Cedar Rapids Public Works Department
Standard Operating Procedure

Procedure Name: Finding Plans and Record Documents		Approved By: Doug Wilson	
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Published Locations (manuals/websites/etc.): Project Development and Management Manual – After any revisions to this document, replace the obsolete version stored on this webpage			

Purpose:
To show where legacy files are stored, how they are organized and how to find what you're looking for. Particular emphasis is given to researching property-related agreements toward the end of the document.

Procedures:
How to Locate Record Files

When looking for a file, it helps to have a project number, as this is the basis of the filing system. If you don't know the project number, you can attempt to find one with one of the following resources:

- OnBase (use Internet Explorer) – This is most helpful for projects built after 2000, but some archived projects have been scanned into OnBase, and are searchable (this is useable only on a City computer).
  - For tips on OnBase searches, see SOP – OnBase Web Version
- File Number Database – Made in 2012, this attempted to centralize all indices into one file. Note there are multiple worksheets of information. It includes both CIP and Non-CIP numbers from 2012 back to the early 1900s.
- Engineering Annual Reports, 1965 to 2005 – This is a text-searchable document which is a pretty complete record of what was built during the named period. It is a good starting point if you have no information to go on.

  This can provide you a timeframe for a project, which is helpful, because CIP numbers were applied after the fact to projects before 1990. For example, a street project from 1967 would have the project number 3011967XXX, which narrows your search.

- [Infrastructure Viewer](#) will sometimes have a project number as one of the pieces of information associated with assets. This is most commonly the case for sewer and water assets, but very recent road projects can be found in the pavement history saved in the Public Works > Project Tracking layers.

The most time-efficient way to search for a file is in the following order:
1. OnBase
2. PWEng Network Files
3. Paper Files
4. Auxiliary Files

The electronic resources are easiest to rifle through, especially if you have a project number. The paper files are time consuming to find and go through, but tend to have the final versions of whatever it is you're looking for. If you're absolutely unable to find anything, there are additional records disconnected from the file numbering system which you can search.

OnBase

A large number of record files have been uploaded electronically into OnBase. Old projects (<1950) and recent projects (>2012) are the most likely to be in this system. If it was scanned into OnBase, the paper original was destroyed.

The most helpful searches for what you'll typically be looking for include:
- Custom Query > Admin - Find doc by Project Name/#
    - Gunshot approach which returns all results for your search term.
- Document Retrieval > Public Works Documents > [File Category]
    - Searches Public Works files. Best for plans, project manuals and other construction contract documents.
- Document Retrieval > Council Proceedings > CP – Contracts/Agreements
    - Helps locate construction contracts, design contracts, and agreements with stakeholders / government entities.
- Document Retrieval > Council Proceedings > CP – Reso (Final)
    - Locates Resolutions related to a project

Use a wildcard search for the area associated with a project. For example, if you know there was a pavement project on 1st Avenue W in 2005, use the search term *1st Av* (include the asterisks) in the Description field of your search tool.

If this is your first time using OnBase, you may need to request permissions to see these file categories. Ask IT to give you the ability to see Council Proceedings and Public Works documents.

See [SOP – OnBase Web Version](#) for more information on using the program.

PWEng Network Files

The more recent a project, the more likely you are to find something useful in the City's computer network files. These are organized by project number, so you have to know the number to be able to find anything.

