



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Planning Division*

### **m e m o r a n d u m**

**TO:** Elizabeth H. Tyler, FAICP, Community Development Director

**FROM:** John A. Schneider, Manager, Grants Management Division

**DATE:** September 19, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Request for Comment on the proposed Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan

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### **Introduction**

On the agenda of the September 23, 2008 meeting of the Community Development Commission is a request for comment on the proposed Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan. The Urbana Zoning Administrator is requesting that City Council approve an amendment to the Urbana Comprehensive Plan to adopt the final draft of the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan as part of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan contains goals and strategies for the area surrounding Crystal Lake Park and the Carle Hospital campus. Similar to previous neighborhood plans such as the 1989 King Park Plan and the 2002 Downtown Strategic Plan, the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan would supplement the Comprehensive Plan and would become the guiding document for policy and planning decisions in planning area. The plan does not recommend specific zoning map or future land use map changes at this time but rather contains the general goals and policies that will justify such changes in the future.

Public input was a key element in the compilation of the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan. Resident comments were gathered in two neighborhood meetings, through surveys, and several comments mailed to the City. In addition to resident input, stakeholder groups such as the Urbana Park District and Carle Hospital were interviewed and invited to comment on draft plans.

On September 8, 2008, copies of the draft plan were mailed to the Community Development Commission, as well as City Council and the Plan Commission for review and comment. This memorandum refers to that draft. The draft plan encompasses many topical areas, such as land use, mobility, housing and community cohesion. Staff is requesting that the Community Development Commission comment on elements of the plan that fall under their purview, including housing, grants and neighborhood programs. Comments from the Community Development Commission will be presented at the public hearing on October 9, 2008.

## **Background**

### **Planning Process**

The process for developing the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan began in March of 2007. Members of the neighborhood organization United Citizens and Neighbors (UCAN) met with the Mayor and city staff to discuss concerns about Carle's potential expansion of the Medical Institutional Campus zoning district. Working with residents and other stakeholders to address these concerns and to provide a planning context in anticipation of Carle Hospital's revised master plan, the City committed to prepare a plan for the neighborhood. The planning process consisted of several phases and took place over the subsequent eighteen months. Phases included Background Research, Visioning, Plan Concepts, Draft Plan Preparation, and Final Preparation. The sixth phase, Implementation, will begin after the plan is approved.

1. The Background Research Phase began with a discussion of how to produce the plan. Staff decided to use a process similar to that of the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Planning Process. The majority of the time in this Phase was spent researching the neighborhood's history and existing conditions.

2. The Visioning Phase was centered on collecting information from residents, property owners, employees and users of local businesses and parks, and other stakeholder groups on what they would like to see happen within the neighborhood. Staff designed exercises for a visioning workshop and invited residents and property owners from the area to discuss what aspects of the neighborhood they want to see changed or preserved. Fifty area residents participated in the workshop. Staff also prepared a resident survey, which was sent to all residents and property owners in the neighborhood. City staff also met with members of UCAN to discuss their concerns and aspirations for the neighborhood.

In concert with the visioning workshop and resident survey, staff distributed a survey to businesses within the area. Key stakeholders such as the Urbana Park District and Carle Clinic and Hospital were also interviewed to gain further insights on how they envisioned the neighborhood developing. Both Carle Hospital and the Park District have master plans for their facilities in the planning area, which are interrelated with but separate from the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan.

3. The Plan Concepts Phase synthesized information gathered from the visioning workshop, resident survey, business survey, and stakeholder interviews. From this information staff identified a development framework and plan parameters, as well as goals and objectives. Alternative implementation strategies were evaluated and tested with key stakeholders.

4. The Draft Plan Preparation Phase consisted of synthesizing the components of the plan into a coherent draft before garnering feedback during a second neighborhood meeting. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the City held an open house to reveal draft Goals and Objectives, and Implementation Strategies to neighborhood residents. Over twenty-five residents attended to comment on the plan.

