

City of Avoca

2009 Action Plan

“17 in 2009”

Prepared by Clint Fichter, City Manager
January 6, 2008

Introduction

On December 13, 2008, a group of City leaders met to discuss and develop the 2009 Action Plan. Meeting participants each received an Action Plan Questionnaire approximately three (3) weeks prior to the meeting. The Questionnaires were returned to the City Manager, who compiled the information for discussion at the December 13th meeting.

The City Manager acted as facilitator for the group meeting. The group discussed the compiled questionnaire responses and came to a general understanding related to the following areas:

- Definition of Success
- Major Recent Accomplishments
- Community Assets
- Community Liabilities
- External Challenges
- External Opportunities
- Future Accomplishments
- Near-Term Priorities
- Teamwork

City officials who attended and participated in the meeting include the following:

- Ronda Holst
- Leslie Bryant
- Carol Kyle
- James Johnson
- Bob McCarthy
- Eldon Riesgaard
- Becky Jacobsen
- Sandy Petersen
- Clint Fichter
- Teresa Hoepner
- Serena Riesgaard
- Jerry Espethseth
- Ken Woltmann
- David McCain
- Melissa Nielsen
- Mike Alexander
- Fred Miller

The most important function of the group was to develop consensus on a set of specific accomplishments that should drive the agenda of the City Council. The group then weighed the various policy alternatives to realize the identified accomplishments for inclusion in the Action Plan. The group's final recommendations are included in this document.

You will see that each recommended policy alternative has further information provided according to type, investment, justification, action, and timeline.

Carry-Over Items from 2008 Action Plan

The following items were included in the 2008 Action Plan. While significant progress was made toward each item, they were not fully resolved. Policy team time and resources will be spent on the following carry-over items:

- I. Work With School Board to Determine Disposition of Current Elementary Building
- II. Assess Needs of the Fire Department, Submit Grants to Meet Needs
- III. Adopt Building Codes and Contract with County Building Inspector
- IV. Create a Stormwater Utility for Storm Sewer Infrastructure Projects
- V. Assess Sidewalks System, Develop Plan of Action
- VI. Develop Operational Procedures for Each Department

Defining Success

A common definition of success is a key component of developing consensus. Our attitudes, actions, and priorities should be reflective of our definition of success. Inputs are the attributes that go into making a successful City. Outputs are the outcomes that the group felt evidenced a successful City. The group consensus on the inputs and outputs of success are listed below:

Inputs-

- Adequate Planning for the Future
- Public and Private Investment in Community
- Committed Progressive Leadership
- Long-Term, Big Picture Thinking Dominates
- Willing and Eager to Change with the Times
- Cultivates New Generations of Leaders
- Community Pride
- Good Location

Outputs-

- Enforcement of Ordinances
- Modern Recreational Facilities
- Jobs and Employers
- Attractive Neighborhoods and Housing Developments
- Excellent Schools
- Active Church Groups and Community Organizations
- Cooperation Among City Staff and Officials
- Inviting Downtown Areas

Major Accomplishments

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the City's recent major accomplishments. The group discussed the responses and approved the list below:

- Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Update
- City Code Update
- Clean-up of Nuisances/Slum/Blight
- Enforcement of Ordinances
- Progress on Streetscape Plan
- Computerized City Accounting
- Spraying for Mosquitoes
- Success with Grant Applications
- Expanded Community Events (i.e. Fourth of July)
- Hiring of City Manager and City Clerk
- Facilitating Creation of Avoca Betterment Association and "Old Hotel" Project
- Housing Incentive Grants

Assets

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the assets of the community. The group discussed the responses and approved the list below:

- I-80 and Hwy. 59 Location, Close to Council Bluffs
- Small Town Environment
- Good School System
- Top Notch City Employees
- New Housing Developments
- Downtown Revitalization Programs
- Culture and Recreational Amenities- Library, Golf Course, Aquatic Center, Park, Sports Complex
- Churches
- Proximity to Airfield
- Reasonable Tax Rate
- Funeral Home
- City Manager
- Limited Public Safety Requirements, Safe Neighborhoods
- Garbage and Sanitation Services
- Basic retail and services (i.e. grocery store and lumber yard)
- Website
- Existing Buildings and In-Fill Lots for Commercial and Residential Development
- Historic Homes
- Medical Clinic

