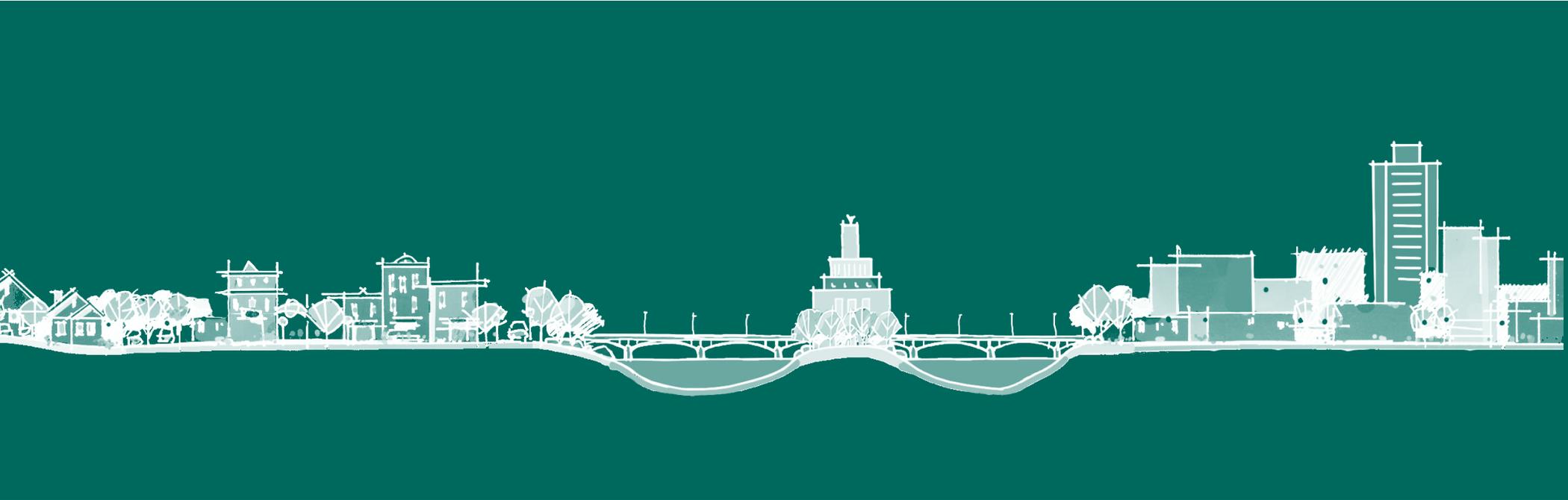


EnvisionCR



A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

ADOPTED JANUARY 27, 2015

PREPARED BY
RDG PLANNING & DESIGN
HR GREEN, INC.





THANK YOU



Jerry A. Pomeroy

City Manager
City of Cedar Rapids

It is with gratitude that I thank and acknowledge the Cedar Rapids community for their interest, involvement, and active participation in the planning process of EnvisionCR. It can be challenging to wrap your mind around something as vast as a comprehensive plan, but Cedar Rapids residents have shown us they are willing and active participants in helping shape the long-term vision of our community.

During the months of pre-planning leading up to the launch of the new plan, we knew we wanted to involve the community in every stage of the process. The plan previously on the books was more than 15 years old, and we were eager for fresh insight and a realigned sense of community aspiration and identity.

Under the skilled and experienced leadership of our Community Development staff, the department set out to engage residents of all ages and backgrounds in a process that would ultimately span the course of 13 months. This product is the result of collaboration to the highest degree, from high-school students to senior executive leadership.

From face-to-face interaction and open houses, to nontraditional forms of digital outreach, the community embraced the planning process and responded with thoughtful, intentional feedback. Our team was amazed at not only the sheer number of participants, but their level of engagement and anticipation of the future plan.

