

# *A 21st Century Vision for Waukegan's Downtown and Lakefront*

Lakefront - Downtown Master Plan  
Summary Report  
July 2003





*“We will harness the energy and commitment that has been demonstrated in the public hearings over the past several months. We will capitalize on the broad and overwhelming cooperation that has been displayed. We will tap into the vast reservoir of talent, creativity and intelligence that has been exhibited. In doing so, we will make our Lakefront the polished gem that we all know it can be. And that polished gem will create more jobs, generate more revenue, and be the source of more civic pride than any (industrial development) would have allowed for.”*

**- in loving memory of the late Mayor Dan Drew**  
whose commitment to polishing that gem gave Waukegan the courage to embrace its future

## **A 21ST CENTURY VISION FOR WAUKEGAN'S DOWNTOWN AND LAKEFRONT**

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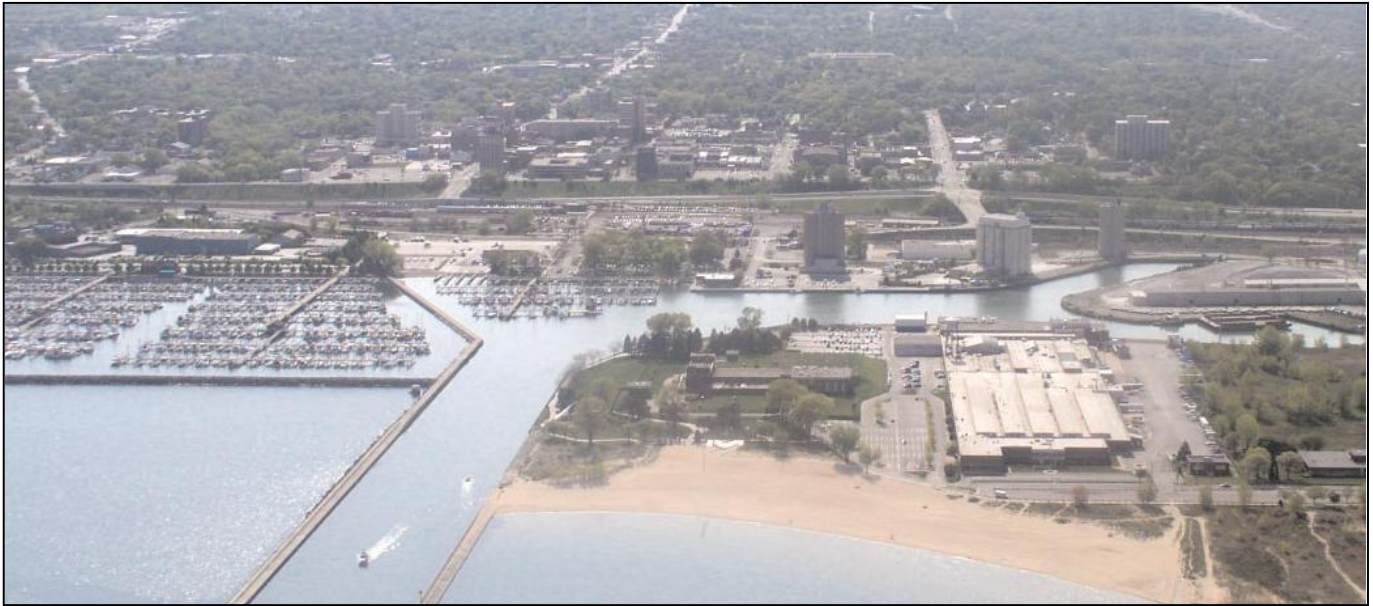
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INTRODUCTION

## Introduction



The Waukegan Harbor and Downtown today

Waukegan is located 40 miles north of Chicago. It has a prized lakefront location on Lake Michigan, and an expanding city population in a growing Lake County that is itself part of the dynamic northern Illinois region. With commuter rail service through the North Shore communities to Chicago, an active marina and harbor, strong neighborhoods and the Illinois Beach State Park to the north, Waukegan has many of the elements necessary for success.

Once the source of thousands of jobs, Waukegan's lakefront is marked by its 19th and 20th century industrial legacy. Some of the land was environmentally compromised by a manufacturing past. A small number of businesses remain, offering only a fraction of the number of previous jobs. Material storage operations are clustered around the harbor. The framework of rail and road infrastructure and land parcels also reflects this industrial past. Much of the lakefront is also separated from the rest of Waukegan by a bluff and the Amstutz Expressway, a one-and-one-half mile highway that lies at its base.

Waukegan's Downtown has declined as local industrial jobs have been lost. The strong base of Downtown county government and court-related jobs has not been sufficient to support a once booming retail district. Office users have left and downtown housing and hotels have fallen into disrepair. An active daytime government center is now surrounded by surface parking lots, a struggling retail sector and under-utilized buildings.

In February of 2002, the City of Waukegan and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) brought some of the nation's leading development experts to Waukegan for a one week investigation of options for the future of the Lakefront. In addition to brainstorming ideas, this panel also recommended the creation of a full Master Plan to create a vision and action agenda for implementation. Following a national search for a planning team in the fall of 2002, the City of Waukegan embarked on the creation of this Master Plan in January 2003.

While the Lakefront and Downtown present challenges, the opportunities are greater. Waukegan's Downtown can move quickly to build on national trends that support central city living, working, learning, shopping and entertainment. Waukegan's Lakefront can become an international model for ecological restoration and sensitive redevelopment. Each can build on the economic strength of the region and the commitment to create a new future shown by Waukegan's citizens and leaders both for themselves and for others.

Transformation of Waukegan's Lakefront and Downtown will be driven by the projected development of up to 4,000 new homes and a combined 1,000,000 square feet of new retail, hospitality, entertainment, education and cultural activity. This transformation will provide new options and opportunities for today's residents of Waukegan and for the residents of the future.

The Waukegan Lakefront and Downtown Master Plan represents the culmination of extensive work by City of Waukegan staff and elected officials and the New Harbor City Renaissance Commission. The latter body served as the steering committee for the Master Plan. Waukegan's citizens also helped prepare the Master Plan through a series of town hall meetings held in March, April and May of 2003.

This report highlights the major findings, ideas and recommendations of the Master Plan. It is intended to be used by City departments, other public agencies, the development community and the residents of Waukegan as a vision for the future and a guide to action. The summary is organized to address Waukegan's place in the region and the city of Waukegan first. Access, open space and development recommendations are offered. The report then addresses key places in turn: the Downtown, the South Lakefront, the Harborfront, the North Harbor and the North Lakefront.

## A Vision for the Lakefront and Downtown



*Downtown Waukegan will become a vibrant city center, a place for jobs, shopping, entertainment and urban living. The South Lakefront and the Harbor will become home to new waterfront neighborhoods. The North Lakefront will become an international model for environmental and ecological restoration. The transformation of Waukegan's Lakefront and Downtown will signal a broader transformation of the city and its place in the region.*

### **The First Step: Downtown**

Waukegan will be known for its revived Downtown: a destination for jobs, entertainment, unique retail and popular lunch and dining spots. It will be a regional center where people work, live and play. New housing and cultural and educational institutions will create a vibrant scene at all times of the day. Beautifully landscaped streets and city parks will draw people from homes and offices. Genesee Street, Sheridan Road, Clayton Street and others will be active streets. Downtown will also extend to the Harborfront with improved pedestrian and open space connections. The Waukegan River and its ravines will be restored. A variety of trails will be incorporated along the ravines. The mouth of the Waukegan River will be widened, where a significant new city park will be established.

### **A Near Term Opportunity: The South Lakefront**

A new neighborhood will be established along the South Lakefront, reflecting the best of traditional neighborhood family housing. A new lakefront park will extend along the entire shoreline of this new neighborhood.

### **New Neighborhoods: The Harborfront and the North Harbor**

A new district will grow at the Harborfront between a new Intermodal Transit Center and a regionally renowned marina. It will offer housing, boat service and construction, and marina-related retail. This new neighborhood will be organized around a central open space connecting Downtown to the lake edge.

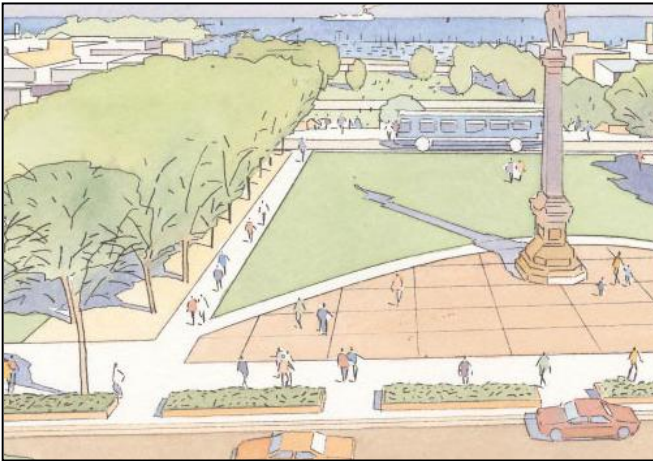
Waukegan Harbor will be a Great Lakes center for sailing and boating. Visitors to the marina will shop at the Harborfront and Downtown. A Harborfront Park will be Waukegan's new civic garden. Festivals, special events, family sports and entertainment will bring people to Waukegan from around the region.

The North Harbor will take advantage of its waterfront location and lake and harbor views to become a primarily residential mixed-use neighborhood. Product development, boat service and launch facilities and civic and education activities will also be part of this new neighborhood.

### **A Legacy Project: Restoring the North Lakefront**

The North Lakefront will emphasize open space, ecological restoration, wetlands, habitats and public access. It will be a place for play, relaxation and reflection. Public access to the water's edge will be maximized. Waukegan's North Lakefront will be known for its far reaching efforts to restore its lakefront environment. Clean land, air and water will provide a place for native vegetation, wildlife, recreation and education to come together. Natural features will be restored. New environmental facilities that celebrate this unique place and an ecological approach to industry and utilities will bring regional, national and international visitors.

# Guiding Principles



Waukegan's new Town Square will connect downtown to Lake Michigan



The plan will provide new ways to experience the Lakefront

The plan for Waukegan's Lakefront and Downtown is built upon the following principles:

## 1. Emphasize Mixed-Use Transit-Oriented Development in the Downtown and the Harborfront

Downtown will become a compact, walkable center for jobs, living, learning, entertainment, shopping and dining. Mixed-use districts will be established around Waukegan's Harbor.

## 2. Create Strong Pedestrian, Transit and Roadway connections between Downtown and the Lakefront

Downtown and the Lakefront will be connected by strong, clear pedestrian, bicycle, roadway and transit connections

## 3. Protect, Restore and Enhance Waukegan's Ravine and Park System

Waukegan's bluffs, rivers and ravines comprise an irreplaceable open space asset, and will be protected and enhanced

## 4. Restore the Lakefront into a Regional Environmental and Recreational Asset

Waukegan will be known for the restoration of its lakefront environment, where clean land, air and water will enhance ecological restoration and wildlife protection and complement recreational opportunities

