

IOWA PLANNING



American Planning Association
Iowa Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

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Davenport's Passive Approach to Floodplain Management

Matt Flynn, AICP
City of Davenport

Iowa's third largest city, Davenport (pop. 99,000) is the largest City in the United States located on a navigable river without structural flood protection.

Davenport, which existed before Iowa was a state, has more control of its riverfront than many municipalities. In fact the City owns nearly all of the nine miles of its riverfront. The original motivation of ownership was to have a park like corridor for a primary sanitary sewer interceptor. The result was the creation of LeClaire Park, Lindsey Park, the scenic overlook at the water company, Modern Woodmen Park and now the developing Centennial Park.

Throughout its history, Davenport has seen its share of devastating floods. For decades, Davenporters debated the pros and cons of building protection. While the floods of 2008 (Davenport had three, one being a flash flood of Duck Creek) caused damage and expended



Save the beer! Temporary levees like this one protect older businesses including the Front Street Brewery

[More on Floodplain Management, Page 5](#)

2008 Iowa Planning Awards

Each year, the Iowa Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Iowa) asks its more than 350 members to nominate plans, projects, and individuals deserving recognition by the professional organization. Award nominees can be recognized in as many as fifteen categories ranging from planning excellence to distinguished leadership. Based on an independent review by a jury of professional planners from the Minnesota Chapter of the APA, three nominees have been selected to receive Iowa APA Awards in 2008, as follows:

Outstanding Planning Award for Best Practice – City of West Des Moines and Central Iowa Architects – “A Pattern Book for West Des Moines Neighborhoods”

The City of West Des Moines identified the need to encourage homeowners to retain the integrity and character of their homes within the existing older neighborhoods of the City and asked for help from the architectural community in identifying the prevalent character and architectural styles of these neighborhoods and ideas for logical ways to expand and update these older homes. A group of three neighborhoods were identified within the City for the initiative to focus on. The product of this public planning process was a series of

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The Editor's Corner

Richard Brown, AICP
APA Iowa Newsletter Editor

One of the perks of being the Iowa Planning Newsletter Editor is the opportunity to occasionally replace the "President's Message" with my own. I'm taking advantage of that perk to let you know more about the newsletter and other changes to communication in APA Iowa.

First, you may have noticed that the newsletter is only delivered in a digital format. One of the advantages of an all-digital format is that we no longer have to meet printing deadlines, so we can create, process and deliver the newsletter more quickly. As a result, our new goal is to publish six newsletters each year instead of four as we had in the past.

As always, planners across the state are encouraged to submit articles to be published in upcoming issues of the newsletter. Below is a schedule of our 2009 deadlines and publishing dates. If you have an article you would like to see published, please submit it to the newsletter editor by the deadline for that issue. Please note that submitted articles must be approved by the APA Iowa Executive Committee for publication, and approved articles are subject to editing.

May 2009:
Deadline: April 15, 2009
Publish Date: April 30, 2009

November 2009:
Deadline: October 15, 2009
Publish Date: October 30, 2009

July 2009:
Deadline: June 15, 2009
Publish Date: June 30, 2009

January 2010:
Deadline: December 15, 2009
Publish Date: December 30, 2009

September 2009:
Deadline: August 15, 2009
Publish Date: August 30, 2009

In addition to our all-digital newsletter, APA Iowa will soon have a new and improved website. This major overhaul will be the first one since our website was created, and will serve as a portal to up-to-date job information, planning resources, past and future Chapter news and activities, planning-related links, and an archive of past issues of Iowa Planning.

The last big thing to look for is a first for APA Iowa; we will be producing an annual report that will be printed and sent to all of our members. You should receive this annual report sometime in April.

As always, we strive to improve our communication with and among APA Iowa members and welcome your questions, comments and suggestions, which may be submitted to me at rrbrown@dmgov.org.



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design guidelines or pattern book for the City and its residents to use as a guide and source of information when homeowners desire to add onto or remodel their existing older homes so that the additions and renovations are in keeping with the original architectural character. Thanks in part to a grant from a local lending institution; the printed copies of the pattern books are available to West Des Moines residents at no cost. The pattern book is also available for download via the News page of the City's web site (www.wdm-ia.com). Reference copies are also available at the West Des Moines City Hall, Library, the local Main Street office, neighborhood associations, branch banks, and West Des Moines building supply retail stores.

