



Planning and Development Department



2014-2015 Annual Report



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From the Director..

Greetings, and thank you for your interest in the activities of the City of Champaign Planning and Development Department. As stated in the City's annual budget, the purpose of the Planning and Development Department is to engage the community in planning for its future, promote quality of life, provide choices in housing and transportation, ensure the wellness of existing neighborhoods, protect property values by encouraging compatible development, and promote the economic development of the community. This report describes the efforts the Planning and Development Department has made over the past year to fulfill that purpose.



You'll notice some differences between this report and previous annual reports. First, this report captures the events of the calendar year rather than the July-June fiscal year. While many City activities operate on the fiscal year cycle, the development cycle tracks more closely with the calendar year. Reviewing activities January-December offers a clearer picture of what our department has accomplished.

Second, whereas previous reports presented every case heard by the boards and commissions our department supervises, this year's report takes a more selective look at key projects throughout the year. Inside, you'll continue to find the Growth Area Analysis and the Comprehensive Plan Update held over from previous annual reports. However, you'll also find several Project Spotlights featuring a variety of department activities. The full accounting of board and commission cases has been shifted to a memorandum accompanying each body's annual meeting.

Though the annual report looks a little different this year, the quality of the work found within remains the same. With the support of the City Council and City Manager, the City of Champaign continues to be a national leader in the planning movement. I look forward to continued success in the future. For more information, or to express ideas of additional improvements you might like to see, feel free to contact me at bruce.knight@ci.champaign.il.us.



Meet the Staff



Bruce A. Knight, FAICP
Director
Areas of Focus: Department leadership, Plan Commission, City Council, Economic Development
bruce.knight@ci.champaign.il.us



Rob Kowalski, AICP
Assistant Director
Areas of Focus: Long-range planning, department administration, Plan Commission
rob.kowalski@ci.champaign.il.us



Kevin Phillips
Zoning Administrator
Areas of Focus: Zoning, building permit review, Zoning Board of Appeals, historic preservation
kevin.phillips@ci.champaign.il.us



Jeff Marino, AICP
Senior Planner
Areas of Focus: Subdivision plats, zoning ordinance amendments, special use permits, Current Planning Team leader
jeff.marino@ci.champaign.il.us



TJ Blakeman, AICP
Senior Planner
Areas of Focus: Tax Increment Financing, Center City districts, economic development
terry.blakeman@ci.champaign.il.us



Lacey Rains Lowe
Senior Planner
Areas of Focus: Comprehensive Plan, long-range and special area plans, sustainability planning,
lacey.rains@ci.champaign.il.us



Ben LeRoy
Associate Planner
Areas of Focus: Pedestrian planning, zoning ordinance amendments, bicycle planning, Safe Routes to School
ben.leroy@ci.champaign.il.us



Tina-Marie Ansong
Associate Planner
Areas of Focus: Economic development, sustainability planning, small business retention and development
tina-marie.ansong@ci.champaign.il.us



Lisa Hempel
Administrative Assistant
Areas of Focus: Lead department secretarial support, all Boards and Commissions
lisa.hempel@ci.champaign.il.us



Eric Van Buskirk
Associate Planner
Areas of Focus: Historic preservation, long-range planning, graphic design
lacey.rains@ci.champaign.il.us

Comprehensive Plan Annual Report

In 2011, City Council adopted *Champaign Tomorrow*, Champaign's first comprehensive plan since 2002. The plan provides a renewed vision for the future and establishes clear policy direction for the growth and development of the community. This annual report highlights the progress made to-date in achieving the vision of the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan has three functions. First, it establishes a community vision based upon what residents value to achieve a high quality of life. Next, it anticipates the future needs of the community. City planners review growth trends, infrastructure needs, demographic changes and more to be prepared for a changing future. Finally, the document presents the strategy for growing in a responsible and sustainable manner. By guiding compact and contiguous growth in locations where urban services can be readily provided, the Comprehensive Plan ensures the City uses resources as efficiently as possible.

Planning and Development Department

The Planning and Development Department has three focus areas that each play an important role in implementing the vision established by the Comprehensive Plan.

Advance Planning administers the Comprehensive Plan and conducts longer range studies, including redevelopment plans, neighborhood plans, and transportation plans. This division also implements sustainability and active transportation programs.

Current Planning oversees mapping, development review, annexation of property, zoning administration and enforcement, and historic preservation.

Economic Development administers Enterprise Zone programs, Tax Increment Finance district funding, the Infill Redevelopment Program and more. This division also represents the City on various interagency economic development partnerships.



Vision & Guiding Principles

The Vision and Guiding Principles of the Plan reflect what Champaign will be like if the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented.

