

IMPROVING OUR LIFE ON THE LAKE



Lakefront Master Plan Update

October 2020

INTRODUCTION

The lakeshore, bluffs, ravines, and public parks physically define Highland Park.

The Park District maintains four lakefront properties that offer public access to this magnificent shoreline: Millard, Moraine, Park Avenue 1550 N. Northwest Highway Boating Facility, and Rosewood Park and Beach. Each lakefront properties provides a unique mix of ecological, recreational, aesthetic and educational value that is an integral part of the historical, cultural and natural resources of Highland Park.

In 2007, the Park District, in collaboration with stakeholders, completed and began

implementation of the 2007 Lakefront Master Plan – a roadmap for improvements at all lakefront properties, beaches, and ravine ecosystems. Since 2007, much has been accomplished along our lakefront. Years later, Park District lakefront priorities and community priorities have changed. Following a recommendation from the Park District’s master plan, GreenPrint 2024, the Lakefront Plan is being revisited and updated to better address today’s Highland Park.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Accomplishments since 2007 range from planning efforts, habitat restoration, to major renovation. A full list of accomplishments is included as an appendix. Notable accomplishments include:

- Renovation of Moraine Park to include a sculpture walk, new landscaping, and lighting.
- Rosewood Beach major renovation that transformed the beach from a once underutilized rocky beach into a unique award-winning education and recreational oasis.
- Grant funded project to return fish habitat to the ravine streams at Millard Park.



6. Create a long-term strategy to enhance, manage, and maintain the lakefront

CHANGES TO THE LAKEFRONT SINCE 2007

While the principles remain the same, the dynamic nature of Highland Park's lakefront and ever changing population warrant an update to the plan.

Rosewood

In 2015, Rosewood Park and Beach was transformed from a once underutilized rocky beach into a unique award winning



educational and recreational oasis. The Park District offers diverse water-based recreation programs such as swimming and paddle boarding as well as fitness and nature-based



programs. All in addition to the family fun summer events on the beach.

Park Ave Boating Facility

The community made their voice heard in 2008 when the referendum for major

development at Park Avenue/Central Park failed. Since then, the Park District collaborates with the City of Highland Park to control access to the property with consideration of the Water Treatment Plant.

Lake Levels

Lake Michigan levels rise and fall seasonally, annually and over long periods of time. Currently, lake levels are higher than average. Coming on the heels of near record lows, this change is quite noticeable at all our lakefront parks.

High lake levels can increase the impact of storms on our beaches, causing enhanced erosion. For example, on April 14, 2018 a storm pounded the shore with offshore wave heights of 12 to 18 feet, on top of already elevated water levels. Communities up and down the north shore experienced significant beach erosion.

As the Park District works to provide safe and fun beach-going experiences through routine maintenance of our beaches, we also

PLAN UPDATE

The Plan Update is guided by planning principles defined in 2007 along with the community input gathered in 2018. The planning process is explained in the following pages along with a summary of the insights collected from the community. The plan update offers Districtwide and park specific operational and capital priorities. Capital priorities will be considered as part of the Park District's capital planning process.

Process

Planning efforts began in 2017 and followed a four step process.

Step one: gather information.

Park District staff conducted a detailed audit of the 2007 Lakefront Master Plan recommendations to determine if, and to what extent, the recommendations from 2007 had been accomplished. Recommendations were given a status of accomplished, active, re-evaluate, not feasible, or planning. The full audit is included in the appendix.

Step 2: engage the community.

With a thorough inventory of the work that had been completed since 2007 the next step was to understand the current priorities of the community. Community feedback was collected through listening sessions and a survey. The survey was designed to evaluate

how residents use the Park District lakefront properties and their level of enjoyment of the various activities available. Additionally, respondents were asked to prioritize the recommendations not accomplished from the 2007 plan. The survey provided space for additional comments. The survey was available online and a paper version distributed at Park District facilities and events. Completed surveys were accepted starting in May 2018 through the end of September 2018. During this time, nine listening sessions were held across the District: one at each of the lakefront parks, Hidden Creek Aqua Park, a Lakefront Open House public meeting, Fourth Fest, and two at the Recreational Center of Highland Park. Listening sessions were promoted in advance. At each listening session, staff members were available to talk with residents about their views of the lakefront parks.

Step 3: plan development.

The information gathered through the community engagement effort was aggregated to identify community needs that would guide the priorities of the plan update. Park District staff worked collaboratively to explore opportunities to address the needs identified and to determine implementation methods and/or costs.

Step 4: plan approval and implementation.

The proposed plan will be presented to the board for review and final approval. The final plan update report will be available online. Implementation of the approved plan will be tracked and progress presented to the board periodically.

This plan is a living document and is subject to change based on available funding and changing priorities.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Between May 2018 and September 2018, the Park District solicited feedback from the community through an online and paper survey as well as collected feedback through in-person conversations. The following pages highlight key findings.

662 Survey Respondents

9 Listening Sessions

at 4 Parks

2 Facilities

2 Events

Respondents Demographics

Survey responses from a diverse population.

