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Public Engagement Strategies to Build More Resilient Communities when Urgency Matters

Cedar Rapids, Iowa


The Flood

The 2008 Flood

In Eastern Iowa, the City That 'Would Never Flood' Goes 12 Feet Under

Scott Olson/Getty Images

Volunteers placing sandbags along a road Thursday in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. About 8,000 people had evacuated their homes, and 5,500 were without electricity.

By CHRISTOPHER MAAG
Published: June 13, 2008

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — They said this city would never flood. They talked about 1993, and 1966 and 1851, years when the Cedar River swelled and hissed but mostly stayed within its banks. They thought they were safe. They were wrong.

31.12 feet flood crest

10+ square miles impacted

310 City facilities flooded

Flood Impacts

41,771 tons of flood debris removed

1,360 estimated jobs lost due to flood

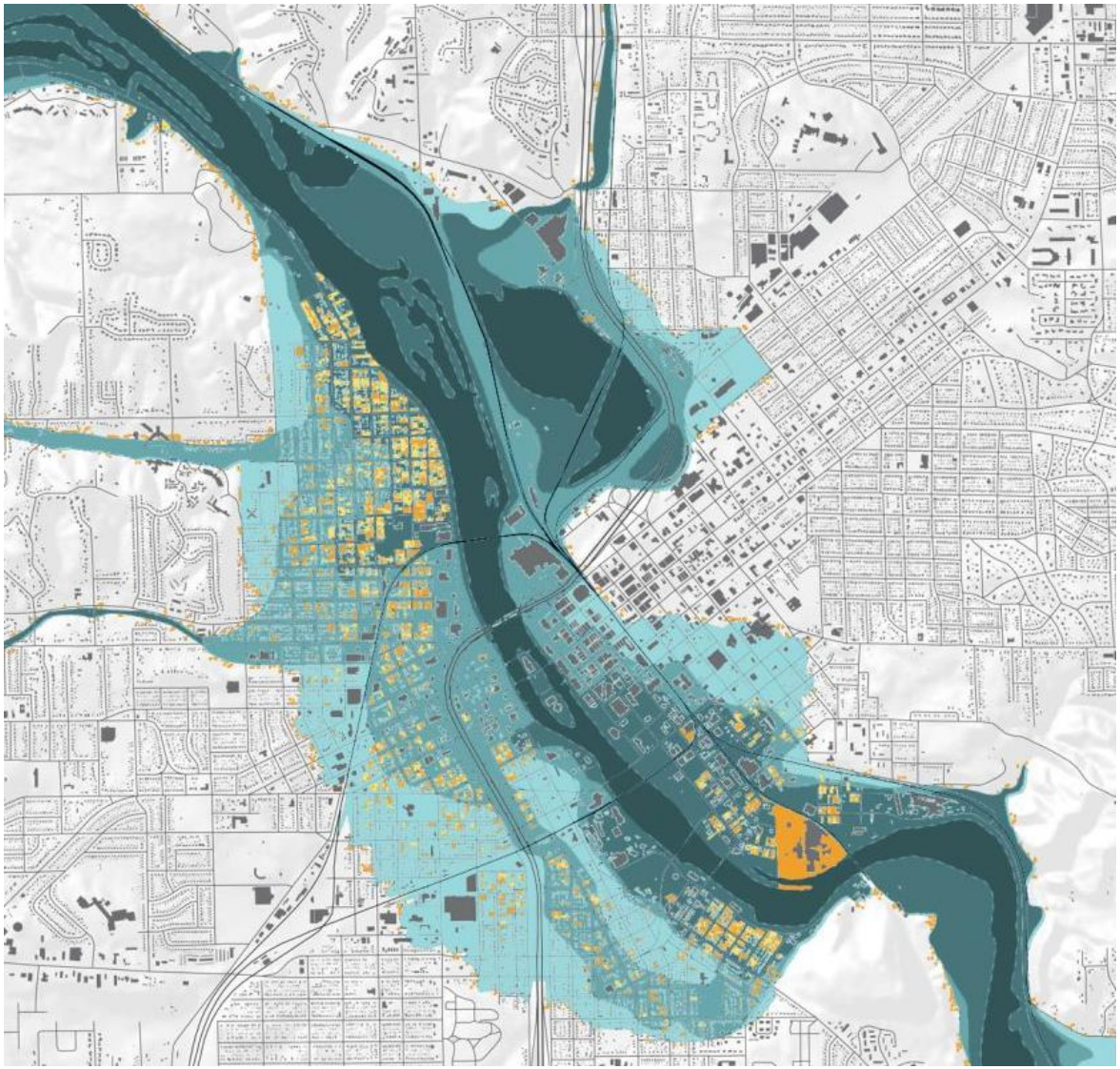
Flood Impacts

7,749 parcels flooded

~18,000 residents displaced

0 flood-related deaths

Flood Impacts



5,900 residential properties flooded

~1,400 damaged properties will be demolished

Recovery Timeline

FLOOD
June 13
2008

PHASE 1
Flood Management Strategy
July - November 2008

3 Public Open Houses seeking public feedback on the following themes:

- Flood Impact Assessement
- Options and Evaluation
- Flood Management Strategy

PHASE 2
Neighborhoods Reinvestment Plan
January - May 2009

4 City-wide workshops & 4 Area Meetings leading to a strategy for reinvestment that builds:

- Community Governance
- An Evaluation Framework
- An Action Plan

PHASE 3
Implementation
Ongoing

A series of implementation initiatives:

- Public Facilities
- Urban Design Guidelines
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Army Corps Feasibility Study

Phase One; Public Open House

Phase Two; Trained City Employees Facilitating Conversations between Neighbors

The Public Engagement Process – Getting Decisions that Stick

Three Stages – Communicate & Seek Feedback on:

- The need, the process, evaluation criteria
- The options
- The selected option

Keys to Success

- Incorporates public early on in decision-making process
- Establishes clear roles which retain governing board's authority
- Is interactive and addresses residents' issues/concerns as process progresses; listens and responds to public feedback
- Develops support during process, creating an outcome that's supportable by governing boards

