



# **2003 Comprehensive Plan Update**

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## **Focus Groups**



## **Final Report**

**December 2002**



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## **Overview / Focus Group Format**

As a key component for the update to the Urbana Comprehensive Plan, a series of focus groups were conducted with individuals in the community about a variety of planning related topics. The focus groups gathered technical and professional input from those that have specific knowledge on these topics.

The results of the focus groups will supplement the community input gathered from the neighborhood workshops and the resident survey (see separate reports on each) to formulate draft goals and objectives for the plan update along with draft future land use and transportation maps.

Seven focus groups were assembled. These focus group topics included:

- Growth and Economic Development
- Transportation
- Infrastructure
- Public Services
- Environment
- Human Services
- Community Heritage / Urban Design

Each group met twice to discuss a list of issues identified on that topic by City staff in the Existing Conditions Report (see report under separate cover). City staff conducted the meetings which included anywhere from five to fifteen participants, depending on the group. The discussion generated at the meetings was used by staff to develop specific findings which are listed starting on page 41.



## **Focus Group Discussion Results**

### **Growth and Economic Development**

The Growth and Economic Development Focus Group met twice. Once on September 18, 2002 and then again on September 25, 2002. Their charge was to discuss issues related to the growth and development of the City of Urbana. They were also asked to discuss issues of image and identity. One of the primary tasks of the group was to examine Urbana's growth areas and give insight as to what types of land uses could be expected in the future given current market demands.

#### **Growth and Economic Development Focus Group Participants:**

- Bruce Walden, CAO, City of Urbana
- Howard Wakeland, Wakeland Rentals, Inc.
- Mark Dixon, The Atkins Group
- April Getchius, University of Illinois
- Laurie Bonnett, Urbana Business Association
- Chris Billing, Berns, Clancy and Associates
- Frank DiNovo, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
- Carl Hill, Hillshire Realty
- Dale Wright, Busey Bank
- Alex Ruggeri, Ramshaw Smith
- Paul Tatman, Tatman Enterprises
- Kathy Larson, City of Urbana
- Anna Merritt, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

#### **Facilitators:**

- Libby Tyler, Director
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Tim Ross, Senior Planner
- Lauren Kerestes, Planning Intern



**General Questions Considered:**

*Growth and Development*

- What are realistic market forces in the region now and in the future?
- What land uses does Urbana need more of and why?
- What locations would be appropriate for new development (commercial, industrial, residential)?
- What infrastructure deficiencies exist that will prohibit growth?
- How can Urbana's downtown best be redeveloped to encourage new and expanded uses and to increase vitality?
- What would encourage more neighborhood businesses?
- What existing policies or plans encourage (or discourage) growth? What new policies could be implemented?
- How can Urbana's commercial centers be revitalized?

*Image & Identity*

- What should Urbana's image be to developers?
- What kind of identity do the industrial and commercial areas of Urbana have? How easy are they to market for new business? What kind of planning and other special consideration needs to be given in order for these areas to succeed?
- How should the City and development community best promote business and industry in Urbana?

*Economy*

- Why is economic development important?
- What is the current and projected state of the economy for Urbana and the region as a whole?
- What can be done to bring livable-wage paying jobs to Urbana?
- What can be done to equalize tax rates in the region?
- What can be done to retain and expand Urbana's retail tax generators?
- How can the University be encouraged to provide tax relief, encourage replacement of property lost to the tax rolls, and replace lost business areas?



### **Summary of Discussion**

The following offer an overview of general statements and discussion presented at the focus group. The summary does not represent exact quotes of individuals and may not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

#### *Growth and Development*

1. More and more municipal services are being required to serve the population and community. If we want to maintain what we currently provide, the tax base needs to expand by four percent a year. The City of Urbana cannot simply be satisfied and stay where we are unless we expect either a rise in taxes or a reduction in services.
2. There was discussion and concern that the University of Illinois' plans along Curtis Road will significantly limit Urbana's growth potential to the south. It was noted that Lincoln Avenue would not be extended from Windsor to Curtis. The University and developers should work together to come up with a development plan for that area.
3. The University of Illinois and the City of Urbana need to master plan the north campus area from Harvey to Lincoln and include taxable development.
4. West Urbana needs to be able to grow to serve the University population. There should be more high density, mixed-use development along the Lincoln Avenue corridor.
5. There will be a strong market for a variety of housing types needed to serve an aging "baby-boomer" population. There are currently multi-year waiting lists at various assisted living facilities.
6. There needs to be better utilization of existing vacant buildings within the city. The majority of economic development comes from the expansion of existing businesses in the community.
7. The market for offices is always fluctuating. In order to attract a strong market for offices, "Class A" office space needs to be built and available. Tenants need to be able to inspect potential spaces before deciding to lease. All necessary infrastructure, such as fiber optics, need to be in place. The North Cunningham area along the interstate would be a good location for new office development.
8. There needs to be more industrial uses planned north of the Interstate and along Route 130. Regional detention could help create more buildable area on North Lincoln Avenue.



9. In terms of retail, Urbana is shy of many basic retail services. North Cunningham should offer additional opportunities for commercial growth. Current land use plans and maps show commercial development too far north. The general rule is that commercial should not extend beyond two miles from the interstate interchange.
10. A major problem with growth and development is that the city staff appointed Commissioners and the elected officials are not always in “step” together. In many cases, elected officials are far more concerned with the preservation of existing neighborhoods rather than new development.
11. Even though Urbana has a perceived reputation of not wanting development, the City Council has traditionally approved major development proposals such as Stone Creek, the Meijer development, Farm and Fleet, Schnucks and others.
12. Land use policies are more critical than the future land use map. The policies need to be flexible so they do not become obsolete as conditions in the community change. Plans and policies need to be used to educate people on the direction the community has decided to take.
13. The one-and-one-half mile extraterritorial jurisdictional area needs to be planned for in a clear and concise way so potential developers know exactly what the city desires in that area.
14. Although concepts of New Urbanism and neo-traditional development are very popular across the country. It should not be the sole emphasis in planning for growth and development. The market shows that many residents still prefer to drive to goods and services. For this reason, new growth should strive to accommodate both auto and non-auto trips. Focusing on only one would be shortsighted. There are many examples of how to design development in a way that accommodates both motorists and pedestrians. North Prospect is a poor example.
15. Downtown Urbana is prime for more residential development similar to what downtown Champaign is currently experiencing. The biggest opportunity for residential expansion is Lincoln Square Mall.
16. An interchange connection in the I-74 / High Cross Road area is necessary for both transportation and development needs. One of the reasons Urbana has not developed consistently with Champaign is that Urbana does not have a sufficient north-south roadway network. There needs to be a through-road system that links all of Urbana.
17. If a spur connection is made at I-74 and High Cross road, the area should not be planned solely for residential.



18. There is commercial potential along Windsor Road. Also, an agricultural-business corridor is evolving on Windsor Road.
19. There needs to be beautification of North Lincoln Avenue in order to try and attract new industrial development. Light industrial development may also be appropriate at Route 150 and Route 130.

*Image and Identity*

1. Urbana needs to better exploit all the positive aspects of the City. Perception quickly becomes reality. There needs to be a high quality report to show how Urbana ranks in different areas such as schools, parks, and housing. Right now the perception for many is that there are few housing choices, taxes are tremendously higher, and the schools and parks are not good. The tax rebate program is an excellent example of how Urbana is working to turn around perceptions and encourage people to choose to live in the community. The “Build Urbana” program should be extended to commercial and industrial development as well.
2. The appointed Commissions and elected officials need to be more sensitive to the issues of growth and development. If it is perceived by developers that the review of development proposals will be an arduous and lengthy task, they will likely choose other communities to do their business.
3. There needs to be a toolbox of reports and plans that make it very clear to investors and developers about what Urbana is planning for and what they want to encourage in the community. Without this clear message, the development process is more risky.
4. Urbana is ready to take off and bust out. For years Urbana did not have a variety of new housing choices. Now, thanks to “Build Urbana,” people are choosing to live here. The commercial development needs to follow so people don’t continue to view Urbana as a nice place to live while Champaign is the only place to shop.
5. The City needs to foster a more positive public relations campaign. Too many good things are happening that are not heard by the community.
6. The City should strongly consider a full-time person dedicated to promoting and exploiting the positive image of Urbana. This would include coordinating press releases, public events, and the advertisement of special programs designed to promote Urbana.



