

2010 Annual Awards Program
Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Cedar Rapids River Corridor Redevelopment Plan

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Cedar Rapids, IA

Jurisdiction population(s): 128,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: November Year: 2008

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: James Prosser

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Cedar Rapids, IA

Name: Christine Butterfield

Title: Director of Community Development Jurisdiction: Cedar Rapids, IA

Name: Sandi Fowler
Title: Assistant to the City Manager Jurisdiction: Cedar Rapids, IA

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: James Prosser
Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Cedar Rapids, IA
Street address: 3851 River Ridge Drive NE
City: Cedar Rapids State/Province: IA
Zip/Postal Code: 52402 Country: USA
Telephone: (319) 286-5080 Fax: _____
E-mail: J.Prosser@cedar-rapids.org

ICMA Program Excellence Awards: Community Partnership Award

Cedar Rapids River Corridor Redevelopment Plan – Phase One

Problem Assessment

Cedar Rapids crowned 2008 the “Year of the River,” a title meant to reinforce the connection between the City and the Cedar River that runs through its core. This name became even more significant in June 2008 when the worst flood in the Cedar Rapids history inundated neighborhoods along the river and a large part of downtown with a record-breaking 31.5 feet of water. The Cedar River crested 11.5 feet higher than any previous flood, stretching across two miles and engulfing 1,300 city blocks, forcing thousands of evacuations in the downtown and river corridor neighborhoods. When the waters receded, they left \$2.5 billion in damage to Cedar Rapids and Linn County alone, impacting 5,390 Cedar Rapids homes; 310 public facilities including City Hall, the Linn County Courthouse and the City's central fire facility; and more than 900 downtown businesses.

Following the flood, the City and its residents mobilized to complete a River Corridor Redevelopment Plan. This was the first major test for the new form of government which Cedar Rapids adopted in 2006, which put a city manager in place and strengthened the role of the City Council.

Program Implementation and Costs

Phase One of the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan, which began only days after the flood, was a four-month public process to develop a flood management strategy. Lessons learned from other flood communities underscored the need to develop an inclusive community-based process to achieve a supportable flood management plan, with the partnership of technical experts and especially the Army Corps of Engineers.

Guided by a recently adopted City Vision, the City's primary goals included improved flood protection, a neighborhood recovery and reinvestment plan to guide the City to recover better and stronger than before the flood and replace flood-damaged facilities. To achieve this, City leaders engaged more than 2,680 community members at three milestone open houses, garnering feedback on options for flood management and community revitalization. The first open house presented a rigorous analysis of pre-flood community assets, an inventory of flood impacts and sustainable principles for the City's recovery. An interdisciplinary consultant team subsequently worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to test and synthesize community feedback into a series of options for the second open house, and ultimately a preferred alignment for future flood management at the third.

This transparent public process resulted in a River Corridor Redevelopment Plan which outlines a flood management strategy to minimize future risk and improve the City's relationship to the Cedar River. Low-lying properties within the 100-year floodplain are converted into a 220-acre greenway park and levee system, providing public recreational space along the river. Along the edge of the downtown, an innovative removable floodwall system allows visual connections to the river and creates a new civic promenade. The final strategy also identifies non-structural measures, including improvements to evacuation planning, interim flood protection, flood proofing, and flood warning systems, as well as a future initiative to address Cedar River watershed issues.

With an ambitious scope and a need for quick action, cooperation was essential to the development of a viable plan. The planning process was a partnership between community members, multiple City departments, the Cedar Rapids City Council, and numerous agencies ranging from the local to the federal level such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Downtown District, the Chamber of Commerce, and Linn County. The River Corridor Redevelopment Plan efforts were coordinated by the Community Development Department, who engaged a broad

interdisciplinary team, led by Sasaki Associates, to meet the challenge. This team included urban planners and designers, landscape architects, transportation and civil engineers, architects, hydrologists, ecologists, sustainability specialists, market analysts and watershed management experts.

