

IOWA PLANNING



American Planning Association
Iowa Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

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engaged the
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2,680 persons."*



The City of Cedar Rapids River Corridor Redevelopment Plan Receives National Award

Submitted by David Wilwerding, AICP

At the National American Planning Association Conference in Boston, MA on April 11, 2011, the City of Cedar Rapids and their consultants, Sasaki Associates, Inc. were presented with the Best Practices in Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Planning award for their River Corridor Redevelopment Plan. This plan also won the 2009 Hard Won Victories Award from APA Iowa. The plan included two phases, as follows:

Phase I - Framework for Reinvestment

On June 17th, 2008, four days after the crest of the river, the City engaged the public in three open houses, which were attended by 2,680 persons. The resulting Framework for Reinvestment and Revitalization positions Cedar Rapids to not only recover from the flood but move towards its vision as a "vibrant urban hometown – a beacon for

people and businesses invested in building a greater community for the next generation." The Framework Plan focuses on the creation of a preferred Flood Management Strategy, Connectivity, and the creation of Sustainable Neighborhoods. Completion of this plan led to the Neighborhood Planning Process.



Picture Courtesy of APA: Pictured are Bruce Knight, FAICP, APA President; Jason Hellen-drung; Christine Butterfield; Brad Larson; Gina Ford; and Marie L. York, FAICP, Jury Chair.

Phase II - Neighborhood Planning Process

A critical element in disaster recovery is to create a plan that has broad public support to follow. Between the months of January and

May 2009, over 1,200 of the City's residents dedicated 6,000 hours of their time planning for their kids and their kids' kids futures; some, while still rebuilding from the flood. Over 70 members of the City's staff, from administrative assistants to department directors,

volunteered their weekends and evenings to facilitate discussions and organize the meetings.

The City of Cedar Rapids began the Neighborhood Planning Process in January 2009 immediately following a comprehensive planning process for a new flood management strategy. Both planning processes were a result of the record flooding that occurred in June 2008. The NPP was designed based on benchmark
(Continued on Page 9)

President's Message

Greetings Iowa Planners!

It must be spring – flowers are blooming, it's warming up (and then quickly cooling back down reminding us it's not summer yet), the Iowa Legislature is nearing the end of its 2011 session, and many of us just returned from the National APA Planning Conference!

**Iowa Planners
Gather at "Design
Professionals Day on
the Hill"**

Thanks to all of the APA Iowa members and students and alumni of the planning programs at the University of Iowa and Iowa State University who attended the All Iowa Reception at the National APA Planning Conference in Boston. We had a great turn out and it was an excellent opportunity to network and catch up with our planning colleagues from around the state and country. We hope you can join us for next year's All Iowa Reception in Los Angeles.



I would also like to thank all of the APA Iowa members who attended the first annual "Design Professionals Day on the Hill" held on March 14, 2011 in coordination with the Iowa Chapters of the American Institute of Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects and International Interior Design Association. This event allowed the planning community a direct opportunity to discuss key issues pertaining to our profession directly with our Iowa Legislators and network with our affiliated design professionals. It is opportunities and events like this where we are able to share our planning message and promote our profession, which as highlighted in several events at the National Planning Conference, is something we all need to be doing a better job of during these tough economic times.

APA is currently searching for the next class of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) who will be inducted in Los Angeles at the 2012 National Planning Conference. Fellows of AICP are honored in recognition of the achievements of the planner as an individual, elevating the Fellow before the public and the profession as a model planner who has made significant contributions to planning and society. Fellowship is granted to planners who have been members of AICP and have achieved excellence in the categories of professional practice, teaching and mentoring, research, public and community service, or leadership and have had an active AICP membership for 15 consecutive years or more. Fellows must be nominated by a Chapter, thus if you know of someone worthy of such distinction and are willing to assist APA Iowa in preparing the necessary nomination forms, please contact me as soon as possible.