7. There needs to be more promotion of Urbana to the business community. This would include information in development trade magazines and regular information regarding what is happening in Urbana and why the development community should continue to invest in the community.
8. The public perception is that the taxes are so much higher in Urbana yet the average person probably does not know by how much and what they actually get for that money. The difference should be demonstrated so that the perception is not unrealistic. Tax rate equalization programs like “Build Urbana” need to be continued and expanded to other development.
9. Urbana’s fiscal responsibility should be highly promoted. People will feel proud to live in a community that is wisely spending revenues and working to keep taxes as low as possible.



## **Public Services**

The Public Services Focus Group met twice. Once on September 18, 2002 and then again on September 25, 2002. The participants represented agencies providing fire, police, school, parks and library services to the community. The primary task of this group was to review their current level of service and discuss how those services would be affected as Urbana grows.

### **Focus Group Participants:**

- Robin Hall, Urbana Park District
- Tim Bartlett, Urbana Park District
- Preston Williams, Urbana School District #116
- Chief Eddie Adair, Urbana Police Department
- Chief Rex Mundt, Urbana Fire Department
- Fred Schlipf, Urbana Free Library

### **Facilitators:**

- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Michaela Bell, Planner
- Tim Ross, Senior Planner
- Lauren Kerestes, Planning Intern

### **Questions Considered:**

- What are the deficiencies of Urbana schools, parks, and other services?
- How will new development affect demand for schools, parks, and other services? Where is there development capacity?
- How can the City and the community-at-large assist the Park District in achieving its comprehensive plan goals and its master plans for improvements?
- Is the library expansion consistent with the growth and development in Urbana and surrounding communities? Is it adequate to serve future needs?
- How can the Urbana Fire Department retain and improve upon its excellent insurance services rating for fire protection? Will relocation of a fire station be necessary, or possible addition of a new fire station?
- How can the Urbana Fire Department best work with surrounding fire protection districts to ensure a high level of protection for improvements in the planning area?
- What can the Urbana Police Department do to continue and strengthen its community policing efforts? To encourage the continued decline of crime in our community?
- How can the continuation of a high level of emergency response best be encouraged? How can Urbana continue to be well prepared for disaster events?



- What will the long-term solid waste collection and disposal needs be for the City of Urbana? Can we continue to transport our solid waste out of the area?
- What can be done to further encourage recycling efforts?

### **Summary of Discussion:**

The following offer an overview of general statements and discussion presented at the focus group. They do not represent exact quotes of individuals and may not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

#### *Urbana School District*

1. The Urbana School District currently consists of 23,000 students. Class sizes are expected to increase to a ratio of one teacher per 22 students.
2. One of the greatest facility deficiencies currently facing the schools is the lack of green space for recreation and athletics, particularly at Leal School, the middle school and high school sites. Parking is and will continue to be an issue for students, faculty and visitors, as more and more students drive to school and as parking areas are converted for athletic and recreation use. More green space will also be needed if sports and athletic opportunities expand to the junior high level.
3. The school district continues to work with the park district in coordinating afterschool intramural activities and both expect this cooperation to increase.
4. The school district has adequate internal space to accommodate the current number of students and staff. The high school could accommodate approximately 1700 students, approximately 1350 students currently attend. There are 1100 students at the middle school, this number is fairly close to the maximum for that building. The student population of the elementary schools has been on the decline, facilities are expected to be adequate for the next 5-10 years, despite any influx in student population resulting from new residential developments.
5. In terms of existing facilities, there is question about what to do with a possible expansion of King School.
6. Thomas Paine, Yankee Ridge, and Prairie school could accommodate any future development that may occur in the Northeast portion of Urbana's growth area; No new school building should be needed for the time being.



7. Development and growth in East Urbana should not pose any problems for the school district, however there is always a concern about achieving a distributed diversity of students.

*Urbana Park District*

1. Acquiring adequate park space within new developments is a primary concern for the Park District. Recent development in East Urbana is creating a shortage of adequate open space in that area. The proposed mini-park in Savannah Green will not adequately serve the population of that development. Consideration needs to be given to parkland dedication when subdivisions are approved.
2. There was discussion about the benefit of Destination Parks versus Neighborhood Parks. Current social trends suggest that more and more people are utilizing larger parks over neighborhood parks, which may explain the success of both Crystal Lake and Meadowbrook Park. While in some communities there is a trend to avoid small neighborhood parks in new development, the Park District encourages adequate, useable open space in new development.
3. The Park District is currently acquiring 60 acres immediately north of Prairie School to Main Street. There will be a new 10-acre Dog Park that will provide an exception to the leash ordinance that pertains to other area parks.
4. The current trend for athletic accommodations in parks is for less baseball space and more soccer and basketball space.
5. There is a possible need for a Skate Park to centralize skate boarders that are using various parking lots and sites within city. The Park District is waiting to see if and when Champaign will build a similar facility.
6. It is important to determine what types of parks are needed in the different areas of the community. For this reason it is important for the Park District to work closely with the School District to study the demographics of the community.
7. There is a need to renovate the pool and bathhouse at Crystal Lake Park.
8. East Urbana annexations and expansions should not be a problem for the district and would create more revenue for the proposed 60-acre park.
9. There is concern and interest about the future of the Pomology property east of Meadowbrook Park and how it might be developed.



10. There is a need for a teen center however there are concerns about funding and problems typically associated with these facilities.
11. There is a need to carefully look at properties and land surrounding Urbana, as Urbana continues to grow. We need to preserve and maintain many of these areas as open space/wildlife/farming. Other parks in the community should be designed and operated according to the passive and active recreational needs of that area. The city's pro-development aim is positive, but it should not override the need to set land aside for preservation, conservation purposes. Both the City and Park District need to be proactive and designate open space far out in the future growth areas. This is how some of our most treasured parks were created many years ago.

#### *Urbana Free Library*

1. The Urbana Free Library is currently in the top 1% of libraries nationwide in terms of usage.
2. Plans are underway to double the size of the library from 25,000 sq. ft. to 50,000 sq. ft. Anytime the city grows and adds population, library usage increases. The increased square-footage will help alleviate some of the space burdens within the library and better accommodate visitors. While this planned expansion is positive, in terms of added library space, the expansion will further decrease the size of the library's already inadequate parking area.
3. As funds allow, the library would eventually like to acquire and occupy the entire block to accommodate residents, but since expansion is cost-driven, doubling the square-footage is all that is feasible now. The current expansion will have a "knockout wall" to the west.
4. Growth in northeast Urbana is cause for concern. Many residents from this peripheral area may not be served as efficiently as someone within west Urbana (mainly because they are more likely to be auto-dependent and because on-site parking is a particularly troublesome issue).
5. Creation of a bookmobile or branch libraries to service hard-to-access areas is not usually considered until a city population reaches 50,000. The library is committed to offering the best possible service to all residents and feels that keeping its resources at the main library would be best. As the city continues to annex property and development beyond its current borders, the library needs to consider how well those new residents can be served. Branch libraries and bookmobiles are expensive.



6. Annexing additional property in East or North Urbana should not present a problem for the Park District. The additional tax revenues would generate more money for the parks.
7. Social and cultural trends need to be understood and addressed. There is currently a need to expand language materials.
8. The function and safety of the library is always a concern. Location of the facility is very fragile since the library is open to the general public and has limited security. It is imperative that library facilities are not located in close proximity to other land uses that will encourage the library as a place to loiter.
9. East Urbana annexations and expansions should not be a problem for the library. The increase in tax base would help with the increase in library use.

