



STATUS & INFORMATION REPORT

WEEK OF DECEMBER 15, 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.

CITY MANAGER

- This will be the final S & I Report of the year. The next S & I will be sent Monday, January 5, 2009.
- **Governor to visit on Dec. 23** - Governor Chet Culver will be visiting Cedar Rapids December 23rd, to recognize the community's progress over the past six months and offer support for the work that is still ahead. The Governor will attend a special event at St. Wenceslaus Church at noon that is open to the public.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Jumpstart** - As of December 12th 1,561 applicants have received their first one-on-one consultation with housing advocates for the Jumpstart Program. Of those applicants that have received an initial consultation, 76 individuals were denied, as they did not meet the criteria for an eligible applicant. These individuals were referred to the Linn Area Long Term Recovery Coalition for assistance. Approximately 660 applicants have received a second consultation, 532 of which have been awarded funds for rehabilitation, down payment, or interim mortgage assistance. Of the 532 applicants:
 - 393 have been awarded rehabilitation assistance valued at \$7,825,551.
 - 53 have been awarded down payment assistance valued at \$1,711,528.
 - 16 have been awarded interim mortgage assistance for a total of \$20,722.
 - 70 have been awarded both down payment assistance and interim mortgage assistance, valued at \$720,499.Approximately 1,200 inspections have been completed. Individuals that have not yet received a second consultation will be contacted by a Jumpstart housing advocate within the week to discuss their upcoming appointment.

The Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce continues to administer the Jumpstart Business Assistance program. As of December 15th, over \$5.5 million has been distributed, with an additional \$3.1 million to be distributed this week.
- **Community Development** - City Planning Commission held a regular meeting December 9th to review land development applications. In order to expedite these cases in a timely fashion, staff is scheduling three motions for public hearings on the December 17, 2008 City Council work session. These items will be on the consent agenda and the public hearings will held at the January 14, 2009 City Council formal meeting.
- **FEMA** - Property owners of the 192 parcels eligible for inclusion in the City's application for FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) were mailed information last week that included answers to frequently asked questions about voluntary acquisitions and a phone number to call and schedule a one-on-one consultation. Staff is currently working to locate property owners that did not receive the mailing. The consultations began December 13th and will continue throughout the week of December 15th. The City contracted the professional services of JCG Land Services, Inc. through a Request for Qualifications process, to conduct the consultations. JCG is providing trained and experienced staff trained in property acquisition to explain the program and sign up property owners for the HMGP application, due January 30, 2009.

- **Sherman Associates** - Sherman Associates conducted a public meeting December 11th at Madison Elementary School to discuss the proposed development commonly referred to as the “Chipping Green”. The proposed development, located on a parcel of land within Ellis Park, includes a mix of housing types with 40 apartment units and 25 town-homes. Approximately 40 people from the general public attended. George Sherman presented the proposal including:
 - How the proposed site was chosen.
 - How Sherman Associates became involved in potential residential development in Cedar Rapids.
 - The design elements of the proposed housing and site.
 - That the housing proposed will be for people with jobs and not subsidized rentals.

- **Neighborhood Planning** - Staff will be hosting three focus groups December 15 and 16 at City Hall to be used to collect information for the Neighborhood Planning Process. Participants will take a visual preference survey and be asked questions about neighborhoods and quality of life issues.

- The City is seeking applicants for the Neighborhood Planning Process Steering Committee. Typically, a community commits to doing 1 neighborhood plan over 6 to 12 months. The City of Cedar Rapids has committed to doing plans for 7 neighborhoods over the next 5-6 months. To make sure the goals and objectives of this planning process are met, the City Council has created a Steering Committee to provide oversight of the process. Applicants will be interviewed December 28 or December 30.

- **Facilitation Training** - The City will provide facilitation training for additional staff, Council members, and neighborhood leaders January 5 and 6. The participants will learn the Institute of Cultural Affairs' ToPs facilitation methods. The training will be from 8:00am to 4:30pm at the Baymont Inn on Park Place NE. This training is in preparation for the upcoming Neighborhood Planning Process, in which staff and community leaders will participate in several workshops and small group discussions. For additional information, contact Brad Larson at 286-5076 or b.larson@cedar-rapids.org.

- **Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance** - Staff and Peggy Whitworth met with Rod Scott, President of the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance (IHPA). The IHPA is a non-profit organization with the goal of promoting historic preservation in Iowa. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify IHPA’s role in assisting with recovery efforts. Rod Scott made the IHPA available for educational efforts for residents with historic buildings.

