

RIVER CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT PLAN  
Answers to Questions raised at Open House held July 29, 2008

1. How do we get information on the Open Houses and the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan along the process?
  - a. When will flood control options be presented? *Flood management options will be presented at the September 11<sup>th</sup> open house.*
  - b. How is the Downtown Area Plan different from this plan and what will happen to those task forces? *The Downtown Area Plan focused on revitalization and redevelopment of the downtown and resulted in the creation of taskforces to address issues highlighted by the plan. The River Corridor Redevelopment Plan is focused beyond the downtown. The River Corridor Redevelopment Plan has a larger scope of work and focuses on the redevelopment of the City from the flood including increased flood protection, housing, and transportation. The concepts and workplan developed by various task forces under the Downtown Area Plan is now part of the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan.*
  - c. How do I follow the updates for the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan? *Updates will be posted on the City's website at <http://www.cedar-rapids.org/development/riverplan.asp>.*
  - d. Is information from the open house available on-line? *Yes, information from the open house is available at <http://www.cedar-rapids.org/development/riverplan.asp>.*
  - e. Who approves the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan? Will the general public be included in the process of planning the development? *Cedar Rapids' City Council will approve the plan after public feedback is received from the third open house on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The City held the first open house on July 29<sup>th</sup> at three different locations and times and the second open house on September 11<sup>th</sup> at two different times at the Grand Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Five Seasons Hotel.*
  - f. Will the Library Director and theatre director receive this feedback? Are they involved in discussions concerning the city's rebuilding? Why has the African American museum not received coverage or mention in the city plan and or report? *The library director as well as the directors of the African American Historical Museum & Cultural Center of Iowa, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, and Theatre Cedar Rapids were interviewed as part of the development of the plan to understand how they were impacted and what their redevelopment plans are.*
  
2. Am I in the 100 year floodplain? What is the new 100 year flood plain and why is it changing? How are the flood plain boundaries determined and why are some buildings out of it?
  - a. How are the floodplain demarcations determined? *Floodplain boundaries are determined by the estimated encroachment of the 100-year flood on adjacent ground. The amount of flood water, or flow rate is usually determined by the Corps of Engineers. The elevation of the 100-year water surface is based on this flow rate and surveyed cross-sections of the river and adjacent areas. The 100-year floodplain boundary is located where the surface water elevation matches the adjacent ground elevation.*
  - b. How has the floodplain changed in shape? When was the last updated floodplain map? *The preliminary floodplain map revision is estimated to add about 164 residential, 104 commercial, and 10 industrial parcels to the 100-year floodplain. The current Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) are from 1982 and 1991.*
  - c. How can May's Island be out of the 100 year flood plain? *May's Island will be out of the 100-year floodplain in the updated map because its ground elevations are approximately 5 to 6 feet higher than the 100-year flood elevation.*
  - d. How do I find out which floodplain my property is in? *The Building & Zoning Department or Engineering Department can tell you the floodplain that your property is located in.*
  - e. Where can I see a map of FEMA's proposed changes to the floodplains? *A map of the preliminary floodplain map revision can be viewed on the City's website at [http://www.cedar-rapids.org/engineering/fema\\_floodplain.asp](http://www.cedar-rapids.org/engineering/fema_floodplain.asp).*