*Police Department*

1. Building space is adequate for staff, at least for the next five years. Space and employee demands will increase, incrementally, as the City acquires land, expands, and builds.
2. Lower income areas are typically higher service areas for the police. The greater the demand for service, the greater the need for more police officers and incremental growth of the department. Particular high response and burden areas include the Sunnycrest II Apartments at Philo and Colorado Avenues.
3. Homeland security is the main priority of the department at present. As a result, police are educating the public on heightened security awareness, updating emergency response plans, and focusing on the smaller, local acts of crime that they believe break down a community's perception about security.
4. The Department has concerns about development in the Savannah Green area. Concentrations of lower-income housing require a greater demand for services (not just from police and emergency response teams, but also from schools, parks, and library).
5. East Urbana annexations and expansions should not be a problem for the department, because it is an area already serviced by police (Scottswood, Edgewood).



*Fire Department*

1. The Department receives about 4,000 calls per year, 60% of which are emergency response calls.
2. The current Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating is ISO3. [Note: this rating was upgraded to ISO2 subsequent to the Focus Group meetings]. The Fire Department has improved this rating since 1989. The ISO rating is determined by three factors: 1) communication systems; 2) water supply; and 3) fire response. There are three components relating to fire response. These are station location, equipment, and personnel and training.
3. Space is tight for the Fire Department at the main Vine Street station location, but equipment is in good condition and is adequate for needs.
4. The north and campus fire station sites have plenty of space.
5. The fourth fire station on campus is an asset because it improves fire response rates. The new station does not really help the City in its fire rating.
6. The department has upgraded its response rates to include three engines, one ladder, and a command car at every call. This has added four fire fighters per call to the scene.
7. The department has a track record of good record keeping, this continues to be a long-term goal.
8. The training program is very systematic and well managed, although they don't receive ISO credit for public education and community involvement.
9. PRO and ARROW are the two emergency response providers at the City. One of the two is always stationed in the main firehouse. Fire-based emergency response is the best approach although there will be a need for more coordination down the road.
10. There is concern about how the City expands since this may have a negative impact on ISO ratings. The presence of adequate water hydrants is also a concern that results from City expansion. Everything north of I-74 is currently outside of the fire response district.
11. The department is being asked to provide automatic aid to back other fire departments with little offered in return, this has caused some friction between career and volunteer fire departments. There is a need to work with the City of Champaign and the University of Illinois to make cooperative trades that benefit all communities.



12. Increased economic development means increased number of buildings for the fire department to regulate, inspect, and administer code enforcement.
13. As the City expands, the department will need more space for housing, conference rooms, training rooms, etc. They are currently operating with very limited facilities.
14. Preventative Public Education can always be improved upon to further strengthen the department's efforts.
15. East Urbana annexations and expansions should not be a problem for the department, as areas such as Scottswood and Edgewood are already being serviced.
16. There will be a demand for more training facilities in the City. The department currently uses the City of Champaign's training facility, but there is the possibility it will be moving 3 to 5 miles south of its current location at Windsor and Neil.
17. Serious consideration should be given to requiring that sprinkler systems be installed during the construction/remodeling phase of properties, including residential. Incentives could be offered for the installation of fire protection systems.
18. Currently there is a need to improve the frequency of fire inspections in rental units.



## **Transportation**

The Transportation Focus Group met on September 20, 2002 and then again on October 4, 2002. The charge for the group was to discuss local issues associated with various modes of transportation and the interaction between these modes. Another important issue for the group was the interaction between transportation routes and development, including redevelopment. Discussion from the focus group will be used as input to the Transportation Plan component of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

### **Focus Group Members:**

- Aimee Johansen Alnet, local bicycle and pedestrian advocate
- William Gray, City Engineer, City of Urbana
- Cynthia Hoyle, Transit Planning Consultant, Champaign-Urbana Metropolitan Transportation District
- C. Elaine McCoy, Director, Institute of Aviation, U of I-Willard Airport
- Anna Merritt, Chair, Urbana Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Rita Morocoima-Black, Transportation Planner, Champaign-Urbana Urbanized Transportation Study (CUUATS)
- Barb Pritchard, People Assuming Control of their Environment (PACE) (submitted written communication)
- Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer, City of Urbana

### **Facilitators:**

- Tim Ross, Senior Planner, Community Development Services
- Libby Tyler, Director, Community Development Services
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager, Community Development Services
- Michaela Bell, Planner, Community Development Services

### **Questions to Consider:**

#### *Roadway Planning*

- Are the current functional roadway classifications in the Comprehensive Plan adequate or should they be modified or updated?
- What changes should be made to the roadway plan to more accurately reflect existing and planned development?
- What major roadway and highway improvements will be necessary during the planning horizon?



- Should the Subdivision and Land Development Code be modified to clarify the developer's responsibility for roadway improvements that may be necessary due to new development?
- Should modifications to the roadway plan and Subdivision and Land Development Code be made to encourage new or differing styles of development and circulation patterns?
- How can the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan best incorporate CUUATS studies and plans, including the Campus Area Transportation Study (CATS) and C-U in 2030?
- How can major roadway improvements best be funded? Should arterial improvements be funded by a local-share motor fuel tax source?

*Functional issues*

- What, if any, forms of traffic calming should be encouraged and in what locations?
- What access management guidelines are appropriate?
- Should the City adopt access control parameters? If so, will these standards promote the ease of transfer of goods and services along major arterials?
- Are changes necessary to current traffic impact assessment guidelines?
- Is the City committed to arranging agreements with IDOT to ensure land use objectives of the Comprehensive Plan along state controlled right-of-ways?
- Are current sidewalk construction requirements adequate?
- What is the best mechanism for construction of sidewalks in pedestrian locations that currently lack them?
- How can connections between schools, parks, and recreational facilities best be provided?
- Can linear corridors be developed to serve circulation, environmental, and recreational needs? If so, where? What are appropriate funding mechanisms?

*Transit and alternative modes*

- How can alternative modes of travel, such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit, best be encouraged?
- How can pedestrian and bicycle safety be enhanced?
- What changes might be necessary to the Natureways, Bikeways, and Trails Plan to reflect current and projected development in Urbana?
- How can bicycle pathway improvements best be funded?
- How important is the continuation of passenger rail service to and from Champaign-Urbana? Are sufficient industrial sites provided adjacent to freight lines? How can rail service be improved to better provide freight and passenger needs?
- Should light rail be pursued for connecting the downtowns of Champaign and Urbana and the University district?



- How can the Willard and Frasca Airports best be improved and expanded to serve commercial and individual air travel needs? What are the economic development implications? How can nearby residences be protected?
- How can the increased use of transit be encouraged so as to achieve specified transit usage goals?
- What is the best means of incorporating Transit District plans into the Comprehensive Plan?
- Can MTD or non-vehicular transit bodies provide design parameters that the City can consider for alternative transportation planning?

**Summary of Discussion:**

The following offer an overview of general statements and discussion presented at the focus group. They do not represent exact quotes of individuals and may not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

*Air*

1. Willard Airport has visited Delta and ComAir about possible jet service.
2. Before and after 9/11 Willard has hosted 16 flights a day, but that quantity has been higher in past.
3. Willard has added a new general aviation runway.
4. FlightStar is a tenant who operates charter planes and other commercial flights at Willard. There are no major freight carriers.
5. Willard is working with the Transit District to run a bus line to and from the airport to serve both passengers and employees.
6. The airport has no taxing authority to offer free parking.
7. The airport has expanded to the south and west with no major neighborhood complaints.
8. Frasca is a general aviation airport. It is a distinct operation from Willard and the two airports are not in competition. Sometimes there are flights between airports.

*Fixed-Guideway System*

1. There is a study underway by Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District to consider some kind of rail service in the campus area with a link to downtown Urbana and downtown



Champaign. Many questions remain about the streetcar proposals, including funding and infrastructure requirements.