Flood Management Plan

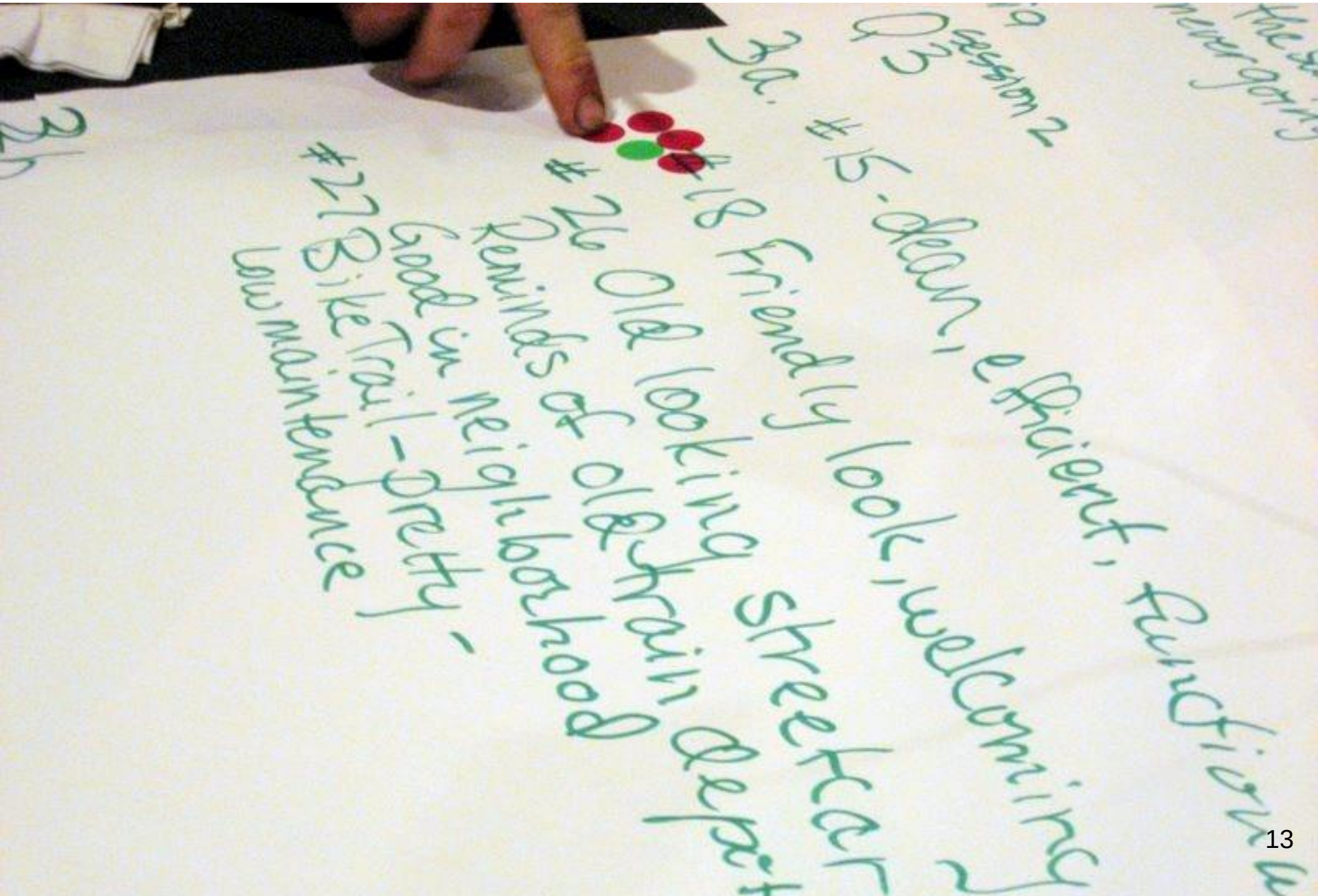
- Staffed "open house” events
- Boards which:

  -- told the story

  -- framed up the issues

  -- translated technical information for community consumption
- Solicited feedback at each step; fed back the feedback, and incorporated feedback

