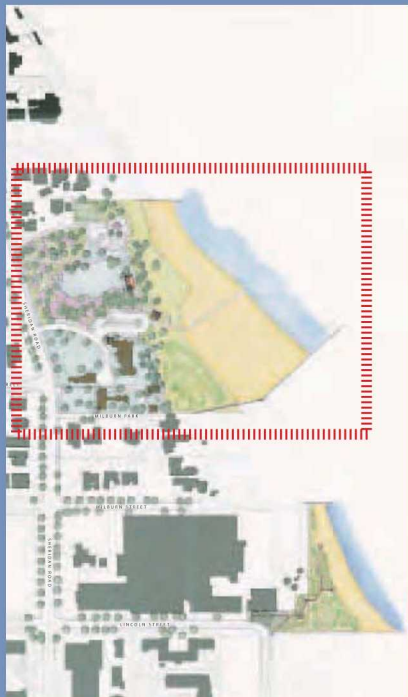


LIGHTHOUSE BEACH

Existing Conditions

Lighthouse Beach is the northernmost of Evanston's lakefront parks, and is actually made up of four individual parks managed by two separate agencies. From north to south the parks are as follows: Lawson Park is managed by the City of Evanston where special amenities include community gardens and a children's playground. Northeast Park is managed by the Lighthouse Park District. Lighthouse Landing is managed by the City of Evanston and special amenities include the Historic Lakefront and the Evanston Arts Center. Grosse Point Lighthouse is managed by the Lighthouse Park District. Both the Lighthouse and the Art Center are Evanston landmarks.



Park users experience these various parks as one place with four distinct areas of use. The southwest corner of the site houses all of the significant structures, including the Evanston Arts Center and Lighthouse. To the northwest, separated from the structures by the parking area, is an upland green space used mainly for traditional park activities such as picnicking, community gardening, and flexible play. Over time, settlement has occurred in the landscape, creating low spots in the lawn which collect water and are easily damaged by activity. To the east of this area is a transitional space where the grade drops approximately ten feet to the level of the beach. This lower area is separated from the beach by large boulders intended to provide shoreline protection, which results in a narrow corridor that is less visible from the rest of the park. This area is characterized by graffiti, trash, and other signs of undesirable park activity not found in any other location along Evanston's lakefront. The fourth area is the beach itself, which is well used and includes a significant area of dune grass restoration at the southern end. An ADA compliant accessible route from the parking area to the beach does not currently exist but is being planned.

The Evanston Arts Center (1) and associated carriage house are sited on the grounds of the historic Clarke Estate which were originally designed by the noted landscape architect Jens Jensen. While not all of the historic garden elements remain, the council ring – a key element in many of Jensen's designs – is still in use, and there is local support for the restoration of the grotto and lily pond. The Evanston Arts Center's building itself is a significant structure with considerable maintenance requirements.

Lighthouse Park (2) is home to the Grosse Point Lighthouse and its associated structures, the Fog House and Signal House. All of these structures are on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Lighthouse represents the iconic lakefront image of Evanston. The Fog and Signal houses are used for arts and education programs. The entire site is also within the Northeast Evanston National Register Historic District. The Grosse Pointe Light Station site is a National Historic Landmark

Current project activity within the park include Noah's Playground for Everyone (3), which is a new playground designed to be fully accessible for all children. Associated with the new playground is a modest expansion of the parking area, completed in fall 2007, with a number of additional accessible parking spaces. Another ongoing project will create an ADA compliant accessible route (4) from the upland play and parking area to the existing restroom building and beach.

Master Plan Elements

The master plan for Lighthouse Beach proposes improvements focused primarily on making the existing park space more usable and easier to maintain, while expanding habitat plantings, improving visibility, and enhancing security.

Evanston Arts Center and Lighthouse

The historic nature of these facilities should be maintained and celebrated, and accordingly, the key elements of the master plan for this area focus on restoration of the historic structures and the Jens Jensen landscape. Two new activities are proposed, which are intended to increase awareness of the facilities and to provide modest revenue to support this restoration.

Many key elements of the original Jens Jensen landscape remain largely intact, although the grotto and lily pond are in need of significant repair. The original council ring remains and is still in use today, although few people are aware of the significance of this feature. The woody landscape plantings are healthy, and provide a balance of habitat and usable space. The cultural value of this landscape should be recognized, and future work should be undertaken with the intent to maintain Jensen's original vision.

The plan proposes to make use of the beautiful grounds of both the Arts Center and Lighthouse for low impact public functions such as weddings and small receptions, and an improved event lawn (5) is proposed for the space east of the Lighthouse, between the Fog and Signal houses. This space should be available for reservation by the public for a fee, with the proceeds going to support the restoration of the buildings and grounds.

