



City of Five Seasons®

City of Cedar Rapids

**Development Committee Meeting Agenda**

City Hall Training Room

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Purpose of Development Committee:**

To enable the City Council to discuss and evaluate in greater detail these specific issues that directly impact the physical, social, and economic vibrancy of the City of Cedar Rapids.

**City Council Committee Members:**

Council member Monica Vernon, Chair

Council member Pat Shey

Council member Susie Weinacht

- Mayor Ron Corbett is an ex-officio member of all Council Committees per City Charter Section 2.06.

**Agenda:**

- Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2015

- Informational Items:

1. Housing Access and Affordability

Paula Mitchell/Anne Russett  
*Community Development*

2. DRTAC

Kirsty Sanchez  
*Community Development*

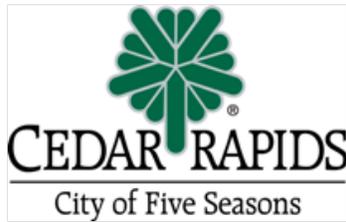
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Seth Gunnerson  
*Community Development*

4. Highway 100 Update

Seth Gunnerson  
*Community Development*

- Public Comment



**City of Cedar Rapids  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES  
City Hall Training Room  
Wednesday, May 20, 2015  
4:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 4:02 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Shey, and Weinacht. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Bill Micheel, Community Development Assistant Director; Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager; Kirsty Sanchez, Community Development Planner; Anne Russett, Community Development Planner; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Weinacht made a motion to approve the minutes from April 15, 2015. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Presentations:**

**1. Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Project**

Steve Sovern, Committee Chair for the Southside Investment Board, presented on the former Rock Island Bridge south of the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge and stated that rebuilding the bridge would complete the trails system within the community and would be an outstanding element of the community tying NewBo and Czech Village together. Funders have been in contact with the Southside Investment Board. CRANDIC has done some preliminary engineering work and confirmed the foundation of the bridge is substantial. CRANDIC and the engineer confirmed using the existing bridge is less costly. Mr. Sovern presented photos of rebuilt bridge. In order for this to happen, the bridge needs to belong to the City. Southside Investment Board is urging the City to negotiate with CRANDIC. Ron Griffith and Rita Rasmussen have started researching this project.

Council member Vernon stated that this is part of the Master Trails Plan for the City. Mr. Sovern stated that this would intersect Mt. Trashmore. Ms. Pratt stated that this project is in the Corridor MPO's Vision Plan and that is helpful when getting grants. Staff is working on the ownership issues and things are moving in the right direction.

Council member Weinacht stated that there is funding for maintenance when Site One is turned into green space, but there is a lot of work to do to make that happen. This can fit into the Vision with the trail coming through, but that is several years down the road. Mr. Micheel stated that currently the Solid Waste Agency has thirty percent design level for Site One. There is a broad stroke vision of what the final use of Mt. Trashmore will be. It will certainly involve trails and trail connections. Locating funding sources is the next step.

Dale Todd stated in regards to the Flood Control System, some type of short term levee system needs to be included in the area. Mr. Sovern stated that the Alliant Substation has been brought up to the 500 year floodplain. That is the level to which the flood walls will be built and that is essentially the level at which the bridge exists today. Council member Shey stated that it needs to be built so that it can survive another flood.

Council member Shey asked what materials will be used for the reconstruction. Mr. Sovern stated that the metal would stay, but the old steel would be removed. The design will be the exciting aspect of the project. Council member Shey asked if the price quote was just for the basic bridge. Mr. Sovern stated that is correct and that the design will raise the price up. The MPO staff believes it could cost up to \$4 million.

Council member Vernon stated that this will create a loop that many people will like and use. There is a need for public/private partnership and the MPO as well as what the City needs to do. City staff and MPO staff will need to be assigned to this project in the short-term. Since flood planning is in process, HR Green and Stanley will need to know what is going on as well. This presentation will be communicated to City Council. Council member Shey stated that when this is presented to the public it should not be called a bicycle trail, but a pedestrian trail.

