

Elgin activist to vie for Kane board seat

November 13, 2007

• **STEVEN ROSS JOHNSON** Staff Writer

ELGIN -- Gifford Park neighborhood advocate Julie Schmitt, an outspoken critic against a city council-backed housing development on the site of the former Channing YMCA, has decided to step into the political arena at the county level.

Schmitt announced Monday her intention to run in next November's election for the 20th District seat on the Kane County Board as a Green Party candidate.



Schmitt, along with fellow members of the Gifford Park Association, have spoken out against the project out of concerns over density within the neighborhood.

She becomes the fifth person to enter the race -- as well as the county's first Green Party candidate -- joining a field filled with current and former officials and candidates.

Gail Borden Public Library Board Trustee Larry Wegman is running against retired businessman and onetime Elgin City Council candidate Richard Bennett to be the Republican nominee, while the Democratic Party has city Zoning and Subdivision Hearing Board member Cristina Castro vying for her party's nomination Feb. 5 against incumbent Kane County Board member Jesus de la

Isla.

Despite the long list of more seasoned opponents, Schmitt, a first-time candidate, felt her lack of experience might be seen as an attractive alternative for voters disillusioned by what she called a "politics-as-usual" approach by the two major parties.

"I look at it like a job," she said. "In this particular position, I don't have any prior political experience, but I've got a lot of experience management-wise in business, and it's just taking the same talents and applying them to a different venue.

"I think the fact that I'm apolitical works in my favor because I'm swayed by what the best thing to do for the people and for this county and for my district and not by anyone else's agenda."