



The Planner

VOLUME I, ISSUE 17 Week of DECEMBER 14, 2009

Newsletter for the Iowa City Planning & Community Development Department

Urban Planning | Historic Preservation | Housing Rehab | Community Development
Economic Development | JCCOG Transportation Planning | Neighborhood Services | Public Art

Calendar

December 14

Deadline for public comments on draft plan of 2011-2015 CITY STEPS. For more info, visit www.icgov.org/PCD or the 11.23.09 or 12.07.09 issues of The Planner, located on our website at www.icgov.org/PCD.

December 16

Board of Adjustment meeting, 6 p.m., Emma Harvat Hall, City Hall. *Page 5.*

December 17

Airport Commission meeting, 6 p.m., Iowa City Municipal Airport Terminal, 1801 S. Riverside Drive. *Page 3.*

Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, 7 p.m., Emma Harvat Hall, City Hall. *Page 5.*

December 24-25 and January 1

Holidays — City offices will be closed.

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Funds awarded for First Avenue – Iowa Interstate Railroad project

The City of Iowa City was awarded \$2,423,561 in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds by Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) for a grade separation project at the First Avenue – Iowa Interstate Railroad crossing. The \$6.2 million project will lower the grade of First Avenue, a major arterial street in east Iowa City, and raise the railroad grade, creating an underpass for vehicular traffic. The City has applied for other grant monies to help pay for the remainder of the project. STP funds originate at the federal level and are apportioned locally by the JCCOG Urbanized Area Policy Board.

Currently, an estimated 20,400 vehicles use this route on a daily basis, and the number is expected to climb to 28,000 within 10 years. Each day, between two and four trains block First Avenue. Traffic observations have shown that on average, whenever the crossing is blocked, 288 vehicles idle in traffic for 10 to 20 minutes, while another 392 vehicles seek other routes, including the nearest grade-separated crossing on Summit Street, a four-mile detour. The situation is expected to only worsen with the increase of rail traffic from the proposed Amtrak service linking Iowa City and Chicago.

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. . . inside . . .

More buyouts

Funding has arrived for another round of buyouts of flood-damaged properties. *Page 4.*

Poetry in Public

Get your pencils out and your creative caps on — the annual Poetry in Public and Poetry in Public Art competitions are getting underway. *Page 6.*

Airport strategic plan

It’s time to update the Iowa City Municipal Airport strategic plan — and the City wants to hear your input. *Page 3.*

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First Avenue – Iowa Interstate Railroad project



How would it look?

A computer simulation shows how the First Avenue - Iowa Interstate Railroad grade separation project might look. Cars would drive through an underpass, trains would run on the overpass — and the traffic congestion and delays that drivers experience today would be largely alleviated.

Other JCCOG-approved projects

Other projects that have received approval from Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) are:

Federal Surface Transportation Program funds

Coralville:

Widening Coral Ridge Avenue from Holiday Road to Oakdale Blvd., including a 10-foot trail and lighting improvements..... **\$1,500,000**

Other:

JCCOG pavement management program **\$9,000**

JCCOG state Urban Design Standards fees **\$8,000**

Federal Transportation Enhancement funds

North Liberty:

Constructing North Dubuque Street Trail from south city limits to Mehaffey Bridge Road **\$342,163**

University Heights:

Building wide sidewalk on Sunset Street from Melrose Avenue to Benton Street..... **\$215,000**

All JCCOG cities:

Installing trail and bike route wayfinding signs **\$15,600**

continued from cover

When completed, the grade separation project will not only relieve traffic congestion and delays, but will also reduce vehicle emissions and improve public safety at the intersection and in surrounding neighborhoods. It is also expected to improve operations for Iowa Interstate Railroad and provide a competitive edge for the City by improving the efficiency and reliability of moving goods by rail.

For more info

For more information, visit the JCCOG website at www.jccog.org or contact Assistant Transportation Planner Kristopher Ackerson at 356.5247 or e-mail kristopher-ackerson@iowa-city.org

Airport Commission seeks public input for strategic plan; meeting set December 17

The Iowa City Airport Commission will soon begin the process of updating the five-year Strategic Plan for the Iowa City Municipal Airport. The Strategic Plan update is intended to provide a guide for operation of the airport for 2010-2015, and sets specific goals and strategies for improved operations. Before the commission begins the update process, it is seeking input from the public regarding their concerns, perceptions, and suggestions for Airport operations and improvements. There are two ways for the public to provide input:

Attend the public input meeting:

Thursday, December 17, 2009, 6 p.m. at the Iowa City Municipal Airport Terminal, 1801 S. Riverside Drive

Send comments to facilitator:

Jeff Davidson, Director of the City's Planning and Community Development Department, is the facilitator of the Airport Strategic Plan process. Comments may be sent directly to him by mail at 410 E. Washington Street, Iowa City, IA 52240 or by e-mail at jeff-davidson@iowa-city.org. **Comments should be submitted by noon on December 17.**

Once the Strategic Plan update has been drafted, another public meeting will be scheduled to receive input. To view a copy of the current Strategic Plan (FY2006-FY2010), visit www.icgov.org/airport



Use of the Iowa City Municipal Airport continues to grow — and as the City gets ready to update the Airport's Strategic Plan for 2010-2015, it wants to hear from the public about concerns, perceptions, and suggestions.