- **Housing** - Staff is arranging a walking/motor tour for Shannon Meyer, the new CEO, for the Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce. The tour is to include stops at downtown housing projects, a visit of a downtown building (US Bank Building), neighborhoods, and surrounding sites, including educational centers, etc.

- Housing Services received 4 applications for the HOME Investment Partnership Program and 27 applications for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program following solicitation of funding proposals. Of the CDBG requests, 3 requested funding for Planning & Administration, 14 requested funding for public service activities, and 10 requested funding for facility improvement or housing rehabilitation activities. Staff will review all applications for threshold eligibility and the Grants & Programs Citizens Advisory Committee will convene in January to begin the funding recommendation process.

- Since the beginning of December, the Assisted Housing Program has been conducting voucher briefings at Westdale Mall. At these briefings, families are issued a Housing Choice Voucher, the document that permits the family to look for an eligible unit. These families represent applications that were pulled from the waiting list prior to the flood event. Upon approval of the unit, a monthly housing assistance payment can be provided to the landlord for the participating family, as long as they remain eligible.

- **Code Enforcement** - Dan Garrick, Construction Coordinator for the Linn Area Long Term Recovery Coalition, will hold a workshop on sealing homes for winter December 18 at 8:00am. The workshop will be held at the Community Recovery Center, 220 6th Street NW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

- Staff continues to process record numbers of building and trade permits. From June 1 to November 30 2007, the Code Enforcement Division (CED) issued 3,428 building permits and 7,155 total permits. Over the same time period this year, CED issued 4,658 building permits and 12,335 total permits, a more than 70% increase over 2007.
- **Corridor MPO** - Corridor MPO sent out applications to its member jurisdictions for Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds for road, trail, and transit projects for Fiscal Year 2013. The Corridor MPO typically programs \$2.5 to \$3 million dollars in STP funds annually, which in the past, have been used on improvement projects such as Mt. Vernon Road, Blairs Ferry Road, 1st Avenue E, and the 33rd Avenue SW viaducts. \$230,000 in TE funds are typically programmed annually on trail projects such as portions of the Cedar River Trail, Cedar Valley Trail, and the Marion Trail. Project submittals are due February 13.
- The Corridor MPO Board has directed staff to draft an agreement with the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA) to conduct an Organization Development Workshop in late January. ICA will begin collecting background information over the month of December, including meetings with staff, interviews with Board Members, and potentially discussions with major stakeholders. The workshop is targeted for mid- to late-January. The outcomes of the workshop will be a clear mission statement and specific goals to guide planning and funding decisions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Telephone Etiquette** – Telephone conversations should follow the same business etiquette guidelines as face-to-face meetings, and often carry just as much importance. Following basic guidelines for phone etiquette helps to make the experience pleasant and productive for all those involved, and could be the deciding factor in creating a positive experience for customers, clients and fellow staff members. Distractions are all around, therefore it easy to forget simple principles. Your personal service reputation as well as the reputation of the City of Cedar Rapids will depend on how well calls are handled. Placing callers on hold too long, not knowing how to effectively transfer calls, responding inappropriately to angry callers, and failing to actively listen can impact how customers perceive this organization.
- **Health Plan changes** - A new Iowa law went into effect on July 1, 2008 that requires group health plans to continue coverage for dependents who were on the employee's plan as of June 30, 2008 and who meet the following eligibility criteria: 1) Are unmarried; 2) Residents of the State of Iowa; 3) Are under age 25 or remain a full-time student (regardless of age)
Important tax information with this new law - If the child no longer meets the IRS definition of "dependent" and the employee continues coverage for the child under Iowa's new law, then the child's health and dental insurance premiums become a taxable benefit to the employee. This benefit will result in taxable income to the employee and will be reflected on the employee's W-2 form. Employees electing to continue coverage for a child who no longer meets the IRS definition of "dependent" are advised to consult their tax advisor as to the implications of this law change. Contact Dixie Harland, 286-5112 or Bonnie Pisarik, 286-5078 if you have questions.

LIBRARY

- **Music Together** – Teri Stuckey from the Cedar Rapids Symphony School will present a Music Together program at the 10:30am preschool story time December 17th at the Public Library at Westdale Mall. *Music Together* is an internationally recognized early childhood music program for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, and the adults who love them. First offered to the public in 1987, it pioneered the concept of a research-based, developmentally appropriate early childhood music curriculum that strongly emphasizes and facilitates adult involvement. *Music Together* classes are based on the recognition that all children are musical. All children can learn to sing in tune, keep a beat, and participate with confidence in the music of our culture, provided that their early environment supports such learning.