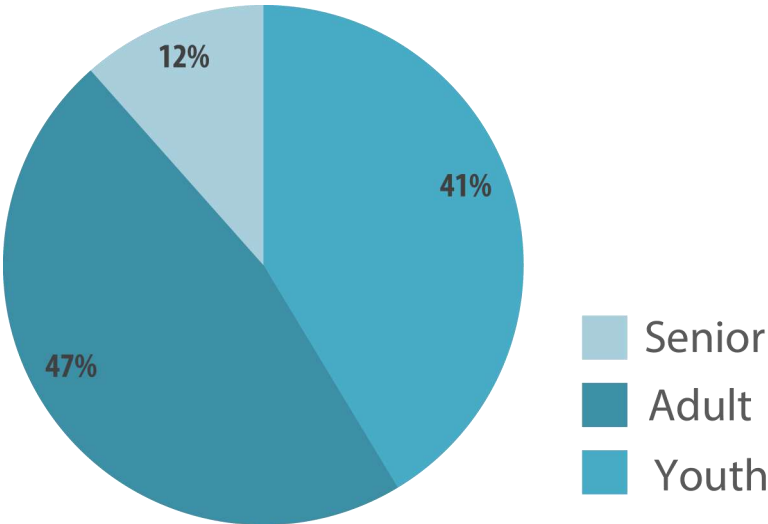


Figure 1. Age breakdown of survey respondents

95% of survey respondents report visiting the lakefront at least once per year. Over 30% report visiting the lakefront more than 10 times a year.

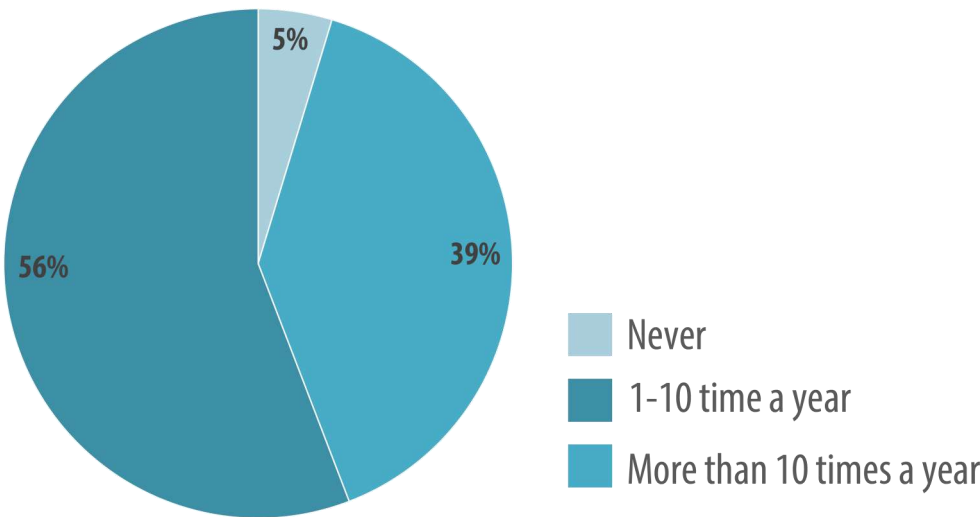


Figure 2. Survey respondents reported visitation frequency to the Lakefront. Not Park specific.

Lakefront Visitation

Lakefront visitation is comprised of casual visitors and regular visitors (more than 10 visits annually). Regular visitors are primarily frequenting the District's two programmed lakefront properties, Rosewood Park and Beach and Park Avenue Boating Facility. Rosewood is the City's only swimming beach and hosts nature and recreational programming, paddle board rentals, sand

playground, and a concessionaire. Park Avenue Boating Facility offers a boat launch and boat storage. The North Shore Yacht Club leases the building and offers boating programs for members. Rosewood is the most visited lakefront property among casual visitors followed by Moraine Park and Beach, the District's only off-leash dog beach. Millard Park and Beach is the least visited lakefront park for both casual and regular park users.

Regular visitors are primarily frequenting the District's two programmed parks, Rosewood Park and Beach and Park Ave Boating Facility.



Figure 3. Visitors making more than 10 visits a year by Park.

Visitors to the lakefront are primarily driving to the parks.