If you haven't done so lately, please check out our website, www.iowa-apa.org, Seana Perkins our Webmaster, is updating the site weekly (or more) keeping it current with information and events. If you have any suggestions for content or need to post a job or RFP please just let us know. Finally and as always, if you have any comments, suggestions or questions about APA Iowa or would like to volunteer to assist the Chapter in any way, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the APA Iowa Board.

Best wishes,

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Updated Climate Change Policy Guide Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly

Submitted by Amber Lynch

"The updated [Climate Change Policy] Guide takes a more comprehensive look at climate change issues..."

On opening day of the 2011 National Planning Conference in Boston, MA, planners from all 50 states gathered at the Chapter Delegate Assembly to review, debate, discuss, and revise an update to the American Planning Association's Climate Change Policy Guide. There are currently 23 such guides, available at: <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm>. The Assembly is the last step in the approval process before the APA Board of Directors ratifies a Policy Guide. Each State Chapter is given a specific number of delegates,

based on membership.

The procedures were formal. After an overview of the draft Guide, delegates were given time to caucus and discuss proposed amendments. For states with many delegates like California, this offered a chance for the chapter's representatives to caucus together. As the lone delegate from Iowa, I caucused with other states in our region: Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota. After the caucus, the assembly reviewed the Guide policy by policy, with delegates proposing formal amendments,

time for discussion and debate, and finally, a vote to approve each amendment. Many amendments that strengthened or clarified the policies were approved, while others were voted down. Once all amendments had been proposed, the delegate assembly voted to approve the full Policy Guide.

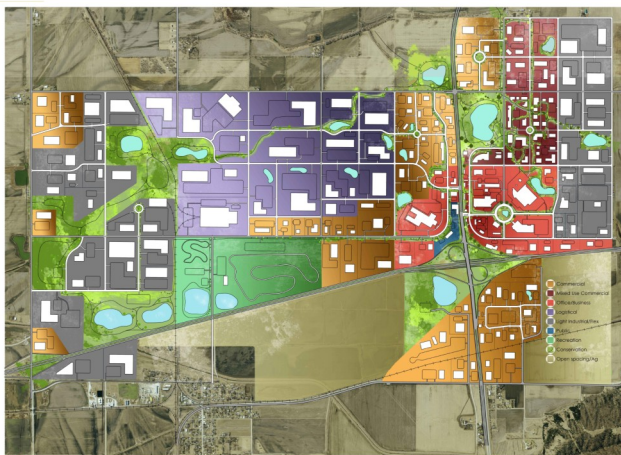
The Climate Change Policy Guide was originally adopted in 2008, with a heavy focus on transportation. The updated Guide takes a more comprehensive look at climate change issues, includes (Continued on Page 5)



Mills County Takes Progressive Action to Plan for Growth

Submitted by Rick Allely

Mills County in Western Iowa is about to have a new transportation corridor that will connect two major highway systems through the realignment of Highway 34 into Nebraska. Recognizing this creates an excellent opportunity for new development along the I-29 and Highway 34 corridors, Mills County took action in adopting policies and plans to promote and yet manage the development. The County put together a project advisory committee with the direction of Darin Whatcott from JAS Consultants who handles the County's zoning, building, and safety services. This committee consisted of planning & zoning commissioners, economic development staff, utility providers, business leaders, land owners, developers, and engineers.



Site Plan Concept



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Once the committee was in place and the County identified the need for professional consulting services, JEO Consulting Group, Inc. of Omaha was hired to work with the project advisory committee to develop a Conceptual Master Plan for the study area. The Plan sets the overall strategy for current and future development of over 5,000 acres prior to the new Highway 34 corridor and bridge being constructed, placing the (Continued on Page 8)

How Sustainable is Your Community?

Previously Published in Breakthroughs; November, 2010



According to a recent survey conducted by the International City/County Management Association, a strong majority of local governments consider sustainable practices to be key priorities within their communities. However, from the 2,176 localities responding to the survey, only 29 percent have put sustainable goals into action. This article will highlight a new online tool, which aims to assist Pittsburgh regional jurisdictions in identifying sustainable policies and see them through to fruition.



