

winter 2023

NEWS FROM NORTHSIDE

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION • IOWA CITY, IOWA

ACT NOW TO BUY DISCOUNTED TREES!

SPRING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER, and the NNA's Trees Interest Group encourages neighbors to act now to purchase discounted trees through Iowa City's annual Root for Trees program.

Iowa City residents can save 50% off on the purchase of a tree at two local retailers: Earl May Garden Center on Lower Muscatine, and Iowa City Landscaping & Garden Center on Highway 1 West. Tree vouchers are limited and available through May 15, 2023. The quantity and variety of trees also are limited. New trees arrive at retailers around April 1st. Iowa City residents may purchase only one tree through this program.

Trees obtained through the Root for Trees voucher program must be planted on the purchaser's private property. Residents wishing to plant their tree in the right-of-way (ROW) must obtain a no-fee permit and approval before purchasing the tree. See voucher and permit details [here](#). Recall that the ROW is City property and residents should follow City ordinances when planting in the ROW.

The Trees Interest Group has the following suggestions for selecting a tree that is best for your property and the health of our local ecosystem:

- ▲ Plant the "right" tree in the "right" place. Do not plant trees that will grow into power lines or other overhead obstacles. Check the surroundings before planting, and consider the size of the tree 5, 10, and 25 years from now. When mature, some trees like oaks are quite large, 60-80 feet tall with a large canopy. Consider native mid-sized to small trees and shrubs with a maximum height of 25 feet. Small native trees, like Eastern Hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) and Downy Service Berry (*Amelanchier arborea*) offer high quality food and habitat for native birds and other beneficial wildlife.
- ✳ Avoid non-native trees and shrubs. Non-native species provide little to no ecological benefits, and some are invasive and harmful (see recommended species list on page 3).
- ✳ Avoid the following species: Ash trees (white, green, and black) because of the emerald ash borer; maple trees (sugar, silver, etc.) because of the Asian long-horned beetle; and black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) because of the mess/nuisance created by copious walnuts.

Also note that before digging or planting, residents are required to contact Iowa One Call at 811 (1-800-292-8989) to locate overhead and underground utilities. (continues on page 3)



PLEASE COME
Annual Meeting
NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION

Monday, March 27th 6:00–8:00 PM
Mann Elementary School, Multipurpose Room

We will elect officers, hear updates from NNA committees and interest groups, and discuss other important topics, including upcoming Northside street construction. See the full agenda [here](#) on the NNA website. See you there!

STUDY RECOMMENDS NORTHSIDE IMPROVEMENTS

In late 2021 and early 2022, a graduate student Housing Policy class led by Professor Jerry Anthony of the UI School of Planning and Public Affairs conducted a survey designed to analyze current trends in Northside neighborhood housing stock. The project was suggested by Northside residents including former Iowa City Mayor Jim Throgmorton, City of Iowa City Council Member John Thomas, and former UI law Professor Linda McGuire.

The students worked with Northside residents to collect data on housing types and quality, analyze trends in neighborhood property taxes across the city, and make recommendations to the City of Iowa City and the Northside community to help stabilize and strengthen this historic neighborhood's character.

The recommendations contained in the resulting [Northside Neighborhood Plan](#) were as follows:

- That the City of Iowa City reinvest larger proportions of tax revenue from the Northside Neighborhood back into the Northside Neighborhood. The City can make this reinvestment by adopting tax abatements for homeowners making improvements, or providing grants or low-interest loans to support improvement of Northside Neighborhood homes.



- That the City adopt a form-based code for the Northside Neighborhood, creating more rigorous quality requirements for all new construction within the neighborhood.
- That the City modify its historic preservation guidelines to encourage repairs in deteriorating historical properties, and to update data about historic properties in the City's building permits department to prevent demolition of historic properties.
- That Northside Neighborhood residents should explore the creation of a Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) to generate revenue for neighborhood improvement.

Neighbors attending NNA organizing meetings in the summer and fall of 2022 expressed disinterest in the SSMID suggestion. However, most neighbors agreed that the students' other recommendations have merit and are worth pursuing with the City.

If you're interested in issues such as the Northside's housing stock, zoning laws, historic preservation, and other matters related to our built environment, we encourage you to participate in the NNA Land Use Interest Group. Contact group leader Bruce Ayati at bruce.ayati@gmail.com for information about meetings times and agenda items.