Growing City



Guiding Principles:

- Fiscally sustainable growth
- Foster a knowledge based economy, focused on higher education, research and technology, healthcare and the creative and applied arts
- Strong employment centers
- Regional destination for commerce
- Local decisions with regional benefit

Sustainable City



Guiding Principles:

- Reduced consumption and impact
- Reuse of materials
- Reduced emissions
- Thoughtful site design
- Low energy building design
- Renewable energy generation and consumption

Complete Neighborhoods



Guiding Principles:

- Well-planned mix of uses
- Well-designed density
- Range of housing types
- Connectivity
- Presence of neighborhood elements

Community Identity



Guiding Principles:

- High quality urban design
- Preservation of special places
- Neighborhood pride
- Beautification of urban areas
- Build the "Center City"
- A university town
- Build community culture

Healthy Community



Guiding Principles:

- Create a walking community
- Build active transportation
- Provide for community health facilities
- Encourage healthy youth
- Create local food systems

Complete Public Facilities



Guiding Principles:

- Build complete infrastructure
- Ensure sufficient services
- Ensure the presence of community facilities
- Provide for accessibility to transit service

Growth Area Analysis

Prior to the housing crash of 2008, fringe residential growth was extraordinarily high. New subdivisions were being proposed at a pace not seen since the post-WWII era. Following 2008, development slowed to a near halt. That shift resulted in a large inventory of land that was ready for new housing and businesses to be built. Planners realized that in order to best determine the extent of property that should be included in the 20 year Future Land Use Map, three questions needed to be answered:

- 1) Where are urban services, like sewer and improved infrastructure, available?
- 2) Where urban services are present, how much land remains available for development?
- 3) How many dwelling units are already approved for development, but not yet built?

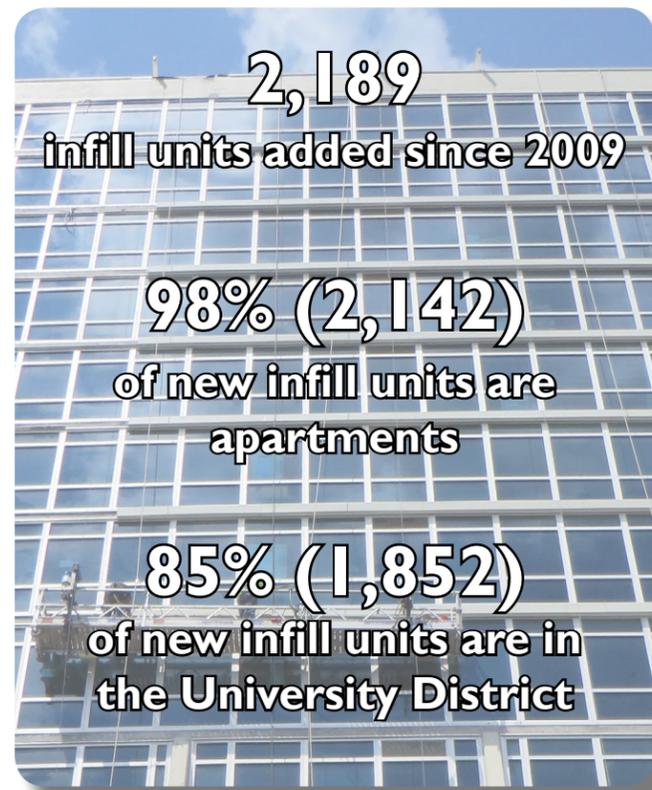
The 2009 Growth Area Analysis was conducted to answer these questions. The study considered five growth areas of the City's fringe. Results indicated that Champaign had a plentiful supply of residential lots in areas already receiving urban services. Using estimated population, it was projected that 10-15 years of residential construction could be accommodated by this supply alone. The Growth Area Analysis helped confirm that the *Champaign Tomorrow* Comprehensive Plan should encourage infill development and completing projects that are already started before promoting new greenfield development. In short, the Plan should emphasize growing better rather than growing bigger.