Sustainable Community Essentials Rapid Assessment

"Sustainable Pittsburgh created the Sustainable Community Essentials Rapid Assessment to compliment our work at both the local government and regional levels," explains Executive Director, Court Gould. The online tool provides southwestern Pennsylvania residents, in 551 municipalities within the 10-county region, with an opportunity to evaluate their community's sustainability while also becoming versed in identifying sustainability indicators. The assessment is made up of 14 components, including energy conservation, air quality, community design, water

management, housing choices, and healthy communities. Each category is given a description on why the category is essential to creating a sustainable community, a guide on how it can be measured, actions for implementation, and a case study showcasing examples of real world applications.

Results of the assessment are two-fold; residents are given a sense of their community's progress in applying sustainable practices and the residents are also provided with a bar chart that visually illustrates their community's sustainable policies and practices. Residents are encouraged to share their results with other community members, attend town hall meetings, and start conversations with municipal leaders in an effort to hasten the community's goal toward sustainable development at the grass-roots level. If interested, residents may also submit their results directly to Sustainable Pitts-

burgh. The organization will then aggregate assessments and periodically reach out to municipalities, and provide them with feedback on how their residents perceive the community's sustainable efforts. "Sustainable Pittsburgh will be taking the Rapid Assessment directly out to municipalities around the region. Sitting down with municipal managers to walk through the assessment will provide insights to help tailor assistance, training, and inter-municipal sharing individually and across our region," says Gould.

Additionally, the information obtained through Rapid Assessment will be shared with ICLEI-Local Govern-

ments for Sustainability — a membership of over 600 local governments committed to advancing climate protection and sustainable development — and processed through its STAR Community Index. Inspired by the success of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), STAR was developed as a national, consensus-based framework for gauging the sustainability and livability of U.S. communities. Similar to LEED's impact on the building industry, STAR is expected to transform the way in which local governments set priorities and implement policies by measuring their achievements, and ultimately, improve their sustainability performance.

"STAR was developed as a national, consensus-based framework for guiding the sustainability and livability of U.S. communities."

Conclusion

Sustainability is multidimensional, requiring indicators that assist communities in identifying problems while illustrating its benefits to the community as a whole. "This new tool will help communities articulate a vision and define goals and steps to put sustainable community development initiatives in place. It will enable us to track individual community progress and also aggregate and assess regional progress," explains Gould. Implementing similar tools throughout the nation can assist more localities in putting their sustainable goals into action.

Updated Climate Change Policy Guide Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly *(continued)*

Submitted by Amber Lynch



the latest climate science information, and recommends actions that planners and various levels of government can take to mitigate climate change as well as to adapt to the effects that are already occurring. The intent of the Guide is to direct the APA's legislative mission in Washington D.C.; however, it also serves as a resource for planners on the causes, range and type of impacts, and options for communicating about and addressing climate change.

Climate Change

Scientists have been warning us about climate change for years now, yet many people still do not believe in "global warming". After a particularly cold and snowy winter in Iowa, it is easy to doubt the claim that the earth is warming up. But climate is defined as the "average weather" in a specific place over a period of time, as exhibited by temperature, wind velocity, and precipitation. The World Meteorological Organization defines the period of time as 30 years. And the fact is that over the past three decades, the average temperature of the earth has increased. Despite this fact, places will still experience climate *variability* from year to year, with unseasonably cold winters or hot summers, unusually wet or dry conditions. These experiences do not mean an end to the overall climate change trend.

Across the U.S., climate change impacts can be seen in more intense weather events and negative effects on ecosystems. Other impacts vary by region. In the Midwest, impacts of climate change come in the form of increased heat waves and reduced air quality in the summer; a longer growing season with the potential to increase crop yields, but subject to additional weather and pest challenges; increased volatility in precipitation – i.e. floods or droughts; and reduction in lake water levels as a result of higher temperatures.

