

One-cent sales tax increase could fund 'blitz on blight'

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DES MOINES, Iowa —

Des Moines City Council will consider plans Monday put a one cent local sales tax before voters.

The plan would raise the sales tax to 7 percent and generate \$37 million.

Mayor Frank Cownie said revenue from the proposed one cent sales tax would allow the city to clear out a long list of public nuisance structures in what they call a “blitz on blight.”

“We can only do 7-15 (houses) a year,” Cownie said. “We are hopeful that we can get over 100-150 of them a year to see if we can improve neighborhoods through that.”

Leaders with Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy set priorities for funding, including infrastructure, lighting the parks, expanding library hours and children's mental health services.

Council member Connie Boesen said a blitz on blight would raise surrounding property values, revitalize neighborhoods and improve the quality of life.

"It's to really to bring ... pride back in the neighborhood so people can build the equity that they want for their financial well-being and also to have a secure neighborhood," Bosen said. "No matter where they live in the city, everybody should have the same pride."

Should Des Moines voters approve the sales tax increase in March, the city would begin tearing down run-down homes in June.

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