Single Family vs. Multi Family

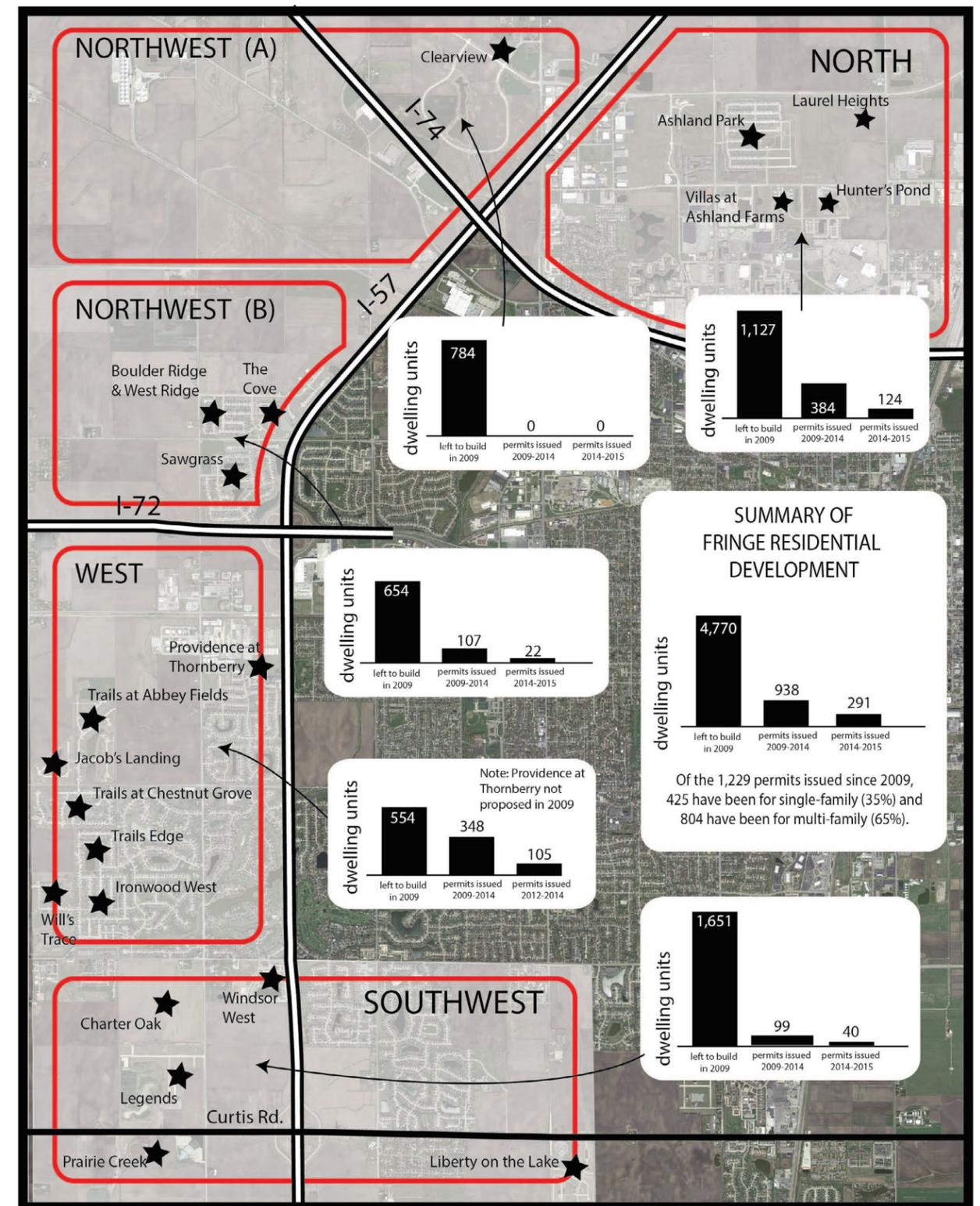
Residential growth that has occurred in Champaign since 2009 is heavily weighted toward multifamily construction, typically in the form of apartment complexes. Of the 1,229 residential permits issued in the growth areas, 65% (804 total) were multifamily dwellings. Citywide, 86% of the total residential units constructed during this time frame were multi-family.

Infill Development

In recent history, infill residential development has outpaced fringe residential development. Since the 2009 Growth Area Analysis was completed, 60% of new units have been built in infill locations. The significant majority of these infill dwelling units are student-oriented apartment buildings in the University District.



Growth Area Analysis



Sustainability Planning

City Council has a goal that 'Champaign is a model of environmental sustainability.' The Planning and Development Department is responsible for managing the implementation of the *Champaign Growing Greener* Environmental Sustainability Plan. This year, Staff has been working on the following activities:

Ameren Act On Energy

Through a partnership with Ameren Illinois, the City is providing free home energy audits to residents and increasing Ameren's incentives for insulation and air sealing by 20%. For the second year in a row, Ameren named Champaign a 'Most Progressive City' for the energy saving improvements made by both residents and businesses. Participating customers saved nearly \$500,000 in energy expenses in 2015.

Sustainability Outreach

The Environmental Sustainability Plan recognized that Champaign could not become an model of sustainability without participation from the public. The "Grow Green Champaign, 'Til it Comes Naturally" effort was launched to inspire behavior change through a change in habits. The website (greenchampaign.com) was created as a 'one-stop-shop' for sustainability related questions. Staff promoted the efforts at community events, including STAR Awards, Garden Hills Community Day, the Downtown Farmers Market and more.

Keep Champaign Beautiful Affiliation

Keep Champaign Beautiful (KCB) was officially designated as an affiliate of the national non-profit Keep America Beautiful. The mission of the organization is to prevent litter, encourage recycling and reduce solid waste and beautify the community. The effort is a partnership of other local units of government, local citizens and local businesses, but is sponsored by the City of Champaign. In October, volunteers completed the second annual Litter Index, which again showed litter in Champaign is concentrated in 'hot spots' and that most litter is single-use plastic packaging.

In November, KCB distributed free reusable shopping bags and gave away shopping trips to local non-profit reuse businesses in honor of America Recycles Day.



Bristol Place Redevelopment

The Bristol Park Neighborhood Plan, adopted in 2011, was drafted to provide guidance to the City and neighborhood groups for specific actions related to neighborhood revitalization. The Bristol Place Redevelopment is a keystone component of the overall Bristol Park Neighborhood Plan. Over the past few years, the Planning and Development Department and Neighborhood Services Department have made substantial progress towards this redevelopment.

Phase I of the Bristol Place Redevelopment includes activities and funding needed to prepare the site for redevelopment, while Phase II is the redevelopment itself. The previous year saw substantial steps taken towards the transition from Phase I to Phase II, including property acquisition, relocation of neighborhood residents, and preparation of an RFQ for a developer to implement the Bristol Place Master Plan.

Property Acquisition and Relocation

Bristol Place is not a large neighborhood, yet property acquisition requires significant staff and financial resources. Phase I of the Bristol Park Redevelopment includes acquiring 91 properties, relocating approximately 65 households and two churches, and demolishing 80 structures. During Phase I, the City and the Housing Authority of Champaign County (HACC) entered into an intergovernmental agreement for the purpose of funding the Phase I activities and outlining the partnership for redevelopment in Phase II. The Phase I agreement details the contributions of both agencies. The HACC is providing either a \$1,092,000 cash investment or 33 vouchers in the project (or a combination of the two). The City's portion is estimated at \$6,354,748.