Other regions in the U.S. experience different impacts, such as sea level rise, increasing scarcity of the water supply, wildfires, and stresses on agriculture or other natural resource systems. Depending on the severity, climate change impacts may cause people to migrate from some regions of the country to others. Think New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Climate change largely results from a buildup of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere. Human activities such as fossil fuel burning, development patterns and deforestation greatly contribute to the buildup. The Policy Guide proposes two response categories for addressing climate change: **mitigation** (responses intended to address the *cause* of human-induced climate change) and **adaptation** (efforts to address the "symptoms" or impacts of climate change). Mitigation measures primarily seek to reduce GHG emissions and CO₂ production.

While such measures are important in the long-term, many impacts of climate change will occur regardless. Therefore adaptation measures are necessary to reduce communities' risks from the impacts. Planners can improve community resiliency while working to mitigate climate change at the same time. The Guide argues that

a dramatic, comprehensive response to climate change is required in public policy at all levels of government.

Policy Guide Overview

The Policy Guide includes a section on climate change science, including an explanation of the greenhouse effect, a summary of climate change impacts across various regions of the U.S., general scientific findings, and policy implications for various segments of planning, such as land use, transportation, and conservation. At the delegate assembly, planners stressed the importance of becoming better-educated on climate change science and local impacts in order to give sound policy advice to elected officials and communicate well with community members. The APA will continue to update this Policy Guide periodically.

The Guide recommends twelve general policies and over 118

(Continued on Page 6)



Picture Courtesy of APA

Updated Climate Change Policy Guide Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly *(continued)*

Submitted by Amber Lynch

specific policies, organized under the following categories: federal, state, and local roles; land use; transportation; energy; green development; natural resources; economic development; hazards management; public health; and public infrastructure. Each category includes techniques for both mitigation and adaptation, describes the relationship with climate change, and gives reasons to support the proposed policies from a climate change perspective.

The twelve general policies are as follows:

- Clearly delineate roles for and aggressive, proactive action by various levels of government concerning climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Support development patterns that minimize the emission of GHG's through a more compact urban form.
- Plan for climate change-induced migration.
- Support planning and development of multi-modal regional and local transportation systems that reduce GHG emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled, increasing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, increasing alternative fuels infrastructure and alternative modes of transportation, increasing fuel-efficiency of vehicles, improving connectivity of the transportation network, reducing congestion, and improving cooperation and coordination between all levels of government.
- Support the development and retrofit of climate-resilient transportation infrastructure and establishment of maintenance practices that reflect new climate conditions.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to the production and use of energy in the built environment.
- Implement green development design standards and incentives that reduce the carbon footprint and enhance the climate adaptive capabilities of new and existing buildings and developments.
- Take actions that preserve and manage natural assets, including agricultural and forestry lands

and natural ecosystems, in such a way that the natural assets can be sustained despite climate change impacts and that those held reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- Diversify local economies, incorporate and promote new technologies and sustainable businesses, and reduce the physical and sector vulnerabilities of local economies to climate change.
- Develop plans, strategies, and standards to better anticipate and prepare for the hazards impacts of climate change.
- Manage public health impacts resulting from climate change, including customization of efforts to address particularly vulnerable populations.
- Address climate resilience and reduce GHG emissions related to design, construction and installation, and operation of public infrastructure.

Roles for Planners

Many of the policies and actions recommended to address climate change are interrelated with what we already accept as good planning practice: smart growth and sustainability, compact development patterns, housing and transportation options, natural resource management, economic development, energy, green building, and public health. The Guide recognizes that impacts of climate change are highly localized; therefore, state and local governments are often the most appropriate venues for action. Still, the federal government also has a significant role to play. The APA has identified five "strategic points of intervention" with regard to climate change: long-range community visioning and goal setting; plan making; standards, policies, and incentives; development work; and public investment.