Internally, our efforts have also included cross-departmental collaboration and unity in plan adoption and implementation. The goals set forth in the comprehensive plan will be adopted by all departments, collectively using EnvisionCR as a blueprint for prioritization, funding considerations, and long-term planning.

It is with great anticipation that we look forward to the next chapter and see the initiatives start to unfold. Our planning efforts would not have been possible without the collaboration and participation of the community we serve. Again, thank you for your engagement and expectations. We look forward to answering the call.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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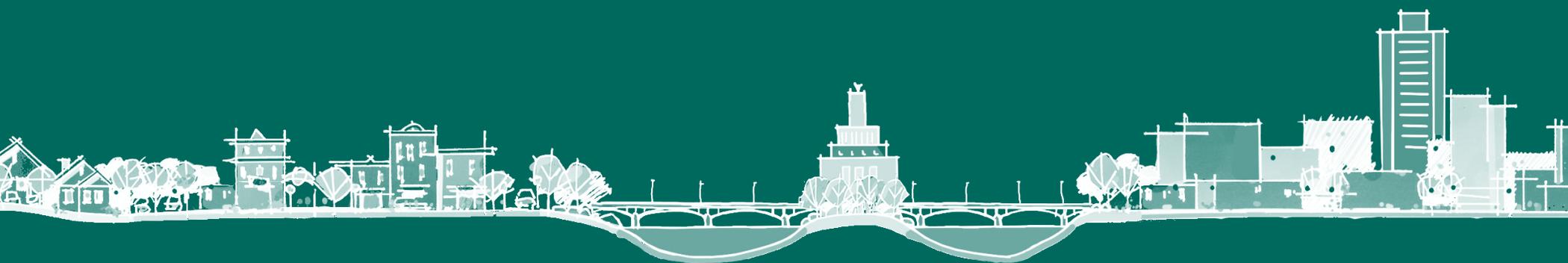
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An ongoing process that uses and updates the plan.