## **2. CR Youth**

Kirsty Sanchez, Community Development Planner, stated that in January 2015 staff attended the Public Safety Youth Services Committee meeting. It was recommended that staff work with a group of students from Iowa BIG (program for project based learning) to create a framework for a youth program. This framework will be presented to Youth Services on June 9, 2015. This will provide them the opportunity to learn how local government works and to work with City staff on different projects. For Community Development, it is a great opportunity to use their feedback when updating Envision CR. The students were taken on a tour of vacant City-owned parcels to get their ideas on what the City should do with those parcels.

Five students from area high schools presented their ideas for vacant City-owned property. Some of the ideas presented were an outdoor theatre, a glow in the dark park, a temporary art exhibit open twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week, an area schools garden, and downtown mini marts.

Council member Shey stated that temporary sites that rotate keep things new and different for the area. The glow in the dark park with swings is a great idea. Council member Vernon thanked the students and told them what great ideas they had. Ms. Pratt stated that staff will use the student ideas.

## **Recommendation Items:**

### **1. Remaining Lots Available**

Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, stated that approximately two hundred and sixty-five (265) properties have been disposed of for the ROOTs Program, approximately thirty-three (33) units have been rehabilitated after the flood, over fifty (50) parcels were part of a Commercial redevelopment project, and staff has done disposition to adjacent property owners. At this point, there are fewer than 40 remaining non-conforming lots outside of greenway, construction study area, and 100-year flood plain. There are two different scenarios with these lots that are “standalone” or those that are suitable for site assembly. An example of standalone is 705 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW where the lot size does not meet the R-TN minimum, it is a shallow lot

with difficult access, and there is no adjacent or nearby City-owned property. An example of suitable for assembly is 625 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SW. The lot meets the R-TN minimum, the City owns lots at 617 and 623 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SW, and there is potential for assembly with private land.

Staff recommendation is:

- Continue disposition of standalone non-conforming lots.
  - Offer through sealed bid to adjacent owners.
  - Reduces City's cost to maintain and monitor.
  - City Council consideration of sealed bid disposition.
- Retain lots suitable for site assembly.
  - Parcel status available on City web site.
  - RFPs based on clear project concept with demonstrated market interest.

Council member Vernon asked if the biggest timeline issue was the cost of maintenance of the properties. Ms. Mitchell stated that there are a lot of inquiries from people who are looking at their own parking issues with adjacent properties or they want to expand their property. The cost is another factor and the total cost to maintain is approximately \$200,000 per year.

Council member Vernon stated that there are facilities that are still needed in the community such as a community center, recreation center, or senior center. Council member Vernon would like staff to make up a short list of community needs for these lots, and determine how much more housing or office space is needed. The standalone lots may continue to be sold to adjacent property owners. Ms. Pratt stated that there needs to be interdepartmental meetings to look at multiple lots together and determine City needs, infrastructure issues, or what would be the highest and best use to provide more guidance. Council member Vernon would like an inventory of the lots to be available.

Council member Shey asked if there is a minimum for the sealed bids as someone could offer \$1 for these lots. Ms. Mitchell stated that so far when Public Works sends out the sealed bids to the adjacent property owners they only take what they consider serious bids as there is some monetary value established and then those go to Council. At some point staff may need to look at that and determine what the cost is to maintain versus selling the lots.

### **Informational Items:**

#### **1. Zoning Code Update**

Anne Russett, Community Development Planner, stated that staff is developing the scope of work and request for proposals for consultant services to update the Zoning Code. There are three main components to the whole process:

- *New Zoning Code:*
  - Ensures consistency with EnvisionCR and focuses on the design, form, and physical character of development.
  - Consider community context and apply regulations based on the unique character of a diversity of communities.
  - Evaluate a variety of issues, such as use standards, parking requirements, landscaping regulations, and options for promoting connectivity and accessibility.
  - Other issues that may be explored include green site design standards, density bonuses, second units, and joint live/work units.

- *New Zoning Map:*
  - A new Zoning Map that applies the new code based on the defining characteristics of the neighborhood (e.g. urban core, historic neighborhood, suburban).
- *Zoning Handbook:*
  - An easy to read handbook that helps laypersons navigate zoning regulations and processes.

Ms. Russett stated the timeline for consultant selection would start in July 2015 with the release of the RFP, proposal deadline and review of proposals in August 2015, interviews in September 2015, consultant selection in October 2015, and City Council approval and contract execution in November 2015.