*Roadway Plan*

1. Roadway classifications follow the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) standards, and are usually consistent with Average Daily Traffic count classifications. This is important for many reasons, especially funding and design.
2. A simpler roadway classification of arterial, collector, and local may be better but may be limited by IDOT standards.
3. Approximately \$860,000 per year for roads is allocated for Champaign-Urbana-Savoy in federal funding.
4. The Motor Fuel Tax is \$29 per person living in the community. Currently that provides over \$1 million in revenue, but it is used to fund a variety of capital improvements.
5. The City's Engineering Staff will work with the Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study (CUUATS) to propose a roadway plan update for review.
6. Curtis Road should be left as an arterial designation.
7. Urbana needs to plan for roadways outside the 1½-mile Extra Territorial Jurisdiction Area (ETJA).
8. CUUATS is creating a Long Range Transportation Plan and is putting together a committee to help on the update.
9. The transportation portion of Urbana's Comprehensive Plan should correlate with CUUATS' CU-2035 Plan. The functional classifications will likely be different but the planned roadway improvements should be consistent.
10. Currently there are no regulations for access management, only guidelines. The Comprehensive Plan needs to incorporate goals and objectives related to access management standards.
11. There are broad guidelines in the Subdivision Code about the need to conduct Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). The volume horizon should consider a 20-year full build out. Turning volumes are a critical component of a TIA.
12. The City would welcome a review of the TIA from CUUATS.



13. Urbana should apply traffic calming ideas and concepts in new design and construction of roadways where appropriate, especially for local roads.
14. Communication with IDOT is important and should continue.
15. CUUATS is coordinating a Greenways Plan update through an intergovernmental committee.

*High Cross Road/I-74 possible interchange*

1. While an extension of the University Avenue interchange should be considered, a new interchange at I-74 and High Cross Road (Route 130) is unrealistic considering the close proximity of Beringer Commons and other subdivisions.

*Sidewalks*

1. Three things would make walking a better alternative to other transportation modes:
  - Adding more street lighting for pedestrian safety. There is a lack of street lighting in Urbana.
  - Having longer walk signals. The perception is that the duration is too short.
  - Keeping sidewalks in good repair. Some sidewalks are problematic.
2. From the City's perspective, walk times are adequate for the majority of pedestrians and the City has implemented innovative improvements to crosswalks that have been used as a model by IDOT. Sidewalks are generally in good repair. The maintenance of brick sidewalks is improving.
3. Urbana needs to have a goal or requirement that sidewalks must connect from the street to the development.
4. The priority system for installation of new sidewalks is based on use. Schools, parks, etc. receive top priority. Funding sidewalk improvements can be challenging.
5. The City could look at sidewalk width standards. There are no standards for commercial that are different than that of residential.

*Bicycle/Pedestrian/Transit*

1. Transportation planning has historically revolved around roads.



2. The existing Comprehensive Plan lacks sufficient emphasis on other transportation modes. The new Comprehensive Plan will include a multi-modal perspective.
3. Future MTD routes change and are dependent on development. We need to increase the consideration of transit in the design of new development.
4. Getting people to use transit is a challenge in an auto-oriented culture. Two blocks is generally considered the maximum distance someone will walk to catch a bus.
5. The City should consider transit overlay district standards.
6. The Comprehensive Plan should include a goal to develop a bike and pedestrian plan for Urbana. We need more information about pedestrian/bike issues and we need to develop design standards. The effort underway at the Regional Planning Commission will serve as a starting point.



## **Infrastructure**

The Infrastructure Focus Group met twice. Once on September 24, 2002 and then again on October 3, 2002. The participants represented agencies generally providing utility services to the community. The primary task of this group was to review their current level of service and discuss how those services and utilities would be affected as Urbana grows.

### **Focus Group Participants:**

- Bill Gray, Urbana Public Works Department
- Alex Nagy, Urbana Public Works Department
- Mike Little, Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District
- Brent O'Neill, Illinois American Water Company
- Don Wauthier, St. Joseph Drainage District
- Denise Harrison, Illinois Power
- Keith Erickson, University of Illinois

### **Facilitators:**

- Libby Tyler, Director
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Tim Ross, Senior Planner
- Michaela Bell, Planner

### **Questions Considered:**

- What are the growth limitations and opportunities posed by the Urbana and Champaign Sanitary District's Long Range Facility Plan? How should these be reflected in the Comprehensive Plan?
- What are the growth limitations that might be imposed by the availability of water service lines? How can these be rectified?
- What capital improvement needs for roads and infrastructure are not planned for?
- Should impact fees be imposed to pay for major infrastructure improvements?
- What infrastructure deficiencies exist that will prohibit growth?
- What types of development patterns best promote the conservation of energy and water?
- What improvements are needed to storm sewers, detention basins, and applicable regulations?
- What can be done to promote improved water quality in Urbana?
- Do adequate regional detention opportunities exist?
- How can drainage ways in Urbana be protected and improved?



- What changes are necessary with respect to utility easements and placement?
- What special needs exist for telecommunications infrastructure? How can these be provided?
- What effects will utility deregulation have on Urbana?
- Should the City undertake special service areas to place utilities underground in certain area?
- What areas are currently being served by telecommunications companies? Where will future investment be needed?

**Summary of Points Discussed:**

*Water*

1. The Illinois American Water Company is currently updating their five-year plan. Their next major push will be water lines serving Curtis Road from Staley to High Cross Road.
2. The Water Company is generally able to keep up with the pace of development and supply water and development expands. Developers typically install their own mains.
3. Urbana is currently well served with water mains along Airport Road, High Cross Road, Windsor Road and Cunningham Avenue.
4. Currently approximately 33 million gallons of water are treated annually. Currently, there is capacity to accommodate up to 41.2 million gallons.
5. There are currently two plants; one on Mattis Road and one in Urbana. A new 10-20 million gallon plant will be built to the west in the next 3-5 years.
6. The years 2010 to 2015 are projected to be dates when the water company will need expansion and improvements system-wide.
7. Well-heads on Bradley are low producing.
8. In general, the water company is always concerned about development near well-heads. There is always a potential for spills or unauthorized dumping of materials into well-heads.
9. The new main on Airport Road could serve development in Northeast Urbana very well. The main on High Cross Road is 16 inches in diameter.

*Power*

1. The supply of gas and power needs to be in range of current substations and mains. The closer the development is to the substations, the cheaper the cost will be to serve that



development. Substations are checked yearly. It is uncertain whether any overhauls of substations are planned in the short term.

2. It is not anticipated that Illinois Power would have any problem serving new development in Urbana.
3. Illinois Power maintains an 87% reliability rating.
4. Illinois Power does not own and operate any power plants but they purchase power agreements.
5. Because of de-regulation, Illinois Power has become an Independent Distribution Company rather than a Functional Utility Company. The difference between the two relates to the type of service. Illinois Power no longer provides heavy service incentives with development; they essentially provide the pipes and wires.

#### *Sanitary Sewers*

1. The U-C Sanitary District recently completed their long-range plan which can be used in the Comprehensive Plan effort.
2. Currently, the District is concentrating on a major interceptor project that affects the University. The project will provide an interceptor from the Southwest treatment plant to the South Campus Research Park.
3. There are two phases of interceptor work for Windsor Road and Curtis Road.
4. The UCSD anticipates plant projects in 2005, 2010, and 2015. An expansion of the Southwest plant is scheduled in 2005 while improvements to the Northeast plant are scheduled in 2010 and 2015.
5. There are no plans for a Southeast treatment plant through 2019. All development in this part of Urbana will be centered on the Myra Pump Station.
6. In general, the UCSD can easily accommodate growth to the North and Northeast. Growth to the south and southeast will need to be pumped.
7. Development east of High Cross Road can be accommodated for on a limited scale but consideration will need to be given for the next ring of interceptors.