The plan also proposes to make use of the existing Carriage House (6) to provide space for an appropriately themed café and/or gift shop, which could generate more visits to the Arts Center, provide higher quality food than typical park concessions, and create a venue for local artists, musicians, and writers to share their work. While this would also generate additional revenue in support of restoration and maintenance, the plan recognizes that these funding sources alone will not be enough to cover all that is needed. Additional funding in the way of grants and private donations should be pursued to enable these facilities to make better use of the public funds already allocated.

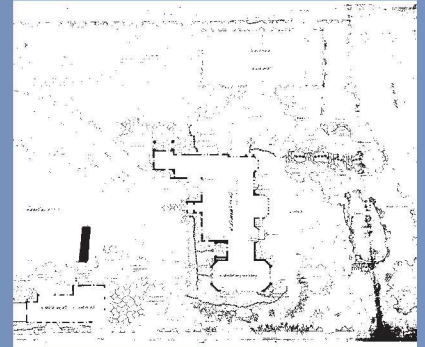
Parking / Access

The plan does not include expanding the existing parking area (7) beyond the work already underway in association with the construction of Noah's Playground for Everyone. While it is recognized that the amount of parking currently provided is not adequate for busy days, there was no public support for expanding the parking. The plan calls for additional bicycle racks and encourages walking by providing improved pathway connections to the existing neighborhood walkways.

Special parking for weddings or receptions at the proposed event lawn would not be provided on site. The existing vehicular drop off makes valet parking, or the use of a parking shuttle from off site parking areas, a viable option for increasing the use of the park without impacting the character of the park.

Upland Green Space

The upland green space (8), north of the Arts Center and west of the beach





Lighthouse Beach







provides flexible open space and play opportunities for picnicking and informal games. With the addition of Noah's Playground for Everyone, this area will see more use. The master plan proposes to make this area more usable and easier to maintain by restoring the grading and turf to provide positive drainage throughout.

New paved pedestrian paths connect existing walkways to the heart of the park, Noah's Playground for Everyone, and the new accessible route to the restroom building now being designed. Also proposed for this area is to replace the aging picnic shelter with a newer structure (9) that is designed to compliment the architectural character of the Evanston Arts Center building. This structure would be located closer to Noah's Playground for Everyone and centered on the renovated flexible play lawn while also taking advantage of views to Lake Michigan.

The existing community gardens (10) would remain, and extensive new plantings around the north and western edges of the park would be designed to compliment the original Jens Jensen landscape plan for the Clarke Estate, while providing habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife. This would include Hawthorne and Crabapple scattered along the entry drive, along with Chokecherry, Viburnum, native Plum, and Sumac throughout the edge plantings.

For the transitional area located between the beach and the sloped edge of the upland green space (11), the master plan proposes to open up views to the lake, relocate or remove the stone shoreline protection, and extend the dune habitat along the entire length. Much of the existing plant material is dense and overgrown, preventing views of the lake from much of the upland area. This area should be surveyed to identify healthy native trees and plants, and a planting design to compliment those species and transition to dune ecology should replace the weedy overgrowth. Selective pruning of the trees and removal of this overgrowth will open up views from the upland area, and provide improved habitat. This also means that police will be able to survey the beach from the upland area, providing a safer environment and reducing the amount of graffiti and trash.

The existing shoreline protection boulders should be reviewed by a qualified coastal engineer to determine if they could be removed altogether from the site. If this review finds that the boulders are necessary to protect the embankment, the plan proposes that the boulders be moved west to the toe of the slope if possible. This would eliminate the hidden lower space, as well as the undesirable activity that goes along with it, while expanding the beach and dune environment.

Lighthouse Beach

The primary need at Lighthouse Beach is improvements to the existing restroom facility (12) and the provision of an ADA compliant route from the parking area to the water's edge. The existing restroom building is a small concrete building tucked into the slope between the edge of the beach and the parking area. It is in need of improvement and expansion, and is aesthetically out of character with the surrounding historic structures. Its location, however, is ideal for controlling access to the beach, and also allows for access to the roof of the structure as an overlook of Lake Michigan. The master plan proposes a renovation of this facility, and an additional structure on the south side of the existing ramp to provide equipment storage for the lifeguard staff, space for the staff to control entry and collect fees, and provision of minor concessions to eliminate

the need for the concession truck used now.

The new accessible route from the upland area to the restroom facility and beach currently under design will meet the proposed accessible decking that will provide access to the water's edge. A water trail access point (13) is proposed north of the swimming area, and new fencing is proposed at the northern edge of the beach to clearly delineate the end of the public beach. The unused existing storage structure buried beneath the dunes should either be permanently sealed or removed altogether to improve safety on the beach.