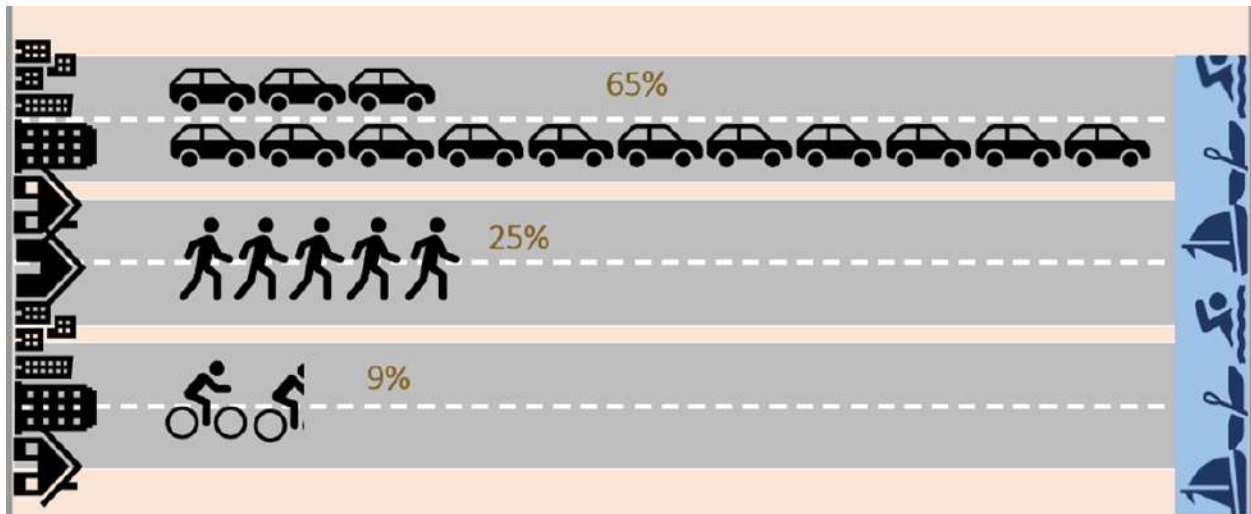


Figure 4. Mode of travel to lakefront. Not park specific. 1 icon = 5%

Activities

Walking and enjoying the view were the top activities for all four of the District's Lakefront Parks.

Rosewood Park and Beach

Activities	Count / (%)*
Views	435 / 81%
Walking	365 / 69%
Beach sand activities	258 / 48%
Swimming	214 / 40%
Picnicking	167 / 32%
Beach yoga	91 / 17%
Paddle Boarding	82 / 16%
Birding	77 / 15%
Fishing	14 / 3%

Park Avenue Boating Facility

Activities	Count / (%)*
Views	252 / 68%
Walking	232 / 63%
Canoeing/Kayaking/Sailing	130 / 36%
Picnicking	95 / 26%
Paddle Boarding	88 / 25%
Motorized Boating	59 / 17%
Birding	37 / 10%
Fishing	27 / 8%

Figure 5. Most enjoyable activities reported by survey respondents, site specific.

*The percentage represents the percent of people who reported visiting the specific site, it is not a percentage of all survey respondents. For example, 68% of respondents that report visiting Park Avenue Boating Facility enjoy the view.

Millard Park and Beach

Activities	Count / (%)*
Views	210 / 85%
Walking	205 / 82%
Relaxing on a park bench	137 / 56%
Rock garden	119 / 49%
Beach sand activities	86 / 35%
Picnicking	63 / 26%
Fishing	8 / 3%

Moraine Park and Beach

Activities	Count / (%)*
Views	254 / 73%
Walking	229 / 66%
Sculpture Garden	137 / 39%
Dog Beach	136 / 39%
Playing Catch/Kick a ball	63 / 18%
Picnicking	50 / 14%
Birding	46 / 13%

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Six planning principles guide the 2007 Lakefront Master Plan. These principles were developed through a collaboration between the City of Highland Park and the Park District of Highland Park along with extensive community engagement. These principles were confirmed through the 2018 community engagement effort and continue to guide lakefront priorities.

Lakefront planning principles:

1. Develop a unique lakefront experience that builds upon the historical, cultural, and natural resources of Highland Park
2. Connect neighborhoods and parks to the lakefront
3. Create varied and appealing lakefront parks while increasing opportunities for recreation, education and interpretation
4. Improve environmental and public health conditions at the lakefront
5. Develop a sustainable lakefront model for other lakefront communities to follow

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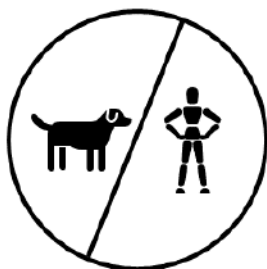
Four themes consistently stood out through the community-wide engagement. These four themes, rooted in the guiding principles, serve as the Lakefront priorities.

Lakefront-wide Priorities

1. **Preserve** walking trails and views
2. **Access** improvements to and around the lakefront parks
3. Provide **accurate information** about the lakefront parks
4. **Maintain** infrastructure and recreational amenities

While each of the four lakefront properties offers opportunities to enjoy the lakefront and surrounding nature, they each offer a distinct benefit to the community. Moraine Park and Beach is home to a sculpture garden and hosts the District's seasonal dog beach; Park Avenue Boating Facility offers a boat launch; Millard Park and Beach feels like a true escape into nature to engage in passive recreation; and Rosewood Park and Beach is the District's swimming beach.

**Moraine
Park & Beach**



*Art/Culture +
Dog Beach*

**Park Avenue
Boating Facility**



Boating

**Millard
Park & Beach**



*Passive
Recreation*

**Rosewood
Park & Beach**



Swimming

The following pages outline objectives and strategies to address these priorities and location specific improvements.