Gathering Meaningful Feedback



Cultivating Community Support and Stewardship

Open House 1

Sharing Personal Stories of Loss to Allow Healing

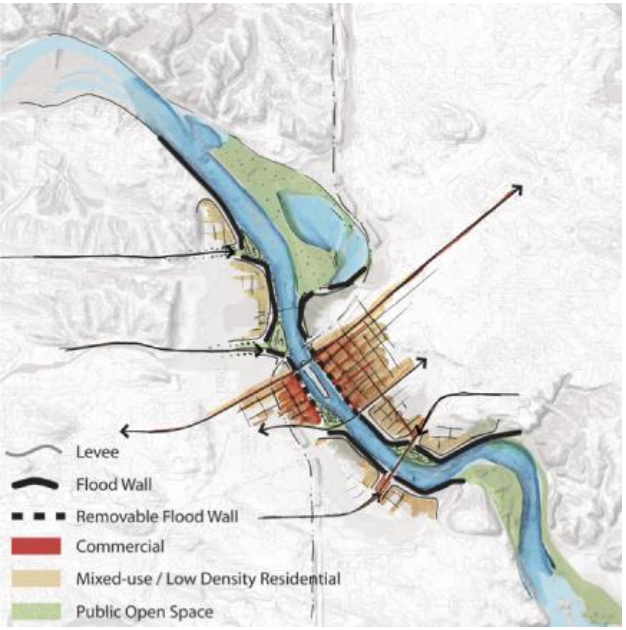
Evaluating Options

Tactic	Flood Reduction	Costs	Install Time	Approval Time	Other Impacts
1. Dry reservoir upstream Size: 520,000 acres, 1 ft. of water deep		$600--650M	50 years	3--5 years	Effective, but negatively impacts six towns, as well as roads, bridges, and the Duane Arnold Power Plant
2. Flood protection at river's edge Floodwalls / levees 10-18 ft. high depending on location		$250--275M	10--15 years	1--3 years	Effective, but visually and physically separates the City from the river
3. Flood protection offset from river Floodwalls / levees 5-18 ft. high depending on location		$175--200M	10--15 years	1--3 years	Effective, but severs connection to the river and requires extensive property acquisition
4. Diversion channel around Cedar Rapids (East) A 15-mile 330 ft. wide x 20 ft. deep concrete channel along east route		$5.6B	20--30 years	3--5 years	Effective, but expensive, and aesthetic issues
5. Diversion channel around Cedar Rapids (West) 11-mile 330 ft. wide x 20 ft. deep concrete channel along west route		$2.8B	20--30 years	3--5 years	Effective, but expensive, and aesthetic issues