*Drainage*

1. The City continues to make progress in rehabbing its sanitary sewers to reduce inflow-infiltration problems.
2. Greeley/Hanson outlined Urbana's storm sewer improvements in a study in 1982. This study still provides guidance for necessary improvements.
3. The City is undertaking a joint project with Champaign County and with Urbana Township to address drainage deficiencies in the Scottswood Subdivision area. This involves televising and cleaning of existing storm sewers and the future construction of a detention basin and new storm sewers to serve the area.
4. Urbana is working with other local and regional governments and with the University of Illinois on a Phase II Stormwater Plan to reduce non-point source pollution. Over the next five years, this plan will result in amendments to our local ordinances to incorporate best management practices, the need for improved public education and public involvement, and other implementing actions, such as improved development and post-development erosion control measures and general housekeeping measures within Public Works.
5. Phase II implementation will result in some cost increases. A storm water impact fee may be considered to help offset these costs.
6. Urbana continues to monitor flows on the Boneyard Creek pursuant to recently constructed improvements upstream. A joint floodplain-remapping project will be undertaken after 2003. Overall, these improvements have yielded a 10- to 25-year level of protection within the Boneyard Creek Floodplain.
7. Additional study should be considered to determine if detention basins are operating optimally in reducing local flooding. Hydraulic modeling of a watershed is necessary to evaluate current basins and to determine where and if additional regional detention basins are necessary.
8. Impacts on rural drainage districts are a concern in that drain tile systems are not suited to handling urban flows. This can require adjustment of jurisdictional boundaries or payment of outlet fees.
9. There is additional design and planning considerations needed to balance between the goals of flood protection and water quality.



10. The greenway potential of the Saline Branch and the Boneyard Creek can be enhanced through use of grass filter strips and other erosion control measures within their respective floodplains.

*University Utilities*

1. The University continues to complete its major utility upgrade projects, including that to their chilled water plant.
2. The University emphasizes energy conservation through LEED certification of its buildings.
3. The University coordinates with the Cities on stormwater detention requirements for new developments.
4. The University has coordinated with the Cities on upgrade of the Boneyard Creek.
5. Major utility extensions to the South Campus Research Park will be necessary.
6. There is a plan to irrigate the South Farms with nonpotable water for sustainability purposes.
7. The University is coordinating with Champaign, Savoy, and the UCSD on the Curtis Road sanitary sewer interceptor project to benefit the South Campus Research Park.
8. The University is creating new right-of-way ordinances to address the increase in license agreements for telecommunications. The goal is to manage utilities located in a right-of-way and reduce disruption of service.



## **Human Services**

The Human Services Focus Group met twice, once on September 19, 2002 and then again on September 26, 2002. Their task was to discuss issues related to human services in the community. They were also asked to discuss issues from service distribution to perceived demographic trends. One of the primary tasks of the group was to examine Urbana's human service situation and provide insight into how to improve coordination to meet future needs.

### **Focus Group Participants:**

- Lynne Barnes, Executive Director, Carle Hospital
- Steve Clark, Executive Director, Housing Authority of Champaign County
- Vacellia Clark, Interim Personnel Manager, City of Urbana
- Carol Elliott, Cunningham Township
- Judi Jones, Urban League
- Bob Grewe, Grants Manager, City of Urbana
- Darlene Kloepfel, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
- Josha LeSure, Housing Authority of Champaign County
- Robert E. Lewis, Community Development Commission
- Anna Merritt, Chair, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- John Muirhead, Adult Education, Urbana School District
- Karen Rasmussen, Grants Coordinator, City of Urbana
- Libby Tyler, Community Development Director, City of Urbana

### **Facilitators:**

- Michaela Bell, Planner
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Tim Ross, Senior Planner

### **Questions Considered:**

- What is the human service situation today? What is on the horizon?
- Does Urbana currently provide an adequate supply of affordable housing?
- How should existing public housing developments be redeveloped?
- How can existing housing programs in Urbana be improved?
- Is Urbana equipped to meet the changing needs of a diversifying population? What important issues/needs should be addressed for the future?
- How will new housing developments affect other city services and the quality of life for the remainder of Urbana residents?



- How can the provision of human services be strengthened? What populations and neighborhoods require expanded or different services?
- How can we encourage the most efficient distribution of human services in terms of location and facility placement?
- How can we encourage land use patterns that ensure adequate transportation to jobs and housing?
- What can be done to encourage new job creation and job training programs in Urbana?
- Should Urbana consider a citywide neighborhood wellness initiative? If so, what should be the goals of such a program?
- What are Urbana's future daycare needs?

### **Summary of Points Discussed:**

#### *Demographic Changes/Trends*

1. The 2000 Census shows that Champaign and Urbana have experienced the following demographic trends:
  - Change in family composition i.e. more single-parent households
  - Increase in low-income populations with felony convictions
  - Increase in low-income populations from other Illinois communities who are displaced by eliminated public housing projects
  - Increase in senior population
  - Increase in minority populations
  - Increase in populations where English is a second language
  - Increase in cases of HIV and AIDS
  - Increase in the "working poor"
  - Decrease in workforce population with job-readiness skills

#### *Support*

1. There is a need to identify the "basic needs" of those living in the community. Efforts should be made towards meeting those identified needs through a focused coordination of programs.
2. Services should be offered with conditions that encourage self-sufficiency.
3. There is a need to continue to serve the current populations while planning for others.
4. There is a need to secure new locations that provide necessary services such as educational programs.



5. It should be a goal to provide safe neighborhood centers for various outreach programs.
6. Urbana Public Television (UPTV) should be used as an information dissemination tool.

### *Housing*

1. There is a need for comprehensive education about the lack of affordable housing options.
2. Emergency shelters are running over capacity.
3. More information needs to be provided about low income tax credits and what they entail.
4. The City of Urbana should be more aggressive in educating developers about the various incentives and grants available for businesses.
5. Service providers and local governments need a map of income versus housing stock to assess affordable housing options.
6. There is a need to provide more permanent housing options.
7. Those with felony convictions cannot acquire housing, this is an important issue to consider.
8. A future increase in the senior population may demand the need for an assisted-living campus.

### *Public Housing*

1. Public housing policy needs to focus on lowering the concentration of poverty.
2. There is a need to identify areas in Urbana for future public housing opportunities.
3. Housing should be linked with other human services.
4. The Federal Government is downsizing public housing and HUD is looking to get out of the business.



*Partnerships*

1. There is a need for a referral office/resource center in a central location. Lincoln Square may be an ideal place for a central office location.
2. A grant is needed to fund a study that explores various service delivery models.
3. The community should continue to analyze changing trends and new challenges.
4. Service providers should encourage programs that provide intervention and long-term support models.
5. Services are fragmented in the community. Providers should build on Carle's efforts to centralize services.
6. Subsidize transportation for seniors.
7. Faith-based organizations will play an increasing role in Human Service distribution, partnerships need to be established.
8. There is a need to make public transportation in Urbana more user-friendly and easier to understand.

*Employment*

1. There is a need to get low-income persons into the Urbana workforce.
2. Encourage private sector to address their employees' human needs.
3. There is a need to identify the transportation issues that limit access to jobs.
4. Improve life-skills education and job retention programs that educate people about how to maintain a job and function successfully in the workforce culture.
5. The community would benefit from more diversity in workforce, provide a community job-mentoring program.
6. There is a need to focus on Urbana's economic development efforts towards bringing in businesses that provide living-wage jobs.



## **Environmental Focus Group**

The Environment Focus Group met twice, once on September 20, 2002 and then again on October 4, 2002. Its charge was to discuss the impacts of development on the environment in Urbana and the outlying area, as well as to discuss ways in which local environmental resources can be preserved, enhanced, and created.