Liabilities

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the liabilities of the community. The group discussed the responses and approved the list below:

- Decaying Neighborhoods and Dilapidated Houses
- Outdated and Crumbling Infrastructure (Curbs and Gutters, Sidewalks, Streets, Sewer, Water, No Storm Sewer)
- Declining Downtown Business District
- Lack of Population Base
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- No Senior Housing
- Old Elementary Building
- Negative Attitudes
- No Downtown Restaurant
- Poor Animal Control
- Lack of Pride: Junk in yards, Garbage cans left out, Welcome To Avoca Flags Old
- Do Not Market the Town to Outsiders
- Unattractive Gateways
- No Community Center
- Fairness of Ordinance Enforcement
- Poor Communication Between City Boards
- Lack of involvement from 40 & Below Age Group
- Lack of Developable Land within City Limits
- Lack of Good Paying Jobs
- No Curb and Gutter on South Side

External Challenges

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the external challenges of the community. The group discussed the responses and approved the list below:

- Negative Economic Trends
- Poor Cooperation Among Regional Communities
- Negative Population Trends
- Statewide Economy Too Dependent On Agriculture
- Too Far From Metro for Residential Growth Spillover

External Opportunities

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the external opportunities of the community. The group discussed the responses and approved the list below:

- Location Along Hwy. 59 and Interstate 80- Economic Development
- Community is Highly Desirable For Recent Retirees
- Attractive to Small Firms Like Estes Trucking
- Develop Area Near Interstate for Quality Job Growth
- Regional Approach to Ambulance and Fire Department Service
- Room to Expand Residential Area- East of Current City Limits
- Trails, Campgrounds, and River Corridors Attract Tourists and Residents- Develop River Areas for Recreation

Specific Accomplishments

The Action Plan Questionnaire asked participants to name the specific accomplishments that were their top priorities as City officials. The group discussed the responses, eliminated alternatives, and reached consensus the list below:

- Create Local Jobs
- Keep Cultural and Recreational Facilities Excellent
- Keep Tax Rates Low and Service High
- Improve Quality of Life for Residents
- Community and Recreational Center
- Improve Appearance of the Town/Eliminate Slum and Blight
- Attract New Residents

Near-Term Priorities

The group used the questionnaire responses and discussion to develop consensus on near-term priorities for the City. The near-term priorities should be reflective of the specific accomplishments that were named earlier. The near-term priorities are classified policy decisions, minor investments, and major investments.

Policy Decisions

- Modernize and Standardize Fire Department
- Plan to Update Curb and Gutter
- Development and Use of Technology in Delivery of Government Services
- Easy to Use Information on City Ordinances
- Curbside Recycling
- Marketing of City

Minor Investments

- First Impression Improvements- Attractive Entrance, City Pride; Plant more flowers, trees, shrubs- Green up Avoca
- Hwy 83 East
- Affordable Housing- Especially on Infill Lots; Programs to Help Homeowners Improve Properties
- Business and Job Development
- Replace Sidewalks

Major Investments

- Implement Streetscape; Downtown Revitalization
- Community Center OR Elementary School Project OR Rebuild/Remodel Elementary School into Recreation Center- Look At Existing Buildings for This Purpose
- Develop River Corridors for Camping, Trails, Wetlands, Etc.
- Develop Land for Housing and Industrial Bldg.
- Fix Drainage Ditch Through West Edge of Town
- Complete Replacement of Elm Street South of Lyon Street to Fairgrounds

Teamwork

In order to accomplish the selected goals and objectives, it is important that the City's elected and appointed officials work as a team and have effective group decision-making skills. Please list several things that we could do in the future to improve teamwork, the decision-making process, and our ability to accomplish the stated goals and objectives. The group discussed responses and reached consensus on the list below:

- Increase Individual Efforts to Communicate; Establish Better Means to Communicate
- Train New Committee and Board Members on Their Roles
- Look at What is Best for the Long Term
- Get more Community People Involved
- Collaborate with School and/or Churches
- Hold Annual City-wide Meeting for Planning and Follow-up Meeting to Check Progress

Action Plan

The following section details the specific actions the City Council plans to pursue in order to achieve its near-term priorities. Not all items will be achieved within the 2009 calendar year, but instead will require planning steps and decisions that will lay the groundwork for completion.

