

Hampton Blight Assessment

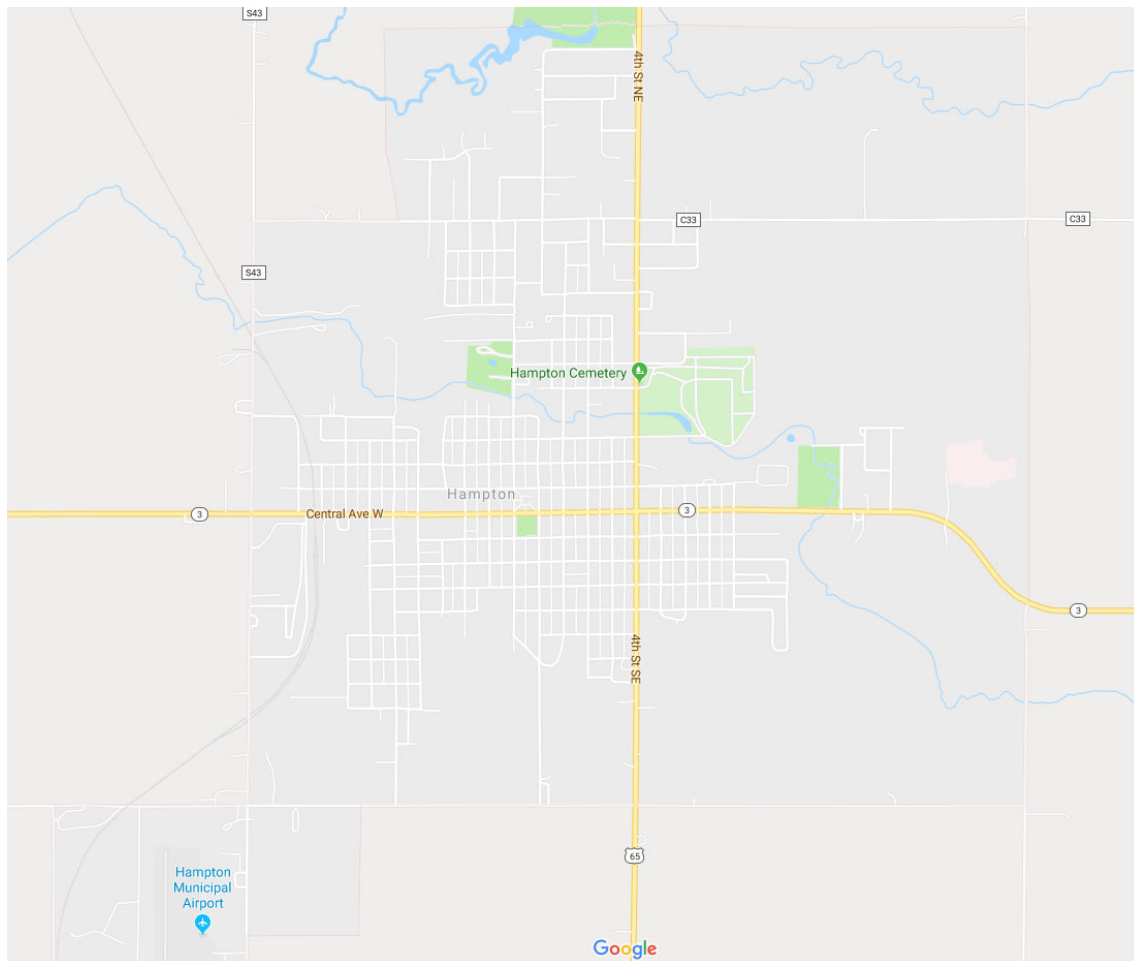
July 2019

City of Hampton

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Local Government Professional Services, Inc. (LGPS), DBA Simmering-Cory, has been retained by the City of Hampton, Iowa to conduct a Blight Assessment in conjunction with the potential development of an Urban Revitalization Area. The assessment evaluated factors that, through their presence, may allow the Urban Revitalization Area to take advantage of additional benefits provided by the *Code of Iowa* for providing incentives to private property owners for the remediation of blight within the Urban Revitalization Area.

The assessment was conducted in April 2019 by LGPS staff on all residential properties within the City. In addition to a windshield survey, LGPS collected data on certain elements of the City, residential properties, and other blighting influences within the City to make a final determination as to the existence of blight within the City.



