

# **A Plan for Milwaukee's Lakefront**

**Prepared by: The City of Milwaukee, DCD  
1994**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Mayor appointed a 28-member task force charged with the preparation of a Plan for Milwaukee's lakefront lands, which explicitly addresses three issues:

- Create an image that will attract visitors from inside and outside the City.
- Find the most appropriate mix of public and private activities and coordination.
- Continue cooperation and communication between the agencies, especially the City and County, to implement recommendations for improving the lakefront. The study area was divided into four sub-areas: Northside parklands bounded by Hampshire on the north and Wells on the south; Downtown waterfront bounded by Wells Street on the north and Bruce Street on the south; Jones Island running from Bruce Street on the north; and Russell Avenue on the south and Southside parklands starting at Russell Avenue on the north and extending to Milwaukee City limits on the south.

## **2.0 Vision**

The task force emphasized the need for access to the lakefront area, including not only to the water's edge but the water as well. It particularly noted that shoreline protection structures should be designed to facilitate and not deny access to the water. Access is essential if city residents are to have an appreciation of this special environment, which is physically close but dramatically different from everyday experience. The following are additional insights recognized:

- Open space was found to be an essential ingredient for a desirable future lakefront. The space should be inviting and offer potential users a variety of options.
- Developments and/or improvements should encourage and enhance the boating facilities and experience along the lakefront and the Milwaukee River.
- The museums are an asset, which contribute and gain from their location on the lakefront. They attract visitors to the lakefront who would otherwise not come and attract visitors during the "off-season." New developments should not use public land at the waters' edge. Instead, expansion should be directed to the War Memorial Center site.
- Food service along the lakefront should support the broad range of lakefront activities. Facilities should be compatible with other aspects of this vision; access to waters' edge and the amount of public space used should be minimized.
- Fishing is a very popular activity along the lakefront. Access to the water for fishing is encouraged, since it is enjoyable for a diverse population.
- The lakefront is endorsed as a site for public festivals, including Summerfest, the Ethnic festivals, Maritime Days, Great Circus Parade and various other festivals that contribute to residents visiting the lakefront area.
- Any developments or improvements on the lakefront should emphasize diversity and appeal to a mixed group of people.

### 3.0 Recommended Policies

Three general issues and policies are outlined with the intention that all future development would adhere to them.

#### *Accessibility*

- Maximize public access to and through the lakefront parklands, including the North Harbor Tract.

#### *Recreation and Open Space*

- Preserve and enhance the lakefront parklands, including North Harbor Tract, as unique recreational resource.

#### *Development and Land Use*

- Encourage a land use pattern, which enhances the economic well-being and preserves the integrity of the lakefront for the Milwaukee Community.

### 4.0 Recommended Actions

The task force recommends the following actions as essential to its vision for the study area and urges implementation.

*Northside Parklands recommendations are intended to reinforce and advance the recreational resource. The improvements and developments to the Northside Parklands include:*

- County Plan
- Linnwood Water Purification Plant and vicinity
- Picnic Point
- Temporary Parking
- Roundhouse/Yacht Club Area
- Coast Guard Station Reuse
- Lakefront Jitney

*The taskforce sees diversity along the Downtown Waterfront as an asset and desires to have both public and private activities in the area share its benefits. Improvements and developments to lakefront features include:*

- Develop a Cultural Campus
- Urban Park
- Cass-Michigan Renewal Project
- Milwaukee County Transit Center
- Light Rail Route
- Municipal Pier Lake Walk
- Reuse of Port Office
- Summerfest Leasehold
- Harbor Island
- Chicago/Jackson/Coachyards Area

- Milwaukee River-East Bruce Street to North Water Street

*Jones Island is the center of operations of the Port of Milwaukee and the site of a MMSD treatment plant. The task force endorses the efforts of the Harbor Commission to develop the Port as a modern, efficient, multimodal transportation facility. The task force recommends the following to be developed or improved to facilitate the vision of the Port.*

- Port Office Relocation
- Compatible Recreational Use
- Kaszube Memorial
- Confined Disposal Facility
- Sea Scouts Pier
- Commercial Port Property

*The Southside Parks study area is composed of County and City owned property. The recommendations made by the task force allow for existing and/or additional activities while improving the facilities as well washed-out portions of the lakeshore bike trail.*

- Shoreline Stabilization
- Explicit Areas for Fishing
- Texas Avenue Pumping Station
- Lakefront Zoning

*Certain concerns that are not specific to a particular location or which affect several locations are important to consider, including:*

- Water Quality
- Public Trust Doctrine
- Fishing
- Continuous Pathways
- Coordination

## **5.0 Implementation**

The task force has identified public and private sector parties to lead implementation and delegate responsibilities to facilitate the vision of Milwaukee's Lakefront. The public sector includes the City of Milwaukee and its agencies including Water Works, Harbor Commission, Department of City Development, Redevelopment Authority; Milwaukee County and its agencies, including Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, Department of Public Works; Wisconsin DNR and DOT. The private sector entities will include the Milwaukee Art Museums, Equitable Real Estate Investment Management, Inc, Milwaukee World Festival, Inc., Italian Community Center, and Specialty Restaurants Corp.