

Crystal Lake Park Outdoor Aquatic Facility

Questions & Answers / Planning Timeline

CRYSTAL LAKE AQUATIC CENTER CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Why is an outdoor pool needed in Urbana?

Urbana residents have told the park district they want both indoor and outdoor swimming experiences.

A 2007 survey for the district's strategic plan indicated that one in every four households surveyed said that their aquatic needs were half met or less. At that time there were outdoor options available, including Windsor Swim Club and Crystal Lake Pool, but today both facilities are closed and Urbana citizens have no option for outdoor swimming. In a professional phone survey taken in September 2010, 86% of respondents supported the construction of a new outdoor aquatic facility. Seventy percent of respondents indicated they would use a new facility at least a few times/season.

The Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center alone does not meet all the aquatic needs of Urbana citizens and summer demand exceeds the facility's capacity. The Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center is a joint facility with the Urbana School District. It will continue to operate year-round and provide an indoor swimming experience for the public before school, during lunch, evenings and weekends, and summertime.

The park district plans to construct an outdoor aquatic facility that can serve a wider range of pool users than any other currently available in Champaign County. Part of filling the need for aquatic recreation is providing an affordable, multi-user facility that will be unique to Urbana.

What features/amenities/programs will be offered at a new outdoor pool?

- Shady/ green spaces
- Zero-depth entry
- 8-lane competitive/lap pool
- Picnic areas/ concessions
- 3-season sprayground
- Flume slide/bowl slide
- Sand play area
- Tot area
- Family changing area
- In-water playground
- Diving board
- Open water for play

The new pool concept shows a water surface area of 14,700 sq. ft. —nearly the same number of square feet of water surface as the previous Crystal Lake Pool.

(Rantoul's Hap Parker Pool is approximately 12,000 sq. ft. and Champaign's Sholem Aquatic Center is 24,000 sq. ft.)

A simple rectangular pool does not meet the needs of today's residents. Surveys conducted by the district and professional market analysts indicate that community members of all ages want more varied recreational amenities in an outdoor aquatic facility. Staff, park district board and committee members and interested members of the community made site visits to pools of many types in 2009. These visits helped further define planned features. The plan includes a separate 8-lane lap pool for lessons, recreational and competitive swimming and many features for those who use the water for play. There is a demonstrated demand in the community, and research indicates high level of need for this type of outdoor swimming experience. Projections for a new facility are for 69,000 visits/ season.

No two swimmers are alike. The concept plan will enable the park district to offer a multi-age and multi-skill aquatics program that includes features for all ages and a variety of needs.



What will the park district ask the voters?

A ballot question will ask for a tax rate increase that will be used to construct (at a cost not to exceed \$7,725,000) AND operate a new outdoor aquatic facility. The amount of bonds sold to construct the new pool will not exceed \$7,000,000. Additional features will be funded through donations and grants.

Why ask voters about an outdoor aquatic facility now?

The Urbana Park District promised voters in 2009 that if the 15 cent rate increase passed it would pursue a concept plan for an outdoor aquatic facility.

Where will the funding come from?

The property tax rate increase would provide enough funds annually to allow the park district to sell and pay back bonds to finance construction, operating costs, maintenance and long-term reinvestment in the pool and its features. All 11 cents of the new taxes will be used for the outdoor pool for debt service, pool operating costs not covered by user fees and for future repair and renovation.

If approved, it would add 11 additional cents to the park district property tax rate. This equals \$37 in taxes annually for a home with a fair market value of \$100,000. The first year new tax money could be collected is 2012. (Find your property's assessment and fair market value at <http://www.co.champaign.il.us/cao/assessor.htm>)

The words on the ballot ask the public about an increase in the tax rate, but do not include the words pool or outdoor aquatic facility. Illinois law requires specific language to be used. A sample of the ballot wording can be found here <http://tinyurl.com/4mr7lvq>

The district also promised to use the 15 cent rate increase to take care of existing parks, natural areas and facilities and maintain programs and services without cuts.

