

2021

MIDYEAR REPORT

THE 7i2 INITIATIVE



THE 712 INITIATIVE

The 712 Initiative's vision is to make Council Bluffs a dynamic healthy community where families and businesses choose to live, work and play.

OUR MISSION:

The 712 Initiative is aimed at improving the economic vitality in redevelopment areas through investments in built environment, activating public spaces and delivering programs that increase social engagement and healthy lifestyles.

OUR GOALS:

The 712 Initiative prioritizes efforts along five primary goals.

Build quality housing and commercial stock

Attract new residents to Council Bluffs

Connect community members

Engage through neighborhood projects and events

Sustain organization through partnerships



Your Support Has Not Gone Unnoticed

A word from our CEO, Sheryl Garst

Thank you for supporting The 712 Initiative and checking in with us on this midyear report. We are happy to be firing on all cylinders to bring vitality to the Council Bluffs' Downtown and West End. We are already shattering numbers from previous years.

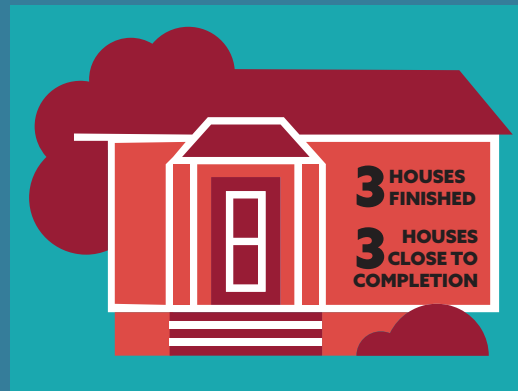
Our first three house have been renovated and sold for homeownership and we are experiencing a public response that we never expected. Citizens and corporate partners came out in droves to be a part of the positive impact made to this community. Our annual goal of 115 volunteers was crushed mid-year with 384 souls giving back with their time on these dilapidated properties. A \$3,000 corporate gift from TS Bank mid-summer quickly turned into an anonymous \$100,000 donation for exterior repair homeowner projects, our May Clean Sweep event was the second highest with 3,500 lbs. of trash picked up, the community garden's 90 plots were fully leased and the Farmer's Market and Backyard Movie Night programs both doubled in size.

You, patient followers saw and understood the high-risk high reward game we have led for the past 25 years with our mixed-use downtown revitalization projects like The Cohen building at 530 W. Broadway. We loved celebrating with you this summer at the groundbreaking and naming ceremony with the descendants of Harry Cohen. This time next year, that Council Bluffs entrance will literally have its lights back on and be a source of commerce, housing and energy for the heart of our community.

Although we love our building projects and the economic impact they bring, it's truly the people that bring life to these projects and areas. Thank you to you financial supporters, advocates, patrons and volunteers who collaborate with us everyday to make this community and its people their best.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheryl Garst". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

MidYear Highlights



Learn more about...

The two houses that closed, one that was sold and another that is going on the market

The Cohen Building and it's current construction

The busy Farmers Market season with almost double the number of vendors

The new partnership with Iowa Total Care

The \$100,000 donation that was made to help the homeowners of the Council Bluffs' community



702 Bluff Street: The home was purchased by an older gentleman who decided to move into a smaller home in the Council Bluffs area. His previous home went to a new family from Omaha.



2209 6th Ave: The spacious house was purchased by a single mother of three, hoping to give her children more space to grow.



The Housing Revitalization Program is focused on improving owner occupied housing in Council Bluffs.

The 712 Initiative purchases homes that are in need of substantial improvements (considered to be in poor or dilapidated condition). Once those improvements are made (major systems, roof, siding, etc. - varies from home to home) the completed product is put on the market for owner occupied housing. The ultimate goal is to improve our neighborhoods and housing.

The first homes have gone on the market with great feedback and support from the community. 702 Bluff Street, was sold to a retired, long-time-resident of Council Bluffs who was looking to downsize from his previous home. Here we were able to save the original trim, doors, and hardwood floors while upgrading the rest of the home. 2209 6th

Continued on page 6

After being abandoned for over six years,

2117 S 5th Avenue was in desperate need of some help. There is a falling wall in the basement, the floors are soft with decay and it was filled with so much trash that almost felt like going back in time. There were VHS tapes, broken toys and old artwork that depicted the vintage '90's era.

Once we had ownership of the house, the first thing we



Continued from page 5

Avenue was sold to a single mother with three children and everyone will have their own room (4 bedroom, 1.5 bath).

By the end of 2021, we will have completely renovated seven single-family homes to deserving homeowners.

Volunteer time and effort on these homes has also been

amazing. To date, we have had 384 volunteers assist the housing in 2021, surpassing our goal of 115 volunteers. They have assisted with demo and landscaping, with the help of the Master Gardeners.