Council member Shey asked if there will be a whole new Zoning Code or if this is amending the existing one. Ms. Russett stated there will be a new code. Council member Shey asked about the price. Ms. Russett stated that \$220,000 is budgeted.

Council member Vernon stated that with all of the complaints with parking restrictions, those who have built underground parking should get credit. Council member Vernon likes the idea of defining by the characteristics of the neighborhoods.

Ms. Russett stated that the other key piece of the process is an analysis of the existing code and existing needs and stakeholder outreach. The entire zoning map will require a lot of coordination with property owners and other stakeholders.

Council member Vernon stated that infrastructure is a problem and huge challenge that needs to be in sync with the Zoning Code.

Council member Shey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II  
Community Development



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Anne Russett and Paula Mitchell through Jennifer Pratt, Community Development and Planning Director  
**Subject:** Housing Affordability & Accessibility  
**Date:** June 17, 2015

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**Background:**

Cedar Rapids has long supported affordable housing options through a variety of approaches. Support for the development of affordable housing may take the form of programs to incentivize the production of affordable housing, to promote access for the consumers of affordable housing through rehabilitation assistance or down payment assistance, and also through the periodic examination of the City's codes and ordinances as they relate to affordable housing, to ensure that there are no regulatory barriers that preclude development of a range of affordable housing options.

**Existing Financial Programs and Incentives:**

The City administers several housing assistance programs that support affordable housing, both existing housing stock and new development. These programs include:

- *Owner-occupied Rehabilitation Program* – Assists approximately 45 low-to-moderate income homeowners per year with code deficiencies or repairs that constitute a threat to health and safety.
- *Lead Hazard Control Grant Program* – Assists with remediation of lead based paint hazards in housing built before 1978.
- *First Time Homebuyer Program* – Assists approximately 60 homebuyers per year with down payment assistance toward the purchase of existing housing.
- *ROOTs Program* – Provides builder and buyer incentives for the construction and purchase of new single family homes, with an emphasis on core neighborhoods. The program will result in the construction of over 800 new homes by the end of 2016.
- *Multi-family New Construction Program* – Subsidizes the development cost of new multi-family, mixed income housing, with over 600 new units created to replace those lost in the 2008 flood by the end of 2016.

In addition to the programs it administers, the City also provides matching funds (often in the form of Tax Increment Financing or Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption) for State-administered housing incentive programs such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Workforce Housing Tax Credit programs.

**Potential Regulatory Incentives:**

With the adoption of EnvisionCR in January 2015 the Community Development staff is moving forward with implementation. The priority project is a comprehensive update to the zoning code. As part of this update, the staff would like to explore issues related to housing affordability, choice, and access.

## ***Affordability***

- *Inclusionary Housing* – There are three basic types of inclusionary housing policies:
  - 1) Voluntary policies that encourage developers to build affordable housing by offering incentives,
  - 2) Mandatory policies that require developers to include a portion of income restricted units within a market rate development, and
  - 3) Conditional, or quid pro quo, inclusionary housing policies that only require developers to build affordable housing in conjunction with certain land use approvals, such as zone changes and plan amendments.

As part of the comprehensive zoning code update, the staff will explore the following voluntary policies.

- *Density bonuses*: Allowance of increased densities for qualified, income-restricted projects.
- *Parking reductions*: Allowance of reduced parking standards for qualified, income-restricted projects.
- *Incentives*: Allowance of certain incentives for qualified, income-restricted projects, such as waivers or modifications to setbacks, building height, and lot size.

## ***Choice***

- *Second Units* – Explore the allowance of second units in certain residential zones. Second units provide another housing type, which are often affordable rental options within single-family neighborhoods. In addition, with the aging demographic these housing types may provide for multi-generational living arrangements. In fact, second units are sometimes referred to as granny flats.
- *Joint Live/Work Units* – Joint live and work units are a type of housing that consists of both living space and work space.
- *Small Lot Subdivisions* – Explore the feasibility of establishing a program that allows small lot subdivisions. Small lots can provide an affordable homeownership option. Unlike condos, small lots are fee-simple lots that do not include homeowner's association fees. This would need to be explored as part of an update to the City's subdivision ordinance.