- **Holiday Music** – The “White Lights” series continues with a performance by guitarist Harold Gray December 20th at 10:30am at the Westdale Mall Community Room.
- **Holiday Hours** – The library will close at 1:00pm on December 24 and will be closed all day December 25.

POLICE

- **CRPD Holiday party** - The CRPD hosted their annual Santa visit for all police employees. The CRPD Auxiliary coordinates the annual Children’s Christmas party along with the Linn County Sheriff’s Department. Santa and a couple elves visit. There are crafts, cookie decorating and pictures with Santa for employee’s children and grandchildren. Photos are taken by Lt. Jerry Potter and given to the families which are paid for by the auxiliary.
- **Shop with a Cop** - The CR Police Protective Association fundraiser took almost 200 kids shopping at Kmart West last week. Each child was able to buy \$100 worth of clothes and toys for Christmas. All children selected are either in Foster Care or affected by the flood.
- **Enforcement** - Officers are initiating neighborhood enforcement in multiple apartment complexes and businesses in which complaints of various problems have been received. Several officers recently worked the speed zone on I-380 at 7th Street NE as part of a traffic project resulting in nine tickets.
- **Promotions** - Seven Officers were recently selected and trained to be Field Training Officers (FTO) for the new recruits. The new FTO’s spent a full day in training.
- **Skywalks** - The skywalks and parkades were monitored last week for skateboarders that have moved indoors to continue their blade work. Officers were monitoring both of these downtown hotspots for kids on wheels.

PUBLIC WORKS

- **Safety Grants Approved** - The Iowa DOT Transportation Commission approved traffic safety grants for three Cedar Rapids projects at the December 9th Commission meeting:
 - An \$85,000 grant for traffic signal improvements at the intersection of Oakland Road & 29th Street N.E.
 - A \$35,000 grant for signing and pavement marking upgrading for 7th Street N.E. between I-380 and 1st Avenue East.
 - A 12,300 grant for the materials to upgrade the Metro (overhead) and ground mount street name signs for the I-380 off ramps and Highway 30. The street name signing upgrade provides higher reflective sign sheeting and increased letter height for improved visibility of the signs.
- **Edgewood Road SW** - The final five hundred foot section of the Edgewood Road detour paving was placed December 11th. This will allow Edgewood Road to reopen late next week completing the road closure necessary to construct the new bridge embankments at the CRANDIC railroad. The eight-inch pavement section is temporary and will remain in service until fall 2009 when the new roadway is scheduled for completion. Paving is normally not placed when freezing temperatures exist due to the potential that a shorter service life will result. City staff will monitor the pavement condition over its temporary service life to determine the types of distress resulting from placement of paving in early winter conditions.
- **Flood Damaged Home Demolition** - Cold weather conditions have stopped work on the flood damaged home demolitions. Work is anticipated to continue when more moderate weather conditions occur. The contractor is local and can quickly begin operations when favorable weather conditions are forecast.
- **Closed Sidewalks** - To reduce the impact on residents in the worst of the flood zone, the city is closing roughly 40 blocks of sidewalks. This means the ordinance requirements will not be enforced for these areas. By Iowa Code, the owner may still be responsible for the removal. To assist with the issue, Emergency Job Program personnel will begin removal of snow or ice from the walks on Tuesday.

- **Safe Routes To School** - On October 1st, the City submitted applications for Safe Routes to School funding for sidewalks. Word was recently received three out of the top five scoring applications state-wide were from those Cedar Rapids submitted. Unfortunately, the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) indicated there is a \$250,000 limit in the amount of funds a single city can receive. Therefore, last week, CR's two top-scoring projects were recommended to the IDOT commissioners for approval at their January 6th meeting. The two sidewalk projects are Buchanan Drive SE from 26th Street to Memorial Drive (south side) for Grant Wood Elementary and 38th Street NE from E Avenue to B Avenue for Kenwood Elementary. The sidewalks will probably be constructed in 2010. We are grateful for the cooperation of the CR Community School District which paid for a staff person who actively participated in the preparation of the grant applications; the school district's employee was critical to the success of our funding requests.
- **Leaf Program** - The last of the leaf routes for a second rotation were completed last week. Over 4,800 tons of leaves were collected this year.
- **Snow Removal** - The City provides snow and ice control in a safe and cost effective manner, weighing environmental impact, safety, budget, equipment, availability of anti-icing, deicing materials, and personnel concerns. Clearance of snow or ice and maintenance of the road system during the winter is primarily to improve travel safety and convenience for local residents, businesses, and visitors. The level of service depends on the different uses of the roads. The first priority is the emergency snow routes and major collector streets. This is done on regular time and the use of over time when necessary. Residential areas are done on regular time unless there is a major storm. For a major storm, the goal is to complete plowing within 12 hours of a major event. Street crews have responded to 5 snow or ice events which totaled 4.7 inches of snow and roughly ¼ inch of ice using 1,200 tons of salt and 800 tons of sand.

