetation area easement or tract.

In addition, replanting requirements apply in certain circumstances. Replanting is always required to remove trees on nonresidential property, unless the property will still meet its required minimum tree density and its approved development landscaping requirements. If removing trees from residential property and outside of shoreline, critical areas, and buffers, you may remove a limited number of significant or landmark tree per year without planting replacement trees, provided there will be trees that remain after the removal. This limit depends on the size of your property.

Property Size	Maximum Annual Tree Removal without Replacement	Significant or Landmark Trees to Remain After Removal
Up to 10,000 square feet	1 landmark tree or 2 significant trees	2
10,0001 - 20,000 square feet	1 landmark tree or 3 significant trees	3
20,001 - 40,000 square feet	1 landmark tree or 4 significant trees	4
40,001 square feet or greater	1 landmark tree or 4 significant trees	8

Table 4. Number of Trees Allowed to be Removed per year

City of Issaquah’s Tree Canopy Coverage Requirements- Canopy coverage goals are dependent upon property zoning type. Tree canopy coverage goals outlined in the table below are to be

measured by the canopy provided by all existing trees or the projected canopy to be provided by planted trees when they reach 20 years of age.

Zoning	Canopy Coverage
Conservancy	85% 75%
Community Facilities	85% 40% 25%
Single-Family Lots Greater Than 15,000 Square Feet	60%
Single-Family Lots 10,000 – 14,999 Square Feet	45%
Single-Family Lots 5,000 – 9,999 Square Feet	35%
Single-Family Lots Less Than 5,000 Square Feet	25%
Multifamily	30% 25%
Retail	25%
Mixed Use	25%
Commercial	25%
Urban Village	25%

Table 5. Zoning Tree Canopy Coverage

Tree retention is prioritized, meaning developers are asked to maintain certain trees when possible. The priority ranking is as follows:

1. *Priority One.*

- Significant trees rated as excellent or good.
- Significant trees that form a continuous canopy.
- Significant trees on slopes greater than 20 percent.
- Significant trees adjacent to critical areas and their associated buffers.
- Conifer species such as the Douglas fir and western red cedar.
- Significant trees over 60 feet in height or greater than 18 inches DBH.

2. *Priority Two.*

- Healthy tree groupings whose associated undergrowth can be preserved.

3. *Priority Three.*

- Significant alders, cottonwoods, ornamental trees, and fruit trees that are native to Western Washington.
- Significant trees rated as fair that are native to Western Washington.
- Other significant trees that are not native to Western Washington.

Maple Valley's Tree Retention Requirements-

The applicant for the permit will prepare a canopy coverage calculation. The canopy coverage calculation may be merged with the Tree Retention Plan and/or landscaping plan for the proposal. The canopy coverage calculation shall show retention and planting of trees at mature canopy coverage of the total site area to equal or exceed: 15 percent for commercial developments within the Commercial Zones if there is no residential component. Zones meeting the landscape requirements contained in MVMC § **18.40.130(F)**: 20 percent for all residential development with the Residential Zones. Other developments meeting the landscape requirements contained in MVMC § **18.40.130(F)**, on the Legacy Site, will be excluded from canopy coverage from this section, calculated as follows:

- Retained landmark trees shall be calculated at 1,650 square feet each, regardless of canopy coverage or dripline area, or as marked in the field and measured by the proponent;
- Retained significant trees shall be calculated at 1,100 square feet each, regardless of canopy coverage or dripline area, or as marked in the field and measured by the proponent;
- Retained trees shall be calculated at 900 square feet each, regardless of canopy coverage or dripline area;
- Planted significant trees meeting the minimum planting standard shall be calculated at 300 square feet each;
- Planted significant trees exceeding the minimum planting standard by 50 percent shall be calculated at 550 square feet each; and
- Planted significant trees meeting the definition of large nursery stock and exceeding the minimum planting standard by 100 percent shall be calculated at 750 square feet each.

SeaTac's Tree Retention and Protection- SeaTac has tree retention policies in place for new development scenarios. Significant trees within new short plats and long subdivisions shall be retained as follows, unless an alternative allowed by this subsection is used:

- Residential low density zones: two (2) significant trees.
- All other zones: three (3) significant trees, or twelve percent (12%) of the significant trees on site, whichever number is greater.

Any significant tree proposed to be retained that is removed during the final short plat or preliminary plat approval process, or during the construction of a residence on a lot, shall be mitigated as follows:

Within Low Density Residential Zone-

- For each significant tree removed, two (2) deciduous trees, a minimum of two (2) inches in caliper measured at four (4) feet from its base at the time of planting; or
- Two (2) evergreen trees with a minimum height of eight (8) feet, not including growth leaders; or
- Any combination of the above, with a minimum of two (2) trees.

- All trees required to be replanted shall be replanted prior to the final inspection of the residence.
- No mitigation for the removal of significant trees shall be required once the builder of a detached dwelling unit on any lot containing significant trees transfers ownership of the lot and residence to another party, or when a certificate of occupancy is issued to the same party.

Within all other zones-

- For each significant tree removed, three (3) deciduous trees, a minimum of two (2) inches in caliper measured at four (4) feet from its base at the time of planting; or
- Three (3) evergreen trees with a minimum height of eight (8) feet, not including growth leaders; or
- Any combination of the above, with a minimum of three (3) trees.
- All trees required to be replanted as mitigation shall be replanted prior to occupancy

No significant trees shall be removed from any multi-family, commercial, or industrial zone property without obtaining a no-fee “Tree Clearing Permit” from the Department. The property owner shall demonstrate at least one (1) of the following criteria in order to obtain a “Tree Clearing Permit”:

- A tree constitutes a safety hazard to any structure on the property and to any structures on adjacent properties as determined by the City; or
- A tree is dead; or
- The tree is significantly diseased and will die as determined by the City; or
- The property owner has an approved building permit for a new development on the property.

Landmark or Heritage Tree Ordinances

Many jurisdictions see the benefit of protecting trees of a certain size or importance to the community (either historically or aesthetically). These programs are typically designated as Landmark Tree Programs or Heritage Tree Programs.

Bellingham’s Landmark Tree Ordinance- Bellingham developed a Landmark Tree Ordinance that protects the most significant trees from being cut down. Significant trees are described as those that are oldest and largest, measuring 36 inches or larger in diameter at breast height.

A landmark tree inventory was established to understand where these significant trees are located. A permitting process was developed for the removal of landmark trees. Those who remove these trees illegally without a permit are subject to fines ranging from \$800-\$5000 per violation.

Removal is possible with approval from the Director of Planning under certain circumstances:

- The tree is hazardous as defined within the ordinance
- It’s necessary to enable construction on or reasonable use of a property and an applicant has demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been examined with the intent to avoid and minimize the removal of a landmark tree.

- It's necessary to maintain utilities, access, or to fulfill the terms of an easement of covenant record prior to the adoption of the ordinance.

Vancouver's Heritage Tree Program- The city of Vancouver, Washington has a Heritage Tree Program to protect special trees. A tree can be nominated on either private or public property. A tree will be eligible for the program if it meets any or all of the following criteria:

- Size: a diameter of at least 36 inches
- Special site location
- Relation to a historical event
- Unusual species for the area or exemplary form for the species
- A grove may be considered if it meets any of the following requirements:
 - Mature and contains trees that are distinctive due to size, shape, species or age
 - Associated with a historical event
 - Relationship with a natural resource, such as a stream bank

A key feature of this program is that once a tree is nominated with consent from a property owner, this is binding for all future owners, successors, and heirs of the property. This policy has similar intentions to Bellingham's Landmark Tree ordinance.

Burien's Heritage Tree Designation- This designation allows for stronger protection for trees that are considered more significant due to their size, age, location, aesthetics, or association with an event significant to the city of Burien.

Mountlake Terrace's Heritage Tree Program- Anyone can nominate a tree on public property and property owners can nominate trees on their own property. The nominated tree must be at least 36 inches at DBH and must have another characteristic that makes the tree special and worthy of heritage tree status (distinctive size, shape, species, historical significance, and/or age.) The process will incur approximately \$650-850 in fees for the arborist report, documentation, and application fee, which are required to be paid by the applicant.

Fee-in-Lieu Option

In the case that a developer or property owner cannot meet the requirements for tree retention on a plot of land, some jurisdictions offer an option to pay a fee rather than keeping or planting a tree. This option allows flexibility for developers and often contributes to a tree fund of tree maintenance for the jurisdictions.

City of Burien's Fee-in-Lieu option- Burien's tree code requires that trees of significance that are cut down over the allowable tree canopy credit limit be replaced. However, with this option the property owner or developer is allowed to pay a fee to the city rather than replace the tree. The fee-in-lieu amount covers the cost of the tree, installation including labor and equipment, maintenance for two years, and fund administration. This money is then utilized by Burien's urban forestry initiative to meet current objectives and goals of the city.

City of Mountlake Terrace's Tree Fee-in-Lieu option- Mountlake Terrace's tree replacement requirements state that trees that can't or won't be replaced on the development site can pay the fee-in-lieu option instead. The amount of the fee shall be multiplied by the number of trees

necessary to satisfy the tree replacement requirements (MTMC 19.130.190) and shall be deposited into the city's tree fund.

- The fee shall be paid to the city prior to the issuance of a civil or building permit.
- Exemption: If the development meets the requirements for affordable housing as defined by RCW 84.14.010 for a minimum of 20% of the housing units, tree fee-in-lieu fee requirements are waived.
- Tree replacement fees as specified in the civil engineering construction development fee schedule (in 2024 fee schedule, cost is \$781 per replacement tree.) Tree replacement fee is based on wholesale cost for a two (2) inch caliper tree with tax; labor for planting and summer watering for first three (3) years; plus replacement cost for anticipated 20% street tree mortality.