## 5. Create a Transportation Framework that Allows Clear Access to the Lakefront

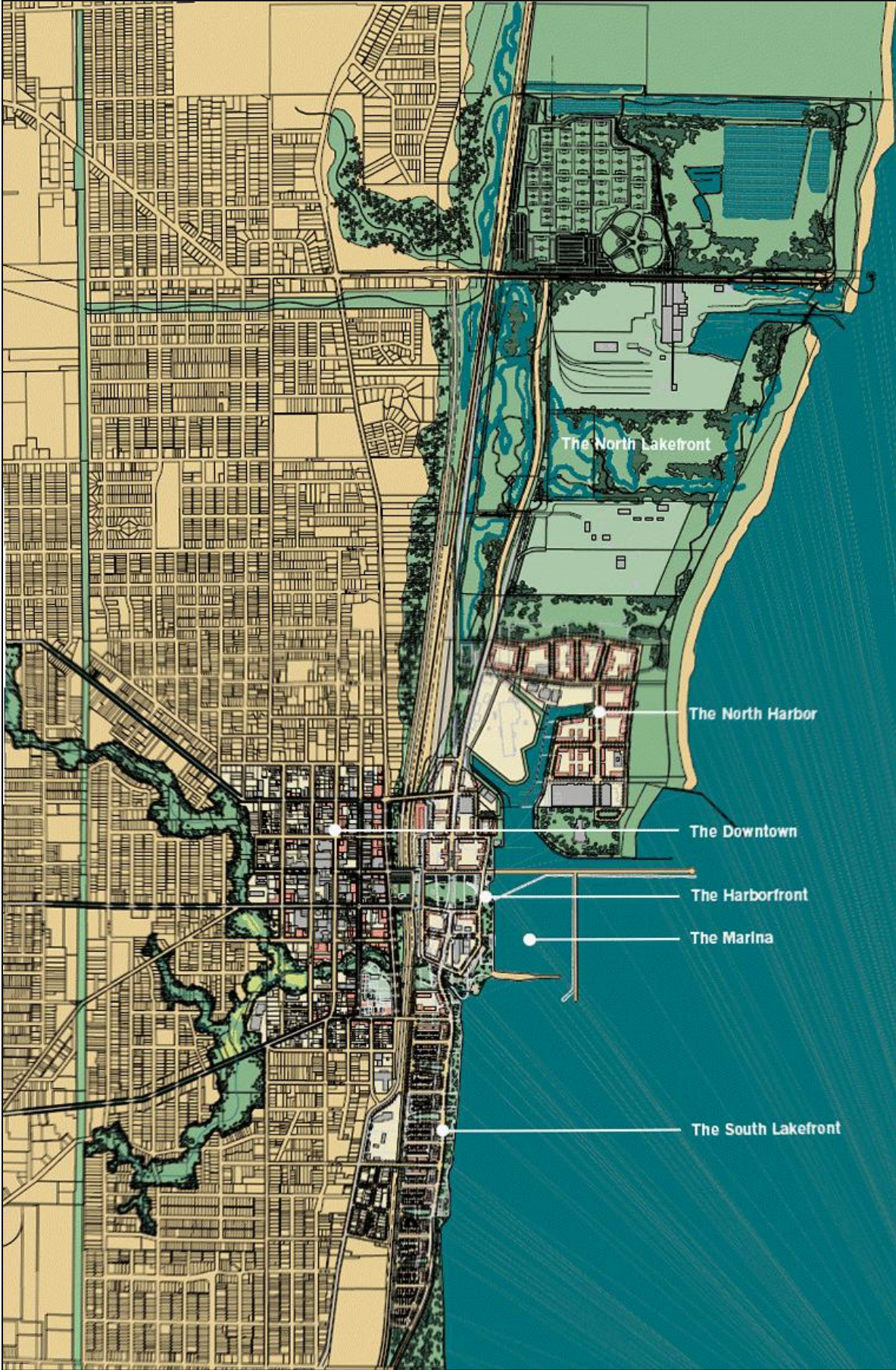
Modifications to the existing road and infrastructure should clarify access to new development, strengthen routes to the Lakefront, establish streets as civic places, and consolidate underutilized land

## 6. Encourage Harbor-Related Uses that Complement an Environmentally-Based Lakefront

The Harbor will evolve into a regional center for sailing and boating. The adaptation of remaining industry and utilities to a new vision for the Lakefront will establish Waukegan as an international model for sustainability



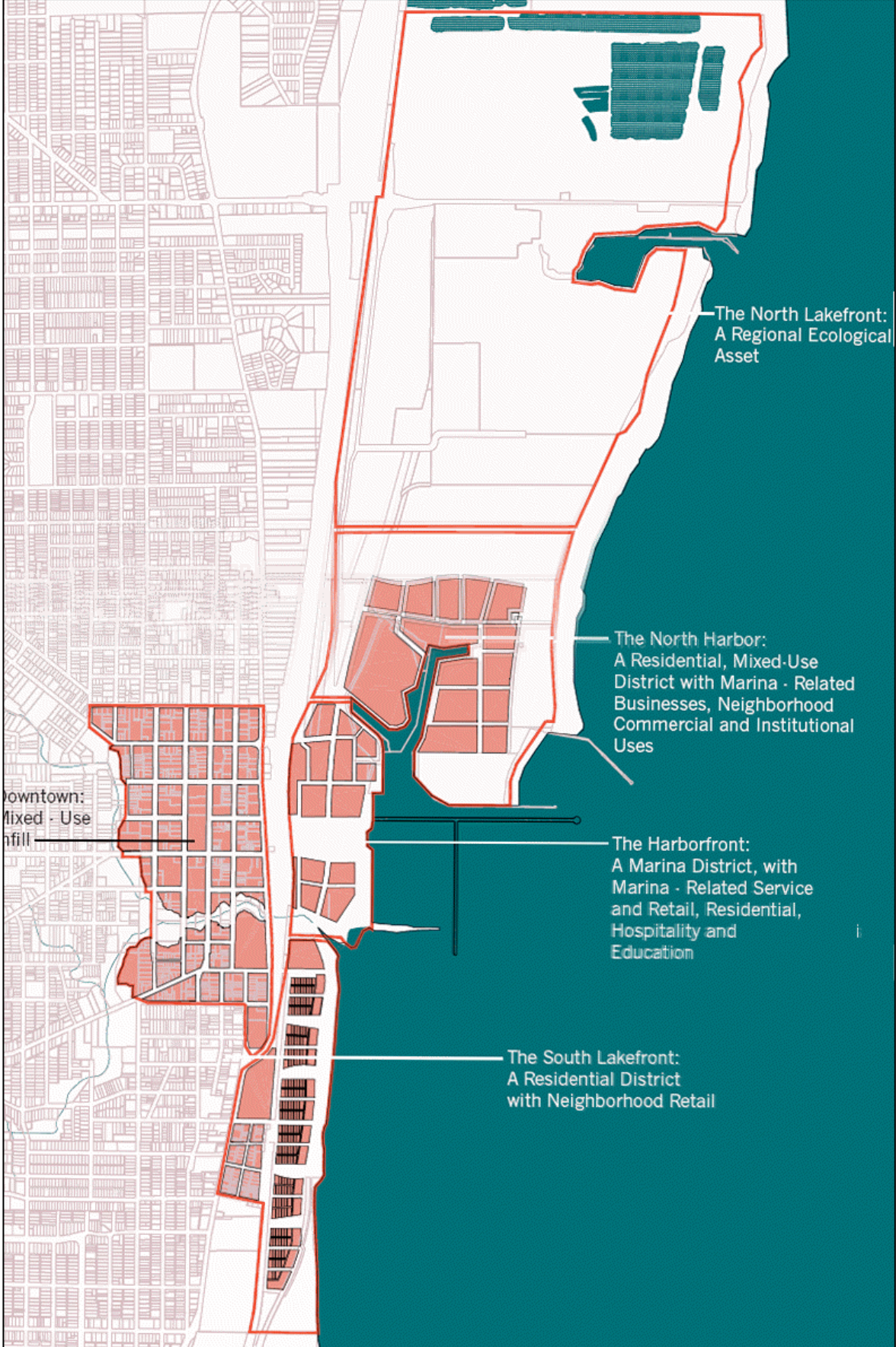
# The Master Plan



# Open Space Framework



# Development Framework







CREATING A GREAT CITY

# Enhancing Waukegan's Role as a Regional Center

## WAUKEGAN'S PLACE IN THE REGION

As the Master Plan is implemented, Waukegan will re-establish its position as a significant regional city. The master plan builds upon Waukegan's three greatest regional assets: its marina, its lakefront ecosystem, and its location on a regional rail line. The marina and harbor represent the only deep-water port between Milwaukee and Chicago, and will play a role in the future of recreational and commercial maritime uses on Lake Michigan.

The lakefront ecosystem is an example of a classic Lake Michigan dune system, and is an amenity on par with Illinois Beach State Park to the north. The enhancement and unification of Waukegan's lakefront, together with links to the Park, will create an unparalleled ecological resource for the State of Illinois.

Waukegan's position within the Metra commuter rail network will also be enhanced by the Master Plan. As the proposed Metra circumferential line is completed and service to Waukegan is enhanced, the city's ability to serve an expanded transit customer base will be strengthened by a new intermodal transit center.



Current and future Metra rail

## REGIONAL ACCESS

### Distinguish Waukegan as a city well-served by rail transit

- Metra commuter rail provides access from Waukegan to the North Shore, Kenosha and Downtown Chicago
- Future Metra expansion positions Waukegan as a key intermodal transit center at the intersection of the proposed regional circumferential Metra Line

### Strengthen Waukegan's connections to the regional roadway network

- Enhance links to interstate and state highway systems
- Create distinct gateways to Waukegan from interstate and state highway systems



Highway access to Waukegan

## The Region

### REGIONAL OPEN SPACE

#### Promote Waukegan's Lakefront as a regional ecological asset

- The Waukegan Lakefront adjoins one of the state's finest ecosystems: Illinois Beach State Park
- The Waukegan River is a hidden regional treasure that once provided a safe port for passing vessels

#### Create recreational connections to other open space systems within Lake County

- Create connections to Illinois Beach State Park, forest preserves and city parks



Waukegan offers access to a rich collection of open spaces

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### Strengthen Waukegan's role as the urban destination in Lake County

- Build on Waukegan's growing population and diversity
- Build on the market strength of the North Shore and Lake County
- Transform the perception of Waukegan into that of a city offering a high quality of life

#### Distinguish Waukegan as a regional tourist destination

- Waukegan is midway between Chicago and Milwaukee, and offers rich cultural opportunities
- Leverage Waukegan's adjacency to Illinois Beach State Park and Great Lakes Naval Training Center, each of which bring a significant number of visitors to the area

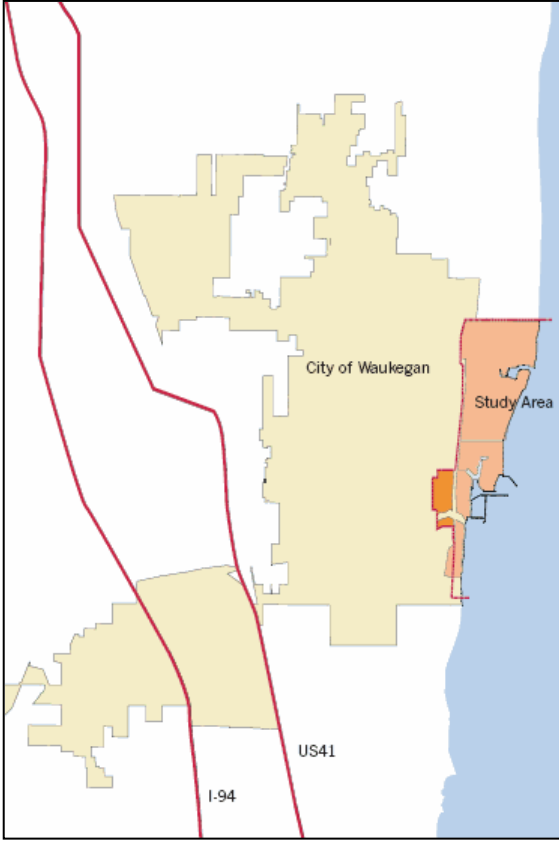
#### Promote Waukegan's maritime assets

- Waukegan is the only deep-water harbor between Lake Calumet on Chicago's South Side and Milwaukee
- The current Harbor is a major regional recreational amenity



Waukegan is part of the dynamic Northern Illinois region

# Creating a Great Civic Presence: The City of Waukegan

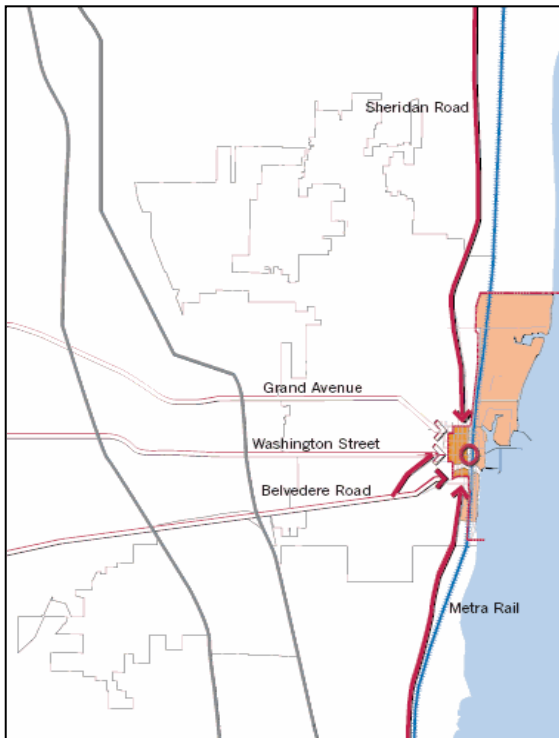


Waukegan's Downtown has a rich history as the center of a vital and diverse city. The Master Plan enables the Lakefront and Downtown to reassert itself as the symbolic, functional, and spiritual center of Waukegan. In an age of faceless strip-malls and an ill-defined public realm, strengthening the Lakefront and Downtown as the center of Waukegan is of primary importance.