The Guide acknowledges that there will always be a level of uncertainty when it comes to climate change. Because of the constantly changing nature of the variables involved, it is difficult to say that a particular action today will cause a particular resolution down the road. Despite this uncertainty, the Guide argues that planners can approach climate change solutions from a "no regrets" perspective, meaning that actions taken to address potential effects of climate change have other benefits, regardless of their impact on the future state of the climate. For *(Continued on Page 7)*

Updated Climate Change Policy Guide Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly *(continued)*

example, taking actions to increase the mode share of bicycling and walking in a community reduces GHG emissions, but it also improves public health. Promoting a compact urban form can reduce both GHG emissions and infrastructure costs. If the climate change argument is a tough sell in your community, educating the public on the other associated benefits (particularly if you can explain the direct benefit to them) may make it easier to put policies and practices into place.

A Call to Action

Later that evening, the news was filled with reports that supported the case for action on climate change: wildfires in Texas, flooding in Fargo, a tornado ripping through Mapleton, Iowa. It seemed to hammer home the point that climate change is not something in the distant future, it is here, now. With all of the interests that compete for our time and for

elected officials' support, it is easy not to heed the Policy Guide's call for a "dramatic new response" to climate change. Yet as planners, we are in a unique position to educate our decision-makers and citizens on how to build more resilient communities, to protect our most vulnerable populations, and to promote practices today that can leave a livable place for future generations.

You can access the full Policy Guide at: <http://www.planning.org/policy/Guides/pdf/climatechange.pdf>. For more information on climate science, visit the World Meteorological Organization at: http://www.wmo.int/pages/themes/climate/index_en.php.



The City of Cedar Rapids River Corridor Redevelopment Plan Receives National Award *(continued)*

communities recognized for their high quality neighborhood planning activities and was tailored to incorporate elements specific to Cedar Rapids' unique situation. Under normal circumstances, a community commits to creating one neighborhood plan in a four to six month period. The NPP, through the dedication of residents and

staff, was able to create a plan for 10 neighborhoods in four short months. The process ensured transparency and secured broad public participation in the development of the framework plan for reinvestment. A citizen-led Steering Committee was appointed to ensure the process remained focused on the goals that were originally

established. By the end of the NPP, the Community had created a framework plan for reinvestment and action steps to accomplish this plan that will be implemented over the next 10 to 15 years. Additional information on the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan is available at <http://www.cedar-rapids.org/government/departments/>

Mills County Takes Progressive Action to Plan for Growth *(continued)*

Submitted by Rick Allely

County ahead of the curve and in excellent position to encourage and ensure quality development. The

proved Conceptual Master Plan. JEO's extensive experience crafting zoning regulations and flex dis-

the Gateway's overall value and appearance while encouraging well-designed projects providing new tax base and jobs within the County. Drawing on their consultant's site selection and economic development expertise, several site visualization tools were developed to create a marketing instrument for promoting the study area to interested businesses and developers. JEO's planners and architects utilized computer generated graphics to show what the study area might look like after it has been built out. These site visualization tools have allowed the County to sell its vision since one can see graphically what new development may look like and how it can fit in the existing environment.

Mills County's progressive planning and economic development efforts including the master plan, overlay district, design standards, and site visualization tools will ensure quality development with a positive return on their investment.

For additional information on this project, please contact Darin Whatcott, Mills County Building & Zoning Office at dwhatcott@jasconsultants.net or Rick Allely, JEO Consulting Group Project Manager at rally@jeo.com



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Plan will help the County avoid costly mistakes including inefficient uses of assets and infrastructure.

The planning approach included obtaining all background information available for the study area including floodplain, topography, soil suitability, existing infrastructure, planned infrastructure, and planned transportation routes and right-of-way purchases. With all the data assembled and placed in a GIS format, the areas became clear that would be the most attractive for future development.