The three-year Phase I agreement, set to expire in January 31, 2016, allows for extension. An extension agreement for Phase I will be brought to HACC Board of Commissioners and Council in January 2016. In the meantime, property acquisition and demolition has begun in the neighborhood.



Bristol Place Redevelopment

Developer RFQ for Master Plan implementation

In 2014, the City of Champaign concluded an eight-month input and design process with the adoption of the Bristol Place Master Plan. Produced by Farr Associates, the Master Plan envisions a complete Bristol Place neighborhood that is affordable, connected, and safe for residents. Importantly, the Master Plan is designed to achieve the standards of LEED-ND, a certification that recognizes the importance of sustainable communities.



This year, the City and HACC took major steps towards finding a developer to implement the recommendations of the Bristol Place Master Plan. In October 2015, City Council directed staff to generate a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a developer meeting the following selection criteria:

- Master Development
- LEED-ND
- Mixed Income Housing
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Mixed Financing
- Tenant Selection/Property Management Experience
- Minority and/or Women Business Enterprise Inclusion
- Local Contractor Collaboration
- Community Integration

Responses to the RFQ will be due in early 2016, with developer selection to follow.



The Bristol Park Master Plan envisions a mix of housing types arrayed along a new street grid, as well as expansions to the Bristol Park itself

Zone Champaign

Zone Champaign is the City's first comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance since 1996. The Planning and Development Department has engaged the services of Teska Associates, Inc. to align the Zoning Ordinance more closely with the goals of the *Champaign Tomorrow* Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the new regulations adopted under *Zone Champaign* will encourage better building design, support infill development, and ensure that Champaign's neighborhoods and business districts preserve important elements of their character.

The *Zone Champaign* effort is targeted towards four particular areas:

University Neighborhood

The Campustown area of Champaign is a unique area of the community. Residential densities are very high, and the neighborhood is largely populated by students whose transportation and lifestyle needs are different from other populations. *Zone Champaign* will create a new "University Neighborhood" zoning district that will encourage higher quality design in Campustown while ensuring that developers can continue to meet the housing demand generated by continued increases in the University of Illinois' enrollment.

Central Business Districts

Champaign has two downtowns (the traditional downtown as well as Green St.) which are connected by the mixed-use First St. corridor. *Zone Champaign* is developing new standards recognizing each area's unique role as an area for community members to live, work, shop, and dine. Updated regulations will ensure that these districts continue to mature as vibrant urban areas.

In-Town Neighborhoods

In the mid 1980s, the In-Town Neighborhood Plan established a set of zoning districts intended to preserve the character of the residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown on the west and south. Today, these neighborhoods are composed of a mix of housing types and residents. *Zone Champaign* will eliminate the In-Town zoning districts in favor of two "Urban Neighborhood" zoning districts designed to perpetuate this vibrant urban housing mix. Additionally, certain parts of the neighborhood that are largely composed of single family houses will be rezoned to the SF1-Single Family District.

Neighborhood Commercial

The CN-Commercial Neighborhood District provides for a variety of neighborhood-serving commercial uses at locations around the community.

Zone Champaign will update this districts' regulations to better serve the needs of these commercial uses and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The success of *Zone Champaign* is due in large part to the contributions of a citizen working group. This working group — composed of local developers, architects, and realtors — offers detailed insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by each of the *Zone Champaign* focus areas. As *Zone Champaign* produces new code language for review, the Planning and Development Department will seek feedback from both this working group as well as the larger public.



Zone Champaign will continue to encourage high-density development in CB Districts, but will likely limit the height of new buildings below the tallest existing towers. In other areas, new design requirements may require buildings to "face the street" with doors and windows (as opposed to example, above).

Spotlight on the University Neighborhood

In the course of studying the University Neighborhood, it became apparent that the two greatest flaws in the existing development regulations related to parking and open space. Requirements that each building provide a certain amount of on-site parking and open space posed significant challenges to high-quality design. Additionally, these requirements were working at odds with larger goals of developing Campustown into a



vibrant urban neighborhood. Discussions with the *Zone Champaign* working group and Teska Associate, Inc. indicated that eliminating these two requirements would substantially advance these goals. In September 2015, City Council voted to eliminate parking and open space requirements for multi-family dwellings within the University District. Staff believes this change will positively impact building design in Campustown.

Interchange Planning

Three interstates pass through the City of Champaign. Interstate interchanges often provide the first impression of the community to visitors and newcomers. For these reasons, special care is taken with the development of these locations. This year, staff focused on two of these interchanges: one ripe for revitalization, the other largely a blank slate.

I-74 Neil Street Interchange

For several years, the area at North Neil Street and Interstate 74 (I-74) was an eyesore because of a defunct hotel and other vacant commercial buildings. Recently, each of those buildings has been demolished. Recognizing the opportunity to address this area's needs as a whole, Staff undertook a strategic market analysis to understand the redevelopment potential of the area immediately south of the interstate. In addition to existing businesses, the study area includes three vacant parcels, the largest of which was home to the former Gateway Hotel. Findings of the analysis include:



The study area included commercial, office, and light industrial properties along Neil Street and Edgebrook Drive

- The area is too small to accommodate shopping centers serving regional markets, and the competitive market north of I-74 poses challenges to properties located south of I-74.
- The projected market-rate rent of \$5 per square foot in this area is likely not enough to cover the entire cost of new construction.
- Patience in creating financial incentives and providing public improvements could go a long way in promoting private investment.