City of Bellevue's Tree Fee-in-Lieu option- Bellevue allows the permit applicant to pay a fee if they have considered all other planting options and found them to be infeasible. Bellevue's fee is \$1300 per tree credit as of July 16th, 2024. This fee covers the cost of the tree, installation (including labor and equipment), maintenance for 3 years, and fund administration fees. The fee is subject to change each year at the directors discretion, in accordance with Seattle's Consumer Price Index for Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. The fee-in-lieu funds will be used by the city to support tree canopy and related initiatives.

Tree Replacement Rule- Non-Development Scenarios

The rules for tree removal are different when in non-development scenarios. Some jurisdictions may limit the number of trees that can be removed per year. An example is that the City of Burien allows one tree to be removed per calendar year for lots up to 5,000 square feet. The property owner is still required to submit proper documentation of the tree removal. This adds another layer of protection for trees on private property and minimizes the speed with which tree canopy can be removed on private land.

While there are regulations in place for tree removal in non-development scenarios, there are instances when the property owner may bypass the regulations to act more quickly in removing a tree. Some examples of tree removal options that may be exempt from the permitting process include annual removal allowances, emergency/hazard tree removal, standalone tree removal, and nuisance tree removal (King County guide).

University Place allows for up to 5 trees (only those not listed on their specific retention list UPMC 19.65.270(C)) to be removed in a 36 month period without a removal permit. Any trees beyond that limit, the property owner must acquire a tree removal permit.

North Bend requires a clearing and grading permit for the removal of any significant tree(s). Single family lot homeowners are allowed to clear up to 10 trees per year without a permit, unless the tree is within a native growth protection easement or within 150 feet of a critical area. In emergency situations that pose an imminent threat to life or property, a tree may be removed without prior permitting or approval from the City. Additionally, any trees that are hazard, dead, or dying may be removed with a letter of request submitted to the city.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Tree canopy cover is an important tool in mitigating the urban heat island effect. Prioritizing and protecting tree canopy will benefit the City of Des Moines by providing lower temperatures across the city. There are multiple options Des Moines could implement to begin preserving tree canopy on private properties, including starting a Landmark Tree Program, putting tree retention policies in place for development scenarios, or even instating restrictions in non-development scenarios.

While many cities have similarities in how they preserve tree canopy, the biggest differences are found in the way retention requirements are calculated. Options range from creating a tree credit program to requiring a strict percentage of trees on the property to be retained during development. Additionally, some jurisdictions allow for those who can't meet retention or replacement requirements to pay a fee-in-lieu option. This is another consideration for Des Moines, as these fee-in-lieu options typically pay into a tree fund that helps with urban forest maintenance.

One of the simplest ways Des Moines can work toward maintaining tree canopy is by creating restrictions on tree removal in non-development scenarios. The current code does not restrict property owners from removing trees on their property at all. By creating a code that limits the number of trees that can be removed, either on a yearly basis or other time frame, the city can slow canopy loss. The restrictions on non-development scenarios typically are less complicated than the retention requirements for development scenarios, making them an easy step for Des Moines to take.

Overall, Des Moines has many different possibilities for addressing tree canopy retention. The city will need to decide what approach works best for them, particularly regarding what retention requirements they would like to set on development scenarios.

References

Alonzo, M., Ibsen, P. C., & Locke, D. H. (2025). Urban trees and cooling: A review of the recent literature (2018 to 2024). *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry*.
<https://doi.org/10.48044/jauf.2025.023>

Clearing, Grading, Filling, and Drainage. North Bend Municipal Code. (n.d.).
<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/NorthBend/#!/NorthBend19/NorthBend1910.html#19.10.030>

Green Des Moines. City of Des Moines. (n.d.).
https://www.desmoineswa.gov/your_community/volunteering_in_des_moines/green_des_moines

Heritage Trees. City of Vancouver, WA. (2025, September 26).
<https://www.cityofvancouver.us/government/department/public-works/urban-forestry/heritage-trees/>

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division. (2024). Guide to developing effective urban tree regulations on private property (Report No. KCR3648). Prepared by Facet (formerly DCG/Watershed).

Landmark Tree Protection. City of Bellingham. (2026, March 23).
<https://cob.org/services/environment/trees/tree-protection>

Title 11 Trees. Portland.gov. (n.d.). <https://www.portland.gov/code/11>

Trees and urban forest management. City of Burien. (2024, August 27).
https://www.burienwa.gov/business/community_development/trees_and_urban_forest_management

Trees for terrace. Mountlake Terrace. (n.d.). <https://www.cityofmlt.com/2194/Trees-for-Terrace>

Tree permits. City of Issaquah. (n.d.). <https://www.issaquahwa.gov/1072/Tree-Permits>

Tree Retention and Replacement. Bellevue Municipal Codes. (n.d.).
<https://bellevue.municipal.codes/LUC/20.20.900>

Tumwater Municipal Code Title 16 Environment. City of Tumwater. (n.d.).
<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Tumwater/#!/Tumwater16/Tumwater1608.html#16.08.040>

Urban Forestry. MRSC. (2025). <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/environment/resources/urban-forestry#regulations>

Tree Retention Policies



**LEVEL
I**

LEVEL I • Limited Regulations

Level I codes have little or no limitations to tree removal on private property aside from tree removal and replacements in critical areas. May require review of trees as part of a landscape plan review for informational purposes.

Algona | Carnation | Clyde Hill | **Des Moines** | Enumclaw
Normandy Park | Pacific | Skykomish | Snoqualmie

Des Moines Municipal Code – Tree Protection

Non Development Tree Removal

No permit Required:

- Trees located outside of environmentally critical areas
- Trees that are not part of a required landscaping area
- The total area cleared is less than 2,000 square feet

Development Tree Regulations:

- Healthy evergreen trees six inches DBH (diameter at breast height) or greater and all existing healthy deciduous trees eight inches in diameter or greater as measured at 54 inches above the ground should be retained to the extent feasible within landscape areas.
- Significant Trees along the boundary of a subdivision shall be retained if the City determines that retention will provide beneficial buffering.

Des Moines Municipal Code – Tree Protection

Penalty:

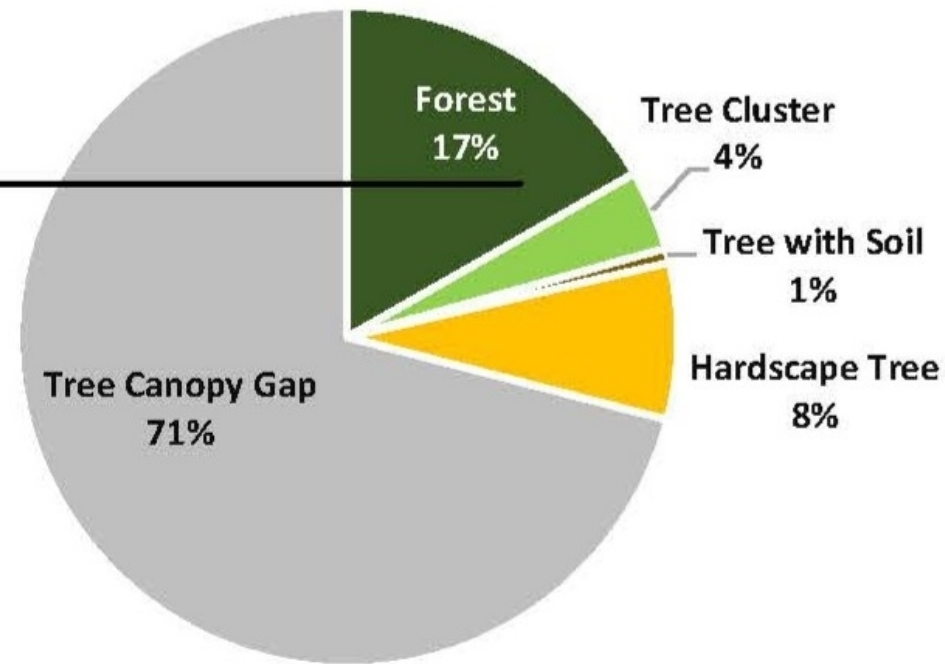
- Any tree identified to be retained that is removed, destroyed or damaged shall be replaced at a ratio of 3:1 for non development.
- Any tree identified to be retained that is destroyed or damaged during construction shall be replaced with five trees on the subject property or within the planting strip near the subject property.

Off-site mitigation and fee paid in lieu:

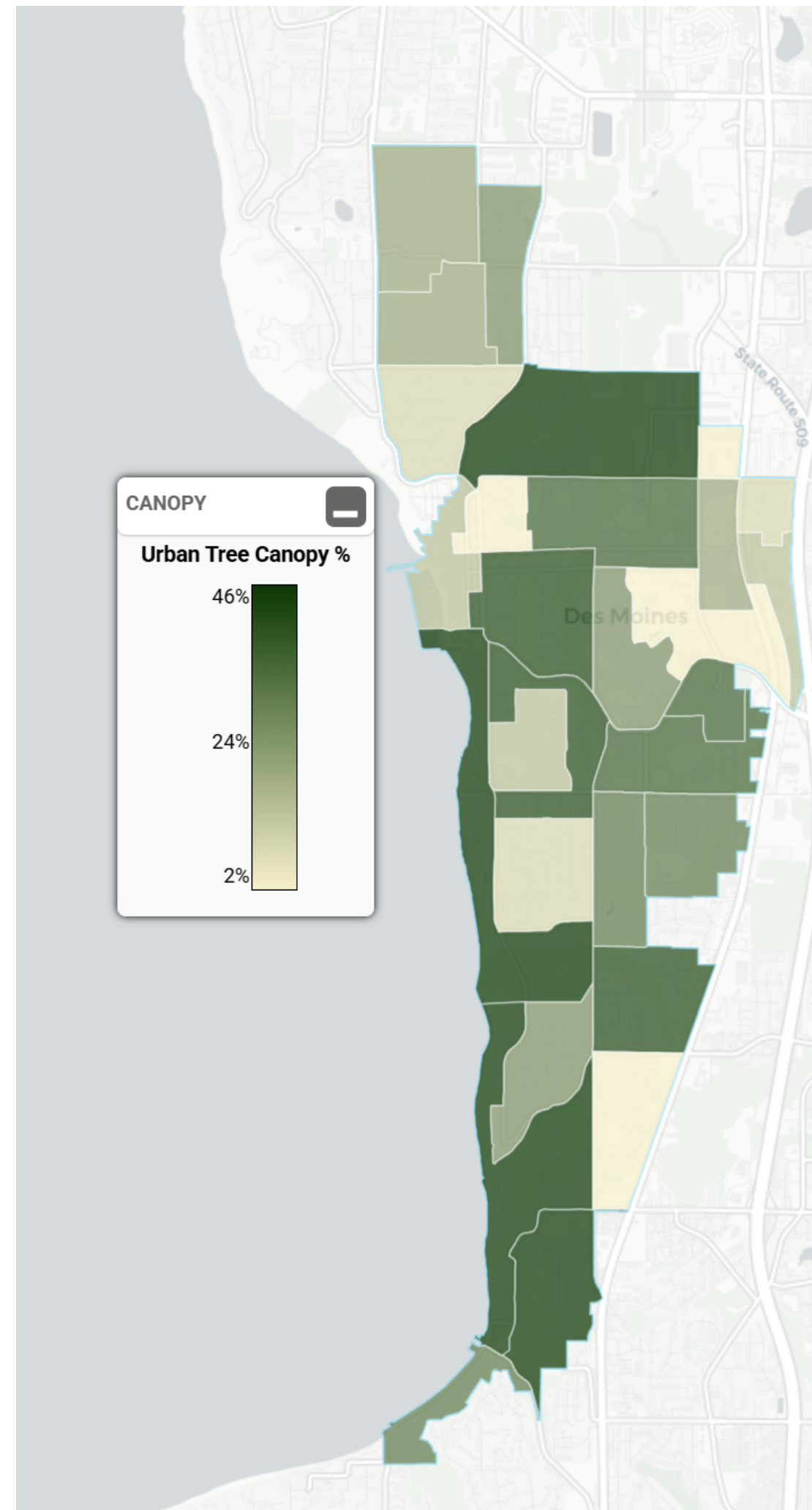
- Where the minimum required replacement tree cannot be provided on site, off-site mitigation or use of a tree replacement fee may be approved by the Director.

Des Moines Tree Canopy

Citywide
(29% Canopy Cover)



City Property – Portion of Total Citywide Land Area	5%	(214 of 4,059 acres)
% of Forest Area on City Property	16%	(111 of 680 forested acres)



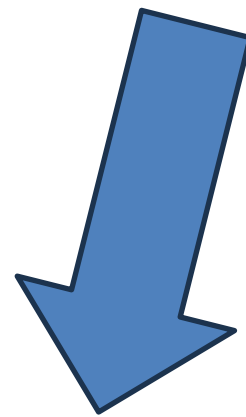
Tree Retention Development Codes

Non-Development Tree Codes

Heritage Tree Program

Fee-In-Lieu Option

Tree Retention



During Development

Outside of
Development

Tree Retention During Development

Every jurisdiction has their own way of developing tree retention thresholds

Requirements may be calculated based on:

- Lot size
- Development type
- Total canopy goal
- Total tree number goal
- Other factors

Retention requirement may prioritize trees already existing on the property rather than replacement trees

Example Property



Lot size: 130,000 sq. ft.
Development type: Commercial
Total current canopy: 80%
Total current significant trees: 60

Tree Retention Examples

City of Maple Valley

Canopy coverage is calculated for the site.

- 15% for commercial zones with no residential component
- 20% for all residential development within residential zones

City of Burien

The city uses a tree credit system to calculate retention requirements. Trees or certain species or size are worth more credits than others.

Land Use Type	Required Minimum Tree Credits per 1,000 square feet of developable area
Single-family development (detached dwellings, ADUs and DADUs) and townhouses on individual lots.	1
Multi-family development (attached dwellings including townhouse apartments and cottage housing)	1
Commercial, industrial, or non-residential lots	0.15

Example Property



Lot size: 130,000 sq ft
Canopy required: 15%
Canopy remaining: 20%
Required credits: 20
Tree retained: 15 (depending on size of tree may have 20 credits)

Tree Retention Examples

City of Issaquah

Canopy coverage depends on the site zoning, shown in the table below.

Zoning	Canopy Coverage
Conservancy	85% 75%
Community Facilities	85% 40% 25%
Single-Family Lots Greater Than 15,000 Square Feet	60%
Single-Family Lots 10,000 – 14,999 Square Feet	45%
Single-Family Lots 5,000 – 9,999 Square Feet	35%
Single-Family Lots Less Than 5,000 Square Feet	25%
Multifamily	30% 25%
Retail	25%
Mixed Use	25%
Commercial	25%
Urban Village	25%

Example Property



Lot size: 130,000
Canopy required: 25%
Canopy remaining: 20% (would add minimum 5% with additional planting)

Tree Retention Examples

City of Mountlake Terrace

The city requires 25% of viable trees to be retained. When 25% tree retention cannot be met, a combination of:

- (1) tree retention,
- (2) tree replacement above and beyond City landscaping requirements for site development, and/or
- (3) tree fee-in-lieu must be used to mitigate the impacts of all significant viable trees removed from the site

Example Property



Lot size: 130,000
Canopy required: 25%
Canopy remaining: 20% (would add 5% with additional planting above require landscaping or pay in-lieu fee)

Non-Development Scenarios

Some jurisdictions have restrictions on the number of trees that can be removed outside of development

These restrictions are typically a set number of trees over a certain timeframe

Example: City of Burien

The city allows up to 1 tree to be removed per calendar year on lots up to 5,000 square feet.

Documentation of removal is necessary, but no permit is required.

Exceptions are made for dead or dying trees and those that pose a threat to life or property.

Replacement Ratios

Burien

Any exceptional healthy tree required to be removed as part of a development permit requires replacement at a ratio of three (3) trees for each tree removed and shall follow size and planting standards in this section. This replacement is in addition to the minimum required tree credits.

Table 19.26.050-1 Required Minimum Tree Credits

Zones	Required minimum tree credits per 1,000 square feet of developable area
R-1, R-2, R-3	1
Mixed Uses, SPA-2, R-4, R-5	0.5
I, AI	0.15

Table 19.26.100-1 Tree Replacement for illegal removal of trees

Diameter at standard height (DSH) of tree removed	Number or required replacement trees
6 to 10 inches DSH	1
Larger than 10 inches and up to 14 inches	2
Larger than 14 inches and up to 18 inches	3
Larger than 18 inches and up to 22 inches	4
Larger than 22 inches and up to 26 inches	5
Larger than 26 inches and up to 30 inches	6
Larger than 30 inches and Exceptional trees where an exception pursuant to BMC 19.26.040(2)(C) has not been granted	7
Exceptional trees granted an exception pursuant to BMC 19.26.040(2)(C)	8

Replacement Ratios

Issaquah

Tree replacement: 1:1 and must provide canopy coverage equal to or greater than the tree(s) being removed.

This requirement may be waived if the site meets or exceeds the canopy coverage targets even after the removal of the tree(s) at issue.

Bellevue

Significant tree: 1:1

Landmark tree: 3 replacement trees, or two large conifer species trees.

Hazardous Trees: 0, except when required to maintain any applicable landscaping standards.

The number of replacement trees required to be planted on the site may be reduced by the director if adequate

Tree density on the site.

Table 23.76.060.G. Residential Tree Removal Allowances Without Replacement

Site Size	Annual Replanting Threshold	Significant or Landmark Trees Remaining on the Site
Up to 10,000 square feet	Removal of 1 landmark tree or 2 significant trees	2
10,001 to 20,000 square feet	Removal of 1 landmark tree or 3 significant trees	3
20,001 to 40,000 square feet	Removal of 1 landmark tree or 4 significant trees	4
40,001 square feet or greater	Removal of 1 landmark tree or 4 significant trees	8

Replacement Ratios

Maple Valley

Loss of any retained tree due to wind, disease, or other natural causes, or illegal removal shall be replaced by one or several trees per planting standard Canopy Coverage requirements. Replacement trees must equal the canopy lost, with the exception of street trees which shall be planted at a one-to-one ratio.

Mountlake Terrace

Tree replacement on-site is required for tree removal associated with development, above and beyond required landscaping. Each viable significant tree to be removed shall be replaced as follows:

For each significant tree between 6 inches and 12 inches DBH removed, 3 replacement trees are required.

For each significant tree between 12 inches and 24 inches DBH removed, 5 replacement trees are required.

For each significant tree between 24 inches and 48 inches DBH removed, 7 replacement trees are required.

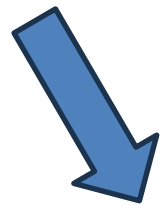
For each significant tree greater than 48 inches DBH removed, 10 replacement trees are required.

Fee-In-Lieu Option

Tree retention or replacement requirements are established during development



Developer either can't or won't meet those requirements



Developer can pay a fee per tree that they can't retain or replace

Fee-In-Lieu

Example: City of Mountlake Terrace

For trees that can't or won't be replaced, the developer can pay the fee

Fees must be paid before the civil or building permit will be issued

Fees amount to \$781 per replacement tree. This includes the cost of the tree, the cost of maintenance for the first 3 years, and accounts for a general 20% tree mortality rate

Heritage Tree Programs



What is a Heritage Tree Program?

Heritage trees are of a certain size (usually 36 inches diameter or greater) and or importance (either historically or aesthetically) to the community

A Heritage tree program is a voluntary program to protect these trees, making it difficult to remove them

Residents can nominate trees on their own property or on public property

Example: City of Vancouver, WA

Heritage trees are defined by:

- Size: a diameter of at least 36 inches
- Special site location
- Relation to a historical event
- Unusual species for the area or exemplary form for the species

Heritage trees require special permission and permits to remove. Once a tree is nominated by a property owner and accepted, it is binding for all future owners, successors, and heirs of the property.