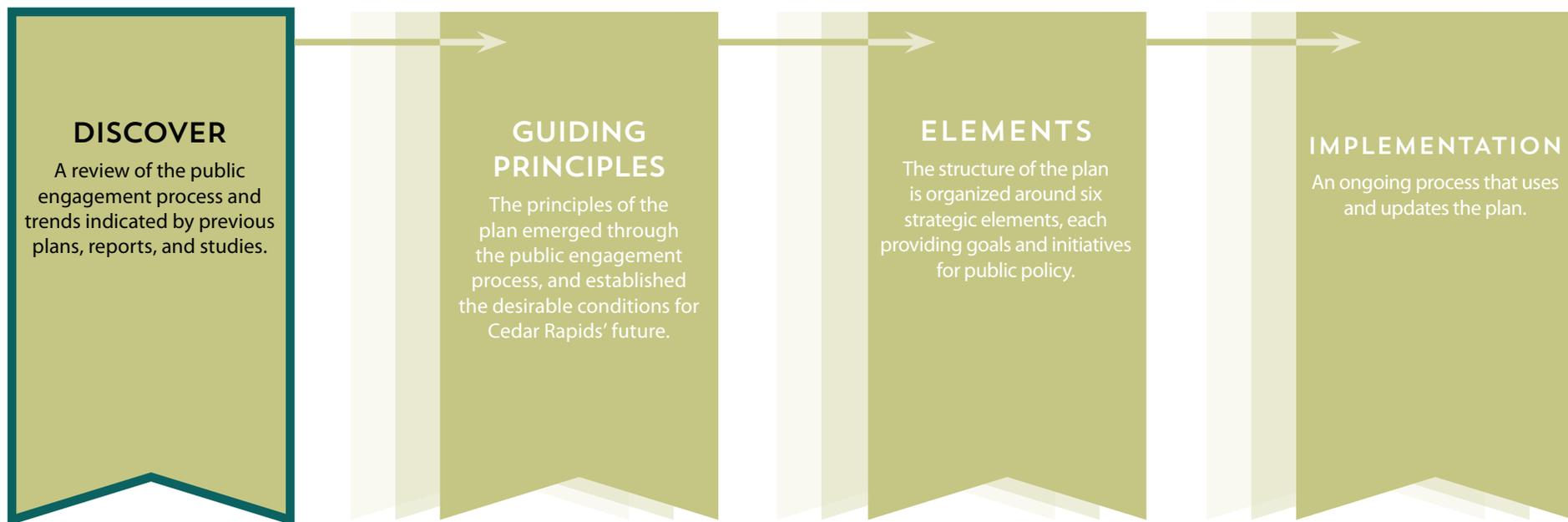


DISCOVER



STRUCTURE

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN



DISCOVER

AN INTRODUCTION

In March 2014, the city formally kicked-off its new comprehensive plan – EnvisionCR, a plan to engage residents hands-on and inspire them to create a vision for Cedar Rapids' future.

We want to thank the hundreds of residents who invested their time and insight to help roadmap a strong future. EnvisionCR is a true document of the people.

As comprehensive planners, we worried the post-flood planning required of Cedar Rapids residents would leave the community survey-weary and reluctant to move forward. We've never been so wrong.

You turned up by the hundreds at public open houses, and responded in droves online.

Nearly everywhere we turned, residents welcomed the chance to partner with city officials to build a dynamic future. You've shared your vision for neighborhoods, downtown retail, entrepreneurship and industry, active riverfront opportunities, and more.

The theme that underpins all of these exceptional visions is faith in what Cedar Rapids is, and what it can become. City leaders have heard your desire to build on these themes and create a community of exceptional choices – a hub of the Midwest, where people clamor to live, work, learn, and play.

We work across the country with city leaders who are creating fresh new plans, but rarely do we get to enjoy a community this involved - this empowered to shape its future. We were particularly wowed by a powerful think-tank of nearly 100 local high school students who offered intelligent ideas in creative and passionate ways, loving the opportunity to talk directly with city officials.

Thank you, Cedar Rapids – for your vision, your passion, and your faith in the future.



RDG Planning & Design



By way of introduction to this comprehensive plan, the consulting team's letter to the community, published in the Cedar Rapids Gazette on August 25, 2014 bears repeating:

THEMES

THEMES THAT UNDERPIN THE ENTIRE PLAN

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs by working toward a healthy environment, community, and economy.

HEALTH

Healthy places support residents' mental and physical health and in so doing, quickly attain a distinction as a place for families and young professionals to call home. For example, trails and parks spaces support the health of the body, while education and cultural facilities support intellectual development.

PLACEMAKING

People will often identify with one particular place within their city. Sometimes this location is a school, a park, or even one's home. Placemaking is about building memories through public spaces and activities, often associated with a destination like the riverfront, downtown or a given neighborhood.

EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is about doing things in an optimal way, for example completing an infrastructure project in the fastest or in the least expensive way. Effectiveness is about doing the right task, completing activities and achieving goals. The plan is about being both efficient and effective.

OVERVIEW

You will find here a visionary plan for action, rooted in the strong commitment of the residents of Cedar Rapids to continue what they have so well-started: to build an ever-better Cedar Rapids.

The plan's structure is simple. Here, in the **DISCOVER** section, you will get an introduction to the background materials and process that drove the plan. You will also see the four themes that drive the plan forward: sustainability, health, placemaking, and efficiency. These themes are ever-present throughout the plan.

The **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** section demonstrates the foundation for the plan, built from the grassroots up. These principles should drive decision-making within Cedar Rapids and throughout the region for many years to come. The public engagement process led directly to these principles and their resulting land use maps. This is a critical section for decision-makers and for the public to understand the broad-sweeping overall direction of the plan.

Then you will see six detailed sections or plan **ELEMENTS** – these make up the essence of the plan. Each element consists of a background discussion before introducing you to the element's goals. Each goal is supported by a series of initiatives that will help the city achieve that goal over time and reach the vision embodied through that element.

