

**CEDAR RIVER, CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA  
FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY  
28 APRIL 2009 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE**

MEETING SUMMARY

**1. Introduction.** This document serves as the meeting summary for the Cedar Rapids, Iowa Feasibility Study public open house held on 28 April 2009. The open house was a cooperative effort of the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers and the City of Cedar Rapids. This report will discuss the findings and public comments received.

**2. Open House Objective.** The objective of the informational open house was to explain the Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study process and answer questions related to the study initiative.

**3. Medium.** The public was informed of the open house through several different communication avenues. A printed announcement was mailed to Federal, State, and local governmental agencies, businesses, media, and the general public inviting them to attend the open house. The announcement was also posted on the City's website. The Corps sent a news release to area television and radio stations and newspapers.

**4. Public Meeting Format.**

a. Location: Crowne Center Plaza Five Seasons Hotel, Grand Ballroom, 350 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

b. Time: The open house was held from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

c. Set-up: Representatives from the Corps of Engineers and the City of Cedar Rapids were on hand to provide information and answer questions on a one-to-one basis. Displays provided information on the Corps feasibility study timeline, study scope, project objectives, feasibility study planning process, report review process, Congressional authorization and appropriation process, the City's project goals, and how to be part of the process. Handouts included a comment sheet and a copy of the display boards.

**5. Attendance.** Approximately 150 members of the public attended. Included were: Media representatives present were from KGAN-TV, KCRG-TV, WMT Radio, Iowa Public Radio, and the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

**6. Public Comments.** Forty-two comment sheets were returned by meeting attendees. The following is a summary of the responses.

Response to survey questions on the comment sheet:

Question	Response	
	Yes	No
This meeting provided an opportunity to gain information and a better understanding of the COE feasibility study process.	92%	8%
I understand how public input into the City's redevelopment planning process will contribute to the COE feasibility study.	70%	30%
I understand how the COE flood damage reduction study process differs from the Cedar Rapids river corridor redevelopment plan.	74%	26%
I understand that the focus of the COE feasibility study is flood damage reduction options.	92%	8%
I understand that benefit-to-cost justifications with subsequent Congressional authorization and funding are required in order to proceed to construction of a COE project.	89%	11%

Written comments

Area of Concern	Comment
Hydrology	It's very important to study, model and evaluate many scenarios for mitigation of future flooding. There must be a physical basis for decisions superseding political views. I would hope the hydrology models are checked thoroughly against prior flood knowledge prior to dependence on the process of model usage for each scenario evaluation.
	My concern is quite high in elimination of the restrictive action of current bridges. A suspension bridge construction will hopefully be the only evaluated to provide maximum flow at high flood levels. Many advantages can be found there from.
	Patiently awaiting alternatives and preliminary hydraulic recommendations.
Feasibility Study	We would like a presentation of what the COE has done thus far and the different plans and techniques they are considering using to control future floods.
	This "Open House" style of disseminating information is very inefficient and boring.
	Handout was not informative enough. A better timeline with rough months/years and range for each step would be desired. What happens after authorization? Steps & time.

	<p>If report is 2011 then at best 1 Oct 2011 for authorization and 1-year design so 2012? What about environmental impact study or historical impact study?  Failed to give time range of possible project. Is it 3 or 13 years?  How much is cost to city?</p>
	<p>We appreciate the work of the City of CR and the relationship that they have cultivated with the Army Corps.  CRDD has already begun promoting the formation of temporary to permanent flood protection plans as a key reason to keep business located downtown.  We look forward to continuing to promote the work of the City and the Corps on behalf of downtown.  Feel free to over-communicate each step of this process. Downtown businesses and property owners are anxiously awaiting additional information.</p>
	<p>I do not understand how the city of Cedar Rapids and the Corps of Engineers are going to work together and agree on a plan that will be beneficial to all the affected citizens of the flooding.</p>
	<p>I feel the process is business as usual. The process should not take the time it is said to take.  President Obama said there is too much red tape in government. This proves it.  There should be better ways to the process to speed it up. Remove some of the overhead and repetitive of what has to be done.</p>
	<p>This plan should be completed sooner. Too many questions were answered with "ifs" - "if a levee is built then this or that may happen." When will we know a levee will be built?</p>
	<p>I would hope that the leveraged working between the Corps of Engineers and the City (Sasaki) will streamline the process.</p>
	<p>Continue open and frequent public informational sessions. Suggest coordinating with City to allow opportunity for: 1) COE to present updates on feasibility study; 2) City to provide updates on any mitigation activities in progress that are independent of COE; and 3) public feedback/input.  Anything that the City and COE can do to encourage and solicit public involvement and input should be considered.</p>
	<p>I would like to see more of a plan. I know it will be a while, but to determine cost-benefit I want to know what is being given up and what it is saving. There are an awful lot of us coming back to the "Blvd."  I also want to know how insurance benefits will affect our buyout options.</p>
	<p>Thank you for answering some of my questions. The city of Cedar Rapids is proceeding as if they think a 35' floodwall is a done deal. I live on the west side of the river. A 24-foot river level would not flood my house. I have rebuilt and am hoping to stay put. If houses are protected to 100-year flood level, then flood insurance becomes affordable.  Had the flood forecast been anywhere near accurate damage would have been a lot less as valuables would have been moved. I lost a 7-day-old new car and all my furniture. Could have all been saved.</p>
	<p>Cedar Rapids had virtually no historic resources studies along the river except downtown. The post flood event resources studies are just now coming to light as required for buyout programs.</p>

