



STATUS & INFORMATION REPORT

WEEK OF MAY 5, 2008

Cedar Rapids is a vibrant urban hometown - a beacon for people and businesses that are invested in building a greater community for the next generation.

In addition to the regularly scheduled monthly test of the Public Notification/Warning Siren System on Wednesday, May 7, 2008, special testing will be conducted on 4-6 individual sirens in the Cedar Rapids area. The special testing will involve several soundings of each of the sirens and may last up to 2 minutes for each test. The testing will be conducted between the hours of Noon and 6:00pm on May 7th and 9:00am to 6:00pm on May 8th. In the event of inclement weather on these dates, an alternate test period will be 9:00am to 6:00pm on May 9th. The special testing is being conducted to perform siren acoustic measurements required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency following the installation of 13 new replacement sirens.

CITY MANAGER

- ✓ Councilman Gulick shared an email he received from a constituent: “I just wanted to let you know that there has been a major improvement regarding the weekly garbage/recycling pick-up. I see little, if any, litter that you would assume came from containers left at the curb for collection. Please thank the other council members for me, as well as the sanitation department.”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ On May 15, 2008, the “Our Neighborhood / Our City” Housing Fair will bring together staff from a number of government offices and community agencies that assist citizens in matters impacting their neighborhoods. Participants include: Community Development (Housing Rehabilitation, Lead Paint, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher), City Manager, Civil Rights, Code Enforcement – Housing Inspections, Police, Solid Waste, Linn County Sheriff, BRIGHTEN Project, Iowa Legal Aid, and the Landlords of Linn County. This event will be held from 5:00 to 7:00pm in the Veteran’s Memorial Armory. If you have any questions, please contact Scott Seibert, Leased Housing Supervisor, at 286-5192.
- ✓ The City received statements of qualification from 18 consulting firms interested in developing a Riverfront Park Master Plan with the City through a public planning process. After presentations by the five firms ranked highest by the Evaluation Committee, two firms are being recommended for City Council interviews. Close Landscape Architecture and Sasaki Associates have been scheduled for interviews by City Council beginning at 4:00pm on May 8, 2008 in City Council Chambers.
- ✓ In response to the request by City Council, the City Planning Commission (CPC) has moved forward with the charge of evaluating the City’s current design guidelines and providing options for policies and procedures to enhance the quality of development. At their meeting on April 29, 2008, the CPC approved a proposed work plan and timeline for the design guidelines initiative. The planning process incorporates many opportunities for public input, including focus groups and open houses, as detailed below:

DATE	EVENT	ACTIVITY
April 29	CPC Regular Mtg.	Discuss elements of communication plan, including: (a) stakeholders (b) key messages (c) tentative timeline

May 20 (tentative)	CPC Special Mtg.	APA orientation program on design guidelines and additional background information.
May 27	CPC Regular Mtg.	Review current City codes and best practices in other communities.
TBD	Focus Group	Staff to conduct at least three separate focus groups with: (a) randomly selected residents (b) Development Council representatives (c) business owner/realtor representatives
June 24	Joint CPC/City Council	(a) Review completed and upcoming activities (b) Present results of the focus groups (c) Preview the Open House and visual preference survey
July 22	CPC Regular Mtg.	Presentation by selected community official and/or developer to share experiences working with effective design guidelines and review process
July 30	Open House #1	(a) Obtain feedback on issues of concern to the community (b) Roll out visual preference survey on website and kiosk
August 19	CPC Regular Mtg.	(a) Discuss results of Open House #1 (b) Review progress on visual preference survey
Sept. 16	CPC Regular Mtg.	(a) Discuss results of the visual preference survey (b) Start framing options for Open House #2
TBD	CPC Special Mtg.	Continue work on options.
October 14	CPC Regular Mtg.	Final discussion of options to be presented at Open House #2.
October 29	Open House #2	Obtain feedback that can be incorporated into the options presented to City Council.

FINANCE

- ✓ The Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) asked thousands of its members to send documents for the association's online "Cybrary" which became active recently. It replaces a little-used and outdated fax-on-demand library. Items submitted by members are reviewed for current content, quality, presentable format, practicality, and applicability. Several governmental manuals including the Cedar Rapids' Risk Management Procedures and Operations Manual were selected as models. Cedar Rapids' Risk Management Annual Report is the only model annual report in the "Cybrary".