Finally, this plan reiterates the **INITIATIVES** in summary form, complete with timelines, roles and responsibilities – the information essential to creating a plan for action.

But this plan begins at the beginning – with a basic understanding of the purpose of a comprehensive plan.

ELEMENTS

The elements of this plan, with their associated goals, are as follows:

StrengthenCR. Make bold moves in community planning to retain the character of neighborhoods and corridors.

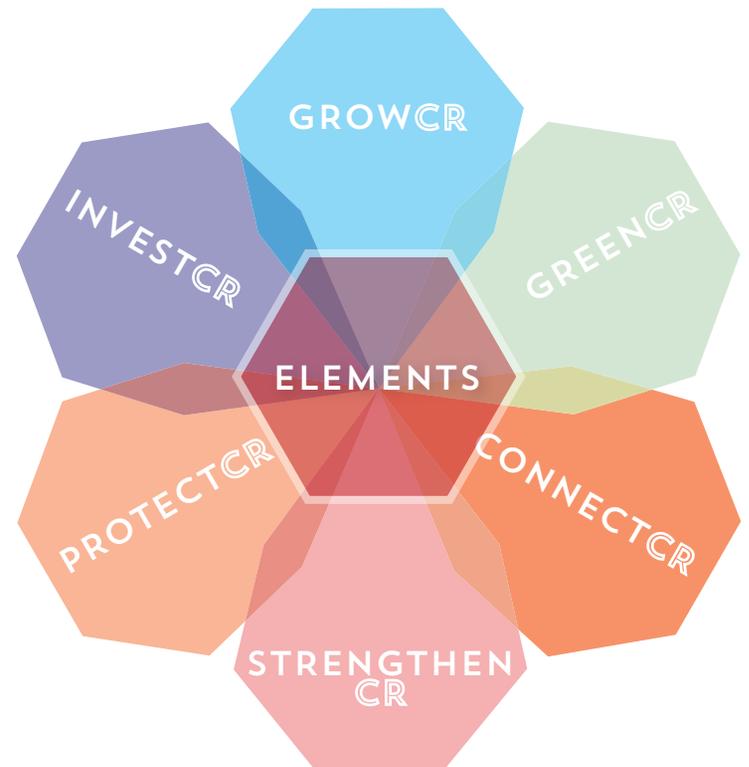
GrowCR. Make bold moves in future planning to encourage sustainable connections of growth areas to existing neighborhoods.

ConnectCR. Create a culture that enhances transportation options for pedestrians and cyclists through complete streets, trails, and public transportation.

GreenCR. Buffer and connect existing parks, trails, and streams to build a natural network in addition to regional collaborations and individual efforts to improve stormwater management, water quality, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation.

InvestCR. Make Cedar Rapids a desirable place for businesses to start, move, and grow by leveraging resources to invest in business districts and amenities that keep and attract a skilled workforce.

ProtectCR. Provide quality services to increase neighborhood safety and keep moving forward with the flood control system.



THE ELEMENT NAMES HAVE BEEN ADOPTED AS THE CITY COUNCIL'S GOALS. THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL GOALS HAVE BEEN USED TO DESCRIBE THE ENVISIONCR ELEMENTS AS SHOWN ON THIS PAGE.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The EnvisionCR comprehensive plan provides a vision for the future of Cedar Rapids, with a focus on priorities for city policies and public investments in the next 20 years.

Primary Roles

The plan serves three primary roles:

1. Community Building. Comprehensive planning provides an opportunity for residents to create a shared vision for their community. Residents and city staff identified issues and opportunities for Cedar Rapids' land use, infrastructure, public facilities, and natural resources, among other areas. These findings were used to set public priorities and provide a set of action steps that can improve quality of life and make the city more attractive for potential growth.