PURCHASING

- **Cost savings purchases** - Rebecca Johnson coordinated a citywide purchase of ice melt on September 24, 2008 from JP Gasway Company. Seventeen divisions pre-purchased 131,050 pounds of ice melt for a total cost of \$22,434.30. The price on December 9, 2008 for the same product is \$31,466.25. The city saved \$9,041.95 on this one purchase.
- Sodium Hypochlorite 12% is a chemical used at the Water Pollution Control Facility. The current vendor proposed an increase of over 43% for the renewal period, from \$0.80/gallon to \$1.49/gallon. The decision was made to rebid the contract. In replying to the bid, the current vendor supplied a price of \$1.29/gallon, \$0.20/gallon less than they had proposed for the renewal. That price, however, was not the lowest price. The contract is going to be awarded at \$1.015/gallon. WPC estimates to use 250,000 gallons in calendar year 2009.

Renewal price	\$1.49/gallon x 250,000 gallons	\$372,500
Rebid contract price	\$1.015/gallon x 250,000 gallons	<u>\$253,750</u>
Savings for CY09		\$118,750
- Iowa public procurement professionals have formed the Iowa Public Procurement Association (IPPA), the 76th chapter of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP). The chartering ceremony, in conjunction with a full day of learning and networking opportunities for Iowa public procurement professionals, was held November 19th at the Wallace State Office Building Auditorium, 502 East 9th Street, Des Moines, Iowa. Judy Lehman was elected Vice President of the chapter.

TREASURY

- **Parking** - Demand for parking in the downtown area remains strong as businesses reopen. In addition, the construction workers rebuilding businesses creates even more demand than usual. APAC has indicated that they plan to hire up to 400 additional employees in the next few months. Treasury is working with APAC representatives to register and assign parkers.

- **Legislative** - The Governmental Legislative group, comprised of representatives from Linn County, the City, and the Cedar Rapids Area Chamber, continues to meet at least once per week. Council member Shields serves as the intergovernmental liaison for the Council. Ann Poe, the Governor's appointee for Long-term Community Recovery, is heavily involved in these meetings. The committee is charged with forming political strategy and communicating with state and federal legislators on the needs of the community. Recently, members collected information from the city, county, human services, housing, schools, cultural community, medical facilities, labor, faith-based community and others to create a comprehensive list of financial losses and the related unmet needs. Members have worked with the League of Cities and the nine largest cities (Metropolitan Coalition) to create legislative priorities in the wake of Iowa's largest disaster.
- On the federal front, the City had its lobbyists in for two days recently to meet with numerous groups. Mary Langowski, from the Sonnenshein firm, and her colleague Mary Pat Lawrence listened to the needs of various groups and offered recommendations on ways to secure funding or frame the message for the community's needs. They have asked the city to provide a list of infrastructure projects that are 'shovel ready' to be included in Governor Culver's list of projects for the State. This list will then be sent to the federal government to be considered for funding through the Infrastructure Economic Stimulus bill proposed by president-elect Obama. E-mails were sent to each city director asking for their submissions and are due no later than December 16th. Also, project information related to the annual federal appropriations process, need to be submitted by December 17th. An e-mail was sent to the directors, with a white paper template attached, for preparation of the project submittals. These will be reviewed by the city council and prioritized prior to submission.

