

**First Avenue Uptown College District Meeting**  
**February 21, 2008**  
**Coe College**  
**8 a.m.**

**Present:** Molly Altorfer, Scott Crosby, Lt. Tim Daily, Craig Erickson, Erin Lenninger, Alex Michaud, Doug Neumann, Susan Pfeiler-Todd, Kevin Platz, Rod Pritchard, Lisa Reid, Deb Schnyder, Monica Vernon, Phil Wasta, John Wasta, Cpt. Bernie Walther, Drew Westberg.

***Agenda Items***

- 1. Guest Speaker: Doug Neumann, President – Cedar Rapids Downtown District.** Doug gave an update on the progress and process of the city's revitalization for downtown (also covered in a front page article of the Gazette – Thursday, Feb. 21). He shared that this plan was conceived by cooperating and working together with the many downtown stakeholders. Past improvement plans, where one entity developed the ideas and tried to sell them to other stakeholders, never gained much traction. An equal and balanced plan, supported by most if not all major contributors, has allowed this plan to move forward with enthusiasm. There are seven aspects of the development plan, one of which is moving focus to the Cedar River. Doug explained the multiple facets of the River Phase which focus on improving existing infrastructure and also building new.

As far as funding, they have some commitment from the city council and are working on securing funds at the state level. Many legislators are excited about the plans, but worry about the "tight" budget this year. When asked if the major businesses downtown were in favor of the plan, Doug responded that all were, even businesses located away from downtown, such as AEGON and Rockwell Collins, viewing this as a business investment that will have advantages for the larger city, not just downtown.

Doug reported there are 900 people living downtown in Cedar Rapids. He compared this to Des Moines' 15,000 downtown residents. Maxfield Research has also done a study on this area and believes Cedar Rapids can handle the addition of housing units in the downtown area. He emphasized the need to build "upper-end" rental units that would attract young business professionals and also to spread the construction over time so as not to saturate the area. When asked about incentives from the city, Doug replied that the city now tends to work with each developer and come to terms on incentives based on what the developer needs to turn a profit and what fits into the city's plan. The first businesses/organizations to jump on board with the revitalization will likely benefit from more incentives than those last to commit.

- 2. Update from Cedar Rapids Police Department –** Capt. Bernie Walther introduced Lt. Tim Daily as the officer for the SE district of which Uptown is included. Lt. Daily will be attending Uptown's monthly meetings, if possible, from now on.

Capt. Walther stated that the police department has started reporting crime statistics for the Uptown district (10<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Streets along First Avenue). He was happy to report that the more serious crimes decreased in the month of January. There were three robberies. He reported that crime was down in the Mound View Neighborhood as well.

As part of the new police department reorganization, there will now be district service officers that serve each district and work during the day to resolve "big picture" issues within their district. Responding to calls will be secondary (with the exception of emergencies) as their primary responsibility is to communicate between departments, agencies and the public. One of the first things

they will focus on will be code enforcement, working with other city departments. Bike patrols will start in March, weather permitting. These officers will work downtown and through Uptown, creating a visible presence, responding as necessary and expanding relationships with the businesses and organizations within the patrol.

Capt. Walther explained there are two years left in the five-year Weed-n-Seed grant for the city and the steering committee for that grant is looking to add a member. Capt. Walther invited a member of Uptown to join the committee. The Weed-n-Seed committee meets monthly to discuss ways of using the funds appropriately in our area.

There was a robbery of the Wireless One recently. The police are still looking for two black males – 6’2” 175 lbs. and 5’7” 140 lbs. They were wearing black coats and had a shotgun. Capt. Walther asked if there were any areas that needed attention in the district and a couple places were noted. The alleys behind businesses on either side of First Avenue are still seeing a bit of negative activity. The police department agreed and believes the bike patrols should help in that area. The block of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Street along A Ave. was also identified as a problem area. The police are currently looking into those issues.

- 3. Update on Market Study** – In late January, Scott, Rod and Erin met with Christine Butterfield, director of community development for Cedar Rapids, to introduce her to the district (physically) and speak with her about obtaining a market study. It turns out that the city was able to add a market study of Uptown in to a previous deal with Maxfield Research, and in doing so, was able to secure it for a reasonable cost. A market study proposal has been drawn up and will soon be finalized and posted to the Web site. Drew thought that the study may be able to begin as early as March 1. Given the proposed 60 day study, the district would have the results for the May meeting. The same researchers have or will soon have completed studies in other parts of the city and so are very familiar with our area and will collaborate with information from those studies.
- 4. Goals for 2008** – The steering committee has identified four main areas in which they wish to focus efforts for 2008. *1) Create an accurate, inclusive list of properties within our district.* In order to realize other goals and to ensure the whole district progresses together, it is important to know who is within our borders and have accurate information. *2) Increase membership.* There are financial reasons that a larger membership is advantageous, however, it will also be important to present a strong and united front when attempting to secure outside financing, support and community buy-in. A diverse group of members ensures healthy and representative leadership moving forward. *3) Conduct market study and take actions based on results.* This process is already underway (please read about market study above). When the results are presented to us, the district needs to be poised to move forward on the recommendations. *4) Host a special district event.* The district hopes to host a special event sometime in the fall of 2008 that would stimulate and promote the district in a fun and enjoyable way. Coordinating the event to coincide with a special event weekend at Coe would allow for even more people to attend.

#### Next Meetings:

- The next membership meeting will take place on Thursday, March 20 at 8 a.m. in Lynch Room, Gage Memorial Union on Coe’s campus. Please R.S.V.P. to Erin Lenninger at [elenning@coe.edu](mailto:elenning@coe.edu).
- The next steering committee meeting will take place on Thursday, March 13 at 2 p.m. in Nassif House on Coe’s campus. Please let Erin know if you are able to attend.

Please visit [www.uptowncollegedistrict.com](http://www.uptowncollegedistrict.com) for information and updates. If you have any specific questions, please feel free to contact Scott Crosby at 319-310-6111 or Erin Lenninger at 319-399-8581.