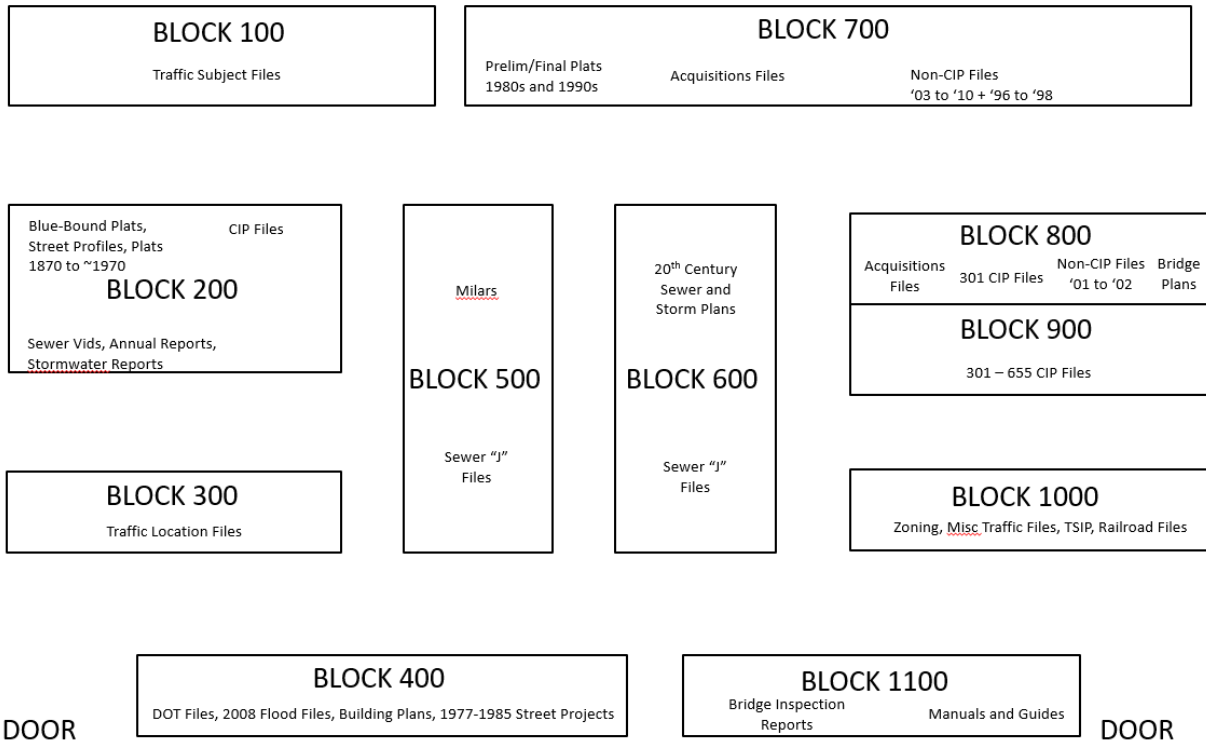Project files are located in PWEng > Projects (available only on City computers). They are subdivided further into:
- CIP – General capital projects. Common project number prefixes include:
  o 301 – Street / sidewalk
  o 304 – Storm sewer
  o 305 – Bridges
  o 306 – Traffic signals
  o 321 – Streetscaping
  o 325 – Trails
  o 331 – Cedar River flood control system
  o 611 / 655 – Sanitary sewer
  o 625 – Water main
- Flood – Refers to 2008 flood recovery projects
- Non-CIP – All files and records which don't correspond to a capital project
  o See the Non-CIP Paper Files section below for a listing of what the file number prefixes mean.
- Paving for Progress – Street projects (301) funded by a local option sales tax from 2014 through 2024.