Outstanding Planning Award for a Grassroots Initiative – City of Dubuque and MSA Professional Services – “Washington Neighborhood Revitalize Visioning Project”

During the summer and fall of 2007, the City of Dubuque sponsored a participatory Visioning Process for the Washington Neighborhood in order to articulate shared values and goals among neighborhood residents and stakeholders. The Washington Neighborhood is among the most diverse neighborhoods in the State of Iowa, and is conveniently located just north of Dubuque's vibrant downtown district. During a period of increasing neighborhood tension, this visioning process provided a consensus-based foundation for continued efforts to make positive improvements to the neighborhood. City Staff, working with the assistance of staff from MSA Professional Services and Iowa State University Extension, designed and implemented a unique “immersion-based” community engagement program. This program was specifically designed to build bridges between diverse stakeholders, to expand the civic capacities of local groups, and to achieve a single consensus vision statement that would serve as a touchstone for all future efforts within the area.

Over forty participants, representing the neighborhood association, commercial interests, faith based organizations, and key City staff and elected officials participated in a series of evening meetings during the fall of 2007 to work toward articulating a shared vision for the future of the Washington Neighborhood.

Outstanding Planning Award for Best Practice – Iowa Department of Transportation and Mead & Hunt, Inc. – “Iowa Airport Land use Guidebook”

Communities depend on Iowa's aviation infrastructure—the existing system of airports—to provide the needed services and added benefits of close accessibility. Land use compatibility and the coordination of the management of land uses on and near airports have been identified as important components of the system's preservation. The *Iowa Airport Land Use Guidebook* was developed to create an understanding of the management of land uses on an airport and a connection to the land use regulations in adjacent communities. This comprehensive guide addresses the preservation of airport safety as well as the public health, safety and welfare of persons on the ground near airports.

The *Guidebook* was developed as a reference tool for a diverse audience of professionals who make decisions regarding airport land use compatibility including airport sponsors, planners and elected officials. It has been developed to identify and explain the distinct relationship between land use classifications and the impacts associated with compatibility concerns. Further, it provides suggested methods and strategies for implementing effective land use compatibility planning and zoning.



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Davenport Flood Management

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resources, the City is very fortunate not to have suffered the devastating damage that has afflicted so many other communities.

This was not due to accident. It is more than just providing protection. This is the story of how Davenport learned to work with the River, manage its floodplains, predict and fight floods, and is reclaiming its Riverfront for recreational amenities of national caliber.

The Great Floodwall Debate

Following a major flood in 1965 and a series of moderate events in the decade following, Davenport and the Corps of Engineers began to look in depth of the feasibility of constructing structural flood protection, consisting of a floodwall in the core of downtown and levees elsewhere. Supporters saw the project as simple necessity while opponents cited its multi-million dollar cost, potential environmental impact and especially, the isolation of the citizenry from the water. In the Downtown, LeClarie Park, its historic band shell and Modern Woodmen Park (with the pending demise of Yankee Stadium, soon to be the third oldest professional ballpark in the Country) would be altered forever.

Davenport's plan for a collapsible wall and roadway network took a very long time to develop and it was not ready for federal funding until the early 1980's. The City Council, after input from many community members, spearheaded by Kathy Wine and her organization RiverAction, decided the view and access' value exceeded the threat of going into debt or raising taxes. The City decided to forgo the big plans of the Corps of Engineers.

The record flood of 1993 followed by the near record 2001 flood again raised the floodwall issue. However, community attitudes had decidedly changed. Yes, the water rose, things got wet, and the national media came to film the 'great disaster', but actual damage was minimal compared to the communities devastated by levee breaks or had systems overtopped by floods that exceeded design limits. The City and the Corps of Engineers took one last look at the financial feasibility of constructing flood protection. Ongoing property acquisition in the floodplain, flood proofing of new structures and construction inflation now clearly had determined the costs exceed the benefits.