In its current condition, the site is appealing for auto-oriented businesses, such as gas and convenience stores. The future completion of the Bristol Place Redevelopment coupled with public and private improvements to beautify the area will strengthen market demand. Council advised staff to include the larger Neil Street corridor when planning for the future of the site and to envision the interchange as the first step in a visitor's trip to downtown, the University of Illinois campus and Research Park. This strategic market analysis was shared with City Council and the commercial property owners in the study area. In the future, the Planning and Development Department may undertake a more active planning role to bring redevelopment to this interchange.

I-57 Curtis Road Interchange

In 2007, a master plan was created for the area at Curtis Road and Interstate 57 (I-57), coinciding with the completion of the interchange. The Plan recommendations were buttressed by a new set of zoning regulations for the study area. After many years of inactivity, renewed development interest in the area has prompted a review of the Master Plan and zoning regulations. The 2008 housing crash and subsequent recession substantially changed the real estate and housing market nationally and locally. Many of the recommendations of the original plan, which were based on a market study completed in 2006, are no longer accurate. Staff has begun to review the original Master Plan and accompanying zoning regulations to understand their applicability and what revisions may be warranted.

The 2007 Plan and regulations have the following limitations:

- Large-scale corporate office centers and mixed use 'lifestyle centers' are not supported by current development trends in this location,
- The expectation that developers provide a master plan for up to one half of a quadrant or 80 acres before construction may begin is overly burdensome.
- The requirements for each overall development plan and individual site plan are difficult to navigate.



Staff is working to update the development standards and procedures of the master plan. The intent is to realize the vision for high quality development that was originally conceived, while reflecting today's market realities. As 2015 concludes, the Planning and Development Department is developing a public participation process for neighbors and property owners to participate in the update of the Plan.

Landmark Nomination

1201 S. Neil Street (Coca-Cola Bottling Plant)

This past year, Bob Monti (owner of Papa Del's Pizza) nominated the former Coca-Cola Bottling Plant as a Local Landmark. Mr. Monti is moving his restaurant from its long-time location on Green Street to this historic structure. Staff worked closely with Mr. Monti and his design team to secure a designation of landmark status for the building from the Historic Preservation Commission.

The building was constructed in 1938 under the supervision of local architect George C. Ramey and is an excellent example of the Art Deco movement and standardized facility plans for the Coca-Cola Company. Although the building has not been used as a bottling facility since the late 1970s, a number of restaurants have utilized the ground floor since the early 1990s. Mr. Monti is currently undertaking a massive interior and exterior renovation of building. This includes tuck pointing the interior and exterior brick, updating access points to meet ADA accessibility and building safety standards, and restoring the second floor (which has sat vacant since 1978) into a banquet and special event hall.



Many original design elements, such as the Coca-Cola Bottling Company sign, have remained in good shape through a variety of different tenants and uses (the building as a wholesaler in 1988, top right, and as a restaurant in 2014, at right)



Staley Road Area Annexations

Over the previous year, the City of Champaign completed a series of significant annexations on the north side of Springfield Avenue and the west side of Staley Road. Completed against the background of impending deadlines, these annexations brought property into the City with much less difficulty than if the annexation agreements had expired.

In 1995, the City signed a number of annexation agreements governing properties on the north side of Springfield Avenue near Staley Road (subsequently developed as the Tiffany Court properties). While these properties were not contiguous with municipal borders at the time, the City allowed several businesses to be developed on these lots prior to annexation to facilitate economic development. In an attempt to preclude contiguity from ever being established, one property owner purchased a "spite strip" of railroad right-of-way separating the subject properties from land within city limits.

In 2005, the City began to pursue a little-used clause in Illinois State Law that allows for a "court ordered" annexation. The City signed additional annexation agreements with several other properties arrayed around the northwest corner of Staley Road and Springfield Avenue. Each agreement contained a clause requiring the property owner to participate in a court ordered annexation, should the City choose to pursue it. Unfortunately, this strategy bogged down in the face of the time and resources necessary to pursue it.

Separately, the City identified a separate path towards annexation involving a 220 foot gap of remaining railroad right-of-way through the "spite strip". The City proposed an annexation agreement to the owners of the property to the north of this gap, offering support with future access points, zoning considerations, and sidewalk construction. Despite significant obstacles over several years, including broken chains of title and legal oddities relating to railroad property, the City was able to establish contiguity through the gap in the spite strip. This established a chain of contiguity through a number of properties under annexation agreements.

Staff raced to get property owners to sign the annexation petitions, and the City was able to annex the properties on Tiffany Court two weeks prior to the expiration of their annexation agreements. The growing business and industrial center at the intersection of Staley Road and Springfield Avenue, which developed thanks to the benefits generated from its proximity to the City of Champaign and its higher level of urban services, is now within city limits and contributing to the upkeep of the community.