WATER

- **Penn Avenue transmission main restored to service** - The 24-inch Penn Avenue line which carries water from the J Ave Plant westward across the river was returned to service December 4th. This line failed in February 2007 under the secondary channel of the river near the East well field. The project needs were assessed and design work conducted with HDR Engineering in 2007 and the project bid late that year. Judds Brothers Construction and King Contracting of Lincoln, Nebraska mobilized last March and April, but were interrupted in their work by high river levels in the Spring and ultimately by the June flood. In September through November they bored a new casing and piping under the secondary channel to the river island and connected to a pipe previously bored under the main channel in the mid-1990's.
- **Major work at the Water Plants continues** - Miron Construction continues work on the \$35.1 million disinfection improvements project at the J Avenue and Northwest water treatment plants. Construction began in August 2007. Much of the initial work at the J Ave plant involved relocating existing utilities to make room for the proposed structures and connecting piping. After existing utilities were relocated, an earth retention system was constructed to allow for close quarter excavation of deep structures. The depth of the excavation is approximately 35 feet below grade, and 12 feet below the foundation of the adjacent tanks. Since sections of the existing plant were constructed in 1929, special precautions were taken to minimize potential damage to the existing structure. The earth retention system that was constructed includes a visible retaining wall that forms a safety barrier between the new structures and J Avenue traffic. While other Contractors were working on utility relocations and the earth retention structures, a new electrical loop was installed that circles the J Avenue Plant campus. The loop will provide the plant with greater electric power reliability. At the same time work is being conducted at the J Avenue site, the same team of Contractors was constructing a new UV building at the NW Treatment Plant. It will house 4 ultraviolet light disinfection reactors and related equipment. At this time the building shell is essentially complete and weather tight. The Contractors will be installing the reactors, and other mechanical and electrical equipment, over the next 2-3 months. The Contractor will be concentrating on constructing below grade reinforced concrete structures, including a Pumping Station, a Contact Basin/Storage Reservoir, and a UV Reactor Building at the J Avenue Plant. Above ground Masonry work is tentatively scheduled to begin next spring. To date, the Contractor has placed about 7,500 cubic yards of concrete at the J Avenue Plant, with about 7,000 cubic yards to go. Overall, the project is approximately 51% complete.

- **SOLID WASTE** - The flood debris contract has ended for the year due to the onset of winter and little volume being set out in neighborhoods. Individuals who will be cleaning out or gutting houses in the flood affected areas during the next few months must call Solid Waste and Recycling division to coordinate. A “first letter” has been issued to businesses which had an accumulation of flood debris in front of their businesses, informing them that the City would not collect the flood debris from their business at City expense. Some of the businesses have removed their debris. A second round of letters will be mailed this week to those businesses that have not removed their debris to date asking them to please have it removed by the second week in January. Businesses who do not remove their flood debris by that time will be issued with a nuisance abatement notice and SWM will follow our nuisance abatement procedures.

UPDATES

Liquor Store – In response to the many inquiries regarding the liquor store across from HyVee on First Ave SE continuing to sell liquor after Council repealed its license last month, PD reports, “They were initially issued the license and then it was revoked. They can continue to sell alcohol until their appeal is heard by the State. The date of the hearing is January 21.”

Recovery & Reinvestment Coordinating Team Marked Six Month Anniversary of Flood – Members of the Cedar Rapids Recovery & Reinvestment Coordinating Team (RRCT) marked the six month anniversary of the June flooding disaster on Friday, December 12, 2008. RRCT presented a report that outlined the progress our community has accomplished so far and the recovery work that’s still ahead. You can view the report online at www.cedar-rapids.org. The RRCT includes representatives from the following community organizations: Affordable Housing Network, nonprofit and human service agencies, Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Cedar Rapids Small Business Recovery Group, Cedar Rapids Downtown District, Landlords of Linn County, Cedar Rapids Neighborhood Association, arts and culture community, Cedar Rapids Community School District, Linn County and the City of Cedar Rapids.

COUNCIL MEMBERS’ CALENDAR

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

Monday, December 15	7:00pm	Lincolnway Village Neighborhood Association meeting, <i>(Green Acres Storage, 5315 J Street SW)</i>
Tuesday, December 16	Noon	Brown Bag; Red Light and Speed Enforcement Cameras, <i>(Police Department North Classroom)</i>
	7:00pm	Cedar Valley Neighborhood Association meeting, <i>(2300 Rompot Street SE)</i>
Wednesday, December 17	8:00am	RRCT meeting, <i>(City Hall Conference Room A)</i>
	5:30pm	Council meeting, <i>(Aegon USA Auditorium, 4333 Edgewood Rd)</i>
Thursday, December 18	8:00am	Legislative meeting, <i>(City Hall Conference Room B)</i>
	5:00pm	Budget Session, <i>(Lower Level Classroom)</i>