

Cedar Rapids Grades Development Projects

The City of Cedar Rapids is now using a Smart Growth Development Scorecard to rate new development projects. The assistance-seeking projects are graded on 32 specific points in six categories. The six categories are: proximity to infrastructure and services, land protection, housing options, mix of uses, transportation options, and character and design. The Scorecard was developed by the City of Cedar Rapids' Smart Growth Task Force whose objectives are to discourage costly urban sprawl and to facilitate more fiscally efficient landfills.

In a 2007 article in the *Gazette*, City Manager, Jim Prosser, had predicted the scorecard would be controversial (as it would be viewed as more bureaucracy by developers). Jennifer Pratt, Development Coordinator with the City of Cedar Rapids, provided an update recently on how the scorecard was working out almost two years after its implementation. Jennifer reports the scorecard is working out well for reviewing new projects. She noted it is very useful to Council members and has served as an education tool. As an example, Jennifer cites that scorecard measurements provided an objective means to educate residents to the positive aspect of an infill building project.

More recently, the City of Cedar Rapids has been in the process of completing the EPA Sustainability Audit. The audit results will help take the Smart Growth Scorecard to the next level and to know where improvements are needed in the Smart Growth planning process.

For cities that are considering the Smart Growth scorecard approach, Jennifer recommends a phased implementation. The phases in Cedar Rapids included a meeting with the City Planning Commission, one with the City Council, and one open house for the public, all

prior to implementation. Due to the learning curve for Smart Growth, Jennifer explains it is key for the development community to be at the same table with all of the other stakeholders. Cedar Rapids Smart Growth Task Force found that this opens up communication and takes away the fear of the unknown. Jennifer said any potential controversy with developers is removed (or greatly reduced) when all groups are involved in the Smart Growth planning process from the beginning.

For more information, you may contact Jennifer Pratt, Development Coordinator, City of Cedar Rapids, 319-286-5047, or j.pratt@cedar-rapids.org

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1000 Friends of Iowa is a state-wide non-profit organization founded in 1998 based in Des Moines, Iowa.

1000 Friends of Iowa promotes responsible development that

- Conserves and protects our agricultural and natural resources
- Revitalizes our neighborhoods, towns and cities, and
- Improves the quality of life for future generations

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Letter From the President

by Mary Ellen Miller

From The 1000 Friends Field

As 1000 Friends approaches its twelfth anniversary, the Board of Directors met this fall to develop our 2010 work plan. Like most young nonprofits, our Board is expected to commit to a fair amount of work on behalf of the organization. It was gratifying to witness the enthusiasm for addressing our current needs in fundraising, membership growth and public education. Each Director is an experienced professional willingly donating their time and talents to our cause of responsible development, conserving our natural resources and revitalizing our communities. Take a moment to look over their names and get to know the Director nearest you. Thank them for their efforts; share your concerns and ideas, they will appreciate hearing from you.



The Board recently had a most interesting dialogue concerning the language we use when addressing land use. Most particularly there was an extended conversation about the term “smart growth.” Some think “sustainable development” better represents “growth that conserves land” or “reuses” existing structures. Others feel “smart growth” serves as a positive alternative to “anti-sprawl” language. We have no consensus on this issue of “best” terminology but it is clear that there exists much passion and critical thinking about this subject. The very same discussion has been an ongoing exercise at the national level and I am impressed by the range of viewpoints the conversation represents. In the end, the terms we use will most likely reflect our individual view of “development.” It is all part of what makes our work so challenging and interesting. I will keep you posted on this continuing dialogue.

Each year, as part of our effort to promote and applaud “smart/best/sustainable” land use practices, we select our “Best Development” Awards. This year’s winners are announced on page 8; you are invited to attend the subsequent ceremonies and tours. Come and help us celebrate these winning examples.

1000 Friends co-founder Ed Fallon, and his wife Lynn, are hosting “The Fallon Forum” on Des Moines station 98.3 WOW-FM, or live stream at www.983wowfm.com. 1000 Friends of Iowa agreed to be a sponsor of this startup; land use topics will be included in the schedule, check our website for details. The call-in forum airs Monday-Thursday, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

“What do you think endures? Do you think a great city endures, or a teeming manufacturing state?.... Or hotels of granite and iron?.... these are not to be cherished for themselves,.... the show passes,.... A great city is that which has the greatest men and women....” Walt Whitman

Linda's Line



Dear Friends,

We hope you find our updated newsletter "look" inviting! We are working to make our newsletters timely and to include news from around the state.