	<p>My concern is about another flood. I think the existing flood protection did a very poor job. I would like to see the flood risk management project recommended and approved by Congress to help us start construction on levees and floodwalls, early as Spring of 2012.</p> <p>A City where I grew up built their levees and flood. Thanks to Army Corps of Engineers for helping Dubuque. For Cedar Rapids, they will do a wonderful job.</p>
Ellis Blvd/Time Check	<p>I feel the city has a plan that needs some "amendments."</p> <p>I own 1845 Ellis Blvd NW. In that area there are many homeowners that would like to stay. I also understand the benefit of having levees. There can be a cost benefit. I have submitted a request to introduce a removable flood wall.</p>
	<p>Please do a cost/benefit study on Ellis Blvd (1700-1900 blocks). If you demolish the houses along the river to save the small houses on the west side of 8th Street you will be spending more than you are saving. I think a better plan would be to turn the levee at Penn Ave. or Q Ave. and run it up to the hill on Ninth Street. This would require less levee construction and fewer buyouts because a lot of people on Ellis would like to, or have rebuilt.</p>
	<p>Believe the citizens and opposition to what the city council is up to have been shut out of the process from the beginning. City hall makes a run at our property by Ellis Park every 10-15 years, but hasn't had the money or the support; so they're using the flood as an excuse to get federal dollars to take the neighborhoods of working class people for their own recreational desires. It's a pork barrel boondoggle that would be a tremendous waste of taxpayers money. Nothing could have stopped this flood. The dyke along 1st West actually held. It should be strengthened and raised some. In an emergency, a temporary dyke can be thrown up straight up Penn Ave. Nobody's home need be taken and it would save a fortune.</p>
	<p>Keep the levee at the Time Check area on the river. Use First Street to widen it and make it taller. Instead of the gate system, use the roadover system like in Guttenberg, Iowa. It has worked well for them. Please do not take out the Time Check Neighborhood.</p> <p>Dredge the river. Some areas are only 2-feet deep. How can the water stay in the river?</p>
Flood Insurance	<p>I paid for flood insurance for 30 years now. I've been flooded and collected insurance money and have rebuilt my home. I find out that this insurance money will be deducted from the money I receive for my home if I'm forced into a buyout. This is not in any flood policy I have read.</p>
	<p>Pay your flood insurance</p>
Real Estate	<p>Unless another flood has run me out, all I want is for you to leave me a gate to get out when, of if, ever you build the wall.</p>
	<p>We plan on staying at our home so leave us where we are. Our house is not in the 500-year but we are right on the river. We have a FEMA home.</p>
	<p>There are a lot of people that want to build in the construction area and greenway. We feel you are being mitigated into approving yes or no - the City plan. I feel the over six square blocks of houses taken in one area only constitutes plans by the City to impose their will.</p> <p>The construction/greenway is a big deterrent to construction presently.</p>

