Community Outreach

The Evanston Lakefront Master Plan was developed through an extensive community outreach process involving key stakeholders and members of the Evanston community every step of the way. The basis of the master plan is the Evanston Lakefront Vision, which established the goals and objectives for the lakefront through a similar extensive public process.

The master plan team began the design process by reviewing the Evanston Lakefront Vision with a broad cross section of the community through public stakeholder interview sessions, followed by a series of meetings with City of Evanston departmental meetings. These meetings engaged members of the public from various stakeholder groups, including the bicycling community, environmental organizations, boaters, birders, and others. The City of Evanston Departmental meetings included Public Safety officials from Police, Fire, and Health; Public Works; Department of Parks / Forestry & Recreation; as well as coordinators for Accessibility and Sustainability. These meetings outlined specific issues, opportunities, and potential constraints for the implementation of the Lakefront Vision.

The City of Evanston notified the public of the master plan process and public meetings through a variety of methods, including notices published in the quarterly City of Evanston “Highlights” newsletter and City of Evanston Arts and Recreational Issue, both of which are sent to every household in Evanston. Additionally, notices were posted at all City buildings, and emails were sent to over 200 organizations and the Downtown Evanston Planning list serve. Notices were also advertised in the Evanston Roundtable. Media coverage of the process included multiple stories in the Evanston Roundtable, Evanston Review, and Chicago Tribune. Finally, National Public Radio played a segment on the charrette process multiple times on the morning of October 4, 2008.

Design Charrette Process

Following the initial public stakeholder interview sessions, the master plan team held a series of public meetings during the course of two design charrettes. The purpose of these meetings was to follow an iterative design process that presented a wide range of ideas for the lakefront to the public, and gather comments and input that became the basis for the next round of concept refinements. The first public meeting where design concepts were presented was held on September 19, 2007, as part of Design Charrette One. Three concept alternatives were presented, and extensive feedback was gathered from the public. This feedback was used to refine the three alternatives down to two alternatives, which were presented at the second public meeting, held on September 20, 2007. Over 50 members of the public attended each of the first two meetings held at the Evanston Civic Center.

Design Charrette Two was held on October 3 and 4, 2007, and the two alternatives presented on September 20 were further refined to a single “Draft Consensus Plan”. Again, over 50 members of the public attended the meeting, and provided significant feedback on the plan. At the conclusion of this presentation, the City requested that three additional public meetings be held at locations throughout Evanston to ensure input from the broadest range of Evanston residents. These meetings were held on October 30, 2007 at Presbyterian Homes Westminster Place Campus; November 1, 2007 at Levy Senior Center; and November 8, 2007 at Fleetwood-Jourdain Center. Following this series of public
meetings, the Draft Consensus Plan was revised to incorporate the public comments, and the revised Draft Consensus Plan was presented on November 15, 2007 at the Evanston Civic Center.

On January 14, 2008, the Consensus Plan was presented to the City of Evanston Planning and Development Committee at the Evanston Civic Center. Further discussion of the Consensus Plan was held with the public and Planning and Development Committee on January 22, 2008. Following public input and a series of questions and answers, the Planning and Development Committee recommended that the plan be presented before the full City Council. On January 28, 2008, the Evanston City Council approved the Consensus Plan.

During the design process, a total of six alternative plans were developed and reviewed that led to the approved Consensus Plan. The following pages show each of those plans, along with a summary of the design program and public comments for each.