5. The Final Plan Preparation Phase came next. The draft plan was revised based on comments from

the open house and a final draft was issued for public comment on September 8, 2008. Area residents and property owners were all notified that the draft plan is available at several locations and online for review. Comments from this review period will be forwarded to the public hearing at the October 9, 2008 meeting of the Urbana Plan Commission. The Plan Commission will forward the draft and any recommended changes to City Council for final review and adoption.

6. The Implementation Phase will consist of carrying out strategies identified in the Plan and will help to guide the city as it pursues related activities in 2008 and beyond. The goals and strategies set forth herein will assist the City in review of updates to the development agreement with Carle, decisions made during the City's Annual Action Plan for funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HOME and CDBG), Capital Improvement Plan, review of zoning requests and building permits, and other planning decisions.

## **Issues and Discussion**

### **Plan Overview**

The plan contains six major components, as well as an extensive appendix. The Background contains a history of the area, an inventory of current zoning and land uses, and an analysis of the existing demographic conditions and trends. The Planning Process provides an overview of the plan's formation, introduces the major stakeholders for the area and lays out the existing plans and agreements that govern development in the neighborhood. The heart of the plan outlines Trends and Issues, maps out key Plan Concepts, and introduces Goals and Objectives for the area as follows:

The Trends and Issues section (starting on page 35 of the draft plan) identifies key trends occurring in the area, and asks key questions about how those trends affect the neighborhood. Trends include items such as the growth of Carle Hospital, an aging housing stock, and changing conditions along the University Avenue Corridor.

Key Plan Concepts are mapped out next, as shown on the attached Exhibit "A". This map identifies several desired improvements that were noted as priorities from public meetings and surveys. Various planning initiatives or other important features identified in the Plan are noted on the map. Some notes are taken from other agency plans, such as the Park District's Crystal Lake Park Master Plan. The map outlines a proposed Medical Institutional Campus expansion area which allows Carle Hospital some room to expand without encroaching too much into the neighborhood. The University Corridor Study is taken into account, as well as links to connect Crystal Lake Park to Leal Park and downtown Urbana. The Plan Concepts Map also identifies Future Land Uses as set forth in the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan. These future land uses are not proposed to be changed.

The Goals and Objectives section lists nineteen goals and several objectives derived from input gathered during the planning process. Goals and Objectives are intended to preserve what residents and stakeholders like most about the neighborhood and to improve other aspects where needed. Many Goals and Objectives are taken directly from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, as listed in the

Appendix to the Plan. The full list of Goals and Objectives can be found starting on page 43 of the Plan. Goals and Objectives, as well as Implementation Strategies are divided into four categories: Land Use and Development, Housing, Mobility, and Community Enhancement. The following is a list of the Goals, with a brief discussion of how they relate to the neighborhood:

### ***Land Use and Development***

*Goal 1.0 Provide a framework for potential expansion of the Carle campus which balances what is best for residents, Carle, and the City as a whole.*

*Goal 2.0 Ensure that commercial development and development on the Carle Campus is implemented with the minimal amount of impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood.*

These first two goals address the potential conflicts between a large hospital and a low-density residential neighborhood. By encouraging Carle to expand upward within its existing campus, rather than out into the neighborhood, some conflicts can be avoided. As time goes by, the need to expand will eventually lead to new hospital uses outside of the current MIC. These uses should be low-intensity, single or two-story buildings that are primarily used during the work day. Proper landscaping and lighting will also remediate potential conflicts.

*Goal 3.0 Retain and expand local businesses as community assets.*

*Goal 4.0 Redevelop University Avenue. (Comp Plan Goal 26.2)*

*Goal 5.0 New development should be compatible with the overall urban design and fabric of the neighborhood. (Comp Plan Goal 2.0)*

These goals deal with the commercial areas of the neighborhood, mostly located along University Avenue. The City should work to improve the corridor as anticipated by the upcoming University Avenue Corridor Study. The City should also expand efforts to bring new businesses to the area, and ensure that they are developed in character with the neighborhood.