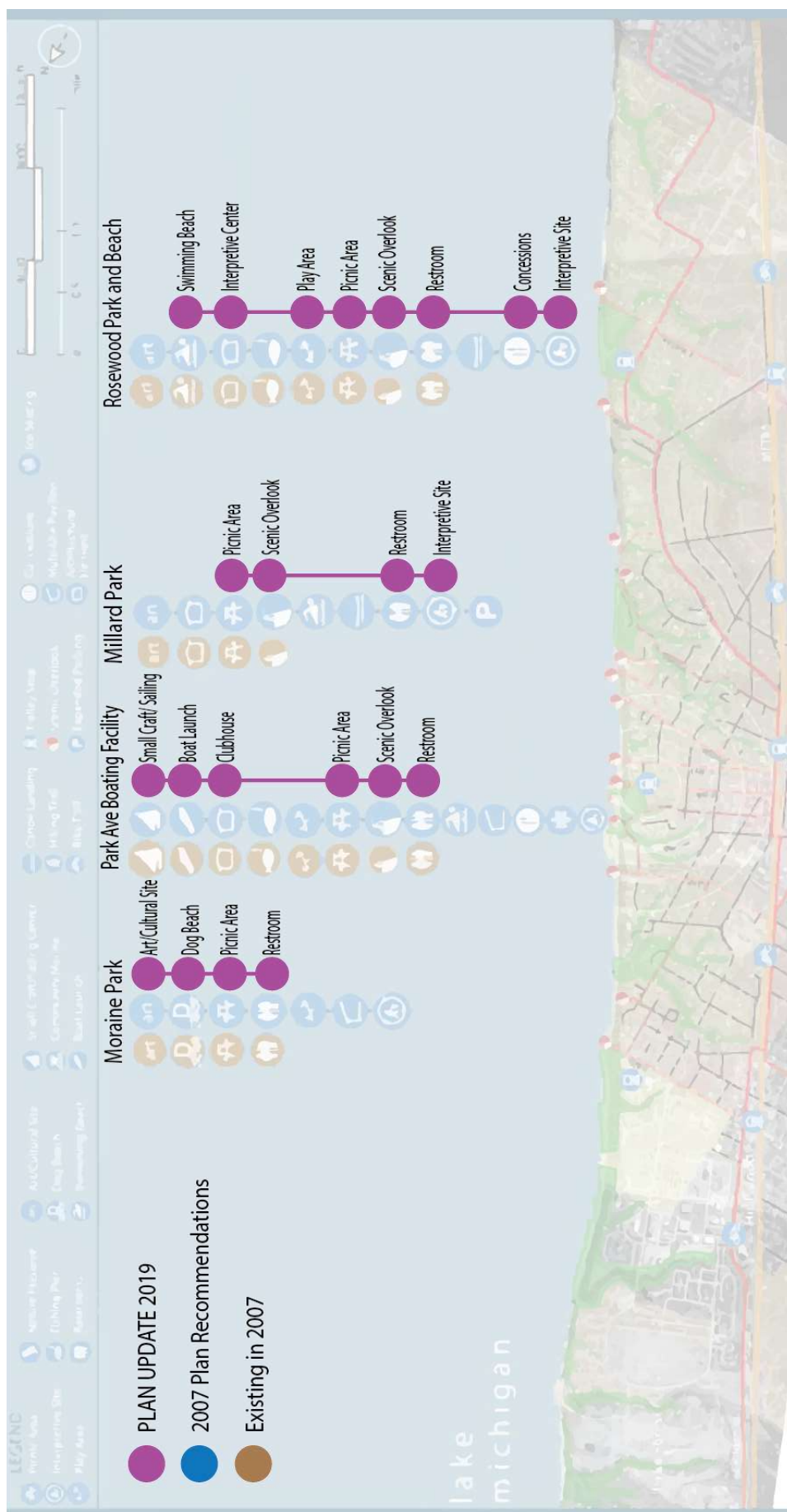


Figure 6. Plan progression. Existing conditions in 2007 , recommended improvements in 2007 , and 2019 recommendations.

DISTRICTWIDE

Objectives/Strategies

1. Improve communication about lakefront parks, including location, access, and activities at each lakefront property

- a. Apply the Park District signage standards to all the lakefront properties, with the exception of Rosewood Beach and Park, which has its own unique standard.*
- b. Install wayfinding signage at lakefront properties.*
- c. Implement the approved informational signage standard for temporary signage at lakefront properties. Temporary signage will interpret the changes of the dynamic lakefront for visitors to understand current lake status.*
- d. Remove signs with dated information upon installation of new park signs.*
- e. Update website pages for each lakefront property with information on access and activities.*

2. Maintain existing lakefront infrastructure

- a. Develop a plan to strategically maintain Park District beaches sensitive to dynamic lake activity.*
 - ◆ The Park District was awarded a Illinois Coastal Management Grant in 2020 to develop a Beach Management Plan. The Beach Management Plan will outline implementable strategic recommendations for beach maintenance and management in a dynamic and variable environment effected by climate change. The planning process is underway.
 - ◆ In response to increasing lake levels and sand movement, the Park District implemented sand nourishment efforts at Rosewood Beach. Staff and the Park Board continue to assess future needs and protection options to protect Rosewood Beach.

