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## Coralville talks redevelopment

### Possibilities discussed for Old Town Area

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CORALVILLE -- A tree-lined First Avenue and a true downtown center are among the possibilities for a redeveloped Coralville, depending on how city leaders chose to define the city.

The ideas were among those tossed around a workshop Wednesday at the Coralville Public Library on the redevelopment of Coralville's Old Town Area. The area Fifth Street to Clear Creek and the Iowa River west of Fourth Avenue along with First Avenue and Highway 6 that sustained damage from record flooding in June 2008. About 20 people gave ideas in a give-and-take discussion with consultants Van Meter Williams Pollack of San Francisco and a representative of the Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Growth program.

Ellen Habel, Coralville's assistant city administrator, said the workshop, which continues today between the consultants and city officials, was a chance to redevelop the damaged areas in a new way that would be sustainable yet more flood-resistant.

"This opportunity came to us as a result of the floods," Habel said. "(We want) to make sure we use the river as an asset."

Getting to that point, however, will depend on how the city defines itself, said Rick Williams, a partner with Van Meter Williams Pollack. The public session Wednesday afternoon was a way to figure how to define Coralville and what people would want, Williams said.

Some of the ideas that were developed during day-long meetings included how city residents wanted to keep Coralville "family-friendly" with plenty of opportunities for recreation and community gathering while developing business that was not necessarily connected to Coral Ridge Mall. He said goals should include creating great streets, diverse residential areas, great public spaces and great towns.

"Having great public space is the same as having great streets," Williams told the crowd. "Smart growth is about creating a great town. Coralville will be great in of itself and as part of the region."

Some of that include further developing a town center that included S.T. Morrison Park, the Coralville Aquatic Center, the library and other features along Fifth Street and closer to the river that could be reached on foot, he said. All of this would be an updating of the 10-year city comprehensive plan that would include developing West Coralville and the Coralville Strip while creating an icon for the town.

"(Outsiders) think of a particular area of a town and say, 'That's Coralville,'" Williams said. "It has an identity. It becomes a way to market (the town). If you have a more identifiable image ... the easier it is when you're trying to attract a business, attract visitors."

Several of the residents who attended the work session had some ideas about how to define the city.

William Laubengayer said Coralville did not have a regular downtown area that boasted a main street filled with businesses that other towns do. He said Coralville is more spread out and likely would remain that way.

"The old downtown was traditional retail stores," he said. "I don't think Coralville will have a traditional downtown. It will be a distributed downtown."

Audrey Moeller said all of the diverse areas of the city should be connected in some way.

"If you can come up with a definition and some linkages there, that would be a good challenge," she said.

The workshop will continue today with only city officials and the consultants and no public comment for the time. Williams said those involved will work on creating some specific design ideas and plans that eventually will be put into a document to be made public by city officials.

"We're try to illustrate some of the smart growth ideas," he said.

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