2. Legal Basis for Land Use Regulations. Section 414 of the Code of Iowa allows cities to adopt land use regulations such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, and to promote the "health, safety, morals or general welfare of the community." These regulations govern how land is developed within a municipality and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. Land use regulations recognize that people live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to coordinate and harmonize the uses of private property. The comprehensive plan provides a legal basis for these regulations.

3. Guidance for Decision-Makers. The plan will serve as a guide for city staff, the Planning Commission, City Council, and other city boards and commissions, as they set policy and make investment and land use decisions.

The plan is designed as a flexible document that can be updated as conditions change over time.

10 SMART PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Broad Guiding Values For Comprehensive Plans

1. Collaboration
2. Efficiency, Transparency and Consistency
3. Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy
4. Occupational Diversity
5. Revitalization
6. Housing Diversity
7. Community Character
8. Natural Resources & Agricultural Protection
9. Sustainable Design
10. Transportation Diversity

Iowa's Smart Planning Legislation

In 2010, the Iowa State Legislature passed the "Iowa Smart Planning Act" as a way to guide and encourage the development of local comprehensive plans. The legislation outlines ten smart planning principles and 13 comprehensive plan elements that Iowa cities should use to develop comprehensive plans. These guidelines are intended to improve economic opportunities, preserve the natural environment, protect quality of life, and ensure equitable decision-making processes.

The smart planning principles and comprehensive plan elements as defined in the legislation are listed above.

13 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Sections to Include in All Comprehensive Plans

1. Public Participation
2. Issues and Opportunities
3. Land Use
4. Housing
5. Public Infrastructure and Utilities
6. Transportation
7. Economic Development
8. Agricultural and Natural Resources
9. Community Facilities
10. Community Character
11. Hazards
12. Intergovernmental Collaboration
13. Implementation

Though the sets of elements and principles may look similar, they differ in that the ten smart planning principles are meant to be the overarching values that inform each of the 13 elements of the plan.

The Cedar Rapids comprehensive plan was created in compliance with the guidelines of the Iowa Smart Planning Act. The plan addresses all 13 elements of a comprehensive plan required by the Iowa Smart Planning Act, but is organized in a format that fits Cedar Rapids' public engagement process and planning needs. Cedar Rapids received an Iowa smart planning grant that partially funded the creation of this plan.

UNDERSTANDING TRENDS

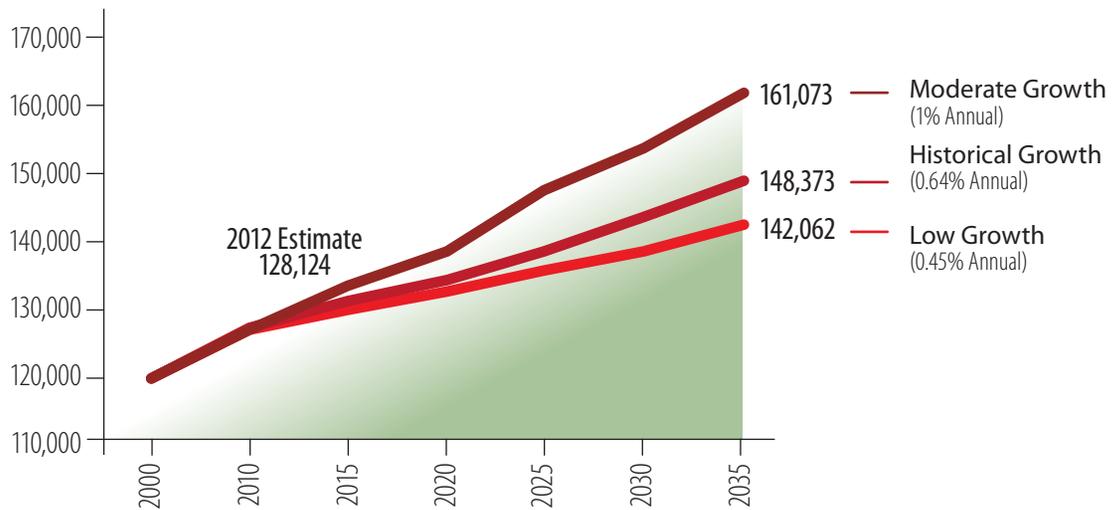
Population Projection

As Cedar Rapids prepares for its future, the first step in the process is to understand trends. Population projections help Cedar Rapids plan efficiently for future land use and community services. It is helpful to plan for a slightly optimistic growth rate. A one percent growth rate results in a 2035 population of about 161,000. This change raises immediate questions.

