

Why is the Urbana Park District constructing a new operations building? Q&A DRAFT 3/2/10

The Planning and Operations building is central to the district's ability to function.

It is the heart that pumps the blood supply to the 22 parks and 66,000 square feet of indoor space the Urbana Park District manages. If a roof leaks, pool water needs to be made safe, trash needs to be picked up, a park needs mowing, a tree needs to be removed, a sign needs to be repaired—work to make it right happens from the operations building.

Everything that happens at the Planning and Operations building directly affects the level and type of services the Urbana Park District provides to the citizens. Constructing a new building that is up to code is the most responsible way the district can “take care of what we have” —what was promised to citizens if the 15 cent rate increase was approved by voters.

The Urbana Park District must quickly remediate the life-safety issues at the current Planning and Operations Building, which was constructed more than 50 years ago. These problems cannot be brought up to code by staying in the same location without affecting Crystal Lake Park neighbors and going against the recommendations of both the Crystal Lake Master Plan and the UPD Strategic Plan and affecting the attractiveness of both the park and the surrounding area. In addition, it will not cost any less to make needed upgrades at the existing site than constructing a new facility. Many locations for a new facility were investigated. It was determined that the best use of resources was to use land already owned by the UPD and to construct a facility that would meet all the space, storage and work function needs of the planning and operations department with green practices and sustainability in mind.

What type of building is needed?

1. **Life/Safety**—it must allow for all work to be done safely as defined by local, state and federal regulations.
2. **Efficiency**—it must allow the district to help meet its mission “to improve the quality of life of Urbana’s citizens through a responsive, efficient and creative park and recreation system.”
3. **Durability**—it must last many decades.
4. **Environmentally responsible**—it must use practices that meet UPD mission “to contribute to the conservation of the environment”. Systems like heating and cooling should control the district’s environmental impact and costs over time.
5. **Able to expand as required for future needs**—it must meet the UPD mission of being a “responsive” park and recreation system.

How will it be financed?

The park district will finance the project with money already being collected from taxpayers and will still have money left to pursue other important projects that take care of what we have —the community mandate given to the UPD with passage of the 2009 referendum.

The district is working with concept plans for a \$6,000,000 dollar facility at this stage. The actual cost of the building is still being investigated and will not be determined until building plans are finalized. The district must ensure all the work functions that take place are included in the design. It is understood that such a building has a large cost. However ensuring safety, environmental responsibility and durability are not inexpensive undertakings. The final cost will depend on the size of the building, construction materials, and when construction begins. **It is imperative to begin immediately to take advantage of:**

- A federal bond program that will rebate a significant portion of the interest on the bonds to the park district (more than \$1,000,000 over the life of the bonds and possibly much more),
- A favorable environment for bids and cost of construction materials,
- Very low interest rates,
- An opportunity to impact the economic health of the community through creation of local construction work.