6. Multiple reservoirs upstream Size: Total 520,000 acres, 1 ft. of water deep		$900--950M	40--50 years	3--5 years	Effective, but negatively impacts upstream communities
7. Widen Cedar River channel cross section Size: 700 ft. wide		$320--350M	10--20 years	3--5 years	Impacts adjoining property
8. Diversion channel through Cedar Rapids 100 ft. wide by 20 ft. deep concrete channel		$140-160M	10--15 years	1--3 years	Aesthetic issues and impacts adjoining property
9. Construct lift bridge spans		$110--120M	10--20 years	< 1 year	Bridges would not be operational during flood event
10. Add tunnel through Cedar River corridor Four 20 ft. diameter tunnels		$300-320M	10--15 years	1--3 years	Unknown
11. Increase channel capacity By removing "pinch points" on either side of corridor		$35--45M	10--15 years	1--3 years	Impacts adjoining property

Twenty-two flood management tactics proposed by experts and community members were evaluated. Above are the **11 most effective tactics** *at reducing the 2008 flood level, in order of effectiveness.*

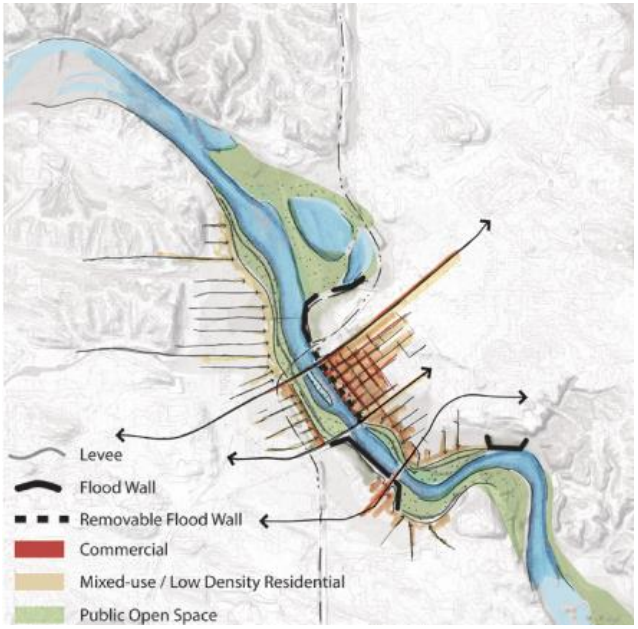
Developing Strategies

The Walled City
(Floodwalls)



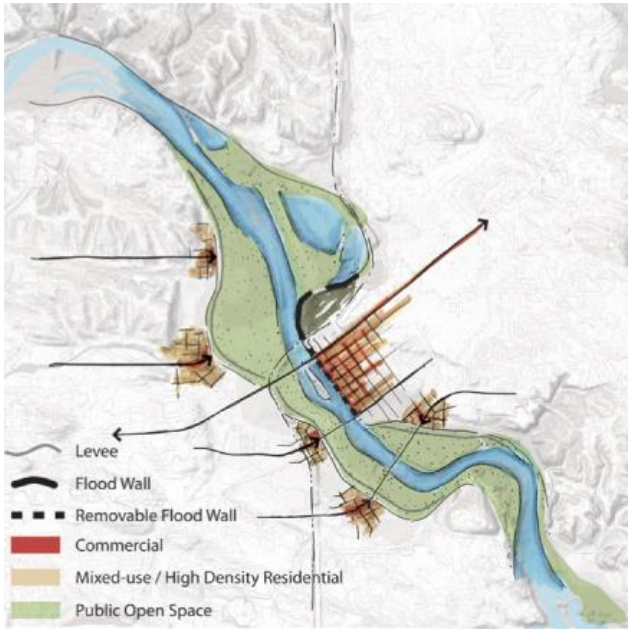
Floodwalls are constructed at the river's edge with strategic openings.