**Design Charrette One – Public Meeting One**

Three alternatives were presented on September 19, 2007, titled “Passive”, “Active”, and “Multi-Generational”. The intent of these concept alternatives was to test widely varying approaches to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Lakefront Vision, and provide the community with the opportunity to participate in the design process through sharing their opinions and thoughts on each plan. Additionally, the concepts were informed by the feedback received during the initial stakeholder interviews. The common themes design elements of each of the first three alternatives included:

- **Accessibility**
  - Every beach is an accessible beach
  - Existing restroom facilities either renovated or replaced

- **Sustainability**
  - Carbon neutral – LEED Certified buildings
  - Re-use existing materials
  - Stormwater best management practices
  - Reduce irrigation and fertilizer/pesticide use

- **Habitat Enhancement**
  - Include native shrubs & trees that provide food and cover at appropriate times
  - Expand native dune restoration efforts

- **Reduced Maintenance**
  - Eliminate unused turf areas
  - Replace with native dune plantings

Three major elements were specifically changed on each plan in order to test the impact of various design approaches, including:

- **Lakeshore Armoring Options**
  - Raise elevation
  - Offshore reef
  - Stepped revetment

- **Boat Ramp**
  - Remove entirely
  - Relocate
  - Enhance in place

- **Programming Intensity**
- Less
- Same
- More

**Passive Concept**
The primary design approach behind the Passive Concept alternative was to test the notion that the lakefront environment should be maintained in as natural a state as possible, with programming on the lakefront significantly decreased. The only uses proposed in this concept were those that can only be accommodated on the lakefront, and expansion of the park space was more important than other considerations. Key program elements included:
- Expand lakefront park footprint through relocation of parking and roads
- Significantly expand and enhance native landscape
- Provide passive seating areas along lakefront
- New and expanded dune habitat areas
- Remove rip/rap along entire lakeshore, replace with underwater breakwaters
- Remove boat ramp completely, provide secondary ramp for aquatic camp use
- Relocate some or all festival and concert programming

The public comments on the various concepts fell into three categories, including positive aspects, negative aspects, and “split decision” aspects, where there was a reasonably even public response both for and against. The public comments for the Passive Concept included:
- Positive Aspects
  - Less Programming
  - More native/dune planting
  - Larger park space
  - Water trail
- Negative Aspects
  - Removal of Arts Fair
  - Removal or windsurfer/kayak parking
- Split Decision
  - Sheridan closing

**Multi-Generational Concept**
The primary design approach behind the Multi-Generational Concept alternative was to test the notion that the lakefront environment should be maintained with range of program elements specifically targeted at all age groups, with programming intensity on the lakefront remaining similar to the existing condition. The elements proposed in this concept were based on a variety of uses, and provided greater access to the lakefront as a primary design goal. Key program elements included:
- Multigenerational programming
- Relocate boat ramp to north
- Provide additional parking for boats and park visitors
- Create fishing pier at old boat ramp
- Provide interpretive signage at water treatment plant
- Expansion of dune ecology
- Creation of a Great Lawn, providing green space adjacent to the water
- Provide additional pavilions throughout lakefront area
Enhanced pedestrian connection to Pioneer Park

The public comments for the Multi-Generational concept included:

- **Positive**
  - Great lawn
  - Lincoln Street Overlook
  - Relocation of Boat Launch
  - Pedestrian connection to Patriots Park
  - Increased Parking
  - “Public” commercial use at Clarke Estate (Daytime Retreat, Café)

- **Negative**
  - South Boulevard Beach Restroom location
  - Southbound Bicycle trail

- **Split Decision**
  - Covered picnic shelters

**Active Concept**

The primary design approach behind the Active Concept alternative was to test the notion that the lakefront environment should provide a significantly increased level of program elements. A range of new uses was proposed, with programming intensity on the lakefront increasing relative to the existing condition. The elements proposed in this concept included revenue generating features, and proposed increased use of the lakefront as a primary design goal. Key program elements included:

- More programmed activities
- More programmed club sports
- Urban square/plazas along lakeshore
- Restaurant venues
- Raised boardwalks/promenades along lakefront
- Covered picnic areas
- Formal gateways to lakefront area
- Expanded breakwaters
- Expanded boat ramp services

The public comments for the Active Concept included:

- **Positive**
  - Pavilion at Lighthouse Beach
  - Lagoon Promenade – Cultural programming
  - Restricted access to bird sanctuary