An outdoor aquatic experience provides a high recreational and wellness value for a low cost. Community recreation facilities typically fare quite well during more difficult economic times when many families choose to stay home instead of leaving on an expensive vacation. In addition, the park district expects the construction climate to remain favorable. Construction bids now are highly competitive and therefore yielding extremely modest pricing. A project like this would provide more local construction jobs and seasonal employment upon completion of the facility.

The Urbana Park District first approached the community about supporting a new outdoor aquatic facility in its 2008 referendum— prior to the closure of Crystal Lake Pool. The 2008 referendum did not pass, and pool planning had to be put on hold. Passage of the referendum in 2009 allowed the district to take care of other important needs and create a pool concept plan that the public would be asked to vote on in the future. The concept design process has taken about a year and has involved input from citizen planning committees and public surveys.

The concept planning process created a picture of a new outdoor pool for Urbana. The final cost of the project can be determined once architectural drawings are complete and construction bids are received. Architectural drawings will not be done unless the 11 cent rate increase is approved by the voters. A business plan for the pool based on the current concept has been provided to the park district by pool consultant Councilman-Hunsaker. Details about operating costs, projected revenues and visits are in that plan. See the business plan here: <http://tinyurl.com/4avju9p>

The district would welcome donations and plans to seek available grants. Donated or grant funds related to the pool will be first used along with bond funds for construction costs. In the case that pool donors come forward and/or grant money is awarded, the district will use tax dollars offset by grants and donations to complete additional planned features in the area of Crystal Lake Park adjacent to the pool.

What will people pay for admission?

Few public swimming facilities are self supporting unless they charge a high entrance fee. The design consultant has provided an estimated five year revenue projection with an 80% cost recovery rate based on a \$6 admission fee.

In order to maintain a low entrance fee, about 20% of the annual operating costs for the pool will be covered by other UPD funds. This is roughly the same dollar amount that the district spent annually to support the previous Crystal Lake Pool (\$70,000-\$90,000).

In the business plan for the pool, 2% of the annual pool budget is dedicated to helping those who need assistance with daily admission or in participating in pool programs. Opportunities to use the pool will be made available for those with limited ability to pay.

Pool consultant Councilman-Hunsaker has more than 30 years experience in planning aquatic centers. They expect a stable level of attendance for the first several years of operation. See the business plan here: <http://tinyurl.com/4avju9p>

When will the new outdoor aquatic center open?

Without any unforeseen delays, a new facility would open sometime in 2013 if the community votes in support of a tax rate increase in April 2011.

Design will take 6-8 months and approval and permitting from the state will take several more months. Construction could most likely begin in summer or early fall of 2012.

How will the pool be maintained over time?

The Urbana Park District will practice preventive maintenance and will include the new pool within its district-wide renewal and replacement program to keep the facility fresh and interesting over the long term.

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Why was Crystal Lake Park chosen as the pool site?

The Urbana Park District did a systematic evaluation of alternate sites for an aquatic facility in Urbana. Thirty-eight different site criteria were used in the evaluation of prospective locations. Criteria included; zoning, land use, traffic impacts, lighting, utility service, etc. Crystal Lake Park was selected as the best location for a future outdoor aquatic facility. This will preserve the history of an outdoor pool at this location since 1927.

What will the neighborhood impact be?

The capacity of the proposed new pool is about the same as the capacity for the old Crystal Lake Pool.

Parking and lighting will reflect that capacity. More modern, efficient lighting systems will be more friendly to the environment and lessen the impact on nearby residents. The return of Crystal Lake Pool, will offer more positive activity in that area of Crystal Lake Park.

It is the professional designers' and staff's opinion that the natural setting and proximity to the nature center should be taken into account and incorporated in the final design of the aquatic facility. In the district's 2007 Crystal Lake Park master plan update, the pool's location in the northeast corner of the park was identified as an important complement to other active features in that section of the park. The master plan calls for that area of the park to be reinvigorated in hopes that visitors will come for activities such as aquatics, natural pursuits, and more.

Why did the old Crystal Lake Pool close?