To see homes we are currently working on, check out our website: the712initiative.org.

org.

We are also working to acquire next year's projects. Two of these homes came from Pottawattamie County. These are properties that went to tax sale and the tax sale certificate was never purchased.

Ultimately, the two homes became vacant and their

knew we had to do was clean it out. Luckily, we were blessed with hardworking volunteers from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After two hours of digging through dust covered leftovers from the previous owner's life, the trash brigade was able to fill a 40 yard dumpster.

The only room that was left untouched was the basement, so after that gets emptied, the next steps of the renovation can begin.

Before the temperatures start to drop, the goal is to repair the foundation so we can complete the rest of the renovations in 2022.



condition began to decline. Through a forgivable loan agreement, we were able to acquire both properties from the County. 706 3rd St and 2117 5th Ave will finally get the care that they desperately need.

The houses were first brought to our attention

thanks to The 712 Initiative's Neighborhood Coordinator, Turner Morgan.

Turner passes 706 nearly every day on his way to work. After witnessing firsthand it's slow deterioration over the past few years, he suggested that we investigate as to why the house sat abandoned for

so long.

Although our focus is to renovate whenever possible, when a property is too far deteriorated or already vacant (without a structure), new construction is necessary.

706S3rd is highly dilapidated and will be demolished for a new build.



From Drab House To Dream Home

"This is amazing," announced Nikki Gomez, as she walked through the newly renovated 710 Bluff house with her family. The home was previously owned by the grandmother of her husband Pat. For decades the house was used as apartments, lived in by a variety different people, including the Gomez family.

The family rented one of the two upstairs apartments until they bought their own home in 1996. At that time, the house was split into three separate living spaces: two upstairs and one downstairs. The Gomez family, that consisted of the couple and their toddler daughter, lived in one apartment and Pat's aunt and uncle lived downstairs.

After the family and the other tenants moved out, one of Pat's uncles moved in and the

house slowly went downhill due to a hoarding addiction. For close to 15 years, the house was filled every space possible with thousands of different items that most people would consider trash.

"You couldn't walk through it," said Nikki. "He didn't fill the radiator and the pipes froze and broke and it was horrific."

Everything in the home was ruined. All of the floor to ceiling items in the bathrooms and kitchen areas were now covered in water.

"I didn't have any faith that this house could be lived in again," said Abby Gomez, the youngest daughter of Nikki and Pat. "It smelled so bad when we first came in here after he was gone."

After the pipe accident, the family moved Pat's uncle out of the house, found him some

help and then set about cleaning out all of the moldy trash that was left behind. At this point, The 712 Initiative was working on our first flip that was located two houses down from 710. Turner Morgan, our Neighborhood Coordinator, witnessed the family filling bin after bin with trash. Turner's intuition told him this family might need a little help, so he approached them.

From there, a connection was made, and was moved by The 712 Initiative's mission and sold the house to us in August of 2020. While the family filled more than two 20 yard dumpsters, we ended up filling between 10 to 20 more. The house took over a month to empty out before we could start initial construction.

After almost a full year later, the house is now completely redone. The upstairs apartments were converted into bedrooms, a narrow upstairs kitchen was turned into a beautiful walk-in closet, the upstairs boiler room now housed a washer and dryer and the downstairs kitchen received all new updated appliances with a kitchen island added for future cooking ease.

The plan is for the house to be finished with construction and be on the market by the end of September 2021.



"I never thought it could look like this"

Nikki Gomez



Before
Upstairs Kitchen



After
Bedroom

New name.

New construction.

That seems to be the word of the year for 530 W Broadway; new. After three years of design and fundraising, 530 W Broadway was finally ready for construction. The renovation will create 18 new residential units and three commercial bays.

The building has been a staple for Council Bluffs for decades. It held a variety of businesses over the years, but hasn't quite gotten the care

that it needs.

We marked the beginning of construction on the building with a groundbreaking ceremony on July 1, where we revealed the building's new name.