So the question is...

Of these regulations:

- Tree retention thresholds during development
- Non-development restrictions
- Fee-In-Lieu option
- Heritage tree program

Which, if any, does the City of Des Moines want to implement?



Thank you!
Any Questions?



**City Council
AGENDA ITEM**

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Presentation of the City of Des Moines' Draft Strategic Plan- Charting Our Course

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Des Moines - Updated Framework - April 2026

FOR AGENDA OF:

May 7, 2026

DEPT OF ORIGIN:

Administration

DATE SUBMITTED:

April 27, 2026

CLEARANCES:

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this item is to receive the presentation of the draft Strategic Plan, *Charting Our Course*, and provide feedback and direction.

Background

In 2025, the City initiated its first comprehensive Strategic Planning process to establish clear priorities and guide decision-making over the next five years. The City entered into a professional services agreement with Raftelis in August 2025 to support facilitation, community engagement, and plan development.

Branded *Charting Our Course*, the Strategic Plan is intended to align City resources, policy direction, and service delivery with community priorities. The process has included:

- Council retreat(s)
- Community survey and outreach
- Focus groups and stakeholder engagement
- Public events and community input opportunities

Discussion

This agenda item will be conducted as a facilitated workshop, led by Nancy Hetrick of Raftelis.

The workshop will provide Council with an opportunity to review and discuss the draft Strategic Plan, including:

- Vision, goals, and priority areas
- Key strategies
- Alignment with existing City plans and initiatives
- Implementation considerations

The intent of this session is to gather Council feedback and direction to inform final revisions. Staff and the consultant team will incorporate Council feedback and return with a final Strategic Plan for Council consideration and anticipated adoption in June 2026.

City of Des Moines - Strategic Plan Framework

Vision

The premier waterfront community on the Puget Sound.

Mission

Des Moines is committed to maintaining a safe, sustainable environment while ensuring a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play.

Values

Teamwork | Customer Service | Safety | Responsibility | Integrity

Strategic Focus Areas

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Des Moines cultivates a dynamic economy that attracts investment and is sustainable for residents and businesses.

Strategies

- Implement a data-informed Economic Development strategy with clear priorities, opportunities, and focus areas.
- Revitalize downtown to be vibrant and provide a range of amenities that meet the needs and wants of a growing community.
- Stimulate a marina that is the treasure of Des Moines, where the beauty, activities, and events attract locals and visitors.
- Create an atmosphere where Des Moines is recognized as a great place for business investment.
- Embrace the Pacific Highway corridor as an integrated community and economy to support complementary redevelopment.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

We keep Des Moines on solid financial footing by spending wisely, securing steady revenue, and maintaining healthy reserves.

Strategies

- Secure steady revenue through diverse sources.
- Use resources wisely and manage costs.
- Align spending with City priorities.
- Plan ahead with strong financial forecasting.

- Use partnerships and outside funding to support City services.
- Maintain healthy reserves for long-term stability.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Des Moines is a safe and equitable place to live and visit, supported by responsive public safety services, emergency preparedness, and strong community partnerships.

Strategies

- Recruit and retain public safety personnel to align police staffing with service needs.
- Enhance public safety services through data-driven decision-making, partnerships, and modern tools.
- Improve traffic safety through coordinated enforcement, engineering, education, and technology.
- Strengthen emergency preparedness and community resilience.
- Provide sustainable and effective animal control services that meet community expectations.

ENGAGED AND THRIVING COMMUNITY

Des Moines fosters an engaged and connected community where residents are informed, involved, and supported by inclusive programs, events, and public spaces.

Strategies

- Provide programs, events, and spaces that evolve with community needs and interests.
- Increase participation in civic life through expanded volunteerism and inclusive engagement opportunities.
- Maintain and activate parks, trails, and green spaces as safe, welcoming community assets.
- Make it easy for people to find information and stay connected through modern, user-friendly tools.

NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Des Moines preserves its natural resources, including waterfronts, parks, and trails, while promoting safe, convenient mobility across the City and prioritizing investment in maintaining critical infrastructure.

Strategies

- Maintain and invest in critical infrastructure and public assets to support reliability, sustainability, and future growth.
- Preserve, restore, and enhance natural resources and open spaces.
- Advocate for solutions that reduce airport impacts and protect community health and quality of life.
- Maintain parks, trails, and recreational facilities to ensure safe, high-quality community amenities.
- Improve mobility, safety, and connectivity through a balanced, multimodal transportation system.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Des Moines builds a skilled, supported, and engaged workforce that delivers high-quality service to the community.

Strategies

- Strengthen a service-centered culture across the organization.
- Recruit and retain a talented workforce to deliver high-quality public services.
- Develop leadership capacity through clear professional development and advancement pathways.
- Promote employee engagement through communication, recognition, and feedback.
- Equip employees with the tools, technology, and resources needed to deliver effective services.



CITY OF DES MOINES

Charting Our Course

2026 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

Table of Contents

Letter from the City Manager ~~~~~ 03

Introduction ~~~~~ 04

The Strategic Planning Process ~~~~~ 06

Des Moines' Strategic Plan ~~~~~ 08



Des Moines City Council. From left to right:
Jeremy Nutting, JC Harris, Mayor Yoshiko Grace Matsui, Deputy Mayor Gene Achziger, Robyn Desimone, Harry Steinmetz, Pierre Blossie



Letter from the City Manager, Katherine Caffrey



Dear Des Moines Community,

I am proud to share Charting Our Course, the City of Des Moines' first-ever Strategic Plan. This plan represents an important milestone for our community and provides a clear framework to guide City decisions, priorities, and investments in the years ahead.

This Strategic Plan was shaped through extensive community engagement and strong leadership from the Des Moines City Council. I am grateful to the Mayor and Councilmembers for their thoughtful direction, time, and commitment throughout this process. Their leadership helped ensure this plan reflects both community priorities and a clear, long-term vision for the City.

At its core, Charting Our Course reflects what we heard from you. Over the past year, residents, business owners, community partners, and City staff shared their perspectives, priorities, and hopes for Des Moines' future through surveys, conversations, workshops, and public meetings. The result is a plan grounded in real community input—one that balances ambition with practicality and reflects our shared values.

This Strategic Plan is intentionally high-level. It is designed to serve as a compass, not a checklist—helping City Council and staff align daily work, budget decisions, and long-term planning around a common set of priorities. While it does not replace the many functional plans that guide City operations, it brings them together into a unified direction for the organization.

As Des Moines continues to evolve, this plan will help us navigate change thoughtfully, remain accountable to the community, and make informed choices about how best to use limited resources. Just as important, it provides transparency into where the City is headed and how progress will be measured over time.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and voice to this effort. Charting Our Course is a shared commitment—to our community, our values, and Des Moines' future.

- Katherine Caffrey | City Manager



Year of Incorporation

1959



Population

32,400



Square Miles

6



Puget Sound Shoreline

5 miles



Moorage Slips

850



Acres of Park Land

510



Median Home Value

\$630k

Situated along Puget Sound between Seattle and Tacoma, Des Moines is a waterfront community of approximately 32,400 residents.

Incorporated in 1959, Des Moines has grown into a vibrant, full-service City that balances a blend of small-town character with modern opportunities and access to nearby metropolitan areas.

The marina and waterfront serve as the heart of Des Moines. As one of the largest public marinas in Washington, the Des Moines Marina anchors a scenic stretch of shoreline that draws boaters, visitors, and residents year-round, serving as both a civic gathering space and an active economic driver.

The waterfront corridor—along with the City's network of parks, beachside trails, and fishing pier—reflects the community's deep connection to the natural environment and distinguishes Des Moines

from neighboring cities. These spaces provide beloved gathering places where residents of all ages come together to build a deep-rooted sense of community. Between destinations like Saltwater State Park and the City's green spaces, the mild Pacific Northwest climate and stunning natural setting make outdoor recreation not just an amenity, but a way of life.

Throughout the strategic planning process, community members consistently highlighted the City's close-knit feel and sense of belonging as some of its most cherished qualities. Neighbors know one another, and local events bring people together. Residents describe a genuine sense of belonging that is increasingly rare in communities of similar size.

Community

This spirit is evident in the City's active community organizations, thriving farmers market, and the pride residents take in their neighborhoods and public spaces. The City is also shaped by its diversity, serving as home to long-term residents and new families. This mix of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences contributes to the richness of community life and reflects the inclusive, welcoming character that defines Des Moines.

While positioned between two major metropolitan areas, Des Moines maintains a distinct identity, offering genuine community and a natural beauty that residents are proud to call home.

Des Moines' waterfront geography shapes both its identity and its aspirations.

Strategic Planning

Purpose and Process

The City of Des Moines initiated a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2025 with the goal of creating its first Citywide Strategic Plan and charting a course for the City over the next five years. At its core, a Strategic Plan answers three questions:

- **Where are we at today?**
- **Where do we want to go?**
- **How do we get there?**

The purpose of developing a Strategic Plan is to align the City Council's vision with strategies that bridge what the community desires, what the organization can deliver, and what the future holds. It creates a clear roadmap that unifies the City around shared goals. By guiding daily decision-making, the plan directs limited resources toward the most impactful initiatives. It also serves as a vital communication tool to share progress with the community and other stakeholders, fostering accountability and a shared understanding of how everyone contributes to the City's overall success.

A key step in the development of a Strategic Plan is understanding community needs and desires. As part of this process, the City engaged various stakeholder groups to gather valuable insights to inform the development of the Strategic Plan. These engagement activities included the following:

- Individual interviews with members of the Des Moines City Council to discuss their vision for the future.
- Five focus groups, attended by a total of 50 members of the community. Participants discussed what they love about Des Moines, current strengths, challenges, and their desired future for the City.
- An online survey distributed to City staff. Employees had the opportunity to provide input on organizational mission and values, as well as strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing Des Moines. A total of 113 employees provided responses.