- Where will people live and what will be their housing preferences?
- Where will the city attract and support new employment for industrial and commercial growth?
- How will the city best provide access to existing neighborhoods and emerging growth areas? Infrastructure, too?
- How will Cedar Rapids develop differently to promote health, recreation, and mobility options?
- What will it take to improve the experience of living and visiting Cedar Rapids? How does the city enhance amenities to ensure quality of life improvements?

Cedar Rapids' residents and businesses are enormous community assets and their participation was essential to answering these, and many other, questions during the planning process.

CHART 1: Population Change and Projection



CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

THE CEDAR RAPIDS POPULATION IS CHANGING. RECENT TRENDS SHOW THE POPULATION IS AGING AND BECOMING MORE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE.



2.5x:

THE INCREASE IN CEDAR RAPIDS' HISPANIC/LATINO POPULATION FROM 2000 - 2012.

THE INCREASE IN THE NON-WHITE POPULATION IN CEDAR RAPIDS, AS PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION, FROM 2000 TO 2012: 8% - 13%

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This section of the plan describes outreach efforts of a community engagement program unprecedented in scope and its efforts to involve as many people from Cedar Rapids as possible. The campaign for maximizing communication and opportunities for the public input process include:

Steering Committee

The steering committee was an important team of decision-makers and involved citizens focused on a vibrant future for Cedar Rapids, based on resident needs and recommendations. The steering committee met throughout the development of this plan, guiding the process overall and ensuring the people's voices were well heard and considered.

Data Collection

Background materials related to the existing plan, past growth and land use, natural resources, neighborhoods, economy and a variety of other factors were developed to set the stage for understanding the importance of comprehensive planning. They also provided the starting point for building this plan and introducing the planning process to the steering committee, decision makers and the public-at-large.

Ongoing Feedback and Social Media

Throughout the process, the public has been invited to share ideas and input via the city's website, including participation in www.crtalks.com, directly e-mailing the Community Development Department (communitydevelopment@cedar-rapids.org) and/or participating via Twitter or Facebook. On March 24, 2014, the city also launched an on-line forum specific to EnvisionCR via Google Hangout. Panelists participating in the forum included representatives of the Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance, Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, Blue Zones, ImpactCR, and the

Cedar Rapids Gazette. Public comments are viewable via the web through easy links from the EnvisionCR page on the city's website.

Kick-off Celebration

On March 26, more than 300 residents engaged in a dynamic open house, that outlined essential content for the plan and seeking the public's input on each of the categories:

- Neighborhoods and housing
- Land use and environment
- Parks and recreation
- Transportation
- Infrastructure and facilities
- Economic development
- Population and growth

At that kick-off event, and throughout the course of the public engagement process, the public was also asked to share its big ideas for the future of Cedar Rapids. Comments ranged from skate parks to support for industry and entrepreneurs. All comments were considered and many incorporated as the process moved forward – translating into principles, goals, initiatives, or additional critical background information for this document.

Stakeholder meetings, small group discussions, and interviews.