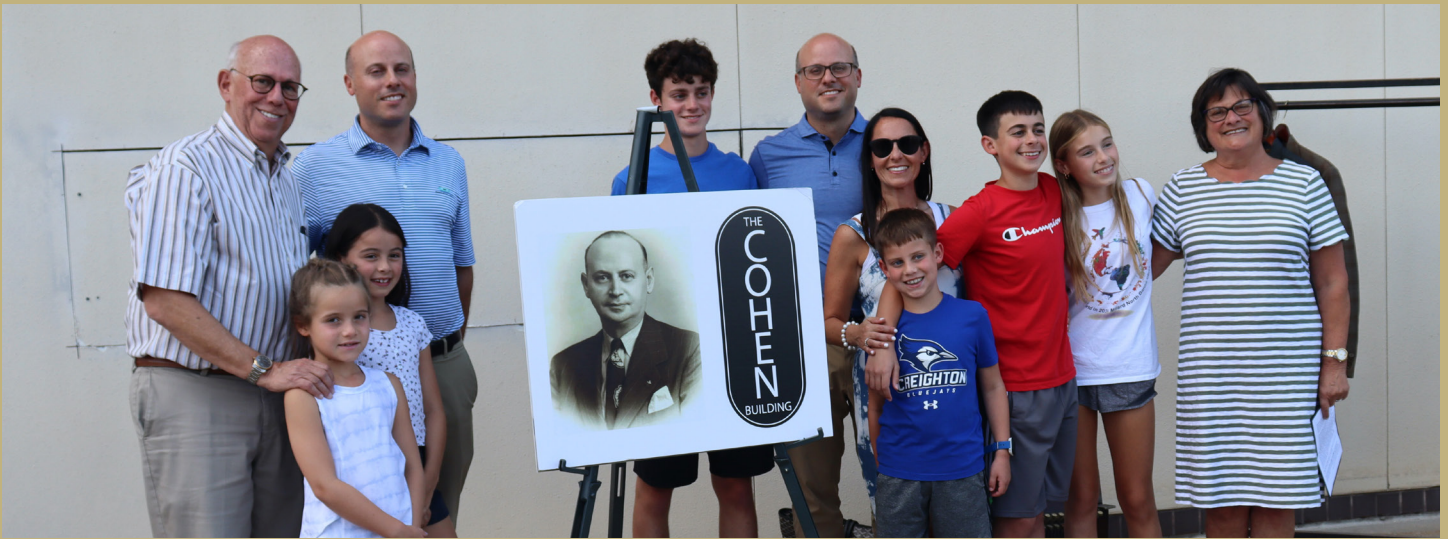
As stated before, the building has held a number of businesses over the years, but one business was there far longer than any of the others. Iowa Clothes was founded by Harry

This **5.8 million dollar** project wouldn't have been made possible with out our generous funders

Iowa West Foundation
City of Council Bluffs
State of Iowa
Peter Kiewit Foundation
Midstates Bank
Patty and Steve Nogg
Pottawattamie County
Housing Trust Fund

1930's Wilcox Florists





Cohen. He moved the store to 530 in 1930 and the store stayed there until it closed in 1990.

The store was a staple in Council Bluffs and it only made sense to name the renovated building after the hardworking owner. To mark the renaming of 530 West Broadway to the Cohen Building, decedents of Harry Cohen attended the groundbreaking and were the first to start the renovation.

Cohen's granddaughter, Patty Nogg, generously donated to name the building after him. A few weeks later, the first renovations were made by the removal of the façade.

Renovations on the inside of the building are currently underway. Once the project is completed, the beautiful building will contain 18 new apartments and two commercial bays with large storefront windows.



The Council Bluffs Farmers Market continues to be a resident favorite.

Compared to past years, we have seen 18 additional vendors added to our season long list. The market has developed into a place where local business owners of all kinds can sell their wares, no matter what they are.

We've had bakers, welders, bee keepers, photographers, soapers, gardeners, farmers and many other passionate creators. We've developed a market that is perfect for different people with a wide range of interests. We have an average of 672 people attend the market each week.

For the fourth year in a row, we have partnered with Family Inc. in developing the Wellness Bash that coincides with the Thursday market. The bash included health screenings, a cookout, plenty of vendors and other fun activities. The bash focused on encouraging members of the community to gain a better understanding of their health and how to live a healthy lifestyle.

Family Inc. also donated \$2,500 in farmers bucks that attendees could use at the market to encourage purchasing local goods. All but 183 of the farmers bucks were redeemed with most being used either on produce or baked goods.





This summer was filled with popcorn and entertaining movies.

The Backyard Movie Night Kits had 47 reservations this year, resulting in the two kits that we have checked out almost every weekend. On top of that, we partnered with the Council Bluffs Library and held two Movie in the Park events.

During the first one we played Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles at Sunset Park and had a costume contest, karate instruction, a meet-and-greet with some actual turtles and food trucks. The second event was at Kirn Park and was Christmas in July where we played the movie Elf. We also had an ugly sweater contest, Santa, Christmas bingo, Christmas cookie decorating and food trucks.

Both events were a success and were a fun way to entertain the little ones during a summer that wasn't quite back to normal yet. We also used our Block Party Trailer at these events, that was checked out by the community 21 times this year.

Our hope is that events like the Movie in the Park will encourage the community to come together and reunite after a year of spending so much time apart. Simple things like getting together and watching a movie is a simple way for people to connect again.





