



STATUS & INFORMATION REPORT

JANUARY 5, 2009

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

- Indian Creek Nature Center Director Rich Patterson wrote to thank all employees for jobs well done this past year. Over the past months Patterson said he witnessed exceptionally good and effective work carried out by many employees of the City of Cedar Rapids.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Neighborhood Planning Process:

- The City will be hosting a Kick-Off Meeting for the Neighborhood Planning Process this Saturday, January 10, 2009. At this meeting Cedar Rapids residents will be able to talk to one another about their goals and desired outcomes of the process. Participants will learn more about the planning process and why the City is using it. They will also discuss sustainability and how it relates to Cedar Rapids. This meeting will be held from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm in the Crowne Plaza Ballroom. Lunch will be provided and free parking will be available at the Five Seasons Parking Ramp.
- Staff held the fifth focus group on December 30 to talk to residents about neighborhoods and quality of life issues. Participants were given a visual preference survey, which asked individuals to rate a series of images, and asked open-ended questions related to neighborhoods and quality of life issues. Nine (9) people attended the event, which was originally scheduled for December 16. Similar to the previous four (4) focus groups, the participants identified walkability and pedestrian orientation as elements of an ideal neighborhood, and unkempt houses and poorly maintained streets as elements of an undesirable neighborhood.
- Of the five (5) focus groups held between October 4 and December 30, seven (7) key themes emerged:
 - **Accessibility, Connectivity, and Walkability** – Neighborhoods are connected to each other and the broader community. These connections include trails, sidewalks, gathering places, schools, community centers, roads, etc. Residents need the ability to walk to and from neighborhoods and community destinations including schools, places of work, homes, shopping, recreation, and transit.
 - **Pedestrian-Orientation** – Throughout the discussions, the need for planning and construction at the pedestrian scale was emphasized. This factor focuses on walkability, vibrant and active places, way-finding signage, and the possibility of pedestrian-only streets, connections to schools and other destinations, and a community that encourages pedestrian activity.
 - **Mature and Integrated Environment** – This component focuses on well-planned, open spaces and increasing the number of mature and protected trees throughout Cedar Rapids.
 - **Diversity** – The number of choices available to residents was a driving concern, including diversity of quality design, mix of land uses within neighborhoods and subdivisions, recreational facilities, concentrated specialty stores, and more. Residents have a strong desire for locally-owned, conveniently accessible businesses.
 - **Neighborhood Character** – Homes and businesses are in keeping with the existing architecture, incorporate similar elements, or have been rehabilitated.
 - **Appropriate Housing Options** – These affected neighborhoods will need to create new places for residents to live. However, there is strong concern that new housing units be appropriate in size and scale to the neighborhoods they locate in. In some neighborhoods, mid- to high-rise housing units may be appropriate. In others, single-family, townhome, and/or duplex units may be the most appropriate.

- **Sound Governance** – The groups noted the important role played by government in producing quality development. These items focus on public engagement, regular and open communication, and appropriate and fair regulations that produce quality development.

Task Force Updates:

- The Infill and Environmentally Sensitive Areas Task Forces will present their final reports and recommendations to City Council at a Brown Bag session on Thursday, January 8. Each task force will provide a brief 5-10 minute presentation to allow for adequate discussion from Council. The task forces have been meeting regularly since April 2008.
- The Replacement Housing Task Force (RHTF) participated in a staff-facilitated workshop on December 16th. The purpose of the workshop was to have RHTF members reflect on their work since being formed in September. The task force requested several items to improve their decision making process moving forward, including consistent application format, issues matrix / scorecard, feedback on the neighborhood planning process, big-picture flow chart on housing recovery activities, and mechanism for communicating with Council.

Housing Services:

- Staff has conducted 66 Visual Risk Assessments (VRAs) to date of flooded properties seeking Jumpstart assistance. VRAs are conducted to assess the risk levels of lead associated with the structure. All Jumpstart inspectors are now qualified to conduct VRAs and staff assistance will taper off.
- Sixty (60) contractors participated in Lead Safe Work Practices training December 11. Typical attendance is around ten students. Trainings are held monthly and taught by City and Linn County Public Health staff. The majority of participants were contractors involved with Jumpstart. The next training is scheduled for January 15. A representative from the Jumpstart program will be available to address questions about the program and how it affects contractors.