The Master Plan will achieve this by creating gateway boulevards into the Downtown at Grand, Washington, and Belvidere streets. Further, it proposes to strengthen Sheridan Road particularly through the downtown as a key north/south street.

The plan also proposes the gradual relocation of industrial uses from the lakefront to existing appropriate districts in other parts of the City west of Downtown. This allows the lakefront to continue to evolve from an inaccessible industrial-based area to a Lakefront that is an asset for the entire city and a place for new neighborhoods.

The downtown and lakefront are the historic center of Waukegan



## CITY ACCESS

### Strengthen key gateways to Waukegan

- Create identifying signage to Downtown at I-94 and US Route 41
- Transform Grand Avenue, Washington Street and Belvidere Road into civic boulevards connecting neighborhoods and Downtown
- Strengthen Sheridan Road as an important north-south corridor into Waukegan

### Create a seamless transit network for the city

- Link western neighborhoods to the Downtown and Harborfront by strengthening existing bus service
- Connect bus lines to the proposed intermodal center and Metra Rail

Create civic boulevards that provide clear links to the downtown and lakefront



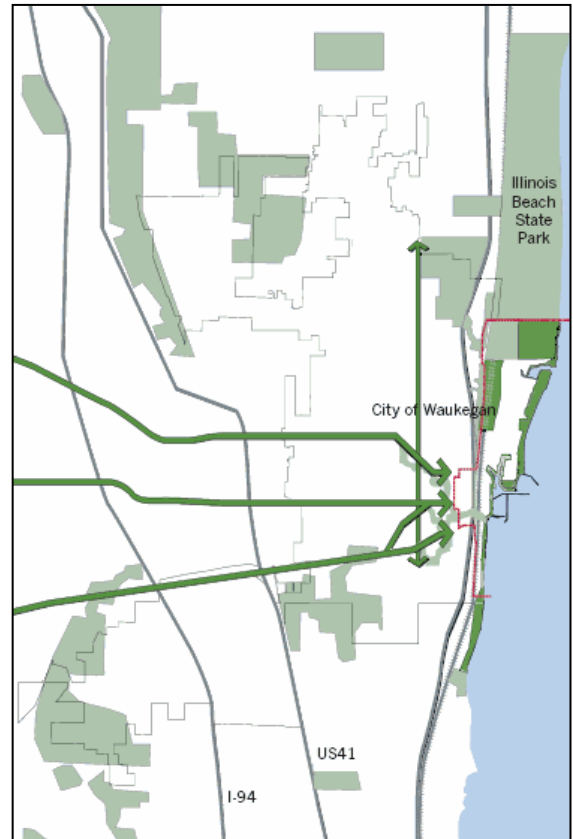
**CITY OPEN SPACE**

**Create an accessible Lakefront for all of Waukegan's Citizens**

- Connect the Lakefront to adjacent open space amenities, via trails and bike paths
- Maximize public access along the Lakefront
- Re-connect natural resources to Illinois Beach State Park and other open spaces

**Preserve, protect and restore Waukegan's unique ecological resources**

- Acknowledge the Lakefront as Waukegan's defining natural amenity
- Enhance the city's ravine system as a great open space resource
- Preserve and enhance the lakefront bluff as an open space resource
- Provide connections between open-space resources to maximize recreational opportunities for all residents



Connect the lakefront to adjacent open space amenities

**CITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Establish Downtown as the highest-density development center for the City**

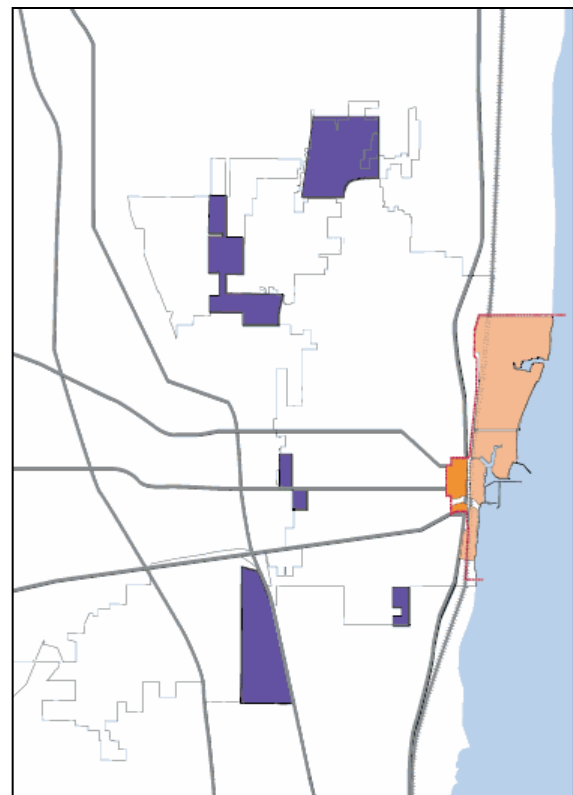
- Create a dynamic, mixed-use downtown that is active during the day, evening and weekend
- Strengthen Waukegan's residential neighborhoods

**Unlock the development potential of the Lakefront**

- Create new residential and mixed-use development districts at the lakefront
- Reconfigure infrastructure to set the stage for lakefront redevelopment

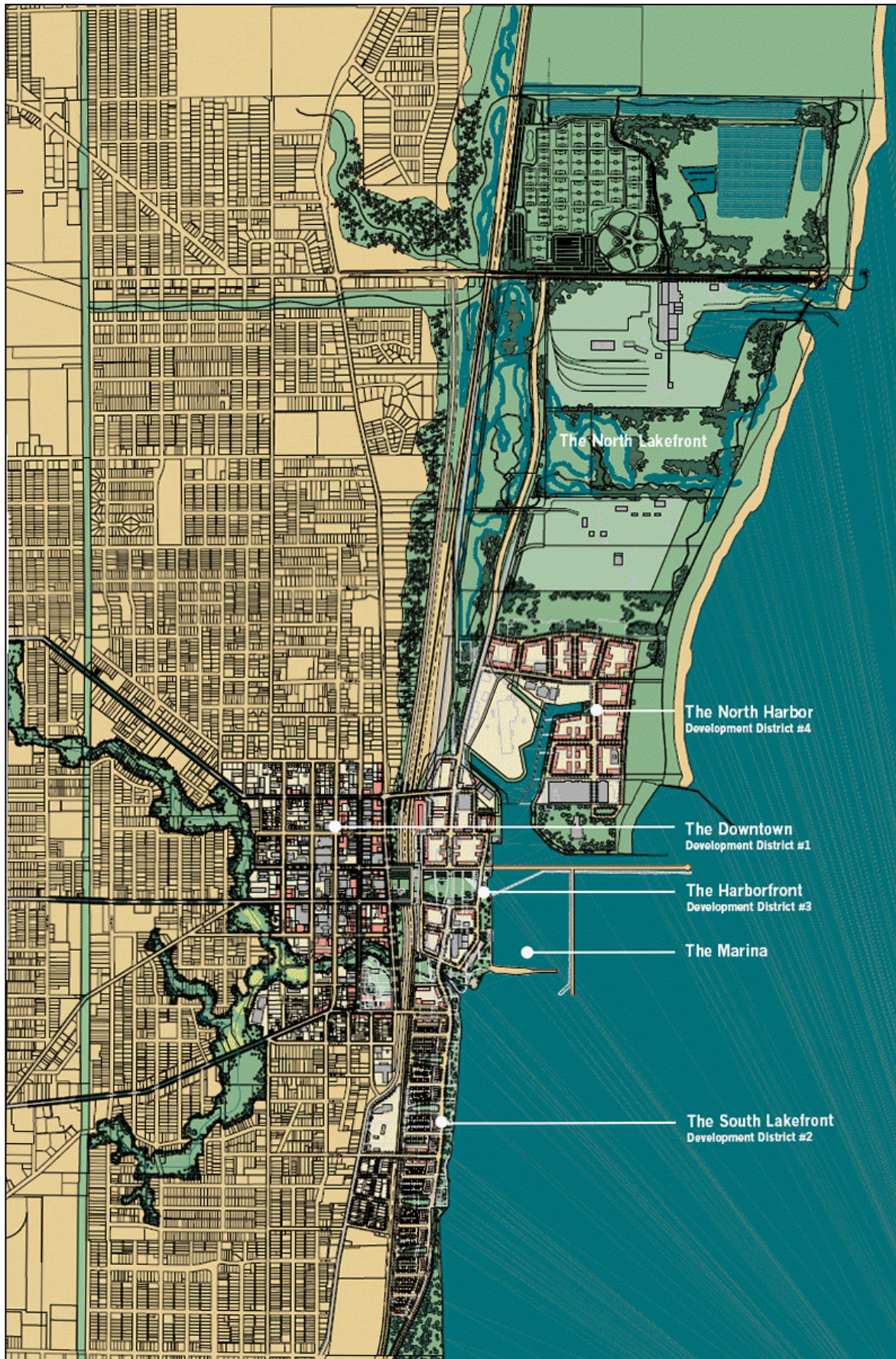
**Prepare the Lakefront for redevelopment by encouraging industrial uses to relocate**

- Relocate industrial uses that are not water-dependent to Waukegan's other industrial districts
- Strengthen industrial districts near the Waukegan airport and along transportation corridors



Prepare the Lakefront for redevelopment by encouraging industrial uses to relocate

# A Transformation: The Lakefront and Downtown

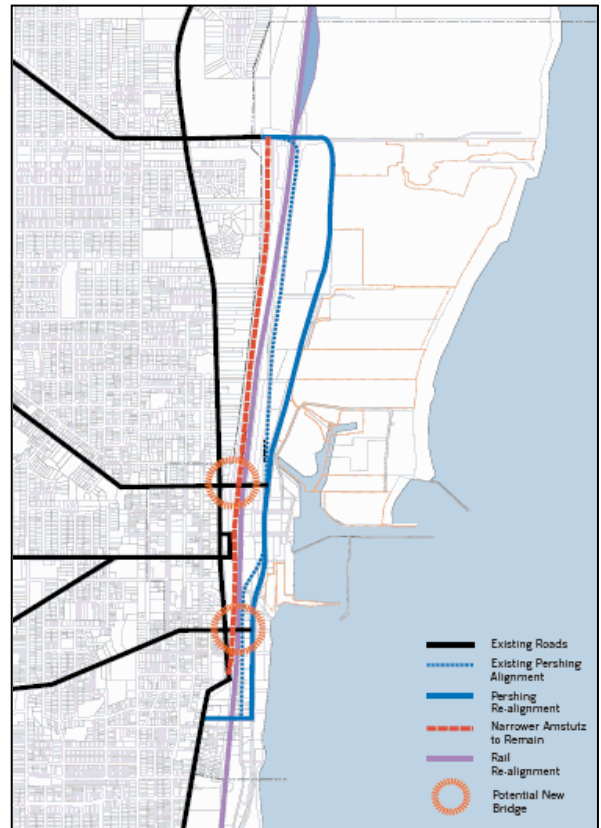


## The Lakefront and Downtown

The Lakefront and Downtown form the project focus area. Encompassing approximately 1400 acres, this area includes a 155-acre Downtown as well as underutilized industrial parcels, prime lakefront land, and extensive road and rail infrastructure.

The Lakefront and Downtown area will be the focus of three primary initiatives. The first is to reconnect the Lakefront with both the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods by eliminating or minimizing barriers such as the Amstutz Expressway and rail lines and yards. The second is to create new Lakefront development districts that celebrate Waukegan's maritime location. The third initiative is to reconnect the Lakefront's disparate open space components into a unified recreational and ecological resource that will be a model within the Great Lakes region.