- An online survey made available to members of the Des Moines community. Survey respondents shared what they love about Des Moines, what they would prioritize for the City to focus efforts, current challenges, and their vision for the future. A total of 1,036 community members provided responses.

- A Town Hall meeting attended by over 80 members of the community. Participants provided their thoughts on a vision for the future of Des Moines, including how they want Des Moines to look and feel, as well as providing specific feedback on key priority areas.

Following these engagement efforts, City staff and the City Council held multiple workshops to review themes and draft the Strategic Plan framework, ensuring it is rooted in operational realities and staff capacity. This Strategic Plan represents the essential bridge connecting future aspirations with daily operations, preserving what makes Des Moines great while aspiring to achieve more in the future.



SMALL TOWN PEOPLE

SMALL TOWN

WATERFRONT

ENGAGED

NEIGHBORS COMMUNITY

ENVIRONMENT

WALKABLE

HEART

PEACEFUL

BEACH

MARINA

**What We
Love About
Des Moines**

Our Strategic Plan



We know our community has big dreams and we want to see them come true. Our Strategic Plan lays a foundation for this progress, defines our shared vision for the future, and focuses City resources on six key strategic priorities: Economic Vitality; Financial Stability; Public Safety; Engaged and Thriving Community; Natural and Built Environment; and Organizational Excellence.

Charting Our Course



Mission

A mission statement articulates the purpose of the organization and what drives employees to show up and deliver quality services for their community.

Des Moines is committed to maintaining a safe, sustainable environment while ensuring a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play.

Vision

A vision statement is aspirational. It reflects what we hope will be true about our City and community in the future. Des Moines' vision is to be:

The premier waterfront community on the Puget Sound.

Values

Values are the principles that guide behavior, influencing how staff interact with one another and how they serve the public. Des Moines embraces the values of:

**Teamwork | Customer Service
Safety | Responsibility | Integrity**

Strategic Focus Areas

Focus areas represent what the City must do well to achieve its vision. These areas guide the City's resources and daily efforts, driving measurable progress toward the community's desired future.





ECONOMIC VITALITY

Des Moines cultivates a dynamic economy that attracts investment and is sustainable for residents and businesses.

Strategies

- Implement a data-informed Economic Development strategy with clear priorities, opportunities, and focus areas.
- Revitalize downtown to be vibrant and provide a range of amenities that meet the needs and wants of a growing community.
- Stimulate a marina that is the treasure of Des Moines, where the beauty, activities, and events attract locals and visitors.
- Create an atmosphere where Des Moines is recognized as a great place for business investment.
- Embrace the Pacific Highway corridor as an integrated community and economy to support complementary redevelopment.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

We keep Des Moines on solid financial footing by spending wisely, securing steady revenue, and maintaining healthy reserves.

Strategies

- Secure steady revenue through diverse sources.
- Use resources wisely and manage costs.
- Align spending with City priorities.
- Plan ahead with strong financial forecasting.
- Use partnerships and outside funding to support City services.
- Maintain healthy reserves for long-term stability.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Des Moines is a safe and equitable place to live and visit, supported by responsive public safety services, emergency preparedness, and strong community partnerships.

Strategies

- Recruit and retain public safety personnel to align police staffing with service needs.
- Enhance public safety services through data-driven decision-making, partnerships, and modern tools.
- Improve traffic safety through coordinated enforcement, engineering, education, and technology.
- Strengthen emergency preparedness and community resilience.
- Provide sustainable and effective animal control services that meet community expectations.

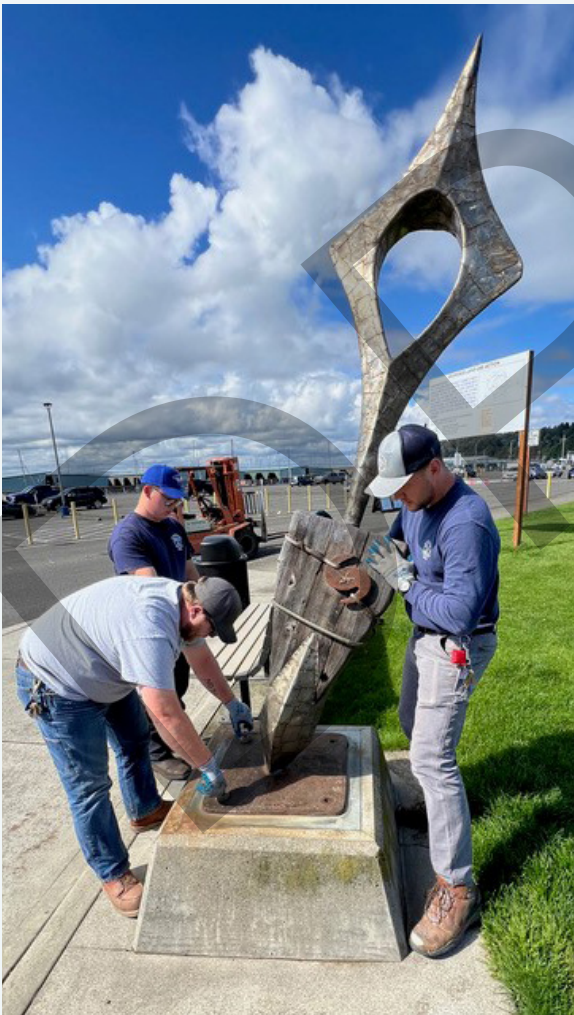


ENGAGED AND THRIVING COMMUNITY

Des Moines fosters an engaged and connected community where residents are informed, involved, and supported by inclusive programs, events, and public spaces.

Strategies

- Provide programs, events, and spaces that evolve with community needs and interests.
- Increase participation in civic life through expanded volunteerism and inclusive engagement opportunities.
- Maintain and activate parks, trails, and green spaces as safe, welcoming community assets.
- Make it easy for people to find information and stay connected through modern, user-friendly tools.





NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Des Moines preserves its natural resources, including waterfronts, parks, and trails, while promoting safe, convenient mobility across the City and prioritizing investment in maintaining critical infrastructure.

Strategies

- Maintain and invest in critical infrastructure and public assets to support reliability, sustainability, and future growth.
- Preserve, restore, and enhance natural resources and open spaces.
- Advocate for solutions that reduce airport impacts and protect community health and quality of life.
- Maintain parks, trails, and recreational facilities to ensure safe, high-quality community amenities.
- Improve mobility, safety, and connectivity through a balanced, multimodal transportation system.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Des Moines builds a skilled, supported, and engaged workforce that delivers high-quality service to the community.

Strategies

- Strengthen a service-centered culture across the organization.
- Recruit and retain a talented workforce to deliver high-quality public services.
- Develop leadership capacity through clear professional development and advancement pathways.
- Promote employee engagement through communication, recognition, and feedback.
- Equip employees with the tools, technology, and resources needed to deliver effective services.



Acknowledgements

Charting Our Course reflects a shared journey—one guided by collaboration, trust, and a common commitment to Des Moines' future. We extend our sincere appreciation to the many individuals and organizations whose contributions helped shape this Strategic Plan. We would like to thank and acknowledge the following:

City Council

Mayor Yoshiko Grace Matsui
 Deputy Mayor Gene Achziger
 Pierre Blossie
 Robyn Desimone
 JC Harris
 Jeremy Nutting
 Harry Steinmetz

Citizens Advisory Board members

Former Mayor Traci Buxton and Councilmember
 Matt Mahoney (terms ended December 2025)

The Des Moines residents, businesses, and
 organizations that contributed their valuable
 time, energy, and ideas

City Staff

Katherine Caffrey, City Manager
 Adrienne Johnson-Newton, Assistant City Manager
 Tim George, City Attorney
 Ted Boe, Police Chief
 Rebecca Deming, Community Development Director
 Jeff Friend, Finance Director
 Mike Slevin, Public Works Director
 Bonnie Wilkins, Director of Administrative Services
 Scott Wilkins, Harbormaster