Please note: once a project is closed out, it is moved to an "Inactive" sub-folder at the bottom of its respective folder tree. You can probably find older projects in this Inactive folder.
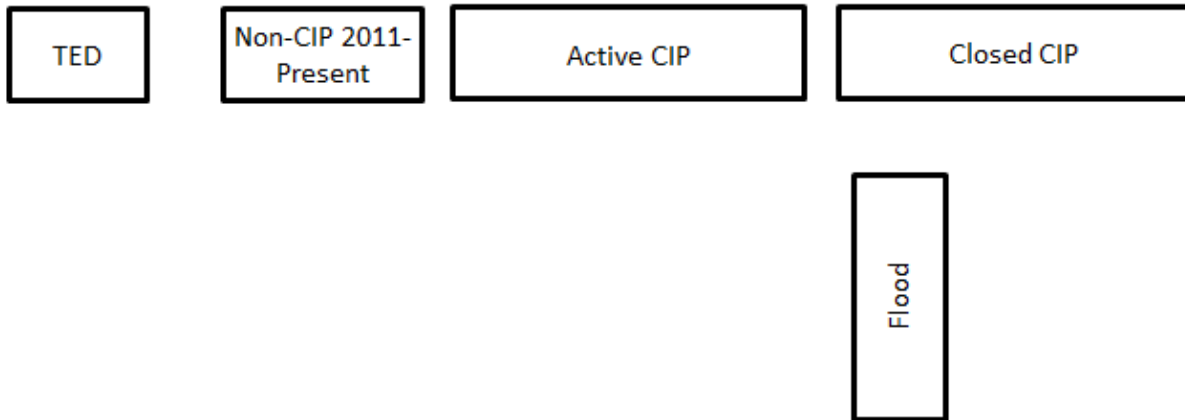
Paper Files

A large amount of files from projects built around 2015 and earlier are still in paper form. Here is the layout of our paper filing locations:

Main Filing Room

BLOCK 100		
Traffic Subject Files		

BLOCK 700		
Prelim/Final Plats 1980s and 1990s	Acquisitions Files	Non-CIP Files '03 to '10 + '96 to '98

BLOCK 200

Blue-Bound Plats, Street Profiles, Plats 1870 to ~1970   CIP Files

Sewer Vids, Annual Reports, Stormwater Reports

BLOCK 500

Milars

Sewer "J" Files

BLOCK 600

20th Century Sewer and Storm Plans

Sewer "J" Files

BLOCK 800

Acquisitions Files   301 CIP Files   Non-CIP Files '01 to '02   Bridge Plans

BLOCK 900

301 – 655 CIP Files

BLOCK 300

Traffic Location Files

BLOCK 1000

Zoning, Misc Traffic Files, TSIP, Railroad Files

DOOR

BLOCK 400

DOT Files, 2008 Flood Files, Building Plans, 1977-1985 Street Projects

BLOCK 1100

Bridge Inspection Reports   Manuals and Guides

DOOR

WINDOWS

TED	Non-CIP 2011-Present	Active CIP	Closed CIP

Flood

Mail Room Drawers

The cabinets beneath the long table in the mail room house exclusively Construction Contract folders, circa 2012 to present.

The following types of paper files are kept in their entirety for at least seven years after project completion in case the projects are audited:

- IDOT-funded projects
- Flood recovery projects
- Federally-funded projects
- Acquisition files

Capital Improvement Projects
The bulk of the paper files are from capital improvement projects. The type of information saved was sorted based on folder color:

- Blue – Correspondence
- Grey – Consultant contracts and related information
- Red – Construction contracts and related information
- Manilla – Subject files which do not fit into the above

Correspondence – Blue Folders
Files such as letters, transmittals, phone records, and any other general correspondence for a project belongs in blue folder. The documents are stacked in date order with the newest correspondence on top.

Consultant Files – Grey Folders
Documents pertinent to a Consultant's contract. A Consultant is an outside entity that does design or provides a service, but does not build anything in the physical world. A few examples of these would be HR Green, Foth, Shive Hattery, and others.

The folders are organized into multiple divisions:
- 1st Division – Professional Service Agreements, Addenda, and Council documents go here
- 2nd Division – Certificates of Insurance
- 3rd Division – Progress Summaries on the Consultant's work
- 4th Division – Correspondence pertaining directly to the Consultant's work (not design or construction work)

Contractor Files – Red Folders
A Contractor is a company who builds something in the physical world. Rathje, LL Pelling and Horsfield are all examples of contractors.