The City Council formally adopted the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan in November of 2008 with the support of the public, allowing the City to move forward with interim planning and acquisitions of houses damaged beyond repair. Its implementation will require roughly \$2.5 billion for flood control measures, neighborhood redevelopment and repair and replacement of city facilities. Most funding will come from federal and state sources including Water Resource grants, FEMA, Small Business Administration, Community Development Block Grants, state disaster grants and economic development programs.

Tangible Results and Outcomes

Since November 2008, the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan has guided ongoing flood recovery initiatives, including:

- A community engagement process – involving more than 1,400 citizens, 5,900 hours of planning time and eight public meetings – to develop a Framework for Neighborhood Reinvestment in the City's nine flood-affected neighborhoods. Collectively, the plans envision a sustainable Cedar Rapids characterized by strong pedestrian, transit and vehicular connections, a network of open spaces, a variety of housing types, diverse economic opportunities, and thriving cultural destinations. An Action Plan was developed to guide redevelopment over the next 10 to 15 years.
- A training program for 75 City staff to promote cross-departmental coordination, communication and leadership, and to outline how to successfully develop relationships with community members.
- Coordination with FEMA and HUD on the acquisition of flood damaged properties. More than 7,000 properties were damaged during the flood, and the City is working with property owners to acquire

roughly 1,400 properties that were damaged beyond repair. The City presently has come to agreement on the acquisition of over 100 properties using FEMA funding and is working with HUD on additional acquisitions.

- Coordination with the State and HUD on the distribution of Community Development Block Grants to assist in reconstructing flood damaged infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, and utility lines.
- Coordination with housing developers to help deliver more than 300 units of high-quality, sustainable replacement housing for those that lost their homes during the flood, and to bridge the gap of affordable homes that existed prior to the flood.
- A community process to prioritize replacement and rehabilitation of flood-damaged City facilities. This includes the rehabilitation of City Hall, the construction of a new library and new facilities for the central fire station, CR Transit, and Animal Control. It also will create a consolidated City Operations Center for Public Works and other City Departmental facilities and maintenance yards.
- Coordination with the U.S. Economic Development Administration on grants to assist in economic development initiatives to help re-build and strengthen the damaged local economy.
- A public process to shape the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and integrate the future 220-acre floodplain greenway into the Parks system.

Lessons Learned

The complex process of flood recovery in Cedar Rapids has encouraged leadership building and improved communication between the City and the community. It also has generated strong partnerships between the federal and state partners who are providing support for redevelopment. Critical lessons learned include:

- **Build partnerships and relationships necessary for success** – There is no hiding behind a desk if you want to recover from a flood. Relationship building is critical, from open houses and community planning groups to meetings with state and federal agencies and elected leaders.
- **City staff have to become operational leaders** – After a disaster, City staff must play a critical role by facilitating public meetings, forecasting issues, promoting cross-departmental coordination and assuming new leadership roles.
- **Position the community and residents in an active role in their own recovery** – City planners found a critical part of their role was to help people to pull together and proactively work on solutions rather than waiting for an agency to rescue them.
- **Help mediate pain and loss in order to move forward** – Partnerships between the City and human service organizations were critical to address the immediate physical toll on impacted businesses and residents, and to help them face the future.
- **Achieve a process of transformation for community and residents** – The steps Cedar Rapids underwent in the planning process brought community members from anxiety to hope for a future for the community and in many cases, for themselves.
- **Identify and ensure resource allocation for flood recovery** – Disaster recovery is all about resource allocation – how you garner those resources, and not let functional lines get in the way.
- **Develop a strategy, not just a plan** – In order to recover, Cedar Rapids needed to be able to get something executed. It's not a plan, it's about planning and execution with a clear purpose and tangible results.
- **Stay disciplined** – Financial commitments can become overwhelming and potentially bankrupting. Projecting the cost to implement redevelopment recovery and matching resources and timing of when resources are needed is a critical part of the recovery process.