## ***Access***

- *Reasonable Accommodations* – Analyze the City's existing policies and procedures for persons with disabilities to request reasonable accommodation from land use and zoning requirements, when those requirements are a barrier to equal housing access. There are a variety of types of accommodations that could be requested. One example is the allowance of a wheelchair ramp within a side-yard setback. Other examples include relief from fence height restrictions to allow greater privacy for a person with a disability to use the outdoor space and a reduction in parking based on the number of residents who drive.



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Kirsty Sanchez through Jennifer Pratt, Community Development and Planning Director  
**Subject:** Design Review Overlay Districts Update  
**Date:** June 17, 2015

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**Background:**

The City of Cedar Rapids has established three Design Review Overlay Districts to encourage quality urban infill development in the Czech Village/New Bohemia, Kingston Village and Ellis Boulevard areas of town. Each established overlay district has an appointed Design Review Technical Advisory Committee (DRTAC) which is tasked with reviewing site plans and building permits and providing comments to the approving body. While the role of DRTAC is not appropriate to approve or deny projects, committee recommendations under considered by the approving body, such as the City Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and City Council.

*MedQuarter Overlay District Update*

On May 12, 2015, Ordinance No. 035-15 was passed amending Chapter 32 of the Zoning Ordinance to create the MedQuarter Design Review Overlay District. Staff will return with a resolution establishing the composition of a MedQuarter Design Review Technical Advisory Committee at a future date.

*Kingston and Ellis Boulevard Overlay District Update*

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Tim Blumer, Bethany Jordan, and Matt Miller were appointed as the core reviewers for the Kingston and Ellis Boulevard Overlay Districts. In addition, Fred Timko and Scott Loggins were appointed as stakeholders to the Kingston Overlay District and Al Pierson and Aggie Doyle were appointed to the Ellis Boulevard Overlay District.

*Czech Bohemia Overlay District Update*

The Czech Bohemia DRTAC has been meeting since 2012 and has reviewed over 50 cases. Staff and the Czech Bohemia DRTAC held several meetings to identify ways the current standards can be updated to allow for more meaningful input from the committee. Staff used the overlay standards recently created for the MedQuarter as a template. This has been customized through discussions with the Czech Bohemia DRTAC members. Examples of proposed changes to the overlay district standards include:

- Creation of a *Site Furnishings and Landscaping* review category
- Fencing standards
- Additional recommendation items (separate from required standards)

Prior to Development Committee consideration, staff will hold an open house to provide residents, property owners, and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide input. After the open house, staff will make any necessary changes to the draft standards and then present to Development Committee and City Council. Staff anticipates similar updates to the overlay standards for the Kingston and Ellis Boulevard Overlay Districts in the near future.

**Next Steps:**

- Hold an open house to gather input from residents, property owners, and other stakeholders
- Development Committee review and recommendation
- City Council adoption



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Seth Gunnerson through Jennifer Pratt, Community Development and Planning Director  
**Subject:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE Action Plan Update  
**Date:** June 17, 2015

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### **Background**

On February 13, staff provided an update to the Development Committee on efforts to develop a plan for future improvements along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. The importance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor within the core of the community has been recognized in a number of planning processes, including:

- EnvisionCR
- 2007 and 2011 Downtown Vision Plans
- Flood recovery planning
- Strategic plans conducted by the Main Street District and Southside Investment

During the spring, staff has, in conjunction with the Metro Economic Alliance, conducted two meetings with stakeholders to gather ideas on improving the corridor.

At the first meeting on April 7, staff provided an overview of the existing conditions on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. This overview included a visual survey of changes to amenities along the street between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

During that meeting the stakeholders divided into smaller groups and provided approximately 45 strategies to improve the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor. Staff grouped the suggestions into three broad categories.

- **Policy and Operations:** Suggestions included curbside snow removal and continuing to support housing and retail development downtown. Feedback in this category largely confirmed the value of existing policies and programs.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Permanent capital improvement projects. Feedback from the group included suggestions on amenities that should be present on urban streets, including street furniture, wider sidewalks, pedestrian improvements at intersections and visual elements such as public art and lighting.
- **Street and Sidewalk Activation:** These suggestions included more temporary uses of the street, including outdoor seating, street musicians, pop-up art displays, and other strategies. The strategies in this category also represent lower cost tactics that can be led by stakeholders.

On May 13, staff presented these suggestions to the stakeholders and discussed a strategy moving forward to identify and prioritize infrastructure gaps and encourage creative use of the street.