The Master Plan articulates a vision that balances new growth with open space, creating approximately 200 acres of new development. Formed into distinct neighborhoods, or development districts, this acreage is the equivalent of two new downtowns. Complementing that development, over 50% of the study area will remain as open space. These extensive natural areas will provide a legacy landscape for the city and contribute to the transformation of the Lakefront into a civic asset.



Reorganize infrastructure to meet today's transportation needs

### ACCESS AT THE LAKEFRONT AND IN DOWNTOWN

#### Reduce barriers between the Downtown and the Lakefront

- Narrow the Amstutz Expressway right-of-way, and modify its character to create a Lakefront Boulevard
- Re-align Metra tracks to the west in the Harborfront area
- Relocate passenger and freight rail-yards from the Harborfront to north of Grand Avenue
- Create a new decked park over the reduced Amstutz right-of-way and rail lines, connecting Downtown to the Harborfront

#### Create a network of streets that serve multiple purposes

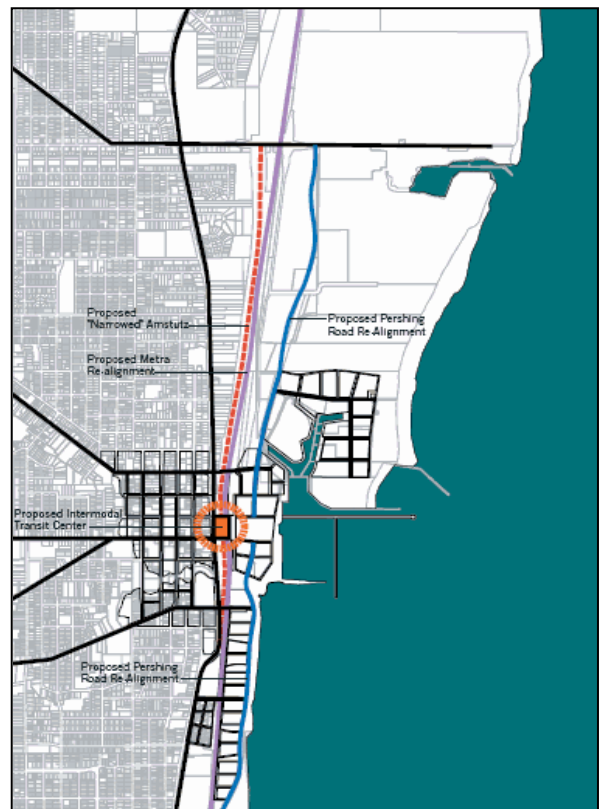
- Design streets that (1) provide automobile access (2) create great places (3) build community (4) are an aesthetic asset to the city and (5) unite development districts and minimize barriers
- Enhance bridges at Grand Avenue and Belvidere Road to provide greater civic presence and access to the Harborfront and Lakefront

#### Create an Inter-modal transit center serving all development districts

- Enhance Pace bus service to lakefront areas
- Provide seamless interface between rail, bus and automobile

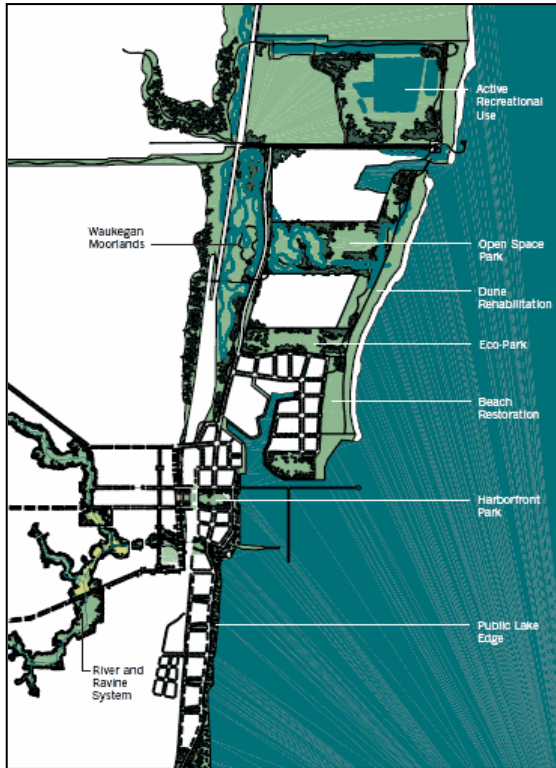
#### Provide appropriate parking resources for all districts

- Create opportunities for shared parking between weekend and weekday functions



Create a network of streets that extend to the Lakefront

# The Lakefront and Downtown



## OPEN SPACE AT THE LAKEFRONT AND IN DOWNTOWN

**Identify, protect, and enhance Lakefront areas of high-quality habitat and ecology**

- Restore and enhance pre-settlement ecological and hydrological systems
- Reconnect fragmented ecosystems as significant public open-space amenities
- Implement the Waukegan Moorlands, a unifying environmental initiative for the Lakefront

**Create great new places at the Lakefront**

- Create parks that complement their Lakefront location
- Maximize open spaces at the lake edge
- Provide places for active and passive recreation at the Lakefront

**Ensure connectivity between Lakefront open space systems**

- Maximize public access to the lake edge
- Provide recreational and ecological links between new open spaces
- Connect open spaces to Downtown and new neighborhoods

Open space at the Downtown and Lakefront



Proposed Waukegan Moorlands



A dune overlook



New trails connect to open spaces



A Harborfront promenade

# The Lakefront and Downtown

## DEVELOPMENT AT THE LAKEFRONT AND IN DOWNTOWN

**Create clear development districts that offer a sense of completion at each stage**

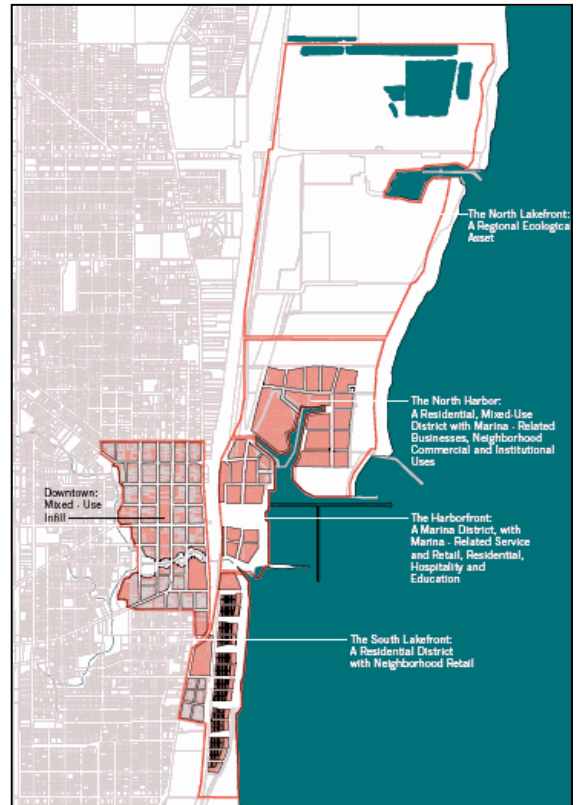
- Start with Downtown as the first development district
- Create new mixed-use, waterfront neighborhoods: the South Lakefront, the Harborfront, and the North Harbor
- Establish a pedestrian-scaled framework of streets, blocks and development parcels

### Build on existing assets

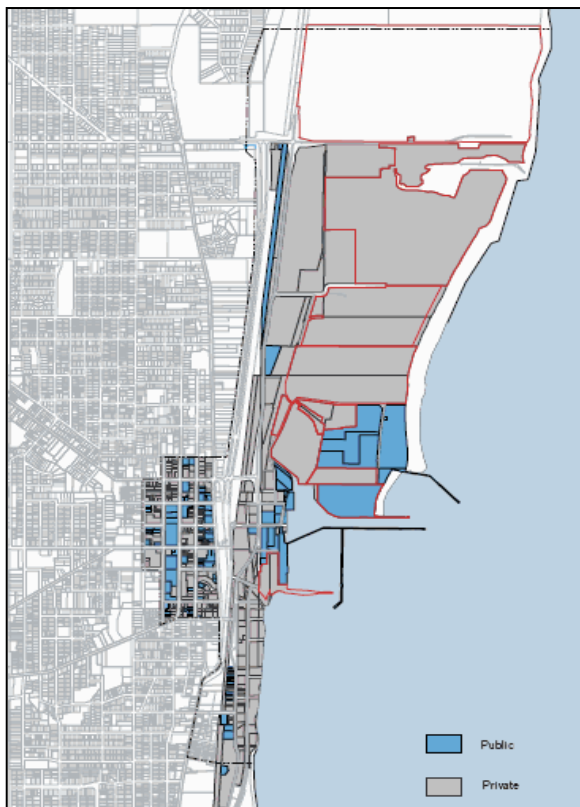
- Governmental and educational base
- Historic buildings
- Stable adjacent neighborhoods
- Transit access and roadway infrastructure
- A Lakefront location

### Consolidate infrastructure to increase development area

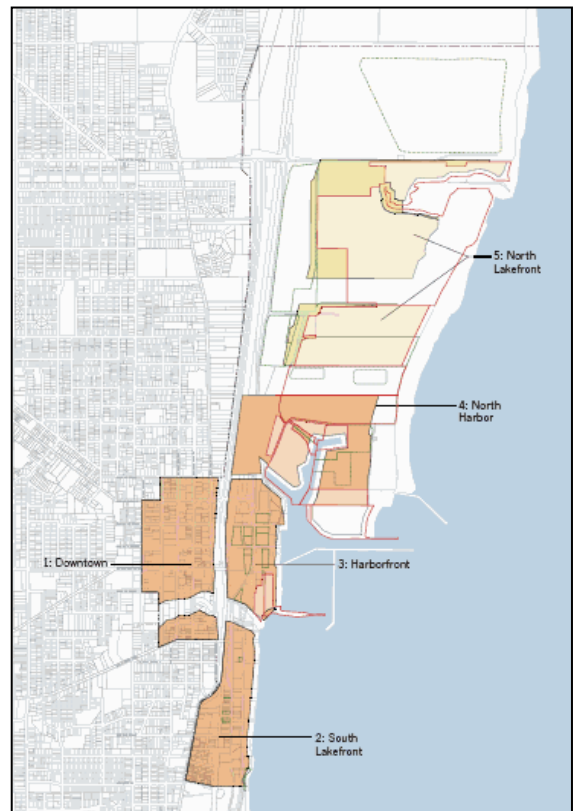
- Narrow the Amstutz and decommission it as an expressway
- Move Metra lines to the west
- Relocate rail yards from the Harborfront
- Decommission and consolidate the EJ&E railroad and Pershing Road



Downtown and Lakefront neighborhoods



Take advantage of publicly-owned land to achieve the transformation of the Lakefront and Downtown



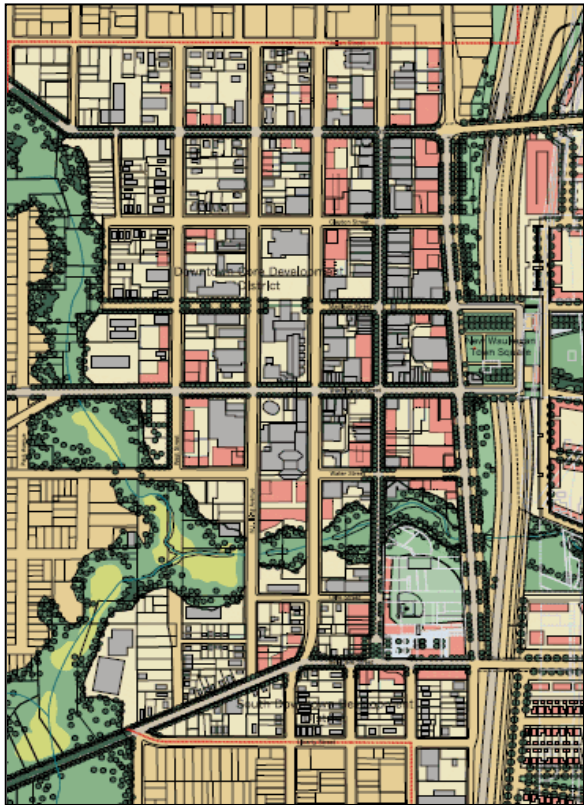
Establish new development districts





CREATING GREAT PLACES

# The First Step: Strengthening Downtown Waukegan



Strengthening Downtown is the first step in the transformation of the Downtown and the Lakefront. By taking advantage of existing infrastructure, approximately 25 acres of vacant land and under-utilized buildings are available for immediate development. The vision for Downtown is to complement the city's existing cultural and institutional assets with expanded retail, residential, office, and specialty uses. This dynamic mix of uses will create a Downtown that is lively and active throughout the day, into the evening, and on weekends. It will also establish a broader residential population to support retail uses and heighten civic involvement in the future of Downtown. Significant new specialty uses such as a minor league baseball stadium and the renovated Genesee Theatre will attract visitors from throughout Waukegan and the surrounding region. A vibrancy will be returned to the Downtown, restoring its historic character and uniqueness.