Red folders are organized as follows:
- 1st Division: Construction Schedules that are submitted by the Contractor (usually on a monthly basis)
- 2nd Division: Weekly Report of Working Days
- 3rd Division: Test Results
- 4th Division: Leave open in case you need extra room for more inspector worksheets and monthly pay applications and contractor change orders --- when the 5th or 6th tab becomes full
- 5th Division: Resolutions for Change Orders
- 6th Division: Inspector Worksheets (these will come from Finance) Monthly Pay Applications and Contract Change Orders (these are faxed out at the first of the month)

Project Manuals, Plan sets and As-Builts, if available, are often fit loosely within the folder.

Subject Files – Manila Accordion Folders
Sometimes there is enough of a particular type of document to warrant having a separate folder. Common examples of these are:
- IDOT Agreement Files
- Permits
- Petition and Assessment Agreements

Non-CIP Files
Any kind of record which wasn't related to a Capital Improvements Project was instead stored in a "Non-CIP" file. These project numbers are setup in the following format:

  [File Type]-[Fiscal Year]-[Sequential Number]

  Example: 47-12-005 → "The fifth Final Plat file of fiscal year 2012"

The introduction of Energov took over for some of the functions the Non-CIP numbering system used to govern. The equivalents are included below.

Here is a table showing the meaning of the File Type numbers:

Prefix	EnerGov Equivalent	Meaning
40		Annexation Reviews
41		Encroachment / Vacation Reviews / ROW
42		PW Info
43		Sewer Maintenance
44		Rezoning / Prelim Site Dev Plan / Conditional Use Plats
45		City Facilities
46	PRPT	Preliminary Plat
47	FLPT	Final Plat
48	ASDP	Building Permit
49		Engineering Administrative Project
50	PLSV	Plat of Survey
51		Process Improvement
52		Property Disposal
60		PW Planning & Administration
61		Street Lights
62		Traffic Parking Issues
70		Forestry
80		Streets
91	RZNE	Rezoning
92	PSDP	Preliminary Site Development
93	PRPT	Preliminary Plat
94	COND	Conditional Use Plat
95	ASDP	Administrative Review
97		Pre-Application Submittal
98		Concept Plan Review

Auxiliary Files
There are several smaller resources of information not connected to the CIP filing system you can refer to if you are unable to find anything. These are useful for specific types of information.

Here is a summary of auxiliary files and the info they can provide to you:
- Vault files – Street, bridge, drainage and other large projects from early- to mid-20th century.
- H Files and Flat Files – Redundant sets of capital improvement plans kept by Traffic Engineering, good as backups for missing Engineering files.
- J Files – Historical plans for storm sewers and sanitary sewers installed early- to mid-20th century.
- Bridge Files – Mostly bridge inspection data, but also some improvement plans.
- Plat Files – Contains final plat information, plus easements, agreements and pre-payments related to subdivisions or individual parcels.

- Road Profiles – Hand-drawn copies of profiles for road projects which may not have been part of a CIP project.
- "Blue Bound" Plat Files – Contains copies of Final Plat drawings, and related copies of Council documents too old to be found in OnBase.
- Traffic Subject and Location Files – Helpful for intersection layouts, wiring diagrams, traffic safety figures and resident complaints about specific locations

The Vault files
There used to be a literal vault in a previous location for the City Services Center which contained large format plans for a smattering of high dollar projects, including bridge projects, DOT projects, building plans, large scale drainage projects, and an assortment of other mid-20th century undertakings. All of these were scanned into OnBase. They have a "project" number prefix of VT for "Vault Tube." A listing of these files can be found in the File Number Database.

Traffic Engineering's "H" Files and Flat Files
Traffic Engineering used to be a separate division under the Commission form of government. They retained their own set of project files for any capital improvement projects they were involved in. These were saved as "H" (hanging) files, which were large format plans, and "Flat" files, saved in drawers, for smaller format plans. Sometimes if Engineering is missing its copy of plans, a redundant set can be found in Traffic's records.

These were all scanned into OnBase. They have the "project" number prefix of H and FD. Indices for both may be found in the File Number Database.

Storm and Sanitary Sewer "J" Files
Storm sewer and sanitary sewer mains installed in the early- and mid-20th century are catalogued and shown in the "J" Files, located in the main filing room. They are recorded by location, and do not exist electronically.