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3. What is the relationship between building permits and buyouts? Why are some owners getting them? Why are you allowing any redevelopment before you decide what to do next about buyouts and the 1% flood level?
- a. Which houses will be selected for buy-out? Will this include homes in the 500 year floodplain? How do we get considered for buyouts? *Often referred to as the "Buyout Program", the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is provided through federal and state agencies after a major disaster event to fund activities during the recovery phase. The purpose is to reduce the loss of life and property in future disasters regardless of which floodplain the property is located. Anticipated timeline is as follows:*  
**September, 2008** – *The City will submit a Notice of Interest to the State Hazard Mitigation Officer on September 12, 2008 that includes a listing of all interested property owners to provide State and Federal agencies with an estimate of potential acquisition costs. Properties can be added and removed from the City's final application.*  
**October, 2008** – *The State will review the Notices of Interest from across the State and invite eligible communities to formally apply for the HMGP.*  
**October to December, 2008** – *The City will work with the State and Federal agencies on a final application that balances the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan and the mitigation priorities of the State and Federal funding sources.*  
**December, 2008** – *According to State officials, the formal application will likely be due in December of 2008.*  
**April to June, 2009** – *State and Federal agencies will review the formal applications and announce funding.*
  - b. Why are building permits issued in the floodplain? *The City of Cedar Rapids adopted a Floodplain Management Ordinance in 1987. Property owners have a right to develop their respective properties in keeping with all applicable codes or ordinances much like the Building Codes and Fire Codes. Building permits are issued within the floodplain if the property owner has met the requirements of the Floodplain Management Ordinance.*
  - c. Are you clearing houses in groups or one by one? Are the homes on my block marked for demolition? *The only structures scheduled for demolition by the City are those with a Purple Placard. These structures have been determined to be an immediate threat to public health, safety, or welfare. The City is in the process of securing a qualified contractor to perform the demolition and removal. The City Council does not have a plan or dedicated funds for the demolition of additional structures at this time.*
4. Describe the process for flood mitigation over the next 1-2 year time frame – understanding that the decision about which flood mitigation strategy (or set of strategies) has not been determined.
- a. As a business that intends to locate back downtown - what flood mitigation steps will take place within the 1 to 2 year time and to alleviate the fear of loss of property and disruption of business in the short term? What longer term mitigation will occur to prevent flooding of business property in the downtown for the long term? *The City Council will utilize the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan and public feedback of that plan to determine the flood management strategy or strategies that will be used to protect the city in the short and long term.*
  - b. Possible timeline of recovery and status reports? *Citizens should watch the website for news releases and copies of the newsletter.*
  - c. What is the plan for the Time Check / NW Neighborhood? *Reinvestment in the Northwest Neighborhood will be determined by City Council after receiving feedback from the citizens and formal adoption of the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan.*

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5. How is the City dealing with abandoned properties and where should I go if I want to abandon mine?
  - a. Is there or will there be a process in which properties that have been abandoned due to flooding are dealt with by the city? *Given the magnitude of the disaster and the need to secure homes, the best option is for property owners to board up the property. This will keep the building secure and allow the property owner the needed time to continue to evaluate their future use of the property. Property owners should make sure that utilities, such as water service, are disconnected to prevent further damage to the property over the cold season. Ultimately, it will be necessary for property owners to make a decision to repair, rebuild, relocate or demolish the dwellings. The property owners that are moving forward want to have viable neighborhoods. The City is asking citizens to continue to maintain the property as best that they can.*
  
6. What are the sources of funding, and what are you doing to secure FEMA funds for the City residents?
  - a. Will homeowners get tax breaks? What will this cost taxpayers? How will funds be raised? How long and how much will flood protection and redevelopment cost? Will there be any type of assistance for senior citizens who have their homes paid off? *To be determined by City and State policy makers.*
  
7. What is the City's current flood warning system and what happened the day of the flood? Why didn't we know how high the crest will be, or why was that information not communicated to the public?
  - a. Why did we not know sooner that the river would crest so high? *The City relies on the National Weather Service for flood forecasts, as do most all other cities in the United States. Flood forecast information is made available to the City and to the public at the same time. The National Weather Service uses data from the US Geological Survey flood gauging stations and also uses data on rainfall throughout the watershed, in addition to a sophisticated computer model that uses the combination of saturated ground conditions, precipitation forecasts and the computer conveyance model of the river itself to forecast flood heights.*  
  