Thanks to all of you who responded to our member survey. We have included a summary of the results in this newsletter and are considering your feedback in our work plans. One discovery we made during the membership survey process is many of our member

If you have not received any Action Alerts from us recently, you might send me a quick email (director@1000friendsofiowa.org) with your name and current email so we can check our records.

email addresses are outdated. We are working to correct this by contacting those of you with email addresses that are being re-

turned undeliverable. If you have not received any Action Alerts from us recently, you might send me a quick email (director@1000friendsofiowa.org) with your name and current email so we can check our records. This will save us a telephone call to you!

Two weeks ago, our Board of Directors completed a full day of strategic planning. Out of this session, we developed a work plan for the next year. We have set goals with due dates to be met as well as names of Board members responsible for each action item. We feel confident that 1000 Friends of Iowa is moving forward with an organizational plan that supports our mission, *Citizens United for Responsible Land Use!*

One of our goals as an organization is to increase our membership. One of the best forms of advertising is word-of-mouth! Tell your friends about 1000 Friends of Iowa! Or if you know of someone we should contact, let us know. Together we can grow!

Linda Gobberdiel
Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Iowa

B-cycle: What A Concept!

By Linda Gobberdiel

An exciting new biking phenomenon may be coming to Des Moines that would offer residents alternative transportation within the downtown area. The bike is called B-cycle, produced by Humana, Trek and Crispin, Porter + Bogusky, and is offered as a bike-sharing program for individuals needing to travel short distances. The first cycle arrived in Des Moines the week of September 20 and I was given the opportunity to have a first-hand experience riding it. The bike feels very sturdy and safe, and while not the design you would see in the Tour de France, appropriate for the intended use.



I spoke with Lee Jones, Director of Sales for B-cycle, about the history of the B-cycle. Lee explained the concept originated at Humana in Louisville, Kentucky. Workers were traveling short distances by car to eat lunch or to reach other buildings within the Humana complex. Bike-sharing became a more efficient and environmentally-friendly way to accomplish the same travel, and the health benefits from the physical activity are great.

According to Lee, 40% of all car rides within the U.S. are less than two miles in length. This figure alone makes the case for transportation alternatives to cars for such short distances.

The way the B-cycle system works is 10-12 bikes are "docked" at hub stations at various locations within a metro area. Riders use a card swipe to remove a bike from the dock and ride it to their destination. There they park their bike either at another hub station or use an attached bike lock to secure it on a bike rack if making a stop along their way to another B-station. Swipe cards are purchased as an annual membership either by individual riders or often by companies as a perk for their employees. The fees are such that any bike ride less than 30 minutes is covered by the annual membership. After 30 minutes, the card is charged approximately \$1.00 for each additional 30 minutes. (This cost is covered by a credit card used to secure payment.) Daily and weekly memberships are also possible within the B-cycle system. *continued page*

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Summary of Our Recent Member Survey

Thank you to all who participated in our member survey! We considered the comments & suggestions at our strategic planning session. We appreciate each of you taking the time, and we value your input.

We received feedback from several members who feel 1000 Friends needs to have a stronger presence across the state. Many felt the work of 1000 Friends is centered in the Des Moines Metro area and more attention should be given to statewide issues.

While we currently do not have the staff to support staying on top of all statewide issues, we do want to hear about current events in your area, and encourage members to inform us of local problems, as well as victories! Please help us stay informed by contacting our office with local land use news. Additionally, we spend a lot of time monitoring the Des Moines Area MPO because of our location in Des Moines, IA. If our members across the state wish to send us news about your local MPOs and COGs, we can work to provide updates to members in your area. You can find a link to information about your local MPO and COG on our website, www.1000friendsofiowa.org.