## DOWNTOWN ACCESS

### Strengthen gateways into Downtown

- Establish Grand Avenue, Washington Street, Belvidere Road and Sheridan Road as great entry boulevards

### Create a new inter-modal transit center to serve Downtown

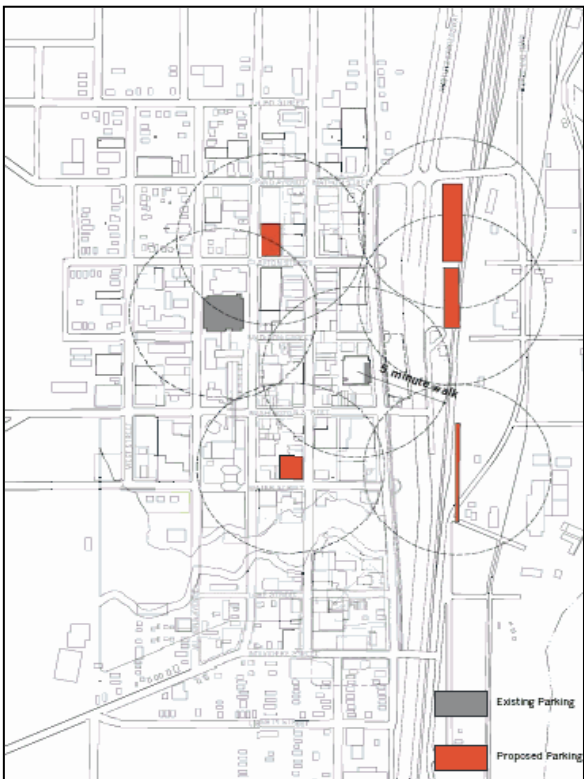
- Strengthen pedestrian connections to Metra rail and Pace bus transit to encourage transit use

### Emphasize opportunities for shared parking facilities

- New theatre and entertainment uses can share office parking
- Baseball stadium

### Enhance and improve the quality and character of Downtown streets

- Strengthen the pedestrian quality of all Downtown streets with attractive street furnishings and landscaping
- Revive Genesee Street as a great retail corridor with stores, restaurants, entertainment and education
- Emphasize evening entertainment along Clayton and Genesee Street
- Develop Sheridan Road as the new residential face of Downtown with taller buildings



Emphasize opportunities for shared parking in Downtown



Ensure the Genesee Theatre and other entertainment activities are served by providing a parking facility at Clayton and County



# The Downtown

## DOWNTOWN OPEN SPACE

### Re-establish the Waukegan River and ravine system as a great natural resource

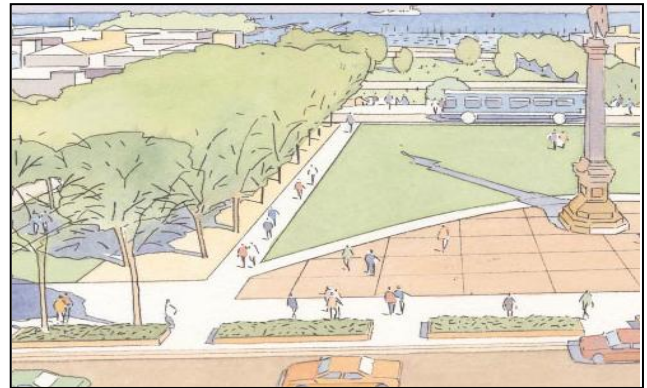
- Stabilize the ecological condition and re-establish native vegetation in the Downtown portion of the ravines
- Reduce direct storm-water discharge into the ravines
- Incorporate a variety of trails throughout the ravines

### Create a downtown with a network of parks, plazas and promenades

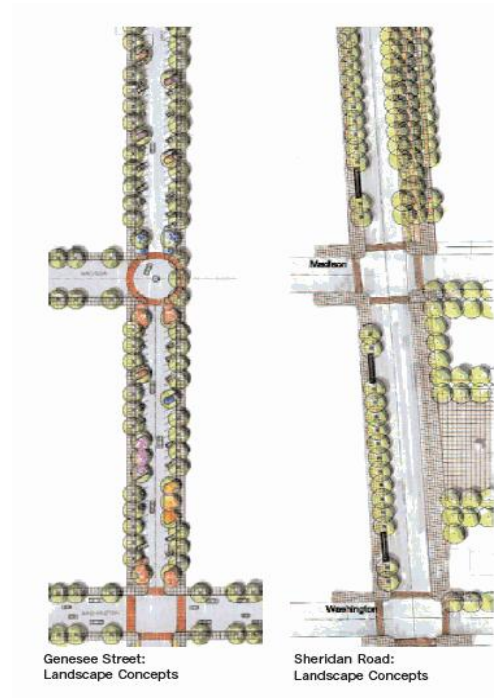
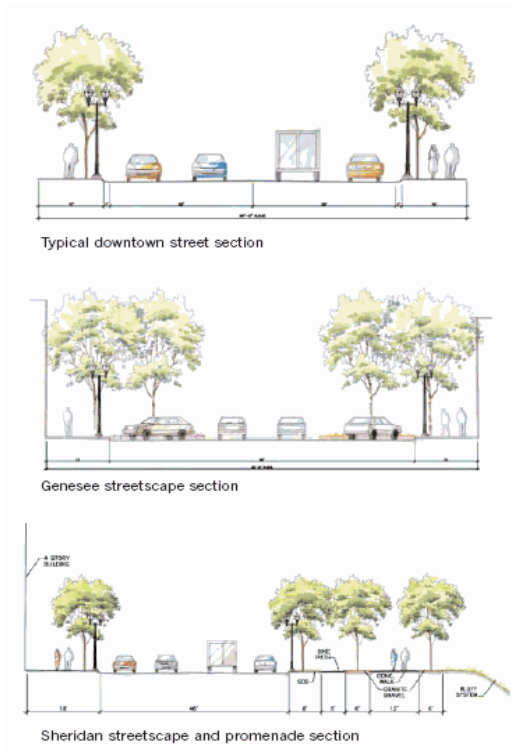
- Create a new Waukegan town square, with connections over a narrower Amstutz
- Create a new public promenade above the bluff along Sheridan Road
- Create appropriate plazas and parks to mark gateways and special places
- Strengthen "green" streets as important links between open spaces



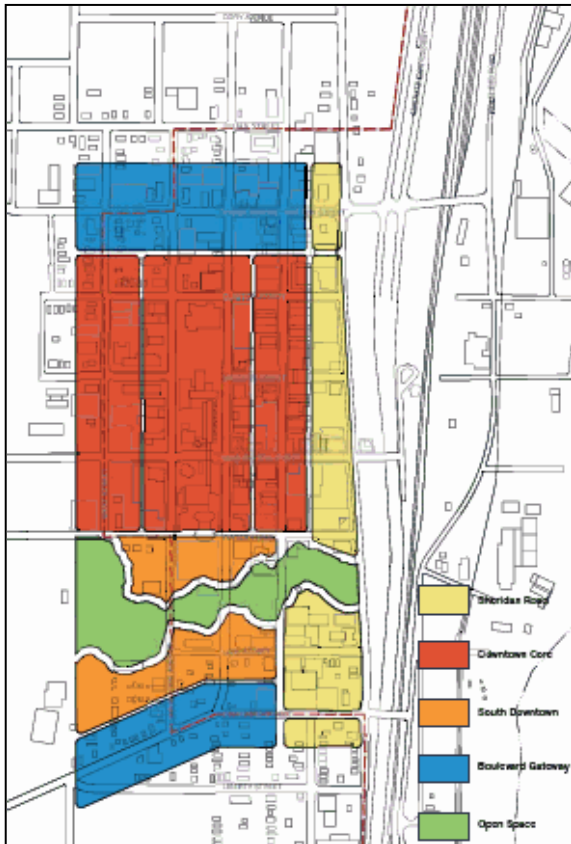
Restore the Waukegan River and ravine system as an open space



Create a new Town Square as a transition between the Downtown and Lakefront



# Creating a Mixed-Use Downtown

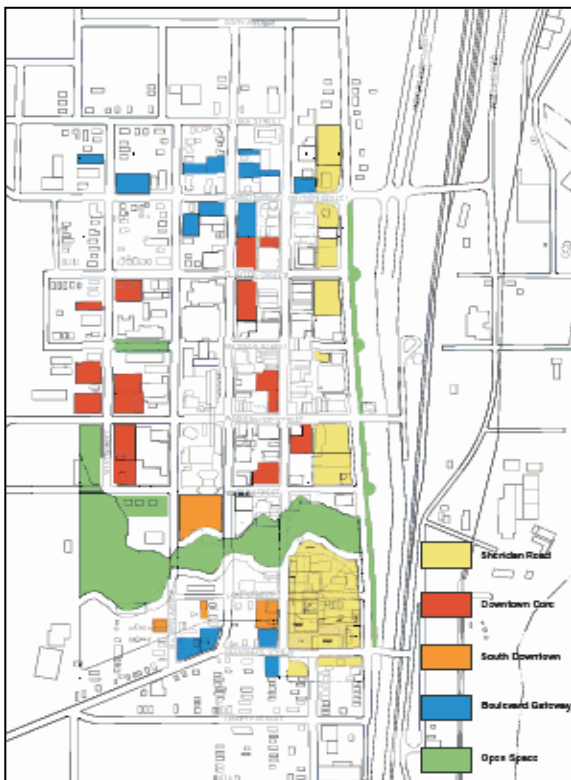


Downtown Districts

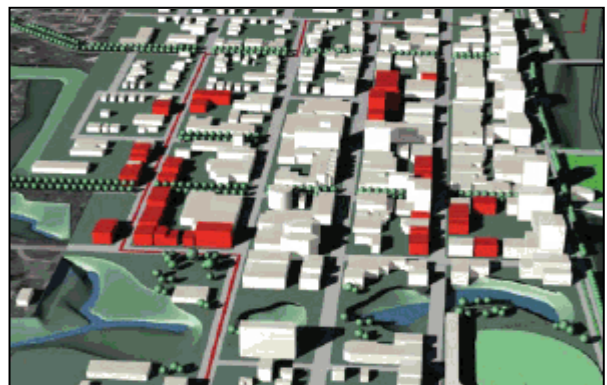
## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

Realize immediate opportunities for new development in Downtown

- Encourage new retail and dining on Genesee Street
- Create diverse retail opportunities for residents, workers and visitors
- Emphasize government and office on County Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue
- Strengthen existing governmental, educational, and institutional uses
- Leverage opportunities presented by Waukegan's role as the county seat. Create restaurants and shops to attract employees and visitors to the Lake County building
- Encourage the growth of educational institutions in Downtown
- Encourage new residential infill in Downtown
- Pursue the opportunity for up to 400 new homes, 150,000 square feet of retail, 200 hotel rooms and 300,000 square feet of office development



Downtown opportunity sites

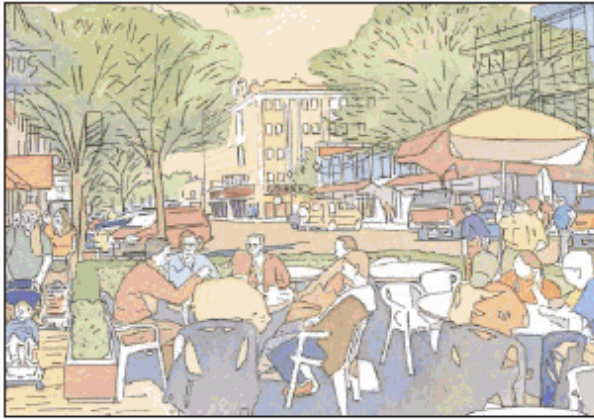


Opportunity sites in the governmental core



Sheridan Road - The face of Waukegan

# Creating Great Places



Leverage the renovation of the Genesee Theatre to support a revitalized Genesee Street with retail and dining



