

City of Windsor Heights, Iowa
Traffic Light to Facilitate Economic
Federal Funding Requested for Federal FY 2009 or FY 2010
Requesting: \$900,000

Hickman Road Renewal and Redevelopment Project Description

Two major east-west roadways run through Windsor Heights, University Avenue and Hickman Road. University Avenue is one of the few roadways that completely traverse the Des Moines metropolitan area. Hickman Road is also a state highway.

The City over the past ten years has been diligently working to redevelop University Avenue, including the reconstruction of the street itself as well as redevelopment of the adjacent properties. This effort is about to enter its final phase. The City now is turning its attention to Hickman Road, which is a boundary area shared with Des Moines and Urbandale.

The area planned for redevelopment is a stretch of 968 feet (street frontage) along Hickman Avenue. The current properties include a Hotel/Motor Lodge, a small office building and a discount retail store. The area is blighted and some of the parcels have actually lost value, even when most property in this area has grown steadily in value. A severely blighted property in this area, most recently used as a mobile home park, was purchased by a private developer in 2006 and this parcel can serve as a catalyst for future development in the area.

While this area experiences the high traffic volumes desired by private developers, the lack of signalized traffic controls at the intersection of Hickman Road and Westover Blvd. presents a major hurdle for any commercial or residential development. In 2006, the City contracted a private traffic engineer to conduct a study to determine if traffic levels at the intersection of Westover Blvd. and Hickman Road would meet the Iowa Department of Transportation thresholds for traffic signal warrants. The results of this study indicate that the intersection exceed all warrants necessary for the installation of a traffic signal under current conditions. Major commercial or residential developments would only increase the traffic volumes along this area, so a traffic signal has become a necessity.

The City of Windsor Heights is requesting \$900,000 in assistance for costs associated with for signalizing the intersection at Westover Blvd. and Hickman Road. As a blighted neighborhood, federal funds are necessary to assist this area due to the lack of sufficient tax base to support improvements in the area. A traffic light at this intersection will provide an extra incentive for development that is necessary to reinvigorate this entire area by creating jobs and/or viable housing opportunities for new residents.

*****This is also included in the Greater Des Moines Partnership's
Regional Legislative Priorities*****

Unique Zip Code for Windsor Heights, Iowa
Federal Funding Requested for Federal FY 2008, 2009, and/or 2010
Funds are not associated with this request.

Unique Zip Code for Windsor Heights, Iowa (Currently in 50322, 50311, 50312)

Over the past several years, the City of Windsor Heights has worked diligently to secure a unique zip code for our community. The lack of a unique zip code has hurt our community in many ways, both tangible and intangible. Several of these examples include the following:

- Area residents and businesses have struggled with problems related to multiple zip codes.
- Businesses have difficulty targeting local customers.
- The City's communication of official notices and publications is hampered because the Des Moines Register distributes different community sections of its newspaper based upon zip code.
- The variety of zip codes likely adversely affected our most recent census count. Due to the reduction in our population to "under 5,000", the amount of grant dollars that we are eligible to apply for is restricted in many cases.
- Our community lies within two school districts, further complicating our efforts for cohesive communications. Additionally, residents in the 50322 (Urbandale) zip code, receive only Urbandale School information, which is not one of the school districts in which the community lies.
- When our residents obtain their State of Iowa Drivers Licenses, the licenses reflect the default city identified by the zip code, instead of Windsor Heights.
- Zip codes and drivers licenses are used to identify Windsor Heights' residents throughout the regional library system, creating tracking complications.
- The lack of a unique zip code has created problems for the proper tracking of sex offenders for application of the "2000 foot" law.
- Area businesses are usually identified as "Des Moines" or "Urbandale" instead of Windsor Heights in advertising and mailings.
- The lack of a unique zip code affects our residents and business' abilities to get accurate insurance rates.
- The lack of a unique zip code undermines our community unity and our credibility as an independent metro area municipality.

Additional Issue History

When Mayor Pro Tem Willits began the effort a number of years ago to secure a unique zip code, she was told that the Windsor Heights needed a post office. She explained the City has a post office in Hy-Vee. She was then told that it needs to be a stand-alone office. She noted that other communities' post offices are housed in other businesses. It was therefore determined that this criteria had been met. At that point, City officials were told that the City was too small to have its own zip code. Windsor Heights noted that clearly, there are cities much smaller throughout the state with unique zip codes. We read with interest that there is a dormitory in Ames, Iowa that has its own zip code. She was told the City needed to submit the appropriate paperwork, which the City did. The city was then told that we needed to demonstrate that the lack of a unique zip code was creating an economic hardship, which the City demonstrated. The criteria for a unique zip code then became that the City needed to show growth, an obstacle, which it is self-evident that landlocked Windsor Heights cannot overcome.

On March 12, 2004, we had what we thought was a groundbreaking meeting with representatives from the Post Office. Congressman Boswell and representatives from Senators Grassley and Harkins' offices, along with Windsor Heights' officials, played a key role in that meeting. We left that meeting with the understanding that the Post Office representatives were going to develop a plan, along with the appropriate implementation timeline and associated costs. We also left that meeting with more hope and optimism than we had experienced on this topic in a number of years. That was possible largely due to the efforts of our Congressional delegation and we thank you for your help.

Unfortunately, the follow up from the Post Office was again discouraging. Postal representatives did follow up after the meeting, regurgitating the same arguments presented during the meeting and in past correspondence as to why it is difficult for them and why they choose not to reconfigure the area and create a unique zip code to address the on-going problems in Windsor Heights.

Windsor Heights has repeatedly demonstrated the need for a unique zip code. Probably the most illustrative example of problems can be demonstrated by the representation made by Post Office officials at the March 12th meeting. They indicated that all Windsor Heights properties were coded to be able to use "Windsor Heights" as the address, instead of Des Moines or Urbandale. Shortly after this meeting, a council member received a letter on which the Post Office removed "Windsor Heights" and wrote in "Urbandale" based on the zip code.

This year, in addressing the issue of where sex offenders live, the City discovered yet another problem with the lack of a unique zip code. The City is unable to accurately track sex offenders, because quite often the city in which they live is determined by zip code. For example, when printing names of sex offenders based on city, the registry produces five names in "Windsor Heights." Then, when the zip codes in which the City of Windsor Heights falls are entered and information is printed out based on the zip code, there are eleven names of offenders living within our jurisdiction. Some of the names are classified in Urbandale or Des Moines based on zip code. In fact, when checking the Post Office's website, if you enter the zip code "50322" (the zip code, which hundreds of homes in Windsor Heights has) it defaults to Urbandale. "Windsor Heights" is listed as an acceptable city name (but as mentioned previously, is not preferred by the Post Office), but if abbreviated to "Windsor Hts" is NOT considered an acceptable city name. The same is true if either "50311" or "50312" are entered, it defaults to Des Moines, with "Windsor Heights" listed as acceptable. Because of the confusion in tracking sex offender registrations caused by the zip code issue, the City has more than double the number of sex offenders than originally identified due to the designation of offenders' city names based on zip code. The confusion created by lack of a unique zip code has now become a matter of public safety.

Finally, we read with interest that Saks Fifth Avenue department store was opening a shoe store, which was granted its own zip code. This is frustrating to a community who has been working nearly a decade to secure a unique zip code for identity; community and economic development and safety reasons.

The City has exhausted all diplomatic and bureaucratic channels with the Post Office. We feel that we are left with the last resort of requesting special legislation. We are asking our federal legislative representatives for further assistance in this matter to introduce and support legislation mandating the creation of a unique zip code for our community.