To find a plan set in these files, you need to know the location of what you're trying to find. Do the following:
- There is a large map of the city, mounted on foam board, with a grid overlaid, located in Block 600 of the main filing room. Find the spot you are looking for on this map.
- The numbers you seen in the grid sections of the maps correspond to page numbers in the Sewer books. These are hardcover, oversize books located in Block 600. The books are subdivided by "Storm" and "Sewer" (Sanitary). They are further subdivided by East and West, with respect to the Cedar River.
- Find the page number you identified on the grid map.
- Find the structure you are looking for. If there is a plan set available, it will have a J number referenced on the page (e.g. J-136).
- The J sheets are spread between Blocks 500 and 600 in numerical order, either in drawers or in hanging files.

Bridge Files
There is a standalone steel drawer case towards the wall-end of Block 800 which contains a collection of bridge-related information. It is sorted by bridge name. Mostly it has inspection records, but it occasionally includes construction plans, especially for minor bridges and culverts.

Plat Files
Neighborhood subdivision information was traditionally kept in Non-CIP files. They carry the prefix 46 for Preliminary Plats, and 47 for Final Plats. Often times Preliminary and Final Plat information are combined into a single folder under the Final Plat number.

Plat folders are spread out all over the place, ordered by fiscal year (see map layout). These files are very useful for finding easement information, and agreements tied to subdivisions, or individuals' properties. Receipts of pre-payments on petition and assessment agreements can also be found here.

The 47-YY-NNN format was not the original labelling convention. Some folders are labelled with the following format: Preliminary Plat numbering on top, ordered NN-YY, and Final Plat number on bottom, ordered NN-YY.

An index of Plat numbers can be found in the File Number Database. A portion of them have been uploaded to OnBase, but the majority are still in paper form.

Road Profiles
If you're having trouble finding plans for a street segment, check the Road Profiles stored in Block 200 (the side facing Block 100). Minor street projects which may or may not have been part of capital projects have hand-drawn plans and profiles saved there. They are organized by a numbering system. There is a card stock drawer on top of the cabinets which can tell you which number to open. These are not often very detailed, but are better than nothing, and can give you a pavement age.

"Blue Bound" Plat Files
Copies of Final Plats and the Council Resolutions which approved them are located in Block 200 (the side facing Block 100). Sometimes these can fill in missing gaps of information which you couldn't find in the Plat Files. These are number ordered. There is a small ring binder on top of the file drawers which has the numbering legend.

Traffic Subject and Location Files
Traffic's paper files can help you locate intersection layouts, wiring information, and traffic safety data. More often the Location Files will help you. They are located in Block 300 of the main filing room. They are sorted first by quadrant, and then by location, alphabetically.

Researching Property Agreements

Typical documents searched for might include Petition & Assessment Agreements, performance bonds, performance sureties, Platting & Zoning Conditions, and other documents related to Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects, traffic signals, and sanitary sewer.

Identifying a Plat Name and Number:

- All platted areas were assigned an identifying number when they were created. To find this number, you first need the plat name.
- Use the City's Infrastructure Viewer and identify each parcel within the search area (see image to right).
  - o Write down or note all property addresses.
  - o Note the City Assessor's legal description for each property. This should include final plat name, lot number(s), plat of survey number, or lands description for the property. In the example to the right, the plat name = "Emery's 3rd Addition." The property's full legal description = "Emery's 3rd STR/LB 26." This reads as "Emery's 3rd Addition Lot 26." Not all properties are platted. Some will have the designation A.P. or P.O.S., which means "Auditor's Plat" and "Plat of Survey," respectively. Others will only have a "metes and bounds" description, which is the legalese way of describing the boundaries of a property.