Economic Development Partnerships

Champaign County Economic Development Corporation

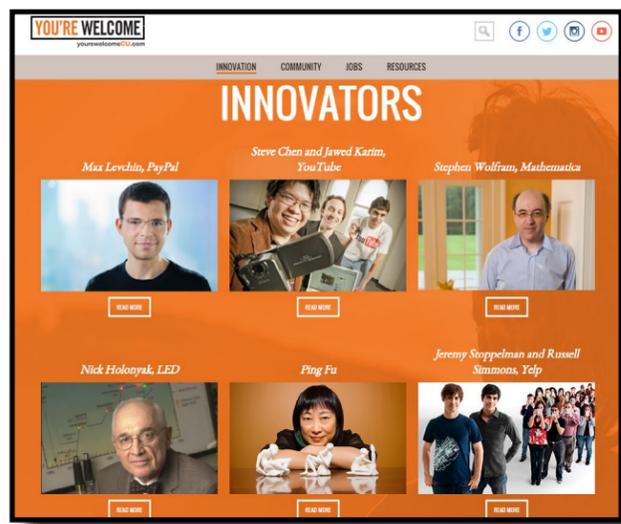
The Champaign County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) acts through public-private partnerships to continually grow the local economy by supporting local business and driving expansion and attraction. In September 2014, City Council approved a three year agreement for economic development services with CCEDC to ensure City of Champaign priorities are addressed. Over the past year, major CCEDC initiatives have included the following:

- **Business Outreach Visits** that help the City of Champaign learn more about businesses operating in the community, identify any needs they have, and understand what makes their location in Champaign County the right location for them.
- **Work Force Development** ensures that local employers are able to draw on a local work force possessing the skills and motivation to succeed in today's marketplace. Activities include participation in the CU Cradle to Career Initiative, developing a business sponsored high school-to-career pathway program, and convening an employer/educator roundtable.
- The **You're Welcome Campaign** is our community's effort to brand Champaign-Urbana as a hub for innovation, attract top talent and companies, drive economic development, and share the story about our micro-urban community. A new website (yourewelcomecu.com), social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter [#YoureWelcomeCU], Instagram, and YouTube), videos, and other media efforts have been deployed in targeted markets nationwide.

CCEDC has also been instrumental in the Willard Airport Governance and Sustainable Air Service Task Force and various small business development efforts, each of which is covered in-depth later in this report.



The "You're Welcome" Campaign brands the community as a hotbed of discovery and invention. At right, the "You're Welcome" website highlights some of the many Champaign-Urbana innovators that have made a mark in the fields of science, technology, and culture.



Champaign Center Partnership

The Champaign Center Partnership (CCP) supports the Center City neighborhoods of Downtown, Midtown, and Campustown by strengthening independent retailers and encouraging collaboration between businesses and across districts. The City's current agreement with CCP, which offers financial support for staffing and operational expenses, runs through FY 2018. Highlights of CCP activities include:

- Christie Clinic Parade of Lights
- Shop Local Campaign
- Center City Trolley Rides
- Campus Pub Tour
- *Live the Champaign Life* Campaign
- Midtown Sundaze
- 13 Thursdays in Campustown
- Downtown Treasures Tour

Visit Champaign County

Visit Champaign County (VCC) is a local, non-profit organization whose mission is to market and promote Champaign County as a travel destination. The City of Champaign was a found member of VCC and has financially supported its efforts for over 25 years. The City of Champaign supports VCC at a high financial level because of the substantial economic benefits produced by the large and diverse set of activities that bring tourists to our community. Some of these activities include:

- The Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon and Meijer 27th Mile events, which attract 21,000 runners and have a \$10M impact on the community
- The Hot Rod Power Tour, which brought 3,700 hot rods through the community and produce a rare Sunday night "hotel sellout"
- Various high school and college club sporting events, including the IHSA Wrestling Tournament, the MVP Illinois Lacrosse Tournament, and the Game Day USA Baseball Tournaments.