3. Enhance lake views for visitor enjoyment at Park District managed beaches and bluff parks

- b. Continue maintaining viewshed windows from the upper parks*
 - ⇒ Strategically identify locations for future bench placement to utilize existing viewshed windows

4. Encourage and facilitate access to lakefront properties

- a. Implement welcome signage at the entrances of the District's lakefront properties.*
- b. See following pages for recommended park specific access improvements.*

MORaine PARK AND BEACH

A neighborhood friendly park that is focused on passive recreation.



Inventory:

- Off-leash dog area
- Sculpture garden
- Walking paths
- Natural areas
- Picnic Area
- Public restroom
- Parking
- Non-swimming beach access

Objectives/Strategies

1. Maintain and improve access and support amenities for both people and dogs

b. Facilitate access to the lakefront to non-dog owners

⇒ Clear a path West of the fence bordering the dog beach and create pedestrian access to the south beach for park visitors.

b. Repair the ravine beach access path

c. Improve access to and amenities at the Dog Beach

⇒ Install a cyclone fence at the entryway of the dog beach

⇒ Include the dog beach as an opportunity for bench donations

2. Restore the natural character of the ravine outlet at the Lake

a. Implement AECOM plan. Incorporate into the capital plan.

◆ In 2020, the US Army Corps of Engineers determined this effort to not be feasible.

The following recommendations from the 2007 plan received less than 15% support from 2018 survey respondents that report visiting Moraine Park, and are not determined priorities for the Park District.

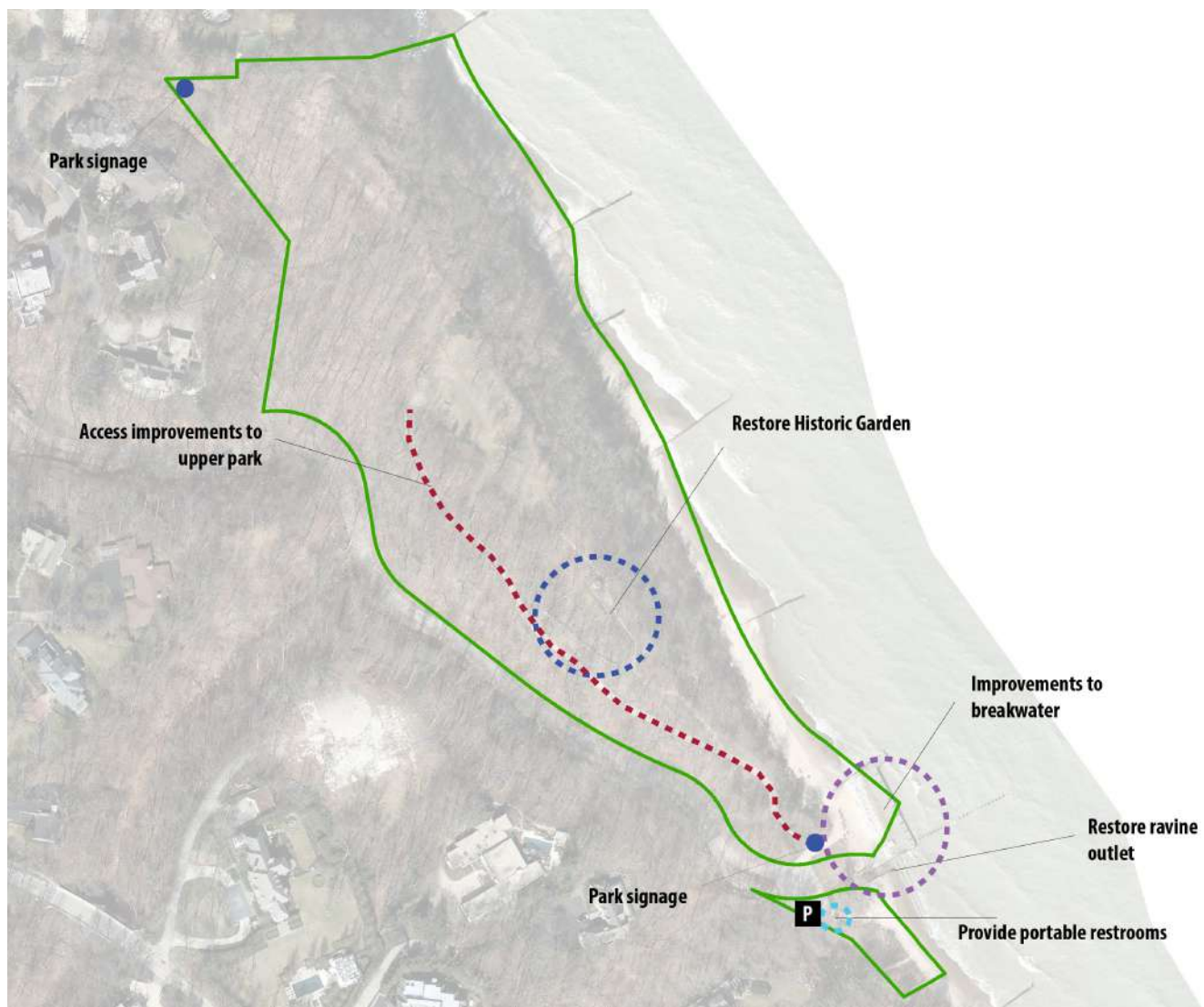
3. Restore historic gardens and trails
4. Addition of an interactive kids' sculptural garden
5. Addition of a multi-use pavilion