Because the City has identified that they may utilize this Blight Assessment to amend their current plan or implement a new Urban Revitalization Plan LGPS conducted the assessment utilizing the definition of a "blighted area" as contained in the *Code of Iowa* Section 404.1(2) which states the following:

An area which by reason of the presence of a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures, predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, incompatible land use relationships, faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility or usefulness, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site or other improvements, diversity of ownership, tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the actual value of the land, defective or unusual conditions of title, or the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or a combination of such factors, substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of a municipality, retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability and is a menace to the public health, safety, or welfare in its present condition and use.

In addition to the definition provided in Chapter 404 of the *Code of Iowa*, the Iowa Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program also provides additional guidance on defining blight within neighborhoods and communities. The CDBG Program criteria defines blighted properties as containing one or more of the following conditions:

- Physical deterioration of buildings and improvements.
- Abandonment of properties.
- Significant declines in property values or abnormally low property values relative to other areas in the community.
- Known or suspected contamination.

The CDBG Program classifies a given area (city-wide or target neighborhood) as a blighted area when the area has documented that 25% or more of the properties meet their definition of blight.

For the purposes of this report, residential properties were evaluated to determine the general exterior condition and whether the property had factors present that exhibited deterioration or deteriorating elements, were abandoned, and/or had physical deterioration. Residential properties that exhibited these elements were considered to be blighted, while those that showed no deterioration or minor deterioration were labeled as non-blight. Blighting influences observed within Hampton, Iowa during the windshield survey included the following:

- Missing or boarded up windows and doors.
- Damaged and extremely worn roofs.
- Broken or molding siding.
- Peeling paint in excess of 40% on a single painted surface.

- Foundation issues including deteriorated or damaged block and brick, visual settling of housing elements, and cracked masonry.
- Abandoned properties.

In addition to the physical condition of the residential unit, the windshield survey also identified properties that had the existence of visual blight on or around their property. Examples of visual blight observed in Hampton, Iowa included:

- Junk vehicles parked in yards.
- Accumulation of trash and junk in yards and around homes.
- Overgrowth of weeds and grass around properties.

FINDINGS

The following assessment is presented below in a format based on the factors and conditions of blight as defined in the *Code of Iowa* Chapter 404. It should be noted that in order to determine that a blight finding is appropriate, the area needs to show blighting conditions based on several factors and not rely entirely on one of the defined elements of the definition of blight. A summary of the findings and an overall determination is available at the end of this report.

1. “SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF DETERIORATED OR DETERIORATING STRUCTURES”

Hampton has an older housing stock with a large majority of housing units, over 75%, within the community being over 50 years old and over 32% built prior to 1940.

Data from the 2017 U.S. Census estimates shows the age of the existing housing stock as follows:

Timeframe of Construction	Number of Units	Percentage of Totals
2014 or later	0	0.0%
2010 to 2013	0	0.0%
2000 to 2009	90	4.7%
1990 to 1999	37	1.9%
1980 to 1989	154	8.0%
1970 to 1979	192	9.9%
1960 to 1969	268	13.9%
1950 to 1959	355	18.4%
1940 to 1949	211	10.9%
Prior to 1940	625	32.3%

Another potential indicator of the presence of blight is a substantial number of homes with low values within a community. Generally, blight is not commonly found in properties with higher assessed values while properties with a lower assessed valuation tend to be blighted at a higher

ratio. Assessed values provided by the Franklin County Assessor's office shows the number of properties within the City of Hampton, Iowa in the table below. Of the homes in Hampton, over 75% of the housing units are valued at less than \$100,000. This data supports the results of the windshield survey conducted by LGPS.

Value Range	Number of Units	Percentage of Totals
Less than \$50,000	486	32.1%
\$50,000 to \$100,000	672	44.3%
\$100,000 to \$200,000	221	14.6%
\$200,000 to \$300,000	123	8.1%
\$300,000 to \$500,000	10	0.7%
\$500,000 and above	4	0.3%

Table 1 Housing values in Hampton, Iowa (Franklin Co. Assessor)

As part of the windshield survey conducted by LGPS staff in April 2019 a total of 1,512 residential properties were visually reviewed and classified as either blighted or non-blighted properties. Multiple unit properties were reviewed as a single unit. The windshield survey determined that 43.1% of the properties reviewed were blighted while 56.9% were non-blighted properties. The following pictures are examples of some of the blighting conditions observed during the windshield survey:



Figure 1 Example No. 1 -Missing shingles, visual blight on and around front porch, and rotten wood.



