

August 18, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this **Letter of Intent** to accompany the Drake Neighborhood Association's (DNA) application for your Year-Round Grant Program.

The Drake Neighborhood is located within the City of Des Moines, between MLK Ave to the east, I-235 to the south, 42<sup>nd</sup> St. to the west, and Franklin Ave to the north. We represent what the City defines as a "transitional" neighborhood, with a median household income of about \$32,000, according to City-Data.com, and a housing stock with strong representation from around the turn of the last century.

One thing that sets the Drake Neighborhood apart from some of its more suburban neighbors is our commitment to beautification through reforestation projects. The DNA has at numerous times in the past planted shade trees in public areas within the neighborhood, and has even planted a free neighborhood orchard with about 30 fruit trees that is open to and cared for by all members of the community.

However, the DNA has not planted new trees in a number of years, and we need to do so if we hope to sustainably maintain our urban canopy. Thus, we are asking for \$500 that we can use to purchase trees for public areas in our neighborhood, such as the parking region between the street and sidewalk. Two of the trees will be used to replace trees planted six years ago near Drake Park that were damaged. For the other trees we intend to focus as much as possible on parts of the neighborhood where trees might not otherwise be planted, for example because the owners of nearby properties do not live in the area.

As we have done in the past, we intend to work closely with the Des Moines City Arborist in order to ensure that we select trees that are suitable for public spaces and that we find locations that will provide the most benefit while not interfering with overhead power lines or lines of sight.

Beautification through the planting of trees in an urban environment fulfills MWA's mission of "environmental stewardship" in a number of ways. First, there are direct benefits that trees provide, including air quality improvements, water conservation and runoff reduction, habitat for urban wildlife, and the mitigation of temperature fluctuations (especially heat in the summer). However, they also provide indirect benefits. For example, by making urban neighborhoods more appealing, trees can reduce pressures of urban decay and sprawl, with concomitant environmental benefits. As a community project, tree planting also helps to bring neighbors together and foster community, which has been shown to provide stewardship benefits as well.

The Drake Neighborhood Association commits to matching MWA funds, to bring the total budget to \$1000, and we also commit to planting the trees and watering them

for the first two summers until they can survive on their own. \$1000 will be sufficient to purchase 10 large trees at \$100 per tree. Our experience has been that in urban areas it is necessary to purchase large trees in order to deter vandalism and improve the success rate. The DNA has sufficient funds to pay for this project and await repayment of the MWA share at a later date.

We expect this to be a sustainable project in two ways. First, it is part of our long-term effort to find funds to continue to replace and add trees to our urban canopy. In addition to money from the MWA, we are seeking funds for further planting from other groups. In order to sustain an urban canopy it is necessary to replace trees that are lost to age, disease, and accident, and thus the project is part of our overall efforts at developing a sustainable canopy. Second, as mentioned earlier, urban trees contribute to environmental sustainability in many ways.

The project's success will be measured directly in the successful growth of the new trees. While some loss of trees is expected in the first couple of years, we will consider this project to be a success if nine or more trees survive through their first five years. MWA's role in the project will be recognized in articles about the project in our bimonthly newsletter that is sent to all DNA members, and on our website ([www.drakeneighborhood.org](http://www.drakeneighborhood.org)).

Thank you for your consideration.

David Courard-Hauri  
For the Drake Neighborhood Association  
[david.courard-hauri@drake.edu](mailto:david.courard-hauri@drake.edu)

**Budget:**

Expenses:

10 trees @ \$100/tree = \$1000

Funds:

\$500 from MWA

\$500 plus labor and water costs from the DNA