- The means and methods of creating and storing platting / zoning information have changed through the decades. If you know approximately when the area was platted, this will help you know where to look (check the ages of the houses in Parcel Viewer if you are unsure):

Date of Plat / Zoning	Best Resource(s) to Check
2012 – Present	Energov* (must use Internet Explorer)
2010 – 2012	E-Submittal*, Master Filing Index, Access Database
1990s – 2012	Master Filing Index, Access Database
1950s - Present	Linn County Recorder's Website
1960s – 1990s	File Number Database, Plats Card Index**
1880s – 1998	File Number Database, Blue-Bound Documents**

* I.T. will need to setup login credentials for you to be able to view this resource.
** This is a physical card catalog

Locations of physical indices:
1. Final Plats Card File Index – Block 200 in the main filing room.
2. Zoning Ordinance Map Book - Large format book located in Building Services. Contains maps of the city divided up into Zoning areas, with hand written notes which list ordinance numbers associated with rezonings. An index is located at the front of the book.
3. "Blue Bound" Final Plat documents – Block 200 in the main filing room.

Finding Records:

After you have a name/project number, you can search for available records in both digital and hard-copy format.
1. Search digital databases first:
    a. [Energov](#)
        i. Click on the "E" in the upper left hand corner. Choose Plan Mgmt > Plan Viewer > Plan Search
        ii. You can find the Plat/Zoning files by searching for the Plat/Zoning name using the Description field which shows up in search criteria.
    b. [E-Submittal](#)
        i. Since this tool was used for such a short time (2010-2012), you will usually not need to refer to this resource.
        ii. Note: Final plats were not stored in this system.
    c. [OnBase](#) (must use Internet Explorer)
        i. Using the plat number you found earlier, search for files which have already been scanned in. The scanning project is an ongoing task. Generally speaking, the older the files, the more likely it's been scanned in.
        ii. For assistance using OnBase, refer to the [training guide](#) (available to City personnel only) for the program.
    d. [Linn County Recorder's website](#)
        i. Go to Search the Real Estate Records > Property > Property Type = Subdivision. Search for the Plat name in the list provided.
2. Search paper files if digital copies are unavailable using the file number you found earlier. The general location of physical files are as follows:
    a. Zoning Files and Development Plans
        i. Older files pertaining to Engineering projects - Southeast corner of the large filing room
        ii. Newer files (2012+) – Spread between the Building Services filing room, near the elevator, and Building Services' filing cabinets along the north wall of their area.
        iii. There is a Zoning Ordinance Map book located in Building Services. You may need to ask Building Services staff where this is currently being kept.

b. "Blue-Bound" Final Plat Documents – Northwest corner of the large filing room beneath its card catalog index.

c. Non-CIP File Documents – Concentrated on the north wall and northeast corner of the large filing room, although there are small numbers of boxes spread elsewhere. **Hint:** Energov numbering supplanted the Non-CIP numbering system for the purposes of Plats, Zoning, etc, which, started in 2012.

- EnerGov assumed the role non-CIP project numbers played after September 2012. EnerGov file names follow the convention [file type prefix]-[6-digit unique number]-[year], for example FLPT-001989-2013, or "2013 final plat number 001989."

Undeveloped / Non-Platted Land:

Sometimes you'll encounter properties which were never / have not yet been platted. These are more difficult to research, but there are a few strategies you can use to find agreements tied to that property:

- Identify the name of the current property owner. Visit the Linn County Recorder's website and try to find the property via their name. You can then attempt to build a property history by back-tracing the line of owners for that property.
- Sometimes copies of agreements will be saved in capital project folders for nearby public assets. Try to find the project files for adjacent pavement, sewers or water main to see if any agreements were put into effect at the behest of the public improvement project.
- All agreements executed by the City since the turn of the century have been saved into OnBase. If you know a property owner name or physical address, you can search for these in lieu of subdivision names if agreements were made with individuals. These most commonly show up under CP – Resolutions (Final) or CP – Contracts/Agreements.

If you are truly stuck, and it is crucial that you have an accurate history of a property, you can order a professional title search through the Real Estate team. This is an expensive endeavor, however, usually costing more than $1,000 per property.