	<p>All the commercial property has been rebuilt along 1st St. NW.</p> <p>Thank you for coming. We need to hear the truth about what is going to happen and in the time frame. I was very concerned about what was true when city council members told us construction zone lines and homes to be bought out were under the direction of COE. Truth is, the city and Sasaki came up with most of this acquisition push. This is not COE keeping people in limbo, it is the city. We were never encouraged to rebuild, only leave and wait for buyout. Thank goodness my family helped me rebuild starting right after the flood-we did not wait. Not encouraging people to rebuild was a disservice to citizens.</p>
Other	<p>Originally thought this meeting was going to be about answers but instead learned it was just to inform everyone about how the decision process will occur concerning floodwalls, etc.</p> <p>I've been to all neighborhood Crowne Plaza meetings and was disappointed to see on one of the billboards that emphasis is being made on connecting the medical facilities. Every time I sat at one of the tables, the general consensus was brought up time and time again - why concentrate on medical district? Don't see the significance. Is Sasaki pushing this instead of the attending public?</p> <p>I think this would have been better presented as a program on Channel 18 or at Crowne Plaza where people explain as they're viewing each point.</p> <p>Contact me regarding any focus groups that could benefit from the input of a flood zone survivor and his company.</p> <p>Thanks for holding the open house and giving us the opportunity to meet with you and discuss our particular desires concerning the feasibility study. We are fully supportive of what you are proposing for Cedar River flood risk management. As a resident of Sun Valley neighborhood, am hoping you would also be looking at Indian Creek watershed. In 2002 Indian Creek overtopped the Cottage Grove bridge and severely impacted 30-40 homes with a damage estimate of \$2 M. Nothing substantive has been done since then to remedy the Indian Creek flood threat. There has been continued development in the watershed area, including construction on the floodplain. We were evacuated during the June 2008 floods, but this time flood waters only reached our sidewalks and a few basements. Your representatives indicated a separate Indian Creek proposal is being evaluated.</p>

**7. Study Team Feedback.** The COE study team members also recorded verbal comments expressed by the members of the public during the open house. The table below summarizes the verbal feedback:

Area of Concern	Comment
Real Estate	Buyouts might be based on tax valuation rather than appraised values.
	Uncertainty about which action to take: repair or buyout.
	Buyout conditions (process/legalities/
	Residents concerned about making a decision (regarding property) prior to COE determining if a federal project is justified.
	Why is right of entry needed? Don't want to provide one as my wife works nights. (Response: COE can work around your schedule [for getting on your property]).
	Impacts of city's "construction zone" on homes and businesses in that area.
	How were yellow and green areas on map chosen, and what do they represent.
	Residential property values (assessed values; pre-flood condition; current condition value).
	Relocation benefits (FEMA vs. HUD vs. State vs. Corps).
	Difference between potential COE ROW and acquisition vs. city relocation and development in yellow zone.
	Compensation for buyout of homes; what different agencies have to offer.
	Corps participation in moratorium - not to rebuild in yellow area was City's decision.
	Insurance issues.
	Concerns that buyouts would be based on assessed tax valuation rather than appraised values.
	Can Corps buyout my house and force me to move?
Feasibility Study	It is important that study proceed quickly.
	Why do you need soil exploration on my property? (Response: To determine the structural capability of the soil).
	More green space (i.e., buy more property to use as floodway).
	Project timeline-when feasibility study would be completed and if a COE project could be predicted.
	What elements comprise construction cost & how are benefits derived (RE values vs. flood protection benefits).
	Levee concerns (location; how big; level of protection provided).
	Concerns about greenway space not going to be enough to let the "river breath."
	Why does it take so long for the study? We need answers now.
	Corps need to hear the citizens' concerns not just the city's plan.
Hydrology	Dredge river channel and provide green space and parks for recreation along riverbanks.

	Dredging the bottom of the river would go a long way to reduce flood stages.
	Improper operation of the 5-in-1 dam contributed to the flood heights.
	Impacts on upstream and downstream river stages caused by any floodwall/levee construction through Cedar Rapids.
	Need to study control measures upstream of Cedar Rapids.
	Raise bridges to provide for more flow downstream. This could also maintain access to Mays Island.
	Edgewood Bridge constricts flow; under current flows there is a 2-ft change in elevation between the upstream and downstream water surfaces.
	Study will not adequately consider alternatives to retain floodwaters upstream of CR on agricultural land.
	Build retention ponds in the watershed as a solution to flooding.
	Study may not adequately consider alternatives upstream of Cedar Rapids on agricultural lands. Use small Minute-men reservoirs?
	Corps should consider dredging options.
Ellis Blvd and Time Check Neighborhood	Regarding yellow "Construction Zone" as termed by the City: confusion on whether to rebuild or not rebuild; understand that flood protection system (if built) would not fill up the entire yellow zone; aware of the timeframe required for USACE to determine if a project is justified
	Perception City is using flood to clear out "undesirable" areas to allow new development.
	Concern CDBG funds being directed to buyouts instead of repairs for damaged structures.
	Too much green space; homeowners oppose selling homes for the creation of wide open green space.
	Will houses be allowed to stay on wet side of levee? (Response: not a USACE decision-we would be critical of any utility penetrations of a federal system.)
Other	What is status of Indian Creek study? (Response: Scope of Work being revised and should be delivered to City about mid-May).
	Czech Museum
	Difference between PL 91-646, Stafford Act and other programs.