FIRE / PUBLIC SAFETY / CODE ENFORCEMENT

- ✓ Recreational Vehicle Ordinance - The Code Enforcement Division was planning a citywide canvass for compliance with the recreational vehicle ordinance this spring. The intent of this ordinance was to not allow RVs to be parked in the front plane of a property and to limit the total number of RVs allowed on a property; however a recent legal opinion indicated that the ordinance needs to be clarified and rewritten to accomplish these objectives. Code Enforcement and Development staff met and will present to the City Planning Commission and then the City Council an updated recreational vehicle ordinance with proposed changes. This will allow the Commission to recommend and the Council to decide whether recreational vehicles will be allowed to be parked in front of homes, what period of time they may be parked if allowed, and how many total recreational vehicles can be parked on a property. Visual clearance and other safety issues will continue to be enforced while the recreational vehicle ordinance is clarified.
- ✓ NEAT Teams - Neighborhood Enhancement Action Team (NEAT) initiatives have begun in seven neighborhoods throughout the City. Code enforcement staff, along with police department district service officers, inspected homes in several blocks throughout each quadrant of the community. To date, 209 properties have been inspected and 167 (80%) of these homes have building, housing, zoning, and/or nuisance violations that need to be corrected. Many of these violations contribute to blight in a neighborhood, including chipping and peeling paint, as well as trash and debris.

FLEET SERVICES

- ✓ The City currently has 11 units listed on Government Deals .com website for sale and 18 units listed on the Alliant Energy electronic auction site. This brings the total since October 2007 to over 50 units that have been sold, excluding the electric buses. There are another 10-15 currently ear-marked for disposal which will be moving through auctions in the coming weeks.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- ✓ A new service is available to CR residents - online rental listings. Renters and Landlords can utilize this tool to post and view available rentals in Cedar Rapids. The website was custom-coded by Sylvia Shannon, and is maintained by Mark Stokesberry in Housing. For additional details, visit the Housing Department's website.

LIBRARY

- ✓ The African-American Historical Museum has received word that their Big Read grant proposal has been funded for \$20,000. CRPL and other Iowa libraries are partners in this statewide project. The Big Read will focus on Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God. Activities and events will take place next year.
- ✓ Downloadable audio service will begin with a 'soft launch' in May, with a larger promotional effort to soon follow.
- ✓ The May window dressers at the West Side Branch have done a great job. This month features Susanne Boehm's "Camping " and Penny Frischkorn's "Pretty in Pink". If you are out and about near Westdale come take a peek!
- ✓ The next non-fiction book discussion will be Friday Night Lights: A Town, A Team, and a Dream by H.G. Bissinger, May 15th at 2:00pm.

PARKS & RECREATION

- ✓ Steve Krug, Landscape Architect/Construction Supervisor for Parks and Recreation, successfully passed his certification exam for becoming a Certified Playground Safety Inspector.

POLICE

- ✓ Officer Matt Magnuson graduated 160 kids from McKinley Middle School in the GREAT Program which is a 13-week curriculum for 6th graders. The classes are geared towards giving the students tools in which to use to stay out of gangs.
- ✓ The Animal Shelter was closed down due to flooding on Tuesday, Wednesday and reopened on Thursday of last week. Staff was ferried into the shelter by the CRFD to feed, water and clean the animals and their cages.
- ✓ CRPD and Pet's Playhouse teamed up on Saturday, April 26 for a fundraiser for the K-9's and raised just over \$10,000, which will be applied to the purchase of the new dogs in March.

PUBLIC WORKS

- ✓ On May 1st, the right-of-way was cleared for the Edgewood Road SW viaduct project. This milestone will allow for May 20th bids on the next \$2.6 million construction phase.
- ✓ Invitations to just fewer than 1,200 property owners were mailed for Public workshop meetings for those along the Council Street NE, C Avenue NE, Williams Blvd SW, and 33rd Avenue SW improvement projects. The focus will be to receive public feedback on general city-wide benefits, neighborhood benefits, and by-products of the projects that will have negative benefit for both. Feedback will be sought on the fairness of funding options for the City, including special assessments. Lastly, general discussions on the City Council's vision, Key Financial Strategies and how special assessments work will be covered. Three workshops will be held May 10th, May 12th and May 14th. Invitees may attend the one that is the most convenient for them.
- ✓ The City of Cedar Rapids and Anderson-Bogert Consulting Engineers were presented a 2008 Engineering Achievement Award by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Iowa for the 1st Avenue East, from 19th Street to Cottage Grove Intersection Improvement and Sidewalk project. This project was unique because it included a decorative retaining wall placed near an existing high rise condominium building using an innovative soil nail technique. This method minimized disturbance to the adjacent property and mature trees

and allowed the wall to be built starting from the top. In the true spirit of context sensitive design, the Cottage Grove Condo Association selected the final wall fascia and railing type from options provided by the City.