Code Enforcement Division:

- Beginning today, January 5, Code Enforcement Division (CED) staff will be moving back to the Public Works building located at 1201 6th St. SW. The return to Public Works will substantially improve IT capabilities and consequently improved customer service. As of January 6, all CED staff will be operating from the Public Works location.

Corridor MPO:

- The Corridor MPO will be conducting an Organizational Development Workshop in late January. The purpose of the event will be to generate a Mission Statement and develop organizational goals. This is the first step in the Corridor MPO's update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP is the guiding transportation document for the entire metropolitan area. More information about the LRTP is available at <http://www.corridormpo.com/publications.asp>.

FIRE

- Cedar Rapids Firefighters participated in the "Be a Senior to a Santa" program for the third year. Firefighters delivered presents to 77 homes and also checked to make sure the seniors had working smoke alarms. They changed batteries and in some cases installed new smoke alarms if the alarms were older than 10 years. "Be a Santa to a Senior" is a program of *Home Instead Senior Care*.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Employees have an opportunity to take advantage of the annual Principal Wellness screenings. Screening dates are January 21 through March 3, 2009. All regular full-time and part-time employees are eligible to participate. Don't miss out on the chance to win \$100 and get your health insurance premium paid for one month. Look for a flyer posted within your department and sign-up information sent to your home.
- The Wellness Ambassador group has been instrumental in working on a Request for Proposal from local fitness centers. This is an opportunity for local fitness centers to propose their best pricing for their services. The goal is to offer more fitness services at a more reasonable price and to make it available to all City employees and their families.

LIBRARY

- Special Story Times -- Cedar Rapids Public Library and the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art are teaming up to provide special story times throughout the exhibit "Mary GrandPre – Harry Potter and Beyond" that will be showing through February 1, 2009. Story times will occur at 10:30 a.m. on the first, third and fifth Fridays of the month.
- Learning Safari -- Martin's Big Dream, a program for preschool children, will be held on Thursday, January 8, 2009, at the Cedar Rapids Public Library in Westdale Mall. Erin Thomas, Education Director at the African American Museum of Iowa, will present the free 40 minute program at 10:30 am. Learning Safari programs are held at the Cedar Rapids Public Library located in Westdale Mall on the second Thursday of each month. Other Learning Safari programs are held at the Hiawatha Public Library on the first Friday of each month and at the African American Museum of Iowa on the second Wednesday of each month. All programs are free and open to the public.
- Bridge Library -- Work on the "Bridge Library" at Westdale Mall is progressing, utilizing the talents of staff to drywall, paint, and undertake other preparatory activities. The grand opening is scheduled for Friday, February 13 and celebratory events will be held all weekend.

PARKS & RECREATION

- Twin Pines Clubhouse will remain open for season pass and merchandise sales in January and February. Hours are Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5 pm. Any inquiries call the clubhouse at 286-5583.
- Jones Clubhouse renovations are slated for this winter. The selected architectural firm is Solum/Lang of Cedar Rapids, chosen in a conference meeting between city staff members Judy Lehman, Rob Davis and Lisa Miller. A preliminary meeting between Brad Lang, Rob Davis, John Levy and Lisa Miller will be held Jan. 9th at the Jones Golf Course Clubhouse.

POLICE

- ID Investigator Rod Schifflett spent an exciting week in Kansas City, MO to prepare for an IAI Latent Print Certification.
- Officers have increased their active patrolling in certain areas of town in which our Crime Analysis Unit had shown to have an increased crime activity. Because of this targeted patrolling, officers caused a 75% decrease of theft from vehicles from previous years in the Lindale Mall area; a 200% decrease in burglaries over previous years in a SE neighborhood; only 1 burglary to a strip mall business compared to 41 as a high in 2001 and a 72% decrease in thefts from vehicles in the Westdale Mall business area. Hats off to our CAU and patrol units for this decrease.
- The Cedar Rapids Police Department began taking applications online for police officers. This will be the first time applications are available online. The hiring process is quite lengthy and intensive to be able to hire the quality of officers the City needs. The anticipated start for the academy is July 6.
- The Department is continuing to check parking violations in the down town area. On Dec. 26 alone, there were 35 parking citations distributed in the downtown area due to simple parking violations.
- There have been 825 reports filed with the CRPD since December 13. Of these there were 55 Burglaries, 71 criminal mischief, 44 theft from vehicles, 45 assaults, 31 domestic abuse, 34 narcotic related arrests, 6 robberies and 10 theft of vehicles.
- We are again seeing an increase in thefts of purses in the downtown area. Purses are being taken from desks, closets and unlocked lockers. The thefts are occurring in businesses and even churches.