21630 11th Avenue S, Suite A
 Des Moines, WA 98198

www.desmoineswa.gov
 Adopted Summer 2026

City of Des Moines

Council Study Session

May 7, 2026





CITY OF DES MOINES

Charting Our Course

2026 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

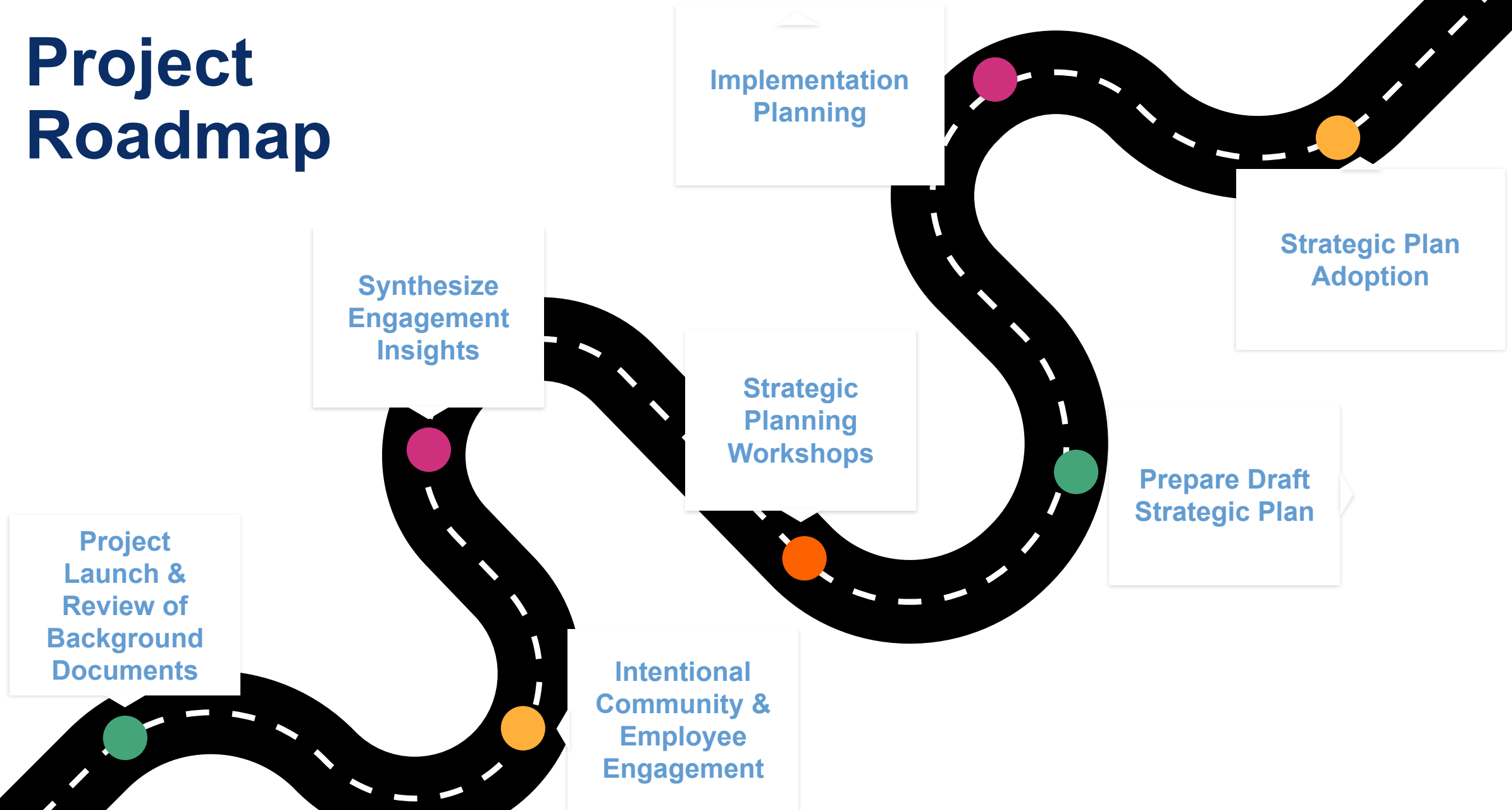
Agenda

1. Process Overview
2. Key Issues/Challenges
3. Vision, Mission, and Values
4. Strategic Focus Areas
5. Wrap up and Next Steps

Process Overview



Project Roadmap



Community & Employee Engagement Process



Key Issues/Challenges



Key Issues and Challenges Facing Des Moines

- Financial position
- Airport impacts
- Public trust
- Existing land use mix
- Pacific Highway corridor