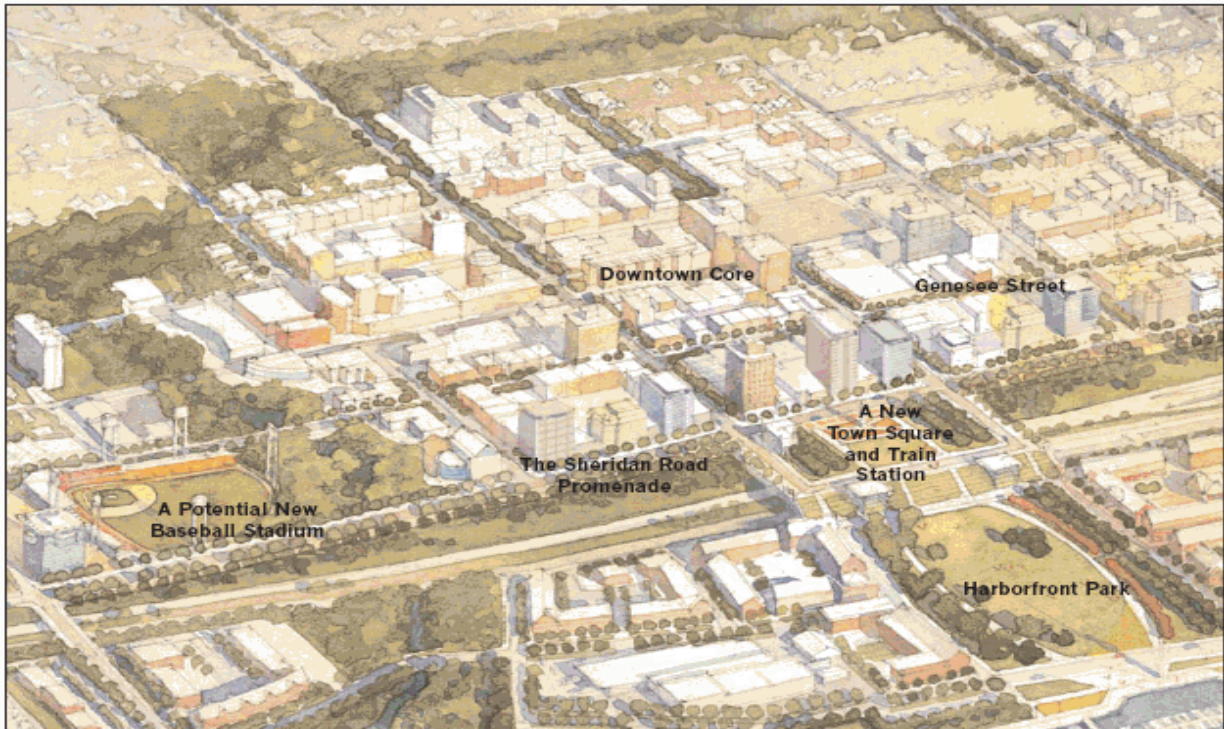
A dynamic mix of uses will create a Downtown that is lively and active during the day, evening and weekend



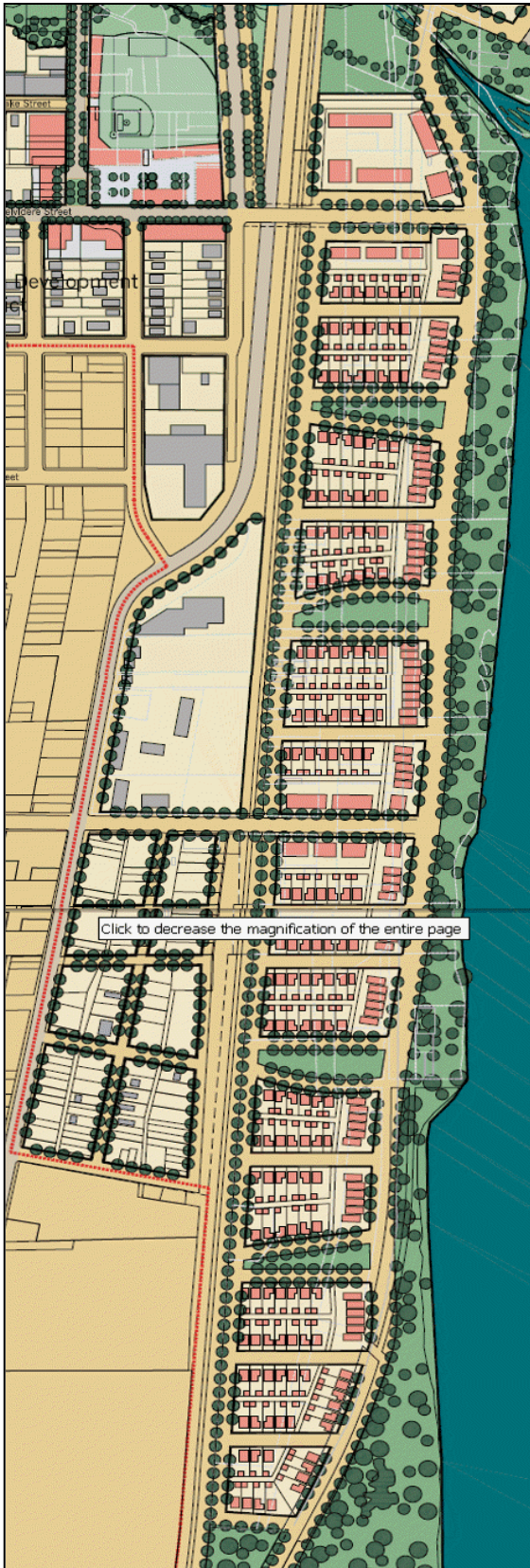
Reinforce Sheridan Road as a residential and mixed-use corridor with a bluff-top promenade



Strengthen South Downtown as a mixed-use district anchored by a new baseball stadium at Sheridan Road and Belvidere Road



## A Near Term Opportunity: The South Lakefront



The South Lakefront District

The South Lakefront development district represents a near-term opportunity for Waukegan. Currently comprised of abandoned or under-utilized parcels, the South Lakefront offers outstanding lake frontage. This 125-acre district will offer approximately 80 acres of development land.

The lake edge will be returned to the citizens of Waukegan as a permanent, public lakefront park. Immediately adjacent to this park will be a new southerly extension of Pershing Road, forming a new "Lakeshore Drive" for Waukegan that will unite the entire lakefront. The third component of the South Lakefront district will be a new 50-acre new residential and small-scale commercial neighborhood. The residential component will consist of single-family housing, townhomes and stacked flats that complement Waukegan's traditional neighborhoods. Neighborhood commercial uses, such as small convenience stores or dry-cleaners, will form focal points within the larger residential area.

### ACCESS TO THE SOUTH LAKEFRONT

- Create a network of attractive, landscaped, walkable neighborhood streets that lead to the Lakefront
- Extend and enhance Pershing Road as a new "Lakeshore Drive" for Waukegan
- Allow for future roadway connections to North Chicago
- Provide a continuous lakefront pathway that connects to the Harborfront
- Mid-block alleys will provide access to residential parking



A new neighborhood at the South Lakefront

## The South Lakefront

### OPEN SPACE AT THE SOUTH LAKEFRONT

- Create a significant lakefront park that defines the district
- Ensure a continuous public lake edge
- Create connections to the mouth of the Waukegan River
- Create great neighborhood parks and playgrounds that define residential identity
- Allow for future open space connections to the south
- Define the mouth of the Waukegan River as a significant place on the Lakefront



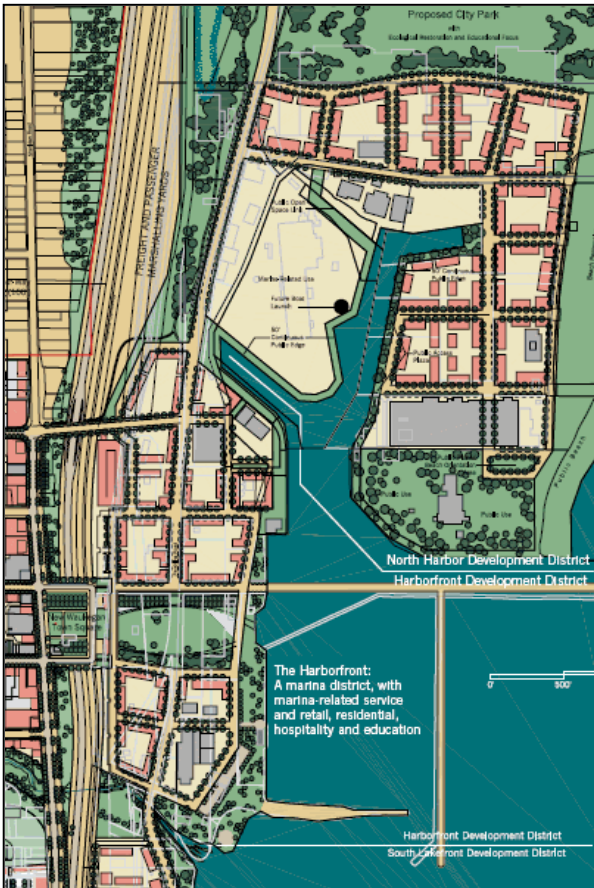
### DEVELOPMENT AT THE SOUTH LAKEFRONT

- Establish a new mixed-density residential neighborhood with up to 500 new homes
- Incorporate supporting retail uses that provide neighborhood services
- Create development parcels that allow the neighborhood to be built in complete increments
- Ensure homes face the street and offer attractive, well articulated facades



The South Lakefront will include single-family homes, townhomes, and neighborhood-serving retail

# Creating New Neighborhoods: The Harborfront and North Harbor



The Harborfront and North Harbor development districts offer a new centerpiece for the Lakefront. These neighborhoods are approximately 335 acres in size and provide approximately 120 acres for development.

With the closing of key manufacturing plants, and reduced dependence on lake-based shipping, development adjacent to Waukegan's harbor will shift to a more diverse mix of recreational, residential and commercial uses. The Master Plan expands and enhances this evolution by proposing mixed-use, marina-based development that will re-define Waukegan's harbor for the next century. The 95-acre harborfront will include approximately 35 acres of development. The 240-acre North Harborfront area will include approximately 85 acres of development.

The Harborfront and North Harbor districts will be characterized by a rich diversity of housing types and marina-based retail. These will be organized around an intermodal transit center and a new Harborfront Park. Current marina-based uses will be encouraged to stay within the districts, but relocate to sites more suited to their long-term needs. Boat launch facilities will be relocated to an area that can accommodate their parking needs.

Waukegan's harbor will become a destination, not only for boaters and anglers, but also for area residents that want to be a part of a vibrant, diverse, mixed-use waterfront district. The Harborfront and North Harbor will be places to live, recreate, spend a weekend or an afternoon. They will perpetuate the spirit of Waukegan's maritime history.