Attic Insulation Grants Available

In wintertime, we add extra blankets to the bed to stay warm. Our houses need blankets, too, in the form of attic insulation that keeps us comfortable and keeps energy costs low. Many older homes on the Northside are lacking sufficient insulation, and a poorly insulated attic loses as much heat as a window left open all winter.

If you can see the joists in your attic floor, there's a good chance you need more insulation. Fortunately, the Iowa City's Climate Action and Outreach Office is offering a generous solution: A grant program for

income-qualified homeowners that covers the full cost of increasing the amount of insulation in their homes.

To learn more about eligibility, visit www.icgov.org/Insulate. If you qualify, you'll be provided with a list of local insulation contractors. From there, it's a matter of obtaining an estimate, submitting it to the City for approval (turn-around time is very fast), and getting the work scheduled. All costs are directly covered by the City. For complete details, contact Daniel Bissell at dbissell@iowa-city.org.

(Trees continued from page 1)

Trees are an intrinsic part of the quality of life. They often improve a neighborhood's appearance and provide health benefits for residents. Trees provide shade and a windbreak, which reduce energy bills. They remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, decrease stormwater runoff, and provide habitat for native birds and other beneficial wildlife. Trees benefit our environment and are important part of the City's Climate Action Plan.

Northside resident Mike Fallon of the Trees Interest Group will do his best to answer questions that you may have about native plants (trees, shrubs, etc.) that you might want to plant on your property or the ROW. E-mail him at mjfjr@yahoo.com.

Ace is the (NEW) Place

If you've stopped by Ace Hardware on N. Dodge Street since the start of the New Year, you'll know the place has undergone a major transformation. It's the culmination of a two-month renovation project, says store manager Sam Stolley; the first such overhaul in 20 years. It's all part of corporate effort to modernize Ace stores nationwide.

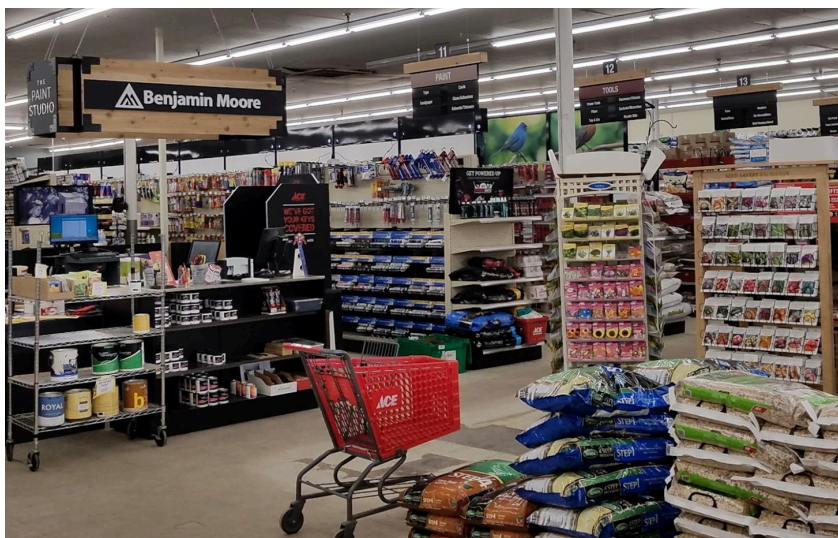
Product aisles are now arranged east-to-west along the length of the building, instead north-to-south, which Stolley says will improve traffic flow and make the store easier to navigate. He also hopes shoppers will appreciate some of the aesthetic changes, including the larger, rustic-themed interior signage.

Stolley and his team are eager to show off their new surroundings to the locals. "We love the Northside," he says. "The neighborhood has been super supportive."

Recommended Tree Species

The Trees Interest Group encourages planting native trees from the list below. NOTE: Planting native species helps the ecosystem in providing food and habitat for insects, birds and other animals.

Eastern Hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*)
 Common Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)
 American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
 Downy Service Berry (*Amelanchier arborea*)
 American Hornbeam, (*Carpinus caroliniana*)
 Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioicus*)
 Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)
 White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
 Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)
 Shag-Bark Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
 Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*)
 Shellbark Hickory (*Carya laciniosa*)
 Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*)
 Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*)
 Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)
 Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
 American Basswood (*Tilia americana*)
 American Elm (*Ulmus americana*)



NEWS FROM NORTHSIDE is happy to share information about neighborhood businesses & organizations, theater, art, and music events or recent book releases by local authors. Let us know if you have an interesting story for the newsletter or announcement for the NNA website. www.northsideiowacity.org

New signage and aisle changes have been made at Ace Hardware in an effort improve the flow of foot traffic.

