

## Grimes plans to revitalize Governor's District

Written by Tiffany De Masters  
Feb. 25

desmoinesregister.com

### Grimes plans to revitalize Governor's District

Mayor supports special assessment to pay for portion of Main Street; City Council is against it.

Owners of commercial and residential properties will not be asked to pay a special assessment for the redevelopment of Southeast Main Street in Grimes, city officials said last week.

The mayor and City Council have been divided on taxing about 30 properties for the \$3 million project, City Administrator Kelley Brown said.

Mayor Tom Armstrong stated his support for assessments at the Feb. 12 council meeting, but planned not to pursue action on the levy in the event that his efforts could delay renovations.

"I'm not going to push the project to be assessed, but that's where I stand," Armstrong said.

Councilman Mat Tapper disagreed with the assessment, saying the area, known as the Governor's District, has been neglected and in disrepair for years. Tapper said it's a special area and there are other efforts by businesses to try and revitalize the street.

"I think you'd get agreement from the rest of the council that Main Street is a special area, it's a special district, because it's the main street," Tapper said. The mayor "disagrees with me, but, ultimately, that's politics, that's life."

Construction between Southeast Second and Southeast Sixth streets has been talked about for at least 15 years. Road and sewer upgrades are a few of the needed repairs in the area. Construction is expected to begin in the spring. Beautification and parking additions are included in the project.

Armstrong and the council members have discussed assessments for more than a year. The assessment would have paid for a 4-foot sidewalk, plus water and sanitary sewer work. Armstrong said he believes that everyone should take some ownership into an investment in the future and the fairest way would be to assess area owners the approximately \$178,000 cost for the upgrades.

Some business owners were against an assessment. Sonja Mauk, owner of Country Clip Joint, 210 S.E. Main St., said she wasn't sure why the mayor was so insistent on an assessment when the council was against it.

"I'm a small shop," Mauk said. "I don't have employees and I'd have to work a lot harder to get that money out of my pocket."

Repairs on the road have been needed since she started her hair salon 30 years ago, Mauk said.

"Roads and sewer repairs have to be done," she said. "When they tear the road up, it's going to affect our businesses. We all have to suffer together, I guess."

Keith Snow, owner of B2E Direct Marketing, 209 S.E. Main St., said Main Street belongs to the community.

"It's been neglected for so many years, and our belief is it's the core of the community and we really want it to look nice," Snow said.

"It belongs to the community; we happen to be down here."

The problem with an assessment, Snow said, is the cost could be higher than what most of the property in the area is worth.

Snow anticipates the Governor's District becoming similar to Des Moines' East Village with eateries and living space.

“We want to create an area that the people in Grimes want to come to and enjoy,” he said. “The long-term goal is that once it's spruced up it will spur growth.”

Commercial properties were last assessed in 2009 on the East First Street project, which added several lanes of traffic and signals. An assessment of \$2 million was divided among businesses on both sides of the street in front of Wal-Mart.