Capital Planning

Capital Improvements	Est. Cost	Year Funded in Capital Plan	Tier
Arrange the beach to maximize use by humans and dogs and provide support amenities	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 5: New
Repair the ravine beach access path	\$500K	2021/2022	Tier 1: Safety/Legal
Restore the natural character of the ravine outlet at the Lake	\$1.1M	Determined to not be feasible	Tier 4: Improvement
Ravine Restoration	\$375K	2023	Tier 4: Improvement
Restore historic gardens and trails	\$200K	Unfunded	Tier 5: New
Addition of an interactive kids' sculptural	\$500K	Unfunded	Tier 5: New
Addition of a multi-use pavilion	\$200K	Unfunded	Tier 5: New

MILLARD PARK AND BEACH

A neighborhood-friendly park that provides areas for contemplation and respite.



Inventory:

- Picnic area
- Natural Areas
- Parking
- Walking path
- Non-swimming beach access

Objectives/Strategies

1. Improve break water

a. Assess the condition of the break water structure and develop solutions

⇒ Expand on the existing plan completed by AECOM

2. Restore Ravine Outlet

a. Identify funding and partnerships

3. Restore Historic Garden

a. Identify funding and partnerships

4. Access Improvements to upper park

a. Enhance pedestrian access to upper park

⇒ Repave and convert the maintenance road to a shared-use path connecting the lower and upper parks.

⇒ Monitor and maintain the stairway honoring the historic aesthetic.

⇒ Collaborate with City to install park wayfinding signs along right of way of Forest Ave, Hazel Ave, and Ravine Dr.

b. Enhance pedestrian access to and through the park

⇒ Replace the fence at the Sycamore entrance with bollards

⇒ Install park signage to the Sycamore Entrance of the park

c. Offer restroom amenities to facilitate day-long use of the lakefront

⇒ Arrange for portable restrooms at Millard Park

The following recommendation from the 2007 plan received less than 15% support from 2018 survey respondents that report visiting Millard Park and Beach, and is not determined a priority for the Park District.

