

# Crystal Lakes plans near reality

## City Council gets more detailed presentation of Vulcan Lakes future

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CRYSTAL LAKE - Planners are getting tantalizingly close to finishing a design plan for developing Vulcan Lakes into the recreational jewel that city leaders have long desired.

"I don't know about everybody else, but this thing is becoming more and more real with each meeting," Crystal Lake Mayor Aaron Shepley said.

Shepley and the Crystal Lake City Council were presented with more detailed plans Tuesday for

developing the Vulcan Lakes into a haven for anglers, swimmers and beach bums. The lakes are the former gravel pits northwest of Rakow and Pingree roads now owned by the city.

The council already gave feedback to preliminary plans in October and gave more feedback Tuesday. The council is set to approve final design plans Dec. 16, with construction set to begin in May 2009. The city-owned park is scheduled to open to the public in fall 2009 or spring 2010.

The highlight of the presentation from Hitchcock Design Group,

which is leading the development for the city, was a computer simulated tour of the proposed park.

The tour began at an intersection with Route 14, which will provide public access to the park. The virtual visitor then checked in at a 200-square-foot gatehouse before driving south to a parking lot filled with environmentally friendly landscaping.

The tour then traveled through the center breezeway of a lakehouse that looks out to a large beach stretching for about an acre on the northern edge of the south lake. The tour then walked along

a pathway to a 300-square-foot proposed boathouse that acts as rental station for kayaks, canoes and fishing boats. The tour ended with a walk along a "boardwalk" to a nearby island. Initial plans called for bridges to connect the islands surrounding the beach area, but the new plan proposed turning those bridges into lower "boardwalks" to save money.

"You can sit, read a book and enjoy the island experience without breaking the bank," said Bill Inman of Hitchcock Design Group.

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Swimmers also could wade all the way to two of the islands, which would have small beaches built on them.

"I am thrilled that we are at this point," Councilwoman Cathy Ferguson said. "I think it's great you're going to have the swimming areas on the two islands."

Inman estimated that the costs of

the project would range from about \$9.55 million to about \$14 million, depending on whether the council should choose options such as building a larger boathouse, building a larger path to Main Street, and taking steps to prevent shoreline erosion.

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