- **Negative**
  - No large scale private restaurant at Clarke Estate
  - Too much programming – maintenance concerns
  - Development of Clark Square

- **Split Decision**
  - Music venue
  - Increase festival activity

**Design Charrette One – Public Meeting Two**

The first three alternatives presented on September 19, 2007 were refined based on the comments received, and two new plans were presented at Public Meeting Two, held on September 20, 2007. These plans were titled “Natural Approach” and “Recreational Approach”. The intent of these two concept alterna-
tives was to eliminate from consideration elements that were widely rejected by the public on the first three plans, and integrate the best elements of the previous plans into two concepts. The common themes design elements for the two refined alternatives included:

- **Desirable**
  - Widening of greenway/reduction of lanes on Sheridan at Calvary Cemetery
  - Expansion of dune ecosystem / “Magic Hedge”
  - Alternative shoreline protection
  - Water Trail (kayak / canoe landings)
  - Eliminating or relocating the motorized boat ramp
  - Some type of “public” commercial use of the Clarke Estate
  - Lincoln street overlook
  - Great lawn
  - Clear separation of bike and pedestrian traffic

- **Split Decision**
  - Relocation of Sheridan Road near Lunt Park
  - Additional covered picnic shelters
  - Private commercial use of Clarke Estate

- **Not Acceptable**
  - Removing the parking at Dempster Street Beach
  - Removing the art festival program

**Natural Approach Concept**

The primary design approach behind the Natural Approach alternative was to base the design on the best elements of the Passive Concept, but provide a more balanced range of programming and uses. A range of uses was proposed, with programming intensity on the lakefront approaching a level similar to the existing condition, but focused more on passive uses and less motorized use of the waterfront. In addition to the common elements outlined above, key program elements included:

- Maximize dune ecology / native planting
- Reintroducing lost ecosystems
- Consolidation of parking
- Consolidating program activities
- Expanding park area

The public comments for the Natural Approach Concept included:

- **Consensus:**
  - Keep Community Gardens at Lighthouse Park
  - Remove head-in parking facing residences
  - Keep Tennis Courts
  - No new structured play, consider more unstructured play
  - Keep bike paths on City side of park
  - Keep pedestrian paths on lake side of park
  - Provide alternatives for the excessive dune ecology
  - Dark Sky Lighting
  - Great Lawn
  - Functional Lagoon Promenade
  - Reduction of armoring
  - Water Trail
  - Park Expansion supported by traffic analysis
Split Decision:
- Consolidated versus Distributed Parking
- Reduction in lanes at Cavalry Cemetery
- Amplified Music
- Remove public boat launch
- Underwater reef armoring

Recreational Approach Concept
The primary design approach behind the Recreational Approach alternative was to base the design on the best elements of the Multigenerational and Active Concepts, but provide a more balanced range of programming and uses. A range of uses was proposed, with programming intensity on the lakefront increasing somewhat similar to the existing condition, but in a more balanced way with less focus on revenue generation. In addition to the common elements outlined above, key program elements included:

- Provide multi-cultural venues
- Meet multi-generational recreation needs
- Provide select “public” commercial activity where appropriate
- Enhance Cultural / Festival opportunities
- Expand native habitat / bird watching opportunities

The public comments for the Recreational Approach Concept included:

- Consensus:
  - “Public” commercial use of Evanston Art Center (ie café, gift shop) without negative parking impacts
  - No permanent music facility
  - More covered pavilions
  - Remove proposed playground at Clark Square
  - Provide alternative playground at Garden Park
  - Maintain promenade at Clark Square Park
  - Extended restroom season
  - Lowering of armored edge
  - Water Trail

- Split Decision
  - Keep public boat launch
  - Expand Lagoon Promenade
  - Expansion of active programming