### **Focus Group Participants:**

- Tim Bartlett, Planner, Urbana Park District
- Mike Brunk, Arborist, City of Urbana
- Rod Fletcher, Environmental Manager, City of Urbana
- Anna Merritt, Chair, Urbana Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Dave Monk, local environmentalist
- Bob Stickers, Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Libby Tyler, Community Development Director, City of Urbana
- Bob Wendt, Manager, Champaign County Farm Bureau
- Charlie Wunder, Planning and Zoning Director, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission

### **Facilitators:**

- Tim Ross, Senior Planner
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Michaela Bell, Planner

### **Questions Considered:**

- What are the most significant natural features of Urbana and its surrounding area?
- What natural features of Urbana need to be preserved or improved? How could this be done?
- What impacts do new and existing developments have on the natural environment?
- How can local water quality be better protected?
- Are there appropriate stormwater management policies in place to control flooding? How can they be improved?
- Where are the significant wooded areas in Urbana and the surrounding area?
- Are existing wooded areas being adequately protected?
- Is there an appropriate level of support for our arbor program? Are we committed to maintaining the Tree City USA designation?
- Where do opportunities exist for the creation of future natureways and greenways, especially for the purposes of pollution prevention and environmental preservation?
- What specific conservation measures should be enacted?



- Is there an appropriate level of support for the U-Cycle recycling program?
- How can U-Cycle be improved?
- How can farmland best be preserved? Where should this occur?
- Can we expand on the success of the Project Impact program?
- What policy changes should be made to better protect the natural environment?
- What will the long-term solid waste collection and disposal needs be for the City of Urbana?  
Can we continue to transport our solid waste out of the area?
- What can be done to further encourage recycling efforts?

### **Summary of Points Discussed**

The following offer an overview of general statements and discussion presented at the focus group. They do not represent exact quotes of individuals and may not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

#### *Amenities to Preserve*

1. The following were listed as local environmental features that are considered worthy of preservation and/or conservation (items are in no particular order):
  - Prime farmland
  - Wetland areas
  - Drainage ways
  - Urban Trees
  - Open space in undeveloped areas
  - Crystal Lake Park, Meadowbrook Park and other parks
  - Busey Woods, Brownfield Woods, Trelease Woods
  - Stream corridors – Embarras, Saline Branch, Boneyard, McCullough Creek, etc.
  - Farms with wooded areas
  - Moraine corridor northeast of Urbana
  - Greenspace
  - Topsoil

#### *Farmland preservation*

1. Farmland is a valuable resource.
2. Grant programs are available for farmland and greenspace preservation.
3. Champaign County is working towards an Exclusive Agricultural zone.



4. Large lot rural subdivisions may promote leapfrog development. Development should be compact and contiguous.
5. The agreement with the Sanitary District requiring annexation or annexation agreements prior to sanitary connection promotes compact and contiguous development.
6. Urban sprawl is a concern in terms of density, pace, and quality of development.
7. Urbana is not a true example of a sprawling community – perhaps the term “Urban Crawl” more closely resembles the recent growth pattern.

*Open Space/Greenspace*

1. Connections between “open space” areas are important. A map designating all existing greenways would be a useful tool.
2. Open space needs to be defined as something more than parks and recreational space. It should be usable and could include drainage ways. Connections could be pedestrian ways.
3. Covering the Boneyard Creek was not productive.
4. Urbana should consider a park dedication requirement. The Park District and the City need to work with developers to preserve open space. This needs to be a concerted effort, because once a developer begins considering property, it quickly gets too expensive for Park District acquisition.
5. We need neighborhood parks and we need to consider creating linear parks.
6. More combined (regional) detention basins are needed. They are amenities but are sometimes designed poorly.
7. Wetlands are a component of the new dog park and need to be constructed properly. Recent cases of the West Nile Virus bring greater concern about areas that serve as habitat for mosquitoes. Restored wetlands serve to bring back part of our environmental heritage.
8. The Regional Planning Commission is coordinating an update of the regional greenways plan. The plan will provide guidance about potential new areas for greenway and trail development.



*Development and the built environment*

1. Development should be designed differently. Currently residential areas have been stripped of topsoil and are compacted, making it difficult to grow vegetation, create urban forestry and preserve virgin soils. Developers should consider compacting just the roadways and not the internal development.
2. How can we acquire greenspace in our existing built-up areas? There can be newly created open space areas in existing developments on lots much larger than they need to be, i.e. K-mart parking lot, Sunnycrest lot. Recent zoning amendments allow for a reduction in parking on large commercial parcels. Putting new greenspace in existing developments may be cost-prohibitive in many cases.
3. The “Fox boxes” on Fox Drive in Champaign is a good example of development which respects the natural environment; Old Farm is another good model of new retail development.
4. An important step in maintaining or improving natural areas is for governmental bodies to acquire land for conservation/preservation and lease it with conditions.
5. Access corridors should be provided into a conservation district.
6. Urbana needs to coordinate with County zoning in planning the mile-and-a-half area and beyond.
7. A funding vehicle geared towards preservation should be identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
8. There is a lack of really good plans that support compact and contiguous development.
9. There is a need for land cache and transfer of development rights ordinances at the state level.
10. Contractors should be encouraged to ameliorate recycled soils – composting is difficult due to compaction.
11. The City needs to encourage more “green” buildings through local ordinances.
12. The Project Impact program should specifically consider the issue of flood protection.
13. Inter-urban rail would be good for environmental preservation. However, the burden to adjacent landowners is significant.



*Trees/Forestry*

1. There needs to be tree preservation on private property.
2. The City should require a minimum of one street tree per developed lot, and should plan for maintenance.
3. A Heritage Tree program would be appropriate for Urbana, based on the unique and international trees that have been imported and grown here. Under such a program, the City would get points for unique trees that have been established for several years.
4. It would be useful to know how the Forest Preserve District obtains and maintains land.

*Water quality/Stormwater management*

1. Riparian filter strips would improve and/or preserve water quality. Establishing them is sometimes challenging because streams frequently run through industrial areas, i.e. the Saline Branch.
2. Septic areas should be designed and maintained to preserve water quality.
3. Rainwater should be managed and absorbed where it falls if possible. Pervious surface should be maximized and trees should be utilized so water recharges into the ground.
4. Drainage Districts were often originally designed for rural land uses, and urban development strains these systems.
5. The Mahomet Aquifer study will address the status of regional water supply; we know it is declining.

*Potential interchange at I-74*

1. We need to be realistic that I-74 is prime for some commercial zoning and uses.
2. The area should be left agricultural. It does not need to develop.
3. Construction of the High Cross interchange may reduce or eliminate the need for expanding the current interchange at University. The Interchange would require higher intensity land use than residential.



*Solid Waste/Recycling*

1. Educational recycling programs are beneficial.
2. Recycling is a market-driven industry.
3. Litter of plastic bags is a problem in areas outside commercial areas – i.e., North Market Street.
4. The new transfer station will mostly consolidate solid waste, and possibly provide limited recycling.
5. Solid waste management is a global problem. We are likely to see trucks hauling garbage over long distances to regional facilities.



## **Community Heritage / Urban Design**

The Community Heritage/Urban Design Focus Group met twice, once on September 24, 2002 and then again on October 1, 2002. Their charge was to discuss issues related to community heritage, historic preservation, and urban design. Because all of the subjects were so interrelated, the group examined how efforts could be combined to meet community goals.

### Focus Group Participants:

- Tony Endress, Professor, University of Illinois
- April Getchius, Assistant Director and Campus Planner, University of Illinois
- Laurie Goscha, Architect, Isaksen-Glerum, Incorporated
- Kevin Hunsinger, Local Developer, Hunsinger Enterprises
- Alice Novak, Chair, Urbana Historic Preservation Commission
- Megan Wolf, Interim Director, Champaign County Arts, Entertainment and Culture Council

### Facilitators:

- Michaela Bell, Planner
- Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager
- Tim Ross, Senior Planner

### Questions Considered:

#### *Community Heritage*

- How can the history of Urbana be better recognized in the future development and preservation of the community?
- What should be the city's role in the preservation of historic buildings?
- In addition to historic preservation, what other innovative approaches can be made for neighborhood conservation?
- What types of programs should the city consider to help implement historic preservation efforts in the community?
- What cultural diversity attributes are found in Urbana? What should the city do to celebrate this diversity?