Figure 2 Example No. 2 - Boarded up door, potentially abandoned property.



Figure 3 Example No. 3 - Peeling paint, deteriorated windows, and foundation problems.



Figure 4 Example No. 4 - Visual blight, accumulation of junk and trash



Figure 5 Example No. 5 - Visual blight, accumulation of debris and garbage, possible abandoned structure

The Hampton Police Department enforces the City's nuisance abatement and junk ordinances in an effort to help curb visual blight within the community. Data from their nuisance logs over the past several years confirm the presence of visual blight within the community.

Year	Nuisance Contacts
2009	255
2010	343
2011	489
2012	222
2013	184
2014	182
2015	110
2016	97
2017	141
2018	163
2019	59 (Through March 31)

While the numbers show that there was a significant reduction in the nuisance logs following the high in 2011, the numbers appear to be increasing again starting in 2017, after a low in 2016, indicating that properties with nuisances are again on the rise or a step up in enforcement of nuisances within the City. The data seems to correlate with the observations made during the windshield survey.

The data provided by the U.S. Census correlates with the conditions of housing observed during the windshield survey and based on the available information there are a substantial number of deteriorated or deteriorating structures to provide justification for a potential blight finding.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - STRONG

2. "INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE RELATIONSHIPS"

The relationship between non-residential uses and residential uses can impact the quality and growth of housing in neighborhoods. Many people will not want to live next to or near properties which are industrial in nature or where high traffic volume, extreme or continuous noise, or odors are generated on a regular basis. These uses are defined as incompatible land uses and typically will decrease the value of the residential properties in the neighborhood where they occur.

During the windshield survey there were no extreme examples of incompatible land use relationships observed; however, there were a few cases where adjacent residential neighborhoods could be impacted. This includes the following examples in the northwest portion of Hampton:

In this example, Seabee Corporation and Hampton Hydraulics are located in close proximity to a residential neighborhood and community park. The impact didn't seem to be extreme during the windshield survey; however, over time it may impact the valuation of homes adjacent to these facilities. The greater concern here may be the Hydraulics location where numerous vehicles were observed outside of buildings and where the property had a more general "industrial feel" rather than a neighborhood feel.

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The second example, also in the northwest portion of Hampton, was what appeared to be a brownfield site, old concrete plant, or old dumping ground. Some screening was provided at this location but sites like this can lead to accumulation of debris and unwanted loitering. The County records show the site is owned by the City and as such there may be plans in the works to rehabilitate the site.

Overall there are not a large number of incompatible sites within the City nor are there any significant examples where the impacts of the incompatible uses are having a major impact on adjacent residential uses within the area; however, the potential is there for the two identified areas to have a greater influence on neighboring homes over time.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - MODERATE

3. "FAULTY LOT LAYOUT IN RELATION TO SIZE, ADEQUACY, ACCESSIBILITY OR USEFULNESS"

Hampton, like many other communities in Iowa, has some smaller lot sizes which were laid out in the early years of the City. These smaller lots were sufficient for the time when originally platted but in modern times can be difficult to redevelop or add on to while maintaining the required setbacks within the community. As an example, a few of the lot sizes found in Hampton include the following:

- 54 x 62 (3,348 sq. ft.)
- 60 x 62 (3,720 sq. ft.)
- 62 x 62 (3,814 sq. ft.)
- 62 x 99 (6,138 sq. ft.)

Many of the smaller lots observed during the windshield survey were also identified as blighted due to the physical condition of the buildings on the property or because of the accumulation of trash and junk within the available yard. It is not uncommon for smaller lots to be associated with blighted properties because the lots do not have adequate space for storage of personal property resulting in cars parked in the yards and various items stored outside in the yard.

Additionally, smaller lots typically don't have adequate parking for today's family needs. Most families today have more than one vehicle and on older lots where a single car garage was built parking can be challenging and often times vehicles are parked in yards creating nuisance and visual blight issues.

Hampton's minimum standards for lot sizes today are 66 feet wide by 100 feet deep according to Chapter 170 of the City's Code of Ordinances.

The older lots within the City that were designed to meet the needs of families during the times they were built are today generally too small for current family needs which can result in additional challenges regarding nuisance abatement and blighting factors. Examples of these were observed within the City during the windshield survey.