The old Crystal Lake Pool long outlived its expected life. In spite of maintenance and improvements undertaken by the district, the pool had advanced deterioration and major components past the point of failure, as well as systems that could not meet current codes. It would have been fiscally irresponsible to continue routine maintenance and spend resources to repair the facility.

What are other priorities/obligations for the park district?

The 15 cent rate increase approved by voters in 2009 has allowed the district to address the promise to take care of existing parks, natural areas and facilities and maintain programs and services without cuts. A list of ways the Urbana Park District is using the 15 cents can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/4avxabu>

Effects of Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL), Commonly known as Tax Caps

The phrase tax caps can be misleading because the PTELL does not cap either individual property tax bills or individual property assessments. Instead, the PTELL allows a local taxing district to receive a limited increase in property taxes on existing property, plus an amount for new construction, and voter approved rate increases. The taxes received are calculated with a very specific limiting formula defined by law using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It is not based solely upon the district's increase in Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV). Each year the CPI is calculated based upon the changes in the prices paid by urban consumers for a representative "basket" of goods and services. The limit slows the growth of property tax revenue to taxing districts even though the market value and assessed value of property increases at a faster rate.

Find out more about tax caps and the park district's budget by reviewing pages 2 and 19 of the 2010 audit here: <http://tinyurl.com/2ap8zws>

The Urbana Park District represents 10% of all the local property taxes you pay. See page 44 of the 2010-2011 Urbana Park District budget: <http://tinyurl.com/2ap8zws>

Year collected	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995*	1996	1997	1998**	1999	2000
Total UPD tax rate	.7452	.7416	.7432	.7373	.7712	.8193	.8957	.8687	.8456	.8122
Year collected	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010***
Total UPD tax rate	.7960	.7939	.7767	.7534	.7463	.7218	.7066	.6961	.6962	.8354

*A 10 cent tax rate increase was approved by Urbana Park District voters in 1994. This was phased in over three years in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

** PTELL or Tax Caps passed by Champaign County voters in 1996. The first year of a lower tax rate due to tax caps was 1998.

*** A 15 cent tax rate increase was approved by Urbana Park District voters in 2009. The first year the increase was applied was 2010.

What happens if the tax rate increase does not pass?

The old Crystal Lake Pool will be demolished and filled in at an estimated cost of \$300,000. The expense will come from existing tax dollars and will require the Urbana Park District to rearrange financial priorities. This step would be necessary because the empty pool would be unsightly and a danger to citizens and a liability to the park district if left as is. This district will need to evaluate continuation of aquatic programs that exceed the capacity of the Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center, including Nadiators, some swim lessons and water fitness classes and use by Urbana Park District summer camps.

Who to contact with more questions...

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Pool Planning Timeline

- 2007 – Crystal Lake Pool Market Analysis, UPD Strategic Plan
- 2008 – Crystal Lake Pool evaluation report completed by Farnsworth
- April 2008 – Rate increase of 25 cents rejected by voters (would have included new outdoor pool)
- August 2008 – Crystal Lake Pool Closed for safety reasons
- April 2009 – Rate increase of 15 cents approved by voters (did not include new outdoor pool)
- June–July 2009 – Crystal Lake Pool Survey (at Neighborhood Nights)
- July–September 2009 – Pool Tours
- August 2009 – Summer Camp participants gave design input
- November 2009 – March 2010 – Public Pool Planning Stakeholder Meetings
- December 2009 – Determined Pool Location
- December 2009 – Urbana Middle School students gave design input
- January 2010 – Request For Qualifications for pool design consultants advertised
- February 2010 – Developed Program Statement
- April 2010 – Ratio, Counsilman-Hunsaker, Berns Clancy & Assoc. selected.
- May 2010 – Scope of Service Agreement
- June 2010 – Boundary and Topographic Survey – Berns Clancy & Assoc.
- June–July 2010 – Aquatic Feature Survey
- July 2010 – Concept Design Open-House
- July–August 2010 – Concept Design Survey
- September–October 2010 – Market Research Phone Survey
- November 2010– Final Concept Plan