#### *Urban Design*

- What are the important issues of urban design? What elements are found in Urbana?
- How can urban design improve the quality of life for citizens of Urbana?
- To what extent should Urbana address urban design? On a voluntary, incentive-based, or regulatory basis?



- How can urban design contribute to the downtown image initiative?
- How can Urbana institute “Smart Growth” principles through urban design?
- What type of community educational workshop about design would be beneficial for Urbana?
- How can local artists and muralists contribute to the design and heritage of Urbana?
- Would an awards program that honors “good design” for a restoration project, innovative design or model development be a tool for promoting design principles?

**Summary of Discussion:**

The following offer an overview of general statements and discussion presented at the focus group. They do not represent exact quotes of individuals and may not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

*Historic Preservation*

1. Urbana’s built environment is an important community asset.
2. The history of Urbana and efforts for promoting it are important to the community.
3. The Historic Preservation Commission should increase investments in public education.
4. Historic preservation efforts should be a combination of incentives and regulations.
5. There is a need to preserve historical buildings and those with significant quality and integrity.
6. Economic incentives should be available to all socio-economic classes.

*Zoning*

1. Neighborhood businesses and B-1 Districts may benefit from improved regulations. Use regulations for B-1 may include: height requirements, parking maximums, roof pitch and landscaping requirements.
2. Urbana has the opportunity to be more creative in improving sustainability by encouraging the use of recycled materials and porous paving in new developments.
3. Infill development is stifled by the lack of a zoning district buffers, establish an improved buffer zone between Duplex and Multi-family zoning districts.
4. The City should continue investing in green space throughout Urbana.



5. The City should continue improving commercial corridors such as Cunningham Avenue.
6. The City should continue re-examining the MOR, Mixed Office Residential Zoning District, to identify ways of improving the regulations associated within the district.

*Community Heritage*

1. It is important to improve various gateways into the City of Urbana.
2. The urban tree canopy is a distinctive part of Urbana's heritage.
3. Historic preservation provides various benefits to the community both economic and cultural.
4. Promote public art.
5. Urbana lacks the civic/public space found in other communities, this contradicts the community interaction that residents value.
6. Urbana should support cooperative efforts to fund neighborhood groups that wish to hold cultural/heritage celebrations.
7. Urbana groups should coordinate efforts with Champaign County Arts Council in supporting an increase in community outreach programs such as workshops, walking tours and festivals that focus on the theme of "Celebrating Urbana". This would encourage positive attitudes towards celebrating Urbana artists.
8. Urbana should continue to encourage neighborhood identity and organization.

*Urban Design*

1. The Community should recognize Urbana's diversity and efforts towards sustainability.
2. The City of Urbana should provide a "Design Guide" or workshops to aid local developers in meeting city goals.
3. The City of Urbana may consider encouraging the use of recycled materials and porous surface designs for parking areas. Provide incentives for developers to get creative with their building designs.
4. The City of Urbana should encourage compatible land uses specifically in Urbana neighborhoods.



5. Continue to strive for a central node in the downtown area to make it a destination-location.
6. Incorporate more art in the downtown area.
7. Continue to improve the quality of life in Urbana.



## Summary of Staff Findings

The following staff findings were generated as a result of the discussions at the various focus group meetings.

### Growth and Economic Development Staff Findings

1. Revitalizing downtown should be a primary focus for growth and development of the city. Redevelopment of the downtown area offers the best opportunity to create new dense housing and new commercial opportunities that would be in close proximity to many residents. With the existing infrastructure and services in place, redevelopment of downtown offers the most cost effective way to provide new businesses, offices and living opportunities. It also encourages more pedestrian and transit activity while reducing dependence on the automobile, contributing to a higher quality of life for residents. A fixed-guideway system can help link downtown Urbana to campus and downtown Champaign creating an even stronger market for residential and commercial redevelopment downtown.
2. High density housing development should be encouraged in the downtown area. There could be a strong market for young professionals and graduate students who desire to live in an urban setting close to services and the University.
3. Business retention and expansion is just as critical as attracting new businesses to the city. Long range planning and infrastructure improvements need to be planned for existing commercial and industrial areas such as the Sunnycrest commercial area and the North Lincoln Avenue industrial area.
4. Urbana lacks many basic retail services such as stores for appliances, electronics, and apparel. Aggressive business attraction and expansion efforts are needed to fill these needs. This should be a top priority.
5. The University of Illinois' plans to relocate the South Farms to the area south of Windsor Road will severely limit growth and development opportunities for Urbana. The long range plans by the University to expand into this area with non-taxable uses essentially eliminates the tax revenue potential for the area.
6. Curtis Road should be improved to be a four lane major arterial roadway becoming part of a beltway system around Champaign-Urbana and Savoy. The improvement of Curtis Road will make south Urbana more desirable for development.



7. Growth and expansion to the south of Windsor Road and east of Philo Road is currently limited due to existing sanitary sewer capacity limitations. Significant infrastructure improvements will be needed to open this area for more development.
8. The future land use map needs to clearly identify areas that are appropriate for industrial development. The Comprehensive Plan should explicitly identify infrastructure improvements to be provided and strategies for annexing industrial properties in the City. One area most appropriate for industrial development is North Lincoln Avenue north of the Interstate. This area needs to be annexed into the city and cleaned-up in order to be marketable for new development. Regional detention should be considered in order to create more buildable space.
9. There needs to be better access to Interstate 74 in the area of Route 130. Current improvement plans include an access road from the existing spur from Interstate 74 up to High Cross Road. The current Comprehensive Plan also shows Interstate 74 and High Cross Road to be a future interchange. Given the close proximity of High Cross Road to University Avenue, it is unlikely that an interchange at both University and High Cross will be feasible. For this reason, consideration should be given to completing the interchange at University Avenue up to High Cross Road and the long-term planning for a new interchange at Cottonwood Road.
10. The area north of the Interstate 74 and University Avenue interchange should be developed in a manner that capitalizes on the opportunity of the interchange yet preserves the unique natural features in that area.
11. There needs to be a more coordinated effort for marketing and promotion of the City and its economic development efforts. Detailed reports should be generated and distributed to the development community offering the facts about the community regarding city services, the school and park districts, and demographics.



## **Public Services Staff Findings**

1. Considering current development trends and the decline in the student population at the elementary school level, an additional school facility is not an immediate need for Urbana.
2. Because Urbana High School is built in an urban setting in the center of Urbana, there is a shortfall of space for outdoor recreational facilities on the campus to meet today's standards for athletic activities. The Comprehensive Plan should recognize these needs and assist in planning for the appropriate location of needed facilities.
3. The Urbana School District currently has capacity to accommodate additional students as Urbana develops.
4. The Comprehensive Plan needs to identify opportunities for open space within Urbana's future growth areas. The northeast area contains natural amenities that are very unique to the Champaign-Urbana area. There should be advanced planning that preserves these features and incorporates them into conservation / recreational areas.
5. Residential development in east Urbana is creating the need for more park space in close proximity to those new neighborhoods.
6. When designating areas appropriate for future park space, consideration must be given to the type of park needed in that area.
7. The Urbana Free Library is one of the community's most successful institutions and a major draw for downtown Urbana. Although a major expansion is currently underway to double the current size of the facility, consideration still needs to be given about future space needs.
8. Continued growth and development will not have a detrimental effect on library services unless development is so intense that services such as bookmobiles and satellite facilities are needed.
9. The Urbana Police Department currently responds to many calls in areas located outside the city limits to the north and east. Annexation of existing nearby developments such as Scottswood and new development in this area should not pose a service problem for the Department.
10. Developments that concentrate low to moderate-income persons will typically result in more service requirements for the Police Department.
11. The expansion of the city limits will impact on the services of the Urbana Fire Department and could possibly affect the current ISO rating. The location of existing fire stations and the



existing roadway network allows areas in the south to be more efficiently served than new development in the northeast.