*Goal 6.0 Promote Sustainability*

*Goal 7.0 Integrate Planning Efforts*

Future development in the area should minimize impacts on the environment, and should be in harmony with other agency plans.

### ***Housing***

*Goal 8.0 Preserve the established residential character of the neighborhood. (Comp Plan Goal 1.0)*

*Goal 9.0 Promote a mixture of housing types that preserves the affordable nature of neighborhood homes. (Comp Plan Goal 40.0)*

*Goal 10.0 Provide for one-to-one replacement of housing removed in the area*

Housing goals recognize that area homes are aging and that expansion by Carle Hospital toward the north may reduce the number of homes in the neighborhood. Carle currently owns and maintains over a dozen rental homes. Although these homes have been well maintained, they are in danger of being lost to hospital expansion. While not a housing developer, Carle should help identify replacement units within the greater planning area. The City also has a role to play in helping low and moderate income residents maintain their homes. Most of the planning area falls within the Community Development Target Area, which is eligible for project assistance through Federal funds.

### ***Mobility***

*Goal 11.0 Reduce traffic congestion and impact on surrounding neighborhood.*

*Goal 12.0 Create and maintain a multi-modal transportation system. (Comp Plan Goal 47.0)*

*Goal 13.0 Improve neighborhood infrastructure.*

These related goals deal with the reduction of car trips throughout the residential areas surrounding Carle and Crystal Lake Park. A multi-modal transportation system with improved infrastructure, such as bicycle paths, would allow for residents, employees, and visitors to travel throughout the neighborhood by means other than automobile.

*Goal 14.0 Enhance connections for residents to neighborhood amenities, downtown Urbana, and the University of Illinois.*

The neighborhood's location adjacent to downtown Urbana should afford residents easier access to downtown amenities such as the Market at the Square. An enhanced connection, possibly through Leal Park and along the Boneyard Creek, will provide greater mobility for bicycle and pedestrian trips.

### ***Community Enhancement***

*Goal 15.0 Capitalize on the neighborhood and its assets.*

*Goal 16.0 Promote a sense of community through neighborhood activities and community gathering spaces.*

*Goal 17.0 Improve neighborhood safety and appearance.*

The neighborhood has many assets but lacks the active community group found in many other areas of Urbana. Better organization amongst neighbors can provide for more community-building activities as well as a safer and more attractive neighborhood.

*Goal 18.0 Utilize the Champaign County Fairgrounds to its full potential.*

*Goal 19.0 Promote Crystal Lake Park as a Neighborhood Amenity*

The fairgrounds and Crystal Lake Park represent great opportunity for community and neighborhood events. While the fairgrounds come alive every summer, they are underutilized during the remainder of the year. Crystal Lake Park is a tremendous destination for residents of Urbana, however it has the potential to host many events that cater to the needs of neighborhood residents.

**Implementation**

Finally, the plan offers an Implementation Strategies section which outlines how the goals and vision will be achieved. This table is also broken down into the same categories as the Goals and Objectives. For each strategy a responsible party is identified; either a City Division, an outside agency, or one of each. Many strategies call for a continuation of ongoing City programs, such as the Whole House Rehabilitation program. Others call for new initiatives, such as creating a neighborhood watch. These strategies are supported by the City of Urbana and area stakeholders UCAN, the Park District, and Carle.