The Greenway
(Levees)



A **levee** and **parkway** system is developed along the river.

The Breathing Room
(Naturalized Floodplain)

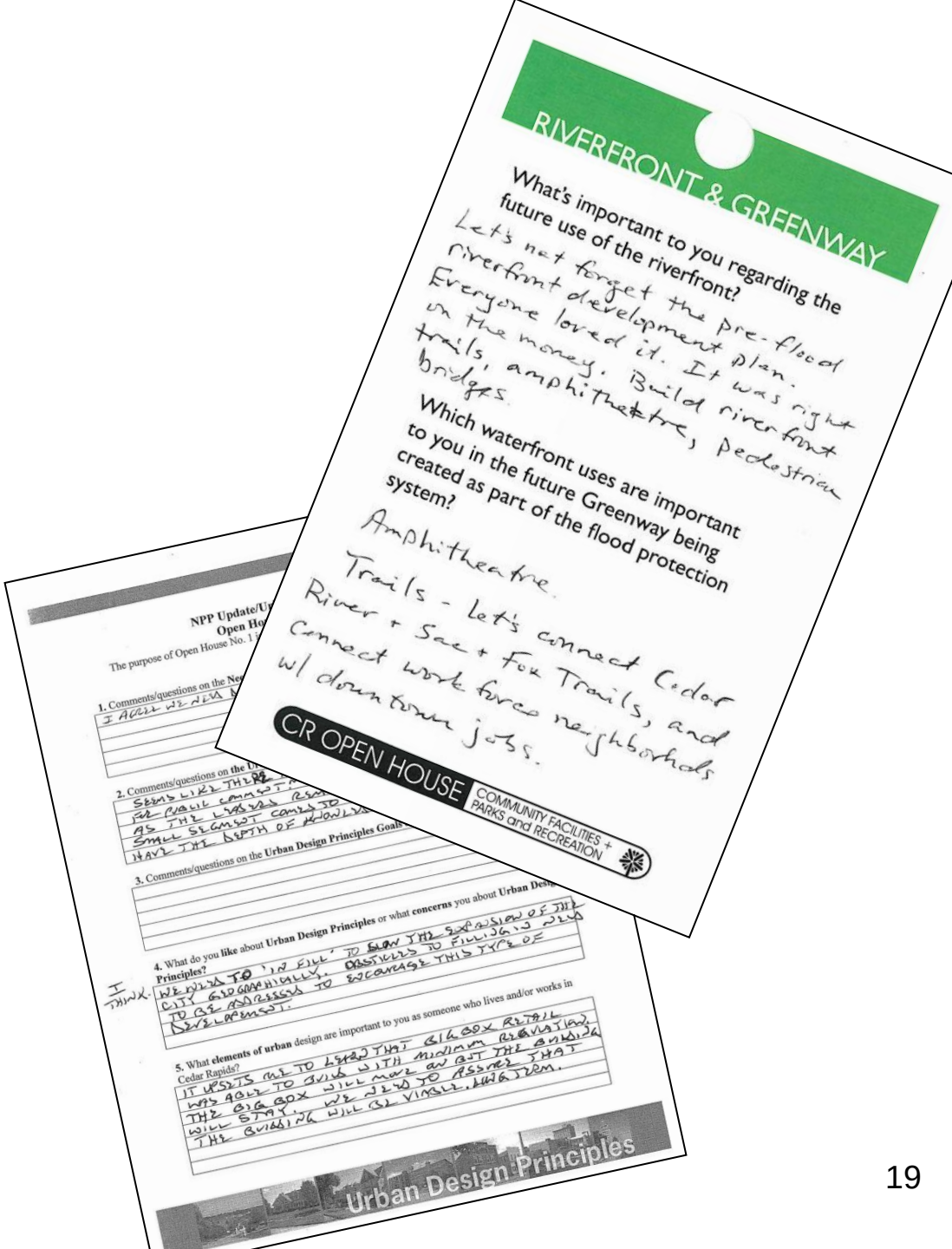


Low-lying, flood-prone areas are reclaimed as a **naturalized floodplain** with an integrated inland levee

Resolution of Neighborhood Conflict

Post-meeting follow-up

- Sign-ins/ mailing list
- Synthesizing feedback (include highlights at next meetings to demonstrate comprehension and confirm take-aways)
- Thank you for attending/ Send links to presentation and/or synthesized feedback



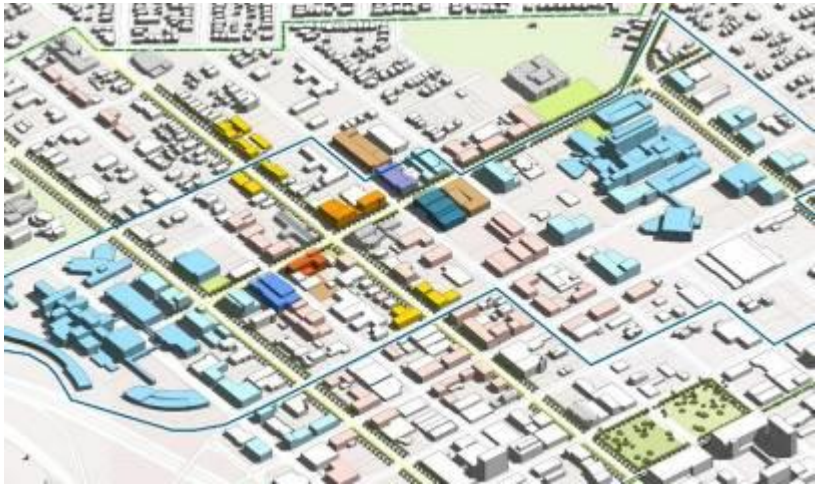
Transparency

Fostering Self Governance

Citizen Steering Committee

Designing a process that leads to implementation

Flood Management Strategy Implementation: Acquisitions



Initiatives Underway: Medical District Planning

Ongoing Reinvestment Planning: Public Facilities, Parks and Open Space

AREA PLAN ELEMENTS	INITIATIVES	ACTION ITEMS	STARTED WITHIN…					ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	ROLES						STATUS
			0-12 MONTHS	1-2 YEARS	3-5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	10-15 YEARS		FEDERAL	STATE	COUNTY	CITY	NEIGHBORHOOD	OTHER	
Housing & Neighborhood Character															
Transportation & Connectivity															
Recreation & Open Space															
Arts & Cultural Opportunities															
Business Reinvestment															
Community Services															
Preferred Flood Management Strategy															

Neighborhood Planning Process Action Plan Format; "A Living Document"

Monitoring progress

Neighborhood Reinvestment Action Plans

Central

Elements — **Open Space & Recreation**

Initiatives — **Greenway Programming and Design**

Action Items — **Determine feasibility of a new outdoor performance venue**

Outdoor performance venue will be part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Open Houses for public input are scheduled for June 23, August 18 and October 6. Additional coordination and planning with the community may be needed at the conclusion of recommendations.

Start Date: 2009
This project is On-Going

This action item is a flood recovery/reinvestment project or initiative that has been identified by the public through the Neighborhood Planning Process.

Responsible Parties

	Lead	Communication	Funding	Participation
Federal			X	
State			X	
County				
City	X		X	
Neighborhood				X
PrivateSector