



Taking shape

Work is proceeding at a rapid clip on the Cedar Falls Recreation Center at 12th and Main streets. The \$2 million project is expected to be completed next year.

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Traer farm project highlights conservation

■ Farmers have 1995 deadline to slow soil erosion in order to get federal aid.

By CATHY CUMMINS
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TRAER — A farm north of Traer in Tama County is the site of a project dedicated to showing farmers how to slow or stop water from washing away the precious soil in their fields this summer.

As 1995 approaches, farmers are being pushed to comply with conservation plans outlined by the federal government to slow soil erosion. Farmers who work land considered highly erodible but don't follow the mandated conservation plan will be cut off from all federal funds, ranging

from price supports to low-cost loans.

The project grew out of the Soil Conservation Service's interest in helping farmers comply with their plans, according to Mark Kouba, a soil conservation technician working with the Tama County SCS office.

"We wanted to demonstrate to farmers how they can handle waterway erosion," Kouba said. "They know how to contour farm and they know about residue, but we wanted to show them how to handle waterways (with erosion problems) without contractors."

Kouba, who farms northwest of Toledo, was hired to work on the project full time as designer and coordinator.

The project covers a 213-acre farm with several rolling hills north of Traer owned by Marion Berger. On it, wind-

ing its way through the fields, are two main water ditches fed by a network of smaller waterways.

On several of the channels, a variety of solutions to different problems will be implemented using equipment producers may have on hand or may have to hire, Kouba said.

"They may have some of this equipment on the farm, they may not," Kouba said. "They may have to hire contractors to do some of the work. We want to show different options to these problems."

Some of the problems being tackled on the farm project are minor, such as the mounds of dirt that have built up in several of the channels, Kouba said. A scraper or skid loader can be brought in to push the dirt back into the fields and leave the waterway clear, he said.

Memories are expected to flow as easily as dime cups of coffee Thursday at the landmark downtown building that was the home of Black's department store for almost three generations.

Midtown Development, the partnership owning the building, plans to hold a "Black's Day" open house Thursday from 9 to 12 a.m., in commemoration of the now-defunct Black's department store, after which the building was originally named.

Located at 501 Sycamore St., and now called the Chicago Central building, it is still known to many residents and former residents as "the old Black's building."

Midtown Development principal Donna Nelson, and real estate manager Fred Rose, have received numerous letters from former Black's employees over the past six months, ever since Beasley's Too restaurant opened up in what was the Black's coffee shop, generating publicity and renewed interest in the building's redevelopment.

"Regarding your article on Black's regeneration: I'm glad it is coming alive again," wrote Mrs. T.R. Crawford

However, another waterway has been left alone for so long that major design and construction work will be needed to repair the damage, he said. Wheel tracks left by trucks driven the length of the shallow ditch have eroded into foot-deep ruts which need repair.

Other parts of the farm are being treated to the no-till farming technique, where new crops are planted into the dead stubble of last year's harvest. The change is already winning over Berger, who insisted on planting a nearby hill with conventional tillage, only to watch the soil and seeds wash away in a heavy rainstorm.

Area farmers and local contractors have donated everything from their labor to the machinery to the summer-long project, which will culminate in a field day on Aug. 4.