There were several respondents who expressed concern that 1000 Friends attempts to tackle too many problems, while others felt the organization has become too focused on transportation, at the expense of saving farmland, stopping urban sprawl, etc. To those who feel we spread ourselves too thin on issues that don't appear to be relevant and/or directly related to the mission of 1000 Friends, we encourage you to visit our website and download *The Land Use Bulletin*, Spring, 2009/Issue 75 (or call our office and we'll mail a copy of the issue to you) and read "The Combination of Possibilities, How's THAT a Land Use Issue?". The article provides an excellent explanation of how all the issues are directly related and why each must be addressed in order to achieve our common goal.

We asked members to offer suggestions on how we could improve. One frequent response was collaboration with likeminded organizations and groups as well as working to connect members across the state to others in their area.

Collaborating with likeminded organizations is one priority of our new Executive Director, Linda Gobberdiel.

Headway has already been made with Smart Growth America, REAMP, Rebuild Iowa, Iowa Environmental Coalition, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa Food Cooperative, and the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Another area for improvement was educating and informing members, especially in our Land Use Bulletin and on our website. One member wrote

"1000 Friends needs to have more basic land use information to tie all the issues together so new members can grow in knowledge. You used to be better at that in your newsletter. Then you got really into transportation and smart growth and have held back on basic information. Your old website had more basic information than your new one for students doing research. Most Iowans don't think much about how land use decisions are made or why cities continue to grow when the state's population isn't growing. Under those circumstances how can growth be economic development? If growth wasn't subsidized would we be growing? 1000 Friends needs to connect those dots."

Our Land Use Bulletin, website and emails had become very technical and at times difficult to understand for those who aren't involved in the issues every day. We are working on improving our materials and invite your feedback on the changes.

Detailed responses to the question "What program areas would you like to see 1000 Friends address or emphasize?" included:

- "Continue working to provide growth and housing alternatives to urban governments...alternatives to the traditional housing and mall sprawl..."
- "Smart Growth – changing ordinances, sustainable design in planning, zoning, building"
- "Citizen Empowerment-Public outreach and education presentations. Education-Research on land use facts in Iowa that can be applied to educational and policy change. Transportation. Urban/rural fringe issues. Smart Growth-Sustainable Development" *continued page 5*

Does your gift list include someone who has everything and cares about preservation of our land, natural resources & historic places? **Give the gift of membership to 1000 Friends of Iowa!** Contact us, 515-288-5364, or visit our website, www.1000friendsofiowa.org, to obtain a membership form today!

Summary of Our Membership Survey continued

Overall, respondents encouraged continued/increased focus on the following issues:

- Land Use legislation
- Citizen Empowerment
- Best Development Awards
- Water quality
- Urban outgrowth
- Ending sprawl
- Farmland preservation
- Educating retiring farmers about the alternatives to selling to developers
- Sustainable use of land through local food
- Path of new power and gas lines
- Bike lanes
- Soil conversation
- Public transportation
- Preserving natural resources
- Working with local governments to educate them on Smart Growth
- Continue monitoring the MPO
- Watershed issues

While the feedback was very encouraging and informative there were two recurring criticisms: 1. no response to email & 2. No reminder to renew.

When emailing 1000 Friends, please be sure you're using one of the following email addresses:

Use director@1000friendsofiowa.org to contact our Executive Director, Linda Gobberdiel.

Use kfoi@1000friendsofiowa.org or for general information or to report a local land use issue.

Email received at the above addresses also goes to Crystal at crystal.letto@1000friendsofiowa.org who then forwards the information to the appropriate party. Contact Crystal for information on joining the organization, problems with your membership, to report a website issue or, if you are unsure who to contact, Crystal will help determine how to assist you.

Letter Sent to Governor Culver Regarding Safety of Non-motorized Transportation

The Iowa Bicycle Coalition sent a letter to Governor Culver recently asking for his attention to the safety of non motorized transportation modes following a series of crashes this summer.

Letter sent to Governor Culver continued

The letter gives examples of the serious problems encountered by pedestrians and bicyclists, at times, tragically, causing fatalities and serious injuries. The letter also highlights the inequities faced in a transportation system heavily dominated by motorized vehicles. Bicyclists & pedestrians have the same rights and duties as motorists according to the Iowa Code, with additional penalties for crashes causing serious injuries or fatalities. Mark Wyatt, executive director of the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, thinks the application is much different in the real world. "It seems that when a bicycle is involved traffic charges don't apply." Wyatt adds, "It's not limited to law enforcement issues. We have to crowd meetings and fight for each and every bicycle facility and accommodation. When bicycle or pedestrian accommodations are warranted funding becomes a burden..."

