LAND EXCHANGE MASTER PLAN

Land Exchange Overview
One of the major issues facing Crane Lake is the lack of public land for future planning or development. In many ways the Town of Crane Lake is land locked between large tracts of federal, state, and private land. The community has identified the need to acquire land in order to:

- Provide land for future development;
- Use land for the community's economic future;
- Create affordable housing for those interested living in Crane Lake;
- Create worker housing for the large influx of seasonal workers during summer months;
- Provide land for recreational facilities and an expanded trails network;
- Provide land for a new town hall/civic center; and
- Address the future social, economic, and ecological sustainability of the town.

The community has an opportunity to acquire an 80-acre parcel of land through an land swap with the United States Forest Service. The goal of this design/planning project was to develop plans that represent potential futures for the 80 acres and to test the community’s response to them. The community was actively engaged in the design process. Community members gave feedback in a series of conversations on community needs and aspirations and subsequent design presentations. Two options were investigated for the 80-acre site prior to the development of the final design.

Land Exchange Option One
Option One investigates a design program driven by housing and the new town hall. This design/planning exploration is based on current St. Louis County zoning that applies to the community. The design:

- Uses the required lot minimum of 2.5 acres;
- Creates a variety of property values through site location and sensitivity to the topography and forested environments;
- Locates a community trail along the roadside that encourages walking and connects to the roadside trail along County Road 24;
- Protects natural drainage patterns by providing ample buffer zones through ravine and swale locations;
- Provides 24 single-family units;
- Creates a new community hub by developing the relationship between the town hall and residential area;
- Places the town hall on the southern side of the property;
- Handles a conflict in land uses by separating residential and town hall areas with a road and forested areas; and
- Creates a town hall site nestled into a forested hillside.

For more information see Town Hall Center Phase One on page 39.
Option Two

Option Two provides an alternative design to the 2.5-acre build-out in Option One. Access to a central sewer system allows the community to depart from the required minimum 2.5-acre lot and explore development options that are similar to a planned unit development (PUD). The design:

- Provides a mix of residential types and sizes: single-family lots include thirteen 2.5-acre lots and four one-acre lots; fourteen 0.5-acre lots accommodate a 10-12 unit apartment building and nine long-term mobile homes;
- Creates a trail easement through the picturesque ravine-studded bluffs that follow existing drainage patterns;
- Maintains a forested environment;
- Separates multi-unit/rental facility and mobile homes from the single-family houses;
- Explores the potential of a build-out with a trail easement;
- Provides roadside trails;
- Creates a woodland trail connection to the town hall;
- Sites the town hall to create a civic center for the community by connecting the town chapel, fire hall and town hall off of Handberg Road; and
- Sites the town hall to create a civic center by connecting the town chapel, fire hall and town hall off of Handberg Road;
- Connects the woodland trail to the civic center; and
- Creates a roadside trail along Handberg Road.

For more detailed information see Town Hall Center Future Development on page 41.
LAND EXCHANGE MASTER PLAN OPTION TWO
Final Master Plan

Based on feedback received at the preliminary design presentations and the survey mailing, the master plan was revised to address the concerns raised by the community. The issues were the: amount of development, uses of land, community and building scales, impacts of the prior proposals, and expansion of recreational opportunities. The final design:

- Sets about half of the site into a preserve not to be developed or used for trail access;
- Aligns a trail system that capitalizes on the site’s natural amenities while providing connections to the single-family houses, the apartment building, the mobile homes, the town center, and the trail network;
- Limits residential development to fourteen one-acre lots;
- Addresses the need for affordable housing close to the community by providing mobile homes on small lots;
- Uses the town sewer to allow for the creation of one-acre lots;
- Proposes the creation of a town hall center that serves as the heart of the community and center of development;
- Provides new recreational space for open green space, children’s play area, gathering, tennis, and basketball;
- Separates residential areas from other appropriate land uses; and
- Becomes a major trailhead access point for the Crane Lake Trails Network.