Buyout offers go to Parkview Terrace



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

STEVE LONG

Community Development
Coordinator

319.356.5250

steve-long@iowa-city.org

Web page:

www.icgov.org/commdev

Letters were mailed to 54 property owners in the Parkview Terrace neighborhood earlier this week with an offer from the City to purchase their properties as part of the CDBG flood buyout program. If a property owner agrees to sell, the home will be razed and the lot will be returned to green space to help reduce damage and destruction in future flood events. The Parkview Terrace neighborhood include homes on Normandy, Eastmoor, and Manor Drives, Park Place, Granada Court, and part of Park Road.

The City of Iowa City has received \$11.7 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) flood recovery funds to acquire these properties, which were not eligible for the initial Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) buyout program administered by FEMA. The letter said that homeowners of significantly damaged properties who owned the property at the time of last summer's floods will be offered 112% of the 2008 assessed value of their property, minus any duplication of benefits from FEMA or CDBG post-flood assistance programs.

The CDBG buyout program is completely voluntary. Property owners are not required to sell, even if they previously indicated an interest in a buyout. In addition, homeowners who are interested in a buyout but are not satisfied with the amount of the City's purchase offer have an option to file an appeal and schedule a hearing with a third party entity to try to negotiate other terms.

For more information, contact Community Development Planner Doug Ongie at 356.5479 or at doug-ongie@iowa-city.org.

More buyout offers

Many homes in the Parkview Terrace neighborhood that were destroyed by last year's floods have been purchased through the HMGP buyout programs and razed as part of a flood mitigation effort. More CDBG funding has been received that will enable the City to make additional buyout offers to interested homeowners.





URBAN PLANNING

ROBERT MIKLO

Senior Planner
319.356.5240

bob-miklo@iowa-city.org
Web page:

www.icgov.org/urbanplanning

Planning & Zoning Commission

MEETING INFORMATION

Thursday, December 17, 7 p.m., Emma Harvat Hall in City Hall

AGENDA ITEMS

Subdivision: Discussion of an application from Arlington Development, Inc. for a preliminary plat of Windsor West Parts Two and Three, a 58-lot, 25.78 acre residential subdivision located north of American Legion Road, south of Cumberland Lane, on Buckingham Lane.

Annexation / rezoning item: Discussion of an application from Moss Green Development Corporation for annexation and rezoning of approximately 132 acres near the intersection of Hwy. 1 and I-80 from County Agricultural to Interim Development - Research Park.

Comprehensive Plan item: Setting a public hearing for January 7, 2010, on an amendment to the comprehensive plan to amend the long-range planning growth area boundary to accommodate the annexation proposed by the Moss Green Development Corporation.

Board of Adjustment

MEETING INFORMATION

Wednesday, December 16, 5 p.m., Emma Harvat Hall in City Hall

This meeting was originally scheduled for December 9, but was postponed due to weather conditions. One of the original agenda items — discussion of an application for a special exception to allow a specialized education facility to operate in the Intensive Commercial zone at 415 Highland Avenue — has been rescheduled for the January 13 meeting.

AGENDA ITEMS

Discussion of special exception criteria and the Board of Adjustment's scope of review for Communications Transmission Facilities (cell towers).

UniverCity update

City staff members are beginning to identify and evaluate properties that qualify for the UniverCity Neighborhood Partnership affordable housing program. UniverCity, a joint project between the University of Iowa and the City of Iowa City, seeks to help stabilize and revitalize older neighborhoods surrounding the University of Iowa campus and return them to a healthier balance of owner-occupied homes and rental housing. The affordable housing program is being funded by a \$1 million I-JOBS grant.

To qualify for the program, properties must be located within the designated UniverCity Neighborhoods, have a current rental permit, be priced under \$200,000, and be in a condition that can be addressed within the \$50,000 rehab budget. City staff will administer the program and provide recommendations and oversight on the home renovation process. The first round of property purchases and renovations will get underway in January 2010, with homes available for re-sale as early as March.

For more information on the program, visit www.icgov.org/UniverCity.