The Harborfront (lower left) and North Harbor (upper right)



The Harborfront will be anchored by a new Intermodal Center and Harborfront Park

## ACCESS WITHIN THE HARBORFRONT AND NORTH HARBOR

### Extend Waukegan's framework of streets to the Harborfront

- Create new streets that extend the grid of Waukegan's Downtown to the Harborfront
- Create clear access and view corridors to the lake, especially at the gateway boulevards of Washington, Grand and Belvidere
- Enhance the pedestrian environment of streets leading to the harbor
- Transform the EJ& E rail right-of-way into a new Pershing Road to serve the Harborfront and North Harbor

### Provide appropriate parking for all uses

- Emphasize opportunities for shared parking facilities that can be used by commuters, marina users, shoppers and evening and weekend visitors
- Provide adequate marina-related parking for boaters and anglers

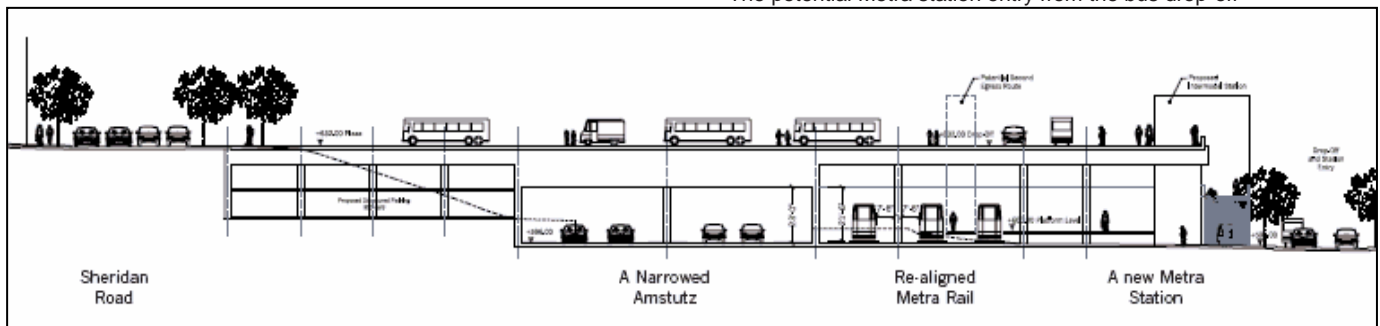
# The Harborfront and North Harbor

## Create a transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly district

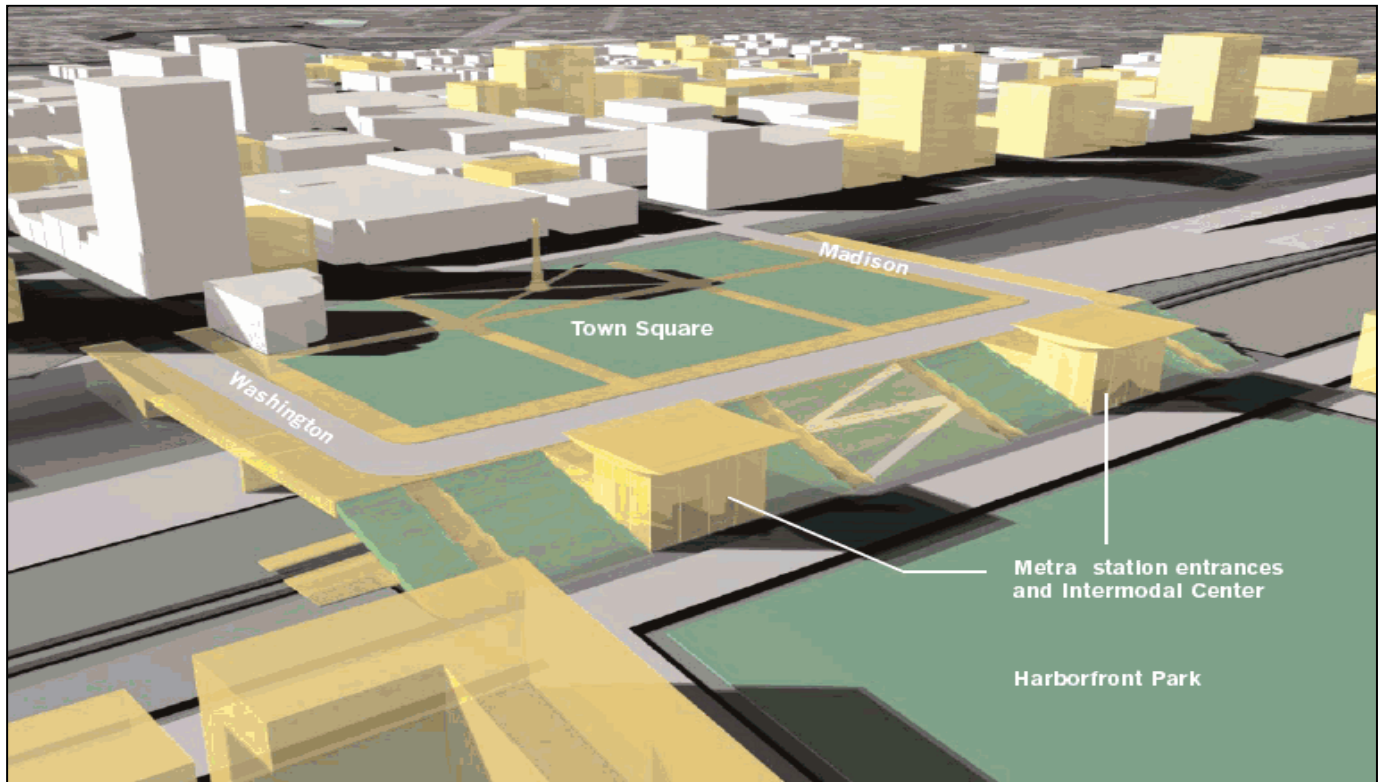
- Create pedestrian connections between Downtown and the Lakefront
- Create high-quality pedestrian-scaled streets throughout
- Establish clear pedestrian connections to Metra and Pace buses to encourage transit use
- Locate the Metra Station and Intermodal Center between Madison and Washington



The potential Metra station entry from the bus drop-off



A cross section through the new Town Square and Intermodal Center

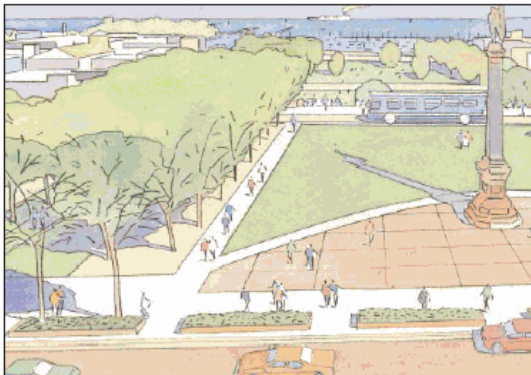


The proposed Intermodal Center is the focus of the transit-oriented Harborfront District

## The Harborfront and North Harbor



A Harborfront promenade



A new Town Square along Sheridan Road

### OPEN SPACE AT THE HARBORFRONT AND NORTH HARBOR

#### Create continuous public access along the waterfront

- Implement a waterfront promenade for pedestrians
- Maximize public access to the marina
- Ensure recreational links to the north and south

#### Create new public places that connect residents to the lake

- Create a great civic open space at the Harborfront that extends to the marina
- Maintain and enhance Waukegan's beaches
- Incorporate the City of Waukegan water-treatment facility into the open space framework

#### Create a new city park to the north of the North Harbor

- Create a theme of ecological restoration for the park
- Incorporate new technologies for bioremediation
- Establish opportunities for large-scale environmental art
- Provide an open space connection from the bluff to the lake edge



The Harborfront and North Harbor



# The Harborfront and North Harbor

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE HARBORFRONT AND NORTH HARBOR

### Create marina-oriented, mixed-use neighborhoods that emphasize their waterfront locations

- Provide up to 2500 new homes
- Emphasize marina-related service and retail, hospitality and education activities
- Provide uses that complement one of the few full-service, commercial marinas in Illinois
- Encourage existing industries to incorporate “green” principles
- Relocate long-term boat parking and storage north of Grand Avenue
- Relocate incompatible existing uses to other areas still within Waukegan

### Strategically locate new development to support the long-term vision for the Lakefront

- Consolidate infrastructure to create viable development parcels
- Organize higher-density development around the new Harborfront Park and inter-modal station
- Consolidate educational or institutional facilities adjacent to the beach area at the North Harbor

### Encourage the relocation and consolidation of appropriate marina-related uses

- Encourage marina-related business expansion to the central and western portions of the North Harbor
- Encourage material storage, distribution and industrial operations to relocate away from the North Harbor after five years
- Move boat launch facility to the north of its current location
- Provide appropriate boat launch parking while encouraging the use of alternative and shared parking adjacent to the waterfront



Retail, boat service and construction, and marina-related activities at the Harborfront

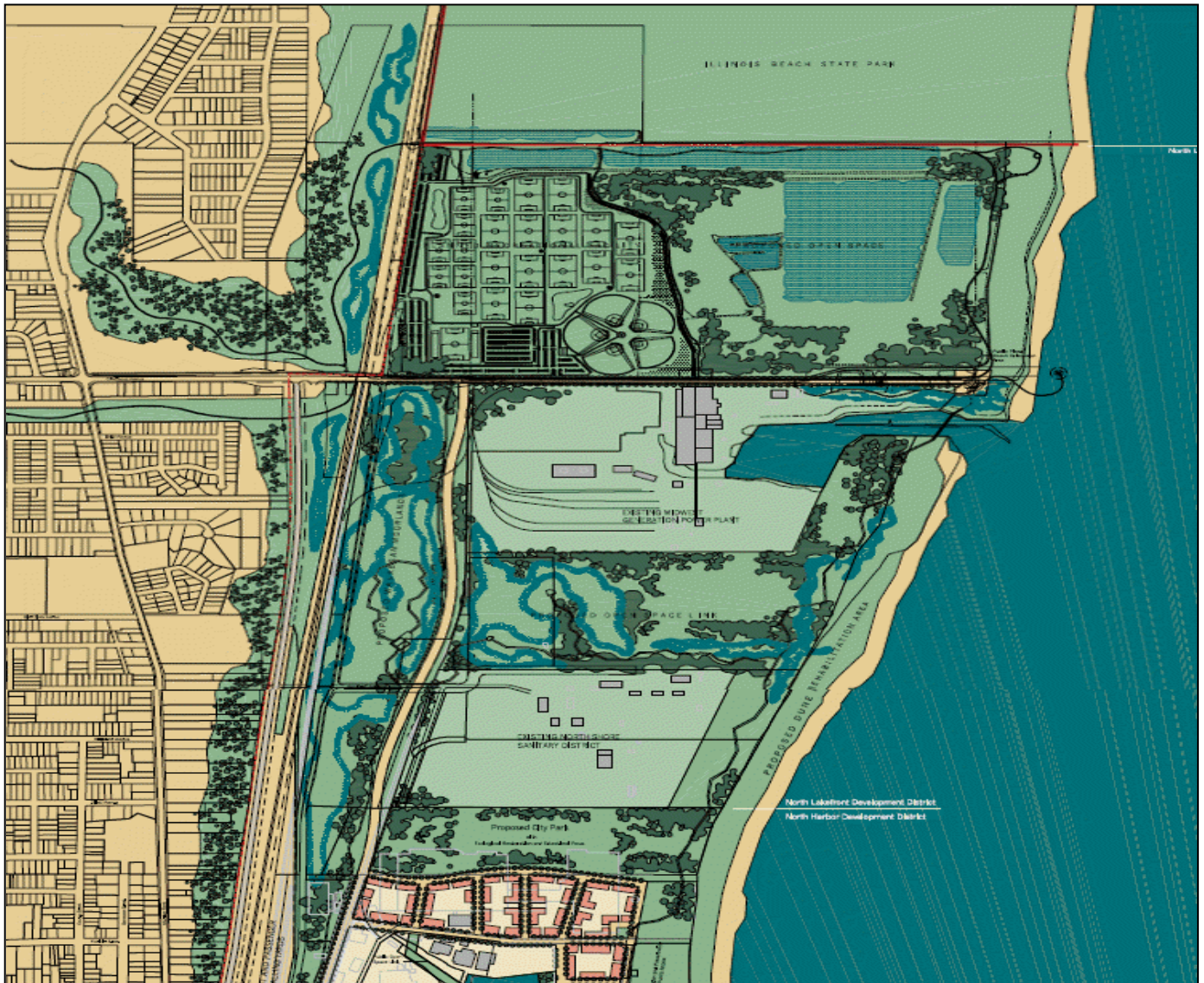


A mix of housing and other uses at the Harborfront



Contemporary and traditional approaches to housing and retail

## A Legacy Project: The North Lakefront



The North Lakefront represents a long-term, legacy project for the city. It is the city's greatest open-space resource, and is a unique geological, environmental and ecological feature. The long-term vision for the North Lakefront is to return it to its former natural magnificence while accommodating existing long-term land uses.

The vision for the North Lakefront includes protecting and enhancing existing natural amenities and the creation of the Waukegan Moorlands. This extensive open-space area will restore historic wetlands while providing recreation trails and wildlife habitat. As the Moorlands are implemented, the City will work with Midwest Generation and North Shore Sanitary District to create a continuous open-space system that incorporates private and public land.

In addition, access to the lake will be improved, the beach areas will be connected with bike and pedestrian trails, and a proposed city park will be initiated.