Wyatt says the issue of bicycle safety is linked to other issues including health, obesity, traffic congestion, and air quality. Bicycling and walking have a strong relationship to quality of life and retention of younger workers. "But it starts with making it safe to ride a bicycle down the road. We need to conquer the safety issue first." states Wyatt.

B-cycle: What a Concept!

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There are B-cycles currently in operation in the National Mall in Washington D.C., at Humana in Louisville, Kentucky, and test pilots in Denver, Colorado (where expanded B-cycle hub stations are scheduled to be installed in spring 2010). A public meeting in early October will be used to introduce the B-cycle concept to Des Moines.

The cost of B-cycle is approximately \$3500 per bike, which includes the bikes, docking station and the software to operate the vending portion. There are a number of ways to fund the system including grant money, corporate sponsorship and advertising.

The bottom line is that such a system would support the health and well being of residents through reductions in carbon emissions as well as increased physical activity. Alternatives to driving, when provided in a convenient location, (and possibly supported by employers) could positively impact individual choice for the greater good.

Cabinet Secretaries visit Sustainable City, Dubuque, IA

When words such as "vibrant" and "diverse" are coupled with phrases like "long-term sustainability", "economically resilient" and "increased quality of life" in Iowa, it gets our attention. It also received the attention of the nation in late September when President Obama's Cabinet Secretaries from the EPA, DOT, and HUD arrived to tour Dubuque and announced the administration's inter-agency partnership during their national three city Sustainable Communities Tour.

The Dubuque mayor and city council decided in 2006 to make the community "a Sustainable City." Federal officials recognized the progress made toward that goal and announced proposals during stops in Chicago and Dubuque. The proposals will help communities improve access to affordable housing, provide additional low-cost transportation options, and protect the local environment. "Coordination", "collaboration" and "cooperation" between transportation, housing and the environment are necessary ingredients in a recipe for responsible development.

Dubuque, a city that is recognized as a national leader in sustainability with its forward-thinking public policy, together with IBM, will address the ever-increasing demands of cities to deliver vital services such as energy and water management, and transportation, all while reducing the community's impact on the environment.

News From Iowa City

A \$1 million grant through Governor Culver's I-JOBS Program was awarded to the UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership Program to acquire, rehabilitate, and sell 20 affordable single-family homes in neighborhoods surrounding the University of Iowa campus. This new program is a cooperative effort between the City of Iowa City and the University of Iowa to encourage homeownership and reinvestment in older neighborhoods surrounding the University.

In other news from Iowa City - The University of Iowa is gathering public input on two possible sites to re-locate and rebuild Hancher Auditorium, Clapp Recital Hall, and the University's school of music after these venues were destroyed in the floods of 2008.

The debate centers around whether to rebuild in a location near the current site, but up the hill and out of the 500-year floodplain, or, to move these venues to a new location near downtown Iowa City and closer to the main liberal arts campus.

Proponents of the original location, cite its bucolic setting, access to surface parking, and the fact that the University already owns the land. Advocates for the downtown location, which includes the majority of music school faculty, cite the benefits for students and faculty of a location closer to the main campus and the proximity to restaurants, shops, and hotels in downtown Iowa City.

Interestingly, much of the buzz on the various informal blogs seems to pit the older generation of Hancher patrons that have a fear of parking in downtown parking ramps against the younger set that has fewer qualms about parking in ramps, riding transit, or walking that are associated with the more urban location.

Davenport NOW

The City of Davenport is using an urban services boundary defined in its Comprehensive Plan to spur urban revitalization and focus sustainable regional growth within city limits. Anyone adding more than \$5,000 of new assessed value within the urban services boundary is eligible to participate in the "Davenport NOW" program, which rebates 50% of city property taxes for ten years, with participants choosing either annual rebates for ten years or a one-time payment. The new value can be reinvestment in any existing building or any new structure, but all new structures must be within the urban services boundary to qualify. The program, which began July 1, has proven quite popular, with more than 150 participants already. Unlike tax increment financing (TIF), the Davenport NOW program only impacts the city's portion of property taxes. City Administrator Craig Malin noted, "Davenport NOW fundamentally reverses the lower taxes / better services mythology that fuels suburban sprawl. There has never been a better time than now for cities to take the lead in a more sustainable future, and there has never been a better time than now to invest in Davenport." *continued page 7*

Davenport NOW

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Consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and City Council Goals, the Davenport NOW program is intended to encourage new investment, revitalization and sustainable, regional growth in Davenport. Every property owner is eligible, either by investing in an existing structure or through investment in a new, owner occupied residential structure or commercial structure. Improvements for existing rental properties will be eligible, but new construction of rental property or conversion of owner occupied property to rental property will not be eligible.