PUBLIC WORKS

- Collins Road NE Public Hearing - Iowa Department of Transportation will hold a design public hearing for improvements along Collins Road from east of 1st Avenue to Center Point Road NE on January 20, 2009. It will be an open house with no formal presentation from 5pm to 7pm at the Harding Middle School cafeteria at 4801

Golf Street NE in Cedar Rapids. The improvement drawings to be presented are conceptual in nature and part of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process that must be completed before detailed design can start. Questions can be referred to Cathy Cutler, Iowa DOT District 6 Planner, at the Iowa DOT Office at 430 16th Avenue SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404 or 319-364-0235.

- Trees Please Grant - A \$20,000 grant from MidAmerican has been announced for the City to purchase trees during 2009. This is a matching program in which the City will match the Mid American funds for trees to be planted in common areas such as parks, trails and right-of-ways. The grant is expected to be received in March 2009.
- Closed Sidewalks - To reduce the impact on property owners in the worst of the flood zone areas, the city closed 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 have begun removal of snow or ice from the walks in the Time Check area and will start in the Czech Village area this week.
- Snow Removal - The snow and ice season is at a high pace again this year. Crews have responded to 12 events of which 4 included ice. 15 to 20 events are expected in a normal season with 2 or 3 ice events. At the end of December the city has received 17.2 inches of snow compared to 21.2 inches last year. Average annual snowfall at the end of December is 10.4 inches. Over 4,500 tons of salt and 4,000 tons of sand have been used so far this year.
- Helping Hands for Sidewalk Snow Removal - The Helping Hands Program continues to add people, companies or organizations to the list. The list has grown to roughly four dozen. If you are interested, please send to Street@cedar-rapids.org or call 286-5802 with the following information: a) name, b) phone number, c) part of the city for the service, d) type of service provided.
- Sanitary sewer stoppages at record low - The program had only 14 non rain/flood induced stoppages in 2008. On a national basis, a system our size would have an expected average of 140 stoppages per year. The results show the outcomes of the aggressive preventive maintenance program, televising program and capital improvement projects. The numbers were 110 to 120 just five years ago. To keep the program on track, a targeted cleaning and televising of the flood zone has been started. Only two of the stoppages have been from flood debris or broken pipes. As businesses and residents return, additional monitoring will be performed. Debris being flushed/washed into the sewer system will be a significant challenge in 2009.
- Pushing snow onto right-of-ways – Snow can only be placed in the right-of-way of the abutting property of its origin. It is against city code to push, blow, or move snow onto other properties. When a non-compliance case is identified, a letter is sent to the property. If the issue continues, the snow may be removed by city crews at the properties owner's expense.
- Recent thaw causes pot holes - The warmer temperatures of December 27th caused enough freeze thaw cycles to start the winter pothole repair work. Crews have used over 5 tons of patch material to repair them in the last week. To report a pot hole, please call Public Works at 286-5802 or email street@cedar-rapids.org.

DEPARTMENTAL CHANGES

December brought several staffing changes to the City. Please take a moment to congratulate our coworkers who received promotions in the past month.

- Cindy Potter, Construction Contract Coordinator Engineering
- Reuben Schloeman, Web Developer II Information Technology
- Mike Feuerbach, Housing Chief Inspector Code Enforcement
- Keith Nuehring, Operation Manager IT
- Marty Hoeger, Real Estate Development Coordinator Community Development
- Phillip Cronbaugh, Collection System Maintenance Worker II Sewer Department

Please welcome the following new team members for the month of December:

- Steve Cook, Water Plant Operator, hired 12/1/08
- Jerry LaGrange, WPC Wet End Operations Specialist, hired 12/1/08

- Susan Stannard, Substance Abuse Manager (Library Grants program), hired 12/8/08
- Adam Tenney Part-time Transit Driver, hired 12/8/08
- Stefanie Robinson, Administrative Assistant and Karl Cassell, Executive Director, Civil Rights Department
- Jeffrey Carman, Building Maintenance Worker I, hired 12/8/08
- Mary (Betty) Dale, Hourly Parking Fee Cashier, hired 12/22/08
- Kevin Reed and Jeffrey Dean, WPC Process Operators, hired 12/29/08
- Mark Winkle, Water Plant Operator, hired 12/29/08
- Derek Chaplin, Construction Contract Administrator, hired 12/30/08

Welcome back...