Throughout the process, but particularly in the winter and early spring of 2014, the consulting team and city Community Development staff conducted an ongoing series of conversations, reaching out to audiences from the following backgrounds:

- Natural resources and the environment
- Utilities, infrastructure, and energy production
- Police, fire, hazard mitigation, public safety

- Economic development and the financial community
- Industry and entrepreneurship
- Technology and communications
- Education and social services
- Neighborhood residents and leaders
- Downtown development
- Arts, culture and historic preservation
- Non-profit organizations
- Public health and medicine
- Regional services and initiatives
- Developers
- Planners

These conversations included discussions of the city's current strengths and challenges, potential opportunities, desired future, and obstacles to achieving that future. Comments of both a broad-sweeping and specific nature were encouraged. These sessions provided critical insight to prepare for additional conversation with the public and stakeholders and for direct input into this plan.

Stakeholder Workshop

Two stakeholder workshops with 30-50 participants each were conducted to focus on key input aspects to the plan. The first workshop (March 26, 2014) involved visioning elements/big ideas and identifying gaps between a preferred future for Cedar Rapids and current conditions. A second workshop (June 17, 2014) saw the stakeholders developing goals, action steps, and considering measures of success.

Community Workshop

EnvisionCR covers a large and diverse area. In order to address specific local issues, one week-long planning workshop was held, allowing the public to stop by throughout the week and essentially become part of the

planning team. They identified issues and expressed ideas for their neighborhoods and businesses in words, sketches, and maps. This workshop took place in April 2014.

Student Program

Cedar Rapids may well lead the nation in involving youth in its comprehensive planning efforts, particularly through a series of highly interactive sessions involving four high school classrooms, reaching nearly 100 students. Initially, a member of the consulting team and/or city staff visited each classroom to gain insights into student likes/dislikes and big ideas for Cedar Rapids. These sessions were followed by a half-day event involving all classrooms at once, where students crafted visions, goals, and actions to move their community forward. They reported their results with a mix of flip chart bullet points, and dramatically more creative means (including art work and song). As one student put it at the conclusion of the event, "This makes me think I'd like to stay here after all."

Mainstream Media

Articles, letters to the editor, radio and television interviews provided opportunities to communicate the plan's purpose, objectives and emerging recommendations.

Open Houses

In addition to the kick-off celebration, two additional open houses provided key points of opportunity for public input and feedback on the plan as developed at that point in time. Held on August 27, 2014 and November 10, 2014, these open houses generated 100+ participants each and high quality feedback, including detailed review on the part of many citizens of the draft goals and initiatives using a pencil-and-paper feedback instrument.

DIALOGUE OPENS DOORS FOR CITY PLANNING

By Kyle Skogman
Published in Corridor Business Journal
August 25, 2014

Public engagement can be a challenging and rewarding component of civic planning. Over the last several months, I've been encouraged to see the city facilitate meaningful dialogue as part of the new comprehensive plan, EnvisionCR.

I've been afforded the opportunity to advocate for diverse community and business representatives by participating on the EnvisionCR steering committee, a role that has allowed me to glimpse a wide-array of public feedback.

This opportunity has only grown my respect for the varying perspectives we share as a community, and for the well-rounded structure the city is giving to their comprehensive plan.

Alongside representatives from non-profits, young professional networks, developers, business owners, educational professionals, corporations, and City Council members, the steering committee has helped champion the direction of the draft plan, and helped unravel a myriad of public feedback comments.

While our perspectives are diverse, we have found that our goals are very much the same. We see the need to keep building on the momentum of downtown, from Newbo to Kingston. We see the value and the importance of studying our transportation system – we want to avoid repeats of infrastructure that has brought frustrations or challenges. We have expressed a desire for a robust economic development strategy, giving traction to young entrepreneurs and making ourselves attractive to outside businesses.

Together, key stakeholders have wrestled with questions that fundamentally shape the Cedar Rapids landscape; questions like what does it mean to be an economic leader? How do we establish ourselves as the hub of the region? How can we promote mixed-use development? What can we do to ensure Cedar Rapids offers activities that appeal to a wide age range?

I have been proud to help facilitate this critical dialogue as Cedar Rapids moves forward with the next steps of their comprehensive plan.