I. Modernize and Standardize Fire Department

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: Staff time plus additional costs if other services needed.
- c. Justification: The fire and rescue service needs a capital equipment plan, standard operating procedures, and incentives to assist with the recruitment and retention of members.
- d. Action: Approve policies designed to achieve the abovementioned goals.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by February 2009.

II. Plan to Update Curb and Gutter for Street System

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: Staff time plus additional \$1,500 in professional services costs.
- c. Justification: Outdated infrastructure was cited as a liability for the community. Street network should be periodically examined by the City Engineer and project recommendations should be placed into a Capital Improvement Plan.
- d. Action: City Manager will work with City Engineer to complete an assessment of the street system and develop a capital improvement plan to be followed over a multi-year problem.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by June 2009.

III. Development and Use of Technology in Delivery of Government Services

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: Staff time plus additional costs if other services needed.
- c. Justification: Technology offers ways to improve the efficiency of our operations and the delivery of services to residents.
- d. Action: The City Manager will work with the appropriate staff and vendors to develop potential technology investments for the following areas:
 - i. Accounting and General Government
 - ii. Community Website
 - iii. Sanitary Sewer and Water Utilities
 - iv. Cemetery
 - v. Recreational Facilities (Golf Course, Park, and Aquatic Center)
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by end of 2009.

IV. Easy to Use Information on City Ordinances

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: Staff time plus additional costs if other services needed.
- c. Justification: The City Code has been updated so our codes are modern and effective. User-friendly information on the City Code could aid citizen understanding and increase compliance.
- d. Action: Staff will work to develop information.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by April 2009.

V. Curbside Recycling

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: None
- c. Justification: Curbside recycling is increasingly seen as a basic service requirement for municipalities. The City's solid waste contractor is capable of providing the service.
- d. Action: Have solid waste contractor prepare a proposal for curbside recycling service. Seek out additional options if necessary.
- e. Timeline: Policy decision should be made sometime in 2009.

VI. Marketing of City

- a. Type: Policy Decision
- b. Investment: None for initial steps. Professional services will be required for later services.
- c. Justification: The City does not market itself to potential residents. Awareness of the City and all the positive developments currently underway may attract potential residents.
- d. Action: Form a Citizen's Marketing Committee to address the issue.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by end of 2009.

VII. First Impression Improvements- Attractive Entrance, City Pride; Plant more flowers, trees, shrubs- Green up Avoca

- a. Type: Minor Investment
- b. Investment: Recommended investment is \$15,000 for FY 2010 budget.
- c. Justification: Targeted street landscaping and restoration of the City's right-of-way will greatly enhance the appearance of the City. Tree-lined streets and attractive neighborhoods are linked to lower incidents of vehicular speeding and lower crime.
- d. Action: Develop a program to restore targeted areas of the City right-of-way. Plant flowers and trees on targeted City streets.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by October 2009.

VIII. Hwy 83 East

- a. Type: Minor Investment
- b. Investment: \$40,000.
- c. Justification: The Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) has included the resurfacing of Hwy 83 east of Hwy 59 in its FY 2010 Capital Improvement Program. The City will be responsible for the installation of curb and gutter for the street.
- d. Action: Approve a 28E with the IDOT for the project.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by August 2009.