Council Bluffs

was covered in the color green on an overcast day last March,

as Shamrock Shuffle participants shuffled their way to the finish line. We had 363 people moving their way through Council Bluffs, with everyone wearing their most festive green attire.

After a year of uncertainty and abnormality, the people of Council Bluffs were eager for some normalcy again.

Of course, that doesn't mean it was still set up a little differently from years

prior. Masks were highly encouraged, which a lot of runners were courteous enough to wear.

We also had an option for people to participate virtually, by still registering and getting a shirt and then running on their own.

We also had staggered start times and limited starting group sizes to encourage more social distancing.

The event had live music

performed by the Polka Police to help the runners get energized and custom knit stocking hats to keep them warm on their run.

The Grinch made an appearance, and thankfully he likes St. Patrick's Day better than he does Christmas.

Even with all of the changes that we made to the event, we still made sure that everyone who attended still had fun and enjoyed their run.



The 712 has teamed up with Iowa Total Care in helping renovate CreekTop Gardens.

A ribbon cutting was held in July to celebrate the new partnership and the \$15,000 donation over the next two years.

This new partnership will help reach more people and expand the garden programming, so that it reaches its utmost potential. Among the attendees of the ribbon cutting event, were local youth that are apart of the Council Bluffs Boys and Girls Club.

The garden has 90 4-by-8 foot raised-bed garden plots that were all planted this past spring. Out of those plots, 51 people rented either one or more of them.

There are also plots that are used to grow produce that can be picked by the homeless population of Council Bluffs that are harvested each week and taken to the local shelters. Dedicated gardeners, Elizabeth Hunter and Susie Opperman have been our biggest helpers in helping maintain these plots.

With fall quickly approaching, the garden will soon lack the fresh produce that we have been providing to the shelters. However, we have recently started a partnership with College View Elementary.

We were able to get a hydroponic garden in Jordan Preston's 5th grade classroom, that will be used to grow fresh produce that can be donated to First Baptist Church. The program will teach children how to grow and harvest their own food and the importance of helping those in need.



For neighborhoods

Here at The 712 Initiative, we are constantly trying to find ways to better the Council Bluffs community. When we were approached by TS Bank to collaborate on the AMP for Neighborhoods program, we were more than happy to help. The AMP program focused on helping homeowners in the community renovate the exterior of their homes.

TS Bank originally donated

\$3,500, with Black Hills Energy donating \$1,000, Real Property Management donating \$500, and an anonymous donor donated \$50,000, but after the damaging storms in July, the donor donated an additional \$50,000.

The program attracted 53 applicants with a variety of needs from all over Council Bluffs.

From those applicants,

our review board identified 14 potential applicants that would benefit the most from the AMP program.

While we can't help everyone who applied, we do know of other resources that can help. For the other 39 applicants, we referred them to other local programs. Most of the projects are projected to be finished this fall or early spring.



A special shout-out needs to be made to our Neighborhood Coordinator, Turner Morgan, who received the Impact CB Young Professional of the Year Award. Turner works closely with homeowners who receive assistance with our Rock the Block Program and other community leaders.



Thank you to our many sponsors and supporters that have made a financial commitment to The 712 Initiative in the past year.



- American National Bank
- Ameriprise Financial
- Availa Bank
- Barley's Bar
- Black Hills Energy
- Centris Federal Credit Union
- CHI Health Mercy Council Bluffs
- Chiropractic Essence
- Council Hitch
- Dickinson Investment Advisors
- Dickinson & Clark CPAs
- Doll Distributing
- Rick Guill Insurance Agency
- First National Bank
- Frontier Iowa Trails
- Frontier Savings Bank
- Glory Days
- Habitat for Humanity of Council Bluffs
- Heartland Oncology & Hematology
- HGM Associates Inc.
- Hoy-Kilnoski Funeral Home
- HyVee
- Joe's Carting
- Leach Camper Sales
- Life Dimensions by Ilona McGinn Law Firm
- MidAmerican Energy
- Midstates Bank
- NP Dodge Real Estate
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- Precision Race Results
- Pottawattamie County Housing Trust Fund
- Pottawattamie County Master Gardeners
- Renegade Bootcamp & Boxing
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Neighborhood Coordinator

UPCOMING EVENTS

Blocktober October 9

Biketober in the Bluffs October 9

Monster Rock on The 100 Block October 25

Winterfest November 19

STAY TUNED

DIY Home Video Series Featuring The 712 Initiative's Neighborhood Coordinator, Turner Morgan

Sept. 25 Lawn & Native Conversation with West Pottawattamie County Master Gardeners

Oct. 15 Gutters and Window Wells

Dec. 11 Holiday Craft & Garden at Sherbondy's



Thank you to all of our supporters, volunteers and individual donors. We wouldn't be even half as successful as we are without you.





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