## **Infrastructure Improvements**

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The City will play an active role in any capital improvements along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. Based on feedback received from the stakeholder group, staff is going to complete a more thorough gap analysis of necessary and potential improvements along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

The process will identify a list of potential projects that could be completed in the future as resources become available. The City will utilize the stakeholders along the corridor to help prioritize this list, which will be presented to City Council at a future date for use in future budgeting processes.

## **Sidewalk Toolkit:**

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Staff is also working to encourage creative use of the street and sidewalks. Staff is currently reviewing the “Street and Sidewalk Activation” suggestions and identifying how these fall into existing permitting processes (such as Encroachment or Sidewalk Café permits). Staff is planning to develop a “Sidewalk Toolkit” which will provide simple parameters to business owners. The document will describe which situations businesses are permitted to place objects on the sidewalk without requiring a permit, such as the recent deregulation of sandwich board signs which permitted businesses to place them without a permit as long as they met certain criteria, such as maintaining a six foot wide pedestrian path. The document will also describe situations where a permit would be required, such as if outdoor alcohol service or alterations to the street are contemplated.

The goal of the Sidewalk Toolkit is to create a document which encourages and empowers individuals and groups to think creatively about 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (and other corridors) and propose and implement new ideas. It will eliminate the need for business owners and stakeholders to ask “What can I do?” and instead the City lets business owners know “As long as you do X, you can be creative”.

Any policy changes recommended by staff that comes out of the review process will be brought back to the Development Committee at a future meeting.



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**To:** City Council Development Committee  
**From:** Seth Gunnerson through Jennifer Pratt, Community Development and Planning Director  
**Subject:** Highway 100 Corridor Management Plan Update  
**Date:** July 17, 2015

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At the July 17 Development Committee meeting staff will provide an update on the Highway 100 Corridor Management Plan. Development of the plan is nearing completion with anticipated adoption the plan by the Corridor MPO Policy Board in July. Review and adoption by the City of Cedar Rapids will begin with a recommendation by the Development Committee in August before going to the full City Council.

### **Background**

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Construction of the Iowa Highway 100 Extension is underway with work currently being done on the first phase which is Edgewood Road to Covington Road. The second phase is expected to begin next year which is from Covington Road to US 30.

Development of the highway is anticipated to attract a portion of the Community's future growth to the west side of Cedar Rapids. While infill development remains a priority of the City, EnvisionCR acknowledges that market demands and projected future growth will require growth at the periphery of the community. Due to the construction of Highway 100 and favorable topography for extending infrastructure, EnvisionCR has identified the Highway 100 Corridor as a future growth area for the City.

Much of the land in the study area is currently in the jurisdiction of Linn County. The County's land use policy, along with annexation agreements with communities around Cedar Rapids, identify future development along the Highway 100 corridor as being incorporated into the City of Cedar Rapids.

The Corridor MPO has been working with the City of Cedar Rapids, Linn County, and surrounding communities to develop a Highway 100 Corridor Management Plan. The plan looks at future land use and infrastructure needs that will result from the construction of Highway 100.

Funding for the plan has been provided through the Iowa DOT and regional funds provided through the Federal Government. HR Green has been the lead consultant for the plan with the development concept prepared by RDG. Both of these consultants worked on the City of Cedar Rapids' EnvisionCR plan and have worked with staff to ensure that the Corridor Management Plan conforms with and enhances the work completed by the City.

### **Plan Development:**

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Public outreach was conducted in conjunction with Iowa DOT public meetings about the Highway 100 project and at EnvisionCR Open Houses. A visual preference survey was also conducted that was promoted through City social media. Various stakeholders in the study area were also engaged in one-on-one meetings. A project management team consisting of City staff

and representatives from the County has been engaged to review progress as the plan was developed.

**Preferred Development Concept:**

In developing the plan, three development Scenarios were explored; Standard Development Practices, Urbanism; and Conservation focused development. Community feedback showed a heavy preference towards the Urbanism approach

The Preferred Development Concept is incorporated into EnvisionCR and the City’s Future Land Use Map. The Highway 100 Corridor Management plan will expand upon EnvisionCR by offering more detailed land use and infrastructure recommendations.