Another element related to lot layout is the width of streets within neighborhoods. Again, older neighborhoods can be impacted more than newer neighborhoods since the older standards for streets were much narrower than what is currently considered acceptable, especially when considering the need for parking and emergency access.

During the windshield survey LGPS staff did notice instances where street width was so narrow that it caused concerns for safety and access issues for emergency vehicles. Some of these streets may be former alleys that have been converted into streets as development occurred.



Figure 8 Example of narrow street and potential safety concerns for residents.

A combination of small lots sizes, narrow streets, and today's family need for two or three cars can create a situation where increased nuisance abatement issues result with cars parked in front yards or in the parking area of the public right-of-way.

Together the combination of small lots and narrow streets in certain neighborhoods provides an influencing factor for a finding of blight.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - STRONG

4. "DETERIORATION OF SITE OR OTHER IMPROVEMENTS"

The condition of public infrastructure can also impact the overall growth and redevelopment of properties within the City. The City reports that the existing water collection and sanitary sewer collection systems are aged and in need of rehabilitation; however, the funding for making improvements is not readily available. Water distribution lines are, in general, smaller than current standards for providing proper fire protection and water pressure to residents within the City. Sanitary sewer collection lines are older and subject to infiltration and infill (I/I) which

increases the flow within the lines, especially during and after heavy rain events, increasing costs for treatment. The City has begun the process of addressing these problems starting with the worst areas first. They plan to continue making regular investments in improving infrastructure over the next several years as resources are available.

The City has a storm water system installed in some parts of the City; however, there are areas where the storm water system consists of rural road sections with ditches. While it hasn't caused significant problems currently as development and redevelopment occurs an increase in impervious surfaces and more runoff can create challenges for residents and the City in neighborhoods without adequate infrastructure, including the potential of flash flooding during heavy rain events.

Many of the City's streets are constructed of asphalt concrete or PCC, there are a very minimal number of gravel roads within the City. During the windshield survey LGPS staff observed several roads which were in rough shape including roads that were almost impassable such as the one within the trailer park (this road is a private road maintained by the owner of the trailer park; however, it is still an influence on the overall condition of the residential properties that it serves).



Figure 9 Example of road conditions within trailer park.



Figure 10 Example of public street deteriorated.



Figure 11 Example of public street deteriorated.

Lack of adequate public infrastructure can lead to depressed housing values and minimal reinvestment within neighborhoods. The lack of adequate water pressure within the water mains can impact the City's ability to fight fires and result in higher insurance premiums for property owners.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - STRONG

5. "EXISTENCE OF CONDITIONS WHICH ENDANGER LIFE OR PROPERTY BY FIRE AND OTHER CAUSES"

The potential for flooding within a community can severely impact not only the quality of life of residences but also the ability for the community to grow and achieve redevelopment in certain areas. The following map shows the existing FEMA Flood Plain map for the City of Hampton.