- IX. Affordable Housing- Especially on Infill Lots; Programs to Help Homeowners Improve Properties
- a. Type: Minor Investment
 - b. Investment: \$30,000 annual budget allocation.
 - c. Justification: A lack of affordable housing has been cited as a deficiency of the community. An adequate affordable housing stock is critical to maintaining the quality of the community.
 - d. Action: Examine modifications to the existing incentive program which would benefit the affordable housing market.
 - e. Timeline: Should be completed by May 2009.
- X. Business and Job Development
- a. Type: Minor Investment
 - b. Investment: \$50,000.
 - c. Justification: The commercial and industrial development of the City is critical to future viability.
 - d. Action: Continue to fund Downtown Improvement Program. Aggressively seek out economic development opportunities, especially for industrial development sites cited in Comp. Plan. Work closely with WIDA and actively participate in Board meetings.
 - e. Timeline: Budget commitment should be completed by March 2009.
- XI. Replace Sidewalks
- a. Type: Minor Investment
 - b. Investment: \$25,000.
 - c. Justification: Approximately 40% of the City's sidewalk network needs replaced. Sidewalks are an essential part of the City's infrastructure
 - d. Action: Approve a Sidewalk Replacement Incentive Program
 - e. Timeline: Multi-year, beginning in May 2009.
- XII. Implement Streetscape; Downtown Revitalization
- a. Type: Major Investment
 - b. Investment: \$2.5 million.
 - c. Justification: A streetscape project for the downtown area has been a highlighted need since the late 1970's. A streetscape project would dramatically enhance the image of the downtown area.
 - d. Action: Let project, approve bonds for financing, construct project.
 - e. Timeline: Most of the project should be completed in 2009.

- XIII. Community Center OR Elementary School Project OR Rebuild/Remodel Elementary School into Recreation Center- Look At Existing Buildings for This Purpose
- a. Type: Major Investment
 - b. Investment: Unknown.
 - c. Justification: The community lacks a community center. A community center is an oft cited need for the community.
 - d. Action: Form a committee to study the options available and to make recommendations to the City Council.
 - e. Timeline: Committee work should be completed by end of 2009.
- XIV. Develop River Corridors for Camping, Trails, Wetlands, Etc.
- a. Type: Unknown
 - b. Investment: Staff time plus additional costs if other services needed.
 - c. Justification: River amenity development can be critical to local economic development. River enhancements have been made a statewide priority by the Iowa Legislature. Avoca sits near two branches of the Nishnabotna River.
 - d. Action: Form a committee to study the options available and to make recommendations to the City Council.
 - e. Timeline: Committee work should be completed by end of 2009.
- XV. Develop Land for Housing and Industrial Bldg.
- a. Type: Major Investment
 - b. Investment: Unknown
 - c. Justification: The city needs shovel-ready commercial sites and developed residential lots to remain vital.
 - d. Action: Perform the following:
 - i. Resolve issues with the Olesen Addition Development (Residential)
 - ii. Identify areas for in-fill in existing area of town.
 - iii. Have City Engineer complete estimates to fully develop commercial sites identified in 2008 Comprehensive Plan.
 - iv. Work with property owners of potential commercial sites and Pottawattamie County to develop a common development strategy.
 - e. Timeline: Initial work should be completed by January 2009.

XVI. Fix Drainage Ditch Through West Edge of Town

- a. Type: Major Investment
- b. Investment: Unknown.
- c. Justification: Stormwater problems are a major issue in Avoca. The City Engineer has completed a stormwater infrastructure study.
- d. Action: Approve the stormwater utility to create a funding source for stormwater projects. City Engineer to develop plan and cost estimates for project.
- e. Timeline: Capital planning for stormwater projects should be completed in 2009.

XVII. Complete Replacement of Elm Street South of Lyon Street to Fairgrounds

- a. Type: Major Investment
- b. Investment: Unknown
- c. Justification: The City is spending significant resources on updating the Elm Street Streetscape. Upgrading the remainder of south Elm Street would be a complement to the streetscape project.
- d. Action: City Engineer will need to develop a cost estimate. Prioritize project in the Capital Improvement Program.
- e. Timeline: Should be completed by January 2009.