

Winfield expects more homes, better roads

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Population could triple in next 50 years

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WINFIELD — Already a growing community, it appears Winfield's growth spurt will continue into the foreseeable future, even for the next 50 years.

David Lasser, of Commercial In-Sites in Merrillville, predicted:

■ Winfield will probably triple in population in the next 50 years.

■ All that growth will mean a police department that is more than one full-time officer, as it is now, and the fire department

probably won't be all volunteers.

■ While the widening of 109th Avenue from Winfield to Crown Point already is being planned, Lasser said Randolph Street could also end up being widened to four lanes all the way to U.S. 30.

Todd Kleven, vice president of Hawk Development, said, "Winfield was established at the 11th hour to avoid annexation by Merrillville. It put Winfield on the map, and it became attractive because the taxes are low. Now it's one of the fastest growing communities." He predicted:

■ Most of the development will be residential that will come pretty rapidly.

All that development will create a need for more park property,

a need the town plans to begin addressing this year. A 10-acre parcel just south of the center of town will get its first features, probably some parking, a picnic pavilion and maybe some playground equipment, as part of an overall plan for ballfields, trails, an amphitheater and other improvements in the future.

Council President Gerald Stienner predicted:

■ Winfield will continue to grow residentially and continue to be a bedroom community for Chicago. If high speed rail ever comes, it will enhance that.

■ As the town adds residential rooftops, it will attract more commercial development, which Stienner said should expand the

availability of essential services, such as dry cleaners, drug stores and, he hopes, restaurants, in town.

■ "It's hard to compete with Merrillville and U.S. 30 for clothing stores and things like that, but, long term, it would be nice to get a Whole Foods or something like it here," he said. "I would guess the WiseWay is struggling because there are not a lot of people here to support a grocery store. So, the more growth we have, the more we will have to support those businesses.

■ "We changed some of the rules so buildings will be of a higher quality, and we have a draft of a downtown plan with sidewalks, signs and enhance-

ments to create the look of quality. We want to have our own identity and yet keep the small town feel. People have told us they don't want Winfield to turn into a Merrillville."

■ Stienner said the park is part of creating the town's identity by providing a place to hold festivals and events to bring the community together. With growth expected to continue, the challenge will be to keep pace with the infrastructure, sewer, water and roads, especially 109th.

■ "I can tell you how to fix it, but we don't know how to pay for it," he said of the roads. "Addressing it in small chunks is all we can do. Ultimately, those things have to happen."

No flying cars, but high speed rail seen in area's future

Crown Point expected to grow and expand

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CROWN POINT — The city would grow by 50 to 100 percent in population, depending on whose vision of the city's future is clearer, but everyone seems to agree Crown Point will be a major player in the Region's future.

David Lasser, of Commercial In-Sites and a member of the Crossroads Chamber of Commerce, which includes Crown Point and Merrillville, said:

■ The city will grow by 50 percent in the next five decades because "The legacy of the Crown

Point courthouse and the square will remain, and the legacy and quality of the Sportsplex will still be there."

■ "I don't see any more highway interchanges, but North Street/109th Avenue will be four lanes from Main Street to Ind. 2 in Valparaiso."

■ He said the area could see a couple of upscale business parks similar to the AmeriPLEX in Portage at the Interstate 65/109th interchange.

■ As many as half a dozen hotels and more retail is likely at the interchanges at 109th and the one at U.S. 231 by 2066, he said, adding, "The spread of residential growth will create the

demand for the growth at both interchanges."

■ The city could see a second high school and middle school on the east side of I-65, and high-rise office at those interchanges in the four to six-story range.

Todd Kleven, vice president of Hawk Development, called Crown Point "the new Munster" as the most desirable place to live and predicted:

■ High-rise offices along with expansion of the city to the east and south with residential construction, followed by commercial.

■ Kleven also said an amusement park for the area near the Fair Oaks farm in Newton County

was a possibility.

Mayor David Uran also has high hopes for the community's future, saying:

■ "I can see Crown Point being one of only three cities/metro areas that represents the entire Lake County footprint. With the consolidation pushed by the state, this will be the trend going forward. I don't think this is a bold prediction but a reality.

■ "I still see the Crown Point metro area as a residential hub of the south county region with strong educational, computer-based learning centers or in-home settings versus the traditional current in-school settings. This is another trend being

pushed by the change of our current school curriculum."

■ He also sees not just one but several high speed rail/tram connections to other communities within the Region and to Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville.

■ Another big change could come in the realm of school sports. Uran predicted, "School-sponsored sports teams will be conducted privately. I can see with the city's success and passion for amateur sports and the elimination of school sponsored sports Crown Point will be the center of all youth sports in the northern part of the state."

It sounds like 2066 will be an interesting time for the city.

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