Design Charrette Two – Public Meeting Three
On October 3 and 4, 2007, the master plan team met for Design Charrette Two, and refined the Natural and Recreational Concepts into a single “Draft Consensus Plan” based on the comments received. The Draft Consensus Plan was presented at Public Meeting Three, held on October 4, 2007. The goal of the Draft Consensus Plan was to address the wide range of comments from the public and integrate the best elements of the previous plans into a single concept. The guiding principles of the Draft Consensus Plan included:

- Open up the landscape as much as possible
- Eliminate pedestrian / vehicular conflicts
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
- Celebrate the historic character of the lakefront
- Provide amenities for all age groups and cultural groups
- Create natural buffers and separation of activities
The key program elements of the Draft Consensus Plan included:
- Balance dune ecology / native planting with flexible green space
- Reintroduce lost ecosystems
- Expand native habitat / bird watching opportunities
- Consolidating program activities to north end of core area
- Realign Sheridan to expand park and improve pedestrian safety
- Provide multi-cultural venues
- Meet multi-generational recreation needs
- Provide select “public” commercial activity where appropriate
- Enhance Cultural / Festival opportunities

**Public Meetings 4, 5, 6, and 7 – Draft Consensus Plan**
Following the third public meeting, the City of Evanston recognized the need for additional public input to further discuss the Draft Consensus Plan. The intensity of comments, both for and against various issues, naturally increases as the number of plan alternatives is reduced, and the key issues that generated the most debate and comment included:
- Functional Use of Clark Street Beach as Sailing / Kayak Beach
  - Does not allow for interaction of families with boaters
  - Loss of Clark Street Swim Beach
- Sheridan Road Realignment
- Parking Distribution
- Removal of Boat Ramp

During the series of three additional public meetings, held October 30, November 1, and November 8, 2007, the Draft Consensus Plan was presented with a variety of proposed refinements which addressed the public comments.

**Clark Street Beach / Sailing – Kayak Facility**
Based on a collaborative design approach with members of the sailing and kayak community, revisions to the existing Dempster Street facility were proposed that improved the functionality of the existing facility while creating additional space for separated bicycle and pedestrian paths. The resulting plan modifications resolved the functional issues at the Dempster facility, resolved the issues involved with interactions between boaters and families, while retaining the Clark Street swim beach.

**Sheridan Road Realignment**
The discussion surrounding the proposed realignment of Sheridan Road was focused on the trade-off of creating a larger contiguous park space versus the potential impacts of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods. Public comments on the issue included:
- Pro:
  - Creates the largest contiguous park area
  - Reduces crosswalk widths, improves pedestrian safety
  - Changes the character of Sheridan from thoroughfare to park way
  - Reduces traffic speeds
- Con:
  - Moves Sheridan traffic closer to adjacent homes
  - Moves 60 parking spaces farther from Dog Beach and Lagoon
  - Potential to shift traffic to other routes
Any proposed change to Sheridan would require a comprehensive traffic study to identify specific impacts in greater detail. As part of the transition of Sheridan from State Highway to Evanston roadway, a Phase One study will begin in January of 2008.

Following the extended discussion, it was determined that the potential negatives outweighed the potential benefits, and the proposed realignment was eliminated from the plan. The plan was further revised to provide as many of the benefits of the realignment proposal, such as pedestrian safety and connectivity of adjacent park spaces, without changing the primary alignment of Sheridan Road.

**Parking Distribution**

The Draft Consensus plan provided a new parking area near Clark Street Beach that was intended to offset the loss of parking from the realignment of Sheridan Road. The community expressed a clear preference for maintaining the present system of parking, which is evenly distributed throughout the lakefront, and this approach was implemented in the final plan.