PUBLIC ART

MARCIA BOLLINGER

Public Art Coordinator
319.356.5237

marcia-bollinger@iowa-city.org

Web page:

<http://www.icgov.org/publicart>

WRITERS AND VISUAL ARTISTS:

Poetry (and Art) in Public

Iowa City's writers and artists are being called upon to submit works for this year's Poetry in Public program, now in its eighth year, and Poetry in Public Art, a new associated program introduced just last year that seeks entries from visual artists of two-dimensional pieces inspired by one of this year's selected poems.

In Poetry in Public, local writers are encouraged to submit original poems in celebration of the City's rich literary culture and history. Last year, Iowa City was named a UNESCO "City of Literature" — one of only three in the world — and Poetry in Public seeks to encourage writers and foster continued interest in creative writing and the art of the written word.

More info and 2010 entry submission forms can be found on the City's website at www.icgov.org/pip. Other questions may be directed to Marcia Bollinger at 356.5237 or marcia-bollinger@iowa-city.org.

Part of our City's literary tradition

Who can enter?

Anyone who's a resident of Johnson County. Applicants can be of any age and any skill level, from elementary school students to retirees, published poets to casual writers, and professional artists to people who just like to draw. No fee to participate!

What are the rules?

...for poetry entries...

- Only one poem per person.
- The poem must be 7 lines or less (not including the title).
- Avoid using complex formats.
- All poems must be suitable for public display and for readers of all ages.
- See www.icgov.org/pip for full list of requirements.

...for art entries...

Because art entries will not be submitted until poems are selected, rules for this program will be announced later.

How do I participate?

...for poetry entries...

Attach a Poetry in Public 2010 cover sheet (found on our website at www.icgov.org/pip) to your poem and **mail** to or **drop off** at City Hall:

City Hall
Attn: Poetry in Public
410 East Washington Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

or **e-mail** to:

marcia-klingaman@iowa-city.org

...for art entries...

Submission guidelines for Poetry in Public Art projects will be announced at a later date.

When's the deadline?

All poems must be received by
5 p.m.

Friday, February 5, 2010

The deadline for art projects will be announced later.

Who selects?

A panel of judges, including a professional writer, representatives from the City's Public Library and Public Art Advisory Committee, and City staff will select poems based on the quality of writing and poem's suitability for public display before a general audience.

Poems on display

Selected poems will be on public display from National Poetry Month in April through next fall at the Iowa City Public Library, Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center, and Scanlon Gymnasium / Mercer Park Aquatic Center, as well as in City buses, downtown kiosks, and other public facilities. There is no honorarium, but writers whose works are selected will receive a copy of the poster featuring his or her poem.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT?

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

General Phone: 319.356.5230

Fax: 319.356.5217

Department Web Page: <http://www.icgov.org/PCD>

ADMINISTRATION

Jeff Davidson

Director
319.356.5232
jeff-davidson@iowa-city.org

Janet Dvorsky

Administrative Secretary
319.356.5230
janet-dvorsky@iowa-city.org

Jodi DeMeulenaere

Public Information Assistant
319.356.5236
jodi-demeulenaere@iowa-city.org

URBAN PLANNING

Robert Miklo

Senior Planner
319.356.5240
bob-miklo@iowa-city.org

Urban Planners:

Karen Howard

319.356.5251
karen-howard@iowa-city.org

Christina Kuecker

Historic Preservation
319.356.5243
christina-kuecker@iowa-city.org

Sarah Walz

Board of Adjustment
319.356.5239
sarah-walz@iowa-city.org

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Steve Long

Coordinator
319.356.5250
steve-long@iowa-city.org

Community Development Planners:

Tracy Hightshoe

319.356.5244
tracy-hightshoe@iowa-city.org

Doug Ongie

319.356.5479
doug-ongie@iowa-city.org

David Purdy

319.356.5489
david-purdy@iowa-city.org

Housing Rehabilitation Specialists:

David Powers

319.356.5233
david-powers@iowa-city.org

Jeff Vanatter

319.356.5128
jeff-vanatter@iowa-city.org

Liz Osborne

Program Assistant
319.356.5246
liz-osborne@iowa-city.org

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wendy Ford

Coordinator
319.356.5248
wendy-ford@iowa-city.org

JCCOG

John Yapp

Executive Director
319.356.5252
john-yapp@iowa-city.org

Transportation Planners:

Brad Neumann

319.356.5235
brad-neumann@iowa-city.org

Kent Ralston

319.356.5253
kent-ralston@iowa-city.org

Kristopher Ackerson

319.356.5247
kristopher-ackerson@iowa-city.org

Darian Nagle-Gamm

319.356.5254
darian-nagle-gamm@iowa-city.org

Human Services Planning:

Linda Severson

Coordinator
319.356.5242
linda-severson@iowa-city.org

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Marcia Bollinger

Coordinator of
Neighborhood Services
& Iowa City Public Art Program
319.356.5237
marcia-bollinger@iowa-city.org