**Staff Recommendation**

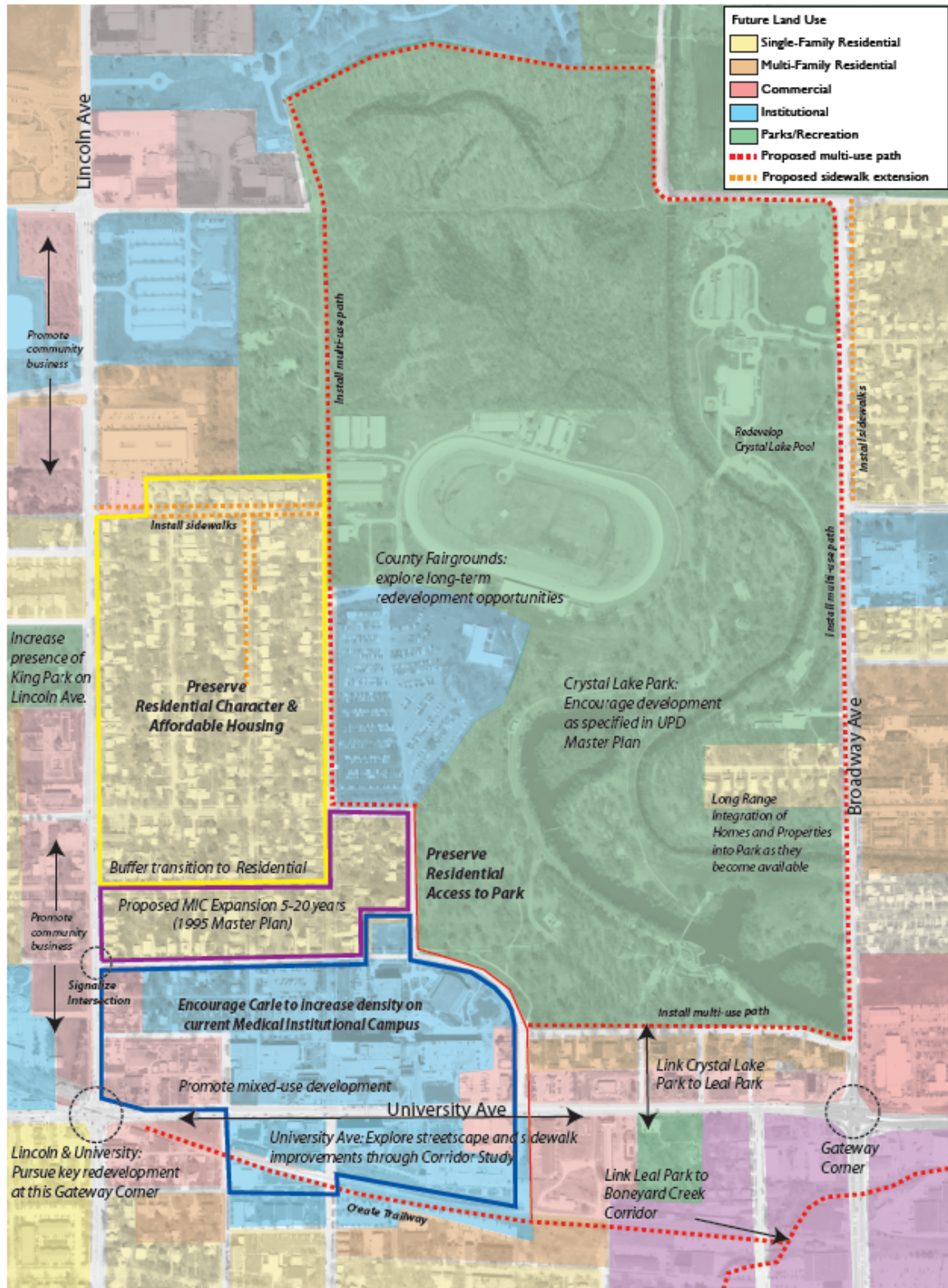
Staff requests that the Community Development Commission review the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan and recommend changes for consideration by City staff and the Plan Commission at the public hearing on October 9, 2008.

**Memorandum Prepared By:**

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Planning Division

Attachments: Exhibit “A”: Plan Concepts Map

# Exhibit A: Plan Concepts Map



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**Plan Case:** 2088-CP-08  
**Subject:** Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan  
 Comprehensive Plan Amendment  
**Petitioner:** Zoning Administrator

Prepared 09/08 by Community Development Services - jme