**Boat Ramp**

The proposal to remove or relocate the existing boat ramp facility generated significant public comment in favor of retaining and improving the existing boat ramp. The key issue is that the existing Boat Ramp can not simply stay as it is. The debate centered around three alternatives: It must either be significantly improved to reduce dredging costs and improve functionality and safety; it should be reconstructed in the best possible location and provide for ease of dredging and expanded functionality (Permanent storage of Emergency watercraft, ability to support more watercraft); or it should be removed altogether. Other key issues included:

- There is no location within the City of Evanston that is particularly well suited for a boat ramp facility.
  - The best location would be nearest the southern end of Northwestern University.
  - There will be dredging no matter the location
  - There will be environmental impacts to downwind landowners
- Any new ramp facility or change to the existing ramp would require comprehensive coastal engineering design.
- Current number of users may not justify the expense to repair the existing facility or construct a new facility
- Analysis of financial model and user fee structure is necessary
- Remember that very few public recreation facilities are profitable, so the overall benefit to the community must be considered.
- Improvement of the ramp may encourage more boaters to use the facility, making it more financially sustainable, which is potentially at odds with the goals of the Lakefront Vision.
- Vision calls for consideration of increased restrictions on motorized boat use.
- No public support for allowing day use passes.

After significant debate, there was clear public support for maintaining the boat ramp in its current location, with the expressed desire to make significant improvements to the facility to address its current shortcomings, and reduce associated impacts on the surrounding park facilities.
On November 15, 2007, a revised Draft Concept Plan was presented at the Evanston Civic Center. The revised plan included a series of significant revisions to the plan that sought to achieve a balance of uses, and address the full range of goals and comments of the community.

- Enhance natural areas for wildlife habitat and bird watching
- Create natural buffers and separation of activities
- Balance dune ecology / native planting with flexible green space
- Open up the landscape as much as possible
- Maintain the lakefront in accordance with environmentally sustainable best management practices, including LEED certified structures
- Evaluate alternate shoreline protection systems
- Improve pedestrian safety and access
- Celebrate the historic character of the lakefront
- Provide amenities for all age groups and cultural groups
- Improve, but do not expand, parking facilities
- Provide select “public” commercial activity where appropriate
- Enhance Cultural / Festival opportunities
- Expand educational and recreational programming
- Provide dedicated bicycle and pedestrian pathways
- Improve accessibility to lakefront from downtown and the rest of Evanston
- Achieve a universally accessible lakefront

While recognizing the fact that no single plan could ever reflect the individual desires of everyone who participated in the master plan process, the Final Draft Consensus plan was presented to the City of Evanston Planning and Development Committee on January 14, 2008. After further discussion with the public and Planning and Development Committee on January 22, 2008, the master plan was approved by the Evanston City Council on January 28, 2008.
Active Concept - North Lakefront

Design Charrette One - Public Meeting One - September 19, 2007
Active Concept - Central Lakefront

Design Charrette One - Public Meeting One - September 19, 2007
Multi-Generational Concept - North Lakefront
Multi-Generational Concept - Central Lakefront
Multi-Generational Concept - South Lakefront
Passive Concept - North Lakefront
Passive Concept - Central Lakefront
Natural Concept - North Lakefront
Evanston Lakefront Corridor
Reconstruction Master Plan

“Natural Concept”
Central Section

September 2007

Design Charrette One - Public Meeting Two - September 20, 2007
Natural Concept - South Lakefront
Recreational Concept - Central Lakefront
Recreational Concept - South Lakefront
Draft Consensus Plan - North Lakefront

Evanston Lakefront Corridor Reconstruction Master Plan

"Draft Consensus Plan"
Northern Section
October 4, 2007

Design Charrette Two - Public Meeting Three - October 4, 2007
Draft Consensus Plan - Central Lakefront (North Section)
Draft Consensus Plan - South Lakefront (North Section)
Draft Consensus Plan - South Lakefront (South Section)
Crosswalk Sketches

Typical Crosswalk - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007

Enhanced Crosswalk - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007
Beach Structure and Boat Launch Sketches

Typical beach structure - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007

Boat launch - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007
Sheridan Road Sketches

Two lanes without median - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007

Four lanes without median - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007

Four lanes with median - Additional Public Workshops - October to November 2007
Final Consensus Plan - Central Lakefront (North Section)