Davenport NOW is a "standalone" economic development program in two important ways. First, Davenport NOW will not be combined with any other City property tax based economic development tool. New investment in property and creation of jobs in Davenport through existing City and State funded programs will continue under the current guidelines. Businesses seeking to create new jobs and otherwise investing in Davenport will continue to have choice of the current array of economic development options administered by the City, including Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption (URTE) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF). City URTE and TIF policies are well established, and conservative, in comparison to other cities in the region and state.

This conservative use of URTE and TIF illustrates the second important way in which Davenport NOW is a standalone program. Unlike URTE and TIF, Davenport NOW does not negatively impact any other local government. Schools, Scott County and other local taxing districts are not impacted at all. Only the City portion of property taxes is reduced by the tax rebate.

To encourage revitalization of existing neighborhoods throughout the city and sustainable growth within the city and region, program eligibility will be limited to areas of the city within the Urban Services Boundary defined by the Comprehensive Plan and ready for delivery of city services without substantial extension of infrastructure.

The resolution adopted by the City Council of the City of Davenport directing the City Administrator to implement Davenport NOW, became effective July 1, 2009. It is effective through June 30, 2012.

One additional note, later this year or early next year, the Davenport Fire Department will become nationally accredited, joining their nationally accredited police and public works departments. Davenport will be the first city in Iowa to have all three front line departments accredited (and just the 15th in the nation, out of 18,000 cities, towns and villages).

Trying to think of a unique gift? Consider a 1000 Friends of Iowa t-shirt that features a large, color reproduction of the Grant Wood painting we use as our logo. Learn more by contacting our office at 515-288-5364, or visiting our website, www.1000friendsofiowa.org.

Making Public Land Productive in Davenport

Darrin Nordahl, city designer at Davenport City Hall, has first-hand experience providing food for people living in his community. Darrin, however, does not give "handouts" in the familiar sense. He provides food directly for sharing at the growing site. Darrin plants vegetable seeds outside his office – using public land to provide public produce!

An article in the *Quad-City Times* in early September included comments from Darrin and his ideas about plantings on public lands being expanded to include edible products. In addition to the usual ornamental trees and shrubs, Darrin suggests incorporating fruit-bearing plants such as apple trees and grapevines as well as vegetables such as squash and tomatoes.

Darrin attributes his interest in public produce to Tom Flaherty, a former City of Davenport parking manager who planted tomatoes in the square at 2nd and Brady streets. He and Tom believe there is a tremendous amount of public space that could be put to more productive use.

Other reasons we need public plantings according to Darrin include:

- Provides inexpensive fresh produce in cities where residents often do not have such access.
- Builds on local food security versus depending on traditional growing and transporting, which relies on diminishing oil reserves and a changing climate.
- Builds a sense of community and the thrill of cooking (and eating) foods you just picked.

Quad-City Times, September 9, 2009

Presenting the 2009 Best Development Awards Recipients

1000 Friends of Iowa is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2009 Best Development Awards! The winners of our Best Development Awards are models of how responsible development practices provide benefits to the community, the environment, and quality of life for future generations. We will feature this year's recipients in our Winter Land Use Bulletin. By category, the winners are:

- New Commercial/Civic: Marshalltown Public Library, Marshalltown
- New Residential: Court Avenue Lofts, Des Moines
- Renovated Commercial/Civic: The Durrant Building, Dubuque
- Renovated Residential: Westfield Avenue Lofts, Waterloo
- Mixed Use: Plaza Towers , Iowa City
- Leadership: Historic Millwork District Master Plan, Dubuque

Please join us in congratulating this year's recipients and visit our website, www.1000friendsofiowa.org, to learn more about this year's winners!