- Zachariah Armstrong rehired in WPC as an Electrician I on 12/29/08
- Marita O'Konek rehired as Police Records Supervisor on 12/1/08

So far the month of January brings...

Congratulations to:

- Scott Seibert on his new position as Assisted Housing Program Supervisor
- Paula Hinzman-Mitchell on her new position as Community Development Program Supervisor
- Gary Petersen on his new position as Capital Improvement Project Manager
- Tracy Conner on his new position as Streets Labor Extra Driver effective 1/5/09

Welcome to:

- Daniel Gibbins, City's Arborist/Landscape Architect, on 1/5/09
- Sandy Pumphrey, Civil Engineer, on 1/19/09
- Michael Lake and Brad Helle, Solid Waste Recycling Laborer Extra Drivers, on 1/5/09
- Kenneth Russell, Water System Engineering Design Manager, on 1/19/09

UPDATES

Jumpstart Update:

As of January 2, 2009 1,648 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, 44 individuals did not qualify for the program, with an additional 40 applicants that qualify but are unable to participate. These individuals were referred to the Linn Area Long Term Recovery Coalition (LTRC) for assistance.

Approximately 949 applicants have received a second consultation, 647 of which have been awarded funds for rehabilitation, down payment, or interim mortgage assistance. Of the 621 applicants:

- 452 have been awarded rehabilitation assistance valued at \$7,615,248.
- 80 have been awarded down payment assistance valued at \$1,855,798.
- 19 have been awarded interim mortgage assistance for a total of \$122,995.
- 96 have been awarded both down payment assistance and interim mortgage assistance, valued at \$1,527,705.

Approximately 1,332 inspections have been completed. Affordable Housing Network Inc., the third-party administrator for the City of Cedar Rapids, expects to have completed all award interviews by the end of January.

As of Monday, December 22 the Cedar Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce had distributed over \$8 Million to the business community. In total, 421 applications were received, 46 of which were denied. Of the 375 total eligible applicants, 255 have received funds. Approximately 34 applicants were awaiting their initial intake, with approximately 40 applicants pending final paperwork.

CDBG Update:

On December 10, 2008, the City Council authorized staff to submit a Community Neighborhood Stabilization Plan to the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) in order to receive up to \$1.2 million in additional CDBG funding to address the effects of foreclosure and abandonment upon neighborhoods. Staff has identified options for implementing a Community Neighborhood Stabilization Program within the range of eligible activities and program

rules, and will present options to City Council at the January 7, 2009 work session. Following Council direction, a Community Neighborhood Stabilization Plan will be submitted to IDEED by January 15, 2009. Awards are expected to be announced by January 31 and funds available by spring of 2009.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' CALENDAR

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

Tuesday, January 6	9:00am	Local Option Sales Tax meeting, (<i>Chamber of Commerce</i>)
	10:00am	Open House for Census Bureau, (<i>The Bridge, 2100-1st Ave NE</i>)
Wednesday, January 7	8:00am	RRCT meeting, (<i>Conference Room A, City Hall</i>)
	5:30pm	Council meeting, (<i>Aegon USA Auditorium, 4333 Edgewood Rd</i>)
Thursday, January 8	8:00am	Legislative Update, (<i>Conference Room B</i>)
	Noon	Brown Bag - Smart Growth Task Forces Presentations, (<i>Lower Level Conference Room, City Hall</i>)
	7:00pm	Noelridge Neighborhood Association meeting, (<i>Noelridge Park Church, 1147 Clifton Street NE</i>)
Saturday, January 10	8:30am	Neighborhood Planning Process, (<i>Crowne Plaza</i>)
	10:00am	Mound View Neighborhood Association meeting, (<i>Central Park Presbyterian Church, 1700 B Avenue NE</i>)