12. There needs to be advance planning for adequate training facilities for the Fire Department. Training facilities need to be in close proximity to the city to be able to effectively respond to calls during training.



## **Transportation Staff Findings**

1. The Transportation Plan should be updated to reflect multi-modal usage, especially including a greater emphasis on the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian components. Standards for roadway classifications should be consistent with the CUUATS Long-Range Plan.
2. A bicycle and pedestrian plan should be developed for the City that will provide a greater opportunity for recreation and alternative transportation modes.
3. Street lighting should be enhanced to improve safety
4. New and existing developments should optimize access and connectivity for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian users
5. Along state and federal routes, unnecessary curb cuts should be closed upon redevelopment to improve safety and access management. The City could consider assisting landowners with funding through Tax Increment Financing or other resources.
6. The City should carefully consider the feasibility of the streetcar proposals to decrease the congestion caused by use of buses near campus and to attract visitors to downtown Urbana.
7. Where feasible, sidewalks should be added to existing developments to improve pedestrian access
8. The Comprehensive Plan needs to incorporate goals and objectives related to access management standards.
9. Urbana should apply traffic calming ideas and concepts in new design and construction of roadways where appropriate, especially for local roads.



## **Infrastructure Staff Findings**

1. There appear to be adequate water supplies and distribution networks to serve existing and future development in Urbana. The City should continue to work closely with the water company on respective long-term planning efforts to ensure that this continues to be the case.
2. The City should continue to review wellhead protection zones in evaluating new development proposals and should continue to coordinate with the water company to protect these zones from land uses that could impact upon them.
3. Illinois Power needs to consider future roadway plans as they extend utility lines to ensure that these are kept out of potential rights-of-way areas. The City will continue to coordinate with Illinois Power and other utility companies to help make this happen.
4. Some industrial and commercial users are dissatisfied with the level of service provided by Illinois Power. This situation seems to have been exacerbated by deregulation and by the status of Illinois Power as a Distribution Company only. The City should work with the power companies and other municipalities and interested entities to ensure that adequate power service is provided despite regulatory obstacles.
5. The City's Comprehensive Plan Update will need to coordinate closely with the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District's Long Range Facility Plan to ensure that growth occurs in locations which can be efficiently and cost-effectively provided with sanitary sewer service.
6. As development begins to occur outside of those areas that can easily be provided with sanitary sewer service, the City will need to work closely with UCSD to pursue an equitable and effective means of paying for new interceptor or treatment plant improvements.
7. The City should continue its ongoing drainage facility upgrade and maintenance work and to work together with the County and Townships on improving drainage conditions in adjacent areas that are not well served.
8. The City will be undertaking specific construction practice regulatory changes pursuant to the Phase II Stormwater Plan, such as increased erosion control. This Plan will help to ensure reductions in non-point source pollution. To meet the goals of Phase II, stormwater impact fees may need to be assessed in the region.



9. Recent improvements to the Boneyard Creek appear to be successful in maintaining reasonable floodplain protections.
10. Additional hydraulic analysis of drainage detention needs within Urbana watersheds would be helpful in identifying possible regional detention locations.
11. The City should continue to coordinate with the various Drainage Districts to ensure that new development on the edges of Urbana does not harm rural drainage improvements. This could require the payment of improvement fees to the Districts due to the impact of specific projects and/or necessary territorial adjustments.
12. Drainageway improvements should consider and incorporate the potential value of these features as greenway amenities. This can be accomplished through the development of drainageway improvement plans (as potential linear park connectors) prepared in cooperation with the Urbana Park District.
13. The City should continue to coordinate with the University on major utility improvements to limit disruptions and provide for more efficient conduits.
14. The City should consider applying green building concepts (or LEED certification) for any future public buildings.



## **Human Services Staff Findings**

1. Coordination of human service distribution could be improved through centralized distribution centers.
2. Transportation accessibility could be improved upon to better support the self-sufficiency of persons obtaining human service programs and employment. Decisions about growth and development should consider transportation obstacles.
3. Public housing redevelopment should improve the living conditions for low-income persons by providing housing that is located within a mix of incomes. Redeveloping the existing public housing stock and taking a scattered-site approach in locating additional units in Urbana will promote the de-concentration of poverty.
4. Affordable permanent housing continues to be an important issue in Urbana. According to the Consolidated Plan, affordable housing is generally defined as housing where the occupant is paying no more than 30% of gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities.
5. Affordability of rental housing is the principal problem in the Urbana-Champaign area. According to the Consolidated Plan, affordable rental housing is needed for the general population. In addition, rental housing for persons with disabilities should be accessible and visitable.
6. According to a Champaign County workforce report, there is a saturation of currently employed skilled and experienced workers in the area that would be willing to change jobs given the opportunity. For this reason, employers in Champaign County will not rely heavily on the unemployed workforce when filling job vacancies. This means that the unemployed, low-skilled workers without experience who are seeking employment may not be able to compete in the job market without adequate job-readiness programs.



## **Environment Staff Findings**

1. New development should be compact and contiguous to preserve prime farmland and optimize the use of public services. “Leapfrog development” should be avoided. The agreement with the Sanitary District requiring annexation or annexation agreement prior to connection is a useful tool in encouraging compact and contiguous development.
2. New bike trails, pedestrian trails, and open space corridors should be created in new and existing developments. The Comprehensive Plan should illustrate where these areas should be established.
3. Linear parks are an alternative to consider when creating new parks, especially those that would connect existing open areas. Linear preservation corridors should be considered along stream banks where possible.
4. A street tree requirement for new developments should be considered, including a maintenance plan.
5. Planning for the area north of I-74 and west of High Cross Road should preserve a significant portion of the wooded area if it is developed.
6. Pervious surface should be maximized in new development to handle rainwater on-site.
7. There should be planning for parks within new areas in the mile-and-a-half planning area. A cooperative effort is needed between the City, the Park District, and developers to plan for new parks.
8. Recycling should continue to be encouraged through the City’s U-Cycle program.
9. The City should consider regional detention basins and they should be designed so they become an environmental amenity.
10. Trelease Woods should be designated as a conservation area in the Comprehensive Plan.
11. Local ordinances should promote more energy efficient “green” construction.
12. The City should improve its designation as Tree City USA by considering a street tree requirement and also consider a heritage tree program that would recognize unique trees that have been established for several years.



13. The City should continue to seek input from drainage districts, as new urban development can stress drainage systems that were originally designed for rural development. There needs to be better coordination between the City and the drainage districts to minimize problems.



## **Community Heritage / Urban Design Staff Findings**

1. Preserving significant community resources in Urbana is an important priority. A combination of regulation and economic incentives should be an integral part of this effort. Economic incentives may be provided through federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits or through the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program. The possibility of offering local economic incentives should be examined.
2. The Urbana Historic Preservation Commission should continue its community outreach and education efforts to raise awareness and appreciation for the City's historic heritage.
3. Urbana should revise the requirements of the B-1, Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District, to encourage development that is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan Update should incorporate goals to encourage neighborhood businesses within new residential developments.
4. Urbana should revise the regulations of the MOR, Mixed Office and Residential Zoning District. The City should modify the regulations in this district to better encourage development while ensuring neighborhood compatibility.
5. Urbana does not currently administer design guidelines. Design guidelines could provide a greater level of aesthetic review for construction. This review may be appropriate for areas that contain significant historical and architectural character.
6. There has been an increased importance put on making developments more aesthetically pleasing. Urbana should consider encouraging more creative design and use of construction materials in future developments such as encouraging porous paving designs and the use of recycled construction materials. This effort could be accomplished through a series of educational workshops designed to offer local developers guidance.
7. Urbana should continue to celebrate its unique community heritage found through the arts, culture, and education. This may include various community outreach programs about historic Urbana and community festivals celebrating and highlighting Urbana's cultural and artistic assets.