High Tech Flood Fighting

You could cynically say that Davenport has become good at flood fighting through lots of practice. That would be true, however, it can also be said that it is equally science and art. Davenport engages a detailed flood fighting plan (http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/egov/docs/1206019646_714752.pdf) that systematically details what action needs to take place based on what projected crests will be as well as current time water levels. The City knows what quantities of materials are needed based on predicted flood heights, and can rely on a network of outside contractors and volunteers who work with City staff when the need arises.

GIS has been used extensively to model flood impacted areas and heights. During the recent floods, this information was widely broadcast and posted on the City's website. City GIS technicians field checked elevations, on foot and by boat. Their findings showed that the modeling done in the office closely matched real world conditions.

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Davenport Flood Management

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Public Works Director Dee Bruemmer has overseen flood fighting operations since 1990. She knows to err on the conservative side and directs her crews to prepare for floods much worse than predicted. Bruemmer will be soon leaving her position to assume the Scott County Administrator position, but the planning efforts of the City and her leadership leaves Davenport well-positioned to deal with the next flood event.

RiverVision and Beyond

RiverVision is a partnership between the cities of Davenport, Iowa, and Rock Island, Illinois, to develop a Consensus Plan for their shared Mississippi riverfront. The Consensus Plan was developed over the course of seven months with input from the public on both sides of the Mississippi River. The RiverVision process is a unique model for cooperation between two cities and states to achieve both shared regional objectives as well as projects specific to the needs of each city. By pooling the resources and energy of two cities and states for the greater good, the communities of Davenport and Rock Island have created an ambitious model for neighboring communities across the country.

In Davenport, RiverVision has established the basis for developing Centennial Park, home of a former dumping ground immediately downstream from Downtown. Centennial Park will be constructed over a ten year period and will include a skate park (completed), concessions and restrooms (nearing completion), basketball courts (nearing completion), a spray ground (funded for FY 09-10), and additional amenities (FY 10-11 and beyond).

In recognition of the joint efforts of Rock Island and Davenport in the development of RiverVision, both Cities were named "Most Liveable Cities" by the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2007.

The RiverVision Plan can be found at http://www.cityofdavenportiowa.com/egov/docs/1180045217_757019.pdf

Plans for expanding LeClaire Park, located adjacent to Downtown, have been developed recently by the City's Design Center. This process also generated broad community support by utilizing a variety of input techniques. Although the timing of the relocation of the Rhythm City Casino has been delayed, the Citizens of Davenport are eager to see additional riverfront recreational amenities provided.

Davenport also boasts one of the largest urban wetlands in the Upper Mississippi Basin, the 200 acre Nahant Marsh. In 1998, after the Nahant Marsh area was donated to the City of Davenport by the Scott County Sportsmen's Association, a master plan was adopted by the City of Davenport to rehabilitate the land which was contaminated with lead. In 2000, after major rehabilitation efforts, the Nahant Marsh education center opened its doors. Today the Nahant Marsh Ecological Area conserves wetland resources and habitat and offers the community education about the value of wetlands, water quality, and the role such areas have in floodplain management.



2009 APA National Conference

Greetings APA members. As you may have heard by now, Minneapolis will be host for the 101st National Planning Conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center, April 25-29, 2009. This conference is expected to bring together up to 6,000 professionals from multiple disciplines who are active in and passionate about city building. In addition to the hundreds of sessions selected by the American Planning Association, the Local Host Committee has developed over 100 mobile workshops (many of which will be conducted by foot, bike or transit), orientation tours, special events, a planners guide on what to experience while in Minneapolis, and conference merchandise.

The conference will offer something for everyone. The American Planning Association, the Local Host Committee and all the volunteers are working hard to make the 2009 conference in Minneapolis one of the best, and more importantly, most relevant given the challenging economic times. The session tracks include: Why Places Grow; Neighborhood Planning in Citywide Context; Green Urban Design; Reclaiming the Waterfront (and Mississippi River); Is Regional Planning Coordinated Planning?; Civic Planning and the Role of Foundations; The Arts and Culture Economy; Small Town and Rural Planning; Youth Engagement in Planning; Climate Change and a Sustainable Future; The Changing Face of the American Community; Planning and Community Health and Activity; Transportation Infrastructure: The Next Hundred Years.