Waukegan possesses a natural environment that exists in very few places in the world. This environment, characterized by a freshwater "dune and swale" system adjacent to an upland bluff and ravine system, can be seen in an almost pristine condition in Illinois Beach State Park (IBSP) immediately to the north of the project area. The fundamental landscape initiative of the plan is to acknowledge, enhance and expand this environment by building on Waukegan's remaining ecological assets and strengthen connections to IBSP.

## The North Lakefront



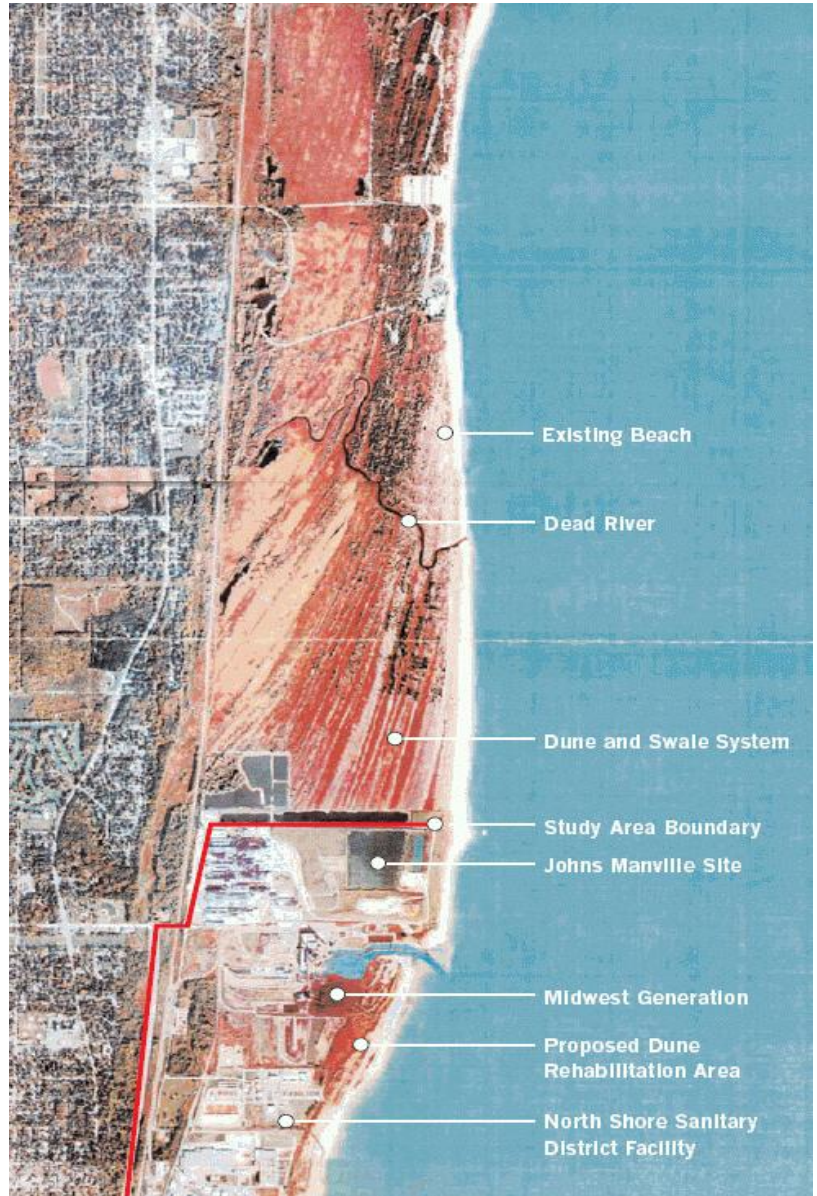
1907 - Little Dead River extents



1908 - Little Dead River extents



Today - Little Dead River is filled



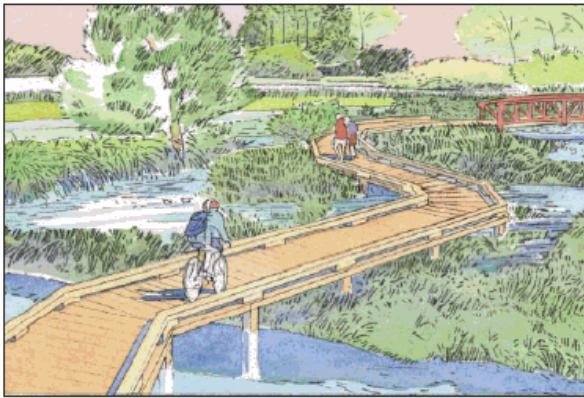
Over the course of Waukegan's settlement and growth, many natural features of the original lakefront landscape have been destroyed or severely compromised by industrial development. Despite the negative effects of industrial activity on Waukegan's lakefront, many valuable ecological systems remain. These include an excellent "foredune" system immediately adjacent to the beach, small remnant plant communities in abandoned sites and wetlands adjacent to roads and railroads.

As shown in the diagrams above, Little Dead River, an important hydrological connection between Waukegan's upland areas and Lake Michigan, has been gradually filled, severely compromising its role as a natural water filter. The Master Plan's proposed Waukegan Moorlands will reconstruct Little Dead River, re-establishing a valuable hydrologic and recreational amenity for the city. Because of access restrictions on the North Shore Sanitary District and Midwest Generation sites, in some

instances native plant and animal communities have remained. The Master Plan recommends working with these long-term lakefront partners to establish limited-access easements that reconnect and enhance these existing native systems.

Through the use of plants indigenous to Waukegan, enhancing remaining ecological systems, and celebrating the uniqueness of this place, the vision for the North Lakefront will begin to heal Waukegan's unparalleled lakefront landscape.

# The North Lakefront



Access through the Moorlands



A potential recreational use on the North Lakefront, south of Illinois Beach State Park



Maximize public access to the Lakefront



New trails will unite isolated open spaces

## ACCESS TO THE NORTH LAKEFRONT

### Ensure public access to the Lakefront

- Improve Greenwood Avenue as an important route to the Lakefront
- To protect sensitive areas, limit vehicular and pedestrian access
- Move Pershing Road to the EJ&E right-of-way, creating a new "Lakeshore Drive" through the North Lakefront

### Develop a system of trails and bike paths that allow full access to all areas of the North Lakefront

- Use trails and bikeways to link the newly created Moorlands to adjacent open spaces
- Create a pedestrian and bicycle link to Illinois Beach State Park
- Provide pedestrian routes and observation points along the beachfront
- Utilize power line right-of-way to provide recreational access west to Robert McClory bike trail

### Design roads and trails that can be crossed by recreational users and wildlife

- Create boulevards where appropriate, reducing the perceived width of streets
- Design streets and trails that allow storm-water and wildlife to move freely between park areas
- Employ context-sensitive design standards for all infrastructure projects

## DEVELOPMENT AT THE NORTH LAKEFRONT

### Limit North Lakefront development to primarily recreational uses

- Limit new buildings to recreational and educational facilities

### Incorporate existing industrial uses into the open space system

- Improve the environmental stewardship of land, air and water by power generation and sanitary district facilities
- "Soften" edges of existing industrial sites by creating landscapes similar to the natural areas they adjoin
- Incorporate North Shore Sanitary District's overflow into a series of constructed wetlands within the Waukegan Moorlands

# The North Lakefront

## OPEN SPACE AT THE NORTH LAKEFRONT

Implement the "Waukegan Moorlands," an open-space initiative that restores pre-settlement landscapes and hydrologic patterns

- Re-establish natural waterways and wetlands
- Create constructed wetlands
- Re-establish wildlife habitats, especially for migrating and over-wintering birds
- The Moorlands will offer a living example of the North Lakefront's natural ecosystems



### Protect and restore the beach and lakefront environment

- Establish a permanent, protected, dune zone at the lake edge
- Establish a fore-dune wetland system that provides plant and animal habitat

### Create open-space initiatives that link the Moorlands to the lakefront

- Establish a new ecological park north of the North Harbor.
- Use the Johns Manville site for recreational uses
- Create an east-west open-space link at the southern edge of the Midwest Generation site



### Create ecological continuity between the North Lakefront's diverse places

- Ensure hydrological systems are inter-connected
- Design sites to have "porous" edges. Eliminate unnecessary fences or other man-made barriers







CONCLUSION

## Implementation of the Master Plan



### **Waukegan's Downtown and Lakefront is poised for change**

The city must seize the existing planning and development momentum to ensure realization of the plan. The following steps outline a possible implementation scenario.



### **Strengthen existing assets in Downtown**

- Activate storefronts on Genesee Street to support and respond to the re-opening of the Genesee Theatre
- Create a parking structure to support the Genesee Theatre
- Initiate the transformation of the Harborfront with the reconfiguration of the Amstutz Expressway and commuter and freight rail lines and yards and other infrastructure
- Implement a strategic environmental remediation methodology to unlock the Lakefront for public use and future public and private investment



### **Create new opportunities in Downtown and the South Lakefront**

- Redevelop at least three Sheridan Road sites in downtown for either housing, office hospitality or retail activities
- Encourage new retail and dining
- Strengthen governmental, educational and institutional activities
- Encourage new residential infill
- Prepare the South Lakefront for redevelopment



### **A near term opportunity: The South Lakefront**

- Establish a new residential neighborhood
- Create a network of attractive, walkable neighborhood streets
- Ensure a continuous public lake edge



## Implementation of the Master Plan

### Setting the stage at the Harborfront

- Consolidate infrastructure to set the stage for Harborfront redevelopment
- Create new streets that extend the grid of Waukegan's downtown



### The new Harborfront neighborhood and the Intermodal Center

- Create a decked park over the Amstutz and Metra lines as the new town square
- Build a new intermodal transit center
- Create a new Harborfront Park that leads to the water's edge
- Establish a new mixed-use district with marina-related services and retail, residential, hospitality and education activities



### The new North Harbor neighborhood

- Establish a new mixed-use residential district that takes advantage of lake views and access to beaches and the North Lakefront



### Implement North Lakefront open spaces

- Create a great city park at the North Harbor
- Implement the Waukegan Moorlands
- Initiate stewardship strategies with major land holders



## Conclusion

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This Master Plan represents a major step in the transformation of Waukegan's Downtown and Lakefront. It has brought city and other government officials, business leaders and the residents of Waukegan together to establish shared goals for the future.

The transformation of Waukegan's Downtown and Lakefront will offer enormous public benefits in terms of new homes, stores, entertainment and offices, recreation resources, high quality transit service and a new framework of streets and public spaces. New revenues for the City of Waukegan and new jobs for residents will result.

Sustained and focused public and private investment will be required to strengthen Downtown and unlock the full potential of the Lakefront. Waukegan, Lake County and the entire metropolitan region will benefit. The City of Waukegan is committed to working with State and Federal agencies, as well as property owners and future developers to achieve the vision established by this plan.

### **Technical Analysis and Supplemental Report**

Substantial analytical work was carried out during the creation of this Master Plan. This included:

- Site assessment
- Ecological assessment
- Market assessment
- Development programming
- Land assembly analysis
- Environmental strategy analysis
- Traffic and transit impact analysis
- Implementation budget
- Economic and fiscal impact analysis

This analysis is compiled in a supplemental document which can be made available for review by contacting:

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## Acknowledgements

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### **Waukegan City Council**

Samuel Cunningham First Ward

John Balen Second Ward

John Rickerd (through April 2003) Third Ward

Gregory Moiso (since May 2003)

J.A. "Tony" Figueroa Fourth Ward

Frank Harris (through April 2003) Fifth Ward

Edith "Edie" Newsome (since May 2003) Fifth Ward

Lawrence TenPas Sixth Ward

Patrick Needham Seventh Ward

Richard Larsen (since May 2003) Eighth Ward

Rafael Rivera (since May 2003) Ninth Ward

### **New Harbor City Renaissance Commission**

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Cranston Byrd

Gary Dowty

Tony Figueroa

Marc Huber

Dale Johnson

Tom Muscarello

Tom O'Connell (Chair)

Tim O'Leary

John O'Meara

Chuck Wesselhoft (Recorder)

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Conservation Design Forum

Ecological, Open Space and Landscape Planning

Site Design Group, Ltd.

Park and Streetscape Concepts

US Equities

Environmental Resource Identification

Sally Foster

Community Outreach