The concept recommends best practices for future development in the areas of stormwater management, street typologies, sewer and water infrastructure, along with future land use.

**Implementation:**

The plan contemplates development in four phases:

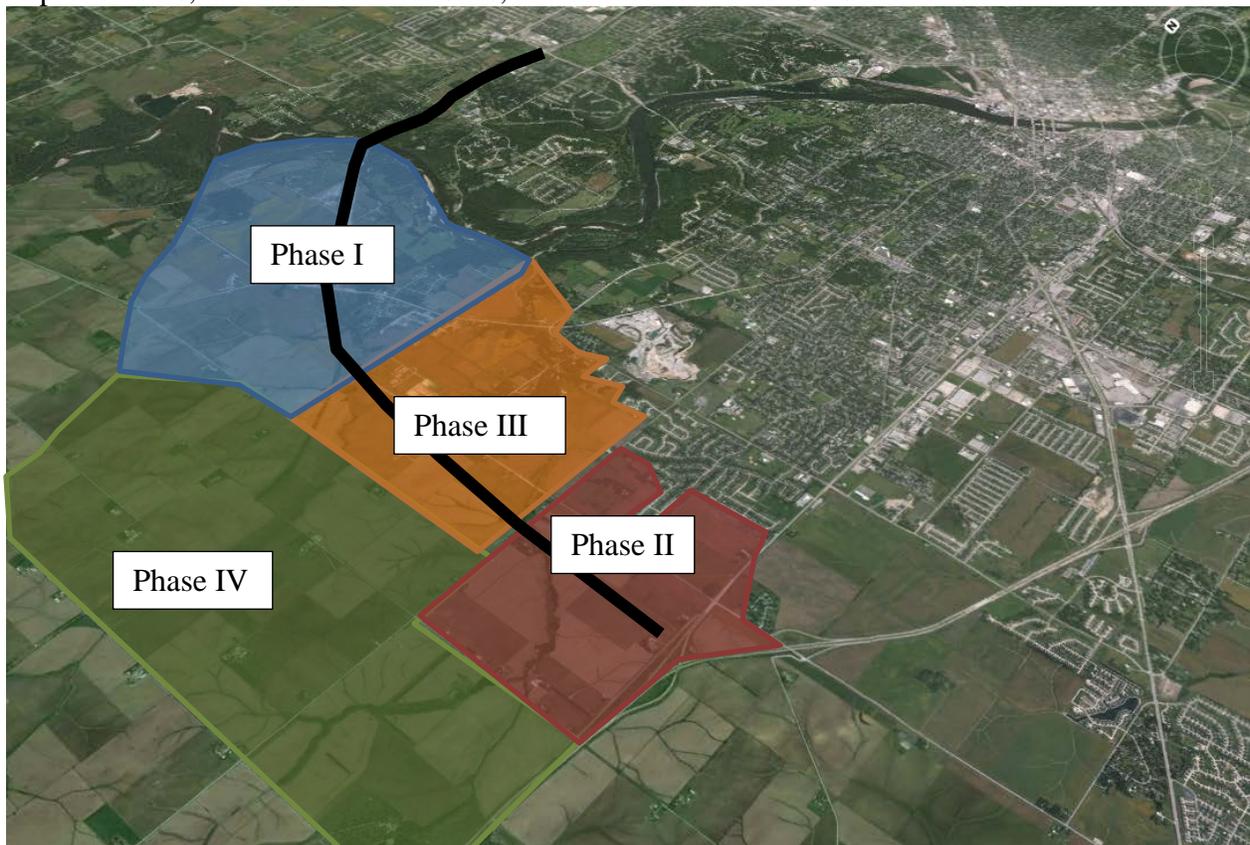
**Phase I:** North of Ellis Boulevard around the F Avenue Interchange

**Phase II:** Land around the E Avenue interchange

**Phase III:** Development along Highway 100 between Phase I and II

**Phase IV:** Urban Reserve to the west of corridor.

For each phase the plan identifies future road projects, trail and pedestrian network improvements, land use characteristics, and infrastructure needs for utilities.



**Next Steps:**

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The proposed review and adoption schedule for the final Highway 100 Corridor Management Plan:

- July – Corridor MPO Policy Board Adoption
- August – City Council Development Committee Presentation and Recommendation
- September – City Council Adoption