The 2009 National Planning Conference Local Host Committee, in partnership with the American Planning Association staff, continues its work to make the 2009 conference in Minneapolis one of the best, and more importantly, most relevant given the challenging economic times. The Co-Chairs wanted to call out a few sessions that members from the Midwest might find particularly useful:

Saturday Workshop: Bringing Economic Reality to the Planning Process

Sunday:

- Infrastructure and Global Competitiveness
- Transportation Infrastructure and Economic Growth
- Planning Directors and Infrastructure Investment

Monday:

- Trends that Matter: Why Regions Grow
- Spatial Economics of Land Use
- Dealing with Shrinkage and Growth
- Planning Directors in the Hot Seat
- Achieving City Quality in Economic Downtimes

Tuesday:

- Mastering Leadership
- Mega-Region Strategy and Planning
- Funding the Infrastructure Gap
- Progress and Preservation in City Planning

Wednesday:

- Women Planning Directors in Big Cities



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For More Information Please Contact:

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<p>GOLD</p>  		

Flood Management Continued from Page 6

Over 25 years after being formed to advocate against structural flood control, RiverAction (www.riveraction.org) continues to promote recreational activities and environmental awareness along this stretch of Mississippi. It has worked to establish a water tax connecting five of the Quad Cities, coordinated riverfront trail connections and wayfinding, and holds celebrations such as Ride the River, which helps reinforce the value, from a recreational, environmental, and economic standpoint, of our greatest resource.

Throughout much of American history, "too much water" has been touted as a problem to be "solved" through large scale public works projects. As a result cities have been given the false hope that they are perpetually safe and therefore encourage unwise floodplain development and increase flood damage costs. Katrina was the first big wake up call.

As many Iowa communities begin to recover from this year's flood, Davenport's example of floodplain protection, coordinated flood fighting, and open space restoration and development is worthy of consideration.

Events Calendar

Foreclosures Part 1: The Impact on Cities, Neighborhoods and Homeowners CM | 1.00

Wednesday, 03/25/09 11:30AM to 1:30PM

Sensible Land Use Coalition

St. Louis Park, MN

**APA Federal Planning Division
Conference for Federal Planner CM |**

Multipart

Wednesday, 04/22/09 to Friday, 04/24/09

Federal Planning Division APA

Minneapolis, MN

2009 Upper Midwest Conference CM |
Multipart

Thursday, 09/24/09 to Saturday, 09/26/09

APA Illinois Chapter

Chicago, IL

**See more information on Page 10

2009 APA National Planning Conference CM | Multipart

Friday, 04/24/09 to Tuesday, 04/28/09

American Planning Association

Minneapolis, MN

Road and Access Law: Successfully Handling Disputes CM | 6.00

Monday, 05/11/09 9:00AM to 4:30PM

NBI, Inc.

Overland Park, KS

Land Use Law: Current Issues in Subdivision, Annexation and Zoning CM | 6.00

Tuesday, 06/09/09 9:00AM to 4:30PM

NBI, Inc.

Fargo, ND



**2009 APA Iowa Chapter
Annual Conference**

Mark your calendar now for the American Planning Association
Iowa Chapter's Fall Conference in Des Moines on
October 28th—30th.

Please check out www.iowa-apa.org and watch your inbox for more conference
information coming soon.

2009 Upper Midwest Conference



If you are interested in submitting a planning related article in Planning Iowa, please contact the newsletter editor for more information.

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2009 Upper Midwest Conference September 24-26, 2009 Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the 1909 Plan of Chicago

The legacy of the 1909 Plan of Chicago will be a major theme for the conference, which will be a mobile workshop-based event with various workshops around the city and across the region to visit the best of Chicago-area planning. Plenary sessions will examine Burnham's legacy in the development of a Midwestern metropolis. This conference is part of the larger Burnham Plan Centennial celebration occurring throughout the city and its environs in 2009. Make bold plans. Dream big dreams. (More information on other Centennial celebration activities can be found at www.burnhamplan100.com.)

For more information and volunteer opportunities, contact the Conference Co-Chairs:
Konstantine Savoy, AICP - KSavoy@rsksaassociates.com
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SAVE THE DATE

CHICAGO 2009

For more information visit www.ilapa.org

2009 Upper Midwest Conference
September 24-26, 2009 - Chicago, IL (Agency)

