



# NEWS RELEASE

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## HEART & SOUL SEEKS CONVERSATIONS ON IMPROVING CITY

*Resident feedback important; website launched with project information, surveys*

[\*\*\(READ BLOG POST\)\*\*](#)

### MUSCATINE, Iowa –

Conversations on making Muscatine a better place to live, work, or operate a business begin with community leaders reaching out to community



members to learn about what opportunities residents see for solutions and improvements to the quality of life in Muscatine.

Those conversations are at the core of the Muscatine Community Heart & Soul initiative. The Muscatine program will involve all residents in conversations to improve the community in ways residents want to see through building on the valued strengths.

“We are eager to hear from our community members concerning the various projects the City is working on as well as to gather information that will help guide our next Comprehensive Plan Revision,” Jodi Royal-Goodwin, Director of Community Development, said. “Asking what



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residents like about Muscatine and what they want to see more of is a crucial part of working to improving Muscatine together.”

The City of Muscatine was awarded a \$10,000 seed grant from the national Community Heart & Soul organization to support of the Muscatine Community Heart & Soul program. The program seeks to gather resident feedback that will help drive positive change in our community by determining what matters most to residents. The feedback will be used to identify the action steps that will be integrated into the upcoming revision of the City Comprehensive Plan.

One of the ways that the forces behind the local initiative will use to collect feedback from residents is a survey that is available online. The short survey is also being distributed at community events so more residents can be involved.

The project’s leadership team is comprised of community members and is being directed through the City of Muscatine Department of Community Development. To be successful, however, the project needs YOUR voice. Residents can share their thoughts and feelings about Muscatine by completing the Heart & Soul survey at [Heart & Soul Survey](#). Separate surveys are available for adults and youth, and are available in English and Spanish.

Your feedback today can spark change for the future of our community.

Meghan Custis was an intern with the Department of Community Development this past summer and specialized in piloting the Heart & Soul program.

“Heart & Soul offers true promise for our community and, I believe, will help connect residents across the board,” Custis said. “I’ve spent a lot of time getting advice from other communities that have completed the Heart & Soul process, and it gives me such hope for Muscatine. Great things are already happening in our community, this is an opportunity for residents to speak up and tell the City what should come next.”



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Community Heart & Soul is a national model designed for small communities to uncover what residents collectively value and identify action steps based on core values. It has been field-tested in 90 communities across the country and shows proven results.

The Muscatine Heart & Soul project will be completed in three phases with the first phase concentrating in the South End area (Hershey Avenue south to the City limits), phase two the middle section of Muscatine (Hershey Avenue north to Mulberry Avenue), and phase three the east section of Muscatine (Mulberry Avenue north to University Avenue).

In each phase, the Heart & Soul team will dedicate efforts to gathering resident stories and experience through events, community forums, engagement at community gatherings, and survey distribution. This strategy will allow all residents to share their thoughts and perspectives on their neighborhoods as well as the overall community.

The project is estimated to take between 18 and 24 months.

“I grew up in the South End, and I know how the community looks at that part of town,” Kindra Petersen, a member of the Heart & Soul Leadership Team said. “The South End has so much to offer the community: bike paths, a skate park, easy access to the riverfront, Deep Lakes Park, a mini-soccer area, the soccer complex, Kent Stein, a beautiful dog park, and more.”

Petersen pointed out that there is more to the South End than just the amenities available.

“There are also tons of local businesses in the South End that are often overlooked because the big factories tend to overshadow the location,” Petersen said. “I’m hoping we can bring to light the vast opportunities South End has to offer our community.”

The newly launched Muscatine Community Heart & Soul website houses additional information, updates about the initiative, how to become a part of the team, and links to the surveys. Visit the website to see our progress and stay up to date on our efforts! As a resident-driven process, the



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involvement of community members to steward the Heart & Soul efforts is essential to this project.

Community Heart & Soul is a tested community-development model that has been used in over 90 small cities and towns across America. It focuses on three key principles including involving everyone and focusing on what matters. The third principle is playing the long game to uncover areas of improvement while building lasting relationships across the various communities, organizations, and neighborhoods. Heart & Soul uses an inclusive, affirming approach to strengthening communities. The focus is on building upon what is working and valued in the community while ensuring all voices are incorporated into solutions.

The local Heart & Soul project was announced in February and begins in the South End, an area that Royal-Goodwin noted has suffered from a lack of significant investment.

“The Grandview Avenue area is a neighborhood made up of residents and businesses on the southern end of Muscatine,” Royal-Goodwin said. “We have already received feedback from residents in this area and we are hoping for more. We are looking to work with residents and businesses to reinvigorate and revitalize this important area of Muscatine.”

The main focus of Heart & Soul will be improving the quality of life and economic development of Muscatine and beginning in the South End. That focus has been broken down into five pillars including street revitalization, economic development, recreation, business support, and residential support.

The City of Muscatine’s Grandview Avenue Reconstruction Project fits into the street revitalization pillar and will improve the drivability of the corridor with new pavement, improve the walkability of the corridor with new sidewalks, and improve the aesthetics of the corridor with landscaping.

Information on Muscatine Community Heart & Soul can be found at <https://www.muscatineheartandsoul.org/>, or on the City of Muscatine web site at [Heart & Soul](#).



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