- ✓ The introductory special assessment presentation and subsequent discussion that PW staff and its consultant had with the City Council on April 16th will be repeated for the Developer's Council on May 8th. Area developers have expressed keen interest on any city policy decisions related to special assessments. At the April 16th City Council meeting, Council had asked staff to solicit city-wide feedback, and this group is an important element. On a more broad scope, PW staff is also working with an engineering firm that also specializes in opinion polling to conduct a 4-6 minute Cedar Rapids public opinion poll. Questions will include the positive and negative benefits of types of public infrastructure and development, as well as opinions on financing strategies.
- ✓ In response to the 17.08 feet Cedar River crest on Monday, April 28th, PW maintenance crews set up roughly 110 wells on storm structures, used 12,500 sandbags, made an additional supply of over 10,000 sandbags, and deployed 40 pumps to maintain public safety and ensure the quality of life for the neighborhoods on the river. April was twice the normal rainfall and the year has been over 40% wetter than average.
- ✓ Following the major stage flood, crews engaged in sweeping operations. As of Friday, May 2nd, over 1,400 sweeper loads had been collected which reflects roughly 2,800 to 3,500 tons of debris. This exceeds a normal year's level in the first month of work. The status of the work can be seen on the Street maintenance website.
- ✓ Public Works is requesting feedback and input for improvements for the snow and ice program. Please send suggestions to street@cedar-rapids.org.
- ✓ In preparation for median painting, crews are cleaning and cutting off sod. This is done every three years.
- ✓ Concrete pavement repairs are starting with the first location of 38th St and D Ave NE. This week a railroad crossing removal at Rockwell Dr NE will also be performed.

UPDATES

Current Brownfields redevelopment activities:

- **GRANT AWARDS** - The City has received verification regarding award of both the FY08 HUD Special Purpose Grant (\$147,000) and the FY08 EPA Brownfields Clean-Up grant (\$200,000). These grant funds will be available October 1, 2008 and will be used to continue brownfields clean up and redevelopment.
- **SINCLAIR CLEAN-UP** –
 1. Staff is preparing a Request for Proposals for asbestos removal and demolition of the former boiler buildings on the Sinclair Meatpacking site. These structures are located near the smokestack and are in disrepair. It is anticipated that some of the asbestos removal will be conducted in May – June and will be funded through a \$25,000 grant provided by the IDNR.
 2. Staff is working with IDNR to secure revolving loan funds to assist in Sinclair environmental clean up. A portion of the IDNR funds would be in the form of a grant. These funds are provided to IDNR through an EPA state assistance grant program.
 3. As a result of an RFQ process conducted by staff, HPZS Architect/Engineers/Conservators/Planners (Chicago, Illinois) has been selected to provide architectural and engineering services related to an evaluation of the Sinclair Smokestack. A scope of services and cost will be negotiated with HPZS for City Council approval. HPZS has extensive experience working with historic preservation projects, including many towers and other tall structures. The scope of services will include a detailed structure analysis, historic structure documentation, conservation analysis, and related cost opinions.
- **IOWA IRON WORKS / IOWA STEEL** - In response to a citizen concern, staff contacted the environmental consultant for the Iowa Iron Works and Iowa Steel sites, H. R. Green Company, to determine the appropriate level of environmental testing for City-owned properties within the Oak Hill Neighborhood Revitalization (HAND) Area. Based on the proximity to the former industrial properties, H. R. Green staff indicated that proper due diligence would include conducting soil sample tests to determine if there is an elevated level of lead in the soils. This work will be conducted and funded (\$14,000) as part of the existing contract with the consultant for Iowa Iron Works/Iowa Steel clean-up activities that is funded solely through tax increment revenues.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' CALENDAR

*(Not all meetings are noted. The calendar is **not** an official posting.)*

Monday, May 5	9:30am	Joint City/County meeting, <i>(Linn County Board Room)</i>
Wednesday, May 7	9:00am	Community Transportation Forum, <i>(Mercy Medical Center, Hallagan Education Center)</i>
	4:00pm	Boards and Commissions interviews, <i>(Council Chambers)</i>
	6:00pm	Council Work Session, <i>(Council Chambers)</i>
Thursday, May 8	4:00pm	Riverfront Park Masterplan RFQ Interview, <i>(Council Chambers)</i>
	7:00pm	Noelridge Neighborhood Association meeting, <i>(Noelridge Park Church, 1147 Clifton St. NE)</i>
Saturday, May 10	10:00am	Mound View Neighborhood Association meeting, <i>(Central Park Presbyterian Church, 1700 B Avenue NE)</i>