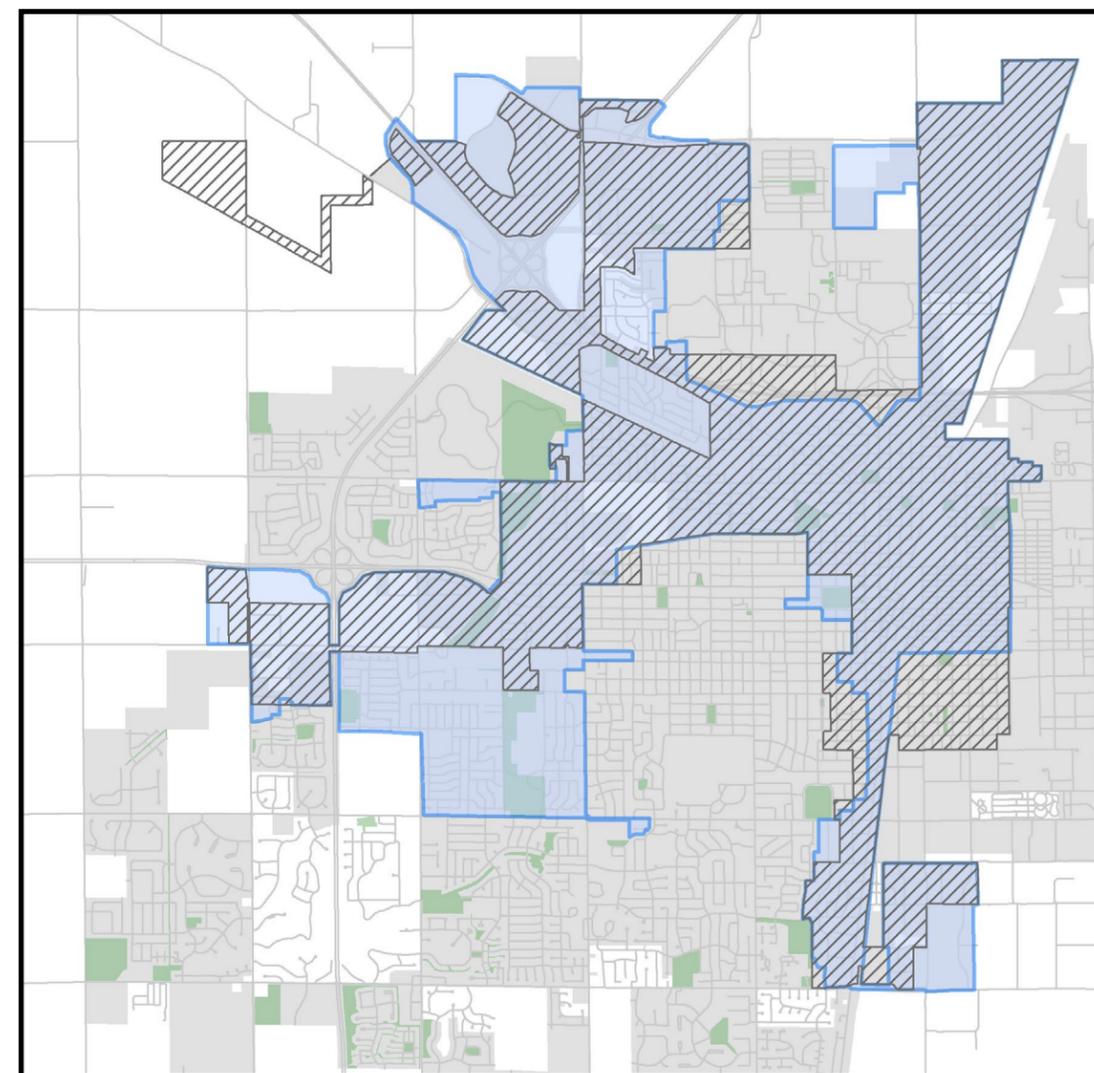
From Ebertfest to Friday Night Live, events both large and small stimulate our local economy. In the previous year, visitors to Champaign County spent nearly \$330M, and the City of Champaign collected \$2M in hotel/motel taxes.

Enterprise Zone Recertification

As a result of the legislative rewrite of the State's Enterprise Zone Act, all Enterprise Zones across the State of Illinois approved prior to 2015 will begin to expire. The City of Champaign's Enterprise Zone, enacted jointly with Champaign County in December 1985, is now slated to expire at the end of 2016. Since its inception, the Enterprise Zone has fostered reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and declining building stock. Additionally, the Enterprise Zone has been a valuable tool in attracting and retaining businesses that have their choice of location throughout the broader region. In December 2014, City Council directed staff to apply for state certification of a new Enterprise Zone compliant with the new state regulations.

The proposed Enterprise Zone will encompass 10.89 square miles, approximately 9.5 square miles of which will be within city limits. The City and the County will continue to jointly administer the following programs within the Enterprise Zone:

- The **Targeted Neighborhood Improvement Program** stabilizes and enhances neighborhoods by eliminating blighting factors and improving property conditions in single family dwellings.
- The **Affordable Multi-Family Housing Program** expands the availability of quality affordable multi-family housing throughout Champaign. Applicants will receive a larger property tax abatement depending on the duration and amount of new and rehabilitated units provided at affordable rent rates.
- The **Commercial District Enhancement Program** enhances the overall viability of commercial structures by offering incentives for rehabilitation or new construction.
- The **Employment Expansion Program** grows a quality industrial and office employment base in the City by encouraging businesses to expand and or open new operations in Champaign. The abatement duration scales proportionally with the number of new and retained employees.
- The **Historic Structure Rehabilitation Program** encourages the preservation and restoration of designated historic structures.
- The **Tourism Development Program** incentivizes the redevelopment and construction of facilities for the purpose of drawing substantial visitors from outside the community.



The new enterprise zone (blue) largely overlays the current enterprise zone (striped area), but some significant changes have been made. The new map adds Garden Hills, Dobbins Downs, and the neighborhood around Centennial High School while shrinking its footprint in the University District.

Development of the application required coordination with Champaign County, the City of Urbana, and the CCEDC. Additionally, staff engaged in discussions with the multiple other taxing bodies operating within the City of Champaign that would be impacted by the approval of the Enterprise Zone.

In August 2015, the State of Illinois indicated that it would certify the joint City of Champaign-Champaign County Enterprise Zone as one of 49 throughout the state. Official certification is expected before the end of the 2015.

Development Agreements

Development agreements serve as a form of reinvestment in the local economy. Targeted, narrowly tailored programs help preserve and expand our workforce and reinvigorate the core of the city. Significant recent development agreements include:



An expansion of high-technology space serving **Yahoo!** allowed the firm to quadruple its employment in Champaign. The community benefits from more high-paying jobs, a more robust Research Park employment cluster, and a stronger tech community with which to attract other firms in the future.