*The National Weather Service forecasting information has been reliable in the past, but for this record flood event conditions surpassed all the previous data in the model. Forecasts took longer to extrapolate due to the loss of gauging data stations at Vinton and Cedar Rapids and the results were not as accurate as previous flood event forecasts. The Cedar Rapids flood volumes were greater than Waterloo due to significant rainfall occurring at Waterloo and south of Waterloo as the flood crest moved towards Cedar Rapids.*
  
8. Garbage Pickup – Clear up misunderstanding
  - a. When will the city stop picking up flood debris/construction debris? *The City will continue to provide residential flood-related debris removal in flood-impacted areas for the next several weeks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will suspend collection and disposal of appliances, electronics, and household waste on August 1, 2008. However, the City will continue to collect and transport these materials from flood-impacted residential areas to the Cedar Rapids/Linn County Solid Waste Agency for disposal after that date. Currently, the City is partnering with a contractor to help remove the large amounts of residential flood-related debris. The contract with the contractor is currently in its third extension of 14 days and at some point, based on volume, either the contractor or the City will decide not to exercise a renewal, which will reduce the resources available for debris removal. It is in everyone's benefit to utilize the debris removal services of the contractor and the EPA while these additional resources are available. If you own property in the flood-damaged area of the City, we encourage you to place all flood-related debris at the curb as soon as possible.*

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9. Are there any special assistance programs for rental property owners? For the elderly?
- a. Will renter of businesses in the 500 Year Flood Plains be required to buy flood insurance after the floodplain changes? *The City has always encouraged property owners to purchase flood insurance to protect from flash flooding or flooding from streams and other Cedar River tributaries.*
  - b. What types of assistance is there for rental property owners? *Rental property owners should contact the Small Business Association's (SBA) Disaster Assistance office at 1-800-651-2955.*

10. There are many residents who wish to help but don't know where to go – please direct us
- a. Where can items in good condition be donated to help families? *Call the East Central Iowa Volunteer Reception Center at (319) 540-4810, Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 6 pm to volunteer. The Volunteer Reception Center is a joint effort between United Way of East Central Iowa, the Community Corrections Improvement Association, and Americorps/VISTA. The Center has many opportunities for volunteers throughout the community and provides training, tools, and resources.*

*Individuals should contact faith-based groups in their area to offer donated materials. Limited space to store, sort, and offer materials to the public often limit organizations from being able to accept donations on a continual basis. Opportunities to meet specific needs and requests (such as cleaning supplies) are regularly published on [www.corridorrecovery.org](http://www.corridorrecovery.org).*

11. Are housing decisions already being made? By whom? Why were they chosen? What is their role? and how can I be included?
- a. Have any developers made proposals for replacement housing? What types of housing are being considered? What are the price points of the housing being considered? Where is the pre-flood housing study? Will there be any new downtown housing? Where is the replacement housing going to be located? *The City has a Replacement Housing Taskforce of seven community members lead by Affordable Housing Network Director Jim Ernst that reports to the City Council. The taskforce will do the following: evaluate and prioritize proposed housing developments for public participation and make recommendations to the City Council for approval of various funding resources; help develop a long-term Recovery Housing Strategy; and address the financing gap and housing needs based on the City's goal and vision. The taskforce will use the following criteria: attainable, workforce housing near employment centers; neighborhood restoration that incorporates a sense of place, connectivity, and walkability; and quality, sustainable development practices that provide residents with options for housing, transportation, and recreation.*

12. Specific Questions

- a. Why did the placard colors of some properties change? *In response to the damage created by the flood, the City of Cedar Rapids performed preliminary structural inspections of all 7000+ properties affected by the flood. This service was provided as a way to help ensure the safety of the property owner and provide some basic knowledge of the integrity of the building. One of four colored placards with instructions was placed on each residence. The placard colors changed after the initial inspection for a few reasons:*
  - *The inspector may have been unable to completely assess the damage to the structure and placed the placard using the best information he or she had available at the time. Upon returning to their properties many owners requested a re-inspection and provided the inspectors with a more complete access to the building which allowed for a better*