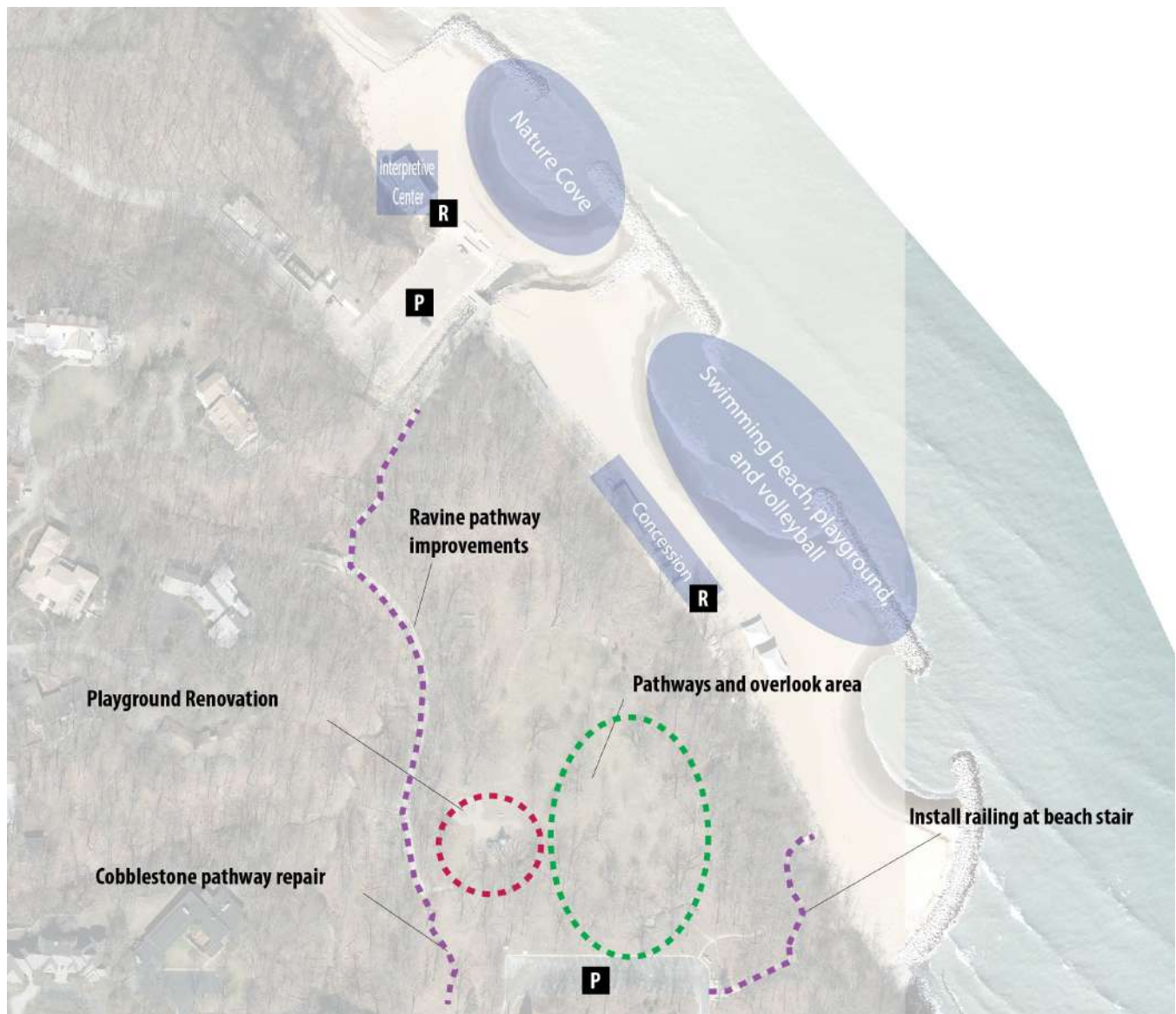
5. Addition of a picnic shelter

Capital Planning

Capital Improvements	Est. Cost	Year Funded in Capital Plan	Tier
Improvements to the break water	\$800K	Unfunded	Tier 4: Improvement
Restore Ravine Outlet	\$500K	Unfunded	Tier 4: Improvement
Restoration of the Historic Garden	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 4: Improvement
Access Improvements to Upper park	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 4: Improvement
Picnic Shelter	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 5: New

ROSEWOOD PARK AND BEACH

A community-focused active recreation park with a swimming beach.



Inventory:

- Playground
- Picnic area
- Natural areas
- Public restrooms
- Parking
- Swimming beach
- Concessions

Objectives/Strategies

1. Ravine walkway improvements

a. Improve access for pedestrians traveling to the beach

⇒ Install a railing along the beach stair.

◆ In 2019 the bluff staircase was rebuilt and a railing was installed.

⇒ Explore improvements to the ravine path to ease the slope

⇒ Repair cobblestone pathways throughout the upper park connecting to the ravine path

⇒ Post shuttle information on the website and on park signage

2. Playground Renovation at Upper Rosewood

a. Replace the playground at Upper Rosewood following the repair and replace schedule

3. Create pathways and a designated overlook area at upper Rosewood

a. Develop a plan and identify funding

⇒ Review the Ratio Architects plan for pathways at upper park

The following recommendation from the 2007 plan received less than 15% support from 2018 survey respondents that report visiting Rosewood Park and Beach, and is not determined a priority for the Park District.

4. Restoration of the Historic Jens Jensen Landscape

Capital Planning

Capital Improvements	Est. Cost	Year Funded in Capital Plan	Tier
Ravine walkway improvements	\$800K	2021	Tier 2: Critical Repair and Replace
Playground Renovation at Upper Rosewood	\$300K	2024	Tier 3: Scheduled Repair and Replace
Addition of pathways and overlook area at upper Rosewood	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 5: New
Restoration of the Historic Jens Jensen Landscape	TBD	Unfunded	Tier 4: Improvement

ROSEWOOD PARK AND BEACH



Rosewood Beach Sand:

Many residents have expressed discontent with the sand at Rosewood. When Rosewood Beach was renovated in 2015, over 65,000 cubic yards of sand was added to broaden the severely eroded beach area. The State of Illinois controls sand management along the shores of Illinois and issues beach nourishment permits. These permits are restrictive as to the type and source of sand that can be added to the shoreline. A large enough source of Lake Michigan dredged sand was not available for the Rosewood beach project. The alternative acceptable source used was sand brought to the site from a local quarry.

The parent source of the quarry sand is glacial deposits and its composition is mixed minerals. Natural beach sand in Illinois is very much the same and is comprised of deposited minerals from the same glacial events. The difference is the quarry sand has not been lake or rain washed over many years like natural beach sand. Over time, the lake and rain will filter out the fine dust in the new sand at Rosewood Beach.

Dogs at Rosewood Beach:

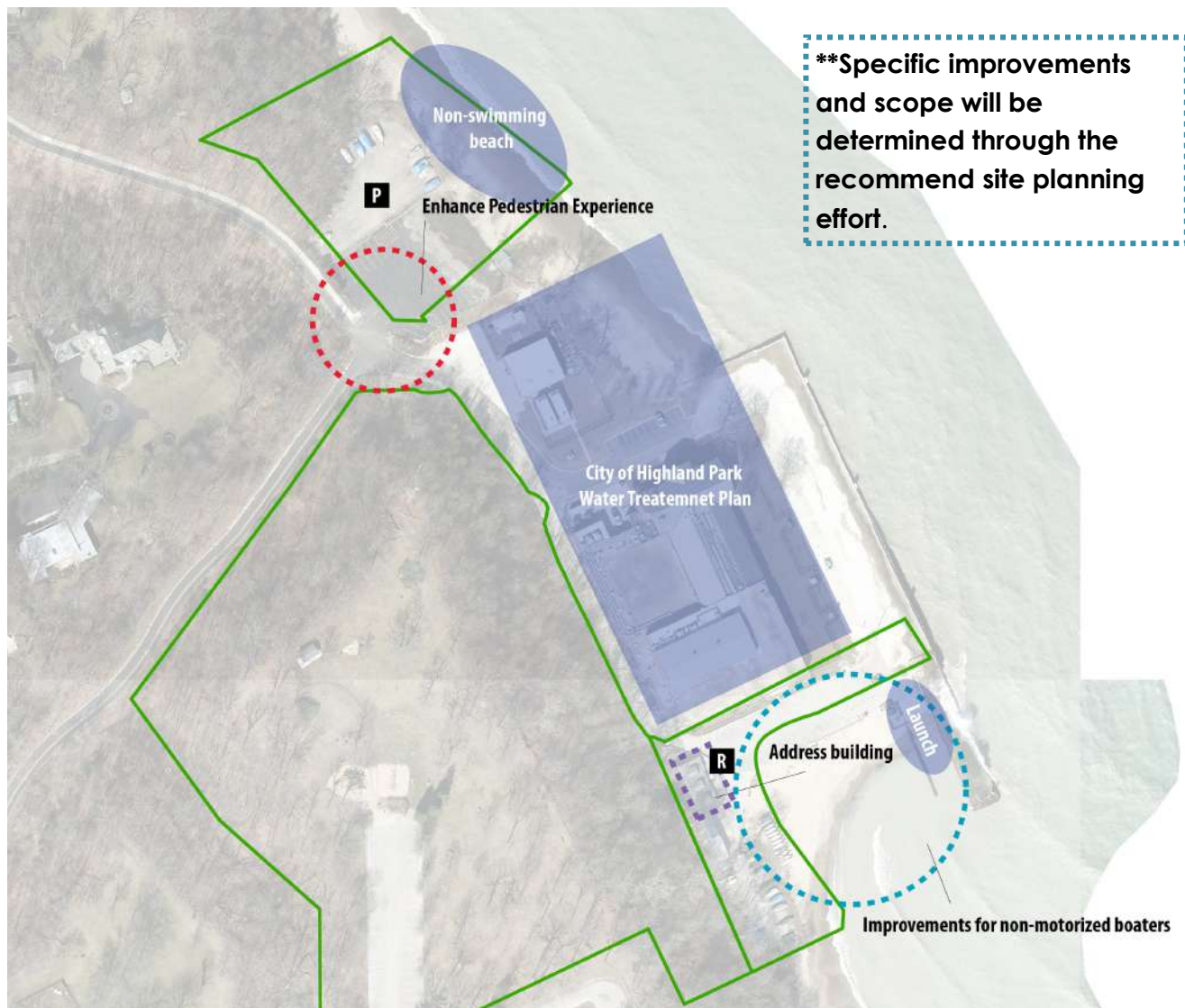
Through the community engagement process, the District heard from many of you regarding the desire to allow dogs at Rosewood Beach. While the District understands, the board walks at Rosewood Beach are high traffic areas and the presence of dogs creates a safety concern. Dogs are permitted at the upper Rosewood Park and along the Ravine Path.

Pedestrian access along vehicular path:

Many residents have expressed interest in a pedestrian path down the vehicular access road. The Park District sought the guidance of professionals to determine whether a pedestrian path was feasible along the vehicular drive down to Rosewood. It was determined that a safe pedestrian path was not possible. Pedestrian access to Rosewood Beach begins at Roger Williams at Rosewood upper Park.

PARK AVENUE BOATING FACILITY

Downtown lakefront park that balances boating activities while preserving a natural look.



Inventory:

- Boating Facility
- Boat launch
- Picnic area
- Fishing
- Natural Areas
- Public restroom
- Parking
- Non-swimming beach access

Objectives/Strategies

1. Develop a site plan to explore and determine site priorities and direction

- a. *This plan to address the top improvements from the 2018 survey including: Improvements to the yacht club building, Improvements for non-motorized boaters including boat storage, and Enhancements to the pedestrian experience including access to and through the park.*

2. Develop a Park Ave Working Group

- ♦ A Park Ave Working Group was established in 2019 with the following goal: seek feasible options that provide long term access to boating activities at the Park Ave Boating facility.

The following improvements received less than 15% support from 2018 survey respondents that report visiting Park Avenue Boating Facility, and are not determined priorities for the Park District.

- 3. Improvements for power boating
- 4. Improvements for fishing
- 5. Boat storage improvements

Capital Planning

Capital Improvements	Est. Cost	Year Funded in Capital Plan	Tier
Site Planning	\$15K	2021	Tier 4: Improvements

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The Park District of Highland Park will work collaboratively with partners to implement the objectives and strategies identified in the Lakefront Master Plan Update. This plan is a living document and is subject to change based on available funding and changing priorities. The plan will be revisited annually to evaluate objectives, strategy feasibility and effectiveness in achieving Lakefront-wide priorities.

CONCLUSION

Our Lakefront is a defining characteristic of the Highland Park community. The input gathered for the plan update is invaluable to planning for an improved lakefront. The objectives and strategies identified in this planning effort will guide future Park District initiatives, maintenance, and capital planning.