Many of the major issues the community is facing now and may face in the future are addressed by the plan/design. As the number of family-run resorts continues to diminish in the community and in the region, so will many of the services they provide. It is not realistic to assume that private investment will be able to rebuild such services on expensive, prime lakefront property. In designing a new town hall as the anchor for a new public center, the Crane Lake community creates a new vision and direction for the future that builds on existing town strengths, integrates current and future uses and provides for new recreational opportunities. By using the vegetation of the town’s splendid natural environment as major materials in the center’s design, the community’s identity as a special north woods place is reinforced. The design encourages walking, enhances adjacent property values, attracts new businesses, creates a destination, and becomes a major year-round community resource. How the town hall center can develop over time is explored in the following pages.
Phase One

The town hall center design focuses on the development of public spaces, trails, and expanded recreational facilities while creating the framework for future economic development near the center. It has the potential to become a major selling point in attracting future commercial and residential development because of the amenities associated with the creation of this civic center. It is organized around a central green planted with jack pine, and is designed as a setting to focus community life and attract “good fit” business to Crane Lake. Addressing issues of scale and development costs is difficult in an area where property values and the competition for development are constantly changing. The goal is to show how the initial phases of the project could support a coherent design that adds value to existing assets and can be implemented over time. The design:

- Locates the town hall as the focal point to the town center;
- Provides visibility from the highway;
- Uses wildflower meadows and pine plantings to frame the town center from both directions and buffer the center from highway traffic;
- Minimizes the impact of highway noise and creates a dramatic impression by using the thirty-foot elevation change from the highway to its advantage;
- Creates a new entrance to Crane Lake;
- Locates the town hall, open-air multi-use trailhead shelter, trails, playground, and a multi-use recreation field into a new public town hall center;
- Provides public bathrooms, water and changing facilities in the town hall;
- Creates a framework that encourages future development that supports the town center;
- Advocates beginning with site grading to attract business and to allow for immediate replanting of forested areas;
- Preserves and restores native plant communities in a design to treat storm water runoff generated from hard surfaces; and
- Creates a new place for community gatherings, events, and festivals on a new town plaza.
Future Development
In the Future Development Plan the development of the town hall and recreational amenities grow into a true town center over time. The design:

- Relocates trailhead building to create a town center framed by two public spaces and organizes the town hall/plaza and the trailhead/recreational facilities around a central green;
- Uses jack pine plantings reflecting the local forest to provide enclosure, shade, and definition of space;
- Locates a new community sign;
- Provides space for four new business buildings ranging in size from 1,200 square feet to 2,400 square feet;
- Creates affordable housing by allowing mixed use; commercial buildings on the north side of the center would have walk-out apartments on their lower level while other commercial buildings could have second-story apartments;
- Provides connections within and around the site with a trail network that connects to the roadside trail on County Road 24 and residential area;
- Serves as the major trailhead for the Crane Lake Trail Network;
- Increases recreational opportunities with new amenities such as a tennis court, basketball court, trailhead and plaza space, kiosk, children’s playground; and
- Expands the town center to address many of the potential programs identified by the community.

For additional information see the Town Hall Building Concepts below.
Initial Phase of Development

During the community action plan process, the creation of a town hall was identified as a major goal for the future of the Crane Lake community. This was reiterated during the programming process of this project. Options were presented in preliminary design presentations to gather feedback. The phasing approach allows the concepts to address various building uses while remaining sensitive to issues of scale and cost. The design:

- Remains small in scale, addressing the community needs as well as cost limitations;
- Provides a public face to the town hall by providing door, window, and community porch elements; its community character is further strengthened by roof line and fascia treatments;
- Supports the civic nature of the center by orienting the town hall to the central town green;
- Provides storage for recreational equipment, conferences, and other group activities;
- Provides a full commercial kitchen with multiple service areas; and
- Provides a restroom facility with changing and locker space accessible that can be made accessible from both the inside and outside by lockable interior and exterior doors.
INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: PHASE I

FLOOR PLAN CONCEPT

ELEVATION

BOARD & BATTEN

TIMBER FRAME

STONE COLUMNS

STAIRS

GREAT ROOM: 10' X 32'

FULL KITCHEN: 15' X 10'

STORAGE: 7' X 12'

CLOSET: 7' X 3.5'

ARRIVAL SPACE: 14' X 23'

POORCH: 10' X 20'

REFRIGERATOR

RESTROOM: 2' X 10'

SINK & COUNTERTOP

OUTDOOR ACCESS

BENCH

LOCKERS
Future Phases
The Town Hall Building Concepts look at the potential for future phases to expand the original building to provide space for additional building uses. The design:
- Creates two 25’x25’ additions to the original building;
- Provides space for a community recreation room, a library, and a technology and history center;
- Provides new connections between interior and exterior spaces;
- Could also provide for a Crane Lake Historic Museum; and
- Could provide needed office space for a town government.
TOWN HALL EXPANSION:
LATER PHASES

FLOOR PLAN CONCEPT

ELEVATION