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*damage assessment. This new information may have created a need to change the placard.*

- *Many property owners retained the services of a licensed contractor after returning to their properties. The contractor performed structural work to improve the integrity of the property and upon re-inspection these improvements may have caused a need to change the placard.*
  - *After the water receded many of the property conditions continued to degrade. Due to weather, exterior foundation forces, or simply neglect many structures degraded to a point that a new placard was needed to reflect the condition of the structure.*
- b. *What is going on with the old Wilson Plant? The former Wilson facility, now known as the Sinclair Meatpacking Plant, was heavily impacted by the June flooding. Current status and activities:*
- i. *All of the Sinclair tenants have moved out from the facility*
  - ii. *Demolition of dangerous buildings started prior to the flood is being completed. Additional structures, including the smokestack, were damaged by the flooding and will be evaluated for demolition*
  - iii. *Assessment of the remaining buildings and restoration cost estimates will be completed within 4 to 6 months*
  - iv. *The City is consulting with the EPA and Iowa DNR regarding additional environmental testing and clean-up*
- Future uses and activities:*
- i. *The River Corridor Redevelopment Plan scheduled for Council adoption in October will include the future use of this area*
  - ii. *The restoration cost and future use reflected in the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan will provide City Council with alternative future uses.*
- c. *Are there going to be vast improvements in Flood Control Management? What are the plans for the dike down over 21st Ave SW? The City is investigating the feasibility of a number of structural and non-structural flood management measures for effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages, cost, and timeline to completion. Measures being considered include but are not limited to reservoirs, diversion channels, walls and levees, development policies, and greenspace. A final determination of existing structures will be made when the City has completed its examination of feasible flood management strategies.*
- d. *What will happen to the Ellis Park area? The City Council will utilize the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan and public feedback of that plan to determine the flood management strategy or strategies that will be used to protect the city in the short and long term.*
- e. *In 1993 we had NO water even in our basement. The water level was at 19.3ft. Why are we having to fill our basements now? Homes in the 100-year floodplain that received damage of 50% or greater of the assessed value are required to do one of three things: relocate the home, remove (demolish) the home, or raise the lowest floor level to one foot above the 100-year floodplain. Moving mechanicals such as the furnace and water heater out of the basement and filling it might be one possible way to comply with this city code (adopted in 1987), which allows for residents to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program.*
- f. *Security in flood impacted areas question? Beginning early in the emergency council enacted a curfew from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am for the flood affected areas. Primarily the downtown area, Time Check, Czech Village, and all other areas affected by the flood. This curfew has been effective in stopping a challenging individuals who are seen in the areas. Many citations have been issued and because of the curfew other crimes have been detected*

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*and dealt with. Extra patrols supplementing the normal patrol forces have been enacted and specifically directed in the flooded areas. Using the curfew and other laws they have provided a patrol presence to reduce the likelihood of criminal activity in the area. Foot and bike patrols have been put in place based on analysis of crime and specifically targeted to when criminal activity is likely to occur. Existing grant programs have also been used to supplement patrols as appropriate. Beginning shortly after the contractor certification process was begun the police department, in coordination with code enforcement, assisted with issues and certifying contractors who wish to work in Cedar Rapids. The main reason for this was to ensure the contractors are legitimate certified contractors who would provide quality workmanship to the residents to help ensure people would not be victimized while they try to recover.*

13. We need more advice, where should we go?
- a. How do you plan to help/inform housing owners what steps they need to take to move forward in rebuilding? *Citizens should use the following resources: call 211, read the weekly recovery newsletter mailed directly to flood impacted residents, and view [www.corridorrecovery.org](http://www.corridorrecovery.org).*
  - b. Where do I go for a temporary use permit for my business? *To obtain more information or to receive a temporary use permit for my business, please call the Code Enforcement Division at 319-286-5836 or visit the temporary office on the second floor of Westdale Mall.*