

PLAY in Linn County
Meeting Minutes- October 9, 2008

Present: Saxen, Sina, Voss, Bowers, Day, Wasta, Long, Kraayenbrink, Nygren, Loskill, Shulte, Harrington, and Bickel

Guests: Greg Lindenbaum, City Long-Term Planning, Robin Robinson, 5 Giant Steps, Jason Hellendrung, Sasaki Associates.

Meeting with Sasaki and City Planning Representatives

Jason Hellendrung spoke to the group on what the status of city planning in the wake of the flood. The main challenge is to define where the boundary is for flood protection. Army Corps of Engineers will also perform studies to determine how best to establish flood protection as well as integrate recreational trails, wetlands, etc. It is significant that the Corps of Engineers is sitting at the same table with Sasaki and the City during this analysis.

Cedar Rapids City Council with JLG and Sasaki have held Open Houses and have met for 2-4 hours at a time, 2-3 times per week in planning meetings.

Open Houses have provided public input to the planning process (see web site for final open house presentation boards).

<http://www.cedar-rapids.org/development/documents/riverplan/Open%20House%203%20boards%20total.pdf>

Reports are required on hydrology, levees vs. floodwalls, and assistance to property owners who are in the 100-year flood plain. Library redevelopment and expansion;
Better coordinated "government center" will also be considered.

What does this mean for Cedar Rapids and how will it improve the quality of life? Considerations include better connections through selected access to the river, trails along the river, open spaces, recreational opportunities, etc.

This may require changes to existing street lines and thereby neighborhood boundaries. Input required from neighborhood citizens. Neighborhood centers, Town Centers will need to be defined once the areas for change/renovation have been defined.

Question as to how does PLAY fit into the city planning?

Saxen provided that Williams Architects has supplied some basic prototype conceptual drawings to Sasaki/City for future discussion purposes. PLAY's consensus was that Williams Architects still needs to identify partnership/marketing opportunities, prepare an operating/sustainability analysis

and the best “siting” options in conjunction with the overall Sasaki-led efforts. It is vital that these efforts will be a component of the larger redevelopment/re-visioning efforts of the City and as a part of future Sasaki-led Open Houses, not separate PLAY Open Houses. The focus should be on the Neighborhood discussions and determine how PLAY fits into those Neighborhood discussions. How can PLAY strengthen the Neighborhoods and potentially tie the city together will be a focus. This may require re-scoping the charter of Williams Architects and Saxen, Sina, Kraayenbrink and Loskill were going to have a conference call with Williams Architects within the next week to discuss PLAY’s (and Williams Architects) role.

Further, according to Hellendrung, there are opportunities for potential sites for PLAY within the proposed Greenway, including perhaps in two areas off of I-380 north around E & Ellis and the former Time Check Rec Center/Park or in the Sinclair area.

Hellendrung offered that the final decision would have a proven connection with trails, green space.

Wasta was concerned there were so many options that we may find ourselves in Option Paralysis. The issue is that the flood has put everything into play (no pun intended). These “bundling options” should be a focus of Williams Architect’s efforts and part of their future presentation to the City/County leadership.

Day asked where/what the Army Corps of Engineers’ role in these efforts?

Answer from Hellendrung: The Corps is another consultant. There had been pre-flood studies of the Time Check area. The corps will require approximately 18-24 months for a full feasibility study, alternatives, environmental assessment, cost benefit analysis. The Corps is working directly with Sasaki and the City. The City would share the cost of these studies with the Corps.

There will also be individual flood control project studies for the Cedar Valley and ROMPOT areas. Funding would come from a variety of sources including HUD, EPA, FEMA,

Q: Looking at immediate funding, what are the priorities?

A: Levees will probably take 2-6 years. This will help define the “new” neighborhoods.

The PLAY timeline will be dependent on this funding. It would be reasonable to expect that it will be approximately 4 years before any construction would start (with the levee system) to 8 years (again, dependent on funding). But if PLAY is deemed to be a city priority, a facility could be built to be protected from flooding prior to the completion of the city’s overall flood protection plan.

PLAY will need to tie into Neighborhood planning. Rollout of Neighborhood discussions will be in November, start in January, and complete by the 3rd qtr 2009.

The Army Corps of Engineers are also authorized to look at recreational aspects.

General Information:

Saxen and Bowers have been speaking to different groups and the feedback is in support of a state-of-the-art community life/rec center.

Since our brochures and presentations focus on our website as a PLAY information resource – **it is very important that the PLAY website** contain the last Open House comments and our regular PLAY meeting minutes for visitors to review. Also, notices of upcoming PLAY meeting dates and other important community (Neighborhood Sustainability) dates are posted.

There is a bill in Congress regarding the Upper Mississippi Watershed, which looks at the Iowa and Cedar Rivers specifically along with agricultural practices and land use.

Saxen will be meeting 10/22 with the Rebuild Iowa Flood Control/Hazard Mitigation taskforce. This meeting will also discuss a Statewide Watershed Authority and Soil conservations districts.

The Vision Iowa board is interested in helping CR.

Upcoming Meetings

10/16 - Final Flood Control Open House (see website above) held at Crowne Plaza Grand Ballroom

10/28 – 6PM – Neighborhood Sustainability - Brown Bag Meeting at Flaherty Community Room at Basile Hall at Mt Mercy College

Next PLAY meeting: Nov 13, 7:30 AM, Ambroz