Strategic Plan Elements

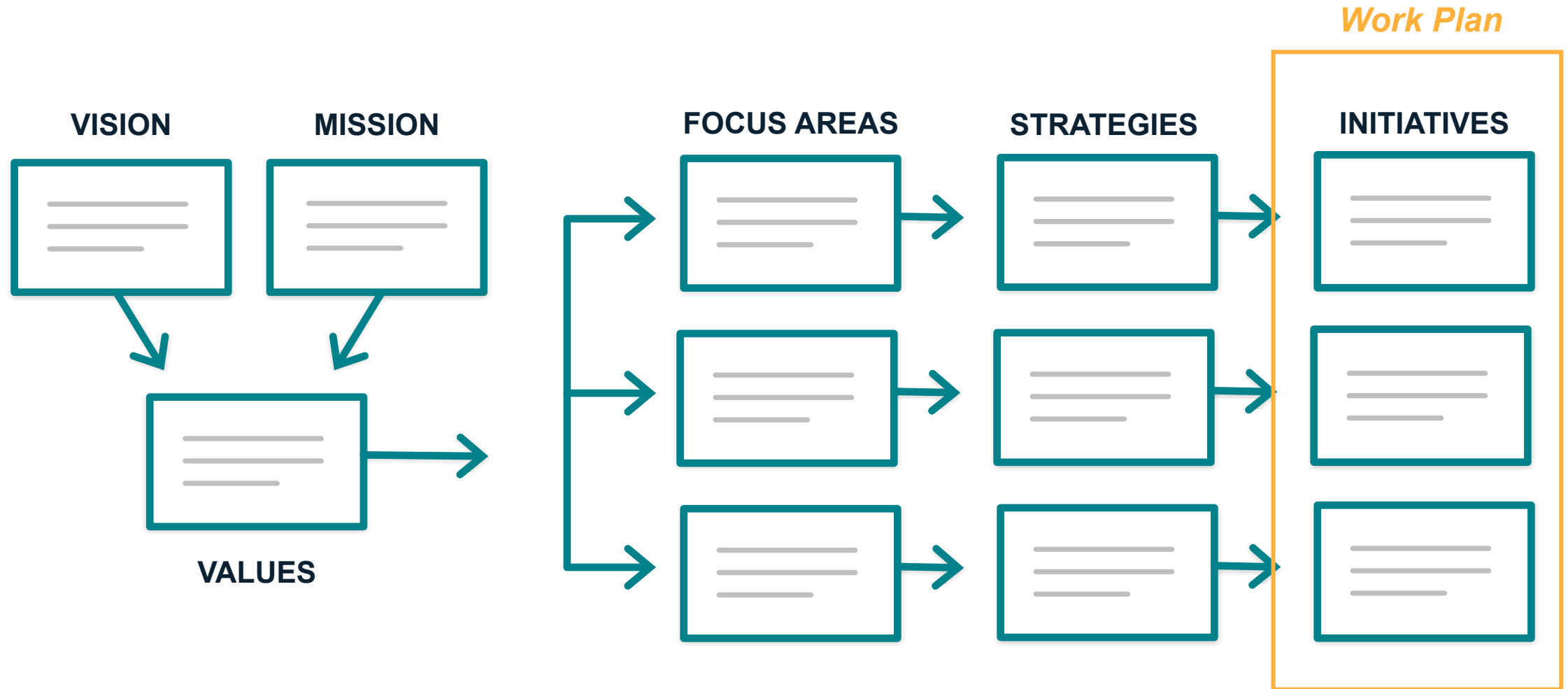


CITY OF DES MOINES

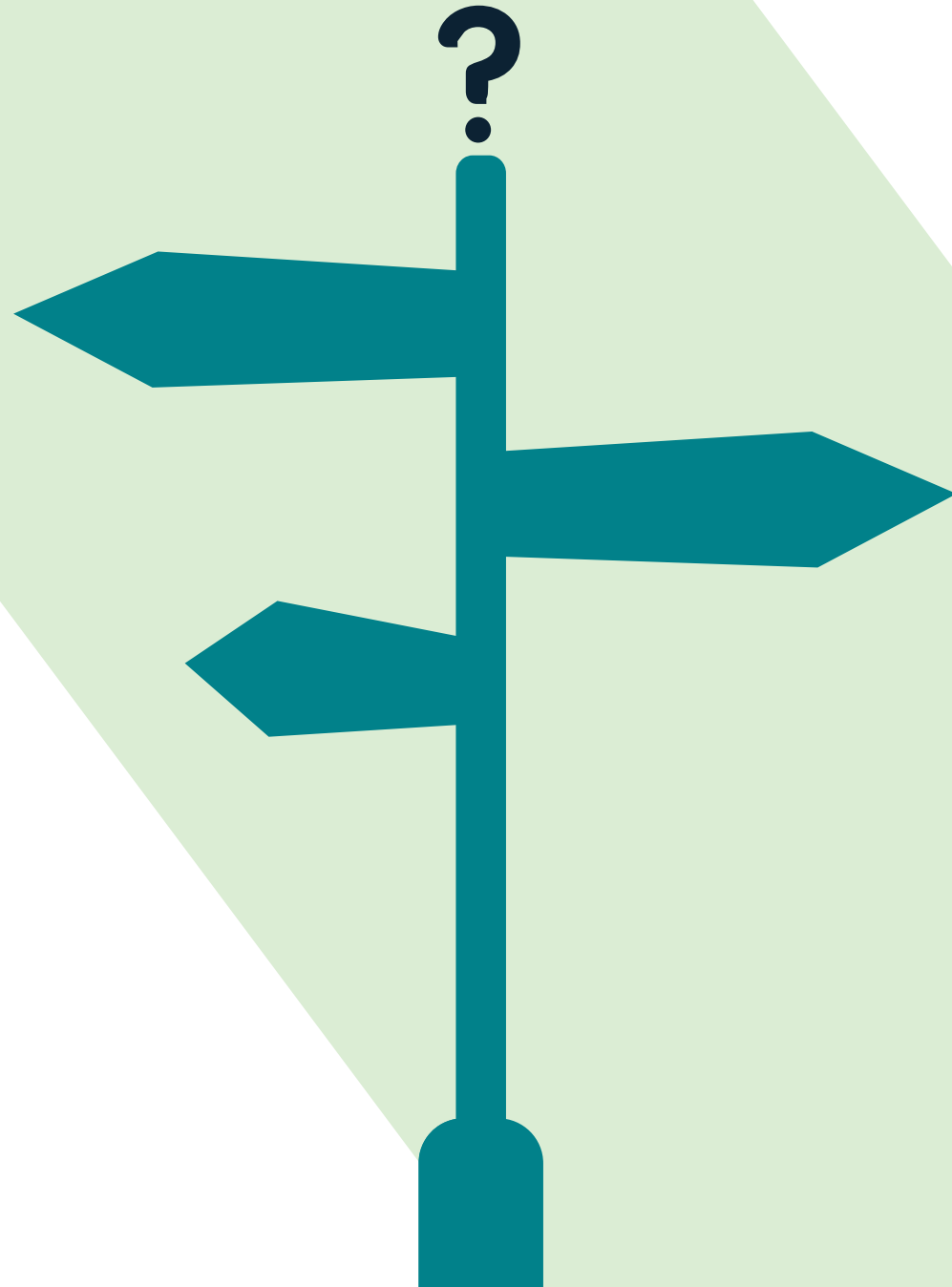
Charting Our Course

2026 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Framework



A Strategic Plan Answers **3 Questions**



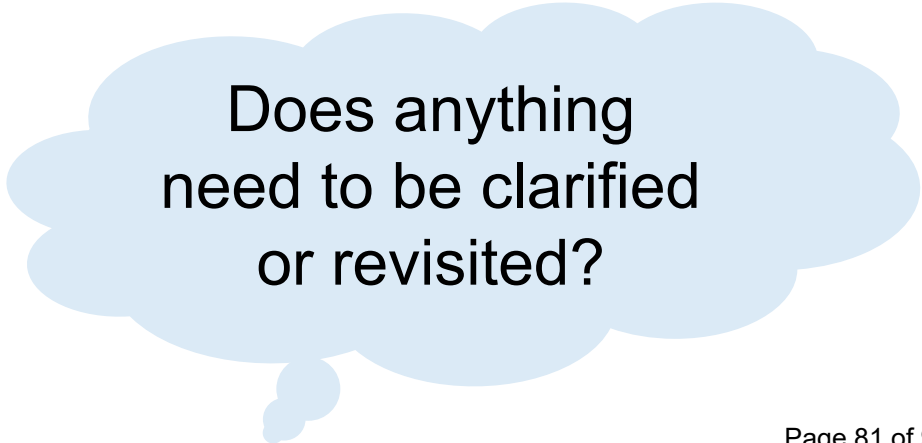
Vision, Mission, and Values



Vision Statement

What Des Moines aspires to be...

The premier waterfront community on the
Puget Sound.



Does anything
need to be clarified
or revisited?

Mission Statement

The purpose of the City of Des Moines...

Des Moines is committed to maintaining a safe, sustainable environment while ensuring a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play.

Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Organizational Values

How the organization shows up when at its best...

Teamwork
Customer Service
Safety
Responsibility
Integrity

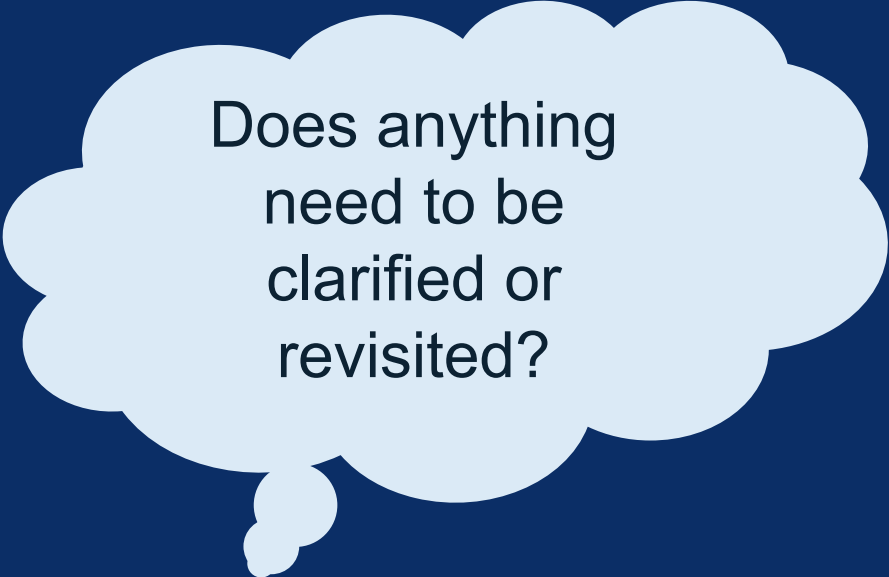
Does anything
need to be clarified
or revisited?

Strategic Focus Areas and Key Strategies



Economic Vitality

Des Moines cultivates a dynamic economy that attracts investment and is sustainable for residents and businesses.



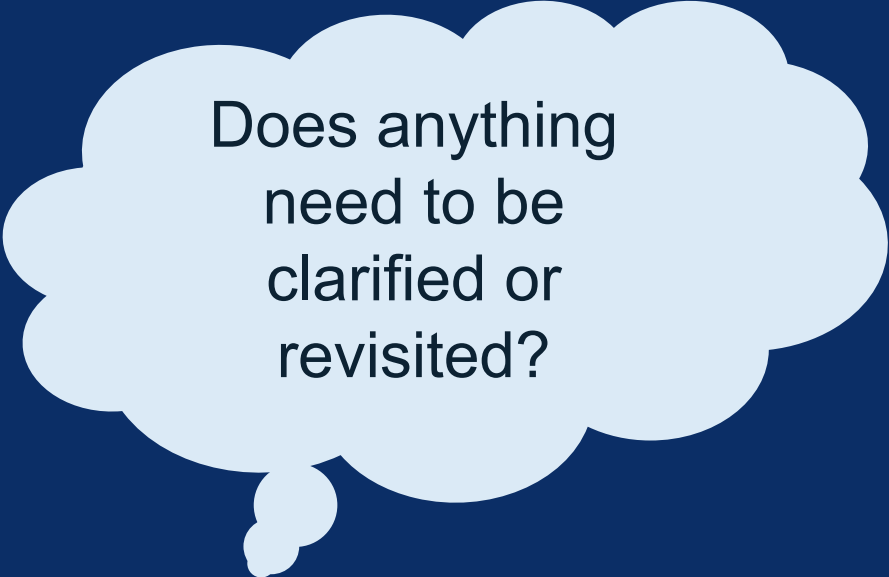
Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Implement a data-informed Economic Development strategy with clear priorities, opportunities, and focus areas.
2. Revitalize downtown to be vibrant and provide a range of amenities that meet the needs and wants of a growing community.
3. Stimulate a marina that is the treasure of Des Moines, where the beauty, activities, and events attract locals and visitors.
4. Create an atmosphere where Des Moines is recognized as a great place for business investment.
5. Embrace the Pacific Highway corridor as an integrated community and economy to support complementary redevelopment.

Financial Stability

We keep Des Moines on solid financial footing by spending wisely, securing steady revenue, and maintaining healthy reserves.



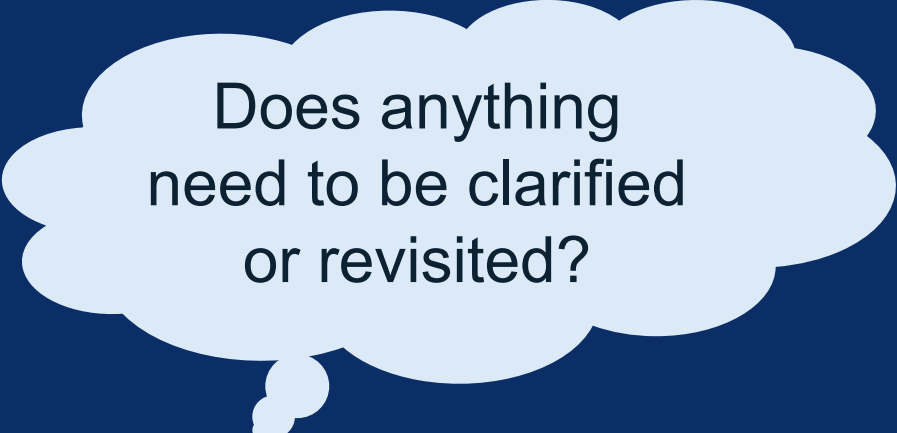
Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Secure steady revenue through diverse sources.
2. Use resources wisely and manage costs.
3. Align spending with City priorities.
4. Plan ahead with strong financial forecasting.
5. Use partnerships and outside funding to support City services.
6. Maintain healthy reserves for long-term stability.

Public Safety

Des Moines is a safe and equitable place to live and visit, supported by responsive public safety services, emergency preparedness, and strong community partnerships.



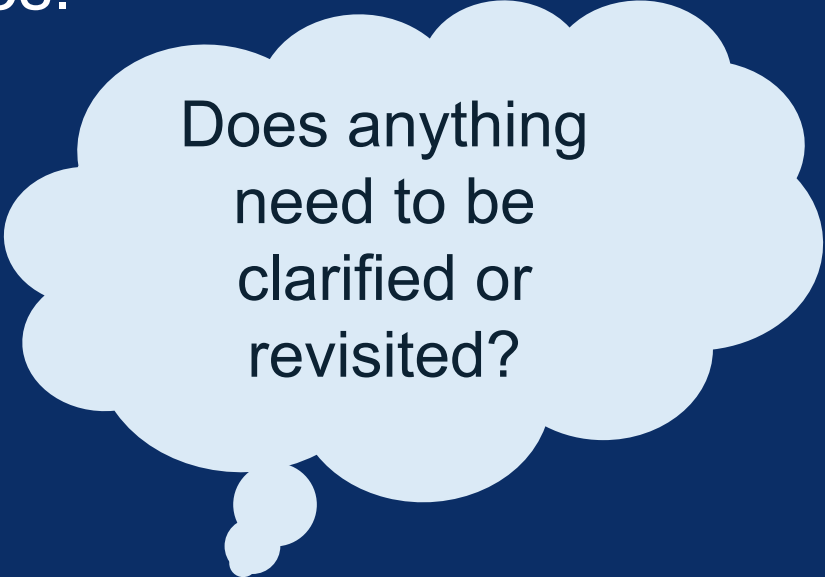
Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Recruit and retain public safety personnel to align police staffing with service needs.
2. Enhance public safety services through data-driven decision-making, partnerships, and modern tools.
3. Improve traffic safety through coordinated enforcement, engineering, education, and technology.
4. Strengthen emergency preparedness and community resilience.
5. Provide sustainable and effective animal control services that meet community expectations.