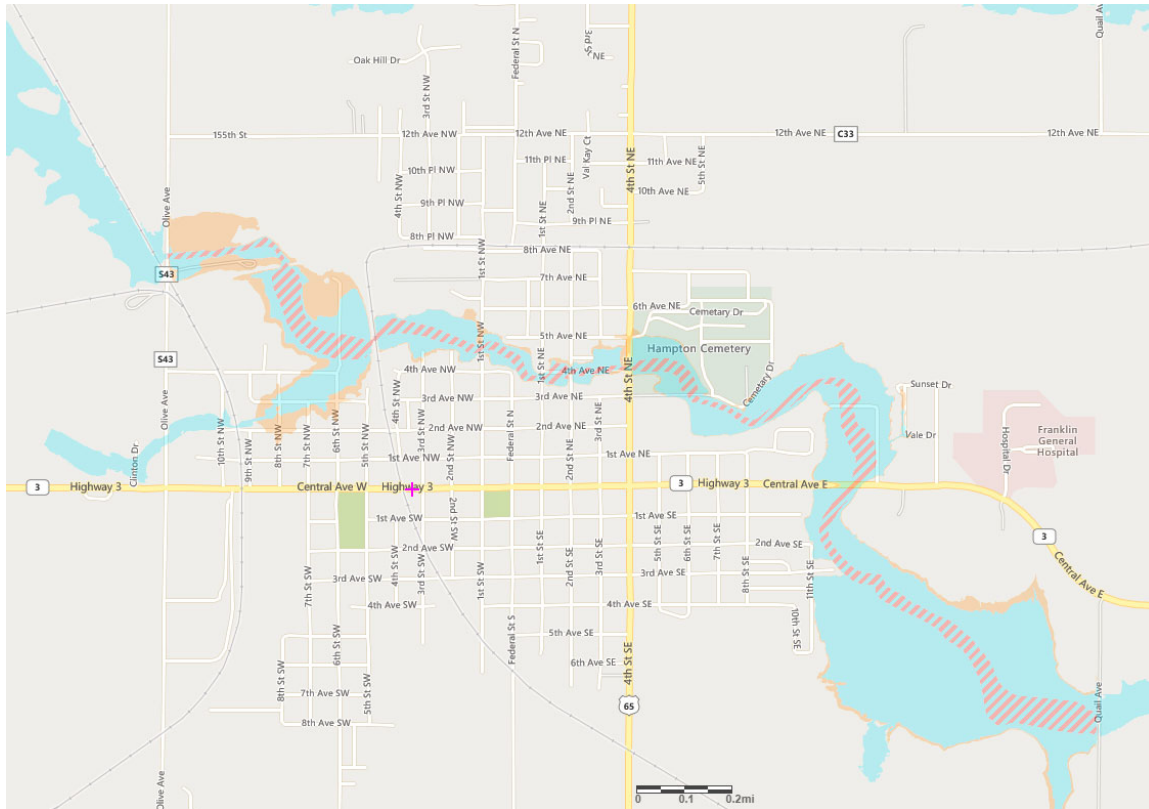


Figure 12 FEMA Flood Plain Map for Hampton, Iowa

As noted in the above map the existing flood plain map shows that while the mapped flood impacts are minimal there is the potential for flooding within a small portion of the City's residential neighborhoods. This flooding potential can increase the cost of living for residents within the neighborhood due to increased flood insurance costs as well as additional expenses due to flood proofing activities and clean up from flooding events. These additional costs can result in the observance of additional blight factors within these neighborhoods. The conditions of the homes within the flood plain area around 8th St. NW and 3rd Ave NW during the windshield survey indicated a higher ratio of blighted properties.

In addition to the potential impacts of flooding within the flood plain area, the ability of the City's Fire Department to fight fires utilizing the existing public infrastructure can create a condition which endangers life or property and impacts the overall growth potential of the neighborhood.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - MODERATE

6. “RETARDS THE PROVISION OF HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS OR CONSTITUTES AN ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL LIABILITY AND IS A MENACE TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH”

The following map is provided by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and shows the location of the following potentially dangerous and unsanitary sites within the City of Hampton.