Renovations to the **DS Volition** offices allowed this growing company to remain in downtown Champaign. With nearly 200 employees, DS Volition is one of downtown's largest employers and generates significant business for other downtown shops and restaurants.



Redevelopment of a building on the north side of downtown will host a second location for the **Common Ground Food Co-op**. In addition to bringing a grocery store downtown for the first time in decades, the project will include space for a production brewery and other retail and service uses, activating a part of downtown that is fairly quiet at present.

Reinvestment in Existing Commercial Areas

An important principle of the Comprehensive Plan is to keep our established commercial centers strong. In 2015, three examples best illustrate this reinvestment. Staff involvement ranged from providing information on the community to site selection firms to collaborating on infrastructure challenges.



Following the closure of the Sears anchor, there was concern that the east wing of **Marketplace Mall** would fall into decline. Anchor stores are difficult to fill. Fortunately, Dick's Sporting Goods relocated to Marketplace Mall as part of a larger 102,000 square foot flagship store that also includes Field and Stream (Dick's flagship outdoor brand).



The relocation of Champaign Ford and Nissan from south Neil Street to Marketview Drive opened the **Carriage Center** property for redevelopment. Seven new businesses have opened in 2015, with a new grocery and hardware store and hotel planned for 2016. This significantly enlarges the commercial presence along this busy corridor.



The intersection of Green Street and Neil Street serves as a gateway to the campustown business district, but the southwest corner has long been underutilized. The development of **Green Street Galleria**, a mixed-use project, will work in tandem with the MCORE improvements to revitalize this important entryway to the U of I.

Small Business Development

In March 2014, Council directed staff to explore the creation of two programs to aid in small business development: the **Virtual Incubator** and the **Small Business Incentive Program**. After a year of research and public input, both programs launched in 2015.

Virtual Incubator

The Virtual Incubator arose out of a concern that entrepreneurship is undersupported despite its importance to the local economy. More than a virtual space for simplifying and streamlining the small business start-up process, the Virtual Incubator is a partnership between all local agencies providing entrepreneurship services throughout Champaign County (*graphic at right*). Even before the program launched it was off to a hot start, winning a \$50,000 award from the U.S. Small Business Association's "Start-Up in a Day" competition (*photo, below*).



Small Business Incentive Program

The Small Business Incentive Program assists entrepreneurs by bridging the resource gap that often exists during the launch phase of a business. In many cases, individuals lack the capital to pursue several key steps that would set their businesses up for success, such as setting up payroll, incorporation, and market research. This capital shortfall is especially pronounced among minority and female entrepreneurs.

Staff held multiple roundtables and commissioned a survey through the Black Chamber of Commerce to learn which early business expenses entrepreneurs need help with most frequently. The results guided the Small Business Incentive Program's structure, which is based on a similar program offered at the University of Illinois Research Park. Using \$220,000 in one time money, the program will function as a forgivable loan program (individual loans of \$5,000-\$15,000). Program applicants can obtain necessary start-up services from any eligible service provider, with a portion of costs reimbursed by the program.

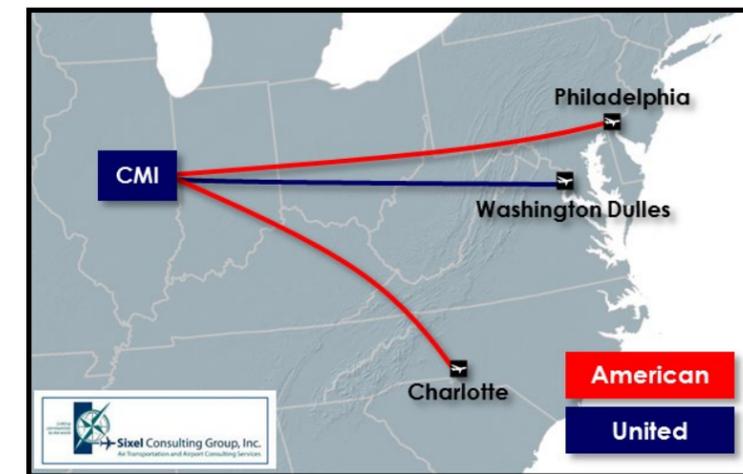


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Airport Advisory Committee

Early in 2014, the Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign appointed a community task force to develop a strategic business plan for the future of Willard Airport. This body was charged with making community-initiated recommendations regarding short- and long-term strategies to sustain and expand local air service in the community. A healthy airport functions as a driver of local economic development by serving the transportation needs of the University and the surrounding communities. The task force recommended, among other things, a business plan model and a shared governance structure.

The Airport Advisory Committee was subsequently established to oversee the implementation of these recommendations with the Planning and Development Director serving as the City's appointee. This group meets monthly and has been involved in the roll out of the new airport brand, development of a marketing strategy, the hiring process for a new Executive Director for the airport, recommendations for improvements to ground transportation, and development of a land use and zoning plan to protect the integrity of the airport runways.



One goal of the Airport Advisory Committee is to expand air service to the community. Currently, commercial flights are only available to Chicago-O'Hare and Dallas/Fort Worth. Possible new routes include service to new American Airlines hubs at Philadelphia and Charlotte, or to Washington Dulles via United Airlines.



