



GILLSON PARK



DRAFT

GILLSON PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE - PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

December 14, 2020

PARK CONTEXT

1. Identify opportunities to selectively remove vegetation in poor condition or adversely impacting landscape character through an active tree and landscape management strategy.
2. Explore the option of framing the north Bird Habitat Garden or Wildflower Garden with a low perimeter stone knee wall to create a sense of special gardens and spaces.
3. Integrate art in the park to create a "Gallery without Walls."
4. Improve all entries into the Park.
5. Consider ways of improving a sense of connection between the Sheridan Shores Yacht Club and the overall character of the Park.
6. Consider better integration of Sailing Club/Beach into the overall vision for the Park.
7. Explore opportunities to enhance a more distinct character between Lake Side parkland and Park Side parkland for a richer park experience.
8. Improve understanding of how ownership and leasing agreements may affect long term planning.

CIRCULATION CONDITIONS

1. Create a comprehensive pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation plan that connects the entire park using existing and modified patterns.
2. Consider removal of Overlook Drive to create a pedestrian/bike promenade.
3. Explore option of removing Middle Drive to accommodate green space or pedestrian/bike trail.
4. Enhance and improve pedestrian experience throughout the park, especially at important roadway crossings.
5. Extend pedestrian connections along the south shoreline to the Dog Beach and Gross Point.
6. Provide dedicated pedestrian boardwalk and bike pathways at Harbor Drive.
7. Upgrade the pedestrian entry to the Park and Beach at Lake Avenue.
8. Consider parking "pods" or diagonal parking along main drives to increase parking count.
9. Continue enhancement of the vehicular arrival and exit experience at the Beach House parking lot.
10. Explore ways of making pedestrian and vehicular circulation more intuitive.

WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE CONDITIONS

1. Improve entry sequences and hierarchy of spaces throughout the Park.
2. Explore ways of accenting the Washington Avenue historic columns along Michigan Avenue as a more prominent gateway feature/element within the Park. Consider repeating similar stone column elements at other park gateways.
3. Expand the newly developed wayfinding signage design to create a more cohesive, park-wide sign program.

LANDSCAPE CONDITIONS

1. Develop a cohesive, park-wide landscape strategy to connect the overall character and feel of the Park.
2. Enhance, or elaborate on, the special stone features that exist throughout the Park, especially the council ring near the Lakeview Center and the entry to the 911 Memorial Garden.
3. Reestablish native plantings along the shoreline dune communities, the Dog Beach, and Gross Point.
4. Remove and manage invasive species in native habitat areas and on certain north park bluff slopes.
5. Coordinate and plan the use of existing and new formalized plantings in key areas.
6. Use plantings to enhance spatial definition for seasonal park uses, like the ice rink, while respecting the full range of regular and special uses for the park space year round.
7. Document existing memorial trees and plan for future memorial tree placement and coordination.
8. Provide targeted view corridors from Michigan Avenue to Lake Michigan via a selective tree and vegetation management strategy.
9. Respect, and where possible expand, the existing lawn and tree landscape through targeted pavement reduction.
10. Create a managed and volunteer-curated "Garden Walk" throughout the Park.
11. Undertake a comprehensive landscape assessment and long-term maintenance program.

UTILITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE & STORM WATER CONDITIONS

1. Repair and replace asphalt roadways and curbs where necessary.
2. Implement a consistent lighting style throughout the park that creates a hierarchy of lighting levels, using dark sky compliant LED fixtures
3. Address poor drainage throughout the park with improved stormwater infrastructure and best management practices.
4. Balance the impervious surface impact of any potential site alterations.
5. Develop ADA accessible routes that connect major features throughout the Park.
6. Develop a consolidated infrastructure improvement program that is tied to capital improvement and special project phasing.

SPECIAL CONDITONS

1. Coordinate any Park planning initiatives with identified short- and long-term shoreline improvements.
2. Consider additional covered shelters for revenue stream and programming support.
 - a. Potential shelter west of new parking lot
 - b. Potential shelter at south end of park near the existing picnic area, with infrastructure to support summer camp programming.
3. Consider non-motorized watercraft launch at south end of beach.
4. Enhance visibility and programming support for the Aquatics Beach.
5. Consider Dog Beach maintenance and potential facility improvements (shelter, fencing, seating, drinking fountain).
6. Sailing Beach
 - a. Increase a designed sense of connection to the Sailing Beach through a min-mid-maxi ideas approach.
 - b. Provide new restroom facility for the Sailing Beach
 - c. Explore potential for a new mixed-use Sailing facility that combines restrooms, community space, expanded boat storage, and a lookout deck, with revenue generation potential to self-fund project. Locate new building as far west as possible to open up more beachfront.
7. Maintenance Facilities
 - a. Relocate Park Maintenance Building to open up views and provide more space for access and programming.
 - b. Investigate a range of hardscape and softscape screening options for the Maintenance Building storage yard.
 - c. Consider wayfinding, cross walk, or other design strategies at the Lakeview Center/Wallace Bowl Maintenance Facility to facilitate continuity of pedestrian circulation along the west edge of the beach house parking lot.

8. Assess opportunities to better delineate relationships between the park and adjacent facilities, including the Wilmette Harbor, U.S. Coast Guard Station, Sheridan Shore Club, and Wilmette Water Plant. Improve connections to desirable aspects and buffer others.