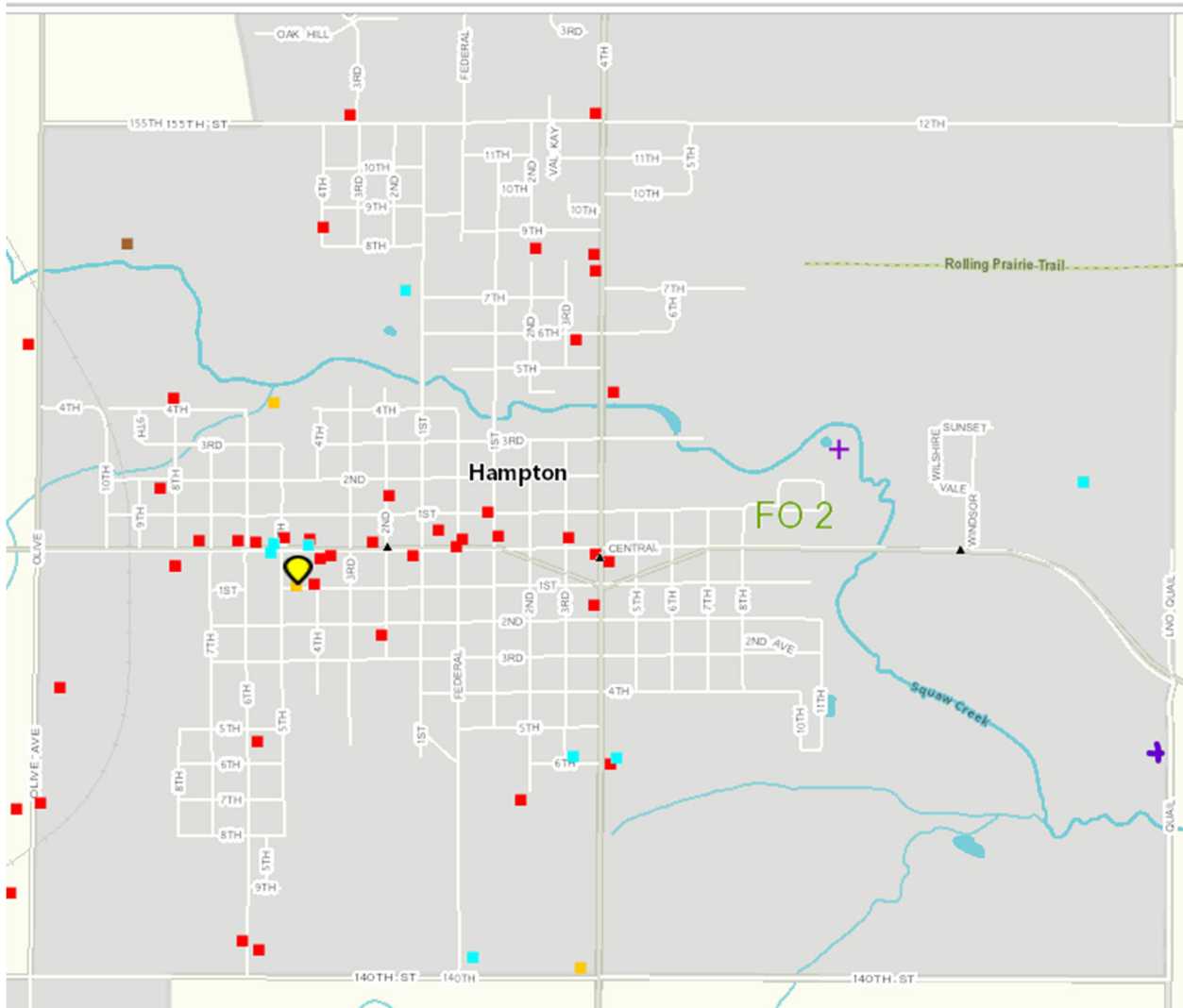


Table 2 Environmental Facilities Identified by Iowa DNR

Red star sites are sites with a leaking underground storage tank.

Orange squares mark sites with an above ground storage tank facility.

Purple plus is a wastewater treatment facility.

Light blue squares are sites with air quality issues.

Yellow squares are contaminated sites.

Sites listed on the above map are sites that the IDNR are aware of and are in varying levels of monitoring under current State and Federal guidelines. Our analysis did not analyze the current condition or level of hazardous conditions that currently exist.

While the majority of the potentially hazardous sites are located with the commercial and industrial areas of Hampton, a few, including a potentially contaminated site (located at 4th Avenue NW and 6th Street NW) are located within predominantly residential neighborhoods. Sites like these can retard the provision of housing within the neighborhood, limiting new development around and in these neighborhoods and increasing the potential for additional nuisance complaints and problems.

BLIGHTING FACTOR - MODERATE

Summary

Collectively, the factors outlined in this report are sufficient to confirm that blight exists throughout the City with regard to residential properties in the City of Hampton, Iowa. An objective review of the data and conditions in the community reveal that the blight finding is based on a number of contributing factors that ultimately substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the City, retards the provision of housing accommodations, constitutes an economic or social liability, and is a menace to the public health, safety, or welfare in its present condition and use.

A significant factor in making this determination is the number of properties that were determined to be blighted or having blighting influences during the April 2019 windshield survey; however, there are other moderate blighting factors that exist within the community.

It should be noted that blight conditions need not be evident throughout the entire area being evaluated. The fact that some individual residential properties or residential blocks are free from blight does not negate the finding of blight on a citywide basis. The blight finding is not just related to the physical condition of the City's housing stock, but also includes the consequences where the surroundings become undesirable and negatively influenced. The presence of these conditions can result in a negative impact for the whole community.

The findings of blight within the City of Hampton may require that the City consider a comprehensive plan of programs, enforcement, and other elements to help remediate the blighting influences and mitigate blighted conditions. The City has done and is continuing to implement projects and programs to help mitigate and prevent blight within the City; however, additional programs and incentives may be needed to stimulate property owners to invest in blight remediation and reverse the negative impact of blight within the community.

It is our conclusion that the factors observed and identified in development of this report support the finding of blight within the City of Hampton and the need for concentrated efforts to remediate blight and its negative impact on people and property within the community.