North Gilbert Street Reconstruction Project

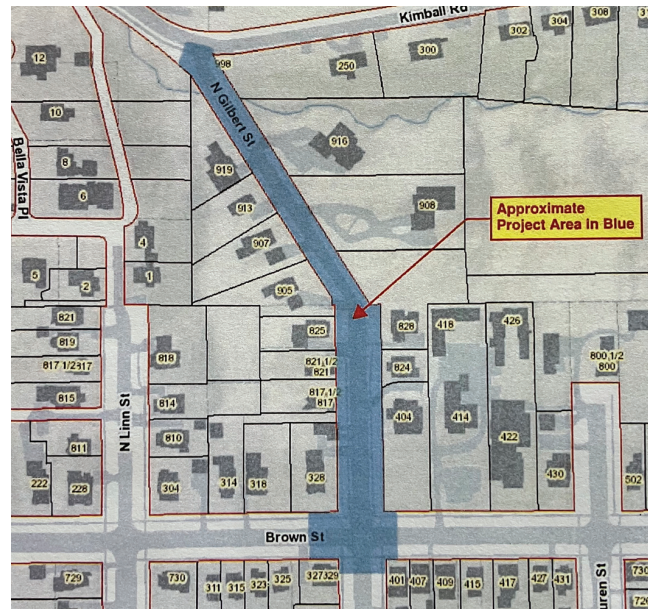
Northside residents living on North Gilbert Street are getting ready for infrastructure improvements planned for 2024–25. A significant project will start at the intersection of Brown and N. Gilbert Streets to reconstruct nearly two blocks of N. Gilbert Street down to the intersection at Kimball Road. The work proposed will replace the street with new concrete pavement, include restoration of the brick street portions of the project area, install new sanitary sewers, possibly extend a storm sewer system, and add sidewalks. In addition, the water mains under the intersection of Brown and N. Gilbert Streets are expected to be relocated or replaced.

During the first stage of the work, private overhead utilities, both electric lines and communication wires, will be buried underground in 2024. The major street reconstruction work is planned for spring of 2025.

At a meeting in November 2022, residents living close to the project area saw proposed plans allowing parking on one side of the street and an alternative plan with no street parking. City of Iowa City civil engineer and project manager Tyler Olson said, “It would be difficult to have parking on both sides of the street because of the lack of available space in the public right-of-way.” The final decision on parking will come later.

Due to the steepness of the hill, engineers at Strand Associates are looking into alternative concepts to ease the steepness of the slope and the sharpness of the curve. Adding sidewalks to both sides of the new, redesigned street is a goal, but constraints may limit options to only one side.

The southern section of the project may involve altering features of residential yards located in the public right-of-way. Olson said, “any wall that is replaced or rebuilt will likely need to have the appearance of being constructed with similar materials of the neighborhood. This would include stone, brick, limestone block, etc.” Currently no wall is committed to being removed or preserved as it is too early to confirm this in the current designs. “The City recognizes that the walls are a desired feature of the neighborhood,” Olson said.



To help keep the public informed, the City is working on a new project website for the N. Gilbert Street upgrade work. This website is anticipated to be available sometime in the spring. In the meantime, the City does have another website available that provides information and maps showing general locations of future projects. A link to the City’s website showing future projects is located [here](#).

In Memoriam: A Northside Founder

The NNA extends deepest condolences to the family of Janis Greer Hubel, who passed away earlier this year. According to her obituary, Janis and her husband Kenn, a faculty member in the UI Department of Internal Medicine, “bought a fine old house on N. Linn Street and restored it to a single-family home” in the early 1960s.

That home was at 619 N. Linn, and when the Hubels moved elsewhere in the 1980s, the house became the Haverkamp Bed & Breakfast for many years. It’s now a private home again, owned by Steve and Bev Blasingame. The obituary goes on to state that “to discourage the trend of turning similar old houses in the area into rental properties,” Jan and Kenn were among the founders of the Northside Neighbors Association. Today’s NNA is proud to continue their legacy.