Engaged and Thriving Community

Des Moines fosters an engaged and connected community where residents are informed, involved, and supported by inclusive programs, events, and public spaces.



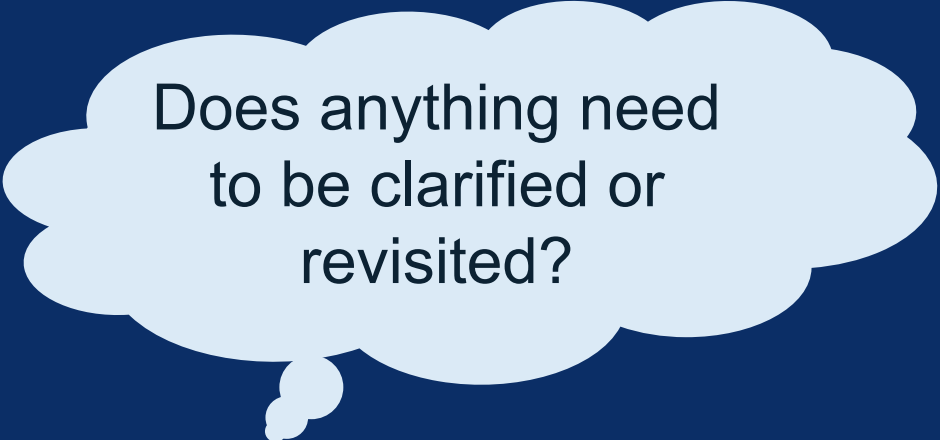
Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Provide programs, events, and spaces that evolve with community needs and interests.
2. Increase participation in civic life through expanded volunteerism and inclusive engagement opportunities.
3. Maintain and activate parks, trails, and green spaces as safe, welcoming community assets.
4. Make it easy for people to find information and stay connected through modern, user-friendly tools.

Natural and Built Environment

Des Moines preserves its natural resources, including waterfronts, parks, and trails, while promoting safe, convenient mobility across the City and prioritizing investment in maintaining critical infrastructure.



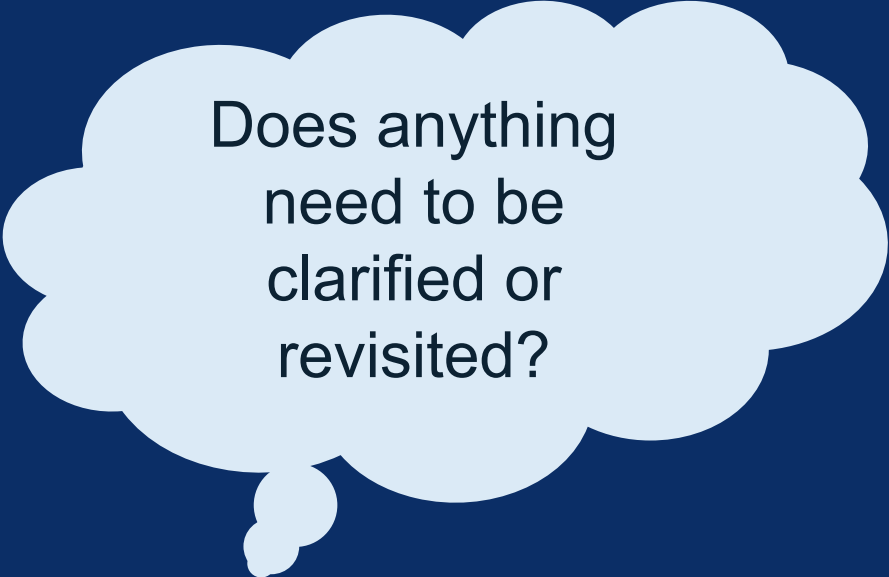
Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Maintain and invest in critical infrastructure and public assets to support reliability, sustainability, and future growth.
2. Preserve, restore, and enhance natural resources and open spaces.
3. Advocate for solutions that reduce airport impacts and protect community health and quality of life.
4. Maintain parks, trails, and recreational facilities to ensure safe, high-quality community amenities.
5. Improve mobility, safety, and connectivity through a balanced, multimodal transportation system.

Organizational Excellence

Des Moines builds a skilled, supported, and engaged workforce that delivers high-quality service to the community.



Does anything need to be clarified or revisited?

Strategies

1. Strengthen a service-centered culture across the organization.
2. Recruit and retain a talented workforce to deliver high-quality public services.
3. Develop leadership capacity through clear professional development and advancement pathways.
4. Promote employee engagement through communication, recognition, and feedback.
5. Equip employees with the tools, technology, and resources needed to deliver effective services.

Connection to Staff Work Planning

Staff developed specific initiatives to achieve Council's strategies within each Focus Area

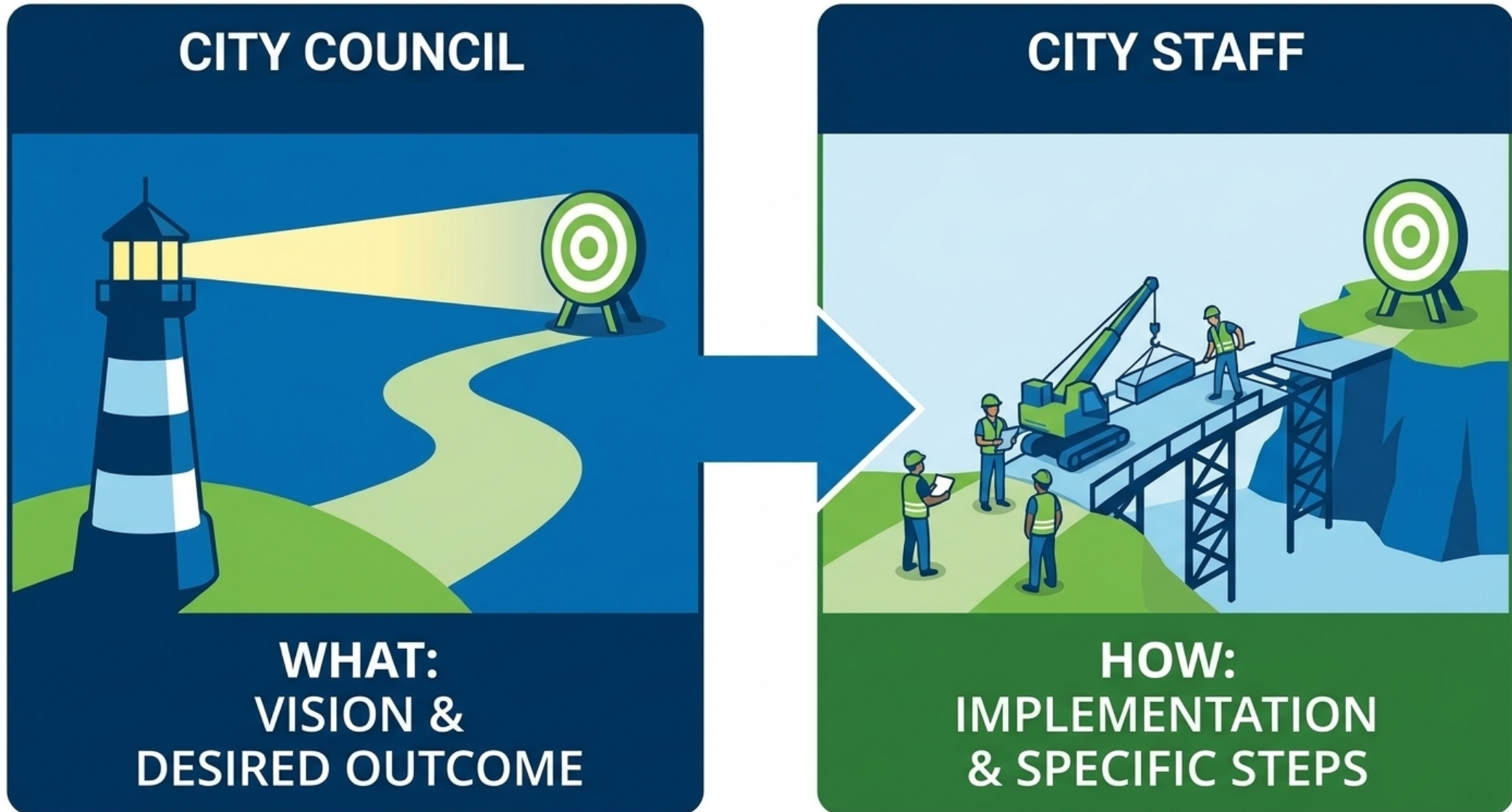
The work plan is still in development. These examples are preliminary drafts.

Economic Vitality

Des Moines cultivates a dynamic economy that attracts investment and is sustainable for residents and businesses.				

<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Initiatives</u>	<u>Responsible Lead</u>	<u>Current Status</u>	<u>Anticipated Completion</u>
Implement a data informed Economic Development strategy with clear priorities, opportunities and focus areas.	Leverage the three 2026 grant funded efforts to establish a foundation for an economic development strategy.	Dan E.	In Progress	End of 26/Early 27
	Identify, unlock and promote strategic properties that enhance the tax base.	Katherine/ Dan E.	Not Yet Started	
	Develop tools and incentives to target investment and development in key commercial areas.	Dan E.	Not Yet Started	
Revitalize downtown to be vibrant and provide a range of amenities that meet the needs and wants of a growing community.	Update development standards to increase building heights and density that allow downtown to support thriving businesses.	Rebecca	In Progress	
	Modernize zoning to comply with state requirements and preserve ground-floor commercial uses in key locations.	Rebecca	Not Yet Started	

Implementing the Plan – *What's our role?*





Next Steps

- Refine the plan based on tonight's feedback
- Present the plan for adoption (*June*)
- Facilitate a City Council retreat to discuss implementation (*early fall*)



CITY OF DES MOINES

Charting Our Course

2026 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



Thank you!

Contact: Nancy Hetrick
408 674 3369 / nhetrick@raftelis.com