The next step included the creation of an overlay district to enforce the ap-

tricts for various interstate corridor communities provided a solid understanding on how best to regulate these areas so that what is built conforms to the vision the County created. A set of design standards to articulate design principles, guidelines, and standards for development within the study area was then completed to assist local planning officials and prospective developers to understand the minimum standards and criteria for on-site development. The County's forethought and strategic planning will ensure quality development at this new gateway into Mills County.

Their intent is to enhance



Upcoming Events

May 18-20: Iowa COZO 2011 Spring Conference

The 2011 County Zoning Officials Conference will be held in Dubuque. Conference details can be found at www.iowa-apa.org/ by clicking on 'Iowa COZO 2011 Spring Conference' under 'Events'.

May 22-25: National Main Streets Conference

The four-day National Main Streets Conference will be held Des Moines, IA and is the only commercial district revitalization, educational and networking event that blends economic development, community revitalization and historic preservation. It provides a forum to share knowledge, best practices and innovative ideas with professionals and volunteers from small and rural towns, suburban communities and large and mid-sized cities from across the nation. For more information on the conference visit www.preservationnation.org/main-street/training/conference.

May 31: Creating 21st Century Communities

The "Creating 21st Century Communities" course will be held from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm at the Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, WI. AICP members can earn 7 Certification Maintenance credits. Please visit the following website for more information on the course and facilitators: www.naturalstepusa.org/creating-21st-century-communit. Register at: <http://tnsmadisonplanners.eventbrite.com/>.

June 8-11: APA Planners Training Service Workshops

"Planners Training Service Workshops bring you the latest intelligence from leading planning researchers and practitioners—the ideas you need to solve the problems on your desk today. AICP members earn 14 Certification Maintenance credits for each Planners Training Service workshop they attend." Workshops will be held at APA's Burnham Conference Center and Summit Executive Center, Chicago. Register by May 18th for early registration discounts. To register or for more information visit www.planning.org/PTS/.

June 28: Planning Iowa Sustainably - Building on What We Have

Join Friends of Iowa for their 2nd annual Iowa Sustainable Planning Workshop. The workshop will be held from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm at the Historic Hotel Pattee in Perry, IA. Registration ends June 23, 2011. To register or for more information visit www.1000friendsofiowa.org/.

October 19-21: APA Upper Midwest Regional Conference

Hosted by the Iowa Chapter of APA, the Upper Midwest Regional Conference will be held in the Quad Cities Event Center, Downtown Davenport, IA. More details will be available come Spring of 2011 at www.iowa-apa.org/.

Note from the Editor

Thank you to the APA Iowa members who have continued to submit articles to *Iowa Planning*! Your participation and feedback is greatly appreciated.

APA Iowa strives to keep our members informed and updated about various projects, issues and events relating to planning. We've taken some great steps in communication this past year, including the website update and the development of a facebook page for planners to interact. I would also like to expand some of that interaction into our newsletter.

I have received a few suggestions on possible improvements to the newsletter and, upon speaking with the APA Iowa Board Members; hope to 'test out' some of these ideas in the July issue of *Iowa Planning*. In

doing so, I may request some input from APA Iowa members for additional "question/answer" column(s). Requested input may involve a question to a planning issue or a practical solution to such issue. This gives Iowa Planners a chance to discuss planning concerns or questions that they have, or have been approached with by citizens or other entities. It also gives each of us a chance to provide some potential solutions or recommendations that we have applied or experienced first-hand in our entities.

Communication between planners is important, passing our knowledge and skills on to each other can create a more sound and local approach to issues that Iowa Planners deal with. I hope that each of you is willing to participate by raising planning questions, or provid-

ing practical planning solutions. I will be in contact with the APA Iowa Members in the coming months via email regarding our potential newsletter column(s).

Thank you, again, to APA Iowa Members who continue to contribute their articles and ideas to *Iowa Planning*. Along with newsletter articles, I continue to welcome suggestions on possible improvements!

Best Regards,

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